

Tagung der Alpenkonferenz

Réunion de la Conférence alpine

Sessione della Conferenza delle Alpi

Zasedanje Alpske konference

**XVI**

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**ANLAGE/ANNEXE/ALLEGATO/PRILOGA**

- 1 Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention: Activity report, April 2019 – November 2020



ALPENKONVENTION  
CONVENTION ALPINE  
ALPSKA KONVENCIJA  
CONVENZIONE DELLE ALPI

Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention

# ACTIVITY REPORT

April 2019—November 2020

Submitted to the XVI the Alpine Conference

# PHISICALLY DISTANCED, VIRTUALLY CONNECTED

Foreword by the Secretary General



Have you also asked yourself over the past year: “When will conferences and meetings take place in real life again and what will they look like?”, “When can the kids get back to school?” or “What will be left of

the socio-economic life as we knew it?”. One thing we cannot deny: life, also in the Alps, has changed since the coronavirus struck.

In 2020, the Permanent Secretariat spontaneously developed into some sort of a chameleon: constantly adapting itself to the circumstances. With the difference that we wanted the Alpine Convention to be anything but less visible to our Contracting Parties, Observers, partners and stakeholders in the Alpine arc and beyond. With joined forces and in close cooperation with the French and the upcoming Swiss Presidencies, we managed to set up a sustainable multilingual online conference system. We dealt with the challenges of home office and learnt to appreciate its

positive sides. We supported interactive, virtual workshops. As a result, digital data traffic has never been so high and the persons behind it were highly valued. At a time when borders were closing, we helped to keep the transnational exchange high on the agenda across all topics of activity of the Convention.

This Activity Report gives an insight into the continued support provided by the Secretariat to the organs of the Convention, the projects we initiated and supported, the committed people we met (physically or virtually) across the Alps and the events we organised, often in cooperation with partners, since the XV Alpine Conference.

These manifold activities and our successes in a spirit of cooperation provide a healthy breeding ground to seize the opportunity to steer a more equitable and green recovery. For in disruptive times, one must question the new reality and dare to take bigger steps to strengthen resilience in the area, address the challenges such as climate change and pave the way for a sustainable life in the Alps for upcoming generations.

The Permanent Secretariat is ready to escort the Contracting Parties on this road.

**Alenka Smerkolj**

Secretary General of the Alpine Convention

# SUPPORT TO THE BODIES OF THE ALPINE CONVENTION

## Alpine Conference

The XV Alpine Conference took place on 4 April 2019 in Innsbruck (AT) and was certified as a “Green Event Tirol”, in line with the Secretariat’s sustainable approach to meeting organization. The Conference brought about two significant changes for the daily work of the Permanent Secretariat. First, the Presidency of the Alpine Conference was handed over from Austria to France, and second, Alenka Smerkolj was appointed as the new Secretary General to start her term in mid-July.

The Permanent Secretariat has been in charge of supporting the French

Presidency with the organization of the XVI Alpine Conference, scheduled on 10 December 2020. The Secretariat has been helping the Presidency in defining the programme and in the setup of the logistics, also in coordinating with AlpWeek Intermezzo, the Young Academics Award and EUSALP. Due to the sanitary situation, alternative scenarios to hold the Alpine Conference either as initially foreseen in Nice (FR) or online were prepared, until the Presidency decided for a virtual conference

## Permanent Committee

The Permanent Secretariat worked closely with the Austrian as well as the French Presidency and the Monegasque delegation

to organize two meetings of the Permanent Committee in 2019 in Innsbruck (AT) on 2-3 April and in Monaco on 14-15 November,



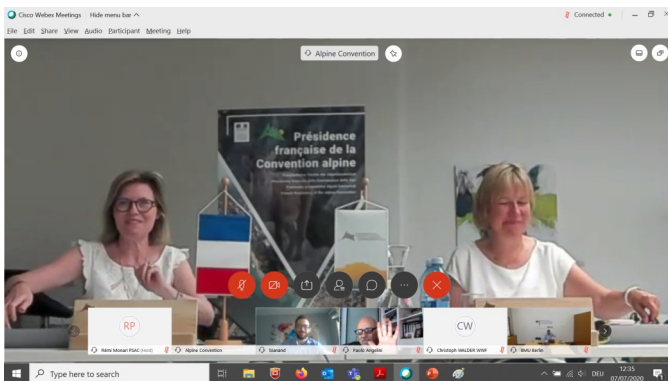
*Participants of the PC68 at the excursion to Grimaldi forum. Photo: PSAC*



respectively. Both events were certified as “green events”, the 68<sup>th</sup> PC meeting was even the first international event awarded such a label by the Monegasque government.

In 2020, both PC meetings, initially planned in Aix-les-Bains (FR) and Innsbruck/Mutters (AT), were converted to online sessions because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 69<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 7-8 July, was the first ever PC meeting not to be held face-to-face, which required thorough research and tests in order to identify a

setting which would allow the participation of all Contracting Parties and Observers. In cooperation with the interpreters, interpreting technicians and IT technicians, the Secretariat provided a functioning platform with four language interpretation to allow the meeting to run as smoothly as possible. The 70<sup>th</sup> meeting took place on 21-22 October and was organized in a similar setting, although this time, due to the worsening of the sanitary situation, the Presidency and Secretariat also worked from different locations.



*PSAC and French Presidency teams at PC70. Photo: PSAC*

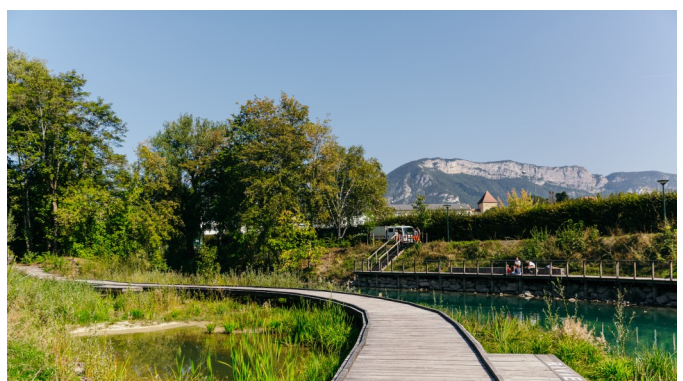


## Presidency

The French Presidency's Alpine-wide Conference “Water resources and Alpine rivers: adaptation to the challenges of climate change” gathered more than 130 participants on 18-19 February 2020 in Annecy (FR). The Permanent Secretariat was in charge of the logistics and the

communication on the event and its results.

The second Presidency event is the Mountain Biodiversity Day, aimed at disseminating the knowledge of Alpine Convention Bodies and the commitments



*Highlights from the Water Conference in Annecy. Photo: PSAC (left), Claire Simon (right).*

of the Alpine Conference in the field of biodiversity, within the Alps and to other mountain areas in the world, and at contributing to the recognition of mountain specificities ahead of the IUCN Congress and the COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Secretariat is liaising with the Alpine Biodiversity Board, ALPARC and UNEP to support the organization of this event, initially planned back-to-back to the IUCN Congress in Marseille (FR) and which will now be held in a virtual form on 13 January 2021.

The French Presidency convened a meeting with the Observers which had presented requests for the reinforcement of the Alpine Convention, in Paris (FR) on 4 November 2019, as well as a two-day Heads of Delegation meeting in Innsbruck (AT) on 7-8 January 2020, where the key deliverables of the French Presidency were discussed. The Secretariat provided support



*Secretary General meeting the chair of the Permanent committee in Paris in October 2019. Photo: PSAC*

## Compliance Committee

The national reports on compliance of the Contracting Parties' commitments under the Alpine Convention and the reports on compliance with the Declaration Population and Culture were due at the beginning of September 2019. Over autumn and winter 2019 as well as during the

for the organization and the contents of these meetings, as well as for follow-up Heads of Delegation meetings on 1 April, 3 June, 23-24 September and 23 November 2020, which were held online due to the sanitary situation.

The Secretariat also supported the Presidency with the preparation, in terms of contents and logistics, of the 29<sup>th</sup> Compliance Committee meeting which took place online on 5-6 October 2020.

On behalf of the Presidency, the Secretariat also prepared two workshops of the Chairs of the Thematic Working Bodies and provided logistical assistance to the Alpine Climate Board, Alpine Biodiversity Board and Large Carnivores, Wild Ungulates and Society Working Group (WISO) as outlined in the next section.

The Secretariat also prepared a banner for the Presidency and published and updated the Presidency page on the Alpine Convention website.

These tasks were carried out through the recruitment of a dedicated Presidency support officer as well as the involvement of all other Secretariat team members. Regular briefings with the Presidency took place in Paris (FR), Innsbruck (AT) and via phone, e-mail and video calls.

course of 2020 almost all national reports for the ordinary procedure were submitted, whilst only three Contracting Parties also submitted their reports regarding compliance with the Declaration on Population and Culture.

At its online meeting on 5-6 October 2020 the Compliance Committee initiated a revision of the collection and processing of the information on the implementation of the Alpine Convention and its Protocols by the Contracting Parties and agreed to start an in depth review of a specific topic, if the Permanent Secretariat will be provided

## Thematic Working Bodies

The XV Alpine Conference was a milestone for most of the Thematic Working Bodies of the Alpine Convention. Under the French Presidency, eight active Thematic Working Bodies have been operating. As usual, the Permanent Secretariat has been ensuring continuous support by appointing project officers who followed the work of the individual Advisory Boards and Working Groups and supported their Chairs in the preparation of the meetings as well as their follow-up. The Secretariat also supported the French Presidency in the organization and moderation of a meeting with the Chairs of the Thematic Working Bodies, which took place on 3-4 July 2019 in Bolzano/Bozen (IT). At the meeting, the Chairs were introduced to some general information, procedures and tools, they presented the mandates of the Thematic Working Bodies and discussed the cooperation, in particular with regard to the RSA8, the implementation pathways of the Alpine Climate Target System 2050 and the Alpine Space projects which might be relevant to the work of the individual Thematic Working Bodies. A second, virtual meeting with the Chairs took place virtually on 12 November 2020. It allowed

### Alpine Biodiversity Board (ABB)

The Permanent Secretariat supported the Alpine Biodiversity Board, chaired by Italy, which met for the first time in 2019, in

with sufficient means to fulfil its tasks. Furthermore the Compliance Committee adopted a structure of a draft report of the Compliance Committee as the next step of the current ordinary procedure and called on the Contracting Parties to submit the missing national reports.

the Chairs to present their results and draft mandates and lay the foundation for effective synergies in the next years.

The incoming Swiss Presidency took the lead in drafting, together with the respective Chairs, the mandates of the Working Groups and the work programmes of the two Boards for the years 2021-2022, which were submitted to the 70<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Committee and subsequently the Alpine Conference. The Permanent Secretariat assisted Switzerland in this process.

The Permanent Secretariat has also established a new cloud-based file exchange service called AlpConv Cloud, replacing the old AlpConv Intranet. Chairs and members of all the Thematic Working Bodies were provided with user accounts and can now use the Cloud as a platform to gather and share their work.

Below follows a description of the work of the individual Thematic Working Bodies which the Permanent Secretariat supported in the current mandate.

Gorizia (IT) on 1-2 October and twice in 2020, respectively in Turin (IT) on 28-29 January and, due to the COVID-19 pandemics, in form of a virtual workshop on 16 July. The main tasks of the Board



were the preparation of a form and subsequent collection of information on national and Alpine-wide legislation related to biodiversity as well as the development of a concept for two workshops. The stocktaking analysis was the first step towards the elaboration of a set of biodiversity targets for the Alps. The Permanent Secretariat provided organizational support to the meetings, including, on behalf of the French Presidency, the provision of simultaneous

interpretation in the four Alpine languages at the January 2020 meeting, held back-to-back with a meeting of the Alpine Climate Board – as well as feedback to the activities. Moreover, the Secretariat liaised between the ABB and the French Presidency in order for the Board to provide inputs to the draft Declaration on Mountain Biodiversity that were submitted to the XVI Alpine Conference and to the programme of the Mountain Biodiversity Day.

### Alpine Climate Board (ACB)

The mandate of the ACB until the XVI Alpine Conference consists of facilitating the operationalization of the Alpine Climate Target System 2050 as well as drafting a revised Climate Action Plan. Both tasks encompass all fields of competence of the Alpine Convention. As in the previous stages (stock-taking and drafting of the target system), the Permanent Secretariat supported the Chair in obtaining exhaustive feedback from the relevant Thematic Working Bodies of the Alpine Convention as well as other specialist groups (EUSALP AG9, former expert group on spatial planning, etc.) for

the identification of sequences of measures to reach the 2050 targets, the so-called implementation pathways of the ACB.

The Secretariat participated in the following meetings of the Alpine Climate Board: 6<sup>th</sup> meeting on 16-17 September 2019 in Lyon (FR), 7<sup>th</sup> meeting on 29-30 January 2020 in Turin (IT), 8<sup>th</sup> meeting on 13 May 2020 and 9<sup>th</sup> meeting on 9-10 September 2020 (both virtual); two workshops on 13-14 May 2019 in Salzburg (AT) and on 15-16 September 2020 (virtual) as well as seven separate preparation meetings (ACB core group). On behalf of the French Presidency, which covered the costs, the Secretariat carried out the logistical organization of



*ACB workshop on the communication strategy. Photo: PSAC*



the Lyon meeting as well as of interpretation services for the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting (in cooperation with the Italian delegation) and the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The Secretariat also provided support in the dissemination of invitations to the workshops as well as of results of the ACB, in particular in the European Climate-ADAPT Newsletter, at the EIONET Workshop on "Climate Change Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation" on 12-13 June 2019 in

### **Large Carnivores, Wild Ungulates and Society Working Group (WISO)**

The Large Carnivores, Wild Ungulates and Society Working Group, chaired by Slovenia, gathered for the first time under the French Presidency on 22-23 October 2019 at Lake Bled (SI). The first part of the meeting was dedicated to a regular exchange among the members on activities for large carnivores management. During the second part, the Working Group continued with brainstorming sessions on the practical executions and contents of their planned mandate outcomes. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the planned meeting and fieldtrip in April 2020 had to be cancelled. In the meantime, the national delegations

### **Mountain Agriculture and Mountain Farming Working Group (MAMF)**

The Permanent Secretariat supported and took part in the first meeting of the Working Group Mountain Agriculture and Mountain Forestry (MAMF), chaired by Italy, on 8-9 October 2019 in Turin (IT). The mandate was discussed in detail, especially the over-view of adaptation initiatives to climate change. In addition, a Workshop on the implementation pathways developed by the Alpine Climate Board took place,

Copenhagen (DK), the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Colloquium on Climate Change in Mountain Areas on 23 October 2019 in Jaca (ES) and the EUSALP Conference "Climate, Risks, Energy" on 30 September 2020 (Chamonix, FR and online) and by assisting Austria in preparing a presentation at the 4<sup>th</sup> European Climate Change Adaptation conference (ECCA), taking place in Lisbon (PT) on 28-31 May 2019. The Secretariat also participated in the conception of the website of the ACB, [www.alpineclimate2050.org](http://www.alpineclimate2050.org).

elaborated their contributions to the foreseen report on lessons learned through experiences of application of prevention measures for damages by large carnivores. The results were discussed on 12-14 October 2020 at a virtual meeting.

During the final meeting, the second priority of the WISO, i.e. a summary of the experience exchanges on wild ungulates management and discussion on the importance of transboundary cooperation, was dealt with. The Permanent Secretariat supported the Chair throughout the mandate. Initial logistical preparations for the French Presidency to host the final meeting and a site visit in the Maritime Alps (FR) were aborted due to the conversion in a virtual meeting.

aimed at collecting a set of measures that would implement the Alpine Climate Target System 2050. The second meeting of the Working Group took place on 14-15 May 2020 online, whereby the progress in the implementation of the mandate was reviewed. Other tasks of the Working Group included exchanges on connections between mountain agriculture, mountain forestry, tourism and biodiversity, contributing to the implementation of the Action Program for a Green Economy in the Alpine Region and developing

cooperative and innovative solutions for sustainable relationships between urban and rural space. To this effect, an online workshop on the topic “Mountain forestry and mountain agriculture for enhancing

### Natural Hazards Working Group (PLANALP)

The Natural Hazards Working Group, chaired by Austria, held four meetings in this mandate period: on 24-25 April in Seggau (AT) as well as on 15-16 October in Vitznau (CH) in 2019 and virtually on 27 May and 16 October 2020. All meetings were attended and supported by the Permanent Secretariat. As usual, a part of all meetings was dedicated to reports on past and current events regarding natural hazards in individual countries and regions.

The main topic of the current mandate is contingency planning in the scope of natural hazard risk governance with special regard to residual risk. The group drafted the course of work as well as the concept and contents of their output, which includes performing surveys on a local and

biodiversity and tourism” open to relevant stakeholders was organized on 11 September 2020, to which the Secretary General gave a welcome speech.

regional level and presenting a white paper with recommendations for contingency planning. At the third meeting, the project consortium, contracted by the Chair, presented the detailed timeline and activities to be implemented by the group members to provide the results for the final analysis and report. During the summer, workshops with experts have been taking place in the countries of all delegations. During the autumn the report was being prepared, but could not be finished because of some delays in the process because of the pandemic. A preliminary report is being presented to the XVI. Alpine Conference and the final report will be presented at the 71<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Committee.

Special attention was also given to the promotion of the RSA7 in the individual countries and for different audiences.



*Awareness raising event for pupils on natural hazard risks organized by PLANALP and EUSALP AG8 in Heimschuh. Photo: PSAC*

## Soil Protection Working Group

The XV Alpine Conference has appointed the newly established Soil Protection Working Group, chaired by Germany, which met two times in 2019, on 18-19 June in Munich (DE) and on 16-17 October in Innsbruck (AT – where they were welcomed by the Secretary General) and three times virtually in 2020 (22 April, 21-22 July, 7 October). Germany funded a position at the Permanent Secretariat for a Project Officer to continuously support the Chair in the coordination of the Working Group, the preparation of its meetings and the drafting of its reports.

Soil Protection being a cross-sectoral issue, the Group had exchanges about soil events and with several Alpine Convention thematic working bodies as well as other external groups, projects and organizations, discussing actively how the future of their product, the Alpine Soil Partnership (AlpSP), could be ensured. As a result, several Contracting Parties of the Alpine Convention will support the coordination unit of the AlpSP for the next few years. Furthermore, a stock taking of institutions, projects and networks relevant for soil protection in the Alps was done. To tackle the challenge of raising awareness, the

Group developed the concept of an “Alpine Soil Film Tour” for broad and young target group. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the organization of events was limited significantly, but the first three Alpine Soil Film Tour events will probably take place in autumn 2020 in Austria, Germany and Slovenia. First steps in facilitating the implementation of Articles 20 (establishment of harmonized databases) and 21 (establishment of permanent monitoring areas and coordination of environmental monitoring) of the Soil Conservation Protocol consisted in a stocktaking of soil monitoring sites in the perimeter of the Alpine Convention, discussions on data harmonization and the establishment of a cooperation with the JRC regarding the European soil survey, LUCAS Soil.

Also, a report on challenges and solutions towards a more economical and prudent use of soils in the Alps was elaborated by the Group. Finally, selected interlinkages between qualitative and quantitative aspects of soil protection were especially addressed in the fields peatlands, soil function assessment, excavation material as well as strategies of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) regarding soil.



*Participants of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Soil Protection WG meeting in Innsbruck. Photo: PSAC*



## Transport Working Group

The Transport Working Group, chaired by France, met on five different occasions: 2-3 June 2019 in Grenoble (FR), 21-22 December 2019 in Paris (FR), 12 March 2020, 18 June 2020 (both virtually) and on 10-11 September in a hybrid meeting between Munich (DE) and virtual.

The Working Group's mandate has been covering four different topics. Their task was (1) to draft a position paper on modal shift of the Alpine freight transit, (2) making a collection of good practices in reducing transport demand, (3) performing a study on existing and new technologies for sustainable passenger transport and (4) making an overview of the impacts of transport in the Alps on air quality. The

Permanent Secretariat assisted the Working Group in carrying out these tasks by providing support before and during the meetings, advising the Group and its Chair on institutional and strategical aspects, taking minutes as well as keeping track of the different delegations' inputs and documents. Additionally, the Secretariat tried to ensure the coordination with other ongoing processes like EUSALP AG4 and the RSA8 Working Group, which has been dealing with a partially overlapping topic.

The Secretariat additionally involved the Transport WG in the process for defining the pathways for the Climate Target System 2050 through a dedicated workshop to gather contributions, inputs and comments.



*Meeting of the Transport WG in Grenoble (FR). Photo: PSAC*



## Working Group for the Preparation of the RSA8

Information about the work of the Working Group is available in chapter on SOIA.



# NETWORKING

During the course of 2019 and 2020, the Permanent Secretariat kept regular contacts with the Contracting Parties, Observers and Alpine Convention Working Bodies as well as with the Infopoints and

other partners to ensure effective coordination and cooperation among the relevant Alpine Convention stakeholders. Some selected highlights are described in more detail below.

## Contracting Parties

One of the first priorities of the new Secretary General upon taking office was to meet the people involved in the Alpine Convention bodies and processes. She has visited each Alpine country; the visits

included meetings with several ministers of the Alpine Conference as well as with the Heads of Delegations to the Permanent Committee, the Focal Points and staff from the relevant ministries.



*Secretary General in Berlin visiting Svenja Schulze, German minister of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (left), and in Ljubljana visiting Andrej Vizjak, Slovenian minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning (right). Photo: PSAC (l), MOP/ Sašo Vöröš (r)*

The main themes discussed included the expectations by each Alpine country towards the Alpine Convention in the upcoming years, the ways in which cooperation can be improved even more and the specific topics of relevance for the single country. All in all, climate change was highlighted as a topic on which strong Alpine-wide cooperation is needed; the work with young generations also emerged as very important. The Secretary General had the opportunity to present her vision

for the Permanent Secretariat in the upcoming years and her aim of strengthening the relevance of the Alpine Convention in global processes such as at the Sustainable Development Goals.

The European Union is the only Contracting Party, which was not visited by the Secretary General in 2019, due to the changes in the Commission. A visit was planned for 2020, but is further postponed because of the current sanitary situation.



*Secretary General in Vaduz visiting Dominique Hasler, minister of Home Affairs and Environment of Liechtenstein (left), and in Vienna visiting Maria Patek, Austrian minister of Sustainability and Tourism. Photo: PSAC*

The Permanent Secretariat also provided communication support and participated in the following events of the Contracting Parties: Slovenian Alpine Convention Days (18 October 2019, with the next edition scheduled for 4-5 December 2020) and the International Conference "Alpine Landscape Meets Culture" - ALMCC 2020 (28-30 September 2020). The Secretary

General also attended the side-event "EU eco-corridors: a mountain to climb" organized on 13 October 2020 in the frame of the European Week of Regions and Cities 2020 and the virtual conference "Outdoor tourism with a perspective - Between climate change, sustainability and crisis management" organized by Germany on 16-17 November 2020.

## Observers

The Secretary General also met with several Observer organizations. Besides individual meetings at the Permanent Secretariat, the main occasions which offered the opportunity for an exchange with the Observers were the final

conferences of EUSALP AG6 and of many Alpine Space projects (such as Links4Soils, HyMoCARES, AlpFoodway and ALPBIONET2030) in which the Alpine Convention Observers have been active and have played an important role. A great



*Secretary General at the panel discussion during the Links4Soils final conference. Photo: PSAC*



opportunity for meeting and networking were also the 68<sup>th</sup> Permanent Committee meeting in Monaco and the EUSALP Annual Forum in Milan (IT).

A team of the Permanent Secretariat also took part in the 25<sup>th</sup> Danilo Re Memorial in the Hohe Tauern National Park (AT), organized under the umbrella of ALPARC in January 2020.



*PSAC team at the Danilo Re Memorial.  
Photo: PSAC*

## Infopoints

Infopoints are very important partners for the Secretariat, since they bring the work of the Alpine Convention closer to the local communities in the Alpine countries. In 2019, the Secretary General held introductory meetings with the Infopoints Grand Paradis (IT), Domodossola (IT), Chamonix (FR), Tolmin (SI) and Mojstrana (SI). An event by the Morbegno Infopoint on the occasion of the International Woman's day to be attended by the Secretary General in March 2020 had to be cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In September 2020, the representatives of the Secretariat also visited the Infopoint in Villach (AT).

During 2019 and 2020, the Permanent Secretariat strongly strived to improve the

cooperation among the single Infopoints; a pilot action was launched at the end of 2019 through the Christmas-themed exhibition "Advent at the Alpine Convention Territory" in Mojstrana. The Infopoints from Tolmin, Domodossola and Villach contributed with different items for the exhibition as well as with different local products for the Advent market. A similar event is also planned in 2020, adapted to the event organization restrictions.

In 2019, the Permanent Secretariat, with the support of Austria, started organizing a main Infopoint networking event which was planned to take place in May 2020 in Bolzano/Bozen (IT) and is now postponed



*Secretary General with the director of ARS.UNI.VCO during her visit at the Domodossola Infopoint (left) and with the director of the Slovenian Alpine Museum at the celebration of Museum's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary (right). Photo: PSAC (l), Fototeka GMJ–SPM (r)*



to spring 2021. The event will provide an occasion for the representatives of the Infopoints and the Permanent Secretariat to meet and exchange on the experiences and on the ways in which to strengthen the Infopoints in their day-to-day task of

spreading the Alpine Convention messages. The main goal of the workshop will be to plan a common project of the Infopoints to be carried out in the upcoming years.

## EUSALP

The Permanent Secretariat continued its strong commitment and efforts for contributing to EUSALP in several ways: by representing the Alpine Convention in the Executive Board and the General Assembly,

by co-leading the Action Group 6 (AG6) with Carinthia and by being an active partner in the AlpGov project as well as in the follow-up AlpGov 2 project.

### Representing the Alpine Convention in the EUSALP Process

During the Italian EUSALP Presidency in 2019 the Permanent Secretariat participated in the Executive Boards (EB) in Milan (IT) on 26-27 May, on 23-24 October and on 27 November.

The high point of the Italian EUSALP Presidency was the Annual Forum on 28-29 November 2019 in Milan. It featured a series of events with the involvement of

the Alpine Convention and AG6. During the EUSALP General Assembly, Secretary General Alenka Smerkolj stressed that more cooperation is necessary not only in an institutional logic but also regarding the substantial challenges the Alpine Region is currently facing in terms of climate change and sustainability. The Joint Declaration which was adopted on this occasion endorsed the current leaders of the AGs, and entrusted France with the EUSALP presidency in 2020. The results achieved by the three subgroups of AG6 in the period



*Leaders of AG6 at the EUSALP Annual Forum in Milan. Photo: PSAC*



2016-2019 were also mentioned during the plenary round table discussion on nature protection in the Alpine region, where three members of AG6 elaborated on projects which are related to or directly came out of the work of the AG6. Moreover, the Permanent Secretariat, together with Carinthia, organized and managed an information stand on AG6, where the results of AG6 were presented in the newly elaborated EUSALP AG6 flyer.

### Activities of the EUSALP Action Group 6

The AG6 met on 1-2 July 2019 to discuss the implementation of the activities of the AG6 work programme 2016-2019 and on the development of potential new topics for the work program 2020-2022. After several feedback loops with the AG6 members these topics were fine-tuned and finalized during the first online AG6 meeting on 24 August 2020. After the meeting, the AG6 work plan 2020-2022 was adopted in a written procedure.

The main AG6 event in 2019 was the Final Conference on 5-6 November 2019 in Innsbruck (AT), where the results of the past three years of work were presented. The conference included an AG6 meeting on the first day and a session open to the public on the second day. Here, the AG6 sub-groups presented the large variety of their

On 4 February 2020, France kicked off its Presidency of EUSALP in Lyon (FR). The Permanent Secretariat took part in the EB meetings in Lyon on 5 February, and in the online EB meetings on 18 May, 1-2 July and 25 November. All meetings included joint sessions with AG-Leaders. France declared its availability to assume the EUSALP Presidency also in 2021. The Annual Forum, including the next General Assembly, is foreseen virtually on 10-11 December 2020.

results and of ongoing ARPAP (Alpine Region Preparatory Action Fund) and ARPAP II projects with AG6 involvement, which are AlpJobs, CirculAlps, Impuls4Action, 100% Local and REDIAFOR.

The AG6 was not only active through its meetings and final conference, but also through conferences and workshops organized by its sub-groups. The subgroup "Future oriented farming and forestry" of the EUSALP AG6 organized an international conference on 13-14 May 2019 in Bolzano/Bozen (IT) on regional brands in the agri-food sector. Moreover, the subgroup 2 "Integrated and sustainable water management" organized a conference on 30 October 2019 in Turin (IT), where the elaborated good practice examples and recommendations for the realization of "green infra-structure solutions" in the framework of river



*Participants of the AG6 Final Conference in Innsbruck (left) and "Integrated and Sustainable Water Management" Conference in Turin. Photo: PSAC (l), Elisabeth Sötz (r)*

restoration and for dealing with droughts were presented to the public.

The AG6, co-leader Land Carinthia with the support of the Permanent Secretariat, organized a workshop on financing mechanisms of the Action Groups 6, 7, 8 and 9 on 12 September 2019 in Klagenfurt (AT), which offered useful information about the orientation of the European funding pro-grams for 2021-2027.

The Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, as co-leader of AG6, took up a leading role also in the Task Force Multi-functional Forests and Sustainable Use of Timber (TF MFSUT), which was established on 25 September 2019 in Innsbruck (AT). The Task Force organized a cross-sectoral workshop of the Action Groups 6, 7, 8 and 9 in the framework of the EUSALP Annual Forum 2019, that focused on the climate

### Participation at the AlpGov and AlpGov 2 Projects

In the period covered by this report, the Permanent Secretariat participated in two AlpGov meetings in 2019, on 2-3 May in Munich (DE) and 23-24 October in Milan (IT). The finalization of the AlpGov project, including the elaboration of the storytelling videos of the individual AGs (AG6 video), were discussed. The AlpGov Final Conference was embedded in the EUSALP Annual Forum 2019 and offered the AGs an opportunity to interact with young people on their respective topics.

Since 1 January 2020, the project partners are also involved in AlpGov 2, a follow-up project of the Alpine Space Programme. The Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention participated at the AlpGov 2 Kick-off meeting and the joint meeting of the EUSALP EB and the Board of Action Group Leaders (BAGL) on 5 February 2020

crisis and its effects on forest and timber value chains.

In order to prepare for a smooth transition to the new framework conditions for the activities of AG6 the Secretariat met with representatives of the AG6 co-lead Carinthia on 16 December 2019 in Salzburg (AT).

As a first activity for the implementation of the work plan of the second phase, the Permanent Secretariat as co-leader of AG6 presented the activities of the Alpine Convention and of AG6 in the field of pastoralism at an event of the French EUSALP Presidency on 8 October 2020. The AG6 meeting on 18 November 2020 was dedicated to boost further implementation steps of the work plan under the overarching topic "Co-operating for landscapes in times of climate crisis".



in Lyon (FR) and at the four AlpGov 2 virtual meetings in 2020 on 5 May, 30 June, 29 September and 6 November. Furthermore, the Permanent Secretariat participated at numerous other meetings for the progress of the different work packages, e.g. the meetings for the identification and developing the concepts of the five strategic priority policy areas. AG6 is actively participating in the activities regarding the policy areas "Spatial planning", "Innovation hub for green business" and "EUSALP innovation facility". Another main development of 2020 is the possibility given by the AlpGov 2 project to report staff costs, if the partner takes up additional tasks within

the project. The Permanent Secretariat made use of this possibility and took over the organization of the Road Show, an activity within the communication work package. The Road Show is an initiative for bringing the EUSALP closer to citizens and

### **Observer Role in AG4 and AG9**

The Permanent Secretariat continued fulfilling its Observer role in AG4 (Mobility) and AG9 (Energy), attending the respective five and three meetings in the reporting

period. The Permanent Secretariat also participated in the AG4 Task Force on project assessment methodology (which held two more meetings) and the AG9 Conference “Climate, risks, energy”.

## **International Organizations**

### **Mountain Partnership**

The cooperation with the Mountain Partnership mainly concerned the Report of the Secretary General to the United Nations General Assembly on Sustainable Mountain Development; this report is coordinated through a cooperation by the FAO and Mountain Partnership, which contacted the Permanent Secretariat for inputs concerning the Alps and the work of the Alpine Convention. Several good practices of the Alpine Convention on the topics selected for the report were provided. Some examples include: biodiversity – with the institution of the Alpine Biodiversity Board; governance – with the Report on the State of the Alps on

Natural Hazard Risk Governance; climate change – with the Alpine Climate Target System 2050; livelihoods improvement in mountain areas – with the Report on the State of the Alps on Greening the Economy in the Alpine Region and the international conference on the role of women in mountain areas.

The Permanent Secretariat also participated in an event organized by the Mountain Partnership in December 2019 on the occasion of the International Mountain Day; the event saw a panel discussion and a concert, dedicated to mountains, by Ludovico Einaudi after which the pianist was named “Ambassador of the Mountain Partnership”.

### **Carpathian Convention**

The cooperation with the Carpathian Convention (CC) has continued and further been deepened in 2019 and 2020. Besides keeping constant contacts and exchanging on the latest happenings in the two Conventions, the Permanent Secretariat also follows the exchange between the

Chairs of the Alpine Climate Board and the working group on Adaptation to Climate Change of the CC.

Secretary General Alenka Smerkolj has been invited to contribute to an official session at the virtual COP6 of the Carpathian Convention, taking place on 25 November 2020.

The Secretariats of the Alpine Convention and the CC aim at updating the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between them and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Both Secretariats agreed over the summer 2020 on a draft version of the updated MoC and started consulting the CBD Secretariat before submitting the update of the MoC to the respective bodies for revision and approval.

## OECD

Because of her work as a minister in the Slovenian government, the Secretary General has been invited by the OECD to a panel discussion titled “Metrics that make a difference: Policy users of well-being and sustainable development indicators in Latin America and the Caribbean”, which took place in Bogota (CO) on 23-24 October 2019. Here, the Secretary General took the opportunity to present the Alpine Convention in the light of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Other

### Host Cities and Institutions

Special cooperation is fostered with the regional and local representatives of the cities and regions where the Secretariat offices are hosted. Since taking office, the

Both Secretariats are also closely cooperating, together with the French Presidency, UNEP Vienna and ALPARC, in the preparation of the Mountain Biodiversity Day scheduled for January 2021. The achievements of this event should be further advanced and could be brought to attention at the CBD COP15 in 2021.



*Secretary General at the OECD panel discussion. Photo: OECD*

A deepening of cooperation between the Alpine Convention and the OECD is being explored.

Secretary General met with the mayors of both Innsbruck (AT) and Bolzano/Bozen (IT) as well as the governors of Tyrol and South Tyrol to ensure that the good relationships with the Secretariat continue.



*Secretary General meeting with Arno Kompatscher, the governor of South Tyrol (left), and Günther Platter, the governor of Tyrol (right). Photo: LPA/Guido Steinegger (l), PSAC (r)*





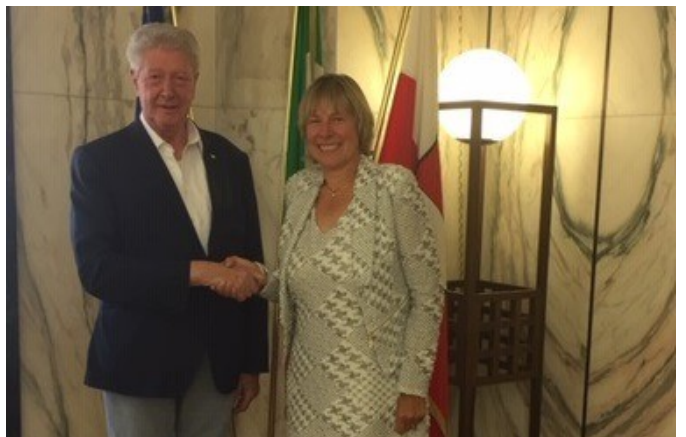
Moreover, the Secretary General met several times with the President and the Director of Eurac Research. The excellent cooperation with Eurac Research was also continued and was intensified in 2019 and 2020 through the constant collaboration with the Eurac Center for Sensing Solutions for the development of the Alpine Convention WebGIS/Atlas as well as through a meeting of the responsible for the GLOMOS initiative, a scientific alliance between the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) and Eurac Research. In addition to this, the experts from the

Communication department also helped with their knowledge with the development of the Alpine Convention communication strategy.

Both premises of the Secretariat are about to undergo some changes. Indeed, in November the Secretariat moved to new offices in Bolzano/Bozen, kindly provided by Eurac Research, which will enhance the visibility of the Alpine Convention within the institution. In Innsbruck, a refurbishment of the offices is foreseen for early 2021, thanks to the support from the City of Innsbruck and Land Tyrol.



*Secretary General meeting with Georg Willi, mayor of Innsbruck (left), and Renzo Caraschi, mayor of Bolzano/Bozen (right). Photo: PSAC*



## AlpWeek Intermezzo

AlpWeek Intermezzo, a shorter version of the AlpWeek, is a joint project of key Alpine organizations, among them also the Permanent Secretariat. The 2019 edition took place alongside the XV Alpine Conference in Innsbruck (AT). Two days of different events brought the main Alpine stakeholders and the interested public together to meet and exchange views. The umbrella topic was "Tomorrow in the Alps", which focused on different aspects of future living in the Alps, such as climate change, landscape conservation and sustainable mobility.

From 9 to 11 December 2020, the question "What are the perspectives of the youth on

climate change in the Alps?" will be investigated during the second AlpWeek Intermezzo. This event will take place virtually alongside the XVI Alpine Conference and will revolve around the topic "Youth and Climate". Young people,



*AlpWeek Intermezzo 2019. Photo: Caroline Begle*

non-profit organizations, educational institutions, incubators, careers guidance organizations, researchers, civil servants and politicians will come together to share ideas and experiences on how to live, work

### Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention (YPAC)

The Permanent Secretariat continues to support the YPAC in its efforts to bring the Alpine Convention as well as the political process closer to the Alpine youth. On 7-8 November 2019, a preparatory meeting of the teachers and students took place in Sonthofen (DE). The meeting was attended by the Secretariat, providing content inputs. In addition the participants had a Skype call with the Secretary General, during which they presented the programme of the YPAC session, which was initially planned for March 2020 in Rosenheim (DE), focusing on Sustainable Development Goals and with foreseen participation of the Secretary General at the opening ceremony and the final parliamentary session. Unfortunately, the event had to be cancelled shortly before it

and educate in the Alps in the future. Parallel sessions, virtual field visits and an AlpWeek Base camp will enable the participants to create a creative exchange in a special atmosphere.

would have taken place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Defining a new date for the YPAC session in Rosenheim was challenging against the background of the sanitary situation and the following, already scheduled YPAC session. The current agreement by the participating schools foresees a virtual Trogen YPAC session for 23-26 March 2021. Rosenheim will take over a session in the coming years.

The Permanent Secretariat furthermore supports possibilities of participation of YPAC students during the XVI Alpine Conference as well as for the AlpWeek Intermezzo – Youth & Climate.

The Secretariat is also supporting the YPAC on a technical level by providing the server space for hosting their website.



*Networking of the YPAC delegates with the members of the XV Alpine Conference. Photo: BMNT/Paul Gruber*



## Youth Alpine Interrail (YOALIN)

YOALIN, a project of CIPRA Youth Council (CYC) and CIPRA International, financially supported by Switzerland, Austria, Liechtenstein and Germany, ended with a closing event in September 2019 in Bern (CH) which was also attended by the Permanent Secretariat. Furthermore, an additional follow-up event took place on 9 December 2019 in Ljubljana (SI) by CIPRA International on the initiative of the Swiss



*Participants of YOALIN with representatives of Slovenia, Switzerland, CIPRA and PSAC. Photo: CIPRA International*

## Mountaineering Villages

The Permanent Secretariat also continues with the regular exchange with the Mountaineering Villages association. The Secretary General attended the association's General Assembly in Berchtesgaden (DE) on 11 October 2019 and virtually on 6 November 2020. In addition to this, she was also present at the inauguration of Luče (SI) into the Mountaineering Villages network in September 2019.

## ARGE ALP

The Permanent Secretariat continued assuming its role of Observer in the ARGE ALP and attended virtually the Conference of the Heads of Government on 30 September 2020.

delegation and with the support of the Slovenian delegation and CIPRA Slovenia. It was a meet-and-greet between the most engaged travellers (mostly from Slovenia, but also from Italy and Austria) with some decision makers, namely the Slovenian State Secretary for environment as well as the members of the Swiss and Slovenian delegations and the Permanent Secretariat.

Due to the COVID-19 situation and based on the principle of solidarity with the people at risk and society in general, it was decided to suspend the 2020 YOALIN edition. This implied that no kick-off event and no travel period through the Alps in July and August would take place. Nevertheless, the YOALIN community was kept alive! An alternative activity was found in the cooperation between the Permanent Secretariat, YOALIN and CYC to target young people (until the age of 30) in the 2020 photo contest of the Alpine Convention (more on this in the chapter on projects).



*General Assembly of the Mountaineering Villages Association. Photo: PSAC*



# PROJECTS OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT

## Reading Mountains / Leggere le montagne / Lire les montagnes / Berge lesen / Brati gore

In 2019, the Reading Mountains Festival took place for the 5<sup>th</sup> year in a row, celebrating the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Alps on the occasion of the International Mountain Day, 11 December. 75 partners in 7 Alpine countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Switzerland) as well as Belgium, Poland and Serbia organized [98 events](#) all together.

The Permanent Secretariat coordinated the partners and offered them support in the form of event promotion and information. It also organized three events in Innsbruck (AT), two in cooperation with local bookstores and one individually in the plenary room of the Innsbruck city council, which has been given at the disposal of the Secretariat by the mayor. In addition to this, ten partner events were financially supported with the funds provided by France and Austria, six of which were the

events of the Alpine Convention Infopoints and the other four were bigger events contributing to greater Alpine Convention visibility in France, Italy and Austria, respectively.



Because of the limitations in event organization due to the pandemic, the 2020 edition of the Festival will not take place in the extent we are used to. But in spite of this many partners responded to the invitation and will organize their events online. This year again all Infopoints will participate with their own events, which will again be financially supported by France. As usual, the Secretariat is organizing its own events—this year virtual—in all four Alpine languages.



*Reading Mountains 2019 event organized by Villach Infopoint. Photo: Verein Naturpark Dobratsch*



*Reading Mountains 2019 event in Innsbruck, co-organized by PSAC. Photo: PSAC*

## We are Alps Compact

The We are Alps Tour is an opportunity for a selected group of interested journalists within the Alpine perimeter to deepen their knowledge about the Convention and to experience hands-on the Alpine nature and culture. Although the topic of the tour changes yearly, meeting Alpine decision-makers, entrepreneurs, inhabitants etc. and travelling sustainably are the two solid values of this journey through the Alps.

In 2019, the Permanent Secretariat organized the 6<sup>th</sup> edition as a “We are Alps Compact” tour in and around Innsbruck (AT) within the scope of the XV Alpine Conference and focusing on the topics of climate change, natural hazards and governance.

In 2020, many things turned out differently and also the popular annual tradition of the We are Alps had to be halted. Already

having an outlook to 2021, a new opportunity of making journalists and media houses familiar with the Alpine Convention is presenting itself with the Innsbruck International Media Festival. The festival will take place in the last weekend of September or the first weekend of October 2021, at different locations in Innsbruck. It is the first one in a total of 3 planned editions. The focus is put on independent and high-quality journalism; journalists from around the Alps and the world will come together to discuss pressing questions, and will go into debate with academics, scientists and representatives from NGOs. This 3-day festival will include panel discussions and interviews, book presentations, workshops, exhibits, films and radio programmes. A possible cooperation in order to have the Alpine Convention embedded in the Festival is currently under examination.



*Highlights from the We are Alps Compact tour. Photo: PSAC*

## Young Academics Award

The first half of 2019 was dedicated to the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Young Academics Award on the topic of „Sustainable water management” whose prizes have been awarded at the evening reception of the XV Alpine Conference.

Since the XV Alpine Conference, the Secretariat started the planning and the preparation of the 5<sup>th</sup> edition. In coordination with the French Presidency, and with the support of the RSA8 Working Group, the Alpine Climate Board and ISCAR,



the topic “Emissions in the Alps: climate change and air quality, measurements and measures” was chosen and different sub-topics specified. The Infopoints of the Alpine Convention have been invited to participate in the project making the so called “Infopoint prizes” available for the contestants: four of them participated in order to award works with a specific relevance to their territories.

The Permanent Secretariat, in cooperation with experts from the jury, redefined the evaluation criteria and the modalities for application, and set up a dedicated webpage to collect the applications. The call was published in November 2019 and remained open until 31 July 2020. The Award was widely advertised in the 8 Alpine countries, especially in the peak times of the academic year, through direct contacts with universities, relevant institutions and partner networks and through the Alpine Convention website and social media channels.

As in the previous editions, an academic jury representing all four Alpine languages was set up. At the end of the application phase, the evaluation process began: the Secretariat organized the entire process, setting the criteria, the structure and the timeline as well as coordinating the work of the jurors and involving the participating Infopoints. The jury selected five finalists, which have been invited to a virtual finalists’ workshop in the framework of the XVI Alpine Conference in Nice (FR) to present their work to the jurors. On that occasion the jurors will make the final choice about the winners of the Award, which will be awarded in the scope of the online streaming events around the Alpine Conference. Also in this phase the Permanent Secretariat has been very active: from the design to the printing of the certificates, from organizing the jurors’ activities and the finalists’ online workshop to ensuring the award ceremony has the due visibility. At the end of the process, the Secretariat will also disseminate and advertise its results.



*Winners of the Young Academics Award 2019. Photo: BMNT/Paul Gruber*

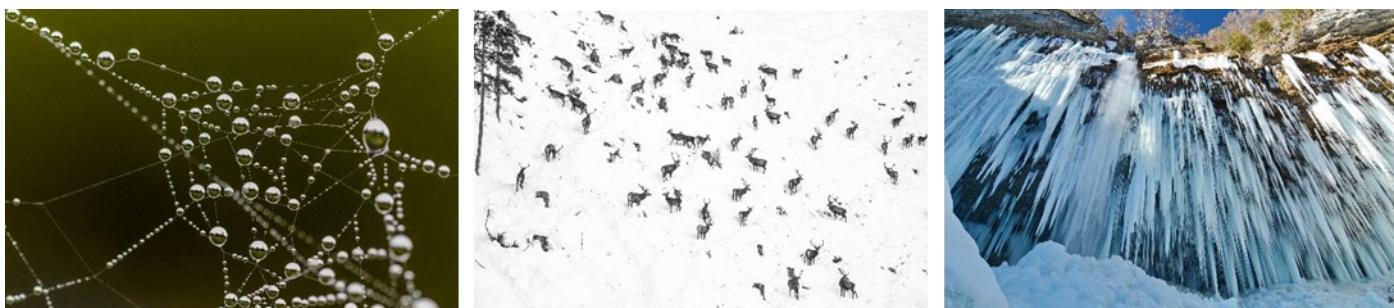


## Photo Contest

In May 2019, the Permanent Secretariat launched the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the annual Photo Contest. The anniversary edition focused on the topic of “Textures and Patterns in the Alps”. The participants were invited to contribute all kinds of photographs, which featured the textures and patterns we can see and find in the cultural and natural environment of the Alps in any shape or form. 128 photos were sent until the deadline in September, among which the jury, consisting of the Secretariat team, selected the best thirteen

that featured in the Alpine Convention Calendar for 2020. The authors of the winning photos were awarded with financial prizes and copies of the calendar.

The calendar was distributed to all the Contracting Parties and partners of the Alpine Convention as well as other interested individuals, who sent a request to receive it. They were also distributed as a Christmas gift by the Permanent Secretariat.



*2019 edition: 1<sup>st</sup> place: Troise Carmine-Washi (left), 2<sup>nd</sup> place: Andreas Hollinger (middle), 3<sup>rd</sup> place: Zoran Stanko (right)*

Our Alpine-wide photo contest is one thing that didn't change completely in 2020. On 2 June, the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the Alpine Convention's Photo Contest was launched with the support of the upcoming Swiss Presidency of the Alpine Convention, CIPRA International and the CIPRA Youth Council.

This edition was dedicated to the theme “Contrasts in the Alps”. Although at first sight the Alps build a harmonious entity as a transnational mountain area, taking a second look there are a lot of differences to identify. Unlike in previous editions, this year's photo contest was targeted at a specific group of photographers. Young people until the age of 30 were invited to

catch the contrasts in the Alps in creative, beautiful and meaningful pictures.

In the end, we received 99 pictures of which 13 were selected by a jury composed of members of the Youth Parliament to the Alpine Convention, CIPRA's Youth Council and the YOALIN project. These winning pictures illustrate the Alpine Convention 2021 calendar and will be announced in the run-up to International Mountain Day (11 December). The calendar will be presented by the upcoming Swiss Presidency at the XVI Alpine Conference and given to the Contracting Parties, Observers and partners of the Alpine Convention as a Christmas present.

# SOIA

In 2019 and 2020, the main activities of the Permanent Secretariat in the framework of the System for Observation and Information on the Alps were related to the dissemination of the 7<sup>th</sup> Report on the State of the Alps (RSA) on governance of natural hazards, to the support to the ad-hoc

Working Group for the elaboration of the RSA8 on air quality in the Alps and to the development of the new Alpine Convention Atlas that will replace the current WebGIS. Additionally, the Permanent Secretariat played a major role in the Young Academics Award.

## Reports on the State of the Alps

One of the main tasks of the Permanent Secretariat in the scope of the SOIA refers to the biannual Reports on the State of the

Alps. Below you can read a more detailed overview of the activities carried out.

### Seventh Report on the State of the Alps

After the XV Alpine Conference gave official approval to the RSA7 in April 2019, the Secretariat carried out the dissemination activities, which included, among others: advertising the Report on

the website, the social media and the newsletter as well as shipping the Report to the national delegations, the Infopoints and other interested subjects. Additionally, the Secretariat further disseminated the text in other subsequent relevant meetings and conferences, especially through PLANALP.

### Eighth Report on the State of the Alps

The Permanent Secretariat supported the ad-hoc Working Group and its Chair in coordinating the Group and its activities. On the one hand, the Secretariat provided the Working Group with the Cloud infrastructure and kept it up-to-date with the most recent documents and minutes, providing also the Alpine Convention perimeter for the mapping purposes, as well as the comprehensive list of the municipalities (LAU2) within the Alpine perimeter to allow the members to collect data appropriately.

On the organizational side, the Permanent Secretariat supported the Chair of RSA8

Working Group in running the six Working Group's meetings, which took place on 4-5 June 2019 in Paris (FR), on 10-11 October 2019 in Annecy (FR), on 27-28 January 2020 in Innsbruck (AT), respectively on 7 and on 26 May 2020 via video-conference, and on 21-22 September 2020 in Munich (DE). In particular, the logistics of the Innsbruck meeting were organized entirely



*"Group photo" of the RSA8 Working Group.  
Photo: PSAC*

by the Secretariat. At the same time, the Secretariat kept track of the different delegations' inputs, proposals and requests and, in general, in setting the timeline, steering the process of drafting as well as advising the Chair on strategic decisions and institutional aspects. The PSAC ensured a proper and efficient coordination of all the parties involved and facilitated the ministerial consultation phase. Additionally, the Secretariat fostered the communication with the Transport Working Group and the Virtual Alpine Observatory (VAO) in order to evaluate

possibilities for their contributions to the Report.

Additionally, the Permanent Secretariat already initiated many of the steps necessary for the publication of the Report: it set up the translation process which is taking place in the months of October and November 2020; it initiated the work on the maps, to ensure they are published correctly and in time both in print and in digital form; it defined a suitable layout for the text in line with the new corporate identity.

## Ninth Report on the State of the Alps

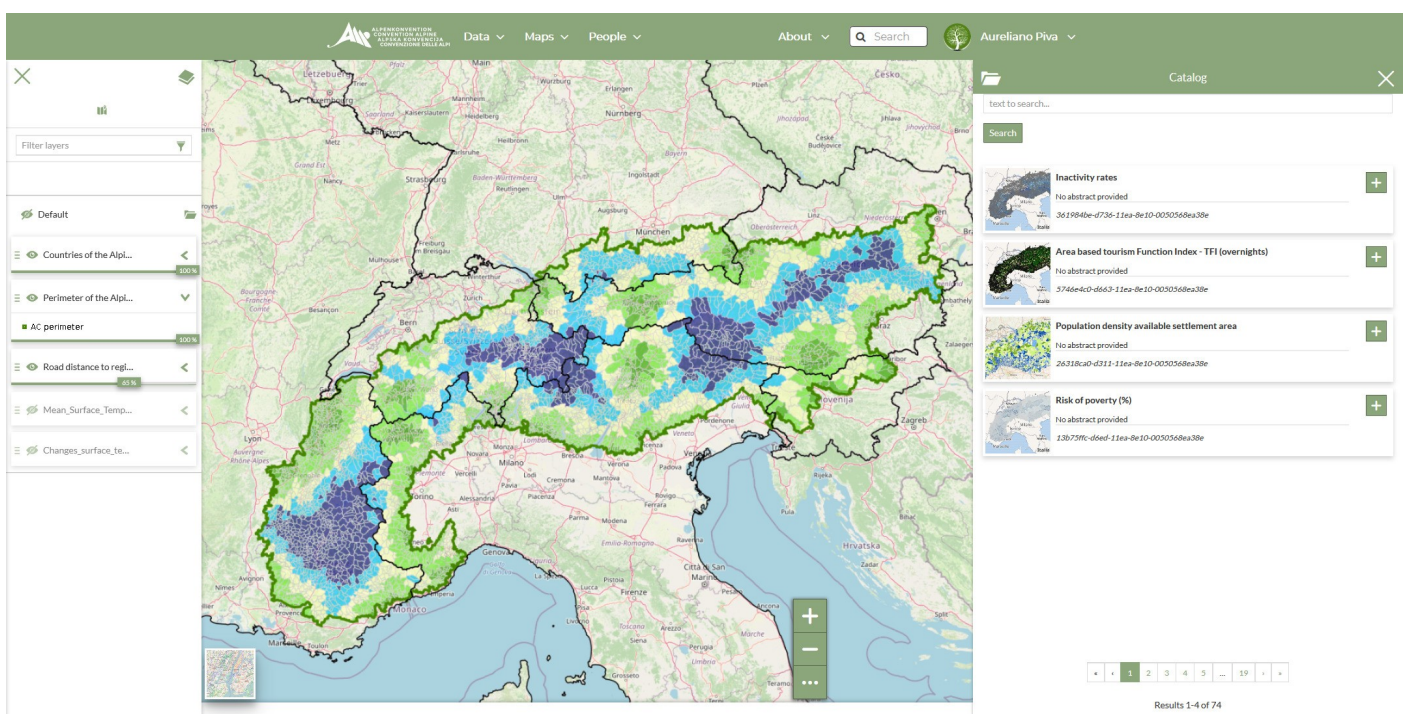
The Secretariat was involved at an early stage in supporting and advising the future

Swiss presidency in defining the structure and the process of drafting the next edition of the Report on the State of the Alps.

## WebGIS and Alpine Convention Atlas

During 2019 and with the financial support of Austria, the process of renewal of the current Alpine Convention WebGIS was initiated because of the age of the platform, the limitations of its functionalities and the costs for its management.

Several options for renewal were evaluated through a detailed analysis of the aims and of the target groups of the platform, as well as of the specific needs of the Alpine Convention. Based on the results of this analysis, the detailed requirements for the



*Alpine Convention Atlas.*



development of a new platform were evaluated in terms of technical features (hardware and software), behavior and layout. The defined requirements allowed the Permanent Secretariat to choose a platform suitable for the Alpine Convention targets, as well as to identify the right contractor to carry out the development tasks. A contract was drafted and signed in February 2020.

The Permanent Secretariat initially drafted an accurate project plan, which covers the timeline, the actors and stakeholders involved, the risks and the benefits of this renewal project. Based on this plan, the development phase started in March 2020. Since then, the Secretariat has been heavily involved in the development with a set of activities, which included amongst others: the organization of weekly meetings with the developers to monitor the process and to exchange on the open issues and achievements; the provision to the developers of constants inputs, feedback

and requests through a ticketing system; the definition and implementation of the specific settings for the behavior of the system; the evaluation of the technical options to solve different problems emerged during the process; the identification and solution of different bugs; the constant checks to make sure the system works according to the requirements; the verification of the correctness and of the consistency of the data and metadata imported from the previous WebGIS.

Additionally, many members of the staff of the Secretariat were involved in the testing phase of the new Alpine Atlas before its public release: this allowed the platform to be more user-friendly and its functioning smoother and simpler, as well as to single out and solve flaws in its functioning.

The new platform is expected to be released in the beginning of 2021.

# COMMUNICATION

The communication activities of the Permanent Secretariat in 2019-2020 encompassed various fields: from digital and printed media to the presence of the Secretariat at forums and conferences and own communication projects. The fresh

online presence following the launch of the new website in summer 2019 requires a sustained effort which was applied continuously also in 2020. Furthermore, the new Corporate Identity of the Alpine Convention was brought to the field.

## Online Presence

Initiated as a project within the Permanent Secretariat in 2017, the new website of the Alpine Convention was launched on 22 July 2019. The goal was to create a user-friendly browsing experience for all those who want to learn more about the work and aims of the Alpine Convention. Until November 2020 the website was also realigned with the new corporate identity.

In the framework of the renewal of the website, the Permanent Secretariat started elaborating a new concept for the quarterly newsletter of the Alpine Convention: after 22 editions, the newsletter was

discontinued and will be substituted with other media in accordance with the new communication strategy.

The Permanent Secretariat was also active as never before on its two social media channels (Facebook and Twitter), which resulted in an increase of followers, reaching 1,400 followers on Twitter in September 2020. Through social media, different International Days are celebrated, visits and events from the Secretariat as well as from partners are communicated and Alpine relevant information is shared.

## New Corporate Identity

The new design examples of the Alpine Convention were officially presented at the 69<sup>th</sup> Permanent Committee in Monaco. According to the rules of procedure of the Alpine Conference, a written procedure for the approval of this new corporate identity was carried out in the timeframe from 3 April until 4 May 2020 and concluded with a written consent from all Contracting Parties. In order to deploy the new design elements, the Permanent Secretariat made them available in the Alpine Convention Cloud.

During the course of 2020, further concrete steps were made to translate the new corporate identity on the field. The new design examples were applied to the stationery of the Secretariat and to business gifts but also to the web-design.



*New logo of the Alpine Convention.*



The latter will be taken to a further level in 2021 in order to convey the philosophy behind the new corporate identity as well as its “look and feel” to our online portal.

*New Alpine Convention umbrellas.*

## Communication Strategy

On the occasion of the redesign of the corporate identity of the Alpine Convention, the Permanent Secretariat also started the exercise of elaborating a clear Communication Strategy. A brainstorm session and SWOT-analysis during the staff retreat in January 2020 were the kick-off, together with several internal assessments of the communication activities carried out by the Secretariat so far.

The Communication Strategy was

elaborated during spring and summer 2020 and was finally presented and approved at the 70<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Committee. The strategy builds upon a clearly defined brand statement of the Alpine Convention: *“The Alpine Convention is leading the way for sustainable life in the Alps”*. It entails a clear target group classification, on which the communication objectives are conceived, and which fit at any time under the brand statement. The role of the Contracting Parties, Observers, Info Points and



*PSAC team during a workshop on the Communication Strategy and SDGs. Photo: PSAC*



Members of the Thematic Working Bodies as important and valuable multipliers is recognized and explicitly positioned with the future communication activities. Based on the Strategy, possibilities and opportunities of new communication channels and formats will be examined by the Permanent Secretariat.

One of the starting points for the new Communication Strategy was also the connection of the Alpine Convention to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With all of its Protocols, Working Bodies and activities, the Alpine Convention is a great example of SDG implementation on a transnational level.

## Alpine Convention Video

A further project with the communication actions, in particular corporate communication is the production of a new, multi-faceted video about the Alpine Convention, embedding the brand statement in a clear and understanding manner as well as in an artistic and aesthetically pleasing way. This videoclip or teaser will promote the vital work carried out within the Alpine Convention on the cross-generational interplay of ecosystems and biodiversity, humans, animals and plants. The visualisation of the connection with the Sustainable

In 2019 and beginning of 2020, the first steps were taken to identify how individual documents, activities and projects correspond with the respective SDGs and their targets.

The SDGs have been incorporated into the new communication strategy and in autumn 2020 a process of visualization of the connections between the Alpine Convention and SDGs is ongoing. This visualization will be included into the Alpine Convention website as well as the new outdoor exhibition.



*On the filming set. Photo: PSAC*

Development Goals transcends the Alpine level and underlines the global relevance of the Convention.

## Outdoor Exhibition

Within the scope of the Communication Strategy of the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention and to familiarize the general public with the work of the Alpine Convention, the Permanent Secretariat published a call for the conceptualization of a new, unique outdoor exhibition, visualizing the work carried out

within the scope of the Alpine Convention and its direct contribution to the SDGs.

The basic idea of the exhibition is to let pictures speak! Interesting facts and figures about the Alpine Convention would be shown to the public, whereby a clear link to the Sustainable Development Goals will be

provided. The exhibition is planned to travel around known public spaces within the Alpine region.

The first workshop and exchanges of

wishes and expectations versus costs and possibilities with the tenderer took place in September and the process is continuing in the autumn.

## Bringing the Alpine Convention Closer to the People

Within the mission to bring the Alpine Convention closer to the people, over 500 "ClimCards" card games – as developed on the occasion of the XV Alpine Conference – were sent out all over the Alpine perimeter and beyond! In the meantime, the exhibition "The Alps – A Journey through maps and pictures" continued its trip through the Alps with stops in Paris, at the Maison de l'Europe de Gap et des Alpes du Sud in Gap (FR) and at the Maison de l'Environnement/CIPRA France in Grenoble (FR).

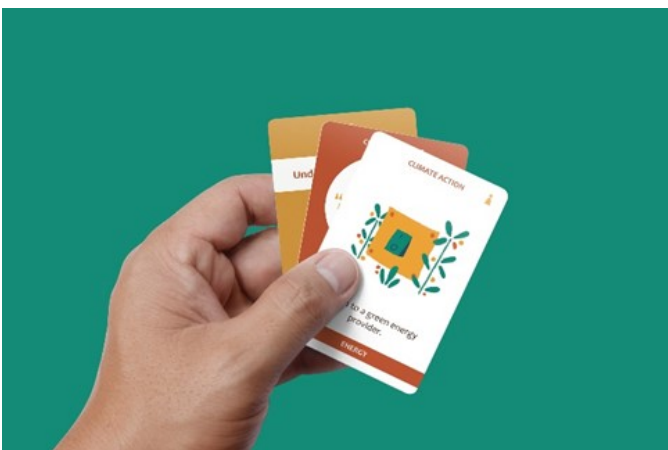
The Permanent Secretariat was also present on the field. At the first International Mountain Conference in Innsbruck (AT) in September 2019, we reached around 500 conference visitors from diverse scientific disciplines. The Reports on the State of the Alps and the WebGIS of the Alpine Convention served as an impulse for lively discussions on how to foster the sustainable development in the Alpine region. One of such happened on the



*"The Alps – A journey through maps and pictures" in Paris. Photo: Ministère de la Transition écologique et solidaire*

occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> Alpine Convention Day in Slovenia on 18 October 2019 in Postojna (SI), where the Permanent Secretariat together with a member of PLANALP presented the work of the Alpine Convention in the field of natural hazards. The 11<sup>th</sup> Alpine Convention Day in Slovenia will take place on 4 December and will be dedicated to the topic of soil.

Besides this, several initiatives were supported by the Permanent Secretariat in order to raise awareness about the Convention. In this sense financial support was given to the Innsbruck Nature Film Festival in return for a daily showing of an Alpine Convention trailer between 4 and 12 October 2019 as well as 2 and 10 October 2020. The Secretariat also provided communication support in the three main phases of the international and online short film festival, the Mobile Film Festival. As a patron of the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Alpine cultural award "Frontiere Grenzen", the same kind of support was provided. In reverse sense, the Secretariat could count



*ClimCards: Alpine climate in your hand!*

# TEAM OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT

Both 2019 and 2020 were very dynamic years for the Permanent Secretariat team. On 15 July 2019, Alenka Smerkolj took office as the Secretary General of the Alpine Convention, the first woman ever to cover this position. In-depth meetings with each of the staff members, for discussing mutual expectations, tasks and improvement possibilities, were part of her first weeks in office in-between visits to the Contracting Parties.



*PSAC team at the staff retreat in South Tyrol. Photo: PSAC*

Several changes in the composition of the Permanent Secretariat team took place in 2019 as well as 2020. First, in the late months of 2019, it was announced that the Deputy Secretary General would go on parental leave, which she started in February 2020. Since November she is working part-time. Most of her tasks in this time were redistributed amongst other staff members. Moreover, Austria kindly agreed to temporarily reinforce the team by seconding an officer on a part-time basis – the Permanent Secretariat expresses its gratitude for this welcome support.

In the light of the pandemic, also the Permanent Secretariat team assumed home office as of March 2020. Although the sanitary situation later enabled office presence again, due to construction works in the Innsbruck old town the colleagues working in Innsbruck will remain in home office presumably until June 2021.



Other relevant changes concerned the ITC and the communications department. After 14 years of taking care of the ITC infrastructure within the Permanent Secretariat, the IT officer resigned in April 2019. A call for replacement was issued with no satisfactory outcome; as a result, the ITC-related tasks of the Permanent Secretariat were outsourced to a specialized company.

Moreover, the communication and international relations officer originally temporarily hired for a parental leave



substitution was confirmed in her position in 2019. However, she left the Secretariat in October 2020 and a call for a new communication officer has been issued. Her successor will join the Secretariat team in December and will focus exclusively on communication matters.

As customary for an optimal support to the Presidencies, a part-time position, financed by France, has been established at the Permanent Secretariat. Because of parental leave, the initially appointed support officer was replaced in March 2020.

Some changes in the staff composition also concerned the branch office in Bolzano/Bozen, where a project officer was hired for a parental leave substitution. Thanks to generous support from Italy, he was offered to extend the cooperation with the Secretariat until July 2021 despite the return of his colleague from parental leave.

For the second half of 2019 and in 2020, opportunities for internships were offered to four excellent young master students. One of the interns was offered a contract as a part-time project assistant and is

supporting the Secretariat until the end of 2020.

Attention was also dedicated to on-the-job training of team members, such as language training. 2019 closed with the planning of a staff retreat in South Tyrol, which took place at the beginning of 2020 (22-23 January). Two workshops were organized in the scope of the retreat, respectively on the Communication Strategy and the Agenda 2030 (Sustainable Development Goals).

On a daily basis, the dedicated staff members work side by side in five languages – English, French, German, Italian and Slovenian. 80% of the team is female. On the initiative of the Secretary General, a revision of the staff rules was undertaken. First changes were adopted by the Permanent Committee at its 69<sup>th</sup> meeting and the process is expected to be finalized at the XVI Alpine Conference. The aim is to provide a more sustainable and employee-friendly working environment, ensuring that the Permanent Secretariat will also in the future be able to attract international, motivated and competent collaborators.



*PSAC team at the staff retreat in South Tyrol. Photo: PSAC*