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MULTI-ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME OF THE ALPINE CONFERENCE

2023–2030



IMPRINT

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Ad Hoc Working Group for the Preparation of the Multi-Annual Work Programme (MAP) 2023–2030

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Many more stakeholders contributed with valuable inputs to the MAP 2023–2030, notably in the thematic online workshops on the three priority areas and in the workshop series “roadMAP” in autumn 2021.

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I. What we strive for together

The Multi-Annual Work Programme (MAP) of the Alpine Conference for the years 2023–2030 is a tool to implement the [Alpine Convention](#) and its [protocols](#). The MAP also sets out a vision for the Alps as a model region for sustainable living. It aims at fostering joint activities in selected priority areas for cooperation. The MAP 2023–2030 is the fourth Work Programme in the history of the Alpine Convention. Valid until 2030, beyond the usual six years, it coincides with important national and international climate, biodiversity and development objectives such as the 2030 Climate Targets of the European Union (EU), the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN).

The MAP 2023–2030 helps to achieve the Alpine Convention's general objectives of the protection and sustainable development of the Alps. It pursues the following vision:

The Alps shall be a model region for a sustainable future worth living in for humans and all other species in 2030 and beyond.

This image was shaped by the Ad Hoc Working Group for the preparation of the MAP. It is closely related to the long-term goal of reaching climate-neutral and climate-resilient Alps by 2050, as expressed in the [Declaration of Innsbruck](#) at the XV Alpine Conference.

II. How we elaborated and structured the MAP

This vision for the Alps can only be reached if all the organs of the Alpine Convention work closely together to address the challenges the Alpine region is facing. These challenges are expressed as priority areas for cooperation. Supporting processes that stimulate the effectiveness and continuity of the activities undertaken are also needed. The MAP thus contains:

- three thematic priority areas for cooperation with qualitative objectives;
- principles which shall guide the way to 2030 with regard to implementation, communication as well as milestones and progress review.

The Ad Hoc Working Group consisting of representatives of the Contracting Parties, the Observer organisations and the Thematic Working Bodies of the Alpine Convention elaborated this Work Programme in numerous (online) meetings and consultation rounds. Further stakeholders in the Alps, also beyond the Alpine Convention circle, contributed with their knowledge, ideas, and expectations in a workshop series in six Alpine countries in autumn 2021 called “roadMAP”.

This participative elaboration and common spirit during the elaboration process shall be the starting point for a wide range of joint activities to help implement the MAP.



III. The challenges we are addressing

The challenges, which were at the centre of the previous three MAPs of the Alpine Conference, such as dependency on tourism and the development towards sustainable forms of tourism, transport issues linked to accessibility, air pollution, noise and greenhouse gas emissions, and demographic change have lost neither their relevance nor their timeliness. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated some of them, for example in the tourism sector.

Meanwhile, the climate and the biodiversity crises have become the greatest challenges of our time: temperatures in the Alps are increasing almost twice as quickly as in the rest of the northern hemisphere. The impacts of climate change on the Alpine territory are increasing and are affecting a growing number of previously untouched assets. Alpine biodiversity is coming under further stress due to increasing temperatures, pressures on land use and unsustainable forms of tourism. A stable climate and ecological integrity are the fundamental bases for a good quality of life for everyone in the Alps and a sustainable regional economy.

With less than ten years to 2030, taking ambitious action to address these challenges is more imperative and crucial than ever to limit irreversible damage to the climate and the natural richness in the Alps. Many opportunities lie in Alpine-wide cooperation and a cross-sectoral approach. With the MAP 2023–2030, the Alpine Convention wants to facilitate and promote exactly this. Further, it intends to facilitate and promote the transnational implementation of the SDGs.



IV. Where our priorities for cooperation lie

The new cooperation framework of the Alpine Convention until 2030 is based on three thematic priority areas: **biodiversity and ecosystems, climate change and quality of life, which are mutually interdependent**. The Multi-Annual Work Programme pursues a cross-sectoral approach and underlines the importance of addressing the three priority areas in a holistic way. It recognises and intends to promote actions that take into account the synergies and the trade-offs between the three areas. Therefore the bodies of the Alpine Convention shall carefully consider these interlinkages when formulating, carrying out and communicating their activities.

As the landmark workshop report on biodiversity and climate change of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states¹:

“Limiting global warming to ensure a habitable climate and protecting biodiversity are mutually supporting goals, and their achievement is essential for sustainably and equitably providing benefits to people.”

Limiting temperature increase and preserving and restoring Alpine ecosystems are core tasks in the Alps. The climate and biodiversity crises have to be tackled together if we want to solve them successfully and ensure a good quality of life in the Alps. All actors and sectors of activity of the Alpine Convention have a role to play in this endeavour and are called upon to jointly implement this Work Programme.

In order to facilitate the monitoring of the progress and potential gaps in the implementation of the MAP, explicit qualitative objectives for each priority area for cooperation are part of this Work Programme. The main fields of action and approaches to reach these objectives are mentioned. Concrete exemplary milestones shall be part of a roadmap.

¹ Pörtner, H.O. et al 2021. Scientific outcome of the IPBES-IPCC co-sponsored workshop on biodiversity and climate change; IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany, DOI:10.5281/zenodo.4659158 (p. 14).



Priority area 1: Conserving and valuing Alpine biodiversity and ecosystems



Objectives:

- Contribute to the achievement of the European and international objectives to protect, preserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystems in the Alps
- Strengthen the Alpine Convention's own biodiversity and ecosystem-related activities and integrate the topic into the work of all its bodies

The state of biodiversity is deteriorating rapidly around the world and most of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets that were set for 2020 by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have not been met. The Alpine area offers a wide range of natural and cultural landscapes of great importance for flora and fauna. However, as land consumption is continuing, habitats are becoming smaller and more fragmented, and as the climate crisis is unfolding, Alpine ecosystems and biodiversity are increasingly coming under pressure. Habitat degradation and species loss are also causing severe problems for human life such as the reduced availability of fertile soils and healthy water resources. The quality of the natural environment is also one of the foundations of Alpine tourism, and of a sustainable agriculture and forestry; it is therefore crucial for the economy.

At the beginning of the 2020s, a new stage for global biodiversity conservation and restoration is being set: The United Nations have proclaimed the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the Parties to the CBD are about to agree on a post-2020 global biodiversity framework in order to set the world on a path towards ambitious biodiversity conservation and restoration by 2030. This framework includes numerous milestones towards the 2050 Vision of "Living in harmony with nature". In accordance with this Vision, the EU has also adopted a Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

The Alpine Convention shall help the Contracting Parties reach the objectives set at European and global levels. It will do so by translating these global objectives in the Alpine context and by supporting national, regional and local authorities' efforts to reach them. It can, among other things, contribute by better monitoring the state of biodiversity in the Alps as well as by supporting the development of protected areas and by supporting the implementation of actions in priority habitats. Further, sustainable spatial planning and prudent use of soil are particularly crucial for the conservation and restoration of biodiversity in the Alps.

To reach these objectives and carry on these activities, the Alpine Convention relies on the Alpine Biodiversity Board and other Thematic Working Bodies whose work is linked to biodiversity. The Observer organisations will also be key players in this topic. Finally, the established cooperation of the Alpine Convention with the Carpathian Convention and the CBD will be further pursued.



Priority area 2: Taking ambitious climate action



Objectives:

- Implement the Climate Action Plan 2.0 on the way to reach climate-neutral and climate-resilient Alps by 2050
- Pursue cross-sectoral activities and look for cooperation beyond the environmental and climate sector

As the effects of global warming multiply and the target set in the Paris Agreement to limit warming to 1.5 degrees seems increasingly difficult to achieve, the Contracting Parties to the Alpine Convention have all made commitments to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. In addition to these global and national targets, the Contracting Parties of the Alpine Convention have also adopted the [Alpine Climate Target System 2050](#) and the [Climate Action Plan 2.0](#), which together aim at transforming the Alps into a climate-neutral and climate-resilient region by 2050. The focus of the concrete implementation pathways at the heart of the Action Plan over the medium term coincides with the validity of this MAP until 2030.

The activities of the Alpine Convention until 2030 shall aim at both mitigating climate change and increasing regional adaptation. The Alps are indeed particularly affected by the climate crisis and, at the same time, there is a large emission reduction potential in the Alps. Climate change affects all areas of activity of the Alpine Convention, so that not only the Alpine Climate Board, but all the Thematic Working Bodies have an important role to play. The challenges include among others the decarbonisation of transalpine freight transport through modal shift and the development of sustainable mobility solutions, the adaptation of the tourism sector and a reduction of its greenhouse gas emissions, the transformation towards a green Alpine economy, the prevention of climate-induced natural hazards, and the promotion and development of renewable energies while addressing undesired impacts on vulnerable Alpine landscapes and biodiversity. This requires good coordination and careful evaluation of trade-offs.

To pave the way for climate-neutral and climate-resilient Alps, the Alpine Convention shall build upon its existing instruments and in particular support the implementation of the activities foreseen in the Climate Action Plan 2.0, among others through the sectoral implementation communities. In this document, the Contracting Parties and the Observer organisations have identified and prioritised sixteen implementation pathways in ten sectors of activity because of their Alpine-wide relevance, their transformative character, their political relevance and their feasibility in the short term. The further, annexed, pathways shall be implemented as well. In addition, the Alpine Convention shall support the implementation of cross-sectoral activities and encourage the involvement of other ministries and stakeholders beyond those in charge of the environment and climate.

Priority area 3: Enabling a good quality of life for the people in the Alps



Objectives:

- Further the Alpine Convention's knowledge on the quality of life of people in the Alps, acknowledging and respecting territorial and individual differences
- Promote the inclusion of quality-of-life measures in public policy-making processes at all territorial levels

The Alps are home to approximately 15 million people and attract many more each year as tourists. Maintaining and enhancing the quality of life of the population is key to a resilient Alpine area, while improving the quality of life needs to be decoupled from harmful environmental and climate impacts. Quality of life is an overarching topic par excellence, as it is linked to all three spheres of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Aspects such as biodiversity or the availability and good quality of natural resources (air, soil and water) and the sustainable management (of mountain forests among others) are part of it, but it also depends on an efficient organisation of life in municipalities, towns and cities, on spatial development and good mobility and public transport, the availability of fair work opportunities, a sustainable economic development, the richness of cultural life and the inclusion of vulnerable groups. While many aspects of quality of life have already been tackled in the framework of the Alpine Convention, addressing it in its entirety is new.

The Alpine Convention shall increase its knowledge on quality of life and thus go beyond a subjective perception of it. This can be based on work that is taking place at European level, for example in the framework of the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) or the Long-term vision for the EU's rural areas up to 2040. Alpine-specific aspects shall be emphasised. It shall consider the different realities of life of people living in the Alps, whether they are regional or individual.

The Alpine Convention and its Contracting Parties, including through the work of the Thematic Working Bodies, shall promote concrete measures in public policies to improve the quality of life in the Alps. The Alpine Convention is also a platform for exchange and mutual learning between different actors, which can be used advantageously for promoting quality of life. From the point of view of territorial levels, municipalities have a particularly important impact on the quality of life of their inhabitants and the Alpine Convention shall strengthen their capacities, especially by involving and enhancing existing networks of municipalities and towns, such as the Community Network Alliance in the Alps and the Alpine Towns of the Year association.

Finally, the Alpine Convention shall communicate how its activities contribute to improving the quality of life for people in the Alps and thus reinforce their identification with the Convention's goals and targets.



V. The principles that guide us on the way to 2030

We implement through joining forces

This Work Programme shall be implemented through joint activities, as coordinated approaches are indispensable in addressing the challenges and reaching our objectives outlined above. In this endeavour, all Alpine Convention bodies play an important role, but the circle of implementers goes beyond these actors. Cooperation between all organs of the Alpine Convention and other players shall be at the heart of the implementation approach for this MAP and be further deepened through regular exchanges.

The Contracting Parties, who express their interest for Alpine-wide cooperation in the areas at the heart of this Work Programme, shall initiate and continue to support common projects and activities of the Observer organisations.

The Thematic Working Bodies, instituted by the Alpine Conference, and the definition of their respective mandates constitute a major instrument for the implementation of the MAP. This shall be supported by regular opportunities for exchange and collaboration between all Thematic Working Bodies, the Presidency in office and the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention. The aim of this is to jointly reflect on how the Thematic Working Bodies can contribute to the MAP objectives.

The Alpine Convention shall seek out partnerships and cooperation beyond its bodies. This includes programmes, strategies, associations and organisations of relevance for the Alps, such as the Interreg Alpine Space Programme, the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region EUSALP, the Territorial Agenda 2030 and ESPON. Exchanging with organisations and cooperation fora at international levels or in other mountain regions, such as the Carpathian Convention, can further enrich the Alpine Convention's approaches in the implementation of the MAP.

Engaging in partnerships with public authorities at local, regional and national levels, beyond the environmental sector, is crucial in implementing the MAP on the ground. The Infopoints of the Alpine Convention can facilitate these contacts through their rootedness at regional and local levels.

Children and young people are greatly affected by the decisions taken today. They are also actively contributing to the shaping of the Alpine region today and will do so even more in the future. The Alpine Convention shall thus also seek and support cooperation with youth representatives and engage in joint activities.



We communicate in targeted and effective ways

The MAP, with its clearly defined scope, is an effective base for communicating the Alpine Convention and its work for the protection and sustainable development of the Alps. Communication shall encompass the relevance and added value of Alpine-wide cooperation in the priority areas for cooperation. The core mission of the MAP could be communicated as follows: taking action on climate change and conserving biodiversity and ecosystems positively impact the quality of life for people in the Alps and enables the Alpine Convention to lead the way for sustainable life.

The topics of the MAP are relevant for a variety of actors in the Alps. Thus, diverse and accessible communication measures tailored to different target groups shall accompany this Work Programme until 2030 and enable its appropriation by many stakeholders. Communication shall concentrate on good examples and storytelling, focusing on people and concrete activities. The Contracting Parties, Observer organisations and partners are important multipliers in communicating the MAP.

We set milestones and review our progress

Joint activities are at the core of the implementation of this Work Programme. Setting exemplary activities for 2030 with intermediate milestones enables us to keep track of progress, reflect on our activities and identify potential implementation gaps. Exemplary activities, projects and cooperation fora to pursue jointly shall be outlined in an accompanying road-map.

The Thematic Working Bodies and the Presidencies, with assistance from the Permanent Secretariat, shall support the review of progress by including the contents of the MAP 2023–2030 in their mandates and connecting their reporting to the MAP objectives.



The Alpine Convention is a pioneer of its kind as the first international treaty dedicated to the protection and sustainable development of a transboundary mountain range – the Alps. The Convention was signed by the eight Alpine countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia and Switzerland) and the European Union, and came into effect in 1995.

The foundations of the Alpine Convention are the Framework Convention and the implementing Protocols and Declarations, which establish guiding principles and a framework for transnational cooperation in key areas of Alpine environments, societies, and economies. Based on these foundations, the Convention works to build partnerships and establish cross-sectoral approaches to address the most pressing challenges in the Alps.

Work is carried out in different formats by the Contracting Parties and the Alpine Convention's various bodies: the biennial Alpine Conference, the Permanent Committee, the Compliance Committee, numerous Thematic Working Bodies, and the Permanent Secretariat. Several Observer organisations also contribute to the implementation of the Convention.

The Alpine Convention is leading the way for sustainable life in the Alps, working to safeguard their unique natural and cultural heritages – now and for the future.



The Multi-Annual Work Programme 2023–2030 of the Alpine Conference sets out priority areas for cooperation until the end of this decade.

This strategic document outlines how, in the next years, climate action, biodiversity conservation and restoration, and supporting a good quality of life shall be at the centre of Alpine-wide cooperation within the Alpine Convention.



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