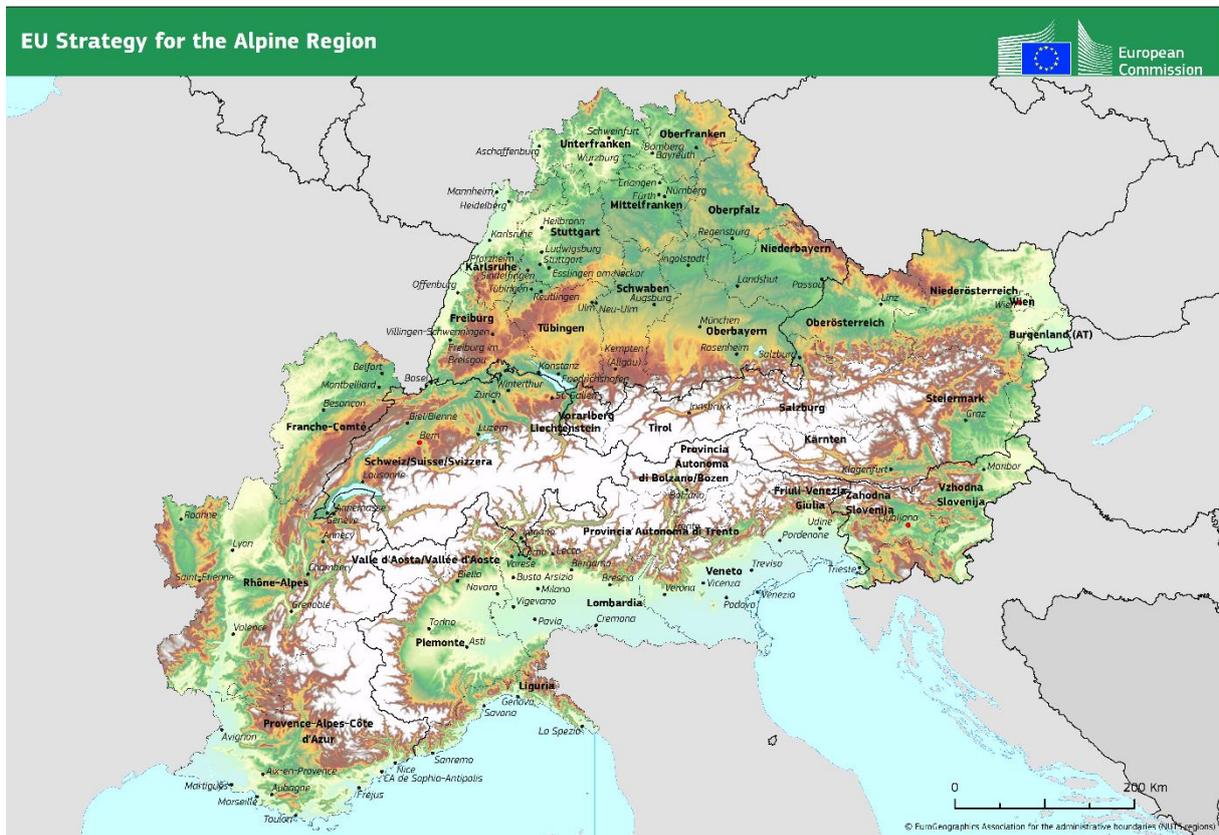


ORIENTATION PAPER

Transnational Cooperation Programme

Interreg Alpine Space 2021-2027



Executive Summary

This Orientation Paper is a document of the Commission aimed at launching a discussion on the **Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027 (future ASP)** with partner countries concerned. It does not represent the negotiating position of the European Commission, but is destined to provide ideas, options and orientations on the thematic focus of the future programme.

The guiding principles for drawing this Orientation Paper are the following¹:

1. **Coherence with Macro-Regional Strategies:** The future Alpine Space programme is destined to closely link to the European Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP), and has therefore to comply with Article 15 (3) of COM(2018)374, requiring programming of the total ERDF contribution on the objectives of that strategy. Macro-Regional Strategies such as the EUSALP mean an integrated framework endorsed by the European Council, which may be supported by the Cohesion Policy funds among others, to address common challenges faced by a defined geographical area relating to Member States and third countries located in the same geographical area, which thereby benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion.
2. **The Functional Area principle:** the definition of a functional area is a key element for cooperation in larger regions. Cooperation should concentrate on areas defined by common characteristics, challenges and development opportunities, and the need and potential to address them jointly with the aim of delivering tangible results.
3. **The Thematic Concentration principle:** In view of the limited budgetary resources and the requirement to focus support in areas where EU funds can achieve the highest benefit, the programme should concentrate on thematic key areas where joint actions can have the biggest impact. In doing so, EU funds would focus on a limited set of objectives and policy areas, thus achieving the highest possible impact, in terms of efficiency of funding and result orientation.

Based on these principles, the European Commission recommends concentrating the available ERDF contribution on:

Policy Objective 1 (a smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation),

Policy Objective 2 (a greener, low-carbon Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue² investment, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management),

Policy Objective 5 (a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives), and on the

Interreg-specific objective (a better Interreg governance, with a specific focus (on continued support to the governance of the EUSALP³ and) on enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies). The **future ASP** should continue to support the governance of the EUSALP, considering its potential of leveraging a large spectrum of investments from different sources, including from relevant national and regional EU funded programmes.

These objectives comply with the strategic framework of the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) and with European Union (EU) priorities.

¹ Standard text proposed for all TN programmes.

² Blue investment is not proposed for this programme.

³ Specific area proposed for this programme.

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A. Introduction

1. This Orientation Paper sets out the key characteristics of the Alpine Space covering a largely mountainous area, which includes 5 Member States and 2 non-EU countries. It is the first of a number of papers prepared by the Commission (DG REGIO) for all Transnational Interreg Programmes with land borders.
2. This Paper⁴ will serve as a basis for discussion between Member States, programme authorities and the European Commission on the Transnational Cooperation Programme for the Alpine Space 2021-2027 (**future ASP**). It does not represent the negotiating position of the European Commission, but is destined to provide ideas, options and orientations on the thematic focus of the future programme. The paper relies on the profound analysis of relevant studies and other documents, and takes into account lessons learned from the previous and current programming periods 2007-2013⁵ and 2014-2020⁶.
3. According to the legislative proposal for European Territorial Cooperation in the 2021-2027 programming period⁷, where a component 2A programme supports a Macro-Regional Strategy, the total ERDF shall be programmed on the objectives of that strategy. The **future ASP** shall entirely align with the **European Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)** comprising 48 regions in five EU Member States (Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia) and two non-EU countries (Liechtenstein and Switzerland⁸), and should serve priorities where ASP funds can achieve the highest EU benefit. Moreover, account has been taken of all national, regional and other Interreg programmes of the area concerned, and of the European Semester Country Reports 2019 including their respective Annex D for the five Member States concerned.
4. The Alps and their surrounding plain countries, parts of the Mediterranean and the Adriatic seas and the river valleys of the Danube, Po, and Adige, Rhône and Rhine rivers dominate the area of the Alpine Space. It is home to more than 68 million people⁹, who live and operate in one of the most dynamic economic growth areas in Europe, which is characterized by German, Latin and Slavic culture and linguistic continua within a very diverse and vivid natural and cultural landscape.
5. More than determined by topographic criteria, the Alpine space is rather a result of regions that identify with the Alps and consider that a dialogue, cooperation or integration with neighbouring regions based on a shared Alpine identity is particularly relevant. Therefore, cooperation in the Alpine Space is a long tradition and relies on a large number of programmes and institutionalized initiatives (see point 21).
6. A functional area is generally characterized by interdependencies or links between territories, where functional connections either unite or isolate territories and areas influenced by them. For

⁴ Orientations, geographical information, and thematic information is highlighted.

⁵ CCI 2007CB163PO014.

⁶ CCI 2014TC16RFTN001.

⁷ Article 15 (3) of Proposal for a Regulation COM(2018)374 of 29.5.2018.

⁸ **Austria:** Burgenland, Kärnten, Niederösterreich, Oberösterreich, Salzburg, Steiermark, Tirol, Vorarlberg, Wien. **France:** Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur. **Germany:** Baden-Württemberg, Bayern. **Italy:** Friuli Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Lombardia, Piemonte, Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, Provincia Autonoma di Trento, Valle d'Aosta, Veneto. **Slovenia.** **Switzerland:** 26 regions. **Liechtenstein.**

⁹ Eurostat, 1.1.2017 (FR 14.7; IT 23.3; DE 10.6; AT 8.8; CH 8.5; LIE 0.04; SI 2.1).

transnational cooperation, functionalities represent joint characteristics accompanied by joint challenges and development potentials. Transnational cooperation is reaching its full potential when there is a strong will to address those challenges jointly.

7. Cooperation within the functional area of the Alpine Space is taking place on many different levels/settings, such as other Interreg programmes and cooperation initiatives (in particular, EUSALP¹⁰, Alpine Convention¹¹, CIPRA¹², and Alliance in the Alps¹³, ISCAR¹⁴, ALPARC¹⁵, The Vanguard Initiative)¹⁶. Through the Alpine Convention, countries cooperate with a particular focus on sustainable development and protection of the Alps. Coordination with the 2014-2020 ASP concerns common priorities and thematic fields. A number of EGTC existing in the Alpine area contribute to flexible cooperation on various issues. Finally, the *Vanguard Initiative* based on regional smart specialization strategies offers to Alpine regions (e.g. Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes; Baden-Württemberg, Lombardy and Lower Austria) a new strand for cooperation post-2020¹⁷. Investments resulting from all types of cooperation should be taken into account, avoiding overlaps and creating synergies.

B. Challenges and foundation of the macro-regional functional area of the Alpine Space

8. The cooperation area of the 2014-2020 ASP has remained the same as for the 2007-2013 programming period. The participating countries are:

AUSTRIA: the whole territory

FRANCE NUTS 2: Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, Grand-Est (Bas Rhin, Haut Rhin)

GERMANY NUTS 2: Oberbayern, Schwaben, Tübingen, Freiburg

ITALY NUTS 2: Lombardia, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Provincia Autonoma di Trento, Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano / Bozen, Valle d'Aosta, Piemonte, Liguria

LIECHTENSTEIN: the whole territory

SLOVENIA: the whole territory

SWITZERLAND: the whole territory.

9. The functional area of the 2014-2020 ASP is not fully aligned with the EUSALP area, which includes in addition the German NUTS 2 regions of Karlsruhe and Stuttgart (parts of NUTS 1 region of Baden-Württemberg) and Niederbayern, Oberpfalz, Oberfranken, Mittelfranken, Unterfranken (parts of NUTS 1 region of Bavaria), but excludes the French NUTS 2 region Grand-Est/Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin).

¹⁰ European Union Strategy for the Alpine Strategy. <https://www.alpine-region.eu/>

¹¹ An international treaty signed in 1991 and in which the EU is a contracting party. The focus of the Alpine Convention is sustainable development in the Alps.

¹² International Commission for the protection of the Alps, an umbrella non-governmental and autonomous organisation for the Alps, supporting sustainable development focussed on different themes.

¹³ A Community network of municipalities closely linked to the Alpine Convention (AC), and working on a variety of themes such as nature, economy and coexistence.

¹⁴ International Scientific Committee on research in the Alps, involving six countries promoting cooperation in research.

¹⁵ Alpine Network of Protected Areas, gathering protected areas of large size with the AC area.

¹⁶ Interreg Alpine Space, 2014; Interact, 2017.

¹⁷ <https://www.s3vanguardinitiative.eu>.

10. Though dominated by the Alps, the area is not at all homogeneous in its internal structure. It comprises high mountains and valleys with lowlands, remote areas and European crossroads, global cities such as Lyon, Milano, Munich and Vienna including their functional urban areas, and rural territories. Without being clearly defined geographical regions, these categories of areas are universally present in the entire programme area and altogether co-exist in a rather limited space creating a complex pattern of pre-conditions for social and economic development¹⁸. Accordingly, the entire area can be categorized in five territorial types: Alpine metropolises, Alpine cities, stable or growing rural areas, declining or shrinking rural areas, and tourism areas¹⁹. Another spatial breakdown is the macro-territorial scale, geographically distinguishing an Alpine mountainous area, hosting mainly small and medium-size cities; a Peri-alpine foreland hosting also medium-large and large cities; and a Plain area, hosting mainly large cities and their regional urban structure²⁰.
11. While being part of the European Union for the largest part of its territory, the cooperation area is nevertheless subject to external determinants of global or macro-regional processes. The driving forces identified in current programmes²¹ that affect the Alpine Space either as an entity or in each type of territory differently, are in particular:
- Climate change;
 - Tensions in the energy market;
 - Economic globalisation;
 - Acceleration of information society and knowledge economy;
 - Socio-demographic change;
 - Increased mobility.
12. These driving forces are still relevant for describing the main features and challenges in the Alpine Space. Differences occur between inner- and pre-Alpine areas, northern and southern Alpine areas, eastern and western Alpine areas, and between Member States²².
13. At European level, a number of territorial key challenges may have an impact on the driving forces described above (points 8 and 9), and which are highly visible²³. These are:
- Fragmentation and disintegration of societies and territories;
 - Interdependencies and their externalities affecting local development;
 - Mismatch of functionalities between jurisdiction and geography.
14. The Alpine Space can be described as a (very large) mountainous area, which is in terms of space and functions, linked with surrounding lowlands²⁴. The mountain massif represents a barrier to functional integration. However, for some challenges or opportunities, the Alpine Space can be considered as single functional region²⁵:

¹⁸ Alpine Space Programme – Cooperation Programme 14/20.

¹⁹ Gløersen et al. (2013). Strategy Development for the Alpine Space – Final Report. Alpine Space Programme. p. 43.

²⁰ Camagni, Capello, Cerisola, 2017.

²¹ Gløersen et al., p. 42f.

²² ESPON 2018a. Alps 2050 – common spatial perspectives for the Alpine area. Towards a common vision. Final Report. Luxembourg: ESPON EGTC, 2018.

²³ ESPON, 2017, 2017a, 2018, 2018c; European Commission 2017; Martin et al., 2018.

²⁴ ESPON 2018a.

²⁵ Gløersen et al., 2013.

- a) Ecology and impact of climate change;
- b) Transport;
- c) Energy;
- d) Innovation and research.

15. Ecology and impact of climate change: The mountain massif can be considered as an “ecological functional region”, mainly due to similar territorial features, which expose surrounding lowlands to similar challenges²⁶. These are in particular:

- *Fresh water reservoirs*: the Alpine Space is supplying the surroundings territories and rivers with fresh water from rain, snow, glaciers and ice; when the hydrological cycle is disturbed, water supply for inland shipping and agriculture, industry and household use can be severely affected.
- *Habitats*: climate change reduces biodiversity, which affects fauna and flora and soil erosion.
- *Soil erosion*: climate change and e.g. tourism change landscapes and affect soil stability, with negative effects on land quality.

16. Transport: The mountain massif is an obstacle to transport between the North and the South, and the West and the East, of the European Union. This situation has led to the “Zurich process”²⁷, which is a formal platform of cooperation among the ministers for transport in the Alpine countries operating since 2001. The individual corridors with trans-European connections are specific types of functional areas, such as Rhine-Alpine; Mediterranean; and Baltic-Adriatic, but spread much further than the Alps. Many more connections exist indeed through the Alps, which are significant for the individual regions²⁸. In many parts of the Alps however, access to the border is difficult or non-existent, creating obstacles to increased cross-border cooperation.

17. Energy: The mountain massif provides large potential for the production of renewable energy from hydropower, for supplying the surrounding lowlands. However, in some areas there are strict environmental limitations, whereas in other countries of the area, hydropower might be the optimal energy source. This situation would justify transnational actions across borders²⁹.

18. Innovation and Research: Even though the Alpine Space is already performing overall well in innovation and research, the current situation where innovation and research activities address many similar areas would call for more intense cooperation³⁰. However, existing networking activities under the EUSALP, and projects such as *Re-search Alps* and *BIFOCAlps*, and the Vanguard initiative are expected to produce tangible results in the future and to establish certain functional links between Alpine territories. Moreover, most national and regional ESIF programmes in the area (for example, in Austria, Germany and France) support innovation and research.

²⁶ Gløersen et al., 2013; Jiricka, Pröbstl, Schmied, Stöglehner, Klaffl & Leitner, 2014.

²⁷ <http://www.zurich-process.org/en/>

²⁸ Gløersen et al., 2013; Zurich Process, 2018.

²⁹ Kraxner, Leduc, et.al., 2015; Svadlenak, Gomez et.al., 2015 ; Recharge-green.project. <http://purc.iisa.ac.at>.

³⁰ Meier zu Köcker, Dermastia & Keller, 2018.

Lessons learned from previous programming periods:

19. The **ASP 2007-2013** was centred on four **thematic priorities** (allocation in brackets)³¹:

1. Competitiveness and attractiveness of the Alpine Space (32%)
2. Accessibility and connectivity (28%)
3. Environment and risk prevention (33%)
4. 4. Technical Assistance (7%)

Projects were implemented under **six specific programme objectives**:

- ad 1. Research, innovation, entrepreneurship, SMEs;
- ad 1. Balanced territorial development;
- ad 2. Accessibility to services and connectivity;
- ad 2. Accessibility and consequences of transport;
- ad 3. Natural and cultural assets and sustainability;
- ad 3. Natural and technological hazards and climate change impacts.

20. An evaluation of the impact achieved by the 2007-2013 programme was based on projects concerning strategic policy development, exploration and piloting, and policy implementation. The projects assessed led to enhanced knowledge, experience, but the impact of the programme was difficult to identify, and achievements remained often invisible. Stakeholder analysis and involvement, including involvement of decision-makers and political actors, and identification and involvement of potential users concerned a relevant part of the knowledge produced. Agreements with future users of project outcomes were particularly beneficial for project effectiveness. Beneficiaries were mostly public authorities, but partnerships included potential users of projects³².

21. The **ASP 2014-2020** centres on **five thematic objectives (priority axes)** (allocation in brackets)³³:

1. Innovative Alpine Space (32%)
2. Low carbon Alpine Space (27%)
3. Liveable Alpine Space (27%)
4. Well-Governed Alpine Space (8%)
5. Technical Assistance (6%)

Projects are implemented under **seven specific objectives (investment priorities)**:

- ad 1. Improve framework conditions for innovation
- ad 1. Increase capacities for delivery of services of general interest in a changing society
- ad 2. Establish trans-nationally integrated low-carbon policy instruments
- ad 2. Increase options for low-carbon mobility and transport
- ad 3. Sustainably valorise cultural and natural heritage
- ad 3. Enhance protection, conservation and ecological connectivity of eco-systems
- ad 4. Increase application of multi-level and transnational governance.

22. A first assessment of the 2014-2020 ASP shows that the progress towards results is adequate, and envisaged results will most probably be achieved³⁴. Current projects are likely to contribute to producing improvements of existing capacities and policy framework conditions. This development confirms

³¹ European Territorial Cooperation 2007-2013 - Operational Programme Alpine Space. Total ERDF allocation EUR 97.8 million.

³² Alpine Space Programme Impact Assessment. Final Report. Metis 2010.

³³ Alpine Space Programme – Cooperation programme 14/20. Total ERDF allocation EUR 116.6 million.

³⁴ Evaluation of programme communication, effectiveness and stakeholder involvement of the Interreg Alpine Space 2014-2020 Programme. Final Report. Spatial Foresight 2018.

that the focus developed for the programme works generally well, also due to improvement of the quality of government and governance. However, efforts to improve the situation in the weaker areas and/or smaller places, such as targeting administrative capacities at local level in certain regions with the aim of promoting the original idea of Interreg, are still required³⁵.

23. In the 2014-2020 ASP, the participating beneficiaries and target groups are more diverse, though lead partners are still exclusively public organisations. Private partners were increasingly represented (19%) and mainly active under business-oriented specific objectives. The programme attracted 32% of new lead partners, in compliance with the programme's objective. However, the concentration of partners and certain types of partners in certain geographical areas and thematic fields is a relevant weakness³⁶.
24. In the 2014-2020 programming period, ten EU cross-border programmes coexist in the Alpine Space, which partly overlap with the territory of the ASP. In addition, there are a number of national and/or regional ESIF mainstream programmes for the five Member States, which cover the relevant national and/or regional territory participating in the ASP. **Annex 1** lists the programmes and the different thematic objectives supported by these programmes. An important objective of the **future ASP** is to achieve complementarities with other programmes in the Alpine area.
25. According to the 2017 Annual Implementation Report of the 2014-2020 ASP, the programme connects well with relevant stakeholders of the cooperation area and outside, such as other Interreg programmes and the EUSALP. An evaluation completed in 2017³⁷ has demonstrated that the 2014-2020 programme is effective in supporting applicants in project development, and satisfaction among project participants has increased compared with the 2007-2013 period. It has however been recommended to reinforce coordination and support provided by the Joint Secretariat to the contact points, with the aim of better harmonizing the quality of services provided to applicants in the different countries. Furthermore, the need emerged for the organisation of additional transnational networking events, to help especially newcomers to better understand the programme expectations and find new partners. The programme attracts large numbers of applicants and beneficiaries (+65% proposals), but the application process could be further simplified for applicants. The evaluation also recommended reducing the number of evaluation criteria and the relative complexity of the grid, and that thematic expertise could help with assessing proposals, e.g. in innovation.
26. The 2014-2020 ASP shows significant thematic congruence with the Central Europe Programme 2014-2020 (CEP), allowing for coordination of projects within thematic fields³⁸, and on administration. There is also important congruence with the Interreg Mediterranean Programme and the Danube Programme 2014-2020. Coordination with the various cross-border programmes, and with national and regional ESIF programmes active in the area is not apparent, as these largely work in parallel and non-coordinated with the ASP, possibly because of the non-proportional burden that

³⁵ For more information: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/maps/quality_of_governance

³⁶ Haarich et al., 2018.

³⁷ The evaluation adopted in December 2017 by the Programme Monitoring Committee was carried out by the programme authorities and external experts, and was referred to in the Implementation Report for the ETC goal – Alpine Space programme 2017.

³⁸ Interreg Alpine Space, 2014.

such coordination would entail. National or regional Cohesion Policy programmes consider the Alpine Space only, if at all, in terms of supporting the EUSALP³⁹.

27. The 2014-2020 ASP contributes to a high extent to the **European Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)**, which outlines the strategic approach to the entire Alpine area. Both share an (almost) common territory (see points 3 and 4) and similar objectives. The 2014-2020 ASP (see point 18) supports the EUSALP under priorities 1-3 through different projects, and under priority 4 (“well-governed Alpine Space”), e.g. through the AlpGov project. Exchanges between the ASP and the EUSALP are institutionalized (EUSALP Executive Board), and there is information exchange, networking (EUSALP Action Group with ASP projects), and funding support⁴⁰.

28. The **EUSALP** is focussed on the following policy areas:

- Economic Growth and Innovation;
- Mobility and Connectivity;
- Environment and Energy;
- Governance, including Institutional Capacity.

29. The **EUSALP** is pursuing a number of actions under each thematic policy area/objective including those with a territorial dimension that are relevant for the **future ASP**⁴¹:

1) Fair access to job opportunities, building on the high competitiveness of the region

- To develop an effective research and innovation ecosystem
- To increase the economic potential of strategic sectors
- To improve the adequacy of labour market, education and training in these strategic sectors

2) Sustainable internal and external accessibility to all

- To promote inter-modality and interoperability in freight and passengers transport
- To connect people electronically and promote accessibility to public services

3) A more inclusive environmental framework and renewable and reliable energy solutions for the future

- To preserve and valorise natural resources, including water, biomass/forest resources, and cultural resources
- To develop ecological connectivity in the EUSALP territory
- To improve risk management and to better manage climate change including major natural risks prevention
- To make the territory a model region for energy efficiency and renewable energy

A sound macro-regional governance model for the Region to improve cooperation and the coordination of action.

³⁹ Interact, 2017.

⁴⁰ Haarich, Toptsidou, et al., 2018.

⁴¹ For details see: <https://www.alpine-region.eu/>

C. Investment objectives linked to the challenges

30. In this section, orientations are presented with respect to the five policy objectives and one (of two) Interreg-specific objective⁴², under which funding of the **future ASP** can take place. As outlined above (see points 6 -18), a number of common challenges would justify the delimitation of the Alpine Space as one functional area, with the following relevant cooperation topics from a transnational perspective⁴³:

- Biodiversity of Alpine habitats;
- Fresh water management;
- Climate change and adaptation to it;
- Inner-peripheries and smaller places with declining access to public services;
- Economic transition, in particular circular economy and 4th industrial revolution;
- Energy, in particular renewable energy production and storage;
- Green economy, in particular low-carbon mobility;
- Governance.

PO 1: A smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation

31. In the light of the 4th industrial revolution, innovation networks are becoming more relevant as the revolution will lead to more economic concentration in terms of leading companies and location of companies and key players⁴⁴. A number of regions of the 2014-2020 ASP (Oberbayern, Tübingen, Stuttgart; Switzerland; regions in France and Austria) have a high innovation performance; others (northern Italy; eastern Slovenia) a moderate performance. Innovation performance in some regions has even declined. Expenditure for R&D has grown in all regions but one (Oberbayern). The 3% R&D expenditure/regional GDP share has been reached in many Austrian, all Swiss and in southern German regions. Globalisation puts a growing pressure and risk on regions, in terms of production, knowledge and innovation. Some Alpine regions are facing high risks (northern Italy) while others have only low risks (southern Germany, Tyrol), and regarding competitiveness, the area divides into a north-south line, with northern regions being the most competitive ones, whereas some Italian regions have experienced a decline in competitiveness.

32. There are many EU and national programmes financing RDI and cooperation in the Alpine Space, including topics which are also, but not exclusively relevant for the Alpine Space. An already high density of territorial cooperation and development platforms, and a high number of research activities characterizes the Alpine region. This comprises university institutes, public research institutions and consultancies with a strong focus on Alpine development⁴⁵. These activities have provided a rich basis of knowledge and information that allow, in general, evidence based policies and relevant political debates. Relevant activities under the **future ASP** could therefore be targeted to availability, quality, and monitoring of data that are missing but relevant for assessing and addressing common challenges⁴⁶. Support could also be relevant for scaling up cooperation between different actors across the area. This could include support to building capacity to cooperate, identifying complementary use of capacities and pilot projects in certain areas of Alpine Space importance.

⁴² The external Interreg-specific objective “a safer and more secure Europe” does not apply to this programme.

⁴³ <https://territorial-review-espon.eu>.

⁴⁴ Böhme, Antikainen, Zillmer, Hans & Pyykonen, 2016; ESPON, 2018b, Schwab, 2017; ESPON, 2017a.

⁴⁵ ESPON, 2018a.

⁴⁶ For details on relevant data, see ESPON, 2018a.

33. **Orientation:** The Alpine Space is not (yet) a functional area for RDI, and many other EU programmes are supporting such type of investment. The **future ASP** should limit support to RDI and smart specialization strategies to very specific challenges and pilot projects (taking into account points 8, 31 and 32), where direct benefits and spill-overs relating to the Alpine Space and its regions can be expected, including possible complementarities with other EU programmes. A possible focus of the programme could include issues such as green economy, circular economy, inner peripheries and related topics, energy, fresh water and climate change and adaptation to it. Deployment of results of RDI projects could may be supported rather under other selected objectives and priorities.

PO 2: A greener, low-carbon Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management

34. Renewable energy, green economy, circular economy and climate change are highly relevant for the **future ASP**. A territorial diversity is apparent as to renewable energy between inner Alpine regions (highest production share) and outer and urban Alpine areas (highest potential, in particular wind and biomass). Alpine regions are among Europe's best-performing ones adapting to green and low-carbon economy, with an advantage for Swiss, southern German and Austrian regions. Slovene regions are particularly successful in adopting models for circular economy, and good practices are present in northern Italy. Climate change (rising temperature, loss of biodiversity, hazard risks, such as soil erosion and snow slips and landslips) particularly affect mountain regions (such as Southern Alps in France). Adaptive capacity is higher in northern and urban areas, and less in Italian regions⁴⁷.

35. **Orientation:** As ecological functional areas mainly concern valleys and lowlands, the functional focus is primarily domestic and not transnational. In the **future ASP**, transnational cooperation on environment and climate change should concentrate on selected joint challenges that one single cooperation partner is unable to address alone. In a transnational perspective, the features of fresh water reservoir, decreasing biodiversity, and soil erosion and other natural hazards⁴⁸ (such as landslides and glacier melting, which are expected in southern Alpine areas) appear to be such joint issues, which would have to be concentrated on in the future ASP, building on the current "liveability" axis⁴⁹.

36. **Orientation:** Investments in renewable energy production, such as hydropower, and storage may affect transnational eco-systems and habitats. The **future ASP** should therefore support cooperation on sustainable solutions to renewable energy production and storage in the Alpine Space. These are challenges and potentials, which the areas have in common, and which should therefore be subject of exchanging experience and developing new approaches with regions across the borders.

37. **Orientation:** Other common challenges, such as transnational green economy and circular economy systems, as well as climate change adaptation with respect to natural hazards should also be relevant areas of support in the **future ASP**.

PO 3: A more connected Europe by enhancing mobility and regional ICT connectivity

38. Demand for modern digital technologies and improved transport solutions has an important impact on peoples' lives. Transnational transport corridors, accessibility of remote areas, pollution from

⁴⁷ European Commission, 2017; ESPON, 2018a; ESPON, 2013.

⁴⁸ European Commission, 2017.

⁴⁹ See ASP 2014-2020 below, point 17.

transport and digital connectivity are therefore relevant for the Alpine region. While transport connectivity is high along the six core network corridors crossing the Alpine Space north-south and east-west, connectivity is lower in the inner Alps area due to geography and topography. Pollution is largely due to road transport and concentrated in cities in Italy and Germany. Accessibility and connectivity of some rural areas in the Alps is low. Digital connectivity is better in urban areas (e.g. Milano, Innsbruck, Salzburg) and in some regions in Austria and Germany. On the other hand, in many other regions and cities of the Alpine Space, connectivity is low⁵⁰.

39. **Orientation:** Transnational transport corridors and accessibility of remote areas are an important challenge in the Alps. As transport infrastructure requires substantial funding, this could be made available from national, regional or private sources, or from other EU sources (CEF, ERDF), where appropriate. This could concern areas such as smart urban mobility, sustainable multi-modal mobility, and clean public transport. Transnational actions contributing to sharing or deploying low carbon mobility and smart transport solutions including pilot projects should be envisaged under the **future ASP**. It is recommended to address these areas under **PO 5**. Other public (incl. EU) or private funds could cover still existing gaps in NGA broadband connectivity in certain rural areas.

PO 4: A more social Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights

40. Increased territorial diversity in the Alpine Space is also due to demographic trends (aging, migration) and changes in lifestyles (urbanisation, changing family and household structures). These trends have an impact on the offer and accessibility of services of general interest and lead to more jobs in certain sectors (e.g. healthcare, education, culture and environment). These challenges are relevant for the Alpine region also in the future. Population in urban regions in Switzerland, France and Italy and the largest cities in Germany and Austria will presumably grow, whereas in most rural regions in Austria, Slovenia and Germany, population will decline⁵¹. Employment and unemployment is increasingly imbalanced across the Alpine area, and unemployment has been rising in certain French, Italian and Slovenian regions. Access to services of general interest (medical, educational, transport) differs largely among regions and is dependent on territorial aspects and population density.

41. **Orientation:** Challenges related to growing unemployment in certain regions and changing needs on the labour market may be tackled by the ESF+, in particular under their national and regional programmes or other sources under PO4. Increasing demographic concentration combined with declining accessibility and lower endowment with services of general interest in more remote rural areas and inner-peripheries are an important concern for the Alpine Space. It is proposed addressing these issues under **PO 5 (see below)**.

PO 5: A Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives

42. Given that policies often focus on well-performing regions, increasing differences between those and places “left behind”, policies should consider more “place-sensitive” approaches closer to citizens, exploiting untapped potentials of those places. Such inner-peripheries areas in the Alpine Space are often remote and sparsely populated with low accessibility to certain services (see under PO 4

⁵⁰ European Commission, 2017.

⁵¹ ESPON, 2018a, 2018b.

above)⁵². Territorial strategies should be promoted to encourage such approaches, through urban partnerships, sustainable urban development (SUD), ITI, and CLLD. The use of ITI is relatively high in Italy, France, and low in Germany, Slovenia; and SUD approaches occur in France, Italy and Germany⁵³.

43. **Orientation:** In many areas, perceptions are that remote and peripheral areas are left behind and do not matter. Efforts are required in order to link all areas (e.g. municipalities) to the larger European scale, e.g. transnational level. Measures to **promote capacities** and empowerment on local level can help these areas to be listened to and to become increasingly involved. In addition, **innovative approaches** (including in urban areas, where appropriate) will be a crucial element for the **future ASP** with the aim of improving **access to services of general interest** (e.g. healthcare) in such places. The programme should therefore consider support of such innovative approaches to tackle joint issues of transnational relevance. The use of **small project funds**⁵⁴ should be envisaged. Urban innovative actions may also be supported under relevant national and regional mainstream programmes.

44. **Orientation:** The **future ASP** should support **bottom-up territorial strategies** to consider the specificities of **inner-peripheries and smaller areas** threatened by out-migration and fragmentation, by putting such areas in a wider European context.

INTERREG-specific objectives: Better INTERREG governance

45. According to the Commission proposal for a 2021-2027 ETC Regulation⁵⁵, 15% of the ERDF funding for an Interreg programme shall be allocated to the Interreg-specific objective of ‘a better Interreg governance’. In particular, the programmes aligned with Macro-Regional Strategies should support the governance of such strategies.

46. **Orientation:** The future ASP should continue providing support to the governance of the EUSALP . The EUSALP should become a platform for connecting the future ASP with other programmes in the area with the aim of improving coordination and funding opportunities, and should be represented in the programme monitoring committee at national, regional and local level. The future ASP should actively promote contributions from other national and/or regional EU Cohesion Policy “mainstream” programmes, as well as cross-border programmes active in the Alpine Space, to the objectives of the EUSALP. Coordination between the future ASP and the Alpine Convention should be further developed, in particular for common priorities and thematic fields, in order to avoid duplications.

47. **Orientation:** The governance of the EUSALP could also be strengthened through a new Macro-regional ITI (M-ITI) based on the well-established ESIF ITI approach⁵⁶. This M-ITI would offer a flexible tool for implementing territorial strategies in a more integrated way, allowing participating countries to make use of funding from different operational programmes in the Alpine area. Such M-ITI led by a central coordination and implementation body (e.g. composed of interested Action Groups) could

⁵² ESPON, 2017b; Rodriguez-Pose, 2018.

⁵³ Zwet, Bachtler, Ferry, McMaster, Miller, 2017.

⁵⁴ Article 24 of the Proposal for a Regulation COM(2018)374 of 29.5.2018.

⁵⁵ Articles 14 and 15 of the Proposal for a Regulation COM(2018)374 of 29.5.2018.

⁵⁶ Presented in Tallinn 2017 at the EUSBSR Forum.

cover the full EUSALP or specific policy areas or individual Action Groups⁵⁷. The **future ASP** could take a leading role in organizing such M-ITI.

48. **Orientation:** The **future ASP** should continue attracting new partners, also from other areas than Northern Italy, Bavaria, and the capital regions in Austria and Slovenia, and from different types of places (larger urban areas, small cities, rural areas, remote areas), which are generally underrepresented.

49. In addition, programme governance should be based on the partnership principle, which is a key feature covering the whole programme cycle including preparation, implementation and participation in monitoring committees, building on the multi-level governance approach and ensuring the involvement of economic, social and environmental partners. Examples of good practice include involving representatives of different interests in the programming process; involving them in programme evaluation or other strategic long-term tasks, such as setting up temporary working groups, consulting all members efficiently on key documents. An active involvement of partners should be ensured by their participation in key steps. Technical Assistance can be made available from the programme to facilitate their full involvement during the whole programme cycle.

D. Conclusions for the 2021-2027 period for the cooperation area, including strategic orientations and relationship to macro-regional strategies/sea-basin strategies

50. Based on the considerations elaborated in the previous sections for transnational cooperation topics, the following thematic focus of the **future ASP** is proposed:

PO1

- Improve the framework conditions for research and innovation, with a focus on data availability, quality and monitoring;
- Promote RDI activities across the Alpine Space, with a focus on identifying joint challenges and innovative solutions.

PO 2 (strongest focus)

- Enhance protection, conservation and ecological connectivity of the Alpine Space (e.g. biodiversity of Alpine habitats, fresh water management, climate change adaptation incl. risk prevention, circular economy, renewable energy and energy efficiency, and including relevant and targeted RDI activities);
- Establish low-carbon policy instruments.

PO 5

- Innovate with approaches and increase capacities for delivery of services of general interest (e.g. healthcare) in inner-peripheries and/or places at risk of out-migration and fragmentation, including relevant and targeted RDI activities;
- Support actions for promoting low-carbon mobility and transport;
- Promote territorial strategies such as urban partnerships, sustainable urban development, ITI, and CLLD.

Interreg-specific objective of better governance (15%)⁵⁸

- Raise administrative capacity and/or quality of governance in certain Alpine regions;
- Foster cooperation between regions, across borders, and between programmes;
- Support the governance of, and the coordination with, the EUSALP.

⁵⁷ Toptsidou & Böhme, 2018.

⁵⁸ See Recital 19 and Articles 14 and 15 (2) of the Proposal for a Regulation COM(2018)374 of 29.5.2018.

51. The future ASP should be entirely aligned with the EUSALP territory, in order to facilitate support from the future ASP to the EUSALP objectives and governance (see point 5).

52. **Orientation:** The **future ASP** should strengthen the focus on PO 2, as compared to the current ASP. It is considered to limit support under PO 1 to improving the framework conditions for research and innovation and focussing on very specific RDI support (see point 33). Deployment of research, development and innovation activities should be supported under PO 2 and PO 5, where appropriate. The proposed re-orientation is destined to respond to the majority of challenges identified in section B. The proposed re-orientation is at the same time coherent with the EUSALP, as it would support at least three of four of EUSALP objectives, namely “Mobility and Connectivity” (except for transport), “Environment and Energy” (entirely) and the cross-cutting objective of “Governance, including Institutional Capacity”. Eventually, all thematic objectives of the future ASP would be coherent with the EUSALP objectives.

53. **Orientation:** In accordance with the orientations concerning the selection of policy objectives above (section C), a stronger link with relevant national and regional EU Cohesion Policy programmes, as well as cross-border programmes should be promoted. According to the proposed legislation⁵⁹, Member States are encouraged to include cooperation activities with other countries under their national and regional programmes. Policy objectives 3 (for transport) and 4 (for employment) are not explicitly considered for the future ASP, but cooperation activities under these POs could be promoted under relevant national and regional EU Cohesion Policy programmes, Horizon Europe, Connecting Europe Facility, Invest Europe, and/or other Interreg programmes, where appropriate.

54. European Semester Country Reports 2019 for the five EU Member States concerned (Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia) and their respective Annexes D, identify potential areas for cooperation and/or refer to the EUSALP. Cooperation should therefore be promoted between Transnational programmes and Cross-border programmes within the same territories, as well as between Transnational Programmes and EU programmes with a particular attention to Cohesion Policy programmes covering the same region or Member State, always in close coordination with the geographical units responsible or relevant Commission services. The list of 2014-2020 programmes (CBC and ERDF) is attached to this document (Annex 1).

⁵⁹ Proposal for a Regulation COM(2018)375, Article 17 (3) (d).

Annex 1

PO 2021/2027 Programmes 2014-2020	1 A smarter Europe	2 A greener, low-carbon Europe	3 A more connected Europe	4 A more social Europe	5 A Europe closer to citizens/ Interreg- specific objective
Interreg V-A AT-DE	TO1	TO6			TO11
Interreg V-A DE-AT-CH-LIE	TO1	TO4,6		TO8	TO11
Interreg V-A IT-AT	TO1	TO6		TO9	TO11
Interreg V-A SI-AT	TO1,3			TO9,10	TO11
Interreg V-A FR-DE-CH	TO1,3	TO6	TO7	TO8	TO11
Interreg V-A IT-FR (Maritime)	TO3	TO5,6	TO7	TO8	
Interreg V-A FR-IT (ALCOTRA)	TO1	TO4,5,6		TO9,10	TO11
Interreg V-A FR-CH	TO1	TO6	TO7	TO8	
Interreg V-A IT-CH	TO3	TO6	TO7	TO9	TO11
Interreg V-A IT-SI	TO1	TO4,6			TO11
Germany: Bavaria Baden- Württemberg	TO1,3 TO1	TO4,5,6 TO4			
France Alsace Rhône-Alpes Franche-Comté Bourgogne Provence- Alpes-Côte d'Azur Auvergne Massif Central CLLD Massif des Alpes	TO1,3 TO1,3 TO1,3 TO1,3 TO1,3 TO1,3 TO1,3	TO4,5 TO4,6 TO4,5,6 TO4,5,6 TO4,6 TO4,5,6 TO6	TO2 TO2 TO2,7 TO2,7 TO2 TO2,7	TO8, 10 TO8 TO8 TO8,9,10 TO8,9,10	
Italy Veneto Valle d'Aosta Trento Piemonte	TO1,3 TO1,3 TO1,3 TO1,3	TO4,5 TO4,6 TO4 TO4,6	TO2 TO2 TO2	TO9	

Lombardia	TO1,3	TO4	TO2		
Liguria	TO1,3	TO4,5	TO2		
Friuli, Venezia, Giulia	TO1,3	TO4,6	TO2		
Bolzano	TO1	TO4,5	TO2		
8 national OPs with different thematic focus					
Austria	TO1,3	TO4,6		TO8,9	
Slovenia	TO1,3	TO4,5,6	TO2,7	TO8,9,10	TO11

NB: The allocation of the Thematic Objectives (TO) of the 2014-2020 programming period to the proposed Policy Objectives for 2021-2027 has been approximately done based on the following definitions:

- TO1:** Strengthening research, technological development and innovation
- TO2:** Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies
- TO3:** Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs
- TO4:** Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy
- TO5:** Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management
- TO6:** Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency
- TO7:** Promoting sustainable transport and improving network infrastructures
- TO8:** Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility
- TO9:** Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination
- TO10:** Investing in education, training and lifelong learning
- TO11:** Improving the efficiency of public administration

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