

EUSALP INNOVATION FACILITY (EIF)

Concept for the Strategic priority policy area and Strategic cross-sectoral implementation initiative

Lead: Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection and Lombardy Region, acting respectively as Lead Partner and Partner of AlpGov 2

Contributions by: all AGs

1. Background

The Macroregional strategy for the Alpine area EUSALP started its activities in 2015. The core of the work is carried out by the nine Action Groups. The work of the Action Groups has been financed and to some extent structured by the Alpine Space Program project AlpGov. AlpGov helped a lot to build up the governance mechanism of EUSALP and to develop concrete activities. AlpGov was running from June 2016 to December 2019. All nine Action Groups had established a workplan and initiated so called Strategic Implementation Initiatives. Each Action Group was requested to implement at least one such Strategic Implementation Initiative. Thus, AlpGov has largely influenced the work of EUSALP in the first four years. This work was mainly following a project logic.

With AlpGov 2, running from January 2020 to June 2022, EUSALP will go a substantial step further. A much stronger focus is put on the policy cycle and on initiatives across several Action Groups. This step reflects very well the phases described in the 2017 COWI-Study. The EUSALP period from 2016 to 2019 corresponds basically to Phase 1 as defined in the COWI-Study, while the work in EUSALP in the years 2020 to 2022 corresponds to phase 2 with a much more strategic approach. In AlpGov 2, the Action Group Leaders which are at the same time the partners of the AlpGov project, agreed to work together on at least five Strategic priority policy areas and to implement at least five Strategic Cross-sectoral implementation initiatives. With these two core strands, EUSALP reinforces the cooperation across Action Groups and strives for a much bigger impact on the policy level.

According to the Application Form, the Strategic cross-sectoral implementation initiatives shall “demonstrate the power of the territorial cooperation at macro-regional level to correctly meet the needs of the territories and to address the relevant policies for the development of the Alpine areas, thus supporting the setting of policy recommendations (WP-T-3)”. The Strategic cross-sectoral implementation initiatives must therefore demonstrate the capacity of EUSALP to integrate policies, sharing a vision and joint actions between the AG’s.

Still according to the Application Form, the Strategic priority policy areas will be built on the activities in WP-T-2 and should be defined based on the opportunities for change and potential impacts of the policy change. The Strategic priority policy areas will undergo the policy cycle as defined in WP-T-3 and ultimately feed into the policy recommendations of AlpGov 2.

In the informal meeting of February 5th 2020 in Lyon, the project partners of AlpGov 2 agreed on a first selection of five such topics. They also agreed on the principle, that the Strategic priority policy areas should embed the Cross-sectoral implementation initiatives. The present concept note defines the potential activities for one of these five areas: The feasibility of an “EUSALP Innovation Facility (EIF)”.

2. EUSALP Innovation Facility (EIF)

It is common sense, that macroregional strategies can only fulfil the role as laboratories for a new Europe when appropriate funds are available to join forces, to strengthen cooperation and to achieve economic, social and territorial cohesion. To do so, all available sources of funding, be it European, international, national, regional, public or private, have to be used.

Although efforts are currently made to better align EUSALP topics with funding priorities of the programmes, it will by nature always be the case that any action for which funding out of these programmes is foreseen, has to respect specific rules set up by the responsible authorities based on legal provisions. For implementing EUSALP Action Plan it turned out that given the wide range of actions the INTERREG B Programme plays a key role also in the future. In addition, other EU-cofunded programmes and support from the EP are practically or may be more intensely used.

However, specific rules for programmes necessarily limit the flexibility for overall approaches covering different types of activities, territories, partners to be involved. As long as there is no “one size fits all”-EU-funded Programme for MRS (which is far from reality because of the three-no-principles), EUSALP actors have to double check for every activity to be funded which programme to use and which provisions to respect. In some cases, it is even impossible to gain any financial support specifically for **cross-sectoral implementation initiatives**, as national and regional budgets are mainly bound to sectoral policies and often concentrated on few powerful project partners.

As a consequence, a specific funding opportunity separate from ESI programmes or – in other words – a sort of innovation capital tool, which allows reacting **dynamically** in terms of **time**, **content** and **purpose** on societal developments and triggers **innovative approaches supporting all EUSALP cross-sectoral initiatives** or e.g. ideas coming from **youth and young experts participation** initiatives, is missing. It should also reflect potentials for triggering innovation in SMEs. As a working title, we use the term “EUSALP Innovation Facility (EIF)” to make clear that the final design and the institutional character as well as the final role and setting within the EUSALP Governance System will be subject of further analysis resp. decisions. In any case, it is worth mentioning that such a facility shall not represent an additional or separate element of the governance support structure within EUSALP but only serve as an

instrument, which can be used and processed by existing governance bodies. It is meant to support the implementation of innovative initiatives by complementing existing funds and activate new ones, while being fully in line with EUSALP priorities as set by the EUSALP bodies and coherent with the 4-thematic strategic initiatives. The options for the legal setting, the connection to a potential EUSALP technical support structure (TSS) and management of such an instrument will be investigated during the implementation process of the strategic initiative in close coordination with the EUSALP actors from the beginning.

The intention of this strategic initiative therefore lies in exploring the feasibility and potential frame-conditions how to mobilize further funding sources for short time, dynamic and cross-sectoral funding requirements for serving a wide range of potential and varied beneficiaries - also considering private financial support such as enterprises, foundations etc. In this sense, it strategically provides backing for all cross-sectoral implementation initiatives in strengthening their implementation capacity. Not least, this initiative has the potential for high political impact. State and regional representatives can demonstrate to the public the institutional commitment to EUSALP and the role of the public administration as driver of innovation.

With the support of additional budget independently from the AlpGov 2 project budget¹, a process will be set up, which assesses the options in a joint process of EUSALP actors. An advisory group composed by EUSALP actors should be initiated. This group is proposed to be composed by one representative of the EB per Alpine country, the European Commission and the coordinators of this initiative. It will be supported by an external (legal) expert based on a public procurement procedure.

The concrete **output** will be a **feasibility study** summarising

- a needs analysis and matching with potential funding sources
- potential legal structures and prerequisites
- potential governance schemes (administration, rules of procedure, decision making), also in relation to EUSALP governance
- profile for such an instrument (topics, nature of activities)
- results of the dialogue process and outlining the process ahead.

3. Milestones

For the implementation of this strategic priority policy area, we foresee the following activities, which can be summarized on a timeline with the following milestones:

- September 2020: Detailed presentation of the approach in the Executive Board and agreement on the structure of the advisory group composed by EUSALP actors

¹ Bavaria is in additional funds for this purpose with an amount of 80.000€ and Lombardy Region will contribute with complementary actions (budgeting in progress)

- October 2020: Set-up of the advisory group and first (virtual) meeting. Joint formulation of the tender specifications.
- November – December 2020: Tender process for external support.
- January – October 2021: elaboration of scenarios for an EUSALP Innovation Facility (EIF).
- January - June 2021: Working sessions of the advisory group
- July 2021 – November 2021: Dialogue events with public authorities and potential private partners.
- November (?) 2021: Annual Forum, presentation of the scenarios for an EUSALP Innovation Facility (EIF).
- January 2022: Drafting of policy recommendations for AlpGov 2 including EUSALP Innovation Facility (EIF).
- February 2022: Capitalization seminar for the policy recommendations organized by SAB.
- Spring 2022: Presentation of policy recommendations in all seven countries in strategic policy workshops (cf. Activity A.T3.6)
- June 2022: Final Conference of AlpGov 2 and presentation of final policy recommendations.

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