

alpMedia Newsletter

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www.cipra.org/alpmedia



Climate Pact for the Alps – criteria for innovation

(19.06.2008) Some 350 attendees came to Argentière-la-Bessée/F for this year's AlpWeek from 11 – 14 June to discuss the question of innovation in and for the Alps under the title of "Innovating (in) the Alps".



Argentière is the gate to the core area of the Ecrins National Park.

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With the Climate Pact for the Alps launched in Argentière, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA) is pursuing a targeted approach to sustainable and innovative action in the Alpine region.

This second edition of AlpWeek brought together the big networks for Alpine research (ISCAR), the Alpine municipalities (Alliance in the Alps), the NGOs (CIPRA), the protected areas of the Alps (ALPARC) and the Alpine Clubs (Club Arc Alpin). The debate opened with the question whether innovations are per something positive or

whether they must always be subjected to critical scrutiny in terms of sustainability and their ecological footprint. Or, as one speaker put it, "Yesterday's innovations are today's problems." In addition to such fundamental considerations, there were also presentations on concrete projects from the whole of the Alpine region, such as Ecomodel Achental/D, in which the various municipalities are pooling their efforts for a sustainable future, and forward-looking ideas like the Alpine Transit Exchange.

A number of presentations and excursions were devoted to innovation at the local level. Argentière, for example, used to be largely dependent on the aluminium industry and had to adopt a completely new orientation following the demise of the industry in the 1980s. Today the town is a popular centre for ice and rock climbing, walking, canoeing and other outdoor sports. On the fringe of AlpWeek, CIPRA launched the Climate Pact for the Alps and called upon organisations, institutions and networks to sign the pact so as to bring pressure to bear on the countries of the Alps with the aim of transforming the Alps into a model region for climate protection on the basis of a meaningful plan of action developed in the framework of the Alpine Convention. For this purpose, CIPRA delivered specific proposals for the government action needed to mitigate climate change and adapt to its consequences.

Information and Climate Pact download: <http://www.cipra.org> (de/fr/it/sl/en)

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In July the UNESCO World Heritage Committee added another 27 cultural and natural sites to the World Heritage List, including three located in the Alpine region, namely the Swiss Tectonic Arena Sardona with the Glarus overthrust, the cross-border (CH/I) Rhaetian Railway in the Albula/Bernina Landscapes and the fortifications of Vauban in France.

Page 3: 2009 Alpine Town of the Year award for Bolzano

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New World Heritage sites in the Alps

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Sources: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/453> (en)



In the area of the Glarus overthrust, old Verrucano rock is thrust over much more recent flysch.

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Alps and Carpathians pulling together for biological diversity

(19.06.2008) On 29 May, the representatives of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Convention agreed to intensify collaboration in the field of nature protection and signed a memorandum of co-operation to that effect. The objective is to establish an ecological network in the sensitive mountain regions of the Alps and the Carpathians as a contribution to a global network of protected areas as called for in the Biodiversity Convention. The memorandum was signed in the framework of a high-powered side event to the 9th Biodiversity Conference in Bonn/D. The Ecological Network platform of the Alpine Convention played a central role in preparing the agreement between the three convention organisations. With their Ecological Continuum project, which was presented in the course of the side event, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA), the Alpine Network of Protected Areas, the International Scientific Committee for Alpine Research and the Alpine Programme of the WWF show how ecological networking can be implemented at the local level in the Alps. Information and text of the memorandum: http://www.bmu.de/int_umweltpolitik/weitere_multilaterale_zusammenarbeit/doc/41686.php#memo (de/en), Ecological Network platform and Ecological Continuum project: <http://www.alpine-ecological-network.org> (en)

Database on municipal development in the Alps

(17.07.2008) How do my town and region perform in terms of employment, demographics, structural diversity, agricultural and near-natural land use, structural change in agriculture, and landscape fragmentation in the Alpine space? Answering these and many other questions was the goal of DIAMONT, a recently completed INTERREG IIIB project, in which a spatial development indicator database was created as an objective tool for comparative working throughout the Alps. The database, which is freely accessible to the general public in the Internet, provides data on a total of 81 indicators relating to social, ecological and economic aspects of life in the Alps. The data can be selected for individual municipalities and for higher-level spatial units. The website also has maps as a more graphic style of presentation for twelve of the indicators such as available settlement area, forest area and private service sector jobs. In addition to the statistical data, the English-language website also offers access to over a hundred spatial development instruments for land resource management in the Alps and numerous links to examples of best practice for selected instruments. Database: <http://www.diamont-database.eu> (en)



Changes in agriculture are also impacting the Alpine landscape.

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New publication: "Mapping the Alps"

(19.06.2008) With its international data sets and maps, this recently published atlas of the Alps provides a solid and up-to-date basis for a wide range of questions relating to the Alpine region. The editors see their work as a tool for studying the differences and the rapid pace of change in terms of place and society, which is so typical of the Alpine region in particular. "Mapping the Alps" contains more than a hundred coloured maps of the Alps in its societal, economic and ecological aspects. Subjects like settlement patterns, income levels, landscape fragmentation or employment are interpreted with the help of various indicators by experts and their views presented in five languages (English, French, German, Italian and Slovene).

The target group for the atlas is the scientific community with an interest in the Alps from the fields of geography, tourism and economics, as well as politicians and informed members of the general public.

Bibliography: Borsdorf, A., Tasser, E. & Tappeiner, U. (eds.), 2008: Mapping the Alps. 292 pages. Spektrum Akademischer Verlag, ISBN 3-8274-2004-0.

2009 Alpine Town of the Year award for Bolzano

(19.06.2008) On 9 June Bolzano/Bozen was officially declared the 2009 Alpine Town of the Year. The decision was taken in recognition of the South Tyrolean town's contribution to climate protection and a sustainable planning policy designed to provide a good quality of life for residents and an attractive destination for visitors. The jury was also impressed by the fact that Bolzano has formulated guidelines for a sustainable future in its strategic development plan and has already implemented them. The accolade is seen as an incentive for the townspeople to give thought to Bolzano's double identity, i.e. urban and alpine, in the course of the year, to strengthen the town's links with the surrounding area, and to network with both neighbouring municipalities and the other alpine towns.

The Alpine Town of the Year award has been made annually by the association of the same name since it was introduced in 1997. The winning town is selected by an international jury on the basis of its commitment to the forward-looking and sustainable development of the urban area and its surroundings.

Further information: <http://www.alpenstaedte.org> (de/fr/it/sl/en)



Bolzano is working to achieve climate neutrality in the next ten years.

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European regions calling for a green paper for mountain regions

(03.07.2008) The Committee of the Regions (CoR) is calling for the European Commission to deliver a green paper on development for the mountain regions, with such fields as economic and structural funds, employment policy, nature protection, civil defence, the environment and energy policy, and also transport and agricultural policies combined in an integrated approach that does justice to the special character of the mountain regions. This appeal for a dedicated European mountain policy, on the model of those already created for maritime and urban regions, was formulated by over 340 elected representatives of the regions and municipalities of Europe in a resolution adopted on 19 June. The resolution also calls for political responsibilities for the mountain regions to be bundled and vested in one single EU Commissioner.

Source: <http://www.stol.it/nachrichten/artikel.asp?KatId=c&ArtId=118098> (de)



The CoR resolution is seen as the first major step towards a dedicated mountain policy in Europe.

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EU Structural Fund with negative environmental impacts

(29.05.2008) More than two thirds of the projects financed with the help of the European Union's Structural Fund have effects that are contrary to EU environmental policy objectives. That is the basic message of a study entitled "Environmentally Harmful Subsidies – a Threat to Biodiversity" produced by Green Budget Germany (GBG) and published by Deutscher Naturschutzring (DNR). The study lists numerous cases where European funds have been spent on projects that have negative impacts on the environment and lead to a loss of biodiversity. The examples include questionable hydropower plants, motorways planned and built without mitigating measures for the environment, and the unbalanced development of European waterways. The conclusion drawn by the authors of the study is that ecological criteria and the aspect of sustainability must be included in the assessment and selection procedures for projects proposed for EU funding.

The DNR and GBG are also critical of the subsidy award procedures in Germany, a country in which one quarter of the tax perks available today were introduced before 1940 and which they say has antiquated laws and regulations that are detrimental to the declared goal of sustainable development.

To download the study, go to <http://www.eu-koordination.de/index.php?page=23&vorlage=fuenfb&id=588> (de)

EU Greening Transport Package

(17.07.2008) On 8 July the Commission of the European Union presented a package comprising various initiatives for environment-friendly and sustainable transport. The package includes a strategy for internalisation of external costs in the transport sector, a proposal for a Directive on road tolls for lorries, and proposals for reducing the perceived noise from rail freight trains. According to "Bündnis LSVA für Europa", inadequate use will continue to be made of pricing policy to establish steering instruments for lorry traffic, and the rules for differentiating between urban and non-urban routes to calculate external costs are incompatible with the Alpine Convention. But they also see positive signals insofar as road use charges can now be doubled for air and noise pollution in sensitive mountain areas.

Sources and information: <http://ec.europa.eu/transport/greening> (en/de/fr/it/sl), <http://www.go-lienz-osttirol.net/lsva/kurz-nachrichten-2008-07.htm> (de)

Miscellaneous

More winter passengers handled by France's Alpine airports

(19.06.2008) Passenger volumes at the airports in Grenoble-Isère/F and Chambéry-Savoie/F increased by 7% and 20% respectively in the 2007/2008 winter season. In the last two years, Grenoble-Isère has had the highest rates of growth in passenger totals of all French airports. The two Alpine airports are particularly popular with winter visitors from the UK, with Scandinavia coming second. Last year's new services from the Netherlands, Sweden and Poland also proved very successful. For the upcoming winter season, the airport authorities are anticipating a further increase in passenger movements. This development is giving cause for concern with regard to its ecological footprint, all the more so as many visitors only stay for a long weekend.

Source: http://www.actumontagne.com/newsletter-article_667.html (fr)

Geotourism Challenge – public voting for the winning projects

(29.05.2008) This year the American National Geographic Society launched the "Geotourism Challenge: Celebrating Places/Changing Lives", a new competition designed to find and promote pioneers in the field of geotourism. For the National Geographic Society, geotourism is a form of tourism in which the regional character of a destination – in terms of ecology, culture, aesthetics, heritage and quality of life – is sustained or even enhanced. Projects from over eighty countries were submitted and are presented on <http://www.changemakers.net/geotourismchallenge> (en/es). An expert jury has short-listed the finalists, and now visitors to the website are invited to choose the winning projects from the list.

New look for the Via Alpina website

(29.05.2008) Via Alpina fans can now go the organisation's revamped website with additional functionality for planning and preparing for a walk. The officially designated routes of the Via Alpina, with descriptions of the walks available in several languages, are the ideal way to discover the Alpine Arc. The new website provides visualisation of the various sections of the trails with the help of Google Maps and Google Earth as well as additional information such as route profile, total length, level of difficulty, time required, signposting, topographic details and tips for guide books.

For the Italian area of the Alps, the website offers information and links to package holiday and other tourism service providers, including accommodation along the routes. There is also a new community section where users can compare notes and offer mutual advice in the form of blogs and chat forums.

Information: <http://www.via-alpina.org> (de/fr/it/sl/en)

Agenda

International conference and excursion: **ALPPS 2008 – Alpine Landslide Problems and Projects Switzerland 2008**; 23.8.-03.09.2008, Bern/CH; language: en; organiser: Department of Geography, Bern University.

Information: <http://www.alpps.ch> (en)

23rd IUFRO Conference for Specialists in Air Pollution and Climate Change at Contrasting Altitude and Latitude; 07.-12.09.2008, Murten/CH; language: en; organisers: IUFRO, SLF, WSL
Information: http://www.wsl.ch/iufro_ch_2008/index_EN?-C=& (en)

6th European Mountain Convention. "How to generate added value from Europe's mountains"; 08.-10.10.2008, Brig-Glis/CH; languages: de/en/fr/it/sl; organiser: Euromontana
Information: <http://www.euromontana.org/> (en/fr)

6th International Conference and General Assembly of the Alpine Protected Areas. Living in the Alps, the New Challenges; 08.-10.10.2008, Bled/Sl; language: de/en/fr/it/sl; organisers: Protected Areas Task Force of the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, Triglav National Park/Sl.
Information: <http://www.alparc.org/> (de/fr/it/sl)

4th International Conference on Monitoring and Management of Visitor Flows in Recreational and Protected Areas; 14.-19.10.2008, Montecatini Terme/I; language: en; organiser: MMV
Information: <http://web.fi.ibimet.cnr.it/MMV4/index.php> (en)

Strange but true!

...What works in Rio de Janeiro should also be possible in Bavaria: earning money with a gigantic statue of Christ! The Brazilian original, a popular tourist attraction, is a mere thirty metres high. An organisation by the name of "Christliche Initiative Pax" is now planning to erect a 55 metre high version, "the world's biggest statue of Christ", in the German pre-Alps – logically enough on a 1600 meter high mountain called Predigtstuhl (Sermon Chair). The project has met with a negative response from the major Christian churches. Canon Josef Obermaier, who is responsible for pastoral care in tourism for the Archbishopric of Munich and Freising, is sceptical about this giant Jesus and says it would be better to strengthen the regional tradition of building chapels in the countryside and erecting mountain-top crosses.

Sources and information:
<http://www.oecumene.radiovaticana.org/ted/Articolo.asp?c=208339> (de), <http://www.cjp-komitee.blogspot.com> (de)