

EU strategy for the Alpine region

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The Committee on Regional Development adopted the own-initiative report by Mercedes BRESSO (S&D, IT) following the Commission communication concerning the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region.

Members welcomed the communication from the Commission and the accompanying action plan, which can play a significant role in efforts to counter the depopulation of the region, especially the outflow of young people.

The report called on Member States' competent authorities and the participating regions to **align their national and regional policies and funding arrangements, wherever possible**, to the actions and objectives of the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). It called on the EIB, in cooperation with the Commission, to examine the possibility of setting up an investment platform for the Alpine region that would enable mobilisation of funding from public and private sources.

Members stressed the need for:

- appropriate information campaigns regarding the EU strategy for Alpine region;
- **setting-up at macro-regional level of a supporting implementation structure** for the governing bodies of EUSALP, in cooperation and agreement with the Commission, Member States and regions.

They called for the Commission to play an active role in the implementation phase of EUSALP, and to submit, every two years, **a report** on the implementation of EUSALP to the Parliament and the Council, based on objective criteria and measurable indicators.

Jobs, economic growth and innovation: Members made the following recommendations:

- ensure active synergistic cooperation between farming and other economic activities in protected areas (Natura 2000 sites, national parks, etc.), in order to **develop integrated tourism products**, as well as the importance of preserving and protecting the unique habitats of mountain regions;
- highlight the opportunities opened up by the strategy for the **development of its labour market**, which has different important levels of cross-border commuting, and further diversify economic activities and employment opportunities in the Alpine region;
- prioritise investment in **digital infrastructures** and ensure quick and efficient access to high-speed internet for people living in areas remote from large urban centres;
- encourage competent authorities of the Alpine Member States and regions to come together with the Commission to look into the feasibility of carrying out during the next programming period **a joint programme to foster the integration of research and innovation activities in the Alpine area**;
- encourage clustering and cooperation between public and private enterprises, universities, research institutes and other relevant stakeholders with the aim of promoting innovation;
- provide opportunities to preserve, sustain, and adapt where necessary, forms of traditional economic activity, **such as agriculture and forestry and craft-based economic activities**, as well as fostering innovation and the development of new initiatives in this field;
- encourage the formulation of **tourism** strategies based on existing natural and cultural heritage, sustainability and innovation;
- protect the Alpine heritage and promoting sustainable use of natural and cultural resources (environment, cross-border terrestrial habitats and biodiversity);

- develop **new tourism opportunities** adapted to regional needs and exploiting regional resources, such as tourist theme parks and routes, food and wine tourism, cultural, health and educational tourism and sporting tourism;
- support measures to help **ease pressure** on transport infrastructure;
- promote the development of soft and sustainable touristic activities for the entire Alpine region, including in lake and spa towns;

Mobility and connectivity: the report called for a **holistic approach** to the future design and implementation of Alpine transport and environment policy. In this context, it underlined the need to prioritise modal transfers with a view to achieving a shift from road to rail, in particular for freight, and asks the Commission to support this transition.

The Commission and Member States should also:

- facilitate **clean, low carbon and better connections**, notably for rail networks, at regional and local level in order to enhance cohesion and quality of life in mountainous areas;
- facilitate better **digital connections** at regional and local level in order to enhance the quality of life and promote the development of new activities and the creation of job opportunities in these areas, and to encourage resettlement.

The environment, biodiversity, climate change and energy: the report recommended:

- joint efforts to introduce innovative measures for preserving and maintaining **biodiversity**;
- promoting the **self-generation of energy**, improving energy efficiency and supporting the development of the most efficient renewable energy sources in the region, and the development of forms of renewable energy specific to the Alps;
- developing new strategies to combat air pollution;
- making joint efforts to **implement spatial planning and integrated territorial management**, and continuing efforts to diversify energy supply sources, and to develop the renewable sources available, such as solar and wind energy, within the energy production mix.