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Joint press release by the Alpine Initiative, CIPRA – the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps and the Austrian Greens

An Alpine Crossing Exchange is legally feasible

There are no legal obstacles to the introduction of an Alpine Crossing Exchange (ACE), provided the Alpine countries show the necessary political will. This is the conclusion reached by a study commissioned by the European Region Tyrol - South Tyrol - Trentino.

“There are no insurmountable legal obstacles to the introduction of an Alpine Crossing Exchange”. This is the conclusion reached by Astrid Epiney, Director of the Institute for European Law at the University of Fribourg, in her study on the “Compatibility of introducing an Alpine Crossing Exchange with the requirements of EU legislation”, commissioned by the European region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino. “If you want to effectively transfer freight traffic from road to rail and thus effectively reduce environmental pollution in the regions concerned, it’s hard to see any alternatives that would be as effective as an Alpine Crossing Exchange”, Epiney states in her conclusions. The introduction of this efficient instrument necessitates the political will of the Alpine countries. Only the Switzerland-EU Land Transport Agreement, which regulates transport relations between Bern and Brussels, would have to be amended. This agreement is set to be revised in the next few years.

Infrastructure alone is not enough to transfer traffic from road to rail

“One thing is for sure – without an Alpine Crossing Exchange, there will be no transfer to rail”, says Fabio Pedrina, President of the Alpine Initiative. A study by the Swiss Federal Office of Transport on the impact of the New Rail Links through the Alps (NRLA) on freight transfer, published in 2012, showed that base tunnels alone will only get a few trucks off the road. Even today, only 60% of the capacity of the Gotthard and Lötschberg tunnels is being used. The transit problem will not be resolved anywhere in the Alps by infrastructure alone. “The regions in and around the Alps therefore have to become aware of their potential and limited capacity as regards transport. They need to develop visions and to define concrete quality criteria and reduction targets”, says Claire Simon, Director of CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps.

International Alliance for the Alpine Crossing Exchange

The Alpine Crossing Exchange is supported not only by the Alpine Initiative and CIPRA, but also by political and regional bodies. The European region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino has been demanding the introduction of an ACE for several years. In 2011, a meeting of the three provinces that make up the region addressed a motion on this subject to the Italian government. In May 2012, other transit regions in the Alps also jointly requested the introduction of an incentive instrument as part of the European iMonitraf project. "It now is up to the governments of the Alpine countries to fulfil the demands of the Alpine regions and respect the political will of the population", adds Georg Willi, Transport Spokesperson for the Greens in the Austrian Parliament.

This is how the Alpine Crossing Exchange works

The Alpine Crossing Exchange (ACE) is an incentivising instrument for heavy goods traffic. The Alpine states would limit the number of trucks crossing the Alps and issue a corresponding number of transit rights. These could then be traded by transport companies on a market. The remaining goods would be transported by rail. Various studies, such as that by the University of Fribourg, commissioned by the European region Tyrol - South Tyrol - Trentino, underline the ACE's legal feasibility and its positive effects on the transfer of goods from road to rail.

Study entitled "Zur Vereinbarkeit der Einführung einer Alpentransitbörse mit den Vorgaben des EU-Rechts" (On the compatibility of introducing an Alpine Crossing Exchange with the requirements of EU legislation) by Prof. Astrid Epiney, University of Fribourg. Commissioned by the European region Tyrol - South Tyrol -Trentino:

www.unifr.ch/euroinstitut/assets/files/pdf/cahiers_fribourgeois/Cahier_15.pdf (in German).

Study entitled "Auswirkungen der Fertigstellung der NEAT auf die Erreichung des Verlagerungsziels im Güterverkehr" (Impact of the new rail links through the Alps (NRLA) on achieving the goal of transferring freight):

www.bav.admin.ch/dokumentation/publikationen/00568/00571/04259/ (in German).

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The Alpine Initiative

The Alpine Initiative (known as “Iniziativa da las Alps” in Romansch) is a Swiss association that is committed to protecting the Alpine region from transit traffic. The association launched the “Federal popular initiative for the protection of the Alpine area from transit traffic” (commonly known as the “Alpine Initiative”). It was adopted by a majority of the Swiss population and the Swiss cantons on 20 February 1994.

www.alpine-initiative.ch

CIPRA, a diverse and versatile organisation

CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, is a non-governmental umbrella organisation with national representatives in all the Alpine countries, representing more than 100 associations and organisations from seven Alpine states. CIPRA works towards achieving sustainable development in the Alps; it also strives to preserve the natural and cultural heritage, maintain regional diversity, and bring about solutions to cross-border problems in the Alpine region.

www.cipra.org