

EUSALP Stakeholder Conference
Milan, 1st December 2014
European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)

Milan Declaration of the Alpine States and Regions

The representatives of States and Regions participating in the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) gathered today in Milan, after one year of consultation and preparation after the conclusions adopted by the European Council on 20 December 2013 inviting the European Commission, in cooperation with Member States, to elaborate an EU Strategy for the Alpine Region by June 2015 in order to be endorsed by the European Council by the end of 2015.

The representatives of States and Regions acknowledge that the overarching challenge for the Alpine Region is to balance development and protection through innovative approaches which strengthen this area located in the center of Europe as a living space for people and nature as well as a field for economic and social activities in a sustainable way.

EUSALP will enhance attractiveness and competitiveness of the Alpine Region as well as reduce social and territorial disparities for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the region across the whole Union and its neighboring Regions and States, constituting a tailor-made contribution to the growth of the region in line with Europe 2020 Strategy objectives and building on its cultural and natural heritage.

EUSALP aims at ensuring mutually beneficial interaction between the mountain regions and the surrounding lowlands and urban territories, flexibly taking into account the functional relationships existing between these areas.

EUSALP, as a unique example of a Strategy built on a bottom-up approach, promotes the Alpine Region in its function as an EU pilot area for effective cross-sectorial and multi-level governance, strengthening cohesion within the Union and deepening the cross-border cooperation of institutions and actors in this environmentally sensitive key European area at the crossroads of cultures and traditions.

The States and Regions agree:

1. To reiterate their belief that a macro-regional strategy constitutes the ideal framework for action at all levels (European Union, State, Region) for achieving an ever closer and more effective cooperation, based on the common identity of the Alpine Region. They commit to guarantee that EUSALP will effectively contribute to the Alpine region specific implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy
2. To express their satisfaction with the progress that their initiative has achieved, following the Political Resolution passed in Grenoble on 18 October 2013.
3. To welcome the outcome of the public consultation that took place between 16 July and 15 October 2014, which is the object of this Conference, and which involved citizens, organisations and local institutions, with a view to clarifying the objectives and most suitable tools for achieving the high level of wellbeing and development which the Strategy strives to obtain; to thank all participants for their active input and ideas.
4. To cooperate with the European Commission, in accordance with the mandate of the European Council, in order to draft the EUSALP Communication and Action Plan while involving local institutions, organisations (including non-governmental organisations representing common interests) and research centres in the definition of the most substantial actions to be undertaken to achieve the aims of the Strategy.
5. To carry out the necessary actions to improve the coordination of funds available at the EU, state, regional or local level, based on the awareness that tangible results for citizens can only be achieved by enabling the development of synergies between the various

planning levels. The participating States and Regions put all efforts in using the potential of the existing 2014-2020 financial framework.

6. To ensure that the Strategy is implemented in compliance with the principle of the three NOs (i.e. no new EU funds, no new formal EU structures, and no new legislation), in accordance with the Grenoble Political Resolution, the Council Conclusions of 22 October 2013 on the added value of macro-regional strategies and the Council conclusions of 21 October 2014 on the governance of macro-regional Strategies.
7. To urge the Commission to continue fulfilling its role in guiding the strategic coordination of the Strategy where its involvement generates a clear added value, in cooperation with the participating States and Regions and in compliance with the subsidiarity principle.
8. To put in place a governance structure for the Strategy which is in accordance with the Grenoble Political Resolution, the principles of multi-level governance and the Council Conclusions of 21 October 2014, and is based upon:
 - a) a General Assembly to be held on a regular basis, gathering the high level political representatives of States and Regions involved in the Strategy, and representatives of the Alpine Convention and Alpine Space Programme as observers, and which will be responsible for laying down general political guidelines;
 - b) a standing Executive Board in charge of overseeing the implementation of the EUSALP Action Plan, formed by representatives of the States and Regions and including representatives of the European Commission, the Alpine Convention and the INTERREG Alpine Space Programme as observers;
 - c) Action Groups, to be defined in greater detail depending on the content of the Action Plan, which will be responsible for implementing the actions.

An annual rotating presidency will provide political leadership at General Assemblies and represent the Strategy at all levels and will provide a political link with the institutions of the European Union and the participating States and Regions, in addition to organising the annual General Assembly. The same presidency applies to the Executive Board.

The governance system will have to ensure effective coordination between these three levels (8a-c), including appropriate arrangements for cooperation with existing institutions and non-governmental organisations.

9. That further modalities enhancing continuity, ownership and visibility could be explored in due time, following European Council endorsement and release of the Communication and Action Plan.
10. To acknowledge the work undertaken by the EUSALP joint Steering Committee, gathering representatives of States and Regions; they wish to convey their congratulations to the Steering Committee for the results achieved so far in terms of content and compliance with the timeline laid down by the European Council and European Commission, in agreement with the aforementioned participating States and Regions, and to encourage this Committee to continue its activity until the inauguration of the Executive Board.