Interreg III B

AlpCity Project Final Report

City

Local endogenous development and urban regeneration of small alpine towns

AlpCity Project
Final Report

OVERVIEW

A trans–national project implemented by

REGIONE PIEMONTE

l'uovodicolombo - torino

in collaboration with

Franche-Comté Conseil régional · RegioneLombardia · REGIONE del VENETO · GRAINAU · N Niederösterreich · RhôneAlpes · SAINT-MAURICE D'AGAUNE · HEVs haute école valaisanne hochschule wallis

AlpCity Final Report

Overview

AlpCity is the first project managed by Piedmont Region as Lead Partner in the framework of the INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space Programme, which takes care of the alpine population's life and working conditions.

For this reason the trans-national partnership among eleven regional and local authorities belonging to five partner countries has gained a pivotal role and put the premises for a future collaboration aimed at empowering the small alpine towns as link between rural/mountain areas and metropolitan ones.

The work carried out records, through the case studies and the working groups, that the role of Regions is essential to voice the needs of the small alpine towns as vital essence of the Alps.

Regions have to look after the future of the Alps, since the small alpine towns develop just thanks to the regional policies.

Mercedes Bresso
President of Piedmont Region

Sergio Conti
Regional Councillor
for Territorial Policies

Bruna Sibille
Regional Councillor
for Mountains

Preface

The *AlpCity Project Final Report* provides a comprehensive analysis of the project together with the results of the discussion on the policy for the development of the alpine space. The AlpCity Project (2003-2006) – INTERREG IIIB – Alpine Space Programme focussed on local endogenous development and urban regeneration of small alpine towns.

This issue is particularly relevant, because of the critical socio-economic development and the inadequate quality of life and urban environment in the small alpine communities and towns, often characterised by economic decline, ageing population, abandonment of villages, loss of cultural vitality, buildings decay and a limited community participation.

The AlpCity trans-national partnership aimed at facing these processes of decline by supporting and matching 21 pilot initiatives launched by small alpine towns and targeting the definition of a common strategy for local sustainable development in various and integrated environments through a broad programme of cooperation.

Above all the AlpCity Project was intended to contribute to the setting-up of a mutual knowledge and a common strategic perspective by addressing some key areas of the INTERREG IIIB – Alpine Space Programme. These objects targeted the support to a polycentric and sustainable local development, the creation and development of new and existing networks, the promotion of innovative initiatives and cooperation activities at a trans-national level.

Moreover, the creation of a shared knowledge and vision has been enhanced by the collection, creation, dissemination and transfer of good and best practices implemented in mountain areas. The Project provided all partners with information and materials about the concept of best practice as established by the main international agencies, but tailoring them to the processing of issues related to AlpCity and its case studies.

The AlpCity network assumed a strategic direction toward the set up of a Regional Urban Observatory, which is meant to be member of the UN Habitat Global Observatory Network. For this purpose part of the AlpCity resources were committed to propose definitions, criteria, indicators and guidelines in order to create a proper framework for consolidating the AlpCity future position and function in the European and international environment.

Major issues discussed in this *Report* are:

- The AlpCity Project in the framework of the INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space Programme with detailed considerations about the peculiarities of the Alpine Space and the most important features of the Project.

- The AlpCity empirical approach through the development of 21 pilot cases within the four topic areas (economic development, services and quality of life, urban environment, cooperation among towns) together with the specification of their aims, results, outputs and lessons learned.

- The policy implications and guidelines with prospects of future scenarios as result of the interaction among the AlpCity initiative, the partners' expectations and the

development policies at regional, national and international levels.

In discussing these issues, the *Final Report* seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the importance of trans-national cooperation in the European development and, in particular, its implications for the Alpine Space.

Turin, October 2006

Maria Cavallo Perin
Officer in charge of the AlpCity Project

Daniela Sena
AlpCity Project Manager

Contents

THE ALPCITY PROJECT
IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE INTERREG IIIB ALPINE SPACE PROGRAMME

THE ALPCITY PROJECT EMPIRICAL APPROACH: 21 CASE STUDIES

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS WITH PROSPECTS OF FUTURE SCENARIOS

Annex

THE ALPCITY PROJECT
IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE INTERREG IIIB
ALPINE SPACE PROGRAMME

The AlpCity Project is positioned into a broad context: it belongs to the INTERREG III B Alpine Space Programme dealing with Priority 1 (Promotion of the Alpine Space as a competitive and attractive living and economic space in the scope of a polycentric spatial development in the EU) and Measure 1 (Mutual knowledge and common perspectives) through a 2.404.928€ budget co-financed by ERDF (50%) and national funds (50%). It involves 11 Project Partners from 5 countries with Piedmont Region, acting as Lead Partner, and Lombardy Region, Veneto Region, Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region, Provincial Government of Lower Austria, Rhône-Alpes Region, Franche-Comté Region, Municipality of Grainau, Haute École Valaisanne, Municipality of St.Maurice and Municipality of Tschlin.

AlpCity aimed at raising awareness about the importance of revitalisation of small towns in the Alpine Space area by sharing and improving a common knowledge and understanding on the key project issues (economic development, services and quality of life, urban environment and cooperation among towns).

A small alpine town is traditionally defined in terms of the size of its population and the economic aspects relating to its functions (the services sector). Today, however, the prevailing discussion on small towns is often characterised by the acknowledgement of a loss, whether in the services sector or in terms of industrial closures; a loss that public initiatives try to make up as developmental initiatives.

According to the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and the Alpine Space Programme, vertical and horizontal cooperation is the key to an integrated spatial development. Therefore one of the main objectives of the AlpCity Project is promoting long and short networks and new forms of cooperation. Across all project activities vertical (especially between regions and towns) and horizontal cooperation (between regions themselves, towns, universities) is sought for, so that not only the Project Partners do have the best possible benefit, but also other alpine towns and regions can learn from the results and experiences of AlpCity.

AlpCity promoted the search, the collection and exchange of Good and Best Practices on the project working areas in view of their transfer to other contexts.

A Best Practice is defined as an innovative initiative, which has led to the resolution of a problem in a more efficient and effective way than the one belonging to familiar, widely-employed and

established practices and, above all, than the one stemming from other innovative practices. It is a concrete action that is generated by a local issue and from which a "lesson" is learned - that is, a method and an operational procedure whereby a given type of problem can be solved. It is just this "lesson learned" that comes to be transferred.

Transfer is a process, whereby the skills acquired through the Best Practice are applied in another context, in order to provide the best solution to an analogous problem. Transfer, in turn, poses another condition: the practice involved has to be innovative. Often, when we think about innovation, attention comes to be centred on the process of creation and testing, that feature the Best Practice. However, the production phase of a Best Practice is not sufficient in fully unfolding the benefits, which may be drawn from the innovative potential of the Best Practice itself. For this to take place, it is necessary to transfer the lesson learned from testing. It is not enough to know how to promote Best Practices, but how to transfer them into society. The process of transferring Best Practices are an indissoluble part of the overall definition of a Best Practice itself.

Furthermore the project aimed at building up of an interrelated network of activities, which will have to be managed in a synergetic way. Modifying conditions related to the sustainability of the alpine urban fabric is an unconceivable task without a complex of temporally and spatially coordinated schemes across sectors, which constitute a common strategy.

The AlpCity common strategy is particularly concerned with issues arising from urban development and regeneration in an alpine environment, with a view to contributing to the creation of a polycentric urban system also in alpine areas, as promoted by the INTERREG III B Alpine Space Programme (European Union, 2003)

and by the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (European Consultative Forum, 1999).

The AlpCity network has been formed because the Regions and local bodies, which make it up, became aware that the sustainable development of small alpine towns is a shared problem. The network's aim is at cooperating in the co-development of a common strategy, in order to solve this problem as effectively as possible. To this end it was proposed that the network transforms itself into a Regional Urban Laboratory/Observatory (RUO, www.ocs.polito.it/alpcityruo/alpcityruo.htm) as part of the United Nations Habitat Global Urban Observatory Network (UN Habitat – Global Urban Observatory, 1998; ww2.unhabitat.org/programmes/guo/).

Within the AlpCity Regional Urban Laboratory/Observatory (RUO) each of its regional members should set up a task force to work on managing, developing and promoting the implementation of the common strategy. The network may continue to be coordinated by the Piedmont task force, which leads AlpCity, and should be responsible for the setting up of and running the Laboratory main website. This horizontal network of cooperation among regional authorities is accompanied by a vertical network, which branches downwards and maps out the cooperation among the sub-regional local authorities, who will eventually be putting the common strategy into practice. Each regional authority should set up a Local Urban Observatory (LUO) - a network of the local authorities in its area. The Laboratory would thus essentially consist in a trans-national network of regional LUOs.

THE ALPCITY PROJECT EMPIRICAL APPROACH:
21 CASE STUDIES

AlpCity promoted the design and implementation of 21 pilot activities at local level, which are considered as potential best practices and models for local endogenous and urban development in small alpine towns. These activities were conceived, mainly, in the form of strategic and feasibility studies on relevant issues in the four fields identified within the Project:

1. Economic development
2. Services and quality of life
3. Urban environment
4. Cooperation among towns.

They were scattered throughout the Alps in order to cover different contexts and representative situations. The activities applied a bottom-up approach involving local authorities and inhabitants with the help of consultants and experts. They were of trans-national interest, both as regards the issues faced and their methodology.

Work Package 5 on economic development dealt with development and assistance to existing small and medium-sized enterprises with special attention to the ones, which contribute to local sustainable development in line with the requirement to preserve local environment and territory as well as its cultural and social resources and heritage. It took care also of the setting up of new small and medium-sized enterprises with reference to innovative technologies, telecommunications and services able to enhance the creation of local job opportunities and the improvement of the local population's life quality by encouraging professional advice, challenging entrepreneurship and innovative enterprises. It supported training activities addressed to different social target groups (youth, women, mature workers and other disadvantaged

groups and ethnic minorities). Moreover it favoured training activities for advanced-level professionals in response to the requests of the territory and the job market in order to encourage new and innovative local investment.

Through the case studies, this Work Package ranged over many fields: support of local enterprises; innovative proposals for local craftspeople; development of tourist industry with a special focus on large scale winter sport events in local mountain areas.

The case studies included in this Work Package are:

- Experimentation of innovation actions for preserving commercial services. Lombardy Region (Italy).
- Experimentation of innovation actions for trade and handicrafts integration. Lombardy Region (Italy).
- Development of the retail trade concept for small trade. Municipality of Grainau (Germany).
- Future and tourism in Saint Maurice. Municipality of Saint Maurice and Haute École Valaisanne (Switzerland).
- Integrated tourism strategies. Municipality of Tschlin (Switzerland).
- Local Development and the Winter Olympic Games' legacy, implemented in two Olympic stations (Pragelato in Chisone Valley and Prali in Germanasca Valley). Piedmont Region (Italy).

Work Package 6 on services and quality of life was related to the selection and implementation of case studies, which focus especially on the improvement of the quality and quantity of services with special reference to the needs of alpine and mountain communities, as well as to the accessibility to these services in environments characterised by a low density of population. Particular attention has been paid to the improvement and innovation of services provision and management models by considering the necessary support to the economic, social and cultural development of small alpine and mountain communities, which present different weaknesses in relation to their capacities to

access these services, to integrate the public and private services as well as to involve the private sector and the local population. The selected actions aimed at the quantitative and qualitative improvement of private and public services available to the population (social, health, cultural and commercial services, etc.), bearing in mind community needs at a local level and demographic variations.

Small mountain towns cannot compete with towns from the economic point of view, but they have good chance in offering a higher quality of life, including not only a beautiful landscape, but also education and job opportunities (for example in the service sector). Quality of life must combine successful concepts for future development perspectives (education, employment, provision of necessary goods, etc.) and preserving and promoting cultural and natural heritage (e.g. for sustainable leisure time activities). By combining these elements they can increase their attractiveness and decrease the abandonment of these areas.

The case studies included in this Work Package are:

• Network of multimedia public libraries. Provincial Government of Lower Austria (Austria).

• Network of the youth in small and medium-sized alpine towns. Provincial Government of Lower Austria (Austria).

• The international mountain school of the Maritime Alps (Municipalities of Entracque and Valdieri). Piedmont Region (Italy).

• Improving and promoting services addressing tourism and young people. Municipality of Grainau (Germany).

Work Package 7 on urban environment took care of some case studies focussing not only on the recovery and regeneration of historical centres and settlements, but also on the project planning and regeneration of recent settlements including the expansion of residential areas, the access to small rural towns and to their main entrance and exit routes, the development of streets, commercial, manufacturing and industrial areas. Moreover, they dealt with the

project planning and regeneration of buildings and public spaces, as activities aiming at the local integrated development (environmental, social, economic and cultural) as well as the promotion and the support to the "sense of belonging" of the local communities toward their territory. In real terms the selected pilot cases acted on the recovery of abandoned structures, an innovative vision of the solutions to environmental problems, the improvement of the value of the cultural and historical heritage, the development of a more sustainable mobility and the development of skills related to environmental issues.

The case studies of Work Package 7 are:

- Guidelines for reclaiming abandoned villages in the borderland with Austria and Slovenia. Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region (Italy).
- Guidelines for obtaining environmental certification. Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region (Italy).
- Renewing and optimising the use of abandoned rural buildings, which were once used for productive activities. Veneto Region (Italy).
- The renewal of abandoned mountain hamlets. Piedmont Region (Italy).
- Living in Mountain Areas: Maira Valley and Po Valley in the Province of Cuneo. Piedmont Region (Italy).
- Improving the public image of the longitudinal axis of the Jura Mountains. Franche-Comté Region (France).
- Enhancing the image and promoting cultural historical sites for the reinforcement of the regional attractiveness of the "Petites Cités Comtoises de Caractère". Franche-Comté Region (France).
- Renewal of downtowns - Development of the Integrated Action Plan - Development of the concept of landscape preservation. Municipality of Grainau (Germany).

Work Package 8 on the cooperation among towns related to the realization of three case studies in the alpine space, with a special

focus on the administrative cooperation among small mountain towns, so as to create and implement networks and associations, improve services and bring about an exchange of experiences. Cooperation among towns, especially in the shape of networks, is particularly crucial for the development of small towns. In a context of competition and being undersized in an economy dominated by large cities, structured agreements among towns can help them to reach a higher "critical mass". Cooperation is also a way to develop exemplary operations, through the transfer of experience and knowledge from one associate town to another. By grouping towns together, it becomes possible to develop a polycentric structure in which the towns complement one another. Cooperation is a less governed and more bottom-up type of public action. The towns cooperate with one another on a voluntary basis, working towards objectives that they themselves set according to the issues they have in common. This system seems far more flexible and appropriate than organized institutional procedures. It encourages innovation through the exchange of experience, and, through the internal complementarities it promotes, also prevents the scattering of low-performance small-sized facilities. From this point of view, agreements are an instrument of sustainable development, which is supported as such by European policies.

The selected case studies are:

- Surveying the experiences of small mountain towns in different areas (Alps, Jura and Massif Central). Rhône-Alpes (France).
- Technical assistance for small towns. Rhônes-Alpes (France).
- The territorial organisation of Franche-Comté Region. Franche-Comté Region (France).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS WITH PROSPECTS OF FUTURE SCENARIOS

AlpCity aimed at facing some of the main problems of the small alpine towns by finding inspiration in the experience collected within the EU Urban and Leader Programmes, which suggest an integrated approach to elaborate solutions for urban decay and marginality of mountain areas.

Final considerations

- Confirmation of **the added value of cooperation and trans-national partnerships** (effective and strategic), with a strong persuasion that the joined elaboration of methods, tools and strategies for the territorial protection and integrated promotion guarantees a major effectiveness if compared to isolated actions. This initiative should enhance an horizontal-vertical agreement among institutions acting at different government levels (states, regions, local authorities) with a special attention to a model (e.g. a Laboratory for the development of the small alpine towns in line with the principles promoted by UN Habitat), which allows to act according to and in synergy with the European (Lisboa and Goteborg Agendas) and international (UN Habitat) initiatives.
- Need of a **shared strategy for sustainable development** starting from the awareness of the differences among territories from the cultural, economic, social and vocational points of view. On the basis of this marked diversity among the alpine areas, **the role of the most advanced Regions appears fundamental in comparison with the less developed ones.**
- Need of **an integrated approach to solve the marginality of mountain urban areas** (previous EU initiatives implemented by Piedmont Region: Urbact and Leader).

- Enforcement of the awareness that the **Alps are valuable** as deposit of cultural and natural resources not replaceable for the future of Europe.
- **Strategic value of an approach** enhancing the local actors' participation in terms of success and sustainability of individual initiatives/projects, but also of integrated development plans/programmes in the medium-long run.
- **Importance of networks for the exchange of knowledge and know-how**, but above all for the capitalisation of cooperation experiences through innovative (not only information) tools, in order to improve connections among the Alpine Space territories and actors (best practices, seminars, training courses, web platforms, twinning activities, etc.).

Recommendations

- **To promote effective, stable and strategic trans-national partnerships**, which voice the needs and priorities of the local stakeholders in the small alpine towns with an outstanding echo on upper levels (EU, national and regional authorities).

- To enforce and promote **a dialogue and a fruitful exchange among the (strategic and operational) levels of EU Programmes** (Alpine Space, but also other ones within Interreg III A-C) **and the projects** in terms of results, lessons learned both related to contents and contractual/management procedures.

- **To formulate strategies and innovative territorial government tools** through:
  - The exchange of successful experiences (best practices) and related lessons learned on spatial planning, promotion, revitalisation and management of the Alpine Space;

- Experimentation of innovative tools (e.g. e-government, marketing) for advising decision-makers ("Laboratory of best practices" including the sections: policies, projects, training, twinning activities, institutional building actions);
- Setting up of a network (trans-national and international) with features of learning organisation (according to the UN Habitat model promoted in the framework of the "Best Practices and Local Leadership Programme") and aimed at finding, selecting best practices and transferring the lessons learned in order to accelerate the diffusion process of innovation and to formulate a common strategy for the sustainable development of the alpine urban systems within the lager scenario of the knowledge society and economy.

- **To allow the growth of new territorial vocations** through the involvement, commitment and empowerment of the key local actors (support to gender policy and actions).

- **To increase the value of local peculiarities and to capitalise endogenous potentials, human resources and local identities** as attracting factors for investment.

- **To reduce social and spatial disequilibria by supporting the development of peripheral areas**, through cooperation and enforcement of **urban-rural networks**.

- **To improve connections between regional centres (medium towns), peripheral areas and economic centres of the Alpine Space**, both in terms of infrastructures and ICT solutions.

- To trigger synergistic and sustainable development effects and **to link EU resources to national and regional programming**.

- **To contribute to the development of an European strategy of urban sustainability**; to link this contribution to the global framework (above all with reference to the Alpine Convention) some international institutions and organisations like UN Habitat take care of.

Proposals

The proposals related to the project future are based on the awareness that it is necessary to formulate and share regional strategic and governance policies, favouring the small alpine towns in line with the European and international strategy for urban sustainability. The final aim consists in the official acknowledgement (and adoption/integration in the European development strategies) of these regional/trans-national policy recommendations by European and/or international subjects with positive spin-offs on different levels (the local one included) of the Alpine Space.

The proposal concerns a **"Laboratory supporting the sustainable and integrated development of the small alpine town"**, which can provide some elements for the future formulation of a trans-national strategic and landscape plan shared on a large scale, devoted to the small alpine towns (environmental certification, energy certification for building renewal, main trans-national communications networks, etc.) and taking into account the need of:
- Introducing lasting **innovation** in enterprises and in the management of the alpine territories.
- Increasing the value of **subjects devoted to the development and improvement of the economy and the alpine environment** in order to train a new generation interested in settling and working in the presently marginal alpine regions.

- Creating **new job opportunities** in order to enhance the settlement in the alpine towns of people coming from other areas and to brake the flight, through the promotion of industries (apart from tourism), which can play a pivotal role for the alpine economy, such as breeding, wood industry, niche agriculture, etc. Moreover an essential role for productive innovation can be represented by the Information and communication technology.

- Supporting the most important economic sectors, through a specific attention paid to the **small enterprise** in the framework of strategic programmes proposed by the same associated alpine communities and aiming at diversifying economic activities, as foreseen by European directives belonging to the programme on rural development and territorial cooperation.

- **Developing and enforcing relationships and exchanges among towns**, both by promoting the setting up of networks and associations among small towns in order to elaborate common development strategies, the shared services and functions management; and also enhancing the creation of programmes and relationships between small and big towns, with a particular attention towards culture, scientific research, training and access to information. For this purpose Regions share the necessity to design proper tools supporting associations among small alpine municipalities, but also the cooperation between big cities and associations of small municipalities by applying information technologies too.

- Developing and **testing the introduction of new urban functions in the small towns** in order to make them more attractive, through specific regional initiatives proposed by local actors as for example the international mountain school of the Maritime Alps.

- **Improving the competencies of the local communities in elaborating development strategies, in urban planning, in planning and designing public works and in managing**

services. Regions share the need to provide assistance to small alpine towns according to the example of the project led by Rhône-Alpes within AlpCity, which organises exchanges among young public officers interested in working in the small alpine towns, sponsors post-graduated internships in the most attractive and efficient small alpine towns, etc.

- Considering the chance for a **Common Alpine Market of public works and services** by promoting the participation of the most qualified enterprises in tenders, the adoption of eco-compatible techniques in public works design and implementation, the approval of common prices for bio-building materials, etc.

Structure and activities
of the Laboratory for the development of the small alpine towns

The Laboratory proposal foresees a structure, which follows **the model of the Regional Urban Observatory implemented by the UN Habitat** to monitor the implementation of the Habitat Agenda on global level (please see AlpCity Guideline n.5 "Features of the AlpCity RUO").

Basic activities of the Laboratory/Observatory for the small alpine towns with a medium-long term perspective:

- Setting up of a **new trans-national** (or international) **partnership** led by Piedmont and constituted by regions (some of them already part of the AlpCity partnership) and other key subjects for the development of the alpine space (e.g. CIPRA, UNCEM etc.) with the purpose to strategically and operatively contribute to the Laboratory for the small alpine towns. The Partnership could include, with a medium-term perspective, a **Committee of Regions** for the small alpine towns composed by the presidents of the regions or their representatives with the task of supervisor of the

elaboration and management of shared policies, the testing of guidelines and the definition of first hypothesis for a trans-national strategic and landscape plan dedicated to the small alpine towns of the member Regions. Each member of the Committee would be assisted by a regional officer and the Committee would be chaired in turn by the president (or his representative) of one of participating regions. Within each partner region there is a committee with the task of implementing the shared policies, of testing the guidelines and contributing to the definition of first hypothesis for a trans-national strategic and landscape plan dedicated to the small alpine towns. Representatives of local authorities (provinces, departments, mountain communities, municipalities) take part in the Committee.

- Setting up and management of a **regional Laboratory for the small alpine towns** (according to the UN Habitat RUO model) dealing with technical assistance and research, collection and exchange of best practices, led by Piedmont Region together with the other Regions, which are committed in co-financing about 50% (tentative).

- Setting up of a **structure dedicated** to the Laboratory by Piedmont Region (composed by at least three unities), the regional officers and representatives from other key subjects involved in the project can refer to. The structure has the following objectives:
  - o To accomplish the functions of a **secretariat** of the Committee of Regions and to coordinate the activity of the regional committees;
  - o **To manage the Laboratory** in driving and assisting the local authorities through the other regional structures with the purpose to create, test and promote new tools (operative and strategic) in order to support the decision-making processes and the exchange of best practices.;

o **To support the regional structures** in implementing the shared policies, testing the guidelines and defining the first hypothesis for a trans-national strategic and landscape plan dedicated to the small alpine towns;

o To promote (fund-raising included) and managing a **"Best Practices Award"** on trans-national level;

o To organise an **international conference** dedicated to the development of the small alpine/mountain towns (in cooperation with other institutions already involved in the promotion of similar events like CIPRA, ISCAR) with the presentation of the activities and results of the Laboratory for the small alpine towns and of the "Best Practices Award".

- Comparison on the **policy guidelines** with the Committee of Regions, with the request that the policy supporting the Alps takes the problems of small alpine towns into consideration and a specific programme can be approved dedicated to the creation of trans-national strategic networks among the small alpine towns.

- Presentation of the **guidelines to the national authorities** and conclusion of an agreement aimed at supporting also financially the Laboratory for the small alpine towns as permanent structure for their strategic development.

The AlpCity Project inherited from UN Habitat (ww2.unhabitat.org/programmes/guo/) the idea of setting up a Regional Urban Observatory, which has subsequently been developed into the proposal of a Laboratory for the small alpine towns. This means that the activities of collecting Best Practices and transferring the relative lessons learned are coupled with the experimentation of innovative tools for technical assistance and for driving small alpine centres to define and implement strategic projects.

The proposal is for a **'Best Practices Observatory /Laboratory'** conceived as an operational and strategic project able to support other INTERREG projects (operational level) as well as the INTERREG Programmes (strategic level).

The core activities include:

- ❖ The search, selection, collection, diffusion and transfer of **Good and Best Practices** with reference to the topic of sustainable development of the Alpine Space living environment (specific attention is addressed to small alpine towns) at a trans-national /international level.

- ❖ The development and updating of the '**Best Practices Database**' already set up within the AlpCity Project.
  (http://www.ocs.polito.it/alpcity/scheda_db.htm)
  The database, as well as the submission and selection processes, have been developed in line, and in collaboration with the UN Habitat, which is successfully implementing the 'Best Practices and Local leadership Programme' at a world wide level since 1996. (http://www.bestpractices.org).

- ❖ The outlining and transfer of **lessons learned** able to support inter alias the formulation of strategic policies (EU and Programme levels).

- ❖ **Institutional and capacity building, training and twinning activities** able to support the sustainable development of the Alpine Space at a local level (beneficiaries: mountain communities, municipalities, NGOs, CBOs etc.).

- ❖ A **Learning Centre** focused on the diffusion of lessons learned and formulation of guidelines for supporting a tailor made transfer of the outlined best practices. Six guidelines have been already finalised in the framework of AlpCity.
  (http://www.ocs.polito.it/alpcityruo/en/library_ruo.htm)

- ❖ Launch and organisation of a **Best Practices Award** open to the world with a call for best practices submission in the field of the sustainable development of the Alpine Space. The Best

Practices Award could be promoted in line with the International Best Practices Award organised by the UN Habitat.

❖ **Networking activities and setting up of a solid partnership** among Regions, Institutions and other key actors (e.g. CIPRA; ISCAR, UN Habitat, Alpine Convention etc…) as partners of the Best Practices Observatory/Laboratory.

❖ **Information and Publicity activities** including a web site, publications, newsletters, the organisation of seminars and meetings.

In short this Laboratory/Observatory is conceived as innovative tool enhancing the elaboration of spatial sustainable policies shared by the Project Partners and targeting upper political levels.

Conclusion

The project put in evidence the decisive importance of the experiences exchange and the dissemination of lessons learned from the best practices: each individual local situation is too small to be able to solve complex problems in the best way; all together they constitute a great system of cooperation/competition.

In spite of the different history and places the existence of shared problems has been recognised together with the need to elaborate common strategies in order to solve them. Within this frame, a better knowledge of the various national juridical regulations, the different national and local policies, and the diverse implemented tools, revealed to be enlightening.

A further relevant result is represented by the shared awareness that the definition of a common strategy has to vigorously target innovation: AlpCity is a project developed within the European innovation strategy, since it pays a particular attention to policies involving public authorities.

The setting up of a permanent network with functions of learning organisation, aimed at selecting best practices and transferring the

lessons learned, fulfils the objective to create an accelerator of the diffusion processes of innovation, particularly within the public authorities.

In fact one of the most important results of AlpCity consists in the common acknowledgement of the usefulness of building up a permanent partnership recalling the Regional Urban Observatories model promoted by UN Habitat, with a twofold purpose:

    a. developing a network aiming at innovation diffusion and formation of a common strategy for the sustainable development of the alpine urban systems, in the framework of the more general scenario of the knowledge society and economy;

    b. contributing to the development of the European strategy for urban sustainability and linking this contribution to the global environment, UN Habitat takes care of.

AlpCity Project Final Report

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements
Preface

PART ONE
THE ALPCITY PROJECT IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE INTERREG IIIB
ALPINE SPACE PROGRAMME

B. Comments about methodological aspects of projects description and analysis

C. The problems of the alpine village in their regional manifestations

   1   Diversity and common ground of the issues affecting AlpCity

   2   The geographic and institutional contexts of small alpine towns

     2.1 Brief description of the character of the mountain areas in each   partner's territory

      2.1.1 Italy: Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia

      2.1.2 Lower Austria

      2.1.3 Rhône-Alpes

      2.1.4 The Valais

      2.1.5 Upper Bavaria

      2.1.6 Franche-Comté

     2.2 Structure of the towns within the region

      2.2.1 Italy: Piedmont, Veneto, Lombardy

      2.2.2 Lower Austria

      2.2.3 The French regions

      2.2.4 Switzerland: the Valais

      2.2.5 Upper Bavaria

      2.2.6 Synthesis in the diversity of urbanisation situations

     2.3 Social image of the mountains within the region

      2.3.1 In Piedmont

      2.3.2 Veneto and Lombardy

      2.3.3 The Valais

      2.3.4 Lower Austria

      2.3.5 Rhône-Alpes and Franche-Comté

     2.4 Policies for the mountains

      2.4.1 In Italy

         2.4.1.1 National level

IV BEYOND BEST PRACTICING: THE TRANSFER OF LESSONS LEARNED

1. What do we mean by *the transfer of lessons learned* through Best Practices?
2. First principles
3. The role of networking
4. Transfer stages
5. Transfer feasibility
6. Transfer methods
7. Monitoring and evaluating transfer effectiveness
8. Lessons learned from the transfer procedure

V THE COMMON STRATEGY OF THE ALPCITY PROJECT

1. Why do we need a common strategy?
2. A synergetic network
3. Basic concepts concerning the evaluation of social-economic programmes through the use of indicators
4. Towards an evaluation of economic, social and environmental sustainability
5. Targets and effectiveness of Best Practices
6. *Ex ante*, *in itinere* and *ex post* evaluation
7. The framework of the AlpCity common strategy
8. How to define the content of the common strategy in terms of Best Practices

VI TRANSFER WITHIN THE ALPCITY FRAMEWORK

1. Should we transfer Best Practices or the common strategy?
2. From government and governance and back
3. Transfer to regional and provincial authorities and mountain communities
4. Transfer to local councils
5. Bringing out Best Practices and hidden skills

PART TWO
THE ALPCITY PROJECT EMPIRICAL APPROACH: 21 CASE STUDIES

VIII INTRODUCTION
    1. The selection of 21 case studies
    2. Form 1. Partner's introduction
    3. Form 2. Description of the concerned territory
    4. Form 3. Description of the local activities within AlpCity
    5. Evaluation of the case studies by the Scientific Steering Committee's experts

IX   WORK PACKAGE 5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
    1. Introduction
    2. Case studies cards:
       - Experimentation of innovation actions for preserving commercial services
       - Experimentation of innovation actions for trade and handicrafts integration
       - Development of the retail trade concept for small trade
       - Future and tourism in Saint Maurice
       - Strategies for an integrated tourism
       - Local Development and the Winter Olympic Games' legacy

X   WORK PACKAGE 6. SERVICES AND QUALITY OF LIFE
    1. Introduction
    2. Case studies cards:
       - Network of multimedia public libraries
       - Network of the youth in small and medium-sized alpine towns

- The international mountain school of the Maritime Alps
- Improving and promoting services addressing tourism and young people

XI   WORK PACKAGE 7. URBAN ENVIRONMENT
   1. Introduction
   2. Case studies cards:
      - Guidelines for reclaiming abandoned villages in the borderland with Austria and Slovenia
      - Guidelines for obtaining environmental certification
      - Renewing and optimising the use of abandoned rural buildings, which were once used for productive activities
      - The renewal of abandoned mountain hamlets
      - Living in Mountain Areas
      - Improving the public image of the longitudinal axis of the Jura Mountains
      - Enhancing the image and promoting cultural historical sites for the reinforcement of the regional attractiveness of the "Petites Cités Comtoises de Caractère"
      - Renewal of downtowns - Development of the Integrated Action Plan - Development of the concept of landscape preservation

XII   WORK PACKAGE 8. COOPERATION AMONG TOWNS
   1. Introduction
   2. Case studies cards:
      - Surveying the experiences of small mountain towns in different areas (Alps, Jura and Massif Central)
      - Technical assistance for small towns
      - The territorial organisation of Franche-Comté Region

PART THREE
POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
WITH PROSPECTS OF FUTURE SCENARIOS

XIII THE PROJECT ITINERARY: FROM THE PROJECT IDEA TO SOME FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
- 1. Introduction
- 2. Final considerations
- 3. Recommendations
- 4. Proposals

XIV THE REGIONAL URBAN OBSERVATORY: FROM A PROJECT IDEA TO A PROJECT PROPOSAL

XV CONCLUDING AND LOOKING AHEAD
- 1. The importance and the need for trans-national innovative cooperation
- 2. The Lead Partner's point of view
- 2.1 Criticism and challenges of a strategic and integrated project management
- 2.2 Lessons learned from the management of the project
- 3. The Scientific Steering Committee's (SSC) point of view
- 3.1 Cooperation problems
- 3.2 Case studies: evaluating their implementation and weighing the pros and cons

Local endogenous development and urban regeneration of small alpine towns

ANNEXES

ANNEX A
ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN BEST PRACTICES DATABASES RELATED TO THE SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

a. Selected databases
b. Databases designed for a possible international cooperation
c. General submission form scheme
d. Legend cards of the main databases
e. Websites

ANNEX B
THE ALPCITY BEST PRACTICES DATABASE

a. Aim and organisation of the Best Practices Database
b. How a Best Practice is selected
c. How a Best Practice is documented
   ANNEX B1. Abstract Submission Form for the AlpCity Best Practices Database
   ANNEX B2. AlpCity Best Practices Database checklist
   ANNEX B3. Standard Index for the AlpCity Best Practices Database Non Technical Best Practice Report
   ANNEX B4. Indicators' typology for the evaluation of socio-economic programmes

ANNEX C
AN EXCERPT OF THE ALPCITY BEST PRACTICES DATABASE

a. AlpCity Best Practices Database Management: the format
b. AlpCity Best Practices Database Management: a demo of data entry, queries and reports
c. AlpCity Best Practices Database Use: the online interface

d. AlpCity Best Practices Database Use: a demo of database consulting
e. An example of the AlpCity Best Practices Database Abstract Submission Forms
f. An example of the AlpCity Best Practices Database Assessment Cards

REFERENCES

Local endogenous development and urban regeneration of small alpine towns

Comments, interactions and revisions to the present document can be sent to:

AlpCity Office
Piedmont Region
Regional Budget Planning and Statistics (8.3)
Via Lagrange 24   10123 Turin (Italy)
Tel.: +39 011 432 5260
Fax: +39 011 432 5560
alpcity@regione.piemonte.it
www.alpcity.it