

EUSALP Action Group 7
“To develop ecological connectivity for the whole Alpine region”

Minutes of the Kick-Off meeting on 9 March 2016 in Munich

The following minutes are reflecting the key results of discussion. Inputs from the Action Group Leaders (AGL) as well as the signed list of participants are documented in the annexes 2 and 3. The following persons have been present at the meeting:

<i>Country</i>	<i>Name</i>
FR	Guido Plassmann
DE	Brigitte Koehler-Neumann
DE	Bettina Hedden-Dunkhorst
DE	Raimund Becher
DE	Michaela Künzl (AGL)
IT	Antonella Trisorio
IT	Anna Paola Rizolli
IT	Roberto Chincarini
SI	Tina Trampuš (AGL)
EC DG Regio	Filomena Carvalho
EC DG Regio	Frithjof Ehm

Session I - Introduction of members and their expectations

Participants of the meeting presented themselves as well as their expectations of the meeting and of the AG 7 work in general.

The presentations reflected the high motivation of members to initiate concrete implementation steps. Besides identifying the appropriate activities it was mentioned that the EUSALP AG 7 should empower the environmental policy field and especially the topic of ecological connectivity by providing a strategic framework and establishing a close link to (future) funding opportunities.

A more detailed documentation of this session is included in annex 1. The collected inputs provide a basis for formulating a mission (and/or vision statement) as part of the AG 7 implementation strategy.

Additionally to the basic understanding of the Action Groups objective setting, for the single members it is necessary to sharpen the picture on the role of the AG members and on the possible contributions of their institutions to the AG 7 implementation process.

Session II – Thematic objectives and priority setting

Implementation of the EUSALP Action Plan

AGL presented a summary of the Action Plan contents for AG 7 as well as the priorities mentioned by the AGL in their Expressions of Interest for leading the Action Group (see presentation enclosed). As this first picture should only be seen as input for discussion and as subject for further development,

priority setting will be modified within the process of developing the AG 7 work plan and base on the inputs of all members.

Presentation of the AlpGov project

AlpGov is a project being under preparation in the governance pillar of the Alpine Space Programme and aims to support the work of EUSALP AGL. Therefore it will mainly cover activities of the AG related to governance aspects; thematic work will not be the focus of the project. In total the project budget will be up to 3.5 Mio € ERDF funding. For each AG up to 300.000 € might be available for 3 years. For AG 7 the AGL institutions in Slovenia and Bavaria will cover the national co-financing of 15% (each 50%).

Within the kick-off meeting AGL presented the general approach of the AlpGov project as well as the specific contributions of AG 7 (see slide 15). Based on the discussion of AG 7 members the following aspects will be included in the concept of AG 7:

WP 1 “Facilitating Action Groups and their cooperation”

- Integrate a strategic analysis of stakeholders and sectors as well as a questionnaire on thematic priorities into the AlpGov work plan for AG 7.
- Trento offered to support this work.

WP 2 “A collaborative EUSALP digital environment”

- Linkages to existing knowledge and related platforms are important to be included into the thematic sub-part of the joint knowledge platform.
- AGL will keep all AG members informed about the further steps; in case of successful AlpGov application the detailed concept for AG 7 subpart of the joint EUSALP platform will be discussed within the Action Group.

WP 3 “Establishing a financing dialogue”

- The concept and concrete AG 7 contributions have been presented.
- No specific changes have been suggested.

WP 4 “Shared Alpine Governance”

- In addition to the so far planned workshops (see presentation enclosed) the integration of a dialogue event with other sectors has been proposed.

WP 5 “Launching of projects → Initiate strategic implementation concepts”

- The entire process of developing strategic implementation concepts (from dialogue events to project development) is covered by this WP.
- As regards the formulation it was suggested to avoid building up too much pressure on other sectors but keeping the aim of developing concrete cross-sectoral implementation activities. The further concept will be further developed in the AG.

WP C “Communication”

- In general it was suggested to build up on existing materials (e.g. provided by Green Infrastructure, Continuum initiative etc.).
- Basic information material on the AG 7 work like a folder and/or a poster - complementary to digital tools - should be developed by AlpGov.
- Alternative communication ways (like mainstreaming the concept to the public in a target group orientated way) have to be financed by other sources (and could perhaps be supported by sponsoring).

General priority setting (independently from the AlpGov project) – Some basic building blocks for AG 7 Work Plan

The following aspects have been mentioned during a “think tank session”. They will be caught up for preparing the next AG 7 meeting and will be further developed during the process of drafting the AG 7 work plan.

- Base on the **work already been done**.
- **Include science and socio-economic point** of view into work plan.
- Cross-sectoral integration has been identified as one of the main challenges. Especially for addressing other sectors and stakeholders, activities should focus on **transferring/translating the ecological connectivity concept into “easy understandable language”**.
- AG 7 is challenged to **convince by concrete proposals for cooperation** and sharing good practice.
- **Spatial planning** is supposed to take a key role in cross-sectoral integration and to bring forward on-the-ground implementation of ecological connectivity.
- Close **connection to climate change** is seen for
 - Developing scenarios as discussion and decision support in the field of ecological connectivity - similarly to the general practise in the thematic field of climate change.
 - Shaping the contribution of ecological connectivity to adaptation measures in the Alpine region. The Action Plan on Climate Change in h Alps of the Alpine Convention can be considered [here](#).
 - Cooperation in governance questions as there are given similar frame conditions (multi-level, cross-sectoral, transnational).
- The **interface to economics** should not be excluded from strategic approach when activities will probably have to be developed at a later stage.
- **Green Infrastructure Strategy** will provide the appropriate strategic frame and is as well set by the EUSALP Action plan as one of the main targets. Currently a very supportive contact to EC DG Environment has been established. More detailed presentation of the strategy, current implementation and potentials for AG 7 is foreseen for the next AG 7 meeting.

Nest steps for thematic priority setting

- AGL will – in close cooperation with DG Environment - provide more detailed information on GI concept.
- AGL will enter into contact to AG 8 to explore possibilities of cooperation (AG8: To improve risk management and to better manage climate change, including major natural risks prevention).
- AGL will collect information (provided by AG 7 members) on existing initiatives and will provide this overview for the next meeting.
- Next meeting of AG 7 will take place end of June 2016 in Munich with the advising members and will focus more in detail on thematic aspects.

Session III – Alpine connectivity governance

AGL presented the three level governance system of EUSALP and addressed the horizontal and vertical linkages of the Action Groups: in the vertical dimension AGs will report regularly to the Executive Board (EB) of EUSALP on the progress of implementing the Action Plan. For horizontal coherence of AG a Board of AGL will be established. According to the current draft governance paper for EUSALP, AG will have the tasks described in the annexed presentation.

As one of the basic elements in governance for all AG, joint rules of procedure shall be established. Therefore EC provided a draft which has been discussed in detail as EC DG Regio asked all AG for a feedback on this draft. Regarding the draft version of Rules of Procedure, AG 7 will communicate the following comments to EC DG Regio:

1. Quorum: AG 7 is aiming for the quorum in all meetings and would apply it for all decisions to be taken. However AG 7 recommends that AG meetings can be held as well in cases the quorum is not reached by participation. This is especially helpful when a meeting is foreseen to mainly discuss thematic questions and no basic decisions are planned to be taken. Anyway, it would be good to make it more specific when the 'quorum rule' should be applied. Decision making could be complemented by introducing the possibility of "written procedures".
2. Status and rights: The basic structure of the group shall consist of decision making members with voting rights and advising members. An additional status called "guests" could be helpful to define the possibility of non-permanent experts to join the group. A discussion arose on the voting rights of AGLs. The fact that AGLs are on one hand taking over responsibility for implementation and on the other having no voice in decision making, leads to a kind of contradiction. AGL 7 asks the Executive Board (EB) to explore possibilities for AGL in decision making process e.g. by giving as well the transnational dimension a voting right or including the AGL in their national delegations.
3. Coordination: After a debate about the background of the rule suggested in the draft, the "one country-one vote" rule has been accepted.
4. Decision making: In general AG 7 aims to work on consensus basis (at least without a dissentient vote). In cases of reaching no consensus, when at the same time decision is needed within a specific time frame, 4 countries rule might be used. Alternatively decision making on issues where no consensus can be reached can be brought to the Executive Board.
5. Tasks: The discussion regarding the level on which decisions should be taken, lead to the viewpoint that all thematic decisions should be taken on the level of AG; all political decisions have to be taken on the level of EB. Based on a suggestion of France, AG 7 suggests reformulating the sentence "to decide on which projects should be supported" (instead of "decide on projects"). Additionally AG 7 proposes to delete the word "long" ("A list of tasks" instead of "A long list").
6. Costs: AG7 suggests that the issue of costs should be coordinated between all AGs. This question should also be brought to EB. The rules for reimbursement could be harmonized between AGs as e.g. some advisors might be member of different AGs (like CIPRA International) and should not be treated differently in different AGs.

EC DG Regio added that an "opening clause" is foreseen for the rules of procedures where AG can integrate their individual needs like organization of thematic sub-groups.

Participants discussed possible modalities of work and agreed on possibility to engage through virtual channels (e.g. video conferences). This way of work could mostly be used after personal contacts have already been established on meetings and for occasions where some specific issue should be clarified. Regarding the question of establishing thematic sub-groups, no need for a specific subgroup is currently expressed. This possibility could be explored and adopted later, depending on proceeding work.

Composition of the Action Group

AG 7 discussion on composition of the AG and integration of advising members further lead to the proposal that all EUSALP AG might use the same criteria for institutions becoming permanent advising members. These criteria might be

- transnationality and
- providing expertise and/or a concrete contribution to the implementation of the Action Plan.

So called "Advisors" might show their interest and possible contribution in a "letter of motivation" and can become members on the basis of AG decision and joint criteria applied for all AG. EC DG Regio will pick up the question on joint criteria in the next EB meeting.

Institutions being interested so far in becoming members of AG 7 are listed in the annexed presentation. A final decision and feedback to the interested organizations on their AG 7 membership will only be possible after the decision of EB on the Rules of Procedure. AG 7 will therefore clarify in a written procedure after the EB meeting end of April which members will be invited to the next meeting in June 2016.

AG members are asked to propose additional "strategic" members with regard to the fulfilment of the Action Plan and the priorities of AG 7 (e.g. in cross-sectoral respect).

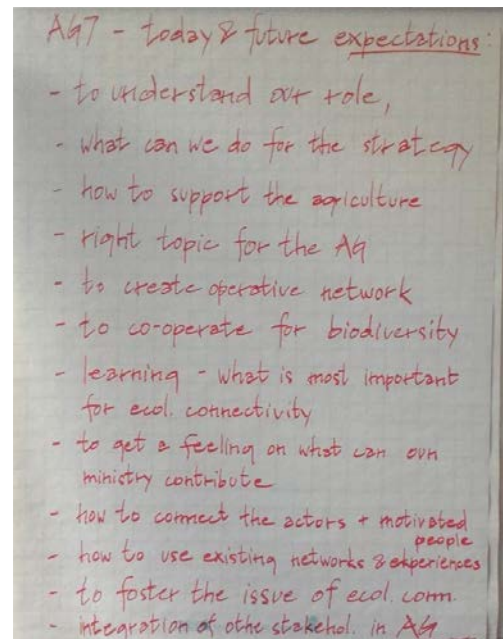
Any other business

- BW asks AG 7 to support two events in Stuttgart (in fall 2016) and will provide more detailed information on
 - international conference on food/climate change and
 - international conference on spatial planning.
- The Alpine-Danube River Corridor project asked AG 7 to become a strategic project partner. As AG 7 set up process needs more time, inter alia to define criteria of projects to be supported, AGL proposes that basic interest will be communicated and close contact ensured but that at the current state of development institutional / formal support is not feasible.
- The Platform Ecological Networks of the Alpine Convention is planning, in combination with the Alpine Week in October 2016, a workshop of pilot regions on 11. October 2016. Platform Presidency will provide further information.
- EC DG Regio refers to AG 1, 2 and 3 who organized parallel meetings of the three AG including joint sessions. AGL 7 will discuss with the other AG of the environmental and energy policy field on a similar approach for this policy field. The Mediterranean Coast Week end of September in Slovenia under SI EUSALP presidency would provide a possibility to involve members in parallel sessions as well in technical workshops like the exchange with other MRS.

Annex 1:

Expectations for Kick-Off Meeting and the future AG 7 work in general:

- to understand our role
- what can we do for the strategy
- how to support the agriculture
- right topic for the AG
- to create operative network
- to co-operate for biodiversity
- learning - what is most important for ecological connectivity
- to get the feeling on what can our ministry contribute
- how to connect the actors and motivated people
- how to use existing networks and experiences
- to foster the issue of eco
- integration of stakeholders in AG



AG7 Priorities – “Think tank session”

- to clarify the concept of ecological connectivity
 - o what is the knowledge?
 - o what are the gaps?(input for this priority is possible envisaged publication on ecological connectivity (Bettina – platform))
- focus on the gaps between sectors
- spatial planning as a tool for bringing sectors together
- analysis of scenarios - what will happen in 50 years with ecological connectivity
- translation (+transfer) of the concept from scientific level to local level --> concrete, simple, relevant
- to collect all material (web sites, studies ...) that exist on ecological connectivity
- agriculture practices for ecological connectivity

