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ALPEN.LEBEN – **THE FUTURE OF THE ALPINE CONVENTION** **AND ITS PROSPECTS WITHIN THE FRAME-** **WORK OF A MACROREGIONAL STRATEGY**

Final Report



MIT UNTERSTÜTZUNG VON BUND, LÄNDERN UND EUROPÄISCHER UNION



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LEBENSWEERTES
ÖSTERREICH**



LE 07-13
Landwirtschaft für ein lebenswertes Österreich

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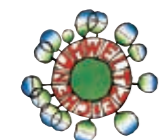


ALPEN.LEBEN – THE FUTURE OF THE ALPINE CONVENTION AND ITS PROSPECTS WITHIN THE FRAME- WORK OF A MACROREGIONAL STRATEGY

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1. MACROREGIONAL ALPINE STRATEGY – FROM IDEA TO IMPLEMENTATION

The initial discussions and efforts made toward establishing an 'Alpine Macroregion' go back nearly two decades, when in 1995 the Alpine Convention first set a positive example for transnational cooperation. Since then there exists an internationally recognised agreement among eight Alpine states and the European Union, with its pan-Alpine area of application sharply demarcated and a plethora of political and practical goals contained in its protocols, declarations, plans of action and study groups. In its document *Europa 2000+* the European Commission (1995) acknowledged this step, because according to the Commission, the Alpine Convention not only articulates an active scenario for transnational development, but also exhibits the political will – aided by a harmonious policy regarding transport and common guidelines for environmental protection – to carry out a coordinated development of the Alpine region. Interestingly enough, the EU document designates this Alpine regional district as 'Alpine Convention' (cf. CIPRA Austria 2011). The idea of expanding this common development of the Alpine region into the surrounding regions of the Alpine foreland could also be traced back to a proposal made by the EU Commission in this document.

How this common development might proceed – extending beyond the Alpine Convention or complementing it, respectively – remained unclear due to a lack of concrete goals and definite boundaries, or specific concepts of governance for the area under development (cf. Bätzing 2011, 32). So the idea of an Alpine macroregion once more went dormant, and was next shaken awake by emergence of the Baltic Sea Region Strategy and the Danube Region Strategy in the years 2009 and 2011, respectively Resolutions such as 2010's Mittenwald Declaration (see page 10) and the national symposium of CIPRA Austria in 2011 reanimated the discussion about an Alpine macroregion once more. The latter focused on what was then the key question, which still remains the essential question for the current project Alpen.Leben: What role does the Alpine Convention play in the development and implementation of a macroregional strategy for the Alpine Region (cf. CIPRA Austria 2011)?

Finally, on 18 October 2013, a political resolution was adopted by all Alpine nations and regional governments concerning a macroregional strategy for the Alpine region. Two months later, on 20 December 2013, the European Council assigned the European Commission the task of developing a EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP), with the goal of improving cooperation and networking between the Alpine core and the surrounding regions of the Alpine foreland with their economically powerful cities, and to strengthen this cooperation for the long

term. With its project Alpen.Leben, CIPRA Austria was well prepared for this resolution and initiated a discussion with a colloquium of experts in January 2014, which brought various stakeholders together – ranging from governmental officials to state and regional representatives along with representatives of the academic disciplines and NGOs – in order to sketch out areas of focus and possibilities for its implementation.

This report embodies the output and synopsis of these discussions and briefings as well as proposals and ideas developed in the context of the EUSALP process, which have taken place on various levels in recent months. It concerns itself with numerous current questions regarding the process of developing a macroregional strategy for the Alpine region, attempts to identify possibilities, risks, challenges and possible consequences – and thus endeavours to consistently emphasise the added value of the Alpine Convention in the successful implementation and application of the EUSALP. Furthermore, this report is designed to demonstrate possibilities for the practical implementation of the strategy, particularly regarding a form of governance specifically tailored to the special needs of the Alpine region. The recommendations resulting from the consideration and analysis of existing models and experiences (including currently active macroregional strategies as well as the Alpine Convention) should provide the relevant stakeholders with aids to discussion and decisionmaking, and foster engagement with this theme on a national and an international level.

This report will initially touch upon the general concept of the macroregional strategy and subsequently outline the development of the discussion regarding a macroregional strategy for the Alpine region. Particular attention will be brought to the contribution made by the project Alpen.Leben to this process. The central substance of the project involved these aspects: to develop the added value of the Alpine Convention in the course of implementing the EUSALP, to construct points of thematic focus based on the so-called Three Pillars of Grenoble, to demonstrate models of functional governance, to play out possible visions and scenarios for the future, to inform civil society about the future project of an Alpine macroregion, and to identify potential differences to the current Danube and Baltic Sea regional strategies.

In the view of CIPRA Austria, it is precisely the Alpine Convention – a clearly defined, legally valid instrument recognised under international law – that is predestined to provide the basis for the implementation of a macroregional strategy for the Alpine region, and could with its

The Alpine macroregion is expected to strengthen the position of the Alpine region, to enable intense mutual exchange between the Alpine foreland and the metropolitan regions, further to strengthen the Alpine Convention and to give added value to civil society. (Photo: J. Essl)

myriad of well-recognised functional structures already in place function as the motivating force that pulls the entire implementation procedure forward.

1.1. The principle of a macroregional strategy

The concept and implementation of macroregions in Europe turn upon two primary themes (cf. Streitenberger 2011, 14ff):

- 1) It is precisely the larger regions that are frequently affected by regionally political initiatives geared toward cooperation, which either lose momentum, run parallel to one another or compete with each other. Furthermore, problems frequently exist in these regions that nobody anticipates. For this reason a variety of agencies (NGOs, civil society, regional and federal bodies as well as public and juristic ones) must be led toward better cooperation within a macroregion in order to develop policies which point the way to the future.
- 2) Transnational cooperation which must be specific and effective in its implementation of common projects and must have a wide-ranging application as its goal is required.

Originally, macroregional strategies were earmarked for the function of developing specific solutions to problem situations on the periphery as well as in urban centres. Moreover, macroregions were regarded as 'islands' that were not obliged to cooperate with their surrounding areas. But today a macroregion, especially in the view of the European Union, is viewed from a fully different perspective (cf. Bätzing 2012, 1). At the present, there exist two European macroregional strategies: the Baltic Sea Region Strategy (since 2009) and the Danube Region Strategy (since 2011). The EU defines a macroregion as a region 'that encompasses multiple governmental regions, but demonstrates an adequately perceptible common theme, enough so to justify a single strategic concept' (European Commission 2009, 248/3). Simply stated, behind the macroregional strategy stands the basic idea of promoting better cooperation and coordination, in order to more effectively and efficiently address extranational challenges in specific areas than could be targeted by individual measures (cf. Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, 2013, 4). In the meantime, in Europe, eighteen macroregional strategies are either being planned or already in the implementation phase. Figure 1 shows current and potential areas of cooperation in Europe.

Macroregional strategies are orientated upon four central principles: integration (the goal of a macroregional strategy should tie into the relevant existing political circumstances on the European, national, regional and local levels), coordination between geographic and sectorial policies, instruments and sources of finance, cooperation of states and sectors as well as Multi-Level-Governance (cf. Hiess and Pfefferkorn 2013, 4).

Furthermore, the so-called '3 NOs' provide important guidelines for macroregional strategies and their implementation: In the implementation of a macroregion, the EU believes that there should be no new: 1. institutional undertakings, 2. financial undertakings, or 3. statutory undertakings. The goal here is to utilise existing instruments, means of finance and communication like those of the European environmental policy or cohesiveness policy, as well as national and intergovernmental means. In addition to this, an employment programme with areas of focused interest, measures and showcase projects must be implemented (CIPRA International 2013, 2). The primary goal here is the consolidation of various states and regions in order to meet common challenges and solve common problems, as well as the creation of an instrument for (re)distribution and specification of existing financial incentives. It is moreover important in the establishment of a strategy to demonstrate a 'definable added value compared with currently extant instruments on the national and transnational European levels' (Hiess and Pfefferkorn 2013, 5).

An Alpine macroregion must therefore fit in with the existing infrastructure, while at the same time develop and work out new areas of thematic interest and focal points relevant to the area in question. Certainly one must remain aware that in the choice of topics the themes must be new, and in the case of the EUSALP, specific to the Alpine region, as well as innovative and contributing to a transnational solution.

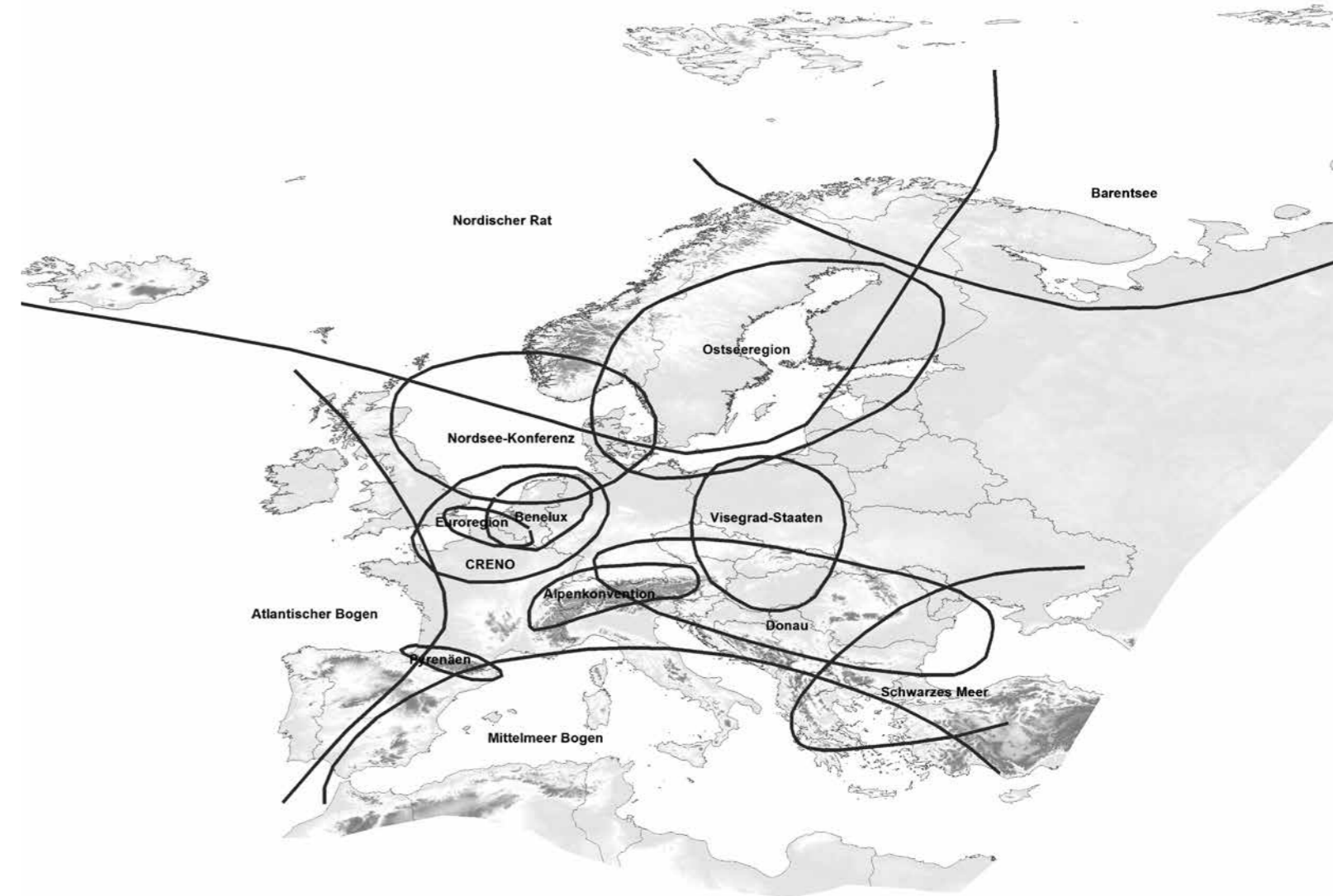


Figure 1: Europa 2000+ – Europe's regions, including the scope of the Alpine Convention, are designated distinct areas. (Source: European Commission 1995)

1.2. General framework and point of departure for a EUSALP

Europe can anticipate a fundamental transformation in the coming years and decades. Environmental issues (climate change, drinking water, air pollution etc.) peak oil, economic crises, demographic change, youth-unemployment, decreased competitive capability and the decline of buying power are only a few examples of the factors that already present Europe with new challenges and problems. Thus an increasing number of political agencies envision a future in which nations, states and regions cross their own borders to create networks dedicated to answering Europe's future questions with the instruments of a new transnational cooperation. In the European Union's initiative 'Europe 2020' we can see a mid- and long-term basis element for achieving intelligent, sustainable and integrative growth.

When the idea of a macroregion appeared twenty years ago it acknowledged for the first time that the gulf between the major cities and the peripheral districts yawns ever wider. This imbalance is particularly apparent between the central region of the Alps and the regions of the Alpine foreland with their urban economic powerhouses. At the same time there exists the challenge of drawing up profitable boundaries, in order not to fully devalue the core region in a structure built around the economically dynamic Alpine foreland. It is the current belief that regions far beyond the actual Alpine arc – including the great cities – could be integrated into the macroregional process, in order to ensure a greater cohesiveness within the EU.

'The European Commission regards the Alpine region with particular interest because of its water resources and its development in terms of tourism, a region that holds great importance for the entire European Union' (Hiess and Pfefferkorn 2013, 6). And it is certainly important to bear in mind that in an Alpine macroregion, the problems of the core area must be the central concern.



CIPRA Austria already discussed issues of an Alpine macroregion at a conference in 2011. (Photo: J. Essl)

1.3. Origins of the EUSALP and current political developments

1.3.1. THE BIRTH OF THE IDEA OF A MACROREGIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE ALPINE REGION

The first preliminary considerations of an Alpine macroregion, as was mentioned briefly at the beginning of this report, surfaced in the 1990s. One step that was essential to progress in this sort of an Alpine-relevant process was the Mittenwald Declaration of March 2010, in which the regions Bavaria, Bolzano-South Tyrol, Salzburg, Tyrol and Trentino provisionally brought (again) a macroregional strategy (MRS) for the Alpine region into the discussion (cf. Hiess and Pfefferkorn 2013, 9). Further deliberations followed with the ARGE Alp Regional Heads conferences in June 2011 in Eppan and in July 2011 at Zell am See. It was in 2011 as well that the Alpine Convention vigorously entered into the discussion. So a declaration was passed at the XI. Alpine Conference in Brdo, Slovenia, welcoming the establishment of an Alpine macroregion along with the decision to give the Alpine Convention an active role in the development of a strategy. Moreover, a task force for a macroregional strategy was established at the beginning of 2011 within the structure of the ETZ Alpine regional programme. This was followed in May 2011 by the start of a project with the title 'Strategy Development for the Alpine Space' (cf. Hiess and Pfefferkorn 2013, 9f).

CIPRA Austria took up the theme as well, organising the first national symposium on the theme 'Perspectives for the Alps – What can the Alpine Convention and a macroregional Alpine strategy contribute?' on 19 September 2011 in Vienna. Highly respected specialists such as Wolfgang Streitenberger (European Commission, Directorate for Regional Politics), Marco Onida (then General Secretary of the Alpine Convention), Herwig von Staa (chairman of the Tyrol provincial government, and at the time vice president of the Congress of Communities and Regions of the European Council), Peter Haßbacher (chairman of CIPRA Austria), Werner Bätzing (Alpine researcher and professor at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg) and Georg Schadt (Austrian Federal Chancellery) spoke about the possible interchange between the Alpine Convention and an Alpine macroregion, as well as concerning the possibilities, challenges and potential of the region, but not failing to elucidate the possible hurdles and risk factors, addressing general circumstances in the European Union that would effect a potential Alpine macroregion.

1.3.2. MILESTONES ALONG THE WAY: THE COUNCIL DECISION

An important milestone in the direction of an Alpine macroregion was passed in Bad Ragaz on 29 June 2012 with the Conference of the Alpine Region. Here, an initiative

was composed designing a macroregional strategy for the Alpine regions, with the resulting resolution to create an Alpine macroregion with the purpose of establishing the Alpine territory as the heart of Europe.

The environmental ministers of the XII. Alpine Conference of the Alpine Convention, which met on 7 September 2012 in Poschiavo, reaffirmed the wish to participate in the development of an Alpine macroregion under the premise that its creation and implementation would effectively address challenges particular to the Alpine region. Its goal must be that of improving prosperity and cohesiveness in the Alpine region as well as achieving growth in accord with the Europe 2020 growth strategy (cf. Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention 2013, 4ff).

A few months later at the 52nd meeting of the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Conference on 7 & 8 March 2013 in Bolzano, the working group 'Macroregional Strategy for the Alps' was formed and an input paper drafted and composed as a concrete contribution to the process on the part of the Alpine Convention, brought to fruition on 14 May 2013 with the following three points of emphasis:

1. Alpine-specific themes

- a) Natural resources and their management
- b) Networking and ability to compete

2. Added value of the Alpine Convention

- a) Accomplishments in matters of ecology, green economy and tourism
- b) The Alps as water tower – drinking water and important renewable source of energy (and storehouse for energy)
- c) Landscape, biodiversity and networking
- d) Relationships, the population, education, employment, and culture
- e) Transport and mobility

3. Central messages and perspectives

- a) Collaboration to reach common goals
- b) Exchange of knowledge and collective politics
- c) Improvement of cooperation on all levels and between all levels

On 15 May 2013 the European Parliament became active as well, and a working group introduced a resolution pursuant to a macroregional strategy for the Alps (2013/2549/RSP). The draft of this proposal anticipated giving particular weight to the Alpine Convention, since the geographical area covered by the Alpine Convention was included. This proposal fell upon deaf ears in the assembly, which is why this passage was incorporated neither in the proposed resolution of 21 May 2013 (cf. European Parliament 2013) nor later in the resolution of 23



The Alps and their rich cultural assets (photo: a hiking path) need to be preserved. (Photo: J. Essl)

May 2014 (cf. European Parliament 2013/2549 [RSP], 1ff).

Specific and focused attention was drawn to the theme of an Alpine macroregion at a conference of governmental leaders of the Alpine nations and regions on 12 October 2012 in Innsbruck as well as the conference Regional Initiatives on 22 February 2013 in Milan, in order to achieve broad support among the Alpine nations for this European project. The regional development agency DATAR (Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale) declared itself ready to elaborate a practical proposal to the European Council for a macroregional strategy for the Alpine region, and to appoint a committee with parity of representation. In the first step, a drafting committee consisting of the regions Bavaria, Rhône-Alps, Lombardy, Alto Adige, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Tyrol, Vorarlberg, Salzburg and Graubünden would be created with the goal of developing a 'convergence paper' as a common proposal (cf. Hiess and Pfefferkorn 2013, 10). The makeup of this drafting committee created a great deal of irritation in Austria, because certain Austrian federal states were inadequately represented regardless of their expansive Alpine territory – nor was the Alpine Convention represented. In spite of this, DATAR submitted the first draft proposal for the creation of an Alpine macroregion.

The second half of the year 2013 was characterised by numerous discussions concerning the 'DATAR paper' and the initial exclusion of the Alpine Convention and civil society from this incipient process concerning the Alpine region. Numerous meetings on the national as well as international levels plus conferences with the European Parliament, the Alpine nations, Alpine regions and Alpine federal states ultimately led to the Alpine Convention becoming incorporated in the continuing process, where it could collaborate under the aegis of DATAR.

1.3.3. THE GRENOBLE RESOLUTION AND THE DECISION IN FAVOUR OF A EUSALP ON THE EU LEVEL

Not only was the course finally set for the establishment of a EUSALP at the ministerial conference in Grenoble on 18 October 2013, but three thematic focal points were established within the framework of a resolution, which laid out the essential configuration of an Alpine macroregion. The following Three Pillars of Grenoble were defined by the foreign ministers (Grenoble Resolution 2013):

- 1) **Sustainable Growth:** Ensuring sustainable growth and promoting full employment, competitiveness and innovation by consolidating and diversifying specific economic activities with a view to reinforcing mutual solidarity between mountain and urban areas.
- 2) **Territorial Development:** Promoting a territorial development that is focused on an environmentally friendly mobility, reinforced academic cooperation, development of services, transports and communication infrastructures policy.
- 3) **Management of Energy, and of Natural and Cultural Resources:** Promoting sustainable management of energy and natural and cultural resources and protecting the environment and preserving biodiversity and natural areas.

A general meeting of the council of the European Union (Ministerial Council) followed on 22 October in Brussels. Shortly thereafter the Alpine Convention's working group 'Macroregional Strategy for the Alps', convened on 29 October in Innsbruck. On 17 December 2013, upon the invitation of France and the Italian chairman of the Alpine Convention, a high-level promotional conference devoted to the idea of an Alpine regional strategy took place, attended by civil society (in the form of CIPRA International). This conference was to forge a bridge to further developments, in order to secure inclusion of an Alpine regional strategy in the discussions of the European council on 19 December 2013.

On 19 December 2013, the European Commission was finally charged by the Council in Brussels with the resolution to develop – together with the Alpine nations and states – the design of a macroregional strategy for the Alpine area: 'Recalling its conclusions of June 2011 and the Council Conclusions on the added value of macroregional strategies of October 2013, the European Council invites the Commission, in cooperation with Member States, to develop an EU Strategy for the Alpine Region by June 2015.' The deadline of mid-June 2015 was estimated as a very ambitious goal for developing the proposal. The assignment from the European Council was also the starting point for all stakeholders in terms

of articulating and considering important thematic fields and focal points for the Alpine strategy.

1.3.4. DISCUSSION CONCERNING THE SUBSTANCE AND A FUNCTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUSALP

In order to propel the process forward, a steering group was established, whose first meeting convened on 20 February 2014 in Munich. Along with the EU Commission, seven representatives of Alpine nations as well as seven representatives of Alpine provinces participated as voting members. The Alpine Convention and Alpine Space were represented as well, although only granted observer status. And despite the fact that Austria, Germany and Switzerland once more called for the inclusion of civil society in the steering group, this was not done, which not only led to discord but also made the picture even clearer that certain individual states persist in pursuing a top-down approach, rather than adopting a bottom-up perspective. In the first meeting of the steering group it was decided that a 'draft paper' would be prepared in coordination with the EU Commission, concerning the central elements and their ancillary activities, to be used as basis for additional discussion. Further substantial and strategic meetings of the steering group followed in April (Innsbruck), May (Milan) as well as in June 2014 (Chambery), where among other issues, it was decided to establish sub-working groups for the Three Pillars of Grenoble, in which along with representatives of the Alpine Convention, civil society – in the form of CIPRA International – was allowed to take a seat. The highest priority of this sub-working group was the development of individual fields of action. Two meetings at the end of March 2014 and the end of April 2014 were scheduled with the purpose of achieving visible and substantial results. These meetings led mostly to the formulation of general aims with their – in part – various interpretations. A number of forward-looking themes were either ignored or only peripherally treated. In any case the results from the sub-working groups consistently allowed room for



The preservation of biodiversity is a major pillar of the EUSALP process. (Photo: J. Essl)

interpretation and consideration not only for the continuing process of discussion, but in particular for the public consultation process (cf. European Commission 2014) that the European Commission was commencing in July 2014. The development of detailed fields of action for the preparation of the consultation (cf. Weixlbaumer 2014, 6) was worked out within the framework of the project Alpen.Leben, along with thematic concentration on a macroregional strategy for the Alpine region, with the Alpine Convention as added value (see Chapter 4), in terms of consensus-building and further development.

At the international conference 'For a strong Alpine region – current developments in the implementation of a macroregional Alpine strategy' as part of the project Alpen.Leben in Salzburg on 17 June 2014, high level representatives of the European Commission, the Austrian Foreign Ministry and the Austrian Chancellery, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management, the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, states and science/academics as well as NGOs engaged in the process, while organisations of civil society discussed the focal points concerning a macroregional strategy worked out by the steering group in the foregoing conferences. Thus the conference sought to achieve a broad and up-to-date standard of knowledge and thematic focus regarding a macroregional strategy, debating possibilities for implementation proposed by the sub-working group, establishing the role of the Alpine Convention, demonstrating possibilities of functioning governance, and supplying prognostications for its practical implementation in the coming years.

Agreement was reached on three material statements concerning a successful implementation of the EUSALP (CIPRA Austria 2014, 1ff):

- 1) Cooperation on an equal footing between the Alpine core region and the economically powerful cities that lie outside the Alpine arc.
- 2) The Alpine Convention must under no circumstances be replaced by a macroregional strategy for the Alpine region.
- 3) The Alpine Convention must come out of this EUSALP process stronger than it went into it.

A further foundation for the implementation of the EUSALP is presented by the Alpine Space Programme 2014–2020, encompassing a focal point termed 'Well-governed Alpine Space' (cf. Alpine Space 2014). This focal point was registered in the programme with the intention of enabling projects in this sector, and so to facilitate and expedite the implementation of the EUSALP.

Successful implementation of the EUSALP will ultimately depend upon an open discussion between the Alpine core region and the Alpine foreland with its economically powerful cities, as well as the substantive orientation of the thematic fields, the establishment of focal points and the goal of sustainable development.

At the XI. Alpine Conference of the Alpine Convention in the year 2011, it was resolved to establish a working group 'Macroregional Strategy for the Alps', in order to generate essential input from the Alpine Convention toward an implementation of the EUSALP. In the course of the 56th meeting of the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention on 19 June 2014 a further precedent-setting conference led to the inclusion of the Alpine Convention in this European process. With this it was determined to proceed on a path supporting the European Council toward a successful implementation of the EUSALP, with the confirmation that use must be made of the Alpine Convention's substance and its more than twenty-year history.

On 16 July 2014, the EU Commission finally initiated the public consultation phase, based on the Three Pillars of Grenoble as focal themes of the EUSALP. The goal of this process running until the 15th of October was to win the general public's support and encourage its engagement with the future development of the Alpine region and the economically powerful cities of the Alpine foreland.



To the economically strong metropolises (photo: Vienna) the Alps must be more than just of complementary value. (Photo: J. Essl)

The online questionnaire encompassed all three focal themes of Grenoble and was designed to supply concrete responses to issues such as:

- how to promote cooperation, in order to better develop the potential of the Alpine region;
- how to successfully overcome doubts and stumbling blocks;
- which political positions hold the greatest relevance for a EUSALP;
- how capabilities for cooperation in the Alpine region can be improved, in order to better utilise opportunities and meet challenges;
- what are the advantages for Europe;
- what are the greatest obstacles to mobility for workers, students etc.;
- what are the greatest challenges to competitiveness in the Alpine region;
- what are the greatest challenges with regard to connectivity;
- what are the greatest challenges regarding sustainability in the Alpine region;
- what possibilities present themselves for improving the transnational cooperation apparatus;

The results of this consultation are presented in December 2014 at the international stakeholders' conference in Milan. In connexion with this, the results from the consultation process will be read through, evaluated and incorporated into the proceedings by the EU Commission. The continuing timetable includes the formulation of a concrete plan of action, one that will be completed by the middle/end of June 2015.

But before the end of the consultation phase in mid-October 2014, a EUSALP conference at a high political level took place in Innsbruck, where once again the necessity for establishing an Alpine macroregion was emphasised. It can be recorded as a result of this conference that

- the EUSALP process must take place with the active inclusion of the Alpine Convention and civil society;
- it is intended to install a steering committee for the EUSALP with a rotating chairmanship;
- it is intended to install a special commissioner for the EUSALP;

- it is important to strive toward pan-Alpine collaboration in matters of tourism;
- and
- the Alpine region should be more diligently protected and safeguarded at the EU level.

CIPRA Austria has drawn up a clear timeline for the entire implementation process of the EUSALP, in order to document the rapid progress of this ambitious undertaking, including the myriad national and international conferences and meetings that have taken place. The timeline is available at www.cipra.at.

1.3.5. CONTRIBUTION OF THE PROJECT ALPEN.LEBEN TO THE FORMATION OF A EUSALP

The project Alpen.Leben, sponsored by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management via the Rural Development Programme – and fostered by CIPRA Austria – has been focussing its attention upon the internationally legal contracts and treaties of the Alpine Convention, in the course of developing a macroregional strategy for the Alpine region.

Despite the longstanding existence of the Alpine Convention, knowledge of this international accord and its potential for sustainable development of rural areas has not gained any appreciable foothold with many decision makers and among the populace. It was and still is important to correct this state of affairs, since the Alpine Convention has in the past two decades created a structure for the Alpine region that is unique in its nature. The goal must provide that the Alpine Convention and an Alpine macroregion complement each other, rather than compete with one another. For this reason the project Alpen.Leben aimed to point out existent structures and possibilities within the framework of the Alpine Convention, and to present the strengths of this international set of agreements by way of example. The potential and added value an Alpine macroregion can offer from the Alpine Convention's perspective was thus presented in detail. The heart of this project has therefore been an analysis of the discussion regarding themes of the Alpine Convention and a macroregional Alpine strategy, and in the context of its possibilities to provide concrete management recommendations for successful integration of the Alpine Convention in a macroregion. One essential element of the project has concerned the preparation of a governance model, one that is based on a bottom-up perspective, illustrating potential collaboration between the Alpine region and the surrounding areas. The resulting report will serve as an aid to discussion and decision-making for all those engaged with the theme of an Alpine macroregion.

The project Alpen.Leben has technically and substantially been supported by a stakeholder group bringing together representatives from the environmental ministry, the provinces, academia/science and the NGOs. In order to gain an accurate assessment and have a look beyond the borders, additional experts from the national and international spheres will be included in this process of discussion. Monthly newsletters, presswork and workshops culminating in an international conference have demonstrated that the Alpine Convention will provide added value for the implementation of a macroregional Alpine strategy.

1.3.6. THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE FORMATION OF THE EUSALP

The core element of a functional Alpine strategy is governance that allows all interested and concerned parties to be actively included in the process, and provides for their participation. In order to achieve this goal, people must perceive a visible benefit to the strategy. It is precisely the CIPRA with its more than one hundred member organisations in the Alpine states which, as the representative of civil society, can generate trust and acceptance for an Alpine strategy and act as an important facilitator for this rather unwieldy construct, thus making concern and understanding for the sensitive Alpine region visible in Europe. That assumes, however, that civil society (= CIPRA) is permitted to be active from the beginning in the elaboration of focal themes. In order to underscore this necessity, the CIPRA and its members adopted a comprehensive position paper on 10 October 2013 on the theme of an Alpine macroregion with active integration of the Alpine Convention.

The 'bottom-up' process frequently invoked since the beginning, however, did not translate into reality: Owing to the interventions of France and Italy, civil society was not incorporated in the governing body. Only in the sub-working groups, which composed the substantive implementation of the Three Pillars of Grenoble, did it become possible for them to take an active part in the elaboration of focal themes.

In contrast to the other Alpine states, the Republic of Austria has chosen another path – a totally transparent and inclusive approach. The Federal Chancellery and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs created a coordination platform in which the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, the Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology, the Alpine Convention, all social partners, the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning, the sciences, Alpine Space as well as CIPRA Austria (representing civil society) all took part, in order to exchange information as well as to determine common substance and strategies for the implementation of an Alpine macroregion.

1.3.7. CALLS FOR AN ALPINE MACROREGION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Voices heard in the context of the project Alpen.Leben demonstrated that the EUSALP needs time. Some were particularly critical of the EUSALP: Karl Weber and Sebastian Schmidt (University of Innsbruck) were sceptical that the Alpine Convention would be reinforced with the macroregion. Rather, they perceived the danger that the Alpine Convention can only lose, since the Alps will ultimately be relegated to the role of a complementary region for the greater agglomeration. In their opinion, the Alpine Convention would have, alone and by itself, the opportunity and possibility of solving many future challenges in the Alpine arc, particularly on the regional level.

Werner Bätzing (University of Erlangen), for years engaged with the concept of an Alpine macroregion, expressed himself in a similar fashion. For him as well it is the Alpine Convention that demonstrates the best qualifications for playing a leading role, because of the existing structures at its command, which are still significantly missing from an Alpine macroregion. According to Bätzing, the concern remains that the Alpine core region would not be placed on an equal footing with the regions of the Alpine foreland and their economically powerful cities. Concerning governance, Bätzing pursued an interesting approach whereby the Alpine Convention per se would be well suited to the role of a distinct macroregional strategy. It would therefore require governance structures for both the Alpine Convention and for an Alpine macroregion – and thus a greater area – which in the course of things would offer added value and occupy an important bridge-building function in the implementation.

The worry that the Alpine Convention could be reduced to only a peripheral factor was expressed by Markus Reiterer (General Secretary of the Alpine Convention) at the beginning of the EUSALP process. The Alpine Convention reacted early on for precisely this reason and established its own working group and prepared an input paper. The front initially built up by certain Alpine states against a leading role for the Alpine Convention has in the meantime given way to acceptance of the Alpine Convention in the EUSALP process. Even if the Alpine Convention currently holds only observer status in the steering group, it is involved in the decision-making process. According to Reiterer, any governance for an Alpine macroregion must be lightweight and straightforward; here, the Alpine Convention can furnish an important substantive input with regard to most issues, functioning as an essential hub and assuming a leading role with the Third Pillar. Accordingly, Reiterer formulated eight principles of the EUSALP, proceeding in the confident belief that the substance of these will achieve a wide consensus:

2. THE ALPINE CONVENTION AS BASIS FOR A EUSALP

The Alpine Convention, also known as Convention for the Protection of the Alps (cf. Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention 2008), came into being in 1995 as a compact under international law, with eight thematic implementation protocols in the areas of conservation and landscape conservancy, mountain farming, spatial planning and sustainable development, mountain forests, tourism, transport, soil conservation, energy and the protocol for resolution of conflicts. Additional declarations were adopted addressing themes of population and culture in 2006. The framework convention establishes the fundamentals for the Alpine Convention and articulates general measures dedicated to sustainable development in the Alpine region.

Parties to the contract of the Alpine Convention are Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, France, Italy, Monaco, and the European Union. The goals and rules of engagement are laid down in a framework document, and the implementation protocols serve to determine measures taken toward the realisation of goals in the individual disciplines. Since the implementation protocols of the Alpine Convention stand on the same legal stratum as those of the mother convention and constitute separate contracts under international law, they have the power of amendment and complementary legal character and must therefore according to Art. 50 I B-VG be authorised by the national assembly. Various protocols were ratified by all Member States by 2002, and are in effect since 18 December 2002 (cf. Austrian Alpine Society 2011, 21).

2.1. History and role of the Alpine Convention

As early as 1951 the International Alpine Commission, as the CIPRA was then known, had registered the development of an international Alpine convention in its founding documents. In 1986 the CIPRA took up the initiative once more concerning practical development of the convention and introduced the proposal in the European Parliament. This assembly's unanimous decision for developing a 'convention for the protection of the Alpine region' followed on 17 May 1988. The starting point for the elaboration of a system of Alpine development and coordination that would be binding under international law came with the subsequent I. Alpine Conference (of the seven environmental ministers of the Alpine nations) in Berchtesgaden in 1989. The 1990s were characterised by marathon negotiations concerning the substance of the accord and internal balloting of the signatories. On

7 November 1991 came the signing of the framework convention by the environmental ministers of the Alpine nations, as well as the environmental commissioner of the European Community, which would come into effect on 6 March 1995. In the International Year of the Mountains 2002, Austria, Germany and Liechtenstein ratified all of the implementation protocols, making the way free for them to come into effect on 18 December 2002. Between 2002 and 2005, France as well ratified all protocols, while in Monaco at least the protocols concerning regional planning and sustainable development, conservation and landscape conservancy, tourism, protection of the soil and resolution of conflict went into effect. Slovenia followed with the ratification of all protocols in the year 2004. Ratification of the Transport and Mobility Protocols, certainly part of the heart of the matter for the Alpine Convention, proved a time-consuming process for the EU and in Italy. After lengthy negotiations, Italy's ratification of the transport protocol ensued in 2013 (cf. Austrian Alpine Society 2003, 7ff).

At the present time not all protocols have been ratified by all of the signatories, or incorporated into national legislation. It is particularly unfortunate that the national assembly of Switzerland, which with more than 60 % of its territory in the Alps occupies a central position in the Alpine Convention's area of application, has twice already declined the political implementation of the Alpine Convention. Italy has behaved in a similar fashion, although their ratification of the Transport Protocol in 2013 has brought some movement to Alpine politics.

The future seat of the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention remained undetermined until 2002. In the course of the VII. Alpine Conference in 2002, the Permanent Secretariat was awarded to the provincial capital Innsbruck (Tyrol), with a field office in Bolzano (cf. Austrian Alpine Society 2003, 7).

The implementation protocols are currently in effect in Austria as a part of the national body of law, and thus must be observed by the legislature and by law enforcement. How much value the convention actually carries in the federal states depends on the one hand upon ratification of the implementation protocols, and on the other hand upon the fulfilment of its requirements (cf. Austrian Alpine Society 2003, 7ff).

The comprehensive reports on the state of the Alps drafted by the Alpine Convention offer wide-reaching, substantiated information concerning ecological, economic and social developments in the Alpine region, and thus

- 1) Listen to the people – involve civil society and the private sector.
- 2) Work on the level that can best address an issue: municipality, region, state, Alpine Convention, EU.
- 3) Stick to the law – community law, national laws, international law, the Alpine Convention and its protocols.
- 4) Establish sustainable activities, which are beneficial for both the Alpine regions and the surrounding areas; in doing so pursue the best possible balance between economic development and protection of our valuable and vulnerable living space.
- 5) Use the full potential of existing structures – Alpine Space, Alpine Convention, networks.
- 6) Define SMART objectives: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.
- 7) Ensure a responsible, efficient and transparent structure of governance.
- 8) Create a new awareness of Alpine issues in Brussels.

1. The Alpine Convention is indispensable and must be given a leading role in the EUSALP process, because unlike the EUSALP it already possesses an existing and proven structure, and can thus make an essential contribution toward sustainable development and protection of the Alps, thanks to its extensive practical knowledge.
2. The active inclusion of civil society would ease the introduction of focal themes in the EUSALP, and at the same time create open and positive access for the Alpine populace to participate in the future project of an Alpine macroregion.
3. Structures of governance must be lightweight and straightforward. The integration of all stakeholders and civil society in the process is a must in order to realise a bottom-up approach.
4. The districts involved could themselves be positively affected by a wider demarcation of boundaries.

Veronika Holzer (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management) sees positive potential in a EUSALP, so long as lightweight governance with the integration of all stakeholders including civil society is guaranteed.

For Wolfgang Pfefferkorn (Rosinak & Partners) the expansion of the EUSALP beyond the Alpine core area (= to the boundaries of the Alpine Convention) constitutes a necessity, since the ETZ Alpine regional programme expressly contains the Alpine foreland along with the urban agglomeration. But Pfefferkorn as well acknowledges that the Alpine Convention must play a sustaining role, because this will not only make possible an exchange between the Alpine core region (Alpine Convention) and the Alpine foreland, but constitutes a positive influence on the structure of governance.

One thing becomes clear from all of these discussions: during the orientation phase, any euphoria concerning an Alpine macroregion has kept itself within limits. Still missing were the long-awaited answers to the burning questions – and above all, any coordination of energies towards stated goals concerning sustainable Alpine development was not truly evident. Four cornerstones have crystallised out of the discussions, which also wend their way like a crimson thread through the entire Alpen.Leben project:

provide an important basis for discussion about the region's future development. Furthermore, these reports provide important strategies for successful implementation.

The first Report on the State of the Alps appeared in 2007, addressing the theme transport and mobility in the Alps (cf. Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention 2007). Two further reports followed in 2009 and 2011, on the themes water supply and water resources management (cf. Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention 2009). The fourth report appeared in 2013, concerned with the thematic field of sustainable tourism in the Alps (cf. Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention 2013²).

2.2. The advantage of utilising the existent structures of the Alpine Convention for a EUSALP

'A concept of the Alps recognised by international law exists today with the Alpine Convention, demarcated by a clearly defined area of application and a specific mandate for the desired sustainable development in this region' (CIPRA International 2013, 1). From CIPRA Austria's viewpoint, the Alpine Convention is predestined to form the basis for a macroregional strategy for the Alpine areas. This also underscores the fact that the Alpine Convention is pursuing clear and substantial goals for the region in its implementation protocols, while at the same time focussing upon protection of the Alps and sustainable development for the region. Furthermore, the Alpine Convention possesses longstanding functional governance, which operates from a highly effective bottom-up perspective.

Since a macroregional strategy is not allowed to create new structures or statutory provisions, the Alpine Convention could be utilised in the case of the EUSALP as an existing, legally responsible structure. This strengthens not only the convention itself, but also eases the preparation and implementation of a macroregional strategy for the Alpine area: 'The Alpine Convention is an important political framework for the protection and development of the mountain region, and should in this sense promote innovation in the Alpine region as a laboratory for sustainable development, to make it possible for the local population to continue living and working in the Alps. In this, the question involves not only the political administration of the Alps but also their connexions to the surrounding areas, which are interlinked with the Alps in functional relationships. In this, the Alpine Convention sees its role on the one hand as contributing to solutions that improve the chances for sustainable development, while at the same time providing secure protection of the Alps (Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention 2013, 17). Furthermore, the Alpine Convention, with its more than twenty years of experience, practical knowledge

and existing network, can contribute significantly to the success of a macroregional Alpine strategy. Moreover, the Alpine Convention possesses an existing framework of municipal boundaries, which could be integrated into the strategy for the Alpine region (see Chapter 2.3).

If an Alpine macroregion were to be constructed merely upon the coordination of the involved territorial entities, unable to avail itself of any discreet structures (no permanent secretariat, none of its own means of finance), it runs the risk of failing to meet its goals (cf. Bätzing 2012). This too speaks for making creative use of the well-established structures of the Alpine Convention.

In order to illustrate the most effective points of the Alpine Convention, we shall briefly enumerate and outline the structures that have been created and maintained over the past twenty years, its governance frameworks as well as diverse cooperation platforms:

Functioning structures

- The Alpine Convention's area of application: case-relevant and clearly defined in terms of municipal boundaries;
- A precise count of the integrated communities, localities and cities as well as of their populations;
- Eight Alpine nations and the European Community as contractual partners of the Alpine Convention;
- Alpine Convention: Federal Law Gazette since 1995;
- Eight implementation protocols and two declarations with clearly defined substance as the basis for political implementation (identical for all contractual partners);
- Additional protocol on the solution of litigations (arbitration and reconciliation in case of conflict among contractual partners);
- Framework convention as law in force since 1995¹
- Implementation protocols: applicable law in Austria since 2002;
- Established law, oriented toward a pan-Alpine integrated and sustainable strategy (e.g. energy, tourism, spatial planning, conservation, mountain farming etc.).

¹ A treaty the states of the Alpine agreed upon together with the European Union and that Austria has ratified (BGBl. 477/1995 i.d.F. BGBl. III 18/1999).(BGBl. 477/1995 i.d.F. BGBl. III 18/1999).

Functioning governance

- Alpine Conference (semi-annual conference of the environmental ministers) – an exchange between Alpine nations at a high political level
- Permanent Committee – executive organ at a high government level
- Existing platforms, working groups and a supervisory committee
- Secretariat of the Alpine Convention as interface for all signatories to the convention
- Specific to Austria: National Committee of the Alpine Convention (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management: Information, discussion and strategy platforms, which includes the participation of the relevant ministries, federal states, social partners and concerned NGOs)

The role of the NGOs in the Alpine Convention

- Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention: Alpine NGOs are granted observer status
- Special to Austria: NGOs are members of the National Committee of the Alpine Convention, and thus securely positioned in the transfer of knowledge

Research and knowledge

Compared with the existing and proposed macroregions, the transfer of research and knowledge constitutes an essential component of the work:

- Alpine status reports (transport and mobility, water supply and resource management, sustainable development, innovation in rural areas, tourism)
- Alpine signals (documentation of natural occurrences, reduction of climate damaging emissions in the Alps, transnational ecological cooperation – Alpine Network of Protected Areas, Alpine Convention 'in concrete terms' – goals and implementation
- ALPARC Alpine Network of Protected Areas, existing network of over 100 protected areas within the Alpine Convention's area of application
- Observing and understanding: Alpine observations and information system SOIA
- Working groups and platforms: transport, ecological cooperation, macroregional Alpine strategy, large animals of prey, mountain farming, UNESCO heritage, natural hazards, demographics and employment, water supply in the Alpine region

The implementation of the Alpine Convention on the community level

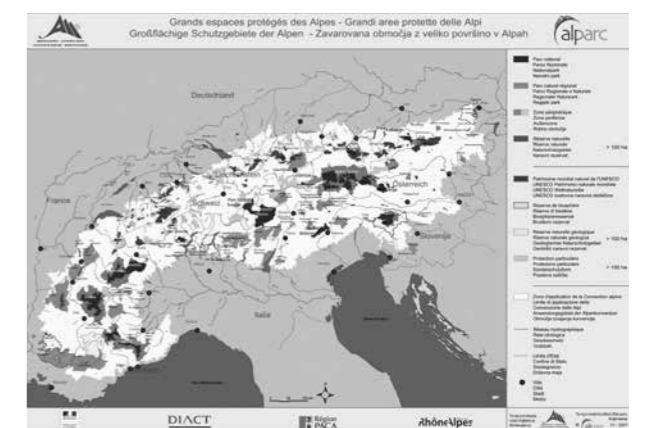
Although the Alpine Convention and its implementation

protocols represent a sovereign and somewhat abstract instrument for much of the Alpine populace, it has been visibly implemented in a practical fashion on the community and regional levels. For this reason, attention has been directed to the brochure published in 2011, 'Alpine Convention and best practices in the Austrian communities – Guidelines for implementation of the Alpine Convention' (Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention and Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management). This guarantees in the meantime that a widely based network and exchange of information has been established in more than 300 Alpine communities.

- Community network Alliance in the Alps (practical execution of the implementation protocols in communities and regions regarding climate protection, sustainable building, energy, tourism, mountain forestry, waste reduction, separating and recycling etc.)
- Alpine City of the Year: focussed execution of the implementation protocols of the Alpine Convention
- Alpinist Villages
- VIA ALPINA – extensive hiking trails, networking all Alpine states
- ALPAR - Network Network of Protected Areas
- Per Alpes – twenty circular hiking trails within the Alpine arc (some of them international)
- Examples of implementation for soft mobi-



The Alpine Convention possesses longstanding functional governance. (Photo: Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention)



The Alpine Network of Protected Areas is a key project of the Alpine Convention. (Source: Alpine Network of Protected Areas)

lity in recreation (hiking, mountain climbing, cross-country skiing)

The Alpine Convention and Europe 2020

The Europe 2020 strategy provides a further development of the Lisbon strategy, the result of a changing Europe (economic development, age demographics in the populace, reduced competitiveness etc.) The focal points of Europe 2020 are based upon three pillars, of which the second is sustainable growth and thus above all promotes protection of the environment and its biodiversity, as well as advocating an efficient and intelligent use of energy, along with a sustainable economy producing reduced emissions.

The Alpine Convention is already covering some of the essential substance of Europe 2020 with its existing and clearly defined implementation protocols addressing the theme of protection of the environment and biodiversity as well as that of energy and should therefore be incorporated into any implementational measures concerning sustainable (also economically speaking) development of the Alpine macroregion.

2.3. Concerning the territorial demarcation of a EUSALP

Since the Alpine region constitutes a great periphery without a great city, the essential question arises, whether an Alpine macroregion can only be made up of an amalgamation of peripheral areas (domain of the Alpine Convention) or if the nearby metropolises should be included (domain of Alpine Space Interreg III B Programme [Bätzing 2012]). In the discussion concerning

the municipal boundaries of a EUSALP, there are three possible courses of action mentioned. In the first, the macroregion could be delineated according to the Alpine Convention's perimeter. With the second, it could incorporate the great cities and the regions of the Alpine foreland. The third alternative proposes no formal boundary for the region, but rather that the Alpine macroregion orientate itself by future-relevant thematic fields and focal points. In the discussions of recent months, the steering group strongly favours the variant including the Alpine core plus the regions of the Alpine foreland and their economically powerful cities, with a total of 70 million inhabitants. Hereafter the individual proposals regarding area of application will be shown, along with their advantages and disadvantages.

2.3.1. TERRITORIAL DELIMITATION ACCORDING TO THE ALPINE CONVENTION'S AREA OF APPLICATION

The entire territory of the Alpine Convention, and thus its area of influence, extends over an area of 190,000 km² and is home to some 5,900 communities, of which France and Italy occupy the largest proportion with each around 30 %. Some 65 % of Austria's territory lies within the purview of the Alpine Convention, some 19 % of the communities. Moreover, Austria has a particular role in the context of the Alpine Convention, since it brings not only the greatest area to the Alpine region (28.46 %), but also after Liechtenstein and Monaco – who each have 100 % of their territory within the area of the Alpine Convention – is also the nation where the Alps occupy the greatest proportion of both area and population (cf. Oesterreichischer Alpenverein 2011, 30ff). Some 14 million persons live within the perimeter of the Alpine Convention (see Figure 2).

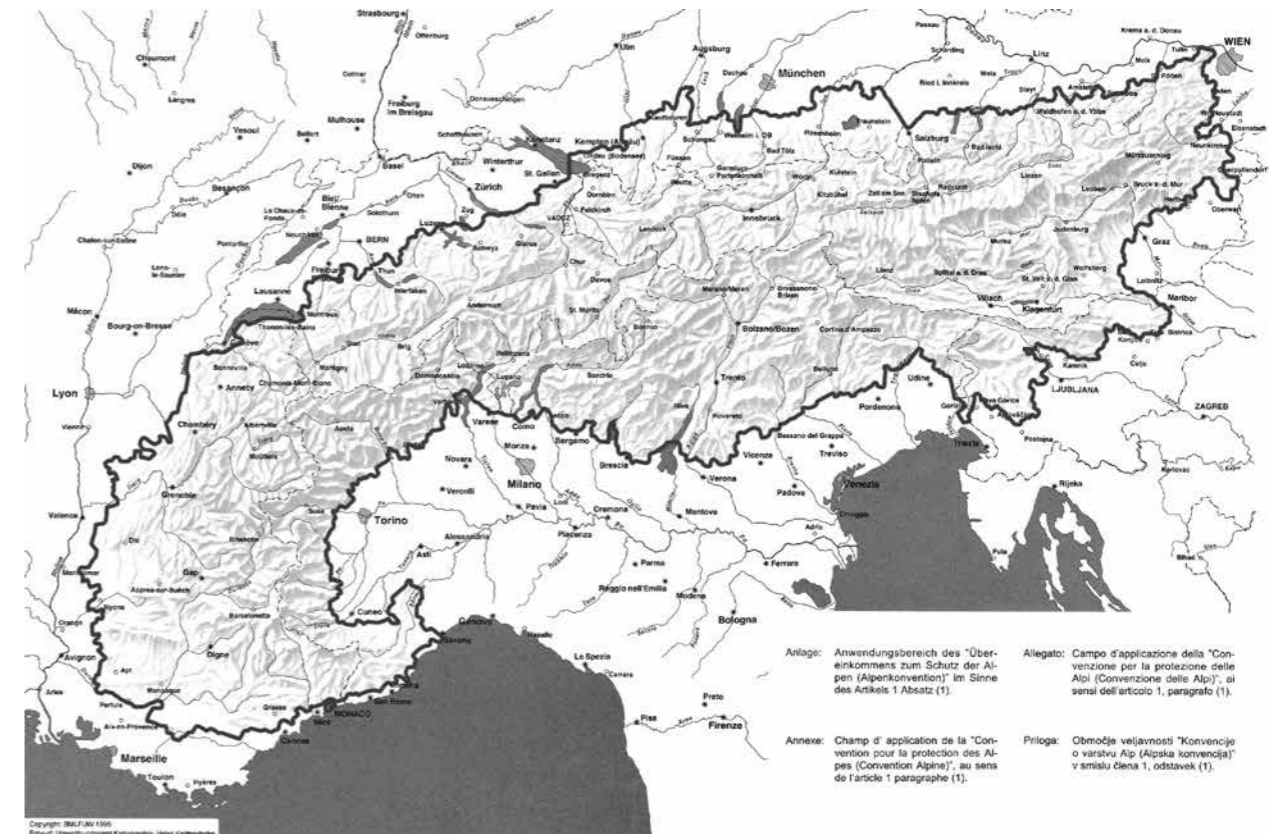
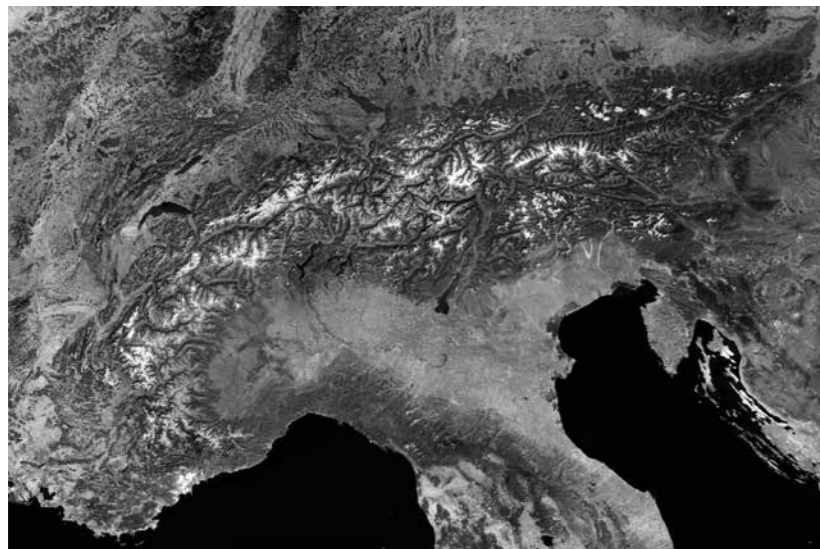


Figure 2: Scope of the Alpine Convention (Oesterreichischer Alpenverein 2011, 22f)



The scope of the Alpine Convention covers 190,000 km². (Satellite picture: Geospace)

One fundamental advantage of the Alpine Convention's clearly demarcated boundaries would be, as already mentioned in Chapter 2.2. the existence of a linkable and established structure. There would be no need to draw new borders. Focussing on the Alpine Convention's area of application would be important according to Bätzing (2012), so that the Alpine core region would not be devalued to the point of being a complementary area to the neighbouring metropolises'. There are several substantial arguments that speak for this 'peripheral macroregion':

- Amalgamation of the individual perimeters into a single macroregion would create the prerequisite of revaluing Alpine-specific resources, because this would establish a minimum size for the small-scale and otherwise frequently marginalised regions, and thus an appropriate status in the process for them.
- 'The same applies for tackling the Alpine-specific transnational environmental problems [...], which in the Alpine region possess great significance, but in the perspective of the extra-Alpine regions, however, constitute merely a "special case" with only peripheral significance.' (Bätzing 2012)

In any case would it be necessary in 'a determination on the Alpine Convention's area of application [...] to facilitate situational territorial expansions in order to undertake territorial adaptations, where it is advisable in the interests of the macroregional strategy to do so' (Bußjäger 2014, 6).

2.3.2. TERRITORIAL DELIMITATION INCLUDING THE SURROUNDING METROPOLISES

An area of demarcation going beyond the Alpine Convention's area of application, which along with the peripheral region include the economically powerful great Alpine foreland cities of the sub-Alpine regions – Milan, Munich, Geneva, Vienna etc. – would have an area of 490,000 km² with some 70 million inhabitants. This expanded perimetric boundary corresponds to the project-field of Alpine Space.

According to Bätzing (2012) this delineation of boundaries could lead to two problems: 'The problems and potential of the Alps as considered by the Alpine Convention are extremely different from those of the regions of the Alpine foreland, whereby this larger-scale demarcation – reaching far beyond the Alpine core region – represents a contradiction to the central theme of a macroregion (assembly of regions that have common problems and potentials) [...] [Moreover], the thinly-settled Alpine region would be [hereby] led to assume a minority position with regard to demographics, economics and political matters

compared with the densely populated and economically dynamic metropolitan' regions of the Alpine foreland. According to Haßbacher (cf. CIPRA Austria 2014, 15) it must also be prevented that the Alps be regarded only in terms of resources or as barriers for the surrounding regions. An equitable cooperation between the great cities and the Alpine core should remain in focus, so that it remains possible to react to particular demands and find common solutions to current challenges (CIPRA Austria 2014, 13).

Although the question of area boundaries has not been treated with any urgency in the EUSALP discussions for some time now, it quickly becomes apparent that many stakeholders in fact prefer this scenario. Also, the European Commission (cf. European Union 2014) refers to the Alpine macroregion on its website as 'a region in Europe with ca. 70 million inhabitants', thus including the foreland metropolises in its strategy. According to the EU Commission, the added value from this variant of demarcation would lie in the creation of a new relationship between the great cities, the Alpine foothills and the Alpine core.

2.3.3. NO FORMAL BOUNDARIES – AREA OF APPLICATION DETERMINED ACCORDING TO INDIVIDUAL CASE

One further approach would create no exact demarcation of boundaries, but rather define a perimeter according to individual issues and concerns that are relevant to the various regions affected. In this fashion, nations and provinces that are further removed from the Alps can be drawn into the process and the relationship of the Alpine core to all states in the EU can be taken into account.

A similar approach was in fact chosen in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), in which nations somewhat removed from the immediate vicinity of the Danube were included. The ARGE Alp and the Alpine Regions (2012, 25) contend in their initiative paper that a strategy should address the concerns of the Alpine core even as it addresses the interactions of the core region with the bordering metropolitan areas. Furthermore, 'the Alpine core and the foreland regions constitute an entity, notwithstanding differences of focus and areas of emphasis. [...] The exact geographic layout must be defined in a flexible and functional fashion, according to the demands of the individual topics and concerns' (ARGE Alp and the Alpine Regions 2012, 25). In this fashion, questions of trans-Alpine traffic could be addressed within a different delimited area than, for example, mountain farming. Also for Roland Arbter from the Federal Chancellery (cf. Expert Workshop II 2014) the precise geographic framework plays a subsidiary role in the discussion process, particularly when concrete thematic substance is being discussed. From Arbter's point of view, there must

ultimately be a proviso that allows for the exclusion of states and nations that have no immediate connexion to the Alpine core region.

2.3.4. FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS WITH REGARD TO BOUNDARIES AND DEMARCATION

Bätzing (2012) expresses the opinion that it would be useful to aim at creating a double structure:

- On the one hand, a solution for the Alpine core region with the Alpine Convention as the political control. With this model, the extra-Alpine metropolises cannot dominate the Alps. Hereby integrative goals would be pursued.
- On the other hand, integration between the surrounding region and the Alpine core in the form of an Alpine Cooperation Zone. The municipal demarcation could in this case be defined by Alpine Space. Here the goals would be sectorially embedded.

The question arises regarding a suitable model for development in this discussion of boundaries – if one takes the increasing dependence of the Alpine core upon the great cities into account or if one ought to pursue instead an endogenous model of development, in which the Alpine region can develop autonomously and make independent decisions. Here a blended form could also

be possible (cf. CIPRA Austria 2014, 3f).

There is no disagreement that the Alpine Convention must play a leading role in the implementation of the EUSALP as representative of the Alpine core's interests (cf. Bätzing 2012). Bätzing also avers here that discussions from two different perspectives concerning the future of the Alps in the context of European macroregions will take place, both of which make essential contributions to the dialogue concerning the demarcation of boundaries. On the one hand, it is impossible to view the Alpine Convention as an isolated application in Europe. Rather, the central idea of the Alpine Convention involves establishing a connexion to the surrounding region and to Europe, although the current structure of the Alpine Convention lacks this connexion. On the other hand, the EU goals of territorial cohesiveness tend to press macroregional solutions over those functioning on the national level. So there is interest in a macroregion coming from both directions. But a potential conflict could result between the 'right' and the necessary delineation of a EUSALP. This is no accident, according to Bätzing (2012), 'because here one encounters the mixing of concrete territorial issues with basic theoretical concepts concerning the future spatial structure of Europe'.



The EU Strategy for the Danube Region also involved countries that are not directly situated at the Danube. (Photo: F. Kovacs)

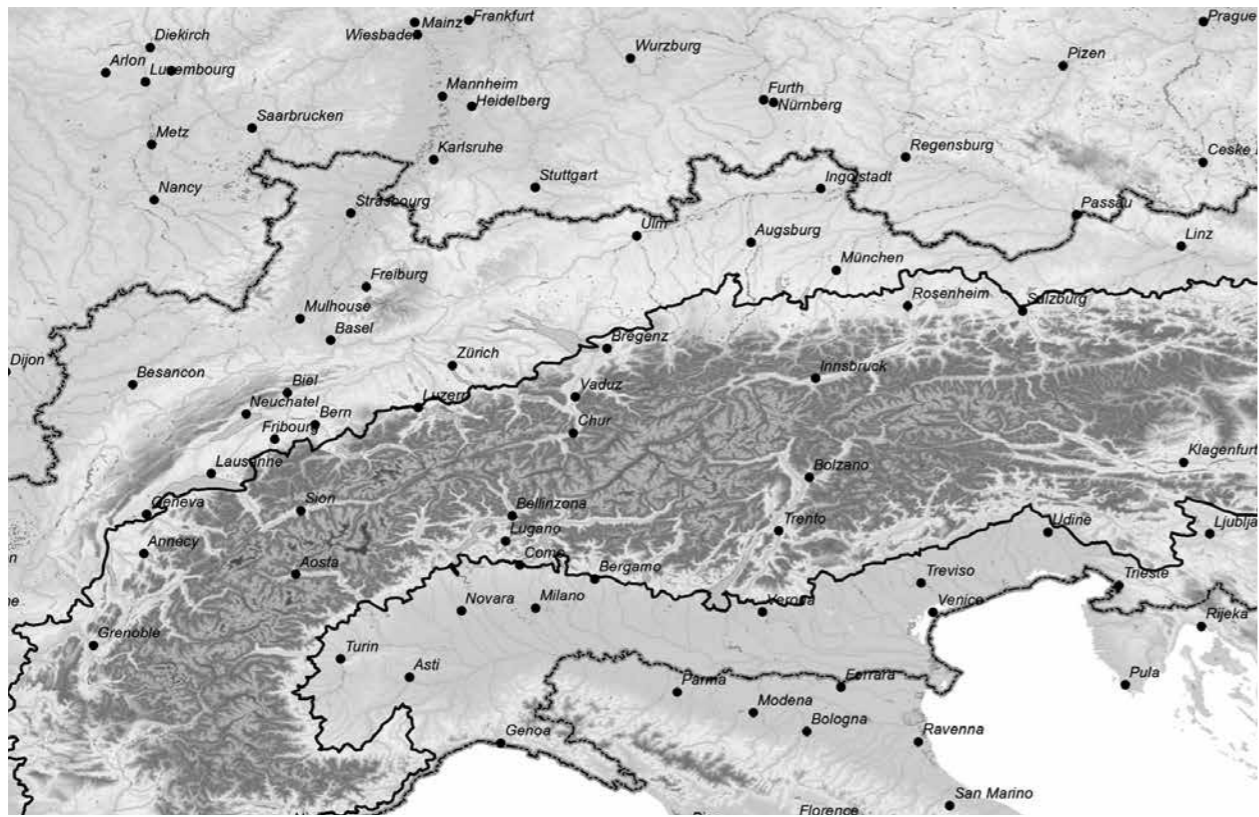


Figure 3: Scope of the Alpine Convention (inner line) and Alpine Space scope of a macroregion reaching beyond the core Alpine area.



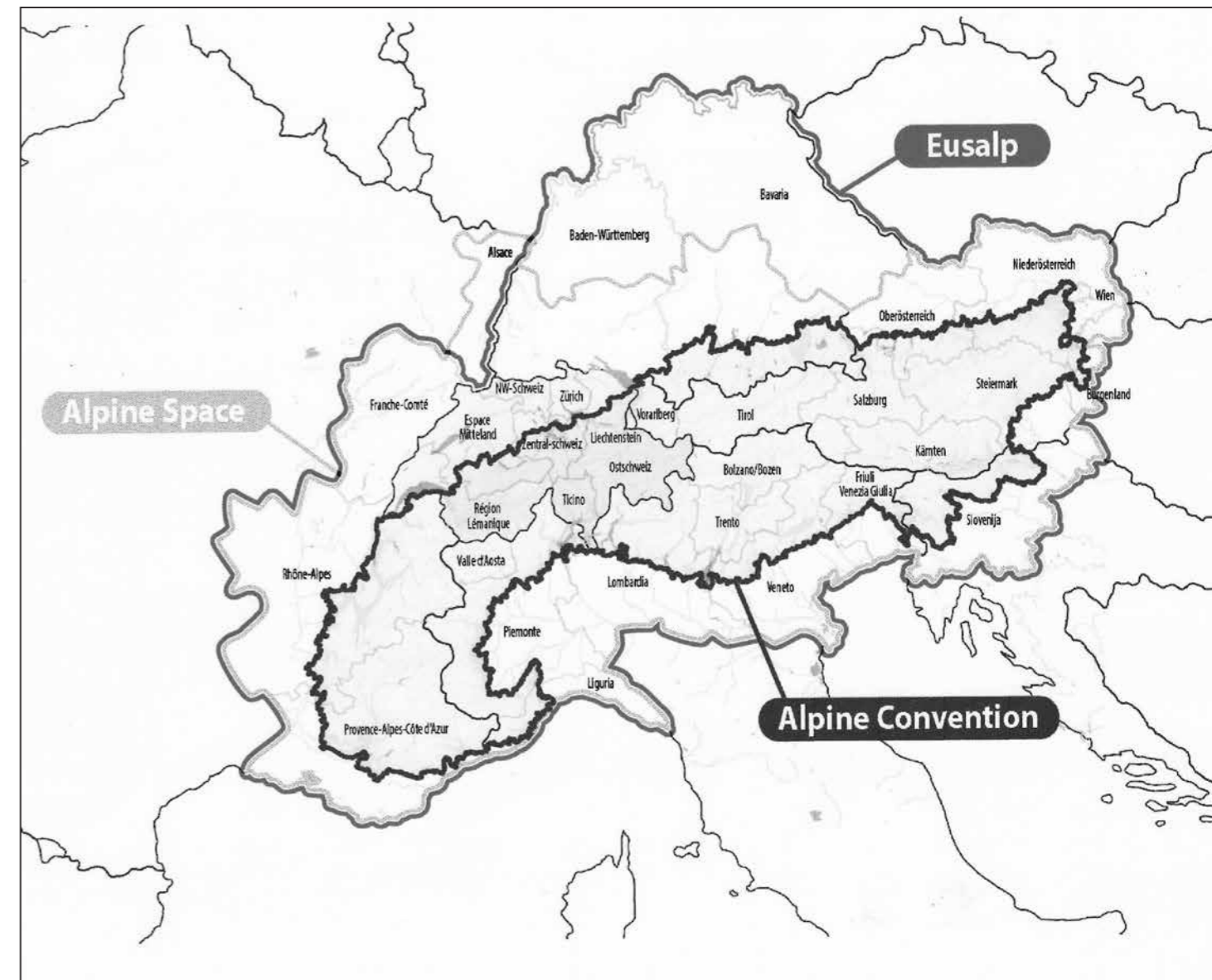
The whole of Bavaria (photo: Oberammergau) as well as Baden-Wuerttemberg will be integrated in the EUSALP process. (Photo: J. Essl)

2.3.5. NEW REGIONAL BOUNDARIES OF THE EUSALP GO BEYOND THE PERIMETERS OF THE ALPINE CONVENTION AND OF ALPINE SPACE

In the meantime there exists a newly envisaged area of application for the EUSALP; this now extends far beyond the Alpine Convention's area of application, and even beyond the original purview of Alpine Space. The southern part of the EUSALP will continue to orientate itself by Alpine Space's demarcation points. To the north, by contrast, all of Bavaria and Baden-Wuerttemberg will in the future be integrated into the EUSALP process. With this, though, the Alpine region runs the risk of being in the future increasingly seen as a 'complementary area' to the foreland region and its economically powerful metropolises. Here all possible effort must be exerted to ensure that the Alpine Convention, and with it the Alpine core region, be seen as an equal partner in the implementation process of the EUSALP by all stakeholders.



For years, many regions of the Southern Alps have been fighting strong migration (photo: Valle Stura/Cottian Alps). These regions will very well demonstrate the potential benefit of the EUSALP process. (Photo: H. Bauer)



The European Commission's new delimitation proposition for an Alpine macroregion reaching beyond the scopes of the Alpine Convention and Alpine Space.



Water is a special resource of the Alpine area that needs to be protected. (Photo: J. Essl)

3. ALPINE-SPECIFIC FEATURES, CONDITIONS AND CHALLENGES

The Alpine region, as seen within the Alpine Convention's area of application, offers a unique living and working space in the middle of Europe for nearly 14 million people, as well as an attractive tourist destination for some 120 million annual visitors; the physical characteristics of the mountain region are singular and exceptional both in terms of geography and ecology. At the same time, the mountainous Alpine core region has reciprocally active connexions on multiple levels with the regions of the Alpine foreland and their urban economic powerhouses.

A succession of initiatives, institutions and experts such as the Alpine Convention, the ARGE Alp, Alpine Space, CIPRA International and CIPRA Austria have engaged themselves for many years with particular regionally-specific challenges and opportunities concerning the evolution of a macroregional strategy for the Alpine region, attempting to present and elucidate the relevant added value of a EUSALP. As a fundamental hypothesis, it is accepted that the added value of an Alpine macroregion combines its particular Alpine-specific topographic and physiographic features with the established functional and transnational interrelations that exist within the region.

The following précis concerning the specific characteristics of the Alpine region is based on the input paper of the Alpine Convention, the initiative paper of the ARGE Alp and the expert paper on the Alpine region programme. Hiess and Pfefferkorn (2013, 19f) summarise events, challenges and background elements as follows:

1) Mutual specific concerns from external influences, such as:

- Globalisation
- Climate change
- Energy supply and demand
- Global and European interrelations concerning transport and mobility
- Demographic change
- Economic transformation to an information- and knowledge-based economy

2) Specific resources, including:

- Wealth of raw materials
- Water supply
- Biodiversity and landscape
- Renewable energy storage
- Ecological services



The Alps are a popular touristic destination for about 120 million people each year. (Photo: Archive DAV-Sektion Berlin)

3) Specific economic systems, such as:

- Mountain farming
- Mountain forestry
- Winter and summer tourism

4) Specific risks, for example:

- Natural hazards
- Environmental problems in the Alpine topography (noise, air quality in valley districts)
- Transnational effects of interventions in the ecosystem

5) Specific urgent measures:

- 'Branding' of the Alps as an entity
- Plans for transnational danger zones
- Transnational concepts for use of water power
- Development of a pan-Alpine energy policy for improving the area's position on the European market
- Development and coordination of transnational energy networks
- Development of a strategy for the pan-Alpine protection of nature
- Preparation of common climatic prognoses
- Development of a strategy concerning transport and mobility in the Alpine region
- Development of coordinated lobbying regarding transport and mobility
- Development of transnational transport systems

4. PROPOSITIONS FOR THEMATIC FOCUS AREAS WITHIN A MACROREGIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE ALPS CONSIDERING THE BENEFITS OF THE ALPINE CONVENTION

The palette of topics laid out above is thoroughly complex. However, it fails to set clear priorities or suggest concrete activities with clearly defined goals and measurable target-figures for an intensification of pan-Alpine cooperation. In order to be able to demonstrate distinct added value, it sometimes requires a narrowing of the palette coupled with the simultaneous focus on a few specific themes (cf. Hiess and Pfefferkorn 2013, 21). CIPRA International attempts to take this into account, since the Alpine Convention has been accorded a particular presence in the macroregional Alpine process as it is recognised under international law, possesses a clearly defined area of application and pursues a clear assignment in terms of its substance, namely to champion the cause of sustainable development and protection of the Alpine region.

In accordance with this, on 10 October 2013 CIPRA International adopted a position paper (cf. CIPRA International 2013), which declared that not only a new solidarity between the Alpine core and the surrounding regions should be striven for, but also that the Alpine Convention should be granted an appropriate position of importance, since it meets the most modest territorial requirement for an Alpine macroregion. In this way, new synergies between the Alpine Convention and an Alpine macroregion must be created.

From the viewpoint of CIPRA International (2013), the central themes are:

- Energy and climate protection: The Alps and the great cities travel a common path toward an environmentally compatible future for energy, by means of energy savings, energy efficiency, Alpine-friendly renewable energy and the modernisation of existing hydroelectric installations. No final expansion of Alpine water power under the pretext of climate protection.
- Transalpine transport and soft mobility: The CIPRA calls upon the Alpine states and the EU to support the Alps through funding an environmentally sound system of transport and promote interregional transportation of people and goods via rail.

- Natural resources and natural hazards: The Alps and the great cities together promote establishment of ecological networks and conservation reserves as well as ecological corridors for biodiversity, and scrutinise all measures geared to climatic protection to evaluate their sustainability and compatibility with nature.
- Nature-friendly, sustainable tourism: Providers in the Alps and in the surrounding regions work together in the future toward sustainable and climate-compatible tourism.
- Questions concerning youth and the aged: Better training and stricter qualifications, regional empowerment and stronger integration of previously disadvantaged social groups in the Alps.

The following propositions of thematic focus areas in the frame of a EUSALP follow the contents of the Alpine Convention protocols. This collection of focal points is the result of a discussion process running over several months. It unites the ideas of various input papers as well as the opinions and amendments of diverse experts and stakeholders from politics, the economy, science as well as representatives of civil society that were heard during a series of workshops and an international conference in the course of the Alpen.Leben project.



The preservation and extension of protected areas has to play a central role in the light of biological diversity. (Photo: J. Essl)



As a defining asset of the Alpine region, mountain farming needs to be strengthened. (Photo: J. Essl)

As a document of recommendation these thematic focus areas were also handed over to the steering group. It remains to be seen, to which extent these propositions and demands will be considered in the EUSALP process on a national or international level.

4.1. Introductory remarks

To CIPRA Austria, the basic aims of a macroregional strategy for the Alps are to secure sustainable development of this sensitive living and natural environment, economic zone, and recreational space under the consideration of its ecological, economic and demographic capacity limits and, under these premises, to build on innovation and sustainable economic development following the precautionary principle. To reach these aims, CIPRA Austria regards the contents of the Alpine Convention protocols as the main building blocks for a macro-region of the Alps. According to the principles of the Alpine Convention, the Alpine core area and the Alpine foreland shall complement each other in a meaningful way and new synergies shall be created between these two zones – always in due consideration of a mutual and solidary balance of interests.

This particularly applies to the following common challenges:

- climate change
- the preservation of the living and cultural space of the Alps
- the preservation of the resilience of ecosystems as well as their evolutionary potential and connectedness
- traffic and mobility
- energy supply
- water protection and water supply
- health
- tourism
- usw.

In general, EUSALP topics need to live up to three preconditions: They need to be innovative, able to solved on a transnational level and specific to the Alps (cf. European Union 2014). It is primarily the specific characteristics of the Alpine region that predetermine certain fields of action. In the Alpine region, a number of actors exist. Actors on the regional level are small in structure and very diverse with regard to society, economy, culture, and language. However, on a regional level, direct cooperation between actors is difficult due to differing competences. Additionally, in the Alpine area, divergencies in autonomy exist. For instance, Switzerland shows a strong form of federalism while France displays centralisation. Also, the single regions hold strong constitutional positions. A further challenge is the extreme migration taking place. On the certain

hand, other regions are overly stressed by people's demands in terms of quality of life and recreation possibilities. Touristic regions put pressure on nature and landscape. On top of that one can observe problems regarding traffic and the environment as well as social and economic issues.

These problems can be found all across the Alpine area, even if they are quite heterogenous. The Alpine area is especially exposed to environmental changes and climate change. The strongly knowledge-based economy of the peripheries has also brought wealth to the core area. The latter, however, is often regarded as mere recreation and leisure resource. These specific challenges in the Alpine area do specifically influence a potential governance structure of the EUSALP (cf. Bußjäger 2014, 3f; see Chapter 5).

To find solutions to these present and upcoming challenges, future visions should be elaborated that include the shift from a production, growth and consumer oriented lifestyle and economy to an eco-sufficient and sustainable development.

At this point it has to be noted that the development of a macroregional strategy for the Alps needs to be based on transparent information and open communication as well as the goal of a permanent and binding implementation built on democratic principles.

4.2. Thematic Propositions

4.2.1. THEMATIC FOCUS AREAS WITHIN THE FIRST PILLAR OF THE GRENOBLE RESOLUTION: 'SUSTAINABLE GROWTH'

4.2.1.1. Aims and expectations

The preservation and functionality of a living and economic space is an essential basis for the maintenance of social peace and for securing people's wellbeing in the long run. Especially in the Alpine region, thinking and acting across and beyond generations as well as building on both established and innovative potentials of development are important in order to preserve, support and strengthen regionality. This also demands for an eco-sociological approach to guarantee a high (social and ecological) quality of life through the optimal minimisation of environmental stress, pollution and eutrophication, by respecting the natural limits of the Alps as a natural space, and by following the principles of a circular economy to protect valuable resources.

Economic and social processes shall follow a basic participatory approach with the consistent involvement of civil society in order to fall back on a broad knowledge management including the permanent evaluation of knowledge, knowledge transfer, and knowledge networking. This shall also serve to secure data access in the field of environmental monitoring and to reach cost transparency in the field of environmental education.

Furthermore, the creation of high-quality and sustainable jobs, a family-friendly working environment, innovative services in the tourism and health industry as well as in mountain agriculture including the support of small and medium businesses, as well as the preservation of traditional craftsmanship are top priorities.

In the course of discussions with relevant stakeholders the following propositions for the practical implementation of the strategy in four thematic focus areas within the First Pillar of the Grenoble Resolution have been elaborated.

4.2.1.2. Economy and consumption

In this area, special attention shall be paid to enabling sustainable economic activity and consumption.

To strengthen sustainable economic activity and regional economic cycles, the introduction of an (organic) quality brand for the whole Alpine region is suggested. At the same time and despite a consistent umbrella brand, it is important to emphasise and to preserve the Alpine space's unique diversity. In this respect, it is particularly important to recognise and consider the benefits of ecosystem services as well as to create an understanding for the capital value of the Alps in order to combine economic and ecological aspects (keywords: green economy, green jobs, green care).

To promote sustainable consumer behaviour, it will be essential to strengthen consumer responsibility through eco-standards and eco-labelling. Likewise, the concept 'sharing instead of owning' can be of value.

The economic value added has to be retained within the mountainous and rural areas, respectively, in order to counteract migration into the cities. In this respect, it will also be of importance to strengthen craftsmanship and entrepreneurship as well as innovative production chains (e.g. those following the cradle-to-cradle principle) to support competitiveness.

To strengthen regional cycles, a tight connection between inner Alpine and outer Alpine regions following the principal of proximity is important. In this regard, the preservation and development of solidarity between the urban areas in the Alpine foreland on the one hand and the economically disadvantaged peripheral areas in the mountainous regions on the other hand shall be of concern. Therefore, economic transfer as well as measures taken by the foreland areas to support the mountainous regions, e.g. through financial balancing or territorial corporations and city networks, is needed. It has to be considered that not only the rural areas depend on the support by 'richer' areas; in the same way, social problems in the metropolitan areas caused by rural exodus need to be addressed.

One concrete supporting measure to strengthen sustainable economic activity would be the foundation of a 'bank of sustainability' in the Alps that specialises in financing economically and ecologically sustainable projects, promotes transparency and builds on, for instance, crowd funding.

In all economic fields, energy saving production and energy demand coverage through renewable sources of energy need to be accelerated. Further, the promotion of innovative Alpine technology is desirable.

4.2.1.3. Work and employment

Safeguarding jobs and guaranteeing not only quantity but also quality of future oriented employment in the Alps while reaching genuine full employment shall be one of the main goals in this area. Furthermore, highest job satisfaction and attractive jobs following the principle of sustainable and environmentally friendly employment shall be sought for in order to counteract further migration to the cities. In this respect, it is undoubtedly of great importance to provide professional opportunities for adolescents.

4.2.1.4. Agriculture

Organic farming including the creation of organic regions that build upon regional and specific high-quality products holds the greatest potential in the field of agriculture in the Alpine region. Also, smaller farms need to be acknowledged and supported to guarantee sovereignty of alimentation. Further, the farmers themselves forming the basis of well-functioning agriculture shall be valued and promoted by increased added value and financial support. The young generation's lack of ambition to take over and carry on their parents' enterprises has to be met by the creation of incentives for the young in the mountainous and rural areas. Supportively, the diversification of agricultural enterprises needs to be facilitated in order to be able to combine agricultural production with, for instance, touristic offers (keyword: farm holidays) and thereby increase the attractiveness of rural life and agricultural economic activity.

4.2.1.5. Tourism

In Alpine tourism, sustainable actions and the promotion of sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism are of particular importance. One possibility to protect landscapes, regions and nature would be the elaboration of an Alpine-wide tourism concept considering the following measures and challenges, respectively: sustainable mobility, the production and marketing of regional products and specialties, the education of specifically qualified guides for sustainable tourism, certified enterprises, climate change, weather-independent offers, as well as higher added value in the regions. Due to the existing oversupply of touristic attractions, quantitative expansion shall be avoided. In order to avoid further ecological and spatial stress for the Alpine region, the definition and introduction of capacity and stress limits seems urgent.

With a focus on compartmentalisation in a sustainable, citizen-shaped form of tourism, based on the approved principle of 'quality before quantity', as well as considering the great potential of the Alps as a destination of health tourism (going beyond wellness tourism), the Alpine space has the chance to establish itself as a model region for ecologically and economically sustainable, low-impact tourism. Particularly, the topic 'health tourism in the Alpine region' can be seen as a cross section theme reaching from wellness and recreational offers to agriculture (healthy products) providing qualified jobs, intact natural and cultural space (nature and landscape protection), as well as high environmental quality (fresh air, clean water, quiet etc.).



The project 'Bergsteigerdörfer' contributes to a sustainable form of tourism. (Photo: G. Stabentheiner)

4.2.1.6. Alpine Convention – application of thematically relevant protocols in the field of 'sustainable growth'

In the following relevant Protocols for the topics of the First Pillar are summarised to give an overview of the connections to the Alpine Convention.

Tourism Protocol

The objective of this Protocol is to contribute to sustainable development in the Alpine region within the existing institutional framework by encouraging environmentally friendly tourism through specific measures and recommendations which take the interests of both the local population and tourists into account. It is of special importance to consider a reasonable balance between intensive and extensive forms of tourism.

Mountain farming Protocol

This Protocol lays down international measures to preserve and promote mountain farming which suits local conditions and is environmentally compatible; it aims at recognising and securing the continuity of its essential contribution to maintaining the population and safeguarding sustainable economic activities, particularly by means of producing typical high-quality produce, safeguarding the natural environment, preventing natural risks and conserving the beauty and recreational value of nature and the countryside, and of cultural life in the Alpine region.

Spatial planning and sustainable development Protocol

The objectives of spatial planning and sustainable development in the Alpine territory are to harmonise the use of the territory with the ecological needs and objectives, use the resources and the territory sparingly and compatibly with the environment, and support economic development in the Alpine region. Regional identities and specific cultural features shall be preserved, equal opportunities for the local population in its social, cultural and economic development facilitated.

4.2.2. THEMATIC FOCUS AREAS WITHIN THE SECOND PILLAR OF THE GRENOBLE RESOLUTION: 'TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT'

4.2.2.1. Aims and expectations

Prerequisites for the positive development away from an increasing imbalance between metropolitan areas and the rural regions with a growing tendency of migration are solidarity between cities and country regions as well as the reduction of disparities. An essential basis to reach this goal is to keep up regional economic activities and thus to secure added value in the rural regions. The optimisation of land use, landscape development as well as appropriate protection from natural hazards are necessary.

Situated in the midst of economically strong outer Alpine metropolises, the Alpine area is characterised by an overall well-functioning regional circular economy with effects towards the inner Alpine as well as the outer Alpine regions. The principle of proximity and the existing multi-functionality are essential pillars to be safeguarded for the preservation of the Alpine area as a place for living and of economic activities.

In order to strengthen the rural regions, above all, the reinforcement of public transportation to keep up and improve infrastructure is necessary. Also, the peripheral regions are to be provided with area-covering data highways (broadband) in order to enable access to a fully functioning data network.

To counteract the enormous daily stress caused by Alpine transit traffic, environmentally friendly mobility concepts need to be created in order to reduce stress for the environment and to accelerate regional economic cycles in the Alpine area.

The Alpine space holds a huge pool of knowhow in Alpine research and knowledge and contributes a great deal to research about global relationships. To further strengthen Alpine research, cross-linkage of knowledge by the help of Alpine-wide academic research cooperation activities is needed.

Within this pillar, the propositions for practical implementation were also identified in a stakeholder process and cover four thematic fields:

4.2.2.2. Spatial planning/regional development

Spatial planning at regional level is an important instrument to solve conflicts of interest and conflicts of use for the purpose of a sustainable development in the Alps. A super-regional or Alpine-wide spatial planning concept will be necessary to meet the demands for qualitative soil protection, protection from natural hazards, land use optimisation, and landscape development, as well as for aesthetics and the preservation of the overall appearance of the landscape. Also, the establishment of priority areas for nature conservation is of great importance (keyword: zone model).

Furthermore, securing the habitability of sparsely populated regions through the provision of public services is necessary. At the same time, the courage is needed to dissolve or relocate single areas of settlement that, due to financing difficulties, cannot be sustained in the long run – however, this shall only be accomplished under consideration of the local people's needs. Alternatively, these areas shall be given back to nature.

In this respect, also spatial planning challenges resulting from the migration to metropolitan areas need to be considered.

4.2.2.3. Science and education

To strengthen the Alpine space as an area of knowledge and to improve academic interconnectedness, scientific exchange and research in the Alpine area including a comprehensive monitoring programme need to be promoted.

It is further of importance to improve access to education and training in the whole of the Alpine area and to connect existing universities and educational institutions. A meaningful measure to keep more people in the Alpine area would be the establishment of a university of the mountainous region that is located in several Alpine countries and dedicated to Alpine spatial planning and regional development through transnational cooperation.

4.2.2.4. Mobility

Concerning mobility in the Alps, three fields of action need to be considered: inner Alpine traffic, trans-Alpine traffic, and regional challenges of mobility. In general, an Alpine-wide environmentally friendly mobility concept and an area-covering shift towards environmentally friendly

modes of transportation shall be achieved. To do so, low-impact mobility infrastructure with a carrying capacity that meets the rising demand for efficient means of transportation is needed.

Mobility is one of society's essential goods and especially inner Alpine traffic often leads to high noise pollution and air contamination. Most particularly, Alpine valleys of high touristic relevance suffer from pollution loads caused by leisure and touristic traffic. In sparsely populated areas, on the other hand, public transportation services are minimal and people are insufficiently being motivated to use public transportation. Due to the fact that almost 30 % of all greenhouse gas emissions are caused by traffic, the expansion of the public transportation network should be a major objective, just like the development of further alternative means of transport that increase the accessibility of peripheral regions.

In this respect, particularly touristic centres need to be addressed and quantifiable measures like car-free regions preferred.

The sustainable design of trans-Alpine traffic asks for uniform regulations in the Alpine area as well as a European consensus concerning funding.



The expansion of public transport in the rural regions is one of the central challenges within the EUSALP process. (Photo: J. Essl)

4.2.2.5. Alpine Convention – application of thematically relevant Protocols in the field of 'territorial development'

Transport Protocol

The objective of this Protocol is a sustainable transport policy that shall help to reduce the negative effects of and risks posed by intra-Alpine and transalpine transport to a level which is not harmful to people, flora and fauna and their environments and habitats, and that further helps to reduce and, as far as possible, avoid any impact which might endanger the role and natural resources of the Alpine region and threaten its natural and cultural heritage. The efficiency of transport systems shall be increased; modes of transport which are more environmentally friendly and more economic in terms of natural resources shall be promoted.

Spatial planning and sustainable development Protocol

The objectives of spatial planning and sustainable development in the Alpine territory are to harmonise the use of the territory with the ecological needs and objectives, use the resources and the territory sparingly and compatibly with the environment, and support economic development in the Alpine region. Regional identities and specific cultural features shall be preserved, equal opportunities for the local population in its social, cultural and economic development facilitated.

4.2.3. THEMATIC FOCUS AREAS WITHIN THE THIRD PILLAR OF THE GRENOBLE RESOLUTION: 'MANAGEMENT OF ENERGY AND NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES'

4.2.3.1. Aims and expectations

Ground is sparse in the Alpine area and existing natural resources are a valuable good. Land use intensity thus needs to be based on sustainable forms of cultivation and adjusted to natural circumstances in order to allow natural resources to regenerate.

The Alpine space is characterised by a special treasure of traditions and a diversity of Alpine-specific cultural goods. Thus, the cultural landscape of the Alps including areas of value in terms of nature conservation need to be preserved; in the same way, habitats within the Alpine area, yet also between inner Alpine regions and the foreland shall be interconnected (e.g. as ecological networks).

All over Europe, energy demand has become a great challenge over the past years and decades. In the Alpine area, the aspired energy transition shall mainly be

achieved by making the most of energy saving potentials and the increase of efficiency through the use of existing water power plants. The last remaining free flowing rivers need to be preserved as effectively as possible; their ecological and limnological functioning must be preferred to building new storage power plants.

Regarding the Third Pillar five focal areas have been identified in the course of the stakeholder process:

4.2.3.2. Nature and environment protection

Due to the sensitivity of the Alpine space, it is decisive to respect its biophysical limits and its capacities for spatial development. The absolute limits of this natural and cultural space need to be acknowledged and communicated. In the same way, social limits and people's capacities need to be respected.

In the sense of a comprehensive protection of the ecological and scenic diversity of the Alps, the support of both inner Alpine and trans-Alpine habitat connection (between Alpine space and foreland) as well as the preservation of the overall appearance of the landscape are to be prioritised.

Comprehensive environment, species and area protection also includes the consideration of climate change and natural hazards. Balanced wildlife ecology relations and an Alpine-wide uniform policy regarding agriculture, forestry and energy economy are to be aspired.

The Alpine space is especially affected by climate change and it is thus indispensable to initiate enhanced measures for climate protection. Besides getting control over traffic emissions, new technologies for air pollution control to achieve a reduction of pollution are necessary to secure

people's health and the preservation of the natural and cultural space with all its different functionalities as well as biological diversity.

4.2.3.3. Protected areas

Protected areas need to be maintained and extended wherever possible. Protected areas in the Alpine space have the potential to grow in their purpose and functioning through a new form of governance and sustainable management. The connection with surrounding areas and the depiction of nature priority areas (zone model) are essential parts of an ecologically meaningful protected area development. Protected areas not only enormously contribute to great biological diversity, they are also of major importance in terms of recreation and are thus of particular regional economic importance in areas where sustainable and environmentally friendly/ecologically orientated tourism prevails.

4.2.3.4. Energy

In the Alps, energy saving through subsistence economy and the coverage of energy demands by renewable resources with the aim of carbon-free production shall be top priorities. The Alpine space is an ideal region to reach energy autarchy. Further, it is feasible to extend the Austrian energy model regions to the Alpine space and thus create an Alpine model region of modern energy efficiency.

Hydropower is one of the most important energy economic components of the Alpine space. Sustainable management (price policy) for water and water body protection as well as flood protection and thus the protection of man's living space need to be considered. In this respect, however, the notion of the Alps as 'green battery' is to be rejected. The degeneration of the Alps into a 'self-service outlet' for the Alpine foreland and Europe has to be avoided. In the light of the aim of developing into an autonomous region in solidary exchange with the foreland, it is of high importance to use resources where it is ecologically and economically meaningful. Alternatives to traditional ways of energy production as well as innovation and, above all, the management of alternative energy systems and thus research and development in this area are essential.

4.2.3.5. Cultural good, tradition and living space

Diversity is the Alpine space's strong point. The Alps need to be preserved as a place worth living in and with its special aesthetics and unique scenery as well as the special diversity of cultures, traditions and wildlife. It is of special importance to maintain and deliberately use cultural and language niches. Language as a feature of identification for the local population plays a major role in the maintenance of cultural processes. Also, local knowledge – beyond science and research – has to be acknowledged as a valuable cultural good. In this respect, traditional craftsmanship needs to be fostered. Involving civil society (participation) in all developmental processes is indispensable.

Generally, it is essential to raise people's awareness for and their identification with the Alps as a living space.

4.2.3.6. Health

Many of the topics and aims for the Alpine space – like employment, nature protection, traffic or tourism – mentioned so far are also relevant when it comes to health. In order to secure people's living quality and health, a comprehensive health care system is necessary. Health shall be regarded including environmental education; the factors recreation and wellbeing including spiritual aspects shall be central. The promotion of health tourism plays a major role on the way to establishing the Alps as a renowned and popular health destination in all of Europe.



Extreme events caused by climate change ask for quick and devout actions to be taken. (Photo: J. Essl)



In the future, health tourism will play a major role in the Alpine area. (Photo: J. Essl)

4.2.3.7. Alpine Convention – application of thematically relevant Protocols in the field of ‘Management of energy and natural and cultural resources’

Conservation of nature and countryside Protocol

The objective of this Protocol is to lay down International laws, implementing the Alpine Convention and also taking the interests of the local population into account, in order to protect, care for and, to the extent necessary, restore nature and the countryside in such a way as to ensure the lasting and widespread functional efficiency of the ecosystems, the conservation of countryside elements and wild animal and plant species together with their habitats, the regenerative ability and lasting productivity of natural resources, and also the diversity, specificity and beauty of the natural and rural landscape.

Energy Protocol

The objectives of this Protocol are to create framework conditions and adopting measures for energy saving, production, transport, distribution, and utilisation within the territorial scope of the Alpine Convention in order to establish sustainable development in the energy sector that is compatible with the Alpine region’s specific tolerance limits. This shall make an important contribution to protecting local communities and the environment and to safeguarding resources and the climate.

Spatial planning and sustainable development Protocol

The objectives of spatial planning and sustainable development in the Alpine territory are to harmonise the use of the territory with the ecological needs and objectives, use the resources and the territory sparingly and compatibly with the environment, and support economic development in the Alpine region. Regional identities and specific cultural features shall be preserved, equal opportunities for the local population in its social, cultural and economic development facilitated.

Mountain forest Protocol

The purpose of this Protocol is to preserve the mountain forests as a near-natural habitat and, whenever necessary, to develop them or increase their extent and improve their stability. The necessary prerequisite for the effectiveness of mountain forest functions is a mountain forest system that is managed in a careful, sustainable fashion, that adopts methods of natural reforestation and that avoids erosion and compacting of the soil by ensuring methods of use and collection that comply with the needs of nature.

Mountain farming Protocol

This Protocol lays down international measures to preserve and promote mountain farming which suits local conditions and is environmentally compatible; it aims at recognising and securing the continuity of its essential contribution to maintaining the population and safeguarding sustainable economic activities, particularly by means of producing typical high-quality produce, safeguarding the natural environment, preventing natural risks and conserving the beauty and recreational value of nature and the countryside and of cultural life in the Alpine region.

Declaration on Population and Culture

The socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects of the Alpine space are central to the implementation of an integrated policy to ensure the protection and sustainable development of the Alpine area. The value of the Alpine area lies in its diversity. Preserving and promoting cultural diversity in the Alps as well as building bridges and fostering dialogue between cultures is essential. It is necessary to constitute a people-centred, sustainable development policy that focuses on the needs, wishes and opinions of the people who have the right to live in these areas on a permanent basis and to engage in economic activities. The Alpine residents also have the right to equality of opportunity, both within the Alpine region as well as in relation to the residents of non-Alpine areas. The effects of demographic change on living and working conditions in the Alpine areas are a major challenge.



Life in the Alps will not be possible without functioning mountain forests. (Photo: J. Essl)

5. GOVERNANCE – CHALLENGES FACED IN IMPLEMENTING THE EUSALP

Along with the challenge of identifying high-priority focal issues in the Alpine region and developing appropriate measures for addressing them, particular attention must be paid, in the course of developing a macroregional Alpine strategy, to the realisation and implementation of a functioning governance structure.

5.1. Demands made upon governance in the course of the EUSALP

‘Governance’ as an abstract concept is frequently translated with the terms ‘political steering’ or ‘coordination’. Governance is thus brought into the context of cooperative and network-like forms of state and governmental activities, in which more or less autonomous agents exercise influence and support in a reciprocal fashion. In government processes, ‘public and private stakeholders operate together in a network-like fashion in control of societal situations’ (Sielker 2012, 44). So political steering processes are coordinating ‘not only various stakeholder groups in various sectors (horizontal integration), but also those from various levels (vertical integration). With this, non-governmental stakeholders are able to gain relevance (cf. Sielker 2012, 45).

The European Commission commented upon this by re-emphasising their ‘3 NOs’: ‘As for the implementation, the strategy will be based on the key principles applied to existing macroregional strategies – no new EU funds, no additional EU formal structures and no EU legislation – while relying on a coordinated approach, synergistic effects and a more effective use of existing EU funds and other financial instruments. The aim is to produce a clear added value based on jointly identified objectives’ (European Union 2014).

Challenges facing a EUSALP with regard to governance involve concrete political ‘leadership’, transparent responsibility and the inclusion of civil society. Consistent support by the European organs is just as important as the utilisation of regionally active organisations in the implementation of the strategy. Further key competencies include a robust management of the strategy, transparency and effect upon the public as well as the inclusion of civil society (cf. Bußjäger 2014, 2).

Here, along with the role of governance in the current formative process of the EUSALP, the capabilities of

governance in the implementation of the EUSALP as seen from the scientific/academic viewpoint shall be outlined. Preparatory to this the European Union’s ideas about governance for macroregional strategies in general, as well as the current governance structures within the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, along with that of the Alpine shall be examined. Moreover, the role of civil society in processes of shall be examined in detail.

5.2. Governance in the current formation process of the EUSALP

As already described in Chapter 1.3. it was the regions and nations who provided the initial impulse toward developing a EUSALP, and coordination on the part of DATAR gave the project an overall stewardship. The Commission then took an important role in its genesis as well, establishing ‘a temporary organisation for the preparation of the proposal to the European Council’ (Hiess and Pfefferkorn 2013, 24).

The inclusion of many relevant stakeholders is essential in the evolution of a macroregional strategy. As an example in the case of the EUSALP, this was consistently achieved through establishment of the Austrian coordination platform by the Austrian Federal Chancellery and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other nations, such as France and Italy, have shown little interest in adopting a transparent approach. Multiple attempts have been undertaken on the European (EU) level to include the Alpine provinces and the Alpine nations in the conception of the project. From the very beginning, individual nations created difficulties by means of intervention, obstructing inclusion of the Alpine Convention and the integration of civil society. The Alpine Convention was able to claim a small and partial victory with its inclusion into the steering group.

But the fact that it is included only as an observer in a process that affects the Alpine core region – and thus the Alpine Convention’s immediate area of application – raises the question concerning which role the Alpine Convention will play in a future macroregional process. Civil society (represented by CIPRA International) was not even granted observer status in the steering group. Apparently second thoughts and prejudices were too strong here regarding the amount of focus they place upon environmental issues. By contrast, CIPRA International found acceptance in the steering group’s sub-

tantive and technically focussed sub-working groups concerned with material related to the Three Pillars of Grenoble. Nevertheless the attitude of many stakeholders in the current process showed that current developments remained substantially removed from establishing a practical bottom-up approach. Independent of the consultation process, which admittedly included civil society (although only at an advanced stage in the proceedings), it requires rethinking on a high political level and on the part of certain stakeholders in order to avoid the danger of being confronted with prejudice, rejection and scepticism from civil society. The special significance of civil society in this kind of process will be explored in Chapter 5.7.

5.3. Options for governance in the implementation of macroregional strategies

In the area of governance, especially, we find differing approaches in terms of theoretical method and techniques of implementation. It has still not been adequately clarified, precisely who will carry out the implementation of a macroregional strategy. Various models of governance will be described in the following chapters; parts of these models are potentially usable for the EUSALP as well. It is agreed that every macroregional strategy requires the evolution of an individual governance structure, one that takes into account the participating states and regions, the stakeholders involved, and the specific goals of the individual strategy.

5.3.1. PROPOSAL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF MACROREGIONAL STRATEGIES

The European Commission prepared a paper on two currently existing strategies, both in the implementation phase (the Baltic Sea Strategy and the Danube Region Strategy), addressing the topic of governance, in which it elucidated how a governance model can be successfully implemented within a macroregional strategy.

The EU Commission considered the following elements of governance (cf. European Commission 2014, 3):

- Inclusion of the European Commission and the member nations on a high political (ministerial) level, ensuring political commitment and strategic orientation;
- National points of contact: high-ranking officials from the participating states – coordination of efforts at a high governmental level;
- Experts for individual high priority thematic areas or horizontal issues, who can form steering groups

for the individual issues.

According to the EU commission's proposal, currently existing regional organisations should be efficiently and sensibly utilised. But the document did not go so far as to say which specific organisations should be involved. The commission also points out that an established structure with hierarchical areas of responsibility is of essential significance, in order to create appropriate and functional frameworks (cf. European Commission 2014, 4).

In the opinion of the European Commission, the intended governance structure for macroregional strategies would be composed as follows (cf. European Commission 2014, 4ff):

- Overall leadership by an upper-level, well-structured political body that determines priorities and makes decisions. This level has responsible for each individual strategy.
- The European Commission assumes partial strategic leadership, provides motivation, supports the primary stakeholders and reports on progress.
- The role of the Commission stands in balance with the leadership of the nations and regions involved, whereby the Commission offers additional strategic support.
- General strategic leadership on the ministerial level: The ministers upon whom the national contact points depend make decisions and constitute a regular body for arbitration. They are responsible for the evaluation process and for driving implementation. The chairmanship could possibly rotate regularly, and a special representative could be installed. The ministers would also assume strategic coordination duties within their national governments.
- Departmental ministers motivate progress in their individual disciplines.
- The commission and the national contact points (mostly foreign ministers, EU integration ministers, or regional development ministers of the nations) assume responsibilities for coordination and management.
- The national contact points will coordinate on the national level with specialists, who will themselves form leadership groups addressing individual themes, and lead the coordination and operative direction. These can also establish a national coordination platform for reconciliation between national and regional interests.

- The so-called High Level Group consists of representatives from all twenty-eight EU Member States, and is concerned with the overall concept of all macroregional strategies. Parallel to this there will be discussions of the National Contact Points on the regional level. The High Level Group must be sure to guarantee coherence between macroregional strategies and actions, as well as the goals of the EU.
- Interested parties should be more closely included in the decisionmaking progress: parliaments on various levels, regional authorities, and civil society.
- Programmes for transnational collaboration (and the programme INTERACT) should be employed to the fullest, and available financial means utilised.
- The transnational cooperation programme and INTERACT should assume a supporting role on the coordinational level.

The following tasks are, among others, part of the implementation of strategies: facilitation and implementation of initiatives and projects, determination of indicators and objectives, determination of linkage with the relevant financing programmes such as the European structure and investment funds, Horizon 2020, LIFE, COSME, as well as participation in the programme committees (cf. European Commission 2014, 9). The driving force for implementations are the topical experts, including their leadership groups (cf. European Commission 2014, 9).

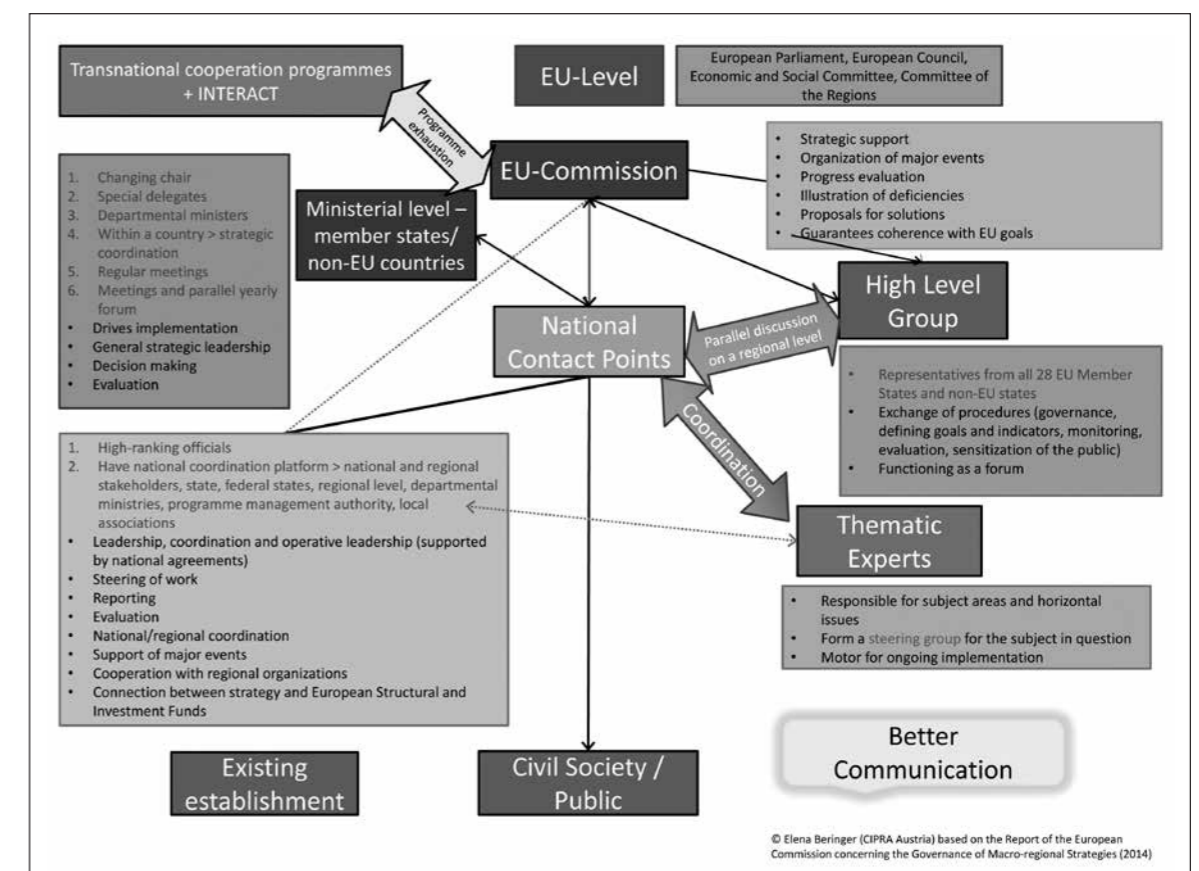


Figure 5: Governance for macroregional strategies as envisioned by the EU Commission 2014 (our interpretation of the EU-Commission's proposal).

Bußjäger (2014, 6) notes, that ‘macroregional governance [...] seems to be a rather technical-bureaucratic matter in this respect’. Besides, the strategy proposed by the commission pursues a centralised approach, in which the responsibility lies primarily with the ministers. To be sure, the National Contact Points play a significant role, but according to Bußjäger (cf. 2014, 7), they can only lay the groundwork for transnational cooperation and coordination. In this model, the regional and local levels as well as civil society play a subordinate role, primarily designated for the implementation of policy and projects. The possibility that the regional level as well as civil society could also function as decision makers and formulate political substance is not considered. In the Commission’s report concerning the governance of macroregional strategies, it is indeed acknowledged that a stronger political leadership and participation of integrated states and regions in the decisionmaking process is called for, although this seems only to serve to more persistently reinforce a ‘top-down’ approach. ‘In other words, the regions and the local authorities, as well as civil society, can provide the strategies with legitimacy, but may not contribute to the formulation of their substance’ (Bußjäger 2014, 8). As Bußjäger (2014, 9) further points out, ‘a reduction of the regional level to that of mere execution [...] is amiss, since in the federal states of Austria, Germany, Switzerland and the similar federal system of Italy, it has at least partially, and in important material (in Austria for example on the level of conservation) original responsibilities assigned to it. In the steering groups as well there should be room for representatives of civil society, according to the concern of individual themes’ (cf. Bußjäger 2014, 12).

5.3.2. GOVERNANCE IN THE DANUBE REGION STRATEGY

In 2010 a mandate was passed by the European Council to the European Commission to develop a macroregional Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). After the European Commission (as executive organ of the EU) had prepared the strategy in collaboration with the partner states, it also supported the implementation of the strategy.

The EU Commission coordinated the strategy on the political level and organised an annual forum together with each of the respective states of the EUSDR, in which the most important stakeholders came together. It supported the High Level Group, which for all macroregional strategies is comprehensively composed of representatives from all EU Member States, and thus supports the EU Commission with political coordination (cf. EUSDR 2014²). The political decisionmaking stratum is composed of constituents at the EU level (European Council, EU Commission, High Level Group) and the individual nations. Furthermore a National Contact Point functions as partner of reference between the EU

Commission and the individual nations. These are most frequently the countries’ foreign ministers, EU integration ministers or regional development ministers. In Austria, the partners of reference and thus the national contact points are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Federal Chancellery (cf. Sielker 2012, 89). ‘The National Contact Points (NCPs) coordinate and keep an overview of the participation of their country in the implementation of the EUSDR including all eleven Priority Areas. The role of the NCP is to promote the Strategy and inform relevant national-level stakeholders of key developments’ (EUSDR 2014²).

Each of the eleven areas of focus is coordinated by two nations. These two coordinators compare information on a regular basis with the EU Commission, the relevant European authorities and regional institutions, and prioritise the implementation of action plans, securing cooperation between promoters, programmes and sources of funding. In addition, they offer technical assistance and guidance (cf. EUSDR 2014²). All Priority Areas have an individual steering group as well, which is composed of delegates from the Danube states and representatives of the Directorate. This steering group is supported and observed by stakeholders, who fill a major role in the field of the focal area. In a few select steering groups, the observers have been granted decision making power as well (cf. Sielker 2012, 91f). The tier where strategic decisions are made is thus formed out of the steering groups, the focal point coordinators and – in the long term – the annual forum.

The governance model of the Danube Region Strategy is graphically depicted in Figure 6 and Figure 7. The Danube Region Strategy officially entered its implementation phase on 1 July 2011 (cf. Sielker 2012, 92).

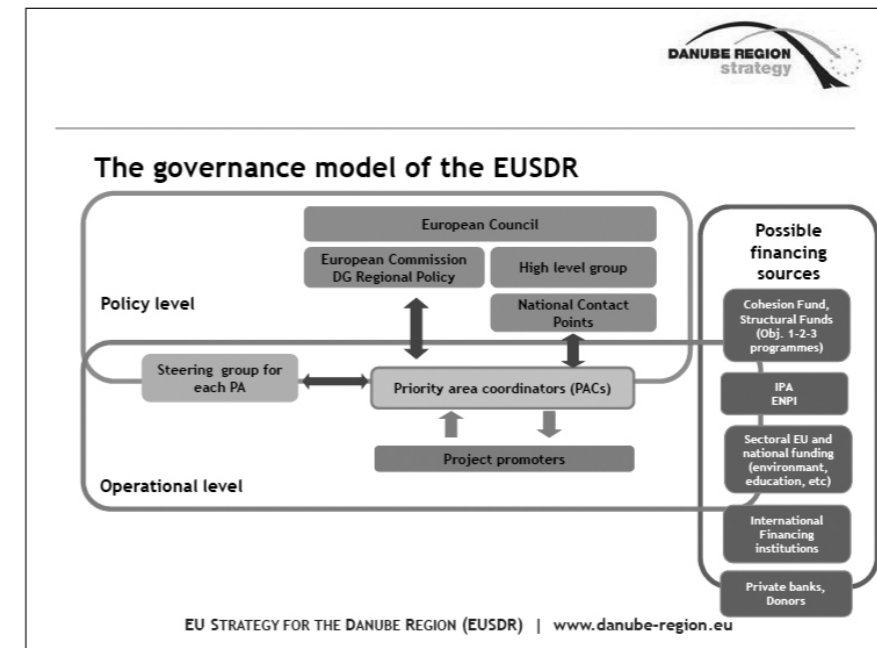


Figure 6: Governance of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (Source: Danube Region Strategy, www.danube-region.eu)

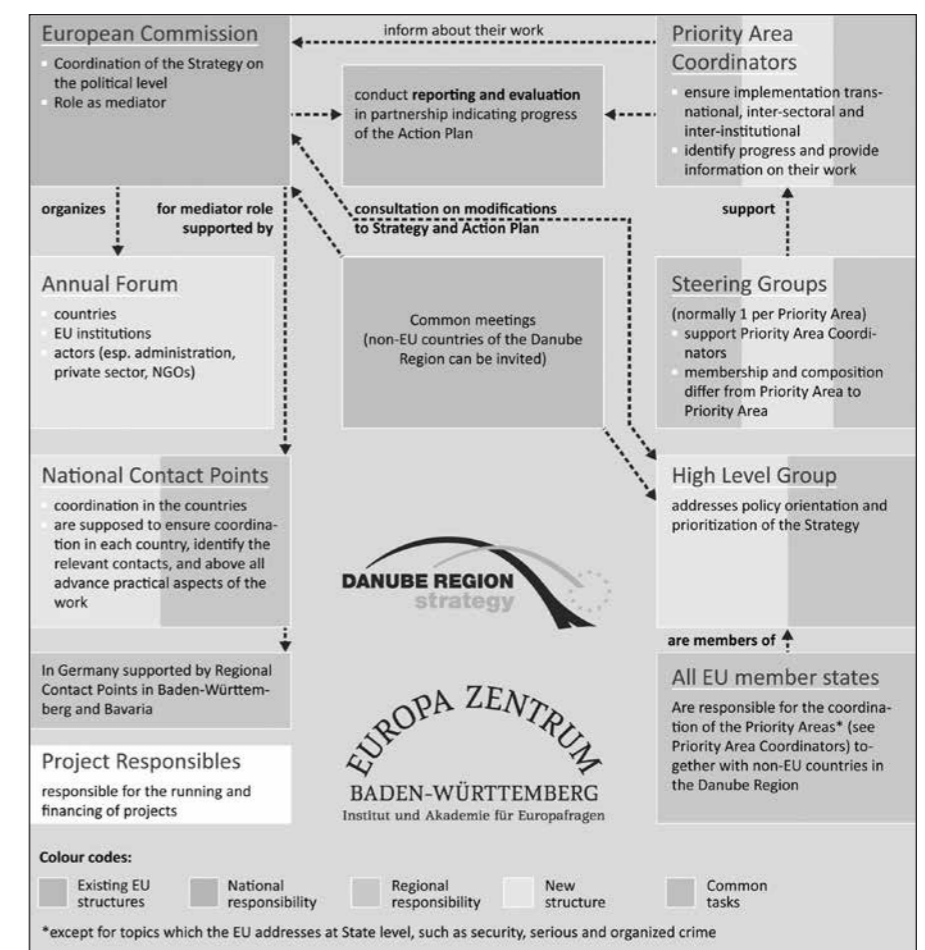


Figure 7: Structure of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, as viewed by Germany (Source: Europa Zentrum Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart, 2015)

5.3.3. GOVERNANCE WITHIN THE ALPINE CONVENTION

The Alpine Convention is an international treaty and includes all eight Alpine nations (Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, France, Italy, Slovenia and Monaco) plus the European Community. Implementation of the Alpine Convention functions by means of its individual Implementation Protocols addressing the themes transport, mountain farming, tourism, conservation of nature and countryside, energy, spatial planning and sustainable development, as well as soil conservation. The framework convention went into effect on 6 March 1995 (cf. Chapter 2). Thus the Alpine Convention can look back on twenty years of successful and effectively functioning governance. As a rule, an Alpine Conference is held every two years, made up of the environmental ministers of the Alpine nations – which constitutes the decisionmaking body – in the country of the current chairperson (the chair rotates on a biennial basis).

The Alpine Conference, however, grants observer status to the United Nations and its specialised agencies, other European nations and the European Council as well as to transnational Alpine-regional entities and internationally active NGOs, in order to facilitate participation. At the moment there are seventeen organisations that function as external observers to the Alpine Convention (e.g. UNO, ARGE Alp, Club Arc Alpin, Alliance in the Alps, ALPARC and CIPRA International). If necessity arises in a focal theme, working groups can be installed, in which scientific/academic processes are paid special attention. Decisions of the Alpine Conference are made by mutual agreement (cf. Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention 2008).

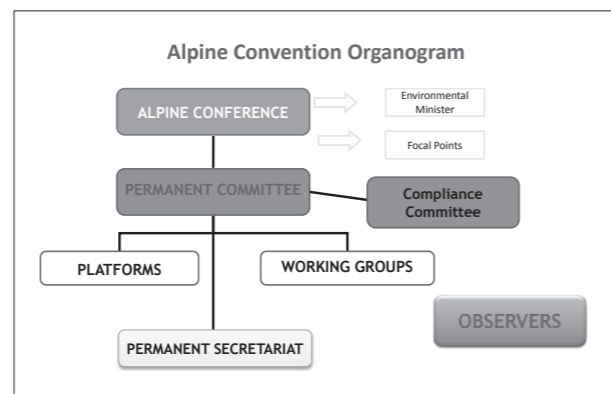
At the moment there have been working groups and platforms established to examine various themes such as transport, ecological networking, macroregional Alpine strategy, large animals of prey, mountain farming, UNESCO world heritage, natural hazards, energy and mountain forestry as well as water resources in the Alpine region.

The executive body of the Alpine Convention is its Permanent Committee, composed of high-level official delegates from the signatories. On the occasion of the VII. Alpine Conference in 2002, the Review Committee was established. This serves as a mechanism for examining the Alpine Convention and its Protocols, as well as evaluating the effectiveness of measures taken. After the commencement of the Protocols each signatory is obliged to submit national reports at ten-year intervals. The review committee examines the national reports, handles requests for examination of suspected infractions and generates recommendations for compliance with the Alpine Convention (cf. Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention 2010, 2011ff). This review committee is

composed of two representatives from each signatory, and two observer agencies represented in the Permanent Committee. If necessary, experts can be brought in for consultation (cf. Oesterreichischer Alpenverein 2011, 121). Beyond this, the observers possess the privilege of initiative, and so can introduce a procedure when there is reason to do so.

The Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention is based in Innsbruck, where it functions as staff office for the Alpine Convention, the Permanent Committee, the Chair, and the signatories.

The organisational structure of the Alpine Convention as well as the division of responsibilities is depicted in Figure 8.



Alpine Conference	political decision-making body; consists of the Ministers of the Contracting Parties, meetings held every two years in the Member State holding the the Presidency.
Permanent Committee	executive body, ensures that the Convention's decisions, principles and aims are carried out in practice, meets generally twice a year
Compliance Committee	body controlling if the commitments and obligations resulting from the Alpine Convention are complied with. Report every four years (First in 2009).
Working Groups and Platforms	set up according to the current needs; responsibility: recommendations and implementing measures, studies of ongoing developments. Set for a two-year term.

Figure 8: Structure and division of responsibilities of the Alpine Convention (Source: Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention)

In Austria, the Focal Point Alpine Convention was created by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management as a resource for discussion and determination of Austrian thought and strategy in the Alpine process, but also as an important information and communication platform. This Focal Point represents all delegates of the affected ministries, the federal states, social partners, science/academia and the NGOs (cf. Oesterreichischer Alpenverein 2011, 12ff).

In 1994, the Alpine Convention Bureau was founded by CIPRA Austria and established in Innsbruck, in order to most effectively support the implementation of the Alpine Convention's protocols. Along with answering current questions concerning specific Alpine themes and concerns of the Alpine Convention, it has published a quarterly magazine since 1995, 'Die Alpenkonvention – Nachhaltige Entwicklung für die Alpen' ('The Alpine Convention', Sustainable Development for the Alps'). All topics relating to the Alpine Convention in Austria and other Alpine states are treated in this periodical. The publication is an important national and international medium for information – for government ministries, authorities, communities, NGOs, the sciences and so forth. CIPRA Austria's support for the Alpine Convention is driven by the Focal Point Alpine Convention in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management.

In addition to this, the Legal Service Point Alpine Convention has been established, financed by the environmental ministry. This body, consisting of independent legal experts, is engaged with the legal interpretation of the Alpine Convention and its implementation protocols. Since 2009 the Legal Service Point has formulated twenty-eight positions on projects relevant to the Alpine Convention for civil authorities, NGOs, private individuals etc. In addition to the Legal Service Point, a legal database has been established by the Austrian Environmental Agency, with accounts of decisions relevant to the Alpine Convention organised by a keyword catalogue. This provides important aid for civil authorities, ministries, communities, NGOs and private individuals. The database can be accessed via www5.umweltbundesamt.at/alpenkonvention.

5.4. Expert views on possible governance structures for the EUSALP

Governance structures can basically be sorted into vertical and horizontal methods of coordination. With vertical governance we can draw upon existing models of cooperation. Coordination must be established here between the EU level, the national and regional levels, as well as the community level (cf. Bußjäger 2014², 2f).

With the implementation of horizontal governance in the structure of a macroregional Alpine strategy, a role can be played by transnational institutions and platforms such as the Alpine Convention, the ARGE Alp, or the existing European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). Horizontal governance would also facilitate the inclusion of civil society, since there are no legal prohibitions on the books that would forbid its participation. In addition to this, a macroregion calls for coordination on the national-regional level.

5.4.1. VERTICAL GOVERNANCE

With respect to the involvement of its states in the decisionmaking process, preparing the EUSALP for interface on the EU and national level, Austria's model holds pioneer status in the European Union. In this, the federation assumes responsibility for informing its states about all development proposals made within the structure of the European Union. This applies to the community level as well, which provides an informational track across the Austrian Association of Towns and Municipalities. Further, in matters concerning the states, the federal government has the authority to place a notable member of the state government as a participant in the conferences of the council (with the approval of the minister responsible). In the case of the EUSALP, the model of common state representation would make it possible to assign the representation of Austria at ministerial meetings concerning matters particularly relevant to certain federal states to an administrator from the state(s). This is limited, though, to meetings of the council. But it is significant that this model is already in practice in other areas within the structure of cooperative federalism, which is why it could indeed be applied to the governance model of a macroregional Alpine strategy.

With regard to this possible governance structure one can ultimately conclude 'that the right of the states and communities to participate in the affairs of the European Union serves to prevent the possibility that these subordinate governing bodies can be excluded from the decisionmaking process on the European level. This makes possible not only their collaborative effectiveness but also creates better communication and ensures the inclusion of these territorial authorities in the decisionmaking process. This

serves to curtail or eliminate development of obstructionist attitudes. This model can be termed “federalism by participation”, because “federalism by decision” – as a concept with strictly separated autonomous jurisdictions – becomes steadily less enforceable in the European multilevel political system. Adoption of this model would be particularly advantageous for the EUSALP process, since the functional capabilities of the strategy are essentially dependent upon the willingness of subordinate territorial authorities and civil society to participate. In a certain sense, it facilitates the participation of the subordinate level of government in the formation of policy, and not only in its implementation’ (Bußjäger 2014², 3ff).

5.4.2. HORIZONTAL GOVERNANCE

According to Bußjäger, it is precisely the transnational organisations – above all the Alpine Convention, but the ARGE Alp and the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) as well – that could play an important role in a macroregional area. They would all be predestined to function as fundamental players in the structure of governance – and particularly so the Alpine Convention if its scope of responsibility were to be extended over the entire Alpine region. On the thematic level, the working groups of the Alpine Convention would play a leading role, as well as could the EGTC Europe Tyrol – South Tyrol – Trentino. The inclusion of the organisations of civil society in the decisionmaking process (say, via consultation) as well as in the implementation phase, seems here to be possible to a certain extent, since up to this point there exist no restrictive legal regulations that would prevent this sort of participation (cf. Bußjäger 2014², 5).

5.4.3. GOVERNANCE ON THE NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL

One possibility of coordination on the national/regional level is based upon Austria’s cooperative federalism, in which views are exchanged between the federal government and the individual states. In addition, there are the National Contact Points (NCP) mentioned by the EU Commission. It would be expedient, especially in this envisaged governance, to include the local levels as well as civil society, particularly on thematically focused issues, in order to impart the necessary transparency to the macroregional process for the Alpine area. Parallel to this, the establishment of platforms in the Austrian states, leading to an exchange between policy and civil society, will be considered sensible and advisable. An important role belongs here to the state assemblies as well, since they must play an active role in this process (cf. Bußjäger 2014², 4). Along with the questions concerning organisation itself, there is the need for project organisation. The installation of an oversight committee with leadership responsible

for the professional development of the project would be helpful. With this the supervisory board could assume the political steering and the determination of missions (cf. Bußjäger 2014², 5f).

5.5. The Alpine Convention in a governance structure

By virtue of their longstanding experience, their existing structures within the framework of a multilateral treaty and their incorporation of all signatories involved in a macroregional strategy for the Alpine area, the Alpine Convention should function as an essential protagonist on the European level as well as on that of the Member States. This is doubly so since the thematic material of the Three Pillars of Grenoble is already contained in the substance of the Alpine Convention’s implementation protocols (see Chapter 2). It is therefore recommended that the Alpine Convention, because of its myriad points of contact, be included in the decisionmaking process. Moreover, it is clearly necessary that the Alpine Convention be given an essential role in the implementation process, because of its extensive expert knowledge (cf. Bußjäger 2014, 6f).

5.6. Multi-Level-Governance for the Alpine macroregion:

In general, implementation of the EUSALP demands a bottom-up approach, in which all affected stakeholders including civil society are involved. This also means that several institutional tiers must cooperate with one another. The European Union and the Alpine nations and regions as well as the local representatives must contribute on an equal basis. One possibility for implementation is the approach involving Multi-Level-Governance (MLG), according to Bußjäger (cf. 2014, 4), the pragmatic instrument for realisation of a macroregional strategy. MLG is a form of government on multiple levels, which in contrast to the classical linear/hierarchical top down approach incorporates the agents involved in a kind of network (cf. Bußjäger 2014, 4). In the context of the European Union, Multi-Level-Governance connotes the coordinated approach of the Union and the Member States along with the regional and local governing bodies in the development and implementation of the policies of the European Union. This leads to responsibility being shared by all of the governmental tiers involved. The bases of this political form include all levels of democratic legitimacy and the representation of all participating stakeholders (cf. Committee of the Regions 2009). Moreover, this action relies upon the principle of subsidiarity, the principle of proportionality and that of partnership. Thus, this form of governing facilitates a flexible approach, receptive to the wishes for participation of the various stakeholders.

However, Multi-Level-Governance suffers in practice (in aspects of democratic theory) from a particular bias toward the executive. For this reason it is important that the parliaments and civil society are all adequately participating (cf. Bußjäger 2014, 5).

MLG occasionally brings along its own problems. According to Bußjäger (cf. Alpen.Leben Workshop 2013) Multi-Level-Governance can lack structure as well as central direction. It is government-dominated and offers few possibilities for access and transparency. Cooperation of the stakeholders is always dependent upon the good will of all involved parties. The possible positive impact for the environment and the resident populace are however clearly recognisable. Thus, the Alps will ideally be perceived from outside as an interconnected system, which will promote cooperation within as well as cooperation with the neighbouring regions. This will rein in any unilateral actions on the part of individual states or stakeholders. And on the other hand, the capability for innovation and democratic accomplishment will be strengthened.

5.7. The role of civil society in the framework of EUSALP governance

‘By “civil society”, one understands principally the segment of society that is not active in terms of state, party or politics, but rather engages itself voluntarily and openly in societal and political questions. Members of civil society include NGOs and various initiatives’, (Gärtner 2008), as well as interested members of the general public (cf. Bußjäger 2014, 9). ‘Civil society is heterogeneous and characterised by great diversity’ (Bußjäger 2014, 9). Formalised participation of civil society is problematic, in that there is no such thing as a formally delimited civil society (cf. Bußjäger 2014, 9). Over the course of the development of the EUSALP the role of civil society in the process as well as in its implementation was discussed on several occasions. In reality, however, the appropriate integration and participation of civil society was neglected to a significant extent. In the handbook of participation (cf. Arbter 2012, 10), ‘participation’ is defined as the involvement by which – along with the citizenry, organisations and the professional segment – government is integrated, as are political representatives and business concerns. In the context of the EUSALP it specifically involves the integration of civil society on a level equal to that of the political stratum. Through its inclusion, a strategy can be more directly and effectively implemented, particularly on the local and regional levels.

But why then does the integration of civil society hold such great importance? The inclusion of civil society in processes of political decisionmaking is provided for in many conventions, programmes and arrangements – among

others in the Århus Convention as well as in Agenda 21. The Århus Convention states that the public shall participate in negotiations as well as the implementation of international agreements, particularly in agendas affecting the environment. Existing macroregional strategies, particularly the Danube Region Strategy, have shown that failure to incorporate civil society in a comprehensive fashion at an early point in the proceedings leads to inadequate information for the populace, resulting in a reduced sense of engagement and delays in implementation of the strategy. An appropriate integration of civil society early in the development process creates a more solid commitment on the part of the citizens. Furthermore, the organisations of civil society possess abundant expertise as well as ideas concerning possibilities for implementation, from which governmental stakeholders as well as the EU can profit (cf. CIPRA International 2014, 1). The ARGE Alp (2012, 25) emphasised, ‘the non-governmental institutions, organisations and networks are essential agents in the configuration and implementation of a strategy for the Alpine region because of their wealth of experience’.

‘Without participation of the regional level and civil society in the presentation of themes, it can hardly be expected that the strategy for the Alpine region could come to life’ (Bußjäger 2014, 11). For this reason, civil society must be integrated directly and early, so as to take part in the evolution of themes and their development. In setting the agenda, it must however be avoided that civil society gets lost in a non-transparent area between organs of the EU and of the states.



The role of civil society in the EUSALP process has remained unclear. (Photo: J. Essl)

5.7.1. GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE – SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AT THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL: CITIZENS' COUNCILS

The citizens' councils in Vorarlberg provide one good example of successfully integrating civil society on the regional and local level for the purpose of solving regional and local problems and posing questions. 'The citizens' council is an innovative microformat of participatory democracy' (Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2014, 2). In a citizens' council lots are drawn, and typically ten to fifteen persons from a community come together in order to discuss a particular theme affecting the community, for the duration of one or two days. The participants are not required to have technical expertise, but rather to speak from their own experience. In this fashion, necessities, desires, proposals and prognostications are expressed, exchanged, established and documented. The results of the council are presented and reflected upon to the relevant population, political leaders and the authorities in the course of a coffee session. A citizens' council is then qualified either to develop new themes and objectives, to develop new political fields or to scrutinise current developments – also if important measures of implementation are to be instituted. A valid formation of opinion as well as valid processes of decisionmaking can take shape in a citizens' council (cf. Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2014, 2ff).

The state of Vorarlberg has the most experience with integrating its citizens in this process. Experience shows that the quality of the results approximates that of experts, because citizens are the experts in their own milieu. 'With the anchoring of participatory democracy in the state constitution in January 2013, additional weight has been imparted to the integration of the citizens and with this the citizens' councils' (Büro für Zukunftsfragen 2014, 2). Citizens' councils have been formed here among the populace since 2011. In general the communication between policy, government and the citizens is particularly important, since the methods of the citizens' councils modify themselves and develop further. By means of these councils, the theme of citizen participation in Vorarlberg has been given greater value and as the political leaders see it, has made quite clear 'how important citizen participation is for all of us!' (Büro für Zukunftsfragen, 2).

5.7.2. GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE – SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AT THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL: CARINTHIA'S ENERGY MASTER PLAN EMAP

In 2014 the Carinthian state government and their parliament unanimously approved an energy master plan construction process. The Energy Master Plan (eMAP) was completed in May 2014 and made public (cf. Office of the Carinthian State Government 2014, 1). With the Energy Master Plan, Carinthia was seeking to achieve the rapid implementation of an energy turnaround in order to achieve sustainable and ecological utilisation of energy resources. Through this Carinthia should be – at least on the balance sheet – energy-independent from fossil-based and atomic sources of energy by the year 2025 in heating and electricity and by 2035 in transport and mobility. The eMAP was worked out on two levels (Holub et al. 2014, 9ff): at the expert level and on another level based on a broad-based integration of the Carinthian populace in the process. 200 experts formed themselves into eleven thematic working groups (energy efficiency, research and development, green professions, the struggle against fuel poverty, spatial planning, mobility, renewable energy, infrastructure and networks, transnational cooperation, consciousness-raising and creativity etc.), each with a spokesperson. Topic and content were determined by the spokespersons and the project managers. An eMAP body of advisors, in which parties represented in the state council, the social partners and representatives of NGOs and citizen initiatives were integrated (cf. Holub et al. 2014, 18f), was regularly updated on the results. Besides the working groups, the citizens of Carinthia were integrated in the creation process by information events (including info sessions and discussion periods as well as workshops) (cf. Holub et al. 2014, 20). With this more than 1,800 individuals from more than 121 communities were able to participate in the design of the Energy Master Plan.

5.7.3. GOOD-PRACTICE EXAMPLE – SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AT THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL: COMMUNITY NETWORK ALLIANCE IN THE ALPS

The community network Alliance in the Alps set itself the goal of instituting the Alpine Convention's implementation protocols on the community level. As of 2014, the community network had grown to a membership of 300 municipalities in Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Slovenia. The executive board of the network, in which one community from each nation is represented, meets at least twice a year and develops strategies and programmes for their cooperative undertakings. To further foster open communication and facilitate the necessary transfer of information, a conference of member communities is held in springtime each year and an annual symposium in autumn. Additional regular meetings of community alliance members in the individual nations take place in order to discuss and implement collaborative projects. The results are ultimately introduced at the annual symposium in the form of keynote speeches.

By these examples of 'good practice' we have provided a selection that, however small, demonstrates that not only does practical knowledge exist on the local and regional levels, but also that citizens' active participation can contribute to the successful implementation of projects. And it is especially evident that a macroregional strategy must grow from the bottom up, that civil society must feel that they are included in the process as forward-thinking and formative participants. For this reason it is imperative to integrate all essential stakeholders including civil society into the decisionmaking process as well as the implementation process, to bring the oft-cited bottom-up perspective actively to life and into the picture.

5.8. Conclusion: the model of inclusive governance

As was made clear in the preceding chapters, many basic approaches exist for designing ideal governance. Fundamentally the optimum practical implementation of governance must be identified and developed according to the individual case. So it is essential to discover a form of organisation which is equal to tackling the complexities of macroregional politics, one that brings with it the maximal mobilising of the stakeholders involved, while avoiding creation of additional parallel administrative structures (cf. Hiess and Pfefferkorn 2013, 7).

The general governance tasks of the EUSALP, according to Hiess and Pfefferkorn (2013, 20), include:

- Development of strategy, concept and measures that cover the entire functional Alpine region;
- Pooling resources based on pan-Alpine focal themes;
- Improvement and intensification of the transnational Multi-Level-Governance in the Alpine area;
- Increased and more effective positioning of the interests of the Alpine region;
- Improved exchange of theoretical and practical knowledge.

Moreover, in this governance, acknowledgement must be made of existing relevant, transnationally established, regionally active organisations that are currently functioning in the Alpine area. Among these organisations are the Alpine Convention, the ARGE Alp, and the International Lake Constance Conference, ARGE Alpen-Adria, medALP and the Alpine Space programme under the auspices of INTERREG. The Alpine Convention should be given a special role here, because of the numerous themes treated in their protocols that also make up part of the material of the EUSALP (cf. Bußjäger 2014, 10f).

The Alpine region itself has a number of specific requirements and conditions that must be considered in the context of Multi-Level-Governance. The cultural, ethnic, topographic, economic and biological diversity must be taken into account, and Multi-Level-Governance must be able to do justice to this lack of homogeneity, particularly in terms of the distinctions that exist in national laws. This will necessitate multiple crossings of frontiers, both in terms of territory and sector. Moreover, a highly democratic attitude to the proceedings is required, along with a bottom-up approach, in order to involve the populace in this strategy for the future and to guarantee a successful implementation (cf. Bußjäger 2013, 1f).

In EU affairs, jurisdiction customarily lies with the federal government – so it is as well with the EUSALP. Despite this, the federal government should inform nations about planned projects and decisions in order to give them the possibility to formulate opinions. The same is true for the communities. Governance on the national level generally remains centred in the autonomy of the individual state (cf. Bußjäger 2014, 13ff). 'On the thematic level, the working groups of the Alpine Convention play a role that can provide essential contributions' (Bußjäger 2014, 16).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Alpen.Leben – input for discussion and vital impetus for the consideration of the Alpine Convention in the EUSALP process

The discussions concerning a macroregional strategy for the Alpine region clearly indicate how varied and essentially different the interests and political positions prevailing in the region are, and why its implementation on the broader plane poses such a great challenge. The preconditions for a successful EUSALP process dictate an open and transparent exchange among all stakeholders and civil society, as well as consideration of the established structures and longstanding experience of the Alpine Convention. With well-structured wide-ranging governance functioning on multiple levels (MLG), it can become reality to transform existing prejudices, scepticism and negativity concerning any vision of the European future – still currently perceived by the populace as abstract and awkward – into a constructive process.

With the elaboration of thematic focal points based upon the Three Pillars of Grenoble and the intersection of the discussion with the Alpine Convention and its Protocols within the framework of the Alpen.Leben project, an interesting debate has developed, particularly in Austria, concerning the proposed future macroregion. Austria offers a functional procedural model, since the establishment of the Austrian coordination platform by the Federal Chancellery and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has facilitated an intensive exchange among all important stakeholders. On the one hand, the Alpine Convention can be integrated into the discussion and entrusted with an important role, while on the other hand this also creates the possibility for CIPRA and its project Alpen.Leben to function as an important access and communication platform for civil society. It also became possible to introduce an in-depth position paper concerning workable governance in the structure of an Alpine macroregion, thus creating the basis for further discussions.

Nevertheless, on an international level there remains the specific irritant that it has not been possible – owing to the intransigence of certain individual Alpine states – to establish the Alpine Convention as an essential element in the development of the EUSALP. Inclusion of the Alpine Convention as an observer in the steering group is at least a small consolation. Although it was emphasised repeatedly – and in particular by upper-level political representatives of the EU as well as those from Austria, Switzerland and Bavaria – that not only must the Alpine Convention be given a leading role in formulating a macro-

regional strategy for the Alps, but also that civil society must be integrated into the process from the beginning, obstructions and barriers in the international channels can still not be cleared away. Admittedly, civil society was included as participant in a sub-working group – and the inclusion of CIPRA as well as other representative organisations of civil society can be interpreted as an important step – but only by the concrete development of a governance system and the generation of a plan of action for the implementation of the EUSALP will it truly be shown whether or not the concerns and issues of civil society have indeed been acknowledged. The Alpine macroregion stands at the start of a long journey; many questions remain in need of clarification. In contrast, the Alpine Convention has recourse to longstanding experience, to well-established structures and networks that have already enabled it to articulate and address the major Alpine-specific challenges that the future holds.

Recommendations resulting from discussions conducted in the course of the Alpen.Leben project regarding the successful realisation of an Alpine macroregion are presented here in compact form. These recommendations have also been submitted to the steering group in the form of a policy paper, with the call to bring these proposals into the ensuing processes of discussion and negotiation.

6.2. Recommendations for a successful implementation of the EUSALP, from the viewpoint of Alpen.Leben

6.2.1. ADDED VALUE OF THE ALPINE CONVENTION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

With its existing structures solidly in place and its pan-Alpine practical knowledge, the Alpine Convention is certainly well suited to assuming a leadership role in the EUSALP, to develop it further and to supply forward-thinking informative content. The entire EUSALP process can profit from this knowledge. Alpen.Leben would therefore consider it an important signal and a responsible step on the part of the European Commission to grant the Alpine Convention a leading role in the development and implementation of the EUSALP.

The same holds true for civil society, whose role in the continuing process must still be regarded as under-represented. Especially the CIPRA, with its more than 100 member organisations, its many years of collected specialised knowledge and its effective networking in

Within Austria, integrating representatives of the local level and civil society could be expeditiously accomplished because of the broad-based communication afforded by the Austrian coordination platform and the National Contact Points. Besides this, platforms can be established in the federal states to enable an exchange between policy and civil society (cf. Bußjäger 2014, 16). In this fashion one could, for example, establish internet-based (social media) platforms, but also organise presentations in which individual aspects of the strategy could be discussed. The state parliaments could assume an important role here as platforms for information (cf. Bußjäger 2014, 16f).

Since the macroregional strategy for the Alpine area is at the moment just at the beginning, and by the majority of the population regarded only peripherally and/or as an abstract concept, now is the proper time to establish the track for an open and transparent course of action on all levels. This begins with all essential stakeholders in the Alpine region, and ends with an active integration of civil society. Since it is in the meantime constantly becoming clearer that the area of application will go beyond that of the Alpine Convention's perimeter as well as that of Alpine Space (70 millions inhabitants, 490,000 km²) and will also draw into it the economically powerful metropolises of the foreland region, a governance structure that functions from the standpoint of equality on all levels between the Alpine core and the foreland territories must be created. The goal must be that of developing the 'we-feeling' between all Alpine inhabitants. For this reason, framework conditions must be created which provide a clearly perceptible added value for the populace of the Alpine region. The Alpine Convention is an essential aspect of this process, since the substance of its Protocols covers a multitude of thematic fields relevant to the macroregional Alpine strategy. For this reason it must be granted a leading role in Multi-Level-Governance.

Although an initial step has been taken with the consultation process, there is now a need for further palpable and visible impulses. The macroregional Alpine strategy would have the chance to make Europe more visible, in a way that the regions and cantons provide a connecting link between the European Union and civil society (cf. Mast 2013, 132f).

Multi-Level-Governance with the integration of all stakeholders and civil society would be able to address (and solve) persistent problems including various cultural, economic and social challenges, thanks to the various federal entities and regional governments. With this, a basis would be created that could meet the challenges and problems in the immediate Alpine core region (delineated by the Alpine Convention), while on the other hand the Alpine region and the economically powerful great cities of the foreland could meet on a level playing

field (cf. Bußjäger und Gsodam 2013, 298). Meanwhile the EUSALP has entered the content-generating phase. But still it appears that this abstract and 'sovereign' process has not really arrived with the general public. This situation is complicated by the fact that the macroregional Alpine strategy is regarded as the brainchild of the European Union, which not infrequently inspires scepticism and rejection among the populace. But precisely this offers the opportunity for the European Union to improve their current image by means of the EUSALP, and to utilise the EUSALP to build an appropriate closeness to the citizens by choosing an open, transparent and active form of participation for civil society in the formation and implementation processes, so that the Alpine Convention could be seen as an essential element of an Alpine macroregion.



The Alpine macroregion would enable the EU to make Europe more visible and ... (Photo: K. Jipp)



... to bring about added value to the people living in the Alpine area. (Photo: J. Essl)

the entire Alpine region can function as a concentrated centre of competence in sustainable Alpine development as well as concerning the protection of the Alpine region, thus providing a substantial and essential contribution to a positive elaboration of the EUSALP.

In the view of Alpen.Leben, the EUSALP can only be successful in the mid- and long-term if the Alpine Convention and civil society assume a leading and formative role. Therefore Alpen.Leben will make the following clear recommendations to the steering committee concerning the successful implementation of the EUSALP and its added value for the Alpine Convention.

6.2.1.1. Leading role for the Alpine Convention, above all in the Third Pillar of Grenoble

The implementation protocols, declarations and action plans of the Alpine Convention are constructed upon principles of sustainable development and protection of the Alpine region. The Convention has already engaged itself comprehensively for more than two decades with themes specific to the Alps, themes that for the most part must be laboriously worked out in the current EUSALP process, then consequentially integrated and securely anchored. For this reason, it must be seen as the logical conclusion for the European Commission to entrust the Alpine Convention with an important role in all three thematic fields, and the appropriate leadership position – particularly because of their basic expertise – with respect to the Third Pillar of Grenoble (sustainable management of energy, natural and cultural resources).

6.2.1.2. Established law must remain law

The Alpine Convention is juridically anchored in all Alpine states and in the European Union. Through the ratification of the Protocols by the European Union – which are also a component of European law – the EU Commission has been assigned great responsibility as custodian of the contracts. It must therefore be ensured that no weakening or undermining of the Alpine Convention and its substance be permitted to take place – the legal standards of the implementation protocols may not be disturbed. On the contrary, the EU Commission should have particular interest in strengthening the Alpine Convention as part of the macroregional Alpine strategy, and to employ its Protocols as important cornerstones upon which to base development of the focus issues.

6.2.1.3. The Alpine Convention as an important connecting link to the EUSALP's area of application

The EU Commission's proposal regarding an appropriate demarcation of the macroregion also takes into account the geographic boundaries of Alpine Space and the perimeter of the Alpine Convention. With this, the Alpine Convention assumes a functional place in the EUSALP process. It remains open, however, to decide within which exact geographic framework these measures and activities will be managed as part of the macroregion, along with how and in which form the priorities concerning fields of action will be determined. From the viewpoint of Alpen.Leben the following is clear: The greater the geographic area, the more divergent the ambitions within the macroregion will prove to be. Within a region that is too large, there will be other goals and points of focus – with possibly different solutions proposed – than there would be in a theatre of operations involving only the heart of the Alpine region. Therefore, a geographic framework for the determination of applicable measures must be comparable with the perimeter of the Alpine Convention, whereas, at the same time, flexible management – according to case-to-case requirements – of the EUSALP's area of application needs to be guaranteed. With this we must take into account the reality that functional relationships between the core area of the Alpine region and the surrounding regions will vary from issue to issue, and that the specific requirements of the individual case must be determined in each instance. Proceeding in this fashion it can be guaranteed that there will be no weakening or undermining of the Alpine Convention and its Protocols. The EU Commission's interest must thus lie in strengthening the region beyond the substance of the Alpine Convention, and to create in the Alpine macroregion a connective link between the respective perimeters of the Alpine Convention, Alpine Space and the EUSALP, with which a meaningful exchange between the mountain districts and the foreland regions and their great cities can take form, guaranteeing a level playing field for discussion.

6.2.1.4. The Alpine Convention as basis for governance of the Alpine macroregion

Proposals made by the EU Commission and by the German state of Bavaria concerning how Multi-Level-Governance for an Alpine macroregion might function are already on the table. It is striking, however, that when these proposals were put forward both favoured a top-down hierarchy, with emphasis placed upon the higher political and governmental strata, in which no integration of the Alpine Convention or of civil society was imagined. But if the EU Commission should in the future realise the importance and validity of a frequently suggested bottom-up approach, then the Alpine Convention and the civil

population must be regarded as important components of governance. The governance structure proposed by the EU Commission cannot currently meet this need. It is precisely the Alpine Convention that already has experience with functional and established governance, and thus conforms to the third suggested NO of the EU Commission, namely the prohibition of creating any new structures. It would thus be productive on the part of the EU Commission to blend the currently proposed governance with the existing governance structure of the Alpine Convention.

In the following, possibilities will be shown – based on the EU proposal – how the Alpine Convention and civil society can successfully and fully enfranchised be integrated into the EUSALP's governance structure.

1) Incorporation of the Alpine Convention into the various strata of the EUSALP's governance structure

EU level

The roof of an EUSALP governance is formed at the EU level by the European Parliament, the EU Council, economic and social committees and the Committee of the Regions. Representatives of the Alpine Conference of the Alpine Convention, who meet every two years on the environmental ministry level, can already be integrated on the EU level, and thus present Alpine-specific themes for discussion.

Ministerial level, Member States, non-EU nations

The EU proposal anticipates strategic coordination as well as leadership and decisionmaking on the ministerial level, with a rotating chairmanship. Particularly on this level, the environmental ministers (Alpine Conference) can play an essential role, so that Alpine-relevant themes can be determined and discussed.

National Points of Contact

This council is to be made up of high-ranking officials, and constitute a nationally effective, operational coordinating platform (between federation, nation, regions, departmental ministries, organisations etc.). These National Contact Points are closely interwoven with the ministerial level and the individual members (both EU and non-EU nations) as well as the EU Commission, and also constitute a connecting link to the High Level Groups and civil society/the general public. The Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention, which consists of upper-level delegates from signatories to the accord, watches over the goals as well as the principles and the essential thinking of the Alpine Convention. Additionally, it reports to

the Alpine Conference concerning the progress of the Alpine Convention, thus ensuring a direct connexion on the EU level, also functioning as an important disseminator of information and interface to the ministerial level and to the High Level Groups.

Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention and Focal Point Alpine Convention

The Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention occupies an important staff position as well as a crucial and pivotal role in all questions concerning the Alpine Convention and its Protocols. It is therefore necessary to integrate this important network into an EUSALP governance, so that it may function as a connecting link to the Alpine Conference, to the Permanent Committee, to the individual specialists and to those with dedicated knowledge (for example, study groups and platforms) as well as to civil society and the general public. The Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention can thus assume a leadership role with regard to the Third Pillar of Grenoble. For this reason alone it is extremely necessary to include the Alpine Convention in all discussions and sharing of knowledge. Virtually every Alpine state has its own Focal Point to the Alpine Convention established in its environmental ministry, which among other duties carries out important discussions and defines the Alpine Convention's goals in the respective nation. These information, discussion and strategy platforms – through inclusion of the concerned ministries, countries, social partners and NGOs – can, much like the Permanent Secretariat, assume an important function in networking.

Specialised expertise and action groups

The EU Commission and Bavaria recommend the establishment of a group of specialists, whose responsibility lies in the development of thematic material as well as in the discussion of horizontal issues. This group is also designed to establish leadership teams in the various areas of expertise as well as to actively accompany the EUSALP process with regard to content. The Alpine Convention is predestined to be incorporated in this council of experts: For more than two decades it has addressed those very thematic considerations in its study groups and platforms that are currently being developed in the EUSALP process; for this reason, it has collected a great deal of Alpine-specific practical knowledge in terms of research and sharing of information. With the Alpine status reports or the System for the Observation and Information on the Alps (SOIA), there exists many years' worth of Alpine-specific data that can provide important input concerning the determination and development of topics.

2) Integration of civil society and the general public

The course of events in the EUSALP process has up to now been rather significantly characterised by a top-down approach, since up to this point civil society and the general public have not been represented in the decisionmaking process. Also in this respect, EUSALP governance could orientate itself by the structure of the Alpine Convention, because with the participation of 17 various observer organisations, it functions very effectively in its bottom-up approach.

- a) Austria's National Committee for the Alpine Convention, positioned in the Environment Agency, offers the nation a unique platform for information, discussions and strategy – one composed of ministries, federal states, social partners and NGOs. This has not only created a tight network, but a highly functional communication structure as well – one that operates effectively from both the horizontal and vertical perspectives.
- b) The EUSALP process must have as its goal a dedicated breaking down of the thematic material to the community level. In this respect, the community network Alliance in the Alps can function not only as an important disseminator of knowledge, but can also provide valuable input regarding implementation.
- c) Since 1995 the CIPRA and its member organisations have concerned themselves with Alpine-specific themes and issues. For this reason, the CIPRA possesses not only great practical knowledge, but also maintains a network that functions throughout the Alpine mountain arc. The CIPRA can serve as an important and comprehensive conduit for information and communication as well as an important propagator among the populace.

Currently available designs of governance proposed by the EU Commission and Bavaria already include some positive beginnings. But a few substantial improvements are necessary in order to satisfy the criteria of good governance. It must remain an important goal to integrate all concerned – including the Alpine Convention and civil society – in governance, to grant them leadership status and endow them with relevant decisionmaking authority. Only then can it be ensured that the EUSALP will achieve a positive outcome in its ongoing evolution.

6.2.2. FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SUCCESSFUL DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUSALP

6.2.2.1. Good work can rarely be done in a hurry – give the concept of an Alpine macroregion time to mature and develop

Few would argue against the point that a complex process like that of the EUSALP requires time to unfold and develop. For this reason, it seems advisable at the present time to put the brakes on just a bit with this very ambitious plan of action. Too many questions about this future project remain open and unanswered – also concerning its effect beyond the mountains themselves. Countries, regions, cantons and communities are for the most part still searching for optimal solutions with regard to actual implementation. Many things have been up to this point discussed, decided and put into action on the smaller scale – so one is tempted to expect that great things ought to suddenly happen. But this process and its possible impact are undiscovered country for a great number of the persons involved, and must be understood and grasped in its entirety. Besides, the concept of a macroregional strategy for the Alpine region has not really filtered through to the level of the communities or into the general populace – and the officials responsible have been in no hurry to get it there. Also, the international compact of the Alpine Convention could not be implemented in a short period of time. It is part of the nature of the issue that these types of international negotiations and arrangements must come as the result of a highly necessary, long and intensive process of discussion. The Alpine macroregion needs to take the time for this to evolve naturally and organically.

6.2.2.2. Continue the EUSALP process with the inclusion of all concerned, and make Europe fit for the future

On no account can the discussions concerning the EUSALP come to an end with the consultation process and the subsequent incorporation of its conclusions in a strategy paper proposed for mid-2015. The EUSALP calls for a dynamic approach, an approach that on the one hand anticipates a basis-oriented governance structure involving all stakeholders as well as civil society, and on the other hand carries the idea of an Alpine macroregion outward, and thus allows sufficient room for vision. Europe is in desperate need of a fundamental structural transformation, one attuned to solidly unite social and sound environmental behaviour, one to which controversial topics like, for example, eco-efficiency, have not been rendered taboo. Instead, its specific focus must in the future be built upon the themes 'quality of life' and

'justice'. Naturally, it is also necessary to preserve the Alpine mountain region as living space for nature and man, to strengthen it as a cultural, social and economic environment – with the knowledge that the Alpine region must be integrated into the context of the surrounding territory and the EU, but likewise must have its own interests acknowledged. Any essential success of a macroregional Alpine strategy would surely depend upon how the bridgebuilding between the Alpine core region and the foreland regions with their economically powerful cities would be implemented, and how the common challenges would be addressed and met by all concerned on an equal footing.

6.2.2.3. Maximum transparency

What the implementation of a macroregional Alpine strategy of greatest added value to all sides needs, is pulling together with the maximum measure of transparency and openness. Only then will it be made possible for an Alpine macroregion to bring about something new and innovative – in the sense of inspirational, possible and concrete.

Regardless of viewpoint – Alpine Convention, Alpine Space or CIPRA – all are actively participating in the EUSALP process, and thanks to their longstanding experience are able to provide important input, to breathe life into this still unwieldy construct of an Alpine macroregion. It is up to the EU Commission and the participating countries, regions and cantons – at the close of the consultation process as well as in the design of the action plans, and in the ensuing phase of implementation – to choose a transparent and open mode of operation, to conduct an active dialogue with all stakeholders in order to ultimately arrive at the added value demonstrated by Alpen.Leben.

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