



EUSALP EU STRATEGY FOR THE ALPINE REGION
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CELEBRATING A DECADE OF ALPINE COOPERATION



EUSALP
EU STRATEGY FOR
THE ALPINE REGION

2015-2025
10 YEARS



Summary

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

The Alpine Region remains one of the most dynamic, innovative, and competitive areas in Europe. It is one of the largest economic and productive regions in Europe with unique geographical and natural features.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). We celebrate a decade of successful cooperation across the Alps, building bridges across national borders, governance levels, and policy areas.

EUSALP stands as a model of how European and non-EU partners can work together to seize opportunities and pursue common goals. This unique cooperation between 48 regions from seven countries, including Switzerland and Liechtenstein, demonstrates the tangible benefits of cross-border collaboration.

Over the past decade, the collective efforts of all EUSALP stakeholders have shown the power of cooperation rooted in the region's economic dynamism, natural and cultural richness, and long-standing tradition of partnership. The Strategy aims at reducing regional disparities, while unlocking the full potential of this unique region in Europe. Numerous projects have been implemented in areas such as water management and skills development for the jobs of the future in the Alps.

At the same time, the region continues to face shared economic and social challenges requiring a joint response: from promoting sustainable economic development to protecting the Alpine landscape. Home to Europe's largest mountain range, the region continues to experience challenges, such as low population density, ageing populations, seasonal dependence in tourism, as well as infrastructure and resource challenges. Growth, prosperity, and stronger synergies among policy areas are key to turning these challenges into opportunities, and this can be best achieved by cooperation at local, regional, national and European levels.

This spirit of cooperation is also evident in this anniversary year, as the Strategy has made significant progress, notably through the first wide-ranging revision of its Action Plan. The revised Action Plan sets comprehensive goals to foster resilience, innovation, inclusion and sustainable governance across the region. It draws on lessons learned from a decade of implementation, strengthens governance, and offers a more adaptable framework for future cooperation. I congratulate this year's Austria-Liechtenstein co-Presidency for their effective coordination and leadership in guiding this process. The finalisation of the updated Action Plan by the end of 2025 is a significant milestone that reflects a shared vision across the region.

The Alpine Strategy continues to play a central role – not only by promoting cooperation across borders but also by building trust among EU and neighbouring non-EU countries. The Austria-Liechtenstein co-Presidency is a living example of this spirit of cooperation.

By bridging local and regional initiatives with European priorities, EUSALP remains a model for cooperation and innovation, both within and beyond the European Union. As we celebrate ten years of EUSALP, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to its success. Together we are building a better, stronger, and more resilient Europe.



Raffaele Fitto, Vice-President of the European Commission and Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms



EUSALP PRESIDENCIES

2015 - 2025



EUSALP EU STRATEGY FOR THE ALPINE REGION



Presidency 2016 - Slovenia



“Launch of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region”

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Karl Erjavec played a key role in launching the Strategy, establishing political ownership and leadership of EUSALP during Slovenia’s first presidency, emphasizing multi-level governance and cooperation.

Challenges faced

Slovenia was entrusted with EUSALP presidency in October 2015, before the official approval of EUSALP by the General Affairs Council (November 2015) and the European Council (June 2016) and even before the establishment of the EUSALP General Assembly in early 2016. This put Slovenia in a pioneering role to set up the whole EUSALP governance structure, although not all political decisions had been adopted, and to assure the requisite conditions for the structure to be operational. Slovenia drew on its experience from EU strategies for the Danube region and the Adriatic-Ionian Sea, in which it had previously participated. The aim was to secure strong political backing and ensure broad consensus on the strategic orientation for the implementation of EUSALP.

Successes achieved

On 25 January 2016, the Slovenian presidency organised the EUSALP Launch Conference in Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia. The event brought together over 700 participants from all EUSALP states and regions, representatives of EU institutions, including two EU commissioners, the representatives of the civil society, businesses, NGOs, interested stakeholders and media. Topics such as Diverse in Unity of EUSALP, Alpine Leadership, Partnership with Stakeholders, Building and Increasing Knowledge, Smart Networks, Cooperation for Green Opportunities and Challenges, Governance and Lessons Learned were discussed, laying down the basis for the implementation of the Strategy. The EUSALP General Assembly met at its first, constitutive session co-chaired by Slovenian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Karl Erjavec and EU Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu and attended by almost 40 high political representatives of EUSALP countries and regions. The General Assembly adopted EUSALP strategic orientation in the Brdo Joint Statement, in which political leaders acknowledged the validity of the multilevel governance principle of three interrelated levels (i) political leadership and ownership, (ii) coordination and (iii) implementation.



Milestones reached

Slovenia's EUSALP presidency organized a number of high-profile events. In addition to the Launch Conference of EUSALP in January 2016, the second major presidency's event was the Mediterranean Coast and EU Macro-Regional Strategies Week which took place from 23 September to 1 October 2016 in Koper. The event gathered over 1,000 participants from the Alpine, Adriatic and Danube regions, with the active participation from the highest political level, including the Prime Minister, ministers and the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. Their involvement helped raise awareness of EU macro regional strategies and emphasized the value of regional cooperation for addressing shared macro-regional challenges. The main objective of the Week was to build synergy in the area of connectivity, with a focus on the ecological connectivity of the wider Danube, Adriatic Ionian and Alpine region.

Since its first edition in year 2016, the Mediterranean Coast and Macro-Regional Strategies Week has been organized every year and has become one of the most important and visible macro regional events, bringing together stakeholders from all four EU macro regional strategies.

Overall results

Under the Slovenian EUSALP presidency, the Brdo Joint Statement and the EUSALP Rules of Procedure were adopted, establishing the three-level governance structure with the formation of the Executive Board and the endorsement of Action Group Leaders. With strong political commitment and coordination, Slovenia set the foundation and momentum for a stable, inclusive and effective EUSALP implementation.

During Slovenia's 2016 EUSALP presidency, key recommendations for further work were drafted to improve EUSALP management, regional cooperation and visibility.



EUSALP General Assembly #1, Slovenia 2016.

The recommendations included:

- Establishing the EUSALP area as a testing ground for green infrastructure;
- Creating a laboratory for deeper stakeholder and civil society engagement;
- Introducing a parliamentary dimension to EUSALP and youth involvement;
- Creating a unified horizontal pillar on “media and communication” across all four macro-regional strategies.
- The deliverables of Slovenia’s 2016 EUSALP presidency, laying down foundations for the EUSALP governance and implementation, were summarized in a brochure presented at the second EUSALP General Assembly on 13 February 2017 in Rottach-Egern, Bavaria.



Slovenia 2016, first EUSALP Presidency (represented from left to right by Karl Erjavec, Deputy-Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andreja Jerina, Slovenian National Coordinator for EUSALP, and Bojana Cipot, Slovenian Deputy-National Coordinator for EUSALP).

Presidency 2017 - Bavaria, Germany



PRESIDENCY
2017

“EU Alpine Strategy - Joint action for the benefit of the Region”

It is great pleasure and honour for BAVARIA to celebrate EUSALP's 10-Years-Anniversary today. As a Macro-Regional Strategy, it follows the idea of a Europe of regions, which was always of utmost importance for BAVARIA. For us, EUSALP offers a unique opportunity to tackle cross border challenges with friends and neighbors in the Alpine region. At the pan-European level, EUSALP offers the chance to strengthen economic, political, and social cohesion.

Bavaria has been committed to the success of EUSALP right from the start. We played a key role in its conception. In 2017, Bavaria was the first region to take over the presidency of EUSALP. From the very beginning, we have been working in various EUSALP Action Groups to achieve concrete project successes.

In 2026 and under my political patronage, Bavaria will visibly renew its commitment by taking over the EUSALP presidency for the second time.

State Minister for European and International Affairs, Eric Beißwenger, MdL

Challenges faced

In 2017 EUSALP was still at an early stage. Based upon the valuable achievements under Slovenia's EUSALP presidency 2016, a stable governance and funding architecture had to be finished off. And: the political focus of the EUSALP presidency 2017 had to be defined and implemented. This was excellently achieved – also due to the sound and resilient relations between the states and regions in the Alpine area, the good cooperation with EUSALP partners such as the Alpine Space Program, the Alpine Convention, the European Commission and the European Parliament (Friends of the EUSALP).

Successes achieved

- Deepening of a stable EUSALP governance architecture.
- Strengthening of the financial architecture for EUSALP (Embedding into the MFF)
- Setting political guidelines for the work done during the EUSALP presidency 2017
- Establishing a sound relationship with the European Parliament (Friends of the EUSALP)



Milestones reached

- **13th February 2017 and 23th November 2017:**

Adoption of two joint declarations by the General Assembly of the EU Alpine Strategy on political priorities for the implementation of the strategy and principles for future cooperation (including continuous citizen participation, improvement of the financing of the EU Alpine Strategy under the new EU budget).

EUSALP Position Paper on improving financing opportunities for EUSALP under the EU MFF post-2020. Political support was achieved from nine additional partner regions in the EU Alpine Strategy and very positive response from the European Commission.

- **13th February 2017:**

First meeting of the General Assembly of the EU Alpine Strategy under Bavarian chairmanship in Rottach-Egern on Lake Tegernsee.

- **14th - 16th February 2017:**

Action Group Forum in Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

- **10th May 2017:**

Meeting of and with the European Parliament group “Friends of the EUSALP” at the Bavarian Representation in Brussels.

- **2nd October 2017:**

Environmental Ministers' Conference in Munich, with the adoption of a joint declaration on green infrastructures in the Alpine region by 27 Alpine states and regions.

- **23th - 24th November 2017:**

Second General Assembly meeting within 2017 and Annual Forum of the EU Alpine Strategy in Munich.

Overall results

The Joint declarations on political priorities for implementation of the Strategy and principles for future cooperation adopted under the German Presidency 2017 are available on EUSALP website.



Presidency 2018 - Tyrol, Austria



PRESIDENCY
2018

“shaping.future.together”

The EUSALP was established as a unique bottom-up macro-regional strategy, i.e. at the initiative of the Regions, which are closest to the people’s needs and concerns. What is needed for the effective implementation of EUSALP is the strong political will on the part of all parties. EUSALP is more than just a collection of individual projects. It is a political framework, a political initiative, and we must be aware of this strategic dimension.

This is precisely why it is important that the states and regions make a clear political commitment to our strategy. It is a shared commitment to shaping a greener, more competitive, cohesive and younger Alpine Region.



Challenges faced

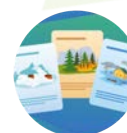
A core challenge during our Presidency in 2018 was addressing mobility transformation in the Alpine Region. A sector that remains both a key emitter and a lifeline for regional cohesion. In Tyrol, the pressure along the Brenner corridor, with over 2.5 million trucks annually, underscored the urgency of shifting freight from road to rail. However, this transformation faced strategic and operational hurdles: fragmented transport policies, insufficient cross-border infrastructure integration, and a lack of fair conditions for rail transport. Additionally, the delay in large-scale projects like the Brenner Base Tunnel made accompanying measures even more critical. We tackled these challenges by prioritising mobility as a thematical priority of our presidency, advocating for modal shift and coherent governance mechanisms across regions. Only through joint action can mobility become both climate-friendly and socially inclusive.



Successes achieved

A key pillar of our 2018 Presidency was the strategic focus on youth participation within EUSALP. The Tyrolean Presidency has launched the ‘youth.shaping.EUSALP.’ process. The first « pitch your project » contest was one of the highlights of the Annual Forum 2018. Following the initiative of the Tyrolean presidency 2018, 30 young people from all seven EUSALP states developed together with EUSALP representatives concrete proposals on how they want to participate in EUSALP. As a result, the project youth.shaping.EUSALP lead by Region of Tyrol and co-financed by the European Commission, was organizing in the coming years the following youth activities:

- The EUSALP Youth Council,
- EUSALP summer activities,
- The “Pitch Your Project” contest,
- Online communication and participation tools.





Milestones reached

Youth involvement:

- First time speaking right for the youth at General Assembly
- Annual Forum with strong focus on youth – motto: shaping.future together with the next generation; pitch.your.project contest established.

Mobility:

- Project „cross boarder“ Joint approaches to improving cross-border mobility in the Alpine region.

Sustainable land use and soil protection:

Broad support for soil declaration (6 countries and 19 regions)

The declaration covers:

- 6 key reasons why sustainable land use and soil protection are important
- 6 areas of action where increased cooperation is needed

The measures are:

- Apply existing regulations and improve implementation
- Coordinating and improving data collection and monitoring systems
- Promoting inner-city development, planning infrastructure and mineral extraction in a soil-conserving manner
- Promoting awareness-raising, capacity building and exchange of experience on sustainable land use and soil protection
- Enabling and practising participation
- Establishing and strengthening regional, national and cross-border cooperation.

Vocational training – 10 points plan:

- 10 points are aimed at companies, trainees and teachers and focus in particular on networking and the need for cooperation between all stakeholders.
- Basis for further activities in this area, which is so important for skilled worker development. Highlight what is necessary for successful vocational training.
- The 10 points are presented in a calendar format and issued.

✔ Overall results

The 2018 Presidency of Tyrol, anchored youth participation as a structural element of EUSALP by empowering the Alpine Youth and fostering intergenerational dialogue, reaffirming that the future of the Alpine Region must be co-created with its next generation.



Handover of the Presidency from Bavaria (Michael Hinterdobler, left) to the Region of the Tyrol (Governor Guenther Platter, right) in the presence of the European Commission (Walter Defaa, center)

Presidency 2019 - Lombardy, Italy



PRESIDENCY
2019

“shaping.future.together”

The Italian presidency of EUSALP 2019, coordinated by Lombardy Region, represented a crucial moment for the consolidation of the Alpine Macroregional Strategy. With the central theme of "Green Economy", we promoted the Alps as the perfect "living lab" for sustainable innovation. Our vision aimed to reconcile economic development with the protection of natural resources, making the Alpine macroregion the driving force for Europe's future.

·Regional Minister for Environment and Climate Mr. Raffaele Cattaneo.

Challenges faced

During the Italian presidency 2019, we faced significant challenges related to the operational consolidation of EUSALP. The main issue concerned overcoming financial dependence on European territorial cooperation programmes alone, which limited the scope and impact of macroregional initiatives. Furthermore, we needed to increase the "political ownership" of the strategy, strengthening interaction between the General Assembly, Executive Board and Action Groups. Another crucial challenge consisted in perfecting coordination among the nine Action Groups and developing effective methods for evaluating work programmes. In parallel, the need emerged to incorporate Macroregional Strategies into the legal framework of Cohesion Policy 2021-2027. These challenges required an innovative approach based on multi-level governance and diversification of funding sources to ensure truly impactful interventions.

Successes achieved

The Italian presidency achieved concrete results in positioning Green Economy at the center of the macroregional agenda. We successfully coordinated five Action Groups under Italian leadership (AG1, AG3, AG4, AG5, AG9), creating cross-cutting synergies between innovation, training, sustainable mobility, digital connectivity and energy efficiency.

The programme actively involved eight Italian regions, representing 29.8% of the EUSALP population and 23.7% of the macroregional GDP. The "result-oriented" approach was particularly successful, focusing attention on concrete challenges for macroregional citizens. The World Manufacturing Forum initiative in Lombardy also created an international benchmark for EUSALP. Significant was also the involvement of young people and youth entrepreneurship, strengthening the "bottom-up" dimension of the strategy and dialogue between mountain and metropolitan areas.



Milestones reached

During 2019 we reached fundamental strategic milestones. The Political kick-off meeting on February 28-March 1 in Milan marked the official start of the presidency, followed by the Green Economy Conference on July 3-4, the programme's central event.

Key events included: the joint dialogue between EUSALP and other macroregional strategies (Baltic, Danube, Adriatic-Ionian) in Trieste in June 2019; the Workshop on energy efficiency in Alpine enterprises in Bolzano; the transport and corridors conference in Genoa; the General Assembly and 2019 Forum in Milan in November.

Each event contributed to strengthening cross-border cooperation and consolidating the network among the 48 macroregional territories. The December Trio Meeting also ensured strategic continuity with the subsequent French presidency, keeping alive the original spirit of the strategy "born from below" with strong regional impetus.

Overall results

The overall impact of the Italian presidency 2019 is measured in the consolidation of EUSALP as a mature and operational macroregional strategy. We demonstrated that the regional dimension constitutes the most suitable level for addressing complex European challenges, strengthening the multi-level governance system.

The Green Economy theme catalyzed cross-cutting energies and competences, positioning the Alps as an innovation laboratory for all of Europe. The presidency also laid the foundations for embedding Macroregional Strategies in Cohesion Policy 2021-2027, opening new prospects for funding and impact.

The innovative "multi-funded projects" approach and the enhancement of cooperation between different territories have concretely improved competitiveness and livability for Alpine citizens. The model developed during the Italian presidency continues to inspire subsequent strategies, confirming EUSALP as a reference point in European macroregional cooperation.



Handover of the Presidency from the Region of the Tyrol (Ingrid Felipe, Region of the Tyrol, Regional Councillor for Environment and Mobility, left) to Lombardy Region, (President Attilio Fontana, right).

Presidencies 2020 & 2021 - France



PRESIDENCY
2020-2021

“Together for a sustainable Alpine Region”

The European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) represents an innovative approach to territorial governance, based on multilevel cooperation and the valorisation of the unique characteristics of the Alpine area. Its origin reflects a strong political will to address the specific challenges of mountain regions while strengthening territorial resilience in the face of crises, particularly the Covid-19 pandemic. **Joël Giraud**, former Minister for Territorial Cohesion and Relations to Local Authorities, played a key role in shaping this dynamic.

The sustainable economic development of the Alpine region relies on the transformation of key sectors such as agriculture, forestry, tourism, and industry. These transitions are closely linked to a strong commitment to energy transition, championed by **Fabrice Pannekoucke**, former Vice-President of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region in charge of agriculture and valleys, now President of the Region.

Sustainable mobility, natural risk management, and biodiversity conservation are essential pillars of Alpine public policy. These themes are central to the work of **Renaud Muselier**, President of Region Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur and **Chantal Eyméoud**, Vice President of the region, prominent figures in regional governance.

Finally, youth engagement, social innovation, and the transformation of the Alpine tourism model have led to the creation of the EUSALP Youth Council, initiated by **Marie-Guite Dufay** and **Liliane Lucchesi**, who have been committed to ensuring greater inclusion of younger generations in decision-making processes.





Challenges faced

During the French presidency in 2020 and 2021, EUSALP faced unprecedented challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The crisis deeply affected transnational cooperation, making it necessary to adapt swiftly to new working methods and ensure the continuity of EUSALP's activities despite restrictions. Through a spirit of resilience, collaboration was maintained remotely, and major events were organised in hybrid formats to sustain dialogue among partners.

Amid these exceptional circumstances, the French presidency succeeded in advancing strategic priorities by adopting an Action Plan for the sustainable recovery of the Alpine region, aiming to strengthen territorial cohesion and ecological transition. Given the global situation and the need for continuity, the French presidency was extended for an additional year, ensuring stability and sustained coordination in a period of uncertainty.



Successes achieved

- Adoption of the Manifesto Together, to shape a sustainable and resilient Alpine region which emphasized joint priorities for the Alpine region recovery and transition
- Developing year-round sustainable tourism: final declaration of the general state of mountain tourism transition
- Promoting the production, transformation and consumption of local Alpine products in short-circuits, especially forestry and agricultural products: recommendations for forestry projects in the next European programming period; launch of a project on the valorization of labels
- Developing sustainable mobility and transport solutions: an evaluation and labeling methodology of projects relevant for the promotion of sustainable mobility solutions in the Alpine region from a macro- regional point of view
- Involving youth in the energy transition and the fight against climate change: launching of the Youth council
- Speeding up the ecological transition of the Alpine Region: letter of intentions of 9 Regions in favour of a structured cooperation on hydrogen
- Preserving Alpine biodiversity and preventing risks related to climate change : activation of the EU Solidarity Fund for French and Italian valleys damaged by Alex Storm
- Making the Alpine region an example of multi-level governance



Milestones reached

- French Presidency kick off event and GA meeting (4-5 February 2020, Lyon)
- 16 March 2020 : first Covid-19 lockdown
- Adoption of the Manifesto Together, to shape a sustainable and resilient Alpine region (12 June 2020)
- 2020 Annual Forum and GA meeting (10-11 December, Marseille and remote)
- 2021 Annual Forum and GA meeting (9-10 December, Nice)
- Developing year-round sustainable tourism: ski resorts and climate change conference (16-17 March 2021, Métabief); final conference of Smart Altitude project (10 May 2021, Les Orres); general state of mountain tourism in transition (23-24 September, Alpine region)
- Promoting the production, transformation and consumption of local Alpine products in short-circuits, especially forestry and agricultural products: mountain forests and climate change (4-5 September 2020 Aix les Bains), second international territorial brand workshop (10-11 June 2021)
- Developing sustainable mobility and transport solutions: 4th mobility conference (20 May 2021, Nice)
- Involving youth in the ecological transition and the fight against climate change: 2020 and 2021 Pitch your projects context editions
- Speeding up the energy transition of the Alpine Region: climate, risks and energy conference (30 September and 1st October, Chamonix)
- Preserving Alpine biodiversity and preventing risks related to climate change : Alex Storm (1st October 2020, (climate, risks and energy conference (30 September and 1st October 2021, Chamonix)
- Making the Alpine region an example of multi-level governance

✔ Overall results

- 42 events organized or backed by the French presidency over the whole Alpine region (up to 2000 attendees to an event)
- Developing year-round sustainable tourism: TranStat and BeyondSnow projects incubated; French State owned Avenir Montagnes program inspired
- Promoting the production, transformation and consumption of local Alpine products in short-circuits, especially forestry and agricultural products
- Developing sustainable mobility and transport solutions: identification of strategic secondary lines with a view to requesting the inclusion of these networks in the global TEN-T network, to enable their financing by the CEF consistently with their strategic dimension for the interconnection in the Alps
- Involving youth in the ecological transition and the fight against climate change: launching of other youth councils like for Alcotra cross-border programme
- Speeding up the energy transition of the Alpine Region: Amethyst and H2MA projects incubated
- Preserving Alpine biodiversity and preventing risks related to climate change: Biodiv'Alp and AdaptNow project incubated
- Making the Alpine region an example of multi-level governance: prefiguration of the EUSALP technical support structure



“And thence we came forth to see the stars again” (Inferno XXXIV, v. 139)

The Italian Presidency of EUSALP in 2022, co-chaired by the Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen - South Tyrol and the Autonomous Province of Trento, was marked by a strong commitment to fostering the sustainable development of the Alpine region. Its overarching goal was to reduce disparities between peripheral and well-connected urban areas, ensuring balanced territorial cohesion across the EUSALP area.

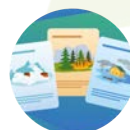
Coinciding with the European Year of Youth, the Presidency placed particular emphasis on addressing demographic challenges such as ageing populations and youth outmigration. Recognizing the need to make the Alpine region more attractive for younger generations, the Presidency prioritized inclusive policies aimed at improving quality of life, employment opportunities, and civic engagement.



Challenges faced

Building on the legacy of previous presidencies, the Italian Presidency built its programme around six challenges :

- Promoting energy efficiency and the energy transition to guide the Alpine region toward carbon neutrality.
- Fostering smart villages and sustainable local development, enhancing innovation and resilience in rural and mountain communities.
- Empowering Alpine youth through dedicated initiatives and strengthening the EUSALP Youth Council.
- Promoting sustainable tourism and transport, balancing economic vitality with environmental stewardship.
- Strengthening EUSALP governance and ensuring institutional continuity and impact.



Successes achieved

- **Governance:**

One of the main achievements of the 2022 Presidency was the introduction of the **Rotating Presidency Mechanism**. Adopted by the General Assembly, the Regions and States of the Alpine arch committed with this mechanism to the development of the Strategy by ensuring political ownership and henceforth stability and accountability to it.

The 2022 Presidency worked year-round on further steering the implementation process of the Technical Support Structure (TSS) to guarantee the establishment of a functioning strategy office. Under the lead of the presidency, the Executive Board elaborated the **Mandate of the TSS**, which later was adopted by the General Assembly.

To facilitate the access to Presidency funding, upon the proposal of the Presidency 2022, the resources were provided through the basic Alpine Space Programme funding project. This pooling also resulted into a better coordination of tasks and activities between the presidencies and the Action Group Leaders.

The 2022 Presidency marked the beginning of the EUSALP topical restructuring and refocusing. The Executive Board initiated a dialogue on narrowing the scope of thematic priorities, with the objective of strengthening EUSALP's visibility and fostering political interest. The coordination of the agreed thematic foci of the Strategy were summarized in the **list of common implementation priorities**. Based on this, the **cross-cutting strategic initiatives** were introduced to enhance the collaboration among Action Groups on topical fields of shared competences thereby contributing to a further focalization of EUSALP. This approach was subsequently pursued by the Swiss Presidency under the guiding principle "less is more".

- **Participation of young people in the Strategy:**

The Italian Presidency 2022 aimed at strengthening the participation of young people in the Strategy, not only at Youth Council level. During the Macro-Regional Strategies Week 2022 in Brussels, a peer-to-peer training and the participation in the Conference of the Future of Europe gave to EUSALP Youth Councillors the chance to raise Alpine issues at the European level. A "Youth Council meets Action Groups" event was organized to foster the involvement of youth and the inclusion of their perspective in the work of Action Groups. Three "participatory foresight workshops" were held on the topics of future jobs, digitalization of Alpine territories, and the integrated development of rural and urban areas to envision desirable futures for the Alps. Other events focused on the creation of communication content through podcasting and writing in collaboration with different youth associations.

The Annual Forum marked the end of an intense year dedicated to reinforcing the collaboration between all relevant EUSALP bodies. Action Groups were invited, for the first time, to work together in the organization of cross-cutting thematic workshops, while cultural and thematic events were open to the general public to increase the visibility of the Strategy.

- **Climate change, energy efficiency and renewable energy:**

Climate change prevention and the establishment of the EUSALP as the first carbon-neutral EU macro-region were main topics of the Italian Presidency 2022. Organized under the motto “Affordable and sustainable energy in the Alps”, the 6th EUSALP Energy conference allowed energy stakeholders to network and exchange on ways to increase energy efficiency and encourage the decarbonisation of the energy system. The EUSALP Energy Award 2022 honored seven initiatives that contribute to citizen activation and participation in the energy transition through communicating and sensibilization of citizens, participatory approaches, and innovative financing models:

- With the workshop “Hydrogen: Which priorities for the Alpine Regions?”, the Presidency facilitated the cooperation of key actors in the field of hydrogen in transport.
- Two Energy Dialogue sessions with citizens, municipalities and enterprises encouraged a multi-stakeholder debate at local level to exchange on practices to tackle the energy crisis and overcome energy poverty.
- The event Liguria, EUSALP, Europe: mobility perspectives to 2050 has focused on the evolution of sustainable mobility in the EUSALP area, in the framework of the EU goal to become climate-neutral by 2050.
- The Presidency promoted the adoption of the EUSALP declaration “Rail Transport in the Alpine Region – Joining forces for a sustainable transport and mobility system”, calling on the EU to create a level-playing field between transport modes as a basic requirement for an effective modal shift, to optimise the potential of rail to serve as the backbone of a connected transport system, and to improve infrastructure provisions for rail transport.
- The workshop “How may forest and timber practitioners as well as civil society respond to the climate crisis?” allowed to foster exchange among timber business representatives, forest practitioners, consumers and citizens to tackle the climate crisis that is threatening forests.
- The conference Climate change adaptation in municipalities and ComuneClima ceremony highlighted the importance of municipalities to develop strategies of adaptation to climate change and their capacity to involve local citizens and economic actors.

Milestones reached

The 2022 Presidency calendar included a variety of events dedicated to different target groups and organized by Action Groups, like the AG 3 conference on the **European Dimension of Higher Vocational Education and Training** in Brussels with the “Friends of EUSALP” MEPs, the AG 4 Mobility Conference in Innsbruck, the AG 5 **Digital Alps Conference** in Trieste, and the AG 9 **Energy Conference** in Bolzano. The presidency also hosted the **1st EUSALP Energy Award**, that was launched that year, as well as the **Green Infrastructure goes Business Award** in Bolzano. Action Groups’ thematic conferences and thematic events offered a great occasion to share best practices, foster networking, and have an expert perspective on specific issues. Also, these big conferences helped to give visibility to the Strategy during the entire year. Moreover, the Autonomous Province of Trento worked to include EUSALP events in the annual calendar of the city of Trento. For instance, the **EUSALP award “What keeps me here”** was inaugurated in the context of the 70th edition of the Trento Film Festival Mountains and Culture and, since 2022, this award is annually given to the movie that best conveys the conscious choice of living in the Alps, and thus acknowledges the value and attractiveness of these areas as well as the importance to preserve the Alpine ecosystem and counteract the phenomenon of depopulation of human and entrepreneurial resources.

✓ Overall results

The document “Rotating mechanism of EUSALP Presidency” as well as the adoption of the mandate for the strategic implementation of the TSS marked important step stones to guarantee a smooth political and administrative coordination of the Strategy. Last but not least, the Rotating Presidency Mechanism, the TSS mandate as well as the formalization of the Youth Council as an official body of EUSALP, required the revision of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, the Executive Board and the Action Groups.

The 2022 Presidency triggered the revision of core topics tackled to improve planning and concentration of scarce resources available for the implementation of the Strategy. The increased cross-sectoral thematic coordination, initiated in 2022, strengthened the collaboration among Action Groups in order to better address macro-regional challenges comprehensively and from different perspectives, and improve political coordination as well as the communication of EUSALP’s achievements towards the general public and the visibility of the strategy.

Representatives from the DG REGIO and INTERACT and other Macro-regional Strategies participated in an online seminar to present a broader picture of the embedding process at EU level and good practices from their territories potentially replicable in the Alpine Region.



Handover of the Presidency 2022 from Italy (Maurizio Fugatti, President of the Autonomous Province of Trento, left), and South Tyrol (Arno Kompatscher, President of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, center) to Switzerland (Christian Rathgeb, President of the Conference of Cantonal Governments CCG, right).

Presidency 2023 - Switzerland



“Less is more”

The Swiss Presidency of EUSALP in 2023 demonstrated that cooperation across borders and levels of government is essential to address the complex challenges facing the Alpine region. Guided by the principle “less is more”, Switzerland focused on delivering tangible results through dialogue, partnership, and mutual trust. The joint leadership of the Confederation and the cantons embodied our federal spirit and showed that diversity, when coordinated, becomes a source of strength for the Alps and for Europe as a whole.

Challenges faced

The Swiss Presidency faced several strategic and operational challenges. Strategically, the main difficulty was to streamline EUSALP’s broad agenda while preserving political relevance. The guiding principle, “less is more,” expressed the need for thematic focus and organisational efficiency to avoid dispersion. Operationally, the shared leadership between the Confederation and the cantons required complex coordination among federal agencies, 26 cantons, host regions, and European partners. Though resource-intensive, this model ultimately demonstrated the strength of Switzerland’s federal system. Contextually, the climate and energy crises, combined with transport disruptions—such as the closure of the Gotthard tunnel during the Lugano mobility conference—underscored the urgency of the selected themes. These challenges required flexibility and reinforced the value of pan-Alpine cooperation. Through inclusive governance and clear thematic prioritisation, the Presidency successfully advanced EUSALP while laying the groundwork for continuity under future chairs.

Successes achieved

During its 2023 Presidency, Switzerland strengthened EUSALP by delivering tangible thematic, organisational, and political results. Three high-level conferences—on circular economy (Fribourg), water (Scuol), and mobility (Lugano)—deepened cross-border dialogue on key sustainability issues, each producing concrete commitments to enhanced cooperation. The Annual Forum and General Assembly in Bad Ragaz adopted the “Declaration of Bad Ragaz,” reaffirming political commitment and launching the revision of the 2016 Action Plan, thereby ensuring renewed strategic orientation. Switzerland also coordinated the introduction of four cross-cutting priorities—digitalisation, energy transition, water management, and circular economy—to guide action groups until 2025, thus enhancing coherence across thematic areas. Equally significant was the inclusive governance model, through which the Confederation and the cantons shared responsibilities, exemplifying federal cooperation and strengthening the role of regions. These achievements consolidated macro-regional collaboration and provided a robust framework for continuity under future presidencies.



Milestones reached

The key milestones of the Swiss EUSALP Presidency in 2023 reflected thematic, strategic, and political progress. The three thematic conferences—on circular economy in Fribourg, water in Scuol, and mobility in Lugano—served as platforms for cross-Alpine exchange, demonstrating that challenges such as resource efficiency, water scarcity, and sustainable mobility require collective responses. The Annual Forum and General Assembly in Bad Ragaz were decisive moments: the “Declaration of Bad Ragaz” renewed political commitment and initiated the revision of the 2016 Action Plan, to be concluded in 2025. Another milestone was the endorsement of new action group work plans aligned with four cross-cutting priorities—digitalisation, energy transition, water management, and circular economy—ensuring consistency until the revised strategy is adopted. Together, these steps advanced the Presidency’s objectives of focus, political reinforcement, and future-oriented preparation of EUSALP.

Overall results

The 2023 Swiss Presidency of EUSALP left a lasting imprint by reinforcing both the strategic orientation and political visibility of the macro-regional strategy. Through high-level conferences on circular economy, water, and mobility, it addressed urgent Alpine challenges and fostered commitments to transnational cooperation. Structurally, it coordinated the introduction of four cross-cutting priorities—digitalisation, energy transition, water management, and circular economy—which now provide a coherent framework for action groups until 2025. Politically, the adoption of the Declaration of Bad Ragaz launched the revision of the 2016 Action Plan, ensuring that EUSALP remains responsive to evolving challenges. The shared Confederation-cantonal leadership illustrated the strength of Switzerland’s federal system and enhanced the role of regions. The Presidency also increased EUSALP’s visibility in Brussels through two side events. Overall, it strengthened cooperation, strategic focus, and resilience, positioning EUSALP for continued relevance in the years ahead.



Handover of the Presidency 2023 from Switzerland (State Secretary Alexandre Fasel, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, left and right, State Councillor Markus Dieth, Canton of Aargau President of the Conference of Cantonal Governments CCG) to Slovenia (Marko Štucin, State Secretary for European Affairs of Slovenia, center).

Presidency 2024 - Slovenia



PRESIDENCY
2024

“The Alps are the Water Tower of Europe”

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Tanja Fajon highlighted the Slovenian presidency's commitment to a competitive, circular and smart Alpine Region. She stood for better political relevance, a more focused strategy, continuity of priorities and, as a result, greater involvement of high-level political representatives.



Challenges faced

Slovenian EUSALP presidency 2024 was entrusted an important debate on the revision of the Strategy's Action Plan. The aim of revision process was to respond to remaining and new challenges of the Alpine region – intensified by climate change and ongoing green and digital transitions and highlighting the urgent need for innovative, sustainable development, stronger territorial solidarity and a balanced approach between economic growth and nature conservation across the Alpine region. Slovenia also had to promote political relevance for EUSALP in the context of changing EU priorities and global challenges. To achieve the ambitious objectives set by the Alpine countries and regions, EUSALP's political engagement at the highest levels was essential.



Successes achieved

Slovenian presidency focused on three key priorities: strengthening the circular economy, transitioning to a water-smart society and improving quality of life for youth in the Alpine Region. It aimed to promote sustainable development by encouraging youth participation across all discussions. The circular economy was emphasized as essential for a green transition in the Alps. In response to the severe floods in 2023, Slovenia prioritised resilient and sustainable water management to address extreme weather events. This focus was supported by events like the Green Infrastructure Goes Business Award and Pitch Your Project, fostering innovation and sustainability. A key success of Slovenia's 2024 EUSALP presidency was the active involvement of youth. The participation of young people in EUSALP has been notably strengthened and the voice of youth has been clearer than ever. As a priority, young people were included in governance and policy discussions, contributing notably with their Youth Vision for a Water-Smart Region, developed by the EUSALP Youth Council, which outlined recommendations on education, participation and community water management. The multi-day event (13–15 March 2024) was organised under the Slovenian presidency of EUSALP in Kamnik, Slovenia, which for the first time brought together the EUSALP Youth Council, Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention and the CIPRA Youth Council. The guest of honour was the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Nataša Pirc Musar, who encouraged participants with the words: “You have a chance to define your generation and shape the future of the Alpine region for the better.” The participants discussed the issue of sustainable water management in the context of extreme weather events and the adaptation to climate change.



Milestones reached

The key event of the presidency was the 9th Annual Forum, which took place on 14 and 15 November 2024 in Brdo pri Kranju. The Forum was launched by Tanja Fajon, Slovenia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs. The Minister highlighted the urgent challenges of the green transition, emphasizing that "... peace, prosperity and a pristine environment can no longer be taken for granted.

"*We must be proactive.*" EU Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa Ferreira, addressed the participants of the 9th EUSALP Annual Forum in a video message. In her remarks, she highlighted the Alpine region as a centre of innovation and competitiveness in Europe, emphasizing the success of the Strategy in fostering cooperation to tackle shared challenges such as climate change, energy efficiency and skills development.

This event provided a significant opportunity to convene high-level representatives, national delegations, Action Group members, Youth Council members and various stakeholders. The Forum featured a High-Level Plenary Panel Alpine Region – Competitive, Circular and Smart in the Global World?, workshops and panels addressing Alpine-related issues, as well as Action Group meetings. Additionally, it included the award ceremonies for the Pitch Your Project, Green Infrastructure Goes Business, and EUSALP Energy Award competitions.

On 14 November 2024, Minister Tanja FAJON chaired the General Assembly of the EUSALP underscoring the need for a common vision for the Alpine region and emphasised that macro regional cooperation can help to achieve the Strategy's goals. Participants also adopted the Brdo Pri Kranju Declaration, which set out important policy orientations for the implementation of the Strategy and for the revision of its Action Plan.

From 18 to 22 September 2024, Slovenia organized the Mediterranean Coast and Macroregional Strategies Week in Izola, promoting sustainable coastal development and cooperation in the Adriatic-Ionian, Alpine and Danube regions. The event hosted several EUSALP events: EB BAGL meeting, Conference Soft Skills: Common Goals, Common Ground, a panel entitled From Vision to Action N – Shaping Our Macro-Regions Future, Digital Alps Conference, the meeting of Action Groups leaders on the cross-cutting priority Boosting Circular Economy.

Overall results

The main task of Slovenia's EUSALP presidency in 2024 was leading a debate on the revision of the EUSALP Action Plan. Through coordinated work with the Executive Board and a dedicated task force, Slovenian presidency produced the White Paper on the Revision of the Action Plan, providing key thematic and structural guidelines for the future of the Strategy. This, together with the Brdo Declaration adopted by the General Assembly, set a clear direction for the continued work under the 2025 Austria-Liechtenstein presidency. The Slovenian presidency significantly reinforced youth involvement in EUSALP. The EUSALP Youth Council presented their Youth Vision for a Water-smart Alpine Region.

The Slovenian presidency also laid solid foundation in creating synergies among youth structures in the Alpine Region: for the first time the EUSALP Youth Council met with Youth Parliament of Alpine Convention and CIPRA Youth Council. Promoting sustainable water management: the notion that the quality of life for future generations also depends on how we treat one of the most precious resources in the Alps has been thoroughly promoted among young people in the region. The EUSALP Youth Council has prepared its own recommendations about sustainable water management in the Alps. Sustainable water management was also one of the topics of the Pitch Your Project competition. Making EUSALP more visible: through a focused campaign of EUSALP Success Stories, concrete results of macro-regional cooperation in Alpine Region were published and promoted through various channels.



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Handover of the Presidency 2024 from Slovenia (Tanja Fajon, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, center) to Austria (Anton Mattle, Governor of Tyrol, left), and Liechtenstein (Dominique Hasler, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport, right) Co-Presidency 2025.

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Co-Presidency 2025 - Austria & Liechtenstein



“Cooperation empowers transformation!”

Challenges faced

The simultaneous implementation of several processes at the end of the three-year work period, together with the EUSALP 10th anniversary, presented EUSALP’s first Co-Presidency with a complex set of tasks. These were in particular the revision of the Action Plan, the parallel preparation of policy recommendations, the development of new three-year work plans, and the securing of technical support from the Alpine Space Programme – all requiring intensive coordination among EUSALP stakeholders. At the same time, it was important to highlight the added value of strategic cooperation in urgent transformation processes, such as the mobility transition, the energy transition, and the shift to circular construction and renovation to counter the effects of climate change and its consequences for the Alpine region. Highlighting the territorial dimension of EUSALP aimed at making spatial interrelations and challenges in the Alpine region visible in order to provide impulses for an integrated and future-oriented territorial development. Finally, the greater involvement of young people in future issues was another important priority.”

Successes achieved

While the full impact of the Austrian Liechtenstein Co-Presidency will be assessed after the General Assembly meeting, significant progress is already evident at the technical level. The revision of the Action Plan is completed, introducing a mission-oriented approach as innovative feature for stronger political steering of the strategy. The Action Groups are actively developing policy recommendations for the 2023-2025 period alongside with the preparation of new three-year work plans. Securing continued technical support for EUSALP, including the consolidation of the EUSALP Secretariat, also marks an important achievement. Several key events generated valuable outcomes, such as a thematic conference on the challenges of strategic autonomy in the energy sector, an international experts conference on sustainable hydropower.



Additionally, the EUSALP Youth Council's field excursion offered an inspiring, hands-on perspective on the challenges of the Alpine region and can be considered a great success.

Another goal of the Co-Presidency was to strengthen innovative and integrated approaches in the field of circular construction and renovation practices beyond regional and national limits, by identifying, exploring and sharing inspiring examples from the Alpine Region, which can also be transferred to other places.

Finally, with its State of the Territory Report, the Co-Presidency provided a territorial picture of potentials and challenges in the Alpine Region, which did not only gain a lot of interest and new followers on social media, but can also be seen as a complementary contribution for the Alpine Convention's working process towards an Alpine Spatial Development Perspective.



Co-Presidency 2025 represented by Austria (Dr. Peter Kaiser Governor of Carinthia, right, and Anton Mattle, Governor of Tyrol, center), and Liechtenstein (Dominique Hasler, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport, left).





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