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## EU Strategy for the Alpine Region EUSALP

With over 80 million inhabitants, the Alpine Region is one of the biggest living, natural and economic spaces in Europe and also a very popular tourism area that attracts millions of visitors every year. Whereas commerce, trade and industry in the Alpine Region are largely concentrated in the large urban centres on the margins of the Alps and in the main Alpine valleys that constitute the transport arteries, the rural area is extensively managed and thinly populated, and over 40 percent of the area of the Alps has no or no permanent population at all.

In view of the unique natural and geographic characteristics of the Alpine Region, some of the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are to be observed there with particular intensity:

- Economic globalisation calls for consistently high and sustainable competitiveness and innovative strength in the Region.
- Demographic change is leading to an ageing society in the Alpine Region and to an exodus of highly qualified employees.
- Global climate change is already having specific impacts on the environment, biodiversity and living conditions for residents of the Alpine Region.
- Given its geography and related impacts on human life and the environment, the Alpine Region – as a transit region at the heart of Europe – requires sustainable transport policies implemented on a consensual basis.
- The Alpine Region must be preserved as a unique natural and cultural space.

The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region offers an opportunity to respond to these challenges with innovative initiatives in the fields of trade and industry, infrastructure and transport, the protection of the environment and resources, and energy, in close cooperation with the States and Regions, but also with non-state actors, thus strengthening economic, political and social cohesion at the core of Europe. The Communication<sup>1</sup> and the Action Plan<sup>2</sup> on the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region were formally adopted by the European Commission on 28 July 2015 and by the European Council on 28 June 2016.<sup>3</sup> The Strategy involves seven States (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Switzerland and Liechtenstein) and 48 Regions of those States in the Alpine Region.

The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region is in line with EU's Cohesion Policy 2014-2020. It is designed to ensure a coordinated, targeted procedure, to employ synergies and to make effective use of existing EU funding and other finance instruments. Tangible added value is to be generated on the basis of jointly set priorities. A further major benefit of EUSALP is the opportunity to build a new relationship between the urban centres, the mountain periphery and the mountain areas.

The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region is focused on the three thematic policy areas competitiveness and innovation, environmentally friendly mobility and connectivity and the sustainable use of energy and natural and cultural resources, with governance as an additional cross-cutting objective. The Action Plan for the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region divides the three thematic policy areas into nine specific actions, so that the various objectives for the Strategy can be listed as follows:

<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>Fair access to job opportunities, building on the high competitiveness of the Region</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Action 1: To develop an effective research and innovation system</li> <li>→ Action 2: To increase the economic potential of strategic sectors</li> <li>→ Action 3: To improve the adequacy of labour market education and training in strategic sectors</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>Sustainable internal and external accessibility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Action 4: To promote inter-modality and interoperability in passengers and freight transport</li> <li>→ Action 5: To connect people electronically and promote accessibility to public services</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 3</b>	<b>A more inclusive environmental framework and renewable and reliable energy solutions for the future</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Action 6: To preserve and valorise natural resources, including water and cultural resources</li> <li>→ Action 7: To develop ecological connectivity in the whole EUSALP territory</li> <li>→ Action 8: To improve risk management and to better manage climate change, including major natural risks prevention</li> <li>→ Action 9: To make the territory a model region for energy efficiency and renewable energy</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 4</b>	<b>A sound macro-regional governance model in the Region (to improve cooperation and the coordination of action)</b>

1 COM(2015) 366  
2 SWD(2015) 147 final  
3 Council Minutes EUCO 27/16