POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Interreg
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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.

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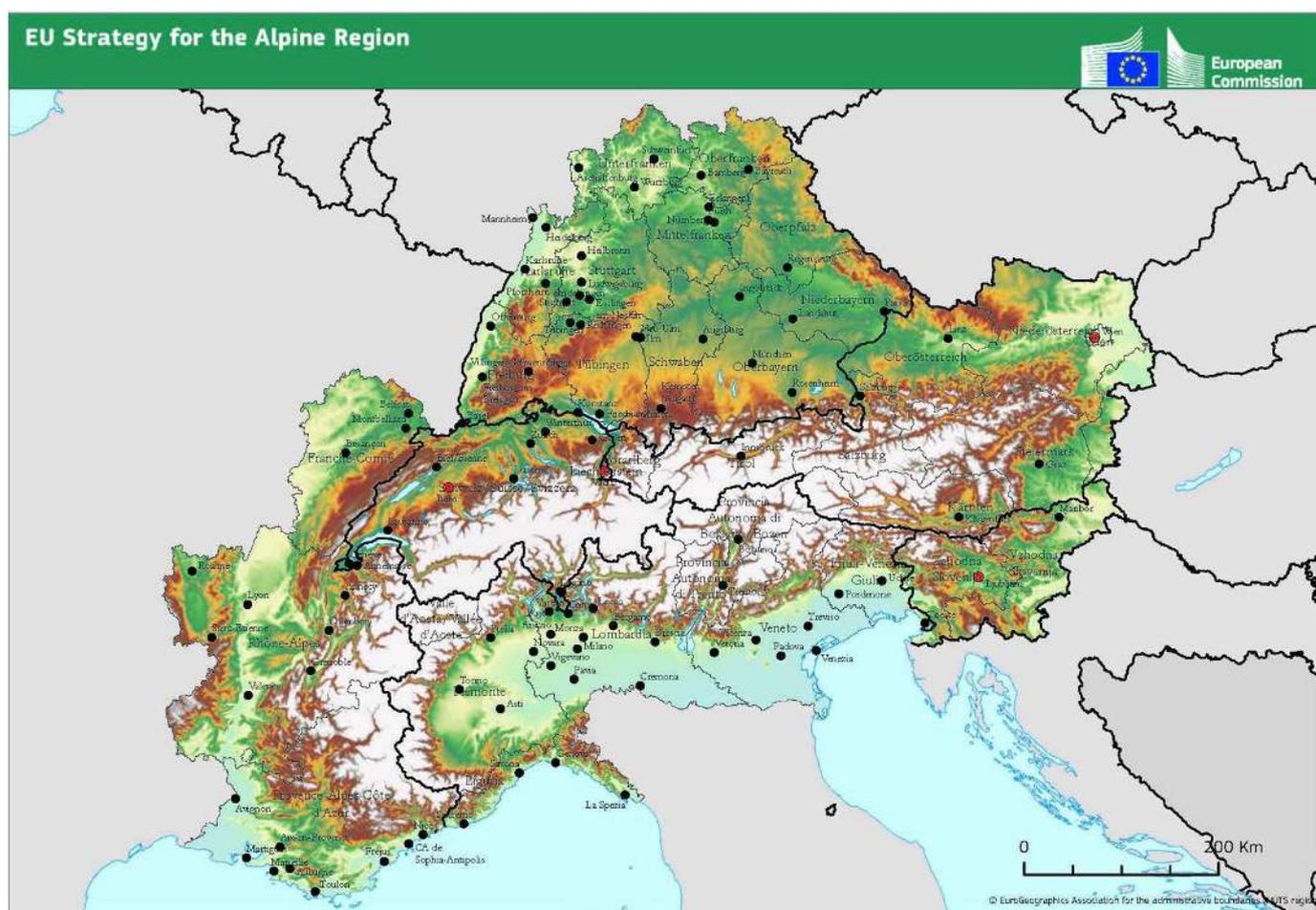
BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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. In the period starting from 2020, each Action Group developed further Strategic implementation initiatives and all nine AG's agreed to work on five Strategic Priority Policy Areas SPPA and implement Cross-sectoral implementation initiatives in these five areas.

All 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 these policy recommendations and an outlook on what is to be expected in forthcoming years.

The draft policy recommendations will be completed with the results of the ongoing activities in spring 2022. During spring 2022, the draft policy recommendations will be presented in all alpine countries and discussed with key stakeholders. The results of these discussions will flow into the final policy recommendations document, which will be presented in June 2022 to the public.

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 transfer the findings and work of the Actions Groups of EUSALP into the policy cycle. The policy brief is structured along the topics of the nine Action Groups.

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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:

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- 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

Blue print for a R&I-agenda in the Alpine region

The Interreg Alpine Space A-RING project underlined that Alpine Regions already share several RIS3 priorities, namely: circular economy, digitalization and in particular artificial intelligence, smart and sustainable mobility and social innovation. However, at present, very few of the potential synergies are caught and developed with a transnational approach. Moreover, the collaborative R&I efforts are hindered by several factors that produce Alpine Region's stakeholders needs:

- The necessity of simpler information/communication processes about S3;
- The necessity to simplify bureaucracy for project collaborations: this is valid both inside each region and cross-borders.
- The short-term approach implemented within SMEs creates a huge gap in motivations for their participation into collaborative research and innovation efforts.

A-Ring piloted several possible solutions to try to solve these hindering factors to cross-border – multistakeholder R&I efforts and can propose the adoption of several steps that, if implemented, can take EUSALP to the adoption of a successful SRIA.

Taking these challenges into account the A-RING project recommends:

- Support the adoption of the Alpine S3 Lab Methodology, developed and piloted inside the project, to assess the shared R&I interests across the region and check for cross-regional collaborations to lever on;
- Promote the shared ownership of R&I priorities inside EUSALP which in turn will generate more political influence, deemed necessary to create cross-border collaborations and shared policies;
- Promote the adoption by the regions of a shared communication style and language with regards to S3;
- Promote the establishment of trans-national R&I calls favouring the collaboration across academia, SMEs and public authorities.

The detailed results of the A-Ring project to enhance R&I governance capacity of the Alpine Region will be available in June 2022 on the project's website.

Blue print for a synchronized R&I-funding scheme

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The Interreg Alpine Space ARDIA-Net project's AlpsConnect scheme for cross-regional RDI-cooperation suggests to **strengthen synchronized funding schemes** in the Alpine Space macro-region. Option 3 of AlpsConnect introduces joint synchronized calls managed by a coordination office, and was put into action in the Innovation Express 2021.

Synchronized RDI-funding schemes have the advantage to directly tackle regional challenges and allow for an immediate uptake of regional priorities. Thus, regional capacities can be strengthened and potential weaknesses can be compensated by complementarity of cross-regional R&I cooperation partnerships. Cross-regional synchronized R&I-funding schemes therefor should be an integral part of regional Smart Specialisation Strategies for research and innovation-driven growth (S3) and sustainable and inclusive growth (S4+).

For further information visit the project's website.
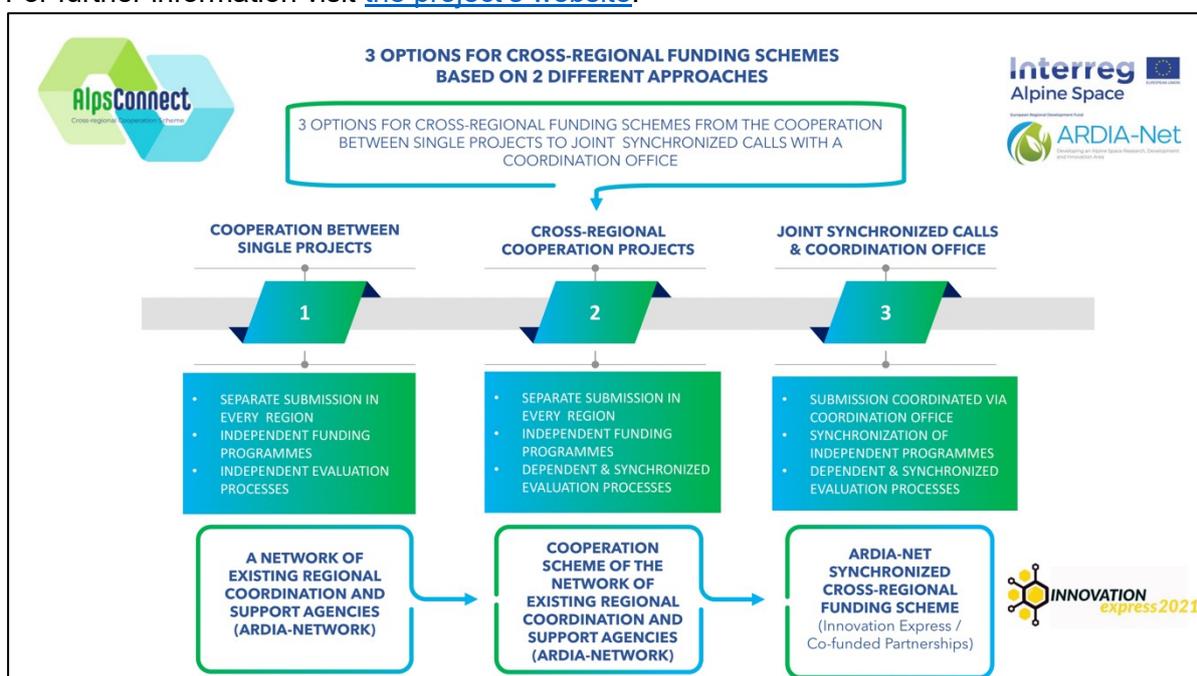
Outlook on further activities:
In the upcoming years, AG1 will:
- Provide specific policy recommendations on how to improve the collaboration across different actors on strategic topics;
- Promote the set-up of an "Alpine S3 Lab" which will bring together regions and stakeholders to discuss common objectives and find complementarities;
- Provide key policy recommendations on strategic topics 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.

Recommendations for a resilient and innovative business system

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". The following recommendations have been identified in this respect:

1. Reorganize business processes to reduce the strict dependence on logistics.
2. Emphasize the possibilities and tools for interaction with other companies to define a unique industrial model for the area.
3. Overcome the NIMBY concept in the circular economy by adopting a strategic alignment of the system to political, economic, technological, environmental and legal changes.
4. Stimulate internal organizational interactions and continuous learning to attract new competencies in-house (including training and labour market inclusion of youngest, women and local resources).

Other issues

1. Support the SMEs to increase their **independence** from the import of resources and energy and find opportunities both economic and systemic to invest in R&D and create a solid network in the circular economy
2. Support the creation and strengthening of **clusters** with the function of:
   - Assisting public/private institutions in the creation of specific funding lines for economic, technological, and human resources growth
   - Supporting the transposition of European and national regulations through widespread dissemination of the challenges and benefits of regulatory innovations
   - Interacting with decision-making organizations (at regulatory and financial level) not only as intermediaries for receiving changes, but above all as a 'voice' instrument, i.e. proposing strong institutional lobbying that brings the operational results of systemic relations to the decision-makers and highlights the differences between regions and sectors of economic activity (to avoid one-fits-all approaches).

Logistic and supply chain management: enhance the strong connection among companies in the supply chain allowing companies to remain in the domestic market and avoid interruptions in the supply chain (as may occur during temporary shocks or persistent crises). In addition, enhancing the supplier diversification as an important resilience factor.

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Resources and circular economy: support and develop the research to overcome the problem of products containing different types of materials (plastics, noble materials, silver, copper) that are difficult to separate and differentiate.

Access to innovation: promote a real simplification of procedures to avoid red-tape and allow the SMEs to easily access the call for tenders (usually affected by time too long, distance between public funding (after) and commitment of expenditure by the private party (before).

Outlook on further activities

In the timeframe 2022-2023, 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.

Supporting an effective governance of dual systems in the Alpine Region with a strategic overview.

Based on a comparative analysis of the different dual systems in the Alps, developed in AlpGov I, significant differences emerged in the approach, management and sensitivity to this educational system in EUSALP Countries. Nevertheless, common priorities can also be identified and linked to EUSALP objectives: namely, the governance of the systems and their attractiveness, the quality of the training offered and innovation. In addition, transnational mobility of apprentices would fully realize the free movement of people within Europe and, in particular, 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: such as central and local institutions, social partners and representatives of training institutions, Chambers of Commerce, Trade Associations, Employment Services. It is also important to identify stable fora for comparison and collaboration, which would consolidate regional networks and enable an exchange of best practices with the aim to raise the quality of the dual education system.

Another objective is to improve the perception of apprenticeship among students and their families, especially by sharing stories of professional and personal success.

In this context Action Group 3 established a sub-group that, together with the Trentino School of Management and UNI, is working on identifying the best model of dual training in the Alpine Region and defining a code of ethics/code of conduct useful to companies operating in all EUSALP Countries and hosting training programmes for students. After collecting the best practices of dual training in all EUSALP Countries, Action Group 3 focuses on combining them and creating the best model of dual training through the instrument of voluntary standardisation, under the form of a 'CEN Workshop Agreement' (CWA). The CWA on 'Quality Assurance Guidelines for Dual Training Systems' has an international character and can guide companies hosting students for dual training in a very important moment of their growth, during their transition to adulthood.

Further information on the CWA.

Promoting the standardisation of soft skills in order to value competences acquired through work-based learning and make them recognisable in the Alpine economy

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Action Group 3 established a sub-group on soft skills and, with the collaboration of the Franco Demarchi Foundation and IRES, aims to identify skills that workers acquired in formal, informal and non-formal environments/contexts, in addition to a more "classical" knowledge acquired at school. Since the economy is evolving faster than in the past, it is important to provide tools and guidelines for the identification and assessment of a set of soft skills that would ease the labour market transition: from unemployment to work as well as between different jobs (in terms of up-skilling and re-skilling).

Encouraging the mutual recognition of educational titles, in particular relating to Higher Vocational Education and Training (HVET).

Action Group 3 aims to promote tertiary education and training pathways by focusing in particular on the mutual recognition of HVET titles. This is a sensitive and controversial aspect that often hinders the communication between educational systems as well as the circulation of knowledge and competences in the Alpine Region. The mutual recognition of qualifications can support the creation of a shared labour market and ease industrial relations in the EUSALP area. Action Group 3 aims to raise awareness on this topic and integrate it in the political agenda of Alpine Countries participating in EUSALP.

Outlook on further activities:
Action Group 3 will reflect on the evolution of the labour market in relation to new working spaces located in peripheral areas. To this end, it is collaborating with Action Group 5 in connection to the topic of smart villages, digitalisation and education, digitalisation and the labour market, strengthening digital skills and competencies in rural areas. On of the main aims is to identifying best practices of remote working that contribute to decreasing depopulation trends as well as to value co-working spaces that facilitate access to basic services. These best practices could be shared and replicated in all EUSALP Countries. Another stream of work will focus on job opportunities in the Alpine region, especially in connection to mountain professions and green jobs, with the aims to increase young people mobility and revitalise internal and peripheral areas.

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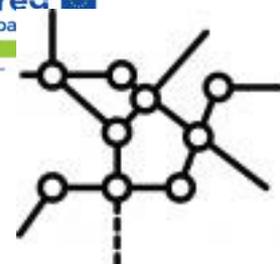
TO PROMOTE INTER-MODALITY AND INTEROPERABILITY IN PASSENGER AND FREIGHT TRANSPORT

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.

EUSALP Project labelling

The EUSALP AG4 Assessment Methodology for Individual Projects serves to identify projetcs with a relevance for the fostering of sustainable mobility solutions in the Alpine Region from a macroregional perspective. The awarded EUSALP AG4 Label can be used to communicate its endorsement by the macroregion to decision-making authorities who are in the position to promote the implementation of the respective project and/or to provide adequate financial support. So far, two rounds of assessments took place. A first round of assessments was finalised in December 2020, a second round was finalised in October 2021. In total 20 projects received EUSALP AG4 Label. Through implementation of the labelled projects it is recommended to promote inter-modality and interoperability in passenger and freight transport by:

- Supporting and fostering the removal of infrastructure bottlenecks with sustainable mobility projects
- Bridging missing links
- Coordinating planning and timetables of public transport
- Modernizing sustainable transport infrastructure and
- Enhancing cooperation.

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The EUSALP AG4 Assessment Methodology for Individual Projects serves to identify sustainable mobility solutions in the Alpine Region with a high macroregional relevance. So far, two assessment rounds took place, in which 20 projects received the EUSALP AG4 Label.

Cooperation	FVG.2	COMODALCE
	FVG.4	New cross-border rail
	FVG.5	SMARTLOGI
New infrastructure	GRB.1	Alpine Crossrail
	STM.4	Alpine Western Balkan Corridor
	TIC.1	AlpTransit Sud
	TIR.1	Fernpass Railway
	BAV.11	Four-track expansion
	VEN.2	Treno delle Dolomiti
	VEN.3	Collegamento Ferroviario
Public transport rail	STM.2	Inter-Regio rail
	FVG.1	CROSSMOBY
Terminal infrastructure	VBG.1	Bodensee-S-Bahn S7
	KTN.2	Logistics Center Austria South
	STM.1	Cargo Center Graz (CCG)
Upgraded, electrified infrastructure	LIG.1	Parma
	LIG.2	Genoa-Marseille
	PAC.1	Multimodal axis Valence-Val de Suze
	PIE.1	Cuneo-Ventimiglia-Nice
Digitalisation, ticketing	BAV.2	Expansion of the MVV network

Further reading:

https://www.alpine-region.eu/news/ag4-project-labelling-second-project-call-presentation-european-week-regions-and-cities
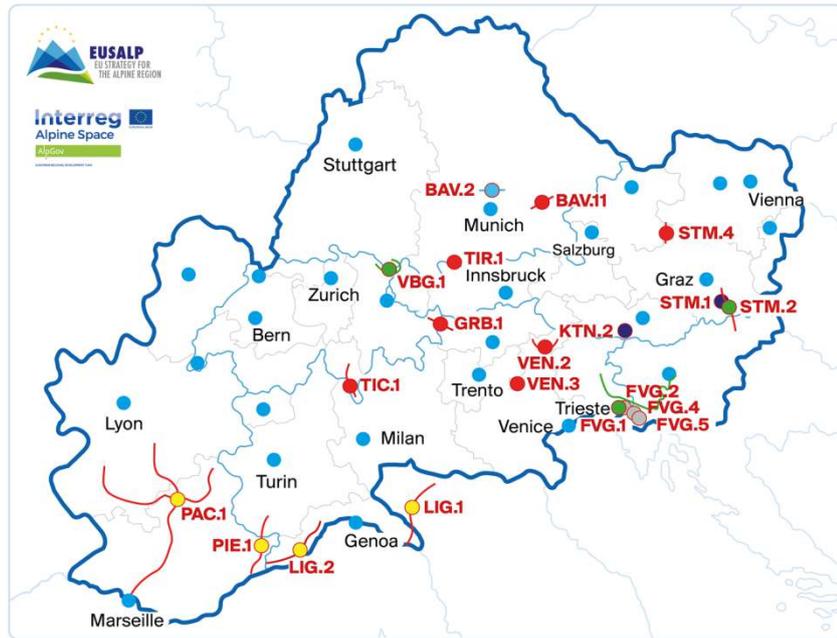
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Rail Transport in the Alpine Region – Joining forces for a sustainable transport and mobility system

Rail transport should form the backbone of a more efficient, multimodal, connected sustainable transport system, in particular on medium and long distances. With new infrastructure initiatives, rail should also be in the centre of a fully decarbonised transport system in line with the European Green Deal's decarbonisation strategy. While the transport sector accounts for almost a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions in the EU, railways only have a 0.6 % share of all transport-related emissions[1]. Currently, in transalpine freight transport rail accounts for only about 30 %, while about 70 % of goods are transported on road. Meanwhile Switzerland, which has a modal share of 74 % goods on rail, proves that with an ambitious modal shift policy railways can be the solution for long distances.

15 Alpine regions call on the European Union …

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/transport_en

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… to create a level-playing field between transport modes as basic requirement for an effective modal shift by:

- Promoting conditions to ensure the availability of adequate levels of suitable rail infrastructures and services in terms of quantity, quality, reliability and cost sustainability in comparison with road transport, also correcting competition distortions between the different modes of transport: the positive externality gap related to most rail freight journeys in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, congestion, fatalities and, in some cases, also noise, compared to their road equivalent is not appropriately addressed by the current regulatory environment and resulting market prices, as well as the initial incentives that can influence competitiveness. Taking stock of these market distortions, the provision of rail services, especially in low-density populated areas with low demand, should be sustained and subsidised.

- Improving the attractiveness for sustainable rail-based and smart mobility solutions for Alpine tourist destinations and for commuters by ensuring quality of supply, establishing attractive and integrated user-friendly passenger information and ticketing systems, fully exploiting the potentials of digitalisation.

- Supporting the optimisation of cross-border rail services including night trains

… to optimise the potential of rail to serve as the backbone of a connected transport system by:

- Strengthening common activities that promote resilient smart rail and smart combined transport solutions, including rail freight transport generated from EUSALP ports and their hinterland connections, to improve the competitiveness of railways in the race towards innovation.

- Fully exploiting the potential of the railway sector in terms of digitalisation, automation, interoperability, and shift towards more sustainable rolling stock.

- Supporting the industry to ensure access to branch lines and loading places that are well connected to the main national and European rail network.

… to improve infrastructure provisions for rail transport by:

- Better coordinating rail infrastructure development across borders to close missing rail links and bottlenecks in the Alpine transport network. Some of the EUSALP labelled projects identify some of those missing links.[2]

- Closer coordinating across borders rail infrastructure capacity management for international freight transport, such as slot allocation, to support modal shift.

- Supporting the expansion of terminal infrastructure for combined transport and improved rail access to fully exploit the potentials provided by the new transalpine base tunnels.

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[2]   https://www.alpine-region.eu/results/labelling-projects-macroregional-added-value-fostering-sustainable-mobility-solutions

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- Assessing the relevance and matching of alternative propulsion systems technologies for rail-based transport with relevant transport needs in the Alpine Region.

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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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EUSALP Youth Council recommendations on sustainable travel behaviour

The EUSALP Youth Council is willing to support AG4 in creating incentives for participants of EUSALP events to travel sustainably. To this end it is recommended to:

- Create a guide for the organization of mobility logistics for an EUSALP event
- Set rewards and bonuses for members who travel sustainably to events.
- Develop positive aspects of least pollutive means of transport

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Outlook on further activities:

In the upcoming years, AG4 will continue to work on the thematic areas that were part of the Work Plan 2019-22 – Smart clean logistics and combined transport to support modal shift; Accessibility on local and regional transport links on the secondary network; Smart and low-carbon mobility and innovative public transport solutions. Furthermore AG4 will seek cooperation with AG9 on energy security and provision for different modes of transport. AG4 will continue applying the project assessment methodology for the labelling of sustainable mobility projects – a third project call is foreseen for 2023. Finally, the EUSALP Rail Declaration provides a basis for engaging the policy-makers for the implementation of the Strategy.

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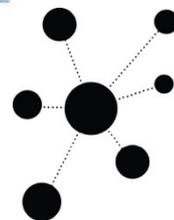
TO CONNECT PEOPLE ELECTRONICALLY AND PROMOTE ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC SERVICES

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.

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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SME's benefit from the potentials offered by digitalization

The aim of the Smart SMEs project was to understand to what extent SMEs that produce, process and apply natural fibres use digitalization tools and approaches. To this end, value chains in different Alpine countries have been analysed and recommendations formulated from the project. The recommendations focus on three fields of action:

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1. Setting up a practicioners network
2. Promotion of tools for digitalization
3. Reshaping public support schemes

Further reading:

https://www.alpine-region.eu/projects/smart-smes

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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.

In September 2021, the Think Tank published a further document, indicating how existing services can be improved thanks to digitalization, which new services can be developed and how the cooperation across services can be fostered. The document contains many interesting good practises and provides also some policy recommendations. The policy recommendations draw the attention to the need for robust digital infrastructures but also to digital skills which need to be improved. Speaking about services of general interest it is also important to stress, that the provision of new or improved digital services shall not lead to new social or territorial disparities ("leave no one behind"). The consequence is, that "analogue" and digital services may be provided for quite some time in parallel.

Further reading:

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

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A Roadmap for future proof digital infrastructures in the Alpine area

Based on the workshop "Future-proof digital infrastructures and platforms for the Alpine area" during the Digital Alps 2021 Conference, a first version of policy recommendations was developed to further elaborate a roadmap for future-proof digital infrastructures in the Alpine area.

The policy recommendations were then discussed with the AG5 members within the Action Group 5 and will be further enriched by input from the Digital Alps Conference 2022.

Strategy - Contribute to EU digital goals and take full advantage from the EU-level central programmes to implement future-proof digital infrastructures, connecting "smalls" and "larges" entities, adopting specific territorial plans based on territorial goals, capitalizing existing networks and ongoing experiences at all level, leveraging geographic challenges of Alpine territories as opportunities.

Connectivity - Build widespread very high capacity networks closing the gaps in cross-border backbones, enabling a "continuum of digital infrastructures" between urban areas and rural/mountain areas and adopting a mixed technological approach for the access network in the more remote areas to ensure an "inclusive access" for inhabitants while guaranteeing economic development.

Data infrastructures - invest in data-oriented and ecosystems-enablers distributed and federated infrastructures for data and digital sovereignty sustaining investments for interconnected infrastructures at regional level, defining an overall view on Data Spaces for an Alpine Data Place and promoting the creation of pilot edge infrastructures on Alpine territories federated at European level to create value from data for territories.

Innovation facilities - bridge the gap for small actors to adopt digital innovation through local structures by supporting a network of local Micro or Digital innovation HUBs distributed in rural and mountain areas, interconnected to first level DIHs at EUSALP level to foster digital transition of all territories without losing an inclusive bottom-up approach.

Further reading:
https://www.alpine-space.org/projects/alpgov/alpgov2/deliverables/wpt2/digital-infra.docx

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Potentials for Open Data in the Alpine area

Based on the Open Data study launched by AG5 that aims to promote an open data approach in the Alpine Space, the draft policy recommendations were developed. The final recommendations will be further discussed during the Digital Alps Conference 2022 during a specific workshop.

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- Increase the range of public bodies (governments, local governments, multilateral organizations, higher education institutions) actively engaged in the Open Data Initiative in the Alpine Space promoting an Open Data approach, starting from EUSALP institutions.
- Broaden the scope and improve the quality, quantity and range of Open Data and associated meta-data; improve the quality and range of services provided in Alpine Space adopting common standards, methodologies and technologies.
- Promote networking to engage with all stakeholders and encourage use of Open Data, which includes civil society, governments, local governments, private sector, journalists and media, researchers, donors, and multilateral organizations.
- Support and encourage the adoption of Open Data in the Alpine Space, embedding the Open Data approach into Programmes conditions and requirements for funding new projects.
- Try to define a framework tailored to Alpine Space, on how to contribute to the main topics of Alpine area, and to ensure that effective governance structures and multilateral organizations are in place to implement the Open Data Strategy in the Alpine Space.
- Monitor and evaluate the impact, benefits, and risks of the Open Data Initiative in the Alpine Space and benchmark against other MRS (Macro-Regional Strategies).

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Outlook on further activities:
In the upcoming years, AG5 will continue to work on the topics of Smart villages, Open data and digital infrastructures. To encourage the exchange of experiences amongst Smart villages and regions in the Alpine area, a new Network of Alpine Smart villages and regions called SMART ALPS has been created in 2021. In 2021, AG5 has begun to start a series of yearly conferences on digitalization in the Alpine area. The yearly Digital Alps Conference shall become a focal point for all initiatives dealing with digitalization in the Alpine area.

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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

Preservation and valorization of Alpine landscapes in times of climate crisis

On 24 May 2022 AG6 held the EUSALP Landscape Conference at EURAC research in Bolzano/Bozen in the framework of which the impact of renewable energy production on

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Alpine landscapes was tackled. The following recommendations for stakeholders that were adopted by the AG6 members can be drawn from the presentations and the discussion:

The transformation of the energy sector from fossil-based to zero-carbon will not be easy. At its heart is the need for a quick phase out of fossil fuels to reduce energy-related CO_2 emissions to close to zero. Much knowledge on mitigating the effects of the climate crisis is already existing. Decarbonising the energy sector requires urgent actions from a global scale to the local level across all relevant policy fields and involving various actors.

Conflicts of interests will be frequent. Hard decisions on what kind of landscape we want in the future, how we deal with biodiversity loss and what role renewables will play must be taken - and creative solutions must be found. These choices must be backed by the political will to actually implement them.

Spatial planning is a crucial instrument for effectively integrating mitigation and adaptation actions into sectoral activities and for avoiding lock-in effects with respect to settlement and infrastructure development.

Spatial planning is also key to success in anticipating many conflicts and promoting multi-functional solutions (e.g. agrivoltaics) based on alternatives and scenarios that bring a fair burden and benefit sharing for all concerned. A top-down approach for major projects should be combined with bottom-up elements, such as inclusive project development, promotion of local ownership and compensation schemes. Monitoring of environmental compliance must be enforced, where concerns exist.

The Alpine Space has also great potential for renewable energy production (solar, wind, biomass).

The necessity to urgently act requires simultaneously saving energy and expanding renewable energy production. This includes as well acknowledging the limits of growth and discussing shrinking strategies (e.g. individual car traffic and land consumption by commercial areas).

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Outlook on further activities:
In the upcoming years AG6 will continue its activities aimed at preserving and sustainably valorising the Alpine natural and cultural heritage. In addition, AG 6 will be involved in transversal activities with other Action Groups, 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 within the strategic priority policy area "Spatial Planning".

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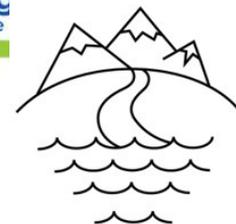
TO DEVELOP ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY IN THE WHOLE EUSALP TERRITORY

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.

Three main steps and policy recommendations 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, for doing so
    b. to strive for a continuous dialogue of AG7 members with institutions responsible for administrating corresponding EU funds (like INTERREG, ERDF or centrally managed programms like LIFE or Horizon) and
    c. to centrally (e.g. by the TSS) examine the support of the EU programms to the implementation of MRS related projects and initiatives
    d. 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, for doing so
    e. to promote a joint transnational flagship project on Alpine peatlands as a main contribution to fulfil the ambitious international climate biodiversity goals,
    f. 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 involve local citizens and land owners in policy and project development
    b. to design projects that help improve the individual citizen's quality of life,

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c. to award innovative solutions with the help of competitions/call for ideas, in particular

d. to turn the initial "GI goes business" competition to a permanent EUSALP activity with a view to a permanent network of innovative green businesses

e. 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:
AG7 will endeavour to set up a transnational project on Alpine peatland preservation and restoration under the EU LIFE programme.

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TO IMPROVE RISK MANAGEMENT AND TO BETTER MANAGE CLIMATE CHANGE, INCLUDING MAJOR NATURAL RISKS PREVENTION
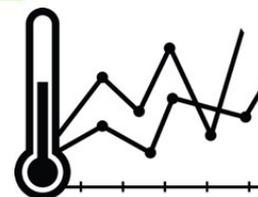
Sustainable and effective protection from natural hazards is an essential predisposition for settling, as well as, socio-economic development in the Alps. Limited settlement space and climate change lead to increasing exposure and damage risk of private property and infrastructure in the Alps. The interests 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

Climate resilient spatial planning

Policy recommendations regarding Climate resilient spatial planning in the EUSALP area:

- Develop adaptation pathways that integrate spatial planning and rely on extensive sectoral cooperation. It is recommended to:

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- shape (and fund) the understanding of climate change adaptation as an integrative part of a management assignment in spatial planning that reaches from transnational to the very local level through extensive exchange among experts
- develop climate change adaptation measures in a problem-orientated perspective that coordinates different sectoral domains and integrate spatial planning as a key sector through funding research and pilot projects on implementation activities
- Identify dependencies of Nature-based Solutions. It is recommended to:
  - connect existing political priorities and funding schemes concerning Nature-based Solutions (NbS) to questions of mainstreaming NbS through spatial planning. This relates to displaying and co-managing natural features that provide hazard protection and climate services, especially mountain forests
- Establish an iterative learning process. It is recommended to:
  - foster and fund the development of monitoring schemes to evaluate and display the effectiveness and efficiency of adaptation measures implemented through spatial planning

Further reading:

- Risk governance
- Forest fires
- Cases of overload and residual risk
- Climate resilient spatial planning

Outlook on further activities
In the upcoming years, AG8 will strive to further improve natural risk management in the Alpine region. In this context, climate change with its resulting challenges for natural risks as well as risk communication will play an important role.

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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 sustainable production and use of local renewable energy in the EUSALP area, especially in the public and private sectors. The framework is provided by, inter alia, the EU's energy directives, the EU climate targets and the Energy Union Package as well as the European Green Deal. The action aims to support a significant reduction in energy consumption in strategic sectors such as buildings, small and medium-sized enterprises and municipalities.

Improving energy efficiency in Small and Medium Enterprises

Due to non-optimal cost-benefit ratios, energy efficiency in SMEs needs to be promoted with a variety of measures. For a successful roll-out of voluntary energy efficiency schemes for SMEs, public authorities and energy agencies must strongly engage in trust-building, information and technical support.

EUSALP Action Group 9 recommends the following policy instruments and implementation activities to promote energy efficiency in SMEs:

1. Inform about benefits of energy efficiency measures and the use of renewable energies, best practices, funding possibilities as well as other positive side effects;
2. Put in place supportive measures to shorten pay-back periods of energy efficiency and renewable energy investments made by SMEs;
3. Showcase and award energy efficiency best practices to demonstrate the cost effectiveness of branch-specific energy-saving measures and correlated funding possibilities;
4. Support regional and national programmes that network SMEs through energy efficiency peer-to-peer meetings and workshops;
5. Facilitate energy advice to SMEs through supportive programmes run by public authorities/energy agencies;
6. Set up regional "one-stop-shops" for technical support and financial advice
7. Put in place long term supportive programmes and funding schemes with simple application procedures.

Further reading: ARPAF project CAESAR "Capacitating Energy Efficiency in Small Alpine Enterprises" https://www.project-caesar.eu/

Promotion of green hydrogen in the energy mix within the EUSALP area

Green hydrogen can play a crucial role in the energy transition. Based on the EU strategy for hydrogen as well as existing and future national and regional hydrogen strategies, Regions within the EUSALP area should cooperate to develop the production of green hydrogen to decarbonize the industrial and mobility sector. Through cooperative activities, Alpine corridors can be equipped with hydrogen refueling stations for heavy road mobility (passengers and freight). Approaches combining production, transport, storage and consumption on the same territory, involving local public authorities and the private sector, should be explored, as it can decarbonize both sectors, depending on the local context.

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EUSALP Action Group 9 recommends the following policy instruments and implementation activities to promote green hydrogen in the EUSALP area:

1) Provide support to regional authorities to participate in EU calls that finance investment in corridors;
2) Promote cooperation in the development of hydrogen solutions in touristic uses;
3) Identify the best sustainable applications for the production, storage, distribution and consumption on the regional level;
4) Promote capacity building for policy makers and local authorities;
5) Prioritize the application of hydrogen in hard-to-abate and energy intensive sectors (heavy industries, freight and heavy duty mobility);
6) Embed the topic hydrogen in the main EU financial programs.

Setting-up an energy observatory for the EUSALP area

Regional energy and greenhouse gas observatories collect, process, monitor and disseminate data to regional and local public authorities. The data sets are crucial for public authorities, supporting them to develop and monitor their Sustainable Energy and Adaptation Action Plan. They are used to elaborate regional and local energy scenarios, improving energy management in municipalities and on the regional level. The EUSALP energy observatory will collect data from all regional observatories to complete the picture of the energy transition within the EUSALP area. These macro-regional data sets will help to calculate the contribution of the EUSALP area to the EU energy and climate goals for 2030 and 2050, and will allow to define more specific objectives and targets for the energy policies of the macro-region paving its way towards carbon neutrality.

EUSALP Action Group 9 recommends the following policy instruments and implementation activities to promote the setting-up of an EUSALP energy observatory:

1. Encourage all regions in the EUSALP area to share energy data sets with the EUSALP energy observatory on a regular basis;
2. Support the exchange and harmonizing of practices among regions in collecting, processing and disseminating energy and environmental data;
3. Elaborate a common set of KPI at regional level in order to monitor the progress of the regions in the EUSALP area toward carbon neutrality;
4. Monitor the progress in defining energy strategies at regional level in order to monitor the energy planning activities;
5. Showcase and award public authorities in order to promote the most successful practices/projects implemented in the EUSALP area.

Renewable Energy Communities (REC)

Through energy communities, citizens and local authorities invest in renewable energy sources and energy efficiency measures. The participation of citizens in renewable energy projects fosters social acceptance of renewable energy projects and the energy transition in general. This delivers local economic benefits, social cohesion, improves energy efficiency of housing and tackles energy poverty. Designing adequate public interventions at the local

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level is key but there is no one-size-fits-all solution to trigger the creation of energy communities. The level of public participation and the type of actions required vary significantly depending on the specific context of each city and town. Small and citizen-led energy communities face practical challenges for developing their full potential, such as lack of information, limited access to finance, difficulties in aggregating small interventions, difficulties in managing the public participation and engagement, conflicts of interests between energy production, other land uses and nature and landscape protection, and establishing effective governance and decision-making structures.

EUSALP Action Group 9 recommends the following policy instruments and implementation activities to promote renewable energy communities:

1. Promote energy communities as a policy instrument for decentralized prosumer models
2. Support activities that aiming at strengthening the technical and financial capacities of local actors to support citizen-led initiatives in the field of energy (particularly in Member States with low levels of community energy activity);
3. Facilitate the exchange of knowhow and good practices of energy communities across the regions that can be of inspiration for others;
4. Promote best business models in order to guarantee an optimal share of the benefits and the creation of RECs that adequately consider the environmental impact of renewables and the conflicting use of natural resources;
5. Support the mapping of energy communities projects in the EUSALP area, setting up KPIs and benchmarks to compare data and achievement;
6. Support the development of toolkits to facilitate feasibility evaluation, including the assessment of environmental, social and economic sustainability.

Further reading:
AlpGrids project https://www.alpine-space.org/projects/alpgrids/en/home
Prospect 2030 project https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/PROSPECT2030.html

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.
The Action Group is 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.

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STRATEGIC PRIORITY POLICY AREAS

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. In the scope of those five SPPA, several policy recommendations have been developed. Some of them are linked to recommendations already mentioned in the previous chapters and are therefore not repeated once again.

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. A joint paper on spatial planning has been presented in June 2022 and delineates the way forward.

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 was the creation of a network of Smart Villages and Smart Regions in May 2021 (SMART ALPS). 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

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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. EUSALP is elaborating a study on the feasibility of such a facility.

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LEARNINGS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY CYCLE

In parallel to the elaboration of the policy recommendations by the Action Groups, an important work was carried out under the leadership of Région SUD Provence – Alpes – Côte d'Azur on the mainstreaming of policy actions. The mainstreaming logic was integrated into ALPGOV 2 activities in order to raise awareness of the issue among EUSALP bodies and action groups representatives. It was tested in three pilot experimentations. The findings are relevant for all policy activities and are reproduced in this chapter.

As a reminder, mainstreaming is the process of integrating new knowledge and good practices produced by European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) / Interreg projects into regional, national or European policy-making levels.

Main lessons learnt from mainstreaming experimentations in other contexts

Some important recommendations on the mainstreaming process could already be identified from the work in other contexts, mainly in the framework of the governance project of the Interreg Med programme 2014-2020:

- Need to set clear objectives when designing the mainstreaming process and to specify the scale of the process (strategic, operational, national, regional or local transfer process...)
- Importance of taking into account the agenda of public authorities in order to influence strategic orientations.
- Mainstreaming is a more difficult process than a simple transfer, as it requires more valuable inputs for a deep or large-scale change.
- Importance of identifying the right stakeholders (takers and donors). It takes time to convince them of the value of the mainstreaming process.
- Implementing a successful mainstreaming process requires time and resources for both 'takers' and 'donors'.
- Proactive steering and management are necessary for a successful mainstreaming process.

Lessons learnt from mainstreaming experimentations in EUSALP

Further recommendations for mainstreaming have been identified through an in depth work with three pilot cases within EUSALP in the period 2020 – 2022.

- ✎ The adoption of very valuable solutions from ETC projects, or even the deployment of a mainstreaming process, requires a cultural change. Projects and working groups should not only have to implement activities for themselves, but also to be part of a wider learning community.

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✤ Implementing a more systematic transfer approach aimed at extending effective and highly replicable project solutions, especially beyond the traditional Interreg bubble, seems to be a preliminary step to a more ambitious mainstreaming process.

✤ The lessons learned from the experimentations of different ETC programmes during the 2014-2020 period in terms of capitalisation provide a solid basis for an effective transfer process. The main success factors are the formal commitment of stakeholders (both givers and takers) and the technical and financial resources to support it.

✤ The cross-referencing of lessons learned and conclusions resulting from the implementation of these actions makes it possible to outline a framework and some conditions to be fulfilled in order to amplify this transfer/mainstreaming approach during the period 2021-2027. For this purpose, one option could be to use priority axis 4: "Alpine region managed and developed in cooperation" of the transnational programme Alpine Space 2021-2027 (*under activity a) Establishment of transnational frameworks, platforms, networks and mechanisms in the field of governance to strengthen cooperation between Alpine actors, including mapping of resources, potentials and processes as well as definition of innovative implementation pathways and structures*), which could develop specific types of projects with a more top-down approach and expert support.

✤ In the future, measures will be needed to strengthen the mainstreaming process. They could go in two directions:
  o <u>bottom-up</u>: the procedures to be followed by standard ETC projects in relation to mainstreaming should be more binding. Their contribution would imply that they should be more involved in the transfer/mainstreaming processes from the beginning of their activities (e.g. specified in the terms of reference of calls for projects, additional information in a specific format requested in the application form to prepare potential upscaling of achieved solutions, etc.).
  o <u>top-down</u>: Stronger support for transfer and mainstreaming activities in ETC projects would be needed. Top-down support from relevant ETC programmes could be ensured through specific budgets, procedures and technical support, and above all by establishing effective links with high-level policy makers.

✤ In the period 2021-2027, the implementation of a more intensive transfer and integration process could be tested on a few topics, e.g. among the main priorities of the Green Deal, decided by the executive bodies of EUSALP.

✤ Increased mainstreaming will help to raise the visibility of Interreg within cohesion policy, and make capitalisation even more concrete on the basis of operational and more effective contributions to public policies. Capitalisation of project results will improve the design and implementation of policies and actions, identify lessons learned from previous interventions and create reference frameworks for the future development of EUSALP.

The main steps for a mainstreaming process

The main steps for a mainstreaming process can be illustrated as follows:

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Step 1
- Identify **outputs** (tool, data, knowledge, methodology, best practice, regulation…) with **high potential for replication / re-use** *(NB: key issues to consider: selection criteria and relevant expertise to engage)*

Step 2
- Identify **potential target organisations** *(takers or receivers)* for the transfer/mainstreaming *(NB: awareness-raising actions to stimulate and convince the decision-makers within these target institutions is key - the advantages that they can benefit from the process need to be as clear and specific as possible)*

Step 3
- Check with the target organisations **what they really need** (**demand-driven approach**) and **adapt the offer (pre-selected outputs) where** necessary (workshops, working documents, peers' reviews…)

Step 4
- Elaborate a **roadmap** and a **transfer/mainstreaming plan** with specific activities (events, working documents, peer-review, etc.), deliverables, milestones, etc.

Step 5
- **Animate/monitor** the process in a **proactive way.** A transfer/mainstreaming process requires a proactive involvement and regular contact in order to maintain a high level of commitment of the partners

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CONCLUDING REMARKS AND SUMMARY

As can be seen from this document on policy recommendations, many policy recommendations have been formulated by the Action Groups since 2016. These policy recommendations are the fruit of the work of the AG's on concrete topics and show the added value of EUSALP. They contribute to make EUSALP more tangible and visible. It is crucial, that these policy recommendations are taken seriously and find their way into to policy making processes. A major goal of any macroregional strategy is not to create new policies but to better align existing policies.

This wealth of policy recommendations has also a negative side. It might sometimes be difficult to keep the overview on all the activities and recommendations. In an analogy, one could say, that at the beginning of EUSALP, some trees were planted. But now, there are so many trees that it is hard to see the forest. **A challenge for EUSALP in the upcoming years is therefore to focus more on some key topics.** These topics should be transversal and be topics, which require an action / a response at transnational level. The topics should allow EUSALP to touch the ground and to involve all relevant stakeholders into the work. EUSALP should also focus on topics, which are not yet dealt with by other Alpine initiatives and bodies like the Alpine Convention, to avoid doubling the work. It will be up to the General Assembly and the Executive Board together with the Action Groups to fix these priorities. During the presentation of the Policy recommendations in the different Alpine countries, some suggestions for future priorities came up:

- Circular Economy and Ecosystem Services. A new Action Group should be set up on this topic and Slovenia has offered to chair or co-chair this new Action Group.

- Preserving and sustaining Alpine natural resources with a focus on agriculture and forestry. In this respect, the work initiated by the Task Force Multifunctional Forests and Sustainable Use of Timber (TF MFSUT) should continue.

- Risk management and a better management of the effects of climate change are also important topics where further work needs to be carried out.

- Development of ecological connectivity in the whole EUSALP territory with a special focus on green and blue infrastructures, including River basin management.

- Promotion of Crossborder inter-modality and interoperability in passenger and freight transport with a focus not only on (missing) connected railway and cycling infrastructures but also on joint solutions for public transport measures and joint ticketing systems.

- Digitalization and Smart use of the potentials of digitalization. In this respect, the Smart villages approach is now widely accepted and should be further made known and developed.

- Spatial planning is a crucial topic which relates to many of the topics mentioned in this document and also to the priorities suggested just above. Spatial planning and especially spatial planning across borders is e.g. important in the field of risk prevention, of crossborder mobility and for green and blue infrastructures. A clear focus in the next years should therefore be put on this cross-cutting topic and to develop a common vision for the Alpine area.

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To fully use the potential of the work of the different bodies of EUSALP on the **policy cycle**, the **governance system of EUSALP** should be further improved. The aim must be a strong commitment by policy makers to EUSALP. The bottom-up work of the Action Groups should be better aligned with the top-down work of the General Assembly and Executive Board. A revision of the Action Plan of EUSALP and based on this a revision of the Work Plans of the Action Groups provides an opportunity for a better alignment together with the new Monitoring Matrix and a closer cooperation and communication between the different bodies of EUSALP.

The communication on the huge wealth of results of EUSALP should also be further improved. **EUSALP must get more visibility**. Suggested actions in this respect are e.g. organizing transnational conferences on specific topics and working closer with key stakeholders in the different topics. The work with young people from all Alpine countries shall be pursued and further developed.

Furthermore, the **cooperation across Macroregional Strategies MRS** should be further encouraged in the future. This cooperation is already strongly supported by the European Commission with the yearly week of MRS. The presidencies of the Macroregional Strategies have also already launched a regular dialogue and some AG's have started cooperation with Policy Area Coordinators of other macroregions. This cooperation across MRS helps to better embed the results from the work of the MRS into the European policies and strategies and to encourage the exchange of experiences across the MRS.