Evaluation of programme communication, effectiveness and stakeholder involvement of the Interreg Alpine Space 2014–2020 Programme

FINAL REPORT

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Table of Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	Alpine Space Contact Point	JS	Joint Secretariat
AF	Application Form	LAU	Local Administrative Units
AG	Action Group (EUSALP)	LP	Lead Partner
ASP	Alpine Space Programme	MA	Managing Authority
CP	Cooperation Programme	MC	Monitoring Committee
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation	MRS	Macro-regional Strategy
EC	European Commission	MS	Member State
EEA Grants	European Economic Area Grants	NUTS	Nomenclature des Unités
EFTA	European Free Trade Association		Territoriales Statistiques
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial		(Nomenclature of Territorial Units
Cooperation			for Statistics)
EoI	Expression of Interest	NWE	North-West Europe
ERDF	European Regional Development	PC	Programme Committee
Fund		PIH	Project Implementation Handbook
ESG	Evaluation Steering Group	PP	Project Partner
ESIF/ESI	European Structural and Investment	PR	Progress Report
Funds		SEA	Strategic Environmental
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation		Assessment
EUSALP	EU Strategy for the Alpine Region	SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
EU2020	EU 2020 Strategy	SO	Specific Objective
FP7	7th Framework Programme		
GIS	Geographic Information System		

Executive summary
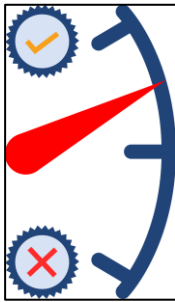
Achievements end Effectiveness

For each of the seven Specific Objectives of the programme projects have been approved. These projects show an adequate level of progress and achievement of outputs, taking into account their starting date. Project lead partners are highly confident about the likelihood of achieving expected outputs and results. The expected outreach to target groups and the current extent of outreach will facilitate a transfer and use of project results in general decision-making processes and policy capacities in the Alpine Space. Therefore, the evaluation concludes that each of the specific objectives (SO) is on a good way to reach its targets.

The progress of achievements is adequate in relation to the means and resources mobilised. Execution of ERDF and committed resources has reached a mid-term status (approx. 50%). This is in line with the progress in project approval and progress towards output achievement (considering the expected outputs to be achieved by the approved projects). Some of the output indicators even over-perform considerably with the expected outputs and might require a revision of their final targets.

The overall level of execution of Call 1 projects is 35,6%. Compared to that, the average level of execution for Call 2 projects is 11,9%. Overall, SO present either a level of execution of 10-11% (SO 2.2 and 3.1) or a more advanced level of between 17%-23,5%. The differentiated analysis shows that Specific Objectives 2.2 and 3.1 are lagging behind in financial execution mainly because of only having projects within Call 2. This reduces their average level of execution. However, within the projects approved in Call 2, SO 2.2 and 3.1 are not performing worse than other SO.

Considering the achievements of outputs, milestones and targets defined in the performance framework, the programme is well on track for this mid-term moment in implementation. For the financial indicators defined in the performance framework, the level of achievement exceeds the defined milestone and intermediate target. The achievement of physical outputs is not that well advanced, only PA1, as well as SO 2.1 and 4.1 show some progress.

The following recommendations can help to increase speed of progress and to improve the monitoring system in the upcoming months and years:

- One indicator (CO_42) is still without any achieved/expected value. For this indicator, a review of its adequateness, a review of the target value or a more focussed monitoring might be necessary.

- The SO factsheets show that the composition of target groups is rather different for each SO. This knowledge might help to produce target-group-specific contents and information on results and outputs in upcoming communication activities.

- Projects in SO 1.2 on social innovation seem to operate in a riskier and more unsecure environment than other projects. They might need a specific support or exchange of experiences and good practices to achieve their expected results.

- Based on the current performance, the programme does not need re-programming. However, if response to some of the SO is low (also in Call 3) and if there is a perceived difficulty in obtaining high-quality project applications in some SO, reprogramming might be a way to even improve effectiveness.

Horizontal Principles

The horizontal principles – regarding sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, as well as equality between men and women – are well integrated in the programme management arrangements. The principles have been taken into account in the programming phase and are well reflected in the programming documents. The principles are included in the application documents and mentioned in the Project Implementation Handbook (PIH). In particular, Factsheet 4.8 of the PIH presents the aspect of sustainable development during the implementation of a project ("greening"). This extraordinary support to projects in the implementation phase can be regarded a good practice example in Interreg project management arrangements.

The horizontal principles – regarding sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, as well as equality between men and women – are well integrated in the activities of funded projects. Projects are selected, based on their contribution to the horizontal principles – among other quality and operational criteria.

90% of ASP projects contribute positively to the principle of sustainable development. 40% of the projects contribute positively to equal opportunities and non-discrimination and 26,7% to equality between women and men. No negative impacts could be perceived.

To generate more of information on the follow-up on the integration of horizontal principles during project implementation, a specific survey might be set up and integrated in overall project monitoring, especially to facilitate the identification the uptake of "project greening" practices and other good practices with regard to the horizontal principles.
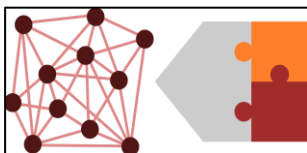
Contribution to EU2020

The evaluation shows that the Alpine Space Programme 2014-2020 contributes directly or indirectly to all three priorities of the EU2020 strategy and to all its sectoral key targets. The formulation and design of the programme led to a direct contribution on the goals for R&D goal, Poverty and Social Exclusion Goal, and for Climate and Energy. Indirect contribution can be observed in the fields of Employment and Education.

54,5% of the approved projects contribute to a medium or high degree to the Climate and Energy goal of EU2020. 24,2% of the projects contribute to the EU2020 goal on R&D strengthening. 12% of projects contribute to the eradication of poverty goal through a better access to services of general interest, equal opportunities or the promotion of non-discrimination. 9% of projects contribute to both the EU2020 employment goal and the EU2020 education goal.

Overall, it can be estimated that programme implementation contributes to a substantial degree to the EU2020 Strategy, even if the dimension of effects and impacts within the overall context of EU, national and regional policies can be deemed as rather low.

Contribution to MRS

The evaluation shows that the contribution of ASP to EUSALP is considerable and effective. From the beginning, ASP was committed to support the strategy. In particular, this support has been built into Priority Axis 4 "Well-governed Alpine Space" addressing Alpine governance issues. On the other hand, ASP was invited to actively take part in the development of EUSALP which formed the basis for a smooth and trustful coordination. Contribution and alignment takes place at multiple levels and pursues complementary goals: strategic and operational coordination, information exchange, funding of relevant EUSALP projects and activities and of multi-level governance and capacity-building (Priority Axes 4), mobilising actors and stimulating networks, synergies and efficiency in the organisation of events, cross-fertilization and integration between projects and action groups, coordinated communication and awareness-raising activities.

Almost all ASP projects that are currently being implemented contribute to EUSALP, some projects at different levels or to different Action Groups. Overall, it can be estimated that programme implementation contributes to a substantial degree to the EUSALP strategy.

Representatives of ASP programme bodies acknowledge the increasing cooperation and coordination mechanisms and the clear benefits for both sides. EUSALP benefits from the funding of ASP while implementing their Action Plans and getting access to on-the-ground implementing organisations. ASP benefits from a better visibility of its priorities and projects and better access to high political levels. However, interviewees also highlight the need for more synergies but also a clearer distribution of roles within the support of territorial development in the Alpine Space.

Nine out of ten EUSALP stakeholders that have been consulted confirm that the coordination between EUSALP and ASP is effective. 30% of them even consider the coordination as 'very effective'.

To further improve the situation, the following recommendations can be highlighted.

- Continue communication on the different roles of ASP and EUSALP internally and to stakeholders of Strategy and Programme, as one element of the overall communication objectives.

- Continue encouraging informal collaboration and exchange processes between AGs and projects (taking into account that some projects fit into different AGs) to continue adding to the visibility and creation of synergies between EUSALP and ASP.
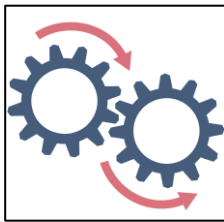
Synergies

The evaluation shows that the Alpine Space Programme 2014-2020 facilitates the creation of synergies with other instruments and funds already in its Cooperation Programme. Synergies are largely promoted within the programming documents. On-going ASP projects have developed a wide range of synergies with other instruments and funds. 29 projects of all 33 projects (88%) declare in their application form that they have or will exploit synergies with other funds or instruments. Detailed examples show that synergies of ASP projects are achieved with a) EU Programmes and Initiatives, b) other Interreg or transnational, cross-border initiatives, c) National or Regional Instruments or Policies.

Interviews show that there is a certain level of coordination (e.g. exchange of information) with ESIF Managing Authorities, but that this coordination is by now purely coincidental and does not follow a specific strategy. They stress that more can be done to strengthen synergies of ASP with ESIF MA and national/regional mainstream policy-makers.

In order to increase coordination and synergies with national and regional ESIF Managing Authorities, a specific communication activity with ESIF MA and the creation of an information network, maybe with support of the EUSALP, can be designed, following the example of the Baltic Sea region.
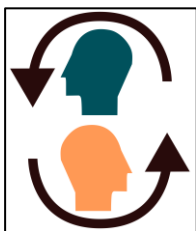
Communication

Based on the analysis of the different findings, the strategy is overall a solid, sound, coherent strategy. The communication strategy is written in a way that eases the implementation and allows reaching the set objectives. The strategy has a clear hierarchical structure that links objectives, target audiences, activities and tactics. It clearly sets the methodology, the communication objectives and communication activities. Aspects that could be improved is the analysis of specific target audiences (e.g. sectoral policy-makers, business associations and cluster, NGOs). The communication strategy foresees clear and measurable objectives. It prepares evaluation with the definition of indicators and foreseen monitoring activities. The objectives are overall clear and with good potential to be measurable. Target values seem to be reasonable and achievable. For some indicators no baseline values have been defined or are available. This will hamper the evaluation of these indicators und limit their usefulness. The communication strategy foresees clear roles and responsibilities. Even if there is no specific section on roles and responsibilities, roles and responsibilities are clearly distributed within the JS and between the different programme bodies. According to the review of annual communication results and the perception of programme bodies, they seem to be efficient and well-working.

With regard to the evaluation of communication activities, there is a wide variety of AS communication activities that are adequately tailored to the different target audiences, as can be observed by the satisfaction levels of participants in events and by the users of different tools through the survey to lead project partners. The different programme communication measures reach out to a wide range of different target groups. The coverage of communication outreach is considerable and effective. However, it can be observed that the communication stays at a general level regarding programme issues and it reaches particularly the 'usual suspects' in transnational cooperation. New tools and different, more specific contents are proposed as measures to reach wider and different target groups and become more effective in communicating on benefits and results.

The analysis of the achievement of indicators of the communication strategy confirms that communication objectives are being reached to a large extent. This is also confirmed by the perception of projects and programme bodies. The perception of projects and programme body representatives indicates slight potentials for improvement with regard to all communication objectives, in particular, there is potential for improvement on the objective on 'increasing awareness and visibility on projects and results'. The advanced achievement of communication objectives confirms that most communication activities are working well and are adequate to achieve the communication objectives. Nevertheless, assessments by projects and by programme bodies recommend an improvement of communication activities and/or new activities, for example:

- In general, a wider use of social media is recommended by some projects and stakeholders, e.g. more intense use of Facebook, Twitter etc. This should be further analysed regarding potential costs and benefits.

- New and more targeted activities such as more storytelling activities and videos / tutorials would be more up-to-date and very helpful, so that the communication activities would get more interactive, less static and also easier to share within other communication channels.

- It is recommended to better address specific target groups according to their information needs and interests (e.g. businesses, environmental NGOs, public service providers, citizens, policy-makers at different levels, sectoral agencies in different fields) and 'stories' about results and benefits should be more in the centre of communication.

- The analysis shows that the communication strategy might need a specific update for the remaining programme period. This update regards 1) revision of indicators and target values of the indicators in the strategy, 2) include the (already existing) communication activities with EUSALP to make the links with EUSALP more visible, 3) up-date and better targeted analysis of target groups in order to prepare new communication activities, in particular related to the objective of 'increasing awareness and visibility on projects and results'.

Considering the specific recommendations for new and better communication, an extension of the resources dedicated to communication in the programme should be analysed.

Partnerships and Involvement

The analysis shows that the programme foresees the right mechanisms to involve relevant partners in programme drafting/preparation as well as during implementation. This is being confirmed by the high degree of overall

satisfaction reported by all respondents interviewed, as well as from the feedback received via the surveys.

The overall involvement of relevant target groups is deemed generally satisfactory. A wide range of target groups is addressed by the current 33 ASP projects. The selection of most relevant targets groups correspond to the different Specific Objectives. Analysing the information in application forms and progress reports, projects have foreseen generally a wide variety of tools and activities to effectively address and communicate with target groups.

Private partners, academic/research partners and policy-makers bring clear and diverse benefits to projects. Therefore, a balanced mix of partners is expected to be of added value to a project. Currently, many projects include different target groups and benefit from their contributions.

The target group outreach by projects has already reached 59% of the planned figure on average. In general, and given the current mid-term situation of projects, this can be deemed a satisfactory result, and it is particularly clear when considering that only four projects reported a degree of target group outreach below 40%.

When analysing the distribution of project observers, there is a relatively high concentration on a few geographical areas, and typologies of actors, tightly linked to the focus of projects under each specific objective. This concentration may risk reducing the potential impact of the project, and making it less evenly distributed. The benefits brought by and to project observers have proved to be overall positive and relevant for projects. Project observers have diverse expectations and motivations. According to both, project lead partners and project observers, there are clear benefits of observers to projects. However, observers put more focus on "upstream" contributions in which they regard an input from the observer's side is involved, as opposed to the lead partners' point of view, more focused on result dissemination and access to networks and contacts and very specific practical or legal knowledge. Some project observers ask for more communication with and a wider involvement in projects. In very few cases, there seems to be slight misunderstandings between observers and project partners about roles and expectations.

The involvement of relevant target groups as beneficiaries appears to be positive. The mix of typologies is diverse and covers the whole spectrum of actors well. However, as noted in the analysis, the distribution of partners is rather uneven, especially across different geographical locations. The geographical distribution of applicants and beneficiaries is relatively uneven. Italy is the country with most applicants and beneficiaries. Germany, Austria, Slovenia and France have a more or less similar participation, whereas Switzerland has a slightly lower level of participation and Liechtenstein only a very minor role, as expected. The analysis of the distribution per NUTS 2 region shows a good overall participation with some 'active' regions and some regions with very few participants. The programme might consider promoting participation especially in the 'weak' regions.

Lead partners are in all cases public organisations, and almost all different listed typologies of public organisations are represented among the partners. Education and research partners, including training centres and schools, lead the way covering 27% of the projects, while regional public authorities complete the most represented typologies with 21%. Sectoral agencies and business

support organisations account for a combined 27%, while the remaining is split between national and local public authorities, international organisations, and interest groups. The split between private and public partners across specific objectives also shows a certain degree of concentration. As argued about the involvement of project observer, private actors are largely represented on the more business-oriented SOs, and particularly those linked to PA 2 (Low Carbon Alpine Space), and PA 1 (Innovative Alpine Space).

The capacity to attract new partners is regarded as positive, as 32% of the lead partners involved were new to the programme. This shows that there is a good chance that even newcomers can become lead partners. This is also a sign that the newcomers have been relevant partners, capable of organising and leading a complex transnational project. On the other hand, most of the lead partners that had been involved in the programme before, had already been involved as lead partners previously, while almost half of the current lead partners had already participated in the programme with the same role. Proof of the capacity to attract newcomers is also the fact that at the Meet&Match Forum 2017 were 126 participants out of 220 registered as newcomers, that is 57%.

Obstacles to a better participation of partners can be identified in the concentration of applications in certain geographies and on certain topics, as well as the concentration of partner typologies by location and topic. This is, for instance, exemplified by the concentration of SME involvement on priority 2 projects in Bavaria, whereas all other geographies and objectives have little SME involvement. This kind of imbalances would need a structured, strategic approach to be tackled effectively.

The overall analysis of private partner involvement shows that the efforts to involve this kind of partners have been, to some extent, successful. 19% of total partners in the programme are made up of private partners. The analysis of private partner involvement shows a mixed picture. Although in general terms it can be regarded as successful, the contribution of these partners has proved to be rather concentrated in a few countries (namely Germany and, to a lesser extent, Italy) and a few priority axes (1 and 2). Private partners in these countries and objectives have been successfully involved in the programme thanks to their specific focus, and their involvement has driven up the overall number of private partners involved in the Alpine Space Interreg programme. However, the figures reveal that the attractiveness of the programme has not been extended to businesses in other countries and under other specific objectives. More effort could be put into attracting partners from more diverse backgrounds.

To increase the level of outreach to target groups and improve stakeholder involvement, the following recommendation can be highlighted:

- Imbalances with regard to private actor involvement are somehow given, according to the type of SO and the aim of the project. However, private sector actors are one of the largest groups that current projects are addressing. So, SME or enterprise involvement seems also to be possible in other SO. Private sector involvement might be strengthened with a more focused communication towards specific target groups (as recommended already in the Chapter on Communication).

- Continue raising awareness for project partners and project observers in the projects on the wide range of possible roles and contributions (and possible benefits) of observers to projects.

1 Context and Methodology

The Interreg Alpine Space Programme (ASP) 2014-2020 is a transnational European Territorial Cooperation Programme jointly funded by the European Union, the five EU Member States Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia as well as the Non-EU countries Switzerland and Liechtenstein. The programme area covers the Alpine Ridge and surrounding Alpine foreland, and exhibits a high diversity in terms of demography, economic power, culture and languages. The programme territory is largely congruent with the area covered by the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP), and overlaps with the Danube macro-region and strategy.

The **main objective** of the Interreg Alpine Space Programme **Operational Evaluation** is to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme communication strategy, the effectiveness of programme implementation, and the involvement of stakeholders in the programme at a mid-term moment in the funding period (2014-2020). The evaluation helps the programme assess to what extent the programme objectives have been reached so far. The evaluation generates data and knowledge that contributes to the overall programme management objectives, in particular to the first one:

- Increase efficiency and effectiveness of the management and implementation of the programme;
- Reinforce the capacities of project applicants and beneficiaries;
- Increase the programme's visibility and that of its results.

The Terms of Reference for the 'Evaluation of programme communication, effectiveness and stakeholder involvement' of the Interreg Alpine Space Programme defined the main evaluation objectives and evaluation questions. The structure of the service foresaw the following three tasks:

- Evaluation of effectiveness
- Evaluation of the communication strategy
- Evaluation of partnerships and stakeholder's involvement

In particular, the evaluation seeks to answer the following **evaluation questions**:

Evaluation of effectiveness	Has each of the specific objectives reached its target or is it on a good way to do so? How is the progress in relation to the means and resources mobilised (including progress in relation to the milestones and targets as defined in the performance framework)?
	To which extent are horizontal principles integrated in the programme management arrangements and in the activities of funded projects?
	To which degree is the programme implementation contributing to the EU2020 strategy and to relevant macro-regional strategies? Has synergy been created with other instruments and funds?
Evaluation of the communication strategy	Is the communication strategy written in a way that eases the implementation and allows reaching the set objectives?
	Does it foresee clear and measurable objectives?
	Does it foresee clear roles and responsibilities? Are they efficient / well-working?

	Are the communication activities adequately tailored to the different target audiences (content, format)? Have the programme communication measures reached the relevant target groups efficiently?
	To what extent have the communication objectives been reached? (please refer to the communication objectives as described in the pages 9 to 11 of the communication strategy);
	Are the foreseen activities the right ones/adequate to achieve the communication objectives? Are other/further activities necessary?
	Does the communication strategy need to be updated for the remaining programme period based on the evaluation findings?
Evaluation of partnerships and stakeholder's involvement	Does the programme foresee the right mechanisms to effectively involve relevant partners in programme implementation?
	Are the relevant target groups of the programme successfully involved as beneficiaries? How is the participation in terms of policy relevant partners and private actors, as well as in relation to the geographical coverage of the programme? How far has the programme managed to attract new, relevant partners?
	Did the project observers benefit from their involvement in the projects and vice versa?
	How effectively is communication planned and carried out at project level, for involving relevant target groups and achieving the planned project outputs and results as well as supporting their transfer and sustainability?
	Which obstacles have been identified to the participation of stakeholders to the programme and which improvements in the programme management are deemed necessary based on the evaluation findings (e.g. reducing administrative burden, simplifying programme procedures, etc.)?

The **methodological approach** of the evaluation involved a mix of different data gathering and analytical methods, including **documentary review**, **analysis of monitoring data** and project websites, nine **interviews** to programme bodies, **surveys** to project lead partners and project observers, as well as a **written consultation** of EUSALP presidency and action group leaders. Details on the different methods used can be found in the annex to this report. To support the evaluation of progress and contribution of projects to the programme's objectives, factsheets for each of the 33 approved projects as well as for each of the seven Specific Objectives have been developed. These factsheets are available as additional documents.

This report has the following **structure**:

- Chapter 2: Evaluation of the effectiveness of programme implementation
- Chapter 3: Evaluation of the Programme communication strategy and activities
- Chapter 4: Evaluation of the Partnerships and Stakeholder Involvement
- Chapter 5: Overall Conclusions and Recommendations
- Chapter 6: Proposal of Follow-up measures.

2 Evaluation of the effectiveness of programme implementation

The evaluation of the effectiveness of programme implementation is a key element of the mid-term operational evaluation.

Effectiveness is determined by different factors, in particular the level of achievement of targets and objectives with regard to the estimated number of projects, programme output indicators, performance framework indicators, as well as the level of progress towards achieving the defined specific objectives and the estimated contribution to result indicators. The mid-term situation is an adequate moment in time to observe progress in implementation and first achievements, in order to be able to assess whether the programme is right on track or needs operational adjustments.

As defined by the Terms of Reference, the evaluation of the programme implementation covers five specific topics that are presented in the following sub-chapters.

- Progress towards the achievement of programme objectives;
- Contributions to horizontal principles;
- Contributions to EU long-term strategic goals as defined in the EU2020 Strategy;
- Contributions to macro-regional strategies;
- Creation of synergies with other funds and instruments.

2.1 Methods used

The evaluation is built on the analysis of available monitoring data (financial data, indicators, etc.) and of qualitative evidence, such as descriptions of projects in the application forms, of interim project results and outcomes from project progress reports. The analysis of project and monitoring data considered the situation until the end of January 2018 with regard to all approved projects from the first and second Call, i.e. a total number of 33 approved projects. For other information and the documentary review, the latest available data was considered, for example, the Annual Implementation Report 2016.

This information was enriched with findings from a web-based survey to 33 project lead partners. The web-based survey allowed to identify already achieved project outputs in comparison to the outputs planned in the application forms, to obtain qualitative information on activities, results and impacts on target groups, and to detect additional or secondary effects and synergies of the projects.

Nine interviews to programme bodies (MA, JS, HD, and ACPs) were conducted to gather up-dated information on relevant issues in programme implementation, contribution to wider strategic goals and horizontal principles. To evaluate the contribution of the Programme to the macro-regional strategy (EUSALP), a short web-based questionnaire was sent to EUSALP action group leaders and EUSALP presidency, collecting their views about the contribution of the ASP and its projects to EUSALP.

To visualise the progress and contribution of projects to the programme's objectives, project factsheets for each of the 33 approved projects as well as SO factsheets on achievements for each of the seven Specific Objectives have been developed.

2.2 Progress towards the achievement of programme objectives

On the one hand, the progress towards the achievement of programme objectives can be observed from the programme monitoring data. On the other hand, valuable progress towards the achievements of projects outputs and results can be better described in qualitative terms, as it is still too early for most projects to present already quantifiable outputs and impact on their target groups. Therefore, different information sources have been consulted and analysed for this part of the evaluation.

2.2.1 Evaluation question/s

The following evaluation questions guided the evaluation:

- Has each of the specific objectives (SO) reached its target or is it on a good way to do so?

- How is the progress in relation to the means and resources mobilised (including progress in relation to the milestones and targets as defined in the performance framework)?

2.2.2 Main findings

The analysis of the Programme monitoring data shows that the Programme is currently well immersed in its implementation. Until February 2018, three Call for Projects have been published. Within the first two Calls, 33 projects have been approved. The application procedure for the third Call that was closed in December 2017. 32 project applications have been received in the step 2 application phase of the third Call.

In line with the temporal situation of the programme (slightly over half time), the progress of the programme execution with regard to the number of expected projects and the absorption of EU funds lies at more or less 50%. To date[1], 33 projects have been approved, that is 55,9% of the overall estimated 59 projects for the programming period.

The number of projects in comparison to the foreseen number of projects in the Cooperation Programme is quite high for all Priority Axes (58-67%), except for PA 4, where only three projects have been approved so far (see Table 2.1). However, this is still in line with the projections, because Priority Axes 4 includes one very large project, so that the level of financial commitment corresponds to the level of execution of the other Axes.

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[1] The evaluation considers the situation until 31st of January 2018, unless the date is indicated otherwise.

Table 2.1: Number of projects and ERDF exhaustion rate after two Calls

Priority Axis	Thematic Objective	Estimated Total Number of projects	No. of Approved Projects as of Dec. 2016	% of projects as of Dec. 2016
Priority Axis 1: Innovative Alpine Space	(1) strengthening research, technological development and innovation	19	11	57,9%
Priority Axis 2: Low Carbon Alpine Space	(4) supporting the shift towards a low carbon economy in all sectors	15	10	66,7%
Priority Axis 3: Liveable Alpine Space	(6) preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	15	9	60,0%
Priority Axis 4: Well governed Alpine Space	(11) enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	10	3	30,0%
Total	--	**59**	**33**	**55,9%**

Source: Annual Implementation Report 2016

With regard to the financial allocation and commitments, the progress corresponds to the mid-term situation of the programme. The absorption rate of available EU funds in the programme has reached 55,28%, considering the commitments for the approved projects so far.

The level of commitment is considerably higher for Priority Axis 2 (64%), 55% for Priority Axis 3 and slightly less for the Priority Axes 1 and 4 with 50% for each. Thus, the data shows an adequate progress of the Programme in line with the committed resources. Figure 2.1 shows the level of absorption of ERDF support per Priority Axis.

Table 2.2: Level of Absorption of ERDF support per Priority Axis (as of end of 2017)

PA	A Planned ERDF support (in EUR)	B Allocated ERDF support to Projects (in EUR)	C Remaining ERDF support (in EUR)	% B/A Level of Absorption
1	37.323.349	18.496.627,92	18.826.721,08	49,56%
2	31.491.576	19.997.053,60	11.494.522,40	63,50%
3	31.491.576	17.424.995,29	14.066.580,71	55,33%
4	9.330.838	4.683.907,52	4.646.930,48	50,20%
Total	**109.637.339**	**60.602.584,33**	**49.034.754,67**	**55,28%**

Source: Cooperation Programme and ASP Electronic Monitoring System (data from February 2018, based on project data until end of 2017)

Figure 2.1: Level of Absorption of ERDF support per Priority Axis (as of end of 2017) in % of allocated ERDF support to projects
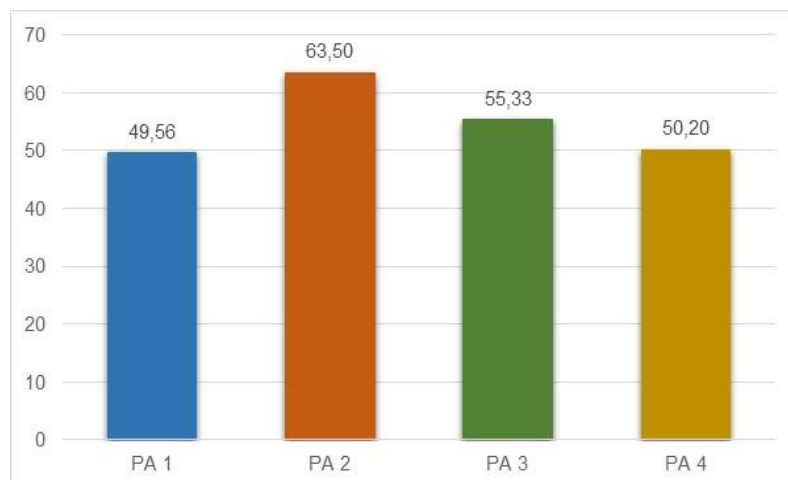
Source: Cooperation Programme and ASP Electronic Monitoring System (data from February 2018, based on project data until end of 2017)

With regard to payments to projects and real financial execution, the progress is less advanced. This is a logical consequence of the programme cycle and reflects the fact that first payments to projects only have been made since early 2017. Thus, the financial indicators based on payments are still rather low. Comparing the different Specific Objectives (SO), execution is highest for SO 2.1, followed by SO 1.1, 1.2 and 3.2. It is lower for SO 2.2 and considerably low for SO 3.1. The average execution level lies at 18,6%.

Table 2.3: Level of Execution per Specific Objective (as of end of 2017)

SO	A	B	% B/A	SO % of total
	Eligible expenditure by approved projects (in EUR)	Certified eligible expenditure by approved projects (in EUR)	Level of Execution	Certified by SO as% of total certified
1.1	14.009.650,34	2.612.568,78	18,65%	18,63%
1.2	8.844.006,15	1.669.914,25	18,88%	11,91%
2.1	17.388.701,17	4.581.936,44	26,35%	32,68%
2.2	7.569.779,06	1.010.183,69	13,34%	7,20%
3.1	7.140.103,55	621.040,42	8,70%	4,43%
3.2	14.498.252,06	2.589.752,57	17,86%	18,47%
4.1	5.809.579,45	935.668,01	16,11%	6,67%
Total	**75.260.071,78**	**14.021.064,16**	**18,63%**	**100,00%**

Source: Cooperation Programme and ASP Electronic Monitoring System (data from February 2018, based on project data until end of 2017)

Figure 2.2 shows the level of execution of the different Specific Objectives.

Figure 2.2: Level of Execution per Specific Objective (as of end of 2017) in certified eligible expenditure as % of total eligible expenditure of all projects
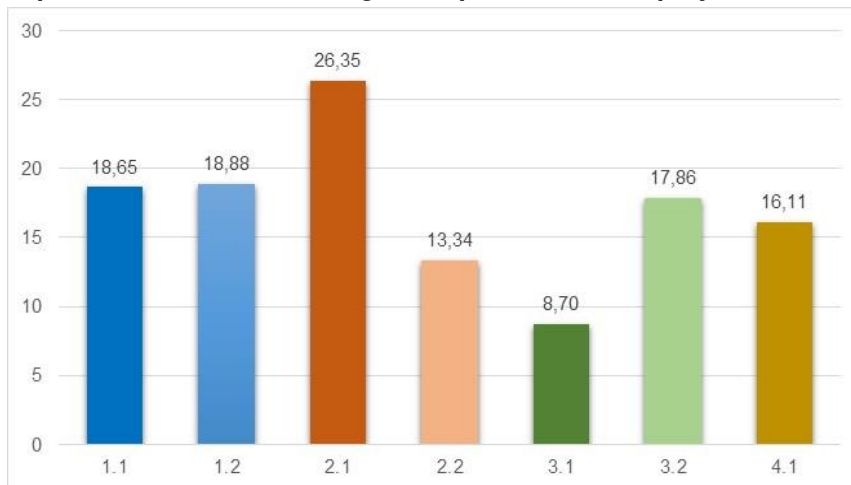
Source: Cooperation Programme and ASP Electronic Monitoring System (data from February 2018, based on project data until end of 2017)

As one might expect, the level of execution is quite different for projects that were approved within Call 1 or within Call 2. Therefore, a differentiated analysis is helpful to estimate the real level of implementation per Specific Objective.

Figure 2.3: Level of reported project expenditure per Call and Specific Objective (as of end of 2017)
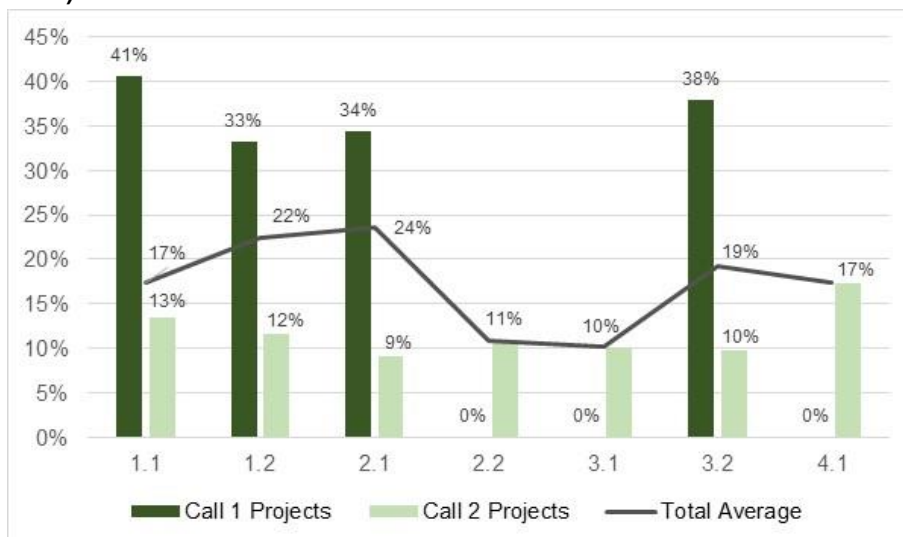
Source: Project Application Forms, Project Progress Reports (data from February 2018, based on project data until end of 2017)

Figure 2.3 shows that the overall level of execution of Call 1 projects is 35,6%, reaching from the lowest project execution of 25,8% to the highest execution per project with 41% of reported expenditure. Compared to that, the average level of execution for Call 2 projects is 11,9%. Projects with the lowest execution have a level of 6,2% with 24,5% for the highest level of execution.

Overall, SOs present either a level of execution of 10-11% (SO 2.2 and 3.1) or a more advanced level of between 17%-23,5%. The differentiated analysis shows that Specific Objectives 2.2 and 3.1 are lagging behind in financial execution mainly because of only having projects that were approved within Call 2. This reduces their average level of execution. However, within the projects approved in Call 2, SO 2.2 and 3.1 are not performing less than other SO, while the SO with a slightly lower level of execution in Call 2 projects are SO 2.1 and SO 3.2.

This indicates that all SO are progressing well in their implementation. From the programme perspective, more effort should be given to SO 2.2 and 3.1 in order to increase their level of execution over the next Calls.

Output Indicators

When it comes to the analysis of the **achievement of outputs and intermediate targets** of the Programme, there are two different situations to consider: a) the actual achievements of the 33 projects with regard to outputs and b) the foreseen achievements of the 33 approved projects until their finalisation.

With regard to the first situation, the actual achievement of outputs per project is still quite low, as most projects are still in the initial half of their implementation (see Column B in Table 2.4). Taking into account that most outputs and projects results will not be achieved until the last phase of the project implementation or even with project closure, the low level of actual output achievement is of no surprise. Therefore, also the level of actual effectiveness is at a very low level for most of the output indicators (see Column D in Table 2.4). Only some indicators of Priority Axes 1, 2 and 4 present first achievements.

The assessment of the second situation offers additional information about the progress of the programme. Column E in Table 2.4 indicates the level of expected effectiveness in which all planned achievements for the 33 approved projects[2] have been taken into account (Column C). Here, the overall effectiveness is quite high. Many output indicators present a status that corresponds to the mid-term situation of the programme and budget execution. Only one indicator (CO_42) is still without any achieved/expected value. For this indicator, a review of its adequateness (or of its target value) or an improved monitoring might be necessary.

Other indicators, highlighted in red, present a considerable over-performance at this mid-term situation. This means, that they have already achieved the target foreseen for 2023.

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[2] As they have been planned and presented in the Projects Application Forms.

Table 2.4: Effectiveness of Programme output indicators (situation as of 11th January 2018)

PA	Output Indicator	A Target Value 2023	B Achievements	C Achievements to be expected by finalised 33 projects	D = % B/A Level of Effectiveness	E = % C/A Level of Expected Effectiveness
1	CO_26 Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	1000	0	300	0%	**30%**
1	CO_42 Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	20	0	0	0%	**0%**
1	1_1 Number of supported transnational cooperation structures improving the framework conditions for innovation	8	0	6	0%	**75%**
1	1_2 Number of developed strategic elements improving the framework conditions for innovation	6	0	9	0%	**150%**
1	1_3 Number of developed implementation elements improving the framework conditions for innovation	19	2	21	10,5%	**111%**
1	2_1 Number of supported transnational cooperation structures increasing capacities for the delivery of services of general interest in a changing society	4	0	2	0%	**50%**
1	2_2 Number of developed strategic elements increasing capacities for the delivery of services of general interest in a changing society	3	0	4	0%	**133%**
1	2_3 Number of developed implementation elements increasing capacities for the delivery of services of general interest in a changing society	17	1	27	5,9%	**159%**

PA	Output Indicator	A Target Value 2023	B Achievements	C Achievements to be expected by finalised 33 projects	D = % B/A Level of Effectiveness	E = % C/A Level of Expected Effectiveness
2	1_1 Number of supported transnational cooperation structures aiming at establishing transnationally integrated low carbon policy instruments	9	1	1	11%	11%
2	1_2 Number of developed strategic elements aiming at establishing transnationally integrated low carbon policy instruments	6	1	12	16,7%	200%
2	1_3 Number of developed implementation elements establishing transnationally integrated low carbon policy instruments	12	0	22	0%	183%
2	2_1 Number of supported transnational cooperation structures Increasing options for low carbon mobility and transport	3	0	2	0%	67%
2	2_2 Number of developed strategic elements Increasing options for low carbon mobility and transport	3	0	4	0%	133%
2	2_3 Number of developed implementation elements for low carbon mobility and transport	18	0	6	0%	33%
3	1_1 Number of supported transnational cooperation structures aiming at the implementation of sustainable valorisation of cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine Space	12	0	4	0%	33%
3	1_2 Number of developed strategic elements aiming at the implementation of sustainable valorisation of	7	0	6	0%	86%

PA	Output Indicator	A Target Value 2023	B Achievements	C Achievements to be expected by finalised 33 projects	D = % B/A Level of Effectiveness	E = % C/A Level of Expected Effectiveness
	cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine Space					
3	1_3 Number of developed implementation elements sustainably valorising cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine Space	14	0	6	0%	**43%**
3	2_1 Number of supported transnational cooperation structures aiming to enhance the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of Alpine Space ecosystems	9	0	2	0%	**22%**
3	2_2 Number of developed strategic elements aiming to enhance the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of Alpine Space ecosystems	8	0	30	0%	**375%**
3	2_3 Number of developed implementation elements enhancing the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of Alpine Space ecosystems	16	0	27	0%	**169%**
4	1_1 Number of supported transnational cooperation structures encompassing multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space	10	1	12	10%	**120%**
4	1_2 Number of developed strategic elements aiming at the increase of the application of multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space	3	1	4	33%	**133%**
4	1_3 Number of developed implementation elements applying multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space	20	0	26	0%	**130%**

Source: ASP Electronic Monitoring System, Project Application Forms and Survey to Projects (data as of February 2018)

Performance Framework

With regard to the **Performance Framework** agreed in the Cooperation Programme, the situation of effectiveness is positive and adequate, that means that the progress is in in line with the resources mobilised so far in the framework of the Programme.

Table 2.5: Performance Framework –Achievements and Effectiveness (as of end of 2017)

| PA	Performance Framework Indicator	A	B	% B/A
		Milestone 2018	Achievement	Level of Effectiveness
1	Eligible expenditure verified by the certifying authority	3.359.101,00 EUR	4.282.483,03 EUR	127,49%
1	Number of developed implementation elements improving the framework conditions for innovation	4	2	50,00%
1	Number of developed implementation elements increasing capacities for the delivery of services of general interest in a changing society	4	1	25,00%
2	Eligible expenditure verified by the certifying authority	2.361.868,00 EUR	5.592.120,13 EUR	236,77%
2	Number of developed implementation elements establishing trans-nationally integrated low carbon policy instruments	4	0	0,00%
2	Number of developed implementation elements for low carbon mobility and transport	4	0	0,00%
3	Eligible expenditure verified by the certifying authority	2.361.868,00 EUR	3.210.792,99 EUR	135,94%
3	Number of developed implementation elements sustainably valorising cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine Space.	4	0	0,00%
3	Number of developed implementation elements enhancing the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of Alpine Space ecosystems	4	0	0,00%

| PA | Performance Framework Indicator | A | B | % B/A |
		Milestone 2018	Achievement	Level of Effectiveness
4	Eligible expenditure verified by the certifying authority	186.617,00 EUR	935.668,01 EUR	501,38%
4	Number of developed implementation elements applying multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space	4	0	0,00%

Source: Cooperation Programme and ASP Electronic Monitoring System (data from February 2018)

As can be observed in the table, the achievement of output indicators is still limited, except from Priority Axis 1. However, as many projects will achieve their output indicators only in the last months of the project life or even after closure, this does not generally indicate a low performance. Proofs of the advanced overall performance are the financial indicators for all four Priority Axes that are exceeding the established intermediate target values. Considering also the level of expected achievement of output indicators of the current approved projects (shown in Table 2.4), the level of progress of the programme, thus, can be assessed as adequate for this mid-term moment in programme implementation.

When evaluating the **overall effectiveness of the Programme** with regard to the Specific Objectives, it is important to keep in mind the intervention theory of the programme that was defined to fulfil the result-orientation approach for each priority axis. Therefore, specific objectives and their expected results were defined. In addition, for each specific objective, indicative actions were formulated to demonstrate possible ways for projects to contribute to the expected outputs and results. Now, this theory of change has to be validated taking into account the contribution of 'real' projects to the programme outputs and specific objectives. For this validation, different intermediate components of the theory of change need to be considered.

Figure 2.4: Simplified Theory of Change to be validated
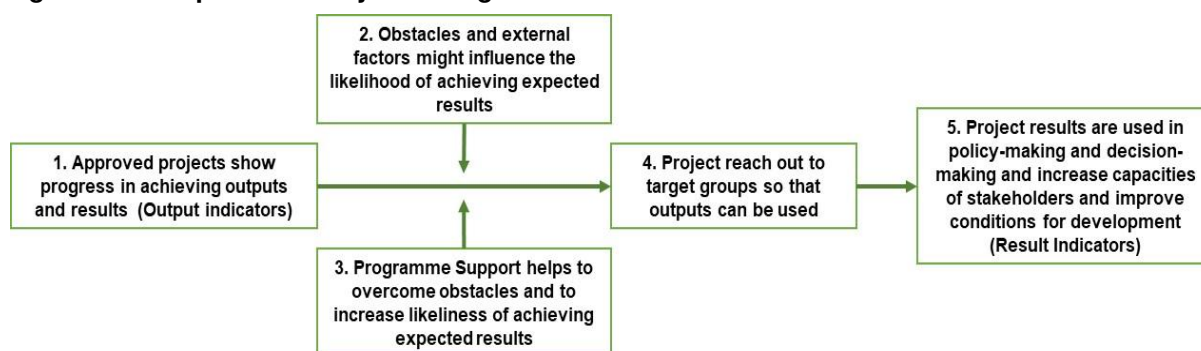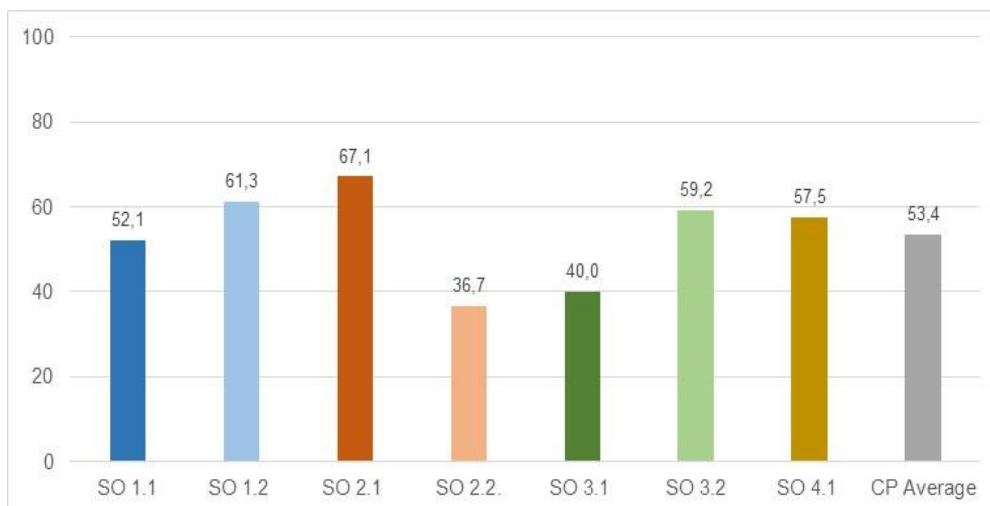

Source: Own elaboration

In the evaluation, the different steps in the theory of change were examined.

To obtain information on the status and level of progress of projects, a survey was carried out to Lead Partners of all 33 projects[3]. This survey also helped to gather information on the likelihood of achieving the expected outputs given the current situation of the project and on the achieved outreach to target groups.

First, the level of progress of projects as analysed. The results show that the projects estimate that their overall progress towards achieving their project outputs and results lies at 53,4%. This is in line with the progress observed in financial execution and implementation in the monitoring data. Comparing the projects of the different SO, on average the most advanced SO are 2.1, 1.2, 3.2 and 4.1. This has also to do with the number of more advanced projects (from Call 1) that started earlier their implementation. SO 2.2 and 3.1 are less advanced, because they cover only less advanced projects from Call 2. Overall, level of progress is in line with expectations and adequate.

Figure 2.5: Estimated level of progress in achieving overall project outputs (in % per SO)

Source: Own elaboration based on Survey to Projects (Lead Partners) (data as of 30th March 2018) (n=32)

As a next step, the likelihood of achieving expected results was estimated. The estimation of probability by project lead partners of achieving goals at this mid-term moment in time is important to evaluate the reliability and robustness of the information on expected outputs and results given by projects in the beginning (in the Application forms). The likelihood is also a good indicator for the perception of relevant obstacles and external factors that might influence result achievement. Sometimes, external factors can influence the work of project partners or the overall work in a given region, country or territory might hamper the effectiveness of projects in contributing to programme results and contribution to larger impact in the programme area. Therefore, they need to be taken into account when evaluating the progress in project implementation.

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[3] Receiving 32 responses from 32 projects, as of 30th March 2018.

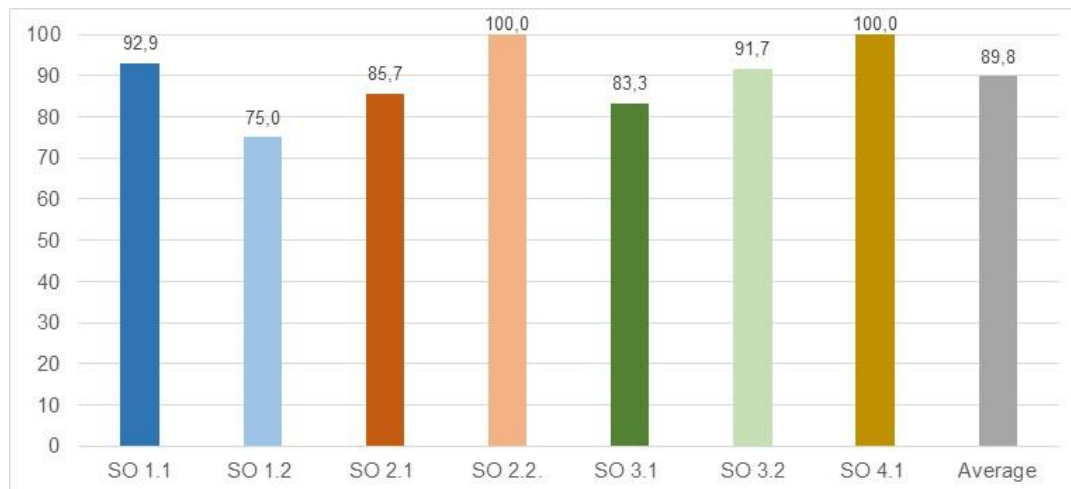**Figure 2.6: Estimated likelihood of achieving overall project outputs as expected (in % per SO)**

Source: Own elaboration based on Survey to Projects (Lead Partners) (data as of 30th March 2018) (n=32)

As can be observed in Figure 2.6, the overall probability to achieve results is estimated as very high (89,8%). In particular, projects in SO 1.1, 2.2 and 4.1 have little doubt that they will achieve their expected outputs and results. They do not seem to perceive any relevant obstacles and external factors that hamper their implementation. Also, likelihood to achieve results is high in SO 3.2 (92%). It is slightly lower in SO 2.1 and SO 3.1 (86% and 83%), and considerably lower in SO 1.2 with 75%. Overall, external factors such as changes in staff, changes in policies and commitments by project partners, as well as changing or unsecure regulations may play a role in reducing the probability of achieving outputs. In addition, internal factors like difficulties with the project management, problems with one project partner that cannot perform, or complex organisation of work within the project, may be reasons for possible lack of effectiveness. A review of the progress reports did not show any structural or common external factors that affect all ASP projects in general or in any specific SO. With regard to SO 1.2, the analysis indicates a higher level of uncertainty in the project environment. This might be due to the high level of risk and uncertainty linked to innovations in general which lead to difficulties to promote social innovations in different sectors of the society and therefore a higher complexity of the projects as well as a higher risk to fail.

Support from the programme can help projects to overcome obstacles and barriers to effective implementation. Therefore, it is important to assess if support from the programme to the projects is in place and how it is perceived by the projects. The survey to projects[4] carried out for the purpose of this evaluation shows that 96,7% of project lead partners are satisfied (completely or somewhat) with the information and support of the programme given to the projects with regard to project management. In particular, 97% of project lead partners are completely satisfied with the support provided by the Joint Secretariat. 77% of project lead partners are completely satisfied with the support from the Managing Authority, whereas 55% are complete satisfied with the support provided by the ACPs. It has to be mentioned that some projects are not at all satisfied with the support from the ACPs (6,5%).

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[4] Survey responses as of 30th March 2018, (n=32)

These results confirm the overall good support provided by the programme bodies to projects during implementation. They are confirmed by the similar positive results presented in the previous evaluation on efficiency and effectiveness of the application and selection procedures (carried out by t33 in 2017).

Another element in the intervention logic that leads to a successful materialisation of project outputs and results that might contribute to programme results is the projects' outreach to target groups. First, the expected outreach to target groups by projects was analysed. The results grouped by SO are presented in Table 2.6. In a second step, the projects were asked in the survey, to which extend they already have reached out to the target groups (figures are also included in Table 2.6).

Table 2.6: Target Group Outreach by 33 approved projects per SO (as of February 2018)

Specific Objective	Result Indicator corresponding to the SO	Expected and estimated Target Group Outreach by 33 approved projects per Specific Objective
1b.1 Improve the framework conditions for innovation in the Alpine Space	Level of maturity of framework conditions for innovation for generating innovation processes among business, academia and administration	- Local public authority: 177 - Regional public authority: 113 - National public authority: 21 - Sectoral agency: 132 - Infrastructure and (public) service provider: 70 - Higher education and research:279 - Education/training centre and school: 67 - Enterprise: 955 - SME micro, small, medium: 8.580 - Business support organisation: 466 - Other: 215 Average extent to which target groups have been reached already by projects: 51%
1b.2 Increase capacities for the delivery of services of general interest in a changing society	Level of capacity of social organisations and public authorities to deliver innovation in the field of social services and services of general interest through transnational networking	- Local public authority: 1.170 - Regional public authority: 85 - National public authority: 15 - Sectoral agency: 70 - Infrastructure and (public) service provider: 292 - Interest groups including NGOs: 305 - Education/training centre and school: 290 - SME micro, small, medium: 280 - Business support organisation: 290 - Other: 30 - General public: 160.000 Average extent to which target groups have been reached already by projects: 55%
4e.1 Establish transnationally	Level of Implementation of low	Local public authority: 1.200

Specific Objective	Result Indicator corresponding to the SO	Expected and estimated Target Group Outreach by 33 approved projects per Specific Objective
integrated low carbon policy instruments	carbon policy instruments.	• Regional public authority: 125 • National public authority: 55 • Sectoral agency: 98 • Infrastructure, (public) service provider: 48 • Interest groups including NGOs: 184 • Higher education and research: 63 • Education/training centre and school: 55 • SME micro, small, medium: 620 • Business support organisation: 25 • International organisation: 6 • Other: 100 • General public: 12.400 Average extent to which target groups have been reached already by projects: 73%
4e.2 Increase options for low carbon mobility and transport	Level of potential to access and use low carbon mobility and transport options	• Local public authority: 2.190 • Regional public authority: 35 • National public authority: 19 • Sectoral agency: 30 • Infrastructure and (public) service provider: 61 • Interest groups including NGOs: 60 • Higher education and research: 10 • Enterprise: 10 • SME micro, small, medium: 250 • Other: 17 • General public: 4.500.000 Average extent to which target groups have been reached already by projects: 23%
6c.1 Sustainably valorise Alpine Space cultural and natural heritage	Level of sustainable valorisation of cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine Space	• Local public authority: 155 • Regional public authority: 55 • National public authority: 10 • Sectoral agency: 25 • Interest groups including NGOs: 555 • Higher education and research: 12 • Education/training centre and school: 715 • SME micro, small, medium: 80 • Other: 110 • General public: 315.000 Average extent to which target groups have been reached already by projects: 55%

Specific Objective	Result Indicator corresponding to the SO	Expected and estimated Target Group Outreach by 33 approved projects per Specific Objective
6d.1 Enhance the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of Alpine Space ecosystems	Level of integration of the ecosystem services approach in the policy systems of the Alpine Space	• Local public authority: 7.719 • Regional public authority: 197 • National public authority: 37 • Sectoral agency: 109 • Infrastructure and (public) service provider: 66 • Interest groups including NGOs: 120 • Higher education and research: 91 • Education/training centre and school: 50 • SME micro, small, medium: 143 • General public: 467.000 Average extent to which target groups have been reached already by projects: 72%
11.1 Increase the application of multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space	Level of application of multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space	• Local public authority: 180 • Regional public authority: 134 • National public authority: 17 • Sectoral agency: 16 • Interest groups including NGOs: 106 • Higher education and research: 70 • Education/training centre and school: 50 • Enterprise: 70 • International organisation: 10 • Other: 515 • General public: 10.000 Average extent to which target groups have been reached already by projects: 83%

Source: Cooperation Programme, Application Forms, Project Progress Reports and Survey to Projects (data from February 2018)

As can be observed, the outreach of the different projects is considerable. It is expected that with the projects' outreach the programme reaches more than 5,4 million people (general public), more than 12.700 local public authorities, more than 9.900 SMEs, over 740 regional public authorities and 174 national public authorities, 781 business support organisations, 480 sectoral agencies, 525 higher education and research centres, 537 public service and infrastructure providers, more than 1.300 interest groups and NGOs and more than 1.220 education and training centres. The SO factsheets show that the composition of target groups is rather different for each SO.

The analysis indicates that the programme with the current projects can contribute to produce changes in existing capacities and policy framework conditions in the Alpine Space. By now, the projects indicate that they have already reached out to 59% of the initially planned figures. Outreach is of course higher for more advanced projects from Call 1. Per SO, the extent of outreach is lowest for SO 2.2, and highest in SO 4.1, 2.1 and 3.2.

Figure 2.7: Extent to which expected target group outreach has been reached (in % per SO)
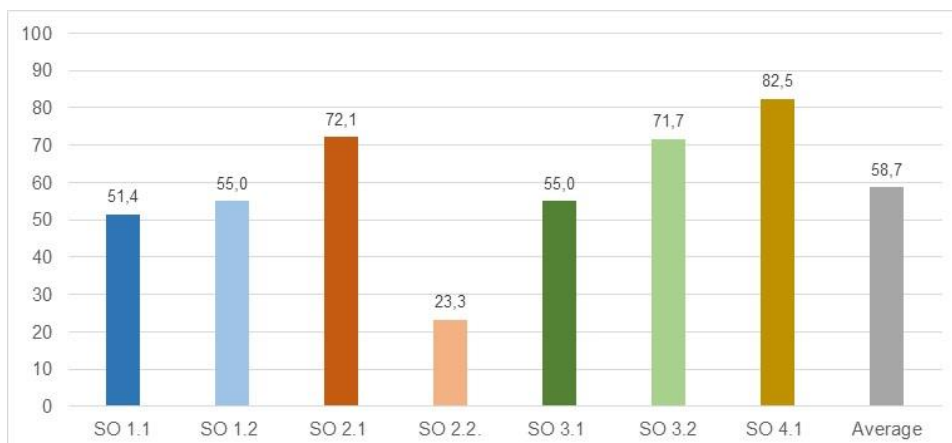
Source: Own elaboration based on Survey to Projects (Lead Partners) (data as of 30th March 2018) (n=32)

As a final element of the analysis, the mid-term achievements and activities as well as the planned outputs and results of all projects have been analysed. The overview for each project and a summary for each Specific Objective can be observed in the Project Factsheets and the SP Factsheets (annex documents). The analysis shows that relevant contributions by projects to specific policy fields can be expected. It is therefore extremely probable that the Programme in all of its SO will achieve its results and contribute to change as it is foreseen in the CP.

Perception of programme bodies

In addition to the monitoring data, the interviews that were carried out to representatives of programme bodies confirm the positive assessment of the progress and performance of the programme. Overall, there is a positive perception of programme progress, taking into account that progress is somehow less advanced in SO 2.2 and 3.1. It was stressed that it is still early to see the real effectiveness with regard to the resources mobilised, as still no projects can show final outputs and results. Interviews acknowledged that, since programme definition, external factors have influenced the priorities in the Alpine Space, e.g. putting migration and the integration of migrants on the agenda, but reducing the priority of low-carbon policies. Therefore, reprogramming might be a possibility to respond to a changed society and changed needs of the territory.

2.2.3 Conclusions and recommendations

Taking into account the different sources of information and the findings of the analysis, the main conclusions of the evaluation are:

- Projects have been approved for each of the SO. These projects show an adequate level of progress and achievement of outputs, taking into account their starting date. Project lead partners are highly confident about the likelihood of achieving expected outputs and results. The expected outreach to target groups and the current extent of outreach will facilitate a transfer and use of project results in general decision-making processes and policy capacities

in the Alpine Space. Therefore, the evaluation concludes that each of the specific objectives (SO) is on a good way to reach its targets.

- The progress of achievements is adequate in relation to the means and resources mobilised. Execution of ERDF and committed resources has reached a mid-term status (approx. 50%). This is in line with the progress in project approval and progress towards output achievement (considering the expected outputs to be achieved by the approved projects). Some of the output indicators even over-perform considerably with the expected outputs and might require a revision of their final targets.

- The overall level of execution of Call 1 projects is 35,6%. Compared to that, the average level of execution for Call 2 projects is 11,9%. Overall, SO present either a level of execution of 10-11% (SO 2.2 and 3.1) or a more advanced level of between 17%-23,5%. The differentiated analysis shows that Specific Objectives 2.2 and 3.1 are lagging behind in financial execution mainly because of only having projects within Call 2. This reduces their average level of execution. However, within the projects approved in Call 2, SO 2.2 and 3.1 are not performing worse than other SO.

- Considering the achievements of outputs, milestones and targets defined in the performance framework, the programme is well on track for this mid-term moment in implementation. For the financial indicators defined in the performance framework, the level of achievement exceeds the defined milestone and intermediate target. The achievement of physical outputs is not that well advanced, only PA1, as well as SO 2.1 and 4.1 show some progress.

The following recommendations can help to increase speed of progress and the level of achievements in the upcoming months and years.

- One indicator (CO_42) is still without any achieved/expected value. For this indicator, a review of its adequateness or review of the target value might be necessary.

- The SO factsheets show that the composition of target groups is rather different for each SO. This knowledge might help to produce target-group-specific contents and information on results and outputs in upcoming communication activities.

- Projects in SO 1.2 on social innovation seem to operate in a riskier and more unsecure environment than other projects. They might need a specific support or exchange of experiences and good practices to achieve their expected results.

- Based on the current performance, the programme does not need re-programming. However, if response to some of the SO is low (also in Call 3) and if there is a perceived difficulty in obtaining high-quality project applications in some SO, reprogramming might be a way to even improve effectiveness.

2.3 Contributions to horizontal principles

Articles 7 and 8 of the EU Regulation No 1303/2013 regarding common provisions for ESIF 2914-2020 establish that within implementation of ESIF programmes …

- "*equality between men and women and the integration of gender perspective are taken into account and promoted throughout the preparation and implementation of programmes, […]*"

- "*appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination*" are taken, and that

- "*the objectives of the ESI Funds shall be pursued in line with the principle of sustainable development and with the Union's promotion of the aim of preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment*".

These so-called horizontal principals shall also be taken into consideration during monitoring and evaluation of programmes.

2.3.1 Evaluation question/s

The following evaluation question guided the analysis:

- To which extent are horizontal principles integrated in the programme management arrangements and in the activities of funded projects?

2.3.2 Main findings

In line with the general ESIF Regulation 2014-2020 and with the specific ETC Regulation 2014-2020, the Programme considers in its Cooperation Programme document in Section 8 the horizontal principals of sustainable development, non-discrimination and equality between men and women.

Furthermore, in the 2015 and 2016 Annual Implementation Reports, the Alpine Space Programme highlights the specific actions taken to promote equality between men and women and to promote non-discrimination, in particular accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the arrangements implemented to ensure the integration of gender perspective in the cooperation programme and operations.

The detailed analysis of programme documents reveals the following information with regard to **sustainable development**:

The ASP consists of four priority axes out of which two, namely priority axis 2 "Low Carbon Alpine Space" and priority axis 3 "Liveable Alpine Space", are explicitly dedicated to environmental protection, resource efficiency, climate change action and risk prevention and management. In addition, Priority axis 1 "Innovative Alpine Space" and priority axis 4 "Well-Governed Alpine Space"

address indirectly issues such as efficiency or research on new technologies that can be seen as conducive to sustainable development in the long term[5].

During the programming phase, a thorough Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was carried out and taken into consideration. It is foreseen that in 2019 a mid-term evaluation on the compliance with strategic environmental assessment will be carried out, which will be integrated in the overall monitoring of the programme.

The application and project selection procedures include the contribution to the horizontal principle "sustainable development" as specific paragraph within the application form and as a specific assessment criterion. "*Project applicants have to describe in the AF which is assessed by the JS the project´s contribution to the horizontal principle "Sustainable development" as "positive", "neutral" or "negative" and justify their choice. In the final project reports, the projects will be asked to report on their actual contribution to the horizontal principle of sustainable development. The information they provide will be assessed as part of the project monitoring.*"[6]

During the implementation phase, the contribution of each project to the principle is addressed in a qualitative manner in the frame of project implementation and programme evaluation. The support to projects in order to better integrate the principle of sustainable development during implementation has to be highlighted. Factsheet 4.8 of the PIH presents the aspect of sustainable development during the implementation of a project ("*project greening*"). The level of detailed knowledge and support for projects can be seen as particularly positive and exceeding the usual degree of support to projects on horizontal principles. However, information on experiences of projects with this specific guidance is not gathered and followed-up, so real impact of this specific guidance is difficult to estimate.

With regard to **equality between men and women, equal opportunities and non-discrimination,** the detailed analysis of programme documents shows the following results:

In the course of programme preparation, the ASP has observed non-discrimination and addressed relevant issues related to the socio-demographic developments in the programme area (mainly related to migration and ageing) in the SWOT analysis[7].

The programme has defined the horizontal principles "Equality between men and women" and "Equal opportunity and non-discrimination" as assessment criteria. *"Project applicants have to describe the project´s contribution as "positive", "neutral" or "negative" in the AF and to justify their choice, so as to ensure that none of the approved projects would have any negative effects on the horizontal principles. In the final project reports, the projects will be asked to report on their actual contribution to*

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[5] ASP Cooperation Programme, page 95.

[6] ASP Annual Implementation Report 2016, page 53.

[7] See also ASP Cooperation Programme, page 97.

the horizontal principles. The information they provide will be assessed as part of the project monitoring."[8]

During implementation, the ASP emphasizes on the principle of equal access to information of the possibilities offered by the programme. This includes targeting different social groups adequately, removing barriers in the communication of the programme (e.g. media, language etc.), promoting barrier free approaches etc.

In the course of programme implementation, attention is given to equal opportunities and non-discrimination in a qualitative manner in the frame of programme evaluation. However, the integration of the issues of equal opportunities and non-discrimination is not followed-up during project implementation, so the level and quality of integration is difficult to estimate based on project monitoring data alone.

To sum up, the horizontal principles are included in the programming and application documents and mentioned in the Project Implementation Handbook (PIH). In particular, Factsheet 4.8 of the PIH presents the aspect of sustainable development during the implementation of a project ("*greening*"). This extraordinary support to projects in the implementation phase can be regarded a good practice example in Interreg project management arrangements.

ASP projects consider that they have a positive contribution to all horizontal principles. The survey to project lead partners confirms that 90% contribute positively to the principle of sustainable development. 40% of the projects contribute positively to equal opportunities and non-discrimination and 26,7% to equality between women and men (see Figure 2.8).
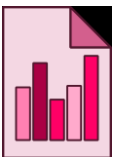
The review of the project application forms reveals that there is no negative contribution, but that all projects have either a positive or a neutral contribution to the horizontal principles. The review also shows that there are some projects with a highly positive impact on some of the horizontal principles. There are 15 projects (45,5%) that might have a highly positive contribution to sustainable development. These projects come mainly from PA 2, but also some from PA 3 and 4. On the other side, 4 projects (12%) might produce a highly positive contribution to the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination. These are mainly from SO 1.2, but also one project from SO 4.1.

Figure 2.8: Contribution of projects to Horizontal principles
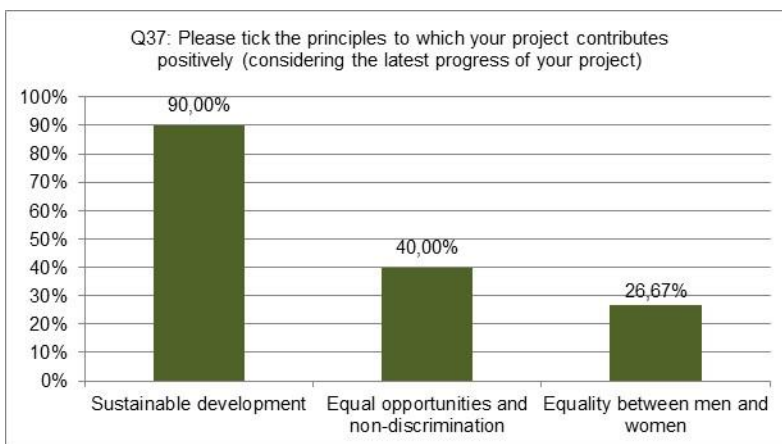
Some examples of contributions by projects are presented below:

Table 2.7: Examples of project contributions to horizontal principles

Horizontal Principle	Exemplary Project contributions
Sustainable development	"Indicators for calculating resource use sustainability. Conceptual framework for decision making aiming at sustainability. Online tools (e.g. WIKIAlps fostering knowledge towards the sustainable development of the Alps)." "The project focuses on facilitating increased multimodality in freight transport, shifting more goods from road to rail. It therefore contributes directly to sustainable development." "A more efficient SGI delivery thanks to an integrated approach and the introduction of new technologies will save resources and relief the environment." "Our Project has positive impact by lowering environmental impact on the field of energy savings & renewables, saving natural resources, raw material recycling, lowering CO_2 emissions from transport (local transport chains)." "Each city is developing its own circular economy strategy involving stakeholders and thereby raising awareness. Moreover, reaching out with a platform enabling transactions between the cities and regions we are addressing at least SDG 7, 11, 12, 13."
Equal opportunities and non-discrimination	"By indicating multi- and intermodal travel options in suburban and rural areas, where high public transport standards are hard to achieve, the project contributes to the promotion of equal mobility opportunities in disadvantaged regions." "The project specifically addresses issues of non-discrimination related to migration and the socio-demographic developments in the Alps. The new offers and services developed by the project will promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination of migrants." "The project improves the social dimension of public policies and decisions considering a new framework of sustainable finance where the public bodies will give more attention on investments and results measurements of impact in social project." "Participatory democracy has an inherently inclusive approach and applies to all citizens (no distinctions for gender, education, ethnicity, language, religion). The project will consider this principle when involving citizens in activities." "Because we try to involve young people in decision process. At the moment they are not so much involved."

2.3.3 Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis leads to the following conclusion:

- The horizontal principles – regarding sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, as well as equality between men and women – are well integrated in the programme management arrangements. The principles have been taken into account in the programming phase and are well reflected in the programming documents. The principles are included in the application documents and mentioned in the Project Implementation Handbook (PIH). In particular, Factsheet 4.8 of the PIH presents the aspect of sustainable development during the implementation of a project ("*greening*"). This extraordinary support to projects in the implementation phase can be regarded a good practice example in Interreg project management arrangements.

- The horizontal principles – regarding sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, as well as equality between men and women – are well integrated in the activities of funded projects. Projects are selected, based on their contribution to the horizontal principles – among other quality and operational criteria.

- 90% of ASP projects contribute positively to the principle of sustainable development. 40% of the projects contribute positively to equal opportunities and non-discrimination and 26,7% to equality between women and men. No negative impacts could be perceived.

To further improve the situation, the following recommendation can be highlighted.

- Improve the generation of information on the follow-up on the integration of horizontal principles during project implementation, maybe not through additional questions in regular project reports – to not increase the administrative burden for project partners, but through a specific survey in order to identify the uptake of "project greening" practices and other good practices with regard to the horizontal principles.

2.4 Contributions to EU2020

The Europe 2020 strategy, adopted by the European Council on 17 June 2010, is the European Union's agenda for growth and jobs. It emphasises **smart, sustainable and inclusive growth** as key priorities for growth in the European Union until the year 2020. EU2020's implementation and monitoring is linked to key targets related to the strategy's priorities at EU level, namely:

- Employment: 75% of the population aged 20 to 64 years to be employed;
- Research and development (R&D): 3% of GDP to be invested in R&D;
- Climate change and Energy:
  - Greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced by 20% compared to 1990;
  - Share of renewable energy sources in final energy consumption to be increased to 20%;
  - Energy efficiency to be improved by 20%;
- Education: rates of early school leavers below 10% and at least 40% of 30 to 34 years old to have completed tertiary or equivalent education;
- Poverty: at least 20 million fewer people in – or at risk of – poverty/social exclusion.

The Europe 2020 strategy is used as a reference framework for activities at EU and at national and regional levels. Cohesion Policy that is co-funded by European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), such as the Alpine Space Programme, shall be aligned with the EU2020 strategy and contributing to it.

2.4.1 Evaluation question/s

The following evaluation question guided the evaluation:

- To which degree is the programme implementation contributing to the EU2020 Strategy?

2.4.2 Main findings

The Alpine Space programme (ASP) was designed and programmed to be in line with the three key priorities of EU2020. Starting with the Alpine Space Strategy Development Project[9], a SWOT analysis of the Alpine Space was developed and cross-checked by a public consultation process. This process took into account the priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, as well as of the European Territorial Agenda 2020[10]. Accordingly, the programme extracted options for policy responses and selected four priority axes, corresponding to four Thematic Objectives of 2014-2020 EU Cohesion Policy: Innovative Alpine, Space, Low Carbon Alpine Space, Liveable Alpine Space and Well Governed Alpine Space. Among the cornerstones for the selection of the TOs were the characteristics

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[9] Gloersen et al. (2013): Strategy Development for the Alpine Space 2014+. Final Report.

[10] ASP Cooperation Programme, page 9.

of the programme area in form of a summarising SWOT at the level of the three priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy[11].

This decision on selecting priorities in the programming phase led to the following contribution logic of ASP 2014-2020 in relation to the EU2020 priorities:

Table 2.8: Contribution logic ASP and EU2020

ASP 2014-2020	Employment Goal	R&D Goal	Climate and Energy Goal	Education Goal	Poverty Goal
Direct contribution		++ Direct contribution through Priority Axis 1, Specific Objective 1.1 (TO 1)	++ Direct contribution through Priority Axes 2 (TO 4) and 3 (TO 6).		++ Direct contribution through Priority Axis 1, Specific Objective 1.2 on Social Innovation.
Indirect contribution	+ Indirect contribution through Priority Axes 1, 2 and 3. Employment and job creation is a horizontal contribution.	+ Indirect contribution through Priority Axes 2 (TO 4) and 3 (TO 6).	+ Indirect contribution through Priority Axis 1 (TO 1) and 4 (TO 11).	+ Indirect contribution through Priority Axes 1, 2 and 3, through niche elements such as enhancing the mobility for researchers on Alpine issues, enhancing the openness and relevance of education systems etc.	

Source: ASP Cooperation Programme and own analysis.

However, even if the contribution logic indicates a direct contribution, the effect of ASP projects on these goals can be expected as rather low, given the size of ASP projects within the overall sectors and the context of national and regional policies.

To support the manifestation of contribution by ASP projects, the programming bodies have provided certain mechanisms to support the materialisation of effects and impacts in line with EU2020. For example, the "Project Implementation Handbook" highlights in its Fact Sheet 0[12] the programme intervention logic and the relationship between EU 2020, the ESIF common strategic framework 2014-

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[11] ASP Cooperation Programme, page 16.

[12] PIH, Fact Sheet 0, page 7.

2020, the Alpine Space Cooperation Programme and the ASP projects. Based on this logic, it can be expected that results and outputs of approved and implemented projects will contribute to the programme specific objectives and results of the programme and, therefore, also to the EU2020.

The review of project monitoring data and information on the project contents and expected impacts reveals that ASP projects contribute widely to EU2020 priorities. The contribution covers the five strategic priorities of EU2020: Employment, Education, Poverty, R&D and Climate-Energy. Due to the specific relevance given to the promotion of low-carbon energy and climate adaptation in the Alpine Space, the contribution to the Climate and Energy goal of EU2020 is the most significant. 54,5% of the projects contribute to a medium or high degree to this goal. 24,2% of the projects contribute to the EU2020 goal on R&D strengthening. 12% of projects contribute to the eradication of poverty goal through a better access to services of general interest, equal opportunities or the promotion of non-discrimination. 9% of projects contribute to both the EU2020 employment goal and the EU2020 education goal, even if these areas are only indirectly tackled by the Alpine Space programme.

Table 2.9: Contribution of ASP projects to EU2020 goals

No. of Projects with a …	Employment Goal	R&D Goal	Climate and Energy Goal	Education Goal	Poverty Goal
Strong contribution (high or medium)	3	8	18	3	4
In %	9,1	24,2	54,5	9,1	12,1

Source: Application Forms, Project Progress Reports and Survey to Projects (data from February 2018)

2.4.3 Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis leads to the following conclusions:

- The evaluation shows that the Alpine Space Programme 2014-2020 contributes directly or indirectly to all three priorities of the EU2020 strategy and to all its sectoral key targets. The formulation and design of the programme led to a direct contribution on the goals for R&D goal, Poverty and Social Exclusion Goal, and for Climate and Energy. Indirect contribution can be observed in the fields of Employment and Education.

- 54,5% of the approved projects contribute to a medium or high degree to the Climate and Energy goal of EU2020. 24,2% of the projects contribute to the EU2020 goal on R&D strengthening. 12% of projects contribute to the eradication of poverty goal through a better access to services of general interest, equal opportunities or the promotion of non-discrimination. 9% of projects contribute to both the EU2020 employment goal and the EU2020 education goal.

- Overall, it can be estimated that programme implementation contributes to a substantial degree to the EU2020 Strategy, even if the dimension of effects and impacts within the overall context of EU, national and regional policies can be deemed as very low.

2.5 Contributions to macro-regional strategies

Policy coordination and transnational cooperation has existed in the Alpine Space already for a long time (e.g. Arge Alp, Alpine Convention and its treaties, CIPRA, Alpe-Adria, Euregio, Cotrao, trilateral cooperation between Slovenia, NE-Italy and Austria etc.). Within this context, the Alpine Space Programme is an initiative of the European Union and of the Member States, to which regions, local authorities and other alpine protagonists can participate with both project ideas and co-financing. It started as EU Community Initiative Interreg IIIB Alpine Space Programme for the period 2000–2006. The current ASP 2014-2020 is the third EU Programme to promote territorial cooperation in the Alpine region.

Macro-regional strategies are large strategies in a given geographical space that go beyond actions and objectives of transnational cooperation programmes but without replacing them. The first macro regional strategy in Europe, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) – adopted in 2009, was born out of a common interest to find a collective and more coordinated answer to environmental challenges in and around the Baltic Sea. After presenting the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), the European Commission adopted the Action Plan on the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) in 2015.

EUSALP constitutes "*a strategic agenda that should guide relevant policy instruments at EU, national and regional level, by closely aligning and mutually reinforcing them. It constitutes 'an integrated approach' with coordination of actions across policy areas which are expected to achieve better results than individual initiatives. The combined effects on a specific territory of the interventions of focused policy areas can lead to achievement of sustainable, balanced and harmonious development*"[13].

2.5.1 Evaluation question/s

The following evaluation question guided the evaluation:

- To which degree is the programme implementation contributing to relevant macro-regional strategies (MRS)?

2.5.2 Main findings

At the time of the drafting the current ASP programming document (March 2013 to May 2014) the macro-regional strategy for the alpine Region was still at an early stage of development. The "EU Strategy for the Alpine Region" was presented in June 2015, when the ASP Cooperation Programme was already defined. Despite this temporal mismatch, there is an important coherence between EUSALP and ASP with regard to territory, stakeholders, needs and strategic objectives.

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[13] European Commission (2015): Communication concerning the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region. COM(2015) 366 final. 28.7.2015, p. 5.

Map 2.1: EUSALP and ASP territories
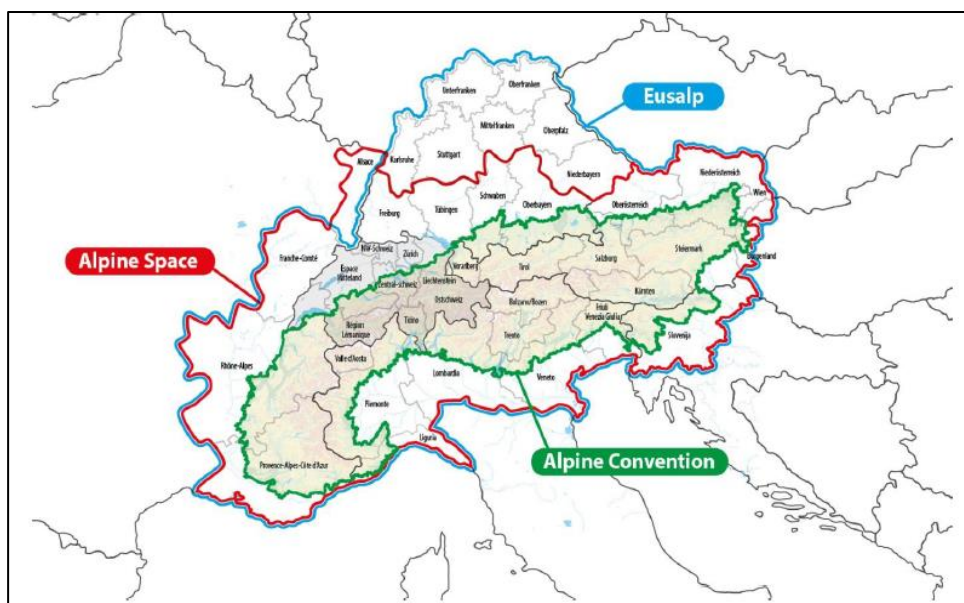
Source: European Commission 2015

Already in the course of the development of the ASP 2014-2020 programme, the representatives of the ASP discussed the options and implications of a EUSALP for the future ASP with an expert team and stakeholders, and a common understanding of the role of the ASP and its relation to the EUSALP was established[14]. The high consistency of the ASP TOs, the national and regional policies and the key thematic pillars of the future EUSALP was seen as favourable for a smooth coordination in the following years during programme implementation.

EUSALP implementation started in the first half of 2016. The European Commission has acknowledged the role of ASP in its deployment. "*The regions, the participating countries (of which two non-EU, Switzerland and Liechtenstein), the Alpine Convention and the Interreg Alpine Space programme have all contributed to defining the concept of the strategy, whereas the Commission has defined the steps to finalise and endorse it*".[15]

After the endorsement of the EUSALP in late 2015, ASP has taken a pro-active approach to ensure close links and contribution to the strategy through several measures. From the beginning, ASP was committed to support the strategy through the support to projects in Priorities 1-3. In particular, this support has been built into Priority Axis 4 "Well-governed Alpine Space" addressing Alpine

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[14] ASP Cooperation Programme, page 77.

[15] European Commission (2016): Report on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies. COM(2016) 805 final of the 16.12.2016, p. 9.

governance issues. On the other hand, ASP was invited to actively take part in the development of EUSALP which formed the basis for a smooth and trustful cooperation.

The relations EUSALP-ASP have constantly improved along the years with the participation of the MA as member in the EUSALP executive board (EB) and of the joint secretariat (JS) team members as observers in the action groups (AG). The following measures have been taken since 2016/2017 or are planned for 2018 to enhance alignment of ASP with EUSALP:

- The Alpine Space Programme **participates in the EUSALP Executive Board** as observer.

- **Informal coordination and information exchange between ASP Programme Committee Chair and EUSALP Presidency.** From 2018 on, meetings are planned to normally take place on a quarterly basis between the PC chair, the EUSALP Presidency, the EC and the MA and JS to update each other on implementation matters, planned events and possibilities for synergies[16].

- Planned for 2018: Joint **strategic coordination** and **preparation for the post 2020 period**. A post-2020 workshop event with EUSALP and MAs of programmes in the Alpine area is planned for autumn 2018[17].

- **Funding support to relevant projects under all four Priority Axes that can be relevant for EUSALP implementation.** ASP is considered to be one of the most relevant funding sources for EUSALP macro-regional projects: "*The Interreg Alpine Space programme is, according to the survey results, the most likely programme for funding in the EUSALP. 64% and 45% of the respondents, at policy and project level, respectively, have marked the transnational programme as source where financing has been obtained*".[18]

- **Earmarking of Priority Axis 4 for activities relevant to the macro-regional strategy in the framework of multilevel and transnational cooperation:** The ASP is interested primarily in the enhancing and application of multilevel and transnational governance building on past experiences and new opportunities. The macro-regional strategy is considered to be one of these opportunities. In 2016, the PC invited the EUSALP action group leaders (AGL) to submit a project proposal aiming at facilitating the implementation of the EUSALP action plan and the coordination of the action groups. The project proposal was submitted in a "one step" application procedure and approved in June 2016[19]. The project "*AlpGov – specific project dedicated to the support of the EUSALP implementation*" kicked off its activities in June, in which a programme representative participated in order to support and clarify any open questions. According to the project website, AlpGov Project supports a joint approach for implementing the EU-Strategy of the Alpine Region. Based on overall governance rules set

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[16] ASP Annual Communication Overview 2018, p.10.

[17] Ibid.

[18] COWI et al. (2017): Study on macroregional strategies and their links with cohesion policy. EUSALP Report, p.151.

[19] ASP Annual Implementation Report 2016, p.3.

politically by the Generally Assembly and technically by the Executive Board, it serves as the main tool to make EUSALP Governance operable and effective[20].

- **Networking of EUSALP Action Groups with corresponding ASP projects:** Relevant ASP projects have been invited to EUSALP AG meetings and workshops with networking activities and joint capacity building that creates synergies between similar ASP projects and enhances inter-project cooperation[21].

- **Integration of EUSALP Action Groups with corresponding ASP projects**. For instance, AG3 and PlurAlps have agreed on the joint launch of a call for good practices on the integration of migrants, whose award ceremony will take place at the mid-term conference of the project. There are further examples of such synergy effects where EUSALP has improved project visibility: the activities of AlpBionet2030, the CESBA initiative and S3-Alp4Clusters have been built respectively into the work plan of AG7, AG9 and AG2[22].

- **Growing integration of communication and outreach activities between ASP and EUSALP:**

  o Since 2017, integration of a specific EUSALP goal among the planned annual communication activities: "*[…], communication activities in 2017 will be directed towards the following goals: […], - further positioning the programme as partner of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP); […]*" under Specific Communication Objective CO.3.2.[23]

  o Coordination and co-organisation of events: e.g. AlpWeek 2016, a major Alpine event which takes place only every four years, or the Meet & match forum - Together we move mountains! (21-22 March 2017 in Milan, Italy)[24].

  o Organisation of ASP sessions on EUSALP events, e.g. the information session "Action Groups meet (Interreg Alpine Space) projects" at the EUSALP AG forum, February 2017, and the presentation of the ASP programme at the EUSALP forum on 23 and 24 November 2017 in Munich.

  o Participation of ASP in relevant events organised by the EUSALP Presidency e.g. EUSALP General Assembly 2017 and 2018, First EUSALP Annual Forum in November 2017[25].

  o Planned for 2018: Synergy brunch shall provide an exchange platform for networking and synergy to ASP projects, EUSALP AGL, and ASP programme bodies[26].

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[20] http://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/alpgov/en/home

[21] See EUSALP Newsletter #2, December 2017. https://www.alpine-region.eu/newsletter/756

[22] Information by the APS JS (January 2018).

[23] ASP Annual Communication Overview 2017, p.2.

[24] ASP Annual Communication Overview 2017.

[25] Ibid.

[26] ASP Annual Communication Overview 2018, p.10.

o Brochure "Projects and EUSALP" that gives an overview and raises awareness on EUSALP Action Groups and corresponding ASP projects[27].

o Presentation of the EUSALP on the ASP website ("What is EUSALP") with an overview on ASP projects according to EUSALP Action Group correspondence and a link to the EUSALP website. Planned for 2018: The enrichment of the EUSALP page with project stories written in coordination with the EUSALP communication team[28].

o The ASP developed a permanent section in the programme's newsletter: "What's up EUSALP, linking AGs and project lead partners". Beyond displaying the cooperation and the work going on in the AGs and the projects, it is meant for communicating about concrete cooperation in action to the public[29].

o Planned for 2018: Improved cooperation with EUSALP bodies on the field of communication. In particular, in view of the EUSALP forum of November 2018, the programme will co-develop with EUSALP communication material on the contribution of Alpine Space projects to the EUSALP implementation[30].

Overall, the contribution of ASP to EUSALP is considerable. It takes place at multiple levels and pursues complementary goals:

- strategic and operational coordination,
- information exchange between key implementers and decision-makers,
- funding of relevant EUSALP projects and activities,
- funding of EUSALP multi-level governance and capacity-building (Project AlpGov),
- mobilising actors and stimulating networks,
- benefitting from synergies and increased efficiency in the organisation of events,
- cross-fertilization and integration between projects and action groups,
- coordinated communication and awareness-raising activities to create more and better links between EUSALP and ASP projects.

Project lead partners estimated in the evaluation survey the contribution of ASP projects to the EUSALP Strategy. An overwhelming 97% of respondents considered that the project contributes to EUSALP and/or the Alpine Convention (see Figure 2.9). This is confirmed by the review of information included in the project application forms where all 33 projects indicate a medium-high level contribution to EUSALP. Considering the increasing activities to promote synergies between EUSALP Action Groups and ASP projects, it can be expected that the final contribution will even be higher and more substantial than planned in the beginning.

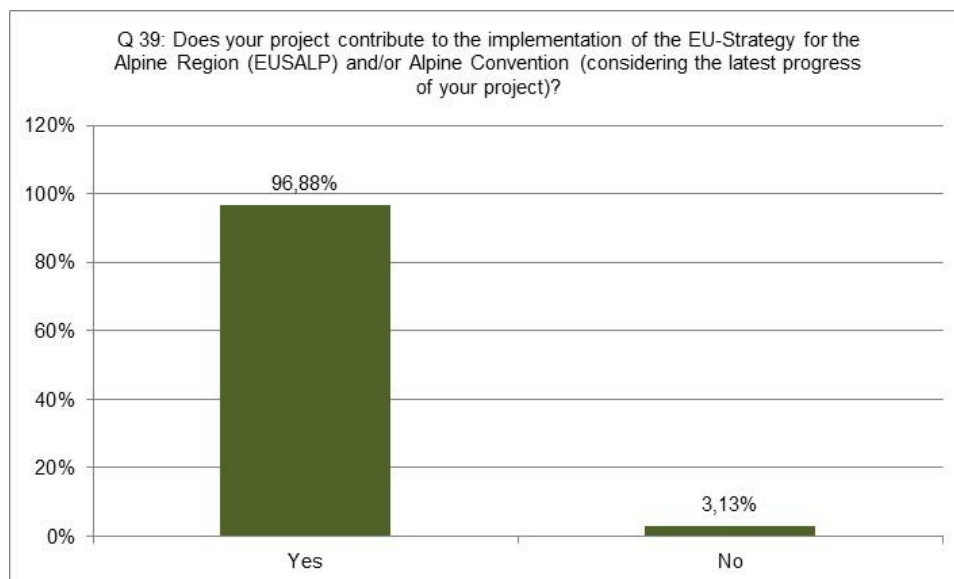[27] http://www.alpine-space.eu/about/eu-regional-policy/macroregional-strategies/what-is-eusalp-

[28] http://www.alpine-space.eu/about/eu-regional-policy/macroregional-strategies/what-is-eusalp-

[29] http://www.alpine-space.eu/news-events/newsletter/newsletter

[30] ASP Annual Communication Overview 2018, p.10.

Figure 2.9: Contribution of projects to EUSALP

Q 39: Does your project contribute to the implementation of the EU-Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) and/or Alpine Convention (considering the latest progress of your project)?

Source: Own elaboration based on Survey to Projects (Lead Partners) (data as of 30th March 2018) (n=32)

The survey allowed collecting some anecdotal evidence on examples of project contributions and links to EUSALP priorities and action groups. These are presented in the following table.

Table 2.10: Examples of ASP project contributions to EUSALP

Examples of Project Contributions to EUSALP
• "EUSALP's Pillar 1; EU Industrial Policy for support to manufacturing competitiveness and modernisation; National/Regional strategies, in particular, RIS3. PPs and observers are contributors and already actuators at several levels of policies/strategies."
• "We feel to be linked to EUSALP 1st Thematic Policy Area "Economic Growth and Innovation". Namely, Group 2 to - Action 2 in the aim of strengthening Alpine Space economic and social environment." • "Perfect linkage to AG2 with our S3 action plan. It allows to create new value chains within AS."
• "There is a link with Group 3 to establish a common macro regional educational space on Design Thinking and Co-Creation." • "Concrete links to EUSALP AG3 on labour market integration of migrants and school to work transition of migrants." • "Social innovation for NEETS and seniors, links with the activity of action group n. 3 (Social impact policies in the alpine area)."
• "We have links with Action Group 4". • "The project results & output support the EUSALP challenge about climate change, and is strongly linked to AG4 objective of "promoting inter-modality and interoperability in passenger and freight transport" and an extended meanings of the objective "to support the modal shift from road to rail" considering a different feature of electrification in transport."
• "Our Project leader– is also a coleader of EUSALP AG5 - and is assuring knowledge exchange with the project and vice versa."

- "Our Project was involved in the AG 5 at the EUSALP Action group forum (14-16 Feb 2017) dealing with the effectiveness to promote accessibility to public services by innovative ways."

- "The project contributes mainly to EUSALP AG 6, as preserving and valorising water related ecosystems through an ES approach is one of its primary aims; but also to AG 7 (AG7 co-leader is an observer), as the role of hydro-morphological management is key to ensure ecological connectivity in rivers; AG 8, as it directly tackles flood risk prevention and improvement of climate Change, adaptation strategies; and AG 9 as it provides tools to improve the sustainability of hydropower production, involving relevant actors."
- "The Project is part of work program of AG6 SG2. Our project Mid-Term Conference is part of official program of Tyrolean EUSALP Presidency 2018."

- "Our partner is an official member of the Action Group 7 of the EUSALP and very actively involved in the concerned issue. A work package of the project is dedicated to the EUSALP space."
- "Intensive cooperation with EUSALP AG7 (joint project kick-off Workshop, joint line ministers and city representatives event on Green infrastructure, contribution to EUSALP annual forum, ...)."

- "There is a Close cooperation with AG8 (Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation), in particular to receive additional Inputs for France, Liechtenstein and Slovenia as they are not present in the partnership."

- "We have given contribution to EUSALP AG9 and before the end of the project we will contribute to the Strategy with some results directly linked to AG9 but also referring to AG6, AG7, AG8 and we raised the awareness within our PPs of the Strategy goals introducing them to the innovative policies elaborated during the project."
- "We are linked to AG9. The synergies are about: development of tools and guidelines for low-carbon energy transition, energy data collection and management, promotion of platforms/observatories/etc., transnational and multi-level governance approach to low-carbon energy initiatives, RES use, etc."
- "The project is also linked to EUSALP AG9 objectives of setting up an Alpine energy efficiency cluster" and if perfectly fits the sustainable development issue for transport in the Alpine Convention."

Source: Own elaboration based on information provided by project lead partners collected in the Survey (February 2018)

The examples show that there is a wide and diverse contribution that covers not only shared memberships (being an ASP partner and a EUSALP AG member), but also joint activities, exchange of information, contribution to wider goals. It has to be evaluated positively that the contribution to EUSALP tackles all EUSALP Action Groups.

However, even if supported by different events and brochures that indicate the connection between ASP projects and EUSALP Action groups, not for all projects it is easy to get involved with EUSALP. One respondent observed: "*the activities in the EUSALP Action groups are sometimes not really transparent and the direct involvement for the projects are not so easy. This could be improved.*"

Interviews with representatives of programme bodies confirm the very well developed and increasing relationship between EUSALP and the Alpine Space Programme. Some of the linkages come naturally through the participation of the same people and organisations in both areas, the Strategy and the ASP, and the long tradition of transnational cooperation in the Alpine Area (e.g. CIPRA, ARGE, Alpine Convention).

Interviewees acknowledge the increasing cooperation and coordination mechanisms and the clear benefits for both sides. EUSALP benefits from the funding of ASP to launch implementation of their

Action Plans. ASP benefits from a better visibility of its priorities and projects and better access to high political levels. However, interviewees also highlight the need for more synergies but also a clearer distribution of roles within the support of territorial development in the Alpine Space. "*The goals from MRS and the goals of ASP are not the same.*" EUSALP and ASP can have different perspectives on the same question. Thus, it is important to continue working on coordination and synergies.

Interviewees highlight the AlpGov project and its relevance for creating governance capacities and structures within EUSALP. "*ASP and EUSALP found a way to bring governance support to MRS in form of a project*".[31] However, one interviewee indicates that this form of support cannot be continued. For EUSALP governance there should be other funds available (regional, national, EU), not only from ASP, to generate more institutional stability. An important role is given to the next ESIF regulations 2020+ that should better define the role and distribution of responsibilities between ESIF MA, Interreg and macro-regional strategies. Another aspect that needs to be better defined is the treatment of EUSALP priority projects in ASP. It is not clear if it would be adequate to have a specific project lane only for EUSALP projects, or a kind of 'labelling' as it is used in other macro-regional strategy contexts.

Interviewees recommend to further strengthen the coordination, cooperation and synergies but with clear roles, also involving other relevant players, such as Cross-border Interreg programmes, National and regional authorities. In general, the series of coordination activities already planned for 2018 is already well received by the interviewees, as a first step to strengthen coordination.

In addition, the evaluators sent out a written consultation to ten representatives of EUSALP presidency and action group coordinators in order to integrate their view in the analysis. In the consultation, 90% of them confirm that the cooperation between EUSALP and ASP is effective, of this sub-group, 30% even consider the coordination as 'very effective'. One respondent considers the cooperation as 'somewhat ineffective'.

The EUSALP stakeholders name the following valuable contributions from ASP to EUSALP[32]:

- "*Similar territorial expansion ensures unity of purpose, facilitates collaboration and both, the strategy and the program, complement one another. In this sense, the ASP is one of the instruments EUSALP Action Groups can access to finance and implement their activities.*"

- "*Support to the creation of governance capacities and structures through AlpGov*"

- "*Financial support for carrying out the activities that include quite some travel and engagement in transnational community.*"

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[31] Quote from the interviews to representatives of programme bodies for this evaluation. 2018.

[32] Quotes from responses to the EUSALP written consultation within this evaluation 2018.

- "*The programme contributes to making the EUSALP more visible by informing ASP audiences about EUSALP activities through their communication channels.*"

- "*It gives the opportunity to implement smaller activities that contribute to the strategy implementation process. It is an important network that creates strong linkages to the AGs.*"

- "*Sharing and enhancement of knowledge of decision makers and experts of the Action Groups necessary for the implementation of the strategy.*"

With regard to the question how the coordination between the Interreg Alpine Space programme and EUSALP can be made more effective, the EUSALP stakeholders appreciate the recent joint events and the events planned for 2018 as valuable tools and key for improved coordination. They also highlight the need for a clarification of roles and tasks for EUSALP and ASP, but also of roles of EUSALP AG leaders in ASP projects (should they be partners? observers?). Some respondents mention the need for the elaboration of a formal collaboration and exchange processes between (already approved) ASP projects and the EUSALP Action Groups. In addition, some respondents request more joint meetings between ASP and EUSALP presidency and Board of AG leaders as "*good occasion for discussion and exchange of interests and needs.*" Another recommendation refers to the possibility to coordinate a joint dissemination of results of projects and AG according to specific policy fields.[33]

With regard to improvement of contribution of ASP to EUSALP in the future (2020+), the macro-regional stakeholders highlight that in a future programming period contribution should be increased by a joint planning of Action Plan and Cooperation Programme, increasing the alignment between both documents (and facilitating a clear separation of priorities). A more stable to support EUSALP governance should be found (post AlpGov, maybe but not necessarily through ASP). In the future, the EUSALP stakeholders wish for a less complex and more flexible application process for EUSALP projects in ASP but also, in general, in different EU funding instruments, as it is currently very difficult to mobilize sufficient resources to implement alpine wide activities. "*The EUSALP Action Groups plan to carry out financial studies to provide an overview of the current and future funding possibilities to implement EUSALP actions. The results of the studies provide an overview of needs and requirements which should be taken into account for the upcoming ASP programming period.*"[34]

In addition to contribution to EUSALP, it should be mentioned that the Alpine Space programme has also territorial and thematic overlapping with the European Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and the European Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR). "*The ASP also contributes to topics related to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (PA02, PA03, PA04, PA05, PA06, PA07, PA08, PA10) and to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region ("transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity", "diversified tourism offer" and "sustainable tourism management").*"[35]

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[33] Quote from responses to the EUSALP written consultation within this evaluation 2018.

[34] Quote from responses to the EUSALP written consultation within this evaluation 2018.

[35] ASP Cooperation Programme, p. 77.

However, the coherence with these macro-regional areas is lower and a contribution to these macro-regional strategies can be estimated as limited and less intentional, in comparison to the contribution to the EUSALP.

2.5.3 Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis leads to the following conclusion:

- The evaluation shows that the contribution of ASP to EUSALP is considerable and effective.

- Contribution and alignment takes place at multiple levels and pursues complementary goals: strategic and operational coordination, information exchange, funding of relevant EUSALP projects and activities and of multi-level governance and capacity-building (Priority Axes 4), mobilising actors and stimulating networks, synergies and efficiency in the organisation of events, cross-fertilization and integration between projects and action groups, coordinated communication and awareness-raising activities.

- Almost all ASP projects that are currently being implemented contribute to EUSALP, some projects at different levels or to different Action Groups. Overall, it can be estimated that programme implementation contributes to a substantial degree to the EUSALP strategy.

- Representatives of ASP programme bodies acknowledge the effective cooperation mechanisms and the clear benefits for both sides. EUSALP benefits from the funding of ASP to launch implementation of their Action Plans. ASP benefits from a better visibility of its priorities and projects and better access to high political levels. However, interviewees also highlight the need for continuing developing synergies and communication on ASP and EUSALP within the Alpine Space Area.

- Nine out of ten EUSALP stakeholders that have been consulted confirm that the cooperation between EUSALP and ASP is effective. 30% of them even consider the coordination as 'very effective'.

However, to further improve the situation, the following recommendations can be highlighted.

- Continue communication on the different roles of ASP and EUSALP internally and to stakeholders of Strategy and Programme, as one element of the overall communication objectives.

- Continue encouraging informal collaboration and exchange processes between AGs and projects (taking into account that some projects fit into different AGs) to continue adding to the visibility and creation of synergies between EUSALP and ASP.

2.6 Creation of synergies with other funds and instruments

The effectiveness of a programme increases when it is aligned and develops synergies with similar funds and instruments that focus on similar objectives and target groups. In the case of a transnational programme, the alignment with other European Funds and instruments, as well as with other national and regional policies and initiatives is important to reach higher levels of effectiveness and avoid double spending.

2.6.1 Evaluation question/s

The following evaluation question guided the evaluation:

- Has synergy been created with other instruments and funds?

2.6.2 Main findings

The Cooperation Programme establishes that "*the ASP demonstrates strong operational links with a large number of national policies (see annexes) through the partnership-based formulation of the strategy and the careful scrutiny of the ex-ante evaluation; this is especially the case for the first three priority axes. The priority axis 4 "Well-Governed Alpine Space" shows a horizontal relevance to the national policies and has mainly a transnational dimension, hence applying to all of them*".[36]

In fact, already in the programming phase the Strategy Development Project (2013) has paved the way for identifying key priorities and strategic orientations for this programme and substantiated the debate on Alpine governance. For each field of future Alpine-wide cooperation, important actors were identified and the roles that the 2014-2020 ASP could assume were described[37]. This helped to identify and learn about other relevant initiatives and possible synergies from the beginning.

The Cooperation Programme highlights in its Section 6 the measures that are foreseen to coordinate

- among ESIF,
- with other EU funding instruments (in particular, with HORIZON 2020, Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs (COSME) 2014-2020, LIFE, Connecting Europe Facility, High-growth and innovation SME facility (GIF), Risk Sharing Finance Facility (RSFF), PROGRESS),
- with national and regional funds,
- as well as with EIB financial instruments.

As can be observed by project monitoring data and interviews with programme bodies, these coordination measures have been actively put in place.

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[36] ASP Cooperation Programme, p.2.

[37] ASP Cooperation Programme, p.87.

Furthermore, it has to be considered that ASP intentionally took the decision to concentrate on issues where transnational cooperation has an added value. Other issues, even if relevant for the Alpine Space are considered as horizontal or the main field for regional and national policy interventions:

"*There are additional thematically relevant topics from the eleven TOs of the EU Framework. It was, however, decided not to address them […]: TO 2 "Enhancing access to and use and quality of ICT", significant investment component. It is not suitable for a transnational programme, TO 3 "Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs", TO 5 "Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management", TO 7 "Promoting sustainable transport", TO 8 "Promoting employment and supporting labour mobility", TO 9 "Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty", TO 10 "Investing in education, skills and lifelong learning by developing education and training infrastructure*".[38]

That means that the Programme is well aware of possible synergies even with initiatives that do not fall under the Priorities of the CP 2014-2020.

In addition, the Cooperation Programme highlights that the ASP demonstrates significant thematic congruence with the Interreg Central Europe programme. "*This allows for coordination of projects working within the same thematic field, supporting the cooperation between Alpine Space and Central Europe stakeholders*".[39]

The review of project information included in Project Application Forms and Progress Reports reveals that 29 projects of all 33 projects (88%) declare that they have or will exploit synergies with other funds or instruments. Most of the projects have not only relationships with selected national and regional policies and initiatives, looking for the mainstreaming of their experiences in national and regional (or transnational) policies, but also to other Interreg projects (mainly from ASP, but also from Interreg Central Europe) and to wider EU networks, instruments or initiatives. Many projects also indicate their pre-disposition to cooperate, coordinate and develop synergies with other on-going ASP projects in the same field. This can be considered as very positive. Some examples of synergies with other funds or instruments are presented below:

Table 2.11: Examples of synergies with other instruments and funds in ASP projects

Exemplary Synergies with EU Programmes and Initiatives
• LIFE+
• COSME
• EaSI on Social Finance ("A recipe book for Social Finance" 2015)
• Enterprise Europe Network
• FP7 and H2020 Projects
• S3 Platform

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[38] ASP Cooperation Programme, p.20-21.

[39] ASP Cooperation Programme, p.77.

- Vanguard Imitative
- European Factories of the Future Research Association (EFFRA)
- KIC Knowledge and Innovation Community (EIT) Innolife
- Harmonised European Assessment system on resource efficiency opportunities in the building sector
- EU Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing
- IEE – Intelligent Energy Europe projects
- ETC Climate Adaptation
- EPA Interest Group on Climate Adaptation
- EU Climate Change Committee WG6 on Adaptation
- BSR Climate Dialogue Forum
- LEADER and GAL
- URBACT
- European Migration Network
- ERASMUS+
- Former Youth in Action
- Covenant of Mayors

Exemplary Synergies with other Interreg or transnational, cross-border initiatives

- Interreg ASP 4B 2007-2013
- Interreg ASP 2014-2020
- Interreg Central Europe
- Interreg SI-AT
- Interreg ALCOTRA
- ARGE ALP
- EGTC Trento South Tyrol
- Alpine Convention
- CIPRA Youth Council
- EUSALP Action Groups

Exemplary Synergies with National or Regional Instruments or Policies

- "Information Offensive Geothermal Energy" in Bavaria
- Landcare Germany (DVL) (Bavaria)
- Germany, France and Italy: national advisory board reports on SII (social impact investments)
- National and Regional policies on cross-fertilization actions with creative/media sectors
- S3 strategies and policies in the AS
- With national climate adaptation strategies
- "Programme of Action for the Regional Provision of Public Services (MORO)", Germany
- Industry 4.0 initiatives in Germany, Italy, France and Austria

Source: Own elaboration based on information in Project application forms

Interviews with representatives of programme bodies show that there is a certain level of coordination (e.g. exchange of information) with ESIF Managing Authorities, but that this coordination is by now purely coincidental and does not follow a specific strategy. Most interviewees appreciate the need for further coordination with other ESIF and mainstream

regional and national funds, in particular to promote certain projects that require larger investments. However, the interviewees consider also the limited resources to carry out such approximation and highlight that the interest to strengthen the dialogue and exchange of information should come from both sides (from ASP but also from the ESIF MA side). Some interviews indicate the need to frame such coordination in the new 2020+ ESIF Regulation, in particular, in the new regulations on relationships between macro-regional strategies, Interreg and ESIF-funded policies at regional and national level.

Some Interviewees are optimistic that within the framework of EUSALP there might be room for improved coordination/contact between Interreg ASP and ESIF MA. One interviewee mentioned the good practice example from the Baltic Sea, where the macro-regional strategy promoted a network of ERDF MA in the macro-regional context that helps raising awareness on transnational and macro-regional topics and needs and how they affect the different regional and national policies and stakeholders in different MS.

2.6.3 Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis shows the following conclusion:

- The evaluation shows that the Alpine Space Programme 2014-2020 facilitates the creation of synergies with other instruments and funds already in its Cooperation Programme. Synergies are largely promoted within the programming documents.

- On-going ASP projects have developed a wide range of synergies with other instruments and funds. 29 projects of all 33 projects (88%) declare in their application form that they have or will exploit synergies with other funds or instruments. Detailed examples show that synergies of ASP projects are achieved with a) EU Programmes and Initiatives, b) other Interreg or transnational, cross-border initiatives, c) National or Regional Instruments or Policies.

- Interviews show that there is a certain level of coordination (e.g. exchange of information) with ESIF Managing Authorities, but that this coordination is by now purely coincidental and does not follow a specific strategy. They stress that more can be done to strengthen synergies of ASP with ESIF MA and national/regional mainstream policy-makers.

However, to further improve the situation, the following recommendations can be highlighted.

- In order to increase coordination and synergies with national and regional ESIF Managing Authorities, a specific communication activity with ESIF MA and the creation of an information network, maybe with support of the EUSALP, can be designed, following the example of the Baltic Sea region.

3 Evaluation of the programme communication strategy and activities

The Programme communication is part of the management and implementation of the Alpine Space Programme. The Alpine Space Programme has its own communication strategy, which was adopted by the Programme Committee on the 22 April 2015. The communication strategy aims to promote the programme's activities and facilitate the programme implementation and designed in a way that it is in line with the managerial objectives of the programme and its overall aims.

The communication strategy has three main objectives, each of which has a number of specific objectives. These objectives are clearly linked to the Programme Management Objectives. The first objective is about the increase of the efficiency and effectiveness of the management and implementation of the programme, the second on the reinforcement of capabilities of project applicants and participants and the third one on the better visibility of the programme and its results. These are presented below:

Communication objective 1: Enhance programme bodies' exchanges and offer clear guidance on administrative procedures for project participants. This objective covers internal communication and presentation of procedures and roles to the programme beneficiaries and applicants.

- ➢ Communication specific objective 1.1: Enhance capacity among programme bodies for communication.
- ➢ Communication specific objective 1.2: Clarify presentation of administrative procedures.

Communication specific objective 2: Effectively empower applicants and participants. This objective aims to support project applicants and participants throughout all phases of the project implementation.

- ➢ Communication specific objective 2.1: Enhance capacity of applicants and their support.
- ➢ Communication specific objective 2.2: Enhance capacity of project participants and their support for project implementation and closure.

Communication objective 3: Increase awareness of the programme and its results. This objective is about increasing the visibility of project and programme results.

- ➢ Communication specific objective 3.1: Raise awareness about calls and achievements.
- ➢ Communication specific objective 3.2: Improve the programme's internal and external links.
- ➢ Communication specific objective 3.3: Enhance inter-project cooperation to reach thematic objectives.
- ➢ Communication specific objective 3.4: Increase projects' capacity to communicate their own achievements.

The communication is annually planned and monitored by Annual Communication Overviews, which detail the communication activities taken place and inform about achievements of the previous year.

3.1 Methods used

For the evaluation of the communication strategy, the research team has drawn upon a number of different sources. The analysis started with a review of core programme documents, i.e. the communication strategy document, the Alpine Space Cooperation Programme, the Annual Implementation Reports and the Annual Communication Overviews have also contributed to the analysis. In addition to that, different supporting documents (e.g. the Project Implementation Handbook, factsheets, the programme website, as well as statistics and feedback responses of ASP events and seminar have been reviewed. Furthermore, a survey to project lead partners was launched for the purpose of the programme evaluation, containing also relevant questions about communication activities and their usefulness for projects. Finally, interviews with representatives of programme bodies helped to validate first findings.

This chapter is structured along three main sections. Section 3.2 focuses on the evaluation of the communication strategy as such, responding to the relevant evaluation questions. Section 3.3 looks at the activities and tools of the communication strategy and gives an answer to the relevant evaluation questions. Last but not least, section 3.3 takes a closer look at the communication strategy's indicators and their achievements and objectives.

3.2 Evaluation of Communication strategy

This section focuses on the evaluation of the communication strategy. The relevant evaluation questions are presented in sub-section 3.2.1 below.

3.2.1 Evaluation question/s

The evaluation questions to be answered in this section are the following:

- Is the communication strategy written in a way that eases the implementation and allows reaching the set objectives?

- Does it foresee clear and measurable objectives?

- Does it foresee clear roles and responsibilities? Are they efficient / well-working?

3.2.2 Main findings

To assess the programme's communication strategy, the structure and contents of the strategy have been analysed. Overall the communication strategy is written in a concise and clear way. The strategy has a clear hierarchical structure that links objectives, target audiences, activities and tactics. It clearly sets the methodology, the communication objectives and communication activities. It also prepares evaluation with the definition of indicators and foreseen monitoring activities. Following this, the communication strategy builds on a clear intervention logic, which is presented in a matrix on pg. 8 of the communication strategy document.

Figure 3.1: Intervention logic of the ASP communication strategy

Source: ASP Communication Strategy

The communication strategy establishes clear links to Priority Axis 5 (technical assistance) of the programme and more specifically on the following management objectives:

- Increase efficiency and effectiveness of the management and implementation of the programme;
- Reinforce of capabilities of project applicants and participants;
- Better visibility of the programme and its results.

Thus, the matrix has built upon those objectives to develop its communication objectives, specific communication objectives, which it then links to target audiences, tactics and activities. This gives the rationale of the selected actions and objectives, as well as a logic connection between what is to be achieved and through what means, but also whom it targets. There are clear definitions of the objectives and the target groups. Finally, it covers not only the programme part of communication but presents also the different national communication strategies that guide the work of Alpine Contact Points. An aspect to comment is that potential internal and external factors that could influence implementation and results are not mentioned in the communication strategy.

It can be observed that target audiences are only presented in a rather general manner in the intervention logic, but not presented or analysed specifically in the strategy. For example, project applicants, beneficiaries or potential project participants are only mentioned as generic groups, without making a difference between policy-makers, private entities, interest groups/NGO etc. that might have

a very diverse interest in the programme, at least when it comes to learning about results and possible benefits of the programme for them A higher differentiation and analysis of needs of specific target audiences might, however be helpful, to further develop and improve specific communication activities and tactics. It also shows that specific audiences, such as the general public, EUSALP stakeholders or ESIF Managing Authorities are not yet mentioned as target audiences, even if they represent now relevant stakeholder groups for the programme (this was also confirmed by the interviews to programme bodies).

The strategy contains information such as objectives, basic communication activities and a budget distribution that is relevant for a smooth implementation. Overall, the communication strategy is written in a way that eases the implementation and allows reaching the set objectives.

The communication strategy presents a set of indicators for each communication objectives. This is the first and most important step towards a continuous monitoring which is important for the evaluation of the strategy. The indicator table in the communication strategy provides information on the measurement unit, the target value as of 2020, the baseline value, as well as the data source and the reporting period. The objectives are overall clear and with good potential to be measurable. For some indicators no baseline values have been defined or are available. This will hamper the evaluation of these indicators und limit their usefulness. Target values seem to be reasonable and achievable. Overall, the strategy sets, in principle, measurable objectives – even if the real evaluability of the strategy will be analysed in section 3.3.

The communication strategy does not devote a separate section in describing the specific roles and responsibilities. However, the CP and the communication strategy foresee that a Communication Manager in the JS is responsible for the communication strategy and its implementation. Furthermore, section 4 of the communication strategy presents the basic types of communication activities and for each the responsible body is indicated. In most cases the responsible body for the communication activities is the JS. But also ACP have a considerable role as well as the MA. The role and foreseen activities for each ACP are clearly visible in the national communication strategies, which is positive. However, it is not clear if these national strategies will also be followed up and evaluated (and if yes, by whom), so that important feedback can be given on the effectiveness of the different national strategies. Overall, even if there is no specific section on roles and responsibilities, it seems that roles and responsibilities are clearly distributed within the JS and between the different programme bodies.

The feedback received by representatives of programme bodies of ASP through interviews about the communication strategy is positive. As regards the design of the communication strategy, the respondents agree that the communication strategy is adequate and consistent. The process of defining the strategy has been smooth and based on experience from previous programmes. When it comes to its objectives and whether they are clear and measurable, the majority agrees that overall the objectives of the strategy are clear and given the indicators, measurable, although some interviewees mention that some improvements could be made. Furthermore, it was stressed that in some cases (e.g. internal communication or external visibility) it is not so easy to measure the communication and outreach, so that the objectives seem to be clear, but rather broad and not always easy to measure with indicators. Some interviews also highlight that, given that the EUSALP strategy was adopted when the communication strategy was already defined,

the link to the macro-regional strategy is missing and should be made more explicit. Especially, considering that in the last years and also for 2018, there will be many specific communication activities that address EUSALP stakeholders or are even planned jointly. This is something that should be updated. As regards the roles and responsibilities, these seem to be rather clear to interviewees, as there is one full-time person at the JS working on communication. Also the flow with the ACP members works well, regarding the available capacity in the different countries.

3.2.3 Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the analysis of the different findings, the strategy is overall a solid, sound, coherent strategy. More specifically:

- The communication strategy is written in a way that eases the implementation and allows reaching the set objectives. The strategy has a clear hierarchical structure that links objectives, target audiences, activities and tactics. It clearly sets the methodology, the communication objectives and communication activities. Aspects that could be improved is the analysis of specific target audiences and the identification of factors that might hamper the efficient implementation of the strategy.

- The communication strategy foresees clear and measurable objectives. It prepares evaluation with the definition of indicators and foreseen monitoring activities. The objectives are overall clear and with good potential to be measurable. Target values seem to be reasonable and achievable. For some indicators no baseline values have been defined or are available. This will hamper the evaluation of these indicators und limit their usefulness.

- The communication strategy foresees clear roles and responsibilities. Even if there is no specific section on roles and responsibilities, these are clearly distributed within the JS and between the different programme bodies. According to the review of annual communication results and the perception of programme bodies, they seem to be efficient and well-working.

The following recommendations can help to improve the strategy in a possible up-date.

- A higher differentiation and analysis of needs of specific target audiences might be helpful, to further develop and improve specific communication activities and tactics.

- Specific audiences, such as the general public, EUSALP stakeholders or ESIF Managing Authorities are not yet mentioned as target audiences, even if they represent now relevant stakeholder groups for the programme. They should be considered in the strategy.

- The strategy should analyse and mention internal and external factors that might hamper implementation. Correspondingly, mitigation measures to potential risks might be developed.

3.3 Evaluation of Communication activities and tools

This section takes a closer look at the communication activities and tools used for implementing the objectives of the communication strategy. The relevant evaluation questions are presented in section 3.3.1 below.

3.3.1 Evaluation question/s

The evaluation questions to be answered in this section are the following:

- Are the communication activities adequately tailored to the different target audiences (content, format)?

- Have the programme communication measures reached the relevant target groups efficiently?

3.3.2 Main findings

The communication strategy foresees a number of different communication activities and tools. These have been analysed in this report as regards their usefulness for main users, such as the beneficiaries and applicants and programme bodies. For this, available feedback and satisfaction surveys after different events, as well as interviews remarks have been examined.

The communication strategy foresees the following main types of communication activities:

- **Corporate design**. This regards common Interreg corporate design, the use of the Interreg logo to ensure high visibility.
- **Website**. This regards the development and running of the programme's website, which would contain general information on the activities, the calls of proposals, and other news, national information on national languages, information about projects, as well as documents.
- **Contact management system**. Contact database management will be regularly updated to manage changes in contact details. This facilitates additional services such as mass mailing, newsletter registration and event management.
- **Promotional material**, including posters, roll-ups, pens etc.
- **Publications:** Flyer of the ASP as hardcopy publication, as well as some other brochures and mainly electronic (online) publications of handbooks, newsletters, results of events, projects results etc.
- **Events**. The events category, contains the following types of events:
    - Major transnational programme events are planned to be organised two to three times throughout the programming period bringing together different interest groups.
    - Thematic events are workshops organised to stimulate the creation of new networks and projects and serve as an opportunity to discuss and exchange experience.

It is important to mention at this point that this categorisation of the different types of events was made at the beginning of the programme. At this time, it was envisaged to organise thematic events, which eventually were not considered as suitable. Instead, networking events were organised, such as the

Meet&Match Forum, which was not initially foreseen. More information on the current uptake of the different events is presented below.

- **Seminars** serve in empowering applicants and project participants to support them with tools to produce high quality projects. These include applicant seminars, lead partner seminars, projects participant seminars, national info days and communication seminars.

- The participation of the programme to the **external events** aims to enhance the visibility and promotion of the programme and reach new potential participants.

The table below presents the different events that took place so far, categorised under the different types presented in the communication strategy. Based on available material from surveys and the Annual Communication Overviews, the table also provides the percentages of the participants who gave their feedback as regards their satisfaction of the event.

Table 3.1: Events organised by the Alpine Space Programme

Type of event	Name of event	Date	Number of participants	Satisfaction of participants
Major Programme event	Kick off of the programme	October 2014	Over 400	56% very good, 40% good
Networking event	Network event Meet & Match (replacing the 'thematic events')	March 2017	220	45% very satisfied 50% satisfied
Seminars	Project management training on Call 1 and Get started seminar on Call 1	February 2016	40	20% very satisfied 60% satisfied
	Project management training on Call 1 and Call 2	November 2016	70	8,7% very satisfied 43,5% satisfied
	Get started seminar on Call 2	November 2016	64	37,5% very satisfied 45,8% satisfied
	Applicant seminar on Call 1[40]	July 2015	66	61% very good 39% good
	Applicant seminar on Call 2	June 2016	48	70,6% very satisfied 29,4% satisfied
	Applicant seminar on Call 3	October 2017	45	54,5% very satisfied 45,4% satisfied
	Communication seminar	March 2016	26	50% very satisfied 50% satisfied

Source: Own elaboration based on information from the JS on events and different ACO documents

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[40] Source: AOC, 2016

Overall, the satisfaction figures of participants are quite high on all events, reaching levels of 100% for most events for the people that are satisfied and very satisfied. An exception is the Project management training on Call 2.

Meet & Match network event. About 220 participants attended the Meet & Match Forum which took place in March 2017 in Milan. 29 out of 33 projects were represented at the Forum, while 103 participants were newcomers. This makes the event successful in reaching the target groups envisaged. The event has been an overall much appreciated networking opportunity. In total 40 participants gave feedback on the event. The majority of the respondents were satisfied with the content of the event. To the question "how satisfied were you with the opportunity to exchange with other participants", 21 replied that they were very satisfied, 14 satisfied and 3 not satisfied.

Figure 3.2: Feedback on Meet and Match Forum – Networking Opportunity
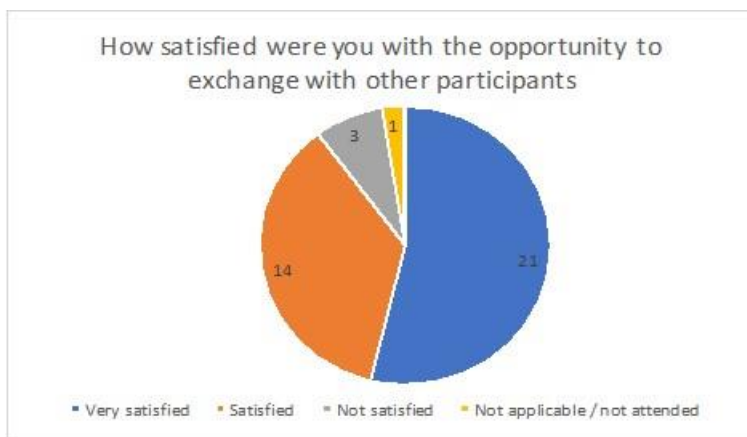
Source: Feedback survey data provided by JS.

The two days event had several sessions, for which the majority of the participants were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied', as shown in the figure below.

Figure 3.3: Feedback on Meet and Match Forum – satisfaction with different sessions

Source: Feedback survey data provided by JS.

Get Started seminars. The two Get Started seminars were organised for the lead partners and aimed to provide assistance for the different steps of the project development. The participants were introduced to the next steps after approval, the programme expectations on reporting, financial aspects and communication. Starting with the first Get Started seminar, which was organised in February 2016, feedback was given by five participants and all considered the event as very useful. As regards the second Get started seminar, which was organised in November 2016, the target group that attended the event was from projects. 24 participants from 9 different projects gave their feedback. From the participants who provided feedback to the event, the majority found the individual consultations for revising the project proposal as very useful or useful.
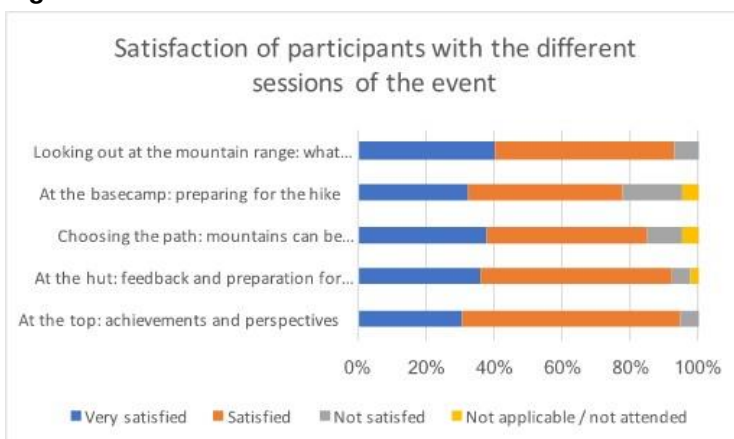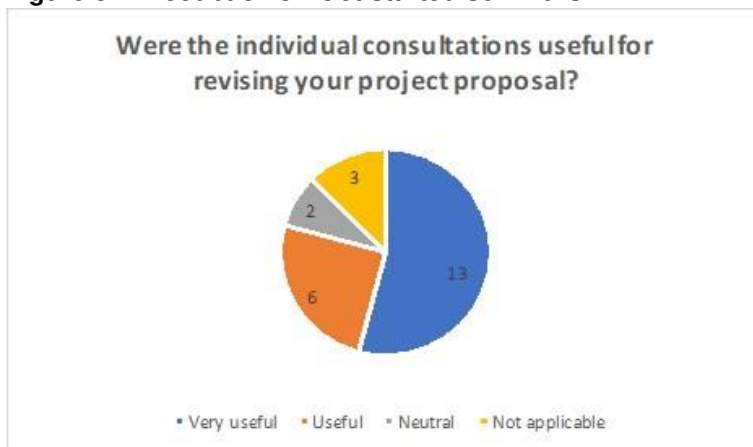
Figure 3.4: Feedback on Get started seminars

Source: Feedback survey data provided by JS.

Project management trainings. In total, two project management trainings were organised. The project management training on call 1 was organised back to back with the first Get Started! Seminar in February 2016. From the 5 participants who gave feedback on these two parallel events, the majority has been very satisfied with its content. The project management on call 2, also referred to as advanced project management seminar, took place in November 2016. In total, 23 of the participants provided their feedback, of which 8,7% were very satisfied with the overall content covered by the seminar, and 43,7% were satisfied, while a 17% was not satisfied by the event's overall content.

This diversity in perception might be explained with the difference in previous experiences with Interreg projects. So, for some participants the contents might be useful, while for others they are already known or too general. Responses from the lead partner survey for this evaluation confirm the diversity of opinions:

- "*LP and Applicant Seminars were very interactive. High quality support.*"

- "*LP seminars should be more "operational" oriented (less theory lessons on management) and more oriented to exchanges between projects.*"

- "*Many topics addressed to in the Lead Partner seminar should have been addressed to before (project management, etc.). At that stage they were no useful and gave no added value to the project or to the lead partner.*"

- "*The seminars include the most important issues and even more important is the chance to discuss open issues directly with the JS and to exchange experience with the other projects.*"

- "*Lead partner seminar is only interesting if it is your first project and if you are not so used to project management.*"

Communication seminar. One communication seminar took place in March 2016. 50% were 'very satisfied' from the event, 25% were 'satisfied' and for 25% the seminar was average. The Communication seminars are also appreciated within the survey to lead project partners. Some observations have been made by the project partners:

- "*Communication and networking seminars were great, with inspiring talks and good opportunity for networking.*"

- "*For communication issues: it would be more useful to have strong support throughout the project implementation (not only one seminar in the beginning). The website content management is quite difficult to handle. It would be good to have some kind contingent for professional communication management support for each project during implementation.*"

- "*Seminars are fine but to date there are better info tolls to exploit: webinars, on line tutorials wiki platforms.*"

Applicant seminars. The applicant seminars are designed to assist the projects in the development of their project and inform them about the different requirements necessary for the project life. In total three applicant seminars have been organised so far. The applicant seminar on call 1 was organised in July 2015. Participants of the event found the event by 61% very good and by 39% as good. The applicant seminar on call 2 was organised in June 2016 and in total 17 participants representing 10 different projects gave their feedback. Overall, the seminar was well appreciated by the participants, who found the sessions useful, as shown in the figures below. The sessions of Day 1 were largely appreciated, with the majority of participants being 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied'.

Figure 3.5: Feedback on Applicant Seminar Call 2 – Day 1
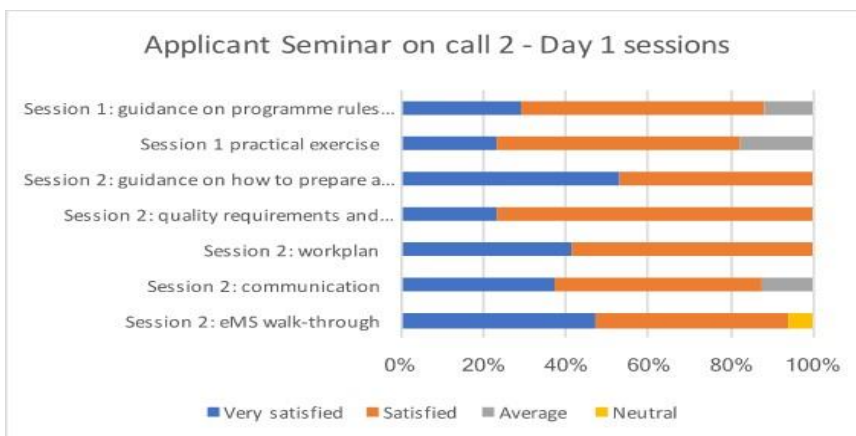
Source: Feedback survey data provided by JS.

The Day 2 sessions were also largely appreciated. Especially the session on the project managements basics and the presentation on eligibility rules were the most appreciated. Only few

participants not being satisfied at all from the session 'national informaiton by the Alpine Space contact points'.

Figure 3.6: Feedback on Applicant Seminar Call 2 – Day 2
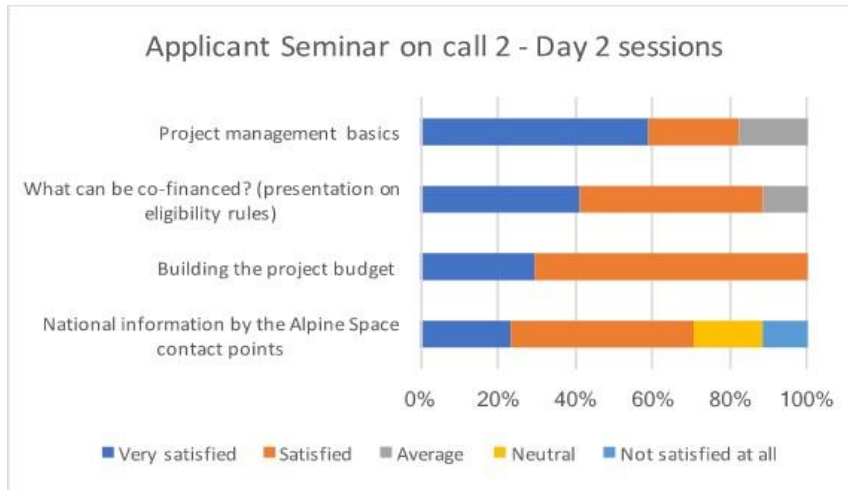
Source: Feedback survey data provided by JS.

The applicant seminar on call 3 was organised in October 2017. Participants also very much appreciated the content seminar. In total 11 participants of the second applicant seminar gave their feedback, representing seven different projects.

As shown by the figure, the sessions of day one were very much appreciated by the participants, who remained overall satisfied. More specifically, session 2.2 on building the budget has been the session with which participants where most satisfied.

Figure 3.7: Feedback on Applicant Seminar Call 3 – Day 1
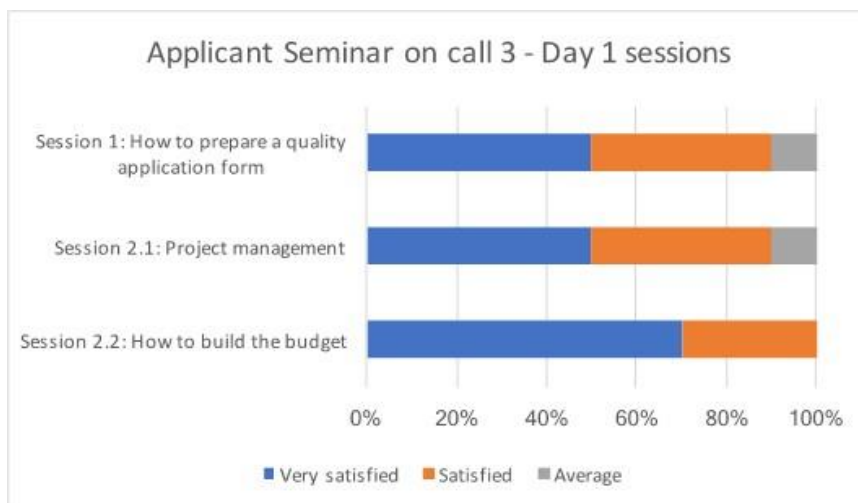
Source: Feedback survey data provided by JS.

Same is the picture as regards the sessions of day 2. Overall, the satisfaction of participants was high, with the presentation on eMS being first in their ranking.

Figure 3.8: Feedback on Applicant Seminar Call 3 – Day 2
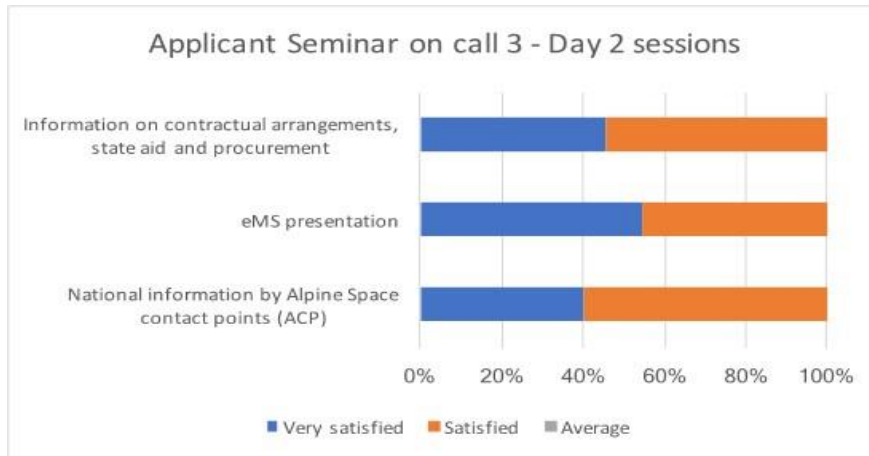
Source: Feedback survey data provided by JS.

In addition, national info days and other events have been organised by the different Member States and ACP. Other events that have been organised are internal ACP/MA/JS meetings and workshops. Furthermore, the Alpine Space programme has participated in wider external events, such as the AlpWeek, the open days, 25 years of Interreg and others.

Perception of programme bodies

Overall, the activities of the communication strategy have been perceived by the interviewees as adequate, well-functioning and targeting the relevant stakeholders and target groups. The **different events** are the most efficient and successful communication activities so far. Especially the Meet&Match Forum was well appreciated. Similarly, the LP and applicant seminars were also positively assessed.

In the opinion of the interviewees, the **newsletters** that are produced in the framework of the communication strategy are useful and content-wise helpful, however, they could be improved by becoming clearer and easier to spot by potential applicants and other key stakeholders. As regards the **website**, interviews confirm that for them it is overall well-structured and informative. The integration of the projects website inside the programme's website is seen as useful. Nevertheless, some interviewees recommend that it would benefit from being more interactive, more modern, including some innovative features such as a YouTube channel for videos or a chat. Others mention that it might be useful to have a few sections of the website more visible for the applicants, such as are the documents sections and the factsheets. Most interviewees ask for a more intensive and more targeted use of social media channels and of new tools such as webinars, video tutorials or stories telling about project results and benefits addressing the general public and specific target audiences. Interviews highlight the adequateness and effectiveness of the increasing number of communication activities together with and for **ESUALP stakeholders**. These are well presented in the ACO and on the website. However, they already deserve an own chapter in the communication strategy and should also be framed within an overall strategy. Thus, the Communication Strategy, if updated, could cover

the EUSALP and foresee the specific communication activities for EUSALP stakeholders as well as exchange activities between ASP projects and EUSALP. Interviews mention that there are some communication tools that have not been totally effective, such as the partner search tool on the website, or the guide on how to use the EU logos. On the other side, new factsheets could be helpful, e.g. on the distribution of roles between the programme bodies, or the dissemination of project results.

Perception of project partners

A similar picture as regards the communication activities has been **confirmed by the survey sent to lead partners of projects.** According to the survey[41], 90% of the lead partners are 'very satisfied' with the support from the JS on communication issues, while 10% are 'satisfied'. That means that in the eyes of the project lead partners the JS offers valuable support and tools to help projects that hardly can be improved. On the other hand, 50% of the lead partners are 'very satisfied' with the support from ACP on communication issues, while 25% are 'satisfied'. In this context, almost 18% are not satisfied with the work of ACP. This indicates a potential for improvement[42]. It has to be noted that the level of dissatisfaction is particularly high in one country (26,7% are somewhat or at all unsatisfied with their ASP), whereas in all other countries on average only 5,9% are somewhat unsatisfied with the ASP support on communication.

Zooming in to the different communication activities, the high level of satisfaction of the **events**' contents and format was confirmed by the respondents of the survey carried out to the lead partners. The lead partners were also in general very satisfied with the different events. More specifically:

- **Applicant seminars**. 75% of the respondents were completely satisfied and 6% somewhat satisfied from these events.
- **Lead Partner seminars**. 72% of the respondents very completely satisfied, while 19% somewhat satisfied from these events.
- **Communication seminars**. 47% pf the respondents were completely satisfied and 28% somewhat satisfied from the communication seminars.
- **National info days**. 37,5% of the lead partners were completely satisfied and 28% somewhat satisfied.
- **Other national events**. 15,6% were completely satisfied and 22% somewhat satisfied.

As regards other communication activities, such as the factsheets, toolkit and website manual, the respondents also seem overall satisfied. More specifically:

- **Communication factsheet**. 84% of the respondents are completely satisfied with the communication factsheet.
- **Communication toolkit**. 69% of the respondents are completely satisfied with the communication toolkit.

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[41] Survey responses as of 30th March (n=32)
[42] Here, it has to be noted that the survey to lead partners implies a bias, as 46,9% of the survey respondents come from one country. If we differentiate the responses per country, respondents from this country have a satisfaction rate of 66,7%, whereas in all other countries (all but Liechtenstein) together, the satisfaction rate is 82,4%.

- **Website management manual**: 47% are completely satisfied with the website management manual.

Looking at the different sections of the programme's website, the respondents seem to be in general satisfied. More specifically:

- **General website.** Here 65,6% are completely satisfied, and 34% somewhat satisfied.
- **Project application section.** 72% completely satisfied, 25% somewhat satisfied.
- **Project management section.** 69% completely satisfied, 28% somewhat satisfied.
- **Project results.** 47% completely satisfied, 31% somewhat satisfied. For this section 3% is not satisfied at all.
- **News & events.** 55% completely satisfied, 35% somewhat satisfied, while 3% is not satisfied at all.

This indicates an overall high level of usefulness of the documents and website for projects, with a slight potential for improvement, in particular, for the Project results section on the website, even if it has to be considered that there are not many projects results yet on the page.

Overall, there are some observations and recommendations by the project partners that refer how to improve the communication activities:

- "*Communication materials related to AS Programme and the joint website is working very well.*"

- "*We think the support given is of a high quality.*"

- "*The programme communication activities are very useful to increase the awareness toward practitioners but less useful toward policy makers and SMEs.*"

- "*Info events are all right for a general know how, more targeted and fine tuned communication activities should improve central communication to reach local level (mainly through use of on line tools); having " Ambassadors" at local level may help spreading know how about programmes use project coordinators with experience to create a network of experts and get them involved in communication about Interreg.*"

- "*Many of the activities only reach audiences that are already interested. Crucial would be a publication in media that reaches more people.*"

- "*Facebook page should be more active on general programme issues and not only in promoting projects.*"

- "*Communication tools are very static and central communication activities are too scattered and not coordinated for the whole programme. It results in a good communication from a central point of view that has little impact at local/regional level apart from involving the regions.*"

- "*The measures provided so far allow for a good start of the promotion of project activities. Hence, a follow-up seminar would be helpful to improve respective activities and to see how to efficiently use partners' communication channels and resources.*"

- "*After year 1, programme bodies could organise a further workshop on strategies of communication improvement and involvement and motivation of partners in communication*

tasks. The exchange among lead partners of the different projects would be interesting and could add to increased know-how and expertise."

- Regarding factsheets and other guidance: "Since the documents are updated continuously, a "date version" could be useful to understand if you have stored the very last version."

- "Some fact sheets are too generic and LP should ask every specific question to JS. It will be better if it would be a sort of short periodical review that will give information about problems faced and solved by others projects."

- "Also a specific networking event with all the PM and financial managers of LP staff should met jointly with JS (maybe once a year) to exchange experiences and help each other in administrative, management and communication issues."

The figures of attendance to events and the answers to the survey confirm that the communication activities and tools are generally reaching the expected target groups. This is also confirmed by looking at the wealth of activities and outreach by ASP in 2017:

Figure 3.9: Overview on communication activities of ASP (end of 2017)
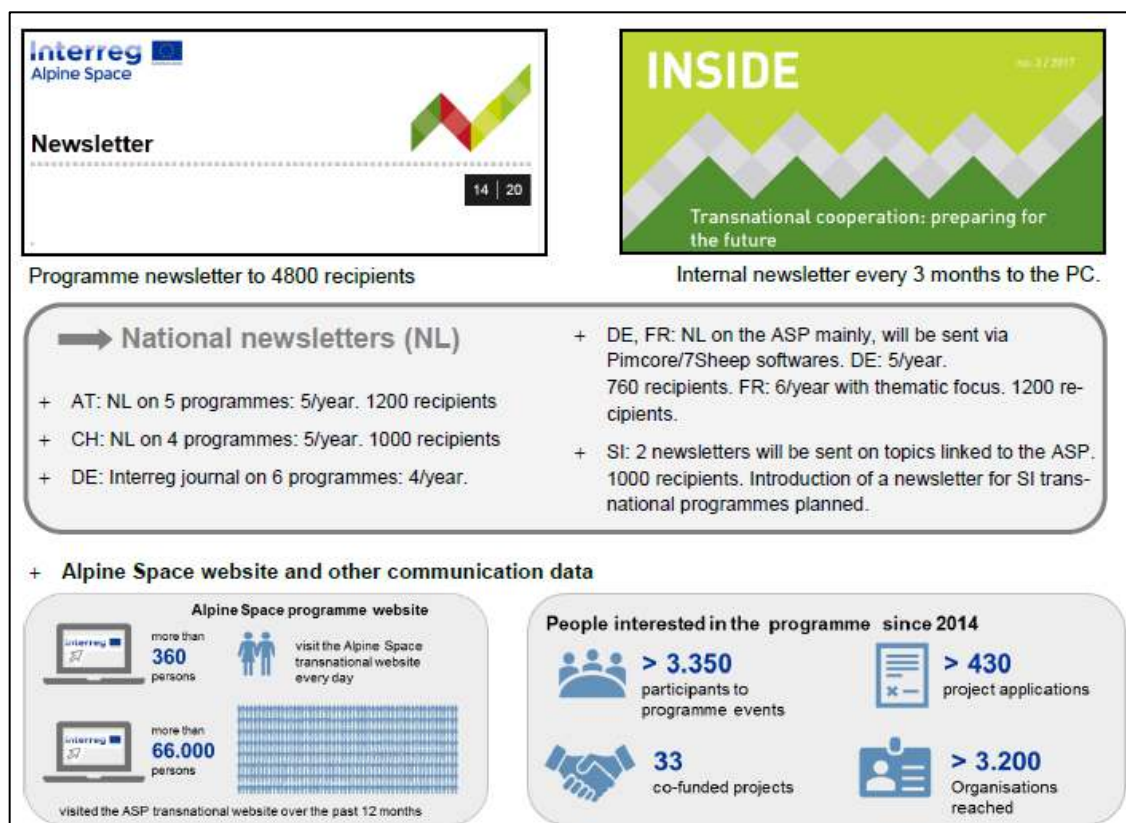
Source: Annual Communication Overview 2018

3.3.3 Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the findings, the conclusions are as follows:

- There is a wide variety of AS communication activities that are adequately tailored to the different target audiences, as can be observed by the satisfaction levels of participants in events and by the users of different tools through the survey to lead project partners.

- The different programme communication measures reach out to a wide range of different target groups. The coverage of communication outreach is considerable and effective. However, it can be observed that the communication stays at a general level regarding programme issues and it reaches particularly the 'usual suspects' in transnational cooperation. New tools and different, more specific contents are proposed as measures to reach wider and different target groups and become more effective in communicating on benefits and results.

The following recommendations can help to improve the suitability of communication activities.

- Monitoring of communication activities and satisfaction levels related to events and support tools can be improved and made more systematic, allowing for a better on-going evaluation of communication effectiveness.

- There is potential for improvement with regard to support projects on communication about achievements and projects results.

- Within the available communication budget and resources, some improvements of communication activities and tools can make communication more effective. This regards, 1) an update of the website and integration of more interactive and dynamic tools, 2) more intense use of social media channels and specific formats, such as videos, webinars, video tutorials, success stories, 3) more possibilities for on-going projects to exchange experiences and to learn on management and communication (e.g. 1-1,5 years after the project start), 4) more specific outreach to specific target groups and different circles (e.g. of SMEs, Universities, NGOs, local public authorities) to increase awareness and present project results and programme benefits.

- Considering the specific recommendations for new and better communication tasks, an increase of the resources dedicated to communication in the programme can be recommended.

3.4 Evaluation of Achievement of Objectives

This section focuses on the assessments of the achievement of objectives. It takes a closer look on the effectiveness of the communication indicators.

3.4.1 Evaluation question/s

This section seeks to answer the following questions:

- To what extent have the communication objectives been reached?
- Are the foreseen activities the right ones/adequate to achieve the communication objectives? Are other/further activities necessary?
- Does the communication strategy need to be updated for the remaining programme period based on the evaluation findings?

3.4.2 Main findings

The Alpine Space Programme Communication Strategy has developed a large number of indicators, which are linked to the strategy's communication objectives. This is necessary to allow monitoring the communication activities and evaluating their achievement. Table 3.2 below shows the indicators which have been included in the communication strategy with relevant baseline values, target values as well as with the current value (when available).

In general, targets for all Communication Objectives have been reached, at least partially. There are, however, some indicators the require revision or up-dating.

Table 3.2 Situation of Communication strategy indicators in 2018

Indicator	Unit	Baseline 2014	Target 2020	Situation 2017/18	Evaluation
Communication objective CO1.1: Enhance capacity among programme bodies for communication					
Satisfaction of project participants with the support of programme bodies for communication	Percentage	Satisfaction: JS: 80% and ACP: 60% Ignorance / dissatisfaction: JS: 0%; ACP: 5%	80% satisfaction for JS-ACP and less than 5% ignorance / dissatisfaction	Satisfaction: JS: 100% satisfied ACP: 75% satisfied Dissatisfaction: JS: 0% ACP: 16% not satisfied.	Target reached for JS. Close to the target for ACP.
Satisfaction of project participants with the support of programme bodies for management	Percentage	Satisfaction: JS: 80%, MA:32% ACP: 33% Ignorance / dissatisfaction: JS: 4%; MA : 25% ; ACP: 21%	80% satisfaction for JS-ACP-MA and less than 10% dissatisfaction	Satisfaction: JS: 100% completely satisfied MA: 100% satisfied ACP: 81% satisfied Dissatisfaction: JS: 0%, MA: 0%. ACP: 17% not satisfied.	Target reached for JS and MA. Close to the target for ACP.
Communication objective CO 1.2: Clarify the presentation of administrative procedures					
Satisfaction of project participants with the guidance and templates provided by the JS	Percentage	95%: PIH 96,7%: communication handbook	90% satisfaction	Communication factsheet in PIH: 97% satisfaction Communication toolkit: 88% satisfaction Website management manual: 75% satisfaction	Target reached. Potential to improve on the website management manual
Satisfaction of project participants with the applicant, LP and	Percentage	Applicant seminar : 71% LP seminar: 88% Communication seminar: 65%	80% satisfaction	Applicant seminars: 81% satisfaction Lead partner seminars: 100% satisfaction	Target reached. Potential to improve on the communication seminars.

Indicator	Unit	Baseline 2014	Target 2020	Situation 2017/18	Evaluation
communication seminars				Communication seminars: 75% satisfaction	
Satisfaction of project participants with the availability of programme bodies	Percentage	97%	100%	Overall Satisfaction with JS: 100% Overall Satisfaction with ACP: 81% Overall Satisfaction with MA: 100%	Difficult to answer, as there is no specific monitoring for this question. Current value refers to overall satisfaction with support. For now, target reached for JS and MA, not for ACP.
Communication objective CO 2.1: Enhance capacity of applications and their support					
Satisfaction of project participants with the support of programme bodies during the application phase	Percentage	In Communication Strategy: To be defined with the first applicant seminar of the ASP 2014–2020 Evaluator's comment: No Baseline has been established	80%	Survey to applicants (2017): 65,8% very good 15,4% good 18,8% poor or very poor	Target reached.
Project application quality	Average grade ranking of EoIs and Application Forms	In Communication Strategy: Will be defined with first call for project proposals. Evaluator's comment: No Baseline has been established	700 points (if ranking remains the same as in the period 2007–2013)	Average grade ranking of eligible EoIs and AF: Call 1 EoI: 370, AF: 598 Call 2 EoI: 433, AF: 677 Call 3: EoI: 502	Cannot be evaluated, as ranking changed, target should be revised. In general, projects application's quality increases from Call to Call in 14-20.
Communication objective CO 2.2: Enhance capacity of project participants and their support for project implementation and closure					
Satisfaction of	Percentage	Implementation: JS: 94%,	80%	Overall Satisfaction with JS: 100%	Target reached.

Indicator	Unit	Baseline 2014	Target 2020	Situation 2017/18	Evaluation
project participants with the support of programme bodies during the project implementation and closure phase		MA:41%, ACP: 35% Closure: JS :76,4% ; MA : 35,3% ; ACP : 16,5%		Overall Satisfaction with ACP: 81% Overall Satisfaction with MA: 100%	
Satisfaction of project participants with the communication trainings	Percentage	Indicative and based on Survey on support of programme bodies towards Lead Partners: 60%	80%	50%: very interesting, 50%: interesting	Only data available from feedback questionnaire of one training so far (call 1 projects). Review if the indicator is still adequate, if there will be no more training seminars on communication.
Smooth project implementation and closure	Duration	In Communication Strategy: To be defined with the first 3 progress report checks Evaluator's comment: No Baseline has been established	Average delays progress report check closing of less than 2 months	--	No monitoring data available, cannot be evaluated. Review of indicator is recommended.
Communication objective 3.1: Raise awareness about calls and achievements					
Participation of newcomers (non project participants) to Alpine Space transnational and national events	Percentage	Based on Alpine Space 2020 conference registration: 44% newcomers	50%	Meet&Match Forum: at registration: 126 newcomers of a total of 220, that is 57%	Target reached for one event. No data available for other events.
Website outreach	Number of visits per month	There was no baseline value as there was no	500	Unique visits per month (2018): January 2018: 4.164	Target reached. Target value should be

Indicator	Unit	Baseline 2014	Target 2020	Situation 2017/18	Evaluation
		statistic tool for the previous website.		February 2018: 2.514	adapted to still be meaningful.
Communication objective 3.2: Improve programme's internal and external links					
Contribution to external public events	Number of participants	This baseline value was not defined as this was not calculated until 2014	200	--	No monitoring data available, cannot be evaluated. Review of indicator is recommended.
Communication networks	Number of communication networks set up	Not established in initial Communication Strategy. Oral info: There were 3 networks already existing (ACP, PC and projects).	5 (ACP, PC, projects, Alpine organisations, Alpine INTERREG programmes)	5 networks have been set up	Target reached.
Communication objective 3.3: Enhance inter-project cooperation to reach thematic objective					
Project achievements library outreach	Number of visits per month	There was no baseline value as there was no statistic tool for the previous website.	100	The library is not published yet on the website.	Target not reached.
Networking at programme's public events	Percentage of participants having made new connections at the ASP events	This baseline value was not defined as this was not calculated until 2014	70%	For the Meet and Match Forum: 97,5% of the questionnaire respondents made new contacts.	Target reached for one event. No data available for other events.
Communication objective 3.4: Increase projects' capacity to communicate their own achievements					
Satisfaction of project participants with the	Percentage	Indicative and based on S survey on support of programme bodies towards	80%	50%: very interesting, 50%: interesting	Only data available from feedback questionnaire of

Indicator	Unit	Baseline 2014	Target 2020	Situation 2017/18	Evaluation
communication trainings		Lead Partners: 60%			one training so far (call 1 projects). Review if the indicator is still adequate. Evaluator's comment: This indicator is also used under CO 2.2. It should be reviewed if it is still appropriate under this CO.
Website update	Average duration between 2 updates of all project websites	The project websites were external until 2014, so there is no baseline value.	2 weeks	Observation: project websites seem to be regularly up-dated. No data available.	The data availability for this indicator should be checked. If not available, the indicator should be redefined or deleted.

The indicators that require attention and a possible modification or up-date are marked in red in the Evaluation Column of the table presented above.

In general, it has to be mentioned that the monitoring of the communication indicators is currently organised on an on/off basis with punctual data gathering at events and during evaluations. This limits the potential of a well-defined communication monitoring system. A more systematic monitoring of communication activities and indicators of objectives is highly recommended, in order to generate more information and feedback on the effectiveness and adequateness of communication activities. Surveys to establish up-dated values for the communication indicators should be carried up regularly and with sufficient time, so that results can be fed into strategic reflections and evaluation processes.

Perception of projects

The survey[43] addressing the lead partners has shown that the respondents are in their majority (91%) completely satisfied with the JS and with the ACP (50%) as regards support on communication issues. Overall, there has been a good exchange with the relevant bodies. This implies that the roles and responsibilities are clearly understood by the stakeholders, have clearly been distributed and the lead partners know where to direct themselves when in need of support or information.

Regarding the general communication objectives, 78% of project lead partners estimate that the programme communication activities (such as programme website or factsheets or info events or seminars), were/are helpful to offer **clear guidance on administrative procedures**, while 22% believe that activities are 'somewhat helpful'. No respondent considered them as 'not helpful'.

Furthermore, 59% believes that the communication activities were 'very helpful' in **empowering them for the project communication**, while 31% 'somewhat helpful'. No respondent considered them as 'not helpful'.

41% of the lead partners believe that the communication activities of the programme were 'very helpful' to **increase awareness** of the project and its results, while 53% found them 'somewhat helpful'. One respondent considered them as 'not helpful'.

Therefore, from the perspective of project lead partners, the communication activities are generally adequate to achieve the communication objectives, with potential for improvement on the objective on 'increasing awareness and visibility on projects and results'.

Perception of programme bodies

From the perspective of the programme bodies and based on the findings from the interviews, the communication activities are valued as adequate and there is the perception that communication objectives are being reached to a large extent.

Regarding the **objective of enhancing the exchange between programme bodies**, the assessment by programme bodies is very positive. The cooperation among the programme bodies works well. However, a few suggestions have been proposed, e.g. regarding the knowledge management between JS, MA and ACP. "*Maybe it would be good to better coordinate the activities on answering questions of partners between the CP and the JS, to which have been given from the JS, so as to agree on answers…*"[44]. Furthermore, the existing tool to coordinate work between ACP could be improved, even it is generally working well (e.g. notify up-dates, better data exports). For some countries, interviewees mention that the work of ACP could be strengthened, although there seem to be larger differences between ACP work in the different countries – some do more, while other have

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[43] Survey responses as of 30th March 2018 (n=32)

[44] Quote from an Interview response from a representative of a programme body, February 2018.

less recourses or are not so well coordinated. Many interviewees also mention that targeting more specific target groups should also be considered for the future.

Regarding the **objective of providing clear guidance on administrative procedures**, the assessment by programme bodies is positive. There is a general appreciation that MA and JS offer valuable support to applicants and beneficiaries, even if some interviewees think that guidance for applicants can be slightly improved, for instance through make the factsheets easier to find within the webpage.

Regarding the **objective of empowering the projects for project communication**, the assessment by programme bodies is very positive. Guidance and events, as well as advice is adequate. This appreciation is also confirmed by the positive feedback of the projects themselves. Dedicated communication seminars are estimated as being more effective, than general management seminars. One point to be improved could be the overall capacity to communicate by all project partners, and not only the 'official' communication capacity of the projects partner that is in charge of the communication Work Package.

Regarding the **objective of increasing awareness and visibility of the programme and its projects/results**, the assessment by programme bodies is positive in general, but indicating some aspects that need improvement. It is appreciated, that the programme is more visible than in the past, thanks to EUSALP linkage and thanks to positive initiatives such as appearance in the EU-wide REGIO Awards, or within the European Year of Cultural Heritage. However, there is a general feeling among the interviewees that more is needed to better communicate the projects results and the benefits of the programme for the different target groups. "*Now we need to find better solutions for making results transferred to the citizens, to use the results. We have results for policy makers, for business etc. but not for the citizens.*"[45]

As regards the **effectiveness** of the current activities and the possible need for better or **other communication activities**, the programming bodies think that most communication activities (e.g. Meetings, Meet&Match, and Seminars), are highly effective but still an improvement is possible.

- The Newsletter is valued by some interviewees and by others not so much. Maybe it could be supported by other forms of newsflashes in other channels, such as Facebook, Twitter etc.

- In general, a wider use of social media is recommended, however it is clear that this would require further resources.

- New and more targeted activities such as more storytelling activities and videos / tutorials would be more up-to-date and very helpful, so that the communication activities would get more interactive, less static and also easier to share within other communication channels.

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[45] Quote from an Interview response from a representative of a programme body, February 2018.

- A summary programme brochure or book containing the results of the different projects is recommended.

- Last but not least, it is important for the future to make more efforts to better disseminate the results of the projects and of the programme to increase visibility and awareness, but also to better communicate these results to the citizens. Target groups have to be better addressed according to their information needs and interests (e.g. businesses, environmental NGOs, public service providers, citizens, policy-makers at different levels, sectoral agencies in different fields) and 'stories' about results and benefits should be more in the centre of communication.

With regard to the question on a possible **up-date of the communication strategy**, the analysis shows that the overall strategy is well-designed and adequate. But interviews estimate that there have been more developments in the region since the definition of the communication strategy and also mind-sets have changed. So, some aspects should be improved to increase the usefulness of the strategy for guiding the communication activities and learn about results and effectiveness.

- First, some indicators to monitor progress in the communication strategy should be revised, as mentioned earlier. This covers the revision of the general suitability of the indicators and/or the revision of target values and/or the availability of monitoring data for these indicators.

- Second, the strategy could be updated to cover the communication activities to make the links with EUSALP more visible. The EUSALP is not mentioned in the Communication strategy, as the EUSALP was not yet there at the beginning of the programming period.

- Third, the target groups should be up-dated (e.g. including EUSALP coordinators and AG leaders, EUSALP wider political stakeholders, general public and citizens, and more specific target groups within the beneficiaries and potential applicants) and analysed more in-depth about their interests and expectations, so to better focus the communication to them later on.

In addition, maybe as consideration for the next programming period, more than a current up-date, the overall strategy could be complemented with some guidance on how to organise the knowledge management regarding communication with and guidance to projects within the ASP system, i.e. between the different programme bodies. For example, it can be possible to have a kind of a 'Wiki-website' on the questions and answers from projects, so the responses and accumulated knowledge can be better stored and accessed.

3.4.3 Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the findings, the conclusions and recommendations are as follows:

- The analysis of the achievement of indicators of the communication strategy confirms that communication objectives are being reached to a large extent. This is also confirmed by the perception of projects and programme bodies. The perception of projects and programme body representatives indicates slight potentials for improvement with regard to all

communication objectives, in particular, there is potential for improvement on the objective on 'increasing awareness and visibility on projects and results'.

- The advanced achievement of communication objectives confirms that most communication activities are working well and are adequate to achieve the communication objectives. Nevertheless, assessments by projects and by programme bodies recommend an improvement of communication activities and/or new activities, for example:

  - In general, a wider use of social media is recommended by some projects and stakeholders, e.g. more use of Facebook, Twitter. This should be further analysed regarding potential costs and benefits.

  - New and more targeted activities such as more storytelling activities and videos / tutorials would be more up-to-date and very helpful, so that the communication activities would get more interactive, less static and also easier to share within other communication channels.

  - It is recommended to better address specific target groups according to their information needs and interests (e.g. businesses, environmental NGOs, public service providers, citizens, policy-makers at different levels, sectoral agencies in different fields) and 'stories' about results and benefits should be more in the centre of communication.

- The analysis shows that the communication strategy might need a specific update for the remaining programme period. This update regards 1) revision of indicators and target values of the indicators in the strategy, 2) include the (already existing) communication activities with EUSALP to make the links with EUSALP more visible, 3) up-date and better targeted analysis of target groups in order to prepare new communication activities, in particular related to the objective of 'increasing awareness and visibility on projects and results'.

Considering the specific recommendations for new and better communication, an extension of the resources dedicated to communication in the programme should be analysed.

4 Evaluation of the partnerships and stakeholder involvement

The partnerships and stakeholder involvement determine largely the quality of projects and programme outputs. Therefore, the evaluation of the composition of partnerships and of the specific involvement of target groups is a key element of the mid-term operational evaluation.

This chapter analyses the involvement of programme partners and stakeholders, as well as the involvement and outreach to target groups at project and programme level.

4.1 Methods used

The information and analysis in this chapter are essentially based on four sources:

- a review of existing information from programme documentation,

- an in-depth analysis of data sets regarding programme applicants and beneficiaries as included in the Call 1 and Call 2 of the current ASP 2014-2020,

- answers from the interviews to programme bodies (Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, Head of Delegations and Alpine Space Contact points) carried out by Spatial Foresight during this evaluation,

- the analysis of responses given to a survey carried out by Spatial Foresight to project lead partners (updated as of responses received by March 30th, 2018), and

- the analysis of responses given to a survey carried out by Spatial Foresight to project observers (updated as of March 5th, 2018).

4.1 Involvement of Programme Partners and stakeholders

This section analyses the general effectiveness of provisions for the involvement of programme partners and stakeholders in general. Sourced used for this section are programme documentation, including the Cooperation Programme, the 2016 Annual Implementation Report, and the 2017 Evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness on application and selection procedures, and the interviews to programme bodies.

4.1.1 Evaluation question/s

The evaluation question that guided the analysis is:

- Does the programme foresee the right mechanisms to effectively involve relevant partners in programme implementation?

4.1.2 Main findings

The initial desk research revealed that stakeholder involvement and the consultation of experts have been key components of both the *strategic development process* which

preceded the drafting of the cooperation programme, and the drafting of the programme itself. This involvement, closely linked with the elaboration of the EUSALP Macro-Regional Strategy, has been carried on to the implementation phase in different ways.

The programming process to set up the 2014-2020 ASP was coordinated and steered by the TF 2014+. Composed of representatives of national and regional authorities of the seven participating Partner States, the MA, the JTS and observers, the "TF 2014+" built on the profound analysis on the needs, recommendations and potentials of (territorial) cooperation in the Alpine Space to feed the programming process with strategic input.

"*In this inclusive process, key actors from all seven countries participating in the ASP were consulted and provided their feedback on the expert findings in a series of stakeholder workshops (representatives from local, regional and national administrative level, chambers, enterprises, research and development institutions, civil society/NGO, education/training sector, etc). Also the young had a voice: under academic guidance, students contributed their views to the process. More than 700 respondents took part in an accompanying online survey.*"[46]

The Cooperation programme document establishes that "*programme partners commit themselves to the partnership principle as laid down in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013and will therefore involve key actors not only in the preparation phase, but also in programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation (especially by involving relevant actors in national committees or by nominating them as members of the PC, TFs or other working groups that will be set up in the course of programme implementation).*"[47]

The analysis of the Programme Committee member composition shows that the administrative level of all Partner States is represented. The EC and relevant Alpine organisations (e.g. the Alpine Convention and later EUSALP) have been invited to take part in the PC in an observer role.

With regard to involve political representatives in the programme implementation, this is achieved through various activities, such as organisation of events, newsletters and other communication tools, described in the Annual Communication Overviews. Furthermore, national info days are being used as a tool for the involvement of potential applicants and partners. The MA/JS produced guidance documents to support applicants in the development of the proposal. For each call, seminars were also organised to guide the applicants. Trainings targeting project management and communication topics were organised for all projects.

During programme implementation, the programme provides support to projects in the effective involvement of different kinds of partners. This support is expressed with different tools and mechanisms, which have been discussed mainly in interviews with the Managing Authority, the Joint Secretariat, and all Alpine Contact Points. The findings from interviews are hereby summarised.

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[46] ASP Cooperation Programme, page 87.

[47] ASP Cooperation Programme, page 88.

In the framework of interviews to programme bodies, all respondents agree on a positive assessment of the capacity of the programme to assist in the involvement of partners in programme implementation. While some respondents declared to see no need for further improvement to the mechanisms to effectively involve relevant partners in programme implementation, other respondents indicated a few points that currently present opportunities for improvement. The main concern expressed is the difficulty to obtain a balance in partners. Some respondents highlight how certain types of actors or certain project topics tend to be over-represented, and more effort could be put in shifting the focus to newly introduced target sectors or objectives. Another interviewee reported imbalance in the geographic location of applicants, project partners and projects, there being in particular a higher than average number of applications in certain Italian Regions such as Lombardy. Concentrations of actors in certain combinations of geography and thematic focus mean that the competition in programme selection varies greatly in the programme, so that that there may be imbalances in the challenges that programme authorities have to face, as well as possible differences in the final quality of the selection. These balances are further discussed in section 4.3 of this report.

Several interviewees agreed on the fact that there exists an important potential for better stakeholder involvement coming from the links with the EUSALP macro regional strategy. This potential is regarded as being yet to be fully attained. Almost all respondents highlight positively the improved links between the EUSALP strategy and the Alpine Space programme, as ASP is regarded to have obtained increased visibility with stakeholders thanks to EUSALP. However, interviewees strongly expressed the view that more political importance should be given to the links with the strategy, including more commitment from Member States.

Matchmaking events, such as the Meet&Match Forum, were regarded as being particularly useful and positive for the creation of relations between partners and stakeholders.

In a few cases, interviewees stressed that more visibility outside the traditional channels of Interreg partnerships would be beneficial in order to involve more relevant partners.

4.1.3 Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis leads to the following conclusion:

- The analysis shows that in programme drafting/preparation as well as during implementation, the programme foresees the right mechanisms to involve relevant partners. This is being confirmed by the high degree of overall satisfaction reported by all respondents interviewed, as well as from the feedback received via the surveys, which will be discussed in the following sections.

However, some improvements are recommended, in particular:

- greater efforts regarding a more homogeneous targeting of regions and partner typologies across the Alpine Space,

- better exploit the links with the EUSALP macro-regional strategy and its stakeholders.

4.2 Evaluation of target group involvement on project level

This section assesses the involvement of target groups at the project level. The focus of the section is on data and information about target group involvement and from project observers. The starts with information about target group reach, coming from the questionnaire to lead partners. Information of project observer location and typology is elaborated starting from programme documentation such as contact lists and the project application forms of selected programmes. The analysis of answers to the project observers' survey is presented later in this chapter.

4.2.1 Evaluation question/s

- How effectively is communication planned and carried out at project level, for involving relevant target groups and achieving the planned project outputs as well as supporting their transfer and sustainability?

- Did the project observers benefit from their involvement in the projects and vice versa?

4.2.2 Main findings

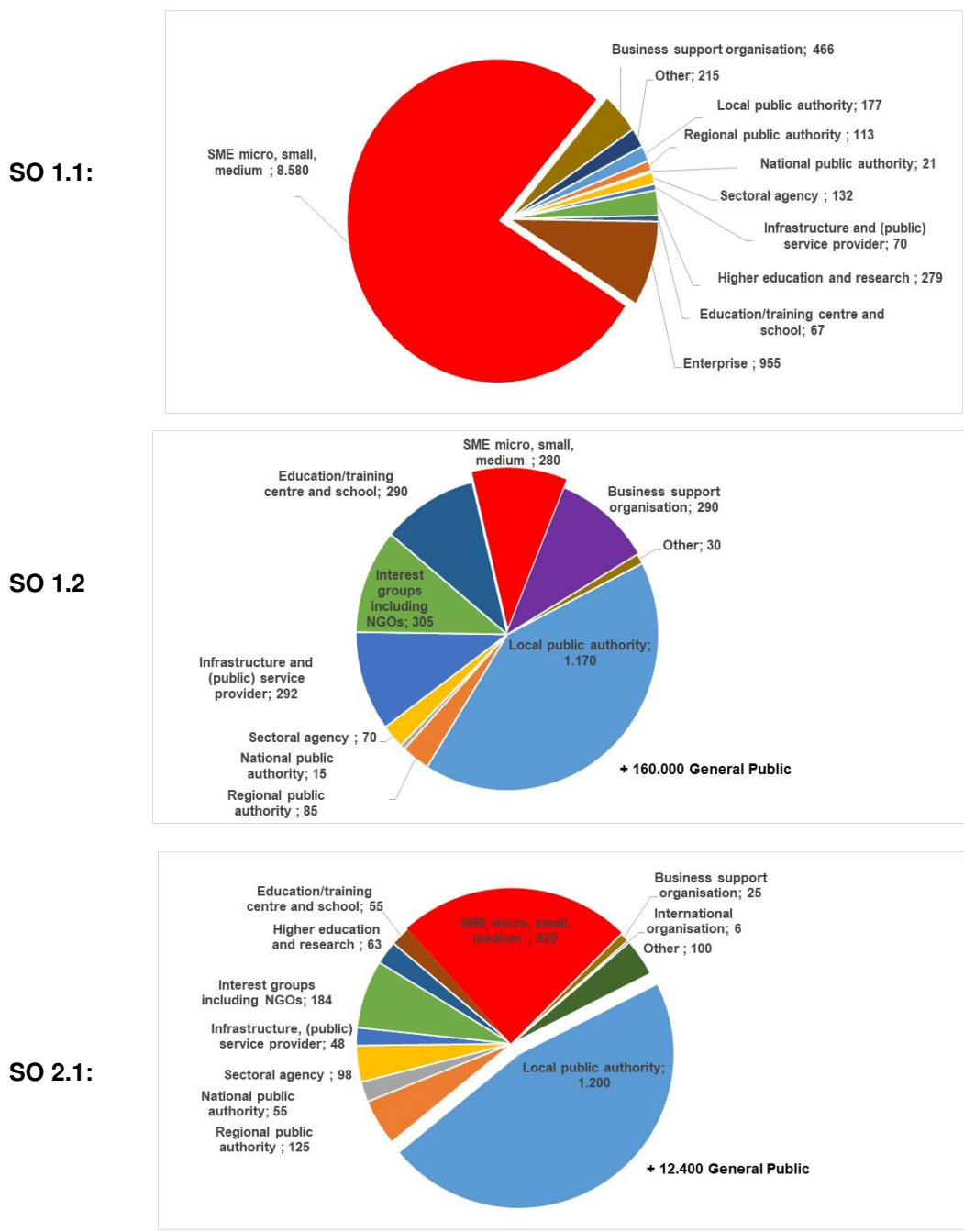**Projects and target group involvement**

The analysis of project data as included in Application Forms and project progress reports shows that there is a wide outreach to target groups by the current 33 projects. A detailed overview per Specific Objective has been already presented in Table 2.6 in Chapter 2. Altogether, it is expected that with the projects' outreach the programme reaches

- more than 5,4 million people (general public),

- more than 12.700 local public authorities,

- more than 9.900 SMEs,

- more than 740 regional public authorities and 174 national public authorities,

- 781 business support organisations,

- 480 sectoral agencies,

- 525 higher education and research centres,

- 537 public service and infrastructure providers,

- more than 1.300 interest groups and NGOs and

- as well as more than 1.220 education and training centres.

The analysis per Specific Objective shows that the composition of target groups is rather different for each SO.
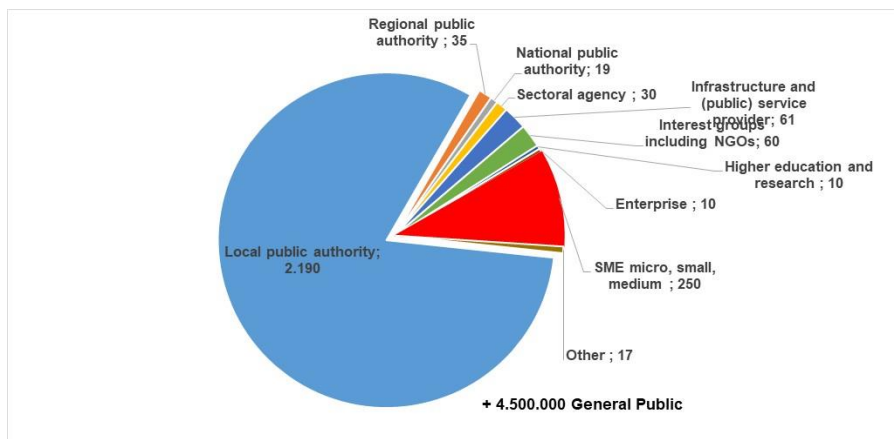
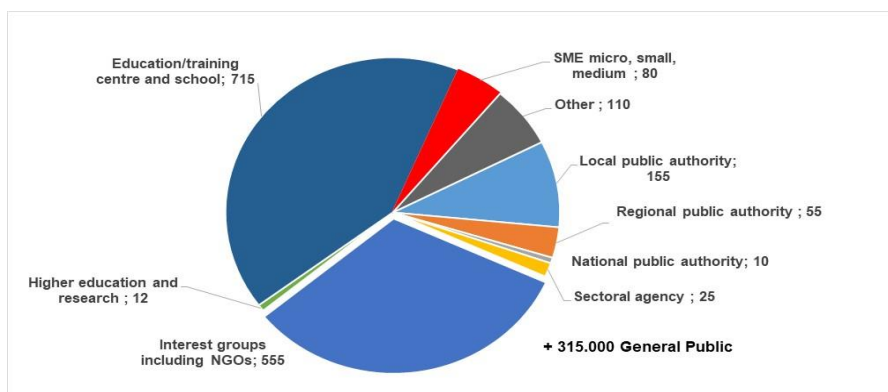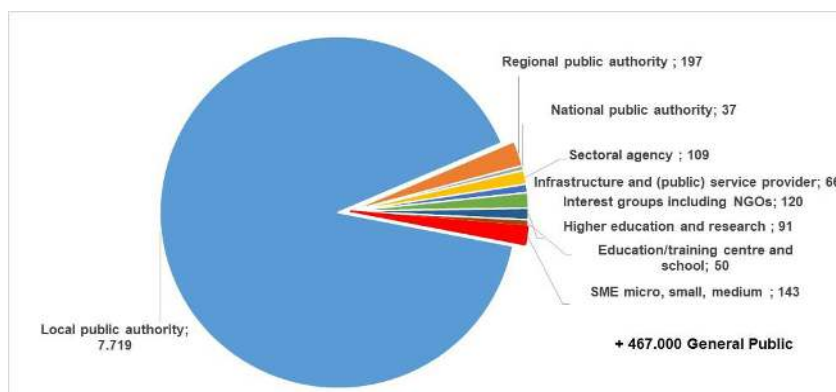**Figure 4.1: Target Groups addressed by projects in the different Specific Objectives**

SO 1.1:

SO 1.2

SO 2.1:

SO 2.2:

Regional public authority ; 35
National public authority; 19
Sectoral agency ; 30
Infrastructure and (public) service provider; 61
Interest groups including NGOs; 60
Higher education and research ; 10
Enterprise ; 10
SME micro, small, medium ; 250
Local public authority; 2.190
Other ; 17

+ 4.500.000 General Public

SO 3.1:

Education/training centre and school; 715
SME micro, small, medium ; 80
Other ; 110
Local public authority; 155
Regional public authority ; 55
National public authority; 10
Sectoral agency ; 25
Higher education and research ; 12
Interest groups including NGOs; 555

+ 315.000 General Public

SO 3.2:

Regional public authority ; 197
National public authority; 37
Sectoral agency ; 109
Infrastructure and (public) service provider; 66
Interest groups including NGOs; 120
Higher education and research ; 91
Education/training centre and school; 50
SME micro, small, medium ; 143
Local public authority; 7.719

+ 467.000 General Public

SO 4.1:

International organisation; 10
Enterprise ; 70
Education/training centre and school; 50
Higher education and research ; 70
Interest groups including NGOs; 106
Sectoral agency ; 16
National public authority; 17
Regional public authority ; 134
Local public authority; 180
Other; 515

+ 10.000 General Public
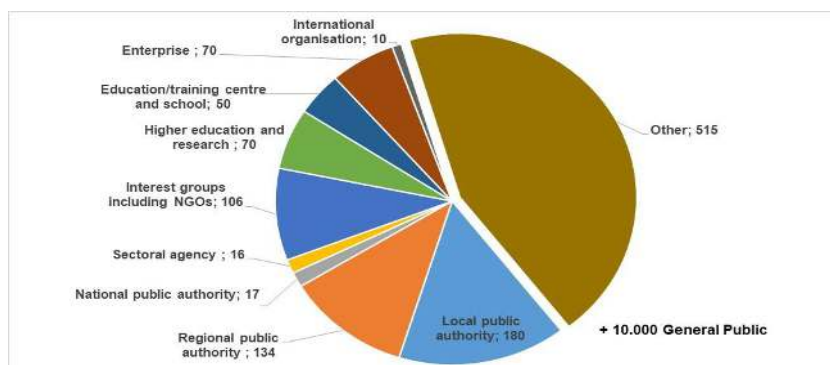
Source: Own elaboration based on analysis of information included in Application Form and Progress Reports

As can be observed, a wide range of target groups is addressed by the current 33 ASP projects. The selection of most relevant targets groups correspond to the different Specific Objectives. Analysing the information in Application forms and progress reports, projects have foreseen generally a wide variety of tools and activities to effectively address and communicate with target groups.

The survey to project lead partners has targeted, among other topics, the current degree of **target group outreach** by the projects, and the benefits brought from the programme to target groups and vice versa. The result of the enquiry about the current status of target reach gives an average value of 59%. The results from all respondents are plotted in the following chart.

Figure 4.2: Extent to which expected target group outreach has been reached (per project)
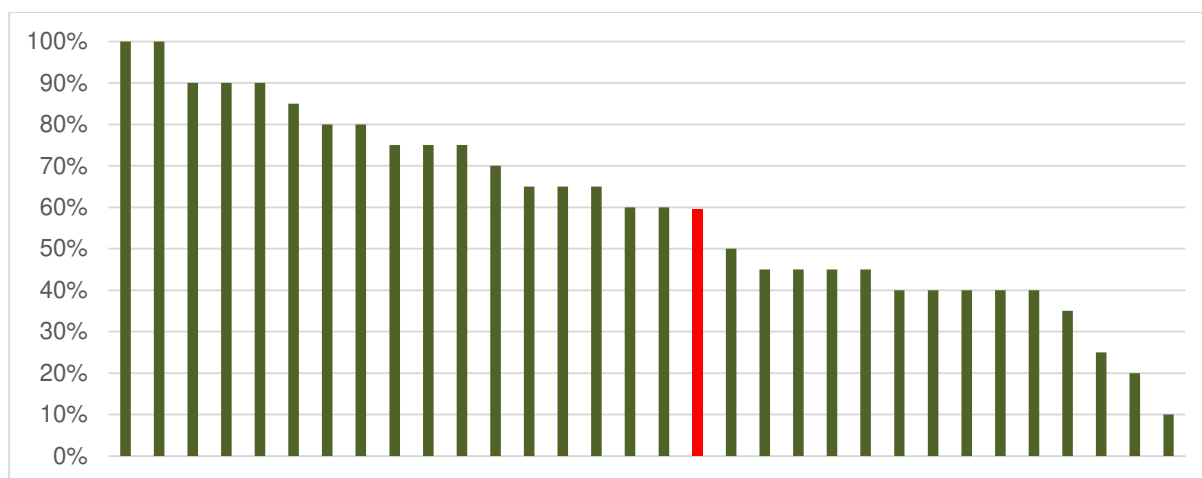
Source: Own elaboration based on Survey to Projects (Lead Partners) (data as of 30th March 2018) (n=32)

This information has also been analysed in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.7) per Specific Objective. In general, and given the current mid-term situation of projects, this can be deemed a satisfactory result, and it is particularly clear when considering that only four projects reported a degree of target group outreach below 40%.

In addition to the outreach, the analysis examined then if (and which) benefits from the involvement of relevant target groups are perceived by project lead partners. The most recurrent benefits in general are:

- Increased knowledge on new innovation methodologies amongst Alpine stakeholders

- Peer Learning and strong interconnection with high level know how hubs and already existing networks

- Deep transregional activities on SMEs assistance

- Creation of frameworks for inter institutional dialogue, helping to get a better sense of horizontal and vertical governance structures and their interdependencies, as well as to get a better understanding of common challenges for local authorities and policy makers

- Creation of shared knowledge for spatial planners

- Citizens involvement

The detailed analysis per specific target group reveals the following:

When asked the project lead partners about the **involvement of private partners** in their projects, 84% of them replied that private partners had been involved in their project.

Figure 4.3 Benefits brought by private partners to projects
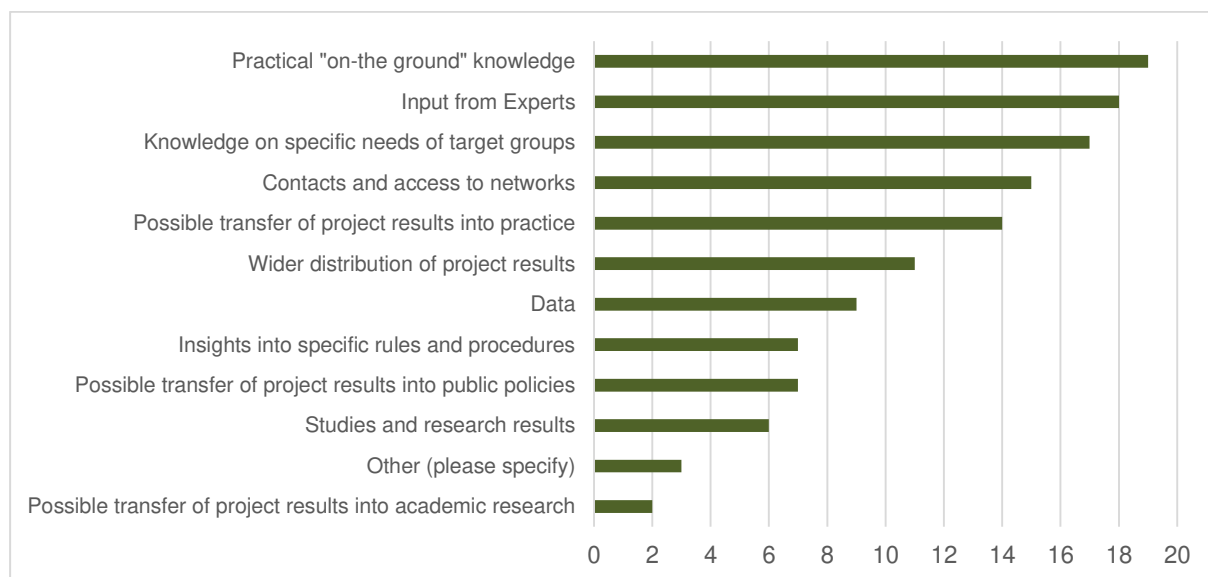
Source: Own elaboration based on Survey to Projects (Lead Partners) (data as of 30th March 2018) (n=32)

The benefits brought by private partners to the projects are diverse and appear coherent with expectations. Practical knowledge, input from experts, knowledge on needs of target groups, networking and implementation opportunities are indicated by more than half of respondents as valuable contributions from private partners, whereas other more specific inputs are less relevant. Among the "other" benefits indicated, it is particularly interesting to note that facilitation of sustainability of activities started within the project was mentioned, meaning that the involvement of private partners can aid the turning of project outputs into practice by contributing with own investment.

Overall, key contributions are linked to the demand side of products and services potentially produced in the scope of the programme. They affect both the development and the marketability of innovation.

A considerable 94% of lead partners reported the **involvement of academic or research partners** in the project. Coherently with the nature of these partnerships, the benefits identified by respondents focus on expertise, knowledge, and networks related to academia, as well as knowledge. Academic partners are, in most cases, active in transferring the project results to academic research.

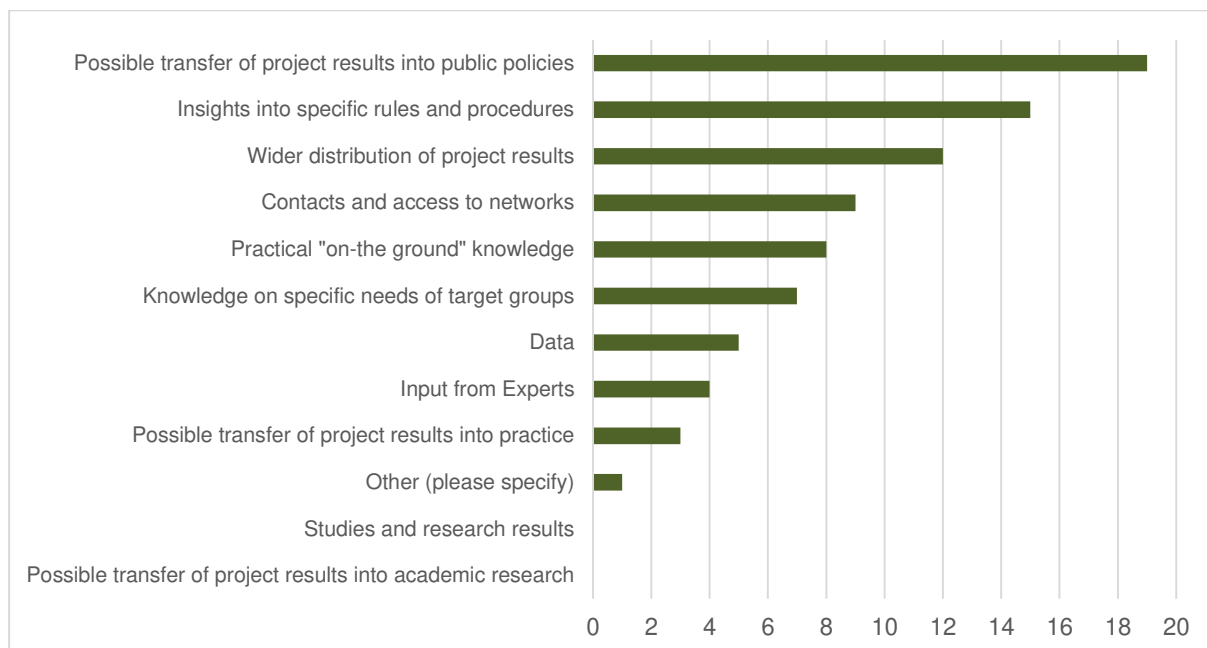**Figure 4.4: Benefits brought by academic or research partners to projects**
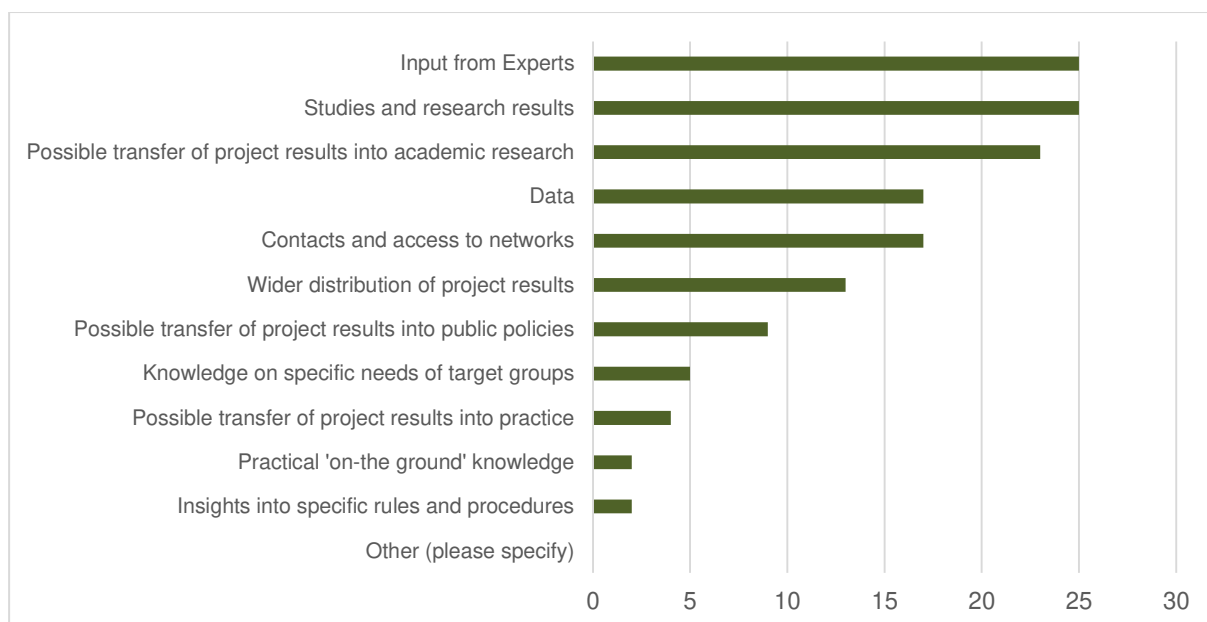
Source: Own elaboration based on Survey to Projects (Lead Partners) (data as of 30th March 2018) (n=32)

66% of project lead partners reported the **involvement of policy-makers and decision-makers at** local, regional or national level in the project. They are, therefore, another relevant stakeholder group.

Figure 4.5: Benefits brought by policy makers to projects

Source: Own elaboration based on Survey to Projects (Lead Partners) (data as of 30th March 2018) (n=32)

The benefits brought by policy makers are inherently linked to the transfer of project results into public policies, and the general distribution of project results. Moreover, policy makers have been indicated as the main contributors of insights into specific rules and procedures.

The analysis shows that each relevant target group has its specific role and benefit within the ASP projects. Thus, it is important to strengthen the existence of wide-ranging and balanced partnerships.
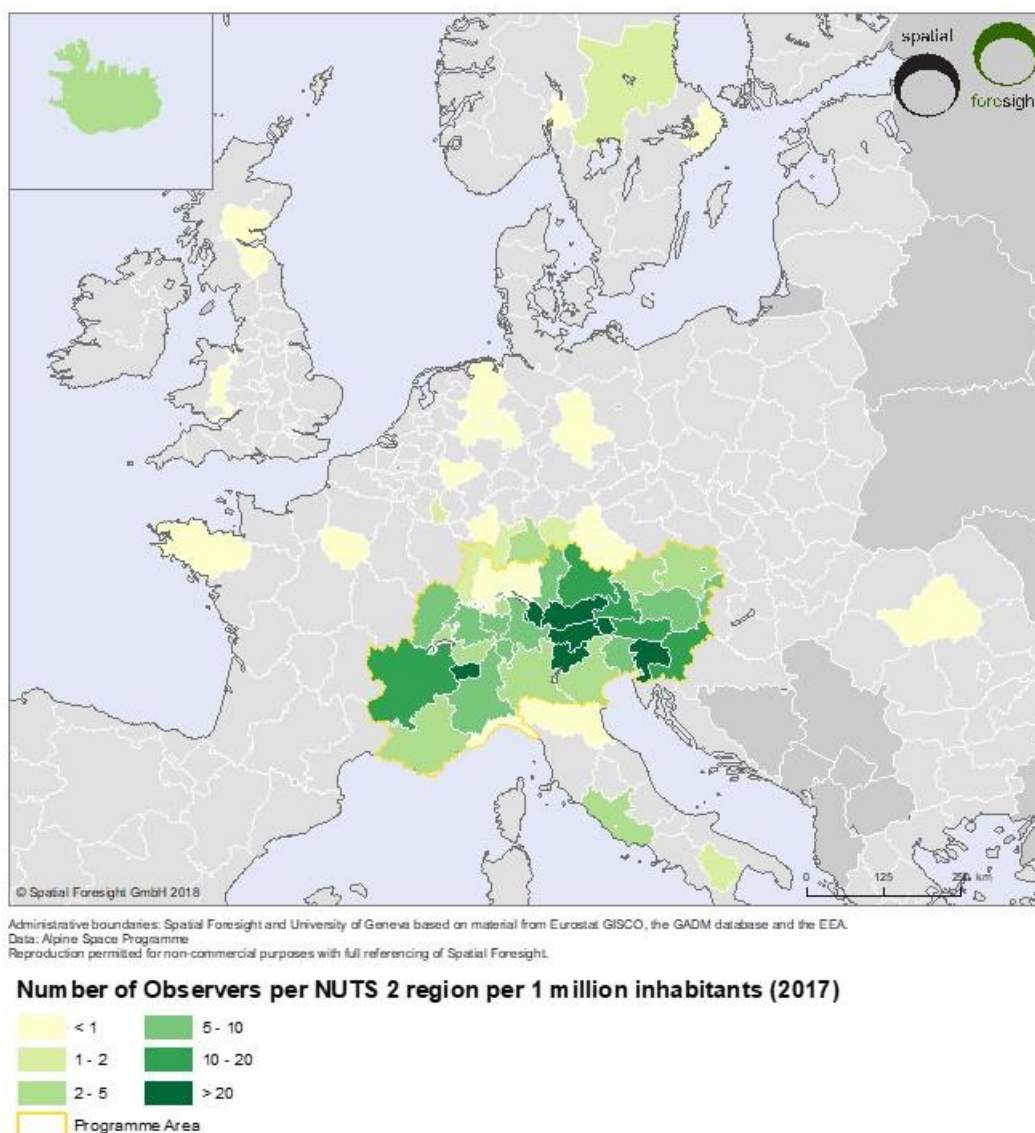
The current figures show that most projects involve all three groups of partners, even if the participation of policy-makers could be still improved. Further analysis of partnerships and target group involvement at programme level will be presented in the next section 4.3.

Analysis of project observer involvement

The geographical distribution of project observers (see Map 4.1) shows that many come from outside the programme area, adding to the European visibility of the programme. However, as expected, most of them are concentrated in regions within the programme area. In relation, to their population some regions are more active than others with regard to observer participation.

Map 4.1: Number of Observers per NUTS2 region in the ASP programme area

Administrative boundaries: Spatial Foresight and University of Geneva based on material from Eurostat GISCO, the GADM database and the EEA.
Data: Alpine Space Programme
Reproduction permitted for non-commercial purposes with full referencing of Spatial Foresight.

Number of Observers per NUTS 2 region per 1 million inhabitants (2017)

|	
< 1	5 - 10
1 - 2	10 - 20
2 - 5	> 20
Programme Area	

Source: Alpine Space Programme internal documentation (list of contracted PPs and OBS call 1-2)

When considering the participation in relative terms with respect to the population in the regions, more scarcely populated regions like Trentino-Alto Adige and Valle d'Aosta are heavily represented. The same can be said for the Austrian Länder of Tyrol and Vorarlberg. As a general observation, the more central the regions are located within the Alpine Space, the more observers are located in them.

Figure 4.6: Project Observers' distribution by typology
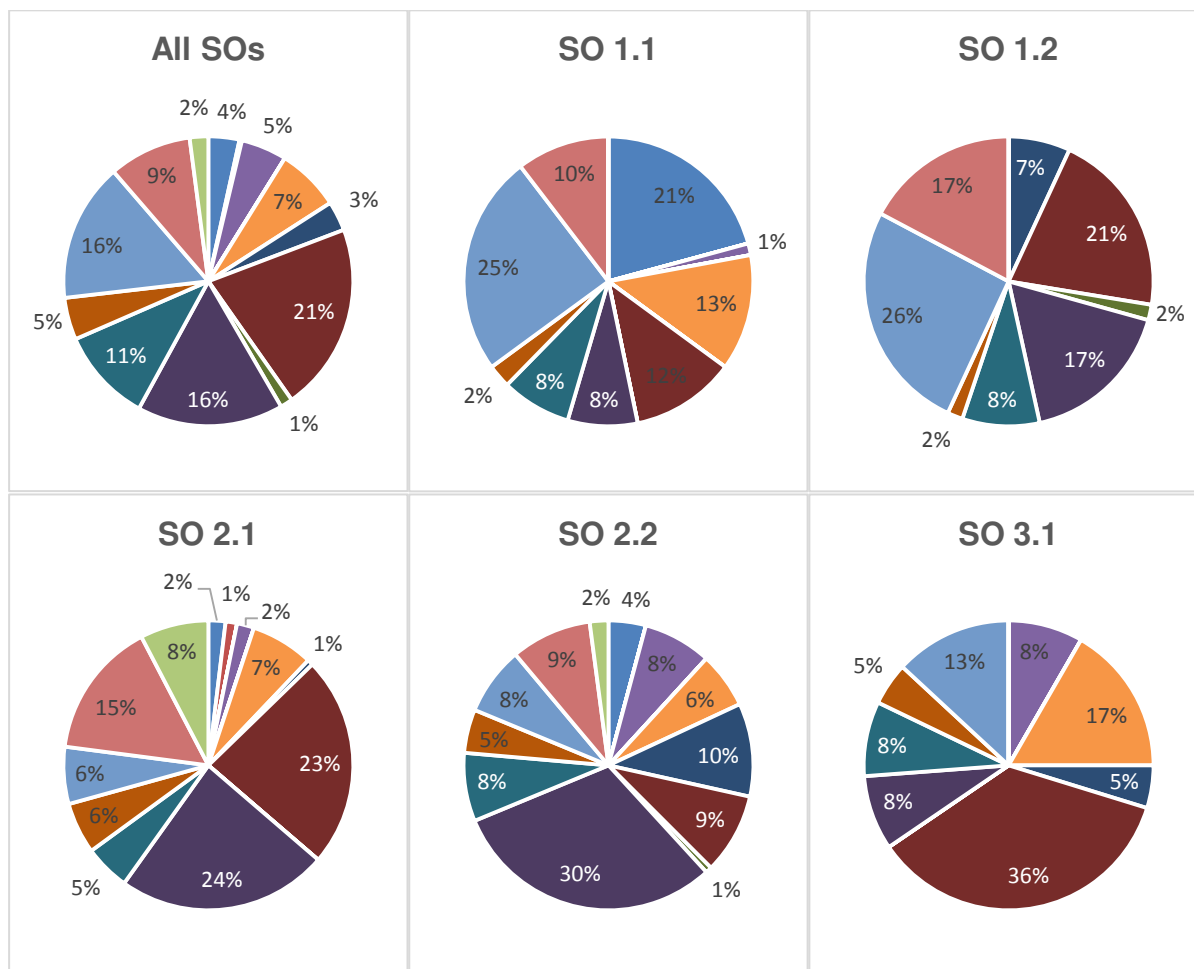
Legend:
- Business support organisation
- EEIG, EGTC
- General public
- Infrastructure and (public) service provider
- International organisation under national law
- National public authority
- Regional public authority
- SME micro, small, medium
- Education/training centre and school
- Enterprise
- Higher education and research
- Interest groups including NGOs
- Local public authority
- Other
- Sectoral agency

SO 3.2	SO 4.1
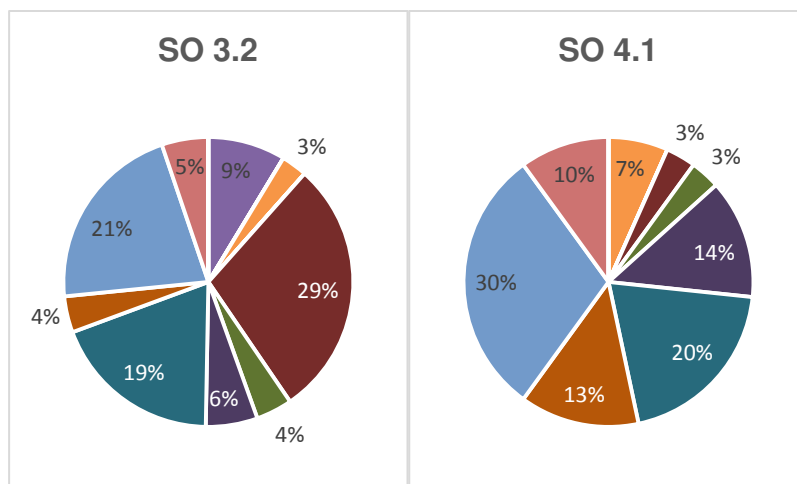
Source: ASP project application forms (own elaboration)

The group of project observers has been analysed according to the typology of organisation. As can be observed in the graphs, the distribution of stakeholder typologies is rather diverse across projects in different SOs. It is relevant to point out how private actors, especially enterprises and SMEs, are largely focused on the most business-oriented SOs, and particularly those linked to priority 2 (Low Carbon Alpine Space). On the other hand, public actors make up the vast majority of observers in the Well-Governed Alpine Space SO (4.1), as well as in the SOs under priority 3, focusing on valorisation of heritage and ecology.

Overall, 18% of observers are represented by enterprises and SMEs, and a relevant number of private actors also fall under the category "interest groups including NGOs", which makes up 21% of the total. This is an indicator that shows that the efforts toward mobilisation of more private actors in the programme have been successful. However, this success has been deeply linked to a focus on topics that offer business opportunities to private organisations, while the programme is not so successful in involving private partners in projects that had a less direct link to private endeavours. It seems safe to assume that the availability of such attractive thematic focuses has been perhaps the strongest single driver for the involvement of private partners, and this should be taken into account when planning increased private actor involvement in the programme.

A survey carried out for this study has been addressing project observers. The survey to project observers collected 81 responses. 37 respondents (46%) had already been involved in the Alpine Space programme before, while 44 (54%) are new to the programme. Only 2 of the 44 respondents who were new to the programme had applied to the programme before but had not been successful, while the remaining 42 were completely new. This confirms the capacity to attract newcomers to the programme, in particular through the figure of project observer.

In the survey to project observers, they have been asked about their expectations from the projects and the degree of their fulfilment. Most respondents identified expectations in line with their motivation to join the project and are satisfied about their current degree of fulfilment. However, in many cases,

they highlighted that the mid-term stage of the project does not allow for a conclusive assessment. In a few cases, the respondent reported that no communication has taken place yet with the project and they are not satisfied by now.

Project observers were asked about the **motivations** that lead them to take part in the project. Most recurring motivations are:

- Interest in topic which is in line with the observer's strategic goals, as the participation in the project could provide new up to date relevant information, including convergence of research interests

- Enabling knowledge transfer

- Chance for inter institutional cooperation

- Networking

- Exchange of international best practices

- Transfer to policy and/or implementation of project results

- Contribution of know-how

- Enhance existing partnerships

- Contribute to the dissemination of results

- Spread the results to other sectors and/or geographic areas

Most observers (74%) regard their contribution to the project as relevant, very few even deem it substantial. Only 23% consider their contribution as not relevant. These results can be generally considered as positive.

Figure 4.7: Relevance of observers' contribution to projects
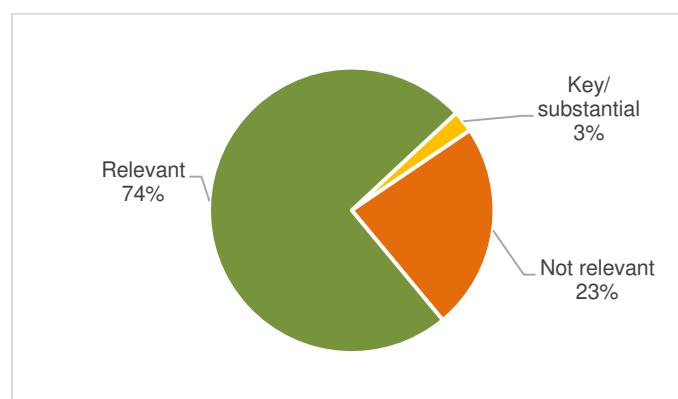
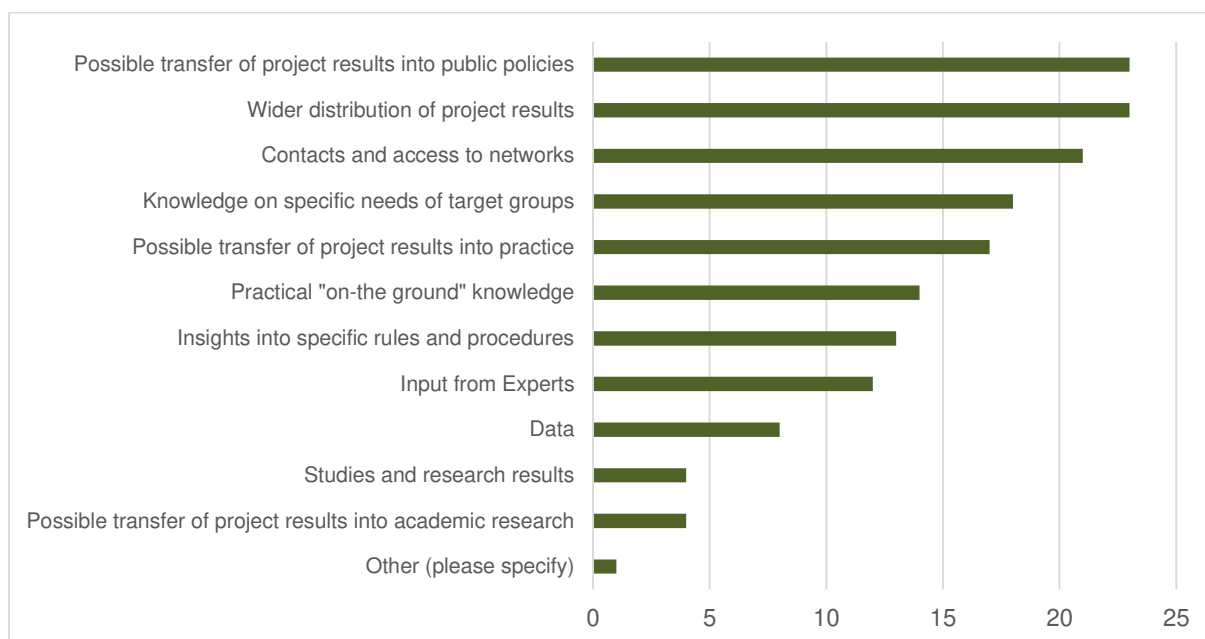Source: Spatial Foresight survey to ASP observers (Feb/Mar 2018) (n=81)

To analyse the role and benefits of project observers to projects, this aspect has been analysed from two perspectives. First, the project lead partners have been asked, which benefits are brought to their project by observers. Second, the project observers have been asked about their point of view, which contribution they bring to projects.

All projects responding the survey to lead partners involve project observers. The benefits that lead partners identify in the relation with observers are presented in Figure 4.8.

The responses to this question about the benefits of observer involvement show that the role of observers is regarded by lead partners as mainly that of network openers and facilitators of contacts and wider dissemination for the transfer of project results. They also contribute with practical knowledge on specific target groups or rules and procedures. Their capacity to provide inputs, data or studies to the projects is not deemed so important, as could be expected.
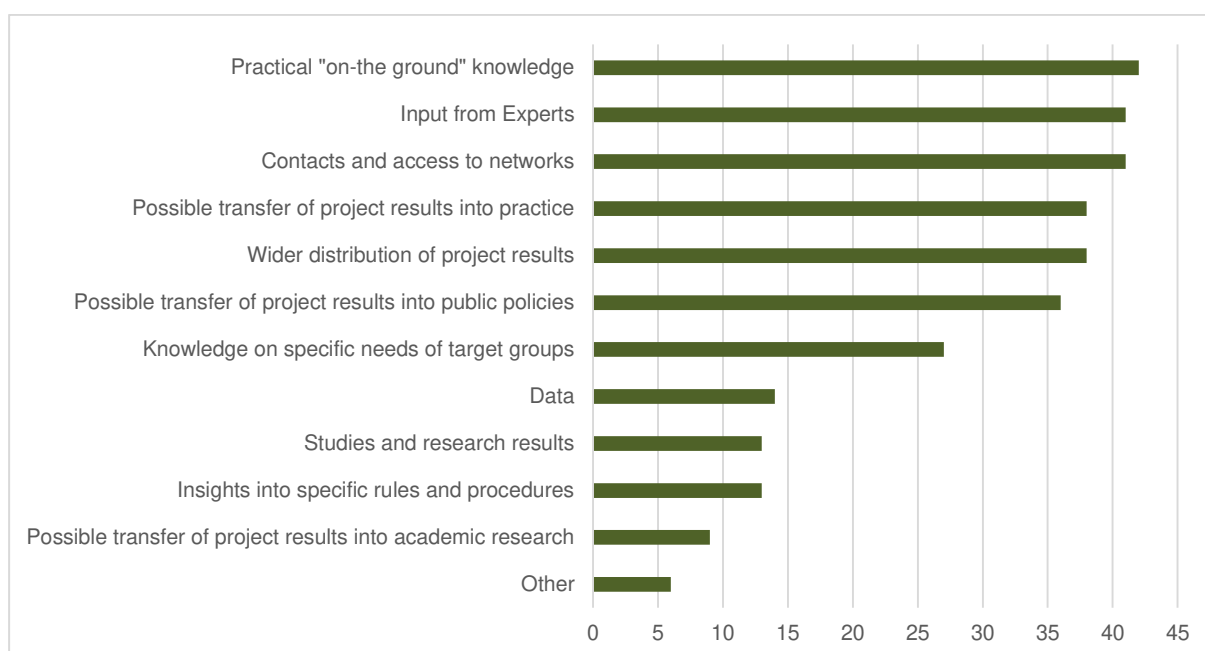
Figure 4.8: Benefits brought by observers to projects – Perspective of project lead partners

Source: Own elaboration based on Survey to Projects (Lead Partners) (data as of 30th March 2018) (n=32)

Figure 4.9: Contribution brought by observers to projects – Perspective of observers

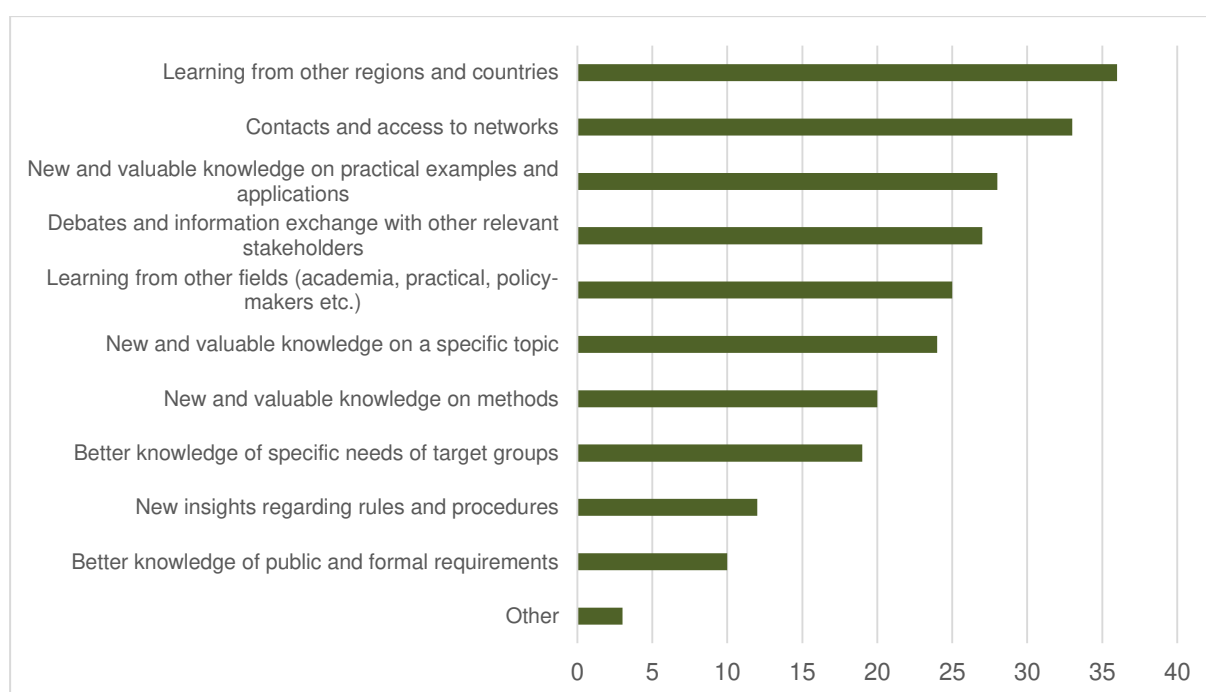Source: Spatial Foresight survey to ASP observers (Feb/Mar 2018) (n=81)

On the other side, the project observers themselves estimate that they contribute mainly through practical and expert knowledge, their contacts and access to networks and also through a better transfer and dissemination of project results to practice and/or into public policies.

From the comparison of the estimated benefits reported from the respondents with the ones indicated by the project lead partners, it is possible to note how the most prominent types of contributions are the same, however in a different order: observers put more focus on "upstream" contributions in which they regard an input from the observer's side is involved, as opposed to the lead partners' point of view, more focused on result dissemination and access to networks and contacts and very specific practical or legal knowledge.

Project observers were asked about the early benefits that they feel that they received from the participation in projects. 65% of respondents indicated that they can already identify some benefits.

Figure 4.10: Benefits for observers from project participation – Perspective of observers

Spatial Foresight survey to ASP observers (Feb/Mar 2018) (n=81)

Other benefits include access to previously not available information, better inter institutional cooperation and networking and stronger interaction with other stakeholders. Overall, learning, networking, and information exchange are the most important benefits.

Among the remaining 35% of respondents, that declared no current benefits, 88% regarded the reason to be that project outputs have not materialised yet, while there may be benefits in the future. The remaining regarded that no benefits were expected, and two respondents indicated communication issues with the lead partner which currently impair the production of benefits.

Final questions were asked to project observers about the possible measures that could be undertaken in order to improve the benefits to them, and their contribution to the projects. By far the most often expressed need for the achievement of these two targets, has been that of more communication between the projects and the observers, including more structured knowledge production and sharing, and more participation to meetings for discussion of results. This need was expressed by roughly one third of respondents. A minor share of respondents pointed out that more involvement could be supported with an increased allocation of resources.

4.2.3 Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis leads to the following conclusion:

- The overall involvement of relevant target groups is deemed generally satisfactory. A wide range of target groups is addressed by the current 33 ASP projects. The selection of most relevant targets groups correspond to the different Specific Objectives. Analysing the information in Application forms and progress reports, projects have foreseen generally a wide variety of tools and activities to effectively address and communicate with target groups.

- Private partners, academic/research partners and policy-makers bring clear and diverse benefits to projects. Therefore, a balanced mix of partners is expected to be of added value to a project. Currently, many projects include different target groups and benefit from their contributions.

- The target group outreach by projects has already reached 59% of the planned outreach on average. In general, and given the current mid-term situation of projects, this can be deemed a satisfactory result, and it is particularly clear when considering that only four projects reported a degree of target group outreach below 40%.

- When analysing the distribution of project observers, there is a relatively high concentration on a few geographical areas, and typologies of actors, tightly linked to the focus of projects under each specific objective. This concentration may risk reducing the potential impact of the project, and making it less evenly distributed.

- The benefits brought by and to project observers have proved to be overall positive and relevant for projects. Project observers have diverse expectations and motivations. According to both, project lead partners and project observers, there are clear benefits of observers to projects. However, observers put more focus on "upstream" contributions in which they regard an input from the observer's side is involved, as opposed to the lead partners' point of view, more focused on result dissemination and access to networks and contacts and very specific practical or legal knowledge.

- Some project observers ask for more communication with and a wider involvement in projects. In very few cases, there seems to be slight misunderstandings between observers and project partners about roles and expectations.

To further improve the situation, the following recommendations can be highlighted.

- More balance in the involvement of project observers and other partners should be pursued in view of the next programming period, and for the current one, a suggestion could be to increase activities targeting the areas and stakeholder typologies that currently present low participation.

- Some projects might need punctual support in order to be reminded of involving all project observers somehow in the projects.

4.3 Evaluation of target group involvement on programme level

This section draws diverse types of information from the analysis of project data, with the aim to draw as from statistics about features of project partners. The analysis is complemented by results from the survey to project lead partners, particularly the questions about the management of partnerships.

4.3.1 Evaluation question/s

The following evaluation questions guided the evaluation:

- Are the relevant target groups of the programme successfully involved as beneficiaries?

- How is the participation in terms of policy relevant partners and private actors, as well as in relation to the geographical coverage of the programme?

- How far has the programme managed to attract new, relevant partners?

- Which obstacles have been identified to the participation of stakeholders to the programme and which improvements in the programme management are deemed necessary?

- How successful has the programme been in mobilising private actors (as a special concern of the programme)?

4.3.2 Main findings

The analysis of the programme data shows the following results. With regards to the distribution across member states, there is an over-representation of lead partners from Italy. This is coherent with the notably higher number of project applications lead by Italian partners, which made up 56% of all applications.[48] Although the Italian Regions in the Programme make up 33% of the total target population and 22% of the programme area and therefore are the most represented in the Alpine Space, both the share of applications and of selected lead partners from the country are rather high when compared to the participation of the other countries. As shown in Map 4.2, considering the size of population in each country, Slovenia, followed by Austria dn Switzerland have the highest number of applicants per 1 million inhabitants. Germany and France have less applicants in relation their population.


[48] With respect to Calls 1 and 2

Map 4.2: Number of applicants per country
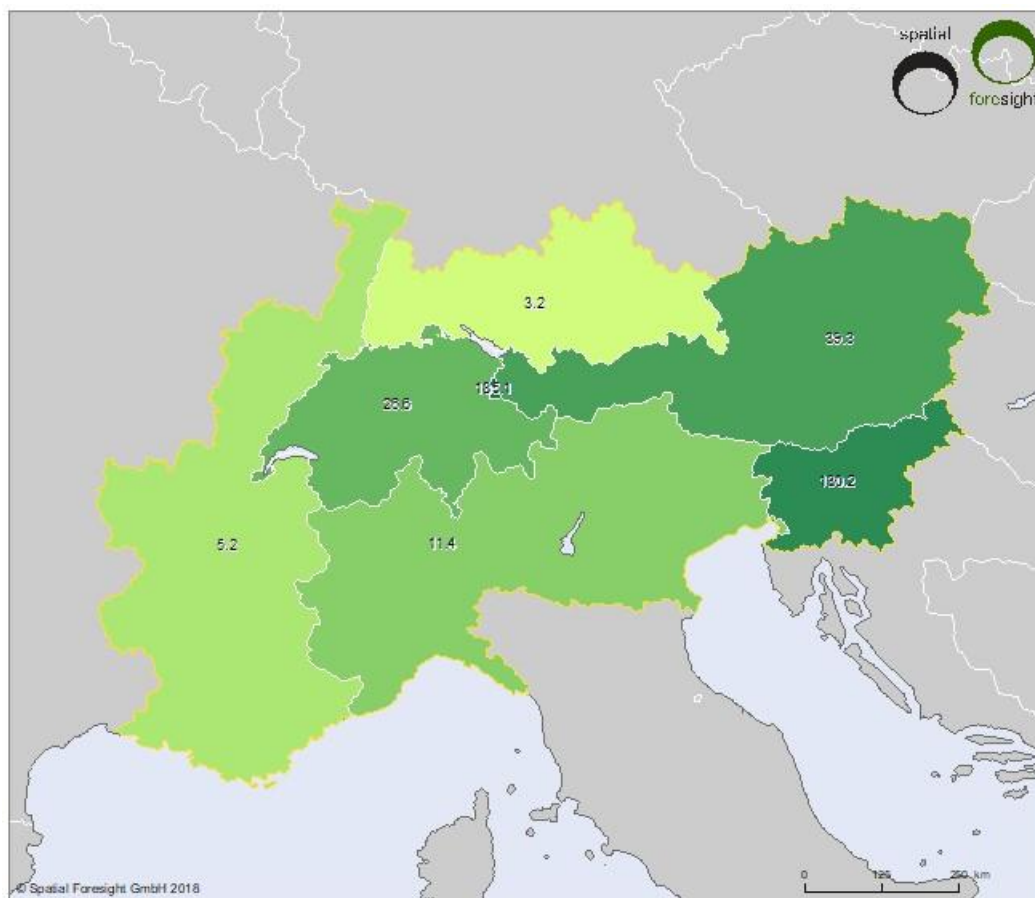
Administrative boundaries: Spatial Foresight and University of Geneva based on material from Eurostat GISCO, the GADM database and the EEA.
Data: Alpine Space Programme
Reproduction permitted for non-commercial purposes with full referencing of Spatial Foresight.

Number of Applicants per Member State per 1 million inhabitants (2017)
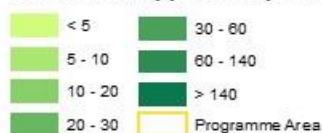
< 5	30 - 60
5 - 10	60 - 140
10 - 20	> 140
20 - 30	Programme Area

Source: Alpine Space Programme internal documentation (list of applicants contact data calls 1,2, and 3)

The situation is more balanced when analysing total selected project partners, as discussed in the next paragraph. This consideration may be signalling that more focus should be put in the promotion of initiatives in other countries in the Programme. Except for the over-representation of Italy, the picture is balanced across other countries.

Figure 4.11: Lead project partner distribution per country and type of partner
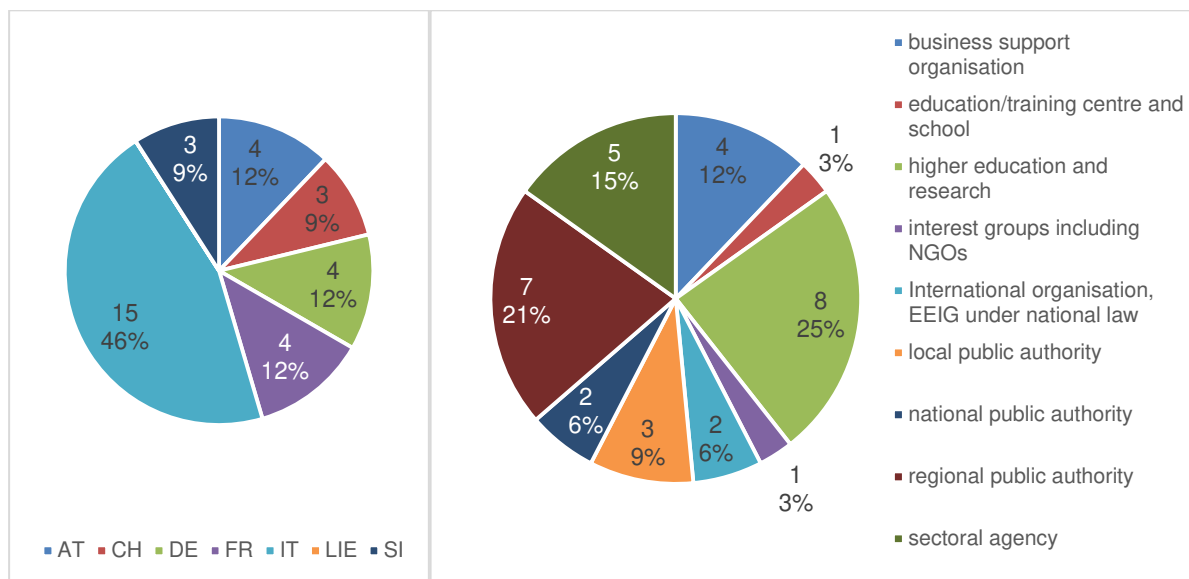
Source: Alpine Space Programme internal documentation (list of contracted PPs and OBS call 1-2)

Lead partners are in all cases public organisations, and almost all different listed typologies of public organisations are represented among the partners.

Education and research partners, including training centres and schools, lead the way covering 27% of the projects, while regional public authorities complete the most represented typologies with 21%.

Sectoral agencies and business support organisations account for a combined 27%, while the remaining is split between national and local public authorities, international organisations, and interest groups.

Overall, the situation is rather balanced.

Figure 4.12: Project applicants per country
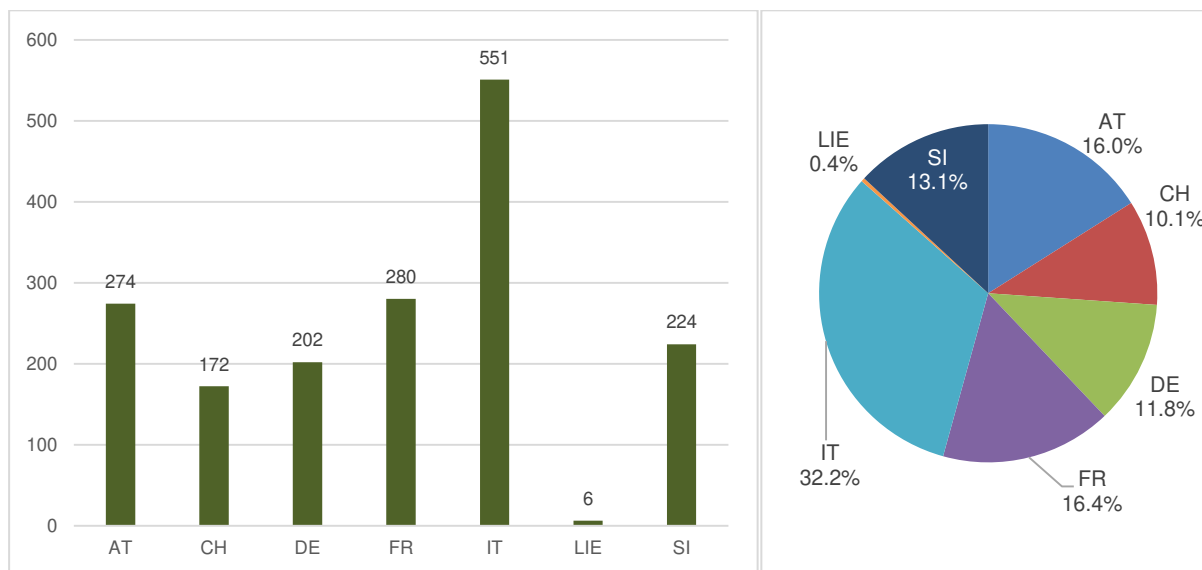
Source: Alpine Space Programme internal documentation (list of applicants contact data call 1-2)[49]

Figure 4.13: Project partners per country
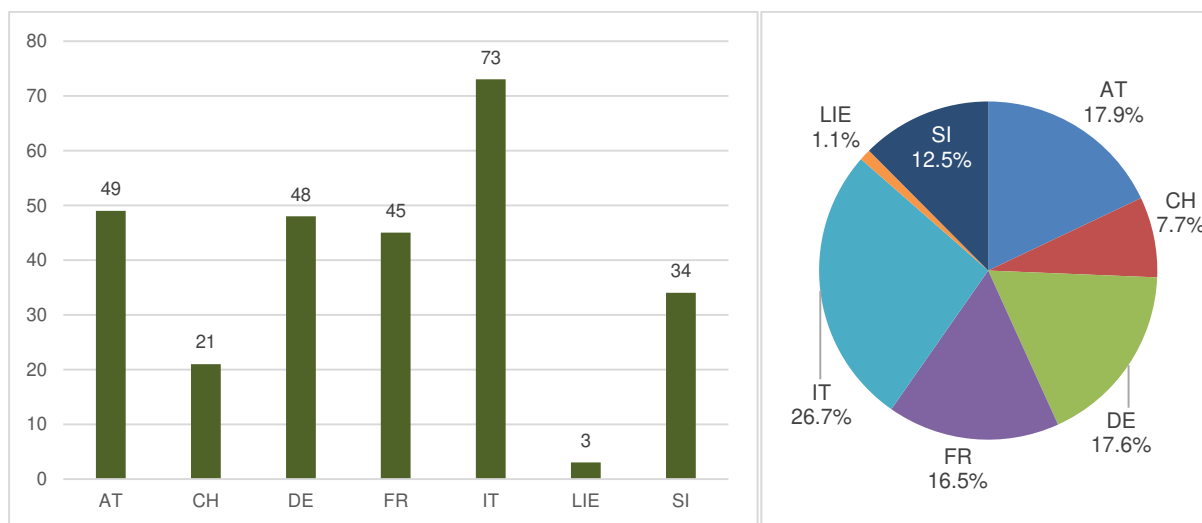
Source: Alpine Space Programme internal documentation (list of contracted PPs and OBS call 1-2)[50]

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[49] In the analysis of applicant information, duplicates have been removed as much as possible, but due to the high number of entries, it was not possible to identify and remove all of the duplicates manually, as it has been done for lead partners, project partners, and project observers. Data about applicants, therefore, should be regarded as indicative.

[50] The data used for this graph has been cleaned in order to avoid double counting of partners involved in multiple projects.

From the comparison of the country split between applicants and project partners in selected projects, it is possible to draw some conclusions.

The overall picture of selected project partners appears slightly "flatter" when compared to the one of applicants, and therefore a slightly more balanced distribution has been attained with respect to applications: notable changes differences in distribution are the lower proportion of selected applicants from Italy, which represented almost one third of applicants, while applicants from Germany, under-represented in the application phase with just 11,8% of applicants, increased their share in selected projects.

Generally speaking, the distribution of partners, both in the application phase and in selected projects, appears to be balanced among countries, as it roughly reflects the territorial extension of the countries concerned.

When looking at the NUTS 2 (Regional) level, the same pattern in the distribution of partners appears as the one discussed above with respect to project observers. Rhône-Alpes, Oberbayern, and Zahodna Slovenija catalyse most of the partners in absolute terms in the respective countries. Vorarlberg, Tyrol, Liechtenstein, Valle d'Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige, Kärnten, and Zahodna Slovenija are leaders in terms of partners per number of inhabitants. Italy has a more balanced representation; Switzerland and Germany have generally a lower number of participating partners, while Austria appears having in most regions an active participation in projects. France regions have generally an intermediate level of participation.

Most of the distribution of partners can be intuitively explained with the concentration of actors in the regions with the largest and most dynamic economies. Some regions have a lower participation in the Programme, in particular:

- Freiburg, Tübingen, and Schwaben in Germany;

- Liguria in Italy.

Map 4.3: Number of partners per NUTS 2 region
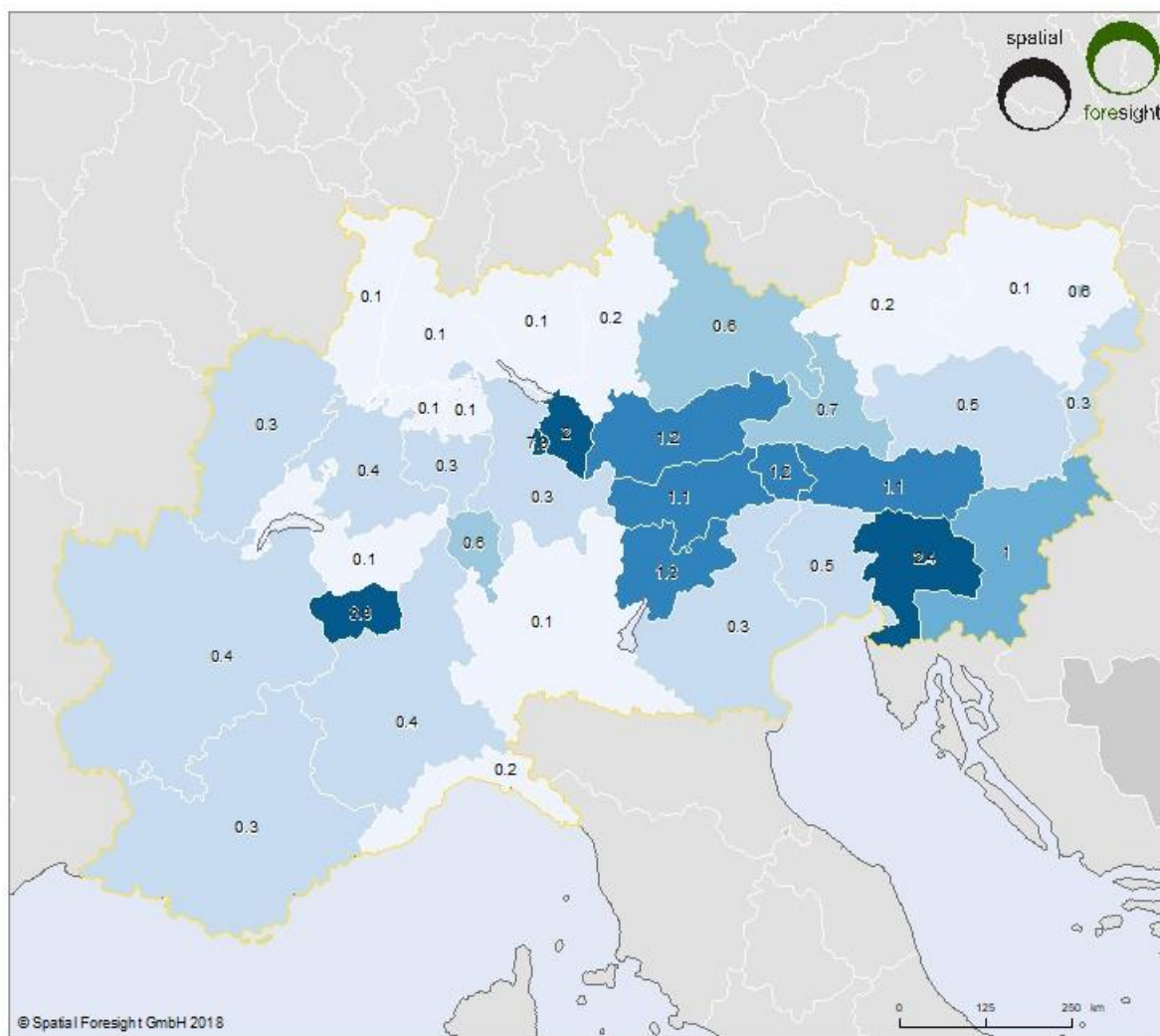
Administrative boundaries: Spatial Foresight and University of Geneva based on material from Eurostat GISCO, the GADM database and the EEA.
Data: Alpine Space Programme
Reproduction permitted for non-commercial purposes with full referencing of Spatial Foresight.

Number of Lead and Project Partners per NUTS 2 region per 100 000 inhabitants (2017)
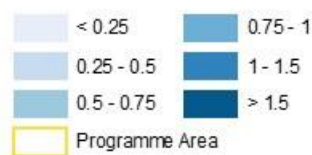
< 0.25	0.75 - 1
0.25 - 0.5	1 - 1.5
0.5 - 0.75	> 1.5
Programme Area	

Source: Alpine Space Programme internal documentation (list of applicants contact data calls 1 and 2)

The overall analysis of private partner involvement shows that the efforts to involve this kind of partners have been, to some extent, successful. 19% of total partners in the programme are made up of private partners. The split by country and specific objective offers more insight:

Figure 4.14: Type of partner (public or private)
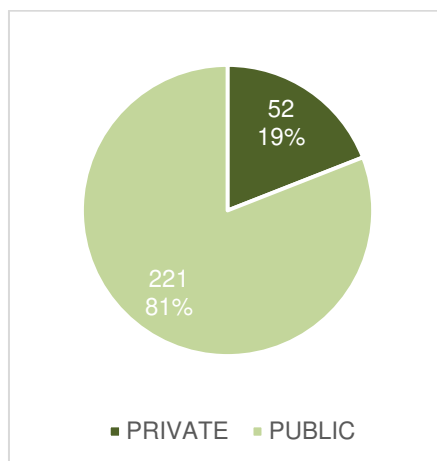
Source: Alpine Space Programme internal documentation (list of contracted PPs and OBS call 1-2)

The distribution of private partners across countries is remarkably diverse. Austrian, Swiss, French, and Slovenian partners are made private organisations in just 12% of the cases, while in Germany the share reaches 42%. Italy is somewhere in the middle with 22%, while Liechtenstein is the only case in which private partners are more than the public ones (2 vs 1). This result is linked with the high number of Bavarian SMEs and enterprises, mostly related to the transport sector and low carbon economy-related sectors, taking part in projects.

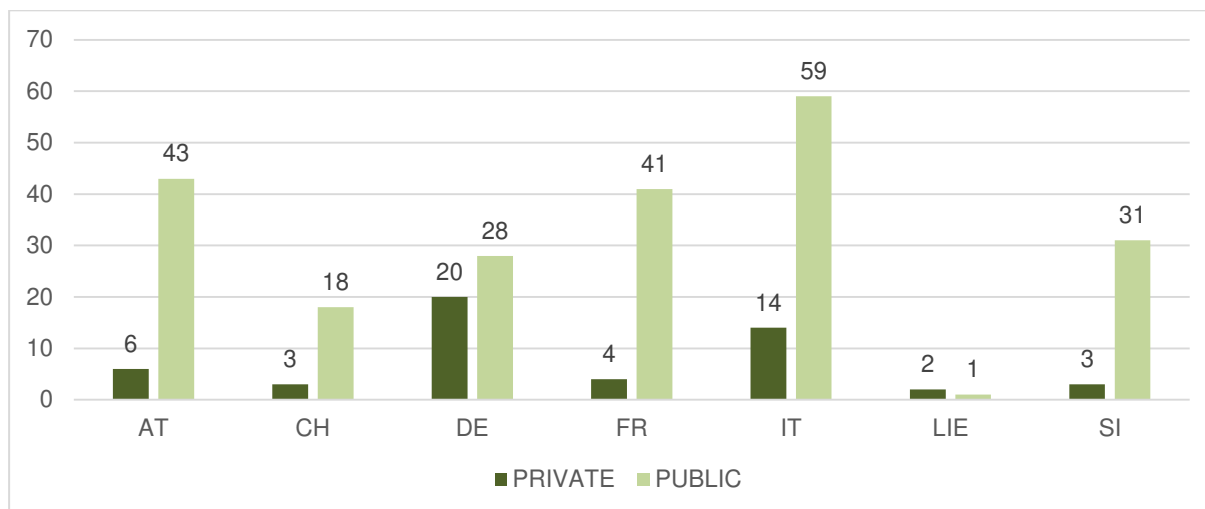**Figure 4.15: Type of partner (public or private) by country**

Source: Alpine Space Programme internal documentation (list of contracted PPs and OBS call 1-2)

The distribution of private partners across countries is remarkably diverse. Austrian, Swiss, French, and Slovenian partners are made private organisations in just 12% of the cases, while in Germany the share reaches 42%. Italy is somewhere in the middle with 22%, while Liechtenstein is the only case in which private partners are more than the public ones (2 vs 1). This result is linked with the high number of Bavarian SMEs and enterprises, mostly related to the transport sector and low carbon economy-related sectors, taking part in projects.
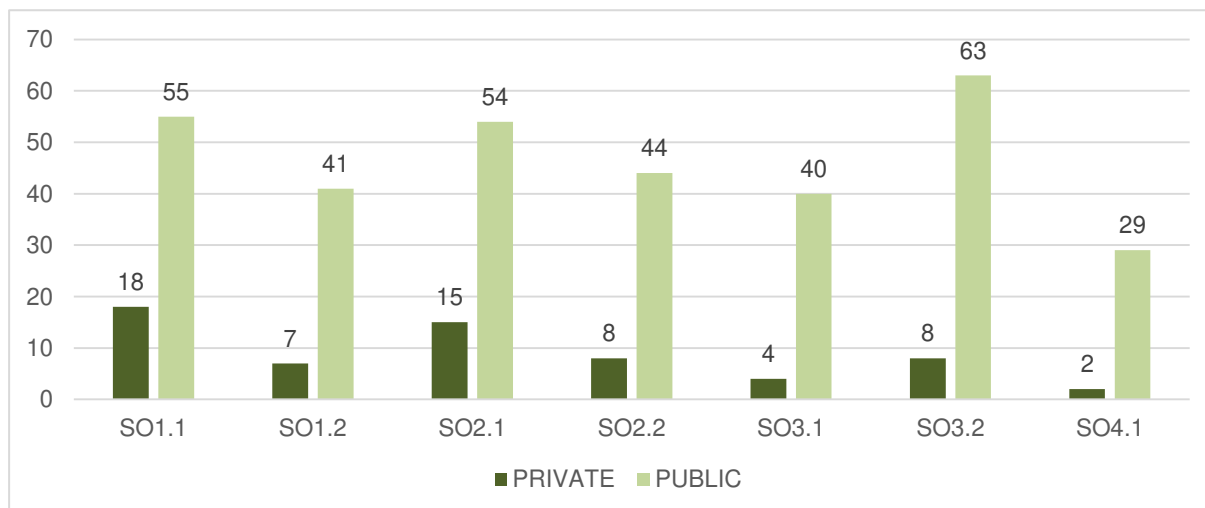
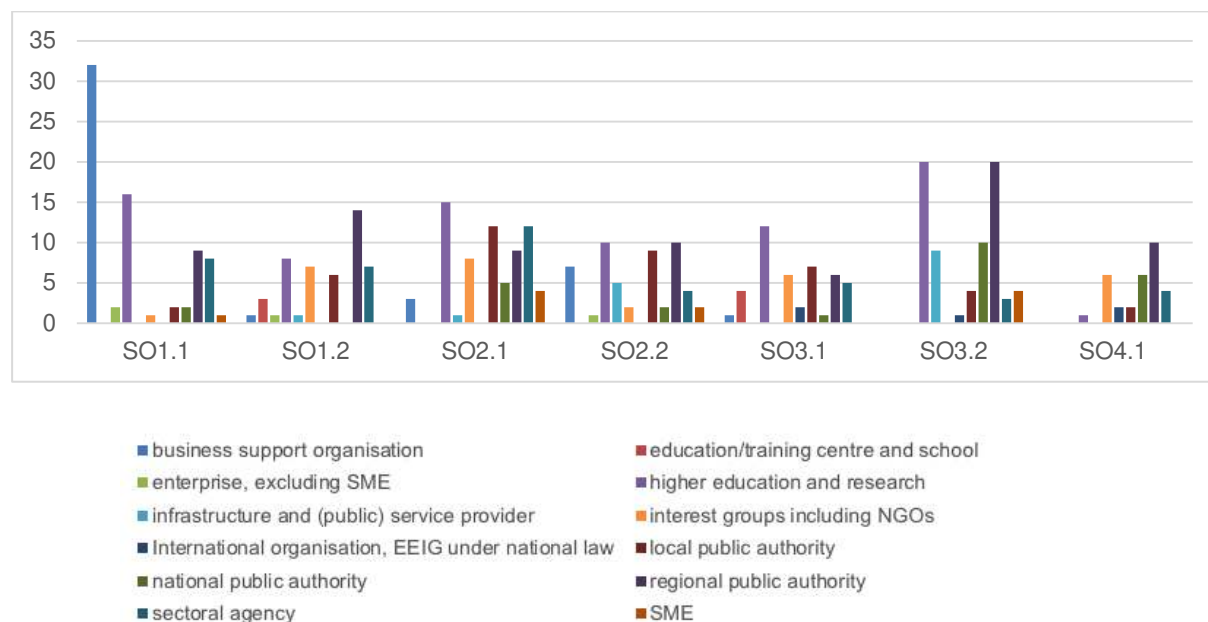**Figure 4.16: Type of partner (public or private) by SO**

Source: Alpine Space Programme internal documentation (list of contracted PPs and OBS call 1-2)

The split between private and public partners across specific objectives also shows a certain degree of concentration, albeit on a lesser scale. As argued about the involvement of project observer, private

actors are largely represented on the most business-oriented SOs, and particularly those linked to priority 2 (Low Carbon Alpine Space), and 1 (Innovative Alpine Space).

Figure 4.17: Type of partner by Specific Objective

Source: Alpine Space Programme internal documentation (list of contracted PPs and OBS call 1-2)

The split of partner typology across SOs is also quite diverse. The concentration of business support organisation on SO 1.1 stands out, as does the presence of SMEs almost only in SOs under priority 2. Other types of partners don't show any particular pattern in their distribution across SOs.

Drawing on project partner and lead partner data, the analysis on project partner typologies distribution is possible. Notable highlights from the comparison of graphs above include:

- The consideration that the typology of partner distribution is roughly similar across all member states, except Liechtenstein – due to the low number of partners – and Switzerland.

- SMEs have low shares in most countries, with the exception of Germany where they make up 13% of the total.

- Slovenia presents a far higher than average share of higher education and research institutions.

Figure 4.18: Type of project partner organisation by country

Pie charts showing type of project partner organisation by country.

AT
- 2%
- 2%
- 2%
- 16%
- 25%
- 17%
- 4%
- 12%
- 12%
- 6%
- 2%

CH
- 5%
- 5%
- 5%
- 14%
- 19%
- 47%

DE
- 4%
- 13%
- 19%
- 2%
- 4%
- 10%
- 19%
- 2%
- 10%
- 13%
- 4%

FR
- 2%
- 18%
- 18%
- 2%
- 11%
- 14%
- 2%
- 13%
- 18%
- 2%

IT
- 3%
- 11%
- 18%
- 3%
- 16%
- 14%
- 4%
- 18%
- 9%
- 4%

LIE
- 33%
- 34%
- 33%

SI
- 23%
- 15%
- 3%
- 3%
- 35%
- 9%
- 9%
- 3%

All ASP
- 4%
- 13%
- 13%
- 2%
- 1%
- 12%
- 22%
- 6%
- 11%
- 12%
- 1%
- 3%

Legend:
- business support organisation
- education/training centre and school
- enterprise, excluding SME
- higher education and research
- infrastructure and (public) service provider
- interest groups including NGOs
- International organisation, EEIG under national law
- local public authority
- national public authority
- regional public authority
- sectoral agency
- SME

Source: Alpine Space Programme internal documentation (list of contracted PPs and OBS call 1-2)

In the survey to project lead partners a number of questions about partnership were asked. The most relevant findings are discussed hereafter.

The most important finding is that 32,3% of respondents (10 out of 31) are newcomers to the programme and have not taken part in any Interreg Alpine Space programme activities before. Out of these 10, four had applied to the programme before, but had not been successful. The remaining 6 (19% of the total) were completely new to the programme.

Also in interviews with programme bodies, the programme is regarded as being able to effectively attract newcomers in the participation to the programme. The Alpine Contact Points are generally satisfied with the work done to reach out to newcomers (private businesses, representative organisations). A significant and positive change in the type and volume of stakeholder involvement has been reported, this seems to be the case mostly in France, Italy, Switzerland and Slovenia. In other countries, changes in stakeholder involvement have been limited, but partner involvement is satisfying, according to programme bodies.

Of the other 21 respondents who had a previous role in the programme, 15 had been lead partners previously, as well as taking other roles as partners or observers, while 5 had been involved as project partners.

Figure 4.19: Previous relationship with ASP
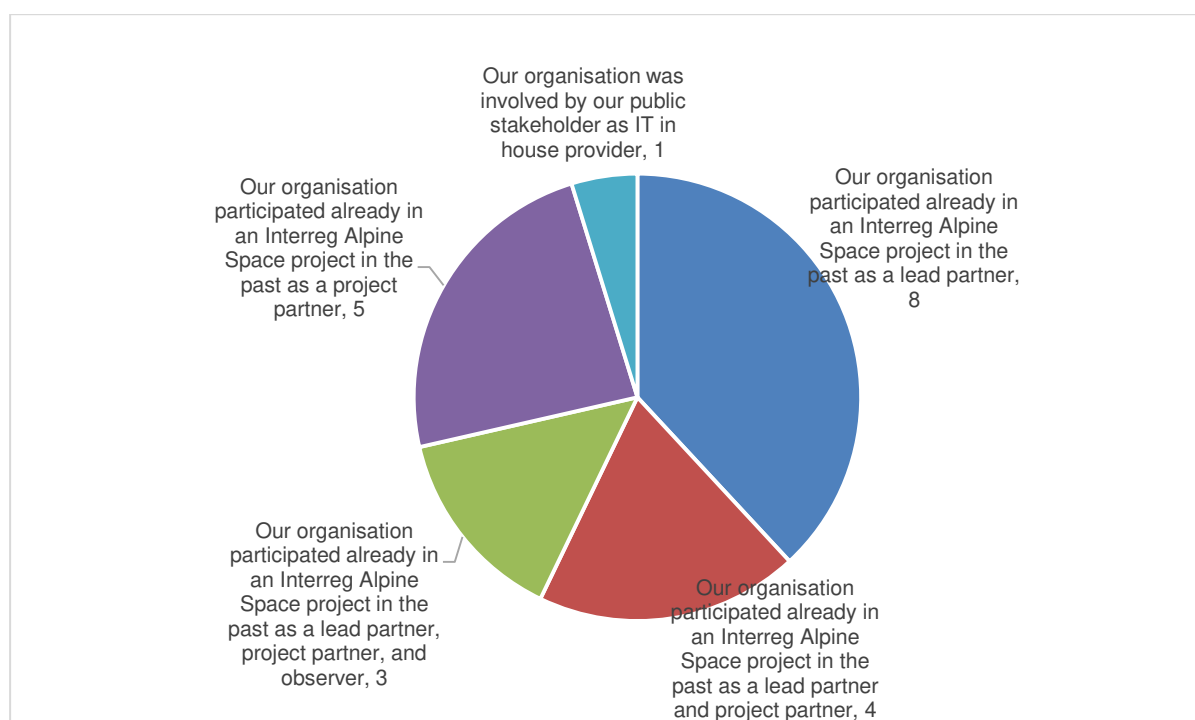
Source: Spatial Foresight survey to ASP lead partners (data as of 30th March 2018) (n=32)

4.3.3 Conclusions and recommendations

The main conclusions of this part of the evaluation are:

- The involvement of relevant target groups as beneficiaries appears to be positive. The mix of typologies is diverse and covers the whole spectrum of actors well. However, as noted in the analysis, the distribution of partners is rather uneven, especially across different geographical locations.

- The geographical distribution is relatively uneven when considering the applications, but it is more equally distributed when it comes to approved projects. Italy is the country with most applicants and beneficiaries. The analysis of the distribution per NUTS 2 region shows a good overall participation with some 'active' regions.

- Lead partners are in all cases public organisations, and almost all different listed typologies of public organisations are represented among the partners. Education and research partners, including training centres and schools, lead the way covering 27% of the projects, while regional public authorities complete the most represented typologies with 21%. Sectoral agencies and business support organisations account for a combined 27%, while the remaining is split between national and local public authorities, international organisations, and interest groups.

- The split between private and public partners across specific objectives also shows a certain degree of concentration. As argued about the involvement of project observer, private actors are largely represented on the more business-oriented SOs, and particularly those linked to priority 2 (Low Carbon Alpine Space), and 1 (Innovative Alpine Space).

- The capacity to attract new partners is regarded as positive, as 32% of the lead partners involved were new to the programme. This shows that there is a good chance that even newcomers can become lead partners. This is also a sign that the newcomers have been relevant partners, capable of organising and leading a complex transnational project. On the other hand, most of the lead partners that had been involved in the programme before, had already been involved as lead partners previously, while almost half of the current lead partners had already participated in the programme with the same role. Proof of the capacity to attract newcomers is also the fact that at the Meet&Match Forum 2017 were 126 participants out of 220 registered as newcomers, that is 57%.

- Obstacles to a better participation of partners can be identified in the concentration of applications in certain geographies and on certain topics, as well as the concentration of partner typologies by location and topic. This is, for instance, exemplified by the concentration of SME involvement on priority 2 projects in Bavaria, whereas all other geographies and objectives have little SME involvement. This kind of imbalances would need a structured, strategic approach to be tackled effectively.

- The overall analysis of private partner involvement shows that the efforts to involve this kind of partners have been, to some extent, successful. 19% of total partners in the programme are

made up of private partners. The analysis of private partner involvement shows a mixed picture. Although in general terms it can be regarded as successful, the contribution of these partners has proved to be rather concentrated in a few countries (namely Germany and, to a lesser extent, Italy) and a few priority axes (1 and 2). Private partners in these countries and objectives have been successfully involved in the programme thanks to their specific focus, and their involvement has driven up the overall number of private partners involved in the Alpine Space Interreg programme. However, the figures reveal that the attractiveness of the programme has not been extended to businesses in other countries and under other specific objectives. More effort could be put into attracting partners from more diverse backgrounds.

The following recommendations can help to improve target group involvement at programme level.

- While promoting participation, the programme might consider to promote participation especially in 'weak' regions with currently low participation and, therefore, less impact of ASP.

- Imbalances with regard to private actor involvement are somehow given, according to the type of SO and the aim of the project. However, private sector actors are one of the largest groups that current projects are addressing. So, SME or enterprise involvement seems also to be possible in other SO. Private sector involvement might be strengthened with a more focused communication towards specific target groups (as recommended already in the Chapter 3 on Communication).

5 Overall recommendations

Overall, the programme shows satisfactory levels of effectiveness, communication and stakeholder involvement. No critical change in the overall programme management has to be recommended.

However, in order to continue improving the levels of efficiency and effectiveness of the Programme, the following operational recommendations are transferred to the programme authorities.

Recommendations for the current programming period:

	Recommendation	Who?
1	Revision of Output Indicator CO_42 (adaptation of target value, check for adequateness or more focused monitoring data)	MA/JS
2	Improve support to projects with factsheets or other tools: a) Continue supporting projects with raising awareness on the different possible roles and (diverse) contributions of project observers to projects. b) Focused monitoring (specific follow-up) of Social Innovation projects (SO 1.2), as they try to operate in uncertain environments and with higher risk and might need more specific support than other projects to achieve their outputs.	MA/JS
3	Continue communicating on the distribution of roles and functions of ASP and EUSALP internally and to stakeholders of Strategy and Programme.	MA/JS and PC with EUSALP
4	Continue coordinated dissemination of results and achievements with EUSALP to stakeholders according to common topics or policy fields	MA/JS and PC with EUSALP
5	Propose to EUSALP specific communication activities with ESIF MA (possibly leading to the creation of an information network) in order to increase coordination and synergies with ESIF Managing Authorities	MA/JS and PC
6	Up-date of the communication strategy regarding the following aspects: - Revision of indicators and target values of the indicators in the strategy - Improve the monitoring of communication activities and satisfaction levels related to events and support tools. - Include the (already existing) communication activities with EUSALP, - Up-date and targeted analysis of target groups in order to prepare new communication activities (e.g. business associations, NGOs, sectoral policy-makers). Specific audiences, such as the EUSALP stakeholders or ESIF Managing Authorities should be considered in the strategy.	MA/JS

	Recommendation	Who?
7	Continue improving communication and creating new useful and dynamic communication tools (analyse if the use of Twitter and Facebook would be of added value considering the additional costs, develop new tools such as videos, webinars, storytelling, a summary book). If new communication activities are to be developed, an estimation of possible additional needs for resources should be carried out.	MA/JS

Recommendations for the next programming period:

Overall, the programme is effective within the current framework of ESIF and ETC Regulations.

It is not possible to take into account already the new regulatory framework, so that it is difficult to recommend specific improvements on the programme management mechanisms (e.g. indicators, monitoring, synergies, cooperation with EUSALP).

In general, for the next programming period it can be recommended that the Communication Strategy can be further improved, for example, via analysing and mentioning internal and external factors that might hamper implementation (risk analysis). Correspondingly, mitigation measures to potential risks might be developed. In addition, the next Communication Strategy might consider taking into account more specifically the possibilities of different social media channel (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) and dynamic web-site and web-based knowledge management tools.

6 Annex

As additional and separate documents there are also available:

- 33 individual Project Fact Sheets.

- A document with seven Specific Objective (SO) Factsheets.

- Methodological Annex to the Factsheets, indicating the Information Sources used.

6.1 References

Bibliography

COWI et al. (2017): Study on macroregional strategies and their links with cohesion policy. EUSALP Report.

European Commission (2016): Report on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies. COM(2016) 805 final of the 16.12.2016

European Commission (2015): Communication concerning the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region. COM(2015) 366 final. 28.7.2015

Gloersen et al. (2013): Strategy Development for the Alpine Space 2014+. Final Report.

t33 (2017): Evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness: application and selection procedures. Evaluation Report. Report produces for the Alpine Space Programme 2014-2020.

Programme Documents

- ASP Cooperation Programme

- ASP Annual Implementation Report 2016

- ASP Project Implementation Handbook

- ASP Communication Strategy

- ASP Annual Communication Overviews (ACO), various documents

- ASP Monitoring data

6.2 Interviews

In order to gather information and feedback about the internal and external management and organisation of the ASP implementation, 10 interviews with 13 representatives of ASP programme bodies were conducted for this evaluation

Interviews carried out for this evaluation

Programme Body	Name and Position	Date of the Interview
MA	Christina Bauer, Head of MA	19.2.2018
JS	Stefanie Amorosi, Evaluation Manager at JS Julia Chenut, Communication Manager at JS	19.2.2018
ACP Slovenia	Janez Berdavs, ACP Slovenia	1.3.2018
HD Slovenia	Peter Ješovnik, HD Slovenia	1.3.2018
ACP France	Marine Henry, ACP France	23.2.2018
HD Austria	Michael Roth, HD Austria	20.2.2018
ACP Italy	Alessandro Bordonaro, ACP Italy together with Adriana May	22.2.2018
HD/ACP Switzerland	Silvia Jost, HD Switzerland Sébastien Rieben, ACP Switzerland	22.2.2018
HD Germany	Florian Ballnus, HD Germany	22.2.2018
HD/ACP Liechtenstein	Henrik Caduff, HD/ACP Liechtenstein	27.2.2018

Guideline of Questions for the Interviews

Note: For each programme body a slightly different selection of these questions was used, according to their role and function within the Programme and to the distribution of question agreed in the Inception Report.

- How has been the process of defining the Communication Strategy within the JS (cooperation with MA, assessment of earlier actions, etc.)?

- In your opinion, is the communication strategy adequate? (Why/not?)

- Does it foresee clear and measurable objectives?

- Does it foresee a clear distribution and assignment of roles and responsibilities?

- Are roles and responsibilities well-working and efficient? (Why/not?)

- Does the communication strategy allow for monitoring of its achievements?

- Do you think since 2014 the communication activities helped to enhance exchange between programme bodies and offer clear guidance on administrative procedures for project partners? (Why/not?)

- Do you think since 2014 the communication activities helped to effectively empower applicants and participants? (Why/not?)

- Do you think since 2014 the communication activities helped to increase awareness of the programme and its results? (Why/not?)

- Which communication activities do you consider effective? Which ones not so effective (Why?)

- Would you say that the communication strategy/activities need improvement? Why? How?

- Would you say new/other communication activities are needed? Why? Which?

- In how far is the reporting and monitoring process (and related tools including indicators) of project implementation well set-up and efficient? (e.g. allowing the verification of project achievements, and effective financial management - such as payment of beneficiaries in adequate time, reducing financial errors and de-commitment risks)

- How would you consider the progress of the programme in line with the Specific Objectives and the possible achievement of Objectives and Impacts?

- How would you estimate the progress in relation to the means and resources mobilised?

- Has the programme set adequate measures to reduce the administrative burden of applicants and beneficiaries (i.e. use of simplified cost options)? From your experience, are there factors that may hamper the use of SCO at national/regional level?

- In your opinion, how effective is the coordination between programme bodies as regards project and programme implementation?

- What are, in your opinion, the programme´s contributions to regional development in the Alpine Space Region?

- To which degree is the programme implementation linked to relevant macro-regional strategies (MRS)?

- How can links with macro-regional strategies possibly be improved/strengthened?

- Would you consider that there is a sufficient level of information to MAs from mainstream funds about the ASP projects and results?

- Does the programme foresee the right mechanisms to effectively involve relevant partners in programme implementation? Why/not?

- Can you notice a change in stakeholder involvement? If so why and how is this change visible?

- Any other comment

6.3 Surveys

Survey Methodology

Three Surveys have been carried out by Spatial Foresight to gather information by relevant stakeholders.

All three surveys were online-based and used Survey Monkey to structure and analyse the survey.

- A survey carried out by Spatial Foresight to project lead partners (launched on the 15th February 2018 and analysed as of responses received by March 30th 2018). The survey was sent out to 33 project lead partners. The survey gives a very good picture of the lead partners knowledge and opinions, as it includes responses from 32 out of 33 projects, with a coverage of 97%. There is an implied bias in this survey to Lead Partners that might influence certain survey results. In this sense, 46,9% of the respondents (15) are from Italy, whereas the other countries represent between 9% and 13% of the respondents (with no respondent from Liechtenstein).

- A survey carried out by Spatial Foresight to project observers (launched on the 15th February 2018 and analysed as of March 5th 2018). The response rate to the survey to project observers has also been positive: the valid responses used in the analysis have been 81. This corresponds to a response rate of 12% considering the whole sample that received an invitation, and a response rate of 16% on all estimated valid invitations (500) to the survey (considering that some emails in the database are already outdated or refer to different people in the same organisation). These respondents were observers to 29 projects, meaning 90% of the projects with observers. The average number of projects observed by each respondent in the sample is 1,14.

- A written consultation to EUSALP stakeholders was launched on the 15th February 2018. We received ten responses, covering all nine Action Groups of EUSALP and the EUSALP presidency, which corresponds to 100% response rate.

Annex Documents:

- Questionnaire used for the Lead Project Partner Survey

- Questionnaire used for the Project Observer Survey

- Questionnaire used for the EUSALP Stakeholder written consultation