Alpine Green Infrastructure –

Joining forces for nature, people and the economy

Joint declaration of Alpine States and Regions

Munich, October 2, 2017

Bavarian State Ministry of the
Environment and Consumer Protection

Interreg
Alpine Space
AlpGov

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BAYERN 2017
PRESIDENCY

EUSALP
EU STRATEGY FOR
THE ALPINE REGION

80 million people, 7 countries, 48 regions, mountains and plains addressing together common challenges and opportunities

The Alpine region

The Alpine region is characterized by a wide range of natural, cultural and geographic features. Its richness and beauty are values of their own. They are assets for various ecosystem services, also thanks to a sustainable land use, and thus indispensable components of a green economy and a healthy environment. Current challenges like climate change, loss of biodiversity, depopulation and land abandonment, agglomeration and landscape fragmentation call for political leadership for sustainably leading the Alpine region into the future – for the benefits of nature, people and the economy.

A strategically planned and coherently managed network of Green Infrastructure aims at securing the continuous provision of these benefits offered in rural and urban settings for present and future generations. In close collaboration with involved stakeholders and through improving cross-territorial coordination such a network intends to valorize existing Green Infrastructure elements and support the further deployment or restoration of high quality environmental spaces to jointly close strategic gaps in the setting up of the Alpine Green Infrastructure network.

We, the representatives of the states and regions in the territory of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP),

having regard to

- the European Parliament resolution on cohesion policy in mountainous regions of the EU, outlining that the entirety of the EU depends on the ecosystem services being provided by the European Mountainous Regions[1];

- the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy [2] stressing that, "by 2020, ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing Green Infrastructure and restoring at least 15 % of degraded ecosystems";

- the EU Strategy for Green Infrastructure [3] which aims at promoting the development of Green Infrastructure across the EU for delivering economic, social and ecological benefits and contributing to sustainable growth;

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[1] European Parliament resolution of 10 May 2016 on cohesion policy in mountainous regions of the EU

[2] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions titled "Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020", COM(2011) 244 final, 2011

[3] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions titled "Green Infrastructure (GI) – Enhancing Europe's Natural Capital", SWD(2013) 155 final, 2013

- the Alpine Convention and particularly its Protocols "Nature protection and landscape conservation" [4] calling for the creation of a national and cross-border network of protected areas, biotopes and other environmental assets; "Mountain Farming"[5] and "Mountain Forests"[6] emphasizing the importance of sustainable management of mountain pastures and forests by farmers and forest owners; and the recent Report on the State of the Alps "Greening the Economy in the Alpine region" [7] calling for the consideration of ecosystems and biodiversity as an economic asset in the Alpine area;

- the Action Plan for nature, people and the economy[8] calling for a strategic framework for further supporting the deployment of EU-level Green Infrastructure, with a view to contribute to the goals of the Nature Directives so as to enhance the delivery of essential ecosystem services throughout the EU territory and for exploring how nature-based solutions can contribute to building up a spatial and functional network of Green Infrastructure at European level with Natura 2000 at its core;

- the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 recognizing that ecological values, environmental quality and cultural assets are crucial to well-being, health and to economic prospects and that territorial integration and cooperation can create a critical mass for diminishing economic, social and ecological fragmentation[9];

- the Joint declaration of the General Assembly of the EUSALP of February 13, 2017 [10] calling, based on the EUSALP Action Plan, for "Establishing the Alpine region as a model region for the development of a European Network for Green Infrastructure (TEN-G)" and entrusting EUSALP actors to implement these focus topics to the best of their ability;

jointly declare:

[4] Protocol on the implementation of the Alpine Convention of 1991 relating to nature protection and landscape conservation – Protocol "Nature protection and landscape conservation", 1994

[5] Protocol on the implementation of the 1991 Alpine Convention in the field of mountain farming – Mountain Farming Protocol, 2016

[6] Protocol on the implementation of the Alpine Convention relating to mountain forests – "Mountain Forests" Protocol, 1996

[7] Report on the State of the Alps titled "Greening the Economy in the Alpine region", Alpine Signals – Special Edition 6, 2017

[8] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions titled "An Action Plan for nature, people and the economy", COM(2017) 198 final, 2017

[9] Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 – Towards an Inclusive, Smart and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions, 2011

[10] Joint declaration on the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP), February 13, 2017

Emphasizing the benefits of Green Infrastructure

1. We recognize that realizing an Alpine Green Infrastructure, as a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and being coordinated in a cross-border way, is an appropriate instrument to enhance synergies among various policy fields and therefore ensure sustainable and livable future development for the benefit of nature, people and the economy for present and future generations.

2. We consider Green Infrastructure as important also in urban and metropolitan areas, in which around 75 % of the EU population lives, so as to interlink urban, peri-urban and rural areas and to provide appealing and healthy places to live and to work in.

3. We shall therefore give Green Infrastructure greater awareness in European, national, regional and local policies; and highly welcome the EU Strategy on Green Infrastructure as well as the accompanying initiatives taken by the European Commission to support Green Infrastructure deployment throughout the EU.

Making the Alpine region a model region for Green Infrastructure

4. We consider the Alpine region with its unique features and the already elaborated comprehensive knowledge as an appropriate model region for further developing an Alpine Green Infrastructure, also with a view to mutually inspire implementation of Green Infrastructure in other mountain areas or by other EU macro-regional strategies in Europe.

5. We welcome the initiative of the Alpine network of protected areas by including its core areas into an Alpine Green Infrastructure system; and particularly stress that this Alpine Green Infrastructure network shall also encompass non-protected areas in the whole EUSALP territory so as to ensure structural and functional landscape connectivity.

6. We recognize a multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholders approach with an active and early involvement of stakeholders as crucial for the success of the initiatives developed in this framework, in order to sustainably ensure the continued provision of ecosystem services and at the same time fostering socio-economic benefits and encouraging sustainable land-use practices.

Providing appropriate governance and financing mechanisms

7. We commit to mobilize resources for the implementation of an Alpine Green Infrastructure to the best of our abilities and to acting as ambassadors for integrating Green Infrastructure into other sectors; we declare our willingness to intensify transnational and cross-territorial cooperation and to embed our national and regional Green Infrastructure policies into a coherent European Green Infrastructure network while explicitly including non-EU-member states.

8. We will jointly act to strengthen the ability of regions and stakeholders to invest in capacity building and to create green jobs based on Green Infrastructure deployment.

9. We expect with high interest the guidance, being under preparation by the European Commission, aimed at providing a strategic framework for further supporting the deployment of EU-level Green Infrastructure including the development of selection criteria for projects of European interest; and we call for an active involvement of regions in this initiative.

10. We emphasize the necessity for making better use of existing funds especially through integrating different funding sources, fostering synergies of national and regional funds with funds under shared management of the EU and Member States as well as centrally managed EU funds; for simplifications in the application process; and for better mainstreaming Green Infrastructure requirements in the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework post 2020.

11. We call on the European Commission to further pursue the approach of developing a TEN-G instrument and to establish appropriate financing mechanisms, especially supporting cross-territorial and cross-sectoral implementation and governance.

Taking further action for implementing Alpine Green Infrastructure

12. We entrust EUSALP Action Group 7 with the task of supporting the positioning of the Alpine region as a candidate for a EU-level Green Infrastructure by

    - identifying priority areas of trans-European importance as Alpine segments of an European Green Infrastructure network taking into account existing networks,

    - developing criteria for selecting those priority areas and related EU relevant Alpine Green Infrastructure projects,

    - setting up pilot cases of EU relevant Alpine Green Infrastructure projects to elaborate appropriate governance mechanisms for an improved transnational and cross-sectoral coordination, based on comparable experiences, such as the existing Trans-European Networks,

    - initiating – on a voluntary basis – together with diverse sectors and stakeholders, including land owners, concrete implementation measures on the spot to close strategic gaps in the Alpine Green Infrastructure network, to explore appropriate funding schemes and to support inter-communal/regional cooperation,

    - promoting dialogue with and, if appropriate, participation of relevant stakeholders, involving civil society, and building upon the knowledge gained e. g. by the Alpine Convention and its Working Groups and Platforms, such as the Platform Ecological Network and its Pilot Regions, the results of Green Infrastructure projects relevant for the Alpine region, as well as knowledge gained at EU level in supporting the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020.

13. We explicitly welcome the initiative of the Alpine cities and metropolitan areas to build up a network focusing on Green Infrastructure and encourage all EUSALP states and regions to support this network in its efforts to continue to strengthen the multi-level cooperation with EUSALP bodies; and we also encourage the Alpine cities network to develop and strengthen cooperation with other Green Infrastructure related to urban initiatives in Europe.

14. We emphasize the importance of cooperation with other mountain ranges in Europe and invite EUSALP Action Group 7 to organize – in cooperation with Alpine states and regions, the European Commission, the Alpine cities and metropolitan areas network, the Alpine Network of Protected Areas as well as partners from all EU macro-regional strategies – further exchanges on European Green Infrastructure.

15. We ask the future EUSALP Presidencies to pursue efforts towards establishing an Alpine Green Infrastructure.

Done at Munich, October 2, 2017

Österreich

Kärnten

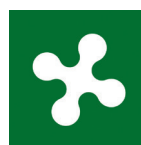**Salzburg**

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