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Pröll: Bring about Trend Reversal towards a more Ecologically Sound Tourism

Sub-heading: Conference, “Environmentally Friendly Travelling in Europe Challenges and Innovations facing Environment Transport and Tourism” demonstrates innovative options.

Vienna (30 January 2006) The predictions about transport development in EU Member States suggest a stagnation to even a further decline in environmentally friendly means of transport such as train or bus. Increases are predicted for private car and air transport. The kilometres driven during holidays and leisure time alone will almost have doubled by 2010 compared to 1998. Yet the ratio between private car transport and public transport threatens to shift even more to the detriment of environmentally friendly means of transport like train or bus. We must actively counteract this development and bring about a trend reversal towards a more ecologically sound tourism. This is what Federal Minister Pröll stated on the occasion of today’s press conference “Environmentally friendly travelling in Europe”****

In order to initiate a trend reversal and to make travelling more sustainable, Austria advocates the implementation of the following measures: Environment Minister Josef Pröll: “The introduction of stricter exhaust gas ceilings for private cars and the promotion of organic fuels are two core issues of the Austrian EU Council Presidency. Furthermore, the promotion of train and bus as environmentally friendly alternatives for tourist mobility, as well as the support of emission-free vehicle technologies, clean fuels, and renewable energies. Moreover it is important to take political measures so that the Kyoto targets become also applicable to international air transport.”

Synergies for Environment, Tourism and Transport are possible

The Ministry of Life co-ordinates many large-scale, trans-national model projects, and wants to show in practice that environment, transport and tourism can be successful partners. Even now synergies between economically reasonable actions and ecological behaviour can be demonstrated.

- Within the framework of the project “Alps Mobility II – Alpine Pearls” 15 partners from Alpine regions in Germany, France, Italy, Austria and Switzerland are cooperating, under the leadership of the Ministry of Life, with the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour and the Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology. In this network “Alpine Pearls” 17 innovative tourist locations demonstrate how tourist attractions can be combined with the advantages of environmentally friendly, soft, travelling.
- Another project is “Alpine Awareness” which sets priority on awareness-raising among guests and the population, in particular among young people, but also among people employed in the transport and tourism sectors.
- The project “MOBILALP” focuses on the development and establishment of networks of intelligent mobility services between the regions and the urban centres.
- The programme “Sustainable environmentally friendly transport and tourism in sensitive areas, region lake Neusiedl/Fertő/Tó” combines, for example by means of the “lake card”, environmentally friendly transport routes with tourist highlights.

Best Practice Werfenweng

That environmentally friendly travelling constitutes an attractive goal and not a contradiction between ecology and economy becomes obvious by the example of a special high quality product, the Austrian model project “Soft Mobility – Car-free Tourism” in Werfenweng. The community recorded, within the framework of “Alpine Pearls”, since the beginning of the programme 8 years ago in the winter seasons a plus in overnight stays of 56%, the average in Salzburg amounted to 22 %. In the summer seasons the overnight stays, showing an increase of 10 %, even tripled compared to the average value in Salzburg. The enterprises offering the holiday package “holidays from the car” recorded an even higher increase in overnight stays:

namely + 109 % in the winter seasons 1996/1997 to 2004/2005 and + 60 % in the summer seasons 1997 to 2004.

Goals of the Conference

Pröll: "The purpose of this conference is to send, within the framework of the EU Council Presidency and the Austrian Presidency of the Alpine Convention, a signal towards more environmentally friendly travelling behaviour and more ecologically sound travel offers. However, the stakeholders from the transport and tourist industries are also called upon to make a contribution to the achievement of goals and the compliance with commitments in environmental policy, and to take over their responsibility according to the principle of sustainability.

The conference should especially increase the sensitivity of the people and make them aware of the fact that environmental quality constitutes a big asset for tourism. An intact environment – clean air, a beautiful landscape, attractive cities – is a decisive criterion for tourists in their holiday decision-making process and is thus also of economic interest. In order to acknowledge the achievements prizes are awarded to the most successful participants in the projects run by the Ministry of Life.

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