



WORK PROGRAMME

Međimurje County within the Alps-Adriatic Alliance

2026–2027

**“Strengthening European Regional Cooperation,
Competitiveness and Territorial Resilience”**

6th May 2026, Čakovec

Presidency Priorities and Vision 2026-2027

On 10 November 2025, Međimurje County, led by County Prefect Matija Posavec, officially assumed the Chairmanship of the Alps-Adriatic Alliance (AAA) for the mandate period 2026–2027.

For Međimurje County, assuming the Chairmanship of the Alps-Adriatic Alliance represents both an exceptional honour and institutional responsibility, as well as a strategic opportunity to further strengthen interregional cooperation among the member regions of the Alliance in a period marked by complex economic, geopolitical, security and social challenges.

Within the framework of its Chairmanship, Međimurje County will actively contribute to the development of joint initiatives, foster the establishment of new institutional and development partnerships, and systematically work towards further strengthening the political relevance, operational efficiency and international visibility of the Alps-Adriatic Alliance as a recognised platform for cooperation and interregional connectivity.

Building upon the strategic direction established during the successful Styrian Chairmanship of the Alps-Adriatic Alliance 2022–2025, particularly in the areas of strengthening the political visibility of the Alliance, intensifying cooperation with Western Balkans, developing joint projects and reinforcing the shared identity of the member regions, Međimurje County proposes a work programme focused on clearly defined, feasible and strategically relevant priorities capable of generating measurable and long-term added value for all member regions.

Guided by the conviction that the Alps-Adriatic Alliance should further consolidate its role as a credible, functional and internationally visible network of interregional cooperation at the European level, the objective of this programme is to further strengthen its operational and developmental dimension through:

- shaping cooperation across the Alps-Adriatic Region
- advancing regional dialogue through thematic events (conferences, forums, workshops)
- enhancing the project funding and evaluation model
- welcoming new partner regions
- boosting visibility, regional outreach, and strategic approach
- the development of the new strategy of the Alps-Adriatic geographic area for the period 2028-2036.

1. Shaping Cooperation Across the Alps-Adriatic Region

Međimurje County considers strengthening concrete and result-oriented interregional cooperation to be one of the fundamental prerequisites for the long-term development, operational effectiveness, and international relevance of the Alps-Adriatic Alliance.

Joint initiatives, thematic conferences, expert meetings, networking platforms and interinstitutional cooperation mechanisms represent important instruments for strengthening institutional connectivity and mutual trust among member regions, exchanging professional knowledge and expertise, developing joint projects and reinforcing coordination between regional development policies.

To improve coordination and increase the overall visibility of activities implemented within the framework of the Alliance, Međimurje County proposes establishing a common calendar of regional events for the Alps-Adriatic Alliance. Such a platform would contribute to stronger coordination and strategic planning of activities, improve the visibility and accessibility of regional initiatives, encourage more active participation of institutions and regional stakeholders and further strengthen networking and mutual support among member regions.

Cooperation during the period 2026–2027 should therefore include coordinated international promotion and representation, stronger communication and public outreach activities, active participation in conferences and events, the promotion of cultural, educational and tourism cooperation, as well as the development of visible joint initiatives reflecting the diversity, development potential and shared values of all member regions of the Alliance.

2. Advancing Regional Dialogue Through Thematic Events

In cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Alliance, a pilot edition of the Alps-Adriatic Alliance Thematic Conference is planned to be organised in 2027, conceived as a permanent platform for strategic dialogue, exchanging knowledge, experience, and innovative approaches, developing new joint initiatives among member regions and institutions, relevant partner organisations, and potential future members.

Recognising sustainable and resilient agriculture as a key strategic issue for Europe's future in the context of climate change, food security, and the sustainable management of natural resources, we identified it as a topic for the first conference that would be of great interest to all member regions.

We also propose that, in preparation for the conference, a thematic workshop be organised in a member region to exchange examples of good practice, develop joint project initiatives, transfer expert knowledge and strengthen cooperation among institutions, academia, the business sector and other relevant stakeholders, thereby enhancing the conference content. All member regions are invited to organise workshops on the topic that best fits their experience, goals and visions.

3. Enhancing the Project Funding and Evaluation Model

Each organisation constitutes a dynamic system that must continuously adapt to evolving circumstances within both its immediate operational environment and the broader socio-economic and geopolitical context. Within this framework, the Alps-Adriatic Alliance allocates part of its activities to financing projects through a joint budget derived from members' contributions (i.e., membership fees). While limited in financial scope, these interventions represent a targeted and effective instrument for advancing the strategic objectives set out in the Strategy of the Alps-Adriatic Geographical Area 2019–2027 (SAA-2027) and AAA Council meetings.

Recognising the need for greater efficiency, transparency and strategic coherence, Međimurje County has initiated a structured process to further enhance and standardise procedures for the submission, evaluation and financing of AAA projects. In close coordination with the Steering Committee and the Secretary General, application procedures and evaluation criteria will be comprehensively reviewed and updated to ensure full alignment with the principles of sound financial management, as well as with the evolving role of the AAA as a modern, responsive and forward-looking macro-regional platform. This process will also ensure consistency with relevant European and global policy frameworks, trends and regulatory standards.

Furthermore, Međimurje County proposes that projects connected to the thematic framework of the 2027 annual conference may be encouraged as a source of cooperation and project development; however, such thematic relevance shall not constitute a preferential evaluation criterion. All applications shall be assessed on an equal basis in accordance with the officially adopted call criteria, taking into account their quality, feasibility, interregional added value, innovation potential, the principles of inclusion, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, long-term sustainability, and contribution to the strategic objectives of the Alps-Adriatic Alliance. Special attention will be given to small-scale, repetitive projects, which will remain in focus as long as they meet all required criteria, as they generate significant networking and visibility.

4. Welcoming New Partner Regions

Međimurje County recognises the strategic importance of continuing political dialogue and strengthening cooperation with partners from the Western Balkans, building upon the successful direction established during the Styrian Chairmanship of the Alps-Adriatic Alliance.

In line with the Alliance's long-term vision of fostering stability, connectivity and territorial cohesion across the wider Alpe-Adriatic area, County Prefect Matija Posavec, together with the Secretariat and partner regions of the Alliance, has initiated intensive discussions with representatives of Montenegro and Albania aimed at further developing partnership relations and exploring possibilities for their future involvement in the activities and cooperation mechanisms of the Alps-Adriatic Alliance.

In this context, we support a gradual, flexible and inclusive approach to the future enlargement of the Alliance, including the possibility of introducing an observer status mechanism for potential future member regions. Such a model would enable the progressive inclusion of new partners into the Alliance's activities and cooperation structures while simultaneously safeguarding institutional stability, preserving the quality and efficiency of cooperation mechanisms and ensuring the continued operational effectiveness of existing member regions.

Through such an approach, the Alps-Adriatic Alliance can further strengthen its role as a credible, open and forward-looking platform for European territorial cooperation, capable of connecting regions, institutions and communities through shared strategic interests, mutual solidarity and common values.

5. Boosting Visibility, Regional Outreach and Strategic Approach

County Prefect Matija Posavec emphasises the importance of further strengthening the external communication and international visibility of the Alps-Adriatic Alliance through a more coordinated approach, a stronger presence within the European public sphere, and the continued modernisation of the Alliance's communication and promotional channels.

Attention should therefore be devoted to the further development and modernisation of the Alliance's website and digital content, strengthening media visibility and social media presence, ensuring a more systematic presentation of joint activities and project results, improving coordination of communication among member regions, and intensifying interregional and international promotional activities.

Regular publication of press releases, information on joint projects, examples of successful cooperation and results achieved can further reinforce Alliance's visibility as an intentionally recognised platform for regional cooperation.

6. The Development of the New Strategy of the Alps-Adriatic Geographic Area for the Period 2028-2036

As the current Strategy of the Alps-Adriatic Geographical Area 2019–2027 approaches the end of its implementation period, Međimurje County considers preparing a new strategic framework for the period 2028–2036, an important opportunity to define the future direction of the Alps-Adriatic Alliance. The new Strategy should build upon the achievements of the current programming period while addressing emerging challenges and opportunities affecting the wider Alps-Adriatic area. Attention should be devoted to ensuring alignment with the European Union's strategic priorities.