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Media Release on the European Strategy for the Alps

## **ALPINE POLICY PUT TO THE TEST**

**The Macro-Region Alps opens up new possibilities for co-operation. CIPRA's calls over the years for more participation and implementation may yet be acted upon. International policy for the Alps is the focus of the latest issue of *SzeneAlpen*.**

As part of its European strategies the EU provides an instrument, the so-called macro-regions, for the strengthening of economic, social and territorial cohesion within areas sharing common challenges and opportunities. Problems are as far as possible to be solved according to the subsidiarity principle, based on self-determination and self-responsibility. Such strategies already exist for the Danube region and the Baltic states. The European Strategy for the Alps (EUSALP), currently being developed, opens up new co-operation possibilities and also involves Switzerland and Liechtenstein, neither of them EU member states. This represents a great opportunity – provided it is developed in a participatory and sustainable manner.

### **A reflection of the times**

The Alpine Convention has since 1991 provided a framework for co-operation between the Alpine states and the EU. At its heart lies the notion that supranational problems require joint solutions. Yet the Alpine Convention has its flaws: important players such as the Alpine administrative regions are not parties to the Convention and too little involved, while the treaty itself lacks a strategy and resources for its implementation. Now CIPRA's long-standing calls for more participation and implementation may be acted upon.

With its broad-brush approach the European Strategy for the Alps corresponds to the needs of the time. The supranational space of tomorrow no longer consists mainly of states that have signed up to the treaty: it also includes local authorities that want to establish collaborative ventures, as outlined by geographer and Alpine expert Bernard Debarbieux in an interview in the current CIPRA publication *SzeneAlpen* "Which way now? Why Alpine policy needs to be reoriented" (available at [www.cipra.org/szenealpen](http://www.cipra.org/szenealpen), [international@cipra.org](mailto:international@cipra.org) or +423 237 53 53).



It remains unclear how and by what means the strategy will be implemented. But one thing is certain: the Alpine regions and civil society must participate. They will only wish to lend their support if they are properly involved and their opinions are taken into account. Responsibility lies on both sides: the national states and the EU must facilitate participation, while those concerned must become actively engaged. This is possible via an online consultation on

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/consultation/eusalp/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/eusalp/index_en.cfm).

### **Sustainability – the main aim**

The Alps must, however, not simply be perceived as a functional space where people move unhindered, exchanging goods and services. The main aim must be to develop this unique habitat in a sustainable way while preserving its natural resources. The implementation protocols of the Alpine Convention provide the appropriate guidelines and, in this sense, the European Strategy and the Alpine Convention will complement each other.

**SzeneAlpen** appears in four languages, German, French, Italian and Slovenian. This CIPRA publication can be ordered free of charge at [www.cipra.org/szenealpen](http://www.cipra.org/szenealpen), [international@cipra.org](mailto:international@cipra.org) or by phone +423 237 53 53.

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### **CIPRA, a diverse and versatile organisation**

CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, is a non-governmental umbrella organisation with national offices in all seven Alpine countries, representing more than 100 associations and organisations. 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.

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