

alpMedia Newsletter

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Biodiversity and climate change as subjects for transnational co-operation

(31.07.2008) The Alpine Space Programme established in the framework of the INTERREG IVB European Community Initiative Programme is being used to fund a dozen new projects.



The ECONNECT project is designed to eliminate obstacles to the movements of animals.

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Each project has a focus on one of the three programme priorities: the competitiveness and attractiveness of the Alpine region, accessibility and connectivity, or the environment and risk prevention. Several of the new projects also relate to the overall theme of climate change.

The 2007-2013 Alpine Space Programme is the continuation of the programme from the 2000-2006 structural fund period. The overriding goal in the current funding period is to increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of the co-operation area through joint activities in fields in which

transnational co-operation is needed for sustainable solutions.

Of a total of 136 project proposals submitted at the beginning of the year, twelve were chosen to receive funding at the end of June. A number of recurring subjects are addressed by several of the projects, such as climate change, tourism, town and country relationships, and water management.

The ECONNECT project ("Improving Ecological Connectivity in the Alps"), in which CIPRA (International Commission for the Protection of the Alps) is a partner, is designed to create a transnational ecological network in the Alps. Six pilot regions will work on the basis of a common methodology to improve and restore the ecological corridors that serve as linking elements. This involves identifying barriers to the movement of various groups of species and formulating recommendations for such barriers to be eliminated. Another task is to compare the legal basis for ecological networks and to make improvements where possible. The project involves 16 partners from all the countries of the Alps. ECONNECT has a three-year project period and a budget of 3.2 million euros.

For the current funding period for INTERREG IVB, a total of 130 million euros has been made available for project finance. The second call for project proposals is scheduled for autumn 2008.

Information: <http://www.alpine-space.eu> (en)

Contents

Page 1

Biodiversity and climate change as subjects for transnational co-operation

Page 2

Glittering mountain hut in the Monte Rosa massif

Water resources under threat in the Himalayas

Rail tunnel ground water to heat a tropical greenhouse

Interactive Internet portal for sustainability in South Tyrol

Page 3

Knowledge transfer – new pillar of regional development?

EU: Legally enforceable right to clean air

Modifications to Alpine plant communities

EU measures on climate change

Page 4

Miscellaneous

Agenda

Oh!...

Headlines:

Page 2: Glittering mountain hut in the Monte Rosa massif

Construction work began last week on the new Monte Rosa Hut at the foot of the Dufourspitze above Zermatt/CH.

Page 3: Knowledge transfer – new pillar of regional development?

The latest issue of the bilingual (fr/en) Revue de Géographie Alpine (RGA) deals with the subject of knowledge management and knowledge transfer in the regional context.

Glittering mountain hut in the Monte Rosa massif

(28.08.2008) Construction work began last week on the new Monte Rosa Hut at the foot of the Dufourspitze above Zermatt/CH. The hut, which resembles a glittering rock crystal, is being built by the Swiss Alpine Club in the framework of the 150th anniversary of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology. The hut is not only unconventional with regard to the architecture; it also features innovative energy management and technical building services. The intelligent solutions incorporated in the eco-friendly building make it 90% autonomous in terms of energy.

The ambitious project is meant to show the potential for renewable energies in challenging locations and for the construction of almost energy-neutral buildings. The project managers hope that the new hut will also act as a catalyst for buildings in the valley flats.

Information: <http://www.presseportal.ch/de/pm/100015731/100568132/mail> (de), <http://www.neuemonterosahuette.ch> (de/fr), <http://www.ethz.ch> (de/en), <http://www.sac-cas.ch> (de/fr/it)



A photomontage of the modern Monte Rosa Hut, which is due to be finished by the end of 2009.

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Water resources under threat in the Himalayas

(28.08.2008) Climate change is threatening the water reserves of East Asia. An estimated 50 percent of the water from the Himalayas comes from glaciers, permafrost zones and the snowmelt. The Roof of the World provides the run-off for the seven biggest rivers in Asia, with a catchment that is home to more than a billion people.

In the Himalayas, the mean temperature is rising by 0.3 degrees every ten years. That is twice as fast as the global average. And the glaciers are melting at a far faster rate than hitherto assumed. In addition to local phenomena such as floods and mudflows, there is also an increasing risk of famine and military disputes over water resources and energy supplies. Climate change is also reflected in today's precipitation patterns: more intensive rain and snowfalls during the monsoon period are leading to more frequent flooding, while precipitation is lower than ever before in the dry periods, and agriculture above all is suffering from extreme droughts.

Sources: <http://www.worldwaterweek.org/> (en), <http://cdurable.info/Himalaya-Le-rechauffement-climatique-menace-les-ressources-en-eau,1184.html> (fr)



Tibetan Highland: soon dried out?

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Rail tunnel ground water to heat a tropical greenhouse

(14.08.2008) In the future, the ground water that drains from the Lötschberg Base Tunnel at a temperature of 20°C will be piped into a tropical greenhouse which is to be built at the northern portal in Frutigen/CH to produce fish and tropical fruit, and also to heat the administration building. The facility will include forty aquaculture tanks for an annual output of 45 tons of sturgeon, 3 tons of caviar and 20 tons of other fish species, while the greenhouse will be used to produce an annual total of 20 to 40 tons of tropical fruit.

There will also be an energy park on the site. In a project initiated by BKW FMB Energie AG, various sources of renewable energy will be presented to the general public in easily understood form. The exhibits – a geothermal plant, a wood chip heating plant, a water turbine, a photovoltaic installation and a biomass power plant – will offer visitors a striking demonstration of eco-friendly energy production and use. There are also plans for a project called Regio Plus in support of effective marketing for agriculture and the trades in the Kander Valley in general and for the produce from the tropical greenhouse in particular.

Sources and information: http://www.nzz.ch/nachrichten/schweiz/tropenhaus_mit_integriertem_energiepark_1.796008.html (de), <http://www.tropenhaus-frutigen.ch> (de/fr/en)

Interactive Internet portal for sustainability in South Tyrol

(14.08.2008) In a research project lasting several years, a sustainability monitor has been developed for South Tyrol, Italy and is now on-line. A total of 74 indicators relating to the environment, society and the economy have been developed to make sustainability quantifiable and to show the situation in the various municipalities with regard to sustainable development. The set of indicators has been adapted to the specifics of a mountain region but serves equally well for purposes of national and international comparison.

The data on the website are updated regularly so that the situation in the municipalities can be monitored continuously. An additional goal is to tell the public what sustainability is all about and to indicate the fields in which the actions of every individual can make a contribution to sustainable development. A trilingual (de/it/en) book entitled "Sustainable South Tyrol?" has also been published containing a set of indicators with data relating to the ecological, societal and economic situation in all the municipalities in the region.

Online portal: <http://www.sustainability.bz.it> (de/it/en)

Knowledge transfer – new pillar of regional development?

(31.07.2008) The latest issue of the bilingual (fr/en) *Revue de Géographie Alpine* (RGA) deals with the subject of knowledge management and knowledge transfer in the regional context. The three key elements in knowledge work are the human being, organisation and technology. Whereas the technology-based approach was predominant in the 1990s, today's focus is on the human being; "High touch, not high tech" is now the motto.

This issue of RGA presents various models. Albert Simard describes knowledge transfer as a market- and service-oriented value-added chain. Roland Scherer and Klaus-Dieter Schnell address the special role played by knowledge transfer in Swiss regional policy. Wolfgang Pfefferkorn and Serena Rauzi summarise the positive results of CIPRA's knowledge transfer project "Future in the Alps". The practical transnational and translingual knowledge transfer work done in the framework of the project is so far unique in and beyond the borders of the Alps. In the last article, Karolina Begusch-Pfefferkorn discusses the knowledge balance of the Austrian research focus on the Cultural Landscape to show how knowledge transfer work can be evaluated.

Bibliography: *Revue de Géographie Alpine/Journal of Alpine Research*, vol. 96 no. 2, June 2008: *Connaissances en mouvement: expériences et propositions / Knowledge transfer: experience and proposal*. Grenoble. ISBN 978-2-200-92501-7. 120 pages.

EU: Legally enforceable right to clean air

(31.07.2008) The European Court of Justice (ECJ) has ruled that citizens have a legally enforceable right to clean air. Individuals affected by high concentrations of particulate matter can now call on the courts throughout the EU to ensure that effective measures are taken to improve the quality of the air. The authority involved must then draw up an action plan listing the measures to be taken in the short term. The measures must be capable of reducing to a minimum the risk that limit values may be exceeded and of ensuring a gradual return to a level below the ceilings in the long term. The ECJ issued its ruling in response to a complaint lodged by a German citizen against the Munich municipal authority for neglecting to take effective measures to reduce air pollution. Having failed to achieve his goal in the German courts, he was finally successful in Luxemburg. The ECJ quoted an EU directive which provides for comprehensive action plans to be drawn up to tackle the complex problem of air-borne particulate matter.

Urban centres in the Alps and valleys with high levels of traffic in transit are regularly affected by high concentrations of particulate matter. In future the authorities there will find it less easy to turn a blind eye.

Sources and Information: <http://curia.europa.eu/de/actu/communiqués/index.htm> (de/fr/it/en), <http://www.presseportal.de/pm/22521/1234944/mail> (de), TAZ, 26 July 2008



An EU standard introduced in 2005 stipulates that the limit values for emissions of particulate matter may be exceeded on 35 days a year at most. In some parts of Munich this has happened far more frequently in the last few years.

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Modifications to Alpine plant communities

(31.07.2008) A recent French study into 171 woodland plants in temperate regions shows how plant species have already adjusted to climate change, with a significant upward shift in species optimum elevation averaging 29 meters per decade in response to rising global temperatures. At higher elevations, the plants find the conditions they need for growth, reproduction and survival. This migratory pattern was confirmed for plant species of all altitudinal belts. Compared with trees and shrubs, upward migration was found to be proceeding more quickly in plants with a shorter life cycle and hence a faster population turnover. Similarly, plant species that are specialised in Alpine habitats are migrating more quickly than generalists. These differences in the pace of migration are gradually leading to modifications in the composition of plant communities and their interaction with the fauna.

Bibliography: Lenoir, J. et al. (2008). A Significant Upward Shift in Plant Species Optimum Elevation during the 20th Century. In "Science" vol. 320. <http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/320/5884/1768> (en); Information: <http://www.agroparistech.fr/-Espace-presse-.html> (fr)



In the long term, climate change leads to shifts in plant communities.

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EU measures on climate change

(11.09.2008) When the time comes for the new European Commission to take office in 2009, it is possible that the EU will appoint a Commissioner for Climate Change, according to the environmental news service ENDS Europe Daily. So far, the field of climate change has been covered by several commissioners. Ultimately it is the President of the EU Commission who decides on the allocation of responsibilities within the Commission. Those who want to play an active role now already can participate in the EU Internet consultation "Towards a comprehensive and ambitious post-2012 climate change agreement". The on-line hearing gives individuals and organisations an opportunity to state their views on various items of the Bali Road Map. It is hoped that this public consultation exercise with stakeholders and the general public will lead to a sustainable global climate protection agreement for the period after 2012. Source and on-line consultation: <http://www.eu-koordination.de/index.php?page=23&vorlage=fuenfb&id=701> (de/en), <http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=climatepost2012> (de/fr/en)

Miscellaneous

2008 King Albert Mountain Award

(11.09.2008) The King Albert I Memorial Foundation held its annual award ceremony in Pontresina/CH on 6 September. The 2008 awards went to five mountain experts, including four from countries of the Alps, namely Catherine Destivelle from France, one of the best women mountaineers in the world, Kurt Albert from Germany, the creator of the Red Point idea, Gerhard Baur, a documentary film producer from Germany, the Swiss history professor Jon Mathieu, and the Canadian professor Hanspeter Schreier. The King Albert I Memorial Foundation, which is registered in Zurich/CH, was founded in 1993 by Walter Amstutz, former Chief Tourist Officer in St. Moritz, in honour of King Albert I of Belgium (1875-1934), who was an outstanding mountaineer and climber, for the purpose of honouring institutions and individuals who have done outstanding service through their work in any field pertaining to the mountain regions of the world.

Source and Information: <http://www.king-albert.ch> (en)

Obligatory rentals for planned Swiss resort

(14.08.2008) The Egyptian entrepreneur Samih Sawiris does not want the resort he is planning in Andermatt/CH to become a ghost town. His solution: anyone who purchases a house or apartment as a second home must sign a contract agreeing to rent the property whenever they are not in residence. If they fail to do so, Mr Sawiris says they will be charged "very high maintenance and service costs" for the period of non-occupation. His plans for Andermatt include seven hotels with 3000 beds, a golf course, 400 holiday apartments and 50 to 70 villas.

Source: NZZ, 31 July 2008,

http://www.nzz.ch/nachrichten/schweiz/sawiris_ferienresort_in_anderstatt_soll_nicht_zur_geisterstadt_werden.1.796549.html (de)

New publication on developments in environmental law

(11.09.2008) This book is the first to tell the full story in chronological order of the Environmental Law Programme of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN ELP). With its Environmental Law Programme, the IUCN has made a name for itself worldwide in playing a leading role since the middle of the last century in the development and implementation of environmental law, and especially international environmental law. The author also discusses the creation of the Alpine Convention in the context of developments in international environmental law.

Bibliography: Lausche, B. J. (2008): Weaving a Web of Environmental Law – Contributions of the IUCN Environmental Law Programme. 563 pages. ISBN: 978-3-503-11045-2. <http://esv.info/id/350311045/katalog.html> (de)

Agenda

International Workshop: **Ecological Networks: from Spatial Strategy to Implementation**; 01.10.-02.10.2008, Oisterwijk/NL; language: en; organiser: ECNC-European Centre for Nature Conservation.

Information: <http://www.alpinestudies.ch/veranstaltungen.html> (en)

Banff Mountain Festivals 2008; 01.-09.11.2008, Banff/Canada; language: en; organisers: The Banff Centre.

Information: <http://www.banffmountainfestivals.ca/festivals/2008/> (en)

First virtual global conference on climate change : **Climate 2008**; 03.-07.11.2008, language: en; Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, Information:

<http://www.klima2008.net/?a1=clen&PHPSESSID=s535kb9b6ko0f16ju9oltvh7q2> (en/de)

Sustainable tourism as a factor of local development; 07.-09.11.2008, Monza/I; language: it/en; organisers: GRISS – Research Unit for Sustainable Development, University of Milano Bicocca

Information: http://www.brianzaeturismo.it/international_congress.htm (it/en)

4th International Conference and Exhibition on Consequences of Climate Change and Flood Protection; 26.-29.11.2008, Hamburg/D; languages: de/en; organiser: Hamburg Messe und Congress GmbH

Information: <http://www.acqua-alta.de> (de/en), <http://www.hamburg-messe.de/Grafiken/aquaalta/pdf/2008/ausstellerprospekt08.pdf> (de/en)

Strange but true!

... The construction works for the Winter Olympics are making good progress. Fifty-five – more than half – of the 105 structures planned, were completed by 30 September 2007. By 30 December 2007 the total had risen to 59, and less than ten percent of all the buildings were less than 50 percent finished. If we can trust the predictions made by the Piedmont/I regional authority, at this galloping pace of construction all the structures planned for the Winter Olympics will be ready by spring 2009 already. So far so good. But wait a minute! Didn't the Olympics in Turin take place in the spring of 2006?!

Source: La stampa, 10 July 2008