

**Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
for the Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027**

Non-technical Summary

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

Final version

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**Institute of Landscape Development, Recreation and Conservation Planning,
Department of Landscape, Spatial and Infrastructure Sciences
University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU)**

**Authors: Alexandra Jiricka-Pürner, Christa Hainz-Renetzeder
(with support from Alice Wanner)**

Peter Jordan-Straße 82 (mail)/ 65 (office)

A-1190 Vienna

Tel.: +43/1/47654-85323

www.boku.ac.at

Contact person: Alexandra Jiricka-Pürner, PhD MSc.

E-Mail: alexandra.jiricka@boku.ac.at



Universität für Bodenkultur Wien

Non-technical summary

Overall, Alpine environmental issues are – despite past achievements in the Alpine Space territory – **continuously affected by land use change, climate change and related spread of neobiota**. Climate change itself but also response to it as well as mitigation efforts can imply also negative consequences and conflicts of objectives. **Resource scarcity** is very likely to increase in the Alpine Space territory due to a combination of drivers of land use change. Particularly, soil (land) and water capacities are affected.

In this context, the SEA highlights four significant goals to improve the condition of the environmental issues in the Alpine territory further:

- **To improve the ecological condition and connectivity**
- **Decrease pollution and deterioration of environmental issues**
- **Enhance multi-functional land-use to reduce conflicts and enhance co-benefits (e.g. for climate regulation, hazard protection, mitigation and nature conservation targets)**
- **Reduce resource consumption**

The final version of the Alpine Space Programme 2021+ is tackling several of these challenges and goals actively and contributing directly and indirectly to improvements of the environmental condition in the programming territory. The SEA was iteratively integrated in the programme development process. Presentation of the scoping results including major environmental goals and challenges for each environmental issue and the Alpine Space territory overall were discussed with the entire Task Force and relevant institutions such as the JS and MA team, the programme drafting experts and the representative of the European Commission. During the programme drafting process also the monitoring results for the previous Alpine Space Programme were taken into consideration by the Task Force as well as possible implications for the upcoming programming period. Therefore, the programme is strongly reflecting environmental aspects.

To sum up, the SEA did not identify any significant negative environmental impacts, based on the final programme version from May 2021, which served as the basis for this environmental report, when considering the monitoring results of similar specific objectives (and over-arching priorities) of the past Alpine Space Programme (2014-20), viewing the actions planned and including the feedback of the iterative process with the programme drafting experts and responsible institutions.

Assessment results of the four priorities are summarized and displayed in Table 1. Detailed information on the assessment results for each environmental objective with specific explanation in context of the actions planned under this specific objective are provided in section 5 of the environmental report.

Priorities	Specific Objectives	Soil	Water	Climate/Air	Fauna, Vegetation, Biodiversity	Landscape	Human health, Population	Material assets and cultural heritage
Priority 1 "Climate resilient and green Alpine region"	S.O. iv. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience	Significant positive impacts likely	No significant impacts to positive impacts	No significant impacts to positive impacts	No significant impacts to positive impacts	No significant impacts to positive impacts	Significant positive impacts	Significant positive impacts
	S.O. vi. Enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution	Significant positive impacts likely	Significant positive impacts likely	Significant positive impacts likely	Significant positive impacts likely	Significant positive impacts likely	Significant positive impacts likely	Significant positive impacts likely
Priority 2 "Carbon neutral & resource sensitive Alpine region"	S.O. i Promoting energy efficiency measures	No significant impacts to positive impacts	No significant impacts likely	Significant positive impacts likely	No significant impacts likely	No significant impacts likely	Significant positive impacts likely	No significant impacts likely
	S.O. vi. Promoting the transition to a circular economy	No significant positive impacts likely	No significant positive impacts likely	Significant positive impacts likely	No significant impacts likely	No significant impacts likely	Significant positive impacts likely	No significant impacts likely
Priority 3 "Innovation and digitalisation Alpine region"	S.O. i Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	No significant impacts likely	No significant impacts likely	No significant to positive impact	No significant impacts likely	No significant impacts likely	Significant positive impacts likely	No significant impacts likely
	S.O. ii Reaping the benefits of digitalisation for citizens, companies and governments	No significant impacts likely	No significant impacts likely	No significant to positive impacts likely	No significant impacts likely	No significant impacts likely	Significant positive impacts likely	No significant impacts likely
Priority 4 "A better Interregional Governance"	enhance institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies	No significant impacts likely	No significant impacts likely	No significant to positive impacts	No significant impacts likely	No significant impacts likely	No significant impacts to positive impacts	No significant impacts likely

Table 1: Assessment tables summarizing the impact assessment for the different Specific Objectives

As the past SEA monitoring showed, the integrative consideration of environmental impacts and positive synergies is highly dependent on the integration of environmental expertise right from the beginning. Information on environmental challenges and environmental goals (see also section three and four of the environmental report) can contribute already in the calls and application procedure to a more detailed reflection on multi-dimensional sustainability.

Throughout the whole project lifetimes synergies with other projects can be established to maximize co-benefits. For the novel programme, the SEA estimates synergies between several priorities and specific objectives, as also partly indicated within the programme itself. Figure 1 summarizes synergistic effects among priority one to three with regard to enhancement of positive environmental impacts. Positive interrelationships between several environmental issues are likely and can be exploited further through positive cumulative impacts with other specific objectives and even additional funding schemes and planning initiatives complementary to the Alpine Space Programme’s activities. The SEA does perceive priority four as neutral in this context and therefore it is not included in this figure. Apart from the synergies within the Alpine Space Program, other funding and research programs at European and national level offer opportunities to join efforts and maximize positive outcomes in their foci.

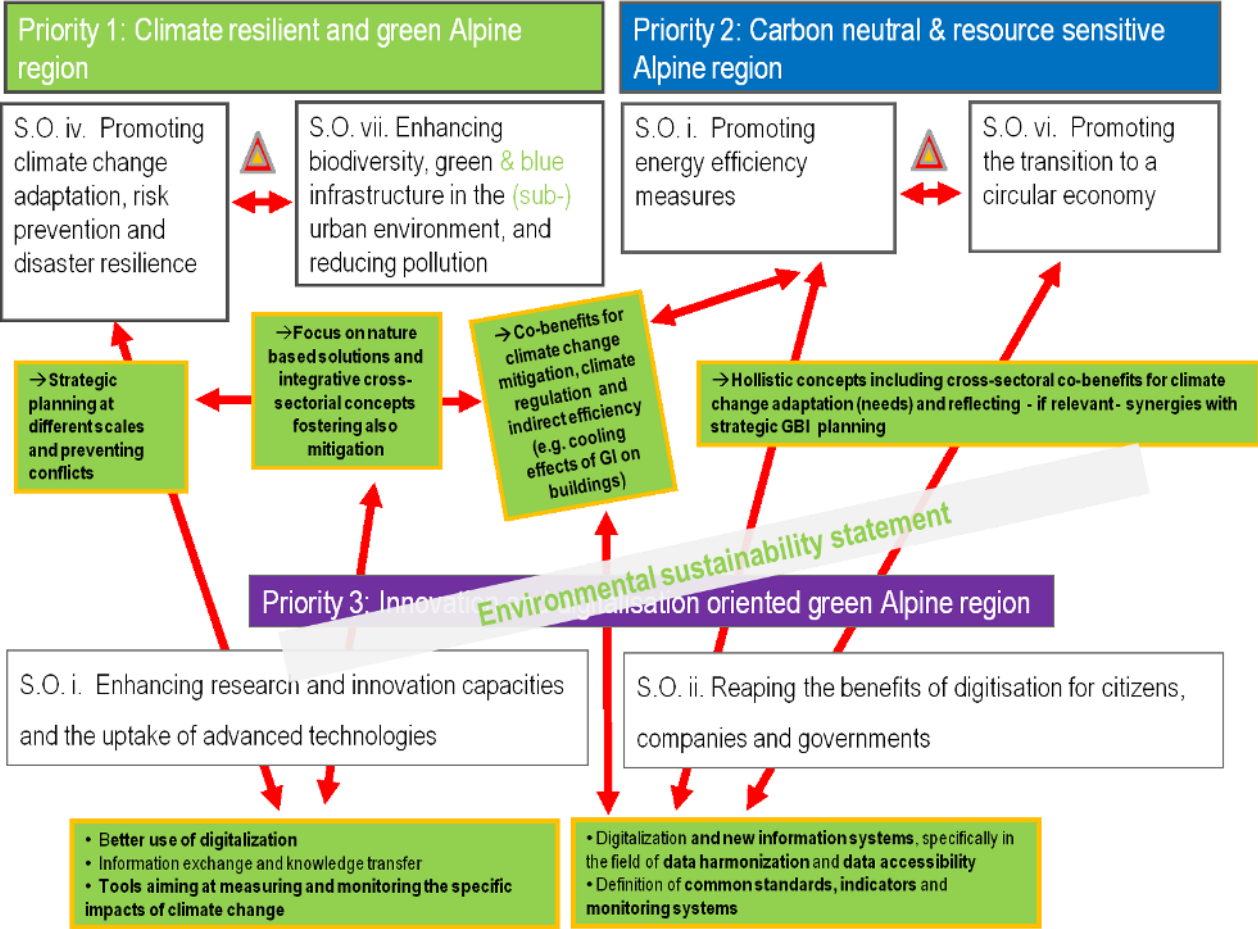


Figure 1: Overview of synergistic interrelationships between the specific objectives to enhance even more the positive environmental impacts of the Alpine Space Programme

No mitigation or compensation measures are required in case the specific objective iv focuses on nature-based solutions and retention capacities. Thereby, if synergies with S.O. vii are well used, it can even create positive co-benefits for other adaptation or mitigation targets or even flora/fauna/biodiversity conservation objectives. Actions also address higher alpine areas. These territories and their flora/fauna/habitats will be impacted strongly by climate change. Project selection, implementation and monitoring therefore needs to pay special attention not deteriorate or negatively impact habitat conditions. Also, for S.O. i of priority 2 negative environmental impacts are unlikely viewing the planned activities. Consequently, no specific mitigation measures (or selection criteria) are recommended. In the first draft of the environmental report the SEA encouraged applying the **sustainability statement** included in priority three for the entire programme. In the final version, the programme announces a clear commitment to amplify positive environmental impacts including strong efforts to mitigate climate change and also its impacts on the alpine territory. Early consideration of negative impacts and avoidance of any harm on the environmental issues is explicitly addressed as the following statement of the programmes' final draft announces (ASP 2021+, final programme, p. 15): *“To foster the “green and CO2-neutral approach” of the Alpine Space programme 2021-2027 even more, the programme invites all partners to consciously consider expected and unexpected impacts of their projects or actions on the environment, climate and sustainability, to seek mitigation of possible adverse effects, to strengthen any positive effects and, whenever possible, to incorporate mechanisms or practices that will unleash such positive effects (e.g. “green projects” considering environmental aspects right from the beginning).”*

Although not significant negative impacts are to be expected from the Alpine Space Programme 2021+, provided the project selection will reflect environmental impacts accordingly, monitoring of any unforeseen environmental impacts is recommended. Additionally, the SEA monitoring can survey synergistic effects to create significant positive environmental impacts and interrelationships between several environmental issues.