

**INNOVATIVE PROJECTS FOR ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND TOURISM**  
**European expert conference “Environmentally Friendly Travelling in Europe“ presents new concepts for gentle mobility**

**Finding environmentally sound ways of travelling is one of the major challenges faced by Europe in the future. Austria was one of the first countries to recognise this and to launch innovative projects in the fields of transport and tourism. These projects are the main focus of the European expert conference and contest “Environmentally Friendly Travelling in Europe. Challenges and Innovations Facing Environment, Transport and Tourism” taking place from 30 to 31 January 2006 at the Hofburg Vienna. The conference gathers approximately 400 experts and decision-makers from all over Europe, as well as representatives of the EU Commission and of other international organisations. They will discuss ideas, concepts and specific projects providing gentle mobility solutions for Europe.**

The expert conference and the European contest “Environmentally Friendly Travelling in Europe” take place within the context of the Austrian Presidency of the European Union and the Austrian Presidency of the Alpine Convention. They are mounted by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, together with the Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour. Among the well-known speakers at the conference are Arthur Oberascher, President of the European Travel Commission, Eugenio Yunis, chief of the section Sustainable Development of Tourism of the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), Andrew Cooper from the International Federation of Tour Operators, and Francesco Ianniello and Marcel Rommerts representing the EU Commission.

**Gentle Tourism and Gentle Mobility**

The conference tries to provide an impetus for the changes required as far as travelling to and from tourist destinations and mobility at the chosen destination are concerned. Possibilities to improve the offers of tourist organisations, tour operators and tourist regions, the necessity to create awareness in costumers and the political and institutional prerequisites to facilitate eco-friendly travelling will also be discussed. Four working groups look at these subjects in the fields of tourism, transport, destinations and administration, respectively. On the second day of the conference the discussion turns to gentle mobility in destinations posing special challenges. The working groups to be established for this purpose deal with the challenges faced by tourism in mountain regions, coastal zones, along rivers, lakes and wetlands, and in urban areas.

This international exchange of experience is based on innovative pilot projects for ecologically sound mobility for recreational and tourist purposes launched in the last few years, many of which were initiated or contributed to essentially by Austria.



“Gentle Mobility – Car-Free Tourism”, “Alps Mobility“, “Alps Mobility II – Alpine Pearls“, “Alpine Awareness“, “Mobilalp“ and “Environmentally Sound Transport and Tourism in Sensitive Regions, Lake Neusiedl, Fertő-Tó Region“ are the names of national and transnational projects targeted at the interfaces between environment, transport and tourism.

They show innovative ways of implementing the aims of the Kyoto Protocol and the Alpine Convention and towards a sustainable regional development. Transnational projects are co-financed by the EU within the framework of the Alpine Space Programme of the Community Initiative “Interreg”.

Experience with the above-mentioned pilot projects under Austrian direction or with Austrian participation shows that sustainable mobility solutions can also increase the value added in the region. More and more guests looking for high-quality travel and aware of environmental issues are convinced by the label “Gentle Mobility”.

### **Proposals for Action Promoting Sustainable Mobility**

The results of the conference will be summarised in a final document reflecting the experience from the pilot projects and suggesting courses of action in the fields of transport, local tourist destinations and administration. Its purpose is to stimulate the implementation of the Alpine Convention and its Protocols at the European level. The Kyoto Protocol 2005, the Alpine Convention and its Implementation Protocols as well as the EU guidelines “ Sustainable Development Strategy 2000” and the basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism provide the political framework for these recommendations.

A successful implementation of these proposals first of all requires all stakeholders in the fields of environment, transport, tourism, regional politics and tourist destinations to work together. This is the only way to improve offers for tourists interested in gentle mobility and provide solutions for recreational and tourist traffic that will reduce environmental damage and traffic density in tourist regions.

For further details on the conference please visit [www.eco-travel.at](http://www.eco-travel.at)

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