



**INTERVENTION DOCUMENT**

**FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION**

**OF A EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGY**

**FOR THE ALPINE REGION**



## Preamble

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The Alpine region represents a living and working space for the resident population and an attractive tourist destination for millions of guests every year. The Alps are the water tower of Europe and are known all over the world for their natural beauty, varied landscapes, rich biodiversity and cultural heritage.

The Alpine region is a unique territory, which has an important potential for dynamism, but facing major challenges, such as:

- Economic globalisation that requires the territory to distinguish itself as competitive and innovative by developing knowledge and information society
- Demographic trends, particularly characterised by the combined effects of ageing and new migration models
- Climate change and its foreseeable effects on the environment, biodiversity and on the living conditions of its inhabitants
- The energy challenge at the European and worldwide scales, which consists in managing and meeting demand sustainably, securely and affordably
- Its specific geographical position in Europe, as a transit region but also as an area with unique geographical and natural features which set the frame for all future developments

The States and Regions of the Alpine region are convinced that only a common, concerted strategy, that is targeted on priority policies which cannot be formulated and implemented by States and Regions alone, can effectively meet these challenges by:

- Providing a framework for multilevel governance and cooperation between countries both within and outside the European Union, between Alpine regions from east to west and north to south, and between existing organisations and institutions
- Coordinating strategic decisions, rationalising and targeting existing resources to priority policies, and implementing them more effectively and at all levels
- Encouraging the stakeholders to keep on developing their countries in accordance with the orientation of this Macroregional Strategy

The States and Regions of the Alpine region wish to jointly and actively commit to drawing up a macroregional strategy approach based on the Europe 2020 strategy “for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”.



To achieve these objectives, the Strategy will be in line with the strategic approach adopted for the programming of ESI Funds 2014-2020 that supports the attainment of the Europe 2020 objectives, by both promoting a more result oriented and effective use of the Funds, and reinforcing the implementation of the partnership principle at all levels and in all steps of the preparation and implementation of the programs.

The Macroregional Strategy for the Alpine region will take into account the lessons learnt both from the cases of the Strategies under implementation (EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region and for the Danube region), and from the preparation of the new ones (EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian region). Moreover, it will represent a first true comprehensive example of a strategy initiated in a bottom up approach by the territories and backed by the States and Regions.

Since the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, and based on the articles 3.3 of Treaty on the European Union (TEU), 4 and 174 of Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), territorial cohesion is identified as a shared competence between the Union and the States and Regions, following the multilevel governance model.

The article 174 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) requires territorial cohesion to be achieved jointly with social and economic cohesion. Moreover, it considers mountain regions among others as territories facing disparities, which require specific attention and actions; as such, a macroregional strategy will be particularly well adapted to guarantee a sustainable development for the Alpine region, with a view to promoting growth across the whole European territory and mutual solidarity between mountain and peri-Alpine territories.

The Commission report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions, about the added value of macroregional strategies and published on June the 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013, concludes that the added value of such strategies is certain, but it insists on the necessity to improve their implementation methods.

It highlights the fact that new initiatives “have to be of strategic importance for the Regions and have to be translated into a limited number of well-defined objectives, associated with an adequate number of indicators to measure progress”.

This document, which was co-written by the States and Regions of the Alpine region, aims at supporting a European Council’s request to the Commission to prepare a EU Strategy for the entire Alpine macro-region. The States and Regions that co-authored this document would like the European Council to give by the end of 2013 an agreement in principle and a timetable for preparing a EU Strategy for the Alpine region (EUSAR).



It is based on the following preparatory documents:

- The “Initiative paper” of the Alpine Regions approved on June the 29<sup>th</sup> 2012 in Bad Ragaz,
- The “Input paper” untitled “Contribution of the Alpine Convention to the process towards a macroregional strategy for the Alps” adopted by the Alpine Conference on September the 7<sup>th</sup> 2012 in Poschiavo,
- The “Final report” of the experts group from the Strategy Development Project developed by the European Territorial Cooperation Alpine Space Program 2007-2013 published on May the 31<sup>st</sup> 2013.

## **I – Objectives and expected results of the EU Strategy for the Alpine region**

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The premise that underlies any macroregional strategy is that better cooperation between the concerned territories and improved coordination of public policies are necessary to cope with the challenges that are common to these territories.

Historically, cooperation structures are well developed in the Alpine area. They show a broad variety in terms of topics, policy levels and instruments, territories concerned, actors, stakeholders and addressees, thus leading to some overlapping and discontinuities.

Experiences show that a strengthened coordination between the given structures and a better integration between public policies, and between public policies and private initiatives, is necessary to create added value.

By strengthening cooperation in order to improve the efficiency, leverage effect and impact of European, national, regional and local policies, through improving coordination and creating synergies between actions, resources and existing programs, the EUSAR is an opportunity to provide effective solutions to the common challenges of the Alpine region and to improve the sustainable exploitation and promotion of its potentials.

There will be neither new funds, nor new rules, nor new institutions, for the EU Strategy for the Alpine region.

The main added value of a European Union strategy for the Alpine region and for the whole of Europe will consist in a new relationship between metropolitan: peri-mountain areas and mountain areas. Only a new “solidarity agreement” between these territories – something strictly linking resources, stakeholders, and local institutions – can improve mutual benefits of a coordination of funds and policies, and can act as a leverage for the growth of Europe.



The ambition of the macroregional strategy is to strengthen mutual solidarity within the regions between mountainous and urban areas, between declining territories and dynamic ones, between territories which provide amenities and those which consume it.

The macroregional strategy will be built as an inclusive framework so that the States and Regions reinforce cross-border and transnational strategic approaches, international projects, networking and cooperation at the scale of the whole of the area.

The aim of the macroregional strategy is to strengthen the innovative and economic abilities of the Alpine region and to ensure its sustainable and long-term development, particularly of its mountainous area. The cooperation between this Alpine core area and the surrounding low lands and metropolises will be built on equivalence and on flexibility according to the functional relationships existing between these areas.

Enhancing competitiveness of the Alpine region and reducing social and territorial inequalities will benefit to Europe as a whole.

Moreover, by facilitating a strengthened cooperation between the States of the European Union and those outside the European Union in the Alpine region, and by deepening the linkages of the Alpine regions from east to west and north to south, the States and Regions of the Alpine region wish to make a substantial contribution to the achievement of a long-term development of the European Union, as it is expressed in the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, implementing them in way tailored to the specificities of the area.

## **II – Diagnose**

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The Alpine region is an attractive territory, where human, natural, and cultural resources equally contribute to its sustainable development, and 70 million people live and work, it covers a surface area of 450,000km<sup>2</sup>.

The core of this area consists of the Alpine arc, a chain of mountains going from the Maritime Alps in the Principality of Monaco to the Julian Alps in Slovenia. It represents the most extensive mountainous landscape in Europe, with a specific agriculture and forestry and is considered as biodiversity hot spot. It provides a working and living space to a population attached to its territory, and it has also an economic role at a wider scale, providing goods and services in a sustainable way, such as tourism and recreation, transport corridors, academic cooperation, health, hydroelectricity, food, timber, handicrafts, for all of Europe.



The Alpine region is a central point for prosperity, modernity and innovation, with a solid potential for development, but also with pronounced territorial disparities; an area where the largest medium-sized metropolitan zones in Europe are, strongly connected to their Alpine mountains and foothills, which are attractive places for appropriate industrial installations and research institutions.

Its demographics present contrasting situations, with very attractive areas where new populations settle, and territories where the ageing of the population and the brain drain are important and not balanced by the inflow of new residents.

Likewise, the Alpine area features an income level above the European average, but the comprehensive approach veils important disparities linked to the remoteness of some territories and to the scaling down or termination of many industrial activities or traditional crafts, and essential services which are a pre-requisite for economic and social development.

It is also a zone that is crossed or bordered by trade and transit routes of strategic importance with regard to the development of Europe, where the concentration of local, regional and trans-Alpine traffic streams have reached a considerable level and is the source of significant environmental consequences in many valleys.

Despite the progress made towards sustainability, the Alpine region remains under strong pressure. Various developments, such as climate change, international economic competition, Alpine transit traffic, decreasing biodiversity and land consumption threaten the ability of the Region to provide the goods and services mentioned above.

The Alpine region also hosts a great cultural diversity because of its topography, its historical context, its traditions, languages and its links with neighbouring Regions.

The territory is characterised by a long tradition of local solidarity, which is backed up by close relationships between the urban environments and the mountain-dwelling world. These relationships shape the Alpine core area and the surrounding lowlands and metropolises as functional entities.

Lastly, the Alpine region is a focal point between different histories and political contexts which have nevertheless been able to develop a long tradition of political, economic and cultural cooperation, and corresponding institutions.



### III – The main strategic guidelines

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In order to promote full employment and to improve the Alpine region as a living and working area for its inhabitants and also as an economic area and natural environment, the priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy and its more specific applications (smart growth, sustainable growth and inclusive growth) must be adapted to its specificities and challenges.

Green economy can become a political and economic guiding principle for the development of Alpine region and constitutes a common objective for all of the Alpine stakeholders, leading to shared development lines for the Alpine region.

However, making the EU Strategy for Alpine region efficient implies prioritising actions and concentrating on a limited and very clearly defined set of concrete transnational issues, otherwise energy and efficiency will lose focus.

The development's challenges and opportunities which constitute the main strategic guidelines must be chosen according to the added-value provided by their implementation on the macroregional scale and take into account the EU's horizontal policies, more specifically the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The EU Strategy for the Alpine region will be implemented through various programs and instruments that organise and define the actions of Alpine States and Regions, including in their cross-border and transnational cooperation.

The EU Strategy for the Alpine region should be constructed on three strategic strands, which apply the three priorities of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in a way that is adapted to the Alpine area:

- i. Ensuring sustainable growth and promoting full employment, competitiveness and innovation by consolidating and diversifying specific economic activities with a view to reinforcing mutual solidarity between mountain and urban areas;**
- ii. Promoting a territorial development that is focused on an environmentally friendly mobility, reinforced academic cooperation, development of services, transports and communication infrastructures policy;**
- iii. Promoting sustainable management of energy and natural and cultural resources and protecting the environment and preserving biodiversity and natural areas;**



**i. Ensuring sustainable growth and promoting full employment, competitiveness and innovation by consolidating and diversifying specific economic activities with a view to reinforcing mutual solidarity between mountain and urban areas**

The Alpine region constitutes the largest economic and production area in Europe and is one of the zones with the highest development potential. Based on this sound foundation, the Alpine region must attract new investment, particularly in the emerging industries, not only to optimise production capacities but also to cope with the depopulation of several mountain and remote areas.

As tourism is one of the most important job creators in the region, the promotion of its sustainable development will also be one of the key drivers for economic growth.

In order to maintain the high quality of life and the high level of production and services of the Alpine region, the economic activities should make full use of the innovation and research-development potentials within the Alpine region.

**ii. Promoting a territorial development that is focused on an environmentally friendly mobility, reinforced academic cooperation, development of services, transports and communication infrastructures policy**

Nowadays, the communication issue within a territory is a necessary condition to its demographic and economic development, to its planning and to the cohesion between the different areas that compose it.

The question has conventionally been approached from the point of view of physical mobility (transport in a broader sense), but this has been widened over the last decades to the field of information and communication technologies, these new information and communication highways that also promote growth, competitiveness and innovation.

Moreover, depopulation, population aging, disappearance of public services from less populated areas, impact of transport, and a digital coverage that is still insufficient, are among the major challenges that the Alpine stakeholders must cope with.

Improving accessibility in its broader sense should create new opportunities for development, improve the lives of the Alpine region's inhabitants and strengthen the relationships between

towns and mountain areas based on mutual solidarity between the urban and mountain-dweller populations.





**iii. Promoting sustainable management of energy, and natural and cultural resources, and protecting the environment, and preserving biodiversity and natural areas**

Transition to a green and sustainable economy can only occur, in the Alpine region, with the recognition of the value of its landscape and of its preserved nature, with the valorisation of the ecosystem services, the internalisation of negative externalities into production costs, and an increased attention to the management of natural risks.

The wealth of strategic resources in the Alpine region (water, biomass and natural capital) makes it one of the most important and, at the same time, fragile environments in Europe, particularly concerning climate change;

A common, smart, integrated and sustainable management of water resources is now imperative, given their multifunctional value (consumption, irrigation and hydropower) and the multitude of existing international river basin districts.

It is also necessary to increase the energy efficiency and the share of renewable energies in final energy consumption, by the energy production from local renewable sources and at the same time by reducing any impact on the territory (landscape, biodiversity).

#### **IV – Governance and management of the Alpine region**

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The implementation of appropriate governance is the core element of the EU Strategy for the Alpine region, as it is a key factor in the quality of the results of the Action plan and the projects selected in this context.

The choice of an ambitious strategy, common challenges to be met, the objectives that have been set and the actions to be undertaken, call for the establishment of strengthened governance and management, built within a framework of partnership and co-operation.

The Strategy will be implemented on the basis of an Action plan, listing a series of priority actions described by measures, time frame, financial instruments, responsible actors and measurement of results with specific sets of indicators.

The governance arrangements will be based on the European Code of Conduct on Partnership initiated by the European Union, according to which strengthened cooperation of all relevant partners (public authorities at national, regional and local levels, socio-economic interest groups, representatives of the civil society, etc.) is the key for the success of EU policies.



The organisational methods for governance will be consistent with the multi-level governance approach and the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, as set out in the article 5 of Treaty on the European Union.

The principles of governance are based on two objectives:

- Allowing active involvement of all relevant actors in the definition of objectives and in the implementation of the selected projects, by appropriate consultation following the defined objectives
- Enabling to mobilise national, regional and local authorities, and existing institutions, depending on the selected projects and competencies required to their implementation

The governance must be adapted to the territorial and institutional organisation that already exists in the alpine region and to the specificities of the EUSAR, which favours a bottom-up action and a tailored approach for each project.

The governance methods for EUSAR will equally represent the interests of mountain and lowlands populations.

It will mostly rely on existing organisations, whose expertise in the fields of intervention selected in the Action plan is recognised.


The Alpine Convention, the European Territorial Cooperation Alpine Space Program, as well as transnational thematic Alpine networks, will take action in their specific roles.

The ways of governance should also involve and associate the citizens of the Alpine region.

The challenge to be met by the proposed governance will be to favor the establishment of an Action plan as it is an operational expression of the strategy, at relevant territorial levels, and to ensure consistency of all of the initiatives, in accordance with the priorities defined in the strategy.

It must also ensure consistency of the various sectorial approaches that shape the Action plan.

This bottom-up approach, tailor made for each project, requires decision-taking, monitoring and evaluation bodies corresponding to the defined objectives. It also requires structures and organisms in charge of their implementation of projects provided with a clear mandate, in order to make it possible for the decision-taking bodies to ensure the necessary monitoring.



The governance arrangements must make use of innovative approaches, combining consultation and communication technologies, in order to ensure the maximum transparency in the implementation of the EUSAR.

## **V – Methodology for drawing up the EU Strategy for the Alpine region**

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Following the various preparatory meetings in Bad Ragaz, Innsbruck, Milan, Paris and Vienna, it was decided to constitute a Joint Drafting Committee involving seven representatives of States and seven representatives of the Alpine region, and designating France, through the DATAR, to ensure coordination.

Once the principle of implementation of this strategy approved, the future Action Plan entrusted by national governments to the European Commission will be drawn up including all of the stakeholders of the EUSAR.

It will take into account the proposals of the representatives of socio economic interest groups and of the civil society in the countries concerned.

A very specific effort will be made in order to involve the citizens of the Alpine Region in the promotion of the action plan and in projects foreseen in it.

For the elaboration of the future Action plan the EC may rely on the experience of the collective dynamics and on the governance methods that have been established to edit this intervention document.

The joint drafting committee