

Protect the Alpine landscapes

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The Alpine associations confederated in CAA are dedicated to the preservation of natural and cultural alpine landscapes. They are a unique living environment for humans and nature and an important cultural heritage for Europe.

In its introduction, the European Landscape Convention indicates that "the landscape contributes to the formation of local cultures and is a basic component of Europe's natural and cultural heritage, thereby contributing to the well-being of people and strengthening European identity"¹. This is particularly true of the Alps. Because of this importance the CAA is committed to the preservation of the unique alpine landscapes.

The Alpine landscape is unique

The shaping power of nature and the determining influence of human use are both reflected in the landscape of the Alps. Over the centuries, cultural landscapes have been created in the Alps that characterize its scenery just as much as the untouched natural spaces and some of Europe's last remaining wildernesses. Mountain peaks and valleys, glaciers and waters, mountain pastures and forests are characteristic elements of the unique and small-scale structured Alpine landscape.

The Alpine landscape is an important resource

As a resource for the Alps, this landscape is extremely important in many aspects. It is vital for the population to identify with the region and crucial to the quality of the living environment. At the same time, the visual impression of the Alpine scenery is an important basis for the recreational value of the Alps and thus for Alpine tourism as an economic factor. The natural, unspoiled landscape is one of the main motivations for holiday-makers to visit the Alps. Compensating measures for landscape exploitation often lead to access restrictions in other areas and thereby to additional loss of space for Alpinists.

The Alpine landscape is under pressure

The original natural landscapes and the historical, inherent cultural landscapes of the Alps are under growing pressure. Landscape disturbance for intensive tourism, power generation, transport and residential development, changes in agricultural and forestry use are all contributing to that with growing intensity and speed. Structural problems from emigration and desertion are resulting in the region losing its cultivated cultural landscapes. At the same time, the consequences of climate change are altering the landscape.

The term "valorization" of landscape is too often used and understood only in an economical sense. However landscapes have an intrinsic value, even when they don't generate a direct economic benefit. They convey cultural, spiritual and ecological benefits.

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The Alpine associations that form the CAA see unspoiled landscapes in the Alps as important community assets that must be preserved and, at most, developed sensitively. As such, they are committed as actors of this protection and of its sustainable evolution.

They are calling for the consequent application of landscape conservation laws, such as the Alpine Convention in particular in terms of its "nature protection and landscape conservation" protocol. They also support the implementation of the following specific measures to maintain and sustainably develop the unique landscapes of the Alps:

¹ European Landscape Convention, Florence, 20.10.2000, Council of Europe

Sustainable conservation of the landscape

- The landscape as a resource must be a greater focal point for environmental protection. Nature conservation should not be limited to the protection of species and must observe the landscape as a whole. Specific emphasis must be placed on the conservation and networking of protected areas.
- Landscape conservation and the value of unspoilt land for the community must play a greater part in the consideration of projects. To do this, landscape plans and visual models must be developed and implemented for the spatial planning assemblies.
- Particularly valuable landscapes and natural areas that define the image of the Alps, prominent vistas, peaks and ridges must be protected from further developments that impact the area. Untouched, or almost untouched, areas such as the higher summits should be kept free from any development.
- Traditional, extensive farming systems and practices, necessary for the preservation of richly diverse cultural landscapes, shall be supported in a targeted manner. The evolution of the rural landscape, shaped by traditional farming and habitat, shall not be trivialized.

Develop with respect for the landscape

- The natural and cultural landscapes have changed over history. All new developments must show respect for the history of the landscape and come with the consensus of the population and the parties involved.
- The development of tourism may lead to a moderate increase in the quality of what is offered within the existing limits of expansion, without resulting in new land boundaries.
- Especially space-intensive forms of energy production should be limited to suitable landscapes. Energy saving and efficiency must be at the heart of switching to new energies to minimize pressure on the construction of new plants.
- The promotion of structurally weak regions in the Alps must not only target economic benchmarks, but must give equal focus to the objectives of landscape conservation.
- Population sprawl in the region must be counteracted with appropriate measures of spatial planning and housing development. Landscape protection must be afforded greater consideration when planning land development and land use.
- The European Landscape Convention should be ratified as a common European basis for the protection and development of the landscape in all Alpine countries and implemented in national legislation.

Resolved at the general assembly on 13.9.2014 in Paris, amended at the general assembly on September, 16th, 2017 in Malbun/Liechtenstein.

