

Interreg Alpine Space

Terms of Reference

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for a project proposal of the Action Group Leaders of
the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)





Introduction

The **Interreg Alpine Space programme 2014-2020** is an EU co-financed transnational cooperation programme that supports sustainable regional development in the Alpine region. Contributing to the EU 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, it provides stakeholders with a framework to develop, test, implement and coordinate new solutions. The programme has four funding priorities: innovative Alpine Space, low carbon Alpine Space, liveable Alpine Space and well-governed Alpine Space. More information on the programme can be found under: www.alpine-space.eu.

The **EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)** is a macro-regional strategy that has the objective to organise cooperation between Alpine countries or territories by mobilising local, regional and national actors to align policies and funding and to identify common issues, solutions and actions. The EUSALP addresses the challenges of the Alpine Region by selecting three thematic policy areas focusing on topics with the highest macro-regional relevance such as: (1) economic growth and innovation, (2) mobility and connectivity and (3) environment and energy as well as Governance and institutional capacity as a cross-cutting policy area. Macro-regional strategies are based on the principles of no new EU funds, no additional EU formal structures and no new EU legislation. They are an instrument for optimal use of existing financial resources, better use of existing institutions and better implementation of existing legislation.

The high consistency of the funding priorities of the Alpine Space programme, the national and regional policies and the thematic pillars of EUSALP guarantees a smooth coordination between programme and strategy. It ensures that projects submitted under all four funding priorities of the programme give answers to the needs of the area and that the programme supports the implementation and governance of the EUSALP through its priorities and funding.



Application and assessment procedure

According to Article 7 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 the ERDF may support measures aiming at developing and coordinating macro-regional strategies under transnational cooperation programmes. Thus, the Interreg Alpine Space programme 2014-2020, as approved by the European Commission on December 17th 2014 has been designed in a way that it can inter alia co-finance the development and implementation of the EUSALP under its priority 4. Herewith, the EUSALP Action Group Leaders (AGL), represented by the Action Group Leader taking the lead in the project, are invited to submit an application form, together with a signed partnership agreement to the programme.

The joint secretariat of the programme will assess the application according to the programme's assessment criteria. Based on this assessment the programme committee will take the co-financing decision.

Details on the quality requirements for projects, assessment criteria, eligibility rules and contractual arrangements are provided in respective factsheets that can be found on the programme website¹.

Programme expectations

In the implementation of EUSALP the action groups (AG) are key actors. The tasks of the AGL include amongst others facilitating involvement and cooperation with relevant stakeholders from the entire macro-region, identifying projects complying with EUSALP objectives, facilitating policy discussions in the macro-region and liaising and cooperating with other AGL to ensure synergies, coherence and avoid duplication of work on the strategy implementation. By co-financing a joint project of the EUSALP AGL the partner states of the Interreg Alpine Space programme intend to continue supporting the AGL in performing these tasks. Thereby, the programme partners are also ready to contribute with programme funds to strengthening the internal and external communication of the EUSALP.

¹ See section [project implementation handbook](#)



The activities which shall be implemented in the framework of a dedicated Alpine Space project are by nature only one part of many activities which are set by the EUSALP action groups. However, the programme expects the applicants to develop a project proposal that is consistent with the aims that they agree to reach with this specific project, thus to clearly describe in the application which project objectives are strived for, which concrete activities shall be set and which outputs, results and deliverables shall be achieved in the end. The programme partner states ask the applicants to consider the advanced stage of maturity and the strategic dimension of the EUSALP and coordination of EUSALP bodies. The project proposal shall therefore not be a simple prolongation and extension of activities, which are currently implemented in the Alpine Space project “AlpGov”. The project proposal should foresee an appropriate approach and clearly described methods on how the set objectives shall be reached. This shall also include the setting up of a differentiated communication strategy and the planning of targeted measures so to ensure an increased visibility of the EUSALP and transparency of the work of single AG. Mechanisms strengthening links within the EUSALP governance bodies, in particular with the executive board, to increase political ownership and ensuring constant and pro-active information flows, also with the Alpine Space programme and the Alpine Convention, shall be part of these communication measures.

The applicants shall pay attention to the consistency of the project partnership, project budget and project duration with the envisaged activities and outputs. In order to allow a timely and quick closure of the programme, the project shall end no later than 30 June 2022.

The project shall furthermore be based on a slim and efficient **project structure and organisation**:

- This shall be especially reflected in a limited number of work packages and work package responsables.
- Whereas an Alpine Space project can have 15 project participants (including the lead partner) at maximum, the applicants are encouraged to keep the project partnership as small as possible so to ensure operability. The project partnership shall predominantly involve AGL and may exceptionally foresee further partners if this is considered essential for the project and agreed by the whole partnership.



- The project applicants are recommended to make use of the possibility to involve observers since recent programme evaluations have shown the considerable positive effects and advantages of involving observers in project activities.
- The programme asks for an intensified use of internal resources and knowledge so to ensure proper capacity building on the level of the project partner institutions.

As regards the **project budget**, the following shall be considered:

- The applicants may calculate with an ERDF amount of 2.4 million Euros. The final committed amount will depend on the quality of the project.
- The budget granted for the project shall be used explicitly for project-specific tasks, coordination and communication work.
- The aim of the programme is to co-finance only project related activities and not the regular work of AG member- and leadership.
- The project applicants are strongly recommended to make use of the 20% flat rate for staff costs or foresee less than this amount for this specific budget line. Only in well-justified cases (such as involvement of affiliated institutions, specific communication tasks, or project management / increased coordination tasks that have to be set out in detail in the application) staff cost budgets on real costs basis exceeding the 20% share of a single partner budget will be accepted. The total budget allocated to the budget line "staff" shall be limited to 30% of the total project budget in any case.
- To ensure a timely financial implementation of the project and to reduce the risk of a decommitment on programme level, the following decommitment rule will be applied and set out in the subsidy contract: If less than 80% of the spending target (ERDF tranches to be requested per reporting period as indicated in the AF) is met, the PC will decide if the difference will be considered as "decommitted" for the project and if the total ERDF budget of the project will be reduced accordingly. Therefore, the project should carefully calculate its spending targets. At least 30% of the budget shall be allocated to 2020 and at least further 35% to 2021.
- The programme's eligibility rules (fact sheet 1.4) and especially the general principles of eligibility such as additionality, efficiency, economy and effectiveness shall be carefully considered already in the setting up of the project and its budget.



Submission period and co-financing decision

The project application form shall be submitted, together with a signed partnership agreement via the programme's electronic monitoring system (eMS) until 05.06.2019 1 pm. After project evaluation by the JS, the programme committee will take the co-financing decision on 02.10.2019.