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*Plenary sitting*

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**A8-0226/2016**

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# REPORT

on an EU Strategy for the Alpine region  
(2015/2324(INI))

Committee on Regional Development

Rapporteur: Mercedes Bresso

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on an EU Strategy for the Alpine region (2015/2324(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Articles 192, 265(5) and 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the Commission communication concerning the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (COM(2015)0366) and the accompanying action plan and supporting analytical document,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 (the Common Provisions Regulation or CPR)<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 of 17 December 2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) as regards the clarification, simplification and improvement of the establishment and functioning of such groupings<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the Action Plan of 28 July 2015 accompanying the communication concerning a European Union strategy for the Alpine Region (SWD(2015)0147),
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 19 and 20 December 2013 on the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region,
- having regard to the report of 28 July 2015 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 Region (SWD(2015)0147), and to the relevant Council conclusions of 19 and 20 December 2013,
- having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 8 October 2015 on the Commission communication concerning a European Union

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 259.

<sup>3</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 303.

strategy for the Alpine Region (COM(2015)0366),

- having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 3 December 2014 on an Alpine macro-regional strategy for the European Union (CDR 2994/2014),
- having regard to its resolution of 3 July 2012 on the evolution of EU macro-regional strategies: present practice and future prospects, especially in the Mediterranean<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 23 May 2013 on the evolution of a EU macro-regional strategy for the Alps<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to the report of 20 May 2014 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 (COM(2014)0284),
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 26 January 2011 entitled ‘Regional policy contributing to sustainable growth in Europe 2020’ (COM(2011)0017),
- having regard to Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment,
- having regard to Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment,
- having regard to Council Decision 2005/370/EC of 17 February 2005 on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Community, of the Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters (Aarhus Convention),
- having regard to the launch conference on the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region held in Brdo (Slovenia) on 25 and 26 January 2016,
- having regard to the stakeholder conference on the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region, held in Innsbruck on 17 September 2014,
- having regard to the stakeholder conference on the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region, held in Milan on 1 and 2 December 2014,
- having regard to the Council decision of 26 February 1996 (96/191/EC) concerning the conclusion of the Convention on the Protection of the Alps (Alpine Convention),
- having regard to the Commission’s summary report on the public consultation on the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region,

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2012)0269.

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0229.

- having regard to the expression of stakeholder views contained in the ‘Political Resolution towards a European Strategy for the Alpine Region’ adopted in Grenoble on 18 October 2013,
  - having regard to the study entitled ‘New Role of Macro-Regions in European Territorial Cooperation’, published in January 2015 by the European Parliament’s Directorate-General for Internal Policies (Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies),
  - having regard to the Commission white paper of 1 April 2009 entitled ‘Adapting to climate change: Towards a European framework for action’ (COM(2009)0147),
  - having regard to the Commission’s Innovation Union Scoreboard for 2015,
  - having regard to the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled ‘Green Infrastructure (GI) - Enhancing Europe’s Natural Capital’ (COM(2013)0249),
  - having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on European Territorial Cooperation (ETC),
  - having regard to the Commission guidance document of 2014 entitled ‘Enabling synergies between European Structural and Investment Funds, Horizon 2020 and other research, innovation, and competitiveness-related Union programmes’,
  - having regard to the Commission communication of 26 November 2014 to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank entitled ‘An Investment Plan for Europe’ (COM(2014)0903),
  - having regard to the conference in Innsbruck on 17 September 2014 entitled ‘Towards the European Strategy for the Alpine Region’,
  - having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 3 December 2014 on an Alpine macro-regional strategy for the European Union,
  - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinions of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, the Committee on Transport and Tourism and the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (A8-0226/2016),
- A. whereas in order to promote an overall harmonious development, economic, social and territorial cohesion across the EU needs to be strengthened;
- B. whereas macro-regional strategies are the current fundamental tool for contributing to the objective of economic, social and territorial cohesion; whereas these strategies are supported under the principle of the ‘three no’s’, i.e. no new legislation, no new funding and no new institutions;

- C. whereas the macro-regional strategy for the Alps could help to reverse the economic decline through investment in research, innovation and business support, taking into account the region's unique characteristics and assets;
- D. whereas the objective of macro-regional strategies should be to better achieve common goals of different regions by a voluntary and coordinated approach without entailing the creation of additional regulation;
- E. whereas climate change is happening at a faster rate in the Alpine region than the global average and is leading increasingly to natural disasters such as avalanches and floods;
- F. whereas the macro-regional strategy seeks to identify resources and exploit the regions' shared development potential;
- G. whereas macro-regional strategies represent a model of multi-level governance in which the involvement of stakeholders representing local, regional and national levels is essential for the success of the strategies; whereas mutual cooperation between different macro-regions should be encouraged in order to improve their policy coherence in line with European goals;
- H. whereas macro-regional strategies can contribute to the development of cross-border strategies and international projects for the creation of cooperation networks benefiting the region as a whole;
- I. whereas the regional identities and the cultural heritage, notably the popular cultures and the customs, of the Alpine region deserve special protection;
- J. whereas the strong bottom-up approach adopted by the regions of the Alpine area has led to the development of the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP), aimed at effectively addressing challenges that are common to the entire Alpine region;
- K. whereas the Alpine region plays an important role for the economic development of Member States and provides numerous ecosystem services for the urban and peri-urban areas adjoining it;
- L. whereas the macro-strategy for the Alpine region will affect 80 million people living in 48 regions in seven countries, of which five are EU Member States (Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia) and two are non-EU countries (Liechtenstein and Switzerland);
- M. whereas the EU Strategy for the Alpine region must reconcile environmental sustainability and economic development, in a natural environment area which is also a major tourist destination;
- N. whereas depopulation is the main problem of some Alpine areas and most inhabitants of the Alpine region cannot survive solely on Alpine tourism, and therefore need to further develop agriculture, forestry and other environment-friendly industries and services;
- O. whereas considerable differences exist between regions included in the strategy, and

therefore coordination of policies and sectors is required between different regions (horizontally) as well as within individual regions (vertically);

- P. whereas the Alpine region possesses unique geographical and natural features, and constitutes an interconnected macro-region and transit region which has substantial potential for development; whereas, however, specific responses are needed to challenges arising from environmental, demographic, transport, tourism and energy-related issues, seasonality and multi-activity, and coordinated territorial planning could produce better results and added value for territorial cohesion in Alpine and peri-Alpine areas;
- Q. whereas the Alpine region is Europe's 'water tower' and the Alps supply enough water to provide up to 90 % of the needs of the foothill areas in summer; whereas water is important for hydroelectricity, the irrigation of agricultural land, the sustainable management of forests, preserving biodiversity and the landscape and providing drinking water; whereas it is essential to preserve the quality of waters and the low water levels of rivers in the Alps and to find a fair balance between the interests of local populations and the needs of the environment;
- R. whereas the Alpine region is criss-crossed by borders, and tackling these barriers is a prerequisite for cooperation in this area, for the free movement of people, services, goods and capital and thus for economic, social and environmental interaction; whereas the Alpine strategy also provides an opportunity to strengthen cross-border cooperation, create links and networks connecting people and economic activities, and thus dismantle the borders and the barriers they create;
- S. whereas in its communication on the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region the Commission points both to the need to reduce the impact of transport across the Alps, so as to preserve the Alpine environmental heritage, and to the importance of implementing a strategy to deliver a healthier and better preserved living environment for local people;
- T. whereas the free movement of people is a fundamental right and a prerequisite – particularly in border areas – for achieving the goals of economic, social, territorial and environmental cohesion, strong and sustainable competitiveness and equitable access to employment;
- U. whereas the EUSALP territory comprises the mountain areas at its heart and the peri-Alpine areas, including metropolitan areas, which are linked together by close interactions and functional relationships, all of which influence economic, social and environmental development;
- V. whereas this region with preserved ecosystems and its services can provide a basis for many economic activities, with the emphasis on farming, forestry, tourism and energy, taking into account the cultural and natural heritage of the region;
- W. whereas the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region, as the first macro-regional strategy relating to a mountain area, can be a model and an inspiration for other mountain areas in the EU;

- X. whereas earlier EU macro-regional strategies have proved the success of a cooperation arrangement of this type and have provided useful experience for drawing up new macro-regional strategies;

### **General considerations and governance**

1. Welcomes the communication from the Commission concerning the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region and the accompanying Action Plan; believes this is a step forward for the development of the region in line with the Europe 2020 objective of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth; notes that the Strategy and the Action Plan can play a significant role in efforts to counter the depopulation of the region, especially the outflow of young people;
2. Highlights the valuable experience gained in the implementation of the Alpine Convention, which balances out economic, social and environmental interests; calls on the participating countries to respect the agreements reached and to maintain a high level of commitment for the sustainable development and protection of the Alps;
3. Welcomes the fact that the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) offer potentially significant resources and a wide range of tools and options for the Strategy; calls for greater synergies to promote coordination and complementarities between the ESIF and other funds and instruments relevant to the Strategy pillars, notably Horizon 2020, the Connecting Europe Facility, the LIFE programme, the COSME programme for SMEs, the Interreg Alpine Space Programme and the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), for which the Commission should investigate the possible added value of specific calls focused on the particular challenges of the Alpine region;
4. Calls on the Commission and on the national, regional and local bodies which are responsible for the preparation, management and implementation of ESIF programmes to stress the importance of macro-regional projects and actions; expects an increased coactivity through the coordination of those EU policies, programmes and strategies that play a role in the Alps, and invites the Commission to scrutinise the practical application of the programmes in question in order to avoid overlap and maximise complementarity and added value; calls on the Commission, in addition, to ensure ease of access to the relevant documents, both for European citizens and Member States' institutions, with a view to providing full transparency concerning the procedure to be followed;
5. Reiterates the importance of the 'three No's' principle, given that macro-regions are frameworks that build on the added value of cooperation initiatives and synergies between different EU funding instruments;
6. Calls on the Member States' competent authorities and the participating regions to align their national and regional policies and funding arrangements, wherever possible, to the EUSALP actions and objectives, and to adapt their adopted operational programmes in order to ensure that future projects under the EUSALP strategy are promptly implemented and that managing authorities take due account of EUSALP priorities when implementing the operational programmes (e.g. by way of dedicated calls, bonus points or budget earmarking); calls for the enhancing of the macro-regional approach, ahead of the post-2020 reform of cohesion policy, and underlines the importance of



integrated macro-regional projects and measures;

7. Calls on the EIB, in cooperation with the Commission, to examine the possibility of setting up an investment platform for the Alpine region that would enable mobilisation of funding from public and private sources; calls for the creation of a project pipeline for the region which would attract investors; in this context, encourages the Commission, the EIB and the participating countries to fully exploit the possibilities available under the EFSI so as to finance projects in the region with a view to bringing about sustainable development and economic growth and stimulating employment at macro-regional level;
8. Stresses the need for appropriate information campaigns regarding the EU strategy for Alpine region, and encourages the Member States to ensure that the strategy has a sufficiently high profile and that its aims and outcomes are adequately communicated at all levels, including cross-border and international levels; calls for the promotion of coordination and exchanges of best practices in the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies, especially in the field of managing natural and cultural heritage with the intention of creating sustainable tourist opportunities;
9. Calls for the setting-up at macro-regional level of a supporting implementation structure for the governing bodies of EUSALP, in cooperation and agreement with the Commission, Member States and regions; furthermore welcomes Parliament's representation on its governing bodies, and believes that Parliament should be involved in the monitoring of the strategy's implementation;
10. Calls for an active role for the Commission in the implementation phase of EUSALP; believes that it should be involved alongside the Member States and regions, on a shared management basis and in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, at all stages in the planning and implementation of projects coming under the strategy, not least in order to ensure the effective participation of local and regional stakeholders from public authorities, economic and social partners and organisations representing civil society concerning the macro-region and proper coordination with other EU-supported strategies and funding arrangements;
11. Calls for the implementation of EUSALP to be evaluated by the Commission, with objective criteria and measurable indicators;
12. Supports strategic planning among both urban and rural areas of the Alpine region, with a view to promoting networking and common targets in a coherent, coordinated and integrated policy framework (e.g. with reference to renewable energies, welfare, logistics, and business and social innovation); encourages the pooling of best practice on, e.g., sustainable tourism among regions, as well as with other existing macro-regional strategies;
13. Insists that for the decision-making procedures local and regional authorities, in partnership with local and regional civil society, should have a leading role in the managing bodies and in the operational, technical and implementing bodies of the Strategy, in full respect of the principles of subsidiarity and multi-level governance;
14. Considers that investment should be channelled towards equal and effective access to

healthcare and to first aid units and emergency assistance for the whole population of the region, especially in rural areas, so as to prevent depopulation;

15. Calls on the Commission to submit, every two years, a report on the implementation of EUSALP to the Parliament and the Council, based on objective criteria and measurable indicators, in order to assess its functioning and its added value in terms of growth and jobs, reduction of disparities and sustainable development;
16. Calls on the participating countries to continue their efforts to diversify energy supply sources, taking account of the environment; underlines the need for sustainability, competitiveness and modernisation in respect of the existing hydropower infrastructure, which was developed at a very early stage, while taking into account the impact that hydropower infrastructures can have on the environment and on geology, as well as promoting small (mini, micro and pico) ones; stresses that the integrated management and protection of water resources is one of the keys to sustainable development of the Alps and that, therefore, the local population should be able to commit to hydropower and use the added value it generates; calls on the participating countries to contribute to well-functioning networks in the macro-region, in order to ensure security of supply and set up structures for the exchange of best practices on cross-border cooperation;
17. Stresses the need to strengthen further the social dimension, in order to ensure the pursuit of a growth model that can secure sustainable growth, social inclusion and social protection for all, in particular in border areas; in this context, underlines the importance of setting priorities and taking measures against any form of discrimination;
18. Recalls the principle of universal access to public services, to be guaranteed in all territories of the EU, in particular in the areas of education, healthcare, social services and mobility and paying particular attention to the needs of people with disabilities; stresses the need for the participating countries to encourage alternative and innovative solutions for the Alpine region in the provision of public services, including tailor-made solutions adapted to local and regional needs; in this context, calls on the participating countries to elaborate incentives for the development of public-private partnerships; recalls, however, the principles of affordability and accessibility of quality public services for all;
19. Is concerned at the degradation of ecosystems and the risk of natural disasters in certain parts of the Alpine region; stresses the need to apply full natural disaster risk management and climate change adaptation strategies; underlines the need to develop and implement common contingency plans in response to cross-border pollution; calls for the establishment of joint rapid response teams for tourist areas affected by natural disasters such as mudslides, landslides and flooding; in this context, points to the need to better promote the EU Civil Protection Mechanism;

### **Jobs, economic growth and innovation**

20. Calls on the EIB, in cooperation with the Commission, to examine the possibility of setting up an investment platform for the Alpine region that would enable mobilisation of funding from public and private sources; calls for the creation of a pipeline project for the region which would attract investors;

21. Acknowledges that the Alpine regions have an environmental heritage which needs to be preserved, with their vast reserve of natural landscapes, as well as having an extraordinary variety of ecosystems, ranging from upland to lowland and even to the Mediterranean coasts, thus enabling an economic area and biosphere based on coexistence between nature and humans; highlights, therefore, the need for active synergistic cooperation between farming and other economic activities in protected areas (Natura 2000 sites, national parks, etc), in order to develop integrated tourism products, as well as the importance of preserving and protecting the unique habitats of mountain regions;
22. Highlights the opportunities opened up by the strategy for the development of its labour market, which has/sees different important levels of cross-border commuting; considers that increasing the qualifications of the workforce and creating new jobs in the green economy should be part of the investment priorities of the Alpine strategy; underlines however that SMEs – very often family businesses, such as small farmholdings and small processing enterprises – in agriculture, tourism, commerce, crafts and manufacturing form the core of economic activity in an integrated and sustainable way in the Alpine region, and thus constitute the backbone of the living, cultural and natural environment in the Alps and an important source of employment; underlines the need for further diversification of economic activities and employment opportunities in the Alpine region;
23. Highlights the need to prioritise investment in digital infrastructures and the importance of ensuring quick and efficient access to high-speed internet, and, thereby, to digital and online services, such as e-commerce and the use of digital market channels and teleworking, as well as other opportunities for people living in areas remote from large urban centres, while promoting where possible alternatives to physical travel;
24. Considers that innovation and the use of new technologies in key areas of the economy, driven by smart specialisation strategies and financed by existing EU funding sources (e.g. the ERDF, the ESF, COSME, Horizon 2020 or Erasmus +), could help generate quality jobs in strategic sectors, such as life sciences, the bioeconomy, energy, organic products, new materials or e-services; recalls the importance of ensuring strong backing for SMEs, which could help reverse the current depopulation trend observed in certain areas and territories of the Alpine region;
25. Calls on the competent authorities of the Alpine Member States and regions to come together with the Commission to look into the feasibility of carrying out during the next programming period a joint programme (based on Article 185 TFEU) to foster the integration of research and innovation activities in the Alpine area, in the context of cogent European value chains incorporated into smart specialisation strategies;
26. Encourages clustering and cooperation between public and private enterprises, universities, research institutes and other relevant stakeholders with the aim of promoting innovation and making it possible to benefit from synergies between Alpine and peri-Alpine areas; considers that envisaged actions should build on the national and regional Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Regional Specialisation with a view to securing more efficient and effective investment;
27. Recognises how important it is to the success of the EUSALP strategy to develop

projects for associations, institutions, micro-enterprises and SMEs working in the cultural and creative sectors, because of the influence they have on investment, growth, innovation and employment and also because of the key role they play in preserving and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity;

28. Emphasises that a macro-regional strategy for the Alps should not only provide opportunities to preserve, sustain, and adapt where necessary, forms of traditional economic activity, such as agriculture and forestry and craft-based economic activities, as well as fostering innovation and the development of new initiatives in this field, e.g. through the EU's InnovFin instrument; points to the need for small and medium-sized enterprises to be given easier access to support and financing, bearing in mind their role in creating jobs;
29. Underlines that cooperation between regions, above all cross-border cooperation, is essential for the further development of tourism in the wider region; encourages the formulation of tourism strategies based on existing natural and cultural heritage, sustainability and innovation; stresses the social, cultural and economic dimension of the various Alpine traditions and customs, which should be encouraged and sustained in their diversity;
30. Notes that the management and reintroduction of birds of prey and carnivores in the Alpine regions is carried out at national and local level, while these species do not recognise administrative borders, and that migration is a cross-border phenomenon by nature; however, in order to avoid clashes linked to this reintroduction, calls on the Member States to improve coordination between the various authorities while exchange of information, and that best practices need to be enhanced in order to improve the management and protection of farm and grazing animals as part of the Alpine strategy, in relation to the Large Carnivores, Wild Ungulates and Society Platform of the Alpine Convention;
31. Supports diversification of tourism supply via the development of new tourism opportunities adapted to regional needs and exploiting regional resources, such as for example tourist theme parks and routes, food and wine tourism, cultural, health and educational tourism and sporting tourism, in order to prolong the tourist season, while easing pressure on the infrastructure and achieving year-round employment in the tourist cycle, as well as agri-tourism aimed at attracting visitors to rural and wildlife activities in hotels outside the mainstream, and enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of tourist destinations; supports the promotion of new tourist activities that are better adapted to climate change and environmental protection;
32. Supports measures to help ease pressure on transport infrastructure by staggering school holidays and related holiday periods, smart road toll design, and the provision of incentives by tourism providers during peak travel times and rush hours;
33. Recalls the economic importance of promoting the development of soft and sustainable touristic activities for the entire Alpine region, including in lake and spa towns; also encourages Member States to make use of cycling in combination with rail travel or intermodal transport services; points, on the basis of best practice, to tourism platforms created as part-EU-funded projects;

34. Notes that the same person is often required to carry out different activities over the course of a year's cycle, sometimes on a cross-border basis; calls on the Commission, the Member States and regional and local authorities to encourage cooperation between bodies providing initial and in-service professional training; stresses the benefits which an Erasmus+ programme devoted to cross-border apprenticeships could bring;

### **Mobility and connectivity**

35. Stresses the importance of improving transport and energy connectivity among the participating countries, including local, regional and cross-border transport and intermodal connections with the hinterland (including large conurbations), also on in order to boost the development of the region, enhance the quality of life of its inhabitants and attract new residents, while at the same time assessing whether existing networks can be renovated and/or expanded with the overall goal of better implementation of the TEN-T networks; stresses the importance of building a 'smart' infrastructure; believes that newly-built infrastructures should become proper 'technological corridors' within which to build all the separate infrastructure, namely electrical power lines, telephone lines, broadband and ultra-wideband lines, gas pipelines, fibre optic networks, water pipes, etc;
36. Calls for a holistic approach to the future design and implementation of Alpine transport and environment policy; in this context, underlines the need to prioritise modal transfers with a view to achieving a shift from road to rail, in particular for freight, and asks the Commission to support this transition; also in this context, calls for the revenues generated from road transport to be used to boost the implementation and the development of efficient and environment-friendly passenger and freight rail transport and for reducing noise and environmental pollution, and notes potential projects in fields such as traffic management, technological innovation, interoperability, etc; calls in addition for an extension of the existing infrastructure, including intermodal and interoperable systems of quality, in the Alpine region; stresses the importance of ensuring connectivity and accessibility for all inhabitants of the region;
37. Underlines the importance of connecting transport routes with other parts of Europe and the relevance of interconnections with TEN-T corridors, while making optimum use of existing infrastructure; points out that mountainous terrain is still an obstacle to rapprochement between EU citizens and that the EU has pledged to increase funding for cross-border transport infrastructure; calls, therefore, on the participating countries also to focus their efforts on implementing and planning complementary projects that are sustainable and inclusive, while linking and developing the current TEN-T network;
38. Draws attention to the lack of effective, non-polluting connections within mountain areas and between mountain and peri-mountain areas; urges the Commission and the Member States to facilitate clean, low carbon and better connections, notably for rail networks, at regional and local level in order to enhance cohesion and quality of life in these areas; encourages and promotes settling in the Alpine region;
39. Calls on the countries participating in the macro-regional strategy to take into account the specific conditions of cross-border workers and to develop cross-border worker agreements for the Alpine macro-region;

40. Supports the development of innovative forms of local transport on demand, including smart transport information, traffic management and telematics and multimodality, also considering the potential of the inter-regional sharing of activities in this field;
41. Stresses the lack of effective digital connections within mountain areas; urges the Commission and the Member States to facilitate better connections at regional and local level in order to enhance the quality of life and promote the development of new activities and the creation of job opportunities in these areas, and to encourage resettlement;
42. Stresses the importance of public investment in mountain areas in order to tackle the failure of the market to provide digital connectivity in these areas; emphasises the importance of complete and universal coverage with broadband internet, including in mountain regions, in order to ensure the long-term viability of remote settlements and economic areas; calls on the Commission to propose concrete solutions for this issue;

### **The environment, biodiversity, climate change and energy**

43. Underlines the importance of protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the Alpine region; calls for joint efforts to introduce innovative measures for preserving and maintaining it, while calling for a thorough examination of the role of large predators and the possible introduction of adjustment measures, and also fully complying with the Union acquis on the protection of the environment and biodiversity, soil and water; stresses the importance of ensuring that all possible measures are taken to avoid duplication of already existing legislative initiatives;
44. Points out that the Alpine macro-region offers great opportunities in terms of innovative solutions that could make it into a unique testing laboratory for the circular economy; will table, in the 2017 budgetary procedure, a pilot project to explore the potential of this area for developing specific strategies related to the circular economy, for example in the areas of production, consumption and waste management;
45. Stresses the importance of promoting the self-generation of energy, improving energy efficiency and supporting the development of the most efficient renewable energy sources in the region, from hydro to solar, wind and geothermal, and also of promoting the development of forms of renewable energy specific to the Alps; notes the impact on air quality arising from the use of different types of combustion in the heating sector; supports the sustainable use of forest wood without reducing the existing forest area, which is important for the balance within the mountain ecosystem and for protection against avalanches, landslides and flooding;
46. Underlines the urgent need to develop new strategies to combat air pollution, which is raising public health concerns, as well as climate change, particularly in the more industrialised and populated areas of the macro region, while also identifying existing sources of pollution and closely monitoring pollution emissions; calls, accordingly, on the Member States to introduce sustainable transport policies in line with the Paris COP21 targets, and to support the preservation and maintenance of ecosystem services throughout the entire Alpine macro-region;
47. Stresses the importance of energy transport infrastructure, and supports smart energy

distribution, storage and transmission systems, as well as investment in energy infrastructure for both the production and the transport of electricity and gas, in line with the TEN-E network and in implementation of the concrete projects mentioned in the list of Projects of Energy Community Interest (PECI); stresses the importance of exploiting local, especially renewable, energy sources in order to reduce dependence on imports; calls for the promotion of decentralised/self-generated energy production, and for the improvement of energy efficiency in all sectors;

48. Urges the participating countries to make joint efforts to implement spatial planning and integrated territorial management, involving multiple stakeholders (national, regional and local authorities, the research community, NGOs, etc) from the region;
49. Calls for the further strengthening of the collaboration and work done in the framework of the World Glacier Monitoring Service, in view of the recent decisions of the COP21 conference in Paris and the strategy to be followed thereafter;
50. Is concerned that climate change and rising temperatures are a serious threat to the survival of species living at high altitudes, and the melting of glaciers is a further cause of concern as it has a major impact on groundwater resources; calls for a wide-ranging transnational plan to combat the melting of glaciers and to respond to climate change throughout the Alps;
51. Calls on the participating countries to continue their efforts to diversify energy supply sources, and to develop the renewable sources available, such as solar and wind energy, within the energy production mix; underlines the sustainability and competitiveness of hydropower plants; calls on the participating countries to contribute to the setting-up of well-functioning electricity infrastructure networks in the macro-region;
52. Stresses that diversifying energy supply sources will not only improve the energy security of the macro-region, but will also bring more competition, with important benefits for the economic development of the region;
53. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the governments and national and regional parliaments of the EUSALP participating countries (France, Italy, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, Germany and Slovenia).

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Following initial moves made in this direction by Alpine regions in late 2011, in December 2013 the European Council asked the Commission to submit an EU strategy for the Alpine region (EUSALP). In response, the Commission submitted an action plan for the strategy in July 2015.

This is the fourth EU macro-regional strategy, following those for the Baltic Sea region, the Danube region and the Adriatic and Ionian region, which provide a body of experience on which to draw.

The macro-regional strategies are the product of inter-governmental action taken in parts of Europe that had for many years been divided by wars and political fault lines, with a view to boosting institutional and economic cooperation between those areas.

However, it was the inclusion of the territorial cohesion objective in the Lisbon Treaty that made these strategies possible, and they should therefore be brought more closely within the 'Community method', so as to be able to draw on the vast potential that exists for bottom-up strategic territorial planning, as opposed to the traditional top-down approach adopted by the Commission with instruments such as the ESPON programme.

The Commission therefore needs to be more closely involved at the start-up stage of macro-regional strategies, at the design and planning stage and, most important of all, at the implementation stage, as well as in coordinating the macro-regional strategies with other strategies and with EU territorial cohesion policy as a whole. Similarly, Parliament needs to be formally involved, in its capacity as co-legislator, in the launch and approval of strategies, as well as in monitoring their outcomes.

It would be unthinkable for the institution that holds legislative-initiative and executive powers and the institution embodying the democratic will of the people not to be directly involved in key EU development strategies that have a bearing on the future of the Union and the use of the material and planning resources available to it and that are gradually being extended to cover a large part of the European continent (in addition to the Baltic, Danube, Adriatic and Alpine strategies, further initiatives are in the pipeline, from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean and in other mountain regions of Europe).

A legislative act is therefore needed in order to redraw the procedures for launching, approving and implementing macro-regional strategies, as well as coordinating them with other EU policies, and to lay down the framework within which new and existing strategies will operate in the future.

That legislative framework also needs to define more clearly, in keeping with the subsidiarity and proportionality principles, the system of governance that is to be used for new and existing strategies. It should confine the role played by national and EU authorities to getting strategies off the ground and subsequently coordinating them and to providing oversight and support, leaving the tasks of project governance and implementation to regional and local authorities, who must be the real drivers behind territorial and development policies at grassroots level.



The EUSALP strategy is being introduced in a region in which various cooperation arrangements, including the Alpine Space, the Alpine Convention and a range of INTERREG cross-border programmes, are already in place. EUSALP covers 48 regions in seven countries, five of which are Member States (Italy, France, Slovenia, Austria and Germany). The other two countries are Switzerland and Liechtenstein. The Alpine region, which has a population of more than 80 million, has a strong human, natural, economic and cultural appeal. Its history has been marked by wars and disagreements over Alpine borders, as well as by the creation of states straddling those borders. The Alpine lowlands and uplands form part of a single, indivisible natural and human environment and are historically interdependent. The economic development of the lowland areas was made possible by access to the geological and water resources of the uplands, while the thriving tourist trade in many parts of the Alps developed as a result of proximity to the densely populated lowlands. Poor transport links and logistical problems for manufacturers have held back the development of mountain areas, however. What is more, today the Alpine macro-region is also extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Accordingly, the public authorities need to take action in accordance with the subsidiarity principle to address the economic and environmental challenges facing the macro-region.

With a view to boosting investment, the Juncker Commission has introduced an Investment Plan for Europe and set up a European Fund for Strategic Investments. These offer the countries of the region an opportunity to launch new joint investment projects and build on those already in progress. EUSALP can now be used as a vehicle for strategic investment that will benefit the region as a whole. The Alpine macro-region has huge potential, and joint planning by the countries and regions in the area, coupled with close involvement of local authorities and public and private bodies, can help to realise that potential. The Commission will need to work together with the EIB and international bodies in providing guidance and support for the implementation of the strategy.

Against this background, EUSALP offers the countries of the region an opportunity to invest in projects that will have an impact throughout the EU, and not just at regional level. It will allow new forms of multi-level governance to be developed, grounded in the regions but with the involvement of the European institutions.

Given that it has co-legislative powers in the field of cohesion policy, Parliament has a key role to play in the design and implementation of the strategy.

The underutilisation of resources in some upland areas (in the hinterland) and the concentration of manufacturing activities in lowland areas call for integrated economic strategies. This type of approach is in keeping with the ESIF objectives for the 2014-2020 programming period, and in particular with the principles of innovation and smart specialisation.

Instead of being an additional layer on top of existing inter-regional and cross-border cooperation arrangements, EUSALP will provide added value for those arrangements. The aim is to pursue common objectives for the area as a whole that are in keeping with the sustainable development, environmental and energy objectives set under the Europe 2020 strategy, and projects of a macro-regional scale are therefore required in order to meet those objectives.

In this context, regional authorities are best placed to design a bottom-up planning system that will take account of local needs while being subject to inter-regional coordination carried out in cooperation with the European institutions.

#### Priorities and proposals

Following months of discussions with EUSALP stakeholders at EU, national, regional and local levels, the following development priorities, ideas and proposals may be put forward:

#### Pillar I (Improving the competitiveness, prosperity and cohesion of the Alpine region)

Enhancing Alpine SMEs' ability to innovate by implementing harmonised smart growth strategies for the participating countries and regions.

Devising a place-based approach to the development of Alpine areas.

Fostering cooperation between the public and private sectors in the macro-region, in particular in those sectors that have been identified as strategic under EUSALP.

Promoting sustainable and competitive tourism (diversification and sustainable, responsible management of the sector).

Diversifying the range of tourism facilities and products on offer in order to make the Alpine region a year-round destination – cross-border thematic routes, development of nature- and culture-based tourism products, construction of new tourism infrastructure (e.g. theme parks), macro-regional branding of tourism products and services, campaigns to promote the region around the world, targeting of specific population groups (e.g. older age group, convention and business tourists), promoting the region as a multi-season destination.

Raising standards and boosting innovation in the tourism sector – ICT, education, technology transfer, networking between commercial operators, clustering, pooling of best practice, closer links between local farmers, tourism firms and food suppliers, innovative promotion/marketing.

Promoting and protecting the remarkable system of lakes in the Alpine and peri-Alpine valleys to the north and south of the mountain range.

Integrated management of major sports facilities in the macro-region, in order to promote their joint use, including for major sporting events.

Improving access to tourism products and services – raising skill levels and improving specific services, staff training, promotion and information provision, cooperation in streamlining tourist travel arrangements, harmonising national statistics collection in order better to gauge the impact of sectoral and forward planning and of policy-making.

Making better use of EU funding – providing easier access to funding for innovative, sustainable start-ups and SMEs, with a focus on research and the smart growth strategy.

Establishing a network of sustainable tourism clusters and businesses.

Fostering professional training and entrepreneurship capacity-building in the tourism sector – promoting innovation and diversification of tourism facilities and products.

Embedding EUSALP projects in ERDF-funded regional and national operational programmes and taking advantage of the integration of ESIF-funded regional programmes with direct-access programmes such as Horizon 2020, for example by introducing macro-regional seal of excellence-style schemes.

Building macro-regional public and private research networks to work on developing EUSALP projects.

Providing support for macro-regional university exchange projects, including through the use of support funding for EU programmes such as Erasmus.

Pillar II – Accessibility and transport links for everyone in the Alpine region (cross-border transport links, intermodal links with the hinterland)

Building Italy-France and Italy-Austria corridors to be brought into full operation and linked up to the now-completed Italy-Switzerland corridor, to improve links between northern and southern Europe.

Systematically improving transport infrastructure by remodelling existing, or building new, links with major transport routes and opening up the transport services market to competition, in line with EU rules.

Developing innovative systems to support public and shared transport provision and making all forms of public transport more attractive.

Establishing public-private partnerships for transport operations.

Long-term planning of transport safety programmes, in particular for road transport.

Developing innovative, coordinated systems for the management of border crossings.

Conducting studies into the feasibility of integrated border and transport charging systems in the area.

Improving links between the hinterland and TEN-T maritime ports and making the development of intermodal transport in the Alpine region a firm requirement.

Developing innovative logistical systems, in particular with a view to boosting cross-border trade.

Reducing the isolation of hinterland and remote areas and improving access to energy and transport services in those areas.

Developing energy grid infrastructure.

Completing, rationalising and harmonising ICT network provision, in particular cross-border segments.

Grouping together intermodal and logistics operations/services throughout the region.

Using innovative systems to make upland areas more accessible, including systems based on participating countries' and regions' smart specialisation strategies.

Coordinating current and planned major interconnection infrastructure projects.

Pillar III – Ensuring sustainability in the Alps: protecting the Alpine heritage and promoting sustainable use of natural and cultural resources (environment, cross-border terrestrial habitats and biodiversity)

Investing in the water sector (e.g. building reservoirs) to mitigate climate change risks.

Providing support for Alpine farmers in such a way as to ensure balanced, sustainable development.

Protecting and rehabilitating biodiversity and ecosystems, establishing an effective system for Natura 2000 network monitoring, information provision and management, and ensuring sustainable nature management.

Promoting and ensuring the sustainable development of Alpine economies and the sustainable use of Alpine resources.

Improving our knowledge of the Alpine environment – promoting joint research into the state of biodiversity in the Alps.

Establishing and expanding macro-regional protection areas – creating the capacity required to provide access to ecosystems and map areas of key importance to the conservation of species and habitats in priority sites, with a view to connecting up all of the macro-region's many protection areas by means of ecological corridors.

Pooling best practice among the authorities managing Alpine protection areas.

Devising and implementing a joint emergency plan.

Harmonising and implementing national laws on terrestrial habitats and biodiversity – harmonising town planning laws, protecting nature, the environment and the cultural heritage in line with the European Landscape Convention.

2.5.2016

## **OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

for the Committee on Regional Development

on an EU Strategy for the Alpine region  
(2015/2324(INI))

Rapporteur: Jérôme Lavrilleux

### **SUGGESTIONS**

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. having regard to the Commission communication concerning the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (COM(2015)0366) and the accompanying Action Plan;
- B. whereas the Alpine region is one of the most dynamic, innovative, productive and competitive regions in Europe, characterised by relevant industrial districts and many centres of excellence, and has unique geographical, natural and economic features, including local products as well as elements of historical interest, landscape and culture;
- C. whereas the idea of a macro-regional strategy is born of the need for better cooperation and coordination in certain cross-border areas, in order to address common challenges more efficiently and effectively than single actors are able to individually, as well as of the ambition to foster problem solving within a relatively small group of countries and regions, with a view to facilitating, in practice, stronger cohesion among citizens within the European Union;
- D. whereas there are significant differences between the diverse types of areas characteristic of the Alpine region, such as its mountainous areas, Alpine foreland, rural areas and urban areas;
- E. whereas specific responses are needed to meet the various challenges facing the Alpine region, such as: globalisation; negative demographic trends, including low birth rates and an ageing population; low population densities; ‘brain drain’; new migration trends; the economic crisis, and economic and demographic disparities; climate change; large-scale natural hazards; the energy challenge; seasonal fluctuations in employment and income, and the need to take on multiple jobs; waste reduction; and the need to ensure a

sustainable use of resources;

- F. whereas demographic changes – characterised, in particular, by an ageing population, low fertility rates and out-migration, as well as low population densities in mountain areas – are major challenges for the Alpine region and have an effect on labour-market developments, investments and the provision of public services;
  - G. whereas progressively established intergenerational cohesion, extended family ties and family businesses are of great social significance in the Alpine region;
  - H. whereas the low population density is, among other factors, linked to the scarcity of basic services for the population; whereas mountain areas are disadvantaged when it comes to the supply of social services and medical care;
  - I. whereas the future development of the Alpine region is associated with rural areas, rural development, ‘the future of the village’ and agriculture;
  - J. whereas the fundamental right of free movement of persons is a prerequisite, particularly in border regions, for reaching the goals of economic, social, territorial and environmental cohesion, for achieving strong and sustainable development and competitiveness and for making equal access to employment possible;
  - K. whereas the populations of foothill areas are among the poorest in the mountain region, and are at high risk of unemployment, leading to depopulation, as traditional industrial production is being relocated to, and concentrated in, urban areas;
  - L. whereas the strategy for the Alpine region should take inspiration from the successful macro-regional strategies already in place for the Baltic Sea region, the Danube region and the Adriatic and Ionian Seas region;
  - M. whereas mountain areas, especially the most remote regions, often suffer from lower educational attainment, the lack of a qualified workforce, a lower density of public services and poor availability of broadband; whereas more accessible areas can generally count on a more vital economy and attract more investments;
  - N. whereas the strategy for the Alpine region should prioritise areas where it would bring real added value and more regional convergence;
  - O. whereas financial resources should be focused on the specific needs of mountain areas;
1. Welcomes the Commission’s communication for the Alpine region and the accompanying action plan, but stresses the need to strengthen further the social dimension in order to ensure the pursuit of a growth model that can secure sustainable growth, social inclusion and social protection for all, in particular in border areas; insists on the importance of encouraging the establishment of social infrastructures and of promoting social investments;
  2. Stresses the importance of increasing the economic potential of the strategic sectors of agriculture, forestry, sustainable and generation-friendly tourism, sustainable energy, the bioeconomy, organic products, health and the latest technologies, of giving strong backing

to SMEs, including family businesses within this category, and of promoting social entrepreneurship, in collaboration with research centres to form inter-regional networks and links; stresses the need to promote local production and to foster fresh investments, such as by facilitating credit access for young entrepreneurs and for sustainable job creation respecting the ILO Decent Work Agenda, which will respect collective bargaining and collective agreements where they exist;

3. Stresses the importance of cross-border and other forms of regional identity;
4. Stresses the need to make quality public services accessible and affordable for all, in particular in the areas of education, healthcare, social services and mobility; underlines the need to develop infrastructures and technologies that ensure the availability of sustainable services that are tailor-made for the people living in the Alpine region; calls on the Member States concerned to take better account of the needs of people living in the most peripheral areas;
5. Stresses the need to put in place effective instruments, including adequate inspections and controls, to guarantee decent working and living conditions for seasonal workers in the Alpine region, and to ensure that there is no misuse of seasonal employment; stresses the need to ensure the respect of employment rights, labour standards and high-quality working conditions in general;
6. Stresses the need to strengthen the adaptability of the workforce through re-skilling, lifelong learning and multilingualism, and to endorse plans to enhance good working conditions, social security, gender equality, and accessibility for people with disabilities;
7. Stresses that an environment needs to be created that fosters innovation and research with smart specialisation strategies, and stronger links between the complementary strengths of the Alpine region and its interests, and stresses the need for regional clustering to ensure the sustainable networking of research, science and the economy; stresses that a high level of social welfare, a skilled and educated workforce, innovating companies and unique geographical features are competitive advantages for the Alpine region;
8. Considers that multi-skills training, and training courses that match the needs of a sustainable labour market and its strategic, future-oriented sectors, should be encouraged with specific training centres and an online multilingual regional job centre in particular; believes that quality apprenticeship training should be focused, and provided, according to the needs of the labour market;
9. Underlines that sustainable tourism, local production and efficient public transport systems can help tackle depopulation and secure jobs in the region;
10. Points out that training centres are in competition with each other and should therefore only receive special assistance if they can be shown to be absolutely essential for qualitative and economic reasons;
11. Calls for transport connectivity within the region and with the rest of Europe to be made more sustainable and efficient, and for intermodal transport systems to be encouraged for the sake of the region's development and the well-being of its inhabitants; underlines the importance of supporting coordinated transnational policies and new approaches in shared

responsibility and fair cooperation between territories, such as vertical links between large cities and rural, mountain and tourist areas;

12. Highlights the importance of ensuring access to high-speed internet connections and, thereby, to digital and online services, and tele-working and other opportunities for people living in areas remote from large urban centres, in order to give them access to job vacancies published on the internet, including those published on the EURES web portal, as well as the many other online services that make day-to-day life easier, foster job creation, increase labour productivity and earnings, help overcome the digital divide and promote the social and economic inclusion of all; highlights the need to better connect schools, universities and research centres, and to promote e-learning programmes, innovation and the development of clusters based on regional expertise and regional companies, as well as the comprehensive development of 'digital villages and regions' providing sustainable, liveable and family-friendly environments;
13. Stresses the social dimension of a common Alpine strategy, and calls for innovative cooperation, e.g. to promote demographic development through collaborative measures to provide safe and comprehensive obstetric care facilities in rural Alpine areas;
14. Recalls that the principle of universal access to public services is to be guaranteed in all territories of the EU, and, in this regard, stresses the need for Member States and regions to encourage alternative and innovative solutions for mountainous areas, including, where necessary, tailor-made solutions adapted to local and regional needs;
15. Stresses the need to promote production models based on a circular economy approach, to support energy efficiency and the creation of 'green infrastructures' to preserve biodiversity and natural resources, and to provide new opportunities for tourism and quality job creation;
16. Urges the Commission to take gender mainstreaming actions at horizontal and vertical levels within every policy area, and to fund mainstreaming actions specifically targeting women living in mountainous regions to counter any given imbalance;
17. Stresses the social, cultural and economic dimension of the various Alpine traditions and customs, which should be encouraged and sustained in their diversity, also on a cross-border basis;
18. Calls for the direct involvement of regions, municipalities and individuals in all EU Alpine strategy initiatives, as being essential to the success thereof.



## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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| <b>Date adopted</b>                           | 26.4.2016   |
| <b>Result of final vote</b>                   | +:                43<br>-:                4<br>0:                 5   |
| <b>Members present for the final vote</b>     | Laura Agea, Guillaume Balas, Brando Benifei, Mara Bizzotto, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Enrique Calvet Chambon, David Casa, Ole Christensen, Jane Collins, Martina Dlabajová, Lampros Fountoulis, Arne Gericke, Marian Harkin, Czesław Hoc, Danuta Jazłowiecka, Agnes Jongerius, Rina Ronja Kari, Jan Keller, Ádám Kósa, Kostadinka Kuneva, Jérôme Lavrilleux, Jeroen Lenaers, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Javi López, Morten Løkkegaard, Dominique Martin, Anthea McIntyre, Joëlle Mélin, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Emilian Pavel, João Pimenta Lopes, Georgi Pirinski, Sofia Ribeiro, Claude Rolin, Anne Sander, Sven Schulze, Siôn Simon, Jutta Steinruck, Romana Tomc, Yana Toom, Ulrike Trebesius, Renate Weber, Tatjana Ždanoka, Jana Žitňanská |
| <b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b> | Daniela Aiuto, Georges Bach, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Tania González Peñas, Krzysztof Hetman, Paloma López Bermejo, Evelyn Regner, Flavio Zanonato  |

19.4.2016

## **OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY**

for the Committee on Regional Development

on an EU strategy for the Alpine region  
(2015/2324(INI))

Rapporteur: Renata Briano

### **SUGGESTIONS**

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas under Articles 11, 191 and 193 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the Union is empowered to take action in all areas of environmental policy, such as air and water pollution, waste management and climate change;
- B. whereas Article 1(1) of Directive 2002/49/EC<sup>1</sup> makes it clear that a common approach should be developed in the European Union ‘to avoid, prevent or reduce on a prioritised basis the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to exposure to environmental noise’;
- C. whereas the Alpine Convention was signed by the Alpine countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia and Switzerland) and the EU for the sustainable development and protection of the Alps;
- D. whereas environmental policy is of a cross-cutting nature and whereas the favoured options for Alpine strategy fields must reconcile environmental sustainability and economic development; whereas climate change mitigation and biodiversity preservation policies include the need for securing the resilience of ecosystems with enough habitat connectivity to allow species migration;
- E. whereas the Alpine region is the second largest basin of biodiversity in Europe and forms one of Europe’s foremost water catchment areas, where water is not only important for

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2002/49/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 June 2002 relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise – Declaration by the Commission in the Conciliation Committee on the Directive relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise, OJ L 189, 18.7.2002, p.12.

hydroelectricity but also for irrigation of agricultural land, the sustainable management of forests, the preservation of biodiversity and the landscape, and the provision of drinking water;

- F. whereas agriculture and tourism in the Alpine region have a major impact on the conservation of the environment, traditional landscapes and biodiversity;
- G. whereas the area's historical and cultural heritage is one of its prime assets;
- H. whereas Parliament adopted a resolution on 23 May 2013 on a macro-regional strategy for the Alps<sup>1</sup>;
  - 1. Stresses that the Alps are a natural environment in which close to 14 million people with a shared culture live and work, as well as being a major tourist destination which attracts some 120 million visitors each year;
  - 2. Notes the success of some agricultural models in the Alpine region which combine food production, forestry, the protection of landscape for tourism and the provision of ecosystem services such as avalanche protection; believes that these models, which serve multiple purposes and have low environmental impacts, should be expanded where appropriate;
  - 3. Acknowledges that the Alpine region, with its vast reserve of natural landscapes, is a socio-economic area with tourism potential; notes its extraordinary variety of ecosystems, which range from upland to lowland and even to Mediterranean coasts, and which include highly sensitive aquatic ecosystems such as lakes, rivers and streams; points out that the region is extremely rich in biodiversity, as well as natural resources such as water and timber, and should be preserved;
  - 4. Welcomes the fact that the regions are deeply involved in the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region;
  - 5. Believes that particular attention should be paid to preserving the settlement of sparsely populated areas of the region;
  - 6. Notes that in the Alpine region, largely man-made urbanised environments coexist alongside areas of sparsely populated mountainous countryside; takes the view that the strategy should comprise cohesive measures that apply throughout the area but take due account of the structural disparities to be found within it, and focus primarily on Alpine mountain regions because they have immense potential for sustainable economic growth; points out that rural depopulation is a factor behind hydrogeological instability in certain areas, which might have an impact on the whole region (flooding, landslides); emphasises the key role played by welfare services in sustainable growth and in countering the depopulation of mountain areas, and points to the need to better promote the EU Civil Protection Mechanism;
  - 7. Points out that farming in mountain areas is very important for maintaining the geological stability of the Alps; notes, however, that mountain agriculture is exposed to climate-

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 55, 12.2.2016, p. 117.

related natural disasters such as floods, avalanches and mudslides; calls, therefore, for the promotion of risk-prevention measures (for example, flood protection schemes);

8. Is concerned that climate change poses serious risks for hydrogeological instability and biodiversity; underlines that rising temperatures are a serious threat to the survival of species populations living at high altitudes, and that the melting of glaciers is a further cause for concern as it has a major impact on groundwater reserves; points, therefore, to the need for a macro-regional climate change adaptation policy and the protection and sustainable management of Alpine rivers, lakes and streams;
9. Considers it essential to pursue climate change policies based on production and consumption patterns that are in line with circular economy principles and short cycles in food supplies, and to place the emphasis on rational use and reuse of local materials and natural resources, including wastewater and agricultural waste, and on sharing services encouraged by green public procurement and fostering close links between producers and consumers at local level; recalls that the management of risks linked to climate change should take into account the structural and organisational vulnerabilities of Alpine societies; stresses the need to step up the exchange of best practices and cross-border cooperation in the area of climate risk management, taking into account all the territorial sensitivities;
10. Considers it necessary for the regions involved in the strategy to use Union funds in line with cohesion policy and to promote environment-related investments which have among their objectives climate change mitigation and adaptation and counteracting hydrogeological instability, as well as sustainable forestry, tourism, agriculture (including organic farming) and livestock, which all play an important role in land management;
11. Stresses that not enough is being done to attain the objectives of the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC; calls on the Commission, in implementing the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC, to observe Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora in order to ensure more sustainable water management; stresses that, in so doing, cooperation should be given preference over regulation;
12. Considers that the challenge of remaining ‘white spots’ in mobile coverage in the region can be transformed into an opportunity for both ecotourism and medical research;
13. Recalls that the integrated management of water resources is one of the keys to the sustainable development of the Alps; recalls that the natural risks, including water risks, could have a spillover effect on lowlands and built-up areas; stresses, therefore, the need to step up the exchange of best practices and cross-border cooperation in connection with the Alpine Convention’s Water Management Platform between the national bodies responsible for the management of water and river basins in order to meet the shared challenges caused by climate change;
14. Considers that investments should be channelled towards equal and effective access to healthcare for the whole population of the region;
15. Considers it necessary, given the economic importance of tourism for the entire Alpine region, to continue to support the development of ‘soft’ tourism; points, on the basis of

best practices, such as the tourism platform ‘Alpine Pearls’, created as part of the EU-funded project Alps Mobility, to achievements so far which should be built on;

16. Considers it necessary to provide for energy efficiency and saving policies as well as policies to promote renewable and sustainable alternative energy sources through the proper management of water, forestry and landscape resources; deems it important to expand the model of decentralised and local energy production and supply through, inter alia, grid integration and storage; calls, therefore, for more research initiatives in this area that are geared towards the specific needs of mountain regions; stresses the importance of encouraging consumers, enterprises and public authorities to invest in renewable energy as a way of increasing energy security and preventing energy poverty; emphasises the importance of hydropower for energy supplies in mountain regions and calls for the local administrations to promote the use of hydropower, as well as other renewable sources, for the needs of the population;
17. Considers it regrettable that agricultural land is becoming increasingly scarce owing to non-agricultural uses such as road construction and designation of building land; calls for the establishment of practical support schemes and requirements to ensure the long-term availability of land for agriculture and forestry use; underlines that the issue of land consumption is very critical in the more urbanised areas; urges, therefore, that land use and urbanisation which use up valuable natural resources be carried out sustainably;
18. Calls for a holistic approach to the future design and implementation of Alpine transport and environment policy so that the achievement of a common target is not jeopardised by arbitrage and transfer effects;
19. Regrets the inadequate accessibility of economic areas, which undermines efficient mountain farming in the Alps and hence the competitiveness of these regions; urges the Commission and the Member States to create an appropriate infrastructure system, which should include the development of suitable farm and forest tracks and Alpine trails and access to a high-speed mobile data network for the Alpine regions;
20. Draws attention to the importance of sustainable tourism that is driven by protection of biodiversity and respect for ecosystems, as shown by the good example given by parks;
21. Stresses the importance of protected areas in triggering environmental protection initiatives as outlined in the Alpine Convention; considers it necessary to draw up a policy identifying parks as places in which to promote environmental protection activities; believes that protected areas are particularly sensitive areas for people and nature; is convinced that they may take on a cross-border dimension as regards the development and implementation of best practices that combine habitat protection with the sustainable economy (organic and quality farming, promotion of local products, soft tourism and mobility, wildlife management, etc.) and can be exported to all parts of the Alpine region and beyond;
22. Notes that, as regards transport, ways need to be found to allow appropriate access to the most marginal areas, which are often increasingly abandoned, within a framework of sustainable mobility;
23. Considers it necessary to develop infrastructure for new sustainable transport modes, to

implement policies for the sharing of goods and services and to promote connectivity in the less developed areas, also to promote the development of teleworking;

24. Notes that the management and the reintroduction of birds of prey and carnivores in the Alpine region is carried out at national and local level, while these species do not recognise administrative borders, and that migration is a cross-border phenomenon by nature in the Alpine region; feels that it is essential, as part of the Alpine strategy and in connection with the Large Carnivores, Wild Ungulates and Society Platform of the Alpine Convention, to step up the exchange of best practices in this field;
25. Believes that local communities, regional authorities and civil society, including economic actors such as local agriculture and forestry stakeholders, should be involved in decision-making, in an open, transparent and informed process;
26. Underlines the importance of aligning the Alpine strategy with cooperation initiatives such as the Alpine Convention and the subsequent protocols thereto, as well as taking into account existing transnational cooperation and networking in this field, in order to reach common policies and goals;
27. Points out that active agriculture and forestry are essential to preserving biodiversity in the Alpine region while at the same time making a significant contribution to other sectors such as tourism;
28. Calls for targeted approaches to financing by the Member States and the European Union in relation to macro-regional policies as part of the Alpine strategy;
29. Considers it necessary to strengthen the role of local and regional authorities in the implementation of EU policies and to place the principle of multilevel governance at the centre of the planning and implementation of the Alpine strategy;
30. Calls on the Commission to introduce noise emission limits in Alpine goods transport and stronger incentive schemes to encourage investment in noise reduction measures on the main transport routes;
31. Calls for the introduction of the real cost principle and the principle of internalising external costs in relation to existing and future regulatory measures on taxes, levies and infrastructure use charges, taking account of the comprehensive strategy for the Alpine region and the need to avoid subsequent transfer and arbitrage effects;
32. Calls for a macro-regional Alpine strategy that will allow sustainable use of land and nature and hence an economic area and biosphere based on coexistence between nature and people, so as to avoid a further population exodus that would have a negative impact on nature and landscape protection.

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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|---|---|
| <b>Date adopted</b>   | 19.4.2016   |
| <b>Result of final vote</b>                                     | +:               64<br>-:                1<br>0:                0   |
| <b>Members present for the final vote</b>                       | Marco Affronte, Pilar Ayuso, Zoltán Balczó, Ivo Belet, Simona Bonafè, Biljana Borzan, Cristian-Silviu Buşoi, Nessa Childers, Alberto Cirio, Birgit Collin-Langen, Mireille D'Ornano, Miriam Dalli, Angélique Delahaye, Jørn Dohrmann, Karl-Heinz Florenz, Francesc Gambús, Elisabetta Gardini, Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy, Jens Gieseke, Julie Girling, Sylvie Goddyn, Matthias Groote, Françoise Grossetête, Andrzej Grzyb, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Jean-François Jalkh, Benedek Jávor, Karin Kadenbach, Kateřina Konečná, Giovanni La Via, Peter Liese, Norbert Lins, Susanne Melior, Miroslav Mikolášik, Massimo Paolucci, Piernicola Pedicini, Bolesław G. Piecha, Pavel Poc, Frédérique Ries, Daciana Octavia Sârbu, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Tibor Szanyi, Estefanía Torres Martínez, Dame Glenis Willmott, Damiano Zoffoli |
| <b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>                   | Paul Brannen, Mark Demesmaeker, Jacqueline Foster, Elena Gentile, Martin Häusling, Krzysztof Hetman, Merja Kyllönen, Mairead McGuinness, Gesine Meissner, Ulrike Müller, James Nicholson, Christel Schaldemose, Jasenko Selimovic, Bart Staes, Keith Taylor, Tom Vandenkendelaere, Carlos Zorrinho  |
| <b>Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote</b> | Angel Dzhambazki, Bronis Ropè, Marco Valli  |

25.5.2016

## **OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM**

for the Committee on Regional Development

on an EU strategy for the Alpine region  
(2015/2324(INI))

Rapporteur: Daniela Aiuto

### **SUGGESTIONS**

The Committee on Transport and Tourism calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas the Alpine region, as defined in the Alpine Convention, like other European mountainous areas, poses a major challenge in terms of the development of its role within the European transport network, since it has a low population density, very specific types of connections and accessibility to services, and distinctive local economies;
- B. whereas the specific geomorphology of the macro-region should not be considered an obstacle to connectivity, but rather an opportunity to develop sustainable intermodal transport services based on regional best practice models and combined with the protection and promotion of the natural, environmental and cultural heritage and biodiversity and climate change mitigation;
- C. whereas financial resources should mainly be channelled towards and invested in the development of public transport connections in the Alpine regions, on the basis of indicators suited to the specific conditions in mountainous areas, through the improvement of existing rail connections, specifically cross-border transport, in the promotion of small town centres, through the enhancement of accessibility to work and sustainable tourist facilities, and in ensuring essential health, educational and childcare services, facilitating the creation of new quality local employment and protecting the environment and natural resources, including water resources;
- D. whereas the Alpine region is being adversely affected by a rural exodus and an ageing population; whereas an efficient public transport service, high-speed internet connectivity and sustainable year-round tourism could help make the Alpine region more attractive to young people and facilitate access to employment;



- E. whereas, five out of nine TEN-T core corridors, which are crucial for European and regional development and for achieving the goals set out in the Transport White Paper, extend through the Alps, and whereas their realisation requires joint and coordinated financial efforts on the part of the Member States until 2030;
- F. whereas, in order to give effect to the principles laid down in the Framework Convention and to the initiatives to be implemented at the practical level, a number of protocols and memoranda of understanding have been adopted, setting out specific measures on a range of subjects, including transport, tourism, soil conservation, spatial planning, sustainable development, nature conservation and landscape protection, with a view to pursuing joint projects related to trans-European transport networks, and whereas Member States accordingly entered into bilateral agreements for the purpose of implementing Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) funding in conjunction with funding under their own national budgets;
- G. whereas the Commission's macro-regional strategy is intended to provide instruments that strengthen regional capacity, in particular by boosting sustainable transport connectivity, intermodality and interoperability in passenger and freight transport, so as to achieve the shift of traffic from road to rail; whereas several regions taking part in other neighbouring macro-regions (Adriatic, Danube) should utilise overlapping areas in order to improve connectivity, accessibility and intermodality;
- H. whereas, in its communication on the EU strategy for the Alpine region, the Commission points both to the need to reduce the impact of transport across the Alps, so as to preserve the Alpine environmental heritage, and to the importance of implementing a strategy to bring about better environmental conditions for the population; whereas the balance to be struck between transport infrastructure and regional conservation has for decades been identified as a major challenge; whereas, nevertheless, every productive investment should be based on a lifecycle assessment, together with the environmental impact assessment necessary to forestall the main natural disaster risks in an area as vulnerable as the Alpine region;
1. Takes note of the territorial delimitation under the Alpine Convention and of the related protocols on transport and tourism, as well as of the Commission's action plan aimed at improving the sustainability of transport connectivity, within and to the region, and promoting intermodality, interoperability and the quality of intermodal transport and mobility systems, in accordance with best practice models;
  2. Welcomes the opening of the Gotthard Base Tunnel on 1 June 2016; invites the Commission and the respective Alpine Member States to evaluate the change of traffic flows and freight share, such as along the Brenner route, owing to new tunnels, before planning additional base tunnels; requests a sufficient number of rail-road terminals, where appropriate, along the corridors in order to promote the goal of shifting freight traffic from road to rail;
  3. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen multilevel governance in transport planning, and to implement for the essentially mountainous Alpine region a policy to develop transport infrastructure that is sustainable, inclusive and non-invasive for the region, preserving the latter, and promoting a balanced development of economically weaker regions and areas in terms of tourism, social cohesion, economic

advancement and employment; stresses that, in the planning of transport infrastructure policy, it should be a priority to assess and minimise adverse impacts, inter alia, on the environment; calls for support to be provided with a view to encouraging a gradual shift from road to rail transport and transport powered by alternative energy sources in order to cut pollutant emissions;

4. Calls on the Commission to focus also on optimising existing infrastructure network capacity, with the overall goal of better implementation of the TEN-T network; stresses that infrastructure projects which would result in an avoidable or disproportionate risk to the environment, natural resources or public health should not be financed;
5. Stresses that the connectivity and accessibility of the region by day and night and at weekends should be improved and promoted by ensuring respect for the environment, the protection of water and ground resources and the involvement of local populations, by fully involving political actors and decision-makers at every level, in particular regional and local levels, as well as civil organisations (NGOs), and also by promoting public consultations;
6. Considers that developing infrastructure in mountainous areas would enable the development of, and increase the attractiveness for, SMEs, and would facilitate the establishment of specific industries in such areas that would benefit from being located there owing to the environment (temperature, clean air), which would create new jobs and contribute to the sustainable development of the region; encourages the Member States to repair and improve old disused trails for use by tourists, upgrading them and bringing them back into service, so as to prevent them from being abandoned and allowed to fall into disrepair and possibly hydrogeological destabilisation;
7. Calls on the Member States forming part of the Alpine region to cooperate in ensuring that transit fees are as uniform as possible and in line with European standards, especially for those countries that are compelled by their geographical location to cross others;
8. Takes the view that the development and accessibility of information and communication technologies should be increased by providing services more quickly and efficiently and by encouraging and promoting, where possible, alternatives to physical travel, such as teleworking, in order to reduce the number of journeys and their negative external effects, such as polluting emissions, and to facilitate a better work-life balance;
9. Calls on the countries concerned to identify strategic infrastructure projects that would help to strengthen cohesion and reduce road congestion by using intermodal transport services suitable for tourist areas and the growth of local economies, thus encouraging job creation; underlines the role of regional airports and ports in the peri-Alpine regions/ Mediterranean for the accessibility and connectivity of the Alpine region; considers it important to link them with the road and rail networks;
10. Calls on the Member States to invest in local job creation programmes and tourism infrastructure; calls for a strategic approach to be adopted to make tourism less of a seasonal activity and to facilitate sustainable access via public transport to tourist destinations such as ski resorts, encouraging the use of cycling in combination with train travel; underlines the importance of supporting networking and the publishing of best practice examples of sustainable tourism initiatives, such as structures designed for

passive energy, resource-efficiency and using sustainable energy sources;

11. Points out that climate change is particularly significant for regions such as the Alps, whose morphology and natural habitats are particularly vulnerable; emphasises that the transport and tourism protocols within the Alpine Convention have been ratified by the EU and the Alpine Member States; calls on the Member States to monitor air pollution limits closely and to introduce sustainable transport policies in line with the Paris COP21 targets; considers that efforts should be made to encourage SMEs to invest in innovation and development in accordance with the COP21 targets;
12. Calls on the Commission to ensure easy and convenient access to documents both for European citizens and for the institutions, in order to ensure transparency regarding the use of public funds, and believes that, in cases where access is being sought for overriding reasons, including, among others, those relating to public health and the environment, this should be given priority over any consideration whatsoever relating to competition or commercial aims; notes that it will be necessary for Member States to invest EU funds earmarked for implementation of the Alpine strategy in a transparent manner, taking into account the constraints emerging from the environmental impact studies, and with better cooperation and collaboration, so as to improve exchanges of good practice; considers that effective implementation, goal achievements and the economical use of resources should be reviewed annually by Parliament and the European Court of Auditors;
13. Considers that revenues from tolls and special tolls from the Alpine regions for transport projects in the Alpine regions should be earmarked – firstly for the development of the TEN-T Alpine corridors, secondly for regional access routes, and thirdly for local routes;
14. Calls on the Member States and regions to ensure that less accessible areas can be also be reached and emergency assistance provided, and that healthcare and first aid units are provided in areas where the transport situation is less favourable, taking into account their distance from major hospitals.

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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|---|---|
| <b>Date adopted</b>   | 24.5.2016   |
| <b>Result of final vote</b>                                     | +: 40<br>-: 2<br>0: 3   |
| <b>Members present for the final vote</b>                       | Marie-Christine Arnautu, Georges Bach, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Deirdre Clune, Michael Cramer, Luis de Grandes Pascual, Andor Deli, Isabella De Monte, Ismail Ertug, Jacqueline Foster, Tania González Peñas, Dieter-Lebrecht Koch, Merja Kyllönen, Miltiadis Kyrkos, Peter Lundgren, Marian-Jean Marinescu, Georg Mayer, Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, Renaud Muselier, Jens Nilsson, Markus Pieper, Salvatore Domenico Pogliese, Gabriele Preuß, Dominique Riquet, Massimiliano Salini, David-Maria Sassoli, Claudia Schmidt, Jill Seymour, Claudia Țapardel, Keith Taylor, Pavel Telička, István Ujhelyi, Wim van de Camp, Janusz Zemke, Roberts Zīle, Kosma Złotowski, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska |
| <b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>                   | Knut Fleckenstein, Maria Grapini, Karoline Graswander-Hainz, Werner Kuhn, Curzio Maltese, Jozo Radoš, Ulrike Rodust, Davor Škrlec, Evžen Tošenovský   |
| <b>Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote</b> | Beatrix von Storch  |

26.4.2016

## **OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

for the Committee on Regional Development

on an EU strategy for the Alpine region  
(2015/2324(INI))

Rapporteur: Ulrike Müller

### **SUGGESTIONS**

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Highlights the importance of the Alpine region as a natural environment and a place for people to live, work and relax in, thanks to the vital contributions made by agriculture and forestry, sustainable year-round tourism and craft trades; stresses that these sectors are of crucial value in the sustainable development of the region and the sustainable management of natural resources, as they ensure a high-quality food supply, maintain the population in outlying areas, maintain the cultural landscape, and preserve ecosystems by means of biodiversity, soil and water protection; welcomes the EU Alpine Strategy as an integrating framework and a way to improve and enhance sustainable economic, environmental, infrastructural and socio-demographic development in the Alpine region; calls on the Commission and the Member States to take into account lessons learnt from the implementation of other EU macro-regional strategies;
2. Stresses the need for initiatives to improve mobility, digital infrastructure, energy supply, social migration and demographic outlook and to enhance cooperation and coordination among authorities at different levels in order to address common challenges in certain cross-border areas more efficiently and effectively than could be achieved by individual measures; underlines that the strategy should also address challenges imposed by globalisation and deindustrialisation; stresses the need to improve access to public services and infrastructure in order to increase the accessibility and attractiveness of these regions as well as to reduce the decline of small and family farms, which are an important economic and social pillar of the region; considers it necessary for specific traditions in the fields of land use, craft trades and tourism to be preserved when implementing the strategy;

3. Stresses that the economic, social and environmental role played by farming in mountainous areas needs to be supported by targeted policies that offset the disadvantages faced by mountain farmers and to acknowledge the contribution they make to the environmental and social sustainability of large parts of Europe; stresses that particular attention should be paid to small-scale farms which are mostly family-run and to the role of women in alpine agriculture, who drive growth and therefore must be given greater support and recognition; reiterates that sustainable development of mountainous areas is an essential element to the well-being of rural populations, their intergenerational cohesion and the prospects of family-run farms;
4. Reiterates that the future development of the Alpine region is associated with rural areas, rural development, ‘the future of the village’ and agriculture in particular;
5. Is concerned by degradation of ecosystems and the risk of natural disasters in certain parts of Alpine areas and urges, in this respect, the Commission and Member States to ensure that land and forests are managed in a sustainable way that is adapted to local conditions, with a particular attention to soil health, and to encourage such development so as to preserve both the cultural and the environmental diversity of the region and ensure economic prospects by safeguarding natural resources for the long term; stresses the importance of implementing the principles of the circular economy and synergetic cooperation between farming and other economic activities on areas protected under the Nature 2000 network and all other protected areas;
6. Laments the increasing abandonment of – and scrub encroachment on – farmland, which adversely affects not only the landscape, agricultural productivity and in particular traditional practices with regard to small-scale livestock and arable farming but also water management and hydrogeological balance, biodiversity and sustainable energy generation;
7. Notes that the Alpine region is Europe’s ‘water tower’ and that the Alps provide enough water to provide up to 90% of the needs of the foothill areas in summer; notes also that the Alps constitute Europe’s main biomass reserve; stresses that water is important for hydroelectricity, the irrigation of agricultural land, the sustainable management of forests, preserving biodiversity and the landscape and providing drinking water, which will be even more crucial in coming years in view of climate change; stresses, therefore, the need to step up the exchange of best practices and cross-border cooperation in connection with the Alpine Convention’s Water Management Platform between the national bodies responsible for the management of water and river basins;
8. Notes that the Alpine region was able at a very early stage to benefit from its waterways by producing hydroelectric power; takes the view that it should be possible to subsidise exchanges of good practice and the modernisation of structures using EU funds, with a view to responding to the growing demand for energy and the influx of tourists;
9. Finds it regrettable that there is currently an increasing tendency towards the indirect expropriation of landowners as part of the implementation of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and the Biodiversity Strategy; urges the Commission to take action to safeguard property rights as a key component of the development of the Alpine regions;
10. Points out that the return of large predators is putting traditional agriculture and pasture farming at risk in many Alpine valleys as sheep, goats and cattle are increasingly being

attacked by wild predators; underlines that management and reintroduction of birds of prey and carnivores must be better coordinated among various authorities while exchange of information and best practices needs to be enhanced in order to improve cross-border protection and management of these species as part of the Alpine strategy and in connection with the Large Carnivores, Wild Ungulates and Society Platform of the Alpine Convention;

11. Insists that the strategy should contribute towards meeting the targets set at COP21 and also outline how the region should cope with climate change challenges, particularly bearing in mind its vulnerability and exposure to natural disasters (e.g. mudflows, wildfires);
12. Points out that cascading use of renewable resources is a principle which if regulated and enforced by law will become a large interference with property rights and might hinder innovation especially for SMEs;
13. Stresses that it must remain possible to use traditional arable and livestock farming practices in mountainous areas, in order to preserve agrarian structures and settlements in those areas; calls for monitoring procedures and cross-compliance requirements to be harmonised, simplified and reduced, particularly for smallholders and mountain farmers;
14. Considers it important to set up regional programmes to promote decentralised, macro-regional structures for processing and marketing agricultural and forestry products (e.g. cooperatives and producer organisations), in order to strengthen their position in the timber and food value chains and improve employment, food supply and innovation in the regions; points out the advantages of securing a broad variety of market opportunities;
15. Calls for the enhancement of the value of agricultural products, by encouraging initiatives to increase the use and dissemination of the ‘mountain products’ label on the basis of practical arrangements, promoting the protected geographical indications of products from the Alpine region and developing new high-quality products in order to meet consumer demand and provide them with information about the traditional basis of these products and their distinctive characteristics and quality; considers that more effective safeguards are needed against imitators and pirate producers of products claiming to originate in the Alpine region and for protected geographical indications; furthermore, calls on the Commission to introduce special operational programmes for high-quality mountain products, with a view to improving the promotion and marketing of those products;
16. Emphasises the importance of milk production in mountainous parts of the Alpine region, and in particular of the high-quality dairy products that come from that milk; points out that, in many instances, the dairy industry cannot compete with more favourable locations; calls on the Commission and the Member States to introduce specific offsetting measures for producers under the CAP, in order to ensure that livestock farming and dairy production in mountainous areas is financially sustainable, in particular for small and medium-sized family-run farms, as well as support for processors turning Alpine milk into high-quality products;
17. Underlines that it is important to boost the competitiveness of mountain farms by, inter alia, promoting the formation of producer organisations as well as stimulating the activities of local producers by launching public procurement; stresses that networking

and the formation of associations between mountain farmers can increase their bargaining power vis-à-vis distributors and help to mitigate in general the structural weaknesses of mountain farming; furthermore, believes that short supply chains in mountainous areas and local markets are of key importance for preserving agricultural production on small scale farms located in these areas;

18. Believes that the marketing of agricultural products could be improved if they were included within the general tourism products of a given geographical area;
19. Considers it particularly important to give young farmers long-term prospects in order to address rural depopulation in the Alpine region; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote transnational initiatives to support entrepreneurship, emerging industries and the labour market in agriculture and forestry; underlines the importance of integrating farming more effectively in the local economy, in particular in the tourism, crafts and SME sectors, in order to raise farm incomes and make agricultural jobs more attractive to young people;
20. Highlights the importance of agri-tourism as a source of income for small-scale farmers (e.g. farm holidays); calls on the Commission and the Member States to establish programmes to support investment and entrepreneurship; considers it important to support those farms through specific tourism campaigns;
21. Points out that the climate and topography of the Alpine regions make it difficult to intensify farming and forestry; urges the Commission and the Member States to promote research and development in the use of grassland, livestock farming and forestry by capacity building to make production more efficient, to preserve traditional forms of farming and livestock breeds and to assist the conversion of forests into climate-resilient mixed forests;
22. Calls on the Commission to expand education and consultancy structures for agricultural and forestry workers (e.g. training for alpine farming consultants), to provide a macro-regional training network and to intensify cooperation and networking between educational, economic and scientific actors (e.g. inter-branch trainee schemes and exchange programmes) with a view to promoting sustainable growth in the context of joint, cross-border and international research programmes and projects; notes that mountainous areas have always been a major source of innovation, particularly for overcoming natural handicaps; notes that, in the Alps, the same person is often required to carry out different activities over the course of a year, sometimes across borders; calls on the Commission, the Member States and local authorities to encourage cooperation between (initial and continuous) professional training operators; takes the view that training and information on innovations in farming and forestry must be provided in order to enhance the competitiveness of smallholders and family-run farms;
23. Points out the important role of agriculture and rural resources in providing social and educational care for vulnerable people in particular; calls on the Commission to promote social agricultural activities, given that for mountain farmers in particular, they represent a new way of providing alternative services;
24. Points out the importance of access to a high-speed internet connection and to digital services and, in addition to purely infrastructure-related development, calls for a holistic



‘digital villages and regions’ approach, providing sustainable, liveable and family-friendly environments;

25. Notes that SMEs in mountainous regions experience administrative difficulties when applying for funding from the EAFRD; calls on the Commission to align the corresponding support programmes in order to ensure better access to funding and greater success in implementation, which should be of more benefit to small municipalities;
26. Calls for the prospective and current regulatory framework for farms throughout the Alpine region, in particular under the CAP, to be harmonised and simplified respectively; points out the need for specific additional support based on factors such as soil assessment and gradients in order to make it possible to farm sustainably on steep hillsides;
27. Welcomes the establishment of a macro-regional governance model for the Alpine region so as to foster cross-border cooperation in agriculture and forestry; regards it as important in this connection that there should be improved exchanges of information and experience, on a transnational basis, between associations and producer organisations in the areas of livestock and crop farming and forestry by setting up regular symposia;
28. Emphasises that the development of new initiatives requires regional solutions and participatory approaches, including the harmonisation of existing and new initiatives, in order to maximise the benefit for mountain farming in the Alps and reduce administrative barriers; calls for the direct involvement of regions, local authorities and individuals in all measures under an EU Alpine strategy, with particular attention to agriculture and forestry stakeholders that should be instrumental in carrying out the Commission’s action plan at regional level; points out that the Alpine Convention, EU cohesion policy and existing EU initiatives must be taken into account;
29. Considers it important that the EU Alpine strategy should be carried out with existing financial resources, such as the 2014-2020 Structural and Investment Funds, and that no new funding should be introduced; stresses that they must be used efficiently in order to carry out the strategy with greater coordination;
30. Calls on the Commission and Member States to expand support programmes such as INTERREG and LEADER within rural development policy for agricultural and forestry smallholdings in order to exchange information and best practices and to develop synergies between these various programs and focus on a limited and clearly defined set of priorities; underlines the importance, in this connection, of multifunctional small-scale farming in the Alpine region;
31. Notes that mountainous terrain remains an obstacle to bringing European citizens closer together and that the EU has committed itself to increase funding for cross-border transport infrastructure.

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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|---|---|
| <b>Date adopted</b>                           | 26.4.2016   |
| <b>Result of final vote</b>                   | +:               36<br>-:               5<br>0:                0  |
| <b>Members present for the final vote</b>     | John Stuart Agnew, Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Eric Andrieu, Richard Ashworth, José Bové, Paul Brannen, Daniel Buda, Nicola Caputo, Matt Carthy, Viorica Dăncilă, Michel Dantin, Paolo De Castro, Albert Deß, Herbert Dorfmann, Norbert Erdős, Edouard Ferrand, Luke Ming Flanagan, Martin Häusling, Anja Hazekamp, Jan Huitema, Peter Jahr, Jarosław Kalinowski, Zbigniew Kuźmiuk, Philippe Loiseau, Mairead McGuinness, Ulrike Müller, James Nicholson, Maria Noichl, Marijana Petir, Laurențiu Rebegea, Bronis Ropé, Jordi Sebastià, Jasenko Selimovic, Maria Lidia Senra Rodríguez, Czesław Adam Siekierski, Marc Tarabella, Janusz Wojciechowski, Marco Zullo |
| <b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b> | Pilar Ayuso, Franc Bogovič, Jean-Paul Denanot, Jens Gieseke, Ivan Jakovčić, Anthea McIntyre, Sofia Ribeiro, Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso   |

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

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|---|--|
| <b>Date adopted</b>   | 16.6.2016  |
| <b>Result of final vote</b>                                     | +: 25<br>-: 2<br>0: 6  |
| <b>Members present for the final vote</b>                       | Pascal Arimont, Franc Bogovič, Victor Boștinaru, Mercedes Bresso, Constanze Krehl, Sławomir Kłosowski, Andrew Lewer, Martina Michels, Iskra Mihaylova, Jens Nilsson, Younous Omarjee, Konstantinos Papadakis, Stanislav Polčák, Liliana Rodrigues, Fernando Ruas, Monika Smolková, Ruža Tomašić, Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso, Ángela Vallina, Monika Vana, Matthijs van Miltenburg, Kerstin Westphal |
| <b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>                   | Andor Deli, Tunne Kelam, Tonino Picula, Claude Rolin, Bronis Ropè, Claudia Schmidt, Remo Sernagiotto, Damiano Zoffoli  |
| <b>Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote</b> | Dominique Martin, Vladimir Urutchev, Marco Valli   |