

# alpMedia Newsletter - summary 02/-04/2016

## Better protection for natural spaces



© Nicolas Grunbaum

**Resistance is growing across the Alps against construction activities in pristine or largely unspoilt areas. CIPRA is making an appeal for integrative spatial planning to the Alpine states meeting this week in Murnau, Germany.**

It was probably the largest protest action ever to take place on a mountain in the French Alps: in mid-March 2016 over 600 people formed a giant heart below the 2400-metre peak of Les Vans in the French Belledonne mountain range. They wanted to show their disapproval of the planned expansion of the Chamrousse skiing area southeast of Grenoble. The Vans Valley forms part of the “Natura 2000” network of protected areas. The action was called by twenty environmental associations, including CIPRA France, with the project being deemed disproportionate. Those responsible denied the reality of climate change and prevent all-year-round tourism.

## Bavarian Alpine Plan under pressure

Elsewhere too, citizens and environmental organisations are protesting anew against building projects in pristine or largely unspoilt areas, for instance on the Riedberger Horn in Germany, which is covered by a protected zone in the Bavarian Alpine Plan, or against the linking of the Pitztal and Ötztal glacier skiing areas in Austria. CIPRA Germany, CIPRA Austria and CIPRA South Tyrol have listed on a map around 40 planned aerial ropeway projects and ski piste developments in their respective regions.

At the end of March, prior to a conference on spatial planning to be held in Murnau, Germany, these three representative bodies appealed to the Alpine countries to ban all future major extensions to skiing areas. Such extensions would simply lead to ruinous international competition, destroy the landscape and nature and make no contribution to the development of a sustainable economy. Internationally co-ordinated spatial planning is what is required: as Peter Hasslacher, head of CIPRA Austria, explains: “We are not making any headway with the concentration on species protection. We need spatial planning to safeguard areas that have not been or have hardly been developed.”

## Nature is priceless

CIPRA International added its voice with an open letter to the Alpine states, presented the day before yesterday to the German Secretary of State Rainer Bomba at the Murnau conference on spatial planning. CIPRA International supports the efforts of the Alpine states to achieve an integrated and multi-sector approach, as set out in a declaration that was discussed at the conference. Only such an

approach could prevent special interests from coming before the public interest. But, as the letter continues, it is unfortunate that, in spatial planning procedures, “political or business interests were often given more weight than values that are not measurable in monetary terms, such as quality of life, landscape, biodiversity or ecological networking”. Proof is provided by the decline in variety, open spaces and corridors. “It gets forgotten that nature is not just one factor among many affecting our lives, but the source, inspiration and framework of every life.”

Sources and further information: [www.cipra.org/de/cipra/oesterreich](http://www.cipra.org/de/cipra/oesterreich) (de), [www.cipra.org/de/positionen](http://www.cipra.org/de/positionen) (de, fr, it, sl), [www.mountainwilderness.fr/images/presse/2016/CP-Rassemblement-Vans/DP\\_Vans.pdf](http://www.mountainwilderness.fr/images/presse/2016/CP-Rassemblement-Vans/DP_Vans.pdf) (fr), <https://vimeo.com/159052489> (fr)

## Point of view: 25 years of the Alpine Convention are not enough



**While we celebrate 25 years of the Alpine Convention, we still bemoan the slow pace of its implementation. For its objectives to be achieved, believes Katharina Conradin, President of CIPRA International, we have to repeatedly demand their realisation.**

© Martin Walser

Expectations were high as the environment ministers of the Alpine countries met in the Austrian city of Salzburg in 1991 to sign the Convention for the Protection of the Alps – the Alpine Convention. CIPRA, together with many of its fellow campaigners, expected it to make a crucial contribution to the Alps becoming the green paradise in Europe. We have still got some way to go, however – and there are good reasons for this.

Every international convention requires a suitable implementation strategy at national level. The signatory states must thus anchor the objectives and rules of the Alpine Convention in their constitutions and legal codes. Yet this is where the central challenge arises: the systemic and multi-sector approach of the Alpine Convention (which covers matters ranging from soil protection to traffic and tourism) contradicts the sector-based organisation of the Alpine states, which usually entrust a single ministry (mostly the environment ministry) with the main responsibility for the Alpine Convention. The responsible ministries naturally have difficulty in implementing the aims of the Alpine Convention on a 1:1 basis in other ministries.

But it would be an oversimplification to charge the contracting parties – and thus the fact that not all expectations have been met – with the lack of implementation of the Alpine Convention. In the long run the need is for more than “just” the Alpine Convention in order for the Alps to transform themselves into a model region of sustainable development. The Alpine Convention is a political guide and vision, but it too needs a basic social understanding as regards the direction in which the Alps are to develop. This can never be determined only from above: it must grow from below, with innumerable initiatives, committed individuals and partners drawn from society, economy and environment.

We thus all have a responsibility to commit to sustainable, ecologically sound development and to use the potential of the Alpine Convention: we emphasise this in our 2015 annual report, which we have dedicated to the Alpine Convention. CIPRA will also advocate for these goals over the next 25 years and contribute to the implementation of the Alpine Convention.

[www.cipra.org/en/cipra/international/publications/annual-reports](http://www.cipra.org/en/cipra/international/publications/annual-reports)

## CIPRA and the Alpine Convention: a fruitful co-operation



**An architectural competition, a climate conference, activities with young people: CIPRA and the Alpine Convention have a lot in common, as the current annual report of CIPRA International makes clear.**

Illustration: Johannes Gautier

In Markus Reiterer's office in Innsbruck, Austria, there hangs a collage that tells of an exciting journey with a long-term impact. It was presented to him as Secretary General of the Alpine Convention – and to other representatives of the organisation – at Expo Milan in June 2015. It was created by young participants of CIPRA's Youth Alpine Express project using materials they had collected on their journey – waste to some, recyclable materials to others. The collages carry a clear message: reduce, reuse, and recycle! In the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Alpine Convention, this message is more relevant than ever before; the Alps, with their wealth of natural resources, are under particular pressure today.

Twenty-five years after the launch of the Alpine Convention, CIPRA International takes stock in this year's Annual Report. Much has been achieved. Thanks in no small part to CIPRA, the Alpine Convention has opened its doors to young people. Other challenges are still waiting to be addressed, however, and some have become more pressing than ever before. Climate change, for example, is calling into question accepted models for business and tourism. New answers may be found thanks to the mediation of the Alpine Convention, where international co-operation has generated diverse contacts and multifarious expertise. Over the last 25 years, it has already inspired numerous activities and initiatives. In many cases, CIPRA has played a role, for instance in the climate conference for municipalities or in the Alps-wide architectural competition “Constructive Alps” – as can be seen from CIPRA International's 2015 Report.

[www.cipra.org/en/cipra/international/publications/annual-reports](http://www.cipra.org/en/cipra/international/publications/annual-reports), [www.cipra.org/en/media-releases/tracking-change-with-cipra](http://www.cipra.org/en/media-releases/tracking-change-with-cipra)

## Change is in the air



**A change of executive director at CIPRA International and at CIPRA Austria, and a new president for CIPRA Switzerland: the new faces shaping the future of CIPRA.**

© Caroline Begle / CIPRA

The line-up is changing at CIPRA International: executive director Claire Simon will be handing over the reins to her deputy Andreas Pichler as of 1 August 2016. Claire Simon, 38, made her mark on CIPRA during her twelve years at the helm and among other things strove to open up the organisation to coming generations. Under her leadership CIPRA not only succeeded in making its presence felt on the stage of international Alpine policy, but also initiated changes and worked towards innovative approaches in the development of processes.

Her successor Andreas Pichler, who has been working since November at the organisation's head office in Schaan, Liechtenstein, brings with him a passionate interest in the sustainable development of the Alps, as well as his experience gained as the former director of the South Tyrol Eco-Institute, his professional expertise and a wide-ranging network of contacts.

CIPRA Austria too has a new leader, with Hemma Burger-Scheidlin being succeeded at the top by ecologist Josef Essl, 48. He has since 2013 been head of CIPRA Austria's Alpine Convention office in Innsbruck. There is also a change in the presidency of CIPRA Switzerland: current president Reto Solèr is stepping down in favour of Patrik Schönenberger, an agrarian ecologist who lives in the canton of Freiburg, where he teaches at the Changins college of further education and runs a consultancy firm specialising in ecological winegrowing.

[www.cipra.org/en/media-releases/tracking-change-with-cipra](http://www.cipra.org/en/media-releases/tracking-change-with-cipra)

## One river, numerous desires: disagreements about the Alpine Rhine



**A current bone of contention between different interest groups is the priority to be given to the various uses made of the Alpine Rhine: as a farming area, as a habitat for the little ringed plover and the German tamarisk, or as a drinking water reservoir. SPARE, a new European Union project for the Alpine region, will offer assistance for the holistic management of watercourses.**

© Frank Schultze, Zeiteinspiegel

Flood protection is being improved along the 30-kilometre or so stretch of the Rhine between its confluence with the River Ill and down to Lake Constance near the border between Switzerland and Austria. The two countries are to implement the large-scale Rhesi project for this purpose, with the

joint Rhine Commission due to decide on possible variants at the end of April 2016. In the view of nature conservationists, the proposals do not go far enough. Lukas Indermaur, spokesman for the “Lebendiger Alpenrhein” environmental platform, summarises their concerns: “For people to relax and enjoy themselves on the Rhine and for animals and plants to propagate once more, the river needs as much space as possible”, he says. A blockade by individual drinking water suppliers has meant that the legal requirements have only been met along 15% of the stretch in question. On the other hand, municipalities are concerned about drinking water supplies while farmers fear the loss of fertile land.

Similar conflicts have arisen in many places about the management of rivers in the Alpine regions. The recent SPARE initiative, co-financed under the EU’s Alpine space programme, is intended to offer assistance in improving the bases for decision-making and ensuring full participation of the interest groups concerned. IRKA, the International Governmental Commission for the Alpine Rhine, is an observer. Describing his expectations, IRKA member Helmut Kindle, head of Liechtenstein’s Office for the Environment, says: “We wish to contribute our experiences to the international project as best we can, while at the same time learning from the examples of other countries”. With its responsibility for project communications, CIPRA International also has a significant role to play.

Sources and further information: [www.rhesi.org](http://www.rhesi.org) (de), [www.lebendigerrhein.org](http://www.lebendigerrhein.org) (de), [www.alpenrhein.net/](http://www.alpenrhein.net/) (de), [www.alpine-space.eu/SPARE](http://www.alpine-space.eu/SPARE)

## Chemicals in the Alps – unwanted souvenirs



**Not only particulates are causing problems for people and animals: chemicals too are accumulating in the Alps. As one of the causes the outdoors industry is only gradually moving to remedy matters.**

© James Peacock / flickr.com

Outdoor enthusiasts also contribute to the spread of persistent organic pollutants (POPs). These substances are usually released into the environment as unwanted by-products of industrial processes. Alongside innumerable other areas of application, for example in the automobile or electronics industries, POPs are also used in the outdoor industry, e.g. in dyeing processes or to make equipment dirt- or water-repellent. From clothing and shoes, to ski wax and sleeping bags, chemical substances are utilised everywhere in production. The cold conditions of high-altitude Alpine areas mean that the pollutants accumulate in such places in particular and stay there for a very long time.

The international research project Monarpop, conducted at 40 locations in the Alps on behalf of the Austrian Office for Environment Protection, has demonstrated the existence of POPs in the air, in the water cycle (in snow) and in the biomass (in pine needles). A time series is now available for the first

time. The values recorded are comparable to those in cities: according to the researchers, the Alps act as a natural barrier for the air masses that carry pollutants, thus allowing these to accumulate.

In the public view, the main concern up until now has been the problem of particulates in the Alpine valleys and along major transit axes. It is thus particularly worrying that persistent organic pollutants accumulate not just in the air, but also in biological matter. That means they are present in our food and our drinking water, and can in this way enter our bodies. They are demonstrably a danger to health, are carcinogenic and hormonally active, and are linked to damage to the immune and fertility systems. As a preventive measure, therefore, their use is regulated by the UN's "Stockholm Convention". The study however shows that the agreements are insufficient to deal with the problem.

At least those practising mountain sports can help in the fight against the spread of such pollutants: according to Greenpeace some outdoor wear producers are using fluorine-free recycled membranes made of polyester as well as fluorine-free impregnations, with quality seals to help consumers decide.

Sources and further information:

[www.umweltbundesamt.at/aktuell/presse/lastnews/news2016/news\\_160322/](http://www.umweltbundesamt.at/aktuell/presse/lastnews/news2016/news_160322/) (de),

[www.umweltbundesamt.at/fileadmin/site/publikationen/REP0546.pdf](http://www.umweltbundesamt.at/fileadmin/site/publikationen/REP0546.pdf) (de),

[www.greenpeace.de/sites/www.greenpeace.de/files/publications/s01761\\_greenpeace\\_chemie\\_natur\\_08092015\\_1.pdf](http://www.greenpeace.de/sites/www.greenpeace.de/files/publications/s01761_greenpeace_chemie_natur_08092015_1.pdf) (de), <http://chm.pops.int/TheConvention/Overview/tabid/3351/Default.aspx>,

<https://utopia.de/0/magazin/die-wichtigsten-siegel-fuer-kleidung-ohne-gift> (de)

## Award-winning tourism



**Tourism too has its success stories. Innovative projects in the Alps are drawing attention. A national park in Germany now shows that sustainable tourism can also bring economic benefits.**

© CIPRA Switzerland

Swiss parks are renowned worldwide for their best practice and sustainability as regards tourism. At the beginning of April 2016, the parks network was voted as one of the top three from a total of 160 candidates in the "Destination" category at the international "Tourism for Tomorrow Awards".

"Environmentally-friendly access via public transport, the marketing of regional park products and the national co-operation with PostAuto or Coop all obviously impressed the experts", enthuses Tina Müller, tourism manager for the Swiss parks network.

CIPRA Switzerland has now for the first time awarded another prize for sustainability in tourism at the national level. Of the various submissions, two Swiss projects collected the prize money of 5,000 francs: "100% Valposchiavo" advocates enhancing the status of regional agricultural produce in the

tourist offering and the tourism marketing of the Valposchiavo area. The second prize went to the “Café Greina” for its valuable contribution to regional value creation. The Pamirlink association in the Tajik Pamir region received the solidarity prize, which goes to projects from the global south and is worth 2,000 francs.

Sustainable tourism is also a major topic in Germany. The Federal Office for Nature Conservation has thus issued two guides: the first focuses on how tourist destinations can make themselves more sustainable and thereby consider the relevant ecological, economic and social aspects; while the second, entitled “*Faszination Natur erlebbar machen*”, makes recommendations for the development of interesting offers for experiencing nature.

A current case study on the regional economic effects of tourism by the University of Würzburg in Germany also presents the regional economic effects of the Berchtesgaden national park. The Bavarian Minister of State Ulrike Scharf is delighted that the national park secures up to 600 jobs and praises it as an economic success model.

Sources and further information: [www.wttc.org/tourism-for-tomorrow-awards/winners-and-finalists-2016/](http://www.wttc.org/tourism-for-tomorrow-awards/winners-and-finalists-2016/) (en), [www.cipra.org/de/cipra/schweiz](http://www.cipra.org/de/cipra/schweiz) (de), [www.bmub.bund.de/N52889](http://www.bmub.bund.de/N52889) (de), [www.bmub.bund.de/N52890](http://www.bmub.bund.de/N52890) (de), [www.nationalpark-berchtesgaden.bayern.de/medien/pressemitteilungen/2016/index.htm](http://www.nationalpark-berchtesgaden.bayern.de/medien/pressemitteilungen/2016/index.htm) (de)

## Victory and defeat for new protected areas



**New protected areas are valuable for biodiversity, with many also intended to boost the local economy. There are nevertheless frequent reservations.**

© berggeist007 / pixelio.de

Since the beginning of 2016 the landscape around Monte Viso, the symbolic mountain of the Cottian Alps in Italy, has been a nature park. This new facet of the Alpine-wide network of protected areas should have been bigger but, fearing the imposition of limitations, some municipalities in the Pellice valley did not wish to join the park.

The promoters of the “Chiemsee-Chiemgau Alps” nature park project were less successful. Rejected by twelve of the original 31 municipalities that were part of the plan, the project must for the time being be considered a failure. “The nature park was intended to promote our region and strengthen our tourist profile”, says Marc Nitschke, mayor of Übersee (Germany) and chairman of the “Alliance in the Alps” network of municipalities, in support of the idea. But the fears of the agricultural sector in particular were too great. “We did not manage to make the opportunities clear to all the farming representatives or demonstrate that the nature park would not have meant limitations for them.”

The Adula national park project is aimed at creating a combination of nature and business in the heart of Switzerland. The draft charter is currently being revised. Highly diverse caveats have to be weighed up against each other, for example the desire for more freedom of movement for mountain enthusiasts, or fewer exceptions for particular user groups in order to foster nature development in the core zone. Meanwhile the go-ahead for the further development of another project, the “Espace Belledonne”, has now just come from Paris. An alliance of municipalities, businesses and associations wants to establish this regional nature park in the French Alps and is now set to draw up its charter.

Sources and further information: <http://www.parcomonviso.eu> (it), <http://www.parcodelpocn.it/cgi-bin/news/Cai%20Parco%20Monviso.pdf> (it), <http://www.chiemgau24.de/chiemgau/traunstein/naturpark-chiemsee-chiemgau-gescheitert-widerstand-landwirtschaft-gross-6190531.html> (de), <http://www.parcadula.ch> (de, it), <http://www.espacebelledonne.fr/-Projet-de-territoire-.html> (de)

## Strange but true...

Soft guitar music, gentle singing, then the camera zooms onto a green, undeveloped hillside.

A man’s voice says: “The works began towards the end of spring...” Then boom! The first explosion comes before the drums roll, while debris and earth fly through the air. The heavy artillery arrives: excavators and trucks carve access roads and routes for ski pistes out of the slope. Ditches are dug, pipes laid. Not a scene from a war zone, but rather the promotional video for the French skiing area “Les2Alpes3600”. A total of 555,000 cubic metres of earth have been removed for a new piste so that beginners can also manage the run down to the valley. As it happens, more than half of all accidents occur away from the pistes: on ski lifts, in hotels, in bars or in restaurants, as the Sunday Times recently calculated for British visitors. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVo2CW2l1mc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVo2CW2l1mc) (fr)

## Agenda

**Conference on Design and Communication for Eco-Social Transitions**, 02.05. - 07.05.2016, Bozen/It, Organisation: Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. [More...](#)

**Int. Conference: Embracing the Circular Economy: Pioneers Creating New Business Value**, 06.05.2016, Ljubljana/SI, Organisation: Circular Change. [More...](#)

**Joint Transnational Call on Researching and Advancing Climate Services Development**, 01.03. - 30.06.2016, online, Organisation: JPI Climate. [More...](#)

**Mountain Workshop 2016**, 09.06. - 10.06.2016, Bern/CH, Organisation: CH-AT Alliance. [More...](#)

**Youth at the Top 2016**, 12.07.-13.07.2016, different sites in the Alps, Organisation: ALPARC, Educ'alpes. [More...](#)