



EU Strategy for the Alpine Region Vademecum

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1. Background

The governance of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) plays a strategic role for the implementation of its actions and the achievements of its objectives, targets and overall goals. Participating states, regions and key stakeholders have made great efforts to build and ensure an effective and efficient governance for the EUSALP at all levels.

The Council conclusions on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies (MRS) approved on December, 2, 2020 underlined the importance of capacity-building, clear-cut and results-oriented governance of the MRS and called on participating countries/regions to optimise governance aspects according to best practices across all MRS and participating countries/regions; ensure effective involvement of national/regional/local stakeholders, citizens and civil society, including young people, in the implementation of the MRS; and ensure that MRS key implementers are duly empowered and provided with a clear mandate to fulfil their tasks in a continuous way.

Within EUSALP, several documents define the governance structure of the strategy:

- Rules of procedure of the Action Groups (last updated on January, 12, 2021)
- Rules of procedure of the Executive Board (last updated on January, 12, 2021)
- Decision paper on Governance (endorsed on September, 29, 2020)
- Technical Support Structure Decision Paper (endorsed on January, 12, 2021)
- Youth Council Decision Paper (endorsed on November, 25, 2020)

However these documents are fragmented, in the sense that they do not take into account all the implementers of the Strategy nor all their interactions. This observation led to the decision made by the Executive Board of January 12, 2021, to draw up a EUSALP Vademecum with the aim to improve coordination and cooperation among EUSALP implementers in view of further enhancing the commitment to the Strategy and its effective implementation as well as support the development of the necessary administrative capacity to ensure that political commitment translates into effective implementation.

The key is to empower relevant stakeholders and implementers and increase the ownership of the relevant line ministries on the national and regional level. Such empowerment also improves mobilization of regions, cities, agencies and institutions such as universities, private businesses and civil society, encouraging them to network, cooperate and participate in the implementation and development of the Strategy. To achieve the above mentioned, a lean governance structure, effective decision making and clear competence distribution should be in focus.

2. Governance scheme

This chapter defines the roles and responsibilities of EUSALP political, coordination and implementation bodies: the High Level Group (HLG) on macro-regional strategies (MRS), the General Assembly (GA), the TRIO Presidency, the Presidency, the Executive Board (EB), the National Coordinators (NCs), the Youth Council (YC), the European Commission (EC), the Board of Action Group leaders (BAGL), the Action Groups (AGs) and their Subgroups (where applicable), the thematic network of Managing Authorities (MAs) and the EUSALP Technical Support Structure (TSS).

2.1. The High Level Group (HLG)

The HLG on MRS advises the EC on the coordination and monitoring of MRS. It is made up of official representatives from all EU Member States and the non-EU states participating in the MRS. The HLG ensures coordination and monitoring across all MRS, assesses progress made in their implementation and may provide policy orientation and strategic guidance. It is the overarching forum where the approaches and practices in each MRS are compared to maximize their leverage and impact. The Commission's biennial report on the implementation of macro-regional strategies and the annual HLG meetings provide important overall strategic guidance also for the individual MRS.

2.2. The General Assembly (GA)

The GA is the political level for guiding and monitoring the Strategy; it determines the overall direction of the Strategy, establishing political ownership and responsibility with the desired effect of aligning policies and funds, and providing the resources and legitimacy for decision making.

The GA is composed of political representatives from each of the seven EUSALP country delegations, consisting of the State and Regions, with the European Commission as co-chair and facilitator. The GA includes the Alpine Convention and the Youth Council as observers.

According to the GA ROPs, the responsibilities of the GA include:

- Laying down the general political guidelines for the Strategy and adopting any general act that would be necessary for the implementation of the Strategy;
- Endorsing the list of common priorities for the implementation of the EUSALP;
- Monitoring the overall Strategy, supported by evaluations and proposals made by the EB;
- Appointing the annual Presidency and endorsing the pre-established shift order of presidencies;
- Deciding on the mandates for AG leadership;
- Endorsing the members of the Youth Council (YC);
- Calling on the Presidency to organize ministerial meetings in order to create the necessary political awareness for the Strategy;
- Asking the European Commission (EC), based on recommendations by the Executive Board (EB), for a review or adaptation of the Action Plan;
- Deciding on the membership of new EUSALP members;

The GA meets at least once per year, or more often if deemed necessary, with a view to ensuring broadest possible participation by the political representatives. One annual GA meeting is organized during the Annual Forum.

The GA establishes Rules of Procedure for further specifications.

2.3. The TRIO Presidency

The Trio Presidency is composed of the incumbent Presidency, the past and the future Presidencies.

Its aim is to ensure continuity and efficiency during the rotation of Presidencies, specifically by supporting the incumbent Presidency by securing regular exchanges on strategic steering and coordination.

Trio Presidency meetings should take place at least twice a year and are convened by the incumbent Presidency. Such meetings should also be organised at a political level by the political representatives of the Trio Presidency. It is a prerogative of the Trio Presidency to propose for approval to the GA the most appropriate modalities to organise the work to be carried out at the political level.

2.4. The Presidency

The Presidency is established on an annual basis. To ensure a balanced distribution, a rotating presidency will be set up. It can be allocated to all participating States and Regions by endorsement of the GA and in agreement with the Commission.

The Presidency is:

- chairing GA and EB Meetings;
- preparing - under consultation of the TRIO Presidency, EB and AGs - an annual working programme for the Strategy;
- as a general rule, organizing and hosting the meetings of GA, EB and the Annual Forum

2.5. The Executive Board (EB)

The EB consists of 7 national Delegations. Each country nominates a maximum of 3 representatives at state and regional level, including the NCs from state and regional level (where applicable). Representatives of the European Commission (EC), the Alpine Convention, the Interreg Alpine Space Programme and the EUSALP Youth Council shall participate in the EB meetings in advisory capacity.

The EB is chaired by the Presidency and co-chaired by the Commission.

The EB is in charge of the overall horizontal and vertical coordination of the EUSALP Action Plan. This includes inter and intra-objective coordination as well as horizontal and vertical coordination inside each country, performed by the National Coordinators (NCs).

The EB may invite Action Group Leaders in charge of the implementation of the actions to certain thematic meetings. Besides, each EB meeting includes one substantial joint slot with (one or more) AGLs, informing and discussing on AGs' work plan and projects and allowing constructive and content-related dialogue among the EB and AGLs.

According to the EB ROPs, the responsibilities of the EB include:

- The endorsement of proposals of actions which need to be implemented to secure the effective implementation of the EUSALP;
- The endorsement of the selection criteria, work plans and actions proposed by the AGLs;
- The discussion of the functioning and work of the AGs, in association with the AG leaders, in order to provide them guidance and/or support;
- The continuous monitoring – in cooperation spirit – of AGs' work and functionality, including the annual AG reports, and the transmission of results to the GA;
- Every three years, – based on the evaluation carried out – submitting a proposal for decision to the GA on the mandates for AG leadership;
- EB members of each country should have regular national exchanges with their respective AGLs and members and are encouraged to participate in AG meetings held in their respective countries whenever possible, in order to get an understanding of AG activity and take note for further EB discussions on the subject;
- The approval of all proposals, e.g. on evaluation, monitoring and possible revision of the EUSALP, before they are submitted to the GA.

The EB establishes Rules of Procedure for further specifications.

2.6. The National Coordinators (NCs)

The NCs are the focal points on the national level and they are part of the decision-making body of the Strategy (EB). They are the core strategic decision-makers within the governance structure of EUSALP. They equally have a strategic coordination function of the Strategy within their State.

NCs are appointed, and recalled by their government / respective institution (e.g. line ministry). Each participating State has to officially nominate one or more NCs and may appoint one or more deputies. They constantly keep the incumbent Presidency and the EC updated as soon as changes occur.

NCs come either from the national or regional level. They are duly empowered by their governments (at national and/or regional level, depending on competencies in each country) to take decisions on behalf of their national delegations within the EB. They play a major role coordinating and supporting the design and implementation of the Strategy, and encouraging stakeholders' involvement.

NCs functions include:

- Coordinating and keeping an overview of the active participation of their state or region in the implementation of the Strategy:
 - Liaising with the administrations participating in the thematic areas covered by the Strategy in their State/Region as well as with the managing authorities and intermediary bodies responsible for the implementation of the relevant European and national/regional programmes;
 - Taking care of the active participation of representatives from their state or region in the AGs
 - Liaising with national and/or regional AG members and encourage – wherever possible – for continuous active participation;
- Having regular exchange with national and/or regional AG members and AGLs about content, progress and possible support in order to improve progress of projects, actions and overall attainment of the Strategy objectives.
- Acting as interface and link between the operational / management level (EB, AGs) and the political / ministerial level;
- Informing and involving the national and regional ministerial levels, as appropriate;
- Ensuring coordination with existing national, regional and local cooperation organizations, as appropriate;
- Raising awareness for the EUSALP and the Alpine Region within relevant ministries, possible stakeholders, as well as the broader public.

2.7. The EUSALP Youth Council (YC)

The YC is an advisory body, representing the diversity of living realities of young people in the Alpine Region and making their voice heard in the implementation of the Strategy.

The Members of the YC will be appointed for 1 year by EB and endorsed by the GA due to an agreed procedure among the EUSALP States and Regions.

The representatives of the YC will be regularly involved in EB and GA meetings as observers. In this capacity, the YC can contribute its own considerations and put forward its own proposals for discussion. The representatives of the EB are invited to attend meetings of YC and workshops organized by it.

The YC:

- elaborates proposals for concrete actions and projects and suggestions for topics to the EB, GA, Presidency, AGs within the scope of the Action Plan of EUSALP;
- provides contributions to EUSALP priorities and policies, in collaboration with the Presidency;
- participates in youth activities of EUSALP (Pitch your project jury, Youth Camp, Online Platform);
- participates in events (e.g. Annual Forum), to make the voice of young people heard;
- may implement and organize small projects or events technically supported by EUSALP bodies to identify appropriate funding in coordination with AG(s) and EB.

The YC will adopt its own Rules of Procedure.

2.8. The European Commission (EC)

The overall role of the EC is that of a strategic adviser, i.e. to play a key role in providing strategic coordination of the macro-regional strategies where its involvement brings a clear added value. EC also plays a leading role in the strategic coordination of the Strategy and promotes that it is taken in due account in all relevant EU policies and instruments; it has an essential role in all four EU macro-regional strategies through the Directorate General for Regional and Urban policy (DG REGIO). In particular, EC (DG REGIO) takes up the following tasks:

- Providing strategic support to the implementation of the EUSALP in cooperation with the participating States, Council and European Parliament. With its institutional background, it helps comparing the functioning of MRS and gives a possibility to promote alignment mostly between MRS and transnational cooperation programmes, but also in case of other EU programmes;
- Acting as a key adviser when it comes to prioritizing policies and strategic frameworks;

- Actively pursuing strategic coordination at policy level (Council, European Parliament, Committee of Regions, European Economic and Social Committee, EC line DGs, NCs) and seeking to better interlink and align the Strategy with programmes during programming and implementation (i.e. EU, national, regional, centrally managed funding instruments);
- Actively promoting the embedding of the EUSALP both at the strategic document level (e.g. Partnership Agreements, Operational Programmes etc.) and at operational level (for instance through practical advice and good examples). This is done, inter alia, by promoting continuous dialogue between EC actors (DG REGIO state desk officers, desk officers from line DGs) and programme bodies (Managing Authorities, Joint Secretariats, intermediate bodies);
- Promoting and facilitating the dialogue and involvement of stakeholders within the Alpine Region, within the EU (line DGs, programmes, platforms, and other stakeholders) and across macro-regional strategies – in thematic or procedural terms. This also comprises the exchange of information, good practices, lessons learned and solutions perceived for triggering learning effects and for contributing to the streamlining of processes;
- Reporting to the other EU institutions (Council, European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, Economic and Social Committee) on the progress made in implementing the EUSALP and the results achieved; including facilitating the bridging with relevant activities at EU-level, like e.g. by ESPON's MRS monitoring, etc. For that purpose, every two years the EC publishes a report on the implementation of EU MRS to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, based on contributions given by the strategies' key implementers (the first was published in 2016);
- EC advises TRIO Presidency and Presidency in strategic preparation and implementation of their programmes. For the GA, EC acts as a facilitator and coordinator and will co-chair the meetings, without voting right;
- EC will confirm that decisions taken by the General assembly comply with EU legislation, when appropriate. EC co-chairs the EB meetings (without voting right) and – as far as feasible - attends AG meetings in its advisory and supportive role and supports participation / involvement of line DGs in the AGs' work.

2.9. The Board of Action Group Leaders (BAGL)

The BAGL is a format aiming at ensuring horizontal coherence among AGs and smooth coordination between coordination level (EB) and implementation level (AGs).

The BAGL is currently chaired by the Lead Partner of the AlpGov 2 project. It meets twice a year, whenever possible back to back with a meeting of the EB.

2.10. The Action Groups (AGs)

Action Groups are the implementing bodies of EUSALP, gathering experts from EUSALP States and Regions in charge of the day-to-day implementation of the Strategy's thematic fields (Actions and Projects). Their work is transnational, inter-sectorial, inter-institutional and aims at an effective embedding into the various national contexts.

AG members with decision making capacity are appointed and recalled by their government or administration and should have sufficient capability and mandate to represent their governmental institutions as well as sufficient resources to fulfil their tasks for the Strategy. Other stakeholders as well as representatives of the Alpine Convention and the Alpine Space Programme can be involved into the AG activities in an advisory role. Further members can be part of international organizations NGOs, trade unions, chambers of commerce, universities, national, regional and local authorities, thus helping to bring the Strategy "closer to the people".

Meetings of the AG take place as often as may be necessary (physically or virtually), but at least twice a year and preferably four times a year.

According to the AGs ROP, AGs tasks include:

- actively initiating and developing the AG by identifying – in close cooperation with the NCs – relevant stakeholders from the States and Regions;
- drafting of a working plan for the AG;
- implementing the EUSALP Action Plan, notably by:
 - promoting and facilitating the involvement of and cooperation with relevant stakeholders from the entire macro-region;
 - developing specific criteria for the purpose of selecting actions/projects within its action;
 - identifying actions/projects to be included in the Action Plan;
 - pinpointing relevant funding sources for the actions/projects identified, maintaining a dialogue with bodies in charge of implementing programmes/financial instruments;
 - reviewing the indicators and targets set; monitoring progress within the action and report on it to the EB;
 - facilitating policy discussions in the macro-region regarding the action concerned as well as ensuring communication and visibility of the action;
 - regularly reviewing the relevance of the action as described in the Action Plan; proposing necessary updates to the NCs and EB;
- liaising and organising cooperation with other AGLs and NCs in order to ensure coherence and avoid to duplicate work on the strategy implementation.

2.11. Subgroups of Action Groups (optional)

If deemed appropriate, the AG may establish sub-structures, such as sub-groups or task forces, addressing specific topics or tasks within the AG's framework as set out in the Action Plan, with a clear mandate, limited in time where appropriate and coordinated by an AG-member.

2.12. Financial Dialogue Networks

EUSALP financial dialogue networks aim at facilitating the connection between EUSALP AGs' activities and available funding by enhancing dialogue and exchange of information between EUSALP Action Groups members and bodies in charge of managing funding opportunities (managing authorities and intermediary bodies). They aim at enabling sharing of good practices related to embedding EUSALP priorities in the funding programs and to the co-financing of projects incubated and/or labelled by EUSALP AGs. They also aim at indirectly reinforcing capitalization, visibility and communication of the Strategy.

So far, four networks have been set up on a voluntary basis:

- the network related to the energy transition and specifically hydrogen, led by the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region;
- the network on sustainable mobility led by the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region;
- the network on digital technology led by the Lombardy Region and the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Region
- Network on risk governance, within Action Group 8, whose activities already include dialogue with and coordination of national and regional funds.

Other thematic networks may be constituted.

These networks are flexible structures, whose organisation has to correspond to a variety of situations within the administrative landscape of EUSALP states and regions. Their implementation corresponds to a pragmatic approach: the point is to support AGs to have regular exchanges with authorities and intermediary bodies in charge of funding, possibly back to back to AG meeting, in the format that is the most adequate for them as regards to the funds available for their activities.

The network leaders are in charge of coordinating the work within their respective networks, organizing regular meetings, ensuring the exchange of information within the network, supporting the active mobilization of the members

2.13. The EUSALP Technical Support Structure (TSS)

The TSS will act as a strategic working unit and supportive body for EUSALP, supporting the implementation, communication, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy. According to the EUSALP Governance Decision Paper, the TSS tasks include:

- Supporting EUSALP communication: building stronger ties between EUSALP and relevant institutions; developing and managing communication tools; maintaining an up to date list of EUSALP actors
- Supporting EUSALP governance bodies and stakeholders; providing information on EUSALP & AG projects; encouraging the involvement of stakeholders
- Supporting capacity building: training and supporting EB members and AGLs and AG members and activities
- Supporting horizontal coordination: ensuring close contact with managing authorities of ESIF and animating the network of Managing Authorities
- Supporting monitoring and evaluation

The TSS participates in the meetings of the aforementioned bodies, especially the EB and BAGL.

3. The Annual Forum

The Annual Forum is the main event of the MRS year. It gathers politicians, experts, young people and civil society to discuss the entire thematic spectrum of the Strategy in the framework of various events and workshops. It serves the visibility of the Strategy, deepens exchange on specific thematic initiatives and fosters a multidisciplinary and integrated view on the Strategy and its effective implementation.

4. The Alpine Space Programme (ASP)

ASP is considered as a key instrument for implementing the EUSALP objectives (see relevant Interreg regulation). ASP projects have important functions in this respect. In the 2014-2020 period ASP has provided financial support to the AGs, and to a number of particular projects which have been implemented with a view to reaching the objectives of EUSALP by a number of stakeholders, including many from AGs. In the funding period 2021-2027 the Programme will remain an essential instrument for the implementation of the EUSALP. In a coordinated approach, the programme will support the governance and the transnational work of the AGs, within the programme rules, procedures and objectives. DG REGIO and TSS (after its implementation) support the linkages and mutual coordination between ASP and EUSALP. Permanent collaboration between ASP and the EUSALP is enhanced by the regular attendance

of ASP Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat in the EB and – where deemed necessary - AG meetings.

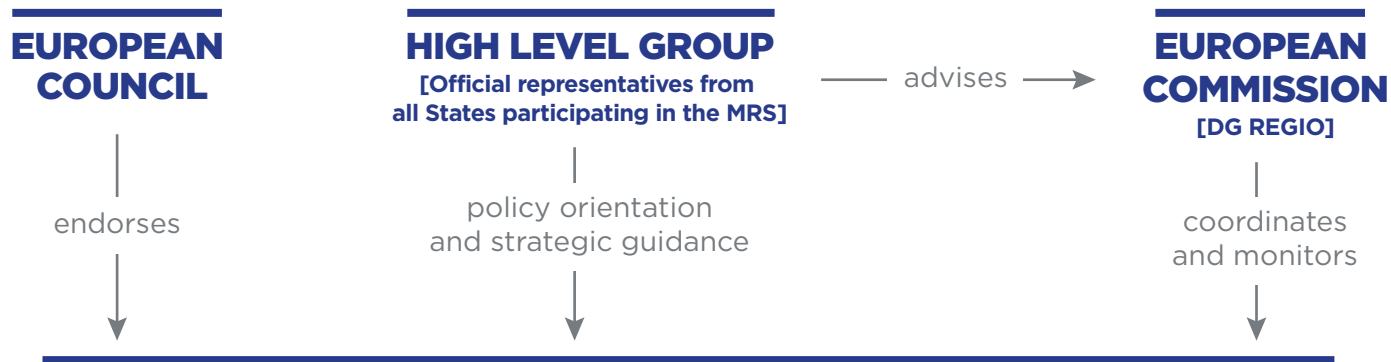
5. The Alpine Convention

The Alpine Convention is a legally binding international treaty between the Alpine Countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia and Switzerland) as well as the EU, with the objective of protection and sustainable development of the Alpine mountain range. All EUSALP countries are Contracting Parties to the Alpine Convention.

It has to ensure that - within the boundaries of its legally defined territorial perimeter - the Framework convention and all ratified protocols will be effectively implemented.

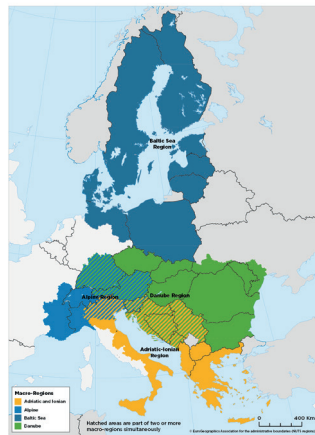
Representatives of the Alpine Convention participate to the EUSALP EB and GA as observers, take part in EUSALP Action Groups (where the Alpine Convention is engaged as a co-lead), thus ensuring the coordination between the Convention and the Strategy.

WHAT IS EUSALP, HOW IT WORKS?



4 EUROPEAN MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Policy framework allowing countries located in the same geographical area to jointly tackle and find solutions to challenges and better use the potential they have in common.



EU Strategy for the Baltic and Sea Region - **EUSBSR**



EU Strategy for the Danube Region - **EUSDR**



EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region - **EUSAIR**



EU Strategy for the Alpine Region - **EUSALP**

support the implementation

EU Funds



STAKEHOLDERS

[Local / regional / national authorities; sectoral agencies; international organizations; civil society: academic, economic and social actors; interest groups and NGOs; and others]



HIGH LEVEL GROUP

[Official representatives from all States participating in the MRS]

Coordination and monitoring across all MRS /
Policy orientation and strategic guidance

GENERAL ASSEMBLY (GA)

[Ministers from regional and national level /
EC as facilitator and co-chair / Observers: EC-AC-ASP-YC]

Determines the overall direction of EUSALP

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (EC)

[DG REGIO EUSALP team]

Observer / Strategic coordination
and monitoring

EXECUTIVE BOARD (EB)

[NCs + representatives of the States and Regions
(max. 3/country) / Observers: EC-AC-ASP-YC]

Overall horizontal and vertical coordination
and monitoring of EUSALP implementaion

9 ACTION GROUPS (AGs)

[Experts from all participating countries
from public, private, associative organisations]

Executive bodies in charge of
the day-to-day implementation

SUBGROUPS

Addressing specific topics
or tasks within the AGs

POLITICAL

ANNUAL ROTATING PRESIDENCY

[Participating States and Regions]

Prepares and implements
the annual working plan

TRIO PRESIDENCY

Strategic coordination

NATIONAL COORDINATORS (NCs)

Vertical coordination
inside each country

BOARD OF ACTION GROUP LEADERS (BAGL)

Horizontal coherence among
AGs and coordination between EB and AGs

YOUTH COUNCIL (YC)

Regular exchanges and contributions
to GA - Presidency - EB - BAGL - AGs

IMPLEMENTATION

FINANCIAL DIALOGUE NETWORKS

[AGs and bodies managing funds]
Facilitating the connection between
EUSALP activities and available funding

COORDINATION

supported by EU Funds
Alpine Space Programme (ASP)
+ Interact + ARPAF [...]

TECHNICAL SUPPORT STRUCTURE (TSS) Supportive body

ALPINE CONVENTION (AC) [Legally binding international treaty] Observer / AG6 co-leader / Member of AGs



EUSALP IS BASED ON THREE THEMATIC POLICY AREAS AND ONE TRANSVERSAL POLICY AREA

