

Multiannual Work Programme of the Alpine Conference 2017-2022

The Multiannual Work Programme (MAP) of the Alpine Conference for the years 2017-22 represents an important tool to foster a proactive implementation of the Alpine Convention and its Protocols and to focus activities on joint priority topics. The MAP contributes to the overarching long-term **Vision for the Alps as a Pioneer Region for Sustainable Living at the Heart of Europe**, expressed in the **Declaration of the XIVth Alpine Conference on the Multiannual Work Programme 2017-2022**.

Following the spirit of partnership, the Contracting Parties together with all relevant partners intend to implement the MAP **priorities** through joint activities. These activities are contained in the newly established **Roadmap** attached to the MAP which encourages the concentration of resources, the activation of international cooperation and the commitment of all Contracting Parties to implement joint projects and partnerships. Coordinated by the Presidency of the Alpine Conference, this Roadmap is updated every two years. It has to be approved by each Alpine Conference. Finally, the MAP suggests a range of important **partnerships** with different actors and institutions for the implementation of the priorities and Roadmap activities.

I Challenges and Opportunities

The MAP is an instrument for addressing a variety of challenges and seizing opportunities in the Alpine region. Some of these challenges and opportunities have already been identified in the previous two Multiannual Work Programmes, others have emerged recently. Some of them emanate from the Alpine region itself; others originate from sources on which Alpine actors do not have a direct leverage.

Challenges for the Alpine region and its inhabitants can best be identified **through a bottom-up approach**. Whether a development or situation represents a challenge or not is usually defined through the eyes of the society that it affects. Therefore the preparatory phase of the MAP 2017-22 included a preliminary stakeholder survey as well as the active participation of the civil society.

Both processes helped explore the most pressing challenges for the Alps and their population (see Figure 1) – but they also identified the **opportunities comprised in these challenges**. For example, developing climate change policies offers a window to think in more transversal and innovative patterns about economic development, and to explore policy co-benefits in areas such as health or green growth. However, these **opportunities need to be sought after proactively and in cooperation with the different actors affected**. It is one task of the MAP to create opportunities from challenges by encouraging the use of the abundant resources of the Alps, in particular the creative spirit and productive wealth of

their regions and the population. These factors provide the potential for the Alps to become a showcase for a sustainable mountain region.

Which strategic challenges will the Alpine region be facing in the coming 10 years ?



Figure 1: Result of MAP Survey, May 2015. Answers to the question: Which strategic challenges will the Alpine region be facing in the coming 10 years?

II. Priorities for cooperation

Building on the input from the stakeholder process and the work of the ad-hoc Working Group for the elaboration of the MAP, the Alpine Conference **has identified six priorities**: *Focusing on people and culture, Taking action on climate change, Conserving and valuing biodiversity and landscape, Greening the economy, Promoting sustainable transport, and Playing a leading role in EUSALP (EU Strategy for the Alpine Region).*

These priorities are linked to a number of **overarching questions**: how do we secure a high quality of life for the entire Alpine population without degrading the Alpine nature and landscapes? How do we overcome internal regional and local differences, such as between urban and rural areas, in a region which overall is one of the wealthiest in Europe? How do we accommodate different uses, interests and pressures – from within and outside the Alpine Convention perimeter - while recognising that space is a limited resource?

In response to these questions, the Alpine Convention from its inception has adopted a transversal approach which aims at balancing environmental protection with socio-economic development. 25 years after the adoption of the AC this interconnectedness of challenges, processes, institutions and actors has further increased. This needs to be mirrored when

addressing problems and looking for solutions. The Alpine Conference therefore calls for an even more transversal and integrated approach. In this context, strengthening sustainable spatial planning will help the Contracting Parties to combine sectoral activities and policies and will give new impetus to cooperation between different interest groups and stakeholders at different local and regional levels.

Priority 1: Focusing on people and culture

The Alpine society is characterised by a unique mixture of people, cultures, traditions and ways of organising life. In order to appreciate, maintain and enhance this cultural diversity and heritage in the future, a number of issues need to be answered: what makes Alpine societies resilient, innovative and ready for the future - for example in order to address demographic change; what does a high quality of life actually mean in the Alps and how can it be combined with a low impact on nature and landscape; how can public services and governance structures be improved and adapted to future needs of the population, for example regarding health and education services; and how can we make better use of local and traditional knowledge. It is crucial to work together with, inter alia, civil society organisations, municipalities, and organisations of volunteers. A particular attention will be placed on young people and their needs and prospects as they represent the future of the Alps.

Priority 2: Taking action on climate change

The Paris Agreement, reached in December 2015, sets a new stage to face climate change in the 21st century. Representing a wealthy region at the heart of Europe – and yet one particularly vulnerable to rising temperatures, the Alpine states are called upon to visibly increase efforts in climate change adaptation, to set an example in reducing GHG emissions, to implement measures regarding renewable energy and energy efficiency, and to develop a carbon-neutral economy and lifestyle. The “Renewable Alps Vision”, the Climate Action Plan of the Alpine Convention as well as the recommendations from the 6th Report on the State of the Alps on “Greening the Economy” offer an excellent basis for developing a comprehensive climate neutrality strategy. Such strategy should aim at increasing regional adaptation and mitigation towards an ideal goal of overall climate neutrality in the Alps by 2050.

All these activities should involve a broad range of sectors and stakeholders, for example from transport, agriculture, tourism, buildings and spatial development. The local level, in particular local authorities, plays a key role in this effort, especially following the appeal from the Alpine municipalities and their inhabitants to the participants of COP 21. The Alpine Conference will further support municipalities in capacity building efforts as well as in strengthening networks and governance systems to implement programmes and activities. Furthermore, the Contracting Parties will dedicate more attention to climate research, which should be capitalized on in order to inform smart climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Priority 3: Conserving and valuing biodiversity and landscape

This priority aims at maintaining biodiversity in its comprehensive meaning, including the diversity of species, of ecosystems and habitats and their spatial connections as well as the unique cultural and natural landscape in the Alpine space. Fostering biodiversity and landscape requires action in several important areas such as ecological connectivity, mountain agriculture, forestry, spatial planning, tourism as well as large carnivores and wild ungulates. Building on an analysis of existing biodiversity and landscape strategies, guidelines and policy recommendations for Alpine countries and the results of recent research and development projects, priorities for action as well as important areas of ecological connectivity will be identified and acted upon. The concrete work for biodiversity and landscape conservation and appropriate valuing of their ecosystem services will include action in existing and future pilot regions of the Ecological Connectivity Platform. In these pilot areas, joint projects will be developed and implemented. Moreover, active exchange on strategic and implementation priorities with the EUSALP Action Group 7 on Ecological Connectivity will be sought.

Priority 4: Greening the economy

The Alpine region offers a unique potential for developing a green economy. A green economy can help addressing challenges such as climate change, demographic developments and the abandonment of rural areas while contributing to the creation of jobs and qualification opportunities to the Alpine population. The Sixth Report on the State of the Alps “Greening the Economy in the Alpine Region” highlights the importance and potential of green economy measures for the Alpine Convention. The report lists possibilities for further action in the following areas: Regional economic development, eco-innovation, a resource-efficient, circular and cost-effective economy, competitiveness, green jobs and well-being of the Alpine population. Moreover, the report calls for further initiatives on additional data and knowledge collection and the preparation of a comprehensive and ambitious Action Programme for Green Economy in the Alpine region. Due to the trans-sectoral nature of this priority, projects and initiatives can relate to a range of Alpine economic sectors, such as forestry, farming and tourism. Projects for “Greening the Economy” will address the relationship between economy and environment, including also social aims, such as the fair and socially equitable management of economic processes. Due to the specific contribution of a green economy to the mitigation of GHG emissions, synergies between initiatives carried out under this priority and initiatives carried out under priority 2 (“Taking action on climate change”) should be stressed pro-actively.

Priority 5: Promoting sustainable transport

The transport sector has a substantial impact on the distribution of people, economic activities and job opportunities in the Alps, while also having a predominant role in defining spatial planning patterns. Often, these impacts are not equally distributed within the Alpine

perimeter. Both rail and road transport should contribute to guaranteeing continuity of traffic and connections between central and remote valleys on the one hand and between the Alps and their surrounding regions on the other hand.

Efforts need to be made in order to make transport more efficient, real cost covering, well-balanced, integrated and interconnected. For this purpose, the priorities will remain those laid down in the articles 14-16 of the Transport Protocol. This aims at fostering the integration and harmonisation of external costs generated by heavy goods transport in general and at a cross-border level. Innovative solutions inspired by fast-growing mobility concepts (e.g. sharing mobility) and by effective demand-responsive transport systems (DRTS) should be developed and promoted at local and regional level, so as to ensure high levels of accessibility to the whole Alpine territory. In the same spirit, more efforts are necessary to evaluate the most appropriate measures in terms of tolling and transport management instruments for heavy goods transport related to the environmental impacts and emissions (air pollutants, CO₂-emissions, noise) and to promote the use of alternative fuels with greater energy efficiency and lower CO₂ and pollutant emissions. Moreover, it will be crucial to support a more widespread use of accessible and user-friendly Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) for road and rail, unleashing their potential as promoters of environmentally friendly solutions.

Striving to strike the balance between economic development and sustainability in its full sense will be the key to effectively contributing to this and other MAP priorities (such as climate change, or greening the economy). At medium-term, this means to decouple the increasing transport demand from economic growth. In this sense, the Alpine Conference will as well pursue relevant links within the EUSALP process and make available its decades-long expertise and approach in this field.

Priority 6: Playing a leading role in EUSALP

Already the XIII Alpine Conference recognised the importance for the Alpine Convention to position itself vis-à-vis the EUSALP, promoting the Convention's balanced approach between nature protection and sustainable development as well as calling for EUSALP activities to be mutually beneficial for mountain territories and surrounding areas. The focus under this MAP priority should be to consolidate the Convention's position within the EUSALP and to actively shape EUSALP activities which are relevant to the Convention. This entails the effective and successful implementation of the leadership of EUSALP Action Group 6 together with the Land of Carinthia. It also means participating in and/or providing input to other EUSALP Action Groups where possible and relevant for the AC. As the EUSALP itself has only yet started to be operative, it will also be necessary to follow and influence further governance developments, relating to, for example, decision-making procedures, information flows and involvement of non-state actors. To meet these ends, communication and coordination among the Alpine Convention bodies will be needed as well as regular assessments of Alpine Convention priorities regarding contributions to the EUSALP. In this

coordination framework, the Macroregional Strategy Working Group will play an important interface role.

III. Roadmap

The Alpine Conference, aware of the fact that the most promising solutions and impacts result from joint and international initiatives, will pursue a range of activities laid out in the attached Roadmap. The Roadmap will be updated by each Alpine Conference.

IV. Partnership

The successful implementation of the MAP requires a robust partnership. Therefore, the Contracting Parties and bodies of the Alpine Convention follow the partnership approach. Partnerships are crucial for exchanging experience across thematic fields and knowledge groups, increasing the feeling of ownership of the Alpine Convention with different stakeholders and providing better visibility of the Alpine Convention.

Within the institutional architecture of the Alpine Convention, partnerships between the key actors, namely Contracting Parties, Observers, the Permanent Committee, the Compliance Committee and the Working Groups and Platforms as well as the Permanent Secretariat will be further deepened. This process has already been started by organising, *inter alia*, routine exchanges between all Platforms and Working Groups before the Permanent Committee meetings or by the specific ad hoc requests for information from the Compliance Committee to the Working Group on Sustainable Tourism.

Enhancing cooperation with Observers deserves special attention, for example through engaging in regular dialogues and round table discussions between Ministers and Observers on current issues, as well as supporting Observer activities and implementing joint projects. Observers are important multipliers and implementers of the Convention who can create links to the civil society and enable bottom-up participatory processes.

Partnerships will also benefit from a greater involvement of public authorities of the Contracting Parties at different levels, in particular at regional and municipal level. For example, the Alpine Convention Infopoints can facilitate the implementation of actions and awareness-raising in the relevant areas of the Alps.

The partnership approach also means looking beyond the institutional architecture of the Convention and reaching out to relevant stakeholders at local, national and international levels. They can for example include other international Conventions (such as the Carpathian Convention or Convention on Biological Diversity) as well as bodies and actors on EU level (such as the European Environment Agency). Actors and especially Action Groups of EUSALP merit particular attention (see priority 6 “Playing a leading role in EUSALP”). Partnerships can also be built with universities, research and education institutions. Furthermore, civil society organisations beyond the official Observers can be essential partners in reaching out to the population and in implementing projects on the ground.

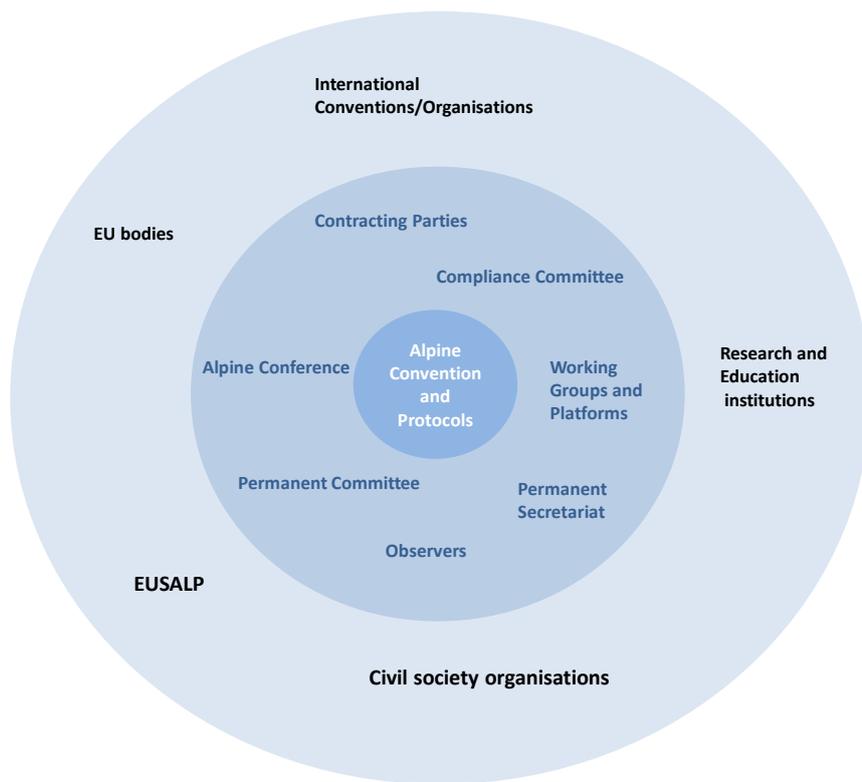


Figure 2: Overview of actors involved in the Alpine Convention Partnership