

Brdo Joint Statement on the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)

Brdo, 25 January 2016

We, representatives of the National and Regional Governments of Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Switzerland,

BASED on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning a European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region¹ and the accompanying Action Plan;

GUIDED by the Council conclusions² on the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region of 27 November 2015;

RECALLING the potential of macro-regional strategies as an integrated framework relating to Member States and Regions, including non-EU countries, as well as to international organisations and the civil society in the same geographical area in order to address common challenges, to benefit from strengthened cooperation, to contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy objectives, particularly the promotion of growth and jobs;

CONVINCED that macro-regional strategies are an instrument aimed at the optimal use of existing financial resources, better coordination among existing institutions and improved implementation of existing legislation;

BEING AWARE that the Strategy will affect around 80 million people living in 48 regions in seven States, of which five are EU Member States and two are non-EU countries.

NOTING that the Alpine Region comprises some of the most dynamic European regions and should build on its high competitiveness and enhance existing opportunities;

CONVINCED that the active cooperation of all interested international, national, regional and local organisations and communities in areas where actions of mutual benefit can be identified are synergy-oriented, promoting concrete achievements and value-added results;

AGREEING that, to ensure adequate visibility, communication and awareness raising about the Strategy's objectives and desired results, the involvement of all actors in their different roles is required;

¹ COM (2015) 366 final

² 14613/15

ARE SATISFIED with the efficient implementation of the European Council Conclusions of 19–20 December 2013 and the progress made in the preparation, public consultation and endorsement of the Strategy and its Action Plan;

EXPRESS sincere thanks to the European Commission for its continuous support during all preparatory phases of the EUSALP and for its commitment to continue working side-by-side with the Participating States and Regions as well as international organisations and civil society in the Alpine Region during the implementation phase and for ensuring that the Strategy is taken into account in relevant EU policy initiatives and programmes;

ACKNOWLEDGE the validity of the principle of multilevel governance of the macro-regional strategy outlined in the Commission Report³ and in accordance with the Grenoble Political resolution⁴ and Milan Declaration⁵ involving three interrelated levels: (i) political leadership and ownership (ii) coordination and (iii) implementation;

UNDERLINE that governance is a shared process and that the implementation of the Strategy relies on a collective effort on the part of the participating actors in their different roles in the implementation of the Strategy;

INVITE the European Commission to retain the coordinating role for the Strategy and establish synergies among existing EU Macro-regional strategies and EU Programmes, especially those directly managed by the Commission.

WE

- COMMIT TO ENSURING the necessary political ownership and leadership demonstrated through the EUSALP General Assembly strategic orientation. We agree to continue the exchange started at Brdo today, to sustain momentum and whenever required, support at the political level;
- AGREE that fully-fledged ownership in the participating States and Regions requires an active commitment by all relevant line ministers and regional bodies; in this respect, the key implementers of the Strategy (notably national coordinators and action group leaders) will be duly empowered and the conditions established for them to undertake their tasks;
- COMMIT to implementing the EUSALP and invite international, national, regional and local actors as well as stakeholders to contribute to the achievement of the EUSALP objectives. With the support of the European Commission, the partners involved should identify ways to ensure closer coordination with existing activities and programmes in the area.

³ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the governance of macro-regional strategies – 20.05.2014 - COM(2014) 284 final

⁴ Political resolution towards a European Union Strategy for the Alpine region of 18 October 2013

⁵ Milan Declaration of the Alpine States and Regions of 1 December 2014

- APPRECIATE and PRAISE the valuable work carried out by the Steering Committee members and ENCOURAGE them to continue their efficient and dedicated work as Executive Board members;
- MANDATE the Executive Board to supervise and coordinate the translation of the objectives and priorities laid down in the Strategy into concrete actions, and to regularly report to the General Assembly on how this work is proceeding. The Executive Board is also mandated to report on possible proposals emanating from the Action Groups regarding possible revisions of the priorities laid down in the Strategy;
- CONFIRM that the Action Groups are a prerequisite for effectively implementing the actions of the Strategy and therefore ENDORSE the proposed leadership of the Action Groups;
- ENCOURAGE the Action Groups to use the existing networks in the Alpine Region and capitalise on the results achieved by cooperative projects in the Alpine region;
- EMPHASISE the need for the appointed Action Group Leaders to ensure the strategic coordination of all relevant actors; to effectively cooperate with sectorial ministries in all levels; to actively involve stakeholders from the Alpine Region, including parliaments, regional governments and civil society, and to make the best use of the national, cross-border and Transnational EU Programmes, including for governance and implementation support.

ACKNOWLEDGE that the Strategy builds on long experience of many cooperative structures already operating in the areas such as the Alpine Convention, the Alpine Space INTERREG Programme and other *ad hoc* structures, and on the lessons from the existing macro-regional strategies;

REGISTER with satisfaction that in Slovenia three EU macro-regional strategies meet: the Danube, the Adriatic Ionian and the Alpine macro-region, and ENTRUST Slovenia with the EUSALP presidency in 2016.

EXPRESS willingness to cooperate on the smooth commencement of the implementation of the Strategy, beginning with a successful launch event at Brdo.