

## What is the Alpine Space Programme?

The Alpine Space Programme is a EU funded programme. Its global aim is to enable different actors such as local and regional administrations, research institutions, service providers or chambers of commerce to jointly foster a balanced territorial development and sustainable growth in the Alpine area. They cooperate in working fields that require Alpine wide approaches and transnational solutions. By working together, the Alpine countries and regions can meet the challenges much more effectively, quickly, and with better results.

But what are the specific challenges? To name just a few: coping with the effects of climate change in a very sensitive natural landscape (floodings, water shortage etc.), mitigating the negative impacts of traffic on people and environment, reducing territorial disparities (urban sprawl as well as depopulation in rural areas) and strengthening internal innovation capacities of SMEs.

### The background: European Regional Policy and European Regional Development Fund

The European Union comprises 27 Member States and 271 regions - naturally the economic and social disparities among these regions are great. The European regional policy is designed to reduce the gap between the development levels of the regions and to strengthen its economic and social cohesion by correcting imbalances between its regions. The main funding instrument is the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which was founded already in 1975.

The ERDF can intervene in the three objectives of regional policy. One might know the investments in objective 1 "Convergence" and objective 2 "Regional Competitiveness and Employment". With objective 3 the European Union also supports territorial cooperation among Member States, their regions and cities by cooperation programmes funding projects. These cooperation programmes running under the objective on "European Territorial Cooperation" operate on different geographical levels (e.g. cross-border programmes or transnational programmes) and in different geographical areas. One of the areas where "transnational" cooperation is funded, is the Alpine Space.

The current funding period is running from 2007 to 2013. However the cooperation is not new: Already from 2000-2006 the so-called INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space Programme funded 58 transnational projects (see also [www.alpine-space.org](http://www.alpine-space.org)).

## What are the thematic working fields?

The general aim of the programme is to increase attractiveness and competitiveness in the Alpine Space. The programme operates in various relevant working fields, summarised under three priorities:

### **1) Attractiveness and competitiveness**

Activities are being supported in order to promote the dynamics and economy of the Alpine region and to help overcome local and regional socio-economic obstacles. The goal is to stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship, boost research and innovations capacities of small and medium-sized enterprises, and promote balanced land use development in order to keep the Alpine Space attractive to its inhabitants.

### **2) Accessibility and connectivity**

This priority aims at improving connections in the Alpine Space, ensure optimal access to the Alpine Space, and promote the intelligent, sustainable use of the existing infrastructure. The knowledge and handling of the economic and ecological effects of transportation systems, needs to be improved. For all population groups in all regions, access to services should be facilitated. In order to achieve this goal, connectivity and quality of service need to be improved.

### **3) Environment and risk prevention**

The valorisation and use of natural resources and cultural identities are crucial to maintain a high and sustainable quality of life as well as growth and development. As a result, one of the greatest challenges for transnational cooperation is to develop measures and new solutions to deal with the effects of climate change and thereby contribute to a significant reduction of risks. At the same time, a more intensive use of renewable energy needs to be promoted.

## What exactly is a transnational project and how is it composed?

The programme supports transnational projects in the Alpine area involving key actors and developing joint actions on specific Alpine issues. Transnational means that the partnership has to be composed of partners from at least 3 Partner States and that the solutions developed in the projects shall show a clear transnational benefit.

The projects provide the possibility to develop, test and transfer strategies, approaches and tools for the European territorial development and to generate effective transnational solutions. The participants can widely benefit by extending their know-how and capitalising their competences, by enlarging their networks. Transnational projects favor innovation and creative thinking!

The projects usually last 2-3 years and are steered and supported by the programme through the whole project life cycle – from the idea up to the application, all along the implementation and until the closure. Depending on the field of activity, several types of actors located in the Alpine Space can ask for co-funding:

- Public authorities, administrations and development agencies at local, regional and national level
- Education and training centers, as well as scientific and technological research units
- Organisations representing enterprises (especially SMEs)
- Chambers of commerce and industry
- Public services and transport providers
- Agencies and NGOs in the field of natural and cultural resources and renewable energy management

## Which are the regions involved?

The cooperation area covers the entire Alps including the foothills, the lowlands and the coastal areas. Seven countries with 32 regions participate to the programme: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Switzerland.

## How is it financed and which budget is available?

The programme is jointly financed by the European Union - through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) mentioned above - and the Partner States (Members and Non-Members of the EU) taking part in the programme.

The overall programme budget amounts to almost 130 million EURO for the funding period 2007-2013, thereof 98 million EURO ERDF. The contribution of the project partners coming from the EU Member States are co-funded by ERDF up to a rate of 76%. The remaining costs have to be covered by other public funds, depending on rules at national level. Project partners coming from Liechtenstein and Switzerland can not apply for ERDF, but will be supported by the countries' own national funding schemes.

Every year, a call for project applications is launched. The applications are assessed and evaluated by various programme bodies, representing the programme area.

## Actual state of the programme

Up to now, 2 calls for project application have been launched inaugurating 25 projects with 321 partner institutions. The average project budget lies with 3 million EURO and so far 70,6 million EURO (thereof 50,7 million EURO ERDF) have been committed.

The 25 running projects cover a lot of leading topics such as:

- renewable energies and ecological building;
- support of SMEs and cluster development;
- small and medium cities competitiveness;
- intermodal transport solutions and coordination of mobility strategies;
- public services accessibility;
- water resource management;
- climate change and its impact / hazard management.

## What's upcoming?

In 2010 another call for project proposals will be launched. A programme highlight planned for 2010 will be a thematic event on climate change and energy efficiency. The aim is to provide information on existing approaches in the Alpine Space Programme and to analyse topics to be tackled in the near future.

## The programme in short

The programme	European Territorial Cooperation Alpine Space Programme 2007-2013
Type of programme and background	EU Structural Funds programme for transnational co-operation under the European Territorial Cooperation objective
The programme duration	2007-2013 (implementation until 2015)
The programme budget	130 million EURO thereof ERDF: 98 million EURO
Participating countries	Austria, Germany, Italy, France, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, Switzerland
Co-funding rates	- 76% for partners from EU Member States; - Partners from Liechtenstein and Switzerland receive national funding.
3 programme priorities	1) Competitiveness and Attractiveness 2) Accessibility and Connectivity 3) Environment and Risk Prevention
Calls for project proposals	2 (in 2008 and 2009)
Running projects	25
Involved project partners	321
Total budget committed to approved projects	70,6 million EURO (thereof ERDF 50,7 million EURO)
Total budget committed to approved projects in %	56% (ERDF: 55%)
Total budget committed per thematic area	<b>Competitiveness and Attractiveness:</b> 23,1 million EURO (thereof ERDF: 16, 3 million EURO) <b>Accessibility and Connectivity:</b> 19,4 million EURO (thereof ERDF: 14 million EURO) <b>Environment and Risk Prevention:</b> 28 million EURO (thereof ERDF: 20,3 million EURO)
Project partners per country	Austria: <b>63</b> Germany: <b>38</b> France: <b>44</b> Italy: <b>107</b> Liechtenstein: <b>2</b> Slovenia: <b>32</b> Switzerland: <b>35</b>

## Contacts and further information

Contact persons are available in all countries participating to the programme.  
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Please visit the programme website for further information:

**[www.alpine-space.eu](http://www.alpine-space.eu)**