

D1.3.2 – Report on the impact of public support system for the SMEs transformation



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document presents an analysis of the public support systems available to accompany the transformation of manufacturing SMEs in the Alpine Space, with particular reference to the automotive, mechatronics and bioeconomy sectors.

The analysis focuses on three key dimensions of the transition outlined in the Industry 5.0 strategy: the digital transition (adoption of advanced technologies such as AI, IoT and robotics), the green transition (low-carbon models and circular economy approaches), and the human-centric transition (workers' well-being and skills development).

The document aims to offer a structured and practical reference for SMEs, consultants and project partners involved in supporting or implementing transformation processes.

Through a survey conducted with project partners and members of the RECENTRE Advisory Board, financial and support instruments available in eight Alpine regions were mapped: Rhône-Alpes, Grand Est, Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Veneto, Trentino and Slovenia. Data collection distinguished between past actions (over the last five years) and currently operational instruments, providing SMEs and their advisors with a practical overview of funding opportunities.

The results highlight a wide range of instruments, from innovation vouchers (€7,500–€100,000) to large-scale R&D programmes (up to €1.3 million), from European Structural Funds (ERDF, ESF+) to national initiatives such as Industry 5.0 in Italy or Just Transition measures in Austria. Innovative models also emerge, including territorial hubs (e.g. KMØ in France), collaborative platforms (e.g. GreenTech BW in Germany), and integrated training and reskilling programmes addressing different stages and dimensions of SMEs' transformation pathways.

The collected information highlights both regional specificities and common patterns across the Alpine Space, providing a comparative perspective on how public support systems contribute to fostering innovation, sustainability, skills development and organisational change in manufacturing SMEs. The document is intended to support informed decision-making and to facilitate access to relevant funding opportunities, particularly in the context of the pilot actions implemented within RECENTRE where it shall be used as an operational tool for companies involved in the RECENTRE pilot phase, enabling them to quickly identify the funding opportunities best suited to their transformation plans.



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METHODOLOGY

Introduction and overall objectives

The overall objective of the ALPINE Space project RECENTRE (ASP0500348), co-funded by the Interreg Alpine Space Programme, is to improve framework conditions that support the transformation of the manufacturing sector—particularly the automotive, mechatronics, and bioeconomy sectors—across the Alpine Space, in line with the Industry 5.0 strategy. The project aims to make SMEs more intelligent, sustainable, and resilient, while ensuring the availability of appropriate financial systems to support this transformation.

The project addresses three key dimensions of transition:

Digital transition:

Enabling SMEs to adopt advanced technologies (AT) such as artificial intelligence, digital twins, the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, and automation. This transition enhances operational efficiency, supports data-driven decision-making, and enables the development of smart production systems.

Green transition:

Supporting the shift towards low-carbon, resource-efficient, and circular business models, helping SMEs align with EU climate objectives and respond to growing societal demand for sustainability.

Human-centric transition:

Rooted in the principles of Industry 5.0, this transition places people and society at the centre of innovation, ensuring that technology serves human needs, protects workers' well-being, and fosters inclusive and meaningful work environments.

Manufacturing transformation refers to profound and comprehensive changes in industries triggered by the introduction of new technologies, innovative practices, and revised strategies aimed at increasing efficiency, sustainability, and competitiveness. Such transformation often involves a fundamental realignment of organisational culture, structure, and strategy, resulting in companies that are significantly different from their previous core configuration. A key component of this process is the human-centric dimension, which requires adapting employees' roles through upskilling, networking, and transparent involvement in change processes, in order to reduce uncertainty and secure the long-term viability of companies.



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In addition, improving efficiency and productivity through the use of new technologies and optimised processes, as well as promoting sustainability by adopting more climate-friendly technologies and production methods, represents a central aspect of this transformation.

RECENTRE addresses technological, environmental, and social transformation by developing region-specific models and actively involving decision-makers throughout the process. By drafting a transformation strategy and testing it in SMEs across several countries, RECENTRE provides expertise, technologies, and tools to support the transformation of the manufacturing sector.

This document focuses on the financial tools available to SMEs to support the implementation of their transformation plans, by collecting and systematising information on the funding opportunities available across the different territorial areas participating in RECENTRE.

Survey design and objectives

This report primarily focuses on the contribution that public support systems can provide in assisting SMEs with investments related to green and advanced technology transformation, offering a detailed analysis of this topic. In practice, it summarises the information collected through an international survey conducted by the RECENTRE partnership, aimed at gathering feedback from SMEs operating in the mechatronics, automotive, and bioeconomy sectors in order to identify the main bottlenecks, needs, and barriers they face.

A specific section of the survey was in fact addressed to RECENTRE partners and focused on financial and investment support tools available in the different regions covered.

The main topics related to support systems included in that section were:

1. Past actions and programmes implemented in the region over the last five years;
2. Ongoing actions, programmes, aids, and funding opportunities;
3. Support organisations;
4. Best practices and lessons learned;
5. Suggestions and remarks.

The objective of the data collection was to build on the partners' skills and knowledge in order to



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provide a comprehensive overview of the tools available in each territorial area, taking into account their evolution over time (past versus ongoing measures), the experience gained (best practices and lessons learned), and potential suggestions for future improvements. To complete the information gathering, partners were also asked to identify relevant organisations within their regions that could act as facilitators or managers in the implementation of the identified actions.

This report focuses on the description of support instruments (points 1 and 2 of the list), as they are particularly relevant for subsequent use in the pilot phase. The additional information collected for the remaining points is provided in an attached file, which brings together all the responses gathered through the survey (Annex 1).

Target audience involved

The objective was to provide RECENTRE partners, participating companies, and consultants with a toolkit to support the financing of the transition projects planned for the subsequent pilot phase. For this reason, the decision was made to focus the information-gathering activities exclusively on the support organisations involved in RECENTRE and on the policy-makers identified as members of the Advisory Board. This approach proved to be effective and, through the various steps outlined in the following paragraph, enabled the identification of the set of tools available to companies across the different territorial areas.

Data collection process

To increase the efficiency of the data collection process, the questions relating to support tools were included in the international survey circulated as part of Activity 1.3 which was also addressed to other stakeholders. In this specific case, for the reasons already explained, only RECENTRE partners were asked to respond.

After the initial round of data collection, direct contacts were used to complement, correct, or integrate the information received, in order to develop the document that was subsequently discussed in plenary meeting — first with the partners and then with the Advisory Board representatives.

In detail, the collected information was first analysed to eliminate inconsistent elements and items that could not be considered part of a package of tools available to support business transition projects, for example, those linked to temporary initiatives such as European projects. The results of this analysis were then condensed into a streamlined document (PowerPoint



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presentation) listing the reported tools for each geographical area involved in RECENTRE, divided into past and ongoing tools.

The presentation was discussed in a meeting, shared with partners to fine-tune its content and then finalised incorporating their input. The file subsequently served as the basis for discussion with the Advisory Board (AB). During the meeting, AB members were asked to review the content and add any additional elements if necessary.

Advisory Board members who were unable to attend the first meeting (held online on October 9th) were subsequently contacted by their respective partners, updated on the meeting's content, and asked to provide feedback. Specifically, the goal was to verify whether they were aware of any tools not included in the list that should be added, to receive feedback on the most effective tools, and to collect ideas for new tools to be considered.

The results of this activity were consolidated in the final PowerPoint presentation of the available tools and instruments (Annex 2).



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SURVEY RESULTS

Overview of information collected

The following pages present the information collected through the survey, organised by geographic area and by past and ongoing actions. In addition, the actions related to RECENTRE's three transition areas of interest (Digital, Green, and Human) are highlighted, along with assessments of their effectiveness and references to the supporting organisations, where provided.

Past actions and programmes

Rhone Alpes

In the case of Rhone Alpes, the two main signal actions with reference to the Digital Transition are **Industry of the Future Investment Solutions** and **SI PME** (individual support, group support, and training for skills development). The first relates to investments in equipment and materials related to the development of industrial activities, as well as real estate investments such as the acquisition, construction, and development of industrial premises. The second has the objective to reduce the time-to-market for products, lower manufacturing and prototyping costs, improve product quality and/or lifespan, and optimize production processes.

With reference to the Green Transition, the tools highlighted are **Innov'R Program**, **Rhône-Alpes ISO 14001 – CSR**, and **ADEME**. The first concerns R&D funding for eco-innovations and supports project implementation, funds projects, and enables real-world experimentation under actual conditions. The second are collective actions, which have seen 140 participating companies across both themes. The third concerns support for green production investment.

Turning to aspects related to the human-centric transition, two elements stand out: **National Employment Fund Allocation** and **ARACT**. The first, managed through the Observatoire Compétences Industries (OPCOs), aims to finance training related to ecological and digital transitions. The second, managed by the Regional Agency for the Improvement of Working Conditions in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, focuses on human capital and HR support services. It is generally believed that HR support is essential for managing change and that blended support approaches, combining group and individual work, are particularly appreciated.

Grand Est



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The Grand Est Region has identified four elements with reference to the Digital Transition: **Industry of the Future** Regional Plan, **Quest for Industry, France 2030** and **KMØ** (Mulhouse). The first is included in the Grand Est Compétitivité program and aims to support SMEs and mid-sized companies in adopting Industry 4.0 technologies. It involves the following actions: 100% subsidized industrial performance diagnostics, customized support linking companies with relevant economic players and solution providers, training to facilitate networking and exchange of best practices, identification of solution providers within the Grand Est region. The second, a thematic incubator dedicated to supporting industrial startups from the prototyping phase to their first production facility, is part of the Quest for Change network in the Grand Est region. It has the objective of supporting industrial startups from prototyping to their first production facility through the following actions: coaching by experienced business managers, access to a broad network of industry partners and experts, fundraising support for industrial projects. KMØ (Mulhouse), instead is an example of successful private company and initiative supporting technological transformation. Its objective is to serve as an innovation hub focused on the digital transformation of industry. The main features are: it hosts over 70 companies and 25 technical training programs, provides facilities like a fablab and an Industry 4.0 demonstrator, facilitates cross-sector collaboration among industrialists, entrepreneurs, startups, and educational programs. It helped the creation of a dynamic innovation ecosystem focused on industrial transformation.

With reference to the Green Transition, the tools highlighted are **Crédit d'impôt en faveur de l'industrie verte** (C3IV), **DINAMHySE** (Hydrogen Valley of the Grand Est) and **CCI Alsace Eurométropole – Green Economy Services**. In details, the objective of DINAMHySE is to accelerate hydrogen sector development in the Grand Est through the following actions: supporting projects across the hydrogen value chain and creating partnerships with companies for local hydrogen production and use. The foreseen outcome is to build a strong industrial ecosystem for hydrogen solutions. As regards CCI Alsace Eurométropole – Green Economy Services, however, the objective is to assist companies in transitioning to a greener economy through the provision of the following services: Energy consumption assessments and optimization strategies, Waste reduction and resource efficiency consulting, Guidance on renewable energy production and energy recovery opportunities. The approach promoted is to provide companies with tailored advice and services aiming to align environmental responsibility with business development.

Regarding human-centric transition, the tools reported are **Alsace Tech –Transitions program and conferences**, **Alsace Employer Branding** (ADIRA) and **Grand Est Region – Workforce Development Initiatives**. The first supports companies through industrial, digital, environmental, energy, and societal transitions through thematic conferences on topics like sobriety and personal development, facilitating collaborative projects between engineering schools and companies and mapping 4.0 competencies of schools. It aims at strengthens ties between academia and industry and



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encourages skills development. The second has the objective to attract, retain, and support talent in Alsace. The corresponding actions are: collaborative approach involving companies and regional partners and the development of welcome kits, HR tools, and recruitment platforms. The expected outcome is to boost regional attractiveness for skilled professionals. The third has the objective of supporting the recruitment and training needs of industrial companies. It includes the following Programs: FIFE initiative for collective recruitment projects requiring specific skills, customized training programs developed in collaboration with employment and training stakeholders, support for executive recruitment, initiatives to facilitate the professional integration of young people and *Revenu de solidarité active* beneficiaries.

Baden-Württemberg

The digital transformation in Baden-Württemberg can rely on several tools. The main ones are: **Innovation Voucher BW**, **Hightech BW innovation voucher**, **Start-up BW innovation voucher** and **InvestBW**. Innovation Voucher BW covers scientific activities in the run-up to an innovative project and for implementation-oriented R&D services in the course of an innovative project. It makes available up to € 7,500 grant with a funding rate of 50%. It is open to all technologies and sectors and is aimed at both SMEs and start-ups. Hightech BW innovation voucher for SMEs concerns initiatives for scientific activities in the run-up to an innovative project, for implementation-oriented R&D services and for material costs in connection with a particularly demanding innovative project. The Hightech BW innovation voucher is open to all technologies and sectors and covers up to € 20,000 subsidy with a funding rate of 50%. Start-up BW innovation voucher is addressed to start-ups up to a maximum of five years after foundation, for scientific activities in the run-up, for implementation-oriented R&D services and for material costs in connection with a particularly ambitious innovative project from the growth fields of the future. The Start-up BW innovation voucher can also be used to fund innovation projects in the pre-start-up phase. It covers up to € 20,000 with a funding rate of 50%.

Through InvestBW, funding is provided for research, development and innovation projects, including process innovations or non-technical innovations and service innovations that are aimed at new products, new services, new business models and business processes as well as service platforms across all sectors. The aim is to open up new market areas and increase the productivity, competitiveness and innovative strength of companies. Both individual company projects and joint projects with more companies or universities and research institutions, are eligible for funding. It makes available up to € 650,000 for individual projects and up to 1.3 million € for joint projects. The main areas are green tech, health, bioeconomy, digitalisation, etc..

Regarding green transformation, Baden-Württemberg offers the funding program **Unternehmen machen Klimaschutz** – Companies do climate protection and **GreenTech Baden-**

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Württemberg. The first has two modules: Consultation module and Investment support module, offering companies support for corporate climate protection measures and supporting companies in taking the next steps towards economically successful and effective climate protection. Companies can also get consultation regarding CO2-records and corporate sustainability reporting. The second is a platform acting as a one-stop-shop for sustainable suppliers and for match-making for industry, offering catalogues and networking of institutions and companies.

Finally, to support human-centric transformation, Baden-Württemberg offers the initiative “THE CHÄNCE”, a statewide campaign promoting lifelong learning and professional development, aimed at personalized guidance, boosting skills and job opportunities.

Bavaria

In Bavaria, digital transition support is provided through the **ZIM** and **go-digital** programs, plus projects for regional clusters and testbeds. Specifically, ZIM supports R&D initiatives for SMEs, while go-digital provides vouchers for consulting services.

Regarding green transition, the available tools are funded by European funds, particularly ESIF and ERDF, and include interventions for co-funded energy projects, efficiency/renewables schemes, audit/efficiency vouchers, and circular economy pilot calls.

Finally, regarding human-centric aspects, mention should be made of ESF-backed upskilling measures, chamber/cluster academies, and "train-the-trainer" formats.

These are typically multi-year programs that lead to outcomes such as pilot lines, reduced energy intensity, digital QA, and certified skills.

Lower Austria

In Lower Austria there are two main programs that support R&D initiatives and which are accessible for digital transformation interventions: **Research & technology development - Quality** and **Research, development & innovation - infrastructure** projects and technology centres. The first supports R&D projects with project costs starting from €50,000 that have a high potential for market implementation. The program favours the dynamic development of the company or research institution, also through cooperation, and serves to increase resource efficiency in addition to building up know-how, supporting experimental development or feasibility study. The second supports R&D infrastructure projects that are necessary to achieve R&D results. The



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infrastructure must be made available to interested users on open, transparent and non-discriminatory terms and the price charged for the use or sale of the infrastructure must correspond to the market price.

For both programs, both companies and research institutions as well as their co-operations are supported.

Upper Austria

In this case, the survey identified the following tools: **Inland Environmental Promotion** (UFI), the main instrument for concrete climate and environmental protection measures; for the automotive sector, the **ITS Action Plan Austria** constitutes a framework with which future strategies must be aligned; and there are also specific measures to support **pre-commercial procurement**, the public sector can in fact facilitate implementation by taking requirements and minimum standards into account when drawing up performance agreements.

Veneto

In Italy one of key initiatives to support the transformation of companies, particularly in sectors like automotive, mechatronics, and the bioeconomy is the national **Industry 4.0 Plan**. This plan was launched by the Italian government with the aim of fostering the adoption of advanced technologies, improving the competitiveness of businesses, and promoting industrial innovation. Currently, the plan is complementary to the more recent **Transition 5.0 Plan**, which broadens its objectives to include environmental and energy sustainability. The National Industry 4.0 Plan aims primarily to encourage digitalization and the adoption of advanced technologies by Italian companies, especially those operating in innovative and technology-driven sectors like automotive, mechatronics, and bioeconomy. Another tool worth mentioning is PID (Punto Impresa Digitale - Digital Enterprise Hub) an initiative promoted by the Chambers of Commerce to SMEs in their digitalisation process. The PID offers services and resources that help SMEs adopt advanced technologies to improve their competitiveness. The main goal is to guide companies through their digital transformation journey by providing a variety of awareness, consultancy, and practical support activities. The focus is on adopting innovative technologies that can improve business management, operational efficiency, and competitiveness.

Trento Province

In the specific case of the province of Trento, the ERDF incentives for SMEs investing in production processes, to support digital transformation and the TS Innovation Academy and Innovation Manager Open Call, supporting human-centric transformation, were highlighted.

Slovenia



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In Slovenia, the P4D-DI - Digital Transformation Support for SMEs program is highlighted, as are the Slovenian Enterprise Fund (SPS) and SPIRIT Slovenia. Other available support schemes include P2, P7, RRI2, and DIH vouchers. In particular, P4D-DI provides grants of up to €100,000 for co-financing digital transformation – purchase of equipment, digitization of processes, cyber security, ERP/CRM systems, and consulting.

Ongoing Actions, Programs, Aid and Funding.

This section of the document is the main one, as it summarizes the tools currently operational in the various areas covered by RECENTRE. This means that when companies are developing digital, green, or human-centric transformation plans and need to raise funds to implement their activities, they can refer to this section for an overview of the available opportunities. It will then be a matter of exploring the various aspects in greater depth, either with the company's consultant or with one of RECENTRE's partners, who can easily help the company identify the tool, or combination of tools, best suited to supporting the implementation of the plan.

Area	Name of the instrument	Type of activities supported
Rhone Alpes	Etre accompagné dans mon projet d'Industrie du Futur	<p>Managing environmental and energy challenges related to your activity</p> <p>Establishing, evolving, and sustaining an agile and high-performing organization</p> <p>Optimizing your industrial site project and securing your investment</p> <p>Optimizing industrial processes</p> <p>Automating repetitive tasks to improve productivity, flexibility, and working conditions</p> <p>Relocating production or industrializing a new product in the region</p>
Rhone Alpes - Digital Transition	BPI Diagnostics	Data, AI, Cybersecurity, Digital Transformation, Industry of the Future Strategy
Rhone Alpes - Digital Transition	BPI Digital Loan	



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Rhone Alpes - Digital Transition	ADEME	Responsible Digital (Alt Impact): to raise awareness among all stakeholders about the environmental impact of digital technologies and helping organizations understand the issues. Supports training in digital sobriety and measuring digital environmental impact. Also funds forward-looking territorial projects on digital sobriety.
Rhone Alpes - Digital Transition	Pack Relocalisation	Funding for production tools as part of an industrial relocation project in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region
Rhone Alpes - Green Transition	Industry of the Future Support	Same conditions as above, applied to green transition themes
Rhone Alpes - Green Transition	Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region Energy Loan	Funds investment projects aimed at reducing energy consumption and environmental impact
Rhone Alpes - Green Transition	ADEME	Funding for consulting and investment services (eco-design, waste heat recovery, waste reduction, carbon emissions, etc.)
Rhone Alpes - Green Transition	CSR Support	Provided by BPI and AFNOR
Rhone Alpes - Green Transition	ADEME and CCI Diagnostics	Water, circular economy, energy
Rhone Alpes - Green Transition	Communities of Practice in Savoie and Haute-Savoie	Support for 10 companies, six times per year, on circular economy topics
Rhone Alpes - Human	Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region HR support service	12 days of expert guidance
Rhone Alpes - Human	Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Enterprises Agency	Workshops on future skills for industrial companies



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Rhone Alpes - Human	OPCO Skills Operator (OPCO – French sectoral training and funding body)	Funding for training, diagnostics, and HR/CSR support (PCRH), including former OPCO 2I programs: CO2I, digital and skills diagnostics
Rhone Alpes - Human	ADEME PACTE Industry	Employee training component
Rhone Alpes - Human	BPI and ADEME program VTE Vert	Hiring recent graduates (less than 2 years) for ecological transition missions
Rhone Alpes - Human	Relocation Pack	Includes employee training
Rhone Alpes - Human	Higher Education Initiatives	Institutions like Centrale Lyon, ENTPE, INSA Lyon, and Mines Saint-Étienne combine their research expertise and training capabilities (initial and continuing education) within the Engineering College
Grand Est – Technological Transformation	Industry of the Future Regional Plan (Grand Est). Grand Est Compétitivité programme	Support SMEs and mid-sized companies in adopting Industry 4.0 technologies: 100% subsidized industrial performance diagnostics, customized support linking companies with relevant economic players and solution providers, training to facilitate networking and exchange of best practices, identification of solution providers within the Grand Est region.
Grand Est – Technological Transformation	KMØ (Mulhouse)	Private company, serve as an innovation hub focused on the digital transformation of industry. Hosts over 70 companies and 25 technical training programs. Provides facilities like a fablab and an Industry 4.0 demonstrator. Facilitates cross-sector collaboration among industrialists, entrepreneurs, startups, and educational programs
Grand Est – Technological Transformation	KTUR ²	Cross-border Innovation Hub provide access to advanced research infrastructures. Develop streamlined procedures for R&D collaboration. Offer continuous training programs for professionals. Support entrepreneurship through networking events



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		and startup programs. Identify and analyse funding instruments for innovation projects
Grand Est – Green Transformation	Smart Industrial Park (SIP) Program	Prepare industrial parks in the Grand Est region for the green transition. Focus Areas: achieving soil neutrality, enhancing sustainability and competitiveness, improving quality of life and governance within industrial parks. Actions: Assess company needs and experiment with innovative solutions promoting the green transition, engage stakeholders through events and collaborative projects. Over 15 projects identified, more than 120 entities engaged, and 15 events hosted.
Grand Est – Green Transformation	CCI Alsace Eurométropole	Green Economy Services: assist companies in transitioning to a greener economy through energy consumption assessments and optimization strategies, waste reduction and resource efficiency consulting, guidance on renewable energy production and energy recovery opportunities.
Grand Est – Human	Alsace Tech – "Transitions" Conferences	Address various aspects of industrial transformation, including sobriety, personal development, and corporate social responsibility. Organize conferences and webinars featuring experts and researchers to facilitate discussions on the role of human factors in industrial evolution.
Grand Est – Human	Workforce Development Initiatives	Support the recruitment and training needs of industrial companies. Programs: FIFE initiative for collective recruitment projects requiring specific skills; customized training programs developed in collaboration with employment and training stakeholders, support for executive recruitment through Apec services, initiatives to facilitate the professional integration of young people and RSA beneficiaries.



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Baden-Württemberg - Technological Transformation	Invest BW	Call 2025 (now closed) with €30 million budget, specific focus on e.g. medical innovation, use of health data, resilience, resources, materials
Baden-Württemberg - Technological Transformation	Innovation Vouchers	
Baden-Württemberg - Technological Transformation	Digitalisierungsprämie Plus KMU / „Digitalization bonus ‘plus’ for SMEs	Small-scale financial support for digitalization efforts, either as loan or as grant
Baden-Württemberg - Technological Transformation	ERDF “Spitze auf dem Land/High-performers in the countryside	Including STEP-ERDF-Funding, focusing on funding options for hidden champions in the countryside
Baden-Württemberg - Technological Transformation	Export consulting by RKW	Consulting-association with large number of associated consultants available specifically for SMEs with regard to: Digitalization Leadership & organizational development, Sustainable management, Operations, Corporate succession, efficiency and innovation investment
Baden-Württemberg - Green Transformation	Funding program “Unternehmen Klimaschutz“	consulting support (e.g. CO ₂ footprint analysis, climate strategy) and investment grants for climate protection measures
Baden-Württemberg - Green Transformation	Green Tech BW	Hub for those working on environmental, resource, and climate protection technologies, aims: visibility, networking, supply chains, funding info etc.
Baden-Württemberg – Human	THE CHÄNCE	Statewide campaign promoting lifelong learning and professional development, aiming at



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		personalized guidance, boosting skills and job opportunities
Baden-Württemberg – Human	Ministry for Economy with ESF funds	Specialist course funding
Bavaria - Technological Transformation		SME digitalisation vouchers and consulting, R&D grants, testbed access via clusters and centres
Bavaria - GreenTransformation		Energy audits/efficiency grants, support for PV/heat recovery, circular pilot calls, climate-impact assessments
Bavaria - Human		ESF-style upskilling funds, micro-credentials via chambers and clusters, leadership change programmes
Lower Austria	Bioeconomy Austria	Under the lead of ecoplus - the Business Agency of Lower Austria - has evolved from a “project basis” to an ongoing institutional national Network with over 350 members
Lower Austria - technological and green transformation	JUST TRANSITION FUNDS	Mobilising industry for a clean and circular economy (e.g. product/material innovations through, for example, a transition to renewable, recyclable raw materials and increased use of secondary raw materials; manufacturers of recycling plants, timber construction, conversion to bioplastics).
Lower and Upper Austria		The Plastics cluster and the Mechatronic cluster of Lower Austria and Upper Austria cooperate and provide joint services for their members
Upper Austria	#upperVISION2030	Public funding measures and instruments are provided to R&D organisations, enterprises and



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		SMEs to support their transformation (e.g. FFG - Austrian Research Funding Association)
Lower and Upper Austria – National level	Competence Centers for Excellent Technologies (COMET)	Fosters collaboration between academia and industry to drive innovation in key technological areas, including automotive engineering, sustainable vehicle technologies
Upper Austria – Technological transformation		Measures are implemented along mutual FTI goals that are anchored in various national funding initiatives and are widely transacted through the Austrian Research Funding Association (FFG)
Lower and Upper Austria – National level – Green transformation	National Strategic Framework for Clean Energy in Transport	Outlines measures for the adoption of electricity, hydrogen, and natural gas as cleaner energy sources, along with the necessary infrastructure development
Lower and Upper Austria – National level – Green transformation	EBIN (Electrification of Bus Fleets)	Supports the transition of bus fleets to electric power, including infrastructure development
Lower and Upper Austria – National level – Green transformation	ENIN (Electrification of Heavy-Duty Vehicles)	Focuses on subsidising the electrification of heavy-duty commercial vehicles and the necessary charging infrastructure
Upper Austria – Green transformation	Future Mobility Region Upper Austria by Business Upper Austria (Automotive Cluster)	Strategic initiative aimed at positioning Upper Austria as a leading hub for sustainable and innovative mobility solutions. Spearheaded by the Upper Austrian government and coordinated by Business Upper Austria, the initiative focuses on consolidating regional expertise in mobility and energy



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		sectors to drive the transformation towards climate-friendly transportation
Upper Austria – Human	Workplace Upper Austria 2030 (Arbeitsplatz OÖ 2030)	The strategic framework programme which underpins the labour market policy in Upper Austria. The goals of the program are to secure skilled workers for the Upper Austrian economy in the long term and to avoid unemployment as best as possible with the aim of achieving full employment.
Lower and Upper Austria – National level – Human	Just Transition Action Plan on Training and Reskilling Austria	A comprehensive action plan focusing on education, company collaboration, and communication to support the workforce during the green transition. Initiatives include updating vocational training programs, providing scholarships for green skills training, and launching awareness campaigns to promote green jobs.
Veneto – National level	National Industry 5.0 Plan	Aims to evolve and strengthen the digital and industrial transformation initiated with Industry 4.0, while placing a stronger emphasis on sustainability, social innovation, and long-term competitiveness. Main objectives: Advanced Digitalization and Automation, Environmental and Energy Sustainability, Social Innovation and Well-being, Competitiveness and Resilience of Enterprises, Digital Transition of SMEs, Development of Innovative Ecosystems.
Veneto – R&D initiatives		ERDF support goes to initiatives linked to green transition, digital transformation and human capital.
Veneto – R&D initiatives		Pathway to Digital and Sustainable Transition, managed by the Chambers of Commerce in collaboration with local universities



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Veneto – Human	ESF+ programme	
Trento Province	Territorial ESG Framework	For a sustainability evaluation of the whole territory, comprehending institutions and companies. This leads companies to measure their performances along about 90 ESG KPIs
Trento Province	InnovAction program	A support program including training and testing services for companies to support the adoption of advanced and sustainable technologies (co-funded by the Ministry of Enterprise and Made in Italy (MIMIT), the European Union through the Next Generation EU program and funds from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRP)).
Trento Province – Human	trentino4talent	Collaboration with the territorial employment agency to recruit and attract highly skilled professionals with the competences needed by local SMEs in the manufacturing sector to enable the twin transition.
Trento Province – Human	Manager employment call	For the recruitment of experienced innovation managers within companies
Trento Province – Technological Transformation	Provincial incentives law for companies	Encompasses economic incentives for investments on production facilities, energy efficiency, circular economy, research and development projects, growth and internationalisation
Slovenia – Digital Transformation	P4D-DI – Digital Transformation Support for SMEs	Co-financing digital transformation – purchase of equipment, digitization of processes, cyber security, ERP/CRM systems, consulting
Slovenia – Digital Transformation	P2, P7, RRI2, DIH vouchers	



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Slovenia – National instruments	Slovene Enterprise Fund (SPS) and SPIRIT Slovenia	
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Summary of main findings

The analysis reveals a broad and diversified landscape of public support instruments available to manufacturing SMEs across the Alpine regions. Most regions offer a combination of financial and non-financial tools addressing digitalisation, environmental sustainability and workforce development, often implemented through integrated policy frameworks at regional, national and European levels.

Digital transformation measures are widely represented and include innovation vouchers, R&D grants, digitalisation bonuses and access to testing infrastructures, often complemented by advisory and consulting services. These instruments primarily support the adoption of advanced technologies, process optimisation and the development of new products and business models.

Green transition support focuses on energy efficiency, low-carbon technologies, circular economy practices and climate protection measures. Common tools include investment grants, energy audits, advisory services and targeted programmes aligned with broader climate and sustainability strategies. Several regions also promote territorial or cluster-based approaches to support green innovation. This is especially the case for Lower and upper Austria, even if with a different approach: Lower Austria clusters are EFRE-cofinanced and “do not need” external funding, while in Upper Austria they need external support by, for instance, initiatives like RECENTRE and is therefore more project driven.

Human-centric transformation is mainly addressed through training, upskilling and reskilling programmes, HR support services and initiatives aimed at improving working conditions and employee well-being. These measures are often funded through ESF or national labour market instruments and increasingly linked to the digital and green transitions.

Overall, the findings underline the importance of coordinated support systems that combine financial incentives with advisory, networking and capacity-building actions to effectively accompany SMEs throughout their transformation processes.



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CONCLUSIONS

The analysis conducted confirms that the Alpine Space is characterised by a well-developed and consistent system of public instruments enabling manufacturing SMEs to undertake digital, green and human-centric transformation processes. However, the mapping also reveals significant differences among regions in terms of the type, scale and accessibility of the support measures available. Overall, the diversity and availability of instruments across regions offer significant opportunities, but they also require clear guidance and awareness to ensure their effective uptake by companies. In this context, the RECENTRE approach proves particularly relevant: the mapping exercise has highlighted the added value of a structured overview of support tools, allowing SMEs and their advisors (in many cases represented by Clusters) to better navigate complex funding landscapes and to identify instruments aligned with their specific transformation needs.

This final chapter, thus, summarises the strengths identified through the analysis of the available information. It also presents some challenges for the future and areas for potential improvement, which may be useful both for internal reflection within the partnership and for discussion with policy-makers from the involved areas and the Alpine macro-strategy. Finally, recommendations are outlined which, as for the previous section, can serve as input for discussions at both organisational and political levels.

Identified strengths

- **Diversification of instruments:** each territory offers a mix of incentives ranging from free diagnostic consultancy services to substantial grants for productive investments, ensuring support for companies with different financial capacities and levels of technological maturity.
- **Integration of the three transitions:** some programmes adopt an approach that recognises the interconnection between digitalisation, environmental sustainability and the enhancement of human capital by offering integrated solutions. A stronger integration between technological, environmental and human dimensions could further enhance their effectiveness.
- **Presence of facilitating organisations:** chambers of commerce, regional agencies, industrial clusters and competence centres, among others, play a crucial role in guiding SMEs through the complex landscape of available funding opportunities.



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Challenges and areas for improvement

- **Administrative complexity:** the wide variety of instruments, each with specific requirements and procedures, can be challenging for SMEs with limited internal resources.
- **Geographical fragmentation:** the lack of common standards across Alpine regions requires companies operating at a cross-border level to navigate significantly different systems.
- **Temporal sustainability:** many programmes are time-limited or dependent on European funding cycles, creating uncertainty for long-term planning.

Final recommendations

1. **Strengthen coordination** among Alpine regions to facilitate cross-border access to funding opportunities, foster policy learning, and better align support systems with the concrete challenges faced by SMEs.
2. **Simplify administrative procedures** to ease companies' involvement.
3. **Ensure continuity of the most effective programmes**, avoiding interruptions that could undermine transformation pathways already underway.
4. **Intensify communication and capacity-building** activities targeting SMEs, many of which are not yet fully aware of the opportunities available to them.

Within this framework, the toolkits and approach that RECENTRE is developing represent a concrete first step towards improving the accessibility and usability of public support systems, providing both participating companies and supporting organisations with the tools needed to translate transformation plans into concrete and sustainable actions. At the same time, they can inform further dialogue with policymakers and support organisations on improving the framework conditions for SME transformation.

