



Inter-municipal cooperation for strategic steering  
of SME-oriented location development in the Alps



The project partners of COMUNIS met in Lochau near Bregenz (Austria) in order to present the progress of the project in the pilot regions. Franz Rüb and Peter Steurer from Telesis – Regional Development Agency Vorarlberg, hosted the meeting at the Schloss Hofen in Lochau.

**Day 1:** the partners presented the current state of implementation in their pilot areas: challenges and opportunities, the goals of the region, the operational strategies to reach them and the implementation model on commercial location development (CLD). The presentations strengthened the knowledge of the various regions in the project and served as a basis for vivid discussions in the “COMUNIS-World Café” on the following day.

### Contents

Project-Meeting in Bregenz, Austria	1
“Welcome policy” in Western Lyonnais region	2
Leiblachtal municipalities: cooperation for joint business location	
Joint commercial location development (CLD) in Alpsee-Grünten	3
Conference - Cluster: Drivers for Regional Competitiveness	
Upcoming events	4
5 <sup>th</sup> Transnational project meeting	
COMUNIS at the Alpine Convention	

**Day 2:** Three topics were discussed in working groups: 1. Forming of Tandems, 2. Knowledge Management in the project, 3. Structure of Guidelines for CLD. The groups defined and clarified the upcoming tasks. Mayor Helmut Blank of the municipality of Sulzberg presented to the workshop participants how the model of inter-municipal commercial location devel-

opment has been realized in the region of Vorarlberg. Here, a PSG is set up as management structure for inter-municipal CLD.

**Day 3:** Thanks to good winter tires, the COMUNIS-group could go on excursion to the Great Walser Valley, where Mr. Bruno Summer, Mayor of St. Gerold, presented the community center to the participants. Mr. Summer stated that especially for small municipalities it is extremely important to work together in order to fulfill all the public services that are needed and required. For the Great Walser Valley, COMUNIS is an important project to create structures to assure attractive conditions for small- and medium sized enterprises now and in the future. The examples of the Biosphere Park, the community center of the municipality of Blons including the avalanche memorial site and the joint alpine dairy of Sonntag, showed that “working together” will lead to good practice results.



The COMUNIS-team in snowy St. Gerold. © PS2010

Peter Steurer  
Regionalentwicklung Vorarlberg

## “Welcome policy” in Western Lyonnais region

In the French pilot area Tarare, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Lyon (CCIL) launches a so-called “Welcome policy” for enterprises and employees.

The “welcome” policy is part of an economic development strategy aiming at keeping the population within the territory. It intends to detect, attract and support the establishment of new active population (e.g. labor force, entrepreneurs). It follows the innovative and successful experience “Solo Soho” (Small Office Small Home) established by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Gers. The concept is based on:

- an interactive internet platform for promotion and networking;
- the support of economic projects: notably through business incubators and business hotel telecommuting centres, etc.;
- voluntary municipalities called “hospitality villages” with a welcoming committee in each member municipality;
- a communication strategy and communication initiatives as well as the coordination of the network (see excerpt of marketing brochure).



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The target groups are the entrepreneurs, independent workers (including liberal professions, e.g. lawyer, doctors, etc.), and the skilled, qualified workforce that businesses need in the area. To reach this point, it is necessary to offer a special welcome and accessibility to various services (shops, broadband, etc.). These people are both in search of a pleasant living environment as well as an efficient infrastructure to grow their business activities and move their family.

The CCIL, Délégation in Tarare, copilots the construction and implementation of the initiative in line with the COMUNIS project. Various partners are involved by technical and financial support, including the Communautés de Communes (Association of Municipalities) of Amplepuis/Thizy, Tarare, Haut Beaujolais and the Haute Vallée d’Azergue. For further information: <http://www.soho-solo-gers.com>

*Florine Goncet*  
Chamber of commerce and industry of Lyon

## Leiblachtal municipalities: cooperation for joint business location

Market town agrees to join COMUNIS project.

Hörbranz was the last municipality in Leiblachtal to vote unanimously in favour of joining the COMUNIS project with the aim of creating a structure for the joint development of the business location. The goal is to develop a targeted, inclusive, inter-municipal

strategy in the Leiblachtal Region to support the economic development of the valley. Such strategy should render possible to promote careful and selective site development practices with the support of experts. That should strengthen the cooperation in the region and improve the job creation opportunities in Leiblachtal.

### Challenges and opportunities

In Leiblachtal efforts will be devoted until fall 2011 to gathering data, analyzing the challenges and opportunities for the region and to formulating goals, strategies and actions for strategy implementation. “The work schedule for the year 2011 was presented last week, during the first working meeting attended by all mayors and experts, which in fact laid another brick for the construction of an inter-municipal cooperation,” said Peter Steurer of the regional development agency Regionalentwicklung Vorarlberg, who presented COMUNIS during the meeting of municipal representatives.

*Daniela Lais*  
Vorarlberger Nachrichten Heimat



Working group meeting with all mayors in Lochau, 03.02.2011 © PS2011

## Joint commercial location development (CLD) in Alpsee-Grünten

**Together with the city of Immenstadt and the municipalities of Burgberg, Rettenberg and Blaichach, the town of Sonthofen plans to entrust the development and joint marketing of commercial areas to a single organization.**

Despite different initial conditions, all five municipalities show similar problems: environmental constraints and limited availability of land and high land prices in the long run. Acknowledging the narrow margins of manoeuvre for future spatial development, in the fall of 2009 the COMUNIS project was launched with the aim of developing joint land management policies for the five municipalities.

The results collected so far were presented to city councillors during a joint information event held in February 2011 in Sonthofen.

**The goal: to shape a common economic space.** Given the geographical proximity and the existing links between the municipalities, the decisive factor is not where jobs are created,

but rather the preservation of a “regional” labour market where the job offer is ensured and improved for the population of Alpsee-Grünten.



Joint informative meeting for town and city councillors of the Alpsee-Grünten region. © City of Sonthofen 2011

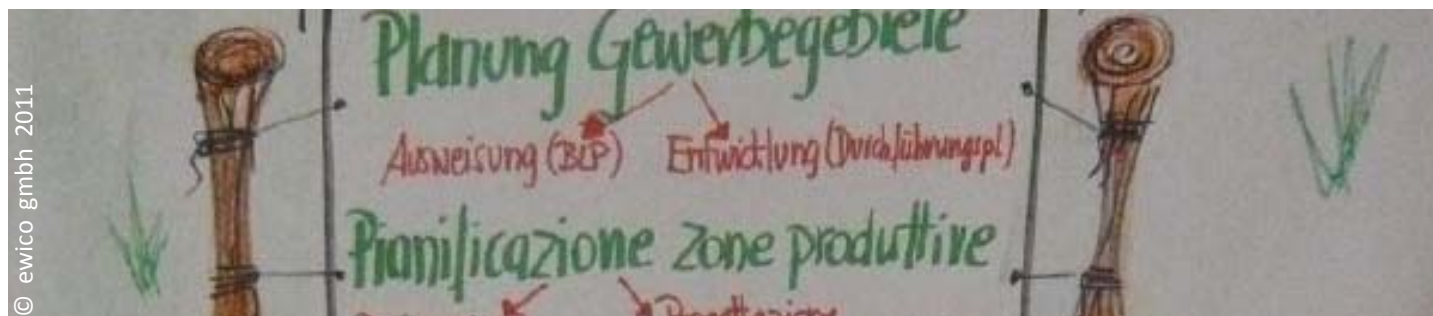
**The strategy: to define common land management policies that allow developing commercial areas in a targeted and needs-oriented manner.** This is possible only if competition for corporate settlements is avoided and resources are pooled. A suitable division of tasks and duties should help reduce costs and risks while curbing the use of agricultural land. Companies - particularly existing local enterprises which want to expand - must be

guaranteed the best possible framework conditions and a land supply as diversified as possible.

**The idea in practice: the involved municipalities will “hand over” land suitable for commercial development to a special-purpose association, so that areas can be developed and marketed jointly.** That will only apply to lots of a certain minimum size; the remaining smaller sized properties will continue to remain the responsibility of individual municipalities. Ensuing costs, revenue, income from sales and corporate taxes will be allocated according to a predetermined distribution formula. The barracks area in Sonthofen, which are being freed up, could be used for common CLD purposes.

In the coming weeks, the town and city councils of the five involved municipalities will assess the tabled proposals and decide on concrete steps to take for setting up a common special-purpose association.

*Sandra Feuerstein*  
Stadt Sonthofen



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## Conference Cluster: Drivers for Regional Competitiveness

Clusters represent a valuable source of innovation, knowledge transfer and increased productivity. That is the reason why clusters have become essential for regions and businesses willing to achieve innovation and economic prosperity.

Focusing on this theme, the conference “Clusters as Drivers of Regional Competitiveness: Strategic and Policy Issues” discussed issues of geographical concentration of enterprises and

interconnected support organizations. The first conference to be held in Switzerland with such focus will bring together internationally renowned academics, senior managers of clusters as well as political representatives involved in regional economic development.

Best practices taken from real cluster experiences were presented with a view to initiate and stimulate new regional clusters. During the day, partici-

pants had networking opportunities and the chance of discussing future collaborations. COMUNIS was represented by the lead partner of the project. The conference took place on 25 March 2011 at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. For further information: <http://www.pst-fr.ch/cluster2011>

*Nathalie Stumm*  
University of Applied Sciences  
Western Switzerland

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**5th COMUNIS Project workshop:** 27-28 July 2011, Province of Asti (IT)

**Alpine Space Mid Term Conference - Driving Cooperation for the Alps:** 16-17 June 2011, Grenoble (F)

### Asti: 5<sup>th</sup> Transnational project meeting

The local development agency Langhe Monferrato Roero (LAMORO) intends to combine the project meeting with an open conference. Main local stakeholders that are (in-)directly involved in the pilot action will be invited.

The University of Economy of Asti will present main local results. The conference will be a good chance to collect mid-term project results and carry out a first evaluation of the obtained results.

**Day 1:** Presentations by the project partners and a sum up of outputs and activities, both in terms of content and finance.

**Day 2:** Presentation of official publicity

actions by local stakeholders.

#### Focus on Evaluation and Adaptation

Work package 7 “Evaluation and Adaptation” is essential for the viability and sustainability of project results and instruments after the official end of the project.

Work Package 7 has the main purpose to critically evaluate the project development and implementation in the pilot areas as well as the consecutive adaptation of the CLD strategies and instruments based on the experiences made and lessons learnt in the pilot regions.

*Valentina Scioneri*  
Langhe Monferrato Roero

COMUNIS aims at developing cooperative strategies for inter-municipal **Commercial Location Development (CLD)**. By **fostering intra-territorial cooperation**, COMUNIS wants to overcome individualistic attempts of problem solution on the level of single municipalities. COMUNIS will provide broadly adaptable guidelines to apply such strategies and offer practical instruments for assessing local and regional demand for the steering of CLD. The project will result in a transnational knowledge management and establish sustainable structures for managing CLD in the COMUNIS pilot areas. The COMUNIS project is part of the European Territorial Cooperation and co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in the scope of the Alpine Space Programme. It runs from July 2009 to June 2012.

#### PROJECT PARTNERS

##### Lead partner:

University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland, Institut Economie et Tourisme (CH).

##### ERDF-Lead partner:

Chambre de Commerce et d’Industrie de Lyon (F).

##### Other partners:

Stadt Sonthofen (DE), Eurac-Research, Institute for Regional Development and Location Management (IT), Canton du Valais Service du développement économique (CH), Ministero dell’Ambiente e delle Tutela del Territorio e del Mare (IT), Bosch Partner GmbH (DE), Regionalentwicklung Vorarlberg (AT), Società Consortile Langhe Monferrato Roero, settore progetti europei (IT), BSC Poslovno podporni center, d.o.o., Kranj (SI), Association Suisse pour le Service aux Régions et Communes (CH).

### COMUNIS at the Alpine Convention: Advantages of inter-municipal CLD in mountain areas

First results and experiences gained in the South Tyrolean pilot area Pas-seier Valley gained by the Eurac were presented at the third meeting of the working group “Demography & Employment” in January 2011.

Particularly attention was paid to the challenges and opportunities encountered at implementing inter-municipal cooperation for CLD at the local level. From a socio-economic point of view, inter-municipal commercial areas are of utmost importance. Especially in decentralized mountain areas, with

their natural geographic conditions, commercial zones and SMEs offer alternative work places to people employed in agriculture (see table below).

These links are decisive for the preservation of rural areas. If commercial areas were to be linked and marketed jointly, a decisive step towards sustainable regional development planning with regard to the respective Alpine Convention protocol would be taken.

*Miriam L. Weiß*  
Eurac research

Demography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase a region’s attractiveness as a place to work and to live.</li> <li>• Cooperation and identification with the area to foster motivation to stay.</li> <li>• Participation in commercial location development of municipalities without own suitable areas (e.g. due to topographic reasons).</li> </ul>
Occupation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preservation of work places by means of strategic planning and administration of commercial areas in the region.</li> <li>• Preservation of decentralized work places; particularly of SMEs.</li> <li>• Offer work places for people employed in agriculture.</li> <li>• Promote cooperation of enterprises and educational institutions.</li> </ul>
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of costs and administrative capacities.</li> <li>• Joint marketing of commercial locations.</li> <li>• Spill-over-effect of joint CLD to other common problem areas.</li> </ul>