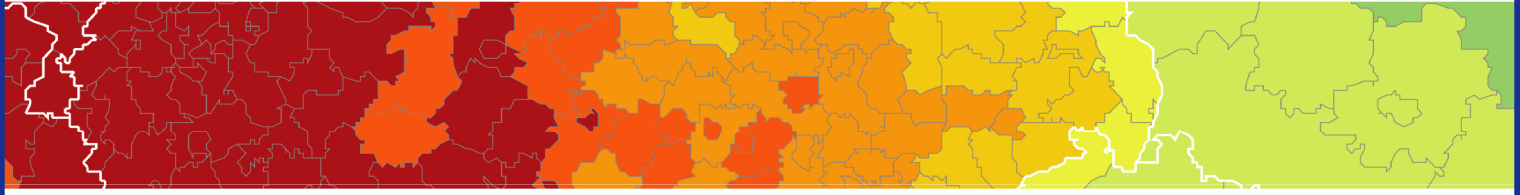


Inspire policy making by territorial evidence



Alps2050

Common spatial perspectives for the Alpine area. Towards a common vision

Targeted Analysis

Executive Summary “Vision Alps 2050”

21.11.2018

This targeted analysis activity is conducted within the framework of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme, partly financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

The ESPON EGTC is the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. The Single Operation within the programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

This delivery does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the members of the ESPON 2020 Monitoring Committee.

Authors

Tobias Chilla, Anna Heugel – University of Erlangen (Germany), Leadpartner

Thomas Streifeneder, Elisa Ravazzoli, Peter Laner, Francesca Teston, Ulrike Tappeiner, Lukas Egarter – EURAC Research Bolzano (Italy)

Thomas Dax, Ingrid Machold – Federal Institute for Less Favoured and Mountainous Areas BABF Vienna (Austria)

Marco Pütz – WSL Birmensdorf / Zürich (Switzerland)

Naja Marot – University of Ljubljana (Slovenia)

Jean-François Ruault – IRSTEA Grenoble (France)

Advisory Group

Katharina Erdmenger, Romana Mynarikova, Jens Staats - Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (Germany)

Vera Bornemann, Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, Innsbruck, Austria

Silvia Jost, Federal Office for Spatial Development, Switzerland;

Michael Roth, Federal Chancellery, Department IV/4 Coordination, Spatial Planning and Regional Policy, Austria;

Lenča Humerca-Šolar, Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Directorate for Spatial Planning, Construction and Housing, Slovenia;

Nicolas Gouvernel, General Commission for Territorial Equality, Unit Building Territorial Development Capacities, France;

Henrik Caduff, Office of Construction and Infrastructure, Liechtenstein;

Francesco Tulipano, Ministry for Infrastructure and Transport, Division Territorial Development, Planning and International Projects, Italy.

Technical Support

Manuela Burkert (survey implementation), Dominik Bertram, Cornelia Müller, Anja Sperr, Maren Teufel (data management and cartography) – University of Erlangen (Germany)

ESPON EGTC: Michaela Gensheimer (Senior Project Expert), Johannes Kiersch (Financial Expert) Piera Petruzzi (Senior Project Expert - Outreach), Laurent Friederes (Head of Unit Evidence & Outreach), Ilona Raugze (Director)

Information on ESPON and its projects can be found on www.espon.eu.

The web site provides the possibility to download and examine the most recent documents produced by finalised and ongoing ESPON projects.

This delivery exists only in an electronic version.

© ESPON, 2018

Printing, reproduction or quotation is authorised provided the source is acknowledged and a copy is forwarded to the ESPON EGTC in Luxembourg.

Contact: info@espon.eu

ISBN 978-99959-55-33-5

1 Background

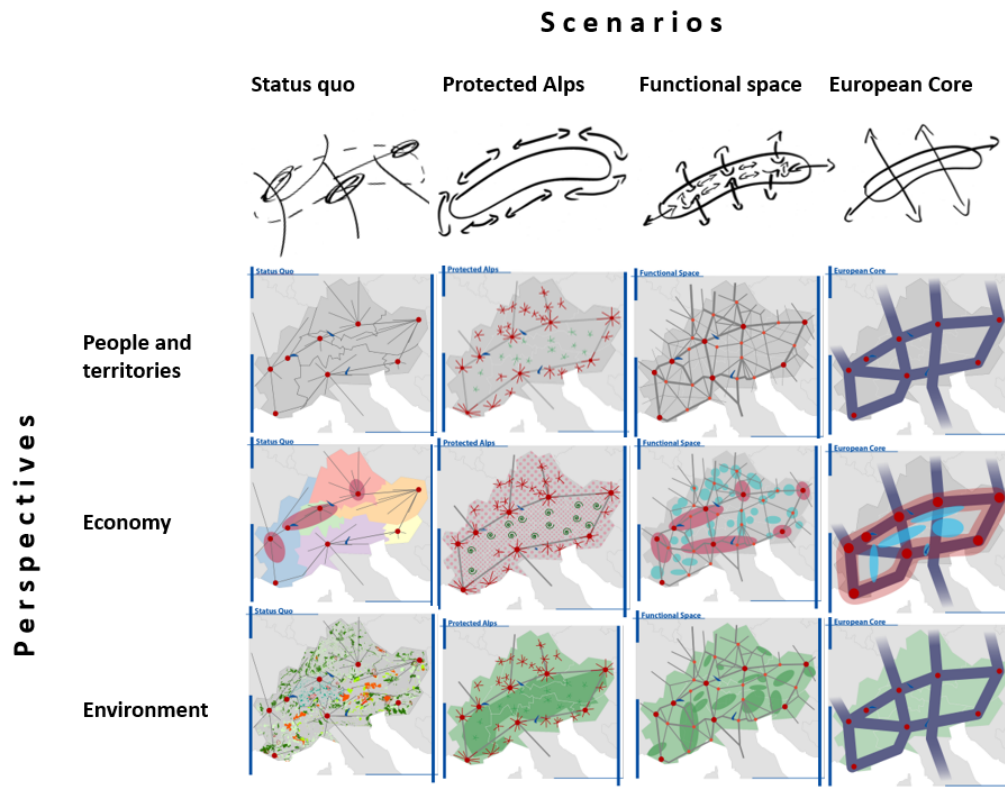
The Alpine region is a particular geographical space, embodying spectacular landscape features, a precious cultural heritage, a touristic destination of global importance, being simultaneously an overall prosperous region and an ecological hot spot – diverse, unique, and vulnerable. At the same time, the Alpine area is a space of important internal linkages and characterised by an increasing embeddedness in global networks: Being located in the heart of Europe, the region is hence part of the dynamic development of a globally integrated economy. Globalisation and the need for competitive economic activities is an important driving force for the Alpine region. Against this background, sustainable development of this sensible area is a particular challenge for regional policies. Balancing development opportunities and protection regimes is a fundamental challenge and a strategic requirement: maintaining prosperity and quality of life, ensuring innovation, managing settlement demand, responding to climate change, reducing fragmentation of ecosystems, and steering agricultural transformation are just some of the most important issues at stake in the political agenda.

The ESPON Alps 2050 project analyses the development challenges and opportunities in many respects. Based on these analyses and on the involvement of diverse stakeholders, the Alps 2050 vision gives answers on how to achieve a more sustainable development and on how to ensure a harmonious development across borders and spatial perimeters.

Map 1 gives an idea on the multiplicity of perspectives and possible scenarios that have fed this process. It is obvious that developing future perspectives refers to different sectoral priorities, political world views and instrumental options. The Alps 2050 project has developed four contrasting scenarios including a status quo (or trend) scenario and has illustrated the different implications in three thematic layers: the ‘protected Alps’ scenario prioritises wide-ranging environmental measures in the inner Alpine parts; the ‘functional space’ scenario focusses on facilitating functional relations across territorial demarcations; and the ‘European core’ scenario concentrates on the role of the Alpine region for large-scale economic flows and hub functions. These scenarios can be made palpable in more sectoral ‘perspectives’ that show that spatial development matters – with a particular emphasis on territorial priorities leading to different futures. Beyond all the controversies that come along with such a complex object of spatial development, important inspiration for the future development arise from this study being summarised in the Alps 2050 vision:

This vision Alps 2050 goes beyond existing differences in the political debate. Instead, it focusses on common ground and formulates elements of a *leitbild* (a future-oriented model) that goes beyond general principles and beyond sectoral objectives. The Alpine 2050 vision is illustrated in a cartographic and very condensed manner in the following chapters. It should be

mentioned that mapping means to simplify complex situations to a large extent and tends to leave out important aspects that are of more diffuse spatial character (e.g. quality of life, greening the economy etc.). Nevertheless, it is essential to seize the main thrust of political processes with regard to long-term objectives.



Map 1 Scenarios and perspectives on the Alpine region

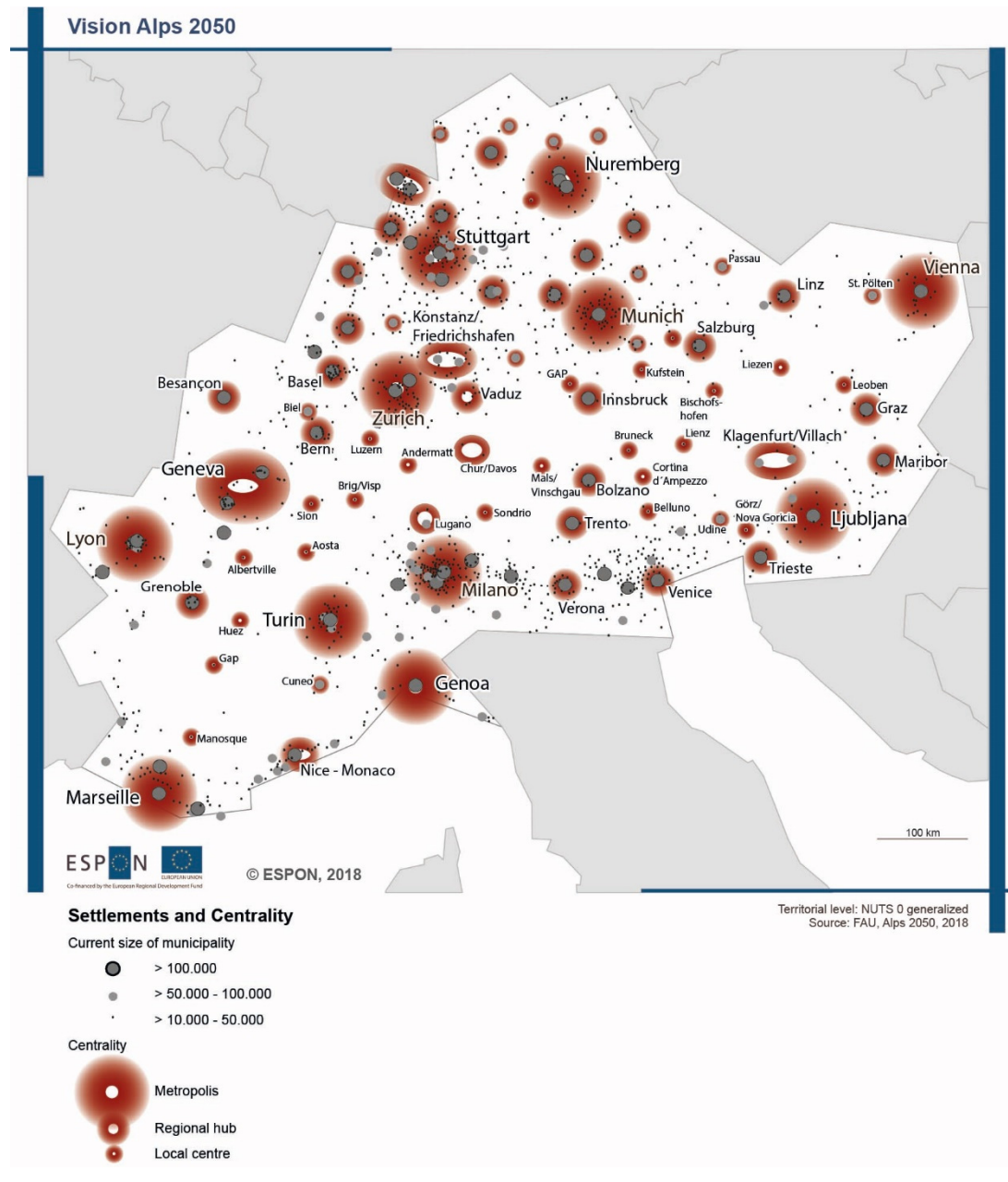
2 Mapping the vision

2.1 Settlements and centrality

Background: Currently, the settlement system of the Alpine region is characterised by mainly national and regional policy regimes. However, the main challenges are the same in all involved countries: Processes of metropolisation put large cities under pressure whereas many regions of rural and mountainous character are confronted with demographic decline and structural changes. Providing adequate services of public interest is a challenge in both kinds of territories. Frictions along the many national borders in the Alpine region aggravate the anyway challenging situation. Moreover, the increasing share of older people shows that the challenges will grow in the coming years, even if the economic situation remains positive and skilled labour in-migration would continue.

Objective: The aim is to achieve spatial development that ensures a good and comparable quality of life for all inhabitants and an efficient organisation of services of public interest. Urban

and rural areas or mountainous and non-mountainous settlements have to be linked in a (more) sustainable way.



Map 2 The settlement system of the Alps 2050 vision

Map 2 presents an overview on the settlement system, combining two core aspects: Firstly, it shows the current size of the larger settlements, differentiating towns and cities into three size groups (> 100,000; 50,000 – 100,000, and 10-50,000 inhabitants). This map illustrates the differences between the pre-Alpine areas (outside of Alpine Convention perimeter) with the far higher degree of urbanisation and the inner-Alpine areas with less and much smaller cities. Secondly, the map indicates the function of the cities for the surrounding area, i.e. its centrality. It is important to note that central spaces are no geographical points but nuclei for regional development that perform as rather soft spaces in practices. The definition of development

areas has also to define risk zones that are less appropriate for settlement development due to climate change (flooding, landslides etc.). – The map proposes three levels of centrality:

- **Metropolises:** The metropolitan cities are characterised by a central role on the transnational scale. They host economic headquarter and innovation functions and large scale political decision-making. They serve as gateways for many incoming professionals from other regions. In general, they have high numbers of inhabitants.
- **Regional hubs:** Regional hubs host important functions in economy and policy for the larger region. The settlement size can vary largely depending on the context (rather more than 100.000 in pre-Alpine and often far less in mountainous regions). It is important to safeguard a critical mass of high ranking R&D infrastructure, a complete offer of services of public interest and the potential for development without affecting rural spaces nearby ('decentral centrality'), in particular as strong suburbanisation processes are already going on. In exemplary cases, the positioning of two cities as one regional hub illustrates that 'division of labour' can help to provide the most fitting basis.
- **Local centres** have a high importance for rural spaces, in particular with regard to services of public interest and for economic incentives. In the mountains, some of these centres have less than 10,000 inhabitants and still provide important functions for their catchment area.

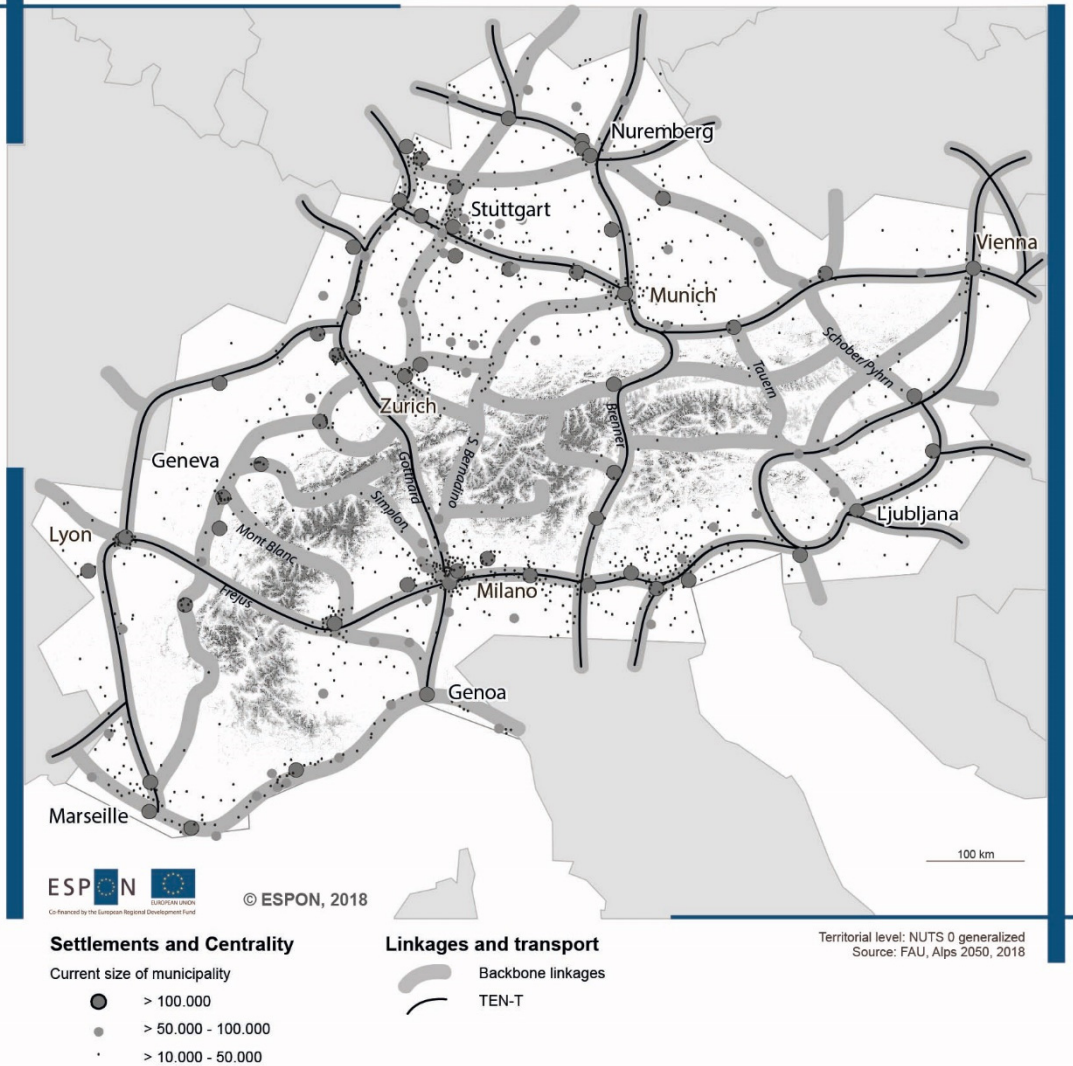
Political action: The organisation of settlement systems is a domestic policy field, following the principle of subsidiarity. Still, the following political activities on the transnational scale can improve the situation:

- Work towards a possible political definition of a common typology of settlement functions on the transnational level as proposed in our map. This may facilitate monitoring and exchange.
- An action plan on the removal of cross-border barriers would improve the organisation of public services across boundaries.

2.2 Linkages and transport

Background: The spatial structure of the Alpine region is characterised by functional linkages on different scales that are based on axes and corridors, carrying major parts of transport flows, hosting main parts of the settlement system, and providing important services of general interest.

The challenges are manifold: growing transport quantities (in particular of freight and via road) aggravate current traffic problems which imply a significant economic and environmental burden and question the local quality of life. Non-action would mean almost permanent congestion situations, increasing noise and air pollution and a widely-shared sense of decreasing quality of life in large scale corridors. Already now, political conflicts along transit routes are serious (among national ministries and between subregional entities along the connecting routes and national decision-makers). It is obvious that improved coordination is needed, including both sectoral transport policy measures and integrated spatial coordination. At the same time, local accessibility remains a complex challenge in many mountainous parts.



Map 3 Linkages, corridors and the transport system of the Alps 2050 vision

Objectives: The objective is to balance transnational mobility and accessibility on the one hand, and ecological quality and good local quality of life on the other. This can only be achieved by considerable efforts on the domestic level, but requires also increased attention at the transnational level. The new infrastructure and the new modes of mobility lead to new geographies due to new accessibility patterns that fundamentally change regional development paths. – Map 3 differentiates the following elements:

- **Backbone linkages:** The (inter-) regional axes further strengthen the existing transport and settlement systems, taking into account of the morphological structure (in particular along the valleys). It is important to concentrate growth dynamics along these lines in order to avoid sprawl and to ensure efficient spatial structures in the long run.
- **TEN-T:** Many of the backbone linkages host the TEN-T infrastructure that are displayed in the map. It is important to implement the investment measures that were decided on the European and transnational level.

- **Major Alpine Passes/Tunnels:** The major Alpine passes or tunnels are displayed here mainly for the purpose of orientation and as important elements for regional dynamics.

Political Action: Towards the year 2050, the following actions have to be undertaken:

- **Sectoral level:** The TEN-T has to be completed, including connecting routes, completing a transnational accessibility regime. Moreover, enhancing multi-modality, combining in particular road and rail, is of high priority. A transnational toll policy might be an important element in this respect. In parallel, internal accessibility (passenger transport) has to be developed in a sustainable way.
- **Integrated spatial development:** Transport policy has to be closely interwoven with general spatial planning processes. There has to be a clear differentiation of transit flows of high quantities that have to be organised along few corridors that are capable to handle large flows in a way that does not harm environmental quality. On the other hand, accessibility on the regional and local level have to be closely linked to questions of the settlement system including services of general interest and to economic dynamics.

2.3 Territories

Background: Spatial development in the Alpine region is challenging as manifold demands meet on a complex and vulnerable territory. So far, spatial planning and development are based on a predominantly domestic regime, with only little reference to the transnational scale. The challenges on the transnational scale are manifold: urban sprawl and ecological connectivity are important in all parts of the Alps 2050 perimeter. The relations between urban and rural as well as between inner-Alpine and pre-Alpine areas are often unclear: the political organisation of transport flows as well as eco-system services, the development of services of general interests and of economic activities is a complex task and has to consider its territorial dimension: areas of long-standing SME innovative tradition, agricultural communities, hotspots of biodiversity and areas of structural transition meet on the ground. Detecting and developing their potential is the key task.

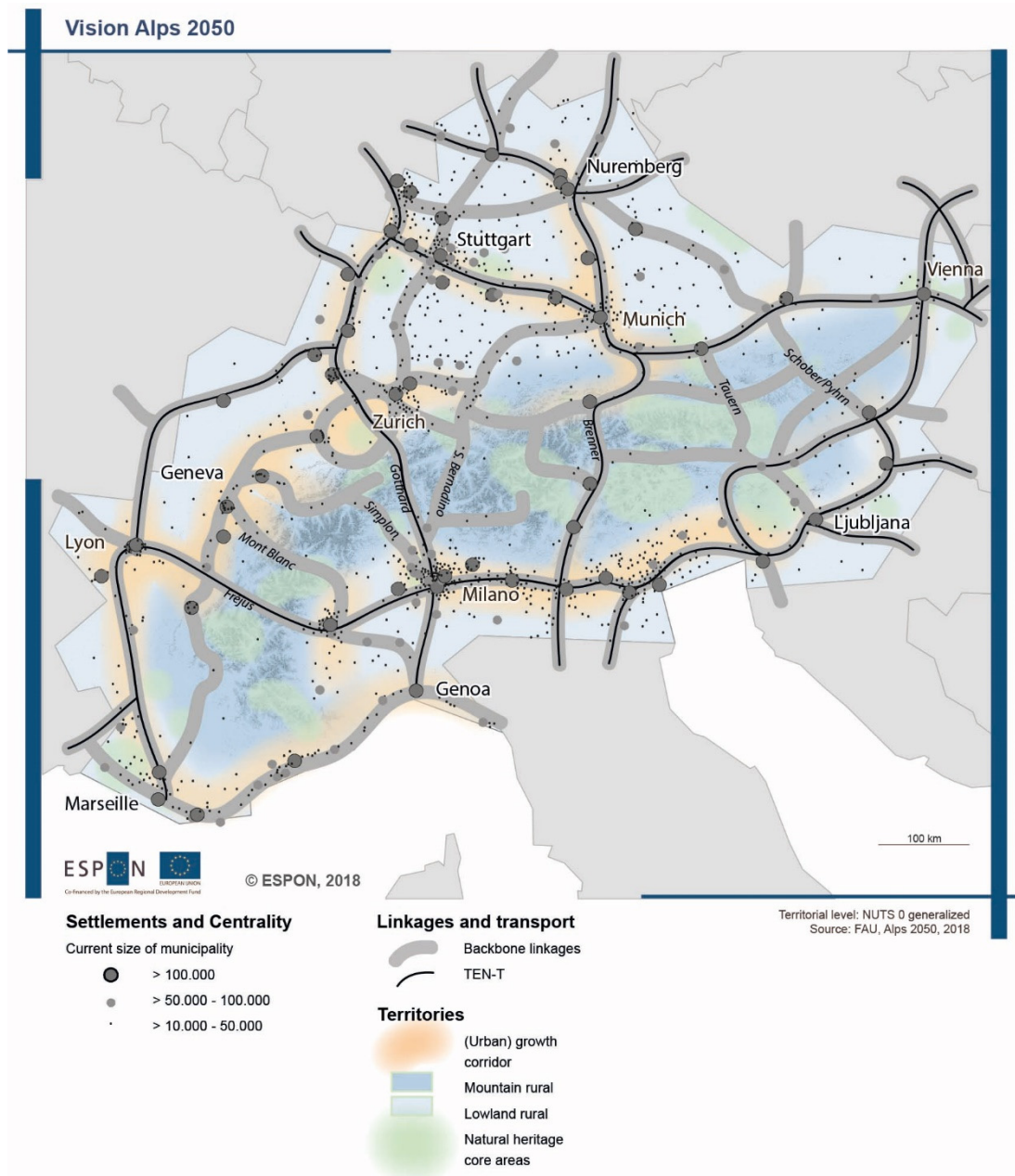
Objective: The objective is to achieve a sustainable spatial development process that goes beyond domestic regimes. However, it is crucial to develop the regional potentials on a cross-border and transnational scale. A common definition of priorities and complementarity facilitates a spatial development that addresses common challenges.

Map 4 differentiates four general kinds of territories – not neglecting that spatial development on the ground has to go far beyond these more general categories.

- **(Urban) growth corridors** are very much linked to the above mentioned backbone linkages. Concentrating growth dynamics on these corridors is important in order to avoid settlement sprawl and in order to achieve an efficient spatial organisation.
- **Mountain rural:** Due to the lower population density, the morphological context and the often less positive demographic change, spatial organisation in these regions has to undertake considerable efforts with regard to the insurance of public services. From the economic perspective, smart innovations are of major importance that lead in the best case to rural innovation systems, potentially comprising technological, agricultural and

touristic dynamics. In particular, regional opportunities along the backbone linkages, but also niche options beyond those areas should be seized and developed.

- **Lowland rural:** The category of rural areas beyond the mountains is very diverse and comprises different contexts in the demographic and economic sense. Developing endogenous potentials and developing fruitful linkages to the metropolises and other centres is the main task.
- **Natural heritage core areas:** Protected areas are one important aspect of environmentally sound development. The map is not meant to show the exact protection regimes but illustrates a spatial category that prioritizes action to protect and develop natural heritage, taking into account touristic potentials wherever reasonable (in the map based on existing UNESCO sites and national parks).



Map 4 The territorial structuring of the Alps 2050 vision

Political Action means in particular the following points:

- **Innovation focus:** Economic development strongly depends on innovation in technology, and, at the same time, adaptations in economic and social processes. Supporting innovation with R&D infrastructure, networking facilities on a transnational level in order to develop endogenous potentials has to be organised in a cross-border way where possible.
- **Cross-border protection regimes:** The hitherto established protection areas are predominately selected and restricted to national boundaries. Strengthening the cross-border dimension seems very promising, considering the primary challenge for ecological connectivity.

2.4 Synthesis

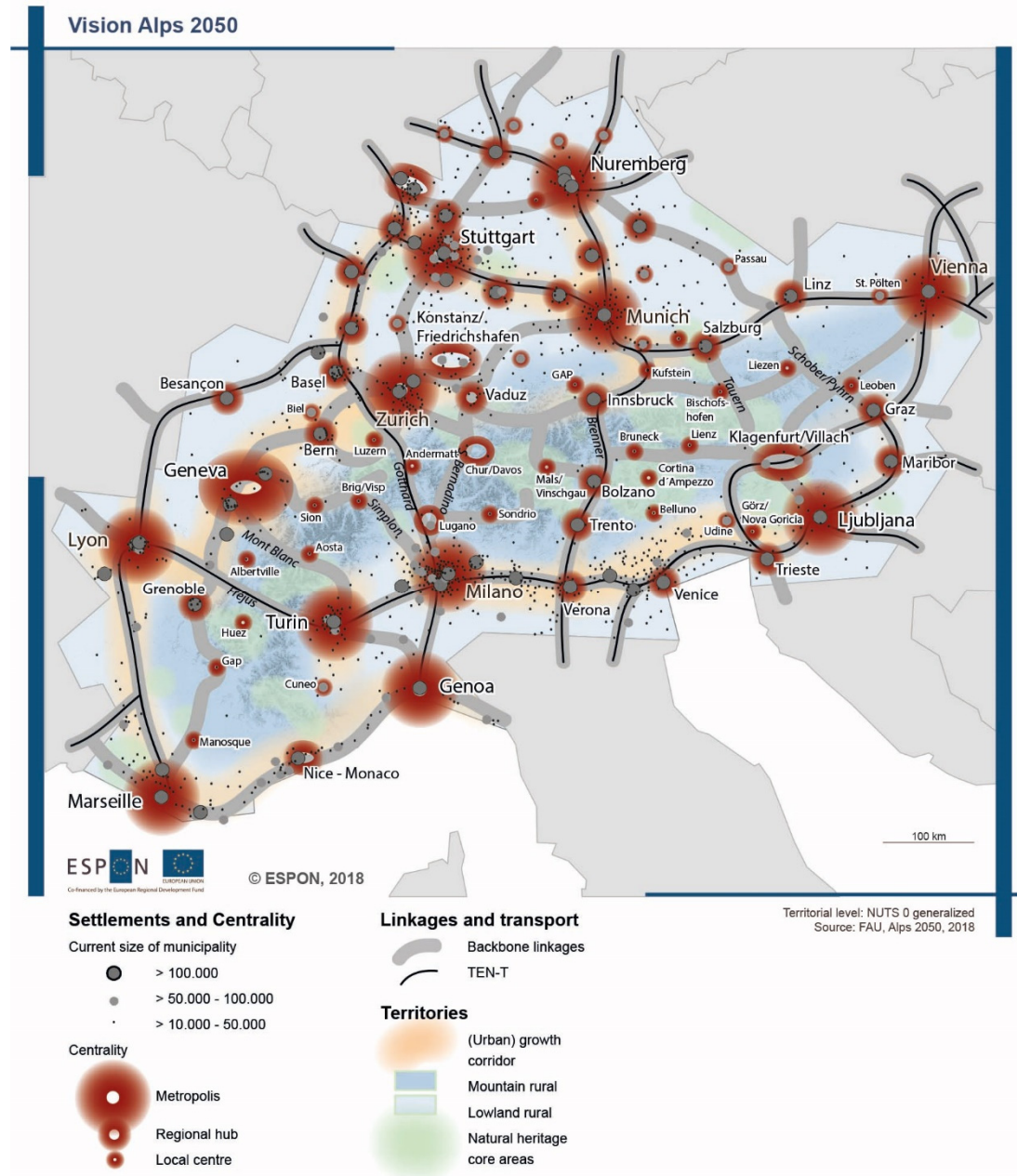
The overall picture shows a common space on the transnational scale, comprising both mountainous and lowland parts that are based on a joint inter-related spatial organisation.

The **general objective** of the Alps 2050 vision is to achieve a balanced spatial development based on sustainability, safeguarding a good quality of life and an efficient management approach of governance. The political measures introduced in the sections above contribute to achieving this goal. Map 5 combines the different dimensions in a visual and simplified way.

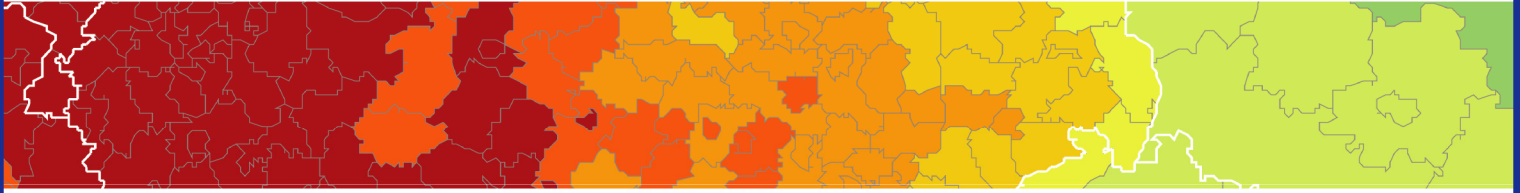
On a more general level, the following political measures help to achieve a harmonious, sustainable and successful development.

- **Inter-regional policy processes:** The existing platforms on the transnational level (in particular the EUSALP action groups and the Alpine Convention working bodies) are without doubt a good basis for further political dynamic: Improve data availability, ensure public transparency, pave the way towards transnational action is the promising direction (as it has been done for the transport policy under the roof of the so-called 'Zürich process'). Developing such processes for labour market mobility, mountain agriculture support initiatives or ecological connectivity regimes are more than promising.
- **Enhancing governance efficiency:** A consequent reflection on mandates and division of labour amongst the involved institutions is a minimum common denominator. The objective is to reduce overlaps, concentrate on core issues and to cooperate in order to make better use of synergies.
- **Funding alignment:** Alignment means stronger links between programmes and easier combination of funding opportunities. This is of crucial importance due to the macro-regional "three no's" rejecting new institutions, new regulations and new budgets. Better linkages between the different strands of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), and between ETC and investment or research oriented funding (cohesion, agriculture, research etc.) is of key importance.
- **Innovative funding:** Reducing the high bureaucratic burden in European funding in general and in particular in cooperation is an ongoing challenge. Beyond this debate, many experts of the Alpine region call for more openness for innovative projects and experimental action that are currently impeded by formal requirements. This includes a more explicit focus on spatial development and goes beyond purely sectoral policy strands.

The Alpine region is the 'contact zone' of different natural spaces and of regional and national regimes and cultures. Turning this diversity into a regional strength and creating a real transnational region is the overarching objective. Achieving sustainable development demands to use the synergies and complementarities on the transnational level and requires a high priority for common action.



Map 5 Alps 2050 vision



ESPON 2020 – More information

ESPON EGTC

4 rue Erasme, L-1468 Luxembourg - Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

Phone: +352 20 600 280

Email: info@espon.eu

www.espon.eu, [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#)

The ESPON EGTC is the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. The Single Operation within the programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.