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Media release on recharge.green project kick-off

Energy production and nature protection in balance

Discussions about the energy transition continue apace worldwide. Wind, water, sun and wood are renewable resources that are all plentifully available in the Alpine regions. How can we meet the demand for renewable energies without at the same time damaging nature? This question is being addressed by 15 partners from six Alpine states in the just-launched recharge.green project. Together they are developing models to serve as a decision-making basis for politicians and energy producers.

More and more people are aware of the effects of climate change and nuclear energy on their lives; the demand for renewable energies is growing in parallel with this awareness. With forests, rivers, mountains and plenty of sunshine, the Alpine countries possess the right conditions for the production of energy from renewable sources, thus helping to reduce greenhouse gases. The Alpine space is at the same time a unique habitat for plants and animals. There are 2,000 to 3,000 plant species per one hundred square kilometres – twice as many as are found in the Central European lowlands.

The economic benefits of renewable energy production can be measured in figures: not so, however, the effects on the ecology and society of using natural resources. This imbalance leads to conflicts of interest between conservationists and energy producers.

From conflict to social added value

The “recharge.green - balancing Alpine energy and nature” project wishes to work to resolve this conflict. Believing that both biodiversity and renewable energy production are important for a high quality of life in the Alps, 15 partners have come together from different sectors. The project team combines experts from all the Alpine countries in the areas of landscape planning, forestry, energy production, research, nature conservation and communication. Lead partner Chris Walzer states: “We would like to show that it is possible to use renewable energies in the Alpine region and at the same time ensure sustainable land use, thus helping preserve the rich biodiversity and the soils of the Alps.” To achieve this aim, the partners will be developing strategies and tools to determine the value of landscapes in terms of energy, ecology and society; these will be tested in four pilot areas in Vorarlberg (Austria), Bavaria (Germany), Piedmont (Italy) and Slovenia. Politicians and energy producers can make use of these models when weighing up the costs and benefits of renewable energy production.



Transforming political discussions into objective facts will produce a social added value from the conflict. Erich Schwärzler, a regional councillor for the Vorarlberg pilot area, praises this approach: “This international study can and should help us in finding the right decisions for questions, as an outside view is important in ensuring overall development.”

The recharge.green project lasts from October 2012 to June 2015. It will contribute to the implementation of various international agreements, such as the EU2020 Strategy or the Alpine Convention. The project is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund in the context of the Alpine Space Programme.

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Print-quality press photos are available at www.recharge-green.eu/media

recharge.green – balancing Alpine energy and nature

The Alps have great potential for the use of renewable energy. Thereby they can make a valuable contribution to mitigating climate change. This, however, means increasing pressures on nature. What could be the impact of such changes on the habitats of animals and plants? How do they affect land use and soil quality? How much renewable energy can reasonably be used? The project recharge.green brings together 15 partners to develop strategies and tools for decision-making on such issues. The analysis and comparison of the costs and benefits of renewable energy, ecosystem services, and potential trade-offs is a key component in this process. The project will last from October 2012 to June 2015 and is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund in the Alpine Space Programme.

www.recharge-green.eu