

## Transport And Tourism In The Alpine Convention - Summary by Ruggero Schleicher-Tappeser -

Tourists make up for a large part of road traffic in the Alps. Important tourism flows are crossing the Alps for southern and increasingly also northern destinations. More than 6 million beds in the Alps are there for tourists which often stay only for a few days. They do not only arrive and leave, during their stay they also contribute to local traffic. For the big agglomerations surrounding the Alps, the mountain range is one of the most important destinations for leisure day trips. And finally, also the 13 million inhabitants of the Alpine Convention area contribute to travels and day trips by car. Better infrastructure, heavier sports equipment and changing habits tend to increase the daily mileage of visitors. Moreover, cross-alpine traffic and increasingly also tourism are concentrated in small parts of the Alps. About 50% of tourist beds are located in 5% of the Alpine municipalities.

The negative impacts of these developments not only affect nature protection but also the quality of life in certain areas and last not least tourism itself. The Contracting parties of the Alpine Convention have addressed these issues, mainly in the protocols on tourism and on transport. Both protocols call for integrated overall tourism and transport policies aiming at an environmentally and socially compatible development, involving local governments, improving international cooperation and monitoring progress. More particularly, the tourism protocol engages the Contracting Parties to promote measures to limit motorised transport in tourism centres and to support initiatives aiming at improving the accessibility of tourism destinations by public transport. A strong statement calls for improved cross-border cooperation also at the local level. The Transport Protocol provides stricter prescriptions by banning the construction of new high-ranking roads for cross-alpine transport, putting limits also for intra-alpine road connections and by asking for a formal assessment of the transport impacts of new tourism facilities. It calls for the creation and conservation of traffic-free areas and measures for promoting car-free vacations. More generally, the transport protocol puts an important emphasis on the support of public transport and the railway system. Also the protocol on spatial planning and sustainable development is relevant in this context: it calls for the concentration of settlements around existing transport infrastructure, for the improvement of public transport and – if necessary – for limitations to motorised traffic.

Overall, the commitments in the Alpine Convention texts concerning tourism and transport are of rather general character. They give orientations but do not con-



tain strict obligations – except for the construction of high-ranking roads and the transport impact assessment of tourism facilities. The protocols are meanwhile in effect in all countries but Italy and Switzerland, also the EU has not yet ratified the Transport protocol. Concerning the subject treated here, the Alpine Convention texts are more of political than of legal importance. The development of good practice examples, of cross-border cooperation and of alpine-wide experience exchange are the most urging measures in this field. This conference is an important step in this direction. It also reflects the priorities of the Multi-Annual working Programme 2005-2010, concerning two of its four key issues, namely “Mobility, accessibility, transit traffic” and “Tourism, leisure, sports”. The Working Group Transport and the Permanent Secretariat have started to work on this issue.