

Position Paper

EUSALP Youth Council 2024-2025

Mouchard (France), 05.10.2024

The EUSALP Youth Council is an official body of the European Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) that aims at building bridges to enact youth-led change in the Alpine region.

The Youth Council aims to represent the alpine youth, their ideas, and their opinions in EUSALP. Its mission is to bring the youth of the different alpine regions together and build a bridge between them and politics. The proposal of concrete political action to the EUSALP body as well as the direct implementation of projects are tasks of the Youth Council. The responsibilities of the Youth Council also include consultation with the Executive Board and the General Assembly of EUSALP as well as close cooperation with the nine action groups of the EUSALP, to ensure that the youth's voice is heard in the decision-making process.

Finally, members of the Youth Council are invited to actively work in other projects within the EUSALP Youth framework. The EUSALP Youth Council also represents EUSALP towards other youth organisations and acts as a multiplier to widen youth integration in the Alpine Space.

This position paper defines the priorities of the Youth Council's work. In the following, objectives, priorities and concrete projects are defined for each thematic group (TG) of the Youth Council, as well as the members of the respective TG are listed.

TG 1: Economic Development

In recent years, more and more ski resorts in all Alpine countries have had to close their doors due to a lack of snow. As a result, many locals are exposed to precarious jobs during the winter season. More generally, climate change considerably affects the Alpine economy, in which tourism plays an important role. As EUSALP Youth Council members and ambassadors for our regions, we want to help find solutions to support the diversification of tourism activities and the economic transition of the Alps.

More generally, we would like to promote the attractiveness of the Alpine space, in particular towards students and young professionals. One of our goals is precisely to encourage dialogue and cooperation between academic institutions and local companies, in order to facilitate the integration of young adults in the Alps' labour market.

Also, we want to contribute to positioning the Alpine region as an attractive place for economic innovation, focusing on circular economy and encouraging young people to contribute to economically developing their home regions.

Missions

- Avoid mass tourism in the Alps and bring tourism back “to the roots”. Tourism should not damage the authenticity of the landscape and regional traditions.
- Promote economic alternatives in the Alps to make them less dependent on tourism and climate change.
- Fitting the education system in the alpine regions to the demands of the Alpine labour market.
- Improve the attractiveness of the Alps for students and young professionals.

Key activities

- Help ski resorts transition and find alternatives to winter tourism (collaborate with Beyond Snow Interreg project and TranStat AG2 project).
- Collaborate with AG3 on the dual systems activities and “Discover mountain jobs” project.
- Institutional collaboration in higher education to highlight skilled workers in alpine-specific industries and create a network between local companies, educational institutions and Youth.

- Search for positive examples and innovative ideas of mountain countries that are improving the attractiveness of the Alps for students and young professionals.
- Organise more field visits with relevant actors and conduct a stakeholder mapping of relevant actors in the field we are working on.

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TG 2: Mobility and Connectivity

Transportation is one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in the European Union and in the alpine region. Therefore, it is very important for us to be able to travel sustainably and limit our carbon footprint. However, we note that it is for the moment difficult to move without a car in a lot of mountain areas, and especially in the cross border regions due to the fact that the public transportation is under the responsibility of different stakeholders. We therefore support actions to unite the systems and make it easier for inhabitants of the alpine regions to switch to public transport instead of using motor vehicles.

We as the young people of the alps are often left behind when it comes to mobility. Not all young people own a car and it can get really expensive to travel through the alps with trains. There are great initiatives to make public transport more affordable for young folks. The Youth Council supports these initiatives. EUSALP should encourage offering advantageous prices on public transport passes for all students and workers.

In general, we should promote the use of public transport by strengthening the offer, increasing connections, and simplifying the booking / information process. As rail is currently the most efficient way of transport, the railway infrastructure has to be updated by constructing new railway lines and improving existing ones. Nevertheless, it must be stated that all types of transport should be made appropriately sustainable in the Alpine regions.

The Youth Council therefore suggests to support the electrification of railway, tram and trolleybus lines and the implementation of actions aimed at reducing the environmental impact of vehicles that cannot be powered directly from the electricity grid. Actions include the use of energy sources that have a lower life-cycle assessment than those already in use, encouraging hitchhiking, and promoting the use of light vehicles that, in addition to polluting less per km, are safer for pedestrians and cyclists. Additionally EUSALP should support policies such as those in France, which has already introduced a ban on short-haul domestic flights and has very restrictive regulations on the use of private jets and helicopters.

Missions

- Improving cooperation between all European stakeholders of mobility with the objective of an integrated network to avoid waste of money and to make sustainable freight and public transportation attractive and efficient.
- Discuss the attractiveness of public transportation with mobility stakeholders and encourage youth targeted offers.
- Establish an alpine youth ticket based on the ALPTICK project lead by the CIPRA YC together with EUSALP, EU and stakeholders
- Collect data on mobility in the Alpine region, in compliance with the GDPR, to be able to report to institutions and public transport agencies.
- Encourage the youth to use public transport as a means to visit the Alpine region.

Key activities

- Improve the efficiency of EUSALP events by providing a car sharing document and support for alternative journeys
- Support Pitch Your Project initiative in relation with the mobility topic and help them to reach their goals
- Support the expansion of the “YOALIN” project
- Support AG4 in planning and organizing the EUSALP mobility conference 2025

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TG 3: Alpine Ressources and Culture

The Alpine region is full of diverse landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and unique ecosystems: it is a treasure waiting to be explored. It is a place where tradition meets modernity and where nature inspires communities. In addition, the Alps today represent a place heavily impacted by the challenges of climate change. Nevertheless, they can represent an area that will offer best practices in the future as well as a wide range of social and natural resources.

However, in an increasingly digital age, the connection between young people and the Alpine region is at risk of fading. Young people in the Alps often find themselves disconnected from their roots and the natural world. It is crucial to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Alpine region's cultural and natural heritage among the younger generation.

Our goal is therefore to bridge the gap between young people and the Alpine region by implementing innovative initiatives that engage, educate, and empower. We aim to create a vibrant and sustainable future for the Alps, where young people are at the forefront of shaping its destiny. By doing so, we can inspire future generations to become active stewards of this precious environment.

To strengthen this connection, we aim to empower young people to become active participants in shaping the future of the Alpine region, we can ensure its cultural and natural heritage is preserved for generations to come.

Missions

- **Strengthen Cultural Identity:** Empower youth to engage more deeply with the Alpine culture by using social networks, setting up events or organizing educational classes.
- **Support Environmental Care:** Raise awareness amongst the young people about significant ecological issues in the Alps and inspire them to take up practices that would help the cause.

- **Include Youth in Decisions:** Ensure that youth who have developed ideas can communicate them and be involved in the decision-making process in relation to the Alpine policies, ensuring the voices of young people to be heard.
- **Working and Cooperating** with the EUSALP's Action Group, especially AG6, AG7 and AG8, but furthermore also with the Alpine Convention, CIPRA and CIPRA Youth Council, DG REGIO (European Commission), Interreg Alpine Space and the EUSALP TSS.

Key activities

- Participate in AG6's 2nd Landscape Conference in spring 2025
- Collaborate with AG8 on the theme of climate change adaptation (CCA)
- Launch a social media campaign focused on alpine culture and heritage
- Partner with (local/regional) museums, cultural institutions, natural parks and influencers to engage youth in Alpine culture and resources through social media, events and educational programs

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TG 4: Education, Soft Skills and Digitalization

The Alpine region faces unique challenges in aligning its education systems with the needs of the local labor market, especially in sectors such as tourism, agriculture, environmental sustainability, and digital innovation. To ensure that young people in the region are equipped with the right skills to succeed, it is essential to foster collaboration between youth, educational institutions, and industry leaders. This initiative focuses on bridging the gap between education and the Alpine labor market by enhancing digital literacy, promoting sustainable practices, fostering soft skills development, and increasing the attractiveness of the region for students and young professionals. By working closely with the AG3 group, local organizations, and international partners, we aim to create synergies that empower youth to become leaders in the Alpine economy and stewards of its natural resources.

Missions

- **Align Education with the Demands of the Alpine Labor Market:** Adapt the educational system in the Alpine region to better match the skill requirements of the local labor market, with a focus on digital skills, sustainable practices, and soft skills.
- **Strengthen Collaboration on Dual Systems and Mountain Jobs:** Collaborate closely with AG3 on dual education systems and the "Discover Mountain Jobs" project to provide hands-on learning opportunities that are directly aligned with local job prospects.
- **Develop Soft and Digital Skills:** Enhance soft skills and digital literacy among young people by creating partnerships, running targeted workshops, and raising awareness of the opportunities available in the digital market.
- **Promote Environmental Sustainability and Climate Education:** Educate young people about climate change and the sustainable use of natural resources through initiatives like "Renove ta Cabane" and classroom-based programs.
- **Increase Youth Participation and Interregional Cooperation:** Act as a central point of contact for youth initiatives in the Alpine region, facilitating cooperation between local youth organizations, and raising awareness about political issues and participation opportunities.

Key activities

- Collaborate closely with AG3 on dual education systems and the "Discover Mountain Jobs" project
- Contribute to AG3's existing map of soft skills best practices by identifying and sharing examples from youth organizations.
- Develop and organize workshops focused on soft skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, adaptability), with the goal of creating a Canva template that can be used by other youth groups to easily replicate the workshop.
- Partnering with IT experts to take part in sustainable digital workshops or initiatives for younger generations.
- Search and highlight innovative educational programs from other mountain countries that can be applied in the Alpine region to make it more attractive for students and young professionals.
- Promote climate awareness through creative campaigns such as a podcast series, before-and-after photo exhibitions, and a creative contest focused on climate change.

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