

A-RING – ALPINE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CAPACITY GOVERNANCE

NEWSLETTER 3, JUNE 2022



A-RING, AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT FINAL PUBLIC EVENT

Dear Readers, with the third edition of A-RING newsletter we are pleased to share with you the highlights of the project final public event, which was held at the University of Milan on 31st May 2022. This was a great occasion for project partners to present the results of the extensive work that has been conducted over the latest 3 years, while key stakeholders across the Alpine Space had the chance to discuss together about the past and future perspectives of (Research & Innovation) Smart Specialization Strategies (S3) and investigate the possibility to join efforts for the development of a **Shared R&I Agenda for the Alpine Space macro-region**.

Various representatives of the research sector, as well as of the business world and Public Authorities gathered to provide inputs and suggestions on **how to jointly valorise the regional S3, by introducing strategies and steps to boost the alignment between different R&I policy initiatives and institutional frameworks** to effectively address societal challenges and increase the uptake of strengths and assets in R&I.

The 2nd part of the newsletter is dedicated to a highlight of the latest events. Finally, you will find details about the partnership and the website and social media links, for learning in greater detail about ongoing and finalized activities, as well as about news and upcoming project events.

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SECTION 1 – HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROJECT FINAL EVENT

- **Introduction - R&I in the Alpine Space, an overview**

The first session of the event was opened by Prof. Giuseppe De Luca, Lead Partner of the A-RING project, who thanked all the project partners for their active commitment throughout the last 3 years, underlining how A-RING can be considered a successful example of cooperation at a transnational level that set the basis for long-lasting interactions and collaborations on R&I in the Alpine Space area. Mr. Roberto De Marco, as National Contact Point of the Interreg Alpine Space programme linked to these words to provide the audience with an overview of the programme, its area of influence, the main features, thus connecting the Alpine Space mission with the objectives & goals of A-RING project.

Following this intervention, UMIL's staff introduced the agenda of the day, clarifying that the final event was aimed at presenting the main results of the project, and all the methodologies/approaches that successfully triggered collaborations among different stakeholders, such as the Matchmaking Parleys, the Seed Labs, the Alpine S3 Lab and the policy piloting initiative. She explained that the project started from the identification of topics, R&I sectors already shared among Alpine Space regions, i.e. (i) **sustainability** (mostly Circular Economy), (ii) **digitalization** (Artificial Intelligence and digital infrastructure), (iii) **mobility**, and (iv) **social innovations**. All the A-RING activities were built and activated based on these shared topics.

- **Presentation of the Alpine R&I Blueprint**

The Slovenian Ministry of education, science and sport (MIZS) presented the highlights of the project outcome “**Blueprint for an Alpine Region Research & Innovation Agenda**”, a strategic document that defines a unique Alpine Region approach for the creation of a shared R&I Agenda, through prioritization of R&I topics for the activation of a transnational synergic and complementary collaboration. MIZS' staff went through the main elements of the Blueprint by presenting its rationale and scope, the most suitable approaches that can lead to a shared R&I agenda (SRIA) at Alpine region level, the steps and the stakeholders to involve in order to reach this goal. They illustrated also the key messages to be taken away from the A-RING project, i.e.

- The SRIA is just the start of a **long-lasting journey**
- **Political buy-in is key** as is early and equal engagement of all stakeholders (quadruple helix)
- **One step at a time** might be preferred in cases of multiple levels of governance addressed over very ambitious starts that need radical changes
- The **role of AG1 and EUSALP** in steering the process
- Either Fast Track or Deep Dive approach, the **first task is the joint vision building for gaining commitment and building trust** for the upcoming long-term collaborative policy and decision-making process
- The Deep Dive approach allows greater focus on deep transformation and whole of government/multilevel approaches for addressing green and digital transitions
- **SRIAs are inherently iterative** – therefore plan to revisit them periodically to finetune the approach and capitalize on the learning curve
- **SRIAs are as effective as their implementation** – **KPIs** help ensure that the process remains on track.

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- **Policy Action Required: on the way to innovative cooperation**

Together with Hochschule Konstanz (HTWG) and the University of Milan (UMIL), the University of Applied Sciences Kempten (HKe) presented the project results regarding **collaboration of Alpine stakeholders consolidated in a relation tool model as well as specific recommendations for Public Authorities to foster these cooperation and an Alpine S3-approach**, all concluding and outlined in the Alpine R&I Chart.

The involved partners started by presenting the third project output, i.e. the **Alpine R&I Chart**. They introduced its goals and hindering factors, methods and activities developed and piloted within the project, such as the Matchmaking Parleys, the Alpine Seed Labs and the Relation Tool Model. They also illustrated the suggested joint actions and services, i.e.:

- The **establishment of an alpine office, which organizes matchmaking events**, interacts with SHs to work on needed funding and present S3 to the local stakeholders
- The establishment of **support institutions across the entire Alpine area**, in order to provide information on funding opportunities, accompany in the process and create partnerships
- Development of **one platform** that brings all desired data
- **Adaptation of existing or development of new funding opportunities** to support Alpine regional collaboration (smaller consortia, longer timeframe, coordinated for transregional collaboration)

It was explained also what would be the basis **for building successful Alpine R&I Relations**, as regional characteristics show differences in RIS3 strategy building processes, i.e.:

- Tendency, smaller territory, less diverse potential stakeholders, higher geographical homogeneity, (more open process of involvement).
- Relations can be fostered on macro-regional level by **bottom-up support services** (like one-stop website and Alpine S3 Lab implementation process) and **top-down support services** (Glossary and Funding Guides)
- Relations can be fostered on regional level by **addressing the need for information readiness, information clarity, fostering contacts among different stakeholders**, and lowering perceived barriers for triple helix collaboration

The presentation continued with a brief overview on the **policy recommendation**, where steps for building cooperation and for newly designed/adapted funding schemes were outlined:

- **Establishment of a direct contact person for all national S3 matters and an alpine office to as neutral alpine-representatives to connect regional stakeholders throughout the alpine area**
- **Preparation of a matching platform that allows meeting new contacts based on a profile, including the S3 focus area, the institution type, previous projects and alike**
- **Preparation of Alpine-wide matchmaking events to support stakeholders in finding cross-regional triple helix partners**
- **Support mechanism for stakeholders in finding suitable funding programs through displaying all funding information at one place**
- **Adaptation of funding programs: Longer funding periods, Focus on smaller project consortia, Applicable for trans-regional collaboration**

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- **Round Table no. 1: Bringing Collaborative R&I “down to Earth” in the Alpine Space**

UMIL’s staff chaired the first Round Table, which aimed at showing how, from collaborative R&I efforts, it is possible to develop concrete companies, projects, product and services, really innovative and marketable.

In this framework, the session hosted five participants from different realities and with diverse experiences, namely:

- Ms. **Simona Rataj - University of Ljubljana Innovation Fund**, an organization affiliated to the University of Ljubljana, which supports knowledge transfer projects which lack any of the main steps needed to conclude a licensing/assignment contract, contract on joint development, or apply for a bigger tender to verify the concept (e.g. feasibility study, market research, working prototype, etc.).
- Mr. **Nicola Redi – Venture Factory**, which developed a unique methodology enabling universities to leverage their intellectual property and transform it in successful startup companies.
- Mr. **Umberto Bondi - USI Start-Up Centre**, supporting early-stage entrepreneurs to realise their ideas, foster entrepreneurship, and contribute to the overall economic and social growth in the Ticino region (Switzerland).
- Ms. **Francesca Cassaro – We Europe**, which supports businesses, associations and public bodies in the construction of a project proposal capable of connecting the territories to European subsidies.
- Prof. **Luca Solari – UniMi Foundation**, which draws on the skills and knowledge of 3,000 professors, researchers and technicians from 33 departments of the University, who can rely on excellent facilities and instruments in every field. The University can be a strategic partner in innovative projects and processes for companies and institutions using research as the key to improving their competitive position on the market. Leveraging on UniMi interdisciplinary skills, the Foundation can serve a wide range of industrial sectors, from pharmaceuticals to cosmetics, from agribusiness to materials, providing each company with a tailored approach to innovation.

- Alpine R&I Policy Brief for the Alpine Space

AREA presented the second main output of the project, which should be conceived as **a roadmap with recommendations on policy options & collaborative steps for national, regional and local policy-makers and other stakeholders interested in formulating and influencing a common S3**, based on a shared approach between Public Authorities tested on specific strategic R&I topics. The partner illustrated the aims, the structure of the document, and the main recommendations that can be drawn based on Partners' work within A-RING:

- **Bottom-up approach**, in promoting R&I collaborations and the need for incentives and mechanisms to involve relevant stakeholders
- **Identification of common priorities**. The results of the A-RING S3 Lab make it clear that the identification of common priorities is the result of a process requiring the active involvement of interested stakeholders and should reach a meaningful granularity
- When considering information sharing, the key issue is not to try to design a new platform, but **to effectively use the many platforms that already exist** at EU, national and regional level
- The critical resources for information sharing are not the platforms for information retrieval but the competences in: 1) understanding the information needs of stakeholders; 2) collecting the information from available sources; 3) analysing data according to the stakeholders' aims
- The experience of the A-RING partners in implementing matchmaking parleys and see labs, point out to the importance of Public Authorities commitment in these mechanisms. Indeed, although they are addressed to interested stakeholders, political will is essential in creating a favouring and welcoming ground and ensuring continuity for the collaboration efforts among the various stakeholders.

Main recommendations upon the Alpine S3 lab, which can be used as a tool to promote R&I collaborations, are:

- The Lab does not require the set-up of the new organizations or legal entities (such as consortia, associations, etc.)
- The Lab is set-up for a specific time period, according to the aims of the collaboration projects
- The Lab relies on the involvement of PAs and stakeholders interested in a specific topic which are expected to contribute to the organization of the Lab and provide the necessary resources to carry-on its activities
- The Lab involves the EUSALP AG1 leader and members: this is important to validate the Lab, support the interested members in the organization of the lab and provide guidance about its activities.

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- **R&I Policy Live Scenarios in the Alpine Space**

Wirtschaftsagentur Burgenland (WAB) presented the results of the **A-RING policy piloting activity on common R&I topics** through a shared approach and common actions tailored on the territorial context. The partner started by illustrating to the audience the methodology and timing of the Alpine S3 Lab, the inputs collected from previous project activities, the R&I governance subjects of mutual interest, and the testing methodology. He provided an overview of the **Policy Pilot Live Scenario and of the three different cases applied in Lombardy Region (Italy), Slovenia and Burgenland (Austria)**.

Afterwards, WAB went into the depth in the presentation of Burgenland exercise, the Internationalization Platform, i.e. a quarterly workshop with key R&I stakeholders in Burgenland, and counterparts from other territories, to discuss cutting-edge R&D issues on specific thematic topics, chosen for the focus area of the meeting.

WAB highlighted that, when reflecting on the full methodology implemented by the three Public Administrations involved, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- All three implemented Strategic Actions to develop their regional strategies on key topics Digitalization, Sustainability (eg. Circular Economy) and Smart Mobility
- All three utilized techniques to help bridge across the full ecosystem and enhancing the inclusion of the quadruple helix and promoting Stakeholder Engagement
- Governing of S3/RIS3 processes was uniquely different across the observed territories. The specific approach of preparing S3 for the new programming period brought certain opportunities and barriers for establishing transnational collaboration. Techniques and Strategic Support to help bridge across more developed and less developed R&I strategy landscapes should be prioritised
- It is key to find areas of collaboration where each territory can extend its competitive edge, in complementary ways with connected territories. Mutual competitive advantage is key to promoting cross-territory coordination on sustainable, smart specialisation strategies (S4), and can only be achieved through knowledge and idea sharing, and structured dialogue between territories.
- For Example, from the perspective of the involved territories, sector coupling, specifically where mobility systems and energy systems collide, for example through the utilisation of e-vehicles as a storage tool to foster more effective management of renewable energy production. This is a unique topic which sits at the intersection of mobility, sustainability and digitalisation, and plays on territorial strengths of all involved players.

- **Round Table no. 2: Public Authorities and R&I in the Alpine Space**

Mr. Stefano Sala (UMIL) chaired the second round table, which focused on the **central role of Public Authorities in fostering R&I initiatives and collaborations**. He explained how the A-RING project is aimed at giving the Public Authorities key instruments for the creation of shared R&I strategy and policies. Based on this, he asked to the Round Table participants (Ms. **Annalisa Viezzoli**, Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region & Mr. **Harald Ladich**, Wirtschaftagentur Burgenland) to briefly explain how transnational cooperation can effectively improve the work done by the single regions in developing their own S3 or S4, and if a transnational approach that leads to the development of a joint R&I agenda could represent an added value, able to facilitate & promote R&I at a wider level.

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SECTION 2 – A-RING LATEST EVENTS

➤ A-RING Caravan Event - Germany: 14th May 2022

Held by HTWG during the “**Lange Nacht der Wissenschaften**” in **Konstanz** on **14th May**, the IST Institute presented the A-RING project, showed its key results, and gave the audience the possibility to ask questions and further information on the project.

➤ A-RING Caravan Event - Austria: 20th May & 30th May 2022

FHV organized the Austrian A-RING Caravan during two well-known events in Austria, namely:

- **Industry 4.0 Summit – Wien, 30th May 2022**
- **The Long Night of Research, Austria & Vorarlberg – 20th May 2022**

➤ A-RING Caravan Event – France: 9th June 2022

Organized by Polymeris on **9th June** in a virtual mode, the French A-RING Caravan reflected on the results of the A-RING project and **on the importance of the political support to the strategic documents** developed within the project.

➤ A-RING Caravan Event – Italy:

On **27th June**, AREA organized an online session to present **key A-RING achievements** and **the role of digitalization in the innovation policies** for the Alpine area.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, WE INVITE YOU TO VISIT PROJECT WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

A-RING website: <https://www.alpine-space.org/projects/a-ring/en/home>

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/a-ring-interreg-alpine-space-49836a1b8

Twitter: [@RingAlpine](https://twitter.com/RingAlpine)

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THE A-RING CONSORTIUM AND PROJECT DETAILS

Project partners	Country
University of Milan	Italy
Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences	Austria
Ministry of Education, Science and Sport	Slovenia
University of Ljubljana (Faculty of Public Administration)	Slovenia
Hochschule Kempten University of Applied Sciences	Germany
Hochschule Konstanz University of Applied Sciences	Germany
Wirtschaftsagentur Burgenland GmbH	Austria
Industrial enterprises Association of Belluno Province	Italy
Polymeris, French competitiveness cluster for rubbers, plastics and composites industry	France
USI Università della Svizzera Italiana	Switzerland
Area Science Park	Italy

PROJECT DETAILS

Funding

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ERDF co-financing: 1.147.996 EUR

Lead Partner

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University of Milan (UMIL)

Duration

Project start date: 01/10/2019

Project end date: 30/06/2022

Communication support

ALOT s.r.l.

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PRIVACY UPDATE - GENERAL PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR).

We are updating our mailing list in accordance with the new data protection regulations which come into force on 25 May 2018 in compliance with the Alpine Space Programme website legal notice (<https://www.alpine-space.eu/legal-notice>). Please note that we have never given our list to anyone, marketing operator or other, and that the data in our possession may contain only name, organization, e-mail address and sometimes also phone number, used only to address updates to you regarding information and news and / or events and invitations. If you want to stay in touch with us and be updated on various initiatives, you do not need to do anything, but if you do not want to receive our information, you can send an e-mail reply simply indicating "no thanks" in the subject, and your e-mail address will be deleted from our mailing list. We thank you for your understanding and cooperation and we cordially greet you. This publication only reflects the author's views and that the programme authorities are not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

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