


Programme Impact Assessment

Interreg Alpine Space programme

2014-2020



21/02/2020



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Acronyms

AC: Alpine Convention

AF: Application Form

AG: Action Group

AIR: Annual Implementation Report

ASP: Alpine Space Programme

EEIG: European Economic Interest Grouping

EGCT: European Group of Territorial Cooperation

ERDF: European Regional Development Fund

ETC: European Territorial Cooperation

EUSAIR: European Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region

EUSALP: European Strategy for the Alpine Region

EUSDR: European Strategy for the Danube Region

JS: Joint Secretariat

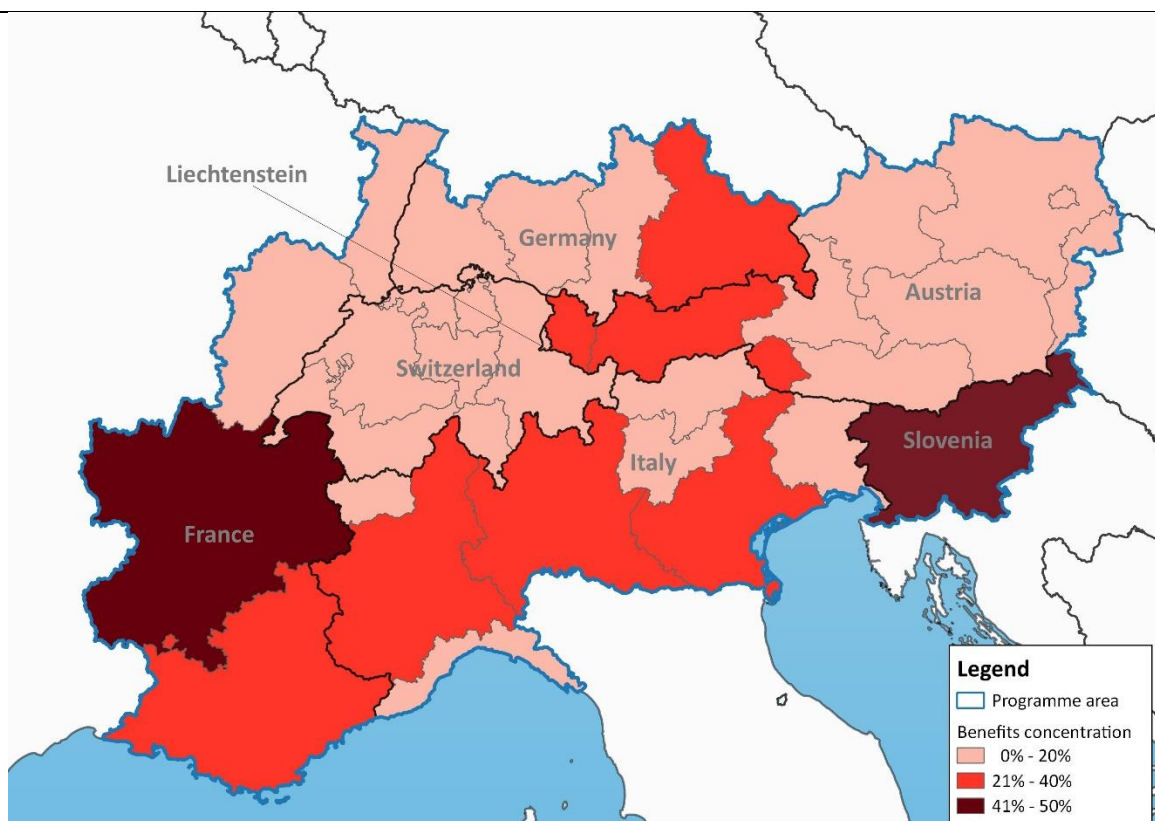
SO: Specific Objective

PA: Priority Axis

Executive Summary

| | |
|--|--|
| EQ 1 Which benefits have been brought by the programme to the cooperation area? | |
| 100% Learning and knowledge | All the beneficiaries involved in the web-survey declared that the project activities allowed them to reinforce their learning and knowledge. In particular, the exchange of good practices contributed to creating stable collaborations and increasing awareness of the topics addressed by the projects. |
| 81% Governance and policy | Policy impacts were particularly notable in the alpine area. This was due to the capacity of the projects to involve the decision makers as partners, observers and as final users of the outputs delivered. Moreover, the provision of appropriate policy instruments, frameworks and tools allowed the policy actions to be concretely implemented in the territories, generating the expected behavioural change at policy level. Some significant differences between SOs were observed. |
| 68% Environment and sustainability | Environmental and sustainability benefits have been produced, in particular by projects under PA 2 and PA 3 which represent the 'green' side of the programme. The rising interest within the general public in the environmental themes led to a stronger political commitment and thus enhanced the role of low-carbon measures in the local/regional strategies. |
| 63% Socio-economic benefit | Socio-economic benefits have been experienced by projects even though at a lower extent if compared to the aforementioned ones. Typical advantages are represented by increased business activities and the capacity to deliver new products, processes, services and techniques. Some measures have been implemented to valorise the alpine identity, benefitting the existing businesses and making the cooperation area more attractive to new potential investors. |
| EQ 2 Could spill over effects be observed? | |
| Beyond the benefits directly brought by the programme, it may be expected that additional effects will be generated. In particular, the general improvement in the knowledge of specific issues, typically belonging to the Alpine Space but also transferable in other context/territories/population, may reinforce, in the long term, the capacity of the actors to react to the challenges properly and efficiently. Other spill over effects are expected to be experienced due to the natural chain of benefits coming from more responsible behaviours with regard to the environmental themes. Therefore, the Alpine Space Programme has the potential to generate a multiplier effect in the long term, thus further investigations appear to be necessary. | |
| EQ 3 How are the effects of the programme distributed in the alpine territory? | |
| Beneficiaries involved in the web-survey were asked to localise the effects of their interventions in the programme area. As the map below shows, benefits are largely concentrated in the French region of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and in Slovenia as a whole country. In Italy the regions mainly concerned are: Piedmont, Lombardy and Veneto. Austria is predominantly covered in Vorarlberg, | |

Tirol and Salzburg, while in Germany the impacts of the programme are largely localised in Upper Bavaria.



EQ 4 As a specification of the previous question and based on the evaluation plan, 'how has the programme contributed to such change and how are the effects of the programme distributed in the alpine territory (metropolises, cities, stable /growing /declining /shrinking rural areas, tourism areas)?'

All in all, the programme performed well in reaching the mountainous territories, considered by 40% of respondents as the predominant areas concerned by the benefits. Also, rural areas have been reached by the projects (34% of respondents) while the urban areas have been targeted at a lower extent (26%). Regarding the latter, as expected, projects under SO 1.1 which focus on the framework conditions for innovation, mainly interested the urban areas. Looking instead to the types of urban areas, data from the survey indicate that the benefits brought by the projects are mainly concentrated in municipalities with over 50 000 inhabitants.

EQ 5 What added value has the programme delivered for the quality of life of the people living in the area?

With reference to the situation analysis of the programme area and the well-being dimensions targeted by the programme's action, the financed interventions have shown to have improved the quality of life of the individuals in the alpine space and societies in the following fields:

- Climate change adaptation and transition to alternative energy sources:

Projects invested both in more mature and relatively new topics and increased awareness of the environmental added value of adopting low-carbon solutions. The relevance of the sectors in which they are applied (mainly housing and mobility) provides evidence on the capacity of the interventions to concretely impact on the well-being of the individuals. Moreover, the involvement of political entities may ensure that future generations enjoy the benefits of the low-carbon approach.

- Innovation and competitiveness:

The added value brought by projects resulted in a wider offer of services supporting the business of the alpine space. SMEs and firms can now count on an improved framework where the actors of

innovation had the chance to discover different approaches and exchange practices. Such actions have the potential to enrich not only the economic but also the environmental and social dimensions. The offer of services could have a higher coverage of alpine marginal areas.

- Socio-demographic trends:

Socio-demographic changes, such as an ageing population and a drain of younger people from peripheral areas in favour of larger cities, have been faced by improving the services of general interest for disadvantaged people. A better supply of such services promoted social cohesion, encouraged pluralism and addressed migration issues.

- Mobility of goods and persons

This dimension was dealt mainly by projects under SO 2.2. The project activities such as the events involving all the actors from the transport chain, produced behavioural change in stakeholders with regard to the mobility of both goods and people. Regarding the former, through combined transport approaches, while for the latter, by creating the conditions for a reduction in private car ownership, allowing savings for households.

EQ 6 How and to what extent do the programme/ projects deliver change in policy making?

The policy impact has been observed in the following SOs:

SO 1.1 Improve the framework conditions for innovation in the Alpine Space

From the analysis of the survey and from the case studies it emerged that the impact on policy is more limited than expected. In particular, only 17% of the respondents declared that their projects are contributing to a better delivery of policy instruments. This evidence is associated with the lower direct involvement (i.e. as a project partners) of the regional and national authorities and can be explained by a low demand depending on the difficult to cope with already existing policy frameworks, instruments and tools.

SO 1.2 Increase the capacity for the delivery of services of general interest in a changing society

All projects under SO 1.2 generated governance and policy benefits. They showed dynamism and effectiveness in dealing with policy, so creating the conditions for durable use of their outputs. In particular, the capacity to deliver appropriate policy instruments, frameworks and tools to be adopted at a regional level (almost 4 out of 10 SO 1.2 partners are regional/ local public authorities) represents a high potential in terms of durability.

SO 2.1 Establish trans-nationally integrated low carbon policy instruments

Comparatively with the other SOs, the projects financed under SO 2.1 have shown high capacity to influence policy. Evidence from case studies shows that the impact is particularly strong at local and regional level rather than at national, especially in larger countries. Moreover, it emerged that approaches based on the aggregation of demand by small municipalities can facilitate the implementation of the Energy Action Plans at local level.

SO 2.2 Increase the options for low-carbon mobility and transport

Regardless of the high presence of regional and local public authorities, the projects have produced limited benefits in terms of governance and policy making. This suggests that the strategic elements generated by the projects, (e.g. recommendations for combined transport systems) will be used mainly within the project partnerships where they were originated.

SO 3.1 Sustainably valorise Alpine Space cultural and natural heritage

Policy change does not seem to be an impact brought about by the projects. The heterogeneity of the projects (food, landscape, education, building, natural risk) seems to reflect the lack of thematic focus/ concentration of this SO. The lack of clarity regarding the change targeted by the projects (and by the programme) could negatively affect the durability of the projects outputs and results and thus the commitment of the policy makers in delivering changes in those fields.

SO 3.2 Enhance the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of Alpine Space ecosystems

Evidence collected indicates that the projects are strongly contributing to the change targeted by the programme. Improved stakeholders' involvement was identified by the projects as the main benefit produced in terms of governance and policy. Moreover, projects are also contributing to the improvement of monitoring and evaluation systems to capture environmental information to be used as a basis for local planning.

SO 4.1 - Increase the application of multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space

As expected, governance and policy benefits are generated extensively. Partners gained a better capacity to involve the relevant stakeholders and provided good solutions to remove the barriers to cooperation and delivering policy instruments.

EQ 7 In how far has the programme contributed to achieving a higher quality and intensity of transnational cooperation?

Most of the projects are the result of existing and previous collaborations among the partners. This shows how the programme was capable of reinforcing the networks and synergies on a transnational basis. Of note is one of the outputs expected to be delivered by the projects, the *transnational cooperation structures* which have been interpreted consistently with the goals of each specific objective. Typical cooperation structures are platforms, joint models, tools and mechanisms for regular consultation and information exchange, think tanks and multilevel community networks.

EQ 8 Which specific benefits is transnational cooperation bringing (as opposed to other actions)?

Transnational cooperation appears to be valuable in all the topics faced by the programme. However, the analysis reveals that the added value is particularly remarkable in the following fields:

- Environment, climate and energy: a mere local action would not allow maximization of the benefits people obtain from ecosystems and ecological connectivity. Bad behaviour in one area indeed, produces effects in other territories as well, thus making joint actions more efficient and effective. Moreover, collecting information and data on territories sharing the same geographical features helps to create a common language to monitor and evaluate natural phenomena.
- Combined transports: traffic does not stop at the borders and transport happens in a network crossing different countries. A purely local, regional or national solution would not enable the pursuit of economic scales and savings.

EQ 9 How have the priorities and/ or specific objectives contributed to wider strategies?

Alpine Space programme area shares its territory with three macro-regional strategies: EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). The present report focused on the relation with the EUSALP rather than the others and the assessment revealed that Alpine Space programme considerably and effectively contributes to it (for the detailed analysis please refer to paragraph 10 of this report).

EQ 10 As a specification of the question on wider strategies, how have the priorities and/ or specific objectives contributed to Europe 2020 and horizontal principles?

For each specific objective, the evaluators have built the intervention logic starting from the challenges reported in the Swot Analysis of the programme, which has been developed along the three priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Therefore, the analysis of the contribution of the programme to Europe 2020 strategy was integrated into the impact assessment carried out for each specific objective. In very general terms, the financed projects (and thus the programme) demonstrated capacity to implement the actions needed to tackle those challenges and meet the Europe 2020 strategy objectives.

| |
|--|
| <p>EQ 11 As a specification of the previous question on wider strategies, how have the priorities and/ or specific objectives contributed to territorial agenda?</p> |
| <p>The links between the programme intervention and the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 were investigated in the ex-ante assessment where it emerged that all the axes, and thus the specific objectives, have the potential to contribute to its challenges. The evaluation activities allowed to observe that no major risks of conflict nor relevant changes compromising such links occurred.</p> |
| <p>EQ 12 To what extent has the programme contributed to improving the framework conditions for innovation? (SO 1b.1)</p> |
| <p>The programme represented an opportunity for projects partners and target groups to improve the knowledge and skills in the field of research and innovation. The existence of universities and research centres with strong capacity can be considered as a driver for a better framework for innovation. However, to ensure impacts on the political level, the involvement of the regional and national policy makers is considered necessary.</p> |
| <p>EQ 13 To what extent has the programme contributed to increasing the capacity of social organisations and public authorities to deliver innovation in the field of social services and services of general interest (SO 1b.2)?</p> |
| <p>Methodologies originated by the projects in the field of social innovation created policy instruments to support decision makers as guidelines for policy on pricing outcomes, procurement and contracting. The elaborated governance models contributed to improve local/ regional approaches and introduced innovative measures to encourage social cohesion.</p> |
| <p>EQ 14 To what extent has the programme contributed to increasing the implementation of low-carbon policy instruments (SO 4e.1)?</p> |
| <p>Projects financed have shown high capacity to increase the implementation of low-carbon policy instruments and to influence policy processes. This success can be explained by the large involvement of local/ regional authorities responsible for the adoption of low-carbon measures. To be noted that an important contribution consisted of increasing the awareness also on new topics like circular economy.</p> |
| <p>EQ 15 To what extent has the programme contributed to increasing the access and use of low carbon mobility and transport options (SO 4e.2)?</p> |
| <p>Projects are increasing the awareness and inducing behavioural change in stakeholder opinion and also producing tangible impacts in terms of environmental and sustainability benefits. Moreover, some economic benefits happened with special regard to cost saving measures while policy impacts appear to be low under this SO regardless the high presence of regional and local public authorities.</p> |
| <p>EQ 16 To what extent has the programme contributed to increasing the sustainable valorisation of cultural and natural heritage (SO 6c.1)?</p> |
| <p>The projects financed deal with very different topics, all handled under a sustainable perspective. This makes the evaluation of this SO more problematic. Preservation and promotion of the cultural food heritage was identified as a key factor of the sustainable development model, especially for peripheral mountain areas. Further investigated fields were the transformation of former industrial landscapes, the protection of green areas and better connection for the people. To be noted that it was not easy to recognise the tourism topic in the projects financed.</p> |
| <p>EQ 17 To what extent has the programme contributed to increasing the ecosystem services approach in the policy systems of the Alpine Space (SO 6d.1)?</p> |
| <p>Projects financed contributed to better develop an alpine ecosystem services concept and increase the awareness on the importance of such services for people's wellbeing. Moreover, the political</p> |

attention to the green infrastructures and ecological connectivity led to a wider adoption and development of the ecosystem approach in the alpine space. In particular, improvements on the monitoring and evaluation systems for spatial planning purpose occurred.

EQ 18 To what extent has the programme contributed to increasing the application of multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space (SO 11.1)?

As expected, governance and policy benefits are generated at a large extent. Partners gained a better capacity to promote participatory forms to decision making processes able to improve the governance in the alpine area. However, it can be noted that multilevel and transnational governance is a very horizontal application concerning all the SOs of the programme.

EQ 19 Are there any specific disbenefits emerging from the programme cooperation?

The evaluation did not reveal any disbenefits.

EQ 20 To what extent have the project outputs/ solutions been adopted/ transferred beyond the project partnership?

Project outputs and solutions are mainly used by the members of the partnership but some interesting examples of a wider adoption emerged from the case studies. The first refers to the PlurAlps project (SO 1.2) where the partners signed formal agreements with local actors (association, cooperatives, SMES...) to implement pilot actions, based on a shared knowledge and know-how, aimed to promote social and labour inclusion of migrants at local level. The second comes from GoApply project (SO 4.1) where an observer municipality integrated in its spatial planning strategy some climate change adaptation measures discussed and developed by the project. In general terms, the same capacity of the projects to influence the policy makers (see EQ 6) can be considered also as the capacity to generate outputs and results replicable and usable in other contexts and by other stakeholders.

EQ 21 What is the durability of programme outputs and results?

All in all, projects showed capacity to deliver outputs and results durable over the time. The durability lays down the nature itself of the outputs (platform, pilot activity) and the reinforcement of cooperation among stakeholders. Regarding the former, there are cases where partners committed for maintenance and/ or financing activities in the future. With regard to the latter, collaboration has been formally established by signing agreements and memorandum, showing the willingness of partners to pursue successful cooperation and networks. When the governance and policy benefits result lower (as it is the case of SO 1.1), durability appears to be more questionable.

I Purpose and structure of the report

This is the final report of the impact evaluation phase I of the Alpine Space programme. The impact evaluation will last until 2022; this report illustrates the results of the analyses carried out in 2019.

Compared to the previous programming periods, the ETC regulation for the 2014-2020 period adopts a new definition of the term “impact” which is no more considered as the long terms effect of a given policy intervention, but as the direct contribution of the policy intervention to the targeted change.

This is not a simple terminological difference. In the “new” logical framework the impact should be considered as one part/component of the targeted result (and not as “a long-term result” as in the previous programming period). More precisely the impact is the part/ component of the targeted change (i.e. “the result”) which we can directly attribute to the policy intervention.

The objective of the impact evaluation is to identify how and at which extent the programme was capable to directly contribute to the changes targeted in 2014.

In 2014, representatives of the countries and regions involved in the Alpine Space area agreed on a list of seven key changes that they wanted to achieve (these are the seven specific objectives of the Alpine Space programme).

This report illustrates how and at which extent the Alpine Space programme has contributed to the seven targeted changes. Its structure reflects this objective with seven chapters (i.e. chapters from 3 to 9), each of them: (1) retraces the key elements of the intervention logic planned in 2014 (i.e. key needs and challenges, targeted change); (2) verifies what has been achieved until now; (3) summarises the key findings and provides some inputs for the design of the future Alpine Space Programme. Moreover, each of these seven chapters provides examples of possible factsheets to illustrate the benefits/ results brought by the projects.

The last chapter is dedicated to the assessment of the relation to EUSALP.

2 Methodological approach

This chapter illustrates the overall organisation of the evaluation activities and the methods/ tools used for responding to the main objectives of the impact evaluation and to the related evaluation questions.

To be noted that the present report embraces the first phase of the impact evaluation, while the second shall take place in 2022. In line with what was specified in the inception report, the evaluators used a set of different methods which are detailed in the following table:

Figure 2-1 Overview of the methodological approach

| | | Phase I | | | |
|---|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Identify the benefits brought by the programme | Desk analysis | Web survey (call 1, call 2) | 12 case studies | | 1 Focus group |
| 2. Gain insights into the relation with EUSALP | | | | 12 interviews | |
| 3. Gather inputs for the future programme | | | | | |

2.1 DESK ANALYSIS

The evaluators conducted ad hoc desk analysis of programme documents in order to rebuild the intervention logic of each programme Specific Objective.

The idea was to highlight the specific change targeted by the programme at the beginning of the programming period and assess at which extent financed interventions were contributing to the expected results.

The evaluators consulted then data from the monitoring system, namely:

- Financial allocation and number of financed projects per SO;
- Type of beneficiaries and their localisation across the territories;
- Application forms and progress reports;
- AIR 2018.

Moreover, in the context of the specific assessment of the relation with EUSALP, the following documents were analysed:

- Evaluation of programme communication, effectiveness and stakeholder involvement of the Interreg Alpine Space 2014–2020 Programme,
- ASP Brochure on “Alpine Cooperation Stories”,

- ASP Brochure on “10 REASONS FOR TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE ALPS”
- Expert Report on “Strategy Development for the Alpine Space. Final Report” (2013)
- EUSALP Action Plan (2015)
- Communication from the European Commission concerning a European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (2015)
- COWI Study “Study on Macroregional Strategies” (2017)
- European Commission 2019 Implementation Report of Macro-Regional Strategies
- EUSALP AG 2 Document “Added value of the EUSALP for clusters and enterprises”
- Data review of on-going and closed ASP 2014-2020 Projects
- Interviews to 3 ASP and 10 EUSALP stakeholders
- Analysis of relevant parts of the Web Survey to ASP project partners
- Analysis of relevant parts of Case Study review of ASP projects

2.2 WEB SURVEY

The aim of the web survey was to collect specific inputs on the types of benefits produced directly from the Alpine Space Programme beneficiaries.

The survey was structured around the matrix agreed in the inception report which resumed the possible/potential types of benefits produced by the Alpine Space projects. This matrix has been elaborated by the evaluators by taking into account (1) the typology of results developed by Interact, (2) the analysis of the sub-dimensions of change foreseen by the result indicator surveys, (3) study on the impacts of transnational cooperation carried out by the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure in Germany, (4) the analysis of 12 application forms of approved Alpine Space projects.

The aim of such approach was to create an opportunity for increasing the capacity of the projects to reflect on the benefits they are bringing to the territories.

The web survey was launched in the first week of July 2019 and remained open until the 30 September. The projects involved were 33 - ~~selected~~ all those which were approved under call 1 and call 2.

The response rate can be considered representative. The total number of replies received is 80, which corresponds to 20% of the total programme beneficiaries. The distribution of the replies across the SOs is illustrated in the table below:

Table 2-1 Number of replies to the web-survey

| SO | N . replies |
|--------|-------------|
| SO1.1 | 12 |
| SO1.2 | 10 |
| SO2.1 | 18 |
| SO2.2 | 8 |
| SO3.1 | 9 |
| SO3.2 | 18 |
| SO 4.1 | 5 |

2.3 CASE STUDIES

The evaluators carried out 12 case studies selected through the following criteria, defined in the inception report:

- state of progress of the project (priority was given to closed projects)
- coverage of all specific objectives
- 10 projects from the first 2 calls and 2 projects from call 3

For each case study the evaluators proceeded to analyse all relevant reports/documents produced by the projects and to interview the lead partner and one partner or a target group representative.

The evaluators carried out 12 interviews with the project lead partners and 12 with project partners/ target group). When interviewing the lead partner organisation, evaluators asked them to indicate whether the interview with a target group representative could provide useful information regarding the impact generated by the project. The idea was to collect the point of view of some final users of project outputs.

The majority of the lead partners indicated other partners and only two lead partners suggested to contact target group representatives. These are: (i) GoApply project, whose lead partner suggested to interview the Municipality of Kempten, which is an observer but also the final user of project outputs; (ii) PlurAlps project, whose lead partner indicated the French municipality of Les Bellevilles, which is part of the Community Network Alliance in the Alps (AIDA).

The table below summarises the interviews carried out in the context of the case studies.

Table 2-2 Interviews carried out in the context of the case studies

| Project | Lead Partner | Date | Partner/ group target | Date |
|-------------------------|---|------------|--|------------|
| AlpEs | EURAC (IT) | 02/09/2019 | CEREMA (FR) | 19/12/2019 |
| PEACE Alps | Regione Piemonte (IT) | 04/09/2019 | Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Énergie Environnement (FR) | 10/10/2019 |
| GoApply | Umweltbundesamt (UBA), German Environment Agency (DE) | 05/09/2019 | The City of Kempten (DE) | 15/11/2019 |
| ALPBIONET030 | ALPARC – Réseau Alpin des Espaces Protégés (FR) | 05/09/2019 | Parc Naziunal Svizzer (CH) | 08/11/2019 |
| Links4Soils | Agricultural Institute of Slovenia (SI) | 09/09/2019 | Municipality of Kaufering (DE) | 21/10/2019 |
| S3-4 AlpClusters | HES-SO//FR HEIA-FR - INNOSQUARE CLUSTERS (CH) | 10/09/2019 | Business Upper Austria – Wirtschaftsagentur GmbH (AT) | 04/10/2019 |
| PlurAlps | Regional Development Vorarlberg eGen (AT) | 12/09/2019 | Les Bellevilles (Community Network Alliance in the Alps) (FR) | 25/09/2019 |
| AlpINNOCT | Bavarian State Ministry of Housing, Building and Transport (DE) | 20/09/2019 | Autorità portuale di Trieste (IT) | 17/10/2019 |
| C-TEMAIp | Veneto Innovazione Spa (IT) | 18/09/2019 | Italian-German Handelskammer Munchen - ITALCAM (DE) | 11/10/2019 |
| GRETA | Technical University Munich (DE) | 26/09/2019 | ARPA Agenzia Regionale per la protezione dell'Ambiente della Valle d'Aosta (IT) | 25/10/2019 |

| Project | Lead Partner | Date | Partner/ group | target | Date |
|-----------------------|--|------------|---------------------------------|--------|------------|
| ATLAS | EURAC (IT) | 01/10/2019 | Energieinstitut Vorarlberg (AT) | | 11/12/2019 |
| Smart Villages | Swiss Centre for Mountain Regions (CH) | 17/09/2019 | University of Ljubljana (SI) | | 02/10/2019 |

2.4 INTERVIEWS TO GAIN INSIGHT INTO THE RELATION WITH EUSALP

Evaluators carried out 13 interviews to gain insights into the relation with EUSALP. This analysis aimed to investigate how the projects and the programme are contributing to the implementation of EUSALP, and which specific and general contributions can be identified.

The following table shows the list of organisations interviewed.

Table 2-3 List of organisations interviewed

| Organisation | Role in ASP | Role in AEUSALP | Date |
|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| State Ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection | PC member / task force 2021+ member | | 11/09/2019 |
| Federal Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism | PC member / task force 2021+ member | Member of executive board | 16/09/2019 |
| ARE - Federal Office for Spatial Development | PC member / task force 2021+ member | Member of executive board | 18/09/2019 |
| University of Milan, Italy | | EUSALP AG 1 Leader | 25/09/2019 |
| Region Auvergne-Rhone Alpes. Coopération Européennes, Directon des relations internationales | Task force 2021+ member | EUSALP AG 2 leader | 17/09/2019 |
| Trentino | | EUSALP AG 3 Leader | 02/10/2019 |
| Tirol, Transport Planning | | EUSALP AG 4 leader | 24/09/2019 |
| SAB | | EUSALP AG 5 leader | 16/09/2019 |
| Alpine Convention | | EUSALP AG 6 leader | 11/09/2019 |
| Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation | | EUSALP AG 7 Leader | scheduled for 13/11 |
| Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Dep. IV/5 - Torrent and Avalanche Control Service | | EUSALP AG 8 leader | 19/09/2019 |
| Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Énergie Environnement | | EUSALP AG 9 leader | 25/09/2019 |
| Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Dipartimento per le politiche di Coesione | | EUSALP presidency | written answer |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---------------------------|
| | | | received on 25/10/2019 |
|--|--|--|---------------------------|

3 Improve the framework conditions for innovation in the Alpine Space

3.1 WHAT IS THE CHANGE THAT THE PROGRAMME WANTS TO ACHIEVE?

3.1.1 Key needs and challenges identified

The territorial analysis carried out between 2013 and 2014 offers an overview of the key characteristics of the Alpine Space area in terms of knowledge-based economy and innovation.

The analysis highlighted the strengths of the area (i.e. “rich in excellent universities, research institutions, good business, culture and support structures and high innovation potential both in research and in business”) but also underlined the limited “transversal cooperation between universities, research institutions, administrations and business”.

The box below summarises the key strengths and weaknesses identified in 2014 which were at the basis of the definition of specific objective 1.1.

Box 3-1 SO 1.1 - Relevant needs and challenges identified in 2014

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High R&D expenditure • Universities and research centres with strong capacities • One of the most innovative places in Europe • SMEs, medium-sized cap companies and large enterprises are leaders in their field and enjoy a high innovation competitive edge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited inter-Alpine research & innovation cooperation • Limited research on topic of Alpine importance |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges related to global processes like climate change are on urge for sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of losing some competitive edge in front of new global competitors |

Source: Cooperation programme

3.1.2 Expected change in the programme area

Representatives of the countries and regions involved in the Alpine Space area agreed to tackle the key needs and challenges summarised in the previous section by improving the framework conditions for stakeholders in the field of research and innovation.

With the concept of “framework conditions for innovation” the programme authorities wanted to express the ambition to generally improve the quality of policies for supporting innovation in the Alpine Space area.

The analysis of the questionnaires used in 2014 for measuring the framework condition for innovation, allows to clarify the change targeted by the programme. The objective for 2020/2023 was to have:

- (1) regional/national strategies on innovation more focused on the specific needs and potentials of the alpine territories;
- (2) Universities, research centres, private businesses and social actors more actively involved in the definition and implementation of the innovation policies and strategies;
- (3) More efficient and effective governance of the smart specialisation strategies (and more generally on the regional/ national policies on innovation);
- (4) A more complete delivery of instruments for supporting innovation (e.g. financial engineering tools, R&D subsidies and grants, innovative voucher, etc);
- (5) More efficient and effective systems for monitoring and evaluating the innovation policies.

3.2 WHAT WAS ACHIEVED

3.2.1 Type of projects and beneficiaries which were financed

All the calls launched by the programme included SO 1.1: the first in 2015, the second in 2016 and the third in 2017. In total 55% of the ERDF resources planned for PA 1 were allocated to SO 1.1.

The average budget per project is 2.1 while, on average, partnerships are composed by 12 partners.

Table 3-1 SO 1.1. Number of projects and budget allocated

| Call | N. of projects financed | ERDF budget allocated |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | 1 | 1 540 447.35 € |
| 2 | 6 | 9 814 628.34 € |
| 3 | 5 | 9 311 760.36 € |
| Total | 12 | 20 666 836.05 € |

Source: Data provided by the JS

If we look at the financial performance, data presented in AIR 2018 offer an overview of the progress made by all the projects financed under axis 1 (not only to SO 1.1). Data indicate that approximately 26% of the budget allocated has been absorbed (see expenditures declared by the beneficiaries), which indicates a good level of progress if compared to the average level of ETC programmes.

Out of 12 selected projects, 6 are already closed while the remaining 6 will be closed in 2021.

When looking at the types of project partners, SO 1.1 is characterised by the presence of business supporting organisations (chambers of commerce, regional development agencies) and education centres, training and research centres (respectively 34% and 21%). More limited the presence of the public authorities (15% in total).

Table 3-2 SO 1.1 – Types of beneficiaries

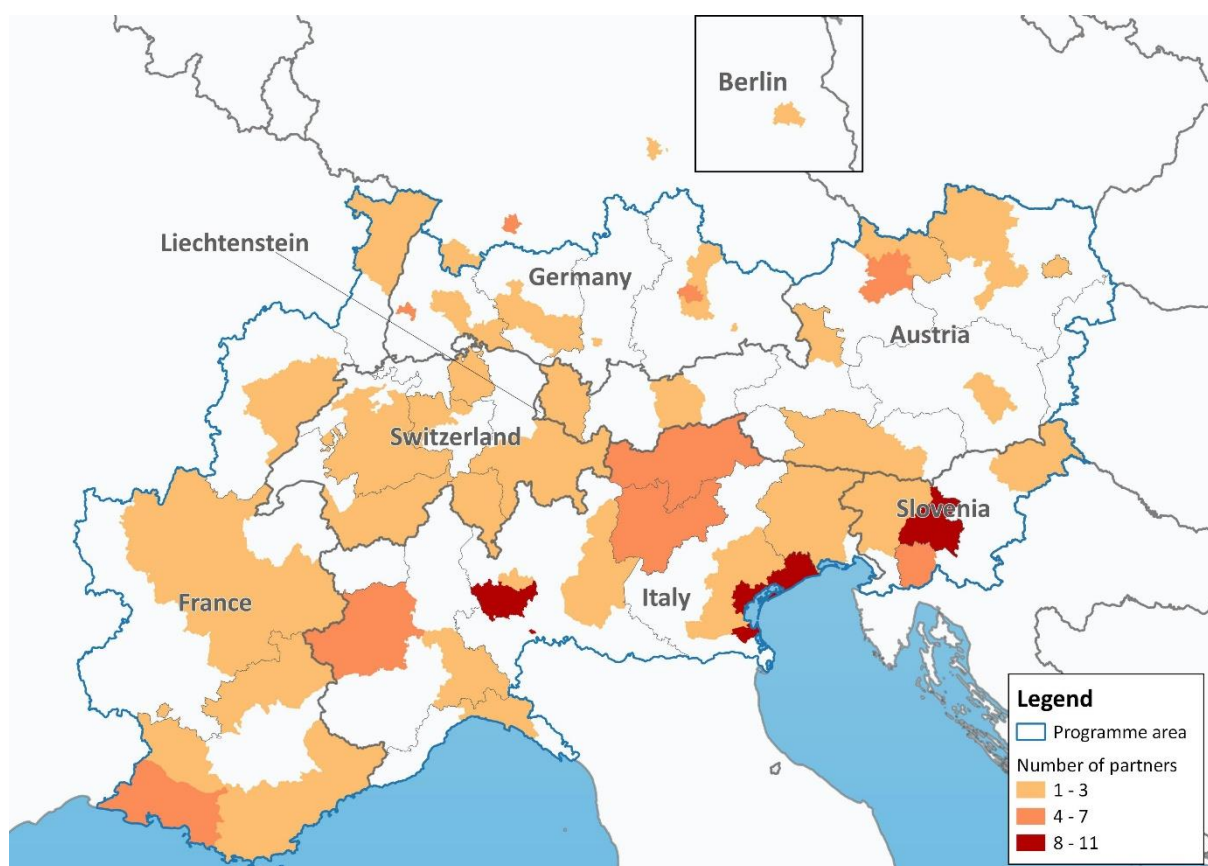
| Type of beneficiary | % out of the total partners |
|---|-----------------------------|
| National public authority | 3% |
| Regional/local public authority | 12% |
| Business support organisation | 34% |
| Education, training and research | 21% |
| Enterprises and clusters | 8% |

| Type of beneficiary | % out of the total partners |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Interests groups including NGOs | 5% |
| Sectoral agency | 18% |

Source: Ddata provided by the JS

From the geographical perspective, all ASP countries with the exception of Liechtenstein are involved in projects financed under SO I.1. Italy have the highest number of partners (39), followed by Germany (28), Slovenia and Austria (both 23) France (19 partners in total) and Switzerland (9). At regional level, as shown by the map below, the highest concentration of partners is in Osrednjeslovenska (Slovenia) and in the cities of Milan (Lombardy) and Venice (Italy).

Figure 3-1 SO I.1 – localisation of the beneficiaries



Source: data provided by the JS

3.2.2 Outputs achieved

Projects financed under SO I.1. are expected to deliver 5 types of outputs. As illustrated by the table below, data collected at the end 2018 attest partial progress towards the final targets set for 2023.

At that date the 12 projects approved had realised 3 strategic elements and 5 implementation elements. No progress was instead observed in relation to the development of transnational cooperation structures.

On the other hand, the table also indicates that for the three programme specific indicators the 12 projects approved foresee to realise, by 2023, more outputs than those initially estimated by the programme.

The table also highlights the presence of specific issues/ problems related to the achievement of what initially targeted in terms of (1) cooperation between enterprises and research institutions, (2) research projects. According to the AIR this is due from the misinterpretation of the definition of the 2 indicators, that led to overestimate the targets set in 2014.

Information provided in the AIR suggest that in 2014 the programme intended to use CO_26 to monitor the capacity of the projects to involve their target groups. In other terms, it seems that the initial plan was to monitor at which extent the project partners (e.g. chambers of commerce, business support organisations) were effective in creating new collaborations between their target groups (e.g. between enterprises and research institutions). This approach was not in line with the EC definition, but it would be anyhow interesting to have data on the capacity of the project partners to create these dynamics with their target groups.

Table 3-3 SO 1.1 output indicators – progress towards the final targets

| Type of output | Achieved 2018 | Final target according to beneficiaries | Target value for 2023 (CP) | Progress towards the final target |
|---|---------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Number of supported transnational cooperation structures improving the framework conditions for innovation | 0 | 6 | 8 | 0% |
| Number of developed strategic elements improving the framework conditions for innovation | 3 | 19 | 6 | 50% |
| Number of developed implementation elements improving the framework conditions for innovation | 5 | 59 | 19 | 26% |
| Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions (CO_26) | 0 | 2 | 1000 | 0% |
| Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects (CO_42) | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0% |
| | | | Average | 15% |

Source: AIR 2018

3.2.3 Target groups reached

Target groups are those groups and individuals who will use the outputs of the projects or will experience a change in their activities because of those projects.

The programme indicated 15 categories of target groups and asked to the projects to select the most relevant for the project purpose and monitor their involvement.

Thus, the evaluators assessed the capacity of projects to reach the target groups, by calculating the distance between the target values set in in the application form and the values achieved according to the last progress report available.

The table below shows the extent at which the projects under SO 1.1 contributed to the target groups defined by the programme. To be noted that all the target groups were concerned by project activities except the international organisations under international law.

Business support organisations is the category most involved by the projects and whose percentages of achievement is more than 4 times higher than the target values. 10 out of 12 projects are expected to reach them and 5 in particular (Smart-Space, Care4tech, C-Temalp, Scale(up)Alps and DuAlplus) significantly exceeded the milestones.

Projects also selected 'other' category as the second most reached target group. To be noted that: 1) such a high figure depends mainly on one Project C-TemAlp, which declared to have reached 136 of *credit/fiscal experts and public/private banks* out of the 15 set in the AF (thus 907% is the level of achievement).

Significant is also the participation of the education sector, 172% for the higher education and research institutes and 145% for the training centres and schools. According to what reported by the projects, those target groups were counted thorough the attendants lists to the events and the e-mail exchanged.

Policy bodies were also significantly involved, especially at national level (92%) and at regional level (87%). Also in this case, projects counted the signatures in the participant lists to the events and the contacts via e-mail.

To be noted is the relatively low achievement of the SMEs, 73%, predominantly due to an overestimation of the target value by one project, SESAM, which expected to reach 75 000 SMEs and instead could only involve the SMEs in pilot areas of the project, 10 in total. Indeed, if we do not consider this project the average level of achievement is 88%.

Table 3-4 Target group reached by projects under SO 1.1

| | % Achievement | Projects contributing (AF) | |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|------|
| | | N. | % |
| Business support organisation | 462% | 10 | 83% |
| Other | 238% | 12 | 100% |
| Higher education and research | 172% | 6 | 50% |
| Education/training centre and school | 145% | 12 | 100% |
| National public authority | 92% | 11 | 92% |
| General public | 90% | 9 | 75% |
| Regional public authority | 87% | 10 | 83% |
| Local public authority | 78% | 4 | 33% |
| SME | 73% | 6 | 50% |
| Enterprise, excluding SME | 57% | 3 | 25% |
| Sectoral agency | 52% | 4 | 33% |
| Interest groups including NGOs | 28% | 12 | 100% |
| Infrastructure and (public) service provider | 27% | 3 | 25% |
| EEIG, EGTC | 0% | 1 | 8% |
| International organisation under national law | 0% | 1 | 8% |
| International organisation under inter-national law | Not expected to be reached | | |

Source: Projects progress reports provided by the JS

3.2.4 Changes observed in the programme area

In 2014 the programme defined a result indicator to monitor the evolution of the programme area in relation to the specific change targeted by the SO 1.1.

This indicator (i.e. *Level of maturity of framework conditions for innovation for generating innovation processes among business, academia and administration*) was monitored in 2014 and in 2018. It is important to underline that this indicator is not supposed to measure the direct impact of SO 1.1 but to measure how the framework conditions for innovation have evolved in the ASP during the last four years.

According to the information presented in the AIR 2018 (see table below) the framework conditions for innovation have generally improved over the last years.

If we look at the specific answers provided by the experts involved in the monitoring of the result indicator, this improvement mainly depends on a more efficient and effective governance of the smart specialisation strategies (and more generally on the regional/ national policies on innovation) and on a better involvement of universities, research centres, private businesses and all relevant stakeholders actively in the governance for innovation.

Table 3-5 SO 1.1 result indicators – evolution of programme’s area

| Indicator | Baseline 2014 | Target value 2023 | Achieved in 2018 |
|--|---------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Level of maturity of framework conditions for innovation for generating innovation processes among business, academia and administration | 62.7% | Increase < 1% | 70% |

Source: AIR 2018

3.2.5 Impact: the results achieved by the projects

This section illustrates the key step of the evaluation of the impact for the SO 1.1. It presents the evidences collected through web survey and the key findings from the case studies regarding the results that the Alpine Space projects are bringing to the area.

All partners of the projects approved under SO 1.1 (call 1 and 2) were invited to take part to the web survey. In total 12 partners from 7 projects took part to the survey. They were asked to provide information regarding the type of benefits and results that their project is bringing by selecting from a list of potential benefits (which the evaluators had identified on the basis of the analysis of the application forms) or by specifying additional types of possible benefits.

As illustrated by the table below, if we refer to the four main categories of potential benefits proposed by the evaluators, projects from SO 1.1 are increasing the knowledge and competences of projects’ partners and target groups (i.e. learning and knowledge benefits) but are also producing some tangible impacts in terms of socio-economic benefits. The impact on the governance and policy level is lower (under 70%), whereas the impact on environment is irrelevant.

Table 3-6 Benefits brought by the projects financed under SO 1.1

| Category of benefit | % of respondents |
|---|------------------|
| Learning and knowledge | 100% |
| • Exchange and use of practice | 83% |
| • Created/increased skills and capacities | 67% |
| • Increased awareness | 67% |
| • Behavioural change in stakeholder opinion | 50% |
| Socio-economics benefit | 75% |
| • Increased business activity/ capacity | 58% |
| • Alpine identity valorised | 33% |
| • Cost savings | 0% |
| • Increased capacity of social inclusion / delivery of services of general interest | 8% |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| • Triggered investments | 25% |
| Governance and policy | 67% |
| Environment and sustainability | 17% |

Source: Web-survey





3.2.5.1 Learning and knowledge benefits



This kind of benefit belongs to the “core business” of the European Territorial Cooperation, especially when transnational and interregional dimensions are concerned. According to the survey data, the most common sub-benefits are “Exchange and use of practice”, “Created/ increased skills and capacities”, “Increased awareness”.

Those who seem to benefit most from this type of improvements are the project partners. Beneficiaries such as chambers of commerce or innovation centres declare that the Alpine Space projects are allowing them to discover “different types of practices about business transfer”; universities and research centres underline that the exchanges with the other partners are increasing their understanding “about the S3 concepts and implementations”. When knowledge is distributed beyond the partnership, “takers” normally belong to the same typology as the project partners.

However, the connection between knowledge generation and actual use of the projects’ results at policy level should be further inquired. At this stage of ASP maturity, we would expect that learning and knowledge benefits produced in relation to innovation policy, i.e. a policy area featured by strong and structured EU funds support, prepare the ground for the actual removal of barriers to cooperation or even for the delivery of new or more effective policy instruments. The relative weakness of the governance and policy side under this SO is confirmed by the fact that even an excellent project like S3-4AlpClusters, having a strong impact on the capacities increase, needs a further ASP funded project fully to reach the policy level, as illustrated in the factsheet below.

Factsheet 3-1 Sub-benefit: created/ increased skills and capacities

| S3-4 AlpClusters | |
|--|--|
|  | SO I.1 Improve the framework conditions for innovation in the Alpine Space |
|  | To set up a systematic process for the identification, development and implementation of transformative activities with cluster initiatives, i.e. the S3-Innovation Model that can be applied by any region aiming to develop and implement a smart specialisation strategy (S3). |
|  Alpine dimension | Project approach consists in applying the S3 to clusters in building a new innovation model directly with their stakeholders, assuming that it could be necessary to act cross-regionally to mobilise the appropriate resources on the development of the activities that are likely to transform the existing economic structures through research, development and innovation. The case of bioeconomy has clearly shown that knowledge is fragmented among the alpine regions, so that single regions do not have the capacity to prepare the transition to this new industrial paradigm. Transnational cooperation, with a peculiar intensity at cross-border level (f.i. between Upper Austria and Bavaria) appears to be necessary. |
| BENEF  What | Benefit: Learning and knowledge Sub-benefit: Created/ increased skills and capacities Quantitative and qualitative analysis, Stress Tests and S3-Synergy Diamonds were used as an innovative way to depict existing capacities and detect opportunities for structural transformation, |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>both within and across regions. Regional and cross-regional Entrepreneurial Discovery Workshops (EDW / cEDW) built on this base of evidence in order to identify transformative activities. In particular, the S3-Synergy Diamonds has appeared to be an effective tool in the policy making process. It allows to focus the entrepreneurial discovery process and represents existing regional capacities in a way that facilitates transformative activities and captures opportunities for need-based interregional cooperation. More specifically, using the S3-Synergy Diamonds it becomes possible to guide the evidence-based discussions on transformative activities and areas of specialisation in the regional and cross-regional context, so preparing the ground for industrial convergence.</p> |
|  Where | <p>S3-4AlpClusters policy tools were experimented in all regions participating in the project (Canton of Fribourg, Piedmont, Lombardy, the Autonomous Province of Trento, Veneto, Slovenia, Upper Austria, Salzburg, Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, Bourgogne-Franche Comté) and are now available to the authorities responsible for the S3 design and implementation, as well as to the clusters managers. Specific policy tools generated by the project were used also beyond the partnership, i.e. by the European Region Danube-Vltava (Lower Bavaria, Upper Palatinate, Pilsen, South-Bohemia, Vysocina, Lower Austria and Upper Austria) for identifying future priority fields and actions for implementation. Furthermore, parts of the process and tools of the S3-Innovation Model have been used in Skane (Sweden), Southern Denmark and the Arctic region. Finally, the identification and development of transformative activities has also been initiated outside of Europe, namely in Tunisia (region of Sfax).</p> |
|  Transnational added value | <p>It would have been impossible to set up such a project solely with national and regional funds, as they are not aimed at creating the conditions for interregional cooperation beyond the borders. However, the implementation of transformative activities as proposed in the project still poses a major problem, i.e. the organization of a synchronized funding scheme allowing to conduct coordinated innovation activities in the respective regions. The ARDIA-NET project financed under the fourth call of the ASP should provide solutions to this problem.</p> |

3.2.5.2 Socio-economic benefits

For what concerns the socio-economic benefits, the analysis of the answers provided in the survey indicates that the benefits coming from the Alpine Space project mainly concern the “Possible increase of the business activity/ capacity” of the project partners or of the project target groups (this is declared by 58% of the projects partners under SO 1.1).






At this regard it shall be reminded that the direct participation of enterprises in the programme is limited, whereas the participation of the Business support organisations is significant. This means that when the survey indicates a significant increase of the business activity/ capacity, we have to think of an improvement of the services offered by chambers of commerce, innovation centres, technology parks to the SMEs reached as target group during the course of the project.

In case the experimented services become standard for the business support organisations after the end of the funded phase, the project shows high durability. This means also that the presence of this kind of partners in a partnership appears to be a key point when socio-economic benefits have to be achieved.

This observation opens the door to a question concerning additionality. If a topic is well known, both on the academic and policy side, and the need by the enterprises is clear, one could ask why specific services are not offered to SMEs, already. In this case, it could make sense to consider national, regional and territorial aspects. Services to SMEs are not offered at a homogeneous level in the alpine area. National traditions and practices are uneven, and there is a great room for mutual learning. Furthermore, SMEs located in marginal areas could have disadvantages in terms of support to increase their business activity/ capacity, and ASP can help to reduce this gap empowering the business support organisations’ networks. Data from the survey indicate that projects, on the contrary, are focusing their benefits on urban areas. However, the C-TEMAIp illustrated in the factsheet below shows that positive experiences in increasing the capillarity of the services to SMEs have occurred.

| C-TEMAIp project | | |
|---|---|--|
|  | SO I.1 Improve the framework conditions for innovation in the Alpine Space | |
|  | To create the conditions allowing to transform <i>business transfer</i> into an opportunity to boost innovation among SMEs in the alpine area. | |
|  Alpine dimension | Demographic change is a key challenge in alpine territories especially in rural areas where the ageing index linked to depopulation and new migration is growing. The phenomenon reduces the capability of key traditional economic sectors – strongly featuring the overall attractiveness of alpine territories - to regenerate themselves so continuing to create value for the local communities. | |
| BENEFIT |  What | <p>Benefit: Socio-economic Sub-benefit: Increased business activity/ capacity (new products, processes, services, techniques)</p> <p>Most of the chambers of commerce involved in C-TEMAIp extended their portfolio of services including business service advisory. Based on a Memorandum of Understanding it was established that after the end of the project the partnering chambers of commerce shall offer for free business transfer standard services, i.e. services accompanying SMEs in the initial stage of the selling process. Companies are analysed and prepared, and this implies the possibility to conclude that the company is not in the position to be sold. Then, more advanced services are offered subject to payment by the companies. This higher level of services relies on the network of consultants, which has survived to the project given that relationships have been established among the professionals having cooperated under C-TEMAIp.</p> <p>A remarkable cross-border dynamic was observed when the Chamber of Commerce of Graz (Austria) offered in the course of the project business transfer services for free to Slovenian enterprises served by the Chamber of Commerce of Maribor. Thanks to the high interest of the Slovenian ministry in the practice experimented under the project, the business transfer service in Slovenia is now offered not only by the Chamber of Commerce of Maribor (C-TEMAIp partner), but also by the remaining chambers of commerce of the country.</p> |
| |  Where | The availability and level of business transfer services appeared uneven when the project was started. In France, Germany and Austria business transfer services offered to SMEs by the chambers of commerce appeared to be more developed than in Italy and Slovenia. C-TEMAIp increased the capacities of the chambers of commerce especially in the territories where the gap was higher. However, also in Germany the project allowed to enhance the offer of well tested business transfer services. |
|  Transnational added value | In absence of C-TEMAIp, it would have been difficult for SMEs located in marginal areas and managed by aged owners to have the opportunity to enter into a proper business transfer process potentially creating value for the workers and the territory. Today, regular business transfer services are offered to solve this gap in some alpine territories. | |

The project illustrated above shows how the business services can improve in areas where they are less developed, also producing benefits on marginal areas. The Smart villages project, illustrated in the factsheet below, is featured by an even stronger territorial focus. It shows how ICT can be strategically used to improve business conditions in very small municipalities, so benefitting local communities living in rural and mountainous areas.

| Smart villages project | |
|--|--|
|  | SO I.1 Improve the framework conditions for innovation in the Alpine Space |
|  | To improve the framework for innovation in the rural areas through new forms of stakeholder involvement facilitated by Information Communication Technology. |
|  Alpine dimension | Alpine space rural communities are deprived of highly needed jobs, good provision of services as well as a favourable climate for entrepreneurship and social innovation, which result in a brain drain. Digitalization is a promising approach in this respect and offers opportunities for these areas to overcome the handicaps of distances and to access new markets through new channels, to create a positive image of a region, to increase the attractiveness of a territory, to create a new learning ecosystem and to create job and business opportunities. However, the digital divide between rural and urban areas has even increased in the last years. |
|  BENEFIT | <p>Benefit: Socio-economic Sub-benefit: Increased business activity/ capacity (new products, processes, services, techniques)</p> <p>Knowing that there is not a one size fits all strategy, Smart Villages mobilized the population of each village (with the support of coordinators named #LocalHeroes) to identify the specific strategy based on the actual will and potential of the inhabitants, including the aged population. Risk of further depopulation and ageing are evident trends in Padna and Solčava. They can be contrasted only by economic initiatives. Tourism has the potential to create business both in ensuring revenues from the hospitality services and the offer of local products. Furthermore, rural tourism is a highly sustainable activity not only economically, but also on the environmental side (as it promotes activities aligned with the natural heritage preservation) and the social side (as it implies a proactive role by the rural population). However, if ICT services are inadequate or even absent, tourism services can be hardly put in place.</p> <p>Internet coverage is quite good in Slovenia, but villages located in rural areas are not always well connected. Ensuring good internet coverage by means of amplifiers, Smart villages gave the chance to the Slovenian villages to develop specific services based on the local needs. In one case, this allowed to transform a restaurant where the travelers have a break in a info point where they are invited to visit the village, and buy local products benefitting from discounts. Internet connection allowed to introduce the use of credit cards, which was impossible before the project, so allowing the tourists to make payments. At a very basic level, internet connection allowed the inhabitants of the villages to interact with the tourists exchanging messages (by email or using the social networks). It is clear that this is a requisite for any tourism activity.</p> <p>The small scale investment consisted in buying the internet amplifiers. The costs were distributed as follows: one third was charged to the Smart Villages project, one third was sustained by the municipality, one third by the local companies. Such a strategy creates full ownership of these small but strategic infrastructures by the local communities, so creating a good basis for durability.</p> |
|  Where | The project focused on test areas in Switzerland, Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia. "Smart villages" is an international concept that can be easily shared at the alpine transnational level and beyond. To inquire the benefits brought to the tourism sector, the ongoing activities in two Slovenian test areas can be illustrated. Šmarje and Padna are villages located in the eastern part of the country on the road followed by the Italian tourists travelling to Croatia. Both of them have few hundreds of inhabitants, but population structure is different. Padna is featured by a strong predominance of aged population, whereas Šmarje, which is nearer to Koper and is emerging for winery, has started to be attractive for young families. Solčava is a small village immersed in the mountainous area on the border with Austria. |



Transnational added value

In absence of the Smart villages project, the community of each village would not have dedicated energies to develop its own strategy for local development. In addition, without the co-financing and especially the input to mobilise local funds to fill a dramatic technological gap, i.e. the lack of internet coverage, the local community would not have discovered that such a small investment makes the difference in the tourism business.

3.2.5.3 Territorial dimension

In the previous part of this chapter we have provided an overview of the localisation of the beneficiaries of projects financed under SO I.1.

However, this chart does not allow to verify where the projects activities are located neither where the projects are bringing their benefits.

To overcome the limits of data provided by the monitoring system we have directly asked to beneficiaries (through the web-survey) where the projects are supposed to generate their benefits. More precisely, we have asked them whether the projects the benefits were expected to be produced in urban, rural or mountainous area.

As illustrated by the table below, according to the data collected through the survey, benefits by the projects financed under SO I.1 are mainly expected to be produced in the urban areas (67% of respondents); the potential impact expected in the mountainous areas appears to be extremely limited (8%).

Table 3-7 Where the SO I.1 projects are supposed to the deliver their benefits

| Area | % |
|--------------------|------------|
| Mountainous areas | 8% |
| Rural areas | 25% |
| Urban areas | 67% |

Source: Web-survey

Looking to the types of urban areas, data from the survey indicate that the benefits coming from SO I.1 projects are not expected to be only concentrated in the regional capitals but to reach different urban dimensions including medium/ small urban areas (the majority of respondents indicate that their projects are going to produce effects on more than one type of urban areas).

Table 3-8 Which urban areas are more concerned by the benefits generated by SO I.1

| Area | % |
|--|-----|
| Regional capitals or capitals | 42% |
| Other municipalities above 50 000 of inhabitants | 67% |
| Municipalities below 50 000 of inhabitants | 50% |

Source: Web-survey

Information collected from the case studies slightly “mitigate” key finding from the survey. C-Tempalp, for example, focuses its actions on traditional business sectors such as manufacturing, especially when they are located in marginal areas where support to the transfer phase is more needed.

The experience of SmartVillage provides further evidence about potential benefits for rural and mountainous areas. The project, indeed, focuses specifically on communities living in rural and mountainous areas, given that they are the most disadvantaged in terms of access to ICT. The digitalisation approach, promoted by the

project, paves the way for a villages' smart transition and contributes to make villages more known and attractive for young people.

3.2.5.4 Durability

The higher form of durability is ensured by the use of projects' outputs at governance and policy level. In case of SO 1.1, however, the survey shows a low capacity by the projects to reach this level (67% versus an average of 81%). The stronger benefits in terms of governance and policy are related to stakeholders' involvement and removal of barriers, but the higher level **“policy instrument delivery” is almost not reached** (17% versus an average of 51%). This suggests that the ASP is not receiving sufficient input from the projects to impact on the policy making in terms of introduction/ improvement of forms of support, introduction/ improvement of regulation tools, improvement of programming frameworks.

The low number of regional/ local authorities involved in the partnerships does not appear as a sufficient explanation. In the current programming period, innovation policy is featured by high intensity of policy frameworks, instruments and tools. Smart specialization strategy being an ex-ante conditionality for ERDF, every regional administration has been required to make a special effort in rethinking the overall strategic orientation of the territorial productive system and especially to ensure that new links between sectors are established in order to make use of the full regional potential in terms of innovation. The implementation of the strategy shall be regularly monitored. Such a structured policy, which also envisages a good level of synergy with the programmes directly managed by the European Commission with special regard to Horizon 2020, requires a regular interaction between line departments dedicated to innovation policy and ERDF managing authorities. Level of complexity is high, already. Seen from the perspective of the regional administration, where the competence on innovation lies, the transfer of solutions identified at the level of an Alpine Space project would require an additional interaction between the officers dealing with European Territorial Cooperation, the line department dedicated to innovation policy and SMEs, the ERDF managing authority. Such a positive dynamic was observed in Slovenia and could be due to the relatively smaller size of the country and the very high priority given to innovation policy at national level. However, in general a need for further policy tools to be applied at regional level was not explicitly expressed by the regional authorities, which have to cope with the complex existing framework, already. Finally, modifications of forms of support financed by ERDF during the course of the programming period appear difficult – even if not impossible – to be operated. If projects have to generate impact on the governance and policy side, and especially if they are aimed at delivering new and appropriate policy frameworks, instruments and tools, they should be originated by the will of the relevant policy makers, i.e. the regional authorities. If, on the contrary, a “givers” approach is adopted meaning that Education, training and research organisations develop solutions to be proposed to the policy makers for possible adoption, the risk of low impact on the governance and policy side is present.

Limited capacity to generate benefits in terms of governance and policy appears to be **a weakness in relation to other SOs, especially when concentration of resources under SO 1.1 is considered**. Given that innovation policy is a cornerstone of the cohesion policy and more in general of the EU policy in the current programming period, the choice to invest relatively significant resources under SO 1.1 corresponded to the expectation to obtain important impacts on the governance and policy level, i.e. a durable use of the projects' outputs.

Analysing the projects, it was observed that some Slovenian partners show a higher capacity to transform the solutions identified through the project into forms of support financed by ERDF (C-TEMAIp), or to participate in a ministerial advisory group with the opportunity to increase the relevance of the project topic in the political agenda (Smart Villages). This could depend on the proximity between the project level and the national political level, due to the size of the country, such as on better political conditions facilitating the mainstreaming of the ETC results.

At SO level, analysis shows that projects durability will be ensured by:

- The nature itself of the output (a platform, a pilot activity);
- The reinforcement of cooperation among stakeholders.

The analysis of the application forms allowed to understand how the projects intended the output to be delivered in light of the three main type of outputs foreseen by the programme. The following table summarizes the type of outputs expected to be generated by the projects.

Factsheet 3-4 Type of outputs

| Programme type of output | Examples by the projects |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Transnational cooperation structures | Think tank and alliances at transnational level and alpine space networks. |
| Strategic elements | Models for cluster development, joint transnational action plans and guidelines for policy maker and other relevant stakeholders, strategies for Design thinking. |
| Implementation elements | New services validated by pilot actions, mapping of knowledge and cooperation in the field of smart technology, monitoring system for evaluating impact of technologies, exchange platforms. |

Source: Desk analysis, case studies

Outputs such as transnational platforms aimed to pursue the exchange of practices and experiences will remain active even after the end of the project, with some of the partners being responsible for its maintenance and financing. The pilot activities implemented represent also a condition to guarantee that the methodology and tools developed by the project effectively address the issues and the challenges on a specific topic in order to replicate them in different contexts.

Partners involved in the web survey have been asked whether the project has generated other opportunities and 66% of them replied positively.

In particular, **the successful cooperation among partners paved the way to establish network and pursue the activities started in the framework of the project.**

In some cases, collaboration has been formally established by signing an agreement. C-TEMAIp partners for instance signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen their own commitment and also the commitment of the observers and stakeholders in the topic of the business transfer. The project indeed enforced their capacity and understanding at transnational level so that partners as the chambers of commerce could extend their portfolio of services.

Some partnerships, as the one of S4-4AlpCluster, have already explored further opportunities to create new consortia for follow-up the activities, this meaning that trustful collaboration had been generated.

3.2.5.5 External factors and mega-trends

The information collected from the lead partners revealed some external factors having affected the projects' implementation.

The first external factor identified could have affected projects under all SOs, even if it was not regularly mentioned by the interviewed lead partners. The **reform of the French regional system** started in 2014, indeed, transformed the territorial architecture of the Republic of France. The number of regions changed from 22 to 13, with one unchanged region in the AS territory (Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur), Rhône-Alpes merged with Auvergne, Alsace merged with Lorraine and Champagne-Ardenne (and was named Grand Est). This major change had some influence in the phase of project partnerships creation, when it became more difficult for some lead partners to identify the distribution of responsibilities among the French administrative bodies emerged from the merging process.

Figure 3.2 Map of institutional reform in France



Service d'Information du Gouvernement (SIG) - 2014

twitter: @gouvernementfr



gouvernement-fr.tumblr.com

Source: French Government <https://www.gouvernement.fr/en/territorial-reform>

A second external factor should be mentioned, especially because it could significantly affect transnational projects oriented to offering services to business operators. The **new General Data Protection Regulation**, applicable from 25 May 2018, corresponds to a major reform of the EU data protection framework. The regulation replaces the 20-year-old Directive 95/46/EC. By setting a global data protection standard, it strengthens the EU internal market, benefiting both citizens and businesses. However, in preparation of the application of the regulation, the single companies had to change their internal data protection management system and this created some burdens and uncertainties, especially to SMEs not able to invest sufficient resources to adapt to the new regulative framework. A specific transnational aspects consists of different levels of sensitiveness towards data protection when national business systems are concerned. In Germany, the attention dedicated to data protection is traditionally high. The companies involved in a ASP project concerning business transfer (C-TEMAIp) required therefore especially high data protection requirements, also influenced by the diffusion of the WikiLeaks report revealing that telephone calls involving German chancellor Angela Merkel and her closest advisers had been tapped by US National Security Agency. The implementation of the project web platform, containing information on potential business transfer, was significantly affected by such a high sensitiveness. Other projects dedicated to the provision of business services at transnational level should take into account not only the obvious legal requirement concerning data protection, but also the more or less rigid approaches adopted in the different national contexts by the business operators.

During the course of the evaluation, when there will be a higher availability of data concerning the 2014-2020 period, external factors at macro level will be also investigated, with special regard to the general economic performance of the Alpine Space and the specific performance in innovation comparing with other EU territories. This analysis should provide information on how the territorial socio-economic conditions and also the alpine innovation landscape was favorable, or hindered the development of AS innovation projects.

3.3 IMPACT OF SO I.1: KEY FINDINGS

1 INPUTS AND OUTPUTS



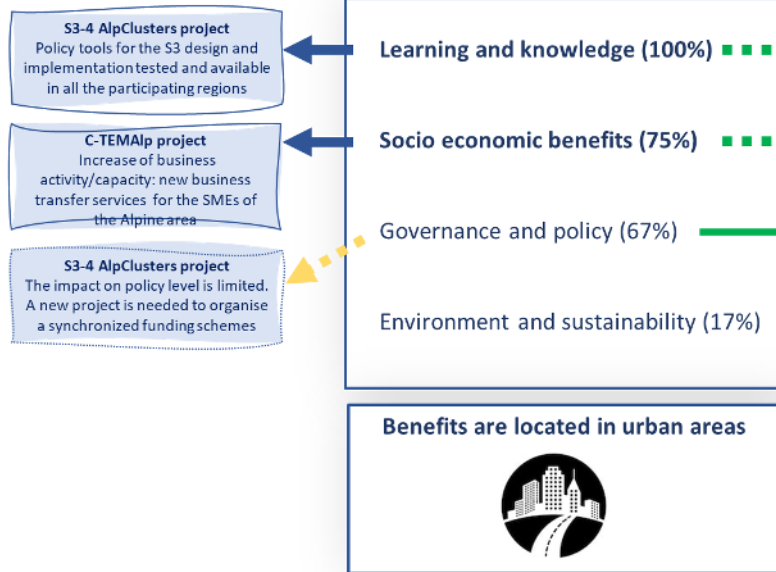
€ 20.6 mil. ERDF
Financial absorption: 26% (for all Axis 1)

12 projects; 141 partners
12 partners per project; Average budget per project: € 2.1 mil

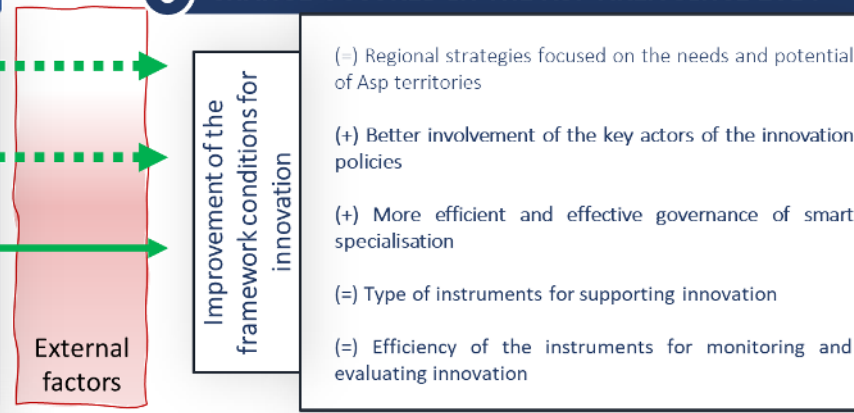
| Outputs | Progress towards the final targets |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Cooperation structures (e.g. think tank, alliances) | 0% |
| Strategic elements (e.g. guidance for policy makers, models for design thinking) | 50% |
| Implementation elements (e.g. new services for innovation, pilot actions) | 26% |
| Enterprises cooperating with research institutions | 0% |
| Research institutions participating in CBC, TNC or interreg. research project | 0% |
| <i>Average</i> | 15% |

| Type of partners | % out of the total partners |
|---|-----------------------------|
| National public authority | 3% |
| Regional/local public authority | 12% |
| Business support organisation | 34% |
| Education, training and research | 21% |
| Enterprises and clusters | 8% |
| Interests groups including NGOs | 5% |
| Sectoral agency | 18% |

2 BENEFITS GENERATED BY THE PROJECTS





3 CHANGE OCCURED IN THE ASP AREA SINCE 2014






The figure above offers an overview of the theory of the intervention logic of SO I.1 and summarises some of the key findings that emerge from the evaluation:


Financial/ output progress and partnership

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Financial data indicate good progress in terms of financial absorption. However, data from AIR 2018 indicate only partial progress for what concerns the outputs (i.e. 15% of the final outputs have been already realized). This is mainly due to the misinterpretation of the definition of the common output indicators selected for this SO, as, if we only refer to the three programme specific indicators, their progress is in line with the financial progress of Axis I.</p> |
|  | <p>More than half of the partners are business support organisations (e.g. chambers of commerce) and education, training and research centres (e.g. universities). The involvement of local, regional and national authorities is more limited.</p> <p>Results are consistent in terms of target group where the business support organisations are the main users of projects outputs followed by the education sector.</p> <p>The policy level seems to be highly involved as target groups even though doubts rose on the adequacy of the counting methods used by projects to assess their level of involvement (i.e. e-mail exchanges).</p> |

Benefits generated by the projects

| | |
|---|---|
|  | <p>The 12 projects financed are mainly generating learning and knowledge benefits. Those who seem to benefit most from this type of improvements are the project partners. Partners such as chambers of commerce or innovation centres declare that the Alpine Space projects are allowing them to discover “different types of practices about business transfer”; universities and research centres underline that the exchanges with the other partners are increasing their understanding “about the S3 concepts and implementations”.</p> |
|  | <p>Projects are also generating some tangible impacts in terms of socio-economic benefits. In particular in terms of improvement of the services offered by the business support organisations (which are the most represented types of beneficiaries).</p> |
|  | <p>The impact on the policy level is more limited than expected. This emerges both from the analysis of the survey and from the case studies. The change targeted is mainly of political/ governance nature (see the 5 dimensions of the expected change). However only 67% of respondents declare that they are contributing to the improvement of the innovation policies of the area. In particular, only 17% of the respondents declare that their projects are contributing to a better delivery of the policy instruments. This is also confirmed by the case studies, where despite the good results achieved, we have observed some difficulties in reaching real changes in the governance and implementation of the innovation policies in the alpine space area. From the evaluators' perspective this is partly due to the low level of direct involvement (i.e. as project partners) of the regional and national authorities who oversee the definition and implementation of the innovation policies. A deeper analysis of such a low commitment reveals that innovation policy is featured by a high intensity of policy frameworks, instruments and tools, already. The coordination between regional departments required to design and implement the smart specialisation strategies requires significant efforts at administrative level, already. Finally, the level of synergy with the programmes directly managed by the European Commission, namely Horizon 2020, represents a challenge. It seems that further administrative efforts can be hardly expected in this policy area.</p> |

Territorial dimension

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Projects are mainly generating benefits on urban areas. Having in mind the two main categories of benefits that are generated by the SO I.I projects, the relevance of urban areas means that the SO I.I is mainly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving the knowledge and competences of the business support organisations and of the research centres located in the urban areas; • improving the services offered by the business support organisation located in the urban areas. <p>Case studies mitigate the evidences coming from the survey and indicate that there are examples of SO I.I projects which are significantly improving the quality of the services provided to the SMEs located in the rural and mountainous areas.</p> |
|---|--|

Inputs for the future programme

| |
|--|
| <p>Evaluation findings suggest that the projects financed in the current programming period are only partially contributing to the targeted change.</p> <p>These are projects that are allowing the partners and target groups involved to improve their knowledge and skills, but the impact on the political level still seems limited. Given the level of maturity of the Alpine cooperation on this issue, from the evaluator's point of view, it was reasonable to expect that the financed projects would allow for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to put in place mechanisms for coordinating innovation policies (e.g. by coordinating the launch of specific ERDF tenders – as experienced for example in the Baltic area); • or to favor the experimentation of innovative and integrated tools to support innovation (for example by promoting the test of financial instruments on a cross-border scale). <p>The type of projects approved, and more specifically the type of partners financed, suggest that the request coming from alpine territories is more to exchange practices to test new types of approaches at local level, than to make the innovation policies more integrated at alpine space level.</p> <p>This point opens the door to two possible approaches for the future programme:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Continuing to push for policy-oriented projects. This would imply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ including in the partnerships the actual “owners” of the innovation strategies and plans (regional and national authorities) ; ○ verifying that projects answer precise and explicit demands of policy instruments, frameworks and tools coming from the policy level (“takers” approach in spite of “givers” approach). (2) Orienting the SO towards the improvement of the territorial capillarity of the services offered by business support organisations to SMEs, with special attention to rural and mountainous areas that are not strongly covered by the current ASP projects dedicated to innovation policy <p>Moreover, it is recommended to establish a taxonomy of target groups at programme level and a more precise and shared methodology to count them. This will allow the projects to estimate more realistic target values, and the programme to effectively aggregate and monitor data.</p> |
|--|

4 Increase the capacity for the delivery of services of general interest in a changing society

4.1 WHAT IS THE CHANGE THAT THE PROGRAMME WANTS TO ACHIEVE?

4.1.1 Key needs and challenges identified

The context analysis carried out at the beginning of the programming period revealed that the alpine space is characterised by a constantly evolving framework in terms of demographic trends, fertility rates, immigration rules, people transition from rural to urban areas, which requires the providers to deliver innovative solutions and comparable quality services.

However, the alpine space can take advantage of the high quality of public and social service existing in the area to mitigate the *disparities in innovation, funding opportunities, ICT and services of general interests among the territories*.

The box below summarises the key strengths and weaknesses identified in 2014 which were at the basis of the definition of specific objective 1.2.

Box 4-1 Relevant needs and challenges identified in 2014

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public and social services are of high quality and widely available within the framework of universal social security | <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong outmigration in rural areas due to poor endowment with infrastructure Significant intra- and interregional and social disparities in innovation, funding opportunities, ICT and services of general interest |
| <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socio-demographic trends open new fields related to social services and infrastructures, quality of life and ambient living | <p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly qualified economic immigrants will mostly settle in larger agglomerations or in the periphery thereof, thus accentuating the “competition” for affordable housing and commuting space with the “native population |

Source: Cooperation programme

4.1.2 Expected change in the programme area

The expected change in the alpine area is to improve the capacity for the provision of social services.

According to the analysis of questionnaire used in 2014 to quantify the capacity for the delivery innovative solutions in the field of services of general interests, there are 5 conditions to achieve this change:

- (1) National and regional decision makers responsible for the provision of social services need to be aware of the potential coming from social innovations;
- (2) The regional and national innovation strategies must be focused on the issues related to social innovation;
- (3) Social enterprises and third sector need to be involved in the governance for delivering public services;
- (4) The social enterprises should be supported by the national and regional policy maker through a mix of delivery instruments (financial engineering tools, subsidies and grants, incubator etc.);
- (5) New tools for the provision of services of general interest should be introduced (i.e. pre - commercial procurements, Social Economic Zone for social innovation, Private - public partnership, digital services, living labs).

4.2 WHAT WAS ACHIEVED

4.2.1 Type of projects and beneficiaries which were financed

4 Projects have been selected under SO 1.2: 2 in the first call and 2 in the second one. The overall ERDF budget allocated is about EUR 7.1 million which corresponds to 19% of the total budget planned for PAI.

The average budget per project is EUR 2.2 million.

At present, all the projects are concluded.

Table 4-1 SO 1.2 number of project and budget allocated

| Call | N. Financed projects | ERDF budget allocated |
|--------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 246 013.46 € |
| 2 | 2 | 3 895 538.73 € |
| Total | 4 | 7 141 552.19 € |

Source: data provided by the JS

In terms of financial performance, data presented in AIR 2018 offer an overview of the progress made by all the projects financed under Axis I (not only to SO 1.2). Data indicate that approximately 26% of the budget allocated has been absorbed.

Partnerships are on average composed by 11 partners and, overall, 44 beneficiaries have been involved. As expected, being the OS. 1.2 focused on public services, 70% of the partners are public bodies while 30% belong to private sector. More in detail, 39% are regional and local public authorities which represent the policy actors delivering services of general interest. The educational sector is also widely represented, especially the higher education and research centres. 11% of partners are sectoral agencies including both regional/ local actors and associations working in the relevant fields. To be noted also a good involvement of the NGOs which often play an important role in providing public services.

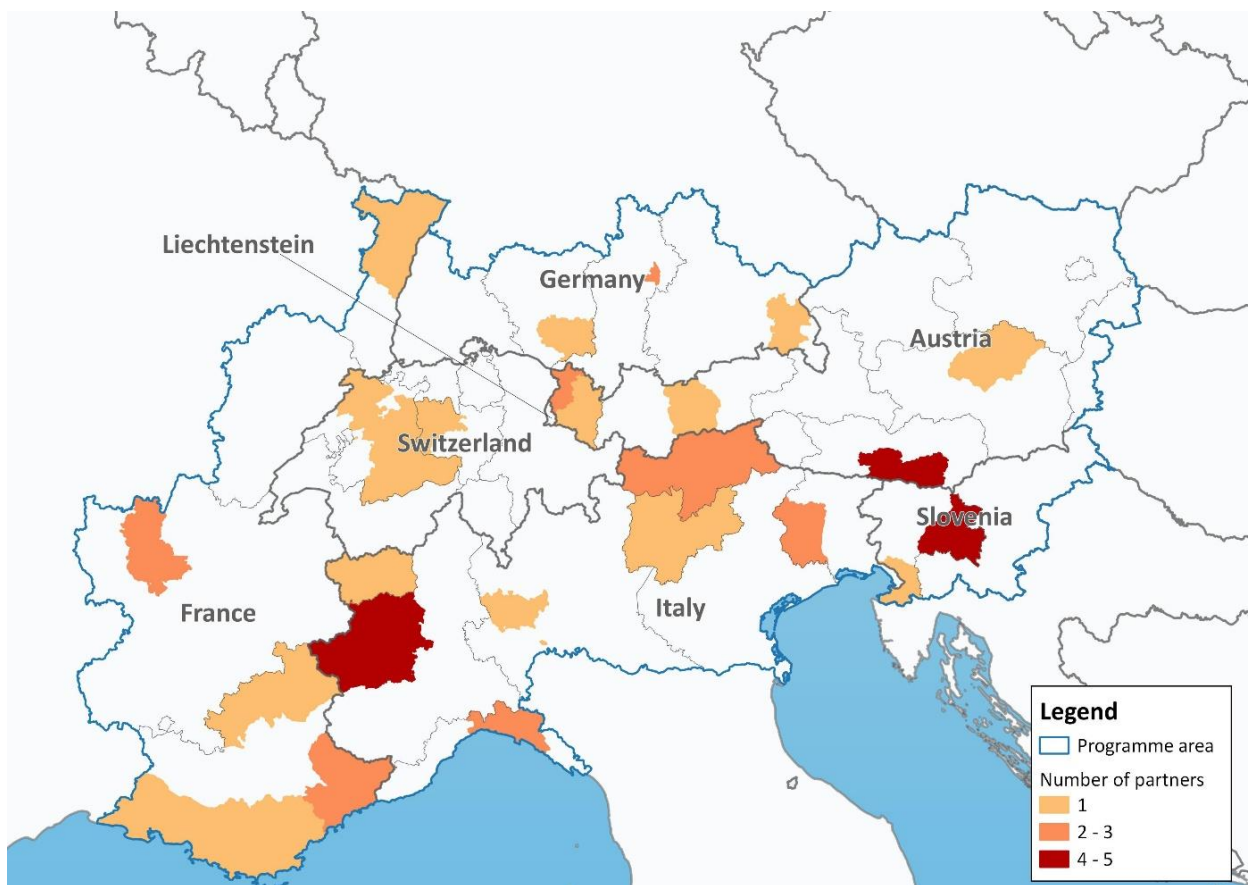
Table 4-2 SO 1.2 types of beneficiaries

| Type of beneficiary | % out of the total partners |
|---|-----------------------------|
| National public authority | 0% |
| Regional/local public authority | 39% |
| Education, training and research | 27% |
| Public services providers | 5% |
| Interest groups including NGOs | 11% |
| Enterprises and clusters | 7% |
| Sectoral Agency | 11% |

Source: data provided by the JS

In terms of geographical distribution, the highest number of beneficiaries is located in Italy (14 in total). Austria and France are both covered respectively by 9 and 8 partnering organisations, followed by Germany and Slovenia (6 partners each). 3 partners are from Switzerland. The areas where partners are most concentrated are the city of Torino in Italy, Klagenfurt-Villach in Austria and the region of Osrednjeslovenska in Slovenia. None of financed organisations is located in Liechtenstein.

Figure 4-1 - Localisation of the beneficiaries



Source: Data provided by the JS

4.2.2 Outputs achieved

Projects of the SO 1.2 contribute to three output indicators.

Data from the AIR 2018 show a partial level of achievement. On average at the end of 2018 the four projects have realised 14% of outputs targeted by the programme for the end of 2023. However, according to final targets set by the beneficiaries the programme is expected to realise in 2023 more output than initially planned.

Until the end of 2018, the projects have realised one cooperation structure (e.g. think tank and forums where service providers and authorities will come together and exchange issues on services of general interest) and three implementation elements (e.g. training model, platforms, action plans and social planning instruments). No achievement has been reported with regard to the strategic elements.

Table 4-3 SO 1.2 output indicators – progress towards the final targets

| Type of output | Achieved 2018 | Final target according to beneficiaries | Target value for 2023 (CP) | Progress towards the final target |
|---|---------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Number of supported transnational cooperation structures increasing capacities for the delivery of services of general interest in a changing society | 1 | 2 | 4 | 25% |
| Number of developed strategic elements increasing capacities for the delivery of services of general interest in a changing society | 0 | 4 | 3 | 0% |
| Number of developed implementation elements increasing capacities for the delivery of services of general interest in a changing society | 3 | 27 | 17 | 18% |
| | | | Average | 14% |

Source: AIR 2018

4.2.3 Target groups reached

Projects under SO 1.2 contribute to all the target groups set by the programme except the international organisations under national law, the EGTC and the enterprises (excluding the SMEs).

The level of achievement reported in the table below refers to the average value achieved by the projects for each category of target group.

The general public was targeted by 3 projects out of 4 and resulted being the most involved category. However, to be noted a different interpretation about the general public by the projects: one intended it as web site visualisations, another as participants' list to the events, while the last one provided no explanation on how general public had been considered.

Interest groups, including the NGOs, and higher education research, as expected, are also significantly concerned.

With regard to the policy actors, the local level was the most involved, followed by the regional and local ones. In this case, the authorities were counted through the participants list and the emails sent for requesting their attendance to training and initiatives.

Furthermore, infrastructures and (public) service providers were involved 2.5 more times than what expected by projects, even though such achievement is mainly due to Intesi project which was able to reach 70 out of the 12 declared in the application form. Similarly happened to the involvement of the SMEs where their high involvement (209%) is the result of an underestimation of the target value by Intesi project (which reached by its own 500%).

Concerning the "other" category, according to the analysis of the progress reports, no further elements on how projects interpreted it are available. The level of achievement depends on project Consenso (170%) and Intesi project, which reported an amount of 1754 while no target values were set in the application form.

Figure 4-2 target group reached by projects under SO 1.2

| | % Achievement | Projects contributing (AF) | |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|------|
| | | N. | % |
| General public | 676% | 3 | 75% |
| Interest groups including NGOs | 554% | 4 | 100% |
| Higher education and research | 475% | 2 | 50% |
| Local public authority | 297% | 4 | 100% |
| Infrastructure and (public) Service provider | 256% | 3 | 75% |
| Sectoral agency | 228% | 4 | 100% |
| SMEs | 209% | 3 | 75% |
| Regional public authority | 194% | 4 | 100% |
| Other | >170% | 2 | 50% |
| National public authority | 163% | 3 | 75% |
| Business support organisation | 114% | 3 | 75% |
| Education/training centre and school | 26% | 2 | 50% |
| International organisation under inter-national law | 0% | 1 | 25% |
| International organisation under national law | Not expected to be reached | | |
| EEIG, EGTC | Not expected to be reached | | |
| Enterprise, excluding SME | Not expected to be reached | | |

Source: Projects progress reports provided by the JS

4.2.4 Changes observed in the programme area

In 2014 the programme defined a result indicator to monitor the evolution of the programme area in terms of capacity of social organisations and public authorities to deliver services of general interest.

According to the information presented in the AIR 2018 (see table below) the *capacity to deliver services of social interest* has generally improved over the last years.

If we look at the specific answers provided by the experts involved in the monitoring of the result indicator, this improvement mainly depends on the fact that regional and national strategies on innovation are now more focused on the issues related to social innovation.

Table 4-4 SO 1.2 result indicators – evolution of programme's area

| Indicator | Baseline 2014 | Target value 2023 | Achieved in 2018 |
|---|---------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Level of capacity of social organisations and public authorities to delivery services of general interest in a changing society | 64.6% | Increase < 1% | 68.3% |

Source: AIR 2018

4.2.5 Impact: the results achieved by the projects

This section illustrates the key step of the evaluation of the impact for the SO 1.2. It presents the evidences collected through web survey and the key findings from the case studies regarding the results that the Alpine Space projects are bringing to the area.

All beneficiaries of the projects approved under SO 1.2 (call 1 and 2) were invited to take part to the web survey. In total 10 partners from 4 projects took part to the survey. They were asked to provide information regarding the type of benefits and results that their project is bringing by selecting from a list of potential benefits (which the evaluators had identified on the basis of the analysis of the application forms) or by specifying additional types of possible benefits.

As illustrated by the table below, if we refer to the four main categories of potential benefits proposed by the evaluators, projects from SO 1.2 are increasing the knowledge and competences of projects' partners and target groups (i.e. learning and knowledge benefits) but are also producing some tangible impacts in terms of socio-economic benefits, with particular regard to social inclusion and offer of services of general interest. Moreover, all respondents declared that their projects impacted on the social policies of the area (i.e. governance and policy benefits). Environmental impact is irrelevant.

Partners involved in the web-survey declared that the benefits indicated in the table below have been generated.

Table 4-5 Benefits brought by the projects financed under SO 1.2

| Category of benefit | % of respondents |
|---|------------------|
| Learning and knowledge | 100% |
| • Exchange and use of practice | 100% |
| • Created/increased skills and capacities | 70% |
| • Increased awareness | 50% |
| • Behavioural change in stakeholder opinion | 50% |
| Socio-economics benefit | 100% |
| • Increased business activity / capacity | 30% |
| • Alpine identity valorised | 30% |
| • Cost savings | 40% |
| • Increased capacity of social inclusion / delivery of services of general interest | 70% |
| • Triggered investments | 0% |
| Governance and policy | 100% |
| • Improved stakeholders' involvement | 80% |
| • Delivery of appropriate policy instruments, framework and tools | 70% |
| • Removal of barrier to cooperation | 60% |
| • Improved monitoring and evaluation systems | 40% |

| | |
|--|------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased relevance (e.g. budget) of the theme of the governance in the local / regional / national / sectoral dedicated policy instrument | 50% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination and better definition of roles | 40% |
| Environment and sustainability | 30% |

Source: Web-survey

4.2.5.1 Learning and knowledge benefits

Projects under SO 1.2 contribute to **learning and knowledge** benefits, by exchanging and using practices (100% of respondents) and increasing skills and capacities (70% of respondents).

Exchange of practices can be a key when a strictly sectorial or institutionally not integrated approach is adopted, without the regular opportunity of mutual learning. This is the case of services of general interest whose competences belong to authorities at different level, and very often isolated solutions are adopted by the providers. INTESI project partners, for example, formed a think tank to further discuss the main issues on the integrated strategy for delivering services of general interest. The think tank represented an occasion to reinforce the knowledge gained within the project and keep active the involvement of relevant stakeholders. PlurAlps identified a powerful solution to share and promote good practices, i.e. the Alpine Pluralism Award 2018. The Alpine Pluralism Award 2018 was launched to make visible recently started and ongoing activities in the Alpine Space, to increase public awareness and provide inspiration for others. 4 categories were foreseen: Managing social change brought by migration with mutual benefits for migrants and local host societies, Integration of migrants into the local/ regional labour market and for fostering entrepreneurship of migrants, Building upon skills of migrants in order to improve land use, nature protection and regional development, Support the school/work transition of migrants and promote the inclusion of migrants into the dual educational path. 41 projects were submitted from 6 countries, so showing the vitality and creativity that feature a topic that is not strongly covered by ETC. Participation was uneven, ranging from 17 projects originated in Austria to only 1 project coming from France. This experience shows that forms of practice exchanging, when well designed and systematically implemented, succeed in **promoting the creativity of actors outside of the partnership**, so creating a significant added value.

Projects contributed also to increase skills and capacities both of the partners and the local authorities. This was possible thanks to the several initiatives organised to train partners and professionals (co-creative labs, workshops and other dissemination events). Partners considered these initiatives very important also to develop new ways of thinking and flexibility, directly led by the cooperation framework. PlurAlps developed a capacity building package, i.e. a collection of ready-for-use materials for increasing capacities and transferring knowledge, with the aim to strengthen pluralism in the Alpine area and beyond.

From the survey it appears that under this SO it is difficult to generate behavioural change in stakeholder opinion and to increase awareness. In particular, the last point seems to be a weakness (50% against the average of 78% under all SO). This shows that the projects were not able to promote the importance to make the services of general interest evolve to satisfy the exigencies of a rapidly evolving society. If combined with the political difficulties in developing continuous action in definite policy fields (such as migration), such atmosphere could hinder the impact of the SO 1.2 - limited in number - projects in the upcoming years. Solutions identified by the projects to ensure durability (f.i. the involvement in PlurAlps partnership of the Community Network Alliance in the Alps – an

association of almost 300 municipalities in seven alpine countries committed to make the municipalities continue using the instruments generated by the project after the end of the funded phase), could turn to be not sufficient given such unfavourable conditions. As the following chapters will illustrate, the situation is very different when environmental topics are concerned, and this opens the door to considerations related to the role played by external factors in the impact generation.

4.2.5.2 Socio-economic benefits



In terms of **socio-economic benefits**, project outputs increased the capacity of social inclusion and generated a significant cost saving for organisations in charge of delivery services of general interest. In the field of healthcare indeed, prevention initiatives play a crucial role in reducing the health expenditures. In Carinthia region for instance the project CoNSENSo estimated that saving by asking to all elderly's close family members enrolled in the pilot intervention if "*the elderly would have been sent in a retirement home in case the CoNSENSo's nurse services would have not been there*". It emerged that among the 367 elderly enrolled, a total of 80 (22%) would have been transferred in a retirement home. It was estimate that this allowed to save a total of 963 months of retirement home fees, corresponding to € 1 540 800. After deduction of all relevant costs, it resulted a saving of € 688 709. Apart from this encouraging piece of information, the method applied by CoNSENSo project to estimate social impact appears to be sound and could be promoted among ASP projects.

Another interesting experience is brought by Intesi project, which tested a functional tendering process for public transport services. Instead of adopting the conventional method where the specifications are precisely defined, the partners decided to take advantage of benefits of the functional method and leave to bidders the possibility to come up with innovative solutions. In the case of Verkehrsverbund Kärnten GesmbH, consumers have been involved in the process of the invitation for tendering and actively provided hints to develop costumer-oriented vision. The finally selected offer (best performing, not cheapest offer) improved public transport services in the test area (Liesach/Maltatal) considerably. The daily connections have from 90 to 144 almost been doubled at the same price as before. In the last 6 months other 4 VKG regions have been capitalising on the Intesi results and started a functional tendering process.

Measurement of impact appears to be less effective in policy fields where such a critical mass of users/ consumers is not present, or where the policy action and therefore the services offered are less continuous and systematic. This is the case of PlurAlps project that dealt with migration issues. Even if the costs of an insufficiently inclusive policy are supposed to be high, it seems to be more difficult to establish parameters and compare the approaches. The benefit produced by the project in terms of increase of capacity of social inclusion is detailed in the factsheet below.

Factsheet 4-1 Sub-benefit: Exchange and use of practices

| PlurAlps project | |
|---|---|
|  | SO I.2 Increase capacities for the delivery of services of general interest in a changing society |
|  | To improve the framework for innovation in the rural areas through new forms of stakeholder involvement facilitated by Information Communication Technology |

| | |
|---|--|
|  <p>Alpine dimension</p> | <p>Alpine space rural communities are deprived of highly needed jobs, good provision of services as well as a favourable climate for entrepreneurship and social innovation, which result in a brain drain. Digitalization is a promising approach in this respect and offers opportunities for these areas to overcome the handicaps of distances and to access new markets through new channels, to create a positive image of a region, to increase the attractiveness of a territory, to create a new learning ecosystem and to create job and business opportunities. However the digital divide between rural and urban areas has even increased in the last years</p> |
| <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">BENEFIT</p> | <p>Benefit: Socio-economic Sub-benefit: Increased business activity/ capacity (new products, processes, services, techniques)</p> <p>The pilot projects focus on social and labour market inclusion of migrants. The project partners formed local partnerships to implement the pilot projects with quite a wide outreach. Pilot projects are implemented in cooperation with over 100 stakeholders (municipalities, associations, cooperatives, SMEs, etc.) in the alpine area. The project partners concluded formal agreements in the forms of contracts, MoU and letters of intents with their local implementation partners. These agreements are important for the ownership and sustainability of the new offers and services developed within PlurAlps. The new services developed and implemented by the partners are relevant to: Information delivery for newcomers – for example online platforms and regular welcome events; Intercultural Coaches / Mediator / Tutors – for example Job and Housing coaches employed by municipalities; Organising volunteers – for example harnessing the power of volunteering (locals and migrants) to support the integration process; Language competences – for example new language training formats for rural areas combining child care and language training for women, or teaching local dialects.</p> <p>The PlurAlps pilot projects suggest that integration issues should be tackled at the lowest level of governance, where they can be solved, because trust between the various actors is highest. The experiences from the PlurAlps pilot projects further shows that integration processes are not automatic but that they need to be consciously designed to bring local actors together.</p> |
| | <p>Where</p> <p>The project partners launched pilot projects in the fields of social integration, labour market integration and environmental and landscape management by migrants. Local or regional implementation partnerships were formed which include all relevant stakeholders for the development of the new offers and services such as municipalities, SMEs, NGOs and other stakeholders. In total, in the six participating countries more than 80 organisations and institutions participated in implementing the pilot projects</p> |
|  <p>Transnational added value</p> | <p>Even if the transnational dimension of migration appears as an obvious fact, ETC has a modest focus on this phenomenon. The experience of PlurAlps would not have been possible in absence of funding for transnational cooperation. However, at the present stage it is not clear if there will be a critical mass of networks and outputs generated by ASP and other cooperation programmes to improve governance and policy making in this field.</p> |

4.2.5.3 Benefits on governance and policy

All projects under SO 1.2 declared to have generated **governance and policy benefits**. Beyond the improvement of stakeholders' involvement (indicated by 80% of the respondents), the projects declared to have delivered appropriate policy instruments, framework and tools (70%) and removed barrier to cooperation (60%).

One project under SO 1.2, AlpSib, focused in particular on the mechanism of the Social impact bonds which is still a not fully explored field and where the capacity of public organisations is a pre-condition to accelerate these new investment models. The methodology originated by the projects in this field

created policy instruments supporting decision makers as guidelines for policy on pricing outcomes, procurement, contracting etc.

Still Intesi project has developed a governance model (Output 2) on how to elaborate integrated, territorial SGI strategies with up to 5 levels of integration (actors, administrative levels financial sources policies services/sectors). This model is a powerful instrument in improving the regional governance in the field of SGI. The partnership produced booklets on the a) Governance strategies b) community led integration of SGI c) SGI cross sectoral integration d) e-services – a new way for SGI delivery and e) a territorial approach for SGI delivery; these booklets together with the policy recommendation handbook present on a few pages information for decision makers in the field of SGI. These products were provided through the partnership to politicians on regional and national levels.

PlurAlps published a white paper, which provides policy recommendations aimed at increasing the social cohesion and territorial attractiveness of the alpine region through innovative measures that encourage pluralism and address migration. The recommendations focus on municipal and inter-municipal levels, encouraging interaction with the other levels (regional, national and transnational, including the business sector).

4.2.5.4 Territorial dimension

This paragraph aims to provide an overview on the localisation of the benefits brought by the projects. Indeed, the mere analysis of localization of the project partners (presented in the previous part of this chapter) does not allow to detect which and what kind of territories are benefitting by the project interventions.

Thus, in order to investigate at what extent impacts have been generated across the territories, respondents to the survey have been asked to specify if project activities are expected to produce the benefits in urban, rural or mountainous area.

As illustrated in the table below, according to the data collected through the survey, benefits produced by the projects financed under SO 1.2 are mainly expected to concern the alpine rural areas (40% of respondents). However, also the mountains and the urban areas are largely covered.

Table 4-6 Where the SO 1.2 projects are supposed to deliver their benefits

| Area | % |
|--------------------|------------|
| Mountainous areas | 30% |
| Rural areas | 40% |
| Urban areas | 30% |

Source: web-survey

If we refer to the types of urban areas, data from the survey indicate that the benefits coming from SO 1.2 projects are expected to be concentrated predominantly in the smaller municipalities (80% of respondents) while the impact on the regional capitals and bigger cities appear to be more limited (respectively 30% and 20%).

Table 4-7 Which urban areas are more interested by the benefits generated by SO 1.2

| Area | % |
|---|------------|
| Regional capitals or capitals | 30% |
| Other municipalities above 50 000 of inhabitants | 20% |
| Municipalities below 50 000 of inhabitants | 70% |

Source: web-survey

The evidences emerged from the survey analysis, i.e. benefits mainly located in rural areas and small municipalities, allow to verify that the financed projects are performing well in facilitating the access to public services to people living in more marginal areas of the alpine space.

4.2.5.5 Durability

In principle, SO 1.2 with 4 projects financed and a budget of less than 9 millions euros presents lower potential in terms of aggregation of outputs and exchanges between partnerships. However, **all partners** involved in SO 1.2 projects and having answered the web survey **declared that their project has generated other opportunities**, with special regard to the establishment of networks among partners, continuation of pilot activities started during the projects, setting up of a partnership based on the previous project experience.

Furthermore, the projects financed under SO 1.2 showed dynamism and effectiveness in dealing with the policy level, so creating the conditions for a durable use of their outputs. In particular, the capacity to deliver appropriate policy instruments, frameworks and tools to be mainly adopted at regional level (almost 4 out of 10 SO 1.2 partners are regional/ local public authorities) represents a high potential in terms of durability.

When looking at the most important types of outputs generated by the projects (as shown in the table below), it emerges that projects – even if in limited number - have produced both strategic elements such as policy guidelines, and specific implementation elements such as social business models.

Table 4-8 Type of outputs

| Programme type of output | Examples by the projects |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Transnational cooperation structures | Think tank and forums where service providers and authorities will come together and exchange issues on services of general interest. |
| Strategic elements | Policy guidelines, toolkits and strategies for integrated, innovative and multilevel governance. |
| Implementation elements | Social business model and training model, platforms, action plans and social planning instruments. |

Source: Desk analysis, case studies

Strategic elements appear of particular importance for durability. At this regard, it is expected that the policy tools having a potential in terms of cost saving in the delivery of services of general interest will be considered with high attention at political level. In particular, solutions to reach a better economic sustainability in dealing with the phenomenon of ageing population are likely to be seriously considered by alpine policy makers, especially if social innovation solutions are well tested and appear to be feasible.

On the other side, in policy fields where it is not obvious to gain consensus durability appears as an open question. The case of PlurAlps is interesting at this regard. The project was formulated in a

sophisticated way, interpreting the topic of migration in a regional cohesion perspective, so orienting action towards the local and regional policy making level. The partnership was built with care, ensuring the presence of the policy makers among partners and observers, giving a prominent role to a partner with high understanding of the policy level such as EURAC, and involving a strong multiplier such as the Alliance for the Alps. Furthermore, the project had the capacity to identify (also thanks to the intensive exchange of practices launched through the Pluralism Award) in the various national contexts the most responsive players to implement the integration policies. For instance in Italy it was detected that municipalities are fragile bodies with low capacities, while cooperative companies can have strong expertise. Finally, interaction with the EUSALP Action Group “To improve the adequacy of labour market, education and training in strategic sectors” occurred thanks to the project observer Province of Trento. However, durability of the project’s outputs will mainly depend on external factors, with special regard to the political priority given to the very sensitive topic of migration. When the local and regional level is concerned, the adoption of a pragmatic approach recognizing the role played by the migrants not only in the labour dimension, but also socially in balancing the demographic change (particularly significant in the rural and mountainous alpine areas), is expected to prevail. Looking at the national level, it is probable that in some of the alpine countries the migration topics will be dealt in a more ideological way, so reducing the room for cooperation at transnational level. This opens the door to the next paragraph.

4.2.5.6 *External factors and mega-trends*

The collection of information from the lead partner of the project selected as case study (PlurAlps) indicated two interesting factors, to be further inquired.

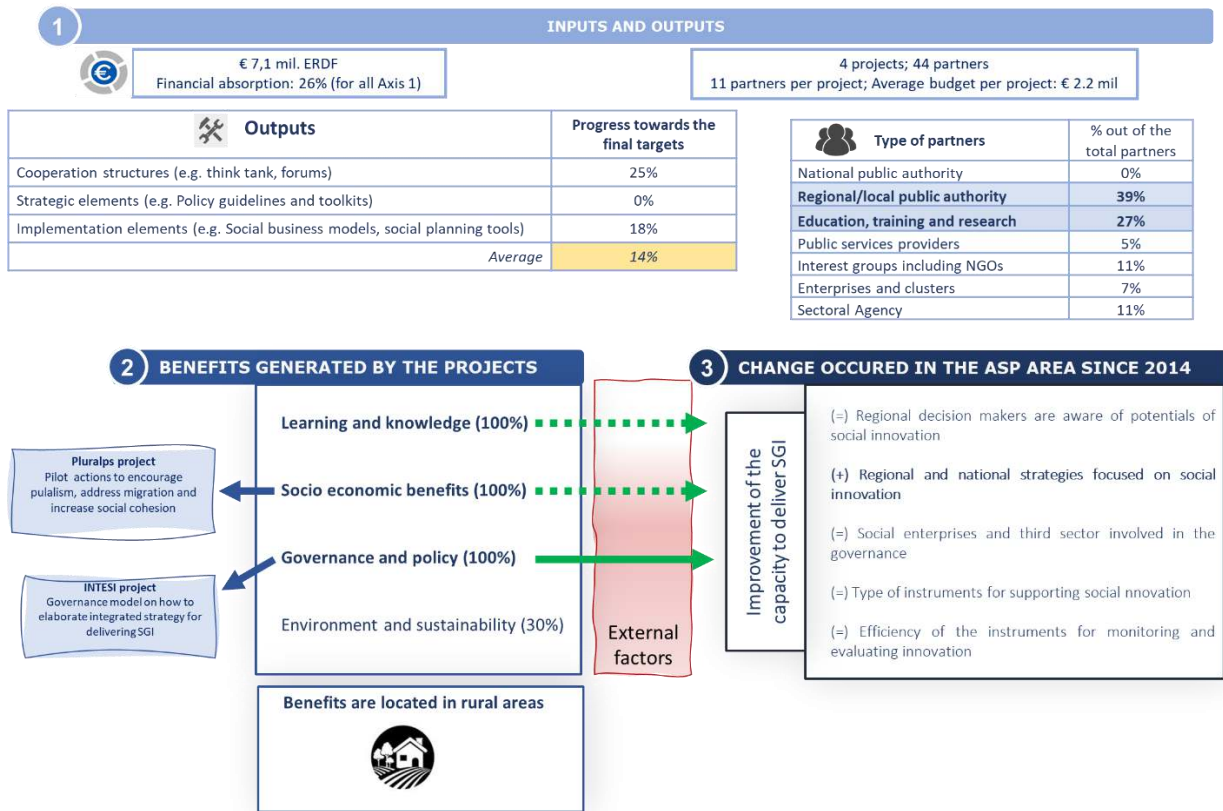
A disparity between national governance and administrative systems was mentioned, when the local level is concerned. In particular, **the Italian small municipalities appeared as weaker players** in the provision of services of general interest, if compared to small municipalities belonging to other countries. This piece of information is consistent with the progress of a major institutional reform in the country.

The institutional reform carried out in Italy in 2014 transformed provinces in inter-municipal cooperation entities. Their representatives turned to be non elected directly, so that provinces cannot be considered anymore as a level of government. Their competences were substantially transferred to regions (upper level) and municipalities (lower level). However, as stated by OECD Multi-level Governance Studies - Multi-level Governance Reforms Overview (2017), ‘regional governments appear relatively reluctant to introduce these transfers of functions. This may be linked to the large potential cost of the reform of the other levels of governments, since regions and/ or municipalities will be responsible for former provincial staff expenditure ... moreover, Italian provinces are on average heavily indebted .. and the reassignment of their assets and liabilities is an intricate question. These potentially costly changes need to be implemented in a current climate of expenditure cuts and budgetary restrictions, which may explain the slow progress made by regional authorities in the implementation of the reform’. The consequence of such a not fully implemented reform is a **lack of institutional support suffered by the Italian municipalities**. This is particularly relevant to the small municipalities, which were significantly supported by the provinces when they were elected bodies with full competences.

In the PlurAlps experience, the relative weakness of the small Italian municipalities was compensated by the dynamism of the Italian social enterprises dealing with immigration issues. However, such an institutional fragility featuring Italy (largely the territorially most represented Member State in the Alpine Space Programme) should be further investigated.



Furthermore, **specific differences between the Alpine Space national systems will have to be observed** when there will be a higher availability of data concerning the 2014-2020 period. In particular, factors such as the structure of population (with special regard to fertility which is historically higher in the French territories than in other areas belonging to the programme) and the perception of immigration (that has suffered a dramatic regression in Italy over a decade, also due to some phases when the role of the EU in the control and management of the irregular borders arrivals appeared as particularly weak to most of the Italian citizens) will have to be observed. This will allow to understand how external conditions - mainly depending on the national contexts - affect the possibility to take action at transnational level to increase the capacity for the delivery of services of general interest.

4.3 IMPACT OF SO I.2: KEY FINDINGS






The figure above offers an overview of the theory of the intervention logic of SO 1.2 and summarises some of the key findings that emerge from the evaluation:


Financial/ output progress and partnership

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Financial data indicate good progress in terms of financial absorption. However, data from AIR 2018 indicate only partial progress for what concerns the outputs (i.e. 14% of the final outputs have been already realized). In particular, no achievement has been reported with regard to the <i>strategic elements</i>.</p> |
|  | <p>39% of partners are regional and local public authorities which represent the key policy actors in delivering services of general interest. The educational sector is also widely represented, especially the higher education and research centres. 11% of partners are sectoral agencies including both regional/ local actors and associations working in the relevant fields. To be noted also a good involvement of the NGOs which often play an important role in providing public services. In terms of target groups, the projects showed high capacity to involve all the different parts of social society (i.e the general public, the policy actors, the education and private sector). However, the over achievement may be due to an underestimation of the target values as well as a different interpretation given to specific categories of target groups (for example the general public).</p> |

Benefits generated by the projects

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Projects financed are generating learning and knowledge benefits. In particular, ASP projects are promoting a new approach in the design and implementation of the services of general interest, moving from a sectorial approach to an integrated multilevel approach.</p> |
|  | <p>Projects are also generating some tangible impacts in terms of socio-economic benefits. In particular, they increased the capacity of social inclusion and generated a significant cost saving for organisations in charge of delivering services of general interest.</p> |
|  | <p>All projects under SO 1.2 declared to have generated governance and policy benefits. They showed dynamism and effectiveness in dealing with the policy level, so creating the conditions for a durable use of their outputs. In particular, the capacity to deliver appropriate policy instruments, frameworks and tools to be mainly adopted at regional level (almost 4 out of 10 SO 1.2 partners are regional/ local public authorities) represents a high potential in terms of durability.</p> |

Territorial dimension

| | |
|---|---|
|  | <p>According to the evidences emerged from the survey, benefits generated by the projects are mainly located in rural areas and small municipalities, which testifies that the financed projects are performing well in facilitating the access to public services by people living in more marginal areas of the alpine space.</p> |
|---|---|

Inputs for the future programme

Evaluation findings indicate that when dealing with social innovation (and more generally with the delivery of services of social interest) the potential of the projects also lies in the specific “nature” of the territorial challenge.

The evaluation has illustrated that solutions to reach a better economic sustainability in dealing with the phenomenon of ageing population are likely to be seriously considered by alpine policy makers, especially if social innovation solutions are well tested and appear to be feasible. On the other side, in policy fields as migration where it is not obvious to gain consensus durability appears as an open question.

This point opens the door to a big question for the future programme:

Should ASP be – in coordination with EUSALP – a proactive player in the alpine area pushing for a transnational elaboration of the most significant territorial challenges (such as migration), even knowing that the durability of the outputs achieved could turn to be a problem given political uncertain perspectives? Or, on the contrary, should ASP focus the resources on the specific objectives where the local, regional and national authorities are more likely to respond, so giving continuity to the transnational action at their respective levels?

The stakeholder consultations aimed at preparing for the next programming period should help to choose between the two options or allow to find a more advanced solution.

Moreover, it is recommended to establish a taxonomy of target groups at programme level and a more precise and shared methodology to count them. This will allow the projects to estimate more realistic target values, and the programme to effectively aggregate and monitor data.

5 Establish trans-nationally integrated low carbon policy instruments

5.1 WHAT IS THE CHANGE THAT THE PROGRAMME WANTS TO ACHIEVE?

5.1.1 Key needs and challenges identified

The situation analysis carried out before the launch of the programme identified the high potential for energy saving, *rich resources and renewable energies of the Alpine space*.

This favourable context paves the way to develop integrated collective approaches to climate change and also to build upon existing capacities in energy savings, use, efficiency and emission-reducing technologies and innovation.

The analysis also allowed to stress the importance to promote a low carbon economy thanks to *the benefits in terms of quality of the air and the preservation of ecosystems*.

Box 5-1 Relevant needs and challenges identified in 2014

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rich resources of renewable energy resources Overall climate change adaptive capacity in terms of governance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploitation of energy potentials stresses the environment instantaneously while negative effects of spatially concentrated emissions (e.g. NO_x, PM etc) are reinforced by the Alpine topography |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interventions for a low carbon economy also benefit the quality of the air and the preservation of ecosystem Economic globalisation is expected to affect energy demand towards renewable and flexible solutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change rises costs for risk prevention/ rehabilitation and will demand additional material inputs for the restoration of the status quo ante |

Source: Cooperation programme

5.1.2 Expected change in the programme area

Representatives of the countries and regions involved in the Alpine Space area agreed to tackle the key needs and challenges summarised in the previous section by establishing transnational integrated low carbon policy instruments. In particular, to achieve the expected change, five conditions must be ensured:

- (1) A better knowledge and understanding of the national and regional decision makers in charge of regional development of the potentials and implications of implementing low carbon policies.
- (2) National and regional strategies need to be focused the issues related to low carbon policies (e.g. related to energy, transport, buildings, spatial planning, land uses etc.).
- (3) A smooth decision making process among national and regional decision makers allowing for exchange, consultation, coordination and public participation on planning containing topics affected by low carbon policies.
- (4) A National and regional operating frameworks fostering the introduction and implementation of supporting tools (e.g. related to coordination, funding and pricing, incentives, behavioural change measures etc.) for low carbon activities.
- (5) A joint Monitoring systems and information flows allowing a constant and effective exchange of data on low carbon policy impacts, evaluation and policy review (i.e. spatial use trends, emissions, economic performance, health etc.).

5.2 WHAT WAS ACHIEVED

5.2.1 Type of projects and beneficiaries which were financed

9 projects were financed under SO 2.1: 4 in the first call, 3 in the second one and 2 in the third. So far, the allocated amount of ERDF resources is EUR16.9 million which corresponds to 54% of the resources planned for PA 2. The average total budget per project is EUR 2.3 mil.

All the projects selected in call 1 and call 2 are closed while the two last projects approved (in call 3) started in April 2018 and will close their activities in 2021.

Table 5-1 SO 2.1 Number of projects and budget allocated

| Call | N. financed projects | ERDF budget allocated |
|--------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | 4 | 8 456 523.47 € |
| 2 | 3 | 5 182 717.14 € |
| 3 | 2 | 3 287 887.73 € |
| Total | 9 | 16 927 128.34 € |

Source: Data provided by the JS

Data presented in AIR 2018 offer an overview of the financial progress made by all the projects financed under axis 2 (not only to SO 2.1). Data indicate that approximately 33% of the budget allocated has been absorbed.

In total, 101 beneficiaries have been financed and the average number of partners per project is 11. To be noted a balanced participation between public and private bodies (respectively 56% and 44%). The most represented organisations are the local and regional authorities (28%) followed by the sectoral agencies (26%). This latter together with the universities and research centres (21%) are bodies with specific technical knowledge in the fields of the energy efficiency and environment.

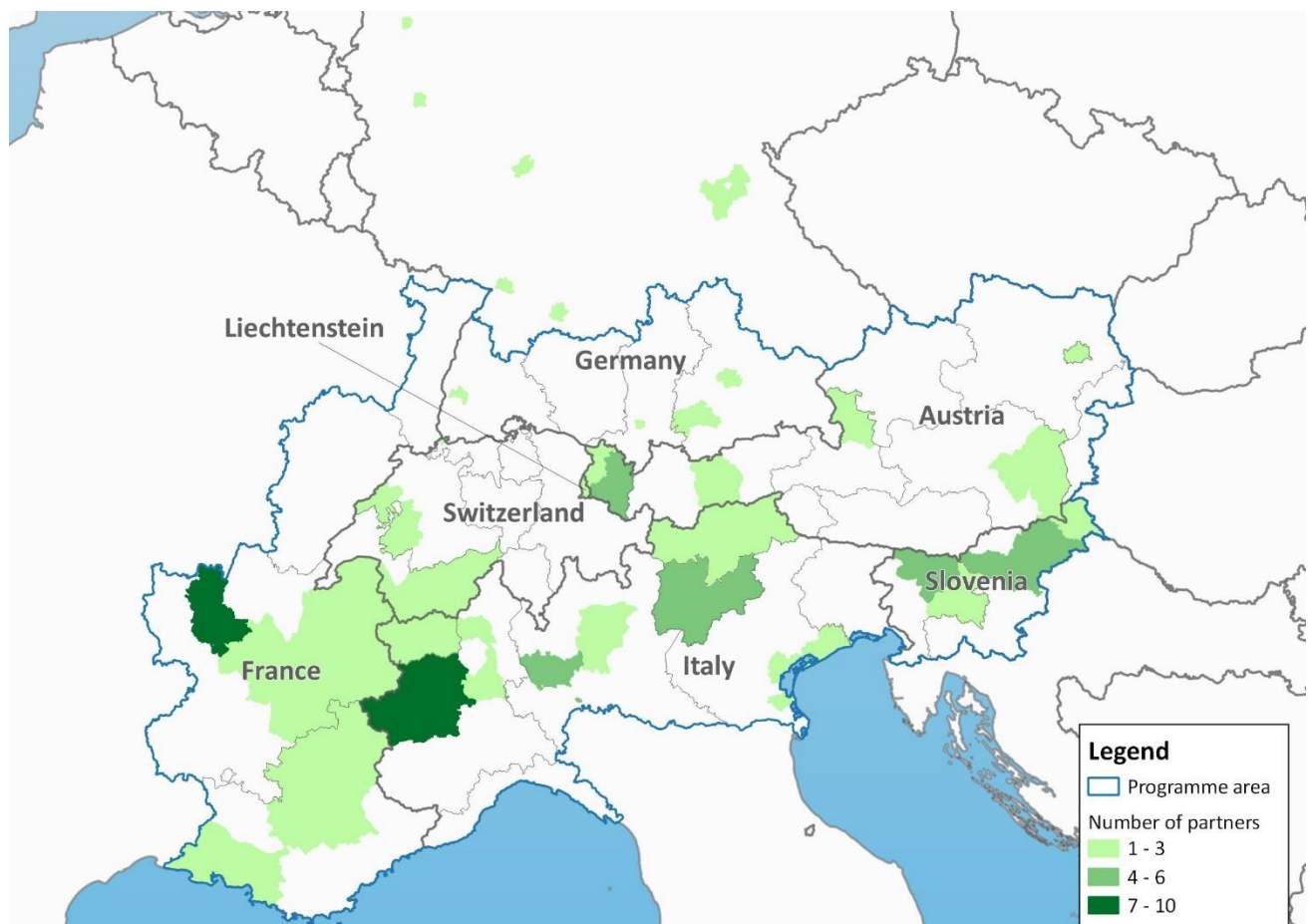
Table 5-2 Type of beneficiaries

| Type of beneficiary | % out of the total partners |
|---|-----------------------------|
| National Public Authority | 3% |
| Regional/ local public authority | 28% |
| Education, training and research | 21% |
| Business support organisation | 4% |
| Enterprises and SME | 8% |
| NGO and no-profit institution | 10% |
| Sectoral agency | 26% |

Source: Data provided by the JS

Beneficiaries are distributed across all the partner states, with Italy having the major share (29 partners). Both in Slovenia and France there are 17 partners, in Germany there are 16 financed organisations, with 9 out of the cooperation area. In Austria they are 14, in Switzerland 5 and the remaining 3 are located in Lichtenstein. The highest concentration of partners is located in the city of Milan and in the French department of Rhone.

Figure 5-1 Localisation of beneficiaries



Source: Data provided by the JS

5.2.2 Outputs achieved

As illustrated by the table below, projects financed under SO 2.1. are expected to deliver 3 types of outputs. Compared to the 2 SOs financed under Axis 1, SO 2.1 shows more progress towards the final targets (on average 28% of the final target was achieved at the end of 2018).

Projects have delivered mainly 3 strategic elements (e.g. methodologies for users engagements, models and recommendations for improvement of policies) and 4 implementation elements (e.g. guidelines for assessments tools, IT applications, hardware and software, toolkits), while no progress was monitored in terms of creation of new transnational cooperation structures.

Table 5-3 SO 2.1 output indicators – progress towards the final targets

| Type of output | Achieved 2018 | Final target according to beneficiaries | Target value for 2023 (CP) | Progress towards the final target |
|--|---------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Number of supported transnational cooperation structures aiming at establishing transnationally integrated low carbon policy instruments | 0 | 2 | 9 | 0% |
| Number of developed strategic elements aiming at establishing transnationally integrated low carbon policy instruments | 3 | 14 | 6 | 50% |
| Number of developed implementation elements establishing transnationally integrated low carbon policy instruments | 4 | 34 | 12 | 33% |
| | | | Average | 28% |

Source: AIR 2018

5.2.3 Target groups reached

Target groups are the final users of the outputs delivered by the projects and beneficiaries are asked to measure somehow their involvement in the implementation of the project activities.

The table below shows the average level of achievement by the projects to the target groups set by the programme (15 categories in total). The 9 projects contribute to all of them except the international organisations under national and inter-national law.

7 out of 9 projects under SO 2.1 targeted the general public which had been reached more than 7 times comparing to what planned. However, to be noted that such achievement is an average value resulted from a range of 0% and 5011%. The maximum value of this range was generated by project Casco that has used the same approach to measure all the target groups i.e. by counting attendance lists to events, media articles and e-communication activities.

Also, higher education and research institutes had been reached extensively and this shows a general tendency to underestimate the target values by all the projects (in particular project GRETA reached 988 out of 30 targeted institutes, which corresponds to a ratio of 3 293%).

In terms of policy involvement, the regional level is the most reached with all the 9 projects contributing to it (305%) followed by local (140%) and national public authorities (88%). The private sector, i.e. SMEs enterprises and business support organisations, is also significantly involved mainly through events and presentations.

Figure 5-2 Target group reached by projects under SO 2.1

| | % Achievement | Projects contributing (AF) | |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|------|
| | | N. | % |
| General public | 760% | 7 | 78% |
| Higher education and research | 658% | 6 | 67% |
| Regional public authority | 305% | 9 | 100% |
| Interest groups including NGOs | 222% | 8 | 89% |
| Infrastructure and (public) service provider | 204% | 5 | 56% |
| Sectoral agency | 197% | 8 | 89% |
| SMEs | 180% | 9 | 100% |
| Other | 180% | 3 | 33% |
| Business support organisation | 179% | 5 | 56% |
| Education/training centre and school | 141% | 5 | 56% |
| Local public authority | 140% | 9 | 100% |
| Enterprise, excluding SME | 122% | 5 | 56% |
| National public authority | 88% | 6 | 67% |
| EEIG, EGTC | 0% | 1 | 11% |
| International organisation under inter-national law | Not expected to be reached | | |
| International organisation under national law | Not expected to be reached | | |

Source: Projects progress reports provided by the JS

5.2.4 Changes observed in the programme area

In 2014 the programme defined a result indicator to monitor the evolution of the programme area in terms of level of implementation of low carbon policies.

According to the information presented in the AIR 2018 (see table below) this level has remained stable over the last four years.

| Indicator | Baseline 2014 | Target value 2023 | Achieved in 2018 |
|--|---------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Level of Implementation of low carbon policy instruments | 66.5% | Increase between 1,0 – 3,0% | 66.2% |

Source: AIR 2018

5.2.5 Impact: the results achieved by the projects

This section illustrates the key steps of the evaluation of the impact for the SO 2.1. It presents the evidences collected through web survey and the key findings from the case studies regarding the results that the Alpine Space projects are bringing to the area.

All beneficiaries of the projects approved under SO 2.1 (call 1 and 2) were invited to take part to the web survey. In total 18 partners from 7 projects took part to the survey. They were asked to provide information regarding the type of benefits and results that their project is bringing by selecting from a list of potential benefits (which the evaluators had identified on the basis of the analysis of the application forms) or by specifying additional types of possible benefits.

As illustrated by the table below, if we refer to the 4 main categories of potential benefits proposed by the evaluators, projects from SO 2.1 are increasing the knowledge and competences of projects' partners and target groups (i.e. learning and knowledge benefits) but are also producing some tangible impacts in terms of environmental and sustainability benefits, with particular regard to increased relevance of low-carbon themes in the local / regional / national strategies. Moreover, the projects impacted on the low carbon policies of the area (i.e. governance and policy benefits). Socio-economic impact is not directly relevant.

Partners involved in the web-survey declared that the benefits indicated in the table below have been generated.

Table 5-4 Benefits brought by the projects financed under SO 2.1

| Category of benefit | % of respondents |
|--|------------------|
| Learning and knowledge | 100% |
| • Exchange and use of practice | 89% |
| • Created/increased skills and capacities | 83% |
| • Increased awareness | 94% |
| • Behavioural change in stakeholder opinion | 50% |
| Environment and sustainability | 72% |
| • Increased relevance (e.g. budget) to low-carbon themes in the local / regional / national strategy | 61% |
| • Increased use of ecosystem services | 28% |
| • Valorised ecosystem services | 17% |
| • Increased sustainability (cultural and natural heritage) of tourism activities | 17% |
| • Larger use of low-carbon mobility and transport options | 0% |
| Governance and policy | 83% |
| • Improved stakeholders' involvement | 72% |

| | |
|--|------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of appropriate policy instruments, framework and tools | 78% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of barrier to cooperation | 28% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved monitoring and evaluation systems | 61% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased relevance (e.g. budget) of the theme of the governance in the local / regional / national / sectoral dedicated policy instrument | 39% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination and better definition of roles | 22% |
| Socio-economic benefit | 44% |

Source: web-survey






5.2.5.1 Learning and knowledge benefits

The main contribution to **learning and knowledge** under SO 2.1 consisted of increasing awareness of the environmental added value of using low carbon solutions. This sub-benefit appears to be reached under SO 2.1 with the highest intensity: 94% against an average of 78%. The interviews conducted to prepare the case studies revealed that this kind of impact was facilitated by a favourable public atmosphere. The *Friday for future* movement was mentioned, emphasising on the one side the higher interest of the general public in any initiative aiming at reducing CO₂ emissions, on the other side the willingness of the decision makers to show higher capacity to design and implement low carbon measures. Such external factor could have contributed to the rise of awareness detected during the projects' course. However, it is worth noting that SO 2.1 includes projects facing new topics (such as circular economy and geothermal energy), which had not been explored before, at least in the alpine area. Increase of awareness of such new (and specific) topics appears as a significant benefit indicating high additionality by the programme.

The other two benefits significantly generated under this SO are exchanging and using practices (89%) and increasing skills and capacities (83%). The CaSCo project, aiming at increasing material flows along processing chains in timber industry, adopted an approach having similarities with the previously analysed PlurAlps project (SO 1.2). CaSCo recognised outstanding construction projects in the alpine area by nominating public and private institutions that procure or implement (partly) wooden buildings or urban furniture made from regional timber. 15 projects from 5 countries were awarded and promoted in relevant media. As shown by other projects, capacity building initiatives focusing on technical aspects such as public procurement or monitoring systems prepare the ground for a more structured development of the project topics in the policy cycle.

In case of projects dealing with mature topics, the benefits under the category of learning and knowledge should be considered as positive but not sufficient in terms of impact, as the level of policy making should be reached going beyond the exchange of practices, the increase of awareness and the acquisition of capacities.

Being focused on a new topic, the project presented in the factsheet below gave a duly justified priority to the awareness increase.

| GRETA project | |
|--|--|
|  | 2.1 Establish transnationally integrated low carbon policy instruments |
|  | To foster the use of shallow geothermal energy in the area and hence to reduce total CO ₂ -emissions in environmentally sensitive regions |
|  Alpine dimension | Geothermal energy use was a new topic both for the ASP and for the geographical area. While such an approach is well established in lowland areas, the use of geothermal energy needs to be targeted to the alpine area, which is featured by common needs to be tackled using shared knowledge and adopting common approaches. For instance, there are several very isolated areas on the Alps where the connection to the pipeline cannot be established. In such places near-surface geothermal resources can represent an efficient solution to reduce CO ₂ emissions of the buildings. Tourism represents a challenge because it requires the development of heating and cooling systems, which cannot turn to produce additional CO ₂ emissions. |
|  What | <p>Benefit: Socio-economic Sub-benefit: Increased business activity/ capacity (new products, processes, services, techniques)</p> <p>During the three years, GRETA partners raised the awareness of the main target groups, namely decisional authorities, technicians, multipliers like energy consultants and the general public. They were addressed with the website, press materials, publications and open events, additionally with workshops, focus groups meetings and presentations. Partners started discussions and collaborative initiatives with stakeholders, esp. associations and administrative bodies. The integration of Near Surface Geothermal Energy in a mobile app, the project video, articles and interviews in several journals and media and the Geothermal Trail in Cerreto kept the project topic at a prominent visibility level. This is particularly important because the project addressed a new and technical topic, which was not known even by the technicians. Even if the increasing public attention towards climate change challenges facilitated the promotion of the concept, the project did not fully reach in terms of number the target group “general public”. However, the very good results in reaching public authorities (31 local authorities reached), interest groups (248), enterprises (313 enterprises reached), infrastructure and (public) service providers (49) created the basis for a higher use of the promoted approach. This success was built since the phase of the partnership creation, when a “multiplier” such as the German Climate Alliance was involved because of their close relationships with the municipalities. A first result in terms of policy making was achieved in Valle d’Aosta (Italy), where the Water protection plan will be modified (in 2020) cancelling the regulation that currently prevents the use of Near Surface Geothermal Energy. Increased awareness of the potential of this approach is of fundamental importance. However, the impact of the projects significantly depends on external factors such as the evolution of taxation, which is expected to reduce the disadvantage connected to the high initial investment required by this kind of technology if compared to fossil fuel based practices.</p> |
|  Where | The project directly intervened in a knowledge gap which affected the whole alpine area. In order to increase awareness in all project territories belonging to the 6 countries, GRETA experimented an approach based on some key principles, such as “Use local language to reach out”, “Use direct contact”, “Use interactive communication approaches”, “Start early”. Even if the topic is analysed at alpine level and the project tools are destined to policy makers of the whole area, GRETA is based on the assumption that implementation remains at the very local/regional level. |



**Transnational
added value**

When a new issue has to be investigated, the mobilisation of actors from the whole alpine **area** appears to be a key for success. This is particularly true when topics related to the environment, climate and energy, i.e. to the specific alpine territory features, are faced. It is worth noting that the investigation of not explored topics clearly requires the involvement of academic bodies. The experience of GRETA reveals that a strong academic guide of the project can also ensure high capacity to work on the awareness side, adopting an easily understandable language and dedicating time to meet the stakeholders in their own places.

5.2.5.2 *Environment and sustainability benefits*

The main benefit indicated by the project representatives under this category is the increased relevance to low carbon themes in the local/ regional/ national strategies (61% of respondents). As all other types of benefits appear to be not significant (below 30%), it seems that this unique “thematic” benefit represents appropriately the projects under SO 2.1. As commented in the previous paragraphs, the public debate in the recent years has contributed to the increase of the relevance of low carbon themes in the political agenda at the different administrative levels. Therefore, a virtuous circle can be seen in the interplay between this external factor and the benefits directly produced by the projects.

GRETA assessed the potential of geothermal energy in 6 pilot areas located in Cerkno Municipality (SI), Parc Naturel des Bauges (FR), Aosta Valley (IT), Oberallgäu district (DE), Zell am See Region (AT), Canton Grisons (CH). In case of Cerkno, the integration of near-surface geothermal resources activities to municipal spatial plan and Local Energy action plan was supported. An important part of the case study is also to include the hotel Cerkno with neighboring public buildings.

CaSCo project illustrated the diversity of the frame conditions and identified the value-added chain of wood in 8 regional/ local areas: Voralberg (AT), Joglland (AT), Valsesia (IT), Piedmont (IT), Auvergne-Rhône Alpes (FR), Southern Germany (DE), Podravje (SI), Pomurje (SI). This indicated key actions on definite territories, such as the “valorisation and certification of the environmental value of the regional wood, through the testing of the CaSCo tool and of the traceability and certification system on a significant group of regional companies” in Piedmont (IT), or the involvement of forest owners in the wood-processing chain in Podravje region (SI).

In order to set up a platform for circular economy, Greencycle developed pilot projects in 5 alpine cities: Freiburg, Vorau, Maribor, Pays Viennois and Trento. The pilots led to the definition of action plans destined to increase the relevance to low carbon themes in the respective urban political agendas.

5.2.5.3 *Benefits on governance and policy*

The delivery of appropriate policy instruments, framework and tools was declared as a produced benefit by 78% of the respondents to the survey. Comparatively with data emerged in relation to the other SOs, this is the highest value. If this benefit is considered as the most advanced one in terms of policy making, the success of SO 2.1 under this respect emerges.





CaSCo project focused on Green Public Procurement as a lever to make timber supply chain shorter. Fostering timber products processed within the alpine space contributes essentially to climate protection, as well as to other environmental aspects as for instance biodiversity or water and resource use. The project provided a set of tools and instruments, which are able to assess and to monitor the



true carbon emission of a certain product and to identify such products, which inhabit a lower carbon footprint than others or than the majority. Additionally CaSCo indicated the opportunity for application of these tools in public procurement and call for bids.

Analysis revealed that ASP projects show a higher capacity to impact at local and regional level than at national level, especially in case of larger countries. It is worth noting that in case of GRETA, project outputs will impact the whole national territory only in Slovenia. This could be explained observing that the Geological Survey – the Slovenian project partner - is a national body, but this is also the case of the Austrian Geological Survey. Furthermore, more than one interviews confirmed that reaching the national level turns to be much easier in Slovenia than in the other countries participating in the programme. Regardless of the country, however, the lower administrative level is featured by fragmentation (high number of local authorities), lack of technical competences and limited capacity to invest. Furthermore, specific burdens such as budgetary constraints (f.i. the Italian domestic Stability Pact reducing the investment capacity of municipalities) can add complexity reducing room for transnational cooperation. All these elements suggest the necessity for the projects to identify their own strategy to increase relevance to low carbon themes in the local/ regional/ national strategies.

The example provided in the following factsheet dedicated to the PEACE_Alps project shows how an approach based on the aggregation of demand by small municipalities can facilitate the implementation of the Energy Action Plans at local level.

Factsheet 5-2 Sub-benefit: Delivery of appropriate policy instruments, framework and tools

| PEACE_Alps project | |
|--|--|
|  | 2.1 Establish transnationally integrated low carbon policy instruments |
|  | To implement low carbon and adaptation to climate change policies at local level as defined in Sustainable Local Energy Action Plans, setting up innovative centralised solutions for several local authorities at a time, providing economy of scale and higher quality than the isolated approach. |
|  Alpine dimension | Adaptation to climate change is a fully alpine topic, given that the area is featured by common climatic and geological features, and this suggests to work at alpine level. In addition, a common feature of several alpine territories consists of the presence of small municipalities, which are the main target group of the project. However, it is clear that administrative solutions have to be found locally, considering on the one side the burdens deriving from the national legislation, on the other side the specific territorial context where the policy has to be implemented. |
| BENEFIT  What | Benefit: Governance and policy Sub-benefit: Delivery of appropriate policy instruments, framework and tools Several stakeholders in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region were involved in PEACE_Alps project: local authorities, energy public services, local climate and energy agencies, but also building sector federations, architects, land planners, institutions and banks. The project gave the opportunity to analyse at an inter-institutional level energy refurbishment funds. It was noticed that existing funds did not encourage dissemination of projects as they were delivered for one project to one stakeholder. The centralised solution on energy refurbishment highlights the advantages of pooling projects. What happened on the field is that 2 Natural Parcs in the region acted as intermediate bodies facilitating the joint identification by their municipalities of a series of buildings to be refurbished. 40 buildings were identified in the first parc and 20 in the second one. |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | <p>Thanks to this approach it was possible to investigate all technical and juridical aspects related to refurbishments and also to make a detailed investment plan. The role played by the parcs in supporting the small municipalities was the key. Thanks to the project such a targeted approach was adopted by the region so indirectly allowing a series of small municipalities to implement the Sustainable Local Energy Action Plans. The ambition is that even municipalities with in a not totally sound financial state can make this kind of investments, also thanks to mechanisms of financial solidarity.</p> <p>At the present stage, the main project’s output used by Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region is the integration of pooling projects in the regional subsidies through a new call for tenders. This experiment provided also a new tool – an energy audit table – which helps municipalities to elaborate an energy refurbishment strategy. This tool would be incorporated in the energy audit specifications provided by ADEME.</p> |
| |  Where | <p>The project brought changes in all project territories mainly on the implementation side. Here as an example the benefits generated on the municipalities belonging to the parcs of the French region Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes are illustrated.</p> |
|  Transnational added value | | <p>PEACE_Alps, a project that was awarded by Regiostars in 2018 in the public sector category, provided to Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region tools that made the municipalities aggregation feasible. Being municipalities aggregation a common need in the alpine territories, the transnational cooperation succeeded in identifying a common approach.</p> |

5.2.5.4 Territorial dimension

This section illustrates how the benefits brought by the projects have been distributed in the alpine territory.

Indeed, it is important to note that the localisation of the partners does not necessarily correspond to impact localisations, thus the territorial dimension of the impact have been investigated by asking to beneficiaries to specify the kind of territory mainly concerned by their activities.

The analysis of the replies reveals that the mountainous area have been highly concerned by the projects financed under SO 2.1 (50% of the respondents) followed by the rural (33% of the respondents). Impacts on the urban areas seem to be created at a lower extent (17% of the respondents).

Table 5-5 Where the SO 2.1 projects are supposed to the deliver their benefits

| Area | % |
|--------------------------|------------|
| Mountainous areas | 50% |
| Rural areas | 33% |
| Urban areas | 17% |

Source: web-survey

When looking at the type of urban area, data from the survey indicate that the benefits coming from projects are expected to be concentrated predominantly in the smallest municipalities (94% of respondents) while the impact in the bigger cities and regional capitals appear to be more limited (respectively 22% and 17%).

Table 5-6 Which urban areas are more interested by the benefits generated by SO 2.1

| Area | % |
|---|------------|
| Regional capitals or capitals | 17% |
| Other municipalities above 50 000 of inhabitants | 22% |
| Municipalities below 50 000 of inhabitants | 94% |

Source: web-survey

5.2.5.5 Durability

At the present stage, SO 2.1 consists of 9 projects with a global budget of almost 17 million euros. Comparatively with the other SOs, the projects financed under SO 2.1 have declared the highest capacity to deliver policy instruments, framework and tools. This capacity corresponds to the strategic elements that the projects shall produce, such as methodologies for users engagements, and the implementation elements, such as toolkits for planners and decision makers to identify low carbon solutions, as it is shown in the table below.

Table 5-7 Type of outputs

| Programme type of output | Examples by the projects |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Transnational cooperation structures | Projects committees and networks |
| Strategic elements | Methodologies for users engagements, models and recommendations for improvement of policies |
| Implementation elements | Guidelines for assessments tools in innovative low carbon policies and strategies, IT applications, hardware and software, toolkits for planners and decision makers to identify low carbon solutions, modular training, market platform |

Source: desk analysis, case studies

These appear to be very good conditions for the durability of the projects' outputs, especially if the mountainous and rural areas are considered, where the projects of SO 2.1 result to have a much stronger impact (see previous section). Furthermore, the already stressed importance of the general public attention and favor towards the low carbon policies has to be considered as an external factor positively affecting the implementation and also the follow-up phase.

Partners involved in the web survey have been asked whether the project has generated other opportunities and 72% of them replied positively, mentioning elements such as the networks established by the project partners, the continuation of the pilot activities started during the project, the opportunity to base a new partnership involving some of organisations already experimented in the project.

The case of the GRETA project can help to understand the capacity of the projects do design sophisticated strategies for durability. First of all, the composition of the partnership is strategically seen as a crucial step to build conditions for durability. As it was the case of the already mentioned PlurAlps project, it was decided to include in the partnership a multiplier body used to work closely with the municipalities, i.e. the Climate Alliance in Germany. As commonly happens, regional

administrations and regional bodies were selected in Italy given that Italian regions have significant policy making powers, so being in the position to use project's outputs to innovate a form of support or even change a regional regulation after the end of the project (this will be the case of Valle d'Aosta Region, which will remove a regulative barrier to the use of geothermal energy). During the course of the project, several factors affecting the durability of the project were considered. It was noticed that at local level municipal the energy plan can be a key to encourage the use of near-surface geothermal resources. Regulations at national and regional level, and especially taxation, can make the "GRETA solutions" competitive with fossil fuel based practices. However, the role of the energy consultants and energy providers is essential, as they will have to push for the use of near-surface geothermal resources.

The following project's achievement are expected to ensure durability.

- The potential maps are accessible for free and will contribute to spread knowledge in the communities. The definition of a license also allows to make the tools commercial and put them on the market.
- Consolidation of networks already existing at regional level.
- Attempt to launch a new project financed by the Alpine Space with a stronger involvement of the policy makers.

PEACE_Alps experimented an interesting format to make the project's outputs used outside of the project's territories. Each partner was required to select 2 "replication partners" expected to adopt the PEACE_Alps approach in the Sustainable Energy Action Plans implementation. The lead partner Piemonte Region chose 2 other Italian regional administrations, i.e. Liguria and Trentino Alto Adige, both of them belonging to the ASP territory.

5.2.5.6 *External factors and mega-trends*

The information collected from the lead partners revealed some external factors having affected the projects' implementation.

Under this SO, as it happened of the SO 2.2 and 3.2, a role was played by the **public debate on climate change**. The dramatic rise of this topic in the public awareness, with special regard to the students' movement called 'Fridays for future', created better conditions to spread information on low carbon policy instruments (for instance new solutions for geothermal energy). It will be necessary to observe over the years such an influence, with special regard to the next step i.e. the possible improvement of conditions for the actual policy instruments' integration in the local and regional political agendas.

A specific factor to be further investigated is the presence of fiscal incentives for the adoption of definite low carbon solutions. Even if included in the Treaties since the beginning of the Union, tax matter have remained closely linked to Member State sovereignty. They are protected by the unanimity requirement and also by a special legislative procedure which keeps tax matters under full Council's control. Given such a low level of integration, fiscal policy can determine varied or even diverging situations in the Alpine Space territories that belong to different Member States.

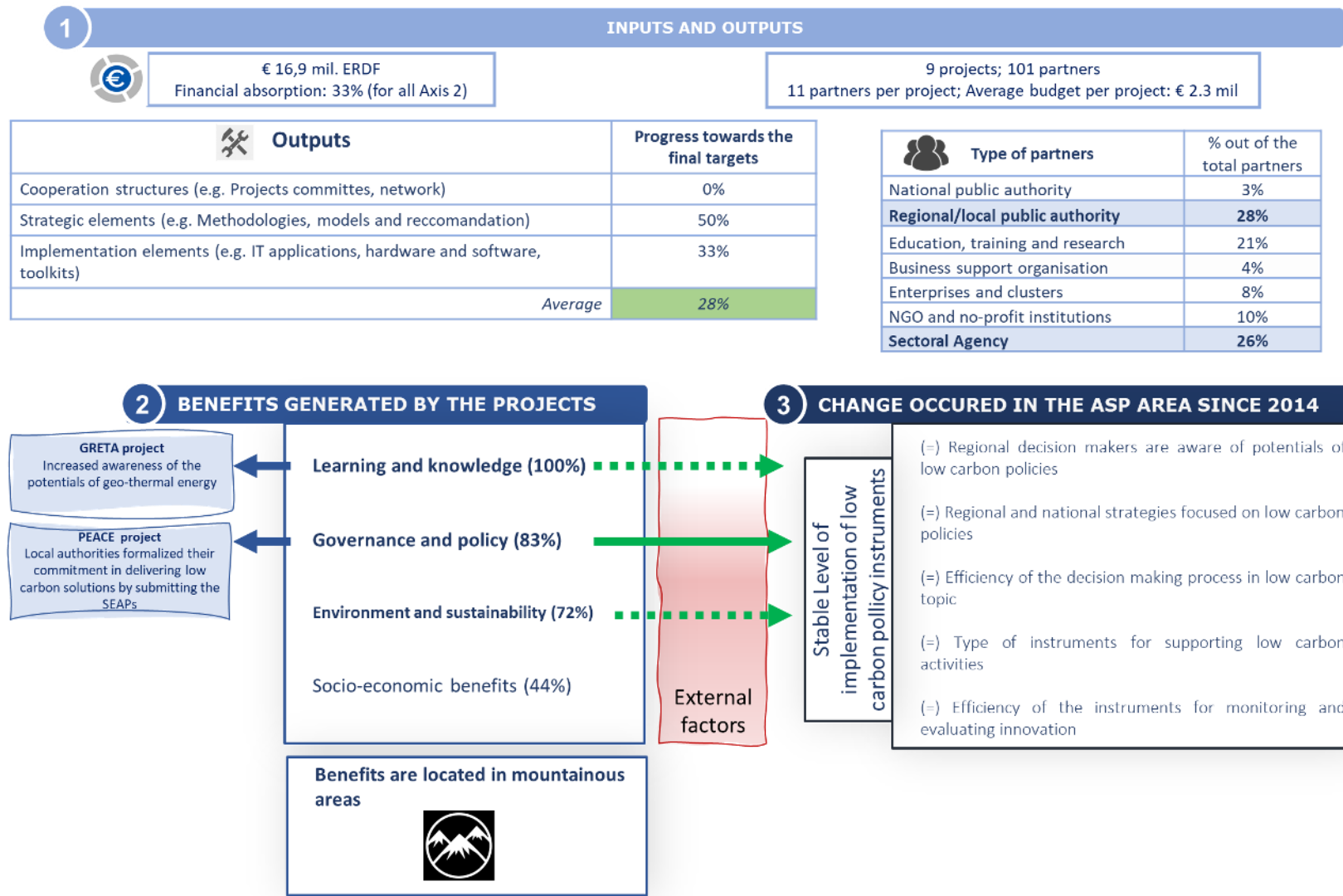
Finally, it has to be observed that SO 2.1 is strongly related to at least two **mega-trends** identified by the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS) in the paper 'ESPAS Report 2019: Global Trends to 2030'¹. Such mega-trends are 'We are hotter' and 'We need more energy'.

Concerning climate change, the report states that 'The increase in global temperature is the most pressing policy issue in the present day – and has been for the last decade, without generating the necessary responses. Today, the effects of global warming are beginning to be felt by the public and policymakers alike, triggering deep societal concerns. As a result, previously unpopular decisions which will curb emissions may become easier to take and implement. At the time of writing, our political systems are, however, not undergoing the necessary radical changes, increasing the risk of 'runaway' (i.e. uncontrollable) climate change up to 2030'. As a confirmation of the research hypothesis mentioned in the beginning of this paragraph, we can expect that the adoption of low carbon solutions will benefit from increasing popular support.

As far as concerns energy, it is foreseen that energy consumption will rise globally by 1.7% per year until 2030. Even if Europe is the front runner for energy transition, it is not expected that such a transition will have been completed by 2030. EU goal to is to draw 32% of its energy from renewable sources by 2030. This means that its energy import dependency, especially with regards to gas, will slightly increase by 2030. Energy production is already the largest source of global greenhouse-gas emissions – the main driver behind climate change. With increasing needs for energy, the pressure on curbing the effects of climate change increases even further. Under this perspective the role to be played by 'green' energies is of fundamental importance. They have promising prospects not only on the environmental view, but also for job creation. Green energies are expected to be an asset of our economies, and this underlines how SO 2.1 is strongly connected with the main mega-trends at EU and global level.



¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/assets/epsc/pages/espas/index.html>

5.3 IMPACT OF SO 2.1: KEY FINDINGS






The figure above offers an overview of the theory of the intervention logic of SO 2.1 and summarises some of the key findings that emerge from the evaluation:


Financial/ output progress and partnership

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Financial data indicate good progress in terms of financial absorption and, on average, good progress towards the final targets for the output indicators (on average 28% of outputs achieved). The only exception is for the transnational cooperation structures, with 0 output at the end of 2018 (against the 9 foreseen by the programme by 2023).</p> |
|  | <p>There is a balanced participation between public and private bodies (respectively 56% and 44%). The most represented organisations are the local and regional authorities (28%) followed by the sectoral agencies (26%). This latter together with the universities and research centres (21%) are bodies with specific technical knowledge in the fields of the energy efficiency and environment. With regard to the target groups, projects are able to involve the general public and the education sector (especially higher research centres) at a large extent, but in general high level of achievement has been observed in all target groups categories.</p> <p>The underestimation of the target values as well as the different understanding by the projects on how to consider and count them may rise doubts on the accountability of those figures.</p> |

Benefits generated by the projects

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Projects financed are generating learning and knowledge benefits. The main contribution consisted of increasing awareness of the environmental added value of using low carbon solutions. This was particularly important when relatively “new” topics like geothermal energy or circular economy were raised.</p> |
|  | <p>Projects are also generating some impacts in terms of environmental and sustainability benefits. In particular, the SO 2.1 are having a significant impact on the local, regional and some cases national (Slovenia) environmental policies increasing the relevance to low-carbon themes (e.g. GRETA project).</p> |
|  | <p>Comparatively with the other SOs, the projects financed under SO 2.1 have shown high capacity to influence the policy level, especially in the interplay with small municipalities (PEACE).</p> |

Territorial dimension

| | |
|---|---|
|  | <p>According to the evidences emerged from the survey, the results generated by the projects in terms of better integration of low carbon policies instruments are mainly benefiting the small municipalities located in mountainous areas.</p> |
|---|---|

Inputs for the future programme

Projects of SO 2.1 tend to produce benefits in a significant extent on the mountainous and rural areas. The durability of the project outputs and benefits is exemplified by the capacity of the projects to influence local planning.

A comparison with SO 1.1 allows to seize the features of this SO: both SOs dispose of a significant amount of resources, both SOs aimed at influencing the policy level, both SOs deal with topics which are at the center of the political agenda (i.e. innovation and sustainability).

However, according to the evidences collected, the capacity of SO 2.1 to influence the policy level is higher. In our view this could depend on two factors, one internal to the programme management, the other external:

- 1) the different level of involvement of public authorities in the partnerships (15% for SO 1.1 and 31% for SO 2.1). From this perspective, the involvement of public authorities as observers under SO 1.1 seem not to be effective for ensuring impact on the policy level.
- 2) The different “intensity” of the request for policy tools: local public authorities are asking for low carbon policy instruments (e.g. solutions to design sustainable local urban plans). On the contrary, in case of innovation the need of new policy instruments at local level is limited (competences are at regional or national level). Moreover, also the regional and national level already dispose of policy instruments that have required a long process of elaboration (e.g. S3).

Moreover, it is recommended to establish a taxonomy of target groups at programme level and a more precise and shared methodology to count them. This will allow the projects to estimate more realistic target values, and the programme to effectively aggregate and monitor data.

6 Increase options for low carbon mobility and transport

6.1 WHAT IS THE CHANGE THAT THE PROGRAMME WANTS TO ACHIEVE?

6.1.1 Key needs and challenges identified

The existing spatial and mobility model is energy intensive and rich in emissions. Moreover, topographical features of the Alpine Space, in particular of the peripheral areas, lead the people to use high carbon means for commuting and freight transport.

Programme intervention intends to provide the prerequisites for creating a low carbon economy and society in the field of the transports, as “*significant potential for energy savings, especially in transportation*” exists in the alpine area.

The box below summarises the key strengths and weaknesses identified in 2014 which were at the basis of the definition of specific objective 2.2.

Box 6-1 Relevant needs and challenges identified in 2014

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reliable and extensive transport network | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The topography limits options for trade-offs among land uses, in particular as regards transport Some regions are dependent on energy-demanding industry and economy and on energy-intensive mobility patterns (commuting) |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant potential for energy savings, especially in transportation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative developments in the energy sector are dependent on public support in the initial phase. Public funds and renewable energy potentials are not spatially congruent |

Source: Cooperation programme

6.1.2 Expected change in the programme area

Representatives of the countries and regions involved in the Alpine Space area agreed to tackle the key needs and challenges summarised in the previous section by increasing the options for low carbon mobility and transport.

Looking at the questionnaires used in 2014 for measuring the level of potential to access and use low carbon mobility and transport options, clarifies the change targeted by the programme. The objective for 2020/2023 was to tackle 5 different dimensions:

- (1) Increase the awareness of national and regional decision makers in charge of mobility, transport, and planning issues of the potentials of low carbon mobility and transport and of the limitations of “mainstream” mobility and transport means in the Alpine Space.
- (2) Make the public opinion in favour of low carbon mobility and transport and aware of the necessity to change behavioural patterns in the constraints of the Alpine Space and the global limits.
- (3) operating frameworks established at national and regional level, enabling low carbon mobility and transport options (i.e. strategies and action plans, coordination mechanisms, regulations, incentives and funding systems, etc.).
- (4) accessibility for Citizens (professionals, commuters, tourists etc.) to low carbon mobility and transport options as a practical means of travel.
- (5) Joint monitoring systems and information flows allowing a constant and effective exchange of data on low carbon transport solutions impacts, evaluation and policy review (i.e. spatial use trends, emissions, changes in interaction patterns etc.).

6.2 WHAT WAS ACHIEVED

6.2.1 Type of projects and beneficiaries which were financed

So far 5 projects have been financed under the SO 2.2: 3 in call 2 and 2 in call 3. The total amount of ERDF resources allocated so far is about EUR 9.6 million which corresponds to 31% of the budget of PA 2.

2 projects are concluded while the remaining three will be closed in 2019 and in 2020.

The average budget per project is EUR 2.3 mil.

Table 6-1 SO 2.2 Number of projects and budget allocated

| Call | N. financed projects | ERDF budget allocated |
|--------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 2 | 3 | 6 357 812.17 € |
| 3 | 2 | 3 275 685.41 € |
| Total | 5 | 9 633 497.58 € |

Source: Data provided by the JS

In terms of financial progress, data presented in AIR 2018 offer an overview of the financial absorption of all the projects financed under Axis 2 (not only to SO 2.2). Data indicate that the share of eligible expenditure on the total allocation is approximately 33%.

The total number of partners involved is 70. Partnerships under SO 2.2 are on average larger comparing to the ones across other specific objectives (14 is the average size) and mostly composed by public bodies (79%). The majority of beneficiaries are regional and local public authorities (36%), followed by education, training and research centres (23%). Also sectoral agencies and public services providers are involved at a good extent: the former includes energy and environment institutes at regional level the latter are mainly bodies in charge of delivering public services.

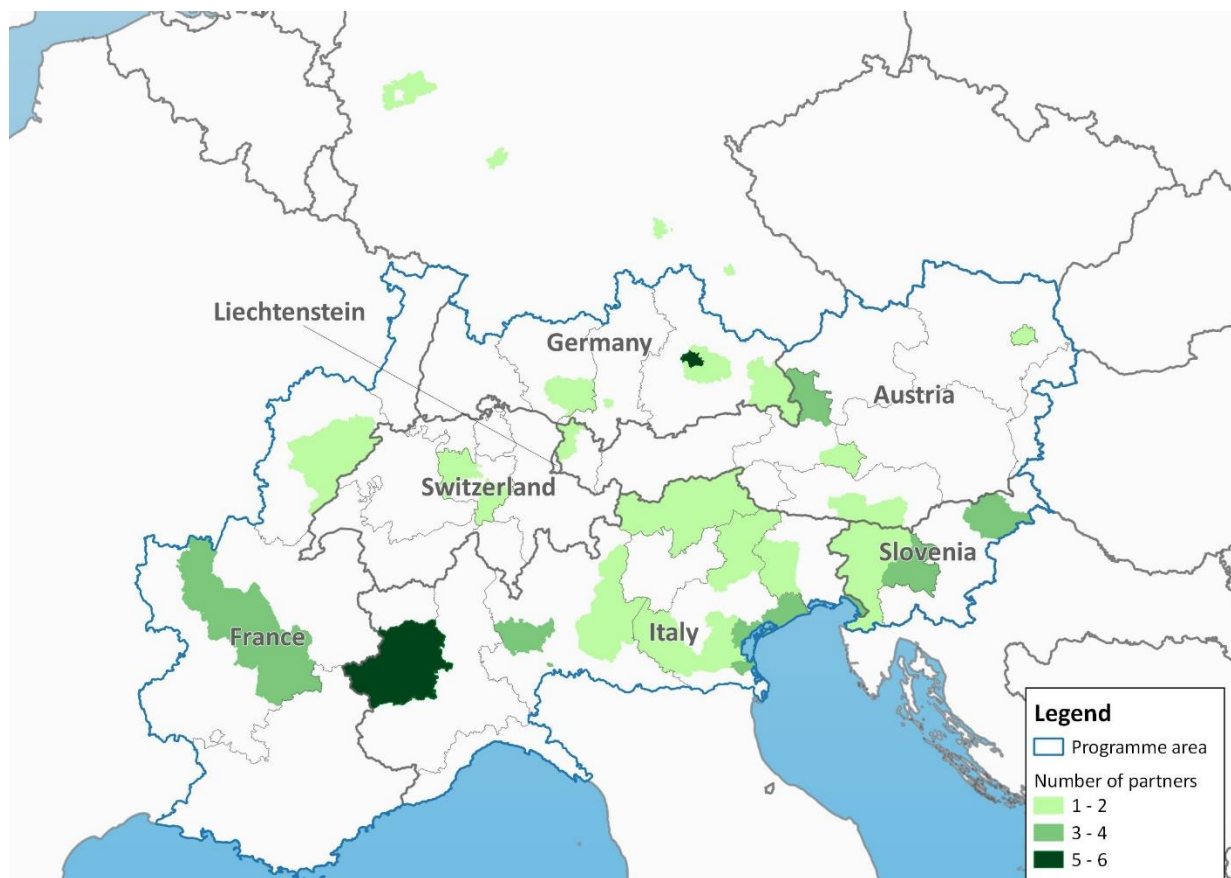
Table 6-2 Type of beneficiaries

| Type of beneficiary | % out of the total partners |
|---|-----------------------------|
| National public authority | 4% |
| Regional/local public authority | 36% |
| Public service provider | 10% |
| Business support organisation | 6% |
| Education, training and research | 23% |
| Interest groups including NGOs | 3% |
| Enterprises and SME | 6% |
| Sectoral Agency | 13% |

Source: Data provided by the JS

Out of 70 beneficiaries, 21 are located in Italy, with the city of Torino presenting the highest concentration. Also Germany is well represented (16 partners) and in particular in München, Kreisfreie Stadt. In Slovenia, the distribution of the 11 partners is balanced across the whole territory while in Austria partners are mainly located in the big cities (Wien and Salzburg). In Switzerland and France there are respectively 2 and 9 partners while no partner was involved from Liechtenstein.

Figure 6-1 Localisation of the beneficiaries



Source: data provided by the JS

6.2.2 Outputs achieved

Projects of SO 2.2 are expected to deliver 3 types of outputs.

Even if most of the projects are still on going, the progress towards the final targets is more advanced than in other SOs. This is mainly due to the 5 *strategic elements* already created at the end of 2018.

Table 6-3 2.2 output indicators – progress towards the final targets

| Type of output | Achieved 2018 | Final target according to beneficiaries | Target value for 2023 (CP) | Progress towards the final target |
|---|---------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Number of supported transnational cooperation structures Increasing options for low carbon mobility and transport | 1 | 3 | 3 | 33% |
| Number of developed strategic elements Increasing options for low carbon mobility and transport | 5 | 5 | 3 | 167% |

| | | | | |
|---|---|----|----|------------|
| Number of developed implementation elements for low carbon mobility and transport | 2 | 11 | 18 | 11% |
| <i>Average</i> | | | | <i>70%</i> |

Source: AIR 2018

6.2.3 Target groups reached

The programme set 15 categories of target groups to be reached by the projects. Capacity to involve target groups in the project activities has been assessed by comparing the values declared as milestones in the application form and the values achieved in the last progress report available.

First, it has to be noted that projects used different interpretations on how to calculate the same target group which resulted in very different levels of achievement.

For example, for what concerns the enterprises, excluding the SMEs, as the table below shows, only two projects contribute to them - AlplnnoCT and Astus. The former reached 810% as it considered all the enterprises participating to targeted events, while the latter, which reached 20%, counted only the firms with whom the project was in direct contact.

Still, business support organisations is the second most reached target group, to which only one project, AlplnnoCT is contributing (i.e. they could reach 13 organisations out of 5 planned in the AF).

Regional public authorities have been concerned by all the 5 financed projects and they have been counted through participation list and e-mail and telephone contacts.

To be noted that the general public, comparing to other SOs, has been reached at a lower extent (4%). This evidence may be explained on one hand, by the fact that two projects are at their first reporting period and thus, dissemination activities are still not implemented. On the other, project Astus may have overestimated the capacity of the project to reach such a wide public.

Figure 6-2 target group reached by projects under SO 2.2

| | % Achievement | Projects contributing (AF) | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|------|
| | | N. | % |
| Enterprise, excluding SME | 415% | 2 | 40% |
| Business support organisation | 260% | 1 | 20% |
| Interest groups including NGOs | 135% | 2 | 40% |
| Regional public authority | 118% | 5 | 100% |
| Sectoral agency | 103% | 5 | 100% |
| national public authority | 85% | 5 | 100% |
| Infrastructure and (public) service provider | 82% | 5 | 100% |
| Local public authority | 48% | 5 | 100% |
| SMEs | 44% | 3 | 60% |
| Higher education and research | 43% | 4 | 80% |
| Education/training centre and school | 25% | 1 | 20% |
| Other | 18% | 1 | 20% |
| General public | 4% | 3 | 60% |
| EEIG, EGTC | Not expected to be reached | | |

| | |
|---|----------------------------|
| International organisation under inter-national law | Not expected to be reached |
| International organisation under national law | Not expected to be reached |

Source: Projects progress reports provided by the JS

6.2.4 Changes observed in the programme area

In 2014 the programme defined a result indicator to monitor the evolution of the programme area in terms of capacity of potential to access and use low carbon mobility and transport options.

According to the information presented in the AIR 2018 (see table below) the *capacity to deliver services of social interest* has generally remained stable over the last years.

Table 6-4 SO 2.2 result indicators – evolution of programme’s area

| Result Indicator | Baseline 2014 | Target value 2023 | Achieved in 2018 |
|---|---------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Level of potential to access and use low carbon mobility and transport options. | 59.9% | Increase <1.0% | 59.6% |

Source: AIR 2018

6.2.5 Impact: the results achieved by the projects

This section illustrates the key steps of the evaluation of the impact for the SO 2.2. It presents the evidences collected through web survey and the key findings from the case studies regarding the results that the alpine space projects are bringing to the area.

All partners of the projects approved under SO 2.2 (call 1 and 2) were invited to take part to the web survey. In total 8 partners from 3 projects took part to the survey. They were asked to provide information regarding the type of benefits and results that their project is bringing by selecting from a list of potential benefits (which the evaluators had identified on the basis of the analysis of the application forms) or by specifying additional types of possible benefits.

As illustrated by the table below, if we refer to the 4 main categories of potential benefits proposed by the evaluators, projects from SO 2.2 are increasing the awareness and inducing behavioural change in stakeholder opinion, (i.e. learning and knowledge benefits) but are also producing some tangible impacts in terms of environmental and sustainability benefits, with particular regard to increased relevance to low-carbon themes in the local / regional / national strategies and larger use of low-carbon mobility and transport options. Moreover, the projects produced tangible economic benefits with special regard to cost saving measures. Interestingly, the governance and policy benefits appear to be low under this SO.

Partners involved in the web survey declared that the benefits indicated in the table below have been generated.

Table 6-5 Benefits brought by the projects financed under SO 2.2

| Category of benefit | % of respondents |
|--|------------------|
| Learning and knowledge | 100% |
| • Exchange and use of practice | 50% |
| • Created/increased skills and capacities | 50% |
| • Increased awareness | 88% |
| • Behavioural change in stakeholder opinion | 75% |
| Socio-economic benefit | 75% |
| • Increased business activity / capacity | 13% |
| • Alpine identity valorised | 0% |
| • Cost savings | 63% |
| • Increased capacity of social inclusion / delivery of services of general interest | 0% |
| • Triggered investments | 0% |
| Environment and sustainability | 100% |
| • Increased relevance (e.g. budget) to low-carbon themes in the local / regional / national strategy | 75% |
| • Increased use of ecosystem services | 13% |
| • Valorised ecosystem services | 0% |
| • Increased sustainability (cultural and natural heritage) of tourism activities | 13% |
| • Larger use of low-carbon mobility and transport options | 75% |
| Governance and policy | 63% |

Source: web-survey

6.2.5.1 Learning and knowledge benefits

Regarding **learning and knowledge benefits**, partners recognised that thanks to the project activities they could increase the awareness of final users about environmental added value of using low carbon solutions, such as produce behavioural change in stakeholder opinion.

Projects invested indeed in a massive number of dialogue events involving all the actors of the chain (transport companies, associations, infrastructure providers etc...) to exchange information aimed to develop ideal models and processes. ASTUS increased the awareness of local stakeholders with regard to potentials for better use of space and lower CO₂ consumption through mobility, and this led to the preparation of 7 territorial scenarios for metropolitan core areas, cities, towns, growing regions bordering on a metropolitan core area, stable rural regions (with functional centres), rural regions with declining development and touristic regions.

Behavioural change in stakeholder opinion appears to the respondents to the survey as a benefit featuring the projects financed under SO 2.2. This is a key point because behavioural aspects are of fundamental importance to make the mobility sector evolve. E-MOTICON project, aiming at homogeneous diffusion of electric mobility throughout the Alpine Space, has improved the confidence in the local networks allowing to recharge electric vehicles. AlplnnoCT has improved the availability of SMEs to access combined transport solutions.

Unexpectedly, the exchange and use of practice was indicated in the survey as a minor benefit, relatively to the projects financed under all other SOs. This could be explained in case of very technical projects requiring targeted industrial solutions. However, it appears strange when it comes to projects related to social innovation and behavioural changes, where sharing good practices is a usual approach. An explanation could be that in these areas practices are normally exchanged, already, and the benefit from ETC projects has no additionality.

6.2.5.2 *Environment and sustainability benefits*

Larger use of low-carbon mobility and transport options is a specific benefit featuring this SO. The projects showed the capacity to design complex strategies to create the conditions allowing to generate such a benefit.

ASTUS saw the link between spatial planning and use of low carbon mobility solutions. Increasing the number of new residential units in existing buildings featured by an optimal location, the project expects to improve the use of low-carbon mobility actions.

E-MOTICON's strategic vision allowed to connect e-charging infrastructure planning with functional spatial and energy efficiency planning, so increasing the use of e-mobility options where the strategy was tested.







The case of AlplnnoCT, whose approach is very specific, appears to be different. The project designed and experimented software solutions allowing to adapt the trucks to the trains, so increasing combined transport opportunities and therefore reducing CO₂ emissions in freight transport.

6.2.5.3 *Socio-economic benefits*

The answers received from the project partners suggest a correlation between measures decreasing the CO₂ emissions in mobility/ transport, and cost saving solutions. The ASTUS project has promoted spatial planning approach aimed at reducing urban sprawl by a more intensive use of existing buildings, so generating cost saving both for housing and mobility. Furthermore, this project has created the conditions for a private car ownership reduction, and this means saving up to several hundred euros per month per households. The project shows that social innovation solutions can help in reducing at the same time CO₂ emissions and costs sustained by the citizens.

AlplnnoCT reduced costs in the logistic context. Operations of wagons and trains at CT terminals were simplified and made more efficient, so allowing the transport chain operators to offer better services, and the transport operators to save time, i.e. money.

The example provided in the following factsheet offers more details on the benefit generated by AlplnnoCT with special regard to the port of Trieste (Italy).

| AlplnnoCT project | | |
|---|---|---|
|  | 2.2 Increase options for low carbon mobility and transport | |
|  | To raise combined transport efficiency and productivity in the alpine area, so reducing the environmental problems deriving from continued growth in freight traffic volume. | |
|  Alpine dimension | It is a matter of fact that transport happens in a network crossing all alpine countries. Therefore, it would not make sense to focus only on local, regional or national solutions. As traffic does not stop at the borders and happens crossing different territories, transnational cooperation including alpine cooperation is the only possible approach in this sector. | |
| BENEFIT |  What | <p>Benefit: Socio-economic Sub-benefit: Cost saving</p> <p>The port of Trieste mainly serves the central European countries, and not the Italian regions, which are better served by other Italian ports because of obvious geographical reasons. The port of Trieste is the most important in Italy for train transport. As the rail infrastructures have not been renovated and enhanced, optimization of the process is the key. Significant improvements have been made in the direct handlings from trucks to train. The Port of Trieste, however, is also interested in improving the process of loading the trains leaving Trieste to reach Bettembourg (Luxembourg). To improve this step, a software had to be designed and experimented in cooperation with the German rail company TX Logistik AG – one of the members of the AlplnnoCT partnership. After the end of the project, it will be possible for the Port of Trieste to use this software also with other 7 rail companies.</p> <p>Such a software solution increases the efficiency of the transport process managed by the Port of Trieste, so saving costs and making the port more competitive at international level.</p> |
| |  Where | The project implemented and evaluated measures on pilot relations e.g. Bettembourg-Trieste and Padborg-Verona and adapted on the developed measures considering practical experiences of relevant actors, observers and target group. In the framework of the Bettembourg-Trieste pilot activity, a software solution was designed with a consequent optimization of the transport process as described below. |
|  Transnational added value | The Port of Trieste has a structured strategy with a series of activities that should be conducted over the years to make the port achieve its goals. This plan includes activities that are suitable to be financed in the framework of transnational projects, such as AlplnnoCT. Such an approach reveals that the Port of Trieste is not “driven” by the EU funded projects, but is capable to use them as (necessary) financing tools. | |

6.2.5.4 Territorial dimension

In a previous section of this chapter we have provided an overview of the localization of the beneficiaries of projects financed under SO 2.2.

However, information on where beneficiaries are based does not provide any evidence on where the projects are bringing their benefits.

To overcome the limits of data provided by the monitoring system we have directly asked to beneficiaries (through the web-survey) to localize the contribution of their projects in the space. More

precisely, we have asked them whether the projects the benefits were expected to be produced in urban, rural or mountainous area.

As illustrated by the table below, according to the data collected through the survey, benefits produced by the projects financed under SO 2.2 are mainly expected to interest the alpine urban areas (50% of respondents); also the mountainous areas have been largely concerned by the impacts (38% of the respondents) while projects will produce impact in a minor degree in rural areas.

Table 6-6 Where the SO 2.2 projects are supposed to deliver their benefits

| Area | % |
|--------------------|------------|
| Mountainous areas | 38% |
| Rural areas | 12% |
| Urban areas | 50% |

Source: Web-survey

If we refer to the types of urban areas, data from the survey indicate that the benefits coming from SO 2.2 projects are expected to be concentrated predominantly in the regional capitals (58% of respondents) followed by other municipalities above 50 000 of inhabitants (35% of respondents) while the impact in municipalities below 50 000 of inhabitants is more limited.

Table 6-7 Which urban areas are more interested by the benefits generated by SO 2.2

| Area | % |
|--|------------|
| Regional capitals or capitals | 58% |
| Other municipalities above 50 000 of inhabitants | 35% |
| Municipalities below 50 000 of inhabitants | 25% |

Source: Web-survey

Data from the survey, i.e. benefits predominantly localized in regional urban areas, reveal that the projects financed were not focused on the more peripheral areas (rural and mountainous areas) where, due to the topography of the area, people have limited access to public transports and are forced to use individual and high carbons means.

6.2.5.5 Durability

The relatively larger size of the SO 2.2 partnerships and their composition featured by high presence of regional and local public authorities together with sectoral agencies and public services providers, appear as good conditions for the use of the projects' outputs after the end of the funded phase. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that **all partners** involved in SO 2.2 projects and having answered the web survey **declared that their project has generated other opportunities**, with special regard to the establishment of networks among partners, continuation of pilot activities started during the projects, setting up of a new partnership based on the previous project experience.

However, we have to remind that the projects declared to have produced limited benefits in terms of governance and policy making. **We have to conclude that the strategic elements** generated by

the projects, such as recommendations for combined transport system, **or the implementation elements** such as behaviour change policy impact estimation methods and tools (see table below), **will be used mainly within the project partnerships where they were originated.**

Factsheet 6-2 Type of outputs

| Programme type of output | Examples by the projects |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Transnational cooperation structures | Alpine wide dialogue platforms and communities and transnational panels. |
| Strategic elements | Analysis of the state of art of the European transport system, recommendations for combined transport system, white books to support local planning. |
| Implementation elements | Guidelines, toolbox of actions, pilot-based evidences and behaviour change policies impact estimation method and tool. |

Source: Desk analysis, case studies

AlplnnoCT project made a thorough analysis of the potential users of the project's outputs. First of all, policy makers were identified as they have the power to enhance the transport system through regulations. To be noted that the partnership includes strong policy makers such as the Bavarian State Ministry of Housing, Building and Transport (lead partner), the Austrian Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology, the Regional Government of Carinthia. Secondly, transport chain operators, such as the partner Port of Trieste, were listed because they have the capacity to implement the low carbon measures. Finally, AlplnnoCT targeted the transport customers, i.e. big companies that procure the transport services, so establishing the timing requirements of the deliveries, which can make it impossible to adopt combined transport solutions.

It seems that a project such AlplnnoCT, promoted and coordinated by a Bavarian ministry and having such a clear view of the outputs users, is in a good condition to ensure full use of its outputs. An external factor for durability is considered the diverse level of policy development in the different countries. It is also true that AlplnnoCT contributed to make Germany and Slovenia – initially at a different stage in the development of combined transport solutions – exchange practices so enhancing the adoption of the same policy frameworks. This opens the door the next paragraph.

6.2.5.6 External factors and mega-trends

Similarly to what was observed under SO 2.1, the collection of information from the lead partner of the selected project (AlplnnoCT) indicated that during the implementation of project activities, the debate on the necessity to reduce CO₂ emissions progressed, involving the general public. This trend did not affect the actual implementation of the project activities (focused on the optimization of freight transport by adopting combined – i.e. truck and train - transport solutions), but facilitated the diffusion of information on the project. However, a positive trend among customers was observed, meaning that the attention towards ecological transport solutions has significantly risen, the use of public transport is considered with more favor, whereas the use of private means of transportation could be progressively reduced. This is a behavioral change, which could indirectly enhance the impact of a project focused on freight traffic. A higher awareness of customers could allow them to accept slightly longer times for goods delivery, depending on some rigidity that still features the combined transport solutions.

A specific factor to be further investigated is the possible disparity of public investments for low carbon mobility between countries and regions belonging to the Alpine Space. In particular, it should be inquired if the main investments are made in the regions including important metropolitan areas benefitted also by private investments (f.i. in car sharing systems). If this will appear as the main trend, the additionality of the Alpine Space programme, which is mainly focusing on metropolitan areas, could appear limited.

As observed with regard to SO 2.1, a relation with a **mega-trend** identified by the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS) in the paper 'ESPAS Report 2019: Global Trends to 2030' can be identified, i.e. 'We are highly connected'. Concerning land transport, a decrease of the private car ownership in Europe is expected, such as in the United States (trend in Asia is expected to be totally different). Innovation will strongly affect the trains, with super high-speed trains that can reduce travel time by nearly 90% and lower environmental damage. As repeatedly observed in this chapter, **such changes are expected not to concern rural and mountainous areas, and this poses a territorial challenge to the Alpine Space programme**, especially when a further mega-trend is concerned, i.e. 'We live in cities'. Small- to medium-sized cities – that feature the European urbanization trend - are currently growing at twice the rate of megacities. By 2030 cities at world level will consume 60-80% of energy resources, will be responsible for 70% of global emissions, account for 70% of the world gross domestic product and 35% of GDP growth. Governing such a trend, especially when mobility is concerned, appears to be particularly ambitious. Avoiding that projects turn to have a reverse effect in terms of cohesion, however, appears necessary for the Alpine Space programme.

6.3 IMPACT OF SO 2.2: KEY FINDINGS

1 INPUTS AND OUTPUTS



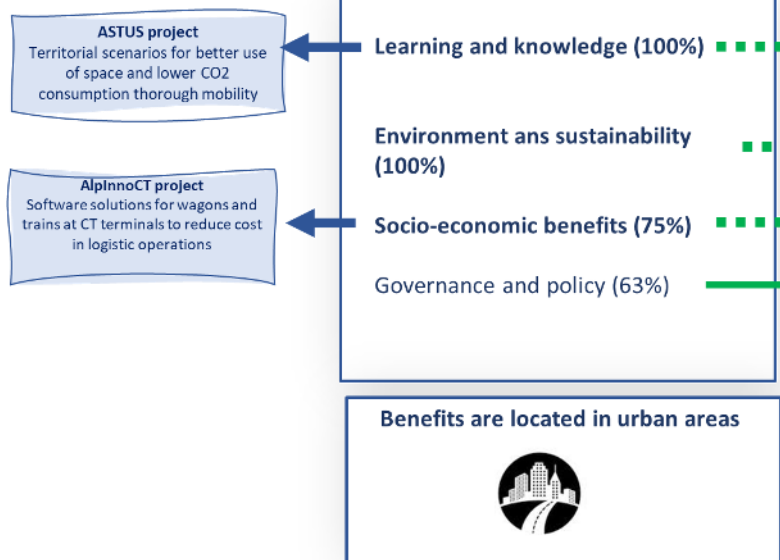
€ 9,6 mil. ERDF
Financial absorption: 33% (for all Axis 2)

5 projects; 70 partners
14 partners per project; Average budget per project: € 2.3 mil

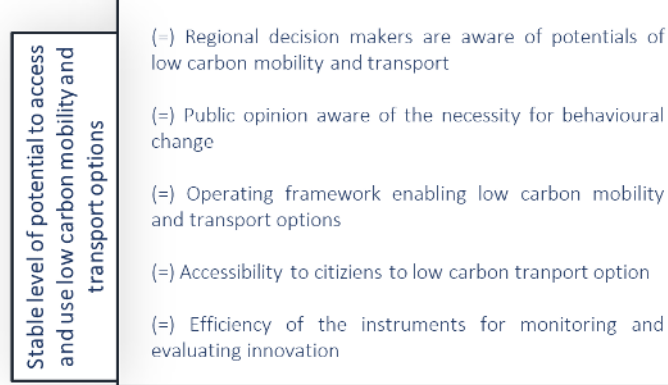
| Outputs | Progress towards the final targets |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Cooperation structures (e.g. dialogue platforms, transnational panels) | 33% |
| Strategic elements (e.g. state of art of transport system, support to local planning) | 167% |
| Implementation elements (e.g. Toolbox of actions, pilot-based evidences) | 11% |
| <i>Average</i> | 70% |

| Type of partners | % out of the total partners |
|---|-----------------------------|
| National public authority | 4% |
| Regional/local public authority | 36% |
| Education, training and research | 23% |
| Business support organisation | 6% |
| Enterprises and clusters | 6% |
| NGO and no-profit institutions | 3% |
| Sectoral Agency | 13% |
| Public service provider | 10% |

2 BENEFITS GENERATED BY THE PROJECTS





3 CHANGE OCCURED IN THE ASP AREA SINCE 2014


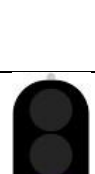



The figure above offers an overview of the theory of the intervention logic of SO 2.2 and summarises some of the key findings that emerge from the evaluation:

Financial/ output progress and partnership

| | |
|---|---|
|  | <p>Financial data indicate good progress in terms of financial absorption and, on average, good progress towards the final targets for the output indicators (on average 70% of outputs achieved).</p> |
|  | <p>Partnerships under OS 2.2 are on average larger comparing to the ones across other specific objectives (14 is the average size) and mostly composed by public bodies (79%). The majority of beneficiaries are regional and local public authorities (36%), followed by education, training and research centres (23%). Also sectoral agencies and public services providers are involved at a good extent: the former include energy and environment institutes at regional level, whereas the latter are mainly bodies in charge of delivering public services.</p> <p>As target group, the private sector appears to be the main user of the projects outputs, with the enterprises and business support organisations involved at larger extent. Policy makers are involved in particular at regional and national level.</p> |

Benefits generated by the projects

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Projects financed are generating learning and knowledge benefits. Partners recognised that thanks to the project activities they could increase the awareness of final users about environmental added value of using low carbon solutions, such as produce behavioural change in stakeholder opinion (e.g. Projects invested indeed in a massive number of dialogue events involving all the actors of the chain).</p> |
|  | <p>Projects are also generating some tangible impacts in terms of environmental and sustainability benefits. In particular, larger use of low-carbon mobility and transport options is a specific benefit featuring this SO. For example, ASTUS increased the number of new residential units in existing buildings featured by an optimal location; AlInnoCT, designed and experimented software solutions allowing to adapt the trucks to the trains, so increasing combined transport opportunities (and therefore reducing CO2 emissions in freight transport).</p> |
|  | <p>Socio-economic benefits: The answers received from the project partners suggest a correlation between measures decreasing the CO2 emissions in mobility/ transport, and cost saving solutions. The ASTUS project generated cost saving both for housing and mobility and has created the conditions for a private car ownership reduction, and this means saving up to several hundred euros per month per households. AlInnoCT reduced costs in the logistic context.</p> |



Governance and policy. The relatively larger size of the SO 2.2 partnerships and their composition featured by high presence of regional and local public authorities, appear as a good condition for having an impact on the policy level. However, the projects declared to have produced limited benefits in terms of governance and policy making. This suggests that the strategic elements generated by the projects, (e.g. recommendations for combined transport system) will be used mainly within the project partnerships where they were originated.

Territorial dimension



Data from the survey, i.e. benefits predominantly localized in regional capitals, indicate that the projects financed were not focused on the more peripheral areas (rural and mountainous areas) where, due to the topography of the area, people have limited access to public transports and are forced to use private and high emissions vehicles.

Inputs for the future programme

It is true that a transnational cooperation programme investing less than 10 million on this SO cannot expect to have a full territorial coverage, and the concentration on cities shown by the financed projects could be linked to the necessity to experiment the transport and mobility low carbon solutions where there is an adequate critical mass. However, the programme could start a reflection on the risks to encourage the urban population and the industry adopting low carbon practices, accepting that rural population and traditional economic sectors lag behind. This could, indeed, increase the divide between urban and rural population so making ASP – a cohesion programme - produce a reverse effect.

Moreover, it is recommended to establish a taxonomy of target groups at programme level and a more precise and shared methodology to count them. This will allow the projects to estimate more realistic target values, and the programme to effectively aggregate and monitor data.

7 Sustainably valorise Alpine Space cultural and natural heritage

7.1 WHAT IS THE CHANGE THAT THE PROGRAMME WANTS TO ACHIEVE?

7.1.1 Key needs and challenges identified

The territorial analysis carried out in between 2013 and 2014 offers an overview of the key characteristics of the Alpine Space area in terms of cultural and natural heritage.

The alpine space is globally renowned due to the “*very rich natural and cultural heritage*” and this made the area an attractive place with quality of life for inhabitants, newcomers and tourists. At the same time human activities (including mass tourism) risk to create “*non reversible pressure and alienation on nature and space*”.

The box below summarises the key strengths and weaknesses identified in 2014 which were at the basis of the definition of specific objective 3.1.

Box 7-1 Relevant needs and challenges identified in 2014

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very rich natural and cultural heritage, which is fully exploited as a production input (tourism) • Land uses integrated in the cultural landscape • Environmental protection and cultural preservation are political mainstream in many regions of the Alpine Space | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism favours seasonal “monocultures” • The ASP area is a zone of high environmental sensitivity affected by general pressure due to human activities • Tourism creates a broad-scale, often non reversible pressure and alienation on nature and space |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-demographic trends in conjunction to globalisation will also offer new global target groups for “moderate” tourism demanding “pristine nature” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragmented governance systems and administrative discordance can reduce the potential for transnational exploitation of the Alpine Space strengths and opportunities |

Source: Cooperation programme

7.1.2 Expected change in the programme area

The programme intends to impact on the level of sustainable valorisation of cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine Space. The change targeted by the programme can be reached through the following conditions:

- (1) The creation of a transnational Alpine Identity valorised by public and private institutions and companies in marketing activities, product development labelling etc.
- (2) The introduction of new and innovative approaches for a sustainable valorisation of cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine Space appear and have been successfully implemented in mainstream policies.
- (3) A broad use of the potential of Alpine cultural and natural heritage for valorisation (tourism, agriculture, food products, etc.).
- (4) Targeted policies, supported by various instruments and tools, to enhance the valorisation of cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine Space.
- (5) Making tourism, in particular mass tourism, sector more aware of cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine Space to an adequate degree.

7.2 WHAT WAS ACHIEVED

7.2.1 Type of projects and beneficiaries which were financed

6 projects were financed under SO 3.1. The amount of ERDF allocated is approximately 11 million corresponding to 34% of the total resources targeted for PA 3.

The average budget for each project is EUR 2.1 mil.

The 3 projects selected in the second call are already closed, while the remaining three are expected to be closed in 2021.

Table 7-1 SO 3.1 number of project and budget allocated

| Call | N. Financed projects | ERDF budget allocated |
|--------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 2 | 3 | 5 747 736.99 € |
| 3 | 3 | 4 952 656.90 € |
| Total | 6 | 10 700 393.89 € |

Source: data provided by the JS

Data presented in AIR 2018 offer an overview of the financial progress made by all the projects financed under Axis 3 (not only to SO 3.1). Data indicate that approximately 26% of the budget allocated has been absorbed.

In total 68 beneficiaries were financed (i.e. 11 partners per project on average). Looking at the type of partners we can observe the strong involvement of Education, training and research centres (50%).

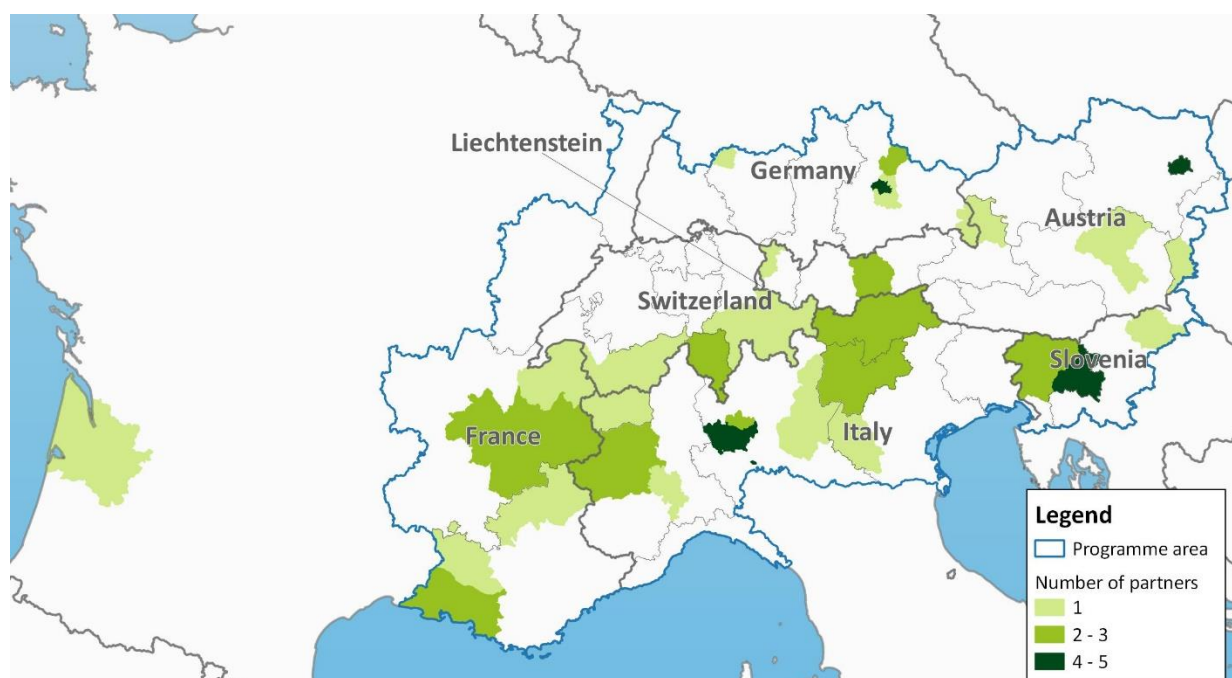
Table 7-2 Type of beneficiaries

| Type of beneficiary | % out of the total partners |
|---|-----------------------------|
| National public authority | 3% |
| Regional/local public authority | 19% |
| Education, training and research | 50% |
| Interest groups including NGOs | 10% |
| SME | 1% |
| Sectoral agency | 16% |

Source: data provided by the JS

As illustrated by the map below, except for Liechtenstein all ASP countries are involved in at least one SO 3.1 project. Beneficiaries are located mainly in Italy (18), France (13), and Austria (12). High density of beneficiaries is observed for Munich, Vienna, in Central Slovenia region and Milan.

Figure 7-1 Localisation of the beneficiaries



Source: data provided by the JS

7.2.2 Outputs achieved

Projects of SO 3.1 are expected to deliver the following types of outputs.

If we refer to the data presented in the AIR 2018, the progress towards the final targets for 2023 are slower than for other SOs (on average 10% of the outputs planned have already been realised).

Progress registered exclusively depends on the 3 projects approved under the second call. 2 projects delivered 2 transnational cooperation structures: YourAlps and LOS_DAMA!. More in detail, YourAlps project created an Alpine Network of Mountain Oriented Education (MOE)

professionals based on a participatory web platform. The MOE is an educational approach aimed to instil in young generation the sensibility and knowledge of Alpine cultural and natural heritage. LOS_DAMA! Instead established a Transnational practitioners network to enhance peri-urban landscapes and valorise them as Green Infrastructure.

With regard to the strategic elements, LOS_DAMA! Project also contributed to the output indicator by delivering a Comparative report on Mountain Oriented Educational (MOE) practices and strategies in the alpine countries.

These have created two transnational cooperation structures (e.g. stakeholders' network for cultural heritage protection) and one strategic element (e.g. historic building atlas, assessment schemes for building renovation, exchange platform, planning and policy recommendation).

Table 7-3 SO 3.1 output indicators – progress towards the final targets

| Type of output | Achieved 2018 | Final target according to beneficiaries | Target value for 2023 (CP) | Progress towards the final target |
|---|---------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Number of supported transnational cooperation structures aiming at the implementation of sustainable valorisation of cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine Space. | 2 | 12 | 12 | 16% |
| Number of developed strategic elements aiming at the implementation of sustainable valorisation of cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine Space. | 1 | 10 | 7 | 14% |
| Number of developed implementation elements sustainably valorising cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine Space. | 0 | 16 | 14 | 0% |
| <i>Average</i> | | | | <i>10%</i> |

Source: AIR 2018

7.2.3 Target groups reached

Projects under SO 3.1 are expected to reach all the target groups set by the programme except the EEIG and GECT. The level of involvement was calculated by comparing the target values declared by projects in the AF and the values reached according to the last progress report available.

The general public resulted extensively reached, with all the projects contributing to it. Similarly to what observed in the other SOs, projects counted the number of visualisations in the social media pages. To be noted that the average level of achievement is mainly due to the overcoming of the target values by two projects, AlpFoodway with 3 376% and Cheers with 3 908%.

Higher education and research institutes have been reached by 5 projects out of 6 and such level of achievement may be explained by underestimation of the target values by three projects: LOS_DAMA (1 380%), YourAlps (225%) and Atlas (1 17%).

The private sector has been involved as interest group including NGOs (246%) and SMEs (239%), while the policy makers mainly as regional (184%) and local public authorities (114%).

Figure 7-2 target group reached by projects under SO 3.1

| | % Achievement | Projects contributing (AF) | |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|------|
| | | N. | % |
| General public | 1265% | 6 | 100% |
| Higher education and research | 347% | 5 | 83% |
| Interest groups including NGOs | 246% | 6 | 100% |
| SMEs | 239% | 3 | 50% |
| Regional public authority | 184% | 6 | 100% |
| Local public authority | 114% | 6 | 100% |
| International organisation under inter-national law | 102% | 3 | 50% |
| International organisation under national law | 92% | 4 | 67% |
| National public authority | 87% | 6 | 100% |
| Education/training centre and school | 80% | 4 | 67% |
| Other | 77% | 3 | 50% |
| Sectoral agency | 58% | 5 | 83% |
| Infrastructure and (public) service provider | 37% | 2 | 33% |
| Enterprise, excluding SME | 20% | 1 | 17% |
| Business support organisation | 19% | 3 | 50% |
| EEIG, EGTC | Not expected to be reached | | |

Source: Projects progress reports provided by the JS

7.2.4 Changes observed in the programme area

In 2014 the programme defined a result indicator to monitor the evolution of the programme area in terms of capacity to valorise the cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine Space.

According to the information presented in the AIR 2018 (see table below) this capacity has slightly improved over the last 4 years. According to the information provided by the experts involved in the survey, this slight improvement is mainly due to the creation of a transnational alpine identity, the implementation in the alpine area new innovative tools for the management of ecosystem services and a broader use and knowledge of the potential of alpine heritage.

Table 7-4 SO 3.1 result indicators – evolution of programme's area

| Indicator | Baseline 2014 | Target value 2023 | Achieved in 2018 |
|--|---------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Level of sustainable valorisation of cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine Space | 62.3% | Increase between 1.00 – 3.00% | 63.6% |

Source: AIR 2018

7.2.5 Impact: the results achieved by the projects

This section illustrates the key steps of the evaluation of the impact for the SO 3.1. It presents the evidences collected through web survey and the key findings from the case studies regarding the results that the Alpine Space projects are bringing to the area.

All partners of the projects approved under SO 3.1 (call 1 and 2) were invited to take part to the web survey. In total 9 partners from 3 projects took part to the survey. They were asked to provide information regarding the type of benefits and results that their project is bringing by selecting from a list of potential benefits (which the evaluators had identified on the basis of the analysis of the application forms) or by specifying additional types of possible benefits.

As illustrated by the table below, if we refer to the 4 main categories of potential benefits proposed by the evaluators, projects from SO 3.1 are exchanging/ using practices, creating/ increasing skills and capacities, increasing awareness (i.e. learning and knowledge benefits). They appear also to have produced some tangible impacts in terms of environmental and sustainability benefits, with particular regard to the increase of sustainability (cultural and natural heritage) of tourism activities and the valorisation of ecosystem services. As occurred in the previous section dedicated to SO 2.2, the governance and policy benefits appear to be less important from the survey, so they will not be analysed. Socio-economic are not directly relevant, even if it shall be noted that 56% of respondents to the survey declared that their project has contributed to the enhancement of the Alpine identity (the highest value comparatively to other SOs).

Partners involved in the web survey declared that the benefits indicated in the table below have been generated.

Table 7-5 Benefits brought by the projects financed under SO 3.1

| Category of benefit | % of respondents |
|---|------------------|
| Learning and knowledge | 100% |
| • Exchange and use of practice | 100% |
| • Created/increased skills and capacities | 89% |
| • Increased awareness | 89% |
| • Behavioural change in stakeholder opinion | 44% |
| Environment and sustainability | 100% |

| | |
|--|------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased relevance (e.g. budget) to low-carbon themes in the local / regional / national strategy | 22% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased use of ecosystem services | 44% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valorised ecosystem services | 56% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased sustainability (cultural and natural heritage) of tourism activities | 78% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larger use of low-carbon mobility and transport options | 11% |
| Socio-economic benefit | 56% |
| Governance and policy | 67% |

Source: Web-survey

7.2.5.1 Learning and knowledge benefits

The presence of education, training and research bodies among the partners involved in the projects financed under SO 3.1 is particularly high, as they are half of all partners. This element could explain the strong aptitude to promote learning and knowledge processes.

The exchange of practices under SO 3.1 is intensive, indeed. In some cases, the involvement of the target group general public turned to be high. In the YOUrALPS project, teachers in cooperation with non-formal educators tested the so called alpine school model. Testing included more than 2 000 students and 200 educators from 14 schools in 5 alpine countries. A collection of the alpine school project descriptions enables teachers to transfer them into their curricula and improves the quality of their lessons, especially when they use inquiry based learning with participative approach. In other cases the exchange involved professionals. This is the case of ATLAS - a project aiming at capitalising and optimising existing best practice solutions for historic building refurbishment in a perspective of energy saving and regional development - which developed the first international online database of good practices related to energy efficient renovation of historic buildings.

AlpFoodway shows how skills were increased in connection with the alpine intangible cultural heritage valorisation. The project links food heritage with marketing and consumer culture and supports “bottom-up” mobilization processes. Participants to a pilot action have for the first time exhibited as vendors at a collective marketing initiative, thus improving their marketing skills.







YOUrALPS integrated into school curricula competences for sustainable development, which include environmental, social and economic responsibility. This project contributed also to reinforce the relationship of the alpine youth to the environment, knowing that “nature deficit disorders” have been detected among pupils. Mountain related experiential learning was experimented so instilling in young generation a stronger familiarity with the Alpine cultural and natural heritage. The project promotes an alpine school model where mountain-oriented education is incorporated in formal education.

LOS_DAMA! project, dealing with urban and peri-urban green areas, adopted a peculiar strategy to raise awareness and create identity. The name for the pilot area identified by the city of Vienna was selected together with the population from Vienna and Gerasdorf. It was possible to vote online and in an information event. Most of the votes received Regionalpark "DreiAnger". Regionalpark

"DreiAnger", as the area will be called in the future, means the villages which the regional park connects.

More details on the already mentioned ATLAS solution to exchange practices throughout the Alps are provided in the factsheet below.

Factsheet 7-1 Sub-benefit: Exchange and use of practice

| ATLAS project | |
|---|---|
|  | 3.1 Sustainably valorize Alpine Space cultural and natural heritage |
|  | To capitalise and optimise existing best practice solutions for historic building refurbishment in a perspective of energy saving and regional development. |
|  Alpine dimension | <p>The alpine area is characterized by the similarity of building types, construction materials and climatic conditions. The existing historically grown villages and landscapes are often in competition with the economic and touristic agglomerations. But the valorization and retrofit of the historic architecture is in the interest of the whole society since the entire Alpine area draws its identity from the cultural landscapes.</p> <p>The sustainable development of historic buildings has a positive effect on many existing challenges in the alpine area: use of the existing infrastructure; limitation of land use changes; decrease of rural de population; promotion of sustainable tourism and as one of the most effective way to reduce the ecological footprint.</p> |
| BENEFIT | <p>Benefit: Learning and knowledge Sub-benefit: Exchange and use of practice</p> <p>The first output of the project is the Historic Building Atlas, i.e. an online database for best practice examples for energy refurbishments of historic buildings on the Alps. This is the first international accessible database of good practice solutions for sustainable renovation of historic and traditional buildings, that bridges the gap from locally existing robust solutions towards the application in transnational context.</p> <p>The database collects information on renovation projects that are exemplary both in terms of heritage conservation and energy efficiency and aims at becoming a useful guide for all the actors involved in the renovation of historic buildings.</p> <p>Some of the case studies featured in the Historic Building Energy Retrofit Atlas were put on display in REDay exhibition, organised in October 2019, arousing interest in the visiting public. Among these were Villa Castelli, a listed building from the 19th century located at the riverside of Lake Como, Italy, whose renovation led to a 90% decrease in energy demand and the Viennese convent of Kaiserstrasse, which was particularly challenging to preserve.</p> |
|  What | |
|  Where | ATLAS has a stronger focus on the territories directly represented by the partners, but the project intends its outputs as fully applicable to all alpine territories. The project is even interested in applications outside of the alpine space. The ATLAS illustrated below – a flagship output for the project – clearly represents this approach. |
|  Transnational added value | Transnational funding was necessary to collect information from all over the alpine areas, so benefitting from such a significant critical mass of good practices. The actual use of the practices showcased will have to be monitored. |

7.2.5.2 *Environment and sustainability benefits*

The projects financed under SO 3.1 deal with very different topics such as food, landscape, education, buildings, natural risks, so showing that cultural and natural heritage is a multidimensional concept that can hardly be “embedded” into a programme sub-category.

On the one side, it emerges that all these topics were creatively interpreted in a sustainability perspective. Preservation and promotion of the cultural food heritage was identified as a key factor of the sustainable development model for peripheral mountain areas. Transformation of former industrial landscapes as well as protection of urban/ peri-urban green areas and better connection with the people, were faced by dedicated projects under SO 3.1. The potential of education in creating the basis for a sustainable model was explored. It was shown how historic buildings, if appropriately restored, can play a role in reduction of CO2 emissions, especially in rural areas where the presence of historic building is relatively high. Finally, the increase of natural disasters on the Alps was investigated in relation to the risks for the cultural heritage, and the capacities to manage securing activities of cultural resources were improved, so contributing to sustainability.

On the other side, **it results more difficult than in other SOs to associate the projects’ outputs to benefits categories.** The problem does not necessarily consist of a lack of impact, as the projects appear to have generated environment and sustainability related changes, even if in a more indirect way. The difficulty is methodological, as these benefits are diverse and cannot be fully explained through the categories “Increased sustainability (cultural and natural heritage) of tourism activities” and “Valorised ecosystem services” – the most indicated items by the SO 3.1 respondents to the survey.

It has to be noted, indeed, that it is not easy to recognise the tourism topic in the projects financed under SO 3.1. AlpFoodway aims at making food cultural heritage an intangible asset based on experiential/ symbolic elements that differentiate products and services in the eyes of tourists and other consumers. However, the link with the increasing of sustainability of tourism activities is not central in the project development.

Valorisation of ecosystem services is at the core of LOS_DAMA! project, dealing with urban and peri-urban green areas. Pilot actions were carried out in Munich, Grenoble, Vienna, Salzburg, Trent, Turin and Ljubljana, following an integrated territorial vision rooted in nature-based solutions and landscape ecology, building on ecosystem services. However, this topic does not appear as a key to interpret the mass of project outputs generated under SO 3.1.

If compared to other SOs, the projects’ outputs generated under this SO are therefore heterogeneous, and this makes the impact evaluation more difficult. However, it is well known that the present programming period has aggregated topics that had been more recognisable in previous periods. In particular, the choice to aggregate natural heritage with cultural heritage, with a minor role played by the latter, has forced the stakeholders to set up complex projects based on very stimulating concepts, but difficult to be assessed.

7.2.5.3 *Territorial dimension*

This section aims to provide a picture on how the benefits are distributed within the alpine space.

In a previous section, we provided an overview of the localization of the partners, built on the data of the monitoring system, that, however, does not allow to detect in what kind of territory the impacts are produced.

In the light of the peculiar topography of the alpine area and of the related territorial challenges, the localization of the benefits have been investigated through the on-line survey to beneficiaries.

As illustrated by the table below, benefits produced by the projects financed under SO 3.1 are mainly expected to concern the alpine mountainous areas (67% of respondents), while rural and urban areas are covered at a lower extent.

Table 7-6 Where the SO 3.1 projects are supposed to deliver their benefits

| Area | % |
|--------------------------|------------|
| Mountainous areas | 67% |
| Rural areas | 22% |
| Urban areas | 11% |

Source: : Web-survey

With regard to the types of urban areas, it emerged from the survey that, small municipalities with less than 50 000 inhabitants are where the benefits are localized most (89% of the respondents), followed by other municipalities (33% of respondents) and regional capitals or capitals (11%).

Table 7-7 Which urban areas are more interested by the benefits generated by SO 3.1

| Area | % |
|---|------------|
| Regional capitals or capitals | 11% |
| Other municipalities above 50 000 of inhabitants | 33% |
| Municipalities below 50 000 of inhabitants | 89% |

Source: : Web-survey

7.2.5.4 Durability

The partnerships under SO 3.1 are featured by a huge presence of Education, training and research centres, and a low participation by national/ regional/ local authorities.

This fact has to be considered in the analysis of the answers by project partners to the question on further opportunities after the ASP funded phase. All partners involved in SO 3.1 projects, indeed, declared that their project has generated new opportunities in relation to the establishment of networks among partners, continuation of pilot activities started during the projects, setting up of new partnerships based on the previous project experience. Specifically, the question to be asked concerns **the financial capacity to ensure use of the projects' outputs in absence of further ETC funding**. The fact that projects under SO 3.1 have shown a lower confidence in producing governance and policy making benefits confirms that durability is still an open question.

It is also true that the progress in the output achievement is limited, already, with the necessity to monitor with special attention the capacity by SO 3.1 projects to develop strategic elements aiming at

the implementation of sustainable valorisation of cultural and natural heritage of the Alpine Space (14% of achievement level in 2018).

More specifically, the SO 3.1 projects should produce strategic/ implementation elements such as planning and policy recommendation, interactive guidance tools, decision support toolkits, assessment schemes for building renovation (see table below).

Table 7-8 Type of outputs

| Programme type of output | Examples by the projects |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Transnational cooperation structures | Experts and stakeholders network for cultural heritage protection, multilevel community network. |
| Strategic elements | Historic building atlas, exchange platform, planning and policy recommendation. |
| Implementation elements | Interactive guidance tool, decision support toolkit, tools for testing potentials, methodology for assets evaluation and interventions, toolkit for identifying exposure of cultural assets to risk, training learning units, concept for civil protection plans. |

Source: Desk analysis, case studies

The answer to the question on the actual use of such outputs by the policy makers is made more difficult by the heterogeneity of the topics faced under SO 3.1, ranging from food to landscape, education, historic buildings, natural risks. Capitalization of results and aggregation of outputs are hardly recognizable by the evaluator, and probably also by the decision makers. However, definite projects outputs could turn to be directly usable by policy makers, especially at local level.

The ATLAS durability, to make an example, will depend on the adoption by the municipalities of the toolkit developed by the University of Munich, which has a long experience in delivering this kind of support instruments. To facilitate this process, the partners decided to produce a replicable pdf document that is structured in several topics. The website is the main channel through which all the outcomes and solutions will remain available to the final users. ATLAS has a lot of municipalities among the observers and they expressed the interest to use this toolkit in their territory.

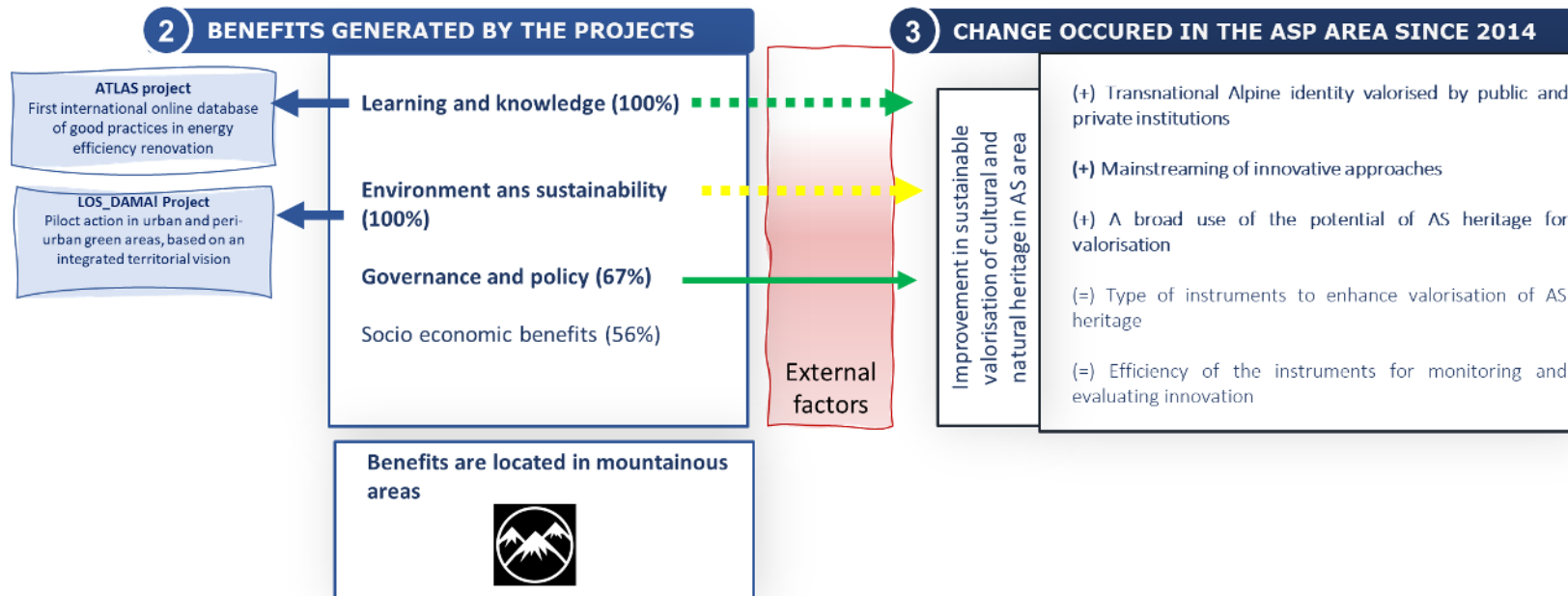
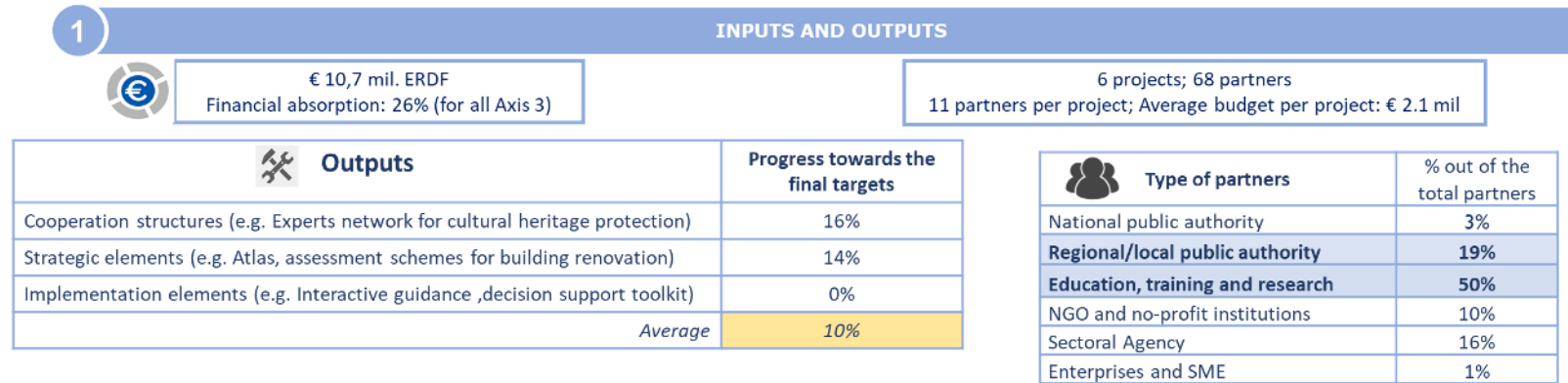
This means that the projects' durability will depend on the administrative and financial capacity at local/ regional level. At this regard, differences among the countries can be expected. For instance, the fragility of the Italian local authorities, especially small municipalities lacking a support by intermediary institutions like provinces and mountainous communities having supported in the past local development initiatives, could turn to be a negative external factor. This will not happen in the territory of the lead partner EURAC, as South Tyrol is governed by an autonomous province having kept significant planning competences and managing important financial resources.

7.2.5.5 External factors and mega-trends

The heterogeneity of the projects financed affects this kind of analysis. Having found a lack of clarity regarding the change targeted by the projects, the evaluator met difficulties in identifying external factors having affected the course of the projects and their capacity to produce impacts. Such a difficulty is mirrored by the absence of elements related to external factors emerged when the project representatives were interviewed.



An analysis of the trends in tourism could be conducted, but it would turn to be not fully relevant to the projects developed under SO 3.1.

7.3 IMPACT OF SO 3.1: KEY FINDINGS





The figure above offers an overview of the theory of the intervention logic of SO 3.1 and summarises some of the key findings that emerge from the evaluation:


Financial/ output progress and partnership

| | |
|---|--|
|  | Financial data indicate good progress in terms of financial absorption. However, the progress towards the final targets for 2023 are slower than for other SOs (on average 10% of the outputs planned have already been realised). |
|  | The partnerships under SO 3.1 have significant presence of Education, training and research centres, and a low participation by national/ regional/ local authorities which poses some doubts about the capacity of the projects to produce governance and policy making benefits (which correspond to the changes mainly targeted by the programme). There is similar evidence for what concerns the target groups, where the education sector was significantly concerned by project activities as well as the private sector (SMEs and interest groups including NGOs). Policy makers, especially at regional and local level, are also involved. |

Benefits generated by the projects

| | |
|---|---|
|  | Projects financed are generating learning and knowledge benefits . The exchange of practices under SO 3.1 is intensive, indeed. In some cases, the involvement of the target group general public turned to be high. For example, in the YOUrALPS project, testing included more than 2 000 students and 200 educators from 14 schools in 5 alpine countries. |
|  | Projects declare that they are also generating tangible impacts in terms of environmental and sustainability benefits. However, looking at the type of sub-benefits generated, both from the analysis of the answers provided to the survey and from the analysis of the projects' documents it is difficult to seize specific environmental benefits. As an example, the valorisation of ecosystem services is at the core of LOS_DAMA! project, dealing with urban and peri-urban green areas, but, this topic does not appear as a key to interpret the mass of project outputs generated under SO 3.1. |

Territorial dimension

| | |
|---|--|
|  | According to the evidences emerged from the survey, the results generated by the projects in terms of better integration of valorization of the natural and cultural heritage are mainly benefiting the small municipalities located in mountainous areas. |
|---|--|

Inputs for the future programme

The projects financed under SO 3.1 deal with very different topics such as food, landscape, education, buildings, natural risks. All topics are related to cultural and natural heritage. In our view,

in the perspective of the future programming period, programme's authorities shall carefully reflect on the opportunity or not to focus one programme objective on such a multidimensional concept.

In other terms, the heterogeneity of the projects financed seems to reflect the lack of thematic focus/ concentration of this SO. In our view the evidences collected are showing that the lack of clarity regarding the change targeted by the projects (and the programme) could negatively affect the durability of the projects outputs and results.

Moreover, it is recommended to establish a taxonomy of target groups at programme level and a more precise and shared methodology to count them. This will allow the projects to estimate more realistic target values, and the programme to effectively aggregate and monitor data.

8 Enhance the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of Alpine Space ecosystems

8.1 WHAT IS THE CHANGE THAT THE PROGRAMME WANTS TO ACHIEVE?

8.1.1 Key needs and challenges identified

The territorial analysis carried out between 2013 and 2014 offers an overview of the key characteristics of the Alpine Space area in terms of protection, conservation and connectivity of the ecosystems.

The area is featuring exceptional and unique landscapes and biodiversity. Due to its topography, it is also characterised by high environmental vulnerability strongly influenced by human activities, emissions and impacts of climate change. It also provides ecosystem services not only for the residents, but as well for visitors, tourists and for other parts of Europe. These ecosystem services, and the factors influencing them, are in constant interaction. The box below summarises the key strengths and weaknesses identified in 2014 which were at the basis of the definition of specific objective 3.2.

Box 8-1 Relevant needs and challenges identified in 2014

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental protection and cultural preservation are political mainstream in many regions of the Alpine Space | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance systems for environmental protection and sustainability issues are fragmented and have a diverging range of responsibilities among and within countries; the application of results of transnational best practices and tools has been weak |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multitude, interdependency and complexity of threats and risks demand transnational cooperation as an attempt to meet the challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change impact could raise costs for risk prevention and rehabilitation and will demand additional material inputs for the restoration of the status quo ante. It could also affect the fragile mountain ecosystems, causing loss of biodiversity, erosion and degradation of eco-services |

Source: Cooperation programme

8.1.2 Expected change in the programme area

Representatives of the countries and regions involved in the Alpine Space area agreed to tackle the key needs and challenges summarised in the previous section by enhance the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of the ecosystems.

Looking at the questionnaires used in 2014 for measuring the level of integration of the ecosystems, clarifies the change targeted by the programme. The objective for 2020/2023 was to impact on five different dimensions:

- (1) Capacity of transnational, national and regional governance instruments and tools to support the ecological connectivity of Alpine Space ecosystems;
- (2) Capacity to implement services to implement ecosystem services;
- (3) Awareness about the relevance of ecosystem services;
- (4) Development and implementation of new and innovative tools for the management of ecosystem services;
- (5) Availability of data and information on the functionality and the benefits of ecosystem services.

8.2 WHAT WAS ACHIEVED

8.2.1 Type of projects and beneficiaries which were financed

8 projects have been approved under SO 3.2 that correspond to about EUR 15.1 million of ERDF (i.e. 48% of the programme budget for PA3).

5 projects are already closed, the remaining 3 will be closed in 2020 and 2021.

The average budget per project is EUR 2.3 mil.

Table 8-1 SO 3.2 number of project and budget allocated

| Call | N. Financed projects | ERDF budget allocated |
|--------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 499 406.55 € |
| 2 | 4 | 8 171 856.70 € |
| 3 | 2 | 3 497 542.95 € |
| Total | 8 | 15 168 806.20 € |

Source: Data provided by the JS

Data presented in AIR 2018 offer an overview of the financial progress made by all the projects financed under Axis 3 (not only to SO 3.2). Data indicate that approximately 26% of the budget allocated has been absorbed.

Projects are composed on average by 12 partners.

Looking at the type of beneficiaries, 42% of the 96 beneficiaries financed are universities or research centres. 26% are regional local authorities, national authorities represent 15% of beneficiaries.

Table 8-2 Type of beneficiaries

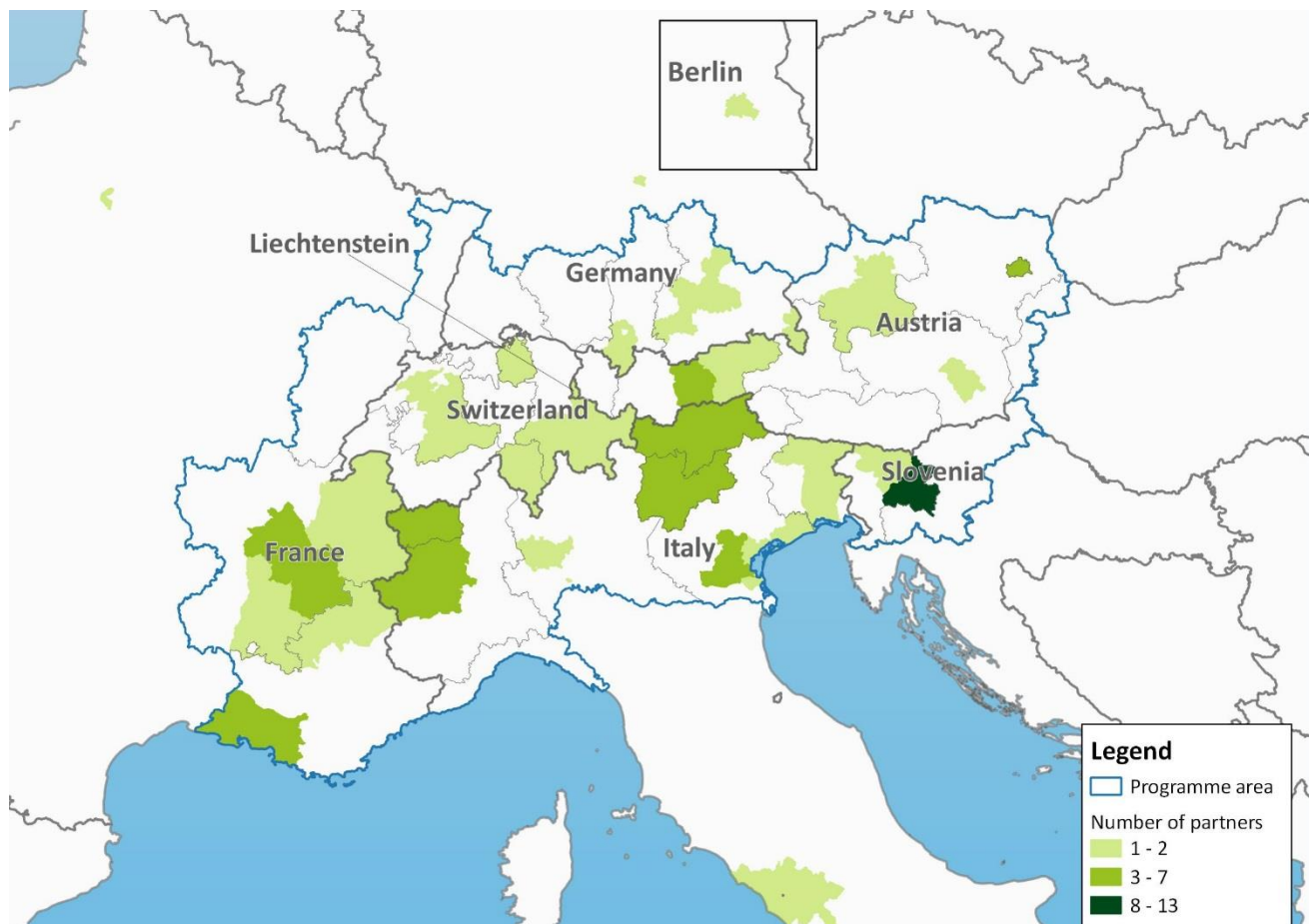
| Type of beneficiary | % out of the total partners |
|--|-----------------------------|
| National public authority | 15% |
| Regional/local public authority | 26% |
| Higher education and research centres | 42% |
| Sectoral agency | 3% |
| Interest groups including NGOs | 9% |
| SME | 5% |

Source: Data provided by the JS

Partners are located in all the Alpine Space countries. Most of beneficiaries are in Italy (26) and in Austria (19).

France and Slovenia and Germany have respectively 15, 14 and 13 partners. In Switzerland there are 7 beneficiaries and 2 are in Liechtenstein. Highest density of beneficiaries is in the Central region in Slovenia.

Figure 8-1 Localisation of the beneficiaries



Source: Data provided by the JS

8.2.2 Outputs achieved

As illustrated by the table below, projects financed under SO 3.2 are expected to deliver three types of outputs.

It is interesting to notice that beneficiaries intend to realise more strategic elements and implementation elements than what was planned by the programme in 2014. However, data coming from the monitoring system (i.e. AIR 2018) also indicate that at the end of 2018 the progress towards the final targets was limited.

For what concerns the number of transnational cooperation structures, data indicate that the 8 projects financed will support only two structures (out of the nine targeted by the programme).

Table 8-3 SO 3.2 output indicators – progress towards the final targets

| Type of output | Achieved 2018 | Final target according to beneficiaries | Target value for 2023 (CP) | Progress towards the final target |
|--|---------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Number of supported transnational cooperation structures aiming to enhance the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of Alpine Space ecosystems | 1 | 2 | 9 | 5% |
| Number of developed strategic elements aiming to enhance the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of Alpine Space ecosystems | 1 | 36 | 8 | 12% |
| Number of developed implementation elements enhancing the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of Alpine Space ecosystems | 5 | 30 | 16 | 31% |
| | | | Average | 16% |

Source: AIR 2018

8.2.3 Target groups reached

The capacity of the projects under SO 3.2 to involve the target groups was measured by comparing the target values declared in the AF and the values reported in the progress report.

General public resulted to be the most involved category. However, the value reported in the table below is the result of an underestimation of the target values by in particular the project ALPBIONET2030, which planned to reach 500 and actually achieved 81 006. Also in this case, different counting methods were used such as the visualisations to the web page, the questionnaire disseminated by the project, social media statistics etc.

The second most reached category appears to be the international organisation under national law, but this is the contribution of only one project, ALPBIONET2030 which estimated to reach 2 organisations but reached 57 (thus 2850% of achievement).

The education sector is also involved, with higher education and research centres being the main users of projects outputs.

Figure 8-2 target groups reached by projects under SO 3.2

| | % Achievement | Projects contributing (AF) | |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|------|
| | | N. | % |
| General public | 2879% | 7 | 88% |
| International organisation under national law | 950% | 3 | 38% |
| Higher education and research | 766% | 8 | 100% |
| Interest groups including NGOs | 373% | 8 | 100% |
| Enterprise, excluding SME | 240% | 1 | 13% |
| SME | 223% | 8 | 100% |
| Education/training centre and school | 217% | 5 | 63% |
| Regional public authority | 217% | 8 | 100% |
| Sectoral agency | 143% | 6 | 75% |
| National public authority | 133% | 8 | 100% |
| International organisation under inter-national law | 129% | 6 | 75% |
| Other | 100% | 2 | 25% |
| Local public authority | 84% | 8 | 100% |
| Infrastructure and (public) service provider | 52% | 6 | 75% |
| Business support organisation | Not expected to be reached | | |
| EEIG, EGTC | Not expected to be reached | | |

Source: projects progress reports provided by the JS

8.2.4 Changes observed in the programme area

In 2014 the programme defined a result indicator to monitor the evolution of the programme area in terms of integration of the ecosystem services.

According to the information presented in the AIR 2018 (see table below), such a capacity has improved over the last four years. According to the information provided by the experts involved in the survey, this slight improvement is mainly due to the implementation in the alpine area new innovative tools for the management of ecosystem services.

Table 8-4 SO 3.2 result indicators – evolution of programme's area

| Indicator | Baseline 2014 | Target value 2023 | Achieved in 2018 |
|-----------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|
|-----------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|

| | | | |
|---|-------|----------------|-------|
| Level of integration of the ecosystem services approach in the policy systems of the Alpine Space | 47.0% | Increase >3.0% | 53.7% |
|---|-------|----------------|-------|

Source: AIR 2018

8.2.5 Impact: the results achieved by the projects

This section illustrates the key steps of the evaluation of the impact for the SO 3.2. It presents the evidences collected through web survey and the key findings from the case studies regarding the results that the Alpine Space projects are bringing to the area.

All partners of the projects approved under SO 3.2 (call 1 and 2) were invited to take part to the web survey. In total 18 partners from 6 projects took part to the survey. They were asked to provide information regarding the type of benefits and results that their project is bringing by selecting from a list of potential benefits (which the evaluators had identified on the basis of the analysis of the application forms) or by specifying additional types of possible benefits.

As illustrated by the table below, if we refer to the 4 main categories of potential benefits proposed by the evaluators, projects from SO 3.2 are exchanging/ using practices, creating/ increasing skills and capacities, increasing awareness (i.e. learning and knowledge benefits). They appear also to have produced some tangible impacts in terms of environmental and sustainability benefits, with particular regard to valorisation and increased use of ecosystem services. Governance and policy benefits appear to be much more significant than in the other SO of the same Axis 3. Socio-economic benefit are lower, and will not be analysed.

Partners involved in the web survey declared that the benefits indicated in the table below have been generated.

Table 8-5 Benefits brought by the projects financed under SO 3.2

| Category of benefit | % of respondents |
|--|------------------|
| Learning and knowledge | 100% |
| • Exchange and use of practice | 94% |
| • Created/increased skills and capacities | 72% |
| • Increased awareness | 72% |
| • Behavioural change in stakeholder opinion | 56% |
| Environment and sustainability | 100% |
| • Increased relevance (e.g. budget) to low-carbon themes in the local / regional / national strategy | 28% |
| • Increased use of ecosystem services | 61% |
| • Valorised ecosystem services | 72% |
| • Increased sustainability (cultural and natural heritage) of tourism activities | 33% |

| | |
|--|------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger use of low-carbon mobility and transport options | 0% |
| Governance and policy | 89% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved stakeholders' involvement | 72% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of appropriate policy instruments, framework and tools | 44% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of barrier to cooperation | 33% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved monitoring and evaluation systems | 67% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased relevance (e.g. budget) of the theme of the governance in the local / regional / national / sectoral dedicated policy instrument | 50% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination and better definition of roles | 17% |
| Socio-economic benefit | 61% |

Source: Web-survey

8.2.5.1 Learning and knowledge benefits

The exchange of practices featured all projects financed under SO 3.2 in the opinion of almost all partners. Exchange allowed the HyMoCARES project (HydroMorphological assessment and management at basin scale for the Conservation of Alpine Rivers and related Ecosystem Services) to gain higher knowledge of practices used in other countries, such as regulatory processes and assessment tools. In case of SPARE (Strategic Planning for Alpine River Ecosystems), the exchanges of practices concerned different participation approaches for heterogeneous types of stakeholders. The case of AlpES, a project dedicated to alpine ecosystem services, is of special interest as WIKIAlps – the alpine knowledge platform (www.wikialps.eu) financed by ASP to capitalise on selected projects on spatial development issues – was fully used. AlpES published materials so that stakeholders can have quick access to updated information on the concept of ecosystem services. As reported by AlpES in the interview, WIKIAlps had 10 000 registered users and more than 11 000 viewers, in November 2018. Looking at the project web-GIS, 100 maps have been created. In the WebGIS AlpES stakeholders can create indeed their own Ecosystem Services maps and use them to inform themselves about the state of individual System Services in their municipality or region. The WebGIS was made available in the five AlpES project languages (EN, DE, FR, IT, SL) and linked to WIKIAlps. Links4Soil developed several academic exchanges. To make an example, the project was invited to intervene at an international conference on soil in Iran.

Skills and capacities were increased under several projects. Links4Soils organised expert sessions at universities and schools dealing with urban or landscape planning to promote the concept of ecological connectivity, with the possibility directly to contact the project to request the organisation of a session. AlpES increased the skills in mapping and assessing ecosystem services. SPARE project conducted two training sessions on advanced participatory methods in water management.

The awareness side offers several points of reflection when SO 3.2 is concerned. Projects dedicated to “new” topics, or to topics that are new at least under ASP, dedicate strong attention to the awareness raising. When it comes to environmental sub-topics which could be considered as


“specialistic”, it has emerged that the attention of the public is unexpectedly high. This emerged in case of GRETA (SO 2.1) and is here confirmed by Links4Soil, which is a project dedicated to a specific environmental sub-topic such as soil management. During the course of Links4Soil, the general public attention towards the project turned to be much higher than initially foreseen. This could depend on the already mentioned global debate on climate change, which has encouraged citizens to explore even specific aspects that were considered academic in the past and are now understood by the population as relevant to their wellbeing and everyday life. Aware of the “novelty” of the soil topic, Links4Soil partnership delivered a good deal of support material. Initially, the language was supposed to be technical. During the course of the project, the exigency to adopt a fully understandable language answering the informative needs of the general public emerged, creating a new challenge for the partnership. ALPBIONET2030, a project focused on ecological connectivity, confirms such a virtuous circle. In recent years the attention to the green infrastructures rose significantly and this allowed the project to largely reach the general public, going well beyond the estimations presented in the application form of the project approved by ASP. Such positive results were achieved thanks to systematic communication activities. To keep experts and wider public informed, ALPBIONET2030 conducted communication activities on facebook, youtube, researchgate and linkedin. The ALPBIONET2030 partners are providing amateur videos on different topics concerning Ecological Connectivity. The project even invented a picture quiz to bring the topic of ecological connectivity closer to wider public.


8.2.5.2 Environment and sustainability benefits

The concept of ecosystem services is at the core of SO 3.2. According to the information published on WIKIAlps by the AlpES project: “Humans live among ecosystems that provide innumerable benefits to our lives: ranging from the pollination of our crops to providing spiritual values, and everything in between. Collectively, these benefits that people obtain from ecosystems are Ecosystem Services (ES). ES can refer to both goods (i.e. timber) and services (i.e. water filtration)”. Examples taken from ALPBIONET and AlpES itself are useful to highlight benefits produced at local level by projects also impacting on the higher policy level.

ALPBIONET2030 is primarily focused on ecological connectivity as the basis of alpine and global habitat species protection. The main results of the project, however, refer to the level of integration of the ecosystem services approach in the policy systems of the alpine space. Harmonized concepts and planning tools that are based on common and scientific assumptions on ecological connectivity can be used by various natural resource managers to constitute the basis for ecosystem services availability. With the involvement of stakeholders from relevant sectors Strategic Alpine Connectivity Areas for Ecological Connectivity and wildlife management strategy were identified. The project conducted analysis at local level, including a description of the “most urgent Human-Nature Conflicts in Project Working Regions”, which is illustrated in the factsheet below.

Factsheet 8-1 Sub-benefit: Valorised ecosystem services






| ALPBIONET2030 project | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>3.2 Enhance the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of Alpine Space ecosystems</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>To consolidate and enhance transnational cooperation in the field of nature conservation while providing a harmonized concept of preserving natural habitats and common planning tools to realize a high level of ecological connectivity for biodiversity conservation.</p> |
|  Alpine dimension | <p>Strategies to enhance the ecological connectivity are implemented at national level, taking into account administrative borders and not the natural continuity. Transnational dimension, namely at alpine level, contributes to harmonize the concept and interventions across the countries and realise an integrative vision at European level (thanks also to the Alpine Convention, which commits states in the protection of ecological connectivity).</p> |
| <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">BENEFIT</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">What</p>  | <p>Benefit: Learning and knowledge Sub-benefit: Exchange and use of practice</p> <p>The analysis was focused on Human-Nature Conflicts in mountain areas. Conflicts usually develop when different needs or interests compete with each other. These conflicts often arise when new “players” appear, such as new touristic offers, the enhancing of recreational activities in the mountains, or new wildlife species coming back to their original territories, bringing new and unforeseen factors of change in an environment already shaped by traditions and rooted economic activities.</p> <p>The analysis concerned the following cases of conflict; e-bikes and wildlife management (Berchtesgaden National Park - DE), Paragliding effects on wildlife (Hohe Tauern and South Tyrol - AT), Pasture use, livestock breeding, interactions with ungulates and large carnivores (Prealpi Giulie and Triglav - IT), Shared management and responsibility of protected species (Kalkalpen National Park - AT), Road infrastructures and Ecological Connectivity (Espace Mont Blanc - FR).</p> <p>The analysis was based on the workshops done in the territories and describes different ways of engaging local stakeholders by the local administrations and partners of the ALBIONET2030 project, regarding the new challenges facing alpine areas in the concrete implementation of ecological connectivity. In order to get all the voices of the local stakeholders, the workshops were conducted in the local language, except for the Italian/Slovenian workshop that was held in English. The nature of the current interactions among stakeholders related to the selected issue were defined, the conflict actors and components were identified and they were addressed towards new possibilities to manage conflicts.</p> <p>Beyond these analysis producing benefits on selected territories, ALPBIONET2030 provided scientific ecological measures, and this turned to be an important added value because ecological measures are normally “locally driven”, which often means “politically driven”. Thanks to the project, effective policy tools to decide where to protect, where to develop and where to mitigate were made available.</p> |
| <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Where</p>  | <p>The 2 main outputs of the projects - a web-GIS system to check the ecological connectivity in the alpine space and the identification of Strategic Alpine Connectivity Areas – concern the whole alpine areas. However, ALPBIONET2030 allowed also to make investigations at local level, so increasing the understanding of ecological connectivity as the base of ecosystems’ health and species protection.</p> <p>The most urgent Human-Nature Conflicts were analysed in a series of project working regions in Germany, Austria, Italy and France.</p> |
|  Transnational added value | <p>EU level cooperation is essential to investigate ecological connectivity issues, as the nature does not recognise the political borders.</p> |

AlpES first aim is to develop an alpine ecosystem services concept. Secondly, the project carries out a mapping and assessment of ecosystem services for the Alpine Space area including the testing in selected study regions across the Alpine Space. Finally, as already mentioned in the previous paragraph,

AlpES provides stakeholders with the results through an interactive web GIS and ensures a multi-level and cross-sectoral transfer of project's results to a maximum number of stakeholders via a series of innovative, tailored and transferable learning tools and targeted activities. The mapping and assessment part of the project was based on a categorisation of ecosystem services consisting of 8 items, among them: Protection of areas against avalanches, mudslides and rockfalls, Filtration of surface water by ecosystem types, and Fuel wood. To develop the mapping methodology, indicators were tested in nine areas, so enhancing the knowledge of ecosystem services at local level. Such an approach, producing benefits at local level (in preparation of major benefits at policy making level), is illustrated in the factsheet below.

Factsheet 8-2 Sub-benefit: Increased use of ecosystem services

| AlpES project | |
|--|--|
|  | 3.2 Enhance the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of Alpine Space ecosystems |
|  | To introduce Ecosystem Services as a concept for transnational/regional environmental governance and train/support public authorities, sectoral agencies, NGOs, SMEs in managing Ecosystem Services. |
|  Alpine dimension | The concept of ecosystems itself goes behind any borders. Alpine area corresponds to a unique entity which needs to be considered as a unity and not as a multitude of national areas, when ecosystem services are concerned. |
| BENEFIT | <p>Benefit: Environment and sustainability Sub-benefit: Increased use of ecosystem services</p> <p>AlpES aims at developing a common understanding/ definition on what the ecosystems services are and which are their main features in the frame of the Alpine Space area. This required an effort in the data management as people very often talk about ecosystem services in different ways and this results in a not homogeneous vision, which limits the possibility to apply the concept in different territories. Thus, the project aimed to provide a common definition and carried out a mapping and assessment of ecosystem services in the Alpine Space area. 8 ecosystems considered relevant for the Alpine Space area were chosen: Surface water for drinking with minor or no treatments, Biomass production from grassland, Fuel wood, Filtration of surface water by ecosystem types, Protection of areas against avalanches, mudslides and rockfalls, CO2 sequestration by forests and bogs, Outdoor recreation activities (including enjoyment and willingness to preserve), Symbolic alpine plants and animals, landscapes.</p> <p>Indicators were tested in the following regions: Alto Bellunese, Veneto (IT), Aosta Valley, Espace Mont-Blanc (IT), Berchtesgadener Land, biosphere reserve (DE), Corona Verde (IT), Innsbruck (AT), Préalpes d'Azur Regional Park (FR), Primorsko-notranjska (SL), South Tyrol (IT), Liechtenstein.</p> |
|  What | |
|  Where | Using sustainability indicators, ecosystem services for the Alpine Space were mapped and assessed. The indicators were tested in definite test regions, so allowing to gain a profound knowledge of ecosystem services in definite areas and a better potential for their use. |



Transnational
added value

Comparative and integrated territorial analysis aiming at defining ecosystem services in the alpine areas would not been possible in absence of a transnational cooperation programme.

8.2.5.3 Governance and policy benefits

Improved stakeholders involvement was identified by the projects as the main benefit produced in terms of governance and policy. In principle, this is not the most advanced benefit under this category, being a precondition for more specific benefits to occur. However, the examples emerged under SO 3.2 at this regard are interesting. SPARE project, according to the information provided by two project partners, changed the negotiation modality from a bilateral approach to a participatory approach with various stakeholders around the table, with an increase of the time to be dedicated to the dialogue. This effort can be correlated to clear impact on the policy side, as SPARE standards were included in the Valle d'Aosta region's strategic planning revision (legally binding).

Links4Soils reported an unexpected difficulty in the involvement of the government bodies, so revealing that stakeholders involvement cannot be considered as an obvious achievement. The project organised several transnational initiatives as seminars, lectures, conferences, meetings, with the aim to train and transfer knowledge to the policy makers, mainly the regional ones. It was concluded that the regional players have difficulties in travelling to participate in transnational initiatives happening in other countries. Such a difficulty does not seem to depend on a lack of resources. Regional policy makers are probably overwhelmed by their tasks and responsibilities so that it is hard to obtain their participation in centralised project initiatives. All in all, travelling to participate in events does not seem to correspond to their mentality. As concluded by the GRETA project (SO 2.1), to mobilise the target groups (including the policy makers) it is necessary to speak the national language and to interact personally.


Such efforts, however, are crucial because **strategies to enhance the ecological connectivity and use the ecosystem services are implemented at national and regional level**, taking into account administrative borders and not the natural continuity. Therefore, these administrative levels have to be considered as the main target for the projects. The transnational dimension contributes to harmonize the concepts and interventions across the countries and realise an integrative vision at European level. At this regard, the role of the **Alpine Convention**, which commits states in the protection of ecological connectivity, was mentioned by more than one project.


The contribution of ALPBIONET2030 to the policy making level emerged clearly in relation to the Strategic Alpine Connectivity Areas, where three macro-areas have been identified: Areas where ecological connectivity is already existing, Areas where the soil exploitation is intense and a local intervention is required, Areas where a structural intervention is required. This project's output is very relevant for policy decisions because it allows to detect where financial resources need to be allocated with higher priority. ALPBIONET2030 has also succeeded in increasing relevance of the ecological connectivity topic in a national policy instrument. As reported by the Swiss National Park, the Swiss government established a programme, which will allow to continue ALPBIONET action after the end of the phase funded by ASP. Another important impact on the regional policy level was achieved by the AlpES project. Piedmont region, indeed, decided to follow the AlpES approach by

embedding the topics of ecosystem services and green infrastructures into territorial planning, with special regard to inter-municipal structural planning.

Finally, a more specific benefit was achieved by the SO 3.2 projects, i.e. the **improvement of monitoring and evaluation systems**. A clear example of this benefit is provided by the experience gained within the Links4Soils project, as illustrated in the factsheet below.

Factsheet 8-3 Sub-benefit: Improved monitoring and evaluation systems

| Links4Soil project | | |
|--|--|--|
|  | 3.2 Enhance the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of Alpine Space ecosystems | |
|  | To encourage and enhance the management and protection of alpine soils, strategically link soil knowledge to daily work of end-users and experts using the ecosystem services concept, improve local management and the local/ regional applicability of the Alpine Convention Soil Conservation Protocol. | |
|  Alpine dimension | Alpine Convention and EUSALP determine alpine soil protection only to be resolved in a transnational framework that requires joint measures. In addition to this strategic orientation, it was observed by a Links4Soil partner that “Alpine population is sharing the same feeling of ‘belonging to the mountains’ and this shared spirit is an important asset for the transnational dimension”. | |
| BENEFIT |  What | <p>Benefit: Governance and policy Sub-benefit: Improved monitoring and evaluation systems</p> <p>Kaufering is a Bavarian towns with about 10 000 inhabitants. The municipality participated in national federal projects such as “Energiewende Forest Biodiversity” and has been selected as flagship project in 2015 for incorporating various aspects, such as soil protection in forest management.</p> <p>The municipality of Kaufering developed a climate protection concept in the year 2013. According to this concept, part of the climate protection happens at local and regional level, and the protection of soils depends on a sustainable silvicultural and agricultural management (energy forests, alluvial forests etc.) able to safeguard ecosystem services that soils provide (i.e. protective functions for erosion or climate change, filter functions, health functions). The sustainable soil management goes along with the ecological renewable energy production of woody biomass. Kaufering has soil-related communication and dissemination experiences, and addresses the local and regional climate protection, forest, agricultural, and soil policies.</p> <p>In order to improve such soil policies, the municipality needs to conduct continuous measurements. This was a practice, already, but Links4Soils has provided methodology, capacity building actions and also funds for the equipment, so improving the soil monitoring system. The current round of measurement will be concluded after the end of the project, i.e. in 2023.</p> |
| |  Where | <p>The project produces governance and policy benefits on the whole alpine areas by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - linking and improving soil management strategies and approaches, tools and knowledge for current and future Alpine soil protection and ESS management (in cooperation with EUSALP Action Group 6); - transnationally comparing, testing and improving cross-sectoral soil management and implementation in regional and local land management and soil protection plans; - enhancing capacity building and end-user skills on efficient use of soil information for sustainable land use/ecosystem management. |

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| | | A specific governance and policy benefit was analysed in the territory of Kaufering, a German municipality participating in the project as a partner. |
|  | Transnational added value | It is hard to imagine dealing with these themes without the support from a transnational programme such as Alpine Space, which can fund initiatives on a cross-country base. Interestingly, the same programme allows a small municipality to make progress in the conduction of environmental monitoring action. As noticed in the case of AlplInnoCT (SO 2.2), the partner (in this case the small municipality of Kaufering) shows high capacity to use the EU funds to achieve goals strategically set, already. |

8.2.5.4 Territorial dimension

In a previous section of this chapter an overview on the localization of the beneficiaries have been provided. However, geographical location of the partners does not capture the possible wider coverage of the benefit across the territories.

In order to investigate the territorial dimension of the impact brought by the projects, beneficiaries participating to the web survey have been asked to indicate the type of territory mainly concerned by their activities. The idea was not to detect the specific participating region or country rather than to understand whether projects interventions are covering in a balanced way the main type territory that characterize the alpine space.

As illustrated by the table below, according to the data collected through the survey, benefits produced by the projects financed under SO 3.2 are mainly expected to concern the alpine mountainous areas (61% of respondents), while rural and the urban areas are less covered (respectively 28% and 11% of the respondents).

Table 8-6 Where the SO 3.2 projects are supposed to deliver their benefits

| Area | % |
|--------------------------|------------|
| Mountainous areas | 61% |
| Rural areas | 28% |
| Urban areas | 11% |

Source: web-survey

Concerning the types of urban areas, data from the survey indicate that the benefits coming from SO 3.2 projects are expected to be concentrated predominantly in the smallest municipalities (78% of respondents) while the impact in the regional capitals a bigger cities appear to be more limited (respectively 30% and 22%).

Table 8-7 Which urban areas are more interested by the benefits generated by SO 3.2

| Area | % |
|--|-----|
| Regional capitals or capitals | 30% |
| Other municipalities above 50 000 of inhabitants | 22% |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Municipalities below 50 000 of inhabitants | 78% |
|---|------------|

Source: web-survey

8.2.5.5 Durability

If SO 4.1 is not considered, the partnerships of SO 3.2 are featured by the **highest presence of national public authorities** (15%, being SOs 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.1 below 5%). This indicates that the opportunity to work transnationally on the protection, conservation and ecological connectivity of alpine ecosystems is not an assumption made by ASP, but much more a political point recognised by the national authorities, whose participation in the transnational projects is uncommon and chosen if well justified by a strategic and governance role to be played.

The role played by national authorities, combined with the regular presence of regional/ local authorities within the partnerships (26%), represents a good condition for a future use of the projects' outputs especially in the planning of mountainous areas, where the projects are focused. It shall be reminded that the SO 3.2 projects declared to have generated strong governance and policy benefits, and this not only as stakeholders' involvement, but also in terms of improved monitoring and evaluation systems and increased relevance of the theme of the governance in the local/ regional/ national/ sectoral dedicated policy instrument.

In particular, as shown in the table below, the outputs generated appear to be very specific so showing a **profound understanding of the policy actions that are necessary** to protect and conserve alpine ecosystem, so promoting ecological connectivity and the proper use of ecosystem services.

Table 8-8 Type of outputs

| Programme type of output | Examples by the projects |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Transnational cooperation structures | Established Alpine Soil Partnership, Improving transnational cooperation through implementation of innovative approaches: the Alpine water cooperation network |
| Strategic elements | Multi-stakeholder cross-border concept for integrated wildlife management in the Alps, Integrative spatial planning concept for a common AC&EUSALP biodiversity conservation approach, Recommendations for large scale impl. of EC in EUSALP, Formalizing of illustrated evidence on the protective role of forests, dedicated to political decision-makers, Maps relevant for protection forest and rockfall hazard management, Report and online factsheets on the assessment of hydromorphological management/restoration of Alpine rivers and associated Ecosystem Services, Alpine Soil Information and Decision Support Platform, Road map for a multiple actor and decision targeted information process |
| Implementation elements | Alpine ecosystem services concept, Alps-wide toolbox (concepts, documentation, GIS, technical recommendations) for connectivity planning in the AC area. Alpine conflict resolution strategy and coexistence toolbox, Conceptualisation of the first historic rockfall events AS database, AS Harmonized methodology for economical assessment of protection forest ecosystems service, Conceptualisation and production of a WEBGIS rockfall protection forest territorial information system, Toolbox on hydromorphological monitoring and assessment procedures, Toolbox to support planning and design of hydromorphological management and restoration measures linking scales, Integration of soil management best practices into management |

| | |
|--|---|
| | plans, Protection forest assessment toolbox, Innovative method based on the analysis of environmental DNA |
|--|---|

Source: Desk analysis, case studies

All partners involved in SO 3.2 projects and having answered the web survey **declared that their project had generated other opportunities**, with special regard to the establishment of networks among partners, continuation of pilot activities started during the projects, setting up of a new partnership based on the previous project experience.

The approaches adopted by some of the funder projects can help in understanding the durability solutions actually put in place.

ALPES made a strong use of WIKIAlps and the web-GIS will remain available after the end of the project, so making available data gathered during the project implementation, but also the methodology including the calculations methods.

ALPBIONET2030 assumes that the partnership itself will ensure a durable use of the project's outputs, given that the parcs, agricultural and forestry institutes forming the partnerships need the tools to conduct "on a daily basis" activities in the field of ecological connectivity and green infrastructures. This means that **the partners dispose of the capacity to use the generated tools on their respective territories**. When transnational cooperation is concerned, two different levels emerge. On the strategic side, the partners are involved both in the working group of the **Alpine Convention** and in the **Action Group 7 "To develop ecological connectivity in the whole EUSALP territory"**, and this ensures high coordination at transnational level. On the implementation side, the partners will need further EU funds to continue common action. This could happen also scaling up at EU level by the use of programmes directly managed by the European Commission such as LIFE. In this case, knowledge and learning benefits could be even higher, but territorial benefits, especially in terms of local and regional governance tools, could turn to be minor. However, it is interesting to note that the lead partner of ALPBIONET2030 is very active at EU level. ALPARC, the Alpine Network of Protected Areas gathering all categories of protected areas of large size within the Alpine Convention area, has signed a memorandum of cooperation with the network working in the protected area within the Carpathians and Danube. This collaboration started in 2015 and the ecological connectivity is one of its goals. Moreover, ALPBIONET2030 was invited by ConnectGreen project, financed under the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme, to share the results achieved by the project. ALPARC created also a professional network within the countries of the Alpine Convention and the (international) Convention on Biological Diversity.

By the end of the project, an atlas will be produced and will be available for the general public. It is worth noting that the partnership decided not to publish a traditional "final report" full of written contents. The partners opted for an atlas, which means a collection of maps that are expected to be more easily accessible also by the general public.

Links4Soils succeeded in ensuring durability following a strategic path. A new working group "Soil" was established indeed within the **Alpine Convention**. This working group will take the responsibility of the Alpine Soil Partnership (a transnational cooperation structure generated by Links4Soils) after the end of the project, and this should ensure a durable use of the project's achievements, at least on the strategic level. At territorial level, specific elements are deriving from the increased relevance of the topic "Soil" gained thanks to the project. As often notices in the AS projects, effects were detected at national level in Slovenia, whereas the local/ regional level was affected in Germany with a series of municipalities spreading the projects' outputs, and in Italy where Valle d'Aosta Region is expected to modify the regional regulation concerning soil. The Links4Soils expects to work also at EU level, through Horizon2020 funds.

8.2.5.6 External factors and mega-trends

Similarly to what was observed under SOs 2.1 and 2.2, the collection of information from the projects indicated that during the implementation of project activities, the interest of the general public in environmental issues increased significantly. In particular, in relation to the ALPBIONET2030 topic it was noticed that the attention towards the green infrastructures rose significantly and this allowed the project to largely reach the general public. The target value set for this target group by the project has been significantly superseded, indeed. Such a huge underestimation (which appears also at SO level, see table 8-2) of the project's capacity to reach the general public was therefore attributed to an external factor such as the change in the general public's interest in the project's topic. More in general, it seems that project leaders do not dispose of a sufficient capacity to plan and monitor the involvement of general public. Apart from calculation methods, identified as a weak point in this report, it is worth noting that external factors are mentioned by the projects when involvement of general public is concerned, so implicitly declaring difficulties in managing this element within the project's framework.

As mentioned above, Links4Soils project indicated the difficulty to involve government bodies, especially those of regional level, in public events aimed at transferring knowledge and agreeing new policy frameworks, tools and instruments. Furthermore, it is worth noting that travelling for one-day workshops will be more and more considered in terms of CO₂ emissions production, especially when planes have to be taken to move in a transnational space. The use of ICT solutions (videoconferences, video training materials) could be therefore encouraged for the development of capacity building actions. At the same time, the projects' representatives continue underlining that the face-to-face meetings and also the use of national languages are crucial for the actual change of the decision makers' approaches. Given all these factors, new solutions could be necessary to ensure that projects will be able to elaborate conceptual frameworks at transnational level and promote them/ make them applied at regional and local level.

8.3 IMPACT OF SO 3.2: KEY FINDINGS

1 INPUTS AND OUTPUTS



€ 15,1 mil. ERDF
Financial absorption: 26% (for all Axis 3)

8 projects; 96 partners
12 partners per project; Average budget per project: € 2.3 mil

| Outputs | Progress towards the final targets |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Cooperation structures (e.g.alpine water cooperation network) | 5% |
| Strategic elements (e.g. Integrative spatial planning concept) | 12% |
| Implementation elements (e.g. Toolbox for connectivity planning) | 31% |
| <i>Average</i> | 16% |


| Type of partners | % out of the total partners |
|---|-----------------------------|
| National public authority | 15% |
| Regional/local public authority | 26% |
| Education, training and research | 42% |
| NGO and no-profit institutions | 9% |
| Sectoral Agency | 3% |
| Enterprises and SME | 5% |

2 BENEFITS GENERATED BY THE PROJECTS

- Alpes Project**
Mapping and assessment of ecosystem services including the testing in selected regions
- ALPBIONET2030 Project**
Web-GIS system to check the ecological connectivity in the alpine space
- Links4soils project**
Detection of strategic connectivity areas in the alpine space where to focus policy action

| | |
|--|---|
| ← Learning and knowledge (100%) | → |
| ← Environment and sustainability (100%) | → |
| ← Governance and policy (89%) | → |
| ← Socio economic benefits (61%) | → |

Benefits are located in mountainous areas





3 CHANGE OCCURED IN THE ASP AREA SINCE 2014

| Improvement in the integration of the ecosystem services in the policy systems |
|--|
| (=) Efficient governance to support ecological connectivity |
| (+) Capacity to implement services to valorise the ecosystem service |
| (=) Awareness about the relevance of ecosystem services |
| (=) Innovative tools for the management of ecosystem services |
| (=) Availability of data and information on the functionality and benefits of ecosystem services |




External factors

The figure above offers an overview of the theory of the intervention logic of SO 3.2 and summarises some of the key findings that emerge from the evaluation:


Financial/ output progress and partnership

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Financial data indicate good progress in terms of financial absorption but slow progress towards the final targets for 2023 (on average 16% of the outputs planned have already been realised).</p> |
|  | <p>Similarly to SO 3.1. projects are characterized by high number of universities or research centres (42%). But differently from SO 3.1, in this case there is a high number of local, regional and also national authorities (41% of beneficiaries). Projects performed well in reaching the general public and international organisations under national law appear to be the second most reached target group. Moreover, the high achievement for all the target groups should be seen carefully due to a general underestimation of the target values.</p> |

Benefits generated by the projects

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Projects financed are generating learning and knowledge benefits. Practices are exchanged and capacities are increased in educational and administrative contexts. AlpES increased the skills in mapping and assessing ecosystem service. Projects dedicated to “new” topics, or to topics that are new at least under ASP, dedicated strong attention to the awareness raising, which was facilitated by the increasing public attention towards low carbon policies.</p> |
|  | <p>Projects declare that they are also generating tangible impacts in terms of environmental and sustainability benefits. The concept of ecosystem services is at the core of SO 3.2. ALPBIONET2030 is primarily focused on ecological connectivity and the main results of the project refer to the level of integration of the ecosystem services approach in the policy systems of the alpine space.</p> |
|  | <p>Governance and policy benefits. Improved stakeholders’ involvement was identified by the projects as the main benefit produced in terms of governance and policy. Moreover, projects are also contributing to the improvement of monitoring and evaluation systems to capture environmental information to be used as a basis for local planning (see Links4Soil).</p> |

Territorial dimension

| | |
|---|---|
|  | <p>According to the evidences emerged from the survey, the results generated by the projects in terms of enhancement of the protection, conservation and the ecological connectivity are mainly benefiting the small municipalities located in mountainous areas.</p> |
|---|---|

Inputs for the future programme

Evidences collected indicate that projects are strongly contributing to the change targeted by the programme.

One key factor was the capacity of the programme to select appropriate partnerships. The role played by national authorities, combined with the regular presence of regional/ local authorities within the partnerships (26%), represents a good condition for effective projects in the field of the protection and conservation of the ecosystems.

Information collected during the interviews stress the importance, for the future programme, to set up effective mechanisms of coordination with the other relevant transnational bodies (EUSALP but also Alpine Convention).

Moreover, it is recommended to establish a taxonomy of target groups at programme level and a more precise and shared methodology to count them. This will allow the projects to estimate more realistic target values, and the programme to effectively aggregate and monitor data.

9 Increase the application of multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space

9.1 WHAT IS THE CHANGE THAT THE PROGRAMME WANTS TO ACHIEVE?

9.1.1 Key needs and challenges identified

The territorial analysis carried out between 2013 and 2014 offers an overview of the key characteristics of the Alpine Space area in terms of multilevel and transnational governance.

The analysis highlighted that the area is characterised “by a long tradition of international and inter-regional cooperation on governmental and non-governmental level”. In terms of quality of the public administration the analysis underlines that “administration systems of the area are characterised as advanced and effective” but also stresses that the general trends (e.g. climate change, demographic dynamics) are posing new challenges.

The box below summarises the key elements identified in 2014 which were at the basis of the definition of specific objective 4.1.

Box 9-1 SO 4.1 - relevant needs and challenges identified in 2014

| | |
|--|---|
| Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public services are of high quality and widely available within the framework of universal social security High quality public administration has a long record of cooperation | Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mix of governance system in the countries poses limits to the potential for cooperation |
| Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges related to global processes like climate change are on urge for sustainability | Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium sized cities near metropolises would be the “winners”, rural areas the “losers” |

Source: Cooperation programme

9.1.2 Expected change in the programme area

Representatives of the countries and regions involved in the Alpine Space area agreed to tackle the key needs and challenges summarised in the previous section by increasing application of multilevel and transnational governance in the alpine space.

The idea was to increase the capacity of the public administration of the area to jointly identify and address the common issues/problems.

The analysis of the questionnaires used in 2014 for measuring the application of multilevel and transnational governance allows to clarify the change targeted by the programme. The objective for 2020/2023 was to:

- (1) Increase the national and regional decision makers awareness of the potential of a macro-regional strategy for the Alpine region.
- (2) Make regional/national policies more focused on the trans-Alpine issues and scenarios.
- (3) Improve the level of involvement of the relevant actors/stakeholders.
- (4) Place common policy delivery tools to face common issues regarding the Alpine dimensions (i.e. demographic and climate changes).
- (5) Develop joint monitoring systems and information exchanges on common issues (i.e. labour market, environmental protection).

9.2 WHAT WAS ACHIEVED

9.2.1 Type of projects and beneficiaries which were financed

4 projects have been financed for a total ERDF allocation of 5.6 million EUR, corresponding to 60% of the total budget initially planned for PA 4.

The 2 projects selected in the first call are closed (i.e. GoApply and GaYa) while the two others (i.e. AlpGov and Astahg) are still on-going.

Looking to the four projects approved, the financial allocation of AlpGov (i.e. over 3 million EUR of ERDF budget) reflects one of the key objective of the programme which is to support the implementation of EUSALP.

Data presented in AIR 2018 offers an overview of the financial progress made by all the projects financed under Axis 4. Data indicate that approximately 22% of the budget allocated has been absorbed.

In total, 35 partners had been involved. As logical to be expected, beneficiaries of projects financed under SO 4.1 are mainly public authorities (National, Regional or Local). To be noted comparing to the other SOs the wider involvement of NGOs and interest groups (14%).

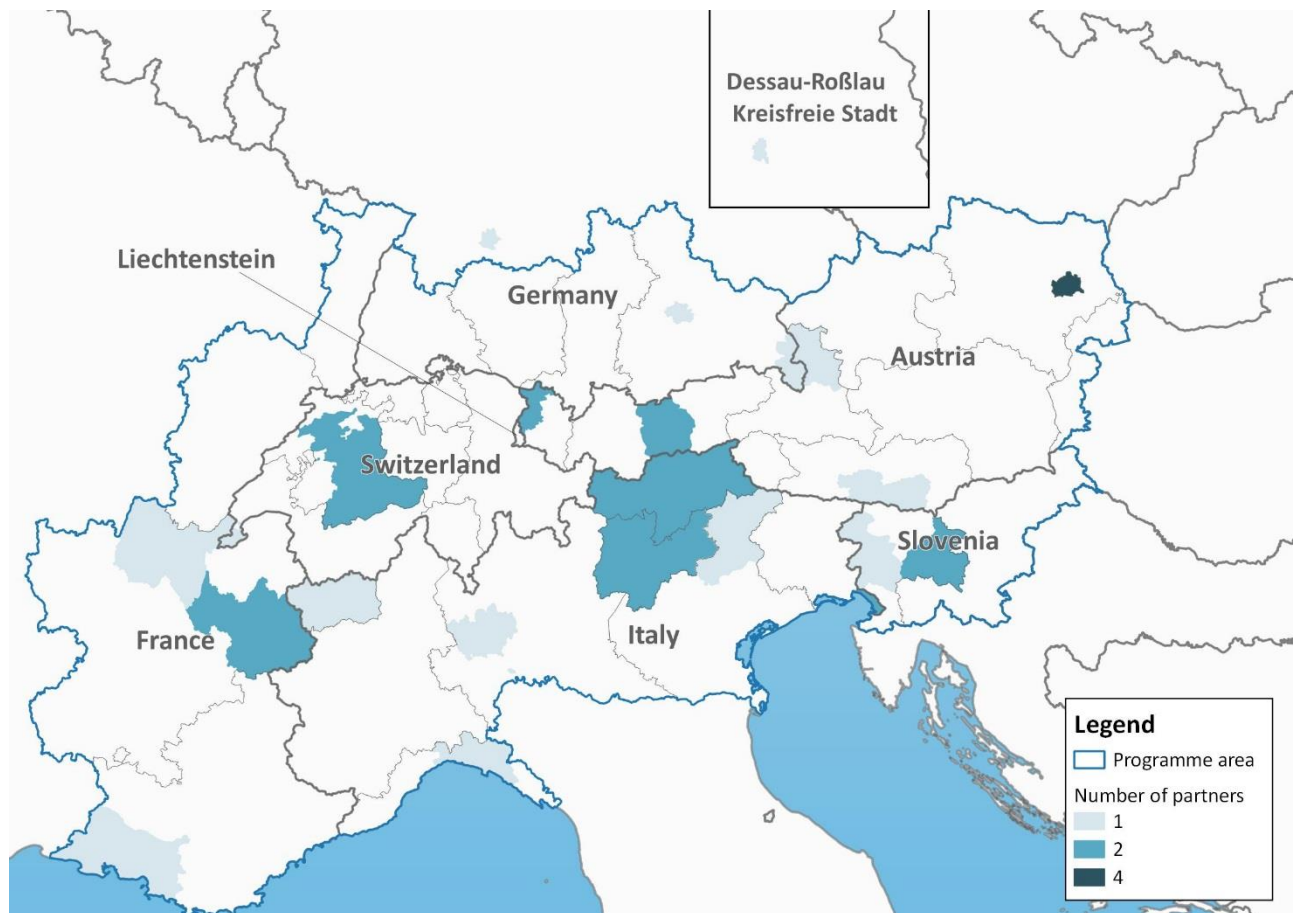
Table 9-1 SO 4.1 Type of beneficiaries

| Type of beneficiary | % out of the total partners |
|--|-----------------------------|
| National public authority | 26% |
| Regional/Local public authority | 37% |
| Higher education and research | 9% |
| Interest groups including NGOs | 14% |
| Sectoral agency | 11% |
| Business support organisation | 3% |

Source: data provided by the JS

Regarding the distribution of the partners across the alpine territories, all countries are represented except for Liechtenstein. 2 countries – Italy and Austria – are more represented than others with respectively 11 and 10 partners each (see the map below).

Figure 9-1 Localisation of the beneficiaries



Source: data provided by the JS

9.2.2 Outputs achieved

Projects financed under SO 4.1. are expected to deliver 3 types of outputs. Most of them refer to documents, plans, strategies jointly approved by the beneficiaries or by the target groups.

The table below illustrate what has been realised by the projects at the end of 2018 and compare it with the final targets set for 2023. All in all, data from AIR indicate that projects are largely contributing to all the 3 output indicators, especially for what concern the number of implementation elements delivered by projects where the achieved value overpassed the final target set out by the programme. Examples of these implementation elements are the Local Action Plan of Participation realised by the project Gaya.

Table 9-2 output indicators – progress towards the final targets

| Type of output | Achieved 2018 | Final target according to beneficiaries | Target value for 2023 (CP) | Progress towards the final target |
|---|---------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Number of supported transnational cooperation structures encompassing multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space. | 4 | 13 | 10 | 40% |
| Number of developed strategic elements aiming at the increase of the application of multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space | 1 | 3 | 3 | 33% |
| Number of developed implementation elements applying multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space | 26 | 20 | 20 | 130% |
| | | | Average | 68% |

Source: AIR 2018

9.2.3 Target groups reached

As the table below shows, higher education and research centres are the main users of projects under SO 4.1, with 3 projects contributing to it. However, to be noted that this achievement depends on two projects: GoApply which estimated to reach 5 centres but reached 81 (thus 1620% of achievement), and Gaya which reached 8 out of the 20 targeted.

International organisations under national law were a target of 3 out of 4 projects and the average level of achievement is 374%, resulting from projects AlpGov and GoApply. Such organisations had been counted through the mailing lists.

To be noted the high involvement of the private sector, namely the SMEs, interest groups, NGOs and business supporting organisations.

If we consider the focus of the SO 4.1, we observe a lower involvement of the policy actors at local level (30%). National and regional public authorities instead had been reached extensively but not information on how they were counted are provided by projects.

Figure 9-2 Target group reached by projects under SO 4.1

| | % Achievement | Projects contributing (AF) | |
|---|---------------|----------------------------|-----|
| | | N. | % |
| Higher education and research | 553% | 3 | 75% |
| International organisation under national law | 374% | 3 | 75% |
| SMEs | 350% | 2 | 50% |

| | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---|------|
| National public authority | 328% | 4 | 100% |
| Interest groups including NGOs | 273% | 4 | 100% |
| Sectoral agency | 234% | 3 | 75% |
| International organisation under inter-national law | 230% | 4 | 100% |
| Business support organisation | 213% | 2 | 50% |
| Regional public authority | 187% | 4 | 100% |
| Infrastructure and (public) service provider | 183% | 3 | 75% |
| Education/training centre and school | 107% | 1 | 25% |
| Other | 89% | 3 | 75% |
| Enterprise, excluding SME | 72% | 2 | 50% |
| Local public authority | 30% | 4 | 100% |
| General public | 7% | 1 | 25% |
| EEIG, EGTC | Not expected to be reached | | |

Source: Projects progress reports provided by the JS

9.2.4 Changes observed in the programme

In 2014 the programme defined a result indicator to monitor the evolution of the programme area in relation to the specific change targeted by the SO 4.1.

According to the information presented in the AIR 2018 (see table below) Level of application of multilevel and transnational governance has remained generally stable over the last years.

Table 9-3 4.1 result indicators – evolution of programme's area

| Indicator | Baseline 2014 | Target value 2023 | Achieved in 2018 |
|--|---------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Level of application of multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space. | 63.2% | Increase between 1.0 – 3.0% | 63% |

Source: AIR 2018

9.2.5 Impact: the results achieved by the projects

This section illustrates the key steps of the evaluation of the impact for the SO 4.1. It presents the evidences collected through web-survey and the key findings from the case studies regarding the results that the alpine space projects are bringing to the area.

All partners of the projects approved under SO 4.1 (call 1 and 2) were invited to take part to the web survey. In total 5 partners from 3 projects took part to the survey. They were asked to provide information regarding the type of benefits and results that their project is bringing by selecting from a list of potential benefits (which the evaluators had identified on the basis of the analysis of the application forms) or by specifying additional types of possible benefits. Even if the response rate to the survey is average, the absolute low number of respondents suggests to consider as merely indicative the quantitative elements emerged from the survey.

The survey confirmed that - as foreseen in a SO dedicated to the governance of the alpine area - the most important benefits are learning and knowledge, and governance and policy. As a basis for the analysis, however, stronger importance will be given to the case study and the information provided by some of the respondents to the survey in the appropriate text fields.

9.2.5.1 *Learning and knowledge benefits*

As regularly happens in the AS projects, exchange of practices was intensive also under SO 4.1. This element is particularly typical of projects aiming at improving governance, as mutual knowledge of practices that are not coordinated, already, is a necessary step to start the process. At this regard, it can be noted that the standardization of the projects' websites appears as a strong point as the way to share projects contents has reached a standard level by the projects, with the possibility to go further as it was the case of AlpES (SO 3.2) with the use of WIKIAlps. GoApply – a project aimed at improving the alpine governance in relation to climate adaptation policy - declared to have used the website platform to share contents at alpine level, and this is seen as the main tool to continue sharing knowledge in the future. The plan is to update the website also after the funded phase, so to continue the exchange of information on barriers, success factors, lessons learnt and good practice examples of climate adaptation governance identified in all four partner countries as well as on transnational level. GaYA, a project promoting innovative and participatory democracy with special regard to youth involvement in decision-making processes, experimented a proactive strategy to learn from the young people themselves their practices and expectations in terms of civic participation. A film contest was organized with the opportunity to use video language to tell a personal experience related to the project theme. 17 videos were submitted and are now published on the project website. In parallel, GaYA produced the comparative report “Democratic Innovation and Participatory Democracy in the Alpine Area”, which provides a portrait of the legal framework of democratic innovation in the Alpine States and Regions and maps empirical trends by collecting good examples of and statements on participatory democracy implemented in the Alpine region, moving from the belief that the implementation of innovative forms of governance has great potential in terms of more sustainable and legitimate decision-making. Again, mapping and mutual knowledge of different practices appear to be key steps in projects aimed at improving the governance in the alpine area, especially when delicate topics such as the crisis of representation democracy and the participatory democracy implementation are concerned.

Increase of skills and capacities is a key benefit for a SO dedicated to improving the governance in the alpine area. GoApply produced and disseminated a state-of-the-art knowledge base about adaptation governance in all 7 alpine countries, aiming at increasing governance capacities of relevant actors. Project findings have been used for building governance capacities of regional adaptation coordinators and local municipality adaptation advisors in Austria.

Projects worked also on the awareness side. Increasing awareness belonged to the core activities of GaYA. GoApply increased the awareness of the relevance of climate adaptation. The need for incorporating climate change in risk management and disaster risk reduction policies increased through involvement of **EUSALP Action Group 8** members at 6 institutional meetings.

9.2.5.2 *Governance and policy benefits*




Governance and policy benefits are typical of SO 4.1 projects. One of the 4 funded projects, AlpGov, aims at implementing Alpine Governance Mechanisms of the European Strategy for the Alpine Region.




It covers practically the whole territory, involving all EUSALP Action Group Leaders and further stakeholders, considering all topics of the EUSALP Action Plan, ensuring linkages to relevant implementing bodies, developing tools for managing knowledge and unlocking investment. Beyond the capacity to improve the stakeholders' involvement, good examples of barrier removal and delivering of policy instrument framework and tool can be provided.

GaYA distributed policy recommendations to improve youth participation in the Alps, focusing on 6 points: Political culture and trust, Education, Resources and means, Youth work, Institutionalisation, Cooperation and exchange. The project also provided practical recommendations on how to promote youth participation.

GoApply provided a multilingual booklet with good practice examples and success criteria of stakeholder participation in climate adaptation from 6 Alpine countries. It produced both policy framework and instruments such as portfolio of success factors, lessons, good practice approaches and policy recommendations to enhance the implementation of national and regional adaptation strategies, and tools such as interactive online visualisation of national climate adaptation governance systems (policies, measures, actors, knowledge resources, interactions and processes) in all 7 Alpine countries. It also contributed to reduce barriers by identifying success factors, good practices, lessons learnt and policy options to strengthen the mainstreaming of climate adaptation into relevant sector policies, i.e. pathways to improve cross-sectoral cooperation. Furthermore, the local experience illustrated in the factsheet below shows that thanks to the project the relevance of the climate adaptation theme was increased at local level and a municipal policy instrument was duly integrated.

Factsheet 9-1 Sub-benefit: Delivery of appropriate policy instruments, framework and tools

| GoApply project | |
|--|--|
|  | 4.1 Increase the application of multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space |
|  | To strengthen the capacities for multilevel, cross-sector and macro-regional governance of climate adaptation by supporting public and non-public actors in improving and re-defining their approaches, shaping new networks, participation formats, cooperation and coordination arrangements, and adopting governance innovations to implement adaptation policies more efficiently across different territorial levels, policy fields, actor groups and countries. |
|  Alpine dimension | Transnational collaboration is essential to learn from shared strengths and weaknesses and from the diversity of governance approaches taken in different countries. This is especially true considering that (1) national climate adaptation strategies are in place not in all alpine countries (2) regional adaptation plans are just emerging (3) implementation at regional and local level is inhibited by multiple obstacles. |
| BENEFIT | <p>Benefit: Governance and policy Sub-benefit: Delivery of appropriate policy instruments, framework and tools</p> <p>Kempton, a city in Southern Germany with less than 70 000 inhabitants, was involved as an observer upon initiative of the German Environment Agency. A first workshop was held in the city on the general topic of climate adaptation. The climate protection officer realized that discussing climate adaptation in relation to several issues like agriculture, tourism, health turned to be not useful for the municipality. It appeared to be necessary to focus more on the actual institutional competences of the municipality. Therefore, it was decided</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
|  What | <p>to organize a second workshop where climate adaptation was discussed only in a land development perspective. This was very fruitful because the municipality had the opportunity to consider climate adaptation in the framework of one of its key competences, i.e. spatial planning. As a follow up, the update of the Municipal Development Plan expected for 2020 will be also based on a climate change perspective. To make an example, one of the new points will be to use the “green” (for instance by planting trees and installing green roofs and setting green facades) to mitigate the heating in definite urban zones. As the plan is updated every 10/15 years and adaption elements were not considered by the policy makers before the project, this experience is an interesting case of delivery of appropriate policy tool at local level.</p> |
|  Where | <p>The project being of governance level, its outputs – including policy framework and instruments such as portfolio of success factors and policy recommendation, and tools such as interactive online visualisation of national climate adaptation governance systems - shall be used in the whole area of the programme.</p> <p>In this box a specific impact generated on the municipality of Kempten – German observer of the project – is illustrated.</p> |
|  Transnational added value | <p>Adequate governance designs, models & formats, incl. effective cooperation pathways and coordination arrangements, were mostly missing or not operational when the project was started. It appeared therefore necessary to tackle joint key challenges of adaptation governance: vertical implementation across territorial levels; horizontal mainstreaming into sector policies; and more active involvement of local, regional & non-governmental actors. The case of Kempten confirms the additionality of the ASP funded project. Without the input from the GoApply workshops, the climate adaptation perspective would not have been integrated in the Municipal Development Plan.</p> |

9.2.5.3 Territorial dimension

This section aims to provide an overview on the localization of the benefits brought by the projects. Indeed, the mere analysis of localization of the project partners (presented in the previous part of this chapter) does not allow to detect which and what kind of territories are benefitting by the project interventions.

Thus, in order to investigate at what extent the impact was generated across the territories, respondents to the survey have been asked to specify if project activities are expected to produce the benefits in urban, rural or mountainous area.

As illustrated by the table below, according to the data collected through the survey, benefits produced by the projects financed under SO 4.1 are mainly expected to concern the alpine rural areas (60% of respondents) and the mountainous areas (40% of the respondents). Urban areas appear to not be the focus of projects financed under SO 4.1.

Table 9-4 Where the SO 4.1 projects are supposed to deliver their benefits

| Area | % |
|--------------------|------------|
| Mountainous areas | 40% |
| Rural areas | 60% |
| Urban areas | 0% |

Source: Web-survey

Regardless the benefits predominantly covered rural and mountainous area, some benefits are expected to be generated also in the urban areas and in particular in the small ones (80% of beneficiaries). Municipalities above 50 000 of inhabitants are also represented (40% of the respondents).

Table 9-5 Which urban areas are more interested by the benefits generated by SO 4.1

| Area | % |
|---|------------|
| Regional capitals or capitals | 20% |
| Other municipalities above 50 000 of inhabitants | 40% |
| Municipalities below 50 000 of inhabitants | 80% |

Source: Web-survey

9.2.5.4 Durability

The partnerships of SO 4.1 are featured by the **highest presence of national public authorities** (26%) and a very high presence of regional/ local public authorities (37%). This feature was expected in projects dedicated to governance and undoubtedly represents a positive condition for a durable use of the projects' outputs.

In particular, looking at the list of outputs provided in the table below, the transnational cooperation structures appear to be of particular interest. First of all, it shall be reminded that GovAlps is a project fully dedicated to the governance mechanisms of EUSALP. Secondly, it has to be noted that transnational cooperation structures risk to be fragile if conceived by weak actors, but allow a systematic approach toward cooperation if designed and implemented by national authorities.

Table 9-6 Type of outputs

| Programme type of output | Examples by the projects |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Transnational cooperation structures | Long-term Transnational cooperation platform of the national climate adaptation policy owners of the Alpine countries and agreed road map for future cooperation, Jointly developed model and mutually agreed mechanisms for regular consultation and information exchange between the national adaptation policy making level and institutional EUSALP bodies, Transnational Governance Board |
| Strategic elements | Comparative Report on democratic innovation and participatory democracy in the Alpine area, Policy Recommendations, Report compiling knowledge base (mapping, strengths & weaknesses, needs) of Alpine adaptation governance systems, Portfolio of good practice examples |
| Implementation elements | Local Action Plan of Participation (LAPP), Participation Toolkit, Transferable and field-tested Stakeholder interaction models to activate and support local and regional adaptation capacities |

Source: desk analysis, case studies

GoApply appears to have created good preconditions for a durable use of the project's outputs. Project partners and observers are the bodies responsible for climate change adaptation in their own countries, so they are expected to use outcomes and products even beyond the project end.

However, the peculiar partnership has to be noted, as it was formed by 5 partners covering 4 countries. In some interviews to other project representatives, it was revealed that proposal writers assume that a strong country coverage ensured by a numerous partnership is an asset to be competitive in the selection phase. The GoApply experience could demonstrate that a more agile partnership, which reduces internal transaction costs and can in principle perform more efficiently, has to be preferred to larger partnerships, if the capacity to cover also the countries not represented in the partnership is shown. This was the case of GoApply, which covered the whole geographical area also distributing promotional materials in more languages than planned, including French, Slovenian and English.

Another interesting aspect of GoApply resided in the role played by the observers. In several projects they were hardly mentioned. The case of GoApply shows that for the durability the involvement of the observers was a key. Some of the national observers can be defined as the “owners” of the national adaptation plans. They were involved in workshops, pilot actions, final conferences. The partnership tried to involve them as far as possible. These observers are supporting the network created by the project. In addition, the local observer City of Kempten (in Germany), as explained in the box above, made a full use of the project’s outputs, already. In Austria the lead partner interacted with some local policy makers interested in approaching the climate change adaptation policy in line with the project.

Concerning the continuation of activities at transnational level, the GoApply partners will meet to assess the access to further EU funding, also looking at the programmes directly managed by the European Commission with special regard to LIFE.

Finally, also the experience of GoApply confirms that the rise of public awareness concerning climate change turned to be a factor in favor of the project. This has surely facilitated the diffusion of the topic to a larger general public. Climate change adaptation has become a central subject, with a public legitimacy that was not obvious some years ago.

9.2.5.5 External factors and mega-trends

Given the limited size of the SO financial size, the very limited number of projects and the variety of the topics raised, it is difficult to analyse external factors and to establish links with mega-trends.

However, in the implementation of the GoApply project it was noticed that the Italian partner had more difficulties in involving local authorities implementing the adaptation plans, if compared to the Austrian, German or Swiss partners. This point, which could create problems in terms of use of the projects’ outputs by the Italian municipalities, confirms the fragility of the Italian local institutional landscape already noticed under other SOs.

9.3 IMPACT OF SO 4.1: KEY FINDINGS

1

INPUTS AND OUTPUTS



€ 7 mil. ERDF
Financial absorption: 60% (for all Axis 4)

4 projects; 35 partners partners per project; Average budget per project: € 1.7 mil

| Outputs | Progress towards the final targets |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Cooperation structures (e.g.transnational governance board) | 40% |
| Strategic elements (e.g. Report on democratic innovation in the alpine area) | 33% |
| Implementation elements (e.g. Toolbox for connectivity planning) | 130% |
| <i>Average</i> | 68% |

| Type of partners | % out of the total partners |
|--|-----------------------------|
| National public authority | 26% |
| Regional/local public authority | 37% |
| Education, training and research | 9% |
| NGO and no-profit institutions | 14% |
| Sectoral Agency | 11% |
| Business support agency | 3% |

2 BENEFITS GENERATED BY THE PROJECTS

GaYa project
Promotion of innovative and participatory democracy to enhance young civic participation in decision making processes

GoApply project
Updating of the municipal development plan with climate adaptation measures

Learning and knowledge (100%)

Governance and policy (100%)

Socio economic benefits (20%)

Environment and sustainability (20%)

Benefits are located in rural areas



External factors



3 CHANGE OCCURRED IN THE ASP AREA SINCE 2014

Stable level of application of multilevel and transnational governance



- (=) Awareness of national and regional decision makers of a macro regional strategy
- (=) Strategies are focused on trans-Alpine issues
- (=) Better involvement of relevant stakeholders
- (=) Policy tools to face common issues
- (=) Monitoring system and information exchange on common issues

The figure above offers an overview of the theory of the intervention logic of SO 4.I and summarises some of the key findings that emerge from the evaluation.


Financial/ output progress and partnership

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Financial data indicate progress in terms of financial absorption and also with regard to the output indicators (i.e. 68% of the final outputs have been already delivered), in particular for what concerns the implementation elements, where the final target is already reached and exceeded.</p> |
|  | <p>Partnerships are featured by a high presence of national public and very high presence of regional/local authorities. If we do not consider the AlpGov project, we observe that the size of the partnership under SO 4.I is smaller (7 partners on average) comparing the other SOs. This does not seem to have affected the capacity of the projects to have an impact on the governance level.</p> <p>In terms of target groups, we observe a lower involvement of the policy actors at local level. National and regional public authorities instead had been reached extensively but no information on how they were counted is provided by projects.</p> |

Benefits generated by the projects

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Projects activities are generating learning and knowledge benefits. The tools used by partners to exchange knowledge and practices are website platforms and innovative models to promote the civil participation to decision making processes. These participatory forms contributed to increase the skills and capacities needed to improve the governance in the alpine area.</p> |
|  | <p>As expected, governance and policy benefits are generated at a large extent. Partners gained a better capacity to involve the relevant stakeholders and provided good solutions to remove the barriers to cooperation and delivering policy instruments. A good example is brought by GoApply project which elaborated a portfolio of recommendations to support local authorities in integrating climate adaptation measures in the programming documents.</p> |

Territorial dimension

| | |
|---|---|
|  | <p>According to the evidences emerged from the survey, the benefits predominantly covered rural and mountainous areas. When urban areas are concerned, projects generally reach municipalities with less than 50 000 inhabitants.</p> |
|---|---|

Inputs for the future programme

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Financed projects, except for AlpsGov, appear to focus on topics easily referable to other SOs and to be featured by small partnerships. Considering that projects financed under other SOs have shown the capacity to produce governance and policy benefits, including the delivery of policy instruments, the opportunity to reduce the number of SOs concentrating resources under the remaining SOs could be assessed. This point could be considered because of efficiency and simplification reasons, regardless the good capacity shown by the 4.1 projects to influence the policy cycle.

Moreover, it is recommended to establish a taxonomy of target groups at programme level and a more precise and shared methodology to count them. This will allow the projects to estimate more realistic target values, and the programme to effectively aggregate and monitor data.

10 Assessment of the relation to EUSALP

10.1 CONTEXT

10.1.1.1 Evaluation foci and evaluation questions

The evaluation of the relation between EUSALP and ASP targets the following evaluation questions, as defined by the Terms of Reference:

- *How do the programme and the EUSALP strategy interact? Which functions/roles do they fulfil? Which conclusions can be drawn for the future?*
- *How and by which means/procedures does the programme contribute to the implementation of EUSALP? Which other contribution from the programme could be realistically expected?*
- *Which contribution has been provided by the Alpine Space projects to the implementation of EUSALP and the relevant action groups' activities?*
- *What are the mutual benefits (that the EUSALP brings to the Programme and viceversa)? How can we expect the mutual benefits to develop in the future?*

10.1.1.2 Starting Point

The impact assessment takes into account the findings from the 2018 Operational Evaluation of the Alpine Space Programme. The evaluation of programme communication, effectiveness and stakeholder involvement made a first assessment of the relation between Alpine Space Programme and EUSALP by answer the question, to which degree the Alpine Space Programme is relevant for macro-regional strategies. The focus of this evaluation was on the relation with the EUSALP rather than the other overlapping macro-regional strategies, i.e. EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR). The evaluation concluded that the Alpine Space Programme considerably and effectively contributes to EUSALP (see box below).

Box 10-1 Main conclusions from evaluation on programme communication, effectiveness and stakeholder involvement regarding the relation to EUSALP

- 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”.

Source: Evaluation of programme communication, effectiveness and stakeholder involvement of the Interreg Alpine Space 2014–2020 Programme (2018, p.53)

The detailed analysis of the relationship between the Alpine Space Programme and EUSALP, thus, have been revisited in the analysis for this report.

It was positively taken into account that – after the Operational Evaluation in 2018 – follow-up measures were defined, implemented and positively reviewed by the Evaluation Steering Group of ASP. In particular relevant were the follow-up measures on the ASP-EUSALP relationship:

- Follow-up Measures No 18: Providing call information to EUSALP AG. The review of the measure shows that it was implemented. The JS informed the AG by email on the framework of the next calls and the support services offered by the programme.
- Follow-up Measure No 19: Continued coordination with EUSALP (events, brochure). The review of the measure shows that it is being implemented as a continuous measure. Several events were organised accordingly: summer synergy brunch (5 July 2018), Cooperation Alps 2020+ event (1-2 Oct. 2018), MEET&MATCH forum (23-24 Oct. 2018), ASP participation to the EUSALP Forum 2018 (20-21 Nov. 2018). A new synergy event was organised in autumn 2019. The updated brochure “Alpine cooperation stories” on AS projects & EUSALP was made available in the events of October 2018. The production of another updated version (in version and/or in print) will be considered to feature approved call 4 projects. The coordination with EUSALP will be continued through the organisation of further events (e.g. synergy event) and update of the dedicated brochure.

The implementation of the follow-up measures and the on-going effort to improve the relation ASP-EUSALP shows the existence of an important endeavour on behalf of the ASP programme to create and maintain a beneficial framework of action for ASP projects and any governance relationship with EUSALP.

Starting from this previous analysis, the following sections update and expand the evaluation of the ASP-EUSALP relation in order to define recommendations on how to further improve the connections between them in the future, in particular in view of the new programming period 2021-2027.

10.2 ASSESSMENT OF THE RELATION ASP - EUSALP

ASP is considered to be one of the most relevant funding sources for EUSALP macro-regional projects, as confirmed by a EU-wide study: “*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*”².

Apart from this clear link, there are other layers of strategic, operational and governance relations that will be closer analysed in this chapter. The assessment of the relationship between ASP and EUSALP is structured in different sub-chapters in order to analyse the different aspects of relationship.

10.2.1.1 Distribution of roles and functions

The EU macro-regional Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) was launched in 2015 in order to address “*challenges and opportunities by providing a framework for collective or combined actions, bringing together regional actions and actors to provide a higher added value strategy*”³. As the Strategy does not have its own financing, it was supposed to be implemented by mobilising and aligning existing EU and national funding relevant to the objectives and actions. In particular, relevant country-specific, cross-border and trans-national programmes from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for 2014-2020 should provide significant resources and a wide range of tools and technical options to support the Strategy. The initial Communication highlighted that “*the trans-national Alpine Space programme will provide financial support for developing the governance arrangements for the Strategy*”⁴.

Therefore, there is by definition a strong relationship between EUSALP and ASP, although there are important (but sometimes tiny) differences between the Strategy and the Programme that might not be visible at first sight to all involved stakeholders (e.g. project partners, thematic Action Group members, potential beneficiaries).

“EUSALP is the strategic framework for the Alpine Space, the ASP follows an operational project logic and is not supposed to function as strategic framework.” (Interviewee, EUSALP AG member)

Comparing the main characteristics of the ASP 2014-2020 and EUSALP, it becomes clear, that there are some overlaps but also quite distinct functions and goals. The Strategy and the Programme present complex policy instruments that operate in different settings (policymaking versus direct funding of territorial cooperation projects) and with different rules.

Thus, by definition, the functions of EUSALP and ASP are well defined, even if some overlapping exist. However, given the quest for synergies and alignment, it seems obvious that some aspects, e.g. objectives, personal networks or working topics, are aligned and appear both in ASP projects and in the work of the EUSALP.

² COWI et al. (2017): Study on macroregional strategies and their links with cohesion policy. EUSALP Report, p.151.

³ European Commission (2015): Communication concerning a European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region. COM(2015)366 final. Brussels. Page 4.

⁴ Ibid. Page 8.

Figure 10-1 Comparison of functions of EUSALP and ASP

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| EUSALP 2015 – on-going | | Alpine Space Programme 2014-2020 |
| Mission: Macro-regional strategy to address common challenges and opportunities | | Mission: EU Funding Programme for transnational cooperation (INTERREG – ERDF) |
| Objectives: 1. Fair access to job opportunities, building on the high competitiveness of the Region 2. Sustainable internal and external accessibility to all 3. A more inclusive environmental framework for all and renewable and reliable energy solutions for the future. 4. A sound macro-regional governance model for the Region | | Objectives: 1. Improve the framework conditions for innovation 2. Increase capacities for the delivery of services of general interest 3. Establish trans-nationally integrated low carbon policy Instruments 4. Increase options for low carbon mobility and transport 5. Sustainably valorise AS cultural and natural heritage 6. Enhance the protection, the conservation and the ecological connectivity of AS ecosystems 7. Increase the application of multilevel and transnational governance in the AS |
| Implementation (2019/2020): 9 Action Groups with Working Groups: each AG carries out projects (non ASP), participates in ASP projects and/or coordinates other types of events and actions | | Implementation (2019/2020): 64 transnational projects in 3 thematic Priority Axes and 1 Governance Axis (specifically for EUSALP and other Alpine governance support), most projects contribute to at least one EUSALP Action Group |
| Governance: Presidency, Executive Board, General Assembly, National Coordinators, Board of AG leaders, AG members | | Governance: Programme Committee, National Coordinators, MA, CA, AA, Joint Secretariat, ACP, Project partners |

| | |
|--|--|
| | With almost the same geographic delimitation, the Strategy has a strategic, long-term focus, while the Interreg Programme operates in a specific time period (2014-2020). However, as Interreg has been there already for 30 years and programmes probably will enter a new funding period 2021-2027, also ASP will continue for several years. So, difference is less visible for stakeholders. |
| | With regard to the Mission, both policy instruments have a clear goal and function to fulfil. However, while EUSALP is strategic and looks for ways how to achieve its objectives (top-down), ASP is more operational and depends on the portfolio of projects that are presented to achieve its goals (bottom-up). However, ASP becomes more strategic, as it is increasingly aligned with EU policy goals and with EUSALP. This situation might lead to certain confusion, as both instruments slowly converge. |
| | EUSALP objectives are wider and more strategic than the ASP objectives. Alpine Space objectives are consistent with EUSALP but not fully overlapping since the objectives of EUSALP are wider and supposed to be covered by a number of other EU, mainstream, national and so on programmes. Slight differences might lead to confusion for stakeholders. |
| | Implementation takes different approaches but might address the same stakeholders. ASP: Bottom-up and via projects. EUSALP: Action groups, identification of Alpine priorities strategically/top-down. However, the implementation modes complement each other very well. EUSALP and ASP strive to find procedures to bring both levels of implementation together and promote fruitful interaction. |
| | At the level of governance, both instruments have complex schemes. ASP has developed a structure to fund and support projects and to achieve the defined goals through these projects. ASP has to follow ESIF and ERDF administrative / financial regulation, with predefined programme bodies (MA, JS, PC, AA, CA). EUSALP has a Presidency and a core group of Action Group leaders. It tries to build up a macro-regional network of policymakers in national and regional authorities (plus experts) to tackle common challenges. The governance is based on a network approach with very low hierarchies, even if first reflection shows |

| | |
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| | that some steering bodies are required. Even if sometimes the same people are in the relevant EUSALP and ASP bodies, both governance structures function differently. |
|--|---|

Source: The author's own elaboration

Interviews with stakeholders showed that, in general, a close coordination between ASP and EUSALP has been established.

| |
|---|
| <p><i>“The exchange works well. [...] Given the short period of time EUSALP is in place, effectiveness is difficult to assess. But in view of the short period the cooperation has developed well and leads to good results. Mutual support works well. It is important that both networks live in parallel and work together. This helps to remain open to new perspectives and the creation of new ideas.” (Interviewee, ASP PC member)</i></p> |
|---|

ASP is pro-actively seeking contact and collaboration with the EUSALP AGs by being present at AG meetings, providing information e.g. on recent calls. This is perceived as helpful by all stakeholders (i.e. ASP PC members and EUSALP AG members). Contact and interaction have increased over the last years and has contributed to a better understanding in general of roles and functions. However, this understanding and the distribution of tasks and functions is still considered far from perfect. One repeated comment (from ASP and EUSALP stakeholders) was: *“It needs time and we still need to learn from each other - and together.”*

Differences emerge between opinions that think that ASP should be the main implementation programme of the EUSALP, and therefore, have a specific role as “operating arm” of the EUSALP, and offer not only support via funding but also “back-office” services. This is a valuable opinion (presented by some of the EUSALP stakeholders) and would be an efficient way to solve some of the shortcomings of the macro-regional Strategy that struggles with not having a back-office support or own means for funding. However, there are some arguments against this wish for this strong relationship. Even if the European Territorial Cooperation programmes can and should support the implementation of the macro-regional strategies, they have **their own function, their own goals and their own governance**, regulative framework and mode of action, as highlighted by all ASP PC members. They are also not the only programmes available to support the implementation of MRS (with other ETC programmes existing in the macro-regional area, and, of course, mainstream ESIF and regional and national funding available, especially when the dense institutional network of the Alpine macro-region is considered). Finally, it has to be taken into account, as confirmed by all ASP PC members, that ETC programme structures are not well suited to fund on-going, regular “back-office” services, as they are designed to manage portfolios of (innovative) projects.

Therefore, the conclusion is that a stronger link between ASP and EUSALP would require a profound adaptation of the ASP to accommodate to the governance needs of the EUSALP, or would only be possible by a newly created interface that would strengthen the governance of EUSALP and connect better ASP and other ETC, EU and ESIF mainstream programmes with the macro-regional strategy.

ASP works constantly on the alignment with EUSALP and on clarifying the different frameworks and modes of action of EUSALP and ASP through existing information on ASP website and social media. Documents such as the “Alpine Cooperation Stories” publication explain the contribution of ASP projects to the macro-regional strategy and give examples of how projects can contribute in the different thematic fields.

Interviews show that most relevant EUSALP and ASP stakeholders are aware of **positive mutual benefits** between ASP and EUSALP, i.e. they recognise that not only EUSALP benefits from governance support and thematic contribution by ASP but also that ASP benefits from the work and achievements of EUSALP (see the sections below for more details on both types of benefits).

Interestingly, mutual benefits are acknowledged by all interviewed stakeholders (ASP PC members and EUSALP AG members). Mutual benefits also seem to emerge not only at governance/programme-management level, but also at the level of the on-going work of thematic Action Groups and projects. Most interviewees (EUSALP AG members) confirm, however, that this understanding of mutual benefits at AG-project level is still recent and much more can be done to strengthen it and extend it to more EUSALP AG and more ASP projects.

After only 4 years of existence of the EUSALP most interviewees highlight also operational challenges to facilitate a steady, yet flexible contribution of ASP to the macro-regional strategy. Especially, the different modes of action of the programme and of the strategy require some time to be understood by stakeholders. For example, experts who have never been in touch with Interreg before, need to understand the way how ASP works and how ERDF administrative and financial rules apply to all ASP projects. Local and regional authorities in the alpine area, on the other hand, are used to Interreg as funding programme for transnational challenges and are accustomed for many years to the Interreg structures/rules. They might, at first sight, find it difficult to use new and innovative ways to support EUSALP, i.e. through other EU programmes with different funding rules or through ERDF or ESF mainstream programmes.

All interviewees (ASP and EUSALP stakeholders) agree that final beneficiaries generally do understand the different general objectives and functions of ASP and EUSALP as global programme or strategy. However, for beneficiaries it might be difficult to differentiate concrete roles and functions, for example, of:

- a. Transparency and equal treatment for all (potential ASP) applicants, ensuring same information on possible project ideas and needs for pilot projects in EUSALP AGs. How to ensure that those having access to the AG (or being member) and those not, have access to the same kind of information and are aware that the EUSALP AG might be an important driver/sponsor of project ideas or even applications.
- b. ASP and EUSALP during project selection (this might be an issue growing in importance for projects in the case of EUSALP AG's support to specific project ideas they are interested in and that might be key for EUSALP implementation).
- c. ASP JS and EUSALP Action Groups during project implementation (projects might feel that also EUSALP AG has a "control" function and tells the project if its activities and results are "valuable" for their work, even if this has nothing to do with the ASP monitoring and evaluation function).
- d. ASP and EUSALP Action Group support in project dissemination and communication and after project closure (here, the EUSALP AG can have an important role to disseminate project results to a wider audience or to use them directly in their political work).
- e. The general ambiguity between Action Group members as representatives of regions/countries or experts (i.e. people that can support their project implementation and dissemination) and the overall Action Group as a group (i.e. it might be not clear for project and even for AGs if the Action Group should be the addressee of the project or if certain AG members are).

Examples reported in the interviews show that some projects develop positive synergies with EUSALP Action Groups and benefit from input and a higher range of visibility through the AG. However, sometimes projects might feel "controlled" by the EUSALP Action Groups, in particular when they are still in the phase of project launch and still do not fully understand the "offer of collaboration" with a

EUSALP Action Group. This might be the case especially for projects that have not foreseen a strong interaction with a EUSALP AG from the beginning or do not have personal/institutional connections with a EUSALP AG member/leader.

In this area, there seems to be a need for further guidance to potential beneficiaries and for developing a common understanding between all EUSALP AGs and the ASP (see the section below on proposals for more detail).

10.2.1.2 Means, processes and procedures available for shaping the interaction

Interviewed stakeholders of ASP and EUSALP confirm that there are many means and procedures for interaction between the programme and the strategy **at programme level**. This confirms the situation presented in the Evaluation on programme communication, effectiveness and stakeholder involvement regarding the relation to EUSALP (2018), in which a wide array of tools and procedures of interaction was presented and assessed as effective. This list included, for example, the following activities, which are still valid:

- 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.
- Joint strategic coordination and preparation for the post 2020 period.
- Funding support to relevant projects under all four Alpine Space Priority Axes that can be relevant for EUSALP implementation.
- Earmarking of Priority Axis 4 for activities relevant to the macro-regional strategy in the framework of multilevel and transnational cooperation (AlpGov projects).
- Enabling networking and synergies between EUSALP Action Groups with ASP projects in different intensities reaching from an informal get-together at synergy events to the agreed implementation of (or contribution to) the AG's workplan by the project(s).
- 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 (see below more examples of interaction of projects-EUSALP).
- Growing integration of communication and outreach activities between ASP and EUSALP, for example coordinated events, synergy brunch etc.⁵

The ASP has initiated a variety of smaller and larger activities and measures to stimulate these interactions. For instance, in their approval letter projects are recommended to contact the relevant AG leader to discuss possible contributions and synergies; information to AG leaders on approved

⁵ For the detailed list, see chapter 2.5.2 in the Final report of the Evaluation on programme communication, effectiveness and stakeholder involvement regarding the relation to EUSALP (2018).

projects; synergy events animated by ASP JS are organised after calls to match projects with their corresponding AG leaders to share workplans and, where relevant, agree on concrete cooperation measures; in the project development phase, ASP is pro-actively supporting the synergy finding (e.g. meet and match events with potential project applicants), where EUSALP AG leaders are also invited and joining thematic sessions.

Interviews confirm that these activities are on-going, and that they are effective in creating active interaction and supporting the mutual learning process about how to better integrate ASP and EUSALP. It is also highlighted that the number of these activities has steadily increased since the launch of the EUSALP, and also over the last two years.

As explained in the previous chapter on SO 4.1, the AlpGov project is considered one of the most important means to support the governance of EUSALP (ASP funds now 2 projects, AlpGov and AlpGov2 just started, to support governance-making and learning within EUSALP). While their value and usefulness is underlined by most interviewees, the flaws of this approach to support governance of EUSALP and the difficulty to fund “back-office” services and structures via an Interreg project are also clearly highlighted.

New interaction modalities have been created since the last evaluation. One example is the nomination of JS project officers as liaison point for specific EUSALP Action Groups. This sustains a more formal and coordinated follow-up of work in the EUSALP AGs by the ASP, and also allows for a better communication to ASP projects on relevant EUSALP activities. This has been assessed as very positive by most of the interviewees. Another example is the participation of EUSALP presidency in the Programming Committee (task force).

Some interviewees, however, stress that interaction could and should be even more intense, structured and formalised. There is a certain expectation that the programming phase for the ASP post 2020 leads to more integrated interaction. Innovative proposals refer, for example, to a EUSALP desk officer in the ASP JS, the participation of the EUSALP AG leaders at the ASP Programming Committee, or a role for the Board of AGs in ASP decisions. Notwithstanding, there is no agreement among stakeholders about the feasibility or intensity of desired integration. It seems that different countries or regions prefer more or less integrated models. Some interviewees also see additional workload through more meetings and rather ask for transparent information. From the point of view of efficiency, it is important to further integrate ASP and EUSALP, and to avoid, as far as possible, the loss of information between different structures. However, a stronger integration might come along with negative side effect such as more confusion about distribution of functions and roles and to an increased bureaucratic complexity in organisation and communication. While we think that a certain integration with clear roles can be beneficial for both, ASP and EUSALP, **too complex structures in the governance should be avoided** to not increase the burden on beneficiaries and local and regional stakeholders. **It seems that many structures and tools are already in place, but that now attitude and commitment by all stakeholders is needed to make use of information and tools for further integration.** From our point of view and based on the interviews, time is mature to also explore interactions with additional funding instruments/ networks, such as the Cooperation Alps 2020+ events or the MRS week organised by the EC-EUSALP Presidency in February 2020.

The **Task Force Alps 2021+**, set up by the ASP and with active observers from EUSALP, has been highlighted as one of the most important means of interaction at this point in time. All stakeholders are aware that this Task Force will be important to further clarify and improve the interaction of ASP

and EUSALP for 2021-2027, within the administrative and regulatory framework that will guide the work of ASP and EUSALP in that programming period. Most interviewed stakeholders (both, ASP and EUSALP representatives) even hope for an updated governance structure that might re-shuffle the interaction between ASP and EUSALP. However, there is no clear majority on how this can be achieved. Proposals range from creation of a EUSALP liaison unit within the ASP JS, or the support by ASP for a EUSALP Facility Point, emulating the example of the ADRION-EUSAIR Facility Point. From the evaluators' perspective, the creation of an EUSALP "back-office" would help to clarify and strengthen positive synergies between ASP and EUSALP, creating a continuing and legitimate contact point for EUSALP but without putting additional burden on EUSALP AG leaders or EUSALP Presidency. However, the possibilities of having ASP funding this "back-office" should be analysed, in particular given the rigid regulatory framework of ETC, MRS and ERDF. Other possibilities to fund an interface between ASP and EUSALP are currently explored, e.g. by a task force, set up by EUSALP for this purpose. In addition, transnational Interreg Programmes supporting MRS are working on the issue with Interact and EC desk officers since many years.

At project level, there is an increasing interaction between projects and EUSALP AGs. This is, however, not true for all projects, and varies in its intensity and mode of interaction. The analysis shows that the most frequent interactions between projects and Action Groups are:

- ASP projects help to strengthen networks of relevant stakeholders. While EUSALP AG are already important political networks of experts and decision-makers, ASP projects help to connect new stakeholders to the network and to EUSALP.
- ASP projects contribute directly with content or methodologies to the implementation of EUSALP AG objectives. They are invited to report at an AG meeting or another EUSALP event on their findings. In most cases, these projects are included also on the AG websites as relevant projects for the AG. On occasion, talks between AG and project leaders are then initiated to further strengthen the collaboration, for example, by a follow-up project.
- ASP project and EUSALP Action Group meet at events and conferences (or actively communicate to have a common session or a mutual dialogue at these events).

An emerging interaction is that **ASP projects are seen as pilot projects or living laboratories for certain policies promoted within a EUSALP Action Group**. Within this context, EUSALP AG has been actively involved in project activities, e.g. in a survey, a focus group discussion or as a jury for a contest. This requires usually that EUSALP AG representatives and project partners are in contact before submitting an application to an ASP Call or that the AG becomes aware of the project at a very early stage of project implementation. Some of the measures implemented by Alpine Space Programme to create these synergies at an early stage clearly stimulate and strengthen these emerging interactions (e.g. via information to EUSALP AG on approved projects, synergy events with newly approved projects, etc.).

A specific case is given, when EUSALP AG and applicants work together on the development of a project idea and application. While this is a very positive interaction between ASP projects and EUSALP AGs, clearly contributing to the implementation of EUSALP via ASP, this opens the question of how to treat this application among all other applications in an ASP Call⁶. Shall it be treated as all other applications (meaning that only the quality decides if it will be selected or not), shall it receive a higher

⁶ It should be noted here that already now "Consistency with EUSALP objectives" is a selection criterion for the ASP, and projects highly contributing by their content are highly scored during the selection phase.

assessment only on the EUSALP-synergy criterion, being assessed like other projects on all other assessment criteria, will it be assessed and selected on a different “fast-lane” only for projects supported/promoted explicitly by EUSALP⁷ or shall it respond, from the beginning, to a specific ASP Call only for EUSALP supported projects? These questions need to be tackled, in particular, with regard to the next programming period, when a stronger interaction of projects and EUSALP AGs is highly probable.

10.2.1.3 Contribution of ASP to EUSALP

80% of respondents of the survey to project partners consider that their project contributes to EUSALP. Most of them gave concrete examples of contribution and interaction in the survey. All Lead Partners among the respondents responded with “Yes” (see Figure 10-2). The actual figure of projects that do actively contribute or interact with EUSALP might be even higher, as can be observed in graph above. Of the 17.5% of respondents that do not detect any contribution, some might be constrained by a specific lack of information about their own project or the links to EUSALP. For example, in the case of at least one third of respondents who indicated “No”, several other partners of the same project marked “Yes” and even could give concrete examples of a contribution.

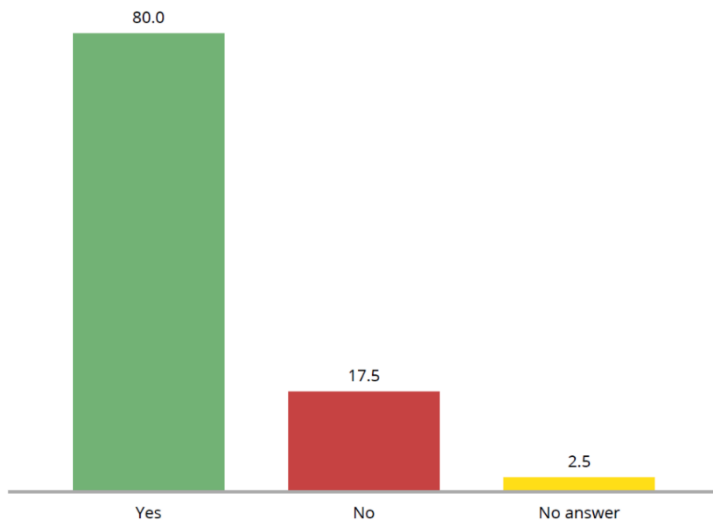
Contribution is framed by the coherence between ASP thematic objectives and EUSALP thematic objectives. Even if the pure quantitative estimation of how many ASP projects contribute to which EUSALP topic is only one dimension of the expected contribution and can be misleading (as it does not show the intensity or effectiveness of real contribution, and can depend also on other external factors), we still take it as a starting point to analyse thematic contribution.

In fact, as you can see below, examples of intensive interaction and contribution are related to all EUSALP AGs and not only in the areas with a higher number of projects associated (e.g. LOSDAMA and AG7).

In Figure 10-3, one can observe that relatively more ASP projects have a potential contribution to EUSALP AG 6 (natural resources), AG 2 (economic potential of strategic sectors), AG 1 (research and innovation), and AG 9 (renewable energy and efficiency).

Figure 10-2 Do project partners feel that they project contributes to the EUSALP?

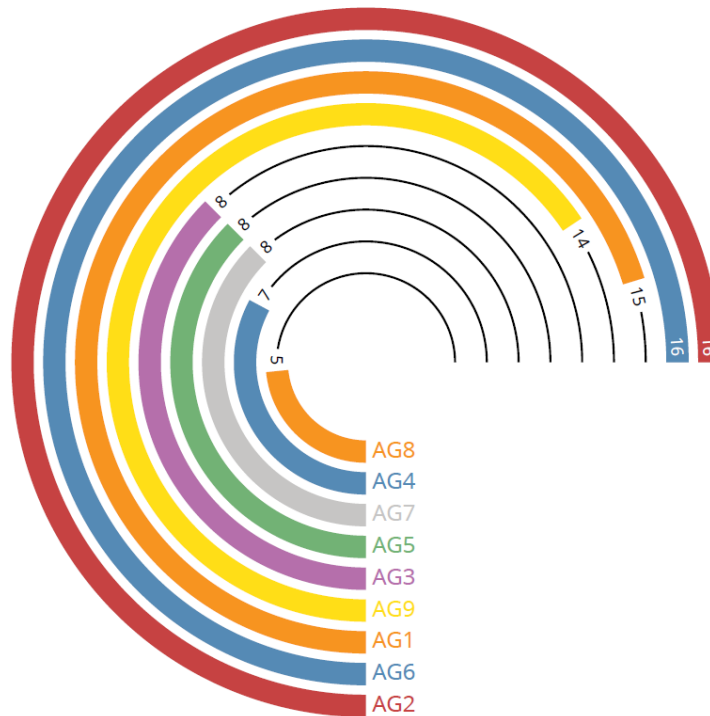
⁷ In other macro-regional strategies, this process is called labelling. For example, in the context of EUSBSR labelled projects are called Flagships and are also considered a quality stamp.



Source: Survey to Project Partners conducted for this Evaluation. 2019. (n=80)

Less ASP projects are potentially contributing to AG 8 (risk management and natural risks), AG 7 (ecological connectivity) and AG 4 (intermodality of transport). However, this analysis does not consider the intensity and actual impact of contribution to the various EUSALP AGs, which can only be analysed after project closure. In fact, there are highly relevant contribution, for example to AG7 by ASP projects LOSDAMA, LUIGI, and AlpBionet. It has to be noted that when ecological connectivity is concerned, interviews showed also strong interaction of the projects with the Alpine Convention, both in the phase of project identification and in the design of the durability strategy.

Figure 10-3 No. of Projects potentially contributing to EUSALP Action Groups*



* One project can contribute to various EUSALP Action Groups.

Source: Own elaboration based on information in brochure “Alpine cooperation stories” (2019)

Apart from the numbers, the previous analysis of impacts of ASP projects (see the previous chapters) shows that many projects have an important policy impact in specific policy areas, most of them linked to EUSALP objectives.

The interviewed EUSALP AG leaders know several ASP projects and their specific contribution. However, it cannot be told from interviews, if they know all relevant projects or are in contact with all relevant projects in their field. Still, most AG leaders can name between 2-4 relevant projects that are contributing to their policy field.

The interviewed AG stakeholders confirm the contribution of projects to the implementation of the EUSALP, mostly through exchanges of information and the presentation of project findings/results to an AG meeting or to an EUSALP event.

“Projects can be seen as laboratories, pilot projects for the AGs. Examples are Dualplus, Pluralps and the Smart Village projects, that are relevant for our AG. In projects you can experiment with approaches, test ideas and get practical on the ground knowledge that feeds back into the AG.” (Interviewee, EUSALP AG leader)

The contribution materialises in different forms. Examples of contributions of ASP projects to EUSALP named in the survey refer mostly to the following activities:

| Type of Contribution | Examples named in the survey and interviews |
|--|---|
| One project partner (or more) is a EUSALP AG member and vice versa | <p>“[partner name] is now member of EUSALP AG5”</p> <p>“through the participation of one of project's partner to the EUSALP AG work”</p> |
| Contribution with contents and tested solutions to specific challenges defined in the EUSALP AG, analysis of topics, specific knowledge on the situation in the Alps | <p>“Contribution to Action 3 by means of Co-creative Lab on NEETs, working on solutions to tackle unemployment and school failure”</p> <p>“harmonised map of protection forest for the whole Alpine Space”</p> <p>“development of sustainability assessment KPI on territorial level”</p> <p>“Yes, to the sub-group wood of Action group 2”</p> |
| Exchange of experiences and information | <p>“AG 3 exchange of best practices in mountain-oriented education”</p> <p>“there were several exchanges”</p> <p>“active cooperation with AG4 and AG9 from the beginning of the project”</p> <p>“input to action group meetings”</p> |
| Participation in EUSALP events | <p>“Participation in EUSALP events”</p> <p>“Information on project communicated, during different events, including the EUSALP Kick off meeting in Milan on 28.02.2019”</p> |
| Request from EUSALP AG to the project for expertise | <p>“they are interested in the advice of our psychologist”</p> <p>“think tank for the AG”</p> |
| Dissemination of mutual interest: on EUSALP within project activities and on the project in EUSALP meetings | <p>“a couple of weeks ago teachers in alpine schools have motivated our students/pupils to create initiatives for resolving sustainable local issues - so be part of EUSALP program - pitch your project</p> |

| Type of Contribution | Examples named in the survey and interviews |
|--|---|
| | <p>2019, because this is also an opportunity for implementation of participatory approach”</p> <p>“representatives of EUSALP participated in the project’s mid-term conference”</p> <p>“Another example was the joint high-level conference from the AG 7 and the LOSDAMA project in Munich in 2017 on the same topic and which was used as a forum for presentation of the topic and project work and signing a Memorandum of Understanding with local and regional partners.”</p> |
| <p>Structured and on-going collaboration of an ASP project/partnership and a EUSALP AG sub-group</p> | <p>“The project’s Think Tank (Output 3) will become a subgroup of AG5 and will continue its work beyond the project duration. This will also be an opportunity to spread the results further on via the involved experts both in the Think Tank and the EUSALP AG5 with the potential to even reach members of the other AGs. The members made also an outlook on the next planning period of EUSALP and possible work activities of AG5 in the field of SGI in the alpine area.”</p> <p>“Project lead partners of very relevant projects (LOSDAMA, AlpBionet, and now LUIGI) are officially and directly invited to AG 7 meetings as observers to learn more about what is relevant for the AG and further topics and themes for the future. In particular with a view on potential joint dissemination and coordinated transfer of project results and synergies with other relevant projects.”</p> <p>“The project has collaborated closely with EUSALP AG8 throughout the entire runtime. The project has provided results that were in strong demand by AG8 and that have contributed to implementation of its work plan. In turn, involvement of AG8 has helped strongly to extend geographic coverage of project results (France, Slovenia, Liechtenstein). The Lead Partner has participated actively in six work meetings of AG8 during the project duration.”</p> |

What is considered the best and easiest form of interaction is the participation of an EUSALP AG member/leader in an ASP project as project partner or observer. This facilitates also the necessary trust and mutual understanding for a fruitful exchange and potential collaboration in future activities.

Communication and trust between ASP project partners and EUSALP AG leaders/members are key for an effective contribution. This is why most interviewees highlight the value of the Meet & Match events where EUSALP AG stakeholders can meet ASP projects.

However, there are also **challenges** to build on the interaction between EUSALP AG and ASP projects and to make contributions to the EUSALP useful. Challenges are of particular relevance for AG leaders that are, for whatever reason, less familiar with ASP projects and members of the AG are not partners in an ASP project. Some of the interviewed AG leaders describe their perceived challenges:

- Action Group leaders describe that it is difficult to get an overview on closed and on-going ASP projects. There is a challenge to capitalise on existing experiences as most projects are

on/off experiences with a limited strategic scope. → The suggestion to overcome this challenge would be to continue working on cross-references, synergy events, brochures, information to AG leaders and trying to establish links and synergies whenever possible. ASP can only create the enabling environment, but for an effective contribution it needs commitment and motivation from EUSALP stakeholders and ASP projects to share and exchange knowledge and results of their work.

- ASP projects are effective in creating new networks but lack sometimes policy results on the ground. This is due to the complex system, the variety of actors included, the limitation to fund investments etc. As a result of this complexity it is not easy for AG leaders to work with ASP projects and to coordinate different initiatives to create results. → The suggestion to overcome this challenge is that ASP projects cannot contribute to all planned activities of an EUSALP AG, so expectations related to them should not be too high. They can be used for a certain type of pilot activities or pilot applications in a transnational context. **EUSALP AG's cannot rely only on ASP projects** but need additional projects and funding to carry out their work, for instance, on investments, policy changes etc.
- From a strategic perspective, each ASP project has a limited political ownership of results of cooperation projects, with limited effect on policies in geographic areas that have not been involved in the project and in particular when regional authorities have not participated. From the perspective of some EUSALP stakeholders, this limits their legitimisation to produce a valuable contribution to EUSALP, if not linked to EUSALP or if no adequate dissemination takes place afterwards. → The suggestion to overcome this challenge is that EUSALP can and should assist ASP projects in their work of communication and dissemination and thus, generating mutual benefits for the project and the EUSALP AG.
- Finally, ASP projects cannot remove border obstacles that prevent an extensive implementation of the solutions identified in different legal contexts. This also limits their contribution, if there is no further legal harmonisation. → The suggestion to overcome this challenge is that EUSALP needs to be aware on and learn from specific lessons of ASP projects on border obstacles in the different policy fields, in order to be able through EUSALP and other government networks to find solutions for the perceived obstacles.

In general, a strong and positive contribution of ASP projects to the EUSALP AG's, and therefore, to the EUSALP objectives can be observed. It seems that since the last evaluation in 2018, contributions have increased. Projects seem to be more aware than in 2018 on their contribution. Most projects that answered in the survey could name examples of specific activities or methods of contribution. Also, the EUSALP AG leaders are generally aware on relevant ASP projects and in most cases, specific working relationships and in-depth interaction between AG's and at least some projects have been established. All stakeholders, ASP PC members, ASP projects and EUSALP AG leaders are satisfied with the level of contribution, even if there seems to still room for improvement, as there are still some challenges, as described above.

10.2.1.4 Benefits of EUSALP for ASP

Most interviewees acknowledge a clear benefit from having a macro-regional strategy for the ASP.

“Projects benefit from getting better and easier to the political and decision-making level. This enables them to have potentially more and wider impact, when showing results to policymakers when using the EUSALP and the AGs as fora or as partners in projects”. (Interviewee, EUSALP AG member)

Other benefits that have been mentioned in interviews by EUSALP stakeholders and ASP PC members are:

- *“New stakeholders and new potential applicants become aware of Interreg ASP and participate in applications and projects.”*
- *“One of the main benefits is the enlargement of the networks and institutions involved directly in ASP activities.”*
- *“Finding project partners for ASP project proposals is facilitated by the work in the EUSALP AGs and the networking with other organisations on the same topic.”*
- *“Knowing people through EUSALP facilitates the coordination of projects and topics and helps to build strategic partnerships. “*
- *“EUSALP defines strategic interests and themes on a long-term basis, and this helps ASP projects to be more focused and more oriented on existing needs of policymakers.”*
- *“EUSALP connects political decision-makers more directly with the funding opportunities, in particular for transnational projects.”*
- *“Because of EUSALP, the ASP projects have now also a higher importance and visibility at political level, or even for the general public, for example, those that are presented on the EUSALP Annual Forum or the EUSALP events.”*
- *“The EUSALP provides a stable framework. While Interreg programmes are discussed and negotiated for each programming period, the EUSALP grounds cooperation in a stable "geographical framework" which gives a long-term political perspective to territorial cooperation across borders.”*
- *“The EUSALP provides a political justification to cooperation and therefore also to the ASP programme.”*
- *“Political stakeholders are increasingly involved in EUSALP which allows for a better capitalisation of ASP project results. With the right visibility through EUSALP, Interreg projects can better influence regional and local policies, even outside the geographical area of the project itself. The EUSALP brings in a dimension of political support. Projects recommendations may then be adopted more easily by local and regional authorities.”*
- *“Collaboration between EUSALP AGs (e.g. on health tourism) has motivated new created cross-sector ideas and has influenced the way of thinking in the preparation of the new ASP programme (e.g. cross-border mobility). Short-term small projects have been used to test collaboration and theme development for a bigger ASP project. This creates many new ideas for the future ASP.”*

However, an interviewed ASP PC member also highlights that the benefit is still not very visible, as EUSALP does not fully rely on ASP projects as much as it could for promoting and developing strategic issues.

One interviewee also indicates that *“the need to coordinate with the Strategy has ultimately made project selection more complex, [...]. Also, the desirability on the part of project partnerships to coordinate with Action Groups has, to a certain point, made it more difficult for new partners to propose project ideas.”*

Given the different opinions in the interviews it seems that there are many different potential benefits and that benefits are larger than the associated shortcomings. However, benefits could also be higher with a more structured interaction between EUSALP AGs and ASP projects, with more communication between EUSALP AGs and ASP (in both directions), and with a clear indication about the potential role of EUSALP AGs in the project life of an ASP project.

While most of these aspects are already under elaboration and will presumably improve in the next programming period, there are still some concrete proposals on how to improve interaction between ASP projects and EUSALP AGs. These are presented in the next section.

10.2.1.5 Proposals on how to improve the interaction between ASP and EUSALP

During the interviews several proposals were made on how to improve the interaction between ASP and EUSALP, mostly at operational level. The following proposals are deemed as useful and directly increasing the efficiency of interaction between ASP and EUSALP.

A first proposal refers to improve the level of knowledge of applicants and project partners on the function of EUSALP AGs and on possible means and procedures of interaction:

- Create a booklet/manual with a description of 15-20 ideas on win-win exchanges and interaction between AGs and projects. It can be elaborated during a workshop (ASP JS with EUSALP AGs) to bring together ideas, practical examples and best practices. Then the ideas can be presented in a booklet to the public and to applicants. Applicants can take from the booklet ideas on how to interact, and what more or less is expected from them. This would also clarify the function of EUSALP AGs and make clear that they are not a control body for projects.
- As an extension to this first idea, the applicants in the next programming period can be asked to fill out a much more detailed section on “collaboration with EUSALP AGs”, that asks for concrete plans to collaborate and maybe also for a proof of integrating the EUSALP AG somehow into the project (e.g. as an observer, during events, with interviews, in the dissemination phase etc.). However, in order to asking this from applicants they should first be able to imagine different ways of interaction and collaboration, for example through the aforementioned booklet/manual on exchanges with EUSALP.

A second proposal refers to better involve EUSALP AG in the ASP, for example, allowing an EUSALP AG as institutional body an official role as observer in an ASP project:

- To date, AGs cannot be official observers of projects, although AG leaders and members often act as observers in projects. However, they do so via their affiliation, since observers in ASP projects, by definition, need to be public authorities. In consequence, in most cases AGs are only indirectly represented through the AG member's affiliation, which automatically puts the focus on the perspective of the represented public authority rather than the AG as such. With an official observer role for AGs the EUSALP would benefit in terms of visibility and would overcome the ambiguous representation in ASP projects.

This proposal would of course not only require a change in the ASP rules for projects, but rather a common understanding among EUSALP AGs on what does it mean to have an “official observer role of the AG as institutional body” (who can fulfil this role, how can it be split from the role as representative of the affiliation, does this require a funding to participate in the project events, and who will pay for it etc.).

There are more proposals on the table on how to integrate ASP and EUSALP further. All proposals have advantages and shortcomings. It is not the role of this evaluation to recommend on one way or the other to integrate, but it is true that more and better integration, starting with a clarification of roles and functions at operational level, but without creating too much additional administrative

burden, is seen as very useful to increase the contribution of ASP to an effective implementation of EUSALP.

10.2.1.6 Key findings

The following conclusions and recommendations can be drawn from the evaluation:

| Evaluation Question | Conclusion |
|--|--|
| How do the programme and the EUSALP strategy interact? | There are many means and procedures for interaction at programme level, being AlpGov, the EUSALP AG liaison officers in ASP JS, and the Task Force 2021+ important examples. The number of these activities has steadily increased since the launch of the EUSALP, and also over the last two years. Some interviewees, however, stress that interaction could and should be even more intense, structured and formalised. There are different ways of further integration, but it is not clear which one could be the best. In any case, more complex structures in the governance should be avoided to not increase the burden on beneficiaries and local and regional stakeholders. |
| Which functions/roles do they fulfil? | Comparing the main characteristics of the ASP 2014-2020 and EUSALP, there are some overlaps but also quite distinct functions and goals. The strategy and the programme present complex policy instruments that operate in different settings (policymaking versus direct funding of territorial cooperation projects) and with different rules. However, differences in implementation and governance that are not clearly visible from the outside might lead to confusion. Continuing to clarify and communicating roles and functions is key for future work of ASP and EUSALP. |
| Which conclusions can be drawn for the future? | <p>It seems that main stakeholders and final beneficiaries generally do understand the different general objectives and functions of ASP and EUSALP as global programme or strategy. However, for beneficiaries it might be difficult to differentiate concrete roles and functions, for example, of ASP JS and EUSALP AG during project implementation and after project closure. The following proposals are deemed as useful and directly increasing the efficiency of interaction between ASP and EUSALP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a booklet/manual with a description of 15-20 ideas on win-win exchanges and interaction between AGs and projects. • Applicants in the next programming period can be asked to fill out a much more detailed section on “collaboration with EUSALP AGs”, that asks for concrete plans to collaborate and to integrate the EUSALP AGs into the project. • Better involve EUSALP AG in the ASP, for example, allowing an EUSALP AG as institutional body an official role as observer in an ASP project. |
| How and by which means/procedures does the programme contribute to the implementation of EUSALP? | <p>At project level, there is an increasing interaction between projects and EUSALP AGs. This is, however, not true for all projects, and varies in its intensity and mode of interaction. The analysis shows that the most frequent interactions between projects and Action Groups are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASP projects help to strengthen networks of relevant stakeholders. While EUSALP AGs are already important political networks of experts and decision-makers, ASP projects help to connect new stakeholders to the network and to EUSALP. |

| Evaluation Question | Conclusion |
|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASP projects contribute directly with content or methodologies to the implementation of EUSALP AG objectives They are invited to report at an AG meeting or another EUSALP event on their findings. • ASP project and EUSALP Action Group meet at events and conferences (or actively communicate to have a common session or a mutual dialogue at these events). |
| Which other contribution from the programme could be realistically expected? | <p>An emerging interaction is that ASP projects are seen as pilot projects or living laboratories for certain policies promoted within a EUSALP Action Group. This requires usually that EUSALP AG representatives and project partners are in contact before submitting an application to an ASP Call or that the AG becomes aware of the project at a very early stage of project implementation.</p> <p>A specific case is given, when EUSALP AG and applicants work together on the development of a project idea and application. While this a very positive interaction between ASP projects and EUSALP AGs, clearly contributing to the implementation of EUSALP via ASP, this opens the question of how to treat this application among all other applications in an ASP Call.</p> |
| Which contribution has been provided by the Alpine Space projects to the implementation of EUSALP and the relevant action groups' activities? | <p>Most ASP projects contribute to the implementation of EUSALP. Contribution is framed by the coherence between ASP thematic objectives and EUSALP thematic objectives. One can observe that more ASP projects have a potential contribution to EUSALP AG 6 (natural resources), AG 1 (research and innovation), AG 2 (economic potential of strategic sectors) and AG 9 (renewable energy and efficiency). Less ASP projects are potentially contributing to AG 8 (risk management and natural risks), AG 7 (ecological connectivity) and AG 4 (intermodality of transport).</p> <p>The contribution materialises in different forms. What is considered the best and easiest form of interaction is the participation of an EUSALP AG member/ leader in an ASP project as project partner or observer. Communication and trust between ASP project partners and EUSALP AG leaders/members are key for an effective contribution.</p> <p>However, there are also challenges to build on the interaction between EUSALP AG and ASP projects and to make contributions to the EUSALP useful. Challenges are of particular relevance for AG leaders that are not familiar with ASP projects and members of the AG are not partners in an ASP project.</p> |