

# SmartCommUnity Project

## REPORT ON MEETINGS FOR THE SMARTALPS NETWORK | WP TEST AREAS AND NETWORKING

**The INTERREG Alpine Space SmartCommUnity project| OCTOBER 2025**

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# Executive Summary

This report outlines the specific actions undertaken to integrate the SmartCommUnity project's Test Areas (TAs) into the Smart Alps Network, facilitated through the efforts of both the WPTAN and WPEU work packages. It presents key meeting information, strategic decisions, and collaborative events that underscore the emphasis on stakeholder collaboration, the development of innovative solutions, and the pursuit of sustainable smart transitions within the Alpine space. It also discusses the lessons learned, challenges encountered, and opportunities that arose during project implementation.

## 1. Introduction: Fostering Smart Alpine Transitions

The SmartCommUnity project, officially titled "Creating a Functional Transnational Community Towards Smart Transition in the Alps," is a dynamic initiative designed to empower rural communities through the strategic adoption of digital technologies. By creating the Smart Alps Network, the project aligns with the broader goals of the EUSALP Action Group 5, which seeks to enhance the quality of life, foster sustainable practices, and build resilient communities across the Alpine region.

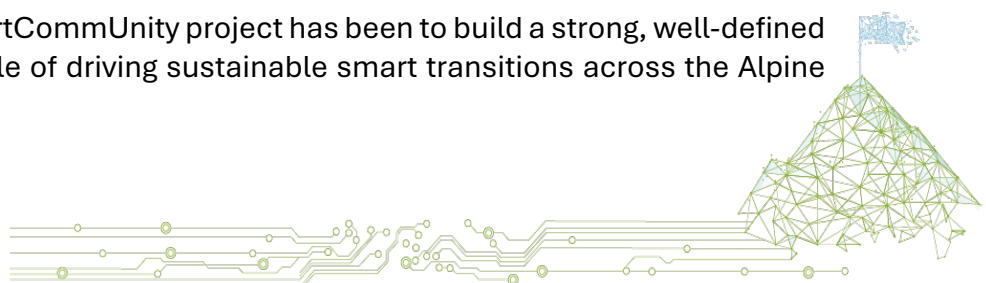
The project, supported by the Interreg Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027, is structured around three key working packages: EUSALP Uptake and Policy Integration (WPEU), Test Activities and Networking for SmartCommUnity (WPTAN), and Innovation Tools for SmartCommUnity (WPIT). The Smart Alps Network is strategically coordinated by the EUSALP Uptake and Policy Integration (WPEU), involving partners from the Autonomous Region of Valle d'Aosta and the Swiss Center for Mountain Regions.

Efforts to establish and support this network have been marked by key milestones, including the establishment of a Steering Board. As the work moves forward, these efforts are designed to continue beyond the SmartCommUnity project and become a central hub of the Alpine Space area, facilitating the effective integration of both members and contributors who have a common goal: to accelerate the region's adoption of innovative technologies and sustainable practices.

## 2. Fields of Intervention & Meeting Outcomes

### 2.1 Establishing a Robust Smart Alps Network: Structure and Governance

A core objective of the SmartCommUnity project has been to build a strong, well-defined Smart Alps Network capable of driving sustainable smart transitions across the Alpine



region. To achieve this, key actions centered around establishing clear governance structures and engaging diverse stakeholders. A major milestone was the adoption of the Smart Alps regulations by the Steering Board in February 2024, setting the foundation for the network's operational guidelines.

Membership in the network has been opened to both “members” - Smart Villages and Regions fully committed to smart transitions - and “contributors,” such as support organizations and institutions. These terms have been written to foster broader collaboration while ensuring decision-making authority remains with the municipalities and regional entities directly engaged in implementing smart solutions. Currently, the Smart Alps Network boasts 33 members, highlighting its increasing visibility and influence as a leading authority on smart, sustainable development in the region. A full list of members is provided in the annex of this report.

With these foundations, a dedication has been made to ensure the sustainability of activities within the network and beyond the activities of the SmartCommUnity project. By formalizing operations and building a strategic framework for sustained activities, the project seeks to continue fostering thriving, digitally connected communities across the Alpine Space and beyond.

## 2.2 Fostering Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange through Meetings and Activities

A core strategic goal is to leverage interactions to create both virtual and physical learning activities that bring the Smart Alps Network together and strengthen the project's overall impact. Across all activities, there was also an ambition to share data, increase reach, and encourage further use of these materials. This strategy involved a multi-faceted approach to promote effective collaboration, increase data accessibility, and encourage stakeholders to actively utilize project outputs in their respective regions.

**Dedicated Outreach with Webinars:** To address key topics of interest for Alpine test areas and stakeholders and overcome travel limitations, a focused webinar series was launched. These virtual events featured strategies for improving governance in rural areas, guidance for developing and maintaining coworking spaces, approaches to sustainable mobility, and effective communication practices. Use of AI translation software significantly broadened audience participation and access to information. The webinar series now forms a valuable library of resources available to communities across the Alpine region and beyond, promoting the uptake of smart solutions in other parts of the EU.



**Strategic Partnerships & Best Practice Exchanges:** Recognizing the need for a common vision, the SmartCommUnity project cultivated active exchanges between test areas, promoting dialogue and action-oriented discussions around project development. Activities were targeted to the best practices identified in digital instruments and local stakeholders to make the project results a valuable asset for rural regions.

**Integration with the Smart Alps Digital Exchange Platform:** The Smart Alps Digital Exchange Platform served as a hub to provide members with easy access to materials and instruments, enabling them to strengthen the support given to their own regional initiatives. The platform's resources fostered regional discussions and the spread of effective communication practices, improving community-led initiatives and digital transformation.

**Joint Vision & Regional Impacts:** By creating a comprehensive framework, there has been an active effort to share the vision. For example, best practices were discussed at the Digital Alps Conference, where policymakers, municipalities, NGOs, and experts contributed and supported collaborative projects, and regional actors are all now working towards specific, measurable objectives.

**Collecting policies on smart transition of mountain areas:** With this collaborative objective, the project leveraged insights from different engagements to both showcase and to collect information on best practices. The Collection of Good Practices, available in Deliverable D.2.2.1, supported greater trust and knowledge sharing amongst a variety of regional partners who brought their key insights to support this effort.

These engagements have laid a strong foundation for building a more cohesive and integrated approach to smart transitions across the Alpine region. The targeted use of webinars, collaborative platforms, and dedicated workshops, along with a clear emphasis on engaging a range of voices, has created a dynamic environment for knowledge sharing and co-creation. By increasing accessibility to information, resources, and best practices, these efforts have significantly enhanced cross-border exchange and collaboration throughout the European Union. The collaborative and transparent activities were all part of ensuring more effective communication and stakeholder engagement for their SmartCommUnity project. These have also greatly contributed to strengthening the network, establishing clear goals for future projects, and promoting smart regional development initiatives across various territories.



## 2.3 Enhancing Digital Engagement through the Smart Alps Exchange Platform

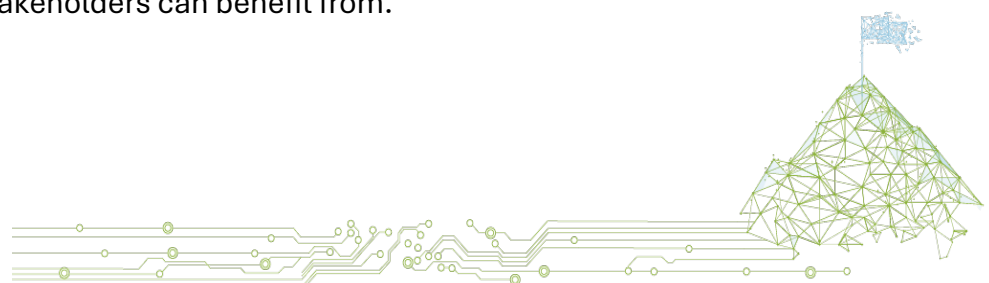
To support community networking, promote collaboration, and inspire sustainable action, the SmartCommUnity project placed a strong emphasis on developing and promoting its digital platform. The platform, a central component of Deliverable D.3.1.1, was designed to serve as a comprehensive hub for sharing information, building trust, creating interconnectivity, and supporting sustained collaboration among stakeholders.

This digital approach was built upon the proven success of the SMART VILLAGES platform, and the team ensured the involvement of stakeholders, partners, and end-users in various opportunities to review new digital tools, address implementation challenges, and gather feedback.

These activities culminated in the launch of Smart-alps.eu, a digital platform that provides state-of-the-art features for smart transitions and knowledge sharing within the Alpine region. With this launch came also an expansion of the stakeholder network and ensured a long-term collaboration among the project partners to ensure an enhanced implementation and access for a diverse pool of expertise. Additionally, the launch helped to create synergies with other innovative regional projects like SMART ERA for future developments and collaborations with the community.

## 2.4 Building a Recognizable Smart Alps Brand: The Smart Alps Label Initiative

To enhance the visibility, credibility, and overall impact of the Smart Alps Network, the project team initiated the development of a unique brand and recognition system by undertaking a robust Smart Alps Label initiative. The effort began by engaging project partners in an interactive brainstorming session focused on crafting the visual identity of the Label, which would help promote and signal adherence to Smart Alps goals. In order to establish a consensus on core concepts, project partners discussed what elements would form the basis of an understandable brand that supported excellence. Discussions with local authorities then considered community expectations, local contexts, and future community needs. In alignment with these goals, project partners conducted a survey to evaluate the interest level and support for establishing an official Smart Alps Label. A broad consensus to move forward and to create the label was formed to support and endorse high-quality initiatives, encourage participation, and promote smart solutions across the Alpine regions. These efforts support the development of high-quality smart communities and the region's network in a recognizable way that all stakeholders can benefit from.



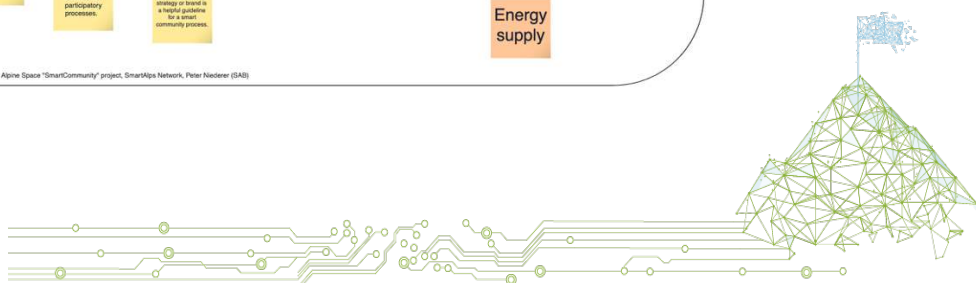
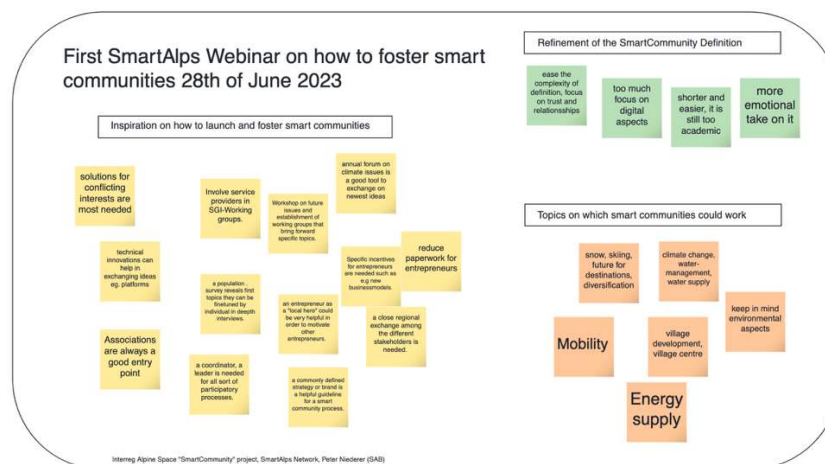
## 2.5 Fostering Knowledge and Innovation Through Expert & Research Engagement

Recognizing the importance of expertise, the SmartCommUnity project established strong connections with the academic community and expert professionals. Key aspects of this engagement included inviting students and researchers from various universities to participate in project activities, discussing the possibilities of summer schools for digital competencies, and engaging professionals for regional workshops with test area leaders to provide insights on topics such as digital marketing and branding. This also involved the EUSALP Youth Council, engaged to provide input from younger generations and local communities. Moreover, to promote accessible sharing of ideas and research, the project encouraged open participation in online platforms and through a wide array of digital activities. By expanding ties to a more interdisciplinary network of practitioners and knowledge providers, the goal was to improve the integration and practical implementation of effective and transformative solutions. This has increased the relevance of knowledge transfer, strengthened relationships across regional universities, and driven the development of new, scalable smart solutions within the project and beyond.

## 3. Overview of key activities and meetings

Through the SmartCommUnity framework and support activities provided by WPEU and WPTAN, members of the Smart Alps Network, Test Areas and other stakeholders have participated in several events:

- Five Smart Alps Webinars:**
  - 1st SmartAlps Webinar (June 28, 2023):** Focused on how to foster smart communities and highlighted the Kungota Smart Villages best practice.





- # SmartAlps Webinar on "Coworking spaces in the alps", 31st of October 2023
- ## Factors of success for a realisation and sustainable running of a coworking space (CS)
- clearly structured process design to involve the relevant and potential users of a core group/cluster entities, covering the local group, neighbouring one [www.alpine-space.eu/en/interreg](https://www.alpine-space.eu/en/interreg)
  - choose a modular development model that can easily be expanded or reduced according to the needs.
  - Adopt the realisation of a CS by local authorities and use existing (financial) support (e.g. regional, national (public office etc.))
- ## How can promoters be supported by the municipality/region?
- Initial funding from the municipality can be decisive (e.g. New Regional Policy, Switzerland)
  - Search for regional and national funding programmes (e.g. New Regional Policy, Switzerland)
  - facilitate public/private partnerships
  - combine a CS with a digital village square application.
  - A municipality can ease networking among stakeholders.
  - community: municipality communicate on the availability and disposability of potential locations.
  - Cooperate with other municipalities, whether where a coworking space makes sense.
- ## Interreg Alpine Space "SmartCommunity" project, SmartAlps Network, Peter Niederecker (SAB) <https://www.alpine-space.eu/project/smartcommunity/>

- # SmartAlps Webinar on "Mobility in municipalities & regions"
- 25th of March 2024
- ### Elements in building a mobility offer in municipality/region

  - adequate bandwidth infrastructure for the organisation of mobility offers and for autonomous driving is needed.
  - be open minded but also pragmatic
  - Steps in partnership:
    1. create a steering committee
    2. find partner examples
    3. define the objectives
    4. description of roles and responsibilities
  - creating small groups of local and external stakeholders (eg LAGs) to design and implement projects
  - Importance of communication with the communities - information and informing the communities

### How to finance and maintain a mobility offer ?

  - using existing solutions and technologies.
  - subsidies from national, regional and local levels
  - Adhesion fees
  - cooperation between different service providers.

### Challenges before the implementation of mobility services

  - 1. Financial issues: costs, funding and financing
  - 2. Technical issues: data, security, interoperability
  - 3. Organisational issues: governance, roles and responsibilities
  - 4. Identifying user groups and creating user cases

### 2 essential pillars for partnership projects

  - 1. Financial issues: costs, funding and financing
  - 2. Technical issues: data, security, interoperability

### multimodal mobility solutions are key

### In order to be cost efficient: clarity of needs in mobility, be clear on target groups (youth, tourism etc.), who needs what?

### create a new governance system (political authorities, private partners etc.) and definition of clear roles

### Service providers have to search for economy of scales in order to be more cost efficient. The service has to be well defined (the expected modal for 2000 managed cars).

### in the future ecosystem

There is a mobility pioneer in a partnership to national and private service providers. In the city of Oberösterreich, the city of Linz and the city of Salzburg are working together to create a new form of collective transport in a sustainable basis have to be sought.

### Project groups, increase in investments

### Consider cultural, social specifics

### Clear problem strategy is needed. Mapping of the stakeholder needs, What data is needed?

### Integration of different administrative level in order to work together -> integration of finances

### Uniformly autonomous buses will need to be accompanied by a parking, lower costs by using community based and voluntary drivers

### In the future more and more private service providers will replace state providers of collective mobility

### Use as a complement on the city traffic

<https://www.linz.at/de/verkehr/verkehrsmittel/autonomes>

### For Mobil Hubs of autonomous it is similar to mobility, promoting that unfortunately high costs, especially the taxi fleet creates high costs
- Interreg Alpine Space "SmartCommunity" project, SmartAlps Network, Peter Neederer (SAB) <https://www.alpine-space.eu/project/smartcommunity/>

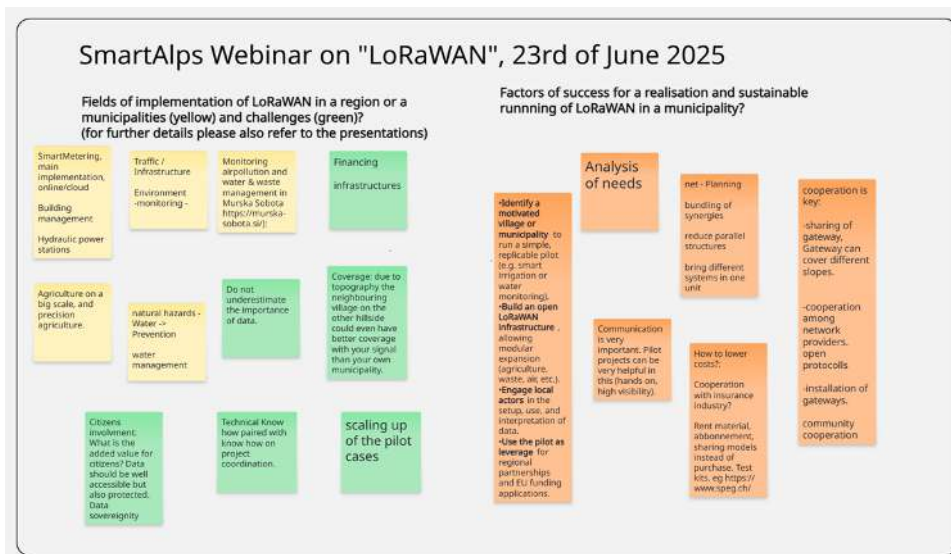
- **4th Smart Alps Network Webinar (November 27, 2024):** Focused on an exchange of digital municipalities' experiences and discussed on different municipal communication platforms.







- **5th Webinar - LoraWan (June 23, 2025):** Focused on the LoraWan implementation and technical considerations in this new tool.



- Participation to the ALPIMODEL training in Alpbach, Austria, 17th to 19th October 2023.
- Study Visit in Vallée d'Aosta from 05 to 07 March 2024.
- Active role on Digital Alps 2024 in Izola, 18-20 September 2024.
- Study visit in Valence, France, from 19 to 20 March 2025. A joint project meeting and study visit was co-organized to facilitate knowledge sharing, align strategies, and connect the project team directly with Test Area stakeholders, including students, through interactive workshops.



- Digital Alps Conference 2025 (Lienz, Austria - 29-30.4.2025): The partnership successfully organized this high-profile conference as an official event of the EUSALP Presidency. It served as a key platform to present the project's approach, engage policy authorities, and strengthen synergies with other projects and the EUSALP Youth Council.
- 2025 and 2026 edition of the Digital Alps Conference, and of other EUSALP AG5 events are already in the planning.
- Moreover, there have been several participations to project related events at AlpWeek in Bressanone 2024, and the EU Green Week also in spring 2024, to promote specific results and solutions developed in the frame of the smart community and smart Alps strategies.

During all meetings of the regional stakeholder groups, and through dedicated events such as the Digital Alps week, there has been an exchange of thoughts and good practices on all aspects connected to ICT, digitalization, and smart villages, which are part of both the "action plans" and projects related to the Eusalp.

In addition, the transnational approach of the project allowed for the identification and use of good practices. With this, all efforts have focused on how to ensure replicability, sustainability and upscalability of the developed solutions.

## 4. Challenges & Lessons Learned

The SmartCommUnity project has, through its various activities and engagements, provided insights into what challenges need to be addressed to support a wide engagement and sustained results. Through a deep understanding of local and international requirements, there has been an evolving and learning-based approach throughout its processes. While strong processes to foster regional engagement have been built, this review will provide important steps forward that the community will continue to consider.

Throughout the WPTAN and WPEU initiatives, the project has encountered common issues related to stakeholder engagement, language access, and knowledge transfer, providing a deeper understanding of building more effective smart communities. This has led to a set of valuable insights to strengthen ongoing project effectiveness and ensure that successful, repeatable tactics are used in the future.

**Stakeholder Engagement:** Gaining consistent participation in activities that required travel or time commitment proved difficult for many stakeholders. Communicating the tangible value of the project to local actors has also been necessary to create additional value to their engagement.



**Solution:** Partners found that generating greater interest, tailoring solutions to specific stakeholder needs, and providing opportunities for immediate implementation were key to improving engagement. Further, it was understood that to better include stakeholders, a clear communication of their responsibilities, and how it is going to support their work with the community, is the core.

**Translation & Interlingual Integration:** Connecting with diverse communities and ensuring the message was accessible required effective strategies to bridge language barriers.

**Solution:** In response, project partners utilized AI-powered translation tools in webinars, greatly increasing accessibility to non-English-speaking audiences. It was understood however that the benefits did not extend to all project activities, calling for an effort to identify the most relevant project materials that should be translated in different languages.

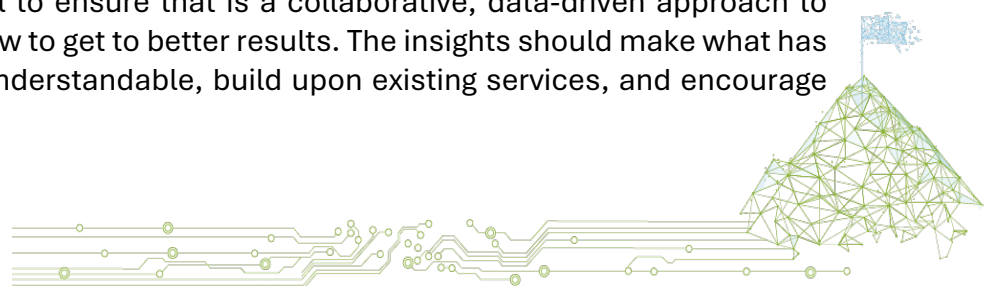
**Building on Successes and Inclusive Approaches:** It is understood that it is more productive to see the stakeholders more as key components of the team, rather than participants, by increasing opportunities for diverse backgrounds and experiences to contribute as equals, to foster shared ownership and promote more relevant local solutions.

## 5. Key takeaways for the Smart Alps Network

To truly foster sustainable and impactful smart transitions, the Smart Alps Network must recognize that its foundation rests on engaging local communities and responding to their diverse needs. To achieve results with tangible benefits, the following key points should be taken into consideration:

**Put Local People First:** Prioritizing the experiences, input, and participation of the community is crucial, so the network can help to establish an ecosystem where technology empowers local voices. To create this the partners can facilitate access to digital tools, ensure engagement and enable an even further transition for the targeted test areas. When this happens they are supporting and creating space for meaningful co-creation and more effective, adaptive regional strategies.

**2. Prioritize clear and accessible Data and insights:** It is often tempting to focus on technologies and outcomes rather than user interface, but there is no replacement for ensuring that all insights and knowledge is user friendly, data driven approaches. For the same reason it is also vital to ensure that is a collaborative, data-driven approach to analyzing the region and how to get to better results. The insights should make what has already been done more understandable, build upon existing services, and encourage



citizen-centric participation to create data-driven improvements in local governance and planning.

**3. Create Equal Partnerships for Innovation:** It is often the case that local communities may feel left out, in the grand design and goals of inter-regional partnerships such as those within Smart Alps. As a result, the projects need to ensure, that diverse experiences are included as equals by creating a sense of ownership and participation by key stakeholders. Key is to help them see how they can add value and how to make it a sustainable and smart plan for all the local community with a high focus on their needs. With this comes more joint development that generates both better digital solutions and creates more community action in those territories.

These efforts help create a community where local needs can be addressed using technology, while ensuring all those taking part are actively involved to guide their local areas. The overall approach will further enhance connectivity and local resources.

## 6. Conclusion: Charting a Sustainable Path Forward

The SmartCommUnity project's efforts to strengthen and expand the Smart Alps Network have resulted in notable progress towards creating a more interconnected, resilient, and digitally advanced Alpine region. Through targeted activities, such as strategic meetings, community-driven initiatives, and the development of accessible digital tools, the project has fostered a collaborative environment where diverse communities can learn from each other and co-create sustainable solutions.

While challenges related to stakeholder engagement, language access, and resource constraints have been identified, the project's learning-based approach has provided valuable insights and actionable recommendations to ensure future initiatives are even more effective. Emphasizing the need for inclusive governance, tailored communications, and the development of open-source instruments, SmartCommUnity has positioned the Smart Alps Network to serve as a catalyst for meaningful smart transitions across the Alpine Space.

By focusing on the needs and aspirations of local communities and leveraging their experiences to inspire policy improvements, the SmartCommUnity project and the Smart Alps Network are paving the way for a more innovative, sustainable, and connected future—ensuring that Alpine regions continue to thrive as vibrant centers of cultural heritage, economic vitality, and ecological stewardship.



## Annex: List of SmartAlps Members

### SmartAlps Members

Municipality/Region	first name	family name	Country
Communauté de communes des Baronnies en	Richard	Lamy	France
Communauté de communes Guillestrois-Quev	Laetitia	Pras	France
Région Rhône Alpes	Laurent	Wauquiez	France
Bodensee Standortmarketing	Michael	Baldenhofer	Germany
Regionalverband südlicher Oberrhein	Otto	Neideck	Germany
Sulzfeld	Sarah	Arbogast	Germany
Elzach	Roland	Tibi	Germany
Winden im Elztal	Roland	Hämmerle	Germany
Borgo Valbelluna			Italy
Campo Ligure	Giovanni	Oliveri	Italy
CM Gran Paradiso	Claudia	Zolla	Italy
Cogorno Municipality	Gino	Garibaldi	Italy
Coreglia Ligure	Ermano	Noce	Italy
Fondation Grand Paradis	Luisa	Vuillermoz	Italy
GAL Baldo-Lessinia	Sofia	Boscaini	Italy
GAL Baldo-Lessinia	Elisabetta	Brisighella	Italy
Lumarzo	Daniele	Nicchia	Italy
Mele	Mirco	Ferrando	Italy
Orero	Giacomo	Gnecco	Italy
Provincia Trentino	Francesca	Leoni	Italy
BSC Kranj	Rok	<b>Simenc</b>	Slovenia
Kungota	Tamara	Šnofl	Slovenia
Ernen	Francesco	Walter	Switzerland
Gemeinde Isenthal/Tourismuskommission	Josef	Schuler	Switzerland
Guttet-Feschel	Philipp	Loretan	Switzerland
Saas Fee	Bernd	Kalbermatten	Switzerland
Padna	Denis	Goja	Slovenia
Sattel	Anita	Betschart	Switzerland
Amlach	Stefan	Clara	Austria
Val Ròia	Tristan	Klein	France
REV Südliches Weinviertel	Alexander	Wimmer	Austria
KLAR Waldviertler Kernland	Elisabetth	Höbartner-Gu	Austria

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