

EUSALP Action Group 7

“To develop ecological connectivity in the whole EUSALP territory”

Minutes of the 3rd Action Group Meeting

26 / 27 September 2016, Izola

The following minutes are reflecting the key results of discussion. Inputs from the Action Group Leaders (AGL), other members 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
DE (Baden Württemberg)	Brigitte Koehler-Neumann
DE (Bavaria)	Raimund Becher
DE	Michaela Künzl (AGL)
DE	Ulrike Hoh-Stadloeder
IT	Serena D'Ambrogi
IT (Trento)	Alessandro Gretter
SI	Tina Trampuš (AGL)
SI	Darij Krajčič
SI	Tjasa Djokić
CIPRA International	Christian Baumgartner
Club Arc Alpine	Alfred Ringler
IUCN CEC	Katalin Czippán
City of Munich – LOS_DAMA	Sylvia Pintarits
AlpES – SI partner	Suzana Vurunić

Day 1 (26 September 2016)

Session I - Introduction

AG Lead welcomed participants of the 3rd AG7 meeting and Mediterranean Coast and Macro-regional Week (MCW) in Slovenia. The meeting was organised as one of the many events of MCW, back to back to meetings of EB EUSALP, Board of Action Group Leaders (BAGL) and AlpGov project partners, all taking place in Izola or Koper.

Current composition of the group: On the previous AG meeting in Munich it was agreed that lead partner of AlpES is invited to join the group. Representatives of EURAC excused themselves for this time but the Institute of RS for Nature Conservation was invited to represent the project as one of the project partners on occasion of hosting the meeting. WWF expressed the interest to join the group and it was agreed to invite them to the next meeting (spring 2017).

AGL provided the summary of the work plan elements for AG 7 so far, with recap of the last meetings and recent developments. All EUSALP AGs are asked to prepare a work plan till the end of 2016. The

discussion on the structure of the work plans will also be part of the BAGL meeting in Izola, so the work of all AGs could be aligned and synchronized. This is also of importance for reporting to the Executive Board and European Commission.

Session II – Alpine Region as model for establishing green infrastructure

AGL provided input (based on the decisions being taken in the first two meetings) on the key initiative of AG 7 to establish the Alpine region as a model region for Green Infrastructure (GI) – specifically against the background of possible development of a Trans-European Network for Green Infrastructure (TEN-G). It was recognised that GI has a big potential and good support on political level (using the momentum).

The AG 7 approach for positioning the Alpine Region as a model region for GI will in 2017 be mainly composed by the following building blocks on strategic level:

Initiating new implementation partnerships

There is an expert workshop on GI & Alpine Urban Areas planned for end of May 2017, organized by AG 7 and the City of Munich as the Lead Partner of the applied LOS_DAMA! project. It was pointed out, that also Graz, Trento, Salzburg, Klagenfurt and other similar middle or big sized towns or urban regions (where more municipalities have to cooperate) are meant under the expression of Alpine Urban Areas and should be addressed regarding the issue of GI. The current state of conceptual preparation can be seen in the PPT attached. During the upcoming phase of detailed planning, contributions of AG 7 members to the workshop will be welcomed to meet our needs.

Addressing the policy level

As previously discussed in AG 7, strengthening political ownership is one of the main issues to be addressed by AG 7. Therefore a meeting of line ministers from national and regional level is planned for beginning of October 2017. During the upcoming months a detailed concept of the meeting will be planned and should be finalised by the end of 2016.

During the development phase of the detailed concept the following results of discussion will be considered:

- TEN-G is to be promoted as one of the flagship projects for EC.
- It is planned that ministers for the environment sectors should be invited but it was stressed out that some other sectors (like agriculture) shall be involved too.
- It was proposed to present some concrete ideas / examples e.g. corridors along the Ticino river as good practice, all cities to be linked by river corridors, investments in GI to be supported to assure better quality of living in urban areas ...
- There is a challenge of who to address since the governance structure is very different depending on the country. AG 7 members will be asked to give support at finding the appropriate contacts.

Session III – AG 7 Communication Strategy

Katalin Czippán from IUCN CEC gave input on basic principles of strategic communication. Presentation was very much appreciated (see annex).

Mapping of stakeholders was planned for the discussion but the importance of clear common understanding of the ecological connectivity concept (eco-con) was stressed out. Participants agreed that we (and the stakeholders) might understand the concept differently and this might cause difficulties in communication (giving the fact that perception is the only reality). Debate was steered to gain the common understanding and at the same time not dive too deep into the definitions issue. It was therefore decided to streamline AG member's perceptions into the direction of a shared AG 7 vision when jointly describing "a good AG 7 project".

Participants were encouraged to try to get a clearer picture on: How would the good working eco-con project look like? What would be characteristics of the good practice, good eco-con project in terms of the content, spatial dimension, stakeholder involvement etc.? Individual ideas were collected using post-its and flip chart paper (see annex). The results of discussion are meant to be building blocks for an AG 7 framework on such projects AG 7 wants to bring forward from strategic point of view.

Second part of Session III took place at the ecological farm Gramona. Farmers, landscape architects by profession, presented their point of view on Green Infrastructure and during short walk showed concrete examples on sustainable farming and "green measures". Presented best practices were warmly welcomed by participants.

Participants continued with the debate on characteristic of good ecological connectivity project. During discussion it became clear that part of the criteria will as well be some spatial criteria (e.g. Where is the project located? Is it covering a priority area? Is it working transnationally?). As a consequence AG 7 members decided to prepare with internal resources and by contributions of each member a first draft for the identification of spatial characteristics of AG 7 projects (See annex) – besides continuing work on the other characteristics.

This draft will be prepared for discussion in the next meeting in February 2017 based on the input by the AG members and will later be part of the framework for AG 7 "light-house" projects.

AG members are asked for their input on mapping of stakeholders following the structure being distributed and amended in Izola by 22 December 2016.

Day 2 (27 September 2016)

Session IV – Connecting actions - Networking session

Second day started with the welcome by Darij Krajčič, director of the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation - AG7 co-lead, Slovenian partner in AlpES project and main

coordinator of activities of MCW. Krajčič expressed his opinion on the importance of building the bridges, especially between lower/local levels and national level, to also mirror and transfer success stories from ground level back to legislation (bottom-up). He wished everybody a successful meeting and a pleasant stay in Slovenia, supporting the idea of good feelings and pleasant environment helping to deliver good results.

Ecological connectivity and ecosystem services

Input by Slovenian AlpES partner – Suzana Vurunić, IRSCN (see presentation in annex)

Similarly to the concept of ecological connectivity, the concept of ecosystem services is quite new and not yet established in society and in the work of major stakeholders. Presentation built up on the information given on previous meeting, with extra focus to the similarities and possible synergies between the work of AG7 and AlpES project (transnational importance of the concept, stakeholders involvement etc.).

AlpES prepared a process of building a common understanding of the ecosystem services concept by distributing questionnaires to partners and observers. It was prepared by IFU plan (WP leader). CIPRA international is a lead of WPC and will provide questionnaires and results to AG7.

Members expressed the wish to get more information on different WP and results, and if possible to exchange thoughts and opinions during the debate and before finalising the results.

Connecting Actions - Networking session

Input by participants on related initiatives and suggestions for the future

GreenInUrbs

Serena D'Ambrogio presented the GreenInUrbs project that includes 20 countries and focuses on the role of forests in urban areas (urban dimension, GI). It is an example of good practice that could be shared on our knowledge platform. Project ends in April 2017, with the conference on 4-5 April in Orvieto. Exchange on results should be ensured; one option is the next AG 7 meeting (fitting well to the end of the project or the GI workshop with Alpine metropolises in May 2017).

Eurocities Conference in Milano

16-18 November 2016, Sharing Cities – the theme of the conference is sharing economies. City of Munich (Sylvia Pintarits) applied for the speednetworking session with the presentation “Shared Landscapes - green infrastructure development in (Alpine) metropolitan areas”. It would be good to know if members or leaders of other EUSALP AGs plan to attend the event. Link to the conference: <http://www.eurocities2016.eu/index.php>

Activities of the network(s) of protected areas

The three networks of protected areas in the Alpine, Carpathian and Danube Region are preparing a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) accompanied by an action plan to be signed at the Alpine Week in Grassau mid October 2016 and specifically dealing with ecological connectivity. Part of the memorandum is an action plan (5 years period) that is supposed to be a living document.

In addition a new publication on ecological connectivity will be issued during AlpWeek (Alpine Nature 2030 – creating Ecological connectivity for generations to come) (PDF version available here: <http://www.bmub.bund.de/en/service/publications/downloads/details/artikel/alpine-nature-2030/>) The 3 video Clips accompanying the publication and illustrating “ecological connectivity” for a wider public ("Life needs connectivity - Three love stories") – on <http://www.alparc.org/nature2030>)

Next meeting for the AC Platform Ecological connectivity is planned for March 2017 (Grenoble).

Other inputs

- A tool for collective urbanism - interactive visual app (provided by Sylvia P.); link to demo version <http://www.unlimitedcities.org/EN/index.php>
- General “Wildlife Path Plan”, Baden-Wuerttemberg; in Germany (provided by Brigitte K. N.) <http://www.fva-bw.de/indexjs.html?http://www.fva-bw.de/forschung/wg/generalwildwegeplan.html>

Linkages to other EUSALP Action Groups

Input by AGL (see annex)

EUSALP provides a specific potential for cross-sectoral initiatives by enabling close cooperation with other AGs representing different fields of society.

For gaining a first picture on concrete topics for horizontal cooperation of AG, the AGL were asked to describe linkages to other AGs and the related topics in a questionnaire. These linkages can mirror synergies and common issues but as well possible conflicts.

The results of indications to AG 7 (both ways) can be seen in the attached presentation (PDF). AG members were asked for a feedback on these themes and to set first priorities in order to develop concrete implementation steps. The AG forum on 14-15 February 2017 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen might provide options to initiate cooperation among AGs as there are different formats foreseen (joints sessions of all 9 AG, individual sessions of the AGs and thematic sessions for 2/3 AGs).

- The linkage to AG 2 (Economic potential of strategic sectors) was assessed of specific importance as there might raise valuable innovation potential. At the same time field of cooperation has to be concretized. One option might be to give an input on potential fields of cooperation at the AG Forum.
- Cooperation with AG 4 transport was as well discussed as very important and might be picked up in a bilateral exchange with AG 4.
- Energy and landscape development is especially for the Alpine region of specific importance; concrete cooperation could base on former projects; might be a topic for AG Forum.
- The topic of water management would be a topic for cooperation of AGs within the 3rd objective “environment and energy” of the EUSALP. In addition water management will be one of the priorities in the Austrian presidency work programme of the Alpine Convention.

AGL will keep AG members informed on the results of discussion of the other AGs and the further development of cross-cutting issues.

Session V – Planned activities in the AlpGov project and next steps

Financial Dialogue

Presentation by Alfred Ringler

Alfred Ringler from CAA presented different schemes of funding in agri-environmental measures in the different Alpine countries and regions (see presentation in Annex).

There are huge differences between countries regarding the amount of payment for the same measure. Different regions found different ways of financing – examples should be collected and good practice chosen and promoted (e.g. conservation plan for the farm in AT).

Current situation in the Alpine region brings new nature dynamics – it will be one of the future tasks to look for new financial schemes reflecting these dynamics in the landscape.

The AlpGov project foresees budget for the implementation of a study examining the in-depth financing options for GI on different levels and different sectors in 2017. AG members support the AGL proposal to organize this study more as an experts-dialogue approach than in a scientific desk-research approach. AGL will continue with the preparation of the concept of the study and will present next steps at the next meeting. Funding issues will presumably be as well one of the topics for all 9 AGs during the AG forum.

Members will support the preparation of the study. It was proposed that

- Examples should be collected and evaluated; success stories should be brought to awareness and promoted.
- Spatial dimension should be reconsidered; maybe the study should focus on main corridors.
- In the debate with other stakeholders should be pointed out the regional economic consequences of NOT applying the measures for ecological connectivity.
- Agricultural sector is one of the most important to be included in the debate. At the same time communication has to be very well prepared in order not to cause reservations by misleading messages.

During this discussion the idea was developed to change the EC graphic on GI (used in AGL ppt) for the Alpine region based on the AG 7 vision of the future landscape. One suggestion might be to use the results of Moreco project – Settlements, green belts, traffic... (Sylvia P.).

EUSALP Knowledge Platform

Input by AGL

AGL gave a short overview on the development on EUSALP level and within the AlpGov project. Details of the Platform of Knowledge (PoK) concept will be discussed in the AlpGov PP meeting the next day. One of the next steps in AlpGov will be, to describe the AGs in different communication material (on the PoK, in flyers, posters e.g.). We therefore kindly ask to provide AGL with graphics and photos (by end of November 2016 the latest) to be usable for this purpose in order to have a high-quality representation of the topic and representing the entire Alpine region.

Conclusions

- AG will continue work in the current composition additionally inviting WWF to the next meeting.
- For AG members the overall principle should be followed that each member organisation is represented by one person plus no more than one deputy. This shall be followed to enable continuity of the debate in the group.
- We need to have clear vision on ecological connectivity. The development of a mission statement and the work plan will help to streamline the AG member's perception into the direction of a joint vision. AGL will provide AG members with a draft of the AG work plan - to be commented by members – as soon as the harmonized structure for all 9 AGs is developed.
- All EUSALP AGs should suggest a "lighthouse initiative". For AG 7 the initiative "To make the Alpine Region a model region for Green Infrastructure and as potential TEN-G model region" will be described and communicated to the EUSALP Presidency (Bavaria in 2017) and EB. The description will be provided to all AG members.
- The idea of a good eco-con project characteristics will be further discussed and developed to an AG 7 framework for projects of strategic interest – a draft will be prepared for the next meeting.
- Members agree that *Connecting Actions - Networking session* is very valuable for AG and we should keep it as a permanent content of the meetings.
- Communication material is needed since quite some events are going on with EUSALP and AG7 representation. It is planned that AlpGov project will produce material before December 2016.
- Concrete suggestions for ministerial meeting (October 2017) are welcomed to make future AG7 goals more tangible and to see what kind of political support is needed. AGL leads will continue with the preparation of the concept for the event.
- Mapping of stakeholders will be done in next phases of the communication process. AGL will provide a digital form (excel sheet) to be filled in, to start the process of defining stakeholders that we want to include in communication. Members are invited to send suggestions before 20. December 2016. First picture will be prepared for the next meeting in spring 2017.
- The option of organising virtual meetings should be reconsidered in respect of different state administration restrictions in some of the organisations. Option of using Adobe Connect will be checked, CIPRA offered support.
- AGL will send the questionnaire for the evaluation of the meeting (sent on 27.9.2017). Participants were asked to give feedback by filling the form and AGL will collect answers (see annex).

Next steps

- Work plan to be discussed and 'approved' by the end of 2016
- Close cooperation with Alpine urban areas was very welcomed and the organization of the workshop on "GI and Alpine urban areas" in 2017 decided.
- Forum of all nine EUSALP AGs is planned for February 2017, Garmisch-Partenkirchen (under Bavarian EUSALP Presidency).
- Next AG7 Meeting in February 2017 within the frame of the AG forum in Garmisch-Partenkirchen.