



# Local Governance as a Means to Enhance QoL in Alpine Communities

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# introduction

## Quality of Life (QoL)

and ways to improve it have long been debated, but less attention has been paid to local governance in these discussions.

GovQoL aims to address this research gap, and preliminary results from the GovQoL Project, funded by the Alpine Space programme will be presented.

**Interreg**

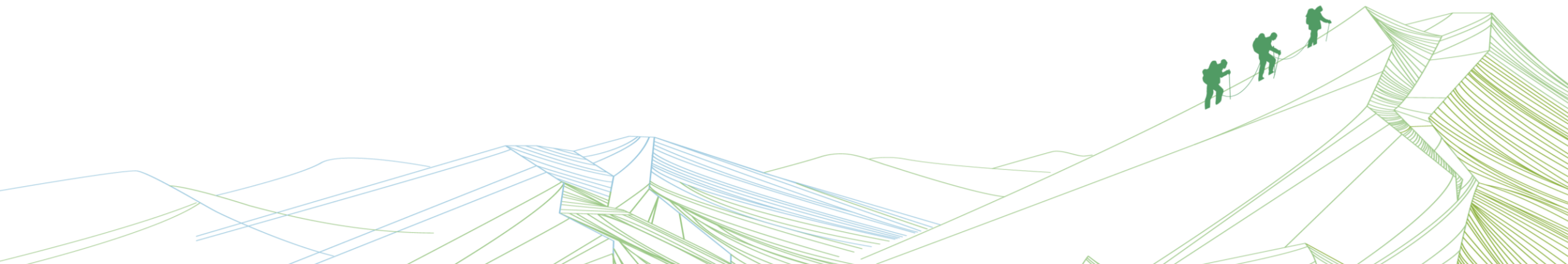


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GOVQoL

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This project is co-funded by the European Union  
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## Setting the background

In the governance discussion, QoL and service provision can be related through

- *Objective conditions* - services, environment accessibility
- *Subjective perceptions* – sense of belonging, participation, safety, and social well-being

Good governance is related to

- Citizen participation in the decision-making processes
- Active engagement of local actors to governmental processes

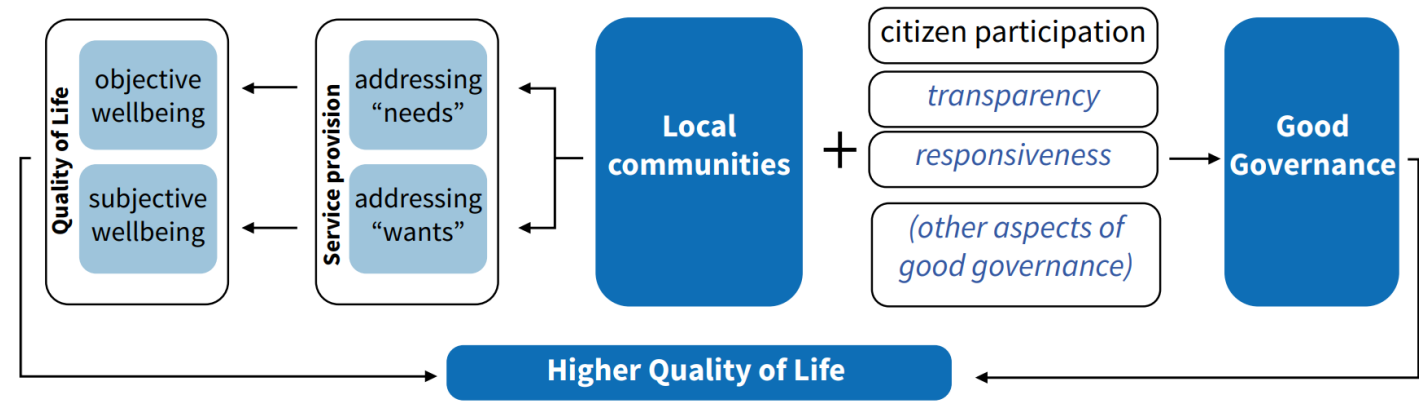


Figure 1. Relation between QoL and local governance (authors' own elaboration)

Research questions are:

1 how QoL has been addressed within horizontal governance systems from supranational to local levels?

2 how local governance can support implementation to improve the QoL of Alpine communities?



Figure 2. Focused countries in the project (authors' own elaboration)

The projects has two workpackages:

WP1

Focuses on discovering the case studies and identifying the gaps

WP2

Focuses on discovering ways to integrate QoL into the local governance frameworks

The presentation focuses on the preliminary outcomes from the project's first phase.

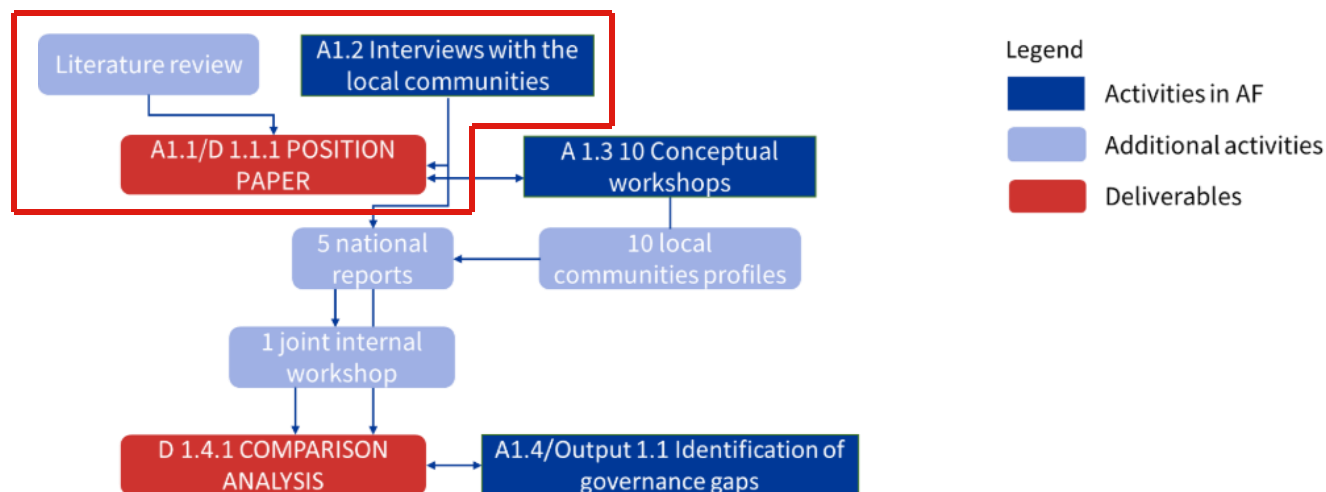


Figure 3. Methodology of the project (authors' own elaboration)

for more information  
about the project



for position paper in  
English



# methodology

In more detail, the research employs a methodology that combines desk research and empirical interviews:

- 1 Synthesis of previous policy framework analysis
- 2 Interviews with the relevant local actors

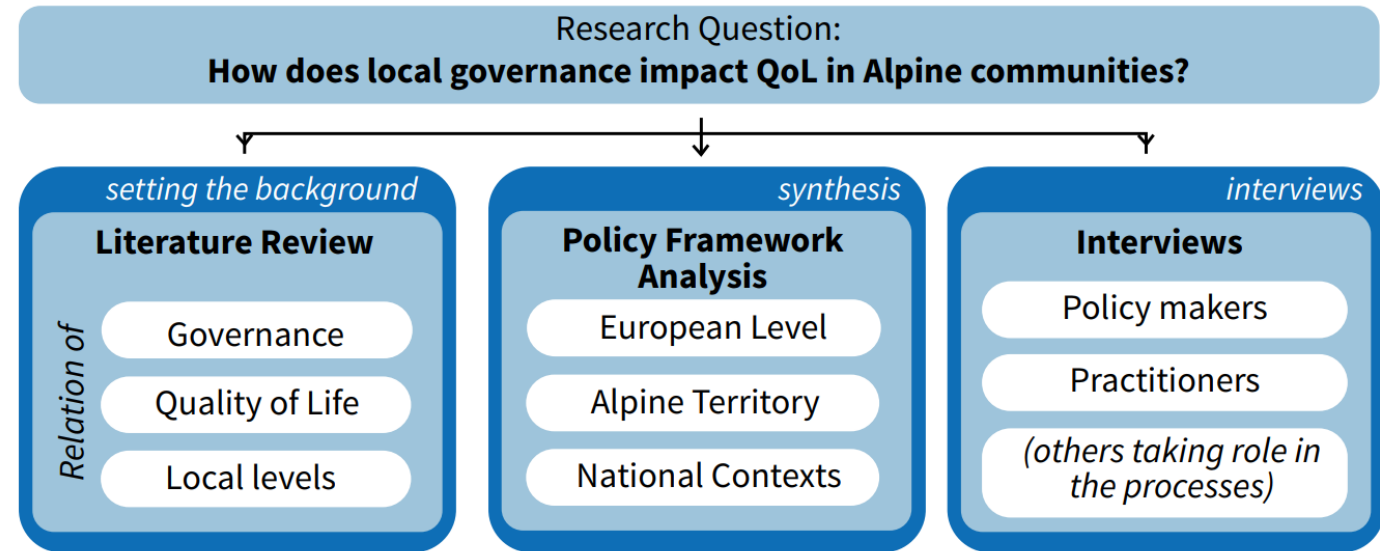


Figure 4. Methodology of the first phase of the project (authors' own elaboration)

Country	Kind of documents	Examples of policies, concerning with the QoL
Austria	Territorial specific	Austrian Spatial Development Concept Regional planning programmes Regional development strategies (Rural) development programmes on the regional level Local Development Concept
	Sectoral specific	Mobility Master Plan 2030 Local mobility concepts
France	Territorial specific	Territorial Development Directive National Strategy for Protected Areas Interregional scheme for the Massif des Alpes Interregional Convention of the Alpine Massif 2021-2027 Regional Scheme for Planning Sustainable Development and Territorial Equality Protected Areas Territorial Action Plan Intermunicipal Local Urbanism Plan Local Urbanism Plan Local Development Strategies
	Sectoral specific	Future Mountains Programme Regional Mountain Plan Ecological Transition Contracts
Germany	Territorial specific	Spatial Planning Principles Concepts and strategies for Spatial Development in Germany state development program Development plan Regional strategies and plans Regulation to check equivalent living conditions in cases of new legislation's introduction
	Sectoral specific	Transport Infrastructure Plan Public Transport Plans
Italy	Territorial specific	National Strategy for the Internal Areas National Sustainable Development Strategy Regional Territorial and Landscape Plans Provincial Coordination Spatial Plan General Territorial Metropolitan Plan The Metropolitan Agenda for Sustainable Development Strategic Metropolitan Plan Local Strategic Plan
	Sectoral specific	National Biodiversity Strategy National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change National Strategic Framework for Sustainable Mobility National Urban Agenda of the Ministry for Sustainable Infrastructure and Mobility Regional Mobility and Transport Plan Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan at Metropolitan Level
Slovenia	Territorial specific	Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia 2050 National Spatial Plan Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 Regional development programmes Regional spatial plans Strategic Municipal Plan Municipal Spatial Plan
	Sectoral specific	National Programme for the Development of Transport in the Republic of Slovenia until 2030 The Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan Long-term Climate Strategy 2050 Local Energy Concept

## 1 Synthesis of previous policy framework analysis

Aiming to understand how QoL has been integrated into the policy frameworks so far, a synthesis of the existing research has been done to present a general understanding of the existing situation.

Two main research were used: 10th Report on the State of the Alps: Quality of Life in the Alps (Marot *et al.*, 2023) and ESPON InterAlp Project (Chilla *et al.* 2024).

In these studies, policy frameworks from national levels to local level are focused on.

Table 1. Country-specific policies to steer QoL (source: Chilla et al. 2024, Marot et al. 2024)

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## Interviews with local actors

12 questions navigation around QoL definition, factors contributing to QoL, relevant actions, public engagement, monitoring systems were asked

In total 52 interviews were conducted, with having 10 participants in Austria, France, Germany, Italy and 12 in Slovenia

A wide variety of interviews from municipalities, intermunicipal communities, associations, different forms of cooperations (LAGs, LEADER)

In terms of municipalities, size and characteristics show differences:

- Small-, medium-, and large-sized municipalities with a population changing from 2000 to 20000;
- Cities with different characteristics, ranging from rural to urban and hybrid forms were involved

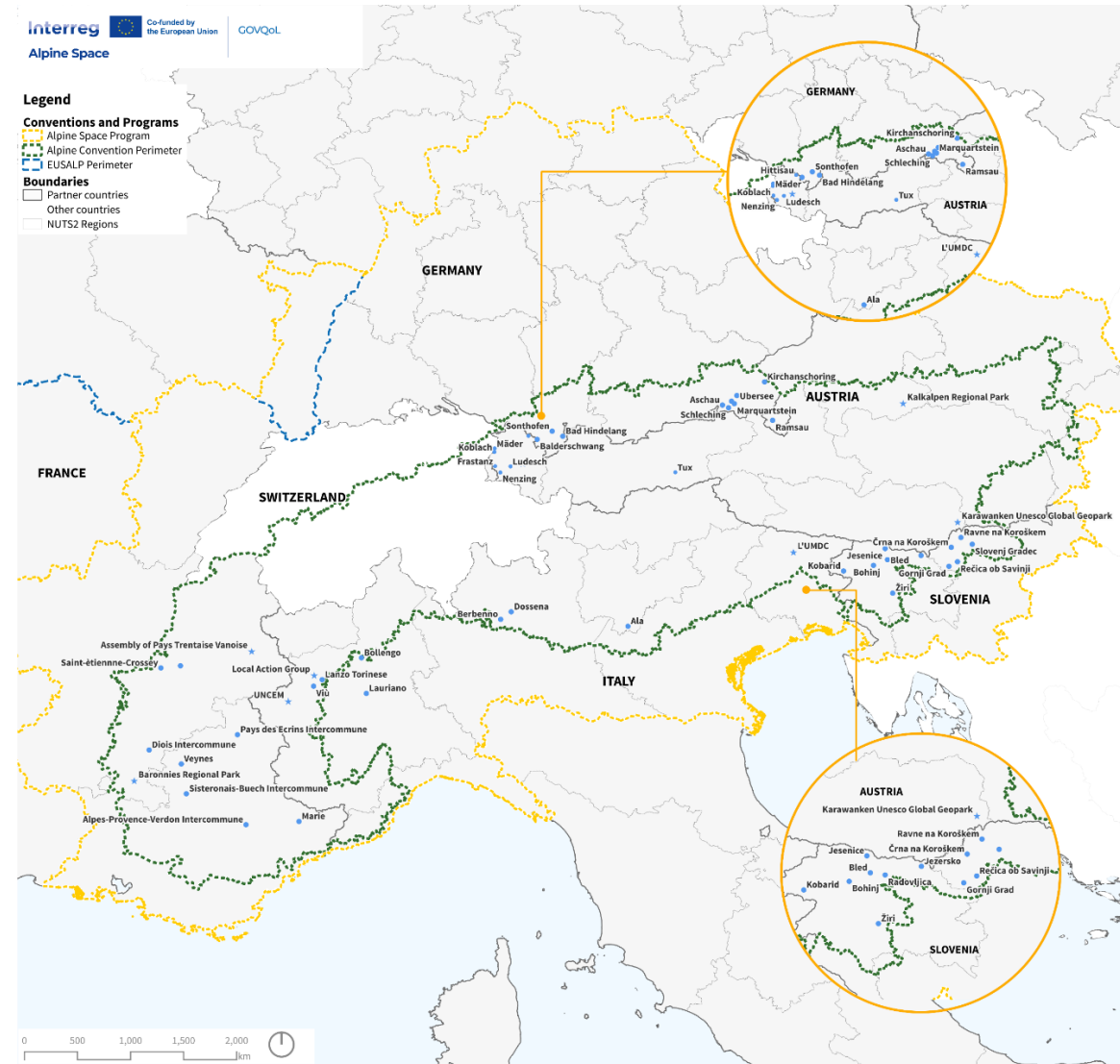


Figure 5. Interviewees' and their locations (authors' own elaboration)

# results

## 1 Synthesis of previous policy framework analysis

Austria, France, Germany, and Italy have three or more levels of governance, including national/federal, regional and local levels; meanwhile, Slovenia has two levels as national and local.

In most cases, QoL is considered a cross-sectoral issue that is addressed by multiple policies and measures, not necessarily mentioned in spatial planning strategies or plans.

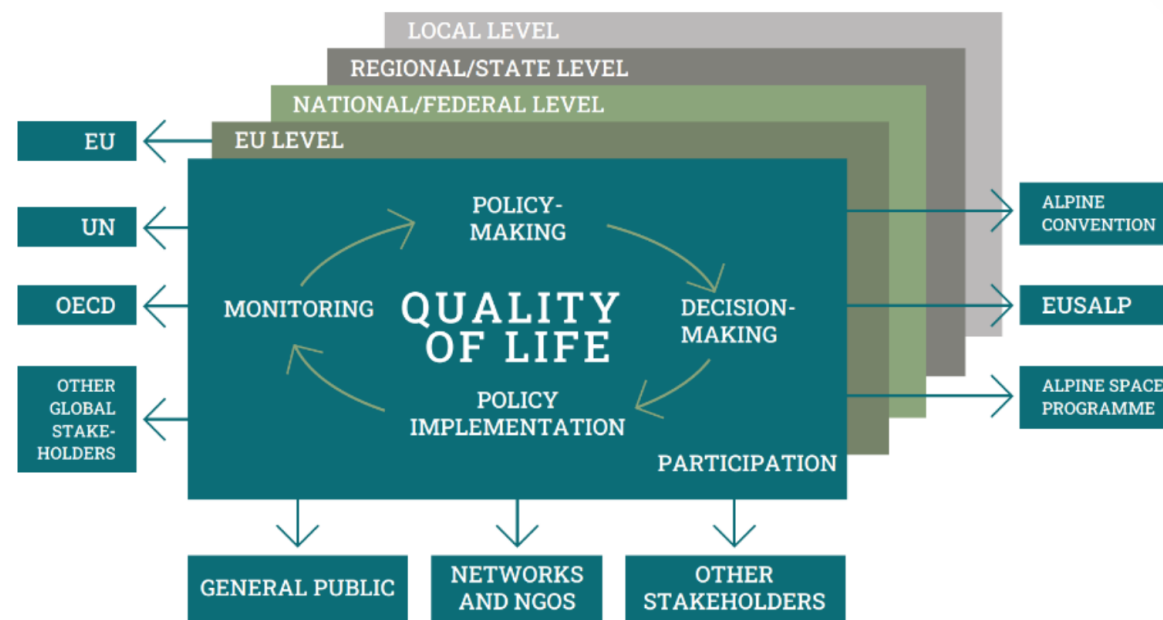


Figure 6. Governance framework for QoL in the Alps (Alpine Convention, 2025, p. 76)

## 2 Interviews with the local actors

### Definition of QoL

While the common themes for QoL appeared as having environmental quality, access to the services, and community engagement; the emphasis varied based on the country:

- Austria: social cohesion and sustainability
- France: Territorial viability and access to services
- Germany: Planning and accessibility
- Italy: Territorial equity, community life
- Slovenia: Satisfaction, service provision



Figure 7. Word cloud for the definition of QoL (produced by wordart.com by using interview analysis)

QoL has been understood in different ways with showing heterogeneity within the Alpine context.

## 2 Factors contributing QoL

### Factors contributing QoL

All the countries mostly share factors affecting the QoL:

- Objective factors: local economic opportunities, environmental services, infrastructure, access to services, local economic opportunities, environmental quality, affordable housing, territorial planning and childcare
- Subjective factors: volunteer culture, local identity, community spirit, sense of belonging, intergenerational solidarity, peacefulness, safety



Figure 8. Word cloud for the definition of QoL (produced by wordart.com by using interview analysis)

## 2 Interviews with local actors

### Governance approach

QoL has been addressed through policy documents within multilevel governance structures with varying limitations experienced in different contexts

Country	Governance Approach	Key Instruments	Main Limitation
Austria	Integrated and cross-sectoral	Spatial planning	Implementation continuity
France	Multi-level and inter-municipal	Planning instruments	Institutional fragmentation
Germany	Planning-oriented governance	Local planning; environmental regulation	Balancing growth vs preservation
Italy	Fragmented but adaptive	Local strategies and territorial cooperation	Weak coordination
Slovenia	Strategically aligned	Municipal plans; sectoral strategies	Limited implementation capacity

Table 2. Governance approach to QoL (authors' elaboration)

## 2 Interviews with local actors

### Stakeholders and Civil Society Engagement

QoL governance is co-produced through collaboration between the local governments and a wide range of stakeholders

Civil society has been a part of governance through different models in different cases

Country	Main Initiatives	Key Stakeholders	Participation Model
Austria	Climate and energy; community events	Associations, volunteers, local groups	Strong community-based
France	Social services; mobility; planning	Inter-municipal bodies, NGOs	Consultation-driven
Germany	Public space; environmental initiatives	Citizen groups, local networks	Locally structured
Italy	Welfare and services; regeneration	Municipalities, LAGs, unions	Social-capital driven
Slovenia	Infrastructure (cultural programmes (Bled))	NGOs, public services	Hybrid participation

Table 3. Initiative and stakeholders for QoL integration(authors' elaboration)

## 2 Interviews with local actors

### Monitoring and Main Gap

Monitoring is one of the weakest dimensions

In most cases, a combination of different methods has been used for evaluation;

however, there is a lack of monitoring mechanisms

Country	Monitoring Approach	Main Gap
Austria	Partial and project-based	Lack of systematic tracking
France	Weak and irregular	No continuous evaluation
Germany	Indirect monitoring	No explicit QoL metrics
Italy	Fragmented	No integrated system
Slovenia	More structured	Limited integration

Table 4. Monitoring and maing gap for it (authors' elaboration)

# discussion & conclusion

Four conclusions are drawn from the first phase of the project:

**Understanding of QoL changes depending on the context** and can be divided into two groups:

- 1 - Related with subjective perception through social cohesion, local identity and happiness
- Related with objective aspects such as living condition, provision of services, job market, and infrastructure

2 **Bottom-up initiatives are the main instruments** – while there is a lack of QoL related policies, the local initiatives either from the local authorities or participatory actions, help to enhance QoL

3 Despite having common challenges such as climate change impacts, demographic transformation, and economic restructuring, **the scale of challenges is spatial dependent**

4 **Administrative capacity and human capacities** are strongly related to the implementation and monitoring systems of QoL

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# Thank you!



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*for more information  
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