



2002 – CIPRA Jubilee Year

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Following the horrors and privations of the Second World War and the economic crises that had preceded it, many people understandably focussed on satisfying their material needs. At that time environmental protection was not very high on the agenda. All the more impressive, then, is the fact that the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA) was established in 1952 already. Far-sighted individuals like Edith Ebers, the driving force behind the foundation of CIPRA, have dramatic words to say about the situation at the time: “full-scale attacks on the natural environment”, “rivers and lakes in the hands of the engineers”, “a lighthouse on the Matterhorn”. Those and other negative scenarios were motivation enough to seek international co-operation in the field of environmental protection. The result was the foundation of CIPRA in Rottach/Egern (D) on 5 May 1952.

In the early years CIPRA was an environmental protection organisation with a commitment to conservation in the alpine space. Today the concept of sustainable development is central to the work of CIPRA; no basic contradiction is seen between the needs of the resident population to earn a living and the need to make considerate use of the environment. On the contrary, only if human beings treat the environment with respect, that is to say make good and sustainable use of it, will they have a future in the Alps to look forward to.

The CIPRA jubilee celebrations will take place at Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein in Vaduz on Saturday, 4 May, starting at 5.30 p.m.

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Culture without population?

(26.04.2002) "Population and Culture" is one of the protocols planned for the Alpine Convention. Instead of a legally binding protocol, however, the signatory states are now talking in terms of a political declaration. In addition, the Italian chair of the Population and Culture working group wanted to address the two subjects separately.

At the 21st session of the Standing Committee of the Alpine Conference, which was held on 15-16 April in Bolzano (I), a number of countries indicated a preference for a political declaration instead of a protocol on the subject of "Population and Culture". For CIPRA such a step would be in contravention of the Alpine Convention, in which a legally binding protocol was promised. On 23-24 April the first meeting of the Population and Culture working group was held in Sirmione (I). The group has been mandated with the task of preparing an interim report for the 7th Alpine Conference to be held on 19-20 November 2002. At the meeting of the working group, Austria, Monaco, the EU and several organisations with observer status were conspicuous by their absence.

The discussion paper submitted by working group chairman Federico Lottersberger provided for the subject to be divided up into two protocols: one for "Population and territorial jurisdiction" – with recommendations and obligations – and a second for "Population and cultural identity". The proposal met with a cool response from the parties to the agreement present and also from CIPRA. Their criticism related to the lack of attention paid to socio-ecological and socio-economic aspects and the one-sided focus on such topics as linguistic minorities and historical cultural landscapes. Although the latter are also of interest, it was argued, they cannot alone be the foundation of such a broad-based protocol as provided for in the framework agreement. The chairman therefore decided to concentrate on drawing up an interim report for the next session of the Standing Committee of the Alpine Conference. The parties to the agreement and the observers intend to communicate their ideas to the chair and outline their views on the contents of a Population and Culture protocol.

Eco forest certification making progress in the Alps

(19.04.2002) "Ernte für das Leben", the biggest organic produce organisation in Austria and Europe, is now offering its membership FSC certification for their forests. That is a further step in the direction of ecological and socially sustainable forest management.

The international certificate awarded by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is proof that the timber is the product of a forest managed on the basis of such principles as ecological and social responsibility and economic sustainability. Certification is only available to operators who respect a ban on clear-cutting and the use of biocides and observe the principle of letting the deadwood lie.

The 12,000 or so farmers affiliated to the ERNTE association manage more than ten percent of the forest smallholdings in Austria, and the majority already employ ecological methods. For them, FSC certification will therefore be a mere formality.

Leading welfare, development and environmental organisations worldwide support FSC certification. In Austria, for example, the WWF, Caritas and Greenpeace have issued a public statement to that effect.

The problem of marketing the certified timber also seems to have been solved, with big retailers like the d.i.y. chains OBI, Baumax and Praktiker, as well as Otto-Versand and Neckermann gradually changing over to FSC products.

Most of the countries of the Alps already have FSC-certified forests. In Switzerland over 70,000 ha of forest is certified. A number of forests in Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Liechtenstein have also received certification.



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Links

<http://www.fscoax.org/>
<http://www.fsc-deutschland.de/>
http://www.ernte.at/framesseiten/f_main_main.html

Alpine Clubs against further ski area development

(03.05.2002) In April the French Alpine Club (Club alpin français) went public with the resolution adopted at the end of last year at the annual meeting of Club Arc Alpin as the international umbrella of the national Alpine Clubs. At that meeting the Alpine Clubs formulated their explicit rejection of any further ski area development and extension projects in the Alps. They called for the creation of an international agency as the supreme approvals body for new tourism facilities in accordance with the provisions of the Alpine Convention and protocols. They also decided to work to have binding limits set for the final stage of every development project and to make people in the Alps and elsewhere aware of the problems created by linking existing ski areas. The complete text of the press release is available (in French) at: <http://perso.wanadoo.fr/mountain.wilderness/news/motioncaa.htm>

Rail corridor between Rotterdam and Milan

(19.04.2002) A working group established by Dutch Transport Minister Tineke Netelenbos and her Swiss counterpart Moritz Leuenberger in the search for greater efficiency on the north-south rail axis recently presented its report. The paper contains proposals at the level of logistics, e.g. cross-border running with locomotives and their crews, joint timetabling, and streamlined customs formalities. The individual measures are as follows:

- creation of a joint corridor control centre with the goal of establishing an integrated administration for the corridor infrastructure in the short to medium-term so as to improve co-ordination in the flow of information;
- cross-border running with locomotives designed for use on different systems so as to reduce the number of locomotive changes and eliminate the critical points in the network;
- joint planning for timetables and resources so as to generate direct improvements in the quality of the rail freight service;
- simplified customs formalities for all rail operators in order to significantly reduce administrative obstacles in cross-border freight traffic.

In a first step the two countries intend to intensify their contacts with Germany and Italy with the aim of creating an integrated transit corridor as quickly as possible. In the second half of the year the ministers will be briefed by the mixed working group on the progress made in terms of implementation before taking a decision on the further procedure. Tineke Netelenbos, however, will no longer be involved in the project as she has resigned from office together with the other members of the Dutch government in response to the role played by the Dutch UN contingent in the Bosnian enclave of Srebrenica in 1995.

Alpine Convention – initiative to involve the EU

(12.04.2002) CIPRA has called on the Ministers of the Environment of the Alpine countries to put pressure on the EU to become more involved in the Alpine Convention. In a letter to CIPRA, Germany's Environment Minister Jürgen Trittin communicated his intention to launch an appropriate initiative.

For several years the EU has shown little interest in the Alpine Convention, having last signed a protocol in 1994. The EU was not even represented at the last meeting of the Ministers of the Environment of the Alpine countries, the 6th Alpine Conference, which was held in Lucerne on 30 October 2000. The standard explanation from Brussels, as repeated most recently in a letter to CIPRA from EU Commissioner Margot Wallström dated 4th April of this year, is always the same. Sustainable development in the mountain regions, they say, is a central goal of EU policy. Such areas are disadvantaged, as the EU stated in the Second Cohesion Report, and they accordingly constitute one of the ten priorities of EU cohesion policy. The fact that the EU is not at present playing an active role in support of the signing and ratification of many of the protocols, the argument continues, should not be interpreted as a lack of interest in sustainable development in the alpine space. After all, the Commission has proposed to the Council of Ministers that the EU should sign the Transport Protocol. The Council is currently considering the proposal (and has been doing so for more than a year, -ed.).

In his letter to CIPRA, Germany's Minister Trittin says that a joint initiative needs to be undertaken by the states signatory to the Alpine Convention "in order to persuade the European Community to meet its obligations as a party to the convention", Germany for its part will take advantage of the next meeting of the Standing Committee of the Alpine Conference to be held in Bolzano on 15-16 April in order to discuss the problem once again with representatives of the other signatory states. In addition, says Trittin, he has suggested that the subject be discussed at the meeting of the Ministers of the Environment of the German-speaking countries to be held in Innsbruck on 21 June.

Heli-skiing at a UNESCO World Heritage Site

(12.04.2002) "The majestic mountain scenery of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, the Great Aletsch Glacier with the fascinating Aletsch Forest of ancient larch and stone pine, the old cultural landscapes of Baltschieder Valley and the rocky steppe around Bietschhorn – they all form part of a landscape that is outstanding for its beauty and diversity." That is what it says on the official website of this Swiss region, which was added to the UNESCO World Heritage list on 13 December 2001. In the national air traffic infrastructure inventory maintained by the Swiss Federal Office of Civil Aviation, however, it says something else. It lists three mountain landing sites that are located within the new World Heritage site. They are used for heli-skiing and sightseeing flights.

This "majestic mountain scenery" can do without heli-skiing, says Mountain Wilderness Switzerland, and they have called a demonstration for 20-21 April at the Jungfrauoch mountain landing site (bad weather alternative 4-5 May). The demonstration is being held to back up Mountain Wilderness' call for "an immediate stop to unnecessary impacts on the alpine space deriving from heli-tourism".

CIPRA published a resolution on the subject in 1997 (http://deutsch.cipra.org/texte/positionen/resolution_heli.htm). In many countries of the Alps, heli-skiing is no longer permitted. An overview of the current legal situation is to be found at

http://deutsch.cipra.org/texte/publikationen/Heliski/Karte_Heliski.htm.

Miscellaneous

Salzburg to bid for 2010 Winter Olympics

(19.04.2002) The city of Salzburg (A) will be making a joint bid with the Amadé Sport Region and Kitzbühel and also, on a cross-border basis, with Berchtesgaden (D) to host the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. On Tuesday evening the marketing programme – entitled “Back to the Origins” – was officially presented to the Austrian parliament. The strongpoint of the Salzburg bid, according to the presentation, is the fact that many of the venues needed for the Olympic events already exist and that the impacts on the natural environment can therefore be kept to a minimum. The question of subsequent use of the facilities has also been clarified, it was said, and the improvements to the transport infrastructure are needed in any case and in some cases are already part of the city's general transport plan. The Olympic Games are expected to boost the economy by some EUR 300 million in the form of extra tax revenues and to lead to the creation of 2000 jobs in the short term and 500 in the long term. CIPRA's position paper on wintersport mega-events is available at: http://deutsch.cipra.org/texte/positionen/Position_WISPO.htm

European conference on protected mountain areas

(26.04.2002) The Alpine Network of Protected Areas and the Montanéa organisation are holding an international conference on the subject of “Protected areas of European Mountains – places of life, research and exchange” in Chambéry (F) on 13-17 November 2002. This will be the first such event to bring together representatives of protected areas from the various mountain regions of Europe. The goal is to establish a dialogue between areas with common goals in terms of protection and development and to encourage co-operation at the European level. Further details from www.alparc.org or sylvia.unterreiner@alparc.org.

Mountain ecosystems at risk worldwide

(03.05.2002) At the beginning of the UN International Year of Mountains, the United Nations University in Tokyo presented a study into the state of the mountains worldwide. The report was drawn up by a research team headed by Jack Ives, an expert on the subject of mountain ecology. According to the report, the European Alps and the Himalaya-Karakorum-Hindu Kush chain are the most endangered mountain ranges. In North America and Europe the main threat relates to excessive exploitation for tourism. In the mountain chains of the developing world, a variety of factors such as poverty, drought, famine, forest clearance and war all play a decisive role. In collaboration with the University of Berne, the research group has drawn up a programme for sustainable development in the endangered mountain regions. http://update.unu.edu/archive/issue14_2.htm

Agenda

International conference on “**Celebrating Mountain Women**”, International Year of Mountains, 30-31 May, Chambéry (France); parallel event: 28-31 May in Kathmandu (Nepal)
<http://www.mountains2002.org/milestones/>

“**25 Jahre Alpenschutz**”, Symposium of the German Alpine Club

14-16 June, Berchtesgaden (Germany)

<http://www.alpenverein.de/berge2002/veranstaltungen.htm#berchtesgaden> (German)

International conference: “**Valori e problemi del patrimonio vegetale delle montagne**”

31 May–1 June, Bergamo (I); organisers: “Società Botanica Italiana” and “Orto Botanico di Bergamo”;

information: ambiente@solco.it, <http://comune.columbusnet.it/ortobotanico/convegno.htm> (Italian)

International conference on agriculture and biodiversity: “**Butter oder Schmetterlinge?**”

10-11 June, Interlaken (CH); information: Pro Natur – Friends of the Earth Switzerland,

<http://www.pronatura.ch/content/presse/DE/page0.html#page0.ancor3> (German)

angie.rother@pronatura.ch

Workshop: “**Beiträge des Bergwaldes zur Entwicklung des ländlichen Raumes - Sicherstellung der Schutzfunktion durch Abgeltung**”

10-12 June, Innsbruck (A); organisers: Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Tyrolean Forestry Commission and the Innsbruck municipal authority; information: herbert.scheiring@uibk.ac.at

“**Focus on the Alp**”: CIPRA-International's 5th summer academy

19.8.–6.9.: general course; 29–30.8.: seminar on “Leisure – Mobility – the Alps”; Schaan/FL; in German with simultaneous translation into Italian; information and registration: www.cipra.org