

Recommendations for Networking

In the analysis of transnational needs across 32 planning documents “networking and cooperation” turned out be the activity which could assign one of the highest scores as keyword. So in most documents networking and cooperation is deemed to be a key element to satisfy transnational needs. Networks contribute to the exchange of knowledge and they work as multipliers. They provide information, contribute to work organization and establish contacts to the public.

Recommendations to policy makers and civil servants

- **Become aware and make use of networks**

Today, almost all networks are accessible and provide information via internet. Become aware of the relevant expert and stakeholder networks in your field, access the information they provide and check the presentation on the internet, not only at your regional and national level but also in the neighbouring regions or across the border. Looking beyond one's own nose can be the first step to get new ideas for your own work and tasks. Sometimes information from other countries may offer highly relevant information. Explore the websites of the relevant networks in your field and make use of the provided contacts.

- **Participate in networking events and build your personal contacts**

Even if time is always short do not underestimate the personal exchange from face to face. There is a lot of unwritten background information which might support your understanding and decision making and which is only available through personal contacts. Personal contacts are still needed for building a confidence base and make later exchange via phone or Email much easier. Other opportunities are to attend conferences, workshops or open project meetings to widen your expertise and to exchange experiences. Visiting other network members is also a good possibility to share your ideas and to gain new ones.

- **Expand your own network**

As a policy / decision maker you are already involved in a network (in your political party, with other policy makers on different spatial levels) be it with focus on the Alps or not. Expanding your network also over administrative borders can offer new insights and give new ideas. The idea of “functional areas” as described in of the recommendations on “Governance and Participatory Planning” is indicating which institutions and persons in other regions are working in the same fields or facing the same challenges. For example a functional area could be a cross-border labour market. This would require a cross-border transport policy and a common public transport – at least a harmonized schedule of lines ending at the border. As civil servant it can be useful to exchange experiences with other civil servants working on similar tasks. This can either be a direct neighbour at the same spatial level (municipality, region, county etc.) or a person from another spatial level. In a further step you could widen your network in the territorial sense and find contacts which might be spatially distant, but face very similar challenges.

- **Use the WIKIAlps database of stakeholders**

The WIKIAlps database offers a stakeholder section in which the WIKIAlps team included all institutions which participated in the two thematic fields “inclusive growth” and “resource efficiency

and ecosystem management” of the last programme period. In other words, the database offers the Alpine Space programme stakeholder network of the last programme period as a first step to hook up into a network. To find institutions with a certain thematic focus or within a certain geographical scope you may use the filter as described in the mini-guide “Matrix of competences”. Further functionalities of this stakeholder database give information on contact data, thematic and regional influence of the different stakeholders.

Recommendations to the Alpine Space MA in order to put more emphasis on spatial development issues in 2014+

- **Use the existing project partnerships**

The partnerships formed during the preparation phase of an Alpine Space project and tightened during the working phase are often dissolving after the final conference and the project closure. This is a loss of expertise, working dynamism and already achieved cooperation. It might be useful to offer post-project meetings after 1-2 years, in which the partnership can reflect the work carried out with the experiences made after that and feed this back.

- **Offer exchange workshops**

Enhance the exchange of stakeholders by offering thematic workshops. Although the Alpine Space Programme generates many different project outputs, there is a lack of links between projects which focus on similar issues. The MA could stimulate such a professional exchange by offering (and financing) a frame for thematic workshops. Project partners could present their work and exchange experiences and thus find and create synergies between the projects. If such workshops are open to a broader public, especially local and regional administrations and policy makers, the potential user groups could express their needs directly. Insights and acceptance of project results might also be deepened by practical exercises of tools, data bases, methodologies, etc. In this sense sustainable behavior change as an empowerment of the civil society and administrations could be used. This could support the involving of additional stakeholder outside the existing partnership networks.

Options for the development of expert networks

- **Involving relevant stakeholder use results of the stakeholder analysis**

The stakeholder analysis undertaken in WIKIAlps offers new insights in the stakeholder landscape of the two thematic fields. You may detect how the geographical distribution and distribution of types of stakeholder is under the current participants of the programme. This recommends in contrast to search for new stakeholders in those areas where so far no stakeholder are present.

- **Horizontal extension of networks within the same field of expertise**

Even within an existing network there might be important actors which have not been involved in Alpine Space issues so far. One example for a potential extension of networks is the administration for rural development in Germany, which are an important player in the rural areas but have not yet been involved in any of the projects. Therefore extending networks is a permanent process and task for the Alpine Space programme.

- **Vertical extension of network**

Within one field of expertise networks should stretch from national to regional and local level. By this the concrete tasks at the local level are faced with requirements and limitations at the national level. Again this might offer opportunities for finding partners, funding or just support from a different administrative level. Another vertical dimension reaches from strategic to a practical implementation level. Even at local level challenges can not only be solved in a practical way but will also need a strategic element such as developing visions for the future development of a municipality or just parts of it.

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