



Meeting minutes of the 2nd General Assembly 2023

Friday, 13th October 2023, Sonthofen



Member towns

On site

- 1) Belluno: Paolo Luciani, Emanuele Prest (young person).
- 2) Biella: Barbara Greggio, Alessio Ercoli; Benedetta Busa, Matilde Lacchia, Carolina Catania (young persons).
- 3) Bressanone-Brixen: Peter Natter.
- 4) Brig-Glis: Christian Jentsch.
- 5) Chamonix-Mont-Blanc: Michèle Rabbiosi, Etienne Grillot.
- 6) Sondrio: Silvia Bertini, Marcella Fratta; Maria Giordano (young person).
- 7) Sonthofen: Ingrid Fischer, Sonja Karnath, Manfred Maier, and five young persons.
- 8) Villach: Christine Redlein.
- 9) Cuneo: Marta Minore, Spedale Alessandro and three young people (Status of guests before agenda item 6).

Online

- 10) Tolmin: Špela Kranjc.
- 11) Bad Reichenhall: Josef Dennerl.

Jury members

Norbert Weixlbaumer.
Gerhard Leeb.

Guests

- Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention: Wolfger Mayrhofer, Laura Wittkopp
- Workshop with young people: Maja Kogovsek, CIPRA International.

Secretariat

Caroline Begle.
Magdalena Holzer.

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1) Welcome, approval of the agenda, possible changes or additions to the agenda and verification of the quorum.

Welcome by Christian Wilhelm, mayor of Sonthofen

Warm welcome in Sonthofen, it is great to see so many young people amongst us – topic water is a future topic. Sonthofen is a member since 2005. Tourism is one of the main income sources for Sonthofen: 80.000 tourists, 370.000 overnight stays, length of stay: 4.5 days. The newly built AlpenStadtMuseum is one of the main attraction points in the town, its co-funded by the European Union and wants to tell the history of Sonthofen to inhabitants and tourists. Sustainability: we have achieved a lot and received awards. Protection of our region, protection of the Alps. Urban space in the Alps, we also want to serve as a role model. Alpine Town of the Year, Fair Trade town, bicycle-friendly town/cycling town, eco-mobility centre, car sharing, etc. Thank you for coming, for standing up for the Alps! Thanks also to Ingrid Fischer, our 2nd mayor, very committed, not only in the association but also in the city council. Thank you for your foresight and commitment!

Michael Borth starts the city tour with the young people.

Welcome words by Wolfger Mayrhofer, vice secretary general of the Alpine Convention

Thanks for the collaboration and active participation in meetings for the elaboration of the 10th Report on the State of the Alps on life quality and Permanent Committees. Towns in the Alps are crucial, the number of inhabitants needs to be multiplied per 10 to have an idea about their importance for their surroundings. The power of Alpine Towns is multifold, sustainable development is one of the most important. Water is one of the aspects, which will occupy us very much in the future. The Alps deliver water for many regions and countries around the Alps. Looking forward to the meetings.

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8 regular member towns are present on site, 2 join online. The quorum is reached. Each member town has one vote. Votes are to be made with the town cards, that have been distributed to you. Online participants vote via chat function. **The invitation and agenda have been sent 6 weeks prior to today's Assembly.** No requests for further agenda items were received. Under Agenda Point "Any other business" the following points shall be treated:

- Next General Assemblies 2024

There are no further wishes for agenda items to be discussed under Any Other Business. **The agenda is adopted.**

2) Approval of the meeting minutes of the 1st General Assembly 2023 and nomination of a ballot counter

Caroline Begle supports as ballot counter.

Do you agree with the meeting minutes of the 1st General Assembly held in March 2023 in Sondrio, that were sent to you via e-mail?

YES/NO

10 of 10 Alpine Towns present agree

0 of 10 Alpine Towns present do not agree

0 of 10 Alpine Towns present abstain from voting.

The General Assembly agrees with the content of the meeting minutes of the 1st General Assembly 2023. There are no abstentions and no votes against.

3) Report from the board

Michèle Rabbiosi:

- **Live Meeting in Sondrio**, preparations of the General Assembly, all board members
- **Online Meeting in August** (content next elections, preparations General Assembly Sonthofen), all board members

Ingrid Fischer:

- **Speech at the Ber(I)iner Salon in Bern.** Content: How to put into practice the association at a local level.
- **Speech in Innsbruck** by Ingrid at Journalismusfest
- **Clarifications regarding the chairs** of the association (cfr. meeting minutes of the 1st General Assembly 2023)
- **Live meeting in Schaan:** Ingrid, Manfred, Magdalena. The General Assembly was discussed and preparations made, as well as details on the chairs of the association.
- **Regular exchanges Ingrid and Magdalena**, once in a month on current activities.

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Barbara Greggio:

- **Visit to Cuneo** in September (Ingrid, Barbara, Magdalena): Barbara: Cuneo is an Alpine Town of the Year par excellence, the work for the interconnection with the surroundings can serve as example for many others. She warmly thanks for the hospitality in Cuneo.

4) Report from the secretariat

Magdalena Holzer:

- Live meetings for the **elaboration of the 10th Report on the State of the Alps on the topic of Life Quality** in Radovljica and Bolzano.
- Live **Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention** in Radovljica.
- **Project Stone:Rich** on dry stone walls and stone cairns to foster habitats for specialised fauna and flora, whilst raising awareness for the need amongst professionals and young people. **Belluno and Sonthofen (NeZ) are pilot regions**
- **Biella is pilot region in project Ground:Breaking**, targeting unsealing surfaces to increase the quality of stay in public places and to reduce overheating, combined with communication measures for administration and population.
- Information around **chairs of the association and newly status of non-profit**. In principle, we have always acted in a non-profit sense, but German tax law imposes restrictions that could lead to fundamental changes: for example the purpose of the association may not be to award a title, amongst others. We therefore have to refocus. This requires time and effort. We will keep the chairs in Germany because our budget is not sufficient to move to another country. We are in exchange with Manfred Maier, a law firm and the tax consultant in Sonthofen.
- **Involvement of young people and topic focus on water**, after the thematic focus on Life quality at the General Assembly in Sondrio. The association's budget includes small contribution for the participation of young people, this also makes it easier for cities to bring young people along.
- **Communication**: Regular updates, website, social media, livestream of the workshop on water management.
- **Map layer of the Alpine Convention of the awarded Alpine Towns**:
[https://www.atlas.alpconv.org/maps/new?layer=geonode:AlpineTownOfTheYear&view=True&layer=geonode:Alpine Convention Perimeter 2018 v2](https://www.atlas.alpconv.org/maps/new?layer=geonode:AlpineTownOfTheYear&view=True&layer=geonode:Alpine%20Convention%20Perimeter%202018%20v2)

Wolfger Mayrhofer: The Atlas is an exciting tool, which can be accessed via the website of the Alpine Convention. There are maps on all kinds of topics, not only for the localisation of the Alpine towns. Data from the Reports on the State of the Alps goes into it and also from the other projects or contracting parties. Demographic maps, tourism, transport, water, etc. Data is collected and presented cartographically. With the help of the existing data, one can also create one's own maps. Scientific findings can be used for policy making.

→ **Members are invited to have a look on these maps:** www.atlas.alpconv.org/maps

- Visit of Cuneo, see above.
- Regular preparation, carrying out and wrap-up activities for board meetings and general assemblies

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5) Budget 2024

Magdalena Holzer:

Income: 92.000 Euro and 5000 Euro for projects tbc.

The Secretariat will hand in a project on sustainable water management in Alpine Towns, asking for funding and will get back to the member towns with further information and possibilities to act as pilot regions, if the project gets funded.

Expenses

slightly higher for the second General Assembly, which will be carried out in the framework of the AlpWeek in Nova Gorica.

This is why expenses for hosting, and media work, print material, travel expenses for board were slightly reduced.

Balance: -1.200 Euro

Since we are a non-profit organisation, which is fine. The association also have reserves. We foresee to close 2023 with a little surplus, which can be taken over to 2024.

Ingrid Fischer:

Thanks Magdalena for the accurate cash management and thanks also to the towns that pay the contribution regularly.

6) Candidacy of Cuneo as Alpine Town of the Year 2024

Norbert Weixlbaumer:

For the title "Alpine Town of the Year", the jury proposes the town of CUNEO for 2024. In the Alpine town of Cuneo, numerous plans and projects focus on sustainable development, increased awareness of future-oriented issues and close networking between the town and its Alpine valleys. With reference to Cuneo's candidacy for the title, profound local knowledge and specialist literature, the jury looked at the existing characteristics of the urban-rural region as well as the town itself. Although located at the edge of the official perimeter of the Alpine Convention, the town of Cuneo is an Alpine town par excellence. This fact has been stated and argued several times by the city itself and in the literature (see e.g. Werner Bätzing and Luigi Dematteis). Due to its geographical location and its cultural wealth, Cuneo as a city represents a supra-regionally important pole of supply and development for surrounding Alpine valleys or Alpine mountain communities in the southwestern Italian Alpine arc - and beyond. On the one hand, it is a city with an exciting geomorphological and cultural past in connection with the Alpine rivers Gesso and Stura, whose riverbeds frame Cuneo today as a Regional Nature Park managed by the city. On the other hand, a town is currently taking numerous initiatives in the technical context of the Alpine Convention Protocols.

The award of the title "Alpine Town of the Year" is intended not only as an acknowledgement of existing initiatives, but also as a motivation to want to shape the future in a sustainable way. Various developments and future-related initiatives testify to Cuneo's inclusion as another worthy representative in the Alpine Convention "Alpine Town of the Year" initiative.

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The representatives of Cuneo leave the room during the voting.

The General Assembly agrees with the proposal of the jury to award Cuneo with the title Alpine Town of the Year. There are 10 votes for Cuneo, Alpine Town of the Year 2023. There are no abstentions and no votes against.

Ingrid Fischer congratulates Cuneo on behalf of the Board and looks forward to working together!

Alessandro Spedale:

Warmly thanks the General Assembly and gives an insight into the activities of Cuneo and some background information. Cfr. Slides on Drive.

Cuneo

- Is embraced by the mountains between the Ligurian sea and the Cottian Alps
- And situated between the river Gesso and Stura stream.

The fluvial park is a protected area of 70km along the rivers and 55km², directly managed by the town of Cuneo.

The Local Agenda 2030 Strategic Plan gives the direction for sustainability and includes key topics such as social inclusion, energy and recycling, sustainable mobility, protection of biodiversity.

Cuneo

- is a plastic-free town
- foresees to sign the European Charta for Sustainable Tourism in the coming year
- sets a focus on bike mobility, for both, touristic scopes and bike to work.
- Realised the swam-city concept in the Ferruccio PARRI' URBAN PARK
- Carries out several projects – transborder and non – on the topic of climate change mitigation and adaption, connected to innovation, sustainable tourism, water management and sustainable mobility.

Each year the Cuneo Mountain Festival is carried out. 2024, in this framework, the first General Assembly of the association shall be held.

Ingrid Fischer: Thanks the representatives of Cuneo for this insight and the members are looking forward to get to know Cuneo in person.

7) Election of the auditors

From this agenda item onwards the member towns with the right to vote are 11, including Cuneo.

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Ingrid Fischer: So far Christine Redlein and one Amina Bargach from Chamonix-Mont-Blanc have done audits. Amina Bargach is no longer employed by the municipality. **The auditors Christine Redlein, Villach and Silvio Tosi, Biella stand for election.**

Barbara Greggio: **Silvio Tosi** is a tax advisor, he has taught at different educational institutions, is responsible for commercial law, is a professional and deals with both private and public accounting. He cooperates with the municipality. He is happy to candidate as auditor.

Christine Redlein: She works for the City of Villach in the economic department, actually for economic development and company settlements and for companies in the city in investment negotiations. She has been doing the audits of our association for last few years and is willing to do this again.

Are there further candidates? No.

The candidate Christine Redlein leaves the room during the election, Silvio Tosi is not present.

The General Assembly votes unanimously for Christine Redlein and Silvio Tosi as auditors of the Alpine Town of the Year association. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

The candidates accept their election.

8) Election of the jury of the association

The following persons stand for election:

Norbert Weixlbaumer
Cristina del Biaggio
Gerhard Leeb

There are no further candidates.

Norbert Weixlbaumer: My workplace is the University of Vienna, at the Institute of Geography and Spatial Research, where I work a lot on regional development, with a focus on natural area planning, acceptance of protected areas by the population, management of protected areas, geography of food. This is where my interests meet with development in Alpine towns, food production and management. I am happy to do the work here. It's a good match, I can talk about current events in the lecture hall and also contribute something here that is important for cities.

Gerhard Leeb: I am a member of the jury and will stand for election again until my last breath. I am an artist, journalist, photographer. The whole story is based on my idea, it was organised in Villach for the first time. Villach was chosen, not elected. I'm glad what has become of the child. It's my second most important child.

Magdalena Holzer: **Cristina del Biaggio** is a professor and researcher at the Institute of Urban Planning and Alpine Geography (IUGA) of Grenoble Alpes University and in the laboratory Pacte. Cristina is co-responsible for the U&A Master's degree in Transformative Urban Studies. Topics that are close to her heart are participation, asylum law and migration topics, e.g. new highlanders.

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The General Assembly votes unanimously for Norbert Weixlbaumer, Gerhard Leeb and Cristina del Biaggio as jury members of the Alpine Town of the Year association. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

The candidates accept their election.

9) Election of the president of the jury of the association

The jury votes for Norbert Weixlbaumer as jury president of the Alpine Town of the Year association. The candidate accepts his election. Ingrid Fischer bedankt sich bei den Jurymitgliedern.

10) Election of the board members of the association

The following persons stand for election:

**Barbara Greggio
Michèle Rabbiosi
Ingrid Fischer
Raphaël Castéra**

Further candidates? Yes, **Paolo Luciani and Marcella Fratta** offer to be part of the board.

Ingrid Fischer has been president for 4 years and she enjoys it. She has noticed that working in a cross-border association offers the possibility to get to know other people and views, to take a lot with her. It offers the possibility to get in touch with the big alpine family - with other associations (Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, Cipra, etc.), therefore she likes to continue working in the board.

Barbara Greggio: Business consultant and active in marketing. In the city of Biella, she is a councillor responsible for tourism, where she is also responsible for mountains for the first time. She is happy to expand and develop the network, both on a political and technical level. The membership in the association gave the possibility to gain insights in the protocols of the Alpine Convention, new methods, new experiences. She is happy to join the board again.

Michèle Rabbiosi: **Raphaël Castéra** is mayor of Passy. He excuses himself for today, but he ensures his support and commitment to all actions. He believes that our discussion and exchange will certainly lead to good results.

Michèle Rabbiosi: Is vice-mayor of Chamonix-Mont-Blanc. She deals with external and internal relationships and partnerships to other towns, and also with many environmental issues. She is part of the association since 2015. I find the good practices of all member towns very important, because the problems in the environmental field are common problems and it is important to exchange on solutions.

Marcella Fratta: I think the strength of our association is to join forces. Alpine towns must have a strong voice and that is only possible with a common voice. In the association, where I was well received, the exchange is also very lively, the board and the secretariat are very active. For me it was important that Sondrio also takes part, it is an important aspect to continue working here so

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that the Alpine towns have and live a strong identity, otherwise the Alpine area would lose its own identity and history. It is the people who contribute to keeping a territory alive. In the province we see a strong exodus, I hope that in the association we will find ideas to counteract this. I am responsible for culture and education in Sondrio, I try to support this discourse in schools. Many professions will hardly have a future in our territory; we have to do a lot to prevent young people from migrating.

Paolo Luciani: As a city councillor, I am responsible for tourism, but I also deal with issues related to the association. I also gained experience at the Protected Area Dolomiti Bellunesi. Being on the board is an opportunity to use synergies between organisations and municipalities, connecting each other besides transversal issues. I participated for the first time 1 year ago and I am motivated to join the board.

All candidates leave the room. The number of towns with voting rights is now reduced by two, from 11 to 9 member towns.

The General Assembly votes unanimously for Ingrid Fischer, Barbara Greggio, Michèle Rabbiosi, Raphael Castéra, Marcella Fratta and Paolo Luciani as board members of the Alpine Town of the Year association. There are no votes against and no abstentions. All candidates accept their election.

11) Election of the presidents of the association

The following person stands for election of the president of the association:

Ingrid Fischer, but only for 1 year (not because she does not like doing it, but the round has become younger and this should also be reflected in the presidency).

The following persons stands for election as co-vice-presidents of the association:

Michèle Rabbiosi
Barbara Greggio

There are no further candidates. Ingrid Fischer, Michèle Rabbiosi and Barbara Greggio leave the room.

The General Assembly votes unanimously for Ingrid Fischer as president of the Alpine Town of the Year association. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

The General Assembly votes unanimously for Barbara Greggio and Michèle Rabbiosi as co-vice-presidents of the Alpine Town of the Year association. There are no votes against and no abstentions.

The three candidates accept their election. The other members of the board are assessors.

12) Update on activities of member towns

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Question to all: With which activities do they support membership? How do they promote the Alpine Convention?

Barbara Greggio: Next week's international Forum on the Agenda 2030: discussion on the Green Deal and green public procurement in the field of water resources; exchange with young people, farmers; Nathalie Morelle (Alpine Convention) will be a guest, Reinhold Messner, Italian Minister of Environment and others.

Etienne Grillot: Alpinism is now part of Unesco's cultural world heritage, so we want to protect alpinism. We have already been able to get 5 regions on board, Switzerland and Italy have also worked on the application. We would like to work more closely with mountain guides and alpine clubs (in Germany, for example, there are 1 million members).

Michèle Rabbiosi: 60% of the apartments in Chamonix are second homes; local people can't afford the rest. The city has now decided to increase taxes by 50% on second homes. Goal: use part of the second homes for the local population. Estimated 3 million euros per year in revenue to be invested in new housing.

Norbert Weixlbaumer: Question to Chamonix: will the money be reinvested in new buildings that seal the ground and use up space?

Reply Chamonix: It will be tried to act as sustainable as possible! Eric Fournier is responsible for this topic.

Peter Natter: In South Tyrol there is also the problem with second homes, from 10% no further second homes may be built for non-South Tyroleans and non permanent residents. Is that not regulated in France?

Michèle Rabbiosi: Yes, it is already regulated. With regard to land consumption, there is also a limit; there are also possibilities to buy and renovate apartments. Sealing of land is also a problem in Chamonix; 50% of the building projects already planned are to be reduced.

Wolfger Mayrhofer: With regard to securing building development and reducing land consumption, there are a number of recommendations in the Alpine Convention, e.g. in the Soil Protection Protocol. It is about keeping areas free, but there should also be an appropriate demarcation of settlement areas. What is designated as a building area should be built on, but should not sprawl. In Austria there are vacancy and second-home taxes, but I don't know whether their steering effect is so effective that we achieve our goals.

Gerhard Leeb: Bolzano, Trento and Bressanone are as affected by heavy traffic as Chamonix, so there could be an online meeting, as well on this topic.

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Christian Jentsch: In the area of traffic, we are talking about the Simplon in Brig-Glis, with a lot of traffic; with the Alpine Convention, we have a clear handhold, but it is being overridden because the economic interests are greater.

Regarding vacancies and second homes: In Valais, a maximum of 20% of all apartments may be second homes. But there are micro-communities with 80% second homes that were already there before the law. Expropriating people is not an option. The problem is that we are acting with a patchwork and symbolic policy. The problem is being pushed out with exceptions, etc.

We have to be careful not to engage in symbolic politics when it comes to living space.

The problem with second homes is not the homes themselves, but the problem of space. Tourism as an economic pillar, if one demands taxes from rich tourism again, is not so good and does not create space. Important issue that should be thought of holistically and not shifted with pressure. Spatial planning is an urgent issue along with water and mobility!

Ingrid Fischer: we would like to do a video conference on the topic, because it can be exciting to hear from different countries on the topic.

→ **Proposal of an online meeting on the topic of second houses. The board agrees and will evaluate the possibility to carry it out together with the Secretariat.**

13) Any other business

a. 1st General Assembly 2024, Cuneo, Alpine Town of the Year 2024, 16th to 18th May 2024.

Cuneo cordially invites you to attend. The events will take place within the framework of the Cuneo Mountain Festival.

b. 2nd General Assembly 2024, Nova Gorica, Slovenia, in the framework of the AlpWeek, in week 23 to 27 September 2024. The organisation team, amongst which the Alpine Town of the Year association, tries to foresee remote work possibilities during this week.

MH, CB, 13.10.2023

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