



## ALPSTAR Policy Board – meeting recommendations

***On 28th of May 2014, at the end of the final conference of the project ALPSTAR, Policy board convened once again to review the many results of the project and reinforce cooperation in the field of climate change in the Alps.***

— The aim of the Policy board is to encourage inter-policy-level interaction on transnational level on issues of carbon neutrality; give feedback to prepared strategies, action plans and implemented measures to guide and redirect the actions and improve the methodology and tools of the project; and thus to contribute to the implementation of Climate Action Plan and ensure sustainability of project results. The meeting on the 28th of May 2014 in Ljubljana, was attended by policy and decision makers from all Alpine countries.

At the meeting, Barbara Simonič, on behalf of the Lead partner of the project ALPSTAR, the Slovene Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment, first presented the recommendations that partners prepared for the meeting of ALPSTAR Policy Board. The recommendations from project partners to the members of Policy board were organised into three groups: enabling and disabling factors for pilot action implementation, and general recommendations for transfer of pilot actions to other regions and for development and implementation of low carbon strategies and action plans in the region.

As enabling factors the following was identified: public and private interest or support, political interest or support, proven benefits for stakeholders, project process approach and use of existing know-how, infrastructure and potentials. When it comes to public and private interest or support, it's easier to assure it through co-operation among institution with the same aim. It has proven essential in one case that the company had the interest to do the analysis and join the project. Motivated managers and other people in pilot region help ease the process, so it is important to approach those concerned. Similar situation is with gaining political support or interest, it is important to consider political framework and contact convinced politicians. Benefits for stakeholders are most easily approached with the financial argument – everyone agrees it's better to save money while becoming climate neutral. Project process approach means employing targeted project management, and focus on selected cases (cities or companies). Using existing know-how, infrastructure and potentials is important as implementation of solutions thus involves lesser costs (e.g. carpooling does not involve large expenditure for community as software and know-how are already available).



Disabling factors for pilot action implementation fell in one of the categories: lack of cooperation, lack of support/interest of local/regional stakeholders, missing awareness, financial issues, project management and lack of good practices. Lack of cooperation for example is tourism and agriculture sector translates in less than optimal offer or supply chain, as well as suboptimal value added in the chain. Lack of support or interest of local or regional stakeholders is especially worrying when locals lack interest for the work in their community and convincing people by words often is not enough, while lack of regional approach and support of a variety of stakeholders prove problematic especially when planning more and better working public services (e.g. cross-border public transportation services). Missing awareness about the need to act on climate change can again be tackled with the argument of savings, but financial issue of funding time consuming workshops and promotional activities is a question, especially when it is not clear that costs can be seen as an investment. For bigger investment (e.g. in railways), financial situation is even more critical, and public authorities are currently unable to tackle such engagement. Project management can also become complicated, as it was the case with an engineering company that did analyses in two regions. Lack of good practices which would show the way out of a difficult situation is impairing further progress.

General recommendations for transfer of pilot actions to other regions included the need to find key figures or motivated people to join the actions, form cooperation with experienced partners, use existing networks, integrate schools and universities, attract young people as a generation with more ideas, different way of thinking. Second important feature is to show the right benefits to private companies and wider public, such as new opportunities for work, financial and health benefits. Infrastructure should be built on existing potential, but also right methods are important in organization of workshops, study visits or promotion of the work done at public events. More global recommendations for development and implementation of low carbon strategies and action plans in the region have been reiterated from the last meeting as it was deemed important to point out these issues which are still valid. Namely, any framework for action should consider climate change mitigation and adaptation together with wider sustainable development goals. Capitalisation on existing good practices has proven beneficial but local characteristics remain a challenge. Ensuring political commitment and institutional support is primordial for successful implementation, but also a close cooperation of a wide array of actors as well as a core team of committed individuals working towards the same goal. In the process, systematic and permanent evaluation is important, as well as transparent flow of information, and constant motivation for target groups.

The second part of the meeting included feedback from Policy board members who were asked the following 3 questions:

- What would you consider are the most essential lessons learnt from the ALPSTAR project?
- How could ALPSTAR results be best disseminated in other Alpine regions?
- In your specific role, where do you see the most promising opportunities and the most challenging threats on the way to reaching climate neutrality in the Alps?

Jernej Stritih, now independent consultant, expressed his agreement with the challenges put forward so far, as in his opinion they hold true. Especially he pointed out



that in his view the main challenge in order to switch discussion and sell the idea of climate action is to show other benefits that such action brings – not only reducing GHG emissions, but also greening the economy as a whole. In this way, things could move forward also in global climate negotiations. The Alpine countries are some of the most developed countries in the world, but in South East Europe and Uzbekistan where he worked on promoting climate action, he noticed that local level has same problems, that is why good practices are such an important element and should be further promoted and disseminated at side events during COPs, for example. Sector-wise, forests are a missing element in equation in his observation, there is development policy framework in the EU for promoting more use of forests, while there is no consideration of how to make forests more resilient to the threats of climate change and more preserved.

Uroš Vajgl, deputy Head of Environment Directorate at the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment, said regarding the first question that concrete actions implemented in the ALPSTAR project bring good feeling and show that there are many ways to go about climate change. Its results could be further disseminated in the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) in the making. He also agreed that other overall goals such as quality of life could gather necessary funding and political support, but the biggest threat Mr. Vajgl sees is the political willingness to tackle climate change.

Dr. Darja Piciga, Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment, expressed strong conviction that it is important to have a more holistic framework of sustainable development, to emphasize social and economic dimension, but also cultural. Alpine Space Programme could then in her view be the one further promoting cultural tradition of the Alps, which was sustainable in the past centuries. The biggest challenge on the way to climate neutrality Ms. Piciga sees in schools where it would also be necessary to build systematically on existing good practices. With this aim, the follow-up project Young Captains of the Planet Earth was conceived.

Ms. Katharina Conradin, member of Board of Cipro International, expressed the belief that the methodology that was used in the ALPSTAR project (identification and implementation of good practices) should be further promoted, and that the Policy Board is an important and innovative way to disseminate project results in her opinion. A way for continuation of the work could be through EUSALP, and follow up project could go even broader – with partners from other fields and sectors.

Ms. Simona Vrevc, deputy Secretary-General of the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, stated her observation that the approach has been quite diverse across ALPSTAR pilot regions, they were rather small but with local problems, so the recommendation would be to try implementation in the larger area and show some real benefits, as direct ones are difficult to prove. In her view, Policy board should be composed of more politicians to truly assure multiplication of results. The biggest threat Ms. Vrevc sees is climate change competing with other, economic growth-related, objectives.

Dr. Mojca Golobič, Biotechnical Faculty of Ljubljana, only stated some observations as external evaluator of the project ALPSTAR . Evaluating the project wasn't easy as the extent to which the project contributed to the actual changes is unclear - question of cause-effect is difficult to evaluate, would it happen without the project? There are less



tangible results, but uptake is important – sharing ideas, developing networks... Overall measures were implemented, mayors came to events, so there are quite some outcomes to share.

Dr. Antonio Ballarin-Denti, professor, also Lombardy Foundation for the Environment, speaking politically expressed his belief that a far sighted vision of climate change mitigation is needed, even at the EU level, there are only outlooks to 2030. Success of every process is to look beyond the process itself; this is also what ALPSTAR project did. Second, permanent cooperation among actors has been established over the course of the project, also with Chambers of commerce and individual enterprises, but buildings and transport sectors are still separated from the objectives, there is more need to cooperate with them. Suggestion would be also to pass through associations, namely gatherings of the so-called 4 motors of Europe (4 most developed regions of Europe), Encore (Environmental Conference of the Regions of Europe) platform, Covenant of Mayors, Climate group of regions and municipalities, etc., and put on the floor the lessons learned. Sector-wise, water management and RES are major challenges in his opinion, more should be done to adapt to extremes and change patterns.

Andrej Kranjc, Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment, long-time chief Slovene negotiator in climate talks, expressed his consideration that a lot has happened in the project, but not enough is known, so his suggestion would be to first involve all Alpine regions and mayors should get on board to join the initiative of reaching climate neutrality. Good outreach is needed, and Mr. Kranjc agreed that next COP in Lima could be an opportunity for dissemination or project results, but the competition of side events is big, more thought should be devoted to how attract participants to attend such an Alpine event.

Michele Pelloso, director of Industry and Craft Department of Veneto Region, said with regard to first question that a common holistic framework is needed to mainstream all the lessons. With regard to dissemination of results, existing groups should be used, while promising opportunities on the way to reaching climate neutrality in the Alps Mr. Pelloso sees in pilot actions promoting LCA in enterprises in order to support green investment. Green practices should be seen as opportunity for new business. Mr. Marco Meggiolaro from the same Department, added that while environment is seen as a constraint, good practices are a way to show that successful cases are possible and are already existing. These are also the positive results of mobility of people.

In general, members of the ALPSTAR Policy board thus agreed that there are still many opportunities and threats on the way to reaching climate neutrality in the Alps that need to be addressed. The discussion then continued with the project partners as to how further capitalise on the existing results and methods that the ALPSTAR project employed so far and continue with the good cooperation at the transnational level formed in the project in the future. Ideas of new projects and follow up plans were conceived, so the session concluded with a confirmation of mutual understanding and expression of desire for further cooperation to make the Alps truly a model region of climate action.

