

Welcome Note: VAO in the context of EUSALP Action Group 8

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WELCOME

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to this Symposium.

I will shortly present the European macroregional Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) and its Action Group 8 on Natural Hazards Management and Climate Change Adaptation, as a member of this Action Group, on behalf of the *Commissariat général à l'égalité des territoires* (CGET) and upon request of the French national coordinator for EUSALP (Nicolas Gouvernel).

At first, what is a macro-regional strategy? A macroregional strategy is an integrated framework endorsed by the European Council, to address common challenges faced by a defined geographical area relating to Member States and third countries located in the same geographical area, which thereby benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The question is why a macroregional strategy for the Alpine area? The Alpine area is composed of territories with contrasted demographic, social and economic trends and a great cultural and linguistic diversity. This diversity goes along with a great variety of governance systems and traditions. Both the common specificities of the Alpine area and its variety and diversity call for cooperation.

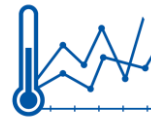
The Alpine region is one of the largest economic and productive regions in Europe where about 70 million people live and work, as well as it is an attractive tourist destination for millions of guests every year. The Alps are the water tower of Europe and are known all over the world for their natural beauty, varied landscapes, rich biodiversity and cultural heritage.

However, it faces several major challenges, such as economic globalisation; demographic trends; climate change; the energy challenge; and its specific geographical position in Europe.

An Alpine macro-regional strategy would provide an opportunity to improve cross-border cooperation in the Alpine States as well as identifying common goals and implementing them more effectively through transnational collaboration.

The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) is the fourth EU macro-regional strategy. The Strategy covers a territory inhabited by 80 million people (16 % of the EU) and includes 48 regions in seven countries: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Switzerland.

The Strategy focuses on three general action-oriented pillars related to EU Thematic Policy Areas: 1) to improve the competitiveness, prosperity and cohesion of the Alpine Region, 2) to improve the accessibility and connectivity for all the inhabitants of the Alpine Region, and 3) to make the Alpine Region environmentally sustainable and attractive. In addition, the Strategy includes a cross-cutting objective aimed at building a sound macro-regional governance model, in order to improve cooperation and the coordination of action in the Alpine Region.



These three general objectives are divided into nine concrete actions, with dedicated Action Groups.

Concerning environment and energy challenges identified in the third thematic area, the objectives of these Action Groups are the followings:

- Action Group 6: *“to preserve and valorise natural resources, including water and cultural resources”*;
- Action Group 7: *“to develop ecological connectivity across the whole EUSALP territory”*;
- Action Group 8: *“to improve risk management and better manage climate change, including prevention of major natural risks”*; and
- Action Group 9: *“to make the territory a model region for energy efficiency and renewable energy”*.

Action Group 8 - the group I participate - aims at improving risk management and better managing climate change in the Alps. These are issues that the VAO is called upon to contribute.

Indeed, sustainable protection from natural hazards is an essential predisposition for settling as well as social and economic development in the Alps. Limited settlement space and climate change lead to increasing exposure and damages to private property and infrastructure. The interests of economic development, social welfare, mobility and tourism still outbalance the targets of risk reduction and safety management which calls for new governance instruments in order to balance multiple use demands. To that purpose, new practices for Natural Hazard Integrated Risk Management (IRM) [- like the ones developed in the interregional territorial cooperation in the French Alps](#) - are required.

Therefore, Action Group 8 pursues the following objectives:

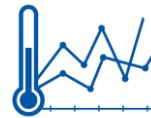
- Stocktaking of relevant actors and interests, mapping and enhancing **governance structures** and processes in the policy fields of risk/hazard management and climate adaptation
- Improving **risk and adaptation governance** mechanisms in the EUSALP region by enhancing, valorizing and leveraging the existing cooperation structures
- Identification of **good practice solutions** in tackling the challenges ahead
- Promoting, developing and implementing local, regional and transnational **pilots and projects** based on the action plan and exploring funding opportunities on both EU as well as national/regional/private levels

Several ongoing Alpine Space projects will contribute to EUSALP and AG8 in particular, in particular the following Alpine Space projects:

- AlpGov project, which aims at implementing Alpine Governance Mechanisms of the European Strategy for the Alpine Region
- GoApply project, which focuses on Multidimensional governance of climate change adaptation in policy making and practice
- RockTheAlps project, which aims to build an Harmonized Rockfall natural risk and protection forest mapping in the Alpine Space

In this context, VAO is also a recommended project to contribute to AG8, with the objective to “set up a Virtual Alpine Observatory which brings together Alpine research centres and helps to improve forecasts and common efforts in research on climate change adaptation, concerning such fields as the atmosphere, Alpine environment and water balance.”

Helping to better understand environmental processes in the alpine region, VAO thus makes a valuable contribution to support decision makers best balancing economic, social and environmental interests in a sustainable way. That is why VAO is part of the Alpine Strategy of the EU as well as of the European Alpine Convention.



MORE INFORMATION

- **EUSALP website:** <https://www.alpine-region.eu>
- **EUSALP AG8 webpage:** <https://www.alpine-region.eu/action-group-8>
- **EUSALP AG8 PARN webpage:** <http://risknat.org/eusalp-suera/?lang=en>
- **Interregional territorial cooperation program CIMA-POIA for Natural Hazard Integrated Risk Management in the French Alps (“GIRN-Alpes”):** <http://risknat.org/girn/?lang=en>

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SHORT CV

Benjamin Einhorn, Director of the Alpine Center for Natural Hazards and Risks Prevention (PARN)

- Geographer-geomorphologist by training, director of the Alpine Center for Natural Hazards and Risks Prevention (PARN), I work at the interface between various scientific, technical and institutional partners in the fields of Integrated Management of Natural Risks and Climate Change Adaptation in Alpine territories.
- Member of EUSALP Action Group 8: “To improve risk management and to better manage climate change, including major natural risks prevention”.

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