

Mountaineering recognized as world cultural heritage



The rope team is symbolic of the team spirit in alpinism.

Unesco now lists alpinism as an intangible world cultural heritage. Alpine associations from France, Switzerland and Italy submitted the application.

Kyrgyz hats, Norwegian dances and now also alpinism: on the International Mountain Day, 11 December 2019, Unesco listed alpine mountaineering as an intangible World Heritage Site for the first time. At first glance, this seems strange, as the list contains mainly rare traditions and customs that are in need of protection. Unesco defines alpinism as "the art of climbing peaks and rock faces in high mountains - in all seasons, whether on rocky or icy ground". Apart from the necessary technical and intellectual skills, it also emphasises the ethical and aesthetic aspects of the mountaineering tradition

that has developed in the Alps. This includes the principle of rope teamwork as a symbol of team spirit as well as mutual assistance and personal responsibility - but also not leaving any traces on the mountain.

Between idealism and appropriation

Again and again, mountaineering is taken up by tourist offers such as heliskiing. In addition, competition and competitive thinking is also spreading in the alpine scene. Katharina Conradin, President of CIPRA International, welcomes the fact that Unesco's definition of alpinism differs from this and above all emphasises values of togetherness and the responsible treatment of nature: "We support the recognition of alpinism, which has developed in the Alps, as a cultural asset. More importantly, however, would be for these values to take on greater significance in tourism too. The aim must not be to make every corner of the Alps accessible for tourism and mountain sports and to adapt them to our needs". In general, the tourist exploitation of the Unesco awards by the tourism industry leads to problems such as in the Dolomites/I, where the actual protection award is literally exploited by tourists. Here it is also up to Unesco to attach greater importance to the objectives of protection and sustainable development in the management plans, said Conradin.

Conference on sustainability in outdoor sports

A conference on 25 and 26 May 2020 in Prien am Chiemsee/DE will also address sustainability in alpinism and outdoor sports. It is being organised by CIPRA International and the Alliance in the Alps network of municipalities within the framework of the Alpine Convention and on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.

More information can be found under: www.cipra.org/de/outdoortourismus (de, fr, it, sl)

Sources:

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Point of view: Water needs no borders – do we?



Marion Ebster, Project Manager «Nature and people» bei CIPRA International (c) Caroline Begle

So far, sufficient water is available in the Alpine regions. If there is to be enough for everyone in the future, despite climate change, water must be treated as a common Alpine resource across national borders, says Marion Ebster, Project Manager at CIPRA International.

Water per se is constantly on the move and knows no borders. Seasonal discharge rates vary greatly, leading to major challenges in the densely packed, multinational Alpine region. The need for cross-border coordination in the Alpine region is growing in line with rising temperatures, but the political willingness to do so is not – which makes the demanding task of dealing with conflicts over distribution and use even more difficult. But this is exactly what we need in the Alpine Space: the involvement of all stakeholders and affected parties in organising the use and distribution of water under the intensified conditions of climate change – and across borders. Water as a common good must be anchored more firmly in the consciousness of institutions and the population. There are already positive moves being made in this direction.

In mid-February 2020, the French presidency of the Alpine Convention held an international water conference. It also addressed the need for optimised water management in the Alpine region and the increase in conflicts of use. One example of best practice presented was

the integrated catchment area management of the River Inn in the Lower Engadin/CH over an area of 2,000 square kilometres, covering five municipalities and 7,900 inhabitants. A long and difficult process led to the adoption of an action plan for this participatory type of water management by the local communities. However, the River Inn has a total length of 517 kilometres and a catchment area of 26,000 square kilometres – which would require integrated water management across three countries.

Despite all the difficulties, the participation of the populations affected by complex water management issues must also be tackled on a cross-border basis. Transnational institutions can play a central role here: both the EU with its Water Framework Directive and the Alpine Convention with its climate target system 2050 must call even more strongly for participatory and transboundary water management. They otherwise run the risk of missing one of the most important topics of the coming decades – and thus perhaps the last opportunity for a sustainable and fair use of water as one of our most important resources.

Bees: small in size, big in effect



Bedded on velvet: CIPRA's current issue focuses on the bee as a symbol of endangered biodiversity. (c) Caroline Begle, CIPRA International

Why we need honey, pollinators and biodiversity: This question is the subject of the themed issue of *SzeneAlpen*, to be published in March 2020.

"The ideal would be not to feed them at all," says beekeeper Klébert Silvestre from the French community of Les Belleville when interviewed about his black bees. He is committed to the preservation of this old bee species and practises a sustainable form of beekeeping. For example, he leaves his bees honey instead of feeding them sugar. Silvestre is also an expert in CIPRA's bee conservation project *BeeAware!* and was interviewed for *SzeneAlpen*. However, the world of bees in the Alpine countries means much more than just a sweet substance to put on our bread, as Monika Gstöhl of CIPRA Liechtenstein writes in her introductory guest article for the themed issue: "Bees and other pollinating insects play a key role in biodiversity, secure our food and generate great monetary value in the process". Why wild bees are just as important for this as honey bees, what endangers

them and how the bee has become a cultural symbol on the one hand and a political issue on the other - these are the questions now addressed in CIPRA's current issue of *AlpsInsight*.

Wanted: pioneering renovations and new buildings



Winner of third prize, "Constructive Alps" 2017: the Caltron community centre in Cles/IT. © Mariano Dellago

The fifth edition of the international architecture prize, "Constructive Alps", has been launched. Renovations and new buildings that set an example for sustainable construction in the Alps can be submitted until 14 March 2020.

"Constructive Alps" wants to publicise the thoughtful handling of climate, landscape and building culture. In future, it will be even more necessary to renovate and build with foresight in order to maintain a high quality of life in the Alps. For its fifth edition, therefore, the international architecture prize is looking for smart regional approaches that show the way for Alpine architecture in the coming decade.

In addition to new buildings, this year's call for entries focuses in particular on well-thought-out renovations and projects that stand for energy efficiency or the careful use of resources, for example through upcycling. The social aspect of architecture will be a further component: for example, the quality of densification or the participation of the population.

Architects, planners, master builders and building contractors are invited to submit their projects to this year's call for proposals by 14 March 2020 at www.constructivealps.net/teilnahme.

Details and further information: www.constructivealps.net

A top combination: From road to rail



A handbook has been developed under the project that contains solutions,

It is technically and politically possible to shift freight traffic through the Alps onto rail. The *AlpInnoCT* project shows how it could work.

In 2018, 223.5 million tonnes of goods rolled through the Alps, more than two thirds of them on the roads. Steadily growing traffic is one of the main problems that the sensitive ecosystem of the Alps is confronted with. Forwarders, port operators and administrations are aware of the problem; the three-year *AlpInnoCT* project has brought them all together. At seven dialogue events organised by CIPRA, they discussed strategies for shifting freight transport to rail. The result is a "Toolbox of Action", a

strategies and methods for combined freight transport in the Alpine region. (c) Michael Gams CIPRA International

multilingual handbook with technical and political proposals for solutions. Kaspar Schuler, co-managing director of CIPRA International, explains that these proposals are addressed to all those involved, "so that the interaction between more rail and less road works optimally".

Pilot routes and "wagon sharing"

The handbook contains a number of technical pilot measures, such as shared wagons or electronic data exchange in rail transport, which were tested on two pilot connections. In September 2019, on the transalpine transport corridor Trieste - Villach - Bettembourg, the transport company TX Logistik together with the Port of Trieste launched a new system that shortens the international handover of trains.

Overcoming political barriers

While freight trains travel at speeds of up to 200 km/h on some international routes, between Bolzano and the Brenner Pass they reach only 60 km/h in some sections. In order to solve problems like this, the rail infrastructure must be modernised. This also requires political support, as the handbook shows. Dr Karin Jäntschi-Hauke of the Bavarian Ministry of Transport, the lead partner on the project, is confident: "We are convinced that the results of AlpinnoCT will contribute to a modal shift in favour of rail". In mid-November 2019 the final conference of the project took place in Brussels/B in the presence of members of the European Commission.

The handbook and further information on the results of the AlpinnoCT (Alpine Innovation for Combined Transport) project is available online at alpinnocttoolbox.eu.

Further information: www.cipra.org/en/cipra/international/projects/current/alpinnoct , www.alpine-space.eu/projects/alpinnoct/en/home

"We Stay on the Ground"



Explore the Alps by train: For the "Youth Alpine Interrail" participants, flight-free travel is a varied adventure.

"We Stay on the Ground - Flight Free 2020" (c) CIPRA International

'Sustainable travelling' are two words that the participants of the "Youth Alpine Interrail" (Yoalin) program were very familiar with last year. The Yoalins discussed their experiences, ideas and suggestions for sustainable mobility in Ljubljana/SL with Marko Maver, the Slovenian State Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, in December. One of the wishes made by the 16-member delegation of the Yoalin team was the creation of a new train ticket valid for just the Alpine regions.

Some Yoalins are also taking a critical view into 2020 and are therefore refraining from air travel. A flight from Ljubljana to Zurich causes 83.68 CO2 kilograms of emissions, four times the emissions of a train journey. Jonas Sonnenschein, coordinator of the campaign, proclaimed "We stay on the ground – a flight-free 2020" at the NGO Umanotera: "Air travel is cheap and therefore often tempts people to take short weekend trips. For many people, air travel is indispensable."

The Yoalins have proven that flying is not necessary to have an extraordinary trip, as shown by reports and photos submitted to the competition. "Decelerated travel is a unique experience that allows personal interactions. With flightless travel, the journey becomes part of the adventure. This made it possible for us to get in touch with the people living in the Alps and carry with us their life stories" says Karin Augsburg, a member of the CIPRA Youth Advisory Council (CYC). Two thirds of the Yoalin participants say that Youth Alpine Interrail has had a major impact on their mobility behaviour. The flight-free movement is steadily growing.

The Youth Alpine Interrail project organised by CIPRA Youth Advisory Council (CYC) and CIPRA International gives 100 young people the opportunity to explore the Alps by train. As in 2018 and 2019, the project will be implemented again this year. In 2018 and 2019 editions were supported financially by the Swiss Federal Office of Spatial Development, the RHW Foundation, the Austrian Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism, the Liechtenstein Office of the Environment and the German Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.

More information can be found under:

www.energie-umwelt.ch/haus/oeffentlicher-verkehr-mobilitaet/mobility-impact (de), <http://yoalin.org/> (en), www.umanotera.org/kaj-delamo/trajne-vsebine-projekti-kampanje/let0-brez-leta-2020/ (sl)

Tourism after the ski lift

Milder and milder winters are forcing ski resorts to invest in expensive snowmaking and lift facilities – an arms race in which many are no longer able to compete. Some places in the Alps have already found alternatives to skiing.



Ski touring instead of the hustle and bustle on the slopes of the Dobratsch/A: where once there were ski slopes, there is now a nature park. © Michael Gams, CIPRA International

In Italy, according to a recent report by the environmental organisation Legambiente, 132 ski resorts have already closed down and 133 are temporarily closed. The Slovenian Cableway Association has lost half its members within a decade and, after two mild winters in a row, many ski resorts there are facing closure. The Dobratsch, a 2,166-metre high mountain at the gates of the Alpine town of Villach/A, shows how things could go. The ski lifts there were dismantled over 15 years ago and a nature park established. Ski tour groups ascend along the old piste, nature park rangers offer guided winter hikes, families meet to toboggan in the snow, cross-country skiers do their rounds. In Gaissau-Hintersee near Salzburg/A, meanwhile, the ski lifts have been out of operation for two years because the promised cash injection from a Chinese investor never came. A ski touring paradise with signposted routes and open ski huts is now to be created here – similar to the Sattelberg in Tyrol/A, where the last ski lifts were dismantled in 2006.

More than just winter sports

In 2012, the French Alpine community of Le Biot decided to dismantle its ski lifts at Col du Corbier. Since then, the area has developed into a year-round outdoor destination, offering ski touring, tobogganing and cross-country skiing, as well as trail running, Nordic walking and mountain biking. Support for marketing and equipment rental comes from a sporting goods manufacturer that wants to establish itself outside of skiing. In Switzerland, too, the ski resort on the Stockhorn had to close 14 years ago. The main reason was climate change, an urgently needed renovation was too expensive, and the resort was running at a loss. The gondola lift is now running again and is back in the black, because the Stockhorn has recently started to advertise itself as a barrier-free mountain for excursions with wheelchair-accessible hiking trails. "Pioneers like these have recognised the signs of the times", says Christian Baumgartner, a lecturer in Tourism and Leisure at the Grisons University of Applied Sciences and Vice-President of CIPRA International. "In future they will also be ahead economically because they operate in the market with a clear profile". Others will have to follow suit, Baumgartner said. A trend that is now also being followed by the Riedberger Horn in Germany: instead of another ski resort, a centre for sustainable tourism is currently being built there.

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Harmful transit traffic



Thick air: thousands of lorries travel over the Brenner Pass every day. (c) European Roads_flickr

Priority for health and the environment along the Brenner axis: this is what CIPRA Italy and other environmental associations are demanding of the Italian Minister of Transport.

Some 55 percent of transalpine freight traffic rolls over the Brenner Pass alone. In 2018, 2.42 million lorries were counted at the Brenner Pass, an increase of 7.4 percent compared with 2017. Every year, more lorries pass over the Brenner than on all Swiss and French Alpine passes together. Pollution along the route increasingly exceeds permissible limits. More traffic also means more environmental pollution. But in December last year, the Italian Minister of Transport, Paola De Micheli, spoke out against Austria's measures to reduce transit traffic on the Brenner axis. According to the truck lobby, the Austrian measures restrict the free movement of goods within the EU.

Several Italian environmental associations have written to the Transport Minister reminding her that the health of citizens living along the transit routes is just as important as the interests of transport companies. In their letter to the Minister, the associations call for concrete measures to reduce environmental pollution, ranging from the use of the remaining capacity of the current railway line to a flexible speed limit to reduce emissions depending on air quality. "This system is already being tested on the Italian section of the A22 motorway, but it now needs to be put into practice as a matter of urgency," demands Francesco Pastorelli, Executive Director of CIPRA Italy. According to Pastorelli, the shift of freight transport from road to rail can only succeed if those who are responsible for external costs due to environmental and health damage also pay for them and if an Alpine-wide transit exchange is introduced.

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How diversity is lost



The sample region used in the study extends over 1500 km² between Steyr and the Gesäuse/A National Park. (c) Iwona Dullinger

Intensive agriculture and climate change: a recent study from Austria shows how much influence both have on the loss of biodiversity in Alpine regions.

What fuels the loss of biodiversity in the Alpine countries? At present, intensive industrialised agriculture is considered the main cause of the loss of habitats for many plant and animal species, due to pesticides and monocultures, among other things. The connection between agricultural use and the decline of animal and plant species is well documented.

A study published at the beginning of 2020 by the University of Vienna and the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences calculated future decisions on land use by around 1,300 agricultural and forestry enterprises, based on the example of the Eisenwurzen region in the Austrian Alps. It concludes that climate change will play a much greater role in habitat loss than land use in the

coming decades. "This result is surprising", says Iwona Dullinger from the Department of Botany and Biodiversity Research at the University of Vienna, "because a large proportion of the 834 plant species we model reacts sensitively to differences in land use".

Protected areas in forests and meadows and pastures in mountainous regions that are not suitable for intensive agriculture are the main reasons why the model does not predict major changes in land use. "Farmers' room for manoeuvre is limited under the economic conditions we assume", explains project manager Stefan Dullinger from the University of Vienna. Although the study is not transferable to other regions of the world, it may be representative of other landscapes in the peripheral regions of the Alps.

Sources and further information:

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Sabbatical in the Alps



Time-out with meaning: the model project "Alpine Sabbatical" has begun. © Corinne Gut Klucker

Take a longer break and give something back: The "Alpine Sabbatical" in Switzerland offers a meaningful alternative way of spending your free time.

In the low season, many alpine tourist destinations face the same problems: a lack of guests and hardly any income from tourism. The Swiss project "Alpine Sabbatical" now wants to change this. In the Grisons pilot regions of Surselva and Prättigau, guests can now book one- to three-month breaks. Language courses in Rhaeto-Romansh, voluntary Alpine and mountain forest work, handicrafts or music courses: the offer should appeal above all to professional dropouts and people changing jobs, but also to pensioners looking for a meaningful time out. A further focus is on burnout prevention and health care. Gerlinde Zuber, an architect and urban planner from Austria who now works in Zurich, submitted her idea to the Innovation Generator of CIPRA Switzerland in 2017 – with success.

A great opportunity

Instead of experiencing and consuming as much as possible in as short a time as possible, the idea is to get involved with a place and its people for a longer time, said Zuber. "The guests give something back to the place by participating." But not so as to replace workers who are in any case necessary, but voluntarily, out of interest in the country and its people. "There are great opportunities in this approach," says Stefan Steiner, Head of Regional Development for Prättigau/Davos. Kevin Brunold, Managing Director of Surselva Tourism, sees a win-win situation: "The guests benefit from the proximity to Alpine events and the peace and quiet in the off-season. For us, the Alpine Sabbaticals are an important building block on the way to becoming a year-round destination".

Sources and further information: www.alpinesabbatical.ch (de), <https://innovationsgenerator.ch/index.php/alpine-sabbatical.html> (de)|

Strange but true...

The Austrian ski resort of Ischgl, the "Ibiza of the Alps", has so far modestly avoided the limelight. Recently it described itself as the "largest climate-neutral ski area in the Alps". Most of the ski lifts run on hydroelectric power, a valley station and a mountain restaurant use geothermal energy for heating, while snow groomers use GPS to measure the snow depth so that less artificial snow has to be made. The ski bus network is being expanded and thousands of trees have been planted in the valley. The ski resort buys its way out of the remaining CO₂ emissions by sponsoring a reforestation project in Peru.



A question of credibility: The skiing area Ischgl/A is applying as "climate neutral". (c) pixabay

This raises questions: Is the gigantism of a ski resort with 239 kilometres of slopes and 45 lifts compatible with climate protection? Is greenwashing being practised here? Most of the emissions from skiing are caused by the journey to the resort. Does a 33 million euro "Parking Lounge" for 640 cars in the village centre fit into the picture of a "climate-neutral" ski resort? How does this go hand-in-hand with press conferences in Moscow and St. Petersburg so that thousands of Russian guests will board a plane for a few days of skiing and partying? Climate protection is a party playground: Ischgl still has to work on the credibility of its message.

Sources and further information:

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Agenda

International Conference Soil and WATER Bioengineering SWB 2020, 23.-24.04.2020, Vienna/A. [More...](#)

Natura 2000 Award, 20.05.2020, Brussels/B. [More...](#)

Workshop for Matchmaking & Conference on Climate Change Communication in the Alps, 30.06.-01.07.2020, Bolzano-Bozen/I. [More...](#)

Alpine Workshop. The Artisans, 20.10.2019-27.09.2020, Bern/CH. [More...](#)

“Smart mountains: how to make our territories attractive and future-oriented?”, 29.09.-01.10.2020, Sila Natural Park/I. [More...](#)