



Dear Colleagues,
Dear Friends,

May is commonly associated as the month of spring. The month when plan(t)s start to grow.

Rather unusual at this time of year, I seize the opportunity to update you on Alpine Convention news, this time focused on one central theme: the **XV Alpine Conference** and its related events that took place in the first week of April in Innsbruck (AT).

I believe that the XV Alpine Conference was a success, to which the consistent and constructive engagement of Contracting Parties, the presidency, observers and the team of the Permanent Secretariat in tandem with the outgoing Austrian Presidency made a major contribution. The activities, projects and support provided by the Permanent Secretariat in the previous two years, were presented by Deputy Secretary General Marianna Elmi to the 67. Permanent Committee and can be found further on in this newsletter. This special edition also presents the **Innsbruck Declaration** and the 7th Infopoint of the Alpine Convention, Villach.

I take the opportunity to wholeheartedly thank everyone who contributed to a successful Alpine Conference week. A very special thank you goes to the City of Innsbruck and the Land Tyrol for their unwavering support. The Tyrolean reception in front of the Hofburg will be remembered for a long time to come!

Wishing you a good read!

Ambassador Markus Reiterer,
Secretary General of the Alpine Convention



Foreword by the Secretary General

France officially takes over the Presidency of the Alpine Convention from Austria

[Closing of the Austrian Presidency](#)

[France takes over the Presidency](#)

XV Alpine Conference

[67th Meeting of the Permanent Committee](#)

[Declaration of Innsbruck](#)

[Alpine-wide declaration on sustainable land use and soil protection](#)

[Report on the in-depth review of the topic "parsimonious use of soil"](#)

[New Secretary General appointed](#)

[Output of the Thematic Working Bodies](#)

[We are Alps 2019 Compact Edition](#)

[AlpWeek *Intermezzo* - The future of the Alps starts here and now](#)

[4th Young Academics Award](#)

[Winners of the Alpine-wide contest "ClimaHost" have been revealed](#)

[YPAC - talking with, not about the youth](#)

News from the Secretariat

[Villach hosts the first Austrian Infopoint of the Alpine Convention](#)

[Renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Chamonix Infopoint](#)

[ClimCards: Alpine climate in YOUR hands](#)

Goodbye Editorial by Silvia Reppe, former Focal Point of the Alpine Convention for Germany

France officially takes over the Presidency of the Alpine Convention from Austria



Closing of the Austrian Presidency

In October 2016, Austria took over the Presidency of the Alpine Convention from Germany. For two and a half years, the Austrian Presidency worked under the motto "Protect and Utilise": protecting the Alps while sustainably developing the living, recreational and economic environment. The main thematic focus was climate change: *"We call for joint efforts with the aim towards climate-resilient and climate-neutral Alps by 2050"*, explains Elisabeth Köstinger, Federal Minister for Sustainability and Tourism and former President of the Alpine Conference. *"I'm pleased that we can pass the baton on to France. At the R20 summit in Vienna last year, Austria and France jointly made an important foray in the field of climate protection and demanded a uniform European minimum price for CO₂",* so Köstinger.

According to the Austrian Presidency, the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention was and is the most important partner for the success of the meeting of the Permanent Committee and for an effective Presidency. The cooperation has been excellent and was a crucial tessera for the achieved success and the results.

[Back to top](#)

France takes over the Presidency

The XV. Alpine Conference in Innsbruck marked the end of the Austrian Presidency of the Alpine Convention and, at the same time, the handover of the baton to France. France's State Secretary for the Environment, Brune Poirson, thanked Austria for the committed and efficient presidency of the Alpine Convention: *"I would like to thank the Austrian Presidency for focusing on climate during the Alpine Conference. Since the R20 summit last year, we have been pursuing a common goal, which we still advocate"*. Other priorities of the French Presidency are air quality, water and biodiversity. *"These areas, just like climate, require the decisive involvement of local actors, whom we must support in their actions"*, so the French State Secretary Poirson.

The French Presidency has proposed air quality as topic for the upcoming 8th Report on the state of the Alps, which is, indeed, a major concern in the Alpine region as mentioned in Article 2c of the Framework Convention but which hadn't been tackled in-depth within the Alpine Convention before. An ad hoc working group is being set up under the French Presidency, with its first meeting to be held on 4-5 June 2019 in Paris (FR).

Water as a resource and as a habitat will be the subject of a presidency-organized conference planned for October 2019 in Annecy (FR), in close cooperation with the Annecy agglomeration, which has repeatedly emphasized its commitment to water issues. This "presidency event" provides an opportunity for the concrete involvement of local authorities, which can express their participation in the implementation of the Alpine Convention and its Protocols.

The French presidency also intends to make biodiversity an important priority: at national level, by publishing a National Biodiversity Plan in July 2018, as well at the international level, by hosting the IUCN World Congress on Nature Conservation in June 2020 in Marseille (FR). In the Alpine area, it will be a question of dealing with the biodiversity of mountain areas in the broadest sense, which also includes the questions of the degradation of natural areas, species dynamics, sustainable tourism and protected areas. A Conference on biodiversity in the Alpine region will be organized back-to-back with the IUCN Congress.

[Back to top](#)

XV. Alpine Conference



67th Meeting of the Permanent Committee

During the 67. Permanent Committee, delegates from the 8 Alpine states, the EU, Partners and Observers met for the first time this year and the last time under Austrian Presidency. In the spotlight was the preparation of the XV. Alpine Conference Secretary General, Markus Reiterer, presented the Activity Report of the Permanent Secretariat. *"We worked hard to fulfil our tasks to the best of our abilities"*, Reiterer stated. The team of the Secretariat focused its activities on the support to the Contracting Parties and on putting the Multiannual Programme (2017-2022) into practice. *"We also took steps forward for the sustainable development and protection in the Alps by working in the domains of population and culture, biodiversity and landscape, green economy and transport. In addition, the Secretariat continued its leading role in Action Group 6 of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)."* Some interesting facts and figures demonstrate the professionalism and enthusiasm for the Alps reflected by the team of the Permanent Secretariat:

- Staff members speak **3.4** languages on average
- **6** different nationalities
- reducing the environmental footprint of the Secretariat by cutting back the travel by plane by two third, from 90 to **33** flights per year
- promoting around **120** events in the scope of the Reading Mountains Festival in celebration of International Mountain Day on 11 December
- participating in **45** meeting of Thematic Working Bodies

Browse for further information on the different events and activities organized by the Secretariat, often in cooperation with partners throughout the Alpine arc.

[Back to top](#)

Declaration of Innsbruck

The Alpine Conference adopted the Declaration of Innsbruck "**Climate-neutral and Climate-resilient Alps 2050**", which reaffirms the commitment of the Contracting Parties to the mitigation of climate change and adaptation to its impacts. In particular, the declaration underlines the Alpine Convention's potential role in awareness-raising and through the work of the Thematic Working Bodies. It calls upon all Contracting Parties to give the Alpine area priority within their respective climate strategies and action plans at all relevant levels. The declaration includes the adoption of the Alpine Climate Target System 2050. Prepared by the Alpine Climate Board over the past two years, the target system identifies specific targets in twelve sectors towards the overall objective of climate-neutral and climate-resilient Alps in 2050. All targets are framed by the general principles of a transition based on cultural and natural heritage, the role of the Alps as model region for integrating mitigation and adaptation as well as being a showcase for transnational cooperation and on an emphasis on Alpine co-benefits.

Furthermore, the Declaration of Innsbruck marks the adoption of the **7th Report on the State of the Alps**. The report is a major achievement for the PLANAP working group, who dedicated its work over the last two years to the preparation and finalizing of the report. The Report deals with the topic of natural hazard risk governance, an innovative and inclusive approach for dealing with the threats natural hazards pose to the people and infrastructures in the Alps.

The Austrian Minister for Sustainability and Tourism , Elisabeth Köstinger, and the Secretary General of the Alpine Convention, Ambassador Markus Reiterer together with the Chairs of PLANALP Mr. Rudolf Hornich and Ms. Catrin Promper were proud to present the Report to the public.

The Declaration of Innsbruck, Alpine Climate Target System 2050 and a summary of the RSA7 are available in the new brochure: [Climate-neutral and Climate-resilient Alps 2050](#) (DE, IT, FR, SL).

[Back to top](#)



©BMNT / Alexander Haiden

Alpine-wide declaration on sustainable land use and soil protection

Soil protection, to which land-saving spatial planning makes a significant contribution, has already attracted a series of commitments at various levels (inter alia World Soil Charter, European Soil Charter, Manifesto for the Soil and Land Alliance of European Cities and Towns), but so far there has been no corresponding declaration at the level of the Alpine Region.

During the Tyrolean EUSALP Presidency 2018 EUSALP Action Group 6 led by the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention and Land Carinthia elaborated a declaration on sustainable land use and soil protection. After a public consultation process and political coordination with the single EUSALP States and Regions the declaration could gather the support of 20 Regions and 6 Alpine States. The recognition of the declaration by the XVth Alpine Conference was a strong sign that the Alpine area is jointly committed to the careful use of this important natural resource.

[Back to top](#)

Report on the in-depth review of the topic “parsimonious use of soil”

The political debate of the Ministers at the XV Alpine Conference on the issue of soil protection was fueled mainly by the report of the Compliance Committee on the in-depth review of the topic “parsimonious use of soil”. This report analyses the implementation of three important provisions of the Protocol on Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development and the Protocol on Soil Conservation. The main concerns of the report, which was adopted by the Alpine Conference, related to preventing soil sealing and to steering the consumption of surfaces. The elements for the interpretation of the selected provisions and the recommendations on how to reduce land take and to prevent soil sealing, which were elaborated by the representatives of the Contracting Parties and the Observer organizations together with experts, constitute a valuable set of indications for a sustainable practice in this field.

[Back to top](#)





New Secretary General appointed

The XV Alpine Conference did not only bring us a new presidency and several important documents; the Conference designated the next Secretary General of the Alpine Convention. Since the 6-year mandate of the current Secretary General, Ambassador Markus Reiterer, is coming to an end, the process of selecting a new candidate has started already last year and has finished at the Conference by officially confirming Alenka Smerkolj from Slovenia as the successor of Mr Reiterer. Ms Smerkolj has long-year experience in international business and financial management and has also served as the minister responsible for development, strategic projects and cohesion in Slovenian government between 2014 and 2018. Ms Smerkolj will take over the work of Mr Reiterer in July 2019.

[Back to top](#)

Output of the Thematic Working Bodies

In the years 2016 – 2019, the following twelve Thematic Working Bodies (be them Boards, Working groups – WGs or Platforms – PFs) worked in fulfilment of their mandates approved by the XIV Alpine conference: Alpine Climate Board (ACB), Transport WG, Natural Hazards (PLANALP) PF, Ecological Network (ECONET) PF, Water Management in the Alps PF, Large Carnivores, Wild Ungulates and Society (WISO) PF, Mountain Agriculture PF, Mountain Forests WG, Ad-hoc Expert Group on Spatial Planning, Sustainable Tourism WG, Green Economy Action Programme Advisory Board, Macro-regional strategy for the Alps WG.

They were the “thematic core” of the Alpine Convention, contributing to key topics of relevance and producing knowledge and information to support the decision-making processes within the Convention. Their results thus constituted an important part of the XV Alpine Conference in Innsbruck (AT). The vast documentation produced cannot be easily summarized; anyway, during the Conference, some elements that characterize the overall work done and results achieved were highlighted. First of all, the outputs stand out for their variety, which very well represents the different Alpine Convention target groups: indeed, the Thematic Working Bodies not only produced reports and studies - such as the 7th report on the State of the Alps on Natural Hazard Risk Governance, produced by PLANALP - but also policy papers, pilot actions, collections of best practices, workshop and events. Moreover, cooperation remained a common denominator for the Thematic Working Bodies, who sought possible synergies and opportunities to work together. Many Thematic Working Bodies provided a substantial contribution both to the Alpine Climate Target System 2050 – developed by the ACB - and the Green economy Action Programme – developed by the Green Economy Advisory Board. Moreover, the Chairs of all Thematic Working Bodies met in an exchange in Vienna (AT) on 30-31.01.2017, in order to explore the possibilities of cooperation. Besides that, other potential synergies between Thematic Working Bodies of the Alpine Convention and EUSALP Action Groups were discussed in Gmunden (AT) (5-6.10.2017) and in Vienna (AT) (10-11.09.2018).

- ***Spotlight: Green Economy Action Plan***

Also during the XV Alpine Conference, the Contracting Parties welcomed the Green Economy Action Programme 2030 (GEAP). The process of elaboration was led by Germany and entailed an inclusive and in-depth continuation of the work that was already started in the scope of the RSA6 on “Greening the economy in the Alpine region”. Moreover, the GEAP aims at implementing the recommendations and principles that are laid down in the RSA6 in a holistic and concrete way. The Action Programme provides a set of possible actions to the Members and the Observers to the Convention as a stepping stone towards a green Alpine economy. Find out more about the process and read the [full report](#).

[Back to top](#)



We are Alps 2019 Compact Edition

This year, the [We are Alps Tour](#) was held as a "Compact Edition", taking place on 3 and 4 April in and around Innsbruck. Nine journalists from Germany, Austria, France and Slovenia as well as the Head of the newly established Villach Infopoint were led by the Permanent Secretariat on site visits on the topics of flood prevention and river ecology, avalanche control and moor restoration (as a contribution to climate change mitigation). As always, they travelled only by public transport and some walking was involved. The group had inspiring discussions with the partners in charge of these activities and got also a direct insight into the work of the Alpine Conference, meeting with the participants at the official opening ceremony and the closing press conference of the XV. Alpine Conference. To date several articles have already been published as a result of the tour and more are to follow.

[Back to top](#)



©Caroline Begle

AlpWeek Intermezzo - The future of the Alps starts here and now

How will the Alps look like and how do we want them to look like, tomorrow? This question was the theme of AlpWeek Intermezzo, which took place simultaneously with the XV Alpine Conference in Innsbruck (AT). During two days, key stakeholders and people from different backgrounds tackled central issues concerning the future of the Alpine Region in the fields of, amongst others land use, climate change and mobility.

On the first day, guest speakers were given the opportunity to personally elaborate on three issues. Based on a case study for sustainable protection mechanisms, Mrs. Šifković, (Legal centre for the protection of human rights and environment) stressed the importance of mapping vulnerable rivers and tributaries and put forward to limit of land use. Mrs. Bienassis, mayor of Saint-Pierre-d'Entremont spoke about the consequences of and the reactions to climate change. The final presentation by Mr. Skonieczki (Office of the Tyrolean Government) addressed new and intelligent means of transportation to be developed in order to reduce the burden on the population while maintaining prosperity without further expanding the road network. The results of the discussions were reported to the XV Alpine Conference the following day.

The second day started with a picture-keynote of views on the past and present situation in the Alps by Mr. Hechenblaikner, herewith visualizing the fact that a pure continuation of some past patterns cannot be the solution for a good tomorrow. They led to a call for a better future by the young citizen of the French Alps, Natael Fautrat in a second keynote. A variety of projects aiming at a better tomorrow in the Alps were presented and opened the floor for discussions at related marked stands. Finally, the fruitful discussions, the Alpine music and the poetry slam summary by Mr. Koschuh, added up to a comprehensive and successful event. The program and market stalls can be found on the [website](#). More output of the event will be added soon.

[Back to top](#)

4th Young Academics Award

Young Alpine researchers stood in the spotlight during the evening reception of the Austrian Presidency. Their Alpine relevant scientific work was awarded within the scope of the Young Academics Award; the award that the Alpine Convention makes available to the best and most innovative Masters' theses on relevant aspects of the Alpine environment, economy and society. The topic of this year's edition was "Sustainable water management in the Alps". The applicants covered all Alpine languages and their backgrounds reached from engineering to biology. The international jury – composed of 4 members, each also representing one Alpine language – evaluated the received works and interviewed the finalists in person. Their judgement determined the following winners:

1. Marta Zaniolo (IT): "Design and application of drought indexes in highly regulated water systems"
2. Marina Amadori (IT): "Characterisation of transport phenomena in Lake Garda through integrative hydrodynamic and meteorological modelling"
3. Gianluca Antonino Vassallo (GE): "Design and development of a living green wall for greywater treatment"

Additionally, three special prizes have been awarded by the Alpine Convention Infopoints:

- Kim Ferjančič (SI): "Fish passability assessment of transverse water obstacles in the Bača river" (Infopoint Tolmin)
- Giovanni Martino Bombelli (IT): "The influence of climate change on hydro power production of large reservoirs in Lombardy" (Infopoint Morbegno)
- Michele Bigoni (IT): "Validation of guidelines for groundwater quantitative status assessment: application to Aosta Valley" (Infopoint Grand Paradis)

[Back to top](#)



Winners of the Alpine-wide contest "ClimaHost" have been revealed

On the eve of the XV Alpine Conference , during an award Ceremony in the Hofburg, the winners of the Alpine-wide contest "[ClimaHost](#)" have been revealed! We congratulate:

- Theiner´s Hotel | Gargazon bei Meran (IT)
- Mountain Design Hotel Eden Selva | Selva di Val Gardena (IT)
- Biohotel der Daberer | Dellach (AT)
- Höllentalangerhütte | Grainau (GER)
- Hotel Mondschein | Stuben am Arlberg (AT)

Sustainable tourism in the sense of the Alpine Convention is mostly alive through the involvement of hosts who display to their guests how to live in the Alps in harmony with the environment. The Austrian Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism launched the first ClimaHost contest in summer 2018, looking for creative solutions for climate protection and energy efficiency in Alpine hotels and restaurants. "*ClimaHost is a very concrete initiative to give recognition to good practices and share them across borders*", states Secretary General Markus Reiterer.

[Back to top](#)



©BMNT/ Paul Gruber

YPAC - talking with, not about the youth

Prior to the XV. Alpine Conference the highest representatives of the Conference meet the delegates of the [Youth Parliament to the Alpine Convention](#) (YPAC) for a direct discussion welcomed in the Tyrolian Parliament by the second vice president of the Tyrolian Parliament, Stephanie Jicha.

During the XV. Alpine Conference, students of the Youth Parliament participated actively on the conference table for the first time. They highlighted in clear words the urge to act regarding [climate change](#) and [soil protection](#) to ensure a good future for their generation, too.

[Back to top](#)



News from the Secretariat



Villach hosts the first Austrian Infopoint of the Alpine Convention

On 4 April 2019, the Dobratsch nature park (AT) became the 7th Infopoint of the Alpine Convention and the first on Austrian ground by signing a Memorandum of Understanding. The initiative is actively supported by the state of Carinthia, the nature park communities of Nötsch im Gailtal, Arnoldstein, Bad Bleiberg and the city of Villach, where the office of the nature park Dobratsch is located.

As early as 1997, Villach became the first city awarded as „Alpine Town of the Year“. The goals and four pillars of the nature park Dobratsch (1. education, 2. recreation, 3. regional development and 4. protection of the ecoregion) meet the objectives of the Alpine Convention as well as its Protocols and Declarations. *"As a contact point for the general public on site, the Infopoint in Villach will surely contribute to an optimal implementation of the Alpine Convention",* so states the Secretary General of the Alpine Convention, Ambassador Markus Reiterer, who is pleased with the cooperation with the Dobratsch nature park and the city of Villach. *"Today more than ever, the Alpine Convention can only be filled with life through the engagement of the inhabitants of the Alpine region, the Contracting Parties, the regions, the Alpine networks and municipalities. Effective partnerships with our Infopoints are playing a key role herein",* so Reiterer.

[Back to top](#)



Renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Chamonix Infopoint

The Permanent Secretariat participated in the work of the AG4 at its 10th meeting in Bolzano on 18-19 March, as well as in two meetings of its Project Assessment Methodology Task Force. The AG4 work plan for 2019-2022 was discussed, and progress towards the project assessment methodology made.

[Back to top](#)



ClimCards: Alpine climate in your hands!

As a major part of the XV. Alpine Conference was dedicated to the topic of climate change with the adoption of several documents, including the Alpine Climate Target System 2050, the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, with the support of the Austrian Presidency, has developed a new card game to help spread the messages of the Target System. The ClimCards card game focuses on different climate targets and actions needed to achieve those targets, be it on the level of policy or individuals. With different unexpected events, the game simulates the situations in which we find ourselves while trying to achieve the aim of climate neutral and climate resilient Alps. Supported with colourful illustrations, the game is suitable for 3-6 players of 10 years of age or older, and is currently available in English language. If you would like to receive a copy, contact us at info@alpconv.org.

[Back to top](#)



©BMUB/Thomas Trutschel

Goodbye Editorial by Silvia Reppe, former Focal Point of the Alpine Convention for Germany

Also after 25 years, the Alpine Convention remains a politically effective instrument. I would even go so far as to say, that the holistic policy called for under the Convention, to ensure both the protection and the sustainable development of the Alpine region, is more easily achievable today than when the Convention first entered into force. This is thanks to the steady improvement in environmental standards, a growing knowledge of environmental issues and increasing awareness among the public that more action is urgently needed in order to preserve the sensitive ecosystems.

The Multiannual Work Programme 2017-2022 (MAP) has proved a suitable instrument for securing greater continuity in the implementation of the Convention, Protocols and Declarations. The priorities of this MAP have focussed the Alpine Convention on developments which, 25 years ago, were not on the political agenda. These include globalisation, climate change, demographic change, inward and outward migration, and the holistic approach of green economy as a response to these trends. This has significantly increased the political weight of the Convention.

When setting out our vision of the Alps as a pioneer region for sustainable lifestyles in the heart of Europe, we made an ambitious voluntary commitment. The report presents many actions along the path towards this goal. However, a lot remains to be done, and after nearly 20 years of working for the Alpine Convention, I ask myself how we could take even more effective and tangible action.

Unquestionably, the Alpine Convention is not high on the list of priorities in the capitals of the Alpine states. Our limited resources reflect this. In the experience of the Federal Environment Ministry, however, strengthening cooperation with the Permanent Secretariat and with transboundary Alpine networks such as AidA, Alpenstadt e.V., CIPRA and ALPARC, can make the Parties to the Convention more effective. The partnership approach of the MAP expressly encourages this. Joint projects with local and regional players can facilitate concrete implementation of the Alpine Convention on the spot. The Alpine-wide activities of the networks have a major multiplier effect. The Alpine Space Programme offers a particularly useful means of mobilising the necessary finance.

Our public relations activities must reach the people who live in the Alpine region. In my view, the report shows that we have made great progress in this regard, as demonstrated by successful joint initiatives such as the Reading Mountains project, the cooperation with the Youth Parliament and the creation of Alpine Convention Infopoints.

For me, a well-funded Permanent Secretariat, fully and competently staffed, is an excellent instrument to effectively support the Parties in implementing the Alpine Convention. I would like to express my thanks for the Secretariat's work.

The Secretary General of the Alpine Convention together with the entire Secretariat team wishes to thank Ms Silvia Reppe for the friendship, cooperation and support over so many years. As Markus Reiterer said during his farewell speech to Ms Reppe: *"Silvia has been nothing less than the heart of the Alpine Convention"*. We wish her all the best for her future endeavours.

[Back to top](#)

Copyright © 2019 Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, All rights reserved.

[unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

MailChimp

This email was sent to

|EMAIL|

[why did I get this?](#)

[unsubscribe from this list](#)

[update subscription preferences](#)

|LIST:ADDRESSLINE|

|REWARDS|