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LIVE WHEREVER YOU WANT AND WORK WHERE YOU'RE LIVING

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Managing the transition
to hybrid work and
satellite offices to revitalize
remote mountain areas

Are co-working spaces good for rural and mountain remote areas?

The AlpSatellites project is aimed at fostering the settlement of new residents and digital nomads in rural and mountain areas by analysing the opportunities and challenges of remote and co-working solutions.

AlpSatellites is designed to lay the ground for a shift to digital workplaces and telecommuting arrangements in the Alps.

The project explores remote and co-working solutions with a view to mitigating negative demographic trends by attracting new residents to remote mountain areas and supporting them in settling down there.

The project is financed by the EU's Alpine Space Programme.

The purpose

Many remote Alpine regions are experiencing population decline and ageing, while the urban-rural divide is widening. The purpose of the AlpSatellites project is to analyse the opportunities and challenges of remote working with a view to attracting young people, workers and digital nomads to remote areas and helping them to integrate into local mountain communities.

The project partners will work closely with local stakeholders to design tailored solutions for attracting and integrating remote workers based on the provision of digital workplaces and telecommuting facilities.

The partners will generate new opportunities for the digital, economic, and social development of their communities by making peripheral areas attractive places for both people and businesses.

The partners

The project's six-way partnership comprises the Unité des Communes valdôtaines Evançon (Valle d'Aosta - Italy), the Association Culturelle, Sociale et Sportive du Queyras (France) and the Municipality of Gemeinde Doren (Austria) plus three academic partners (University of Valle d'Aosta, Aix-Marseille University and FHV University).

The **Communes valdôtaines Evançon**, the **Pays du Grand Briançonnais, des Ecrins and du Guillestrois/Queyras** and the **Municipality of Gemeinde Doren** are all characterized by a rural/mountain landscape, careful management of local ecosystems and a strong cultural identity. Instead of merely reacting to changes such as those arising from the recent public health emergency, these communities wish to shape the new developments by creating fresh opportunities in the digital, business, and social domains.

The **University of Valle d'Aosta**, **Aix-Marseille University** and **FHV University** will help the three local area partners to attain these goals by combining scientific research with co-creation initiatives. A comparative analysis of the target communities' level of readiness for offering remote working facilities will inform the partners' work with local stakeholders to design optimal solutions for attracting and integrating remote workers.



University of Valle d'Aosta and Unité des Communes valdôtaines Evançon

The AlpSatellites project was launched in September 2022 with the aim of exploring co-working spaces and solutions as an opportunity to attract new residents to the Alps. The initiative is led by the University of Valle d'Aosta (UNIVDA).

UNIVDA's partner on the Italian branch of the project is Unité des Communes Valdôtaines Evançon, a local authority that oversees 10 municipalities. AlpSatellites was inaugurated during an international event held in Verrès (Aosta Valley) in early November and hosted by the Unité Evançon. This was a cross-border and cross-sector me-

eting, during which policymakers, companies and members of the public spoke with the project partners about distance working and co-working facilities as a potential means of encouraging young people to move to remote rural and mountain areas.

Following this event, UNIVDA worked with all the other project partners on the joint design of a questionnaire for assessing mountain community residents' perceptions of the pros and cons of remote working and co-working and of the types of services required to make these new lifestyles fulfilling and sustainable.

Data collection is underway and preliminary results are expected to be shared in May 2023. This activity is tied up with another key component of the project that also requires the input of local stakeholders: the co-design of solutions and policies that can help remote workers and their families to settle down and integrate with local communities. In February, members of the public, students, companies and institutions from the Unité Evançon and Valle d'Aosta Region will take part in co-creation workshops, with a view to jointly drawing up a vision and a roadmap for remote-friendly tech areas in the Alps



Aix Marseille Université and Association Culturelle, Sociale et Sportive du Queyras

The Association Culturelle, Sociale et Sportive du Queyras (**ACSSQ**) and Aix-Marseille Université (**AMU**) have been working on the Alpsatellites project since early November 2022. AMU researchers have conducted research on the concept of remote working, the limitations that can be associated with this new work arrangement, and the impact of the phenomenon on people, organisations and society more generally.

This preliminary investigation has:

- clarified the current state of the art in research on remote working

and the areas of France on which it is important to focus for the purposes of this project

- informed the joint design with the other project partners of a questionnaire for gathering further knowledge about these new practices.

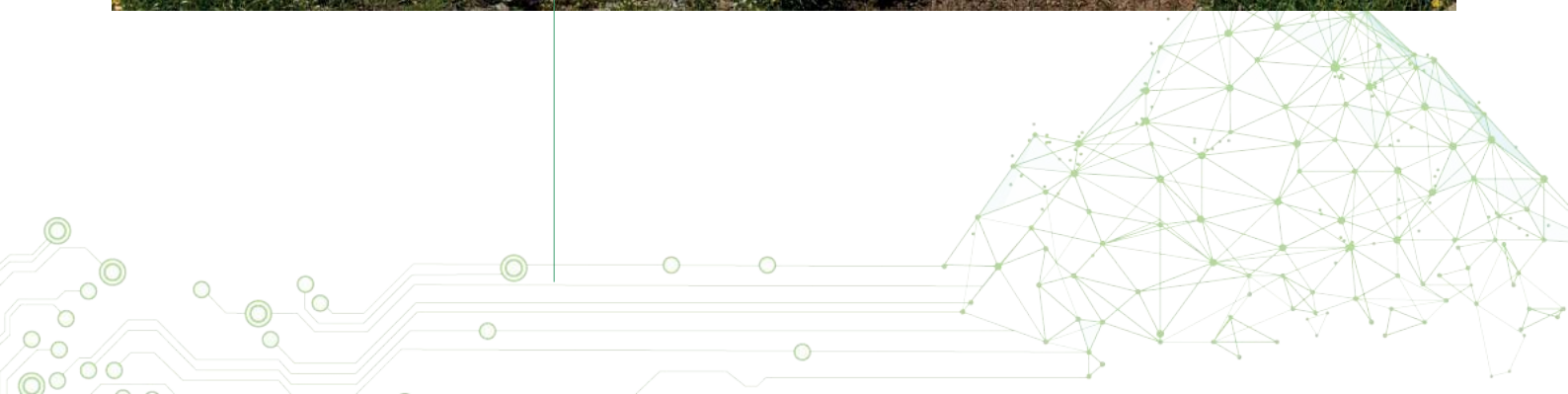
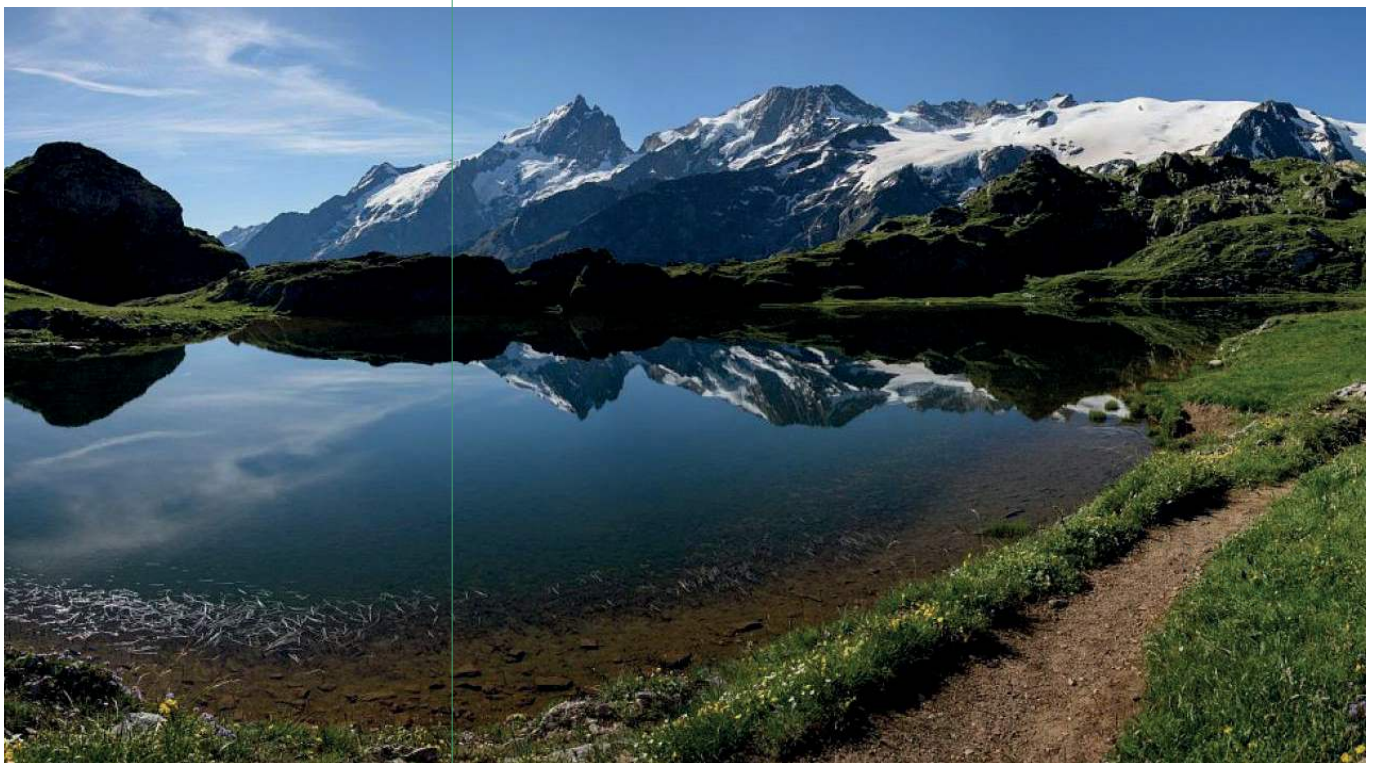
On its part, the ACSSQ has organized preliminary meetings with local authorities, local business leaders and local communities, as well as several work sessions with the local partners.

This has enabled the Association

to:

- draw up a list of key local players to involve in the project
- clearly define its contribution to AlpSatellites and it will go about organizing the French branch of the project
- enhance the impact of its communication tools.

Both AMU and ACSSQ have been working to prepare local area meetings that will be held in March in three areas of France (Briançonnais, Ecrins and Guillestrois Queyras)



Voralberg University of Applied Sciences and Doren Municipality

During the initial phase of the project, the Austrian partners (Doren Municipality and the University of Applied Sciences Vorarlberg- FHV) have focused on building up a working relationship and identifying the problems, challenges and opportunities facing each.

The two partners have also begun to engage in intense interdisciplinary cooperation, with an initial focus on analysing the current status quo in Vorarlberg and the Bregenzerwald Region.

In designing their research, the Austrian partners are guided by two main aims :

- 1) establishing the current level of readiness for remote working;
- 2) examining the situation across the region with a view to identifying what further actions should be taken in the municipality of Doren, specifically.

Based on their analysis of the entire region, they have identified many gaps that need to be filled.

For the municipality of Doren, telecommuting and coworking spaces constitute a key topic that demands further investiga-

tion. Furthermore, the Austrian project partners believe that local areas must go beyond the implementation of co-working spaces that exclusively target workers aged 20 to 60 years.

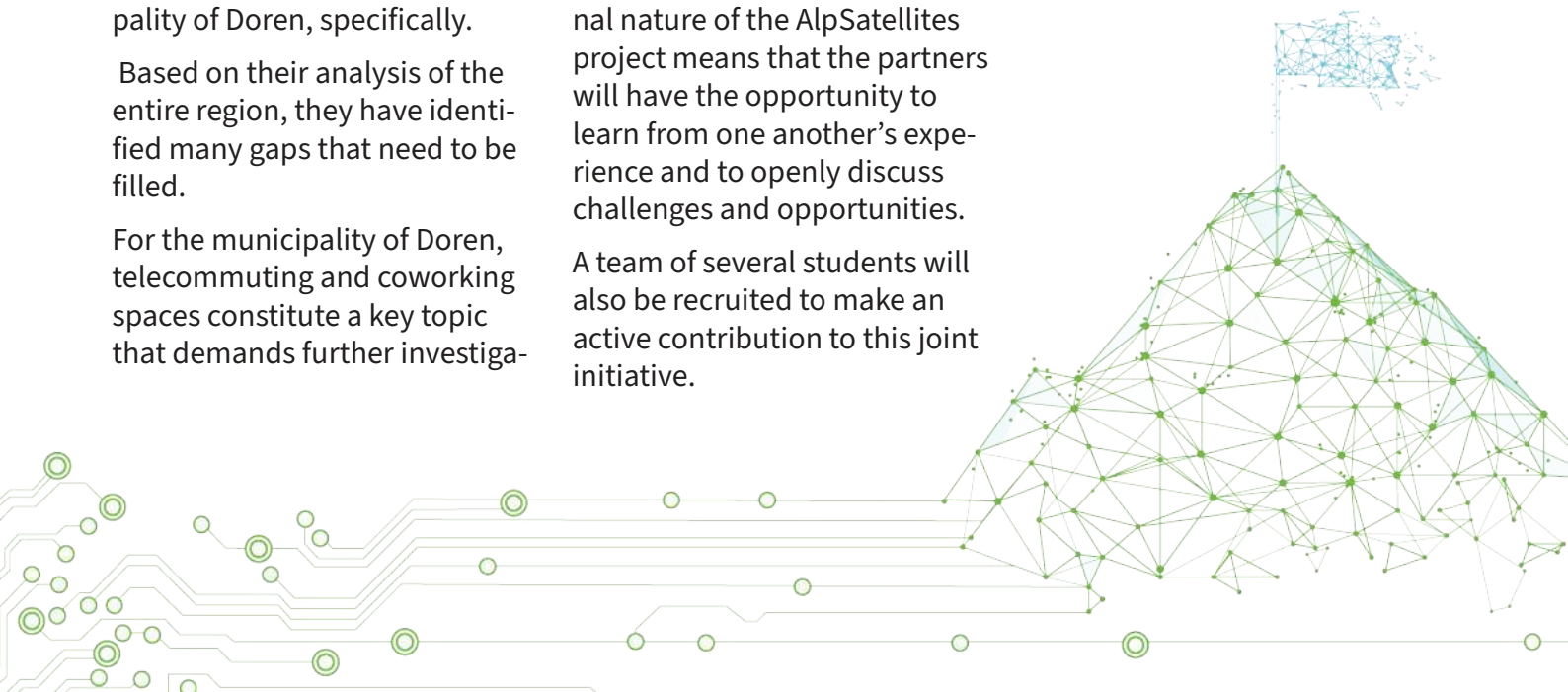
Doren should aspire to the creation of a digital hub that would cater for all members of the community.

In Austria, the digitization of the public sector, along with an increased emphasis on remote working because of the Covid-19 public health emergency, has prompted significant change in both urban and rural areas.

This has generated huge challenges for many residents of local communities. Hence, the task of the Austrian AlpSatellites partners is to identify suitable solutions going forward.

The cooperative and inter-regional nature of the AlpSatellites project means that the partners will have the opportunity to learn from one another's experience and to openly discuss challenges and opportunities.

A team of several students will also be recruited to make an active contribution to this joint initiative.



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