

The Four Motors for Europe

The Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Presidency 2021–2022

Programme proposal

“The Four Motors for economic recovery and sustainable growth”

Introduction

The “Four Motors for Europe” cooperation between Baden-Württemberg, Catalonia, Lombardy, and the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region officially began in 1988, ahead of the introduction of the European Single Market.

It helps promote the innovative and ambitious image of our four Regions within Europe and highlight our leadership in areas of excellence related to economics and research.

It also strengthens our international partnerships and exchanges and generate economic benefits through three main levers: defend the Regions’ economic interests by lobbying European institutions; facilitate collaborative projects between stakeholders from the four Regions and support joint participation in European calls for projects; encourage the mobility of apprentices and researchers as well as exchanges between universities.

The “Four Motors” also cooperate via joint initiatives in networks such as the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP), especially in the following sectors: economic development, research and innovation, training and higher education, climate and environment, mobility, health, agriculture, and culture.

The “Four Motors” have always stood together to defend the key role our Regions play in European integration and in overcoming the challenges they face. While this shared vision is part of the foundation of the “Four Motors,” **the Covid-19 pandemic has confirmed once again the importance of this cooperation.** For more than a year, the Regions have been on the front lines, managing the impacts of the pandemic on the daily lives of their inhabitants, alongside national efforts. Regional governments are essential to this recovery and have found it extremely useful to share their experiences in recent months.

The 2020–2021 Catalan presidency

Catalonia built its presidency around the 2030 Agenda (the 17 Sustainable Development Goals) and the European Green Deal so that regional policies developed to recover from the crisis would follow these frameworks to “strengthen the transformative resilience of our societies”.

To do so, the Catalan presidency targeted three major and interdependent areas: the economic recovery, reduction of inequalities worsened by the crisis, and pursuit of the Green Deal objectives to make Europe carbon neutral by 2050.

The priorities of the 2021–2022 Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes presidency

The Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region took over the presidency of the “Four Motors” during a handover ceremony on 3 December 2021, in Barcelona. We will pursue the priorities of the Catalan presidency and previous presidencies while promoting new approaches that we will adapt to the latest responses to the crisis.

The Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes presidency of the “Four Motors” will also coincide with the **French presidency of the European Union** in the first half of 2022. This period will surely continue to be affected by the pandemic and take place in a context of economic recovery, with the implementation of national recovery plans. As a result, this period encourages us to reinvent our cooperation policies and activities, and initiate (or amplify) a transition to new models that are in line with regional needs and European strategies.

As such, we are building the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes presidency around this opportunity for renewal, with a spirit of innovation that reflects the shared identity of the “Four Motors” and one main priority: **economic recovery and sustainable growth**.

This overarching theme, “**The Four Motors for economic recovery and sustainable growth**”, will be broken down into six main areas, aligned with regional priorities. For each of these areas, the “Four Motors” Working Groups will be involved, and the presidency will support collaborative projects between stakeholders across the four Regions by **facilitating joint participation in European calls for projects**, so that they can benefit from the funding of sectoral/thematic programmes and cross-border cooperation (INTERREG).

We will conduct **lobbying and promotion activities at European institutions** in Brussels throughout the year of the presidency to increase the visibility of the “Four Motors”, particularly during our joint event every October as part of the European Week of Regions and Cities (EWRC).

We will launch a discussion on the conditions of our **joint mission** to foster a more cross-cutting approach and increase economic added value.

As part of this cross-cutting approach, we will hold a **multi-thematic event for the closing of our presidency** in early 2023, which will feature a ceremony to hand over the presidency to Baden-Württemberg.

We may also suggest other initiatives on other topics throughout the year. Additionally, stakeholders from Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes will also carry out other projects.

1- Economy, innovation, energy and digital transition: “promoting relocation in the regions to increase Europe’s industrial and technological sovereignty”

The pandemic highlighted the weaknesses and dependency of European economies. It prompted the European Commission to update the EU’s Industrial strategy, which included an analysis of the “strategic dependencies and capacities” among 5,200 imported products. The report identified 137 products for which the EU is highly dependent on imports, particularly from China, in fields such as energy-intensive industries, health ecosystem, and products relating to the energy and digital transformation.

As the biggest industrial regions in their respective countries, the “Four Motors” have considerable industrial assets, both individually and collectively. They can be at **the forefront of explorations on how to regain industrial and technological sovereignty at regional level, which will help rebuild European sovereignty over time**. Beyond a positive impact on employment, this would also have environmental benefits: relocating certain economic sectors in Europe could contribute to European objectives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The relocation approach is particularly relevant to the digital sector (artificial intelligence, industry of the future, etc.); hydrogen mobility – especially the production of heavy vehicles, for which cooperation already exists with Baden-Württemberg and Lombardy as part of the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP – 48 member Regions in 7 countries); energy transition (renewable energies, particularly photovoltaics); and health (medicines, equipment).

The Regions are strongly committed to supporting the competitiveness of their companies by fostering business flows between them, strengthening their innovative capacity for innovation, and encouraging them to make greater use of European funds. Multilateral cooperation has become even more important in the current recovery process since regional economic players in many sectors have a vested interest in cooperating and exploiting their synergies.

We will carry out several strategic actions to put these priorities into action, starting with a **conference on relocation and reindustrialisation on 10 March 2022 in Lyon** (and via videoconference). This conference, the first big event of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes presidency, will primarily target companies and economic players, but will also be open to stakeholders from institutions, the professional training field, higher education... It will help promote the “Four Motors for Europe Business Passport” and provide an opportunity to set up meetings between companies.

With the support of the “Economy” Working Group, its subgroups, and Economic Development Agencies, we will also propose other initiatives related to relocation and reindustrialisation, such as a joint declaration to present to European institutions during a joint political mission to Brussels or the launch of a competition to promote innovative initiatives.

Several other actions could take place in Brussels during the year, such as business meetings between “Four Motors” companies and a gathering for the Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH) winners of the European Commission’s call for projects.

In the field of research and technology, we will propose an event on technology transfers with a focus on Artificial Intelligence to bring together professionals from the fields of business, research, and academia. We will also offer opportunities for discussions on the topic of “Science and Society”.

Lastly, we may organise a specific meeting for the “Four Motors” during SIDO (International Connected Objects Showroom) in September 2022.

2- Sustainable tourism and health tourism: “supporting the tourism transition”

The tourism sector faces serious challenges: the COVID pandemic, the impact on natural heritage and resources, and a shift in tourist activities due to climate change, particularly in mountain regions. Involvement from regional governments will be critical to support the tourism sector in this transformation.

In conjunction with a EUSALP study on the transition of mountain areas (with the participation of Baden-Württemberg and Lombardy), the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes presidency will provide opportunities to share good practices on tourism transition, taking a cross-cutting approach: economy and jobs, environment (protecting and promoting biodiversity); resource management (water, energy, waste, etc.); training; health/wellness (especially thermalism). These discussions will be structured around an innovative initiative, the launch of a network of tourism professionals to create a **consortium that can respond to an INTERREG Alpine Space call for projects.**

We will also introduce a joint initiative during the **“Mountain Planet” mountain development exhibition in Grenoble in April 2022.**

3- Professional training, apprenticeships, higher education, and student mobility: “renewing training practices to encourage participation among target groups and increase their employment; adapting methods to companies’ needs”.

In autumn 2022, the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes presidency will organise an event on **higher education and student mobility** to discuss the renewal of teaching methods and consortia of European universities involving stakeholders from the “Four Motors”. This conference will extend the enriching discussions that occurred during the side event held as part of the European Week of Regions and Cities (EWRC) in October 2021, at the initiative of the Catalan Presidency and the “Research and Higher Education” Working Group. This programme will also be consistent with the European strategy for universities and proposals for deeper and more sustainable transnational cooperation in higher education, which the European Commission is preparing for 2022.

As for professional training and apprenticeships, following the discussions that take place every year during the *Mondial des Métiers*, particularly with Baden-Württemberg, we will set up two innovative initiatives: **a joint “Four Motors” booth at the 2022 *Mondial des Métiers* and the launch of a joint work on the modernisation of training practices and their attractiveness.** We will then present our results at the 2023 *Mondial des Métiers*.

Lastly, as a continuation of discussions that began in the “Labour Mobility and Professional Training” Working Group, we could develop a European project on good practices for career guidance and training.

4- Agriculture and food sovereignty: “promoting the quality of regional products”

Following discussions launched by the Catalan presidency in 2021 on the “Farm to Fork” strategy and regional brands, which should lead to the creation of an “Agriculture” Working Group, the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes presidency will propose to work on a **joint response to a European call for projects on promoting quality products** to enhance local gastronomy and tourism in our regions, with the support of the Association of European Regions for Products of Origin (AREPO). This would allow us to apply the Regions’ food strategy, providing financial opportunities for our territories and promoting short food supply chains.

5- Climate and environment: “taking action together and promoting the Regions’ initiatives at the international level, in conjunction with the European Green Deal and the French presidency of the European Union”

Climate has long been a priority for the “Four Motors” cooperation. The four Regions are committed to fighting climate change at the regional level and internationally through sustained participation in conferences and networks of local authorities, thereby giving international visibility to the cooperation. As a continuation of the collective efforts over the past several years and the work of the “Environment” Working Group, we will propose **promotion activities and joint statements in the framework of international climate conferences.**

Additionally, biodiversity is a significant natural heritage for the “Four Motors”: it contributes to the positive image of the territories, and serves as a support for wellness services – health, tourism, etc. As the four Regions are facing the same challenges in this area, the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes presidency is planning to **initiate a joint project through the LIFE programme** to strengthen our tools and expertise, particularly in relation to sustainable tourism.

We would also propose to develop a reflection on shared indicators on energy and waste.

6- Health and disability: “sharing our experiences managing the health crisis”

As a continuation of our discussions over the past year on managing the health crisis, particularly in the “Digital Health and Care” Working Group, the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes presidency would like to organise **a symposium on the Regions’ health expertise and decentralisation models.**

The presidency is also committed to proposing actions aimed at **sharing the practices of the Regions on disability**, through two events, particularly on dyslexia.