

# EU strategy for the Alpine region

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The European Parliament adopted by 521 votes to 78 with 107 abstentions a resolution 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, while stressing that the macro-regional strategy for the Alps could help to reverse the economic decline through investment in research, innovation and business support, taking into account the region's unique characteristics and assets. The Alpine region plays an important role for the economic development of Member States and provides numerous ecosystem services for the urban and peri-urban areas adjoining it. The macro-strategy will affect 80 million people living in 48 regions in seven countries, of which five are EU Member States (Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia) and two are non-EU countries (Liechtenstein and Switzerland).

In this context, Parliament:

- 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);
- called on the **European Investment Bank (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;
- was in favour of 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;
- suggested launching appropriate **information campaigns** regarding the EU strategy for Alpine region.

**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**;
- 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, develop **new tourism opportunities** and promote the development of soft and sustainable touristic activities for the entire Alpine region, including in lake and spa towns;
- protect the **Alpine heritage** and promoting sustainable use of natural and cultural resources (environment, cross-border terrestrial habitats and biodiversity);

- support measures to help **ease pressure** on transport infrastructure.

**Mobility and connectivity:** Parliament 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:** concerned at the degradation of ecosystems and the risk of natural disasters in certain parts of the Alpine region, Parliament stressed the need to: (i) apply full natural disaster risk management and climate change adaptation strategies; (ii) develop and implement common contingency plans in response to cross-border **pollution**.

The resolution also 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 (such as solar and wind energy);
- making joint efforts to implement **spatial planning and integrated territorial management**.

The Commission was called upon 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.