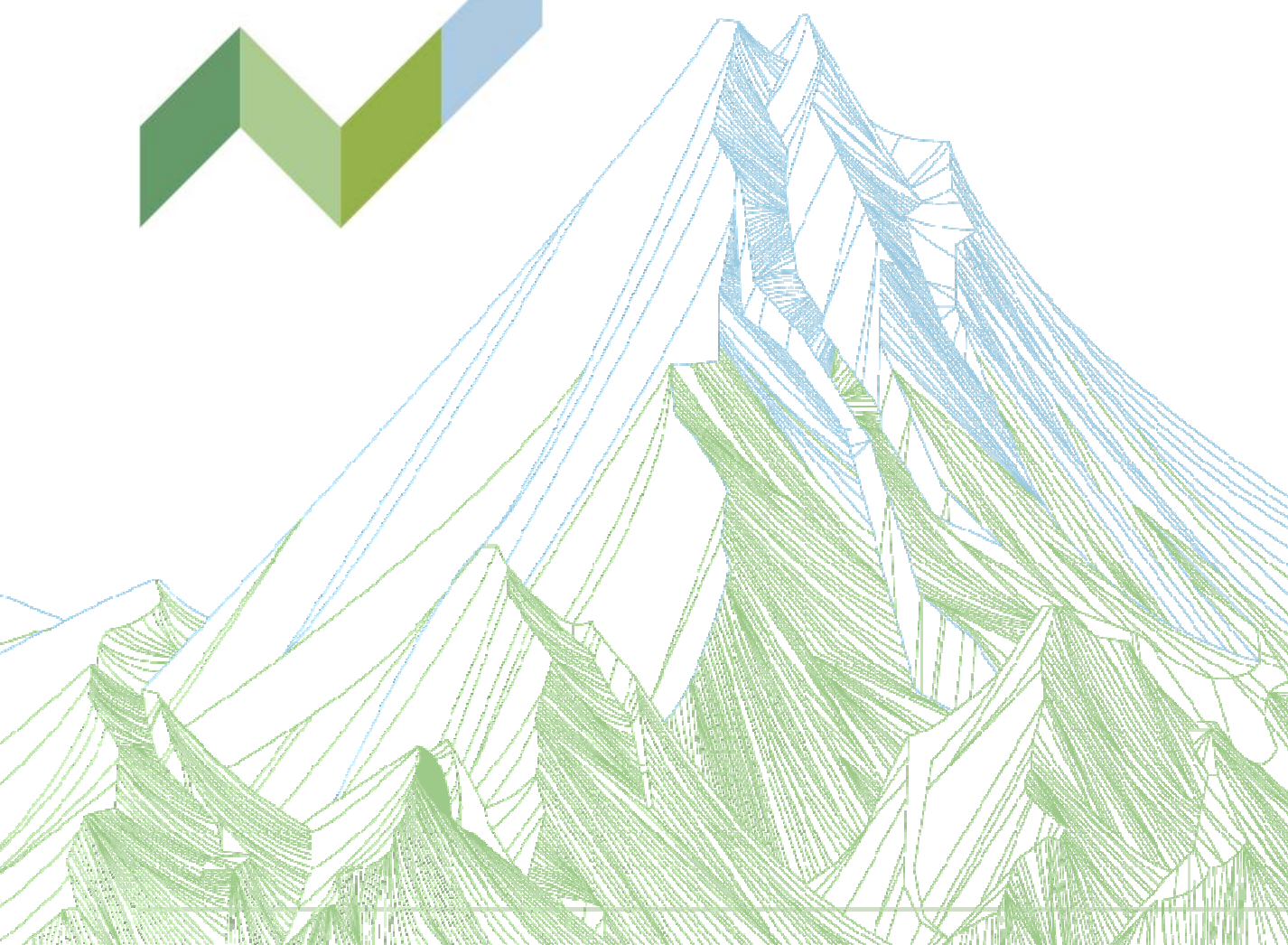


Terms of reference for a project proposal to support EUSALP governance

13.7.2022



The mission of the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027

The Interreg Alpine Space programme 2021-2027 is a transnational cooperation programme funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The programme is anchored on several EU policy initiatives, including the European Green Deal, the Territorial Agenda 2030 and the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). The **mission of the programme** is to be at the forefront of the transition to a unique, carbon neutral and climate resilient Alpine region. The programme shall **foster the integration of sustainable economic development, societal well-being and the preservation of biodiversity**. To do so, the programme shall bring together stakeholders from different sectors and regions to work on innovative and pioneering ideas and create the benefit for those who live and work in the Alpine region.

The programme partner states will invest **EUR 107 million ERDF** to co-finance transnational cooperation projects promoted by public and private organisations from seven Alpine countries.

The support that the programme offers to EUSALP

The cooperation area of the Interreg Alpine Space programme 2021-2027 is aligned with the one of the EUSALP. This is a deliberate effort to **strengthen the coherence and complementarity between both initiatives** and, at the same time, support the path towards a climate-neutral territory. Both initiatives are supported by the European as well the national, regional and local levels. The strong commitment of the territory for cooperation is essential in both of the initiatives.

The Interreg Alpine Space Programme is a key financing source of EUSALP. The high consistency of the funding priorities of the Alpine Space programme, the national and regional policies and the thematic pillars of EUSALP guarantees a smooth coordination between programme and strategy. It ensures that **projects submitted under all four funding priorities of the programme give answers to the needs of the area** and that the programme **supports the implementation and governance of the EUSALP** through all its priorities and funding.

In the funding period 2014-2020 the Interreg Alpine Space has been financing the EUSALP governance mechanisms through two specific projects of the EUSALP action groups which provided valuable basis for further development steps of EUSALP: **AlpGov I and AlpGov II**.

AlpGov I (2016-2019) was implemented in the build-up phase of EUSALP. The project set its focus on capacity building of the EUSALP AG and on rolling out strategic implementation initiatives, enhancing governance and financial mechanism and encouraging cross-AG-cooperation.

AlpGov II (2020-2022) already followed a more strategic approach, concentrated on the consolidation of work of the AG, on fostering work across the AG as well as policy and embedding. The project set a focus

on capitalisation, cross-sectoral strategic implementation initiatives, entering into the policy cycle and building up a learning environment.

Now, obviously a new phase of focusing the EUSALP to fewer policy topics is about to start.

In the meantime EUSALP has reached an advanced stage of maturity, EUSALP Executive Board (EB) and General Assembly (GA) could draw a lot of learnings from the past years and especially these two projects. And a technical support structure (TSS) has been set up to support and foster EUSALP governance. As regards the next years to come, the ambition of EUSALP EB and AG is to improve the EUSALP governance system:

- the visibility of EUSALP shall be increased,
- the cooperation on both, political level and project level shall be improved,
- key policy stakeholders as politicians, policy makers, young people and civil society shall be better involved in the EUSALP-policy cycle,
- the communication between EB and AG shall be intensified,
- the capacities of AG shall be constantly strengthened, shifting the focus from hands-on project mentality to strategic policy coordination,
- sectoral work of the AG shall be overcome by fostering transversality and horizontal approaches intensifying closer cooperation between the AG,
- as regards content the EUSALP EB and AG strive for a clearer focus on key topics.

Projects that can be funded in priority 4

The challenges which the alpine area is facing clearly call for a further **improvement of multi-level governance and further enhancement of institutional capacities of public authorities and stakeholders**. The Interreg Alpine Space Programme wants to contribute to further clarifying, deepening, supporting and improving cooperation structures, with placing a particular focus on the professionalization of governance and stakeholder structures as well as on preparing the ground for innovative projects and stronger involvement of the civil society.

Priority 4 of the programme shall contribute to support the EUSALP governance system. But it is also available for governance-related activities of other organisations in the area.

The priority foresees around **11,5 million ERDF for co-financing projects** that deal with governance issues as described out above. The co-funding rate is 75%. The size of the priority gives room for classic projects and a number of small-scale projects. Based on the needs of governance support as defined by the EUSALP EB, the programme partners have reserved an amount of **6 million Euro ERDF for two classic projects to support EUSALP governance**. The remaining amount is available for small-scale projects of EUSALP players but also other alpine stakeholders.

The programme document gives examples of activities, which EUSALP players as well as other organisations in the Alpine area can take and get co-funded in this priority 4:

- Setting up transnational frameworks, platforms, networks and mechanisms in the field of governance to enhance cooperation between Alpine stakeholders including the mapping of resources, potentials and processes as well as defining innovative implementation pathways and structures;
- Developing and implementing solutions to enhance cooperation and organisation processes within the EUSALP governance structure;
- Developing solutions and pilot projects for communication measures and tools to support multi-level governance, reaping the benefits of digitalization;
- Supporting capacity building and trainings for public authorities and stakeholders at different policy and governance-levels in order to adapt to new challenges (e.g. mitigation and adaptation to climate change, digitalisation, professionalization, process-innovation);
- Developing tailor-made strategies and solutions for the integration of and communication with stakeholders at different policy and governance-levels, as well as with the civil society - also including “the next generation” (youth) - and non-institutional actors;
- Fostering and implementing knowledge transfer, exchange and capitalisation activities addressing the major governance aspects and key stakeholders of the Alpine region;
- Fostering the use of available funding instruments for governance support and EUSALP implementation;
- Developing and implementing joint solutions for monitoring, reporting and evaluating multilevel and transnational policy instruments;
- Implementing joint pilot projects for the design, testing, up-scaling, comparison and evaluation of innovations in the field of public administration;
- Developing mechanisms for the uptake and implementation of multilevel and transnational governance.

Programme expectations

In their meetings of April 22nd 2022 and June 24th 2022 the EUSALP EB defined the cornerstones of a project that shall be suggested for co-funding to the programme with the aim to support the activities of the EUSALP TSS, AGs and the presidency.

The partners of the Interreg Alpine Space programme expect the applicants to obey these cornerstones:

- the project shall run for three years, January 2023-December 2025 (the EUSALP EB intends to review the work performed by the TSS and take a decision on the further set up of the TSS by June 2025)
- the TSS staff that should be co-funded by the project shall not count more than 6 persons,
- for the organisation of annual fora a maximum amount of 600.000 Euro in three years is foreseen,
- the project shall foresee activities and a budget for each AG of maximum 180.000 Euro total costs in three years (exceptions can be foreseen depending on AG financing structures),

- the project shall foresee youth-related activities and a corresponding budget of maximum 180.000 Euro total costs in three years,
- the project has to take stock of the results of the previous AlpGov I and II projects as well as other gained experiences and expertise.

Furthermore, the **EUSALP EB expects the project proposal to strengthen the institutional capacities** of the 7 states and 48 regions, as well as their cohesion and action through increased mutual trust and enhanced multi-level cooperation. It shall:

- provide operational support to EUSALP's governance bodies;
- strengthen the implementation of the priorities of action groups and ensure their coordination to support the integration of their results into public policies;
- enhance EUSALP communications, the involvement of Alpine youth and relevant stakeholders.

The programme partners expect that the project intervention logic shows a clear contribution to reach the objectives set for the programme. The applicants shall **develop a project proposal that is consistent** with the aims that they agree to reach with this specific project, thus to clearly describe in the application form which project objectives are strived for, which concrete activities shall be set and which deliverables, outputs and results shall be achieved in the end.

The applicants shall pay attention to the **consistency** of the project partnership, budget and duration with the envisaged activities and outputs.

Applicants are encouraged to keep the **project partnership as small as possible** to ensure operability. Involving organisations as observers rather than as partners can help to reach this aim.

As ERDF-funding of the programme is limited, the programme encourages the applicants to limit as much as possible their requests for co-funding of staff costs, taking into account the specifics of administrative nature of their organisation, by exploring other funding options than the programme and/or to use more intensively internal resources and knowledge which can also help to ensure proper capacity building on the level of the project partner institutions.

The project applicants are strongly advised to make use of simplified cost options as much as possible.

The support of EUSALP governance and implementation through the funding of the **EUSALP TSS has been indicated as operation of strategic importance** in the programme document. It is the responsibility of the programme committee to keep track of the programme's implementation. As regards projects of strategic importance Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 with common provisions on the ERDF obliges the programme committee in article 40 (1) to examine the progress of such projects. Therefore, the project(s) funding the **EUSALP TSS will be a recurrent topic on programme committee meetings** and the committee might take specific measures to assess the performance of the project (e.g. by commissioning an external evaluation) and to draw conclusions as regards a follow up project. **This kind of review by the Interreg Alpine Space programme** in the light of its objectives and performance framework **is to be differentiated from the role which the EUSALP EB has** as regards steering and supervising the work of the EUSALP AG and TSS.

Who can apply and how to apply?

According to article 14 (4) of the (Interreg) Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 the ERDF may support measures aiming at enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies. Thus, the partner states of the Interreg Alpine Space programme 2021-2027 herewith open priority 4 of the programme for project proposals related to EUSALP governance support. Herewith, the organisations hosting the EUSALP TSS, the EUSALP AG leaders and the regions that will act as EUSALP presidency are invited to submit a joint project proposal.

The joint secretariat of the programme will assess the application according to the programme's assessment criteria. Based on this assessment the programme committee will take the co-financing decision. Details on the quality requirements for projects, assessment criteria, eligibility rules and contractual arrangements are provided in the [programme manual](#), which is available for download from the programme website.

The project application follows a one-step-procedure. This means that the **application form together with the signed partnership agreement** shall be submitted to the programme until **30.9.2022** via the [Joint Electronic Monitoring System \(JEMS\)](#). The programme partners strive at taking a funding decision in the programme committee by mid December 2022 to ensure a smooth start of project implementation in January 2023.