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Summary 01-04

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Boundless information on the Alps

(15.03.2002) alpMedia, the new CIPRA info service, is taking off – with a weekly newsletter and a new website at <http://www.alpmedia.net>. In the initial phase the website is in a provisional format containing the articles from the newsletters.

That will soon be followed by the full on-line version with a wide range of information from the whole of the Alps and also, where relevant, from other mountain regions, relating to sustainable development in the fields of people and culture, land use planning, economics, air quality and climate, soil protection and geology, water regimes, environmental protection and landscape management, agriculture, forests, tourism and sport, transport, energy, and waste management. The information provided will be updated on a regular basis and systematically archived. The result will be a knowledge base that is available in the long term. All published information will be presented on the website and will be accessible via a powerful search routine.

The website offering will comprise news items, background reports, documents, forthcoming events, a list of publications and links, and also dossiers as a focused source of information on selected topics. There will be website versions in French, German, Italian and Slovene plus a selection in English. alpMedia is the name for targeted information on the Alps from reliable sources – fast, up to date, international and interdisciplinary.

The preparatory phase for the development of this new media service was financed by SAEFL, the Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape. The funding needed to run the service is being provided by the Swiss MAVA Foundation. CIPRA wishes to express its sincere thanks to both.

Climate Star 2002 - European award for local climate protection activities

(22.03.2002) The Climate Alliance is calling on all local and regional authorities in Europe to enter the "Climate Star 2002" competition with their various climate protection activities. The objective is to pool the experience gathered to date and publicise successful measures implemented at the local level. Entries must be submitted by 20 May 2002 to the Climate Alliance of European Cities with Indigenous Rainforest Peoples.

europe@klimabuendnis.org, competition documents: www.klimabuendnis.org

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Biodiversity vision for the Alps

(15.03.2002) In collaboration with CIPRA, the International Committee for Alpine Research and the Alpine Network of Protected Areas, the WWF is organising a workshop aimed at the development of a long-term vision of biodiversity in the Alps.

Thanks to their biodiversity and socio-economic function, the Alps are a region of global importance. Existing initiatives and organisations often have an approach to biodiversity that is limited in terms of time and space. The goal of the workshop is therefore to develop a vision that transcends national and linguistic borders as the basis for the development of a long-term action plan. The workshop – Towards a Biodiversity Vision for the Alps – will be held on 15 – 17 May 2002 in Gap (F). It will be attended by biodiversity experts from all the countries of the Alps as well as scientists from socio-economic and other fields. More than seventy attendees have already registered for the event.

No EU interest in the Alpine Convention

(22.02.2002) The European Union has not played an active role in the development of the Alpine Convention for a number of years now, and that is not likely to change in the near future. Austria's European Member of Parliament Marilies Flemming has enquired at the EU Commission when a clear decision can be expected with regard to the signing and ratification of the protocols to the Alpine Convention. She also wanted to know why the much criticised lack of contact with the citizenry in the EU was not addressed in the debate on the People and Culture Protocol.

The Commission's answer was short but not so sweet: At present the intention is to concentrate on those sectors that best contribute to the implementation of EU policies. For that reason the Commission at present has plans to sign the Transport Protocol. The mountain regions, which are "disadvantaged in any case", are being helped in the framework of EU cohesion policy. Proper monitoring of all measures taken in the framework of the Alpine Convention would exceed the financial capabilities of the EU. This is also the reason, says the Commission, for the decision not to contribute to the debate on a protocol on People and Culture.

In the meantime the South Tyrolean Alpine Club has called on the two South Tyrolean European Members of Parliament to work for greater EU involvement in the Alpine Convention.

International Year of Mountains 2002

(28.03.2002) At the end of 1998 the United Nations General Assembly accepted the proposal submitted by the Republic of Kyrgyzstan to make 2002 the International Year of Mountains. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) was given responsibility for the preparations in collaboration with national governments, other UN agencies and NGOs.

Mountains cover one quarter of the surface of the earth. They are home to about one tenth of the world's population and supply water to almost half of mankind. The goal of the International Year of Mountains is global awareness-building for the importance of the mountains for the survival of the human race. The result is a wide range of activities at the local, regional, national and international levels designed to protect sensitive mountain ecosystems and promote sustainable development in mountain areas.

The following websites offer general information and details of events and projects relating to the International Year of Mountains:

Official international website: International Year of Mountains 2002 <http://www.mountains2002.org/> (E/F/Sp); 4-day final meeting from 29 October to 1 November in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Bishkek Global Mountain Summit <http://www.globalmountainsummit.org> (English)

Official national websites:

Germany: Internationales Jahr der Berge 2002 <http://www.berge2002.de;>

France: Année Internationale des Montagnes 2002 <http://213.41.124.139/datar/>

(French); Italy: Anno internazionale delle montagne <http://www.montagna.org> (It, E);

Liechtenstein: Internationales Jahr der Berge 2002 <http://www.berge2002.li;>

Switzerland: Berge verbinden! <http://www.berge2002.ch/start.html;>

Austria: Jahr der Berge 2002 <http://www.berge2002.at;>

Slovenia: Mednarodno leto gora 2002

http://www.sigov.si/mkgp/leto_gora_dobrodosli.htm (Slovenian)



HVF for all Europe?

(15.03.2002) According to a report published by the Swiss Federal Office of Regional Development (ARE), the Heavy Vehicle Fee (HVF) introduced on the Swiss autobahns at the beginning of 2001 has played a key role in reducing in HGV traffic. Following a period of constant growth from 1997 to 2000, the number of lorries on the main highways in Switzerland declined by 8% in the first seven months of 2001. The Swiss charge a toll of between EUR 0.24 and 0.33 (CHF 0.36 and 0.50) per kilometre, depending on axle weight and emission category. The resulting revenues for the Swiss treasury have been higher than expected.

On 15 August 2001 the German government also decided to introduce a distance-related road toll for the autobahn network as of 2003 for all heavy goods vehicles with a maximum laden weight of more than 12 tonnes.

The charge is to be calculated on the basis of the following three factors: distance travelled, axle weight and emission category. Depending on vehicle weight and pollutant class, HGVs using the German autobahns will pay between EUR 0.10 and 0.17 per kilometre. That is ten to seventeen times higher than the cost of the present annual toll sticker.

The Austrian Transport Minister Reichhold has also announced plans to introduce road-pricing for HGVs in the middle of 2003. The Austrian toll is expected to cost at least EUR 0.22 per kilometre, with the charge increasing with the size of the lorry. In a macro-economic study, the Austrian Wifo (Economic Research Institute) has been able to demonstrate that the introduction of road-pricing for HGVs in Austria would lead to an 0.15% increase in GDP, the creation of 5700 jobs and a reduction in the unemployment rate of 0.2%, while prices would rise by only 0.2%. According to the Wifo model, the Austrian heavy vehicle fee will have positive impacts on the construction industry. The new toll will also help level the playing field between road and rail for goods transport.

In Italy, a number of environmental organisations including Legambiente und CIPRA-Italia have presented a petition to the Italian government calling for the introduction of a heavy vehicle fee, clean-air legislation and measures to encourage the use of the railway and public transport.

The decisive factor in this context is always whether the revenues from road-pricing are earmarked exclusively for the highway infrastructure or whether funds may also be used to upgrade public transport services, as is the case in Switzerland.

Links to the topic

- ARE press release: www.raumentwicklung.admin.ch/medien_2001/medien_061101_d.html
- www.lsva-europe.org
- HVF in Italy: <http://www.legambiente.org/Notizie/PetizioneCosti.htm>

„Focus on the Alps“ – 5th CIPRA Summer Academy in Liechtenstein

(28.03.2002) This year CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, is holding its 5th summer academy under the title “Focus on the Alps” from 19 August to 6 September 2002 in Schaan (Liechtenstein). The three-week course will have an internationally recognised faculty and will address all major aspects of the Alps.

The range of topics is wide. It includes geography, history, cultural studies, spatial planning and development, actors and NGOs in the alpine space, the forest and wildlife, landscape and regional development, tourism and agriculture, energy and transport, and the Alpine Convention. Teaching will take the form of lectures, seminars and excursions, and will offer a combination of theoretical and practical aspects. This year there will be German-Italian simultaneous translation.

In the last four years more than sixty people from seven different countries have attended this international and interdisciplinary course. Students discover the alpine space in all its facets – from the land of legend to the historical, cultural and economic realities, from its problems to the potential solutions, from the constraints of economy to the calls of ecology.

The summer academy is a valuable continuous education experience for young university and college graduates and for everyone whose work brings them into contact with the Alps.

On 29 and 30 August there will be a seminar on the subject of “Leisure and transport”. That is also the subject of an optional four-week project, which will last from 9 September to 4 October.

The deadline for registration is 31 May 2002. There are still some places available! Further details and registration (including the full programme and faculty) from http://deutsch.cipra.org/akademie/Programme/Programm_2002/index_2002.html CIPRA-International, Postfach 142, FL-9494 Schaan, T 00423 237 40 30, F 00423 237 40 31, cipra@cipra.org

Olympic Games – time for downsizing

(22.03.2002) Between Lake Placid in 1980 and Salt Lake City in 2002, the number of events increased from 38 to 78 and the number of competitors from 1027 to 2400. Salt Lake City also attracted almost 11,000 media people to provide coverage for the various contests and related activities.

This situation is not to the liking of Jacques Rogge as President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). What is needed in his opinion is a phase of downsizing with regard to “the growing numbers in the retinue (meaning the officials, service people, organisers, media, etc., -ed.), the technological developments, and also the sports facilities, which are often not used after the Games”. The IOC Commission, which is responsible for the Olympic programme, has been given until November 2002 to propose ways of restricting the sheer size of future Games.

The Alps are also affected by these developments, as the 2006 Olympic Winter Games are to be hosted by Turin in the Piedmont, while Berne/CH and Salzburg/A are in the running for the 2010 Winter Games.

CIPRA's position paper on wintersport mega-events is available at

http://deutsch.cipra.org/texte/positionen/Position_WISPO.htm

Right of associations to take legal action in Germany

(05.04.2002) This month the new Federal Nature Conservation Act comes into force in Germany. The German government sees the law as a pillar of ecological modernisation for the country. Under the terms of the new law, the German *länder* have a legal obligation to create biotopes on at least ten percent of their total area. At the federal level, provision has also been made for the right of associations to take legal action. “This right is a key instrument in strengthening people's rights to be involved in shaping their environments,” says Minister of the Environment Jürgen Trittin. The German *länder* authorities can also extend the right of associations to take legal action to cases and matters that were not included in the federal law.

The right of associations to take legal action is already in force in Switzerland und Liechtenstein.

<http://www.bmu.de/presse>

No joint procurement for tilt trains

(05.04.2002) Deutsche Bahn AG (DB), the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) and the Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) established the TEE Rail Alliance as part of their original plan to collaborate on a joint procurement project for high-speed tilt trains. In the meantime, however, both DB and ÖBB have withdrawn from the alliance. The SBB always intended to buy trainsets capable of operating with power from two different systems so as to permit through-running into Italy. Such trainsets would also have made sense for DB and ÖBB on such routes as Innsbruck or Munich to Verona and Milan over the Brenner Pass. In the meantime it is clear that DB has no interest in working its tilt trains through Austria and into Italy. Instead they insisted on full compatibility with ICE-T tilt-body trains, but that increased the tender prices to such an extent that DB decided to abandon the idea. Now the ÖBB has decided not to proceed further with its plan for through-running tilt trains. As a result, the SBB has gone it alone and placed an order for fourteen seven-coach tilting trainsets with twin-current capability for delivery in 2006. They will operate primarily on the Geneva-Brig-Simplon-Milan line.

The decision does not affect the three rail companies' policy of co-operation at the commercial level.



Agenda

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio + 10)

26 August – 4 September 2002, Johannesburg, South Africa; information: <http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/>

Bishkek Global Mountain Summit

28 October – 1 November 2002, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan; information: andrewvf@mail.ru

International conference: Der Alpenprozess – Ein Beispiel für nachhaltige Entwicklung in anderen Bergregionen?

26 – 29 June 2002, Berchtesgaden, Germany; information: CIPRA-Germany, www.cipra.de (info@cipra.de)

Alpine Forum 2002 “The Nature of the Alps” Alpbach, Tyrol (Austria), 23 – 27 September 2002;

information: <http://www.mtnforum.org/calendar/events/0209anaa.htm>; International Scientific Committee on Research in the Alps (ISCAR): icas@sanw.unibe.ch, <http://www.alpinestudies.unibe.ch/wiko.htm>