

Interreg Alpine Space 2014-2020

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1. Introduction

The aim of this Policy Brief is to provide public administrations (PAs) of the Alpine macro-region (AR) **recommendations to enhance transnational and transregional collaboration** in research and innovation (R&I).

The emphasis of the Policy Brief is on the **mechanisms to start and support the collaboration** between relevant stakeholders in addressing common priorities.

There is an increasing convergence of R&I priorities of Alpine regions around three broad issues: **a) digital transformation; b) sustainability; c) mobility**. The most promising topics are: artificial intelligence; industry 4.0 and production transformation; circular economy solutions; renewable energy sources and cleaner production; smart mobility.

The policy brief suggests two types of cooperation mechanisms with a different degree of complexity, stakeholder involvement and efficacy:

- 1) **information sharing;**
- 2) **structured dialog.**

It also reviews the **funding programs** available to support the implementation of these mechanisms and of the resulting collaborations in R&I projects.

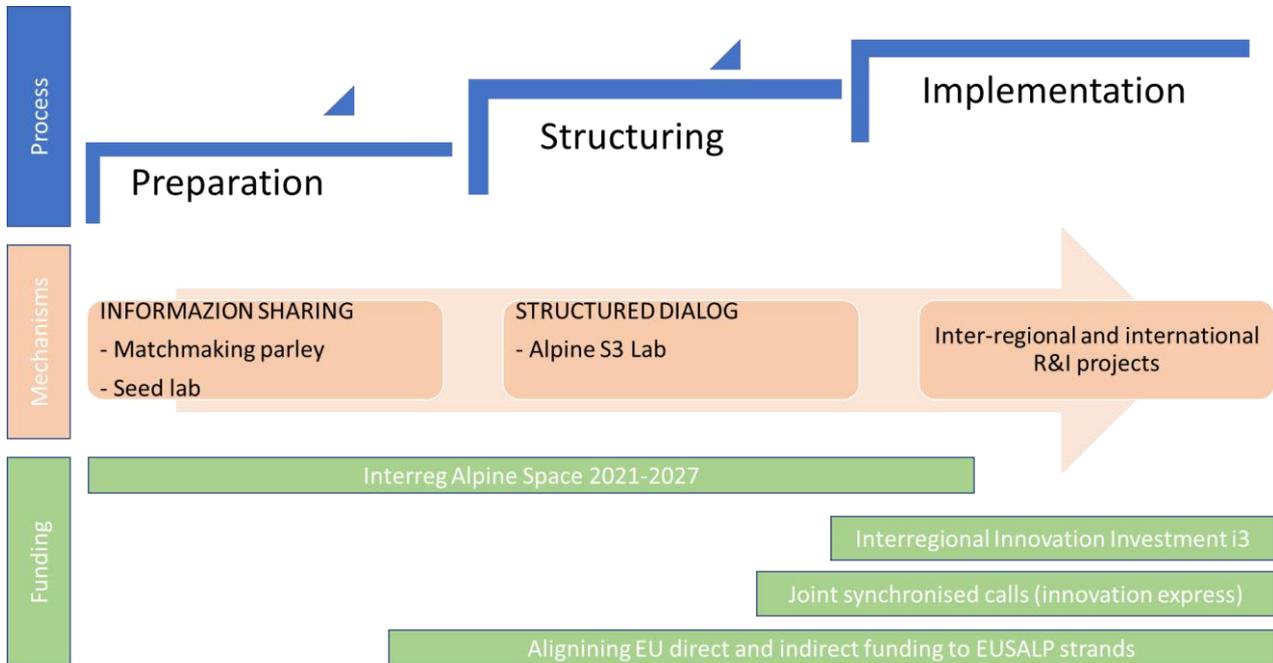
Funding is essential for both:

- a) supporting the cooperation mechanisms;
- b) sustaining R&I collaboration projects.

In general, EU funding programmes show a low degree of integration with macro-regional strategies.

The Policy Brief reviews some of the funding programs which may support R&I collaborations: Interreg Alpine Space 2021-2027; Interreg Interregional Innovation Investment (I3). Moreover, the Policy Brief suggests strategies for the alignment of regional funding programmes.

Here below is a graphical presentation of the suggested mechanisms and funding programs.



2. Implementing inter-regional collaboration in R&I

Identification of common priorities

The results of the activities carried out under WPT1 revealed that **there is an increasing convergence in R&I priorities of AR regions around three broad issues: a) digitalization and digital transformation; b) sustainability; c) mobility.**

Information sharing

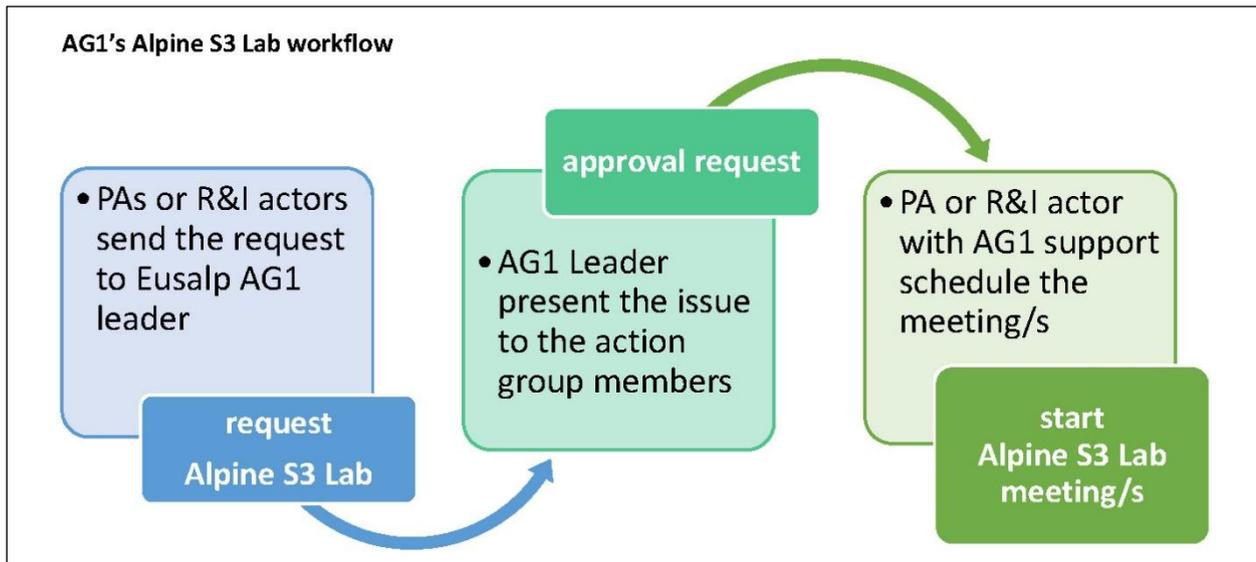
We suggest the implementation of two mechanisms for information sharing, which has been used and tested in A-Ring, and which can be considered as preliminary steps towards the starting of a structured dialog:

- **Matchmaking parley**, aiming at defining common areas of interest;
- **Seed lab**, generating ideas for joint project/activities.

Structured dialog: the Alpine S3 Lab

We suggest using the methodology developed within the **Alpine S3 Lab** which is organized in three phases: starting phase; structuring phase; working phase.

Here below is a picture describing the **starting phases** of the Alpine S3 Lab.



Funding programs

A-RING is primarily addressed at promoting R&I collaboration within the framework of the Smart Specialization Strategy.

Here below is a scheme connecting the most relevant funding programs with the activities to be supported.

Activity	Financial instruments
Collaboration mechanisms (Information sharing, structured dialog)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interreg Alpine Space 2021-2027 • Interreg Interregional cooperation (component 4): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INTERACT • ESPON • Interreg Europe • Vanguard Initiative

<p>R&I collaboration projects between interregional stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interreg Alpine Space 2021-2027 • Interreg Interregional Innovation Investment (I3) (component 5) • Alignment of regional funding programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joint Synchronized Calls (Innovation Express 2021) - Inter regional cooperation projects (using EU direct funding programs connected with EUSALP strands)
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3. Recommendations

Bottom-up approach

The Policy Brief emphasizes the importance of following a bottom-up approach in promoting R&I collaborations and the need for incentives and mechanisms to involve relevant stakeholders.

Identification of common priorities

The results of the A-RING Alpine S3 Lab make it clear that the identification of common priorities is the result of a process requiring the active involvement of interested stakeholders and should reach a meaningful granularity. The process is based on cooperation mechanisms which were tested in the A-RING project and are illustrated below.

Information sharing

When considering information sharing the key issue is not to try and design a new platform but using in an effective way the many platforms that are already in place at the EU, national and regional level. This requires competences in:

- understanding the information needs of stakeholders;
- collecting the information from available sources;
- analysing data according to the stakeholders' aims.

Matchmaking

The experience of the A-Ring partners in implementing matchmaking parleys and seed labs point out to the importance of PAs commitment in these mechanisms. Although they are addressed to interested stakeholders, political will is essential in creating a favouring and welcoming ground and ensuring continuity for the collaboration efforts among the various stakeholders.

Implementing the Alpine S3 Lab

The Alpine S3 Lab has several advantages as a tool for promoting R&I collaborations:

- The Lab does not require the set-up of new organizations or legal entities (such as consortia, associations, etc.).
- The Lab is set-up for a specific time period, according to the aims of the collaboration project.
- The Lab relies on the involvement of PAs and stakeholders interested in a specific topic and that are expected to contribute to the organization of the Lab and provide the necessary resources to carry-on its activities.
- The Lab involves the EUSALP AG1 leader and members; this is important to validate the Lab, support the interested members in the organization of the Lab and provide guidance about its activities.