



# Alps4EU

## Transnational Pilot Action on Policies in support to meta-clusters WP6 – Action 6.1

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### REPORT

### **Feasibility Study for the implementation of a trans-regional funding scheme, based on regional programmes, to support the development of meta-clusters**



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## **TABLE of CONTENT**

<b>Executive summary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Report on Alps4EU Pilot Action on POLICY.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. Introduction.....	4
1.2. The process and outputs .....	5
1.3. Learning from previous experiences in Europe .....	6
<b>2. Feasibility of a transnational funding action .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.1. List of activities to be funded transnationally .....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1.1. International Master of Advanced Studies in Cluster Management.....	9
2.1.2. Cluster Academy for excellence .....	10
2.1.3. Competence portfolio and Open Innovation Platform.....	11
2.1.4. Joint analysis and study of cluster’s market potentials.....	13
2.1.5. Marketing activities .....	14
2.1.6. Cluster Ambassadors .....	16
2.1.7. Thematic Workshop Roadshow .....	18
2.1.8. Transnational innovation vouchers .....	19
<b>2.2. Regions and funding programmes.....</b>	<b>21</b>
2.2.1. REGIONE PIEMONTE, IT .....	21
2.2.2. VENETO, IT .....	22
2.2.3. LOMBARDIA, IT .....	23
2.2.4. BADEN WURTTENBERG, DE .....	24
2.2.5. WESTERN SWITZERLAND, CH .....	25
2.2.6. TYROL, AU .....	25
2.2.7. RHONE ALPES, FR .....	26
2.2.8. PACA, FR.....	26
2.2.9. SLOVENIA .....	27
<b>3. Interest and priority of the proposed activities .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>4. Relevance of the proposed activities according to programmes and policies .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>5. Conclusions.....</b>	<b>30</b>

## Executive summary

As agreed among Alps4EU partners, the final aim of this pilot activity is to run the preparatory work for a future transnational call dedicated to support activities of transnational meta-clustering. Such call might then be launched in the future (for instance in instance in Alps4EU 2 or in other future actions).

All Alps4EU partner contributed to the preparation of the feasibility study by providing inputs based on their experience on funding measures addressed to clusters, as well as on their previous experiences in funding trans-national calls. This work will offer the opportunity to share and put in common the best practices of each Alps4EU partners and to make a further step ahead in putting the bases for developing future transnational funding measures in support to meta-clusters.

In the preparation of the deliverable, the task force kept as much as possible an horizontal approach, which means not to focus on specific sectors. Depending on the regional/national funding programmes that were taken into consideration, some priorities were identified.

The commitment of regional policy makers throughout this process is pivotal to the success of the Pilot Activity, just as that of cluster managers.

They were invited to highlight their needs and priorities. Furthermore, policy makers were expected to declare what funding programme/instrument they would be in the position to use in the implementation of a trans-regional call.

At the end of the process, a letter will be addressed from the Alps4EU partnership to the key policy makers involved in cluster policies within the alsp4EU territories, in order to raise their awareness about the outcomes of the project and provide them with recommendations for the implementation of future policies and funding measures in support to transnational meta-clusters in the long term.

## 1. Report on Alps4EU Pilot Action on POLICY

### 1.1. Introduction

The task force working on the Pilot Action on Policies for meta-clusters is composed of the following Alps4EU partners:

- Regione Piemonte (and Finpiemonte), IT (Piemonte): leading the task force
- Veneto Innovazione, IT (Veneto)
- Finlombarda, IT (Lombardia)
- MFG, DE (Baden Württemberg)
- SEZ, DE (Baden Württemberg)
- TZS, AT (Innsbruck)
- PST-FR, CH (Fribourg)
- Region Rhone Alpes, FR (Rhone Alpes)

All other Alps4EU partners were involved in this activity by sharing its content, approach and proposal.

The Pilot Activity has the following macro-objectives:

- Support meta-clusters creation through regional policies and programmes, **in the long term**.
- Involve regional policy makers to work together in designing a **transnationally harmonized funding measure in support to meta-clusters**.
- **Learn from previous experiences** of transnational coordination of funding among regions and countries, and borrow from them some methodologies of work successfully experimented.

The final aim of this pilot activity is to run the preparatory work for a future transnational call dedicated to support activities of transnational meta-clustering (to be launched in other future actions than Alps4EU).

Through this pilot activity, Alps4EU partners aim to produce a **feasibility study for the implementation a trans-regional funding scheme**, based on regional programmes, to support the development of meta-clusters in the Alpine area.

The task force participants have:

- Contributed to the definition of a set of possible activities to be funded in transnational calls, examining their key features and possibilities for transnational funding.
- Ensured a direct contact with the local policy makers in order to collect their recommendations about the set-up of a trans-regional call in support to meta-clusters.
- Contributed to the production of the “feasibility study”, also providing detailed information about the potential funding programmes and their specific features in relation to the proposed activities.
- Ensured a direct contact with the local clusters as to verify their interest on the proposed activities.

The task force members actively contributed to the preparation of the feasibility study by providing inputs based on their experience on funding measures addressed to clusters, as well as on their previous experiences in funding trans-national calls.

Thanks to this joint effort, this study represents an operational tool that offers an overall vision of the practices matured by each Alps4EU partner in the domain support to clusters. Thus, it allows to make a concrete step ahead in putting the bases for developing future transnational funding measures in support to meta-clusters.

## 1.2 The process and outputs

This document aims to define the framework conditions and provide some **operational suggestions** for Policy Makers of the Alps4EU territories, on how to design and implement a joint trans-regional call/action in support to meta-clusters.

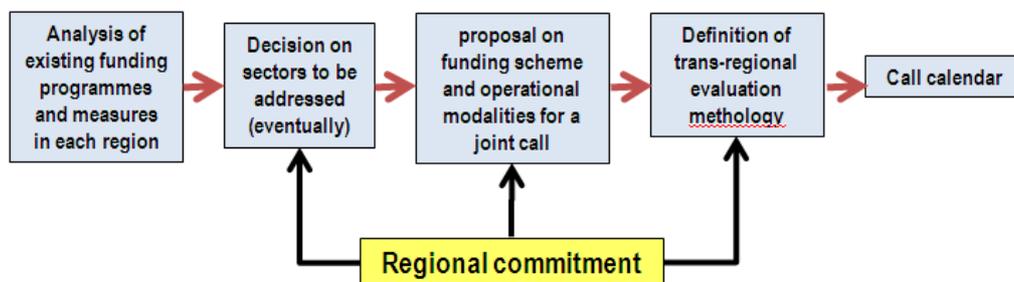
Throughout the preparation of this feasibility study, policy makers and cluster managers were actively involved in order to verify *in itinere* the real feasibility of the proposed actions and plans. An awareness raising action was carried out towards Alps4EU policy makers in order to make sure that they positively met this proposal and that they would endorse the Alps4EU consortium to work further in this direction.

The **toolkit** includes the following content:

- A list of relevant activities that could be funded at transnational level (based on the expression of interest collected from clusters as well as on previous experiences and strategies of Alps4EU partners), also including some further operational information for implementation.
- An analysis on available funding programmes in each Alps4EU territory, also based on a consultation process with policy makers as to explore the real feasibility of the proposed actions.
- A matrix showing the relevance of each activity in each territory, in relation to local existing programmes and policies.

In the preparation of this study an horizontal approach was used, avoiding to focus on specific sectors. Depending on the regional/national funding programmes that were taken into consideration, some priorities were eventually identified.

The commitment of regional policy makers and cluster managers throughout this process was assured in order to highlight their needs, priorities and engagement for the success of this pilot activity.



## 1.3 Learning from previous experiences in Europe

**The ERA-NET scheme:** This kind of activities have been developed successfully within the Framework Programme of the European Union. ERA-NET projects gather together regional/national Programme Owners (national ministries or regional authorities owning a funding programme) and/or the Programme Managers which implement such programmes (e.g. development agencies). Among those actors, ERA-NET projects support the development of coordination and cooperation activities, aimed to increase the transnational integration among regional/national funding programmes and their management procedures.

**Above all, ERANETs allow regions and countries to prepare and implement joint transnational calls in support to innovation and research projects.**

In ERA-NETs (EU Framework Programme) Regions experienced the transnational harmonization of funding procedures in support to common calls. This way, regional/national authorities and agencies work together at transnational level in order to develop and experiment new procedures and to develop new funding measures to fund transnational calls dedicated to support common objectives. ERA-NETs represent a concrete example and on that bases Alps4EU could develop a new transnational funding action.

**Coordination and Support Actions (CSA):** This kind of activities have been successfully developed within the Framework Programme of the European Union. They are aimed at coordinating and supporting research activities and policies at transnational level (networking, exchanges, trans-national access to research infrastructures, feasibility studies, conferences, etc).

**This type of projects are used to coordinate communities, identify new RTD topics and foster interdisciplinary dialogue.**

In continuity with what already experimented in the Framework Programme with CSA, Alps4EU could offer a prosperous ground for the development of projects in which organizations representing a group of innovative companies (ex. cluster) in a specific sector/domain, could create specific trans-regional platforms to foster joint RTD projects and to share know-how and competences. Regional funding programmes could be used at transnational level in order to co-fund such projects.

### **INNOVATION EXPRESS – A joint funding scheme to support cluster cooperation**

It was developed as part of the INNET (PRO INNO) project as a common call for proposals, in order to support and fund inter-cluster RDI cooperation activities at transnational level, for the benefit of SMEs.

It was designed to support a large scope of innovation activities allowing SMEs/clusters to identify, prepare, and develop different stages of transnational cooperation in the field of RDI.

It used a “virtual common pot” to fund, based on the different funding rules of each partner region, either directly SMEs and/or cluster organizations. Inter-cluster activities supported by the INNOVATION EXPRESS are summarized in the picture.

 <b>Examples of Innovation support activities</b>	
<b>A) Dissemination and promotion</b> -Promotion of clusters and SMEs in order to identify, initiate, prepare technology based cross-border innovation activities. -Marketing and communication activities in order to promote technology based cross-border innovation activities.	<b>B) Technological/Innovation advise in the context of technology transfer and take-up activities</b> -Technological watch -Improvement of skills to increase innovation. -Innovation business plan -Improvement of technological know-how. -Market research strategies -Support for the participation in EU programs/calls/proposals.
<b>C) Networking</b> -Support to cooperation between network members. -Matchmaking activities/workshops for RDI activities. -Company visits after identification of potential partners -Collaboration (agreements) and activity between members of the network or the cluster -Feasibility study to set-up new collaborative networks, competence poles, technological partnerships etc. for the benefit of SMEs	<b>D) Technology Transfer</b> -Innovation Platforms in order to support relevant suitable technologies -technology portfolios audit and diagnostics -IPR, patents, Consortium Agreement -Audit services and all other strategic issues.
<b>E) Financial Engineering linked to RDI activities</b> - financial audits in order to prepare further RDI projects - identification of all relevant European/national funding mechanisms (FP, Structural Funds, ..) - funding engineering approach after identification of European mechanisms	<b>F) Recruitment/Training</b> -Recruitment of innovation and SMEs engineering specialists for clusters - Recruitment of innovation engineering specialists in SMEs - Education, training programs between several clusters/SMEs - Staff Exchange
<b>G) Workshops</b> -working seminars to consolidate RDI projects' preparation -Thematic workshops -Benchmarking workshops (RDI best practice/ pooling of resources-activities)	<b>H) In depth feasibility studies</b> prior to RDI projects - Building of a RDI transnational project

Following an approach similar to the one experienced in the Innovation Express, Regions in Alps4EU could use their funding programmes in order to enable Clusters to initiate transnational cooperation (going more into more depth than what is possible with usual meetings in fairs/events) and support the development of international cooperation between clusters of different regions.

## 2. Feasibility of a transnational funding action

### 2.1. List of activities to be funded transnationally

It is useful to recall that in Alps4EU project the meta-cluster concept is defined as<sup>1</sup>:

**“A trans-regional network of cluster initiatives, which focuses on the same or complementary specific technological field or sector. A meta-cluster consists of at least three cluster initiatives in three different regions from three different countries.”**

As highlighted in the alps4EU deliverable “*Concept of Meta-Cluster in the Alpine Space*”, the process to establish meta-clusters should be done in three steps:

**Step 1:** Awareness arising among the involved regional clusters

**Step 2:** Performing studies/analysis and establish inter cluster action plans and implementing first common activities

**Step 3:** Establish meta cluster concepts by implementing sustainable structures between involved clusters

Here below a portfolio of 9 activities is proposed, to be potentially funded in trans-national calls addressed to clusters and cluster members.

As stated, the final aim of such activities is to support the creation of inter-cluster collaborations and of transnational meta-clusters. With this respect, the proposed activities mainly address the step 2 of the process to establish meta-clusters. More specifically:

#### → Preparatory activities towards meta-clusters:

These activities set the bases, in terms of knowledge sharing and competence creation, for the set-up of transnational meta-clusters with highly qualified professionals dealing with cluster management.

Such activities include:

1	International Master of Advanced Studies in Cluster Management
2	Cluster Academy for excellence
3	Competence portfolio and Open Innovation Platform

**Activities n.1 and 3** are addressed to shape advanced experts in cluster management whereas **activity n.3** is aimed to provide a transnational mapping of competencies within clusters as well as a platform for identifying common strategic challenges.

This tool will provide a common framework to facilitate cluster managers and cluster members in creating new alliances and transnational joint initiatives. In facts, at the bottom of establishing meta-cluster activities, there should be a mutual understanding of each involved cluster's strengths and activities.

#### → Activities addressed to cluster-managers in support to the creation of meta-clusters

**Activity n.4** offers to cluster managers the opportunity to make potential meta-clusters emerge: joint analysis and studies of the market potentials for all of the involved clusters could provide a mutual understanding of each involved cluster's strengths and activities.

**Activities n.5 and 6** provide marketing tool that can bring to create an international reputation of the meta-cluster and to elaborate a shared identity, values and vision.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information about the meta-cluster concept, see the alps4EU Deliverable “*Concept of Meta-Cluster in the Alpine Space*”.

4	Joint analysis and study of cluster's market potentials
5	Marketing activities
6	Cluster Ambassadors
7	Thematic Workshop Roadshow

and **activity n.7** offers the opportunity to collaborate transnationally with the objective to close knowledge gaps of clusters and of their members.

→ **Activities addressed to cluster-members**

In **activity n.8** the eligible applicants are SME as members of cluster initiatives and a wide set of eligible activities is proposed.

Cluster initiatives/cluster managers would play the role of facilitator and negotiator: they are considered as an effective vehicle for involving SMEs which have more difficulties to develop international cooperation and therefore they would support the partnership building, proof the proposals and help the funding agency in the selection process.

Also the meta-cluster committee should play a role in this direction, maybe also being somehow involved in a transnational evaluation committee.

This kind of activities would also make a cluster more attractive for potential members, thus helping in widening the size of a cluster with new members.

8	Transnational innovation vouchers
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For each of the proposed activities that could be funded transnationally, the following aspects were further examined by the task force:

- What specifically could be funded at transnational level in each single activity?
- What would be of interest for clusters and policy makers?
- Who would be the beneficiaries to be funded?
- How long would the funded activity last?
- What potentialities could be envisaged in the transnational funding?
- What minimum funding should be invested by each Region to support one project?
- Are there any similar pre-existing experience from which Alps4EU could learn?

### 2.1.1. International Master of Advanced Studies in Cluster Management

Numerous study programs dedicated to cluster management, or to more specific aspects linked to cluster activities, are already available and are usually offered by individual institutions. These programs, as far we know, do not provide recognized international study certification. This pilot scheme, however, seeks to launch a Master's degree of advanced studies internationally by means of 2 to 3 collaborating universities. Each university would be associated with one or more local clusters, thus providing both technical and practical dimensions to the academic courses themselves. A steering group, made up of academics and practitioners, would develop the necessary program which, in its turn, would certify the students as specialists in cluster management as well as project managers for particular activities (innovation projects, internationalization, marketing, etc.). Students who have attended the entire program, have successfully undertaken specific projects and defended their personal master's thesis, done in cooperation with one or more clusters, will be certified with the MAS.

The steering committee will look for academic partners interested in providing courses for specific subjects. The study program should be modular and flexible enough to target a wide interest group. Each course included in the study program will last between 3 and 5 days. The modules taken, along with the amount of personal research and course work accomplished, could be taken into consideration and constitute different study levels, such as a Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS - 10ECTS) or a Diploma of Advanced Studies (DAS – 30 ECTS). This modular approach will give students the opportunity to get a CAS or a DAS depending on their chosen cursus and their accomplishment of practical exercises. Each course could also be offered as an individual package to external auditors. Bachelor Certification will be the minimum level required to join the study program.

In summary, the MAS will be offered by two or three universities and their local cluster partners in order to launch a certified international study program. The program will be set up on the basis of 600 to 800 hours of courses, 600 to 800 hours of personal research and a 400- to 600-hour package for the Master thesis.

- **Who could benefit from funding?**

A fund could be set up to endow one person per cluster with a scholarship which would allow them to follow the curriculum.

The allocated sum of money would not cover the total curriculum costs but would enhance the appeal of the new study program by lowering registration fees. This will indirectly, but effectively, promote the new study program.

- **How long would financing last?**

The market will decide the program duration. The scholarship would be only offered during a given period and would be dependent on global financing and the number of participants.

- **Who might fund this activity at a transnational level?**

Such a program could be funded by the Interreg Program 4B, or even by Interreg Program 4C.

- **What minimum funding should each region invest to support one project?**

Each region would be in charge of setting up a fund allowing one person per cluster to attend the study program.

- **Is there any similar pre-existing experience which Alps4EU could learn from?**

A similar program was set up, at a CAS level only, within the framework of a 4A Interreg project between Switzerland and France.

### 2.1.2. Cluster Academy for excellence

This program will offer 3- to 5-day courses in Cluster Management as well as courses in more technical subjects linked to cluster specialisations. The cluster academy for excellence will itself offer all the courses developed in the previous program (2.1.1). The program will set up additional technical courses in accordance with the themes developed by the meta-clusters. The program could include visits to cluster or research centers whose activities are deemed outstanding. The courses on cluster management would be defined by the steering committee (previous program 2.1.1) and the technical courses implemented by the meta-clusters.

- **Who could benefit from funding?**

Cluster members or executive officers from individual companies could attend the technical courses. The policy makers could also attend more specific courses directly related to the impact of the cluster(s) on regional development.

- **How long would funding last?**

Funding support for a 2- to 3-day training course program would be offered only once in a professional career and for a limited number of students per region.

Thereafter, continuing training programs should be ensured by the meta-clusters themselves. The fund should allow the implementation of this activity for a 4-year period. It should allow for the lowering of training costs over the first two years at the outset of the program.

- **What minimum funding should be invested by each region to support one project?**

Every region would support a defined number of participants, keeping in mind that one participant can be supported only once during the 4-year program.

- **Are there any similar pre-existing experiences from which Alps4EU could learn?**

There are currently several Cluster Academies in operation. Clusterland Upper Austria organized its 5th Cluster Academy in May 2013 and plans to repeat this event in 2014 ([http://www.clusterland.at/1183\\_ENG\\_HTML.php](http://www.clusterland.at/1183_ENG_HTML.php)).

Also, the European Cluster Collaboration Platform organized a European Strategic Partnership within the framework of the previously mentioned 2013 Cluster Academy Upper Austria.

REG-X, The Danish Cluster Academy, is in charge of training programs for regional and national policy makers in relation to clusters. The initiation of their "Executive Policy Program took place in 2011 and was developed in collaboration with the Region of Southern Denmark, the Region of Central Jutland, the OECD and leading international universities and experts" (<http://www.regx.dk/en/our-work.html>). The European Cluster Excellence Initiative (Catalonia, Spain) was launched in 2009 by the European Commission and gathered the "most experienced people and organizations in Europe to identify and set up a meaningful set of training, quality indicators and peer-assessment procedures for cluster management" and ended in August 2012 (<http://www.cluster-excellence.eu/>).

### 2.1.3. Competence portfolio and Open Innovation Platform

Even in the internet era, when information is readily available, learning about competencies available outside their region/country, finding the right partners for their associates and assessing the reciprocal capability to enter a common project is still a major challenge.

Often, regional clusters have developed and maintain tools to map competencies (directories, catalogue of competencies, know-how maps), but the exercise so far – having the goal to develop intra-cluster cooperation - is usually limited to cluster members and no assessment is usually done on the capacity to operate at international level.

The knowledge sharing and competence portfolio will provide a common framework to support regions in the reciprocal learning of competencies available and identify collaboration opportunities as a pre-requisite to launch joint initiatives:

1. A concrete collaboration opportunity could be the promotion of open innovation projects targeting strategic innovation challenges of meta-clusters.
2. Meta-Clusters, in collaboration with regions define strategic innovation challenges of common interest also taking into account the relevant priorities in their smart specialization strategy
3. Clusters map competencies/enabling conditions needed to fulfill the challenges and identify those available within their regions
4. Regions directly or through their agencies provide support in the access to open innovation platforms and technology market places (technical and financial – for example through vouchers) to integrate missing competencies.
5. Multiregional open innovation projects targeting strategic innovation challenges will be launched accordingly.
6. Creation of a repertoire of events, which are real technology market places, that would be classified by region and a contact person would be identified for further information. Need to implement a large and coordinated dissemination work.

The KNOWLEDGE ATLAS tool, developed in the frame of the Alps4eu project, will provide a potential common framework to support the process

► **Who would be the beneficiaries to be funded?**

In the focus of the knowledge sharing and competence portfolio are the cluster members and their affiliated (SMEs, R&I centers) and regional governments.

► **How long would the funded activity last?**

The process from finding common topics relevant for all clusters, developing and setting up a knowledge sharing tool and implement open innovation projects will take 18 months.

► **What potentialities could be envisaged in funding this activity at transnational level?**

Promoting the transnational cooperation among clusters (meta-clustering) allows to create a critical mass in areas of emerging opportunities to launch new industries, markets and technologies

Provide to clusters managers an updated information about existing competences available on specific technological fields might increase clusters visibility and can also stimulate cooperation actions at multilateral level.

► **What minimum funding should be invested by each Region to support one project?**

From € 100.000,00 (Development of a competence portfolio) up to 500.000,00 (financing multiregional open innovation projects)

► **Are there any similar pre-existing experience from which Alps4EU could learn?**

1. Within Alps4EU regions there exists no tool like this yet. Alps4EU project has developed a pilot action of constructing a Knowledge Atlas on the listed topics in the Alpine Space Area in the form of an open wiki (add link when available) which will be the basis for this proposed activity:

Topic	Main sector
E-mobility	ICT
SMART & GREEN technologies for sustainable constructions	Energy/Green tech
Smart grids	Energy/Green tech/ICT
Intelligent production Systems	Mechatronics

2. EEN: the network runs the most successful global market place targeting specifically innovation, technology transfer and research opportunities. Furthermore, the network has a permanent working group to discuss how to effectively deliver its services to clusters.
3. ERAI (Rhône-Alpes agency for international economic development) is partner of the European project Clusterix (financed by the interregional cooperation programme Interreg IVC). It aims to enable regional authorities to identify, analyze and explore the potential of strategic future cluster development through the exchange of experiences and best practices between 9 partners from 8 different countries. The overall objective of CLUSTERIX is thus to increase the competitiveness of European regions and their innovation potential through the improvement and strategic re-orientation of cluster policies towards smart specialization.

ClusteriX also tackles further themes of high interest for cluster policy makers:

- funding the cluster support and its political/strategical orientation and expected impact
  - pushing emerging industries through cluster development (e.g. by using public procurement)
  - creating the positive framework for cross-linked cluster cooperation between the partner regions.
4. RRA: Plan de développement international (International development plan): collective awareness event of this support activity + individual diagnosis of SME's needs + individual support + general information about possible financing (European programs in particular).
  5. Programme RA des missions collectives 2013: creation of an index of events related to one specific sector (worldwide) + contact person + dissemination
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#### 2.1.4. Joint analysis and study of cluster's market potentials

At the bottom of establishing meta-cluster activities, there should be a mutual understanding of each involved cluster's strengths and activities. A joint analysis and study of the market potentials for all of the involved clusters could provide such an understanding.

In this way, inter-cluster activities in view of the application of interdisciplinary key enabling technologies (KET) for promoting a Smart Specialisation could be triggered and synergetic fields of activities (common markets, synergies between complementary technologies etc.) evaluated. At the end of such a process, the clusters should be able to better fine-tune on specific activities for innovations, developments and markets with an interdisciplinary approach for reaching a competitive advantage.

This approach follows the concept of smart specialisation: by cooperating, each cluster can profit from the competencies of the other clusters and does not need to cover all topics by itself. This helps the clusters to further specialise in the fields they are already strong in and to cooperate with partners from other clusters in fields where they are strong. The joint analysis and study of market potentials should therefore take into account the respective strengths and weaknesses of each region and elaborate their joint market potential and cooperation possibilities.

➤ **Who would be the beneficiaries to be funded?**

Generally, this action would target clusters interested in international cooperation with already identified and matched clusters from other regions (in the four main Alps4EU sectors).

While the study would have to be coordinated by the cluster managers, the entire cluster would benefit strongly from such an analysis if the involved clusters are willing to collaborate closely.

➤ **How long would the funded activity last?**

From identifying the clusters until the final results of the study including the proposed next steps and projects, a time span of appr. 9-12 months would be needed.

➤ **What potentialities could be envisaged in funding this activity at transnational level?**

The potentialities of such an approach are enormous: each cluster and region could become stronger in specific fields, while at the same time profiting from the knowledge existent in other regions. Besides saving a lot of money and developing excellence, this could increase the strengths and competitiveness of entire regions in a specific sector.

➤ **What minimum funding should be invested by each Region to support one project?**

Roughly 10.000 € per study (for each region).

➤ **Are there any similar pre-existing experience from which Alps4EU could learn?**

Regions of Knowledge project CReEATE – <http://www.lets-create.eu>: development of a joint research agenda for promoting ICT-based innovations in Creative Industries clusters

### 2.1.5. Marketing activities

This activity aims to sustain marketing and branding activities for the benefit of a transnational meta-cluster.

This goal is not so easy considering that a transnational meta-cluster brings together different clusters souls with their own brands, reputation, systems of values. Therefore building a transnational meta-cluster brand is a complex and participatory process which foresees different steps in order to share common vision and values and afterwards implement a joint marketing strategy.

To reach an effective and powerful transnational meta-cluster initiative, many efforts have to be dedicated, first to understand the mutual competences of clusters involved and the potential added value that each of them could bring, and then to build a fruitful cooperation.

Moreover transnational clusters willing to operate at an international level should have the ambition to consolidate their international visibility.

#### ► **What potentialities could be envisaged in funding this activity at transnational level?**

For different reasons some clusters have already experience that joining efforts is a good opportunity to be stronger at international level (exploitation of sectorial synergies, participation to common innovation and research projects) and to overcome their respective limited dimension.

This activity aims to support the joint international branding and marketing activities of multiple clusters together, gathered into a transnational meta-cluster. Creating a brand of a meta-cluster and its marketing strategy means creating a shared identity, shared values and vision.

Supporting the marketing and branding of a transnational meta-cluster means to concretely support the strategic development of those regional clusters and the of geographic areas where these clusters are located.

At a regional/territorial level, sustaining the branding process of a transnational meta-cluster allows the members to consolidate their relationship and strategically plan their international growth together. On the other side, a strong and recognised transnational meta-cluster can really bring value to the territories where the individual clusters are located because it attracts talents and investors and contributes to the increased perception of the "quality of the place".

Linking transnational clusters with appealing marketing strategies, can also be used to brand the cooperation among territories (e.g. Alpine Space macroregion).

A transnational funding mechanism would allow to start-up the initial transnational cluster branding process, assuring at the same time that incentives are not limited to initiatives supporting individual cluster's promotion. Sustaining the labelisation process should also be considered an option since it allows both to improve the clusters quality and to increase their awareness.

#### ► **What specifically could be funded at transnational level?**

Activities such as transnational branding, co-marketing, organizing joint promotional activities, imply resources (money, time and professional competences) that hardly individual clusters could sustain, without a public support.

Expenses that could be covered might include professional consultancy (communication and marketing agency, Branding Facilitator, market/trend analysis, surveys), external costs (joint meeting/events, communication materials, stands preparation), travel costs and staff cost (e.g. part-time communication manager costs).

This measure could be included in a multiple-measures scheme.

#### ► **Who would be the beneficiaries to be funded?**

The beneficiary should be a legal entity representing a SME network, a cluster initiative or other organisations representing companies-research aggregation.

#### ► **How long would the funded activity last?**

12-24 months (depending on the kind of funded activities)

#### ► **What minimum funding should be invested by each Region to support one project?**

It depends whether it is foreseen mainly to cover personnel costs (for instance to hire a dedicated communication manager) or mainly to cover external costs. In the first case it could be €30k per year. In the second case it could be a small voucher of €15-20k.

► **Are there any similar pre-existing experience from which Alps4EU could learn?**

It is hard finding experiences of transnational funding for cluster marketing and branding.

We can instead consider whether specific measures funding cluster marketing exists, since they could be used to align the instruments and feed the "virtual pot".

Hereafter some examples are given:

- At national level there are the experiences of the French "Poles de Compétitivité" and the German "Spitzencluster". In both cases the best "world-class clusters" were awarded with a label and their marketing and communication costs fully covered to allow them to increase their awareness abroad (three years projects).
- In Nordic countries such as Norway and Sweden there are dedicated cluster programmes (NCE in Norway and Vinnvaxt in Sweden) that foresee a dedicated budget to fund the branding activities of the clusters that demonstrate an international scope. The financial support lasts 10 years.
- In some EU regions such as Upper Austria, the marketing and branding activities of clusters are funded whether they can be linked with the territorial marketing of the regions. The costs are directly covered by the regional authorities and also the communication and marketing activities of the clusters are coordinated and performed by the Region itself.
- A quite successful example for an international cooperation of clusters in the field of mechatronic is the International Forum Mechatronic, where 6 clusters from Austria, Germany and Switzerland cooperate. The yearly held conference is established as a meeting point for experts in the field of mechatronic in German speaking countries and provides a good model for common marketing activities of involved clusters. Detailed information available at [www.mechatronikforum.net](http://www.mechatronikforum.net)

Concerning transnational funding measures, Innovation Express funded communication and marketing activities of clusters. Those activities (such as organisation of common events, joint participation to fairs) should have been finalized to the set up of innovation and research projects:

In Veneto Region a specific measure was open (within the Innovation Express initiative): the calls for proposals targeting clusters (regional plus national funds) at that time funded also promotional activities (such as website creation, fairs participation). There was no limitation into the budget but the Veneto Region covered around the 40% of the expenses.

In BSR Innovation Express this year almost all the participant countries opened the measure A (dissemination and promotion). The max amount funded (for each project and for all the measure) was between 10-60.000 €.

- In Austria a specific funding measure has been launched by the Austrian Economy Service ([www.awsg.at](http://www.awsg.at)), a federal institution mainly responsible for funding activities for business companies in Austria. Within the measure "cluster support – internationalization" the project related costs of international cluster cooperation is supported up to 75% or max. 25.000 Euro. Project duration is limited to 1 year at maximum. Detailed information (only in German) available at <http://www.awsg.at/Content.Node/sonderprogramme/cluster/46819.php>

A successful case of transnational funding for branding purpose is represented by "Medicon Valley", the transnational cluster spanning the Greater Copenhagen area in Denmark and the Skane region in Sweden. The branding strategy of the Medicon Valley addresses companies and researchers from all over the world, presenting the area as "the powerful region for life science" and the "world-class bio-region".

In the mid-1990s the public authorities and the life science industry in Copenhagen and southern Sweden agreed to market the region internationally and to strive for a common goal: to be the most attractive bioregion in Europe. Since 1997 Copenhagen Capacity and its Swedish counterpart Invest in Skåne have jointly branded the region as 'Medicon Valley' to reflect the region's life science strongholds, and today Medicon Valley is one of the strongest life science region in Europe. Medicon Valley is part of the initiatives of Öresund, a cross-border region, set up in the nineties. Since 1996 structural funds have become available via Interreg II, III and now IVA, and used to sustain such kind of activities.

### 2.1.6. Cluster Ambassadors

The Cluster Ambassador is conceived as a sort of “Clusters’ mobility” programme and it aims to be an instrument for clusters’ internationalisation with the purpose to generate projects or partnerships (inter-cluster activities).

The general idea is that of a programme for international experts: gathering together the key actors of the key sectors (Energy and Green Tech, Mechatronics and Engineering, Chemistry and New Materials, ICT) with the common aim to create new business opportunities.

The activity consists in identifying and recruiting international experts who are considered to be the head of a network which matches the specialization of one regional cluster, and inviting them to come to the regions concerned by the meta-cluster in that field.

Such experts should:

- be identified by clusters, regional public authorities, and public development agencies (key public actors for local development) according to the needs identified in terms of international development. Either they identify an expert they know or they write down a profile they need.
- be an expert of an identified sector and identified focus in this sector.

Each expert should:

- ➔ Give a prospective vision to SMEs from Alpine Space geographical zone, about their sector of activities and the way it will evolve.
- ➔ Be able to identify SMEs/clusters/research centres in his country and domain of competencies eager to build European partnerships.
- ➔ Be able to disseminate, back to his country and its international network, information about the actors met in the different Alpine countries
- ➔ Strive to foster lasting bonds between the actors of their local network and their counterparts in partners’ regions.

This programme would allow experts to:

- Further develop their international network by meeting other experts, companies and organizations in their fields of activity
- Promote their knowledge and experience, as well as the skills and know how of their associates
- Facilitate partnerships between their associates and organizations in partners’ regions
- Receive regular updates: market trends current affairs and major events in their field of expertise taking place in partners’ regions
- Exchange strategies and good practices with other experts in their domain
- Participate in major international events

#### ➤ Who would be the beneficiaries to be funded?

The beneficiaries should be business experts: Clusters managers, international experts from industrial associations, research centers’ experts, international networks’ head in e-mobility, smart&green tech for sustainable constructions, smart grid, mechatronics; public institutions’ actors & politics (Europe first, then worldwide).

#### ➤ What specifically could be funded at transnational level?

It would be interesting to create an electronic platform for collaboration (a B2B catalogue, updated regularly for instance with several articles relating the programme’s news and innovation in mechatronics, smart grids ect),

The programme would also include:

- Meetings, visits/training trips, training sessions in coherence with targeted markets.

- Individual meetings with key players working in the expert's field of activity: clusters, companies, universities, laboratories, technical centers, etc
  - Visits of emblematic scientific or industrial locations
  - Lectures during thematic/sectoral roundtables
  - Participations in international events (trade shows, conferences, scientific seminars etc)
- **How long would the funded activity last?**  
Each welcoming should last from 3 to 5 days. Depending on the needs estimated beforehand. The expected benefits are:
- Access to new markets
  - More competitiveness (thanks to new collaborations, access to strategic information, new business and technologies' networks, new kind of technology development, etc...)
  - More visibility of each region's competencies
  - Promotion and better knowledge of each region's competencies
  - Promotion of EU competencies in the fields selected; international promotion
- **What minimum funding should be invested by each Region to support one project?**  
Costs related to logistics and welcoming of experts:
- 1000€ max for travel
  - 40€ per lunch
  - Visa expenses 1000€ max
  - 20 € for bank charges
- Total amount max: 2850 € per expert.
- **Are there any similar pre-existing experience from which Alps4EU could learn?**  
Yes, the Rhône-Alpes Region's programme "Clusters' mobility". The programme in short:
- Process in 5 steps:*
- *experts selection*
  - *programme conception*
  - *welcoming*
  - *evaluation and follow up*
  - *network life management*
- Functioning:*
- *1st phase: programme management and collaborative platform creation*
  - *2nd phase: network life management*
-

### 2.1.7. Thematic Workshop Roadshow

Cluster initiatives and their members, even if situated in different countries or regions, are faced with similar questions or challenges. These might be rather technologically oriented (e.g. between cluster initiatives from the same technological field). They could also be on a more operational level or concerning questions that are more generic. These challenges might hinder the clusters and their members in staying competitive and up to date. In order to face these challenges and, at the same time, strengthen the local economy, a series of thematic workshops in different regions would help the clusters. At the same time, synergy effects could be produced, reducing costs and leading to a possible exchange between the clusters.

In general, the topics of these workshops should be rather directed on cluster members and not specifically on the cluster management level. A thematic workshop roadshow could focus on one of these fields currently in need of elaborating (e. g. a very specific technical field in which enterprises might have a training need involving specific technological trends, too). The respective field would have to be relevant for cluster members in all of the three or more participating cluster initiatives.

The technical workshop can have one common format, developed jointly between the cluster initiatives. In the focus of the workshop should be topics/a technology focus commonly defined by the participating clusters. Once a common format has been agreed on, the workshop can easily be replicated in all of the participating regions. It should be carried out by an expert, either one expert for a series of workshop (this might reduce costs as he has not to develop a new format for each workshop) or, if it makes sense to approach the participants in their own language, different experts could be chosen.

► **Who would be the beneficiaries to be funded?**

In the focus of the workshop series are the cluster members. This can include enterprises as well as other cluster members.

► **How long would the funded activity last?**

The process from finding common topics relevant for all clusters, developing a workshop format until organising and carrying out the workshop would take 9 to 12 months.

► **What potentialities could be envisaged in funding this activity at transnational level?**

The potential of the workshop series is twofold. On the one hand the cluster members can close a knowledge gap, thus becoming stronger and more competitive. On the other hand, the measure strengthens the cooperation between the involved clusters by the communication that needs to be carried out in the planning phase, mostly between the cluster managers. Finally, the financial savings thanks to synergy effects is a clear advantage of this concerted training approach.

► **What minimum funding should be invested by each Region to support one project?**

The costs occurring can be divided into personnel cost for the communication and development of the workshop series, the costs on site for carrying out the workshop and the costs for the invited experts. Per training workshop this would amount to appr. 30.000 €.

► **Are there any similar pre-existing experience from which Alps4EU could learn?**

ALPlastic - <http://www.alplastics.net>

The ALPlastics projects' group did also suggest a similar measure which has not been implemented. The idea was slightly different. They wanted to export all or part of successful conferences to the project partners. The major issue encountered was that the conferences should have been proposed in the partner's languages and the initial speakers were not necessarily capable of taking on it.

### 2.1.8. Transnational innovation vouchers

The internationalization of SMEs is very complex, because the internationalization is very specific for each SME itself. Some are more interested in technology or research cooperation, other maybe are just in a search for new customers or markets. The transnational innovation voucher offers a possibility to adjust the support of SMEs in internationalization to their specific challenges and needs.

The transnational innovation vouchers will help SMEs to get in contact with high level consultants to work on their internationalization process. The final aim is to make SMEs collaborate transnationally in the framework of clusters.

A lot of SMEs are highly specified and they have a lot of knowledge about the products and services they are offering. What they sometimes do not know, how the competencies can be used in another context, e.g. in another region or sector. Thus the activity “transnational innovation voucher will include two steps:

1. In a first step a high profile consultant will analyses the competencies of an SME and will identify new application fields in other regions in the Alpine Space. This consultation will be individualistic for each SME, which is interested in internationalization. This first step should be conducted in separately in different regions of the Alpine Space.
2. In a second step the SMEs, which now have a clear picture of their specific competencies and needs, will be invited to an common workshop to find new ways of collaboration. These workshops can be organized transnational, so that companies from different regions come together to work on new project, products and services.

The two step process helps to elaborate more concrete level for cluster cooperation. This will address a major problem of internationalization, the broad spectrum of cooperation possibilities. The workshop in the second step could be focused on a very concrete topic, which makes it more interesting for SMEs to participate.

#### ► What specifically could be funded at transnational level?

The voucher will fund the costs of SMEs for acquiring services for the support of internationalization. The voucher scheme can be divided into two options:

##### a) Voucher for acquiring a high level consultant

It is quite complicated for companies to identify the competences they need to develop new products or services. The voucher will support them to find a high level consultant, who will elaborate the competencies together with the SME. After identifying the concrete competencies new application fields will be identified.

##### b) Voucher for organizing common workshops

The voucher could cover a part of the costs (e.g. 50%) for conducting a transnational workshop for at least five participants from three different regions. As a precondition companies attending these workshop should have identified their competencies and needs with the help if a high level consultant (see part a).

#### ► Who would be the beneficiaries to be funded?

The final aim is to support SMEs innovation with high level international support in the Alps4EU region. For that, they need some financial support on a very individual level to identify their specific needs. This could be offered through the “Voucher for acquiring a high level consultant (part a)”.

They also need the right contacts to get partners from other region. These contacts can be established via the “Voucher for organizing common workshops (part b)”.

In both steps cluster managers and intermediary institution can play a significant role. Firstly they can decide which companies in their region are ready to go deeper into the internationalization process and can apply for a voucher for an individual consultation. They also can their contacts to qualified consultants, which can help to support internationalization processes. Secondly they can organize matchmaking events or visits in the different regions. This is very important for the transnational cooperation workshops.

The voucher could cover, up to a certain percentage, the following type of costs:

- The cost of the external highly specialised service
  - The travel and accommodation cost of the SMEs
  - ▶ **Are there any similar pre-existing experience from which Alps4EU could learn?**

A similar voucher scheme was tested during the project ASVILOC PLUS - “Agencies supporting the value of innovation systems in local and regional economies“  
[http://www.adrnorddest.ro/index.php?page=PARTNERSHIPS\\_PROGRAMMES\\_ASVILOC\\_PLUS&language=2](http://www.adrnorddest.ro/index.php?page=PARTNERSHIPS_PROGRAMMES_ASVILOC_PLUS&language=2)

The methodology is also used by the Mechatronics Cluster in Lower Austria  
<http://www.ecoplus.at/en/ecoplus/cluster/mechatronics-cluster-lower-austria>
-

## 2.2. Regions and funding programmes

Having in mind the 2020 perspective, all Alps4EU partners have provided a description of the programmes/measures that could eventually be used in their region to fund all or some of the above listed activities (status at November 2013).

Here below we provide a short description on the key aspects of each programme/measure that were taken into consideration.

### 2.2.1. REGIONE PIEMONTE, IT

#### Funding programme: Structural Funds

The measures that Piedmont intends to fund in the upcoming programmes co-funded with structural funds are mainly the following (articulated on thematic objectives, priorities and specific actions):

- **Objective: technological development and innovation:**

- **Priority:** reinforcing of R&I infrastructures; promoting competence centres
- **Actions:** Innovation Clusters; Technological Platform; R&I infrastructures
- **Priority:** promoting enterprises R&I investments, development of new products and services, technology transfer; social innovation and application in public services; demand stimulation, networks, clusters and open innovation
- **Actions:** start up and spin off from public research, sustain of industrial PhD and researchers and qualified services to support participation in European projects, with the aim to spread innovation in SMEs

- **Objective: competitiveness of productive systems**

- **Priority:** promoting entrepreneurship, mainly by facilitating economic exploitation of new ideas and by promoting new companies foundation
- **Actions:** supporting investments in innovation; promoting of enterprises networks; facilitation of credit access through innovative financial tools
- **Priority:** development of SMEs new activity patterns, especially for internationalization
- **Actions:** promoting of enterprises networks focused on export promotion projects

More specifically, the Region intends to move forward in supporting the Innovation Clusters and Technology Platforms, both with funds addressed directly to cluster managers and through dedicated measures addressed to companies and research organizations being cluster members, to be seen as beneficiaries of such programmes.

The Region will move forward in sustaining collaborative research and innovation projects, as well as the supply of qualified services for R&I. Furthermore, new instruments to fund the activities of capitalization of results deriving from the funded projects will be implemented.

Another focus will be on start-ups, especially those high tech.

Also, measures in support to mobility of researchers and highly qualified human resources from research organizations and large companies towards SMEs will be proposed.

### 2.2.2. VENETO, IT

**Funding programme: Regional Law “industrial districts, innovation networks, aggregations”**  
(the law is currently under approbation by the Regional Council)

The programme aims to recognise and rule the regional initiatives dealing with industrial districts, innovation networks, aggregations. Different rules and funding measures apply accordingly to the above mentioned classification.

For the industrial districts and the innovation networks, the direct **beneficiaries** are cluster/networks organisations. For the aggregations the direct beneficiaries are companies (especially SMEs) part of the aggregation.

Concerning the type of activities that are **eligible for funding**, for industrial districts and innovation networks, the Region funds framework programs, including a set of different initiatives. For aggregations, the public funding covers specific selected projects (through periodic calls for proposals).

Anyway for all the categories, the following “axes” might be eligible:

- research and innovation
- horizontal infrastructures
- internationalisation
- sustainable development
- innovative entrepreneurship and employment
- participation to Eu projects, especially targeted for cluster cooperation

Concerning the future perspectives, the law is expected to be approved by this year. The funding programs shall start next year.

Concerning specifically the transnational aspect, the law considers that internationalisation and the involvement of local regional clusters in EU initiatives are core activities to increase the competitiveness of the regional economic systems.

#### **Funding programme: ROP 2007-2013 Measure 5.1.1 “Interregional cooperation”**

The measures is **aimed to** fund research cooperation projects set up by regional companies together with foreign EU partners (either companies or research centres).

The **goal** is to develop the competitiveness of the regional production system supporting innovative interregional projects, with the view to foster the cooperation among local and foreign companies.

Beneficiaries are identified in SMEs (either individual or aggregated), large companies are eligible only if aggregated in a network with SMEs.

The following **type of activities** are eligible for funding:

- projects of industrial research
- projects of experimental development
- combined projects of industrial research and experimental development

Concerning the future perspectives, there are some uncertainties: this year two calls of proposals have been issued but since the measure is part of the current ROP we cannot say whether the is will be part also of the new one.

Concerning specifically the transnational aspect, the call provides grants that could also be integrated with other EU and transregional schemes (like ERANET). The projects should be designed jointly with EU partners; each partner should cover at minimum 10% of the whole budget.

### 2.2.3. LOMBARDIA, IT

#### **Funding programme: Regional Technological clusters**

December 2011 Lombardy Region launched a call for proposal dedicated to research institutions in partnership with enterprises with the aim to establish and develop regional technological clusters in the frame of the nine national clusters funded by the Ministry of Education, University and Research. The nine regional technological clusters promoted by the regional government, aerospace, agrofood, energy, environment and sustainable construction, green chemistry (biofuels), intelligent factory, mobility, life sciences, smart communities and ambient and assisted living, are involved in relevant regional initiatives:

- Programme for the internationalisation of the Lombard enterprises:
  - Joint actions with cluster belonging to the 4 motors regions
  - Participation to the new European opportunities: Horizon2020, structural funds ect
- KIC- Knowledge and innovation Communities (2014-2016):
  - Healthy living and active ageing
  - Raw materials
  - Food4future
  - Added Value Manufacturing

#### **Funding programme: ROP ERDF 2007-2013 Measure 1.2.1.1 “Development of IT network and system to share information and services among SMEs, SMEs and research centres and SMEs and Public Administration”.**

In 2013 Lombardy Region invested in the development of an Open Innovation Platform as regional governance tool aiming to systematically identify technological and innovation challenges where the regional system could act as an ecosystem, encouraging cross-fertilisation actions among different technological and productive areas and promoting the development of emerging industries by mean of key competences and key enabling technologies.

Since the internationalisation of the Lombard industrial system, is considered a priority for the regional government, a dedicated measure has been developed:

- Grants for the access to international open innovation platforms: Lombard SMEs, enterprise networks, both public and private and their groupings (**notably clusters**) will be granted a subsidy to have access to an international platform able to guide their growth in the innovation field.

#### **Regional initiative: G.A.T.E – Give Ability to Export**

The Regional Technological Cluster are involved in the promotion of the initiative G.A.T.E – Give Ability to Export in order to foster the internationalisation process of their enterprises.

G.A.T.E. is promoted by the Lombardy Region Directorate General Industry, Research and Innovation together with the Lombard chamber system and supported by Finlombarda. Main aim is to guide Lombard micro, small and medium enterprises in the entry and settlement process of their business abroad. Enterprises should develop an internationalisation plan to be implemented with the support of an external expert provided by the G.A.T.E. project.

The project has two measures:

- Measure A: dedicated to enterprises with a commercial internationalization plan
- Measure B: dedicated to enterprises willing to consolidate their business abroad with an investment approach.

#### 2.2.4. BADEN WÜRTTENBERG, DE

##### **Funding programme: the European Fund for Regional Development (EFRE)**

The main policy actor of cluster funding activities in Baden-Württemberg is the state's Ministry of Finance and Economics. On the one hand, it supports and strengthens already existing clusters, on the other hand, state-wide networks in specific fields are established. Internationalisation activities are also funded to a certain degree.

In dialogue with industry, academia and existing cluster organisations in Baden-Württemberg, the Ministry of Finance and Economics develops a cluster-political concept, which aims to further expand and support already **existing clusters in the fields of automotive, manufacturing technology, enterprise software, photonics, tele-media and health**, as well as **building new clusters**.

The usages of the funds, stemming from the European Fund for Regional Development (EFRE) are very open. Every action is possible; the limits are just set by the general rules of EFRE-Funding. However, the Ministry sets some general objectives like:

- Fostering Innovation Activities
- Strengthening cooperations between the cluster members
- Sustainable development

Clusters are evaluated by their economic effects, tasks reached, initiating of common projects, number of cluster members, cross cluster cooperations including synergies and cooperations. Another key indicator, being very important in Baden-Württemberg, is the financial sustainability of the cluster management. After three years of public funding the cluster initiatives have to find new financial sources. This means they must be fully financed by membership fees, chargeable services or other funding programmes (e.g. from the European Commission or the national German funding measures).

##### **Promotion of state-wide networks:**

The establishment and / or expanding of state-wide networks in the areas "**automotive**", "**fiber-based materials**", "**mechatronics**", "**logistics**", "**creative economy**", "**production technology**" and the "**environmental technology**" is funded by the Ministry with appr. four million euros from the European Fund for Regional Development. The creation of new cluster initiatives is triggered by competitions. The state-wide networks in Baden-Württemberg are free to do the activities they would like to focus on. They also are limited by the rules of the EFRE-Funding Program.

Base of the funding programme is the study "Analytische und konzeptionelle Grundlagen zur Clusterpolitik in Baden-Württemberg" from prognos. They identified 18 target fields for the cluster policy in Baden-Württemberg which are funded by the programme.

In general, the time-span of these programmes is three years. But in order to get the funding, the applicants had to present a concept on how they will secure the continuance of the clusters or networks for three more years. For these three years, they can't expect any further funding from the federal state of Baden-Württemberg.

##### **Promotion of regional networks – Regional cluster competition:**

The Ministry also promotes the development and professionalisation of **regional cluster initiatives** that have been identified in two competitions in the years 2008 and 2010. Funds of 2.5 million euros from the European Regional Development Fund are available to support the time-limited establishment of a professional cluster management. A maximum of 200.000 € per cluster for a duration of two years is awarded.

##### **The Quality Label "Cluster Exzellenz Baden-Württemberg":**

Based on the "European Cluster-Excellence Label" the Ministry of Finance and Economics implemented a quality label for Baden-Württemberg. The indicators and requirements of the two labels are mostly the same. Therefore, cluster initiatives which achieved the Baden-Württemberg label are allowed to use the European Cluster Excellence Label as well.

The Ministry of Finance and Economics supports the cluster initiatives in two ways:

- *Free Label Coaching:*  
Cluster initiatives in Baden-Württemberg have the possibility to get a half day Label-Coaching for free. In the individual coaching session, cluster experts answer specific questions about the requirements for the label and prepare the cluster initiative for the following Label Process.
- *Financial support for the Assessment Process*  
50% of the costs for the entire Label Process are covered by the Ministry of Finance and Economics.

### **Internationalisation strategy for regional clusters**

The Ministry of Finance and Economics started the programme “Internationalisation strategy for regional clusters” to develop a strategy for the 18 relevant clusters and to support the cluster manager in the approach of internationalisation, e.g. by study visits, exchange and cooperation on international level.

Baden-Württemberg International, the ministry’s agency for the internationalisation of business, science and research, supports the regional clusters in entering international markets.

Vouchers for internationalisation activities for cluster managers are provided, travels of cluster experts for selected sectors or technology areas in specific target countries are supported, as well as presentation programmes for foreign cluster experts in Baden-Württemberg. Furthermore, the development of an internationalisation strategy of the clusters is promoted. In the focus of these support activities are cluster initiatives and networks. Financial subsidies are provided.

The Quality Label “Cluster Exzellenz Baden-Württemberg” was implemented with the objective to support the internationalisation process of cluster initiatives. The Baden-Württemberg label as well as the “European Cluster Excellence” label can improve the international visibility of a cluster initiative. It is a Europe wide sign for excellence in cluster management, which opens the doors to other excellent cluster initiatives. Especially in Baden-Württemberg the aspect of internationalisation is quite important, thus the Ministry added two special indicators to measure the internationalisation activities of the clusters in Baden-Württemberg.

## **2.2.5. WESTERN SWITZERLAND, CH**

As long as there is no cluster policy in Switzerland it is very difficult to map local needs to the proposed activities.

## **2.2.6. TYROL, AU**

### **Funding Programme: Programme to support Cluster’s Internationalisation**

The programme is supporting Austrian cluster organisations in the preparation and implementation of activities with cluster organisations in other countries and is operated by the AWS (Austria Wirtschaftsservice GmbH), a specific state owned bank operating various support programmes. The programme is especially dedicated to Austrian cluster organisations to improve their ability for market and technology access. Additionally a focus is laid on the participation of Austrian Clusters to international and/or European projects.

The funding is focused on e.g.

- Multilingual cluster information brochures for specific target markets
- Costs for soliciting with relevant international cluster organisations
- Costs for common international cluster activities (e.g. events, technology studies)
- The funding rates are up to 75% or Euro 25.000 max. per project , personal costs up to 25% of the total project costs

The programme operates with open calls, usually one per year. The evaluation is carried out in a one-step procedure done by thematic experts. Evaluation criteria to be applied are the content of the project (strategic relevance – economic/technological, specific benefit for the cluster members) and the quality of the project planning as well as structure and management. The waiting time from deposit of the proposal till reply of funding body is max. 3 months.

### 2.2.7. RHONE ALPES, FR

#### **Funding Programme: Regional Plan for enterprises Internationalisation (PRIE)**

The objective is to bring answers to export problematic based on a regional diagnosis.

Among the measures available, the PRIE could be a lever for the activities exposed in this document. Rhône-Alpes Region answers to problematics linked to export allow define eight actions to implement the PRIE in Rhône-Alpes:

- Offer SMEs a better international knowledge of enterprises and sectors
- Maintain in long term the internationalisation of SMEs
- Integrate the European dimension in the heart of the internationalisation strategy
- Offer financial helps
- Implementation of the “BPI-R” platform (investment bank)
- Detecting regional SMEs potential for internationalisation
- International action in Rhône-Alpes “Plan PME”/“SMEs plan”
- Communication towards SMEs: promote the PRIE plan.

This programme will end in 2015 and will be then renewed.

### 2.2.8. PACA, FR

#### **Name of the Funding Programme: PRIDES**

The funding programme is addressed at French regional clusters of the Provinces-Alpes-Côte d’Azur Region certified “PRIDES” Currently, there are 29 clusters that have been certified PRIDES in the Provinces-Alpes-Côte d’Azur Region since 2007.

The PRIDES (Regional Cluster/Pole of Innovation and Economical Co-Development) are regional clusters which gather companies (especially SMEs), research centers, training centers, economic organizations which works for the same value chain, sector or market. Based on a common strategy and having their own governance, they develop collaborative projects and propose innovative services.

The PRIDES are funded by the Regional Council of the Provinces-Alpes-Côte d’Azur Region which takes into consideration the priority to create and maintain sustainable employments.

The Regional Council intervenes financially for the structuration of the PRIDES and afterwards for the implementation of the strategy of the PRIDES. There are 4 financial schemes supporting the operational strategy of the PRIDES:

- The annual cofinancing of the programme of animation and engineering of the projects of the PRIDES: networking of companies, engineering of projects (collaborative actions and projects), collection and sharing of strategic information, support of companies, attractiveness and communication of the PRIDES.
- Funding of collective actions of the PRIDES based on 5 strategic pillars (innovation, export, ICT, training and CSR). These actions are led by SMEs which have to develop and adapt them to the economic, social and territorial environment. Two project calls were created about

the themes of ICT and RSE in order to be better taken into consideration by the PRIDES and their members.

- Support of R&D projects in the framework of regional project calls.
- Direct financial support to companies, members of the PRIDES, which are able to propose a 3-year strategic programme which can create employments.

The **key aspects** of the programme/measures are the following:

- Development of collaborative projects and innovative services.
- Cofinancing of the programme of animation and engineering of the projects of the PRIDES
- Funding of collective actions of the PRIDES based on 5 strategic pillars (innovation, export, ICT, training and CSR)
- Support of R&D projects
- Direct financial support to companies, members of the PRIDES

The **beneficiaries** of the programme/measures are:

- PRIDES – Clusters of the Provinces-Alpes-Côte d’Azur region certified PRIDES
- SMEs

The following **activities** are eligible:

- Networking of companies, engineering of projects (collaborative actions and projects), collection and sharing of strategic information, support of companies, attractiveness and communication of the PRIDES.
- Collective actions about innovation, export, ICT, training, and CSR.
- R&D projects.

The programme is expected to open in the future.

### 2.2.9. SLOVENIA

Slovenian Enterprise Fund is a public financial institution for the purpose of granting financial support and incentives to the business sector in Slovenia. Every year the Fund launches state aid for investment and development expansion of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Slovenia.

The Fund follows the development strategies of the European Commission and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and is aimed at improving competitiveness and business efficiency Slovenian corporate sector. By supporting innovation, new investments in human and technological potential of the Fund achieves faster development and develop entrepreneurial business environment.

#### **Competence Centers**

The competence centres are defined as development and research centres that are managed by partners from industrial sector and link partners from the industry and public research sector; they focus on the promotion of the development capability and the application of new technologies in manufacturing new competitive products, services and processes at priority areas of technological development. This function is complementary to that of the centres of excellence; together they constitute an autonomous whole in the area of research and development.

Seven centres were selected within a public invitation to tender for the development of competence centres in 2010–2013

### **Centers of excellence**

Centers of Excellence are a measure within the framework of the scientific and technology policy of the Republic of Slovenia aimed at promoting the concentration of knowledge at priority technological areas and horizontal linking along the entire chain of knowledge development, which is realised on the basis of strategic partnerships between the private sector and academia. This comprehensive interdisciplinary research and development programme emphasises the horizontal objective of promoting the transition to an energy-efficient economy with low greenhouse gas emissions or strongly promoting the transition to a low-carbon society.

Eight Centers of Excellence were selected within a public call for the development of centres of excellence in 2009–2013

### 3. Interest and priority of the proposed activities

The matrix here below portrays the level interest on a specific activity from the point of view of each territory.

Each Alps4EU partner has indicated a degree of relevance trying to answer to the following question: **"According to your knowledge of the clusters' system in your region, which of the following activities do you think would be particularly useful? "**

Each Alps4EU territory expressed in each activity its degree of priority, as follow:

3 - Very useful in my region

2 - Useful in my region

1 - Sufficiently useful in my region

		REGIONS									TOT	
		Piemonte	Veneto	Lombardia	Baden Wurttemberg	Western Switzerland	Tyrol	Rhone Alpes	Provence-Alpes-Cotes d'Azur	Slovenia		
ACTIVITIES	1	International Master of Advanced Studies in Cluster Management	2	1	1	(it already exists)	1	1	2	1	1	9
	2	Cluster Academy for excellence	1	1	2	3	2	1	3	1	1	15
	3	Competence portfolio and Open Innovation Platform	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	26
	4	Joint analysis and study of cluster's market potentials	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	22
	5	Marketing activities	1	2	2	3	1	3	2	3	3	20
	6	Cluster Ambassadors	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	2	1	13
	7	Thematic Workshop Roadshow	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	16
	8	Transnational innovation vouchers	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	22
TOTAL		16	15	15	18	14	15	19	18	14		

According to the matrix, the most interesting activities for the most of partners are activities n. 3, 4, 5 and 8.

## 4. Relevance of the proposed activities according to programmes and policies

This matrix shows the "relevance" (coherence) of a specific activity to the regional policies and funding programmes/measures.

Each Alps4EU partner, based on its knowledge of the regional policies, programmes and their orientation for the future, has tried to answer to the following question: **"According to your knowledge of the policies and programmes in your region (also including their orientation for the future), which of the following activities do you think would most probably capture the interest of your policy makers?"**

Alps4EU partners took into consideration all the activities listed here below, and attributed a level of relevance to each of them as follows:

- 3** - Very coherent to the policies/programmes in my region, it could probably be interesting for our policy makers
- 2** - Coherent to the policies/programmes in my region
- 1** - Sufficiently coherent to the policies/programmes in my region
- 0** - Not coherent to the policies/programmes in my region

		REGIONS									TOTAL	
		Piemonte	Veneto	Lombardia	Baden Wurtemberg	Western Switzerland	Tyrol	Rhone Alpes	Provence-Alpes- Cotes d'Azur	Slovenia		
ACTIVITIES	1	International Master of Advanced Studies in Cluster Management	1	0	1	(it already exists)	1	1	2	1	0	7
	2	Cluster Academy for excellence	1	0	1	2	1	1	3	1	0	10
	3	Competence portfolio and Open Innovation Platform	3	1	3	0	2	2	3	2	2	18
	4	Joint analysis and study of cluster's market potentials	2	2	2	1	2	3	3	1	0	16
	5	Marketing activities	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	19
	6	Cluster Ambassadors	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
	7	Thematic Workshop Roadshow	3	1	1	0	2	1	2	2	0	12
	8	Transnational innovation vouchers	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	0	20
TOTAL		15	8	13	8	12	14	18	12	5		

According to the Matrix, the activities that seem to be most relevant to the current policies and deprogrammers (and their orientations for the future) are activities n. **8, 5, 3, 4**. In particular, a quite high score in all partner territories (but Slovenia) was obtained by **activity n.8**.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The Alps4EU partnership has produced a feasibility study for the implementation a trans-regional funding scheme, based on regional programmes, which represents a preparatory work to further develop policies in support to the development of meta-clusters in the Alpine area.

This document aims to define the framework conditions and provide some operational suggestions for Policy Makers of the Alps4EU territories, on how to design and implement a joint trans-regional action in support to meta-clusters.

The following members most actively contributed to the preparation of the feasibility study:

- Regione Piemonte (and Finpiemonte), IT (Piemonte)
- Veneto Innovazione, IT (Veneto)
- Finlombarda, IT (Lombardia)
- MFG, DE (Baden Württemberg)
- SEZ, DE (Baden Württemberg)
- TZS, AT (Innsbruck)
- PST-FR, CH (Fribourg)
- Region Rhone Alpes, FR (Rhone Alpes)

Thanks to the work carried out in the Alps4EU project, the partners have reached mutual understanding and consensus on possible activities that could be set-up in order to support meta-clusters at transnational level.

This document conveys the sharing of a common vision about how regional policies could contribute to favour the emergency of stable transnational collaborations among clusters in the alpine-space area.

Based on this common vision and shared ideas, the Alps4EU partners have informed and raised the awareness of their local policy makers on the importance of further supporting, also through potential funding initiatives, the development of meta-clusters.

With this aim, the policy makers in each Alps4EU territories will also be informed in the upcoming period about the results and outcomes of the Alps4EU project.

The recommendation coming from this partnership and addressed to policy makers is that, in the long term and if future conditions will allow it, Alps4EU territories (and beyond) should further collaborate in designing and implementing transnationally harmonized funding measure in support to meta-clusters.

Therefore, this “*Feasibility Study for the implementation of a trans-regional funding scheme, based on regional programmes, to support the development of meta-clusters*”, aims to define the framework conditions and provide some preliminary operational suggestions for Policy Makers of the Alps4EU territories.

This operational **toolkit** includes:

- A set of relevant activities that could be funded at transnational level (based on the expression of interest collected from clusters as well as on previous experiences and strategies of Alps4EU partners).  
In facts, all partners ensured a stable consultation with their local clusters and cluster managers, also through local workshops, in order to collect their recommendations and to verify their interest on the proposed activities. The commitment of cluster throughout this process was assured in order to highlight their needs, priorities and engagement for the success of this pilot activity.

- An analysis on available funding programmes in each Alps4EU territory, also based on a consultation process with policy makers as to explore the real feasibility of the proposed actions.

The experts involved in each territory have identified, also through a consultation process with their local cluster managers, the key activities that would be useful for the cluster system in their region with the final goal to support the development of transnational meta-clusters.

Four activities resulted to be perceived as strategically relevant in a quite wide number of territories. A quite significant number of regions highlighted the importance of cooperating together for the development of the following activities:

- **Competence portfolio and Open Innovation Platform** (7 regions): Piemonte, Veneto, Lombardia, Baden Württemberg, Western Switzerland, Tyrol, Rhone Alpes, Provence-Alpes-Cotes d'Azur
- **Joint analysis and study of cluster's market potentials** (4 regions): Lombardia, Western Switzerland, Rhone Alpes, Provence-Alpes-Cotes d'Azur
- **Marketing activities** (4 regions): Baden Württemberg, Tyrol, Provence-Alpes-Cotes d'Azur, Slovenia
- **Transnational innovation vouchers** (4 regions): Piemonte, Veneto, Baden Wurttemberg, Rhone Alpes

But Also:

- The **Cluster Academy for excellence** registered a high interest from Baden Württemberg and Rhone Alpes and captured the attention of Lombardia and Western Switzerland
- The **Thematic Workshop Roadshow** registered a high interest from Piemonte and Provence-Alpes-Cotes d'Azur and captured also the attention of Veneto, Rhone Alpes and Slovenia.

Subsequently, such “wish list” has also been compared with the current regional policies and funding programmes/measures in each territory (also including their orientation for the future), in order to think concretely about which of the proposed activity would most probably be embraced by the policy makers for future implementation.

This comparison shows in many cases a discrepancy between the perceived needs and opportunities highlighted by experts and cluster managers, and the available funding instruments.

This is mainly the case, for instance, of the **Competence portfolio and Open Innovation Platform** particularly for what concerns Veneto and Baden Württemberg regions and of the **Joint analysis and study of cluster's market potentials** particularly for what concerns Western Switzerland and Provence-Alpes-Cotes d'Azur.

Such discrepancies could be due, for instance, to a lack of policy or funding programme to be used to concretely to support such kind of initiatives.

The portray given by the regional experts involved in Alps4E shows that in some cases a major effort will have to be invested in order raise the awareness of policy makers on the outcomes and recommendations deriving from Alps4EU, as to promote new policies and funding measures that could welcome some of the proposed activities emerging from this project.

Thanks to the joint effort that has been carried out in Alps4EU, this feasibility study represents a starting point and an operational tool that offers an overall vision of the practices matured by each Alps4EU partner in the domain of support to clusters. Thus, it allows to make a concrete step ahead in putting the bases for developing new future transnational funding measures in support to meta-clusters.