

# Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention

## Activity Report 2017-2019

# FOREWORD



**Ambassador Markus Reiterer**  
*Secretary General of the Alpine Convention*

As in the preceding years, the Permanent Secretariat worked hard also during the last two years to put the Multi-Annual Work Programme of the Convention 2017 – 2022 into practice and to provide the best possible support to the Contracting Parties. Our efforts were dedicated to a wide range of topics, including climate change and natural hazard risk management, in a year that saw both severe events having strong impacts on our Alpine landscape and the UNFCCC COP take a further step towards the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Moreover, our strong commitment went much further than that: we took steps forward for sustainable development and protection in the Alps by working in the domains of population and culture, biodiversity and landscape, green economy and transport. In addition, the Secretariat continued its leading role in the Action Group 6 of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP), with spatial development and soil conservation, sustainable agriculture and forestry as well as water as its core topics.

For sixteen years now, the Secretariat has been drawing on its strong mission, its vitality and the energy and engagement to help addressing the challenges for sustainability and find innovative approaches. We fulfilled the commitment to pursue, together with the Contracting Parties, the Observers and other partners of the Alpine Convention, the preservation of the Alpine natural and cultural diversity and the promotion of sustainable development in the Alps.

I invite you to discover in the following pages the Permanent Secretariat's wide range of activities and its most important projects, events and milestones during the past two years. This activity report gives an overview of the projects that we created, the engaged people we met across the Alps, the events we organised, often in cooperation with partners throughout the Alpine arc. If you would like to discover more, visit our website for more and detailed information.

I would also like to use this opportunity to wholeheartedly thank the entire staff of the Permanent Secretariat for their tireless and conscientious work; their professionalism and enthusiasm for the Alps and their protection and sustainable development is the indispensable ingredient and basis for the wealth of activities presented in this report. For the past six years it was my privilege and honor to serve as the Convention's Secretary General and I also want to take this opportunity to express my best wishes for success to my successor.



# Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention

## Activity Report 2017-2019

### IMPRINT

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# AT THE SERVICE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

The Permanent Secretariat acts as the institutional anchor of the Alpine Convention and is the reference point for the Contracting Parties and the Bodies of the Alpine Convention alike, offering them content-related, administrative and logistic support as well as assisting in carrying out the actions within the scope of the Convention and its Protocols. In particular, assistance is provided in the organization of Permanent Committees, Compliance Committees and through the constant support to the Thematic Working Bodies of the Convention.

The infographic shows the support provided by the Permanent Secretariat in the period 2017-2019. Additionally, the Secretariat had a crucial role in the preparation of the XIV Alpine Conference in Grassau (Germany) and the XV Alpine Conference in Innsbruck (Austria), in close cooperation with the respective German and Austrian Presidencies.



**5**

Meetings of  
Permanent  
Committees

**45**

Meetings of  
Thematic working  
Bodies

**4**

Meetings of  
Compliance  
Committee

**>8**

Meetings within  
the Presidency  
Programme

## XV ALPINE CONFERENCE AND WEEK OF ALPINE EVENTS IN INNSBRUCK

The activities of the Permanent Secretariat under the Austrian Presidency culminated with the XV Alpine Conference, which was held in Innsbruck (Austria) during the first week of April 2019. Thanks to the consistent and constructive engagement of the Contracting Parties, the outgoing and new Presidency, the Observers, the City of Innsbruck, the Land Tirol and the team of the Permanent Secretariat, the Conference and the week of Alpine events turned out to be a success. Spotlights were the topics of climate change in the Alps and natural hazard risk governance, with the Declaration of Innsbruck and of soil preservation, with the Declaration on Sustainable Land Use and Soil Protection. The Conference marked also the handover of the baton to France for the next two-year term Presidency of the Alpine Convention.

During this week several other activities were organized in Innsbruck with the support of the Permanent Secretariat: most importantly the Alpweek Intermezzo, which provided a significant forum for exchange between policy makers and civil society and the We are Alps Tour Compact (see p.9). The Alpine Conference also profited from the participation by representatives of the Youth Parliament to the Alpine Convention.



An extensive experience in organizing meetings leads also to a higher awareness of their environmental, social and economic impacts and of the positive effects that they can generate. This is why, in the last years, the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention has been striving for all events in the framework of the Alpine Convention to be designed, organized and carried out with high sustainability standards. Making sure that the events meet sustainability criteria goes beyond the environmental aspect and should take into account also the strengthening of the local economy as well as social aspects. The first recommendation of the Permanent Secretariat is therefore to always seek already available local or regional sustainability certifications, like "Green Event Tirol" or "Green Event Südtirol Alto Adige". Should such certifications not be available, or should they have disproportionate costs for the organizers, the Alpine Convention has elaborated its own checklist for the organization of "Alpine Convention Green events", together with a visual certificate. All bodies of the Alpine Convention are invited to consider the proposed measures and to comply with the checklist in the organization of their events.

# IMPLEMENTING THE MULTI-ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Multi-Annual Work Programme (MAP) sets out a vision for the Alps as a pioneer region for sustainable living in the Alps and is structured along six main themes:



**1. Focusing on people and culture**



**2. Taking action on climate change**



**3. Conserving and valuing biodiversity and landscape**



**4. Greening the economy**



**5. Promoting sustainable transport**



**6. Playing a leading role in EUSALP**

The MAP represents an important tool to foster a proactive implementation of the Alpine Convention and its Protocols as well as to focus and cluster activities on joint priority topics. The Permanent Secretariat has worked hard to contribute to the implementation of the MAP in all its priorities.

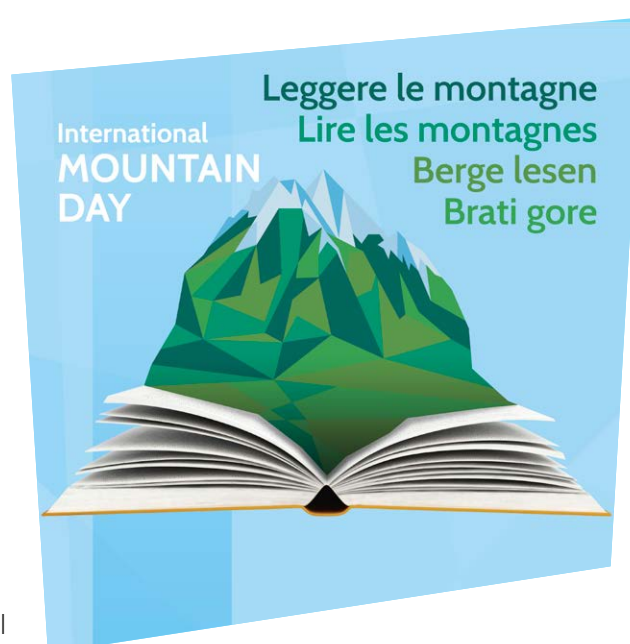
The following pages provide an overview of our work in this respect.

# PEOPLE AND CULTURE

## Reading Mountains Festival

Bringing people together in a time in which online communication is flourishing is sometimes a difficult but worthy task. The Reading Mountains Festival is a spark that lights up real-life exchanges across generations and borders, cultures and language groups, celebrating the rich Alpine cultural diversity. With this festival, the Alpine Convention invites partners to celebrate the cultural diversity of the Alps through the organization of events on mountain literature and beyond. The festival was initiated by the Permanent Secretariat and the German Presidency of the Alpine Convention in 2015 and takes place on and around the International Mountain Day (11 December). Thanks to the efforts of the Permanent Secretariat and the many partners involved, the Reading Mountains Festival has become a leading cultural event in the Alpine region. In 2017, the Festival was composed of a colourful mix of over 120 events.

With the support and the cooperation of hundreds of local volunteers, literary artists, word performers and musicians, bookshops, libraries, schools and inhabitants of the Alps, the Reading Mountains Festival went on stage in 2018 for the 4<sup>th</sup> time. Around 120 events took place in the 8 Alpine Countries, Great Britain, Poland, Romania and, for the first time, in Spain! Thanks to everyone who made it possible to enrich our mind, soul and to fill our ears and eyes with literary and artistic creations!



## We are Alps Tour

Each year, the Permanent Secretariat offers a selected group of interested journalists the opportunity to deepen their knowledge on the Alpine Convention, to learn about Alpine nature and culture and to meet Alpine inhabitants, farmers, entrepreneurs, etc. during a trip through the Alps. The topic of the tour changes yearly, but two solid values of the journey do not: meeting people who live and work in the Alps and traveling in a sustainable way! The last two editions of the tour were dedicated to the topics "Water in the Alps" (2017) and "Population and Culture - Then and now" (2018). In 2017, ten journalists were taken on a journey from Vienna to the Principality of Monaco, crossing Austria, Italy and France. In 2018, the We are Alps tour crossed three countries on a route linking Carinthia (Austria), Gorenjska (Slovenia) and Friuli-Venezia Giulia (Italy). In 2019, a compact format of the We Are Alps tour took place around the Alpine Conference in Innsbruck. The articles and broadcasts dedicated to the tour and released by the participating journalists are available on our website > activities > wearealps.





## Women in Mountain Areas

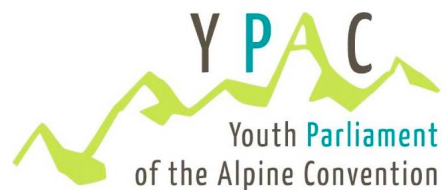


Under the priority “Population and culture” the Permanent Secretariat dedicated particular attention to the topic of women in mountain areas during the Austrian Presidency. The event which gave the first input was the International Conference “The Role of Women in Mountain Areas” in 2017, in which representatives from almost all mountain regions of the world came to Alpbach (Austria) to network, exchange best practices and establish cooperation on the question of how women ecologically, economically and culturally shape, maintain and improve activities in mountain regions. The output of the panel discussions led to the Declaration “Regional Solutions to Global Challenges”, which point out possible steps to strengthen the role of women in mountain regions at global level. After the success of the initiative, the Permanent Secretariat, together with the Austrian Mission to the United Nations, organized in 2018 a side event on the topic in the framework of the 62<sup>nd</sup> UN Commission on the Status of Women, whose topic was “Empowering Rural Women and Girls”.

## Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention

Working hand in hand with the young generation is key to overcoming the challenges awaiting the Alps. Therefore, the Permanent Secretariat was actively involved in the organisation and meetings of the Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention (YPAC). In 2017, the Permanent Secretariat held the introductory session of the YPAC in Innsbruck (Austria), while, in the run-up to the YPAC 2018 in Maribor (Slovenia), the Secretary General personally addressed the youth during an opening speech and also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the YPAC. The cooperation with YPAC continued also in the beginning of 2019, with the involvement of the Permanent Secretariat in the preparation of the session in Merano/Meran (Italy), which focussed on the topic of climate change. Delegates of the Youth Parliament to the Alpine Convention also attended the XV Alpine Conference.

Johanna Erlacher (President of the YPAC 2019) underlined: “According to experts there is a window of opportunity, in which we can change something. But this window will only remain open for a very short time. Therefore, the Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention is urging that something is changed now and not only when it is too late; to work on and implement solutions and measures radical, strict and now!”.



# CLIMATE CHANGE

## Support to the Alpine Climate Board

Climate change is a pressing issue and occurring at a faster pace in the Alps than in lowland areas. It is affecting the living conditions of their more than 14 million inhabitants, 30'000 animal species and 13'000 plant species. The impacts of climate change vary across the Alps, but they do not stop at administrative borders: Alpine-wide and cross-sectorial collaboration (for example, in tourism, agriculture, forestry and energy) in mitigation and adaptation is thus required.

The Permanent Secretariat actively supported the work of the Alpine Climate Board (ACB) by participating in the preparation, running and follow-up of its meetings. Over two years, the ACB worked in a collegial, highly participative manner, actively involving the other thematic working bodies of the Alpine Convention. The output is the "Alpine Climate Target System 2050" a concrete system of objectives of the Alpine Convention towards "climate-neutral Alps" and "climate-resilient Alps" by 2050. As a first step, the Board developed a comprehensive stock-taking, which identified over hundred recent or ongoing climate-related activities of Alpine Convention Bodies, Contracting Parties as well as Observers. The Secretariat contributed to this stock taking report, especially by synthesizing the activities of the Alpine Conference and the Permanent Secretariat itself and facilitating the provision of input by the Thematic Working Bodies.

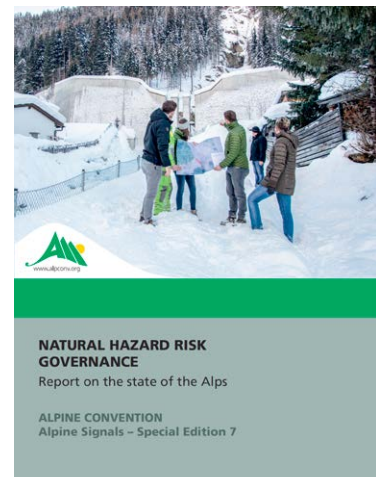
## Global Perspective on Climate Change in the Mountains

Climate change does not only affect the Alps, but all mountain areas globally. The situations in mountain areas in different regions of the world differ vastly, but they share common issues, such as the role of forests in climate change mitigation, the need for a careful water management in times of climate change and the urgency to tackle increasing natural hazards. The Permanent Secretariat seized the opportunity of the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP), in Bonn (Germany) and Katowice (Poland) respectively, to establish a dialogue with other mountain areas in order to promote a mountain-related perspective on climate change. In Bonn, together with the Austrian Presidency of the Convention and the Italian Delegation, the side-event "Mountains in motion: Climate Action in the Alps, the Carpathians, the Pyrenees and the Apennines" was organized. In Katowice, the perspective was shifted on how mountain areas also contribute to climate change globally: the Permanent Secretariat and the Austrian Presidency co-organized the event "Mountain regions moving towards carbon neutrality", which saw a discussion on climate change mitigation priorities and measures in mountain areas in Europe and in the Hindu Kush Himalayas. The Alps were also represented in Katowice by the Permanent Secretariat at the side event "Mountain adaptation – vulnerable peaks and people" on International Mountain Day 2018.

## Seventh Report on the State of the Alps "Natural Hazard Risk Governance" (RSA7)

The Reports on the state of the Alps offer periodical information to stakeholders and decision-makers in the Alps on ecological, economical, and social developments in the Alpine space. The 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the Report addresses the topic of "Natural Hazard Risk Governance": indeed natural hazards, which are increasing due to climate change, pose a threat to the living environment in the Alps through, for example, river floods, avalanches and rockfalls.

The Permanent Secretariat supported the Natural Hazards Platform of the Alpine Convention (PLANALP) in the drafting of the report, which was based on expert discussions and on data delivered by the Alpine countries. The Secretariat was also primarily in charge for the publication of the report, approved by the XV Alpine Conference.



# BIODIVERSITY AND LANDSCAPE

## Chairing the Platform “Large Carnivores, Wild Ungulates and Society” (WISO)

In 2016, the Permanent Secretariat was mandated to chair the “Large Carnivores, Wild Ungulates and Society” (WISO) Platform of the Alpine Convention. WISO has the aim of establishing a dialogue among the Contracting Parties of the Convention in order to find solutions to manage large carnivores harmoniously with society. The Platform has an approach which goes beyond the mere ecologic perspective and includes aspects linked to the society. As Chair, the Secretariat was responsible for coordinating many initiatives addressing the main issues foreseen in the mandate of the Platform (prevention and compensation of damages by large carnivores, brown bear management, genetic monitoring). These activities included the organization of four meetings of the Platform and the international workshop “Prevention and compensation of damages by large carnivores”. Many of these meetings were made possible by the close cooperation with several partners, such as the Liechtenstein and the German delegation in WISO as well as with the Infopoint Domodossola (Italy) managed by the association ARS.UNI.VCO. The WISO Platform also built bridges with other projects and initiatives like the LIFE DINALPBEAR Project, the EU Platform on coexistence between humans and large carnivores and the SCALP project. Particular attention was given to establish a positive and information-based dialogue on large carnivores with different Alpine actors.



The staff of the Secretariat also had the unique and exciting opportunity, upon invitation of the Autonomous Province of Trento, part of the Italian delegation in WISO, to observe brown bears in their natural environment - more precisely, in the Adamello Brenta Nature Park - and to learn more about the brown bear’s behaviour and distribution. An experience which will be difficult to forget!

## Soil

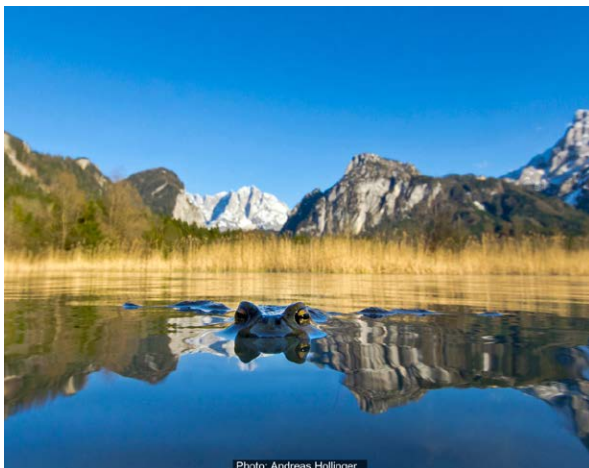
In the course of the last two years, the Permanent Secretariat has supported several activities for addressing the crucial issue of soil, which is a scarce and valuable resource in the Alps in need of protection. One of these activities was the support to the Compliance Committee in undertaking an in-depth revision of the subject “economical use of soil”, including the preparation of its final report. Moreover, the cooperation with the Interreg Alpine Space Programme project “Links4Soils” was promoted, also concerning the establishment of the “Alpine Soil Partnership”.



Finally, in its role as leader of the EUSALP Action Group 6, the Permanent Secretariat coordinated the development of the declaration “Sustainable Land Use and Soil Protection – Joining Forces for Nature, People and the Economy”, which has been supported by 6 Alpine States and 20 Regions. The Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention also chose the topic of soil conservation for its 2018 assembly, underlining the key role that young people in the Alps will have for the promotion of a long-term sustainable approach to the use of this resource. All these activities allowed the exchange on soil to gain new momentum, which led to the establishment of a new Working Group on Soil Conservation by the XV Alpine Conference.

## Photo Contest 2018 Edition “Wildlife in the Alps”

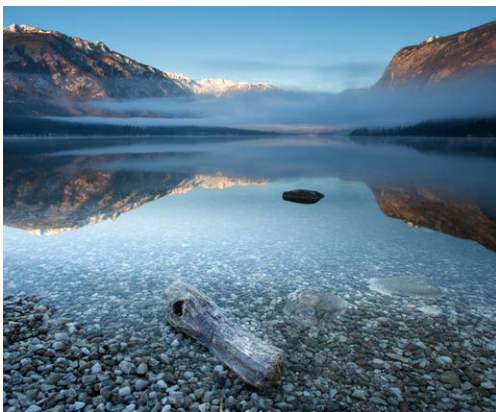
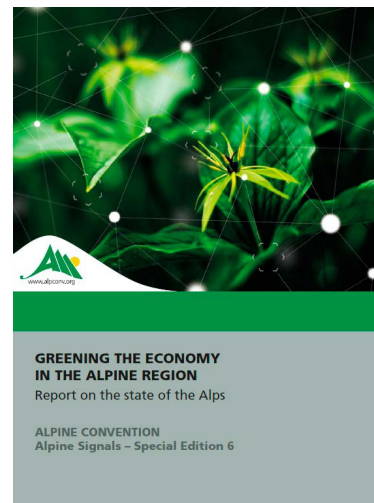
The wide natural and cultural diversity of the Alps can hardly be encapsulated in a single phrase, let alone one single word. For this reason, the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention yearly organizes an Alpine-wide photo contest. The most beautiful pictures are published in the Alpine Conventions Calendar and the winners are awarded with nice prizes. The 2018 edition of the photo contest was dedicated to “Wildlife in the Alps”. Enjoy a selection of winning pictures!



# GREEN ECONOMY

## Sixth Report on the State of the Alps "Greening the Economy in the Alpine Region" (RSA6)

Green economy can be summarized as an economic system that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. The Alps have the potential to function as a laboratory to see the concept of green economy in action, as well as to spread it beyond its borders. This was the idea at the basis of the elaboration of the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the Report on the State of the Alps "Greening the Economy in the Alpine Region", elaborated, published and disseminated with the support of the Permanent Secretariat. The report contains a set of recommendations for the promotion of green economy in the Alps and led as well to the establishment of a Green Economy Advisory Board, entrusted with the task of elaborating an ambitious and comprehensive Green Economy Action Programme in the Alpine region, further specifying the RSA6 into concrete actions on the field. The Permanent Secretariat assisted the Advisory Board in all its activities, as well as in the elaboration of the Action Programme, which was adopted by the XV Alpine Conference.



## Young Academics Award on Sustainable Water Management

Research and innovation make a major contribution to a sustainable development in the Alps. With the Young Academics Award, the Alpine Convention recognizes and awards the key role young researchers play in shaping the future of the Alps. The topic of the Award 2019 edition was "Sustainable Water Management in the Alps", including aspects such as solutions for conflicting uses of water among different sectors, water abundance and scarcity and an efficient use of water. During the evening reception of the XV Alpine Conference and after the finalists were evaluated and interviewed in person, the international jury determined the following winners:

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

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

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

# TRANSPORT

## Working Group Transport and Cooperation with EUSALP Action Group 4 and the Zurich process

Besides the continuous support provided to the Alpine Convention Working Group on Transport, the Permanent Secretariat is engaged in two other main processes related to the governance of sustainable transport in the Alps. Firstly, it provides its expertise and inputs to the work of EUSALP Action Group 4 "*To promote inter-modality and inter-operability in passenger and freight transport*", including its Task Force on project assessment methodology. Since October 2016, the Secretariat participated in six meetings, three Task Forces and three Mobility Conferences organized by the Action Group.

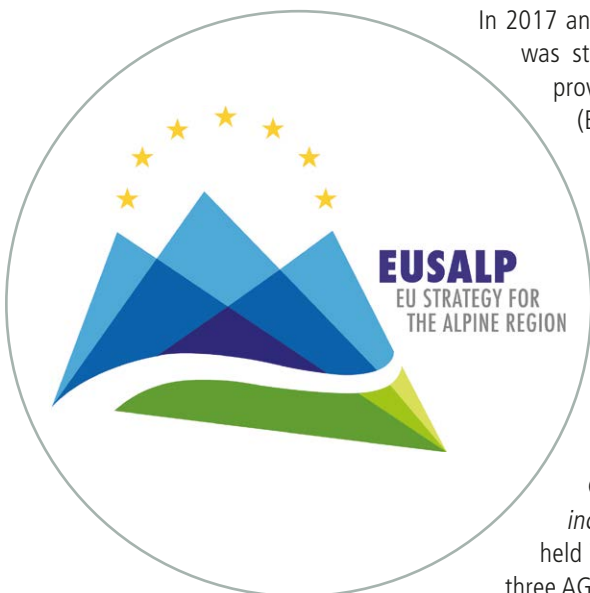
The Permanent Secretariat is also cooperating with the EnvAlp working group of the Zurich process and, in the period 2017-2019, participated in three of its meetings.

## International exchange on mountain bike- and bicycle networks in the Alps

In recent years, the presence of mountain bikes in the Alps for sport and recreation purposes has constantly been growing, up to the point that mountain biking – and cycling in general – is probably one of the most popular leisure activities in the Alpine region today. Due to this trend, conflicting interests are rising between the preservation of nature, energy and tourism. At the end of November 2018, the Permanent Secretariat, together with the City of Innsbruck, invited different stakeholders directly dealing with the management of bicycle traffic to an international exchange of experiences on mountain bike and bicycle networks in the Alps at municipal and regional level. The participants debated on challenges and possibilities towards good practical solutions to conserve on the one hand the sustainability of Alpine nature and on the other hand mountain bike activities in the Alps.



# EUSALP



In 2017 and 2018 the Permanent Secretariat, together with the Presidency, was strongly involved in representing the Alpine Convention and in providing inputs on its behalf to the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). The first bundle of activities concerned the continuous support to the Alpine Convention Working Group "Macroregional Strategy for the Alps", including the organization of two exchanges between the Alpine Convention Thematic Working Bodies and the EUSALP Action Groups (Gmunden, 2017 and Vienna, 2018). These exchanges allowed a better knowledge of the content-related activities of both processes and the identification of possible cooperation opportunities.

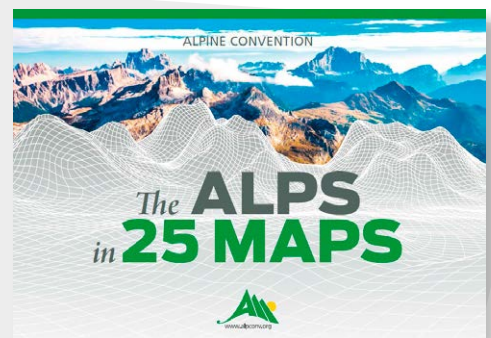
The Permanent Secretariat has also been dedicated to its role, together with the Province of Carinthia, as co-leader of Action Group 6 (AG6) *"To preserve and valorise natural resources, including water and cultural resources"*. Six meetings of AG6 were held in the last two years, bringing together the experts working in the three AG6 subgroups on the "Spatial development and soil conservation", "Future oriented farming and forestry" and "Integrated and sustainable water management". AG6 was able to reach important successes such as the signing of the Declaration on "Sustainable Land Use and Soil Protection" by twenty Alpine regions and six states, which underwent a public consultation process in order to collect feedback of interested institutions and civil society organizations.

Another important milestone reached was the approval of two projects financed through the Alpine Region Preparatory Action Fund (ARPAF): "AlpJobs", aiming at anticipating future jobs in Alpine remote areas and "CirculAlps", dealing with the potentials of innovative circular and bio economy value chains in the Alpine timber sector. These and other activities were showcased by the Permanent Secretariat - through market stands, presentations and exhibitions - at the EUSALP Annual Forum in Munich (2017) and Innsbruck (2018). Finally, the Permanent Secretariat has been engaged as partner in the Alpine Space project "AlpGov", together with all other Action Group Leaders of EUSALP.

# PUBLICATIONS AND EXHIBITIONS - HIGHLIGHTS

## The Alps in 25 maps

As a main product of the System of Observation and Information of the Alps, this publication was produced in close cooperation with Eurac Research. The photo exhibition "The Alps – a journey through maps and pictures" is based on this publication and was elaborated by the Secretariat. The exhibition can be shown upon requests by interested partners and is available in all Alpine languages and English.



## Climate change

The thematic flyer on climate change was issued in 2018. It combines information on the impacts of climate change on different sectors in the Alps with some highlights on the need to act and how to do it.

The brochure "Climate-neutral and Climate-resilient Alps by 2050" is the latest publication on climate change and consists of the three central climate policy results of the XV Alpine Conference: the Declaration of Innsbruck, the Alpine Climate Target System 2050 and the 7<sup>th</sup> Report on the state of the Alps "Natural Hazard Risk Governance".

The Permanent Secretariat developed a new card game to help spread the messages of the Alpine Climate Target System 2050. The ClimCards card game focuses on different climate targets and actions needed to achieve those targets, be it on the level of policy or individuals. With different unexpected events, the game simulates the situations in which we find ourselves while trying to achieve the aim of climate neutral and climate resilient Alps. Supported with colorful illustrations, the game is suitable for 3-6 players of 10 years of age or older, and is currently available in English language. Translations in the Alpine languages are foreseen.







## Multi-Annual Work Programme

The Permanent Secretariat supported the development and the publication of a series of flyers on the Multiannual Work Programme (MAP). The series, published in all Alpine languages and English, includes the MAP itself, the road map and a summarising leaflet.

## Greening the economy in the Alpine region

This four-pager, drafted by the Permanent Secretariat in cooperation with the Presidency of the Ad-hoc expert group, summarises the main results of the RSA6 in a concise and clear way and is intended for dissemination to a broader public.



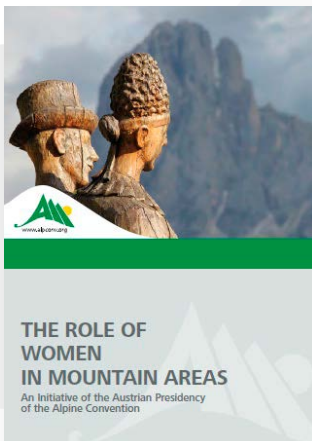
## Guidelines for the implementation of article 11(1) of the Nature Protection Protocol and Guidelines for the interpretation of article 6(3) of the Tourism Protocol

The publications present the work done by the Compliance Committee on the review and interpretation of the articles in question.



## Mountain agriculture

Issued in the “Alpine Signals” series, the publication contains the results achieved by the Mountain Agriculture Platform in the last years, including the issues of marketing, quality and labelling and food safety.



## The role of women in Mountain Areas

This flyer brings together the main results of the activities on the topic “women in mountain areas” that took place in the framework of the Alpine Convention, including the main results as well as testimonials from the conference in Alpbach (Austria). The publication is for the moment only available in English language.

## Natural Hazard Risk Governance

The 7<sup>th</sup> Report on the State of the Alps is a major achievement for the PLANAP Working Group. The Report deals with the topic of natural hazard risk governance, an innovative and inclusive approach for dealing with the threats natural hazards pose to the people and infrastructures in the Alps. It is available in all Alpine languages and in English.



# THE TEAM

## Facts about the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention

### Small is beautiful: our team

The Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention pursues the objectives of the Alpine Convention – preservation and sustainable development in the Alps as well as transnational cooperation - with passion and professionalism. The main tasks of the Secretariat include first of all the support to the Contracting Parties of the Alpine Convention, but is not limited to that and encompasses public relations and the overall promotion of the Convention, the co-ordination of the Observation and Information System for the Alps (SOIA) as well as the coordination of translation and interpreting.

The Permanent Secretariat is a real miniature Alpine area, representing in the few square kilometres of its Innsbruck (Austria) and Bolzano/Bozen (Italy) seats the various languages, cultures and countries of the Alpine arc. Our dedicated staff members work side by side in five languages – English, French, German, Italian and Slovenian...which sometimes turn into “Alpinanto”, the Alpine Esperanto! Every year, the Permanent Secretariat, in cooperation with universities throughout the Alpine arc, also gives two opportunities for internships to motivated young people who have concluded or are concluding their master studies.



Our staff members speak on average 3.4 languages each (Alpine and English).



We have six different nationalities.



70% of our team is female.

When we are not promoting sustainable development in the Alps we love: mountaineering, climbing, skiing, sailing, playing the trumpet, piano, cello, guitar, ukulele, singing, gardening and growing vegetables, traveling, reading, cave exploration.

### Around and throughout the Alps

Working for the Alps means being in the Alps, meeting with the people who live and work there and experiencing first-hand their incredible Alpine nature and culture as well as the challenges they face every day. That is why, also in 2017 and 2018, the staff of the Permanent Secretariat travelled many kilometres in more than numerous work-related missions in and around the Alps. In the last years, we have significantly promoted travelling by train instead of by plane for our journeys, to give a contribution to our joint ambition to reduce the environmental footprint of the Secretariat. Through the engagement of every member of the Secretariat, we were able to reduce the transfers by plane by two thirds and we are striving for more!

## Working with us



*During the Austrian Presidency of the Alpine Convention, I was in daily contact with the colleagues of the Permanent Secretariat. I could always rely on their extensive specialist knowledge, their impressive linguistic aptitude and their serene organizational talent. And, probably even more important, I got the opportunity to get to know the great people behind all this. It was this special mix that made the work so rewarding and the results so successful!*

**Dr. Ewald Galle**  
*BMNT, 2016-2019, President of the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention*



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

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

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

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

**Silvia Reppe**  
*former Focal Point of the Alpine Convention for Germany*



*An internship at the Alpine Convention is more than just a first 9-to-5 working experience. I had the chance to take a close look at its international and diplomatic side and was able to support the administration and logistics behind it. Working for the Permanent Secretariat is not only an enriching professional experience, the constant collaboration between and with the colleagues on so many different topics and projects makes it very dynamic and challenging. I am thankful that I had the chance to meet many people within the Convention and the cities of Innsbruck (AT) and Bolzano/Bozen (IT). Realizing that in this way I contributed to a more durable vision of the environment, made this internship for me very worthwhile. Großherzlichen servus i grazie per tutti. Vive les montagnes! Živele Alpe!*

**Mathias Cox**  
*former intern*

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For sixteen years now, the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention has been drawing on its strong mission, its vitality and the energy and engagement to help addressing the challenges for sustainability in the Alps and find innovative approaches. As in the preceding years, the Permanent Secretariat worked hard also during the last two years to put the Multi-Annual Work Programme of the Alpine Convention 2017 – 2022 into practice and to provide the best possible support to the Parties. We fulfilled the commitment to pursue, together with the Contracting Parties, the Observers and other partners of the Alpine Convention, the preservation of the Alpine natural and cultural diversity and the promotion of sustainable development in the Alps. We proudly present our activity report and invite you to discover the Secretariat's wide range of activities and its most important projects, events and milestones in 2017-2019.

[www.alpconv.org](http://www.alpconv.org)

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