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Strategy Development for the Alpine Space

Conference Digest: Turning Strategies into a Programme: Alpine Space 2014-2020

Milan, Italy, 21 February 2013

Participants of the Alpine Space Stakeholder Conference in Milan on 21 February reflected what multilevel governance looks like in practice: a kaleidoscope of voices from all Alpine countries including local, regional and national authorities, further EU programmes for the Alpine area, universities, and private companies as well as the European Commission.

More than 300 stakeholders got together to sum up the recent stakeholder dialogues and to match expectations for the years from 2014 - both concerning a successor Alpine Space Programme and questions as to the value of a macro-regional strategy for the Alpine Space.



Among many insightful contributions and careful conclusions the following stand out:

Three functions have been identified as crucial for a future **Alpine Space Programme** that is to be

- (1) **selective**: in triggering and funding actions with a clear focus
- (2) **holistic**: in feeding comprehensive debates on long-term alpine development
- (3) **inclusive**: in catalysing improved cooperation and coordination among alpine-relevant actors.

More strategy: from programming to governance

Strategic policy development has always been the Alpine Space Programme's rationale. The transnational programme adds an extra European dimension to regional development in that it adapts strategic priorities developed at European level to the Alpine context.

Drawing on a lively scene of Alpine-wide networks and organisations, in two programme generations more than 100 projects have brought together about 1000 partners from 500 institutions – including all levels of administration, research institutions and development agencies, social and economic partners, NGOs, clusters and networks. In the Alpine Space, it is fair to say that operating in a transnational dimension has become a firmly established reality for many.

It is in this light that we have to understand (1) the call for a “more strategic” programme as it was expressed by external experts and programme partners alike at the conference and (2) initiatives towards a macro-regional strategy for the Alpine Space.

Alpine cooperation as such has matured to an extent that it wants to surpass vertical governance where top-down (typically priorities but also project ideas derived from analysis at European level) meets bottom up (key local actors bring in their expertise, informed opinions and values, propose projects that match set



priorities). Hence the idea of a macro-regional strategy as a frame for multilevel governance has a particular resonance.

Strategic policy development in that sense is at best footed on a creative process of knowledge sharing which may be the most relevant outcome of this strategy-development process: Stakeholder dialogue that is ongoing, iterative and non-linear (so cooperation between all levels really) as an intrinsic part of programming indeed shifts the emphasis to governance. Ultimately this will empower an Alpine Space Programme to arrive at a more proactive project generation as part of an effective evidence-informed cohesion policy.

So what the dialogue series has left us with so far is not less than this:

- + numerous project ideas
- + inputs on how actors perceive development opportunities for the Alpine Space
- + a sense of the state of play in alpine co-operation.

Fewer, focused themes

If there will be a macro-regional strategy, it will have to be focused on few themes. The European Commission and close observers advice that rather than rushing into this process it should draw on experience from the two existing initiatives (Baltic Sea and Danube) so as to lay the foundations for a good process architecture and agree on principles of action rather than a vision as such.

As regards thematic focus for the next Alpine Space Programme, efforts are in their early stages. Consulting stakeholders in all their diversity has brought out the very diversity of their expectations regarding alpine cooperation – some recurring themes such as sustainable resource management or energy efficiency can be identified.

For the time being, three clusters have been derived merging experience of two programme generations with this feedback from stakeholder dialogues and evaluation results:

Innovation, economic development and social inclusion

Environment, resource management and efficiency

Accessibility, services of general interest and territorial integration.

These clusters are still broader than the thematic objectives of the future programme in the end.

In selecting those, it is not decisive whether a theme as such is of importance but whether it is relevant for the Alpine Space and what an Alpine Space Programme as opposed to other actors can contribute.

It is now the responsibility of the programming task force - composed of representatives of all seven partner states of the Programme, its Managing Authority and Joint Technical Secretariat, the European Commission and other Alpine actors cooperating in this programme area, as well as a team of external experts - to translate this list of rich ingredients into a coherent Alpine Space Programme 2014-2020. And here is the roadmap:

11 March 2013	<p>Targeted call for project proposals As a lead over to the successor programme, the last call of the Alpine Space Programme 2007-2013 targets projects that specifically take stock of project achievements and prepare the ground for the next programme generation.</p>
May 2013	<p>Final Expert Report of the Strategy-Development Process The experts will take the contributions made in the stakeholder dialogue into account when finalising their report.</p>
June/July 2013	<p>Summary of the stakeholder dialogue series & end-of-project reflection The programme will set up a documentation of results with a focus on an analysis of stakeholder dialogue (workshops, online survey, Milan conference)</p>
August/Sept 2013	<p>Public consultation The draft Programme will be available for surveying and will be open for comments.</p>
December 2013	<p>The Programme is expected to be submitted to the European Commission</p>

All documents will be available for download from www.alpine-space.eu. A dedicated section on the programme website will provide continuous updates on programming.