



*Brussels, 11.12.2015
C(2015) 8890 final*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion on the 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} and welcomes the Bundesrat's support for the aims outlined in the Strategy.

A 'Macro-regional strategy' is an integrated framework which can be supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), among others, to address common challenges faced by Member States and possibly third countries located in the same geographical area. They thereby benefit from strengthened cooperation which in turn contributes to greater economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The Alpine Region has a long tradition of cooperation. A large number of structures and organisations are already operating in the area, with a wide variety of governance systems. The new challenge will be to ensure co-ordination and avoid compartmentalisation – be it between States, sectorial policies and actors, different tiers of government or funding mechanisms. There is a need for an approach that encourages participants to overcome not only national frontiers, but also sectors and barriers in order to allow thinking that is more strategic and imaginative concerning the opportunities available.

The general objective of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) is to promote the sustainable economic and social prosperity of the Alpine Region through growth and job creation, by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity, while at the same time preserving the environment and ensuring healthy and balanced ecosystems.

By further strengthening co-operation in order to improve the efficiency and optimise the effect and impact of European, national, regional and local policies, as well as by improving coordination and by creating synergies between actions, resources and existing programmes, the EUSALP is a unique opportunity to provide effective solutions to the common challenges of the Alpine Region and to improve the sustainable exploitation of its assets and increase the benefits of its unused potential in terms of economic and administrative capacity.

*Mr Stanislaw TILLICH
President of the Bundesrat
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The Commission is pleased to note that the Bundesrat shares the view that an efficient governance model with streamlined mechanisms is crucial for an effective implementation of the Strategy. In this regard, the Commission agrees with the Bundesrat that the Action Group Leaders should also cover the tasks of the proposed Objective Coordinators whenever this is feasible, which is why it recommended this approach at the last EUSALP Steering Committee Meeting on 8 and 9 October 2015 in Milan.

The Commission very much appreciates the active role that Germany and in particular the Federal States of Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria are playing in the development of the EUSALP. As an active member of the Baltic and the Danube Strategies – and with the experience it has acquired in that context – Germany is well placed to play an important role in the setting up of the EUSALP.

The Commission notes the Bundesrat's request that the EUSALP Action Plan accompanying the Communication be translated into the official languages of the seven participating States. Unfortunately, due to the need to match limited resources with the ever-increasing demands placed on its translation services, the Commission is not in a position to translate staff working documents like the Action Plan into any other language. This was also the case when the Action Plan of the European Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region was adopted in 2014.

The Council of the European Union adopted conclusions on the EUSALP on 27 November 2015. The European Council is expected to endorse the Strategy at its meeting on 17 and 18 December 2015, paving the way for the EUSALP Launch Conference which is due to take place on 25 and 26 January 2016 in Brdo, Slovenia.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised by the Bundesrat and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Corina Crețu
Member of the Commission*