PROJECT

« ATELIER URBAIN - CLIMATE ACTION IN ALPINE TOWNS »

Citizen participation and joint solution finding
in Alpine Towns of the Year
on climate challenges

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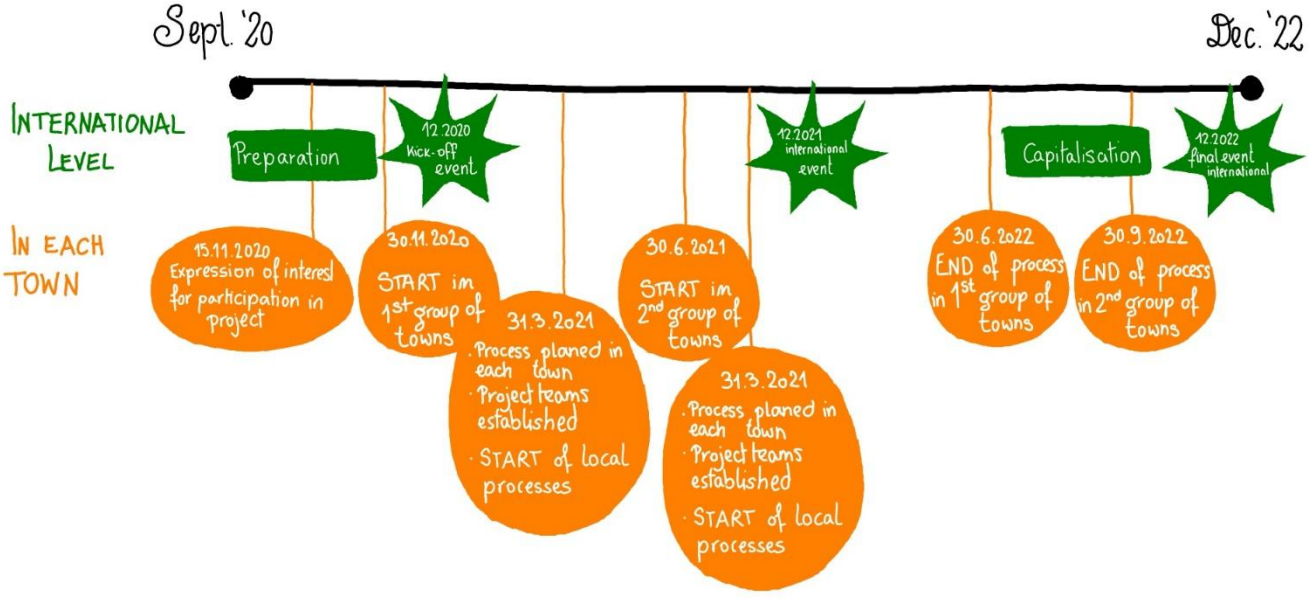
What is the project about?

Perceptions of the Alps are often rural and not “urban”. However, around one third of its inhabitants live in densely populated alpine towns with unique characteristics. The Swiss Presidency of the Alpine Convention in 2021/2022 will develop a scientific report on the state and the territorial impact of these Alpine towns. With this project, the Swiss Presidency would like to complement some of the report’s findings with concrete actions. Additionally, the project will also be one of the six pilot actions of the Territorial Agenda 2030 of the European Union. Switzerland wishes to put *Atelier Urbain - Climate Action in Alpine Towns* at the core of the pilot project. This will connect the expertise of the Alpine Convention on climate with spatial development issues under the “green” priority of the Territorial Agenda and show that municipalities can start with low-threshold climate action now – with Alpine towns taking the lead. Switzerland would like to answer the following questions:

- How can we develop low-threshold climate action in spatial planning?
- How can we involve civil society more carefully in planning processes that relate to climate action?
- How does this involvement change the awareness of citizens for a healthy environment in their city? How does this affect the perception of quality of living?
- How should climate policies & strategies be adapted to this particular territory and culture? Could the Alps become a model region?

The project uses a civic participation approach and directly connects (inter-)national and communal level. *Atelier Urbain - Climate Action in Alpine Towns* aims at allowing the participating alpine towns to experiment citizen participation in planning processes related to climate change adaptation or mitigation. A specific focus on young citizens is foreseen. This project can help the towns improve their methods and practices in the fields of citizen involvement, spatial planning and climate change action by experimenting new approaches and exchanging with the other involved towns. To achieve this, the following working steps are planned. This timeline and the working steps are submitted to adaptations during the project duration.



Additional details that do not appear in the above timeline:

- **Kick-off event:** foreseen on 11th December 2020 in Nice, but this may change due to Covid 19 pandemic.
- **International event 2021:** date and location to be defined (probably in one of the participating towns). Aimed at allowing exchange of experiences between participating towns.
- **Final international event 2022:** date and location to be defined, presentation of project results, open to all Alpine Towns of the Year, as well as international stakeholders from the Alpine Convention and the Territorial Agenda and other interested participants.
- **Two rounds are foreseen (1st group and 2nd group of towns):** some towns will start project activities in Fall 2020 whereas others will start in Spring 2021.
- **Local project teams:** should include representatives of the Alpine town, young citizens, experts, other interested and relevant citizens and qualified persons.
- **Local processes:** each town will be invited to identify a relevant climate challenge that should be addressed with citizen involvement, then develop and implement a relevant planning and participation process, involving the mentioned local project team. The planning process may lead to or include the implementation of **small-scale actions** (see further details and examples below).
- **Capitalisation and valorisation:** it is foreseen to capitalise the project experiences on citizen involvement in planning processes linked to climate change within a common product (by the end of 2022). The project will also help answer questions regarding effective and efficient involvement of civil society in planning processes related to climate action, the impact of this involvement on citizen awareness and the perception of quality of living and on the necessary adaptation of climate policies and strategies to the Alpine region. The experiences and results on local political level will be taken up and the project and Alpine town will gain visibility in the Territorial Agenda process and the Alpine Convention.
- **Sounding board:** it is foreseen to establish a sounding board with international experts (members of European Territorial Agenda, jury members, etc.) to support the project and participating towns with relevant expertise and feedback. This group will meet several times during the project (physically or virtually) and be in contact with the member towns to advise and support their work.

What is meant by “Local Process”?

The project will give **financial and expert support** to local processes in each participating town. For this, each participating town will:

- Identify a relevant climate challenge (1) in the field of spatial planning that should be addressed with citizen involvement.
- Develop an adapted planning and participation process incl. relevant measures (for e.g. workshops, visits, interviews, questionnaires, creative activities) (2) which allows to address the identified challenge and develop solutions with the involved citizens. The processes should be adapted to the identified challenge and to the local context.
- Constitute and involve a local project team representative of the Alpine town, young citizens, experts, other interested and relevant citizens and qualified persons.
- Implement the foreseen process.
- The process may lead to or include the implementation of small-scale actions, such as specific actions days, communication measures, etc. (3)

By participating to the project, each town also commits to take part in the three international events in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

The boxes below list examples of challenges (1) that can be addressed in the project, of measures (2) which could be implemented in the participatory processes and of small-scale actions (3) which could also be foreseen.

Examples of challenges (1)

- Greening of specific neighbourhoods or buildings
- Renaturization of a river passing through part of a town
- Reducing soil sealing in the town by identifying areas where sealing can be replaced by premeable surfaces
- Increasing and improving the space for soft mobility in a town or a neighbourhood
- Developing green & blue islands in the town
- Reducing heat in the town or neighbourhood
- Conversion of brownfields
- Planing or eco-neighbourhoods
- Etc.

Examples of measures included in local processes (2)

- Workshops with citizens
- Interviews
- Field visits
- Creative workshops
- Exhibitions
- Involvement in relevant commissions or decision making processes
- Participatory budget
- Etc.

Examples of small-scale actions (3)

- Action day, for e.g. tree-planting, "customizing" a neighbourhood to invite trafic to slow down...
- Awareness raising action with involved citizens on chosen issue (e.g. mobility, urban gardening, waste seperation...)
- Creative action (e.g. photo contest, writing workshop, theater performance...)
- Etc.

Why is it worth taking part?

- Experiment and gain experience in the use of citizen participation approaches in issues of urbanism.
- Address citizens' concerns on climate change and involve them directly.
- Connect (inter-)national and communal levels by enhancing international cooperation but staying strongly anchored to municipal perspectives/realities.
- Foster the exchange between different departments of the town's administration.
- Experiment citizens-for-citizens approaches when starting the project, involving all social groups.
- Develop creative solutions by allowing town technicians to work with a variety of stakeholders, incl. young people.
- Exchange knowledge and experience with other Alpine towns in the project (international meetings and joint report). Gain insights in planning processes of the participating Alpine Towns, learn from each other
- Access to funds for a tailor-made participation process in your Alpine Town.
- Promote long-term action and exchange between Alpine towns and within the Alpine Convention.
- The project will give high international visibility for the towns taking part and for the association within the European Territorial Agenda 2030 and the Alpine Convention.

How much does it cost?

The project costs will be covered as follows

- **The secretariat of the Alpine Town of the Year Association** (carried by Val&Monti and CIPRA International) will bear all the costs of project development and the acquisition of funding.
- **The Swiss Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE** (within the Programme of the Swiss Presidency of the Alpine Convention) is financing the project (incl. project coordination, support to actions in towns, international exchange and capitalisation activities). Additional funds may be generated via the European Territorial Agenda 2050.
- **Each participating town:**
    - will take over staff costs for the realisation of the project and participation in international events, costs for travel and accommodation at international events, costs for local workshops (programme, catering, equipment, etc.)
    - receives funding of up to 10'000 Euro for the local process, possibly including the organisation and realisation of the participatory process, but also for the realisation of tangible small actions and implementations within the identified planning process.

Which are the next steps?

Please inform the Secretariat whether your Alpine Town wishes to participate in the project (claire.simon@alpenstaedte.org or magdalena.holzer@alpenstaedte.org).
Deadline for your expression of interest: 15th November 2020. Your answers should include the challenge(s) you wish to address, first ideas regarding the type of process and measures you foresee, an outline of how you intend to involve citizens, an estimation of foreseen costs.
Please fill the online questionnaire with your answer.

In case this deadline is too short, but you are interested in proposing an action, don't hesitate to contact us.

The number of participants is limited. The entire project team (participating Alpine Towns, representatives of the Alpine Town of the year Association, experts) will meet at the kick-off workshop on December 11th 2020 virtually to discuss the project implementation and the next steps (date and modalities of the workshop to be confirmed).