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INTERREG IIIB promotes transnational co-operation for sustainable spatial development

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Co-operation on and along the Danube



Europe everywhere

The INTERREG IIIB
COMMUNITY and its projects

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Europe is everywhere

People involved in European policies know how difficult it is to explain these policies to the average citizen and make their results visible to the public. This has been especially true for the transnational Community Initiative INTERREG IIIB, which – unlike its cross-border sister INTERREG IIIA – is struggling with great administrative complexity as well as the peculiar jargon of spatial planning, characterised by a high degree of abstraction and vagueness.

A closer look at concrete projects financed under INTERREG IIIB nevertheless reveals that these programmes permit a concrete “backdoor” approach to what spatial and/or territorial policies are (or could be) about in their transnational and European dimension and how they are linked in a very practical way to everyday life of European citizens: innovative collective taxis for rural areas, gentle tourism concepts for protected Alpine areas, transport planning across Central Europe, cross-border disaster control or satellite navigation for the ships travelling on the Danube – all these initiatives have one aspect in common: they have a clear spatial/territorial dimension, and they address challenges that either could not be tackled by one player alone, without the partnership with neighbours, or would in fact never have been tackled at all without EU support.

This brochure attempts to show how the practical dimension of the highly abstract programmes of transnational territorial co-operation could be explained to ordinary European citizens. The reports described in this brochure visualise the immense variety of projects and activities implemented with Austrian participation through the European programme INTERREG IIIB. These are stories about the respectful management of our natural heritage and the intelligent handling of mobility needs, about the development of new objectives for sustainable tourism and innovations for the benefit of prospering rural regions.

Above all, these are stories about the people who develop, manage and support the projects. Without them and their commitment, the adventure embodied by a programme implementing hundreds of individual initiatives between North Cape and Malta would be simply impossible. One example are the inhabitants of the small Alpine community of Werfenweng, whose spirit and inventiveness have transformed their village into a paragon of sustainable tourism and environmental consciousness in the Alps. Another example concerns the spatial planners from Yugoslavia’s successor states concerned with economic impulses through infrastructure development in an EU expanding to the south-west. And what about the researchers painstakingly investigating the interactions of weather, environmental pollution and disaster risks in the Alps?

They all are members of the even much larger INTERREG IIIB community that, without much public ado but all the more tenaciously and imaginatively, is developing a grassroots Europe that cancels borders and produces concrete results we all can feel in our everyday lives.

I now invite you to get an overview of the great variety of the projects and activities implemented. And if this brochure has succeeded in whetting your curiosity: the Alpine Space and CADSES Programmes are well documented on the websites www.alpinespace.org and www.cadses.net as well as on the individual project homepages.

I wish you an entertaining and stimulating read!

*Heidrun Silhavy,
State Secretary in the Federal Chancellery, Austria*

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Intelligence in motion

Gentle mobility in the Alps

No matter whether designed for small holiday villages or big transit routes, the only mobility concepts that can save the Alpine region from a lethal collapse of the transport system are those based on environmental sustainability and cross-border co-operation.

The llamas of Werfenweng: a symbol of sustainable mobility

Don't worry, Dandy and Valentino are not likely to spit at you, although they might even have a point when carrying the heavy backpacks many Alpine hikers prefer not to lug around themselves. You see, that's the thing about llamas: first of all, they spit only when they feel really, really irritated – and two small rucksacks won't do the trick, as llamas can easily carry up to 30 kilograms. Secondly, llamas spit mainly at each other to clarify hierarchies or keep importunate conspecifics at bay.

But Dandy and Valentino are on the best of terms. Holidaymakers in the Salzburg village of Werfenweng who prefer a relaxed approach to their vacation are bound to enjoy llama trekking as the ideal means to facilitate their ascent to the Hochthron peak of the Tennengebirge range.

Anyway, llamas are incredibly well in tune with Werfenweng – after all, these beasts of burden are perfect specimens of



environmentally friendly, “sustainable” (*the* current buzzword) mobility in the mountains. Frugal to the max, they thrive on grass, shrubs and lichens and can climb the steepest tracks (without spitting, obviously). For the Incas, llamas were an omnipresent and practical means of transport that in fact made it unnecessary for that Indio civilisation to invent the wheel. While the community of Werfenweng has not yet decided to abolish wheels, it has definitely followed far in the footsteps

of the Incas to achieve sustainable mobility.

One idea was to excel as a model of gentle and sustainable tourism at an international level – in fact, lovers of car-free and stress-free holidays are already crashing the hotels of Werfenweng, so to speak. But car-free does not mean immobile: guests arriving at the railway station of Werfen are taken to Werfenweng, which is situated higher up, by “Elois”, a free



Gentle mobility is
also lots of fun

Communities embracing a sustainable model of tourism may justly call themselves “Alpine pearls”.

shuttle bus. At their destination, they will not only encounter an extraordinarily attractive holiday village but also what probably is the cutest fleet of electrically powered vehicles in the Alps. Depending on the guests' mood, the range includes “Bigas” inspired by Roman chariots, racy e-scooters, more sedate e-bikes, smart “Arrows” resembling dune buggies or “village velos”, which are bike rickshaws with an additional electromotor. Riding one of these vehicles or simply walking, using a traditional bike or horse-driven cart, guests will soon realise that cars are superfluous in this “Alpine pearl”, especially when the hotel receptionist hands over a SAMO key, their entrance ticket to all this mostly free-of-charge gentle mobility that is also lots of fun.

But Werfenweng is not the only “Alpine pearl” around. On the contrary: holiday villages embracing a sustainable model of tourism and meeting strict quality criteria are certified with

this title by an international committee. The participating communities must offer a complete service package ensuring maximum comfort for guests and an attractive range of soft mobility options, promote local culture and cuisine instead of sushi bars and yodelling contests at the disco and unconditionally and actively support environmental consciousness. These objectives are not only very useful to advance the idea of reducing motorised traffic in the Alps but also translate into a successful marketing concept for (at present) 17 Alpine holiday communities in Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany and Austria. Environmental consciousness thus blends perfectly with economic interests in developing as a holiday destination, Peter Brandauer, the mayor of Werfenweng, emphasises. – In this way, annual overnight stays in the village have increased from 165,000 in 1998 to 212,000 today, all due to the repositioning as a gentle-mobility holiday destination.

“The EU project first of all singles us out in the tourism market; secondly, this means that the funds and strategic partnerships available to us have multiplied; thirdly, this model helps us to better promote the concerns of sustainable mobility in tourism through co-operation.”

*Peter Brandauer,
mayor of Werfenweng*





This string of pearls is united by the joint INTERREG IIIB project **Alps Mobility II – Alpine Pearls**, in whose context the European Union massively promotes car-free Alpine holidays. The objective is to offer a perfect range of tourist services in keeping with jointly established criteria as well as to promote networking, the exchange of experience, the creation of an umbrella organisation and the strengthening of a common brand. Peter Brandauer comments, “We have been implementing the concept of car-free tourism since the mid-1990s. However, the EU project and our co-operation with communities in five countries pursuing the same goals first of all single us out in the tourism market; secondly, this means that the funds and strategic partnerships available to us have multiplied; thirdly, this model helps us to better promote the concerns of sustainable mobility in tourism through co-operation.”

HEALTHY MOBILITY FOR THE YOUNG GENERATION

Yet peeping from the oyster shell of the Tennengebirge range as an “Alpine pearl” is only one project this environmental model community receives EU support for. The inhabitants of Werfenweng equally want to inculcate awareness of the importance of low-impact mobility in their youngest citizens.

Put differently, adults are discovering that young people who frequently ride a bike, walk to school or use public transport will develop a different sort of mobility behaviour than the older generation.

For this reason, **Alpine Awareness** is a fitting name for an Alpine-wide initiative to promote sustainable mobility awareness especially (but not exclusively) tailored to reach young people. Action days and contests, analyses of the importance of sustainable mobility for youngsters and related learning tools, international youth encounters, educating young people to become environmentally conscious “mobility assistants”, additional modules for driving school curricula, campaigns promoting inexpensive public transport tickets or master classes on “bike planning” are indicative of the great variety of the package of measures undertaken by twelve partner communities and institutions in five countries.

It is hardly surprising that the inhabitants of Werfenweng have adhered to this INTERREG project and that Dandy and Valentino are playing their roles perfectly, too. After a meeting of young people from the Alpine tourism regions South Tyrol/Alto Adige, Belluno and Pongau in December 2005, which was designed to confront them with the issue of Alpine mobility in a playful but in-depth manner, the two animals were

If young people learn that the psychological and cultural significance of cars in our society may be one thing while the actually fastest and most environmentally friendly forms of mobility may be something else completely, they will tend to opt for gentle mobility as adults as well.

the stars of a final nocturnal hiking and sledding excursion. However, the event focused mainly on presentations of Alpine Awareness activities in the partner regions. One such initiative was an Internet survey on public mobility-related behaviour conducted by young people from Belluno in Italy; another concerned the mobility assistance model in South Tyrol/Alto Adige, where young people help and counsel their coevals. The youngsters of Werfenweng carried out a survey on their own mobility-related behaviour. The result was unsurprising: 70 percent of trips are made by public transport; more than ten percent on foot or by bike; and less than 20 percent, by car. The direct approach of young people to this problem, with their personal views incorporated, is useful: even if their current mobility options are limited, they will be road users of the future, free to choose between cars and alternative means of transport. But if young people learn that the psychological and cultural significance of cars in our society may be one thing while the actually fastest and most environmentally friendly forms of mobility may be something else completely, they will tend to opt for gentle mobility as adults as well. For mayor Peter Brandauer, Alpine Awareness is an ideal complement to the community's gentle tourism concept implemented within the scope of Alps Mobility II: after all, it is of little use convincing holiday guests of sustainable mobility if the local population does not embrace the same goal.

FACING THE TRAFFIC JUGGERNAUT TOGETHER

Those who have made the trek from the Ellmau mountain pastures to the Werfen lodge with the capable assistance of Dandy and Valentino (without being spat at, obviously) can

enjoy a marvellous view of the Salzach valley and, towards the south, of the 3,000-metre-plus Hohe Tauern peaks from an altitude of 1,969 metres. Yet when the weather is fine, visitors will also descry a narrow concrete band cutting through the landscape deep down below to remind them that the Alpine pearl Werfenweng is not that far removed from one of the most trafficked transit routes through the Alps. While the Tauern motorway may not attract the massive traffic hordes that beset the Brenner pass, the Pongau region does become an inferno of motorised mobility when crowds of holidaymakers begin their annual migration from north to south and back. The narrow Alpine valleys pose a tough challenge for environmentalists and traffic planners in their fight against air pollution and pollutant emission.

If for example an inversion situation occurs, leading to smog and high-fog accumulating in the valleys for days on end, all limit values for environmentally (and humanly) acceptable volumes of lorry traffic or pollutant emission become worthless theory. To cite just one example: along the Brenner route, an unfavourable winter weather situation in the lower Inn valley may cause a given emission level to result in air pollution loads that are several times as high as, say, in Vienna. Environmental pollution in Alpine valleys is a small-scale phenomenon influenced by meteorological factors that necessitate much more complex models that differ radically from those normally used in flat country to analyse the interactions between pollutant and noise emissions, traffic density, topography, meteorology and the consequences for human health.

“The INTERREG project ALPNAP enables us to introduce the latest scientific findings into everyday traffic planning and to disseminate relevant knowledge among both the population at large and decision-makers.”

Petra Seibert,

Institute of Meteorology, University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences Vienna



To be able take more efficient and targeted measures to contain transit traffic, the EU-funded project **ALPNAP** (Alpine Noise and Air Pollution) tests methods for capturing small-scale environmental effects in interdisciplinary fashion. The objective of the project team, which in addition to the Brenner route is also looking into the Fréjus route between Turin and Chambéry and is composed of eleven research facilities in four countries, is ultimately a highly political one, since the goal lies in supporting the decision-making and arguments of local and regional authorities and politicians with internationally fine-tuned scientific methods. – So don't be too surprised by hot-air balloons floating for hours above the

Tyrolean town of Schwaz: they are just a sign of ALPNAP experts at work, precisely measuring local noise and pollutant levels from the air.

MONITRAF begins where ALPNAP ends. While the research project on environmental pollution in Alpine valleys is focused on creating a scientific basis, the partners of the sister project on the monitoring of road traffic-related effects and common measures go one step further: this network of regions particularly affected by transit traffic is jointly developing concrete measures to improve the quality of life along main traffic axes such as the Brenner, St. Gotthard, Mont-Blanc and Fréjus. But here, too, in-depth situation analysis is a prime objective (in fact, no joint, comparative analysis has ever been undertaken before): what frame conditions of traffic policy are truly decisive for the traffic volume? Is it possible to quantify, in addition to the negative consequences for the environment and quality of life, the impact on economic locations, tourism and social life as well?

This information – always with a view to regional specifics, peculiarities and available solution potentials – is a prerequisite for mutual trust and Alpine-wide, fine-tuned strategies to assuage the problem. When common measures and strategies will be developed in the second phase of this project launched in 2005, a key aspect will lie in their conjoint orientation, so that it will be possible, right from the outset, to avoid negative effects of one measure taken along one route on another, Ekkehard Allinger-Csollich, the competent project co-ordinator of the provincial government of Tyrol, maintains. By the way – the leeway for innovative solutions is wider than many media reports painting the Alps as an irredeemable transit hell indicate: thus an “Alpine transit exchange” might be established to auction limited permits of passage (equalling environmental pollution loads) for each corridor, similar to CO₂ emission trading for climate protection.

THE INTELLIGENT SHIFT OF FREIGHT TRANSPORT FROM ROAD TO RAIL

It is a well-known fact that trains are a proven antidote to the imminent collapse of traffic structures and the environment in the Alps. Looking down from the Werfen lodge towards the Salzach valley, it is easy to discern the tracks of the Tauern railway line built over a century ago; upgraded to meet modern standards, it has been singled out for a more important role in the future. Specifically, traffic planners are hoping for an easing of the throughput on the heavily trafficked Brenner and St. Gotthard passes, irrespective of the benefits offered by the latter's base tunnel. After all, one of the biggest problems of trans-Alpine transit flows is the

If railway traffic flows were distributed across more lines than they are today, the big transit routes would be free for railway freight traffic, creating greater overall capacity within the existing network.

concentration on a just a few bottlenecks that have to absorb the lion's share of traffic. If traffic flows such as that from South-western Germany to Northern Italy were more decentralised than they are today, thus attracting more passengers to the Tauern railway line, the big transit routes would be free for railway freight traffic, creating greater overall capacity within the existing network. The project **AlpFRail** (Alpine Freight Railway) unites German, Italian and Austrian partners with the aim of rethinking the railway system as a true network.

A detailed analysis of the travelling times and technology of the Tauern railway has shown that this line disposes of abundant free capacities for additional transport services. It would thus be easily possible to shift another 5,000 lorries per month to this line. Experts of the Logistik-Kompetenz-Zentrum in Prien on Chiemsee in Bavaria have technically optimised trains and identified nine free layouts. In the meantime, a few forwarding companies as well as the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) have realised that this route offers a true alternative. As per February 2005, ÖBB launched a truck-on-train initiative from Trieste to Salzburg and thus is annually shifting 35,000 lorries from road to rail. Private railway operators, too, are already considering the technical requirements and necessary line concessions to join in.

The objectives of this Alpine freight initiative include not only the optimisation of individual lines but also the identification of new, marketable freight traffic links. Since autumn 2005, new trucks-on-train and container trains are connecting the metropolitan areas of Stuttgart and Milan, a direct, combined cargo link that formerly did not exist at all although more than half of the freight volume between Germany and Italy involves the northern provinces of Lombardy and Veneto and despite the fact that Genoa is one of the key export harbours for the economy of Southern Germany. The new service permitted a significant increase of the rail transport share of freight traffic (formerly only twelve percent!) between

Stuttgart, Ulm and Augsburg on the one hand and Milan, Mantua and Genoa on the other hand. As in the case of the Tauern line, the project partners were not interested in boosting capacities by means of costly, possibly environmentally hazardous infrastructure upgrades but rather in the smart use of the existing network. “AlpFRail networks the existing infrastructure intelligently and offers attractive one-stop-shipping services”, Julian Osswald, managing director of the Regional Association Danube-Iller, is convinced. “This wins over customers for trans-Alpine freight transport by rail and at the same time creates vital impulses for container stations and freight transport centres in our region.”

LLAMAS INSTEAD OF HELICOPTERS

Of course, Dandy and Valentino are not co-financed by the European Union – neither as touring companions nor as symbols of sustainable eco-tourism. Originally (and thus

long before Austria’s EU accession), the two animals were to serve a quite un-touristy purpose: the Werfen lodge is situated at 2,000 metres above sea level and does not have its own access road; all necessities were regularly delivered by helicopter. To avoid having to lease these costly and environmentally dubious means of transport every few months, Gerhard Hafner, who operates the lodge, hit upon the llamas – a typical example of the village’s ecological approach. It was only a matter of time until the two highland denizens began to sideline as porters between the mountain pastures of Ellmau and Werfen lodge – pure intelligence in motion.



INTERREG IIB projects promoting gentle mobility in the Alps

Projects mentioned in the text:

→ **ALPS MOBILITY II/**

Alpine Pearls

Network of Alpine holiday destinations dedicated to nature-compatible mobility:
www.alpsmobility.net

→ **Alpine Awareness**

Motivating the population of the Alpine space to embrace sustainable mobility: www.alpineawareness.net

→ **ALPNAP**

New methods and know-how for the monitoring and evaluation of air pollution and noise along transit routes:
www.alpnep.org

→ **MONITRAF**

Strengthening co-operation between the regions most affected by trans-Alpine traffic to improve their quality of life: www.monitraf.org

→ **AlpFrail**

Innovative concepts to shift trans-Alpine goods traffic from road to rail: www.alpfrail.com

Other projects:

→ **Mobilalp**

Innovative and sustainable mobility options and services for road users at the local and regional levels:
www.mobilalp.com

→ **ViaNova**

Optimisation of the general perception and motivation as well as of urban transport infrastructure for the benefit of healthy and sustainable structures: www.eu-vianova.net



INTERREG IIIB 2000 - 2006

INTERREG was established already in the early 1990s with the intention of supporting co-operation across national borders. As a Community Initiative, INTERREG III in the EU funding period from 2000 to 2006 was aimed at strengthening economic and social cohesion as well as at promoting regionally balanced development in all European countries. The IIIB strand refers to transnational co-operation; these programmes promote the common work of national, regional and local actors in multinational co-operation spaces.

In the funding period drawing to a close, Austria participated in two co-operation areas: the Alpine Space programme and the programme for the entire Central and South-Eastern European space between Baltic and Aegean – CADSES (Central European, Adriatic, Danubian and South-Eastern European Space). In all, Austria disposed of Euro 30 million from the EU Structural Funds for both pro-

grammes. This was complemented by national co-financing, which amounts to at least 50 percent of project funding. INTERREG IIIB is implemented in the context of project partnerships that develop around specific objectives and are composed of partners from at least three countries, which is why project names are in English. The common development of measures and the exchange of methods and information are focal elements of most projects.

In the upcoming funding period from 2007 to 2013, the Community Initiative INTERREG is given additional weight and, through the new Objective 3 “Territorial Co-operation”, will become a key funding instrument of European regional policy. With a total amount of Euro 7.9 billion, the funds available for future cross-border co-operation ventures are also much more substantial than in the past (see page 55).

The Alpine Space programme

The Alpine space is one of the culturally, socially and economically most diverse and at the same time one of the ecologically most sensitive European regions. For this reason, the INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space programme is primarily aimed at sustainable development, which is to be strengthened through cross-border measures. The activities supported under INTERREG IIIB inter alia include environmentally friendly yet efficient transport and communication solutions, measures to safeguard the natural and cultural heritage as well as protection from natural hazards.

Projects pursuing these objectives must develop their activities in keeping with one of the “priorities” of the Alpine Space programme:

- **Priority 1:** Spatial development and competitiveness (25 projects)
- **Priority 2:** Development of sustainable transport systems (9 projects)
- **Priority 3:** Environment and risk prevention (24 projects)

For more information: www.alpinespace.at, www.alpinespace.org

The CADSES programme

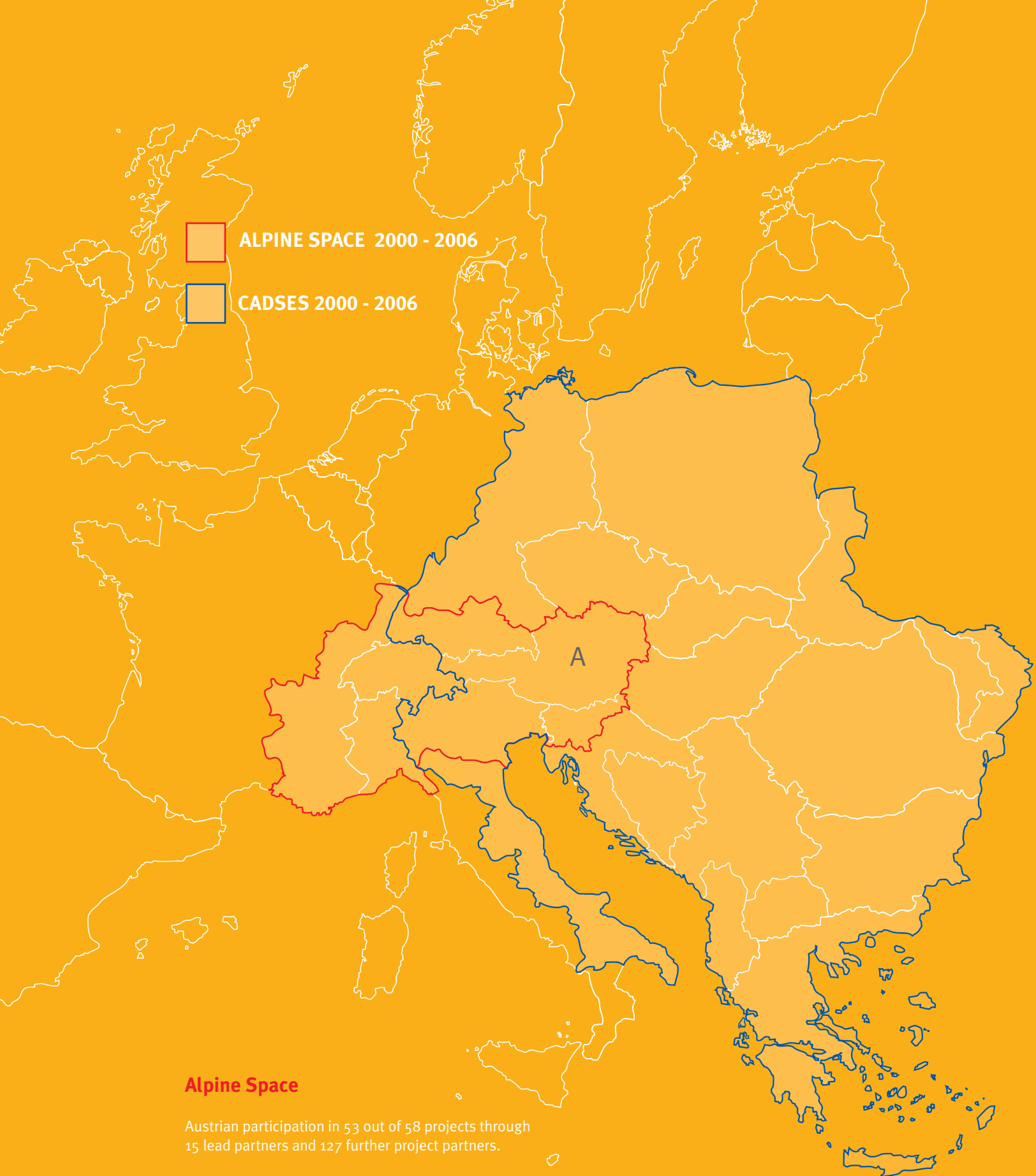
Out of a total of 13 co-operation areas under INTERREG IIIB, CADSES is by far the biggest and most complex. In fact, this area uniting old EU Member States, states of the 2004 and 2007 enlargement rounds as well as states with candidate, accession and neighbourhood status comprises not fewer than eighteen countries with approx. 200 million inhabitants.

CADSES projects are aimed at measures in the following priority areas:

- **Priority 1:** Promoting spatial development approaches and actions for social and economic cohesion (51 projects)
- **Priority 2:** Efficient and sustainable transport systems and access to the information society (25 projects)
- **Priority 3:** Promotion and management of landscape, natural and cultural heritage (26 projects)
- **Priority 4:** Environmental protection, resource management and risk prevention (32 projects)

For more information: www.cadses.at, www.cadses.net





Alpine Space

Austrian participation in 53 out of 58 projects through 15 lead partners and 127 further project partners.

CADSES

Austrian participation in 71 out of 134 projects through 23 lead partners and 147 further project partners.

2

Living on the data highway

Innovations for rural areas

Broadband Internet, telecommunications parks and innovation managers – peripheral rural areas are fast losing their antiquated image. INTERREG creates key impulses towards this goal.

St. Veit in Deferegggen,
Eastern Tyrol





Two years ago, the last grocer's closed down in St. Veit in the Deferegggen valley. The villagers shop in the nearby skiing resort St. Jakob or make a stopover at one of the big supermarkets on the periphery of Lienz when they return from work. No public transport is available for these trips. There are buses, but they are mainly used to drive children from and to school. The post-office, too, fell victim to the big 2003 closedown. This development was particularly tough on the parish priest's 65-year-old cook. She belongs to that part of the population who have no car and are restricted in their mobility. Are these the often-invoked joys of living in the country? What about

the idyllic Alps with their fresh air and unspoilt nature? Aren't they sufficient compensation for mobility, good supply with basic necessities, social meeting-points and an adequate workplace? Well, there is hope. But first the bad news: St. Veit in Eastern Tyrol is not alone to suffer this fate. Since the 1970s, the number of mom-and-pop stores in Austria's communities has decreased by two thirds. And only in the past six years, 120 police stations, 50 district courts and over 60 elementary schools were closed down in Austria. In addition, approx. 1,000 post-offices – nearly one in two – closed their doors to customers as well.

Peripheral rural areas are living through a period of enormous pressure. Their strong dependence on individual industries, such as agriculture, trade or tourism, offers local residents only very limited career opportunities. Young, better-skilled inhabitants often find no suitable job at home and thus leave the region. This exodus and the disproportionate number of elderly citizens duly lead to a further dismantling of infrastructure and services. Schools are closed down, childcare facilities are not provided at all, post buses and other means of public transport are discontinued. This development cuts the vital nerve of many rural communities and triggers a vicious cycle that is difficult to stop. The infrastructure cutbacks mainly hit peripheral rural communities with fewer than 1,000 inhabitants or, in concrete figures, one in four inhabitants of rural areas.

But – and that is the good news – the rural population is unwilling to just stand by and watch this development. It seems that problem pressures and a few impulses provided by the European Union have released a potential of creativity and spurred communities, citizens and enterprises to strive for top-class innovative achievements.

The INTERREG project **PUSEMOR** is aimed at finding new solutions to keep up public services in mountain regions. As a first step, the project partners from Austria, Italia, Germany, France, Slovenia and Switzerland selected roughly one dozen test areas to assess the needs of the rural population. Key

Problem pressures and a few impulses provided by the European Union have evidently released a potential of creativity and spurred communities, citizens and enterprises to strive for top-class innovative achievements.

issues included the citizens' satisfaction with mobility, health-care and childcare facilities, telecommunications services and the like. By summer 2007, pilot projects are to be developed on the basis of this survey and existing models to contribute towards improving the quality of life in mountain regions.

In the Austrian test regions in Eastern Tyrol (district of Lienz) and Carinthia (districts of Wolfsberg and Feldkirchen), public transport was identified as the biggest disadvantage. Thus interviewees claimed that was not too difficult for them to reach bus stops or railway stations but criticised service

New opportunities
through Internet
and the Web



intervals as insufficient – a problem that massively affects the everyday life of many locals if we bear in mind that they have to use the car for every shopping trip or visit to a doctor.

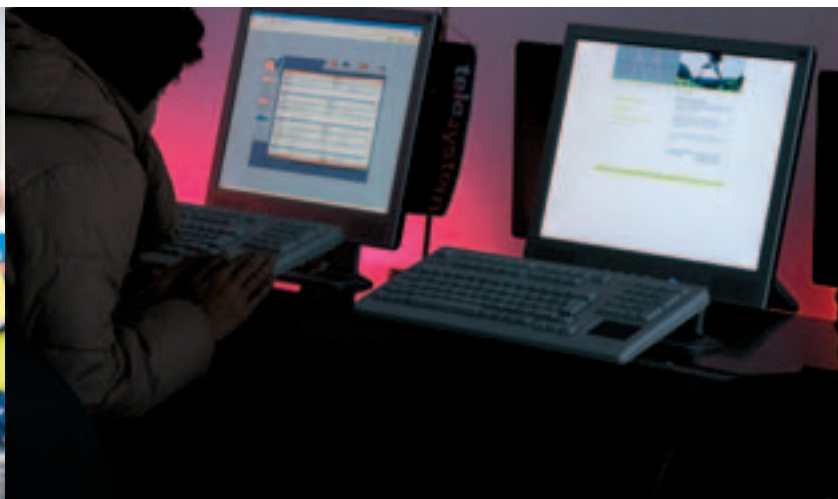
For this reason, a number of communities have already developed innovative approaches to flexible mobility solutions. For example, the Carinthian “Go-Mobil” is a means of transport that adapts to individual needs and enables locals to make flexible trips in the vicinity of their residential area. The tickets – called “Go” – are sold from a price of Euro 2.50 upwards. “No matter whether the destination is a doctor’s surgery, the municipal office, a shopping trip or the kindergarten – every other minute, a passenger gets aboard a Go-Mobil in one of the 25 partner communities”, the operator’s Website proclaims. Similar models to improve local mobility were likewise set up by other communities, such as the taxi-on-demand services “Bürgermobil” in the Eastern Tyrolean village of Virgen or “Ärztetaxi” in Carinthian Gnesau. The latter enables elderly persons living alone to see their doctor on a flexible basis. The drivers are citizens of the village of Gnesau, who volunteer for this service.

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

In the age of telecommunications, though, mobility no longer means having to move from A to B. Already a (broadband) Internet connection increases mobility and opens up formerly

unthinkable possibilities, even in the most remote valley. This technology eliminates distances and thus helps to overcome the topographical disadvantages of mountain regions. The broadband initiative of the Federal Province of Tyrol wants to connect structurally disadvantaged and remote areas to an efficient Internet infrastructure. Soon, the digital divide between city and countryside could become a thing of the past. The PUSEMOR project partners in Eastern Tyrol, too, focus on the further use of this technology. Three pilot projects are to be implemented by mid-2007 to lead an “Internet push” for Eastern Tyrolean communities. In addition to the development of a common Internet platform for three villages St. Veit in the Deferegggen valley, a Web portal for the marketing and sale of regional foodstuffs is planned. Moreover, the project managers intend to fundamentally change the locals’ attitude towards the Internet. After all, some inhabitants of remote regions of Eastern Tyrol – mostly senior citizens – find access to PCs and the Internet still quite forbidding. While most of their grandchildren use the advantages of the Web as part of their everyday lives, many 60-year-plus citizens still regard the Internet as a faraway, strange world.

The know-how of the young generation is to serve as an “access key” to familiarise older citizens with new technologies. A pilot project puts young people in the role of trainers and counsellors on Internet-related questions and makes



One in four inhabitants
of rural areas is
affected by the
infrastructure
cutbacks.



The INTERREG project PUSEMOR unites partners from Italy, Germany, France, Slovenia, Switzerland and Austria in a common effort to find innovative solutions to improve the quality of life in mountain regions.

them contact points for the older generation to resolve PC problems. "Payment" is done with vouchers. "This creates a multi-generational approach", Friedrich Veider of the Eastern Tyrolean Regional Management delightedly emphasises a side effect of this initiative: "social innovation".

THE COMMUTING WORKPLACE

But let's return to St. Veit in the Deferegggen valley. The parish priest's cook is lucky – at least, she works where she lives. The majority of the working population of St. Veit is less fortunate, though: three out of four villagers are forced to commute to work. This entails disadvantages for everyone: dependence on the car, greater time input, incompatibility with childcare requirements and rising mobility-related costs are only some of the drawbacks. A possibility to cope with this problem is offered by more flexible job models. In keeping with the motto "let the workplace commute – not the people", the INTERREG project **alpiNETwork** zeroes in on e-work, i.e. work processes that are freed from the constraints of time and place by the new information and communication technologies. Project leader Johanna Bernhard of the Tyrolean Future Foundation identifies enormous possibilities for rural areas. "In peripheral regions, the new information and communication technologies allow both for the creation of new jobs and the preservation of existing ones. e-work means above all flexibility – for enterprises and for workers in rural areas."

The e-work model is already a well-established practice in a number of enterprises. 60 percent out of 85 companies from Tyrol, South Tyrol/Alto Adige, Trentino, Central Switzerland and Carinthia interviewed about e-work commented on the positive experience they had made with this flexible work model; most added that they want to step up their respective activities. Reasons for the use of e-work solutions mentioned by the enterprises included the acceleration of work processes, but also the fact that more flexible models were

requested or demanded by staff members and constitute an attractive option above all for highly skilled workers. However, Wolfgang Mayrhofer, the regional alpiNETwork project manager in Tyrol, has noticed a certain diffidence on the part of companies that so far have had no experience with e-work. These enterprises fear above all a loss of control, labour-law grey zones and higher costs. On an initiative of the alpiNETwork project, ten enterprises were motivated to introduce e-work models.

The executives and staff of the Tyrolean call and service centre Haiming ICA are convinced of the benefits of e-work. Ideas to develop ICA were already sampled in the late 1990s in Scotland. As in Tyrol, the intention in Scotland had been to create employment for the local population in decentralised regions. The size of the Austrian call centre and its work

"It's workplaces that commute – not people" describes the goal of the INTERREG project alpiNETwork, which is entirely dedicated to e-work.

volume certainly differ from the original model: for example, clients from the entire Anglo-American region can be served from Scotland, where the development of such service centres moreover received substantial support (also from the EU). Still, there was quite a lot to be learned, ICA managing director Elmar Frischmann maintains. One idea was to tap the pool of small and medium-sized enterprises as clients by rendering service packages – e.g. call rerouting – affordable and flexible. ICA has compiled its positive experience in a manual that is to offer valuable support for the development of further call centres. By the way, this publication was financed by alpiNETwork.

"The manual on the development of micro call centres funded by INTERREG enables us to relay valuable experience to other European regions and enterprises. As a result, many errors can be avoided, for example with respect to technological investments or order and contract estimates, thus providing concrete pointers from practitioners to practitioners."

*Elmar Frischmann,
managing director of ICA TelekommunikationsgmbH & CoKG*



MANAGING INNOVATION

In the future, KIM is to become *the* interface for regional innovation processes. But what is KIM? This “knowledge and information manager” is a model to optimise knowledge and information exchange within a region. KIMs are to identify the information required to motivate enterprises to engage in innovative projects and co-operation ventures. In close contact with companies, the public administration, research facilities and other important regional actors, KIM is to collect this information and offer enterprises appropriate counselling. For the time being, KIM is operated in four regions in Germany, Slovenia, Slovakia and Hungary on a test basis. The experience thus gathered will be incorporated into an international standardised concept including a training programme for further KIMs. KIM is part of the INTERREG project **Sm@rt Region**, an initiative to improve regional development by promoting networking and knowledge transfer. In addition to the “old hands” Austria, Germany and Italy, the project team also involves partners from the new EU Member States Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary as well as Croatia and Serbia. The project partners contribute highly diverse facets of experience, and existing local structures still vary strongly from country to country as well. For this reason, know-how transfer between the regions is a special concern.

It is certainly true that other regions stand to gain much by watching Styria. “Compared to other countries, we may safely

in the region. Erhard Kohlbacher has launched numerous innovative ideas and projects, above all in Western Styria, traditionally a mining region: for example, the Telepark Bärnbach project was set up on his initiative. “We were primarily interested in creating high-level jobs for the local population”, Kohlbacher adds. And his instincts were spot-on, too. Since the inauguration in 2001, the premises at Telepark Bärnbach are fully leased; the majority of its roughly one hundred workers also live in the community. But Telepark Bärnbach is not only a much-coveted company location – it is also involved in numerous projects as a partner or initiator. A current INTERREG project is called **InServNet**; this international network with partners from Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Germany and Austria aims at promoting innovation (perhaps not a great surprise, given its location). Yet InServNet not only advances innovation but also triggers new ventures: a case in point is Sm@rt Region, as this project was set up on an initiative of the InServNet partners.

“Partners from old and new EU Member States as well as candidate countries co-operate successfully within the INTERREG project Sm@rt Region. Everybody – but above all Croatia and Serbia – stands to benefit from their wealth of experience in the field of knowledge and information management. Without the project, we could not have initiated this form of know-how transfer.”

*Darko Ferčej,
Scientific Research Centre BISTRA, Ptuj, Slovenia*



The “knowledge and information manager” (KIM) is a model to optimise knowledge and information exchange within a region. It is being developed within the scope of the INTERREG project Sm@rt Region.

call ourselves a model of interface management between public institutions, interest groups and enterprises”, Erhard Kohlbacher, municipal service director of Bärnbach, is convinced. Right from the beginning, Styria took a leading role in cluster development. And the Innovations Region Styria, a network of impulse and innovation centres promoted by the Economic Chamber and various enterprises and established in summer 2006, is to further strengthen innovative companies

A NECESSARY IMAGE MODIFICATION

Broadband Internet, telecommunications parks and innovation managers have all but superseded the classic image of the romantic, maybe a bit backward, tradition-steeped country idyll. A few EU projects into the future, the first paragraph of this article might perhaps run like this: St. Veit in the Defer-eggen valley no longer needs a grocer’s. Just send an e-mail, and the goods will be delivered to your home. The working population of St. Veit no longer has to commute to work or school. Since Web-based jobs and learning models have been widely adopted, locals can decide flexibly on how to shape their everyday life. The Internet café has become the new meeting-point of the village. Even the parish priest’s cook is a frequent visitor.



INTERREG IIIB projects promoting competitiveness and innovation

Projects mentioned in the text:

- **PUSEMOR** Sustainable strategies and innovative solutions for improving the provision of sparsely populated mountain regions with public services: www.pusemor.net
- **alpiNETwork** Improving the availability of workplaces, in particular in remote Alpine zones, through the possibilities offered by information and communication technologies: www.alpinetwork.com
- **Sm@rt Region** Knowledge and information managers: networks for a joint Europe: www.smart-region.net
- **Inservnet** Promotion of services-sector enterprises as the backbone of regional innovation processes: www.inservnet.net

Other projects:

- **AlpCity** From the endogenous development of small Alpine towns to the efficient use of best practices: www.alpcity.it
- **ASPECT** Promoting economic growth in the Alpine region through support and promotion of eco-oriented SMEs: www.aspect-project.eu
- **CARA** Supporting SMEs in their access to professional counselling for research and innovation projects at a transnational level: www.cara.or.at
- **NENA** Promotion of sustainable development, competitiveness and innovation through co-operation between SMEs and clusters: www.nena.telesis.at
- **QUALIMA** Innovative supply with products and services to contrast the process of marginalisation and depopulation in the rural areas of the Alps: www.qualima.org
- **TECPARKNET** Co-operation of science and technology parks in a future-oriented region of the EU: www.tec-park.net

ENSURING SERVICES OF GENERAL INTEREST

The Working Community of the Alpine Countries (ARGE ALP) wants to address common problems and concerns of the Alpine region through cross-border co-operation and thus to promote mutual understanding between the inhabitants of the Alpine region. Chaired by Tyrol, ARGE ALP in 2004 adopted a resolution on services of general interest in the Alpine region. In view of the difficult conditions prevailing in mountain regions, this document demands the continued and independently organised provision of public services at the local and regional levels.

The concept of “services of general interest” comprises goods, services and activities of general interest provided by local and regional authorities for their citizens in the fields of public administration, education, health, culture, energy, transport and telecommunications.

For more information: www.argealp.org

At the EU level, too, services of general interest are a crucial concern. On 12 May 2004, the European Commission published a White Paper addressing this issue and containing proposals for joint action in this field.

For more information:
www.ec.europa.eu/services_general_interest/index_de.htm



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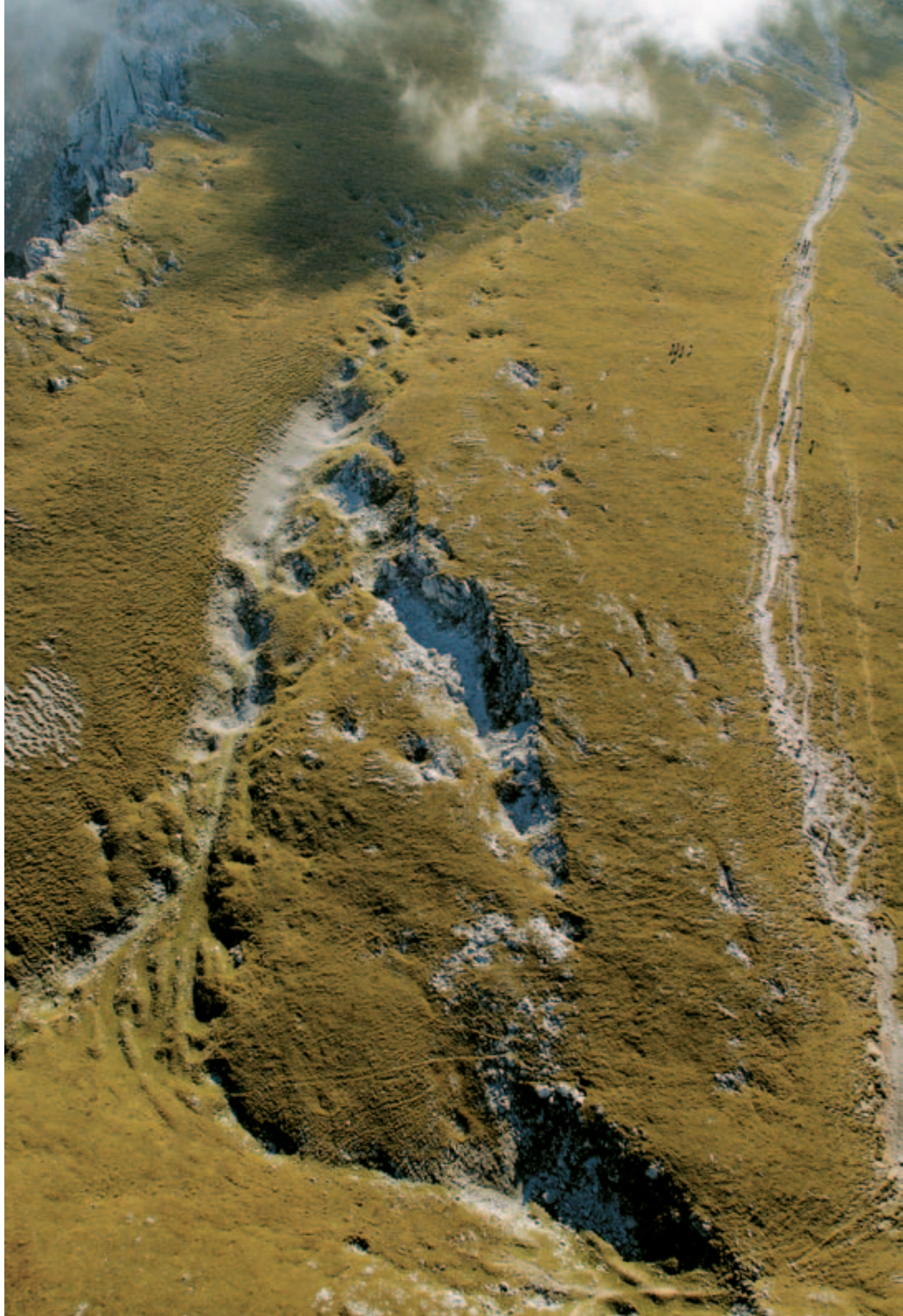
Beyond the world of DJ Ötzi

Après-ski in
the Tyrolean Alps

A therapy for Alpine tourism



Visitor monitoring
from the air,
Schneeberg,
Lower Austria



Agriculture, hiking and nature conservation are different ways of dealing with the Alps – diverse interests must be harmonised, and balanced concepts must be developed to create a benefit for the Alpine region.

Colourful dots are busily scurrying about a high plateau. Seen from 300 metres above, they resemble ants, lacking clearly defined direction. Looking closer, the small dots can be identified as groups of hikers moving across the Schneeberg massif while being observed and photographed from the air. But this is no secret surveillance mission – it's part of the visitor monitoring programme of **AlpNaTour**, a European project for sustainable Alpine tourism.

The Alps are considered the world's most intensively used mountain range.

Like these Schneeberg hikers, approx. 120 million tourists visit the Alps year after year, which makes this ecosystem one of Europe's most important leisure and recreation areas. Guests above all yearn to experience nature in an Alpine setting, and this constitutes the main asset of the Alps as an international tourist destination. Around 370 million overnight stays are annually recorded in the Alpine region. In the high season, famous sights, such as the Silvretta road or the Kitzsteinhorn peak in Kaprun, may attract 500,000 or more visitors. In addition to their function as places of holiday and leisure, though, the Alps are also workplace and home to roughly 13 million persons. The mass tourism of the past three decades has doubtless changed the face of the Alps in radical fashion: a formerly purely agricultural region has become a service centre. Many people work in the tourism industry. The Alps are in fact considered the world's most intensively used mountain range, which is bound to create sustainability problems.

A large part of Austria is taken up by mountains. Mountains pose particular challenges to spatial planning, which tries to balance the contrasting demands made on the Alpine ecosystem. Economic development must be brought in line with ecological acceptability. After all, this sensitive area is also home to more than 40,000 animal and plant species, some of which – such as a rare type of salamander – cannot be found anywhere else on our planet.

National and nature parks, biosphere reserves and nature conservation areas are to prevent the worst and ensure that

The Natura 2000 sites form a dense network of protected areas across Europe.

the Alps can survive into the future. The protection of natural habitats is also a concern of European environmental policy. Thus the European Union and its Member States have created a network of Natura 2000 sites representing areas of the highest protection value in Europe. Roughly 12 percent of the total EU territory embody such "sites of Community interest", as the official wording goes. This entails a number of obligations for the individual Member States, such as the development of management plans to balance the divergent demands made on these habitats. The plans are to regulate clearly what is allowed and what is prohibited. So far, Austria has proposed 214 sites for the Natura 2000 protected site network (as per December 2006). They feature established "beauty spots", such as the National Parks Hohe Tauern and Danube Floodplains, but smaller and less known locations including the protected area Ötztaler Alpen, the Salzach wetlands or the bird sanctuary Wachau-Jauerling were equally placed under Natura 2000 protection.

EXPLORING PROTECTED AREAS

Our Schneeberg hikers, too, are moving through a Natura 2000 site, although few are aware of that. For contrary to the "national park" protection category, whose tasks and objectives most citizens are familiar with, the term "Natura 2000 site" is almost unknown, as a survey conducted among tourists and holidaymakers in the German and Austrian Alps has shown.

But there's the rub with hikers: basically, they are welcome to the mountains and the pleasures they offer. Yet problems are bound to arise whenever they get too close for comfort to wild animals or endanger the Alpine flora. To get a better assessment of the evident tourism-related risks for protected zones, the INTERREG project AlpNaTour has developed risk analyses for selected test sites. "One focus was on measuring visitor flows in the test sites to understand the potential impairment for wild animals and the vegetation", project leader Ulrike Pröbstl, professor for landscape development at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences Vienna, ex-



The marketing of regional products ensures greater sustainability



plains. The behaviour of the Schneeberg hikers, too, came in for closer scrutiny. The extreme conditions prevailing in the area called for innovative research methods. For example, counting mats that record the number of visitors stepping on them cannot be used on sheer rock. Counting visitors via video is likewise impossible at these icy heights for lack of electricity. Ultimately, aerial flights proved an efficient, albeit costly, method. Aerial photographs offer a good overview of the number of hikers moving across an area at a given moment.

Management plans regulate the tourism use of Natura 2000 sites.

However, the amateur mountaineers were not only watched from the air: ski tourers were given a GPS device to put in their backpack before setting out and thus provided accurate data on their ascent and descent. The GPS-controlled graphs also told the scientists whether hikers remained on marked tracks or tended to take “shortcuts” through sensitive vegetation. The extent of the risk posed by visitors for certain species also depends on the animals’ or plants’ sensitivity. For example, bears are not disturbed by ski tourers during the winter months – they hibernate. Conversely, other species, such as grouse inhabiting high mountains areas, are easily startled by visitors, which endangers their health specifically towards the end of the winter season, the expert comments.

As one outcome of AlpNaTour, the partner regions Bavaria and Lower Austria have now presented management plans to govern the use of Natura 2000 sites for tourism. The project partners will moreover publish the results in a book and thus render them accessible to all persons concerned with aspects of tourism in protected zones. A European guide on this issue is likewise in the works. Motivated by the excellent response to AlpNaTour, the project team around Ulrike Pröbstl is already developing further ideas. A research focus of coming years will thus be on ways and means to use Natura 2000 sites more intensively for tourism marketing.

“I am particularly delighted that our INTERREG project AlpNaTour has met with response all over Europe. The project has helped us to set an agenda in a key area – the reconciliation of tourism and protected sites – and thus to soften the contrasts between marketing and nature conservation at least to a degree.”



*Ulrike Pröbstl,
Institute for Landscape Development, University of
Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences Vienna*

THROUGH THE ALPS IN 300 DAYS

Mountain paths and hiking trails are probably the most important tourism infrastructure of the Alps. In the Austrian Alps alone, the trail network has a length of approx. 50,000 kilometres. Hiking trails and mountains huts are built and maintained by Alpine clubs, mostly by volunteers. They have now joined forces within the scope of an INTERREG project to launch the project **Via Alpina**, a hiking trail network comprising all eight Alpine countries. Mountain lovers can thus hike through Italy, Slovenia, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France, Liechtenstein and Monaco. Those who follow all five routes will in fact cross national borders more than 60 times. Travelling the entire length of all itineraries, day after day, would take about one year. You don’t have to be a high-performance athlete or extreme mountaineer to experience the Via Alpina network, though: the approx. 5,000 kilometres of hiking trails or 341 day itineraries can be sampled in bits and pieces as well. However, your health should be up to the challenge, since the Via Alpina will take you to 3,000 metres above sea level. The shortest route (“green route”) is ideal for a holiday, as its 13 day stages lead hikers through the peaks and valleys of Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

The Via Alpina project strengthens both tourism and the economy.

Special attractions, such as guided tours with backpack transport, are to entice additional guests and motivate them to try an Alpine crossing. Information about the Alps as a natural



and cultural space is provided in the four languages of the region – German, Italian, French and Slovenian – as well as in English along the routes. Those who prefer to travel through this Alpine idyll from the comfort of their home or want to prepare for their hiking tour on the Internet will find a wealth of information on the different routes, including maps, photographs and many links to cultural events in the different regions, on the Via Alpina Website. The Via Alpina project is not only to strengthen nature-compatible tourism and boost the local economy in structurally underdeveloped mountain regions, but also to promote cultural exchange between the Alpine countries. The follow-up project **VIADVENTURE** is to initiate new co-operation ventures of tourism, agriculture and the economy and thus to further promote Alpine regional development.

ALPINE BRANDING

But are the splendid Alpine backdrop, unspoiled nature and a well-developed hiking trail network really enough to secure a long-term future as a top tourism destination? Tourism experts say that this is only partly true. Even the Alps must be “sold” to consumers with additional fringe benefits and bonuses. Some years ago, a Tyrolean winter sports resort began to make a name for itself with star-studded large-scale events, organising mega-size pop concerts, shows and après-ski fun against its magnificent panorama. However, good marketing can also choose a gentler path, as is evidenced by “Alpine Wellness“, a new concept designed to establish the Alps as an international health and wellness region. So far, Austria, Germany and Italy have joined forces to develop quality assurance processes and create new services within the scope of the INTERREG project **Alpshealthcomp** – and Bad Kleinkirchheim serves as *the* Alpine model wellness destination, being the first Austrian community to have received the “Alpine wellness certificate”. A prerequisite of this status is the provision of high-quality services in an Alpine setting. In the case of the Carinthian mountain community, this refers to the specific mix of the Nockberge National Park, numerous thermal spas and a regional, alpine-style cuisine. A scientific study commissioned by Alpshealthcomp proves that an altitude of more than 1,000 metres above sea level is beneficial to health. Moreover, the project partners have developed their own line of Alpine health products.

Alpine branding is to be intensified.

The project **RegioMarket** is likewise concerned with the advantages of labels and Alpine branding. The participating regions in Slovenia, Italy and Germany concentrate strongly on the marketing of regional products. Local delicacies, such as a unique Slovenian liverwurst or an Italian mountain cheese, are to find their way more frequently onto regional restaurant menus. In addition, the Italian project partners are developing thematic tourist routes in the style of the “cheese route” through the Austrian Bregenzerwald. With the initiative “Landzunge” (literally, “tongue of land” to emphasise the regional-culinary orientation), the partners in Baden-Württemberg not only aim at marketing regional foods more intensively but are also interested in sustainability. “If local restaurants e.g. offer more dishes made with pasture beef, this is bound to support pasturing on Alpine meadows”, project leader Norbert Höll of the State Institute for the Environment, Measurements and Nature Conservation of Baden-Württemberg underlines the twofold benefit of this project.

“The RegioMarket project co-financed via INTERREG enables us not only to promote the regional economy and step up value creation in the participating regions. Rather, the thus developed marketing strategies also contribute to preserving the typical cultural landscapes of the entire Alpine region.”

*Norbert Höll,
State Institute for the Environment, Measurements and
Nature Conservation, Baden-Württemberg*

We do not yet know whether the tourists and holidaymakers of the future will climb the Schneeberg peak merely for its health-promoting effects or visit the Alps for wellness vacations. One thing is clear, though: experiencing nature and fresh air against a majestic mountain backdrop remains a coveted ingredient for successful Alpine tourism. Yet innovative marketing concepts that also take account of nature conservation and regional development can set new accents for mountain regions. Who knows – perhaps the hikers of the future will visit the Schneeberg massif to celebrate its Natura 2000 status?





Ski tourers on the
Ötscher, Lower Austria

THE ALPINE CONVENTION – A EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF THE ALPS

The Alpine Convention is an international convention for the protection of the natural ecosystem and sustainable development in the Alps. The Convention is to safeguard the residents' economic and cultural interests and to harmonise them with ecological requirements. The Alpine states Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia and Switzerland signed the first agreement on the protection of the Alps already in 1991. Cross-border co-operation is an important guiding principle for the implementation of measures in the fields of regional planning, the conservation of nature and the countryside, mountain farming, mountain forests, soil conservation, tourism and recreation, energy, transport, prevention of air pollution, water management, population and culture as well as waste management. As the decision-making body, the Alpine Conference regularly submits recommendations on current issues.

For more information:

Alpine Convention: www.conventionalpine.org

NATURA 2000 – A EUROPEAN PROTECTED SITE MODEL

With Natura 2000, the EU has created a European network of protected sites to maintain biodiversity and protect natural habitats, wild animals and plants in the EU Member States. The so-called “Birds Directive” and “Habitats Directive” provide the legal basis for biotope and species protection in the EU. The Member States are requested to submit lists of sites with natural ecosystems and species worthy of protection. On the basis of these proposals, the EU Commission, in co-operation with the individual Member States, designates future Natura 2000 sites; this obligates the Member States to ensure the protection of these sites. So far (as per December 2006), Austria has proposed 214 locations to the EU to function as future Natura 2000 sites – they account for 16.6 percent of the national territory. It is now the task of the federal provinces to classify the selected sites as “special areas of conservation” and to take appropriate measures. By 2010, the European network of protected sites is to be completed, experts believe. The Natura 2000 label also entails the obligation to preserve the sites and prevent their deterioration. Management plans are an instrument to fine-tune conflicting demands and requirements. Nature impact assessments for projects that might impair Natura 2000 sites are another precondition. If the result of such an assessment is negative, the corresponding project may even be cancelled in the interests of nature conservation.

For more information:

Federal Environment Agency, Austria: www.umweltbundesamt.at/umweltschutz/naturschutz/natura_2000

European Union: www.europa.eu/scadplus/leg/de/lvb/l28076.htm

INTERREG IIIB projects promoting tourism, cultural heritage and nature conservation

Projects mentioned in the text:

- **AlpNaTour** Integration of tourism into Natura 2000 management plans and promotion of sustainability in the Alpine region: www.alpnatour.info
- **Via Alpina/VIADVENTURE** Promotion of the natural and cultural heritage of the Alps through a hiking trail network: www.via-alpina.org
- **Alpshealthcomp** The Alps as a sustainable health and wellness destination: www.alpshealthcomp.org
- **RegioMarket** Promotion of high-quality regional products and services to increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of the Alpine space: www.alpinespace.org/regiomarket.html

Other projects:

- **NEPROVALTER** Development model for Alpine agriculture through the promotion of biological cultivation, local products, educational and social activities: www.neprovalter.org
- **Alplakes** Network of Alpine lakes: www.alplakes.org
- **VILLAS** Conserving, revitalising and marketing castles, palaces and manors: www.villas-eu.org
- **IPAM-Toolbox** Integrative protected area management by example of the Alps-Adriatic Region: www.ipam.info

4

Containing nature and its hazards

Slopes endangered
by avalanches in
Galtür, Tyrol

Natural space management
and disaster control

Natural disasters do not stop at national borders. Experts co-operate across Europe to ensure better fine-tuning of prevention measures, forecasts and risk management.

Although our society tends to have a short memory for disasters, do try to remember the catastrophic avalanche of Galtür. Rings a bell, doesn't it? Sure, there was this vast powdery snow avalanche that buried part of a Tyrolean ski resort in February 1999. It had been snowing heavily for weeks, and yet the avalanche had hit the village quite unexpectedly, sweeping over large parts of the village and killing 31 persons, many of them in their houses. Due to the difficult weather conditions, locals and guests were forced to wait for hours for help to arrive from outside and could only be flown out in small groups with helicopters. After the catastrophe, criticism was instantly voiced about a lack of discernment on the part of local decision-makers, claiming that the weather situation

construction of road and rail tunnels, funiculars, galleries, bridges, avalanche retention structures and barriers has created new settlement spaces, recreation facilities and traffic routes in former at-risk zones. The value of the structures erected in the Alpine space to offer protection against natural hazards probably equals several hundreds of billions of Euro, experts say. The residual risk, which cannot be avoided despite all technological bravura, is often left out of public discussions.

In view of the often quite restricted space for settlements – for example, only twelve percent of the Tyrolean territory can be inhabited throughout the year –, spatial planning must needs play a crucial role. Regional development plans clearly

Protective structures amounting to a value of several hundreds of billions of Euro guard the Alpine settlement space against natural hazards and disasters.

had been underestimated, exposing locals and guests to excessive risk, and arguing that too much money had been invested in ski lifts instead of avalanche protection and that crisis management after the fact had been bungled. But the event was of a dimension that invalidated all existing prevention, forecast and disaster management measures.

The spectacular natural catastrophes of recent years, such as the “flood of the century” in August 2002, which caused devastation in many European regions, or the avalanche-beset winter of 1998/99 that also affected Galtür, not only shocked the local population – decision-makers, too, were suddenly faced with challenges of unprecedented urgency. How to survive sustainably in a space threatened by natural disasters? How to deal with possible dangers for humans, animals, buildings and traffic routes within limited spatial conditions and in increasingly extreme weather situations?

LIVING WITH DANGER

The Alpine countries are confronted with similar problems in answering these questions. In addition to climate change, which entails a number of uncertainty factors such as the continuing melting of glaciers or increasingly frequent and massive precipitation, the intensive development of the Alpine space is taking its toll on the sensitive natural tissue. The

decree what areas of a community may or may not be built up. Moreover, Austria disposes of hazard zone plans for practically all communities. These plans cover all areas potentially at flood or avalanche risk in case of unusual weather situations. Yet these zone plans do offer some decision leeway for communities, as they are more in the way of recommendations. Constantly rising development pressures frequently lead to hazard zones being ignored while omitting to communicate the related risks.

Communication may be called a key concept in disaster prevention, as indeed is co-operation. Our brief commemoration of the Galtür tragedy is proof positive of the fact that many authorities must work together to save lives and contain damage when the dreaded event actually occurs. Of course, every country has developed its own, often diverse, containment mechanisms. In 2003, the Alpine Conference published the first recommendations for joint measures to enhance protection against natural catastrophes. The necessity of cross-border action to protect the population more efficiently against floods, mudflows and landslides is emphasised several times in the report. In the long term, comparable standards and approaches are to be safeguarded for all Alpine countries. Intensified co-operation in preventing natural disasters is also a concern of the European Union. A number of INTERREG projects support the development of fine-tuned strategies

and measures in this field. There is much to be learned from each other; above all, it is useful to tackle common challenges in unison. After all, floods and other catastrophes do not stop at national borders.

ALPINE FLOOD PROTECTION FOR EUROPE

But the Alps are not only a hot spot for local catastrophes such as avalanches, mudflows or rockfalls. As the catchment area of important rivers – the Inn or Rhine come to mind –, they play a supraregional role for flood protection. Months of snowfall produce large quantities of precipitation in the form of snow or ice just awaiting the melting season. The annual snow melt in spring causes many Alpine rivers to swell. While the snows tend to thaw over several weeks, even this slow rising of the water level increases the water throughput of mountain rivers. Particular hazards arise when a number of factors coincide, such as marked temperature increases and precipitation when the snow is high. Together with the melting snow, rain is then washed into the rivers and high-water marks tend to rise in the Alpine foothills as well, albeit with some delay. “Every litre of water retained in the Alps means active flood protection for Europe”, Kurt Ziegner, a staff member of the Forestry Service of the Federal Province of Tyrol and project leader of the EU-funded project **NAB** (Natural Potentials of

Alpine Regions), explains.

The NAB project unites experts and authorities of Bavaria, South Tyrol/Alto Adige, Lombardy, Slovenia, Switzerland and

*Every litre of water retained
in the Alps means active flood
protection for Europe.*

Austria not solely in cross-border activities. This project coordinated by the provincial government of Tyrol focuses above all on the co-operation of different disciplines and administrative departments to allow for safer and more efficient forecasting of natural hazards and potential risks. The interdisciplinary complexity of the project team’s work is evident from a look at its composition. In addition to experts in the fields of geology, hydrology, forestry and mountain forest management, specialists in such areas as flood protection and torrent and avalanche control contribute their know-how. In addition, one communications experts was called in as well since the improved communication of potential natural hazards constitutes a key to efficient risk management, Ziegner maintains.

After the snowmelt, even
small rivers can turn into
unpredictable danger
zones



The project partners have jointly developed a prototype called “ETALP” as a new procedure to assess the hazard potentials of torrents. “This process based on a geographic information system enables us to assess the hazards posed by torrents in co-operation with our neighbour Slovenia. In case of torrents crossing national borders, this evidently entails massive advantages”, Ziegner lauds the positive co-operation experience.

GIVING MORE SPACE TO RIVERS

Snow melting and extreme precipitation events in the Alps not only mean on-site red alerts – in the Alpine foothills, too, tension is mounting. An example: if extremely heavy rain falls in Tyrol, the deluge is bound to reach Vienna two or three days later. This is exacerbated by the peculiar geological situation of the Alpine foothills, which in Austria are situated in the flysch zone. Flysch is characterised by a high clay content and

with the complex interactions within river systems and to inculcate a responsible attitude towards the ecosystem in youngsters.

“The INTERREG project ILUP enabled us for the first time to bring the relevant actors and authorities together to develop solutions for river basin management jointly. In my mind, this interdisciplinary and transnational co-operation has proved very rewarding.”

Hubert Siegel,

Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry,
Environment and Water Management



Exportable strategies and instruments for sustainable water management were likewise developed collectively by the INTERREG project **SUMAD** in close co-operation with ILUP.

In the experts’ opinion, the new EU Member States Bulgaria

Regions in the Alpine foothills along the Danube have joined forces in the project ILUP to develop a common river basin management system.

thus is particularly susceptible to landslides. Moreover, flysch rock disintegrates very quickly; as a result, swelling rivers form wide rifts and water levels may rise massively all of a sudden. Regions in the Alpine foothills along the Danube have joined forces in the project **ILUP** (Integrated Land Use Planning and River Basin Management) to develop a common river basin management system. “Rivers need space”, project leader Hubert Siegel of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management explains the orientation of ILUP. Settlements, agriculturally used areas, traffic and other activities have markedly influenced watercourses and often do not leave sufficient space for rivers, which naturally leads to floods. For this reason, it is important to view river basins in all their different functions and to develop an integrated management system that involves all related disciplines – hydrology, geology, forestry, torrent control and spatial planning, to name just a few.

In addition, Siegel rates smooth interdisciplinary co-operation a particular asset of the project. For the first time in Austria, the relevant actors and authorities were brought together to develop solutions jointly. The partners from the new EU Member States Czech Republic and Hungary above all contributed interesting novelties, e.g. the Hungarian river forums aimed at balancing the interests of the water industry and flood protection. Austria duly instituted “river dialogues” based on the Hungarian model for the Ybbs and Raab rivers as pilot projects. A concern was to familiarise above all schoolchildren

and Romania have a particularly urgent need for co-operation, as severe floods affected these countries several times over the past years. One notable example was April 2006, when entire districts along the Danube and its tributaries were flooded with metres of water, necessitating dramatic international aid missions that also involved Austria.

GETTING ACTIVE BEFORE THE CATASTROPHE OCCURS

As a rule, it costs much less to invest in appropriate protection measures than to contain damage after the disaster has occurred. Yet to be able to take suitable steps and deal with emergencies, forecast models as well as experience are called for, so that potential hazards will be correctly assessed. Both elements failed in the case of Galtür. Before the tragedy of 23 February 1999, no avalanche had ever reached the village, which is situated only 200 metres from the foot of the nearest peak, the Sonnberg. For this reason, no avalanche prevention structures had been installed on the steep rock gutter of the mountain despite several smaller avalanches in the past. The specifics of the weather situation, too, were underestimated. Before the disaster, four metres of fresh snow had fallen in the Tyrolean village. This was compounded by extreme wind speeds and the particular composition of the freshly fallen powdery snow, which was not solidly anchored to the hard underlying layer. Galtür was sitting right atop a ticking time bomb that nobody was aware of.



Alpinarium and
avalanche
protection structure
in Galtür, Tyrol

Protection forests can absorb much of this danger in mountain zones. However, mountain forests often are no longer able to meet their essential protective function: pollutant emissions,

The INTERREG project NAB has developed a silvicultural manual for protection forest management.

bloated game stocks and natural damage events such as storms thin out species variety and hence weaken forests. The development of a management system for protection forests was thus another top priority for the NAB project. The Swiss project partners offered particularly valuable insights into the ins and outs of protective forest preservation. “Switzerland really has an edge on us in protection forest management. Luckily, we were able to copy some of their concepts as they stand”, Tyrolean forest expert Kurt Ziegner rejoices. Instructions for the optimised care for this “green backbone” were jointly formulated by the project partners and documented in a silvicultural manual. “Obviously, protection forests cannot be made to grow in a year, but they constitute a lasting investment to safeguard the future of the Alpine region”, the NAB project leader is convinced.

Accurate weather forecasts are another key to efficient disaster prevention. The Alpine countries are highly interested in reliable warning systems, since extreme weather events such as floods, avalanches, mudflows or strokes of lightning prove particularly destructive in these areas. Such events often originate south of the Alps and then spread to the north across the Alpine divide. It seems obvious for meteorologists from neighbouring countries to work together in order to develop improved forecasts through co-operation. Yet different structures of weather services and a lack of weather data formerly impeded joint activities. The project **meteorisk** enabled weathermen (and -women) of partner regions ranging from the Vienna Woods and the plain of the Po river to the Zugspitze and the peaks of Switzerland to network and improve communication; new weather stations were developed as well to ensure that measured data from remote areas can be regularly analysed and fed into the early-warning system. “We can now access the data of the partner countries, which were not accessible to us before this INTERREG co-operation”, Michael Staudinger of the Central Institute for Meteorology and Geodynamics praises this new advantage.

A red alert always means business. On a four-level danger scale, red stands for dangerous and unusually intense weather hazards, as devastating damage may occur at any time and there is a high probability of danger to the lives of humans and animals. For example, 18 January 2007 was a day of



suspiciously many red alerts: the Alpine zones in Austria and Germany participating in meteorisk were expecting the disas-

Regions in the Alps and along the Danube are highly interested in reliable warning systems.

trous hurricane Kyrill with heavy squalls and extreme wind speeds of up to 150 km/h that, arriving from the western direction, were likely to hit the Alps in the evening. Conversely, the other partner regions in Italy, Switzerland and Slovenia could draw a breath of relief. Most indicators were in the green zone; only Slovenia registered an orange danger level, while the yellow spots for Switzerland and Trentino indicated potential weather hazards but no unusual weather events.

These Internet risk forecasts are made possible by over 120 measuring stations situated in the project area. Some of them transmit current weather data, which are then compiled into detailed forecasts, every ten minutes. Around Galtür, too, several new weather stations were set up – the small Paznaun valley community probably boasts the world's densest measuring point network.

"The INTERREG project meteorisk has not only contributed towards the improvement of networking and communication between meteorologists in the Alpine countries; rather, transnational co-operation and fine-tuning also enables us to prepare much more accurate weather forecasts and extreme weather event warnings."

*Michael Staudinger,
Central Institute for Meteorology and Geodynamics, Regional
Office for Salzburg and Upper Austria*



LEARNING FROM THE CATASTROPHES OF THE PAST

But even the best early-warning systems cannot prevent catastrophes. We are always wiser after the fact – typically, every flood or disastrous avalanche is followed by heated discussions on what should have been done better or how the event could have been prevented or at least predicted.

Detailed documentation of catastrophic events is particularly important, as it permits us to learn as much as possible from natural disasters and thus enables us prevent further emergencies in the future. In the aftermath of a disaster, the experts of alpS, the Centre for Natural Hazard Management in Innsbruck, immediately visit the site. Research work is contingent on obtaining a clear picture of the situation, documenting the state

of affairs and collecting data. But the exchange of information between meteorologists, civil engineers, hydrologists, forestry experts, etc. is a complex procedure. **DIS-ALP** offers solutions to improve information relaying in the wake of natural disasters. For example, a thesaurus was developed to ensure that experts from different professional backgrounds and countries will

the tragedy. An amount of roughly Euro 8.7 million was and still is being invested in rendering Galtür avalanche-proof. Several-metre-high snow stops made of steel to block the path of potential avalanches as well as barriers on the valley floor and avalanche galleries to protect the access road are to prevent a future catastrophe of this magnitude. A new protection forest,

The INTERREG project DIS-ALP has improved information relaying in the wake of natural disasters.

better understand each other when using technical terms. In addition, manuals and homogenised forms to document disasters on site have yielded international standards in this field. A database permits the documentation of comparable natural events beyond the project run and thus offers a crucial decision-making tool for the implementation of prevention measures.

But how is life in the Alps despite the inevitability of natural hazards? Well, none of the inhabitants has abandoned Galtür after the catastrophic avalanche. Sure, holiday guests stayed away for some time. Today, however, the number of overnight stays in Galtür has more or less returned to what it was before

too, is being created. Yet the decision-makers of Galtür have not only set their minds on improving technical protection measures. Communication and documentation have likewise been given visible priority by the Tyrolean community. Its Alpinarium is a training, exhibition and information centre that directly adjoins the protective barrier – and the back wall of the Alpinarium also serves as an avalanche protection structure.

It is inevitable that natural disasters will occur time and again and that we will have to register – and remember – these tragedies. What counts, however, is that we have learned to deal with the risk. ↩

INTERREG IIIB projects promoting natural space management and disaster control

Projects mentioned in the text:

- **NAB** Information exchange to simplify the protection of humans and infrastructure against natural hazards: www.nab-project.org
- **ILUP** Integrated land use planning and river basin management: www.ilup.org
- **SUMAD** Development of exportable strategies and instruments for the sustainable use and management of alluvial plains with special consideration given to nature conservation: www.schabl.at/sumad.htm
- **Meteorisk** Alpine-wide project to co-ordinate weather forecasts in case of extreme meteorological events: www.meteorisk.info
- **DIS-ALP** Event documentation to close information gaps relating to natural disasters: www.dis-alp.org

Other projects:

- **ClimChAlp** Monitoring of Alpine climate change and its effects on natural hazards, spatial development and the economy: www.climchalp.org
- **River Basin Agenda** for the Alpine space: www.flussraumagenda.de
- **Catch Risk** Hydrological analysis of small-scale catchment areas in the Alpine space for hazard assessment and regional planning: www.alpinespace.org/catchrisk.html
- **MONITOR** Hazard monitoring for risk assessment and risk communication: www.monitor-cadses.org
- **Risk Aware** Weather and meteorological hazard forecast systems to improve risk management: www.smr.arpa.emr.it/riskaware
- **ELLA** Preventive flood management measures by transnational spatial planning: www.ella-interreg.org



NATURAL HAZARDS AND THE ALPINE CONVENTION

On behalf of the Alpine Conference, a working group developed recommendations for a co-ordinated approach to protection against natural hazards in the Alpine space. Inter alia, the following measures were proposed:

- promoting the early diagnosis of potentially devastating hazards;
- promoting integrated risk management;
- improving the dialogue on related risks with experts and the public at large;
- preserving and improving protection forests;
- returning bodies of water to their natural state;
- improving event documentation;
- introducing risk-adjusted land use;
- promoting know-how transfer in the field of hazard prevention;
- promoting the cross-border exchange of experience;
- promoting sustainable development in the Alpine space.

Sources: Swiss Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE), Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (UVEK), 2003: Naturgefahren und Alpenkonvention. Ereignisanalyse und Empfehlungen.

As a second step, the Alpine Conference established a Natural Hazards Platform to develop common strategies for natural hazard prevention and discuss appropriate adjustment strategies. The platform took up operation in May 2006. A significant thematic input for the Natural Hazards Platform of the Alpine Convention is provided by the comprehensive focal project on climate change **ClimChAlp** (Climate Change, Impacts and Adaptation Strategies in the Alpine Space), which is funded via INTERREG and co-ordinated by the State of Bavaria.


www.climchalp.org

5

Weaving a European network towards the east

Cross-border spatial planning

The puszta:
a manmade
environment



No house can be built without a construction plan. Cross-border planning and development create the preconditions for the coalescing of Central and South-eastern European countries.

The puszta may look ancient but it isn't. Contrary to a widespread belief, this seemingly archaic landscape we associate with untouched steppes, herds of cattle, free-roaming horses and the inevitable draw wells does not reflect the primordial state of the Pannonian lowlands before the arrival of humankind. On the contrary – the puszta was a classic manmade landscape that only came into being as a result of the cutting-down of primeval forests, ensuing extensive cattle breeding and the consequent transformation of the lowlands into steppe. The typical scenery of Hungary with its vast fields is proof of the fact that this is fertile land suitable for producing abundant grains and other crops.

But how did this one-sided concentration on cattle breeding, which in Hungary can be traced back to the Middle Ages, come about? The key to the answer lies in the sparse population density of this region repeatedly devastated by war and epidemics and where the areas under cultivation did not have to be large to supply the few inhabitants. Moreover, at a time when large shipments had to be necessarily transport-

ed by water, grain could not have been exported either, because the Danube flows in the “wrong” direction. Although Europe's big cities in the west did require outside food supplies already centuries ago, upriver export was rendered impossible by the high cost of carrying cargo on wooden horse-drawn barges.

So cattle breeding prevailed. Far into the 19th century, the vast cattle herds travelling along the Danube from Hungary to Regensburg and Nuremberg and through the Southern Alpine region and modern-day Slovenia to Venice, Verona and Bologna were a frequent sight. And they grew and grew: Hungary managed to export increasing quantities of meat because the emerging urban bourgeoisie tended to eat beef to distinguish itself from other social classes. Neither did the Turkish Wars interrupt this trend – on the contrary: the herds miraculously succeeded in crossing the many changing fronts as a matter of course. The situation only changed for good in the mid-19th century, when railway lines permitted the exporting of grain and derived products. Since then, the

puszta has been dwindling except for a few small areas under special protection as national parks attracting large crowds of tourists.

That's all water under the bridge, you say? And yet our brief excursion into history is instructive in several ways. After all,

Danubian region comprised of three Hungarian counties – were able to assess the advantages of a fine-tuned approach.

The project was designed in modular fashion to make as much room as possible for concrete pilot activities in a wide variety of action areas. “CONSPACE has enabled us on the one hand

Even 17 years after the collapse of the Iron Curtain, understanding the Central and South-eastern European countries as a unity and tapping this potential often still constitutes a major challenge.



Hungarian grey cattle
near Fertőd, Hungary

it shows us, who live today, how the economy and lifestyles of the past were influenced by the availability or non-availability of certain transport links, how humankind tends to shape natural spaces into cultural landscapes, what attraction can be generated by distant but open markets, how social change triggers the demand for new products, and how human ingenuity and the need for trade and exchange will ultimately overcome even lines of mortal conflicts. Above all, however, our example shows that the Central and South-eastern European countries have been forming a homogeneous living and economic space since time immemorial – except for those eras, of course, when this space was bisected by barbed wire.

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A FUTURE-ORIENTED REGION

Yet even 17 years after the collapse of the Iron Curtain, understanding the Central and South-eastern European countries as a unity and tapping this potential often still constitutes a major challenge. One of the key outcomes of the INTERREG IIIB project **CONSPACE** was bringing the participating regions together for the first time to develop and test concrete strategies and pilot projects for this common space. With a little prodding by the European Union in terms of a suitable programme and adequate financial support, the partners from this “quintangle” – the Austrian federal provinces Styria and Carinthia, the Italian regions Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Slovenia, the Croatian regions Istria and Primorje-Gorski Kotar (with Rijeka and the Kvarner Bay) and the Southern Trans-

to implement good practices for joint development; on the other hand, important preparations for the upcoming EU funding period were undertaken as well. Future co-operation projects can build on this progress”, project member Robert Schodl of the Vienna-based company Regional Consulting comments. Concrete results include the preparation of a list of priorities for cross-border transport between the south of Hungary and Croatia, development strategies for remote mountain regions and ecologically sensitive areas in Veneto, the planning of improved train connections between Gorizia/Nova Gorica and Ljubljana or the testing of models of participative old-city renewal in the Croatian town of Kastav. The Raab valley in eastern Styria was given a “Raabtal Development Plan” to control the future growth of this region strongly oriented towards Hungary, and Carinthia may now boast a “Habitat Network” defining the possibilities for intervention in its natural spaces – which are subject to different protection levels – by means of an “open space index”.

All these activities were focused in the drafting of a catalogue of joint recommendations for the development of the region as a whole, achieved through numerous international project workshops. This ambitious goal was all the more remarkable considering the special position of the region – its small-scale composition, polycentric settlement structure and enormous diversity of economic and social conditions, of cultural heritage and languages, of political systems and planning traditions. Despite long periods of a common history, most partner regions today are situated along national bor-

ders. In this context, diversity also means spatial cohesion, which so far is relatively underdeveloped, and regional co-operation, which is slow to take off.

Yet this region will have to embrace in-depth co-operation in the future. It is the gateway to the Balkans and South-eastern Europe, an access to the ports of the Northern Adriatic, an intersection of Romance, Slavic and Germanic linguistic traditions and moreover marks the border between old and new EU Member States. (Upcoming) EU membership will not only entail new possibilities for the region through

administrators in general and planning authorities in particular depend on the availability of geographic data processing.

“Spatial planning is a cross-sector approach to regional development challenges. The INTERREG programme has enabled us for the first time to implement a spatial planning view through pilot projects designed for the region as a whole.”

*Christian Seidenberger,
Regional Planning Authority of Carinthia*



European cohesion policy but actually constrain it to co-operate in the interests of growth and competitiveness. The CONSPACE perspective and the 18 pilot activities of the project constituted a first joint and concrete effort to sketch a common future and overcome regional imbalances. In one important aspect, the project **Matriosca – Adria Alpe Pannonia**, which will run until the end of 2007 and pursues a similar orientation, goes actually a step further: common institutions for permanent co-operation in the region are to be developed and set up.

THE THREE-STAGE MISSILE OF SUCCESSFUL CO-OPERATION: JOINT INFORMATION, JOINT UNDERSTANDING, JOINT ACTION

Often, however, it is very simple things that impede cross-border co-operation in spatial and regional planning. Austrian experts talking to their Italian or Slovenian colleagues about, say, settlement development or the employment situation may mean the same things but actually understand them differently. Why? A lot of statistical data is captured, collated and defined differently in the various countries, making the data stock very hard to compare. The obstacles to co-operation arising from the lack of important information concerning the other side of the border, e.g. on economic development or planned traffic projects, are even more banal. But efficient and strategic regional planning is only possible if spatial information is made available, especially if we bear in mind that approx. 80 percent of all decisions by public

At the same time, all authorities charged with planning tasks must exploit the small revolution triggered by universally, easily accessible EDP-based geographic information systems for the benefit of their regions. The idea of implementing these objectives through a common EU project was thus an obvious one. As an outcome of the three-year **ISA-Map** project, the first common data stock for transnational, supra-regional planning is now available in Carinthia, Slovenia and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Regional planning, disaster prevention and other aspects of regional policy are thus given a sound basis for common decision-making. The concomitant CONSPACE initiative also contributed towards this goal: a CONSPACE pilot project served to prepare joint indicators for monitoring the economic and social development in this future-oriented region and used them for the ISA-Map data tools – skilfully interwoven, the individual EU projects complement each other ideally and thus create added value, Christian Seidenberger of the Regional Planning Authority of Carinthia maintains.

TIGERS AND BALNIBARBIANS

In view of the eastern enlargement of the European Union, spatial planners from the Baltic to the Aegean are required, by necessity, to think along supranational lines, as regions are constantly coalescing. – This also goes for countries that only a few years ago were embroiled in bloody conflicts. Again, the initial push is provided by the European Union, where considerations regarding spatial development for an integrated

Europe were already launched in the 1990s. At the time, the basic idea was as follows: if the internal market becomes an economic and currency union, thus divesting borders of their old significance, former peripheries and border regions will evolve into new central spaces even faster than in the past. If the entire economic cycle begins to follow a novel, borderless logic, the interlinkages of space, settlement structures, traffic, transport and nature will have to be completely rethought, i.e. placed within a Europe-wide context.

Indeed, the effects of European integration over the past two decades have so shaken the economic geography and regional distribution of wealth in the western part of Europe that a time-travelling observer from the 1980s would probably no longer recognise the continent. And this feat can be repeated: through continued enlargement, the European Union has succeeded in showing the countries of Central and South-eastern Europe a road towards growth and participation in the pan-European economic space. For these countries, EU membership means admission to a model of integration that does not question borders but considers them irrelevant and ensures social and territorial cohesion not only on the basis of European law but also through substantial transfer payments from the more affluent to the poorer Member States. – Again, spatial and regional planners are called upon to perceive a region formerly organised in distinct national states as a unity and part of a coalescing EU.

As a network of regional planning authorities of 15 countries from the Baltic to the Aegean and from the Adriatic to the Black Sea, the project partnership **PlaNetCenSe** has resolved this task successfully. The development perspective prepared by the German Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning within the scope of this project draws a concise and convincing picture of future options for this disparate space with its (still) different levels of integration into the EU. The scenarios for the future presented result from the interaction of such factors as competitiveness and willingness to embrace political reforms, objectives of European agricultural and regional funding, the speed of the enlargement process or efficient urban deve-

If the entire economic cycle begins to follow a novel, borderless logic, the interlinkages of space, settlement structures, traffic, transport and nature will have to be completely rethought as well.

lopment and location policies and show that informed political decisions will determine whether the development path of the region will go up or down.

The bleakest of all potential future scenarios is inspired by Jonathan Swift's Balnibarbi in "Gulliver's Travels" – a country where people work hard and incessantly but with scant success: a scenario where narrow-minded nationalist-populist and protectionist interests weaken cohesion and integration within the EU. This fictitious Balnibarbi would blame the EU and its enlargement for the mistakes of national governments, halt the enlargement process, encourage re-nationalisation tendencies and render it difficult for smaller Member States and their cities to keep their economies afloat and meet cross-border functions. Economic development gaps would grow at the detriment of smaller and less-developed Member States.

"In particular those potentials should be tapped which are based on the co-operative development of centres in the border region."

*Friedrich Schindegger,
Austrian Institute for Regional Studies
and Special Planning*



Hungarian-Austrian
border region



This is counteracted by an optimistic scenario of European “tigers” – quickly developing Central and South-eastern European countries smoothly integrated into a dynamic, self-confident European Union that also views its youngest Member States as test lab for reforming ossified EU policies, e.g. in the field of agricultural and regional policies. Without neglecting the underlying mission of preserving social and territorial cohesion, this scenario imagines new poles of growth around urban centres. Metropolitan regions could thus stimulate structural change in rural areas and act as driving forces for the modernisation of the region between Baltic and Aegean far beyond national borders. “In particular those potentials should be tapped which are based on the co-operative development of centres in the border region, e.g. the Vienna-Brno-Bratislava-Győr region, the Czech-Polish-Slovak agglomeration Ostrava-Katowice-Cracow-Zilina or the city quadrangle Belgrade-Timişoara-Arad-Szeged in Serbia, Romania and Hungary”, Friedrich Schindegger, project manager for PlaNetCense at the Austrian Institute for Regional Studies and Special Planning, maintains.

According to Schindegger, the biggest obstacle is likely to arise from the highly divergent competence distributions and scope for independent action of the various government levels in the individual countries. With further distinctions between actual spatial planning, infrastructure investment decisions, incentives for private investors and accompanying regional planning research, the areas of influence of local, regional, national and European bodies on spatial development are bound to become hopelessly muddled. Regarding the co-operation between metropolitan regions and the upgrading of cross-border transport links, this means that there can be no single “perfect solution” for the mutual fine-tuning of planning measures; only patient dialogue with the neighbours allows for establishing cross-border consensus and binding agreements on joint measures on a case-by-case basis.

TILT TECHNOLOGY STRENGTHENS A BACKBONE OF MASS TRANSIT

But anybody can experience the advantages embodied by such considerations, even if they seem to involve transport and regional planning experts in seemingly far-off future scenarios. Just board a train from Vienna to Prague! The vehicle seats over 300 passengers, is a shiny silver-blue-and-yellow and, being Italian, bears the melodious name “Pendolino”, which is already somewhat indicative of the ability of this train to tilt in high-speed curves, thereby shortening travelling times. Slightly under four hours to go from Vienna to Prague – this is a definite novelty that is also going to prove a worthy competitor for airplanes serving the route between the two capitals.

One of the reasons for the line upgrading and the purchase of these state-of-the-art trains was provided as early as in 1999 by an EU-funded project that was continued in 2003 under the name **SICI**. Starting from the assumption that the upgrading of the railway infrastructure along the north-south corridor from Berlin via Dresden, Prague and Vienna to Budapest and the Upper Adriatic would entail significant economic impulses, these projects looked into possibilities and consequences of line acceleration and capacity boosts for both freight and passenger transport. Particular emphasis was given to the sketching of different economic scenarios resulting from deliberate decisions in favour of or against infrastructure upgrading. Thus it was plausibly demonstrated that 17 concrete measures going beyond current expansion plans would significantly improve metropolitan accessibility for one million persons, shorten travelling times and create an added value of Euro 6 billion by 2020. Conversely – and that would be the Balnibarbian option –, a total withdrawal from the improvement of the railway infrastructure would intensify migration trends from the region and entail cumulated GDP losses amounting to perhaps as much as Euro 192 billion.



A pilot study conducted within the scope of PlaNetCenSE maintains the same opinion. Viewed against the scenario of prosperous Central European tiger states – with Austria smack in the middle –, these findings likewise highlight the importance of north-south corridors for future developments. Moreover, the conclusions call for adjustments of future infrastructure policies, as all upgrading measures implemented so far were almost exclusively focused on the east-west axes connecting Central Europe to Western European agglomerations. Yet the improved mutual accessibility of Eastern-central European cities – facilitated by rapid north-south links – could generate substantial impulses. A polycentric settlement structure, where large cities situated relatively

The improved mutual accessibility of Eastern-central European cities – facilitated by rapid north-south links – could generate substantial impulses.

distant from each other act as drivers of growth for the intermediate, often underdeveloped regions, is one of the most fundamental traits of the Central European space. To facilitate the transfer of the economic modernisation spark from big metropolises to smaller towns and communities, efficient transport links are called for, it is convincingly argued, in order to dramatically improve the accessibility of the centres. European and national activities on behalf of the regions must above all be aimed at finding ways and means to direct the growth effects emanating from the centres to the more peripheral areas.

BORDERLESS NATIONAL PARKS

Today, the puszta has been reduced to small areas – national parks and nature reserves, last refuges of a manmade landscape that once dominated large parts of the Pannonian lowlands. For environmentally oriented regional development, these protected areas constitute a valuable resource that can contribute both to the quality of life of the local population and to income from gentle tourism. Along the Austrian-Hungarian border, too, in the Neusiedler See/Seewinkel/Fertő-Hanság National Park, a touch of the old puszta feeling is still lingering; visitors to this park as well as to several Hungarian national parks further east can admire the last specimens of the Hungarian grey cattle with their majestic horns as a reminder of the times when vast herds of these animals were driven to Western Europe for slaughter.

The National Park on Lake Neusiedl is also a very special institution because of its cross-border location and the resulting management and planning challenges. However, the Austrian and Hungarian park operators and environmental experts are not the only ones to be confronted with this problem, as there are many analogous cross-border nature reserves in other parts of Central Europe. Czech and German colleagues in the Upper Elbe valley between Děčín and Dresden – Bohemian and Saxon Switzerland – as well as Polish and Czech park keepers in the Karkonosze/Krkonoše National Park in the Giant Mountains or their Slovenian and Italian counterparts in the Triglav/Prealpi Giulie National Park are faced with the same tasks. – One of these is dealing with different national systems of charting changes in land use or the categorisation of animal species, plant species or ecosystems worthy of protection.

For this reason, the co-operation project **SISTEMaPARC** tried to get a grip on problems resulting from parallel management and administrative structures for identical ecosystems. EDP-supported spatial information systems (SIS) play a key role towards this goal. Such systems contain all relevant data essential for landscape and open-space management, the long-term monitoring of fauna and flora, tourism marketing, visitor information, etc. So where's the problem? In most cases, land use monitoring is implemented according to technical standards that vary from country to country, compile different data in different fashion or varies in degrees of sophistication. The benefits of developing a common standard for cross-border national parks through an EU-funded project are therefore obvious. Alois Herzig of the Biological Research Station Illmitz in Burgenland emphasises that this minimises development costs and permits tapping the experience made by partners. The outcome are concrete advantages, last but not least for visitors to the national parks. Interactive digital maps will soon provide vivid descriptions of the changes the steppe landscape of the Seewinkel and its ecosystem have undergone over time through the interaction of humankind and nature. ←

INTERREG IIIB projects promoting planning and development in Central and South-eastern Europe

Projects mentioned in the text:

- **CONSPACE** Common strategy network for spatial development and implementation: www.conspace.info
- **ISA-MAP** Harmonisation of regional data resources for cross-border planning: www.isamap.info
- **MATRIOSCA-AAP** Management tools, effective relations for new interregional organisation aimed at strengthening the co-operation among regions in the Adria-Alpe-Pannonia space: www.matriosca.net
- **PlaNetCense** Planners network for Central and South-eastern Europe: www.planet-cense.net
- **SIC!** Implementation of a sustainable transport infrastructure and inter-modal transport concepts in Northern Central Europe: www.sustrain-ic.net
- **SISTEMAPARC** Spatial information systems for the transnational environmental management of protected areas and regions in CADSES: www.geoway.de/sistemaparc

Other projects:

- **TECNOMAN Perspectives** Trans-European Network (TEN) and corridor nodes position management network: www.tecnoman.net
- **IPAM-Toolbox** Integrative protected area management by example of the Alps-Adriatic Region: www.ipam.info
- **CITYREGIO** Regional economic development through city-surrounding cooperation: www.cityregio.net
- **UTN II** Urban technology network: www.utn.at

ESDP – EUROPEAN SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

ESDP is a comprehensive spatial planning concept at the European level adopted in 1999. It might also be called a “European master plan”. While ESDP is not legally binding and does not transfer any new spatial planning competences to the EU, it is to safeguard the coherence and complementarity of the Member States’ spatial planning efforts. Applied at both Community and transnational, national, regional and local levels, the European Spatial Development Perspective moreover offers an important set of instruments for the creation of the Trans-European Networks and an orientation framework for European metropolitan regions.

ESDP is above all targeted at the objective of spatially balanced development according to the principle of sustainability. Sub-aspects of this objective include

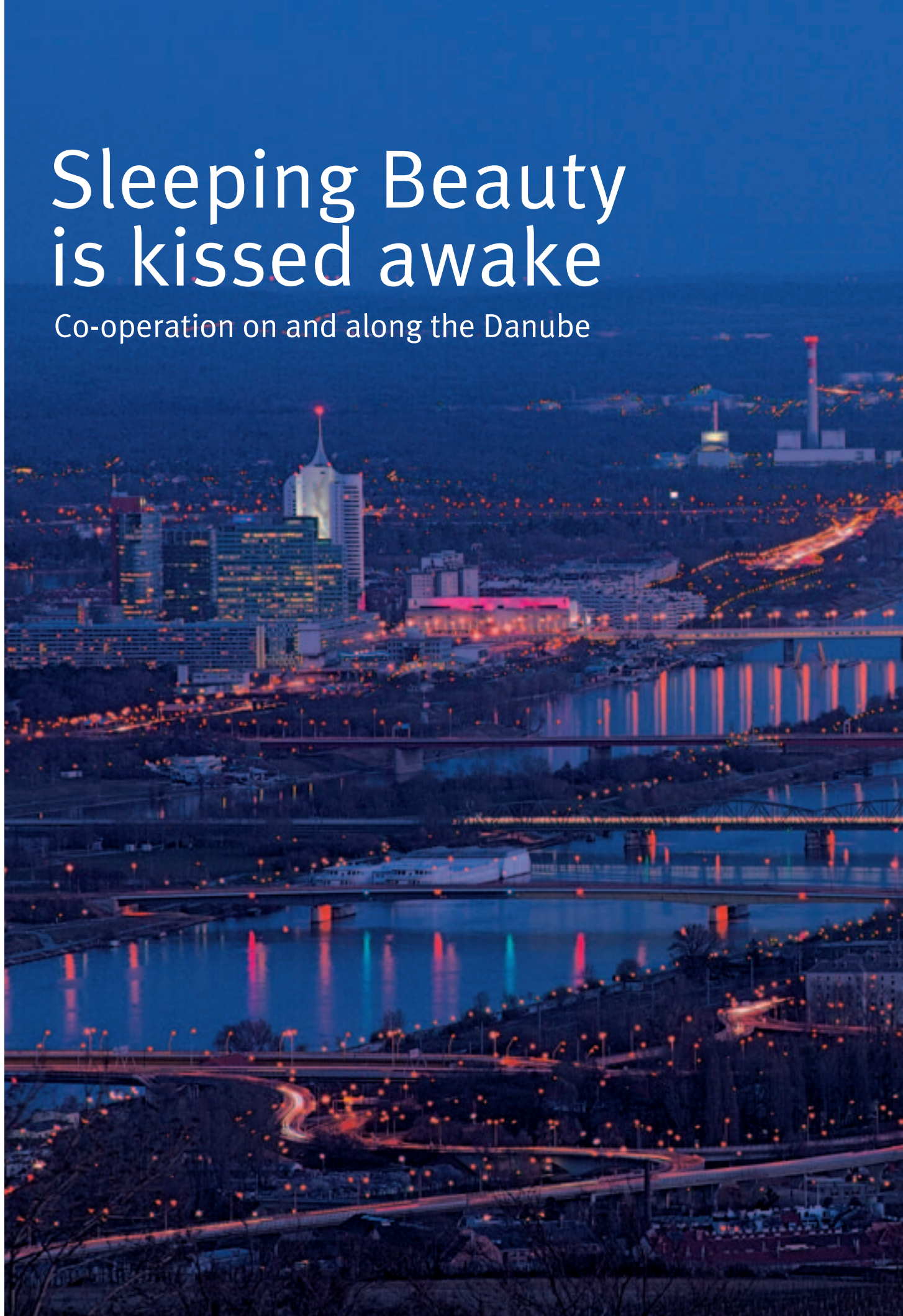
- economic and social cohesion;
- conservation of natural and cultural resources;
- more balanced competitiveness in view of spatial disparities;
- even and polycentric spatial development and a new relationship between town and country;
- parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge;
- wise management and protection of the cultural and natural heritage.

6

Sleeping Beauty is kissed awake

Co-operation on and along the Danube

View of Vienna from
Kahlenberg





A communication highway from and to South-eastern Europe, the white hope of gentle tourism and maybe even an ecological showcase: the Danube is more than just a transport route.

It happened in late October 2006, and not for the first time: due to the dry autumn weather, the Danube again carried too little water for the heavy push barges travelling between Vienna and Bratislava to pass. A veritable traffic jam of lighters

European Corridor VII” – is considered a secret reserve among European transport routes. It is estimated that only seven percent of the Danube’s potential to absorb cargo traffic is exploited – however, this trend is markedly on the rise. The



waiting to continue their journey upriver formed at the Austrian-Slovak border. It took days for the water level to rise sufficiently for the ships to restart their engines and move on.

The sole unusual aspect of this situation was the season – normally, the lowest water levels occur in summer – but certainly not the fact that Danube navigation is sorely affected by capricious weather conditions. Thus captains are forced to load their barges with sometimes only half the cargo they could actually carry, just to be able to continue their journey despite a water level of only 1.5 metres. Possibly even worse economic drawbacks are the delays that ensue when enterprises whose production is dependent on the just-in-time delivery of raw materials and components are likewise affected by the water-induced wait loop. Companies like voestalpine Krems, which is thus supplied with sheet metal for processing, are therefore forced to switch to the more expensive railway network.

economic recovery in the eastern part of Europe, which after Hungary and Slovakia now extends to the new EU Member States Romania and Bulgaria as well as to the western Balkan states, boosts the exchange of goods and hence traffic volumes with annual growth rates of six to eight percent. In this, the assets of the Danube lie not only in its connection (via the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal) to Rotterdam, Europe’s biggest port, but also in the fundamental ecological edge that navigation has over any other means of transport: while ships can transport 127 tonnes of cargo with one litre of fuel over a given distance, the transport capacity of trains is only 97 tonnes and that of lorries, a scant 50 tonnes. Increasing the efficiency of the Danube as a waterway is thus equivalent to the containment of traffic volumes on the roads and railway tracks running parallel to the river, such as the chronically traffic-packed western and eastern motorways, to cite just one example.

The Danube is considered a secret reserve among European transport routes. But this potential can only be tapped through cross-border co-operation and support from Brussels.

For this reason, developing the Danube into a reliable, around-the-year transport route heads the list of priorities of all riparian states and the European Union, all the more because the Danube – which planners and transport politicians, in their dry and sober terminology, are wont to call “Trans-

A NATURAL HERITAGE: IMPERILLED LEGACY, BONE OF CONTENTION AND OBJECT OF PROTECTION

What may seem principally obvious proves to be a highly demanding and delicate task in practice. After all, a river of

2,845 km length is not primarily a dug-out shipping lane for Euro lighters with 1,350 GRT weight but one of the most complex ecosystems imaginable. 2,845 km length means a catchment area ten times as big as Austria, as the Danube morphs from mountain into lowland river and back in a dynamic system of main, secondary and dead branches and, last but not least, one of the key European migration routes of animals and plants.

Moreover, the upper reaches of the Danube are among Europe's most heavily trained watercourses. Since the 1950s,

Today the Danube floodplains are a national park where one of the last still-intact wetland areas in Central Europe invites visitors to relax and enjoy nature. Political decision-makers at all levels have realised that a primeval piece of unspoilt nature extending smack in the middle between two metropolitan agglomerations constitutes an asset worthy of unconditional protection. The river section east of Vienna thus embodies a new approach to the Danube, one that abandons a purely exploitative policy and instead of training and channelling the river opts for the preservation of increasingly rare



the entire course of the river in Austria was transformed into a chain of hydropower stations and hence into a sequence of artificial lakes and dams. The only sections where the Danube is still flowing freely are the Wachau valley between Melk and Krems and the section downriver from Vienna to the Slovak border. But these sections also stand for historic turnabouts

reserves for fauna and flora as well as natural flood absorption areas.

Enhancing the efficiency of the Danube as a waterway is equivalent to the containment of traffic volumes on the roads and railway tracks running parallel to the river.

“To further the development of the Danube region, two things are called for: first of all, a cross-sector approach and, secondly, a co-operation framework that includes all riparian states and also disposes of the necessary funding to implement concrete projects – and this is precisely where the transnational programmes of the EU come in.”

*Nadine Richter,
TINA Vienna*



SQUARING THE CIRCLE: TRANSPORT ECONOMY, RIVER ECOLOGY AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

in Austria's energy and environmental policy. In the 1980s, the economic interests in hydropower generation were defeated by the emerging environmental movement both in the Wachau, which today is a UNESCO World Heritage site, and in the floodplains between Vienna and Hainburg. The prevention of the power station project in Hainburg and the occupation of the Stopfenreuther Au wetlands by environmentalists in 1984 marked the origin of widespread public ecological consciousness and the demise of heedless growth policies.

Yet this does not resolve the problems of barges forced to wait for the water level to rise close to the mouth of the Morava/March river. While the political complications involving the conflicting interests of hydropower exploitation and nature conservation did entail a positive re-orientation of environmental and energy policies, they also halted considerations relating to the sometimes restricted usability of the river as a waterway. Still, nobody today would claim that the entire river should be transformed into a series of locks and artificial lakes to ensure optimum navigating conditions. On the contrary: the comprehensive hydro-engineering project for the Danube east of Vienna launched in 2002 may be called a model of how to balance the opposing interests of transport

and environmental policies: gentle training reduces the flow velocity; in some spots, the river is slightly dammed, thus resulting in a water level that is sufficiently high for navigation. Gravel backfilling is to prevent the continued deepening of the Danube by up to 3.5 centimetres annually as well as the drying-up of the wetlands. Returning riverbanks to their natural state and reconnecting formerly dead branches to the watercourse are to recover a degree of freedom for the river as well as ecological wetland functions that were lost one century ago with the large-scale training of the Danube.

For the community of Engelhartstetten – to which the Stopfenreuther Au wetlands belong –, the planned measures only confirm its excellent position as an environmentally minded tourist destination on the Danube. After all, locals have known for a long time that the National Park and the nearby, carefully restored Baroque palaces constitute the most important prerequisites for a future dedicated to the low-impact enjoyment of nature, leisure and culture. In addition, the community plans to offer its visitors a very special kind of spa: situated at the edge of the wetlands, this wellness oasis is likely to attract numerous day guests and create urgently needed jobs; moreover, the accommodation options in the vicinity of the National Park (which are notably scant) could be improved as well. Located at a mere 25 kilometres from Bratislava, it is evident that visitors from beyond the border will equally flock to this new attraction.

One question above all must be resolved along the entire course of the Danube – namely, how to blend the polyphony of transport economy, river ecology and the promising tourism market into a harmonious triad.

After the wetlands occupation by environmentalists in 1984, the small village of Stopfenreuth – situated at river kilometre 1,887 and boasting fully 185 inhabitants – is again the fulcrum of a development that may be called seminal for the entire river. Upgrading the transport corridor without destroying the ecological balance, using the valuable natural space for sustainable tourism and cross-border approaches – that yet never lose sight of the practical benefits for its actors – are the key challenges for all municipalities, cities, towns and regions along the Danube. From Donaueschingen at the point of confluence of the Brigach and Breg rivers to Sulina in the delta of the

Danube, one question above all must be resolved – namely, how to blend the polyphony of transport economy, river ecology and the promising tourism market into a harmonious triad. In the words of the President of the Croatian Region of Vukovar-Srijem, Bozo Galić, “We all are interested in economic development, the creation of new jobs, transport infrastructure, environmental protection and the Danube region as a place worth living in. And we can attain all these objectives if we have a clear vision of how to evolve our region.”

THE DONAUHANSE VISION

An ambitious, multinational development project has targeted this vision for the future of the Danube. Through the historical analogy emphasised by its name, the city network **Donauhanse**, which is supported by the European Union within the framework of INTERREG IIIB, clearly wants to show the way for developments along the Danube: cities and towns linked by a body of water that is common to all of them attain great prosperity through trade and the exchange of goods, co-operate directly without detours via national authorities and inspire each other culturally. “The term ‘Donauhanse’ was chosen deliberately to underline that co-operation along the Danube involves not only the economy but culture, tourism and social contacts as well”, project manager Nadine Richter explains. Fully 19 cities in six riparian states, including Regensburg, Linz, Vienna, Budapest, Novi Sad, Belgrade, Ruse, Galați and Odessa, have joined forces in this initiative evolved out of the Working Group Danube Region in order to build a communication and information platform along the entire length of the river and identify common perspectives for the future.

For example, a large-scale study revealed the immense potential for tourism on and along the Danube, highlighting the fact that the Danube as a destination actually does not need to develop a tourism image – it already has one: the Danube is a myth fuelled by the cultural diversity of the countries along its course and their landscapes, by its sheer length and the fascination exuded by its history. The combination of splendid cities and landscapes is moreover a special asset in the tourism competition with comparable European “river experiences”. However, in order to release this potential – which is largely untapped, particularly downriver of Budapest –, long-term investments and measures to enhance tourism know-how are called for: modern, cross-border destination marketing, fine-tuned development strategies and commonly implemented master projects under the umbrella of a “European brand” for the Danube. Interest in and curiosity about the Danube experience definitely exist, especially in the big Western European markets. Consumers are just waiting for customised services to embark on a journey of discovery.

But the Donauhanse project is also busy improving the use of the river as a waterway. In its Freightling Initiative, experts of

the Vienna-based development and marketing enterprise Central Danube are trying to resolve one of the biggest problems for the financial viability of Danube navigation: to this day,

The combination of splendid cities and landscapes is moreover a special asset in the tourism competition with comparable European “river experiences”.

most barges carry cargo only on the trip from east to west and travel empty on the return journey. Thus every tonne of cargo transported upriver is matched by only half a tonne carried downriver, mainly because Danube navigation infrastructure is traditionally oriented towards the transport of raw materials and bulk goods more than towards that of processed products.

The Freightage Initiative of the Donauhanse project tries in several ways to counteract this state of affairs, which is very unsatisfactory for shipping companies. Central objectives lie in interesting companies working out of South-eastern Europe in the Danube as a waterway and in identifying goods suitable for shipping. The first steps in this direction were the search for potential goods to be transported by ship and a survey conducted among shipping companies. The result: not less than seven million tonnes of cargo annually, ranging from steel

and coal or chemical and agricultural products to combined container transport, could additionally travel on the Danube. A comprehensive catalogue of demands was formulated on this basis and addressed to transport policy-makers, ports and transport companies. This to-do list on the one hand comprises the tasks of ensuring the whole-year practicability of the Danube, harmonising legal provisions and providing economic incentives for switching to the waterway option and on the other hand calls for modernised terminals designed as inter-modal interfaces as well as more flexible, customer-oriented shipping services. If these frame conditions are met, the intensified use of the Danube as a waterway to the east is bound to take off.

INTELLIGENT TRAFFIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR THE WATERWAY

Smart technologies also contribute towards increasing the performance of the Danube as a waterway. A comprehensive EDP-supported river information system (RIS) is being established along the entire watercourse as part of an EU initiative offering a package of measures designed to increase the efficiency of cargo transport, existing transport capacities and inland navigation safety. A basis for the implementation of DoRIS – as the river information system for the Danube is also known – is provided by the creation of digital charts in the framework of geographic information systems (GIS). “Data Warehouse for the Danube” (D4D) was the title of an EU-funded INTERREG IIIB project concerned with the setting-up of a virtual warehouse for geographic data, that, inter alia, can be used for electronic navigation charts, but also for e.g. disaster containment. All waterway-related data is stored in a distributed database – the data warehouse – and made available to the



participating countries. **DANewBE Data** is the current follow-up project aimed at transferring the experience made in the introduction of this infrastructure in Germany and Austria to the Danube river sections in Slovakia and Hungary. According to Markus Schedlbauer, who handles the two projects on behalf of the Austrian waterways operation company via donau, it is moreover planned to extend the project to Bulgaria and Romania. This is to make sure that national geographic information systems are networked and an efficient exchange of electronic data between the competent waterway authorities will take place.

“Making use of the Danube as an efficient waterway is a common European objective. The INTERREG projects permit the creation of up-to-date navigation standards and a cross-border approach.”



*Manfred Seitz,
managing director of via donau*

This form of modern navigation also helps to increase safety and traffic frequency on sections that have not been modified or trained. The Danube east of Vienna is a typical route where cargo traffic can benefit most from inland ECDIS, a new European inland navigation standard. Especially in areas where natural sandbanks and irregular fairways complicate navigation, accurate systems based on electronic data transmission constitute a true quantum leap. Eventually, networking potentials, too, are of great importance for the entire economic cycle. Port operators will know the precise moment when a specific shipment is to arrive at terminal and hence can optimise logistics involving other means of transport. Moreover, this concept also lends itself to tourism uses: cruise ships could be equipped with virtual position charts similar to those of airplanes to visualise upcoming sights; tourist boards could use electronic river mapping to showcase leisure attractions in the communities along the river in much the same way as cargo ships use them to identify their position.

SLEEPING BEAUTY AWAKENS

As almost anywhere on the Danube, European co-operation is practically omnipresent. The EU has thus not only originated directives on safety and the introduction of a modern river information system but also provided a substantial part of the required funds. Europe is a funny thing, anyway: for Elias Canetti, who was born in 1905 in the Bulgarian city of Ruse, then still called Rustchuk in the Turkish fashion, Europe was situated upriver. Thus the novelist and later Nobel prize winner notes in his autobiography, “In Ruse, the rest of the world was called Europe. And when somebody was going up the Danube to Vienna, they said he was going to Europe. Europe began where the Ottoman empire once had ended.”

Today, modern Europe arrives at the lower reaches of the Danube as a fresh breeze after years of war between the successor states of former Yugoslavia, which had led to the total collapse of local Danube navigation and tourism. Formerly sluggish, formalised forms of international co-operation have been replaced by independent initiatives of cities and regions. Private shipping companies revive competition; obsolete fleets are modernised. For countries like Serbia, Bulgaria or Romania, access to financial support by the EU offers manifest proof of

The new dynamism palpable along the entire river is driven by the economic boom of the Danube countries no less than by the targeted upgrading of the waterway into a continental transport corridor.

their gradual integration into European structures. The new dynamism palpable along the entire river is driven by the economic boom of the Danube countries no less than by the targeted upgrading of the waterway into a continental transport corridor – the comprehensive hydro-engineering project for the Danube east of Vienna, too, is co-financed through funds earmarked for the Trans-European Networks (TEN).

DOWNRIVER INTO THE FUTURE

The cyclists resting at the Stopfenreuther Försterhaus inn on their trip to Budapest or Passau know little of all this. After the turbulent times when the wetlands were taken over by environmentalists, with journalists and the curious flocking to the place, the legendary forester's lodge situated hard by the river's edge has developed into a point of departure for tours of the National Park and a favourite stopover along the Danube bicycle track. The inn is also famous for its freshly prepared Serbian-style carp called “Šaran” – a crisp and crunchy delight that, marinated in garlic and basted in powdered red peppers, is a reminder of the old role of the Danube as a mediator between cultures. So far, the Danube bicycle track does not yet extend to Novi Sad and Belgrade as a fully-fledged, family-friendly cycle route but projects like the Donauhanse tourism platform create an important basis for this goal. With a little goodwill of the riparian cities and regions and support from Brussels, the development of EuroVelo 6 – always parallel to the Trans-European Transport Corridor VII along the entire section from Budapest to Sulina – could soon become reality.



INTERREG IIIB projects on and along the Danube

- **Donauhanse** Network of Danube cities for economic co-operation: www.donauhanse.net
- **D4D** International fine-tuning and harmonisation of European directives and standards along the Danube waterway: www.d4d.info
- **DANewBE Data** Cross-border data exchange along the Danube waterway: www.d4d.info/index.php?id=11

A EUROPEAN PROGRAMME FOR INLAND NAVIGATION

In 2006, the European Commission adopted a Communication on the promotion of inland waterway transport. The action programme NAIADES extends over the 2006-2013 period and comprises five strategic areas of a comprehensive inland waterway transport policy: market, fleet, jobs and skills, image and infrastructure. Inter alia, the following measures are planned:

- attracting new markets through close co-operation between shipping companies, the navigation industry and ports;
- encouragement of entrepreneurial initiative through improved access to capital, fiscal incentives and state aid guidelines;
- improvement of the administrative and regulatory framework by means of simplified administrative procedures and better co-ordination of all relevant public services;
- improvement of the logistics efficiency, safety and environmental performance of inland waterway transport by means of fleet modernisation and efficient information and communication technologies;
- improvement of working and social conditions and greater workforce mobility by means of job profiles and recruitment initiatives harmonised throughout the EU;
- improvement of the multi-modal network through a European Development Plan for the improvement and maintenance of the infrastructure and transhipment facilities of inland waterways based on the TEN-T projects;
- introduction of river information services (RIS) for the efficient and safe use of waterways by means of electronic data exchange and optimised logistics.

Thematic links:

Danube Commission: www.danubecom-intern.org; Working Group Danube Region: www.argedonau.at; European Commission, Transport and Energy – Waterway Transport: ec.europa.eu/transport/iw/index_de.htm; via donau – Austrian Waterway Company: www.via-donau.org; BMVIT – Federal Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure and Technology, Inland Waterway Transport in Austria and Europe: www.bmvit.gv.at/verkehr/schifffahrt/binnen/index.html; Navigation information system DoRIS: www.doris.bmvit.gv.at; Danube Floodplains National Park: www.donauauen.at



“The biggest benefit of INTERREG IIIB is the incentive for interdisciplinary co-operation”

An interview with Wolf Huber, head of Division IV/4 – Co-ordination, Spatial Planning and Regional Policy, Federal Chancellery, Austria

Editorial team: *Who are the key beneficiaries of the INTERREG IIIB programmes in Austria?*

In Austria, federal and provincial authorities, cities, towns and public infrastructure providers wishing to implement projects in funded areas – the environment, transport, economic co-operation, spatial planning, natural space management, etc. – together with partners from other EU Member States and neighbouring non-EU Member States are those most closely involved with the INTERREG IIIB programmes. Thus, most of the projects are co-financed by federal and provincial budgets.

Editorial team: *It is said that participation in INTERREG IIIB programmes entails substantial administrative work. Why do these bodies participate despite the added effort? What is the advantage for them?*

The administrative rules for taking part in the INTERREG IIIB programmes are certainly rather complicated. It is not easy to harmonise the highly diverse legal provisions of the EU and several individual countries so as to ensure, on the one hand, the correct and proper use of the European taxpayers' money and, on the other hand, the actual implementation of projects with an acceptable degree of administrative effort. Still, these EU funds are much coveted. One reason for project carriers to participate in the INTERREG IIIB programmes has been the quite substantial EU co-financing of up to 50% of project cost. Moreover, labelling their co-operation venture an “EU project” is often viewed as a kind of distinction by many operators, who are thus prepared to make do with the additional administrative work. In addition, these EU programmes also result in many new contacts with other projects and potential project partners. As is often the case with public financial incentives, the benefit does not lie in the funding of individual projects per se – which perhaps could be implemented without EU co-financing – but in more long-term combined and multiplier effects.

Editorial team: *Apart from the individual projects, can you, in your capacity of co-ordinator, identify a special benefit resulting from the INTERREG IIIB programmes for Austria?*

In Austria as elsewhere, the EU co-operation programmes for spatial development – i.e. the predecessor programme

INTERREG IIC in the 1997-1999 period and the INTERREG IIIB programmes in the 2000-2006 period – have intensified co-operation between public authorities in an interdisciplinary manner: the Federal Chancellery and the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK) did their best to inform, interest, introduce and network representatives of a great variety of policy areas – environment, transport, technology, industry, tourism, spatial planning and all other policies of spatial relevance. Due to INTERREG IIIB, for example, spatial planners in the *Länder* (federal provinces), hydrologists of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management and experts managing the Danube as a waterway are now aware that floods are an issue of common interest to all of them and dispose of a platform for joint projects. In my mind, this incentive for interdisciplinary co-operation is the biggest benefit of INTERREG IIIB – after all, this form of co-operation is even more difficult to achieve than that of experts in a given field across national borders or different levels within one state.

Editorial team: *INTERREG IIIB is drawing to a close. What are the next steps?*

The Community Initiative INTERREG was transformed into a separate Structural Fund objective with the somewhat unwieldy name “European territorial co-operation” for the 2007-2013 funding period. Here, too, we find several distinct strands: the strand of cross-border co-operation (i.e. between border regions, corresponding to the former INTERREG IIIA), the strand of transnational co-operation (in large-scale co-operation areas determined by the EU Commission, corresponding to the former INTERREG IIIB) as well as several EU-wide networking programmes. In the new funding period, Austria will participate in three (instead of previously two) transnational co-operation programmes – one is “Alpine Space”, which continues unchanged, the second is “Central Europe”, which equals the northern part of what hitherto was CADSES, and the third is “South-East Europe”, corresponding to the southern part of CADSES. The programme areas overlap; as a result, Austrian project carriers will be able to choose for themselves the programme they think is best suited for their specific projects.

The future of INTERREG IIIB

Thematic focus of the new programmes for transnational co-operation from 2007 to 2013

As in the past, the new programmes are to promote the implementation of projects corresponding to priority axes. To ensure continuity with the previous programmes, thematic guidelines were formulated in accordance with the priority axes of the funding period drawing to a close or developed from these on the basis of the EU Lisbon Agenda. The three programmes are currently being negotiated with the European Commission.

Priorities of “Alpine Space”:

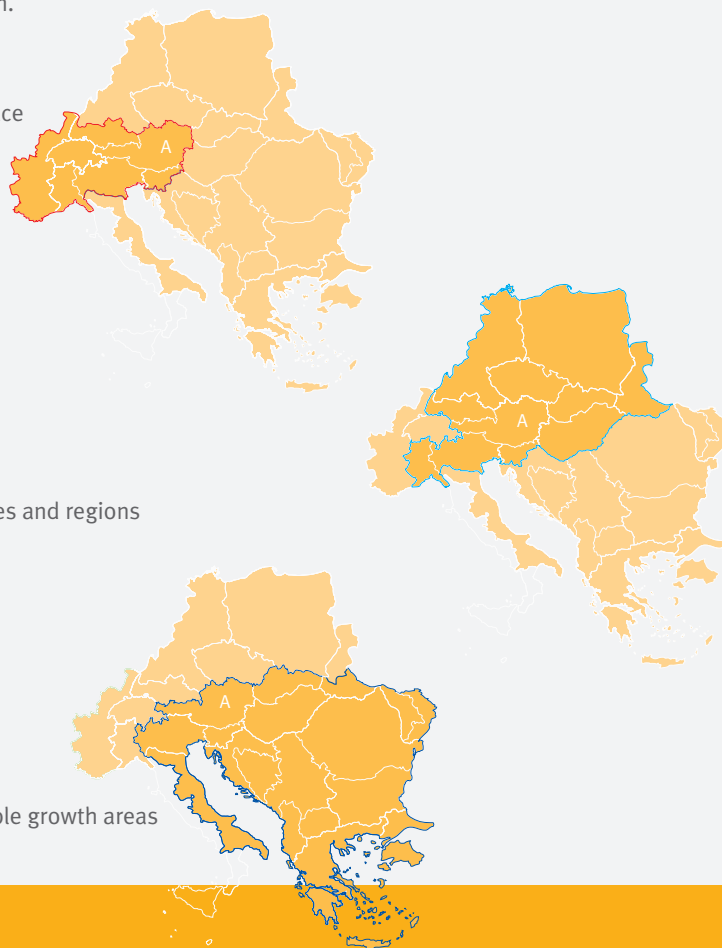
- Competitiveness and attractiveness of the Alpine Space
- Accessibility and connectivity
- Environment and risk prevention

Priorities of “Central Europe”:

- Facilitating innovation across Central Europe
- Improving accessibility of and within Central Europe
- Using our environment responsibly
- Enhancing competitiveness and attractiveness of cities and regions

Priorities of “South-East Europe”:

- Facilitation of innovation and entrepreneurship
- Protection and improvement of the environment
- Improvement of accessibility
- Development of transnational synergies for sustainable growth areas



Contact points in Austria

Special contact points were established in the Member States to connect INTERREG IIIB to the people who will implement it. One such national contact point was set up at the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning in Vienna and inter alia offers the following services:

- General information on the co-operation programmes
- Overview of all projects involving Austrian partners
- Counselling of project applicants during the development phase
- Support of Austrian partners in project implementation
- Support in fine-tuning of Austrian interests

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