

THE ALPINE CONVENTION AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SLOVENIAN ALPINE AREAS

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Abstract

Alpine Convention, international contract for protection of the Alps, represents a framework for sustainable development in the Alps. However, success of this contract depends on implementation on local level, where spatial policies face local interests, and where local communities search innovative projects to live and stay in the Alps. The article shows best practice examples of implementation of Alpine Convention in Slovenia on local level.

Key words: Alpine Convention, sustainable development, best practice examples, the Alps

ALPSKA KONVENCIJA IN NJEN PRISPEVEK K TRAJNOSTNEMU RAZVOJU V SLOVENSKEM ALPSKEM SVETU

Izvilleček

Alpska konvencija, mednarodna pogodba za varstvo Alp, predstavlja okvir za doseganje trajnostnega razvoja v alpskem svetu. A njeno uresničevanje je odvisno predvsem od izvajanja na lokalni ravni, kjer se uresničujejo prostorske politike, posegi v prostor in kjer se rojevajo ideje o številnih projektih ter inovacijah, kako živeti in ostati v Alpah. Prispevek govori o delovanju Alpske konvencije ter izvedenih primerih dobrih praks Alpske konvencije v Sloveniji.

Ključne besede: Alpska konvencija, trajnostni razvoj, primeri dobre prakse, Alpe

I. INTRODUCTION

Mountainous regions are known to be less developed, also peripheral. However, in developed countries, such as Alpine countries, many mountainous areas are facing significant development and spatial pressures, too. For several decades following World War II, industry, transport and agriculture changed the landscape of the Alps tremendously. Many Alpine villages, valleys or areas became known around the world for their landscape beauty and tourism services (some of them were famous even before this era). The global tourism industry grew rapidly and tourists flowed into the Alps, bringing development, capital, growth of income, population growth, but also degradation of landscape in some parts, which resulted in losses of traditional landscape physiognomy. Other parts, where development did not take place, faced depopulation, and aging of population, which also brought about the loss of traditional landscape patterns. This trend of rapid changes and ecological problems, which started in the 1950s and accelerated in following decades, was detected by small international group of experts and researchers at the start of the 1950s, when they established a small society, the Commission for Protection of the Alps (CIPRA). This organization grew slowly over the decades, and finally became the main non-governmental organization for protection and sustainable development in the Alps. The goal of CIPRA was international protection of the Alps, with all Alpine countries agreeing and accepting it on the highest political levels. At first, this idea was more wish than reality, but as the years passed by the process continued and by the end of the 1980s, it became a reality.

2. ALPINE CONVENTION AND ITS OPERATION

After years of efforts, the Alpine Convention, a contract for protection of the Alps was written, and in 1991 the Alpine countries of Austria, Italy, France, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Germany, as well as the EU, were invited to sign it in Salzburg. Slovenia signed the Convention in 1993, and Monaco did so in 1995.

The convention consists of eight protocols:

- Spatial planning and sustainable development;
- Conservation of nature and countryside;
- Mountain farming;
- Mountain forests;
- Tourism;
- Energy;
- Soil conservation;
- Transport.

In 2006, two ministerial declarations were adopted:

- Declaration on Population and Culture, and
- Declaration on Climate Change (Alpska konvencija, 2012).

The Alpine Convention is an international document; its operations and processes, related to its content, are run by bodies of Alpine Convention. The Presidency of Alpine Convention lasts two years and shifts among all Alpine countries. Slovenia has run the presidency three times, 1995–1996, 1997–1998 and 2009–2011.

The most important body of the Alpine Convention is the Alpine Conference, which is the political decision-making body of the Alpine Convention and consists of the ministers of the contracting parties and observers, such as non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and international networks (Alpska konvencija, 2012).

The Permanent Committee is the executive body of the Alpine Conference, and ensures that the Convention's decisions, principles and aims are put into practice. The Permanent Secretariat provides support to the decision-making organs of the Convention, favors the exchange of experience and knowledge about the Alps, and is in charge of public relations for the Alpine Convention. Its main office is in Innsbruck (Austria), and there is a branch office in Bolzano (Italy). Working groups and platforms are set up according to the current needs of the Convention. Their responsibility consists of developing new protocols, recommendations and implementing measures, studying ongoing developments as well as reporting progress to the Alpine Conference and Permanent Committee (Alpska konvencija, 2012).

Slovenia ratified the Alpine Convention in 1995, but ratification of all protocols happened in 2003. Since 2004, the convention has been a part of Slovenian legislation. To date, the Alpine Convention became a part of state legislation in Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein, France and Slovenia. Switzerland, Monaco and Italy still have not ratified all the protocols (Ferreira, 2005; Alpska konvencija, 2012).

2.1. The Alpine Convention as a framework for sustainable development in the Alps

Sustainable development is based on use of environmental sources up to the level of their capabilities of regeneration (Špes et al., 2002; Vintar Mally, 2007), therefore, the regeneration of these sources must be big enough to replace the loss. The political framework of the Alpine Convention enables its international coordination and operation on the ministry level and on the level of senior public servants. It also gives the framework for local-level operations, where it is implemented. However, sustainable development can only be realized on the local level, where local communities, NGOs, different networks and other stakeholders make decisions for spatial and other policies. It is a well-known saying that the Alpine Convention is alive as much as it is alive on local level, among ordinary people. On the local level, far from the political highlights, the people can see the projects and their results. Good or bad practices from one community are educational for others; thus, people can see the effects of such political agreement. If some ideas or even agreements such as the Alpine Convention do not get support at the local level, they have very little chance of becoming important or even existing.

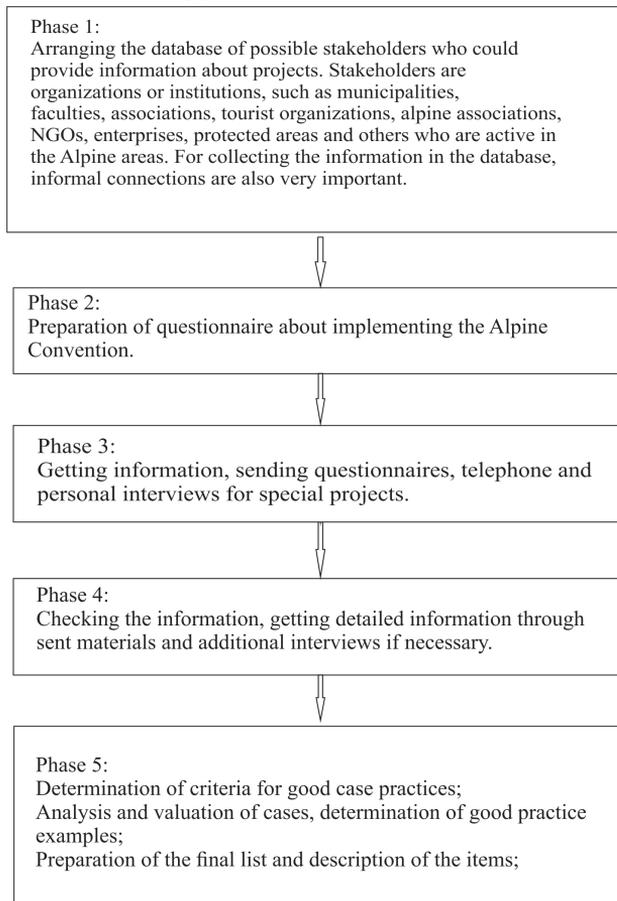
2.1.1. Implementation of Alpine Convention on local level in Slovenia

During the third Slovenian presidency to Alpine Convention (2009–2011), the Slovenian Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning decided to make an overview of the implementation of the Alpine Convention at the local level in Slovenia within previous ten years. Such an overview had not been done before, so no one had comprehensive information on what kind of projects, initiatives and actions were taking place in the Slovenian Alps. Although there was no special support from the government to implement the Alpine Convention, many municipalities, NGOs, companies or development agencies searched for different ways to obtain financial sources to implement various projects of sustainable development, related with the aims of the Alpine Convention.

The methodology of the overview consisted of following phases (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Methodology of survey

Slika 1: Metodologija raziskave



CIPRA Slovenija reviewed all the projects to determine whether its content fulfills the framework of one or more protocols of the Alpine Convention, and if it could be an example of good practice. It is true that the Alpine Convention enables a wide range of measures and actions, so almost all projects were fulfilling at least one aim of the Alpine Convention, but this does not mean that the project was a good or best practice example, which was the main task of the project. To obtain a better differentiation of the projects, CIPRA Slovenija introduced five additional criteria. All the projects that did not fulfill at least two out of five additional criteria were excluded; the remaining ones were examples of good practice. Each criterion fulfilled brought one point to the project, so projects were ranked by the points they obtained.

Additional criteria were:

1. **Increase of sustainable tourism services.** This criterion considers projects that increase the reputation of the destination. They also contribute to an increase of sustainable tourist services. Such projects tend to attract more visitors, but by sustainable means, to offer sustainable experience of a landscape and destination as such.

Background: Tourism is an important economical pillar; it enables various kinds of recreation not only to the Alpine population, but worldwide. To the Alpine population, it brings important income, but, in the long term, these areas can remain interesting and competitive only if they preserve their ecosystem potential, which can be achieved only with sustainable management.

2. **Investments in economic infrastructure, strengthening of local identity and social image.** For projects that raise local identity with investments in local economic structures or infrastructure.

Background: With such projects, tourist services are stronger, and it is also positive for the strengthening of social structure. In this group, there are also projects of taking care of local environment (tidy streets, nice lawns, wide pavements, etc.) with the aim of achieving better quality of life to locals and visitors.

3. **Investments in sustainable energy and innovations.** For projects that increase energy efficiency or introduce innovative technologies.

Background: Low energy efficiency is one of main problems, not only in the Alps but also in other areas. Among all Alpine countries, Slovenia has the biggest problems with energy efficiency in sectors such as transport, heating and manufacturing. The similar situation is with energy self-sufficiency, which has decreased in recent decades. Today, in times of rising prices of fossil fuels, renewable energy sources of the Alps are becoming increasingly important. This was enabled by implementing new technologies and innovations; so we can see today in many Alpine communities various projects that use local energy and material sources (wood for heating, wood for construction, insulation, solar energy for heating or electricity, hydro, wind or thermal power).

4. **Taking care of the cultural landscape.** For projects that preserve the traditional Alpine cultural landscape, but give it new functions.

Background: Awareness for preserving cultural heritage and its value is very important in the Alpine area. The Alpine landscape became a label for the Alps worldwide and

contributes to Alpine identity. Preserving and promoting the values of the traditional Alpine landscape provides important jobs, but it also contributes to biological diversity.

- 5. Rise of social competences.** For projects that increase social competences of the local population, such as those ensuring jobs for locals, granting new skills, know-how, and are focused on target groups with disadvantages in the labor market (older population, people with lack of education, people with insufficient mobility due to economic or some other reasons).

Background: Many Alpine areas are known to be less developed, where local population has lost a competitive position in comparison to populations from other areas, which leads to degradation of social and economic environment. The emigration of the young and active population causes aging of the local population and a vicious circle of social degradation. Investments in the education of the local population on how to remain and work successfully in local countryside are crucial for a successful local society and economy.

The data for evaluation of projects were gathered by inquiries at local agencies, municipalities, NGOs and other stakeholders; many of them were asked or interviewed several times in several weeks. Nevertheless, it was impossible to list all the projects, because the responses of organizations were very different. Despite some difficulties, we can say that most of the projects run in the decade before 2009 were collected.

3. RESULTS – PROJECTS THAT IMPLEMENT THE ALPINE CONVENTION

A total of 76 projects was collected from the area ‘covered’ by the Alpine Convention, most of them (11) from the municipality of Nova Gorica. In smaller municipalities, fewer projects were done, due to a lack of know-how and experience, as well as human resources. There are also few projects from the northeastern part of the Alpine area, where the municipalities have similar problems.

Among the 76 projects, 17 were chosen as examples of good practices. Different protocols of the Alpine Convention were represented at different levels:

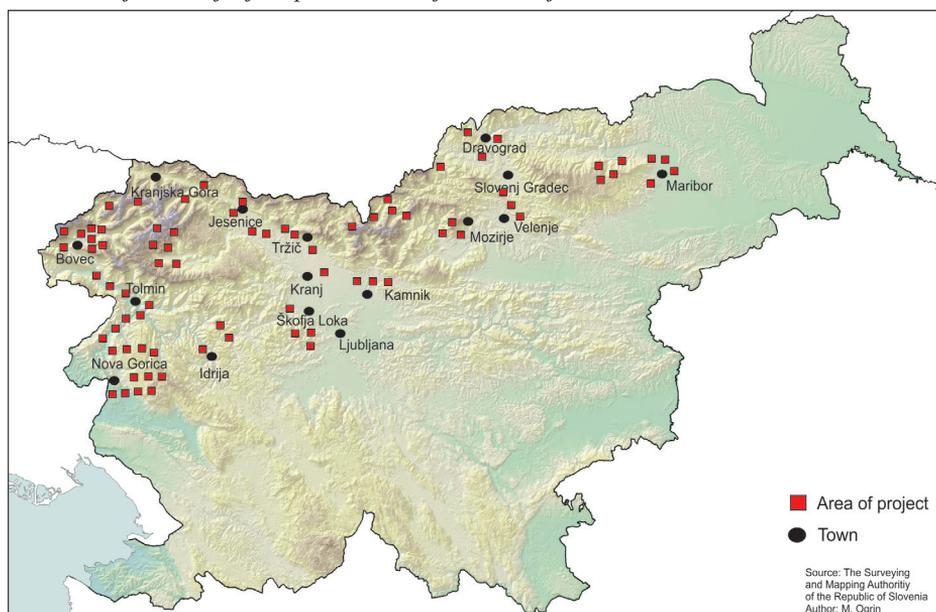
- Tourism Protocol: 11 projects;
- Mountain Farming Protocol: 8 projects;
- Transport Protocol: 5 projects;
- Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development Protocol: 3 projects;
- Energy Protocol: 3 projects;
- Conservation of Nature and Countryside Protocol: 2 projects;
- Mountain Forests Protocol: 2 projects.

The small number of projects fulfilling protocols ‘Energy’, ‘Conservation of Nature and Countryside’ and ‘Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development’ is a matter of concern, because Slovenia has many problems in these fields, not only in the Alpine area, but through-

out the country. These problems are related with illegally built buildings in protected areas and elsewhere, the construction of the TEŠ-6 thermal power-plant in Šoštanj, a lack of sustainable spatial planning, such as sustainable mobility plans or car-free or car-reduced areas, energy efficient neighborhoods, etc. We also have very small number of projects dealing with forests, in term of implementing Alpine Convention, but in general we can say that Slovenian mountain forests are well preserved with rich biodiversity and fauna, including wolves, brown bears, lynx and jackals.

Figure 2: Location of Alpine Convention projects in Slovenia

Slika 2: Projekti izvajanja Alpske konvencije v Sloveniji



3.1. Best practice examples of the Alpine Convention in Slovenia

Among the best practices, we consider projects that, in addition to the protocols of the Alpine Convention, met at least two additional criteria, and took place in area within Alpine Convention.

Each project got one point for fulfilling one criterion, and Table 1 shows the ranked list of projects that are best practice examples. In this article, we describe only the best three, which obtained four or five points; a description of all others can be found in the project report (Izbor in analiza primerov ..., 2010).

Table 1: List of best practice examples of implementing Alpine Convention in Slovenia until 2010
Preglednica 1: Seznam primerov dobre prakse izvajanja Alpske konvencije v Sloveniji do leta 2010

Project title	Lead partner	Period	Points
Management of Logar Valley Landscape Park	Logarska dolina, d.o.o.	Since 1992	5
Environmentally friendly and energy-efficient Spa Snovik	Zarja Kovis, d.o.o.	Since 1994	4
Ecovillage Čadrg	Triglav National Park, local farmer	Ongoing	4
CRPOV Dovje Mojstrana	Development agency Dovje	Since 1997	3
Traffic calming in Julian Alps	Municipality of Kranjska Gora	2008–2009	3
Preservation of bio- and landscape diversity on Pokljuka	Triglav National Park	2005–2009	3
Sustainable mobility plan in Nova Gorica	Municipality of Nova Gorica	2005–2006	3
Restoring possibilities for presentation of landscape products	Local action group for development/ LAS za razvoj	2008–2009	3
Lokalc	Municipality of Velenje	Since 2008	3
Traffic calming in Vrata Valley	Municipality of Kranjska Gora	2005–2006	3
Improving and increasing of countryside offer	Local action group for development/ LAS za razvoj	2008–2009	2
Tourist farm Mulej	Family Mulej	Ongoing	2
Tourist infrastructure Solčavsko	Municipality of Solčava	2008–2009	2
Slovenian Alpine Museum	Municipality of Kranjska Gora	Since 2010	2
International festival of Alpine flowers	Tourism Bohinj – public agency for improving of tourism	Since 2007	2
CO ₂ neutral transport for the Alpine area (CO ₂ – Neutroalp)	B.A.U.M. Consult GmbH München	2008–2012	2
More knowledge on countryside	Local action group for development/ LAS za razvoj	2008–2009	2

Source/Vir: Izbor in analiza primerov ..., 2010

3.2. Logar Valley Landscape Park

The management of Logar Valley Landscape Park is the best known example of sustainable tourism in the Slovenian Alps. In 1987, the municipality of Mozirje established a landscape park. At the beginning of the 1990s, increasing pressures were encountered in the park due to daily picnic tourism, wild camping and increased visits in summer time. Because there was no appropriate infrastructure and management, these processes were increasingly unbearable and disturbing. Conflicts between local land owners and visitors grew from year to year. As with most of the protected areas at that time, Logar Valley Landscape Park did not receive any financial support to solve the problems and to manage the protected area. This changed in 1992 when the government gave a concession to a group of

local land owners to run the protected area. This was the first case in which the government accepted the management of a protected area from the bottom up. One of first tasks of this local consortium was traffic calming and regulation of car parking. Their long-term vision was not how to limit visits, but how to manage them in sustainable way. The measures taken since establishing the consortium were as follows (Izbor in analiza primerov ..., 2010):

- Arranging of picnic places and car parks. They redirected traffic flows to several spots, so traffic was more concentrated on designated areas. In other areas, parking was no longer allowed.
- Setting of information signs and panel boards for interpretation of natural and cultural features, and for orientation and information in the valley.
- Setting of three larger car parks at the entrance to the valley. This measure was very important, because it reduced the use of cars in the valley.
- Introducing entrance fees for motorized vehicles (cars, buses, motorbikes). This income is an important financial source for employees in the landscape park and encourages visitors to leave their cars at the entrance and enjoy the valley by sustainable means (bike, walking, and carriage). This measure also shows to visitors that the unique Alpine landscape is a privilege and has a price.
- Agreement with the government to reconstruct the main road through the valley and lets the municipality to manage the road, so they can limit traffic flows without the government involvement.
- Arrangement of a seven-kilometer footpath through the valley, so that visitors can enjoy the landscape and do not have to walk on the road when they want to walk through the valley.
- Agreement that no new hotels or any other tourist infrastructure will be built. All tourist services must be held within existing buildings which may be renewed.
- Employment of local population in the protected area.

After these measures were accepted, conditions in the valley changed for the better very rapidly, and new ways for the future development of the valley were defined. The number of visitors grew fast through the first half of the 1990s, and growth slowed down in the second half. The peak was achieved in 2001, when 114,000 visitors came into the valley. In recent years, the number of visitors fell to around 85,000 to 91,000 (Prašnikar, 2011).

The income from the entrance fee brings around one third of annual budget needed for operating the protected area (Goetz, 2007). Since the visitors see a well-arranged and maintained landscape, they know that the entrance fee goes for development of the valley. Only for those who come to the valley for a short lunch break the entrance fee is a cost they would rather avoid. A future challenge for landscape park is organizing public transport, at least on summer weekends, when the number of visitors is very high.

Over the last twenty years, the Logar Valley Landscape Park has become one of the best managed protected areas in Slovenia. The way of self-organizing in the consortium of local stakeholders who run the protected area convinced the jury of 'Future in the Alps' project, led by CIPRA International (Goetz, 2007), that it was one of the best examples of how to manage protected area with local know-how.

Figure 3: Logar Valley is one of the most scenic Alpine valleys in Slovenia. The wisdom of local residents is obvious in management of landscape park (photo: Š. Bokal)

Slika 3: Logarska dolina je ena najlepših dolin v slovenskih Alpah. Modrost lokalnega prebivalstva se kaže v vodenju in upravljanju krajinskega parka (foto: Š. Bokal)



3.3. Ecovillage Čadrg

Farming in Slovenia is in very dynamic state, facing a rapid decrease of food self-sufficiency and a reduction of arable land. We are also facing fast modernization of farming, often associated with heavy use of phyto-pharmaceutical additives and negative impacts on environment and biosphere. Because of these processes, the appearance of new ecovillage in the Julian Alps, proves that alternative ways of farming and producing food are possible and also provide working places. The example of Čadrg shows how to revitalize Slovenian mountainous areas (covering almost 70% of Slovenia), which went through strong depopulation during the last century. The village of Čadrg, on the slopes of the Tolminka River valley, was almost abandoned forty years ago; today, it has more than 30 people. The success of the village comes from the help and cooperation between local families. Their positive energy was apparent by the agreement to accept the community of Don Pierino, a community of young men who fell into vicious cycle of drug abuse, but have decided to fight it and step back into healthy life without drugs. The community was also supported by Caritas, Triglav National Park, the municipality of Tolmin and the Agricultural Advisory Service (Prihodnost v Alpah, 2012). The last two bodies helped with co-financing the small

village dairy factory. Experts soon discovered that the village almost fulfilled most of the conditions for ecological farming, so not many changes had to be introduced in farming. Trainings on ecological agriculture were organized for the village farmers.

To obtain the status of ecological farming, they also joined to several networks and were granted the 'Biodar' Slovenian eco-label. They sell their products on the marketplaces in Tolmin and Ljubljana. Čadrg also has a tourist farm, where visitors can enjoy the scenic Alpine landscape, homemade organic food and the warm hospitality of locals. Čadrg also shows a niche for many mountain villages, who cannot compete in conventional farming with large fields in the lowlands. Also very important for the village economy is the dairy factory where they can produce local milk products, such as cottage cheese, whey and cheese. Their cheese, called Tolminc, was awarded several times by local cheese networks; however, the most prestigious award came in 2012, when Tolminc cheese was granted protection in the EU, which gave them even more satisfaction and validated their previous decisions. In 1999, they received an award from the Ford Foundation for their sustainable farming and active attitude in searching for ways to live and stay in the mountains. The most active person is Marijana Bončina, who takes care for the connection between villagers and institutions (Prihodnost v Alpah, 2012).

Figure 4: Tolminc cheese from organic farms is an important label for Čadrg village (photo: M. Ogrin)

Slika 4: Sir 'tolminc' pridelujejo na ekološki način in je pomemben zaščitni znak Čadrga (foto: M. Ogrin)



3.4. Environmentally friendly and energy-efficient Spa Snovik

The vision of Spa Snovik was to build an environmentally friendly and energy-efficient spa, which they planned from the beginning when they included expert institutions that helped to build such a facility in Snovik Valley, known for its thermal water.

The first condition for starting the project was to place the facility on the 23.6 hectares of land. Next was the use of renewable sources of energy; the cost of heating was reduced by 28% in only one year (2007) despite of increase of operation by 36%. They implemented a system of heat recuperation for water and air, and they installed a purification system for waste water. They replaced classic electric bulbs with high efficiency bulbs, so the consumption of electricity for lighting fell by about 75% and the consumption of total electricity by about 20%. The heat is produced with biomass from local forests, which also contributes to economic benefits of the local area. The company also installed solar panels and heat pumps. All these measures contributed to a rapid decrease of the CO₂ footprint of the company, as CO₂ emissions in one year were about 305 t lower than before. In 2012, they implemented a program for efficient use of electricity and as a result, the use of electricity fell by another 20%, what represents the saving of additional 120 t of CO₂.

The Spa Snovik was the first enterprise in Slovenia to receive an 'EU Daisy' label, the European eco-label for tourist accommodation services. The company was also the most energy-efficient enterprise in Slovenia in 2008.

The social part of the sustainable paradigm was the creation of around 30 new working places in the company, and indirectly another new 50 jobs. For their guests, they organized a local marketplace, where locals can sell their products; however, guests can also visit locals at home where they can buy their products. They also buy quality and healthy locally produced food and support local customs, which are also a part of their services. For their education program, they arranged 44 km of educational trails, where visitors can get information on nature, local tradition, etc.

For these efforts, the company received international award from CIPRA International in the framework of the cc Alps Project for its climate-friendly operation.

4. CONCLUSION

Our survey showed that on local level in Slovenia many projects dealing with sustainable development are running or have done so; many of them are also connected with the aims of the Alpine Convention. According to the Alpine Convention, most of projects were fulfilling protocols of tourism, mountain farming and transport. Although many projects were connected with Alpine Convention, the initiative for them did not arise from the ideas of the Alpine Convention. This shows that we still do not see the idea of the Alpine Convention as a main actor for sustainable development and living in the Alps. Although the image of the Alpine Convention in Slovenia has grown in recent years, especially after the third presidency (2009–2011), systematic support for implementation of the Alpine Convention is still lacking.

The Alpine Convention has a chance to become a framework for the shift to the low carbon Alps and green growth in the Alps. Many projects show how local initiatives in other Alpine countries can be connected with idea of the Alpine Convention. One of the best examples comes from Austria, from small village of Werfenweng, where the idea of sustainable tourism mobility for guests of the village grew in the 'Alpine Pearls' network: a network of small tourist places that implement soft mobility as their main tourist attraction. A similar example is the group of villages offering sustainable mountaineering as soft tourism in Austria, called Bergsteigerdörfer.

The most active Slovenian municipalities in the promotion of the Alpine Convention are Bovec, Kranjska Gora, Bohinj, Kamnik, Idrija and Nova Gorica. The municipality of Idrija was also proclaimed to be the Alpine City of the year 2011, a confirmation for their new, sustainable development strategy, after several centuries of mining tradition, to assure safe future for current and future generations.

In contrast, in many other Slovenian Alpine municipalities the Alpine Convention is not known at all or does not have significant support. Some of them do not even know that they are in the area of the Alpine Convention. We also established that many communities do not know the good examples of others, which shows that we should strengthen cooperation among them. We need to convince local organizations that the Alpine Convention can be a reason for better cooperation and an easier shift toward sustainable development on the local level. The problem is connected with the upgrading of some successful projects after they are finished, so that they would become a permanently or long-running projects.

Unfortunately, it is also true that most of examples of good practice would have happened even if these municipalities would not have been in the area of Alpine Convention, nor were they supported for implementing the Alpine Convention. The best examples described in this article are already long, well-known stories, result of local initiatives and the willingness to enter a way of sustainable development in the local area. The story from Logar Valley is probably the most complex, because it includes spatial management and most of the activities in protected area. It is also the first example of a protected area in Slovenia run from the bottom up.

The Čadrg ecovillage is a very successful example of mountain farming, although it is limited to one small mountain village. Despite the administrative and other problems the local farmers face almost daily, their determination to stay in the mountains and also their cooperation on the village level and with institutions such as the municipality of Tolmin, Triglav National Park or Agricultural Advisory Service is an example for small mountain villages of how to stay alive and cope successfully in an era of global farming.

Spa Snovik shows how one of the most important branches of Slovenian tourism can operate in sustainable way, and improve its reputation, profit and number of guests due to its green operation. This should be an important sign to other Slovenian spas of how to make steps forward towards soft tourism.

The projects examined in our survey could be the basis for the further implementation of the Alpine Convention in Slovenia. Slovenia should support local initiatives for implementation of the Alpine Convention, first in fields of energy efficiency, protection of soil and

mountain forests, because to this date these topics were almost ignored in many projects. However, it would be necessary to establish systematic support for the implementation of the Alpine Convention, with different focuses each year, which would be supported through special financial funds. All protected areas in the Slovenian Alps could also be the centers for the promotion of the Alpine Convention and should participate in its promotion at special events, such as Alpine Convention Day, which takes place each year in Slovenia since 2010.

(Translated by Matej Ogrin, proofread by Terry Troy Jackson)

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Povzetek

Alpska konvencija, mednarodna pogodba za varstvo Alp, predstavlja okvir za doseganje trajnostnega razvoja v alpskem svetu. A njeno uresničevanje je odvisno predvsem od izvajanja na lokalni ravni, kjer se uresničujejo prostorske politike, posegi v prostor in kjer se rojevajo ideje o številnih projektih ter inovacijah, kako živeti in ostati v Alpah. Slovenija je ratificirala konvencijo leta 1995, njeni izvedbeni protokoli pa so stopili v veljavo leta 2004. Toda izvajanje take pogodbe je odvisno zlasti od njenega uresničevanja v občinah, kjer se v želji, kako uspešno tekmovali v globalnem svetu, dnevno srečujejo z odločitvami v prostoru, ki imajo bodisi negativne, bodisi pozitivne posledice.

Med tretjim predsedovanjem Slovenije Alpski konvenciji (2009–2011) je padla odločitev, da je potrebno opraviti pregled izvajanja Alpske konvencije na lokalni ravni v Sloveniji od njene uveljavitve naprej in pripraviti nabor primerov dobre prakse njenega izvajanja. CIPRA Slovenija, ki je del mednarodne organizacije CIPRA, nevladne organizacije za varstvo Alp, je prevzela to nalogo in evidentirala 76 projektov, ki so izpolnjevali prvi nabor kriterijev. Največ projektov je bilo izvedenih v zahodnem delu območja veljavnosti Alpske konvencije v Sloveniji, zlasti v občinah Nova Gorica, Tolmin, Bovec, Bohinj in Kranjska Gora. V ožji izbor se jih je uvrstilo 17, med katerimi so trije projekti še posebej izstopali. To so bili projekti 'Upravljanje krajinskega parka Logarska dolina', 'Ekološka vas Čadrg' in 'Okolju prijazne terme Snovik'. Vsak od teh primerov dobre prakse kaže, da je izvajanje trajnostnega razvoja na lokalni ravni zelo raznoliko in da dosega tako rekoč vsa delovanja naše družbe, od kmetijstva, prometa, energetike, turizma, do pridelave hrane itn. Vsa ta področja pokriva tudi Alpska konvencija, ki ima kljub temu, da ji nekateri očitajo togost, morda tudi že zastarelost, še vedno veliko priložnost, da postane okvir trajnostnega razvoja in prehoda na nizkoogljično družbo v Alpah.

V Sloveniji so posamezni primeri, ki jih resnično lahko poimenujemo primeri dobre prakse, dokazali, kako lahko določila Alpske konvencije uporabimo sebi v prid, a sistemske podpore takim prizadevanjem še vedno ni, zato je tudi prepoznavnost Alpske konvencije, kot tudi priložnosti, ki jih ta ponuja, v Sloveniji še vedno pomanjkljiva. Primeri iz sosednje Avstrije, npr. naselje Werfenweng ali združenje avstrijskih pohodniških krajev 'Bergsteigerdörfer', nam kažejo, da so potenciali trajnostnega razvoja, ki jih prinaša Alpska konvencija, v Sloveniji še bistveno večji, kot smo jih uspeli izkoristiti do sedaj.