



## MINI GUIDE

# How to overcome national borders in a sustainable Alpine spatial development

### WHY OVERCOME NATIONAL BORDERS?

The Alpine regions are facing a growing need for housing, transport, industrial, and tourism areas. At the same time, the demand for sustainable management of resources and preservation of natural areas and the cultural landscape is increasing. The spatial planning policies that are already in place to reduce disparities and increase cohesion must be continued and adapted so that they can also simultaneously fulfill a preventive function. Even though many problems in Alpine territory can best be solved by the local and regional authorities directly concerned, certain problems can only be solved in a transnational framework, requiring joint measures by Alpine countries. Specifically, the national borders that split functional networks also demarcate different administrative systems. Because of their differences in responsibilities, the legal, organizational, and institutional settings of regions hinder effective management of cross-border issues.

Many Alpine spatial issues clearly demand cross-border and transnational cooperation; these include sustainable use and management of natural resources, transport infrastructure and facilities, conservation of biodiversity, and natural hazards. Such cooperation contributes

to greater efficiency and usefulness of the results; for example, through development of shared methods and databases for monitoring natural disasters and sustainable use of natural resources, shared and coordinated approaches to help small-scale and medium-sized enterprises, and joint heritage-promotion campaigns.

In addition to regional authorities, such cooperation also includes scientific institutions, local communities, NGOs, and transnational networks. How can you become part of transnational activities?



## 1 JOIN ONE OF THE ALPINE TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS!

In the last two decades, a variety of transnational networks have been initiated in the Alps. Their aim is to implement the Alpine convention's principles at the local and regional levels. Working together with the goal of protecting mountain territory, local actors share experience and knowhow through their networks, and also common representations of Alpine nature and society. Transnational networks represent new models of coordination and governance, and a new politics of horizontal relations. These link various people and groups concerned with the protection and sustainable development of the Alps (CIPRA), protected areas (Alparc), municipalities (Alliance in the Alps), small businesses (NENA), cities (Alpine Town of the Year), researchers (ISCAR), tourism resorts (Alpine Pearls), and many others. Networks of mountain areas outside the Alpine area are also a good option to join (Euromontana, Mountain Partnership).

## 2 PARTICIPATE IN TRANSNATIONAL AND CROSS-BORDER PROJECTS!

Financial support from the Alpine Space Programme enables partners from the seven Alpine countries to overcome national borders and promote sustainable spatial development together, at the transnational level. Another type of European territorial cooperation is cross-border cooperation, which focuses even more on problems arising from contact between two different administrative systems and on issues shared by regions on both sides of the border. In this way, transnational projects provide solutions not only for their regions, but also to similar problems in other regions. Among the numerous successful projects, three examples are presented:



**AlpHouse (Alpine Building Culture and Ecology)**

This project sought to enhance the competitiveness of regional SMEs by providing them with the knowledge, skills, and tools for top-quality renovation of old Alpine buildings. These meet the highest standards of energy efficiency and develop individual local solutions oriented towards a common transnational understanding of quality in renovations and values in traditional architecture.



**ALP FFIRS (Alpine Forest Fire Warning System)**

This project improved forest fire prevention in the Alpine area by creating a shared warning system based on weather conditions affecting fire potential. The main goal was to develop a decision-support tool for those involved in forest fire prevention, consisting of a daily fire danger level assessment (on the internationally uniform Alpine Forest Fire Danger Scale) and a forecast to identify critical periods in advance.



**PermaNET (Permafrost Long-Term Monitoring Network)**

This project established a permafrost-monitoring network across the Alps, consisting of previously existing and newly established regional and national monitoring networks. Bringing together all of the data and experiences of permafrost investigations throughout the Alps has resulted in a huge step forward in permafrost research and in natural hazard management practice.

## 3 MEET YOUR PARTNERS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BORDER ON A REGULAR BASIS!

To solve cross-border issues, constant dialogue among representatives from each side should take place, in the form of regular meetings or supported through other communication channels, such as information platforms and social

media. Conferences, project meetings, workshops, and working days always represent a great opportunity to meet your neighbors and exchange opinions, ideas, and concerns over coffee or a lunch break.

## 4 ESTABLISH A CROSS-BORDER REGION!

To upgrade your cross-border relationships establish a cross-border region, or provide a framework for the ongoing cooperation of two neighboring areas that share the same development challenges. It should address a particular area of cooperation or, even better, common development planning for an entire cross-border functional area in various fields of shared interest.

As can be seen from the Association of European Border Regions ([http://www.aebr.eu/en/members/list\\_of\\_regions.php](http://www.aebr.eu/en/members/list_of_regions.php)), more than two hundred cross-border cooperation bodies have been established in Europe, and they are especially frequent in mountain areas (e.g., the Alps and the Pyrenees). Two typical cases are presented here:

- **The Working Community of Alpine Regions / Arbeitsgemeinschaft Alpenländer (ARGE ALP; [www.argealp.org](http://www.argealp.org))**  
This cooperation area was established in 1972 and covers Bavaria (Germany); the cantons of Grisons, St. Gallen, and Ticino (Switzerland); the region of Lombardy, the Autonomous Provinces of Bolzano - South Tyrol, and Trento (Italy) the provinces of Lombardy, Bolzano, and Trento (Italy), and the states of Tirol, Salzburg, and Vorarlberg (Austria). Its main tasks relate to advocacy for specific Alpine concerns, targeting central governments and European institutions, cooperation with other Alpine and non-Alpine organizations in areas of common interest to the Alpine area (e.g. ecological, cultural, social, and economic), building bridges across borders in the Alpine area, and strengthening the under-

standing between areas inside and outside the Alps.

- **L'Espace Mont Blanc (<http://www.espace-mont-blanc.com>)**  
L'Espace Mont-Blanc is an initiative of cross-border cooperation that joins together thirty-five municipalities from Savoie and Haute Savoie (France), the Aosta Valley (Italy), and Valais (Switzerland). Its main cooperation topics are sustainable development, mountain agriculture, nature and landscape protection, integrated tourism, and transport.

## 5 USE THE WIKIALPS: WWW.WIKIALPS.EU!

WIKIAlps, the wiki of the namesake project, can help you overcome national borders through sustainable Alpine spatial development. This is a dynamic platform that provides operative and ready-to-use information on spatial development for the entire Alpine area seen from three different perspectives:

- The project perspective, which provides an overview of spatial development projects and their results.
- The policy perspective, which provides official spatial planning documents from the Alpine regional up to the transnational level.
- The stakeholder perspective, which offers a competences matrix of stakeholder institutions involved in Alpine spatial development.

The site [www.wikialps.eu](http://www.wikialps.eu) is dedicated to policymakers, civil servants, researchers, entrepreneurs, and interested members of the general public. It allows users to not only use its content, but also contribute actively to its development. WIKIAlps aims to make relevant information about spatial development from other regions or countries tangible and

easily accessible. In this way, key information and knowhow can be shared, and project results, important documents, and contacts for future cooperation can be found. For more information, see also the “How-to-use the WIKIAlps wiki” miniguide.

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