



Ville des Alpes de l'Année
Alpenstadt des Jahres
Città alpina dell'anno
Alpsko mesto leta

Manual

Association

Alpine Town of the Year-- Alpenstadt des Jahres e.V. – Ville des Alpes de l'Année – Città alpina dell'anno – Alpsko mesto leta



"Alpine Town of the Year"

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Introduction

The "Alpine Town of the Year" Association is an association of alpine towns which have been awarded the title of "Alpine Town of the Year". The title commends an alpine town for its particular commitment to the implementation of the Alpine Convention and is awarded by an international Jury.

The principal concern of the Alpine Convention is to combine measures for the protection of the alpine region with a sustainable, trend-setting development of the regions themselves. The fact that the Alpine Convention draws on alpine towns for its contents is of key significance given that around two thirds of the population in the Alps live in urbanised regions, which in turn represent only around 40% of the total alpine area. So while the Alps are still clearly rural in terms of surface area, the population - and with it the economy - is already predominantly urban. Here nature and culture, ecology and economy collide head on, and it is the stated principal objective of the Alpine Town of the Year to communicate that idea to the population at large.

All information contained in this manual can be found on www.alpenstaedte.org.

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Title holders

During its incumbency each Alpine Town of the Year undertakes to implement at least two sustainable projects corresponding to one or more of the five Alpine Town objectives. The web site provides documentation on the projects carried out so far, to help contribute towards the exchange of experience.



Towns of the year

- 2009 Bozen/Bolzano (Italy)
- 2008 Brig-Glis (Switzerland)
- 2007 Sondrio (Italy)
- 2006 Chambéry (France)
- 2005 Sonthofen (Germany)
- 2004 Trento (Italy)
- 2003 Herisau (Switzerland)
- 2002 Gap (France)
- 2001 Bad Reichenhall (Germany)
- 2000 Maribor (Slovenia)
- 1999 Belluno (Italy)
- 1997 Villach (Austria)

Background

It was the town of Villach/A which originally came up with the idea of founding the Alpine Town of the Year initiative. It was motivated by the idea of **developing sustainable models** to achieve harmony between the unique natural landscape of the Alps, economic activity and urban life. One of the main concerns was to put into practice the international set of agreements laid down by the **Alpine Convention**, and to raise the awareness of politicians and citizens alike for the sustainable development of the environment in which they live.

The Alpine Town of the Year project was founded in 1997 and, that same year, it first awarded the title to the Town of Villach for two years. In the years that followed, Villach assumed the sponsorship for the Alpine Towns of the Year. With the duties and tasks involved becoming increasingly complex and wide-ranging, the Alpine Town of the Year Community of Interests was founded in March 2003, thus establishing the activities on a more professional footing. For legal reasons the Community of Interests was then re-established as the **Alpine Town of the Year Association Alpenstadt des Jahres e.V. - Ville des Alpes de l'Année - Città alpina dell'anno - Alpsko mesto leta** in November 2006. The association is domiciled in Bad Reichenhall/D.

The main focus of the "Alpine Town of the Year" Association's activities is to assist and support each Alpine Town of the Year to **develop projects** and draw up a **programme**, and to carry out **information** and **education work** on the objectives of the **Alpine Convention**. Other activities include encouraging the exchange of information among Alpine Towns of the Year, and developing and expanding co-operation projects.

Organisation

Any town bestowed the title of Alpine Town of the Year by the Association may join the Association as a voting **member**. They are represented by the mayor or by his or her deputy. Each town appoints an adviser, who is responsible for implementing the projects.

The members of the Alpine Town of the Year Association undertake to participate actively, and take part in the Members' Meeting, which is held annually. The Members' Meeting elects the Executive Board and the members of the Jury. It formally confirms the award of the title of Alpine Town of the Year, and adopts the Association's programme of work for the year.

Towns as well as legal and natural persons or associations under private or public law may become sponsoring members by recognising the objectives and goals of the Association and by paying a regular contribution.

The **Executive Board** is comprised of three to five members. Each Alpine state may appoint only one person to represent it on the Executive Board. The Executive Board is made up of the (First) President, his/her Deputy (Second President) and the Board Members. The Executive Board is elected by the Members' Meeting for a term of two years. It is responsible for the conduct of the Association's ongoing business; it decides on behalf of the Members' Meeting in matters that cannot be postponed. The First President and the Second President are the Association's legal representatives.

The Members' Meeting of the Alpine Town of the Year Association elects a **Jury**, which is made up of three representatives of different expert organisations operating throughout the Alps. The Jury proposes the next Alpine Town of the Year from among the candidate alpine towns running for the title. The Jury also examines the annual programmes of the selected Alpine Town of the Year and advises the town on matters relating to the programme's contents. At the end of its year as incumbent Alpine Town of the Year the current Alpine Town submits to the Jury a final report on its activities and projects.

The Jury currently consists of each one representative of the following organizations:

- Comunità di Lavoro Città delle Alpi (Working group of Alpine Towns)
- Pro Vita Alpina
- CIPRA International (International Commission for the Protection of the Alps)

Each Alpine Town of the Year appoints an **adviser**. Advisers are responsible for the implementation of the Alpine Town concept in their own alpine town and for co-operation between the alpine towns themselves. They work closely with the Executive Office and take part in the Members' Meeting in an advisory capacity.

The **Executive Office** is responsible for the implementation of resolutions and attends to the current business of the Alpine Town of the Year Association. Each two or three months it publishes an e-memorandum that reports on the current events and activities organised by the Alpine Towns of the Year.

Application

Applications are open to any town in the alpine region that is willing to prove that ecology and economy - rather than being mutually exclusive - complement each other sensibly and in a way that sets the trend for the future. The title commends an alpine town for its particular commitment to the implementation of the Alpine Convention. The Alpine Town of the Year Association has formulated five objectives designed to guide future Alpine Towns of the Year in their choice of projects and events.

Contractual Matters

The Alpine Towns of the Year have formed an Alpine Town of the Year Association. Its activities for the public benefit extend to the alpine region as a whole. New winners of the Alpine Town of the Year title become members of the Alpine Town of the Year Association. The rights and duties of members as well as the bodies and their tasks are set out in the charter. A contribution set out and regulated by the Members' Meeting in a contribution order is levied from the members.

The Alpine Town of the Year Association concludes an agreement with the new titular governing the terms of their co-operation. The agreement regulates the services rendered by the Alpine Town of the Year AssociationAlpinesuch as advisory services and administrative support for the current Alpine Town of the Year, and the duties of the titular itself.

Objectives

1. *To strengthen awareness of the Alps:*

The Alpine Town of the Year is part of the Alps and therefore has a share in this precious living, cultural and natural environment in the heart of Europe. The Alpine Town of the Year assumes a special responsibility for the preservation of the cultural and natural heritage, and endeavours to ensure that it is developed in a sustainable way.

2. *To involve the population:*

The activities and events organised as part of the Alpine Town of the Year are public. All interested persons and associations (from trade and industry, art and ecology) can and should take part with their own projects. Children and adolescents are to be given special scope as they should be allowed to develop and articulate their needs and interests as adults of the future.

3. *To consolidate ties with the region:*

Towns are bridges: firstly to neighbouring regions and secondly to more distant areas beyond the alpine region itself. The Alpine Town of the Year reflects its functions and interactions with the regions in question. It seeks genuine opportunities for a "new partnership" between the urban and the rural.

4. *To shape the future sustainably:*

The Alpine Town of the Year acknowledges the principles of the Alpine Convention, its concept for sustainable development in the alpine region. The Alpine Town of the Year undertakes to take real and innovative steps towards implementation in as many of the twelve areas of the Alpine Convention (e.g. energy, transport, culture, protection of nature, etc.) as possible, and to see them through.

5. *To develop co-operation:*

The Alpine Town of the Year develops and nurtures close contacts with other towns in the Alps to exchange experience and draw up common interests as alpine towns. In the following year the Alpine Town puts special emphasis on towns outside the alpine region, particularly in its partner towns.

News

2009 Alpine Town of the Year award for Bolzano

(19.06.2008) On 9 June Bolzano/1 was officially declared the 2009 Alpine Town of the Year. The decision was taken in recognition of the South Tyrolean town's contribution to climate protection and a sustainable planning policy designed to provide a good quality of life for residents and an attractive destination for visitors. The jury was also impressed by the fact that Bolzano has formulated guidelines for a sustainable future in its strategic development plan and has already implemented them. The accolade is seen as an incentive for the towns-people to give thought to Bolzano's double identity, i.e. urban and alpine, in the course of the year, to strengthen the town's links with the surrounding area, and to network with both neighbouring municipalities and the other alpine towns.

The Alpine Town of the Year award has been made annually by the association of the same name since it was introduced in 1997. The winning town is selected by an international jury on the basis of its commitment to the forward-looking and sustainable development of the urban area and its surroundings.

Information: <http://www.alpenstaedte.org> (de/fr/it/sl/en)

Documents

Charter of European Cities & Towns Towards Sustainability - Aalborg Charter
(<http://www.sustainable-cities.org/docroot/sustainablecities/aalborg.html>)

This report is available in different languages, e.g. : de; fr; it; en

Alpine Convention

(http://www.alpmedia.net/pdf/Alpine_convention_E.pdf), 10 pages

This report is available in the following languages: de; fr; it; sl; en

Links

Alpine Convention: www.alpenkonvention.org

Network of municipalities "Alliance in the Alps": www.alpenallianz.org

International Commission
for the Protection of the Alps CIPRA: www.cipra.org

Working community "Towns of the Alps": www.cittalpi.net

Pro Vita Alpina: <http://www.cultura.at/alpenakademie>

Information service for the Alps: www.cipra.org/alpMedia

Publications

Green Paper – Towards a new culture for urban mobility Herausgeber: Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 2007

Alpine Town Alpine Country. The responsibility of the Alpine towns for the future of the Alps CIPRA Proceedings 2005/22. CIPRA Internationale Alpenschutzkommission. Schaan, CIPRA large series of publications, 2005/22, 2007

European Land and Soil Alliance (ELSA) e.V. (Publ.): **Protection of Underground Water as a Source for Drinking Water in Maribor.** Osnabrück: 2004 (=local land & soil news, no.9)

European Land and Soil Alliance (ELSA) e.V. (Publ.): **Land Use Management in City Regions.** Osnabrück: 2002 (= local land & soil news, no.5)

International Mountain Society (IMS) (Publ.): **Towns in the Alps** Urbanization Processes, Economic Structure, and Demarcation of European Functional Urban Areas (EFUAs) in the Alps. Bern: 2001 (=Mountain Research and Development, Vol. 21, No. 3)

The dynamics of mountain towns: the stakes involved in being "alpin", International Conference, Grenoble 16-17 November 1998. Grenoble, Innsbruck, Nagano, Chambéry and others: 1999

Centro di Ecologia Alpina (Publ.): **Ecological town. Research and proposals for a new environmental setting: the Cristo Re quarter in Trento.** Trento: 1996 (=Report Centro di Ecologia Alpina, N. 10)

Bätzing, W.: **Urbanization and Depopulation in the Alps.** Davis, USA: 1996

Torricelli, G.-P.: **Cities and sustainable development in the Alpine and Prealpine Area.** Milano: 1995

Co-operation between the Association and the Alpine Convention

In April 2005 the Alpine Convention officially recognised for the first time the importance of towns for sustainable development in the Alps. The Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, the Alpine Town of the Year community of interests and the Alpine Towns Working Group signed a two-year agreement aimed at strengthening co-operation. The main result of this co-operation was the jointly organised conference on “Alpine Towns and Protected Areas near Towns”, attended by some 300 participants from five Alpine states on 9 March 2007.

Co-operation between the Association and the Permanent Secretariat was established on a permanent basis on 11 January 2008 following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding. The Memorandum provides for jointly organised events, a regular exchange of information, a strong joint presence in the public arena, and support for the activities of each particular Alpine Town of the Year on the subject of the Alpine Convention. The projects themselves are to be set out in a two-year work programme.

General information on the Alpine space

Action and restraint in the Alps

The future of the Alpine space is being seen more and more in terms of sustainable development, with equal attention afforded to the twin aspects of protection and use. Sustainable development is a form of "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". (Brundtland Commission 1987) Sustainable development is an anthropocentric concept that includes both ecological and sociocultural elements.

Sustainability always involves the question of use, although use is not a prerequisite for sustainability. Indeed a significant aspect of sustainable development can be the decision to abandon land that was previously in use, i.e. a policy of restraint, of release into a process of natural development. The concept of sustainability needs to be defined and implemented at different levels. For the Alpine space as an overall region, specific models and concepts are just as important as individual measures.

Action and restraint both have an economic and an ecological component, with action relating primarily to use and management, and restraint to protection. Action and restraint are inseparable elements in any concept or discussion relating to sustainability. In addition, they are always to be interpreted in the double sense of the words:

- action in the sense of production, i.e. preserving the Alpine region as an independent economic space to meet the needs of the resident population through sustainable development;
- action in the sense of preservation, i.e. shaping and managing the cultural landscape in order to preserve the Alpine region as a living space based on diversity;
- restraint in the sense of a necessity, i.e. the need to refrain from making unsustainable use of the Alpine space;

- restraint in the sense of an opportunity, i.e. the chance to permit a greater role to be played by the forces of natural development without anthropogenic interference.

In the European context, the Alps are ideally suited to serve as a model for a regional concept of a sustainable economy. The goal of any concept of sustainable development is to support economically and ecologically meaningful cycles as the core of a sustainable economy. To that extent the Alpine space is predestined to play a pioneer role in sustainable development in Europe. In view of the specific character of an ecologically sensitive mountain region like the Alps, any mistakes made with regard to land use have faster and more direct repercussions than in lowland areas. They require greater care at the level of prevention and faster reactions in terms of repair.

The Alps can also play a pioneer role in the creation of a convincing design for a sustainable economy. Experience with economic activity adapted to the needs of the natural environment has been preserved longer in the Alpine space, so that the measures required for sustainable development can often be introduced more easily.

In addition, economic activity adapted to the needs of the natural environment also contributes to the management and preservation of the cultural landscape. Sustainability cannot always mean the same thing; a densely populated region is different from a quiet rural area, and a tourist centre is not comparable with a depopulated mountain region. Sustainable development must therefore always take account of the specific character of the natural and cultural spaces involved.

Sensitive Alps

The Alpine region is subjected to a variety of ecological impacts of internal and external origin. The economic functions of the Alpine space are also largely determined externally. In future, the polluter-pays principle must be applied to make non-sustainable activities unattractive and preserve the special potential of the mountain areas. Also, the pollution must be paid for regardless of whether it is caused by traffic in transit from outside of the Alpine space or by a polluter in the mountain region itself. Cross-border environmental problems are growing, and so is

the degree of international integration. For that reason alone, a sustainable development strategy is one that avoids an isolated response in the Alpine space or by individual regions. Integration within Europe, however, does not mean that the decision on the future of the Alps will be taken outside of the Alpine space, all the more so as the Alpine Convention gives the countries of the Alps an opportunity to promote regionalisation.

In terms of the economy, society and the cultural landscape, structural change in the Alpine space has shifted the balance between action and restraint to the detriment of biological and landscape diversity. Where biodiversity and landscape variety are at risk, a basic condition of sustainable development can no longer be said to have been satisfied. New conditions of use require new limits to use. In this context, restraint is the willingness to forgo non-sustainable use.

Structural change is an opportunity to experiment with various forms of restraint and to promote the natural character of areas of land. The goal must be a network of areas of varying intensity of use. We must also seek to overcome the traditional reluctance to take land out of production. Only if we do justice to these various criteria and aspects, will it be possible to pursue a policy of sustainable development in the Alps.

Fascinating Alps

There are approximately 13 million inhabitants in the Alpine arc that covers 190 000 km² with a length of more than 1,100 km and an average breadth of 170 km. The eight countries and 1000 valleys that encompass the convergence of the three large language areas - Romanic, Germanic, and Slavic - are also enriched by the linguistic variety of regional languages and dialects.

Life in the Alps often takes place at boundaries-at borders where countries meet, at tree lines, and at the dividing line between livelihood and the desire for excess profits. However, this region also has the wherewithal to overstep boundaries. The natural landscape developed over millions of years and the cultural landscape over centuries.

Its beauty however is delicate, and as a habitat for people, animals, and plants, it is just as diverse as it is endangered. The Alps are tops: as an area for rest and relaxation, settlement and habitation, water supply, a connecting link between countries, and as a European cultural bridge.

Present development

The reciprocal processes of increasing urbanisation and rural exodus in the Alpine space can be observed at several levels. Within the Alps as a whole we can distinguish between the booming Central Alps and the increasingly depopulated Southwest Alps, within the individual regions between the local centres, which can be large towns or cities or successful tourist resorts, and their underdeveloped hinterland, and at the local level between the built-up areas down in the main valleys and the abandoned side valleys and mountain slopes.

This complexity means that the problems vary from region to region, and that the criteria for sustainable development must be adapted accordingly in the individual case.

The Alps represent a region of great diversity in terms of landscape and the flora and fauna. This diversity is a product of geological, morphological and climatic factors on the one hand and thousands of years of human activity on the other. Natural and near-natural landscapes are becoming increasingly rare, as are traditional cultural landscapes. Within society, however, there is a growing desire for the preservation or restoration of such living spaces. In addition to sociocultural factors, there are also economic reasons for this reappraisal of land use in mountain areas. It is important for the future of the mountain farming community, for example, to avoid the conventional large-farm structures of the flat areas and to focus on niche products with high standards of quality and the appropriate labels. A committed effort is required for the development and promotion of ecolabels for products and services that satisfy the requirements of sustainability.

The population

It is also necessary to take into account the variations in population density within the Alpine arc. In terms of average density, the Alps - with 60 inhabitants per square kilometre - cannot be classified as a densely populated area, but the regional differences are considerable. Above all it should be remembered that 60 inhabitants per square kilometre is the average figure relating to the whole of the Alpine region and that the area of permanent settlement in such a mountainous environment is naturally much smaller. If the area of permanent settlement is taken as the basis for population density, the figure is four times as high and is comparable with the most densely populated regions in the world, as shown in the following Table.

State	Population density per square kilometre
Switzerland	175
Liechtenstein	191
Austria	96
Slovenia	96
Germany	229
France	106
Italy	190
Alps (total area)	60
Alps (area of permanent settlement)	240
Spain	78
Netherlands	368
Great Britain	240
European Union	115
Japan	330
India	278
USA	26
Canada	3

In terms of population distribution, the Alpine region is undergoing a process of urban growth and rural exodus. Rapid growth is to be observed in both the main urban centres and the low-altitude locations in the mountain valleys, while the small communities in the mountains proper are shrinking at a growing rate. Population growth in the mountains is only to be found in a small number of communities where tourism is a main source of income for the local people.

The Alps as region of Europe

As defined in the Alpine Convention, the region of the Alps is home to some 13 million people. The 191,287 sq.km. contained within the Alpine arc comprise the territory of seven countries, 83 regions (NUTS 3) and about 6,200 communities. With their unique combination of natural and cultural history, the Alps have become a living space, an economic area and a recreational playground of eminent importance at the heart of the European continent.

The Alps are a region of cultural and linguistic diversity. The languages and language groups of the Alps include Slav languages, the Rhaeto-Romanic language group comprising the minority languages Romansch, Ladin and Friulian, the German language group with Alemannic and Bavarian and also the Walser dialect, which is still spoken in a few areas, and the Romance language group with French and Italian. Some of these languages and dialects have survived only in small enclaves and are gradually dying out because the younger members of those societies no longer speak them. A number of projects have been launched to encourage the use of these languages and dialects to save them from extinction; they are now being taught at school again, and there are radio programmes, newspapers and so on.