



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2016)0336

EU strategy for the Alpine region

European Parliament resolution of 13 September 2016 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 of 28 July 2015 concerning the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (COM(2015)0366) and the accompanying action plan and supporting analytical document (SWD(2015)0147),
- 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 1083/2006¹ (the Common Provisions Regulation or CPR),
- 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 goal²,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council 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 groupings³,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 19 and 20 December 2013 on the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region,

¹ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 320.

² OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 259.

³ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 303.

- having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 8 October 2015 on the Commission communication concerning a European Union strategy for the Alpine Region¹,
- having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 3 December 2014 on an Alpine macro-regional strategy for the European Union²,
- 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 Mediterranean³,
- having regard to its resolution of 23 May 2013 on a macro-regional strategy for the Alps⁴,
- 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 communication 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 Council decision 96/191/EC of 26 February 1996 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,

¹ OJ C 32, 28.1.2016, p. 12.

² OJ C 19, 21.1.2015, p. 32.

³ OJ C 349 E, 29.11.2013, p. 1.

⁴ OJ C 55, 12.2.2016, p. 117.

- 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 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 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. 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;
21. 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;
22. 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;
23. 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;

24. 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;
25. 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;
26. 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;
27. 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;
28. 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;
29. 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;
30. 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; stresses also the need to support and to enhance the coordination of mountain rescue services;

31. 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;
32. 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;
33. 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

34. 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 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.;
35. 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;
36. 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;

37. 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;
38. 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;
39. 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;
40. 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;
41. 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

42. 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;
43. 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;
44. 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;
45. 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;

46. 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;
47. 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;
48. 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;
49. 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;
50. 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;
51. 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;

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52. 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).