

Interreg
Alpine Space

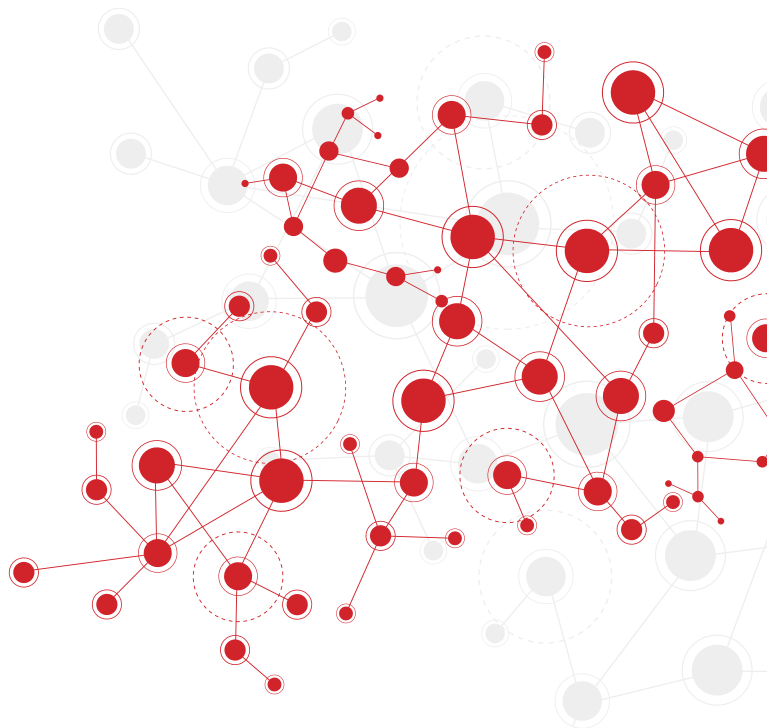


EUROPEAN UNION



INTESI

EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND



SERVICES OF GENERAL INTEREST
IN ALPINE TERRITORIES

Recommendations for integrated and multilevel governance strategies

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SERVICES OF GENERAL INTEREST
IN ALPINE TERRITORIES

Recommendations for integrated and multilevel governance strategies

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The INTESI project

Services of General Interest (SGI) are a key factor for the quality of life of the population, as well as for the attractiveness and the local development of the territories. Their supply, quality, accessibility and affordability are crucial for overcoming social exclusion and prevent the decrease of population in remote areas.

The design and delivery of SGI are in the hands of authorities and service providers at different territorial and administrative levels. The approach to SGI tends to be mainly sectoral, which leads to isolated solutions, neither benefitting from potential synergies nor optimizing the spending of public money and human resources.

INTESI (www.alpine-space.eu/projects/intesi) has worked to overcome this sectoral approach in SGI delivery by promoting a **better coordination** of SGI and their inclusion into **integrated territorial strategies**.

Services of general interest (SGI) are "services that public authorities of the Member States classify as being of general interest and, therefore, subject to specific public service obligations.

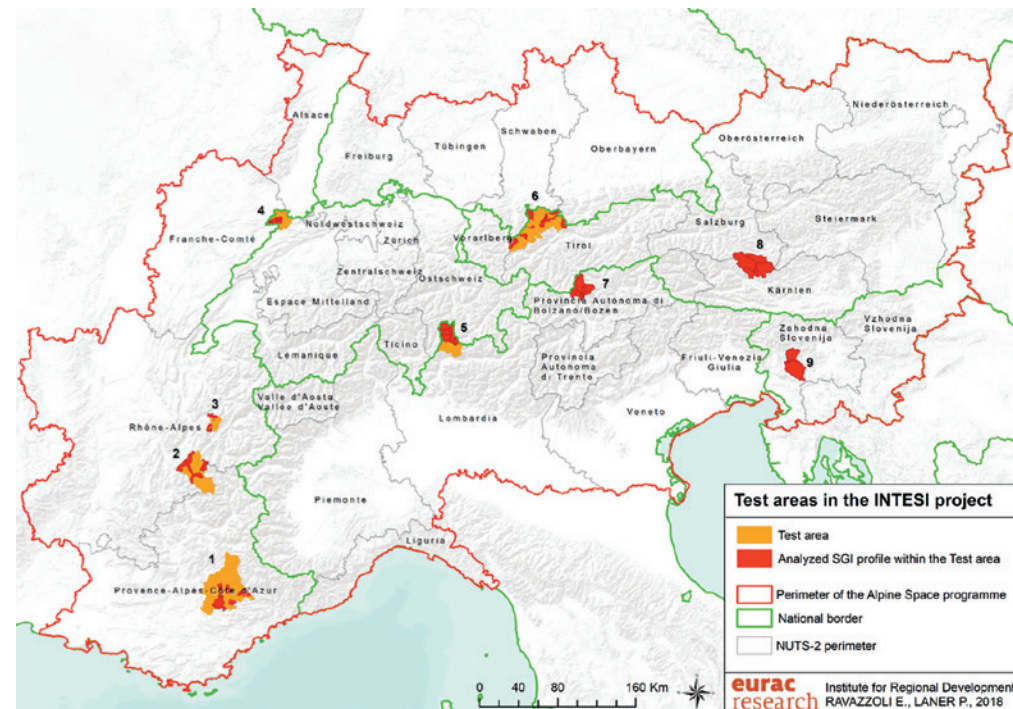
The term covers both economic activities and non-economic services. The latter are not subject to specific EU legislation and are not covered by the internal market and competition rules of the Treaty.

Some aspects of how these services are organised may be subject to other general Treaty rules, such as the principle of non-discrimination"

European Commission,
COM(2011) 900 final

SGI sectors selected in INTESI:

- administrative services • basic goods/services • transport
- telecommunication • health • social care • education



Test Areas: 1.) Pays Asses-Var-Vaire-Verdon 2.) Alpes Sud Isere 3.) Pays de Maurienne 4.) Canton of Jura 5.) Valchiavenna 6.) Ausserfern 7.) Val Passiria 8.) Lieser-/Maltatal 9.) Idrija & Cerklno

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- analysis of existing strategies on SGI at a transnational, national, regional and intermunicipal level
- elaboration of intermunicipal profiles of test areas and implementation of pilot actions, to analyse the current situation of availability, accessibility, demography, as well as needs and perceptions about SGI
- improvement of existing SGI strategies and policies
- establishment of a permanent think tank on SGI delivery in remote areas

SOME FIGURES

10

partners
from 5
countries

8

pilot activities
in 6 test areas

9

test areas analysed with a
quali-quantitative approach on
accessibility and availability of SGI

1

think tank, which
discusses about policy
recommendations
and reflects the work
of INTESI and EUSALP
Action Group 5

1

database with
257 national and
regional documents
(legislation,
programmes,
guidelines)

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION
December 2015 – December 2018

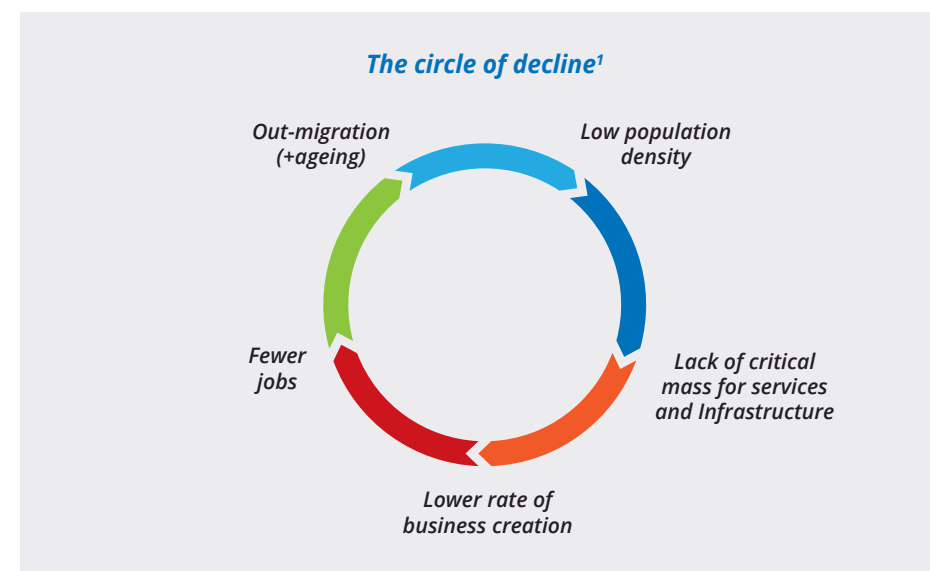
total budget
EUR 1.938.639,42
ERDF contribution: EUR 1.501.473,51

SGI issues and needs

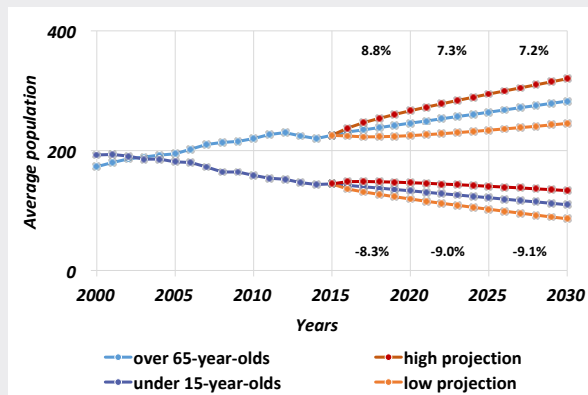
The aim of INTESI is to acknowledge and break the **circle of decline**¹ of rural areas as recognized by the European Union, focusing on mountainous regions. The circle of decline includes out-migration (and corresponding ageing); low population density; lack of critical mass for services and infrastructures; lower rate of business creation; fewer jobs. The circle of decline identifies two main interconnected reinforcing

trends: a shortage of jobs and sustainable business opportunities and inadequate and declining basic services to the population, affecting vitality of mountain areas.

A challenge which affects all test areas of the INTESI project is in fact the ageing population. This trend is exemplified in the following figure (page 8), with the projected demographic structure of one of the INTESI test areas.



¹ EU Rural Review n.26, May 2018



Population forecast
of inhabitants aged
0-14 and over 65 in
peripheral rural areas
of Valchiavenna (Italy)

An adequate provision of SGI is important to guarantee quality of living, social security and inclusion, and the attractiveness of Alpine areas. However, as highlighted in INTESI:

- The SGI provision in mountain areas is challenging in terms of **delivery, distribution** and **accessibility**, due to the specific geographical conditions, dispersed settlement structure, generally poor public transport and ageing population.
- Since the provision of SGI in mountain areas appears **uneconomic** when compared with high-density urban or tourist areas, basic

services are endangered; costs of the services in Alpine areas are affected by more expensive delivery costs, austerity measures, less allocated funds and investments.

- The SGI provision in mountain areas faces **underdevelopment** of infrastructures, such as the broadband coverage, resulting in poorer quality and quantity of services supplied. This fact also depends on the administrative organisation of the states and on the distribution of the available financial resources among territories.

- Policy issues in the provision of SGI in mountain areas may also encompass **un-responsiveness** of the governance system to the actual changing needs of the local communities, poor vertical cooperation and a lack of the bottom up approach, lack in the specification of measures, lack of clarity in responsibilities and lack of suitable monitoring mechanisms.

The EU has increasingly focused on how to improve the conditions of rural (including mountain) areas in several dedicated documents. The **Cork 2.0 declaration 'A better life in rural areas'** (2016) focuses on strengthening emerging business opportunities, on new approaches to integration and on selfsustaining initiatives for a competitive and diversified economy. The subsequent **EU Action for Smart Villages** (2017) highlights the need to enable new business models, to assist existing businesses to emerge, to integrate services and to cooperate better with urban-based businesses. On the same track, the **Bled Declaration** (2018) identifies some technological achievements to inspire innovation

in SGI provision in mountain areas, among which digital platforms offering all essential services, such as e-learning, e-health, e-administration, transport, social services.

INTESI has worked in the direction framed by the EU, showing that there is a **clear need for SGI innovation and integration** in all countries involved.

Such need is most acknowledged within the linkage of the **transport and telecommunication** services with all the other SGI sectors, but also within the transport sector (e.g. multimodal transport policies and time schedule harmonisation of the different modes of transport). Both these sectors are perceived as crucial for the improvement of the SGI accessibility in Alpine regions (e.g. proximity of public transport to services and the benefits of the ICT services such as smart working and remote access to the SGI).

The INTESI analyses have identified the need to cooperate among the different sectors and, for instance, to connect **health & social care** in

terms of policies and also in terms of individual treatment levels. Lacks were identified concerning for example the decline of postal services, small retailers and bank services, but also concerning the risk of closing schools, whereas in general education services are still sufficiently provided. Overall, the health sector is suffering from too few medical specialists and young doctors and caregivers, long distances for rescue services, risk of closing maternity wards, lack of intermediate services between hospital and home care and assisted apartments. Mobile care is one of the current solutions. In the transport sector there is a strong dependency on private cars,

since public transport is generally limited during evenings and weekends and connections and frequencies are poor, while school buses often operate adequately.

Currently, **ultra-broadband infrastructure** is being extended to some rural areas. Nevertheless, financial means for the last mile of optical fiber to the households are needed to improve communication. Administrations experience difficulties as regards opening hours, lacking staff and resources, whereas **inter-municipal administrative services** are established in some areas for a better performance.

Policy-making recommendations

As noted, an identified solution for SGI provision in mountain areas is that of **integration**.

Sketchily, integration can concern two dimensions:

1. vertical integration – among different territorial or administrative levels

2. horizontal integration – among sectors / stakeholders / various administrative units at the same level.

INTESI recommends that the territories develop and adopt strategies and action plans for SGI integration, according to the method detailed in the following and depicted in the figure “the INTESI approach to SGI integration”.

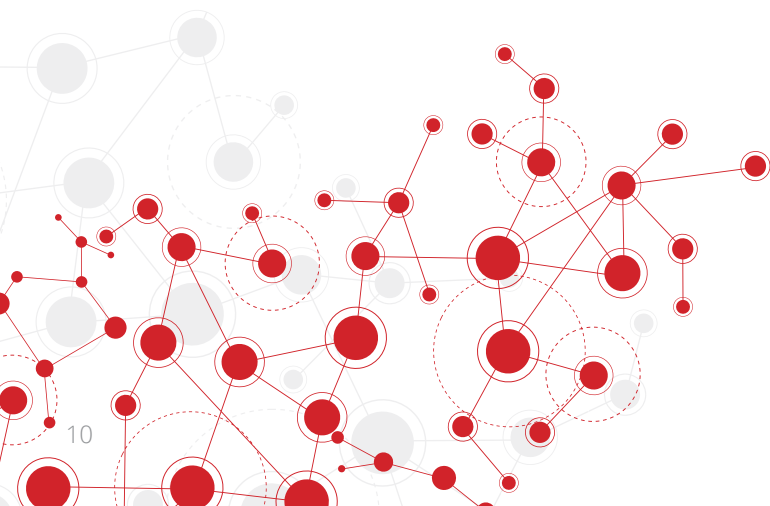
How to develop integrated SGI strategies and action plans: the INTESI approach to SGI integration

The approach comprises: a) elements for cooperation (integrated models), and b) steps towards integration. The two parts are bound together by a methodological interface involving participation and e-tools.

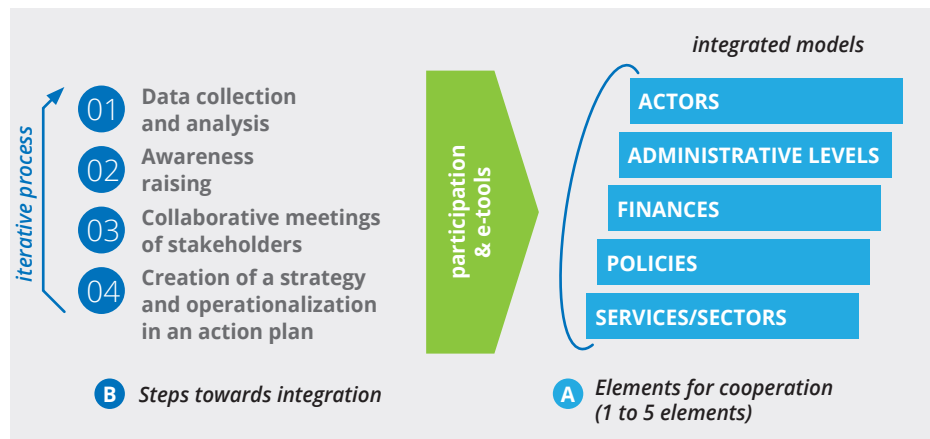
“An integrated territorial strategy for SGI is a strategy for the SGI provision based on four main principles: quality, availability, affordability, and accessibility, which takes into account: peoples’ actual and future needs in a given territory, territorial dimension, and the benefits of the synergies among the different SGI sectors.

With action plan, we refer to an instrument that makes the strategy operative with detailed and concrete actions in a shorter time span, and that can be developed and adopted by different authorities depending on the case.”

(INTESI)



THE INTESI APPROACH TO SGI INTEGRATION



A Elements for cooperation

Ideally, degrees of integration could be pursued simultaneously in up to the five following elements of cooperation:

- **actors** (e.g. national authorities, regions, municipalities, interested public, service providers, etc.)
- **administrative levels** (e.g. national, regional, municipal, local, etc.)
- **financial sources** (private and public - EU, federal/national, state/cantonal/regional, provincial/departmental, municipal/ local -)
- **policies**
- **services/sectors**

The number of elements integrated defines the type of model: integration can concern more components of a single dimension (one element integrated – 1E) or a combination of multiple dimensions (2E, 3E, 4E and 5E models).

In order to allow for an effective and feasible integration, it is important that the construction of a strategy takes place in a shared and structured way, as shown in the figure above.

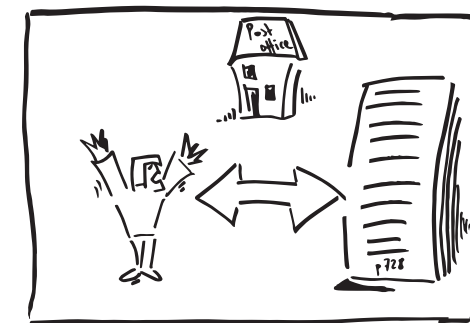
The four steps towards integration, depicted in the lower part of the picture and described and exemplified in the following, can be also considered as iterative and recursive. For more information about the examples, please refer to the project's website.

B Steps towards integration

1. Data collection and analysis

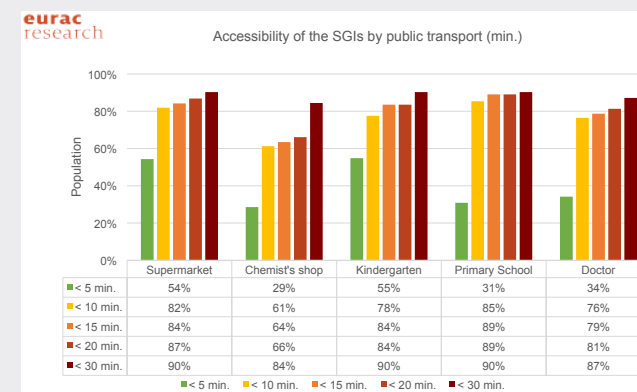
Quantitative and qualitative analysis covering different aspects of SGI supply and demand:

- analysis of the state of the art of SGI provision
- analysis of SGI accessibility (in terms of distance, travel time, costs)
- demographic forecasts
- questionnaires, surveys, interviews with service providers and other relevant stakeholder



INTESI examples

• Regional assessment reports of the INTESI test areas



Analysis of accessibility of local SGI in Val Passiria / Passeiertal – South Tyrol (Italy) using Geographic Information Systems

- **My way to broadband – Carinthia (Austria)** – Tool for regional administrations to assess their position regarding an investment in a regional fiber infrastructure. If the tool returns a positive result, then it makes sense to proceed with concrete implementation steps.



2. Awareness raising

Enhancement of the awareness about SGI-related issues in the relevant actors and the wider public:

- acknowledgment of SGI-related issues by the responsible authorities/providers and relevant stakeholders
- importance of informed and aware local communities as drivers for innovation
- public dissemination of SGI issues and timely information on upcoming changes and consequences, in order to be successful in applying structural changes concerning SGI
- use of a suitable mix of communication methods (media coverage – articles in regional and local magazines, publications on relevant regional and local web pages, social media, radio interviews, round tables, public events, ...)

INTESI examples

- **Vision 'Valchiavenna 2030': a collaborative perspective on the future uses of the ultrabroadband network in a mountain community of Lombardy (Italy)**, proposing ideas and opportunities for SGI, with an integrated approach regarding "Administrative services, governance and participation", "Basic goods and services", "Health and social care", "Education and culture", "Economy", "Land use and natural risk management", "Transport".
- **Interviews with local and regional stakeholders**, through the usage of the **Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology, on social inclusion and care for the elderly in the district of Reutte/Ausserfern-Tyrol (Austria)** to identify the potential of integration



3. Collaborative meetings of stakeholders

Creation of a structured dialogical process among local stakeholders:

- stakeholders coming from different sectors meet to discuss synergies and/or combinations of SGI for service provision and delivery
- meetings should be enriched with focused analyses of the available information
- facilitation of creative thinking
- evaluation of trends and scenarios, definition of priorities

INTESI examples

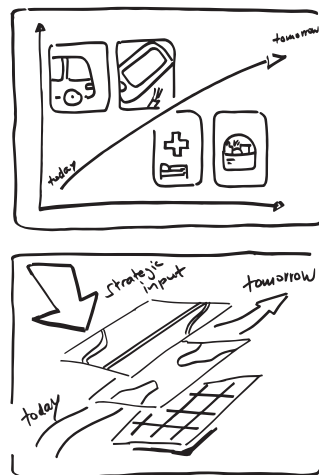
- **Working Group for the Integrated territorial strategy of care for the elderly in the district of Porrentruy (Switzerland)**. The WG, composed of representatives of different administrative levels, the health and the social sector, is identifying and developing synergies with neighbouring sectors in order to improve care and inclusion of elderly people. The approach encompasses the elaboration of a vision, principles and concrete measures.
- **Dissemination workshops with regional stakeholders and SGI providers for evaluating the results of the analysis on the SGI delivery in the test area Idrijsko-Cerkljansko (Slovenia)** and evaluation of the good practices on innovative SGI delivery models for healthsocial care and basic goods provision.
- **General assembly of the regional development agency of the district of Reutte/Ausserfern-Tyrol (Austria)** on the revision of the regional social concept focusing on the needs of elderly people.

4. Creation of the strategy and operationalization in an action plan

The strategy should have a time horizon longer than most sectoral planning (e.g. 15 to 20 years). The action plan translates the strategy in shorter term operations. They are not static documents but more processes, which can evolve in time on the basis of the results of the monitoring activities (re-adjustment if necessary).

The elaboration of both the strategy and the action plan should include:

- consideration of new forms of SGI delivery and organizational innovation
- iterative development of possible alternatives
- determination of the achievable levels of provision, quality standards and costs
- evaluation of solutions and respective costs against the analysed needs
- selection of the preferable alternative and justification of the choice



INTESI examples

- **Action plan for the improvement of the provision of basic goods in the Idrijsko-Cerkljansko area (Slovenia)**, including measures such as online catalogue of the providers and online sale, revitalising of one dilapidated former service building into a shop and networking of the providers in the countryside.
- **The case of the public transport contract in Carinthia (Austria)**, with the organization and evaluation of the public tendering process and implementation of the results in the region, including monitoring of the process and possible reorientations.

Participation and **e-tools** are useful to improve exchange of and access to information and to involve local communities, and they play a fundamental role in facilitating the entire integration process. They constitute a bridge binding together the elements for cooperation and the steps towards integration.

INTESI examples

- **The use of Open Data to support the reorganisation of SGI competences and skills in Pays A3V (France)**, facilitating the restructuring of SGI competences and sharing of skills in newly aggregated municipalities.
- **Digital support to achieve SGI enhancement actions following a public services plan in Valley of Maurienne (France)**, creating a participative database of all relevant SGI in the area and codesigning a process to facilitate SGI data sharing to make them useful and used by the population.
- **Remote patient monitoring in the district of Reutte/Ausserfern –Tyrol (Austria)**, in which elderly persons, mainly living on their own, were provided with diverse medical devices, so that they could keep a “digital health diary” staying in close contact with the care service provider.

Although the INTESI analyses show that integration models are already present in strategic documents or regulations in all the project countries, the results reveal that the **“declared” or de jure integration** recognised in the documents is often not transferred into an integrative approach to the SGI delivery **in practice**.

The project’s analyses show that the bottleneck is not much about adopting new legislation and policies, but more **in adapting the existing ones to the needs of Alpine areas** and in bringing different stakeholders to create a **constructive dialogue** and to act together.

Design Thinking for SGI in mountain areas: policy recommendations

The identified solution of integration can represent one of the fundamental aspects of a wider reflection on how to rethink SGI policies for mountain areas.

INTESI suggests, as the underlying rationale for policy making recommendations for the SGI provision in mountain areas, the **Design Thinking for the Mountains**, which stresses the need for intersecting Desirability, Feasibility and Viability in order to create innovative strategies **tailored for specific mountain contexts**.

- **DESIRABILITY** answers the questions *'What type of SGI are requested in mountain areas? Which quality and quantity of SGI (benchmarks) are needed?'* It reflects the needs of the territory and it is linked to its knowledge, its assets and deficiencies, its stakeholders and actors.
- **FEASIBILITY** is the answer to the issues *'Are there the necessary technical/technological assets to deliver and implement SGI innovatively? Are there the administrative structure and the political will to reorganize/ restructure innovatively the provision of SGI in place?'* It reflects the actual possibilities of a specific action in SGI provision to be

performed and it is linked to technical and administrative constraints.

- **VIABILITY** answers the questions *'Are there durable funds for innovative strategies in mountain areas? Are local leaders and responsible authorities capable of managing the implementation of such strategies? Can profitable business models be put in place?'* It reflects the actual practicability and sustainability of specific strategies in SGI provision from a political and financial point of view.

Finding a suitable answer to the questions posed by the design cornerstones of Desirability, Feasibility and Viability allows building robust and consistent strategies for integrated and improved Services of General Interest in mountain areas. In this context the following 7 **policy recommendations** address one or more of the design cornerstones and, as a prime target, acknowledge **EUSALP Action Group 5**, whose mission is *"To connect people electronically and promote accessibility to public services"*. The INTESI-formed **Alpine Think Tank**, itself integrated in the work of EUSALP AG5, is also to be considered a natural target of these policy recommendations.

The fundamental role of EUSALP AG5 and the Alpine Think Tank can represent a pivotal opportunity to promote a wider and targeted dissemination of the following policy recommendations to mountain policy makers.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 1:

Granting political representativeness to mountain areas

Mountain areas should be directly represented as such at political level, with seats specifically allocated to them in local/regional/national assemblies and they should seek for the cooperation with EU institutions representing mountain areas (in the Alps this concerns particular the exchange with EUSALP AG5). This would support the explicit integration of the peculiarities of mountain areas in various directives, regulations and guidelines about SGI.

- > **EUSALP**
- > **Euromontana (European association of mountain areas)**
- > **ARGE ALP (association of Alpine regions)**
- > **Department for local authorities, mountain and small municipalities @ Lombardy Region (Italy)**
- > **SAB (Swiss center for mountain regions)**
- > **Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention**

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 2:

Enhancing and facilitating public-private mountain-centered partnerships

Improving the demand-driven encounter between local needs in terms of SGI provision and facilitating public (EU, national, regional, ...) - private joint ventures, on-demand services for the mountains, innovative business opportunities for mountain-specific economic niches. Adapting legislation to facilitate partnerships, and to enhance the incentives for private providers to deliver SGI in sparsely populated areas.

- > **CIPRA (international commission for the protection of the Alps)**
- > **Danet in Wallis: 70 municipalities cooperate with regional private energy operators for providing fibre (Switzerland)**
- > **Breitbandoffensive Tirol: coordinated action between the state and the local level to foster regional broadband expansion**
- > **NGO Sopotniki, together with subsidies from municipalities, provides transport for the elderly running daily errands for free (Slovenia)**

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 3:

Embedding integration of governance levels in SGI policy making

Streamlining the whole political process of provision of SGI in mountain areas, conceiving regulation in a way to support simplification of cross-sectoral and integrated territorial processes; reducing the administrative and financial burden for public and private actors; easing multi-level governance cooperation, and combining top-down and bottom-up approaches.

- > EUSALP Action Group 5
- > Alpine Convention
- > Inner Areas Strategies (Italy)
- > Planungsverbände - planning associations for intermunicipal cooperation (Austria)

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 4:

Embedding integration of sectors and service delivery in policy making

Colocation of more services in one building or office space, collaboration between service deliveries in terms of financing and data, creation

of easy-to-fill and easy-to access interoperable datasets, cooperation between professional teams to provide joined-up and integrative services to local population and tourists.

- > SGI Houses (France)
- > Cooperatives like EUM in Val Passiria (Italy)
- > Tourist Diversification Agreements (France)

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 5:

Enhancing the capacity and awareness for addressing SGI needs in mountain areas

Investing in capacity building, local skills and social innovation, including but not exclusively concerning the opportunities of digitization and of innovative strategies of SGI provision (e.g. digital agendas), thus fostering a strongly aware, socialized and interconnected mountain society.

- > Digital Villages Initiative (Germany)
- > Digital Agendas in Spain, Latvia, Sweden
- > Fondazione Cariplo initiative AttivAree (Italy)

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 6:

Integrating SGI delivery in spatial planning policies

Spatial planning contributes to foster SGI via an intersectoral approach. Any intermunicipal coordination can help to avoid duplication and inefficiency in SGI delivery.

- > A strategy for the provision of public services at the regional level
- > Minimum requirements of certain services (compulsory schools, public parking,...) in Italian spatial plans, e.g. the Territorial development and coordination plan South Tyrol (Italy)

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 7:

Allowing experimentations in SGI policies dedicated to mountain areas

Innovation in policy making for the provision of SGI services in mountain areas should be supported by embedding some degree of experimentation within the policies themselves, in order to foresee and encompass possible changes and re-orientations, incorporating resilience and adaptability in the act of policy making, in the spirit already embodied by the EU-supported Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3).

- > Smart Specialisation Strategies

The seven policy recommendations listed above, in the context of an INTESI-customized Design Thinking for the Mountains, can represent useful concepts for policy makers, from EUSALP AG5 and the Alpine Think Tank to the wider mountain policy making community, to work with the aim of constructing innovative, effective and functionally integrated strategies for the provision of SGI.

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For more information about the project results and good practices, please refer to the INTESI deliverables available here: www.alpine-space.eu/projects/intesi/en/project-results

For more information about the examples on Design Thinking for SGI in mountain areas, please refer to the digital version of this document

For more information about the ongoing activities of the INTESI-formed Alpine Think Tank, please visit: <https://servicepublic.ch/>

