

Stakeholder analysis for France

The following analysis and interpretation bases on the project partner institutions participating in the thematic fields “inclusive growth” and “resource efficiency and ecosystem management” of the Alpine Space programme period 2007-2013. For the German part of the Alpine Space 30 institutions participated, four of them in two projects of these thematic fields.

Branches and types of stakeholders

Almost one half of Project Partners (PP) are in branches of NACE-code “O” (public authorities). NACE-code “P” (Universities or Institutes of applied science) are also frequent project partners in the Alpine Space Programme. The public sector is therefore clearly dominating. The private sector is underrepresented as well as institutions representing the civil society. Looking closer at authorities it shows that most of them have their thematic focus on regional development, spatial or regional planning. Only two of them are representing the local, but eight the regional level. Their main resources are decision-making/policy-making. These stakeholders have often high influence on sustainable spatial development. They are a very important target group for the Alpine Space program.

Another type of well represented institutions within the scope of the analysis is “Universities and Institutes of applied sciences” and “Technological and scientific research center” with their main resources knowledge / expertise. Their influence is generally not very high but their area of influence is wider than for participating authorities. Universities and research institutes work generally on all spatial levels, but have often low (direct) influence on sustainable spatial development.

Thematic focus of stakeholders

Looking closer at the thematic focus of the institutions, it shows that many (13) of them have their focus at resources and the other main group (8) is in context with spatial planning and regional development. Close to these institutions are the 3 institutions concerned with economic development and tourism. The issue of building and architecture is represented by three institutions, the other institutions are more singular in the scope of this analysis. The thematic focus of institutions corresponds to the two selected thematic fields, the picture would change, if the other thematic fields (Climate change, competitiveness and innovation of SMEs, low carbon energy and energy efficiency, sustainable transport and mobility) would be included into the analysis.

Influence of stakeholders on sustainable spatial development

A closer look at the degree of influence the stakeholders have on the different spatial levels shows, that there are only 5 (out of 30) institutions with a high influence on sustainable spatial development. The highest influence on local and regional level have authorities who are directly involved in or responsible for spatial planning in their area. But in the two thematic fields of the last program period of the Alpine Space program very few of such authorities participated as project partners, although they represent an important target group of the program. If this is representative for all thematic fields and also the other program periods, strategies have to be found to motivate more of them to participate.

The stakeholders with a low degree of influence are mainly universities and research institutions, which contribute to sustainable spatial development by giving their knowledge and expertise on all spatial levels from the local and regional level (mostly by supporting pilot activities) to the national and even international level by exchanging the expertise via networking and activities in their common channels (conferences, scientific journals etc.). They play an important role in the Alpine Space program as Partners (at least in the scope of this analysis), but are maybe compared to local stakeholders somehow overrepresented.

The most important stakeholders – the key stakeholders for sustainable spatial development – are the 5 institutions with high influence at the local and regional spatial level.

Spatial level of stakeholders

National and local stakeholders are poorly represented, while most stakeholders represent the regional level – a level which includes state authorities from Bavaria. Most research institutes and universities as well as the few private enterprises included as partners in the program work at all spatial levels from the local level – often involved as pilot site – to international level, subject to the respective needs.

Interpretation

The analysis revealed notable imbalances in the group of French institutions that participated in AS projects of the two thematic fields.

First, participation is not equally distributed across the French alpine territory. Notable concentrations are situated in the Isère and Rhône departments, other especially southern territories lagging behind. This might have different reasons. Politically, the northern French Alps are more oriented towards the Alps (also in a transnational perspective) and also to the centres of gravity of the European economy (concept of the blue banana), whereas the Southern Alps are more oriented towards the Mediterranean Sea and the coast. Mountainous zones in the South are less populated, economically less prosperous and more marginal. In addition, economic activity and population create higher perceived pressures in the Northern French Alps, and might contribute to an advanced political and societal understanding of spatial development and natural resource management as contemporary challenges.

Second, although spatial development and spatial policies appear frequently as main fields of work of the considered stakeholders, the majority of them has low influence on alpine spatial development, especially on transnational scale. On regional and local scales, various stakeholders, e.g. the regional authorities and large intermunicipal syndicates, have a rather determining influence on spatial development in the Alps. Research institutes and universities appear frequently in the projects, but their influence may be seen as rather low, or indirect. Although the state and the regions create incentives and create the framework for regional and local development, the major operational level of spatial planning and development initiatives is situated on the local level (municipalities, intermunicipal syndicates, city regions, parks). Hence, if the AS wants to promote sustainable spatial development on the operational level, it would necessarily have to increase the share of local authorities without compromising the participation of higher decision-making levels.

Third, the group of French institutions is largely dominated by the public sphere. An increase in private enterprises might enlarge the scope, facilitate exchanges and increase performance of alpine (spatial) development. For instance, AS projects might reinforce the territorial anchorage of enterprises and inversely raise their awareness for alpine issues. Fourth, and according to the requirements of the operational programme, relatively few institutions participated from areas outside the AS. In the perspective of an enlarged and permeable AS network, it could be desirable to include human capital and knowledge from areas outside the programme area.

Last, and in more general terms, a major problem that became apparent throughout the analysis is related to constraints of stakeholders to participate in AS projects, notably in terms of human capital, expertise and financial resources. Project participants are generally larger institutions and structures, who are able to fulfil the project management requirements. Participation of smaller institutions, both from the public and private sphere, should be facilitated in order to diversify the AS network. In a nutshell, the analysis of French stakeholders has shown a sensitive lack operational partners on the ground across the AS projects, capable of implementing change towards sustainable spatial development. The table below summarizes these results in an action matrix, defining appropriate actions for different groups of stakeholders based on their participation and interest in alpine spatial development.

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