

Basic information

2015/2324(INI)

INI - Own-initiative procedure

EU strategy for the Alpine region

Subject

4.70.05 Regional cooperation, cross-border cooperation

Procedure completed

Key players

European
Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
REGI Regional Development	BRESSO Mercedes (S&D)	17/09/2015
	Shadow rapporteur SCHMIDT Claudia (PPE) SERNAGIOTTO Remo (ECR) JAKOVČIĆ Ivan (ALDE) OMARJEE Younous (GUE /NGL) ŠKRLEC Davor (Verts/ALE) ZULLO Marco (EFDD)	
Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	LAVRILLEUX Jérôme (PPE)	18/01/2016
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	BRIANO Renata (S&D)	26/11/2015
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
TRAN Transport and Tourism	AIUTO Daniela (EFDD)	20/10/2015
AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development	MÜLLER Ulrike (ALDE)	18/11/2015
CULT Culture and Education	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner
	Regional and Urban Policy	CREȚU Corina

Key events			
Date	Event	Reference	Summary
28/07/2015	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2015)0366 	Summary
26/11/2015	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
16/06/2016	Vote in committee		
13/07/2016	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0226/2016	Summary
12/09/2016	Debate in Parliament		
13/09/2016	Decision by Parliament	T8-0336/2016	Summary
13/09/2016	Results of vote in Parliament		
13/09/2016	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2015/2324(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	REGI/8/05067

Documentation gateway				
European Parliament				
Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE580.480	30/03/2016	
Committee opinion	ENVI	PE575.216	19/04/2016	
Committee opinion	AGRI	PE577.050	26/04/2016	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE582.156	27/04/2016	
Committee opinion	EMPL	PE575.287	02/05/2016	
Committee opinion	TRAN	PE575.341	25/05/2016	

Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0226/2016	13/07/2016	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0336/2016	13/09/2016	Summary
European Commission				
Document type		Reference	Date	Summary
Commission document (COM)		COM(2015)0366 	28/07/2015	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2016)876	21/12/2016	
National parliaments				
Document type	Parliament /Chamber	Reference	Date	Summary
Contribution	DE_BUNDES RAT	COM(2015)0366	06/10/2015	

EU strategy for the Alpine region

2015/2324(INI) - 13/09/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

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.

EU strategy for the Alpine region

2015/2324(INI) - 13/07/2016 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

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.

EU strategy for the Alpine region

2015/2324(INI) - 28/07/2015 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to present an EU Strategy for the Alpine Region.

BACKGROUND: the Alpine Region is one of the richest areas in the world and among the economically most dynamic, innovative and competitive areas in Europe. However, it also faces important challenges requiring a joint response:

- economic globalisation that requires the territory to distinguish itself as competitive and innovative;
- demographic trends, characterised particularly by the combined effects of ageing, low population density in the mountain areas and new migration models;
- high vulnerability to climate change and its foreseeable effects on the environment,
- biodiversity and the living conditions of its inhabitants;
- the energy challenge in managing and meeting demand sustainably, securely and affordably;
- its specific geographical position in Europe, as a transit region;
- a high degree of seasonality, especially in some touristic areas.

The European Council of 19 and 20 December 2013 invited the Commission, working with

Member States, to draw up an EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) by June 2015, building on the solid background of cooperation in the region. The Strategy will affect around 80 million people living in 48 regions (map in Annex) 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), being a macro-regional strategy for the sustainable development of the Alpine Region.

CONTENT : the Strategy will respond to the challenges above by covering the following thematic policy areas:

1. Fair access to job opportunities, building on the high competitiveness of the Region;
2. Sustainable internal and external accessibility;
3. A more inclusive environmental framework and renewable and reliable energy solutions for the future;

and a crosscutting objective, building a **sound macro-regional governance model** for the region to improve cooperation and the coordination of action.

Within each objective, a number of actions have been identified. These support EU policy objectives, including those with a territorial dimension.

1) Fair access to job opportunities: this objective focuses on improving the competitiveness, prosperity and cohesion of the Alpine region. The main actions are:

- develop an effective research and innovation ecosystem by stressing a system focusing on thematic issues of particular relevance to the region (such as agriculture and forestry, tourism, etc.);
- increase the economic potential of strategic sectors by supporting SMEs to maintain innovativeness and preserve a competitive edge by ensuring sustainable development (agriculture and forestry sector-based products and services);

- improve the adequacy of labour market education and training in strategic sectors by improving the right competences, and helping to cope with 'brain drain' in remote areas that suffer from depopulation.

2) Sustainable internal and external accessibility: the aim is to improve the sustainability of transport connectivity within the region and with the rest of Europe by:

- promoting inter-modality and interoperability in passengers and freight transport (facilitating the achievement of the trans-European transport network's objectives and those of similar projects to shift traffic from road to rail);
- connecting people electronically and promote accessibility to public services (particularly land-based broadband connections).

3) A more inclusive environmental framework and renewable and reliable energy solutions for the future: this aims to:

- preserve the environmental heritage of the Alps;
- help the region benefit from its resources in various ways, including energy; and
- cope with the changes predicted due to climate change, including preventing major natural risks.

The main actions are:

- preserve and valorise natural resources, including water and cultural resources;
- develop ecological connectivity in the whole EUSALP territory (promotion of ecological corridors and green infrastructure, including in unprotected areas);
- improve risk management as regards climate change, and carry out a comprehensive vulnerability assessment of the sectors and systems likely to be affected and developing a regional strategy on adapting to climate change;
- make the territory a model region for energy efficiency and renewable energy.

A macro-regional governance model: implementing the Strategy requires:

- setting up an efficient governance model involving the actors taking part in implementation and strengthening cooperation and the coordination among other relevant institutions and stakeholders in the region; and,
- changing the decision-making process, **avoiding fragmented governance**, increasing knowledge sharing and coordination, both between different levels of government and across local government organisations at the same level.

Experience to date with macro-regional strategies shows that streamlined governance mechanisms are crucial for effective implementation. Sound governance requires that **roles be clearly defined at an early stage:** how and by whom the Strategy will be implemented, and how and by whom joint actions will be initiated and financed. Governance must have both a political and operational dimension, with political leadership and ownership, coordination; and implementation. The Commission will act as an independent facilitator.

Financing: as the Strategy **does not have its own financing**, it will mainly be implemented by mobilising and aligning existing EU and national funding relevant to the objectives and actions. In particular, relevant country-specific, cross-border and transnational programmes from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for 2014-2020 can provide significant resources and a wide range of tools and technical options to support the Strategy. The trans-national Alpine Space programme will provide financial support for developing the governance arrangements for the Strategy.

The Strategy should focus on actions to identify supra-national priorities when choosing investment projects that could benefit from **joint programming and cross-border coordination in the region.**

Other EU funds and instruments relevant to the Strategy's objectives are available, notably with:

- Horizon 2020 (for all objectives);
- the COSME programme (for objective 1);
- the Connecting Europe Facility (for objective 2) and
- the LIFE programme (for objective 3).

Other funding is also available, particularly from the European Investment Bank.

A strong **monitoring and evaluation system** will be needed to check whether implementation of the Strategy is on track.