

Zurich, Vienna, Munich, Ljubljana, Milan, Lyon 20.10.2010

Press release of WWF, CIPRA, ALPARC and ISCAR (Ecological Continuum Initiative) on "The Wall" event

## **Wall blocks centres of six cities**

### **In protest against the fragmentation of habitats in the Alpine space**

**Stop – no way through! Today, 20 October 2010, a giant wall blocks the way of pedestrians in Zurich, Vienna, Munich, Ljubljana and Milan. For animals, it's the same every day: streets and settlements increasingly fragment their migration routes. Against the background of the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biodiversity, now being held in Nagoya, Japan, WWF, CIPRA, ALPARC and ISCAR (the 'Ecological Continuum Initiative') demonstrate with 'The Wall' how important interlinked habitats are for the survival of many plant and animal species.**

Natural water courses, unaffected by hydrological engineering, are nature's highways. They are routes by which not only fish but also for many mammals and even plants spread. Together with little disturbed woodland and meadow landscape connecting intact habitats they are the key to the preservation of biodiversity: for the separation of animal and plant populations can lead to genetic impoverishment and even the extinction of individual species. But such continuous habitats are becoming rare in the Alps.

The alpine landscape is subject to high pressure from human use, especially in densely populated valleys, where roads, towns, villages and intensive agricultural land use disrupt the routes of animals, separating them from important feeding and resting areas. While efforts are being made to interlink habitats again, these must be intensified and integrated in a strategy for the Alps as a whole, because nature does not stop at political borders and can only be protected through joint efforts. The partners in the 'Ecological Continuum Initiative' are WWF, International Commission for the Protection of the Alps CIPRA, Alpine Network of Protected Areas ALPARC and International Scientific Committee for Alpine Research ISCAR. They demand that all future planning decisions, from the local to the international level, take account of the need of wild animals for unhindered movement.

#### **Infostop by the Wall**

As a protest against habitat fragmentation, the 'Ecological Continuum Initiative' erects artificial barriers in the city centres of Zürich, Vienna, Munich, Ljubljana, Milan and Lyon. Pedestrians will suddenly face an unexpected obstacle, just as animals and plants do because of human activities. The wall, with explanatory texts, can be visited all day. Volunteers involved in the project are available for explanation and discussion. CIPRA's Aurelia Ullrich explains: 'All alpine countries have a similar problem. We highlight this by erecting the wall in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Italy and France.'

The wall's passages, in the shape of animal silhouettes, point to several promising projects in the Alps – though these aren't enough yet. These projects will be presented to the local media in the cities and

are described on the web site of the 'Ecological Continuum Initiative' [www.alpine-ecological-network.org](http://www.alpine-ecological-network.org).

Information on the event including pictures for print, video interviews and successful implementation examples from several Alpine countries is available on [www.alpine-ecological-network.org](http://www.alpine-ecological-network.org).

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**The Ecological Continuum Initiative: restoring the web of life**

The Ecological Continuum Initiative aims to maintain or restore ecological connectivity in the Alps by facilitating and catalyzing relevant projects and initiatives. The Initiative partners (Alpine Network of Protected Areas ALPARC, International Commission for the Protection of the Alps CIPRA, International Scientific Committee Alpine Research ISCAR and the European Alpine Programme of WWF) provide an interface between policy, practise and science to allow the exchange and pooling of knowledge, lessons learned and expertise. The work of the Ecological Continuum Initiative is supported by the Swiss MAVA Foundation for Nature.