

Implementing a Cross-regional Support scheme within the Alpine Region

- Guide for Proposers -

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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.

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.

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.

2. GUIDE FOR PROPOSERS

The following chapters describes a so called “Guide for Proposers”, which usually aims to provide all necessary call related information for interested applicants. The Guide for Proposers represents an important element of the multi-level governance structure and assure a fair and transparent implementation of related cross-regional Calls. Once the ARDIA Net consortium has made progress within the course of the project, it will be able to complete this Guide according to the Call specific content.

2.1 What is ARDIA-Net

Alpine Space regions must inter-links their local assets and excellent individual capacities to address challenges in future European RDI. Dynamic areas with significant impact are related to megatrends in circular-bioeconomy and health-economy that will tremendously impact the way of our status-quo economy. These fields are of high importance for strategic priorities under EUSALP. To tap into these synergies and unearth opportunities for innovation, cross-regional and cross-sectoral cooperation is imperative.

ARDIA-Net overcomes this challenge by developing an Alpine RDI Area (ARDIA) for tailor-made S3 cooperation across regions by developing a funding framework and projects for addressing megatrends across the AS. ARDIA introduces an effective framework for future cross-regional and interdisciplinary RDI projects, enhancing value chains inter-connection, investments, commercialisation, realising ESIF-H2020 synergies and ultimately upscaling Alpine Region efforts. The project empowers governance for fostering S3 cooperation for business support organisation, Academia and SME³.

2.2. Call Announcement

2.2.1. Objectives and Topics

The aim is to fund ambitious cross-regional research and innovation projects addressing the following needs and challenges

The PAN-ALPS Call 1 support research and innovation projects described through the Technology Readiness Levels (TRL). A more detailed description of the topics is available in Annex 1. A description of the TRLs can be found in Annex 2.

The individual regional thematic programme focus and funding rules (3.2.) must be taken into account.

2.2.2. Funding rules

Each project partner has to apply individually for national funding. For each project partner the funding rules of the respective regional/national programmes apply. This means that depending on the respective national/regional funding rules some project partners have to submit additional national/regional proposals or information on national/regional level.

To obtain detailed information about the specific funding rules and programme priorities we strongly recommend contacting the respective regional funding agencies (see Annex 3 for details).

³ Taken from ARDIA-Net Website <https://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/ardia-net/en/home>

2.2.3 Eligible project structure

Project consortia consisting of a minimum of **x** partners (all requesting funding) from at least **y** different regions participating in the PAN-ALPS Call 1 can apply. Partners not asking for funding can participate in addition to the minimum consortium of **x** partners from **y** different regions. The consortia may involve as many partners as necessary.

- Coordinator belongs to a region participating in the PAN-ALPS Call 1.
- Proposal addresses appropriate TRLs for selected PAN-ALPS Call 1 topics
- Proposal is recommended for Full-Proposal submission by PAN-ALPS Call 1 after Pre-Proposal stage.
- SMEs, large companies, academic research groups, universities, public research organisations or other research organisations may also participate according to their national/regional financing regulations.

Small to medium sized projects (4 or 5 partners on average per consortium) are expected. The roles of each partner within the consortium should clearly add value to the objectives of the proposed project. Depending on the nature of the project each partner in the consortium must demonstrate how it will exploit the expected results.

Regional funding rules apply. Therefore in some cases only certain topics, TRLs or types of organisations are eligible (e.g. some regional programmes fund only industrial but no academic partners, low/high TRLs). It is highly recommended to contact the respective regional funding agency before proposal submission (see Annex 3 for details).

A consortium agreement between the project partners is recommended for funded projects based on national/regional funding rules. However, the principles of the agreement should already be clear when submitting the proposal. The purpose of the consortium agreement is to clarify:

- the responsibilities of the partners;
- decision processes inside the project;
- management of any change of partners;
- how to exploit and/or commercialise the results (for each partner);
- IPR issues.

A template for the consortium agreement can be found at: www.xxxxxx.yy

2.2.4. Project budget

No overall limits have been defined on PAN-ALPS Call 1 level but regional limits regarding the available funding will apply.

2.2.5. Project duration

The maximum project duration cannot exceed 36 months. National/regional limits regarding the duration of projects will apply.

2.2.6. Dates and deadlines

The PAN-ALPS Call 1 is open from

Beginning: xx.yy.20zz Launch of PAN-ALPS Call 1

Deadline for submission of pre-proposals is : aa.bb.20cc, 12:00 noon CET time

Deadline for submission of full proposals is : **cc.dd.20cc, 12:00 noon CET time**

Submission of full proposals is only possible when successfully past the pre-proposal stage.

2.3. Application process

The PAN-ALPS Call 1 application process will be a 2-step procedure: Pre-Proposal and Full-Proposal.

1. Before submitting a proposal, all project partners must contact their respective /regional programme funding agencies in order to discuss the project line-up and the funding conditions.
2. A Pre-Proposal is mandatory. It has to be submitted by the coordinator through an online application form available at **www.xxx.yy**. At the same time regional funding applications must be submitted to each of the involved funding agency according to their specific rules (if applicable).
3. Regional funding agency will carry out assessments of Pre-Proposals and respective regional funding applications. The Pre-Proposal stage will be used to ensure that only high quality proposals which are in line with regional requirements are invited to the Full-Proposal stage. Applicants will be provided with feedback after the review of their Pre-Proposal, including a recommendation to submit (or not) a Full-Proposal.
4. A proposal has to be recommended for Full-Proposal submission by PAN-ALPS Call 1 after Pre-Proposal stage to be eligible.
5. A Full-Proposal (including Annex 1) must be submitted by the project coordinator through an online application form available at **www.xxx.yy**. At the same time regional funding applications must be submitted to each of the involved funding agency according to their specific rules.
6. The full proposals will be evaluated by funding agencies of the regional partners. Only those full proposals are finally recommended for funding that receive a positive evaluation of all regions involved in this dedicated proposal. For the final funding decision for a dedicated project proposal with “n” regional sub-projects, “n” positive decisions are necessary. Each region to whom on sub-project belongs, can make individual decisions according to their proposal selection procedures. At the PAN-ALPS selection meeting parties will agree on the projects that are going to be financed based on the ranking list and the available regional finance resources..
7. PAN-ALPS recommends the funding of projects to the respective funding agencies. The regional funding agencies or related programme owners make the final funding decision.

2.3.1. Stage 1: PAN-ALPS Call 1 Pre-Proposal

The Pre-Proposal gives an overview on the whole project. It is mandatory and has to be submitted in English by the project coordinator through an online application form available at **www.xxx.yy**. In addition to the Pre-Proposal (online submission) the corresponding national/regional funding application form may be requested by the respective funding agency according to their respective programme rules.

After eligibility check and evaluation of Pre-Proposals PAN-ALP gives advice to the project coordinators and recommends/does not recommend the submission of Full-Proposals.

2.3.2. Stage 2: PAN-ALPS Call 1 Full-Proposal (and national/regional funding applications)

The Full-Proposal gives an overview of the whole project and describes all national project parts. To receive funding, the national parts of the project must fulfil their national/regional criteria. This will create different submission and financing situations for partners from different countries.

2.3.3. Confidentiality

Proposals and any information relating to them (including the names of the evaluators) will be kept confidential and only be accessible to the organisations involved in the funding. Proposals will not be used for any purpose other than the evaluation of the applications, making funding decisions and monitoring of the project. International experts are required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to evaluating proposals.

2.4. Evaluation

The PAN-ALPS Call 1 aims at providing a transparent, fast and straight forward assessment of the submitted project proposals.

2.4.1. Pre-Proposal:

2.4.1.1 Eligibility check and evaluation criteria

At PAN-ALP Call 1 level:

- Pre-Proposal submitted on or before deadline.
- Presence of requested PAN-ALPS Call 1 Pre-Proposal form in English.
 - Minimum of 3 partners (all requesting funding) from at least 2 different regions participating in the PAN-ALPS Call 1
 - Partners not asking for funding can participate in addition to the minimum consortium of 3 partners from 2 different regions.
- Coordinator belongs to a region participating in the PAN-ALPS Call 1.
- TRLs are in line with the call topic.
- Maximum project duration of **x** years.
- Pre-Proposal is recommended for submission for a Full-Proposal by at least 2 funding agencies from the countries/regions involved.

At regional level:

- Presence of requested regional Pre-Proposal forms (if applicable).
- Minimum number of eligible, independent partners (if applicable, criteria of involved funding programmes apply).
- Relevance to funding programme (if applicable, criteria of involved funding programmes apply).
- Financial status of applicants, especially industrial applicants.

2.4.1.2 Result of Pre-Proposal assessment

At regional level the assessment of Pre-Proposal results in one of the recommendations, to be communicated to the applicants:

- Recommended for submitting the Full-Proposal (including requirements and/or potential comments for improvement).
- Not recommended (motivated - mandatory comments).

2.4.2. Full-Proposal

2.4.2.1 Eligibility check

Eligibility checks of the Full-Proposal are done before the evaluation.

At PAN-ALPS Call 1 level:

- Full Proposal submitted on or before deadline.
- Presence of requested PAN-ALPS Call 1 Full-Proposal form and Annex 1 to the Full-Proposal form in English.
- Minimum of 3 partners (all requesting funding) from at least 2 different regions participating in the PAN-ALPS Call 1.
- Partners not asking for funding can participate in addition to the minimum consortium of 3 partners from 2 different regions.
- Coordinator belongs to a region participating in the PAN-ALPS Call 1
- TRLs are in line with the call topic.
- Maximum project duration of **x** years.
- Only in exceptional cases changes from Pre-Proposal to Full-Proposal are allowed.
- Proposal is recommended for funding by at least 2 funding agencies from the countries/regions involved after the Pre-Proposal assessment.

At National/regional level:

- Recommendations given in the Pre-Proposal stage are fulfilled.

2.4.2.2 Result of Full-Proposal eligibility check:

At national/regional level the eligibility check of Full-Proposals results in a preliminary commitment to the Full-Proposal, depending the outcome of the central evaluation.

2.4.2.3. Evaluation of Full-Proposal:

The full proposals will be evaluated by funding agencies of the regional partners. Only those full proposals are finally recommended for funding that receive a positive evaluation of all regions involved in this dedicated proposal.

The PAN-ALPS Call 1 Evaluation Procedure:

- Individual written assessments according to regulations of regional funding partners and participating programme
- Compilation of individual regional assessments: For the final funding decision for a dedicated project proposal with “n” regional sub-projects, “n” positive decisions are necessary
- A ranking list of recommended projects is based on the scoring.
- All of the involved funding agencies finally meet for a selection meeting to assemble and commit themselves to the final list of selected proposals (selection list). The selection is based on the PAN-ALP Call 1 ranking list and the available national/regional finance resources..

- If there are big differences in the Full-Proposal compared to the recommended Pre-Proposal and/or the eligibility criteria are not fulfilled the Full-Proposal may be rejected without evaluation.
- The names of the independent experts will be kept confidential.

The PAN-ALP Call 1 Evaluation Criteria for Full-Proposal:

The Full-Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Excellence
- Impact
- Quality and efficiency of the implementation

Evaluation criteria, scoring and thresholds are described in Annex 4.

2.6. Decision

2.6.1. Decision process

The PAN-ALP Call 1 selection meeting results in the PAN-ALP Call 1 recommendation for funding decisions at regional level. The recommended selection list will be forwarded to the involved programme owners who will be in charge of the final funding decisions.

2.6.2. Funding

2.6.2.1. Contract

Funding contracts are signed directly between the project partners and their national/regional funding agencies.

2.6.2.2. Payments and Start of projects

Depending on the national/regional regulations, a pre-condition for transferring the first funding instalments might be the existence of a consortium agreement that also includes IPR related issues.

It is highly recommended that the project starting and finishing dates are the same for all project parties. As the national funding contracts may not all become effective at the same time, the project parties:

- Usually do not receive the instalments at the same time,
- Usually are not reviewed/monitored on national/regional level at exactly the same time however, the PAN-ALP Call 1 consortium will help to minimise these gaps.

2.7. Monitoring

2.7.1. National/regional project review

The progress of each individual contract / project will be monitored by the respective regional funding agency through specific project review processes.

7.2. PAN-ALP reporting

Apart from the national/regional project review, the transnational cooperation aspects will be monitored on PAN-ALP level, e.g. by using online questionnaires.

7.3. Change in active projects

Any substantial change in an on-going project must be reported immediately to the involved funding agencies. The project partners should be aware that changes may affect their funding.

2.8. Dissemination

A reference to PAN-ALP Call 1 is requested in publications, exhibitions, lectures and press information concerning results of the projects.

2.9. Support

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) are listed in the website (www.xxxx.yy). In addition, all funding agencies and related programme participating in the call will provide assistance to project proposers in the case of any questions.

List of appendices:

Appendix 1: Thematic priorities for the PAN-ALP Call 1

Appendix 2: Technology Readiness Level description

Appendix 3: Funding agencies and related programmes participating in the PAN-ALP Call 1

Appendix 4: PAN-ALP Full Proposal Evaluation Criteria

ARDIA-Net Partners

