

Surveying the experiences of small mountain towns in different areas (Alpes, Jura, Massif Central)



**AlpCity Partner
Work Package
WP Coordinator
Subjects involved
and their role**

Rhône-Alpes Region (France)
Cooperation among towns (WP8)
Rhône-Alpes Region (France)
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Design offices (6 consultations as part of a public procurement contract)

Local authorities

**Spatial area
involved**

21 small towns selected among 200 mountain centres situated in the Alps, Jura and Massif Central. The following criteria were taken into consideration during the selection:

- dominating functions
- specificity and advantages of the mountain development
- distance/proximity to a medium or large-sized town
- economic character related to agriculture, tourism and services activities
- function in relation to the surrounding area

Project budget

€ 43.060,00

Project purpose

The Region launched a call for proposal addressed to mountain small cities localised in the Alps, Jura and Massif Central. The call concerned towns with a population of around 5000 inhabitants situated in rural areas, far from town agglomerations. The aim



Project methodology	<p>of the call was at selecting about 20 municipalities chosen among 200 candidates, which should participate into the AlpCity Project. Through the case study a real survey was carried on the different experiences of small mountain towns in order to get a detailed portrait of these French mountain areas by outlining differences and similarities in resources and needs.</p> <p>To prevent any arbitrary operations and meet the diversity of local needs, the Region has defined the spatial area to be considered (with the aid of INSEE, the French National Statistics Office): municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants, in mountain areas and that have employment centres and/or service centres and that are not in urban areas.</p> <p>On this basis (i.e. 207 municipalities/small towns) a call for bidders wishing to benefit from the development engineering was launched.</p> <p>To analyse the applications and ultimately select 21 engineering interventions over 20 small towns and <i>communautés de commune</i> (inter-municipal groupings) a technical committee (whose members included representatives from the Region's divisions, State departments, INSEE, resource centres, and the RA expert on the scientific committee) met twice.</p> <p>Elected officials and technicians from the small towns and <i>communautés de communes</i> were called together on 2 occasions by the Region, once at the beginning, following the call for bidders and once at the end, as part of a feedback workshop with the design offices and technical committee.</p>
Project activities	<p>Selection of targeted mountain towns (Massif central, Jura, Alps)</p> <p>Statistical analysis and collection of data regarding the selected towns and regrouping communities.</p> <p>Development of 21 diagnostic studies on each individual situation.</p> <p>2 meeting in Rhône-Alpes with towns and regrouping communities.</p>
Achieved results	<p>Outlining of projects and process of development to the mayors of little towns and the President of regrouping communities.</p> <p>Involvement of different local actors.</p> <p>Respect of sustainable development criteria.</p> <p>Project and process design including the statistical data collected.</p>
Discrepancies between planned results and results achieved	<p>No discrepancies were found between planned and achieved results.</p>
Instruments proposed, revised and finalised	<p>During a meeting held on March 28th 2006 a proposal was presented concerning cooperation among little towns at regional and European level together with a call for raising funds (with the aid of the Region and EU) to contribute to the implementation of projects, to the development process and to tutoring innovation in small mountain towns.</p>
Impact on the local environment, actors and stakeholders	<p>The involvement of local stakeholders and the exchange of information among the participants offered the chance to take advantage from the set up of a network among small towns, even if each valley owns its local identity and history, apart from its economic and development peculiarities.</p>
Critical aspects	<p>It is evident the relevant heterogeneity of the participants in this case study. The great effort to constitute such a network of different small mountain towns has been supported by the conviction of the valuable patrimony of experiences rooted in these areas and exploitable to create an alternative path of development.</p>
Lessons learned	<p>Since the call spread far and wide it is correct to affirm that cooperation and networking are the main tools for development available to small mountain towns.</p>



Transferability	<p>Through the survey it has been possible to increase the value of some best practices experiences found in the concerned areas.</p> <p>The concept of network among small towns is the most important element, which can be successfully transferred to other contexts. A cooperative network allows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- to find together alternative resources for development- to overcome territorial boundaries in order to share trans-national experiences- to spread the cultural heritage and the local know-how- to federate communication and promotion activities- to polarize the supply of equipment and services- to organise the development process and strategies
Case study follow-up	<p>The next case study can already be considered the second step of this one. Moreover the collection of experiences and best practices can be further enriched and improved. The constituted network can also carry on a transfer and accompanying activity through the AlpCity Regional Urban Observatory.</p>
Common issues with other projects SSC Experts' comments and recommendations	<p>A meaningful connection exists with the other case studies of this Work Package, but also with the ones related to the improvement of life quality and services (WP6).</p> <p>The French Project Partner Rhône-Alpes Region started an effort to unify small mountain centres in a network to exchange knowledge and to promote own interests toward the central and metropolitan areas. This is an interesting attempt to ameliorate the network basis of small entities and peripheral regions. It was done on the Rhône-Alpes Region level and brought together common experiences in receiving regional engineering advice. Maybe it could be useful to enlarge this network building on a supra-regional or even European level, but it is necessary to evaluate all the costs and benefits of this enlargement also taking into account other experiences of networking like for example "Alliance in the Alps".</p>