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Press release from CIPRA on the Alpine macro-region

A new solidarity between the Alpine arc and metropolitan areas

Various political actors in and around the Alps are emphasising a macro-regional strategy for the Alps. CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, is setting out its role prior to the forthcoming Alpine Conference of environment ministers from the Alpine Convention states, due to be held in Poschiavo, Switzerland in September 2012. CIPRA will take an active part in the process and has responded positively to the Alpine macro-region – provided there is a clear framework.

In recent years important networks have been built up through dedicated institutions such as ALPARC (Protected Areas), “Alliance in the Alps” (Communities), ISCAR (Scientific Committee for Alpine Research) and the “Alpine Town of the Year” association. Yet, on the whole, the Alpine Convention is inadequately implemented in the signatory states. CIPRA, as a critical observer and ambassador of protection and sustainable development in the Alps, as well as being at the origin of the Convention, is now asking the State Parties to take concrete measures, substantially reinforcing their financial input and significantly strengthening the actual implementation of the Convention on the ground.

The train for an Alpine macro-region has now left the station; none of the major participants wants to miss it (see box). But where is it ultimately heading, who decides how fast it is going, and what will the tickets cost? Numerous questions remain unanswered. CIPRA is now posing these questions: it sees a macro-regional strategy as an opportunity for the Alps to make all Europe aware of the issues facing its Alpine regions.

The Alpine Convention as a benchmark

The conversion of the Alpine Convention into an extended Alpine region, the Alpine macro-region, must now be strengthened. The values acquired by means of this unique international treaty must be applied as a minimum standard to the protection and sustainable development of an extended Alpine region. CIPRA furthermore regards as necessary the participation of the actors, organisations and institutions within the Alpine Convention area as strong partners in the development and implementation of a macro-regional strategy for the Alps. This message has been sent to the Alpine Convention Ministers who will be attending the XIIth Alpine Conference in the Swiss town of Poschiavo at the beginning of September.



In CIPRA's view, the essential topics for the sustainable development of the Alpine region and for a macro-regional strategy are energy production and distribution; traffic transiting the Alps and sustainable transport; the sustainable use of natural resources such as water and biodiversity; eco-oriented, sustainable tourism; and issues affecting younger and older people.

A new balance of power?

Creative solutions for future life in the communities and cities of the Alps will require a new awareness that the Alps and the metropolitan areas bordering these areas are both closely involved in these vital topics. A new solidarity is needed between the actors in the Alpine arc and the metropolitan areas in the regions surrounding the Alps. CIPRA will act to promote this new solidarity.

In addition, the involvement of influential cities such as Munich, Vienna, Ljubljana, Milan, Lyon and Zurich is a major challenge and might lead to a shift in the balance of power or in decision-making processes. At all events, the conclusions from the forthcoming EU evaluation of the two existing macro-regional strategies for the Baltic Sea and the Danube area should be included.

This release and print-ready photographs are available for downloading from www.cipra.org/en/press/press-releases

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Several initiatives for the strategy of the Alpine macro-region

The macro-regional approach is based on an EU proposal. The aim is to assist large areas without firm political and administrative borders to address their common challenges and opportunities where this is not possible through conventional initiatives. Additional institutional, financial and legal burdens are to be avoided: use is instead to be made of the existing instruments, possibilities for financing and cooperation (e.g. European environmental or coherence policies), and national and international regulations. This will require the realisation of a work programme containing the main points of focus, measures to be taken and flagship projects.

Three initiatives were launched in the Alpine countries, by means of the Alpine Convention, the Alpine Space Programme and the governments of certain regions whose territory lies in part or in whole within the Alps, in order to foster the debate regarding a possible macro-regional strategy in the Alpine area. The three initiatives intend, from their specific perspectives, to contribute to this debate: they undertake to coordinate their activities in order to exploit the synergies arising from the various starting points and mandates.

CIPRA, a diverse and multifaceted organisation

CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, is a non-governmental umbrella organisation with national representatives in all the Alpine countries, representing more than 100 associations and organisations from seven Alpine states. CIPRA works towards achieving sustainable development in the Alps; it also strives to preserve the natural and cultural heritage, maintain regional diversity, and bring about solutions to cross-border problems in the Alpine region. www.cipra.org