Alpine Convention (1991): implementation in the field of transport. Transport Protocol

2008/0262(NLE) - 23/12/2008 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to conclude, on behalf of the European Community, the Protocol on the Implementation of the Alpine Convention in the field of Transport (Transport Protocol).

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

BACKGROUND: many environmental problems have a transboundary nature and can only be addressed effectively through international cooperation. One of the objectives of the Community's transport policy is to promote measures at international level dealing with regional and European problems which hinder sustainable mobility in transport and result in risks to the environment. The Alpine region is an ecologically highly sensitive area, therefore, the EC must pay more attention to it and address its problems by an appropriate approach.

CONTENT: to recall, the Convention on the Protection of the Alps, the Alpine Convention, was signed by the European Community at Salzburg on 7th November 1991, and by Council Decision 96/191/EC of 26th February 1996 the Community ratified the Convention, which finally entered into force on 4th April 1998. The other Contracting Parties are Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco , Slovenia and Switzerland.

The Transport Protocol was adopted on 24-26 May 2000 on the occasion of the 16th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Alpine Convention. It provides a framework, based on the precautionary principle, the preventive principle and the polluter-pays principle, for ensuring sustainable mobility and protection of the environment, for all modes of transport, in the Alpine region. The objectives of the Transport Protocol are, in general terms:

- to reduce the volume of and dangers posed by intra-Alpine and trans-Alpine traffic, in particular by transferring more traffic, especially freight traffic, to the railways, especially by providing appropriate infrastructure and incentives complying with market principles;
- to ensure intra-Alpine and trans-Alpine traffic at economically bearable costs by increasing the effectiveness of the transport systems and promoting the modes of transport which are most environmentally-friendly and most economic in terms of natural resources; and to ensure fair competition between the modes of transport.

The Protocol was signed by all member countries of the Alpine Convention; the Community decided on the signature of the Transport Protocol on 12 October 2006. Austria, Germany, France, Slovenia and Liechtenstein have ratified the Protocol and it has entered into force for them. Italy, Monaco and Switzerland are currently making efforts to ratify the Transport Protocol.

The Commission considers that the Alpine Convention and in particular the Transport Protocol are instruments which help the European Community to achieve its objective of a sustainable transport policy in a large, highly sensitive cross-border zone. Therefore, the European community is called upon to conclude the Transport Protocol.