

Alpine Youth discuss on Greening the Alps

YPAC stands for Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention. It was founded by Akademisches Gymnasium Innsbruck and the Alpine Convention back in 2006.

It brings together young people from different countries, Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Switzerland, who discuss current topics regarding the Alpine region in a parliamentary simulation. It aims at giving insight into parliamentary structures as well as current topics, which are of concern to the Alpine region. Moreover, it is a platform for a cultural exchange and networking among young people. In the years the YPAC experience has boosted students' awareness regarding the Alps – their beauty and importance and their fragility enabling students to get in touch with local administrations and international organizations.

The YPAC takes place once a year every year and is hosted by a different school.

This year's edition was hosted by Liceo G. B. Brocchi in Bassano del Grappa, Italy, from the 9th to the 13th of May.



Picture: YPAC group in Bassano

Eighty-five students and twenty-one teachers were joined by the YAE- Youth Alpine Express (CIPRA) - a group of eight students and two leaders who shared their experience of sustainable living and travelling .(<http://youthalpineexpress.eu/>)

[Youth Alpine Express](#), raises awareness about sustainable lifestyles and environmental friendly mobility. In this [CIPRA Project](#), young people, youth workers and decision-makers travel from their hometowns in the Alps to four international events relevant for the Alps.

The third Journey led this May to the [Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention](#) in Bassano del Grappa/I in 2016. They have two days to travel to the event and three days on site to present their experience and their political demands, and one day to travel back home - in a sustainable way. (by Michaela Hogenboom leader of the YAE group)

Novelty for Bassano 2016: three students and a teacher from the Apennines – Avezano AQ- and two girls from Knjazevac in Eastern Serbia, who represented the Carpathian Convention, joined the meeting to get to know how YPAC works.

YPAC gives the great opportunity to involve young people's ideas and creativity to find new ways for a sustainable lifestyle. Occasions like YPAC leave their traces on each and every one of us, they have a great impact on our personality and way of living and make us socialize and meet different cultures.

It would be great if there was a youth parliament for the Carpathian Convention, it could involve not only high school but university students as well. Youth parliament is the voice of the youth, opportunity for young people to participate in solving problems concerning the area they live in.

(by Teodora Milivojevic representative of the Carpathian Convention at YPAC 2016)

During YPAC the delegates exchanged ideas in their own committees and agreed on 4 resolutions each regarding the different topics. After presenting them during the General Assembly with speeches in favour and taking turns to answer several stimulating questions all the delegates voted 10 final resolutions out of 16.

Before the official opening of the General Assembly the delegates were greeted by Mr Markus Reiterer, Secretary General of the Alpine Convention, Mr Andreas Pichler Deputy Director of CIPRA International, Mr Marcello Emma who read the greeting from Mr Paolo Angelini, Head of Delegation to the Alpine Convention and responsible for bilateral cooperation in the Balkan region and by Mr Cassiano Luminati, former President of Valposchiavo Region, CH, and 'friend' of YPAC.



Picture : General Assembly from left - Mr Pichler, Mr Luminati , Mr Reiterer, Mrs Marchetti YPAC organizer, Mr Emma, Mr Zen, Principal of Liceo Brocchi, and Francesco M. Borsoi, President of YPAC 2016.

This year's topics and extracts from the resolutions voted during the General Assembly.

1. Living: demographic change, spatial planning, quality of life.

'We suggest that the regional government should be responsible for sustainable spatial planning in the Alps in order to provide enough green areas (also in the cities) as well as to decrease overdevelopment. Moreover, we strive for useful and fitting architecture according to the surroundings, controlled by the regional government. Businesses and new homeowners who use regional materials like timber and stone should be offered support'

2. Local Business: start ups, social innovation, new forms of sustainable tourism.

All postulations presented by the second committee were voted.

Postulation 1: Renovating saves space in an eco-friendly way

'We strongly encourage the government to subsidize the renovation of accommodation already in existence. Since less soil and land would be wasted, the ecosystem would significantly benefit. This would be done only if the renovated facilities were to switch to renewable energy sources (such as biomass heating and solar power).'

Postulation 2: Support to Green Start-ups

'We suggest that governments reduce taxes for start-up companies which are dealing with problems concerning the Green Economy. Moreover, it is recommended that their final business ideas are presented in periodic exhibitions where they share and promote their ideas with others.'

Postulation 3: Affordable public transport for fewer emissions

Special all-inclusive travel cards encouraging local people and tourists to use public transport to reduce pollution should be introduced.

Postulation 4: Mountaineer Village

This postulation is about motivating Alpine villages to achieve the status of a sustainable Bergsteigerdorf (mountaineer village) thus promoting an Austrian idea throughout the Alpine region.

'The «Mountaineer Village» is an award given to towns which implement sustainable agriculture and forestry and sell local products. Small high quality accommodation provider should be encouraged '

3. Consumption: Circular Economy, waste, CO2, energy management.

Postulation 2: **Efficient recycling:** *'This postulation is about making recycling and waste separation more easily accessible and more efficient to make people willing to separate their waste adequately.'*

Postulation 3: Industrial symbiosis

With this postulation, we want to achieve circular economy.

'We advocate that governments encourage companies to use secondary raw materials by lowering taxes. On the other hand higher taxes should be levied on primary resources use for industrial purposes. Secondary resources would be obtained by collaborating with other companies - using their 'waste' and thus entering industrial symbiosis.'

Postulation 4: LCA – Life Cycle Assessment

In this postulation we propose to use LCA – a method which allows to systematically break down every product to its original components and industrial procedures to evaluate its impact on nature from creation to disposal- as a tool to inform people about the effect products and materials have on the environment.

4. Leisure & Culture: culture as a resource for regional development, terracing, culture of cooperation.

Postulation 1 : Self sustainable terraces

This postulation is about making the already existing terraces, which are part of our cultural heritage, more self-sustainable and productive. 'We propose a solution which includes a closed nutrient-cycle, which would reuse the nutrients from the side products of organisms living in a pond. This nutrient cycle consists of ponds with fish, bacteria and other small animals, which would clean the water and produce nutrient-rich waste which is useful for plant growth. Then, water with "waste" would be pumped up from the pond to the top of the terrace with plants. The government would subsidize the costs of construction of the nutrient-cycle (ponds and pumps). This solution would be beneficial for the community as it would create jobs, including those of maintenance of ponds and pumps and of crops on the terraces, and it would also reduce the use of chemical fertilizers and the amount of waste produced'.

Postulation 4: Integration through cultural events (joint postulation with Committee 1)

This postulation is about improving the relationship between the people who currently live in the Alpine region and those who migrate to it.

'Conflicts are often caused by different cultural backgrounds and prejudices. Immigrants often prefer to stay with other people from their country of origin which could lead to parallel societies. Young immigrants in particular must have the opportunity to get in touch with the new language and culture.

In order to achieve our goal we thought about creating a platform for young people to meet each other. The platform would give locals and immigrants the chance to participate in different cultural exchanges and activities which should either be free or very cheap in order to make them affordable for everyone.

Activities like sports events, music festivals or group cooking workshops could be arranged and promoted by the online platform. The projects could be organized by schools every three months and could include local associations. These events would be integrated to school curricula to prevent the problems mentioned above.'

Picture : Committee 1 during the General Assembly, in the middle the Presidents





Picture : Francesco Borsoi Italian president of YPAC 2016 delivering his opening speech.



Picture : YPAC delegates at work with Mr Cassiano Luminati

Notwithstanding the long and busy days, the experience was highly rewarding and the participants relaxed on their last day with a nice experience of Nordic Walking along the river Brenta before the Closing Ceremony and a tasty lunch offered at Ca' Erizzo where the American novelist, Ernest Hemingway, was stationed as ambulance driver during WWI.



Picture: Nordic walking experience



Picture: Rest in front of Villa Angarano-Michiel with walking poles offered by Gabel Italia

YPAC 2016 gave the opportunity to Liceo Brocchi and Bassano del Grappa to promote the beauty of this area which has historically proved to be strategically important in linking the Alps and the northern countries to Venice and the Adriatic.

To conclude next year's YPAC will be held by Akademisches Gymnasium in Innsbruck.

Text by Anna Rizzo and Wanda Marchetti. Photographs by YPAC press delegates.

