



Interreg
Alpine Space



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Blueprint for an Alpine Region Research & Innovation Agenda

Blueprint for an Alpine Region Research & Innovation Agenda is a strategic document that defines a unique Alpine Region approach for the creation of a shared R&I Agenda, through prioritization of R&I topics for the activation of a transnational synergic and complementary collaboration.

A Blueprint serves the function of providing a process model or design for a transnational Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA). It provides guidance on both process and content for achieving the SRIA. In terms of content, the Blueprint provides indications on the main components or building blocks of the SRIA document and how these can be structured effectively to build on each other. In terms of process, the Blueprint provides guidance on the appropriate structures for steering these efforts and providing strategic oversight, engaging all relevant stakeholders, building consensus and ownership and for generating the required content. The Blueprint paves the way for the SRIA, by instilling a systematic, iterative, and learning approach and the guiding principles of openness and inclusiveness in the SRIA co-design. The effectiveness of the Blueprint depends on the extent to which it is fine-tuned to the type of SRIA which is envisaged, required and feasible for the setup in question. This will be guided by the steering team, the specific context, and the stakeholder community.

To date SRIAs have been developed at European level to address a specific societal challenge(s) or to address a specific research topic/s. The design of a SRIA blueprint for a macro-region will entail a fresh approach which can build on the experiences of successful SRIAs such as the JPI URBAN EUROPE but would require fine-tuning. The ERA-LEARN Guide for the SRIA Development process indicates that *“each SRIA development process must be designed to fit its relevant R&I and stakeholder contexts, therefore, there is no universally ‘right’ or ‘typical’ SRIA process applicable to all partnerships.”* While a blueprint or a step-by-step guide for the design of the SRIA process cannot be provided, some elements are necessary in all SRIA processes.

The development of the Blueprint was based on a review of relevant documents including

- the EUSALP and its publications (AGs)
- the A-RING and other relevant publications (from ARDIA-NET, S3-4AlpClusters, AlpGov, GaYA, the Vanguard Initiative)
- existing JRC/EC manuals and other relevant guides (from ERA-LEARN, BiodivERsA, etc.)
- foresight studies and results (especially those linked to thematic SRIAs and JPIs).

The document is structured along two main parts. First part draws upon the international state-of-the-art and addresses the elaboration approach followed in the development of the Blueprint and consequently the SRIA that can eventually be developed. First part is complemented by the underlying megatrends and specific trends in the key areas of common interest that were identified in the A-Ring project. Second part includes a repository of tested methods and routes in trans-national inter-regional collaboration that are structured along sever collaboration routes. Second part finishes with specific guidelines and good practices for additional elements of a SRIA development process such as engaging stakeholders, communicating and raising awareness, championing, and overseeing the process, vision setting and prioritisation.



The rationale for developing a common SRIA for the Alpine Region is based on three factors:

- The EUSALP regions are running at different speeds.
- There is limited focus on a transnational approach on strategic topics of interest for the Alpine Region in order to better exploit economic opportunities.
- There is no strategic transnational cooperation framework for topics of specific Alpine importance.

From this perspective, the SRIA takes on strategic importance, potentially playing an instrumental role in aligning national and regional research and innovation policies and building a common transnational cooperation framework.

The SRIA can be as effective as the extent of commitment and engagement achieved among key players and stakeholders to building this common transnational cooperation framework. The SRIA needs thus to be supported by jointly agreed goal(s) and objectives. For instance, following the above rationale the goal of developing a SRIA for the Alpine Region should reflect three aspects:

- To contribute to inter-regional convergence in terms of R&I performance and capacity
- To integrate the transnational collaboration dimension in addressing topics of interest for the Alpine Region
- To help build an overarching strategic transnational cooperation framework for topics of specific Alpine interest.

The SRIA goals and objectives need to be clearly articulated within the framework of the EUSALP objectives:

- To balance development and protection through innovative approaches
- To enhance attractiveness and competitiveness of the Alpine Region
- To ensure mutually beneficial interaction between the mountain regions and the surrounding lowlands and urban areas
- To promote the Alpine Region in its function as an EU laboratory for effective cross-sectorial and multi-level governance, strengthening cohesion within the Union.

The timeframe of the SRIA needs to be defined corresponding to the time needed to work on the objectives set to achieve the expected results (next 10 years or more). Naturally, the level of political support and commitment is crucial, although not easily secured for such long periods.

The SRIA will need to be based on a commonly agreed set of guiding principles. These may already be prescribed through EUSALP and EU principles but there may be specific additional aspects for consideration.

Examples:

- Support for R&I capacity-building in lower R&I intensity regions, tech/knowledge transfer
- R&I for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals¹; R&I for sustainability
- Resilience to crises such as the Covid pandemic

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>



- RRI (responsible research and innovation), social responsibility/innovation, open and fair science, open innovation

Key messages to take away:

- The **SRIA** is just the start of a **long-lasting journey**
- **Political buy-in is key** as is early and **equal engagement of all stakeholders** (quadruple helix)
- **One step at a time** might be preferred **in cases of multiple levels of governance** addressed over very ambitious starts that need radical changes
- **The role of AG1 and EUSALP** in steering the process
- **Either Fast Track or Deep Dive approach**, the first task is the **joint vision building for gaining commitment** and building trust for the upcoming long-term collaborative policy and decision-making process
- The **Deep Dive approach** allows greater **focus on deep transformation** and whole of government/multilevel approaches for addressing green and digital transitions
- **SRIAs are inherently iterative** – therefore plan to revisit them periodically to finetune the approach and capitalize on the learning curve
- **SRIAs are as effective as their implementation** – KPIs help ensure that the process remains on track.