

# **Implementing a Cross-regional Support scheme within the Alpine Region**

## **- Cover Document -**

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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 economy<sup>1</sup>.

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 cooperation<sup>2</sup>.

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.

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

VDI/VDE-IT is one of the leading national funding agencies with currently 1.000 Mio. EUR public funding under financial management on behalf of national and regional programme owners. Furthermore, VDI/VDE-IT was one of the key drivers in setting up multi-governance structures for RDI among European Member States. The so called ERA-NET scheme, one of the main success stories regarding facilitating the European Research Area, was developed by VDI/VDE-IT, FFG Austria and other partners. With these partners, VDI/VDE-IT developed various trans-national funding schemes and governance structures with various levels of complexity. By this proposal, VDI/VDE-IT offers the ARDIA consortium support in developing multi-governance structure to facilitate cross-regional cooperation among Alpine Regions.

## 2. DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A JOINT CALL SCHEME

### – A TYPICAL WAY FORWARD

Designing and implementing a scheme that enables cross-regional cooperation, regardless whether it follows the idea of a synchronised or a joint call scheme always contains similar activities, which are listed below.

#### 2.1 Prerequisites

As a prerequisite, it is necessary, that,

- a) research and innovation needs, and
- b) matching research and innovation resources and capacities

of cooperating Alpine Regions are specified at least in a wider sense of research themes and sectors.

A broad initial idea about intended activity formats, and the type of targeted research/innovation actors<sup>3</sup> is helpful for the search and identification of funding programmes necessary for the call, because many of them focus on specific research and innovation areas, types of actors, and activities eligible for funding. It is not necessary to search for programmes with identical eligibility criteria, but matching ones (e.g. a mere research and innovation funding programme in one region with a SME innovation-funding programme in the other region. This information is necessary, because eligibility criteria of programmes are usually difficult to change, whereas the „openness for cooperation with parties outside the regional scope is usually easier to realize by administrations.

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<sup>3</sup> e.g. public/private, companies, small or large/academia/RTO etc.

## 2.2 Steps and results to be achieve a multi-level governance scheme

Programme owners and funding agencies across the Alpine Region may apply the following steps in preparation of a cross-regional cooperation scheme and implementing a cross-regional governance scheme<sup>4</sup>. IT shall be pointed out that both, the programme owner (policy) level as well as the funding agency (administrative) level have actively be involved in this endeavour.

Step	Task	Result	Actor
1	Identification areas of common interested and potentially suitable funding programmes to be used for cross-regional collaboration;	Specification of funding programmes with overlapping or matching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- research themes/technical scope</li> <li>- eligible activity formats</li> <li>- target groups</li> </ul>	ARDIA-Net
2	Discussions with programme owners and representatives from management authorities to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- asses openness/motivation for cross-regional cooperation</li> <li>- pre-existing knowledge and experiences in this regard</li> <li>- identify scope of interest</li> </ul>	Gradual administrative-technical suitability of funding programmes, and knowledge about their motivation for Cross-Alps cooperation	ARDIA-Net
3	Gaining certain kind of committed by interests regional partners	Signature of <b>MoU</b> (intention to participate as a regional funding partners)	Programme Owners
4	<i>Scope ("Call topic") and process planning</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- thematic scope and eligibility criteria</li> <li>- basic timeframe,</li> <li>- call promotion</li> <li>- proposal evaluation,</li> <li>- project monitoring</li> <li>- communication/accompanying of projects</li> </ul>	Draft Call Framework document, Consisting of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- draft table <b>Topics and Indicative Call Budget</b></li> <li>- draft <b>Call Time Table</b> for coordination and communication (of funding programmes)</li> </ul>	(informal) <i>Working Group with representatives from management authorities</i> , organised and supported by ARDIA-Net
5	<i>Implementation planning</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- tasks</li> <li>- resources</li> <li>- governance and</li> <li>- budgets</li> </ul>	Draft <b>Implementation Plan</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Labour division regarding call promotion</li> <li>- structure and design of call secretariat</li> <li>- proposal selection and evaluation process</li> <li>- project monitoring,</li> <li>- call evaluation,</li> <li>- call-network management.</li> </ul>	(informal) <i>Working Group with representatives from management authorities</i> , organised and supported by ARDIA-Net
6	<i>Governance planning</i> and formal individual and mutual commitments.	Draft <b>Consortium Agreement</b> , (project funding budget commitments)	Programme owners
7	Binding (general) commitment, Governance boards inaugural meetings This includes: Commitment to realize Implementation Plan	<b>Consortium Agreement</b> signed by all regional funding parties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- legal bodies are installed.</li> </ul> <b>Implementation Plan</b> endorsed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- implementation bodies entitled to start working</li> </ul>	(mandated) <i>Working group, Steering board</i> members
8	Start with Implementation		Call secretariat, funding partners

These tasks are mostly indispensable, except where taken over by a pre-existing consortium/network. However, the sequencing and extent may slightly, just like terms (like subjects covered under different

<sup>4</sup> The listing includes broader categories of technical administrative tasks only. Indispensable work with the research and innovation actors as a target group is not covered here, neither regarding the acquisition of appropriate projects and their actors.

documents named here) or the extent of the Call Secretariat (can vary from slim virtual secretariat up to long-term team in charge to implement several schemes).

## ANNEX: Forms/Good Practice Examples

Attached are templates for the documents printed in **bold letters** above:

Call framework documents:

- ⇒ **Topics and Indicative Call Budget**
- ⇒ **Implementation and Call Time Table**

**Implementation Plan** (activities, labour division, financing)

**Consortium Agreement**

**MoU** (RDI project funding)



## ARDIA-Net Partners

