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ANNEX

1 Policy Brief “Biodiversity in the Alps” (EN)



ALPENKONVENTION
CONVENTION ALPINE
ALPSKA KONVENCIJA
CONVENZIONE DELLE ALPI

BIODIVERSITY IN THE ALPS

POLICY BRIEF



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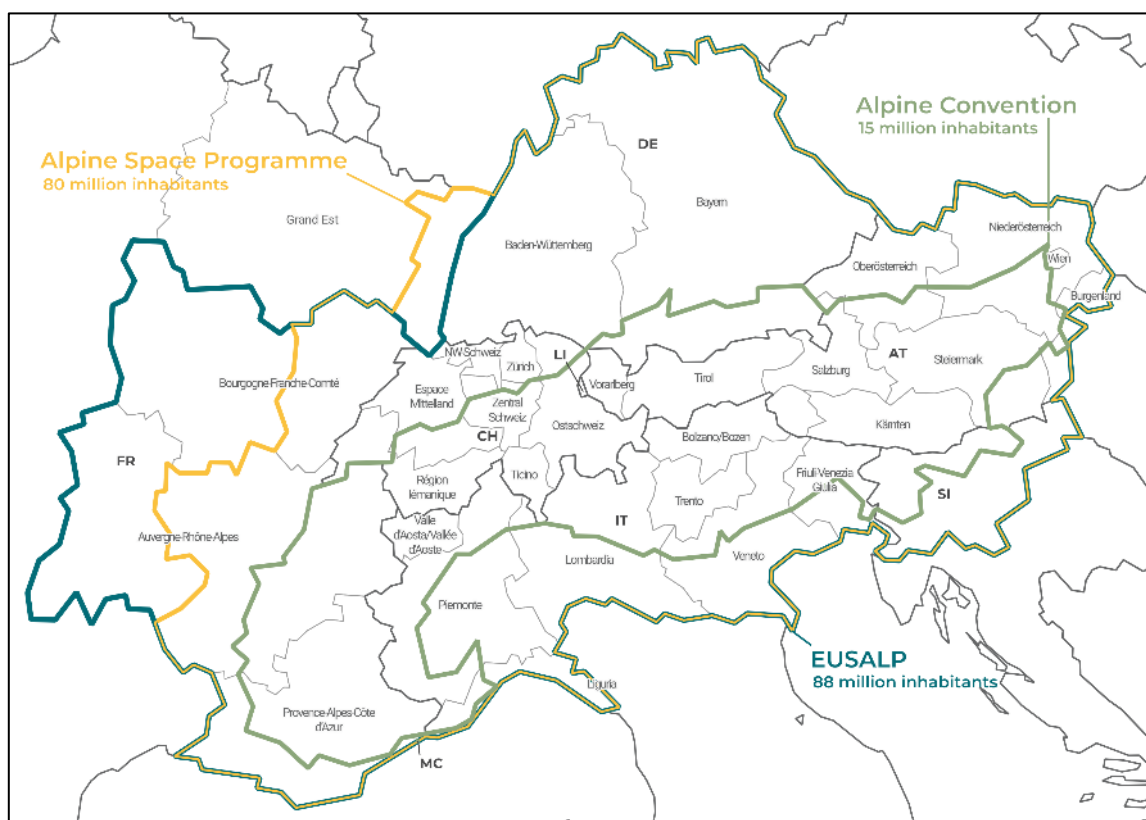
Biodiversity in the Alps

Policy Brief

Introduction

As an intergovernmental platform open to non-governmental observers, the Alpine Convention is an appropriate framework for co-ordinating the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) at Alpine level. The Convention perimeter encompasses the core Alpine area, functionally connected to adjacent valleys and plains around the Alps and embedded in the broader Alpine region covered by the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)

The main purpose of this Policy Brief is to provide strategic guidance for the process of translating the global biodiversity goals to the Alpine level, which will be further defined in the future Alpine Biodiversity Action Plan to be elaborated by the Alpine Biodiversity Board.



The Alpine Convention perimeter and other major boundaries in the Alps. Source: Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, 2023

The Nature Protection and Landscape Conservation Protocol and several other documents adopted in the framework of the Alpine Convention¹ highlight the specificities of mountain biodiversity in the Alps, its vulnerability, and the importance of recognising it in national and international policy frameworks. The Multi-Annual Work Programme of the Alpine Conference, which sets the direction for the period 2023-2030, highlights the role of the Alpine Convention in the priority area of biodiversity and ecosystems.

In an iterative process involving the consultation of the Contracting Parties, Observers, and Thematic Working Bodies of the Alpine Convention, as well as further experts and stakeholders in the frame of the dedicated Alpine Biodiversity Conference², recommendations for action were

identified in four thematic clusters: conservation, connectivity, restoration, and monitoring. These four clusters are interrelated and need to be addressed synergistically to safeguard Alpine biodiversity. A final chapter on governance provides elements for the implementation of the recommendations.

Human activities shape specific habitats and landscapes and can contribute to Alpine biodiversity but also put pressure on it. Reversely, quality of life in the Alps, also in view of the climate crisis, strongly depends on ecological services, which can only be provided by healthy and resilient ecosystems, including fertile Alpine soils. Sustainable use of resources is therefore a key element throughout the conservation, connectivity, restoration, and monitoring topics outlined below.

Conservation

This area mostly corresponds to GBF targets 3, 8 and 10.

Protected areas have a long history in the Alps and almost 30% of the Alpine Convention's territory is currently under some type of formal protection. However, previous studies have demonstrated that protected areas in the Alps are relatively small, lower altitudes are underrepresented, and the levels of protection are very heterogenous³.

Alpine-wide coordination and cooperation is needed to improve the network of protected areas as well as enhance conservation outside of these areas.

Prioritisation needs to be based on existing knowledge and focus on the ecosystem services provided within and beyond the Alps, particularly the role of

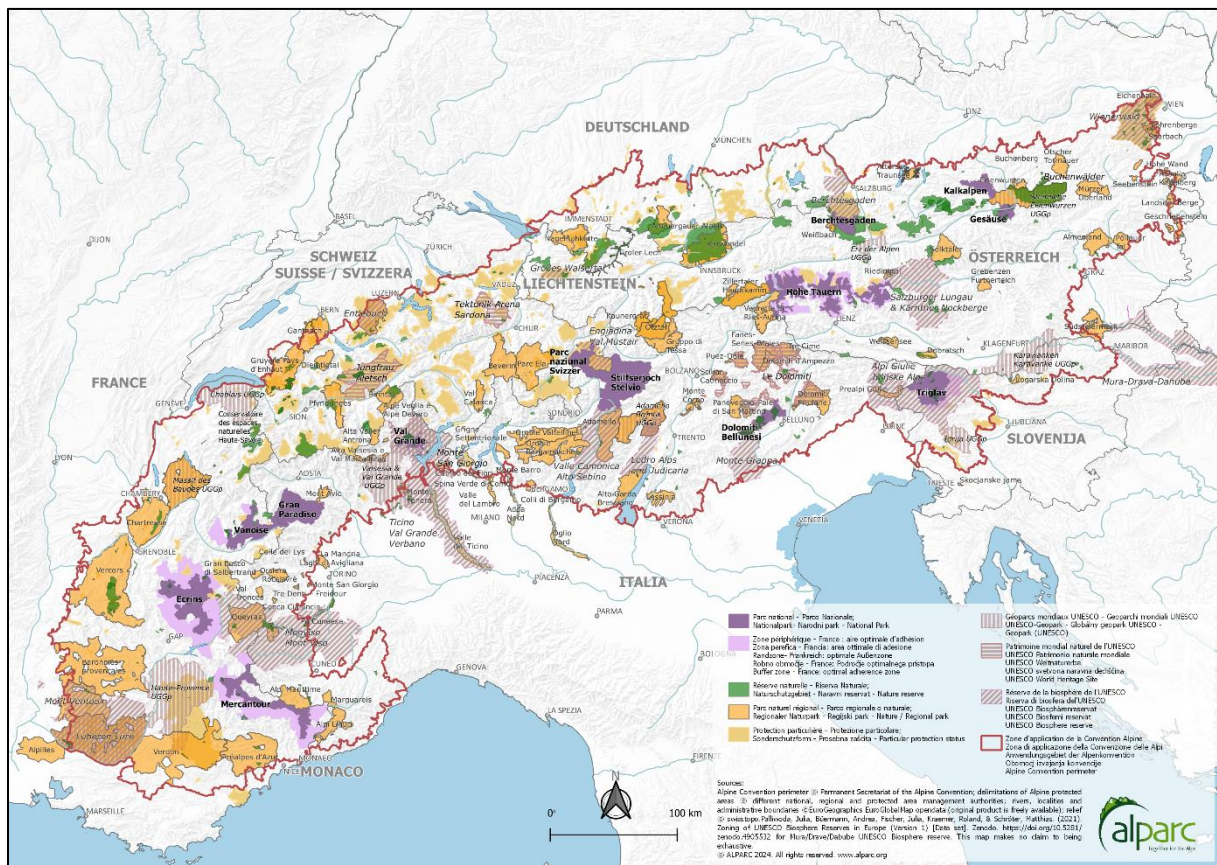
¹ Protocol on the Implementation of the Alpine Convention of 1991 relating to Nature Protection and Landscape Conservation; Declaration of the XVI Alpine Conference on the Protection of Mountain Biodiversity and its Promotion at International Level (2020); Results of the Alpine Biodiversity Board since 2019 and of further Thematic Working Bodies. Switzerland has not ratified the Protocol on Nature Protection and Landscape Conservation.

² [Alpine Biodiversity Conference](#), 12 June 2024, Kranjska Gora, Slovenia.

³ [Alpine Parks 2030. ALPARC \(2023\)](#).

Alpine biodiversity in climate change adaptation and mitigation – while also

taking into account its vulnerability to climate change.



The mosaic of protected areas in the Alps. Source: ALPARC, 2024

Recommendation 1 Based on existing analyses of protected areas, identify gaps in effective protection in the Alps and adopt coordinated improvement measures within protected areas and beyond, with particular attention on transboundary area.

Recommendation 2 Based on existing knowledge, agree on a list of priority Alpine biotopes and species for immediate conservation action

Recommendation 3 Recognise the importance of glaciers in the Alps and their crucial ecological services for downstream regions, strengthen scientific knowledge on glacial retreat and post-glacial ecosystems, and ensure the protection of post-glacial ecosystem.

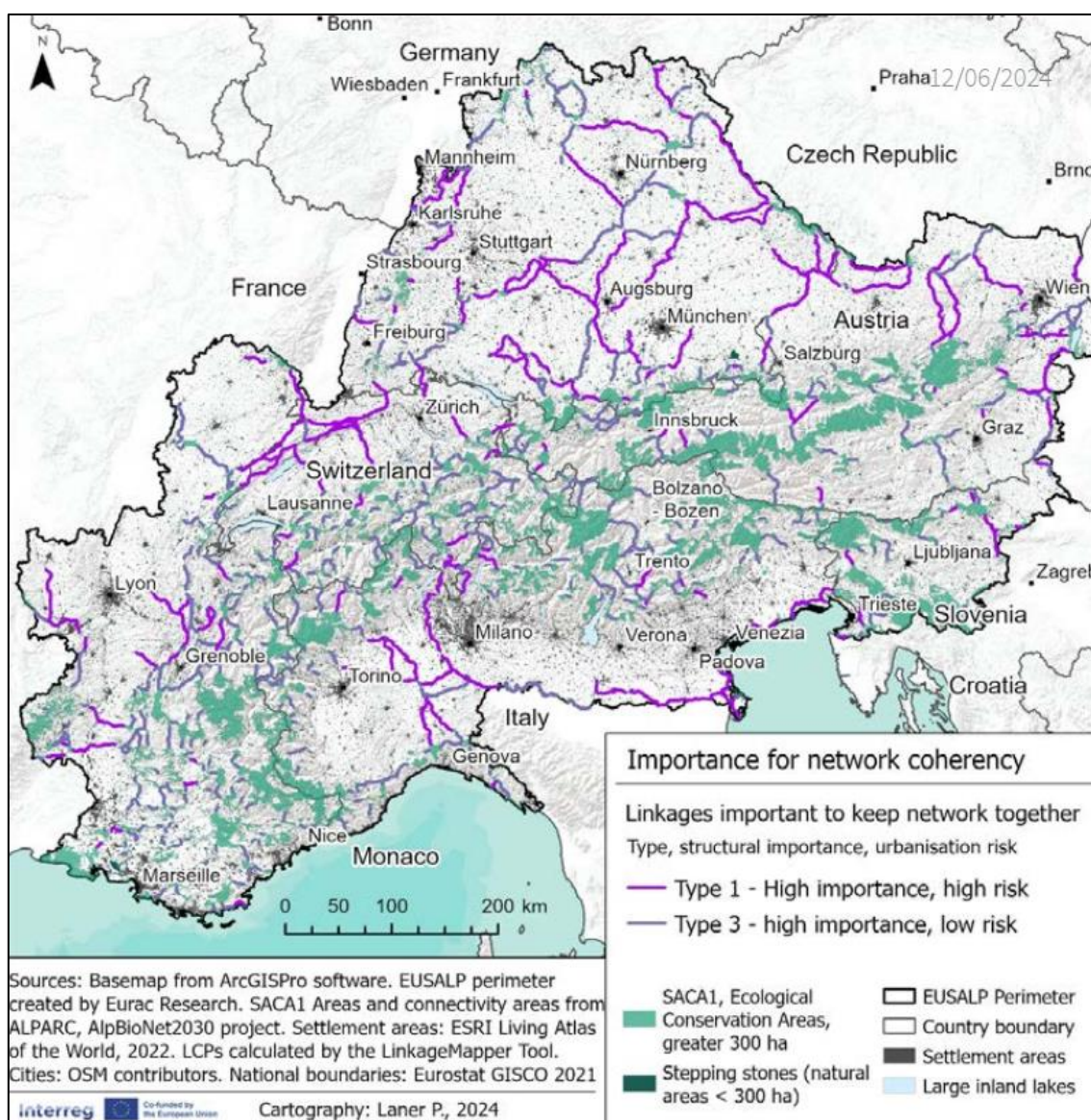
⁴ As foreseen in Art. 13 and Art. 14 of the Nature Protection and Landscape Conservation Protocol.

Connectivity

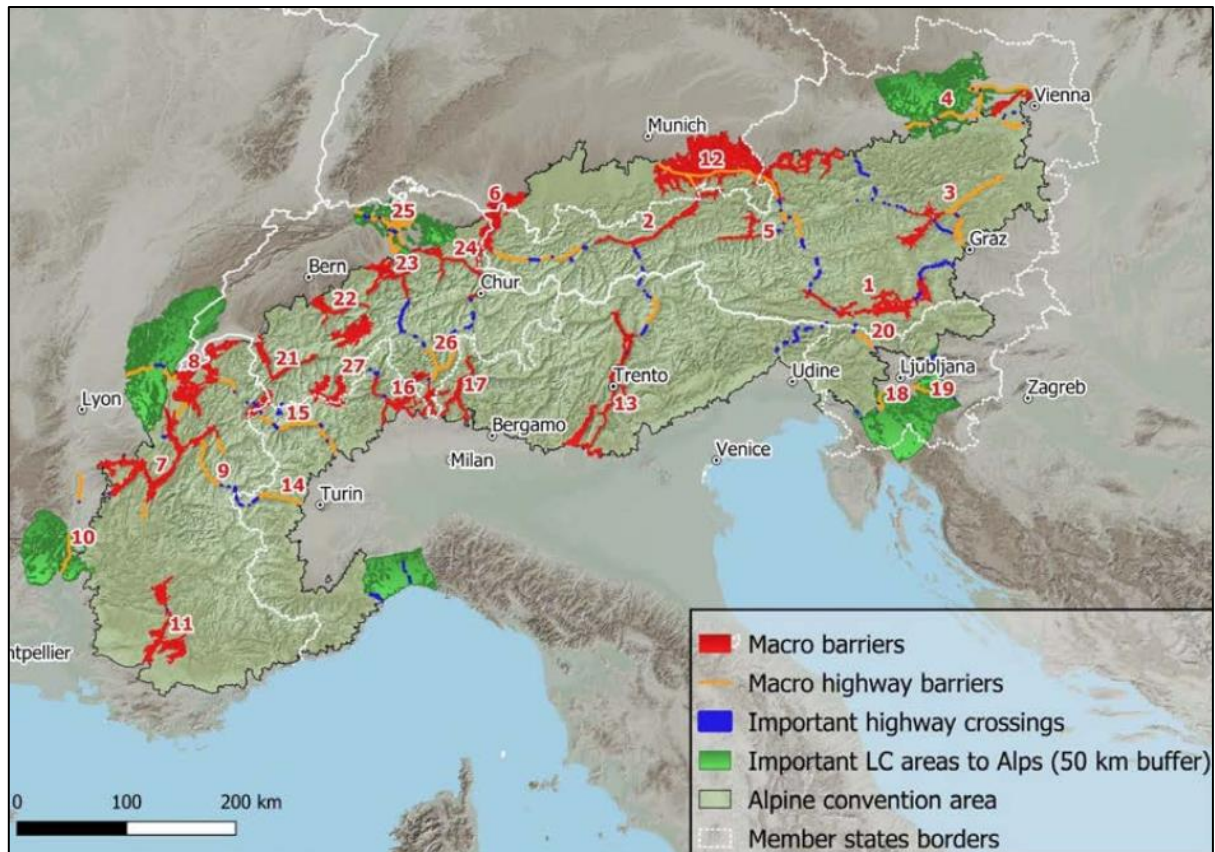
This area mostly corresponds to GBF targets 1, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 10.

Aside from conservation measures, the presence of ecological corridors within the Alps and linking them with surrounding areas is vital to enable the movement of species and ensure ecosystems' resilience. The fragmentation of natural habitats due to settlements and infrastructure is one of the greatest pressures on biodiversity.

Animal and plant species' ability to survive and thrive is highly dependent on spatial movements that enable genetic interchange and adaptation to climate and other environmental changes. Far-ranging migratory species are particularly vulnerable.



Most important linkages for landscape permeability in the Alps. Source: PlanToConnect, 2024.



Identified barriers for large carnivores in the Alps. Source: WISO Working Group of the Alpine Convention, 2022.

Numerous studies have identified major corridors and barriers within the Alps and between the Alps and surrounding areas⁵. In order to maintain and improve ecological connectivity in the Alps, it is now essential to ensure that these major

corridors are properly recognised and integrated into the spatial planning strategies at all levels in the Alpine countries. Efforts should be made to restore connectivity.

Recommendation 4 Agree on strategic priority corridors that need to be preserved or restored at international level in the Alps and with areas beyond, with particular attention on transboundary areas.

Recommendation 5 Include common connectivity objectives for the Alps in national and regional programmes and strategies and implement these objectives through planning

⁵ In particular, *Landscape connectivity for large carnivores and wild ungulates in the Alps*, WISO Working Group of the Alpine Convention (2022); *AlpBioNet2030*, *OpenSpaceAlps* and *PlanToConnect* projects within the Alpine Space Programme.

Restoration

This area mostly corresponds to GBF target 2.

The restoration of ecosystems, be it in the main conservation areas or along connectivity corridors, constitutes a key element in the recovery and conservation of biodiversity. On this matter, collaboration between Alpine countries is crucial as it will allow the sharing of experiences and best practices as well as enabling significantly larger areas to be restored by encouraging synergies between initiatives.

The European Union context, with the recent adoption of the EU Nature Restoration Law and the requested elaboration of National Restoration Plans by EU Member States, should help move all Alpine countries towards common objectives and approaches and help them reach joint results by strengthening cooperation at Alpine level.

Recommendation 6 Elaborate an Alpine Restoration Plan identifying strategic actions to restore priority habitats and areas at Alpine level.

Recommendation 7 Develop a strong technical and cross-sectoral community to share knowledge and experiences to benefit new restoration projects and initiatives in the Alps.

Monitoring

This area mostly corresponds to GBF targets 21 and 15a.

Priorities for action must be based on a common understanding of the current state of and trends in biodiversity, as well as the impact of conservation, connectivity, and restoration measures. To draw on this collective understanding from the wealth of already available data on the Alps, the main challenges are

scattered information, use of different monitoring methods, and lack of use of common indicators. This can lead to very different conclusions on the conservation status of species or habitats from one country to another, making it difficult to reach coherent collective decisions.

Recommendation 8 Improve the inter-operability of monitoring schemes across the Alps, aggregate and jointly analyse relevant monitoring data⁶.

⁶ As foreseen in the *AlpsLife* project within the Alpine Space Programme.

Recommendation 9 Support long-term systematic basis monitoring of species and ecosystems, including Alpine soils, as well as monitoring of the effectiveness of conservation measures and of the threats and the impact of pressures on Alpine biodiversity, including an early warning system.

Governance

This Policy Brief is a fundamental contribution of the Alpine Convention to the implementation of the GBF, focused on the Alps. This will facilitate collaboration, cooperation, and synergies between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Alpine and Carpathian Conventions, as foreseen in the new Memorandum of Cooperation signed between the three Conventions in 2023.

With this Policy Brief, the Alpine Conference agrees on a common vision while allowing freedom in implementation at national or sub-national level to accommodate varying situations and approaches, in accordance with national or sub-national circumstances, priorities and capabilities.

The main emphasis is on strategic priorities, technical efficiency, and political pragmatism. To this end, priority should be given to building on existing knowledge, tools, and processes, identifying and filling gaps, networking and aligning work across borders and sectors e.g. through more systemic cross-sectoral collaboration between biodiversity, land use (especially spatial planning and agriculture), and climate action communities. Available resources should be pooled to finance cross-border

and transnational initiatives. In many cases, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and related EU legislation can provide a logical framework for the implementation, especially in the EU members countries, of the recommendations of this Policy Brief and the subsequent actions, in particular the Alpine Biodiversity Action Plan. Synergies with initiatives at a global level such as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the International Years (Glaciers Preservation 2025, Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026) are opportunities that shall also be seized.

Within the Alpine Convention, the Policy Brief provides guidance for the next mandates of the Thematic Working Bodies. The Alpine Biodiversity Board will be able to better structure the upcoming Alpine Biodiversity Action Plan. Synergies will be developed with the other two priorities of the Multi-Annual Work Programme 2023-2030 – climate action, especially through the implementation of the Alpine Convention's Climate Action Plan 2.0, and quality of life, based on the importance of nature for a good quality of life in the Alps as evidenced by the 10th Report on the State of the Alps.

Cooperation and synergies should be sought with relevant cross-border and Alpine-wide initiatives and networks⁷ as well as beyond the Alps. To pool resources and prevent social conflicts, local stakeholders including youth, should be part of implementation processes from the beginning through

well-prepared participatory approaches. Awareness-raising and education, capacity-building, and development, and emphasising the value of ecosystem services as well as the multifunctional benefits from nature protection measures (e.g. nature-based solutions), are key.

⁷ Such as EUSALP and the AlpPlan spatial planners' network.