



EUSALP

Policy Brief



Summary

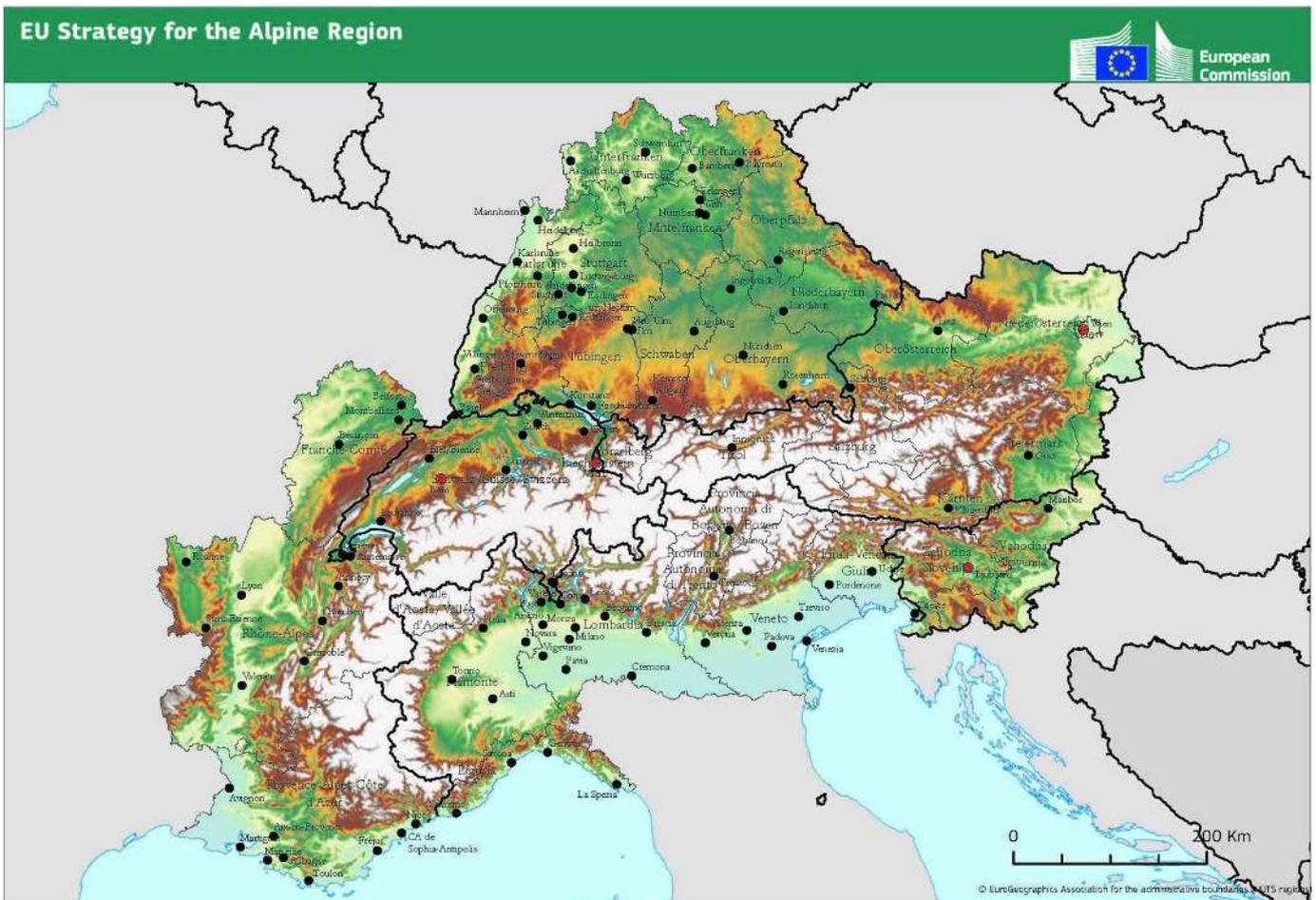
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EUSALP IN A NUTSHELL

The Alpine region is a unique territory, which has an important potential for dynamism, but is facing major challenges. The Alpine macro-regional strategy EUSALP has been launched in 2015 and provides an opportunity to improve cross-border cooperation in the Alpine states as well as identifying common goals and implementing them more effectively through transnational collaboration. Better cooperation between the regions and states is needed to tackle those challenges. This strategy is carried on by seven countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Switzerland) and 48 regions. The main priority areas of EUSALP are (1) economic growth and innovation, (2) mobility and connectivity and (3) environment and energy. Nine Action Groups (AGs) work on the implementation of these priority areas.



EUSALP - EU Strategy for the Alpine Region
 80 million people, 7 countries, 48 regions, mountains and plains
 addressing together common challenges and opportunities



ACTUAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The nine Action Groups of EUSALP started their work in 2016. Up to the year 2020, they have elaborated 14 strategic implementation initiatives and numerous other concrete activities. These activities have led to policy recommendations, which are summarized in the present publication. These policy recommendations address different political levels from local level up to European level. The aim of the present publication is to give an overview of all these policy recommendations and an outlook on what is to be expected in the next two years. Each Action Group will elaborate at least one strategic initiative which should lead to policy recommendations. And all Action Groups together are working on five topics which they deem as crucial. They are called Strategic Priority Policy Areas SPPA. And in each of these SPPA, at least one Cross-sectoral strategic implementation initiative will be developed. This policy brief gives an overview on all this and therewith constitutes a contribution to make the results and outcomes of EUSALP better known and to start the dialogue with relevant policy makers and the wider public. The policy brief is structured along the topics of the nine Action Groups.



TO DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

Based on one of the main drivers of the Europe 2020 agenda which aims at creating jobs and growth, Action Group 1 focuses on the development of an effective innovation ecosystem in the Alpine region. It aims to bring together the existing potentials of the Alpine region to better exploit synergies in the strategic sectors described in the next action and overcome challenges as regards innovation.

Implement a policy model on local and alpine start-up ecosystem

To support scaling processes of start-ups, AG1 has elaborated a comprehensive approach on the Alpine Space level. The work was carried out in the framework of the Interreg Alpine Space SCALE(up)ALPS project. The specific aims were to examine the perspectives of scale-up founders and managers regarding concepts of ‘scaling up’ and ‘scalability’ in the context of the Alpine Space regional development, generate an agreed definition of ‘scalability’ and identify intervention and research design factors perceived by scale-up founders, managers and policy-makers to increase the likelihood and potential for interventions to be implemented on a more widespread basis within the Alpine Space. The following policy options have been elaborated:

- Connecting through Hubs - supporting the start-up and scale-up ecosystem.
- Facilitate the Movement in the Alpine Space by eliminating unfavourable regulations for start-ups
- Provide more overview on the demand- and success driven incubator programmes
- “Accelerate and let go” — build up a peer-to-peer network
- Integration of innovation centres and universities
- Let the business ambassadors fly” by mobilising knowledge creation on scale-ups

Further reading:

<https://www.alpine-region.eu/projects/scaleupalps>

Fast-track the adoption of low-carbon measures for winter tourism regions

Technical solutions for the reduction of energy consumption and GHG emissions in mountain areas relying on winter tourism today exist, with up to 40% reduction potential. However, key trade-offs are at the heart of their slow uptake: they require stronger and innovative involvement to overpass strategic (goals, priorities, risks), economic (costs, financing) and organizational (partnership, stakeholder involvement) challenges. For this reason, the AG1, through the Interreg Smart Altitude Project, has set up a set of actions able demonstrate the efficiency of a decision support tool integrating all challenges into a step-by-step approach to energy transition. The project deployed a comprehensive approach of low-carbon policy implementation based on impact maximization accounting for

technical, economic and governance factors.

Taking into account the urgency to plan and define new strategies for winter tourism in the Alpine Region the following policy recommendations have been suggested:

- Promote the interaction between the different stakeholders of the tourism sector in the AR through the establishment of a local/regional working group;
- Promote the identification of different key aspects related to the tourism sector to be included in the S3 priorities for the next programming period;
- Fast-track R&I transregional actions specific for the winter tourism sector;
- Develop a coherent long-term vision that can increase the resilience of AR communities to climate change.

Further reading:

<https://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/smart-altitude>

Outlook on further activities:

In the timeframe 2021 – 2022, AG1 will:

- Provide specific policy recommendations on how to improve the collaboration across different actors on strategic topics;
- Set-up a unique “Alpine S3 Lab” which will bring together regions and stakeholders to discuss common objectives and find complementarities;
- Provide key policy recommendations on strategic topics (e.g. Bioeconomy, Winter tourism) for the Alpine Region;
- Develop a strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Alpine Region.

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TO INCREASE THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF STRATEGIC SECTORS

Action Group 2 aims at identifying key Alpine economic sectors which would benefit from action at macro-regional level, and to implement concrete measures to improve their economic and social environment. The added value comprises a better use of Alpine specific resources and potentials in the identified strategic sectors with focus on the improvement of framework conditions and opportunities for SMEs.



EUSALP has the ambition to make a substantial contribution to the European Green Deal through an “Alpine Green Deal”. An important element in this respect is the “Innovation Hub for green business models”. For this Innovation Hub a list of issues has been identified:

- Circular economy
- Bioeconomy
- Innovation platforms for industrial development
- Innovation for Green Infrastructure based business models (hydrogen)
- Cluster for green innovation
- Alpine innovative value-chain
- New skills for green jobs.

In consideration of time and available resources, the focus will be put on three main topics, all of them transversal and intertwined with the abovementioned issues (see below).

Outlook on further activities:

In the timeframe 2021 – 2022, AG2 will work together with several other Action Groups on the concept of an Innovation Hub for Green Business. This Concepts encompasses three subtopics which are (1) wood and timber value chains, (2) sustainable tourism and (3) production and supply chain sustainability and resilience. For all three topics, policy recommendations will be elaborated.

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TO IMPROVE THE ADEQUACY OF LABOUR MARKET, EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN STRATEGIC SECTORS



The third Action Group aims at improving the adequacy of labour market, education and training with employment opportunities in strategic sectors in the Region, and at increasing the employment levels of the Region through joint macro-regional activities.

Policy recommendations: to support an effective governance of dual systems in the Alpine Region with a strategic overview.

The AG 3 has finalized an important comparative analysis of the different dual systems in the Alps.

Significant differences emerged in the approach, management and sensitivity to this educational system, but at the same time, emerged also some priorities linked to the objectives that EUSALP wants to pursue.

The most relevant aspects are: the governance of the systems and their attractiveness, the quality of the training offered and innovation. It is worth mentioning the issue of transnational mobility of apprentices, in order to fully realize the free movement of people within Europe and here, more particularly, in the Alpine Arc.

What seems to be essential, when talking about training and dual systems, is the existence of a solid regulatory framework where the roles of the various players are carefully detailed: central and local institutions, social partners and representatives of training institutions, Chambers of Commerce, Trade Associations, Employment Services, and so on. Secondly, it is essential to identify stable fora for comparison and collaboration and to consolidate regional networks, to build stable systems of analysis, monitoring and evaluation, to share best practices and thus raise the quality of the dual education system. Thirdly, it is essential to identify stable fora/bodies for comparison and collaboration and to consolidate regional networks, to build stable systems of analysis, monitoring and evaluation, to share best practices and thus raise the quality of the dual system of school-to-work alternation.

Another necessary topic on which to invest efforts is the improvement of apprenticeship, its perception among students and their families: only by sharing stories of professional and personal success linked to apprenticeship experiences, can increase the attractiveness of apprenticeship.

Since the main actors of dual education systems are, essentially, students and companies, incentives and various types of support tools should be provided to companies so that the business world can also seize the enormous potential of the dual system.

Outlook on further activities:

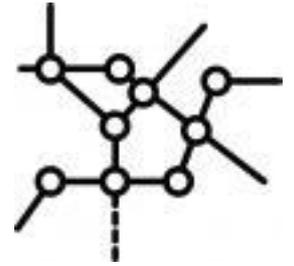
In the timeframe 2021 – 2022, AG3 will work on the definition of best practices of the dual training model, through the instrument of voluntary standardization; will define a code of ethics/code of conduct useful to the business world and to students in training (not only from

a work-professional point of view, but also from the point of view of aware and proactive citizens). It will also focus on the promotion of tertiary education and training pathways - e.g. the definition of a common system of skills certification through digital badges - with the aim of increasing certifications and facilitating faster transitions between unemployment and work or between different jobs (upskilling and reskilling) and the definition of the minimum level of services and mandatory requirements for institutions to be included in the Eusalp supply system; competences recognition paths, and subsequent training path (max 12 months) based on a learning by doing approach, internships and apprenticeships, leading to tertiary level qualifications also with academic value (min VI EQF) foreseen by the Eusalp offer system.

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TO PROMOTE INTER-MODALITY AND INTEROPERABILITY IN PASSENGER AND FREIGHT TRANSPORT



Action Group 4 offers a platform to coordinate and harmonize the activities of Alpine regions and countries for a sustainable transport and mobility system. Its mission is to build a common understanding of transport policy and mobility, to define common objectives and to launch specific activities and projects.

Policy recommendations: Find solutions for cross-border commuting in the Alpine area

Every day, around two million people cross a national border in Europe to go to their place of work; of these, roughly 600'000 do so within the EUSALP perimeter. Therefore, EUSALP is a hotspot for this phenomenon. AG4 and AG5 have identified the challenges and elaborated the following policy recommendations:

- Create a homogenous, Alpine wide statistical database on cross-border commuting
- Install an institutional Alpine political dialogue on cross-border commuting
- Improve cross-border infrastructure networks
- Improve services in existing cross-border networks
- Abolish negative regulatory frameworks or at least try to search for special arrangements
- Encourage cross-border spatial and mobility planning as well as management
- Use the potentials of digitalization to reduce physical cross-border mobility
- Sensitize enterprises and commuters to more sustainable ways of commuting and build up an exchange of experiences
- Support behaviour change

Further reading:

<https://www.alpine-region.eu/projects/arpaf-crossborder>

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Policy recommendations: e-MOTICON: a white book for electro-mobility in the Alpine area

With the project e-MOTICON, AG4 has elaborated a white book for electric mobility (e-mobility) in the Alpine area. The project consortium jointly worked for more than 3 years on problems of low and inhomogeneous deployment of e-mobility that affects the entire Alpine region. Among several causes for the low distribution of e-mobility, the project focused on the limited integration of planning instruments used by Public Administrations (PA) and their lack of knowledge in technological innovation and business modelling. After the analysis of policies, technological solutions and business models, partners elaborated the White Book, a unique Alpine Space strategy on innovative E-CS planning complying with the e-mobility requirements. The partners then integrated and customized the transnational strategy into five Regional Action Plans and provided a toolset to anticipate E-CS network requirements, tested in three joint pilot actions. Furthermore, a transnational community was set up and involved Public Administrations and representatives of the e-mobility industrial sector, research centres, regional agencies, end users and public transport agencies to support the main achievement of improving PAs' capacity on E-CS planning and enhancing transnational cooperation.

Further reading:

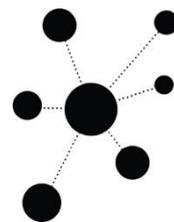
<https://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/e-moticon/en/home>

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Outlook on further activities:

In the timeframe 2021 – 2022, AG4 is preparing a political statement “Towards a coherent strategy to promote sustainable transport and mobility systems in the Alpine Region”.



TO CONNECT PEOPLE ELECTRONICALLY AND PROMOTE ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC SERVICES

The focus of this Action Group is twofold. On the one hand to draw up a comprehensive strategy for guiding and shaping the ongoing process of digitalization in the Alpine region and on the other hand the accessibility to services of general interest. This can be achieved by making the best use of new available technologies as well as developing take-up of e-services.

Policy recommendations: Encourage the Smart villages approach

The aim of Action Group 5 is “to make the Alps the forerunners of digitalization in Europe”. A strategic initiative in this respect is the Smart villages approach. With this approach, mountain villages shall use the potentials offered by digitalization. In the timeframe 2018 – 2021, the approach has been implemented and transferable tools elaborated in various mountain municipalities. The political recommendations coming out of this experience were presented and discussed in November 2020 at an international conference (online):

- Consider the smart transformation of mountain, rural and peripheral villages as a strategic priority
- Embed Smart villages in existing and future strategies and policies
- Allocate funds to integrative approaches such as the Smart villages
- Allow room for innovation and experimentation
- Encourage networking and the exchange of experiences around the Smart village approach within rural and mountain areas and with urban areas
- Use the potentials of the Smart villages approach to communicate the innovation potentials and attractiveness of mountain and rural areas and to link urban and rural areas
- Develop digital infrastructures and skills according to the needs and to the technological possibilities

Further reading:

<https://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/smartvillages/en/home>

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Policy recommendations: Improve the accessibility to Services of general interest

Services of general interest SGI are of vital importance for mountain and rural areas. AG5 has therefore installed a Think Tank, which reflects on the evolution of SGI in the Alpine area. The Think Tank has published in 2019 a Thesis paper which presents 17 points as food for thought. The main point is an integrated, territorial approach to Services of general interest. In an integrated, territorial approach, the competent authorities will first look at the future needs of the service users in the upcoming years. Based on these needs, they will elaborate a territorial strategy encompassing all services in an integrated way and search for synergies between services. This integrated, territorial approach has already been tested and implemented in the scope of the Alpine Space Program project INTESI. The Thesis paper contains also a list of good practice examples and therefore constitutes a good reference also for interested persons outside the Alpine area.

Further reading:

<https://www.alpine-region.eu/publications/thesis-paper-sgi>
<https://servicepublic.ch/en/alpine-think-tank/>

or

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Outlook on further activities:

In the timeframe 2021 – 2022, AG5 will publish policy recommendations on how to improve digitalization in Small and medium enterprises. The work is actually been carried out in the Scope of the Smart SME's project. <https://www.alpine-region.eu/projects/smart-smes>



TO PRESERVE AND VALORIZE NATURAL RESOURCES, INCLUDING WATER AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

EUSALP AG6 aims at preserving and sustainably valorising the Alpine natural and cultural heritage and at balancing protection and economic development in order to meet the overarching challenge to sustain the Alpine Region as a unique living space for people and nature as well as economic area. The overall mission of EUSALP AG6 is to provide valuable contributions to an Alpine strategic framework that allows the establishment of sustainable and balanced models of resource management and production. The motto of EUSALP AG6 is “With Alpine heritage today for a sustainable, resilient and innovative tomorrow”.

Political Declaration on “Sustainable Land Use and Soil Protection”

Soils face specific challenges in the Alpine region, such as limited settlement areas and intensive land use in many of the valley floors, considerable pressure on sensitive ecosystems, tangible consequences of climate change and uneven development of population. In metropolitan areas and agglomerations, building space is scarce and expensive, resulting in commuter flows and traffic problems. Careful land use and soil protection require local and regional initiatives as well as cross-border cooperation, because soils provide a fundamental basis not only for food sovereignty and prosperity, but for all life. In 2018 AG6 elaborated a political declaration on “Sustainable Land Use and Soil Protection” to tackle these challenges. After a public consultation to collect the feedback of interested institutions and civil society organizations, a political coordination process led to the support of the Declaration by 20 Alpine Regions and 6 States. The Declaration requests to:

- Apply and enhance the implementation of existing regulations
- Coordinate and improve data collection and monitoring systems
- Foster inner-urban development and plan infrastructure and mining prudently
- Encourage awareness raising, capacity building and experience exchange on sustainable land use and soil protection
- Facilitate and live participation
- Establish and strengthen regional, national and cross-border co-operations

Further reading:

<https://www.alpine-region.eu/results/political-declaration-“sustainable-land-use-and-soil-protection>

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Outlook on further activities:

In the timeframe 2021 – 2022 the main activities of AG6 will concern the two leading strands protection and valorisation of Alpine natural and cultural landscapes and Alpine food heritage. In addition, AG 6 will be involved in a series of transversal activities, the most important ones being the contribution to the work of the Task Force Multifunctional Forests and Sustainable Use of Timber (TF MFSUT) and the collaboration with other AGs within the strategic priority policy area “Spatial Planning”.



TO DEVELOP ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY IN THE WHOLE EUSALP TERRITORY

Action Group 7 focuses on developing a functional network on Green Infrastructure (GI) throughout the territory. Based on the fact that interconnected GI provides numerous ecosystem services, the AG's work aims to go beyond protecting the environment to achieving multiple social and economic benefits for people. In doing so, AG7 is a role model for practically implementing the European Green Deal on the ground.

In implementing the political declaration "[Alpine GI – Joining forces for nature, people and the economy](#)", the AG 7 approach is to make GI a core topic for Alpine Citizens and decision makers from European to local level by

- liaising relevant key players from all levels,
- implementing tailor made actions at each level,
- involving a wide range of stakeholders.

Policy recommendations: Three Main Steps towards an Alpine Green Infrastructure decade

1. Making the governance and management of Green Infrastructure a political hot topic. To this end, we would recommend to
 - a. to install TEN-G coordinators similar to other European TEN-fields, who take the patronage to promote transnationally significant alpine Green Infrastructure elements,
 - b. to agree in 2nd EUSALP Environmental Ministerial Conference on Alpine Green Infrastructure on next milestones for making EUSALP a European frontrunner in Green Infrastructure.
2. Mainstreaming the topic of "Green Infrastructure" as a core element of "services of general interest in green" towards a greener Europe. To this end, we would recommend to
 - a. to embed GI as a core topic in current EU funding programmes and to make AG7 a hub for developing coordinated actions,
 - b. to implement at least one EUSALP flagship project in the appropriate regional ERDF and cross-border INTERREG programs as well as the transnational INTERREG Alpine Space and the future LIFE program,
 - c. to provide the necessary national co-funding, either by single funding approach or by setting up or adapting national funding programmes accordingly.
3. Making the benefits of Green Infrastructure tangible for decision-makers and citizens at the local level. To this end, we would recommend to
 - a. to design projects that help improve the individual citizen's quality of life,
 - b. to award innovative solutions with the help of competitions/call for ideas.
 - c. to expand the Alpine GI cities network and enhance rural-urban partnerships.

Further reading:

<https://www.alpine-region.eu/action-group-7>

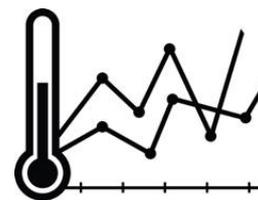
Outlook on further activities:

In the timeframe 2021 – 2022, AG7 will continue to work on these policy recommendations and further discuss and develop them with key policy makers as well as lead a process on Green Infrastructure as Strategic Priority Policy Area.

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TO IMPROVE RISK MANAGEMENT AND TO BETTER MANAGE CLIMATE CHANGE, INCLUDING MAJOR NATURAL RISKS PREVENTION



Sustainable and effective protection from natural hazards is an essential predisposition for settling, as well as, socio-economic development in the Alps. Limited settlement space and climate change lead to increasing exposure and damage risk of private property and infrastructure in the Alps. The interests of economic development, social welfare, mobility and tourism need to balance risk reduction and safety management. This requires new risk governance instruments and processes with a view to find the optimal approach for multiple land use demands.

Policy recommendations regarding risk governance:

- Better understanding of the concept of risk governance
- Open formal procedures on protection measures for discussion
- Mapping as a basis for risk communication
- Spatial planning as essential aspect in a governance process

Policy recommendations regarding forest fires:

- Design and implement short- and long-term prevention measures
- Adapt suppression measures to the specific conditions of the Alpine region
- Improve the understanding and measures on post-fire management
- Support knowledge transfer and exchange of experiences

Policy recommendations regarding cases of overload and residual risk:

- Develop a harmonized approach to integrated risk assessment in the Alps
- Reach and share common definitions for the terms “residual risk” and “cases of overload”
- Establish the full and transparent participation of actors in risk governance processes
- Consider residual risk and cases of overload in land-use and spatial planning
- Introduce an integrated set of measures to increase the overall resilience of a community and its critical infrastructure
- Establish legal and policy frameworks that support residual risk management
- Promote a cross-sectoral approach to risk governance, which fosters synergies between technology, economy and the lifestyle of society
- Create a risk culture, in which the community is aware about residual risks
- Create a lively risk dialogue and foster the distribution of information through multiple channels

Further reading:

- [Risk governance](#)
- [Forest fires](#)
- [Cases of overload and residual risk](#)

Outlook on further activities:

In the timeframe 2021 – 2022, AG8 is lead of the cross-sectorial implementation initiative on climate resilient spatial planning in the Alps (CLISP-ALP). Goal is the evaluation of possibilities and performances of existing planning instruments of the alpine states to achieve a climate resilient spatial development. Recommendations will also be developed. Furthermore, AG8 will concentrate on the evaluation and development of target group-oriented risk communication tools like physical natural hazard models.

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TO MAKE THE TERRITORY A MODEL REGION FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND RENEWABLE ENERGY



Action Group 9 focuses on the promotion of energy efficiency and the production and use of local renewable energy in the Alpine region, especially in the public and private sectors. The framework is provided by, inter alia, the EU's energy directives, the EU goals for 2020 and the Energy Union Package. The action aims at supporting a significant reduction of energy consumption in the housing and mobility sector, as well as in small and medium enterprises. The action promotes energy management and monitoring systems at different levels.

Policy recommendations: Improving energy efficiency in Small and Medium Enterprises

Experience from recent years has shown that the market and the mechanisms of the market only serve the energy saving potential in SMEs to a limited extent satisfactorily. One recommendation emerging from the experts exchanging within the activity of the Action Group 9 is therefore, that for successful regional rollout of energy efficiency schemes for small-medium enterprises, which adhere to such schemes on a voluntary basis, public energy agencies must strongly engage in trust-building, information and technical support.

The following set of recommendations on non-binding policy instruments have been developed in Action Group 9.

Improving awareness raising by public energy agencies

- Inform intensively about issues like benefits of energy efficiency measures and the use of renewable energies, best practices and funding possibilities.
- Intensifying communication and increasing the awareness of non-energy benefits.
- Addressing concerns regarding the payback period of energy efficiency investments.
- Showcase efficiency measures to give specific branches an idea of the most substantial energy-saving measures and correlating funding possibilities and support programmes.
- Transferring experiences of real examples to enterprises via site visits, peer-to-peer meetings and workshops.
- Award enterprises which have realised exemplary energy efficiency measures.

Recommendations regarding energy advice

- Provide free/low cost energy advice to enterprises
- Train sector-specialised and regionally active energy consultants: It is crucial that energy consultants must acquire sector specific knowledge on market dynamics and technologies to be able to consider particular issues when advising enterprises of certain sectors.
- Organise energy consultations and information events regionally in close

cooperation with regional professionals, regional consulting companies, and mayors or even with local banks.

- Offering continuous technical support through the whole planning AND realisation process.
- Promoting authorisation of consultants to apply for subsidies.

Recommendations regarding investment funding

- Setting up a One-Stop-Shop not only for support with technical questions, but also for advice on the available funding possibilities.
- Setting the focus on a few suitable funding programmes.
- Simplifying application procedures
- Giving direct grants instead of soft loans
- Preferring long-term funding programmes

Policy recommendations: Improving the use of green hydrogen in the EUSALP energy mix

Green and decarbonized hydrogen will play an interesting role in the Energy Transition. Based on EU strategy for hydrogen and existing regional hydrogen strategies, Regions should cooperate to develop production of green and decarbonized hydrogen that will be used to decarbonize the industrial and mobility sector. By an intensive cooperation, alpine corridors will be equipped with hydrogen refueling stations for heavy road mobility (passengers and freight). Territorial approaches combining production, transport, storage and consumption on the same territory, involving local public authorities and private sector, should be explored, as it can decarbonize both sectors, depending on the local context.

The embedding of hydrogen in the ERDF programmes (including mainstream) is a crucial issue to develop consistently the value chain, on both offer side (production, refueling stations) and demand side (deployment of rolling stock).

Policy recommendations: raising the role of the regional energy observatory.

Regional energy and GHG observatories have the mission to collect, process, monitor and disseminate data to regional and local public authorities. Data produced are crucial for local authorities, supporting them to develop their Sustainable Energy and Adaptation Action Plan. They are a powerful tool to elaborate regional and local energy scenarios for the future, improving energy management in municipalities. Capacities of the staff of these organizations must be reinforced, and the network between regional observatories must be supported.

This network should be the base of the establishment of an Alpine energy observatory. Its mission will be to collect regional data from all regional observatories to complete the picture of the energy transition in EUSALP. It will calculate the contribution of EUSALP to EU Goals for 2030 and 2050, and will allow to define specific objectives for the EUSALP.

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Outlook on further activities:

In the timeframe 2021 – 2022, AG 9 is elaborating together with other Action Groups a Road Map for Green Hydrogen deployment projects in the Alps.

Furthermore, by 2022 an Alpine Energy Observatory will be established, improving and harmonizing energy data collection and monitoring across the Alps.

The Action Group is also putting a focus on local RES production, energy communities, microgrids and cross-border smart grids. Policy recommendations from these fields will be published as work progresses.

What can be expected in the near future?

This policy brief describes mainly the policy recommendations which have already been formulated by the nine Action Groups up to now. In the timeframe from 2020 to 2022, a strong focus is put by all Action Groups on the Policy cycle. The Action Groups are working together on five Strategic Priority Policy Areas and are implementing at least five Strategic Cross-sectoral Implementation Initiatives. With these core activities, EUSALP reinforces the cooperation across Action Groups and strives for a much bigger impact on the policy level. Besides, each Action Group is implementing at least one Strategic Implementation Initiative.

Five Strategic Priority Policy Areas

For the period from 2020 to 2022, the nine Action Groups of EUSALP have agreed to work on five Strategic Priority Policy Areas SPPA.

Spatial planning: Spatial planning is a real cross-cutting theme of high relevance for all topics dealt with in EUSALP. But up to now, EUSALP itself has no dedicated spatial development vision. Many documents and strategies do already exist in the Alpine Area. The aim of this SPPA is therefore to gather all this information and to elaborate together with the competent spatial planning stakeholders a common spatial development perspective for EUSALP. This shall lead to a legally non-binding document which delineates the spatial development vision of EUSALP. This overall perspective should then contribute to improve the coherence of the national, regional and cross-border spatial development strategies and to identify and implement actions, which contribute to this common spatial perspective for the Alpine area. Three Cross-sectoral Strategic Implementation Initiatives shall help to build this common perspective: (1) a study on climate resilient spatial planning, (2) a mapping of the future proofing of alpine transport infrastructures and (3) an analysis and evaluation of Green Infrastructures in the Alpine area.

Smart Villages: The aim of the Smart villages approach is to create opportunities for a smart transition of Municipalities and Regions in mountainous areas through new forms of stakeholder involvement facilitated by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). This approach has been tested in the period 2018 – 2021 and implemented in several pilot areas within EUSALP. Transferable tools and policy recommendations have been elaborated. Now, the aim is to spread this knowledge to as many as possible mountain and rural municipalities within the Alpine area in order to help them to use the potentials of digitalization. One of the main activities will be the creation of a network of Smart Villages and Smart Regions. This network shall help to ease the exchange of information and experiences and to transpose a modern image of the Alpine area.

Carbon Neutral Alpine Region: The Alpine region is at the forefront of the transition towards a low-carbon or even carbon-neutral economy. The EUSALP Action Groups want to contribute to the European Green Deal and support an approach to the decarbonisation which priorities energy efficiency and energy sufficiency (an important element of energy efficiency in general), followed by the substitution of the remaining energy production/sources and ultimately the compensation of GHG emissions. To achieve these goals, two strategic implementation initiatives are foreseen: Common energy objectives for a low-carbon Alpine region and Green Hydrogen for the Alps. The initiative on common energy objectives will amongst other activities also lead to Policy recommendations. The work on Green Hydrogen will mainly encompass a Meta-Study and lead to a roadmap for rolling out H2 technologies in the EUSALP area.

Innovation Hub for Green Business: The Alpine area is at the forefront of innovation and can build on top-level Research and Development institutions and enterprises. An Innovation Hub for Green Business could valorise these innovation capacities and strongly contribute to the European Green Deal. In order to foster the collaboration among policy-makers, academic world and business sector and enhance the innovation capacity, the activities to be developed in this policy area will take into consideration, as far as possible, the new Smart Specialisation Strategies of the EUSALP regions and the outcomes from ongoing Alpine Space Projects. Three main topics have been selected to better focus the idea of this Innovation Hub on existing potentials of the Alpine area: (1) Wood and timber value chains, (2) Tourism and (3) Production and supply chain sustainability & resilience.

EUSALP Innovation Facility (EIF): One of the main goals of any macroregional strategy is to better align existing funding schemes. But existing funding schemes were not necessarily built to respond to the needs of macroregional strategies. They follow their own (sectoral) intervention logic and rules. Therefore, it is in some cases very difficult or even impossible to mobilize any funding especially for cross-sectoral initiatives involving multiple Action Groups. The EIF aims to bridge that gap. It is meant to support the implementation of innovative initiatives by complementing existing funds and activate new ones, while being fully in line with EUSALP priorities as set by the EUSALP bodies. The intention lies in exploring the feasibility and potential frame-conditions how to mobilize further funding sources for short time, dynamic and cross-sectoral funding requirements for serving a wide range of potential and varied beneficiaries - also considering private financial support such as enterprises, foundations etc. Until 2022, EUSALP will elaborate a study on the feasibility of such a facility.

..and at least nine Strategic initiatives

Furthermore, all Action Groups will work on strategic initiatives as defined in their respective Workplans. So at the end of this period in 2022, many activities will have started or already been implemented. As regards the policy cycle, EUSALP will produce a new document with all policy recommendations coming out from these activities. This document shall be ready by spring 2022 and be presented and discussed at EUSALP-level as well as in all seven Alpine countries. So watch out for things to come and follow our activities on www.alpine-region.eu as well as on Social media.



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