



Brussels, 28.7.2015
SWD(2015) 147 final

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Action Plan

Accompanying the document

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMITTEE AND THE COMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

concerning the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region

{ COM(2015) 366 final }

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INTRODUCTION

Macro-regional strategies represent a new opportunity for the comprehensive development of a larger region, addressing common challenges and opportunities.

The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) will be the fourth macro-regional strategy. The general objective is to promote sustainable economic and social prosperity of the Alpine Region through growth and job creation, by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity, while at the same time preserving the environment and ensuring healthy and balanced ecosystems.

The Alpine Region is one of the richest areas in the world and among the most economically dynamic, innovative and competitive areas in Europe. However, significant economic differences still exist within the territories, requiring a common response. Common environmental, economic and social challenges are also clear: the Alpine Region contains Europe's largest mountain range, with low population density, high vulnerability to climate change and biodiversity loss, a high degree of seasonality, especially in some touristic areas, and ageing populations.

Cooperation structures are historically well developed in the Alpine area; they are fragmented in terms of topics, policy levels and instruments, territories and stakeholders, thus leading to some overlapping and discontinuities. Strengthened coordination between the existing structures, and a better integration between public policies, and between public policies and private initiatives, is necessary and would benefit the area.

By further strengthening co-operation in order to improve the efficiency and optimise the effect and impact of European, national, regional and local policies, as well as by improving coordination and by creating synergies between actions, resources and existing programmes, the EUSALP is a unique opportunity to provide effective solutions to the common challenges of the Alpine Region and to improve the sustainable exploitation of its assets and increase the benefits of its unused potential in terms of economic and administrative capacity.

The Strategy builds upon the existing preparatory work:

- The Bad Ragaz Decision and the Initiative Paper of the Conference of Alpine Regions of 29 June 2012;
- The European Parliament resolution of 23 May 2013 on a macro-regional strategy for the Alps;
- The Grenoble 'Political resolution towards a European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region' of 18 October 2013;
- The work of the Steering Committee composed of representatives from States and Regions as well as observers from the Alpine Space Programme and the Alpine Convention;
- The outcome of the extensive public online consultation (July-October 2014);
- The debate in the Stakeholder Conference on EUSALP and the Milan Declaration of the Alpine States and Regions (Milan, 1-2 December 2014);
- The Opinions adopted by the Committee of the Regions and by the European Economic and Social Committee on EUSALP in December 2014;
- Further input from experts.

It will benefit from the:

- Long experience of a large number of cooperation structures already operating in the area: Arge-Alp¹, Alpine Convention, Alpe-Adria, Euregio, Cotrao, trilateral cooperation between Slovenia, NE-Italy and Austria and other ad hoc structures such as the ‘Zurich Group’;
- Timing of its launch coinciding with the start of the European Structural Investment Funds 2014-2020 programming period, allowing the Strategy to be systematically embedded in EU, national and regional policies and programmes;
- The lessons from the existing macro-regional strategies: need to focus on a limited number of challenges and/or opportunities, and to secure ownership, commitment and leadership from the participating States/Regions; need to establish, at an early stage, a sound governance and management system with a clear division of tasks and roles.

The Strategy is described in two documents: A Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions and an Action Plan which complements the Communication. An accompanying analytical document provides details about stakeholder consultation and evidence base used for the preparation of the Strategy.

EUSALP constitutes a strategic agenda that should guide relevant policy instruments at EU, national and regional level, by closely aligning and mutually reinforcing them. It constitutes ‘an integrated approach’ with coordination of actions across policy areas which are expected to achieve better results than individual initiatives. The combined effects on a specific territory of the interventions of focused policy areas can lead to achievement of sustainable, balanced and harmonious development.

The Action Plan takes advantage of the extensive input of a wide range of stakeholders. It aims to provide an integrated framework for long-term cooperation and identifies common challenges, specific to the Alpine Region that require concerted responses from the countries and regions concerned. As priority is given to the issues of strategic relevance for the macro-region as a whole and to the issues that go beyond national borders and require coordinated responses, the Action Plan presents a limited number of objectives with a first set of supporting actions.

Organisation of the Action Plan

The Action Plan translates the identified common challenges and potentials into concrete actions and is built on the basis of the existing preparatory work (see previous section).

A very crucial role in this context was the extensive public online consultation, held from 16 July to 15 October 2014 (in English, French, German, Italian and Slovenian), which led to close to 400 contributions from individuals/private persons, public authorities, international organisations, civil society organisations, private enterprises, academic/research institutions and other stakeholders. The public consultation, as well as the large stakeholders conference in Milan on 1 and 2 December 2014, allowed stakeholders at all levels to comment on and to endorse the selected policy areas, which are: (1) economic growth and innovation, (2) mobility and connectivity, and (3) environment and energy. These policy areas are concretised and substantiated with three interdependent thematic objectives, which are implemented by nine actions. These actions – which will be supported by projects – appeared

¹ ARGE ALP was already founded in 1972.

promising for responding to challenges and opportunities shared by participating States and Regions as well as all relevant stakeholders. This underlines the very strong bottom-up approach in the identification of the needs and desired answers for which the whole Strategy aims to provide a framework for coordination and cooperation between the different actors.

However, since the existing cooperation frameworks in the Region are primarily sector-based or do not match the geographical scope of the Strategy, a cross-cutting policy area has also been identified, which will address ‘governance, including institutional capacity’.

All four policy areas as well as the corresponding objectives are interlinked and interdependent. This needs to be reflected in the implementation of the Strategy.

Objectives

Following the recommendations from the report on the added value of macro-regional strategies (new macro-regional strategies should concentrate on a limited number of well-defined objectives, matching particular needs for improved and high-level cooperation), and taking into account the outcomes of the previous works in the Region oriented towards EUSALP and the consultation process, the Commission has identified the following objectives which aim to offer:

1. Fair access to job opportunities by 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.

In addition, there will be a cross-cutting objective aiming to build:

4. A sound macro-regional governance model for the Region (to improve cooperation and the coordination of action).

Each objective starts with a presentation of the background information on issues and potentials as well as their regional characteristics. Then, the added value of the objective for the Alpine Region is presented as well as its contribution to the support of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the links with other objectives of the Alpine Strategy. All core objectives agreed on should receive the same level of interest and commitment from all participating countries.

Actions

To keep the EUSALP Action Plan manageable and to ensure a high level of ownership of the participants, the Action Plan focuses on nine actions which represent the main areas where the Strategy can contribute to delivery at the present stage.

Actions can be of different nature: some may require financial support while others consist of better coordinating national policies and decisions. In a number of cases, actions aim at highlighting the areas where activity is already in progress – either at EU level or in other international frameworks –, but which require enhanced efforts of coordination within the Alpine Region and coherent funding strategies as a condition for success in their implementation. The Strategy provides a unique opportunity in this respect. All actions should be carried out in close coordination with other relevant developments (in particular new regulations), including at EU level, to ensure coherence and efficiency.

The Action Plan also includes lists with indicators and targets that illustrate the performance of the actions with a view to reaching the objectives. These indicators and targets, provided by States and Regions during preliminary work, should be completed after the adoption of the Strategy (see chapter on Evaluation, Monitoring and Evaluation).

Project examples

In addition, examples of projects are also presented. Nevertheless, the Action Plan is not meant to list specific projects. These projects are mainly of illustrative character and serve to stimulate further initiatives, as the Strategy progresses and as new ideas emerge. These examples are drawn from the work of the Steering Group² as well as from inputs made during the stakeholder consultation and its closing conference.

The Action Plan should be stable for a certain period of time, even it is designed to be a 'living document', meaning that new actions and projects may be added as needs change or priorities evolve over time, while existing actions and projects may be updated, modified, deleted or replaced. The Action Plan is therefore 'rolling', and will be regularly reviewed according to rules for revision to be defined by the governing board of the Strategy.

When identifying projects to be included in the Strategy, the following criteria should be taken into account:

- They should demonstrate their strategic macro-regional relevance, scope and impact:
 - Added value of macro-regional solution higher than EU/national/regional/cross border or transnational solutions;
 - Common issues strengthened through additional governance coordination and cooperation;
 - Need for joint action at macro-regional level to address the challenge and exploit the potential;
 - Their scope or impact should be of strategic relevance to a macro-regional approach.
- They should address identified priorities, meeting well-substantiated needs and be widely supported from participating countries and regions.
- They should have reached a fair degree of maturity, be realistic and credible (i.e. they can be achieved in a reasonable time and their funding can be secured) and should build on existing initiatives.
- Alpine specifics: issues have to be specific to the Alpine Region.
- They should pay attention to the cross-cutting aspects identified in the Communication, further developed in this Action Plan, like governance.
- They should be coherent and mutually supportive. While mainly relating to one particular policy area, each action or project must fully take into account possible impacts on actions and projects carried out under another policy area. Actions and projects undertaken under the different policy areas must thus be compatible with each other and create win-win solutions.

² The Steering Group is composed of representatives of all States and some Regions participating in the Strategy, which supported the Commission services in the process of preparation of the Strategy. In addition the Alpine Convention and the Alpine Space Programme were included as observers.

1st THEMATIC POLICY AREA: ECONOMIC GROWTH AND INNOVATION

1st OBJECTIVE: Fair access to job opportunities, building on the high competitiveness of the Region

Presentation of the topic

The first thematic policy area focuses on improving the competitiveness, prosperity and cohesion of the Alpine Region. The objective is to offer all inhabitants fair access to job opportunities, building on the high competitiveness of the Region, and is supported by three specific actions.

The Alpine Region constitutes the largest European economic and productive hub, with a high potential for development.

However, lack of economic, social and territorial cohesion is still an issue. Mountains constitute a challenge to homogenous development, entrenching disparities among different territories in the Alpine Region. For instance, access to social services as well as economic services of general interest still remains quite difficult in rural areas at the core of the Alps, while surrounding urban areas develop more easily. Likewise, the innovation capacity in the Alpine Region can vary very much from one geographical area to another (see analytical document).

Alpine metropolitan areas and cities are key locations for activities which compete and innovate in a global economy. At the same time, it is important to ensure that all parts of the Alpine Region are linked to the growth dynamics generated in the cities and metropolitan areas. Development opportunities must be exploited in all parts of the Alpine Region, urban areas as well as remote and lagging areas, bearing in mind that ecosystems and their services need to be improved.

To bridge these territorial gaps, the Strategy therefore aims to support innovative economic development in the whole Alpine Region by building on the complementary assets of its sub-territories.

This should be facilitated by cooperation embracing a variety of economic activities, in the domains of agriculture, environment, industry, commerce, tourism and other services, which have to be able to rely on a skilled and well-trained labour force (see action 3).

Therefore, the main actions envisaged to support this objective are:

Action 1: To develop an effective research and innovation ecosystem

Based on one of the main drivers of the Europe 2020 agenda which aims at creating jobs and growth, action 1 focuses on the development of an effective innovation ecosystem in the Alpine Region. It aims to bring together the existing potentials of the Alpine Region to better exploit synergies in the strategic sectors described in the next action and overcome challenges as regards innovation.

Regional characteristics concerning the proposed action

The Alpine Region comprises a large number of internationally profiled research and innovation centres. These provide a backbone and potential for further developing and strengthening research and innovation in the Alpine Region. High levels of R & D expenditure, universities and research centres with strong capacity, as well as the presence of international and private research centres of global relevance, make the Alpine Region one of the most innovative places in Europe. This is complemented by high levels of ICT endowment, excellent endowment of infrastructure and connections in the metropolitan areas (e.g. through high-speed internet networks).

Already today, R & D expenditure in the Alpine Region is comparatively high in a European perspective. In 2011, it ranged from 1% to 2% in most regions in Northern Italy to 2% to 3% of GDP in many French and Austrian regions, Switzerland and Slovenia and over 3% in German regions and in some Austrian regions of EUSALP. In many Alpine Regions, the share of private R & D expenditure is above the European average.

Moreover, the countries involved in the Alpine Region have largely high levels of innovation performance in the European Innovation Scoreboard. Germany is classified as one of four innovation leaders in the EU. Switzerland is overall innovation leader in Europe. Austria, France and Slovenia are innovation followers. Only Italy belongs to the moderate innovators.

Most of the EUSALP-Regions recently developed smart specialisation strategies based on EC requirements. Swiss regions in parallel are developing Regional Innovation Strategies (RIS). However, in most cases the domains/smart specialisation areas are very broad and/or vague and need to be more focused on areas of economic opportunity. For this, continuing consultation with stakeholders from business and innovation communities through entrepreneurial discovery processes will be necessary.

At regional level, the ESPON KIT project identifies five types of innovation region. This analysis shows the strong innovation profile of the Alpine Region, but which at the same time can vary a lot from one country or region to another. For example, large parts of southern Germany are classified as European science-based areas, which are the most knowledge-intensive and innovation-intensive regions, Lombardy, Piedmont, Veneto (Italy) and Alsace, Rhone-Alps (France) are classified as smart technological application areas, with high potential for knowledge and innovation, but remaining regions have lower profiles in terms of R & D and development.

However, the SWOT analysis carried out for the Alpine Space Programme³ points out several of the region's weaknesses as regards innovation: the limited inter-Alpine research and innovation cooperation between the different countries, the limited research on topics of specific Alpine importance such as high-quality agricultural products, the limited visibility and awareness and thus uptake of existing research and innovation results, spatially fragmented local markets, significant intra- and inter-regional and social disparities in innovation, limited capitalisation of applied research results, high competition for securing the basic production factors, growth poles which are suffering from agglomeration disadvantages and dependency on a few big global players.

The need for the proposed action and its spatial macro-regional relevance

In the period 2014-2020 the EU research and innovation (R&I) policies are based on the

smart specialisation approach and the EU countries/regions have developed R&I Strategies for Smart Specialisation (S3). However, inter-regional and transnational collaboration in similar S3 priority areas across the regions/countries are still very limited. The EUSALP aims to address the challenges of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and competitiveness through a coordinated set of activities integrated through the S3 concept which will contribute to identifying competitive R&I priorities and the right policy mix to achieve them in full coherence with the vision, strategic positioning and the S3 strategies of the Alpine countries/regions. Addressing these challenges through the S3 concept and through transnational collaboration will cater for more effective coordination between different stakeholders in the process of multilevel governance and hence overcome fragmentation of R&I activities. It will also facilitate implementation of well-defined competitive innovation policies in the macro-region. Transnational approaches in support of smart specialisation through mutual learning will also reinforce the implementation of S3 and advance generation of transnational S3 collaboration projects in vertical priority areas and the cross-cutting objective.

Because this action aims at building a research and innovation ecosystem that does not exist at macro-regional level, actions that include setting up of transnational frameworks, platforms and networks for the identification of existing innovation resources, potential and obstacles, or setting up of trans-border frameworks, platforms and networks for the coordination of innovation policy, should be envisaged. Also, in order to give equal chances to economic operators to develop their activities wherever they are located in the Alpine Region, closing of white areas on maps of high-speed Internet connections can be an opportunity to open the entire Alpine Region to the information economy and society, which is of high importance especially as regards declining rural regions⁴ (see objective 2 of the Action Plan).

The overall context described in the previous section offers a good starting position to develop such ecosystems, although a geographical limitation of cooperation in the Alpine Region may need to go hand in hand with a thematic focus on issues of specific relevance to the Alpine Region as set out in national/regional smart specialisation strategies. This would put a particular focus on a limited number of research topics, i.e. where further research and innovation makes use of particular Alpine Region potentials (e.g. use of vegetation for pharmaceuticals, or topographic benefits for renewable energy) or meets particular Alpine Region challenges (e.g. climate change and Alpine tourism, high-tech equipment linked to Alpine navigation, development of high-quality climbing and skiing equipment). This can involve innovations in the field of ICT and high-tech manufacturing which is quite typical for industrial or urban areas.

By way of example, in the field of clean renewable energy (i.e. with low emissions of air pollutants such as PM), there is a vast pool of specific knowledge and innovation potential distributed in the Alpine Region. To strengthen and better exploit this brain pool by promoting exchange of knowledge throughout the EUSALP territory clearly contributes to fostering the competitiveness of the Region.

The experience so far in other macro-regional strategies shows that to frame such an ecosystem, a series of key conditions need to be fulfilled: key strategic sectors where cooperation in research and innovation can impact either in economic or societal terms must be identified, as well as the mapping of existing clusters or competence centres

related to the economic and academic landscape in the Region; good knowledge about the specific value chains characteristic for the Region and their overall economic impact and relevance needs to be established.

This action could be facilitated by further coordinating efforts between the Alpine countries and Joint Research Centre activities, by enhancing capacity building of research institutions, networks and infrastructure with an Alpine Region dimension and taking into consideration existing international research / innovation coordination activities.

By doing so, the Strategy could reduce the risks of losing some competitive edge in front of new global competitors, especially taking into account the lack of an Alpine-specific approach and capitalisation. It could also cope with the issue of fragmented governance systems and administrative discordance which can limit the potential for transnational exploitation of the Alpine Region’s strengths and opportunities.

The table below provides an overview of examples of possible projects:

Examples of possible projects
<p>Towards a EUSALP Research and Innovation Strategy: With a view to assessing the feasibility and added value of a joint Alpine Innovation and Research Strategy a number of key pre-conditions need to be fulfilled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of the key strategic sectors where cooperation in R&I can impact either in economic or societal terms; • Mapping of existing clusters, competence centres related to the economic and academic landscape in the Region; • Mapping and matching of specific value chains and capabilities related to key areas of competence related to national/regional smart specialisation strategies; • Working towards joint pilots with industry participation in areas of smart specialisation to demonstrate opportunities for scaling up innovations for co-creating joint value chains; • Further coordinating efforts between the Alpine countries and JRC activities; • Enhanced capacity building of research institutions, networks and infrastructure with an Alpine Region dimension; • Taking into consideration existing international research / innovation coordination activities of EUSALP. <p>Alpine Transfer Centres: Setting up a network and toolkit for Technology Transfer Centres following the example of ‘Danube-INCO.Net’. The toolkit would support collaboration between R & D organisations and enterprises – organised as ‘one-stop-shops’ mainly for SMEs. Transfer Centres can be regional hosts for common projects regarding innovation and technology transfer. They can coordinate and create synergies and links between existing technology transfer activities in the area and build a transnational network of technology transfer centres in order to ensure the involvement of international experts at any stage.</p>

Living Alps: Mountain research must be targeted to better meet the socio-economic development and environmental needs of the Alpine Region. To this end, the establishment of ‘demonstrators’ territories’ (as a living lab) can be a benefit to ensure a continuum between fundamental research and applied research.

Research actions on Alpine-specific products and services (e.g. agricultural, 3D navigation): Research actions could focus on Alpine agriculture and production and processing of specific Alpine products and services. Moreover they could focus on the development of high-technology services and equipment such as 3D navigation in the Alpine Region.

Further project ideas could relate to the following strategic and common issues:

Strategic issues:

- Alpine Region think tank promoting the innovative process of local and inter-regional development.

Common issues:

- Promoting investments in innovation and industrialisation of research results;
- Creating synergies / networks between companies and research centres / universities; Supporting innovation / laboratories working with herbs, genetic conservation of Alpine species, clean renewable energy, transport, etc.

Indicative research and innovation measures and actions under this thematic policy area I are often closely related to the other two policy areas of EUSALP. This will require coordination between the policy areas.

Examples of indicators and targets:

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Target value</i>
Joint EUSALP research and innovation agenda	Number of agendas	1 by 2020
Joint Alpine Region research actions related to specific Alpine development fields	Number of research actions	Baseline and source to be defined

Action 2: To increase the economic potential of strategic sectors

Action 2 focuses on the economic potential of strategic sectors of the Alpine Region and their economic and social environment, and in particular support to SMEs and e-services.

Regional characteristics concerning the proposed action

Despite a number of large enterprises being present in the Alpine Region, SMEs form an important backbone of the economy and employment in the Alpine Region⁵. The analysis

carried out for the Alpine Space Programme mentions that networks and clusters of SMEs are the backbones of a prosperous alpine economy.

Strong concentrations of SMEs exist in different parts of the Alpine Region. They are rooted in different backgrounds of Alpine productive cultures and form an economy where local businesses are well connected to innovate and to compete at more global levels. Their ability to invest in the Region and to keep and create jobs is important. According to the Alpine Space Programme 2014-2020, the Alpine space is a region covering specific and niche aspects of SME competitiveness. SMEs, mid-sized cap companies and large enterprises are leaders in their field and enjoy a high-innovation competitive edge at the regional and local level with sustainable economic cycles⁶.

Still, to release their full potential, SMEs must overcome the barriers that limit their growth. The average SME is smaller in Europe than in the US. There are also differences between SME sizes within the EU: The average SME in Germany has 7.6 workers, compared to 3.2 workers in Italy. This has significant consequences: the smaller the company, the greater its difficulty in investing in innovation, exporting and integrating global value chains, thus compromising competitiveness.

At the same time, there are also considerable challenges within the Alpine Region, in particular between its urban and rural/remote areas: (i) start-up conditions in Alpine rural areas are often rather weak, (ii) there is a lack of ‘business angels’, of tradition and of institutions to obtain risk capital for fast-growing or financially intensive companies, and (iii) there are only limited incentives for young people to return to their region after their education and start a business⁷. Intensifying links between urban and rural/remote areas is therefore crucial.

The need for the proposed action and its spatial macro-regional relevance

The added value of cooperating at macro-regional level in the fields of innovation, support of enterprises and the labour market is tightly linked to identifying specific themes or sectors where cooperation at other levels (European, national etc.) cannot achieve the same results as macro-regional cooperation.

The focus of this action is mainly to support and to accompany start-ups and dynamically growing SMEs. The added value of the Strategy will be to combine a better use of Alpine-specific resources in various sectors with investment opportunities for transnationally designed products, services, investment models, as well as funding support instruments of business support centres, chambers of commerce, public administration and financing institutions. Following themes/sectors might offer a strong potential to approach innovation, support of enterprises and the labour market in a more integrated manner:

Agriculture and sustainable forestry sector based products and services throughout the full value chain (including for example the pharmaceutical and wooden building sector) show potential. In 2013, 2.7 % of total employment⁸ in the Alpine Region⁹ was in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The percentage is slightly lower compared with 2012, when it reached 3 %. The region of Vzhodna in Slovenia has the highest share of employment in the agriculture and forestry sector (11.46 %).

The distinctiveness of the conditions in the Alpine Region may serve as good basis for strategic actions related to supporting innovation, SME development and labour market integration with regard to Alpine agriculture and forestry and distinct Alpine products in

these sectors. In particular, moving higher up the value chain, this also offers cooperation opportunities for rural and metropolitan parts of the Alpine Region. Moving up the value chain or adjusting products and services to the green economy will require work in the fields of research and innovation, SMEs and training of the labour force.

The Alpine Region has a wide range of economic operators in the agriculture and forestry sector which are strongly rooted in their locations. Opportunities in the agriculture sector can arise for example through organic farming or the use of geographical indications, which allow the production of high-quality and region-specific products. Therefore, smaller farms and farmers should be recognised and supported. Further opportunities in the agricultural sector can arise when combined with the tourism and health sectors. Rural life and agriculture can be promoted through special tourist offers and agro-tourism, while the production of pharmaceutical products can be of importance for the health sector.

The **tourism sector** is an important economic factor in large parts of the Alpine Region, while SMEs in the Region dominate in the tourism sector both as regards economic development and employment opportunities. The number of total nights spent by non-residents¹⁰ in the Alpine Region¹¹ between 2009 and 2013 has increased by 20 % between 2009 and 2013. When compared to the European Union picture, the Alpine Region accounted for 15 % in 2009 and 17 % in 2013 of the total nights spent in tourist accommodation by non-residents.

The level of activity and services varies seasonally and the core activity and level of services for the year-round population can then be limited. To further strengthen Alpine tourism and ensure that the sector is fit for meeting future challenges (e.g. coming from climate change and air quality) and increasingly turned towards environmentally sustainable tourism and year-round tourism, it needs to involve research and innovation, SMEs and training of the labour force.

Through the support of SMEs and innovative tourist sectors, such as agro-tourism or health tourism, the tourism sector can offer more job opportunities of high qualification, but also make the Alpine Region a more attractive destination. Further opportunities for the tourism sector also lie in the development of sustainable year-round tourism.

The Alpine Region can benefit from the European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS), a management tool which can help tourist destinations monitor and measure their sustainable tourism performances.

The **energy sector** is important both with regard to applying potential clean renewable energy production (i.e. with low or no emissions of air pollutants such as PM) and energy-storage building on the specificities of the Alpine Region, as well as for increasing energy efficiency. Hydropower is the major renewable energy resource available in the Alpine Region, already used intensively. However, there is potential for optimising the efficiency of existing plants and hydropower has a high potential as an energy storage system. The Alpine Region also provides a potential for other renewable energy sources: wind and solar power; biomass and geothermal sources for heating. In this regard, as in many areas in the Alpine Region, air quality is poor, notably in the heating season, special ultra-low emission biomass applications should preferably be used for biomass energy production. Furthermore, the countries in the Alpine Region have a strong potential related to energy efficiency, in particular in the building sector. An innovative example is the passive house design which involves reducing energy demand without reducing the level of energy services. This provides an ideal framework for working together on innovative solutions for

the Alpine Region. Supporting SMEs operating in the energy sector described above will not only create sustainable job opportunities, but also contribute to fighting climate change and improve air quality, by providing technical and economic options for Air Quality Plans and National Air Pollution Control Programmes.

The **health sector** is another important economic sector with regard to untapped existing potential in the Region and creating new opportunities. The health sector can be closely linked to the agricultural sector, especially as regards the production of pharmaceutical products. It can also be combined with the tourism sector, focusing on therapeutic and recreational activities. In addition, the cooperation among providers of health services (including e-Health) and health authorities across borders can improve access to and efficiency of healthcare and support the implementation of European legislation on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare. Research and innovation in health at transnational level can support the cooperation among centres of excellence and specialised providers of healthcare, in particular in the framework of the European Reference Networks in health that are created under the above-mentioned European legislation.

The **high-tech sector** is an important economic factor in many areas in the Alpine Region. The share of employment in the high-tech sector out of total employment¹² in 2013 in the Alpine Region ranges from 2 % in the autonomous province of Bolzano in Italy and the region of Vorarlberg in Austria to almost 8 % in the regions of north-west Switzerland and Upper Bavaria in Germany. Many areas in the Alpine Region have a number of global players but also smaller players focused more on regional assets and demands. Intensified macro-regional cooperation might help areas where the development of services and products is linked to specificities of the Alpine Region.

Opportunities to develop this sector come with the strong innovation profile and large number of R & D and high-tech companies in the Alpine Region. Furthermore, the topographic specificities of the Alpine Region may also hold potential for further developments in the sector e.g. linked to specific computer software (e.g. destination management systems, GPS-based 3D navigation and information systems or mobile apps to support visitors), high-end products based on specific Alpine Region raw material (e.g. pharmaceuticals), or high-end products linked to typical activities in the Alpine Region (e.g. ropeways, ski and boot manufacturers, climbing equipment or artificial snow-making installations).

In many regards this cooperation is strongly linked to accessibility and transport challenges, i.e. transport between urban areas and their larger hinterland as well as transport across the Alpine Region, which are subject to Thematic Policy Area II.

The table below provides an overview of examples of possible projects:

Examples of possible projects
<p>Labelling Alpine Wood and Wooden Products: The idea is to support the use of local wood from Alpine forests for buildings and wooden products across all stages of the value chain (whether for mobilisation of resources and operations, or the first or second transformation). A quality label for Alpine wood can help to develop a better management of mountain forests and wooden products ensuring a better carbon footprint by reducing transport. It would contribute to a professionalization of actors and also</p>

facilitate maintaining and developing networks of companies.

AlpNet: Building on research results, the aim would be to improve product innovations for companies working in Alpine tourism for year-round tourism. The project would strengthen the exchange of knowledge and best-practice between tourism regions. As competition in the tourism industry is becoming more and more intense, the aim is to ensure a strong position for the Alpine Region in the global market. The mission is to strengthen sustainable Alpine tourism, to force innovation and to bring new inputs for development and promote joint strategies in the furthering of knowledge in Alpine tourism.

Further project ideas could relate to the following strategic issues:

- New tourism models (e.g. including shared IT-solutions);
- Strengthen trade relation between companies in different parts of the Alpine Region;

Examples of indicators and targets:

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Target value</i>
Support to trans-border cooperation structures aiming to enhance the innovation capacity of SMEs	Number of SMEs receiving support	Target, baseline, deadline and source to be defined
Established Alpine Region brands	Number of brands	Target, baseline, deadline and source to be defined
Youth entrepreneurship – individual business owners younger than 30 years	Share of youth entrepreneurs	Target, baseline, deadline and source to be defined

Action 3: To improve the adequacy of labour market, education and training in strategic sectors

The third action aims at improving the adequacy of labour market, education and training with employment opportunities in strategic sectors in the Region, and at increasing the employment levels of the Region through joint macro-regional activities.

Regional characteristics concerning the proposed action

The Alpine Region has a quite positive labour market compared to Europe where many areas have high employment rates. Indeed all but one of the regions located in the Alpine Region have employment rates more than 3 % points above their national 2020 target, according to the 6th Cohesion Report¹³.

Also, the share of university students is above the EU average. Overall education levels are high in the Alpine Region, especially in the metropolises and the larger cities. In 2011, the share of inhabitants aged 25-64 holding a tertiary education qualification ranged from 13 % to 36 % in the Alpine Region. Numerous high-end universities, research institutes and vocational training centres are located in the area.

Overall, the labour markets in the Alpine Region are quite integrated, as they stretch beyond national borders in many cases. The integration of labour markets is an important feature for the development of the Alpine Region, as it facilitates its economic development. There are also considerable numbers of seasonal workers coming for the tourist season, to specific areas of the Alpine Region for example. Also they often work in other countries than their country of origin. Depending on the definition they are also considered cross-border workers.

The need for the proposed action and its spatial macro-regional relevance

Due to the topographic and demographic challenges of the Region a macro-regional approach supporting stronger cooperation can foster new job opportunities in the Region and overcome existing challenges, such as language barriers or out-migration of skilled labour.

These challenges are also linked to the territorial imbalances within the Region, with less favourable conditions for the labour market in rural and remote areas. To some extent, this can be linked to the accessibility of rural and remote areas addressed under the Thematic Policy Area II of EUSALP. Challenges concern both access to jobs as well as access to highly qualified labour. The access to skilled labour with the right competence is an important labour market challenge in large parts of the Alpine Region, while there is a more general concern with the problem of ‘brain drain’ and the development of professional skills, particularly in remote areas that are already suffering from depopulation.

Therefore the integration of the labour markets is an important feature for development in the Alpine Region. Some aspects related to access to skilled labour throughout the Region might be better addressed at the macro-regional level. This concerns both actions in the field of labour market integration as well as in the field of joint training for increasing the access to skilled labour in rural and remote areas. Initiatives under this action can benefit from the involvement and close cooperation with civil society. These actions could offer appropriate replies to the issue of dependence of seasonal workers, especially in the tourism industry, where the labour market is relying partly on seasonal workers from outside of the area¹⁴.

The table below provides an overview of examples of possible projects:

Examples of possible projects
<p>Youth Alpine Dialogue (YAD): Many Alpine Regions face demographic challenges (ageing population, out-migration of skilled labour). For young people to commit to building their lives in their home communities, they need to be engaged in decision-making and in shaping their future living and work environments. The Youth Alpine Dialogue will support young people in understanding the needs and potential of their</p>

own villages or towns as well as those of the entire Alpine Region. Dialogue tools will involve transnational exchanges of young people as well as decision-makers across all Alpine countries.

Alpine Region Training: Besides the organisation of specific trainings there is also an issue of labelling trainings, and of offering education of high quality, relevant for the Alpine Labour Market. 1. Identification and promotion of training (basic and vocational) offers in the Alpine Region. 2. Implementation of an educational label for Masters level training on topics related to the issues of the Alpine Strategy.

Further project ideas could relate to the following strategic issues:

- Multilingual (online) job-centre for the Alpine Region, including support to employees and potential employers (in particular SMEs, start-ups, entrepreneurs);
- Alpine training centre / activities for joint education and vocational training or standard education (related to languages, entrepreneurship, sustainable tourism, sustainable forestry and agriculture, industry, commerce);
- Alpine mobility programme for secondary school students, but also for workers.

Examples of indicators and targets:

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Target value</i>
Joint Alpine Region job-centres	Number of online platforms	Target, baseline, deadline and source to be defined
Joint Alpine Region training sessions provided (or participants in these sessions) related to specific Alpine development fields	Number of training sessions (or participants)	Target, baseline, deadline and source to be defined

Links with other objectives

Economic growth in the Alpine Region and innovation in particular, even though it is identified as a specific objective, will have to be considered and treated in the Strategy as a cross-cutting issue, building on the high competitiveness of the Region, but in close connection with the environmental challenges and transport issues developed in the other objectives of the Action Plan.

The three actions under the first objective of EUSALP can be linked to the actions pursued under other objectives and Thematic Policy Areas. For instance, action 2 of the first thematic policy area on the cooperation of SMEs in the Alpine Region suggests that better accessibility between urban and rural areas as well as throughout the Alpine Region is necessary. This issue is stressed in more detail in the second Thematic Policy Area of EUSALP, actions 4 and 5. Initiatives under action 1 on innovation can also be linked to the objectives 2 (Sustainable internal and external accessibility) and 3 (A more inclusive environmental framework and renewable and reliable energy solutions for the future).

Support of the Europe 2020 Strategy

The Thematic Policy Area I and its objective and actions strongly support the Europe 2020 Strategy – further strengthening RDI, the competitiveness of SMEs and the development of an integrated labour market including increasing access to skilled labour. These are priorities of EUSALP which are in line with the growth priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

- **Smart growth:** Creating an effective innovation ecosystem in the Alpine Region can contribute to smart growth in the Region. Investments in innovation (action 1), but also actions for increasing the economic potential of strategic sectors of the Region (action 2) can stimulate new jobs and therefore contribute to the Europe 2020 employment targets set for smart growth.

The Communication from the Commission for a European Industrial Renaissance¹⁵ states that the potential of clusters to create favourable innovation ecosystems for mutually reinforcing groups of SMEs needs to be better exploited as a means of promoting growth. In this context, effectively linking the world of education, business and research, and involving social partners and civil society at all levels of education and training raise the relevance of educational offers and the Region's innovation capacity. An advanced level of cooperation also increases the level of awareness and readiness of EUSALP partners to implement their strategy.

Value-added chains must be better integrated. Cluster-facilitated demonstration projects for value chain innovation will also be financed through Horizon 2020 in support of the implementation of smart specialisation strategies.

Moreover, action 3 on improving high levels of employment, education and training also reflects the smart growth targets on better educational attainment, and the 'Youth on the move' flagship initiative on the better equipment of young people and students.

- **Sustainable growth:** Innovative actions to support and increase economic potential of strategic sectors in the Region such as agriculture, forestry, tourism, energy and high-tech can contribute to the Europe 2020 priority of sustainable growth. The energy sector is important both regarding the clean renewable energy potentials in the Region, as well as energy storage building on the specificities of the Alpine Region and energy efficiency in buildings. Moreover, the support to SMEs in these sectors (action 2) is in line with the sustainable growth flagship initiative 'An industrial policy for the globalisation era', where the support to business and especially small businesses, the support of entrepreneurship and the covering of the increasingly international value chain from access to raw materials to after-sales service are addressed¹⁶. The creation of jobs in these sectors is linked to both the action 3 of EUSALP as well as the sustainable growth priority. In addition, such innovative actions would provide synergy effects with environmental policy objectives by providing technical and economic options for Air Quality Plans and National Air Pollution Control Programmes, for example.
- **Inclusive growth:** Initiatives in the three EUSALP actions can create new jobs. Especially action 3 which is dedicated to the improvement of high levels of employment, education and training which contribute to the targets of inclusive growth. More specifically it addresses the flagship initiative on 'Agenda for new skills and jobs', which focuses on acquiring new skills and adapting to a changing labour market, as well as the modernising of labour markets to raise employment levels. In addition,

the creation of new jobs in innovation, the link of innovation to the economy, the support of SMEs in specific sectors of the Region also contribute to increasing employment in the Region. Actions in the aforementioned fields related to training and education also contribute to the Europe 2020 inclusive growth targets, and can be conducted in close cooperation with civil society stakeholders.

In addition to contributing to achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Strategy also contributes to the overall community objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion. It may also help consideration of possible investments under the EU investment plan (the so-called *Juncker Plan*) in the Alpine Region.

The objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) also follow the Europe 2020 agenda, targeting three long-term strategic objectives for EU rural development policy in the 2014-2020 period within the territorial restrictions of national and/or regional rural development programmes (RDPs): fostering the competitiveness of agriculture; ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources, and climate action; and achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities including the creation and keeping of employment.

2nd THEMATIC POLICY AREA: MOBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY

2nd OBJECTIVE: Sustainable internal and external accessibility to all

Presentation of the topic

The overall objective of this policy area is to address the ‘most important challenges and opportunities’ concerning mobility and connectivity in the Alpine Region. The Alpine Region is a major European crossroads in which mobility and connectivity pose significant challenges. The location of the Alpine Region requires that this Region is crossed by traffic flows (freight and passenger) linking the south to the north of Europe, as well as the east to the west. The geomorphology of the area, including the mountainous part, reaching a width of more than 300 km in some parts, is a natural obstacle to crossing. In addition the Alps represent a very vulnerable area and ecosystem. The impact of road transport infrastructure on air and noise pollution is a major challenge; several areas within the Alpine Region have difficulties in reaching EU legal limit values on emission of pollutants. Based on traffic census data, an increase of 30 % of heavy goods vehicles occurred between 1995 and 2005 in the most congested highways crossing the Alps. Therefore, there is an urgent need for greener transport through and within the Alpine Region.

At the same time, connections of local areas within the Alpine Region are crucial for their economic survival. The Alpine Region suffers from an unbalanced demographic trend, whereby cities and peri-Alpine areas grow constantly in population while remote areas suffer, in some cases significantly, from ageing and depopulation. The availability of good connectivity networks (including public transport and high-speed internet) is closely related to the survival of commercial activities in remote areas as well as to the supply of basic services such as education, health, postal and administrative services. Physical transport (of passengers and goods) is not the only relevant dimension in a society increasingly more dependent on virtual connections. Remote and mountainous areas are often lagging behind in terms of e-connection possibilities. At the same time, e-connectivity raises new opportunities for the

provision of services (for example e-government, e-health, e-learning) as well as for the uptake of technologies. Addressing these issues in a coordinated way allows for maximisation of the potential benefits for the economy and the population alike.

Another critical aspect of transport and mobility in the Alpine Region relates to the seasonality of transport flows, as the economy of the Alpine Region is heavily dependent on seasonal activities (in particular winter sports).

Action 4: To promote inter-modality and interoperability in passenger and freight transport

This action aims to promote inter-modality and interoperability in passenger and freight transport, in particular by removing infrastructure bottlenecks, bridging missing links, coordinating planning and timetables of public transport (including multi-modal information and planning services), modernising infrastructure, and enhancing cooperation. In this context, the term ‘inter-modality’ means combining several means of transport during the same journey, using different types of vehicles to get from one place to another. ‘Interoperability’, on the other hand, is defined as the capability to operate on any stretch of the transport network without any difference. In other words, the focus is on making the different technical systems on the EU’s railways work together. Moreover the removal of bottlenecks in transport infrastructure needs to be accompanied by modernisation of customs infrastructure, equipment and systems, so that processing capacity and speed of procedures are matched with the needs of transport.

Regional characteristics concerning the proposed action

The geomorphology of the Alpine Region greatly affects the construction and maintenance of transport infrastructures. At the same time, transport infrastructures have a significant impact on landscape and the environment, which are the core resources of the Alpine Region. The search for a balance between transport infrastructures and the preservation of the territory has been identified for decades as a major challenge and an objective of the international community of States and Regions sharing the Alpine Region. To this end, among other things, an international treaty (the Alpine Convention) has been equipped with a specific protocol on transport, adopted in 2000 and ratified also by the EU in 2013 as a significant contribution to the greening of transport policy in the core Alpine Region. This protocol aims at reducing the negative effects of and risks posed by intra-Alpine and transalpine transport to a level which is not harmful to people and the environment, inter alia, by transferring an increasing amount of transport, especially freight transport, to railways as well as ensuring movement of intra-Alpine and transalpine transport at economically bearable costs by increasing the efficiency of transport systems and promoting modes of transport which are more environmentally friendly and more economic in terms of natural resources.

The need for the proposed action and its spatial macro-regional relevance

The EU has made the choice to promote modal shift as part of the greening transport policy, ensuring that an increasing share of goods which today are transported by road, in particular over long distances, will be gradually shifted to rail. The development of railway links is not only aimed at a freight traffic modal shift from road to rail, but also for passenger traffic. While the transport protocol of the Alpine Convention significantly contributes to the objective of making transport in the Alpine Region more sustainable, this Treaty is only applicable in the mountainous part of the Alpine Region, while the location of the Alpine

Region as an important transit area requires a concerted action extending beyond the core mountainous region: this is why efficient and sustainable transport through the Alpine Region is an issue of concern at an EU-wide scale and as such several cross-border or national infrastructure projects belonging to TEN-T networks are located in the Alpine Region.

TEN-T reduce travel time and contribute in a decisive way to the creation of a functioning single market. The EU is currently investing, together with the Member States, considerable resources in nine different corridors. This is a strategic long-term policy, given the time and resources needed to construct key parts of the corridors, such as tunnels and bridges. At the same time, cross-border links are the weak part of TEN-T. The complexity of the railway infrastructure and the need to jointly work across borders, based on different legal, economic and policy conditions, makes the cross-border part of TEN-T particularly challenging.

The Alpine Region is directly concerned by two key cross-border links related to TEN-T core networks: the Brenner Base railway tunnel in the Scandinavian-Mediterranean corridor and the Lyon-Turin railway tunnel and link in the Mediterranean corridor. Also the new Karavanks tunnel between Austria and Slovenia and the Semmering base tunnel are relevant for the Baltic-Adriatic corridor. The Gotthard base tunnel, the Ceneri base tunnel and the 'terzo valico dei giovi', though not cross-border, are also major elements of the Rhine-Alpine corridor. Moreover, the Rhine-Danube and Mediterranean corridor affect the Alpine Region in parts of their extension, and allow for a better connection of the Alpine Region. Certain main rivers (e.g. the Po, the Rhône) or river stretches (the Danube and the Rhine) become relevant in relation to transport inter-modality, due to their navigability. For the complete list of relevant works, EUSALP should take as reference the corridor work plans put forward by the European Coordinators under the TEN-T guidelines (Rhine-Alpine, Scandinavian-Mediterranean, Baltic-Adriatic, Mediterranean and Rhine-Danube Core Network Corridors).

The TEN-T Network aims at connecting national patchworks towards an integrated European transport network. TEN-T are like arteries, aimed at transporting the main share of traffic. At the same time, they are inserted in the territories and therefore necessary in order to ensure that the territories surrounding TEN-T infrastructures also benefit from them in the best possible way. In other words, TEN-T ensure the possibility of travelling fast across thousands of kilometres, but the 'last kilometre', the access to the main links, the connections to the spread-out communities, all this requires veins. EUSALP should facilitate the development of these veins, in the form of access roads and accompanying measures, to the benefit of the Region and of Europe as a whole. This will have considerable spill-over effects on local transport. A solidarity effect between mountainous and plain areas is expected. Overall, it is important to join forces in order to make TEN-T an opportunity – and not a burden – for the territories crossed, including mountainous areas. The Declaration signed by the Ministers of transport of the 7 Alpine States on 20 March 2015 in Innsbruck acknowledges the potential of Alpine crossing sections of the relevant core networks as frontrunners of a sustainable mobility system, and makes reference to EUSALP as a platform aimed at enhancing cooperation in this area. A follow-up meeting in which the state of play of the agreed actions referred to in the ministerial Declaration is planned for 2016.

Within the trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T), the Alpine Region has a special place, due to its challenging geographical structures, its ecological systems and its transit function, leading towards a sensitive balance between ecological, economic and social parameters. Within the core Alpine Region, local transport plays a major role in maintaining a balanced demographic development of the area. Local communities are keen, as it clearly appeared from the public consultation, that regional and local railways and public transport in

general, are upgraded and modernised. Connections between valleys or across passes are often insufficiently coordinated to allow for a systematic use of public transport. In order to improve this situation, better coordination intervention at a sufficiently large scale is necessary. Given that remote areas in the Alps are often closer to the border than to the regional or national capitals, the transnational dimension is very important. Cross-border projects on sustainable mobility have proven to be positive for the diffusion of innovative solutions, including e-bikes where appropriate.

There is a long tradition of cooperation in the Alpine Region. Several platforms for cooperation and collaboration in the field of transport exist, besides the Alpine Convention, such as the ‘Zurich Group’ and bilateral conferences relating to cross-border projects (as in the case of Brenner and Turin-Lyon). Regional cooperation bodies such as Euro-regions and working Communities (Arge-Alp, Alpe-Adria) are also promoting sustainable mobility projects at regional or local level.

EUSALP can play a role in ensuring that consistent initiatives are taken in the field of transport and mobility, avoiding possible duplications and exploiting synergies, to the benefit of increased productivity and reduced costs. This can be done by better linking the existing platforms for exchange of information and good practices, as well as facilitating the access of the existing cooperation bodies to funding instruments. One cannot say that cooperation in the field of transport in the Alpine Region has not been developed – but what appears to be necessary is a greater integration between the existing bodies and structures, for the sake of greater efficiency of expenditure and effectiveness of infrastructure.

The table below shows an overview of examples of possible projects:

Examples of possible projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of infrastructure bottlenecks and bridging missing links, which would allow the improvement of inter-modality and interoperability, to the benefit of shifting traffic from road to rail. • Development of access routes towards the cross-border projects. • Coordination of local and regional transport planning at macro-regional level, which will allow for increasing the efficiency of existing networks and the share of population using less impacting transport means. • Upgrading of rail cross-border sections of TEN-T projects. Electrification of railway lines, operation of 740-meter-long trains and development of the European Railway Traffic Management System – ERTMS. • Upgrading of local railways such as Turin-Aosta, Nice-Ventimiglia-Cuneo-Turin, Munich-Lindau-Bregenz-Zurich, Ulm-Friedrichshafen-Lindau, Trieste-Ljubljana, Brescia-Edolo, Durance Valley, Milano-Tirano, Dolomiti valleys of Trentino. • Building on existing cooperation projects for reducing the impact of transalpine traffic, and upgrading them at a macro-regional scale.

Examples of indicators and targets¹⁷

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Target value</i>
Internal and external connectivity in the Region including travel time (km of railway lines complying with TEN-T criteria and guidelines)	Km	
Strengthening regional transport systems by linking peripheral regions to TEN-T networks and secondary	N° of passengers using public transport / train services Availability of last-mile infrastructure	
Streamlining of connections – n° of identified bottlenecks eliminated through small-scale interventions	N° of identified bottlenecks (infrastructure, capacity)	
Improvement of the interoperability procedures of rail public transport at transnational and cross border level	Infrastructure utilisation rate	
Promoting resource-efficient use of infrastructure	Emissions (PM, NO _x , SO ₂). Availability of refuelling infrastructures for alternative fuels	
Use of public transport compared to private means	Ratio and trends	
Common management, ticketing and information systems	N° of schemes developed for use of common management systems	
Optimal interconnection of national transport networks	Border waiting time	
Annual use of main networks of collective passenger transport at cross-border level	N° of users, border waiting time	
Increase potential capacity trains/day, reduction of travel time	N° of trains – % of increase mean travel time by sections	
Tons of goods loaded/unloaded in interchange nodes	Ratio out of total transported goods	

Rail passenger traffic generated by ports, logistic centres and airports		
Coverage of basic services (medical, postal, grocery) for local communities	% of the communities covered	
Quality of transport	Transport time, mean speed, frequency, parking availability for freight, road safety	

Action 5: To connect people electronically and promote accessibility to public services

The focus of this action will be twofold. On the one hand to draw up a comprehensive strategy for guiding and shaping the ongoing process of digitisation in the Alpine Region and on the other hand the accessibility to services which are provided by public authorities to people living within a certain area. This can be achieved by making the best use of new available technologies, such as satellite broadband connections in the most remote areas as well as developing take-up of e-services.

Regional characteristics concerning the proposed action

The EU aims at ensuring 100 % coverage by the next-generation broadband network (min. 30 Mbps download) by 2020. This agenda includes both the digital infrastructure and its use for the purpose of providing e-services. The latter requires in turn the take-up of new technological opportunities by business, citizens and public administration. The greater the use of e-services, the faster the innovation in this area, therefore the development of the infrastructure is both a condition and a consequence of the use of e-services. The Digital Agenda and the Digital Single Market of the EU are particularly relevant for the area covered by EUSALP, since the way of achieving the goals of 100 % coverage of high-speed broadband and 50% household take-up by 2020 are greatly affected by the particularities of the Region. One of the main characteristics of the Alpine Region, and in particular of the mountainous part of this Region, is the presence of sparsely populated communities, in a territory where land connections such as wires and glass fibres are a real challenge. Even where land connections are technically feasible, the costs are often too high to make investments profitable, and as a consequence no private investor shows interest. The result is that a share of communities in remote areas cannot benefit from available technologies without public intervention. In the absence of a public intervention on connectivity, there is the risk of a detrimental effect on the e-services and innovative applications offered by public and private providers, which leads to the further depopulation of remote areas. The possibility of exercising a given profession in a remote mountainous area is greatly dependent on the speed of available connections. There is, moreover, a share of the population which, even if investments are subsidised, cannot be reached by land connections in the short run. In this case, the only available solution is offered by broadband satellite technologies.

The need for the proposed action and its spatial macro-regional relevance

When dealing with new connectivity technologies, such as modern glass-fibre and satellite, there is a need to achieve a critical mass, to exploit economies of scale and make infrastructures both economical and better performing. This is particularly true in relation to

the ‘last mile’ of land connection networks, which is the most expensive in terms of the ratio between investment cost and profit. In the case of satellite connections, which are available without limitations of geomorphology, a critical mass of users is crucial in order to make the technology perform in the best possible way. For a satellite signal to perform well, users must be scattered around a sufficiently large area and not concentrated in one of a few spots. For this reason, sparsely populated large areas such as mountainous regions, an area of significant relevance for the total area of EUSALP, represent an ideal scale for implementing satellite solutions for the purpose of connecting remote households, business and administration which cannot be connected by land.

The table below shows an overview of examples of possible projects

Examples of possible projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satellite access for populations in the most remote areas (using the satellite voucher scheme). Using available structural funds, the EU has developed a competition rules complying scheme which allows for subsidising the initial investment necessary for installing satellite broadband equipment. It is possible to significantly increase the users of this scheme. • Development of take-up and e-services. Once the technology is available, a coordinated investment in training and communication is necessary, especially in the initial phase, to the benefit of potential users. This allows for further upgrading and fine tuning of the relevant technologies. • Use of common 112 emergency numbers. A European directive set up a common dial system for emergency situations. The use of this system, in particular in cross-border remote areas, can be improved by the widespread use of available communication technologies. • Develop ITS – Intelligent Transport Systems, interconnecting modes and devices and leading to greater efficiency and safety of transport.

Examples of indicators and targets¹⁸

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Target value</i>
Coverage of households by broadband with minimum 30 Mbps download speed	% of households	100 % by 2020
Coverage of households by broadband with minimum 30 Mbps download speed in the most remote areas	% of households	100 % by 2020
Coverage of enterprises and public buildings covered by broadband with minimum 30 Mbps download speed	% of enterprises and public buildings	
Rate of e- health users	%	

Rate of e-commerce users	%	
Rare of e- government users	%	
Rate of population close to minimum services (less than 20 min drive)	%	
N° of developed innovating cross-border services solutions (cross border and e-services)	N°	
Percentage of people using Internet	%	
Building of a composite indicator for assessing/comparing the quality of e-services of general interest		
Use of the common 112 dial emergency number	N° of uses	

Links with other objectives

Compared to the past, there is a widespread awareness of the close relationship between transport and environment. Transport infrastructures and related traffic in general pose great challenges to the environment and the population, to the extent that certain projects encounter firm opposition from resident populations.

Links such as railway tunnels and bridges are particularly complex structures, requiring considerable resources and also having a significant economic impact. It is unthinkable to conceive such infrastructures today without a sufficient consideration, mitigation and compensation of the environmental and social impacts, towards which a considerable amount of resources are channelled. Environmental policies which are particularly relevant during the construction phase are water and waste management, as well as landscape planning. These complex projects represent laboratories for developing green technologies and new planning concepts. A whole stream of green economy is benefitting from the inclusion of environmental consideration in transport policies.

Moreover, the concentration of intellectual and technological efforts around such works makes them suitable poles of innovation testing and knowledge/data sharing. The use of geothermal sources for energy purposes discovered during excavation works is an illustrative example.

Also from the SMEs perspective, the way contracts are managed may well allow for increasing involvement of SMEs in the design, contraction and management phase of the infrastructures. In a nutshell, there are considerable spill-over effects in environmental and social areas which can and should be exploited, but this requires coordination both at macro-regional scale and between policy areas.

The sector of e-connectivity is very fertile ground for innovation, as some of the most dynamic and innovative clusters relate to ICT. E-connectivity is a proven factor for competitiveness, in particular for SMEs. At the same time, it promotes the diffusion of green

economy solutions: digitally managed car-sharing and e-services replacing physical transport are relevant examples.

Support of the Europe 2020 Strategy

The envisaged actions are expected to contribute to attaining a good and sustainable connectivity network for the whole EUSALP Region. Therefore, this policy area strongly supports the Europe 2020 Strategy. EUSALP is fully in line with the flagship initiative ‘A resource-efficient Europe – Flagship initiative under the Europe 2020 Strategy’, within which the implementation of key proposals and initiatives, such as ‘Future of transport’, ‘Low Carbon Economy’, ‘Trans-European Networks’ play a key role; as well as with the flagship initiatives ‘digital agenda for Europe’ and ‘an agenda for new skills and jobs’.

- **Smart growth:** Building a connected region contributes to smart growth. The Alpine Regions have an enormous capacity, heritage and unused potential in terms of high-quality products (food, handicraft) and services (tourism, especially in certain areas), which an efficient network of physical and virtual connections can bring to the global market. This will lead to new jobs and therefore contribute to the Europe 2020 employment targets set for smart growth.
- **Sustainable growth:** It is well known that several developments related to transport and planning in the Alpine Region have led to unsustainable patterns, the cost of which is still high in terms of pollution, congestion and lost landscape. A new approach, whereby transport is led by connectivity needs and environmental concerns on an equal footing, will allow for sustainable further growth. Lessons learned can be used in order to implement new solutions in areas which lag behind in terms of connectivity infrastructures. Green transport solutions are also beneficial in terms of creating jobs (e.g. management of collective car share or bike share systems at local level).
- **Inclusive growth:** There is a clear problem of unbalanced growth in the Alpine Region, with significant differences between medium and large cities and peri-Alpine areas and remote villages, especially at high altitude. Ageing and lack of professional opportunities result in the dramatic demographic decrease of certain areas, to the detriment of local culture and environment. The digital agenda opens great possibilities for inverting these trends and opening new jobs and market opportunities. There are already several cases where ‘new mountaineers’ have settled in remote areas, where network connections allow for a quick interchange with the global market.

3rd THEMATIC POLICY AREA: ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

3rd OBJECTIVE: A more inclusive environmental framework for all and renewable and reliable energy solutions for the future

Presentation of the topic

The overall objective of this policy area is to address the ‘most important challenges and opportunities concerning the environment’ in the Region. A sound environment is essential for underpinning human activities in the Region and for ensuring economic and social well-being for its peoples. This is also reflected in the outcome of the public consultation, which shows that the environment is among the most important areas where macro-regional cooperation is needed. In this opinion survey, around two-thirds of the respondents stated that environment, sustainable development, or specific environmental issues are among the main topics where cooperation should be fostered.

This objective will deal with the environmental issues that can only be adequately tackled through cooperation at the level and scale of the macro-region. The involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in the implementation of all actions proposed under this objective and, more specifically, the social partners and private-sector actors from all relevant fields, as well as the scientific community and civil society, will further contribute to an integrated approach. Last but not least it has to be underlined that these actions in particular (especially actions 6 and 7) have strong interlinkages to the Alpine Convention and its protocols.

Action 6: To preserve and valorise natural resources, including water and cultural resources

The environment of the Alpine Region is extremely vulnerable. The use of the resources and the exploitation of their potential need to be carried out in a proportionate way. Against this background, this action has a twofold character. On the one hand, it will aim to reinforce the Alpine natural and cultural resources as assets of a high-quality living area. On the other hand, it will pursue the goal to valorise the existing natural and cultural resources.

Regional characteristics concerning the proposed action

One of the main features of the Alpine Region is its outstanding natural and cultural heritage. The Alpine Region forms an area of mountainous habitats and is extremely rich in biodiversity and resources like minerals and water. The ways in which these resources have been transformed into economic assets have varied through history and had distinctive effects both on the Alpine environment and on the resource itself. Humankind benefits in many ways from all these ecosystems. Collectively, these benefits are known as ‘ecosystem services’. Apart from this, cultural aspects such as language diversity in the Alps are unique compared to the rest of EU (many isolated settlements with original languages such as Occitan, Franco-Provençal, Walser, Ladin, Friulian, etc.). It is therefore consistent with the specific natural and cultural characteristics of the Alps that there are also already several UNESCO World Heritage Sites and several are pending.

Important parts of the natural richness of the Alps are the rivers, lakes and glaciers, which make this Region the ‘water tower’ of Europe. This natural storage mechanism benefits some very important rivers in Europe, including the Rhine, Danube, Po and Rhône. These four rivers flow through 15 countries, including ten EU Member States. In some seasons the Alps provide up to 90 percent of water to lowland Europe, particularly to arid areas during the summer months. Preservation of the quality and quantity of Alpine water resources is therefore very important to Europe as a whole. One important threat to the water reserves of the Alps over the long term is climate change, which is expected to result in melting of all glacial ice in the entire eastern Alps and much of the western Alps by 2100. This shows that this action has to be closely interlinked with action 8 (To improve risk management and to better manage climate change).

The need for the proposed action and its spatial macro-regional relevance

The action ‘To preserve and valorise natural resources, including water and cultural resources’ has a twofold character. With regard to the second element, the term ‘valorisation’ has to be interpreted in a broad sense, meaning that the resources are not only the essential basis but also the medium of territorial development. According to this approach, preservation and valorisation of sources like biodiversity, water and soil are closely interwoven. The sustainable use of resources and protection of biodiversity have not only an intrinsic value in themselves but have also proven to be highly beneficial for local economies especially in sectors such as tourism and quality food production that are very important for the Alpine area. In this regard NATURA 2000 provides a range of benefits to society and the economy which are important for the Alpine area. However, it must be underlined that there are conflicts of interest between the elements to protect natural resources and their economic use. Dealing with these issues at a macro-regional level could ensure expertise and exchanges of experience with local and regional stakeholders. It could also contribute to improving the multi-level governance of resource exploitation, and ensure that the interests of different territories and groups are reflected in a more balanced way when it comes to distribution of economic returns. The objective is to set up an Alpine strategic framework that allows the establishment of sustainable and balanced models of resource management and production.

The issue of water resources is a paradigm, which is generally best addressed at the level of river basin management districts through corresponding river basin management plans. As water flows out from the Alps, the Alpine Region does not have river basins which are common to all EUSALP countries. However, there is a similarity in terms of the types of water reserves (glaciers, glacial lakes, fast-flowing rivers and streams) as well as in the challenges (especially climate change and hydropower). Therefore, the transnational river basin management plans/schemes, the sharing of knowledge and information among stakeholders facing similar circumstances, as well as the identification of best practice solutions can be of high added value.

In the field of cultural heritage, the use of Alpine herbs in cosmetics, pharmaceutical products and other products using agricultural raw materials is already practised, for example many multinational cosmetics companies market products containing Alpine herbs. However, there is still scope to find innovative ways of valorising local products, benefiting local Alpine communities, ensuring the authentic nature of these products, and providing local business opportunities (research and innovation, manufacturing and

marketing) and through the entire value chain enabling a stronger connection between the core Alpine area and the surrounding urbanised areas. In addition, valorisation is possible with regard to human settlements (art, buildings and churches). In this regard, exchange of experiences and best practices among stakeholders involved in these sectors is essential.

This action addresses the high dynamic and large diversity within the Alpine area and at the same time provides a link between towns and rural, core and peri-Alpine areas. This applies especially with regard to potential linkages to economic aspects like the ‘green economy’ and the bio-economy. Concerning the cultural aspects of the action, it has to be underlined that they are closely linked to the ‘regional identity’ of the territory and are a particular asset of the territory in a European context. Furthermore, this action is of special importance because its main characteristic is its coherent common approach in contrast to many isolated activities within the territory. A further governance need beyond the existing institutional framework is that this action facilitates a better coordination between different actors according to sectors (nature protection, agriculture, processing industry, consumers), political levels (local, regional and national within the European rural development schemes), and territories (both producing and consuming, with particular importance attached to the relation of core and peri-Alpine areas). It should also lead to stronger political ownership, as the topic has the potential to become a matter of common identity. This is also underlined by the fact that it is of clear spatial relevance as it addresses the entire area: the Alpine Arc, the foothills and the urban areas. Especially due to this fact, this action is expected to encourage solidarity and mutual understanding between the core area and the metropolises and will be a platform to join ongoing activities and to gain wider public and political attention to the Strategy itself.

The table below provides an overview of examples of possible projects:

Examples of possible projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on the progresses made by the NATURA 2000 biogeographical process, and in particular on the results of the Alpine Workshop and Seminar held in 2013 in Austria and of the Workshop dedicated to river restoration held in Slovakia in September 2014¹⁹. • Valorisation of the services of the Alpine Region’s ecosystems and of their functional relationships within and outside its territories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthening the range of benefits to society and the economy including tourism provided by NATURA 2000, taking into account the study ‘The economic benefits of NATURA 2000 network’²⁰. ○ Promoting traditional land use, especially farming, in order to foster biodiversity and preserve protected areas. ○ Promoting services provided by forests for the protection of biodiversity and mitigation of climate change. ○ Strengthening soil protection and sustainable land use in the Alps, in particular regarding the issues of land take and soil sealing and the risk of landslides. ○ Promoting labelling of sustainable goods produced in the area of the Strategy. • Promoting integrated small-scale economic circuits in rural areas and balanced rural-

urban partnerships with the objective of maintaining/creating local capacities for sustainable food production and marketing on the basis of endogenous natural resources, local knowledge and social network capital.

- Creating a network of actors for integrated management of the Alpine water tower from the Alpine Arc to peripheral regions.
- Developing an action plan with priorities, opportunities, costs and benefits of decreasing fragmentation in rivers and other ecosystems limiting water management impacting biodiversity in the Alpine Region based on river basin units, taking into consideration the Alpine Convention Energy Protocol and building on its related activities²¹ and on the activities developed by the Alpine Convention Water Management Platform²².

Examples of indicators and targets:

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Target value</i>
Unlocking creative potential in the development of products and services, building on natural and cultural resources through the development of an 'Alpine innovation label' for products from the 'green economy sector' building on natural and cultural resources including bio-based products in the bio-economy sector	Number of products	Development of label and award of this label to at least 150 products or services over 5 years
Improved valorisation of the Alpine resources at an international level through improved representation of the Alpine Sites within the UNESCO world list ²³	N° of nominations	2 new nominations of UNESCO World heritage sites by UN (especially of trans-boundary and serial transnational sites)
Guaranteed long-term access to drinking water through public water supply is (completely) organised by public institutions in order to ensure equal accessibility	percent of Regions/States	100 % of drinking water supply under state supervision
Watershed management systems are established at transnational and cross-sectorial level through the establishment of an	Yes/No	Network established with relevant public institutions from all EUSALP countries represented

international stakeholders' network for integrated water management for the Alpine Region		
Joint integrated 'identity' plan for a sustainable development and attractiveness of the Alpine Region based on richness of different natural, bio-based, cultural values and typical products	Yes/No	Joint plan developed
Investments in valorisation of cultural and natural heritage, in ecosystem services and green infrastructures	Number of enterprises	200 enterprises involved in investments
Protect and enhance agricultural and forestry systems of high natural value	Percent of agricultural and forestry area	Increase in the percentage of the surface of agricultural and forestry areas under commitments supporting biodiversity in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the EU Forest Strategy and the EU Rural Development Policy as laid down in the Rural Development Programmes

Action 7: To develop ecological connectivity in the whole EUSALP territory

The integrity and functioning of ecosystems, including the conservation of biodiversity and provision of ecosystem services, largely depend on the existence of effective ecological connectivity. The promotion of ecological corridors and also of green infrastructures in unprotected areas has been suggested through the public consultation and is currently largely missing.

Regional characteristics concerning the proposed action

The Alps are very rich in protected areas, which cover up to 25 percent of their territory. However, the co-existence of protected areas on the one hand and intensively used territories on the other hand (e.g. through transport, settlement and tourism) has the effect of increasing fragmentation and entails the danger of creating a dichotomy between protected and unprotected areas. This dichotomy exists especially in small and narrow Alpine valleys, but of course also on a larger scale ('protected Alps', 'protected environmental Alpine containment'). This poses a big threat to Alpine biodiversity and prevents essential ecological processes from taking place. Furthermore, the Alps have a number of ecological links respecting physical corridors with other mountain areas in

Europe. These traditional migration routes for wildlife are currently at least partly defective or interrupted due to the high number of roads and motorways as well as a further increase in settlements (this applies for example to the links between the Alps and the Carpathians, the Dinaric Alps/Balkans, the Apennines, Jura Mountains and the Vosges). All of this shows that often only the Alps as such are regarded as a protected and ‘recreational area’, whereas the so-called surroundings or the hinterland are considered to be ‘land for use’. In this regard we need a change of mind-set, a better-integrated view and more environmental accountability.

The need for the proposed action and its spatial macro-regional relevance

The promotion of ecological connectivity will therefore be an important priority. Land-use policies, sprawl and high pressure from human activities will also be addressed. Projects which focus not only on protected areas but also on common rules for landscape development to promote ecological connectivity have been suggested in the public consultation, as they are currently largely missing.

The EU-wide Strategy on Green Infrastructure is addressing the spatial structure of natural and semi-natural areas but also other environmental features which enable citizens to benefit from its multiple services. The underlying principle of Green Infrastructure is that the same area of land can frequently offer multiple benefits if its ecosystems are in a healthy state. Green Infrastructure investments are generally characterised by a high level of return over time, they provide job opportunities, and can be a cost-effective alternative or complementary to ‘grey’ infrastructure and intensive land use change. It serves the interests of both people and nature. Green Infrastructure also reflects the fact that there are long-term experiences in the core area of the Alps. However, there is a need to define Green Infrastructure at a regional level and to create stronger links between the core area and the surroundings. Apart from this, there is further need for better coordination between national policies, across different sectors and in spatial terms (core area and surroundings). Connectivity is not just connecting protected areas but also integrating the issue in a wider territorial scale and in a cross-sectorial approach. Particularly this point underlines the governance needs beyond the given institutional framework. Therefore, a main feature of this action will be a multi-level approach to ensure consistent implementation of EU policies. This means that the existing networks of protected areas (e.g. NATURA 2000) will be further strengthened. In addition all activities to improve connectivity will also involve policy fields other than nature protection (such as spatial planning) and territories which are not protected. Against this background the main feature of this action will be that it addresses connectivity between the Alpine core and peri-Alpine area on a wider geographical scale but also on regional scale between rural and urban areas, bridging the areas of high natural value. However, this action will also strengthen the above-mentioned links to other mountain regions.

The table below provides an overview of examples of possible projects:

Examples of possible projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing the concept of ecological connectivity and the results of relevant projects with a wide range of sectors and administrations (such as municipalities), contributing to the preparation and implementation of measures aimed at protecting

or enhancing ecological connectivity and biodiversity within the Alps and with adjacent regions.

- Set up of a comprehensive macro-regional scheme in the Alpine Region, ensuring a broad, consistent and coordinated process, aimed at enhancing Alpine ecological connectivity at a larger scale, including a recommendation dimension, and make the Alps one candidate for a Green Infrastructure of European-wide importance (TEN-G).
- Promoting implementation of ecological networks at macro-regional level, by making best use of experiences from protected areas and by strengthening cross-border cooperation in the design and management of protected areas such as NATURA 2000 sites, building also on the joint French-Italian European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) in the Mercantour-Maritime area²⁴, the Econnect project²⁵, the activities developed by ALPARC²⁶ and by Alpine Convention Ecological Network Platform²⁷, and avoiding further fragmentation between protected areas and other areas.
- Strengthening connectivity, long-range movements and cross-border presence of large carnivore species, taking into account the European Commission Large Carnivore initiative and the platform dedicated to cohabitation between large carnivores and human beings²⁸ and building on the work done by the Alpine Convention WISO platform²⁹ on sharing of information, exchange of best practices, cross-border protection and management of large carnivores.
- Strengthening ecological continuity and connectivity between the Alps and other mountain ranges and sharing of experiences with other mountain ranges, such as the Carpathians, building also on the Alpine-Carpathian corridor project³⁰.
- Promoting the development of a joint guiding, integrated, trans-sectoral landscape vision for the Alps. This vision should be based on existing biodiversity policies and strategies, both at EU level and at a national and provincial level, but it must be supplemented by concrete actions that will guide the implementation on the ground.

Examples of indicators and targets:

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Target value</i>
Alpine States and Regions are sharing cross-border harmonised information and methods on ecological connectivity through the implementation of an Alpine-wide standardised publicly accessible software tool	Yes/No	Alpine-wide standardised software is established

<p>Alpine States and Regions are sharing cross-border harmonised information and methods through a joint monitoring of landscape fragmentation using European-wide indicators e.g. effective mesh size, effective mesh density, weighted urban sprawl, indicator species) and implementation of results into other monitoring systems (e.g. biodiversity monitoring or monitoring of sustainable development)</p>	<p>Yes/No</p>	<p>Joint monitoring system established</p>
<p>Development of a trans-sectorial strategic landscape vision to improve ecological connectivity between and outside protected areas and between surrounding mountainous regions</p>	<p>Yes/No</p>	<p>Strategic vision developed on an Alpine level and officially endorsed by all EUSALP countries</p>
<p>Connectivity is integrated into spatial planning and coordinated with all relevant sectors through consideration of the trans-sectorial strategic landscape vision in regional and national spatial planning instruments</p>	<p>Number of planning instruments referring to landscape vision</p>	<p>50 % of States and Regions referring in their planning instruments to the Alpine landscape vision</p>
<p>Adoption of plans and/or programmes exploiting synergies at international level between protected areas, such as the NATURA 2000 or Emerald network sites, in view of improving ecological connectivity in the whole Alpine Region</p>	<p>Number of plans adopted</p>	<p>1 additional concept per region per year.</p>

including major natural risks prevention

Due to its geomorphological conformation, the Alpine territory is extremely vulnerable to environmental disasters, which can cause severe damages to ecosystems, people and infrastructures. The existing circumstances and risks are further exacerbated by the occurring climate change causing additional pressure and challenges in terms of availability of resources and threats to population. With regard to environmental disasters, the focus will be for example to conduct an adequate comprehensive risk assessment and to implement a disaster risk management policy. As regards climate change, the focus will be for example on conducting a comprehensive vulnerability assessment of the affected sectors and systems and to develop a regional strategy on adapting to climate change.

Regional characteristics concerning the proposed action

The Alpine Region is particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change as recognised by the EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change. In the 20th century, the temperature in the Alps increased by almost 2°C, while during the same period temperature increase in nearby regions averaged around 1°C. Small glaciers are likely to disappear, while larger glaciers will suffer a volume reduction of between 30 % and 70 % by 2050. This will lead to a significant impact on the quantity, quality and seasonal distribution of water with an especially large reduction of water discharge in summer.

Biodiversity is under threat, with the European Environment Agency (EEA) estimating that up to 60 percent of plant species can become extinct if they are unable to adapt by moving northwards or uphill. The melting of permafrost above an altitude of 2 500 m will lead to landslides and rock falls more often than in the past. Consequently, an important share of climate sensitive sectors and systems further increase the economic vulnerability of the Region. Although these illustrations do not completely reflect all relations, they show how closely different actions are interlinked. Serious impacts on biodiversity and the water tower role of the Alps show how closely actions 6-8 are interlinked.

The need for the proposed action and its spatial macro-regional relevance

This action addresses the entire EUSALP Alpine area, but at the same time respects the specificities of the core and peripheral areas. With regard to environmental disasters, the focus will be for example to conduct an adequate comprehensive risk assessment and to implement a disaster risk management policy. Concerning climate change, comprehensive actions to adapt to the new circumstances are needed. Enhancing cooperation, establishing efficient management systems and joint regional responses in this area will make the Region more resilient to such changes. Due to the fact that the territory is a hotspot of climate change, it can serve as a reference area in Europe in terms of observation and management of its effects. With regard to climate change, the focus will be for example to conduct a comprehensive vulnerability assessment of the affected sectors and systems and to develop a regional strategy on adaptation to climate change. The adaptation actions pursued should be in line with the national adaptation strategies of the Alpine countries³¹. In addition, both dimensions (risk management and climate change) need to be combined, because they are closely interrelated. Furthermore, concerning the needs posed by climate change, there is added value in cooperation between the Alpine Region and the EU (i.e. the European Environment Agency and/or the European Commission) to address this challenge, because it requires action in the Alps but has much wider trans-boundary effects

in the whole of Europe. Considering the scale of the impact on Alpine water reserves which will be caused by climate change, there is a need to considerably scale up activities in this field. Cooperation with stakeholders implementing the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) should also be envisaged, as some of the States and Regions are covered by the two strategies. Finally, the existing cooperation, which already has a macro-regional nature, should be strengthened. Exchange of knowledge and good practice with other mountain areas, such as the Carpathian region, is relevant in this regard. In sum, there is no coherent international legal climate change framework for the Alps that addresses these questions.

Concerning the governance needs beyond the given institutional framework, both dimensions of this action will focus on good cross-boundary coordination and harmonised policies. Moreover, this action will allow a better coordination between different political levels (integrating European, national and regional scale) and will cluster all relevant projects within one integrated action.

The table below provides an overview of examples of possible projects:

Examples of possible projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up of a Virtual Alps Observatory which brings together Alpine research centres and helps to improve prognosis and common efforts in the research on climate change adaptation, concerning areas like atmosphere, Alpine environment and water balance. • Strengthening of existing Alpine platforms for integrated risk management for the mobilisation of Alpine skills, through benchmarking of current practices in the field of risk management with regards to climate change consequences. • Research on regional and transboundary adaptation, fostering the use of more standard data and protocols for risk assessment in the Alpine Region. Many direct or indirect impacts of climate change spill over frontiers (e.g. on biodiversity, health, water resources, etc.) and can be better assessed regionally, complementing more spatially delimited approaches. • Specific programmes involving monitoring, modelling and evaluation, to quantify climate change, identify hot spots, evaluate impacts and support adaptation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development of solutions to the need for very high resolution models to capture climate variability of mountains and to allow for realistic impact projections. ○ Development of integrated assessments to address the confluence of several effects of climate change. • In close cooperation with action 7 promoting the use of Green Infrastructure implementation as a risk management tool in the sense of mitigation and adaptation in the Alps for climate change induced risks, taking into consideration the important role of natural areas, especially Natura 2000 sites.

Examples of indicators and targets:

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Target</i>
Improve adaptation strategies through		
Development of a strategy for observation and modelling of climate change impact and vulnerability assessments.	Creation of an Alpine network of climate change observatories (Yes/No)	Yes (strategy available in regularly updated version)
Creation of an Alpine network of climate change observatories	Yes/No	Creation of observatory with all EUSALP countries participating
Develop of an Alpine adaptation strategy and accompanying action plan based on a comprehensive vulnerability assessment and in line with the existing national adaptation strategies	An Alpine adaptation strategy exists (Yes/No) Action Plan exists (Yes/No) Number of implementing actions according to AP	Yes (1 Alpine adaptation strategy available in regularly updated version) Continuously increasing number
Implementation of risk management information systems and early warning systems (EAS) at regional level	Percent of regions	Percent of regions having risk management information systems and EAS implemented. Information available to stakeholders.
Coordination mechanisms between disaster risk management and climate change adaptation established	Percent of regions	Percent of regions having coordination mechanisms in place

Action 9: To make the territory a model region for energy efficiency and renewable energy

This action focuses on promoting energy efficiency and the production and use of renewable energy in the Alpine Region, in line with the EU's energy efficiency framework and the Energy Union Package. Energy policy in the Region focuses on energy efficiency in the public and private sectors. A significant reduction in energy consumption could be achieved, in particular in the housing sector. The Alpine Region has substantial potential for renewable energy production which must be developed in a balanced way, taking into account ecological, economical and land use issues and considering societal trade-offs.

Regional characteristics

The countries in the Alpine Region have a strong potential related to energy efficiency, in

particular in the building sector. This provides an ideal framework for working together on innovative solutions for the Alpine Region. Due to the vulnerability of the Region to the effects of climate change there is a certain degree of awareness within the population concerning the need for saving energy. The Alpine Region developed several isolated energy efficiency solutions like highly energy efficient buildings or sustainable mobility solutions. Further, it is feasible to extend existing energy model regions to the whole area of the Alpine Region and thus create a model Alpine Region of modern energy efficiency.

The Alpine Region plays an important role when it comes to the production of renewable energies providing hydropower, solar energy, biomass, wind energy and geothermal sources. The major energy resource available in the Alpine Region is hydropower, being one of the most important energy economic components. It is already used intensively in over 100 large hydroelectric plants with a total capacity of more than 28 Gigawatts [GW]. Added to this, the high number of smaller hydroelectric plants also has an impact on the Alpine ecosystem. In particular, hydropower has a high potential as an energy storage system (the 'battery' function – pumped storage hydropower). However, a balance of interests between energy policy, nature protection and land use purposes is crucial for the further prosperous development of the Region, also taking into account the different needs in mountain regions and plains.

The Alpine Region will make a long-term contribution to meeting Europe's energy needs and at the same time people in that Region need to have sufficient energy resources at their disposal to improve local living conditions and economic productivity.

The need for action and its spatial macro-regional relevance

This action addresses the entire EUSALP Alpine area, whereas in particular the solidarity aspect is relevant between rural and urban areas at a regional scale but also on a wider scale between core and peri-Alpine areas.

The European Union has developed a comprehensive energy efficiency framework (COM(2014) 520 final) that rests on an indicative headline target of 20 % of energy savings by 2020 and is currently comprised of the EU Energy Efficiency Directive (Directive 2012/27/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 25 October 2012 on energy efficiency). As regards energy efficiency, an unbalanced expertise in the territory of the Alpine Region can be identified. In some areas of the Region there is world-leading know-how, whereas in other parts this still needs to be developed. This knowledge could be transferred thanks to a comparable territorial setting. A certain number of possible projects have the potential for visible short-term results. This will also help to raise political visibility in order to increase energy efficiency in the whole EUSALP territory. In addition to small-scale projects, the promotion of energy efficiency requires a wider framework which provides the needed legislative and financial support for the development of sustainable energy solutions. Support schemes and the legislative framework aimed at addressing non-financial barriers to energy efficiency differ from one country to the other, and not all countries in the Alpine Region have equally supportive policy frameworks. A crucial aspect of this action will be the setting of new impulses and leverage effects by combining currently individual measures to one integrated action ('Energy efficient Alps').

According to the Energy Union Package (COM(2015) 80 final), the European Union is committed to becoming the world leader in renewable energy, the global hub for developing the next generation of technically advanced and competitive renewable

energies. The EU has also set an EU target of at least 27 % for the share of renewable energy consumed in the EU in 2030. In the Alps, the coverage of energy demands by renewable resources with the aim of carbon-free production is a top priority. The Alpine Region is an ideal region to reach energy autonomy. In the light of the aim of developing into a model region for renewable energy, in a united exchange between the mountain area and the plains, it is of high importance to make use of the renewable energy resources in a smart way. This means taking into account ecological, economical and land use aspects but also considering social trade-offs. The acceptance within the population of the whole EUSALP territory is essential.

Resource efficiency requires well-functioning networks, interconnections and interoperability. The action will help identify how developments in energy efficiency and renewable energy drive investment needs in energy infrastructure. Cross-border cooperation in the planning and development of energy infrastructure is addressed through national and European network development plans and the action will give useful feedback to these processes, e.g. in terms of helping to ensure that energy networks are suitably prepared for renewable energy.

The table below provides an overview of examples of possible projects:

Examples of possible projects

- Setting up an Alpine energy efficiency cluster. This Alpine Energy Efficiency Cluster would aim at: Being a forum for cooperation and innovation; Bringing technical solutions, adapted to the specific energy needs of the Alpine Region; Developing energy efficiency processes and products particularly adapted to the Alpine Region, especially in the housing and mobility sectors.
- ‘Greening the Alpine infrastructure’ focusing on energy efficiency in the building sector. The intent is to develop harmonised, affordable and operational assessment tools to be used by public authorities in policies targeted to promote and boost sustainable and low-carbon buildings in the Alpine Region.
- Setting up an Alpine renewable energy cluster.
- Smart energy management systems in Alpine areas. Developing, sharing and installing energy efficiency and decentralised RES monitoring systems at the local level (i.e. municipalities of the Alpine area) to monitor public lighting, RES units, waste collection, means of transport and freight traffic. Existing best practices among municipalities of the Alpine area can lead the way.
- Projects that support a better use of local resources to increase energy self sufficiency and reduce climate and environmental impacts.
 - A) Setting up bio-energy supply chains based on sustainable woody biomass resources in the Alpine Regions and on the optimisation of co-generation. The aim is to support the use of local biomass resources, encouraging a sustainable use of forests and to enhance the mitigation role of the forest sector (forests, forest products and bioenergy).
 - B) Develop an integrated territorial approach to waste management. Laying out integrated plans and measures to enhance waste management and encourage its use for energy purposes (particularly manure, waste treatment by-products). The goal is to develop win-win solutions that reduce the impact of waste disposal, and waste transport, generate energy, reduce the environmental impact of waste management and increase labour opportunities.

Examples of indicators and targets:

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Target value</i>
Establishment of a cluster on Alpine Energy Efficiency (e.g. for buildings)	Number of stakeholders in the cluster	At least 200 stakeholders involved in the cluster representing all EUSALP countries
Renewable energy production in the Alps	TWh, in total and by RES source	Increasing RES production in the whole EUSALP territory in proportion to the EU RES target for each State and Region, in particular by improving the efficiency of

		existing power plants
‘Greening the Alpine infrastructure’ through the development and implementation of joint energy efficiency indicators ³²	Set of Alpine-wide indicators is developed or implemented (Yes / No) Number of administrative procedures (approval procedures, funding schemes, public procurement law) including joint Energy Efficiency Indicators for Alpine infrastructure on different levels (international, national, regional)	Yes 1 administrative procedure per State/Region
Organisation of a continuous energy dialogue with the public	Number of participants in dialogue	120 participants involved in energy dialogue annually, with all EUSALP countries represented
Development of a set of sustainability criteria for electricity grids	Development of a set of sustainability criteria for electricity grids	Development of a set of sustainability criteria for electricity grids
Strengthen transnational cooperation when planning and evaluating energy infrastructure	Number of transnational agreements	
Development of smart energy monitoring and management systems	Number of smart energy monitoring platforms	Number of municipalities that have shared and adopted smart energy management systems
Set up of sustainable bioenergy supply chains	Tonnes of woody biomass used for energy purposes	Amount of biomass used according to sustainable approaches/schemes (PEFC, FSC, LCA, certified by biomass sustainability standards)
Integrated plans for local waste management for energy	KWh produced from different local waste sources (domestic	Number of municipalities adopting the plans

use	organic waste, manure etc.)	
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Links with other objectives

The objective ‘A more inclusive environmental framework and renewable and reliable energy solutions for the future’ runs across the other three objectives of the Strategy. Its aim is to limit the ecological footprint of, for example, transport and energy projects.

Another link to the other objectives is that it directs attention to how environmental quality can ultimately enhance prospects for smart and inclusive growth under the other objectives, for example making the Alps a circular economy hotspot and a case-study for other macro-regions. Furthermore, it contributes to sustainable nature-based tourism by ensuring preservation of natural resources and the cultural heritage on which tourism depends.

This objective also contributes to bolstering the resilience of macro-region’s economies and societies in the face of existing and/or potential impacts of climate change. Among others, changes in temperature, precipitation and the frequency of extreme weather events will affect future energy production, transmission and consumption in the Alpine Region. Therefore climate change adaptation measures are required to increase the resilience of the energy sector at both the large-scale and household levels to changing climate conditions. Another strong link to the first objective, which comes from the Europe 2020 Strategy, is that investing in cleaner, low-carbon technologies will help our environment, contribute to fighting climate change and create new business and employment opportunities. There are other concrete conjunctions that concern the three other objectives even-handedly. An example is that the issue of ecological connectivity could be combined with ‘connectivity-actions’ in the areas of transport, social connectivity and jobs creation. This would mean developing the Alpine area from a territory of barriers to a connected roof of Europe. In sum, economic activity and transport have a significant impact on the environment in the macro-region; there are therefore strong links to the three other objectives of the Strategy.

Support for the Europe 2020 Strategy

The actions envisaged are expected to contribute to attaining a good ecological and environmental status for the whole ecosystems by 2020. Therefore, this policy area strongly supports the Europe 2020 Strategy:

It contributes to **smart growth** by strengthening of technical and scientific capacities and establishment of common platforms and innovative solutions for research, observation and monitoring. The Strategy is also in line with the flagship initiative ‘Innovation Union’. With this initiative the Commission declared a strategic research agenda focused on challenges such as climate change and resource efficiency, environmentally-friendly production methods and land management, and to enhance joint programming with Member States and regions.

It contributes to **sustainable growth**, in particular to the objectives of ‘A resource-efficient Europe – Flagship initiative under the Europe 2020 Strategy’. The actions under this policy area will support efficient and sustainable use of natural resources, including preservation of biodiversity, habitats, ecosystems, water and minerals and will contribute to minimising the impact of climate change on ecosystems. Close cooperation with the Network of Energy and Managing Authorities (EMA), which brings together representatives from national energy authorities and from Managing Authorities and with the European Network

of Environmental Authorities for the Cohesion Policy (ENEA), can contribute to sustainable growth.

It contributes to **inclusive growth** by promoting stakeholder involvement in exploring sustainable options, including the involvement notably of farmers and all other relevant actors, thereby ensuring the economic and social sustainability of actions. Moreover, investments in the area of the third objective can provide great returns for the population of the macro-region in terms of growth and jobs.

Taking appropriate actions to address environmental and energy issues faced by the macro-region will contribute to implementing the EU Environmental and Energy *acquis* and policy documents, in particular the Habitats and Birds Directives, the Water Framework Directive, the 7th Environment Action Programme, and the Biodiversity, Green Infrastructure, Soil, Forest Climate Change Adaptation Strategies, the Energy Union Package, the Energy Efficiency Communication 2014, the Energy Efficiency Directive and the Renewable Energy Directive. Furthermore, these actions contribute to the implementation of the Alpine Convention, which is also part of the EU environmental *acquis*, as the EU, together with all the countries involved in the Strategy, is a Contracting Party, and to most of its thematic protocols³³ and related documents, such as the Climate Change Declaration and Action Plan³⁴.

CROSS-CUTTING POLICY AREA: GOVERNANCE, INCLUDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

4th OBJECTIVE: A sound macro-regional governance model for the Region (to improve cooperation and the coordination of action)

Background

Finding the right governance arrangements for collaboration is one of the most complex tasks for macro-regional cooperation and one of major importance as well.

Further to the adoption by the Commission of the report concerning the added value of macro-regional strategies³⁵, which underlines that the governance issue is one of the outstanding questions in the implementation phase, a Communication on the governance of macro-regional strategies was adopted by the Commission³⁶, followed by Council conclusions³⁷. They both emphasise the importance of involving all actors and stakeholders, the need to ensure political leadership and ownership, sound coordination and implementation, as well as the need to cooperate between these three levels of governance.

The OECD also considers that governance is a key issue and can have a significant impact on the success or failure of public policies.

In various reports and territorial reviews³⁸, it points out that governments are seeking new ways to work effectively with their regions and cities. This means looking beyond administrative boundaries to consider 'functional' areas and to better understand the links between different types of regions. Policy must take better account of the places where people live and the issues that matter for their daily lives.

It also underlines the positive impact of an efficient trans-border governance system on the implementation of policies, even though it acknowledges that governance frameworks covering different countries are complex and that the process is inevitably gradual.

This overall background sets the scene for the establishment of a sound and effective governance system for EUSALP.

Governance of EUSALP

The EUSALP governance model has to ensure a sound and effective implementation of the Strategy, which will contribute to reaching its thematic objectives.

The governance system for EUSALP will take into account some specific features of the Alpine Region and of the Strategy:

- a) The Alpine Region already has a long tradition of cooperation. A high diversity of structures is already operating in the area with a wide variety of governance systems. Countries, regions, policy strategies, sectors, and funding resources should avoid compartmentalisation – be it between sectorial policies, actors or different tiers of government. There is a need for an approach that encourages participants to overcome not only national frontiers, but also sectors and barriers in order to allow thinking that is more strategic and imaginative concerning the opportunities available. This strategic approach should also ensure consistency between existing initiatives, avoiding duplications and providing an alignment to existing financial instruments.

In addition to the guiding principles adopted by the Council and described above, the governance system that will be designed in EUSALP also needs to take into account some specific features of the Alpine Region and of the Strategy.

- b) The Strategy has been developed around interlinked policy areas. The governance structure that will be adopted should also consider and reflect this cross-cutting aspect.

The basis of the governance system of the Strategy has been laid down in the Milan Declaration of the Alpine States and Regions, adopted at the EUSALP Stakeholder Conference in Milan on 1 December 2014. It is in accordance with the Grenoble Political Resolution of 18 October 2013, the Commission report on governance of macro-regional strategies³⁹ and the Council Conclusions of 21 October 2014.

The detailed governance and management arrangements of EUSALP will be further developed by the participating States and Regions in cooperation with the Commission after the adoption of the macro-regional strategy by the Commission and before its endorsement by the European Council.

The general functioning of the Strategy is described below. It is based on experience with the existing strategies, and takes into account the Commission report on governance of macro-regional strategies⁴⁰ and the Council Conclusions, and specificities of the Alpine Region.

Political leadership

Political leadership implies both a political and operational dimension. Strong and structured political support, with ministers determining the overall direction of the Strategy, taking ownership and responsibility, aligning policies and funds, and providing the resources and status for decision making, is crucial.

This level should ensure the overall political orientation as well as providing strategic thematic guidance and decisions on actions. *To ensure a balanced distribution, a rotating presidency will be set up. It can be allocated to all participating States and Regions with the agreement of the Commission.* As already experienced in other macro-regional strategies, the organisation of a ministerial meeting concerning each policy area gathering together ministers and/or presidents of the Regions (according to the political and institutional organisation in each State and Region) on a regular basis is considered as a good practice. It would help maintain the political momentum of the Strategy in the area concerned and deliver clear political messages about actions to take and priorities to achieve.

Each country should show its commitment, in particular by making sure that the key partners in the implementation of the Strategy (such as coordinators and implementers at objective and actions level) get the necessary recognition and legitimacy to fulfil their tasks. They should receive a clear mandate and appropriate resources and time allowing them to work in satisfactory conditions and in effective collaboration with the relevant national/regional administrative departments and policy-making and implementing bodies.

As regards the level of overall political steering and decision-making, the Milan Declaration foresees the setup of ‘a General Assembly to be held on a regular basis’. The General Assembly should gather the high-level political representatives of States and Regions involved in the Strategy, the European Commission, and the Alpine Convention as observer. Decisions should be made by consensus, with one vote for each country delegation. The European Commission will act as a facilitator and coordinator and will co-chair the meetings, without voting right. The Commission will confirm that decisions taken by the General assembly comply with EU legislation, when appropriate.

The General Assembly should mainly be responsible for laying down the general political guidelines for the Strategy. Furthermore, the General Assembly has the possibility of organising ministerial meetings in order to create the necessary political awareness for the Strategy.

Annually, the general Assembly can meet in an extended format, open to all relevant stakeholders (Annual Forum).

Coordination

The governance of a macro-regional strategy requires greater dialogue and substantial coordination across all decision-making levels, and sectors inside each state and region as well as between participating States and Regions, to reduce fragmentation, improve realisation of actions and encourage effective participation from the actors involved. It also requires the capacity to exchange information and to detect policy gaps when they arise.

Based on the experience with the other macro-regional strategies and in order to provide a more effective and efficient implementation, a two-level coordination built upon national coordination and objective coordination is highly recommended.

a) At national level: National Coordinators

National Coordinators, coming either from the national or regional level, represent the position of their respective countries, while looking at the same time for convergent opinions and decisions that will facilitate the implementation of the Strategy. They should be duly empowered by their governments (at national and/or regional level, depending on competencies in each country). They play a major role coordinating and supporting the design

and implementation of macro-regional strategies, and encouraging stakeholders' involvement. They should liaise with the administrations participating in the thematic areas covered by the Strategy in their State/Region as well as with the managing authorities responsible for the implementation of the relevant European and national/regional programmes. The experience so far in existing macro-regional strategies shows that National Coordinators usually come from Ministries of Foreign Affairs or Prime Minister Services, in order to provide the overview of the State/Region they represent. Moreover a further good practise is the sharing of the National Coordinator role with one ministry having more direct responsibility in the operational implementation of sectorial and territorial policies.

b) At macro-regional level: Objective Coordinators

The role of these Objective Coordinators is different from that of National Coordinators in so far as they must represent the macro-regional interest (coherence between participating States and Regions) and views on a specific policy. They are policy experts in the area concerned and they must be able to steer and coordinate the activities carried out by the various operators involved in the policy area in the different countries and regions covered by the Strategy. They should report back to the Executive Board about any issue, progress, idea, possible action, etc. that may occur in the implementation phase of the Strategy.

They play an interface role between coordination level and implementation level, therefore in practice they participate at both levels (their implementation role is described in the next point).

The actions in each objective in EUSALP have been developed in an interconnected and complementary way. This requires an efficient coordination in each of them and underlines once more the need to appoint Objective Coordinators.

In order to promote the transnational dimension of their task, it is in general advised that two objective coordinators from different States and Regions are appointed for each objective, on a rotating basis.

As in the existing macro-regional strategies, the European Commission will act as independent facilitator and will ensure strategic coordination in areas where it provides added value for the macro-region (as stated in Council conclusions), supported by the High-Level Group on macro-regional strategies with representatives of the EU-28, as well as non-EU countries participating in the strategies.

The experience also shows that other participants can be associated as observers, when appropriate (e.g. external experts, regional organisations on an ad hoc basis).

Concerning this level of governance, the representatives of States and Regions participating in the EUSALP have agreed in the Milan Declaration to put in place 'a standing Executive Board in charge of overseeing the implementation of the EUSALP Action Plan, formed by representatives of the States and Regions'. The European Commission will act as a facilitator and coordinator and will co-chair the meetings, without voting right. The Commission will confirm that decisions taken by the Executive Board comply with EU legislation, when appropriate. The Alpine Convention and the Alpine Space Programme will participate in the Executive Board as observers. In case decisions have to be taken, they are made by consensus with one vote for each country delegation.

The Executive Board will mainly be responsible for the overall horizontal and vertical coordination of the Strategy (including inter- and intra-objective coordination which will be

guaranteed by the Objective Coordinators) and the preparation of the General Assembly meetings. The Executive Board may invite Action Group Leaders in charge of the implementation of the actions (see next point) to certain thematic meetings. In addition the Executive Board has to collect the reports of the Action Groups and monitor implementation. To ensure coherence, the rotating chair of the Executive Board will coincide with the presidency of the General Assembly.

Implementation

Implementation is a key step, as it is mainly based on the results of joint actions and projects completed at macro-regional level that better and informed decisions can be taken at political level to improve the efficiency of the policies concerned and to reach the objectives assigned to the Strategy.

Key conditions for good implementation include:

- Countries recognising the Strategy as cutting across sector policies, and of concern to every level of government (national and/or regional).
- High level of intra-governmental coordination.
- As guarantor of the EU dimension, the Commission ensuring a strategic approach at EU level.
- Countries steering, monitoring, and evaluating progress, and providing guidance for implementation; appropriate policy responses may be required.
- Good use and valorisation being made of the work of existing organisations in the Region.
- Making full involvement of key stakeholders possible by offering them a structured dialogue. This will produce valuable inputs and will increase the awareness about the Strategy. In practise this could be done also through a permanent stakeholder's platform.

The objectives of the Strategy will be implemented through several complementary actions. The coordination between different actions of the same objective should be ensured by one or two objective coordinator(s) for each objective.

Beyond ensuring the interface between action level and coordination level, and participating in and reporting to the coordinators group, their functions should be to support and coordinate the tasks of the Action Group Leaders, who are also experts in their field.

Objective Coordinators and Action Group Leaders should be able to organise their activities together, so as to ensure an effective implementation of actions and projects in the policy area concerned, and across policy areas, where appropriate, by carrying out, inter alia, the following actions:

- Developing specific criteria for selecting actions/projects that enhance the concerted and macro-regional characters of the projects and propose them to the Executive Board;
- Identifying actions/projects to be included in the Action Plan, ensuring that they comply with the objectives;
- Identifying relevant funding sources for the actions/projects selected and facilitating and following up implementation of actions/projects, including monitoring and evaluation;
- Ensuring linkages with the other actions;

- Liaising with Managing Authorities of other programmes in the area;
- Liaising with the relevant EU programmes managed directly by the Commission;
- Preparing policy proposals and recommendations that will be submitted to the coordinators group.

As well as for Objective Coordinators, Action Group Leaders (preferably two for each action, ensuring a balanced representation from different States/Regions) should be appointed to develop the transnational approach and spirit in the action concerned.

In this respect the Milan Declaration suggests setting up ‘**Action Groups**, to be defined in greater detail depending on the content of the Action Plan, which will be responsible for implementing the actions’. To find Action Group Leaders, States and Regions have to express their interest to the Executive Board. Action Group Leaders will be appointed for an initial period of three years; after this initial period a revision will follow with the objective of promoting rotation. The Action Group Leaders have to fulfil certain requirements; inter alia, expertise in the policy field, to bring in own resources (e.g. personnel, travel costs), to be able to bridge the different interests, especially concerning implementing and financing institutions.

The need to improve the institutional capacity and to change the partners’ mind-set towards more cooperation and coordination of actions

Deploying political willingness, means and resources to make sure that the first objective can be reached requires a change of mind-set at each political, institutional and administrative level. As already noted, this is even more complex in a transnational context and it can only be gradual.

This approach could start and develop on the basis of some preliminary findings from studies, the public consultation and experience with existing strategies:

- (i) Successful implementation requires broadening the involvement to actors other than just public administrations and bodies as they will contribute to boosting public efforts. Private sector, the business community and people living in the Region should be actively associated to ensure engagement and ownership of the Strategy.
- (ii) A study carried out by the Alpine Space Programme⁴¹ concludes that Alpine multilevel governance needs to be redesigned: none of the Alpine organisations in place meet all the requirements to achieve the strategic objectives for the Region. Networking between these organisations and making them function in a more cooperative and integrated way is a key factor to an enhanced Alpine policy. Their various instruments need to be better coordinated to contribute to the achievement of shared strategic objectives.
- (iii) The replies to the public consultation also highlighted the following important aspects:
 - EUSALP should become a platform to join ongoing activities and to gain wider public and political attention.
 - EUSALP is expected to encourage solidarity and mutual understanding across different sectors and in spatial terms (between mountain core area and metropolises).
 - Many isolated activities are developed within the territory without common approach.
 - New impulses and leverage effects could be set through combining currently individual initiatives to one integrated action.

Therefore, this objective of building a new model of macro-regional governance should be followed at an appropriate level. The Executive Board should decide how to build this new model step by step and who should be responsible for it. This or these person(s) should also ensure coordination with existing regional cooperation organisations, as appropriate, and develop a monitoring and evaluation framework.

The creation of a permanent stakeholder platform should be envisaged in order to strengthen the involvement of civil society, including cooperation of consultative networks or platforms already in place.

The European Network for Rural Development and the corresponding national networks, help to facilitate an effective exchange among stakeholder organisations and administrations involved in the various stages of rural development programme implementation. This networking can play a very important role in improving the quality of rural development programmes also concerning the Alpine Region, notably by increasing the involvement of stakeholders in the governance of rural development and disseminating knowledge and experience about programme implementation.

Along the same lines and with a particular focus on interlinking science, farming practice, agribusiness, administration and stakeholders in innovative projects, the ‘European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability’ (EIP-AGRI) has been set up. The EIP-AGRI is underpinned by an EIP network that aims at facilitating information exchange and the sharing of good practice. This can also be helpful for the Alpine Region.

The Commission will support this multilevel governance approach, but the success of the approach depends on the commitment of key stakeholders and partners (including different ministries and decision-making levels within each State/Region, national, regional and local authorities, members of parliaments (regional, national and European), economic and social actors, civil society, academia, and NGOs).

Potential bottlenecks and challenges in EUSALP governance and implementation

<i>Bottlenecks and challenges</i>	<i>Measures</i>	<i>Indicator and target</i>
Getting a stronger political leadership and decision-making process	Organise Alpine ministers meetings on a regular basis	At least one ministerial meeting/year
Maintaining political support during the implementation phase of the Strategy to ensure effective delivery	Deliver a clear mandate and appropriate time and resources to key partners (coordination and implementation level)	Resources allocated by ministries/regions for implementing the Strategy (minimum: one FTE for each State/Region for coordination, one for implementation)
Avoid compartmentalisation between sectorial policies	National Coordinators to ensure sectorial dialogue; plan and organise cross-sectorial meetings	Number of cross-sectorial meetings leading to improved practices/actions
Ensuring strategic approach	Continuous monitoring of	Number of

and reaching the targets	progress. Alert governance body of risks of deviation in targets or the emergence of a problem or a bottleneck	recommendations made by the coordinators group discussed and solved at ministerial level
Difficulties in reaching a common solution	Providing conflict management mechanisms; Providing solutions or procedures to deal with 'competing demands' among different areas or actors	Number of recommendations made by the coordinators group discussed and solved at ministerial level
Lack of financial resources	Ensuring the embedding of EUSALP into the programmes for the 2014-2020 financial cycles and the mobilisation of the relevant EU funds and of other national/regional/local available resources to support the implementation of the Strategy and the achievement of its objectives	Number of programmes mobilising funds or selection criteria for EUSALP actions/projects (target to be defined)
Keep all interested stakeholders (transnational, regional and local level) involved in the implementation	Constantly raising awareness; organise publicity and divulgence actions; create a stakeholders' platform to structure debate	Creation of a stakeholders' platform: 1 Number of divulgence actions organised

DELIVERING THE RESULTS: MONITORING, REPORTING AND EVALUATION

Because strategies do not have their own financing, they can only influence policies or the way they are implemented. So, in order to capture the changes linked to the implementation of the Strategy, two types of indicators can be used:

- Results indicators to measure the cooperation dimension and changes in the way partners cooperate, i.e., coordinate EU and domestic policies/instruments across the Alpine Region;
- Policy indicators to capture the policy dimension and changes in socio-economic and environmental situation in the Alpine Region (influenced by cooperation).

Baseline and target values, as well as clear deadlines need to be associated with these indicators.

Targets should be fixed at an objective level; their number should be limited. They could be complemented in a consistent way with targets at action level. At objective level, the targets should have, if possible, a cross-cutting dimension (which means they should be relevant and valid for several actions at the same time). They would be endorsed politically. They should be supported by indicators that are measurable, realistic, robust and feasible.

Above all, they should be able to capture the expected change the Strategy is going to bring about.

A sound monitoring and evaluation system will have to be put in place, and it will be one of the first tasks of the partners of the Strategy, with the support of the European Commission and external experts as appropriate.

For reasons of transparency and comparability, indicators for monitoring, reporting and evaluating the Strategy shall include, where possible, a set of regional indicators collected, validated and disseminated by Eurostat.

As a first step, it might be necessary to fill gaps in available data needed to establish baseline situations or missing information. Data collection will be promoted via the Alpine Space Programme. While the prime indicator of success is implementation of the Action Plan, more refined indicators will have to be developed in some cases.

Evaluation will be based on the work of the Objective Coordinators and Action Group Leaders, who will report progress towards targets.

The annual forum of the Strategy will offer opportunities for the participating countries and their partners to present and evaluate results, to consult on revised actions, and to develop new approaches.

EXPLOITING SYNERGIES WITH OTHER MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Some of the countries involved in the EUSALP are also involved in other strategies, like Germany, Austria, Slovenia or Italy. This entails added value in terms of exchange of good practices and experiences. Moreover, far from creating new borders and bringing territorial continuity into jeopardy, the Strategy will allow for exploiting of synergies, notably with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) countries and addresses transport, energy and the environment as key fields of action.

While the INTERACT programme can play a central role in ensuring coherence and synergy between the three strategies, efforts are already being made to ensure that the same people are acting as National Coordinators for those strategies.

Common issues to all macro-regional strategies, such as governance, monitoring or funding, are also discussed in the High Level Group composed of representatives of all EU 28 Member-States and non-EU participating countries. The High Level Group can make recommendations aimed at improving the implementation of the strategies.

Furthermore, ETC transnational territorial cooperation programmes can act as facilitators where stakeholders from different macro-regional strategies can meet, as was the case for the Alpine Space Programme in the period 2007-2013.

FUNDING

A key principle of macro-regional strategies is that they do not have their own financing. Therefore, the Strategy is implemented, inter alia, by mobilising and aligning existing EU and

national funding of relevance to the thematic objectives and actions of the Strategy. By endorsing the Strategy, the governments of the participating countries commit themselves to drawing on this funding to implement the Action Plan. In particular, the European Structural and Investment Fund for 2014-2020 provide significant resources and a wide range of tools and technical options for reaching the objectives of the Strategy. As an example, in their study on ESIF programmes in the Alpine Region, Lombardy Region and Finlombarda estimate that around EUR 5.6 billion from the 129 ESI programmes intervening in the area will be allocated to thematic objectives that cover the four policy areas of the Strategy.

Thus, one of the objectives of the Strategy is to induce synergies and complementarity avoiding overlaps between the different ESI-funded programmes. The Strategy should also ensure links with several existing initiatives and platforms for cooperation, by complementing and reinforcing existing actions or by giving them critical mass. In this context, EUSALP can make an important contribution to delivering on the Smart Growth and the Sustainable Growth pillars of Europe 2020 in the Region.

The Alpine Space Programme is also providing financial support for the governance of the Strategy.

As agreed during the negotiations to adopt 2014-2020 programmes, Member States and regions have to decide how they align the programmes with EUSALP. For example, this can be done by prioritising operations linked to the Strategy, by organising specific calls for them or giving priority to these operations in the selection process through identification of operations that can be jointly financed from different programmes. More specifically the alignment can be done by: 1) setting a priority axis for developing inter-regional and transnational cooperation (horizontal or vertical); 2) identifying potential cooperation projects (project ideas) and partners in the operational programmes; 3) introducing a project-selection criterion which gives priority to projects having a clear macro-regional impact, contributing to the targets and objectives and to the implementation of one or more actions in the Action Plan; 4) allocating a certain amount of funding to activities/projects that are in line with the Strategy; 5) including a separate paragraph describing how the objectives and priorities of EUSALP will be reflected in implementing the programmes.

Even though several programmes will already have been adopted at the time the Strategy is adopted, it is always possible to adapt the financing conditions and the selection criteria of the programmes in the course of the programming period, so as to ensure better matching of funds for actions and projects.

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) funding can also effectively contribute to the objectives and actions of the Strategy. RDP measures can contribute to job creation and innovation: support for co-operation can aim to carry out pilot projects and develop new products, practices, processes and technologies in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors and to establish and operate operational groups of the EIP for agricultural productivity and sustainability. Co-operation among actors located in different regions or Member States can be eligible for EAFRD support. Support for basic services and village renewal in rural areas can help realizing growth potential via the development of local infrastructure and local basic services in rural areas. The farm and business development measure facilitates the initial establishment of young farmers and the structural adjustment of their agricultural holding after the initial set-up. Diversification of farmers into non-agricultural activities and the setting up and development of non-agricultural SMEs in rural areas can effectively contribute to encourage entrepreneurship in rural areas and economic developments.

Investments in infrastructure and local basic services, including access to Information and Communication Technologies and the development of fast and ultra-fast broadband is eligible for support.

Forestry is an integral part of rural development and support for sustainable and climate friendly land use is supported under various measures (forest conservation, climate services, investments improving the resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems, investments in forest area development and the viability of forests, etc.) for maintaining the sustainability of forests and their environmental value at the same time. Payments to farmers in mountain areas, compensating them for the loss of income and additional costs due to the constraints on the area, encourages continued use of agricultural land, and contribute to maintaining the countryside as well as to maintaining and promoting sustainable farming systems. Agri-environment climate payments play a prominent role in supporting the sustainable development of rural areas and respond at the same time to society's increasing demands for environmental services. The payment further encourage farmers and other land managers to serve society as a whole by introducing or continuing to apply agricultural practices that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation and that are compatible with the protection and improvement of the environment, the landscape and its features, natural resources, and the soil and genetic diversity. Support can be granted to farmers and forest holders who encounter specific disadvantages in the areas concerned due to the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and Habitat Directives.

Other funds and instruments relevant to the objectives are also available, notably Horizon 2020 for all objectives, the Connecting Europe Facility for objective 2, the LIFE programme for objective 3, as well as for mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, and, for objectives 3 and 4, the Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs (COSME) 2014-2020 and High-growth and innovation SME for objective 1. Other means are also available, like the Risk Sharing Finance Facility (RSFF) and PROGRESS.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has also a role to play in the Strategy, especially in mobilising and blending sources of finance for bankable projects. The EIB has considerable experience of cooperation with most of the countries in the Alpine Region across a range of different sectors. EIB's key role in ensuring the availability of long-term financing to key infrastructure and industrial projects is underlined by the already substantial support provided by the bank in the Region.

The bank also plays an important role in supporting investments aiming to preserve, protect and improve environmental quality. Given EIB's experience from the Baltic Sea, the Danube and (most recently) the Adriatic Ionian Strategy and its priority lending objectives, the bank is well positioned to support developments in all sectors specified in the EUSALP.

In addition to the EIB's lending activity in the Region, it provides technical and financial advisory assistance to support countries of the Region and their intergovernmental organisations. The EIB also cooperates with other International Financial Institutions active in the Region (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), World Bank, etc.) and EC project preparation facilities to build a pipeline of potential projects.

The bank's focus on growth and job creation through financing public infrastructure, SME development and support to Foreign Direct Investment has numerous spill-over effects that have a cross-cutting effect throughout the Region.

During the period 2010-2014, EIB has signed loans with various promoters (private & public companies, regions, cities etc.) for EUR 31.3 billion (credit line allocations included). The breakdown by priorities is the following: 34 % for economic activities (SMEs, RDI, services etc.), 28 % for transports & telecommunications and 38 % for environmental, urban and social infrastructures in the Alpine Region.

JASPERS (Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions) is a partnership between the European Commission (DG Regional Policy), the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The German Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW, "Reconstruction Credit Institute") also supported JASPERS from 2008 to 2013. JASPERS is active in all transport-related sectors, solid waste and energy, water and wastewater, and smart development. The latter includes RDI, ICT (notably implementation of broadband in rural areas and different types of public e-Services), and education, health, smart specialisation, smart cities and other similar contexts.

JASPERS' assistance may cover project preparation support, from identification to submission of the request for EU grant finance, independent quality review of projects, horizontal assignments, strategic support, capacity building (including a Knowledge and Learning Centre) and implementation support. The aim is to help improve the quality of the major projects to be submitted for grant financing from the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds.

Current JASPERS beneficiary Member States are those that joined the EU after 2004, Greece and three Candidate Countries (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia). Although extending JASPERS advisory function beyond the current beneficiary states is not excluded in the current programming period, so far JASPERS activity in relation to the EUSALP-Region has taken place in Slovenia.

The main sectors of JASPERS' activity in Slovenia are Water and Wastewater, including Flood Protection (18 actions) and Transport, including Roads, Rail and Airports (17 actions). The remaining actions are in the Solid Waste sector (4 actions), Smart Development (1 action in favour of the University of Ljubljana) and 1 multi-sector horizontal action (training on project applications). The total estimated cost of the major projects supported by JASPERS and submitted to the Commission for approval is about EUR 1.6 billion.

ANNEX I: EIB FINANCING 2010-2014 BY COUNTRY AND BY SECTOR

By Country

EIB signatures 2010-2014 in the Alps regions

Italy, Germany and France: operations recorded under a region concerned including part of multi-regional 'splittable' projects
Austria, Slovenia, Liechtenstein and Switzerland: all operations signed in these countries

	<i>Country (Alps regions)</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Member States</i>	<i>Austria</i>	1478.5	2020.0	1049.6	2416.6	1495.9	8460.6
	<i>France</i>	455.9	134.0	526.0	903.7	1205.4	3224.9
	<i>Germany</i>	373.0	974.2	420.9	100.5	466.6	2335.1
	<i>Italy</i>	2149.3	2393.3	1996.0	3709.7	3139.4	13387.6
	<i>Slovenia</i>	733.0	335.0	620.0	480.0	111.0	2279.0
<i>Member States</i>		5189.7	5856.4	4612.5	7610.5	6418.2	29687.3
<i>EFTA</i>	<i>Liechtenstein</i>				11.3		11.3
	<i>Switzerland</i>		30.0	31.5	32.4		93.9
<i>EFTA</i>			30.0	31.5	43.7		105.2
<i>Total</i>		5189.7	5886.4	4644.0	7654.2	6418.2	29792.5

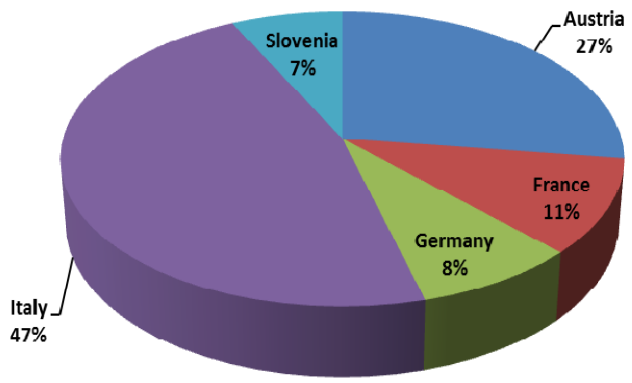
Complement for France Italy and Germany: EIB credit-line allocations 2010-2014

		<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Country - Alps regions</i>	<i>France</i>	1.1	1.3		14.2	2.8	19.4
	<i>Germany</i>	124.0	61.0	7.6	42.4	15.2	250.1
	<i>Italy</i>	564.6	105.4	334.1	112.9	93.3	1 210.3
	<i>Total</i>	689.7	167.6	341.7	169.5	111.3	1 479.8

TOTAL

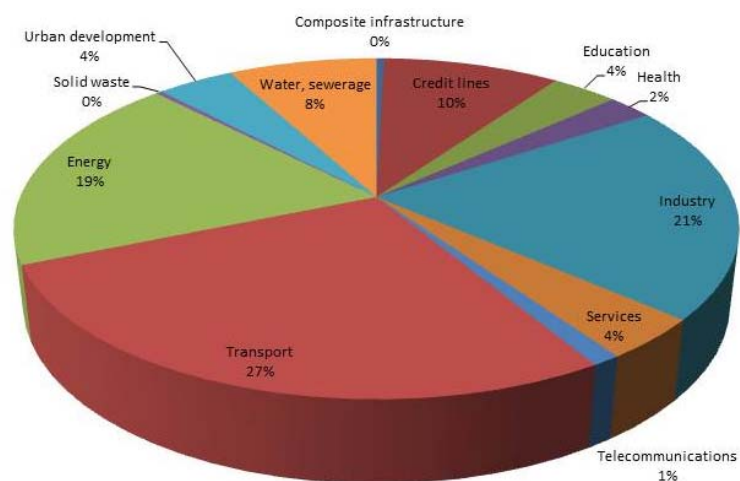
	<i>Country (Alps regions)</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Total</i>
Member States	Austria	1 478.5	2 020.0	1 049.6	2 416.6	1 495.9	8 460.6
	France	457.0	135.3	526.0	917.9	1 208.2	3 244.3
	Germany	497.0	1 035.2	428.4	142.9	481.8	2 585.2
	Italy	2 713.9	2 498.6	2 330.1	3 822.7	3 232.6	14 597.9
	Slovenia	733.0	335.0	620.0	480.0	111.0	2279.0

Member States		5 879.4	6 024.0	4 954.2	7 780.0	6 529.5	31 167.1
EFTA	Liechtenstein				11.3		11.3
	Switzerland		30.0	31.5	32.4		93.9
EFTA			30.0	31.5	43.7		105.2
Total		5 879.4	6 054.0	4 985.7	7 823.7	6 529.5	31 272.3



By Sector

Composite infrastructure	116.5	0 %
Credit lines	2 812.25	9 %
Education	1 057.9	4 %
Health	715.5	2 %
Industry	6 138.856	21 %
Services	1 167	4 %
Telecommunications	321.89	1 %
Transport	8 145.637	27 %
Energy	5 637.339	19 %
Solid waste	101.9375	0 %
Urban development	1 214.8	4 %
Water, sewerage	2 362.9	8 %
TOTAL	29 792.51	
<i>By priorities</i>		
Economy	10 118.11	34 %
Education & Health & Others	1 889.9	6 %
TOTAL 1	12 008.01	40 %
Transports	8 145.637	27 %
Telecommunications	321.89	1 %
TOTAL 2	8467.527	28 %
Energy	5 637.339	19 %
Environment & Urban development	3 679.638	12 %
TOTAL 3	9 316.977	31 %
TOTAL	29 792.51	
Economy	10 118.11	34 %
Transports & telecommunications	8 467.527	28 %
Env. urban & social infrastructures	11 206.88	38 %



ANNEX II: MAP SHOWING THE AREAS OF EUSALP, ALPINE SPACE PROGRAMME AND ALPINE CONVENTION

