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2: Where exactly are the Alps? / Wo genau sind die Alpen? / Dove sono esattamente le Alpi? / Les Alpes, où se trouvent-elles exactement ? / Kje točno ležijo Alpe?



Stefano Tamburini

The Alps are one of the largest continuous natural areas in Europe and the living environment for about 14 million people. The Alps (as determined by the perimeter of the Alpine Convention) cover an area of approximately 190,000 sq km, with a length of around 1,200 kilometres and a maximum width of 300 kilometres. They start at sea level and peak at 4,809 metres, at the top of Mont Blanc.

The Alps are shared by eight countries: Austria (28.7% of the overall area within the Alpine Convention perimeter), Italy (27.2%), France (21.4%), Switzerland (13.2%), Germany (5.8%), Slovenia (3.6%), Liechtenstein (0.08%) and Monaco (0.001%).

3: What is the Alpine Convention? / Was ist die Alpenkonvention? / Convenzione delle Alpi: di cosa si tratta? / Qu'est-ce que la Convention alpine ? / Kaj je Alpska konvencija?

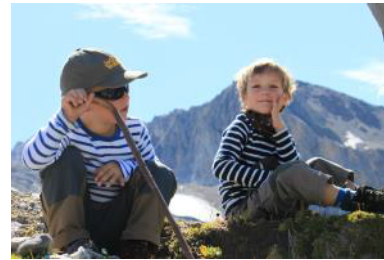


The Alpine Convention, signed in 1991, is an international treaty between the 8 Alpine countries Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia, Switzerland and the European Union. It is the first legally binding agreement aimed at the sustainable development and protection of an entire mountain range, beyond national borders. It consists of a framework convention and 8 thematic protocols.

The Alpine Convention is based on the principle of precaution and of the 'polluter pays' principle and on cooperation between the Alpine countries and regions and with the European Union. The Alpine countries are faced with similar challenges in many areas and they benefit from collaborating and sharing solutions.

4: How many people live in the Alps?

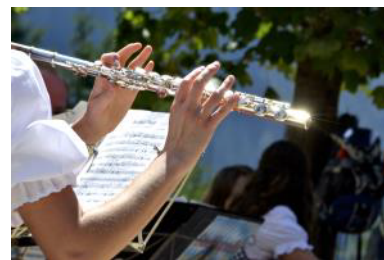
/ Wie viele Menschen leben in den Alpen? / Quante persone vivono nelle Alpi? / Combien de personnes vivent dans les Alpes ? / Koliko ljudi živi v Alpah?



Christian Kuwer

Never before in history did so many people live in the Alps as today. The Alps have been inhabited for about 10,000 years and are now home to some 14 million people and still growing. The average level of employment is higher than at national levels. However, the demographic development is very heterogeneous, with more dynamism in the most accessible areas (valleys), which now have a largely urban and suburban character. In rural areas, women play a particularly important role in facing the effects and consequences of demographic changes and in managing and conserving the natural and environmental resources.

5: Is there an Alpine identity? / Gibt es eine alpine Identität? / Esiste un'identità alpina? / Existe-t-il une identité alpine ? / Ali obstaja alpska identiteta?



Damiano Lamon

Cultural expression is very diverse across the Alps. In addition to the main languages Italian, German, French and Slovene, many regional languages and dialects are being spoken – often across national borders. Music, literature and the figurative arts, typical crafts and agricultural traditions, and the construction of settlements vary vastly from one region to the next; but they often share elements of a common Alpine identity, reflecting the close relationship of people and nature.

6: Where do Alpine people live? / Wo lebt die alpine Bevölkerung? / Dove vive la popolazione alpina? / Où vivent les Alpains ? / Kje živijo prebivalci Alp?



Aleš Krivec

The average population density in the Alps is about 75 persons per km², which is slightly under the European Union value of 117. But less than 20% of the alpine territory is suitable for human settlements – other parts being too steep, too high or too remote. Most population is concentrated in the flat areas, with rather high densities. On this small surface, the interests of housing, industrial and commercial activities, agriculture, transports and energy infrastructure, tourism etc. need to be balanced and ecological issues to be taken into account: a challenging task for spatial planners.

7: How important is the soil under our feet? / Wie wichtig ist der Boden unter unseren Füßen? / Quanto è importante il suolo che calpestiamo? / Quelle est l'importance du sol sous nos pieds? / Kako pomembna so tla pod našimi nogami?



Janez Ribnikar

Soil is the base for human, animal and plant life. It plays an essential ecological role, especially in water and nutrient cycles, stores more carbon than all vegetation and the atmosphere combined and contributes to protection against natural hazards. A careful and economical use of the soils is required: limiting sealing (by well-planned urbanisation) and extraction of mineral resources, avoiding erosion and pollution, preserving wetlands and moors. Although soil is a “renewable resource”, this does not apply in the human time scale: in 100 years at most 1 cm of fresh soil could develop. Most of our middle European soils started to develop 10,000 years ago.

8: So much water! / So viel Wasser! / Quanta acqua! / Que d'eau, que d'eau ! / Koliko vode!



Fernanda Strazzarino

Whether as glacier, snow, waterfall or lake, water is present on many Alpine postcards. Large parts of Europe benefit from the freshwater of the Alps. Water is stored as ice and snow in the mountains and partly released to the rivers in warmer periods. It is needed for drinking water and households, irrigation, water and snow sports and hydropower; these uses sometimes compete with each other and with the needs of aquatic ecosystems. Water is also a major factor in natural disasters, from avalanches and floods, to the melting of permafrost and landslides, to water scarcity and droughts. With climate change, the tendency is to more rain and less snow in winter, and less water in summer, and extreme weather events become more frequent.

9: How much wilderness do we have? / Wie viel Wildnis haben wir? / Quanta ricchezza animale e vegetale abbiamo? / Combien de vie sauvage avons-nous? / Koliko divjih živalskih in rastlinskih vrst imamo v Alpah?



LIFE DINALP BEAR – Marko Masterl

The Alps are home to more than 30,000 animal and 13,000 plant species. Almost 30% of the area has a protection status (national park, nature park, nature reserve etc.), but many species also need to roam over larger distances. It is necessary to provide so-called ecological corridors and “stepping stones”, for instance: green belts around cities, motorway underpasses, fish passes in river dams, bird safety measures on electricity cables and masts. Beyond such measures, it is important that the whole territory remains permeable and liveable for the species. Also, large carnivores (wolf, bear and lynx) and wild ungulates (ibex, chamois, red deer...) are an important part of the alpine imagery and ecosystem, but may enter into conflict with pastoralism, forestry and hunting activities. Balanced solutions have to be sought, in cooperation between all involved actors.

10: What is the price of landscape? /
Was ist der Preis der Landschaft? / Qual
è il prezzo del paesaggio? / Quel est le
prix du paysage ? / Kolikšna je cena
krajine?



Josef Hinterleitner

The Alps are a cultural landscape, modified by people for millennia. Rural alpine landscapes are valued by residents and visitors because they suggest a harmonious integration of human presence in the natural environment. But these landscapes are threatened on one side by the decline of traditional agriculture; and on the other side, by the pressure to build more roads, hotels, wind turbines and other infrastructure. Landscape deserves protection, as a valuable resource which, once modified, can rarely be restored.

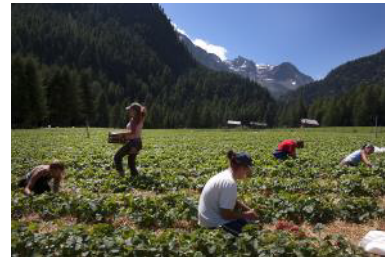
11: Trees, trees, trees... / Bäume,
Bäume und noch mehr Bäume / Alberi,
alberi e ancora alberi... / Des arbres, des
arbres, encore des arbres / Drevesa,
drevesa, drevesa...



Alessandro Sciascia

More than 40% of the Alpine area is covered by forests: there are more than 200 trees per person living here, and the figure is growing, due to the abandonment of some cultivated areas and also to the rise in temperature. Forests provide a carbon sink and a supply of wood as construction material and renewable energy source. They also offer natural protection against avalanches, floods and other disasters, at a cost up to ten times lower than artificial protection structures.

**12: How important is agriculture in
the Alps? / Wie wichtig ist
Landwirtschaft in den Alpen? / Quanto è
importante l'agricoltura nelle Alpi? /
Quelle importance pour l'agriculture
dans les Alpes ? / Kako pomembno je
kmetijstvo v Alpah?**



Lorenzo Leoni

Low-intensity farming has been shaping the Alpine landscape for millennia and also creates the habitats for a large part of the Alpine biodiversity. It is a major aspect of the Alpine cultural heritage, an essential activity to maintain population and public services in remote rural regions and it plays an important role in the attractiveness of the area for tourism. But today, only some 4 percent of the population in the Alps lives from agriculture and numbers keep falling, even as a secondary activity.

13: What is the future of Alpine agriculture? / Wie sieht die Zukunft der alpinen Landwirtschaft aus? / Qual è il futuro dell'agricoltura alpina? / Quel est le futur de l'agriculture alpine? / Kakšna je prihodnost alpskega kmetijstva?



Walter Kuprian

Alpine farmers produce high-quality milk, meat, crops and derived products, under more difficult production conditions than low-land agriculture. Traditional crops play an increasingly small role while 80% of the agricultural surface is used as pasture – half of the farmed animals are cattle, followed by sheep.

The key to success probably lies in promoting sustainable farming methods and the links between the territory, farm products, traditional crafts and tourism: Organic farming is already well represented in the Alps and regional marketing chains, by reducing food miles, are also an important contribution to climate change mitigation.

14: The Alps as a playground? / Die Alpen, ein Spielplatz? / Le Alpi intese come parco giochi? / Les Alpes, un terrain de jeu? / Alpe kot igrišče?



Bernd Golas

There are approximately five million tourist beds in the Alps, and some 40% of the Alpine municipalities display a significant tourism activity: tourism is a key source of income in the region. The main assets of the Alps are their landscapes and the varied natural and cultural heritage. To prevent damage to this capital, infrastructures have to be kept to a minimum and visitor traffic, both to and within the tourism destinations, must be managed with smart mobility options. Sustainable tourism offers need to be developed, where experiencing and respecting the environment are in the foreground.

15: How will our winters look like? / Wie werden unsere Winter aussehen? / Come saranno i nostri inverni? / À quoi nos hivers ressembleront ils? / Kakšne bodo naše zime?



Hannes Schlosser

In the Alps, winter tourism is currently more important than summer tourism in terms of income. However, the snow cover, and especially the duration of the season, are decreasing due to climate change. Artificial snow making will not always be sufficient to counteract this evolution; it also has an impact on the landscape and water resources. New business models are needed, seeking a year-round tourism.

16 : From road to rail / Von der Straße
auf die Schiene / Dalla gomma alla rotaia
/ De la route vers le rail / S ceste na
železnico



Žan Kafol

The Alps lie at the heart of Europe and are crossed by many major international road corridors, which are used by more than 10 million trucks every year (more than 2 million over the Brenner Pass). Due to the topography of valleys and the frequent temperature inversions, the environmental impacts of transport (air pollution, noise, land use etc.) and consequences on health are higher in mountain areas than elsewhere. Therefore, a major objective of the Alpine Convention is to shift the transport of goods from road to rail, refraining from constructing any new motorway (or similar large capacity road) for transalpine traffic, and overall to decouple economic well-being from traffic growth.

17: Do we move too much? / Bewegen
wir uns zu viel? / Ci muoviamo troppo?
/ Est-ce que nous nous déplaçons trop ?
/ Ali se preveč premikamo?



Alpine Convention

The accessibility of remote areas is important for social and economic development. But the individual mobility of Alpine people themselves, especially for leisure, is a major source of pollution and greenhouse gases. Improvements are needed in terms of infrastructure (public transports, e-mobility, car sharing etc.) and information. But first and foremost a transition has to happen in the minds, in order for us all to adopt sustainable mobility patterns: bike to work and hike close to home, for instance.

18: Can the Alps become energy-sufficient? / Können die Alpen
energieautark werden? / Le Alpi
possono diventare energeticamente
autosufficienti? / Les Alpes peuvent-
elles devenir autonomes en énergie ? /
Ali Alpe lahko postanejo energijsko
samozadostne?



Alpine Convention

The cleanest energy is the one we don't produce. There is a high potential in saving energy, especially in buildings. For the remaining needs, the focus should be on renewable energy. The Alps have traditionally been a major producer of hydroelectricity, they benefit from strong solar radiation and their forests are a source of wood biomass. However, available land in the Alps is scarce; negative impacts on nature and landscape and on other human activities, such as mountain agriculture, have to be prevented. Therefore, the augmentation of the energy production capacity in the Alps is limited.

19: When mountains collapse... /
 Wenn Berge zusammenfallen... /
 Quando cadono le montagne... / Quand
 les montagnes s'écroulent... / Ko se gore
 rušijo...



Miro Kristan

Natural hazards have always been present in the Alpine region: avalanches, landslides, floods, forest fires etc. Now, climate change tends to increase the likelihood of such events and make the risks less predictable. Permafrost degradation increases the risk of ice and rock fall and damage to high-altitude infrastructure. Consequently, potential natural hazards have to be taken into account even more strongly in spatial planning: natural and artificial measures are required to protect settlements and infrastructures and we have to give up developing the most exposed areas.

20: How is our climate changing? /
 Wie verändert sich unser Klima? / Come
 cambia il nostro clima? / Comment
 notre climat change-t-il? / Kako se
 spreminja naše podnebje?



Marco Specht

Temperatures are increasing almost twice as fast in the Alps as in the rest of the northern hemisphere. This affects the habitat of endemic species and the water availability, increases the risk and unpredictability of natural hazards and has consequences on all human activities in the Alps. It is urgent to adapt to the changes and in parallel limit the raise in temperatures (mitigation). Action is needed at all levels from international to individual and can bring about smarter ways to live and work.

**21: What is Green Economy? / Was ist
 Grünes Wirtschaften? / Cos'è la green
 economy? / Qu'est-ce que l'économie
 verte? / Kaj je zeleno gospodarstvo?**



Stefano Marsi

The economy in the Alps is very much dependent on the environmental conditions, which bring constraints but also opportunities. There are many good examples on how to use the natural resources in a sustainable way, combine tradition and innovation, save energy and avoid CO₂ emissions while supporting the quality of life and well-being: this is Green Economy.

22: How does the Alpine Convention work? / Wie arbeitet die Alpenkonvention? / Come funziona la Convenzione delle Alpi? / Comment la Convention alpine travaille-t-elle? / Kako deluje alpska konvencija?



Alpine Convention

The Alpine Convention works through many different instances, overseen by the Alpine Conference, the institutional meeting of the Ministers in charge, which is held every two years. The Presidency of the Alpine Convention is assumed in turn by different Member States for the period between two Alpine Conferences. The Permanent Committee of the Alpine Conference, comprised by representatives of the national and regional administrations, is the executive organ. The Alpine Convention also collaborates with several international governmental and non-governmental organisations with Observer status. The Compliance Committee is in charge of verifying the respect of the commitments and obligations resulting from the Alpine Convention. Working Groups and Platforms, gathering experts from the different countries, provide scientific and technical assistance on various topics.

The Alpine Convention has furthermore established a Permanent Secretariat, located in Innsbruck (AT) with a branch office in Bolzano/Bozen (IT). Besides the support of the work of the organs of the Alpine Convention, the Permanent Secretariat is in charge of the dissemination of scientific information and best-practice examples, through publications and online tools, as well as the promotion of the Alpine Convention and its objectives. Finally, in order to reinforce the links with the territory, six Infopoints of the Alpine Convention have been installed to date in the Alpine municipalities of Domodossola (IT), Cogne (IT), Chamonix-Argentière (FR), Morbegno (IT), Mojstrana (SI) and Tolmin (SI).

The Alpine Convention also contributes to the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) which regards both the mountain areas and their periphery.

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Hannes Schlosser

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