



This year's YPAC held at Kamnik in Slovenia saw young people discuss conservation in the Alps. © Tabea Tandler press group ypac

### Youthful ideas for “My Green Alps”

**What will it take for residents of the Alps to take responsibility for their own habitat? Participants of the Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention provided some answers at Kamnik in Slovenia.**

A balanced ecosystem and human well-being go hand in hand in the Alps. Young people in the Alps are not only aware of this connection: they also recognise that measures to secure the services provided by natural environments affect many areas of life.

This is among the central findings of the Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention (YPAC), held last week from 16 to 20 March 2015 in the Slovenian town of Kamnik. This year's theme “My Green Alps – ecosystem services in times of climate change” was inspired by the international recharge.green project, which seeks to balance nature conservation and the production of renewable energy. It is co-financed by the EU in the framework of the Alpine Space programme. The Slovenian partners of recharge.green provided expert support to the young politicians, while CIPRA, as a partner of both recharge.green and YPAC, carried out public relations work and assisted in exchanges with political representatives and the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention.

#### **Laws alone are not enough**

In their discussions with the decision-makers, the young people discovered that politics is not always the right place in which to safeguard the services of natural areas. Consciousness-raising measures have to accompany any legal framework. Thus raising people's awareness was a recurring theme among the ten demands set out during the course of the week by the 70 or so young people present, who hailed from every Alpine country.

The commitment of these young people was acknowledged by representatives of “high” politics, with Milan Brglez, president of the Slovenian national parliament in Ljubljana, where the final debate was held, emphasising: “The Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention is encouraging proof that young people are aware of their habitat and that they are taking responsibility for their future.”

#### **Europe is calling!**

Another concern of the youthful attendees was to strengthen local identity and the cultural heritage. Cassiano Luminati, president of the Swiss region of Valposchiavo and a guest at YPAC 2015, believes that Europe needs these young Alpine citizens and their ability to move seamlessly between local identity and intercultural exchanges: they can usefully provide more content for the European Strategy for the Alps, currently under development.

Further information: <http://www.ypac.eu/press>, <http://www.recharge-green.eu/infoservice-2/media-information/>, [www.ypac.eu/resolutions](http://www.ypac.eu/resolutions)

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## Point of view



Katharina Conradin is president of CIPRA International © Heinz Heiss

## The Alps: on course for sustainability

**It is time to reflect on the unique values of the Alps, emphasises the President of CIPRA International, Katharina Conradin, after her first 100 days in office. Her plea is for a common goal: the Alps as a model region for sustainability.**

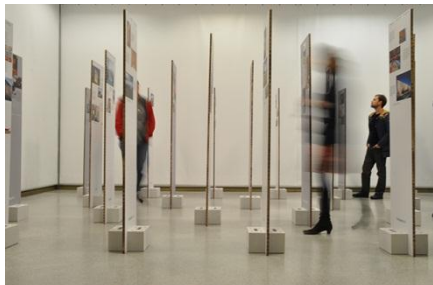
European policy for mountain regions – *quo vadis?* After some 100 days as President of CIPRA International, this question appears to me more pressing than ever. What is the common element today? Bringing growth to the most remote valleys? Minimising transit traffic? Establishing more protected areas? Unlike some decades ago, it seems that today there is no common vision for the development of mountain regions. But that does not mean we are merely doomed to wait - the numerous projects springing up around CIPRA are showing the way: sustainability is the goal!

For many people, the visions contained in the Alpine Convention have lost their original glamour. Long the precept for future-oriented development in the Alps, the Alpine Convention today leads a shadowy existence. Bureaucratic obstacles and lengthy decision-making processes in the signatory states are making it difficult to implement measures. The emerging Macro-Regional Strategy for the Alps is on the other hand almost stratospheric in conception; its statements of objectives are so open to interpretation that they are destined to fall prey to various interest groups. Instead of acting as a spur for new action, it threatens to become a mere daydream.

Yet alongside international politics we can apply our own values as guiding principles. Despite the many challenges facing the Alps, such as transit traffic, climate change and demographic issues, they are also blessed with unique natural landscapes, innovative minds and relative prosperity. Outstanding projects show what sustainable living and economic activity in the Alps really mean. Let us do the same! The Alpine Convention can serve as a basis while the Macro-Regional Strategy can become an implementation-oriented instrument.

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## News from the CIPRA



Both renovations and new buildings can be nominated for the Constructive Alps prize. © CBegle

## Nominations for Alps-wide architecture prize

**Switzerland and Liechtenstein, with technical and organisational support from CIPRA, will for the third time be awarding prizes to buildings in the Alps that demonstrate particular aesthetic and sustainable qualities. The jury has now nominated 32 projects for the “Constructive Alps” Architecture Prize.**

Of 350 submissions received from across the Alpine region, the jury for the “Constructive Alps” international architecture prize has now selected 32 projects and invited them to participate in the second round. The common theme connecting these projects is the renaissance of the village in the Alps. “The jury welcomes continued building\* in villages as a significant contribution to sustainability. The Alps are home to numerous buildings for which intelligent alternatives for further use can be

found”, says jury chairman Köbi Gantenbein.

New buildings can also contribute to the renaissance of the village, for example the unpretentious kindergarten in the municipality of Muntlix, Austria, which was built entirely of wood from the surrounding forests. The jury will be paying visits to the nominated projects in the coming months and the prize-winners will be announced at the Alpine Museum in Bern on 30 October 2015.

Source and further information: <http://www.constructivealps.net/presse/> (de/fr/it/sl)

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Solutions to the conflict between nature conservation and energy production. The final conference of the recharge.green project will take place in Sonthofen, Germany with the support of the “Alpine Town of the Year” association. © Kenneth Brockmann / pixelio.de

### Energy and nature in the Alps: a balancing act

**How do we manage the balancing act between renewable energy production and nature conservation in the Alps? The final conference of the recharge.green project can provide the answers. Organised by CIPRA, it will take place from 20 to 21 May 2015 in Sonthofen, Germany.**

The conflict of aims between the costs and benefits of producing renewable energy lay at the heart of the recharge.green project. The focus was (among other things) on the extent of the Alpine-wide potentials for producing energy from water, wind, biomass and solar sources in the Alps. From 20 to 21 May 2015 the 16 partners, including CIPRA, will be publishing their results at the international conference on “Energy and nature in the Alps: a balancing act” to be held in Sonthofen, the 2005 Alpine Town of the Year. Also being presented is a newly developed system that provides an objective basis for decisions on the production of renewable energy. Representatives from the project pilot areas will be reporting on their experiences with the participatory processes that arise from conflicts between energy use, nature and landscape. An evening event for local people, a poster exhibition and excursions (for example to the famous energy village of Wildpoldsried) will round off the programme.

CIPRA is responsible for the organisation of the final conference and for public relations work. The recharge.green project is co-financed by the European Fund for Regional Development in the context of the Alpine Space programme. The German Environment Ministry is providing financial support for CIPRA’s work. For more information and registration see: <http://www.recharge-green.eu/finalconference>

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Harmful HGVs: trucks are the cause of high air pollution levels along Alpine motorways. © Andreas Mendyk, flickr

### No breathing space in the Alpine regions

**As CIPRA South Tyrol has flagged up, EU limits for nitrogen oxides are being massively exceeded in the region. There is an acute need for action, both in South Tyrol and in other Alpine regions.**

Nitrogen oxide levels in the EU must not exceed an annual average of 40 micrograms per cubic metre of air, yet this is regularly being exceeded in some Alpine regions. Nitrogen oxides are a danger to public health. In South Tyrol, for example, some 40,000 people are currently exposed to increased nitric oxide levels. Italy's lack of enforcement of maximum pollution levels threatens not only the health of the population while risking the degradation of the environment: the government also faces high fines from the EU. CIPRA South Tyrol, as an umbrella organisation for the protection of the local nature and environment, complains: "Policymakers stand idly by and put off the necessary steps. Yet practical solutions exist, such as a modal shift of traffic from road to rail, temporary vehicle bans or bringing tolls into line with those of neighbouring Alpine crossings."

A similar situation can be found in the Rhône-Alpes region in France. The Air Rhône-Alpes association is calling for new instruments to check air quality and an exchange with regions facing similar problems.

Perhaps surprisingly, among the EU countries Austria is dragging its feet when it comes to air pollution. The Austrian Traffic Club (VCÖ) came to the conclusion that the effect is similar to that found in smoking venues. It is therefore calling for (among other things) an expansion of public transport for commuters and a driving ban on trucks not fitted with particulate filters.

Sources and further information: <http://www.umwelt.bz.it/aktuelles/presse/was-tut-die-s%C3%BCdtiroler-politik-um-die-stickoxid-grenzwerte-einzuhalten.html> (it/de), [http://www.air-rhonealpes.fr/site/News/Voir/mieux\\_identifier\\_les\\_sources\\_des\\_particules#News/extraire/689299](http://www.air-rhonealpes.fr/site/News/Voir/mieux_identifier_les_sources_des_particules#News/extraire/689299) (fr), <http://www.vcoe.at/de/publikationen/vcoe-factsheets/details/items/belastung-durch-stickoxide-ist-in-oesterreich-zu-hoch> (de), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:152:0001:0044:de:PDF> (de)

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### News from the Alps



Where is public transport in Slovenia going? © Viola / pixelio.de

### Bus and train: new moves in the Alps-Adriatic region

**Public transport between Italy, Austria and Slovenia is moving forward. The consequences remain to be seen.**

At the end of February Slovenia submitted three railway projects for financing to the European Union, including the currently hotly-debated "Track Two" project. This plans to extend the rail line from the Slovenian port of Koper to Divača. The high cost of EUR 1.4 billion for a second, new



line is being justified on the grounds that it will promote freight transport overall while the port will be strategically connected to Europe and new jobs and economic added value will be created in Slovenia. The route will also be used for passenger transport.

From an environmental point of view it is generally worthwhile to shift traffic from road to rail. The objection here is that the project will cost too much money, while the modernisation of the rest of Slovenia's railway system will be shunted to one side. This would also affect rail routes in the Slovenian Alps. In view of the high cost, the country should perhaps consider whether investment would be better directed towards railway projects with passenger transport as a priority.

There are already cross-border projects that show that an alternative exists in the Alps-Adriatic region, for example the direct bus connection opened last year between Ljubljana and Klagenfurt in the Austrian state of Carinthia. These two capitals are now directly accessible by a public bus service, creating an opportunity to stimulate tourism and economic activity on both sides. There is also more traffic using the interregional railway link between Villach in Austria and Udine in Italy, with 2014 seeing a 21% increase in rail journeys.

Sources:

<http://kaernten.orf.at/news/stories/2692485/> (de), <http://kaernten.orf.at/news/stories/2648780/> (de), <http://www.ferrovieudineciviale.it/progetto-mi-co-tra> (it), <http://www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/dosje-drugi-tir.html> (it), <https://www.dnevnik.si/1042705886/posel/novice/nevarne-igre-z-drugim-tirom> (sl), <https://www.dnevnik.si/1042706910/mnenja/odprta-stran/drugi-tir-koperdivaca> (sl), <http://www.delo.si/sobotna/vlak-za-prihodnost-odpelje-z-drugega-tira.html> (sl), <http://www.delo.si/gospodarstvo/infrastruktura/zelo-malo-moznosti-za-drugi-tir.html> (sl), <https://www.dnevnik.si/1042707950/slovenija/slovenija-ze-oddala-vlogo-za-evropska-sredstva-za-drugi-tir> (sl), <http://www.mladina.si/164616/drugi-tir/> (sl)



Chamonix-Mont-Blanc in France is awarded the title of "Alpine Town of the Year 2015" © Gilles Lansard

### Chamonix is the 2015 "Alpine Town of the Year"

Located at the foot of the highest mountain in the Alps, Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, the "Capital of Alpinism", has been awarded the title of "Alpine Town of the Year 2015", mainly in recognition of its nature and climate protection policies.

The municipality of Chamonix (pop. 9,300) in the Rhône-Alpes region has been chosen by an international jury as the "Alpine Town of the Year 2015". It will now be part of the "Alpine Town of the Year" association, an international network that advocates urban development in the Alps with future generations in mind. "This award honours Chamonix as an appreciation of its efforts so far in environmental policy", says Mayor Eric Fournier, who sees it as an inducement to continue on the same path and set further ambitious targets.

One example is environmentally-friendly mobility: the aim is that, by 2020, the number of bus and train trips will be twice that of today. Sustainable renovation and construction are also priorities, with financial support available to homeowners who improve the energy efficiency of their buildings. Young people, too, are to be more involved in determining the future shape of their home town, with delegates of the Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention (YPAC) this spring discussing the implementation of their demands with the municipal council. "Sustainability requires a holistic approach", argues town councillor Elodie Bavuz. "It means combining environmental, economic and social issues." The result: a sustainable municipality.

Sources and further information: <http://www.alpenstaedte.org/de/aktuell/news/5065>,



Mals in the Italian Vinschgau valley: the region has committed itself to environmental sustainability and social justice. © Christian Lendl flickr

### South Tyrol commits itself to the common good

The “economics of the common good” represents a growing trend, including in the Alps. South Tyrol is now putting this into practice.

The key objectives of an economy geared to the common good are high quality of life, human dignity, global fairness and solidarity. Environmental sustainability and social justice also play important roles. Traditional Alpine structures such as regional networks, a decentralised economic system and voluntary engagement are being strengthened.

In January 2014 the South Tyrolean municipalities of Laas, Mals, Latsch and Schlanders together formed the “*Gemeinwohlregion Vinschgau* [Vinschgau region of the common good]” in order to implement these aims. Mayor Helmut Fischer of Latsch says: “We have analysed our status quo and seen where our strengths and weaknesses lie. The question now is one of implementation.” South Tyrol is following in his footsteps: in December 2014 the South Tyrol *Landtag*, the regional assembly, adopted three measures to further anchor the ‘common good’ principles in the region. First, guidelines should be adapted to an economic approach oriented towards the common good; second, the region intends to give preference in public contracts to enterprises favouring the common good; and third, particular encouragement will be given to municipalities that promote the common good.

The economics of the common good already feature in the curriculum in numerous schools. It is also intended to develop a regional indicator of prosperity in co-operation with EURAC, the European Academy of Bozen/Bolzano. South Tyrol is thus taking in a pioneering role in the Alpine region, thereby inching closer to its goal of becoming “Europe’s most desirable place to live”.

The common good is also on the agenda in other parts of the Alpine area. A national association to promote the economics of the common good was founded in Switzerland in 2014. The municipality of Übelbach in Styria, Austria, unanimously decided to draw up a balance of the common good, with other Styrian municipalities showing interest in the model. Salzburg too has ambitions to become a region dedicated to this aim.

Sources:

[http://www.landtag-bz.org/de/aktuelles/pm-fraktionen-aktuell.asp?aktuelles\\_action=4&aktuelles\\_article\\_id=480155](http://www.landtag-bz.org/de/aktuelles/pm-fraktionen-aktuell.asp?aktuelles_action=4&aktuelles_article_id=480155) (de/it),  
<https://www.ecogood.org/allgemeine-infos/aktuelles/neuigkeiten/suedtiroler-landtag-beschliesst-paket-zur-gemeinwohl> (de), Newsletter archive: <http://us4.campaign-archive2.com/home/?u=c89843db321542c4b959f65b2&id=10fec21af7> (de)

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## Agenda

**Online questionnaire: 2nd Multiannual Work Programme (MAP) of the Alpine Convention**, 15.04.2015. [More...](#)

**FINAL CONFERENCE: THE PUMAS PROJECT**, 12.05.2015, Venice/IT. [More...](#)

**Final conference : « Couloirs de vie » / Paths of life in Isère department**, 20.05.2015 - 22.05.2015, Isère/FR. [More...](#)

**Symposium of "Alliance in the Alps"**, 19.06.2015 - 20.06.2015, Saint-Martin-de-Belleville/FR. [More...](#)

**59th Permanent Committee**, 15.10.2015 - 16.10.2015, Haus der Berge, Berchtesgaden/D. [More...](#)

## Strange but true!

...everything out of the ordinary in the Alps has a label: cow's milk produced with the purest hay from animals herded, fed and milked by mountain farmers; golden apples, sun-ripened and super-crisp thanks to the Alpine climate; herbal tea made with edelweiss, hand-picked at dizzying heights. And now it is the turn of residents of the Bavarian province of the Allgäu. They can now apply for their personal label from the local *Heimatbund* (Homeland Federation), with the "Allgäu ID" then sent to them by post. Holders affirm that they will "always give 100% for the good of the Allgäu region... their qualities include a love of freedom and a positive attitude towards life". Finally, the label also requires that the homeland be cared for and its social customs be protected : "enjoying festivals and celebrating are characteristics that are to be encouraged".

Source: <http://www.heimatbund-allgaeu.de/allgaeu-ausweis.html> (de)