

## The Alps as a climate laboratory



The retreat of the glaciers clearly shows climate change in the Alps. © Michael Gams, CIPRA International

**Without climate protection measures the average temperature in the Alps will increase by up to 4.5 degrees by 2050. New initiatives give rise to hope, with the latest United Nations climate report drawing further attention to the topic.**

What happens when the Earth becomes 1.5 degrees warmer than in pre-industrial times? The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) answers this question in its latest report. In the Alps, however, the temperature has already risen by two degrees, as confirmed by Reto Knutti, Professor at the Institute for Atmospheric and Climate Science of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), Zurich, and co-author of two reports produced by the IPCC. «In the latest scenarios for Switzerland we assume warming of 2.5 to 4.5 degrees by mid-century. These are of course major changes.» The effects will be wide-ranging: 90% of the Alpine glaciers will disappear, with consequences for the outflows. While this will not lead to drinking water shortages, «if summer temperatures and precipitation changes maintain this course, as the scenarios show, we will no longer be able to continue irrigating as we wish». Low-lying winter sports resorts are also at risk: «In fact it has to be admitted that everything under an altitude of 1,500 metres is economically unsustainable in the long term». There is also an increased chance of rock falls and landslides owing to the permafrost thawing.

### Climate protection initiatives

The melting of the glaciers is one of the clearest signs of climate change. The Glacier Initiative was therefore established in Switzerland in the summer of 2018. The aim is to collect declarations of support for a people's initiative in order to anchor the requirements of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, such as the phase-out of fossil fuels by 2050, in the Swiss Federal Constitution. The list of supporters is long and goes well beyond the archetypal environmental scene. Computer science engineer Daniel Germann, from Rickenbach near Wil, is one of them: «Global warming is the biggest problem facing humankind. The answer is clear and simple: stop burning fossil fuels.» Unfortunately, politicians prioritise the economy over people and nature and are incapable of adopting this measure themselves. «The glacier initiative is urgently needed.»

The Austrian politician Helga Krismer is meanwhile gathering votes for a petition for a climate referendum. The «Alpine Climate Board» of the Alpine Convention too is working on shared climate goals for all Alpine countries, while a joint conference of the network formed by the «Alliance in the Alps», the «Alpine Town of the Year» and CIPRA International, to be held on 7-8 November 2018 in Innsbruck, will also be addressing climate visions. The event marks the starting signal for an Alpine partnership of local climate actions.

### Sources and further information:

[www.de-ipcc.de/256.php](http://www.de-ipcc.de/256.php) (de), [www.alpconv.org/en/organization/groups/AlpineClimateBoard](http://www.alpconv.org/en/organization/groups/AlpineClimateBoard), [www.klimaschutz-schweiz.ch/](http://www.klimaschutz-schweiz.ch/) (de, fr), [www.klimavolksbegehren.at](http://www.klimavolksbegehren.at) (de), [www.iac.ethz.ch/people/knutti](http://www.iac.ethz.ch/people/knutti)

## Point of view: Burning with love, not hate



Kaspar Schuler, executive director of CIPRA International © Darko Todorovic

**The climate crisis and nationalism are the two greatest threats of our time, says Kaspar Schuler, executive director of CIPRA International since June, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of «Fire across the Alps».**

It began exactly 30 years ago, in the remote Madris high valley in Graubünden close to the border with the Italian Val Bregaglia, when a bonfire was lit as a cry for help and of resistance. As an Alpine shepherd, together with a handful of courageous locals and newer arrivals, I defended myself and my family against a pumped storage and dam scheme, one of a dozen planned throughout the Swiss Alps at that time. The unbridled expansion of the Alpine transit roads, the decline of mountain farming, the advent of snow cannons and ever more ski resorts were pressing issues for us as environmentalists. The fires were the element that connected topics, regions and people: we imagined seeing this light chain as a night-time link from Vienna to Nice.

The spread of sustainability as a fundamental concept of development vindicates the work of the countless pioneers, not least those who tirelessly championed the cause of an Alpine-wide protection treaty from the 1950s on. In 1994 this finally became a reality: since then, the Alpine Convention has set the political framework for economic development in harmony with ecological mindfulness.

But the work is not yet done. The climate crisis is besetting the Alpine region. And a familiar old poison is once again flowing in the veins of many denizens of the Alps: nationalism.

This summer, climate change bared its teeth and afflicted the German-speaking Alpine regions with a severe drought, leading in some places to a general ban on fires. Instead of a Fire across the Alps, therefore, an artistic light display entertained participants at the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary event that was staged by Alpen-Initiative, Mountain Wilderness and CIPRA.

Nationalism is celebrating a dark revival, promising cheap solutions to political problems even though it only ever produces one thing: losers. My summer vacation on the turquoise-blue River Soča in Slovenia reminded me of this once more. On the one hand I was fascinated by my encounters with the welcoming people of the Julian Alps that transcended language barriers and national borders. On the other, the scars of the Isonzo front can be seen on the mountain slopes and in the villages, awakening gruesome memories of the First World War. In the name of nationalist ideals, Slovene, Austrian, Hungarian, German and Italian soldiers fought each other for two years up on the mountain ridges and down in the valleys, with some 200,000 losing their lives.

So it is again up to us, today's inhabitants of the Alps, to stand up to both of these threats, to nationalism and the climate crisis: with innovation and modesty, with openness and humanity, connected across mountains and borders, so that the fires do not burn in the form of wars or forest fires, but rather for each other, in our hearts.

## Youth taking action for the Alps



The CIPRA Youth Council (CYC) celebrated its fifth anniversary with a hike in the Italian and Slovenian Alps. © Andrea Müller

**Calling for youth participation, engaging in Alpine policymaking, launching the first Youth Interrail Pass for the Alps: the CIPRA Youth Council is celebrating its fifth anniversary with an impressive record.**

Travelling by train in a climate-friendly way, getting to know the Alps, living sustainability instead of preaching it: 100 young people set off this summer with the first Youth Interrail Pass for the Alps. The CIPRA Youth Council, co-developer of the «Youth Alpine Interrail» pilot project, made it all possible. The idea came about three years ago when members travelled in the most sustainable way they could to a CIPRA project held in the Italian city of Milan.

The CIPRA Youth Council currently comprises thirteen young people aged between 15 and 30 living in different Alpine countries. Since 2013 they have been working towards greater sustainability in the Alps, advising CIPRA and bringing their perspectives into Alpine policymaking and projects. For Youth Council member Julia Thüringer, 25, it above all strengthens self-confidence and provides motivation: «If other people are also working for the environment, it gives you the strength to persevere – even if you yourself sometimes feel that you cannot change things», she explains.

And perseverance is what is truly needed in Alpine policymaking. Young people still have too little involvement in political decisions. CIPRA Youth Council member Mirjam Kreisel often has the feeling that young people are not taken seriously by politicians: «In my opinion, young people are simply given responsibility for marketing.» But progress has been made: for example, the European Strategy for the Alpine Space (Eusalp) has invited young people to attend its annual forum to be held on 20-21 November 2018 in Innsbruck, Austria. Young adults can also submit their own project ideas by 15 October.

The CIPRA Youth Council celebrated its fifth anniversary this summer and made the best possible gift to itself with the introduction of the Youth Interrail Pass. Katharina Conradin, President of CIPRA International, congratulates them: «The five-year existence of the CIPRA Youth Council is a cause for joy: it shows that youth participation can succeed and produce very concrete results. A big thank you to everyone involved! »

Further information about the CIPRA Youth Council: [www.cipra.org/en/cyc](http://www.cipra.org/en/cyc)

The Youth Interrail Pass for the Alps: [www.yoalin.org](http://www.yoalin.org)

Eusalp Project Competition: [www.alpine-region.eu/pitch-your-project-annual-forum-2018](http://www.alpine-region.eu/pitch-your-project-annual-forum-2018) (en)

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## Innovative ideas for tourism



Business plans for sustainable tourism concepts receive start-up funding.

**Forest cabins that are self-sufficient in energy, mobile ski instructors, taking a break in an empty second home or glamping down on the farm: CIPRA Switzerland's «Innovation Generator» is supporting the start-up of four tourism projects.**

The «A l'Abri de l'Hêtre» project from western Switzerland includes five forest cabins that are intended to assure their energy and water needs in complete autonomy, while at the same time raising the awareness of guests apropos natural resources and sustainable solutions. Also approved was the idea of «Glamping à la Ferme», a regional network of flexible farmhouse accommodation offers: the farms look after their guests on-site, e.g. providing breakfast or additional services as required.

A «revolutionary ski school model» has arrived from Graubünden: in addition to the existing range of ski schools, in future mobile ski instructors on the slopes could spontaneously teach adventurous skiers in tackling deep snow or mogul pistes. And the «Alpine Sabbatical» project aims to use vacant second homes in the off-season at advantageous rates for a break from the world of work, with participants offering ideas or labour there in return.

These four projects convinced the judges through their innovative character and sound business plans, thus receiving a financial contribution as start-ups. The Innovation Generator is a way for CIPRA Switzerland, along with representatives of the tourism and science sectors, to promote unconventional ideas for sustainable tourism in the Swiss Alps. This also sees the application of co-creation methods, bringing together potential guests and service providers, laypersons and professionals, and city and country dwellers.

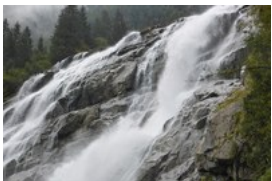
Sources and further information:

[www.innovationsgenerator.ch](http://www.innovationsgenerator.ch) (de)

[www.cipra.org/de/cipra/schweiz/aktivitaeten-projekte/innovationsgenerator](http://www.cipra.org/de/cipra/schweiz/aktivitaeten-projekte/innovationsgenerator) (de)

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## What nature provides



Fresh water supplies are one of the most important ecosystem services in the Alps. © Ulrike Tappeiner

**The international project AlpES is strengthening the importance of ecosystems and their services for the population of the Alps. The project team will be presenting its results on 21-22 November 2018 in Innsbruck, Austria.**

Ecosystem services contribute significantly to the quality of life of the populations of the Alpine regions. These include springs as sources of clean drinking water, trees that provide a pleasant micro-climate in the city, or simply the views of unspoilt natural landscapes. The EU-funded project AlpES (Alpine Ecosystem Services) aims to strengthen the significance and appreciation of ecosystem services in regional and transnational environmental policies. Ten partner organisations from six Alpine countries surveyed ecosystem services over a three-year period and have now gathered them together. One of the project objectives was to develop a freely available Web GIS map that would give an overview of ecosystem services in the Alps, allowing data collected from all of the pilot regions to be entered. Users of the Web GIS map can choose between eight different ecosystem indicators: a glance at the map shows where action is needed, for example in areas with inadequate forest protection or excessive fresh water consumption. Findings like these provide a solid basis for political and economic decisions. The Secretary-General of the Alpine Convention will open the AlpES Conference in Innsbruck

on 21 November 2018.

Sources and further information:

[www.alpes-webgis.eu](http://www.alpes-webgis.eu)

[www.cipra.org/en/alpes](http://www.cipra.org/en/alpes)

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## A cultural heritage to savour



Local specialties are to become part of the intangible cultural heritage of the Alps. © Caroline Begle, CIPRA International

**How a cross-border project combines culinary delights with the Alpine heritage.**

Cheese, speck (smoked bacon) and bread are staple Alpine fare. The ingredients needed to produce them come from the Alps. Directly connected with Alpine agriculture, they form part of the ecological cycles, regional value chains and Alpine cultural landscape. They conceal unique manufacturing and processing methods and stand for trade, know-how and tradition.

With the Interreg Alpine Space project, «AlpFoodway», 14 partners in six Alpine countries are aiming to raise the profile of Alpine cuisine, enhancing it and promoting it as a driver of sustainable development in mountain regions. They view the Alpine eating culture as a way of strengthening local identities, creating jobs and revitalising mountain regions.

**Emphasising differences**

In order to exploit this potential, the project focuses on sustainable enhancement as well as the marketing and branding of Alpine cuisine. Andrea Hemetsberger, director of the Institute for Strategic Management, Marketing and Tourism at the University of Innsbruck, is engaging with these developments in Austria. One of the long-term goals of the project is the international recognition of Alpine cuisine by UNESCO as an intangible part of the region's cultural heritage. In addition to this umbrella branding, it is just as important to develop strategies for the appreciation of local specialties: «Any attempt to promote Alpine cuisine as a mass product will fail. Its attraction lies in the local, in its special nature.»

Examples are provided by existing labels that bridge the gap between national and local recognition, upholding old traditions and practices such as dairies or the baking of old-established bread types while further developing them. Initiatives such as Austria's «East Tyrolean Breakfast», the transnational «Lo Pan Ner» festival of black bread or the Italian «Consortium to Maintain the *Bitto Storico*», a cheese from Lombardy, help in marketing local products without losing the link to producers, places or people.

Sources and further information:

## Morbegno recognised for its commitment



Morbegno's commitment to regional development convinced the jury. © Alpine Town of the Year Association

**Morbegno, in the Italian region of Lombardy, has been chosen as the 2019 «Alpine Town of the Year». It thus joins an international network that advocates future-proof urban development in the Alps.**

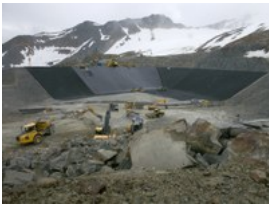
A lively city of 12,000 people, Morbegno was awarded the title of «Alpine Town of the Year» on account of its numerous advantages and efforts. The full reasoning of the international jury, made up of representatives from the Alpine countries, was as follows: «The town shows a great willingness to co-operate with its surrounding areas. Morbegno, as a key destination for the region, provides a wide range of services and has also demonstrably taken on board the themes of the Alpine Convention while putting in place promising building blocks for the future».

The new Alpine Town of the Year will be focusing on local values, promoting regional agriculture and produce as well as sustainable energy via district heating. This small town in the northern Lombardy is reducing local traffic while restructuring numerous urban green spaces, taking particular account of people with disabilities, families and children. The municipality will also be communicating cultural knowledge to residents about their town and region, with a particular focus on young people and families.

Sources and further information: [www.alpenstaedte.org/de/presse/medienmitteilungen](http://www.alpenstaedte.org/de/presse/medienmitteilungen) (de, fr, it, sl)

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## Building – a bottomless pit?



Will major building sites in Austria be waved through faster in the future? © Lois Hechenblaikner

**Whether it is a question of major projects or infrastructure developments in protected areas – Alpine countries such as Austria and Switzerland cannot build quickly or easily enough.**

In Austria only some 3% of all projects covered by environmental impact assessments (EIA) are currently rejected, with a further 1% refused immediate approval. From 2019 the EIA process may however be made quicker and easier: the «Site Development Law» will mean that, where major construction projects require an EIA but are considered to be relevant for the economic location, implementation can be accelerated without completion of the approval procedures. A construction project will be relevant for the economic location if it is of public interest. In such cases approval will be granted by the federal government – without the involvement of parliament or the public.

Criticism has come from all sides. Citizens, NGOs and federal state administrations all consider the draft law indefensible. Such a law would be contrary to Austria's constitution, run counter to the European EIA Directive and contravene the Alpine Convention. Reinhard Gschöpf, Executive Director of CIPRA Austria, warns of the possible transnational effects: «If Austria starts a race to the bottom in reducing legal environmental and stakeholder rights, this would be a drama for the entire Alpine region.» In Switzerland, for example, a change to the Nature and Homeland Protection Law is currently being discussed that would more easily circumvent the national

conservation status of certain landscapes and natural spaces in order to permit building there.

### Highlighting the alternatives

The population of the Alps today requires three times as much space as was the case 50 years ago. The Alpine countries need strategies for resource-efficient land use. One way would be the skilful «recycling» of already built-up areas, allowing them to be reused or converted. Inward development and the exploitation of surface potentials, such as multi-storey buildings, also provide opportunities in addition to the much-needed slowing of the development spiral, thus allowing economical land use and a sensible reduction of large-scale projects.

Sources and further information:

[www.umweltbundesamt.at/umweltsituation/uvpsup/uvpoesterreich/uvpdatenbank/uvpstistik](http://www.umweltbundesamt.at/umweltsituation/uvpsup/uvpoesterreich/uvpdatenbank/uvpstistik)(de), [www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXVI/ME/ME\\_00067/index.shtml](http://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXVI/ME/ME_00067/index.shtml) (de), [www.standortentwicklungsgesetz-ist-der-groesste-gesetzesunfug-der-2-republik?ref=89](http://www.standortentwicklungsgesetz-ist-der-groesste-gesetzesunfug-der-2-republik?ref=89) (de), [www.sn.at/salzburg/politik/standortentwicklungsgesetz-umweltlandesrat-spricht-von-massivstem-rueckschritt-38901490](http://www.sn.at/salzburg/politik/standortentwicklungsgesetz-umweltlandesrat-spricht-von-massivstem-rueckschritt-38901490) (de), [www.vol.at/heftige-kritik-am-geplanten-standortentwicklungsgesetz/5898143](http://www.vol.at/heftige-kritik-am-geplanten-standortentwicklungsgesetz/5898143)(de), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32014L0052>, [www.alpconv.org/en/convention/protocols/default.html](http://www.alpconv.org/en/convention/protocols/default.html), [www.bernerzeitung.ch/schweiz/standard/Es-drohen-Seilbahnen-Parkplaetze-und-Funparks-in-Schutzgebieten/story/11957254](http://www.bernerzeitung.ch/schweiz/standard/Es-drohen-Seilbahnen-Parkplaetze-und-Funparks-in-Schutzgebieten/story/11957254) (de), [www.wwf.ch/de/medien/der-wwf-schweiz-sagt-nein-zum-verbau-der-wertvollsten-schweizer-naturschutzgebiete](http://www.wwf.ch/de/medien/der-wwf-schweiz-sagt-nein-zum-verbau-der-wertvollsten-schweizer-naturschutzgebiete) (de, fr, it)

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## Oh!



Upcycling: the traditional hay rack becomes a demanding fitness course. © elan-inventa.com

... traditional crafts and local architecture are being rediscovered in numerous places, including in Slovenia, where the typical «hay rack» is making an unexpected comeback. For centuries the so-called «kozolci» has been used to dry hay, maize or grain and has thus become an icon of the Slovenian landscape. Many of the hay racks have fallen into disuse, with some clearly in disrepair or used as sites for advertising posters. A whole museum has been dedicated to this gem of Slovenian culture in the Dolenjska region, with the town of Kranjska Gora now going a step further: its new Pišnica sports park has turned the traditional hay rack into an item of sports equipment. Whereas previously it was peasants who would sweat over their scythes while making hay, nowadays it is sports enthusiasts who build up muscles under the protective umbrella of the hay rack.

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## Agenda

**AGRITOURISM: 1st World Congress**, 07.-09.11.2018, Bolzano/I. [More...](#)

**Final Conference of the projects SPARE and AlpES**, 21.-22.11.2018, Innsbruck/A. [More...](#)

**Young ideas for the Alps!** 30.11.2018, Chambéry/F. [More...](#)

**Reading Mountains Festival**, 11.12.2018, Alps. [More...](#)