



Meeting minutes of the 2nd General Assembly 2022 of the "Alpine Town of the Year" association Friday, 14th October, Passy, 9:00 to 12:00

Member Towns present

- 1) Belluno: Paolo Luciani
- 2) Biella: Claudio Corradino, Barbara Greggio, Alessio Ercoli, Alberto Perini, Anna Dissegna
- 3) Brig-Glis: Christian Jentsch
- 4) Chamonix Mont-Blanc: Michèle Rabbiosi, Étienne Grillot, Laura Mezei
- 5) Morbegno: Oscar Del Barba, Maria Larossa.
- 6) Passy: Raphaël Castéra, Pierre-Olivier Carra, Juliette Vodinh, Blandine Revenaz, Zoé Serre-Pauthier.
- 7) Sonthofen: Ingrid Fischer, Sonja Karnath, Manfred Mair.
- 8) Trento: Laura Begher.
- 9) Villach (virtually): Christine Redlein.
- 10) Tolmin (virtually): Maša Klavora, Špela Kranjc, Nika Gerbec.
- 11) Sondrio (virtually): Marcella Fratta. (For agenda item 6)

Jury: Norbert Weixlbaumer, Gerhard Leeb.

Guests: Nathalie Morelle, Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention; six students from Biella; Ephrem Truchet and Massimo Rey from Courmayeur, Valentin Brunner (virtually).

Office: Magdalena Holzer, Caroline Begle.

Excused Member Towns: Bad Reichenhall, Annecy, Bressanone-Brixen, Bolzano-Bozen, Tolmezzo, Lecco, Chambéry, Idrija.

Excused jury members: Cristina del Biaggio

Fast reading notes:

→ Resolutions in bold and orange

→ Invitations in green and bold

Main points: Parts in bold and black

Enclosures to the meeting minutes of the General Assembly:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ts3Gn1Q7-Flicmm6hgr8aAY8aIF0HGxJ?usp=sharing>

Afternoon presentation on activities in selected towns to put the Alpine Convention into action:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/100QDpuQ9cp-2RvHhLycq0t_EYIzs9xFo?usp=sharing

Photos: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PNJBVmsDzsZ61yPdznAcX35dDoo_D9t7?usp=sharing

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1) Welcome and approval of the agenda

Ingrid Fischer thanks for the hospitality and warm welcome from the team members of Passy,

- to the mayor Raphaël Castéra, Pierre-Olivier Carra, Juliette Vodinh and the helping hands behind the scene. Also a warm welcome to our guests:
- Nathalie Morelle, Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention
- Laura Mezei, Chargée de mission coopération transfrontalière, Espace Mont-Blanc, Communauté de communes de la Vallée de Chamonix Mont-Blanc
- Marcella Fratta, town councillor in Sondrio, the re-entered Alpine Town of the Year
- Laura Begher from Trento
- New town councillor of Belluno, Paolo Luciani
- New faces of Biella: six young people
- Guests from Courmayeur: Ephrem Truchet and Massimo Rey; Barbara Greggio is greeting the town councillors and hopes for a fruitful exchange with them.
- Welcome to the towns taking part online: Villach, Tolmin, Sondrio and to the translators in Udine and the technicians here in Passy.

Nathalie Morelle welcomes the General Assembly:

Greetings from Alenka Smerkolj, Secretary General and Silvia Jost from the Swiss Presidency of the Alpine Convention. The cooperation and exchange with the Alpine Town Association is important partner for the Alpine Convention. We are facing big challenges and must get actively involved.

Alpine Towns was the **focus of the current Report on the state of the Alps (RSA)**. Switzerland chose this topic for its presidency during the last two years. The RSA 9 analysed, how Alpine towns can support concepts on how to shape the environment and living spaces better. **The report will be presented at the Alpine Conference** at the end of October in Brig-Glis. There will be scenarios of the future, where municipalities and cities find themselves and what they can implement.

- **Alpine towns have a key role**, regardless of their number of inhabitants
- **Alpine towns connect different spaces: nature conservation areas, agglomeration... they are a connector that can balance climate and imbalances.**
- **Alpine towns have a good standing in Europe, this potential must be expanded.**
- **Towns can develop further potential through networking with other towns**, over borders with transnational projects etc.

The RSA will be discussed by the ministers. **There will be a public event on November 9th presenting the outcomes in Bern/CH.**

→ **The invitation to the public event on 9th November will be sent to the member towns. (Secretariat).**

The invitation and agenda to the General Assembly have been sent 6 weeks prior to today's Assembly. No requests for further agenda items were received.

The General Assembly has no objections and no further motions. The agenda is adopted unanimously.



2) Approval of the minutes of the 1st General Assembly held on March 18th 2022 in Belluno

10 out of 19 Alpine Towns are present, the **quorum is reached**. Each member town has one vote. Votes are to be made with the town cards, that have been distributed. Member towns taking part online, vote via chat.

Do you agree with the meeting minutes of the 1st General Assembly held on March 18th 2022 in Belluno, that you found on the google drive as preparatory material?

→ 10 out of 10 present (physical and virtual) Alpine Towns agree. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

Resolution: The General Assembly unanimously agrees with the content of the minutes of the 1st General Assembly 2022 in Belluno.

3) Provisional Budget

Details can be found in the documents on Google Drive.

Income: € 100'000.-

- € 95'000 Member fees
- € 5000.- Project funding

Expenses:

Projects: € 8750.-

- Atelier Urbain - Climate Action in Alpine Towns: € 2750.-
- Youth activities: € 1000.-
- Different projects: € 5000.-

Other expenses differing from the budget 2021

- Translation General Assembly: € 20'000.- (instead of 18'000.- in 2022)
- Travel costs of board members: €1000.- (new in 2022)

Yearly balance of provisional budget: 0,00 Euro

Does the General Assembly agree to the presented provisional budget?

→ 10 of 10 Alpine Towns present agree, without votes against or abstentions.

Resolution: The General Assembly approves the provisional budget 2022 unanimously.

4) Election of new board members

Ingrid Fischer asks, if there are candidates to become a member. **Raphaël Castéra stands for election as assessor.**

This **election** needs a formal procedure. Manfred Maier/Sonthofen, who helps in all legal matters, explains that the votes can but do not have to be secret, it is possible to vote by raising the voting ballots. **The General Assembly agrees to vote openly.**

→ 9 of 10 Alpine Towns present agree to vote Raphaël Castéra into the board, there are no votes against and one abstention (Passy).

Raphaël Castéra accepts the election.

Resolution: Raphaël Castéra, mayor of Passy, joins the board as assessor.



5) Report on the activities of the board and the secretariat between 18th March and today

Ingrid Fischer hands over to Magdalena Holzer.

Projects

The association carried out three projects in 2022:

- **Climate Action in Alpine Towns:** eight different member towns worked together and implement(ed) measures to adapt to climate change. There is a Webinar on November 7th, where the activities will be presented. It seeks to give inspiration to other towns and to give insights into practices and challenges.
- **Alps2030:** the final event took place in Belluno in March, it was an interesting event that included many young people. We should keep this involvement of the young generation up in the future and include their ideas more in the association's work; Biella and Barbara Greggio are a good example, with six students from Biella with her today.
- **AlpWeek:** under the title „Alps in transition“ different observer organisations to the Alpine Convention co-organised this international event from 5th-7th of September in Brig-Glis. We hosted a workshop about water integration into city centres and an excursion together with our member town Brig-Glis.

Christian Jentsch from Brig-Glis adds: “It was an exciting exchange at the AlpWeek. Important was also the discussion on energy production in open spaces, which was open to the public. In Switzerland there are many profit oriented ideas to put photovoltaic into open spaces. It is important to plan these things together with the inhabitants. Resources have to be used sensibly and we have to think about the future. So exchange is important, and to build a roadmap with milestones, not just quick actions.”

Next year, the Secretariat tries to focus on the topic **air quality**, working together especially with French member towns, and with other member towns interested.

→ **Please address to the Secretariat, if you are interested in joining this project currently in development.**

Slovenia takes over the next presidency of the Alpine Convention, the thematic focus is **quality of life**, which is also a topic that could be taken up by our association.

Communication activities

In 2022, communication has been a focus, explains Caroline Begle from the secretariat. The following activities are underway:

- Print of a new **flyer** with the most important information and **10 reasons to apply for the title** “Alpine town of the year” for potential new. Printed flyers are at the disposal of member towns.
- **Social Media:** regular posts about our activities, **news** and also about our **25th anniversary** this year on Instagram and Facebook. 2021 we had 5 postings and 11 stories on Instagram, in 2022 over 30 posts and more than 70 stories so far. This is why we could increase the reach to 100%.

→ **Please mention us on your profiles and we can share your posts and vice-versa.**

- A central tool for the communication is the **website**: regular updates, this year around 10 news articles. Higher numbers of visitors on the website: In 2020 on the old website, we had overall 17'000 page views, in 2021 on the new website to 31'000, and in 2022 until end of September, we count 37'000 pageviews.
- **The Annual Report 2021** was prepared.

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- Sonthofen had the opportunity to present the association and the towns activities in an **exhibition**. The secretariat made the design for two banners. This service is of course available for every member:
→ **If you need support with your communication, designs etc. regarding your activities as an Alpine Town of the Year, feel free to contact the secretariat.**
- **Media work:** three press releases were prepared (after our Alps2030 project and general assembly in Belluno, about Passy as the new Alpine Town of the Year and one joint press release about the AlpWeek in Brig-Glis.) The AlpWeek was very well perceived in the Valais region, and the event in Belluno produced also many reports, interviews etc. in the region. So far we found about 35 press reports in newspapers, online magazines and radio. There will also be a press release and a news about these three days in Passy, members are invited to share it.

Political activities

- Board member Yuki d'Emilia, former director Claire Simon and Magdalena Holzer supported the work on the ninth Report on the State of the Alps 9 on "Alpine Towns". The results will be presented in November in Bern.
- Ingrid Fischer will be present at the Alpine Conference end of October in Brig-Glis.
- We are invited to present the results from the Climate Action in Alpine Towns project at the Eusalp Forum in Trento in November 2022.

Administrative tasks/events

It was a turbulent time – due to **elections** in Italy and Slovenia the number of board members shrunk from 6 to 3 members. **Sondrio** applied to be re-enter the association as a member, and as the Olympic Games 2026 will be held in the region, there were some concerns regarding new infrastructure works. Barbara Greggio and Magdalena Holzer visited Sondrio and delivered a summary report to the jury and the board. (Cfr. meeting minutes of the first General Assembly 2022 in March in Belluno).

Comments:

- Barbara Greggio states, that the **visit in Sondrio** was very interesting. The town is close to Lecco and Morbegno and they are very concerned about the environment, especially regarding the **Olympic Winter Games**. There has to be a compromise solution for the valleys, especially regarding the mobility / traffic concept, which the public transport has to benefit from. There were many exchanges with Sondrio and the province and the environmental impact assessments have been carried out properly.
- Gerhard Leeb mentions: "I was involved in 1992 with the IOC and know therefor, that small towns and regions do not have a strong power usually. If Sondrio or the region cannot get through with their demands, maybe the **support from the Alpine town of the Year association** and other Alpine towns might help."
- Ingrid Fischer adds, that the former co-president **Uroš Brežan** was with us in Belluno, and after the election in Slovenia he became **environmental minister**. Ingrid congratulates Uroš and the **Alpine Conference** in Brig gives the opportunity to meet again.
- **Maša Klavora, the new mayor in Tolmin**, joins the assembly via Zoom: "It was not easy for us to replace Uroš and step into his shoes. I have been active in the town for 14 years. In 1 month there will be elections and I decided to run for mayor. There are two other candidates and I do not know what the results will be, but we will continue our cooperation and work together with the association of Alpine towns and for a sustainable development. I thank you for all your efforts and achievements and we are happy to be part of this family."



6) Sondrio, Alpine Town of the Year re-entering the association

Ingrid hands over to **Marcella Fratta from Sondrio**, who joins virtually and states that Sondrio believes in this association and is very happy to be **part of this family again**.

- Sondrio is surrounded by mountains and as the **capital of the province**, putting a **focus on environmental issues** together with surrounding municipalities. Sondrio supports and promotes measures in this topic.
- Sondrio started with **bike-sharing**, built canopy for bicycles and promoted cycle routes for inhabitants and tourists. At the train station, there is an eBus for students and inhabitants, and Sondrio hopes to expand **eMobility** in the future.
- **Citizens support the measures**, also regarding the maintenance of the **green spaces**.
- Terraced vineyards are **Unesco** heritage sites. **Products from the region are enhanced**.
- There are numerous historic sites, castles and cultural locations visited by **tourists**. Cycle paths and footpaths were build.
- Sondrio is also preparing for the **Olympic Games in 2026**. We are not directly involved, but the mayor of Sondrio attends the meetings that are related to mobility.
- There is an **international film festival** for documentaries each year at the end of October, since 36 years, involving also young people. The aim is **awareness—raising amongst students** and to focus on **education**.

Norbert Weixlbaumer adds, that with Morbegno the association has a strong pillar in the valley and now with Sondrio we have another supporter. **Sondrio is very motivated** and will be involved in the activities of the association. Member towns are motivated to do something in the sense of the Alpine Convention and to set good examples and point out deficits. It is about motivation and implementation of the Alpine Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals, e.g. education for sustainable development. He thanks Sondrio for taking heart again and becoming a valuable member of the network!

7) Presentation Passy

Michèle Rabbiosi welcomes Passy as the newest member to the association. It is a big family; everybody contributes something and shows good practices. Congratulations to Raphaël Castéra, he will give a short insight in the developments in his town and how Passy focusses on sustainability.

Hand over to Raphaël Castéra, mayor of Passy: He thanks Michèle Rabbiosi and he hopes to fulfil the trust.

- Since more than one and a half years Passy was participating in members assemblies of the association, had many talks with Uroš Brežan about similar challenges in Slovenia.
- Passy has a lot of history. Passy does not have a historic centre like Belluno or Biella, there are 6 hearts beating in this town and its about 82000 square meters wide. There is a lake, many possibilities to be active in your free time, etc.
- The town wants to invest 1 Mio Euros into renewing and renovating buildings. They already renovated 4 school buildings. Energy efficiency will be a big focus for climate protection.
- Another focus topic is air quality, fine particles should be reduced even more. Important steps were undertaken and great successes could be reached, with the air attitude platform and subventions to change the heating system in private households.
- Tourism is another important topic, climate change and transport.

Cfr. video presentations, available on <https://www.alpinetowns.org/passy-celebrates/>

Questions:

Norbert Weixlbaumer asks, how they could **lower emissions** so far?



Raphaël Castéra explains, that they reduced emission by 32% by **changing old heating with wood systems**. In total they want to replace 1600 old heating systems with new ones. They also want to promote **sustainable mobility**, eMobility. They do not want to implement sanctions like vignettes for old cars or SUVs, but contribute to the purchase of low emission cars like electric cars.

Laura Begher from Trento adds, that in **Trento** they are trying to **offer public transport and carsharing on request to reach more remote areas** on hills etc.

Raphaël Castéra admits the need to catch up in this regard. There is a service to get transport via request, mainly used by students at the moment, its available via smartphone. But it is not enough. Implementing a carsharing service on the Plateau d'Assy would be interesting, because public buses do not stop frequently. Another measure from Passy is, that people who come to the Ski area by bus get a discount on the skiing ticket.

8) The added value of the membership in an international alpine Network for sustainable urban and regional development by example of the Alpine Town of the year association

Master thesis written by Valentin Brunner, supervision by Norbert Weixlbaumer, University of Vienna. Hand over to Valentin Brunner, who joins the assembly online.

He formulated the following **recommendations** in his thesis:

- **Communication: personal exchange** is important! There is also a need for **non-direct communication** (website, archive), constant reproduction, regional sub-meetings.
- **Innovation**: the association is open to the outside world, links with other associations exist; new members are regularly elected, this ensures that there are new inputs and a breath of fresh air; **diversity** of members is important, geographically the association is still relatively strongly clustered, more would be possible;
- **Internal organisation**: "smallness" of the network is a strength; **language and administrative barriers are bridged**; dependency of individual actors is a **weakness** (it depends on individuals in cities, when there are elections and changes, it is problematic internally).
- **External visibility**: is currently still low, needs to be improved e.g. by **promoting the brand**, title and logo more in the towns, social media and flyers, etc.; even small measures have a big impact!
- **Thematic focus: five goals** and commitment to the Alpine Convention is central; 5 goals do not reflect the characteristic role of the association though, in addition to the goals, a **mission statement could be developed**; there would be the possibility to use this more for tourism; the concept of sustainability is very broad, perhaps focus temporarily? How is sustainability defined? The term is weak and not very meaningful; it could be sharpened!
- **Projects**: clear structure and output are necessary so that they can be taken up by the towns; **platform** (website or similar) **for the exchange** of cities with similar interests could be implemented; archive of past projects and know-how could be made even clearer and arranged thematically so that other cities can benefit from it / archive of which cities contribute know-how and expertise in which sub-areas, e.g. identify Sonthofen as a cycling expert.

Alpine Town of the Year association plays **a small but important role within the transnational networks in the Alps**.

Cfr. slides on the Drive, link on the first page.



Comments:

- Ingrid Fischer thanks Valentin Brunner for his work, his view from outside and the constructive recommendations.
- Norbert Weixlbaumer comments, that the thesis is a good example, how communication can work. The idea started here in Passy, Valentin invested a lot of time and effort and it shows, that the cooperation within the association functions.
- Raphaël Castéra also thanks Valentin and adds, that a platform for exchange could be helpful for small towns, to learn from good examples.
- Magdalena closes this agenda item and adds, that
→ **the Secretariat will elaborate a proposal how to work with these recommendations from Valentin Brunner.**

9) Any other business (AOB)

- **Next General Assemblies**
- **Next spring in Sondrio there will be a festive event to welcome the town back into the association.**
- **Oscar Del Barba adds, that Morbegno organises on March 8 an event on women in the Alps withing the Reading Mountains Festival.**
- Ingrid Fischer informs, that the Youth parliament to the Alpine Convention is held during in March 2023 in Sonthofen.
 - **Mutual invitations:** Alpine Towns are asked to reflect on possible moments, where to include other Alpine Towns to events with market stands, lectures, sport teams, etc.
- **Barbara Greggio informs, that Biella is organising an international forum Unesco on the topic of water.**
- **Sonthofen organises a “creative summer”, where other Alpine towns can take part.**
- **Chamonix will celebtrae 100 years of winter Olympics next year with big festivities around the history of sports. It starts in the beginning of the year 2023 with the Worldcup. On June 23rd the Olympic week starts and they want to look back and into the future to shine a light on climate change and the need for adaption to it. In autumn, there will be an exhibition that shows the French vision for Olympic Games, where all members are invited too: what vision do they have for the Olympics?**
- **Board members: candidacies are open for the next election in autumn 2023**
- **Withdrawal Herisau**

Herisau decided to leave the association as of 2023. They no longer see any added value in their membership, but the title remains with them.

- **Reading Mountains: Initiatives from different towns and invitation**

On 11 December the festival is organised by the **Alpine Convention**, the focus is on women. The Secretariat will send the invitation to the member towns.

Gerhard Leeb thanks the assembly for the 25 years. 26 years ago he had the idea and was able to realise it with Villach. He did not think that it would become such a family and he hopes the work continues.

Ingrid Fischer thanks the assembly, the secretariat for the preparations and the team from Passy for the friendly welcome and the programme. **In the afternoon, selected member towns will present activities to put the Alpine Convention in the practice. Cfr. link to presentations at the first page.**