

Implementing a Cross-regional Support scheme within the Alpine Region

- Good Practice -

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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 to 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 for 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 reasons 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-Net shall contribute to improve the framework conditions for cross-regional and cross-sectoral cooperation addressing common economic opportunities. ARDIA-Net 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 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.

This document presents good practice projects, which were funded under the five selected transitional funding schemes identified

- ERA-NET Classic
- ERANET "Common Pot"
- EUREKA Network Call
- EUREKA / EUROSTARS
- Innovation Nordic Innovation

The document presents the name of call schemes, the project names, key objectives and reasons why it is considered as a good practice example.

2. GOOD PRACTICES

ERA-NET "Classic"

ERA-NET Classic was the starting point of collaboration during FP6. 2+n (national, regional) funding programmes from different countries and regions joined with the intention to organise cross-border calls and research projects. Existing national funding programmes then coordinate the selection, parallel funding and joint monitoring of project proposals. Minimum requirements are:

- overlapping or at least otherwise matching research topics,
- reliable budget commitments and
- synchronised timetables.

Good practice project: PlasmaTex

Call Scheme: MNT ERANET Call 2014

Duration: 2016 – 2018

Consortium

1	Ghent University	Coordinator	Belgium
2	CENTEXBEL	Partner	Belgium

3	Centre for Textile Science and Technology, University of Minho	Partner	Portugal
4	Jozef Stefan Institute	Partner	Slovenia
5	Smart Com d.o.o	Partner	Slovenia
6	National Institute for Laser, Plasma & Radiation Physics	Partner	Romania
7	S.C. DAVO STAR IMPEX S.R.L	Partner	Romania

Content: The main objective was to investigate new classes of antibacterial coatings for medical materials. The project focused on PACVD of nano-coatings on textiles and plastics with the possibility to control the release of the antibacterial agent by the use of barrier layers.

Why it serves as a good practice? To solve the scientific questions related to the deposition of antibacterial coatings, different competences in the field of coating technology, health care and textile material and application were needed. The project brought together cutting edge competences from coating technology (partners from Belgium), Life Sciences / Chemistry (partners from Slovenia) and Textile (Romanian and Portuguese partners). In 2014 there was no alternative Call under H2020 that the partners could have used getting engaged in such an interdisciplinary R&D project. The MNT-ERANET funding scheme allowed to set up such a consortium. It also allowed SMEs (Smart Com d.o.o. and S. C. DAVO STAR IMPEX S.R.L) to cooperate with leading R&D institutions (Ghent University and Jozef Stefan Institute).

ERA-NET with common pot

ERA-Nets with a common pot approach evolved from the ERA-NET Classic. One major problem of ERA-NET Classic was/is the unbalanced budget structure. It occurred, that well evaluated projects were not funded, because one single funding programme could not finance its regional/national participation out of their own budgets. Driven by the intention to further integrate the funding approach, and in order to optimise the number of research projects funded, so-called common pots were realised. They included the obligation to co-fund projects and their partners *outside* the own national or regional funding programme. Common pots may be virtual (contractual obligation) or real (including a joint budget).

Good practice project: IMPLEMENT

Call Scheme: ERA Per Med Call 2018

Duration: 2019 – 2020

Partners:

1 McGill University of Canada	Coordinator	Canada
2 Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry	Partner	Germany
3 Bar-Ilan University	Partner	Israel
4 Maastricht University Medical Center	Partner	The Netherlands
5 University of Toronto	Partner	Canada

Content: The primary goal of this project is to develop a clinically useful biomarker panel to increase the precision of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) treatment. The consortium expands on its previous work on identifying biological markers, focusing on micro RNAs, using samples from a clinical trial of depression operated across 6 academic institutions.

Why it serves as a good practice? The ERANET funding scheme PerMed 2018 allowed European and non-European partners to cooperate in this ambitious scientific field. Partners from outside Europe were involved in order to assure access to cutting edge knowledge in Biomarkers for MDD treatments from Canada and Israel. There was no other transnational funding scheme available to finance such cooperation between European and non-European partners.

EUREKA Network

EUREKA is a large, Europe-centered network dedicated to foster research and innovation across borders. It is based on policy level contracts in between sovereign countries. “Umbrellas” and “Clusters”, thematic scientific and industrial networks, focused on a specific technology area or business sector. There, EUREKA projects are designed and proposed for funding, evaluated and recognised (“labelled”) through a EUREKA High Level Group. This shall help the projects to get funding from public and private sources. EUREKA is differently well accepted among the research and innovation funding programmes - e.g. much better in French programmes than it is in German ones. For some funding programmes, the label equals the status of a positive scientific evaluation result by the funding programme.

Good practice project: *heaRT-4-EU*

Call: *EUREKA Call 2015*

Duration: *2015 – 2018*

Partners

1 MRI.TOOLS	Coordinator	Germany
2 Universitätsmedizin Göttingen	Partner	Germany
3 Leiden University Medical Center	Partner	The Netherlands

Content: The "heaRT-4-EU" project aimed to develop software solutions for real-time Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRT). Such solutions might allow in the future to better detect heart defects.

Why it serves as a good practice? The key to the success of the "heaRT-4-EU" project was the transnational cooperation of partners and the possibility to bundle front-end knowledge. MRI.TOOLS GmbH from Germany, which was part of the project, concentrated on the further development of the hardware and developed small high-frequency antennas that improve the transmission and reception of MRI signals. The two Dutch partner institutions, MEDIS Leiden and Leiden University Medical Center, together with the team of the Heart Center Göttingen adapted the software accordingly. The EUREKA scheme also allowed partners from just two countries to cooperate, which would be impossible under H2020.

EUROSTARS Programme

Eurostars is a funding initiative of EUREKA member countries. It is co-funded by the European Commission in the frame of an EC Article 185 initiative, and implemented by EUREKA. Eurostars is dedicated to cross-border funding of R&D by SMEs. Calls are regularly (mostly annually) published, and projects funded subsequently.

Good practice project: RIPIS

Call: EUROSTARS CALL, 2011

Duration: 2011 – 2014

Partners

1 Solus Scientific Solutions Ltd	Coordinator	UK
2 Peacock Technology Ltd	Partner	UK
3 Bioadvantage Consulting	Partner	France

Content: The project aimed to develop a fully integrated automated robotic swab sampling and immunological assay system for installation in abattoirs to test carcasses for pathogenic organisms. Key targets were to decrease abattoir costs, improve meat safety/quality, increase product shelf-life and enable compliance with European regulations.

Why it serves as a good practice? This project is a nice example for a SME-driven R&D project from partners from just two countries. The beastliness is that small consortia with an excellent research proposal can receive funding under this scheme. This would be impossible under the FP7 scheme at that time.

Nordic Innovation

The Nordic Innovation funding scheme was established in 1971 and operationalised by a body (Nordic Innovation), which is officially in place to facilitate intergovernmental cooperation in the Nordic Region. Nordic Innovation supports programmes and projects that contribute to the policy objectives of the Cooperation Program for Innovation and Business 2018-2021, as agreed by the Nordic Ministers for Business and Innovation in late 2017.

Good practice project: *Nordic Network for Electric Aviation (NEA)*

Call: *Nordic Smart Mobility and Connectivity Programme*

Duration: 2019 – 2022

Partners:

1 Air Greenland	Greenland / Denmark
2 AVINOR	Norway
3 Braathens Regional Airlines	Norway
El Fly	Norway
Finnair	Finland
HEART Aerospace	Sweden
Icelandair	Iceland
Rise Research Institutes Sweden	Sweden
SAS	Sweden
Swedavia Airports	Sweden
Fossilfritt Flyg	Norway

Content: The main goal of the network is to reduce the carbon emissions for regional aviation. To achieve that, leading aviation partners from the Nordic Countries gathered their knowledge and people from many different sectors.

Why it serves as a good practice?

This project is a nice example for the possibility that partners from the macro-region (Baltic Region / Scandinavia) benefit from a transnational funding scheme and set-up a network to tackle global challenges. It took just 4 months from application until receiving funding.

ARDIA-Net Partners

