



Project Acronym: SMART-SPACE

Project title: ASP478

O.T.4.2

“Alpine Strategic Partnership set-up”

WP n°:	T4: To elaborate the SMART SPACE strategy and set-up the strategic partnership to strengthen the Alpine innovation eco-system for the SMEs' digital innovation
Task n°:	O.T 4.2 In line with EU action plans (COM2016_180 etc) an Alpine Strategic partnership is set up as a follow-up instrument to promote training, joint cooperation, projects, access to EU funds and private investments, promotion of services and knowledge on smart topics for AS SMEs
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Executive Summary

One of the main results of the SMART SPACE project is to create a strategic partnership that could include both the project partners and other public and private partners in order to strengthen the digitization process within the Alpine Space and, if possible, to expand the partnership to further economic and social actors.

This document aims to illustrate the efforts made by the project partners in creating a durable partnership. Furthermore, the post-project phase is illustrated, as well as its integration with further projects of the ALPINE SPACE. The document lays the foundations for the continuation of the strategies and tools related to the actions of the SMART SPACE project, showing the points of contact with other programs that reflect the results and collaborations that took place during the project.

Temporal and organizational development AS Partnership

Basically, the main point of the SMART SPACE project consists in the creation of a strategy and, consequently, of a partnership capable of promoting training and services related to the SMEs sector within the Alpine Space.

The connection between the project phases WP T3 and T4 is therefore extremely important, with a strong impulse and contribution resulting from the creation of the AS platform.

The setting up of an AS partnership was therefore conceived to develop common and shared strategic points to be submitted to partners and to all private and public organizations that could potentially join the partnership. Such partnership had to be linked to the Alpine Space and to be included in a larger geographical area.

- **Temporal phases**

The temporal path taken to establish the AS Partnership has developed in a well-defined context where the Steering Committees are to be considered the points of confrontation and guidance in defining the Partnership itself and its specific objectives.

Great importance for the creation of the Partnership was given to three crucial points in the SMART SPACE project:

- The definition and enlargement process of the DIH platform
- The results of the pilot actions
- The setting up and discussion of the SMART SPACE Strategy

These three elements included in a defined timetable were the basis of the idea and the setting process of a partnership that, where possible, should join the project partners and further public and private organizations.

The DIH SMART SPACE platform has taken on a central role in defining the partnership linked to the durability of the SP actions and strategy. The strategy was developed thanks to the project results, especially the ones related with WP 3. These results allowed the project partners to promote the SMART SPACE project and consequently its development idea related to digitization in SMEs

The implementation of the pilot actions at regional, national and transnational level and the subsequent formulation of the SMART SPACE strategy, also related to a more

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complex analysis of the feasibility study carried out, allowed to develop and draw up a possible partnership agreement in the first months of 2019 .

The meetings held in 2019 (21st January, 30th January, 7th March, 24th May,) resulted in an intense discussion regarding the partnership, its structure, its purposes and, above all, its feasibility within a process that could guarantee a solid durability of the agreement and of the collaboration among all members

The partnership of the SMART SPACE project idea based its success especially on the durability of the joint collaboration between partners and on the further public/private entities.

Given the results achieved by the pilot actions and the consequent feasibility study, Veneto Region and the in-house company "Veneto Innovazione" began a series of meetings at national level in order to sound out and analyze the characteristics of a European partnership based on the SMART SPACE project.

A crucial moment in the establishment of the partnership was the organization of multiple meetings held in Lion between March and May 2019 where the involvement of public authorities in representation of the regions of the project partners was strongly underlined.

Therefore, several intense advertising activities within partner regions have started so that local public authorities could follow the activities and results achieved by the project.

The initial moment of the monitoring activities to build the AS partnership was the Technical Committee of 7th March 2019 this meeting was followed by local meetings with stakeholders and policy makers.

During the summer months of 2019 many partners constantly received feedbacks, that allowed to convey all the needs and requests of the regional managers of the regions involved. Unfortunately, this specific effort did not prove to be effective to define a single policy strategy for policy makers. Actually, a single strategic direction was not found in the beginning.

Given the difficulties encountered and in parallel with the activities with the project partners, the Veneto Region Innovation Department started an intense collaboration with the Lombardy Region Innovation Department also thanks to the intense and fruitful work of the partner AFIL. This collaboration had the purpose of formulating and sharing a common document concerning digitization in the Alpine area. The document allowed to establish a common and basic point for an enlarged partnership among project partners and their regional representatives. The collaboration had the purpose of creating a domino effect that, starting from the Veneto and Lombardy region, would have increased the adhesions to a wider partnership.

The effort shared by the two Departments (Lombardy and Veneto) found many obstacles on its way that delayed the drafting of a real definitive document; because of such delays, the setting up of any agreement and therefore of any partnership was

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at risk. For this reason, all meetings held in Brussels in October (Steering Committee) and November with all the partners were crucial to determine if and which type of Partnership would have been successful in the area.

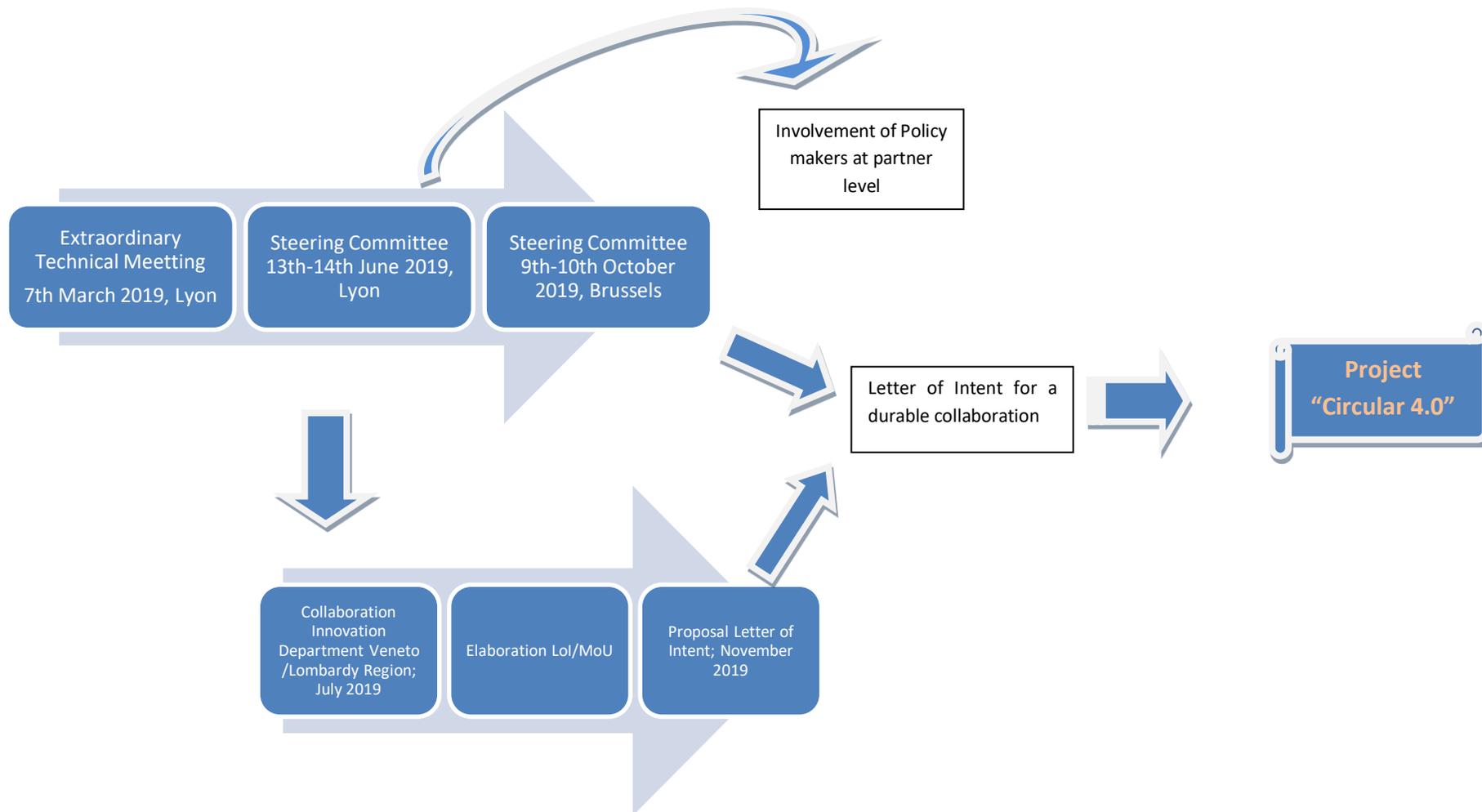
Despite the great effort on the part of the partners and the interest of some policy makers (in particular of regional authorities), the partnership was not established for reasons related to the times and priorities of the political actors. Besides, there would not have been certain results within the end of the project, despite the efforts to resume all the national interests coinciding with the priorities of the political agendas in a common document.

Therefore, where possible, it was decided to continue to involve policy makers. At the same time, an agreement was reached (at the project partner level) and a letter of intent was signed to create the basis for a durable agreement and to manage to use the tools and the results achieved.

This letter of intent, drafted for the first time at the end of December 2019 (revised and corrected by all partners) created a collaboration agreement that could develop a solid partnership. Actually, this agreement turned into a more decisive collaboration in carrying out the results achieved. Simultaneously with the drafting of the letter of intent, most of the partners of the SMART SPACE project joined (as a partner) the "Circular 4.0" project, presented in the latest Interreg Alpine Space call.

The quality of this type of partnership developed during the Smart Space project and the issues faced have almost naturally led the partners to collaborate for the presentation of a new project, precisely Circular 4.0, which continues the activities of the SMART SPACE project by taking experience and tools. Therefore, thanks to the letter of intent, a working group was created, open to other members who can continue the activities related to the SMART SPACE.

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From the SMART SPACE project to the CIRCULAR 4.0 project

The phases and the preparatory meetings for the setting up of the AS Partnership highlighted a difficulty on the part of the various public and private actors in defining a single shared objective linked to the partnership. The results and participation at local level of the various legal entities was strongly agreed, but the agreement of common objectives at transnational level was only partially achieved.

The partnership that all partners tried to set up faced many implementation difficulties and it is precisely for this reason that the project partners decided to sign a Letter of Intent that could include a future collaboration and that was able to guarantee the continuation of the digitization process of SMEs in the Alpine Space

The Letter of Intent signed by the project partners was supported by the drafting and approval of the Circular 4.0 project. This project, started with the kick off in January 2020, has the objective of strengthening the digitalization process of SMEs by trying to accelerate the transition to the circular economy within the AS. Therefore, the Circular 4.0 project envisages not only a very large participation of many partners of the SMART SPACE project (9 out of 12 in total and 3 replaced by connected organizations), but is based quite on the results of the SP project, by drawing inspiration from it and using many SMART SPACE tools .

The main objective of the CIRCULAR4.0 project is to strengthen the digitization processes by SMEs to encourage innovation processes and accelerate the transition to the circular economy (CE) in the Alpine space

The project will allow to develop and test further tools capable of favouring Industry4.0 contribution for the passage of SMEs to the EC economy. The experience gained in the Smart Space, i.e. stimulating innovation through the integration of intelligent technologies (internet of things, big data, clouding, etc.) in the innovation plans of SMEs (output of the Smart Space project), will be resumed and expanded for an application to support the Circular Economy to promote the digitalization of SMEs as an "activator" for circular economy processes in the Alpine area.

Policy makers, intermediaries and SMEs will be informed, trained and involved in pilot actions to increase the incidence of digitization processes, focusing mainly on: process innovation, business models and investments.

Smart Space's experience in establishing a strategic partnership will be capitalized and will continue to strengthen the cooperation of policy makers in the geographic areas involved, for an alpine common circular economy 4.0.

Therefore, the Circular 4.0 project can be considered the demonstration of the lasting collaboration among the various partners who continue their slow and difficult path of

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involvement of numerous other public and private subjects towards the creation of a common transnational goal related to digitization.

Circular 4.0 partners	Smart Space partners
<i>TPLJ SLOVENIJA</i>	<i>CCIAA Venezia Rovigo ITALIA</i>
<i>TUAS Rosenheim DEUTSCHLAND</i>	<i>AI FRANCE</i>
<i>AWS ÖSTERREICH</i>	<i>ARII PACA FRANCE</i>
<i>ITG ÖSTERREICH</i>	<i>TPLJ SLOVENIJA</i>
<i>Biz-Up ÖSTERREICH</i>	<i>BWCON DEUTSCHLAND</i>
<i>VENETO INNOVAZIONE (Veneto Region In house) ITALIA</i>	<i>ITG Salzburg ÖSTERREICH</i>
<i>Grand E-nov FRANCE</i>	<i>AFIL ITALIA</i>
<i>AURAE FRANCE</i>	<i>UASRo DEUTSCHLAND</i>
<i>JSI SLOVENIJA</i>	<i>CSP ITALIA</i>
<i>TOWL ITALIA</i>	<i>ARDI Rhône-Alpes FRANCE</i>
<i>CONFBG ITALIA</i>	<i>AWS ÖSTERREICH</i>
<i>CCIAA Venezia Rovigo ITALIA</i>	<i>REGIONE VENETO ITALIA</i>
<i>UCB DEUTSCHLAND</i>	
<i>RISINGSUD FRANCE</i>	
<i>BWCON DEUTSCHLAND</i>	

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TEMPLATE

(Letterhead of your organisation)

Subject: – SMART SPACE project and Agreement

Project title: ASP478

Letter of intent

This is to confirm that (*Organisation name*), legally represented by (*name of legal representative*), given the importance that society attaches to digitization as a lever for the competitiveness of the economic system, intends to continue the activities implemented in the SMART SPACE project and to continue the collaboration with The Smart Space partners to set up an Alpine Strategic Partnership.

In terms of contributions, our organisation intends to:

- Promote the Alpine Digital Innovation Hub;
- Strengthen the cooperation among AS Innovation Stakeholders and SMEs;
- Share with Partners regular updates and impacts of the SMART SPACE methodology;
- Reinforce the AS Partnership to promote AS SMEs digitisation supporting the Digital Innovation Hub.
- Strengthen the relationship established at Alpine Space and EU level by planning meetings and/or conference call to share successful and unsuccessful actions and continue to learn from each partner.
- Organise events to further increase the joint cooperation, the promotion of services and knowledge on smart topics for AS SMEs, and to recruit new players to participate to the Strategic Partnership.

In this case, our organisation commits to provide and receive feedback to and from all partners on the carried out activities.

Place, date

Signature