



ALPENKONVENTION  
CONVENTION ALPINE  
ALPSKA KONVENCIJA  
CONVENZIONE DELLE ALPI

Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention

# ACTIVITY REPORT

15 September 2022 – 31 December 2024

Submitted to the XVIII meeting of the Alpine Conference

# CELEBRATING A MILESTONE AND MORE STEPPING STONES

## Foreword by the Secretary General



*Photo: Alenka Smerkolj*

Every year we take the opportunity to look back at the work of the Permanent Secretariat. We take stock of the numerous events, meetings, activities, and projects that we carried out together with our partners across the Alps and beyond. And every year more exciting things get added to the list, from new collaborators of our Reading Mountains Festival to international conferences and new communication tools.

This report also covers a very special year for the Permanent Secretariat: in 2023 we celebrated our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary! Our responsibilities (and our team!) have grown since our establishment at the VII Alpine Conference in Merano/Meran

back in 2002. This evolution reflects the increasing complexities of cooperating on such diverse topics across borders.

The many activities that fill the pages of this report are a tribute to the work that goes on in the Secretariat – often behind the scenes, away from the limelight. And this is thanks to the efforts of our international team, sitting in both our Innsbruck headquarters and our operational branch office in Bozen/Bolzano. Working together with the Presidencies, other Contracting Parties, Observer organisations, and our partners across the Alps and beyond, we have been placing stepping stones towards our joint vision of a sustainable Alpine future.

In 2025 we move into a new Presidency and another rich programme, and I look forward to sharing our progress in the next Activity Report!

**Alenka Smerkolj**  
Secretary General  
of the Alpine Convention

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# SUPPORT TO THE BODIES OF THE ALPINE CONVENTION

Starting with the organisation of the XVII Alpine Conference, the reporting period was characterised by the transition to a new Multi-Annual Work Programme (MAP) and the implementation of the Programme of the Slovenian Presidency,

which will conclude with the XVIII Alpine Conference on 22 January 2025. In the meantime, Italy has been preparing to take over the Presidency for 2025-2026.

## Swiss Presidency and Alpine Conference

The XVII Alpine Conference took place on 27 October 2022 in Brig (CH). The Permanent Secretariat supported the [Swiss Presidency](#) in preparing and executing the Conference, which ran smoothly.

The high-level representatives discussed concrete proposals to implement the Climate Action Plan 2.0 and the 2020 Water Declaration; the Ninth Report on the State of the Alps on Alpine Towns as well as the Multi-Annual Work Programme (MAP) 2023-2030 were adopted; and Slovenia presented the programme of its upcoming Presidency.



*Meeting of the XVII Alpine Conference in Brig (CH). Photo: David Schweizer*



*Second ministerial conference of the Simplon Alliance. Photo: David Schweizer*

The Alpine Conference was held back-to-back with ministerial meetings of the Zurich Process and the Simplon Alliance, which the Secretary General attended. The Simplon Alliance initiative emerged from the coinciding Swiss presidencies of the Alpine Conference and the Zurich Process for the years 2021-2022 and aimed at offering an exchange platform for joint Alpine-wide actions, drawing on existing initiatives in the fields of Alpine crossing freight transport, Alpine and cross-border passenger transport, and Alpine tourism mobility, with the climate aspect as a central concern. The Permanent Secretariat supported the

consultation process. At this festive event, Switzerland presented the Simplon Alliance Action Plan, which was finalised in the following months.

## Slovenian Presidency

Under the motto 'Quality of life in the Alps for all', Slovenia designed its [Presidency](#) programme around the three MAP priority areas: quality of life, climate change – which was being dealt with from the angle of environmental education – and biodiversity. Each priority area was also the focus of one of the Permanent Committee meetings organised under the Slovenian Presidency.

For the first priority, quality of life, the main output is the Tenth Report on the State of the Alps – more is reported under the chapter on SOIA.

The second priority, environmental education with an emphasis on climate change, was dealt with through three major activities. The first one was an exchange on climate change education in each Alpine country at the 76<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Committee in June 2023.

The second step was the international conference 'Schools for climate action in the Alps' that took place from 27-29 September 2023 in Bohinj (SI) and saw active participation by almost all Alpine countries, with more than 50 participants from many different backgrounds (governmental institutions,

The Secretariat thereafter supported the communication of the last events of the Swiss Presidency: the Constructive Alps Award ceremony on 16 September and the Alpine Towns conference on 9 November 2022.



*Outdoor workshop during the 'Schools for climate action in the Alps' conference in Bohinj (SI). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

schoolteachers, NGOs, civil society etc.). State Secretary Lenka Kavčič officially opened the conference, and the Secretary General also held a welcome speech. After the event the Permanent Secretariat created an online [padlet](#) to disseminate the results.

The third activity comprised a questionnaire that was designed and disseminated to collect good practice examples on the topic of climate change education. These three building blocks were analysed by an external expert and served as inputs for the elaboration of recommendations submitted to the XVIII Alpine Conference on this topic.

On the third priority – biodiversity – the Presidency drafted an input paper to serve as the basis for a discussion held at the 77<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent



Committee. Written feedback was then collected from the Parties, Observers, and Thematic Working Bodies. On this basis, the Presidency drafted a policy brief which was discussed within the Alpine Convention bodies as well as at the Alpine Biodiversity Conference on 12 June 2024 in Kranjska Gora (SI); the conference was held back-to-back with the ForumAlpinum organised by ISCAR.

The Presidency and the Secretariat have also been communicating on the Presidency's activities and creating synergies with various partners.



*Secretary General and Jože Novak, Minister of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning*

Notably, the Presidency convened all mayors of the Slovenian Alpine Convention territory for the 'Alpine Convention Day' on 27 January 2023 in Bohinj (SI). The Secretary General attended this meeting, as well as three events supported by the Presidency in the scope of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Triglav National Park.

From 20-21 September 2023, on the initiative of the Slovenian Ambassador to Austria (who visited the Permanent Secretariat on several occasions), the Presidency, together with the

Secretariat, also organised a visit of the ambassadors of the Alpine countries accredited in Vienna to the Secretariat's office in Innsbruck. During the visit, the ambassadors discussed the history and significance of the Alpine Convention as well as the priorities of the Slovenian Presidency. The meeting helped raise awareness of the Convention within the diplomatic community in Austria and several follow-up activities are in discussion. On 19 June 2024, the Secretary General also attended a celebration of the Slovenian National Day organised by the Embassy in Vienna.



*Visit of the ambassadors of the Alpine countries to Austria and their representatives at the Secretariat's office. Photo: Franz Oss*

Furthermore, the Presidency supported many projects of the Secretariat and partner organisations such as: Reading Mountains 2022, 2023, and 2024; the Photo Contest of the Alpine Convention (2023 and 2024), the YOALIN launch events in 2023 and 2024, AlpWeek 2024, YPAC, and many more. The Presidency also reported, either directly or via the Permanent Secretariat, at all meetings of the Thematic Working Bodies and hosted of these meetings.

The Permanent Secretariat was closely involved in all aspects of the implementation of the Presidency programme. The Secretary had several exchanges with ministers Uroš Brežan and Jože Novak and throughout the year, while the Presidency and the Secretariat had regular in-person and online exchanges that ensured smooth cooperation on the priority areas as well as the day-to-day business. This included joint staff retreats in 2022, 2023, and 2024.

The Presidency entrusted the Secretariat with the management of a fund to finance the majority of the Presidency activities as well as the position of a

dedicated Officer at the Secretariat who is supporting the Presidency (particularly in logistical and financial matters). Further members of the team of the Permanent Secretariat provided substantial organisational, content, and communication support for the various activities.



*Staff retreat 2023. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

## Italian Presidency preparations

Preparations for the Italian Presidency of the Alpine Convention which starts at the XVIII Alpine Conference, began early in this reporting period, with two meetings of the Italian National Coordination Board in Turin (13 October 2022) and Verona (2 May 2023). During these meetings, updates were given on Italy's activities under the Swiss and Slovenian Presidencies of the Alpine Convention, achievements and an outlook, and the contents of the new Multi-Annual Work Programme of the Alpine Convention for 2023-2030.

During 2024, five further meetings of the Italian National Coordination Board took place: on 11 March in Rome, on 9 May in Milan, and on 10 September, 11 November and 19 November online.

The operational branch office of the Permanent Secretariat supported the

organisation of all these meetings, which were actively attended by representatives of the Italian Alpine regions as well as public and private entities that cooperate and support the Italian delegation in its activities in the Alpine Convention.

These events allowed the Italian delegation to gather the views of the Italian Alpine territory and entities in order to jointly elaborate the draft Italian Presidency Programme. This draft was presented, in its successive stages of progress, at Permanent Committee meetings. The Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General or Senior Executive Officer accompanied the Head of the Italian Delegation for bilateral exchanges with each Contracting Party in a 'Tour des capitales' which took place during summer 2024.



On 24 April 2024, in the framework of the G7 Climate, Energy and Environment Planet Week, the Secretary General brought in the experiences of the Alpine Convention and EUSALP AG6 in a workshop on drought management in the Alps organised in Turin by the Piedmont Region, the Italian Delegation to the Alpine Convention, and Eurac Research, attended by the Italian Minister of the Environment and Energy Security, as well as many speakers from international organisations and research.

## Permanent Committee

The Slovenian Presidency, with the logistical and content-related help of the Permanent Secretariat, organised four [Permanent Committee](#) (PC) meetings; PC76 from 21-22 June 2023 in Radovljica (SI) and PC77 from 6-7 November 2023 at the operational branch office of the Secretariat in Bolzano/Bozen; 15-16 May 2024 in Maribor (SI) and 6-7 November 2024 in Nova Gorica (SI).



*79<sup>th</sup> PC meeting in Nova Gorica (SI). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

The thematic focus of PC76 was 'Climate Change Education', the topic of PC77 was 'Biodiversity', and the one of PC78, 'Quality of Life'. The PC79 was

In addition to these meetings, the Secretary General met the new Director General for European and International Activity in the Ministry of Environment and Energy Security, Alessandro Guerri in Rome on 17 October 2024 and, together with the Deputy Secretary General, she regularly exchanged online and in person with the Italian Head of Delegation to prepare the Presidency. In addition, the Italian Ambassador to Austria visited the Permanent Secretariat on 22 April 2024.

dedicated to the preparation of the decisions of the upcoming Alpine Conference. In the three thematic PCs, the highlighted topic was covered by two agenda items: one on the Presidency activities and one on the MAP. Preparations are ongoing for a final meeting, PC80, dedicated to the overall review of the MAP implementation, which will be held in Brdo pri Kranju on the eve of the Alpine Conference on 21 January 2025.

Before each of the PC meetings, the Presidency convened an online 'Observer exchange', as well as an in-person Heads of Delegation meeting.

Further meetings with the Heads of Delegation were organised online on 14 December 2022 and 12 May 2023, at the Mojstrana Infopoint on 15-16 March 2023, and in the Innsbruck office of the Permanent Secretariat from 29-30 October 2024. The last two Heads of Delegation meetings under Slovenian

Presidency will be organised on 15 January 2025 (online) and on 20 January (in person).

The Presidency invited a delegation from the Andes to PC76 (see the section

## Compliance Committee

The Permanent Secretariat provided support, both in terms of content and organisation, to the Slovenian Presidency in the activities of the [Compliance Committee](#), which met five times during the reporting period: from 19-20 April 2023 in Vila Vipolže (SI), on 5 December 2023 (online), from 13-14 February 2024 in Monaco (MC), from 8-9 October 2024 in Golte (SI), and on 3 December 2024 (online). The initial activities concerned: the selection of the topic 'Conservation of soils in wetlands and moors' for the ongoing in-depth review of the implementation of the provisions of the Alpine Convention and its Protocols, the elaboration of the questions to be answered by the Contracting Parties in this procedure, and the consultation of experts in the field of peatland protection. Based on this information, the Secretariat prepared a first draft of the final report on the topic, the findings, and recommendations which are now open for comments by the Contracting Parties and Observers. The Permanent Secretariat also finalised the report on the implementation of the Declaration on Population and Culture, which was adopted by the Compliance Committee in the follow-up of its 35<sup>th</sup> meeting.

on international cooperation below). PC77 was also the occasion to celebrate 20 years since the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat.



*33<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Compliance Committee in Vila Vipolže (SI). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

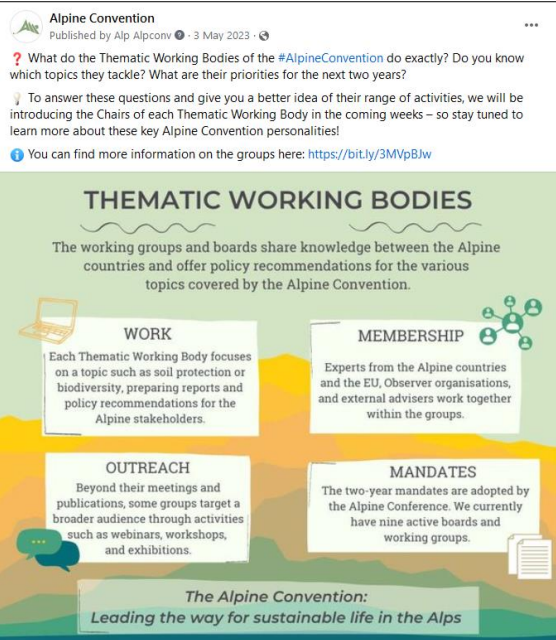
In addition, the Secretariat prepared the questions on the specific subject matter of an extraordinary compliance procedure concerning the request by CIPRA International for a review of an alleged non-compliance with the Alpine Convention and its Protocols through EU deregulation measures to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy. These questions were endorsed by the Compliance Committee. Based on the responses of the Contracting Parties, the Permanent Secretariat prepared a working document for the discussion of this topic at the 36<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Compliance Committee. This working document was revised for the following meeting, where the topic of the alleged non-compliance of EU legal acts was discussed with an expert in European and international law. Based on the

available material, the Secretariat is now elaborating a first draft of the final report for the ongoing extraordinary compliance procedure.

Finally, the Permanent Secretariat is preparing a draft of the final report

## Thematic Working Bodies

The eight regular [Thematic Working Bodies](#) (TWBs) operating in the previous biennium were given new mandates at the XVII Alpine Conference. Their activities in the reporting period are



*First social media post in a series to give an overview of the TWBs.*

presented below. Fifty-three plenary meetings were organised as were 23 thematic events (webinars, workshops, etc.), often targeting a broader audience.

The mandates of the ad hoc Working Groups (WGs) for the preparation, respectively, of the Ninth Report on the State of the Alps (RSA 9) on Alpine Towns, and of the MAP 2023-2030,

on the implementation of the recommendations of the final report of the in-depth review of the topic 'Economical use of soil', based on the reports submitted by the Contracting Parties.



*Workshop of TWB Chairs in Maribor (SI). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

chaired by the Swiss Presidency, came to an end. A new ad hoc Working Group was established to elaborate the Tenth Report on the State of the Alps (RSA 10) on the topic of Quality of Life. Its activities are reported on in the SOIA chapter.

The Permanent Secretariat supports all Chairs through dedicated Project Officers who are involved in the planning and implementation of the activities. The Secretariat also manages the nominations of members to the TWBs and other Alpine Convention Bodies and provides communication and dissemination support. This included the update of the TWB and thematic pages of the website to incorporate the results of the 2021-2022 period and the new mandates, as well as carrying out a social media campaign to raise

awareness about the work of the TWBs. In the first part, implemented in 2023, each TWB Chair was presented in a post. Highlights of their respective outcomes followed in a campaign in 2024.

To continue furthering the exchange and cooperation between the TWBs, the Slovenian Presidency and the Permanent Secretariat, with support from the outgoing Swiss Presidency, organised a workshop of the TWB Chairs on 30 November and 1 December 2022 in Mutters (AT). Beyond the exchange between the Chairs (including EUSALP AG6 Co-Lead) on their outputs and planned activities, they also discussed

their inputs towards the priorities of the Slovenian Presidency and especially on quality of life.

This was the first such meeting in presence since the COVID-19 pandemic and it was also attended by several Contracting Party Focal Points.

A further TWB workshop took place on 14 May 2024 in Maribor (SI), back-to-back with the 78<sup>th</sup> Permanent Committee meeting. Beyond the presentation of the status quo in each TWB, their achieved and planned outputs in the three priority areas of the MAP, as well as the issues of members engagement, the discussions also centred on outreach and synergies.

### Alpine Biodiversity Board



*Photo: Mauro Bertolini*

In its mandate until the XVIII Alpine Conference, the Alpine Biodiversity Board (ABB), chaired by Italy, developed activities covering three key areas.

Firstly, to facilitate cooperation between the Alpine countries on their respective biodiversity strategies and identify common approaches, the ABB organised: an online workshop on 17 April 2023 on NBSAP synergies; an event titled

*'Crossroads biodiversity. From a LIFE Integrated Project to a pan-Alpine biodiversity agenda'* in Milan (IT) from 10-11 October 2023 in cooperation with EUSALP AG6 and AG7 and the partners of the LIFE GESTIRE2020 project; and an online workshop on 19 November 2024 on Alpine restoration policies in cooperation with AG7.

Secondly, on expertise and knowledge issues, the board was instrumental in the preparation of the 'AlpsLife' project, approved in the frame of the Alpine Space Programme (ASP) in June 2024. Its aim is to generate a pan-Alpine scale biodiversity monitoring framework critical to the implementation of coherent national strategies.

And finally, the ABB invested time in cross-cutting issues by organising four



dedicated workshops creating synergies with the TWBs involved: biodiversity and quality of life (on 27 September in Bolzano/Bozen in cooperation with the RSA 10 WG), biodiversity and climate change (online on 5 October 2023 in cooperation with the Alpine Climate Board), biodiversity and land-use planning (hybrid and in Rome on 4 December 2023 in cooperation with the Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development and Soil Protection WGs), and biodiversity and forest management (in Turin (IT) on 8 April 2024 in cooperation with the Mountain Agriculture and Mountain Forestry WG and the European Commission).

### Alpine Climate Board



*Photo: Jernej Rodič*

In its mandate until the XVIII Alpine Conference, the Alpine Climate Board (ACB), chaired by Austria, was following a cross-sectoral approach along three 'hotspots', which were identified in its last meeting under the previous mandate from 21-22 September 2022 in Innsbruck (AT): energy, nature-based solutions (NbS), and lifestyles.

In addition to the above-mentioned workshops, six ABB plenary sessions were held during the period covered by the mandate to review and shape the group's activities (hybrid and in Rome (IT) on 2 March 2023; online on 15 June 2023; in Gorizia (IT) from 30-31 January 2024; in Kranjska Gora back-to-back with the Alpine Biodiversity conference on 12 June 2024; online on 19 July; and on 9 September 2024 specifically dedicated to the next mandate).

The Permanent Secretariat was actively involved in all the meetings and activities, both logistically and technically, bringing in its expertise of current international priorities and activities.

For the first two topics, information on relevant ongoing initiatives in the Alps and possible joint activities were collected in dedicated workshops (energy: online on 27 March 2023; nature-based solutions: during a meeting from 16-17 May 2023 in Vienna). As a follow-up, the ACB elaborated a booklet on cross-sectoral energy governance and organised, together with CIPRA Austria, a workshop on the acceptance of renewable energy production projects – the 'NIMBY' phenomenon (Salzburg, 4 April 2024). In 2024, as a contribution to the ACB, Germany commissioned a study on NbS for climate action in the Alps with a focus on governance, in the framework of which a workshop was organised (11 September 2024, online). In addition to the joint webinar with the



ABB mentioned above, webinars on permafrost thawing (28 September 2023) and on the cross-cutting issues of climate change and spatial development (25 November 2024) were organised.

Within the 'lifestyles' hotspot, the ACB organised a webinar on 15 December 2022 to share and discuss the findings of the 'Closing the gap on climate action' booklet it had recently published and further good practices. As a next step, the Board organised a training for multipliers on how to engage stakeholders for climate action (6 November 2023 at the operational branch office in Bolzano/Bozen with accompanying sessions online on 17 October 2023 and 12 January 2024). A further training session was organised as a side-event of AlpWeek 2024 (26 September 2024), as well as a conference session on how to deal with the human factor. 'HumanFactor – Closing the Implementation Gap in the Alps: Putting the Human Factor at the Centre of Sustainability Transitions' is also the title of a small-scale ASP project which emerged from the ACB and was approved in autumn 2024. The Chair also regularly exchanged with the Chair of the RSA 10 ad hoc WG on the link between climate and quality of life.

And finally, the Board produced an updated stocktaking report on climate action in the Alps and presented its work

at the National Cooperation Programme Forum of the Copernicus Climate Change Services (C3S) on 28 November 2024 as well as in a session organised by the Bavarian State Ministry for Environment in the frame of the ISPO sports fair on 4 December 2024 in Munich. Preparations are underway for a joint workshop between the ACB and C3S in spring 2025.

Further to the events mentioned above, five other ACB meetings were held to review and shape the group's activities: 24 January and 17 October 2023 (online), 18-19 January 2024 (Munich, DE), 16-17 May 2024 (Maribor, SI), and 12 September 2024 (online).

The Permanent Secretariat was regularly involved in all stages of the work, also participating in meetings of the core group, the NbS study group and caretakers, revising documents, and providing logistical support. Furthermore, the Secretariat arranged and supported the participation of the ACB Chair in the international Mountain Innovation Fair organised by UNEP, Eurac Research, GLOMOS, and UNU-EHS from 23-25 October 2023 in Bolzano/Bozen (IT), and presented the work of the ACB in UNFCCC meetings (see details in the 'Networking' chapter).

The Secretariat also reprinted two language versions of the ACB's publication 'Closing the gap on climate action' which were out of print.

## Large Carnivores, Wild Ungulates and Society Working Group (WISO)



*Photo: Sylvie Rizo*

The Large Carnivores, Wild Ungulates and Society Working Group, in short WISO, chaired by Slovenia, met for the first time under the Slovenian Presidency on 24 February 2023 online with the aim of reviewing its mandate, preparing the work, and refining the time plan for the period 2023-2024. A second meeting was held in person from 5-6 June 2023 in Mutters (AT) with support from the Presidency and the Permanent Secretariat. On this occasion, the use of the EAFRD or national funds to protect livestock in the Alpine countries was presented and discussed, and data and experiences concerning the

populations of large carnivores were also exchanged. The third meeting took place online on 16 October 2023, during which the monitoring methods and data applied for wolves and lynx in the Alps were presented and discussed, and the remaining WISO results for the current mandate were planned.

The ongoing activities were further reviewed and the new mandate proposal prepared at a fourth and fifth meeting, from 3-5 June 2024 in Nice (FR) and on 6 September 2024 (online). The Permanent Secretariat continuously supported the Chair, both logistically and technically.

During this biennium, synergies were strengthened with the ABB on methods and data for monitoring large carnivores and connectivity in the Alps, and with the Carpathian Convention, in particular with the co-organisation of a conference for the exchange of practices on the management of large carnivores in the Alps and the Carpathians.

## Mountain Agriculture and Mountain Forestry Working Group



*Photo: Mojca Odar*

The Mountain Agriculture and Mountain Forestry Working Group, chaired by Italy, organised four online plenary meetings (23 February and 28 June 2023; 30 January and 10 June 2024) and three online thematic workshops (10 October 2023; 22 March and 21 June 2024) during this mandate period. The Permanent Secretariat was actively involved in the meetings and workshops.

The first workshop, dealing with 'Depopulation and abandonment of Alpine areas: role and opportunities offered by the agri-food and forestry economy', was jointly organised by the Austrian and Swiss delegations. The insights and debates covered current trends in land use, population evolution, and economic developments in the Alpine countries (with a focus on land abandonment and depopulation), as well as policy approaches of agriculture and forestry for dealing with these trends, illustrated by best practice examples.

The second thematic workshop on 'Circular economy and smart technologies for mountain agriculture and forestry: an overview of the current trends in the Alpine countries', was organised by the Italian delegation, and its purpose was to understand to what extent and with which strategies it is possible to increase the implementation of virtuous economic choices and smart

technologies to reduce the impact and increase production of agricultural and forestry activities in Alpine environments.

Finally, the third and last thematic workshop, jointly organised by the Slovenian and German delegations, was about 'Peatlands and carbon farming, pastoralism, forestry and multifunctional activities in the mountains for the sustainability of the Alpine environment'. The aim was to analyse multifunctionality in mountain agriculture and forestry (carbon farming and peatlands in the Alps, restoration, climate change mitigation, and sustainable agriculture) and the identification of opportunities for mountain farmers while preserving traditional and cultural mountain agricultural heritage closely linked with innovative supply quality schemes and biodiversity.

### Natural Hazards Working Group (PLANALP)



*Photo: Hidrotehnik*

The Natural Hazards Working Group (PLANALP) chaired by Austria, held one meeting in 2022 after the XVII Alpine

Conference, and two each in 2023 and 2024. The work of the new mandate period, focussing on risk communication, began with an in-person meeting from 6-7 October 2022 in Bolzano/Bozen (IT), which included an excursion to Passo Carezza/Karerepass and the forest areas affected by the storm VAIA. The agenda of this meeting also encompassed a workshop on risk communication strategies addressing people living in areas affected by natural hazards and the elaboration of a corresponding collection of best

practices on successful risk communication, which were foreseen in the 2023-2024 mandate. The first meeting in 2023 took place online on 16 March and was dedicated to gaining a deeper understanding of the above-mentioned collection and creating partnerships (duos, trios) among the members for the transfer of selected best practices to convey expert knowledge in communicating natural hazards and climate change adaptation. The next meeting from 10-11 October 2023 was another occasion for the Working Group members to meet in person in Bled (SI). Here, after a visit to the flood-affected areas of the Tržič municipality, the mandate objectives and planned outputs were further advanced, in particular the collection of communication tools, the partnerships, and the elaboration of basic criteria to assess the success of the knowledge transfer and implementation activities. From 1-2 July 2024, PLANALP members met online to further evaluate the status quo of the aforementioned partnerships and the communication tool assessment, review the final version of the collection of communication tools

and a draft fact sheet for each tool, finalise the results of the 2023-2024 mandate as well as discuss the contents for the 2025-2026 mandate. The work on the 2023-2024 mandate concluded with an in-person meeting, held on 1 and 2 October 2024 in Styria (AT), which included a field trip to the 'Water experience' facilities in Öblarn. The agenda of the meeting included a general discussion on all outputs of the mandate, including the finalisation of the mandate proposal for 2025-2026. The meeting was an opportunity to announce that PLANALP is to be chaired by Germany in the next mandate. Every meeting was also dedicated to reports on past and current events regarding natural hazards in individual countries and regions.

With a view to better disseminating the results within each country, PLANALP members also prepared translations in all Alpine languages of the group's factsheet about contingency planning, which are available on the Alpine Convention website.

### Soil Protection Working Group



*Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

The Soil Protection Working Group was chaired by Austria, which also finances a dedicated Project Officer at the Permanent Secretariat to provide continuous support to the Chair.

The Working Group convened eight times after the XVII Alpine Conference. Six online meetings were held from 7-8 November 2022, on 15 February 2023, on



16 November 2023, on 21 February 2024, on 5 June 2024, and on 22 July 2024. The meeting from 3-4 May 2023 was focused on peatlands and included an excursion. It took place in Benediktbeuern (DE) with support from Germany. The second on-site meeting took place at the operational branch office in Bolzano/Bozen from 27-28 September, back-to-back with the 'Quality of life and biodiversity' workshop organised by the ABB and the RSA 10 WG. The meeting also included a short excursion on river revitalisation presented by the Province of Bolzano/Bozen. The Secretariat, together with the EU Commission JRC, had prepared for the meeting in June 2024 to be held in Ispra (IT), before it had to be changed to an online meeting due to a lack of availability of members.



*Working group meeting in Benediktbeuern (DE).  
Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

Beyond the regular exchange of experiences and good practices on a variety of topics with relevance for Alpine soils, the group worked on implementing activities defined in the

'Long-Term Action Plan for the implementation of provisions and declarations on soil protection in the specific context of the Alpine region' and translated this action plan into the Alpine languages. The group developed a statement on the importance of moor protection in the Alps. In cooperation with the Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development WG, the group prepared a concept for events about the importance of soil functions in spatial planning processes, dedicated to regional planners. Four such events took place in 2024 in Slovenia (Ljubljana 17 January), Austria (Innsbruck/online 18 April), France (Grenoble 23 May), and Germany (Benediktbeuern 1-2 July). The Secretariat supported the events in Innsbruck and Benediktbeuern.

Various events to raise awareness about soil took place in the Alps around World Soil Day 2023. The Secretariat supported the ABB hybrid workshop 'Biodiversity and Land-Use Planning' mentioned above, as well as the public 'Soil cinema' organised in Innsbruck (AT) on 6 December by Land Tyrol and the University of Innsbruck.

Finally, the WG cooperates with the 'SOIL:OurInvisibleAlly' ASP project, which the Permanent Secretariat joined as an observer. The Secretariat gave an online keynote at its launch event from 10-11 October 2024.



## Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development Working Group



*Photo: Aleš Krivec*

The Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development Working Group held five regular meetings in the 2023-2024 mandate period. After having already set up the basis for the implementation of the new mandate in an online meeting on 22 September 2022, the first official meeting of the reporting period took place online on 16 March 2023, by which point some first concrete steps for the mandate implementation had been taken. The Working Group then held a joint meeting with the Transport Working Group in Paris (FR) on 21 and 22 September 2023, which was significantly supported by the Permanent Secretariat, especially in terms of organisation and logistics. Preceded by a technical visit and individual Working Group meetings on the first day, a common session with both Working Groups took place on the second day. Members discussed the transport aspects of the Alpine Spatial Planning Perspective (a task in the mandate of the Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development WG) in a workshop as well as exchanged on other common topics, such as behavioural changes and reduced transport demand.

It was followed by a second joint excursion.

The first meeting of the WG in 2024 took place online on 23 February. Shortly after, there was a change in the position of the Chair of the WG; the Secretariat supported the transition and together with the experts commissioned by Germany, helped to ensure the continuity of the work.



*Working group meeting in Paris (FR). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

From 16-17 July 2024, the Secretariat hosted an in-person meeting of the WG in Innsbruck, where a discussion on the mid and long-term perspectives of the group's activities took place. The final WG meeting in this mandate period was held online on 16 September 2024.

The Secretariat also had an active role in the cooperation activities with the Soil Protection Working Group and the ABB, as reported above, and with the RSA 10 WG, as reported in the chapter on SOIA.

In addition, in connection with the ESPON Targeted Analysis InTerAlp, the initiation of which was a part of the group's mandate, the members were

invited to participate in a workshop to help refine the recommendations for a

policy brief to be published after the project's conclusion in 2025.

## Transport Working Group



*Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

The Transport Working Group, chaired by France, met six times during the 2023-2024 mandate period. The 51<sup>st</sup> meeting took place online on 2 February, aiming to kick-start work on the new tasks. At the 52<sup>nd</sup> meeting, also online, on 1 June, updates on the progress of these tasks were discussed. The 53<sup>rd</sup> meeting took place in Paris from 21-22 September and was jointly organised with the Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development Working Group, as reported above. At this meeting, the Chair was handed over from Michel Rostagnat to Michel Pinet, due to the retirement of the former.

On 12 October 2023, a stakeholder meeting on 'Accelerating the Electrification of Road Transport in the Alps' was jointly organised by the

Transport Working Group and EUSALP Action Group 4 (AG4 – Mobility) in Innsbruck (AT). From 7-8 March 2024, a workshop on digitalisation in combined transport was organised by the group in Nuremberg (DE). The workshop included a visit to the Nuremberg multimodal terminal and was followed by the 54<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working Group, during which work on the new mandate for 2025-2026 started. Two more Working Group meetings took place in 2024; Ljubljana on 18 June and Paris on 2 September. During both meetings, the new mandate was discussed, as well as three reports of the WG on road transport electrification, combined transport, and the energy transition in transalpine logistics. The reports and mandate were validated by the group shortly after the meeting in Paris.

The Permanent Secretariat was actively involved in all meetings and their organisation, as well as in coordinating exchanges with EUSALP AG4, and supported a smooth transition between the Working Group's Chairs.

# NETWORKING

One added value of the Alpine Convention is its work across territorial borders and levels as well as involving all relevant sectors of activity. The Permanent Secretariat

promoted this approach through many bilateral meetings with new and old partners and an active involvement in various processes and events.

## Contracting Parties



*Secretary General with minister Leonore Gewessler at the Permanent Secretariat office in Innsbruck (AT). Photo: Cajetan Perwein*

Beyond the support to the Slovenian Presidency and incoming Italian Presidency reported in the corresponding chapters, the Permanent Secretariat also exchanged with and supported activities of all other Contracting Parties.

The Secretary General met the Austrian Federal Minister for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology Leonore Gewessler in Vienna on 28 September 2022 to discuss current issues ahead of the XVII Alpine Conference and was able to welcome her in the Innsbruck office on 3 April 2023 to thank her for Austria's contribution to the renovation of the premises. A further meeting took place

on the margins of UNFCCC COP29 in Baku (Azerbaijan) on 19 November 2024.

The Secretariat participated in and supported the logistics and organisation of three Energy Expert Exchanges on the Austrian delegation's initiative for the Contracting Parties of the Alpine Convention to discuss energy issues. These were held online on 8 January and 9 May 2023 as well as on 7 May 2024, and took stock of the current energy policy landscape in the Alpine region, identified Alpine-specific issues, and shared relevant best practices. The 100<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Austrian National Alpine Convention Committee was organised



*100<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Austrian National Alpine Convention Committee with (left to right): Deputy Mayor of Innsbruck Georg Willi, former Governor of Tyrol Herwig van Staa, Secretary General, Head of the Austrian Delegation Ewald Galle, and Governor of Tyrol Anton Mattle. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*



by the Secretariat in Innsbruck (AT) on 24 June 2024. The anniversary meeting included an Alpine celebration in the premises of the Secretariat which was also attended by the Governor of Tyrol Anton Mattle, the Deputy Mayor of Innsbruck Georg Willi, and former Governor of Tyrol Herwig van Staa.

At the UNFCCC COP28 in Dubai on 9 December 2023, the Secretary General had a bilateral meeting with the deputy Prime Minister of Liechtenstein Sabine Monauni to discuss the activities of the Slovenian Presidency, Liechtenstein's contribution to the implementation of the Alpine Convention, and the inclusion of mountains in the formal UNFCCC processes.



*Secretary General and Deputy Prime Minister of Liechtenstein, Sabine Monauni, at the UNFCCC COP28. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

From 12-13 December 2022, the Secretary General met Parliamentary State Secretary Bettina Hoffmann of the



*Secretary General in Berlin (DE) visiting Bettina Hoffmann, Parliamentary State Secretary of the BMUV. Photo: Christoph Wehrer*

German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, and together they took part in the Reading Mountains event in Berlin. She also exchanged with Stephanie Pfahl, Head of the European Division at the Ministry.

Furthermore, on 29 March 2023, the Secretary General met the Director General of the Bavarian State Ministry for the Environment and Consumer Protection Christian Barth in Munich. On both occasions, the involvement of Germany during this mandate period was reviewed.



*Secretary General visiting Christian Barth at the StMUV in Munich (DE). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

The second edition of the ClimaHost award for climate action in the hospitality industry, funded by Germany and organised by the adelphi agency with support from the Permanent Secretariat in 2021-2022, successfully concluded at a ceremony during the Allgäu Tourism Conference on 26 October 2022 in Füssen (DE). The ceremony was attended by Christian Kühn, Parliamentary State Secretary, and with a video address by the Secretary General. The laureates were five accommodation structures from four different Alpine countries.

And finally, the Permanent Secretariat held a presentation at an event for young staff members of the Bavarian ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection at the Zugspitze (DE) on 21 July 2023.

On 6 October 2022, the Secretary General met the Head of International and European Affairs of the French Ministry for Ecological Transition in Paris. This encounter paved the way for the secondment of a French expert to the Permanent Secretariat as an in-kind contribution to the ordinary budget of the Secretariat. On 27 November 2024, the newly nominated French Ambassador to Austria visited the Secretariat.

Between May 2023 and January 2024, France organised a series of five webinars to put into practice the Alpine Convention's handbook 'Measuring the tourism sustainability of mountain tourism destinations in the Alps'. The webinars were directed at French tourism destinations, and the Permanent



*The new French Ambassador to Austria visited the Permanent Secretariat in Innsbruck. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

Secretariat presented the Alpine Convention's context.

The Secretary General met Sébastien Siccardi, Director General of Public Works, the Environment and Urban Development of the Principality of Monaco on 12 February 2024 to exchange on current issues dealt with in the framework of the Alpine Convention.

A meeting of the Secretary General with the Deputy Director of the Swiss Federal Office for Sustainable Development, the Director of CIPRA Switzerland, and the Swiss Head of Delegation took place on 17 April 2024 in Berne.

From 13-14 October 2022, the Deputy Secretary General met Heads of Unit Sabine Bourdy (DG ENV) and Moray Gilland (DG REGIO) in Brussels to review the engagement of the European Commission in the Alpine Convention.

The Permanent Secretariat also participated in and assisted the respective Focal Points in national Alpine Convention coordination meetings with delegation members or stakeholders, held by Austria (15 December 2022, 4 July and 13 December 2023, 24 June and 12



December 2024, Vienna as well as 24 June 2024 in Innsbruck), France (6 October 2023 and 18 September 2024, online), Germany (7 February 2023 and 13 February 2024, Berlin), and Italy (see chapter on the Italian Presidency preparation).



*German Alpine Convention Coordination meeting Berlin. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

## Observers

The Permanent Secretariat fostered regular relationships with many Observers of the Alpine Convention and supported their activities towards the implementation of the Convention. The most notable cooperations are outlined below and in later sub-chapters.



*Alpine Changemaker Basecamp 2023. Photo: CIPRA International*

The Secretary General and her collaborators had numerous virtual and in-person exchanges with Heads of Delegation on current issues. This includes those in the frame of the 'Tour des capitals' for the preparation of the Italian Presidency, as reported in the corresponding chapter, and further trilateral meetings with Slovenia and Italy.

The Secretary General regularly exchanged with the Co-Presidents and Director of CIPRA International (on 29 November 2022, 15 May 2023, 24 January and 20 June 2024).

The Permanent Secretariat was a member of the reflection group of the Alpine Changemaker Basecamp organised by CIPRA International and other partners and participated in the second edition of the basecamp from 2-7 July 2023 in Schlanders/Silandro (IT). The Secretariat is now involved in the discussions about a possible project continuation.

The Secretariat was also represented at the FutureForum Alps Liechtenstein organised by CIPRA from 30 June to 1

July 2023. The Secretariat sat on the advisory board of CIPRA Germany's project Facts4Tourism and participated in the concluding conference of the project in March 2023. The Permanent Secretariat also participated in the 'Grassau Dialogues' on the media exploitation of the Alps, organised by CIPRA Germany from 13-15 October 2023, and supported the dissemination of the results at PC77 and in a Communication Jour Fixe.

The Secretary General participated in the international conference of Alliance in the Alps on 23 and 24 October 2023 in Bad Hindelang (DE), organised in cooperation with the BeyondSnow project and focusing on options for tourism in the Alps when snow security starts dwindling. The Alliance in the Alps board meeting on 16 April 2024 was held in the premises of the Secretariat in Innsbruck and included an exchange with the Deputy Secretary General.



*Alliance in the Alps board meeting in Innsbruck. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

The Secretary General also attended ALPARC's General Assemblies in the Gran Paradiso National Park in Cogne (IT) from 19-22 January 2023 and in the

National Park Kalkalpen in Spital am Pyhrn (AT) from 18-21 January 2024. In addition, the Deputy Secretary General and further team members were also present for the Danilo Re Memorials in both years, holding presentations at the ranger seminar, networking, and participating in the sports competitions. The Secretary General was invited to discuss the findings of ALPARC's study 'Alpine Parks 2030' at a project meeting hosted at the Permanent Secretariat's



*Danilo Re Memorial 2023. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

office in Innsbruck in December 2022. These were later presented to the PC77.

The Permanent Secretariat intervened at the General Assemblies of the Alpine Town of the Year Association in Passy (FR) on 14 October 2022, in Sonthofen (DE) on 13 October 2023, and in Nova Gorica (SL) on 25 September 2024, highlighting the importance of the Association for connecting the Alpine Convention to the local level and the crucial role of Alpine towns.





*Alpine Town of the Year exchange Sonthofen.  
Photo: Caroline Begle*

Furthermore, team members of the Secretariat visited the member town Sonthofen on 26 June 2024 to exchange about recent Alpine Convention and Alpine Town topics and discuss current and future activities.

The Permanent Secretariat took part in a meeting of ISCAR members on 20 November and 1 December 2023 in Innsbruck. ISCAR's main event in 2024 was the ForumAlpinum, which was organised back-to-back with the Alpine Biodiversity Conference of the Slovenian Presidency from 13-14 June. The scientific conference welcomed

## Infopoints

The Permanent Secretariat regularly liaises with the Infopoints, who relay the messages of the Alpine Convention in their own territories. There are now nine of them.

The Ötscher-Tormäuer Nature Park in Upper Austria joined the network on 11 September 2023. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed during a festive event that included a small



*ForumAlpinum. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

numerous researchers from all around the Alps and beyond to present their work on the topics of geo- and biodiversity. The Secretary General gave a welcoming speech and, in addition to being involved in the logistical organisation of the event, the Permanent Secretariat was also part of the scientific board of the ForumAlpinum. The Secretariat is also exploring different options for closer cooperation with ISCAR, especially related to the Young Academics Award.

The Deputy Secretary General gave a presentation at the CAA General Assembly in Salzburg (AT) on 19 April 2024, where the collaboration with the Convention was discussed.



*Secretary General at the MoU signing with the new Ötscher-Tormäuer Infopoint (AT). Photo: Fred Lindmoser*

celebratory meeting with regional politicians and stakeholders.

The Koroška Regional Development Agency joined as the third Slovenian Infopoint on 28 March 2024 in Dravograd (SI). The inauguration event was accompanied by a panel discussion on remote and hybrid working as an opportunity for less accessible Alpine regions such as Koroška.



*Inauguration of the Koroška Infopoint. Photo: Nika Hölcl, arhiv RRA Koroška*

Both new Infopoints also received a training session on the Alpine Convention provided by the Secretariat.

Most of the Memoranda of Understanding with Infopoints were up for renewal during the reporting period and were concluded for three further years with: the Community of Communes of Chamonix Mont-Blanc (Chamonix Infopoint), the Association ARS.UNI.VCO E.T.S. (Domodossola Infopoint), the Fondation Grand Paradis (Grand Paradis Infopoint), the Slovenian Alpine Museum (Mojstrana Infopoint), the Soča Valley Development Centre (Tolmin Infopoint), and the Dobratsch Nature Park (Villach Infopoint).

In addition to all Infopoints organising events during each edition of the Reading Mountains Festival and six of them participating in the Young Academics Award (see Projects chapter), most of them carried out further specific activities to promote the Alpine Convention.

The Permanent Secretariat participated in activities organised for the young laureates of the 2022 and 2023 editions of the Reading Mountains award of the Domodossola Infopoint: the Secretariat organised a workshop on climate change and quality of life in the Alps on 21 April 2023 in the Bolzano/Bozen operational branch office and participated in the closing meeting on 19-20 May 2023 in Domodossola under the motto 'The Alpine Convention and Alpine Towns'. In 2024, the Secretary General announced the winners at a study tour organised by the Infopoint in Crodo (IT) from 15-16 April for the winning students and their teachers, and gave a video address at the project's final event, which took place on 18 May, and where the pupils participating in the 'Educational' session presented their social teasers on the theme 'I want to live in the mountains' to representatives of local institutions, local associations, teachers, pupils, and families. The Secretariat also provided formal support to the RurACT Project – Shared Actions between Agricultural Enterprises, Community, and Territory, which the Domodossola Infopoint is developing in the Veglia Devero Park and the Antrona Valley (IT).



*Workshop with winners of the Reading Mountains Award of the Domodossola Infopoint in Bolzano/Bozen (IT). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

On the occasion of International Women's Day 2023, the Secretary General visited the Morbegno Infopoint and spoke at the event 'Women Move Mountains' about women in the mountains and their important role in sustainable development. The following day, the Secretary General was invited by the mayor to visit Morbegno and the Infopoint headquarters to discuss future activities.

The Secretariat was also present and held a welcoming speech on 12 August 2023 at the Villach Infopoint's yearly 'Fire in the Alps' event dedicated to combating climate change.

The Permanent Secretariat visited the Chamonix Infopoint on 13 October 2022 to learn about Alpine Convention related activities. Furthermore, the Secretariat financially supported the organisation of the 26<sup>th</sup> edition of the Gran Paradiso Film Festival by the Grand Paradis Infopoint.

The Mojstrana Infopoint was one of the driving forces behind the municipality joining the Mountaineering Villages network in 2023, while the Tolmin Infopoint co-organised the launch event of YOALIN 2023 and was one of the partners of AlpWeek 2024 (see below).



*Secretary General at the International Women's Day event of the Morbegno Infopoint (IT). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*



## Infopoints networking



*Participants of the Infopoint networking event in Mojstrana (SI). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

A second exchange of the Infopoints of the Alpine Convention was hosted by the Mojstrana Infopoint from 21-23 November 2023 and attended by the Domodossola, Morbegno, Tolmin, Ötscher-Tormäuer, and Mojstrana Infopoints, the Infopoint candidate Koroška as well as the Slovenian Presidency of the Alpine Convention and

members of the Permanent Secretariat's team. The networking meeting was organised by the Secretariat and financed by Austria. Each partner presented their work, followed by interactive round table discussions on various common issues of the Infopoints. This exchange was successful in strengthening the feeling of belonging to the bigger Alpine Convention network.

To further support the activities of the Infopoints, the Permanent Secretariat, again with financial support from Austria, produced specific versions of the Alpine Convention flyer for each Infopoint. It also upgraded the Infopoint pages of the [alpcnv.org](http://alpcnv.org) website.

## EUSALP

During the reporting period, the Permanent Secretariat continued its strong commitment and efforts to contribute to EUSALP – the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region – in several ways: by representing the Alpine Convention in the General Assembly as well as in the

Executive Board (EB), co-leading EUSALP Action Group 6 (AG6) together with the Region of Carinthia, participating as an active project partner in the ASP project 'Support EUSALP', and finally as an observer in EUSALP Action Groups 4, 7, and 9.

## Representing the Alpine Convention in the EUSALP process

In autumn 2022, the Permanent Secretariat participated in the EUSALP Annual Forum and General Assembly (23-24 November in Trento (IT)), which concluded the Italian EUSALP Presidency 2022. During the Swiss (2023) and Slovenian (2024) EUSALP

Presidencies, the Secretariat also participated in the General Assemblies held in Bad Ragaz (CH, 18-19 October 2023) and in Brdo pri Kranju (SI, 14-15 November 2024) as well as in almost all meetings of the EB as an observer, and in the joint sessions with the Board of

Action Group Leaders (BAGL) as Co-Lead of AG6.

As regards thematic contributions to the Annual Fora, in 2022 the Permanent Secretariat cooperated with members of the Multifunctional Forests and Sustainable Use of Timber Task Force to organise a workshop on ‘Short timber supply chains in times of climate and geopolitical crises’.



*EUSALP Annual Forum 2022. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

On the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alpine Convention’s Protocol on Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development, the Secretariat also hosted a workshop on ‘Cross-border spatial planning cooperation in the Alpine region’ in cooperation with the Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development Working Group of the Alpine Convention. During the 2023 Annual Forum, the Secretary General represented the Alpine Convention and AG6 in a panel discussion on the topic ‘Promoting a Joint Water Management Transition’. She also spoke at the EUSALP Water Conference in Scuol (CH) on 16 June 2023.



*EUSALP Annual Forum 2023. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

In 2023, the EB meetings under the Swiss EUSALP Presidency were mostly dedicated to discussing the nine Action Groups’ work plans for the period 2023-2025, which were finally approved by the EB in summer. Another important topic of the meetings was the revision of the EUSALP Action Plan dating from 2015. Given the rapid evolution of the strategy in recent years, both of the context in which it operates and in its governance structures, the General Assembly recognised the need to revise the current EUSALP Action Plan and mandated the EB to set up a task force under the leadership of the successive EUSALP Presidencies and with the support of the European Commission and the EUSALP Technical Support Structure (TSS). The Permanent Secretariat contributed to the revision process as requested, including to the development of a White Paper defining important cornerstones of the revision during the Slovenian Presidency. The process is expected to be finalised at the end of the joint EUSALP Presidency of Austria and Liechtenstein in 2025.

## Activities of EUSALP Action Group 6

During the period under review, the Permanent Secretariat organised and implemented seven main AG6 meetings from 14- 15 November 2022 in Villach (AT), 27 and 28 February 2023 in Innsbruck (AT), 1 June 2023 online, 14-15 November 2023 in Poschiavo (CH), 2 February 2024 online, 17-18 June in Innsbruck, and 27 November 2024 online. These meetings were mainly dedicated to the elaboration and implementation of the new AG6 work plan 2023-2025, which was approved by the EB in August 2023. The four main topics of the AG6 work plan cover soil and biodiversity, forestry and agriculture, water, and cultural heritage. Furthermore, recurring items on the agenda concerned the progress of single AG6 activities, as well as the organisation of public events. Special attention was given to AG6's contribution to the EUSALP cross-cutting priorities on the topics of circular economy and water, whereby the AG6 lead was entrusted with the coordination of a newly established EUSALP task force on water management. Beyond this, the AG6 members were continuously informed about the priorities and opportunities for cooperation with the ASP 2021-2027 and about upcoming calls for submission of project proposals.

Regarding the implementation of the AG6 work plan, the most important single activities carried out by the Action Group were contributions to the ASP



*Workshop 'Crossroads Biodiversity' in Milan (IT). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

projects 'AlpTextyles' including the participation in its launch event on 23 January 2023 in Ljubljana (SI) and 'Waterwise' as well as to the development of the project application for 'Circular Alps'; the organisation of a joint hybrid workshop of AG6 and AG2 on the topic of water management in the EUSALP region on 16 June 2023 in Scuol (CH) as a contribution to the cross-cutting priority on water; and the organisation of the public workshop 'Crossroads Biodiversity' from 10-11 October 2023 in Milano (IT) together with the Alpine Convention's Alpine Biodiversity Board, AG6 and AG7 members as well as the contribution to its biodiversity message as an output of the workshop. Moreover, AG6 also organised and carried out the 3<sup>rd</sup> EUSALP Territorial Brands Conference on 13 and



14 November 2023 in Poschiavo (CH). This public conference, which also contributed to the cross-cutting priority of circular economy, was streamed online and translated into all Alpine languages and English onsite and online. In 2023 and 2024, the activities of AG6 also included further contributions to its strategic flagship initiative, the Task Force on Multifunctional Forests and Sustainable Use of Timber. This longstanding cooperation between Action Groups includes communication activities on social media and the development of a new draft mandate of the Task Force which was approved by the EB in 2024.

Furthermore, the Permanent Secretariat developed a draft manual on traditional agricultural techniques in the EUSALP region in 2024. The programme and logistics of a 2<sup>nd</sup> Landscape Conference, scheduled for 27-28 November 2024 in Bolzano/Bozen (IT) were prepared, however the conference had to be postponed to 2025 at short notice due to difficulties in payment processes by AG6 Co-Lead Carinthia.

### Participation in the 'Support EUSALP' project

Based on the corresponding decision of the 75<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Committee, the Permanent Secretariat has been participating, since January 2023, as a project partner in the governance project 'Support EUSALP' which runs until December 2025 in the framework of the ASP 2021-2027. The project is led by the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region which, together with



*3<sup>rd</sup> EUSALP Territorial Brand Conference in Poschiavo (CH). Photo: Polo Poschiavo*

During the reporting period, AG6 also collaborated with other EUSALP Action Groups and Thematic Working Bodies on a case-by-case basis to exchange on specific topics and make use of synergies. Some examples included an exchange on soil and unsealing during the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Alpine Convention Soil Protection Working Group from 27-28 September 2023 at the operational branch office in Bolzano/Bozen, and participation in both TWB Chairs' exchanges. The approved AG6 work plan 2023-2025 as well as the EUSALP current developments were also presented and discussed during the 77<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention.

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and Lombardy, hosts the TSS.

In the period covered by this report, the Permanent Secretariat participated in the launch event of the project from 6-7 February 2023 in Nice (FR), in all project partner meetings, and further horizontal coordination meetings with the TSS, the EUSALP Youth Council, and other

EUSALP stakeholders. Moreover, the Secretariat participated in all communication workshops with the TSS and contributed to the content of the new website of EUSALP.

With regard to the involvement of the Permanent Secretariat in the meetings to progress the different work packages of the 'Support EUSALP' project, the following main activities should be noted: the Secretariat participated in the workshop 'Embedding of Macroregional Strategies: Reflections on the example of Interreg CBC programmes' on 25 May

### Observer role in AG4, AG7 and AG9

The Permanent Secretariat participated as an observer in meetings of EUSALP Action Groups 4 (mobility) and 9 (energy), aiming in particular to coordinate their work with that of the Alpine Convention's Transport Working Group and the ACB, respectively. These took place, for AG4, from 4-5 October 2022, 7 February, 24 May (including a field visit near Nice (FR)) and 11 October 2023 (including a field trip in Innsbruck and back-to-back with the joint stakeholder meeting on electrification co-organised with the Transport Working Group), and on 14 May and 25-26 September 2024; and for AG9 on 11 October 2022 (including the EUSALP Energy Conference in Bolzano/Bozen (IT)), 13 January, 9 March, 6 July, and 4 October 2023, and on 26 March and 16 November 2024. The Permanent Secretariat also joined the AMETHyST Exchange Programme in Pfalzen (IT) and

2023 online, as well as in the ASP-EUSALP Workshop on 24 May 2023 in Stuttgart (DE) as part of the facilitation of project applications by AG6 members to the ASP. In this regard, the Permanent Secretariat also took part in the ASP Information Session for the second call on 11 July 2023 and in the ASP Q&A session on the second call on 13 September 2023. On 25 June 2024 the Permanent Secretariat was actively involved in the Get Started! Seminar of the ASP to make use of synergies of approved projects on the topics of Action Group 6.

the EUSALP Energy Conference on 15 November 2024 in Brdo pri Kranju (SI).



*EUSALP AG4 and Transport WG. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

Furthermore, in addition to the intensification of the activities of the Alpine Convention in the field of biodiversity, the Secretariat decided to strengthen its ties with AG7 (green infrastructure) and joined this Action Group as an observer. The Permanent Secretariat participated in three online meetings (on 26 January 2024, 29 and 31 May and 14 November 2024) and seized the occasion to reinforce synergies



between AG7 and the ABB, notably on the topic of restoration. In this context, AG7 was invited to take part in the organisation of the workshop on

## Further Alpine cooperation

### Host cities and institutions

The year 2023 marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Permanent Secretariat in its two locations, Innsbruck and Bolzano/Bozen. The occasion was celebrated with Contracting Parties and Observers at a gala dinner during the 77<sup>th</sup> Permanent Committee meeting (Bolzano/Bozen, 7-8 November 2023).

The anniversary was communicated on the Alpine Convention website, social media channels, and in a press release elaborated in cooperation with the host institutions in Austria and Italy.



*Birthday cake for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Permanent Secretariat. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

Earlier in the year, on 1 February 2023, the Secretary General hosted the Mayor of Innsbruck as well as officials from

restoration by the German delegation endorsed by the ABB (online on 19 November 2024).

Land Tyrol and the Head of the Austrian Delegation to thank them for their contributions to the renovation of the office.



*Reception in the renovated Permanent Secretariat's office. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

She maintained contacts with the outgoing Governor of Tyrol Günter Platter beyond their last official meeting on 20 September 2022. On 8 January 2024, the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General met the new Governor of Tyrol Anton Mattle in Innsbruck (AT).



*Meeting with the Governor of Tyrol Anton Mattle  
Photo: Elisabeth Fitsch*

The Secretariat pursued its excellent relationship with Eurac Research as the host institution of the Bolzano/Bozen operational branch office through regular meetings with Eurac Research's President Roland Psenner and Director Stephan Ortner. This is matched by the ongoing technical and scientific cooperation, for instance with Eurac Research hosting the Alpine Convention Atlas and taking on the role of Lead Partner in the AlpsLife ASP project which emerged from the ABB. It is also leading the BeyondSnow ASP project, to which the Secretariat agreed to be an observer; the Secretariat participated in the launch on 23 January 2023 as well as the conference of Alliance in the Alps as previously mentioned and the project meeting on 11 April 2024 in Bohinj (SI) and co-organised a public event with the project partners in the frame of the Reading Mountains Festival 2023.

On 30 October 2024, the Secretary General, together with the Head of the



*BeyondSnow project meeting in Bohinj (SI). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

Italian Delegation and the Director and President of Eurac Research, met with the President of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, Arno Kompatscher, in order to involve the Province in the programme of the upcoming Italian Presidency of the Alpine Convention, as well as to emphasise the support and the fruitful cooperation between the Province, the Italian Environmental Ministry, Eurac Research, and the Permanent Secretariat.



*Meeting of the Secretary General, Italian Delegation, Governor Kompatscher, and Eurac President Psenner. Photo: Fabio Brucculeri*

## ARGE ALP

The Permanent Secretariat continued to actively fulfil its role as an observer to the ARGE ALP, participating in all formal meetings, which provide excellent opportunities for networking, including bilateral meetings. The Secretary General attended the Conferences of the Heads of Government on 20 and 21 October 2022 (including celebrations for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary) in Innsbruck, on 20 October 2023 in Bad Ragaz (CH), and on 25 October 2024 in Airolo (CH). In Bad Ragaz, resolutions were adopted for the attention of the EUSALP General Assembly and on the potential of green hydrogen in the Alpine region, and in Airolo on sustainable water management and preventive natural hazards and disaster management. On 24 October 2024, the Deputy Secretary

## Alpine Space Programme

During the reporting period, the Permanent Secretariat continued its strong commitment and efforts to contribute as an observer to the Interreg Alpine Space Programme (ASP) 2021-2027. The Secretariat actively participated in all but one of the nine Programme Committee Meetings. The Permanent Secretariat also took part in the programme reflection workshop on 23 May 2023 in Stuttgart (DE) and is a member of the current ASP Task Force on Priority 4 (on governance) dealing with the related terms of reference, which held two online meetings on 23 November and 14 December 2023. Beside this regular (also reciprocal)

General also gave a presentation on 'Sustainable water management in the Alps – EU and Alpine Convention' at a symposium on sustainable water management in mountain pastures organised by the Canton of Ticino as acting Presidency of ARGE ALP in Airolo (CH).



*50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee Conference of the ARGE ALP Heads of Government. Photo: Die Fotografen*

participation in formal meetings, both Secretariats maintain close relationships. The Secretary General, Deputy, and Senior Executive Officer met the Programme responsible officers in Salzburg on 28 November 2024.

Furthermore, and beyond the involvement in the 'AlpsLife' and 'HumanFactor' project applications which emerged within the ABB and ACB respectively, the Permanent Secretariat often receives requests by applicants to join ASP projects as an observer. These are reviewed and answered on the basis of the possible synergies with the work of the Alpine Convention (especially



TWBs and EUSALP AG6) and available resources to participate in events and support networking and communication. During the reporting period, the Secretariat has been

## AlpWeek

The eighth edition of the AlpWeek, themed 'Alps in our hands', took place from 23-25 September 2024 in Nova Gorica (SI) with more than 200 attendees. Two decades after the first edition, the organising Observers of the Alpine Convention, many invited experts, and all participants reviewed progress made and prepared for the future. The Permanent Secretariat actively supported the Observers by participating in coordination meetings, with promotional activities, translations, and support to the AlpWeek website. The Secretariat also supported the coordination with both the current

supporting the following projects: 'BeyondSnow', 'AlpTextyles', 'Soil: OurInvisibleAlly', 'WaterWise', 'ALPHA', 'LiveAlpsNature' and 'GOV QoL'.

Slovenian and the upcoming Italian Presidency of the Alpine Convention, facilitating a thematic alignment of AlpWeek with the current and upcoming Presidency priorities.



*AlpWeek. Photo: Cimeta Studio*

## Mountaineering Villages

The active collaboration with the Mountaineering Villages also continued in the current reporting period. The network grew to 38 villages and celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary

throughout 2023 in many different locations.

The Secretary General attended the inauguration of the new Village Dovje-Mojstrana (SI) on 26 August 2023. The Deputy Secretary General and the Secretary General held welcoming words, respectively, during the 15<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Mountaineering Villages held in Villgratental (AT) from 6-7 October 2023 and the 16<sup>th</sup> one in Luče (SI) from 31 May until 2 June 2024. The Secretariat financially supported the simultaneous translation of both annual



*Annual Meeting of the Mountaineering Villages in Luče (SI). Photo: Janez Kotar*



meetings. The Secretariat was also represented during the 10-year celebration of the Mountaineering Village St. Jodok, Schmirn- and Valsertal (AT).



*Secretary General in a podcast recording. Photo: Jörg Wunram*

Starting with the Austrian Mountaineering Villages, a podcast series was launched. Episode zero

provides the background for this Alpine Convention implementation initiative including statements from the Secretary General. In addition, she signed a foreword in the new cookbook released by the Mountaineering Villages in 2024.



*Inauguration of the new Mountaineering Village Dovje-Mojstrana (SI). Photo: Miloš Kozan*

## Youth Parliament to the Alpine Convention



*YPAC in Sonthofen (DE). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

The YPAC in Sonthofen from 6-10 March 2023 was the first session to take place in person since the COVID pandemic. It had been prepared in an evaluation and coordination meeting on site from 16-18 November 2022, but none of the young participants had experiences with an in-person YPAC. The Secretary General gave a welcoming speech at the opening ceremony and the Secretariat was present throughout the week. The

general topic 'quality of life in the Alps' was well received and led to high-quality discussions and eight resolutions that were presented afterwards on many occasions across the Alps. For example, YPAC students from Kamnik (SI) presented the resolutions on quality of life to the 76<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Conference in Radovljica (SI) in June 2023.



*YPAC 2024 in Kamnik (SI). Photo: STA / Daniel Novakovič*

The YPAC delegation from the Akademisches Gymnasium Innsbruck (AT) also organised a meeting with Land Tyrol in October 2023 in which the Secretariat participated.

The 2024 edition of the YPAC took place from 11-15 March in the Rudolf Maister Grammar and Secondary School in Kamnik (SI). The students dealt with the topic 'protected natural areas' and accepted eight resolutions developed by the four committees on biodiversity, quality of life, climate change, and cultural heritage. Among the special guests of the opening ceremony was Nataša Pirc Musar, the Slovenian President. Furthermore, an exchange took place between the YPAC, the EUSALP Youth Council, and the CIPRA Youth Council. The Permanent Secretariat supported the organisation of the YPAC and the exchange with the Slovenian Presidency and the other Alpine youth organisations.

Again, the resolutions were presented to politicians by pupils on various occasions, notably the Alpine Biodiversity Conference organised by the Slovenian Presidency.

Following in the footsteps of Innsbruck (AT) and Sonthofen (DE) schools, in 2023 the Kantonsschule Trogen (CH) took over the YPAC general coordination, including the coordination meetings, for the next five years. During the first coordination meeting in Trogen from 6-8 November 2023, Trento (IT) was accepted as a new YPAC school, since the Liceo Ginnasio G.B. Brocchi in Bassano del Grappa (IT) was no longer able to participate. The next coordination meeting took place again in Trogen (CH), from 20-22 November 2024, successfully preparing the upcoming 2025 YPAC in Rosenheim (DE), which will focus on the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (SDGs). The Permanent Secretariat participated in both meetings (online in 2023 and on site in 2024).



*YPAC delegation visits Land Tyrol. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

## International cooperation

The designation by the United Nations of three mountain-related International Years, namely of Sustainable Mountain Development in 2022, Glaciers' Preservation in 2025 and Rangelands and Pastoralists in 2026, is creating a

### Convention on Biological Diversity

From 13-15 December 2022, the Permanent Secretariat for the first time attended the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). COP15 in Montreal (Canada) saw the adoption of the post-2020 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), which also frames the biodiversity activities of the Alpine Convention. The Permanent Secretariat cooperated with UNEP and further international partners in the organisation of the side event 'Ensuring Mountain Biodiversity' where the Alps were represented by Italy (as Chair of the ABB).

Following to the adoption of the GBF, the text of the new Memorandum of Cooperation between the CBD, the Alpine Convention, and the Carpathian Convention was finalised, and the document was signed. It was officially presented at a joint session organised in the frame of the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (see below).

The Permanent Secretariat has since been participating in regular exchanges between mountain stakeholders convened by the CBD Secretariat and

favourable momentum, through which the Permanent Secretariat has been reinforcing its links with mountain organisations and processes beyond the Alpine region.

UNEP, and, although not attending, officially supported the 'Mountain Biodiversity Like-Minded' working meeting at the SBSTTA meeting of the CBD on 17 October 2023 in Nairobi (Kenya).



*Side event at the CBD COP16. Photo. CONDESAN*

From 22-24 October 2024, the Permanent Secretariat attended COP16 in Cali (Colombia) and contributed to a side event on mountains organised by the Secretariat of the Andean Mountain Initiative, Condesan. This event was an opportunity to strengthen the cooperation with other regional mountain platforms, and to better link mountain biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation and mitigation.



## United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The Secretary General and Senior Executive Officer attended all three sessions of UNFCCC COP in the reporting period. At COP27 in Sharm-el-Sheikh (Egypt) from 8-10 November 2022, the Secretary General shared the Alpine Convention's experiences at the side event 'Mountains connect: Collaboration and partnership across mountain ranges' organised by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). At COP28 in Dubai (UAE) from 8-11 December 2023, she addressed the High-Level Segment and participated in two side events: 'Mountains of opportunity: how to leverage funding for climate adaptation' organised by the Adaptation at Altitude programme and UNEP, and 'Elevating mountains and the cryosphere to the forefront of international processes' organised by the Mountain Partnership. At COP29 in Baku (Azerbaijan), between 18-20 November 2024, she also delivered a statement in the High-Level Segment and at the Mountain Partnership's side event 'Accelerating climate change for mountains and mountain people'. The Permanent Secretariat also organised a presentation of the Alpine Convention and the ACB by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action at a side-event co-organised by UNEP on 21 November on 'National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Regional Approaches for

resilient Caucasus Mountains and Beyond'.

In response to the requests by mountain countries, the UNFCCC organised the first 'Expert Dialogue on Mountains and Climate Change' in the frame of the SBSTA meeting on 5 June 2024 in Bonn (DE). The Permanent Secretariat applied to speak, and the Secretary General was invited to a panel, while the Senior Executive Officer co-moderated a workshop. The Permanent Secretariat also contributed to the subsequent informal report. The Secretary General also spoke at the side event 'Mobilizing the Mountain Partnership Countries for addressing climate change' organised by the Mountain Partnership the previous evening.



*Secretary General at the High-Level Segment at the UNFCCC COP28. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

The Permanent Secretariat made use of the UNFCCC sessions to hold meetings with international partners including ICIMOD, the Andean Mountain Initiative and UNEP, and to liaise with several Alpine delegations.



## Mountain Partnership

The Deputy Secretary General attended the 6<sup>th</sup> Global Meeting of the Mountain Partnership in Aspen (USA) from 26-29 September 2022. He participated in a panel discussion on transboundary cooperation and conducted numerous bilateral meetings with attending organisations.



*Global Meeting of the Mountain Partnership in Aspen (USA). Photo: MPS*

Following the resulting 'Aspen Declaration' and a proposal from the Kyrgyz Republic, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the period from 2023 to 2027 as 'Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions'. This initiative aims to raise awareness in the international community about the unique challenges

## Carpathian Convention and UNEP

The Permanent Secretariat and the UNEP Vienna Programme Office, also in charge of the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, collaborated on numerous occasions over the reporting period. On 8 February 2023, the heads of both Secretariats met in Vienna to exchange views and review the joint activities, especially on the topic of biodiversity, the implementation of the trilateral Memorandum of Cooperation

faced by mountain countries and to invigorate international efforts to address them. To help achieve this objective, the Permanent Secretariat has been actively involved in the dedicated Working Group and Task Force coordinated by the Mountain Partnership Secretariat, contributing to the creation of a 'Global Action Framework for the Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions 2023-2027'. This framework incorporates various initiatives of the Alpine Convention, such as the implementation of the Climate Action Plan 2.0, the alignment of the objectives of the Kunming-Montreal GBF in the Alpine context, and endeavours to enhance the quality of life for people living in the Alps. The Permanent Secretariat attended the Mountain Partnership's Steering Committee meeting on 22 October 2024 and cooperated with the Mountain Partnership on UNFCCC side events, as described above.

linking them and the CBD, and cooperation with other mountain ranges worldwide, building on UNEP's Mountains Connect project and regular cooperation at UNFCCC COPs.

The Secretary General participated in a roundtable discussion on biodiversity at the Carpathian Ministerial Conference organised in Rzeszow (Poland) on 21 and 22 November 2022. She also spoke on the High-Level panel of the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention,



*Secretary General at the Carpathian Convention COP7 in Belgrade (RS). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

which took place in Belgrade, Serbia, from 11-13 October 2023, and in the presentation of the trilateral Memorandum of Cooperation the same day.

At the invitation of UNEP, the Permanent Secretariat, through its Bolzano/Bozen operational branch office, was part of the Selection Committee of the first Mountain Innovation Fair, organised by UNEP with GLOMOS, Eurac Research, and the UN University in Bolzano/Bozen from 23 to 25 October 2023. A total of 29 projects, mainly from the South Caucasus, the Carpathians, South-Eastern Europe, East

Africa, and Southern Africa as well as the Alps were selected to attend. Stakeholders and innovators learned from each other about innovative projects in the field of climate change adaptation and sustainable development in the mountains. Both the Chair of the Alpine Climate Board (ACB) and the Deputy Secretary General contributed to the fair.

On 8 February 2024, the Permanent Secretariat joined a workshop of the Central Mountains Interreg Project, which aims to strengthen governance models for sustainable development of mountain areas from the Alps to the Carpathians.



*Exhibition stand of the Alpine Convention at the Mountain Innovation Fair in Bolzano/Bozen (IT). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

## Hindu Kush Himalaya and ICIMOD

After intensifying cooperation with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) with a webinar and a visit by an ICIMOD delegation and members of the Hindu Kush Himalaya's High-Level Task Force (HLTF) to the Permanent Secretariat in Innsbruck in spring 2022, it was agreed that a joint Reading Mountains event would be organised in Kathmandu (see below). The event took part in the framework of the 'Resilient Solutions Conference and Expo 2022: Unlocking innovations and investments for green mountain economies' (RMS-Conference) hosted by ICIMOD from 5-7 December 2022 at their headquarters in Kathmandu/Lalitpur, Nepal. The Deputy Secretary General also represented the Alpine Convention in a high-level plenary session. Furthermore, bilateral meetings between the Alpine Convention and ICIMOD delegations took place in the framework of the conference to discuss areas of further cooperation.

In September 2023, the Deputy Secretary General attended the second Hindu Kush Himalaya Science Policy Forum on the

## Andean Mountain Initiative



*Exchange of the Alpine Convention, the Andean Mountain Initiative and UNEP in Ljubljana (SI): Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

Climate and Cryosphere Crisis in Kathmandu, Nepal. During this event, a trilateral meeting between ICIMOD, UNEP, and the Alpine Convention took place. The discussions revolved around potential areas of collaboration that could enhance the recognition of mountain-related issues on a global stage. The Permanent Secretariat also reiterated its commitment to supporting the formalisation and operationalisation of the cooperation between HKH countries, for instance through commenting on documents and participating in events.



*Deputy Secretary General at the Resilient Solutions Conference and Expo 2022 in Kathmandu (NP). Photo: ICIMOD*

The Permanent Secretariat hosted a delegation from the Andean Mountain Initiative and UNEP for a study visit and exchange about transnational cooperation in mountain areas in June 2023. This included a visit to the Innsbruck office and, in cooperation with the Slovenian Presidency, a visit to the Slovenian Ministry of Natural Resources



and Spatial Planning in Ljubljana and the Mojstrana Infopoint. Additionally, the Andean delegation participated in the 76<sup>th</sup> Permanent Committee meeting in Radovljica (SI). For this purpose, the Secretariat arranged the translation of the event into Spanish.



*Annual meeting of the Andean Mountain Initiative at the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bogotá. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

## Further outreach

The Permanent Secretariat also acts as Focal Point on Alpine Convention issues for the Steering Committee of the AlpPlan Alpine spatial planning network, which emerged from the OpenSpaceAlps ASP project in which the Secretariat was an observer. The Secretariat attended AlpPlan General Assemblies on 7 November 2022 in Vienna (AT), on 27 November 2023 in Ljubljana (SI), and on 27 November 2024 in Obergurgl (AT). It also gave a presentation at the AlpPlan Summer Course 'Mountains of Opportunities', which took place from 1-4 July 2023 in Avignon (FR) and where young professionals and students of spatial planning and territorial governance

From 2-4 July 2024, the Deputy Secretary General and the Project Officer in charge of international cooperation joined the Andean Mountain Initiative's annual meeting in Bogotá (Colombia). In the offices of the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Humboldt Institute, many presentations and workshops were held to exchange the participants' combined experience of sustainable mountain governance and to strengthen the network's role in protecting mountains across the globe. The Alpine delegation presented the governance structure of the Alpine Convention and relevant knowledge that it has gathered in the last 30 years.

discussed the instruments of the Alpine Convention and the importance of fringe territories for its implementation.

Depending on capacity, the Permanent Secretariat also occasionally accepts invitations to present the work of the Alpine Convention in different fora. Further to scientific or educational events (reported on under SOIA), in the reporting period the Secretariat contributed, among others, to the 'BITM XXIII – Giornate del Turismo Montano' (hybrid, 11 November 2022), the Congress of the Swiss Liaison in Italy (Trento, 13 May 2023), and the Forum Biella Creative Cities (hybrid, 20 October 2023).



# PROJECTS

The Alpine Convention comes to life through the work of the Alpine countries, Observer organisations, the Permanent Secretariat, and partners across the Alps. Their projects and activities showcase how the Alpine region is a model for sustainable development.

## Reading Mountains Festival

The [Reading Mountains Festival](#) is one of the Permanent Secretariat's longest running projects. It celebrates Alpine literary and cultural heritage and has been bringing together those who love mountains and books since 2015. Three editions of the Reading Mountains Festival took place in the reporting period, all showcasing a diverse array of activities such as readings, film screenings, poetry slams, workshops, and discussions that engaged communities and celebrated the rich Alpine culture and literature. In all editions, the Secretariat collaborated with old and new partners and carried out various promotional activities including preparing printed materials as well as social media campaigns.

The Alpine Convention Infopoints are always very active partners in the Festival, and 2022-2024 were no exceptions; each Infopoint organised one or more activities in each edition. The Permanent Secretariat provided financial support to all Infopoints as well as selected other partners.

These initiatives contribute to the implementation on the ground of the Framework Convention and Protocols in the Alpine countries. Below is an overview of the projects carried out by the Permanent Secretariat.



*Secretary General at the 2022 Reading Mountains event in Berlin (DE). Photo: Christoph Wehrer*

On and around 11 December 2022, more than 100 events were organised under the umbrella of the Festival across the Alps and beyond.

The Secretary General participated in a reading and discussion organised in Berlin by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection and the Slovenian Embassy.

Many of the other events were connected to the theme of International Mountain Day 2022, 'Women move mountains', including the event by the Mojstrana Infopoint at the Slovenian



*Reading Mountains event 2022 in Bolzano / Bozen. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

Alpine Museum which presented the biography of one of the best female interwar Alpine climbers, Mira Marko Debelak Deržaj. The Domodossola Infopoint once again organised the 'Reading Mountains Infopoint Award' which is dedicated to narrative texts written by middle and high school pupils on the theme of mountains. The topic of the 2022 edition was 'Mountains and fantasy'. The winning pupils took part in a workshop at the Secretariat's operational branch office in Bolzano/Bozen and a closing event the following spring, as reported above.

The Permanent Secretariat also supported partners organising events in its host cities: in Innsbruck, Austrian photographer Irmtraud Hubatschek held a visual presentation in the Tyrolia bookshop with photos of her book 'Almzeit – Up on the alp', while the

Wagner'sche bookshop hosted a reading and discussion with Ágnes Czingulski and Mikael Vogel. In Bolzano/Bozen, a reading workshop for young children was organised at the Secretariat's operational branch office, together with the Sagapò association.

Reflecting the international dimension of the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development, the Secretariat and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) organised a series of events in Kathmandu, Nepal. Under the title 'Alps meet the Hindu Kush Himalaya' a photo exhibition by Erika and Irmtraud Hubatschek was on display during a conference at the ICIMOD headquarters as well as during the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival.

In 2023, again more than 100 events were registered in seven Alpine countries as well as in Nepal, Serbia, and Iran.



*Reading Mountains event 2022 in Kathmandu (NP). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

In Slovenia, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning organised a reading of the book 'Triglav is Ours' on the occasion of

the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Slovenian Mountaineering Association.



*Reading Mountains event 2023 in Tolmin (SI).  
Photo: Posoški razvojni center*

Other highlights included the events by the Alpine Convention Infopoints: a literary evening with Reinhold and Diane Messner organised by the Tolmin Infopoint, the multimedia show 'Overwriting borders' with Austrian author Sieglind Demus and Slovenian jazz musician Lado Jakša at the Villach Infopoint, or the "Reading Mountains Corner" hosted by the Grand Paradis National Park Infopoint in Cogne, where Alpine literature was showcased in an immersive experience, inviting visitors to explore videos, books, and virtual reality (VR) experiences.



*Reading Mountains events in Bolzano/Bozen (IT) 2023. Photos: Permanent Secretariat*

The operational branch office in Bolzano/Bozen organised three free

events in the centre of the city during the weekend of 9 and 10 December: a restorative yoga and meditation session in collaboration with the studio Wanderlust, a presentation of the book 'Il velo' by the local writer Flavio Pintarelli at the Nuova Libreria Cappelli moderated by a senior researcher from Eurac Research, and a free screening of the film 'Le otto montagne', based on Paolo Cognetti's novel and awarded with the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, at Cinema FILMCLUB Capitol.



*Reading Mountains event 2023 in Innsbruck (AT).  
Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

In Innsbruck, together with Alliance in the Alps and in the frame of the 'BeyondSnow' ASP project, the Secretariat co-organised a reading of 'The last snow' by author Arno Camenisch at the Tyrolia bookshop. This was followed by a panel discussion with the author, tourism experts, and the Permanent Secretariat, focussing on the challenges of declining snow cover in the Alps and potential solutions. At the Wagner'sche bookshop, Antonio Fian and poetry slammer Mieke Medusa gave a reading, followed by a discussion about hiking and mountains.



An international highlight was the 'Reading Mountains around the World' event, organised by the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Tehran (Iran) in the framework of the Slovenian Presidency of the Alpine Convention. The event showcased literature from 15 different countries with mountainous regions and facilitated interesting cultural exchanges.

In Pokhara, Nepal, the 'Alps meet the Hindu Kush Himalaya' exhibition was presented by Irmtraud Hubatschek at the International Mountain Museum.

Finally in 2024 the Permanent Secretariat celebrated the tenth edition of the Festival. This first big anniversary was honoured with more than 100 events in all eight Alpine countries.



*Reading Mountains event 2024 in Villach (AT).  
Photo: Robert Heuberger*

The new Koroška Infopoint dedicated their Reading Mountains event to the new protected area, the Regional Park Pohorje Hills. Celebrating the 'Pohorje Hill Days' the Infopoint had an array of events including a roundtable discussion, two film screenings, and a presentation on Pohorje and Kozjak. The

Ötscher-Tormäuer Infopoint organised an interactive event, a 'Winter farmers' market' at their nature park centre. Mountain stories were read, and mini theatres created around them – with the audience joining in. Moreover, they organised a second-hand library, a craft station for children to send Christmas wish lists, and a choir for musical accompaniment.



*Reading Mountains event 2024 in Innsbruck (AT).  
Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

The Wagner'sche bookshop in Innsbruck offered a reading of a book combining two controversial topics: mass tourism and depopulation in the Alps. The story was about a return to the village of childhood – here Hallstatt, the centre of tourism in Upper Austria. At the operational branch office in Bolzano /Bozen two readings from Luca Saltini and Paolo Martini were followed by a South Tyrolean Alpine aperitif with local products.

The anniversary was celebrated with many old partners – the Tyrolia bookshop in Innsbruck has been a partner since the first edition – but also welcomed many new organisers. A few of these were the Alpinium, a centre for nature experiences which organised the first *MountainMic* Poetry Slam, or the





*Reading Mountains event 2024 in Wipptal (AT).  
Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

Tyrolean cultural centre Wipptalherz, where an evening was organised under the theme 'Moving Mountains'.



*New visual identity of Reading Mountains*

In anticipation of this anniversary edition, the Secretariat also gave the Festival a new visual identity, an eye-

## Young Academics Award

The Permanent Secretariat launched the sixth edition of the [Young Academics Award](#) for exceptional master's theses in April 2023 with the support of the Slovenian Presidency and in cooperation with ISCAR. The topic 'Responding to environmental change and maintaining high quality of life' is linked to all three priorities of the Slovenian Presidency and the MAP 2023-2030. As has been done previously, for this edition the Alpine Convention Infopoints were also

catching combination of the original design and the Alpine Convention's corporate identity. The new logo and colours represent the playful, creative spirit that is at the heart of the Festival.

The Permanent Secretariat attended presentations of the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the Domodossola Infopoint Reading Mountains award on 9 December in Verbania (IT) (with an address by the Secretary General) and on 10 December in Domodossola.

Moreover, many events in 2022, 2023, and 2024 were organised in cooperation with other Alpine Convention Observers such as Alparc or CIPRA, as well as Alpine Associations from Italy, South Tyrol, Slovenia, and Switzerland, different Alpine Towns of the Year, the Swiss Academy of Sciences (SCNAT), several protected areas, Mountain Wilderness and the non-profit organisation Protect our Winters.

invited to support the award by offering prizes for works relevant to their geographical area. Six (of the then seven) Infopoints decided to join the initiative. The call closed on 31 July 2024 and 31 master's theses, which corresponded to all criteria, were submitted for evaluation. The four members of the international expert jury selected eight finalists for the main prize and, in agreement with the representatives of the Infopoints, one finalist for each of the

Infopoint prizes. The finalists will get the opportunity to present their work at a final workshop on 21 January 2025 at Brdo Pri Kranju (SI), with the award ceremony taking place on the same day in the scope of the minister's Alpine Conference reception.

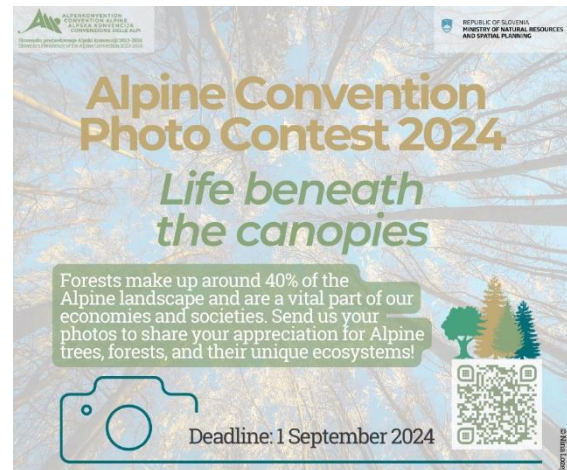


*Flyer for the 2024 edition of the Young Academics Award*

## Photo Contest

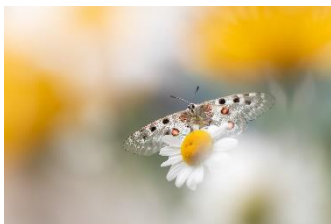
'Life beneath the canopies', 'From pasture to plate', and 'Alpine plays of light' were the topics chosen, respectively, for the 2024, 2023, and 2022 editions of the Alpine Convention [Photo Contest](#) and resulting calendars. The Slovenian Presidency of the Alpine Convention provided financial support to the 2023 and 2024 edition. The 2022 and 2023 editions of the Photo Contest attracted around 200 submissions while the 2024 edition received over 450 photos. For the 2023 and 2024 editions, a new approach in communicating on social media was used, namely paid advertising to make the posts more targeted to those interested in both the topic and photography in general. This proved successful in attracting photographers on the relatively specific topic of 2023, and in general in increasing the outreach.

Each year, the winners were revealed on the Alpine Convention's social media



*Flyer of the Alpine Convention's 2024 Photo Contest*

channels in the form of an advent calendar in the 13 days leading up to Christmas, with the winning picture announced on 24 December. The photographers of the three winning photos were awarded financial prizes, promotional items, and copies of the calendar. The calendars were distributed to all Contracting Parties, Observer organisations, and the Alpine Convention's local and international partners.



*Winning pictures of the 2024 Photo Contest. From left to right: Manuela Gortan (1<sup>st</sup> place), Roberto Arcaro (2<sup>nd</sup> place), Aleš Frelih (3<sup>d</sup> place)*

# SOIA

In 2023 and 2024, the Permanent Secretariat continued with various SOIA activities, most prominently concerning the [Reports on the State of the Alps](#) and

the [Alpine Convention Atlas](#), but also maintaining and widening the network of research and scientific actors in the Alpine area.

## Reports on the State of the Alps

### Ninth Report on the State of the Alps “Alpine Towns”

After the publication of the Ninth Report on the State of the Alps (RSA 9) in English and with the policy recommendations translated into all Alpine languages, the Secretariat commissioned the translation of the full analysis and scenarios chapters and carried out a linguistic harmonisation. The translations were published in August 2024. Two maps from the report (maps of the Alpine towns and universities) were also published on the Alpine Convention Atlas.

Following the dissemination event organised by the Swiss Presidency online on 9 November 2022, the Permanent Secretariat facilitated the organisation of a panel discussion on Alpine Towns with one of the RSA 9

authors, the President of the Alpine Town of the Year Association, and a senior spatial planner from the City of Innsbruck in the framework of the ‘Journalismusfest Innsbruck’, an international media festival that took place in Innsbruck from 13-15 May 2023.



*Panel discussion on Alpine Towns at the Journalismusfest Innsbruck (AT). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

### Tenth Report on the State of the Alps on quality of life

The work on the Tenth Report on the State of the Alps already began in December 2022 at the workshop of the Chairs of the Thematic Working Bodies. In addition to a thematic discussion with the Chairs, an introductory meeting took place with the already nominated

national members and the Focal Points. The first meeting of the ad hoc Working Group took place from 31 January to 1 February 2023 in Innsbruck, followed by an online meeting on 17 April and two further in-person meetings on 20 June in Radovljica (SI) (back-to-back with the



PC76) and on 26 September at the Secretariat's Bolzano/Bozen operational branch office. In addition, a joint workshop was organised with the ABB on 27 September on the links between biodiversity and quality of life. Four more meetings took place in 2024: on 16 January, 10 June, and 6 September online and from 9-10 April in Moosburg (AT), combined with a field visit to the municipality as an example of several best practices. In addition, a joint online meeting with the Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development WG took place on 22 May to discuss the recommendation proposals with territorial dimension.



*Meeting of the RSA 10 Working Group in Bolzano/Bozen (IT). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

## Alpine Convention Atlas

In 2023 and 2024, the Atlas remained one of the key dissemination tools of the Alpine Convention. The Permanent Secretariat continued to prepare new maps and layers to keep the platform interesting and up to date, especially in cooperation with some of the Observers:



*RSA 10 meeting in Moosburg (AT). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

The Permanent Secretariat offered continuous organisational and logistical support to the Chair and the team of experts from the University of Ljubljana contracted to write the report. The Secretariat is also coordinating and contributing to the translation and linguistic harmonisation of the Report as well as the elaboration of an attractive design and layout.

Furthermore, the Secretariat is coordinating the communication and dissemination activities for the RSA 10 with inputs from the Working Group members, including the preparation of a communication toolbox and a collection of events and different publications and media featuring the RSA 10.

together with CIPRA International, a map was created of pastoralism networks in the Alps; a map of the member towns was prepared in cooperation with the Alpine Town of the Year Association; and in cooperation with ALPARC, a map was made showing protected areas in

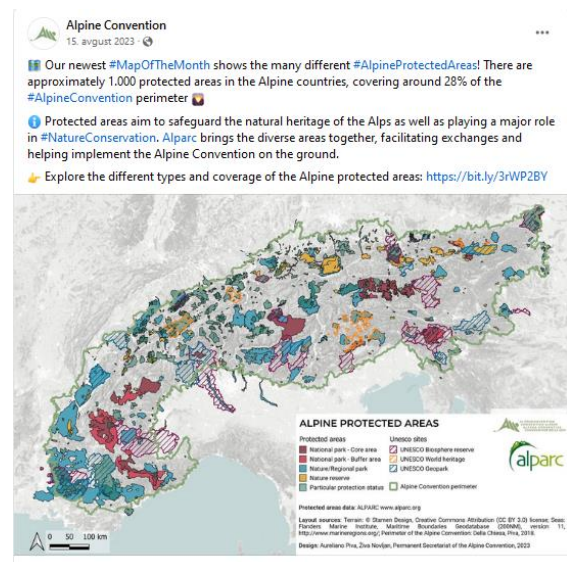
the Alps. An updated map of the governance frameworks in the Alps was also prepared and published. The mapping activities of the Permanent Secretariat also include preparing other maps and calculations of geodata for internal needs and on demand for different projects and partners.

The Atlas has on average between 100 and 150 visits per week, mainly from the Alpine countries, but also the USA, the United Kingdom, and a several of the other EU countries, to name just the most frequent ones.

The platform is hosted by Eurac Research and a good cooperation and regular exchange is maintained between the Secretariat and the respective department.

The use of the Atlas was promoted on several occasions: internally mostly with the TWBs and the Observers and externally in the scope of different

presentations for students or the scientific and research community. The Secretariat continued with the social media campaign Map of the Month, which encourages direct visits to the platform by presenting special thematic maps with some additional content or explanations.



*Map of the Month August 2023*

## Research and education networking

The Permanent Secretariat is in regular contact with multiple partners from science, research and education.



*With the VAO on the Zugspitze (DE). Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

The Permanent Secretariat is an official observer to the Virtual Alpine Observatory (VAO). The Secretary General held a welcoming speech at the 6<sup>th</sup> VAO symposium from 21-23 March 2023 in Grainau (DE). The Secretariat also took part in three VAO Board meetings, one on the side of the symposium another on 26 October 2023 in Munich. The most recent VAO Board meeting, on 19 March 2024, was hosted by the Secretariat. On this occasion, the synergies between the work of the network and the Alpine Convention

were explored, as the VAO, which has a new coordinator since 2023, established a new strategy that envisages deeper cooperation with the Alpine Convention. The Secretariat also spoke about the importance of high-altitude environmental research for policymaking at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UFS Schneesfernerhaus research centre on 5 December 2024.

After involving the Chairs of the TWBs to provide inputs to steer the development of earth observation services on Alpine ecosystems in the scope of the ECO4Alps project in 2021, the Permanent Secretariat continued to fulfil its role as a stakeholder in the project. After a first version of the online earth observation services was presented, the Secretariat provided feedback and liaised with the members of the TWBs to gather feedback from a wider group of experts.

The Permanent Secretariat is also in regular exchange with the Global Mountain Safeguard Research (GLOMOS) and cooperated in the frame of the first Mountain Innovation Fair as previously reported.

Together with the Chair of the Alpine Climate Board, the Permanent Secretariat responded to a request from Copernicus Climate Change Services (C3S) and initiated cooperation, as described in the ACB sub-chapter.

The Secretariat intervened in various other research and education fora. In particular, the Secretary General opened the ninth conference of the international association of mountain study centres

Rete Montagna, 'Next Generation Mountains', which took place in Malborghetto-Valbruna (IT) from 8-10 June 2023.

On 14 September 2023, she held a keynote speech at the annual conference of the Austrian Association for Ecology and Environmental Research in Innsbruck.

The Permanent Secretariat also gave a presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Mountain Agriculture Research Unit of the University of Innsbruck on 14 October 2022.

Lectures on the Alpine Convention were delivered in the following study programmes: 'Sustainable development in the Alps' course of the Bachelor of Environmental Engineering at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (CH), online on 8 November 2022; 'Mountain Ecosystems and Resource Management' Summer Field School of the Grassroot Institute, online on 20 September 2023 (including a video address by the Secretary General); and 'Mountain Regions' of the University of Innsbruck on 4 December 2023 and again on 18 November 2024.



*Student visit from Berlin in the Permanent Secretariat's Innsbruck office. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

Finally, the Secretariat hosted several youth and student groups on its premises in Innsbruck to bring the work of the Alpine Convention closer to the younger generations: from the Chamonix climbing club (13 April 2023), Vöcklabruck (AT) high school (7 July 2023), the Humboldt University of Berlin (7 August 2023, in cooperation with the WWF), the University of Applied Sciences of Chur (CH) (5 December 2023), from the New Orleans Summer School in Innsbruck (AT) on 15 July 2024, and from the Communication Institute of Lyon III University (FR) on 28 November 2024.



# COMMUNICATION

The official Communication Strategy of the Alpine Convention contains objectives for communicating the Alpine Convention, its work, and activities. In 2024, the Communication Strategy adopted in 2020 was updated and upgraded and approved by the Permanent Committee at its 79<sup>th</sup> meeting. The overall idea of the strategy remains unchanged; it is centred on the Alpine Convention's brand statement. In general, the strategy has been made more user-friendly and streamlined the communication objectives. The array of tools being used, for instance the selection of social media, has been updated.

More focus has been accorded to the essential role of the Contracting Parties, Observers, Infopoints, members of the Thematic Working Bodies as well as other important "multipliers" in strengthening communication about the Alpine Convention. The strategy will be revised further when need will arise.

The Permanent Secretariat implements the Strategy in its daily work, both in terms of content production as well as longer term objective setting.

Content on the Alpine Convention website in the form of news stories about events, meetings, conferences, projects

or other milestones represents a major part of communication and is supported by posts on the Convention's social media channels. Targeted mailings to partners and other interested parties as well as printed media are another important way to reach more people. In addition, the Secretariat continues to carry out its own communication projects as mentioned in a previous section. The numerous internal and external meetings, events, and conferences reported in the previous sections represent a further type of communication activity.

The corporate identity of the Alpine Convention is incorporated into all activities and products of the Permanent Secretariat. The Secretariat also provides ongoing support to the Contracting Parties and Observers for a coherent implementation of the corporate identity in all products and outputs of the Alpine Convention. The Secretariat continues to support the Contracting Parties and Observers in communicating their Alpine Convention relevant activities.

The following sections provide an overview of some of the most important communication and outreach activities carried out during the reporting period.

## Communication cooperation

A quarterly 'Communication Jour Fixe' is organised to facilitate information

sharing between the Permanent Secretariat, the Contracting Parties, and

Observers. These meetings are an opportunity to informally exchange ideas and information on the diverse communication activities of the Alpine

## New tools

The Secretariat also decided to prepare another Alpine Convention film, this time an animated one about climate action in the Convention. The video was



*New animated video. Graphics: Minimento*

## Print materials

Thanks to a voluntary contribution from Germany, the Permanent Secretariat was able to give a new look to two of its most versatile printed resources: the general Alpine Convention flyer and the map of the Alps, both dating back to 2015.



*New flyer: back (left) and front page (right).*

The flyer, released in early 2023, conveys basic facts and the main messages about the Alpine Convention in few words and many attractive

Convention and its bodies. The *jour fixe* is also a forum in which Contracting Parties and Observers can explore synergies for communication activities.

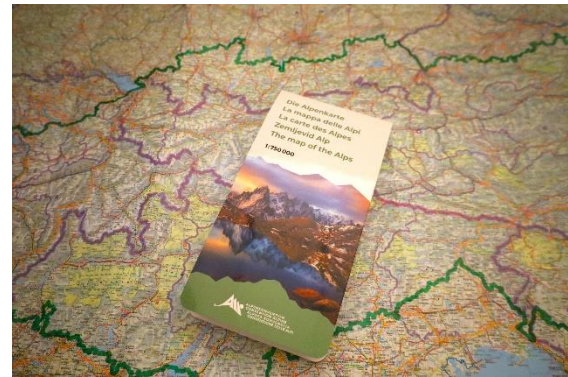
prepared by French design company Minimento, and the Secretariat secured the expertise of Educ'alpes, the French network of educators. Thanks to their input, the Convention now has a new informative and educational communication tool that can be used by different partners to reach a broad audience. The film is available in various formats in English and the Alpine languages.

photographs. It was produced in printed and digital form in the four Alpine languages and in English.

As mentioned earlier, with financial support from Austria, personalised variations of the Alpine Convention leaflet were also prepared for each of the Infopoints, where one of the pages highlights their organisation and activities towards the implementation of the Alpine Convention. These flyers were produced in the respective languages of the Infopoints – both Italian and French for Grand Paradis.

The map of the Alps consists of a folded geographic map with, on one side, a travel map in the scale 1:750.000 and on the reverse a decorative map based on a

satellite image. The Alpine Convention application perimeter is prominently displayed on both maps, giving visibility to the principles of transnational cooperation. Protected areas also stand out on the travel map and the Via Alpina hiking trail, the EuroVelo long-distance cycling trails, and UNESCO World Heritage Sites were added.



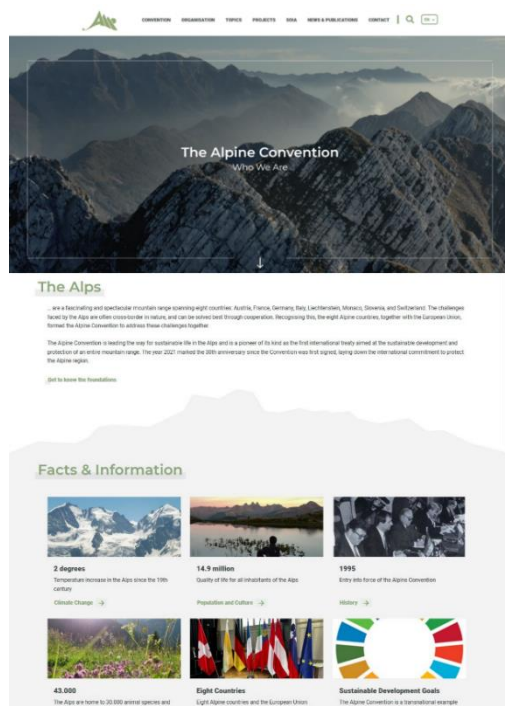
*New map of the Alps. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*

## Online presence

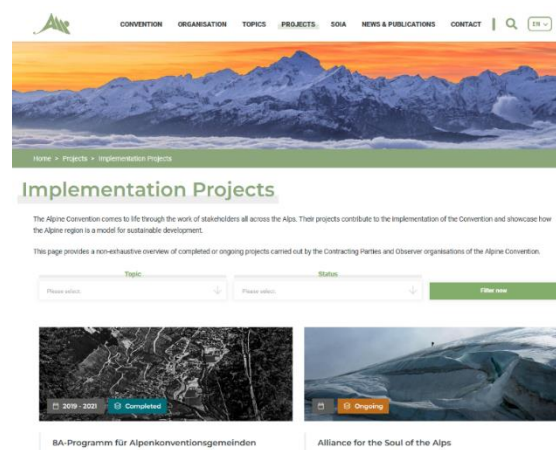
The Alpine Convention website provides a centralised collection of documents, technical information, and other relevant resources to the Alpine Convention and its bodies, as well as serving as an information base for the general public. The website also hosts the projects organised by the Secretariat such as the Reading Mountains Festival,

the Young Academics Award, and the annual Photo Contest.

The website remains a well-used tool for communicating ongoing work and projects and other important developments in the Alpine Convention and its bodies.



*New homepage layout*



*New overview of Implementation Projects*

The revamp of the website carried out in 2021 and 2022 thanks to financial support from Germany concluded in autumn 2022. The general surfing experience was significantly improved with a newly designed homepage,



increased user-friendliness, and full alignment with the new Alpine Convention corporate identity. Links between the Convention and the SDGs were also visualised.

A further feature enriched the website's contents in spring 2023: an overview of [projects](#) carried out by the Contracting Parties and Observer organisations that contribute to the implementation of the Alpine Convention.

A LinkedIn account was created for the Alpine Convention, which helps reach different audiences and received a lot of positive feedback. The number of followers was over 1.240 in November 2024 and continues to steadily increase. In September 2024, the Alpine Convention also set up an Instagram account with the aim of reaching younger generations who are very active on the platform.

The Permanent Secretariat also increased activity on its Facebook channel, which has a steady number of around 3.000 page likes and 3.200 followers. Due to a decline in quality and use of the platform X (formerly Twitter), the Secretariat decided to cease use of the platform and focus on the other three channels.

The Secretariat used these three social media channels to promote events and interesting and important developments in the Alpine Convention and its network, to showcase the TWBs (as reported above), to communicate Contracting Party, Observer, and partner events, to spread awareness of Alpine issues, and to celebrate International Days.

Some of the most popular posts were linked to the projects of the Secretariat, such as the Photo Contest, the new video, and International Days.

## Bringing the Alpine Convention closer to the people



Interviews with the Tyrolian newspaper 20er (left) and the Eurac research magazine (right).



The Permanent Secretariat supported several external initiatives to raise awareness of the Convention.

An important opportunity for high-level visibility came during the 19<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Bled Strategic Forum (2-3 September 2024). The Alpine Convention's promotional film was shown in the frame of a session 'Orchestrating Dialogue: Night Owl Concert and Discussion', organised in cooperation with the Slovenian Presidency of the Alpine Convention. The screening was accompanied by a live musical performance by the Bled Strategic Forum Symphony Orchestra. The session was moderated and conducted by Žiga Pirnat (producer and composer of the soundtrack of the film). This was a unique occasion to bring the Alpine Convention's mission to a broad audience including many high-ranking officials from around the world.

Once again financial support was provided to the Innsbruck Nature Film Festival (October 2022, 2023, and 2024 editions) in return for visibility of the Alpine Convention during the festival. Moreover, for the 2024 edition of the Festival, the Secretariat supported the creation of an Alpine Convention film prize for the "Best film on Quality of Life in the Alps". It was one of the Special Awards at the festival, and aimed at shining a light on how special the Alps are. The prize was awarded to the film 'Piemont – Mit Mulis über Stock und Stein' (Piedmont – Over hill and dale with mules), directed by Philipp Landauer and Davide Michelis. The

secretariat was pleased to hand over the award to Philipp and to meet Davide and the two protagonists. The latter three also visited the Secretariat's headquarters in Innsbruck where they had a chance to share their unique story with the Secretary General and learn more about the work of the Convention.



*Alpine Convention film prize at the INFF.  
Photo: BAUSE*

The Secretariat also provided financial and networking support to the second (2023) and third editions (2024) of the Journalism Festival in Innsbruck. The panel discussion on the RSA 9 mentioned above was a highlight at the second edition – it was very well-attended and helped bring the Alpine Convention into the public view. For the 2024 edition, the Deputy Secretary General interviewed Alpine geographer Werner Bätzing about his latest book.

The Secretary General also gave interviews with various local newspapers or magazines on specific topics. One example was the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Secretariat in November 2023. On this occasion, Secretary General Alenka Smerkolj gave interviews for Eurac's research magazine (Bozen/Bolzano (IT)) and the

20er newspaper (Innsbruck (AT)). On the occasion of International Biodiversity Day in May 2024, the Secretary General also wrote an opinion piece together with the Slovenian Ambassador to Austria, H.E. Aleksander Geržina, and the Chair of the Permanent Committee, Emil Ferjančič. The article was published in the Austrian daily newspaper 'Die Presse' which reaches an audience of around 250.000 readers.

The Permanent Secretariat also continued to provide various content

and promotional materials to the Alpine Convention Infopoints to support them with their communication efforts, in addition to the personalised flyers mentioned above, and a roll-up for the new Infopoints Koroška Regional Development Agency and Ötscher-Tormäuer.

Finally, the Permanent Secretariat continued to disseminate publications and promotional items at relevant events and upon request from the public and partners.

# TEAM OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT

The past two years again saw several changes in the team of the Permanent Secretariat.

In preparation for the retirement of the Deputy Secretary General, also covering the missions of Legal Officer, and thanks to a voluntary contribution from Liechtenstein, a new Legal Officer was already recruited in June 2024 to allow for an appropriate induction period.

Two new Project Officers also joined the team in Innsbruck. One was hired in March 2023 to replace a colleague whose contract had come to an end. He is covering, among other duties, the topics of transport and energy as well as relationships with several Contracting Parties and international partners. France generously seconded a further Project Officer from the end of August. This allowed a position to be filled which had been vacant in the past year and, from 2024, is counted as France's in-kind contribution to the ordinary budget of the Permanent Secretariat. This new colleague focuses on supporting the biodiversity-related activities of the Alpine Convention. Italy prolonged the contract of the second Project Officer based at the Bolzano/Bozen operational branch office. Both Project Officer positions in the branch office likewise constitute an in-kind contribution of Italy to the budget from 2024 onwards.

An external consultant was contracted in autumn 2022 to assume the functions of Support Officer to the Slovenian Presidency. At the same time, the Project Assistant who had been supporting the Swiss Presidency and coordinating the Reading Mountains Festival took over the duties of Assistant to the Secretary General upon the departure of the previous postholder and until the return of the Assistant from parental leave in summer 2023. The Assistant to the Secretary General returned part-time only, but thanks to voluntary contributions from Germany, France and Monaco, the Project Assistant position was prolonged. This position saw a personnel change when one of the interns working at the Permanent Secretariat took over from his colleague in December 2023.



*Names of all colleagues in the 20 years of Permanent Secretariat*

Thanks to voluntary contributions from Germany, Austria, France, Slovenia, and Monaco, resources in the EUSALP unit were increased, with the second Project Officer remaining in office after the return of her colleague (part-time) from parental leave.

In autumn 2024, both Projects Officers in charge of EUSALP went on maternity leave. The Project Assistant was promoted to Project Officer, dedicating half of his time to EUSALP and half to Communications. The recruitment of a new Project Officer is ongoing.

Finally, over the reporting period, the team of the Permanent Secretariat has included five interns, each from a different Alpine country, counting one student hosted within the frame of the Memorandum of Understanding with the University of the Aosta Valley.

The Permanent Secretariat has been dedicating time to formalising its various recurring processes to optimise workflows and enable easier handover between staff members. In terms of staff development, team members attended a

training in photography and one on first aid. Individual members also benefitted from courses in topics such as languages or management.

The team members share a passion for the mountains and the Secretariat has been participating in the 'Tirol radelt' cycling campaign since 2020. In 2022, 2023, and 2024, the team came first in terms of participation rate among organisations with 10 to 50 employees – in Tyrol and, in 2023, even for the whole of Austria! The distance pedalled has been increasing every year, amounting to 12.388,97 km in the 2024 edition. More ideas on sustainable living were also shared in an internal sustainability challenge.

At the 77<sup>th</sup> Permanent Committee meeting, the Secretary General presented the highlights of the work of the Permanent Secretariat since its establishment 20 years earlier, and the team was deeply moved by the songs composed especially and performed by Parties and Observers to express their gratitude!



*Team of the Permanent Secretariat. Photo: Permanent Secretariat*





ALPENKONVENTION  
CONVENTION ALPINE  
ALPSKA KONVENCIJA  
CONVENZIONE DELLE ALPI