

Fostering pluralism as a key to local development in the Alpine Space

White paper of the transnational Alpine Space project PlurAlps



PlurAlps. Enhancing capacities for a pluralistic Alpine Space

Ten partners from six Alpine countries have worked together for three years on the PlurAlps project. The project aims to: increase territorial attractiveness, social cohesion and the innovation capacity of mountainous and peripheral Alpine municipalities and regions; enhance multilevel and cross-sectorial cooperation that enables migrant integration; foster pluralism; and develop welcoming services. Within the project, the Piedmont region in collaboration with FIERI has coordinated this document.

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corso Stati Uniti, 21

10128 Turin – Italy

Editors: Elisa Agosti (CIPRA International Lab), Antonio Cristoforetti (Fondazione Franco Demarchi), Prisca Giaiero (Regione Piemonte), Leila Giannetto (FIERI), Nuria Mignone (Regione Piemonte), Robert Moosbrugger (Regionalentwicklung Vorarlberg eGen), Wolfgang Pfefferkorn (CIPRA International Lab), Irene Ponzo (FIERI), Miriam L. Weiß (Eurac Research)

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1. FOSTERING PLURALISM AS A KEY TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE ALPINE SPACE

Objectives

This document provides policy recommendations aimed at increasing the territorial attractiveness and social cohesion of the Alpine Region through innovative measures that foster pluralism and address migration. The recommendations focus on municipal and inter-municipal levels of engagement. More specifically, they present approaches for public and civil society actors working at different levels (local, regional, national and transnational, including the business sector) that encourage social, cultural and economic innovation, and support pluralism and prosperity at a local level. These actions aim to create more inclusive labour markets and societies for all—locals and migrants—in line with the principles enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights.

2. FOCUS ON THE ALPINE REGION – MIGRATION AND DIVERSITY AS LONG-STANDING ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

The distinctive trait of this document is its double focus on pluralism and the Alps.

Alpine societies are far from static. They have always been dynamic. Historically, the Alpine Region, which encompasses several national borders, has experienced significant movements of its people. The region is characterised by high cultural diversity and numerous linguistic, cultural and religious groups (see Fig. 1 on linguistic diversity). Therefore, diversity can be regarded as a long-standing and distinguishing Alpine trait, which has assumed different forms over time, both peaceful and violent.

“The location of the Alps in the heart of Europe implies that, historically, people and goods have always been crossing them. This has resulted in an extended network of paths, roads and railways as well as linguistic and cultural exchanges (...) An important aspect of the rich Alpine heritage is cultural diversity. Besides the four main Alpine languages – French, German, Italian and Slovenian – a variety of linguistic minorities and enclaves further enrich the Alpine cultural panorama” (Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, The Alps in 25 Maps, 2018).

LANGUAGE GROUPS, 2011

Linguistic minorities	National languages (without dialects)	Linguistic enclaves	Other symbols
Slovenian	Francoprovençal / French	German	Alpine cities > 50,000 inhabitants
Ladin	Francoprovençal	French	Cities > 100,000 inhabitants
German		Italian	Country boundary
Friulian/Slovenian/ Carnithian		Slovenian	NUTS2 boundary
Friulian/Slovenian		Rhaeto-Romanic	Alpine Convention perimeter
Friulian		Carinthian Language (Valle del Fersina)	Water body
Occitan/French		Cimbrian Language (Luserna, Sette Comuni, Giazza-Letzian, Pian del Cansiglio)	
Occitan		Walser German (Valle d'Aosta, Valsesia/Ossola)	

Source: BFS (2000); Eidgenössische Volkszählung 2000; Consiglio Provinciale di Torino (2001); Estratto del verdetto del Consiglio Provinciale di CX in data 11 gennaio 2011; Fan, Ch. & B.S. Plet (2002); National Minorities in Europe. Handbuch/Besamtheit, Wien, Provincia di Cuneo (d.J.); Tulele Minoranze linguistiche ambito territorio provinciale; Sledon Velle Chiese (1996); L'Occitan, Sog. R. (2006); Sord de l'water in Nordostes roch no v'elast; Tulele Minoranze linguistiche stescher d'area; In: Plet, R. (2006); Walsertale 2. Le Challes d'Enfer, Aosta, 35-45; Sprachverzeichnis der STATISTIK AUSTRIA (2000); Volkszählung 2011; Biondelli, E. The Impact of Current Demographic Transformation on Ethno-Linguistic Minorities in the Italian Alps. PhD-Funct. no 2009-01-200-2011; Francoprovençal: Centre d'Etudes Francoprovençales, Tignes, UI025 2014; Country, NUTS2 boundaries: Eurostat; GISC0 2013; Water: © EuroGeographics 2009; Perimeter: Alpine Convention; Eurac Research 2005; Chies, coord. online.org; mapbox.com

Eurac Research, Institute for Regional Development

Author: RAVAZOLI E., LANER P. 2017

Constant societal change requires ongoing effort to find new ways of living, working, thinking and developing together. Since the 1980s, this effort in the Alps has been renewed by an increase in population due to newcomers as opposed to birth rates, which have remained low (Fig. 2).

PROJECTED PERCENTAGE CHANGE OF THE POPULATION DUE TO NATURAL CHANGE, BY NUTS 2 REGION, 2015-2050 (%)

- Country boundary
- NUTS 2 boundary
- Alpine Space Programme Perimeter
- Cities > 100,000 inhabitants
- Legend for projected percentage change:
 - ≤ -15.0
 - > -15.0 - -7.5
 - > -7.5 - 0.0
 - > 0.0 - 7.5
 - > 7.5 - 15.1
 - No data

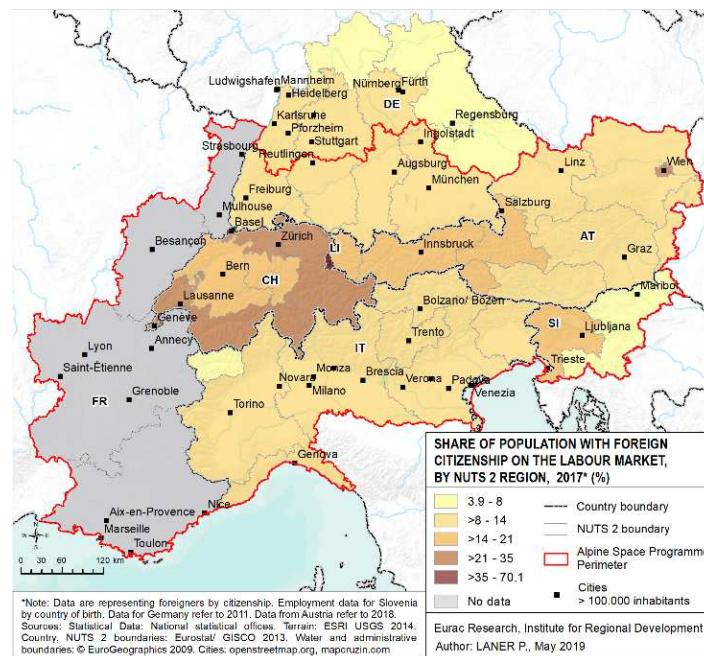
Note: Slovenia: national data
 Sources: Statistical Data Eurostat/ demo_r_d2en and (proj_13bdrms)
 Terrain: ESRI USGS 2014. Country, NUTS 2 boundaries: Eurostat/ GISCO 2013. Water and administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics 2009.
 Cities: mapbox.com

Euras Research, Institute for Regional Development
 Author: LANER P., May 2019

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Importantly, newcomers, particularly foreign migrants, satisfy local labour demands and sustain prosperity (Fig. 3).

Figure 3 – Share of population with foreign citizenship on the labour market



Source: Eurac Research, Institute for Regional Development, PlurAlps, 2019

In addition, the Alpine Region is highly heterogeneous in terms of landscape (urban and rural), municipality sizes (metropolitan areas and small villages) and different national and regional legal frameworks. This factor has to be considered when implementing policy recommendations.

What is pluralism?

Pluralism is a defining feature of European Union Member States. The term is mentioned in Article 2 of the European Union Treaty from 2010 without being fully defined. In general, as an empiric concept, pluralism refers to people of different ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs and cultures who coexist within the same society. As a normative concept, the diversity associated with pluralism is considered positive.

Harvard Professor Diana Eck provides a useful definition of pluralism by emphasising four important aspects:¹

- First, pluralism is not diversity alone, but the energetic engagement with diversity.
- Second, pluralism is not just tolerance, but the active seeking of understanding across lines of difference.
- Third, pluralism is not relativism, but the encounter of commitments.
- Fourth, pluralism is based on dialogue.

This definition does not emphasise pluralism as the static result of an ideal society but rather as an active and ongoing process.

Successful pluralism requires both ‘hardware’ and ‘software’.² The former refers to institutions such as regulations, courts of law, public administrations and schools, and the latter to cultural habits or mindsets such as perceptions of national identity and historic narratives. Both dimensions are critical — fostering pluralism requires a conscious engagement with institutions and culture.

Pluralism, which inspired the name of the transnational Interreg Alpine Space project PlurAlps, has proven to be a useful concept that people in all Alpine countries can easily relate to. The word has a common root in all Alpine languages: Pluralismus in German, pluralismo in Italian, pluralisme in French and pluralizem in Slovenian. PlurAlps promotes further understanding of pluralism in the Alpine Space and contributes to the development of a positive vision of migration in Europe.

¹ Eck, L. Diana (2006) “What is Pluralism?” Available at <http://pluralism.org/what-is-pluralism/>

² Kymlicka, W (2017) “The Hardware and Software of Pluralism”, report prepared for the Global Centre for Pluralism. Available at www.pluralism.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/WillKymlicka_HardwareandSoftware_EN.pdf

Governance context

The EU and Member States

Articles 79 and 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) form the legal basis for the EU's definition of a common immigration policy and outline the respective competences of the Union and its Member States.³ Switzerland is not an EU Member State but is bound to the Union through the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (AFMP), which sets out the nation's legal immigration policy framework.

The EU is competent to define the conditions for regular immigration that govern entry into the EU and legal residence of third-country nationals, including asylum seekers and people entitled to family reunification. Member States retain the right to determine the volumes of people being admitted from third countries to seek work; Member States can also implement special integration programmes.

The EU is required to prevent and reduce irregular immigration in particular by means of an effective return policy that is consistent with fundamental rights.

The EU can also provide incentives and support for measures taken by Member States to promote the integration of legally resident third-country nationals; however, EU law makes no provision for the harmonisation of national laws and regulations in this regard.

The Alpine Region

Several institutions help shape transnational policies in the Alpine Region. Although none of them is specifically charged with developing migration policies, all of them have recognised the topic's importance.

³ www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/152/immigration-policy

EUSALP is the EU's macro-regional strategy for the Alpine Region. It identifies demographic challenges in the Alps, which are commonly characterised by ageing populations and new migration models. The strategy calls for better cooperation across the Alpine Region and aims to tackle these challenges.

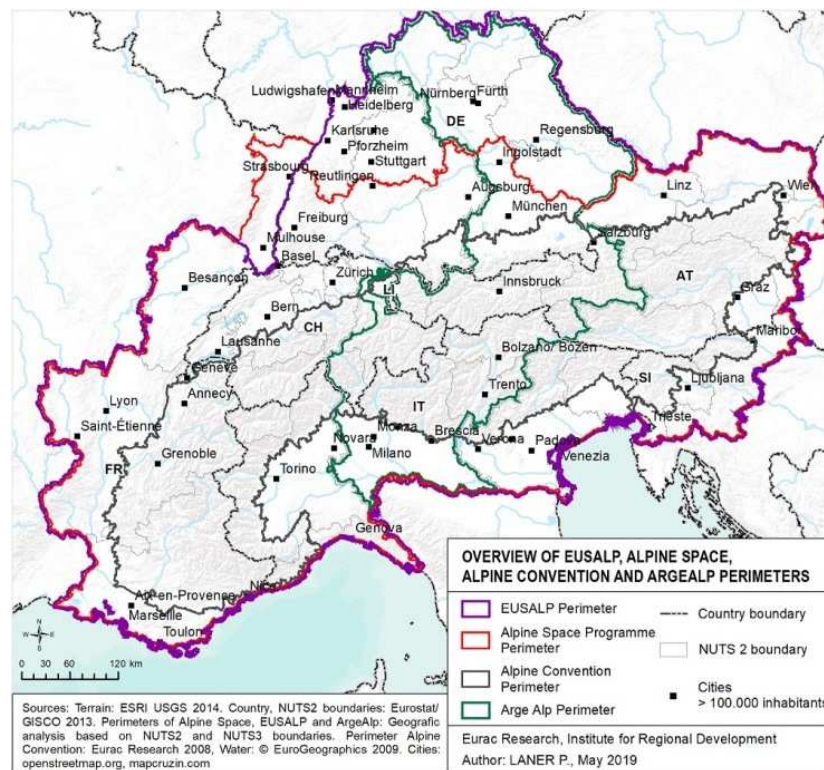
The Alpine Convention is an international treaty between Alpine countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia and Switzerland) and the EU for the sustainable development and protection of the Alps. In its 2015 report on the state of the Alps, the Convention recognised that migration is an important factor for the region's development, especially for those areas that are subject to depopulation or an ageing population.⁴

Arge Alp is an association of ten Alpine areas, including Austrian and German federation states, Italian provinces and Swiss cantons. The association addresses common concerns via cross-border cooperation. In 2017 it specifically focused on integration in the Alps and issued the Arge Alp Award for innovative integration projects.

Interreg Alpine Space is a European transnational cooperation programme for the Alpine Region. It provides a framework that facilitates cooperation between key economic, social and environmental actors in seven Alpine countries and across various institutional levels such as academia, administration, the business and innovation sector, and policymaking. In several calls, the programme specifically encouraged proposals addressing demographic trends and migration flows in the Alpine Space.

⁴ www.alpconv.org/en/publications/alpine/Documents/RSA5en.pdf

Figure 4 - Comparison perimeter EUSALP, Alpine Space Programme, Alpine Convention and Arge Alp



Source: Eurac Research, Institute for Regional Development, PlurAlps, 2019

3. METHODOLOGY - A PARTICIPATORY, BOTTOM-UP PROCESS

This is a transnational, bottom-up policy advice document. It has been developed through a participatory process engaging decision-makers, stakeholders and experts operating in the Alpine Region at local, regional, national and transnational levels. More specifically, the main sources of inputs have come from a number of labs, pilot actions, regional workshops and empirical analyses, all undertaken within the PlurAlps project framework. The inspiring practices illustrated at the end of each section are drawn from the Alpine Pluralism Award launched by PlurAlps.⁵

⁵ www.alpine-space.eu/projects/pluralps/en/pluralism-award

Table 1 – Categories of migrants addressed in the recommendations

Forced migrants	Individuals or groups subject to migratory movement in which an element of coercion exists, including threats to life and livelihood, whether arising from natural or man-made causes (e.g., movements of refugees and internally displaced persons or people displaced by natural / environmental disasters, chemical / nuclear disasters, famine or development projects).*
Economic migrants	Individuals who migrate on a permanent, temporary or seasonal basis in order to seek material improvements to their livelihood.*
Alpine returnees	Individuals who go back to their place of origin, country of nationality or habitual residence in the Alps usually after spending a significant period of time elsewhere.*
Lifestyle (amenity) migrants	Relatively affluent individuals, moving either part-time or full-time, permanently or temporarily, to places which, for various reasons, signify for the migrants something loosely defined as quality of life** (e.g., 'digital nomads', who live and work in several places, and retired migrants).

The policy recommendations collated in this document concern different categories of migrants: forced migrants, economic migrants (including seasonal workers) and lifestyle migrants (e.g., amenity migrants, including neo-ruralists, re-migrants and retirees).

*These definitions are drawn and adapted from the "Asylum and Migration Glossary 6.0", EMN, 2018.

** Benson, Michaela and Karen O'Reilly (2009b) "Migration and the Search for a Better Way of Life: A Critical Exploration of Lifestyle Migration" The Sociological Review, 57, 4: 621.

4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy design and implementation

A. Promoting an integrated policy approach.

Integration policies often use sectoral logic. Each aspect of integration (e.g., employment, education, cultural diversity and housing) is generally addressed by different departments and public entities. Their different approaches often lead to less effective and even contradictory policy implementation.

What can be done:

Policies should explicitly aim to be coherent. Consistency can be improved in different ways such as developing an integrated approach that combines different migrant integration policies (housing, health, employment, etc.) and a common basis for these policies across different institutions and catchment areas.

Those public bodies and departments most concerned with newcomers should share experience and knowledge to improve an integrated policy approach. A joint public and private institution approach is an important means of reinforcing policy coherence. This can be developed by enabling a facilitator or group of actors already active at a local level to coordinate those entities most concerned with migration. Whatever the solution, it is crucial that this bridging element has enough competence to truly impact policies. Each approach should also respond to actual needs and potentially connect civil society organisations and public administrations through local activity.

Specific migration-related training for policymakers and practitioners could improve the consistency of measures adopted by local administrations.

Finally, the development of planning tools, such as that produced within the PlurAlps project, could be useful. Overall, it is important that the chosen solution fits and integrates into the local administration's structure and culture.

B. Developing knowledge-based and forward-looking policies.

Policies that aim to increase the pluralism of local communities are too often based on controversial assumptions and only partial knowledge of both the current reality and future scenarios. This risk is higher in small Alpine municipalities where data and knowledge collection and production possibilities are low.

What can be done:

Besides investing in policy-oriented research, it is important to understand the factors and mechanisms explaining scientific knowledge's low impact on current policies concerning migrants. This is a fundamental condition to help establish a better functioning research-policy nexus.

Specific pluralism training co-developed transnationally for decision-makers could be beneficial. Pluralism experts should be integrated into local administrative teams concerned with migrants in order to continuously feed policies with empirical knowledge. Broader, empirically based policy perspectives should be developed through the collection and discussion of Alpine-wide facts and figures regarding social, economic and demographic change (e.g., ageing societies and increasing diversity). Therefore, it could be useful to set up open-data systems that pool different datasets belonging to public administrations, welfare organisations, universities and research centres, employer organisations and trade unions, etc., under public-led coordination. The collection of data should be permanent and not on-demand or project-based. Effort should be made to make the data comparable across Alpine countries. Data usability and comparability would be aided by elaborating common integration indicators.

Another way of developing empirically-based policies would be through a more inclusive decision-making process, which brings together experts, social workers, policymakers, civil society organisations and local populations to work on future scenarios, identify current and future challenges, and elaborate possible solutions. Both formal and informal consultation venues would be useful in this regard. More generally, the involvement of different subjects and organisations would increase not only their contribution to policy design but also their support of policy implementation.

It is important to recognise that migrants are not a homogenous group and, besides having different origins, they have different levels of education, language skills, professional perspectives, migration projects, etc. Fine-grained knowledge for policymaking could be acquired by involving people from these subgroups.

C. Facilitating the access of small communities and organisations to funding opportunities.

Funding is commonly distributed according to a local actor's ability to write applications and manage funded projects instead of being needs-based. Small Alpine towns or municipalities and civil society organisations are often unaware of available funding opportunities to help manage integration. Those that do enter the process tend to struggle with the administrative burden of submitting project proposals and do not have the capacity to create strong partnerships.

What can be done:

A bottom-up approach could be developed capable of informing the EU and national funding programmes about local Alpine community integration needs. Moreover, the capacity of small local organisations, including those of migrants, to compete for migration-related funding should be enhanced. As a consequence, the mobilisation of small communities and scouting for their ideas on pluralism and integration is important. The establishment of 'antennas' in rural and mountain areas would help 'catch' emerging ideas based on local needs, support their transformation into projects, and connect small municipalities and organisations with higher-level institutions that could act as project coordinators.

Access to resources could also be improved by developing efficient systems of cooperation regarding migration issues; instead of building migration-related structures and know-how in each small community, responsible persons should cooperate with support structures and competence centres. Similarly, institutional levels between municipalities and regions and, more generally, secondary-level organisations of public and private entities should be valued and strengthened to

enhance their member's competitiveness on funding opportunities. Know-how and information exchange between regions could benefit transnational cooperation.

The access small communities have to funding could be improved by simplifying bureaucratic call procedures and valuing experience over formal requirements. Their competitiveness could be better facilitated by providing technical assistance for call applications.

D. Supporting and upscaling good, inspirational practices.

According to the European Commission,⁶ good integration practices are “strategies, approaches and/or activities that have been shown through research and evaluation to be effective, efficient, sustainable and/or transferable, and to reliably lead to a desired result”. Learning from good practices can help foster pluralism and address migration in a more effective way, and save resources by not trying to reinvent the wheel. However, the replication of good practices is generally very challenging since each are rooted in their own specific contexts.

What can be done:

Good practices of pluralism could provide inspiration and be upgraded to systematic solutions. When upscaling and transferring good practices, attention should be paid to both content and process. The long-term assessment of their functionality should prevail over the short-term evaluation of their attractiveness. The first step is to scout and assess good practices in the Alpine Region and extrapolate innovative and successful elements that could be replicated in other local realities; this transfer may be limited to specific actions within projects, specific ideas or methods and tools applied to different ideas (e.g., peer-to-peer learning and consultation groups) rather than transferring the entire practice. Regional adaptations could be necessary. Transfers will be smoother if the communication of practices is improved and competition between local realities prevented.

⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/integration-practices>

Available on-line platforms that provide a quick search by topic could be helpful backbones for sharing good practices; however, this should be matched with face-to-face settings that enable shared experiences. Nevertheless, sharing knowledge is not enough. In order to transfer good practices, it is necessary to identify local stakeholders who support the process and to enhance the capacity of both local policymakers and civil society to implement good practices. Given the changes that occur across localities to the specific configurations of local organisations and stakeholders active within migrant integration, mapping those subjects in areas where practices have to be transferred could be useful.

E. Fostering civil society initiatives as key aspects of local interventions.

Bottom-up integration initiatives have been gaining importance in the Alpine Region, especially at a local level.

What can be done:

Innovative, bottom-up integration initiatives stemming from civil society as part of local policies should be further recognised. More generally, local Alpine communities that actively engage in finding positive solutions to increase pluralism and ongoing social change should be valued. Specific memoranda of understanding signed between public authorities and local centres that support civil society organisations could be useful in this regard. Within this framework, voluntary activities should complement rather than replace professional services.

F. Detecting blind spots.

Integration policies, programmes and projects generally categorise migrants as 'others'. On the one hand, this generalisation and homogenisation process, which binds several categories together, creates social exclusion and depoliticises the migrant's social position. On the other, it is possible that migrants can obtain a voice through such categorisation as it places them within a policy framework and makes them more publicly visible. Nevertheless, those who hold steering roles tend to create blind spots when implementing policies, programmes and projects.

What can be done:

A control mechanism and critical self-reflection piece must be implemented for each project in order to unveil blind spots that may contribute to reify power relations and reproduce otherness instead of giving people a voice within integration processes. Before each new step in a project, questions should be asked. Do current policies focus on target groups? If so, are they seen as homogenous or heterogeneous? Are target groups stigmatised by existing policy responses? How do existing policies address, maintain or create inequities between different groups? And is the target group seen as being expert in relation to their lives and do professional experts accept their perspectives?

A step forward would be to include newcomers in decision-making processes by enabling them to express their needs, propose initiatives and co-decide both policy formulation and local and regional development processes.

Good practices box

Alpine Pluralism Award

Level: Throughout the Alps

Where: Online

Under the PlurAlps project umbrella, a call for the first edition of the Alpine Pluralism Award was launched in September 2017. This call allowed project partners to collect 41 measures from all Alpine countries that had been undertaking local integration initiatives. These measures were submitted in four categories: social integration; integration in the labour market; land use and environment; and dual education path. All measures have been published on the PlurAlps website and given high visibility. The winning projects were invited to the PlurAlps mid-term conference and the EUSALP Forum 2018.

For more information, visit:

www.alpine-space.eu/projects/pluralps/en/pluralism-award (en)

Social Planning Instrument

Level: At a municipal level

Where: In different Alpine municipalities

The Social Planning Instrument (SPI) was developed from within the PlurAlps project. It supports mid and long-term social planning and takes the interests of both locals and new residents into account. The SPI entails regular exchange with the municipality, a user-friendly, online questionnaire and a handbook. It attempts to provide answers to the following questions: What is the quality of life for newcomers and locals?; How can their quality of life be improved?; Which services and provisions in the municipality foster quick integration for all types of migrants?

For more information, visit:

www.alpine-space.eu/projects/pluralps/en/project-results/social-planning-instrument (en)

Communication for fruitful pluralism

G. Developing spaces and possibilities for discussion and negotiation.

Conflicts between newcomers and long-term residents and rising xenophobia often result from misinformation about migratory processes and the lack of opportunity to express concerns and exchange views regarding ongoing social changes.

What can be done:

The general aim should be to connect people, recognise common challenges and address them together. Therefore, it is important to enable both long-term residents and newcomers of different origins to discuss concerns related to ongoing social changes and challenges, mediate conflict and promote a common vision of local development. The dialogue between newcomers and policymakers and practitioners is equally crucial since policies, even when aiming to improve migrant situations and local pluralism, can be imbued with prejudice. The facilitation of such discussion is important to avoid hate speech and disagreements that can degenerate into conflicts. These kind of activities could be supported by developing appropriate forms of information dissemination and discussion.

The creation of dedicated public spaces could help exchanges and dialogue. A higher proportion of local community involvement could be achieved by employing existing settings where people usually meet. Various discussion venues should be identified in

order to catch different strata of the population. Specific attention should be paid to groups who are insensitive to pluralism and migration or do not generally participate in public events. Shared activities where people work together on common goals can also create opportunities for dialogue.

Long-established migrant communities who can be mobilised to facilitate the dialogue between newcomers and long-established residents could be useful, but any possible tensions between newly arrived and settled migrants who have experienced conflict in their country of origin should be taken into consideration.

H. Building on multiple memories and identities to raise awareness.

Newcomers are sometimes perceived as a threat to local identity. However, rather than being monolithic and immutable, local identities are in fact built and shaped by the entire community everyday. The generational divide between newcomers and locals may be another source of tension. Whereas the Alpine population is ageing, newcomers are mainly young: according to the 2018 Eurostat publication *Migration and Migrant Population Statistics*, half of all migrants present in the EU in 2016 were under 28. Therefore, if the generational divide overlaps with the cultural/ethnic divide, this might in turn lead to rejection and social tensions.

What can be done:

Stereotypes regarding Alpine identity should be addressed. The Alpine Region's long-standing migration and diversity should be recognised and valued, encouraging people to become aware of the multiple identities that already coexist.

More value could be made of the cultural and linguistic riches that newcomers offer. Local identities could be reshaped by sharing experiences between them and established locals (e.g., memories of both Alpine community and newcomer migrations). Projects and discussion platforms that raise awareness about the historical development of identities and the representation of plural, local, living worlds could be helpful.

Joint initiatives undertaken by migrants and locals may be an option. For example, exhibitions focusing on emigration from and immigration to the Alpine Region can highlight shared migration experiences between both groups. Cooperation and development projects between communities located in different continents could also be an alternative means of raising awareness.

Intergenerational cooperation centres and programmes should be developed such as those oriented towards intergenerational knowledge and skills exchange. Activities should promote inter-generational living and the exchange of services and mutual assistance (i.e., from youth to senior citizens and vice versa).

1. Tapping the media's potential.

Eurobarometer's statistics show that alarm and concern about migration has significantly increased. The mass media often shapes perceptions about migration and cultural diversity more than personal experience. Communication appears increasingly difficult to navigate with the growing use of social media and dissemination of fake news. As a consequence, this diffuse concern may hamper the adoption of empirically based and rationally oriented solutions that deal with migration and diversity.

What can be done:

Whereas media content control is neither feasible nor desirable, contrasting negative narratives and fake news about migration is important. A good starting point is monitoring traditional and social media. Then, several proactive actions can be undertaken that may even include transnational cooperation: raising awareness and responsibility for dealing with social media; providing training in media literacy to help recognising and reporting fake news; developing transparent and user-friendly platforms where facts and empirical evidence can be accessed; and providing the local media with accurate information on migration-related phenomena and events.

Participation in the media debate is key. Local institutions should cooperate with the media. Special sections in municipal newspapers and radio station broadcasts could be devoted to fact-checked news on migration. The ongoing presence of informed and balanced opinion makers in the media would help prevent fake news.

The dissemination of positive experiences and stories about single migrants would counteract negative media narratives and show how generalisations about newcomers are unfounded. Small municipalities that allow face-to-face encounters and personal relationships could be used as an advantage. Public gatherings and events help build local community identity where pluralism is a key element.

Good practices box

Toolbox Freiamt

Level: Regional

Where: Wohlen/CH

Toolbox Freiamt provides a space for migrants, other new inhabitants, locals, volunteers, institutions and public authorities to interact and help accept social changes. Several tools enable migrants and other new inhabitants to contact locals, receive useful information for their everyday lives in the region and appreciate the Swiss system regarding schools, healthcare, insurance etc. Local volunteers are supported and encouraged to initiate private projects that improve the social life between inhabitants of different backgrounds.

For more information, visit: www.toolbox-freiamt.ch (de, en)

The Sixth Continent

Level: Regional

Where: Bressanone/Brixen/IT

The House of Solidarity's integration and social work provision provides a 'bridge' for migrants, refugees and local people who experience difficulties that can help them lead a more stable life. Three employees and 15 volunteers help integrate those newly arrived in their new home with the support of internal and external buddies by: organising tandem language learning or promoting participation in external languages courses; analysing skills and integrating people into school, training activities and work projects; providing support in building startups; connecting newly arrived people with the local network; providing fiscal, psychological and psychiatric help; and fostering their integration into civil society organisations. The house works independently without direct public contributions, developing models for the big challenges of our time.

For more information, visit: www.hds.bz.it

Socio-economic integration and prosperity

J. Removing barriers for newcomers and enabling social integration.

Newcomers' access to local opportunities, labour and housing markets, and services is often hampered by barriers such as lack of information, low national language proficiency, cultural differences and migrants' long working hours, which may be difficult for locals to perceive. The integration of newcomers and their access to local markets and services may be problematic as a result.

What can be done:

Barriers that hamper newcomers' access to local opportunities should be analysed and identified. Once these issues have been isolated, it is important to make the general public aware so that support can be gained for actions that remove obstacles. Migrants should then be actively supported to help them avoid obstacles and access local opportunities. Possible measures are: the translation of information and forms into the main migrant groups' languages; the production of welcome guides or handbooks for newcomers; the identification of innovative ways and new places where information can be provided; arrangements for coaches or ambassadors who could help newcomers integrate into the local community; the provision of e-governance and digitalisation of services; the establishment of flexible service opening hours; and the employment of intercultural mediators and translators.

In particular, the intercultural mediator's role should be properly described and codified where it is not yet well understood. Furthermore, intercultural mediators should be a structural part of local service working teams and social workers should be trained to properly employ intercultural mediator support in their everyday work.

The removal of barriers for newcomers can be framed within and, at the same time, foster a more general opening up of services towards new users, including locals. The specifics of migrant integration in rural and mountain areas should be part of intercultural mediator and social worker curricula in the Alpine Region.

K. Promoting pluralistic education and learning.

Societies are initially built at school. As a consequence, schools are venues of utmost importance for the development of pluralistic communities.

What can be done:

Investment in pluralistic education should start from an early age and include nurseries. ‘Empathy training’ could be helpful (i.e., encouraging young people to put themselves into another person’s shoes). Pupils with migratory backgrounds could play a strategic role in developing pluralistic education in schools. Peer-to-peer learning and a role model-based approach could be employed to give pupils (and former pupils) from migrant backgrounds an active role in pluralistic education. Twinning local schools with those located in the migrant children’s countries of origin could also be beneficial.

Out-of-school activities, which could influence educational success, should also be investigated and taken into account. More generally, synergies between schools and extra-curricular activities, including music concerts, art exhibitions and sport events, could be fruitful when coping with the pluralism challenge. Adult newcomers can be employed as experts once they have received proper training in how to engage students. Parents and, more generally, families should be regarded as key subjects in the promotion of pluralistic education.

L. Combating segregation and isolation in remote areas.

Distance from key services such as employment centres, vocational training courses and information services could result in segregation and isolation. Rural and mountain areas are susceptible to these issues. Female migrants are particularly at risk, especially when they are housewives.

What can be done:

Better, affordable public transport in remote areas of the Alpine Region would be advantageous to both long-term residents and newcomers. Experiments that pool public and private transport (e.g., public buses, sport club minibuses and private cars) could also improve connections in remote areas. Community welfare and local offices

able to monitor needs could help preventing isolation.

The provision of light services (e.g., the distribution of medicine), promotion of 'onboarding services' for rural areas and the e-governance and digitalisation of public services could be effective ways of reaching people living in remote areas. Support for migrants to involve them in public life and local associations could also help contrast isolation.

The nexus between work and housing should be addressed to avoid discrimination against migrant workers which can push them towards low-quality, isolated buildings. More generally, social housing measures allow local administrations to increase their impact on newcomers' residential choices.

M. Assessing and revealing newcomers' skills.

Local Alpine economies benefit from newcomers when there is a general lack of labour supplied by the existing local population. Mismatching implies a waste of human capital and hampers local development. Private enterprises themselves might have difficulties assessing migrant skills.

What can be done:

Smart and accessible tools that assess and reveal newcomers' skills, including asylum seekers and refugees, could be available to ensure their early access to the local labour market and find the best match between local demand for labour and newcomer competences. Public procedures for skills assessment might not suit migrant profiles since their training and work experience have developed through different steps and according to different standards. More flexible forms of skills assessment such as job tryouts may be more effective. Skills assessment has to be linked to training since competences gained in countries of origin may not be immediately applicable in European labour markets. The speed of inclusion in the local labour market can be increased by identifying skills gaps and finding flexible training solutions. Vocational training has to respond to local economic needs. Practice should prevail over theory—migrants may experience difficulties in following theoretical lessons either due to a lack of language skills or misunderstanding how certain economic sectors function, especially when they come from outside Europe.

Enterprise visits could be an integral part of training since they provide migrants with empirical-based knowledge of the productive processes that might be different between Europe and their countries of origin.

The involvement of employer associations could help ensure that initiatives meet employers' actual needs. Yet, the need for unskilled, cheap labour in sectors such as tourism and agriculture may decrease employers' interest in detecting and improving newcomers' skills.

Finally, special attention should be paid to female migrants who may face a higher risk of underemployment and social isolation due to their segregation in the domestic and care work sectors.

N. Attracting professionals to mountain areas.

Alpine mountain areas often experience difficulties attracting professionals (e.g., doctors and engineers) who generally seek jobs in (peri-) urban areas that offer more opportunities to work in teams with easier access to services, whilst remaining close to the mountains. The absence of professionals in some Alpine Region areas is also caused by an outflow of young people, some of whom are highly skilled. If this process is to be reversed, these people should be encouraged to return. Furthermore, their migration experiences would make them valuable role models for an open society and help raise awareness.

What can be done:

Assessments of the needs of professionals and their families should be analysed in order to provide adequate facilities. Mountain and rural area onboarding service development, especially in cooperation with large companies and local agencies, could be helpful. Web services that match labour demand and supply in mountain areas could also be beneficial. At the same time, word of mouth should be valued as a key mechanism within professional communities. More generally, involvement of employer associations is crucial in any initiative that aims to attract professionals. Moreover, as some Alpine regions already do, it would be useful to put effort into getting and keeping contacts with those who left the region for training, professional and family

reasons, and establish links and networks. Affordable housing solutions could contribute to attracting both professional and re-migrants, especially in touristic areas where prices are high. Agreements with private companies would either help develop remote work or promote the transfer of professionals. 'Emigrant clubs' could also be established to strengthen home community attachment.

O. Using the potential of mountain farming and Alpine landscape maintenance.

Several Alpine Region areas are characterised by strong agricultural depopulation and a consequent increase in uncultivated land, loss of biodiversity and negative impact on the local landscape. Landscape and environmental redevelopment work can also bring life back to abandoned villages.

What can be done:

A valuable first step for newcomers can be found working in agriculture, husbandry, forestry and landscaping, providing access to host societies and the local labour market. Newcomers can prevent or contrast the abandon of agricultural land by taking over farms from retiring farmers or acquiring disused farmland from public/private owners. However, attention should be paid to potential risks such as monoculture farming and land being overused.

Newcomers to rural Alpine landscapes are often experienced in agricultural techniques and practices. Therefore, the role of expert may change hands from the local to the newcomer, modifying perceptions of the latter. Approaches that value the techniques and practices of migrants from their countries of origin can foster exchange with locals on an equal footing and trigger local economic innovation. Alpine landscapes and environment are preserved through these actions. Therefore, once local people see not only migrants at work but also the results of their labour, acceptance tends to grow.

Good practices box

Talents for Austria

Level: Regional

Where: Styria/AT

Due to an ageing population and the trend towards higher education, Austria is facing a huge lack of apprentices and skilled workers, which will only increase in years to come. At the same time, global migration movements call for new migration models to foster social cohesion and cultural diversity. Around 95,000 refugees arrived in Austria in 2015, 14,000 of which moved to the federal state of Styria. Many were unaccompanied minors. At the time, there was not enough accommodation and no answers to questions regarding their linguistic, cultural and professional integration. In an effort to create a win-win situation, 'Talents for Austria', a boarding school with job training and placements for unaccompanied minors as asylum seekers (UMA) was created. Within the project's 24-hour care, UMA receive basic education, learn German, are instructed in Austrian values, receive specialist job training and are placed in the job market. After one year, they can work as apprentices and thus contribute to the Austrian social system.

For more information, visit: <https://talente-entwicklung.com/schule/schule/>

Revealed Hands

Level: Regional

Where: Jesenice/SI

The project 'Revealed Hands' supports vulnerable groups of women who live in Jesenice and female refugees at an asylum home in Ljubljana, Slovenia. It aims to psychosocially empower these women by educating them in: textile design; the production of a video; internet marketing and sales topics; and humanitarian work and social skills. The project is based on experience gained from previous projects, which began in 2012 under the same name. The old and new projects are interconnected and present continuous work that upgrades cooperation with vulnerable groups of women. In addition to textile design, the new project provides more space and other artistic approaches such as body movement, play, theatre improvisation, photography, video and poetry, all aiming to create a relaxing and creative atmosphere during meetings.

For more information, visit: www.razkriteroke.si

5. CALL TO ACTION

The context for migrant integration in Europe has become more complex and challenging since 2015 due to the increase of the so-called mixed inflows. The fragmentation of parties and political positions within the EU parliament and national parliaments make the future coordination of EU migration policy even more challenging. Nevertheless, positive and encouraging signs are also emerging, especially at a municipal level. Municipalities and local actors all around the Alpine Region have shown a great capacity for social innovation and solution-oriented approaches. Interestingly, visible successes and convincing integration stories are to be found precisely at a municipal level, where the greatest burden of integration is being shouldered.

Migration does not have to be a source of fear and conflict. Integration issues should be tackled at the lowest level of governance, where they can be solved by a higher instance of trust between various actors. Experiences from the PlurAlps project show that integration processes are not automatic and need to be consciously designed to bring local actors together. EU funded projects can play an important role in helping municipalities and local actors integrate migrants into society by motivating citizens and migrants to jointly shape the process. Personal contact between local residents and migrants creates mutual trust and gives migrants the feeling of being welcome and accepted. Well-designed initiatives can help reduce the fear of local residents and migrants by putting them in contact with one another.

Pluralist societies require ongoing work and investment by citizens, civil societies, companies and governments. Municipalities and regional development actors across the Alpine Region should consider this a chance to design and implement projects that actively shape the integration process and bring the concept of pluralism to life. Together we can renew long-standing Alpine traditions of migration and cultural diversity, and find new ways of living, working, thinking and developing together.

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Alpine Space
PlurAlps
European Regional Development Fund

