

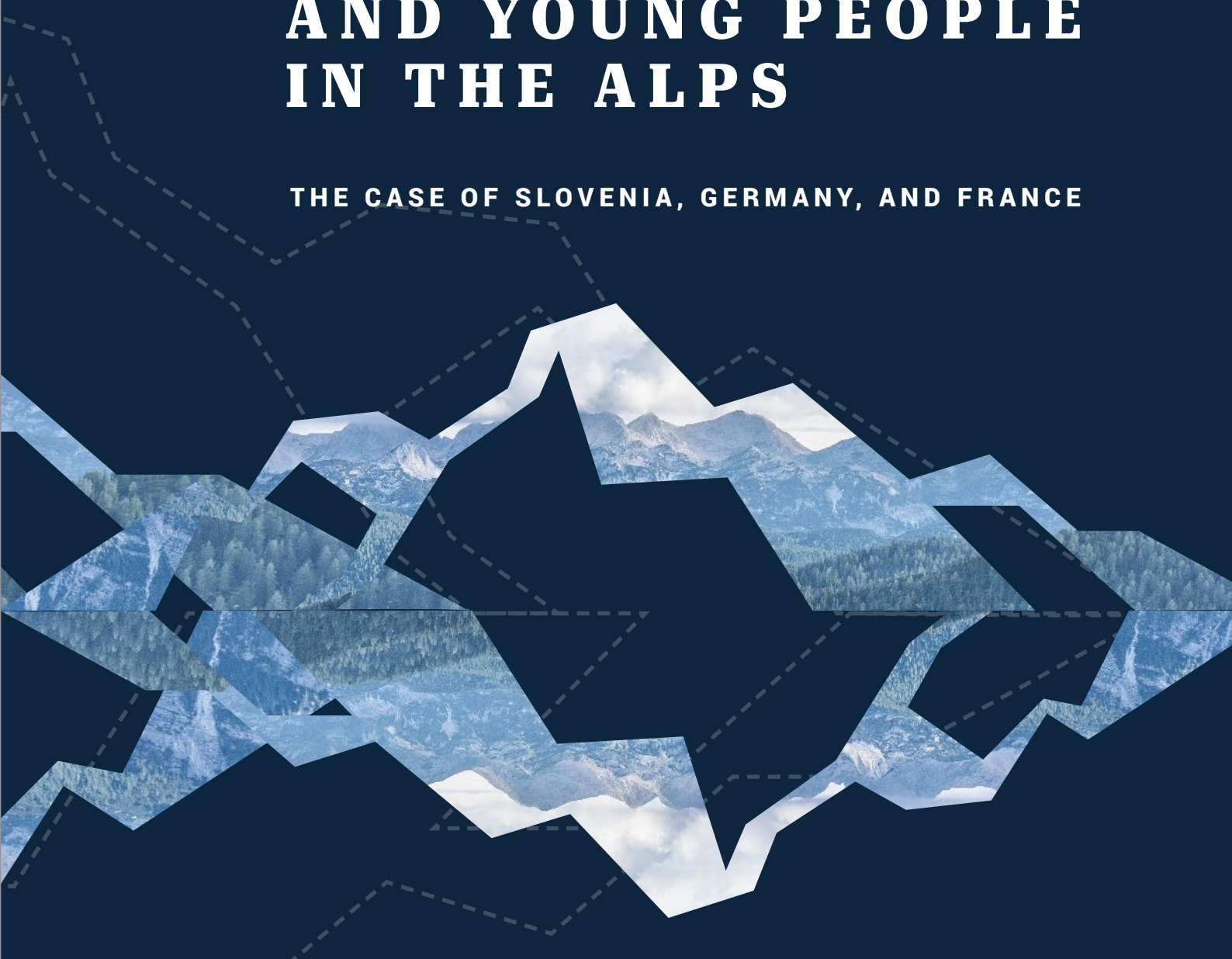


Co-funded by
the European Union

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

DOSSIER QUALITY OF LIFE AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ALPS

THE CASE OF SLOVENIA, GERMANY, AND FRANCE



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND SPATIAL PLANNING



CIPRA
ŽIVETI
V ALPAH



CIPRA
LEBEN IN
DEN ALPEN



CIPRA
VIVRE DANS
LES ALPES



CIPRA
LIVING IN
THE ALPS



Co-funded by
the European Union

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

DOSSIER QUALITY OF LIFE AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ALPS

THE CASE OF SLOVENIA, GERMANY, AND FRANCE



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND SPATIAL PLANNING



CIPRA
ŽIVETI
V ALPAH



CIPRA
LEBEN IN
DEN ALPEN



CIPRA
VIVRE DANS
LES ALPES



CIPRA
LIVING IN
THE ALPS

Dossier: Quality of life and young people in the Alps,

THE CASE OF SLOVENIA, GERMANY AND FRANCE

Project title: Alpine Compass: Youth for Quality of life in the Alps

Lead partner: CIPRA Slovenija, Association for Protection of the Alps

Project Partners: CIPRA Deutschland

CIPRA France

Verein CIPRA International

Authors: Dijana Čataković, Katarina Žemlja, Katarina Žakelj, Špela Berlot Veselko, Rachela Škrinjar, CIPRA Slovenia; Henriette Adolf, Annalena Grünenwald, Kathrin Holstein, Uwe Roth, CIPRA Germany; Marion Ebster, Veronika Hribernik, Maja Kogovšek, CIPRA International; Julika Jarosch, Océane Bailly, CIPRA France

Authors of postulates: Adrian Bornschein, Fabia Lausberg, Julian Fürholzer, Lea Trdan, Matthias Lang, Matej Knez, Océane Bailly, Sarah Chavaudra

Author of the cover photo: Samo Kham

Authors of the other photos: Henriette Adolf, Natael Fautrat, Samo Kham

Graphic authors: Dijana Čataković, Katarina Žemlja

Proofreading: Roger Metcalfe

Design: Sonja Eržen, u.d.i.a.

Print: Demat, d.o.o.

Print run: 70 copies

Publisher: Ministry of the Natural Resources and Spatial Planning
of the Republic of Slovenia

Ljubljana, April 2024

The dossier was published as part of the Alpine Compass project: Youth for Quality of Life in the Alps. The Alpine Compass project is co-financed by the Erasmus+ program of the European Union.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the National agency MOVIT. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

The content of the dossier also does not reflect the position of the Slovenian Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning.

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

711(234.3)(082)
316.728-053.8-053.6(234.3)(082)

DOSSIER quality of life and young people in the Alps : the case of Slovenia, Germany, and France / [authors Dijana Čataković ... [et al.] ; other photos by Henriette Adolf, Natael Fautrat, Samo Kham]. - Ljubljana : Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning, 2024

ISBN 978-961-6392-80-8
COBISS.SI-ID 194587651

Table of content

Opening remarks	7
1. Alpine Compass: Youth for quality of life in the Alps	8
1.1. Objective and goals	8
1.2. Partner organizations.....	9
1.3. General information.....	9
1.4. Main activities.....	9
1.4.1. Webinar and Workshop for Project Partners	10
1.4.2. Research on Quality of Life	12
1.4.3. Webinar and Workshop for Young People	12
1.4.4. Implementation of Living Labs, Formulation and Presentation of Postulates	12
1.4.5. Dossier Publication	13
1.4.6. Presentation of Postulates and Dossier	13
2. Research of the literature	14
2.1. Summary	14
2.2 Comparison.....	15
3. Summary of the interviews.....	16
3.1. France	16
3.2. Germany	17
3.3. Slovenia	18
3.4. Liechtenstein.....	20
3.5. Comparison.....	20
3.6. Conclusion.....	21
4. Living Labs	22
4.1. Implementation process	22
4.2. Results	23
4.2.1. France	23
4.2.2. Germany	24
4.2.3. Slovenia	26
5. Postulates.....	28
5.1. Official postulates from young people living in the Alpine regions.....	28
6. Project conclusion	31
7. Sources and literature	32

Opening remarks

Free community spaces, quickly and cost-effectively accessible mental support, efficient public passenger transport, consideration of the needs of the local population over the needs of tourists, affordable housing, a life-work balance that allows enough free time for hobbies that make us happy, and effective political action to tackle the climate crises are indicators that have proven to be the most important in a set of many indicators that represent the quality of life for young people aged 16-30 living in the Alpine region.

When asked what it is that represents the quality of life for you, a 19-year-old French student gave a simple, but for some unimaginable answer: "The most important thing is that you can do everything without a car". A 29-year-old Slovenian young employee answered the question of what lowers the quality of life: "The quality of life is affected by excessive tourist visits and the feeling that we as local people are superfluous and an obstacle to further tourism development."

Quality of life is a very complex and multidimensional issue, and its interpretation varies from one individual to another which makes the capture of indicators to measure quality of life quite challenging. The Alpine Compass project has shown that young people fundamentally answer the question in a similar way and that their demands are quite straightforward, but at the same time too much for all the decision-makers who have done too little in these areas so far. It has also shown that the quality of life of young people is a very important issue.

We keep repeating the saying »Youth is the hope of our future«, but it is their needs that are usually overlooked in decision-making processes, either because they are not represented or because their opinions and needs are not part of the research.

The values, needs, and aspirations of young people are quite different from those of the adult generation. This makes it even more important to address them. The results of the Living Labs also confirmed that many of the values that represent the quality of life for young people are not measurable or captured as statistics and that it is very important to collect information in a Living Lab way.

In the past, quality of life was addressed only in terms of material indicators or goods, but less than a decade ago, other, mainly non-material indicators started to be included, and these have also proved to be the most important throughout the Alpine Compass project.

When we look at the results of the whole project and the needs of young people for a quality of life, we wonder how is it possible that something as basic as the desire to be transported by bus or to have access to housing is such a challenge to society that we cannot provide it?

Dijana Čataković and **Katarina Žemlja**,
project leaders, CIPRA Slovenia

1. Alpine Compass: Youth for quality of life in the Alps

Most Alpine regions are facing processes of depopulation and brain drain. Many young people are leaving the Alpine region because they lack personal and professional opportunities. There is also a big concern that the Alps are becoming a place for tourists, and local people are often neglected and forced to move because the place is no longer adapted to their needs and wishes, and rather it is oriented towards tourists.

Furthermore, the impacts of climate change make it one of the more threatened regions, where the level of ecosystem services will be drastically reduced – and with it, the quality of life.

Therefore, it is crucial to adapt to the consequences of the social and ecosystem crisis as soon as possible and to listen to the needs and challenges of young people. This will ensure a sustainable and spatially balanced development of the Alps for present and future generations.

1.1. Objective and goals

The Alpine Compass project aimed to address the needs of Alpine youth for quality life while fostering stronger connections between research, practice, and policy in youth and sustainable development. Its objectives included enhancing the capabilities of partner organizations for transnational collaboration, empowering and networking young people in Alpine communities, and raising awareness among decision-makers about youth needs and a sustainable and spatially balanced development of the Alps for present and future generations.

Quality of life was one of the priority issues addressed by the Slovenian Presidency (2023-2024) of the Alpine Convention. In support of the Presidency of the Alpine Convention, CIPRA Slovenia, together with its partners CIPRA France, CIPRA Germany and CIPRA International, was addressing the topic of quality of life for young people in the Alpine region in the Erasmus+ project **Alpine Compass: Youth for quality of life in the Alps**.

The Alpine Compass project addressed the transnational challenge of the need to integrate a quality of life perspective into policy documents through a variety of activities (webinars, Living Labs, interviews, workshops, etc.) and target groups (project collaborators, young people in the Alps and decision-makers).

The project aimed to highlight the transnational aspect of young people in the Alps.

Young people all over Alpine regions face similar challenges, which are geo-social in nature, but are often not addressed in a comparable, macro-regional way and are therefore often not adequately addressed due to the fragmentation of national policies. At the same time, the project activities also aimed to contribute to the development of a different approach: research-practice-policy. Through activities spanning research, practice, and policy, the project endeavoured to produce tangible outcomes such as a dossier on quality of life in the Alps, the formulation of postulates by young people, and their presentation to the Alpine Convention. By engaging both youth and decision-makers, the project aimed to exert an influence towards sustainable policymaking and advocated for EU values and objectives.

The Alpine Compass project was designed to respond comprehensively to the needs of Alpine youth, ensuring they have access to a high-quality life while simultaneously fostering stronger connections between research, practice and policy in the realms of youth and sustainable development. It strategically aligned its objectives with this overarching goal, aimed to empower partner organizations for effective transnational collaboration, facilitated the empowerment and networking of young people within Alpine communities, and elevated awareness among decision-makers regarding the unique needs and challenges faced by youth in the region.

In pursuit of these objectives, the project adopted a multi-faceted approach that spans research, practice and policy. Through activities carefully structured to achieve these aims, the project anticipated concrete outcomes such as the creation of a comprehensive dossier that delves into the nuances of quality of life in the Alps. This dossier was informed by inputs from young people through interviews and workshops, ensuring their perspectives are central to the project's findings. Additionally, the project facilitated the formulation of postulates by young people themselves, reflecting their aspirations and concerns regarding quality of life in the region.

Furthermore, the project strategically positioned itself to engage with decision-makers at the Alpine Convention, presenting the formulated postulates alongside the dossier to influence policymaking at the highest levels. By bridging the gap between youth and decision-makers, the project sought to advocate for EU values and objectives while driving sustainable policy-making that directly addresses the needs and aspirations of Alpine youth.

Through these concerted efforts, **the Alpine Compass project aimed not only to highlight the challenges faced by Alpine youth but also to actively contribute to shaping solutions that lead to tangible improvements in their quality of life in the Alpine regions.** By fostering collaboration, empowerment and advocacy, the project endeavoured to create lasting positive change within Alpine communities, ensuring that the voices and needs of young people are heard and respected in policy-making processes.

1.2. Partner organizations

The Alpine Compass project involved partners from four CIPRA organizations: Slovenia, Germany, France and International (presiding in Liechtenstein). This collaboration was crucial because the project addressed trans-national challenges such as promoting EU values, sustainable development and climate change awareness among young people in the Alps. By working together across borders, the project aimed to ensure the comparability and transferability of its results, empower young people and raise awareness among decision-makers.

1.3. General information

Project duration:	1 January 2023 – 31 July 2024
Action type:	KA210-YOU - Small-scale partnerships in youth
Form ID:	KA210-YOU-DE6D517C
Project working language:	English and national languages (Slovenian, German, French)
Co-financing:	co-financed by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union
Target Group:	The main target group of the project was young people from the Alpine region in Slovenia, Germany, France, and Liechtenstein (16–30 years old).

Young people living in Alpine communities are often also people with fewer opportunities, as geographical distance makes it more difficult for them to enter regional, national and international social initiatives, and there is also less public transport, less diverse opportunities for jobs, and often a less inclusive environment for accepting differences compared to bigger cities. Throughout the project, we worked together with various youth organizations, associations and educational institutions conducting workshops (CIPRA Youth Council, EUSALP, Idrija 2020, Maribor Second Gimnazija school, Jurij Vega Grammar School Idrija, Slovenian Young Geographers' Association (Dmgs Egea Ljubljana), Université Aix-Marseille - Faculté d'Economie et de Gestion, CFMM in Thônes (Training Centre for Mountain Professions), Klenze-Gymnasium in Munich, FOS/BOS Bad Tölz).

In addition, the project also involved decision-makers at local, national and international levels – to translate research and practice into policy – project partners consisting of NGOs specializing in sustainable development that require professional development on various aspects as well as professional circles and the public, including organizations working in the field of quality of life such as ESPON EGTC¹, ZRC SAZU - GIAM² and the Alpine Convention.

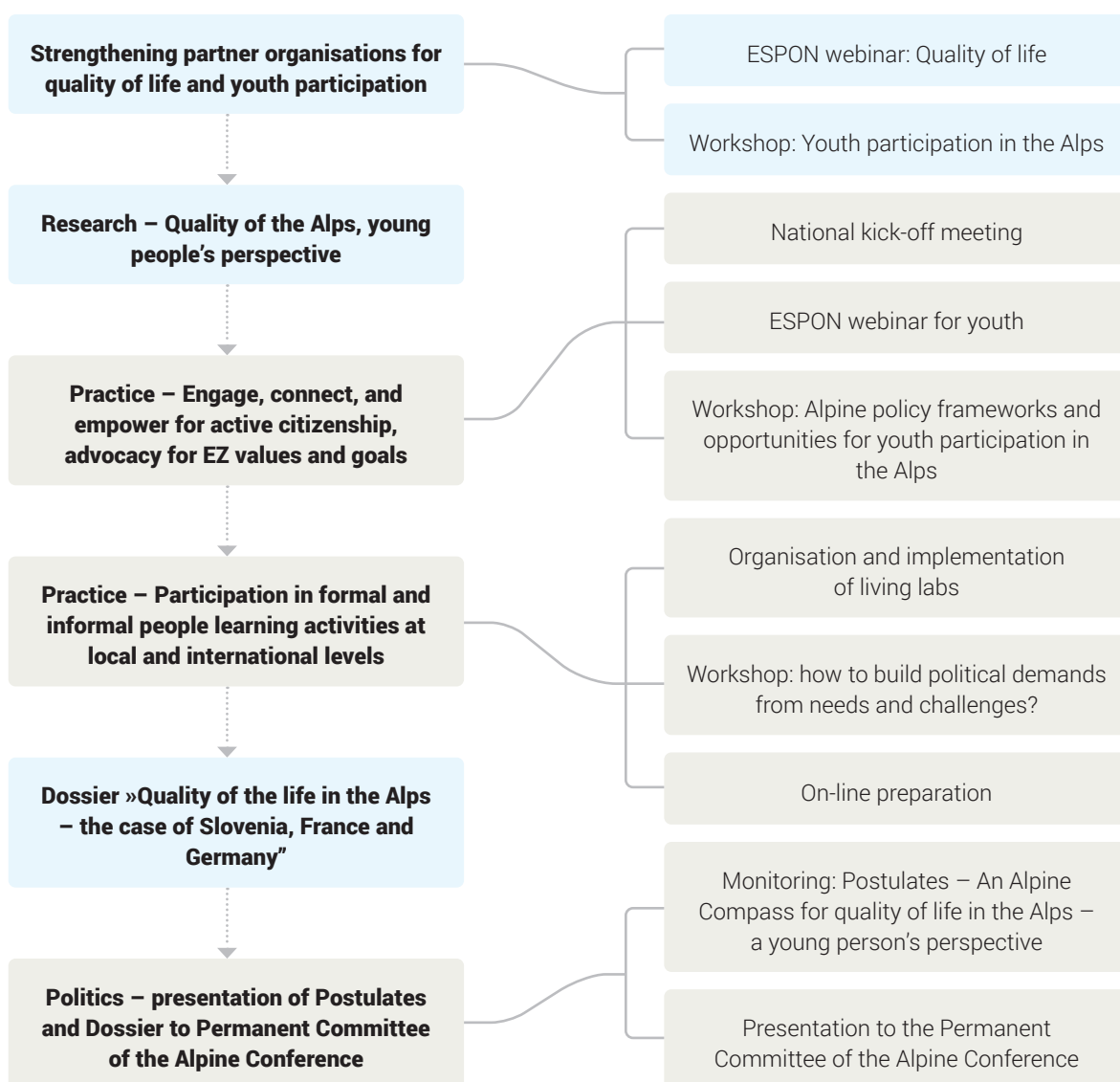
1.4. Main activities

The project followed a research-practice-policy structure to create a stronger link between the three parties in the field of youth and sustainable development. Initially, activities were organized to empower partners in the area of quality of life. Based on this acquired information, research was carried out on the topic of the quality of life of young people in the Alps, and in-depth interviews were conducted. In addition, the work with young people was strengthened by a workshop on “Alpine policy frameworks and opportunities for youth participation in the Alps” and a Webinar on quality of life by ESPON. The project partners used the information gathered from the ESPON webinars as well as the workshops and research work to develop the Living Labs that were carried out with young people in the Alps.

Based on the results of interviews and Living Labs, the postulates were formulated by interested young people and young experienced mentors. The results of the project were planned to be presented at the 78th Meeting of the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention in Maribor and recorded in this dossier. The individual activities are explained in detail below.

¹ ESPON is an EU-funded programme that delivers quality expertise to public authorities responsible for designing territorial policies, www.espon.eu

² Anton Melik Geographical Institute at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts



Graphic 1: Timeline of the project activities, *Katarina Žemlja*

The diagram presents six major steps in the project implementation activities, including strengthening partner organisations, research on Quality of life in Alpine Youth, Practice, including engaging, connecting and empowering and learning, preparation of the dossier and presentation to the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Conference.

1.4.1. Webinar and Workshop for Project Partners

A webinar "Quality of life as a tool for implementing EU values and objectives" by ESPON and a workshop on youth work were conducted to familiarize project partners with the concept of quality of life and strategies for working with young people in the Alpine region.

The webinar was held by ESPON EGTC colleagues to introduce the ESPON methodology for measuring quality of life and the implementation of Living Labs to the project partners. Throughout the webinar, Sandra di Biaggio, a representative of ESPON EGTC, emphasized the importance of effective research for shaping EU policies. ESPON's approach involves territorially related analyses, considering personal, socioeconomic and ecological factors. The webinar highlighted the necessity of involving citizens in research through living laboratories, aiming to bridge the gap between statistical data and people's perceptions. Furthermore, the input of the webinar showed the importance of creating a link between stakeholder engagement and integration of citizen input in policy formation to enable a shift towards more comprehensive approaches beyond traditional economic indicators.



Graphic 2: Learning outcomes on Quality of life as a tool for implementing EU values and objectives, *Dijana Čataković.*

The illustration shows five learning outcomes on quality of life from the webinar Quality of life as a tool for implementing EU values and objectives.



Graphic 3: Learning outcomes on youth participation, *Dijana Čataković.*

Learning outcomes of the webinar on youth participation.

In the left upper corner there is an EU flag logo with the text co-funded by the European Union, below it is a circular photo of young people walking up a hill, behind them you can see some trees, on the right side of the graphic there are 5 learning outcomes:

1. Involving young people from smaller local communities is a gradual and long-term process
2. do not do projects for young people without involving them from the beginning
3. do not forget to be inclusive at every step of the project
4. check in advance how much energy young people have for each activity
5. not all young people wish to use social media

At bottom right there is a CIPRA logo - 3 mountain peaks in the circle and the Movit logo.

The workshop focused on enhancing quality of life, and especially on tackling youth migration from remote Alpine areas. Presenters discussed strategies to ensure the sustained involvement of youth, the creation of engaging and balanced activities, and the implementation of policies in an inclusive manner.

Key insights emphasized the importance of gradual engagement, inclusivity throughout projects, and acknowledging the diverse interests and needs of young people.

1.4.2. Research on Quality of Life

The project conducted comprehensive research to understand the factors affecting the quality of life for young people in the Alps. In the first step, the existing research on the quality of life of young people in Alpine regions was examined and summarized for France, Slovenia, and Germany respectively. Using the knowledge gathered through the ESPON webinars, literature research, and advice from GIAM, we conducted in-depth interviews with 15 young people from four Alpine countries on the topic of quality of life. This included a questionnaire section with general information and an interview with more in-depth questions.

1.4.3. Webinar and Workshop for Young People

Through a series of webinars and workshops, young people were encouraged to educate themselves about quality-of-life issues in the Alpine region. These sessions also provided insights into Alpine policy frameworks and opportunities for youth participation.

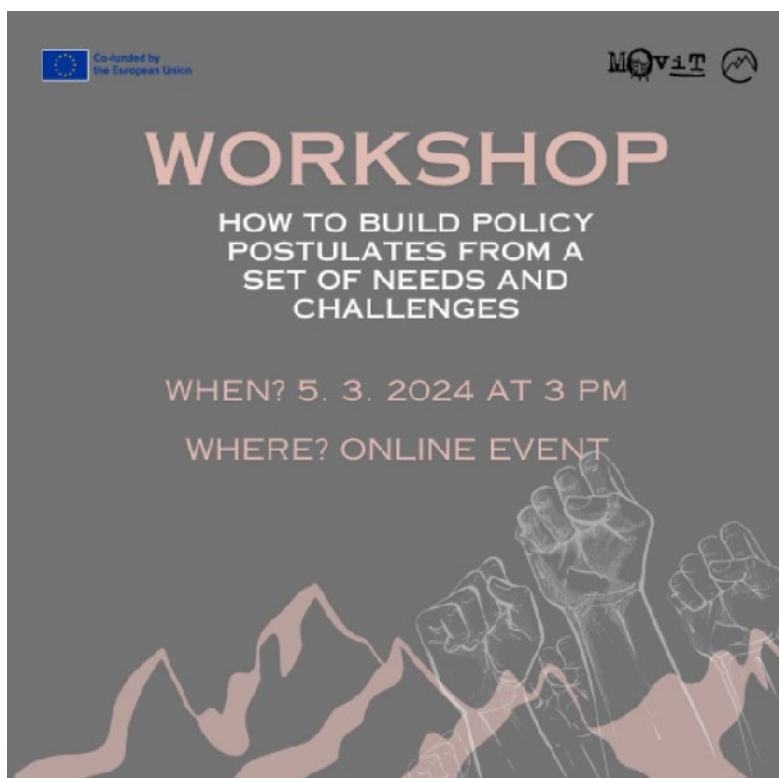
The workshop “Alpine Policy Frameworks and Opportunities for Youth Participation in the Alps” was convened with a specific aim: to empower young individuals to actively engage in shaping policies that directly affect the Alpine region. Recognizing the significance of youth perspectives in addressing modern challenges, the workshop sought to provide a platform for dialogue, learning and collaboration among young participants from Slovenia, France and Germany. The overarching goal of the workshop was to enhance understanding and appreciation of youth participation within the Alpine policy framework. Through presentations from key stakeholders such as Kaspar Schuler from CIPRA International, Vera Bornemann from the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, and members of the Youth Parliament to the Alpine Convention, attendees gained insights into the evolving landscape of youth engagement in policymaking processes.

The webinar on quality of life was held by ESPON to empower young people on the topic of quality of life, to outline the ESPON methodology and to present ways in which young people can get actively involved in their own and the overall Alpine region.

1.4.4. Implementation of Living Labs, Formulation and Presentation of Postulates

In the next steps of the project, the content and implementation plan for Living Labs were developed, drawing upon various sources of knowledge including ESPON webinars on methodology and Living Labs, a workshop on working with young people, literature surveys and interview results. To make sure that the results would be comparable, the aim was to incorporate ESPON indicators as much as possible, while also adding some parts that proved to be important during the implementation of the project activities. These Living Labs consisted of six sessions, two in each participating country, and were designed as interactive workshops engaging young people in hands-on activities and discussions to tackle real-life challenges.

The final step after the Living Labs, the youth workshops and the interviews was the formulation of the postulates. Interested young people involved in the project came together in a workshop to get input ideas on how to formulate a postulate. Afterwards, they formulated postulates based on their insights and experiences regarding the quality of life in the Alps with the help of young, politically experienced mentors. These postulates were planned to be presented to the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention, aiming to influence policy decisions.



.....
Graphic 4: Workshop on how to formulate postulates,
Dijana Čataković.

Invitation to a workshop entitled How to build policy postulates from a set of needs and challenges, with the date 5 March 2024 at 3 o'clock, online. In the left upper corner there is an EU flag logo with the text co-funded by the European Union, on the right upper side there is the CIPRA logo – 3 mountain peaks in a circle – and the MOVIT logo. At the bottom of the graphic is a silhouette of mountains and hands, representing political engagement.

.....

1.4.5. Dossier Publication

The present document titled "Quality of Life and Young People in the Alps - The case of Slovenia, France, and Germany" has been compiled, documenting the research findings, insights from Living Labs and the formulated postulates. This dossier will serve as a comprehensive collection of the project results.

1.4.6. Presentation of Postulates and Dossier

To make sure that the results of the project are heard, the findings were presented publicly to the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention in May 2024. This ensured that the needs of young people in the Alps were being recognized and taken seriously by leading decision-makers.

2. Research of the literature

For millennia, philosophers have been trying to work out what constitutes and makes a good life. Over time, there has been a lot of research on what quality of life is, what indicators can be used to define it, how it differs between different social groups and many other pressing questions. We were particularly interested in what indicators have been associated with quality of life in individual Alpine countries, whether the past indicators are coherent with the ESPON methodology, and the indicators that are important in the course of the research.

The objective of this research was to improve understanding of the needs and challenges faced by young people in the Alps. It also aimed to compare what has already been written (literature analysis) and what young people think nowadays (interviews) to add contemporary concerns to the former studies and to show the need for new indicators for a good quality of life. Moreover, comparing the interview results of young people with different nationalities gave a transnational perspective on quality of life, showing the necessity of European Alpine cooperation on that cross-border subject.

This information gives decision-makers arguments for their policy work, by helping them understand how to improve the quality of young people's life in the Alps, and thus life in the Alps in general. The goal was also to encourage them to take into account youth opinions and needs, as this group represents the future of the Alps. The current young generation is the one that is going to face all the upcoming economic, ecological and social challenges.

2.1. Summary

To give a short overview of the study situation in the three countries of France, Germany, and Slovenia, firstly the main outcome of each country's research is presented, followed by a summary and conclusion.

France: Quality of life assessments in France, specifically in the Alpine regions of Sud-PACA (Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur) and Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (AURA), emphasize a combination of objective and subjective factors. Sud-PACA's areas, with numerous ski resorts, exhibit high employment rates but also face issues of unstable, low-wage, seasonal work. On the other hand, regions like Champsaur Valgaudemar lack resorts, facing challenges such as older demographic structure, low incomes and higher youth unemployment. Long commuting times worsen conditions. In the whole PACA region, the young people's unemployment rate is higher than the French average. Conversely, AURA's Alpine regions provide direct access to nature and outdoor activities, contributing to elevated employment rates and shorter commutes, although access to services remains challenging. Both regions lack specific studies focusing on young people's quality of life, particularly regarding subjective indicators. They prioritize material factors such as income and housing. There is little research specifically addressing young people's quality of life, despite indicators such as youth unemployment rates and housing costs.

Germany: Despite a lack of specific studies on the quality of life of young people in the German Alpine region, cross-regional studies shed light on the challenges faced by this demographic. The Shell Youth Study indicates that while young people express satisfaction with their lives, they are increasingly affected by psychological stress, exacerbated by current crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. Despite optimism about their future, they acknowledge social issues and demand change to actively shape it. The "Youth in Germany" trend study reveals that young people are disproportionately affected by current crises like the coronavirus pandemic, climate change, wars and inflation. They face financial hardship and psychological stress due to high expectations for the future. The authors emphasize the urgent need for expanded mental health support services to address potential issues such as depression. Additionally, the research project "What drives young people", shows that rural areas, including those in the Alpine region, face a migration movement of young people due to infrastructural deficiencies, housing needs and a lack of opportunities to be politically active. Nevertheless, young people maintain a positive attitude towards rural life, driven by strong family and social ties.

Slovenia: Research on quality of life in Slovenia covers various factors, including material conditions, housing, jobs and social integration. Eurostat (2022) shows that while subjective assessments of the quality of life are generally above the European average regarding indicators such as housing, working conditions, leisure, social relations, safety and health, the survey by Bučinel et. al. (2022) indicated that differences exist between urban and rural areas, as well as among various demographic groups, regarding factors such as quality of living, housing and jobs. Nared (2022) has designed a quality-of-life model as a more holistic alternative to the current way of measuring the development of areas, which is based mainly on economic aspects of development. However, longitudinal studies specifically focused on the quality of life of young people in Slovenia have not been conducted.

2.2 Comparison

All the literature from the three studied countries expresses the diversity of indicators to be taken into account when it comes to rating the quality of life. From material indicators to subjective perception of each individual, quality of life is truly a complex concept to define. In all studies, generally, the same main indicators were found, but not necessarily with the same level of importance. For example, indicators found more particularly in the German literature are the importance of policies and political participation in youth well-being and the emotional burden and anxiety (climate change in particular has led to an increase in climate anxiety) present among young German people. Even though German literature focuses on youth, there is a lack of literature about the Alpine part of the country. This is something found in the French literature, showing that one of the major indicators influencing the quality of life in the French Alps is the working condition and salary linked to it (long or short-term contracts, commuting distance, access to a diversity of jobs and so forth). In comparison, the Slovenian literature put housing (access and quality) as the most important indicator, followed by social life, but the study does not focus on the Alpine part of the country.

Whereas literature in France and Slovenia lacks studies about youth, Germany offers a broad definition of how young people evaluate their quality of life. French literature focuses on the Alpine area but not on young people.

The literature analysis shows a general lack of studies focusing both on the Alps and on young people in each country, but also on the Alps in general.

To summarize, in the past, quality of life was mostly based on economic criteria such as GDP (gross domestic product). Income and living standards have also been used to assess quality of life. After 2009, this notion has been mostly defined on the one hand by individual material criteria such as salary, working conditions, accommodation, state of health, etc. On the other hand, quality of life is also rated according to the subjective perception of well-being of each individual. This well-being is based on indicators linked to the environment offered by the area people live in (access to services, housing conditions, access to nature) and also based on the perception of the individual living condition (physical and economic insecurities, trust in the government, quality and frequency of social ties, stress, anxiety and so forth).

3. Summary of the interviews

The partner organizations prepared 23 questions related to quality of life, and the interview design was previously checked with experts from the Anton Melik Geographical Institute. The partners interviewed 15 young people from Slovenia, France, Germany and Liechtenstein living in the Alpine region. When selecting the interviewees, the interviewers tried to select as diverse a profile of young people as possible, and also to include young people from vulnerable groups. The interviews were conducted in the mother tongue of the interviewees.

The in-depth interviews provided a better and more detailed understanding of the interpretation of quality of life among young people. The openness of the questions proved to be very important, as the interviewees were able to focus on what is important to them and what represents quality of life for them.

The questions tried to cover very broad aspects of economic, social, residential and environmental indicators. Questions addressed everything from the general definition of quality of life to the set of most important values, housing preferences, the condition of the environment, access to nature, well-being, opportunities to express themselves, social acceptance, family and friends, income and the availability and diversity of jobs and different schooling options, access to various services, public transport and more.

3.1. France

Interviews in the French Alpine region highlighted the importance of work-life balance, easy access to nature and importance of deep connection to the environment. The interviewees expressed concerns about climate change and the need for strong social bonds (good social connections and community support).

For most of the young French people interviewed, quality of life meant feeling emotionally and physically well in a certain place. A majority of them linked a good quality of life with low pollution, good infrastructure to move easily from one place to another (good public transport) and meeting places to interact with others.

The young people interviewed had mixed opinions regarding the quality of their natural environment. Most of them talked about the city of Grenoble and underlined the high pollution rate and the heat. One said that his valley is too urbanized and contaminated, especially during the tourist period because of all the traffic.

What could be improved is, for the majority, better access to the mountains through more public transport but also through more outdoor activities offered at school. For one person living in a small town between a big city and a ski resort, public transport is also very much needed, as after a certain hour early at night, there is no way to get to these places without a car.

In the city, one of the things that could be improved for them is the heat. They would like more solutions to cool down the city in the summer. One person would like the city to be car-free and another one would like improved cycle paths to be safer.

Statements from young people in France

What are your values related to quality of life?

“What is most important is to be able to do everything without a car.”
Female, 19 years old

“A bad quality of life is when work gets the upper hand over everyday life, leisure time and friends.”
Male, 24 years old

What could be improved in your town/city/village?

“Better, safer cycle paths in Grenoble. Access to nature for all: few mountain activities offered to school groups, little effort in peripheral neighbourhoods Democratization of access to the mountains.”
Female, 22 years old

“Not enough bars in Grenoble: they are empty in the summer and overcrowded at the start of the school year. Find a balance. Develop the docks! Prohibit car lanes on the banks and develop them. Cool the city in summer! Find a way to lower the temperature. Pollution + heat: relatively insoluble problem with traffic around Grenoble.”
Male, 24 years old

Which factors do you think will have the biggest impact on your quality of life in the next 10 years?

“Global warming!! The job I will find: change of place of living, including my friends, housing conditions, free time etc.”
Female, 22 years old

“Climate change and the political decisions taken to block its consequences, so the political factor is going to have the biggest influence on my future.”
Female, 19 years old

“Climate change and the political decisions that will be taken in this area to stop the phenomenon. So it is a political factor that will have the most influence. Ex: Regarding of forests in the future, temperature would increase by 7 to 10°C.”
Female, 19 years old

3.2. Germany

In the German Alpine region, interviews echoed existing studies, emphasizing concerns about infrastructure and amenities in remote areas. Participants prioritized the living environment and personal choices, particularly emphasizing proximity to nature. Interpersonal relationships were deemed essential, and future concerns included job-related aspects and the impact of climate change. The interviews emphasized the complex interplay of environmental, social and economic factors in shaping quality of life.

Moreover, two people mentioned that aspects of society such as living in an open and liberal society which is interested in progress, equality and democracy, influence their quality of life. Furthermore, points that were listed individually are the ability to express themselves, freedom and having leisure time.

Three participants stated that their living environment is a decisive factor for a good quality of life, such as having nature in their close surroundings or the possibility of doing leisure activities close to where they lived. Furthermore, three participants listed their personal way of life as a quality, which includes the ability to design their life as they want, for example in a level work-life balance and freedom for personal development. A few more aspects for a good quality of life that were specified by individual participants are family and friends, affordable rents and the drinking water quality.

Three people addressed that the factor of a change in infrastructure would improve their life in their city/village. Depending on the location where the participants live, they stated that they would like to have less traffic and better connection with public transport.

One participant furthermore mentions that many cultural offerings are organized for tourists, and they would like to have more prospects for the local community.

Statements from young people in Germany

What is quality of life for you?

“ I believe, places worth living are where there is a lot of green, too.
Female, 30 years old

Do you think that the quality of your natural environment is good?

“ I think the best quality I have at my place of residence is nature, and for me that is a very big point for my quality of life. And here nature is just very quickly accessible.
Female, 24 years old

What could be improved in your town/city/village?

“ There could be more economic diversity. For example, we don't have any cozy cafés where you can sit inside.
Male, 26 years old

“ Sure, the topic of public transport in rural areas.
Female, 24 years old

Do you feel that you can truly express yourself and be who you are without judgement in the area you live in? Please explain.

“ No, not 100%, because it is a small village and I have the feeling that one has to adapt to a certain extent.
Male, 26 years old

What would make you feel more connected and supported by your local community?

“ Maybe a little bit more cultural offerings for young people. Connecting of young people outside their own bubble.
Female, 24 years old

Which factors do you think will have the biggest impact on your quality of life in the next 10 years?

“ The climate and I think it will have a lot of negative effects on society. I believe that this is coming very quickly no matter what class or what political attitude you have.
Female, 30 years old

“ I believe for me personally climate change. Both professionally and privately.
Female, 24 years old

3.3. Slovenia

Most interviewees emphasized access to services and living in an environment surrounded by nature when defining quality of life. They also highlighted the opportunity to develop a career, the presence of an active local community and access to major cities by public transport. The values they associated with quality of life were nature, choice and independence, family and cultural values, good relations and belonging to a community, and support for young people.

When asked whether the location suited their wants, needs and values, one respondent mentioned that the location suited them perfectly, while others had mixed feelings. On the one hand, living in a village offers easy access to unspoilt nature, but on the other hand it has its drawbacks – lack of adequate services, poor accessibility to services and bad public transport links. The overall opinion of the respondents on the quality of the natural environment was positive, as they valued coexistence with nature, but at the same time they identified challenges in areas where organic farming and the state of the natural environment could be improved.

All respondents pointed to differences between urban and rural populations. The latter are more likely to be conservative thinkers and cannot express themselves in their social circle without risk of being judged. There are also challenges of acceptance in the local environment in terms of generational differences, political definition and attitudes towards those who think differently.

When asked about improvements in their environment, they highlighted activities and locations where young people could socialize and have fun. Better public transport (and possibility of bike rentals), a better attitude of the municipality towards the local population, accessibility of services and improvements in the health system were essential.

Respondents pointed to extreme weather events related to climate change, the issue of employment and housing affordability for young people, transport inaccessibility, too much pressure from tourism and the resulting deterioration in the quality of the natural environment as factors affecting the quality of life in the future.

Statements from young people in Slovenia

What is quality of life for you?

“Quality of life is about having a choice between different options and not being constrained by them.”
Female, 26 years old

Does this location suit your wishes, needs, values, priorities? Please explain.

“The quality of life is definitely affected by excessive tourism and the feeling that we as local people are superfluous and an obstacle to further tourism development.”
Male, 29 years old

Do you feel that you can truly express yourself and be who you are without judgement in the area you live in? Please explain.

“It is difficult to define oneself ideologically without being judged.”
Female, 23 years old

What would make you feel more connected and supported by your local community?

“I miss activities such as evenings for young people, board games, choir, other activities ...”
Female, 24 years old

What could be improved in your town/city/village?

“More opportunities for individual participation, more cultural events, more dedicated places in nature for relaxation, space for a workplace, more measures to enable commuters to live a more sustainable life.”
Female, 23 years old

Which factors do you think will have the biggest impact on your quality of life in the next 10 years?

“Possibility of buying – housing, transport accessibility (congestion eases and locals can access services), environmental quality to keep nature unpolluted.”
Male, 29 years old

“Extreme weather events – climate change and the resulting impact on agriculture (I don't like the landscape changing because people don't want to farm anymore, since weather change makes it too risky to farm), expanding infrastructure, services – if there aren't enough services, it would be an impact on my life, Brnik Airport expansion – if this were to happen in the future, deforestation, removal of open green spaces, too much tourism in the future and too much human pressure on nature.”
Male, 25 years old

3.4. Liechtenstein

Both interviewees expressed a strong emphasis on the importance of a high quality of life, which encompassed feeling safe, expressing oneself freely and having autonomy in decision-making. They prioritized access to education, healthcare and the ability to live independently. Despite living in Balzers, Liechtenstein, out of financial necessity, both individuals appreciated the natural environment but also expressed concerns about societal norms limiting personal expression and the desire for more diverse cultural experiences.

Suggestions for improving community engagement included reducing gossip, providing clearer information about available resources, and expanding educational and career opportunities, especially for youth. Both interviewees also highlighted the need for better transportation options, shopping facilities and nightlife venues. Empowering young people through voting rights and broader representation in decision-making processes was seen as crucial for enhancing community dynamics.

Looking ahead, both interviewees expressed concerns about their postprospects after graduation, emphasizing the importance of finding a job, achieving financial stability and establishing a comfortable living situation. They also acknowledged future factors such as education, career choices, climate change and political changes that could impact their quality of life.

Overall, both interviews underscored the multifaceted nature of quality of life, influenced by personal aspirations, societal norms, community dynamics and environmental factors.

Statements from young people in Liechtenstein

What is quality of life for you?

“ For me, quality of life is being safe and not having to be afraid, being able to have an opinion and express it. When you live somewhere that is not dirty, where it is clean and where you have a little free time to do what you want. Not only that you work all the time, and yes, you can have a hobby ...

Female, 18 years old

What could be improved in your town/city/village?

“ We could do more about voting in our environment: for example, voting at 16. I think that at that age you are old enough to be able to participate and I am a bit critical that now we can only do it when we are 18.

Female, 21 years old

Which factors do you think will have the biggest impact on your quality of life in the next 10 years?

“ In the future, apart from my studies, probably the biggest influence on my quality of life will be my standard of living and the possibility of finding a job after graduation and finding a flat I can move into and afford.

Female, 21 years old

“ For me, social contacts are very important for a good life, that is friends and family. Also to be able to express myself and to do sport or some other hobby – to be able to live my life. It is also important to me that there are opportunities to get different kinds of help. That you have places and resources where you can ask for help. Also, psychological support ...

Female, 18 years old

3.5. Comparison

When comparing results from the interviews in the four different countries, it appears that no matter where they live in the Alps, young people agree on the same major indicators defining quality of life and the way to improve it. Indeed, the most important aspect of quality of life in the different interviews was almost always a healthy and good living environment, including close access to nature and a good work-life balance. The subject of mobility through public transport both in the city and between city and mountain areas is also a big requirement for a good quality of life according to the young generation, everywhere in the Alps. The third most important indicator for all of them is strong relationships with others. It was particularly pointed out that it is important to have free public spaces where the community can gather (which are not bars, pubs or restaurants; consumption-free spaces).

Thus, what can be improved in the Alps for them is linked to these key indicators: less pollution and more nature in the cities, better public transport in general, more public transport to reach the mountain areas, less traffic jams in general and more cultural and social activities.

In terms of the feeling of being free to express themselves in their current communities, they all highlighted that they feel freer in the big cities; in the small villages it is more challenging for them to express all their ideas because people there tend to be, in general, more conservative, and less open to inclusivity.

Finally, regarding the indicators having the biggest impact on them in the future, they unanimously underlined their concern about climate change. Their employment (opportunities, work-life balance, well-being at work) is the second most important criterion shaping their future. German and French young people also underlined the influence of politics, and Slovenian young people talked about the future impacts of mass tourism on their environment. Young people in Lichtenstein are very concerned about post-graduation prospects. In all countries, the young people mentioned expensive housing issues and associated worries.

3.6. Conclusion

The following key issues have been identified as cross-border indicators for a good quality of life in the Alps for young people:

1. The significance of the living environment: nature and work-life balance

For the younger generation in the Alpine region, the living environment is key for a good quality of life. Whether in Germany, France, Slovenia or Liechtenstein, the interviewees declared the importance of easy access to nature from the place they live in.

Above all, the desire to pursue leisure activities and have a close connection to nature has an impact on the question of available time and how it is used in everyday life. That is why **working conditions are really important for them**. The necessity of job security, a wide range of job opportunities, but also a job that is interesting with a **high degree of flexibility**, are criteria that influence the quality of life of the younger generation. Even more important is the **work-life balance**, with **enough time to fulfil yourself**.

2. Sustainable mobility as one of the most important services

Insufficient public mobility is not a new issue and in the course of our work, regardless of which Alpine country we are in, from France to Slovenia, we are confronted with this topic time and again. During discussions with the young people, whether in the interviews or in the working groups, the topic of mobility was mentioned frequently, particularly in relation to:

- **Public transport services:** The availability of public transport in rural areas to get to the nearest large town or neighbouring village to go shopping, visit friends or family or simply to get to work is very limited. It is often administrative responsibilities, which vary from one Alpine country to another, that limit what is offered, and this is not sufficiently adapted to the needs of young adults.
- **City-mountain connections** with public transport: Access to nature and mountains is limited in many Alpine countries. There is a need for improvement in the entire Alpine region, even if there are differences between the respective countries; the situation also varies from region to region within the respective countries.

3. Need for cultural offerings and social interaction

Depending on the Alpine country, the services offered vary, however the majority of young people interviewed underlined the lack of services, especially cultural offerings. Places to meet new people and interact are also very much needed for young people, showing the significance of strong interpersonal relations with people they can rely on.

4. Climate change: the main impact for the near future

The Alpine region has warmed twice as much as the global average since the end of the 19th century. This ranges from heatwaves to severe weather events, glacier melt, water shortages on the one hand and flooding on the other. The list of negative effects on nature and the environment is long. For young adults from the various Alpine countries, climate change and its effects continue to be the issue that will have the greatest impact on their lives over the next 10 years. They underlined its objective impacts on leisure activities or natural resources, but also the emotional burden they can carry from climate change: anxiety and depression. A political solution to it was mentioned several times as a criterion for a good quality of life, underlining the importance of political consideration for young people's needs and wishes.

4. Living Labs

The Living Labs approach integrates research and innovation by fostering co-creation and user engagement in real-life settings. It emphasizes multi-stakeholder participation, ensuring representation across different ages and sectors, particularly targeting those least knowledgeable about the area. The objectives include defining a common vision and mission, mapping stakeholders and their individual needs, and utilizing various tools for engagement. In the context of the Alpine Convention's focus on quality of life, the Alpine Compass project sought to address the needs and perspectives of young people in the Alpine region. Through activities involving youth from France, Slovenia and Germany, the project aimed to identify key values, indicators and areas for improvement to enhance the quality of life for young individuals in their respective communities.

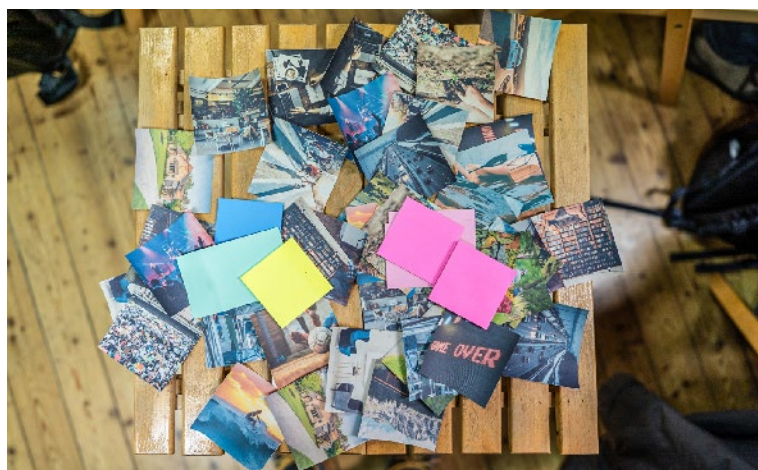
4.1. Implementation process

The process and content of the Living Labs were developed based on the knowledge gained (ESPON webinars on methodology and Living Labs, a workshop on working with young people, results of the literature survey and the results of the interviews). We took into account as much as possible the ESPON indicators in order to make the results comparable with each other.

Participants in the Living Labs included representatives from youth organizations, associations and educational institutions, such as students and members of the local community, all sharing a common interest in improving the quality of life for young people in Alpine regions. In each country, we carried out two Living Labs, one with young people in the Alpine region and the other with students who do not necessarily live in the Alps but are familiar with the concept of sustainable development and living in the Alpine region.

The participants of the Living Labs were the Association of Young Geographers of Slovenia (students) and the Idrija 2020 Association (local youth community – grammar school students) in Slovenia, the Université Aix-Marseille - Faculté d'Economie et de Gestion (students) and CFMM in Thônes (Training Centre for Mountain Professions) in France and the Klenze-Gymnasium school in Munich (students) and the FOS/BOS Bad Tölz (technical and vocational school) in Germany.

All Living Labs followed the same structure: The sessions started with a welcoming atmosphere to build rapport among participants. An introduction circle allowed everyone to introduce themselves and set the tone for open communication. Participants learned about the purpose and objectives of the Living Labs, understanding the goals and expected outcomes of the session. An interactive activity with pictures stimulated discussion, where participants identified important elements in their lives and expressed their thoughts visually. Participants then shared their perspectives on quality of life in their areas, discussing needs and wishes to improve their communities (What would I wish that my city/town/village would have (and it does not now), if I could change anything, what would I wish to change to make this place a better place for you?), challenges (what is difficult in your area, what makes you unhappy?), and things they value about their life in the Alpine regions. They discussed difficulties and challenges they face, while also acknowledging positive aspects and values in their communities. Participants envisioned an ideal scenario for their communities, expressing what would make them happy and fulfilled. The criteria for assessing quality of life were selected based on discussions, serving as measurable benchmarks for evaluating well-being.



.....
 Images to select that represent
 your important values, Slovenia,
Photo: Samo Kham.

The illustration shows a set
 of pictures that participants
 of the workshop in Slovenia
 were invited to select to
 represent their individual value



.....

Identified needs, wishes and challenges, Slovenia,
Photo: Samo Kham.

The illustration shows post-its that were grouped by needs, wishes and challenges and six young people sitting on chairs in small circles and chatting. In the background are posters with the wishes, needs and challenges of young people in the Alpine region.

.....



.....

Matching written needs, wishes and challenges to selected quality of life indicators, Slovenia,
Photo: Samo Kham.

A person pointing at three posters with many post-it notes.

.....

4.2. Results

4.2.1. France

Young French people discussed together in two Living Labs the key question 'What is quality of life in the Alpine region?' The main values which were mentioned often were the link to nature, the diverse possibilities to be active in the mountain areas by going hiking, skiing, biking, etc. and access to good services such as healthcare and shops, along with accessibility by the transport on offer.



.....

Students from **CFMM in Thônes, France**, *Photo: Natael Fautrat.*

The illustration shows a working atmosphere during reflections and discussions in the group of young people in the workshop in France.

.....

Regardless of age and living spaces, the young people were worried about the cost of living; whether for food, accommodation or prices for leisure activities. Prices are increasing in the mountain areas, particularly in tourist areas and even more for young people who can no longer afford the cost of living. Next to costs, the lack of services such as healthcare and transport pose a major problem. The lack of cultural activities (from meeting places for young people to cultural offerings such as concerts, cinemas and so forth) influences young people's quality of life in these regions. The mountain mentality and their often unprogressive approach raised questions for the groups of young people interviewed.



.....
 Reflections and discussions in small groups, France,
Photo: Natael Fautrat.

The illustration shows a working atmosphere in the workshop in France during reflections and discussions in small groups.

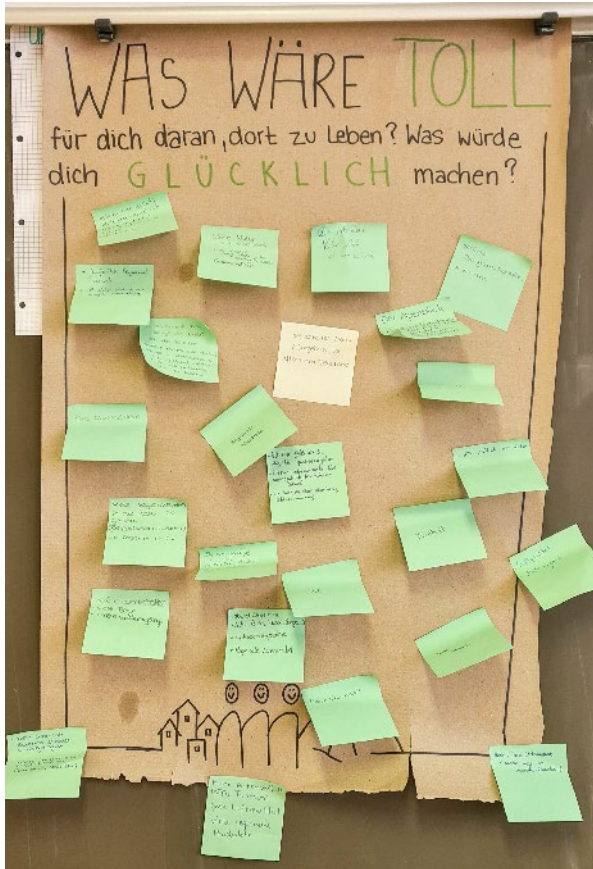
The wishes and needs that were expressed are linked to the challenges mentioned above. More affordable housing (for living but also for tourist use), services and access to education were brought up as well as a better transport system. The ambition to have a better quality of social life seemed to be really important for young people: more places to meet and exchange and more cultural and recreational activities on offer are necessary.

4.2.2. Germany

In the two Living Labs organized in Germany, various aspects of life and living in the Alps were discussed by young people. Both positive and negative points emerged. Nature and the beautiful surroundings of the Alps were seen as a major plus point, offering freedom, relaxation and various leisure activities. The proximity to nature, the fresh air and the wide range of activities such as hiking, skiing and horse riding were particularly appreciated. Some participants also saw the possibility of settling in the Alps as attractive, especially for families and for retirement.

However, there are also concerns about the excessive burden of tourism, particularly in terms of pollution and overcrowding. The infrastructure, particularly public transport and healthcare, was perceived by most participants as inadequate. Housing costs are high and affordable housing is limited. The cultural offerings and meeting places for young people are often inadequate, which can lead to a certain degree of social isolation.

Wishes for improvement included the sustainable development of tourism, improving public transport, promoting affordable housing, expanding cultural offerings, better care and infrastructure in the health sector, meeting places for young people and involving the younger generation more in political decision-making processes and local communities.



.....

What is great about living in the German Alps?
 What makes you happy to live there?

Photo: Henriette Adolf

The illustration shows post-its for the questions
 What is great about living in the German Alps?
 and What makes you happy to live there?

.....



.....

Group discussion: What indicators are important
 for quality of life in the Alps? (Participants of the
 Living Lab in Bad Tölz), *Photo: Henriette Adolf*

The illustration shows a group discussion
 of the participants in the Living Lab in Bad
 Tölz in Germany on indicators important
 for the quality of life in their Alpine regions.

.....



Participants of the Living Lab in Bad Tölz, *Photo: Henriette Adolf*

The illustration shows participants of the Living Lab in Bad Tölz, Germany.

.....

4.2.3. Slovenia

In the two Living Lab workshops in Slovenia, young people from the Alpine region reflected on the quality of life, their challenges, needs, aspirations and values. They valued access to nature, mountains and green spaces, clean air and soil, the abundance of local farms and locally produced food, well-maintained hiking and cycling trails and thus the ability to spend leisure time actively.



Participants of the Living Lab in Ljubljana, *Photo: Samo Kham.*

Young people sitting in three small circles around small wooden tables and debating. Two young persons are sitting on a couch nearby on the right side of the room, one of the persons on the couch is looking at a laptop.

.....



Participants of the Living Lab in Idrija, *Photo: Samo Kham.*

The illustration shows participants in the Living Lab in Idrija, Slovenia. High school students are standing in a circle in front of the whiteboard, with the teacher sitting on a chair on the left side of the classroom.

.....

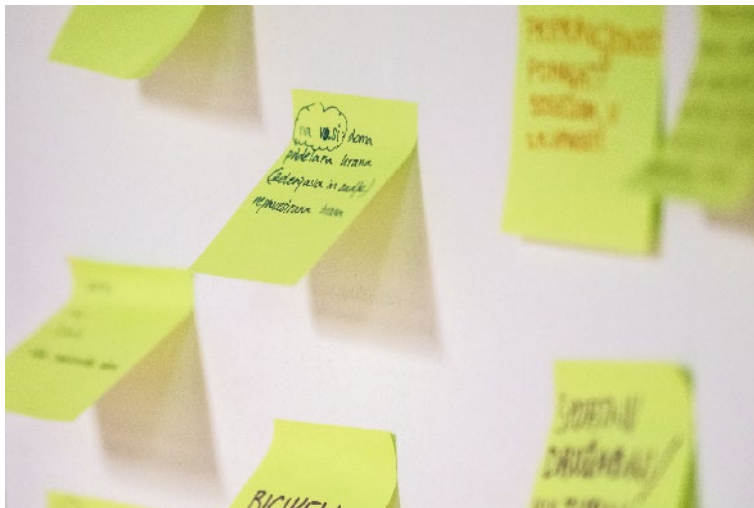
Young people saw as challenges a lack of affordable housing, uncompetitive public transport and thus poor accessibility, abandonment of agricultural land, needless interfering with nature, noise and pollution from motor traffic, and a countryside with poorly equipped services. They were also concerned about over-urbanisation and illegal waste dumps in the countryside. In the context of climate change, some were concerned about flooding and the increasingly warm winters with little or no snow.



.....
 What would I wish that my city/ town/village would have (and it does not now)? *Photo: Samo Kham*

The illustration shows some of the answers to the question What would I wish that my city/town/village would have (and it does not now)..

Needs and desires highlighted were better public transport and reduction of car traffic, revitalisation of areas, limitation of tourism, public education on sustainable development, adequate public healthcare, more self-sustaining communities, personal growth workshops and psychotherapeutic help accessible to all. They wanted a more cohesive local community, more spaces for socializing and public events dedicated to them. They wished for more acceptance of diversity and involvement in decision-making processes.

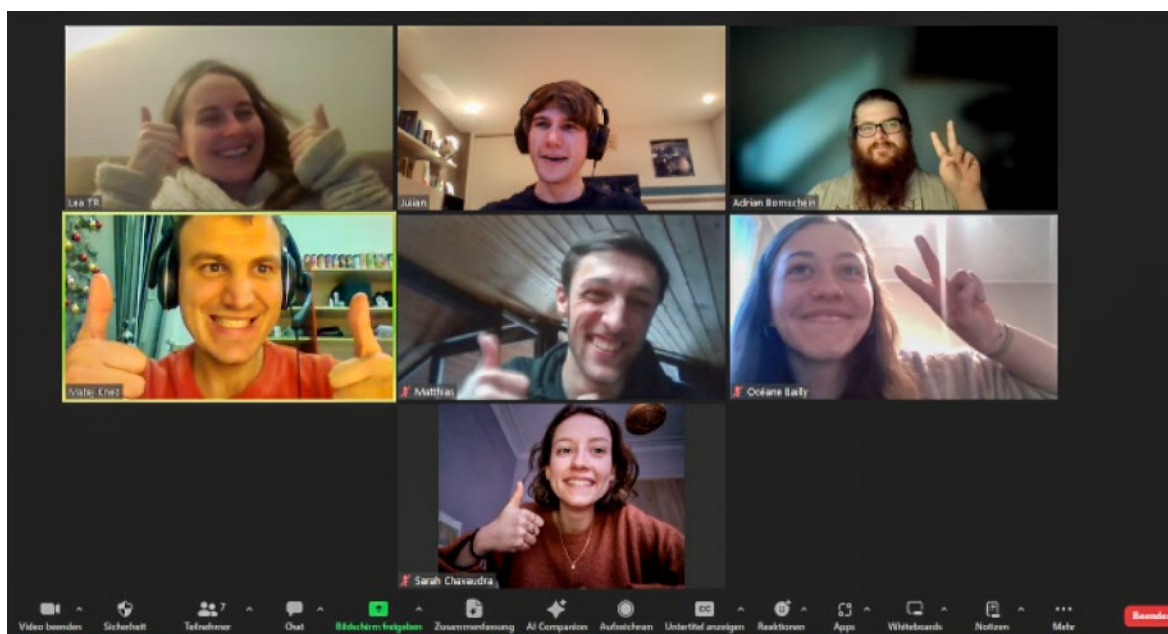


.....
 Values of young people,
Photo: Samo Kham.

The illustration shows some post-its with values of young people.

5. Postulates

The formulation process for the postulates began at the start of the project with the first workshops for young people. First, a webinar on Youth Participation in the Alpine Policy Framework was organized with speakers from CIPRA International, the General Secretary of the Alpine Convention and Members of the Youth Parliament to the Alpine Convention. This was followed by a webinar organized by ESPON on the topic of quality of life. Young people in the Alpine region also took part in the Living Labs, discussing aspects of a good quality of life and what is still missing in their hometown. Interested young people took the results of the webinars and Living Labs further and learned how to formulate postulates in a workshop. These were then formulated in small groups with the help of experienced young mentors based on their political know-how. This focused on three main topics that came up repeatedly during the project and in discussion with young people on the subject of quality of life. The three topics relate to public transport, employment and nature conservation.



Young people and mentors from France, Germany and Slovenia working on the postulates, *Zoom Screenshot*.

The screenshot from one of the Zoom meetings between young people and mentors from France, Germany and Slovenia working on the postulates.

Seven young people smiling at their computer cameras, four of them showing a thumbs up and two of them showing the peace sign.

5.1. Official postulates from young people living in the Alpine regions

AN ALPINE COMPASS FOR A QUALITY LIFE IN THE ALPS

INTRODUCTION

Three workshops in the form of “Living Labs” on how to improve quality of life in the Alps were held with young people in Slovenia, Germany, and France. A team of six young people analysed the results of these workshops, results from a research article that a partner organisation wrote previously and interviews made with 15 young people living in the Alpine regions, and summarised the problems and proposed solutions for a better life in the Alps for young people regarding the main topics of nature protection, work-life balance and public transport.

They formulated postulates in order to amplify young people’s voices and address the Alpine Convention.

POSTULATE n°1 BETTER NATURE FOR A BETTER LIFE

One criterion for the quality of life in the Alps raised by many young people in the Living Labs and the interviews has been nature preservation.

They emphasized the necessity of easy access to nature both in the city and in the surrounding area, showing that nature and its biodiversity are very valuable to them. To ensure a sustainable future they raised the issue of nature conservation and the ongoing deficiency in nature protection, given that both human activities such as tourism, and climate change are damaging biodiversity.

For this reason nature needs to be made accessible in the polluted and urbanized cities in the Alps. To do so, nature must be better protected. The young people especially mentioned mass tourism as having big negative impacts on nature such as soil erosion, loss of biodiversity and pollution. Particularly since the Alps are the last major wildlife area in Central Europe and a "hotspot of biodiversity". Despite covering only 2% of the continent's area, they host around 40% of Europe's plant diversity.

We as young people ask for measures to be taken to develop and to give more room to nature in our Alpine cities, and also to better protect nature in the mountain areas. We strive to make everybody understand the huge role nature plays in the quality of our lives in the Alps, and the role of biodiversity in general, in making human life possible. Protecting nature in the Alps is protecting us.

To sum up, we ask for:

- **Better protection for nature to ensure a sustainable future in the Alps:** e.g. more nature conservation areas, less space consumption, prioritising nature conservation over new infrastructure constructions, leaving more room for nature to developed without any human mark
- **More nature in our Alpine cities for a better quality of life,** for example more biodiverse green spaces in the cities, more trees and parks
- **Better access to nature especially for young people** (for more details please refer to n°3)
- **Better control of mass tourism impacts and activities:** e.g. visitor guidance, nature protection rangers, more awareness campaigns on good practice and behaviour in the mountains, more restriction through quotas if needed in very fragile protected areas, make tourism more sustainable including reducing strongly damaging practices such as creating fake snow with snow cannons

POSTULATE n°2 ALPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE - A NEW ERA OF WORK AND LEISURE

Another very important topic for young people in the Living Labs was work-life balance. Summarising the input for the participants from all over the Alps, we would like to point out the importance of nature to them as mentioned above.

They highly value the possibility of spending their free time outside and close to home. Nature symbolizes peace, tranquillity and freedom. Being able to spend time outside in and with nature has great importance for quality of life and acts as a balance to work.

Despite the availability of nature, rural Alpine areas have a major downside for young people: They lack career opportunities and often offer seasonal work instead of permanent employment. To spend their free time, young people miss meeting places and special youth cultural offerings.

Referring to the topic of job opportunities, young people state the difference between cities and rural areas. Rural areas are perceived as offering more practical jobs and seasonal work. Due to COVID-19 there was a general shift to and rise in remote work, which offered new scope for working from or in the Alps.

We propose to promote a more remote and flexible working environment linking practical jobs and remote working, including throughout different economic sectors. This will give people the opportunity to gain experiences in different working fields. As young people expect more sense and purpose in their job, this also supports companies in finding new skilled and motivated people who have a diverse skill set.

To increase the options and offerings of leisure activities, local events and farmer's markets should be especially promoted. They enable people to feel rooted in the area and promote local partners. The young people of our Living Labs are seeking a stronger connection to culture and the local community. With that in mind we propose more meeting places for young people and cultural events. By protecting nature, free time outdoor activities are protected as well. These measures should be developed in close cooperation with and for the local communities, as they are the foundation on which everything is built. This contrasts with many current tourist-focused strategies. Solutions should be adopted in an interconnected way, with local communities working together and supporting each other.

To sum up, we ask for :

- **Promotion and providing infrastructure for flexible and remote work opportunities** in combination with already existing local jobs: for example fast and reliable internet, mobile phone service, shared community offices
 - **Collaboration among and between Alpine municipalities** to find common solutions to otherwise overwhelming challenges: e.g. common funding of infrastructure projects for the regions
 - **Providing activities and meeting places for young locals**, not just for tourists and during "high season". Cultural events, for example concerts, theatrical performances, poetry slams, should be offered the whole year.
-

POSTULATE n°3 MAKING PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBLE AND EFFICIENT IN THE MOUNTAIN AREAS

For young people who are living in the Alps, and according to the Living Labs results, the current Alpine mobility on offer is not sufficient. They demand more frequent public transport, particularly during peak hours and later in the evening to reduce dependence on individual mobility. Moreover, the sometimes complex public transport system (tariffs and changes) is not efficient, and does not encourage the use of public transport.

All cities in the Alpine arc face the challenge of congestion at peak times, and their inhabitants suffer the consequences of the greenhouse gases emitted by cars. Young people in particular suffer as they cannot use a car on their own but are still exposed to the damage. Atmospheric pollution remains in the valleys and can have a major impact on people's health. Moreover, every year many tourists come to mountain areas, exacerbating the problems of congestion and pollution.

Public transportation is the first solution to limiting the number of cars and allowing both urban and rural residents to continue to enjoy leisure activities and travel around the region, even if the services are fragmented.

The focus should be on improving connections between Alpine regions. Connections are often scarce or require extensive detours. Regarding ticket prices, the combination of a high price with a complicated highly regionalised ticket system is not satisfactory for young people. The same applies to large families and poorer households. Lowering the ticket prices would give more people access to public transport and therefore make travel more affordable, especially for young people.

To sum up, we ask for:

- **High-quality public transportation services:** higher frequency and longer operating hours
 - **New routes according to the needs of the local population**, in particular routes allowing better access to mountain areas
 - **Reduced public transport fares to encourage use of public transport**, especially for young people
-

CONCLUSION

During this project, the aforementioned problems were found in every participating Alpine country. For us young people this is a strong indicator for more cooperation in the Alps to find effective solutions in alignment with the local communities. At the same time the problems themselves are hugely interconnected. Nature not only raises quality of life but also plays a crucial role in ensuring a healthy work-life balance. Public transportation facilitates this and additionally enhances the quality of life for young people. Tackling these issues together can lead to a significant improvement in the quality of life in the Alps for young people.

6. Project conclusion

The Alpine Compass project served as a comprehensive initiative aimed at understanding and improving the quality of life for young people living in the Alpine region. Through a series of activities such as interviews, Living Labs, webinars and workshops, the project engaged young individuals from Slovenia, France, Germany and Liechtenstein in discussions about their needs, challenges and aspirations. One of the project's strengths was its multi-stakeholder approach, involving young people, experts, policymakers and community representatives. This approach ensured that diverse perspectives were considered and facilitated the co-creation of solutions tailored to the specific contexts of each Alpine country.

The literature review emphasized a shift towards holistic evaluations, encompassing well-being and environmental factors. Common themes across France, Germany and Slovenia highlighted the importance of employment, housing, social integration and environmental quality. This research underscored the need for policymakers to consider a broader range of indicators and prioritize transnational cooperation to address shared challenges and opportunities. Interviews across the region revealed common priorities, including a healthy environment, sustainable mobility, vibrant social interactions and concern over climate change.

Implemented through the Alpine Compass project, the Living Labs approach successfully engaged youth from France, Germany, Slovenia and Liechtenstein in co-creating solutions to enhance quality of life. Insights gathered from these sessions provided valuable guidance for policymakers in designing sustainable strategies for youth well-being in the Alpine region. The formulation of postulates in the project reflected the collective voices of Alpine youth, addressing key issues related to nature preservation, work-life balance and public transport accessibility. These postulates served as a roadmap for policymakers to address interconnected challenges and promote the well-being of young individuals while safeguarding the region's natural beauty and cultural heritage.

Moreover, the project highlighted the interconnectedness of various aspects of quality of life, such as the relationship between nature conservation and mental well-being, or the link between transportation accessibility and social inclusion. By recognizing these interdependencies, the project emphasized the importance of holistic and integrated approaches to improving quality of life in the Alps. Overall, the Alpine Compass project not only shed light on the unique needs and perspectives of young people in the Alpine region but also demonstrated the value of collaborative efforts in addressing complex socio-environmental challenges. Through continued engagement and action, the project aimed to contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive future for Alpine communities.

7. Sources and literature

The following documents have been produced in the framework of the project Alpine Compass and are available from the project partners:

- Erasmus+ Application, Project Alpine Compass: Youth for quality of life in the Alps, Round 3, 2022.
- Research Paper, Quality of Life among young people in the Alps, March 2024.
- Analysis of Interviews - Slovenia, Germany, September 2023.
- Transcripts of all Interviews - Slovenia, Germany, France, Liechtenstein, September 2023.
- Report of all Living Labs - Slovenia, Germany, France, January 2024.
- An Alpine Compass for quality of life in the Alps. Official postulates from young people living in the Alpine regions. March 2024.
- Carlo Sessa, Quality of Life in the Canton of Ticino, July 2023, powerpoint presentation.
- Vera Bornemann, Youth participation in the Alpine Policy Framework, May 2023, powerpoint presentation.
- Janez Nared, Teritorialna kakovost življenja v Sloveniji, December 2023, powerpoint presentation.
- Kaspar Schuler, Youth in politics - how does it work, May 2023, powerpoint presentation.
- Report - Webinar: Quality of life as a tool for implementing EU values and objectives, July 2023.
- Report - Workshop: Youth work, May 2023.
- Sandra Di Biaggio, Quality of life as a tool for implementing EU values and objectives, July 2023, powerpoint presentation.



Co-funded by
the European Union

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.



ALPENKONVENTION
CONVENTION ALPINE
ALPSKA KONVENCIJA
CONVENZIONE DELLE ALPI

Slovensko predsedovanje Alpski konvenciji 2023-2024
Slovenian Presidency of the Alpine Convention 2023-2024

