



Alpine Space Programme



CAPACities

Competitiveness Actions and Policies for Alpine Cities

Project No. 6-1-1-I

Work package 4.3: ALPINE TOWNS SURVEY

CAPACities SWOT ANALYSIS

Responsible partner

Anton Melik Geographical Institute - Scientific Research
Center of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts

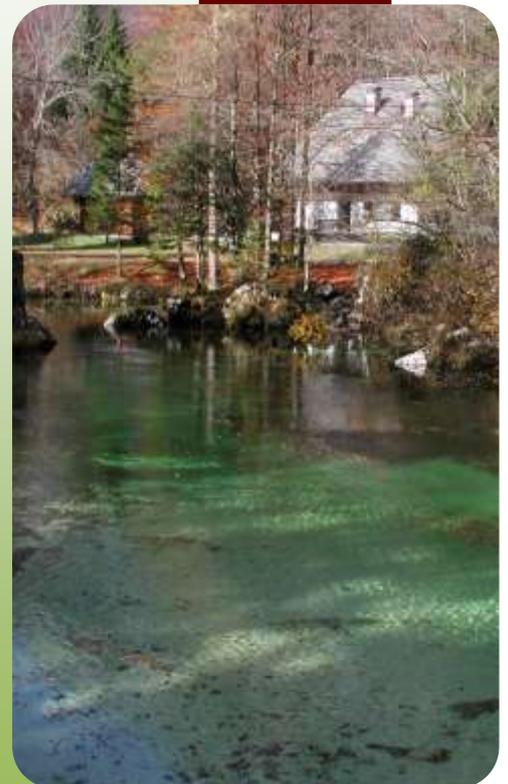


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CAPACities SWOT ANALYSIS

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1 INTRODUCTION

Action 4.3 of the CAPACities (Competitiveness Actions and Policies for Alpine Cities) project (SWOT analysis for the CAPACities area) seeks to highlight small towns' characteristics, their relationship with MEGAs and FUAs, and their potentials and special resources (CAPACities Application Form 2008).

Full name of the project: *Competitiveness Actions and Policies for Alpine Cities*

Acronym: *CAPACities*

Program: *Interreg Alpine Space 2007–2013;*

Priority 1: *Competitiveness and Attractiveness of Alpine Space*

Total Budget: *€2,741,420*

Duration: *October 2008 to March 2011, 30 months*

Partnership: *n.10 – Lombardy Region (LP), DI Herbert Liske (AT), Scientific Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts (SI), National Tourism Association (SI), Town Planning Institute of Grenoble (FR), Adviser in Architecture, Regional Planning, and Environment of Vaucluse (FR), Langhe Monferrato Roero Local Development Agency (IT), Valle d'Aosta Region (IT), Piedmont Region (IT), Graubünden Canton (CH)*

Objectives: *The project aim is to promote the potential of Alpine Space Small Local Urban Centers (AS SLUCs) through an integrated and transnational approach using innovative urban policies and actions and by creating alliances with neighboring MEGAs and stronger territories. The project aspires to promote a new approach to territorial governance sharing a view capable of integrating various issues (multifunctional urban uses, environment and culture, and tourism) in spatial development strategies.*

Outputs: *operative tools and specific policies to promote innovative urban activities pursuing the Lisbon Strategy applied at the territorial level and instruments to support planners in promoting an integrated approach in territorial planning processes, oriented toward enhancing local potentials.*

Main Activities: *WP1 Project Preparation; WP2 Project Management; WP3 Information and Publicity; WP4 Alpine Towns Survey; WP5 Operational Tools; WP6 Pilot Actions (n.22); WP7 AS SLUC innovative pack.*

Website: *www.capacities-alpinespace.eu*

The central focus is on Alpine Space Small Local Urban Centers (AS SLUCs), which were defined in the CAPACities Methodological Document (Nared et al. 2009). The document relates AS SLUCs with MEGAs and FUAs when determining their maximum size as 20,000 inhabitants. Accordingly, AS SLUCs refer to the smallest level of centrality and corresponding centers with basic central functions. Due to a shortage of relevant data, centrality was described using job density; however, some additional criteria were also used to enable inclusion of some explicitly central cities and exclusion of those that fulfill general criteria for AS SLUCs and simultaneously belong to the urban system of the city at a higher or the same level of centrality. The third criterion was the elevation of the center, realizing the importance of objectively smaller centers in very mountainous areas.

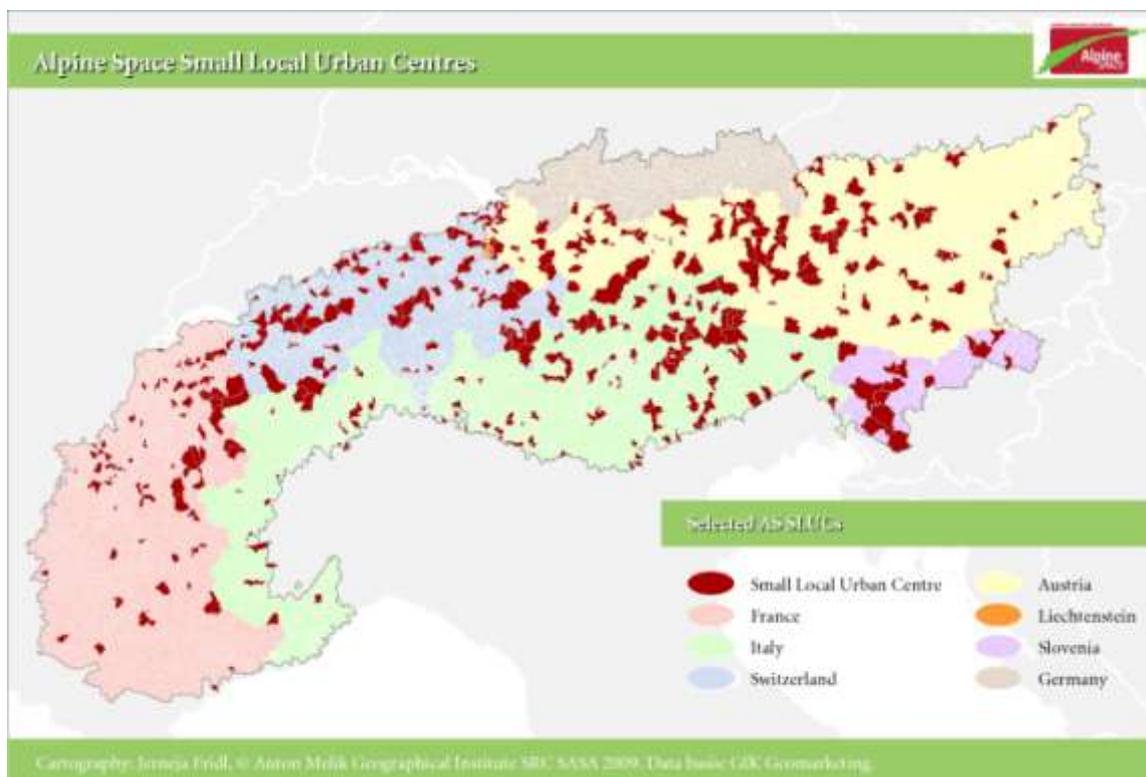


Figure 1: AS SLUCs defined according to main three criteria.

The main aims of the CAPACities project are to promote the potential of AS SLUCs through an integrated and transnational approach by innovative urban policies and actions and by creating alliances with neighboring MEGAs and stronger territories and thus to promote a new approach to territorial governance sharing a view capable of integrating various issues (multifunctional urban uses, environment and culture, and tourism) in spatial development strategies. Accordingly, the SWOT analysis is centered on competitiveness, attractiveness, and overall performance of AS SLUCs.

The SWOT Analysis is a methodological approach used to define the basic characteristics of AS SLUCs and to define their basic challenges. Strengths and weaknesses focus on the actual internal situation of the AS SLUCs, opportunities, and threats to the future. The SWOT analysis is an effective strategy for maximizing strength and opportunities, and for minimizing weaknesses and threats to regions and cities.

As part of the SWOT analysis, we have augmented the DIAMONT database (DIAMONT Database 2009) in order to present the basic characteristics of AS SLUCs. The description of the basic features of small Alpine towns was based on an available and extensive database with 81 statistical variables. The basic features were calculated from reliable harmonized data. Later on, the results were verified through a questionnaire survey, carried out across the entire Alpine Convention Area. The questionnaire contained several sets of questions (e.g., on demography, the economy, the environment, infrastructure, etc.) and was sent to nearly all the Alpine municipalities. It was targeted at administrators in the municipalities, who we believe are best acquainted with the conditions in their municipalities; to this end, it was addressed to mayors, town councilors, spatial planners, and so on. 340 questionnaires were completed.

The SWOT analysis highlights all crucial aspects of development, starting with advantages of AS SLUCs, obstacles that hinder current development, challenges that could arise, and risks that might prevent further development. Accordingly, all action should be performed in compliance with following four guidelines:

- Build on strengths;
- Eliminate weaknesses;
- Exploit opportunities;
- Mitigate the effect of threats.

The main goal of the SWOT analysis is to show the systematic call for action and to ease the development of strategies. The analysis has its roots in strategic management. Within regional development, the SWOT instrument is intended to highlight those dominant and determining factors that are likely to influence the success of the projects/instruments/tools (Nared et al. 2007).

The fields of interest for the CAPACities SWOT analysis are five: settlement and geographical questions, economic questions, social questions, environmental questions, and institutional questions.

These topics correspond to the main issues of sustainable regional development, showing a high potential in connection with resource efficiency and innovation, and also facing many bottlenecks for a sustainable growth in future. Additionally, they are of crucial importance in providing effective regional governance.

- 1. Definition of topics relevant for the CAPACities project.*
- 2. Data processing at the municipal level (DIAMONT Database).*
- 3. Definition of strengths and weaknesses.*
- 4. Definition of opportunities and threats.*
- 5. Summary of priorities for each sector of the SWOT.*
- 6. Compilation of the final SWOT analysis report.*

Schedule 1: Performance of the SWOT analysis.

2 SWOT ANALYSIS

As stated earlier, the SWOT fundamentals were already established in the CAPACities Application Form (2008) by defining the basic topics of the project. The main questions of competitiveness and attractiveness were further developed within the CAPACities Methodological Document (Nared et al. 2009), which focused on the main elements of economic growth. The relation to these elements could show potentials and performance of AS SLUCs and thus relate them to MEGAs and FUAs. The final structure of the SWOT analysis was prepared by the AMGI expert group, which prepared the web-based questionnaire for the Alpine municipalities. The questionnaire centered on the basic questions of Alpine development, reflecting its specifics and environmental conditions. Thus the questionnaire was the crucial source of information for gaining insight into AS SLUC development potentials, barriers, specifics, challenges, and so on. 340 questionnaires were completed, which was less than 10% of all Alpine municipalities; however, the sample was large enough to draw conclusions about certain development forces in the Alpine municipalities. The distribution per country was somewhat uneven because an above-average number of questionnaires were returned from Italy (130) and Austria (90), but only 13 from France, which does not allow comparisons between smaller spatial units. Currently, the sample is also not sufficiently large to compare municipalities with small Alpine towns with other municipalities. Nonetheless, it is mentioned here within the context of the analysis of tendencies of the future development of the entire Alpine space, an important part of which are also small Alpine towns.

The second source of information was the DIAMONT database (2009). Within this INTERREG IIIB project, a set of indicators was developed and upgraded through extensive data collection. Data were harmonized to the maximum possible extent and integrated within one common database that was established to restart and support the SOIA (System for Observation and Information on the Alps) database and its monitoring capacities. The database offers a set of 81 indicators. Some of them were harmonized at the Alpine level, and some of them only for some Alpine countries. For this reason not all indicators were ready to be used. An additional problem was caused by the fusion of some Swiss municipalities and further division of Slovene municipalities. In this case, the analysis was based on the previous spatial structure, not taking in account the changes that appeared in last two years.

The quantitative analysis of the selected sample of small towns reveals that the main problem is the aging of the population and especially the lack of young families. Another feature is the important employment function reflected in both job density and the level of attraction to commuters from the surrounding areas. Due to their specific natural and settlement conditions, small Alpine towns serve as the most important employment center in the Alps, and thus the bearers of other social and cultural functions. The tourism function remains highly important for small towns, especially because they also represent the centers of the tourist activities in the Alps. However, nearly 40% of all the employees work in industry, which shatters the stereotypical notions of small Alpine towns being exclusively centers of tourism, administration, and other services.

The third pillar of the information was extensive published research focused on competitiveness, attractiveness, economic growth, innovations, agglomeration, social and human capital, networking, regional policy and development, urban design and planning, transport issues, environmental questions, mountains, land use and land resource management, institutional questions, and so on. Available studies were compared with Alpine space specifics and evaluated by the AMGI group of experts, covering all basic fields of CAPACities project research interest.

2.1 Settlement and Geographical Questions

CAPACities SWOT ANALYSIS: SETTLEMENT AND GEOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONS

STRENGTHS

- High biodiversity,
- Energy potential,
- Tourism potential,
- Rich water resources,
- Cultural diversity,
- Impressive land features,
- Part of highly developed countries,
- Successful economies,
- Relatively good connections to neighboring cities,
- Relatively good road infrastructure,
- Sufficient telecommunications infrastructure,
- Excellent public infrastructure (schools, public institutions, etc.),
- Central functions,
- High population density (in comparison to rural areas) enables a minimum prerequisite for agglomeration economics,
- Territorial identity

WEAKNESSES

- Difficult accessibility,
- Lack of proper land for construction,
- Harsh natural conditions,
- Traffic congestion,
- Low density of population hinders an agglomeration-based economy and services,
- Depopulation and sparsely populated areas impoverish the territorial, socioeconomic, and cultural capital of mountain regions,
- Aesthetic impact of tourism-oriented settlements, resorts, and ski infrastructure,
- Massive consumption of land and environmental resources,
- Rural character of the entire Alpine Space (only 10% of Alpine municipalities perceive themselves as urban municipalities),

- Poor accessibility of airport infrastructure,
- Lack of alternative transport infrastructure (except roads),
- Limited access to broadband internet,
- Poor accessibility to public transport,
- Limited importance at the national level,
- Limited gravitation for surrounding areas,
- Global influences change traditional landscapes

OPPORTUNITIES

- Adaptation to climate change,
- Adaptation elasticity,
- Redefining the current structure into a more comprehensive network-based polycentric system of settlements/urban centers,
- Strengthening ties with neighboring cities,
- Networking with neighboring AS SLUCs,
- Better connectedness to bigger cities,
- Amenities potential,
- Environmental potential (nature restoration and neutralization functions of the environment)

THREATS

- Climate change,
- Natural disasters,
- Out-migration of young people,
- Abandonment of some areas,
- Lack of jobs,
- Lack of capital and investment,
- Aging population,
- Lack of building land,
- Growing importance of bigger cities

CHALLENGES

- Planning,
- Adaptation elasticity,
- Redefining the current structure into a more comprehensive network-based polycentric system of settlements/urban centers

2.2 Economic Questions

CAPACities SWOT ANALYSIS: ECONOMIC QUESTIONS	
STRENGTHS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Variety of economic activities, ➤ Tradition, ➤ Clean environment, ➤ Natural and cultural heritage, ➤ Rich natural resources, ➤ Slightly higher rate of the population 15 to 64 years old, ➤ High rate of working population, ➤ High rate of female employment, ➤ Favorable sectoral division of jobs, ➤ High density of jobs, ➤ Number of tourist beds per inhabitant is much higher than in other settlements, ➤ Important employment centers 	
WEAKNESSES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Insufficient supply, ➤ Insufficient public services, ➤ Lack of innovations, ➤ Low density of population hinders flow of information and consequently the formation of creative society 	
OPPORTUNITIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ High tourism potentials, ➤ Additional development opportunities for tourism, ➤ Broad opportunities based on energy sources (hydropower plants, biomass, organic farming), ➤ Green economy, ➤ Amenities migration 	
THREATS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Out-migration of young people, 	

- Climate change and its effects on winter tourism,
- Natural risks,
- Low purchasing power,
- Lack of innovative potential

CHALLENGES

- New economic activities based on native resources and potentials;
- Green economy

2.3 Social Questions

CAPACities SWOT ANALYSIS: SOCIAL QUESTIONS

STRENGTHS

- High standard of living,
- Relatively small social problems,
- In general the population is younger than in rural areas and in larger towns,
- Good social infrastructure

WEAKNESSES

- Aging population,
- Unfavorable traffic conditions hinder commuting,
- Inadequate public infrastructure,
- Inadequate market services

OPPORTUNITIES

- Attractiveness of the space attracts new in-migration,
- Amenity migrations

THREATS

- Out-migration of young people,
- Unemployment and lack of jobs,
- Aging population,
- Loss of social institutions (schools, preschools, etc.) due to aging of

the population

CHALLENGES

- Reactivation of traditional social patterns: childcare, close social contacts, etc.

2.4 Environmental Questions

CAPACities SWOT ANALYSIS: ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS

STRENGTHS

- Quality of the environment,
- High biodiversity,
- Attractiveness of space,
- Very high share of natural and semi-natural areas

WEAKNESSES

- Natural risks,
- Lack of building plots,
- Severe landscape,
- Natural barriers,
- Traffic congestion and pollution in certain towns,
- Problems with waste disposal,
- Excessive urbanization/periurbanization/suburbanization,
- High pressure on existing building plots,
- Forest overgrowth

OPPORTUNITIES

- New sustainable tourism

THREATS

- Climate change,
- Unsustainable measures affecting climate change (artificial snow),
- New modes of tourism (e.g., mountain biking)

CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To find the right balance between environmental protection and development

2.5 Institutional Questions

CAPACities SWOT ANALYSIS: INSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS
STRENGTHS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Broad institutional responsibilities, ➤ Leading role for nearby areas, ➤ Decision-making potential
WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of qualified staff, ➤ Insufficient resources for implementation of responsibilities
OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ International measures for effective governance, ➤ Alpine Convention, ➤ E-government, ➤ E-services
THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cutting costs for state administration and facilities (i.e., schools)
CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reestablishing and modernizing institutional structures

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