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Press release

Drought or flood? The 2nd Report on the State of the Alps is out

The 2nd Report on the State of the Alps is now available. For the first time, it records all specific and legal aspects of water in the Alps. Karl Schwaiger, Austrian President of the ad-hoc Expert group for the drafting of the Report, sums up the situation using a medical metaphor: « Just like a doctor would, the Report takes the pulse and analyses the blood and heartbeat of water resources in the Alps. It is like a health check-up of the resources. It looks for the causes of the disease and suggests prevention methods as well as treatment. »

The Report gives detailed and regionally varying information, on the state of water resources as well as on its quality and quantity. It also deals with social and economic aspects of water use, the role played by natural hazards, and the consequences of climate change on water regime. Furthermore, it offers an overview of relevant regulations and initiatives for the future. 200 pages and 120 coloured images, tables and photos containing detailed information on the sources allow a deeper research.

According to the report, the most important challenges are implementing an integrated management of natural hazards, drawing up a plan for the exploitation of river basins, reducing water nuisances, and using water power in a sustainable manner. There are today over 550 hydro-electric plants in the Alps, each of them with a power output greater than 10 MW, to which thousands of small plants can be added. Increasing water demand and climate changes constitute additional challenges for water management.



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Regional differences and uneven resources are another issue in terms of Alpine waters management. The Alpine overall picture according to which there would be « too much » water because of the high level of precipitations is contradicted already today by the fact that in some southern parts of the Alps, water is scarce.

« Not only do we demonstrate that the water regime in the Alps has a decisive influence on the rest of Europe, we also show that this dependence has been increasing with climate change», Karl Schwaiger explains. An international Expert group drafted the Report under the supervision of the Swiss and Austrian co-presidency and the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention. More than 60 scientists and members of governmental organisations and NGOs contributed. The Report was adopted by the Ministers during the Xth Alpine Conference in Evian (France) on 12th March 2009.

The Report is available in English for the long version and in 5 languages (Italian, French, German, Slovenian and English) for the short versions. All versions can be downloaded in pdf format on the website of the Alpine Convention (www.alpconv.org). Short versions are also available in printed versions.

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