

MEETING WITH MELANIE PLANGGER, FROM YOUTH.SHAPING.EUSALP, AND DOMINIK JAKSIC, MEMBER OF THE EUSALP YOUTH COUNCIL

Launched in July 2021, the EUSALP Youth Council aims to give Alpine youth a voice, to listen to and consider their proposals and to give them the opportunity to influence the political decisions that will affect their lives. To understand how this new governance tool for mountain youth works, we met with Melanie Plangger, Project Leader of youth.shaping.EUSALP. We also invited Dominik Jakšič, member of the Youth Council, to share with us his first experiences and aspirations for the mandate to come.



Melanie Plangger

Project Leader of youth.shaping.EUSALP

***Euromontana:* can you share the story of how the EUSALP Youth Council was born in July 2021?**

Melanie Plangger: “During the Tyrol’s presidency of EUSALP in 2018, the Tyrol made youth participation a priority. Under the motto “shaping.future.together”, the next generation should participate in shaping the Alpine region of the future. The Tyrol, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, supported by CIPRA International and Alpine Town of the Year, organised workshops with youth from all over the Alpine region to ask them how they would like to contribute. They expressed their desire to participate through online tools, summer camps and support for concrete actions, as well as institutionally.

Subsequently, their ideas were implemented through the youth.shaping.EUSALP project, co-funded by the European Commission and led by the Region of the Tyrol. Today, the youth.shaping.EUSALP project includes the “Pitch your project” competition for young people, EUSALP modules in summer camps throughout the Alpine region, and various online communication channels and meetings. To ensure that the voice of youth is heard and taken into account in EUSALP bodies, the [EUSALP Youth Council](#) was created.”

How were the members of the Youth Council selected? What are their profiles?

“The aim of the selection process was to represent the greatest possible diversity of young people. We therefore informed young people about the Youth Council via local, regional and national youth organisations and 154 valid applications were received during the registration period.

The selection was weighted according to certain criteria to ensure that we have a broad diversity: experience in [youth.shaping.EUSALP](#), different educational backgrounds, gender, and national and regional diversity. We selected four young people per EUSALP state and thus a total of 28 Youth Council members.

The Youth Council now includes youth from all 7 EUSALP states, different regions, and with different educational and professional backgrounds, from high school and university students to professionals in different sectors. The selection process is evaluated together with the members of the Youth Council and can thus be further developed according to the suggestions of the young people.

The mandate of the current Youth Council ends on 1st July 2022, and from February 2022 young people will be able to apply for the next Youth Council.”



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What are the planned activities for the first few months of the Youth Council?

“Youth councillors started their mandate on 1st July 2021. We organised four online modules in July to introduce them to EUSALP bodies and provide them with important skills for their mandate in the areas of communication, lobbying and outreach. In August, the first physical meeting took place in Innsbruck, where the young people got to know each other and discussed the upcoming agenda and their self-organisation.

The Youth Council organises itself: members are therefore currently fixing the rules according to which they meet, make decisions or distribute roles and tasks. They agreed to work in working groups on their priorities and to hold online meetings at least monthly. Youth councillors pay particular attention to ensuring that all seven states are represented in decisions and that the broadest possible consensus is sought. In other words, they don’t think all that differently from the institutional representatives of the states and regions, which is exciting to observe.

“States, regions and the European Commission have set themselves the goal of working together for the sustainable development of the Alpine region. Young people can actively contribute to this and hold EUSALP members to their promises.”

At the next EUSALP Executive Board meeting in October 2021 in Grenoble, two representatives will present the priorities and rules of procedure of the Youth Council. They will be in contact with the Action Groups and together with the EUSALP institutions they will try to advance their ideas. At the EUSALP Annual Forum in Nice on 16-17 December, the Youth Councillors will present their concerns to EUSALP policy makers.”

So how will the Youth Council recommendations be integrated into EUSALP activities?

“Two representatives of the Youth Council sit in the institutional bodies of EUSALP, in the Executive Board and in the General Assembly. They can make suggestions as observers, get their own agenda items and are allowed to comment on any other agenda item. Their proposals must be heard. A mentor group consisting of the Tyrol, the European Commission, the Presidency, Switzerland and Liechtenstein supports the young people to get in contact with EUSALP institutions. Young people can also get in touch with Action Groups and use the international EUSALP network to push their ideas forward. In addition, they are consulted on presidential programmes and important decisions.

In the end, EUSALP has to be filled with life. States, regions and the European Commission have set themselves the goal of working together for the sustainable development of the Alpine region. Young people can actively contribute to this and hold EUSALP members to their promises. The future of the Alpine region can only be shaped together with the next generation.

In parallel, the "[Pitch your project](#)" project competition offers them the opportunity to receive concrete support for project ideas for the sustainable development of the Alpine region. The current submission phase is open until 31st October 2021.”

Dominik, you are a member of the brand new EUSALP Youth Council, could you introduce yourself?

Dominik Jakšič: “My name is Dominik Jakšič and I am from the charming country, Slovenia. After finishing my master’s degree in music composition, I work as a music teacher, freelance composer as well as conductor. In the following years, I want to combine my passions for photography and flying into a profession as well. Combining music, flying and photography seems strange at the first sight, however I strive for aesthetics everywhere, being inspired by nature, and this is the part that connects all of them.”

“I believe we are as competent for contribution to a better future just as the ‘grownups’ are. We have a vision of how we want our world to look like in 50 years’ time”



Dominik Jakšič

Member of the EUSALP
Youth Council

How did you hear about the Youth Council and what motivates you to get involved?

“I have discovered the Youth Council online and had an immediate desire to apply for it. As said, nature is an inspiration and I believe it is an inspiration for all of us, so it must be preserved. In our world, as I see it, we are living far apart from nature, and this must be changed into a sustainable, ecological way of life. The Youth Council gives us an opportunity to contribute and make at least small steps towards it.

It is far more than just making the world a better place. In the Youth Council we can meet some new faces, make connections and friends. And having a group of like-minded friends can really move mountains. Youth means energy, enthusiasm, freshness, hope, future!”

What do you think young people in the mountains need today?

“It is my opinion that young people must really be blessed to have an opportunity to live in such beautiful nature. However, with getting our everyday living smarter, I believe they would need some of the features of the modern world, all combined with sustainability and their present living environment. And surely, young people would need their environment preserved, as pollution in the Alps is getting more and more critical.”

In conclusion, how do you think mountain youth can contribute to a better life in the EUSALP area?

“With the strong friendship, youth enthusiasm and all of the knowledge, I believe we are as competent for contribution to a better future just as the ‘grownups’ are. We have a vision of how we want our world to look like in 50 years’ time and just as everybody we will do anything to have a good life.”