

13th Youth Parliament to the Alpine Convention

March 19th – 24th 2018

Resolution 1: Enhancing composting

This resolution is about involving people and community, as well as promoting composting.

We would like everyone to be aware and to understand the benefits of composting on soils. Compost is full of nutrients and organisms; as a matter of fact, compost increases the quality of soil and, consequently, foods.

To achieve this goal, we would raise an awareness campaign for children and adults. We think it is important to take action in the schools of younger generations to explain to them how composting works and also to encourage them to do it on their own. Concerning adults, we truly believe that a campaign which would explain the ecological and economic advantages of compost could help to convince people to compost. To do so, composting bins as a part of a recycling system would be available. Once full, they would be collected and turned into compost that farmers could freely use as an all-natural fertilizer that does not harm the soil. Furthermore, for people who are not separating their organic foods from other trash, a penalty would be imposed.

Resolution 2: Not more, but better

This resolution deals with soft tourism (which means environmentally-friendly tourism) and ways to encourage and increase it in the Alpine region.

Considering the huge amount of new, but unused infrastructure and the building of illegal and nature-harming paths built by dissatisfied vacationers, which is something that damages the soil terribly, we propose to upgrade already existing structures utilizing sustainable materials when possible. With local organisations that determine and draw attention to the demands of special-interest groups, the local government will act upon those demands, selecting what to improve first. Building unnecessary new infrastructure will then be avoided in favour of a more environmentally-friendly solution.

This will preserve the soil, which will not risk being destroyed, and will improve tourism, making it a better and more sustainable experience.

Resolution 3: Up in the sky

This proposal deals with companies and the soil that is wasted by their parking lots.

Seen that, for example, around 5 % of Austria is used for roads and parking lots and that 0.3 % of the agricultural space in Europe is used every year to build infrastructure, we think that this is a huge waste of space.

We are convinced that a lot of soil could be saved and used in a more efficient way. New parking lots should be built vertically, not horizontally. Newly-built shops or companies should build multi-storey, over ground parking lots to preserve the soil. The national government should define the laws that regulate this process, but the regional government should efficiently apply and control it. This proposal has already been implemented in urban areas in Austria, but in rural areas it is not applied enough yet. To help companies build this kind of infrastructure, they will be subsidized.

This way, the environment will be protected and more soil will be saved.

Resolution 4: Fighting soil sealing

This resolution is about minimalizing soil sealing and giving alternatives. In order to reach this goal, the committee proposes to promote the use of pervious sealing and to regress and restore unnecessary impermeable areas.

The main concern is that every year, more than 1000 km² get sealed and the soil loses its basic functions, like water purification and flood regulation. Due to urbanization, asphalt and concrete are used to seal the soil to make life more comfortable, yet many areas were sealed where it is not needed. Therefore, we strongly encourage to regress and restore those areas by removing the useless asphalt. In public areas, the city council would decide where to remove it, while in private areas, the choice of making an untaxed removal is given to the owner.

Furthermore, for new or renewed sealed areas, we promote the use of pervious paving, which allows the soil to interact with the nature above. This would be introduced in pedestrian areas and parking places. Two different examples are the “Climate Tile” in Copenhagen, which is used on sidewalks, and the use of pervious paving for parking lots in Valpellice, Italy.

Resolution 5: Minimizing Urban Sprawl

This resolution is about limiting the extension of urban areas.

The increasing number of city residents, resulting in urbanization, causes the growth of urban sprawl. We cannot stop city growth, but we can try to minimize agglomeration.

The committee suggests creating green belts as an option for cities to plan their expansion and to have a clear border between the city and the rural areas as a long-term solution. They also suggest supporting innovation and increasing density and efficiency. Including agricultural land, forest and leisure areas, the green belt would provide food security, decrease air pollution and be a social meeting point. For instance, the city of Portland has designed a virtual line around the city based on predictions and plans of how the city will grow. The line separates rural areas from the city. It is a dynamic process, meaning that they reevaluate the line every time the city reaches that border. We would combine that system with London's green belt system that surrounds the city. Moreover, we propose the reuse of old and abandoned buildings. Thus, existing resources would be used efficiently and less soil would be sealed.

Resolution 6: Breathing Buildings

This resolution is about green spaces in urban areas. The main problem is the degradation of soil in cities due to unsustainable spatial planning.

Urban gardening combined with efficient spatial planning facilitates soil protection and a higher quality of life. We propose the propagation of roof gardening to maximize limited space, especially on flat roofed buildings such as supermarkets. This type of urban gardening leads to many benefits: The presence of plants enables the regulation of pollution. Additionally, the vegetation absorbs water and lowers the heat in the city. This solution manages to make our cities healthier and even more appealing to live in and strengthens the connection between city residents and nature.

Resolution 7: S.E.E.D.!

This resolution is about raising awareness for soil protection in society.

We are observing a loss of information about the importance of soil in urban areas, both in the younger and older generations. Hence, people lose connection to nature and act irresponsibly.

Considering this issue, we propose to form a program called SOIL in EDUCATION, EVENTS and DEVELOPMENT (S.E.E.D.). It consists of scientists and experts of communication tackling the problem in two different ways. Firstly, short-term, S.E.E.D. has the task of providing signs in public places and information on the internet about soil in specific areas. Moreover, it will organize community events and workshops about topics connected to soil, for example urban gardening. Secondly, for a long-term solution, we strongly encourage S.E.E.D. to cooperate with schools in order to provide pupils with knowledge and practical experience with soil. In particular, this solution is beneficial because young people are open-minded and willing to change something for the future.

Resolution 8: Preventing the Harm of Mass Movements

This resolution deals with the prevention of mass movements and suggests some solutions for decreasing the damages caused by these mass movements.

Considering that mass movements will be an increasing natural hazard due to global warming, there will be more landslides or rock falls, which have the power to destroy infrastructure and lives.

Keeping in mind that fully preventing all damages caused by natural hazards like mudslides is impossible, we worked out two proposals. In order to warn tourists and hikers not to enter high-risk areas, the first suggestion proposes to create hazard or risk maps where the concerned regions are noticeably marked. These will inform people about the dangers in the surrounding area. Furthermore, endangered territories will be signed as prohibited areas. Secondly, the already existing measures should be improved. In order to protect our infrastructure and lives, we should increase grids on mountainsides and fortifications around roads. The focus will be especially on planting forests, which protect and prevent, as well as on conducting research concerning plants in the future. Although humans are not capable of stopping such natural hazards, we can do our best and try to minimize their damage.

Resolution 9: Decreasing the Impact of Floods

In this resolution, we propose a way to deal with the impact of floods on populations and soil.

Floods destroy many homes, endanger lives and create huge financial damages. They also contaminate soil by spreading dangerous matter, like fertilizers and heavy metals over large areas.

Considering that we have to limit these damages, we propose two ways of dealing with the problem. Firstly, by re-naturalizing riverbanks by removing most of the concrete and planting vegetation or building levees. Secondly, by creating or improving an emergency protocol for floods, which includes an online warning system. In the event of a flood, a message would be sent to all electronic devices in that area. Certainly, the communication between the countries which share the same rivers is really important and it has to function well, so we propose having interregional committees to deal with this issue. This communication should be complemented by risk maps, which evaluate the damage potential of floods in certain areas.

Resolution 10: Raising Awareness and Performing Prevention for Endangered Soil

This resolution is about raising awareness for endangered soil and the effects natural hazards cause.

Public unawareness of the importance of soil as well as the limited collaboration between Alpine countries leads to the lack of protection of soils.

As a good example, we propose the protection programme, *Soils of the year*, for endangered soils. A committee with politicians and experts from all of the Alpine countries will choose soils which are in danger of natural hazards, for example floods, landslides and erosion. These soils will receive special attention and protection. In addition, we propose regional voluntary workshops for adults on the topic of soil protection and the measures each individual can take to mitigate the impacts of natural hazards on their property. Workshops will also take place in primary schools where the children learn about the importance of soil and the risks that are related to demolition of soil and natural hazards.