

## RESICETS Project

### Recreational activities and nature conservation in the Alpine protected areas: possible coexistence

We have witnessed major changes in Alpine tourism over the past few years. It is not just a matter of the proliferation of new recreational and sporting activities, both in summer and in winter; growing numbers of hikers reach remote nooks of our mountains: hiking, trail running, mountain biking in its various forms, ski mountaineering, free riding, and snowshoeing, are increasingly widely practiced activities, favored by an outdoor market attentive to developments related to fitness, as well as the fruition of nature. Furthermore, the ease of access to areas that were once seldom visited, along with the availability of new technical materials (for example, lighter skis and bikes) mean that more and more people can enter environmentally sensitive areas.

Although this phenomenon has positive implications for the mountain economy, it is a new challenge for the managers of the Alpine protected areas. Several studies have shown that some activities can cause disturbance and have a negative impact on the already difficult lives of wildlife, especially during winter or in breeding periods. Then during summer, crowding can generate problems related to the occupation of the same areas by both the users and wildlife, as well as by farmers and managers of the pastures, meadows, and herds. Addressing the impact of recreational activities on habitats and species of the protected areas at the local level is an important and difficult task: in order to manage it, we need an integrated strategy that relies on the participation of all the stakeholders involved in the local tourist supply chain (including the users) together with an open and constructive overview. Therefore, we need adequate information for tourists, but also training courses for local operators and adequate management and planning tools for protected areas.

**CIPRA Italy** is working alongside the **Ossola Protected Areas Management Body** on the project "**RESICETS - Environmental Resilience of Recreational Activities in the Protected Areas of Ossola, through the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism**". This is a structured initiative that involves various players in the local tourism supply chain concerning a path of information and awareness, as well as economic and territorial development: in fact, the **European Charter for Sustainable Tourism - CETS** promotes the certification of those tour operators (alpine guides, escorts, reception activities) who work alongside the Park Authority for the management and reduction of the impact of recreational and tourist activities. This ambitious and innovative initiative is one of the first activated in this field in Italy. The project, supported by the **Cariplo Foundation**, has a duration of three years and includes activities ranging from monitoring of tourism to operators' training, from activation of a tailored information campaign to the preparation of some low-impact winter hiking trails.

**RESICETS** is linked to the "**Be Part Of The Mountain**" initiative, coordinated by **ALPARC**, the Alpine Protected Areas Network. This is a shared communication campaign which aims to raise the awareness of outdoor participants with regard to the problem and to give greater visibility to local initiatives launched in individual areas. "**Be Part of the Mountain**" is a project of international cooperation that aims to bring together protected areas, NGOs for the protection of the environment, public bodies, alpine clubs and testimonials throughout the Alps. The main objective is the triggering of virtuous behavior among winter sports practitioners through the exchange of good practices, the development of common tools for raising awareness, and spreading information.

