



# Interreg Alpine Space Programme

## 2021-2027

Summary report of the final draft Interreg Programme (not yet approved by the European Commission)

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21/27

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## Nota bene:

As long as the IP is not approved by the EC, all decisions taken by the members appointed to the programme committee (PC) of the 2021-2027 Alpine Space programme are under provisional effectiveness. Upon approval of the programme, the decisions will become effective (in case the then formally established PC does not decide otherwise).

The IP is based on the draft implementation programme that was set up in compliance with Article 17 of the Interreg Regulation for the 2021-2027 period, according to the template annexed to the aforementioned regulation. The European Commission has not yet approved the IP.

Thus, neither have the programme authorities been formally established or confirmed nor have the selection procedure and criteria been formally approved. Please be aware that contents of the programme document may change substantially following negotiations of the partner states with the EC, and that the formally established PC might take other decisions than the provisional one.

For further information on the programming process, please visit the programme website or consult the network of ACP, JS and MA.



## What is the Alpine Space programme?

The Alpine Space programme is a European transnational cooperation programme that funds alpine-wide projects. It provides a framework to connect stakeholders from various sectors and different policy levels from seven Alpine countries. Key players from academia and administrative, business and innovation sectors, as well as policy-makers work together to tackle common challenges and develop joint solutions for the Alpine area. Sharing their experiences and expertise, they strive towards improving the quality of life for the Alpine citizens.

## What is the mission of the programme?

The programme will concentrate on green, CO2-neutral, innovative and governance related topics. The following mission statement of the programme is also an expression of this focus and intends to make this approach broadly visible.

### *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.

## What is the programme area?

The area of 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.



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## What we could learn from the past?

The EU transnational cooperation in the Alpine region has begun in 2000 after a decade-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 highlighting the areas of particular focus for the new Alpine Space Programme:



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- » As current developments show, Alpine regions 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.** An important way to increase the impact of the programme is to further emphasise sustainability and capitalization of project outcomes, territoriality and citizen-orientation.
  - » **A 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 raising** will be sought.
  - » **It remains important to further ensure that programmes are designed to produce outcomes which are not only short-term effects.** For example, activities stemming from Interreg projects can be mainstreamed in domestic programmes and by other actors than project partners.
  - » **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.**
  - » **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
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programme. The programme will aim to strongly engage under-represented actors and stakeholders, according to its target groups 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.

## What are the relations between 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.

According to the EC-reports on the implementation of the four MRS, 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. Almost all projects from the 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.

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.

## What are the funding Priorities in 2021-2027?

The partners of the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027 have defined the following priorities.

<b>Priority 1: Climate resilient and green Alpine region (PO 2)</b>		<b>Priority 2: Carbon neutral &amp; resource sensitive Alpine region (PO 2)</b>	
SO iv: Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience	SO vii: Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution	SO i: Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions	SO vi: Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy
<b>Priority 3: Innovation and digitalisation supporting a green Alpine region (PO 1)</b>		<b>Priority 4: Cooperatively managed and developed Alpine region</b>	
SO i: Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	SO ii: Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities	Enhance institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement EUSALP (“Interreg specific PO”)	

### Priority 1: “Climate resilient and green Alpine region”

**Specific objective: “Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience”**

The Alpine region will be highly affected by climate change in the upcoming years. The annual average temperature will increase changes in precipitation events, 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, 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. Actions supported within these specific objectives should have an integrated character, foster co-benefits for mitigation and avoid lock-in-effects by adaptation.

The programme will support the promotion of **climate change adaptation-measures** specifically focusing on the inter-relations between the natural, economic and societal systems in the Alpine region by funding actions like shown in the following examples:

- » 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 to foster the resilience of the Alpine region (e.g. societal/economic adaptation, health aspects, changes and needs of ecosystem services, soil protection, financial aspects,...);
- » 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;
- » 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;
- » Developing methodologies and tools within pilot activities aiming at measuring and monitoring the specific impacts of climate change to the lithosphere-biosphere-hydrosphere-cryosphere.

The programme will support the promotion of **risk prevention and disaster resilience** that go hand-in-hand with the aforementioned adaption measures by funding activities like the following:

- » 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;
- » 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.
- » 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;
- » 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;
- » 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, water-management and ecosystem services.

**Specific objective: “Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution”**



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 ongoing 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.

The programme can fund activities like the following:

- » 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,...);
- » 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
- » 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, as well as in and for urban regions (e.g. to fight urban heat islands,...);
- » 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.

## Priority 2: “Carbon neutral and resource sensitive Alpine region”

**Specific objective: “Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions”**

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. The ambitions with respect to carbon-neutrality have been reflected in different strategies (e.g. the Alpine Climate Target System 2050 (Alpine Convention) 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, etc.).

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 “Promoting climate change adaptation” and “Promoting the transition to a circular economy”. The interventions in this specific objective should be complementary but not overlapping with these specific objectives.

The programme can finance activities like the following examples:

- » 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);
- » 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;
- » 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;
- » 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;
- » 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.

### Specific objective: “Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy”

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.

Actions like indicated in the following can be financed:

- » 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;
- » 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, ...);
- » 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;
- » 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;
- » 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 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.
- » 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.

## Priority 3 “Innovation and digitalisation supporting a green Alpine region”

**Specific objective: “Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies”**

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 concerning 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.

The programme can fund activities like the following:

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

### Specific objective: “Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities”

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 of Alpine regions 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, green 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.

The programme will fund activities like the following:

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

## Priority 4 - Interreg Specific Objective - “A better Cooperation governance”

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 macroregional 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.



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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.

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 professionalisation 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.

The programme can fund activities like the following:

- » 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;
- » Developing and implementing solutions to enhance cooperation and organisation processes within the EUSALP governance structure;
- » Developing solutions and pilot projects for communication measures and tools to support multi-level governance, reaping the benefits of digitalization;
- » 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. digitalization, professionalization, process-innovation, ...);
- » 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;
- » Fostering and implementing knowledge transfer, exchange and capitalisation activities addressing the major governance aspects and key stakeholders of the Alpine region;
- » Fostering the use of available funding instruments for governance support and EUSALP implementation;
- » Developing and implementing joint solutions for monitoring, reporting and evaluating multilevel and transnational policy instruments;
- » Implementing joint pilot projects for the design, testing, up-scaling, comparison and evaluation of innovations in the field of public administration;
- » Developing mechanisms for the uptake and implementation of multilevel and transnational governance.

## Who can participate?

Depending on the specific objective, the programme addresses different kinds of target groups that can be beneficiaries. Please refer to the programme document to learn more details. In general, the programme foresees the following target groups:

- » National, regional, local national authorities,
- » Higher education and research institutions,
- » Schools/education and training centres,
- » Business support organisations, including chambers of commerce, networks and clusters,

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- » National, regional or local development agencies,
  - » Other public organisations
  - » Interest groups including NGOs and citizen`s associations,
  - » Social organisations,
  - » Sectoral agencies,
  - » General public/citizens

## What kind of projects will the programme fund?

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.



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## Where do I get more information?

Please visit our website [www.alpine-space.eu](http://www.alpine-space.eu), get in contact with our network of Joint Secretariat, Alpine Space Contact Points and Managing Authority and follow our social media channels.