(English version)

Question for written answer E-003063/24
to the Commission
Arkadiusz Mularczyk (ECR)
(19 December 2024)

Subject: EU cohesion policies driving central and eastern Europe-western Europe convergence: seeking impacts and funding data, and plans regarding the Three Seas Initiative

Cohesion and convergence are key to ensuring that central and eastern European (CEE) EU Member States reach the same level as western EU Member States.

To that end:

1. What measurable economic impacts, such as changes in gross domestic product growth, employment rates, trade flows, or infrastructure development, can be directly attributed to the implementation of the EU strategies for the Baltic Sea region, for the Danube region and for the Adriatic-Ionian region, which aim to foster economic convergence between CEE and western European Member States?

2. As the Commission is a strategic partner of the Three Seas Initiative, what are the future plans for the Commission to cooperate with this initiative?

Submitted: 19.12.2024

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto on behalf of the European Commission
(25 March 2025)

EU macro-regional strategies were not set up with a specific focus on fostering economic convergence between Member States that joined the EU before and after 2004.

Rather, the strategies address shared regional challenges within a single macro-region, such as environmental issues, transport and energy security, that cannot be effectively addressed by individual countries alone.

The 4 macro-regional strategies have been operating for over a decade and have added value in guiding cross-border cooperation, enhancing policy alignment between countries, mobilising funding, and engaging stakeholders. These are complemented by 4 sea-basin strategies, with a maritime and blue economy dimension.

Although the impact of these strategies on macroeconomic parameters is difficult to quantify, they contribute to policy development, indirectly promoting the socioeconomic development of the EU and its regions. Macro-regional cooperation has been instrumental in improving the navigability of the Danube River and in cutting red tape for inland navigation operators.

The objectives of macro-regional and sea-basin strategies are complementary to those of the Three Seas Initiative, which is a country-led initiative that aims to promote economic growth, energy security, and infrastructure development in the wider region.

Together, these initiatives can facilitate regional dialogue and close infrastructure gaps through coordinated transnational actions, for example by advancing key corridors in the framework of the trans-European transport network.