

It's High Time for Action – Forum „Coping with Demographic Change in the Alps“ highlights challenges and possible solutions.



Innsbruck, 23rd February 2011 - Population development poses serious challenges, particularly in the Alps. What exactly constituted these challenges and how they could be met was highlighted in the course of the forum "Coping with Demographic Change" in Innsbruck, Austria, on 22nd and 23rd February. The forum, which was organised by the EU Alpine Space Programme together with the Austrian Federal Chancellery and the State of Tyrol, was attended by approximately 120 experts from seven countries and the European Commission. The organisers' intention was to encourage decision and policy makers in the Alpine region, by presenting them with facts and an intensive exchange of practical examples, to deal with the demographic development in a swift and determined manner.

Just how diverse the demographic change actually is, was illustrated at the outset by Herwig van Staa, President of the Tyrolean State Parliament and Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions: "This is not just about an aging society, but also about migration and integration. There is furthermore the question of how the development will affect our spatial structures and the availability of institutions and services to our citizens." People that live in the Alpine Region require, according to the participants, cross-functional policy concepts and individual, tailor-made solutions for the regions. This is because population development and composition, as well as in- and outward migration are often completely different going from West to East, from North to South, or even from one region to the other.

The forum also presented specific and proven examples for solutions, such as the successful cross-border cooperation of hospitals. Other examples illustrate how local communities can integrate new "Alpine Residents": Migrants, together with locals, fix stone walls in terraced landscapes that have fallen in disrepair, thus preserving the traditional Alpine heritage. During other pilot projects, that were dealing with the conflict field "City-Country", a targeted strengthening of small towns and cities, the bedrocks of the Alpine region, took place. The population of 80 percent of all towns and cities is, after all, below 5,000 people.



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The results of the demographic forum will be considered in the next call of the Alpine Space Programme at the end of October 2011. Between 2007 and 2013, 130 million Euros will be invested in the course of this EU initiative in sustainable, transnational projects in seven Alpine countries. This forum was the second of a series of three dealing with key issues in the Alpine region. The first, which took place in 2010, concerned itself with climate change; the third, taking place next September, will be on "Competitiveness".

All presentations and workshops of the Demographic Forum are available on www.alpine-space.eu with immediate effect. This will be supplemented in April by a summary of the most important results. The documentation from the working forum on climate change is also available as download.

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