

Implementing a Cross-regional Support scheme within the Alpine Region

- Guiding Questions -

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List of acronyms and definitions

Programme Owner	Ministries and/or other bodies, that are legally entitled to design, publish and fund calls. They can also decide on funding scope, budgeting and funding rules.
Participating Regions:	Transregional initiatives bundle a certain number of regions that are ready participate in such an initiative. These regions can be represented by Ministries (Programme Owners) or respective Funding Agencies
Funding Agencies:	Funding Agencies, often also called management authority, have the mandate to implement and operate dedicated funding programmes. They are normally in charge with operation aspects for programme implementation, like timing of calls, selection process of proposals or the financial management. They often work an operational arm of the Programme Owner.
Collaborative Proposal	Collaborative Proposals contain sub-proposals from various participating regions.
Multi-Level Governance	A multi-level governance scheme contains mechanisms for cross-regional cooperation of interested parties. It defines rules on policy (programme owner) level, how to align policies to meet common objectives. It also contains procedures how funding of cross-regional activities is provided and managed. Finally, it sets framework conditions under which industry or academia can collaborate across borders.

1. INTRODUCTION

Alpine Space Macro Region was adopted to strengthen innovation and competitiveness by transforming economic structures through the identification of local excellence and by the development of new combinations of existing capacities. Recent experience gained in Interreg-projects like S3-4AlpClusters, CirCulAlps or TRANSALP show that on one side multi-national governance structures for focused cooperation among Alpine Regions are critically missing. There is a persistent funding gap for cross-regional research, development and innovation (RDI) projects within the Alpine Region targeting regional priorities of particular relevance. On the other side, Alpine Regions must inter-link their local assets and individual excellent capacities to address grand challenges in future European RDI. Dynamic areas with significant impact are related to megatrends in circular-bioeconomy and health-economy (CBH) that will tremendously impact the way of our status-quo economy¹.

Nevertheless, there is an increasing understanding that cross-regional cooperation would advance regional competitiveness while bundling critical mass and competences on one side, but also minimising duplication and fragmentation of publicly funded activities across the Alpine Region. In fact, increasing cooperation in innovation investments across regions is supported by the so-called outward-looking dimension that is generally expected to be present in upcoming smart specialisation strategy (RIS3). This dimension calls for possible complementarities with other regions, inside and outside the Alpine Region. However, what sounds rational and easy in theory causes significant issues in day-to-day practice. Currently, funding schemes and related governance structures are not prepared to encourage cross-regional cooperation.

Concerning cross-national funding schemes, Alpine Regions do not have many possibilities to influence the programme design and consequently the scope of the call. Furthermore, the current INTERREG Alpine Space support scheme is coming to an end. Consequently, there is no modality currently in place where a group of Alpine Regions' entities can decide to support R&D or innovation in Bioeconomy or Health-economy across regions. Analysis and recent experiences show that one of the main reason for this funding gap are missing multi-regional governance structures for cross-regional cooperation in S3-implementation that could serve as facilitator for cross-regional cooperation².

That is where ARDIA-Net comes into play, which aims to develop a multi-level, multi-national, coherent RDI area for the Alpine Region. ARDIA shall contribute to improve the framework conditions for cross-regional and cross-sectoral cooperation addressing common economic opportunities. ARDIA shall help regions to jointly design and implement a cross-regional funding framework and adjacent demonstrator projects targeting the development of the Alpine Region for future cross-border implementation of regional strategies, providing crucial solutions to macro-regional governance in support of sustainable development, knowledge transfer and innovation in the Alpine Region.

¹ For more information regarding the project under <https://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/ardia-net/en/about/objectives/specific-objectives>.

² Dermastia, M. and Osvald, D. (2018), Study to Prepare A Synchronised Funding Scheme For Bioeconomy Development In The Alpine Region. Interreg AlpGov.

While none of the consortium partners of ARDIA-Net are public funding parties, ARDIA-Net's approach needs to rely on resources and motivation of the authorities (programme owners) of the regions and nations, and those agencies that fund Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) in the respective regions.

However, ARDIA-Net is determined to promote a process that evolves into cross-regional research and innovation calls and projects. The proposed descriptive analysis and assessment shall support ARDIA-NET in its considerations about a feasible approach to facilitate cross-regional funding.

The objective of this document is to propose guiding questions that support the ARDIA-Net partners to run interviews with regional representatives (Programme Owners or Programme Managers) that have successfully participated in cross-regional programmes.

The following 10 guiding questions shall cover the entire spectrum from “why a region participated?” until “what were the added value and outcomes compared to EU-funded transnational RDI cooperation schemes / national schemes?”

2. GUIDING QUESTIONS

It is recommended to start with some introductory questions, like

- What cross-regional call scheme did you participate in?
- When was it?
- How many of your regional partners were funded?
- What regions your beneficiaries mainly cooperated with?

1) What was the rationale for your region to get involvement in a cross-regional call scheme (synchronised or joint call)?

Justification: This question is important since regional actors can argue that the private and public sector should apply to EU-funded schemes, like H2020 or INTERREG. It is important to understand, what was the reason that the region and related Programme Owner participated in one of the five identified cross-regional support schemes identified in WP 1 of the VDI/VDE-IT offer.

2) How did you convince regional Programme Owners to provide funding to participate?

Justification: In case interviews are run with regional funding agencies (Programme Management Authorities) it would be interesting to understand how they convinced policy makers (Programme Owners) to participate.

3) What were the original objectives to be reached by the participation?

Justification: Regions that participated in cross-regional call scheme often follow dedicated objectives. It is important to understand these objectives.

4) Please describe the short history of the accession process. What were the main barriers to solve?

Justification: The accession / participation process always varies from region to region and from call to call in which regions participated. To understand the different steps of the accession process helps the ARDIA partners to gain knowledge how such an accession process looks like in practice. An example from BW was given in the capacity building workshop on 8th October.

5) What are the experiences so far? What worked, what did not work? What objectives were reached?

Justification: This is an important question to understand to what extent the original objectives were met. Here the interviewer can also ask for lessons learned etc.

6) Is the cross-regional call scheme you participated in appropriate for other regions to join?

Justification: Here we can learn whether the respective cross-regional call might be interesting / suitable for other regions, too.

7) Within in the cross-regional call scheme you participated, were participating regions considered to be peers with partners on national level?

Justification: There is always a concern that participating regions are considered to be second class partners, e. g. because they sometimes bring smaller budgets with them.

8) Would you recommend other regions to participate in cross-regional call scheme? If so, why?

Justification. This is a question that summarises a bit the previous experiences discussed. Thus, this question shall not just been answered with “yes” or “no”, rather to provide an explanation / justification.

9) What would you do differently next time?

Justification: This question aims to discuss lessons learned. Even if the previous experiences might have been good, there is always room for improvements. It would be interesting to learn, what they are.

10) Is there any project you consider as best practice? If yes, please explain.

ARDIA-Net Partners

