



Summary of the 1st Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region 23-24 November 2017, Munich

The 1st Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) marked the closure and was at the same time the peak event of the Bavarian EUSALP presidency. It aimed at taking stock of the results of the work made during the year 2017 and presenting them to a wider public including citizens. In addition, it intended to pave the way for the future development of the youngest of the 4 EU macro-regional strategies (MRS) and to actively contribute to discussions on a better embedding of MRS into the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework.

The Forum's overall concept was, based on the preparatory work of the previous Slovenian EUSALP presidency,

- to set political landmarks for current developments, particularly the question of a better embedding of MRS in recent and future EU national and regional policies,
- to join experts and forces for properly implementing the EUSALP Action Plan and the work plans of the Action Groups,
- to support the work of the Action Groups through triggering cross sectoral cooperation and providing access to financial resources for implementation activities,
- to offer formats for facilitating multilevel governance,
- to involve youth and citizens on the ground and
- to generally improve dialogue on EU topics.

Nearly 600 representatives from politics, administration, academia, associations, civil society and citizens came together at the BMW Welt in a wide range of formats and in an innovative and stimulating location.

General Assembly

As a political steering board of the Alpine Strategy, the General Assembly discussed main outcomes of the Bavarian Presidency year and adopted a Joint declaration

- endorsing a list of implementation priorities from the Action Group Work Plans,
- committing to a targeted use of the available legal and financial instruments while
- welcoming the strong support from the European Parliament and the European Commission.

Embedding macro-regional strategies into the post 2020 EU framework

“Embedding of the MRS” was a permanent topic under Bavarian presidency in the year 2017, starting with a workshop in Brussels in January. A position paper on embedding was elaborated under Bavarian Coordination and presented to Commissioner Crețu in March 2017 followed by a meeting with the Friends of the European Parliament in May 2017 and various presentations during the year. As a consequence, the Forum dedicated two slots to that topic, more politically in a plenary session and more technically in a workshop. The main findings are as follows:

- MRS matter! After some years of experiences and positive results, they are accepted as an important European policy instrument.
- On the contrary to this notion, their role is not sufficiently reflected in the Multiannual Financial Framework. All participants welcomed the engagement of the EUSALP in that respect and call upon. A window of opportunity is open now when post 2020 EU Framework and legislative documents are being prepared in 2018.
- All political levels are requested to – according to their responsibility – better strive for aligning their policies for the benefit of the strategies.
- Funding instruments need to be radically simplified and aligned to the needs of MRS.

Taking stock of the Bavarian EUSALP Presidency 2017

Part of the opening plenary session of the Annual Forum was a political panel discussion to take stock of the Bavarian EUSALP Presidency 2017 in the context of the Trio Presidency Slovenia-Bavaria-Tyrol. As the first presidency after the adoption of EUSALP, Slovenia has laid the foundations for cooperation within the strategy by setting up governance structures and procedures. Bavaria has built upon this work by identifying first political priorities for the actual implementation of the strategy together with its partners in the Alpine region, with

concrete results and milestones visible in all nine Action Groups by the end of its presidency term. The upcoming presidency Tyrol 2018 will continue these efforts to implement the strategy on the basis of its presidency work programme.

EUSALP Youth Conference

In cooperation with the GAYA project funded by Interreg Alpine Space and the Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention students from Alpine schools was given the opportunity to formulate recommendations for future involvement of youth in policy making processes in a separate Youth for EUSALP Conference in the morning and to present and to discuss their results in the plenary session with politicians. Among others, the youth representatives were calling for

- improving possibilities to participate in decision making processes,
- getting better feedback on their recommendations,
- finding permanent format to present their views.

All in all, the involvement of youth representatives in such a format was highly appreciated by participants and should be foreseen also in the future.

EUSALP Exhibition

In order to facilitate exchange with stakeholders and citizens an exhibition took place in the form of a market square. All 9 Action Groups together with the European Commission, the Bavarian EUSALP Presidency, the Alpine Convention and Interreg Alpine Space presented themselves at specifically designed stands, some of the complemented with special exhibits and events like 3D-printer, model of a wood-built high-rise building, mini holodeck, car door made from bio-material, augmented reality sandbox, Alpine Convention parcours, selfie box or a presentation of mountaineering villages. This exhibition proved to be very attractive. In addition to strategy stakeholders, citizens used the opportunity to get informed about the various activities and to get familiar with the goals and practical results of EUSALP during two days.

Citizens Dialogue

As a side event, the European Commission held a Citizens Dialogue. European Citizens was given the possibility to exchange their views and suggestions for European topics. Also here, a lot of young people coming from secondary schools all over the Alps attended. Participants were raising very practical questions on their daily live like transport, demography and regional development.

Award Ceremony • Alpine Region Preparatory Action Fund (ARPAF)

The European Parliament decided to provide up to 2 Million Euro for preparatory actions contributing to implement the EUSALP Action Plan. At the occasion of the Annual Forum 5 selected projects dealing with sustainable mobility (1), demographic change (1) and circular economy (3) have been awarded in a ceremony and can start their activities in early 2018.

Workshops

The workshops held at the Forum can be divided in two parts. One part was addressing more general issues. Among them, the issue of a better embedding of macro-regional strategies into the post 2020 EU framework was addressed two times. In addition, to a political session a more political session (see above) concrete practical examples how to achieve a better embedding have been discussed (see single workshop reports on the result page of the Forum). Two further cross-sectoral workshops were addressing the mutual stereotypes between urban and mountain regions in Europe and the issue of communication. It turned out that the engagement and interconnectedness of the responsible actors counts more than economic strength or geographical position and that the further work of EUSALP implementation should therefore concentrate on empowerment of people to activate the potentials in the sense of an “Extended Alps” concept. Main result of the latter one was that the communication of the MRS as such is practically impossible but to communicate real outcomes of concrete results is much more promising and leads finally perception back to the MRS concept.

The other workshops were dealing with topics of the Action Groups, not only showcasing the current state of play in the Action Groups but also encouraging the cooperation of (two and more) Action Groups. Based on takings stock of the achievements made in 2017, further activities have been discussed (see single workshop reports on the result page of the Forum).

Photo Competition "Us & The Alps"

After being officially launched at the General Assembly on 13th February 2017 by Bavarian State Minister Dr. Beate Merk, the photo competition “Us & The Alps” concluded in an award ceremony at the occasion of the Annual Forum. With almost 250 photos submitted through Social Media channels by participants from all over the 48 EUSALP regions, the photo competition has been a great success. The proud winners of the three competition categories received a precious camera set by Bavarian State Minister Dr. Beate Merk.