



Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Permanent Secretariat to the Alpine Convention and the “Alpine Town of the Year” association

I. Report – The common context

Alpine communities are of fundamental importance for the Alpine Convention. Two-thirds of the Alpine population lives in the towns and cities of the Alps. These communities have a decisive role for the development of the surrounding rural areas. Although reference is more frequently made to the exodus of Alpine people from the countryside to the urban areas, often also the Alpine towns are threatened by a loss of importance due to the structural changes taking place in Europe. The special relationship with the surrounding Alpine territory, the limited possibility of expansion in the valleys, the typical infrastructure problems, the particular sensitivity to air pollution in the foothill areas, and economic development that is often dependent on Alpine resources, all imply a series of specific difficulties but also opportunities that are worthwhile particularly focusing on and make a more intense exchange of experiences to be hoped for. Commitment by the Alpine cities is essential for the sustainable development of the Alpine arc.

Since 1997, a jury including representatives from the Work Community “Alpine Towns”, CIPRA and the “Pro-Alpine life” association has been annually electing an “Alpine Town of the Year”, which represents a model for the implementation of the Alpine Convention in the form of

concrete projects and other activities. The towns that have up to now enjoyed this title have joined in an association called "Alpine Town of the Year".

In order to gain greater representation and commitment from the Alpine towns in the bodies of the Alpine Convention, and also to further involve these towns in the development of a common vision for the Alpine region, an agreement for strengthened cooperation between the Permanent Secretariat to the Alpine Convention and certain organisations of Alpine towns, including the "Alpine Town of the Year" Committee (now the "Alpine Town of the Year" Association) was signed on 26 April 2005. This agreement, which resulted in the joint organising of a seminary on the subject "Alpine towns and surrounding protected areas", expired on 26 April 2007.

The Permanent Secretariat to the Alpine Convention and the "Alpine Town of the Year" Association intend to continue to cooperate and have therefore proposed signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). So as to assure the long-term continuity of the cooperation according to this MoU, it is suggested that its validity is not subject to any time limit, except for the possibility for one or both of the partners to conclude the MoU if the conditions for its implementation no longer exist.

II. Memorandum of Understanding

between the Permanent Secretariat to the Alpine Convention and the "Alpine Town of the Year" Association

Considering that the Alps form a natural environment and an economic area of special European interest,

considering that the Alps are distinguished by their culture and multifaceted history, for the multitude of traditions and for a particular ecological sensibility,

considering that the Permanent Secretariat to the Alpine Convention is entrusted, in particular, with facilitating the organising of projects in keeping with the objectives of the Alpine Convention and its Protocols, which are implemented by the Parties, their local and regional authorities, non-governmental organisations and by all the other parties concerned,

considering that – subject to the principle of subsidiarity – for this reason it is necessary to promote and support active cooperation and the forming of networks for accomplishing the issues in the Convention and its Protocols for the Alpine population,

considering that the "Alpine Town of the Year" Association has the goal of promoting the implementation of the Alpine Convention and its Protocols in the communities of the Alps,

considering that the declaration adopted by the IX Alpine Conference on the subject "Population and Culture" identified the role of Alpine towns as one of the five main axes of action, stating the need to promote:

- the recognition of the importance of the intra-Alpine towns, particularly as regards their function as centres of super-municipal social, cultural and economic services, interacting with their bordering areas,
- the creating and expanding of relations between towns in the Alpine arc and towns and cities outside the Alpines, in order to guarantee the links and exchanges of information between the Alpine population and the economic, scientific and cultural centres outside the Alps.

between

- the Permanent Secretariat to the Alpine Convention, represented by the Secretary-General, Marco Onida,
- and the "Alpine Town of the Year" Association, represented by the President, Colette Patron, Deputy Mayor of Gap,

the following Memorandum of Understanding is signed.

1 Objectives

This Memorandum of Understanding aims to facilitate, reinforce and lay the long-lasting foundations for cooperation between the "Alpine Town of the Year" Association and the Alpine Convention. The "Alpine Town of the Year" Association will promote, using the appropriate means, the priority issues of the Multiyear Work programme of the Alpine Conference in the towns. In this way, the "Alpine Town of the Year" Association will become an important partner to the Permanent Secretariat in the areas of sustainable development in the Alpine towns. The Permanent Secretariat, in turn, will take the needs of the Alpine towns further into consideration in its activities. This cooperation will mainly be aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- a greater consideration for the needs of the Alpine towns in the work of the bodies of the Alpine Convention
- a greater consideration both in the protocols and in the projects of the Alpine Convention in the activities of the Alpine Town of the Year
- an intensifying of the process for discussing the future of the Alpine space and the role of the Alpine towns.

2 Tangible activities

The accomplishing of joint activities will be defined on the basis of a firm work programme. This work programme will be agreed from time to time over the duration of two years, and must make reference to specific activities. The collaboration will mainly relate to the following areas:

1. Joint events

By organising joint events and through the participation of the Permanent Secretariat at workshops and technical meetings of the "Alpine Town of the Year" Association and vice versa,

concrete examples will be promoted for implementing the Alpine Convention in Alpine towns. The joint events will focus on the issues forming the objective of the multiyear work programme of the Alpine Conference, and will be indicated in the work programme to be adopted on the basis of this Memorandum.

The Permanent Secretariat, by its presence to the extent possible at events in the sector, will pay the attention due and attribute the right level of significance to the "Alpine Town of the Year" Association as the important partner for implementing the Alpine Convention. In this way, it will contribute to intensifying the cooperation between the members of the association and also further expand the association.

2. Public relations

The public relations work, in terms of an active policy of information and communication, has the purpose of increasing the level of awareness of the Alpine Convention and its protocols, as instruments for sustainable development. In this way, the partners will take steps to create a greater awareness about the contents of the Alpine Convention and its protocols in Alpine towns. The projects which implement the Alpine Convention, in the Alpine towns, must be communicated as such. The cooperation will be extended to preparing joint information material.

3. Cooperation with the current Alpine Town of the Year

Each year a new "Alpine Town of the Year" is nominated, which then forms part of the "Alpine Town of the Year" Association. The designated town undertakes, during the year, to promote and manage projects and events for implementing the Alpine Convention. The partners of this Memorandum of Understanding undertake to support these activities. Specifically, the Permanent Secretariat will advise the town named "Alpine Town of the Year" about the subjects of particular interest to the Alpine Convention and also, as far as possible, will take part in events organised by the Alpine Town of the Year.

3 Reciprocal commitments

- For the entire duration of the cooperation, the Permanent Secretariat will keep the “Alpine Town of the Year” Association fully informed about the work of the Alpine Conferences and the Standing Committee and about the activities of the Secretariat that concern the Alpine towns. This will particularly relate to the experience of other bodies of the Alpine Convention or networks of observers (for instance, the “Transport” Work Group, Network of Alpine Protected Areas, Network of Municipalities) so that it can be integrated into the activities of the “Alpine Town of the Year” Association.
- The “Alpine Town of the Year” Association has the right to use the logo of the Alpine Convention in accordance with the current provisions in this respect.
- The “Alpine Town of the Year” Association, for the duration of the cooperation, undertakes to actively ensure compliance with the obligations set forth by the Alpine Convention and its protocols.
- The “Alpine Town of the Year” Association undertakes to notify the Permanent Secretariat about its activities.
- The Permanent Secretariat may attend the meetings of the members of the “Alpine Town of the Year” Association and also the theme conferences they organise.
- The partners to this Memorandum of Understanding undertake to organise occasions for discussion about the needs of Alpine towns (for instance, as part of the events aimed at implementing the Declarations on “Population and culture” and on climate change by the Alpine Conference).

4 Monitoring

Every two years, and for the first time within two years of signing this Memorandum of Understanding, the partners will jointly prepare a report on the activities performed in cooperation in the previous two years. The Permanent Secretariat will send a copy to the Standing Committee. This report will be used for preparing the work programme for the following two years.

5 Duration

The validity of this Memorandum of Understanding is not bound by limits. However, each partner has the right to terminate it by written communication to the other party. In this case, the Memorandum of Understanding shall cease to have effect once three months have passed from such communication.

Done at Brig-Glis, on 11 January 2008

*For the Permanent Secretariat to the Alpine
Convention*

For the "Alpine Town of the Year" Association

Marco Onida

Secretary-General

Colette Patron

President

Represented by Ursula Rütsche,

Councillor for the Municipality of Herisau