D.3.2.1 – Advisory Board establishment and action

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1 Introduction

The Report presents the activities related to the Advisory Board meeting of the CRADLE ALP Project. The Board, foreseen by the Application form as mandatory part of the WP3, is thought to support and facilitate the connection the Cradle 2 Cradle methodology with the strategies and policies concerning economic development, environment, energy and sustainable production processes.

In particular the Board, composed by policy maker, has its main focus in the discussion and final validation of the Project outputs, helping the partnership to operate modification or improvement where necessary.

The project activities foreseen 2 meetings of the Advisory Board, the first one was held in occasion of the Partner Meeting in Heilbronn, on 10th April 2025 with the aim of presenting Cradle-ALP results and discussing the interim pilot monitoring report.

The second meeting has been held online on 29th September 2025 for the validation of pilot actions results & showcases, supporting transregional cooperation with existing regional/national programmes (funds synchronization) and presenting the local policy dialogues developed by each partner.

2 First Advisory Board Meeting – Heilbronn 10th April 2025

The April 2025 Advisory Board meeting, held in Heilbronn, brought together project partners and external experts to review the most recent advancements of Cradle-ALP. The session was designed to validate progress in the pilot activities within WP2 and to examine the connection with the emerging evaluation framework of WP3. The meeting also aimed to ensure alignment between technical work, policy relevance, and stakeholder expectations, reinforcing the importance of shared methodologies and harmonised reporting across the Alpine region.

The first part of the meeting was dedicated to the update of the ongoing activities under WP2 and WP 3 activities, in particular related to the pilot activities and the transnational S4 strategies and policy instrument. On this basis, members of the Advisory Board expressed their opinions and gave their recommendation as follows

Advisory Board Observations and Recommendations

The Advisory Board provided strategic insights aimed at refining the evaluation process and strengthening the value of the pilot outcomes. Members stressed the need for more harmonised reporting among partners, clearer presentation of transferable good practices, and stronger integration of quantitative indicators such as LCA-based metrics. They also encouraged deeper alignment with regional policy frameworks, ensuring results are relevant for S4 and EUSALP cooperation structures.

1 Strengths identified

The Advisory Board recognised the strong engagement of SMEs across pilot regions and the diversity of activities undertaken. The structured approach adopted by partners, supported by practical tools, was considered a clear strength. Members highlighted the project's ability to generate cross-sectoral dialogue, stimulate new collaborations and provide actionable insights for companies working toward circular business models in the Alpine manufacturing landscape.

2 Challenges observed

Some challenges were noted, including inconsistency in the depth of documentation provided by partners, difficulties in ensuring comparable data across sectors and differences in the maturity level of pilot work. The AB also pointed out the need to streamline indicators, improve clarity in reporting and ensure that all partners follow a common methodological approach to facilitate cross-regional analysis and evaluation.

3 Recommendations

The Advisory Board recommended establishing unified reporting guidelines for WP2 contributions and selecting representative case studies for each sector to highlight early successes. Members encouraged partners to integrate shared metrics and KPIs to measure progress consistently. The Board also suggested strengthening policy-oriented communication and aligning outputs more closely with regional innovation strategies and the broader objectives of the Alpine Space Programme.

Next Deadlines and Operational Roadmap

Key deadlines

The key deadlines presented during the meeting included the submission of inputs for D.2.2.1 and D.2.2.2 by 28 April 2025, participation in the EUSALP event on 12–14 May, and the planned finalisation of pilot activities by the end of June 2025. Further validation steps with the Advisory Board are planned for September and October, leading to the project's final conference scheduled for autumn 2025.

3.1 Required partner actions

Partners were requested to complete remaining pilot activities, upload dissemination materials to the shared platforms and contribute to the evaluation templates for WP3. Continued participation in coordination meetings and sector-specific activities will be essential to finalize all deliverables. Partners were also encouraged to prepare cases, evidence and structured inputs to support the consolidation of the interim and final reports.

3.2 Upcoming meetings

The next Advisory Board meeting will take place in September 2025 to validate the Final Pilot Action Report. Additional sectoral events will be held throughout the summer to promote pilot results and gather final evidence. A Steering Committee meeting will accompany the final conference, ensuring alignment across all work packages and preparing for the project's concluding phase.

Conclusions

The April Advisory Board meeting confirmed the solid progress of Cradle-ALP and provided strategic direction for the final phases of WP2 and WP3. The feedback received highlighted the importance of harmonized reporting, selection of strong showcases and alignment with regional policy frameworks. The project now moves into a crucial stage of evaluation and capitalization, where pilot achievements will be translated into actionable insights, transnational recommendations and long-term value for Alpine manufacturing ecosystems.

3 Second Advisory Board Meeting – online 29th September 2025

The Padova Chamber of Commerce in the person of Andrea Galeota chaired this second Advisory Board meeting, which was held online, to guarantee the widest participation of members.

As already specified, the second meeting had as main objectives the validation of the results coming from the pilot actions developed by each partner and the related, the support to the activities of transregional cooperation with existing regional and national programmes (funds synchronization) and the presentation of the local policy dialogues developed by each partner.

Contents of the online event

The following items were presented and discussed:

Overview of Local and Transregional Activities & Matching Events

Presented by: Chemistry Cluster Bavaria (CCB)

The initiative began with engaging SMEs and R&D Institutions to develop a "Transformation Roadmap," in which we collected a State of the Art (SoA) of the available technologies and identified the ideal regulatory framework for business models seeking to undergo transformation. The primary objective is to support SMEs in the Alpine region through specific activities and actions outlined in the toolkit

Local and Individual Support Activities

1. Quick Scan:

   An Excel-based tool, comprising two phases:

   - Phase 1**:** Self-assessment, allowing SMEs to evaluate their current business model.

   - Phase 2**:** Discussion on how to modify or optimize their business model from a circular economy perspective. This phase provides valuable impulses for rethinking existing models and introduces opportunities for startups to support SMEs in optimizing their business strategies.

   Lesson learned: impulses for discussion and for companies started to rethink their business models and to optimize them.

2. Workshop on Life Cycle Assessment (LCA):

   While LCA is a critical tool for many companies, there is a significant challenge in its implementation due to a lack of internal expertise. SMEs often struggle to adopt the latest updates and understand how to integrate them into their operations.
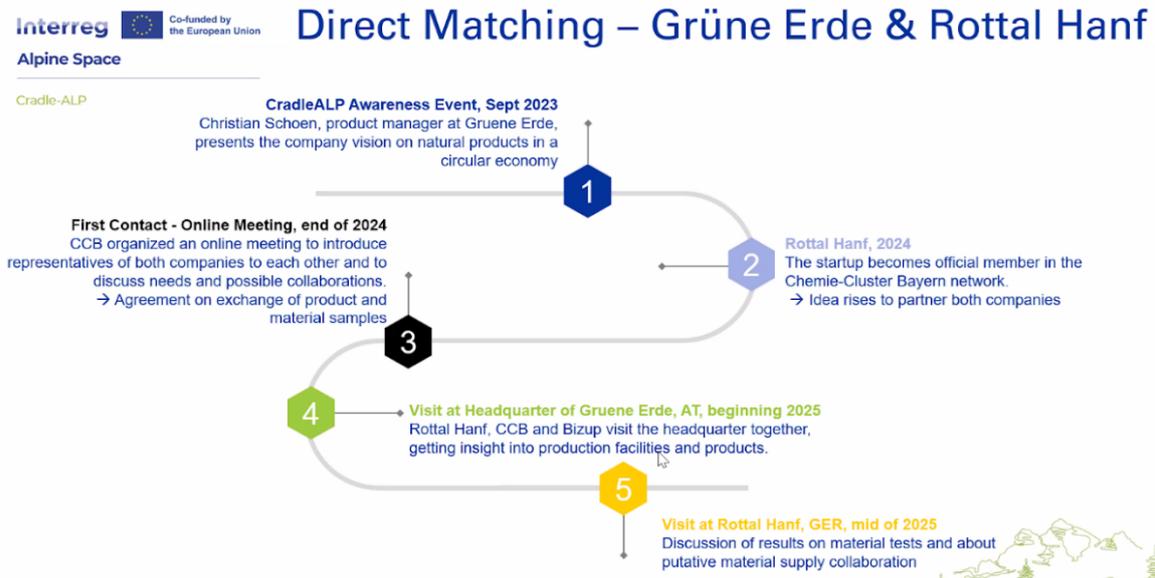
   To address this, a guide on LCA was created in collaboration with the University of Applied Sciences in Wels and BizUp, providing an accessible overview of the available LCA tools.

Transregional & collective activities

- Matchmaking events (online and on site): These events facilitated collaboration and knowledge exchange between SMEs, research organizations, and other stakeholders, enabling them to share projects, explore cooperation opportunities, and discover innovative technologies.

- <u>Direct Matching</u>: initiation of a direct contact for regional collaboration often between SMEs and start-ups (best practice: Grüne Erde & Rottal Hanf)

<u>Toolkit Used During Pilot Action with Companies</u>

Presented by: CCIAA Padova with support of T2I and BIZUP

Quick Scan Circular Business Model Tool – Marco Galanti for T2I

The **Quick Scan Circular Business Model Tool** is designed to assist companies in evaluating and identifying opportunities for adopting circular business models. The tool supports companies through interviews and assessments to determine which circularity opportunities are most suitable for their specific needs. Developed as part of a Horizon project, the tool was selected by the European Commission as one of the best models for introducing circularity into businesses. The main objective of the tool is to offer an evaluation instrument supporting businesses in an initial process of self-assess the circularity and sustainability of their business model. This tool is particularly useful in the early stages of the transition, as it helps companies explore and navigate circular business model opportunities in a simple and personalized manner. At the moment the tool is based in Excel, but T2I is building a AI version.

The fundamental concept is the one of the R-Strategies, which usually create confusion to the companies. In general, the R-Strategies consist in a series of actions organized in an hierarchical manner aimed at reducing the environmental impact through resource reuse.

Moreover, circularity can be included in several business models, which can present standard and common features, but not any business model can be compatible with every company, since there can be specifications and particular characteristics which need to be respected.

Structure of the Quick Scan:

- **Phase 1: Determining the Current Position**
    - Priority: what priorities does the company have for organizing circularity?
    - Experience: what is the company's current level of experience with circular and sustainable models?
    - Ambition: what do you want to achieve as a company?
    - Current Business Model: to what extend sustainability and circularity are already included in your business model?

    Outcome: A "Quick Scan" that provides a snapshot of where the company currently stands in terms of circularity.

- **Phase 2: Adapting or Developing the Business Model**
    - Base type of business model: which business model best aligns with the company's ambitions?
    - R-Strategy: which of the R-strategies should be implemented to build the circular model?
    - Organizational Form: what is the most appropriate organizational form for the company?
    - Supporting processes: which supporting processes are crucial for success? What do you know about them?

    Outcome: Choosing appropriate revenue models that complement the circular strategy.

    LCA guidelines – Linhart for Biz Up

Recognition of the LCA as an important instrument for companies so a three steps approach was adopted: LCA Master Thesis, LCA Guide and LCA Quickstart Workshop.

LCA Master Thesis: *Measuring Circular Economy – The Role of Life Cycle Assessment and Its Status Quo In Companies*. The thesis offers a comparison of the currently existing LCA tools available and categorize them.

LCA Guide is available in English and German ("*Don't' Panic – A Beginner's Guide to Life Cycle Assessment*") – the other languages are coming soon.

LCA Workshop already organized had the goal of creating understanding on sustainability assessment and getting to know the LCA method.

These activities helped companies to better comprehend the LCA and the approach can be easily replicated also abroad (best practice: LCA for cookie cutter).

Proposal: Synchronization of Funds for SME Circularity in the Alpine Area

Presented by: HEIA-FR and BIZUP

The intention is to strengthen the circularity process by enabling transregional cooperation between entrepreneurs, R&D institution and existing regional/national funding programs by building a **synchronized funding scheme**.

The transregional funds synchronization aims at improving exploitation of the existing regional/national funding programs and strategies (S3) through transregional cooperation of the Alpine space region.

The project builds on the Cross-regional cooperation scheme developed in the frame of ARDIA-Net Project (2021).

4 actions regional funding schemes: 1) Cooperation between single project; 2) Cross-regional cooperation project (it means the existence of a consortium and of a project to be submitted and approved in each region involved); 3) Joint synchronized calls and coordination office (participating regions agreed on a specific call and implement on the creation of a dedicated office).

The third option was implemented with the Innovation Express Call (IE) in 2021 and 2024. What we learned from this experience:

PROS	CONS
• Less efforts for mutual preparation process needed because of no changes in existing programmes • Only agreement needed on a common duration on the call and on some specific topics • Slight adaptation of the regional call text • Virtual coordination office helping participating regions to reduce the coordination efforts • Allowed the new RDI partnership between partners that had not previously collaborated before	• External factors challenges (e.g. budget cuts, etc.) • Duration of call always too short for finding partners and preparing applications • Increased support of potential applicants needed and adjustment between funding bodies • Much efforts for a call with less regional participant • Long and different approval periods • Different funding amounts results in very different levels of involvement of project partners

The proposal is to approach transregional cooperation support and transregional/national fund synchronization the other way around: first elaboration services assisting business in the field of circularity; second facilitating matchmaking and establishing a Cradle-ALP – Circular Alpine Space Community; then trigger transborder cooperation with the support of public funds considering the experiences of project partners during Cradle-ALP implementation.

Local policy dialogues of Cradle-Alp partners are currently in progress for identifying current and future funding opportunities and strategies.

Synchronized call HES-SO 2025, Micheal Keller from HES-SO//FR

It is an example of the third level of synchronization even if it is applied only at national level (Switzerland) which could be synchronized with further actions in any other region.

University of Applied Sciences of Fribourg, they synchronized within the western region but also across different thematic areas (nursing sciences, engineering, architecture, etc.) so they match funds from different schools.

The projects could have impact of 4 areas and enable establishment of sustainable R&D facilitating partners with relevant entities at regional, national or international level. The funds used for the projects involved 4 schools of HES-SO//FR – so each project needs to be a joint effort

Initial Feedback on Political Dialogue

Presented by: TZ-BORG, CCB, and HEIA-FR

The presenters shared preliminary insights and feedback on the political dialogue initiated as part of the project's policy engagement activities, with a special view of sustainability of the project after the end of it.

Local Policy Dialogue, Ricardo Goncalves of TZ-HORB

Host: TZ-Horb

Date: 29/08/2025

Participating entities: Regional Economic Development Agency Northern Black Forest, Regional Economic Development Agency Freudenstadt, Regional Cluster Agency for Innovation and Transformation Baden-Wüttemberg.

The session focused on key policy-related challenges and opportunities, particularly in the context of cross-regional funding programs.

Key Discussion Points:

- Challenges and Opportunities of Cross-Regional Funding Programs: The group discussed how to better involve regional stakeholders during the design phase to ensure the funding programs are tailored to the specific needs of each region. There was a consensus on the importance of making funding more region-specific.

- Common Themes Across Regions: Moving towards addressing common themes that affect all regions, but with the flexibility to approach them differently at the local level. This requires adaptability in design and execution to ensure that regional differences are respected while still pursuing shared objectives.

- Boosting Efficiency and Prioritization: A recommendation to focus on fewer, but larger projects that have

long-term impacts (reducing duplicate structures). The idea is to prioritize projects that can drive meaningful change and produce sustainable outcomes 8fewer but larger projects).

Local Policy Dialogue, Tobias Schwarzmüller by CCB

Host: Chemistry Cluster Bavaria

Date: 25/09/2025

Participating entities: Alpice Space Contact Point, PtB, Bayers Innovativ, Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs, Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment, Chamber of Industry and Commerce Nurember, bifa Umweltinstitut (research institute).

Key Discussion Points:

- Skepticism Regarding Synchronization of Funding: There were concerns about the feasibility of synchronizing funding programs, as different regions have diverse administrative structures, which makes coordination complex and resource-intensive.

- Funding Agency Independence: Funding agencies are not able to independently decide on synchronization. The final decisions regarding synchronization must be made by the relevant ministries, limiting the flexibility of regional funding agencies.

- Designing Technology-Neutral Programs: A suggestion was made to design funding programs that are technology-neutral, allowing for more flexibility in funding individual projects. This approach would help address specific needs across regions while ensuring that the focus remains on achieving broader technological goals.

The Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection underlined the presence of a public consultation open until

November 2025 and invited the Cradle-ALP consortium to send a statement.

Local Policy Dialogue, Tobias Schwarzmüller by CCB

Host: HEIA-FR

Date: ongoing (since 03/2025)

Participating entities: Fribourg Development Agency, Federal Office for Spatial Development University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland, University of Fribourg, Fribourg School of Management, School of social work, School of nursing science.

Key points of discussion:

- Development of a new Competence Centre supporting R&D approach focused on the biobased feedstock valorisation pathways identified during the Cradle-ALP pilot phase

- Synchronized call for R&D project in the field of sustainable transformation and circular transition among the three other universities.