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## Protection of water: Alpine Convention, Water Framework Directive and World Water Forum

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(27.03.03) A spokeswoman for the European Academy (EURAC) in Bolzano/I has indicated that the seven states bordering the Carpathians – Serbia and Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Ukraine – are expected to sign the Convention for the Protection of the Carpathians at the summit meeting of environmental ministers to be held in Kiev in May. The resolution as well as the agreements pertaining to the contents of the Convention were adopted during the Carpathian Conference, which was held in Bolzano this week.

The Carpathian Convention has been modelled on the Alpine Convention, with due consideration for the different social and economic circumstances. Indeed, while the alpine countries are characterised by mass tourism and excessive traffic, poverty and unemployment are the main problems for a sustainable use of resources in the Carpathians.

The Carpathian Convention aims to establish sustainable development under conditions of an emergent market economy and gentle tourism. Besides cross-border regional planning, cooperation in water and air conservation, the development of sustainable agriculture and forestry, and a sustainable traffic policy, etc., the Convention is also designed to help create a network of protected areas across the Carpathians. As with the Alpine Convention these objectives are to be implemented through topic-related protocols.

A small secretariat, operated by the European Office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Geneva/CH, is also to be set up for the Convention. Source: Frankfurter Rundschau 24.03.2003

Draft of the framework convention:

[http://www.alpmedia.net/pdf/carpathian\\_convention.pdf](http://www.alpmedia.net/pdf/carpathian_convention.pdf) (en),

Draft of the territorial demarcation:

[http://www.alpmedia.net/pdf/carpathian\\_convention\\_map.pdf](http://www.alpmedia.net/pdf/carpathian_convention_map.pdf) (en).

## Contents

Carpathian Convention to be signed in May .....	1
Results of the alpMedia survey .....	2
Children committed to the future of the Alps .....	2
Contradictory views on the future of mountain railways .....	2
New joint ventures between Germany and the Caucasus .....	2
Protection of water: Alpine Convention, Water Framework Directive and World Water Forum .....	3
WWF Switzerland makes young snowboarders more aware .....	3
Monaco ratifies initial Alpine Convention Protocols .....	3
Fresh evidence of deglaciation in Austria .....	3
Filmlandschaft: Book presentation and film premiere .....	4
Miscellaneous .....	4
Agenda.....	4

## Results of the alpMedia survey



(21.03.03) The survey on the alpMedia information service is now completed, and a warm thank-you from the alpMedia Team to the 344 users who took the time to fill out the questionnaire. We're delighted with the very positive results, which are a motivation for us to continue and improve the information service. We shall aim to implement the many comments and suggestions for improvement whenever possible. Here, at a glance, are the main findings of the survey:

75% of users read the Newsletter either always or nearly always. 55% read most or several of the articles in each issue. 94% rated the Newsletter overall as very good or good; 5% of respondents did not comment. 72% found the web site very good or good; 26% did not comment. The features themselves were very well or well received by 65% of respondents; 33% did not comment.

Besides the three quickest respondents to the survey, the following readers have won a travel voucher worth EUR 100 for public transport in an alpine country: Beppe Muraro, Italy; Gojmir Vizovisek, Slovenia; Hermann Knoflacher, Austria.

For details of the survey results: [http://www.alpmedia.net/pdf/umfrage\\_ergebnisse\\_E.pdf](http://www.alpmedia.net/pdf/umfrage_ergebnisse_E.pdf) (en)

## Children committed to the future of the Alps

(13.03.03) Children from all alpine countries are to meet in Innsbruck/A from June 11 to 14 to attend the first children's alpine summit. The summit revolves around the theme of children's wishes for the future of the Alps. The event itself is being organised by the WWF's European Alpine Programme.

Acting as their respective country's representatives the children at the summit are to reflect on the future of the Alps and devise ideas on how best to put their wishes into practice. The children will discuss the problems which they feel are the most important, and draw up demands of what has to be done to bring about changes in this area. The demands are to be presented to politicians or sent by mail to the governments of the alpine countries. Each alpine country is entitled to delegate a maximum of eight children aged 12. Registrations are to be received by 20 March at <http://www.kids-for-the-alps.net> (de/fr/it/sl). The web site also has a chat forum on this topic.

To mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Earth Focus*, a magazine written by and for young people all over the world, a children's discussion on the subject of mountains is also taking place in Geneva/CH on March 26. The magazine is published by the Bellerive Foundation and the International School in Geneva. The children are to draw up an action plan with ways of preventing the destruction of mountain regions and preserving their natural and cultural diversity. The statement is aimed at the press, international organisations and the countries of the Alpine Convention. Source and information: <http://www.bellerive.org> (fr/en)

## Contradictory views on the future of mountain railways

(27.03.03) The future of mountain railway and cable-car companies was one of the main topics addressed at the 14<sup>th</sup> Tourism Forum of Alpine Regions, which was held in Davos/CH last year. Given that for example only 26% of Swiss mountain railways actually have earning power and are not in debt, the Forum also looked at "Ways out of the Financial Crisis", and at the repercussions and opportunities of subsidies.

A conclusive answer could not be found to the question of whether it was better for mountain railway companies to merge or to co-operate, which was debated using examples from Switzerland, Austria and Germany.

Current figures show that some mountain railways have increased their turnover by up to 20 per cent compared with the previous season. The rise was attributed mainly to the good weather and good snow conditions that have prevailed over the past few weeks.

Sources and information: [http://www.grischconsulta.ch/tfa\\_2003/Info/mehr%20infos.htm](http://www.grischconsulta.ch/tfa_2003/Info/mehr%20infos.htm) (de), 20 Min. Zürich 25.03.2003

## New joint ventures between Germany and the Caucasus

(13.03.03) Mountain Wilderness Germany is launching a project to promote sustainable mountain sports and tourism in the Caucasus together with the Georgian association Sustainable Tourism Centre (STC). Measures including the renovation of a mountain hut on Mount Kazbek are intended to help transform the area into a model region in which mountain sports contribute to sustainable development. Mountain Wilderness Switzerland is also involved in the project.

InWent, the German foundation for international development, is staging workshops in the countries of the southern Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan) in summer 2003 to define ways in which tourism and the preservation of biological diversity in protected areas can be reconciled.

Source: STC/EMF Caucasus representative [stc@gol.ge](mailto:stc@gol.ge) 03.03.2003,

Information: <http://www.mountainwilderness.de> (de)

## Protection of water: Alpine Convention, Water Framework Directive and World Water Forum



(27.03.03) "With a specific Water Protocol the Alpine Convention could contribute towards lastingly securing water resources throughout the entire alpine region and, as a result, for a large part of Europe," stressed Josef Pröll, the Austrian Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management at "Aquavisions", the inaugural event marking the UN's International Year of Freshwater, which was held last Thursday, 20 March. CIPRA is also calling for the drafting of a water protocol in the International Year of Freshwater, and is to provide the technical basis.

At the same event the Austrian umbrella association for the environment recommended implementing the EU Water Framework Directive, amending the Water Act, and drafting a "national water conservation programme". It stated that only these measures could ensure that all Austrian waters would achieve a "good ecological status" by the year 2015. It added that it was essential for all those concerned and all interested parties to be involved from the very outset.

The third World Water Forum in Kyoto concluded with a ministerial declaration that contained few concrete measures, a fact deplored by many, among them representatives of NGOs, the UN and the EU. Switzerland's call for a sustainable use of eco-systems however was adopted in the declaration. The demand provides first and foremost for the comprehensive protection of forests, wetland areas and soils in which water is filtered, stored and distributed. The Forum was also the focal point for an exchange of information and views.

Information: <http://www.worldwaterforum.org> (en), Sources: Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management 20.03.2003 <http://www.lebensministerium.at> (de), umbrella organisation for the environment 20.03.2003 <http://www.umweltdachverband.at/service/presse/aquavisionen200303.htm> (de), NZZ 24.03.2003

## WWF Switzerland makes young snowboarders more aware

(06.03.03) The WWF Switzerland has held its pandACTION Snowdays under the motto "Ride hard. Ride free. Respect nature". Over the course of five weekends 14 to 25-year-old snowboarders learnt how to ensure their safety on the one hand and, on the other, how to act in a way that was compatible with both the environment and nature when snowboarding off-piste. These are issues which the target group addressed here by the WWF has had little awareness of in the past.

Going off-piste or freeriding as it's also known has become increasingly popular among snowboarders in their quest to get away from the masses and find deep snow and challenging terrain. During the Snowdays weekends mountain guides instructed young snowboarders on how to avoid dangerous situations, protect the natural environment and still have fun. Snowboard pros were there to help support the campaign. Source and information: <http://www.freestyle.ch/pandaction03> (de)

Group of snowboarders during an ascent with ski boots



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## Monaco ratifies initial Alpine Convention Protocols

(21.03.03) The ratification process for the Alpine Convention Protocols is progressing. After Austria, Germany and Liechtenstein – where all nine Implementing Protocols came into force on 18 December 2002 – Monaco has now also ratified the Protocols on regional planning and sustainable development, tourism and recreation, soil conservation, and dispute settlement. In an initial phase France had also ratified the Protocols on mountain farming and dispute settlement on 15 November 2002 (alpMedia Newsletter 37/21.11.2002).

Source: Alpine Convention Office of CIPRA Austria 19.03.2003, Info: [http://deutsch.cipra.org/texte/alpenkonvention/uebersicht\\_protokolle.htm](http://deutsch.cipra.org/texte/alpenkonvention/uebersicht_protokolle.htm) (de)

## Fresh evidence of deglaciation in Austria

(21.03.03) 95% of the 97 glacier tongues studied in Austria last season have melted and receded. For the first time in 10 years not one of the glaciers surveyed increased in size. These facts are contained in the 2001/2002 Glacier Report, which was presented last week by the Austrian Alpine Association.

The average change in glacier length compared with the previous year has increased significantly (from -9.32 m to -12.4 m). 2002's record holder is Umbal Kees in the Venediger Group, with a loss of length of 70.3 m. 41 glaciers melted by more than 10 m. This trend is attributed to a number of factors: low rainfall during the spring months, especially south of the main ridge of the Alps, and the above-average temperatures in July 2002. "The trend itself is not yet exceptional," glacier researcher Gernot Patzelt, who headed the study, told the Austrian News Agency APA. He added however that due to Man's growing influence on temperatures at the surface of the planet a reversal in the trend was not to be expected.

Glacier Report: [http://www.alpenverein.at/content/downloads/gletscherbericht\\_s6-13.pdf](http://www.alpenverein.at/content/downloads/gletscherbericht_s6-13.pdf) (de), Sources: ÖAV 12.03.2003, dpa



## Filmlandschaft: Book presentation and film premiere

(21.03.03) The recently published book *Filmlandschaft* features films that have been shot in the Engadine, which has also been called "Switzerland's outdoor Hollywood". Featuring more than 700 films since 1899 it is a treasure-trove of information on the culture and history of the southern Grisons. The idea for the book – a project to document this amazing abundance of films – came about during a successful film week in May 1998.

In no other region of Switzerland have as many films been made as in the Engadine. They include the *Heidi* films and famous mountaineering films such as *The White Hell of Piz Palu*, *Storm Over Mont Blanc*, etc.

The book *Filmlandschaft* is to be presented in Maloja/CH on Friday, 11 April, along with the premiere of the film *Der Pionier – Al maestro Gaudenzio Giovanoli*. Source and information: <http://www.filmlandschaft.ch> (de)



## Miscellaneous

### Carinthian Fair Weeks: A journey through fair trade & organic farming

(13.03.03) The FAIR WEEKS are being held in Carinthia/A from April 1st to May 2nd. The Fair Weeks provide information on both fair trade with overseas countries and on organic farming in Austria. The focal point of the event is the exhibition "Global Trade – Living from the Land", to be shown in Klagenfurt and Villach. It looks at the repercussions of global trends in agriculture and trade, and alternatives for sustainable development in the future. It also provides a hands-on opportunity to find out more about the living and working environments of peasant farmers in Uganda, Bolivia, Mexico, Ecuador and Austria: for example roasting coffee beans, weaving ponchos or playing music on authentic instruments. There is also a framework programme with films, concerts, readings, lectures, workshops, etc. The workshop on organic farming organised by BIO – Ernte Kärnten is to provide schoolchildren with more information on organic farming.

Information: <http://www.faire-wochen.at> (de), [http://www.alpmedia.net/pdf/faire\\_wochen.pdf](http://www.alpmedia.net/pdf/faire_wochen.pdf) (de)

### Italy: National observatory for protected areas to be established

(06.03.03) On February 25 the Italian environmental protection organisation *Legambiente*, AIAB and *Federparchi* resolved to establish a national observatory for protected areas. Its objectives are to promote ecologically sustainable activities and organic farming in the protected areas, and to simplify land-use planning. The protected areas are to become more economically competitive as a result, through the intelligent prioritisation of their individual traits. Specific projects include setting up a documentation centre and an office to promote an exchange of experience.

Source: ANSA 26.02.2003 <http://www.aiab.it/nuovosito/informazione/brevi/?1184> (it)

### Snowmobiles: Unregulated motor-racing in a natural environment

(06.03.03) *keepwild!*, the trend-sports agency, has published a new study on the use of snowmobiles in Switzerland. Its findings show that there is a distinct lack of implementation of statutory regulations, and that checks could prevent improper use. Snowmobiles, which were originally designed to convey goods, are being used more and more for leisure purposes, even though such use is actually unauthorised. For this reason the authors of the study have called for clear statutory regulations in all Swiss Cantons; for permits to be issued by a central authority; and for more frequent checks "out in the white" to lend emphasis to the regulations. The study covers the regional incidence and historical development of snowmobile use in Switzerland, and summarises the environmental burdens (noise, pollutants, compacted snow, repercussions on flora and fauna, etc.) and the resulting user-user conflicts (conflicts with ski tourers, other snow-sports enthusiasts and day trippers, forestry, hunters, etc.).

Snowmobiles receive more and more popularity



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