

EUSALP Action Group 7

“To develop ecological connectivity in the whole EUSALP territory”

Minutes of the 2nd Action Group Meeting

6 / 7 July 2016, Munich

The following minutes are reflecting the key results of discussion. Inputs from the Action Group Leaders (AGL) and guests as well as the signed list of participants are documented in the annexes.

The following persons have been present at the meeting:

<i>Country / Organisation</i>	<i>Name</i>
AT	Johannes Ehrenfeldner
CH	Ruedi Haller
DE	Bettina Hedden-Dunkhorst
DE (Bavaria)	Raimund Becher
DE	Michaela Künzl (AGL)
IT	Serena D'Ambrogi
IT (Trento)	Alessandro Gretter
SI	Tina Trampuš (AGL)
EC DG Regio	Frithjof Ehm
EC DG Environment	Julie Raynal
Alpine Space Program	Primož Skrt
ALPARC	Guido Plassmann
Club Arc Alpine	Alfred Ringler
IUCN CEM	Gioele Passoni
IUCN CEC	Katalin Czippán
CIPRA International	Christian Baumgartner
City of Munich – LOS_DAMA	Sylvia Pintarits
City of Munich – LOS_DAMA	Matthias Lampert

Day 1 (6 July 2016)

Session I- Introduction

In the kick-off meeting in March 2016, with the so far officially announced representatives of states and regions, organizational aspects have been primarily discussed and a first picture on thematic priorities could be gained. In this second meeting, involving further institutions who showed strong interest in cooperation, the identification of key implementation steps has been focussed more in detail.

The members expressed their strong support to the expanded composition. It was decided to continue AG 7 work in this composition.

Session II – Alpine Connectivity Governance

EUSALP governance and tasks of the Action Groups

Input by EC DG Regio and AGL + round table discussion on the Rules of Procedure, tasks and composition of the AG

Frithjof Ehm, EC DG Regio, presented the role of EC: In coordinating and moderating role the EC will provide comprehensive support for the implementation of the strategy. This may apply for enhancing contacts to line DGs (e.g. DG AGRI or DG TRANSPORT) or other European institutions which will provide, especially for the thematic field of ecological connectivity, an important added value.

Another aspect will be to strengthen visibility of the strategy and the actions that are taking place. In this context reporting will play a major role. Every two years (starting end 2016) EC will prepare a report on the implementation of the 4 existing macro regional strategies to the European Parliament based on the contributions of key implementers (for EUSALP i.a. AGs). The EUSALP Executive Board will ask all AGs for a yearly report. Besides reporting the development of concrete implementation projects being of strategic and international relevance will be important to ensure visibility. EC strives for better streamlining of EUSALP objectives with EU funding programs and supports the identification of applicable funding instruments.

Rules of Procedures: EC informs that RoP will be discussed at the September Executive Board Meeting in Slovenia. The idea is to have Rules of Procedures that would be compulsory for all AGs but allow some individual amendments. AGs will be informed on the results of the upcoming discussions.

For AG 7 it was agreed to continue in the so far established composition assuming that the RoP for AG 7 will be finally decided in the meeting in February 2017 (as the next AG 7 meeting will be parallel to EB meeting and therefore no new information will be available until then).

Session III – Thematic framework

The EU Green Infrastructure Strategy

Julie Raynal, EC DG Environment, presented the EU Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy, its current state of implementation including on a future Trans-European Network for Green Infrastructure (TEN-G), and relevance and concrete opportunities for AG 7. (See annex). She explained the broader connection to Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Nagoya, CBD COP10), and to the EU Biodiversity Strategy; especially its Target 2 concerning ecosystem restoration and green infrastructure, which is the basis for the GI Strategy. Links to relevant studies on the issue (e.g. by EEA) can be found in the annex. The EU MAES (Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services) framework (with the latest report for GI in urban areas) provides for the conceptual framework to map and assess the state of ecosystems and their services in EU MS, to assess the economic value of such services, and promote the integration of these values into accounting and reporting systems at EU and national level by 2020. Relevant workshops were announced (workshop on 28 September 2016 in Brussels on

ecosystem restoration; and on Target 2-related knowledge base and spatial and technical data on 24 & 25 October in Brussels).

The possible development of a TEN-G instrument will be one of the main flagship projects of DG ENV for the next years with the aim of connecting all GI components across Europe by e.g. improving financial support. It was clarified that a TEN-G would not imply an EU top-down legal requalification of e.g. agricultural areas.

Conclusions for AG 7: For AG 7 the following concrete initiatives can be derived:

- Specify the GI approach for the Alpine region (involving a spatial and political dimension) to make the Alps one candidate for a possible future TEN-G.
- Promote and politically support the TEN-G initiative
- For developing a spatial decision support basis for AG 7, combine EU wide, Alpine wide and (sub)national approaches (→ workshop on 24/25 October 2016 in Brussels).
- Mobilize Alpine cities to volunteer for testing the MAES framework for urban areas (see link in the annex). In the development of the framework about 10 cities have been involved; now candidates for testing the implementation are searched and so far no Alpine city is involved.
- Discussion on details and cross-relations of different thematic (sub-)concepts like the concept of ecological connectivity and “nature based solutions concept” showed the need for an AG 7 communication strategy formulating an AG 7 specific message (“mission and vision statement”) whereas a scientific debate on definitions has not been seen as expediently.
- From the point of view of cost/benefit approach, it should be taken into account that GI might cause costs for one single stakeholder (e.g. city), but brings benefits to many → important for communication and cooperation with different sectors.

Green Infrastructure and Alpine urban areas

AGL informed on the cooperation with Alpine urban areas from the very beginning of AG 7 implementation work and informed on the presentation of EUSALP AG 7 on a GI-conference in Ljubljana (see annex).

Sylvia Pintarits and Matthias Lampert, City of Munich, presented the project LOS_DAMA (see annex):

- The project title LOS_DAMA! means *Lets' start!* and is an abbreviation for Landscape and Open Space Development in Alpine Metropolitan Areas. It is a bottom-up project and now they are trying to link it to the strategic level.
- The partner consortium is composed of several cities (Munich as LP, City of Vienna, City of Trento, Zurich as observer), regions (Regione Piemonte, Grenoble-Alps Metropolis), planning institutes in (Slovenia, Salzburg in co-operation with the City of Salzburg and the City of Ljubljana) and universities (Munich Technical University, University of applied sciences Triesdorf Weihenstephan, University of Grenoble-Alps) from the Alpine region.
- The main topic of the project is to develop innovative approaches how to deal not only with growing populations but as well with growing land-use demands in (peri)urban areas and therefore preserve and develop green infrastructure elements.

- Close cooperation with AG 7 is foreseen (in case of approval of the project) in order to link the project initiative with the (long-term) political level.
- AG 7 confirmed its strong interest in close cooperation and strongly supports the project application as the involvement of urban areas and metropolises is one of the key issues for the AG according to the Action Plan.

Workshop “Green Infrastructure and Alpine Urban Areas”

In addition to the cooperation via the LOS_DAMA project (and independently from the LOS_DAMA project decision by ASP) AG 7 decided to organize, in cooperation with the City of Munich, a workshop in spring/early summer 2017 on “Green Infrastructure and Alpine Urban Areas”. The detailed concept will be further prepared by the AGL and Munich and progress made will be presented in the next meeting in September 2016; the specific aspects of ecological connectivity will be reflected by the workshops concept. All members are asked to make suggestions for urban areas that might be involved.

First day conclusion:

Participants were asked to reflect the discussion issues and to write down short answers and ideas on two matters:

- 1) (!) What is an important personal learning or information that you received today?
- 2) (?) What question or issue do you have on your mind that you would really want the group to focus on soon?

Ideas were collected and pinned on the dashboard.

What is an important personal learning or information that you received today?

- Ecological connectivity is an issue of spatial planning.
- Understanding of ecological connectivity moves into different sectors.
- GI strategy /roles of EC DG Region and AG7/ MAES knowledge base (EC DG Environment)/ other projects and conventions in the Alps
- But we are approaching clearance at our aim swiftly
- Still a lack of spatial dimension of ecological connectivity.
- Same problems in different countries.
- The basic definitions for the AG is not yet clear. (at least not here and today)
- Importance & danger of definitions.
- Still need to "write" clear definitions of some terms. Mainly for better integration with initiatives like GI.
- 15% restoration + cost/benefit analysis
- The need for interactive work.
- The topic of AG7 fits very well with the big EU environmental policy aims. This is a great opportunity.
- Different perceptions of the definition of ecological connectivity.
- To see how many things are going on.
- Focus of activities / streamlining single actions.
- Need to enhance common understanding of terms and the concepts used. / Need to gather around the table all relevant stakeholders (land users (e.g. farmers), spatial planners, policy makers, NGOs, scientists, etc.)
- GI -process is going forward quickly

What question or issue do you have on your mind that you would really want the group to focus on soon?

- What are concrete obstacles to greater ecological connectivity in the Alpine Region? What are the strengths of the Alpine Region in working to this objective?
- What is ecological connectivity in the alpine context? How far does it have to be specified?
- How to improve policy discussions on ecological connectivity?
- Green infrastructure and alpine cities. This has clear macro-regional value added!
- Communication and campaigning of the need for ecological connectivity. How to go about it ?
- Multi-perspectives within AG.
- Connectivity is a cloudy, uncertain term so far? Full of woolliness??
- Multifunctional land use: How we can integrate ecological connectivity together with the owners?
- Do we have all important people on board?
- It has emerged that there is a role for "further "individuation" of values connected to ecological connectivity / GI / biodiversity as a better tool of communication.
- Tangible, visible success to show added value (before tackling different issues)
- What is ecological connectivity? What do we mean with respect to EUSALP? What exactly do we want to achieve? How should we measure it? What are our targets?
- To connect good working projects!
- Ecosystem services based approach into stakeholders public debate selling ecological connectivity
- Multi-functionality of (natural) and semi-natural landscapes for GI.
- Defining the field of work (topics) of the AG7.
- Clarification of basic definitions /understanding (GI, ecological connectivity, etc.)

Day 2 (7 July 2016)

Session IV – Concrete implementation activities

The AlpGov project – potentials and resources for AG 7

Presentation of AGL and a work plan

AGL presented the project structure and available resources for supporting the work of AG 7. In total about 300.000€ are available for each AG. The next steps will be to develop the thematic sub-part for the joint EUSALP knowledge platform and to start working on the financial issue by designing the “financial study” for AG 7. From 2017 on there will be options for supporting the development of concrete implementation initiatives (like project applications) out of WP 5. The following agenda items are preparing the concretization of these upcoming steps.

Building up a cross-sectorial strategic implementation network

Input by AGL and IT, Trento on a systematic approach for involving implementation partners

The involvement of different sectors in the implementation of AG 7 objectives has been identified as one key issue (see minutes kick-off meeting) together with the need for targeted communication. Therefore it was agreed in the first meeting to initiate a strategic approach on how to involve which stakeholders (information, cooperation, communication). During the kick-off meeting Trento Region

offered to support this strategic approach and gave at the second meeting an input on experiences concerning the involvement of stakeholders made by Trento (see annex).

Next steps in AG 7

- The AGL will ask the members in a structured and targeted way (using a template) to provide contacts of relevant implementation partners AG 7.
- The SI EUSALP Presidency is currently asked to provide an input paper on governance (i.a. involvement of stakeholders). This might provide a chance for AG 7 to communicate on the strategic approach of AG 7 specifically on this issue.

Discussion and decision on the involvement of additional advisors

Based on the kick-off meeting, AG members made suggestions for further AG advising members (see list distributed with the invitation). As regards this suggestions it was decided to

- Invite EURAC in its capacity as AlpES Lead Partner to participate in AG 7 meetings for ensuring close connection to the ongoing ASP project.
- Involve other partners (esp. from other sectors) at a later stage, when AG 7 developed a more precise picture on the concrete targets and ways of cooperation.

Additionally to the involvement of further actors the organization of cross-sectoral meetings (like a topic related European stakeholder meeting in Brussels) or presentations on cross-sectoral events like the »Open Days« might be considered.

Sharing and managing Alpine ecological connectivity knowledge

Input by AGL and CH on mechanisms and concrete options for AG 7, discussion and decision on next steps

As known, the AlpGov project foresees the development of a joint EUSALP knowledge platform with thematic sub-sections for all nine AGs. Lombardy region as AlpGov work package leader (WPL) will develop the basic architecture of the platform. AGs are self-responsible for their “private” sections but close linkages and smooth interfaces have to be ensured. As this will be one of the first steps in AlpGov, all AGs are asked to identify their demands and ideas for knowledge sharing to be communicated to Lombardy Region.

Ruedi Haller, Swiss AG 7 representative, introduced the topic of knowledge management and demonstrated a possible way how to further structure the process of “knowledge brokerage” for the purposes of AG 7. For developing the thematic AG 7 subpart of the EUSALP knowledge platform he proposed a »EUSALP Info Centre« which concentrates on the contents and leaves the technical structure and design in a rather simple way. CH offered to further support and accompany the process of knowledge management for AG 7.

AG 7 decided to follow this KISS-approach (KISS – Keep it small and simple) and to invest the given resources in gaining and sharing of relevant information on the topic in the single states and regions

rather than in technical features. AGL will propose together with CH a possible solution how to organize this procedure of gaining information for the Alpine states and regions.

According to the feedback of AG members some functionalities (like a »private area« for internal work organization, external communication tasks of AG 7 (targeted distributing of results) and a section for funding issues) will be included in the concept.

“Connecting actions” - Networking session

Input by participants on existing initiatives and suggestions for the future

Project ALPBIONET2030, presentation by Guido Plassmann (ALPARC)

ALPBIONET2030 is an ASP project application currently being submitted in the 2nd call. It builds on previous projects (ECONNECT, greenAlps and recharge.green) and focusses now on implementation aspects. In ALPBIONET2030 there will be e.g. a close cooperation with the hunting sector in the field of wildlife management as with other relevant stakeholder. The project as well foresees a close interface to EUSLP AG 7 which will be defined more in detail jointly after project decision.

Guido Plassmann showed furthermore some maps summarizing the results of the long-term engagement in the field of ecological connectivity in the Alps. This engagement of ALPARC is based on the Nature Protection Protocol of the Alpine Convention calling for a network of protected areas not only acting functional but also being realized physically. The maps (to be published in autumn 2016 in a book on ecological connectivity) are showing three spatial types: inner-alpine areas valleys with a high fragmentation situation to overcome only by ad-hoc measures; conservation areas where connectivity still works and potential connectivity areas where with some adequate measures large non fragmented areas can be created. The main problems for developing connectivity have been identified outside the alpine core area, caused by infrastructure, intensive land use or urban sprawl.

Main added value by EUSALP for the topic is seen in the larger spatial scope of activity (involving urban areas and more intensively used landscapes) and the European dimension and attention.

AG 7 might bring in specifically potentials to

- make the topic more attractive on the political level and to the public (relation to communication strategy),
- involve urban areas and cities,
- communicate with other sectors (esp. spatial planning),
- enhance cooperation with the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas and other European mountain ranges (→ Alpine-Carpathian-Corridor-Project).

Ecological Networks Platform (AC), presentation by Bettina Hedden - Dunkhorst (see annex)

- Some overlapping with the membership of the Platform and AG 7 (4 members) provides potential for effective sharing of work.
- The AC nominated 8 pilot regions so far; one suggestion for EUSALP AG 7 could be to also nominate urban areas as pilot region for ecological connectivity.

- The AC platform will prepare a report on how ecological connectivity can be included in spatial planning. The report can be a valuable input for the work of AG 7.

Project AlpES, information by Tina Trampuš (see annex - Presentation provided by Caroline Pecher, EURAC, project lead partner)

- Project (ASP) was launched in December 2015 and addresses the issue of ecosystem services. Lead partner is EURAC (Bolzano).
- There are quite some issues interesting for the work of AG 7, including work package on data information (mapping and assessment, WEB Gis and WIKIAlps) and communication.

Alpine Space Program, information by Primož Skrt

Information on next calls by ASP:

- 2nd call will be closed on August 8th 2016.
- 3rd call will be launched in spring 2017 (March/April) and projects approved till end 2017.

ASP is planning

- An exchange event with LP of all approved projects and all EUSALP AGLs in November 2016.
- A stakeholder event in February 2017

Trento informed on a project initiative (finally rejected) called CONNECT, that referred to AG 7 in the project application. None of the AG 7 members had any previous information on this project proposal. This case illustrates the need to define criteria for projects being supported by AG 7.

Session IV – Wrap up and outlook

Wrap up of decisions being made:

- AG will continue work in the current composition additionally inviting EURAC as lead partner of AlpES. Other sectors will be involved at a later stage.
- Decision on rules of procedures for AG 7 will be taken after the next Executive Board meeting in September 2016.
- One key issue of AG 7 will be the regionalization of EU GI Strategy for the Alpine region with a view to the TEN-G initiative (Alpine Region as potential TEN-G model region).
- Close cooperation with Alpine urban areas was very welcomed and the organization of the workshop on “GI and Alpine urban areas” in 2017 decided.
- AGL will provide a structure to collect contacts of stakeholders and ask AG 7 members for their contribution.
- For knowledge management the KISS-Approach will be followed; AGL will continue work together with CH to concretize the concept for the AG 7 thematic sub-part of the knowledge platform.

Next Steps

- AGL will structure the proposals for concrete actions (see project dashboard below and results of discussion) as a basis for the draft work plan of AG 7 to be further discussed in the next meeting.
- The next AG 7 meeting will focus on financial issues and communication strategy and will take place in Izola (SI) on 26-27th September 2016 (Monday around 12 hrs - Tuesday around 14 hrs) as one of the events during Mediterranean Coast and EU Macro-regional Strategies Week (MCW) at Slovenian Coast. The draft program of MCW was presented and participants invited to attend the meeting and other events during that week. AGLs will provide more detailed information on Mediterranean Coast Week program and options for registration.
- In February 2017, a Forum of all nine EUSALP AGs is currently planned (presumably in Garmisch-Partenkirchen) under Bavarian EUSALP Presidency.

AOB

For the Alpine Week the following events are planned in relation to the topic "Ecological Network"

11 October 2016: 17th Meeting of the Platform Ecological Network

12 October 2016: Workshop of Pilot Regions for Ecological Connectivity of the Alpine Convention

13 October 2016, (8:30 – 10:00): Side Event in the Context of the Alpine Week

All AG 7 members are warmly welcomed to participate in the meetings. AGL will be represented.

AG7 "dashboard"

Ideas for initiatives being developed during the meeting:

Look into distribution of cost & benefits of GI (public good "dilemma")

What input from AGT is needed or welcomed for LOS_DAMA?

- > act as "critical friend"
- > engage in dialogue about implementation barriers > timetable? (LOS_D ⇔ EU)
- > provide content info/data
- > ... more to come

Define ecological connectivity with respect to EUSALP? Perhaps through a workshop?

Specify the EU GI approach for the Alpine Region and add spatial dimension, political dimension; TEN-G candidate

Volunteers for testing conceptual framework (MEAS urban areas)

Alpine-Carpathian-Corridor (e.g. invitation to the next meeting)

Link to informal meeting of ministries for spatial planning → Territorial agenda 2020

Vertical flow of information + communication to bring proposals to implementation

Proposals coming from AG6 Kick-Off conference:

- > Develop an action plan to minimizing influence of transport infrastructure
- > Define alpine specifics in joint implementation of EU Water Framework Directive