

## Strategy-development for the Alpine Space

### Key Statements

**31 July 2012**

Produced by an expert team composed of

Erik Gloersen  
Université de Genève, Switzerland

Thomas Bausch  
Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften München, Fakultät für Tourismus, Germany

Harold Hurel  
INGEROP conseil & ingénierie, Direction Infrastructures, France

Wolfgang Pfefferkorn  
Rosinak&Partner ZT GmbH, Austria

Filippo del Fiore and Carlo Ratti  
Senseable city laboratory, Italy

Alma Zavodnik-Lamovšek  
University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Civil and Geodetic Engineering, Slovenia

***The present key statements are an output from the Second Draft Report on Strategy Development for the Alpine Space. They are meant as a basis for discussions with alpine stakeholders.***

***The expert group is grateful for many inputs from the project Task Force, composed of representatives of the participating countries, of the Managing Authority and of the Joint Technical Secretariat. However, the key statements have been written under the sole responsibility of the group of experts.***

***The key statements are an interim result, which will be amended by the group of experts on the basis of forthcoming stakeholder dialogues in the Alpine Space.***

Seen from a European perspective, the Alpine Space is a group of prosperous regions, with a number of thriving metropolitan areas, a world-class tourism industry and a high general level of socio-economic development.

The socio-economic challenges become obvious when observing the Alps at a more narrow scale. One observes intra-regional demographic and economic polarisation, increasing external pressure on small and isolated alpine settlements and a number of ecological challenges. Transnational alpine cooperation therefore faces a paradox of scales: it argues that one should look beyond national borders to find solutions to problems that occur within regions. However, this is only an apparent paradox. The driving forces of economic, social and environmental change within the Alps operate at a much higher level than individual localities; alpine regions must join forces to meet current and forthcoming challenges and exploit emerging opportunities.

***Key Statement 1: Six major external driving forces influence regional development in the Alpine Space***

The six major external driving forces to be considered in the alpine context are:

- ***Climate change***, with potentially drastic effects on snow coverage, precipitation, the flow of rivers, alpine agriculture and forestry as well as alpine habitats;
- ***Uncertainties regarding Europe's future energy supply*** may make alpine renewable sources of energy more important (hydroelectricity, biomass, solar energy and wind power);
- ***Global market dynamics***, whose uncertainties the alpine space is generally well-equipped to face;
- ***The shift to a knowledge and information society***, which makes it important to ensure that alpine industries are well-connected to leading research and development environments;
- ***Demographic change***, with the combined effects of ageing and new patterns of migration.
- ***The continuous growth in flows of goods and persons***, especially through the increasing pressures on a limited number of Alpine transit corridors, leading to bottlenecks and creating a negative impact on the environment.

By reflecting on how local and regional development trends in the Alps are affected by these six driving forces, the need for transnational cooperation becomes obvious.

***Key Statement 2: The Alpine Space strategy can be structured around three objectives***

Considering the challenges and opportunities emerging from the main alpine driving forces, three strategic objectives can be defined for the Alpine Space:

- ***Foster resilience***: the alpine space needs to become stronger in the face of increasing uncertainties. This implies identifying alpine communities' factors of vulnerability, and identifying how they could be less exposed to these risks. Resilience also presupposes an

*awareness of the core values to be preserved, and adaptations that would be accepted when needed.*

- **Turn to a green economy**, so as that alpine industries reflect the value-basis of alpine communities, while positioning themselves in promising economic niches. Creating a green economy also presupposes fundamental changes in the functioning of the economy, for example by integrating the value of ecosystem services and by internalising negative environmental externalities in production costs. The Alpine Space can reflect on ways of promoting these issues at the national and European levels.
- **Build on cultural diversity and social solidarity**: Solidarity and close social ties are traditionally a hallmark of alpine communities and regions. This has created the basis a very stable value system that can also in some respects be a challenge, as societies become more multifaceted, with a greater diversity of lifestyles and cultural identities. The challenge is to turn this tension between alpine traditions and social change into a strength, by building on the assets and providing tools to address issues when they emerge.

These strategic objectives reflect the long-term strategic orientation of the Alpine Space, and also function as a basis for identifying key priorities and strategic for the future Alpine Space Programme in the period 2014-2020. They can be considered as an adaptation of the European Union's "Europe 2020" priorities to the Alpine Space.

**Key statement 3: The action fields of the Alpine Space Programme  
will only address some aspects of the Alpine Space strategy**

In view of further specifying an Alpine Space strategy, nine so-called "action field objectives" can be identified on the basis of the observation of alpine challenges and opportunities:

- Use of endogenous natural resources in an efficient and sustainable way;
- Capitalise on diverse human and cultural potentials;
- Organise the conversion to a low carbon energy system;
- Balance the risks and use the opportunities of demographic change;
- Implement measures to cope with environmental and climate change related risks and opportunities.
- Build on a knowledge based society in all parts of the Alpine Space
- Improve the stimulation of entrepreneurship and innovation in manufacture, handicrafts, industry, services and tourism
- Develop a new quality of management of mobility and transport needs
- Strengthen the trans-alpine network and governance capacities

The final selection of action field objectives to be addressed by the Alpine Space Programme will have to incorporate a series of factors, the first of which is relevance for pan-alpine cooperation. Existing measures and initiatives outside of the Alpine Space Programme also need to be considered, in view of maximising the added value of the actions. Experience gained from the current and previous Alpine Space Programme can further help identifying where the programme would make the most significant contribution.

Finally, the regulatory framework for transnational European Territorial Cooperation will determine how many actions fields may be covered. According to current proposals, they also encourage a focus on environmental issues.

***Key statement 4: An Alpine Space strategy must develop synergies between different types of territories***

One of the key characteristics of the Alpine Space is the extent of territorial heterogeneity. Topographic constraints have traditionally limited interaction and cooperation, and explain the tendency of alpine communities and regions to be inward-looking. This calls for dedicated actions in the Alpine Space to promote inter-territorial coordination and multi-level governance.

A synthetic and operational typology distinguishing five main groups of alpine territories can guide these efforts:

- Alpine metropolises
- Alpine cities
- Stable or growing rural areas
- Declining and shrinking rural areas
- Tourism areas

The objective with this typology is not to single out alpine territories in need of support from high performing ones. It should serve as a basis for building strategic alliances and synergies between territories with different challenges and opportunities, whose respective assets may complement each other.

***Key Statement 5: A targeted Alpine Space policy is needed***

The focus of alpine transnational policy needs to be on issues for which the Alpine Space is the optimal geographic context for the design and implementation of measures, the exchange of good practice and/or policy discussions. This is a precondition for ensuring that alpine cooperation contributes to the wise and cost-efficient allocation of public funds.

Transnational cooperation is of added value for a number of issues. However, this is not a sufficient justification for addressing them in the context of the Alpine Space. Alpine Space policies must focus on issues for which the Alpine Space is the best possible level of policy design and/or implementation.

This may for example be justified by:

- Functional considerations: the Alpine Space corresponds to the geographical level at which the issue arises or should be efficiently addressed;
- Political considerations: the Alpine Space Programme has better preconditions to bring forward the debate on an issue than other institutions and organisations;
- Symbolic considerations: raising this issue at the level of the Alpine Space will increase the chances that local, regional and/or national institutions or organisations will start dealing with it.

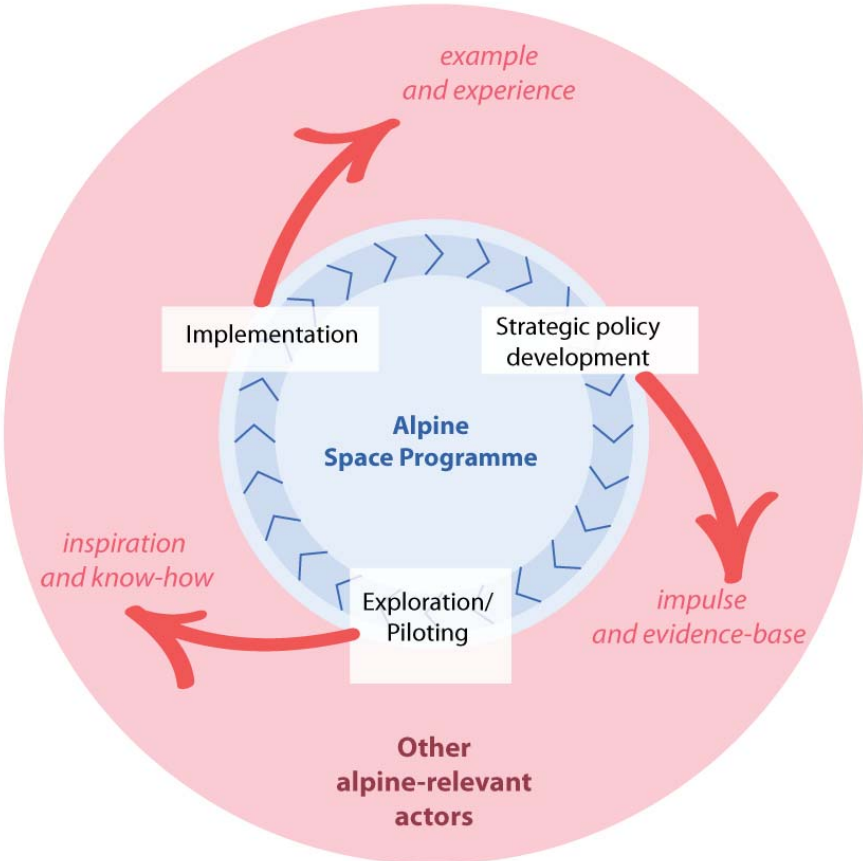
When pursuing a strategy for the Alpine Space, the Alpine Space Programme needs to involve all actors of relevance. This may also include actors located in other areas.

**Key Statement 6: The Alpine Space Programme is a component of alpine governance**

As shown by key statement 3, factual evidence on the opportunities and challenges is not sufficient to design a strategy for the Alpine Space Programme. The strategic orientations and actions of other actors are just as important.

The Alpine Space Programme must be thought as a component of Alpine governance, rather than as a funding stream seeking to impact alpine social, economic, environmental and institutional performance in isolation. The focus must be on the leverage effect of Alpine Space Programme on other actors.

This implies that the “policy cycle” developed as part of the Alpine Space Programme revision process should be extended to incorporate the effect on other alpine-relevant actors.



*Extension of the Alpine Space Programme’s “policy cycle” to incorporate external actors.*

***Key Statement 7: The objective of the Alpine Space Programme is to have a long term impact***

The Alpine Space Programme should act as driver for cooperation in the Alpine Space primarily seeking to interact with the strategies and actions of other alpine-relevant actors, including local, regional and national authorities, to contribute to the achievement of strategic objectives for the Alpine Space.

A “result-oriented” programme would therefore need to focus on these types of effects, and not on possible changes in the economic, social and environmental performance of alpine territories. The assessment of the impact of the programme is necessarily qualitative.

The Alpine Space Programme needs to focus its efforts on the identification of existing obstacles to the emergence of an effective alpine level of governance and on the promotion of projects designed to overcome them.

***Key Statement 8: An alpine macro-regional strategy needs to focus on a limited number of clearly defined and concrete transnational issues***

A macroregional strategy is about dealing with a very limited number of clearly defined and concrete transnational issues, whereas a European Territorial Cooperation initiative such as the Alpine Space Programme has a wider thematic focus. The objective is to ensure that all relevant actors contribute to address these issues in a coordinated and efficient way. The success of the macro-regional strategy can be assessed by analysing the extent the issues at stake have been improved or even solved.

This is the initial understanding of macro-regional strategies, and the only one that seems viable on the long term. Broader macro-regional initiatives strategies that develop a holistic strategy trigger a lot of useful dialogue between regions and other stakeholders. However, because of the lack of focus and prioritisation, they risk becoming “paper tigers” when the initial enthusiasm has passed. Furthermore, they overlap too much with existing transnational cooperation programmes to be of added value from the European perspective.

If a broad macro-regional strategy is adopted, this risks creating confusion on the respective roles of the two European instruments that would then address alpine issues. It would also be unlikely to have a concrete impact in the wide range of different fields it would cover. This may on the long term jeopardize the commitment of regional and local stakeholders to transnational cooperation.

The macro-regional strategy to be adopted for the Alpine Space therefore needs to be very focused.

***Key Statement 9: The Alpine Space Programme can contribute to progressively construct the Alpine Space as a meaningful level of policy making***

Formulating a focused Alpine macro-regional strategy for the Alpine space that would be in place for the next cohesion policy programming period starting in 2014 will be a challenge. This presupposes that a limited number of critical issues requiring policy actions at the level of Alpine Space are identified and agreed upon by the widest possible range of alpine stakeholders. Current macro-regional initiatives illustrate the difficulty of producing such a prioritisation.

If it would turn out not to be possible to adopt a sound, well-embedded and targeted macro-regional strategy before 2014, a more strategic orientation of the Alpine Space Programme could be part of an alternative strategy. The pursuit of the three strategic objectives (see key statement 2) would establish connections and strategic alliances between alpine actors. This would help creating the preconditions for the elaboration and adoption of a shared vision for the Alpine Space, around which territories from the Alps and from peri-alpine areas could rally and which could mobilise a wide range of sectoral actors.

This presupposes that the connection between the strategic objectives and the individual projects is strengthened. The programme cannot rely on projects that are in line with the strategic objectives to be generated spontaneously in response to proposals for co-funding. More proactive approaches to the generation of project ideas are needed. Targeted awareness-raising efforts are needed, as well as a mapping of key actors within each strategic objective. The criteria used to assess project proposals and evaluate project outputs, must also incorporate the strategic objectives for the Alpine Space more explicitly.

Efforts to engage in a dialogue with a wide range of alpine stakeholders and actors of relevance for the Alps also need to be reinforced. The greater visibility of the programme resulting from the adoption of clearly defined alpine-specific objective may facilitate these exchanges.

***Key Statement 10: A more strategically oriented Alpine Space Programme needs to combine multiple functions***

A more strategically oriented Alpine Space Programme needs to combine three functions:

- Trigger and fund actions within a limited number of fields, considering the regulatory framework to be adopted for European Territorial Cooperation;
- Provide inputs to debates on the long-term strategy for the Alpine Space, that are necessarily based on a comprehensive approach to alpine development;
- Be a catalyst of improved cooperation and coordination among alpine-relevant actors, bridging policy sectors, stakeholders and territories, within and outside the Alpine Space.

These three functions feed into each other: being active within networks of alpine actors will help generating projects that contribute to the achievement of the strategic objectives; long-term

strategy development presupposes a wide dialogue with alpine actors and stakeholders; actions to be supported are selected on the basis of a comprehensive strategy for the Alpine Space. However, they presuppose different modes of interaction with external stakeholders and geographical scopes of action. To preserve the coherence of the programme and strengthen its external visibility, a clear rationale for how these different functions would co-exist and interact is required.