Guide of recommendations

YOUTH
ACT 4
ALPS

#YAFA
Nowadays, due to the health crisis, new working methods such as teleworking have been developed. People have realised that the living environment is important, and they increasingly aspire to live close to nature. This is a real opportunity to rethink the Alpine development model. The challenge is to preserve the sustainability of the Alpine region, while enhancing its assets and attracting conscious citizens.

Throughout the three Youth Act 4 Alps Project’s events, young people have made their voices heard, to change the dynamics of life in the Alpine region. Entrepreneurship, environment and citizenship were therefore key principles that recurred during discussions, discoveries of projects, debates, and meetings with elected officials. Based on that, several recommendations have been developed by the participants.
IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY: DEVELOPING THE TRANSPORT OFFER AS WELL AS THE INTERNET NETWORK

INTERNET NETWORK

In the alpine region youth face a major issue: internet connectivity. Young people, especially students during the pandemic, realised that the internet network was not efficient enough to provide stable connection when working from home. Hence, public services in collaboration with private companies should improve the internet connection all over the territory, improving telecommuting and e-learning possibilities.

CAR SHARING PROMOTION

Furthermore many people travel alone in their cars to nearby places, which increases pollution. One solution would be to promote car sharing for daily trips through dedicated mobile applications or specialised search engines listing all offers including in rural areas. Besides, nowadays, women and young women sometimes feel insecure and are reluctant to carpool, so it is necessary to create local platforms that allow them to feel more confident with drivers. It would also be necessary to build infrastructures such as specialised parking areas for carpooling.

DRIVING AGE & PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

Another challenge is to move quickly from one point to another, as it is a priority to better connect cities. Whether it is for daily commuting, shopping, going to sport, or for longer trips, the car seems indispensable. Young people under 18 years old can sometimes struggle to get around, as they depend on their parents or public transport. It might be relevant to lower the age for obtaining a driving licence from 18 years old, so that they can travel to their place of learning and training if necessary. However, it would be wise to also rely on a greater offer of public transport, with more frequencies: mainly buses, and trains, and adding a sustainable value by using clean technologies, (electric, hydrogene...).

COMMON TRANSPORT FARE

Geographical constraints in the region have an impact on travel times, speed etc. but they should not be reflected in prices. In order for young people to stay and settle permanently, they must be able to travel throughout the region at reasonable prices. Every town and small village in the Alpine region should join forces to offer a single reduced transport fare for all young people under the age of 25 residing on the territory, or a common train ticket for several Alpine territories over several countries.
In the same way, professionals could give training lessons at university or high school to inspire young people, and teach them the first steps of how to create a startup, how to conciliate ethics & economy, and how to have a positive social impact with the creation of jobs, the protection of the environment, etc.

Developing incubator services would also be a wise investment. Indeed, young entrepreneurs need help and support to develop great innovative ideas that will change the future. Incubators would provide them with financial and administrative support, business advices, special trainings, a network of professional actors and stakeholders, and more generally it would support the entrepreneurs through all the steps towards the successful creation of their ethical startup.

Subsidies & Grant

Young people should be encouraged to start their own business, and develop their professional projects. Therefore, it would be wise to provide special subsidies to young people under 30 years old, living in small towns in the alpine region (less than 10,000 inhabitants). In the same theme, a special grant for the whole territory of the Alpine region should be created for students, with a special calculation according to the income, and the distance to the university.

Solidarity Projects Promotion

Encouraging students to develop solidarity projects during their academic year. This would allow them to gain experience, develop their skills and know-how, and beyond school, they would discover more about the benefits of non-formal education, and methods to create projects from scratch based on human values. (project designing, partnerships seeking, fund raising, planning, communication, organizing activities, reporting actions).
Improving Youth Active Citizenship

Volunteering Missions

Encouraging and creating more European Solidarity Corps’ missions. Through this programme, young people are more involved in citizenship, discover new cultures, and are useful to society. It is a very good formative experience. Following the same principle, it would be interesting and useful to create a specific youth volunteering programme for the Alpine region, offering missions mainly focused on environmental protection, which would facilitate communication and coordination of action between these regions and countries. Moreover, this type of programme is accessible to all, without any conditions of diploma or other: it is fundamental that everyone has the same opportunities in this field.

Politics Involvement

A last point related to this topic deserves to be highlighted: the involvement of youth in politics. Recently, it has been noted that young people have not participated in large numbers in some elections, yet young people are an integral part of society, have a say and should definitely be represented. It is therefore important to make young people already in high school through specific courses or awareness-raising workshops, aware of the political processes behind the themes of sustainable development and climate change, and how they can take concrete action and become involved. Finally, it is worth considering lowering the voting age to 16, as is already the case in Austria, so that young people are empowered, heard, and represented.

Youth Councils

There is also a lack of youth representation in the parliaments or in official institutions. The solution could be the creation of several Youth Parliaments both on a local and national level in each country of the Alpine territory, Austria, France, Germany and Italy, funded by the respective level of governments, using the example of the EUSALP Youth Council.

Youth Exchange

Citizenship is reflected by being an active member of society. It is therefore good to encourage projects funded by Erasmus+ for example with current and interesting themes about the alpine region, which give young people opportunities to open their minds, make their voices heard, and involve them in local decisions, and at the European level. These kinds of youth exchange, which promote citizenship, are proposed by associations and take place regularly throughout Europe. However, it would be wise to make them more accessible and to communicate to make them better known.
Another point for young people is entertainment: indeed, the majority of young people need activities and like to go out, have drinks in bars, go for walks, go on cultural outings to museums, go bowling or to the cinema. All these activities are found in the big cities. Smaller cities could therefore develop some kind of rehabilitated alternative places dedicated to culture and art, with different premises that can accommodate bars and other shops or leisure infrastructures in one place.

The idea of a festival was also born during the discussions. Musical or cultural festival, or about sports and nature for example, “an alpine festival”, that could become a well-known and inspiring event in the different countries, with an ecological and social dimension. Workshops will be offered on how to recycle and Do It Yourself of natural products. Or it could be a more scientific festival that presents the latest technologies and innovations for sustainable development.

In terms of projects, we could take inspiration from “traditional tourism” and create different hiking circuits and trails with stages according to different themes and allow tourists to discover traditional farms, craftsmen with unique and local know-how, animals and biodiversity to be preserved. In order to accommodate these tourists, camping areas should be built, for example, or eco-responsible accommodation, which could also host school groups and professional groups. This will make tourists responsible and aware, and above all, local craftsmen and farmers would earn a better living.

The strength of the Alpine region is its natural landscapes: mountains, lakes, forests, biodiversity in terms of fauna and flora. The idea is therefore to develop ecotourism, i.e. responsible tourism, which limits negative impacts and raises awareness of environmental protection. Sports tourism is also an undeniable asset: promoting the various sports and activities that can be practised in nature, such as mountain biking, climbing, hiking, skiing, canoeing, paddling etc., and making them more accessible appears to be judicious.

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Youth Act 4 Alps – YAFA – has gathered about 120 participants from France, Germany, Austria and Italy over 3 encounters to advocate young people ideas on public policies around the Alpine region. In order to do so, participants have discussed with more than 20 experts, politicians, entrepreneurs and civil society leaders from the Alpine territory. This list of proposals and the topics selected are the result of their work.

The programme Erasmus+ provides support to policy cooperation at European Union level, thereby contributing to the development of new policies, which can trigger modernisation and reforms, at European Union, and systems’ level, in the fields of education, training youth and sport.

The youth education centre – JuBi invites young people, groups as well as responsible persons and partners in youth work and supports them in realising their own educational projects. It belongs to the Bezirksjugendring, a regional network in Swabia district who works towards the interests of young people and youth inclusion in local democracy.

The association CUBIC from Innsbruck is active in the field of European Youth programmes since 2005 and strives to encourage the participation of young people in inclusive and solidarity projects.

Aliseo is the Regional Agency responsible for the rights of students, youth policies, social policies and orientation guidance in the Liguria region, which supports young people in their educational pathways. Aliseo develops cooperation projects with local associations, national and international institutions, and strives to build a fruitful and constructive dialogue between the stakeholders.