

## **Summary of the R&D Project Pilot Regions**

The platform "Ecological Network" of the Alpine Convention aims to promote the creation of a cross-boundary ecological network in the Alpine region by nominating pilot areas. Areas awarded the nomination "pilot area of the Alpine Ecological Network" are especially active in supporting an ecological network in the Alps and promoting sustainable development in their own region.

The procedure envisages nominating pilot areas at each Alpine Conference. The decision to recognise a pilot area is based on a questionnaire completed by the applicant regions. For instance, the questionnaire uses certain criteria to gather details both on a region's ecological characteristics and its active contribution to sustainable development, as well as on concrete projects and measures which help present and promote the ecological network in the Alps. The completed questionnaire is evaluated according to a points system. In order to be nominated, an area must gain a specified minimum number of points and/or, depending on the final point score, must have singularity status. The nomination is valid for a limited duration but can be applied for repeatedly.

It is proposed that nominated pilot areas will each be presented with a certificate, a leaflet on their region and a press kit during a small ceremony; these can then serve both as official documentation (certificate) and for advertising and information purposes (leaflet and press kit).

At the beginning of 2009 five regions filled out the questionnaire (Alpi Maritime, Berchtesgaden – Salzburg, Département de l'Isère, Inn – Etsch / En – Adige, Nördliche Kalkalpen/Eisenwurzen/Gesäuse/Dürrenstein). These are already pilot areas in the framework of the Econnect or Ecological Continuum Project. Evaluation of the questionnaires showed that all five regions meet the criteria for nomination as pilot areas under the "Ecological Network" platform of the Alpine Convention.

Being nominated a pilot area can bring a region both socio-economic and ecological advantages. For instance, the nomination can increase the region's value added and enhance media response by acting as an advertising vehicle, or through exchange with other pilot regions. In addition pilot regions could find it easier to obtain financial support through existing instruments which contribute to promoting the ecological network.