



WEBINAR ON YOUTH MIGRATION IN THE ALPS

Leaving Home, Staying Connected: The Future of Alpine Living

Wednesday, 17 June | 09:00–12:00 (CET)

We thank all participants for an engaged participation and discussion!

All further links as well as the Q&As from the padlet can be found in the Annex.

THE PILOT SHOWCASE: LESSONS FROM THE OUT4INGOV PROJECT

Establishment of a Youth Consultative Body (YCB) in Maribor (Slovenia)

Amna Potočnik, Regional Development Agency for Podravje – Maribor

To manage youth out-migration and inclusion, a YCB was tested as a governance mechanism in the city of Maribor. Six YCB meetings were held, including simulations of the municipal budgeting process. Participants represented a diverse group of young people, including students and NEETs from Slovenia and various migrant backgrounds. The initiative produced several tangible outcomes, ranging from proposed amendments to the participatory budgeting rules to discussions with the Deputy Mayor on the formalisation of the YCB as a permanent participatory structure.

- “Nothing for youth without youth”

Setting up a Cooperation Group for young people in Cembra Valley (Italy)

Alice Pasquazzo, Autonomous Province of Trento

In a small isolated Alpine valley that is affected by out-migration, a cooperation group between young residents and people who migrated was set up. The goal is to foster exchange on the experiences and skill transfer between the members, addressing qualitative impacts of outmigration. Through online workshops, training webinars and setting up of a WhatsApp group a network was created. A key success factor is to involve a community worker who oversees the activities and activates the network.

- “We turned the concept of mobility into a shared conversation about identity.”

Gathering data through a Youth Observatory in Vesoul (France)

Fabienne Connetable, Vesoul Urban Community

To meet the challenge of youth out-migration in the city Vesoul, first, data needs to be gathered and analysed. A group of experts engaged in academic research, defined indicators relating to youth migration and carried out surveys. The findings were categorised into drivers of youth migration in a rural context and then related to the attractiveness of the city of Vesoul for young people.

- “For Vesoul, the observatory is the first step to reach young people and better understand the needs in this area.”



BEST PRACTICES

Label “Youth Friendly Mountain Villages” in Switzerland: empowering rural youth to counter out-migration

Vera Ambühl, Swiss Centre for Mountain Regions

To counter out-migration of young people from Swiss mountain villages, the label “Youth Friendly Mountain Villages” with an accompanying youth forum was created. The core ideas are to improve the perspectives of young people in their village, to recognise municipalities who support their youth and create commitment of municipalities towards young people. Today, 30 villages carry the label. The youth forum involves the young people into decision making processes, creating a culture of participation.

- *“Young people want to get involved when they feel that their voice matters.”*

Empowering local governance for a better quality of life in the Alps

Lauren Mosdale, Interreg Project “GOVQoL”

Whether young people can choose to migrate, highly depends on the overall quality of life that is related to the skills of local administrations and quality of participation in policy making. The project aims to actively involve youth and citizens into processes to create a higher quality of life for all. It identified three criteria for a good quality of life: nature conservation, access to work and working conditions, and a good public transport. The case of Baronnies provençales shows: *“Young people want to come back!”*

Policy tools to attract talent in regions facing brain drain

Lucila Castro Rovillard, Interreg Project “TALENT4S3”

To meet the challenge of brain-drain and demographic decline, the project develops strategies for talent attraction and retention. Their pilot areas show: It is key to create a governance process rather than individual initiatives to create a talent ecosystem.

- *“Talent policies are not only about attracting people. They are about creating governance systems capable of making talent stay, grow and contribute to regional transformation.”*

PANEL DISCUSSION: YOUTH PERSPECTIVES – THE ALPINE WIDE VIEW

Representatives of the EUSALP Youth Council (Wendy Garica, Nives Hüll), CIPRA Youth Council (Selene Cailotto) as well as the Youth Forum of the Youth Friendly Mountain Villages (Céline Pralong) shared their **perspectives on youth migration in the Alps and their recommendations to municipalities:**

“To enable young people to live in mountain villages, you have to build good living conditions (e.g. affordable accommodation, good health and childcare, digital connectivity, hybrid work models, etc.)” – Céline



“Some mountain villages tend to be conservative; they need open spaces for queer people that are not necessarily found in rural areas. That issue is really overlooked. [...] Festivals and initiatives that pull the young people can create a strong network and make them come back. Don’t prevent people from leaving but attract them back!” - Selene

“If you want to include youth perspectives, you need language accessibility! Have specific projects for intercultural and intergenerational exchange to share perspectives – for instance local practices - that sometimes get lost.” – Wendy

“Enable more remote and hybrid work opportunities, so young people could stay in their home region, even if their profession is not, e.g., tourism linked. Take clear action against all the negative effects of mass tourism, especially regarding housing and traffic to improve the everyday quality of life. Reestablish sustainable public transport.” - Nives

FURTHER INFORMATION

[Link to the recording of the webinar](#)

[OUT4INGOV Website](#)

[OUT4INGOV Youth Platform](#)

3 Podcast Episodes on Youth Migration in the Alps

available on Soundcloud, CBA (Cultural Broadcasting Archive), Spotify, Apple, Amazon Music

- (1) Experts on youth migration explain: What are the challenges, developments and trends in youth migration in the Alps?
- (2) Deep dive into the project pilots: What activities are implemented in the pilot regions and what are the goals?
- (3) Young voices from the project: What are the stories of the young people involved in the project and how did they experience the pilots? *Out now!*

ANNEX: QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PADLET

Youth Consultative Body in Maribor (SLO)

Q: *How do you plan to keep youth engaged? Do you have some kind of work plan with them?*

Amna Potočnik: Our intention is not to treat the Youth Consultative Body as a one-off project activity. The next step is to establish a more permanent and predictable structure for cooperation with young people. This should include regular meetings, a jointly prepared annual work plan, clear thematic priorities and direct opportunities for young people to present proposals to municipal representatives.

It is also important that the agenda is not prepared only by institutions. Young people should be able to propose topics based on their own needs, while the supporting organisations help them transform those ideas into realistic and well-structured proposals.



A key element will be maintaining a clear feedback loop. When young people submit a proposal, they need to know who is considering it, when they can expect a response and what happens if the proposal cannot be accepted. Without this feedback, participation can quickly become symbolic and motivation may decline.

We are therefore discussing the formalisation of the Youth Consultative Body through a municipal ordinance or another suitable arrangement. The longer-term model should also include peer mentoring, communication through channels young people already use, recognition of their contribution and, ideally, a modest budget for activities.

Q: *Was it difficult to convince the political leadership of the need of a Youth Consultative Body?*

Amna Potočnik: I would not say that we faced strong political opposition. The municipality and its professional services recognised that there was a gap between young people and formal decision-making processes. However, there is a difference between general support for youth participation and a commitment to create a permanent structure.

The most convincing argument was therefore not theoretical. It was the concrete work produced by the young participants. In a relatively short period, they identified priorities, learned how municipal processes work, developed a formal proposal concerning participatory budgeting and presented their results directly to the Deputy Mayor.

The municipality also formally responded to the proposal and enabled the participation of temporary residents, such as students and workers, in participatory budgeting. This demonstrated that the Youth Consultative Body could produce realistic and useful policy input rather than only general opinions.

The main challenge now is not convincing political leadership that youth participation is valuable. It is agreeing on the exact institutional form, responsibilities and procedures that will ensure that the body has continuity and that its proposals receive formal responses.

Q: *Have other youth organisations in Slovenia already shown interest in your work or in replicating this model? And regarding the young people who participated, how diverse was the group in terms of age, background, place of residence, and previous experience with youth participation?*

Amna Potočnik: We have already involved and exchanged experience with local youth and civil-society organisations, including MKC Maribor, Slovenska filantropija, ZRC SAZU and other actors from the youth and/or migration policy and practices. They have shown interest in the methodology and in the question of how the model could be continued or adapted.

At this stage, however, it would be more accurate to speak about interest and transfer potential than about confirmed replication by another Slovenian organisation or municipality. To support future replication, we have prepared a practical toolkit that can be used by municipalities, youth centres, regional development agencies and civil-society organisations. The peer-review process also assessed the Maribor methodology as highly transferable because it can be implemented with relatively limited resources.

Regarding diversity, the pilot reached 19 young people between the ages of 18 and 29. The group included permanent and temporary residents of Maribor, daily commuters, students, graduates, employed and unemployed young people, newcomers, returnees and young people with migrant or intercultural backgrounds. Participants included young people connected to Turkey, Iran and different parts of the Balkans.

Their previous experience with participation also varied. Some had already participated in similar activities, while others were engaging with local decision-making for the first time. This combination was



valuable because the group included both participants who understood institutional processes and participants who brought a fresh perspective.

Students represented the largest part of the group, so we also recognise that future recruitment should further strengthen the representation of NEET young people, employed youth and those who are normally less visible in organised participation.

Cooperation Group in Trentino (IT)

Q: *Is the municipality planning to keep financing the management/coordination of the group? So physical meetings as well, team building activities?*

Alice Pasquazzo: Yes, they are! The Cembra Valley is composed of seven municipalities and all of them play a fundamental role in the long-term sustainability and impact of the network. We really invested in integrating the network into the local context, achieving a high level of institutional engagement. Municipalities are deeply involved, highly interested in the project outputs, and committed to carrying the pilot's intentions forward after the project ends. While we focus on the strategic framework rather than specific budget allocations, their commitment is all about ensuring the continuity of the network's life, and that naturally includes also - but is not limited to - facilitating in-person spaces, physical meetings, and team-building activities to keep the group grounded.

Q: *Are there possibilities to transfer more activities from the project from the digital to the "analogue" world (in-person exchanges etc.)?*

Alice Pasquazzo: Absolutely. While our network already has a strong, tangible footprint, our activities have naturally evolved to match what the youth actually need. Many participants have expressed a preference for lighter, more accessible formats. Additionally, since several members are currently living abroad, digital tools are essential for maintaining these cross-border connections. That being said, we are highly receptive to expanding our in-person, analogue activities wherever it adds value. We have successfully done so in the past, and we are fully committed to creating more hybrid or face-to-face opportunities moving forward.

C: *I would like to express my strong support for hybrid formats. Thank you for genuinely listening to young people and for organising accessible meetings and activities.*

Alice Pasquazzo: Thank you very much for your support. Ensuring our activities are accessible and well-suited to the young participants' needs is very important to us. We truly believe that hybrid formats offer the perfect balance between flexibility and connection, and we will definitely continue in this direction.

Youth Observatory in Vesoul (FR)

Q: What will you do about the data that you gathered? How do you think it will shape the local policies?

Q: Do you have feedbacks about the co-working spaces ? Are they used by many people ?

Q: What were the key drivers of youth migration that you identified?

Questions were answered live during the webinar. Please check the recording.

Youth Friendly Mountain Villages in Switzerland

Q: *Are the 2015 survey questions public, is it possible to receive them?*



Vera Ambühl: Yes, the results of the survey from 2015 are public. But the document is only available in German. Here is the link: https://www.jugend-im-berggebiet.ch/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Bericht_Gesamtprojekt_JidBG.pdf

C: *Interesting to see that there are 19 municipalities with the label in the same canton, and other cantons*

Vera Ambühl: Yes indeed, there is a strong concentration of municipalities in the canton of Wallis. On the one hand, this is due to a snowball effect: We have seen that when a municipality obtains the label, other municipalities in the same area become interested in it as well. On the other hand, the Youth Officer of the canton of Wallis really made an effort to advertise and spread the label in his canton.

Whilst we do not pursue anymore an active policy of contacting municipalities to make the label known, we would like to fill the gaps in some cantons without a municipality with the label.

Q: *How is the youth forum organized, can any young person join, how are decisions made or more specifically how are proposals for the municipalities agreed upon? my question comes from personal experience, where youth organizations quickly end up undemocratic with a small group taking control over decision making, which drives away new youths from joining.*

Vera Ambühl: The Youth Forum is organized in a grassroots democratic way (participation on a voluntary basis, decision-making by raising hands, a decision is taken if a majority of the participants agrees with it).

Yes, any young person between the age of 15 and 30 from a municipality with the label can join the Youth Forum and is welcomed. Since the Youth Forum has gotten bigger and bigger (currently around 60 participants), a few years ago we have set up a committee with particularly engaged participants. The Youth Forum votes if a candidate presents itself for the committee - so far, every person who wanted to join the committee has been accepted and welcomed in it. The committee makes propositions, which the Youth Forum can accept or decline.

The committee looks for new members most years and actively encourages other young people to join the committee.

This is why so far we have never had the problem that a small group would like to take control over decision making and would then drive new participants away.

Q: *Who is the contact for the youth forum?*

Vera Ambühl: You are welcome to contact either Céline Pralong, the president of the Youth Forum (pralongceline20@gmail.com), or myself as project manager of the label (vera.ambuehl@sab.ch).

Q: *Have you evaluated the impact of the label? Is there an effect on out-/return migration from young*

Vera Ambühl: On a quantitative level, we have not evaluated the impact of the label and it would be difficult to do so (we'd need data about out-migration of young people on a municipal level plus it would be very, very hard to establish any sort of causality).

However, on a more qualitative level, we have for example published compilations with good projects from different municipalities and documents about different themes that matter to young people (mobility, sustainability, communication with the municipality, the future of mountain regions in light of increasing risks of natural disasters etc.).

Plus, we have an exchange with the municipalities every year and the assembly of the young people takes place every year, so we get an idea of the impact the label has this way.



We do know from some municipalities with the label that they've managed to stop the shrinking of their population, in some cases even succeeding in a turnaround and they now have a growing population. We don't know whether that's due to return migration of new people arriving.

For other municipalities it would constitute already a success to slow down out-migration and shrinking. That depends on the situation of a municipality.

Q: *Do you have similarities in the political colour/family of the municipalities in your network?*

Vera Ambühl: As you have seen on the map we have a strong concentration of municipalities with the label in the canton of Wallis. Because of historical reasons, the Centre Party is a fortress in the Wallis.

But when it comes to tackling out-migration and applying for the label, we don't see a pattern connected to political parties. The openness towards trying new ideas and implementing participation from the responsible people of the municipality is more important than their party affiliation.

Also, the idea of the label is that tackling out-migration in a municipality is a long-term engagement and not connected to specific members of the authorities.

Quality of Life in the Alps (GOVQoL)

C: Often municipalities also just don't know good participation methods, they revert back to old methods, frontal presentations but no real participation. Is this also your experience with your pilots, and do you plan to do some trainings in the project (participation-related, or other aspects of quality of life)

Q: Since the main GOVQoL outcomes are still in development, I'm curious about e.g. how will you make sure the roadmaps later lead to concrete follow-up and real pressure on decision-makers, especially regarding public transport, housing, jobs, services and tourism pressure on locals?

Otherwise, I find this project very interesting and hope it can be useful for many other cases.

Questions were answered live during the webinar. Please check the recording.

Attracting Talent (TALENT4S3)

Q: Is the project aimed only at "highly skilled" workers? In many regions there is currently a lack of trade workers and similar profiles, who I assume will often also be in a more vulnerable position due to lower income, lesser job stability

Q: What can (mountainous) municipalities start with, if: they don't have such an international hub in their area yet, or they don't have a business hub yet, and limited financial resources

Questions were answered live during the webinar. Please check the recording.

Questions & Comments to the Youth Panel

Q: What digital tools and participation methods do you use that works for you to keep the councils working and active, and the members engaged?

Q: Is there any way that you - as members of the transnational councils - could break the big questions of institutionalisation and the implementation of participation down to a local level?

So that your actions and experiences from EUSALP and CIPRA have a direct effect in the region where you live / grew up in.

Questions were answered live during the webinar. Please check the recording.