Work Plans 23-25

EUSALP Action Groups

Cross-cutting Priorities

SUPPORT EUSALP

WORK PACKAGE 2 Supporting AGs activities & fostering integration

D.2.1.1 Action Groups Work Plans

Introduction

The nine EUSALP Action Groups (AG) bring together players from the Alpine region. They are each responsible for a specific thematic area: research & innovation (AG1), economic development (AG2), labour market, education and training (AG3), mobility (AG4), connectivity and accessibility (AG5), resources (AG6), green infrastructure (AG7), risk governance (AG8) and energy (AG9). The Action Groups have established their work programmes up to 2025 and developed cross-cutting initiatives within this framework.

The cross-cutting priorities focus on digitalisation, energy transition, water management and the circular economy. Extreme weather events, the energy crisis and the global competition facing the Alpine region are daily reminders of just how crucial these issues are. These priorities enable Action Groups to intensify their cooperation and to be more creative and innovative by adopting a cross-disciplinary approach. They are also a way of concentrating EUSALP's activities around a few key themes, thus making a more targeted contribution to meeting the challenges facing the Alpine region. The aim is also to make the activities of the Action Groups more visible to local, regional and national authorities.

While all those involved in regional development in the Alpine Space are welcome to contribute to these priorities, the Action Groups play a crucial role in coordinating them.

EUSALP CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITY 2023-25 #1

Promoting Digitalisation for the Alps

Abstract
The pandemic has emphasized the importance of digitalisation not only for urbanised areas but also for developing rural and mountain areas.
That is why AG5 - in collaboration with AG1, AG2, AG3, and AG9 - intends to identify different ways of promoting networking on the main priorities for digital transition in the Alpine region.
The idea is to support local communities and economic players through 5 main pillars:
- Smart and sustainable communities
- Key enabling technologies for local economic players
- Data economy enabled by data spaces and open platforms
- Co-working and remote working
- Digital skills and learning

By carrying out specific actions in these pillars, the AGs want to understand how digital technology and innovative approaches can encourage new generations to settle in the Alps, thus **creating smart, booming, and sustainable communities.** These new approaches must be smartly linked to existing structures to prevent social conflicts (i.e., the digital divide).

Objectives of the cross-cutting priority
The objectives are:
1) Collect and disseminate **best practices** and tools to enable mountain communities to become smart and sustainable through initiatives such as the AG 5 flagship initiative SmartCommUnity.
2) Explore how to **unleash the potential of data and data economy through Alpine data spaces** (and other KETs) and open platforms on key EUSALP priorities. Satellite data will also be shared for climate adaptation policies.
3) **Support the adoption of co-working, remote working**, training and learning practices in inner areas and foster digital skills and learning. The network of Vocational Education and Training (VET) schools in the Alps will contribute to achieving these goals.

Evaluation indicators
The following indicators will be used to assess the implementation of this priority:
• Collection of best practices
• Two studies/concept notes
• One catalogue of relevant open platforms
• Number of public events attended

Coordinators & Action Groups involved
Action Group 1 will engage researchers/experts when needed, promoting co-working and caregiving services, mapping and disseminating smart farming technologies in mountain areas, and creating a model to set up innovation hubs in inner areas.
Contact person(s): Cristiana Lavagetti (Lombardy Region).
Action Group 2 will prepare a project concept focusing on the data economy, developing a data space and open platform study, and organising a forum/workshop on the data economy.
Contact person(s): Luca Mion (Trentino Innovation Hub HIT).
Action Group 3 will collect experiences and promote remote working, training, and learning practices in inner areas, as well as the adoption and dissemination of digital skills and learning. It will also focus on raising the general public's awareness of remote working opportunities for young people and develop the concept of "multi-activity" mountain jobs, which combine remote and on-site work.
Contact person(s): Giorgia Borghini (Autonomous Province of Trento).
Action Group 5 is in charge of the overall coordination. It will also coordinate the development of a "smart community" concept as well as the exchange of best practices and tools. It will contribute to the study of data spaces and open platforms and the dissemination of remote working/learning practices and digital skills in inner areas.
Contact person(s): Carlo Vigna and Alessio Pastorino (Autonomous Region of Valle d'Aosta).
Action Group 9 will contribute to understanding better the availability of data for climate and energy policies by sharing the experience gained in the Interreg Alpine Space project Cervino and the use of satellite data (COPERNICUS) in climate policies (adaptation + mitigation).
Contact person(s): Etienne Vienot (Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Energy Environment Agency AURA-EE).

EUSALP CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITY 2023-25 #2

Accelerating the Energy Transition for a Carbon-Neutral Alpine Region

Abstract
The current energy crisis has shown how urgent the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources is. This priority will focus on:
- Fast-tracking the adoption of green and low-carbon hydrogen in the Alpine region, in accordance with the REPowerEU strategy that "*recognizes the role of the MRS [macro-regional strategies] in promoting cooperation in investments in hydrogen infrastructure*". Alpine regions are very proactive in fostering hydrogen production, storage, transportation, distribution, and use for mobility and industrial purposes.
- Strengthening the process of incorporating hydrogen in regional policies.
- Exchanging data on strategies for mobilising European funds to implement hydrogen infrastructure, with regions supporting each other in the dedicated EU calls, so that they can invest and thus ensure the continuity of hydrogen infrastructure in the Alps.
- Enabling local authorities and stakeholders to understand the challenges of hydrogen and to launch local projects in pilot areas.
- Facilitating the decarbonisation of the transport sector, which thus far has failed in promoting the use of renewable energy sources, bearing in mind that measures to decarbonise transport should follow the "avoid-shift-improve" approach.

Objectives of the cross-cutting priority
The objectives are:
1) **Foster investments in the hydrogen infrastructure**, relying on the Alpine hydrogen value chain and the many innovative companies that manufacture fuel cells, electrolysis, hydrogen refuelling stations, and new or retrofitted hydrogen vehicles. The EUSALP H2 focus group intends to reach the goal of the EU H2 strategy for 2030 by exploring available funding opportunities, interconnecting regional initiatives, and drafting a EUSALP hydrogen roadmap.
2) Work locally **to develop new H2 projects** in mountain and urban areas. Two projects, AMETHyST and H2MA, are currently funded by the Interreg Alpine Space Programme until 2025 and aim at increasing the capacities of local public authorities and connecting them with private hydrogen developers and companies. Study visits, public events, technical studies, tools, results, and outputs will be capitalised and widely disseminated in the Alpine area.
3) **Connect the EUSALP H2 initiatives with other EU H2 initiatives,** such as Hydrogen Europe and the Clean Hydrogen partnership, giving visibility, building networks, and connecting with other macro-regional strategies.
4) Accelerate the energy transition in the transport sector by encouraging cross-sectoral cooperation, identifying best practices, streamlining policies, and incubating new projects.

Evaluation indicators
The following indicators will be used to assess the implementation of this priority:
• Establishment of a EUSALP H2 roadmap
• Number of H2 focus group meetings per year; the goal is 3 per year
• Number of responses to EU calls to finance hydrogen development (Interreg, AFIF, Hydrogen Valleys) in the Alps
• Number of public events attended
• One political declaration on energy transition in the transport sector
• One high-level policy event with all four MRS in Brussels on energy transition in the transport sector
• Four public events/workshops
• Ten selected best practices published on the EUSALP website for Transport and Mobility

Coordinators & Action Groups involved

Action Group 2 will organize three EUSALP H2 focus group meetings per year and prepare the EUSALP H2 roadmap.

Contact person(s): Sylvain Guetaz (Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region) and Massimo Lapolla (Piemonte Region).

Action Group 4 will collect data on energy consumption in the transport sector. AG 4 will also identify innovative approaches to accelerate transport decarbonisation, considering new players from a cross-sectoral perspective and supporting existing policy measures, financial incentives, and cooperation schemes.

Contact person(s): Patrick Skoniezki (Europaregion Tirol-Südtirol-Trentino) and Michael Bürger (Tyrol Region).

Action Group 5 will collaborate with local excellences (https://energy.fbk.eu/) to investigate the relation between decarbonisation and digitalisation, stressing how the latter can represent a fundamental lever for decarbonising energy systems and business processes.

Contact person(s): Marco Tomasi (Bruno Kessler Foundation).

Action Group 9 is in charge of the overall coordination.

AG 9 will also implement the AMETHyST project, capitalising and transferring its outcomes and outputs by creating a EUSALP H2 online platform as a knowledge resource centre. AG 9 will oversee the connection with other EU initiatives, such as Hydrogen Europe, European Hydrogen Week, Clean Hydrogen Joint Undertaking, as well as organise, promote, and participate in public events to promote H2 alpine initiatives.

Contact person(s): Etienne Viénot (Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Energy Environment Agency AURA-EE), Maren Meyer and Benjamin Auer (Energy Agency South Tyrol - CasaClima).

EUSALP CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITY 2023-25 #3

Promoting a Joint Water Management Transition

Abstract
For 2023-2025, the Action Groups have proposed to set up a EUSALP Task Force on water management transition to secure and preserve resources. This proposal meets one of the four defined cross-cutting priorities: promoting the sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources, especially water. The creation of the EUSALP Task Force "Water Management Transition" is also in line with the priorities of the Swiss Presidency and ensures the follow-up of the work launched at the Scuol conference held on 15 June 2023.

Objectives of the cross-cutting priority
The overall goal of the TF is **to enhance the transition to a EUSALP water-smart society led** by forward-thinking civil society stakeholders and players for sound management of water resources. Also, the TF will favour the exchange of know-how and experiences among the AGs involved to tackle conflicts, support joint interests, and capitalise on results at the political level.

Some of the Action Groups' objectives are in line with the general goals of this Task Force. For example, with the Transtat Alpine Space Project, Action Group 1 aims to **develop a transition process to deal with the effects of climate change in ski areas** as well as to develop a portfolio of nature-based solutions for mountain areas (i.e. MountResilience project).

Action Group 2 will focus on supporting **water management projects** funded by the European programmes 21-27.

Action Group 5 aims to contribute to **digitalisation in water management.**

Action Group 6 will bring in its expertise by **coordinating the TF** to enhance the exchange on water management practices. In addition, AG 6 will focus on sharing data on river contact processes, water scarcity, and traditional farming techniques.

Action Group 7 aims to highlight the **interconnection of green and blue infrastructure**, investigating and understanding the GI carrying capacity, as well as the management of river corridors and the link with nature restoration law and peatlands.

Action Group 8 aims to improve the management of **extreme weather events**, including drought, floods, and heavy rainfalls. In the natural hazard and risk management field, the topic of nature-based solutions is frequently discussed and has already been part of previous AG 8 activities.

The EUSALP Youth Council representatives will bring their perspectives to improve the resilience of cities, agriculture, and industries.

Evaluation indicators
The following indicators will be used to assess the implementation of this priority:
• Organisation of at least three EUSALP Water Management Transition Task Force meetings.
• Scientific results on extreme weather events to support the development of policy recommendations (AG 8)

Coordinators & Action Groups involved
The Action Groups that participate in the Task Force are AG 1, AG 2, AG 5, AG 6, AG 7, and AG 8. The EUSALP Youth Council will also be involved.

Each group will support and contribute to the Task Force in their respective field of expertise and participate in exchanging know-how and best practices.

Action Group 1 will promote actions that enable the sectors that drive the mountain economy (e.g. winter tourism—which is heavily dependent on water resources—and agriculture) to encourage and manage the environmental transition.

Action Group 2 will focus on organising exchange meetings on water management projects.

Contact person(s) : Sylvain Guetaz (Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region).

Action Group 5 will focus on exchanging ideas and good practices on the digitalisation of water management.

Contact person(s): Daniela Masotti (ERSAF Lombardy).

Action Group 6 will oversee the overall coordination and focus on sharing information on river contact processes, water scarcity, and traditional farming techniques in the Alpine Region.

Contact person(s): Annalisa Cevasco (ANCI Liguria), Alice Beck, and Lisa Ellemunter (Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention).

Action Group 7 will contribute by highlighting the interconnection of green and blue infrastructure, investigating the capacity of green infrastructure as well as the management of river corridors, nature restoration law, and peatlands.

Contact person(s): Angelika Abderhalden (Pro Terra Engiadina Foundation).

Action Group 8 will focus on extreme weather events and nature-based solutions in the natural hazard and risk management field.

Contact person(s): Katharina Rieder (Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management) and Lydia Pedoth (EURAC).

Finally, the EUSALP Youth Council will promote sustainable water management within new groups of stakeholders.

Boosting Circular Economy

Abstract

The circular economy is a new economic model that disrupts linear business processes by extending the life cycle of products, promoting more efficient use of our limited resources, and encouraging responsible consumption. It involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, recycling, and upcycling existing materials and products as long as possible, as well as valorising and utilising production side streams. Circular economy addresses climate change-related issues, population ageing in the Alpine area, mobility, labour (future skills), education, and many other EUSALP-relevant policies. Furthermore, the circular economy offers specific opportunities for mountain regions' sustainable enhancement and promotion. Several EUSALP Action Groups will address this horizontal economic principle, as it represents a unique opportunity to create joint innovative actions, extend value chains, set up new tools, and develop cross-border financial instruments and projects that foster the sustainable use of limited Alpine resources (water, wood, metals, food) as well as the use of clean and green energy.

Objectives of the cross-cutting priority

The general objectives of this cross-cutting priority are:
1) Waste reduction and valorisation
2) Promotion of innovative waste management solutions
3) Reduction of the total usage and consumption of materials
4) Promotion of the Product-as-a-Service business models and extension of the life cycle of products
5) Creation of professional profiles in key Alpine sector(s) that contribute to the circular economy

Evaluation indicators

The following indicators will be used to assess the implementation of this priority:
• Development of the EUSALP roadmap for the circular economy (& digitalisation)
• Development of projects involving partners from different States and Regions
• Development of key supporting cross-border/transnational instruments, including Alpine Space circular economy Hub

Coordinators & involved Action Groups

This cross-cutting priority will involve several Action Groups.
Action Group 1 will focus on how to scale up innovative solutions in AS and extend cross-border/transnational value chains (including in the bio-based sectors). AG 1 will also try to mobilise public and private stakeholders in the research, demonstration, and deployment of bio-based solutions.
Contact person(s): Cristiana Lavagetti (Lombardy Region).
Action Group 2 will bring expertise in industrial activities, the textile sector, and the transition of SMEs to the CE through digitalisation (Circular4.0 Project).
Contact person(s): Massimo Lapolla (Piedmont Region), Sylvain Guetaz (Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region), and Aleš Pevc and Majda Potokar (Technology Park Ljubljana).

The goals are: to exchange information on circular economy initiatives in the Alps and build a circular and digital community; draft a EUSALP CE (& digitalisation) roadmap; and deploy local bio-economies across the Alpine Space.

Action Group 3 will address circular economy aspects in educational curricula and lifelong learning courses for relevant Alpine sectors (wood, agri-food, etc.).

AG 3 will also create ad hoc courses for Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions on soft and technical/professional skills required by sectors (i.e. wood, agri-food) that contribute to the circular economy, as well as lifelong learning courses for workers who cannot access higher education opportunities but require academic level knowledge.

Contact person(s): Barbara Centis (Edmund Mach Foundation) and Emma Mitrotta (Support Staff - Autonomous Province of Trento).

Action Group 5 will focus on the digitalisation of the circular economy via a dedicated workshop during the Digital Alps Conference.

Contact person(s): Darja Kukovic (Innovation Technology Cluster ITC, Slovenia) and Paolo Perucci (Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia).

Action Group 6 wants to build synergies with the Alpine Space project AlpTextyles, to raise the general public's awareness of territorial branding as a means to ensure the dissemination of circular approaches among SMEs in the Alpine regions and promote circularity in the Alpine textile value chains (valorisation of local resources, such as wool, linen, hemp, dyeing plants).

AG 6 also aims to stress the connection between circular economy and the protection of our cultural heritage, exploring possible links to UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage lists or Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) and fostering a responsible use of water and wood.

Contact person(s): Lisa Ellemunter (Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention) and Cassiano Luminati (Polo Poschiavo).

Action Group 7 will mainly contribute by creating a synergy with the "Green Infrastructure goes business award".

Contact person(s): Miro Kristan and Simon Škvor (Soča Valley Development Centre).

Action Group 8 will develop circular economy solutions for mitigating climate and environmental risks.

Finally, Action Group 9 will focus on optimising of energy uses in the circular economy and renewable energy sources (solar, wind, hydrogen, biogas).