



The topicality of the Alpine Convention, a tool for dialogue among different legal systems and cultures for sustainable development.

This issue of “*Il Crinale*”, published in the first days of the German Presidency, aims at briefly summarizing the latest commitments of the Italian Presidency after the XIII Alpine Conference in Turin. These commitments certainly provide continuity to the work carried out during 2013-2014 and a fertile ground for the German Presidency to keep affirming the central role that the Alpine Convention plays in order to stimulate the continuous dialogue among different cultures and institutional systems, which has made the Alpine region the driving force for European sustainable development, facilitating an integrated approach in mountain territory management as well.

The Convention has indeed contributed to provide continuity to the dialogue on the themes of sustainable development, identifying innovative and shared measures for sustainable development, thanks to the contribution of institutional actors at different levels. Such measures, while respecting diversity, should transpose common needs and facilitate finding common solutions. The Convention can still be a synthetic tool of local demands, according to an integrated policy making process which as of today represents the best mean to guarantee development in Europe, as reaffirmed by Europe 2020 Strategy of Lisbon.

The recent approach towards the definition of an EU Macroregional Strategy for the Alpine Region, supported by several regional and national actors, has availed itself of the multiannual experience of the Alpine Convention, whose role for the environmental protection and development of the Alpine region has been widely recognized, not least, in the occasion of the signing of the joint political resolution by Regions and States in support of the Macroregional Strategy (Grenoble, October 2013).

During the last period 2013-2014 the Contracting Parties, with the coordination of the Italian Presidency and the Permanent Secretariat, have worked with the aim of providing the best and most exhaustive contribution to the definition of EUSALP. In this line, the Convention has reaffirmed, with unanimous agreement, that this new European tool should strength the “mutual solidarity pact” among mountain regions and their surrounding areas at the heart of the European continent.

The Alpine Convention is now ready to reinforce such a contribution, as also stated during the XIII Alpine Conference in Turin which represented a synthesis of the work carried out during the two-year Italian Presidency and whose results show the will to provide continuity to the objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth outlined by the Europe 2020 Strategy for the sustainable and harmonious development of the whole Union and neighbouring regions.

In Turin, for instance, the *Guidelines for climate change adaptation at the local level in the Alps* were approved, a technical document which is the result of the great work by the expert of the Convention and provides territorial administrations of the Alpine Countries with a supporting tool for the governance of local adaptation strategies. The commitments for the safeguard of the Alpine ecosystem was also reaffirmed with the approval of a *Statement on the value of the Alpine forests*.

During these years work has also been carried out for the definition of instruments that may facilitate growth in the Alpine territories while sustaining the economy and offering new impulse to the populations living and working in the mountains.

In this regard the XIII Conference has discussed the *5th Report on the State of the Alps* which outlines an updated and in-depth picture of the ongoing demographic change in the Alpine territory and, taking into account the data and analysis as well as the contribution from other expert groups (*A digital agenda for the Alpine Region* and *Tourism in the Alps: governing sustainability*), has recognized the importance of bridging the digital divide and ensuring the necessary digital services to individuals and enterprises in the Alpine region. It was also decided to establish an *ad hoc* Working Group dedicated to sustainable tourism in order to appraise the potential of Alpine tourism.

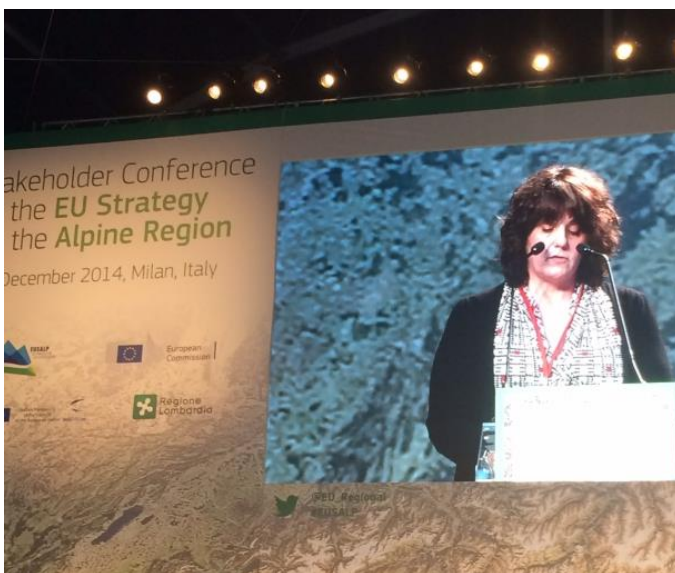
Finally, I would like to recall the decision of setting up a *Mountain Week*, from 4th to 11th June 2015, within the prestigious framework of EXPO in Milan to bring a contribution to the central theme "*Feeding the planet, energy for life*" presenting to the audience the best agro-food traditions and cultures from mountain territories.

These are the results of the professional work of the Delegations and the Permanent Secretariat and the attention that the Parties have granted to the Alpine region. I think they reaffirm the central role of the Alpine Convention as promoter and interpreter of an updated vision integrated with other international instruments for the sustainable future and smart development of the Alps.

Focus

Towards EUSALP : the Alpine Convention for a smart , inclusive and sustainable development of the Alpine region

It took place in Milan the 1st and the 2nd of December, the stakeholder conference for the implementation of



the EU macro-regional strategy for the Alps, the conference marked the end of the consultation process started last July with the aim of identify priorities for EUSALP, an important tool which will represent the future for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of Europe.

The Conference of Milan, organised by the Italian Presidency of the EU Council and the Lombardia Region, brought together a number of stakeholders discussing, during three workshops, the strategic priorities within the three pillars of the future strategy: driving innovative growth, connecting the region and protecting the environment and the promoting a sustainable management of energy and natural and cultural resources.

The Alpine Convention actively participated in the conference: Italian under secretary for Environment, Barbara Degani, addressed a speech in behalf of the Presidency, she declared "The EU macro-regional strategy can promote important innovation processes in the Alps and in the surrounding areas, making the Alpine region a real "laboratory" for sustainable development at the European level, thus enabling the local population to continue to live and work in its territory, maintaining high levels of life quality, welfare and economic competitiveness".

Moreover, Deputy Secretary of the Alpine Convention, Mrs. Simona Vrevc Reiterer, and the President of the Permanent Committee, Mr Angelini, participated two side events of the Conference and reinforced the message for a strong commitment to a real partnership between all stakeholders involved: regions, states, the EU, the Alpine Convention, the Alpine Space Programme and Others. A partnership that will ensure that the scheduled actions will be mutually beneficial for core mountain areas and the surrounding urban centres necessary.

Ms Vrevc highlighted the necessity that ICT represents in everyday life of our society - for sustainable economic development as well as for insuring social integration of the population. A well-functioning ICT is a prerequisite for the functioning of enterprises, in particular the small and medium sized in a regional context; contributes to job creation; enables e-learning, offers the possibility for better connecting schools,

universities and research and thus promotes innovation. Furthermore, internet offers a platform for developing e administrative services and solutions for providing services of general interests. All this issues are extremely relevant for the Alpine Convention and there is no doubt that actions in the field of e connectivity contribute to the implementation of the objectives of the Alpine Convention and to realization of many of the Articles of the Alpine Convention and its Protocols (Article 2 of the Framework Convention, articles 1 and 9 of the Spatial planning Protocol, implementation of Protocols on tourism, transport, mountain farming and nature protection etc).

The President of the Permanent Committee addressed another important issue at the heart of the Convention's agenda: the energy. He presented to the audience the approach of the Convention and in particular some points which could be reflected in the definition of the pillars of EUSALP. Angelini wanted to emphasize that the Convention, also through a specific platform dedicated to this issues, is working to develop a vision of " Renewable Alps" by focusing on the three priority themes of the Consumption - by promoting strategies for efficient energy consumption (especially in the construction industry), the Production - for the development of renewable energy according to principles of sustainability, the Governance - to facilitate an ongoing exchange of best practices and expertise on local and regional strategies for energy governance .

Vast territories in Europe benefit from energy services that come from the mountains, these are largely based on renewable energy sources and local resources (such as wood, biomass, water). The supply of energy from the Alps thus contributes to achieving the objectives set by the European Union, such as the one established by the "Europe 2020 " for the climate change and energy sustainability (- 20% GHG in 1990 ; + 20 % RES ; + 20 % energy efficiency) .

The Alpine Convention in Lima presents the Alpine guidelines for local adaptation to Climate Change

From 1st to 12th December in Lima (Peru) the twentieth Conference of the Parties of the Framework



Convention on Climate Change (COP20 UNFCCC) was held. A key moment for the environmental future of the Planet, it was attended by the delegations of more than 145 Countries gathered to identify the conditions and a working paper for a common agreement that sets national goals for keeping global warming within 2 degrees C.

The final document approved by the Conference should lead to the adoption, next year in Paris, of a universal and binding agreement aimed at reducing CO2 emissions but also able of intervening on adaptation measures, according to procedures to be defined. These procedures are often more suitable to contrast local impacts of climate change

and strengthen the resilience of some territories, such as the mountain ones.

In this regard, the Italian Ministry for the Environment, has also brought the contribution of the Alpine Convention presenting, on 8th and 9th December, two side events dedicated to measures for local adaptation to climate change in the Alps and to the role of mountain forest ecosystem services in the absorption of CO2 for their active and sustainable management.

In 2013-2014 the Italian Ministry for the Environment, as Presidency of the Alpine Convention, has coordinated the work of the Contracting Parties, on these issues also receiving support by some of the main Alpine research centers: EURAC, Lombardy Foundation for the Environment and CURSA, with whose collaboration in Lima the main results of the work were presented in order to contribute to the debate and share experiences with other mountain Countries.

During the two side events the guidelines for local adaptation to climate change in the Alps were presented with the purpose of providing a reference point for policies and measures that, with the necessary

adjustments, may also be applied in other mountainous areas all over the world. “The Guidelines that today we present come from the many local good practices in the Alps, to which we wish to assign a more general and broader value. In this line these Guidelines refer to the local level, but look at global stakeholders. We are glad to present them in Lima as a contribution aimed at strengthening, harmonizing and promoting local adaptation policies and measures for mountain areas and beyond”. Such was the presentation of the document by the Presidency of the Alpine Convention.

As stated by the Italian Minister for the Environment Gian Luca Galletti: “The success of the agreements depends not only on the governments but also on all organizations of the civil society, thus enterprises, trade unions, NGOs, local authorities and individual citizens”. The Alpine Convention too has been working in this direction highlighting the opportunities of cooperation among different States and legal systems towards the identification of adaptation measures which consider the locally-developed experiences and competence, according to a bottom-up principle.

A contribution on the value of mountain forests was also presented: this issue was dealt with by the Alpine Convention with the aim of improving international cooperation in the field of multifunctional mountain forest management, improving the knowledge of their ecosystem services in terms of value for the local populations and the environment and fostering sustainable forestry as well as the enterprises of this sector. In Lima the emerging attention for the role of mountain forest in climate change policies was also stressed. Their CO₂ storage ability has been widely acknowledged but there is also growing attention for the adapting abilities of forests and the forestry sector, which deserves to be considered. Forests not only can significantly contribute to the achievement of the CO₂ reduction goals but also suffer the impacts of climate change and thus require appropriate adaptation policies and measures contributing to preserve their role of green infrastructures for the benefit of the territories, the citizens and the regional economies. Sectorial adaptation actions should be integrated into a wider concept of sustainable forest management which envisages ecological and social factors, as well as economic and ecological risks to which the forestry sector risks to be exposed.

Every year on 11th December the International Mountain Day is celebrated. It was instituted in 2002 by the United Nations upon request by the Italian Government in order to highlight the importance of mountain ecosystems for our Planet and strengthen the idea of sustainable development for mountain regions.

The Mountain Day was also recalled in Lima by the Peruvian Pavilion which has promoted an event dedicated to the Andean mountains, also inviting the Italian Ministry for the Environment to bring the multiannual experience of the Alpine Convention in international cooperation among mountain Countries.

On this occasion the Italian Presidency recalled the participation of an Andean delegation to the XIII Conference of the Parties to the Alpine Convention in Turin, where representatives of Argentina, Chile, Bolivia and Peru underlined the important work carried out by the Contracting Parties and acknowledging the role of the

Convention as a historic instrument for transnational cooperation among mountain territories. The important partnership with the Carpathian Convention was also reaffirmed. This partnership has led to a joint Alpine-Carpathian declaration on the opportunity of identifying measures for local adaptation to climate change for mountainous territories, which was also presented in Lima in order to share its objectives with other mountain regions.