



FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following reflections, recommendations and proposals have been formulated (October 2006) by Piedmont Region, as AlpCity Project Lead Partner and coordinator of the “Best Practices and Future Scenarios” Work Package.

They are the outcome of a reflection taking into account (as a whole and in its complexity) a trans-national cooperation process (2003-2006) among eleven partners from five countries; from the project results related to the implementation of 21 case studies, to the lessons learned from the best practices proposed, assessed and collected during the project; to the considerations, studies and conclusions presented by the Scientific Steering Committee; to the output of four working groups organised during the trans-national scientific conference held in Milan in June 2005 and to the proposals drafted by some partners aiming at a project follow-up.

This text refers also to some key documents marking out the foundations of the present Alpine Space Programme, to the conclusions of the “Perspective Study¹” of the same programme and to the main features, which are going to characterise the next Alpine Space II Programme.

The listed reflections constitute the platform for discussing, comparing and working among the various Project Partners and the Scientific Steering Committee experts. These considerations have been already conceived during the project and will be again the focus on the occasion of the final conference (Pracatinat, October 2006) and within view of the project future developments.

This document is a working one; a proposal, which will be distributed and taken into consideration by the different key actors of the project and of the programme starting from the key subjects within the partnership (also on a political level), who are invited to give comments and integrations to the present text.

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

¹ The study was commissioned from the Interreg IIIB Alpine Space Programme (December 2004) to a group of independent experts on trans-national level with the purpose to have a clue of the key issues related to the sustainable developments of the Alps and to present some concrete inputs for the next Alpine Space II Programme.

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 (Lisbona 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 the approach** enhancing the local actors' participation in terms of success and sustainability of individual initiatives/projects, but also if 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) 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 larger 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 towns**”, 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 towns², 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 in tenders 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**³ 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 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

² It is possible to consider as example “Torino, Città delle Alpi”, an association among Piedmont Region, Province of Turin and Municipality of Turin for the elaboration of common strategies to manage the Olympic legacy.

³ As basis of this project there will be an agreement between the new partnership and UN Habitat

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:
 - To accomplish the functions of a **secretariat** of the Committee of Regions and to coordinate the activity of the regional committees
 - 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
 - **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
 - To promote (fund-raising included) and managing a “**Best Practices Award**” on trans-national level
 - 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.