

Pyrenean Convention to push ahead

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[more on page 1](#)

Italy: 2005 World Ski Championships a risk to national park

(25.09.2003) Preparations for the World Ski Championships in the upper Valtellina in 2005 are in upheaval. The projects for the resort of Santa Caterina Valfurva, which is to stage the women's races, have come under attack. Environmental associations believe that as the Santa Caterina Valfurva skiing region is situated in the Stifserjoch National Park the environmental impact of the projects should be examined particularly thoroughly..

[more on page 2](#)

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The drawing-up of a Pyrenean Convention is modelled on the Alpine Convention, and the aim initially is to establish an awareness of the Pyrenees as a separate legal and political entity with the European Union and the general public.

Source: Mountain Forum Europe and <http://www.ctp.org/francais/portadaFR.htm> (fr/es/cat)

Alpine wind farms: blessing or curse?

(25.09.2003) Tiroler Wasserkraft AG (TIWAG) and Salzachwind GmbH are planning to build several wind farms in the Wipptal/Brenner region on the Austrian-Italian border. The Austrian Alpine Association (ÖAV) is calling for an immediate stop to the planning work for the wind farms as they are to be erected in a conservation and local recreation area.

The wind generators to be erected on the summits and ridges of the Brenner mountains are up to 140 m in height, and ÖAV contends that they negatively affect the natural scenery, which is crucial for close-to-nature tourism. The Alpine Convention's Energy Protocol also prohibits energy-generating installations in protected areas and unspoilt natural regions and landscapes.

In Germany wind power has now displaced hydraulic power as the principal source of renewable energy. A total of 14,000 windmills generate 25 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity a year, making Germany the world leader in wind energy.

Austria's largest wind farm to date was inaugurated in the Austrian town of St. Pölten on September 20. The wind farm produces electricity for around 17,000 households, ensuring an annual reduction in CO₂ of 36,000 tonnes.

Sources and information:

19.09.2003 <http://www.oeav.at/portal/hp-meldung-ue.asp?MeldungID=2239> (de),

<http://www.sonnenseite.com/fp/archiv/Art-Umweltpolitik/3827.php> (de),

22.09.2003 http://www.vpnoe.at/index.php?page=newsdetail&ne_id=2216 (de)

Contents

Pyrenean Convention to push ahead [1](#)

Alpine wind farms: blessing or curse? [1](#)

Italy: 2005 World Ski Championships a risk to national park [2](#)

New publication: EU Agricultural Policy and the Environment in the Alps .. [2](#)

New publication: Andes – Himalaya – Alps [2](#)

EU nature protection database [3](#)

Plans for a network of the Alps' large lakes [3](#)

Merger of three "mountain organisations" [3](#)

No GMO-free zone in Upper Austria says EU [3](#)

Miscellaneous [4](#)

Agenda [4](#)

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In the spring and despite protests from environmentalists the administrators of the National Park approved the first forest clearances for the construction of a ski slope. Plans for the ski-lift facilities were then submitted in the summer. It emerged that the facilities would pose a threat to a peat moor, and so the Park refused approval. In response the Region of Lombardy petitioned for the Park to be placed under the control of a Commissioner.

Given that preparations are now well behind schedule, all these developments could be redundant. In all probability the facilities at Santa Caterina cannot be completed in time for the World Ski Championships. Therefore the races will all be held at Bormio, which is outside the National Park.

For years the organisations *Legambiente* and the WWF, together with Italy's representative of CIPRA (the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps), have been trying to achieve a change of course for the event. So far the International Ski Association (FIS), the Region of Lombardy and the Organising Committee have refused to meet for open discussions that would also take account of environmental protection aspects and socio-economic viewpoints.

In addition some of the projects are located in areas that are still unspoilt. One example is the Valle dell'Alpe, a valley at a very high altitude with unique geological formations and a significant white partridge population.

Information: <http://www.legambiente.org/ufficiostampa/dossier.htm> (it)

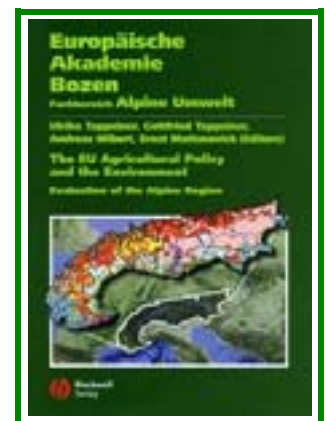
New publication:

EU Agricultural Policy and the Environment in the Alps

(22.10.2003) The Alpine Environment Department of the European Academy in Bolzano has just published a new work entitled *The EU Agricultural Policy and the Environment - Evaluation of the Alpine Region*. It looks at the connections between agricultural policy, agriculture and the environment in the Alps, all of which were analysed by an interdisciplinary team of researchers. Key issues raised include: In what alpine regions is the decline of agriculture particularly severe? Where are the centres of tourism located, and which regions have the highest population density? How does the Common European Agricultural Policy (CAP) affect agriculture and the environment in the Alps? Does the effect of the CAP vary from one region to the next? What sort of business strategies do farmers adopt to respond to their environment and the measures from Brussels?

The book, which is written in English, is appended with a structural atlas of the Alps on CD-ROM in German and English, with around 50 theme maps, texts, tables and diagrams on aspects of the Alps relating to natural space, socio-economics and agriculture.

For information and orders: <http://www.eurac.edu/Press/Publications/index?which=119> (en)

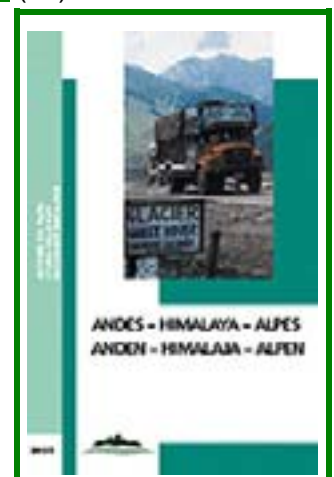


New publication: Andes – Himalaya – Alps

(11.09.2003) The latest volume 2003/8 in the *History of the Alps* series by the International Society for Historical Research into the Alps (ISALP) is dedicated to urban development in the mountain regions of South America, Asia and Europe from the early Middle Ages to the present. The contributions in German, French and Italian provide new insights into the historical development of these three mountain regions. The studies on the individual regions are preceded by two abstracts of discussion papers in English.

The articles contain the findings of the conference entitled *The Mountains in Urban Development*, which was organised by ISALP in Buenos Aires on 25 July 2002 as part of the International Year of the Mountains. Each article is complemented by an abstract in English. A bibliography on the history of tourism in the Alps is included at the end of the book.

Information: <http://www.isalp.unisi.ch/gen/rivista/2003/2003-8.htm> (de/fr/it/en),
orders: Chronos Verlag, Zurich <http://www.chronos-verlag.ch> (de)



EU nature protection database

(22.10.2003) Together with the European Topic Centre for Nature Protection and Biodiversity (ETC/NPB in Paris/F) and the European Environmental Information Observation Network (EIONET) the European Environmental Agency EEA has just published a new database with information on the protection of nature: EUNIS - European Nature Information System.

Data on species, habitats and areas is now accessible to the public and grouped together in a database. Users have the possibility for instance of retrieving information on incidence in different countries and biogeographical regions, population sizes and trends, and protection status.

EUNIS: <http://eunis.eea.eu.int/eunis/index.jsp> (en);

Source: EU Environmental Office 02.10.03:

<http://www.umweltdachverband.at/eu-umweltbuero/eunews/index.htm> (de)

Plans for a network of the Alps' large lakes

(11.09.2003) Together with various partners the French Rhône-Alpes region is planning to submit to the EU Programme Interreg IIIB Alpine Space a project for setting up a network of large natural lakes in the alpine region. The project's main goals are to include environmental protection in harmony with the European Framework Directive on Water and sustainable tourist development of lake landscapes.

A feasibility study for a lake network of this type has already been completed. The study proposes an action programme to establish the network, which is to offer a platform for communications and an exchange of experience. The objective is to improve the administration and protection of the lakes. The project partners will consist essentially of local authorities involved with the management of large lakes.

At a project workshop held in April representatives of many alpine regions (such as Baden-Württemberg/D, Lombardy, Piedmont and Trento/I, Geneva and Lucerne/CH, and Slovenia) already signalled their interest in taking part in the network. The workshop was also attended by organisations such as the International Commission for the Protection of Lake Geneva, and by tourism representatives.

Source and information: Conseil Régional Rhône-Alpes, Tel. +33 (0)4 72 59 41 85,

http://www.alpmedia.net/pdf/network_lakes.pdf (en)

Merger of three "mountain organisations"

(22.10.2003) The three organisations *Association Européenne des Elus de Montagne* (AEM), *Euromontana* and the European Mountain Forum (EMF) have set up a committee of European mountain organisations called CLAME or *Comité de liaison des associations de montagnes européennes*. The merger is designed to co-ordinate the actions of the three organisations more effectively and to develop joint strategies to take more effective action on behalf of sustainable development in European mountain regions. The organisations are to co-operate at three levels, with the AEM operating at the political level, Euromontana at the implementation level, and the EMF at the information level. Joint meetings will be held twice a year to improve communications between the organisations.

Sources: <http://www.mtnforum.org/europe/emf/reportmeet082003.cfm> (en);

No GMO-free zone in Upper Austria says EU

(11.09.2003) The EU Commission has rejected Austria's request to approve national measures for a three-year ban on genetically modified organisms. The federal province of Upper Austria was to have been declared a GMO-free zone. The government of the province of Upper Austria felt that a general ban on genetically modified seed stock was justified inasmuch as the issue of the coexistence of agricultural methods of cultivation with and without genetically modified organisms had not yet been fully resolved.

Environmental protection organisations and various parties in Austria are demanding that the Austrian federal provinces unite on this issue and together achieve a ban on genetically modified organisms through litigation. They feel that Upper Austria should risk taking its case before the European Court. Following Upper Austria's example other federal provinces had passed laws against gene technology. Cross-border approaches exist in the Alpe-Adria region and in Bavaria. Opponents demand that the alliance against gene technology be strengthened to protect organic farming and consumers. Since July of this year it is within the jurisdiction of EU member states to adopt protective measures at national level.

Sources and information:

http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/1194|0|RAPID&lg=DE&display= (de),

GLOBAL 2000 03.09.2003 <http://www.global2000.at/pages/pagentechnik030903.htm> (de)

Miscellaneous

Italy-Slovenia: Transport links to the East

(11.09.2003) Slovenia, which is set to join the EU very soon, is working hard to modernise its road and rail networks. Transport infrastructure was one of the main themes at a summit meeting of representatives of the Slovenian government and the new administration of Friuli-Julian Venetia/I on 2 September. Two projects are to get underway shortly: the motorway extension from Maribor/SI to the Hungarian border and the rail link between the seaports of Trieste/I and Koper/SI. The rail link would improve the overall integration of the two seaports and provide Slovenia's rail network with a connection to the west. For the completion of these projects in particular and the modernisation of its rail network in general Slovenia is able to rely on financial support from the EU. With regard to the extension of the motorway network progress has now been made with the proposal made by the Friuli government to set up a joint company of Slovene and Friuli motorway operators.

Source: Regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia 02.09.2003 <http://www.regione.fvg.it/notizie/notiziegiunta.htm> (it)

Biogasparc Alpe-Adria: Eco-power for households

(11.09.2003) As part of the energy project *Biogasparc Alpe-Adria* biogas plants are to be built and operated in the Alpe-Adria region, of which Austria, Italy and Slovenia are participating members. The plants to be constructed by mid-2006 will generate electricity and heating for around 13,500 one-family households. Farmers who are interested have the possibility of taking part in biogas production through four participation or co-operation modules (including land lease, substrate supply, recycling of fermentation residue).

Source and information: <http://www.biogas-alpe-adria.com> (de)

Euregio Adria-Alps

(25.09.2003) The *Adria-Alpen Euregio* has moved one step closer to its founding following a series of meetings of the Chairmen of Carinthia/A, Veneto/I and Friuli/I and representatives from Slovenia (with Croatia also to be involved soon). The cross-border region is to represent joint strategies at the European level and as a result attain greater importance. It is in part a re-launch of the *Alpen-Adria* Working Group but with a broader remit, as provided for in the European Framework Agreement on Cross-border Co-operation. The regions are already working together on the construction of transport infrastructure aimed at opening up the Balkans and eastern Europe.

Source: Regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia 23.09.2003 <http://www.regione.fvg.it/notizie/notiziegiunta.htm> (it),

Information: <http://www.alpeadria.org> (de/it/sl/en)

Studies and conference on rail network extensions in the Alpine Rhine region

(09.10.2003) The A13/E43 network has commissioned a study in the border region between Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Liechtenstein with the following basic requirements for the future provision of public passenger transport services: Rail links to the large agglomerations in southern Germany and from the upper Rhine valley to the central areas of southern Germany and western Austria; expansion of the *S-Bahn* network in the region comprising eastern Switzerland, the eastern area of Lake Constance and the upper Rhine valley; development of tram/suburban railway systems such a half-hourly *S-Bahn* link between Feldkirch/A and Buchs/CH. In essence the work follows on with concrete proposals from the two completed studies *BODAN-RAIL 2020* and *Nachhaltiger Verkehr im Oberen Rheintal* [Sustainable Transport in the Upper Rhine Valley].

To implement the cross-border transport plans, the A13/E43 network is convening an international conference entitled *Zu(g)kunft im Länderviereck* [The Future of Rail in the Border Region] to be held on the island of Lindau/D on 8 November. The Conference's objectives include exchanging the latest information on transport planning in the four adjacent countries and improved cross-border networking within the organisations.

Another project is the extension of the route Lindau – Munich. Bavaria and *Deutsche Bahn* recently ratified the contract for the extension of this route. Switzerland is supporting the project financially.

Sources and information: <http://www.vcs-gr.ch/netzwerka13/an13.html> (de); NZZ 5.9.2003;

<http://www.stmwvt.bayern.de/index.html?target=presse/pressearchive/ab2001/2003/09/pm387.html> (de);

Agenda

Seminar as part of the "Water Days": **International Seminar on Planning and the European Water Framework Directive**, 11–12.11.2003; Valencia/Spain.

Information: <http://www.remoc.org/DesktopDefault.aspx> (sp/en/fr)

