

Brussels, 12 December 2025
(OR. en)

16815/25

COH 253
ECOFIN 1741
ENV 1393
TRANS 649
PECHE 457
RECH 560
JAI 1911
ENER 682
MI 1064
MAR 176
COMPET 1354
AGRI 716
CADREFIN 394
POLGEN 240

COVER NOTE

From: Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director

date of receipt: 11 December 2025

To: Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

Subject: COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS on the revised action plan of the EU Macro-regional Strategy for the Alpine Region

Delegations will find attached document COM(2025) 750 final.

Encl.: COM(2025) 750 final



Brussels, 11.12.2025
COM(2025) 750 final

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**on the revised action plan of the EU Macro-regional Strategy
for the Alpine Region**

{SWD(2025) 403 final}

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	2
2. ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY	3
3. THE REVISED ACTION PLAN.....	4
4. THE THEMATIC POLICY PILLARS AND ACTIONS OF THE STRATEGY	6
5. GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY	7
6. CONCLUSION	9

1. INTRODUCTION

Between 2009 and 2015, the European Council endorsed the creation of four European Union macro-regional strategies. By enabling countries to pool resources and take a cross-sectoral and multi-level governance approach to cooperation, the strategies tackle issues that no single country can effectively address alone. All the macro-regional strategies deliver results that support fair, green and digital transitions, regional development and growth. The strategies have operated successfully for over a decade. The macro-regional concept is attractive and receives significant attention from political, public, private, academic and civil society stakeholders across Europe.

The European Commission adopted the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region in July 2015, at the request of the seven participating countries. The Strategy was endorsed by the European Council on 28 June 2016. As a European macro-regional strategy, it aims to make more effective use of existing financial resources, strengthen coordination among institutions and policies, and improve coordination of existing legislation.

The Alpine region is home to 80 million people (about 15% of the entire EU population) and encompasses 48 regions across five EU Member States (Germany, France, Italy, Austria and Slovenia) and two non-EU countries (Liechtenstein and Switzerland). Located in the heart of Europe, it boasts a strong network of major metropolises, Alpine towns and villages, making it one of the wealthiest, most attractive, competitive, innovative and productive regions in Europe. With its unique geographical and natural features, the region is home to some of Europe's most important water resources and is one of the continent's main biodiversity sanctuaries. Due to its unique characteristics, the Alpine region faces specific challenges, from the severe impacts of climate change – melting glaciers, rising natural hazards, and disrupted water cycles – to socio-economic issues like ageing populations, youth migration, and unequal infrastructure.

The main objective of the Strategy is to build a framework for governmental and non-governmental cooperation between various stakeholders, fostering cross-border strategic approaches, projects, networking and cooperation on key topics for the benefit of the Alpine region as a whole. Where there is a collective need and interest across the Alps, the Strategy provides a framework for better cooperation.

The action plan for the Strategy, adopted in 2015, focuses on strengthening mutual solidarity between the Alpine regions to enhance the region's attractiveness and competitiveness, reducing social and regional inequalities and ensuring the preservation and sustainable management of its unique natural environment. The founding document of the Strategy¹ laid the path towards a new relationship between metropolitan, peri-mountain, mountain and remote areas, focusing on three priorities:

- (1) competitiveness and innovation
- (2) environmentally friendly mobility and connectivity and

¹ *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning a European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region*, COM(2015) 366 final, Brussels, 28 July 2015

(3) sustainable management of energy, natural and cultural resources.

A decade after the Strategy was adopted, the world has changed significantly. The geopolitical climate is becoming increasingly unstable amid Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, the lingering socio-economic effects of the Covid pandemic and rapid technological progress. The effects of climate change are more apparent than ever, with increasingly frequent heatwaves, the comparatively rare occurrence of snowy winters, and a surge in natural disasters due to intense rainfall. These new external conditions, coupled with new and updated priorities and initiatives of the European Union, such as the Clean Industrial Deal and the Union of Skills, make it necessary to update the action plan and reassess the Strategy's implementation to ensure alignment with the region's contemporary geopolitical and policy challenges. Additionally, after 10 years of implementation, internal processes and structures have evolved, and new bodies and governance mechanisms have emerged within the macro-region.

The new action plan is an updated and refocused version of the initial action plan, concentrating on matters of political and strategic significance. The updated plan will support the Strategy in addressing upcoming challenges, encouraging cross-border exchanges and solutions for a sustainable, prosperous Alpine region.

This Communication presents the revised action plan drawn up by the strategy partners. It explains the background, the rationale, what has changed and how the plan will enable the Strategy to respond to new and future changes.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY

Delivering results on key EU priorities

The Strategy has delivered positive results across several areas, strengthening regional cooperation and networking under its three thematic objectives. Over the past 10 years, it has successfully advanced EU priorities in the region, notably contributing to the European green and digital transitions and to climate change adaptation and mitigation. This has been achieved through a cross-sectoral approach based on multi-level governance and broad stakeholder involvement. In addition, the Strategy has tailored key EU initiatives to the specific needs of the region.

The launch of the Strategy marked a significant milestone in coordinating international efforts to tackle the challenges faced by the Alpine region. Renowned for its rich biodiversity and vibrant cultural landscapes, the region plays a pivotal economic, environmental and social role within Europe. Traditionally, the region has faced distinctive challenges, ranging from environmental vulnerabilities to socio-economic disparities. Since its inception, the Strategy has facilitated successful cross-border projects that have enhanced environmental protection, infrastructure development and socio-economic integration, thereby consolidating the region's status as a key European macro-region. These collective efforts have laid a strong foundation for collaboration, on which the revised action plan seeks to build further.

Funding the Strategy

Embedding the Strategy into multiple funding sources is crucial for its successful implementation. To ensure effective implementation and ownership at all levels, it is essential to leverage funds from various sources such as EU, national and regional authorities and the private sector. Coordinating these funding opportunities strategically across different levels will maximise impact. Historically, significant support has come from the Interreg Alpine Space programme, but actively diversifying funding sources will further enhance the Strategy's reach and effectiveness. This approach can unlock the Strategy's full potential and drive meaningful progress.

As the Strategy takes a regional approach, all funding instruments with a clear regional dimension should be considered to support implementation, along with thematic instruments that could be used more effectively when coordinated across the whole region. Besides the Interreg Alpine Space programme, which is financed by the European Regional Development Fund, possible sources of funding include: other national and regional programmes financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. Other possible sources of funding include EU thematic programmes, such as Erasmus+ and InvestEU. Lastly, loans, equity and guarantees provided by the European Investment Bank can also be sources of funding.

The main partners of the Strategy's stakeholders are the managing authorities of EU programmes. A 'financial dialogue' between strategy implementers and programme administrators is therefore crucial if they are to understand and align their respective needs. In this context, the Strategy's Financial Dialogue Network has helped link the Strategy's activities with available funding by promoting dialogue and improving the exchange of information between the bodies responsible for managing funding opportunities.

3. THE REVISED ACTION PLAN

The process to revise the action plan highlighted the need to address new or more pressing challenges and to develop a more focused vision for implementing the Strategy and adopt a more systematic approach to improve ownership and awareness of the Strategy among all participating countries. At the same time, there was recognition of the need for broad continuity in relation to the thematic policy pillars and the actions of the Strategy.

The Alpine region is acutely affected by climate change. Rising temperatures are causing glaciers to melt, increasing the risk of natural hazards such as avalanches and landslides. These changes affect the water cycle and threaten biodiversity, economic stability and safety, with consequences not only for the Alpine region but also for downstream countries. Additionally, socio-economic issues such as an ageing population, the migration of young people out of rural areas, and disparities in infrastructure and connectivity require thoughtful interventions. The digital divide further compounds these challenges, creating a need for enhanced technological infrastructure and digital literacy to ensure equitable development.

In response to these challenges, the revised action plan sets comprehensive goals to foster resilience, innovation, inclusion and sustainable governance across the region.

Since 2023, participating countries and the Commission have worked together in a multi-level, coordinated manner to produce a revised action plan that takes account of the geopolitical and policy developments since the Strategy was first drawn up. The revised action plan also reflects the lessons learned in implementing the Strategy over the years and includes changes in the governance and management of the Strategy brought in over the last decade.

This work has led to the revised action plan accompanying this Communication, which more accurately reflects the needs and opportunities of the region and provides a more robust framework that will enable the participating countries to work more effectively together in achieving the aims of the Strategy.

What is new?

The revised action plan builds on the previous version with the following two main changes:

a) A **mission-based approach**, which aims to tackle significant challenges of Alpine-wide relevance by setting ambitious yet realistic objectives and providing the political steer and visibility needed to implement the Strategy. Missions are designed to facilitate synergies and promote better connections between actions and projects in a specific area. They involve the political level more closely by designating a mission rapporteur, an elected politician appointed by the General Assembly. In pursuing cross-cutting aims, they enable projects and initiatives to be clustered around one goal, strengthening coherence between the political and technical level.

Missions are based on the action plan and are prepared in close cooperation with the Executive Board and the action groups, involving various stakeholders.

b) Changes to **the Strategy's governance system**. Over the last decade, the procedures and governance of the Strategy have evolved significantly, and the revised action plan now provides a full overview of the structures in place. These include:

The **board of action group leaders** and the **trio presidency**. Following consultations with stakeholders, the governance of the Strategy has also been strengthened over time through the creation of these new bodies. Action group leaders are responsible for implementing concrete projects, and the board facilitates synergies and cooperation. The trio presidency ensures continuity between past, current and future presidencies.

The **Youth Council**. Established in 2021, the Youth Council is involved in all levels of governance. It contributes to the strategy through projects and fosters connections among young people across the Alpine region.

The **technical support structure and the secretariat**. Another important change to the governance was to establish the technical support structure with its secretariat in 2023. It is financed by the Interreg Alpine Space programme. The secretariat supports both the decision-making bodies of the Strategy and its implementers, the action groups.

4. THEMATIC POLICY PILLARS AND ACTIONS UNDER THE STRATEGY

Thematic policy pillars and objectives

Although the challenges of cooperation in the Alpine region have not changed fundamentally in recent years, the Strategy has laid the groundwork for responding to the urgent need to adapt to diverse transformation processes by clearly focusing on and prioritising specific topics. The revised action plan maintains the initial focus on the three thematic policy pillars: economic growth and innovation; mobility and connectivity; and the environment and energy. Each pillar corresponds to one of the Strategy's objectives. In response to the current challenges in the Alpine region and the most recent strategy documents, these pillars contain nine actions.

Each action is broken down into three to seven topics, which form the basis for the work of the action groups. While the actions themselves remain consistent with the previous version of the action plan, the wording and focus of each has evolved. The action groups foster a strong sense of ownership among participants across the region by operating within a broad network and aligning cooperation with the political aims.

Economic growth and innovation

The aim of this pillar of the Strategy is to build a competitive and innovative economy in the Alpine region that is both circular and climate neutral. This is essential for supporting human activities and for maintaining a sustainable balance with the environment.

The three actions under this pillar focus on:

1. **strengthening an effective research and innovation ecosystem** by nurturing a supportive environment for research and innovation that drives growth, especially in sectors like mountain agriculture, forestry and energy;
2. **increasing the economic potential of strategic sectors** by identifying and tapping into the value of key sectors and turning research into tangible benefits through effective technology transfer; and
3. **improving the relevance of labour market policies, education and training for strategic sectors** by ensuring that the labour market is aligned with business needs, emphasising the importance of education and training, and enhancing cross-border labour mobility and cooperation to further drive economic progress.

Mobility and connectivity

The aim of this pillar is to create a more accessible and interconnected Alpine region by advancing sustainable transport and mobility solutions and making full use of digitalisation and new technologies.

The two actions under this pillar focus on:

1. **promoting intermodality and interoperability in passenger and freight transport** by tackling the need for efficient and sustainable transport systems at various levels to enable efficient transport of both people and goods; and
2. **connecting people digitally and promoting accessibility to public services** by focusing on boosting digital connectivity to make public services more easily accessible, thereby enhancing socio-economic integration and paving the way for regional growth and development.

Environment and energy

Under this pillar, the goal is to create a high level of ecological connectivity and an environmentally sustainable region that is ready to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

The four actions under this pillar focus on:

1. **preserving and capturing the value of natural and cultural resources** by emphasising the careful balance between preservation and sustainable use, with a particular focus on restoring and managing sustainably soil and water resources;
2. **developing ecological connectivity across the Alpine region** by conserving, improving and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services, and promoting blue and green infrastructure to create seamless connections across areas;
3. **improving risk management and better managing climate change** by understanding and managing the risks posed by environmental degradation and climate change, and encouraging cooperation in tackling natural disasters and extreme weather events, in priority through nature-based solutions; and
4. **making the Alpine region a model for energy efficiency and renewable energy** by focusing on energy efficiency and the use of renewable resources compatible with the Alpine environment, which are essential for mitigating the effects of climate change.

Climate change induced changes to the water cycle, including glacial melting, will have consequences not only for the Alpine region but also for downstream countries. Joint and well-coordinated management of border-crossing rivers is essential to secure an integrated protection, enhancement and restoration of water resources and their ecosystems, and key for Europe's water resilience and water security. The increased use of nature-based solutions can contribute to restoring the water cycle and improving climate adaptation, including better protection against floods and water scarcity, thus enhancing the resilience of the whole region.

Together, the three pillars foster a balanced approach that not only encourages economic development and better connectivity but also ensures that the environment is protected, building resilience in the Alpine region so it can adapt to and thrive amid global challenges.

5. GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

The governance framework of the Strategy comprises various bodies and tools that steer and direct its activities. Their detailed composition and manner of interaction are set out in the action plan and in their respective rules of procedure.

The Strategy's governance is designed to facilitate capacity building and is clear-cut and result-oriented, thereby enhancing Alpine cooperation. It ensures the active participation of national, regional and local stakeholders, along with representatives from the economic sector, academia, civil society and the general public, especially young people. It guarantees that the key implementers of the Strategy are duly empowered with a clear mandate to carry out their responsibilities. It also ensures clear and comprehensive communication at all levels regarding the Strategy's outcomes and added value.

Over the past decade, the governance framework has evolved, reflecting the strong commitment of the stakeholders to implement the Strategy. This underscores the need to further improve coordination within and between the actions and to further strengthen the political leadership provided to the Strategy's coordinating levels.

Bodies

General Assembly. The General Assembly is the Strategy's highest political decision-making body, setting strategic priorities and goals. It consists of high-level political representatives from participating states and regions, along with observers such as the Youth Council, the Alpine Convention and the Interreg Alpine Space programme. The European Commission participates as a facilitator and co-chair, ensuring alignment with EU legislation but without voting rights. The General Assembly endorses action plans, monitors implementation progress and facilitates cross-regional cooperation.

Presidency. The presidency rotates annually among partner states. It plays a critical role in chairing the General Assembly and Executive Board meetings, developing the annual work programme and organising sector-specific ministerial meetings.

Executive Board. The Executive Board is responsible for implementing the action plan and includes national coordinators and representatives from participating regions and states. The European Commission, in the role of facilitator and co-chair, verifies compliance with EU legislation and alignment with EU priorities. The Youth Council, the Alpine Convention, and other bodies observe its proceedings. The Board oversees action groups, coordinates General Assembly meetings and promotes consistency in the implementation of the Strategy.

National coordinators. National coordinators have a crucial role in overseeing and assisting with the design and implementation of the Strategy and promoting stakeholder participation. They are members of the Executive Board and manage national delegations. They are also the primary contact point at national level, coordinating the Strategy in their country. They are appointed by their government or institution and represent either the national or regional level.

Action groups. Action groups are tasked with the day-to-day execution of the Strategy across thematic areas. Consisting of experts and stakeholders, action groups coordinate actions comprehensively and integrate them across regions. They develop projects and policies that contribute to the Strategy's objectives. Action group leaders facilitate communication and drive group activities in line with their respective work plans.

As described in Section 3, these bodies are complemented by new structures: the trio presidency, the board of action group leaders, the Youth Council, and the technical support structure and the strategy secretariat.

Implementing the Strategy

Implementation of the Strategy's activities is guided by the action plan, which operates on three strategic levels: thematic policy pillars and objectives, actions, and projects. The action plan serves as a reference framework for the General Assembly, the Executive Board and action groups, helping them to develop their work plans based on the missions approved by the General Assembly.

Work plans are triennial programmes designed to translate the objectives stated in the action plan and the missions approved by the General Assembly into concrete results. They ensure policy coherence between the action plan and the projects and initiatives implemented by action groups. The work plans are focused and realistic and reflect the Strategy's ambitions, incorporating guidance from the General Assembly and the Executive Board. They will be complemented by the new missions' tool described earlier in this communication.

6. CONCLUSION

Each macro-regional strategy reflects the unique geographic, economic and political contexts of its respective region and is adapted to the specific strengths and challenges that each macro-region faces. As inter-governmental initiatives, they are not bound by any *ex-ante* rules on implementation structures or project organisation. Instead, each strategy grows and adapts organically to its own circumstances.

Since 2015, the Alpine Strategy has evolved a sophisticated governance model with a broad degree of representation from different sectors of society. The comprehensive update to its governance system in the revised action plan reflects the roles and responsibilities of new bodies and structures, like the trio presidency, the board of action group leaders, the Youth Council, the technical support structure and the secretariat. These new bodies, which have emerged over the past decade, have significantly improved the functioning of the Strategy.

The authors of the Alpine Strategy have chosen not to make any significant changes to its priorities and objectives. Instead, they have opted for continuity, reflecting the broad agreement among the strategy partners that the priorities and objectives chosen 10 years ago remain valid and relevant to the Alpine region. However, the Strategy has introduced a new mission-based approach, with the clear intention of strengthening synergies, increasing political ownership and responsibility, and raising its overall profile.

Overall, with these new elements, the strategy can further support and develop the attractiveness, resilience and competitiveness of the Alpine region and improve the quality of life for the people living in the region. The Commission considers that the revised action plan provides a future-oriented framework to promote sustainable growth, competitiveness, environmental protection and enhanced cooperation in the region. The revised action plan will enable the Alpine region to meet the challenges and opportunities that it faces effectively, so that it can continue to be a role model for cooperation in Europe.