

INTERREG ALPINE SPACE PROGRAMME 2021-2027

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1. Joint programme strategy: main development challenges and policy responses

1.1. Programme area

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(3), point (a) of Article 17(9) ¹

The programme area for the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027 comprises the following territories:

- Austria: the whole territory
- France - NUTS 2: Alsace, Franche-Comté, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Rhône-Alpes
- Germany - NUTS 2: Oberbayern, Niederbayern, Oberpfalz, Oberfranken, Mittelfranken, Unterfranken, Schwaben; Stuttgart, Karlsruhe, Freiburg, Tübingen
- Italy - NUTS 2: Lombardia, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Provincia Autonoma di Trento, Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano / Bozen, Valle d'Aosta / Vallée d'Aoste, Piemonte, Liguria
- Liechtenstein: the whole territory
- Slovenia: the whole territory
- Switzerland: the whole territory.

In 2015 the Alpine States and Regions gave themselves a common strategy: the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). In order to enable the involvement of relevant partners from the entire EUSALP area in the development of the Alpine Region, the perimeter of the Alpine Space programme 2021-2027 shall be aligned to the perimeter of EUSALP.

This is meant to strengthen the coherence between programme and strategy goals and to support the path towards a carbon neutral and climate resilient territory. The focus of activities and interventions on the functional and geographic specificities of the Alps and peri-alpine areas will be maintained. The programme continues to play a key role in implementing the strategy and facilitating transnational cooperation in the area. Through transnational cooperation, the Alpine Region is striving for joint solutions and exchange in this regard.

In the further document we refer to the programme area as “Alpine region.”

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund. Available [here](#).

1.2. Joint programme strategy: Summary of main joint challenges, taking into account economic, social and territorial disparities as well as inequalities, joint investment needs and complimentary and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments, lessons-learned from past experience and macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies where the programme area as a whole or partially is covered by one or more strategies

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(3), point (b) of Article 17(9)

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, present at the time of programming, makes it more difficult than usually to assess current data and derive valid future developments. The following “summary of main joint challenges” is therefore based on currently available data (showing mainly the status before the COVID-19-pandemic) and the best possible estimation of future developments, also against the background and the inclusion of longer-lasting megatrends.

The Alpine Space Programme area consists of both: metropolises of global importance as well as remote rural areas. It spreads across the borders of seven countries. The Alpine states share the geographical and environmental characteristics and challenges of the Alpine region. However, these states differ considerably in terms of their economy and culture. Cultural differences contribute to the wealth of the Alpine heritage. They are embraced and celebrated in the macro-regional, cross-border and transnational dimensions and complement the natural heritage making the Alpine region a particularly attractive destination for tourists. The long history of cooperation as well as the establishment of the Alps as a popular touristic destination is an evidence of cultural and natural wealth and heritage.

Alpine regions are very heterogeneous. This heterogeneity is further intensified by economic and demographic disparities. On the one hand, there are disparities between larger areas as a whole, such as northern and southern Alps, eastern and western Alps. On the other hand, there are disparities between different territorial types such as rural, peri-urban, and urban areas, alpine and peri-alpine areas, or finer socio-economic typologies such as Alpine metropolises, Alpine cities, stable or growing rural areas, declining and shrinking rural areas and tourism areas. Alpine economies are also characterised by different specialisations and economic activities.

The Alpine region is affected not only by issues inherent to its mountainous character, environment and its diverse culture but also by external forces linked to developments at a wider geographical scale. The former, such as remoteness, accessibility, rich, and susceptible biodiversity and environment, economic disparities but also cooperation history are well-known in the region. The latter are emerging developments and mega trends, such as climate change, globalisation, and digitalisation. They pose new opportunities and challenges and impact already existing ones. Both

already established and relatively new challenges closely interact with each other and have social, economic, and environmental consequences.

Of particular note is climate change which is a long-term issue that greatly affects society and economy. Climate change and digitalisation together pave the way towards the next phase of globalisation. Climate change is a global trend with highly relevant but often uncertain impacts on territories, environment, human health, and economy. Mountainous regions, such as the inner Alpine regions, are more affected by climate change than lowlands. Environmental challenges and the phenomenon of climate change pose the most pressing problems on a global scale. Similar to other parts of the world, they impact already existing economic, demographic, and social characteristics and disparities in the Alpine region. This phenomenon challenges us to jointly rethink our economies, societies, and development strategies.

Digitalisation is a global and far reaching technology-driven transition that has been changing life, work structures, businesses, provision of services of general interest (SGIs), mobility, as well as social interaction. This phenomenon offers a considerable range of opportunities in the Alpine region that can be exploited, but possible negative effects (e.g. on CO₂-reduction) carefully have to be assessed and weighted up towards the overall goal of CO₂-neutrality. Other relevant trends include urbanisation, demographic change, societal change; focus on knowledge-based economy, and increasing energy consumption. A comprehensive and place-based approach is needed to address the range of these issues.

A more comprehensive and place-based approach to these environmental, economical, and social challenges can be offered by transnational cooperation at different governance levels in the entire Alpine region. In tackling these challenges, it is necessary to acknowledge the underlying and long-term environmental and climate change-related developments as opportunities for a shift to sustainable economies and societies. The Alpine Space Programme aims to exploit these opportunities and fully embrace this innovative and trail-blazing approach which will require commitment and cooperation.

Having that in mind the content of the programme is based on the applicable European Commission's regulations, as well as on overarching strategies such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the European Green Deal as well as on the Territorial Agenda 2030 "A future for all places" with its two overarching objectives, to achieve a just and green Europe and the New Leipzig Charta.

The "mission statement" of the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027 therefore states the following:

Why are we here?

- We are at the forefront of the transition to a unique, carbon neutral and climate resilient European territory: the Alpine region.

What do we do?



- Through innovative and pioneering ideas, we foster the integration of sustainable economic development, societal wellbeing and the preservation of its outstanding nature.
- We support cooperation projects across borders and facilitate joint trans-national solutions.

How do we do it?

- We bring together stakeholders from different areas, sectors and levels and create benefit for the citizens in the Alpine region.

Summary of main joint challenges, opportunities, and relevant territorial, social, and economic disparities

Environment, biodiversity and climate change, energy

The Alpine region is a biodiversity hotspot and its territory is more susceptible to climate change. The Alps are the second largest biodiversity reservoir in Europe after the Mediterranean Sea and one of the most important water towers of Europe. With almost 4500 vascular plants, the Alps represent one of the largest biodiversity centres in Europe as about 500 of these species are endemic. These resources are widely used creating strong competition for land and water for various purposes. Alpine biodiversity and ecological connectivity has been under pressure for many decades especially since the second half of the 20th century. Intensive exploitation of natural resources and the use of land for various purposes like settlements, transport, energy, and touristic infrastructure as well as for agriculture and forestry have caused high losses in biodiversity and the fragmentation of ecosystems in the Alpine area. In addition, the rich natural heritage of the Alpine region is more and more endangered. Climate change is a new threat for Alpine biodiversity.

As a result of its rich biodiversity across its different territories (mountainous regions, forelands, valleys ...), the Alpine region has a high potential for **Green Infrastructures (GIs)**. However, the Alpine region is also among regions with the lowest contribution of protected areas to the total area of potential GI. An obstacle to potential multi-functionality of GIs is the presence of bare rock on the surface. This results in low values for most **ecosystem services**. For example, in Austria there is a large network of protected areas; however, they have a low capacity to provide ecosystem services. In Slovenia and part of France there is the highest capacity for multi-functionality for policies. Notwithstanding this, there are possibilities for improvement in better integrating ecosystem services and green infrastructures.

At the same time, urbanised areas play an important role by using ecosystem services. In particularly high demand is given for water, leisure supply (including second homes), tourism (demand), but also clean air and ecological benefits. This requires a particular focus on the use of GIs and ecosystem areas in the urban territories of the Alpine region. In the last decades the Alpine countries together with trans-Alpine organisations and networks have taken high efforts to protect natural hot spots and biodiversity as well as to build up ecological networks in the Alps through numerous activities. It is necessary to continue these efforts in the face of continued environmental threats.

The Alpine region is highly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, and faces a particularly high risk of floods, landslides, and changes in water resources. Tourism, agriculture, and forestry are among the most vulnerable sectors, directly impacted by global warming and extreme weather events. Given its morphology, less than one fifth of the territory within the Alpine Convention perimeter is suitable for settlements. Most human activities therefore are concentrated in often densely populated valleys where natural disasters can cause considerable damage. However, the damage potential is also high in more rural and mountainous areas, particularly if they are used intensively for tourism. Risk and hazard evolve dynamically, especially because of the changing climate conditions. This may exacerbate the intensity of hazards and contribute to a shift in hazards-prone areas.

The Alpine region has warmed twice as much as the global average since the late 19th century. The temperature increase from the late 19th century to the beginning of the 21st century was already around 2 °C. According to ESPON ALPS 2050, the changes of the (air-) temperature in the Alps 2050 perimeter show several patterns and characteristics: There are higher increases in annual mean temperature in the Inner-Alpine areas than in the area beyond the mountains. This displays a strong correlation with the morphological structure of the Alps: the higher the mountains, the stronger the increase of temperature (even if the relatively lower temperature-rise in the pre-Alpine areas already creates considerable adaptation challenges). The southern side of the Alpine mountain range is characterized by the highest changes in annual mean temperature, in particular in the Western Alps. This observation shows that above all the French-Italian, Swiss-Italian and Austrian-Italian border regions are most severely affected by climate change.

Considering the responsibility not only for the highly vulnerable Alpine region, but also for the planet as a whole, the task in the years to come is to implement regulations triggering greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction in all sectors and to introduce the next step from a low-carbon to a post-carbon society. On the one hand, this includes technical, legal, and organisational measures and instruments in all sectors (mainly energy production, industry, transport, construction and housing, spatial planning and consumption). On the other hand, it requires a paradigm shift that can only be achieved through awareness raising and new narratives. It involves a transition to economic concepts that leave “pure GDP-thinking” behind and make a step forward to integrated economic concepts of societal well-being. In this respect, the Alpine region could play a forward thinking and front-runner role. Making the Alps, and particularly the inner Alpine areas, more resilient with regards to the impacts of climate change is a joint effort of all actors across all sectors and borders.

The Alpine region is a major European crossroad with several transit corridors. Even though it is largely beyond the possibilities of the programme to provide interventions at the appropriate scale in this regard, the **related environmental consequences should be highlighted.** Various corridors of the road network are close to saturation and cause serious health issues, such as noise and air pollution. Major problems are linked to increasing traffic, the absence of harmonised regulation of transport policies for freight transport and the large proportion of road freight transport. The amount of transported net tons per year has grown at almost all transit corridors, although to different degrees.



Air quality is poor in many areas, e.g. this problem is particularly serious in the Po Valley as well as in several alpine valleys. It is therefore needed to bring transport measures into line with regional sustainable mobility plans, regional air quality plans, and national air pollution control programmes to improve coherence between them and increase synergies.

Energy consumption

Studies show a generally high level of energy consumption while the use of renewable energy varies greatly across Alpine regions. In general, there is a high level of final energy consumption for space heating, hot water, and cooling in residential buildings in the Alpine region, although the demand is decreasing. High final electricity consumption for appliances and lightning in the residential sector can be observed in France, Switzerland, Austria, but is lower in Germany, Italy, and Slovenia. The picture for the service sector is rather differentiated. Final energy consumption for road transport is differentiated but high in Western Austria and Slovenia. Final energy consumption for rail is high in Austria, Italy, France, and lower in Germany and Slovenia.

In the Alpine region, the share of electricity generated from renewable sources is 40 percent, the European average is 29 percent (EUSALP Energy Survey, 2017). However, the shares are very unevenly distributed in the individual Alpine countries. The total share of electricity from renewable sources is high in Austria and lower in France, Germany, Italy, and Slovenia. The solar energy potential is differentiated; and there is some potential for hydropower across Alpine regions.

Support schemes and European, national and regional policies regarding non-financial barriers to renewable energy and energy efficiency differ across countries and need to be better aligned. The efficiency of existing hydropower plants could be increased and other renewable energy sources could be considered. In order to support low-carbon transformation, there is also a need for integrated solutions which create co-benefits. This includes approaches that explore strategic policy-making in the role of consumption patterns and lifestyles. Furthermore, stronger considerations should be committed to disturbances to ecosystems made by energy-related infrastructure.

Actions that promote energy efficiency are therefore strongly needed in all sectors and at multiple levels. Measures towards energy efficiency should be identified for specific areas and economic sectors. The sources and locations of renewables should also be carefully examined: different sources show different territorial patterns with certain kinds of renewables being more efficient to use in one area than in others (e.g. wind, water, solar power).

The need for increased energy efficiency and sufficiency is also pressured by raising energy prices and accumulating negative effects of climate change. In this context, awareness-raising among actors in regards to the financial benefits as well as benefits concerning economic competitiveness of energy efficiency is an important field of action. Recognizing this, the programme supports actions going beyond efficiency and fosters integrated concepts of well-being, sufficiency, post-carbon lifestyles, and circular economy approaches.



Demography, population, and society

Overall, the demographic trends in the Alpine Space have different effects and it is therefore not possible to identify a single Alpine-wide trend of population decline, stagnation, or growth.

Main demographic disparities are linked to territorial types. Metropolises and larger cities are almost always the centre of growth trends, whereas patterns in the rural areas are more diverse: there are stable and even growing regions (e.g. in the South-western Alps) whereas a decline of population can be observed especially in Eastern Alps, e.g. in Lower Austria and Styria. In addition, better employment and GDP trends can be found in the Northern Alps. These regional differences have impacts on the management of settlement growth, on the response to climate change, on the approach to reducing the fragmentation of ecosystems and the steering of the agricultural transformation.

The complexity of demographic development patterns is further increased by the combination of diverse and overlapping in- and out-flows of migrants. In general, there is a highly diversified situation in all parts of the Alpine region. There are bi-directional (and circuit) migratory flows, negative natural trends, the significance of specific age groups and gender differences in migration movements, length and frequency of movements. Metropolitan areas tend to show the most positive values whereas rural patterns are more diverse. Moreover, especially in the Alpine context, the seasonality of tourism leads to season dependent living conditions. In some highly attractive tourist destinations this results in crowding out of local population due to the increase of land- and real estate prices.

Population densities in the Alpine area may be as high as in some of the European capitals due to the concentration of people in valley bottoms with limited space. In these limited areas - the Permanent Settlement Areas - the average population density reaches 414 people/km², which is comparable to densely populated areas outside the Alps. Favourable areas may have considerably higher densities such as the regions around Grenoble 6,282 people/km², Lugano 2,097 people/km², Milan with more than 6,000 people/km² and Innsbruck with 1,444 people/km². This is comparable to European capitals like Berlin (3,812 people/km²) and Vienna (4,025 people/km²). The Inner-Alpine perimeter shows clearly lower values of accessibility than the pre-Alpine and more urbanised areas. At the same time, the growth phenomena in urbanised areas lead to increasing environmental pressure and land use conflicts. Prosperous urban areas face the challenge of managing growth, pollution, and increasing competition for land between housing, industry, transport infrastructure, agriculture, and free space. Declining rural areas have to tackle shrinking processes, the vacancy and decay of buildings and other infrastructure as well as the overgrowing of previously cultivated land.

Even though there are some counter-developments in certain places at a small-scale level, this evidence suggests that **spatial polarisation, which is also linked with an economic polarisation**, is increasing. There is an urgent need to counteract the growing gap between urban and rural areas. Often, peripheral rural areas are characterized by difficult geomorphologic conditions and locations, which lower their potential to be connected to larger functional areas. This constitutes a significant obstacle to growth.



Polarisation leads to challenges concerning the **maintenance of services of general interest (SGIs)**, financial systems, and cultural dynamics in peripheral areas. Accessibility is highly relevant for the provision of SGI, which are a key factor for a good quality of life. SGIs are closely linked to the settlement system: in areas with scattered settlements e.g. in mountainous regions, the provision of SGI is more difficult than in densely settled areas. The uneven demographic situation leads to the thinning out of public services in some places which further perpetuates negative demographic trends leading to departure of the youth and a brain drain. Accessibility of remote and depopulating areas is also a challenge in many areas where public transport needs to be modernised.

In the coming years, particularly remote rural areas with lower grades of SGI-supply and accessibility will face demographic ageing-processes along with enhanced needs of SGI-provision. In other words, there will be a strong need to provide social services that correspond to the change in demographic structures and to ensure their accessibility as a key element of good quality of life. This will be particularly relevant in shrinking regions, where a higher share of elderly people has to be expected. Place-based approaches valorise the potentials of urbanised areas and regional centres as important hubs that spread services at the regional level. In this context, digitalisation will offer a broad variety of options. Essential precondition for their wide-spread use will be the sound knowledge, acceptance, and physical access by the people.

Societal change goes hand in hand with demographic change. Demographic trends are linked with emerging and frequently innovative social and cultural developments such as neo-ecology, low-carbon lifestyles, “counter-movement” trends, health and wellness tourism, as well as cross-cultural, cross-generational and cross-regional learning in the areas of protection of nature and voluntary work, including the involvement of tourists. Accelerated by globalisation and digitalisation, the variety of life concepts in combination with changes in professional careers, working and living places, changing gender roles and age concepts, lead to more heterogeneous, pluralistic societies. Single households, patchwork families, mobile teleworkers, people with more than one living place, population shift between day and night in commuter municipalities have changed local societies in urban as well as in rural contexts leading from strong local identities to multiple identities of a multi-local society. This change has also impacts on the environment and economy and requires integrated strategic approaches.

Sustainable economic development

The further economic developments are difficult to estimate at the time of programming due to the COVID-19-pandemic. National as well as EU-programmes and funding schemes aim to provide strong support for a green recovery, and the Alpine Space programme also follows this approach.

The economic performance of the Alpine region in the last years was rather strong relative to the EU. Most indicators, including GDP per capita, have been above European average. A North-South divide however was to be observed: the trends in employment and in GDP have developed more positively on the Northern side of the Alps 2050 space than on the Southern side. This refers to the post 2008 economic crisis that (most regions of) Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Austria mastered quicker and with less frictions than the Italian and Slovenian regions. A similar North-South divide is given in the field of innovation patterns (European Patent Office data). In addition, there



are also smaller-scale disparities to be considered, for example between remote mountainous areas and regional centres or Alpine metropolises and their “hinterland.”

Employment in the Alpine area has been generally at a high level compared to the EU. A detailed look at the Alpine Convention area reveals lower employment rates for areas such as the south-eastern French and south-western Italian Alps, as well as the Italian-Slovenian border. The unemployment rate in 2019 ranged from 2.5% in Liechtenstein to 11.2% in the Slovenian Alpine area. With the exception of Slovenia, the average unemployment rate was lower in the Alpine region than in the countries as a whole. In some small inner Alpine areas, unemployment rates exceeded 20%. The youth unemployment rate was higher in the southern fringe of the Alpine Convention area.

The **GDP** distribution per capita in the Alpine Convention area is available at NUTS 3 level and shows disparities particularly between the central parts of the Alps and the eastern and western parts, even within a single country and its regions. The southern parts of the Italian Alps and the central parts of the Austrian and the Swiss Alps have had a relatively high GDP per capita. In plain areas, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) patterns show the highest productivity, tourism the lowest. In peri-alpine areas, the highest productivity is with large high-tech and traditional SMEs.

The characteristics linked to its territorial specificity pose certain challenges for the economy in some areas of the Alps. For example, due to limited accessibility from and within the inner Alpine areas to urban centres and to small and remote settlements, there are market barriers for small or new companies, limited availability of knowledge, or a limited supply for consumers.

Alpine countries differ slightly in terms of shares of economic sectors. Parts of the German, Italian and Slovenian Alpine areas have a high share in manufacturing and agricultural sectors whereas in Austria construction and retail are dominant. France and Switzerland are close to the EU average with an overrepresentation of public services. The share in the agricultural sector is the highest in Eastern Austrian and in Slovenian regions (in both cases relevant for all regions except capital regions). National differences are relevant, at least on the NUTS3 level. Belonging to a specific nation-state determines the economic level and path to a high extent. The question, if a region is situated in the Inner-Alpine or pre-Alpine area (i.e. AC or EUSALP), seems much less decisive.

The Alpine region has a relatively strong SMEs and micro enterprises basis. In Switzerland, Germany and France there is a sectoral focus on knowledge economy and ICT (related to industry and services). Switzerland and Italy show diverse sectoral foci. Slovenia has a strong industrial focus and Austria demonstrates a focus on services and tourism. The employment rate in knowledge-intensive services in the southern part of the Alpine Convention area is lower than in the northern and north-western parts.

The Alpine region is also home to global key players in the field of research and innovation (R&I), offering a strong potential for further global development. There are notable concentrations of SMEs in different parts of the region. Many of them are organised in clusters, building up a territorial economy which offers a solid basis for innovation based on smart specialisation strategies and allows companies to become more competitive in areas of particular relevance to the region (such as energy, green technologies, mechatronics and engineering; chemistry and new materials, ICT).

There are some extremely highly innovative regions lacking qualified human capital which are scattered around-synergic knowledge hubs. E.g. high tech firms are concentrated in southern Germany and some in northern Italy (e.g. Monza, Brianza) as well as in Upper Austria (e.g. Steyr) and Styria. It should be noted that different regions within the programme area face some limitations relating to inter-Alpine research and innovation cooperation and the uptake of existing R&I results. This is due to spatially fragmented local markets, social disparities in innovation, funding opportunities, information and communication technologies, strong migration from rural areas due to poor infrastructure availability and the capitalisation of applied research results.

Furthermore, sustainable economic development should ensure closing gaps and fostering exchange and synergy potentials between urban and rural areas. Products, including regional products and quality products, and services based on agriculture and forestry offer significant potential (e.g. for the bio-economy) throughout the value chain (including for example the pharmaceutical and wooden building sector). Moving higher up in the value chain provides opportunities for rural and urban parts of the region to work together. Fostering urban-rural co-operation and circular economy approaches are key success factor for green economy in Alpine region.

In general, the evidence shows a relatively strong economic performance and high levels of innovation in many parts of the region. **Coupled with the particular environmental conditions and vulnerability to climate change, this strong economic basis predestines the Alpine region to be a pilot area for being a leader in green, sustainable economy characterised by carbon neutrality, resource sensitiveness, and climate resilience.** Among others, decoupling economic growth from throughput of material and energy resources as well as fostering of environmentally friendly technologies, favouring integrated approaches to waste and emission reduction rather than end-of-pipe solutions is a particularly interesting area of experimentation for SMEs. Circular economy approaches as well as bioeconomy can help to pave the way from low carbon to post-carbon economy, from a general “efficiency” approach to approaches that are more oriented on sufficiency. SMEs and innovation actors in Alpine region should be encouraged to benefit from the areas potential in developing green solutions and technologies. Businesses can benefit from resource efficiency and circular economy by cutting input costs and increasing their corporate responsibility. The programme can help strengthen a green economy approach based on key Alpine resources and its rich natural and cultural heritage and fostering integrated approaches in agriculture, forestry, tourism, energy, and the water sectors in order to implement sustainable economic development. It should also be emphasised that sustainable economic development needs to be supported by fostering green skills to answer the green jobs market. The development of green jobs constitutes a considerable potential for sustainable economic development.

Tourism

The Alpine region is a global key destination for tourism, especially in the winter; however, tourists are very unevenly spread across the region. The relative importance of the tourism sector is in general high, even more so in the inner Alpine areas with high altitudes and mountainous regions, which are also more susceptible to environmental threats. A key asset of Alpine tourism and a source of economic activity is the valorisation of natural and cultural heritage.



Tourism intensity based on overnight stays shows a ‘central-peripheral pattern’: the gradient goes from the (Inner-Alpine) centre to the ‘periphery’. The relative importance of the tourism economy is very high in the inner Alpine areas (comprising destinations like Graubünden, Tyrol, Southern Tyrol, and other international touristic resorts like in Southern and Western Alps). This shows the role of the Alpine massive as a touristic hot spot with a lot of economic potential but also many risks. The economy of only 10% of Alpine municipalities is mainly based on tourism.

Climate change and related environmental issues, including natural hazards, threaten the sustainability and competitiveness of tourism in the Alpine region. Tourism strategies and solutions should be particularly attentive to environmental and social impact on natural and cultural heritage in general, climate change, natural hazards, biodiversity, and raising environmental awareness and territoriality in particular. The development of the tourism sector could be improved through a concerted approach to sustainable and accessible tourism, involving in particular R&I, SMEs and suitable training for the labour force. Integrated tourism transport options are especially essential and in need of elaboration. Furthermore, tourism can be developed at the local and small-scale level beyond the touristic hotspots, supporting soft tourism in Alpine villages which is strongly based on the rich natural and cultural heritage. This could help improve the geographic and seasonal distribution of the tourism market in the region, while creating growth and jobs. The shift to sustainable and place-based tourism will be accompanied by digitalisation and possibilities in pursuing new lifestyles, marketing, and the information exchange it provides.

On the one hand, effects of over-tourism have already been observed in Alpine regions in the last years. On the other hand, a stronger societal awareness on health, “deceleration” as well as on environmental aspects and low-carbon lifestyles (“flight-shaming”, veganism), a critical view on industrial agricultural practices and more consciousness towards touristic infrastructures can be noticed. Apart from that, the demand for a more pluralistic society will also have its effects on tourism. The growing demand of a diverse society for specific offers, health, and wellness services as well as sustainable and “low-carbon-offers” can be seen as “counter-movement-trends” of recent developments and megatrends (e.g. globalization, acceleration, climate change). These societal changes should be utilized for the further transformation and positioning of sustainable and place based Alpine tourism along related changes in the Alpine community life (e.g.: stronger integration of secondary homeowners etc.).

The COVID-19 pandemic is specifically calling into question some developments in tourism (mass tourism, “après ski” ...). Valid prognoses and assessments in this area are currently very difficult, but the pursuit of sustainable approaches appears to be the order of the day, especially against the background of social change and climate change.

That is why there is the strong need to further develop and deepen sustainable Alpine tourism and to deal with the current developments. Alpine regions, due to their outstanding ecological value, rich natural and cultural heritage and the already high standards in tourism, will be able to propose the unique chance to establish healthy, resilient, and sustainable tourism offers.



Digitalisation

Of particular relevance in the Alpine regions is also the emerging phenomenon of **digital transformation**. Digitalisation is relevant to all actors, not only high-tech SMEs. It affects a range of issues, including business development, SME, innovation as well as education and training of skilled labour force. It can contribute to economic development in the Alpine region by filling the gap created by remoteness and lack of accessibility, thus reducing spatial polarisation and bridging different territorial types across Alpine regions (urban - peri-urban - rural - mountainous, ...). Therefore, taking full advantage of the potentials of digitalisation should also help to reduce the innovation gap between metropolitan innovation hubs and rural areas with low-innovation potentials.

Digitalisation leads to a transformation of market structures, new working conditions, new production processes, focus on individualized products and services, project-based, and temporary cooperation as well as different work structures. It can lead to a higher importance of creativity and innovation in regards to economic and social development. Digitalisation can serve as an instrument for “future proofing” in a knowledge based economy in the Alpine region. Combined with innovation and creativity it can help make the Alpine region more resilient and flexible in adjusting to global trends and shifts from traditional economy and industries to new formats. Thus, digital transformation is linked to a broader approach to **social innovation** with impacts on sectoral policies (tourism, agriculture, nature conservation, etc.) as well as on the general public. Social innovation has a large potential to further develop economic and social structures in the Alpine region and accommodate the societal changes - also including the perspective of citizens as “beneficiaries of digitalisation” - as described above.

The various interactions between urban and rural areas are of special spatial and functional importance in the Alpine region. Similar to migration tendencies from rural to urban areas, they require transnational solutions in order to reduce spatial polarisation and to balance regional development in the Alpine region. The ageing society, the increase of free time and lifestyle trends lead to multi-localism, which could become a new dimension of urban-rural interrelations. Therefore, links between urban and rural areas in the Alpine region have to be further explored and made more sustainable. The potentials between urban centres and Alpine valleys should be explored especially with regards to digital economy which can help establish new development and digital-axes

Joint investment needs and complementarity and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments

As the summary of the challenges shows, the current and foreseeable developments in the Alpine region result in a variety of different investment needs. Investment needs emerge, for example, in the area of SGIs due to the demographic change and the changing society, in the area of energy infrastructure and mobility for instance due to the climate goals and in the area of information communication technology in order to address the needs of a more and more digitized society - just to name some of the most obvious investments needs.

These investment needs however would by far exceed the financial resources and administrative structures of this transnational Interreg programme.

In this programming period, the Alpine Space programme therefore again focuses on supporting cooperation and collaboration in the whole Alpine region on the various levels of governance (from macro-regional to local level) and on non-investment actions (e.g. development of strategies, solutions, pilot projects). These actions taken by the programme are intended to support transnational, inter-governmental, and cross-sectoral cooperation but are therefore also suitable to prepare the ground for sound cooperation in joint investment initiatives and programmes. In this context, the Alpine space programme would like to make use of synergies and complementarities with:

- Other Interreg programmes (cross-border, transnational, interregional)
- National and regional Cohesion Policy programmes relevant for the Alpine region; as well as
- EU-wide programmes, initiatives, and funds, including Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, the LIFE programme, programmes funded under the Just Transition Fund (JTF), the Connecting Europe Facility 2 (CEF), the Digital Europe Programme, and the like.

The implementation of such synergies will happen throughout the programme lifecycle.

To address the complementarity and synergies with other forms of support it has to be pointed out that the selection of priorities and specific objectives for the Alpine Space programme 2021-2027 is based on the summary of main joint challenges in this chapter, the lessons learnt from past experience as well as on a sound needs analysis. The selected specific objectives therefore address the derived needs as best as possible for the Alpine region in all its diversity for the next seven years. In addition, exchanges took place with programmes that overlap geographically with the ASP (e.g. via Interact, personal overlaps in the programming-TF, exchanges between programme authorities, public consultations - see chapter 4).

The complementarity to other forms of support as e.g. ESI-funds mainstream programmes, cross-border programmes or other funding schemes (e.g. CAP, Horizon Europe and the like) is expressed through the tailor-made selection and design of the programme; the synergies through the connection to overarching strategies like the European Green Deal as well as to the framework given by the EC regulations.

Complementarities and synergies will be assessed during programme implementation in the following ways:

- Project application process: Project applicants must describe in the project application the contribution of the project to transnational cooperation (particular focus) as well as possible synergies and complementarities with other funds. Special attention will be paid to this when assessing the project application. Especially with regard to complementarity with other EU Cohesion Policy programmes or the CAP Funds, the transnational focus of the ASP projects should provide an important distinguishing feature.



- Other Interreg programmes: There should be a continuous exchange of information with the relevant programme authorities especially during calls and project selection phases. This should promote the exploitation of synergies and minimise the risk of possible double funding.
- Other Cohesion Policy programmes, CAP and other funding schemes: Coordination will mainly be sought through National committees (or equivalent bodies based on national rules) involving representatives of institutions participating in the implementation of national and regional programmes or other funding schemes.

In addition, appropriate control arrangements and anti-fraud measures shall limit the risk of double funding. The procedures for this are laid down in the description of the programme management and control system as well as in the "Programme Manual" with the rules for participation.

Furthermore with the macro-regional strategy for the Alpine region, EUSALP with its action groups and networks, a very suitable framework for on-going coordination and embedding of the different strands of EU-regional funding is given.

Lessons learnt from past experience

The EU transnational cooperation in the Alpine region has begun in 2000 after an already decades-long cooperation history in the area. The three predecessors of the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027 offer valuable experience upon which the current programme will build in addressing both pertaining and emerging challenges and trends, as described above. There are several lessons that should be highlighted to indicate the areas of particular focus for the new Alpine Space Programme.

As current developments show, the Alpine region will have to face a multitude of transformation processes in the next years. Megatrends such as digitalisation and climate change, other joint challenges and opportunities such as demographic change and diversification of societies, transformation towards a knowledge and innovation-based economy, regional disparities and last but not least the impacts of the Covid-19-pandemic will call for firm action.

The design of the programme enables a holistic, cross- sectoral focus on topics such as digitalisation, economic and social innovation as well as lifestyle changes, low-carbon and environmental aspects. Important ways to increase the impact of the programme is to further emphasise sustainability and capitalization of project outcomes, territoriality and citizen-orientation as well as a holistic approach characterized by cross- sectoral topics and the flexibility of measures as well as by a stronger inter-linkage between projects.

In that context, the **stronger capitalisation of project results** should increase the impact of projects on the territory, lead towards a stronger involvement of the civil society and possibly a more balanced geographical and type-related distribution of project partners and observers. **Stronger synergies and the complementarity at the level of projects and programmes as well as participation and awareness rising** will be sought.

It remains important to further ensure that programmes are designed to produce outcomes which are not only short-term effects. While sustainability of outputs of some projects indeed depends on



continued funding and institutional stability, it is possible to achieve sustainability in other ways. For example, activities stemming from Interreg projects can be mainstreamed in domestic programmes and by other actors than project partners. It is particularly beneficial when Interreg projects are continued and financed from domestic public sources.

At the same time, stronger focus on ensuring a link to territorial specificities of the Alpine region and policy-making will allow the programme to be more embedded with public policies in order to address the “implementation gap” which characterizes incapacity to implement the solutions into policy-making. The projects will be asked to pay particular attention to linking results to policies.

The ambition to make a stronger impact is not only met in the thematic, cross-sectoral, and integrative set-up of the programme’s priorities, but also within the structures of the new Alpine Space Programme. In order to keep up with a changing world the programme will address the call for more openness towards innovative projects and experimental action that are currently often impeded by formal requirements. **The administrative set-up of the new programme will reduce the bureaucratic burden** through simplification and harmonization. In order to further explore the programme’s potential in addressing different and cross-cutting thematic areas, **flexibility for experimental approaches will be explored.** This will pave way for more innovative and frontrunner projects.

Involvement of different types of stakeholders from different types of territories (e.g. cities, towns, mountainous regions, forelands) and different Alpine regions is of special importance for the programme. The programme will aim to strongly engage under-represented actors and stakeholders, according to its target group’s outreach and communication activities will be better tailored. All together, these approaches should help to bring the programme and its ideas closer to the citizens.

The Alpine Space Programme and EUSALP

In the 2014-2020 cooperation period, the programme has welcomed the establishment of the EU Strategy for the Alpine region, EUSALP. As a macro-regional strategy (MRS), EUSALP is an integrated framework for addressing common challenges, among others, through ESIF. EUSALP is the “youngest” of the four MRS and it has already managed to bring together new stakeholders across different sectors, government levels, and countries. A major achievement of the EUSALP appears to be the increase of cooperation between the Alpine region and the surrounding metropolitan areas.

In 2019 as well as in 2020, the EC published reports on the implementation of the four MRS (COM (2019) 21 final and COM (2020) 578 final). According to the reports, bridging the gap between the MRS and funding opportunities seems to remain a challenge. The EC highlights that the **Interreg Programmes**, despite their limited amounts of funding, **have played a significant role in supporting MRS implementation.** The other funds at EU-level as well as national and other sources of funding up to now have not been easily available to support the strategies and its projects. The **EC emphasises the importance of cooperation** as a general cross-cutting feature of cohesion policy. Member States and regions are invited to put a stronger focus on that feature in the next phase of national and regional policy planning and programming.

The **Alpine Space programme contributes to the EUSALP** along all EUSALP action groups. The alignment between the programme and the strategy takes place at different levels: strategic and operational coordination, information exchange, funding, multi-level governance, and capacity building, mobilizing actors, stimulating networks, integration between projects and action groups, coordinated communication and awareness-raising activities. The projects funded by the Interreg Alpine Space Programme contribute to EUSALP at different levels. EUSALP benefits from Alpine Space-funded projects by obtaining access to on-the-ground implementing organisations. Through cooperation with EUSALP, the Alpine Space Programme gains better visibility of its projects, and has a better access to high political levels. Indeed, studies indicate that there is a wealth of good examples of constructive collaboration between Alpine Space Programme and EUSALP, especially related to climate change.

As EUSALP is becoming an established MRS and the programme's relationship with the strategy is maturing, reflection of relationship to date allows further learning. The Alpine Space Programme focuses on further clarifying, deepening, and improving the concrete cooperation structures and financial support. Particular focus is placed on the elaboration of the governance and stakeholder structures as well as concrete administrative cooperation structures. These key-points should contribute towards a higher extent of exploiting synergies and rising the effectiveness and efficiency in the cooperation of the EUSALP and the Alpine Space programme in the programming period 2021-2027 as well as a stronger mutual reinforcement of both approaches.

A stronger integration between projects and action groups is needed for preparing the ground for innovative projects and bringing them closer to the citizens in Alpine regions. In that respect, capitalisation of project results and stronger involvement of the civil society should help to improve the implementation gap and enhance the impact projects show on the territory. Additionally, means of communication play an important role in the governance context. The new programming period offers the possibility to take stock and reflect on the measures undertaken so far. Taking the opportunity to think about new communication solutions will result in making common efforts more visible.

Summary and outlook

Based on the considerations outlined in section 1.2 and the framework provided by the regulations, the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027 defines the following **priorities**:

- **Policy objective 2 - A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility (PO 2) with**
 - **Priority 1: “Climate resilient and green Alpine region”**
 - Specific objective “Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches”
 - Specific objective “Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution”

- **Priority 2: “Carbon neutral and resource sensitive Alpine region”**
 - Specific objective: “Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions”
 - Specific objective: “Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy”
- **Policy objective 1: “A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity (PO 1)” with**
 - **Priority 3: “Innovation and digitalisation supporting a green Alpine region”**
 - Specific objective: “Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies”
 - Specific objective: “Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities”
- **Interreg specific objective 1: “A better Cooperation governance” with**
 - **Priority 4: “Cooperatively managed and developed Alpine region”**
 - Action: “Enhance institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies and sea- basin strategies, as well as other territorial strategies.”

The **policy objectives** and **specific objectives** are to be chosen from a given and pre-named set, provided by the regulations. The **priorities** and the assignment of the specific objectives to these priorities are determined by the programme, based on the considerations outlined in the programme document.

The programme is well aware of the existence of numerous needs in the Alpine region that might be well addressed by the selection of further policy/specific objectives. But after careful consideration and analyses, the inclusion of a broad spectrum of opinions and comprehensive discussion, the programme consciously agreed to **concentrate on green, CO₂-neutral, innovative and governance-related topics**. Through cross-sectoral approaches within the selected objectives and a citizen-orientation, the programme aims to contribute to an integrated territorial development of the Alpine Space and to create benefit for the citizens in the Alpine region. With this focus the programme aims at achieving the greatest possible impact against the background of the given resources. The openness and integrativity of the proposed activities as well as the programme structures outlined in the following sections should make it possible to cover needs from other areas within the chosen framework.

To **foster the “green and CO₂-neutral approach”** of the Alpine Space programme 2021-2027 even more, the programme invites all partners to consciously consider expected and unexpected impacts of their projects or actions on the environment, climate and sustainability, to seek mitigation of possible adverse effects, to strengthen any positive effects and, whenever possible, to incorporate mechanisms or practices that will unleash such positive effects (e.g. “green projects” considering environmental aspects right from the beginning).

The **mission statement of the programme**, which is cited on page 5, is also an expression of this focus and is intended to make this approach broadly visible.

Furthermore, the following horizontal principles have been considered in the design of the ASP 2021-2027 programme-architecture and they shall further be respected during project preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation: The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, gender equality, non-discrimination including accessibility and sustainable development including the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, the principles of E-cohesion, public procurement, durability and “Do No Significant Harm” shall be complied with.

During the implementation of the programme the Managing Authority will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support policy objectives (including professionalization efforts to address capacity gaps). Beneficiaries should be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifestyle cost criteria. When feasible, environmental and social considerations (e.g. green public procurement criteria) as well as innovation incentives should be incorporated into public procurement procedures.

Finally, the New European Bauhaus is an important initiative which the ASP 2021-2027 supports in different ways (for starting points see, among others, approaches supporting cultural heritage, energy efficiency or circular economy). The implementation of these principles and approaches should be examined in the course of the assessment of project applications, then the project implementation reports and evaluations.

1.3. Justification for the selection of policy objectives and the Interreg specific objectives, corresponding priorities, specific objectives and the forms of support, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(3)(c)

Table 1

| Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective | | 1. A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity |
|---|---|---|
| Selected specific objective | Priority | Justification for selection |
| RSO1.1. Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies | 3. Innovation and digitalisation supporting a green Alpine region | Transnational cooperation on innovation and the uptake of advanced technologies has a particular potential to foster a climate resilient, green, carbon-neutral and resource sensitive Alpine region, provided that the activities are tailored to the needs of the programme area. For lagging territories, it offers opportunities to overcome territorial imbalances and opens new chances to shape solutions for a more just territorial development during the green transformation process. The Alpine region is heterogeneous with regard to the innovation-based performance. Cooperation on innovation is in place for some years now; however, the EC Orientation Paper states that “the Alpine Space is not (yet) a functional area for RDI”. Some regions are innovation leaders while others are less advanced with regard to innovation performance. Innovation capacities and support services are not evenly distributed in the Alpine region; and they are particularly under-represented in rural areas. At the same time, many Alpine actors in private and public sectors are eager and open to innovative solutions. Thus, stronger cooperation between different types of actors in and between regions and improved access to innovation environment would increase sustainable competitiveness. Supported actions include innovative solutions with a view to increasing the common good and to inclusiveness towards lagging territories and marginalised groups. Many of the previous projects co-funded by the programme in this field focused on strengthening cooperation between private partners and academia as well as on the exchange of knowledge and practices. However, given the low level of involvement of public and policy actors, the impact was limited. This requires projects that go beyond accustomed approaches and enter into fields that strengthen green innovation and place a special focus on testing and implementation in transnational contexts. At the same time interventions under this SO should be targeted at the most pressing needs. They shall contribute to a more just and integrative development while seeking climate resilience, carbon-neutrality, green and resource |

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| | | sensitive solutions, thus in complementarity of Priority 1 and 2). Form of support: grants. They are used to support financially non-viable projects. |
| RSO1.2. Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities | 3. Innovation and digitalisation supporting a green Alpine region | Digitalisation is an increasingly relevant phenomenon and a megatrend which affects a wide range of issues. These include business development and innovation, social innovation, work, education and training of skilled labour force, provision of public services, as well as a more efficient transformation to a carbon neutral and climate resilient territory with help of better information flows. Digitalisation potentials are relevant in mountainous contexts such as in the Alps, where many areas are affected by remoteness and lack of accessibility, which are further aggravated by demographic changes and depopulation. Digitalisation in Alpine regions has the potential to contribute to mitigating these problems, leading to a reduced polarisation, and bridging different territorial types through the provision of new solutions and services for citizens and businesses. As such, it can help mitigate negative demographic trends and brain drain by offering new employment solutions and encouraging skilled and young actors to remain in rural and intermediate Alpine territories instead of moving to urban areas. Digital tools can be explored to “future-proof” the knowledge-based and green, resource-sensitive and carbon-neutral Alpine economy by offering new possibilities to pursue goals under Priorities 1 and 2. Combined with innovation and creativity, it can help make the Alps more resilient and flexible in adjusting to global trends and shifts in traditional economy, demographic as well as environmental and climate challenges. Digitalisation has a particularly attractive application potential also with regards to availability and access to SGIs, health, sustainable tourism, new working models and mobility and transport planning. Form of support: grants. They are used to support financially non-viable projects. |
| Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective | | 2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility |
| RSO2.1. Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions | 2. Carbon neutral and resource sensitive Alpine region | Being part of the wealthiest regions of the world, the Alpine region is affected not only by climate change impacts. They are also highly responsible for the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Reducing energy consumption is a key success factor to fight the climate crisis. The Alpine countries are committed to achieving the target of the EU Energy Efficiency Directive and respectively the amending directive until 2030 and beyond. Under the amending directive, EU countries will have to achieve new energy savings of 0.8% each year of final energy consumption for 2021-2030. Alpine regions are among the forerunners of promoting energy efficiency measures, but there is still considerable effort needed to achieve these goals. High levels of final energy consumption are still observable by countries in certain areas, as well as in certain sectors such as in the transport, building and residential sector, or the tourism and leisure sector. Promoting energy efficiency measures help to tackle climate change and to reduce its impact in the most affected areas. Energy efficiency measures are needed at local, regional, |

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| | | <p>but also transnational level in order to be effective and to unfold a high impact. Efficiency concepts alone most probably will not be sufficient to manage the transition to a carbon neutral or even a to a post carbon society. Innovative steps therefore should go beyond efficiency and foster integrated, transnational concepts of well-being and post-carbon lifestyles that go further than mainstream approaches Due to their topography and geography but as well as to their traditions, societal set-up and state of economic development, the Alpine region poses a particularly suitable laboratory for testing and elaborating innovative, transnational approaches in the field of energy efficiency and sufficiency. Form of support: grants. They are used to support financially non-viable projects.</p> |
| <p>RSO2.4. Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account eco-system based approaches</p> | <p>1. Climate resilient and green Alpine region</p> | <p>Due to its topography, climate change affects the Alpine region more than other areas. The annual average temperature will increase in the Alpine arc. Changes in precipitation patterns and a movement of the snow line to higher altitudes are predicted for the Alps. As a result, the Alpine region will have to cope with water scarcity and heat waves in summer and warmer and more humid winters. Both nature and humans will be directly affected by increasing temperatures. Additionally, climate change will lead to an increase in natural risks that pose a threat to settlements, infrastructure, livelihoods, human lives, and nature. Mountainous regions as well as their forelands will be highly affected due to their vulnerability. Key sectors that will have to adapt to climate change and natural risks will be the tourism and leisure sector, agriculture, forestry, water management, spatial planning and landscape planning. Apart from that, the mobility-system and the settlement system will be affected as well, e.g. by an increase in floods or landslides, closed or endangered roads and infrastructures, increase of “red zones.” Climate change will have major impacts on the economic and social system. The consequences of climate change will be manifold and represent a considerable challenge for Alpine nature, economy, and society. These challenges will not be limited to national borders. The exact impacts are not yet clear and its variety is difficult to predict today. This uncertainty is an additional challenge that experts, administrations, and policy makers have to cope with. Making the Alps more resilient with regard to climate change requires a joint effort of key actors in all sectors and across borders. This demands inter-regional and trans-national action leading to comprehensive adaptation measures in the Alpine region. There is no time to waste: the public costs of inaction in the field of climate change adaptation will be significantly higher than the costs invested now. Form of support: grants. They are used to support financially non-viable projects.</p> |
| <p>RSO2.6. Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy</p> | <p>2. Carbon neutral and resource sensitive Alpine region</p> | <p>The linear orientation of the mainstream economy leads to an enormous consumption of resources and accumulations of waste. In a world where resources are limited, the transition to new approaches such as “circular economy, green economy, and bio-economy are highly important and inevitable. These approaches reduce the overall resource use, energy consumption and the environmental impacts to a minimum and ensure social inclusion. Coordinated efforts will be needed to meet the global and European goals (e.g. “European Green Deal”). The Alpine region</p> |

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| | | <p>shows a specifically high share of natural resources, such as wood, other raw materials, or renewable energies. The exploitation and processing requires innovative and environmentally friendly technologies, on the one hand. On the other hand, the natural and renewable resources provided in the Alpine region pose a wide range of opportunities in a sustainable circular, green economy. Additionally, many Alpine key sectors (e.g. tourism, mobility) pose interesting but challenging issues for a “circular economy.” Striking the balance in resource use and resource protection will be a key issue in the Alpine region. Thus, the implementation of circular economy approaches offer high potentials. They promote sustainable development for Alpine key resources and key sectors, the implementation of new innovative and transnational solutions, fostering of value chains and breaking the linkage between economic growth and resource use in the long run. These approaches can also be applied to Alpine tangible and intangible cultural heritage to foster its preservation, use, enhancement, or reuse. Given its environmental sensitivity and innovative potential, the Alpine region should build on its successful base and become a leader in developing and implementing circular economy solutions together with green and bio-economy. This can be achieved through transnational cooperation that would involve various types of actors and stakeholders. Form of support: grants. They are used to support financially non-viable projects.</p> |
| RSO2.7. Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution | 1. Climate resilient and green Alpine region | <p>The Alpine region is an important European biodiversity hotspot that defines its environmental sensitivity but also offers significant opportunities for sustainable development. Alpine biodiversity and ecological connectivity have been under pressure for many decades especially since the second half of the last century. Intensive exploitation of natural resources and the use of land e.g. for settlements, transport, energy and touristic infrastructure have caused high losses in biodiversity and the fragmentation of ecosystems and landscapes in the Alpine area. Additionally, air and noise pollution caused by increased transport intensity and the production sector are particularly problematic. Climate change is an additional significant threat for Alpine biodiversity. Not only does climate change have an impact on species and ecosystems, but so do certain climate mitigation and adaptation measures, e.g. in the field of renewable energies (such as wind parks in areas of high biodiversity). Taking into account the outstanding value of Alpine ecosystems, green systems and the current and upcoming threats, a focus must be placed on further strengthening Alpine biodiversity, on the connectivity of Alpine ecosystems as well as multifunctional green infrastructures. In that context, multifunctional green and blue infrastructures offer solutions that can both help to protect biodiversity as well as the sustainable use of ecosystem services. Furthermore, green and blue infrastructure can ensure a better functionality of Alpine cultural landscapes and local economy activities (e.g. tourism, agriculture) and can improve the connection between rural and urban areas. The implementation of transnational green infrastructure solutions can greatly contribute to biodiversity, pollution reduction in all territorial types enhancing territorial potential, possibly by linking rural and urban</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| | | areas and across national borders. Form of support: grants. They are used to support financially non-viable projects. |
| Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective | | 6. Interreg Specific Objectives: A better Cooperation governance |
| ISO6.4. Enhance institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, as well as other territorial strategies (all strands) | 4. Cooperatively managed and developed Alpine region | Fostering transnational cooperation and exchange across borders and governance levels are the “core business” of each transnational programme. Enhancing the institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders is a crucial basis and is strongly needed for successful cooperation. The Alpine region is characterised by high quality public administration with a good and long tradition of cooperation. Cooperation in the Alpine region takes place on all governance levels - starting from local to regional, national, bilateral, transnational and with the establishment of EUSALP also on macro regional level. Cooperation activities are implemented through a wide range of formats - be it funding programmes such as EU-transnational or bilateral cooperation programmes, international agreements such as the Alpine Convention and its protocols or regional cooperation frameworks. Current challenges like climate change adaptation and mitigation, impacts of the COVID 19-pandemic or the digital and global transformation strongly underline the need for public administrations to further adapt and develop their services and processes beyond the capabilities of isolated national or regional administrations and to engage in up-to-date multilevel and transnational governance initiatives. Considering this, areas that urgently will require support, are for example communication - (between different governance levels but also communication with stakeholders and the public), capacity building as well as cross-sectoral and -horizontal cooperation. The funding period 2021-2027 with the “Interreg-specific objective” provides a tailor made opportunity for the Alpine Space programme to build on previous experiences and to deepen cooperation and governance within the Alpine region. The activities foreseen for Priority 4 should therefore focus on supporting the efforts to apply the principle of governance in practice and support respective projects. Form of support: grants. They are used to support financially non-viable projects. |

2. Priorities

Reference: points (d) and (e) of Article 17(3)

2.1. Priority 1: Climate resilient and green Alpine region

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.1.1 Specific objectives: RSO2.4. Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account eco-system based approaches

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches

2.1.1.1. Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The Alpine region will be highly affected by climate change in the upcoming years. The annual average temperature will increase, changes in precipitation events and patterns are foreseen and the snow line will move to higher altitudes. The Alpine region will have to face periods of water scarcity and heat as well as of high precipitation, causing floods, landslides, and other natural hazards. The mountainous regions as well as foothills and forelands of the Alps are highly vulnerable zones. Sectors particularly affected will be tourism and leisure time activities, food production (shift in crops and farm management), forestry and water management but also transport and mobility. The consequences of climate change in the Alpine region are expected to be manifold and represent a considerable challenge for alpine nature, economy, and society.

The signs of climate change require urgent action. Adaptation to climate change is one element of a possible reaction, mitigation is another. Within this specific objective (SO), measures that foster the adaptation to climate change, “the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects.” as the IPCC puts it, should be covered. Mitigation measures will be covered in PO2 SO i, and SO iv. Nevertheless it should be pointed out, that actions supported within this SO should have an integrated character, foster co-benefits for mitigation and avoid lock-in-effects by adaptation.

The following areas seem to be of particular relevance for the implementation of this SO within the Alpine Space Programme 2021 - 2027:

From a transnational Alpine perspective, the inter-relations within the natural, economic, and societal systems are of special interest. The variety and the extent of the impacts caused by climate

change in the different Alpine regions are yet uncertain in detail (e.g. what will the concrete impacts of an increase in landslides and floods on tourism/leisure activities look like? How can administrations ensure road safety in the case of an increase in landslides or rock fall due to glaciers retreat and permafrost instability?). Precisely because of these uncertainties the adaptive capacity of the Alpine region urgently needs to be strengthened. Solutions should be developed to cope with the impacts of climate change, to establish climate services and to foster the resilience of the Alpine region.

Adaptation measures related to risk prevention and disaster resilience should go hand-in-hand with these adaptation measures. Climate change will lead to an increase in natural hazards that pose an explicit threat to settlements, infrastructure, livelihoods, and human lives in mountainous regions as well as in the forelands of the Alps. Therefore, the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027 should support the development of inter-regional and transnational frameworks, joint management approaches and services that foster risk prevention and disaster resilience in a comprehensive and sustainable way. Nature Based Solutions (NBS - solutions inspired and supported by nature like e.g. protective forests) in particular offer great potentials in that respect and should therefore be given special attention.

In the Alpine region, actors generally can look back on traditions of cooperation in climate change adaptation and risk management. But in order to meet the global (UN Agenda 2030, Paris Agreement) and even more ambitious EU climate strategies and goals (e.g. European Green Deal, European Climate Law), increased efforts and a strong focus are the means of choice. Making the Alpine region more resilient with regard to the impacts of climate change requires a huge joint effort of the key actors together with citizens as well as a shift from sectoral to integrated and participatory approaches at a transnational, regional, and local level. This specific objective should therefore be a main focus of the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027.

Related types of action:

Promote **climate change adaptation-measures** specifically focusing on the inter-relations between the natural, economic, and societal systems in the Alpine region by the following indicative types of action:

- a) Developing solutions and pilots to strengthen the preparedness and adaptive capacity of the alpine society, economy and nature to cope with the impacts of climate change and establish climate services[1] to foster the resilience of the Alpine region (e.g. societal/economic adaptation, health aspects, changes and needs of ecosystem services, water and soil protection, financial aspects);
- b) Organising solutions and pilot actions to bridge the gap between climate research and practical implementation and to integrate new research results into the adaptation practice at different levels and for different types of territories;
- c) Supporting information exchange and knowledge transfer at a transnational/regional/local level to adapt to the impacts of climate change and to raise awareness among experts, policy makers and citizens;

d) Developing methodologies and tools within pilot activities aiming at measuring and monitoring the specific impacts of climate change to the lithosphere-biosphere-hydrosphere-cryosphere.

Promote **risk prevention and disaster resilience** that go hand-in-hand with the aforementioned adaption measures by:

e) Setting-up of preventive, integrative and strategic planning measures in the fields of spatial planning and risk management through the joint development of solutions, tools, interoperable databases; disaster monitoring-, warning- and response- systems at different territorial levels concerning all kind of natural hazards and fostering Nature Based Solutions;

f) Developing solutions and pilot activities for different types of territories in highly affected and exposed regions (e.g. high altitude environment with glacial mass reduction, permafrost degradation, or regions specifically hit by draught) as well as exposed main communications axes (e.g. roads, railways) and human settlements.

g) Improving skills and competences for policy makers and stakeholders at different policy levels to make better use of digitalization in the field of risk prevention, risk management and climate change adaptation, e.g. by harmonizing and sharing data (incl. open data) and implementing innovative digital tools;

h) Developing integrated and participatory concepts and implementing pilot projects in risk management as well as communication measures aiming at raising awareness and preparedness among policy makers at different policy levels as well as among citizens;

i) Developing solutions and pilot activities to set up coordination structures for the sustainable management of multifunctional protective forests and the establishment of Nature Based Solutions, taking into account Green and Blue infrastructure, sustainable water management and ecosystem services.

All types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they are not expected to have any significant negative impact due to their nature.

2.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2: Output indicators

| Priority | Specific objective | ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Milestone (2024) | Target (2029) |
|----------|--------------------|--------|---|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1 | RSO2.4 | RCO84 | Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | pilot actions | 5 | 15 |
| 1 | RSO2.4 | RCO116 | Jointly developed solutions | solutions | 2 | 21 |

Table 3: Result indicators

| Priority | Specific objective | ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Base line | Reference year | Final target 2029 | Source of data | Comments |
|----------|--------------------|---------|--|------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------|
| 1 | RSO2.4 | RCR 104 | Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations | solutions | 0,00 | 2021 | 11,00 | JEMS* | |

*JEMS = Joint Electronic Monitoring System

2.1.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Main target groups to specific objective: “Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches” (PO 2, specific objective (iv)):

- National, regional or local public authorities,
- Higher education and research institutions,
- Schools/education and training centres,
- National, regional or local development agencies,
- Interest groups including NGOs and citizen`s associations,
- Sectoral agencies,
- Enterprises (incl. SME),
- Infrastructure and (public) service providers,
- Business support organization, including chambers of commerce, networks and clusters,
- General public/citizens,
- Other public organisations.

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools are not planned to be used within the transnational Alpine Space programme 2021-2027.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

There are no financial instruments planned to be used within the transnational Alpine Space programme 2021-2027.

2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of 17(9)

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

| Prio rity | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|--------------|-----------------------|------|--|--------------|
| 1 | RSO2.4 | ERDF | 060. Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: others, e.g. storms and drought (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches) | 5,815,718.00 |
| 1 | RSO2.4 | ERDF | 058. Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: floods and landslides (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches) | 5,815,718.00 |
| 1 | RSO2.4 | ERDF | 173. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context | 6,631,434.00 |
| 1 | RSO2.4 | ERDF | 059. Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: fires (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches) | 5,815,718.00 |

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

| Prio rity | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|--------------|-----------------------|------|-----------|---------------|
| 1 | RSO2.4 | ERDF | 01. Grant | 24,078,588.00 |

Table 6: Dimension 3 - territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

| Prio rity | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|--------------|-----------------------|------|---|---------------|
| 1 | RSO2.4 | ERDF | 33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting | 24,078,588.00 |

2.1.2. Specific objective: RSO2.7. Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution.

2.1.2.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The Alpine region marks a transnational biodiversity hotspot; even though it is situated within one of the most densely inhabited and connected areas in Europe. This particular context calls for urgent action. Alpine biodiversity and ecological connectivity have been under pressure for many decades, especially since the second half of the last century. Human activities, land use, exploitation of natural resources and pollution lead to habitat fragmentation and loss of biodiversity and cultural landscapes. Additionally, consequences of climate change (e.g. heat, drought) as well as certain climate mitigation and adaptation measures (e.g. the reinforced use of wind- or hydropower in sensitive regions) pose threats to Alpine biodiversity. The on-going and predicted reduction of living space and biotope fragmentation causes high losses in biodiversity and reduces ecosystem services. The need to reduce biotope fragmentation and loss as well as to foster the connectivity of ecosystems is therefore high.

What particularly distinguishes Alpine biodiversity is the coexistence of zones hardly influenced by people and zones that have been cultivated for centuries. Both are characterized by their high importance for Alpine biodiversity. In untouched areas, specific habitats were able to evolve. However, valuable habitats have also developed in areas used for agriculture and forestry, the so-called “cultural landscapes” of the natural and cultural heritage of the Alps.

Regarding these the following thrusts seem particularly relevant for the implementation of this SO within the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027:

As the need to reduce biotope fragmentation and to strengthen the traditional Alpine landscape, the Alpine Space Programme will put a focus on the joint and strategic development of transnational Green and Blue multifunctional infrastructure-networks. Green and blue multifunctional infrastructures (GBI) offer integrated solutions that protect biodiversity and support the sustainable valorisation of ecosystem services (e.g. water, clean air). Networks of GBI also provide climate services, contribute to the provision of recreational areas close to residential areas and help to reduce negative impacts of pollution and improve air quality e.g. by fresh air corridors. The latter is of particular importance for urban, densely inhabited as well as recreational areas and strongly supports

health aspects (e.g. “One-health-approach”), what came out to be particularly important within the COVID 19-pandemic.

Apart from that, the Alpine region will look more closely at the effects of climate change on biodiversity. Changes in temperature and precipitation have impacts on the phases of growth as well as the composition of the flora and fauna. This implies threats e.g. caused by “invasive species” or diseases but also opportunities for new species. Additionally, certain climate change mitigation and adaptation measures have strong impacts on the Alpine biodiversity and ecosystem services. Therefore, the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027 will foster transnational cooperation, knowledge-exchange and reinforced research on the concrete impacts of climate change on Alpine biodiversity, in both protected (e.g. Natura 2000 areas, national parks, all further kinds of sanctuaries) and other areas.

The extraordinary diversity of habitats makes the Alpine region one of the most important areas both for the preservation of biodiversity as well as the sustainable valorisation of ecosystem services. Developments in recent years and predicted future developments connected to climate change call for reinforced action. Cooperation at transnational, regional, and local level as well as inclusive approaches will strongly support these efforts and therefore pose an important focus of this programme, expressed in the following indicative list of types of actions.

Related types of action:

- a) Implementing pilot projects that support multifunctional Green and Blue infrastructure-networks (“TEN-G”), Nature Based Solutions (NBS) and innovative planning methodologies in order to strengthen Alpine biodiversity and ecosystem services, targeting to develop tailor-made solutions for different territorial needs (urban, rural, peri-urban and their interlinkages) and taking into account their impacts on social, cultural and economic systems (e.g. health related issues like the “One-health-approach” integrated and sustainable approaches of system integration and valuation, reduction of pollution);
- b) Developing transnational solutions and implementing pilot projects on sustainable land use management, climate-friendly settlement development, soil protection and the sustainable valorisation of natural and cultural heritage, including cultural landscapes to reduce biotope fragmentation and to support the connectivity of ecosystems
- c) Supporting transnational cooperation, knowledge-exchange and reinforced research on the concrete impacts of climate change on Alpine biodiversity as well as the impacts of mitigation and adaptation measures for different types of territories and ecosystems, as well as in and for urban regions (e.g. to fight urban heat islands);
- d) Developing integrated solutions and pilot activities to cope with the impacts of energy management, hydro power, and energy grids on ecosystems and biodiversity;



Supporting measures of communication and awareness raising among different political levels and citizens concerning the valorisation of ecosystem services as well as Green and Blue infrastructure strategies across borders and their integration into regional and local planning.

All types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they are not expected to have any significant negative impact due to their nature.

2.1.2.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

| Priority | Specific objective | ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Milestone (2024) | Target (2029) |
|----------|--------------------|--------|---|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1 | RSO2.7 | RCO84 | Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | pilot actions | 3 | 9 |
| 1 | RSO2.7 | RCO116 | Jointly developed solutions | solutions | 1 | 13 |

Table 3 - Result indicators

| Priority | Specific objective | ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Base line | Reference year | Final target 2029 | Source of data | Comments |
|----------|--------------------|---------|--|------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------|
| 1 | RSO2.7 | RCR 104 | Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations | solutions | 0.00 | 2021 | 7.00 | JEMS | |

2.1.2.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Main target groups to specific objective: “Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution” (PO 2, specific objective (vii)):

- National, regional and local public authorities,
- Higher education and research institutions,
- National, regional or local development agencies,
- Interest groups including NGOs and citizen`s associations,
- Schools/education and training centres,
- Sectoral agencies,
- Enterprises (in particular SMEs),
- Business support organisations, including chambers of commerce, networks and clusters,
- Infrastructure and (public) service provider,
- General public/citizens,
- Other public organisations.

2.1.2.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools are not planned to be used within the transnational Alpine Space programme 2021-2027.

2.1.2.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

There are no financial instruments planned to be used within the transnational Alpine Space programme 2021-2027.

2.1.2.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 - intervention field

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|--|--------------|
| 1 | RSO2.7 | ERDF | 078. Protection, restoration and sustainable use of Natura 2000 sites | 4,496,150.00 |
| 1 | RSO2.7 | ERDF | 079. Nature and biodiversity protection, natural heritage and resources, green and blue infrastructure | 5,994,867.00 |
| 1 | RSO2.7 | ERDF | 173. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context | 4,496,150.00 |

Table 5 - Dimension 2 - form of financing

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|-----------|---------------|
| 1 | RSO2.7 | ERDF | 01. Grant | 14,987,167.00 |

Table 6 - Dimension 3 - territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|---|---------------|
| 1 | RSO2.7 | ERDF | 33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting | 14,987,167.00 |

2.2. Priority: 2 - Carbon neutral and resource sensitive Alpine region

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.2.1. Specific objective: RS02.1. Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions

2.2.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The European Union aims at becoming the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 with no net greenhouse gases in 2050 and economic growth decoupled from resource use. By 2030, greenhouse gas emissions are to be reduced by at least 55 % below the 1990 level. The ambitions with respect to carbon-neutrality have been reflected in different strategies (e.g. the Alpine Climate Target System 2050) as well as in implementing various measures in the Alpine region in the last years. However, in order to reach the global and European targets, the efforts must be increased in the next years.

In the first place, the need to implement energy efficiency and sufficiency measures, i.e. measures to use less energy but to perform the same tasks or services, will be necessary in order to achieve these goals. Energy efficiency measures reduce the amount of energy needed - which is extremely important against the background of still increasing energy consumption - and help lowering greenhouse gas emissions, thereby contributing to carbon neutrality. Energy efficiency in the long run also lowers costs for households as well as the economy and society due to the total reduction of energy needed for the production of heat, electricity, transport etc.

The two sectors currently showing the highest per capita end-use of energy in Europe are mobility and transport and the building sector. Mobility and transport is one of the sectors that is highly relevant in the Alpine region. Although progress towards energy efficiency has been made throughout the Alpine region and in different sectors, high levels of final energy consumption are still observable in certain areas. Road transport, next to the residential or the tourism and leisure sector, remains one of them. Efficiency concepts alone most probably will not be sufficient to manage the transition to a carbon neutral or even a post carbon society. Innovative steps therefore should go beyond efficiency and foster integrated, sufficiency-oriented concepts of well-being and post-carbon lifestyles. This should be coupled with the use of renewable energy sources broadly available within the Alpine region (e.g. water, wind, solar power).

The promotion of energy efficiency measures is closely linked to tackle climate change, as well as to implement circular economy-approaches. In this context, this specific objective should be seen as a “supporting objective” to SO iv “Promoting climate change adaption” and SO vi “Promoting the

transition to a circular economy.” The interventions in this specific objective should be complementary but not overlapping with these SO’s.

The following areas seem to be of particular relevance for the implementation of this SO within the Alpine Space Programme 2021 - 2027:

Due to its topography and geography as well as its joint traditions, societal set-up and state of economic development, the Alpine region is a particularly suitable laboratory for the elaboration and testing of innovative, cooperative approaches in the field of energy efficiency and the road towards sufficiency. Energy efficiency is tightly knitted to the need for economic development and competitiveness. Decoupling economic growth from resource consumption remains a huge challenge and hence is needed to be addressed in conjunction with energy efficiency targets and the further transition to low energy consumption and circular economy approaches. Lessons from the EU initiatives for coal regions in transition should be taken into account in this context.

To go a step further, the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027 will contribute to establishing a paradigm shift and transformation to focus on developing post-carbon and sufficiency-oriented solutions in the transnational context of the Alpine region, e.g. in the following fields and thereafter expressed indicative types of actions:

- Building/housing/residential sector (see connection to the focus of SO vi - circular economy with a focus on existing buildings), the potential of waste heat recovery, district heating systems or heat storage;
- Green/clean/soft mobility and transport e.g. connected to tourism and leisure time activities as well as specifically public passenger and freight transport (see connection to SO vi - circular economy)
- Integrative land-use-policies and energy-based spatial planning solutions to support efficient and synergetic use of energy (see connection to the focus of SO iv - risk prevention and SO vii - enhancing biodiversity).

Related types of action:

a) Supporting innovative solutions as well as concrete pilot actions that foster sufficiency-oriented-post-carbon lifestyles as well as cross- sectoral approaches for different types of territories, e.g. in the planning/ building/ housing/ residential/ tourism /mobility & transport/ energy sector(s) that take into account the sustainable implementation of new energy-resources (e.g. GNV, hydrogen, bio GNV, electric mobility);

b) Improving skills and competences for policy makers and stakeholders at different policy levels as well as energy communities to support the transition from efficiency to sufficiency and post-carbon oriented approaches, e.g. in the planning/ building/ housing/ residential/ tourism/ mobility & transport/ energy sector(s) also taking into account renewable energy sources;

c) Supporting solutions, the exchange of knowledge, good practices and R&D activities focussing on the transition from energy efficiency to sufficiency-oriented approaches and to support the transition



towards a post carbon economy and society in the Alpine region considering Multi-Energy-System-Integration and the sustainable use of renewables;

d) Developing cooperative and sustainable solutions to improve energy poverty policies concerning adequate and healthy heating, cooling, lighting and energy-to-power-appliances to enhance social inclusion, social innovation and encourage common policies for the Alpine region;

e) Supporting knowledge transfer, pilot activities, as well as communication measures in order to raise awareness among different policy levels and the citizens/consumers using approaches like behaviour economics, transformation management, and political framing in order to foster the paradigm shift towards sufficiency- and post-carbon approaches.

All types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they are not expected to have any significant negative impact due to their nature.

2.2.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

| Priority | Specific objective | ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Milestone (2024) | Target (2029) |
|----------|--------------------|--------|---|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 2 | RSO2.1 | RCO84 | Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | pilot actions | 2 | 5 |
| 2 | RSO2.1 | RCO116 | Jointly developed solutions | solutions | 1 | 7 |

Table 3 - Result indicators

| Priority | Specific objective | ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Base line | Reference year | Final target 2029 | Source of data | Comments |
|----------|--------------------|---------|--|------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------|
| 2 | RSO2.1 | RCR 104 | Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations | solutions | 0.00 | 2021 | 4.00 | JEMS | |

2.2.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Main target groups to specific objective “Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions”:

- National, regional and local public authorities,
- Higher education and research institutions,
- Schools/education and training centres,
- Business support organisations, including chambers of commerce, networks and clusters,
- National, regional or local development agencies,
- Interest groups including NGOs and citizen's associations,
- Sectoral agencies,
- Enterprises (in particular SMEs),
- Social organisations,
- Infrastructure and (public) service providers,
- General public/citizens,
- Other public organisations.

2.2.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools are not planned to be used within the transnational Alpine Space programme 2021-2027.

2.2.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

There are no financial instruments planned to be used within the transnational Alpine Space programme 2021-2027.

2.2.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 - intervention field

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|--|--------------|
| 2 | RSO2.1 | ERDF | 038. Energy efficiency and demonstration projects in SMEs and supporting measures | 1,712,820.00 |
| 2 | RSO2.1 | ERDF | 173. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context | 3,425,638.00 |
| 2 | RSO2.1 | ERDF | 046. Support to entities that provide services contributing to the low carbon economy and to resilience to climate change, including awareness-raising measures | 3,425,638.00 |

Table 5 - Dimension 2 - form of financing

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|-----------|--------------|
| 2 | RSO2.1 | ERDF | 01. Grant | 8,564,096.00 |

Table 6 - Dimension 3 - territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|---|--------------|
| 2 | RSO2.1 | ERDF | 33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting | 8,564,096.00 |

2.2.2. Specific objective: RSO2.6. Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy

2.2.2.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Fostering circular economy is one of the main thrusts of the European Green Deal. Circular economy refers to sustainable systems that treat resources as particularly valuable and attempt to close the resource loop. The principles of avoiding “waste” and trying to keep resources in use for as long as possible are relevant for the entire production-cycle. In this regard, circular economy is a far broader approach than just recycling or waste management. It strongly supports sustainable development, the mindful use of resources, climate-neutrality and both climate change mitigation and adaptation. Concerning the situation with COVID 19, circular economy is also widely assumed to be a suitable approach to tackle the crisis, strengthen resilience, and support a “sustainable restart” of the social and economic system. In this global crisis, the importance of regional and local value chains became clearly visible. Circular economy approaches appear to be very suitable for supporting the needs of sustainable economic development, climate-protection, and social adaptation in the Alpine region.

Regarding the concept of circular economy, the following directions seem particularly relevant for the implementation of this SO within the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027:

The Alpine region is characterized by a high potential for natural resources. The exploitation and processing is mostly linked to (highly) material intensive sectors. Circular-economy-approaches will show great impact and foster the reduction of the overall material use as well as the implementation of innovative solutions and new technologies (e.g. green hydrogen). The Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027 will take a step further and link the circular economy approach with bio-economy and other green economy-concepts. Examples supported might be:

- “Cradle to cradle building”-concepts as advance of “sustainable building” (concerning key sectors such as construction and housing, energy, incl. renewable energy);
- (Trans-) regional material cycles and value-chains regarding resource efficient exploitation, processing and production, transport and use, recycling or up-cycling (e.g. production of sustainable materials and goods, sustainable handicraft and manufacturing, sustainable timber processing, building materials processing, recycling of batteries), also taking into account sharing approaches and renewables (e.g. bioenergy from agricultural and food waste).

Further sectors with great importance for the Alpine region are tourism, leisure time activities, and related sectors (e.g. food production, mobility). Here the programme will support the development

of concepts regarding closed material cycles in Alpine tourism, mobility, and related sectors. This might be achieved by:

- Fostering the use of high quality biological, indigenous and regional products (e.g. “farm to fork-approach”, regional and local craftsperson ship as material and immaterial heritage);
- Reducing the total use and consumption of materials and resources in tourism and leisure time activities, including mobility;
- Fostering approaches in waste recycling (e.g. “plastic free” Alpine region, reducing food waste) and valorisation of waste (e.g. wood and agro-food chains, urban waste).

Furthermore, consumer- and social innovation-oriented processes play an important role. To support the transformation towards circular economy, green economy and bio-economy as well as more eco-sufficiency, consumers and their behaviours have to be addressed. The existing awareness of consumers, stakeholders, and citizens should be strengthened and joint solutions towards circular economy-approaches considering behaviour economics should be developed.

Regarding the different territorial types, circular economy-approaches strengthen the economic development in rural as well as in urban regions:

- The concept poses specific opportunities for rural and mountainous regions with high potentials of renewables with regard to their sustainable valorisation as well as the exploration of the opportunities of bio-economy and bio-tourism.
- Additionally, regional material cycle solutions are particularly appropriate for mountainous areas with constricted transport routes. These solutions can have additional positive environmental impacts like a reduction of pollution and CO₂ emissions due to reduced transport needs.
- Alpine cities and towns might be specifically well suited to embark on innovative waste management solutions, taking into account digitalization (e.g. “smart solutions”).

This specific objective (PO2, SO vi) and the indicative types of actions specified below will represent a focus of the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027. It has strong inter-linkages with PO2, SO i. Further important framework documents that support circular economy are the new “Industrial Strategy and Circular Economy Action Plan,” the “Farm to Fork Strategy for sustainable food” and proposals for a pollution-free Europe prepared by the European Commission.

Related types of action:

- a) Setting-up circular/green/bio-economy-solutions to facilitate the development and implementation of circular and green economy-approaches among different actors with a focus on the Alpine key resources and key sectors above mentioned and implement innovative (pilot)projects and processes;
- b) Exchanging good practices and implementing pilot activities supporting inter-regional circular economy approaches that promote bio-economy, the use of indigenous biological and regional

products and that support waste reduction specifically in the above mentioned key sectors (including e.g. refurbishment activities, enhancing supply chains, regional and local value chains);

c) Developing and implementing "transnational value chain"- solutions based on regional assets and resources, competences and needs referring to the EU-key-concept of "strategic value chains", supporting industrial and innovation stakeholders in the Alpine region;

d) Improving skills and competences of stakeholders at all policy levels and in the relevant business sectors to pave the way towards the implementation of circular, green economy as well as bio-economy approaches including the set-up of indicators and monitoring systems;

e) Supporting solutions and pilot activities dealing with communication, capacity building, political framing approaches and awareness raising for stakeholders at different policy and implementation levels (e.g. including SMEs, start-ups etc.) as well as citizens/consumers using approaches like behaviour economics and political framing concerning the concept of "circular economy", "green economy" as well as "bio-economy" to support a better understanding for the needed transformation processes.

f) Developing solutions and pilot activities supporting the development of clusters specialized in circular and green economy as well as circular bio-economy that foster research, innovation, implementation and cooperation particularly in the in the above mentioned key sectors.

All types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they are not expected to have any significant negative impact due to their nature.

2.2.2.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

| Priority | Specific objective | ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Milestone (2024) | Target (2029) |
|----------|--------------------|--------|---|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 2 | RSO2.6 | RCO84 | Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | pilot actions | 4 | 12 |
| 2 | RSO2.6 | RCO116 | Jointly developed solutions | solutions | 2 | 17 |

Table 3 - Result indicators

| Priority | Specific objective | ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Base line | Reference year | Final target 2029 | Source of data | Comments |
|----------|--------------------|---------|--|------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------|
| 2 | RSO2.6 | RCR 104 | Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations | solutions | 0.00 | 2021 | 8.00 | JEMS | |

2.2.2.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Main target groups to specific objective “Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy”:

- National, regional and local public authorities,
- Higher education and research institutions,
- Schools/education and training centres,
- Business support organisations, including chambers of commerce, networks and clusters,
- National, regional or local development agency,
- Interest groups including NGOs and citizen's associations,
- Enterprises (in particular SMEs),
- Sectoral agencies,
- Infrastructure and (public) service provider,
- Social organisations,
- General public/citizens,
- Other public organisations.

2.2.2.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools are not planned to be used within the transnational Alpine Space programme 2021-2027.

2.2.2.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

There are no financial instruments planned to be used within the transnational Alpine Space programme 2021-2027.

2.2.2.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 - intervention field

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|--|--------------|
| 2 | RSO2.6 | ERDF | 071. Promoting the use of recycled materials as raw materials | 5,812,880.00 |
| 2 | RSO2.6 | ERDF | 075. Support to environmentally-friendly production processes and resource efficiency in SMEs | 6,812,880.00 |
| 2 | RSO2.6 | ERDF | 173. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context | 6,750,505.00 |

Table 5 - Dimension 2 - form of financing

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|-----------|---------------|
| 2 | RSO2.6 | ERDF | 01. Grant | 19,376,265.00 |

Table 6 - Dimension 3 - territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|---|---------------|
| 2 | RSO2.6 | ERDF | 33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting | 19,376,265.00 |

2.3. Priority: 3 - Innovation and digitalisation supporting a green Alpine region

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.3.1. Specific objective: RSO1.1. Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies

2.3.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Cooperation on innovation capacities is a transversal activity that can strengthen the programme's impact in particular thematic fields by increasing the innovation potential of Alpine actors. Enhancing research and innovation capacities in the Alpine region should effectively be fostered by cooperation between actors and stakeholders in different regions.

However, it should be ensured that its implementation takes place according to the present needs and lessons learnt from the past. Traditional approaches that focus on cooperation between private actors and academia can have an even stronger impact with the involvement of policy-makers. Creating a stronger link to innovation policies can safeguard the provision of policy solutions to strengthen actors' capacity to innovate and jointly develop and implement innovative solutions. Better alignment and coordination of policy-making in the transnational context is necessary in order to help regions overcome barriers in cooperation on innovation and uptake of advanced technologies. This will lead to establishing and strengthening existing synergies and functional links, reducing polarisation between urban and rural regions, for example by diffusing innovation services, capacities, linking key actors, and fostering resilience.

At the same time, the programme should further ensure involvement of diverse actors from research, innovation, academia, private sectors, public sector, and civil society. Its focus should not only be result-oriented innovation seeking particular solutions, but also innovation with regards to processes and with a view to reducing territorial imbalances. This can be done by encouraging an open and inclusive culture, contributing to bottom-up development of joint solutions by involving wide a range of actors (including also citizens, students of all ages next to academic and economic actors). This approach additionally should also support social innovation and its application in relevant fields, such as SGIs, sustainable tourism or mobility. Clusters and innovation hubs can continue to benefit from transnational cooperation as key players supporting the concrete deployment of innovation services, leading to innovation diffusion and increased innovation capacities of the regional ecosystems.

It is important to observe that the innovativeness of solutions sought in the programme refers not only to the objective of making business actors more competitive, but to making other actors, such as public bodies and other organisations, more capable of applying innovative solutions and technologies. Given by the programme's mission (such as priority 1 and 2), innovation includes a "green" character of activities, impacts of projects as well as methods and practices of project management. Project partners are asked to consider expected and unexpected impacts of their projects on the environment and sustainability, to seek mitigation of possible adverse effects of the implementation of innovations and technologies, to strengthen any possible positive effects and, whenever possible, to incorporate mechanisms or practices that will unleash such positive effects.

Regarding these considerations the following thrusts seem particularly relevant for the implementation of this SO within the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027:

Activities can address a range of joint challenges which are either persistent or emerging, such as those linked to the COVID-19 health crisis. The interventions under this specific objective should be complementary but not overlapping with activities in other specific objectives. Thus, an effective implementation of joint policy solutions shall directly and indirectly, with relation not just to their objective but also the process, lead to improved transnational framework conditions for innovation and uptake of advanced technologies, especially with a view to increasing the common good. Pursuing these topics should consider above-mentioned principles such as creating links with the policy level, fostering process innovations and greening practices, open, inclusive cultural and social innovation and links to policy level and greening aspects.

In the mountainous Alpine context, other topics (such as access and provision to SGIs, including health care and medical innovations, sustainable tourism and social innovation or mobility) have particular relevance and can be addressed. These thematic fields have also increased relevance due to dangers of health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the same time, cooperation should focus on reducing innovation disparities between different regions and diffusing innovation support services, including clusters and innovation hubs and linking relevant actors, as specified in the indicative types of actions below.

Related types of action:

a) Developing or testing **joint solutions** (e.g. policy instruments and management tools) and **joint actions** to support innovation and uptake of advanced technologies. These activities should involve policy-level actors and have an open and inclusive character, for example in the following areas:

- Shaping an innovation ecosystem that builds on the natural and the cultural heritage of the area, supporting the development of sustainable and innovative value chains that go beyond mainstream approaches and that involve the relevant actors, including individuals and social stakeholders, promoting and exploring solutions for social innovation, eco-innovation and green economy as a trigger for regional development;
- Fostering the innovation capacities, addressing innovation gaps on a transnational level in non-urban areas, reinforcing urban-rural as well as rural-rural-linkages in the field of

innovation, fostering access of rural businesses to the urban innovation support services and diffusion of innovation support services;

- Supporting clusters and innovation hubs-cooperation in different territories, as well as transnational value chains relevant for regional smart specialisation strategies (“S3”), focusing particularly on urban-rural links;
- Supporting experimental models and “green” start-ups to better address innovation topics in the Alpine region, involving greening practices building upon the natural and cultural heritage and knowledge of the actors in the Alpine region;
- Testing ideas for transnational innovation activities and entrepreneurship with a view to reducing territorial imbalances in all sectors, processes and ecosystems in the Alpine region, as well as solutions for identifying and mitigating adverse social and environmental impacts;
- Promoting and exploring application of social innovation to SGIs, improve mobility with advanced technologies (such as green hydrogen), health and medical innovations, sustainable tourism with particular consideration of bottom-up and open, inclusive approaches such as co-creation and living labs;
- Develop and test transnational training programmes to improve skills for green and digital transition and contributing to broaden innovation capacities.
- Support the development and adaptation of business models, products, services, and processes that strengthen the resilience and adaptation of businesses to climate change in urban and rural areas and promote a low carbon economy.

b) Testing and implementing transnational **networking activities, networking tools, advisory services and exchange platforms** to (for example)

- foster social and process innovation based on the natural and cultural heritage of the Alpine region.
- connect regional innovation ecosystems (e.g. to develop joint solutions for innovation diffusion)

c) Supporting the **coordination between innovation activities and policies and other policy domains** of highest relevance in the Alpine region.

All types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they are not expected to have any significant negative impact due to their nature.

2.3.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

| Priority | Specific objective | ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Milestone (2024) | Target (2029) |
|----------|--------------------|--------|---|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 3 | RSO1.1 | RCO84 | Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | pilot actions | 2 | 8 |
| 3 | RSO1.1 | RCO116 | Jointly developed solutions | solutions | 1 | 8 |

Table 3 - Result indicators

| Priority | Specific objective | ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Base line | Reference year | Final target 2029 | Source of data | Comments |
|----------|--------------------|---------|--|------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------|
| 3 | RSO1.1 | RCR 104 | Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations | solutions | 0.00 | 2021 | 4.00 | JEMS | |

2.3.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Main target groups to specific objective “Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies”:

- National, regional, local national authorities,
- Sectoral agencies,
- Business support organisations, including chambers of commerce, networks and clusters,
- Higher education and research institutions,
- Enterprises (in particular SMEs),
- Infrastructure and (public) service providers,
- General public/citizens,
- Interest groups including NGOs and citizen`s associations.

2.3.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools are not planned to be used within the transnational Alpine Space programme 2021-2027.

2.3.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

There are no financial instruments planned to be used within the transnational Alpine Space programme 2021-2027.

2.3.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 - intervention field

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|---|--------------|
| 3 | RSO1.1 | ERDF | 012. Research and innovation activities in public research centres, higher education and centres of competence including networking (industrial research, experimental development, feasibility studies) | 1,525,768.00 |
| 3 | RSO1.1 | ERDF | 010. Research and innovation activities in SMEs, including networking | 1,525,768.00 |
| 3 | RSO1.1 | ERDF | 029. Research and innovation processes, technology transfer and cooperation between enterprises, research centres and universities, focusing on the low carbon economy, resilience and adaptation to climate change | 1,805,768.00 |
| 3 | RSO1.1 | ERDF | 030. Research and innovation processes, technology transfer and cooperation between enterprises, focusing on circular economy | 1,270,511.00 |
| 3 | RSO1.1 | ERDF | 173. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context | 1,525,768.00 |
| 3 | RSO1.1 | ERDF | 138. Support for social economy and social enterprises | 1,525,768.00 |
| 3 | RSO1.1 | ERDF | 152. Measures to promote equal opportunities and active participation in society | 1,525,768.00 |

Table 5 - Dimension 2 - form of financing

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|-----------|---------------|
| 3 | RSO1.1 | ERDF | 01. Grant | 10,705,119.00 |

Table 6 - Dimension 3 - territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|---|---------------|
| 3 | RSO1.1 | ERDF | 33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting | 10,705,119.00 |

2.3.2. Specific objective: RSO1.2. Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities

2.3.2.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

Digitalisation offers opportunities to address joint challenges which are particularly prominent in mountainous areas such as the Alpine region. New digital tools can be developed to increase resilience and mitigate the impacts of accessibility problems and remoteness coupled with negative demographic situations in many regions. Such increased flexibility can be particularly attractive in the context of the territorial specificity of the Alps as well as its ambition to become climate resilient, carbon neutral, green, inclusive and resource sensitive. Due to the emergence of COVID-19, the need to support digital transition in these fields in an inclusive way in all regions became even clearer. Individual lives as well as working modes in both public and private sector have been transformed as more location-flexible. This has created a “window of opportunity” for strengthening and making use of digitalisation to support life and work of citizens to enforce sustainable development even in the face of external challenges.

Application of digital solutions can pave a way to a more open, inclusive, and participative society and citizen-empowerment that is based on cooperation between different actors such as authorities, citizens, and businesses. Digitalisation can be used to support social changes and behaviour, lifestyle, and leisure shifts that support more sustainable communities. However, in order to fully unlock its potential, cyber-security and privacy risks need to be appropriately addressed. An active role of policy makers in developing standards and raising awareness of citizens, as well as responsibility of economic actors is to be emphasised.

Next to increased social sustainability and social innovation, digitalisation also provides opportunities for businesses. Strengthening sustainable economic development in terms of new working structures, product and service provision, innovativeness as well as improved information flows are only a few examples.

Digitalisation can contribute to finding solutions for more efficient, innovative, and effective solutions that support a shift to climate resilience, carbon-neutrality, greening, and resource sensitivity. In the context of the private sector, it also facilitates the implementation of greening practices by businesses and associations as well as ensuring consideration concerning the exclusion of negative impacts of digitalisation on the environment. Principles that should be pursued in these activities are

the inclusion of appropriate groups, such as policy-makers or the civil society, as well as safeguarding that any activities have a positive environmental impact.

Regarding these considerations the following thrusts seem particularly relevant for the implementation of this SO within the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027:

There are diverse ways in which territorial cooperation can bring about the benefits of digitalisation which are relevant to the Alpine region. Projects can explore new and flexible opportunities for working and provision of products and services, new working conditions and working structures, new production-processes, a focus on individualised private, public, and personal products and services. Activities can also focus on customised solutions and services, focus on production processes and services with low material input and a high service component, or the sharing and creative economy. The programme can empower different actors to develop experiment and implement such solutions in various contexts via transnational cooperation. This can also involve advanced innovative digital solutions such as AI, machine learning, IoT, Alpine-wide interoperability of data for private and public purposes. This requires the involvement of different actors including the civil society - also aiming at the “next generation” - as well as policy-makers in order to ensure the uptake of solutions.

A particular focus on the digital divide and on regions that are lagging behind in terms of digital innovation, territorial cooperation will ensure the cohesion of the Alpine region. It is particularly important that activities tackle the digital divide between less and more advanced regions as well as between fluent users and people without sufficient knowledge and/or physical access to information and communication technologies. This constitutes a general policy challenge to digital transformation that affects all age and social groups as well as urban, intermediate, or rural regions and aspects of cultural heritage. It is essential to ensure that policy actors are well-equipped to address these joint needs. In order to ensure ultimate effectiveness in implementing digital solutions, the involvement of policy-level in such activities should also be geared towards ensuring their safety in cyberspace and protection of privacy.

Related types of action:

a) Developing or supporting pilot projects or activities as well as joint solutions (e.g. policy instruments and management tools) to support reaping the benefits of digitalisation in different fields to bring about socially and environmentally sustainable change, for example:

- Developing and testing solutions that better address the response to sustainable development efforts, and to contribute to solutions for climate resilience, resource sensitivity, green and carbon neutrality as well as ensuring inclusiveness and social accessibility to these solutions for a just transition;
- Developing and testing solutions to support flexible SGI provision in all types of areas and for all types of users with regards to e-health/smart health, e-government as well as telemedicine, to be applicable in general and not only in times of health crises;
- Developing and testing solutions to support e-learning, new working structures (home-office and other forms of flexible working) in order to provide more attractive living possibilities in remote areas to different social groups;

- Developing and testing solutions to support business development opportunities, product and service development, strengthening of regional value chains and regional marketing, with a view to reducing territorial imbalances;
- Contributing to elaboration and implementation of Smart Villages and Smart Cities concepts;
- Implementing pilot projects or other activities to accompany SMEs and associations in their digital transformation, with the overarching aim to increase environmental sustainability (e.g. using digitalisation to showcase carbon positive integrated solutions that reduce their carbon footprint and increase competitiveness).

b) Promoting integration of digitalisation as a transversal policy issue: supporting **coordination between digitalisation activities and policies and other policy domains** of highest relevance in the Alpine regions and in response to sustainable development efforts, demographic trends and increase in well-being, particularly focusing on the following policy issues:

- Developing and testing solutions and policies to mitigate digitalisation-related security risks such as cyber security, privacy, data-protection;
- Developing and testing solutions and policies to closing the digital divide between regions (including explore synergies between rural and urban areas through digital solutions), as well as between more and less fluent users.

c) Implement activities to facilitate **networking activities, networking tools, advisory services and exchange platforms** in order to increase territorial cohesion and/or social inclusion in the Alpine region, for example by:

- Setting up or supporting transnational network structures and platforms for sharing exchange of good practices and knowledge with regards to policy solutions supporting digitalisation;
- Setting up or supporting Digital Innovation Hubs.

d) Developing common data collection, indicators and monitoring systems harmonized across borders, ensure the update and sustainability of data collection and monitoring systems.

All types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, as they are not expected to have any significant negative impact due to their nature.

2.3.2.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

| Priority | Specific objective | ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Milestone (2024) | Target (2029) |
|----------|--------------------|--------|---|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 3 | RSO1.2 | RCO84 | Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | pilot actions | 2 | 8 |
| 3 | RSO1.2 | RCO116 | Jointly developed solutions | solutions | 1 | 8 |

Table 3 - Result indicators

| Priority | Specific objective | ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Base line | Reference year | Final target 2029 | Source of data | Comments |
|----------|--------------------|---------|--|------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------|
| 3 | RSO1.2 | RCR 104 | Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations | solutions | 0.00 | 2021 | 4.00 | JEMS | |

2.2.2.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Main target groups to specific objective “Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities”:

- National, regional and local authorities,
- Sectoral agencies,
- Higher education and research institutions,
- National, regional or local development agencies,
- Other public organisations,
- General public/citizens,
- Social organisations,
- Business support organisations, including chambers of commerce, networks and clusters,
- Enterprises (in particular SMEs),
- Interest groups including NGOs and citizen`s associations.

2.3.2.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools are not planned to be used within the transnational Alpine Space programme 2021-2027.

2.3.2.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

There are no financial instruments planned to be used within the transnational Alpine Space programme 2021-2027.

2.3.2.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 - intervention field

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|--|--------------|
| 3 | RSO1.2 | ERDF | 015. Digitising SMEs or large enterprises (including e-Commerce, e-Business and networked business processes, digital innovation hubs, living labs, web entrepreneurs and ICT start-ups, B2B) compliant with greenhouse gas emission reduction or energy efficiency criteria | 2,676,280.00 |
| 3 | RSO1.2 | ERDF | 017. Government ICT solutions, eservices, applications compliant with greenhouse gas emission reduction or energy efficiency criteria | 1,000,000.00 |
| 3 | RSO1.2 | ERDF | 019. e-Health services and applications (including e-Care, Internet of Things for physical activity and ambient assisted living) | 1,605,768.00 |
| 3 | RSO1.2 | ERDF | 016. Government ICT solutions, e-services, applications | 2,211,535.00 |
| 3 | RSO1.2 | ERDF | 018. IT services and applications for digital skills and digital inclusion | 3,211,536.00 |

Table 5 - Dimension 2 - form of financing

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|-----------|---------------|
| 3 | RSO1.2 | ERDF | 01. Grant | 10,705,119.00 |

Table 6 - Dimension 3 - territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|---|---------------|
| 3 | RSO1.2 | ERDF | 33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting | 10,705,119.00 |

2.4. Priority: 4 - Cooperatively managed and developed Alpine region

Reference: point (d) of Article 17(3)

2.4.1. Specific objective: ISO6.4. Enhance institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, as well as other territorial strategies (all strands)

Reference: point (e) of Article 17(3)

Enhance institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies and sea- basin strategies, as well as other territorial strategies.

2.4.1.1 Related types of action, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate

Reference: point (e)(i) of Article 17(3), point (c)(ii) of Article 17(9)

The Alpine region is characterised by a long tradition of international and inter-regional cooperation on governmental and non-governmental level. Cooperation in this sense takes place on a wide variety of levels and in a wide variety of formats, ranging from local to macro regional level, from international to regional agreements, or from professional funding programmes to voluntary work. Cooperation activities are implemented through a wide range of formats, e.g. by funding programmes such as EU-transnational or bilateral cooperation programmes, as well as by international agreements such as the Alpine Convention and its protocols or regional cooperation frameworks. This shows the wide range of governance stakeholders involved at different levels, but at the same time reveals the challenge of addressing these actors adequately and in an innovative and appealing way.

In order to take governance and multi-level-cooperation in the Alpine region to a new level, an important step has been taken in recent years: With the establishment of the EUSALP (European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region) a new perspective for governance cooperation at macro regional level was launched. EUSALP is the “youngest” of four European Macro-regional strategies and forms an integrated governance framework and strategic approach for addressing common challenges and bringing together stakeholders in the Alpine region. EUSALP was adopted by the European Commission in 2015 and endorsed by the European Council in 2016. Despite its “youth” it has already managed to bring together new stakeholders across sectors, government levels, and countries and therefore has contributed towards a new perspective of professional governance in the Alpine region. In this regard the Alpine Space programme 2014-2020 supported the deepening of governance-structures with EUSALP specifically within two projects (AlpGov I and II) which provided a good basis for further development steps.

Current challenges like climate change adaptation and mitigation, impacts of the COVID 19-pandemic or the digital and global transformation strongly underline the need for public administrations to

further adapt and develop their services and processes beyond the capabilities of isolated national or regional administrations and to engage in up-to-date multilevel and transnational governance initiatives. Areas that urgently will require support before this background are for example the further professionalization of communication and stakeholder involvement (between different governance levels but also communication with stakeholders and the public), digitalisation, capacity building as well as cross-sectoral and -horizontal cooperation.

Multilevel-governance in the Alpine region therefore further has to be evolved and institutional capacities of public authorities and stakeholders have to be enhanced accordingly. To this end, the Interreg specific objective represents a tailor-made possibility to deepen and evolve cooperation and governance structures in the Alpine region.

To meet the above mentioned needs, the Alpine Space Programme aims on further clarifying, deepening, supporting, and improving cooperation structures, with placing a particular focus on the professionalization of governance and stakeholder structures as well as on preparing the ground for innovative projects and stronger involvement of the civil society.

These key-points should contribute towards a higher extent of exploiting synergies, supporting EUSALP in developing an appropriate and tailor-made governance system as well as towards a stronger mutual reinforcement of both approaches.

Furthermore, the actions of the Interreg specific objective are also aimed at addressing and involving further relevant cooperation frameworks within the Alpine region - starting from professional structures like the Alpine Convention and reaching until Alpine wide governance initiatives interested in the further enhancement of Alpine regions` governance structures, as specified in the indicative types of actions below. The programme partners are ready to taking and triggering actions by programme management and projects that aim at continuing the well-established close coordination with the Alpine Convention in thematic fields addressed by both, working programmes resp. protocols.

Related types of action:

- a) Setting up transnational frameworks, platforms, networks and mechanisms in the field of governance to enhance cooperation between Alpine stakeholders including the mapping of resources, potentials and processes as well as defining innovative implementation pathways and structures;
- b) Developing and implementing solutions to enhance cooperation and organisation processes within the EUSALP governance structure;
- c) Developing solutions and pilot projects for communication measures and tools to support multi-level governance, reaping the benefits of digitalization;
- d) Supporting capacity building and trainings for public authorities and stakeholders at different policy and governance-levels in order to adapt to new challenges (e.g. mitigation and adaptation to climate change, digitalisation, professionalization, process-innovation);



- e) Developing tailor-made strategies and solutions for the integration of and communication with stakeholders at different policy and governance-levels, as well as with the civil society - also including “the next generation” (youth) - and non-institutional actors;
- f) Fostering and implementing knowledge transfer, exchange and capitalisation activities addressing the major governance aspects and key stakeholders of the Alpine region;
- g) Fostering the use of available funding instruments for governance support and EUSALP implementation;
- h) Developing and implementing joint solutions for monitoring, reporting and evaluating multilevel and transnational policy instruments;
- i) Implementing joint pilot projects for the design, testing, up-scaling, comparison and evaluation of innovations in the field of public administration;
- j) Developing mechanisms for the uptake and implementation of multilevel and transnational governance.

All types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle, since they are not expected to have any significant negative impact due to their nature.

2.4.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iii) of Article 17(9)

Table 2 - Output indicators

| Priority | Specific objective | ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Milestone (2024) | Target (2029) |
|----------|--------------------|--------|--|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 4 | ISO6.4 | RCO116 | Jointly developed solutions | solutions | 1 | 6 |
| 4 | ISO6.4 | RCO118 | Organisations cooperating for the multi-level governance of macroregional strategies | organisations | 13 | 42 |

Table 3 - Result indicators

| Priority | Specific objective | ID | Indicator | Measurement unit | Base line | Reference year | Final target 2029 | Source of data | Comments |
|----------|--------------------|---------|---|------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------|
| 4 | ISO6.4 | PSR 1 | Organisations with increased institutional capacities due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders | organisations | 0.00 | 2021 | 21.00 | Survey | |
| 4 | ISO6.4 | RCR 104 | Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations | solutions | 0.00 | 2021 | 3.00 | JEMS | |

2.4.1.3. Main target groups

Reference: point (e)(iii) of Article 17(3), point (c)(iv) of Article 17(9)

Main target groups to action: “Enhance institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies and sea- basin strategies, as well as other territorial strategies.”:

- National, regional, local national authorities,
- Higher education and research institutions,
- Schools/education and training centres,
- National, regional or local development agencies,
- Other public organisations,
- Interest groups including NGOs and citizen's associations,
- Business support organization, including chambers of commerce, networks and clusters,
- Sectoral agencies,
- General public/citizens.

2.4.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

Reference: Article point (e)(iv) of 17(3)

ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools are not planned to be used within the transnational Alpine Space programme 2021-2027.

2.4.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments

Reference: point (e)(v) of Article 17(3)

There are no financial instruments planned to be used within the transnational Alpine Space programme 2021-2027.

2.4.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Reference: point (e)(vi) of Article 17(3), point (c)(v) of Article 17(9)

Table 4 - Dimension 1 - intervention field

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|--|--------------|
| 4 | ISO6.4 | ERDF | 170. Improve the capacity of programme authorities and bodies linked to the implementation of the Funds | 4,282,048.00 |
| 4 | ISO6.4 | ERDF | 173. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context | 4,282,048.00 |
| 4 | ISO6.4 | ERDF | 171. Enhancing cooperation with partners both within and outside the Member State | 2,141,023.00 |

Table 5 - Dimension 2 - form of financing

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|-----------|---------------|
| 4 | ISO6.4 | ERDF | 01. Grant | 10,705,119.00 |

Table 6 - Dimension 3 - territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

| Priority | Specific objective | Fund | Code | Amount (EUR) |
|----------|--------------------|------|---|---------------|
| 4 | ISO6.4 | ERDF | 33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting | 10,705,119.00 |



3. Financing plan

Reference: point (f) of Article 17(3)

3.1 Financial appropriations by year

Reference: point (g)(i) of Article 17(3), points (a) to (d) of Article 17(4)

Table 7

| Fund | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | Total |
|--------------|------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| ERDF | 0.00 | 18,287,573.00 | 18,581,327.00 | 18,880,956.00 | 19,186,577.00 | 15,898,393.00 | 16,216,362.00 | 107,051,188.00 |
| Total | 0.00 | 18,287,573.00 | 18,581,327.00 | 18,880,956.00 | 19,186,577.00 | 15,898,393.00 | 16,216,362.00 | 107,051,188.00 |



3.2 Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

Reference: point (f) of Article 17(3), points (a) to (d) of Article 17(4)

Table 8

| Policy Objective | Priority | Fund (as applicable) | Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution) | EU contribution (a) | Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution | | National contribution (b)=(c)+(d) | Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart | | Total (e)=(a)+(b) | Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e) | Contributions from the third countries (for information) |
|------------------|-------------|----------------------|---|---------------------|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| | | | | | without TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a1) | for TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a2) | | National public (c) | National private (d) | | | |
| 2 | 1 | ERDF | Total | 42,191,015.00 | 39,065,755.00 | 3,125,260.00 | 14,063,671.00 | 13,576,722.00 | 486,949.00 | 56,254,686.00 | 75.00 | 2,049,424.00 |
| 2 | 2 | ERDF | Total | 30,175,589.00 | 27,940,361.00 | 2,235,228.00 | 10,058,529.00 | 9,710,257.00 | 348,272.00 | 40,234,118.00 | 75.00 | 1,465,776.00 |
| 1 | 3 | ERDF | Total | 23,123,056.00 | 21,410,238.00 | 1,712,818.00 | 7,707,685.00 | 7,440,809.00 | 266,876.00 | 30,830,741.00 | 75.00 | 1,123,200.00 |
| 6 | 4 | ERDF | Total | 11,561,528.00 | 10,705,119.00 | 856,409.00 | 3,853,843.00 | 3,720,405.00 | 133,438.00 | 15,415,371.00 | 75.00 | 561,600.00 |
| | Total | ERDF | | 107,051,188.00 | 99,121,473.00 | 7,929,715.00 | 35,683,728.00 | 34,448,193.00 | 1,235,535.00 | 142,734,916.00 | 75.00 | 5,200,000.00 |
| | Grand total | | | 107,051,188.00 | 99,121,473.00 | 7,929,715.00 | 35,683,728.00 | 34,448,193.00 | 1,235,535.00 | 142,734,916.00 | 75.00 | 5,200,000.00 |

4. Action taken to involve the relevant programme partners in the preparation of the Interreg programme and the role of those programme partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Reference: point (g) of Article 17(3)

The programming process for the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027 officially started in spring 2019. The programme established a **task force (TF)** consisting of delegates from all partner states as well as observers from the European Commission, the Alpine Convention and the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). The task force was responsible for drafting the cooperation programme 2021-2027 and was chaired by the chair of the programme committee. Representatives of the Managing authority (MA) and the Joint secretariat (JS) also took part in the TF-meetings, prepared, and supported the meetings.

External experts had been contracted to support the drafting of the Interreg programme (IP) and the accompanying strategic environmental assessment (SEA):

- Drafting of the Cooperation Programme: Rosinak & Partner ZT GmbH / ÖIR
- SEA: University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU)

Both documents were elaborated in parallel, the programme trying to take up the recommendations given by the SEA as well as possible.

The TF met 19 times, moving mainly to online meetings from April 2020 until July 2021 due to the restrictions related to the COVID-19-pandemics. In its meetings the TF-members firstly discussed an analysis and needs-assessment prepared by the experts and then turned to the discussion of the drafts of the IP (geography of the programme, strategy, justification of selection of priorities, policy objectives and specific objectives, specific objectives and actions, intervention logic, financial resources,...).

The **programming process** in its central parts was completed by July 2021. Changes in the general conditions were addressed accordingly as well as the general time schedule for programming had to be adapted to current developments (e.g. timeframe due to Corona-crisis, multiannual financial framework, agreement upon legal frame-work).

The mandate of the TF will be finished after the official adoption of the programme by the European Commission. A programme committee will be set up to support the implementation of the programme.

Furthermore, the following opportunities for the involvement of relevant partners according to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 were provided:

Focus group-workshop on structures and procedures: In order to obtain input and feedback from project partners, a targeted focus-group-workshop on project structures and procedures was held in Munich in September 2019. In this workshop around 20 projects partners (mainly experienced lead partners) took part and in depth discussed proposals and shared learnings on the set up of programme procedures, working tools, simplification of structures and procedures as well as possible “experimental approaches.” The outcomes of this workshop were taken up for the development of the programme structure and implementation.

EUSALP annual forum 2019: The Alpine space programme 2021-2027 reserved a session in the EUSALP annual forum on 29 November 2019. The MA, JS and experts provided an input on the current stage of the drafting-process and after that participants were invited to discuss and feedback the first proposals of the programme draft (possible orientations of selected POs and SOs). The outcomes of this discussion were documented and the feedback was integrated in the next drafting steps of the programme. The session at the EUSALP annual forum aimed at informing interested stakeholders. Participants had no further formal role in the drafting process, but were invited to closely follow the drafting and implementing process of the programme (e.g. via taking part in calls for project proposals etc.).

Stakeholder consultation May 2020: In order to involve interested stakeholders yet at an early stage, around 6-7 stakeholder workshops had been planned in the partner states from March - May 2020. These consultations had been planned as physical workshops, carried out by the partner states, and supported by the experts. But due to the COVID-19-pandemic all the already planned workshops had to be cancelled. Instead the MA, JS, and experts set up a first online consultation, providing a first draft of the IP for broad feedback among interested stakeholders. Partner states were asked to distribute the invitation among stakeholders and the online consultation was opened from beginning until end of May 2020. 334 persons took part in this consultation and submitted their feedback on the first draft (e.g. selected SO's, proposed actions). The experts integrated the outcomes and prepared a revised draft of the IP. The outcomes as well as the revised draft was discussed in detail in the TF and helped to develop a next draft of the IP.

Official online consultation summer 2020: Based upon the above mentioned drafting and feedback steps, a revised draft of the IP was prepared for the official consultation of the IP together with the SEA. Both documents were subject to broad online consultation from mid-July until mid-September 2020. 204 persons took part in the consultation. The information about this consultation was disseminated through websites, newsletters, and other forms of online communication. Again the outcomes - together with the recommendations of the SEA - were taken up and discussed in the TF. Based on that, the final draft of the IP was developed.

With these two rounds of online consultations, the Task Force tried to involve as many interested stakeholders and relevant partners as possible. The participants had the opportunity to provide feedback on the drafts, but were also generally informed about the drafting process, the Alpine space programme as a whole and were invited to further contribute in the course of the programme implementation (e.g. via submitting projects proposals, taking part in calls or events).



The programme partners commit themselves to the partnership-principle laid down in Article 8 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 [CPR] and will therefore involve relevant partners not only in the preparation phase as laid down above, but also in the programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation.



5. Approach to communication and visibility for the Interreg programme (objectives, target audiences, communication channels, including social media outreach, where appropriate, planned budget and relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation)

Reference: point (h) of Article 17(3)

The programme's approach to communication and visibility aims at demonstrating the core value of the Interreg Alpine Space programme: the programme shall be seen as an enabler, long-term partner, and source of inspiration for a better quality of life in the Alpine region through cooperation.

Based on the programme's mission statement, the **communication objectives** are:

- To build capacities for an effective implementation and communication of the projects and the programme: enhance the communication capacities of programme bodies, support applicants, and beneficiaries in an effective project implementation, increase the capacity of project partners to communicate their project achievements.
- To bring the programme and its achievements closer to citizens: increase awareness of potential applicants about the programme's funding opportunities, promote the projects' achievements and foster their capitalisation by policy-makers and potential applicants, promote the benefits of European territorial cooperation for the Alpine Space.
- To position the programme at the forefront of the transition towards an innovative, climate-neutral Alpine region: support applicants and beneficiaries to reduce the carbon footprint of their activities (internal communication), profile the Interreg Alpine Space as an environmentally friendly and responsible programme (external communication).

The **target audiences** of the programme communication include: (potential) beneficiaries, (potential) end users and citizens concerned with the challenges tackled by the programme, in particular young people who are less involved in policy making processes, multipliers of project results, including programme bodies, Alpine Organisations, EUSALP members and stakeholders, EU institutions including the EC, INFORM network, other thematically relevant national and European networks, other Interreg programmes, etc.

The programme will make a differentiated use of a range of **communication channels**, depending on the target groups addressed and the messages to spread. Events will be dedicated to the information and training of programme bodies, applicants and beneficiaries. Thematic events will encourage synergies between projects, foster innovation, as well as the capitalisation of project achievements. Some of these events might be organised as public events or embedded in larger, external events



(e.g. Alpine, European or EUSALP events) in order to further promote the programme and its impact to European citizens. Events will be green certified or in online format whenever relevant.

The communication of the programme will be mainly digital and based on various formats e.g. short stories, digital publications, online campaigns, videos or other audio-visual productions. The programme website, newsletter, and social media channels form a coherent ecosystem for the digital communication of the programme. The programme website is the main entry to inform (potential) beneficiaries on the programme functioning and news. It is interactive, accessible, and easy to navigate for its different users. It hosts the project websites to support the promotion of their own achievements and increase their visibility. The programme social media channels bring the programme closer to citizens and will be crucial to build a community among its followers. Messages and formats are tailored to the social media channels (e.g. Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook), which mix may evolve depending on the latest trends. The citizens or end users of the project results will also be involved through awareness-raising or participatory measures.

Following the recommendation of the European Commission, the total **communication budget** of the Interreg Alpine Space 2021-2027 programme is at least 0.3% of the total programme budget. The indicative financial plan for communication activities amounts to €650.000 covering the following categories: basic communication activities (€20.000), website and other digital communication channels (€130.000), publications and online campaigns (€100.000), events (€350.000) and a reserve (€50.000).

All communication activities are monitored and evaluated on a regular basis, using external or internal evaluators. Data will be collected through surveys, internal statistics, or website analytics. The programme will use a detailed set of indicators to follow and evaluate all communication activities and improve their performance on an on-going basis. Indicators will include: satisfaction of applicants and beneficiaries, number of visits/downloads on programme website, ranking of the programme website in search engine results, outreach of the social media accounts, number of participants to events and specific activities, level of engagement on specific newsletter and social media posts, number of followers of the projects' social media accounts, number of projects implementing sustainable management practices.



6. Indication of support to small-scale projects, including small projects within small project funds

Reference: point (i) of Article 17(3), Article (24)

Already since several programming periods the programme implements the policy cycle concept. It is a precious support for a result oriented approach, is well known by the stakeholders and potential project partners and offers a great opportunity for projects to help position their activities in the policy context, at the same time offering clarity to the programme on what can be expected by projects. Projects can tackle a wide range of challenges, and position themselves in the policy cycle, depending on the maturity of the topic addressed and the type of activities. Three phases are identified in the policy-cycle: (1) strategic policy development, (2) explorative and piloting activities and (3) policy implementation.

The classic projects that the programme has been financing the past years usually tackle two phases of the policy cycle. To create impact they require a certain duration, budget, and size of partnership.

Experience with the Alpine Region Preparatory Action Fund (ARPAF) has shown that smaller projects with smaller budget and partnership and more focussed actions are of added-value and relevance in the Alpine Space context. For this reason the Alpine Space programme will also fund small-scale projects with shorter duration, smaller partnership, and budget than the classic projects in all funding priorities. Small-scale projects will be an easy entry door to the programme for actors for whom classic projects were out of reach so far. Due to their limited size and duration small-scale projects will by nature only be able to work in one single phase of the policy cycle. To classic projects they will be connected in two ways: they can give the opportunity for a spin-off of a classic project (an idea generated there will be taken to another level) or they can provide expertise and inspiration for a classic project. Their objectives and activities will depend on the theme tackled, its maturity, and the knowledge already available. For instance they can “explore a theme,” enable a test drive of new topics and prepare the ground for a classic project, test on the ground the validity of a “specific output” of a classic project, support transfer and “roll-out” of main achievements of a classic project, sort of “add-on” or “spin off” with strong result-orientation.

7. Implementing provisions

7.1. Programme authorities

Reference: point (a) of Article 17(6)

Table 9

| Programme authorities | Name of the institution | Contact name | E-mail |
|---|---|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| Managing authority | Land Salzburg represented by the Government Office of the Land Salzburg, department 1 for Economy, Tourism and Municipalities, unit 0/1 | Christina Bauer | alpine.space@salzburg.gv.at |
| Audit authority | Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism | Markus Köb | Efre_finanzkontrolle@bmlrt.gv.at |
| Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission | Land Salzburg represented by the Government Office of the Land Salzburg, department 1 for Economy, Tourism and Municipalities, unit 0/1 | Christina Bauer | alpine.space@salzburg.gv.at |

7.2. Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

Reference: point (b) of Article 17(6)

After consultation of the Member States and third countries participating in the programme, the MA will set up a JS (Article 46 (2) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 [Interreg]) with staff taking into account the programme partnership. The JS will assist the MA and the PC in carrying out their respective functions and undertake the day-to-day implementation of the programme.

7.3. Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States and where applicable, the third or partner countries and OCTs, in the event of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission

Reference: point (c) of Article 17(6)

Without prejudice to the Member States' responsibility for protecting the Union budget and applying financial corrections by cancelling all or part of the ERDF support to an operation when expenditure declared to the EC is found to be irregular (Article 103 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 [CPR]) and in accordance with Article 52 (1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 [Interreg], the MA shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the lead partner. Partners shall repay the lead partner any amounts unduly paid.

Where the lead partner does not succeed in securing repayment from a project partner or where the MA does not succeed in securing repayment from the lead partner, the Member State on whose territory the project partner concerned is located (in case of an EGTC where it is registered) shall reimburse the MA the amount unduly paid to that project partner (Article 52 (3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 [Interreg]). The MA is responsible for reimbursing the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union, in accordance with the appointment of liabilities among the participating member states as laid down below.

The MA will reimburse the funds to the Union once the amounts are recovered from the lead partner/project partner/member state.

The apportionment of liabilities among the participating Member States shall be as follows:

Each Member State bears liability for possible financial consequences of irregularities caused by a beneficiary located on its territory.

In case of a systemic irregularity or financial correction (decided by programme bodies or the European Commission) the Member State bears the financial consequences in proportion to the relevant irregularity detected on the territory of the respective Member State. Where the systemic irregularity or financial correction cannot be linked to a specific Member State territory, the liability shall be jointly borne by the Member States in proportion to the ERDF-contribution allocated to beneficiaries of the programme on their territory.

The liability principles set out above for project-related expenditure and systemic irregularities and financial corrections will be applied to technical assistance as they are a direct consequence of corrections related to project expenditure.

8. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Reference: Articles 94 and 95 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)

Table 10: Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

| Intended use of Articles 94 and 95 | YES | NO |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| From the adoption, the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates under the priority according to Article 94 CPR | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| From the adoption, the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs according to Article 95 CPR | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |



Appendix 3²: List of planned operations of strategic importance with a timetable - Article 22(3) CPR

In the period 2021-2027, the programme will provide funding to support EUSALP governance and implementation through the technical support structure (TSS) under priority 4, which has been initially set-up and financed by the EC from December 2021 to October 2022.

² Please note that appendix 1 and 2 do not apply to the programme.

Figure 1: Map of the cooperation area



Interreg Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027, illustration by iService.