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## Alpine Space Forum

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**COPING WITH  
DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE**  
Shaping Policies

INNSBRUCK Austria 22 – 23 February 2011

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EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION





# Enriching the debate

## **THE SECOND THEMATIC EVENT ON KEY ISSUES IN THE ALPINE SPACE**

Following the expert workshop on climate change which took place in 2010, “Coping with Demographic Change” is the second in a series of three thematic events which the Alpine Space Programme is holding in 2010/2011. The European Territorial Cooperation Programme for the Alpine Space aims to use these events to stimulate the policy debate on cross-cutting challenges. In Innsbruck, 120 key players and multipliers, funders and policy makers met with scientific experts and project partners from the programme to present a synoptic view on demographic development in the Alps. The Forum was hosted by the Federal Chancellery of Austria and the State of Tyrol.

This report outlines the key messages of the presentations and workshops held in Innsbruck, organised into three main concepts: migration/integration, centres/peripheries and public services/civil engagement. It unveils the manifold development patterns, as well as the challenges and opportunities which lie ahead and also presents promising approaches by “first movers”. In this way, the Alpine Space Programme aims to encourage joint activities for addressing demographic change in a prompt and determined manner.



## 3 questions to **Christian Salletmaier**

Managing Authority of the Alpine Space Programme (ASP)

### 1

You have launched this series of events on cross-cutting “major” issues. Why focus on demographic change (DC)?

Our overall objective is to stimulate sustainable development, which maintains or even improves the quality of life in the Alpine region. In this respect, DC is extremely relevant and it is high time we tackled the issue. Everyone has been talking about the topic for some years now, but it is rarely examined in its full complexity. Far too often, it is simplified in terms of an ageing population. As a consequence, we still lack adequate policy options and good practice. In order to move forward, we wish to consolidate expertise, highlight all important aspects of demography, pinpoint the opportunities that DC can offer and last, but by no means least, crosslink the key factors in the Alps, where competing interests for the use of very limited space are most apparent. We wish to widen the focus and provide helpful guidance for our project partners. Our ultimate goal is to foster projects that will effectively address this key issue.

### 2

What appears to be the greatest challenge to you personally?

Firstly, DC is an intellectual challenge: it comprises various dimensions often with contradictory developments and requires an integrated approach. Beyond the obvious questions concerning a caring economy, etc. it involves issues such as migration flows, integration, even family life. Secondly, DC is Janus-faced – it is both a political “hot topic” and an opportunity at the same time. For instance, (im)migration is frequently regarded as a threat. However, scientific evidence suggests that merely maintaining population is not a successful strategy – migration is always a necessity!

Furthermore, the ASP is the ideal model for collaboration. This is the best method of addressing DC: working together in order to create tailor-made solutions, for example, when it comes to a fair relationship between cities and peripheries, urban and suburban areas. After all, let us bear in mind that the term “rural” is not a reality for many Alpine areas.

### 3

What is on your agenda now?

In autumn 2011, we will be launching a new call for projects, the last within this programming period. During the drafting of the call, we will of course carefully consider the results of this forum. Finally, we hope that the Innsbruck event has inspired potential partners and encouraged new initiatives to tackle demographic change, just like the first workshop on climate change did. The third major issue will be “Competitiveness” and we have scheduled the forum on this subject for the end of September 2011 in Slovenia. Once more, we look forward to meeting Alpine players and to learning from their contributions and discussions.

# KEY DIMENSIONS

The effects of rising life expectancy, falling mortality and low fertility rates can be felt throughout Europe. Even though demography is difficult to grasp, as population development and structure are complex and its fragile face is changing on a spatial and temporal scale, its impact bears enormous consequences and is highly political: any prudent action now will widen the future scope for decision making and the range of options available. Demographic processes affect all systems – both socio-economic and ecological - and cut across many policy sectors and administrative boundaries. They do of course play a central role in the current EU policy debate. In order to mainstream demographic issues and reflect their complexity, the European Commission has introduced a comprehensive package of strategies and initiatives (see column).

From the start, the Alpine Space Programme has supported projects (see list at p. 17-18) to examine demographic change and by means of this Forum is now addressing the theme on a broader basis and with a view to the next programming period.

Population development is also high on the Alpine Convention's agenda, involving a working group on demography and employment, as well as the report on the state of the Alps relating to "Rural Development and Innovation". Consequently, demographic change has been introduced as one of the five priorities of the Alpine Convention's Multiannual Work Programme 2011-2016.

The development and composition of the Alpine population, as well as inward and outward migration, are often completely different moving from West to East, from North to South, or even from one region to the other. In addition, the high heterogeneity of Alpine regions with regard to their geography as well as to their natural and cultural heritage, makes them more vulnerable to the impacts of demographic change.

During the Innsbruck Forum, the following three concepts were tried and tested as useful groupings for current trends, scenarios and key questions emerging from demographic change in the Alps.

## Economic centres & peripheries

The two extremes - booming cities and abandoned villages - are only tiny pieces in the complex jigsaw that makes up the Alpine Space. In fact, Europe's mountainous core is characterized by the most diverse development patterns: booming suburban structures adjacent to the large cities at the fringe, rural areas experiencing either influx of new population groups or severe depopulation, valleys with a high touristic impact, or hundreds of small and medium towns displaying manifold economic and social vitality. Due to these multi-faceted patterns, the impacts of demographic change are being experienced very differently from region to region. Thus, each socio-demographic profile dictates different priorities and activities.

For a clear perspective on these profiles, a critical view on the indicators used to define development planning is essential. In this respect, one of the key questions is: "what is a centre?" Current planning approaches in Europe have mainly focused on the largest cities (or so-called "MEGAs") as driving forces for economic development. The question is, however, whether such an approach focusing on centres and peripheries provides useful information for Alpine spatial policies. To think of an alternative planning approach would mean to focus on how Alpine regions relate to neighbouring metropolitan regions and organise their own networks of centres and peripheries. In this context, the key challenge

## Demography A European issue

Prominence is given to demographic issues in the current EU cohesion policy. Demographic change is highly relevant for the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the territorial cohesion agenda. Furthermore, the Commission is addressing the issue through initiatives such as:

- **Bi-annual European Demography Forum**
- **Innovation Partnership Pilot Project on Active and Healthy Ageing**
- **Proposal for the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing**

## Herwig Van Staa

President of the Tyrolean State Parliament and  
Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions (A)

"Demographic change is not just about an ageing society, but also about migration and integration. Furthermore there is the question of how the development will affect our spatial structures: how can we make institutions and services available to our citizens in the future?"

for each locality – be it a large city, small or medium-sized town, rural or sub-urban area – is how it may contribute towards increasing economic and social welfare in a specific way, instead of opposing metropolitan regions with high GDP and productivity.

Those supporting this perspective advocate the delimitation of “functional areas”. These are generally understood to be travel to work areas, i.e. municipalities where at least 10% of the employed population commutes to an urban core area. However, the present representation of functional areas does not necessarily provide a recipe for economic performance and needs improvement. Other components of people’s daily mobility should be considered: schools, public and private services and leisure create different types of flows. The solution could be “functional areas of tomorrow” - defined by the best modes of transportation and the maximum time each person should spend in travel.

Innsbruck, for instance, offers work to 90,000 people, of whom more than 34,000 travel into town and back home on a daily basis, most of them by car. In view of the issue of “peak oil”, present spatial structures will have to be replaced by more energy-efficient ones, making living and housing, but also commuting affordable for future generations.

As a general trend, centres in the Alpine Space are mainly facing problems of growth relating to the classical impacts of metropolisation: sub-urban structures leading to urban sprawl, increased congestion, longer commutes and loss of environmental quality. Nevertheless, many rural areas are also gaining population, some being “real” agricultural areas, some urban fringes.

On the other hand, predominantly remote and mountainous areas have to cope with population decline and shrinkage. This causes a dilemma for Alpine municipalities: losing inhabitants means providing social and technical infrastructure at increased costs per capita and with less fiscal support. Thus, public services are placed under threat and in some Alpine areas in particular there is already a lack of medical services today. One of the taboo questions relating to demographic change is whether frantically maintaining population levels in all localities is the only development option. Other rural areas utilize their role as popular retirement destinations to boost economic growth. On the one hand, this can produce a positive demographic balance; on the other - as the French Rhône-Alpes region has experienced – it can make land prices explode and cause a severe shortage of affordable housing for local people.

Moreover, all Alpine regions are confronted with increasing competition: the Alps as such compete with peri-Alpine and other European spaces, whereas Alpine regions and municipalities tout for skilled workers, young families, prosperous companies, public funding or merely inhabitants. The rising ratio of elderly people is challenging for both the centres and the periphery, which are facing an increasing demand for relevant public services. This phenomenon is intensified in booming regions. Innsbruck, for example, is preparing itself for 2030 when 30 percent of its population will be in the 60+ age category.

## Migration & integration

Alpine regions experience a high degree of migration - whether it is shrinkage or growth, or merely a change in population structure – and are facing an increasing ratio of foreigners. Without immigrants, most European regions would be facing a continuous fall in population overall. Currently there is a trend reversal in Alpine population dynamics. In particular, the French and Bavarian Alps, Western Austria and, after years of severe depopulation, the Italian Alps, are currently favoured by a positive migration balance. According to Caritas Italy, the country is currently facing a migrant flow of 4.5 million foreigners, with a predicted annual growth of 450,000 new inhabitants. During the initial years, migrants concentrated in urban areas, whereas a new trend towards settling in alpine areas can recently be observed. Population density in relation to available settlement area is considered a key indicator with regard to demographic targets. The disparities are obvious: in particular the catchment areas of cities at the fringe, such as the North-Western Italian Alps, show a high density compared with the available area. Whereas the Western French Alps, Southern Bavaria, Central and Eastern Austria as well as Slovenia would offer sufficient settlement areas for potential migrants, provided economic activities and job opportunities are available.

### Michael Ralph

European Commission, DG Regio



“Demographic change is a major cross-cutting theme of importance to current and future cohesion policy. The priorities set up by the Alpine Space Programme are a good example and seem already strategically aligned with the EU 2020 Strategy“

During the 1990s the Alpine population constantly grew by 8 percent and reached approximately 13.6 million by the year 2000. Nevertheless, this increase was not evenly spread amongst all areas. Only half of the Alpine regions experienced a positive demographic trend, the favoured areas being communities situated in easily accessible valleys, especially those in large valleys and basins in the Alpine core and areas at the Alpine fringe. Due to their economic assets, such as higher income levels, good education facilities, provision of skills and specialised labour markets, the booming centres at the Alpine periphery, such as Milan, Torino, Verona (I), Lyon (F), Munich (D), Zurich (CH) and Vienna (A) are particularly attractive, bringing about suburbanisation. Consequently, the communities surrounding them have experienced the strongest growth. Considering the different needs of the population, and the fact that only 20 percent of the total Alpine Space is potential settlement area, conflicts arising in the use of land are obvious: settlement and industrial areas are competing with transport infrastructure, agricultural land, recreational zones and nature conservation.

Peripheral and especially mountainous areas are much more likely to experience the phenomenon of out-migration and/or population ageing. With regard to unemployment rates, the Alpine core is better off, whilst the North-East and South-West are suffering from a shortage of jobs. In addition, the Alpine Space is experiencing a significant North-South decline in terms of young-old dependency. The same applies for single-person households.

One traditional scenario is the emigration of young people who leave their homes for higher education or new job opportunities, whilst retirees might migrate into the same valley, because they wish to spend their best years in a healthy climate surrounded by Alpine or rural scenery. In statistical terms, the population has remained stable. In reality, the influx of retirees intensifies natural demographic change and thus significantly changes the demand in public services. Instead of schools and services for young families, healthcare and services for the elderly will be needed. However, similar to the existing spatial patterns in the Alps, migratory flows produce a wide variety of scenarios.

With regard to one which involves severe decline and depopulated valleys, a critical aspect is closely linked with the centre-periphery issue: what opportunities do we have to stop decline and do they stand in contrast to targets of sustainability? Or even more critical: should we primarily prevent young and educated inhabitants from leaving the mountains for better job opportunities or should we instead open the door to newcomers who may find the mountains an attractive place? In this respect, the fear of brain drain stands in contrast to the hope for a socio-economic reality which might be more dynamic than the status-quo.

Nevertheless, recent municipal figures also show a current trend in the other direction: younger, highly educated people have increasingly started to move to the Alps. Many of them in search of a work-life balance and also encouraged by the combination of tele-working opportunities supported by rapidly developing information technology and urban centres within easy reach. Regardless of whether we are dealing with “urban refugees”, foreigners or “amenity migrants”, all different types of migrants most certainly require different services and policies. Moreover, the influx of “New Alpiners” can cause social tensions.

Migration is also related to the question of cultural identity, which is a particularly delicate issue in the Alps. Whether we refer to unique settlement structures, typical Alpine crafts and traditions or regional dialects and creative work, the following question must be posed: who should be entitled to learn about and transfer, then promote and valorise local Alpine cultures? When integrating new residents, training and education for employability have proved to be effective measures implemented to avoid tensions amongst age or ethnic groups or to avoid social exclusion. Another means of improving regional social cohesion is the introduction of new regional governance approaches, such as councils for young professionals, immigrants, elderly people etc.

## Erik Gløersen

University of Geneva (CH)



“Increasing productivity by agglomerating people and activities is a short-sighted solution. Instead, we should ask ourselves: where should the goods and services needed for our long term development be produced? How can this production be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable?”

## Public services & civil engagement

Demographic trends in Europe indicate a long-term population decline and an ageing population. Today, there are 25 Europeans aged 65+ for every 100 inhabitants of working age (15 to 64 years). In Alpine countries, this share is predicted to increase by 60 (F) to even 110 percent (SI) by 2050. The ratio of very old people (80+) in the EU-25 is predicted to more than double between 2004 and 2050. This development is already strongly affecting public services and challenging the adaptive capacities of regions. Municipalities dominated by an ageing society, for instance, need to include very different items on their list of service requirements than those with a high ratio of young families or foreign migrants. Social cohesion based on equal chances for all citizens regardless of income, age, sex or origin is the general objective. However, the current dynamics in migration processes throughout the Alps can create mismatches in the supply of and demand for social and technical infrastructure, such as healthcare, education or public transport and ICT. In Switzerland, for example, the most recent statistics recorded show that 200,000 professionals are active in hospitals, retirement and nursing homes and related services. The Swiss Health Observatory is estimating an additional need for 25,000 qualified employees by 2020. There is a lack of regional and local policies which actively respond to the needs of a changing society.

One of the key questions here is how to overcome shortages in social services in times of budgetary restrictions. National rules and regulations, such as nursing insurance in Germany, or local legal instruments, such as the “Family Law” that the city of Trento (I) is forging ahead with, can serve as appropriate measures and inspire other Alpine regions. Fewer or more flexible rules that encourage increased civic engagement might be even more effective. However, increasing financial commitment seems inevitable: for example, the financial support that the Federal State of Tyrol (A) has offered to non-profit making social services has more than doubled to almost 8 million euros within the last 20 years. Civil participation can lead to broader intervention and take many forms, from individual volunteerism or organisational involvement to electoral participation. These strategic decisions for a workable mix of public and private initiatives need to be taken on a cross-sectoral and individual basis involving the regions affected. In addition, research is required on the effects of policies for rural development.

In the Alps especially, shrinkage processes lead to an underutilization of services which can undermine the efforts of the regional and local authorities towards cost efficiency. Fewer resources may be available to fund the same fixed costs of network-related infrastructure, such as water and energy supply, as well as schools or childcare facilities. On the other hand, financial distributions to municipalities are largely based on population-related indicators. Therefore decline can have a direct negative impact on municipal budgets. As a future trend and cost-efficient measure, the magic “e” will be commonly used in front of various services such as e-government, e-learning or e-consultation. Further items on the list of requirements for local services should include basic supplies on a polycentric scale, multi-functional and mobile services, flexible public transport services and, where necessary, a well-balanced process of shrinkage in the infrastructure and services back to a sustainable level.

In addition to public or private services, an ageing society will also affect the labour market. Considering interregional competition, there is predicted to be a bottleneck in the qualified workforce and provision of skills, particularly in declining areas. Services relating to competitiveness, such as education and training, or age management provided by small and medium-sized enterprises will therefore be of increasing importance.

General guidelines for coping with demographic challenges and creating new ways of life in an ageing society are offered by several ground-breaking initiatives, such as the PUSEMOR and DART projects. Whilst the former has successfully piloted answers to new demands on public services and provided recommendations for policy making and for the operational level, the latter network of regions is formulating an integrated strategy involving education, social services and healthcare, as well as economic innovation.

### Andrea Kdolsky

Former Austrian Minister of Health, Director of Health at PriceWaterhouseCoopers (A)

“We need an integrated strategy for regional transformation. This will show how regions can organise themselves and adapt public and private services to demographic changes in order to exploit chances for new jobs and innovation. And we need to create a life-cycle-proof neighbourhood.”

# CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

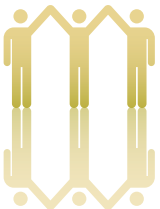
## Defining agendas: priorities for cooperation

In Innsbruck, experts attended thematic workshops relating to the three concepts mentioned above. Before opening the floor for general discussion, experts and project representatives initiated the debate by providing brief contributions and examples from practice. In order to reflect the ongoing debate on demographic change in the Alps, the participants were subsequently invited:

- **to define further effects and trends**
- **to provide input for transforming demographic challenges into opportunities**
- **to identify the need for new approaches or ideas**
- **and finally, to outline the action required for policy makers.**

Here are the main findings of the 120 participants, divided into the following six topics which are of particular significance to the Alpine Space:

## Welcome to the new Alpine residents!



The Alps are experiencing high migration flows. Even if their exact composition is not yet clear, **four types of immigrants** were identified during the course of the Forum:

- re-migrants, mostly elderly, retired people
- migrants from afar, mostly from South-Eastern Europe
- “urban refugees” from amenity-led migration, mostly elderly people
- a “creative class” of young enterprising people.

Figures from North and South Tyrol show that foreign migrants mostly reside in urban areas. However, there is a lack of integration initiatives in the periphery. The Italian-Austrian MigrAlp project is filling a gap regarding foreign migration to small municipalities and rural areas through **monitoring and awareness campaigns**.

Another interesting point was stated with regard to the professional background of people migrating in or out of the area. Particular concern was expressed in terms of the **development in agriculture (the abandonment of farms) and the impacts on natural heritage**, bearing in mind the alarmingly low number of and continuous decrease in young farmers (< 35 years) throughout Europe. Currently, around only 4 percent of the Alpine population earns a living through agriculture, their share having decreased by over 40 percent throughout the last 25 years.

In general, there is a need to carefully investigate what kind of “New Alpiners” are migrating to which locations in order to **determine the services** these people need. **Field research** – either geographical, sociological or anthropological – was found to be indispensable and should be encouraged. The idea of **devising new and more accurate statistical methods** for measuring migration and mobility was also underlined.



All in all, the Alpine population is considered to be homogeneous in composition. However, **cultural dynamics** often seem to be promoted particularly by “New Alpiners” and, in this respect, the need for more knowledge was identified. The “terraced landscapes programme” launched by the Alpine Space ALPTER project has attracted considerable attention. The aim of this project is not only to counteract the abandonment of terraced areas and reduce natural hazards, but also to encourage both “old” and “new” inhabitants to take possession and care of terraces. This entails a **transmission of local knowledge between locals and immigrants**, together with **social and economic integration**.

Furthermore, the need emerged for more **knowledge relating to the legal status of the old and new inhabitants** of the Alps. A better understanding is required of the considerable differences which exist between the various Alpine states with regard to the legal standing of their citizens, for example that of non-EU immigrants or owners of secondary residences. It was therefore recommended that these differences be highlighted by future investigations and taken into full consideration by politicians and administrators.

## Families at work and quality of life

The framework for young families is difficult, as traditional family lines are also affected by demographic phenomena, such as rural exodus or heavy commuting. Both these factors are particularly accentuated in the Alpine Space. **More flexible childcare**, supported by regulations to allow **more private social initiatives**, such as nursing and childcare would offer relief. In addition, enterprises should offer more flexibility in order to facilitate family life and careers for both women and men. Proposals were made to create **models for combining family life with a career**, for defining **more flexible working times** or supporting tele-working. Much attention was given to the region of Trento and its inspiring model strategy to promote family citizenship. The project entitled “Support Family Well-Being” involved various innovative incentives, such as a voucher to assist in achieving a work/family balance, or audits of public infrastructure and even new legislation on family law.



In highly touristic areas, families often face tremendous housing costs. In many parts of the Rhône-Alpes, for instance, housing prices have “exploded” by up to 400 percent within five years. Subsequently, local people cannot find affordable real estate and are forced to leave the area. Here, new concepts are needed for the provision of **accommodation at fair prices**.

**An inter-generational gap** also became evident throughout the discussions. By 2030, 10 percent of the population in the Federal State of Tyrol, for instance, will be made up of children aged between 6 and 15 years, whilst almost a quarter of the population will be aged 65 or older. The ageing society could offer the opportunity of elderly people **volunteering as the (child) carers of tomorrow**. Furthermore, a **need for more inter-generational communication** was identified.

With regard to economic perspectives, increasing interregional competition is placing pressure on the Alpine labour market. **The brain drain** is often followed by shrinking innovation potential and depopulation, together with low income levels and little social appreciation in key sectors can result in a **lack of skilled workers**. Initiatives for enhancing **economic prospects and raising competitiveness in key Alpine economies** were considered to be vital in this respect. The “renaissance” of **traditional economic activities** in agriculture or industry, such as local crafts and the production of authentic regional specialities, etc., should be fostered rather than only focusing on tourism.

Owing to the fact that the poverty rate for people over the age of 65 is considerably higher than for the rest of the population, and that housing costs have increased dramatically in some Alpine areas, **social housing for indigent (old) people** was suggested. **New regional governance approaches**, such as councils for immigrant families and elderly people could provide assistance here.



“The Alps are slowly turning into the Florida of Europe”. This thought-provoking statement reflects the increasing number of retirees living in Alpine regions, the so-called “amenity or lifestyle migration”. Stakeholders were prepared to see this as an interesting opportunity rather than viewing this scenario in a negative light. It comes as no surprise to discover that the spending power of economic migrants and retirees can become a **potential driver of regional economies**, even a potential catalyst for product and service innovation. Some areas already utilise their role as a popular retirement destination **to boost economic growth**. On the one hand, there was a call for the availability of **suitable products and services for elderly people**, particularly in the field of tourism. On the other hand, however, the experts advised **against a dependency on tourism** as a “monoculture”. Local economies in the Alps require **more diversification**. In addition, it was claimed that the expenditure by this target group depends, at least in part, on income generated externally.

Social imbalances between retirees migrating into the area and local inhabitants should be anticipated by the municipalities and regions concerned. In this respect, a need was expressed for **strategies to control prices for housing and social services**. In addition, elderly people have specific accommodation needs. In the long run, the demand for smaller apartments, as well as for new forms of living, such as shared apartments or residential communities combined with assisted living, will continue to rise. Consequently, the demand for houses and larger apartments will be slow.

With regard to housing, the migration of retirees is already presenting communities with huge challenges: some communities in the Bavarian and French Alps are facing a significantly higher proportion of residents aged 65+, as well as exploding housing costs. In addition, new solutions for **a better management of secondary housing** were demanded. These should analyse different approaches in European countries, demonstrate examples of good practice, draw conclusions and offer effective instruments to municipalities and regions.

## Small is beautiful!



Should Alpine territories relate to a hypothetical European “core area”, or should the focus be placed on how they relate to neighbouring metropolitan regions and organise their own networks of cities and villages? Most discussions focused on the latter. Small cities are considered to be the spatial backbones of the Alpine region. Of all the 13.6 million people living in the Alps, 74 percent reside in approximately 3,000 communities with between 1,000 - 25,000 inhabitants. However, they often suffer from a planning approach that focuses on major urban centres and therefore require **special support**. Small regional towns can be boosted as sub-centres by **offering education**, like branches of universities etc., **by positioning themselves** in prosperous niches or creating regional brands, all in all by **practicing territorial marketing**. The experts therefore suggested making better use of endogenous knowledge and resources, and providing improved telecommunication and mobility services in order to further enhance their attractiveness. Furthermore, **improved co-ordination and co-operation among cities and a new urban-rural relationship** were proposed.

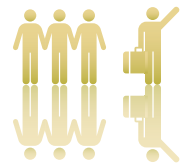
Fortunately, the Alpine Space projects CAPACities and INNOCITÉ are supporting small local urban centres in the Alps. According to the experts involved, regional **administrative policies can have a strong influence** on demographic and economic dynamics. Some regions perform completely differently despite their common or similar demographic size, morphology, landscape and culture. The experience of the practitioners has shown that **transparency** is a crucial factor in the success of **any participation process**. Moreover, local participation should be designed as a long-term collaborative process between stakeholders on an equal footing.

Faced with limited settlement areas, **compact cities with minimum standards for the density of built-up land** are the reference of the moment for land use planning. In this respect, rather radical measures were suggested, such as an end to single family houses, and the call for **land use planning to be carried out on a regional** rather than on a local level.

Some peripheral rural areas are suffering from acute outward migration. The following question gave rise to a lively debate: “**should we keep (young) people** in the Alps, or instead let them leave the mountains, partly in order to pursue individual goals, partly in order to acquire skills which are not offered in the Alpine Space?”. The participants defined two ways of coping with depopulation:

1. To **retain (particularly young) people in remote areas**, for instance by supporting them with special incentives known from other European areas: reduced social security contributions or taxes, higher family and children’s allowances or “soft measures”, such as education, linking locals with their territory or communicating future job perspectives.
2. To allow a **controlled form of shrinkage** in certain peripheral side valleys. However, the municipalities concerned, need support, for instance, when deciding which parts of the infrastructure and public services should be given up. Emotional barriers appear to be involved here. Growth always implies success, whilst shrinkage conjures up the notion of “losing out”.

In general, controlled and socially-cushioned shrinkage has been identified as a **future planning topic**. The Alpine Space project PUSEMOR and the PADIMA project address precisely this dilemma and offer interesting experience. In another project entitled “My Featured Space”, pupils, teachers and researchers examined improvements in rural areas and experienced the following: young people from rural regions are mostly aware of the advantages and disadvantages of life in rural space. In their opinion, **jobs, mobility and leisure time opportunities** were the most important fields in which improvements could be achieved. Many prefer to stay or to come back after education, nevertheless a **lack of expertise is related to business opportunities**.



## Get connected

Declining population leads to lower demand for public services. This places regional and local authorities in a dilemma: maintaining technical infrastructure, settlement structures and a wide range of public services for fewer citizens often proves to be too expensive. However, services are considered crucial for the attractiveness of regions. Therefore the **cost efficiency of service provision** is more important than ever before in the context of population decline, economic crisis and tight municipal budgets.

“Let us move bites and knowledge and not people!” This was the statement that was consequently made during the workshop on public services. The participants were aware that depopulation enforces the need for ICT strategies. Innovative tools such as **e-government, e-business and e-learning** can be crucial for spatial development and pay for themselves by increasing the attractiveness of villages or small towns. These new tools should **involve regional companies** and be designed **to strengthen education**. In addition, **multifunctional public infrastructures**, transport facilities for commuters and mobile public services should complement the service offers.

In this context, **e-health services** – covering long-distance consultation and treatment using ICT tools – is gaining in importance in times of an ageing and mobile society. The Alpine Space project ALIAS is successfully improving **access to telemedicine services** through a virtual network of renowned Alpine hospitals.

Experience in the framework of the ACCESS project has shown that access to broadband internet has not only bridged physical gaps, but also **encouraged social participation** and organisational innovation in rural mountain areas.

However, providing access to all these public services and infrastructure requires **an integrated, demand-orientated approach**.



# SHAPING POLICIES

Demography issues are of high relevance for the implementation of many flagship initiatives of the EU 2020 Strategy. Nevertheless, when it comes to taking action and addressing problems, the field is in its infancy. Specifically in the Alpine Space, with its strongly polarised spatial and demographic development, all the more pro-active regional policy responses to demographic change will have to be stimulated in order to ensure sustainable growth and strengthen social and territorial cohesion.

## Widening the scope

Demography is often narrowly interpreted as the phenomenon of an ageing population. It is high time to strengthen the common understanding and the visibility of its various impacts. Demographic change is a multi-faceted concept; it requires long-term consideration, is difficult to grasp and cuts across administrative boundaries. The three strands identified in the forum proved to be very useful in defining a cross-sectoral approach.

In this context, beyond the challenges created by the impacts of demographic change, it is the opportunities that should also be stressed. New and varied forms of (re- or im-)migration, the peri-urbanisation of Alpine boom areas and retirement areas with a high quality of living, are just a few of these. Continuous heterogeneity in the Alpine regions calls for efficient diversity management. Different types of migration patterns require appropriate policies and measures.

Responding to demographic processes in Alpine regions also requires efforts to strengthen the evidence base in order to better understand the dynamics and opportunities. For example, more knowledge on the various newcomers to the Alps, possibly even a typology, should be generated. Highlighting the background, potential and needs of internal and external migrants would help in the development of new measures and indicators. This should help to adapt policies and instruments to specific local needs as well as to target regional funding. Another interesting question would be the market potential of an ageing society, comprising tourism and recreation, care, mobility or accommodation offers.

## Working together

Common and integrated action can tackle this complex demographic issue much better than a sectoral focus on employment, health or pension. This calls for coordination of different governance levels. When it comes to migration policy, there is a need for greater alignment of national, regional and municipal responses. Furthermore, the participative approach needs to be increased. Bottom-up responses to ageing should lead to emerging regional strategies.

Progressive policy interventions should encourage the exchange of solutions that already exist in the Alps and work in practice. Capitalising on transnational projects within the Alpine Space Programme as well as within other initiatives is suggested. "Take experience from others and tailor it to the needs of your own region", should be the motto. In addition, inter-communal and inter-regional cooperation can help to relieve budgets. The next call for projects to be launched in autumn 2011 by the Alpine Space Programme will have a focus on demographic change and is expected to stimulate even more transferable models.

### Tanja Bogataj

Slovenian Presidency of the Alpine Convention



.....

"We need examples of good practice! And we need to know how to stimulate people to face the future challenges in the Alps. This calls for an innovative mindset. The Alpine Space can be a laboratory for improvement and a mirror for social innovation."

## Rethinking migration and urban planning

Integration (policies) should be designed to stimulate mutual recognition, awareness and a transcultural identity. Experience has shown that involving immigrants in cultivating Alpine traditions can lead to socio-economic dynamism or innovation and help to avoid isolation. Therefore, cultural continuity can also be strengthened as an economic and political resource.

Designing progressive spatial policies for the Alps will involve rethinking urban-rural relationships, as well as polycentricity. Small towns in particular require strengthening as the backbones of rural areas, so that they are able to find competitive niches, create educational offers and invest in being an attractive place to stay for their youth. In this context, future local zoning and land use plans should be made on a regional level. This would ensure planning processes that consider the big picture. Competitiveness amongst key economic partners in the Alps, such as the tourism industry, farmers or small and medium-sized enterprises can be encouraged by new strategies, such as cross-sectoral cooperation and regional branding.

In general, the continuing process of suburbanisation, alongside polarisation trends resulting in strong and weak Alpine regions, needs to be considered. Booming areas of demographic and economic growth – above all urban and suburban municipalities within the Alps, those at their fringe or communities along the big transport axis – have to cope with an increased demand in settlement and commercial areas, public services, labour supply and infrastructure. New concepts are needed in order to enable them to keep pace with this development. Suburbanised areas require alternative strategies and sustainable mobility concepts to avoid negative impacts, such as urban sprawl and long commutes. Taking “peak oil” into account, more energy-efficient spatial structures will have to replace the present ones. These should help to create new living, working and housing patterns, which will secure the quality of life for future generations.

### Georg Schadt

Federal Chancellor of Austria (A)



“Let us take a differentiated view on Alpine regions and their different development needs. We have to find answers to key questions like: what does an increasingly diverse society need? And let us also talk about taboos, such as a fair relationship between urban centres and remote areas or such as the development perspectives for shrinking areas.”

For remote areas, taboos such as shrinkage processes, need to be carefully approached and replaced by well-balanced strategies in areas of population decline. Territorial services are needed especially in these regions to bridge physical gaps. Thus, new concepts are needed involving basic supplies on a polycentric scale, a range of multi-functional and mobile services, a flexible public transport service and ICT as infrastructure ensuring provision of public services, such as (health) care, education and training. These can improve access to training, the labour market and public services and even foster social coherence in small communities. For all these efforts, an integrated anticipated demand-orientated approach is needed.

Future-oriented policies should focus on young families, encouraging flexible care and work offers, intergenerational approaches and affordable housing. France’s public services for families allowing a comparably high birth rate and a higher proportion of working women can serve as a model for other Alpine countries. With regard to increased and improved services for children as well as the elderly, the regulation of private initiatives in particular needs to be reduced or modified in order to facilitate the range of innovative services on offer. Investment in private (health-)care infrastructure in rural areas can reduce bottlenecks in public service supply. Furthermore, there is an obvious demand for innovative tools to make daily life easier for elderly people, but also to adapt to changes in demand patterns, for instance by new tourism or housing offers. All in all, spatial planning for Alpine regions should enable each area to contribute to economic and social welfare in an individual way.

In the field of demographic change, the Alpine Space Programme is just one of several players. However, it will strive to increase awareness of the topic amongst policy makers, to stimulate the discussion and to give the floor to “first movers”. It aims to use the results of this forum to raise the “right” questions and to pass these on to the political advisers. In September 2011, the Programme will dedicate its next thematic event to the subject of “Competitiveness”.

# PROJECTS

## Projects on Demographic Change

**A non-exhaustive overview of European projects addressing demographic change:**

**ACCESS - Improving Accessibility of Services of General Interest (SGI) – Organisational Innovations in Rural Mountain Areas (Alpine Space Programme 2007-2013)**

Improves the accessibility to SGI in sparsely populated mountain areas by finding new forms of organisation of services of general interest via ICT, demand-orientated approaches and integrated mobility systems.

**Project duration: 01/09/2008 – 31/08/2011**

**[www.access-alpinespace.eu](http://www.access-alpinespace.eu)**

**ALIAS - Alpine Hospitals Networking for Improved Access to Telemedicine Services (Alpine Space Programme 2007-2013)**

Addresses medical services and information inadequacy to ensure Health Care provisions in the Alpine Space. It links hospitals to create a network of ALIAS Virtual Hospitals to share medical information and adopt telemedicine services.

**Project duration: 01/08/2009 – 31/07/2012**

**[www.aliasproject.eu](http://www.aliasproject.eu)**

**ALPTER - Terraced landscapes of the Alps (Alpine Space Programme 2000-2006)**

was conceived to counteract the abandonment of terraced areas in the alpine regions, to avoid the loss of cultural heritage and the increase of natural hazard, and to promote good practices against the social and economic marginalisation of traditional rural areas.

**Project duration: 05/02/2005 – 15/02/2008** (research activities continue in some pilot areas)

**[www.alpter.net](http://www.alpter.net)**

**CAPACities - Competitiveness Actions for Alpine Cities (Alpine Space Programme 2007-2013)**

promotes the potential of small Alpine towns through an integrated and transnational approach by using innovative urban policies and actions, and by creating alliances with neighbouring stronger territories.

**Project duration: 01/10/2008 – 31/03/2011**

**[www.capacities-alpinespace.eu/](http://www.capacities-alpinespace.eu/)**

**DART - Declining, Ageing and Regional Transformation (Interreg IV C)**

13 regions – all affected by declining and ageing populations – are co-operating to identify and transfer appropriate solutions for dealing with demographic change in the three fields: traditional & innovative economy, education & lifelong learning, and health care & social services.

**Project duration: 01/01/2010 – 31/12/2012**

**[www.dart-project.eu](http://www.dart-project.eu)**

**DCNOISE - Demographic Change: New Opportunities in Shrinking Europe (North Sea Region Programme)**

prepares the region to cope with its demographic future through: raising awareness amongst private and public actors; involving them in the process; developing a better understanding of demographic change and finding solutions to address its negative consequences in the labour market, services and housing.

**Project duration: 01/06/2008 – 31/12/2011**

**[www.dcnoise.eu](http://www.dcnoise.eu)**

**DEMOCHANGE - Demographic Change in the Alps: adaptation strategies for spatial planning and regional development (Alpine Space Programme 2007-2013)**

addresses the challenges of ageing societies in the Alps with regard to migration, tourism, agriculture, transportation, health-care, housing and education. The project highlights the strong impacts that demographic change has on Alpine regions and raises awareness among regional stakeholders and policy makers.

**Project duration: 01/10/2009 – 30/09/2012**

**[www.demochange.org](http://www.demochange.org)**

**GenderAlp! - Spatial development for women and men (Alpine Space Programme 2000-2006)**

helped policy makers from cities and regions to integrate gender equality into spatial planning and regional development, and assessed impacts on women and men to deliver high quality policies for competitive, inclusive and equal cities and regions.

**Project duration:** 01/01/2005 – 31/12/2007

[www.genderalp.at](http://www.genderalp.at) (de), [www.genderalp.si](http://www.genderalp.si) (slo), [www.genderbudget.it](http://www.genderbudget.it) (it), [www.gendercompetence.net](http://www.gendercompetence.net) (de), [www.rali.boku.ac.at/gdus.html](http://www.rali.boku.ac.at/gdus.html) (European network)

**HDC - Health and demographic changes - Ageing Challenges (North West Europe Programme)**

creates a transnational centre of expertise in the health sector which responds to demographic change due to the ageing of the population and optimise health circuits for elderly people. The project includes university hospitals, universities and local authorities.

**Project duration:** 2008 – 2012

<http://hdc-cooperation.eu>

**InnoCité - how to improve competitiveness of small-medium cities under the influence of Alpine great urban centres (Alpine Space Programme 2007-2013)**

enhances sustainable development in small-medium cities by improving their attractiveness and quality of life and by creating a common vision taking into account residential, administrative and economic functions. Partners seek to integrate results into their local, regional and national programmes by encouraging effective political commitment.

**Project duration:** 01/07/2008 – 30/06/2011

[www.innocite.eu](http://www.innocite.eu)

**MigrAlp – Centre on Migration for Services, Integration and Information (Interreg IV Italy-Austria)**

compares analyses, exchange of data and good practice regarding the integration of immigrants in North- and South Tyrol. It analyses formal and informal networks immigrants use to get access to the labour market, develops an instrument to monitor immigration in rural areas, addresses social cohesion through policy-making and launches an anti-discrimination campaign and role play for young people to combat discrimination.

**Project duration:** 01/01/2009 – 30/11/2011

[www.eurac.edu/migralp](http://www.eurac.edu/migralp)

**“My featured space” (Sparkling Science Programme / Leader Programme)**

“What does the rural space need to be an attractive living space for young people in the future?” Some pupils aged of 16 to 19, from Austria, Slovenia and Italy, worked together, supported by researchers, stakeholders and teachers on providing answers to this question with a focus on jobs, mobility, tourism and social networks.

**Project duration:** 01/10/2009 – 30/06/2011

[www.myfeaturedspace.info](http://www.myfeaturedspace.info)

**OP-ACT – Options of Actions. Strategic positioning of smaller and medium sized cities**

by creating attractive living and working conditions for citizens, by enhancing future perspectives for young people especially for disadvantaged groups, and by adapting the city's social and technical infrastructure to the new age structure

**Project duration:** 19/07/2010 – 19/01/2013

[www.urbact.eu/op-act](http://www.urbact.eu/op-act)

**PADIMA - Policies against depopulation in mountain areas (Interreg IV C)**

exchanges good practice in fighting depopulation in mountain areas. Eight partners from five European countries will produce policy guidelines on successful methods to attract new inhabitants to mountain areas.

**Project duration:** 01/01/2010 – 31/12/2012

[www.padima.org](http://www.padima.org)

**PUSEMOR - Public services in sparsely populated mountain regions - new needs and innovative strategies (Alpine Space Programme 2000-2006)**

developed sustainable strategies and innovative solutions for keeping and improving the provision of public services in sparsely populated mountain regions with the ambition to foster economic development and to improve these regions as place of residence.

**Project duration:** 01/01/2005 – 30/09/2007

[www.alpine-space.org/pusemor.html](http://www.alpine-space.org/pusemor.html)

**QUALIST - Improving quality of life in small towns (Central Europe Programme)**

addresses demography oriented revitalization of small town centres, mobility concepts for small towns and rural areas, and the location information systems to promote the advantages and potentials of quality living in small towns.

**Project duration:** 01/07/2010 – 30/06/2013

[www.qualist.eu](http://www.qualist.eu)

# THANKS

in particular to all speakers

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## Forum Report

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## Setting the Scene

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**Innsbruck** has always been an important link between North and South. Ninety thousand people work there and more than a third of these people commute to town every day. In the capital of Tyrol, the demand for housing is growing faster than the population. However, the settlement area is limited to only 13 percent of the Austrian federal state as a whole. The sustainable development of public services is high on the city's agenda, the main target being: maintaining the quality of life.

With a view to providing a common basis for the subsequent workshop discussions, the experts have highlighted key questions and arranged the complex issue of demographic change into three main concepts.