

Energy-efficient Alpine communities and Alpine towns



Fifty - the car hire scheme from Langenegg/A: car-sharing as a way of protecting the climate in the long term.

At the end of February the Vorarlberg communities of Langenegg, Mäder and Zwischenwasser received the European Energy Award® (eea) - Gold. These communities spearhead the international award for energy-efficient communities, which evaluates some 600 towns and communities across Europe.

Other Alpine communities to receive the European Energy Award® - Gold include the communities of Virgen/A, Wolfurt/A, Lucerne/CH and St. Johann im Pongau/A. A total of 28

communities have been awarded "Gold", the highest category. These pioneering communities stand out by virtue of their commitment to and innovative measures for energy efficiency and climate protection. The European Energy Award® is presented to communities which overall implement 50% of an extensive catalogue of measures in the area of energy and climate protection. Just under 600 towns and communities from across Europe take part in the European Energy Award®. Around 150 German communities and over 300 communities from Switzerland participate. In France, eight communities and local authority associations - such as Grenoble Alpes Métropole - are included in the ranking. In Italy, the number of participating communities rose to over 30 in the past year. Slovenia is not as yet represented at the eea. The European Energy Award® is the quality management system and certification process used for reviewing, rating, planning, steering and regularly auditing the climate protection activities of communities in order to identify and tap into the potential for sustainable climate protection. Climate objectives are to be achieved in the long term and continually improved. Ultimately, the energy and climate work carried out by a community is rewarded publicly if its energy policy concept has had demonstrable success. Source and additional information: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20100223_OTS0067 (de), <http://www.european-energy-award.org/> (en). Videos of the European Energy Award in France, Germany and Austria can be found at: <http://www.european-energy-award.org/About-eea-R.58.0.html> (de/fr/en).

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Harnessing expertise for ecological networks in the Alps



Expertise from the fields of science and practice is to be harnessed for the successful long-term networking of animal and plant habitats.

The Ecological Continuum Initiative has brought international experts together as part of a think tank whose long-term objective is to setup up an alpine-wide ecological network. The think tank provides the experts from the fields of science and practice with a framework for developing new projects to complement and follow up on existing activities such as the ECONNECT project. In December 2009 26 experts accepted the invitation extended by the Continuum partners ALPARC, CIPRA, ISCAR and the WWF to convene in Chamonix/F to discuss the objectives and activities of the think tank in 2010. Three theme-related workshops are to focus the work of the think tank over the coming months. For more information on the think tank (concept) go to <http://www.alpine-ecological-network.org/index.php/services-mainmenu-8/downloads-documents> (en). Anyone interested in taking part in the think tank should contact Thomas Scheurer (ISCAR): scheurer@scnat.ch.

Low-carbon travel from the UK to the ski slopes



There are lots of reasons why going by train is better than flying: It's good for the planet, comfortable and relaxing, scenic, and family friendly.

data about the slopes and the surroundings, recommendations for places to eat and drink, and après-ski and nightlife. Source and additional information: <http://www.snowcarbon.co.uk/> (en), http://diepresse.com/home/panorama/oesterreich/529985/index.do?_vl_backlink=/home/panorama/oesterreich/index.do (de)

Taking the train from London to go skiing in Sestriere/I sounds like a nightmare scenario. But, as a new specialist website proves, it's not. For a number of weeks now, avid skiers can go to www.snowcarbon.co.uk/ (en) to find the most convenient train journeys to take them from London/UK to the Alps or the Pyrenees to go skiing. Through their snowcarbon website travel journalists Mark Hodson and Daniel Elkan are offering an eco-friendly alternative to flying. Travelling by train can cut carbon emissions by up to 90% compared with travelling by air. Users of the website are only a few clicks away from finding the travel information they need, complete with fares. Tickets can also be booked online. All the connections listed have been verified and double-checked by the bus and rail companies as well as resort tourist offices. The winter resorts on offer are located in Switzerland, Austria, France, Italy and Andorra. They were specifically selected by Hodson and Elkan because they can all be reached conveniently by train. The relatively small number of destinations also means that the information provided can be detailed. For each resort the website features details of how to get there, descriptions with general information and

How do people perceive food products from European mountain regions?

The EuroMarc project looked at this very question from February 2007 to January 2010 and it has now published its findings. Ten teams carried out surveys among consumers, retailers and local initiatives in six European countries (France, Norway, Austria, Romania, Scotland and Slovenia). The project managers wanted to use the surveys to document the needs and perceptions of all those involved in the process. The project's overriding objective was to preserve the biodiversity of mountain regions by finding ways of adding value to local food products. On the one hand the project has resulted in practical guidelines for developing and communicating the products for all the actors involved in the supply chain. On the other hand, recommendations can now be made at the local, national and European level on how to develop other quality products from mountain regions. According to a press release by Euromontana the detailed results are to be made available on the project website at the end of February 2010. More information on the project can be found at http://www.mountainproducts-europe.org/sites/Euromontana/EuroMARC_Project/Origins_and_methodology.aspx (en/fr)

Warmest decade for at least 130 years

The last ten years will go on record as by far the warmest in the alpine region since systematic records began. In Germany even the "cool" year 2004 with an average temperature of 9.0 degrees centigrade was well above the climatological mean for Germany, at 8.2 degrees. The past decade broke all the records, whatever the season. Summer 2003 was in a league of its own. The warmest autumn was in 2006, followed by the mildest winter in 2006/2007, and the warmest spring in 2007 since measurements began. Compared with the 1990s, temperatures on either side of the Swiss Alps were half a degree warmer. At medium altitudes the temperature increase for the period 2000 to 2009 was around 0.3 degrees centigrade while high alpine regions were a good 0.2 degrees warmer than in the 1990s. Considered across the entire decade, the increase in temperature at higher altitudes was not as pronounced and, according to MeteoSchweiz, did not attain the values predicted by climate models. Sources: <http://news.search.ch/inland/2009-12-30/die-schweiz-erwaermt-sich-weiter> (de/fr), http://www.co2-handel.de/article256_13332.html (de), http://www.geologi.info/Il-decennio-pi%C3%B9-caldo_news_x_3778.html (it)

Green light for deer and lynx in the Alpine-Carpathian Corridor

In future, wild animals will be able to move more easily between the Alps and the adjoining Carpathian Mountains. That is the objective of the recently initiated cross-border project Alpine-Carpathian Corridor. The EU is providing approximately 2 million Euros for it. Taking into account issues related to nature conservancy, spatial planning, traffic, agriculture, forestry, hunting and tourism, and heavily involving the municipalities concerned, it will define concrete measures to safeguard interconnections among biotopes and realize these in the form of pilot projects. Overpasses with greenery will for example help deer and other animals safely to cross motorways and other large infrastructural works on their treks. Under the overall responsibility of the Austrian Land Lower Austria, eleven project partners from Austrian and Slovakia in the areas of administration, research, nature conservancy and infrastructure cooperate in the project, which will run until the summer of 2012. It makes an important contribution to the objectives of the Alpine, Carpathian and Biodiversity Conventions. Sources and information: <http://www.alpenkarpatenkorridor.at> (en), <http://www.wwf.at/de/akk> (de).

Turin/I: Olympic sports facilities left to waste away

Since the close of the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin many of the sports facilities and installations have been left abandoned. The five ski jumps in Pragelato, for example, for which the building costs exceeded 34 million Euros, are now closed off and unused. Also closed is an adjacent hotel, built specially for the big event. At the time the ski jumps were being built, the hope was that this sporting discipline would appeal to young up-and-coming athletes. But today the facility is cordoned off and there are avalanche warning signs and "Keep out" signs. It's a fate also shared by the bobsleigh run at Cesana, which cost over 60 million Euros. The run is most likely to be closed down at the end of January due to lack of use and high maintenance costs. The biathlon shooting range, currently under a blanket of deep snow, is also out of operation. And while its cross-country ski trail is an attraction for tourists, there are no plans to hold any competitions there in the foreseeable future. The shooting range and the track came at a total cost of 45 million Euros. Source: La Repubblica, 05.01.2010

The new CIPRA compacts Traffic and Spatial Planning are on-line

The results of the climate protection measures taken in the areas of 'Traffic' and 'Spatial Planning' are now accessible on-line. At www.cipra.org/en/cc.alps/results-and-products/compacts/compacts-1/?set_language=en (de/en) both of the background reports - so-called 'CIPRA compacts' - 'Traffic and Climate Change' and 'Spatial Planning and Climate Change' can be downloaded. In these publications CIPRA gives an overview of measures related to traffic and spatial planning that were taken in the Alps to reduce and adapt to climate change; the publications also point out that climate protection objectives will never be attained without a different approach to mobility. On the one hand, private motorized transport must become more expensive; on the other, the mobility package of the joint public transport operators must be improved significantly. The instruments of spatial planning can help to safeguard climate sinks such as bogs, forests and flood plains; it can also help to make areas available for the generation of renewable energy. However, it is essential that decisions on spatial and settlement structures are moved from the local to the regional level.

Hiking right across the Alps

The recently published book *Via Alpina - 2500 kilometres from one coast to another* (*Via Alpina - 2'500 kilomètres d'une mer à l'autre*) recounts the adventure of crossing the entire Alpine range. In 2007 Vincent Tornay followed the Via Alpina Red Trail for a total of 119 days in search of the people and landscapes that make up the Alps of today. He covered 2500 km and 124,000 metres of difference in altitude as he hiked through the eight Alpine states, from the Adriatic coastline to Monaco. The result is a richly illustrated book featuring 13 massifs such as the Triglav, the Bernina and the Queyras. Stages of several days in the massifs are featured in detail with map excerpts and descriptions. The book, which is published in French, also provides background information on landscapes as well as the Alpine fauna. Publication available at <http://www.via-alpina.org/en/article/86> (de/fr/it/en)

Miscellaneous

Keeping water-related projects flowing - Awards for a precious resource

Two awards are now up for grabs for projects in the water sector. The International ReSource Award for Sustainable Watershed Management aims to promote innovative projects with regional measures aimed at protecting water as a resource. The Award is open to projects that have a pioneering character in the local context (cultural, institutional or technological). The Swiss Mountain Water Award of the Mountain Water Network is aimed at private individuals and institutions in Swiss mountain regions. The Award aims to help fund comprehensive projects that deal with water as a vital resource, thereby ensuring that they can be implemented. For more information and application forms, please go to: <http://www.swissre.com/resources/c2d92100489b752fb621fe56be3af4f5-ReSource%20Award%202011%20Application%20Form.doc> (en), http://www.netzwerkwasser.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/SMWA10/NWB_SMWA_Ausschreibung_2010_v3_EN.pdf (de/en/fr/it)

Publication: mountains and climate change

The English-language *Mountains and Climate Change* was published recently and focused on mountains around the world and the effects of climate change. It documents the latest findings on climate change in the mountains of the world and its impact on water, glaciers, natural hazards, biodiversity, food security and migration. The document also contains a series of recommendations for sustainable mountain development. The Alps specifically are addressed in the chapters on Water, Glaciers and Hazards. The publication, which was officially presented at the UN Climate Change

Conference in Copenhagen, was published by the CDE (Centre for Development and Environment) at the University of Bern/CH together with the SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation). It can be downloaded from the following link: http://www.cde.unibe.ch/userfiles/Fullversion_low_Mountains_and%20Climate_Change.pdf (en) Publication: Kohler T. and Maselli D. (eds) 2009. Mountains and Climate Change - From Understanding to Action. Published by Geographica Bernensia with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and an international team of contributors. Bern. ISBN: 978-3-905835-16-8.

Restoring the web of life: a new brochure designed to help you understand ecological networks

What is an ecological network? How can you create one and who does it involve? What are their roles? These are just some of the questions to which the recently published brochure Restoring the web of life: ecological network for more biodiversity in the Alps provides answers. The 12-page brochure has been published by ALPARC, CIPRA, ISCAR and the WWF, with support from the Alpine Convention's Ecological Network Platform in conjunction with the ECONNECT project. Funding was provided by MAVA - the Swiss Foundation for Nature, the German Ministry of the Environment, and the French Ministry for Ecology. It is available as a download in German, English, French, Italian and Slovenian at <http://www.alpine-ecological-network.org/index.php/services-mainmenu-8/downloads-documents#brochure> (en) A printed version in the same languages can be ordered at info@alparc.org

Global warming increases frequency and extent of flood catastrophes in the Alps

In an article published in the magazine Geophysical Research Letters researchers at Italy's Politecnico University in Turin recently confirmed that more frequent and more extensive floods in mountain areas were one of the consequences of global warming. They analysed peak discharge data recorded at 27 gauging stations in the Swiss Alps and calculated the extent of the correlation between flood risk and temperature, precipitation and altitude. The research team noted that there has been an apparent increase in the number of major floods in recent years compared with the past. Since the surface discharge is heavily influenced by temperature, it is assumed that these events are set to increase further. The temperature increase will affect not just the frequency but also the intensity of the floods. The article can be downloaded from the following link: <http://www.idrologia.polito.it/~allamano/lavori/2009GL041395.pdf> (en) Source: <http://www.idrologia.polito.it/web2/> (it) http://www.eco-world.de/scripts/basics/econews/basics.prg?session=50f8c3494b61a2a6_893157&a_no=21068&suchbegriff=idrolo (de)

Agenda

Conference / Congress: **Environmental protection and mountains** . 27.4.2010 – 28.4.2010. Innsbruck/A. Language: en. Organisation: Ständiges Sekretariat der Alpenkonvention, Goldenes Dachl, Herzog-Friedrich-Straße 15, Innsbruck/A. Info: www.alpconv.org/NR/rdonlyres/FBD29AC6-CFF3-4071-A186-0628956CBD58/0/Leaflet_v11.pdf.

Conference / Congress: **European Geosciences Union - General Assembly 2010**. 2.5.2010 – 7.5.2010. Vienna/A. Language: en. Organisation: European Geosciences Union EGU, EGU Office Strasbourg c/o E.O.S.T., 5, rue René Descartes, Strasbourg Cedex/ F. Info: meetingorganizer.copernicus.org/EGU2010/session/2551/Mountain+Soils.

Conference / Congress: **MTNCLIM 2010**. 7.6.2010 – 10.6.2010. Blue River/USA. Language: en. Info: www.fs.fed.us/psw/mtnclim/.

Workshop / Seminar: **Protecting Mountain Biodiversity**. 9.7.2010 – 23.7.2010. Italian Alps. Language: en. Organisation: Mountain Partnership Secretariat, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Signora Dr. Rosalaura Romeo, Programme Officer, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, Rome/I. Info: www.ipromo-school.it/en/course2010/courseprogramme2010.pdf.

Conference / Congress: **Global Change and the World's Mountains**. 26.9.2010 – 30.9.2010. Perth/AU. Language: en. Organisation: Mountain Research Initiative MRI, c/o Institute of Geography, University of Berne, Erlachstrasse 9a, Bern/CH. Info: www.perth.ac.uk/specialistcentres/cms/Conferences/Perth2010/Pages/default.aspx.

Strange but true!

...Can you imagine ski resorts in the Alps where people would go to cycle? Pretty unlikely? Maybe, but perhaps not for much longer...

The French ski school in Vallorcine has come up with a technical marvel that lets skiers pedal themselves up the slopes. The concept consists of a bicycle that is secured the wrong way round, its back wheel mounted to a platform and the front wheel acting as a return pulley; and in between, some 20 metres of cable. So while one person pedals furiously at one end, children aged 3 to 5 are able to glide gently up the slope. Up to four kids at a time can be propelled upwards using this contraption. True, the concept does still need a little work and perhaps one day we will be able to pedal our own way up a mountain while sitting inside a gondola... And while it certainly hasn't re-invented the wheel, it may well have come up with the ultimate eco-friendly uplift... Source: <http://www.ledauphine.com/vallorcine-l-esf-innove-avec-le-cyclofilneige--@/index.jspz?article=259167> (fr)