



International support for campaign against Brenner wind farm



Wind farm on the Brenner pass: the Alpine Convention review committee is currently examining whether Italy is obliged to apply the energy protocol of the Alpine Convention.

With its planned wind farm on the Brenner Pass, Italy is breaching the Alpine Convention, according to the Club Arc Alpin, which has petitioned the Alpine Convention's committee of inquiry. For the first time in the history of the convention, "complaint proceedings" have begun.

The plan is for 19 wind turbines to be built at an altitude of over 2,000 metres on the

Sattelberg mountain in Italy. The project was approved in October 2011 by the South Tyrol regional authorities, although the environmental appraisal was negative. The administration in the Austrian Tyrol objected to the project, too. Its opinion was requested because the wind farm on the Brenner frontier also has consequences for Austria: the facilities will stand right next to a protected landscape area in Austria as well as being close to a Natura 2000 site.

Is the energy protocol part of EU law?

The wind farm, argues the Club Arc Alpin, umbrella organisation of Alpine Clubs, breaches the energy protocol of the Alpine Convention. This states that the parties to the convention, in this case Italy, should maintain protected areas including their buffer zones and improve energy infrastructures, in this case the wind turbines, to take account of the stress they impose on Alpine ecological systems. The planned location of the wind farm is in the buffer zones of the two protected areas. However, the province of Bozen/Bolzano has not as yet examined the consequences of the wind turbines and access roads for the affected protected landscapes and Natura 2000 sites.

The Alpine Convention is in force in the European Union as in Italy. Italy did not in fact ratify the energy protocol of the convention, but is a member of the European Union. The energy protocol has been in force within the European Union since 2006. The Alpine Agreement's committee of inquiry must now examine whether the energy protocol also forms part of EU law. It would then be binding on all member states, including Italy, and therefore on the province of Bozen/Bolzano.

The Sattelberg wind farm proceedings are making legal history. Every four years the Alpine states and the European Union deliver a report on how they are meeting their obligations under the Alpine Convention. Independently of this periodic examination, since the year 2002 all observers may petition the review committee if a party to the convention breaches its obligations. The Club Arc Alpin is the first observer to make use of this right. The committee is not a legal but rather a political panel, made up of representatives from the individual Alpine states. Decisions are taken with a three-quarters majority. It will now be seen whether the review committee is a suitable instrument for resolving such contentious questions and proceedings against breaches of the Alpine Convention.

Source and further information:

www.club-arc-alpin.eu/index.php?id=97 (de), www.alpenverein.at/naturschutz/Energiewende (de), www.tiroler-umweltanwaltschaft.gv.at (de)

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CIPRA's point of view

60 years of CIPRA



Rottach-Egern on Tegernsee, founding place of CIPRA: leading network in the Alps.

The International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, CIPRA, has reason to celebrate. On 5 May this umbrella organisation, containing some one hundred members from all countries in the Alps, will turn 60. Nature protection organisations, Alpine clubs, nature parks and initiatives for sustainable traffic policies: CIPRA represents some one hundred such organisations, contained in the eight national and regional agencies of CIPRA, for example in Slovenia or in France. CIPRA today is thus one of the most important networks in the Alps.

CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, was formed on 5 May 1952 in Rottach-Egern on the Tegernsee Lake in Germany, with the aim of promoting co-operation in environmental protection between the Alpine countries.

Even at that time, CIPRA was demanding an international agreement for sustainable development in the Alps. In 1991 it achieved its aim with the signing of the Alpine Convention. Today CIPRA substantially contributes to making sure that this international agreement is no mere paper tiger and that its abstract thoughts are translated into real actions. An example is the European Union Alpstar project, which implements one of the demands of the climate action plan contained in the Alpine Agreement, i.e. that the Alps should become a carbon-neutral area.

Sixty years after its creation, CIPRA now connects people, projects and organisations across linguistic, cultural, geographical and political borders. "Our projects encourage other stakeholders to implement their own projects", says Dominik Siegrist, president of CIPRA. "This common networked exchange will also play an important role in the future".

The aim is that life for future generations in the Alps is attractive and will remain so.

CIPRA will be celebrating 60 years of existence with its members and companions at the Tegernsee Lake on 5 May 2012, with various events being held in all Alpine states during the course of this anniversary year.

Source and further information:

www.cipra.org/en/CIPRA, www.cipra.org/de/CIPRA/cipra-international (de) www.cipra.org/en/CIPRA/cipra-international, www.cipra.org/en/CIPRA/cipra-international

Bruno Stephan Walder is new CIPRA director



Bruno Stephan Walder: 'I see myself as having a mediating role'.

Inhabitants of the Alpine regions should feel more strongly connected to each other. This is the wish of the new director of CIPRA International, Bruno Stephan Walder. It is clear from his biography that Bruno Stefan Walder (58) is devoted to the protection and sustainable development of the Alpine regions: as a senior official with the Swiss Federal Office of Environment, he has made some lasting contributions to state environmental policy. The new director of CIPRA International also feels a personal connection to the Alps, having lived the last 30 years in the Engadin and in the Bernese Oberland. He states: "Ever since I was a boy I have always loved being in the Alps."

People in the Alps should have responsibility for determining their own development, hopes Bruno Stefan Walder. "I think it is important that they should attempt to find solutions together with people in the surrounding cities." CIPRA's experience allows it to play a mediating role here, and it is in this mediating role that he sees himself as director. Bruno Stefan Walder will take up his post on 1 May, following the departure of CIPRA's director of many years, Andreas Götz, who is leaving to work in a freelance capacity.

Source and further information:

www.cipra.org/de/CIPRA/cipra-international (de), www.cipra.org/de/presse/medienmitteilungen (de), www.youtube.com/watch?v=xa7unvT8DiU (de)

Knowing how to shape the climate



Annual report 2011: Stories of how visions become reality.

We should discharge no more greenhouse gases than the natural systems in the Alps, such as forests or moorlands, can absorb - CIPRA's vision, set out in its annual report, argues for sustained climate protection. In its annual report for 2011, CIPRA indicates ways in which the Alps can be made carbon-neutral and how people can be encouraged to achieve this objective. This vision goes much further than what many hard-nosed politicians believe is feasible, pointing out that it is possible to lead a carbon-neutral existence in the Alps, which will improve the quality of life and be good for the regional economy.

CIPRA's climate projects make it clear where we need to take action and what practical steps can be taken: an administrative director who wants to influence the climate and save the city of Bozen/Bolzano 160 million euros in energy costs; young people to develop ideas of how to slow climate change and motivate people towards greater climate protection; and architects and clients who can show their colleagues how to build comfortable houses while at the same time protecting the climate. It is important for people to meet so they can share their knowledge and experience in order to learn from one another.

Source and further information:

www.cipra.org/en/CIPRA/cipra-international, www.cipra.org/en/press/press-releases/pr

Swiss want to see fewer second homes

Most Swiss people have approved the "Stop the never-ending building of second homes" initiative, providing mountain communities with more protection for landscapes. But the building moratorium is not universally popular. On 11 March, 50.6% of the Swiss voted "yes" to the second homes initiative. They demanded an upper limit on the number of dwellings that are used for only a few weeks each year. If the number of second homes in a municipality exceeds 20%, a ban on such residences will immediately come into effect. The initiative above all affects regions that live on tourism. In the canton of Graubünden/Grisons, 135 of the 176 municipalities are affected by the building ban. Most communities in the Valais, Ticino, Uri and the Bernese Oberland have also said no to the building of unoccupied second homes. The Swiss Working Group for the Mountain Areas complained that the mountain cantons had largely rejected the initiative, and that the urban majority had decided on matters affecting rural areas. Environmental bodies such as Pro Natura see things differently: the decision opens the door for tourist regions to implement modern housing policies that will avoid wasted resources, excessive land use and ruined landscapes. Popular initiatives are rarely approved in Switzerland. Moreover, by voting for the second homes initiative, electors have rejected the proposal made by the government and parliament.

Source and further information: www.woz.ch/1210/zweitwohnungsinitiative (d), www.nzz.ch/nachrichten/politik/schweiz (d), www.uvek.admin.ch/themen/02536/02545/03023/ (d), www.pronatura.ch/news-reader-mc-vollstaendig (d), www.tagesanzeiger.ch/schweiz/standard (d)

Alps overrun by traffic

Never before have such large quantities of goods been transported through Switzerland as in 2011. The title of "Transit Route Number 1", however, goes to the Brenner Pass. The goods traffic crossing the Alps via Switzerland has now broken two records, according to a report published in mid-March by the Swiss Federal Department of Environment and Traffic. In 2011, for the first time ever, road and rail saw over 40 million tonnes of goods transported through the Swiss Alps, at a time that saw Europe in the midst of an economic crisis. Nor have such quantities of goods ever been transported by rail before: 25.6 million tonnes, or nearly 64%. Meanwhile, with some 1.3 million journeys made on the roads through the Alps, Switzerland overshot its 2011 target of one million, set by law, for a modal shift. Throughout the Alps as a whole, in contrast to Switzerland, most goods go by road. In its fourth annual report, published last December, the "Permanent Observatory for Road and Rail Goods Traffic in the Alpine Regions" states that in 2010 nearly 194 million tonnes were transported over the Alps, of which nearly 66% was by road. Rail transport represented just 10.5% in France, while in Austria the figure was around 34%.

The Brenner Pass is the busiest Alpine pass: in 2010 over 1.8 million tonnes more goods were carried over the Austrian-Italian border than in 2011 on all Swiss Alpine transit routes combined, i.e. 41.9 million tonnes. Road transport of goods over the Brenner increased further last year, by 3.5%.

Source and further information:

<http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road/doc> (fr), www.bav.admin.ch/verlagerung/01529/index (d), www.vcoe.at/de/presse/aussendungen-archiv (d), www.news.admin.ch/dokumentation/00002/00015 (d)

Work begins on Semmering Tunnel

The authorisation proceedings have yet to be concluded, but the excavators are already on the move for the building of the Semmering rail tunnel. Austrian politicians have given the project the green light, ignoring loud protests and empty state coffers. The rail tunnel under the Semmering, at 27.3 kilometres, is one of the longest rail tunnels in Austria, will cost some three billion euros and has been the subject of heated debate for the past 20 years. Work is due to begin on 25 April, and to be concluded in 2024. Green light was given by the politicians, even though the necessary proceedings were not terminated yet. As early as February preliminary works started and e.g. in Gloggnitz, Lower Austria, two dozen houses were torn down and roads moved. The Austrian parliament also voted last week to invest 33 billion euros in rail infrastructure until 2017. This will burden Austria's state finances with a total of 26.67 billion euros until the year 2066. These funds are not only intended for the works on the Semmering, but also for the financing of the equally disputed Brenner and Koralpe tunnels.

The nature protection organisation, "Alliance for Nature", is challenging the proceedings so far: the Lower Austrian regional authorities are alleged to have employed biased experts. The environmental compatibility investigation is also alleged to have ignored all 1,500 objections. Alliance for Nature further criticises the fact that the politicians, by allowing work to start regardless of the objections and pending procedures, are intending to establish a fait accompli. A petition to the administrative court may yet stop the megaproject.

Source and further information:

<http://diepresse.com/home/wirtschaft/economist> (de), www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXIV/II/II_01755 (de), <http://noe.orf.at/news/stories/2529304/> (de), <http://cba.fro.at/wp-content/uploads/openup> (de), <http://derstandard.at/1334530869403> (de)

Bruin is back!

The number of bears in the province of Trento has grown, while the damage they cause has fallen significantly, states the report on bears in the province. But not all is well for Bruin and friends. It is clear from the latest report that bears feel very much at home in the province of Trento. The bear population in the Trentino and its surroundings continues to increase and is now estimated at 33 to 36 animals, with at least four cubs. The report contains more than just data and facts about these large predators: it also records the compensation payments for damage caused by the animals and the protective measures taken. In comparison with the previous year, the recorded damage to agriculture decreased by around half, with a total of somewhat more than 43,000 euros paid out. On the one hand, the bears' natural habitat offered them enough to eat while, on the other, over 700 protective measures were taken, e.g. erection of fences.

With over 30 years' experience in handling Bruin and his ilk, the province of Trento has shown that damage can largely be prevented, but that good communication is also needed alongside compensation payments.

Bears have however become extinct in the Limestone Alps, announced the WWF in Austria recently. Between 1989 and 1993 three bears were released there. The small initial population is one reason for the failure of the project: the other is poaching, with more than 20 bears missing.

Source and further information:

www.orso.provincia.tn.it/rapporto_orso, www.kora.ch/news/archiv/20120301d.htm (de), www.bafu.admin.ch/dokumentation/fokus/12020 (de), www.corriere.it/cronache/12_aprile_22 (it)

Agenda

Conference / Congress: AlpCheck2 Conference. 26.4.2012. Haus der Wirtschaft Willi-Bleicher-Str. 19 Studio A, Stuttgart. Organisation: Haus der Wirtschaft, Stuttgart/. [More »](#)

Workshop / Seminar: Climate change and migration in mountain areas. 3.5.2012 – 4.5.2012. Brighton, UK. Language: en. Organisation: University of Sussex, Brighton/UK. [More »](#)

Conference / Congress: Final Conference of the European project TRANSITECTS. 9.5.2012. Prien am Chiemsee. Language: en. [More »](#)

Conference / Congress: MONITOR II. 14.5.2012. Innsbruck, AT. Language: de, en. Organisation: Federal Ministry of Agriculture and

Strange but true!

... not just any old TV, but a smart-looking, high-definition, backlit flat screen model - for free. A handful of Slovenes recently subjected themselves to a gruelling physical challenge in order to get their hands on one for nothing. For over two hours, they battled on foot through nearly a metre of snow, climbing the Komna peak (over 1,500 metres high) while lugging their old TVs with them. They were responding to a challenge, broadcast by a commercial radio station, to come to the Triglav National Park, where the person reaching the summit with the largest TV would win a new one. The radio station promised to ensure proper disposal of the old sets, which it

Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Wien/AT. [More »](#)

International symposium 'Changing mountain environments in Asia'. 7.10.2012 – 9.10.2012. Tribhuvan University (TU) and Hokkaido University (HU). Language: en. Organisation: Hokkaido University, Office of International Affairs / Division of International Services, Kita-ku, Sapporo/JP. [More »](#)

did: they simply slid down on their own

Source and further information: www.cipra.org/sl/CIPRA/cipra-slovenija (sl), www.pzs.si/novice.php?pid=6725 (sl)

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