

EUSALP Landscape Conference, 24 May 2022, Bolzano/Bozen

Conclusions

On 24 May 2022 AG6 held the EUSALP Landscape Conference at EURAC research in Bolzano/Bozen in the framework of which the impact of renewable energy production on Alpine landscapes was tackled. The following recommendations for stakeholders can be drawn from the presentations and the discussion:

The transformation of the energy sector from fossil-based to zero-carbon will not be easy. At its heart is the need for a quick phase out of fossil fuels to reduce energy-related CO₂ emissions to close to zero. Much knowledge on mitigating the effects of the climate crisis is already existing. Decarbonising the energy sector requires urgent actions from a global scale to the local level across all relevant policy fields and involving various actors.

Conflicts of interests will be frequent. Hard decisions on what kind of landscape we want in the future, how we deal with biodiversity loss and what role renewables will play must be taken - and creative solutions must be found. These choices must be backed by the political will to actually implement them. As we are facing a climate and biodiversity crisis, the energy transition has to happen with an environmentally compatible mix in the use of renewable energies that does not put biodiversity in the Alps at stake.

Spatial planning is a crucial instrument for effectively integrating mitigation and adaptation actions into sectoral activities and for avoiding lock-in effects with respect to settlement and infrastructure development.

Spatial planning is also key to success in anticipating many conflicts and promoting multi-functional solutions (e.g. agrivoltaics) based on alternatives and scenarios that bring a fair burden and benefit sharing for all concerned. A top-down approach for major projects should be combined with bottom-up elements, such as inclusive project development, promotion of local ownership and compensation schemes. Monitoring of environmental compliance must be enforced, where concerns exist.

The Alpine Space has also great potential for renewable energy production (solar, wind, biomass).

The necessity to urgently act requires simultaneously saving energy and expanding renewable energy production. This includes as well acknowledging the limits of growth and discussing shrinking strategies (e.g. individual car traffic and land consumption by commercial areas).