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**The new Alpine Space Programme:
Cooperation on the road to 2020**

An interview with Stefania Amorosi, project officer at the Joint Technical Secretariat of the Alpine Space Programme



Figure 1: Stefania Amorosi, project officer at the Alpine Space Joint Technical Secretariat (photo: Bernd Kaeferboeck Photography).

The Alpine Space Programme has recently entered a new phase of transnational cooperation, which will run until 2020. As a European Territorial Cooperation programme of the EU cohesion policy, the Alpine Space Programme has recently developed an overall strategy to support sustainable regional development in the Alpine region in the coming years. Contributing to the EU 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the programme aims to provide stakeholders with a framework to develop, test, implement and coordinate ideas.

Stefania Amorosi, the SPHERA project officer, introduces us to the new programming period and its objectives, as well as the new elements characterising this cooperation programme.

– Stefania, could you give us an overview of the 2014–2020 Alpine Space Programme?

“As an EU transnational cooperation programme, the Alpine Space Programme aims to support sustainable development in the Alpine region in alignment with the principles set out by the EU 2020 strategy. This is done by combining three functions: 1) triggering and funding result-oriented projects contributing to programme objectives, 2) fostering discussions on cohesion policy and the future of the Alpine region and 3) acting as a catalyst for cooperation in the Alpine area that the programme operates in. The total programme budget is almost 140 million euros, of which 116.6 million is provided by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Projects can be co-funded with up to 85% of ERDF funds and will be selected through a two-step application procedure, with a new call for proposals being opened approximately once a year. Although the cooperation programme is still being analysed by the European Commission, we already know that

projects will fall under four categories: 1) Innovative Alpine Space, focusing on Alpine innovation and services of general interest, 2) Low Carbon Alpine Space, which will consider sustainable mobility and a low-carbon economy, 3) Liveable Alpine Space, dealing with natural and cultural heritage and 4) Well-Governed Alpine Space, focusing on multilevel and transnational governance. The first call for project proposals is expected to open in early 2015.”

– What are the distinctive elements of the new programme compared to the previous programming period?

“The 2014–2020 Alpine Space Programme has retained many similar features from its predecessor, but has also introduced a number of new elements. Thanks to the capitalisation projects launched in 2013, we’ve been given an overview of what needs to be improved over this period. This is why we’ll focus more on generating greater impact and transferring results achieved by the projects so as to affect territorial development in the Alpine region in a holistic way. The transnational dimension of the projects will be reinforced as well as their ability to impact policy development. Another important element is, of course, the link to the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP), which is still being developed. Finally, after a long harmonisation process, the 2014–2020 period will be the first in which all European Territorial Cooperation programmes operate through a joint corporate identity and monitoring system, which is something we’re all very excited about.”

– The process for developing the 2014–2020 programme has been complex and challenging. How has it been managed, which phases has it been articulated in and which stakeholders have been involved?

“The new Alpine Space Programme builds on a process of strategy development that ran from mid-2011 to mid-2013. A report was created by a team of experts, providing recommendations and proposals for the programme regarding which direction should be taken by future projects. This report was subsequently discussed by stakeholders in a series of workshops and one online survey. The stakeholders involved in the process came from a variety of backgrounds and countries, thereby ensuring the presence of a wide variety of Alpine opinions. This process resulted in a set of guidelines and recommendations that are now available on our website [<http://www.alpine-space.eu/SDPbrochure>] and that served as a basis for discussion in developing the programme’s objectives and priorities. The shaping of the new programme was steered by the partner states of the cooperation area: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Lichtenstein, Slovenia and Switzerland. The draft cooperation programme was then opened to public consultation, allowing the relevant stakeholders to express their view on the programme intervention logic. This exchange has been very fruitful and could enrich the structure of the new Alpine Space Programme.”

– **The Alpine Space Programme promotes regional sustainable development in the Alps. How do its objectives contribute to the EU strategy for the Alpine region?**

“The EU strategy for the Alpine region has highlighted three pillars of cooperation: sustainable growth and innovation, connectivity for all and ensuring sustainability. The Alpine Space Programme’s new priorities, as mentioned earlier, are close to these pillars and are intended to work in accordance with them so as to achieve results of common interest. The programme’s fourth priority, focusing on governance, will also contribute to EUSALP because they’re directed at both improving governance and favouring transnational cooperation.”

– **A new generation of projects will be launched in the coming months. What are the expectations of the Alpine Space Programme’s governing bodies and who will be able to submit project proposals?**

“The new generation of Alpine Space projects should contribute to the programme’s objectives of an innovative, low-carbon, liveable and well-governed Alpine area. Projects will have to demonstrate their ability to address the territorial assets and challenges with a transnational approach. We expect them to highlight how they’ll contribute to policymaking. They may address different stages of the policy cycle and may therefore focus on the strategic policy development, or on testing new methodologies and tools, or on improving existing policies for the Alpine region. Projects must involve participants from at least four countries, of which three should be EU member states. Both public and private bodies will have the opportu-

nity to participate. The cooperation programme provides an indicative list of beneficiaries per priority, but any legal entity may participate if it’s relevant for the cooperation area and the programme’s objectives. We were all very happy to see the high level of interest and cooperative spirit at our launch conference on 21st and 22nd October in Salzburg. I believe that the first call for proposals will already attract interesting new projects and project partners.”

– **I’m taking this opportunity to express my gratitude to you, Stefania, and the Alpine Space Joint Technical Secretariat Communication Team for the opportunity to hold this interview and for support in managing the SPHERA project.**

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