

**Project Acronym: Cradle-Alp****Project number: ASP0100003**

D.3.2.3 – Coordination and synergies with EUSALP macro strategy

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1. Introduction - What is EUSALP strategy

EUSALP (EU Strategy for the Alpine Region) is a macro-regional strategy designed to strengthen cooperation between the countries and regions of the Alps. Launched in 2016, it is the fourth such strategy in the EU, following those for the Baltic Sea, the Danube, and the Adriatic-Ionian regions.

It's a "common laboratory" where 7 countries and 48 regions work together to solve problems that don't stop at national borders—like melting glaciers, transport through mountain passes, and rural depopulation.

EUSALP covers an area of approximately 450,000 km² with over **80 million inhabitants**. It includes:

- **7 Countries:** 5 EU members (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Slovenia) and 2 non-EU members (Switzerland, Liechtenstein).
- **48 Regions:** In Italy, this includes all northern alpine regions (Piemonte, Valle d'Aosta, Liguria, Lombardia, Trentino, Alto Adige, Veneto, and Friuli Venezia Giulia).

The strategy is organized into three "pillars" (**Thematic Areas**) that address the most pressing challenges of the region:

- **Pillar 1: Economic Growth and Innovation**
 - *Goal:* Make the Alps a competitive and innovative hub.
 - *Focus:* Boosting SMEs, digital industry, and "Bioeconomy" (using alpine resources like wood and agriculture sustainably).
- **Pillar 2: Mobility and Connectivity**
 - *Goal:* Improve accessibility while protecting the environment.
 - *Focus:* Promoting sustainable transport (trains over trucks), reducing transit pollution, and bridging the "digital divide" in remote valleys.
- **Pillar 3: Environment and Energy**
 - *Goal:* Protect the "Water Tower of Europe."
 - *Focus:* Climate change adaptation, risk management (landslides/floods), and making the Alps a model for renewable energy and efficiency.

Recently, EUSALP has shifted focus toward several "horizontal" themes, **Cross-Cutting Priorities**, that touch all pillars.

These are, for the years 2023-2025:

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- **Water Management:** Protecting water resources as climate change reduces snowpack and glaciers.
- **Circular Economy:** Moving away from "take-make-waste" models.
- **Youth Empowerment:** Involving young people through the **EUSALP Youth Council** to prevent the brain drain from mountain villages.
- **Digitalization:** Using tech to provide services (e-health, remote work) to isolated communities.

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2. Coordination and Synergies between Cradle-Alp project and EUSALP strategy

EUSALP works through **Action Groups (AGs)**—teams of experts from different countries who coordinate existing EU funds (like Interreg Alpine Space, or Horizon Europe) toward specific projects.

Cradle-Alp project had a close coordination with several AGs, primarily due to the role of involved partners:

- **Action Group 2 (AG2):** Partner 3, **Chemistry-Cluster Bavaria (CCB)**, is a member of the EUSALP AG2 Sub-Group "Cluster & Bioeconomy";
- **Action Groups 1 & 2 (AG1 & AG2):** Partner 9, the **School of Engineering and Architecture of Fribourg (HEIA-FR)**, ensures Swiss representation within these specific groups.

The project identified several **synergies with EUSALP objectives** to demonstrate its regional relevance:

- **AG2 (Economic Development):** Focuses on the wood topic and the digitalization sub-group.
- **AG3 (Labour):** Relates to the digitalization of the labor market and circularity.
- **AG6 (Preservation of Natural Resources):** Aligns with resource efficiency and "zero waste" goals.
- **AG7:** Relates to the capitalization of the EUSALP innovation facility.
- **AG9:** Focuses on the contribution of SMEs to energy efficiency and Renewable Energy Sources (RES).

The Action Groups have been considered central to the project's coordination and long-term policy impact:

Within **Activity 3.2** the partners established important relationships with **AGs 2, 3, 6, and 7**.

The contacts have been at different levels: bilateral contacts, promoted by partners with AG members, all project long, to updated about Cradle-Alp project and syntonize the project's action with the EUSALP strategy, especially regarding the transition to a Circular Economy; participation of AG members to project's activities and boards involving the stakeholders;

Awareness campaign about the project toolkit and results, developed through contacts and e-mails, in order to favour the implementation of the EUSALP macro strategy, its knowledge by the project's stakeholders.

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Moreover, in all Regions the partners got in touch with relevant stakeholders and regional/national governments in order to favour the development of synergies with EUSALP macro strategy.

In the AG 2 meeting held in Lyon on 15-16/1/2025 AG2 decided to work on three different topics for policy recommendations:

- Circular economy (link with the CCP #4)
- Hydrogen (link with the CCP #2)
- Data and AI (link with the CCP #1)

A provisional timeline that takes into consideration the EUSALP Policy cycle (Executive board meetings and general assembly) was also presented to participants and discussed. The EUSALP Policy cycle has been taken into account also by the Cradle-Alp partnership, in order to define the goal of synchronization of funds.