

Institut für Politikwissenschaft

Univ. Prof. Dr. Andreas Maurer, Dipl.Pol., D.E.E.A.
Professor für Politikwissenschaft und Europäische Integration
Jean Monnet Chair for Political Science and European Integration
andreas.maurer@uibk.ac.at – www.icer.at



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Melanie Plangger/Andreas Maurer

Activating good governance and citizen engagement in the EUSALP **The involvement of non-state actors in the EU macro-regional strategy for the Alpine region**

Within the EU, territorial, trans-national and trans-regional cooperation create distinct opportunities for subnational, regional and local authorities, and civil society. Empirical evidence shows that trans-national and -regional instruments enable regional authorities and civil society to tackle functional problems, raise means for joint action, and strengthen their position in the national, regional and European sphere. At the same time, most analysis overlook an important dimension of the relationship between cross-border opportunities and regional actors: Opportunities to engage in policy-making may not emerge automatically, but are actively pursued, shaped and counter-acted. In this paper, we shift the attention to the emergence of regional and trans-regional civil society as subjects of EU territorial cooperation. We draw on neo-institutionalist, multi-level governance and, strategic-relational approaches and the concept of multi-spatial meta-governance. This approach allows examining the role of regional and trans-regional actors between both, strategically pursued aims and constraining and empowering structures. Building on this concept, we start from the assumption that strategies like EUSALP have the potential to offer added value for more effective, efficient and democratic governance. In operational terms, our objective is to identify and propose means for stimulating the joint analysis and evaluation of possible channels, sender-addressee-relations and conditions of voice and influence as well as of the effective influence of sub- and trans-national levels of action via formal and informal mechanisms and procedures.

We will look into major indicators to synthesize the fabric (institutions, rules, routines) and modes (opportunity structures for actors, interaction and processes) of governance in the EUSALP. Governance comprises complex mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which institutions, citizens and groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences, and exercise their legal rights and obligations. In this context, good governance refers to action that can be qualified as participatory, transparent and accountable. Measuring good governance also relates to identifying institutions, inter-institutional routings and regulatory processes as effective and equitable. Good governance assures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of minorities – the poorest or the most vulnerable - are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources. The concept of governance includes the state, but transcends it by taking in the private sector and civil society. The state creates a conducive political and legal environment. The private sector generates jobs and income. The civil society facilitates political and social interaction – mobilizing groups to participate in economic, social and political activities. Because each has its weaknesses and strengths, a major objective of supporting good governance is to promote constructive interaction among all three.

According to the Governance Working Group of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (1996), “governance refers to the process whereby elements in society wield power and authority, and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life, and economic and social development. Gov-

ernance is a broader notion than government. Governance involves interaction between these formal institutions and those of civil society." Governance is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken.

The progress of EUSALP depends in no small measure on the quality of its governance. While a democratic government may lay the foundation for good governance, a vigilant and active citizenry is essential to its sustenance. Nowhere is this need more evident than in the management of public goods and services for which citizens depend largely on their governments. The quality of governance is enhanced when government as a whole and public agencies in particular become open to new ideas and responsive to citizens. Responsiveness in turn is improved when citizens are well informed and collectively seek better performance from these agencies. Overall, we identify three distinct dimensions of inter-national and trans-regional governance:

- the forms of political regime;
- the processes by which authority is exercised in the management of the EUSALP's economic and social resources; and
- the capacity of executive institutions (governments, governmental agencies) to design, formulate, and implement policies and discharge functions.

The criteria that constitute good governance can then be drawn from these three dimensions, and cover:

- legitimacy of executive action (degree of "democratization"),
- accountability of political and official elements of government (transparency of decision-making, accountability mechanisms, both ex-ante and ex-post),
- competence of governments to formulate policies and deliver services,
- respect for civil rights and rule of law (individual and group rights, framework for economic and social activity, participation, etc).

The involvement of non-state or non-institutional actors ranks high among the priorities of stakeholders in the EU macro-regional strategy for the Alpine region (EUSALP). The action plan mentions that the "[p]rivate sector, the business community and people living in the Region should be actively associated to ensure engagement and ownership of the Strategy" (European Commission, 2015a: 51-52). In its conclusions on the implementation of macro-regional strategies, the Council of the EU (2017: 4) calls the participating countries and regions "to mobilize regions, cities, agencies and institutions such as universities, private businesses and civil society, encouraging them to network, cooperate and participate in the implementation and development of macro-regional strategies". While there exists a consensus on the desirability of citizen involvement and active engagement in the EUSALP's policy processes, its concrete operationalization remains an unfulfilled promise.

During the phase of the elaboration of the strategy, non-state actors were involved in three ways. First, organized civil society could partially contribute inputs in technical subgroups at the early, informal stages of the proposal initiation phase. Second, the European Commission conducted an extensive public consultation process before formulating its proposal for the strategy. This process used an online questionnaire and stakeholder conferences to gather opinions (European Commission, 2014). Third, national and regional public authorities informed and involved non-state actors at the national and regional level during the negotiation phase of the strategy. They launched diverse mechanisms of consultation and dialogue within their constituencies.

With the formal launch of the strategy in January 2016, the question of how to involve a wider range of stakeholders, organized civil society and NGOs active in the EUSALP area in implementing the strategy became important. To date, involvement draws especially on a stakeholder platform that represents a forum for information and discussion. In addition to the stakeholder platform, communication tools like the EUSALP website provide the interface between the EUSALP's levels of governance and citizens on the ground.

While these elements are valuable, a broader, activating mobilization of non-state actors has not yet been reached. However, the involvement of non-state actors appears crucial for the success, input-legitimacy and sustainability of macro-regional cooperation. The participation of a wide range of actors with diverse backgrounds is likely to improve the quality of decisions, to increase innovation and creativity, to generate unconventional ideas and to create lasting ownership among the citizenry. The implementation of projects and policies can be facilitated if the “end-users” - those who implement or use policy outcomes at the ground - participate from early on. Given the multi-level and –actor nature of the EUSALP process, citizen involvement can thus increase the legitimacy of transnational and transregional cooperation through making it more responsive to actual needs, ideas, fears and demands at the ground. Finally, it contributes to sustainable, participatory governance as it fosters mutual trust, learning processes and the development of Alpine identity within the transnational set-ups of the EU and EFTA.

Clearly, EUSALP offers practical benefits to non-state actors. As a relatively new opportunity structure for steering policy process at and between various levels of governance, it provides for innovative approaches in policy-making that brings together actors, resources, competences, routines, and existing regimes across levels and sectoral as well as functional boundaries in the Alpine space. Therefore, EUSALP offers a framework for the development of a common understanding, joint identification of common or interrelated challenges, innovative projects, cross-functional proliferation of instruments, synergies in problem-solving, and far-reaching cross-boundary solutions. Moreover, EUSALP can provide an innovative format for transnational cooperation between non-state actors. While environmental organizations are already mobilized at a transnational level, EUSALP could provide an impetus for Alpine collaboration among economic, social or cultural actors. New projects and partnerships could follow, which might contribute to institutional learning beyond the geographical scope of EUSALP. Therefore, governmental and non-governmental actors can profit greatly from opening macro-regional cooperation to a diversity of actors. The following section identifies the most important non-state groups that should be addressed.

1. Who to involve?

To facilitate involvement and engagement, it is important to know the target group of involving strategies. The spectrum of non-state actors in the Alpine space is complex. For the Committee of the Regions (2014) non-state actors are defined as “industry associations, chambers of commerce, universities and other economic and social bodies in the participating areas”. The European Parliament (2016) refers to “economic and social partners and organisations representing civil society”. The EUSALP action plan calls to involve the “private sector, the business community and people living in the region” (European Commission, 2015a: 51-52), while the Council of the EU (2017: 4) refers to “regions, cities, agencies and institutions such as universities, private businesses and civil society”. Views of the stakeholders in the Alpine region themselves, summarized in the report on the public consultation process (European Commission, 2014: 4), refer to “representatives from regions, NGOs, mayors, regional councils and communities, NGO representatives, associations, institutions, provinces, municipalities, citizens’ representatives in general, but also citizens themselves”. Overall thus, non-state actors may encompass all collective actors that are independent of the state organisations.¹

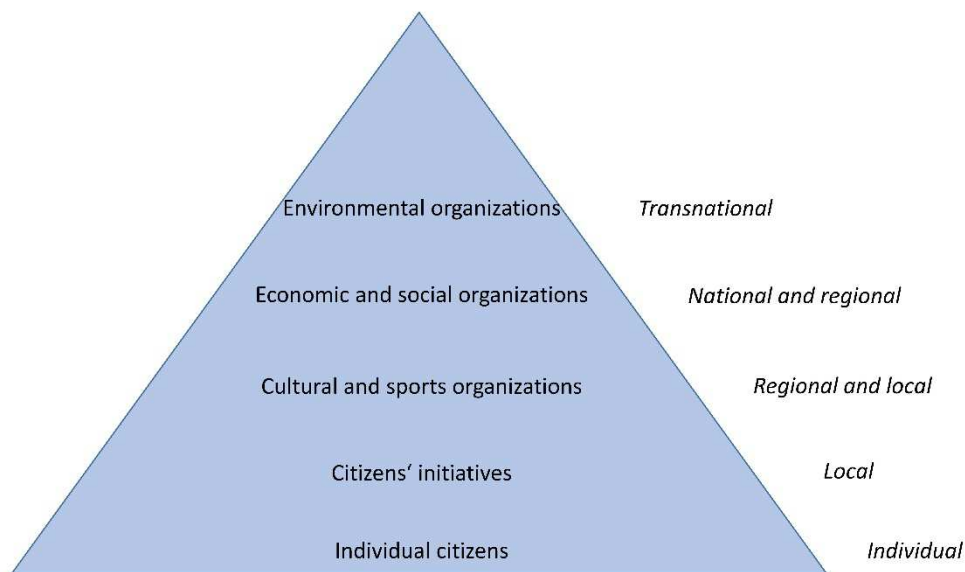
¹ Defined from a political sociological point of view, the concept of civil society describes a particular type of society, which is coined by “the attitudinal capability of its members, that is, citizens, to actively organize themselves to pursue certain (common) goals, within a framework of specific formal institutions. In detailed definitions, depending on particular research goals, civil society may therefore be defined in either attitudinal or institutional terms” (Wnuk-Lipinski and Bukowska 2011). With regard to the political system of the EU, the definition of civil society oscillates between three basic concepts. One school defines civil society as an actor whose democratic role is understood as a controlling counterpart in relation to formal governmental power. For a second conceptualization, civil society is a constituent element and integrated player in political processes. A third school of thought defines civil society as constituted by a communitarian concept of civility in contrast to uncivil social order, or in a procedural understanding of organized interests that are woven into the lifeworld of social entities. Linking these three concepts in relation to participation and participatory governance, “the notion of civic participation is rooted in the normative assumption that the efficiency of any economic, management, and other social system as well as the legitimacy of democratic political systems depends on the involvement and participation of the public and does not simply derive from the output dispensed by the system” (Matonyte 2011).

Also in the macro-regional setting of EUSALP the EU Commission's working definition of NGOs (EC 2000) remains a valid point of departure for identifying those actors, that might be addressed in processes aimed at engaging non-state actors in a systematic way. Accordingly, the term NGO refers to a range of organisations that normally share the following characteristics:

- NGOs are not created to generate personal profit. Although they may have paid employees and engage in revenue-generating activities they do not distribute profits or surpluses to members or management;
- NGOs are voluntary. They are formed voluntarily and there is usually an element of voluntary participation in the organisation;
- NGOs are distinguished from informal or ad hoc groups by having some degree of formal or institutional existence. Usually, NGOs have formal statutes or other governing document setting out their mission, objectives and scope. They are accountable to their members and donors;
- NGOs are independent, in particular of government and other public authorities and of political parties or commercial organisations;
- NGOs are not self-serving in aims and related values. Their aim is to act in the public arena at large, on concerns and issues related to the well being of people, specific groups of people or society as a whole. They are not pursuing the commercial or professional interests of their members.

These actors can be connected – and thereby actively steered, orchestrated or even controlled - through common aims and interests and thus form part of organized civil society. The diversity of non-state actors, their constitutions, inbuilt logics and mindsets regarding democratic decision-making, respect of minority positions, and the respect of the rule of law, makes involvement strategies challenging. The Alpine space encompasses a particularly rich landscape of non-state actors. A strong awareness for environmental concerns and the creation of the Alpine Convention have facilitated the emergence of trans-national and trans-regional organizations and cross-border linkages between environmental organizations. The International Commission for the Protection of the Alpes (CIPRA) may be the most remarkable example of transnational organized civil society. At the same time, topographic characteristics, late processes of nation-state building and border shifts led to the prevalence of distinct ethno-cultural cleavages. As a consequence, the Alpine space has a rich landscape of cultural organizations that contribute to local and regional identity-building. Finally, the Alpine space encompasses states with a strong orientation towards consensus or consociational democracy. States like Switzerland and Austria institutionalize the collaboration with economic and social groups to build a broad consensus among societal fractions, while Italy and France invite socio-economic, collective actors to debate their views within distinct, institutionalized arenas that shall directly address the governmental institutions (France: Conseil économique, social et environnemental; Italy: Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro). What follows is a distinct landscape of organizations at the transnational, the national, the regional and the local levels of governance. Academic institutions add to this diversity; they are typically organized on a national or regional level, but also have strong transnational linkages. At a micro level, citizens' initiatives that form around certain places or specific challenges build a further element of the non-state mosaic. Finally, citizen involvement also concerns individual, not organized citizens who live and work in the Alpine region. Figure 1 illustrates the diversity of the organized and non-organized non-state sector.

Figure 1. Non-state actors in the Alpine space



2. How to involve?

The involvement of non-state actors in governance processes can be conceptualized along three models.

- A first model is top-down and focuses on responsibility of government vis-à-vis the governed. It emphasizes the role of public authorities as the only legitimate representatives of the – aggregated – wills, fears, ideas, proposals of the citizens. In this perspective, public authorities have the responsibility to take decisions in the name, and on behalf of the citizens who elected them. Accordingly, the primary focus lies on mechanisms that hold public authorities accountable to their constituencies. *Information and access to documents* about activities and decisions appears most important.
- A second model is bottom-up and highlights legitimacy of collective problem-solving. It stresses that the legitimacy of public action depends on the continuous responsiveness of decisions and decision-makers to local needs and demands. The implementation on the ground also demands that people can identify with what is carried out. Therefore, public authorities should take up input by non-state actors – opinions, proposals, ideas – and an early stage of the policy process and aggregate them. They should provide for flexible adjustments to changing demands and preferences. Consequently, the main focus lies on mechanisms that allow for the submission of opinions and constant feedback. Regular *consultation and transparency* are deemed crucial.
- A third model is horizontal and emphasizes innovation through participation. It stresses that innovative solutions emerge in a competition of ideas. Therefore, governance should allow for non-discriminatory deliberation among equal participants. A wide range of actors should be positioned to raise ideas and participate in implementing them. In this sense, cooperation also encourages learning processes, the awareness of interdependency and the building of mutual trust. Cooperation can be anchored within the public and thereby gain sustainability, for example through the generation of a common identity. Consequently, the emphasis lies on mechanisms that facilitate equal deliberation and dialogue among a wide range of actors. Equal *collaboration* in producing decisions, output and outcomes is considered most relevant.

Ideally, good governance in multi-level and –actor frameworks should combine all three concepts. Only a combination of all three mechanisms ensures that policy outcomes fulfill needs of responsibility, legitimacy and innovation. Not all stages of the governance process should involve all actors. Rather, it is equally im-

portant to establish smaller contexts in which only those in charge of decision-making take part, and to provide more open, participatory formats in which a wide range of interests can be raised. Therefore, involvement should not be seen as a punctual event, but as a constant process that connects information, consultation and collaboration recursively.

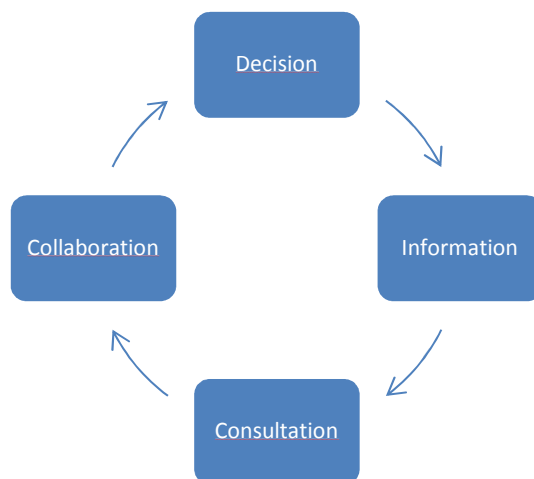


Figure 2. Governance as an interaction between decisions, information, consultation and collaboration

Trans-national and trans-regional cooperation should not limit itself to consider different formats of involvement, but might also take into account that different, opposing fractions of society compete for involvement. The Alpine space is divided into distinct cleavages that shape relationships and interactions. It consists of four main language (DE, FR, IT, SLO) and various smaller language communities. Moreover, citizens in rural areas with low population density may have other concerns than inhabitants of cities and metropolises. At the same time, also the core mountainous area and the peri-alpine area both face specific challenges and opportunities. Involvement needs to balance these cleavages to provide for a comprehensive “picture” of needs, views, ideas and demands in the Alpine area. Therefore, the following sections elaborate more specifically on the three mechanisms of information, consultation and collaboration that aim at a broad anchoring of trans-national and trans-regional cooperation.

3.1. Information and access to information

Information is important to increase political accountability and trust in governance. The scope of information is also a precondition for further consultation and collaboration. Only actors who are informed about decisions, actions and projects can contribute their ideas, opinions and workforce. At the same time, it is particularly difficult to reach different parts of society, especially if they are not already active in Alpine and cross-border cooperation.

The Eurobarometer survey on citizens’ awareness and perceptions of EU regional policy (European Commission, 2015b), conducted and published in 2015, shows that knowledge on macro-regional strategies in the Baltic, the Danube and the Adriatic and Ionian region is low. While 32 % of the respondents in the Baltic Sea region were aware of the Baltic Sea strategy, only 22 % of the respondents in the Danube region and 28 % of the respondents in the Adriatic and Ionian Sea region expressed familiarity with the EU strategy. Even more, a comparison between the surveys conducted in 2015 and 2013 (European Commission, 2013) demonstrates that information decreased over time. The surveys also identify groups that are least likely to be reached by information about macro-regional strategies. Female respondents, young citizens, citizens with a low degree of education and respondents who live in rural areas are least aware of macro-regional strategies. While the EU-SALP did not form part of the surveys, similar results can be expected in the Alpine region.

Consequently, information efforts should target groups according to their needs, their practice and routines to gather information specifically. Moreover, the EUSALP strategy could make use of creative and unconventional ways to submit information. It is also important to raise awareness as early as possible to involve citizens at the early stages of policy-planning and -making.

In general, information in the EUSALP has been improved with the communication strategy, and the website with an online knowledge sharing platform, has been set up. However, there are subsites of the website that could be easily improved by uploading relevant information about the EUSALP activities. Note in this regard that the site on “press releases” contained only one release on 16 May 2017: <https://www.alpine-region.eu/press-releases>. The governmental participants of the EUSALP should make information a steady concern of their activities. Inviting citizens and non-state actors to actively participate in EUSALP policy processes could be facilitated by replicating the EUSBSR’s funding portal, the EUSBSR’s “Beginners Guide”, or the EUSDRS’s and the EUSAIR’s entry sites with initial information according to an ongoing calendar. Mobilization appears difficult if only results are communicated. Therefore, the decision-making bodies and the action groups should constantly inform about policy planning, upcoming initiatives, relevant input from third parties.. The General Assembly and the Executive Board could communicate decisions, discussions and options through the homepage and press releases. Moreover, all action groups could share results and steps of their work through the online platform and inform about ongoing or finished projects.

While the website is an important information tool, it only addresses citizens and organizations that are familiarized to digital information and already know about the EUSALP. Therefore, it is important to also target classic news media (radio, TV, newspapers...). The fragmented Alpine public sphere demands information that is not only submitted through national media, but also through regional and local media outlets. Local newspapers have a particular importance in many parts of the Alpine space and can provide important multipliers.

Events are a further useful opportunity to spread information in a direct way. A special opportunity are meetings of the General Assembly that gather politicians from all over the Alpine arc. They demonstrate political commitment and can increase the public visibility of the macro-regional strategy. Therefore, they could be coupled with public events (EUSALP parliamentary assembly meeting – PARLALPIN [see the Baltic Assembly or the Arctic parliamentary forum], EUSALP Economic, Social and Environmental Committee meetings [ALPESEC], following the established frameworks of the EESC, Italian, French, or Belgian committees that bring together social partners and other stakeholders), youth parliaments, local community councilors meetings (based on the example of the Austrian “EU Gemeinderäte”) and trans-alpine AGORA meetings [ALPAGORA], where citizens could freely debate on recent input of their representatives. Events could also provide sector-specific panels in which specialized for non-state actors can collect information about concrete actions and projects in their field of expertise.

Idea

EUSALP local councillors:

Europe starts at the local level. The EU local councillors are an Austrian model for the engaging citizens and local communities at their most familiar level. Local councillors stay in touch with the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, receiving information about ongoing developments in Europe. Applied to EUSALP, local councillors could be formed as direct interface between the citizenry, organised civil society organisations and the EUSALP’s governmental institutions.

At the same time, events should specifically target groups that are difficult to reach. Special formats for a young audience are advisable [Youth parliament – both real and virtual]. They could be coupled with the existing youth parliament of the Alpine Convention. Information could also be provided in schools, at universities, and civic education universities (“Volkshochschulen”). For example, EUSALP could support school projects on Alpine cooperation or Alpine research conferences with paper calls for undergraduate students. These events could be planned in close collaboration with action group 1.

Events could also address a rural public. Therefore, they should not just be organized in large cities, but also in rural areas. Excursions and site tours to cross-border Alpine projects, culinary events, Alpine trail runs or cross-border hiking days could be easily organized in rural areas and inform about macro-regional actions. In the field of information, EUSALP can also cooperate with existing civil society structures. For example, CIPRA organizes every year an AlpWeek in which it raises awareness for subjects of Alpine relevance.

Finally, information also requires that people get interested in the macro-regional strategy and are willing to invest in information. Therefore, special attention should be paid to projects and outcomes that do not just affect public authorities, but touch the everyday lives of citizens (e.g. cross-border transport connections or training programs). Moreover, communication should strongly emphasize solutions and projects that emerged in the framework of the EUSALP or were supported by it (e.g. through placing the EUSALP logo on a cross-border public transport ticket, cross-border trains or busses).

Best practice from EUSALP

The action groups 1 (“To develop an effective research and innovative ecosystem”) and 4 (“To promote inter-modality and interoperability in passenger and freight transport”) share *information on their meetings, subgroups or their agenda* on the EUSALP website.

Best practice from outside

The project 3Land that connects the German cities Huningue and Weil, the Swiss canton of Basel, the Communauté de Communes des Trois Frontières and the French Département du Haut Rhin organized a *travelling exhibition* to provide information on joint spatial planning efforts.

Website: <http://3-land.net/>

3.2. Consultation – the management of information

Consultation builds on information and aims at gathering ideas, demands and opinions. While the European Commission has conducted an extensive consultation procedure in the elaboration of the strategy, it is important that non-state actors’ input is taken up regularly and in a transparent manner. The macro-regional strategy is a flexible setting that can respond to new and changing demands. Therefore, EUSALP could provide mechanisms, procedures and processes that allow non-state actors to provide their input and to comment regularly on policy-planning, decisions, project ideas and discussion papers. The macro-regional strategy could allow for a regular consultation of established stakeholders as well as of civil society organisations on planned and initiated decisions and related work progress. The primary instruments of non-state actors’ consultation are open consultation platforms, surveys, which can be conducted online, via phone, by mail or in personal, face-to-face interaction. Online consultations are an efficient means and provide easy access, but typically only mobilize actors that are already aware of EUSALP. Therefore, it is important to promote consultations and generate their public accessibility, also with the help of local news media and kick-off events. Moreover, project specific or AG specific AGORA meetings should provide survey forms with which participants can submit specific ideas and opinions. A central EUSALP portal and e-mail address that allows citizens to permanently submit their demands could be a further means to provide for constant feedback.

While large conferences are especially useful to gather opinions of organized civil society, consultation should also use smaller formats in which individual citizens can raise their demands. Local, regional representatives or EUSALP points of contact (Citizen ambassadors) could meet with citizens in citizens' meetings and discuss their views of needs and problems. As rural areas should be targeted specifically, local community councilors could play a key role in providing a forum for local consultation.

Finally, also expert studies provide an instrument of consultation. Most action groups foresee the incorporation of external expertise. This allows connecting to a broad range of context-specific knowledge outside of public administration.

Key problems of consultation are the relationship between inputs and outputs and the representativeness of raised demands. The measurement of the impact of contributions remains a challenge. Participants will be particularly motivated to contribute if they see (or perceive) that their inputs are taken up. Citizens who feel that their engagement makes no difference can lose trust and perceive the EUSALP and participating institutions negatively (Istituto di Sociologia Internazionale, 2015: 44). Therefore, it is important to communicate the consultation results and demonstrate how they relate to the governmental inputs. The responsiveness to demands raised by citizens and organized civil society should become one indicator for the success of the macro-regional strategy. In practical terms, EUSALP consultation processes could thus be organised according to the procedural terms of the EU's scoreboard exercises. Here, participant inputs in relation to defined objectives are clearly visualized and commented in relation to the implementation or non-implementation of articulated input. In this way, scoreboards help to create ownership and legitimize the (partial) translation of input into political practice.

The diversity of the non-state sector also implies that it is difficult to define representatives who speak for civil society or the citizens. Consequently, it is important that representatives of organizations regularly coordinate with their members on the ground. EUSALP should combine institutionalized formats that mobilize representatives with regular platforms that are open to everybody (Istituto di Sociologia Internazionale, 2015: 44).

Best practice from EUSALP

The French national government has established a *network* that aims at gathering opinions and ideas for the french participation in the action groups. The network should regularly gather actors from different administrative bodies and non-state sectors. It aims at a constant interaction between action group participants and the different actors working in the Alpine region.

Action Group 3 ("To improve the adequacy of labour market, education and training in strategic sectors") organizes *consultative meetings* in all Alpine countries. While these meetings are foreseen to gather opinions from public authorities, a similar format could collect ideas from non-state actors across the Alpine arc.

Best practice from outside

The *Danube Civil Society Forum* exists since 2011 and forms part of the EU macro-regional strategy for the Danube region. It is a self-organized and independent structure that gathers 112 non-state actors from the Danube region. The Forum has set up four action groups that are built along the four pillars of the macro-regional strategy. They elaborate opinions and proposals for the macro-regional strategy and coordinate the consultation of the non-state sector. An annual participation day provides a forum for networking. At the participation day, citizens are encouraged to collect viewpoints as citizens' journalists.

Website: <http://dcsf.danubestrategy.eu/>

Idea

Public Participation Assistant

An online assistant for public participation, explaining the process, the possibilities, giving specifically information about municipalities and about relevant projects.

Public Participation Assistant:

To create an online assistant for public participation, explaining the process and stage reached, the possibilities for engagement, giving specific information about connecting institutions and about relevant projects. To organize e.g. local land-use planning future-oriented and sustainable, it would be a logic consequence to integrate citizens in the planning of the developments of the municipalities, regions... Through this involvement and participation, more acceptance on the part of the citizens could be generated. The public participation assistant would stay as an online platform, which gives information and responses on specific questions. See e.g. <http://www.raumordnung-noe.at/index.php?id=356>; <http://www.raumordnung-noe.at/index.php?id=8>

3.3. Collaboration

Collaboration draws on information and consultation and searches for innovative and creative ideas. It demands for discussions on an equal basis, horizontal interconnections between state and non-state actors and the possibility for the latter to raise unconventional ideas and opinions. Collaboration can proceed in non-institutionalized and institutionalized forms.

Easily accessible forms of collaboration are interactive online discussion platforms. The EUSALP website could provide a tool that allows for open discussion of actual challenges. The most important fora for collaboration are the action groups. While many of them do not incorporate non-state actors on a regular basis, they could be accompanied by more open formats in which project ideas and definitions can be discussed on an equal basis. The action groups could organize participatory seminars, open days and workshops in which a wide range of actors can participate. This also facilitates the finding of project partners, the implementation on the ground and the coordination with ongoing projects and activities in the Alpine space. First efforts have already been taken, for example with the Action Group Forum hosted by the Bavarian EUSALP Presidency, the Mediterranean Coast and Macroregional Strategies Week hosted by the Slovenian EUSALP Presidency, the Meet & Match Forum in Milano or stakeholder conferences and seminars organized by individual action groups. Further formats for discussion and a wider opening of participation should be developed.

Institutionalized forms can involve permanent committees and advisory boards that generate ideas and proposals. Based on the existing structures of consultative Economic, Social and Environmental Councils/Committees in France, Italy and Austria, EUSALP could form the basis for the creation of a transalpine EUSALP Economic, Social and Environmental Committee meetings [ALPESEC] to gather structured, consultative input by social partners and other institutions representing the organized civil society. A strong connection to decision-making produces sustainable incentives for collaboration and ensures that innovative ideas find their way into the macro-regional strategy. As within the Baltic parliamentary assembly, EUSALP citizens' representatives could be involved more intensively and – with regard to the EUSALP's key objectives – on a case-by-case basis in the intergovernmental decision-making structures. Parliamentarians as representatives of the public should receive more opportunities for transnational discussion. While the

group “Friends of the EUSALP” already gathers parliamentarians within the European Parliament, structured discussions between local, regional and national parliamentarians could further enhance collaboration among representatives.

The most difficult challenge at the stage of collaboration is lasting, sustainable capacity-building. The participation in discussions and committees requires not just basic knowledge on the EUSALP, but also resources to contribute substantial inputs, raise input in a common language, travel to the different meetings or participate in projects. Therefore, capacity-building beyond inter-administrative cooperation is important. The strategy for the Baltic sea region has a dedicated horizontal action for capacity building that aims at enhancing the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. The horizontal action offers seminars, practical training and coaching to improve knowledge, competencies and leadership capabilities. Based on the EUSBSR’s experience, EUSALP could create similar offers to balance the differential ability of non-state actors to participate at a transnational level. These offers should especially target organizations at a local and regional level and in rural areas, but also individual citizens interested in participating in a macro-regional framework.

Best practice from EUSALP

The *Austrian national coordination platform* gathers not just actors from different administrative bodies and levels, but also economic, social and environmental organizations. It informs about ongoing activities and collects opinions and viewpoints, but also encourages the active discussion of developments in the macro-regional strategy.

Best practice from outside

The *Baltic Sea NGO Network* exists since 2003. It comprises organizations from all states in the region and aims at supporting and strengthening civil society. In the EU macro-regional strategy for the Baltic Sea region, the NGO Network does not just have a consultative function, but actively collaborates as the leader of the horizontal action ‘Capacity’. This horizontal action aims at improving knowledge, competencies and leadership capabilities through offering seminars, practical training and coaching.

Website: <http://balticseango.net/>

Idea



Nachhaltige Pendlermobilität (PEMO) - Sustainable commuter mobility

PEMO is an inter-regional project in the Alpenrheintal, initiated by the State of Liechtenstein and the Canton St. Gallen (CH) and carried out by CIPRA International. Within this project CIPRA International works mostly with government institutions and private companies to support their mobility management. The goal is to reduce the traffic in the Alpenrheintal and Bodensee area, and the air and noise pollution accordingly. The main aim is to provide trans-regional solutions. Collaboration is executed through conferences on the topic, where any interested citizen can attend. CIPRA provides for the link between institutions, companies and the civil society to achieve better results.

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