



**Joint declaration on the EU Strategy for the Alpine region (EUSALP)
19 October 2023**

We, the representatives of the National and Regional Governments of Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, and Switzerland, have come together as the General Assembly of the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) in Bad Ragaz today,

REAFFIRMING our commitment to continue the joint implementation of the EUSALP for the benefit of more than 80 million people living in 48 regions in seven states, of which five are EU member states and two non-EU countries,

RECALLING in this regard the political commitments as outlined by the General Assembly meetings on 25 January 2016 in Brdo (Slovenia), on 13 February 2017 in Rottach-Egern (Bavaria), on 23 November 2017 in Munich (Bavaria), on 20 November 2018 in Innsbruck (Tyrol), on 28 November 2019 in Milan (Italy), on 4 February 2020 in Lyon (France), on 10 December 2020 in Marseille (France), on 16 December 2021 in Nice (France), and on 24 November 2022 in Trento (Italy).

ACKNOWLEDGING the milestones achieved by the former EUSALP Slovenian (2016), Bavarian (2017), Tyrolean (2018), Italian (2019), French (2020-21) Presidencies, and the activities undertaken during the Italian Presidency in 2022,

EXPRESSING sincere thanks to Switzerland, both to the cantons and to the federal level for chairing the EUSALP in 2023, especially for the very focused approach in line with their motto “less is more”, and for the thematic conferences on some of the most relevant alpine topics: circular economy, water, and transport,

ACKNOWLEDGING the need for strengthening the strategic focus and reinforcing the political relevance of the EUSALP,

UNDERLINING the importance of continuous and solid political ownership of the EUSALP at all levels and, in this regard, ENCOURAGING EUSALP’s implementers to reinforce even further the connection of their works and efforts to the political level,

ACKNOWLEDGING the work carried out by the Action Groups to achieve the Strategy’s objectives,

UNDERLINING the importance of the EUSALP’s Action Groups to be empowered with clear mandates, effective decision-making capacity, adequate resources, and a clear vision setting their work in the broader policy context of the Alpine states and regions participating in the EUSALP,

ACKNOWLEDGING the crucial role of the Alpine Convention, the Youth Council, the INTERREG Alpine Space Programme, and further funding programmes for the implementation of the EUSALP, and of all stakeholders as contributors of ideas, initiatives, and activities which are giving life to the Strategy,

CONSIDERING the Council conclusions of 27 June 2023 on the fourth Commission report on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies from 9 December 2022, and in particular on the financial embedding of macroregional strategies and on the value of adjusting their Actions Plans in order to adapt the strategies to emerging needs and challenges in the area, and TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the recommendations formulated by the European Economic and Social Committee of the EU in its Opinion document on the Implementation of EU macro-regional strategies adopted on June 14th, 2023,



ACKNOWLEDGING also the strong symbolic character to adopt in Bad Ragaz this joint declaration, which seeks to build on the constructive spirit of alpine cooperation, already stressed in the Resolution and Initiative Paper of the Conference of Alpine regions (Arge Alp) adopted in 2012 in Bad Ragaz as well,

have agreed on the following:

(1) We strongly call on all relevant actors to work towards even closer cooperation within the Strategy to tackle the accelerating challenges of the climate, biodiversity and energy crises posed to the Alpine region. We recognize that the importance of taking action in these areas was demonstrated once again by the natural disasters that occurred recently and we take this opportunity to express solidarity with the people who have been severely affected.

(2) Therefore, we welcome the efforts undertaken within the EUSALP to address more effectively these challenges and look forward to the results that can be achieved through the adopted new work programmes 2023 – 2025 of the Action Groups, especially their flagship initiatives, and the four cross-cutting priorities that have been identified in the fields of digitalisation, energy transition, water management and circular economy to enhance the effectiveness of their activities. We call on all Alpine states, regions, and involved stakeholders to participate actively in their implementation.

(3) We welcome the strengthening of the EUSALP's governance in recent years, including the establishment of a rotation mechanism for the EUSALP Presidency and of a Technical Support Structure (TSS). We recognize the role played by the INTERREG Alpine Space "Support EUSALP" project in this respect and call on all actors involved to continue to work on the further improvement of the governance. We also stress the need for enhancing the communication of the strategy.

(4) In this regard, we welcome the work of the Youth Council, as the main voice of the Alpine youth in all Strategy activities, and we encourage them to continue their commitment. We invite all EUSALP bodies to include and further support the Youth Council members in their activities.

(5) We acknowledge the vital role that civil society organisations play in bringing local and regional communities closer to the EUSALP and we welcome their growing engagement in support of activities promoted by the Action Groups.

(6) We encourage EUSALP's implementers to address and involve cities, towns and municipalities to enhance and communicate the added value of EUSALP for the local population and their communities.

(7) We encourage the Alpine states and regions and the European Commission (EC), as suggested in the mentioned Council conclusions, to strengthen the funding and embedding of the EUSALP in relevant cohesion policy programmes and in funds directly managed by the EC in order to facilitate its implementation.

(8) In view of the above, we note that the Strategy has undergone rapid evolution in recent years, both in the context in which it operates and in its governance structures. Because of these changes and being encouraged by the mentioned Council conclusions, we recognise the need for a revision process of the EUSALP Action Plan, in parallel with the Strategy's implementation.

(9) We mandate the Executive Board to set up a Task Force to support the Action Plan revision process, under the lead of successive presidencies.



(10) We ask the European Commission for a revision of the Action Plan based on the outcomes of the Task Force. We are confident that the Action Plan revision will strengthen the political relevance of the Strategy and reinforce cooperation within the EUSALP. We ask the European Commission for an interim progress report at the General Assembly in 2024 and for the revised Action Plan to be presented at the General Assembly in 2025.

(11) We agree that this revision process shall start with an assessment of the Strategy's mission statement and activities, in order to review the various documents that support these activities and highlight needs for adaptation or improvement.

(12) We consider that the scope of the Action Plan revision must result at least in an update of the document and, if necessary, more substantial changes that might emerge from a comprehensive and inclusive stocktaking process.

(13) We thank the Swiss Presidency for launching this initiative and the Slovenian and the Austrian/Liechtenstein Presidencies for their commitment to steer and finalize the Action Plan revision process with the support of the European Commission and the help of the TSS. We call on all Alpine states and regions, as well as on observer organizations and action groups, to actively participate in this process.

(14) We extend our special thanks to the European Commission for the continued close cooperation with and the support of all participants involved in implementing the Strategy. We deem it indispensable that all concerned Directorate-Generals of the European Commission are involved in the Strategy's implementation.

(15) We entrust the incoming EUSALP Presidency in 2024 to the Republic of Slovenia, wishing them all success in performing their tasks, and welcome the intention of the Principality of Liechtenstein to assume the co-chair for the EUSALP Presidency in 2025, together with the Republic of Austria.

Adopted in Bad Ragaz, on 19 October 2023