QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE ALPS

ALPENKONVENTION
CONVENTION ALPINE
ALPSKA KONVENCIJA
CONVENZIONE DELLE ALPI

10th Report on the State of the Alps

Imprint

Editor
Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention
Herzog-Friedrich-Straße 15
6020 Innsbruck
Austria

Operational branch office
Viale Druso/Drususallee 1
391000 Bolzano/Bozen
Italy

www.alpconv.org
www.atlas.alpconv.org
info@alpconv.org

Leading authors: Naja Marot, Tadej Bevk, Maja Debevec, David Klepej, Nina Stubičar and Pina Klara Petrović Jesenovec (University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty, Department of Landscape Architecture, Slovenia)

Cartography: Tadej Bevk (University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty, Department of Landscape Architecture, Slovenia)

Graphic design and layout
Graphics: Nina Stubičar, Maja Debevec, Pina Klara Petrović Jesenovec (University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty, Department of Landscape Architecture, Slovenia)

Graphics, illustrations, publication design and layout: Tea Goljevšček, Eva Batič (Podobarna, Slovenia)

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ALPINE SIGNALS
SPECIAL EDITION 10

10th Report on the State of the Alps

The Tenth Report on the State of the Alps was prepared by the team of authors from the Biotechnical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, with contributions by the members of the ad hoc Working Group coordinated by the Slovenian Presidency and the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention.

COORDINATION OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP

Slovenian Presidency
Tomaž Miklavčič (Ministrstvo za naravne vire in prostor)

Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention
Živa Novljan

MEMBERS OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP

Austria
Andreas Bartel (Umweltbundesamt Österreich)
Peter A. Rumpolt (Universität Wien, Institut für Geographie und Regionalforschung)
Katharina Zwettler (Bundesministerium für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie)

France
Kirsten Koop (Université Grenoble Alpes)

Germany
Stefan Mitterer (Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Umwelt und Verbraucherschutz, Germany)
Lukas Kühne, Josiane Meier, Daniel Meltzian, Thomas Otte (Bundesministerium für Wohnen, Stadtentwicklung und Bauwesen)

Italy
Massimiliano Bultrini (ISPRA)
Andrea Omizzolo (EURAC Research)

Liechtenstein
Karin Jehle, Nora Zenhäusern (Liechtensteinische Landesverwaltung)

Monaco
Wilfrid Deri (Gouvernement Princier de Monaco)

Slovenia
Blanka Bartol (Ministrstvo za naravne vire in prostor)

Switzerland
Nicolas Rodigari (Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE)

OBSERVERS IN THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP

Christian Baumgartner, Bianca Elzenbaumer (CIPRA International)
Katharina Gasteiger (Alliance in the Alps)
Magdalena Holzer (Alpine Town of the Year Association)
Ann-Kristin Winkler (WWF)
Angelika Abderhalden, Carolina Adler, Florian Knaus (ISCAR – International Scientific Committee on Research in the Alps)

FURTHER INSTITUTIONS AND PEOPLE THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE REPORT

Students of Universität Wien, Institut für Geographie und Regionalforschung, Bachelor in Geography programme (primarily 2nd year students), study years 2022/2023 (case studies Eisenerz and Lesachtal) and 2023/2024 (further four case studies)
Members of the Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development Working Group of the Alpine Convention (mandate period 2023–2024)
Members of the Alpine Biodiversity Board of the Alpine Convention (mandate period 2023–2024)
Nathalie Morelle, Živa Novljan, Stephanie Wolff (Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention)

FOCAL POINTS OF THE ALPINE CONVENTION

Austria
Katharina Zwettler (Bundesministerium für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie)

France
Isabelle Paillet (Ministère de la Transition écologique et de la Cohésion des territoires)

Germany
Christian Ernstberger (Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, nukleare Sicherheit und Verbraucherschutz)

Italy
Paolo Angelini (Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Sicurezza Energetica)

Liechtenstein
Karin Jehle (Liechtensteinische Landesverwaltung)

Monaco
Astrid Claudel-Rusin (Gouvernement Princier de Monaco)

Slovenia
Majda Lovrenčič (Ministrstvo za naravne vire in prostor)

Switzerland
Nicolas Rodigari (Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE)

European Union
Andrea Bianchini (European Commission, Directorate-General for Environment)

Foreword by the Secretary General

The Alps are a unique living environment. Stretching across eight European countries, they represent a naturally and culturally rich habitat with great diversity. At the same time, the Alps, with their many similarities, also face common challenges. This is why working together across borders is crucial to help shape this special region in a more sustainable way.

The Alps are home to almost 15 million people and attract many more each year as visitors. They are simultaneously one of the least densely populated parts of Europe and one of the most densely populated mountain regions in the world. This mountain range is also a habitat for over 43.000 wildlife species. The ecological significance of the Alps for a large part of Europe makes it necessary to find a balance between environmental protection, economic development, and the social wellbeing of the Alpine inhabitants.

The mountainous topography of the Alps, however, means space is a limited commodity. Most human activity and settlements are concentrated in the valleys and at the edges of the Alpine Convention perimeter. These areas must accommodate housing, services of general interest, various economic activities such as tourism, and different infrastructure – including transport infrastructure of Europe-wide importance. At the same time, they need to retain open spaces for farming and the cultivation of food and goods as well as for recreation, to ensure protection from natural hazards and last, but certainly not least, to maintain ecological connectivity for wildlife and protect ecosystem services.

The Alps are by no means immune to global challenges such as climate change and loss of biodiversity and ecosystems. Indeed, like other mountain regions around the world, they are often more impacted than surrounding regions. Recognising the importance of cross-sectoral approaches to dealing with all these challenges, the Multi-Annual Work Programme of the Alpine Conference 2023–2030 sets three transversal priority areas: in addition to climate action and biodiversity, for the first time the Alpine Convention is tackling the topic quality of life as a whole and not only as a sum of efforts in several sectoral areas. With this work, the Alpine Convention is following a similar path to many international organisations and initiatives, such as the OECD or the Sustainable Development Goals.

The concept of quality of life can be hard to grasp, in part because there are many different definitions, and its assessment depends on the territories where we analyse it. I am therefore grateful to the Slovenian Presidency for taking on this first challenge of establishing some basic knowledge and developing a better understanding of this topic. We can use the findings of the 10th Report on the State of the Alps to better address the needs of Alpine inhabitants, taking into account the environmental, economic, and social aspects. This report helps us find a balance between these three areas, not only according to their current status, but first and foremost with a view to future developments and challenges.

The Alps offer a high quality of life for those who call this region home. Nevertheless, it is only by fostering these preconditions in a cooperative cross-border and cross-sectoral manner that we, the Alpine inhabitants, can maintain our good life and continue to flourish.

Alenka Smerkolj
Secretary General of the
Alpine Convention

Foreword by the Chair of the ad hoc Working Group

Quality of life has long been considered a personal matter but in recent years it has increasingly become a shared societal goal and a determining objective of many public policies. As quality of life has entered the domain of policymaking, the need to describe it more scientifically and to measure progress in this area has become more and more apparent.

Various researchers and international organisations have tackled this issue using different methods, and today we regard quality of life as a comprehensive approach to describe living conditions in a particular location, including people's culture and values. Moreover, it is not just about people as inhabitants, but also other living beings with whom we coexist and who coexist with us in the same territory.

The definition provided of territorial quality of life by ESPON and followed in this report describes it as "the capability of living beings to survive and flourish in the territorial context". In addressing quality of life, we must therefore also bear in mind the quality of the natural environment, biodiversity, and natural processes.

This 10th Report on the State of the Alps provides a comprehensive overview of the factors, strengths, and weaknesses shaping life in the Alps. Based on the analysis of quantitative data, inputs from the working group that was tasked with preparing the report, and the opinions of the people captured by the online survey, we can conclude that the Alps offer good living conditions and enable their inhabitants a comparably high quality of life.

As the quality-of-life approach is also a forward-looking one, the report highlights several threats as well as challenges that the Alpine inhabitants are already facing and whose impacts are going to increase in the future. Global challenges such as climate change, demographic and social changes, nature degradation, and economic and political instability are going to have a major impact on how we live in the Alps. These threats should guide us to be proactive in our different roles at all governance levels and as Alpine inhabitants; to prepare for, adapt to, and mitigate the new conditions as much as possible; and to maintain the quality of life we have achieved so far and as we perceive it should be.

This report provides an in-depth exploration of quality of life, paving the way for further research and joint activities within the framework of the Alpine Convention.

Finally, my warm thanks go to the research team from the Biotechnical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana for their excellent work and expertise. I also want to extend my thanks to the members of the Working Group and the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention for their open and constructive cooperation, their knowledge, and interest in tackling this – for the Alpine Convention – new, sometimes difficult to grasp, but very exciting topic.

Tomaž Miklavčič
Chair of the ad hoc Working Group
for the Elaboration of the RSA 10

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Abbreviations

AG	Action Group
ALPARC	Alpine Network of Protected Areas
ARPAF	Alpine Region Preparatory Action Fund
AT	Austria
BWO	Bavarian Mountain Forest Initiative (de. *Bergwaldoffensive*)
CH	Switzerland
CIPRA	International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (fr. *Commission Internationale pour la Protection des Alpes*)
CO_2	Carbon dioxide
CSA	The Strategic Council for Attractiveness
DE	Germany
EEA	European Environment Agency
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ESPON	European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion
EU	European Union
EU-LFS	EU Labour Force Survey
EU-SILC	EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
EUROSTAT	European Statistical Office
EUSALP	The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region
FOEN	Federal Office for the Environment
FR	France
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse gases
GIS	Geographic Information System
INTERREG	European Territorial Cooperation
ISCAR	International Scientific Committee on Research in the Alps
IT	Italy
LAU	Local administrative unit
LEADER	Links between activities for the development of rural economy (fr. *Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale*)
LI	Liechtenstein
MAP	Multi-Annual Work Programme of the Alpine Conference
MC	Monaco
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PM2.5	Particles of diameter smaller than 2,5 µm
PROFECY	Processes, Features and Cycles of Inner Peripheries in Europe
RSA 10	10th Report on the State of the Alps
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SI	Slovenia
SNAI	Italian National Strategy for Inner Areas (it. *Strategia Nazionale Aree Interne*)
SOIA	System for the Observation and Information on the Alps
TQoL	Territorial Quality of Life
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WG	Working Group
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

Introduction

Aims and objectives

The 10th Report on the State of the Alps (RSA 10) represents a concrete contribution to the implementation of one of the three priorities of the Multi-Annual Work Programme 2023–2030, which was adopted in the autumn of 2022. This priority area is called 'Enabling a good quality of life for the people in the Alps', and highlights two objectives:

1. Further the Alpine Convention's knowledge on the quality of life of people in the Alps, acknowledging and respecting territorial and individual differences.

2. Promote the inclusion of quality-of-life measures in public policymaking processes at all territorial levels.

Given this, **the aims and objectives of the RSA 10** are to:

- describe the governance framework of the Alpine Convention (institutional, legislative and monitoring aspect), and identify the current governance gaps for delivering good quality of life;
- provide knowledge in the Alpine Convention area about the various aspects of quality of life, including the quality and accessibility of service provision, the quality of the environment, the quality-of-life issues related to climate change and biodiversity, and so on;
- represent the quality-of-life information and data collected on the Alpine region via the dashboard and in various graphic forms, including charts, thematic maps, and infographics;
- identify people's perceptions of the quality of life in the Alpine Convention area;
- find good practices for ensuring a quality of life aspired to across the Alpine Convention area;
- formulate recommendations for identified target groups on how territorial development, urban and spatial planning, and related policies should respond, and how quality of life could be better addressed in policymaking processes, and
- contribute to the theoretical knowledge of the quality-of-life concept by applying it to the Alpine Convention area.

Target groups

The report brings a new and different perspective to the development of the Alps, enabling policymakers to prioritise quality of life as a key policy objective. Other target groups – inhabitants and Alpine youth as a special group – were involved in the research to bring ideas about what the quality of life in the Alps should be, what makes the Alps an attractive place to live in, and what kind of challenges and threats lie ahead.

For policymaking, the following stakeholders are relevant:

a) Transnational level

- Alpine Convention bodies (Contracting Parties and Observer Organisations)
- The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) – Executive Board, Board of Action Groups Leaders – Action groups (AG1–AG9)
- The Interreg Alpine Space Programme

b) National level

- Ministries responsible for the Alpine Convention
- Sectoral policy representatives related to the quality-of-life topic: spatial planning, transport, services of general interest, mobility, demography, access to green areas and healthcare, etc.

c) Regional and local level

- Regional governments and administrations
- Mayors of Alpine municipalities

Aside from policymakers, the following target groups are identified:

d) Residents (in general): the focus of the RSA 10 is this target group, particularly how they perceive quality of life and the local living conditions.

e) Youth (in particular) comprises one of the target groups requiring specific living conditions, e.g. access to jobs, education, affordable housing and other related services; representative institutions of this target group are the Youth Parliament to the Alpine Convention and the EUSALP Youth Council.

f) Networks, organisations, and professional associations: these are observers in Alpine Convention bodies. They can reach residents of the Alps and can influence decision-makers/contribute to decision-making in the process of preparing or implementing policies.

How to read the report

The RSA 10 consists of seven chapters and an additional background study as a separate publication (also Chapter 8). Chapter 1 introduces quality of life as a concept in general, and specifically, the concept as it has been elaborated for the Alps in this report. Chapter 2 provides an evaluation of the current situation in the Alps, based on data and a survey. This highlights the main findings and provides answers to questions regarding the state of affairs in the Alps in relation to the following topics: environment, infrastructure and services, work and financial security, social relations, and governance. The chapters are aimed at both the general public and stakeholders with an interest in the topic. The data were gathered via a survey, the ESPON Territorial Quality of Life in the Alpine Convention space study, and the Erasmus+ Alpine Compass project, carried out by CIPRA. The report presents the average situation for each region because the data for NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 were selected based on the availability of individual indicators. However, at local level, things may seem different and intraregional differences may become apparent. The findings are corroborated by various graphics and statements from some of the Alpine residents who took part in the survey or in the interviews performed in the Erasmus+ project. The 'Survey on quality of life' was conducted from May to August 2023 across the whole Alpine area, and the answers were gathered via snowball sampling or, in places where response rates were low, an online panel. Altogether, around 3.000 valid answers were collected. In addition, the field survey was performed by the University of Vienna in six selected Austrian municipalities.

Chapter 3 sheds light on the future challenges of securing a good quality of life in the Alps. It describes the opportunities and risks facing the current situation, and what can be done to secure a good quality of life in the Alpine area both now and in the future. Chapters 4, 5 and 7 address the governance framework in the Alpine area, and Chapter 6 elaborates on measuring quality of life. Specifically, Chapter 4 delineates the governance framework in support of quality of life by showing how people can influence policymaking and implementation processes and how and where quality of life is already integrated into policies. Chapter 5 focuses on the Alpine Convention, explaining how it contributes to quality of life, the measures it enables, and the projects that are being carried out by Thematic Working Bodies, Contracting Parties, Observers, and the Permanent Secretariat, as well as other partners. Chapter 6 identifies and describes knowledge and data gaps that need to be addressed to support a better understanding of the quality-of-life concept. Chapter 7 reflects on the current situation and governance framework in support of the quality of life by identifying the main objectives in the Alps in this respect; it also provides recommendations to increase knowledge about the quality of life in the Alpine area and to enhance policymaking and implementation in the direction of securing a good quality of life. Chapter 8 is the Background Study, which explains in detail the methods, analysis, data and its sources, and results of the study in the Alpine area: this, however, forms a separate publication.

Click here to see the Background Study.

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QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE ALPS

KEY MESSAGE

Quality of life is a multidimensional concept that has recently been put on the European agenda. It is either an umbrella policy topic or can be integrated in various sectoral policies. There is no common definition, nor is there a common method of measurement. Five issues were recognised as crucial for the quality of life in the Alps:

1) the environment
2) infrastructure and services
3) work and financial security
4) social relations
5) governance

1.1 Introduction to the concept

Quality of life refers to the living conditions in a particular location, including the economic, social, and ecological conditions of the population living there. Across the Alps, there is no common understanding or definition of quality of life. Some countries use the terms 'well-being', 'welfare', 'happiness' or 'life satisfaction' in its place. The topic has garnered more attention over the last ten years, primarily from European governments and by the European Union (EU; Eurostat, 2023). As a result, the idea was either included as an umbrella concept in national policies or was presented as a crosscutting issue on the agenda of a variety of sectors. Much like sustainability, quality of life is a complex concept, covering aspects such as the environment, housing, economy, etc. (Veenhoven, 2000; Andereck and Nyaupane, 2011). In contrast to sustainability, quality of life prioritises humans. Thus, achieving the aims of each aspect of quality of life in a balanced manner is a challenge in itself since meeting local community demands may conflict with the spatial planning and environmental protection goals. To illustrate, while Alpine countries aim to protect the environment, they also prioritise securing affordable housing and accessible infrastructure, and this can lead to additional land take if not well planned. While this multifaceted nature of the quality-of-life concept presents a challenge for politicians, at the same time it compels them to think about policies and their potential impacts on multiple dimensions. Hence, the concept can also be understood as a policy process. Use of quality of life as a policy concept can also help engage the general public in policymaking as it is a topic they can easily relate to, motivating them to express their needs and ideas and to participate in democratic processes. According to the Morrison Institute for Public Policy (1997), policymakers need information about how citizens perceive the factors contributing to quality of life.

Furthermore, including quality of life in policy formulation also encourages policymakers to consider the territorial dimension of their policies and decisions. People tend to be confined to the places where they live, work or are otherwise engaged on a daily basis. Consequently, policies focused on quality of life need to look into the differences between living conditions in different types of areas such as urban, rural, intermediate or other territorial typologies that set regions apart from each other. As Figure 1.1 shows, the Alpine regions are predominantly of intermediate or rural character, also containing some urban areas. One of the aims of the RSA 10 was to investigate how living conditions, people's perceptions of these conditions, and satisfaction with quality of life depends on the type of area they reside in.

It could be argued that the ultimate question of any policy decision is how to make life better. As shown above, this is not an easy question; there are multiple interdependent aspects to the concept and the objectives might change depending on the territory. Certain aspects of quality of life are highly individual, but others are more universal and can be quantified to provide us with a better understanding of the state of society. The work done within the RSA 10 has led to several recommendations – summarised in Box 1.1 (for more on the recommendations, refer to Chapter 7) – which, if applied, will likely lead to improved quality of life for everyone in the Alps.

Besides defining quality of life as a concept for policymaking purposes, it also needs measuring to provide feedback to the policy cycle (see Chapter 4). Monitoring approaches vary in the number of indicators and quality-of-life topics they cover (e.g. housing, environmental conditions, social relations, work conditions, access to infrastructure, and governance, see Box 1.2). Further to these tangible factors, subjective components also need to be examined. This means looking at how people perceive their living environments and how satisfied they are with them and with their lives in general. It is possible to observe either absolute or relative values, make complex calculations or compare the existing living conditions to a specific standard or people's expectations (Heal and Sigelman, 1996). A time dimension should also be considered because people's perceptions

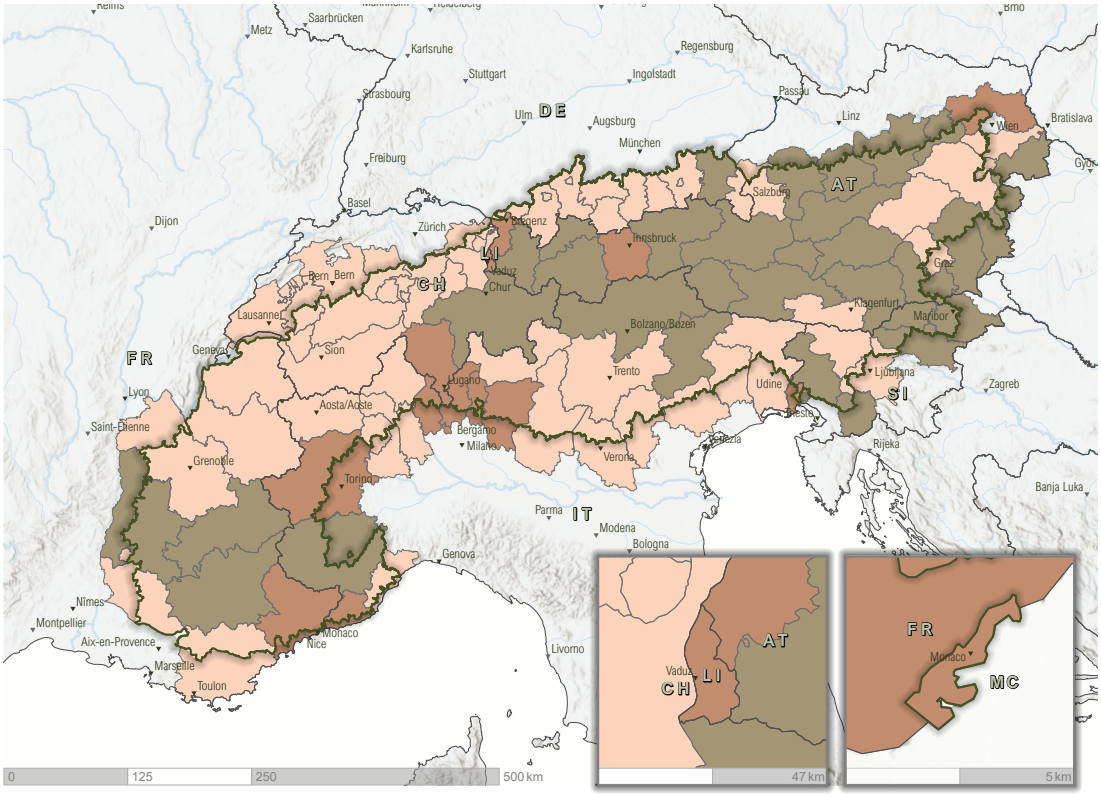


FIGURE 1.1
The area of the Alpine Convention and Eurostat's urban-rural typology. (Source: Eurostat, 2023)

NUTS 3 URBAN-RURAL TYPOLOGY

Predominantly urban areas | Intermediate areas | Predominantly rural areas

ALPINE CONVENTION PERIMETER

NUTS 3 BORDERS

COUNTRY BORDERS

Eurostat's urban-rural typology applied at NUTS 3 regions identifies three types of regions based on the share of the rural population.

Regional level: NUTS 3
Data sources: Eurostat, 2023
Map background: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS; Esri, USGS
Cartography: Tadej Bevk

BOX 1.1

Seven recommendations to pursue for better quality of life in the Alps

R1. Acknowledge quality of life, its specific aspects, and the need for inclusive participation in policymaking.

R2. Address the data gaps in the quality-of-life topic and further pursue research on quality of life in the Alps to support better policy and decision-making.

R3. Strengthen resilience in the Alps to sustain a good quality of life in the region.

R4. Ensure the provision of high-quality infrastructure and services to best meet people's needs and the territorial specifics of the Alps while respecting the area's ecological capacity.

R5. Support a socially and environmentally responsible Alpine economy.

R6. Foster responsible, sustainable, inclusive, and creative Alpine societies.

R7. Respond to the needs of the local communities in governance processes and encourage the engagement of Alpine people in policymaking and spatial planning.

can change over time as their priorities and goals shift, thus influencing quality of life. Moreover, the concept should consider the intergenerational perspective, meaning that securing good living conditions in the present should not jeopardise future living conditions.

Several attempts have been made to measure quality of life in the Alps, either comprehensively (Keller, 2010) or focusing just on certain living conditions (Kolarič *et al.*, 2017). In these reports, despite the Alps being depicted as specific living areas offering well-preserved natural surroundings and good economic conditions (with a gross domestic product above the EU average), they also revealed a number of challenges that significantly influence quality of life. Some studies have shown the differences between the northern and southern parts of the Alpine area when assessing certain aspects of quality of life, with the northern side (comprising Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland) generally outperforming the southern regions[1]. These imply that different types of territories should be considered while exploring quality of life, for example the urban-rural typology could be used to check if living conditions differ according to the different level of urbanisation in a place.

The most comprehensive list of factors influencing quality of life in the Alps was provided by ESPON, the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (2018). In a study done in the framework of ESPON the following indicators were found to be significant for the quality of life in the Alps: a demanding physical territory that hampers access to services, extreme weather events and climate conditions, demographic changes, tourism as one of the important economic sectors, the macroeconomic situation, access to ecosystem services to mitigate climate change and the digitalisation of services (ESPON, 2018). Adaptation to climate change should be a priority because it is expected that the Alpine region will face extended dry spells and reduced precipitation during the summer. Furthermore, wind erosion and an escalated risk of forest fires pose threats to the infrastructure, settlements, and forest ecosystems of the area (Probst *et al.*, 2019; Schindelegger, Steinbrunner and Ertl, 2022). Snow coverage is also expected to decrease below elevations of 2.000 metres, with glaciers and permafrost melting at faster rates and a raised risk of landslides influencing both the tourism sector and the lives of locals (Schindelegger, Steinbrunner and Ertl, 2022).

[1] The latest studies of quality on life include, for example, the investigation of quality of life in South Tyrol (Bausch and Tauber, 2023), the Erasmus+ Alpine Compass project, the ESPON TQoL in the Alpine Convention space study, and the Interreg cross-border project 'Lebenswerter Alpenraum' ('An Alpine region worth living in'); the last of these deals with sustainable rural-area tourism practices that are developed and supported by citizens.

BOX 1.2

Existing monitoring systems for quality of life

The United Nations considers the Human Development Index to be the most widely applicable and comprehensive indicator of quality of life on a global scale. At EU level, the European Commission has established a platform based on eight topics addressing objective and subjective information on quality of life, such as perceptions about various aspects. Data are collected and reported nationwide. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provides various monitoring systems. For instance, the OECD Regional Well-Being platform monitors the data from the NUTS 2 area, while the OECD Better Life Index is nationally based. Some countries have their own approaches to monitoring quality of life, such as Austria's 'How is Austria?' (Statistik Austria, 2021) or the German platform 'Good living in Germany – what is important to us' (Die Bundesregierung, 2024). The European Social Survey is also an important source for measuring people's satisfaction with their quality of life because the survey is recurring and the data can be compared between years.

1.2 Concept of quality of life in the RSA 10

The quality-of-life concept as understood in the RSA 10 was prepared using (i) knowledge about the current state in measuring quality of life and (ii) consultations with the RSA 10 ad hoc Working Group (WG) on its aspects relevant to the Alps. Based on this, the concept developed in the ESPON Territorial Quality of Life (TQoL) project (ESPON, 2020b, p. 10) was taken and further elaborated to consider the specifics of the Alpine territory. The concept rests on three pillars, each of which describes one aspect of quality of life (Figure 1.2):

- **Good life enablers** describe the living conditions and other characteristics of the living environment, such as access to services and jobs (objective assessment).
- **Life maintenance** refers to the state of society's well-being as a result of the available living conditions, as outlined in the first pillar (objective assessment).
- **Life flourishing** portrays an individual's perceptions of quality of life, mostly through indicators measuring satisfaction with living conditions and satisfaction with life (subjective assessment).

Five major quality-of-life topics in the Alps were identified to provide detailed information for each pillar. These are:

- the environment,
- infrastructure and services,
- work and financial security,
- social relations, and
- governance.

The subtopics are listed under each topic and pillar to provide a more detailed understanding of quality of life.

CONCEPT OF QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE PURPOSE OF PREPARING THE RSA 10

MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK OF QUALITY OF LIFE	GOOD LIFE ENABLERS	LIFE MAINTENANCE	LIFE FLOURISHING
ENVIRONMENT	ENVIRONMENT	SUSTAINABLE / ECO-CONSCIOUS SOCIETY	SATISFACTION WITH ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
	ECOSYSTEMS AND BIODIVERSITY		
	BUILT ENVIRONMENT		
	CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION		
	RESILIENCE AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION		
INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES	HOUSING	HEALTHY, EDUCATED AND LIVELY SOCIETY	SATISFACTION WITH QUALITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES
	CONNECTIVITY		
	PUBLIC SERVICES		
	LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES		
	COMMERCIAL SERVICES		
WORK AND FINANCIAL SECURITY	JOB OPPORTUNITIES	PROSPEROUS SOCIETY	SATISFACTION WITH QUALITY OF WORK AND INCOME
	WORK CONDITIONS		
	SOCIAL SECURITY		
	INNOVATION CAPACITY AND SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC TRANSITION		
SOCIAL RELATIONS	SOLIDARITY, INTRAGENERATIONAL AND INCLUSIVE CARE	INCLUSIVE, CARING AND CONNECTED SOCIETY	SATISFACTION WITH QUALITY OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS
	COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS		
	SAFETY		
GOVERNANCE	PUBLIC POLICIES AND LEGISLATIVE PROCESSES	DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY	SATISFACTION WITH QUALITY OF GOVERNANCE
	ENABLING, PROSPEROUS AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE		
	INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION		

FIGURE 1.2
Concept of quality of life for the purpose of preparing the RSA 10. (Source: own work)

2 LIFE IN THE ALPS

KEY MESSAGE

Although living conditions in the Alps are generally favourable, there is still room for improvement in certain quality-of-life aspects such as housing, governance, and work conditions. The main advantages of living in the Alps – a pristine environment and well-preserved nature – will change in the future due to direct and indirect human activities leading to severe climate change, biodiversity loss, and other impacts. More attention should therefore be given to addressing the risks associated with these potential threats. In the highly affected Alpine region, immediate and effective long-term measures are needed to prevent further deterioration of the climate and to ensure ongoing adaptation to the new living conditions. The data and the survey indicate that the best living conditions are found in rural areas, although the correlation analysis has not shown any correlation between the variables related to satisfaction with quality of life and the different types of the settlements that the respondents live in. It can therefore be presumed that happiness and satisfaction with quality of life in the Alps mostly depend on the individual's personal circumstances rather than on specific territorial conditions. A discrepancy was also noted between the objective measures of the status quo for some of the quality-of-life aspects and people's perception of quality of life in the Alpine area (predominantly good).

2.1 Introduction to the Alps as living areas

FIGURE 2.1
Photos showing different types of settlement environments in the Alps. (Authors from top down: Malgorzsata Rudnik, Igor Gruber, Vera Bornemann, Edwin Mennel)

The Alpine Convention area encompasses the mountainous ridge of the Alps but excludes the larger cities at its edges (Figures 2.1a to d). And so, by taking into account the entire population in NUTS 3 regions, approximately 22 million people reside in the Alpine region. If the urban-rural typology of Eurostat is followed, according to the NUTS 3 calculation, the urban population amounts to 24%. In the 9th Report on the State of the Alps, the urban population was calculated at the higher amount of 60% (Chilla, Bertram and Lambracht, 2022, p. 6). The area is known for its scenic landscapes and rich biodiversity, but these environmental features are threatened by the current trend of climate change. Moreover, the mountainous terrain makes it difficult to maintain the infrastructure and services that people in the area need for their everyday lives. Remote communities have had trouble in recent years getting access to medical services, primary education and kindergarten services, and to smaller shops with essential goods (Marot *et al.*, 2018). Nonetheless, existing studies show that the majority of quality-of-life dimensions in the Alps remain higher than the EU average. Deviating from this pattern is satisfaction with governance, which has traditionally not been well regarded across the Alps (see section 2.9). People are not satisfied with how their governments rule their countries and areas and they participate less actively in democratic processes, such as elections and policymaking, than in other regions (OECD, 2023).

The area has also been affected by demographic changes. The ageing index, which measures the proportion of senior people (aged 65 and over) to young people (aged 14 and under), is high (163),

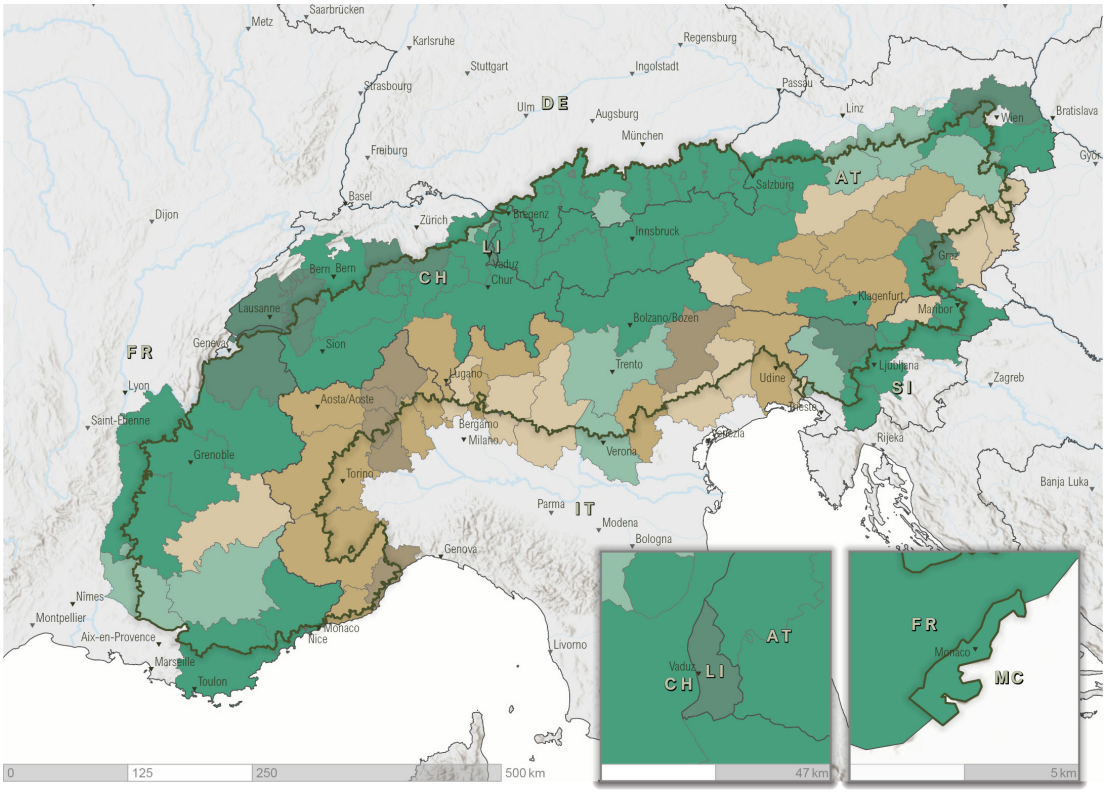


FIGURE 2.2
Population growth trends in the Alps (2017–2021). (Source: Eurostat, 2023; Monaco Statistics, 2023)

POPULATION GROWTH, 2017–2021

-5–-3% -3–-1% -1–0% 0–1% 1–3% 3–5%

Population growth shows how much the population of a region has changed from year 2017 to year 2021.

ALPINE CONVENTION PERIMETER
NUTS 3 BORDERS
COUNTRY BORDERS

Regional level: NUTS 3
Data sources: Eurostat, 2023, Monaco Statistics 2023
Map background: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS; Esri, USGS
Cartography: Tadej Bevk

and above the EU average (140, Eurostat data for 2021; see Figure 3.4 for regional differences). During the five-year period from 2017 to 2021 there was a slight increase in population (1%), which means that it is not much different to that of the EU, which is mostly stagnant (Figure 2.2). In the Alpine region, three different types of migration flows can be identified: immigration to the area from outside the Alps, including from outside of Europe; migration flows between Alpine countries; and migration between individual Alpine areas and between different types of areas, such as migration from rural to urban areas or moving into rural areas by what are called 'new highlanders' (Figure 2.3; Bender and Kanitscheider, 2012; Löffler *et al.*, 2016; Perlik, 2011).

An area's demographic profile is important for evaluating its vitality and future population development, demand for services of general interest, and its potential for economic growth. In terms of economic development, the Alps need alternative economic directions because some areas rely purely on ski tourism, which is negatively impacted by climate change (Steiger *et al.*, 2017; Adler *et al.*, 2022).

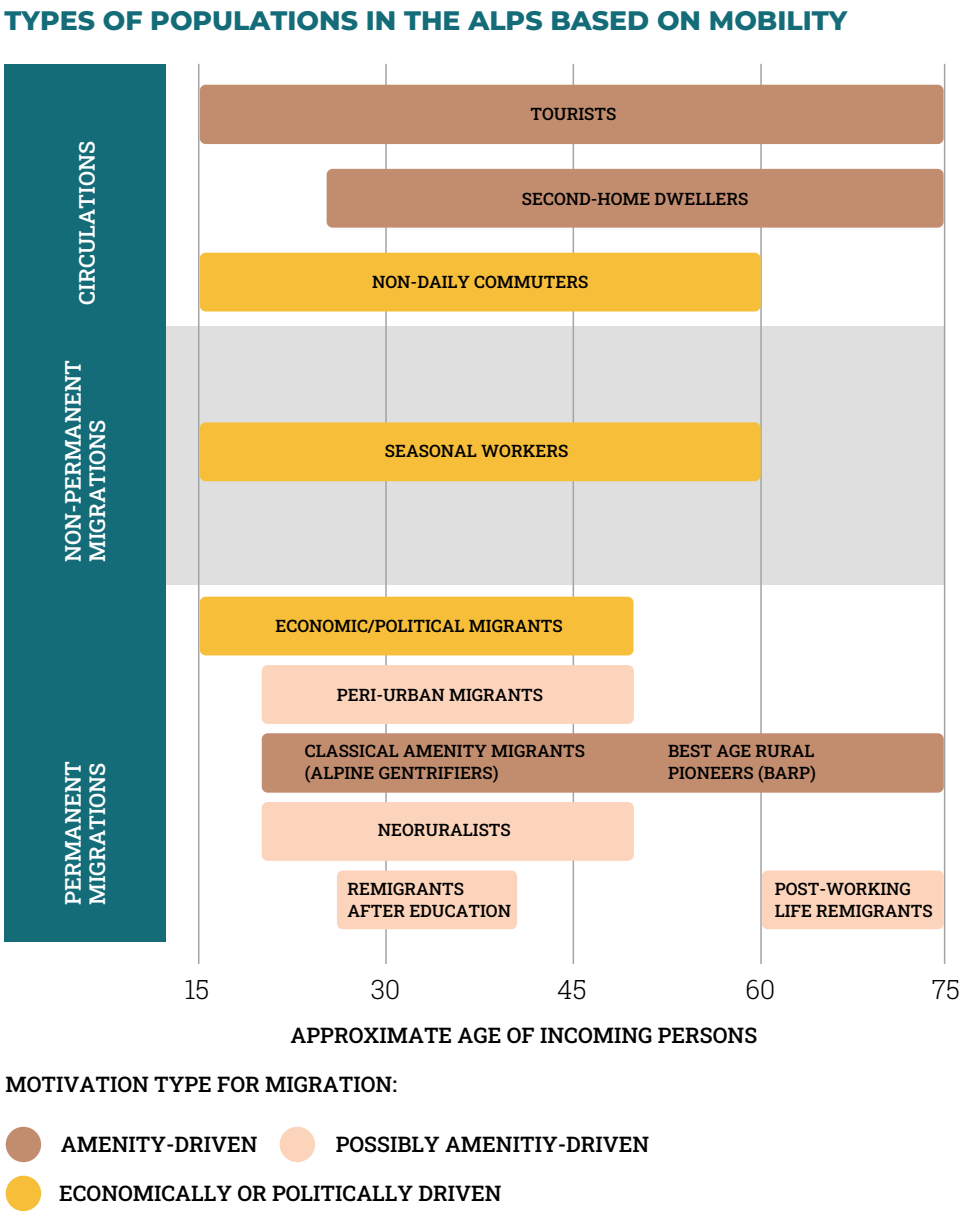


FIGURE 2.3
Types of populations in the Alps based on mobility. (Source: Bender and Haller, 2017; p. 139; based on Zelinsky, 1971, with modifications based on Bender and Kanitscheider, 2012)

BOX 2.1

Erasmus+ Alpine Compass Project of CIPRA

The Erasmus+ Alpine Compass Project addresses the quality of life of young people in the Alpine region. The project was led by CIPRA Slovenia, along with CIPRA Germany, CIPRA France, and CIPRA International. Young people from France, Germany, and Slovenia participated in the study, whose aim was to gain insight into how young people in the Alps perceived their quality of life. In order to determine the needs, challenges, and preferences of the young people participating in the study, 15 in-depth interviews were conducted with young people from various Alpine areas, including two interviews from Liechtenstein, and living labs were set up. In all participating countries youths valued access to nature, mountains, and green spaces, clean air and soil, recreation opportunities (skiing, hiking, horse riding, and cycling), abundance of local farms, and locally produced food. Regardless of where they lived, young people were mostly worried about the cost of living, including food, accommodation, and leisure activities. It was claimed that housing availability and affordability is being restricted by tourism. They also mentioned a lack of adequate healthcare and transportation services. A lack of cultural offers was found to be problematic in the study areas. Young people considered this to be a contributing factor to a high risk of isolation. They were also concerned about the quality of the environment and spatial development trends in their respective regions. Among the problems mentioned were increased noise and air pollution from motor traffic, overurbanisation, and unauthorised landfills in the countryside (mentioned in relation to Slovenia). In terms of challenges to be addressed by policymakers, they specified the need for improved public transport, more self-sustaining local communities, limitations to tourism, public education on sustainable development, and more affordable housing (CIPRA Slovenia, 2024). As a result of this study, three postulates of young people are presented in the publication 'Dossier: Quality of life and young people in the Alps'.

These are:

Postulate 1: Better nature for a better life

"We as young people ask for measures to be taken to develop and to give more room to nature in our Alpine cities, and also to better protect nature in the mountain areas. We strive to make everybody understand the huge role nature plays in the quality of our lives in the Alps, and the role of biodiversity in general, in making human life possible. Protecting nature in the Alps is protecting us." (Čataković *et al.*, 2024, p. 29)

Postulate 2: Alps for young people — a new era of work and leisure

"We propose to promote a more remote and flexible working environment linking practical jobs and remote working, including throughout different economic sectors. This will give people the opportunity to gain experiences in different working fields. As young people expect more sense and purpose in their job, this also supports companies in finding new skilled and motivated people who have a diverse skill set." (Čataković *et al.*, 2024, p. 29)

Postulate 3: Making public transport accessible and efficient in the mountain areas

"We ask for high-quality public transportation services with higher frequency and longer operating hours. New routes should be established according to the needs of the local population, in particular routes allowing for better access to mountain areas. Furthermore, public transport fares should be reduced to encourage use of public transport, especially for young people." (Čataković *et al.*, 2024, p. 30)

Click to see the Dossier: Quality of life and young people in the Alps.

2.2 Strengths and weaknesses of quality of life

FIGURE 2.4 on the next page: Major strengths of living in the Alps in the perceptions of residents. The bottom graph provides an overall picture, the rest show perceptions according to urban-rural typology: the first graph is the data for rural areas; second, for intermediate; and the third for urban areas. The results for urban-rural typology do not show the top four answers – air, nature, quiet, and recreational opportunities – as being the same for all the areas. The word clouds only depict words that had at least 10 occurrences. (Source: own survey)

Living in the Alps has both favourable and unfavourable aspects that can either enhance or diminish one's quality of life. This issue was explained using the survey data acquired. The respondents pointed out the three most significant strengths and weaknesses of living in the Alps.

Strengths

The most notable benefits of living in the Alps were found to be the natural environment and nature itself. The strengths were described with various phrases, such as 'easy access to nature', 'beautiful landscape and scenery', 'proximity to natural landscapes' and 'an unspoiled environment'. The word cloud (Figure 2.4) illustrates how these phrases were simplified to enable graphic representation. The respondents also recognised several environmental factors as significant strengths, such as the quality of water and air, the overall environmental condition, the landscape, mountains, lakes and vegetation. Another notable advantage mentioned about living in the Alps was the variety and accessibility of recreational and leisure opportunities, with activities such as hiking freely available. The Alps were also celebrated for their tranquillity, providing a stress-free and quiet living environment. Other strengths, less frequently highlighted by the residents, included the region's low population density, a sense of safety, good social relations, good local cuisine, and job opportunities.

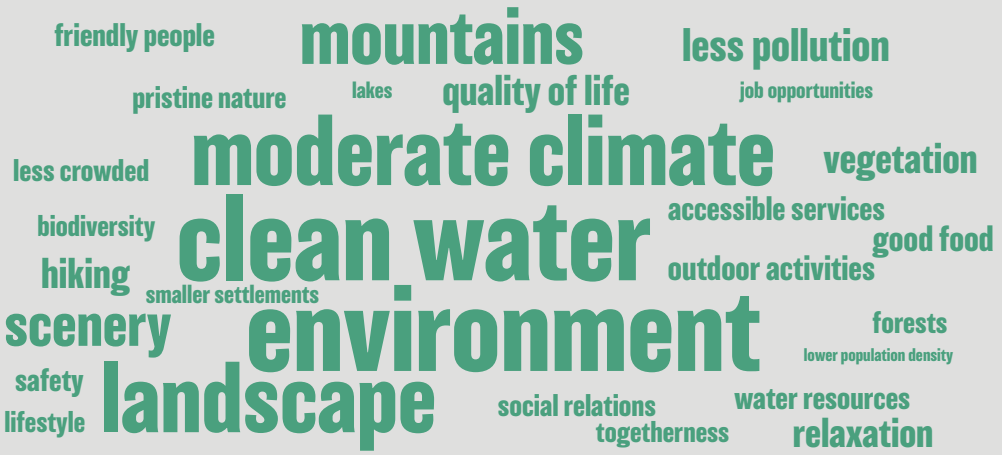
If taking the urban-rural typology into account, the results show that, whether classified as urban, intermediate or rural type, the top four occurrences identified are air, nature, quiet, and recreational opportunities. If those are removed and the results are further analysed, there is some distinction between the areas, but only slight (see Figure 2.4). The urban population mentioned mountains, landscape, and clean water, while the intermediate residents put forward clean water, environment, and moderate climate. In the rural area words like environment, clean water, and landscape stand out. It can therefore be concluded that the residents of the Alps indicated environmental qualities as the main strengths of living in the area.

Weaknesses

The main drawbacks of living in the Alps were associated with services and infrastructure, specifically poor public transport, a lack of proximity to essential services, and dependence on cars for transportation in remote areas (Figure 2.5). Another significant challenge was overtourism, which it was felt could be linked to high living costs and housing prices. Additionally, limitations to the availability of services, such as shopping and cultural opportunities, were reported, as were limited job opportunities. The remoteness of some Alpine areas was also seen to contribute to a sense of social isolation and a lack of social contact. Environmental aspects were not regarded so highly as in relation to the strengths, but Figure 2.5 still shows examples of climate change, noise pollution, natural hazards, and air pollution.

Comparing the responses of residents from different areas shows that there are slight differences in what residents consider problematic. Surprisingly, in urban areas, remoteness and overtourism stand out, while poor public transport comes out as the third most mentioned weaknesses. These common factors are followed by high living costs, which

RURAL



INTERMEDIATE

URBAN

ALL

FIGURE 2.5 on the next page: Main weaknesses of living in the Alps in the perceptions of residents. The bottom graph provides an overall picture, while the rest show perceptions according to the urban-rural typology: the first graph is the data for rural areas; the second for intermediate; and the third for urban areas. The word clouds only depict words that had at least 10 occurrences. (Source: own survey)

can go alongside high housing prices. The most common complaints in the intermediate areas are overtourism and poor public transport, but infrastructural issues also popped up (high living costs, infrastructure, distance to services and distance in general). In the rural areas, poor public transport stands out as most problematic, followed by overtourism and, again, poor accessibility of infrastructure and services. Accessibility to healthcare was specifically mentioned in this context.

"After 50 years of living in the big city, I moved back to my old hometown, a district town, three years ago and experienced this homecoming as a boost to my quality of life. Social integration, a large selection of leisure activities close to nature, and being within walking distance of all the services you need under normal circumstances are the great strengths of a small town in an Alpine rural area."
Male (66–75), a town or a small city, Austria (Oberkärnten, Hermagor), retired, professional and technical occupation

"I miss some of the more urban things – e.g. swimming pool, fitness centre, railway, or better bus services (there are services but there could be more). I miss the cycling infrastructure. I would improve public transport and cycle paths and repair abandoned houses so that people can move in. It is horrible that there are a lot of unfinished and abandoned houses – the state should support renovation. Another problem is the air quality in winter because of wood-burning stoves."
Male (25), Slovenia, village (Erasmus+ Alpine Compass Living Lab)

"There is an urgent need to diversify the economy, focus on inhabitants and move away from mass tourism in the Alps."
Female (36–45), a town or a small city, France (Haute-Savoie), employed, higher administrator occupation

"The Alpine region has become too crowded. All the beautiful places are overflowing with day visitors. On weekends you can hardly go up the mountain because everything is overcrowded."
Male (56–65), a country village, Germany (Garmisch-Partenkirchen), semi-retired, service occupation

"The quality of life for rural people is deteriorating, because decisions about the countryside are made by "armchair nature conservationists", who are out of touch with reality. Politics should listen to the people who live in the areas concerned, because they know the real situation."
Male (18–25), a country village, Slovenia (Gorenjska, Bled), student, professional and technical occupation


traffic
high living costs
distance to the centres
focus on tourism
limited cultural offer
seasonal tourism
high housing prices
pollution
overtourism
intensive agriculture
weather events
remoteness
accessibility to health care
poor public transport
depopulation
limited shopping possibilities
limited job opportunities
distance to services
dependence on car
reluctance to change
nature degradation
politics & governance
poor internet connection
few educational opportunities
urbanisation
infrastructure
distance
natural hazards
RURAL


limited cultural offer
remoteness
distance to services
politics & governance
distance to the centres
reluctance to change
poor public transport
accessibility to health care
limited shopping possibilities
air pollution
overtourism
pollution
noise pollution
lack of social contacts
focus on tourism
climate change
high living costs
traffic
cold winters
natural hazards
dependence on car
discrimination of newcomers
high housing prices
weather events
distance
urbanisation
infrastructure
limited job opportunities
INTERMEDIATE


distance
traffic
reluctance to change
limited job opportunities
lack of social contacts
high housing prices
overtourism
noise pollution
no sea
pollution
dependence on car
limited cultural offer
urbanisation
remoteness
overpopulation
politics & governance
air pollution
poor public transport
nature degradation
natural hazards
heavy snow
distance to services
limited shopping opportunities
cold winters
high living costs
infrastructure
weather events
accessibility to health care
URBAN


noise pollution
natural hazards
pollution
remoteness
high living costs
urbanisation
politics & governance
distance to services
accessibility to services
few educational opportunities
dependence on car
poor public transport
limited shopping possibilities
seasonal tourism
limited job opportunities
overtourism
climate change
high housing prices
accessibility to health care
limited cultural offer
traffic
reluctance to change
infrastructure
air pollution
lack of social contacts
ALL

2.3 Major factors influencing quality of life

The survey shows that the major factors influencing quality of life were personal health, climate change (which also affects personal health), and family life (Figure 2.6), of which only climate change showed a clear link to territory. Additionally, 40% of the respondents considered the macroeconomic situation to be a significant factor influencing their quality of life, while 30% thought that accessibility of services played a crucial role. Career development was identified by approximately 27% of the respondents. Government actions and job (in)security were the least frequently mentioned factors. According to the responses given, Alpine residents were aware of megatrends and how these might influence their quality of life in the future; however, they also put a great emphasis on their current personal situations. Interestingly, neither money nor employment played a direct role in any of the top three factors. For the top four factors, there was no distinction between urban and rural areas (Figure 2.7). The only difference in the top five factors was that, in urban areas, residents put career development as more important than accessibility of services, while accessibility of services is more important to both intermediate and rural residents. The largest dichotomy in the evaluation of factors according to the urban-rural typology was between the minimum and maximum values identified for accessibility of infrastructure and services (urban 23%, rural 34%) and the macroeconomic situation (urban 32%, rural 43%); this result suggests that the impact of these two factors may be related to the type of settlement in which people live and the prevailing situation there.

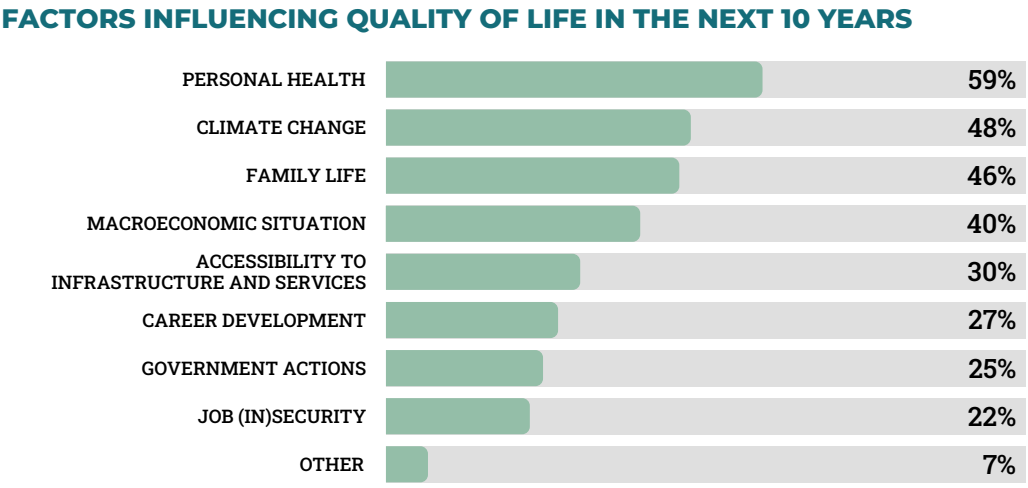


FIGURE 2.6
Factors influencing the quality of life in the Alps over the next 10 years as perceived by the residents (n = 2.971). (Source: own survey)

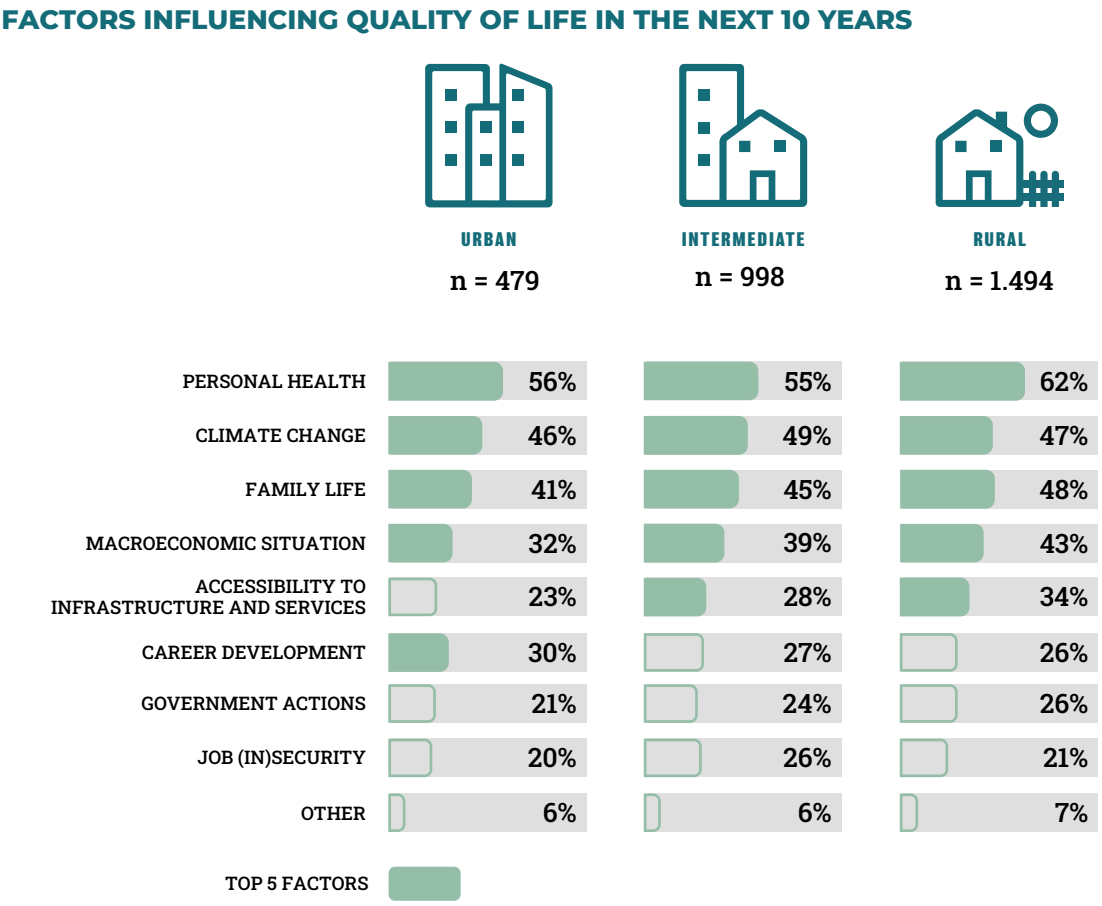


FIGURE 2.7 Factors influencing the quality of life in the Alps over the next 10 years as perceived by the residents and according to the urban-rural typology (n = 2.971). (Source: own survey)

The respondents suggested other factors that they believe would influence their quality of life over the next 10 years; among objective and global situation-related factors were tourism, global instability, and conflicts worldwide. Many other additionally mentioned related to individual situations or life phase factors (retirement, migration [changing regions or emigrating] and ageing), housing and economic situation, social network, personal beliefs, and amount of free time. Only a few respondents suggested factors related to nature and/or spatial development, such as soil sealing and urbanisation, destruction of nature, changes in biodiversity, pollution and natural disasters. This proves that people in the Alps are mostly of the opinion that their quality of life depends more on their personal situations than on their objective living conditions and is, therefore, also less related to the location where they happen to be living.

Similar findings were obtained in the ESPON study on TQoL in the Alpine Convention space, which explored the primary factors influencing the quality of life across regions in various countries, including Ticino (Switzerland), Trento (Italy), Koroška (Slovenia), and Unterkärnten (Austria; ESPON, 2024). The challenges identified were related to global trends, such as climate change, demographic issues, rising living and housing costs (especially in urban areas), and stagnant wage growth. Climate change emerged as a critical threat to the quality of life because of its projected

impacts, such as rising temperatures, altered weather patterns, and glacier retreat – all potentially detrimental to living conditions. Demographic changes, including ageing, posed additional social, economic, and administrative challenges. Remote Alpine areas faced depopulation and out-migration to urban centres, resulting in workforce shortages. The evolution of job opportunities (with special consideration of youth and gender disparities) and the quality of work and salaries strongly influenced career and location decisions. Digital transformation and artificial intelligence emerged as key factors affecting quality of life and its various dimensions, including employment opportunities.

A number of further issues were brought up, including transportation, a conservative mindset of the population, the need to expand protected areas, and more civic education to raise awareness of ecosystem services. Ensuring adequate services, such as public transport and educational opportunities, especially in remote areas, was another challenge cited. According to the study's conclusions, when examining the factors that influence quality of life, both regional differences and the influence of spatial typology (urban-rural) need to be considered because different areas may experience spatial differences and different impacts (e.g. extreme weather events and demographic changes).

"In the future, the biggest impacts on my quality of life will probably be housing issues, traffic congestion associated with tourist visits, and the state of the environment and nature."
Male (29), Slovenia, very touristy mountain municipality (Erasmus+ Alpine Compass Living Lab)

"Every day you see what is still there in the mountains, what has long since disappeared in the lowlands and you notice that the pressure is increasing enormously here too due to intensified agriculture and tourism. People are on the verge of destroying the paradise of the Alps too."
Female (56–65), an isolated hamlet/the countryside with dispersed settlements, Switzerland (Graubünden), retired, clerical occupation

"If you are lucky enough to be able to pursue your job via 'remote work' from the Alps and are able to participate in the economic life of a metropolitan region, then the Alps allow you to have one foot in a modern and technological world whilst also enjoying the advantages of less technology every day – nature, forest, vegetable garden, self-sufficiency, solidarity-based neighbourhoods, culture and much more."
Male (46–55), an isolated hamlet/the countryside with dispersed settlements, Italy (Udine), employed, professional and technical occupation

2.4 Overall assessment of quality of life

Various studies have shown a generally good picture of the quality of life in the Alps (Keller, 2010; ESPON, 2018; OECD, 2023). According to the European Social Survey, the Alpine region generally had greater satisfaction with quality of life than the rest of Europe, and the Eurostat and OECD measures showed largely positive results for the Alpine region. In the research performed for the RSA 10, 34 indicators were taken into consideration to evaluate three aspects of quality of life: living conditions (18 indicators), the state of society (10 indicators) and subjective perceptions of Alpine people's quality of life (six indicators). Another two indicators provided a general picture of quality of life. The scores of the selected indicators in the Alpine area mostly outperformed the European average, except for the duration of parental leave in which the EU average was 50 weeks, whereas the Alpine average was 36 weeks due to the differences between the countries and even variations within countries as is the case in Switzerland (EU Parliament; Reboot, 2024). In addition, the ageing index of the Alpine region was higher (163) than the EU average (140, Eurostat data for 2021), and employment in the service sector was 10% lower than that in the EU (59%). The former information tells us that there is already and will even be an increased demand for services for the elderly, such as medical support and elderly care. The latter information reveals that Alpine regions are, on average, lagging behind in terms of becoming service-oriented societies and still have higher shares of employees working in industries or agriculture. The Alpine region is also at a higher risk of experiencing the impacts of climate change because of its spatial characteristics and the fact that the Alps are predicted to experience a temperature increase significantly above the global average. Regarding the state of society, the average annual equivalised disposable income of households per inhabitant was EUR 27.000, which was EUR 10.000 above the EU average, presenting a good economic base for Alpine residents (see Figure 2.27 for a more detailed picture). This result may have to do with how people view their income in proportion to their level of comfort; people in Alpine areas generally believe that they can get by on their present income. Consequently, the shares of people at risk of poverty (16% compared with the EU's 21%) and of young people who were neither in employment nor in education and training (9% compared with the EU's 12%) were lower. Alpine residents generally perceived quality of life similarly to an average European citizen.

A comparison of the values of the indicators for different types of regions shows several disparities. Regarding enablers, the distance to services of general interest was identified as a gap between urban and rural areas. According to the accessibility analysis using Open Street Map data, rural regions scored the worst in relation to most services except for fire stations, which were traditionally more densely located in rural areas. According to Wrona (2020), a fire brigade is a form of a self-organising community; it is built on and benefits from social capital and pursues many social objectives in local communities other than just providing fire prevention services. For services such as nurseries, community centres and police stations, the average distance increased from urban to rural areas.

Land take was highest in rural areas. Regarding the state of society, two major differences can be observed. Premature deaths because of air pollution were much higher in urban areas, while the income per household was highest in intermediate areas (EUR 38.100) and significantly lower in urban and rural areas (EUR 24.000). There is also a significant gap in income between the northern and southern part of the Alps. In the north, especially in the Swiss cantons, the average income far

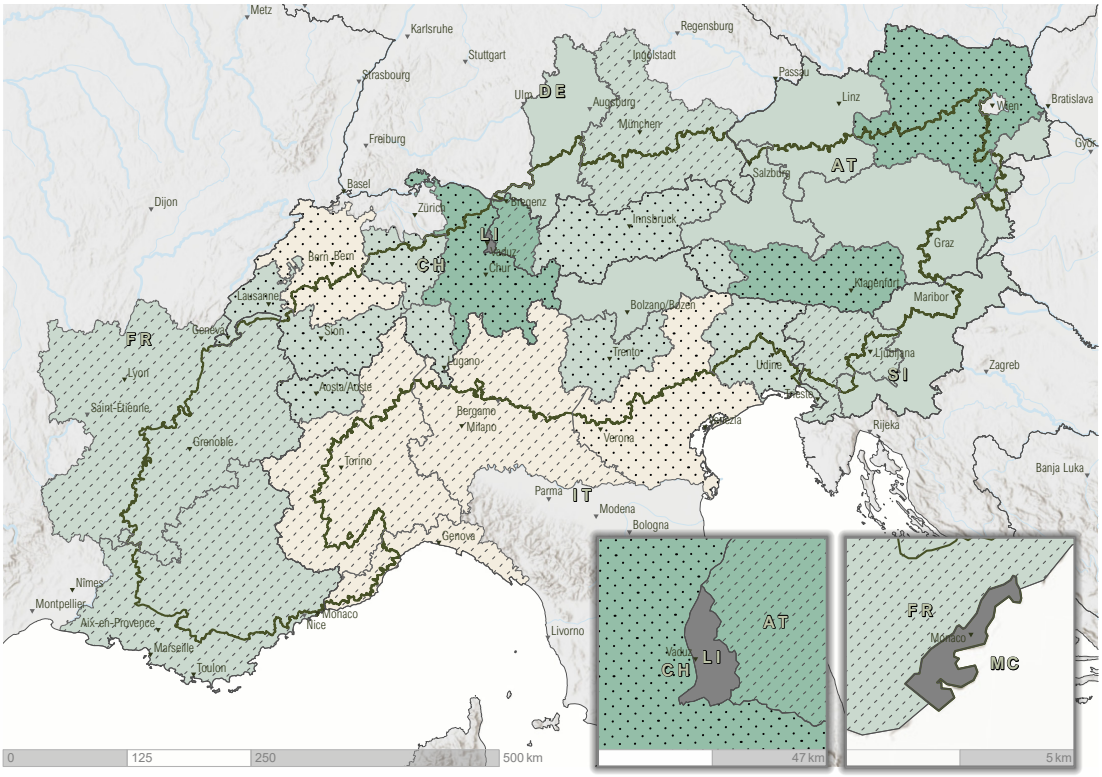


FIGURE 2.8 Perceived satisfaction with the quality of life in NUTS 2 regions by urban-rural typology. The average number of respondents per NUTS 2 is 106. In some regions, the sample number was lower than 40 since the response was poor both via the snowball technique of distribution and by using the online panel. Those regions are Burgenland, Upper Austria, Ticino, Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste, Liguria, Liechtenstein, Eastern Slovenia, and Monaco. (Source: own survey)

LIFE SATISFACTION BY URBAN-RURAL TYPOLOGY, 2023

EXTREMELY DISSATISFIED — **EXTREMELY SATISFIED**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

URBAN-RURAL TYPOLOGY

- PREDOMINANTLY URBAN
- INTERMEDIATE
- PREDOMINANTLY RURAL

- ALPINE CONVENTION PERIMETER
- NUTS 2 BORDERS
- COUNTRY BORDERS
- NO DATA

In order to prepare for the RSA 10, a survey was conducted in 2023 on the Alpine population to determine average life satisfaction. Urban-rural typology indicates how many people live in urban, intermediate or rural regions.

Regional level: NUTS 2
Data sources: Eurostat, 2023
Map background: Esri, Intermap, NASA, NGA, USGS; Esri, CGIAR, USGS; Esri, USGS
Cartography: Tadej Bevk

exceeds EUR 40.000, while the amount in some of the southern regions does not even go above EUR 20.000 (see also Figure 2.27). In life flourishing pillar, in general, intermediate regions tended to score above the Alpine Convention's average, while urban and rural regions scored below this average.

In the last European Social Survey in 2020, the Alpine average of life satisfaction was higher than the EU's (8 out of 10 compared with the EU's 7). However, the results of the RSA 10 survey with Alpine residents had an average of 7 out of 10, meaning that the residents of the Alps are somewhat satisfied with their quality of life. The most recent results did not significantly deviate from the typical European's quality of life. Combining all the percentages on the dissatisfied side of the scale and all those on the other side, only 6% of all people were dissatisfied, and 68% were somewhat satisfied with their quality of life. Of the respondents, 26% were in the middle and were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied, which was also the most commonly selected score on the scale. With regard to the urban-rural typology, residents in rural areas (those living in the countryside – in a village or a hamlet) and intermediate regions reported an average score of 7, while those in urban areas reported only an average score of 6. The precise geographical distribution of scores is shown in Figure 2.8, in which the scores were calculated for NUTS 2 regions.

Looking back, a sizeable proportion of Alpine residents (40%) stated that their quality of life had remained unchanged over the previous 10 years. While for a quarter of the respondents, their quality of life had improved during this period and, for 6%, it had significantly improved, for nearly 28% it had diminished. The residents offered gloomy predictions about what will happen to their quality of life in the future. The most prevalent expectation among Alpine residents was that it would remain unchanged (40%), while 35% believed that it would decline. Furthermore, 8% were concerned that their quality of life would significantly diminish over the next decade. Only 2% and approximately 15% of the respondents expected a significant improvement and a slight improvement in their quality of life respectively.

Among the five topics of quality of life (for detailed data, see Figure 2.9), the respondents were most satisfied with the environment; 59% selected 'extremely satisfied' or 'satisfied', so this was on the positive side of the scale. It was followed by social relations (57%) and work and financial security (48%). Altogether, governance was the worst-evaluated element; 42% of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with it, while respondents were most undecided in relation to infrastructure and services i.e. 35% were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied with them. Not much correlation was detected between satisfaction with quality of life and satisfaction with some of its aspects or basic data. Some correlations were found between satisfaction with two services, as was the case with kindergarten and primary school, or between a major topic of quality of life and some variables on this topic, as was the case in the correlation between satisfaction generally with infrastructure and services and satisfaction specifically with public transport.

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH FIVE CATEGORIES OF QUALITY OF LIFE

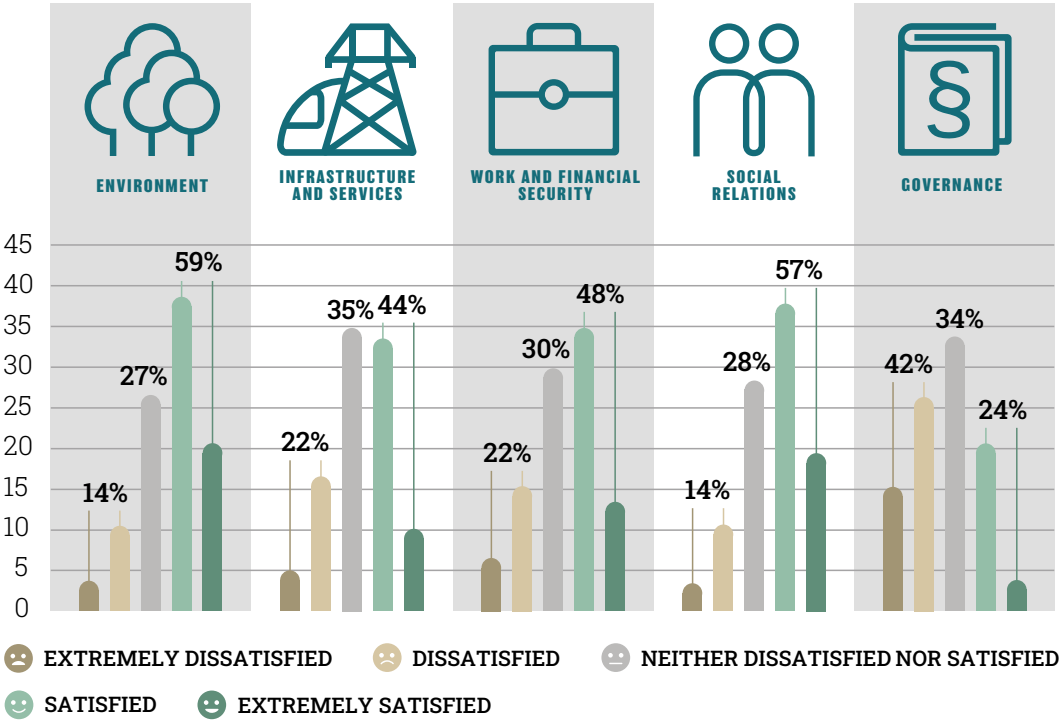


FIGURE 2.9 Perceived overall satisfaction with five categories of quality of life (environment: n = 2.990, infrastructure and services: n = 2.983, work and financial security: n = 2.986, social relations: n = 2.982, and governance: n = 2.983). (Source: own survey)

As the last topic under the overall quality-of-life evaluation, the happiness of Alpine residents was also investigated (Figure 2.10). The average perception of happiness was rated at 7, which means that Alpine people are somewhat happy – they are neither extremely happy nor unhappy. Most of the respondents rated their happiness as 5 or higher. The most frequently chosen score was 5, with 27% of the respondents selecting this option. When the self-declared types of areas that the respondents lived in were considered, happiness tended to be highest in villages, isolated hamlets, and towns (7), and lowest in big cities and suburbs (only 6). No correlation between happiness and any measures of satisfaction or basic data of the respondents was identified; only a strong correlation with general quality-of-life satisfaction can be confirmed.

PERCEIVED HAPPINESS OF THE RESPONDENTS

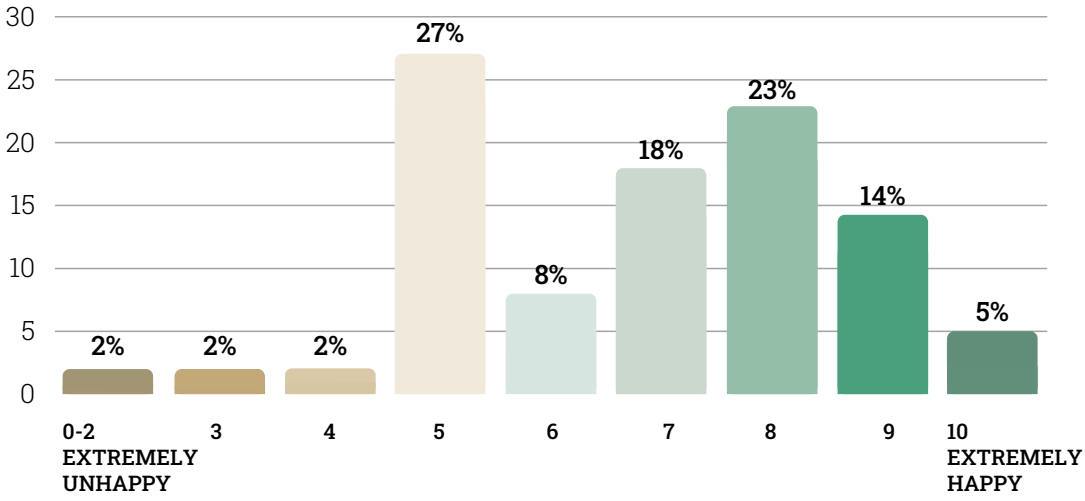


FIGURE 2.10
Perceived happiness of the respondents (n = 2.878). (Source: own survey)

2.5 Environment

One of most distinctive features of the Alps is the Alpine environment, which is also one of the best protected areas in Europe. However, due to anthropogenic processes and climate change, the Alps are also one of the areas under the highest pressure. Temperatures here have risen twice as much as the global average, with the highest rise occurring in the French part of the Alps – more than 3°C from 1960 to 2021 (Figure 2.11; Adler *et al.*, 2022). A preserved, resilient and healthy environment is an essential condition for a high quality of life not only in the core of the Alps but also in many fringe areas that depend on Alpine resources such as water, timber and agricultural produce. Furthermore, the Alpine identity and landscape quality with its aesthetic value serve as incentives for tourism and are also used for sports and recreation by Alpine residents, residents from fringe areas and tourists from other areas (Scolozzi *et al.*, 2015; Mele and Egberts, 2023). There is a lot of pressure from threats to these natural resources, such as an increased risk of floods, avalanches

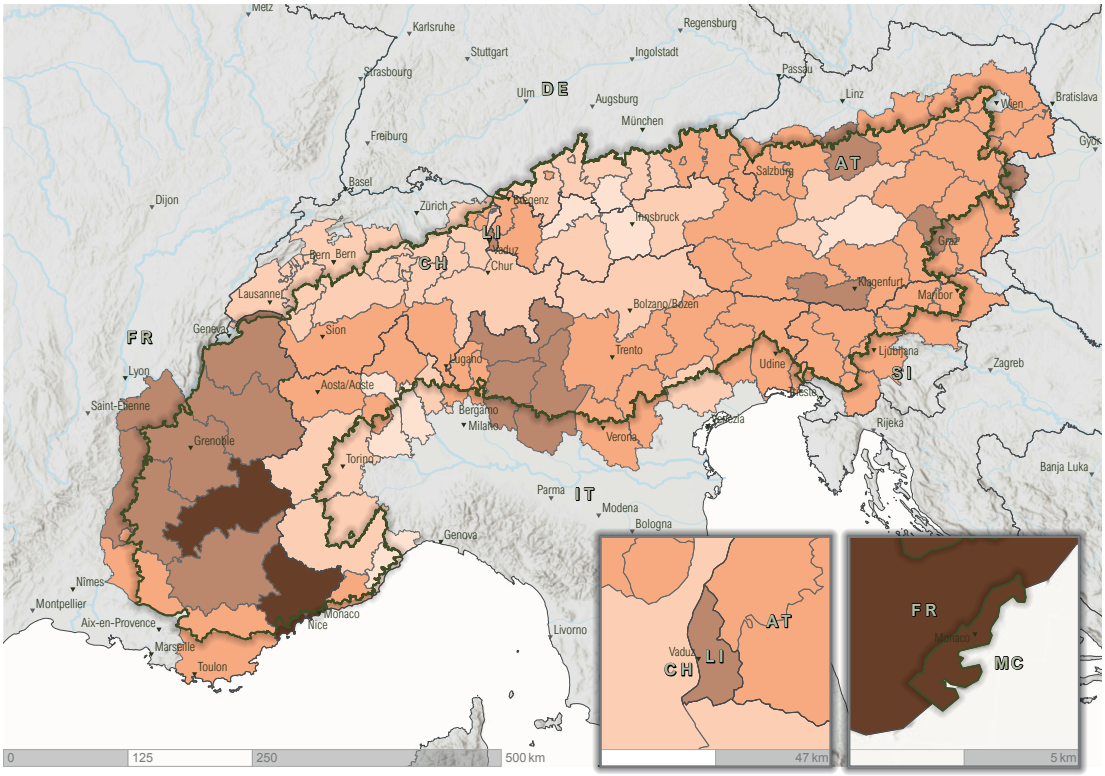


FIGURE 2.11
Annual mean temperature change 1960–2021. (Source: EEA, 2020)

CHANGE IN ANNUAL AVERAGE NEAR-SURFACE TEMPERATURE, 1960–2021

1–1,5°C | 1,6–2°C | 2,1–2,5°C | 2,6–3 °C | 3,1–3,5°C

ALPINE CONVENTION PERIMETER

NUTS 3 BORDERS

COUNTRY BORDERS

The change in annual average near-surface temperature, calculated using European Environmental Agency data, shows how much average annual temperatures have increased from 1960 to 2021.

Regional level: NUTS 3
Data sources: EEA, 2021
Map background: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS; Esri, USGS
Cartography: Tadej Bevk

and landslides (European Environment Agency (EEA), 2020; Stoffel, Tiranti and Huggel, 2014). Good life enablers show that the Alpine environment is generally of good quality, but a closer look at individual environmental elements shows a different picture. Throughout the Alps, there are rivers in poor ecological condition that need to be restored in order to fulfil the Water Framework Directive's goals (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2000). Land take intensity in the Alpine region is about half of the European average, but there is a difference between the populated areas (amount comparable to EU) and Alpine areas not suitable for settlement (very low levels). All in all, the Alpine region is not meeting the net zero goals for 2050 (EEA, 2019; ESPON, 2020a). Land take is especially high in the area's fringes. Although residents were mostly satisfied with the environmental quality, a closer look at specific elements and people's statements show they were less satisfied and especially worried about future threats to the environment.

The respondents tended to be most satisfied with the quality of water, vegetation, air, and soil (Figure 2.12). Slightly lower satisfaction levels were observed with regard to noise and light pollution, perhaps partly because of the negative connotation associated with the term 'pollution'.

PERCEIVED SATISFACTION WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS

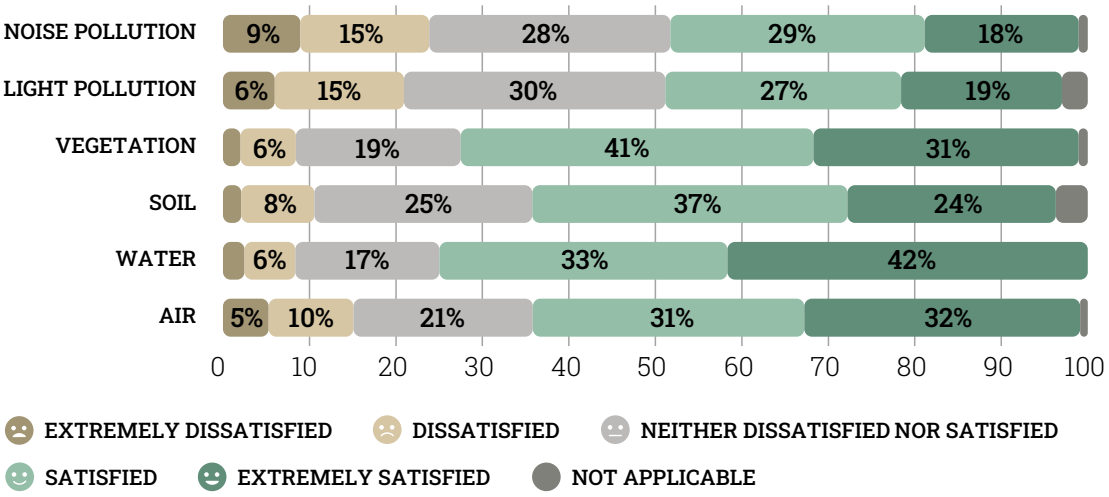


FIGURE 2.12 Perceived satisfaction with environmental aspects (air: n = 2.995, water: n = 2.991, soil: n = 2.989, vegetation: n = 2.987, light pollution: n = 2.989, and noise pollution: n = 2.992). (Source: own survey)

"I am very worried about the return of the large predators. Farmers in particular are suffering greatly. The majority of supporters live in cities and the wolf or bear has little or no influence on their daily lives. If agriculture stops, entire regions die. In most cases, herd protection is not possible at all, and where it is possible, it involves a lot of additional effort that neither farmers nor society are willing to bear. The Flora Fauna Habitats Directive must be changed if we value rural areas."
Male (56–65), an isolated hamlet/the countryside with dispersed settlements, Austria (Pinzgau-Pongau, St. Johann), employed, higher administrator occupation

"High quality of life, but too many tourists, too much traffic, too much noise, too little environmental awareness, sustainability or willingness to protect the climate."
Male (76–85), a town or a small city, Germany (Garmisch-Partenkirchen), retired, professional and technical occupation

"I would like more awareness and insight into the importance of protecting the environment in this fragile and sensitive mountain world."
Male (66–75), an isolated hamlet/the countryside with dispersed settlements, Slovenia (Savinjska, Luče), retired, higher administrator occupation

"More and more people are visiting the Alps, even for a short time, to relax. This leaves us with a lot of garbage, exhaust gases and noise pollution. The rush on weekends and during the holidays is no longer bearable for locals."
Female, (56–65), the suburbs or outskirts of a big city, Germany (Garmisch-Partenkirchen), employed, clerical occupation

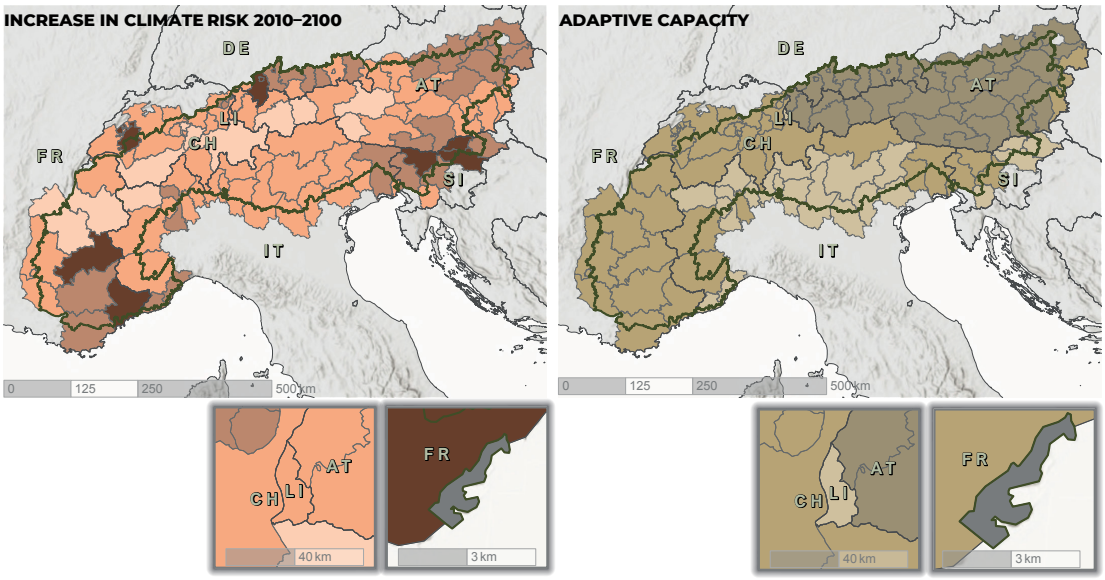


FIGURE 2.13 Aggregated risk of the potential effects of climate change on society under scenarios of continued very high GHG emissions. (Source: ESPON, 2022)

AGGREGATED RISK OF POTENTIAL CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS ON SOCIETY IN A VERY HIGH EMISSION SCENARIO

INCREASE IN CLIMATE RISK 2010–2100

Very low increase | Low increase | Medium increase | High increase | Very high increase

ADAPTIVE CAPACITY

Very low capacity | Low capacity | Medium capacity | High capacity | Very high capacity

ALPINE CONVENTION PERIMETER

NUTS 3 BORDERS

COUNTRY BORDERS

Regional level: NUTS 3
Data sources: ESPON, 2022
Map background: Esri, Intermap, NASA, NGA, USGS; Esri, CGIAR, USGS; Esri, USGS
Cartography: Tadej Bevk

The increase of climate risks shows the potential impacts of climate change on infrastructure, population, protected areas, cultural amenities, and on the primary sector and tourism under the assumption that emissions remain very high. The assessed risks are heat stresses, coastal floods, river floods, flash floods, wildfires and droughts. Adaptive capacity is a measure of a region's ability to counteract the impacts of climate change and is based on social, technological, infrastructure, economic and institutional capacities.

A comparison of the scores for different types of areas showed that residents in rural areas were generally more satisfied with environmental aspects than residents in more urbanised areas.

This generally well perceived quality of the environment can be refuted by the data collected to illustrate the environment's current condition. The situation is generally better than the EU average but still requires urgent improvements. With reference to premature deaths through air pollution, the Alps, on average, are doing better than Europe as a whole, but a detailed look into urban regions shows a worrisome picture of 70 premature deaths per 100.000 inhabitants, which is above the EU average (53). Regions on the southern fringe of the area are particularly affected. Direct measurements of the state of the environment contradicts people's predominantly positive opinion, which might be an indication of low environmental literacy in the Alps. An ecologically literate citizen, according to McBride *et al.* (2013), is an individual who is, above all, informed about environmental issues and problems and possesses the attitudes and skills for solving them. Based on Figure 2.12 it could be assumed that residents are not familiar with the state of the environment as it is or do not yet feel the negative consequences of detrimental conditions.

According to the ESPON update of CLIMATE datasets and maps (2022), the increase in risk of the potential effects of climate change on society under scenarios of continued very high GHG emissions

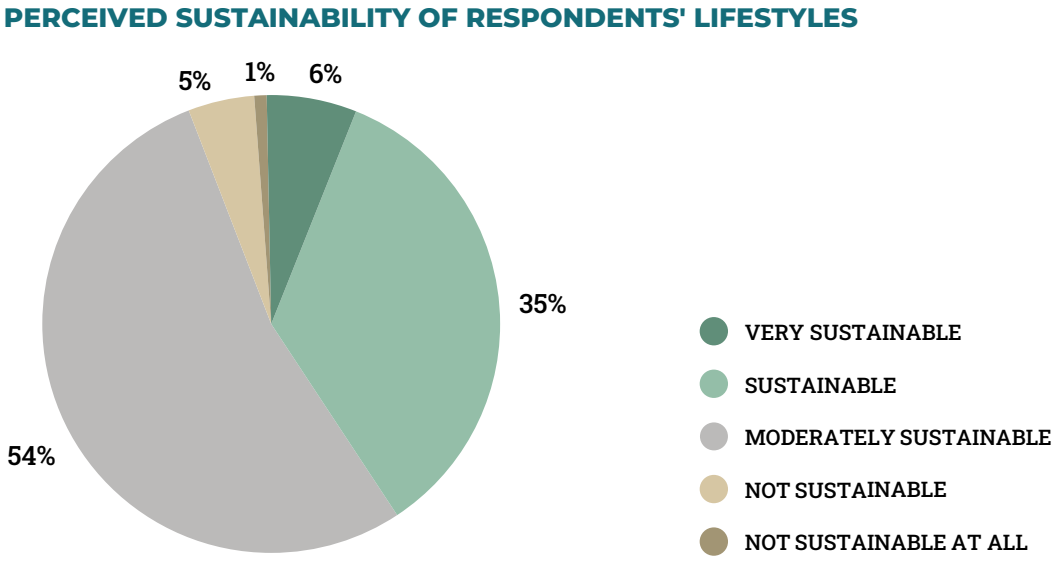


FIGURE 2.14
Perception of the respondents about sustainability of their lifestyles (n = 2.987). (Source: own survey)

in the period between 2010 and 2100 shows geographical variability across the Alpine region, with regions on the fringe being under more pressure (Figure 2.13). Furthermore, in the southern parts of the Alps the adaptive capacity tends to be lower than in other regions, where it is moderate to very high (for more on climate change in the Alps, please refer to Chapter 3).

In terms of subjective views of the environment and health in relation to quality of life, a relatively high proportion of the Alpine population perceived the effects of environmental issues on their daily lives and health (average: 78%, range: 60%–95%; source: European Social Survey, 2020, round 10). In this regard, the residents in the RSA 10 survey were asked about how sustainably they live and what activities, in their own words, contribute to a sustainable life. Across the Alpine region, the majority of the respondents (almost 54%) assessed their lifestyles as moderately sustainable (Figure 2.14). More than one-third (almost 35%) indicated that they were living sustainably, while the lowest percentage (less than 1%) considered their lifestyles to be completely unsustainable. The proportion of individuals who viewed their lifestyles as 'sustainable' was highest in urban areas, with nearly 40% choosing this option, and also those respondents perceiving their lifestyles to be 'very sustainable' was

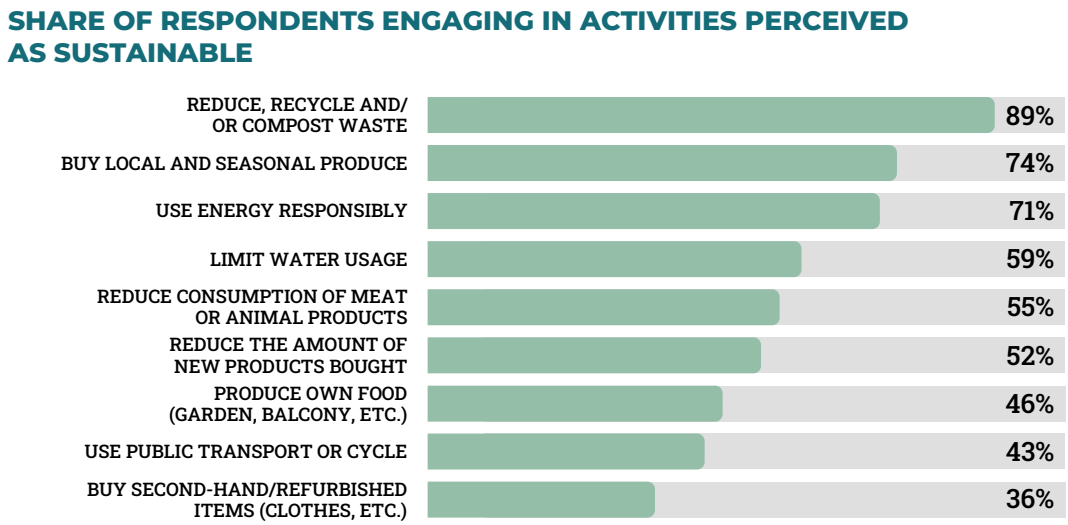


FIGURE 2.15
Respondents' engagement in activities perceived as sustainable (n = 2.995). (Source: own survey)

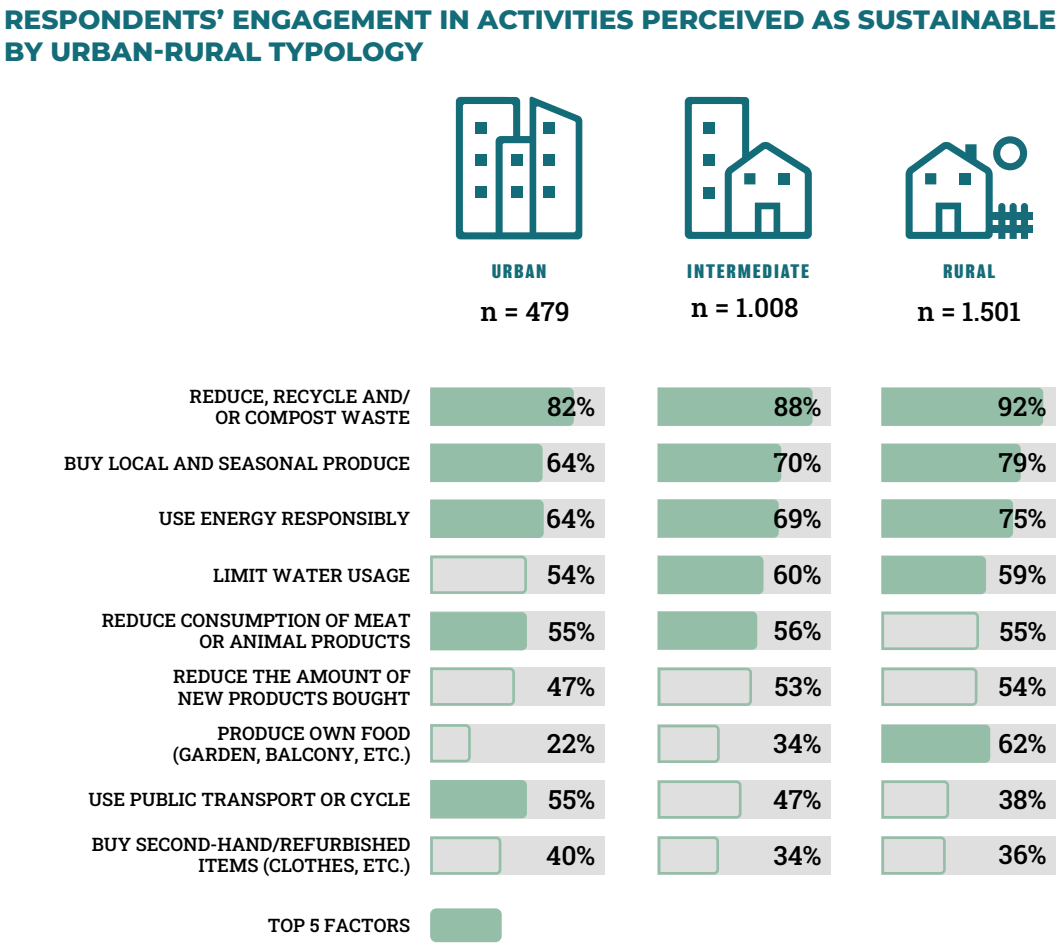


FIGURE 2.16
Respondents' engagement in activities perceived as sustainable by urban-rural typology (urban area: n = 479, intermediate area: n = 1.008, and rural area: n = 1.501). (Source: own survey)

highest in urban areas. The overall trend of self-perceived sustainability remained consistent across all regions.

In support of the claims of living sustainably, the respondents chose from a list of options and also had the possibility to add other activities (Figure 2.15). The most widely practised sustainable activities were reduction, recycling and composting of waste (89% of the respondents performed these). The second most-selected action was buying local and seasonal products, followed by responsible energy usage. The least frequently adopted sustainable practices included buying second-hand or refurbished items (36% of the participants), using public transport or cycling (43%), and producing one's own food (46%). Around 200 out of 3.000 respondents offered additional activities under the option 'others':

- **Fuel saving:** This includes walking or cycling for daily errands, avoiding air travel, owning an electric car or a hybrid car, participating in car sharing, limiting car usage, adhering to speed limits, and not owning a car.
- **Energy saving and production:** This includes installing solar panels, utilising district heating, using energy from renewable sources, minimising travel, and achieving energy self-sufficiency.
- **Second use or rational use of resources:** This means repairing items, following a vegetarian or vegan diet, practicing overall consumption reduction, managing waste collection, opting for ecological construction, knitting or sewing one's own clothes, avoiding plastic packaging and purchasing organic food.
- **Activism:** This means engaging in activism to promote sustainable actions and lifestyles.

In terms of the urban-rural typology (see Figure 2.16), the type of area influences the prevailing types of activities that contribute to sustainability. While the most prevalent sustainable activity was the same across all types of regions, the other responses varied. In rural and intermediate regions, the second most popular activity was purchasing local and seasonal products, whereas responsible energy use came second in urban areas. The least practised sustainable activity in urban areas was producing one's own food, whereas in intermediate and rural regions, the least commonly adopted activities included buying second-hand or refurbished items, using public transport (in rural regions), and growing one's own food (in intermediate regions). Although the respondents generally claim to be very sustainable in their daily pursuits, the household carbon footprint per capita in the Alpine area is above the 2.500 kg of CO_2 per capita which is a sustainability target (Ivanova *et al.*, 2017). In order to proactively promote a sustainable life, the Alpine Climate Board has prepared a brochure 'Closing the gap on climate action' to educate Alpine residents on how to live a more sustainable lifestyle on a daily basis (see Box 2.2).

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF LIVING IN PROTECTED AREAS ON QUALITY OF LIFE

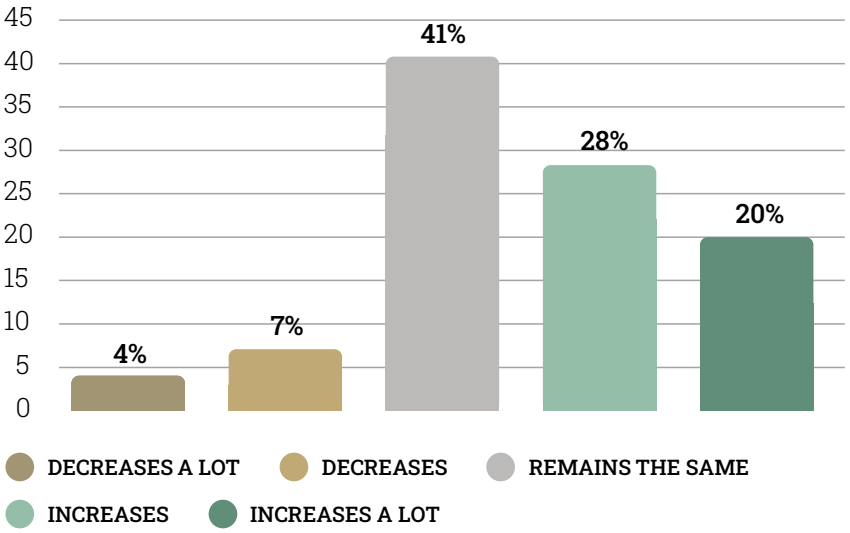


FIGURE 2.17
The impact of living in protected areas on quality of life as perceived by the residents (n = 422, respondents living in protected areas). (Source: own survey)

BOX 2.2

Alpine Climate Board booklet on climate-neutral and resilient lifestyles in the Alps
In 2022, the Alpine Climate Board published a booklet advocating climate-neutral and resilient living in the Alps. Targeting mayors, local and regional politicians, public administrators, NGOs, federations and unions across the Alpine region, it showcases exemplary practices and invites collaboration to foster sustainable and resilient lifestyles. The booklet aims to present successful projects implemented throughout Alpine countries, inspiring further action towards sustainable living and climate resilience in the area. The showcased projects cover various thematic areas, including sustainable mobility, participatory and energy-efficient housing, climate-neutral food production and consumption, as well as culture and tourism-related climate-neutral activities. Additionally, the booklet discusses the advantages and challenges of developing climate-neutral and resilient lifestyles in the Alps, offering ideas for both the public and private sector, as well as civil society, to contribute to more sustainable, climate-neutral, and resilient Alpine communities. For more details, please visit the website.

BOX 2.3

Living in a Protected Natural Area – an example of the Biosphere Reserve in Central Switzerland

In the Entlebuch UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, improving the quality of life of residents is an important line of action. By using it as a key management perspective, synergies between aspects of the seemingly contradictory goals of conservation and development can be found. For example, by organising voluntary work with residents in overgrown Alpine pastures, the health of both biodiversity and of the participants are fostered. Improving the ecological quality of green areas in settlements also improves the living conditions for residents and urban biodiversity. Safeguarding cultural assets, such as the "Alpabfahrt" ('transhumance' of herds from mountain pastures to lowlands in winter), by promoting them as tourist attractions, helps maintain crafts, traditions, income, and jobs in the region. Ultimately, adopting quality of life as a guiding principle of management contributes to the acceptance of the institution, opening doors for more difficult projects in the realm of sustainable development. For more details, please visit the website.

The respondents were also asked to report how living in a protected area contributes to their quality of life (Figure 2.17). Although living in a protected area might put restrictions on potential land use and impose restrictions on human and economic activities, the answers of the respondents on this topic were quite positive. Of the respondents, 14% reported living in designated protected areas, 4% stated they would be unaware of this, and the rest lived outside such areas. The highest share of residents in protected areas was observed in rural regions (20%), while in urban and intermediate regions, the share was below 10%. Of the 14% of people living in protected areas, the majority stated that the activities undertaken in protected areas had neutral or mainly positive effects on their quality of life. Forty-one percent of the respondents stated that their quality of life remained the same, 28% believed it improved a little, and one-fifth said that it increased significantly. Only 11% believed that nature protection activities had rather negative impacts on their quality of life. In terms of the urban-rural typology, the variation between the types of areas for this variable was low.

2.6 Infrastructure and services

The provision of infrastructure and services in the Alpine region has been recognised as problematic in various studies (Humer and Palma, 2013; Marot *et al.*, 2018; Kolarič, Černič Mali and Marot, 2019). The demanding mountainous terrain and dispersed settlement patterns in the Alps present financial and territorial obstacles, which has led to the closure of some services. This has happened because the depopulating of remote areas leading to a decreased demand for services has, in turn, accelerated depopulation because of services no longer being available. Since most services outside urban areas are only accessible by vehicle, poor service accessibility can also be linked to various vulnerable groups, such as youth and the elderly. Although digitalisation and accompanying new forms of supplying such services could offer workable alternatives in some areas, these possibilities are limited by poor broadband coverage.

In the analysis of service provision in the Alpine area, the following aspects were studied. First, the accessibility of services was calculated based on distance; second, residents of the Alps were asked about the time they needed to access specific types of services and how satisfied they were with them. Transportation and housing issues were also examined. Owing to poor data availability, a picture of the housing market was formed based solely on the answers provided by the residents.

Accessibility was calculated based on population-weighted data and the understanding that a distance of up to 1.500 metres was still acceptable for the use of everyday services (Figure 2.18a, b). For services used rarely or only on special occasions, a distance

FREQUENTLY NEEDED SERVICES

PRIMARY SCHOOL

NURSERY

GROCERY SHOP

AVERAGE DISTANCE TO FREQUENTLY NEEDED SERVICES

- < 0,5 KM
- 0,5–1,5 KM
- 1,5–2,5 KM
- 2,5–5 KM
- > 5 KM

OCCASIONALLY NEEDED SERVICES

HOSPITAL

CULTURAL AMENITIES

FIRE STATION

COMMUNITY CENTERS

POLICE STATION

AVERAGE DISTANCE TO OCCASIONALLY NEEDED SERVICES

- < 2,5 KM
- 2,5–5 KM
- 5–8 KM
- 8–15 KM
- > 15 KM

FIGURE 2.18a Average population-weighted distances to the selected services of general interest. (Source: own calculation, based on Open Street Map, 2023 data)

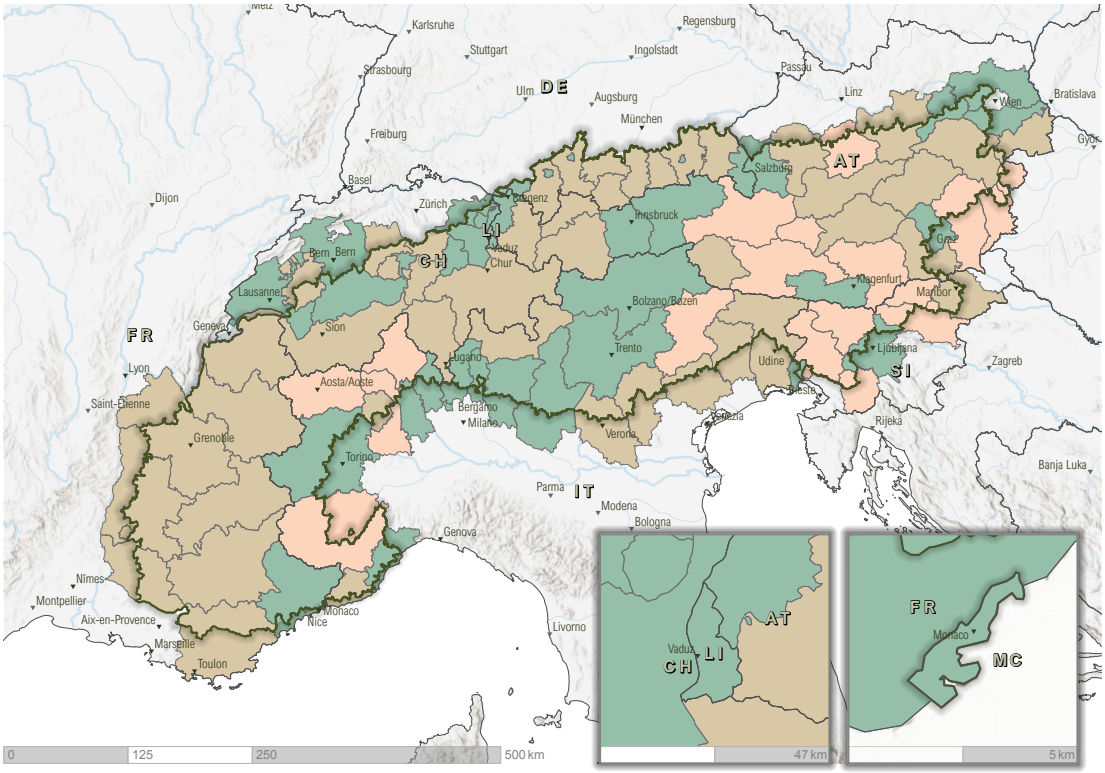


FIGURE 2.18b Average accessibility to services, based on calculation for each separate service. (Source: own calculation, based on Open Street Map, 2023 data)

ACCESSIBILITY TO SERVICES

Some services easily accessible

Most services easily accessible

All services easily accessible

ALPINE CONVENTION PERIMETER

NUTS 3 BORDERS

COUNTRY BORDERS

Accessibility to services indicates how well daily and occasionally needed services are accessible. The result is based on the number of people living within a specific distance of each service.

Regional level: NUTS 3
Data sources: Open Street Map, 2023
Map background: Esri, Intermap, NASA, NGA, USGS; Esri, CGIAR, USGS; Esri, USGS
Cartography: Tadej Bevk

of up to 5 km was considered good. This resulted in a fairly good picture of the accessibility of services. In general, the residents of the Alps had good access to everyday services, but those located in urban areas had the best access. The distance to services increases with the type of area, with rural areas being the farthest. For example, the average distance to a primary school is 1 km in urban areas, while it is almost 2 km in rural areas. The same is the case with a nursery school; the distance in rural areas is double that in urban areas. An even larger gap between urban and rural areas is seen in the case of hospitals and cultural amenities.

The results of the ESPON study on Territorial Quality of Life can shed additional light on the provision of services (ESPON, 2024). Service accessibility was analysed for the entire Alpine area by producing heat maps based on ESPON PROFECY data. The ESPON PROFECY classification begins with Level 0, representing regions with fundamental commercial activities, such as retail, and ends with Level 3+, which represents an area with the best supply of services. The analysis revealed an uneven distribution of service accessibility across NUTS 3 and LAU 2 (municipality) administrative units (Figure 2.19). On average, the inner Alpine regions, such as the core of Switzerland, have fewer services than urban centres. For instance, retail shops are scarce in some inner Alpine areas, while they are numerous in and around urban centres. However, in Austria, Germany, and Slovenia, this pattern is not found, and the distribution of services is more even. Education hubs

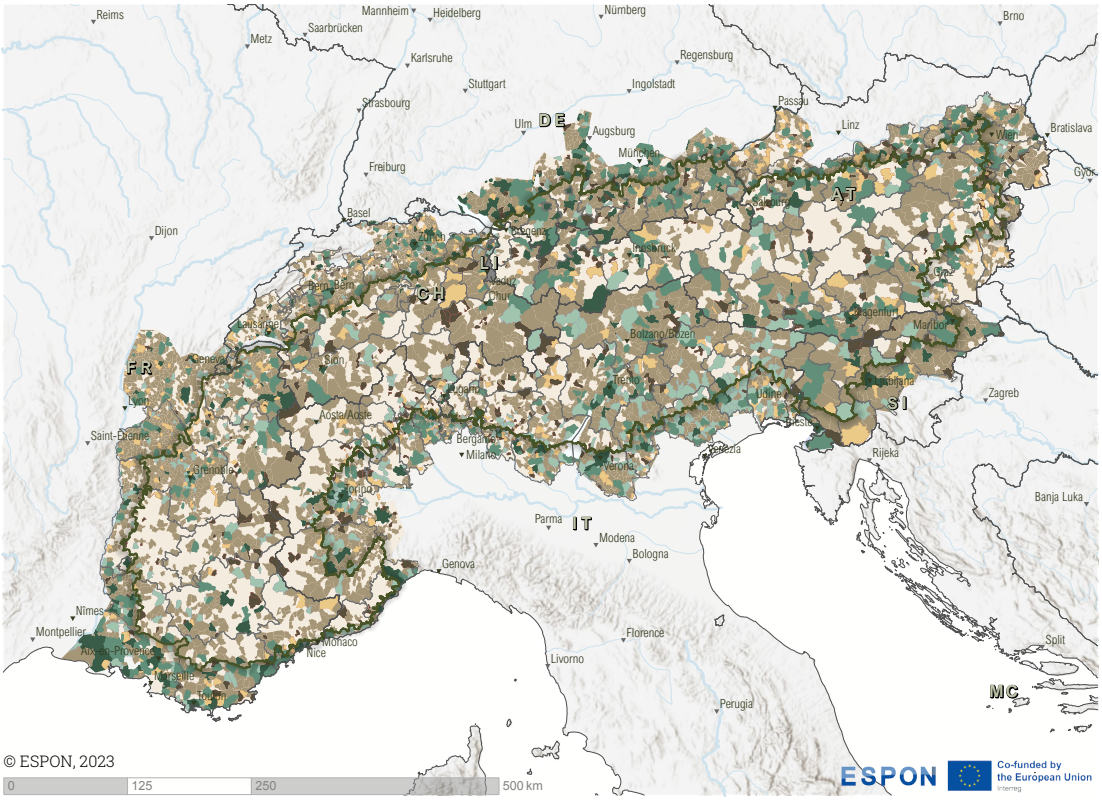


FIGURE 2.19
Territorial Quality of Life – Classification of the Service Accessibility Levels (LAU 2). (Source: ESPON, 2024, p. 19)

TERRITORIAL QUALITY OF LIFE - CLASSIFICATION OF THE SERVICE ACCESIBILITY LEVELS (LAU 2)

ALPINE CONVENTION PERIMETER

COUNTRY BORDERS

SERVICE ACCESSIBILITY PER ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

- **LEVEL 3+ (INCLUDES HOSPITAL)**
- **LEVEL 3- (INCLUDES DOCTORS)**
- **LEVEL 2 (BANK AND PHARMACIES)**
- **LEVEL 1+ (PRIMARY OR SECONDARY SCHOOL)**
- **LEVEL 1- (PRIMARY OR SECONDARY SCHOOL)**
- **LEVEL 0 (RETAIL SHOPS)**
- **NO SERVICES AVAILABLE**

Spatial Distribution
Calculations generated out of the ESPON Profecy Points of Interest.

Territorial level: LAU 2 (version 2021)
Source: ESPON Profecy, 2021
Origin of data: ESPON Profecy, 2021
© EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

are also concentrated near and in major cities. A similar pattern is seen with banks and pharmacies across the Alpine region. Disparities in access to hospitals and doctors are notable between eastern and western areas, as well as between the northern and southern parts of the Alpine Convention area, with a higher density in the northeastern parts.

Contrary to the GIS analysis, the survey did not reveal many differences in the time taken to access services and in the Alpine population's satisfaction in this regard (Table 2.1). The only services that were less accessible to the Alpine population, taking an average of 16–30 minutes' travel time, were cultural amenities in urban areas, specialised shops in all three types of areas (which got the lowest score for all services) and elderly care in urban and rural areas (also 16–30 minutes). Consequently, satisfaction with specialised shops and satisfaction with elderly care were the lowest; residents in rural areas were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied with the accessibility of specialised shops, and elderly care was evaluated in the same manner. The results of the survey, therefore, were generally more positive than those of the GIS analysis. Geographically, the core Alpine area generally performs worse in terms of accessibility of the services investigated, while Alpine fringes, where more urban centres can be found, are better served. For the digitalisation of services, the best conditions were in intermediate areas (94% of households had broadband

ACCESSIBILITY TO SERVICES: DISTANCE, TIME EVALUATED, AND SATISFACTION WITH ACCESSIBILITY OF THE RESIDENTS SURVEYED

TYPE OF SERVICE	AVERAGE POPULATION-WEIGHTED DISTANCE				AVERAGE TIME TO THE SERVICE (SURVEY), MINUTES	AVERAGE SCORE FOR SATISFACTION WITH ACCESSIBILITY (1 - EXTREMELY DISSATISFIED, 5 - EXTREMELY SATISFIED)
	ALL	RURAL	INTERMEDIATE	URBAN		
SERVICES, USED DAILY						
GROCERY STORE	1,3 KM	0,9 KM	1,1 KM	1,7 KM	6–15	4 (SATISFIED)
PHARMACY, POST OFFICE, BANK, PUBLIC LIBRARY, LOCAL FARMERS MARKET	NO CALCU-LATION				6–15	4 (SATISFIED)
NURSERY	2,9 KM	1,8 KM	2,6 KM	3,7 KM	6–15	4 (SATISFIED)
PRIMARY SCHOOL	1,4 KM	1,0 KM	1,3 KM	1,9 KM	6–15	4 (SATISFIED)
SERVICES, USED OCCASIONALLY						
HOSPITAL	6,9 KM	4,5 KM	5,4 KM	10,3 KM	6–15 (GENERAL PRACTITIONER)	4 (SATISFIED)
CULTURAL AMENITIES: CINEMAS, THEATRES, LIBRARIES	3,5 KM	1,9 KM	2,7 KM	5,5 KM	6–30 IN URBAN AREAS, 6–15 IN INTERMEDIATE/ RURAL AREAS	4 (SATISFIED)
SPECIALISED SHOPS	NO CALCU-LATION				6–30	4 (SATISFIED), EXCEPT IN RURAL AREAS (3 - NEITHER SATISFIED NOR DISSATISFIED)
ELDERLY CARE	NO CALCU-LATION				6–30 IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS, 6–15 IN INTERMEDIATE AREAS	3 (NEITHER SATISFIED NOR DISSATISFIED), EXCEPT IN INTERMEDIATE AREAS (4 - SATISFIED)

TABLE 2.1 Accessibility to services: distance, time evaluated, and satisfaction with accessibility as perceived by the residents surveyed, minimum number is 2.974 for elderly care and maximum 2.995 for healthcare. (Source: own survey)

USE OF MEANS OF TRANSPORT IN THE ALPS

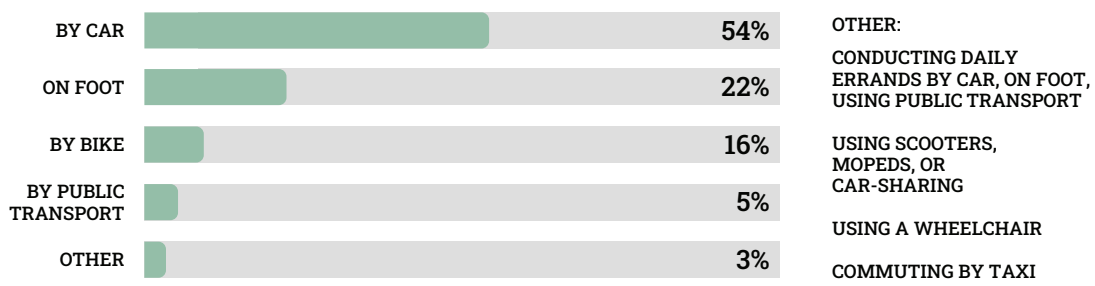


FIGURE 2.20 Use of means of transport in the Alps (n = 2.995). (Source: own survey)

access), while rural and urban areas both accounted for 91%, which was the same as the EU average. Accessibility of services is strongly related to (i) the means of transport that residents of the Alps use to run their daily errands and (ii) the quality of public transport in the area. The transportation habits of Alpine residents reveal that more than half of them (54%) were dependent on cars to reach services (Figure 2.20). In this case, a larger gap can be detected between different types of regions; in urban areas, only 34% used cars, while in intermediate areas, this percentage was 41% and was as high as 70% in rural areas (Figure 2.21). The second choice for means of transport was walking (22%), followed by bikes (16%), and public transport (only 5%). Sustainable mobility choices scored significantly higher in intermediate (overall 56%) and urban areas (65%). In rural areas, only 28% of the respondents walked, cycled or took a bus to run their daily errands. The low percentage in rural areas is due to the poorer quality and infrequency of public transport. Under 'others', the respondents listed a combination of various transportation means or alternatives, such as scooters, mopeds, and car sharing.

"Until 4 years ago I lived in a mountain town (500 inhabitants), now I live on the outskirts of a city of 35.000 inhabitants, but still in a mountain area. My quality of life has remained substantially unchanged because where I live now has more traffic and pollution (especially noise) but there are more and better services."
Male (56–65), a town or a small city, Italy (Belluno), employed, clerical occupation

"The first paediatric emergency room is 35 km away and yet I feel lucky because there are those who are worse off. If I have accidents while driving to work, I am blamed for not using non-existent public transport."
Female (36–45), a country village, Italy (Bergamo), employed, professional and technical occupation

"5G should be promoted for total internet coverage, public services with the current timetables are useless, the "empty" 54-seater buses should be replaced with an electric shuttle service every 30 minutes, families should be helped with regard to winter heating, and greater awareness is needed for electric traction and solar panels. Public administration should be made fully digital, so that people can use the services without going on site. Public administration should be moved out of the centre into a single area equipped with public services."
Male (56–65), an isolated hamlet/the countryside with dispersed settlements, Italy (Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste), employed, professional and technical occupation

"I am astounded by the difference in services available (markets, public transport, shops open, health services open) between the "tourist" periods and the "off-season" periods. Off-season it's a desert, while plenty is available during the tourism season. It seems that year-round residents are of absolutely no interest to elected officials, shopkeepers, and doctors!"
Female (56–65), an isolated hamlet/the countryside with dispersed settlements, France (Hautes-Alpes), employed, service occupation

"Without a car you are very limited, which of course depends very much on your needs. Logically, the range of goods on offer is not at the level of the urban agglomerations!"
Male (56–65), a country village, Switzerland (Graubünden), employed, professional and technical occupation

"Public transport. Only one bus to take us to the resort or Annecy, it runs once an hour and the last departure is at 7.30 p.m.! Afterwards, I have to hitchhike or carpool."
Female (19), France, small town, suburbs of a big town (Erasmus+ Alpine Compass Living Lab)

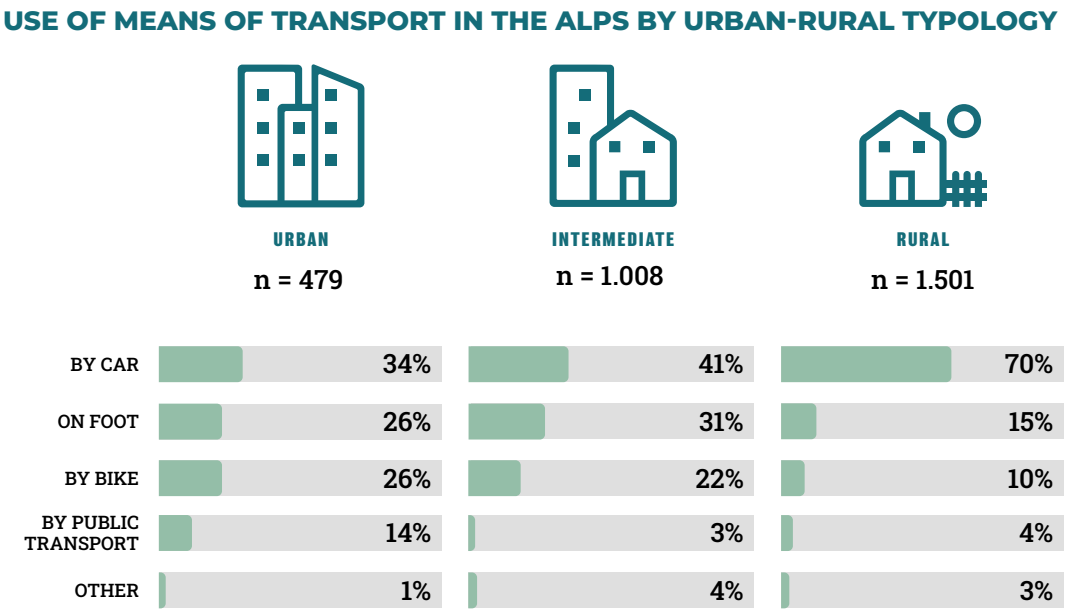


FIGURE 2.21 Use of means of transport in the Alps by urban-rural typology (urban area: n = 479, intermediate area: n = 1.008, and rural area: n = 1.501). (Source: own survey)

The residents also reported how often they used public transport and how satisfied they were with it. Altogether, 57% claimed to never use public transport or use it less than once a month (Figure 2.22). The highest daily use of public transport was reported in urban areas (14%); in intermediate and rural areas, less than 5% of the respondents used this type of transport. Those who used public transport at least once a month were also satisfied with it. Forty-eight percent of frequent users were satisfied with the transportation means, nearly one-third were undecided, and 22% were not satisfied at all. The distinction between the types of areas revealed inequality in public transport offers; only 39% of rural inhabitants were satisfied, while 59% of urban inhabitants were satisfied.

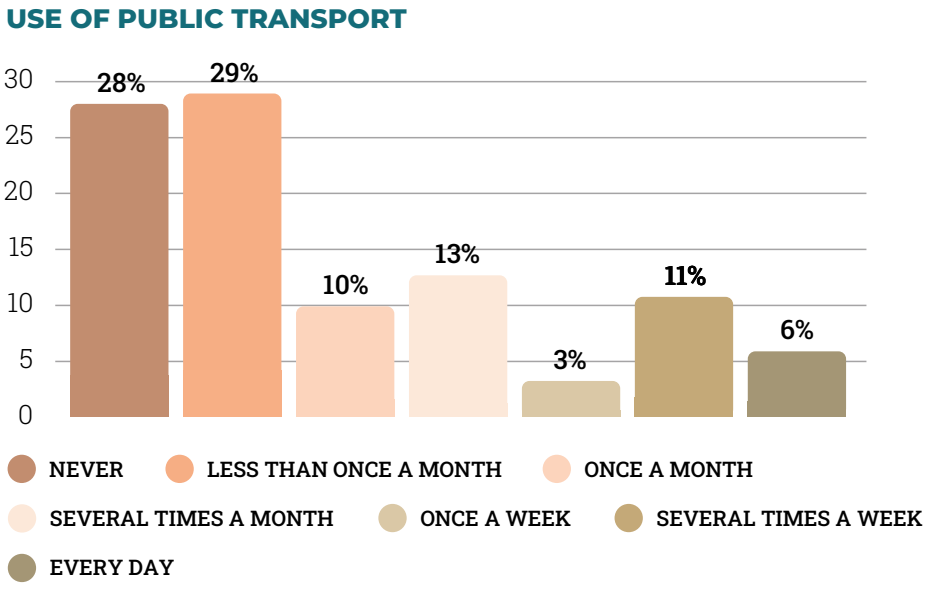


FIGURE 2.22 Frequency of use of public transport (n = 2.995). (Source: own survey)

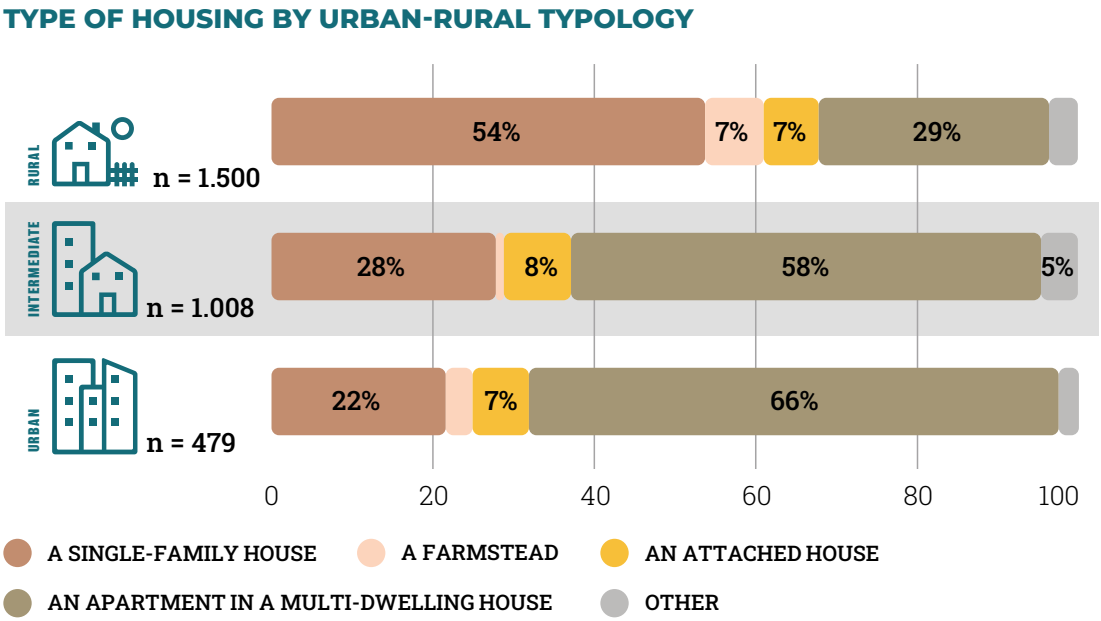


FIGURE 2.23
Type of housing by urban-rural typology (rural area: n = 1.500, intermediate area: n = 1.008, and urban area: n = 479). (Source: own survey)

As there is a lack of data on housing, the respondents answered multiple questions about housing in the survey. The type of housing revealed differences between the three types of areas; in rural areas, most residents lived in single-family houses (54%) compared to 28% of the inhabitants in intermediate areas and 22% in urban areas (Figure 2.23). In urban areas, the majority lived in apartments in multi-dwelling buildings. Farmstead as a housing type scored the highest in rural areas (7%). Among other housing options not provided in the survey, the respondents reported condominiums, multigenerational houses and studios; some of them even had housing solutions that can be classified as holiday accommodation, e.g. a hotel, a holiday/rental/tourist guest house and various types of housing according to management and ownership solutions (social housing, co-op housing and community building).

Owning a housing or residential unit where either the respondents or their acquaintances reside can be advantageous in terms of ensuring housing security. Homeownership means reduced reliance on landlords and can enhance financial and life stability. The results of the survey indicate that nearly 70% of the respondents were homeowners, ranging from 76% in rural areas to 56% in urban areas. In intermediate areas, almost two-thirds of the respondents were homeowners. Respondents owning multiple housing units or real estate properties also reported for what purpose they might use them.

The share of respondents who owned a secondary residence was 25% across the Alps. Only 4% of the participants in the survey offered their secondary housing for short-term tourism leases, while 10% had it for personal leisure use and 9% for a long-term lease. Under 'others', a variety of answers were provided, such as owning a wine cellar, an Alpine hut, a maintenance facility, a housing unit with guestrooms, and multiple secondary housing units (e.g. for rental and leisure). In this case, a difference was again found between urban and rural areas (Figure 2.24); in intermediate and rural areas the highest share was recorded for personal leisure use (45% and 36% respectively), while urban areas scored the highest for long-term lease (43%).

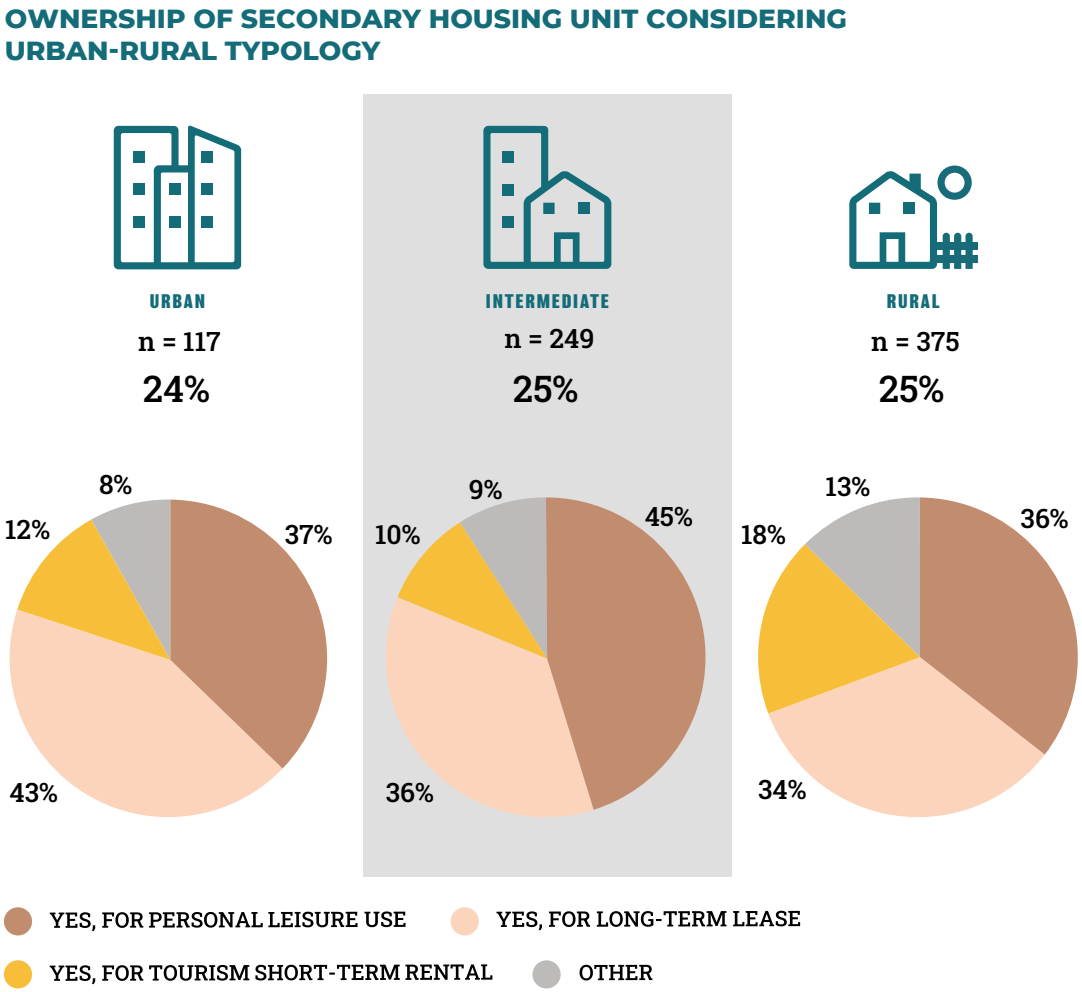


FIGURE 2.24
Share of ownership of secondary housing units and purposes of their use by urban-rural typology (urban area: n = 117, intermediate area: n = 249, and rural area: n = 375). (Source: own survey)

Regarding various housing solutions, the majority of Alpine residents (71%) were satisfied with their housing situations, while 19% were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied. The percentage of dissatisfaction was lowest in rural areas (9%) and highest in urban areas (13%). However, residents were far less positive when commenting on the availability of affordable housing (Figure 2.25). A total of 56% of the respondents were somewhat dissatisfied, and only 15% were satisfied to some extent. Twenty-nine percent were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied. For this question, there was not much variation between the types of areas; intermediate areas recorded the highest percentage of dissatisfaction (58%).

PERCEIVED SATISFACTION WITH THE AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

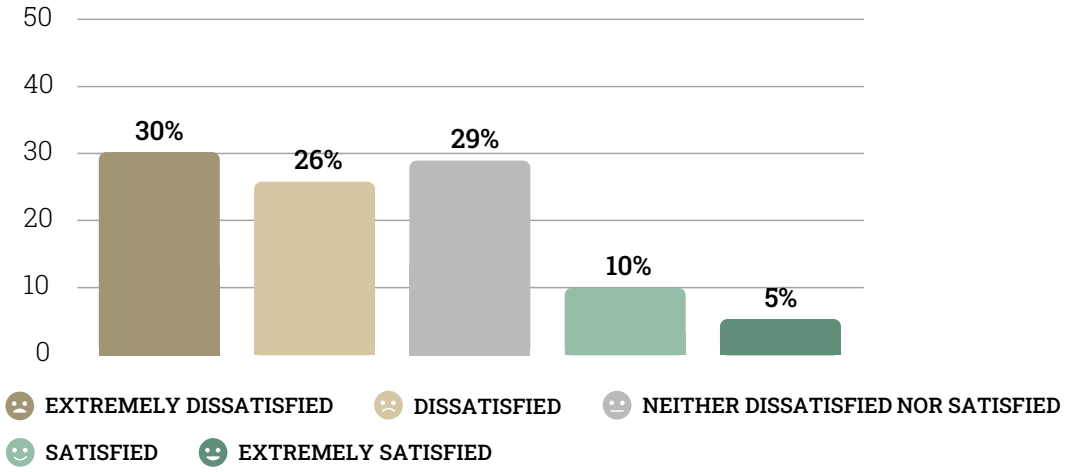


FIGURE 2.25 Perceived satisfaction with the availability of affordable housing (n = 2.951). (Source: own survey)

Over two-thirds of the respondents who took part in the survey further commented on affordable housing supply in the Alps (Figure 2.26). Only one-tenth of these comments were positive (well-priced offers and a good supply of affordable housing). Residents expressed issues with housing, such as high or rising prices (half of the respondents), limited or insufficient offers (one-fifth of the respondents), and a lack of incentives for specific groups, such as the elderly, youngsters, locals, and foreigners (one-tenth of the respondents). The following issues were also mentioned: secondary homes and tourism rentals, poor housing quality and ageing housing stock, unfavourable housing situation for young people, insufficient housing policies and empty buildings. Respondents from urban regions pointed out issues like high rents, too expensive, and the limited offer. In addition, poor-quality housing also stands out. By contrast, respondents from intermediate areas mentioned the limited offer, too expensive housing (a related term is also 'not affordable'), and, differentiating them from urban inhabitants, also rising prices, secondary residences, and no offer. In the rural areas, the limited and not affordable offer, including 'the unfriendly housing situation for young people', stand out.

FIGURE 2.26 on the next page: Opinions on the (un)availability of affordable housing. The bottom word cloud presents an overall picture, while the rest show the answers according to urban-rural typology: the first picture shows answers in urban areas, the second those in intermediate areas, and the third in rural areas. (Source: own survey)

too many AirB&Bs
unfriendly housing situation for the locals
not affordable
high land prices
poor quality housing
no offer
old buildings
secondary residences
restrictive rental criteria
limited offer
empty buildings
high rents
no social housing
too expensive
unfriendly housing situation for the elderly
unfavourable credit conditions
insufficient housing policies
rising prices
unfriendly housing situation for the youth

RURAL

unfriendly housing situation for the youth
too many AirB&Bs
high rents
too expensive
no offer
restrictive rental criteria
unfriendly housing situation for the locals
limited offer
no tenant protection
empty buildings
old buildings
no new buildings
unfavourable credit conditions
high land prices
insufficient housing policies
not affordable
no social housing
rising prices
secondary residences
unfriendly housing situation for the foreigners
poor quality housing

INTERMEDIATE

unfavourable credit conditions
poor quality housing
rising prices
unfriendly housing situation for the elderly
not affordable
restrictive rental criteria
no offer
no social housing
high rents
too expensive
high land prices
limited offer
old buildings
secondary residences
too many AirB&Bs
unfriendly housing situation for the youth
insufficient housing policies
empty buildings
unfriendly housing situation for the elderly
unfriendly housing situation for the locals

URBAN

secondary residences
not affordable
limited offer
no offer
insufficient housing policies
no tenant protection
empty buildings
unfavourable credit conditions
no new buildings
high prices
old buildings
rising prices
no social housing
unfriendly housing situation for the foreigners
poor quality housing
too many AirB&Bs
unfriendly housing situation for the youth
high rents
too expensive
unfriendly housing situation for the locals
restrictive rental criteria
high land prices

ALL

"As the entire region is now being filled with secondary homes, which are also incredibly expensive, there is no choice and a lot of people have to move away because they can no longer afford an apartment."
Female (46–55), a town or a small city, Switzerland (Graubünden), employed, professional and technical occupation

"I would like to plan for the long term in my area and start a family there, but housing is unaffordable, so I am thinking of leaving."
Female (26–35), an isolated hamlet/the countryside with dispersed settlements, France (Savoie), employed, higher administrator occupation

"I live in a beautiful but completely overpopulated area. Construction is springing up everywhere and regulations are often not respected. This is for the benefit of investors or real estate acquired for secondary residences. This does not even benefit the locals who find themselves deprived. It's a complex subject but a reality."
Female (36–45), a country village, France (Haute-Savoie), employed, professional and technical occupation

"In the area where I live, the biggest problem for my generation is that, despite good salaries, we cannot afford our own properties."
Female (26–35), a town or a small city, Slovenia (Gorenjska, Radovljica), employed, higher administrator occupation

2.7 Work and financial security

Several authors have researched the job market in the Alps and claimed that job opportunities, work conditions, the quality of work life, and job satisfaction strongly influence overall life satisfaction (Judge *et al.*, 2001; Heimerl *et al.*, 2020). As Price and Ferrario (2014) have argued, the availability of jobs and other professional opportunities is the fundamental basis of decisions to stay in, return to or leave a certain region. Heimerl *et al.* (2020) have gone on to note that the Alpine region has been experiencing a growing shortage of skilled workers for many years, especially in the tourism sector. The indicator share of employment in the service sector of the Alps is slightly below the EU average of 59%, meaning that the transformation to post-industrial societies in the Alps is slower than elsewhere. In other words, the economy still relies to some extent on agriculture and industry. The lowest percentage of the population employed in services was recorded in rural areas (45%).

Aside from this gap, brain drain – the loss of skilled intellectual and technical individuals – occurs in rural areas when they move out, mostly to larger urban centres (Debarbieux and Camenisch, 2011; Perlik, 2018). The loss of young people is evident not just in the job market but also in the overall demographics as it is an issue that leads to an older population. By contrast, Price and Ferrario (2014) described an opposite phenomenon in

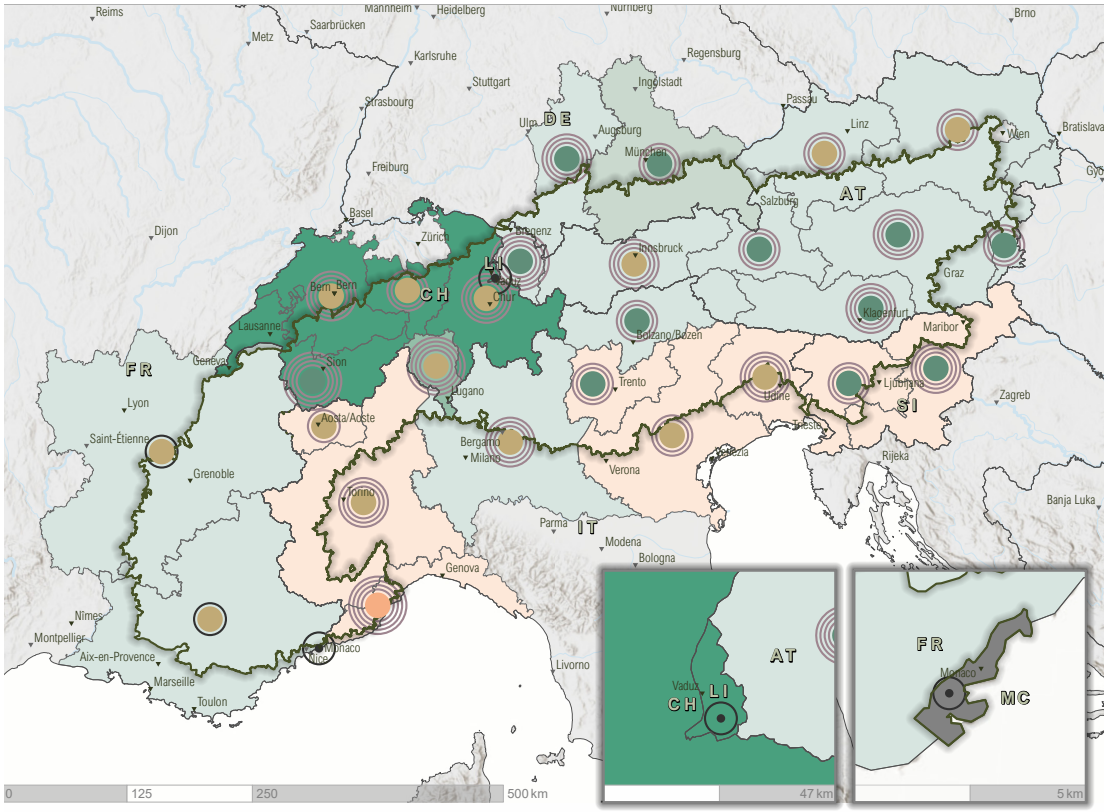


FIGURE 2.27 Indicators related to financial security of Alpine residents: disposable household income, share of people at risk of poverty and perception of their household income. (Sources: Eurostat, 2020, 2019 (DE), 2018 (AT); own survey)

which highly qualified individuals choose to settle in the mountains and take on roles in local development as 'new inhabitants of the Alps' or 'mountain people by choice'. The number of daily commuters in the Alps is higher than the EU average (6%), with the highest being in rural areas where 10% of the residents commute to another NUTS 2 region and the lowest being in urban areas at only 5%. But it is important to note that the NUTS 2 figures are rather imprecise and, most likely, an analysis of lower NUTS levels would show much higher percentages of commuters.

The equalised disposable income of households (per inhabitant) was quite high in all the types of regions and was significantly higher than the EU average of EUR 17.200 (Figure 2.27). The overall Alpine average was EUR 27.000, with the figures being highest in Swiss regions

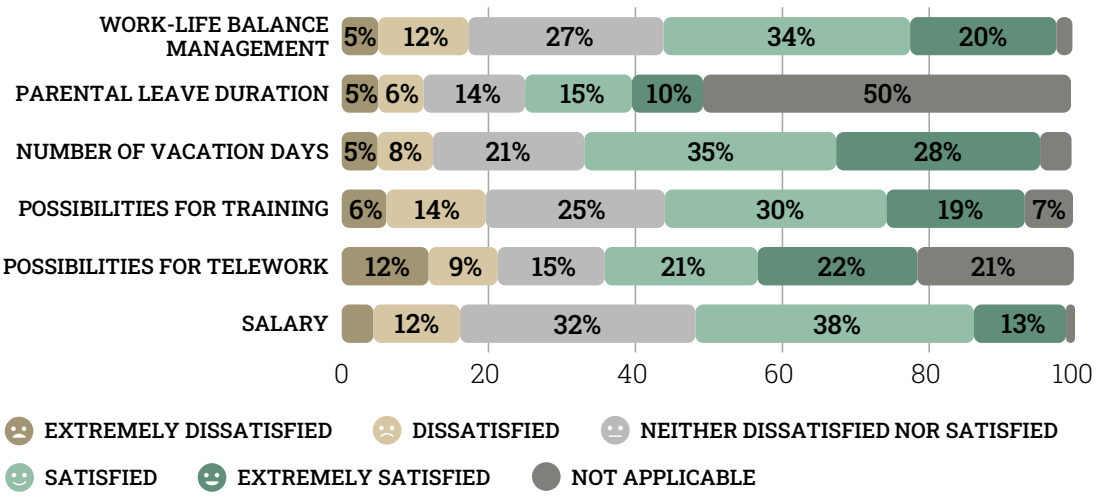
and lowest in Slovenian regions. Figure 2.27 shows that higher average income does not necessarily mean better financial living conditions. While in some of the Italian and Slovenian regions there is a correspondence of lowest income and just 'getting by on present income', residents of other Slovenian regions live comfortably on their current income. By contrast, residents of some of the Swiss regions could only just about manage on their present income, even though they live in regions with some of the highest incomes in the Alpine area. The subjective interpretation and data on satisfaction, of course, depends on an individual's situation and may differ substantially from the regional average.

Residents of the Alps also evaluated the work conditions and opportunities that employers offered them (Figure 2.28). More favourable working conditions, such as a longer parental leave, work-from-home options, and training opportunities, might significantly contribute to greater satisfaction and, in turn, might lead to higher overall satisfaction and enhanced quality of life. On average, residents of the Alps selected 3 (neither dissatisfied nor satisfied) or 4 (satisfied) when assessing their general satisfaction with work and financial security. Better results were achieved for number of vacation days, work-life balance, and possibilities for training. The respondents were least satisfied with parental leave duration, salary, and work-from-home opportunities. Alpine countries had major differences in terms of the latter, as it is based on national legislation, the economic situation, and employers' goodwill.

There were some differences, however, according to average scores and the types of areas. For example, residents in rural areas evaluated salary and possibilities for training more highly (4 instead of 3), whereas the residents of intermediate areas evaluated possibilities for working from home more highly (4 instead of 3); otherwise, there were no major differences between areas. According to the European Social Survey, satisfaction with one's main job was 7 out of 10, except in intermediate regions where people were more satisfied and a score of 8 was obtained.

FIGURE 2.28
Perceived satisfaction with work conditions (salary: n = 2.271, possibilities for working from home: n = 2.270, possibilities for training, n = 2.266, number of vacation days: n = 2.262, parental leave duration: n = 2.261, and work-life balance management: n = 2.264). (Source: own survey)

PERCEIVED SATISFACTION WITH WORK CONDITIONS



For perceptions of household income in terms of comfort of living, both EU and the RSA 10 data are available. The EU data show slightly lower scores in the Alpine region than in other European regions, although the average rounded-up score was still the same (2 – coping on present income; 45%). The average survey result was also 2. If answers for the first two categories were considered together, 84% either lived comfortably on their present income or were at least coping (Figure 2.29). About 13% of the respondents admitted to finding it difficult to thrive on their present income, and 3% indicated that they found it very difficult. From the answers provided, it can be concluded that only two-fifths of Alpine residents live comfortably on their present income, while the rest need to plan more carefully how they spend their money in order to meet their daily needs. There were no significant differences between the regions. The response 'finding it very difficult on present income' was consistently the least selected answer across all areas. In rural areas, 3% of respondents reported financial difficulty of this sort and 4% stated it in urban areas. In intermediate areas, the figure was less than 3%. Combined with the answer 'finding it difficult on present income', most of the residents who it could be said were at risk of poverty lived in urban areas (with 19% of the population), while the lowest proportion lived in rural areas (15%). These numbers are comparable with the indicator share of people at risk of poverty, in which rural regions scored 15% and urban regions scored 17%. In this case, the Alpine region's average was 16%, which was below the EU average of 21%.

According to data on work conditions, the Alpine region generally enjoys strong economic circumstances in terms of jobs, although there tend to be large differences within the region which mostly stem from the national regulations of the job market in each country.

PERCEPTION OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR COMFORT OF LIVING

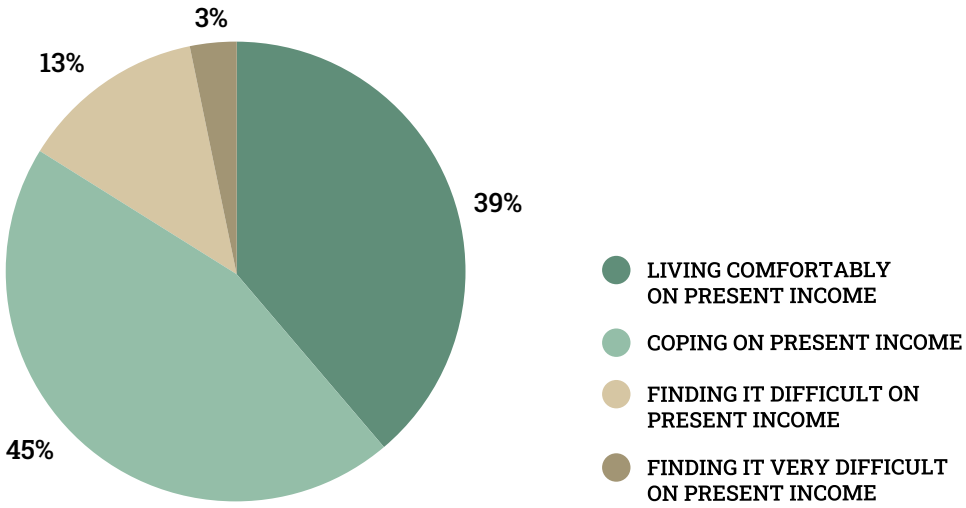


FIGURE 2.29 Perception of household income in terms of comfort of living (n = 2.991). (Source: own survey

"Quality of life is so good because I am a cross-border commuter and therefore have the salary from Switzerland to live in Austria."
Female (26–35), a country village, Austria (Rheintal-Bodenseegebiet, Bregenz), employed, professional and technical occupation

"Working hours are relatively high in Switzerland, in addition to the increasing pressure, which is partly caused by the labour shortage, which has a negative impact on the work-life balance (or work-life blending)."
Female (26–35), a country village, Switzerland (Graubünden), employed, professional and technical occupation

"The fact that I do not work in the municipality where I live and have to be away/separated from my family for part of the week lowers the quality the most, I drive too far to work."
Female (36–45), a town or a small city, Slovenia (Goriška, Tolmin), employed, higher administrator occupation

"Life becomes more and more expensive. Everything increases except wages. It could become problematic if it continues like this."
Female (26–35), a big city, Switzerland (Vaud), employed, clerical occupation

"The challenge is provision of jobs in rural areas. More support should be dedicated to measures, that help people to work and create jobs outside the cities so that employment opportunities are distributed among small towns and large villages, not just concentrated in Ljubljana. I would like to improve accessibility to services since people live too far from work and healthcare facilities. Because there are long queues, we have to travel further, e.g. to Kranj, to access services, which is a challenge for the elderly."
Female (26), Slovenia, small village (Erasmus+ Alpine Compass Living Lab)

"I am happy to live in the Alps and I can do so thanks to the possibilities of teleworking."
Female (36–45), the suburbs or outskirts of a big city Italy (Trento), employed, professional and technical occupation

"Inflation is another relevant issue; salaries should be adjusted. Weekly working hours should be reduced in order to also promote gender equality and avoid the common situation of full time work for men and part time work for women. If measures are not taken, the quality of life will decrease, even in Bolzano which has always scored very high for quality of life."
Male (26–35), a big city, Italy (Bolzano/Bozen), employed, clerical occupation

2.8 Social relations

The quality and nature of social relationships in the Alps are mostly conditioned by the nature of the territory and by traditionally strong local and regional identities. Wilson, Schermer and Stotten (2018) noted that remote mountain communities may be more closed, insular and conservative due to their isolation and the need for self-sufficient livelihoods. Furthermore, social relations are shaped by constant flows of people who come and go to Alpine communities for reasons such as migration, tourism and work (Boscoboinik, Cretton and Offenhenden, 2023). Various social changes have been depicted in several studies; for instance, people are no longer as close to each other, do not talk to one another as they would in a close-knit community and are more selfish and focused on maximising their profit (Wilson, Schermer and Stotten, 2018). In addition, migration movements (amenity migrants, foreigners and refugees) have disrupted the closeness of Alpine communities, necessitating the development of new relationships and trust between local residents and newcomers (Gretter *et al.*, 2017). While more people owning second homes can help preserve the buildings, these residents may not be fully involved with the local community life which can create 'ghost hamlets' and overburden the infrastructure (Löffler *et al.*, 2015).

A more thorough examination has been made of the accessibility of public services that either facilitate Alpine people's social interactions or ensure the security of their living environments. Distances to community centres, police stations and fire stations were calculated (refer to Figure 2.18a). Fire stations are the most frequently

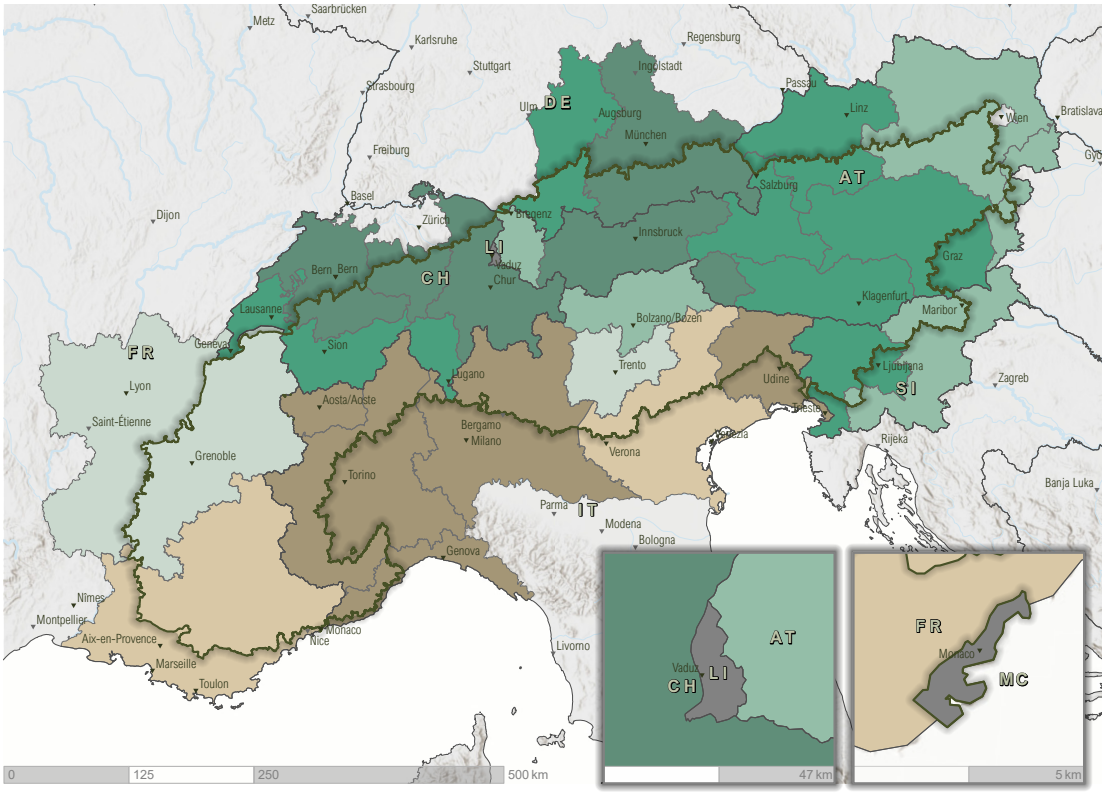


FIGURE 2.30
Share of young people neither in education nor in employment. (Source: Eurostat, 2022, 2020 (CH))

SHARE OF YOUNG PEOPLE NEITHER IN EMPLOYMENT NOR IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING

4,5–6,5% | 6,5–8% | 8–10% | 10–11,5% | 11,5–13,5% | 13,5–15,5%

ALPINE CONVENTION PERIMETER

NUTS 2 BORDERS

COUNTRY BORDERS

This indicator shows the share of young individuals aged 15 to 29 years who are currently not enrolled in any formal or non-formal education programs and are also not employed.

Regional level: NUTS 2
Data sources: Eurostat, 2022, 2020 (CH)
Map background: Esri, Intermap, NASA, NGA, USGS; Esri, CGIAR, USGS; Esri, USGS
Cartography: Tadej Bevk

found, largely as a result of local traditions, especially in Austria, where this service is closest to the population. On average, there is a police station and fire station within 3 km of the Alpine population; community centres, on the other hand, are located within a range of 5 km. On average, people feel safe in local areas; the worst result is in urban areas, although the differences are minor. The entire Alpine area, according to the European Social Survey, feels safer than the EU area, on average. The worst availability of places for socialising is in rural regions, where community centres are lacking. The corresponding map shows only an approximation, as various services and buildings can serve as community activity centres, not just the ones labelled as such.

The indicators of the ageing index and the share of young people neither in employment nor in education and training were selected to depict the situation of vulnerable groups in Alpine societies. The ageing index was highest in urban areas (175) and lowest in rural areas (159), but in all cases, it was higher than the EU average (140, Eurostat data for 2021; for more, also see Figure 3.4). The share of at-risk young people was lowest in rural areas (8%) and highest in urban areas (11%), meaning that one-tenth of the youth population has an insecure future (see Figure 2.30). Especially problematic are the Italian regions in the Alpine Convention perimeter.

"We should be more aware that life in the Alps is like living in a haven. We complain too much and look too much only at our own personal benefits instead of getting involved and contributing to the life of the community."
Male (46–55), a country village, Slovenia (Gorenjska, Jezersko), employed, higher administrator occupation

"Some of the locals are very reluctant to change, especially towards new things/ changes and people outside the Allgäu."
Female (26–35), a country village, Germany (Oberallgäu), employed, professional and technical occupation

"I miss more opportunities for socialising. Currently, there are only pubs. I miss recreational facilities and a centre for young people. I miss activities such as evenings for young people, board games, choir, and other interest-driven activities. It would be nice if people were more open towards each other and less traditional. It would be nice if there was less competition. On the other hand, during the floods, it was nice to see neighbours helping each other."
Female (24), Slovenia, small remote village (Erasmus+ Alpine Compass Living Lab)

Two very important items of information about social interactions are whether a person has friends or relatives to rely on in case of need and how often they see one another. The EU average of the first indicator (someone to rely on) is 91% (European Social Survey), while in the Alpine area the values exceed 85%, and for some regions are even above 95%. Otherwise, the average for the Alpine Convention area accounts for 92%. For this variable, there is not much difference between the types of regions.

The survey results show that almost half of the Alpine population had social interactions at least once a week or more frequently; however, one-quarter of them have very few interactions (Figure 2.31). Twelve percent met others less than once a month or even never, which again points to groups of people who experience social isolation and the challenges related to it. A comparison of the results between types of regions shows that people living in urban areas were more isolated and distant from one another than those in rural and intermediate areas. If several categories were considered together, most social interactions occurred in intermediate areas (smaller towns), where 80% of the respondents met someone at least a few times a month or more frequently. The percentage was lower in rural areas (75%) and lowest in urban areas (70%). From this, it can be concluded that physical proximity does not necessarily result in a higher frequency of and better social relations.

FREQUENCY OF SOCIAL MEETINGS

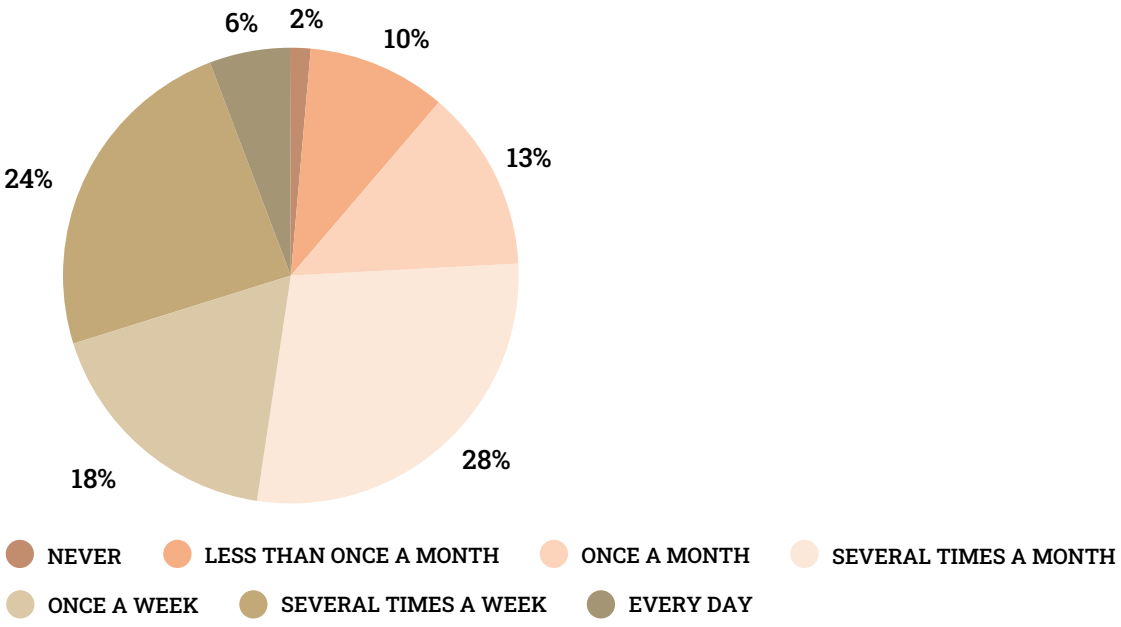


FIGURE 2.31
Frequency of social meetings (n = 2.995). (Source: own survey)

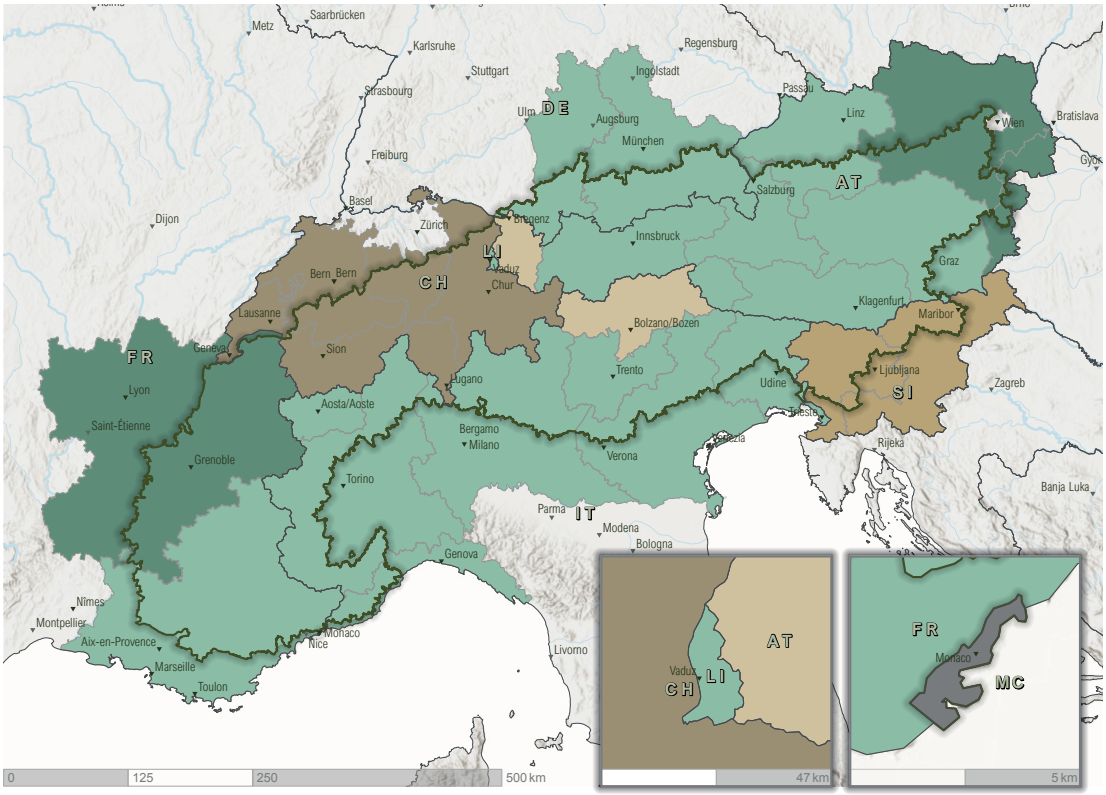


FIGURE 2.32 Voter turnout in national elections. (Sources: OECD, 2021 (DE, LI), 2019 (AT, CH), 2018 (IT, SI), 2017 (FR))

2.9 Governance

Governance in the Alps, as measured by the OECD, is traditionally the worst-evaluated element of quality of life. It is an aspect of quality of life that is highly dependent on the national context and the governance frameworks that comprise it. Although the area has a long-standing tradition of cooperation networks and joint institutions, such as the Alpine Convention, EUSALP, and the Interreg Alpine Space Programme (Del Biaggio, 2015; Teston and Bramanti, 2018), the local population is not satisfied with policy and decision-making, and in certain areas, participation in these processes is low. With regard to governance, the following elements were of interest: the European Quality of Government Index, climate change adaptive capacity, voter turnout in national elections, and satisfaction with democracy in the country, as measured in the European Social Survey.

Voter turnout reflects awareness of and public engagement in political affairs (Figure 2.32). A higher turnout indicates that a larger share of eligible voters participated in the election process, demonstrating greater public engagement. Voter turnout rates varied considerably across the Alps, ranging from 43% to over 80%. Regions in Slovenia and Switzerland tended to have lower turnout rates, falling below 50% or slightly above that mark.

However, in Switzerland, citizens have other means to express their views, such as binding referendums and popular initiatives, and in these voter turnout is usually higher than in general elections. By contrast, Alpine areas in France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, and most regions in Austria exceeded both the EU and Alpine averages, reporting higher voter turnout rates; this suggests a tendency towards stronger political participation in these regions. Across the different types of areas, the highest turnout was in urban regions (74%), and the lowest turnout was reported in intermediate regions (63%).

The European Quality of Government Index is a joint indicator that evaluates multiple aspects of governance relative to the EU average (marked as 0). It reflects average citizens' perceptions and experiences regarding corruption, as well as the quality and impartiality of three vital public services – health, education and policymaking – in their respective NUTS 2 regions (but no data for Switzerland, Monaco, and Liechtenstein). Regions with positive values indicate a better Quality of Government Index, while regions with negative values reflect a lower Quality of Government Index. For the Alpine region, these indicator values ranged from −0,8 to 1,2, with most Alpine areas reporting positive values. The highest values were observed in the German and Austrian regions, whereas most Italian regions showed negative indicator values. Slovenia, whose population has always been dissatisfied with its governance, likewise scored worse than the Alpine average.

The survey respondents also evaluated their satisfaction with governance on a scale that ranged from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied; Figure 2.33).

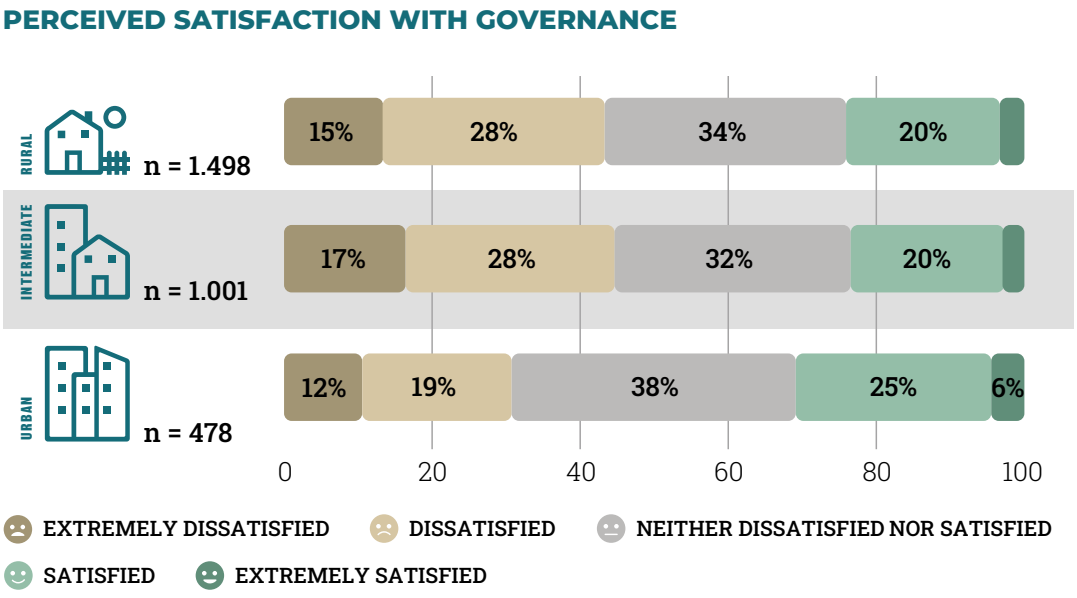


FIGURE 2.33 Perceived satisfaction with governance by urban-rural typology (rural area: n = 1.498, intermediate area: n = 1.001, and urban area: n = 478). (Source: own survey)

This topic obtained the lowest levels of satisfaction recorded across the entire survey. Over 75% of the respondents gave governance a score of 3 or lower, indicating that they were dissatisfied or neither dissatisfied nor satisfied. Of the respondents, 15% were even extremely dissatisfied with it. In terms of the urban-rural typology, the respondents most satisfied with the aspect of governance were those in urban regions (more than 30% reported satisfaction). The level of dissatisfaction with governance was lowest in urban regions (slightly above 31% reported dissatisfaction), while this share was higher in rural and intermediate regions (around 43% in rural areas and slightly under 45% in intermediate areas). Apart from satisfaction with governance as a whole, satisfaction with democracy was also examined; it reflects how people perceive the effectiveness and functioning of democracy in their respective countries (Figure 2.34).

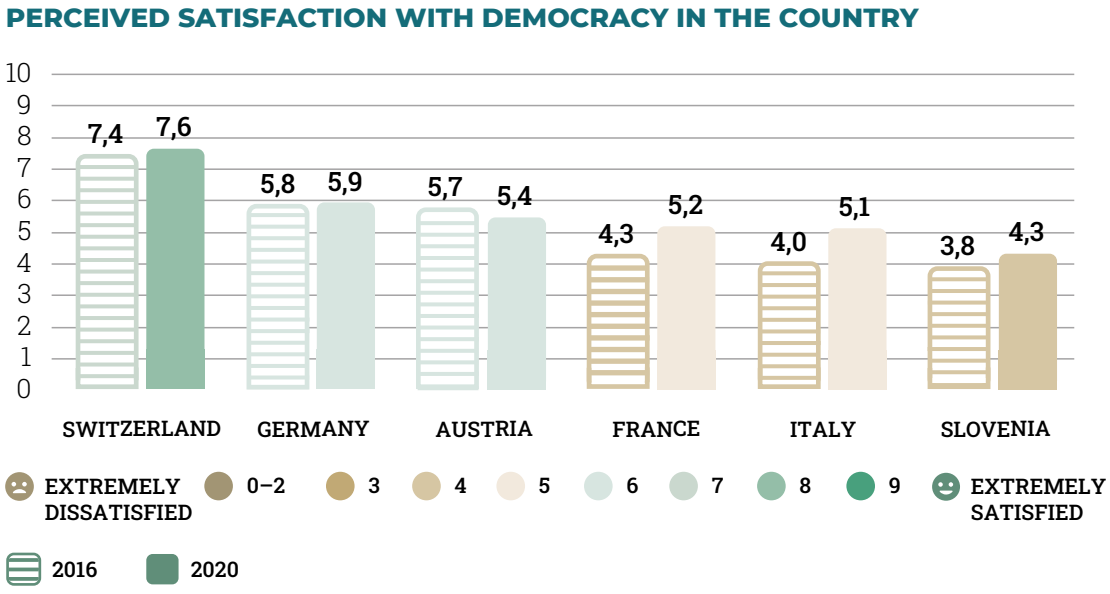


FIGURE 2.34 Perceived satisfaction with democracy in the country, comparison of the national average data between 2016 and 2020. (Source: ESS, round 10, 2020)

“It is shameful that municipalities leave small mountain villages without essential services, namely aqueducts, sewers, and snow removal. We are abandoned by the institutions. For the municipality of Aosta it is as if we do not exist.”
Male (46–55), an isolated hamlet/the countryside with dispersed settlements, Italy (Valle d’Aosta/Vallée d’Aoste), employed, service occupation

“Politicians have an almost exclusive focus on infrastructural and quality of life aspects linked to GDP. The value of the social aspects (possibilities for participation, commitment and their content and forms) are criminally ignored.”
Male (56–65), a country village, Switzerland (Graubünden), employed, professional and technical occupation

Across the Alpine countries (the spatial coverage of the data otherwise differentiates from NUTS 0 to NUTS 3, thus the national data was used in this case), the values measured ranged from slightly below 4 (dissatisfied) to well above 8 (satisfied) on a scale from 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied). Slovenians expressed considerable dissatisfaction in both years measured, while Swiss regions were the most satisfied. The trend when comparing data between 2016 and 2020 shows improvement in all countries, except for Austria. The overall Alpine average satisfaction score was 5, which was the same as the European one (neither dissatisfied nor satisfied), indicating that there is still plenty of room for improvement in the field of governance across the Alps.

3

FUTURE CHALLENGES TO SECURING QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE ALPS

KEY MESSAGE

The future challenges related to quality of life in the Alps consist of demographic changes, economic and political instability, climate change, a degraded natural environment, loss of biodiversity, and other global threats. Only with a proactive approach based on preparedness, adaptation, mitigation, solidarity between regions, transnational cooperation, and other measures can the Alps become a resilient region to live in.

3.1 Major global threats to the Alps

In the 21st century the world is constantly changing. The global exchange of knowledge and resources and the global flow of people contribute to these changes and put pressure on society, the environment, and the economy. How the global situation can influence local communities was best demonstrated by the Covid-19 pandemic, in which one health crisis affected the entire world we live in and how society functions. The Alps, with their location in the centre of Europe, have been under pressure as well; the area is at the centre of the flow of people and resources between north and south in Europe and west and east of the continent. Moreover, internal flows within the region, including tourists travelling to holiday locations or workers commuting daily and travelling to their jobs, constantly alter the dynamics of life in the Alps. Quality of life in the area also heavily relies on the material flows and resource extraction from other parts of the world, e.g. importing of minerals and food.

The territory is also impacted by global trends, such as climate change, the biodiversity crisis, demographic changes, and the economic situation. One of the major factors that affect the Alpine environment and its well-preserved nature, which make the Alps a desirable place to live (Figure 3.1) is **climate change.** According to several studies, the Alpine region is anticipated to experience the following changes in its weather: increased temperature and warming (average temperature to increase between 2°C to 5°C by 2100; Ogrin, 2023), shifting seasonal weather patterns, intensified precipitation and extreme temperatures, decreased extent and duration of snow cover at low elevations, droughts and prolonged dry spells in the summer, torrential rain and floods, and further changes in natural hazards. Weather changes will have significant impacts on the environment, human activities, and quality of life. Among these impacts are soil degradation, wind erosion, decrease in mountain permafrost areas, decrease in glacier extent and volume, and impacts related to flora and fauna (Adler *et al.*, 2022).

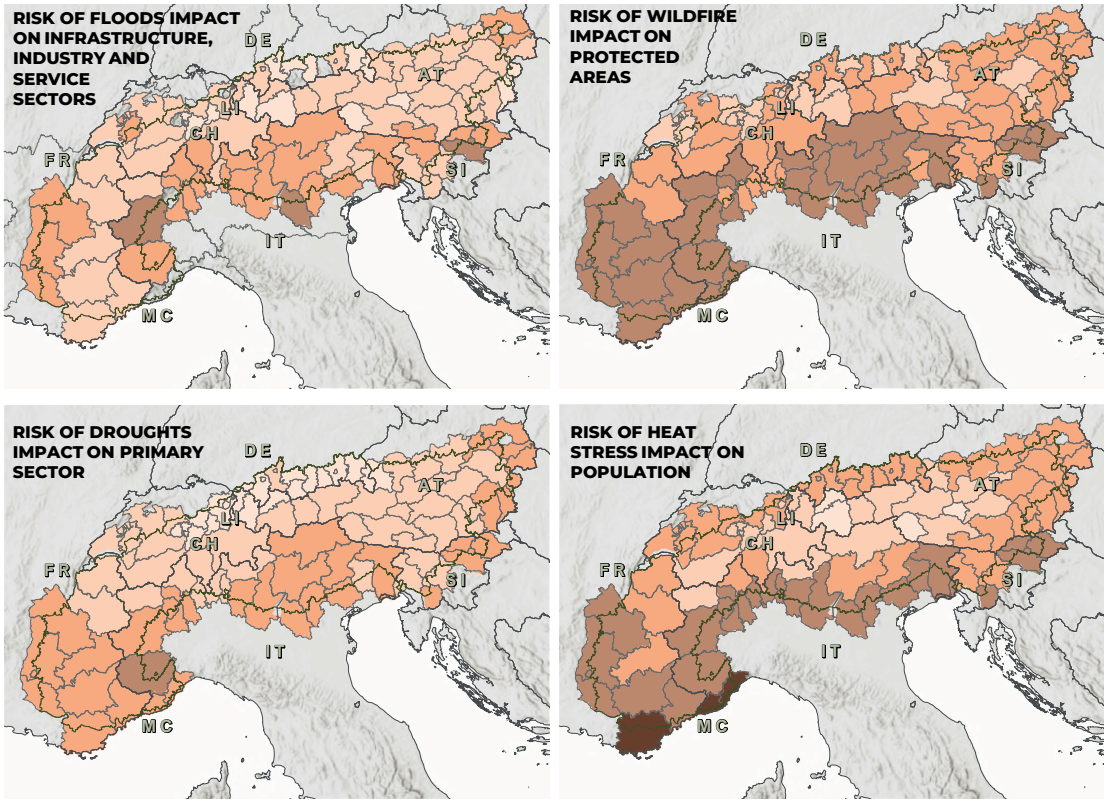


FIGURE 3.1 Risk of climate-related hazards under a scenario of very high GHG emissions. (Source: ESPON, 2022)

The Alps are one of Europe's biodiversity hotspots as they are home to 30.000 animal and 13.000 plant species (World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), 2004). These species are under threat not only because of climate change but also because of other human activities. Climate change might cause plant and animal species to move to higher ground and some species might even become extinct because of habitat changes, while there will be more favourable conditions for invasive species to spread. Some researchers have investigated the potential impacts on forests, such as different altitudinal zonation and increased stress on forests because of heat: for instance, the spruce will lose its high shares of forest cover in the long run (Binder and Höllerl, 2017).

The potential risk of extinction of species and the pressure that humans exert on the environment and biodiversity are called the **biodiversity crisis.** Altogether, five major threats to biodiversity have been identified: pollution, climate change, invasive species and disease, species overexploitation, and land use change (WWF, 2020).

Schirpke *et al.* (2021) assessed **land use change** from 2000 to 2018 in connection with ecosystem services. It was concluded that ecosystem services mostly declined because of changes from agricultural land use to other uses, such as being abandoned or turning into forests and settlement areas. Urban sprawl was one of the major contributors to the decline of ecosystem services; the most significant changes

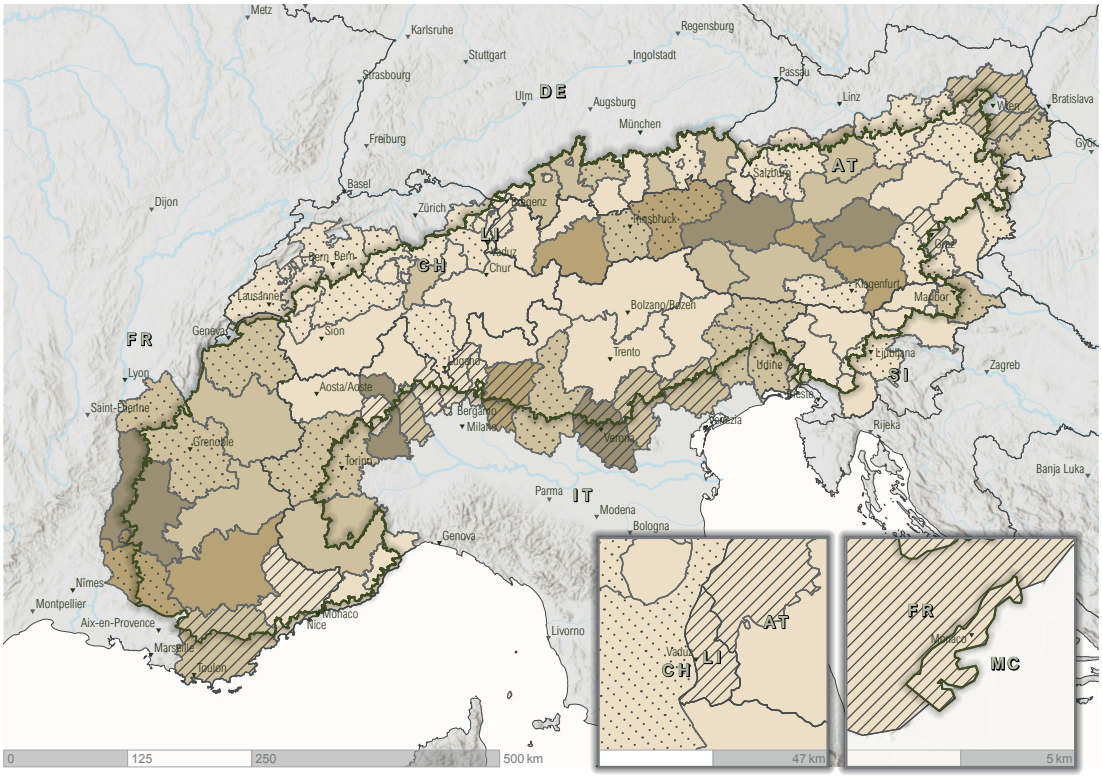


FIGURE 3.2
Land take in the Alpine region. (Source: EEA, 2020)

LAND TAKE AND SHARE OF BUILT AREA, 2000–2018

0–3% 3–6% 6–9% 9–12% > 12%

SHARE OF BUILT AREA

> 5%

5–10%

> 10%

ALPINE CONVENTION PERIMETER

NUTS 3 BORDERS

COUNTRY BORDERS

The intensity of land take is calculated as a percentage increase in artificial surfaces areas from 2000–2018 based on Corine land cover dataset. The built ratio uses the same dataset to calculate the share of artificial land uses relative to all other uses.

Regional level: NUTS 3
Data sources: EEA, 2021
Map background: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS; Esri, USGS
Cartography: Tadej Bevk

occurred in the Southern Alps in Italy and Slovenia, and the Western Alps in general. Land take, depicted in Figure 3.2, shows that Alpine areas differed significantly in land take and ratios of built areas. Alpine countries have set very rigorous objectives concerning the EU goal of zero land take by 2050. In Germany, the goal was to achieve an intensity rate of less than 30 hectares per day by 2030. Austria is currently fighting for a land take rate of approximately 2,5 hectares per day and its implementation by 2030, while France has a rather ambitious target at 1,6 hectares per day (ESPON, 2020a). As evaluated in the study by Schirpke *et al.* (2021), Alpine areas differ in how successful they have been in achieving this goal, with values of additional artificial surfaces ranging from 0% to 13%. On average, the share of increase in artificial surfaces in the area from 2000 to 2018 was 3,5%, while it was 7% for the entire EU. In terms of the urban-rural typology, rural regions reported the highest land take at 4,7%.

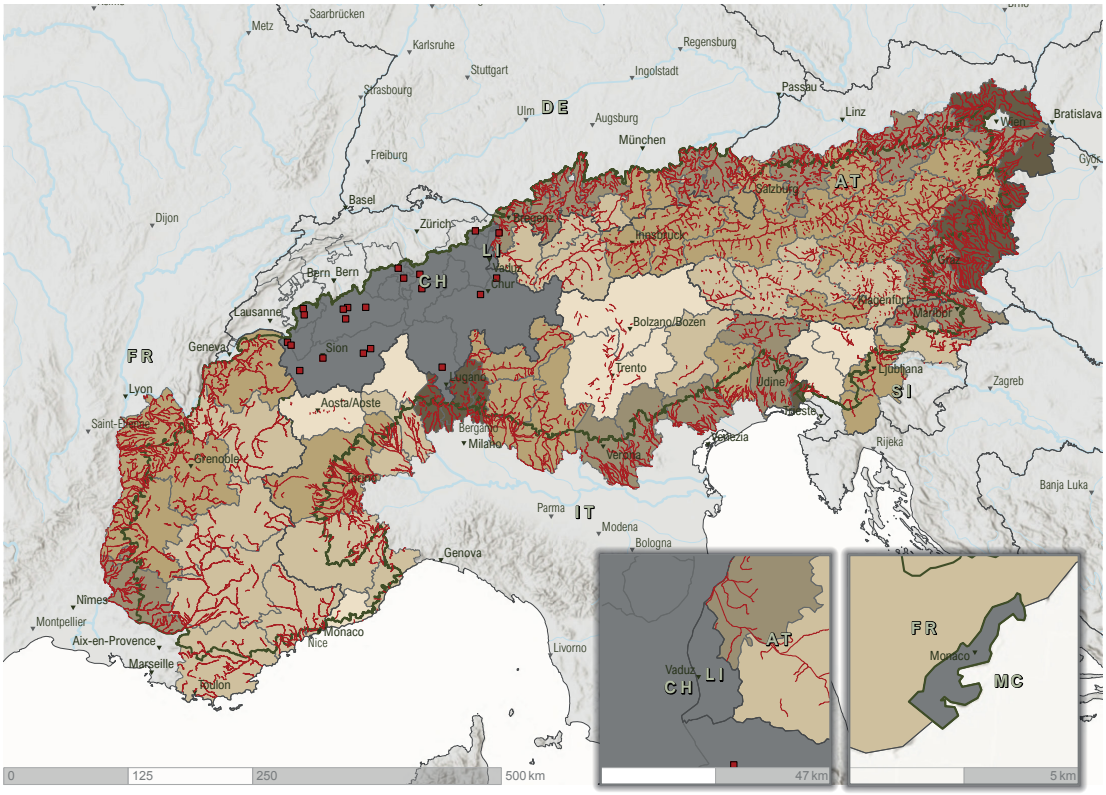


FIGURE 3.3
Share of water bodies with good or high ecological status. Ecological status indicates the quality of the structure and functioning of surface water bodies, including biological, physio-chemical and hydromorphological quality elements. The overall ecological status is determined by the element that has the worst status among all the elements. (Source: EEA, 2023; FOEN, 2019)

Apart from land, water will also become a scarce environmental resource. The Alpine fringe regions with large urban centres were already affected by **water supply issues and water conflicts** in 2003 and 2009, which is very likely to recur in the future. More water is expected to come from the melting glaciers. Periods of precipitation become more intense, with more rain/snow falling at once. If glaciers disappear, the Alpine region will face water scarcity. At the same time, new areas and habitats will be formed, and the number of lakes will increase (Bosson *et al.*, 2023). In addition to the volume of water available, there will be changes in water temperature and water quality, and further organisms might become extinct. The current ecological status of water can be shown by the indicator share of water bodies with good or high ecological status (Figure 3.3). In the EU, the average share of water bodies with ecological quality elements rated as good or better was 40%. The Alpine region had a higher average of 57%, indicating that Alpine rivers offer a cleaner environment than the broader EU does. This high share, however, is accounted for by many smaller sections in the uppermost parts of rivers, while the lower and middle sections are often in worse ecological condition.

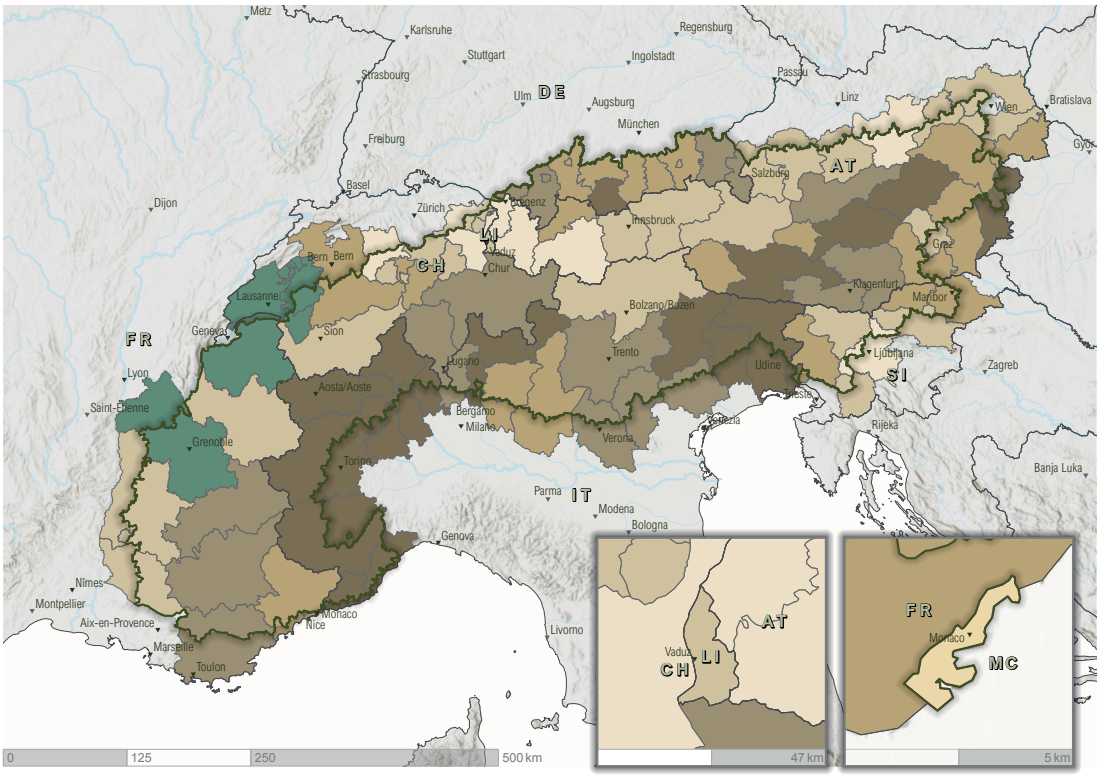


FIGURE 3.4
The ageing index in the Alpine region. (Source: Eurostat, 2023; Monaco Statistics, 2023)

AGEING INDEX, 2023

90–100 | 100–120 | 120–140 | 140–160 | 160–180 | Above 180

ALPINE CONVENTION PERIMETER

NUTS 3 BORDERS

COUNTRY BORDERS

Ageing index is a measure of the ratio between the young population (below 14) and the elderly population (over 65). Values above 100 mean there are more elderly people than young.

Regional level: NUTS 3
Data sources: Eurostat, 2023, Monaco Statistics 2023
Map background: Esri, Intermap, NASA, NGA, USGS; Esri, CGIAR, USGS; Esri, USGS
Cartography: Tadej Bevk

The Alpine region likewise faces **demographic changes** and their various impacts. First, the population is ageing faster in the Alpine region than in other parts of Europe. Only three areas had indicator values below 100; in the rest, the proportion of old people exceeded that of young people. The highest ageing index can be seen in northern Italian regions and parts of the eastern and southern Austrian Alps (Figure 3.4). The Alps are vulnerable not only because of ageing but also because of various bidirectional migration patterns. On the one hand, in the past decade there have been several types of immigration: re-migrants, retirees, working and seasonal migrants, and newcomers. The area has benefited greatly from the influx of migrants, including buying power, interest in the autochthonous cultural Alpine traditions and reviving of some of the abandoned villages (amenity immigrants), filling in the gaps on the job market (newcomers), potential for innovation (from returning migrants after completing higher education), and a boost to the local economy (working age immigrants; Bender and Kanitscheider, 2012; Löffler *et al.*, 2015). On the other hand, studies show that there are people, mostly younger generations, who leave the Alps because of the 'demotivating environment' and 'uninformed pessimism' connected to the belief there are no jobs for graduates in their region. Outmigration from remote areas is a consequence of lack

of university education options, poor public transport, and a dearth of social and cultural activities (Price and Ferrario, 2014). The demographic situation shows us how vital society is for a place, so this issue needs to be addressed as seriously as the other challenges discussed in this section.

"My quality of life is very good, but it is very impacted by my awareness of the need for global actions relating to biodiversity and stopping global warming. Basically, every day I am stunned by the non-existence (or almost) of impactful measures on the part of our leaders. Watching myself live, watching my neighbours live in this "consumerist happiness" terrifies me ... My desire for change is all too often stopped by the lack of means (public transport, local public services, cycle paths for cyclists)."
Female (46–55), the suburbs or outskirts of a big city, France (Isère), employed

"As more and more buildings are built up, the quality of life is decreasing. Because there are more and more people worldwide, more has to be built; more apartments, hospitals, doctors, kindergartens, schools, supermarkets, hotels, roads, etc. have to be built. More cars, more, more, more. Animals are increasingly being displaced."
Female (56–65), a town or a small city, Austria (Osttirol, Lienz), employed, farm worker

"We are witnessing an increase in the destruction of the environment and biodiversity, the grabbing of water for mass tourism and the profits of the real estate lobby, the disappearance of public services, the disappearance of health systems, the disappearance of public transport (there used to be a train in our valley) all in favour of cars. In fact, the quality of life of local inhabitants is inversely proportional to the quantity of public money poured into the skiing sector which weakens the sustainable economy and causes a loss of food and energy autonomy."
Female (56–65), an isolated hamlet/the countryside with dispersed settlements, France (Haute-Savoie), higher administrator occupation

"The quality of life is decreasing due to mass tourism, the lack of purposeful use of budget funds, the lack of maintenance of the roads which are in an increasingly poor condition, the noise caused by cars, and the dangers posed by bicycle riders. There will be a problem with long-term water supply and local food production as farmers reduce agricultural activity and inflation raises prices sky high."
Male (26–35), a country village, Slovenia (Savinjska, Zreče), employed, professional and technical occupation

"The world is still fine for me. However, it looks like we are facing numerous problems (climate change, thawing permafrost, floods and mudslides caused by increased heavy rain)."
Male (66–75), a town or a small city, Austria (Pinzgau-Pongau, Zell am See), retired, higher administrator occupation

3.2 Major challenges to securing quality of life

Residents of the Alps may eventually have a diminished quality of life as a result of the aforementioned issues. It is important that these specific challenges are described and identified as fundamental information for policymakers in the Alpine area. A further need is that, rather than addressing these challenges separately, the way they interact should be considered as well. In the following part, these challenges are illustrated based on the five quality-of-life topics, which result from the analysis carried out while preparing the RSA 10, and multiple elaborations with the RSA 10 ad hoc Working Group. Figure 3.5 presents an overview of the challenges, with a detailed description under each of the five topics.

SCHEME REPRESENTING THE MAJOR QUALITY OF LIFE CHALLENGES IN THE ALPS

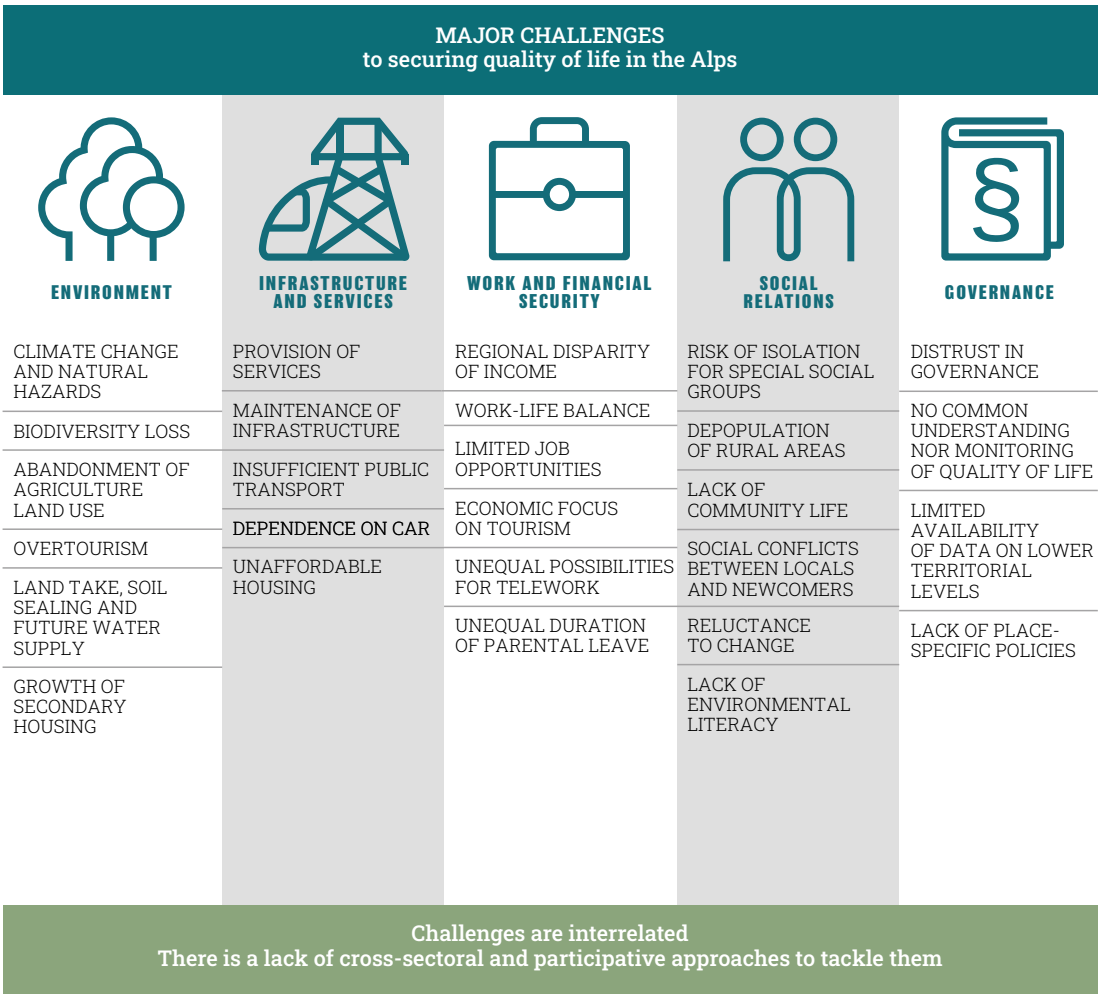


FIGURE 3.5
Scheme representing the major quality-of-life challenges in the Alps. (Source: own work)

ENVIRONMENT

Climate change and natural hazards are the two main environmental issues. Climate change may have a number of effects on living conditions, most of which would be negative. In any case, the Alps are a hotspot for biodiversity, and the loss of biodiversity is closely linked to climate change.

Firstly, agriculture practices will need to adapt, and there will be changes in landscape maintenance, such as less cultivation, less pasturing or even giving up using land for agriculture. However, new agricultural practices will continue to be encouraged and introduced, such as organic farming, permaculture, agroecology and others. Secondly, the tourism industry will be significantly affected by changes in environmental conditions, and existing economic models of ski resorts below certain altitudes will become outdated. Thirdly, the increased frequency of extreme weather events such as floods, landslides, and heatwaves may potentially have an impact on health. People could experience helplessness, chronic distress, and a general sense of anxiety. There is a need to improve land management, water and air quality and food production and to ensure the protection of biodiversity and the health and safety of all living beings. Overtourism and, consequently, stronger environmental pressures also need to be addressed.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

The provision of services and infrastructure is certainly one of the greatest challenges the Alpine region needs to address in the future. It arises from various factors, such as the gap between demand and offer in remote and rural areas. Depopulation has resulted in less demand, which means services close down, and as a result even more people leave some parts of the Alps. Furthermore, public transport is typically inadequate in these areas, which particularly impacts the elderly, the young, and other social groups who would rely on it. As the report's own survey with residents has shown, more than half of the population depend on their cars for their daily errands. This is an unsustainable practice, but in some areas, people simply do not have any other choice as there is no public transport available.

One of the major challenges in this aspect was found to be the poor public transport, occurring because of route closures or non-existent or infrequent services. It would therefore be advisable to seek alternatives to traditional public transport, such as on-demand public transport and volunteer services for the elderly and other vulnerable social groups. Moreover, previously existing secondary railways should be reactivated wherever possible, and train links still existing in rural areas should at least be maintained. Infrastructure should be made resilient to climate change and natural hazards, and construction standards should be improved. Every infrastructure requirement should be subject to an impact assessment that balances ecological integrity against additional land consumption and other alternatives. Options for the digitalisation of services should also be explored. However, the extent to which digitalisation is possible depends on the telecommunication infrastructure available, and infrastructure found in remote areas might not be sufficient.

Another major vulnerability, according to the survey results, is the housing situation. The presence of second homes for leisure purposes and short-term rentals, given that tourism is a major economic activity in some Alpine areas, has led to a dearth of affordable housing. Even if new construction projects are initiated in such areas, vulnerable groups, such as young people, the elderly, and young families, cannot afford these properties. Thus, effective housing policies and regulations should be developed in the Alps to address the situation.

WORK AND FINANCIAL SECURITY

The analysis of the Alpine situation in terms of work conditions and financial security shows substantial differences

across Alpine areas. Apart from significant differences in income, there are also differences in work conditions, such as the duration of parental leaves, which do not always provide favourable conditions for young parents to balance their work and family lives. Working from home is seen as one of the solutions to foster a better work-family balance. However, not all employers across Alpine countries are willing to let people work remotely, and in any case, the majority of low-paying jobs must be done on site. Nevertheless, working from home is welcomed as a way of retaining the population in remote areas, as long as the necessary digital infrastructure is available.

The job market in the Alps also faces challenges. Owing to regional variations in population dynamics and the unavailability/inaccessibility of jobs (some areas are not economically oriented), work is not necessarily available where people reside. And since ski tourism as a major economic sector is vulnerable to climate change, jobs in this sector are endangered. Alternatives should thus be sought. At the same time, the number of working people is declining in some areas due to an ageing population and out-migration by young people. Immigrants cannot fill this gap because of their difficulties integrating into the job market.

Demographic changes have altered population dynamics and social relationships in the Alps. Many elderly people are in need of care or simply social engagement with other people. According to the survey, almost 10% of the respondents had no social interaction at all or less than once a month, which considerably decreases their quality of life. Depopulation of remote areas, the closure of local community centres, and other population dynamics deprive young people and other vulnerable groups of social interactions (see Box 2.1). In addition, an increase in immigration by non-Alpine/non-European populations increases the possibility of conflicts between the existing population and newcomers. Therefore, more steps must be taken to address the social inequities and the social dimensions of quality of life, such as through grassroots initiatives and community-based policies. Spatial planning could play an active role in providing places for people to engage in and boost community life.

Governance is the quality-of-life aspect that consistently receives the lowest score and the least amount of public trust, whatever the measurement approach and platform used, including the RSA 10 survey. It is also the aspect in which the changes and adaptations needed are the most complex. Paramount to good governance is a common understanding of quality of life across Alpine countries but, as of yet, none exists since these countries quantify it using different terms and monitoring systems. As research has shown, there is no common Alpine Convention monitoring system of quality of life in the Alps; Alpine countries and the Alpine Convention rely on existing measurement approaches, such as those used by Eurostat and the OECD, or even whatever national systems there may be, such as the one in Austria (see Box 1.2). These existing measures have several shortcomings, such as insufficient data in the areas of housing, biodiversity, and transportation. Furthermore, in most Alpine countries, quality of life is not considered an umbrella topic but is mostly covered by various sectors and their policies. Quality-of-life policies fail to take into account the unique needs of local and regional communities, so this is clearly an area in need of improvement. As there is a mismatch between national and local initiatives concerning quality of life, Alpine countries need to develop standards or regulations to secure the minimum provision of services of general interest in the region. Extreme political views, conservatism, and euroscepticism are evident in the survey and might further influence how the Alpine region is governed.

3.3 Measures to address the challenges

Several measures and instruments could improve the quality of life in the Alpine region. The governance questionnaire and the form collecting specific information on good practices promoting quality of life were both used to gather examples of measures, some of which are already being implemented in Alpine countries. It should be noted that the challenges are interrelated and interdependent, which means that while excellent practices may address one component of quality of life in isolation, they may also improve other aspects of quality of life. The content supplied by the WG members determines how examples of good practices are geographically represented. The measures are implemented at various administrative levels and acquire different levels of stakeholder engagement; however, their transferability might be contingent on the governance framework in the specific Alpine country involved. These measures comprise three types: 1) instruments, 2) financial incentives introduced by the governments of Alpine countries or states, and 3) initiatives, including Interreg and other bottom-up projects, oriented towards one or more issues related to quality of life, as identified in this chapter. While instruments and financial incentives come mostly from individual nations, initiatives target regional and local levels. They are funded from a number of sources, such as EU funds, cross-border cooperation schemes, EU-led local development programmes, and national, regional, and local funds. The initiatives also differ in whom they target; most typically, citizens are of interest, as are enterprises, regional and local authorities, farms and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), followed by vulnerable groups, such as children, the elderly, youth, and migrants. The projects may be focused on one Alpine area or have been built on transnational cooperation.

Environment and climate change

Adaptation and mitigation measures are urgently needed to address the multiple

BOX 3.1

A good practice to address climate change

The Bavarian Mountain Forest Initiative (BWO) in Bavaria has fostered forest resilience against climate change in the Alpine region since 2008. It is a vital part of Bavaria's climate adaptation programme, which covers the entire Bavarian Alpine region. The BWO uses a unique participatory approach, supporting private and municipal forest owners with a range of measures, including forest management, stakeholder engagement, awareness campaigns and knowledge sharing. Complementary to conventional forest administration, the BWO's project-based model involves specialised staff at local forestry offices who coordinate efforts within defined project areas. They facilitate round table discussions to balance competing interests and raise awareness about the impact of climate change on mountain ecosystems and protective forests. The BWO ultimately safeguards the quality of life in the Bavarian Alpine region by enhancing mountain forest resilience. For more details, please visit the website and see the description of good practice 2 in the Annexes to the Background Study.

impacts of climate change. Austria initiated the Klimarat project (Climate Council) to promote participatory and climate governance. This Climate Council is made up of randomly selected citizens from all regions and from different social, education, income, and age groups, who have lived in the country for at least five years. With the support of scientists, it has developed measures addressing key future questions on transportation, energy production, and sustainable food production, all of which are related to quality of life. The proposals of the Climate Council should create a climate-healthy and neutral Austria by 2040 (Klimarat, 2023). The Bavarian state has issued climate protection policies (Bayerisches Klimaschutzprogramm and Bayerisches Klimaschutzgesetz) which aim to reduce at least 65% of the CO_2 equivalent of GHG emissions by 2030 and ensure that the state becomes carbon neutral by 2040. In addition, similar to the Austrian example, the Bavarian Climate Council (Bayerischer Klimarat) was set up to provide an important impetus for the future orientation of climate policy and support climate research in Bavaria (Bayerischer Klimarat, 2023). Switzerland adapted two documents that were pertinent to the topic. The first one, the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy, sets out the guidelines for the Federal Council's sustainability policy and establishes sustainable development as an important requirement for all federal policy areas. Three priorities were set: 1) sustainable consumption and sustainable production, 2) climate, energy and biodiversity, and 3) equal opportunities and social cohesion (Federal Council, 2021a). The second document of 2021 is the Long-term Climate Strategy to 2050 in which they identified the goal of net zero emissions by 2050. The strategy formulates ten basic strategic principles that will shape Swiss climate policy in the coming years and presents climate goals and emission pathways for the construction, industry, transport, agricultural and food sectors, financial markets, synthetic gases, aviation, and the waste industry (Federal Council, 2021b). Monaco has set itself on a path to reduce its GHG emissions by 55% by 2030 and reach climate neutrality by 2050, based on the reference year of 1990, by setting out measures in its future Climate and Energy Plan. The main objective of this plan is to address climate change, adapt the territory to climate changes sustainably, and build a resilient and robust territory for the benefit of its population and activities (Gouvernement Princier, 2023).

Initiatives addressing climate change include the Bavarian Mountain Forest Initiative (Bergwaldoffensive – BWO), a unique programme within the Bavarian forest administration that uses a strongly participatory approach (see Box 3.1). In addition, through the KommKlimaFöR funding guideline, Bavaria provides financial support to Bavarian municipalities and the partners of the Bavarian Climate Alliance (Bayerisches Landesamt für Umwelt, 2024) to implement climate protection projects (reduction of GHG emissions)

BOX 3.2

A good practice in support of biodiversity, environmental literacy, and public services
Rovereto, an Italian Alpine town grappling with climate and biodiversity challenges, seeks to enhance citizens' quality of life by revitalising its cultural heritage. Through the transformation of the train station's main building and its surroundings, the town has established a public civic hub aligned with the EU's New Leipzig Charter. This Station for Transformation (S4T) programme facilitates collaborative efforts to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and heritage regeneration. By repurposing the station into interactive venues for training, co-design, and knowledge transfer, S4T mobilises stakeholders at multiple levels. Guided by the principles of, "Understand, Adapt, and Use", the project fosters innovative solutions to pressing challenges, ultimately improving the valley's quality of life. Selected under the European Urban Initiative, S4T exemplifies a strategic approach to holistic community development. For more details, please visit the website and see the description of good practice 22 in the Annexes to the Background Study.

and/or climate adaptation measures. The Austrian Federal Ministerial Climate and Energy Fund (2024) promotes and funds innovative projects focused on efficiency and sustainability, aiming to transform the energy system. The fund's total annual budget is 150 million EUR. Furthermore, there are many small-sum funding options that primarily focus on raising awareness at the local level of municipalities, towns and the public, e.g. Austrian KLAR! Programme and e5-Programm für energieeffiziente Gemeinden.

Environmental impact assessments (according to the EU directive implemented by all Alpine EU members and required by law in Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Monaco) and other governance measures combined with development, quality of life and environmental sustainability measures can also be used to assess the quality of the environment. Furthermore, the Italian River Contract is a useful instrument for the reconciliation of local quality-of-life interests, the creation of integrated strategies and the redevelopment and management of river basins' environmental and landscape qualities (Politecnico di Torino, 2015). Similarly, the Bavarian Water Action Programme 2030 (PRO Gewässer 2030) provides an integral strategy for flood protection and natural water body development, anticipating increased recreational and experience functions of the water bodies through complementary measures and environmentally friendly accessibility (Bayerische Staatministerium für Umwelt und Verbrauchschutz, 2024).

Financial incentives that directly benefit citizens, such as funding associated with EU cohesion policies, rural development programmes or allowances paid in the context of agricultural policies, enable the further operation of mountainous farms and indirectly preserve traditional landscapes, Alpine pastures, agricultural land and village settlements, and rural towns (see Box 3.2).

Provision of infrastructure and services

Regarding infrastructure provision, **public transport** was mentioned as one of the issues that needed attention in some parts of the Alps. As potential solutions, instruments in the field of public transport from Austria, Bavaria (DE) and Monaco can lead the way. Austria has an integrated public transport system ticketing service called KlimaTicket Ö (n.d.), which allows the use of public and private railways and public transport in regional, cross-regional and national areas with one flat fee ticket. By providing a more climate-friendly alternative to individual motorised transport, the service aims to achieve the Paris climate goals (United Nations, 2024) by primarily facilitating personal mobility. In addition, the northeastern Austrian federal states – Burgenland, Lower Austria and Vienna – have a shared public transport network called Verkehrsverbund Ost-Region (VOR). One of its offers, VOR Flex (VOR, 2024), is a demand-driven public transport system that offers information and booking services while also making paying for journeys easy and flexible. In a

BOX 3.3

A good practice for local food production and consumption

In Austria, a project promoting local grocery shopping has been initiated, thus minimising reliance on cars. Currently, 19 KastlGreissler shops are in operation across the country, nine of which are located within the Alpine Convention area. Customers are encouraged to purchase high-quality, regionally or locally produced, often organic food, supporting small farms and ensuring food security. This entails supplying regional products in self-service containers and small village venues, fostering local value chains and securing rural supply. The initiative reduces CO_2 emissions, enhances accessibility for immobile individuals, and fosters local economic growth. By offering high-quality food within walking distance, the project strengthens community ties and promotes sustainable living practices, benefiting both consumers and local producers. For more details, please visit the website and see the description of good practice 2 in the Annexes to the Background Study.

similar vein, Bavaria (DE) has supported the expansion of local public transport via various programmes. Through a funding programme that aims to improve rural mobility, the State supports local authorities in providing **demand-driven mobility services** and **express bus lines.** Rural areas and the Alpine region benefit particularly from this. Slovenia has also established an integrated transportation ticket that makes it easier and more affordable for vulnerable people, such as the young and the elderly, to use public transport. Monaco's incentives were related to decarbonisation and mobility, and they provided subsidies for electric and hybrid vehicles. Box 3.3 shows an example of good practices for securing the local provision of services of general economic interest.

Although **housing** was recognised as one of the main challenges directly associated with quality of life, few good practices have been reported on this topic. Alpine countries have different approaches to securing non-profit housing and housing for vulnerable groups; they have also put in place strict restrictions concerning secondary housing in more tourist-oriented areas. While this might be regulated via spatial planning regulations, such as land use and zoning, the types of housing will also need to be adapted in the future, especially for the elderly and their needs. In Liechtenstein, subsidies are available for densified residential construction, which discourages single-family housing. Dispersed settlements lead to high costs for public administration when it comes to providing infrastructure and services (electricity, water and wastewater; Liechtenstein National Administration, 2023).

Demographic change

Demographic changes have been addressed by the RSA 5 (Alpine Convention, 2015) and mostly through Alpine Space Programme-financed projects that cover various aspects of these social changes. One such project is DEMOCHANGE, which describes demographic change as a phenomenon in the Alps and looks for solutions to cope with it (Bausch, Koch, and Vesser, 2014). Another was PlurAlps which especially targeted newcomers as a vulnerable social group in the Alps (see Box 3.4). **How young people can be encouraged to stay** is being addressed by the French AlpSatellites project (Interreg Alpine Space Programme, 2024a), which aims to analyse opportunities and challenges for transitioning to hybrid work, telecommuting and co-working in remote satellite working ecosystems. New inhabitants would work virtually while enjoying the quality of life in the Alps and revitalising the area.

Initiatives targeting various quality-of-life aspects and enhancing local living conditions can also indirectly address demographic changes. For example, the Bavarian Ministerial Regional Management currently supports more than 60 initiatives and nearly 200 projects that address quality-of-life issues, including housing, accessibility, the ageing population, youth

BOX 3.4

A good practice regarding demographic change (immigration)

The PlurAlps project has focused on enhancing the capacity for pluralism across the Alpine Space. Implemented by 10 partners from six Alpine countries, the project emphasises pluralism as a strength, showcasing successful integration models involving municipalities, businesses, and civil society. The pilot regions exemplified effective integration strategies, inspiring others and offering insights for sustainable projects. The project has developed a social planning instrument for municipalities that enhances residents' and immigrants' quality of life. The PlurAlps White Paper provides recommendations for increasing the attractiveness of the Alpine area and fostering social cohesion. The results highlight municipalities' ability to engage in social planning, have strengthened cross-sectoral cooperation for welcoming services, and improved knowledge of migrant integration. These outcomes support social innovation in municipalities and small and medium-sized enterprises, ultimately enhancing the Alpine region's social fabric and economic vitality. For more details, please visit the website and see the description of good practice 13 in the Annexes to the Background Study.

participation, and the local supply (Kitzingen County – The Strategy for Demography); enhance the vitality of the region; provide social and mobility services (Altmühl Jura County); and promote active citizenship (Regen County: Arberland).

Governance

Since governance obtained the lowest score among the quality-of-life factors, solutions should also be sought in this direction. Governance-related measures might concern **policymaking in one specific policy or geographic area, policymaking concerning one or multiple quality-of-life aspects or focus on enhancing participation in the governance process** (see Boxes 3.5 and 3.6). As governance is one of the main challenges in ski tourism and in general, innovative and sustainable solutions should be developed for tourism management and development. Interreg projects often strive to prepare specific strategies and measures to close a particular policy gap. For example, LOS_DAMA! was oriented towards improving access to green areas for the Alpine population and preparing strategies in this regard (Interreg Alpine Space Programme, 2024b). The Smart Altitude project has created a tool to adapt the management of ski areas to climate change (see Box 3.7), while the Smart Villages project has addressed the digital transformation of rural communities and brought insights into how digital networks are organised and financed in rural Alpine communities (Interreg Alpine Space, 2024c).

Most funds are available for mountainous, remote, and border areas and seek to secure continuous settlement and housing while also providing services, preserving nature, and managing landscapes, forestry, and agriculture. The money is typically intended for local communities, municipalities or regions, and it is often linked to specific policies that provide a governance framework, programme or financial background, e.g. the Swiss Federal Policy for rural and mountainous areas, the French interregional governance of Alpine Massif and the Italian National Strategy of Inner Areas (SNAI). The French interregional governance of Alpine Massif co-finances calls for projects carried out by the regions, and it includes committed partnerships across several territories and several partners to enable dynamic Alpine cooperation. Similarly, many Italian funding opportunities address the preservation and development of mountainous areas; for example, SNAI (financially supported by European Structural Funds such as the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, and national funds) co-finances local development projects tackling the demographic decline in remote, rural, and mountainous areas. The Bavarian Ministerial Funding instrument for Regional Management supports innovative projects at regional and inter-municipal levels and addresses at least one future issue (regional competitiveness, settlement, regional

BOX 3.5

A good practice for policies integrating quality of life

The core framework for development in Slovenia is the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 (Government of the Republic of Slovenia, 2017), which aligns with the Vision of Slovenia, development baselines, and international commitments addressing regional, national, European, and global trends and challenges related to development. Active implementation is essential to achieving its objectives, which primarily focus on providing a high quality of life for all. Objectives include a balanced development of the economy, society, and the environment, with opportunities for present and future generations. Opportunities for employment, education, and creativity, as well as safe and active living arrangements, a healthy environment and participation in democratic decision-making and social management all contribute to an individual's high quality of life. For more details, please visit the website.

BOX 3.6

A good practice for place-based policymaking

The aim of the ESPON TQoL in the Alpine Convention space study was to enhance and implement TQoL by using a methodology involving indicators to measure quality of life in the territory. The study analysed the current situation in the Alps and anticipated future trends and suggested indicators to monitor emerging patterns and the impact of global changes on local quality of life. Living labs were organised in the Canton Ticino (Switzerland), Trento (Italy), the Koroška region (Slovenia), and Unterkärnten (Austria) as part of this study. Focus groups involving stakeholders and citizens were held to identify the priorities in quality of life, recommend indicators, and define challenges (e.g. climate change, demographics, lifestyle, and governance changes) and to evaluate their impact on quality of life. This approach helped identify indicators related to spatial planning and policy goals for practical implementation, as well as promote public participation and community involvement in decision-making processes at local level. For more details, please visit the website.

identity, climate change and energy, and demographic changes).

Furthermore, **initiatives** may **integrate local lifestyles, economies, services, and balanced tourism** in interesting ways. An example is the Mountaineering Villages (n.d.), an Austrian initiative developing supranationally that has enabled an alliance across the Alpine Convention area. The villages strive for permanent preservation and the establishment of protected areas, and they also promote a tourism offer that sustains Alpine traditions. Participating municipalities take an active role as partners in the maintenance and development of these areas (public transport and the needs of citizens and guests). Moreover, in Bavaria, the Achental created an eco-model (Ökomodell Achental) that integrates local agriculture and forestry, trades and crafts, and gastronomy and tourism to maintain and improve the quality of life in the valley by focusing on preserving the natural and cultural landscape, keeping small farms in operation, nature-friendly tourism and trade, and the use of local renewable energy sources. In addition, there are incentives addressing **investment opportunities,** entrepreneurship, and sustainable tourism. For example, Liechtenstein Tourism actively promotes mountain areas as destinations for tourists and financially supports infrastructure in ski areas (Liechtenstein National Administration, 2024).

BOX 3.7

A good practice for tourism management

Smart Altitude, a European initiative, targets energy optimisation and GHG reduction in Alpine ski areas. It introduces decision-making tools for ski operators and policymakers alongside innovative technical solutions tested in four living labs. The project operates on the belief that the Alpine region can adopt adaptation and mitigation strategies to combat climate change effects. These strategies aid ski resort operators and policymakers in navigating changing climatic conditions, thus fostering a new model for Alpine winter tourism. Developed by partners across Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, and Switzerland, the Smart Altitude toolkit includes tools for prioritising, planning, implementing, monitoring, auditing, and communicating strategies, empowering stakeholders to drive sustainable change in the region's energy usage and environmental impact. For more details, please visit the website and see the description of good practice 6 in the Annexes to the Background Study.

4

GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FOR QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE ALPS

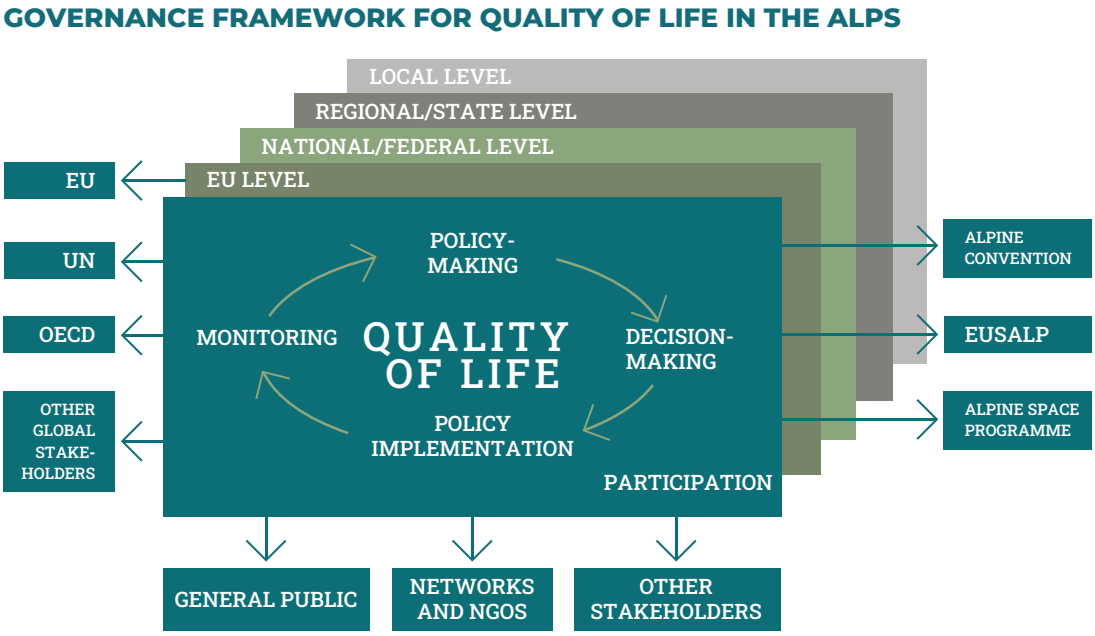
KEY MESSAGE

The complex governance framework for quality of life in the Alps consists of several institutions operating at multiple administrative levels and across various policy sectors. Policymaking is influenced not only by supranational policies within the Alps but also by global guidelines, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Important elements of the framework are participation, which should be enabled at every step of the policy process, and monitoring to verify how well the policies have been implemented.

4.1 General framework

The European Union integrates quality of life into its major policy goals (Lisbon Treaty) concerning all three major cohesion objectives (i.e. economic, social, and territorial cohesion). In the Territorial Agenda 2030, territorial cohesion is defined as an objective "to promote balanced and harmonious territorial development between and within countries, regions, cities and municipalities, as well as ensuring a future for all places and people in Europe, building on the diversity of places and subsidiarity" (Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning, 2020). The aim of securing better living conditions is amply reflected in the 17 SDGs set out as a global framework to monitor how well the countries are steering their development and to inspire policymaking on different administrative levels. Another initiative defining the global referential framework is the concept of planetary boundaries, which "presents a set of nine planetary boundaries, within which humanity can continue to develop and thrive for generations to come" (Stockholm Resilience Centre, 2024).

FIGURE 4.1 Governance framework for quality of life in the Alps. (Source: own work)



4.2 Alpine-specific governance framework

The governance framework of the Alps is a very complex matter. There are several institutions and programmes that also guide development and policymaking in relation to quality of life. The **Alpine Convention** is a legally binding international treaty to protect the Alps and promote sustainable development in the Alpine Convention perimeter. Its work is grounded in Protocols and Declarations, accompanied by the Multi-Annual Work Programme and various activities of its organisation bodies (see Chapter 5). **EUSALP** is a macroregional strategy which provides a political framework for cooperation of states and regions in the Alpine macroregion. It operates within three thematic policy areas (economic growth and innovation, mobility and connectivity, environment and energy), four crosscutting priorities, and nine Action Groups, all relevant to quality of life. A financial instrument known as the Alpine Region Preparatory Action Fund (ARPAF) was created in 2019 to provide financial support for smaller projects under EUSALP but, as of 2024, it is no longer available. The **Alpine Space Programme** is a seven-year Interreg programme for transnational cooperation in the Alpine area, and is currently in effect from 2021 to 2027. The programme finances projects that address three issues of the Alpine area: climate change, digitalisation, and territorial transformation. Past projects contribute to all five quality-of-life topics.

Alpine countries vary significantly in their governance settings. Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland have three or more levels of governance, including national/federal, regional and local levels. Slovenia is organised on two levels, national and local, while Monaco's national and local levels coincide geographically but have separate responsibilities. Equally diverse are the ways in which countries address quality of life and well-being through policies. Some countries include quality of life in their fundamental laws, while others include it in various national (development) strategies. Examples of a national policy with quality of life as an umbrella concept are the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 (Government of the Republic of Slovenia, 2017) and the Swiss 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy (Federal Council, 2021a). In most cases, quality of life is considered a cross-sectoral issue that is addressed by multiple policies and measures. The role of spatial planning in regard to quality of life is to provide better living conditions and protect the environment. Some of the countries also reported specific institutions that deal with quality of life, such as the Commission for Sustainable Development (France), Federal and Bavarian Commission on Equivalent Living Conditions (Germany) or Strategic Council for Attractiveness (Monaco).

Also at regional and local levels, various strategic policies concern quality of life, such as regional development programmes, LEADER programmes and initiatives, and sustainable development strategies. At local level, various initiatives and projects might be implemented that directly target one of the five quality-of-life topics.

Monitoring the quality of life at different levels is also an important aspect of the governance framework. Within the EU, Eurostat has established a quality-of-life platform where national data are gathered and compared. Some countries have established their own quality-of-life monitoring systems, such as Austria's example, "How is Austria?" (Statistik Austria, 2021).

The Alpine countries participate in quality-of-life surveys conducted throughout the EU and contribute data to the Eurostat and OECD databases. In addition to periodic monitoring, individual studies are performed in the Alpine region to evaluate the quality of life in a specific Alpine area (e.g. Rumpolt, 2020). Some local communities have even established their own quality-of-life or well-being measuring concepts, such as Grenoble (FR).

4.3 Participative approaches

The policy process usually consists of four steps: 1. Policymaking, 2. Decision-making, 3. Implementation, and 4. Monitoring. It is important to get the public's participation in all four steps, through different forms of engagement such as public consultations, surveys, workshops and online consultations. The general public should have the opportunity to voice their needs and proposals at all stages of the process. Besides the general public, there are specific stakeholders, like associations, companies, providers of social services, and others that represent the needs of specific population target groups. In the Alpine area, there are also various networks and NGOs that contribute to the implementation of the Alpine Convention and steer Alpine development in a sustainable direction. These networks also support civil society and professional groups in their needs with regard to quality of life and transnational cooperation. They lobby for issues relating to quality of life and implement relevant projects. A participatory budget is another strategy that can be introduced by regions or local communities to finance projects that improve people's quality of life.

5 ALPINE CONVENTION CONTRIBUTIONS TO QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE ALPS

KEY MESSAGE

Within the scope of the Alpine Convention, the Contracting Parties and Observers strive to respond to current and future challenges, seeking solutions and implementing activities to balance looking after both the environment and people. These activities should contribute to securing a good quality of life while preserving the environment and addressing climate change. Moreover, the Alpine Convention should continue pursuing its promotional and awareness-raising activities that showcase the Alpine region as a model region for sustainable development.

5.1 Organisational framework of the Alpine Convention in support of quality of life[2]

[2]The content of this chapter was adapted and revised by the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention.

The Alpine Convention planning process for protecting and sustainably developing the Alps began in 1989. Over the following years all Alpine countries and the European Union signed the document which came into effect in 1995. The Alpine Convention continues to support the implementation of its goals and objectives and foster transnational cooperation. Its work is carried out by various organs, at strategic, legal, operational, and thematic levels. Together, they contribute to its implementation.

As an international treaty, the Alpine Convention represents a policy framework for the protection and sustainable development of the Alps (see Figure 5.1). Eight thematic Protocols provide concrete steps and specific measures on how the Framework Convention's goals and objectives can be executed (see Box 5.1). The Framework Convention and–in all countries which have ratified them–the Protocols, are legally binding; the Framework Convention and those Protocols ratified by the EU are also part of European law.

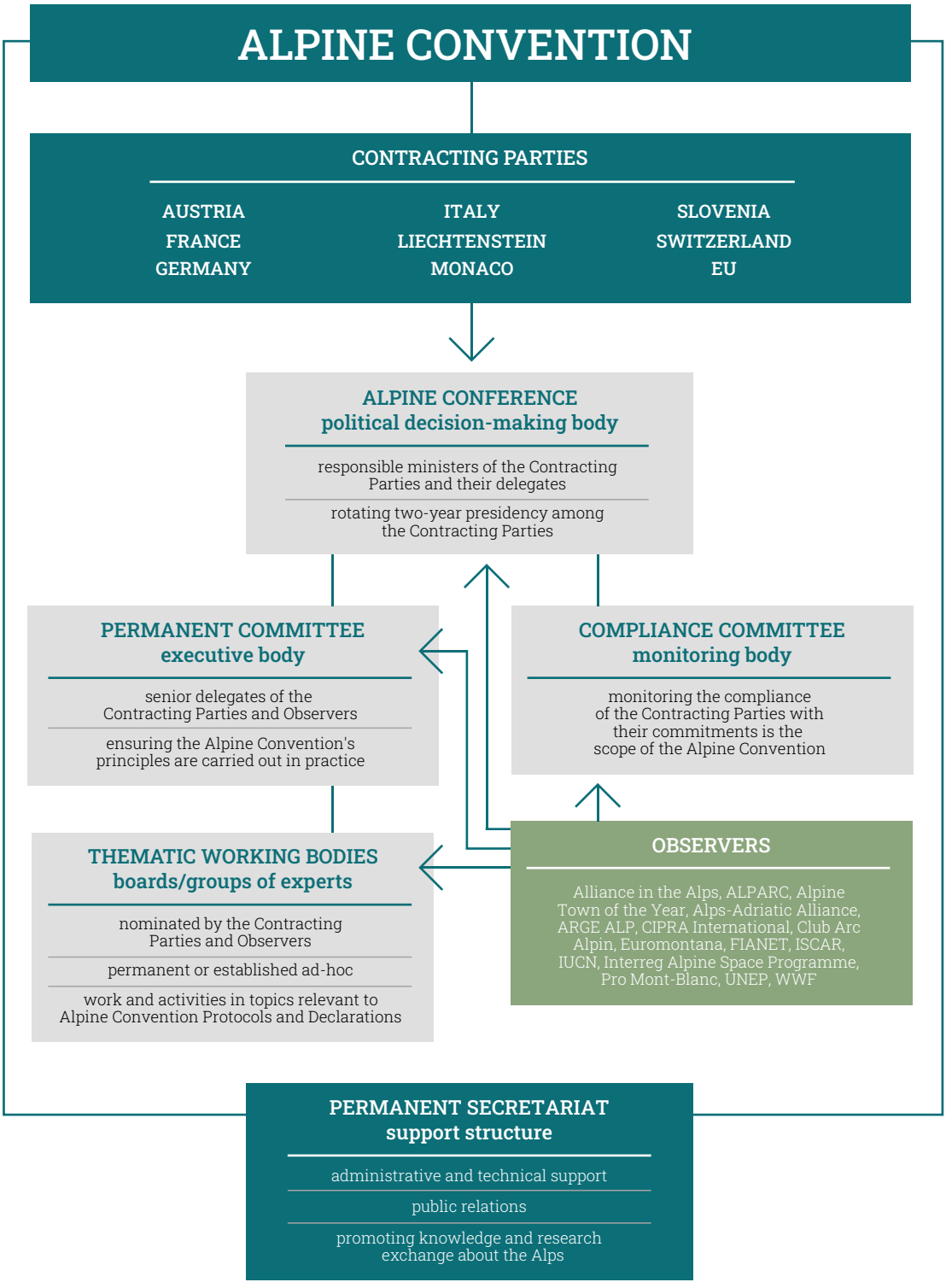
Additionally, the Alpine Convention has adopted six ministerial Declarations. One of the first was the Declaration on Population and Culture (Alpine Convention 2006a), which was adopted in 2006 to ensure, among other aspects, the preservation of the living environment, quality of life, and equal opportunities for the Alpine population. Among its objectives, the Declaration lists the preservation of settlement conditions based on the principle of sustainable development, the provision of services of general interest, and the promotion of belonging and identity.

The overall work of the Alpine Convention is guided by Multi-Annual Work Programmes (MAP) which are usually adopted for a six-year period to secure the implementation of the Protocols and Declarations. In addition to the Contracting Parties, several Observer organisations are active in the Alpine Convention and represent various interests such as those of civil society, thematic associations or transnational organisations.

The Alpine Convention works across borders and sectors, striving for a sustainable future in the Alps. The Alpine Convention cooperates with other organisations in the Alps, such as EUSALP and its Action Groups, the Interreg Alpine Space Programme, and other stakeholders. Globally, its work is framed by the UN SDGs and other international treaties and processes such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and European-level legislation. To achieve its goals, the Alpine Convention also cooperates with other mountain regions and international organisations and institutions.

FIGURE 5.1
Organisational scheme of the Alpine Convention framework. (Source: own work)

ORGANISATIONAL SCHEME OF THE ALPINE CONVENTION FRAMEWORK



5.2 Contributions of the Alpine Convention to support quality of life

Although none of the eight existing Alpine Convention Protocols directly address quality of life, they contain overarching goals and actions that contribute directly or indirectly to maintaining and enhancing quality of life and people's well-being in the Alps. In order to promote a cross-sectoral approach to policymaking, the Protocols address the respective topics while balancing the environmental, social, and economic impacts, as well as taking into account the objectives of other related policies. The Protocols also highlight the principle of people's participation in the development and implementation of policies.

Furthermore, the ministerial Declarations emphasise the importance of:

- quality of life and equal opportunity, reflected in providing conditions for settlements, services of general interest, education, leisure activities, and community life (Declaration Population and Culture; Alpine Convention, 2006a);
- action to reduce the endangerment of Alpine living, economic, and cultural spaces due to climate change (Declaration on Climate Change, Alpine Convention, 2006b; Declaration of Innsbruck: Climate-neutral and Climate-resilient Alps 2050, Alpine Convention, 2019);
- a shift to a green and sustainable economy, which contributes to the population's good quality of life (Declaration on Fostering a Sustainable Economy in the Alps; Alpine Convention, 2016).
- managing water scarcity and reducing natural hazard risk (Declaration on Integrated and Sustainable Water Management in the Alps; Alpine Convention, 2020a);
- strengthening actions towards the protection and restoration of biodiversity, cultural landscape, and livelihoods of local communities in the mountains (Declaration on the Protection of Mountain Biodiversity and its Promotion at International Level; Alpine Convention, 2020b).

Securing a good quality of life is thus one of the Alpine Convention's main priorities. This goal was emphasised in the latest MAP for the period 2023–2030 which set enabling a good quality of life for the people in the Alps as one of its three strategic priorities.

Quality of life is an overarching topic linked to the three spheres of sustainable development (economic, social, and environmental) and a highlighted priority of the MAP. In addition to the ad hoc Working Group, the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Conference and the Thematic Working Bodies work to implement the priorities of the MAP; besides the RSA 10 ad hoc Working Group, eight Thematic Working Bodies were active at the time of the preparation of the report. The ecological sphere of quality of life is in the forefront for the Working Group on Large Carnivores, Wild Ungulates and Society (e.g. preventive measures), the Alpine Biodiversity Board (e.g. exploring connections between biodiversity and quality of life), and the Alpine Climate Board (e.g. promotion of climate-responsible lifestyles) as well as the Soil Protection Working Group and Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development Working Group (e.g. promotion of soil functions in spatial planning). However, the Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development Working Group also addresses the socio-economic sphere since it covers cross-border cooperation and the Alpine spatial development perspective. The socio-economic sphere is also very important for the Thematic Working Bodies – especially when they tackle transport and mobility

BOX 5.1

Highlighted objectives from the thematic Protocols, relevant to quality of life:

Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development
- Supporting economic development and a balanced distribution of the population;
- Facilitating equal opportunities for the local population in its social, cultural, and economic development;
- Accentuating a balanced and prudent utilisation of lands necessary for economic and cultural activities, services of general interest, leisure activities as well as the protection of nature and landscapes (Alpine Convention, 1994b).

Mountain Farming
- Recognising and securing the continuity of the essential contribution of mountain farming for maintaining the population and safeguarding sustainable economic activities, the natural environment, preventing natural risks and conserving the recreational value of the environment and of the cultural life (Alpine Convention, 1994a).

Nature Protection and Landscape Conservation
- Reducing the environmental impact and impairments undermining nature and landscape in the entire Alpine territory, while also taking account of the interests of the local population (Alpine Convention, 1994c).

Mountain Forests
- Conserving protective forests for the inhabited areas, transportation structures and farmed lands;
- Preserving forestry as a source of employment and income for the local community;
- Ensuring that effective functions of forests improve air quality, and provide noise protection and recreational space (Alpine Convention, 1996).

Tourism
- Ensuring greater harmony between tourism and the environment as well as with the standard of living for the locals;
- Recognising the importance of tourism for maintaining population and for providing their livelihood;
- Promoting cultural heritage and the cooperation of tourism with agriculture, forestry and handicrafts (Alpine Convention, 1998c).

Energy
- Ensuring sufficient energy resources to improve local living conditions while reducing energy needs, making wider use of renewable energy sources (Alpine Convention, 1998a).

Soil Conservation
- Recognising that soil serves as a sink for harmful substances and that contaminated soils can endanger humans, animals and plants;
- Promoting prudent use of soil for many human activities while at the same time conserving the natural functions which benefit the people to be available for future generations (Alpine Convention, 1998b).

Transport
- Improving accessibility to service the essential needs of the population;
- Providing employment opportunities;
- Minimising impacts on natural environment and human health, such as reduced air quality and noise pollution, and increasing transport safety;
- Developing public transport and encouraging car-free tourism while recognising the geographical limitations of the Alpine region and ensuring sufficient infrastructure for individual transport (Alpine Convention, 2000).

(following the evolution of social change, Covid-induced mobility changes; Transport Working Group), agriculture and forestry (local value chains, good quality food, handicrafts; Mountain Agriculture and Mountain Forestry Working Group), risk management (Natural Hazards Working Group), and Alpine identity. Past activities of the Thematic Working Bodies can be viewed on the Alpine Convention website.

There are many projects and awareness-raising activities that promote the goals of the Alpine Convention including sustainable life in the Alps, and these are carried out within the framework of the Convention. They are implemented by the Contracting Parties, Observers, and the Permanent Secretariat, as well as other partners. For instance, these projects include the Reading Mountains Festival, oriented towards the promotion of Alpine cultural heritage and diversity, and the Mountaineering Villages, an initiative for sustainable Alpine tourism. There are also projects focused specifically on youth: YOALIN – Youth Alpine Interrail (encouragement of sustainable travel), Youth Parliament to the Alpine Convention (parliamentary simulation to discuss current topics in the Alpine region), and the Young Academics Award (award for master's theses to further the role of research in the sustainable development of the Alps).

Click to see the Alpine Convention website.

6

MEASURING QUALITY OF LIFE AND IDENTIFIED GAPS IN KNOWLEDGE

KEY MESSAGE

The RSA 10 provides new information about the quality of life in the Alps. Several knowledge gaps were identified during the preparation process, which need to be addressed through further studies, e.g. in the field of housing and age-specific data. A periodic report on quality of life is recommended, albeit in a simpler, less detailed version.

6.1 Measuring quality of life in the RSA 10

In order to further the Alpine Convention's knowledge of the quality of life of people in the Alps, the RSA 10 was prepared based on a detailed work programme consisting of analytical and participative methods. The Multi-Annual Work Programme of the Alpine Conference 2023–2030 states that spatial and individual differences in quality of life should be detected and acknowledged. To achieve this aim, the structure of the RSA 10 was formulated using three leading questions:

- What is the current state of enablers of quality of life in the Alpine region?
- What do people think about the current quality of life in the Alpine region?
- How can policymaking be adapted in Alpine Convention countries to secure a good quality of life?

The preparation of the Background Study was done in multiple steps: 1) governance analysis, 2) data and geographic information system (GIS) analysis, 3) survey with residents of the Alps, 4) collecting data on good practices, and 5) collaborative preparation of recommendations. The preparation process took nine months from January 2023 to September 2023.

The governance analysis describes the governance framework for quality of life in the Alps at all administrative levels. The analysis was done based on a questionnaire with 10 questions answered by representatives from all Alpine countries. The following information was gathered: understanding of quality of life, policies and legislation (general, development and spatial/territorial planning), sector-specific documents, instruments and measures, competent institutions that either measure or steer quality of life, and the monitoring systems available.

The data and GIS analysis was the most exhaustive analytical work in the preparation of the RSA 10. Indicators were sought for 2019 onwards, presenting information either for the NUTS 2 or NUTS 3 level in order to get as close as possible to the Alpine Convention perimeter. Because of either the nature of the indicators or the data collection method, some of the indicators were only available at national level. Altogether, 36 indicators were included in the analysis, some of them presented graphically with charts and some on maps, to geographically distinguish the living conditions in the Alps. Eurostat's urban and rural typology was applied to differentiate between the types of areas. The indicators and their metadata were gathered and consolidated in a dashboard in a separate Excel file.

A survey of Alpine residents was carried out to collect subjective views on quality of life. The questionnaire consisted of 27 questions on the five quality-of-life topics and people's satisfaction with each of them. More emphasis was placed on those topics that were not covered well in official sources of data, such as housing, accessibility and quality of services. The answers were collected via random sampling using a snowball technique between May 2023 and August 2023. Additionally, in the Alpine regions of some countries where the response rate was low, an online panel was carried out by a third party. A total of 3.000 responses were collected, and the sample was controlled based on geographical distribution and age category. The share of responses from the Alpine countries was as follows: Austria (29,6%), France (12,2%), Germany (10,1%), Italy (26,2%), Liechtenstein (0,3%), Monaco (less than 0,1%), Slovenia (13,5%),

and Switzerland (8,1%). Weighting was applied to the analysis as the share of responses from some of the countries was either higher or lower than the percentage in the population (for further information, see the Background Study, section 1.4.4). The results were analysed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation and were graphically presented using charts, word clouds, tables, and maps. In addition to the online survey, a field survey was conducted by the University of Vienna[3] in a total of six Austrian municipalities in 2023 and 2024.

The goal of **collecting data on good practices** was to prepare an overview of the potential measures/instruments/initiatives that could help ensure a better quality of life in the Alpine area. Examples should therefore be applicable to the Alpine situation and context (e.g. dispersed settlement and mountainous areas) and could be implemented via spatial planning or other activities. Twenty-six good practice examples were derived from Interreg projects, initiatives financed by Alpine Region Preparatory Action Fund, State measures and so on. In the annex to the Background Study, each example is described in detail, providing information about, for instance, the measures used, target groups, financing, timeframe, and location.

Policy recommendations, the main output of the RSA 10, were prepared in a participatory manner via multiple workshops, engaging the members of the RSA 10 WG as well as the Alpine Biodiversity Board and the Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development WG.

[3]Selected results of the three 2023 case studies were already published in the respective municipalities' periodicals (see Rumpolt, 2023; Rumpolt, Ebenstreit and Stroissnig, 2024; Rumpolt and Heintel, 2024).

6.2 Identification of knowledge gaps

The preparation process of the RSA 10, specifically its Background Study, was a useful exercise for evaluating the data available for measuring quality of life over a specific period at territorial level. Data from the Eurostat portal, the OECD well-being portal, the EEA website, the Alpine Convention Atlas, and previous ESPON projects that either focused on quality of life overall or on a specific aspect were searched. In situations where a data gap was found for a specific country, national statistics agencies were also checked. The ESPON QoL Dashboard was examined in detail; however, due to outdated data or a lack of data at NUTS 3 level, the dashboard's usefulness was limited and it was difficult to effectively depict the current situation well. European-wide surveys, including the European Social Survey and the European SILC survey, were consulted to portray subjective views on quality of life.

Based on the data search, the following knowledge gaps were identified:

a) Territorial gap: Most of the data available were at the NUTS 2 or coarser level, which did not allow for a precise evaluation of the situation in the Alpine Convention area because there was already a lot of overlap across the borders, given the shape of the NUTS 2 regions. The borders of the Alpine Convention area mostly correspond to lower administrative levels such as municipalities or below. However, EU-level data is mostly only available at NUTS 3 level or above, which accounts for the disparity in the information given. The situation in different types of areas (urban vs. rural) might be more clearly

distinguished if data at lower NUTS or even LAU levels were available.

b) Time gap: Some of the indicators were based on data samples obtained via surveys or specific indicator formulations only available for certain years or just one year. Such data cannot be utilised to assess quality-of-life trends or be included in the monitoring system.

c) Content gap: For certain quality-of-life topics, no indicators were found; housing and accessibility of services were two such topics in which a more systematic approach and frequent provision of indicators should be applied at EU and national levels (for instance, housing data is available only every 10 years, based on the decennial census). In addition, data on biodiversity and the impacts of climate change on quality of life are specifically relevant to the Alpine area. At present, climate change scenarios are available, as are individual niche studies focusing on one impact of climate change, but comprehensive monitoring of climate change impacts in relation to quality of life is missing. Moreover, data about environmental conditions were mostly available in GIS format, which meant that recalculation needed to be done for the NUTS 3 level.

d) Reliance on multiple resources: As evident from our report, multiple resources are needed to provide a comprehensive picture of quality of life and to cover both its objective and subjective aspects. This approach might affect the validity of the data and lower comparison options. Sometimes, the data for one indicator are extracted from several indicators, as one resource does not cover all Alpine countries. An additional challenge is that three countries in the Alpine Convention area (Liechtenstein, Monaco, and Switzerland) are not members of the EU, so their data are only partially covered by Eurostat.

e) Missing data on local and regional governance of quality of life: The RSA 10 governance analysis covered the supranational and national levels in detail, including the state level of federal nations. It was therefore often stated that, in order to obtain a detailed picture of both governance and the quality of life in local communities, greater data collection at local and regional levels is necessary.

f) Missing information on age-specific groups, their quality of life, and their lifestyles: The RSA 10 survey involved residents of the Alpine region who were 18 years of age or older. The results were analysed according to the type of area and not age groups. The correlation analysis showed no correlation between age and satisfaction with quality of life. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to look into the quality-of-life specifics of the following population groups: young people, the elderly, families with children under the age of 15, and immigrants who moved to the Alps in the last 10 years or so.

g) Missing information about connections between the factors influencing quality of life and contradictory policy goals: The RSA 10 focused on gathering information about various topics of quality of life, but it paid little attention to the relationships and interdependencies between these topics and factors influencing them. Given that different sectors and policies address different aspects of quality of life, some of whose goals may conflict, this is especially relevant and should be further explored.

In addition to the knowledge gaps mentioned, the specifics of measuring quality of life include the dichotomy between observing the situation at selected territorial levels to show an objective picture of the living conditions there and measuring the subjective perceptions of quality of life at the individual, family or household level. As argued in several studies, including those by ESPON (2019) and González *et al.* (2011), a more precise evaluation of quality of life can also be achieved by weighting the importance of each indicator based on the preferences of the population of the selected areas with regard to the entire concept of quality of life.

6.3 Proposal for measures to improve knowledge on quality of life

Various activities can be pursued to overcome the gaps observed and depicted in Section 6.2. First, a periodic report focusing specifically on quality of life and based on 10 to 15 core indicators could be prepared for the Alpine area (see Table 6.1). Second, it is important that indicators are derived from existing databases, particularly the Eurostat data portal and European-wide surveys. In this way, the data provision is reliable and frequent. With regard to the content coverage of the indicators, Eurostat should be asked to make housing data available again and the EEA should provide some of the indicators at the NUTS 3 level to enable comparisons between regions. In addition, more effort should be put into the ESS to synchronise the data in terms of territorial level, given the significant differences between Alpine countries. Data are not available for some countries, while other countries only have national-level data available, but a few of them make data as detailed as those at the NUTS 3 level accessible.

To support monitoring, financial incentives could be provided by the Contracting Parties or other funding sources within the Alpine area for collecting, processing, analysing, and presenting the data on a two or five-year basis. Related to this, a survey with the Alpine population should be conducted every five years to monitor the subjective aspects of quality of life. The survey should encompass the population in the age group of 18 years and above, although the view of the younger population (15 to 18 years old) could also be of value. The existing questionnaire can be used as a model for future surveys, but it can also be updated to include whatever issues are currently pertinent to quality of life at the time, such as climate change impacts and the importance of biodiversity.

Within the Alpine Convention, someone should be assigned for monitoring quality of life, or one of the permanent Working Groups could take on this responsibility going forward. Furthermore, efforts must be directed to securing the proposed 10 to 15 core indicators. This can be done by engaging different national statistics agencies to bridge the gap of non-EU membership by the three aforementioned countries (Liechtenstein, Monaco, and Switzerland). A template could be prepared for these national statistics agencies to fill out on a five-yearly basis to provide data for the Alpine Convention area. Based on the information obtained, a short periodic report focusing on quality of life could be prepared. In the long term, this approach would secure stability in monitoring and provide sound input for policymaking in the Alpine context.

Further analysis should also be carried out to cover the governance of quality of life at regional and local levels because the RSA 10 has not been an in-depth study in this regard. Revealing the policymaking and implementation processes at local level could provide more insight into the quality of life of Alpine populations, their lifestyles, and the micro specifics of their living conditions. This would also give an opportunity to explore in detail the quality of life and lifestyles of specific age groups or other vulnerable groups living in the Alps. This aim can be pursued through research projects financed by national research agencies, Interreg projects or other third-party funding.

PROPOSAL OF A SIMPLIFIED LIST OF INDICATORS TO BE USED FOR FUTURE QUALITY OF LIFE MONITORING IN THE ALPS

	INDICATOR	SOURCE, YEAR OF AVAILABLE DATA	SPATIAL DETAIL
GENERAL	LIFE SATISFACTION	ESS, 2020	NUTS 1: DE, IT; NUTS 2: AT, CH, FR; NUTS 3: SI
	POPULATION GROWTH	EUROSTAT, 2020; 2021 (SI), MONACO, STATISTICS, 2022	NUTS 3
GOOD LIFE ENABLERS			
	LAND TAKE INTENSITY	EEA DATA AND MAPS, 2021	NUTS 3
	SHARE OF WATERBODIES WITH GOOD OR HIGH ECOLOGICAL STATUS (EU, CH)	EEA DATAHUB, 2020; FOEN, 2019	NUTS 3
	SHARE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH BROADBAND ACCESS (EU, LI)	EUROSTAT, 2021	NUTS 2
	DURATION OF PARENTAL LEAVE	OECD FAMILY DATABASE, 2022	NUTS 0
	AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED IN A TYPICAL WEEK AT THE MAIN JOB	EUROSTAT, 2022	NUTS 2
	GOVERNMENT INDEX	EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2021	NUTS 2

TABLE 6.1 Proposal of a simplified list of indicators to be used for future quality of life monitoring in the Alps.

	INDICATOR	SOURCE, YEAR OF AVAILABLE DATA	SPATIAL DETAIL
LIFE MAINTENANCE			
	PREMATURE DEATHS PER 100.000 INHABITANTS DUE TO PM 2.5 AIR POLLUTION	EEA DATAHUB 2019	NUTS 3
	EQUIVALISED DISPOSABLE INCOME OF HOUSEHOLDS (PER INHABITANT)	EUROSTAT 2020; 2021 (SI)	NUTS 2
	AGEING INDEX	EUROSTAT, 2022	NUTS 3
	SHARE OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT IN EMPLOYMENT OR IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING	EUROSTAT, 2022; 2020 (CH)	NUTS 2
	VOTER TURNOUT IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS (OECD, LI)	OECD DATA EXPLORER , 2021	NUTS 2
LIFE FLOURISHING			
	PERCEIVED OWN HEALTH	ESS, 2020	NUTS 1: DE, IT; NUTS 2: AT, CH, FR; NUTS 3: SI
	PERCEPTION ABOUT INCOME WITH REGARDS TO COMFORT OF LIVING	ESS, 2020	NUTS 1: DE, IT; NUTS 2: AT, CH, FR; NUTS 3: SI
	SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY IN COUNTRY	ESS, 2020	NUTS 1: DE, IT; NUTS 2: AT, CH, FR; NUTS 3: SI

7

A WAY FORWARD – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY MESSAGE

Further actions should be taken by the Alpine Convention, Contracting Parties, and Observers to gain greater knowledge on quality of life and set guidelines on how a good quality of life in the Alps can be secured. In doing so, they should take into account that measures could conflict with each other and therefore deal with these conflicts accordingly.

7.1 Setting the scene for the recommendations

Improving quality of life is one of the top priorities of the Alpine Conference and, as such, is represented in its latest MAP for the period 2023–2030. The aim of the MAP is to define the context for cooperation on common measures over an extended period in order to successfully and effectively face challenges, such as cultural, demographic, and climate changes, which all require a cooperative transnational effort. The vision of the Alpine Convention is that 'The Alps shall be a model region for a sustainable future worth living in for humans and all other species in 2030 and beyond' (Alpine Convention, 2022, p. 3). Three priorities were set to achieve this vision. The third priority, 'enabling a good quality of life for the people in the Alps', clearly focuses on quality of life. Two main objectives were defined:

- 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 policymaking processes at all territorial levels.

Since the Alps depend on the Alpine region's resilience, the third objective is to maintain and improve the quality of life of Alpine people. Actions taken need to prevent environmental damage and enable adaptation to climate change, which is one of the major threats to quality of life in the Alps. Quality of life is a comprehensive and complex umbrella topic in the area of policymaking. It is not just a subject to be integrated into policies, but also a process of enabling, building, and maintaining a good living environment in a specific location. While the quality-of-life concept makes it possible to take into account the economic, environmental, and social aspects of sustainable development, it also requires the engagement of multiple sectors or the creation of an umbrella institution. It can be understood in multiple ways and in cross-sectional actions, such as biodiversity, availability, preservation and good quality of natural resources, sustainable management of nature and the provision of infrastructure and services for the people in Alpine communities. As such, quality of life depends on the efficient organisation of life in the various types of Alpine settlements (e.g. towns, villages, and isolated settlements), integrative spatial planning, improved accessibility and public transport, the availability of fair work opportunities, cultural life, and the consideration of vulnerable groups. While many aspects of quality of life have been addressed in the framework of the Alpine Convention through the activities of its Thematic Working Groups and Boards, comprehensively addressing quality of life requires a novel approach.

The preparation of the RSA 10 and the analytical work carried out in this regard have provided an opportunity to address quality of life as a whole, specifying relevant aspects in the Alps and identifying challenges to tackle in the future. By shedding new light on how Alpine residents perceive quality of life and outlining the situation of the five core quality-of-life topics in the Alps – the environment, infrastructure and services, work and financial security, social relations, and governance – the report makes recommendations for actions by the Alpine Convention, the Alpine countries and other relevant stakeholders to secure a good quality of life for people in the Alps now and in the future. The numbers that precede the recommendations do not represent their significance or value, they were simply included to make recommendation-related communication easier.

The following parties are the focus of the recommendations: (i) the Contracting Parties and their representatives in the framework of the Alpine Convention and its bodies; (ii) policymakers in the fields related to quality of life at all administrative levels; (iii) the representatives of regions and local communities in charge of quality-of-life measures; (iv) civil society, and (v) researchers. Civil society is crucial for initiating and implementing bottom-up initiatives to improve quality of life, and researchers can add to the body of information on quality of life. The main MAP objectives for quality of life – knowledge advancement, actions to pursue in policymaking at all administrative levels, and specific topic suggestions – are addressed in the recommendations.

7.2 Recommendations for the inclusion of quality of life in policymaking at all administrative levels

Recommendations for policymaking in the framework of the Alpine Convention and the Contracting Parties are made in addition to the recommendations concerning information gaps. The overarching objective of these recommendations is to increase the representation and visibility of quality of life in policymaking and make it more relevant as a spatial planning consideration. As noted below, the recommendations relate to most of the SDGs, and their execution will contribute to delivery of these global goals as well.

R1. Acknowledge quality of life, its specific aspects, and the need for inclusive participation in policymaking

- A good **quality of life must be the goal** of all territorial and/or administrative policies and measures. Therefore, the policies should also address environmental challenges to secure good living conditions.
- Policies and measures concerning quality of life should recognise local challenges and risks (be **place based**) and consider local people's opinions and needs regarding quality of life (be **co-created by the Alpine people**). The characteristics of different types of Alpine areas should be acknowledged, as should the linkages between them, e.g. lowlands and highlands.
- **Spaces for discussions** on quality-of-life issues affecting people and stakeholders should be created. The Alpine Convention should continue with and upgrade its communication and other activities targeted at Alpine people and integrate the quality-of-life topic in them.
- **The role of public service and administration in policymaking and implementation should be strengthened** and made visible as an enabler of a democratic and long-living society.

The following SDGs can be achieved by implementing this recommendation:

7.3 Recommendations for improving knowledge on quality of life

The recommendations in this section are focused on enhancing and expanding the body of knowledge now available on quality of life and addressing the primary objective of the MAP's third priority. This should lead to more data-driven and responsible policymaking concerning quality of life.

R2. Address the data gaps in the quality-of-life topic and further pursue research on quality of life in the Alps to support better policy and decision-making

- **The most significant data gaps** identified in the RSA 10 should be followed up on, either through a more detailed analysis of relevant topics, e.g. housing, or the introduction of new indicators to be tracked by major databases such as Eurostat, to provide a more comprehensive picture of quality of life in the area. The Alpine Convention could also help by reaching out to institutions responsible for EU data and studies, such as Eurostat, ESPON, and the national statistics agencies of each country.
- The Alpine Convention could aim **at introducing data review and regular reporting,** including an RSA 10 survey follow-up and a periodic report on quality of life in the Alps every five years or as otherwise specified in the MAP.
- Data and reports should reflect the state of the quality of life today and how it has changed over time, as well as **identify current and future challenges and areas** that need the most attention from policymakers.
- **Further research on quality of life and sustainable and responsible lifestyles** in the Alps should be promoted by policymakers and Thematic Working Bodies. Research findings can serve as a basis for new projects, policymaking or other initiatives, particularly at lower administrative levels like regions and local communities. The **most pressing topics** to cover with such in-depth studies may include demographic changes, tourism, climate change, energy consumption and production, biodiversity, and water supply.

The following SDGs can be achieved by implementing this recommendation:

7.4 Recommendations specific to the quality-of-life topic

The RSA 10 provides very detailed insights into quality of life and its five aspects recognised as the most relevant to the Alps: environment, infrastructure and services, work and financial security, social relations, and governance, which target different administrative levels. For each of these topics, we specified objectives to improve living conditions. Based on the analysis of the data and the perceptions of Alpine people, governance is the worst ranked aspect according to existing quality-of-life related measurements. Each recommendation is relevant because, for each of the topics, one or more challenges have been identified. Furthermore, each recommendation is linked to the Alpine Convention's overarching goal which is the 'protection and sustainable development of the Alps'.

R3. Strengthen resilience in the Alps to sustain a good quality of life in the region

- More support and enforcement of **equitable and reasonable net-zero land take, ecological connectivity**, and the natural restoration of sealed surfaces is required. Measures should also be introduced to increase urban greenery and open spaces and make urban and rural space generally more adapted to the potential impacts of climate change. The Alpine population would gain social and health benefits from this.
- **Use and consumption of natural resources per capita,** e.g. water supply, should be reduced to a sustainable level, and managed in a sustainable and comprehensive manner.
- The introduction of mitigation and adaptation measures, in conjunction with the development of multifunctional green infrastructures (e.g. mountain and protection forests), should be the driving force behind the **protection of biodiversity and improvement of climate resilience** across the Alps. **Alpine protected areas,** including strictly protected areas, should be promoted and enforced as a key element in environmental conservation. By protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services, they ensure good living conditions that benefit people, nature, and the economy.

The following SDGs can be achieved by implementing this recommendation:

R4. Ensure the provision of high-quality infrastructure and services to best meet people's needs and the territorial specifics of the Alps while respecting the areas' ecological capacity

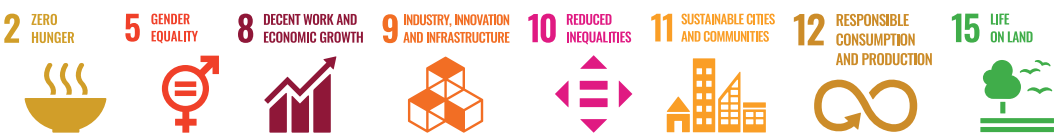
- **The social infrastructure and its accessibility** should be **well maintained and improved** while taking into account local territorial needs and variations across different Alpine areas and respecting the ecological capacity of the area.
- **Affordable, good-quality, and energy-efficient housing** should be provided.
- **Sustainable mobility and connectivity** within the Alpine region should be stimulated by reducing commuter and tourist flows in general, redirecting the remaining commuter and tourist flows from private, highly energy-intensive private transport to public transport (e.g. reactivated secondary railways, on-demand shuttle buses), and active transport (e.g. bicycles) in particular.
- **Large-scale infrastructure should be constructed in line with local spatial carrying capacity** and considering the long-term interest of the local communities.

The following SDGs can be achieved by implementing this recommendation:

R5. Support a socially and environmentally responsible Alpine economy

- **A sustainable economic transition** should be fostered by supporting sustainable social innovation, citizen initiatives, and projects promoting the circular economy.
- **Measures should be introduced to enable economic diversification and resilience, digital transformation, and the inclusion of vulnerable societal groups,** such as young people and newcomers, into the job market.
- **Sustainable, traditional, and ecological agriculture as well as multifunctional forestry** should be supported. Incentives to reactivate abandoned and/or degraded land for agricultural purposes should be introduced.
- **Responsible tourism and recreation supply** and general tourism management should be applied in order to make it correspond better to climate change challenges and to exert positive effects on residents, their tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and the local environment.

The following SDGs can be achieved by implementing this recommendation:



SOCIAL RELATIONS

R6. Foster responsible, sustainable, inclusive, and creative Alpine societies

- **Activities to communicate, educate, and promote sustainable and responsible lifestyle choices** to the people living in, working in, and visiting the Alpine region should continue and be strengthened.
- Measures promoting **Alpine society as inclusive and welcoming** to all kinds of newcomers as the basis for Alpine socio-cultural and economic development should be introduced.
- **The creation of a local contemporary culture** should be supported through bottom-up cultural initiatives that contribute to continuing the Alpine identity and heritage.

The following SDGs can be achieved by implementing this recommendation:

GOVERNANCE

R7. Respond to the needs of the local communities in governance processes and encourage the engagement of Alpine people in policymaking and spatial planning.

- It is important to put in place activities that facilitate **broad and engaged public participation** in policymaking. These activities include training public administrators in co-design and participatory methods, and giving them incentives to carry out public participation.
- The general public should have increased access to policymaking and spatial planning processes by **employing various public participation techniques** such as citizen science, workshops, surveys, and other methods.
- Measures promoting the importance of democratic policymaking and elections and **improving environmental and political literacy** of the Alpine people should be introduced and supported.
- At national and regional levels, trends and processes of spatial development should be better monitored, and challenges for spatial development identified. Based on this, **a long-term vision for spatial development should be elaborated,** with a view to improving quality of life in the Alps (Alpine Spatial Development Perspective). This should be done in close cooperation with EUSALP and by involving local administrations and civil society.

The following SDGs can be achieved by implementing this recommendation:

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The Alpine Convention is a pioneer of its kind as the first international treaty covering an entire mountain range – the Alps. It is based on a vision to protect the region's unique natural landscapes and ensure human settlements and infrastructure develop in a sustainable manner. This idea was developed by the eight Alpine countries – Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia, and Switzerland – and the European Union, who together signed the Convention in the 1990s.

The Alpine Convention's foundations are the Framework Convention and the implementing Protocols and Declarations, which establish guiding principles and a structure for transnational cooperation in key areas of Alpine environments, societies, and economies. Building on this, the Convention strives to develop partnerships and establish cross-sectoral approaches to address the most pressing challenges in the Alps.

The Contracting Parties implement the Alpine Convention with support from various bodies: the biennial Alpine Conference, the Permanent Committee, the Compliance Committee, several Thematic Working Bodies, and the Permanent Secretariat.

Several Observer organisations also contribute to its implementation.

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.

What is quality of life?

How do we measure it?

What are the challenges we face in securing quality of life in the Alps and how can we address them in the future?

This report brings a new and different perspective on living in the Alps through its transversal approach, balancing environmental, economic, social, and governance aspects. It enables policymakers and other stakeholders from local to transnational level – including the Alpine inhabitants themselves – to better understand what shapes quality of life. It offers insights into the value of establishing quality of life as an important overarching policy goal and presents recommendations for further actions to secure a good quality of life for Alpine inhabitants – also in the future.

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