

alpMedia Newsletter

A CIPRA information service – 16.01.2009, summary 22/08-01/09
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2018 Olympics – How green are France's candidatures?

(15.01.2009) Four French towns are bidding to stage the 2018 Winter Olympics:



The mountains of the Ecrins National Park could provide the backdrop for the 2018 Winter Olympics.

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Anney, a town with a strong mountain identity; Grenoble, where the Winter Olympics were held in 1968; Nice, where mountains meet the Mediterranean, and Pelvoux-Vallouise in the region of the Ecrins National Park with its *montagne nature* (nature & mountains) candidature. The decision will be taken in March 2009 when the French Olympic Committee announces France's official candidate for the 2018 Winter Olympics. The French candidate is certain to come up against at least one rival bid from the Alpine region, with Munich competing as Germany's candidate.

On paper at least, all four French candidatures demonstrate the determination to organise so-called ecological Games. Nice in particular wants to guarantee "clean Games" with a dense public transport network. Grenoble and Anney are talking of CO₂-neutral Games, with Anney pointing to the fact that 80% of the sports infrastructure is already in place. The bid submitted by Pelvoux-Vallouise is a little different, featuring slogans such as "... and what if the Winter Olympics were organised in the mountains?" The region points out that the Games really would be held in the mountains and be of benefit to the mountain region. Pelvoux's candidature stands out internationally from other projects by providing for the re-use of the infrastructure used for the 2006 Olympic Games in the neighbouring city of Turin/I. And its bid states that other ecological concerns are also to be addressed: the spatial concentration of the venues; a concept for soft mobility revolving around the existing railway line; planning all the installations in such a way that they are complementary with summer and winter use; a cost-conscious approach to resources such as water and energy, etc. Pelvoux also intends to lend more weight to the Olympic idea, with a budget half the size of its rivals' budgets.

While announcements of "green" projects are all very well, ultimately it's the implementation of the concepts that counts. And when it comes to sustainability, the Olympic Games – whether summer or winter – have had few successes to show in the past.

Information: <http://www.pelvoux-ecrins-2018.com> (fr), <http://www.annecy-2018.fr> (fr), <http://www.grenoble2018.fr> (fr), <http://www.nice-coteazur-2018.fr> (fr), <http://www.comite-olympique.asso.fr> (fr)

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In the October issue of its IHDP Update magazine the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP) looks at mountain regions worldwide.

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The Alpine range will continue to fulfil its role as central Europe's water tower in the future.

A scientific insight into mountain regions and cultures worldwide

(20.11.2008) In the October issue of its *IHDP Update* magazine the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP) looks at mountain regions worldwide. It refers to them as “Laboratories for Adaptations” to difficult environmental conditions which, particularly with climate change, are now increasingly important. Short summaries of scientific studies illustrate the challenges and potential solutions from regions in Africa, Eurasia and America.

The projects featured focus on the inhabitants of mountain regions. For example, in one study German researchers explain the impact which the fall of the Iron Curtain has had on the agricultural landscape in the Carpathians, resulting in rapid and drastic changes in the economic and societal structures. Another example: Mount Kenya in east Africa acts as a water tower for a vast area of land – what would happen if the snow reserves were to melt as a result of climate change? It is a question which Swiss scientists are looking to answer together with local researchers. The 13 other articles address similar issues.

To download the magazine: <http://www.ihdp.unu.edu/file/IHDP+Updates/IHDP+Update+2008+2?menu=60> (en)



Traditional agricultural systems are coming under pressure.

© PIXELIO / BirgitH

ACCESS: Improving the provision of basic services

(20.11.2008) ACCESS, the transnational project, was launched in Genoa/I at the end of October. Its objective is to improve the provision of basic public services in rural mountain regions using innovations in organisation. It focuses in particular on the provision of local services, post office and telecommunication services, public transport, health services and education.

ACCESS is looking to develop new structures designed to enable regions to help one another, with ideas and co-operation ventures, to improve the provision of basic public services. It focuses on ascertaining what goods and commodities are needed in everyday life, providing better access to non-local services, setting up area-wide online access, and improving the mobility of the population as a whole. The project's lead partner is the Swiss Working Group for Mountain Regions (SAB). Source and information: <http://www.alpine-space.eu> (en)



Public services are becoming increasingly scarce in mountain regions that are not used for tourism.

© PIXELIO / Fabio Sommaruga

Discussion on territorial cohesion in Europe

(18.12.2008) Discussion of the European Commission's Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion entitled “Territorial Diversion as Strength” has been underway since October 2008. The contributions are to provide the basis for a new European cohesion policy for the period after 2013.

The Green Paper opens up interesting perspectives on the formulation and implementation of specific strategies adapted to macro regions such as the Alps. The Alpine region could therefore benefit from greater and more efficient co-operation between the Alpine Convention and the EU. Indeed, in this Green Paper, territorial particularities form the mainstays of a broad-based cohesion policy, along with a broad range of policy formulation at several levels (from European-wide to local). EU Commissioner Danuta Hübner is also of the view that “by viewing cohesion from a territorial angle attention can be brought to themes such as sustainable development and access to services”.

All citizens and organisations have the possibility of submitting their contribution online by 28 February 2009 at the following address: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/index_de.htm (de/fr/it/en).

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/terco/index_de.htm (de/fr/it/sl/en)

Projects on transnational networking in the area of natural hazards

(20.11.2008) AdaptAlp, a recently launched EU project, looks at climate response measures and the evaluation of natural hazards. The work on strategies and proposed solutions aimed at coping with the impact of climate change is to provide the basis for more intensive international co-operation in natural hazard management. AdaptAlp is to run for a term of three years and involves partners from Switzerland, Italy, Austria, Germany, France and Slovenia.

Improved transnational networking, this time in the area of safety and civil protection, is provided by a new internet platform which was recently presented at the meeting of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Alpenländer* (ARGE ALP) marking the completion of its project on a joint geo-data association. With the aid of GIS, or a Geographical Information System, valuable data can be retrieved quickly in an emergency and forwarded area-wide, bypassing complicated red tape. The new internet platform is to be tested in practice in the spring of 2009 using a cross-border catastrophe scenario.

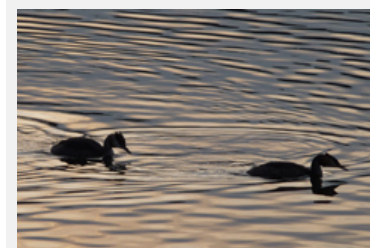
Sources and information: <http://www.alpine-space.eu> (en), <http://www.provinz.bz.it/lpa/285.asp?art=265834> (de/it), <http://presse.vorarlberg.at/land/dist/vlk.html?id=28514> (de), <http://www.argealp.org> (de/it)

Is climate change drying up the Alps?

(20.11.2008) The Alpine range will continue to fulfil its role as central Europe's water tower in the future. But not without restrictions, according to the forecasts of a current study by a group of 20 experts commissioned by the European Environment Agency (EEA). According to the study on the water situation in the Alps the seasonal bottlenecks that are already being experienced are set to worsen. The EEA is publishing the full recommendations of the expert group in an 80-page report at the beginning of 2009.

On the same subject, the National Research Programme NFP 61 on "Sustainable Water Management" is to be launched in Switzerland this autumn, with an operating budget of CHF 12 m. The Programme's objectives include developing scientific foundations and methods for the sustainable use of water resources in Switzerland. The deadline for submitted pre-proposals to the Swiss National Science Foundation is 20 January 2009.

Sources and information: <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-presse/2008/pd08-075.htm> (de), <http://www.nfp61.ch> (de/fr/en)



Water is an element that is vital to the lives of people, animals and plants.

© PIXELIO / Bernd von Dahlen

Alpine Crossing

(04.12.2008) The "Alpine Pearls" co-operation venture is organising a "softly mobile" winter trip through the Pearls of the Alps between 19 and 30 January 2009 – specially for members of the press. Around 25 journalists from the Alpine countries will travel by train and by bus, following an itinerary schedule that takes in spectacular Alpine crossings such as crossing the Rosà Plateau at the Matterhorn on skis or a hot-air balloon trip from Innsbruck/A to the Berchtesgadener Land/D. Also on the agenda are daily press talks on subjects such as sustainable mobility and eco-friendly tourism in the Alpine region. On the last day of the trip a large-scale summit meeting is to be held in Werfenweng/A to review the "Alpine Crossing" media trip.

"Alpine Pearls" is the umbrella brand for sustainable tourism using gentle mobility in the Alpine region. 22 municipalities from Austria, Germany, Italy, France, Slovenia and Switzerland have teamed up to co-operate in this way and offer their guests holiday pleasure in the Alps based on the notion of sustainability.

Source: <http://www.alpine-pearls.com> (de/fr/it/sl/en/jp)



The Municipality of Arosa/CH is one of 22 "Alpine Pearls" offering holiday pleasure in the Alps based on the notion of sustainability.

© Alpine Pearls

Switzerland says No to "gigaliners"

(15.01.2009) Environmental associations have launched a campaign against the introduction of "gigaliners" on Switzerland's roads. The country's *Bundesrat* [Federal Council] has already clearly rejected the "monster trucks". For major hauliers, gigaliners, i.e. HGVs with a vehicle length of up to 25 m and a total weight of up to 60 tonnes, are considered profitable with regard to transport logistics; however, they are hardly compatible with a sustainable transport policy. Throughout Europe more than 120 associations from 20 countries are now taking part in a coalition against the introduction of the 60 tonners.

In Scandinavian countries, however, gigaliners have been the standard in domestic haulage for a number of years now. Trials have also been made in the Netherlands and in Germany. The EU Commission has commissioned a study to examine the impact of gigaliners in transnational traffic and provide a basis for a decision regarding the EU-wide approval of the 60 tonne vehicles.

Sources and petition: <http://www.verkehrsclub.ch/de/politik-kampagnen/online-petition/60-toenner.html> (de/fr/it), <http://www.swissinfo.ch> (de/fr/it) 23.12.2008

More than 10,000 alien species in Europe

(04.12.2008) The fact that more and more non-indigenous species of fauna and flora are spreading throughout Europe is nothing new. But for the first time a complete list of all the invasive species has now been compiled. 1,462 neozoa and neophytes have been found in Austria alone, a landlocked and Alpine country. As part of the DAISIE project ("Delivering Alien Invasive Species Inventory for Europe") researchers documented a total of 10,822 new animal and plant species. Species which do not pose a threat to either forestry or agriculture or to human health had so far been neglected as they do not cause any direct economic damage; however their impact on our ecosystems could be serious. After all, "only" 15 per cent of the species listed are responsible for direct damage. A further 15 per cent could affect individual habitats, native plants and animals or microorganisms. The complete list is freely accessible at www.europe-aliens.org (en).

Source: http://www.naturschutznetz.ch/files_php/news.php?nr=3620 (de)

Miscellaneous

LexALP online database

(18.12.2008) The LexALP project (Legal Language Harmonisation System for Environment and Spatial Planning within the Multilingual Alps) co-financed by the EU is aimed at collating and explaining specialised terminology relating to the subjects of spatial planning and sustainable development, and making available free of charge on an internet website. The term bank classifies the terminology into domains with explanations pertaining to all the legal systems in the Alps, enabling users to obtain translation equivalents. LexALP provides the terminology in the four working languages of the Alpine Convention, i.e. German, French, Italian and Slovene.

Database: <http://lexalp.eurac.edu:8080/termbank> (de/fr/it/sl/en)

Lots of Russian tourists in Austria

(15.01.2009) Never before have so many Russian holidaymakers come to Austria as in 2008. Hotels reported a 35% rise in arrivals and a 40% increase in overnight stays. During the summer season the number of overnight stays rose by around 80%. In 2008 Russian guests accounted for a total of 1.1 million overnight stays in Austria. Besides the capital Vienna, the Russian visitors were particularly taken by the federal province of Tyrol and ski resorts such as Sölden, Ischgl and Mayrhofen.

Source: http://www.tourismuspresse.at/presseaussendung.php?schluessel=TPT_20081229_TPT0001&from=nl (de)

Even high-elevation Himalayan glaciers are melting

(15.01.2009) Glacier studies by an international team led by Natalie Kehrwald of Ohio State University show that even high-elevation glaciers are suffering from the effect of climate change. The ice of various glaciers contains two radioactive layers associated with thermonuclear bomb tests conducted during the 1950s and 1960s. However these layers are missing from Naimona'nyi, one of the highest glaciers (6050 m) in the Himalayan range. One possible reason might be mass loss since the late 1950s. If high-elevation glaciers were to shrink on a large scale, the implications for the water resources of around half a billion people in south-east Asia would be far-reaching.

Bibliography: Kehrwald, N. M. et al., *Mass loss on Himalayan glacier endangers water resources*, Geophysical Research Letters, 35, 2008. Abstract: www.agu.org/pubs/crossref/2008/2008GL035556.shtml (en)

Agenda

International Conference: **World Sustainable Energy Days 2009**. 25-27.02.2009, Wels/A; languages: de, en, it, sp; organisers: O.Ö. Energiesparverband.

Information: <http://www.wsed.at/wsed/index.php?id=217&L=1> (en/de)

International Conference: **Health and Recreation in Forest and Landscape**. 01-03.04.2009. Birmensdorf/CH; languages: de, fr, en; organisers: Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL).

Information: http://www.wsl.ch/landscapeandhealth/index_DE?-C=& (de/fr/en)

REALS CORP 2009. **14th International Conference on Urban Planning and Regional Development in the Information Society**. 22-25.04.2009, Sitges/ES; language: en; organisers: CORP Association.

Information: <http://www.corp.at/> (en)

eceee 2009 Summer Study. Act! Innovate! Deliver! Reducing energy demand sustainably. 01-06.06.2009. La Colle sur Loup/F; language: en; organisers: Agence de l'Environnement et de la Maîtrise de l'Energie (ADEME).

Information: http://www.eceee.org/summer_study/ (en)

IALE Conference 2009: **European Landscapes in Transformation: Challenges for Landscape Ecology and Management**. 12-16.07.2009, Salzburg/A; language: en; organisers: IALE.

Information: <http://www.iale2009.eu/> (en)

Strange but true!

...The Matterhorn is a symbol of Kyrgyzstan's strength. At least according to the will of Kurmanbek Bakiyev, the President of this central Asian country. He is currently campaigning using posters that feature a photograph of himself together with the Matterhorn and a slogan stating that the country would be as strong as the depicted mountain if people stood shoulder to shoulder. Not that Kyrgyzstan lacks its own impressive mountain peaks, but presumably the President appreciates just how patient the Matterhorn has proved to be. After all, it placidly accepts to be used to help advertise chocolate, beer and heaven knows what else. And if Toblerone is unhappy about this new competition from the Matterhorn, the Swiss chocolate manufacturer can always get its own back and base its own future advertising on the Lenin Peak.

Source: NZZ 26.09.08