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ACTIVITY REPORT 2007/2008

PLATFORM ON NATURAL HAZARDS OF THE ALPINE CONVENTION PLANALP



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1. What is Platform on Natural Hazards of the Alpine Convention?

The Platform on Natural Hazards of the Alpine Convention (called hereafter PLANALP) was set up to develop common strategies designed to prevent natural hazards in alpine space as well as to deliberate on adaptation strategies. The extent of the damage caused by such hazards is constantly increasing. The reasons are varied: concentration and increase in value, more vulnerable infrastructure, increasing requirements with regard to mobility and communications, major uncertainties due to climate change, etc. Measures agreed across the whole Alpine arch region therefore make sense and in some fields are urgently needed.

After the devastating avalanches and floods of 1999, the Alpine Conference appointed a working group to develop common strategies and activity fields on the level of the parties to the Alpine Convention. Based on the recommendations of this working group, PLANALP was appointed by the Ministers at the 8th Alpine Conference in 2004. The basis of PLANALP is the mandate approved by the 9th session of the Alpine Convention. The mandate of PLANALP covers both the formulation of strategic concepts on integrated risk management against natural hazards and the coordinated implementation of subsequent measures.

The contracting parties to the Alpine Convention delegated high-level experts to PLANALP in order to ensure effective networking and coordination of activities in the Alpine region and exert influence on national strategies.

Andreas Götz, vice director of Switzerland's Federal Office for the Environment FOEN and the president of the Swiss National Platform for Natural Hazards PLANAT, has held the chair of PLANALP since 2005. PLANALP works closely with the relevant professional international and national institutions in this field. The platform consists of between 16 and 20 members with no more than two representatives (national and/or regional) per contracting party. Observers to the Convention may put forward two representatives selected by the observers themselves. PLANALP meets at least once a year in the country that holds the chair. During the reporting period the members of PLANALP met four times trying to implement PLANALP's mandate. An administrative secretariat assists the platform. In 2007 and 2008, the administrative secretariat was affiliated to the secretariat of PLANAT Switzerland. Other contracts can be concluded if needed.

Main objectives of PLANALP:

- ♦ Discuss concepts for an integrated reduction of natural hazards
- ♦ Identify "best practices"
- ♦ Implement the subsequent measures
- ♦ Intensify the cross-border exchange of experiences

Activities emanate from these focal points.

Principal topics of PLANALP:

- ♦ integrated risk management
- ♦ early-warning systems
- ♦ sustainable protection concepts and protective measures
- ♦ event documentation
- ♦ strategies of reconstruction after a disaster
- ♦ risk dialogue



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Chair

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Bern/Switzerland

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Members, guests, and secretaries who left PLANALP in 2007/2008

Aleš Horvat	Avalanche and torrent control, Slovenia
Simone Hunziker	Federal Office for the Environment FOEN, Bern/Switzerland
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2. Activities 2007/2008

Formulation of the working programme 2007 - 2008

At PLANALP's meeting in March 2007, the working programme for 2007 – 2008 was formulated. The working programme is based on the mandate and the formalities drafted at the 8th Session of the Alpine Conference on 16 November 2004. The main aspect of this working programme is to write position papers dealing with different aspects of natural hazards. These position papers will be prepared by the different PLANALP members and the outcome of these papers should be recommendations for the Alpine Convention.

Projects

Essential work as regards the activities contents of PLANALP is made in the framework of a comprehensive focal point project financed by the INTERREG IIIB programme on "Alpine Space" and which is coordinated overall by Bavaria. More precisely PLANALP is involved in INTERREG IIIB Work Package 8 "Flexible Response Network" (WP8) on "Climate change, impacts and adaptation strategies in the Alpine Space ClimChAlp". WP 8 aims at an in-depth analysis of current management tools and practices in the Alpine countries for dealing with natural hazards. A demonstration software was developed to improve the efficiency of the database for the flexible response network.

Exchange of information

Over the whole first and second period, the exchange of members' know-how was of prime importance. This meant that a good deal of time during PLANALP meetings, but also between meetings via e-mail and internet was dedicated to this task.

An area with all current documents and information is available at www.planat.ch. There is also a restricted area for inter-member communication between meetings.



3. Subjects of the Platform meetings 2007/2008

March 8, 2007

4th PLANALP meeting, Opfikon-Glattbrugg/Switzerland

At the 4th meeting the long term working programme was discussed and adopted. It was decided that position papers will be prepared by the different PLANALP members for the following themes:

1. Residual risk arising from natural hazards (by the Austrian PLANALP members)
2. Adaptation to climate change (by the German PLANALP members)
3. Risk dialog: information & education of the public (by the French PLANALP members)
4. Land use (by the Italian PLANALP members).

The result of these position papers should be recommendations for the Alpine Convention. Moreover, due to the fact that the Alpine Convention is preparing a climate action plan which deals also with the impact of climate change on natural hazards, PLANALP decided to be involved in this climate action plan.

September 6, 2007

5th PLANALP meeting, Zurich/Switzerland

During this meeting the first drafts of the position papers were presented and discussed. Moreover, some results of work package 8 (WP8) – INTERREG IIIB-Projekt ClimChAlp were presented and their meaning for PLANALP was discussed.

May 16, 2008

6th PLANALP meeting, Zurich/Switzerland

On the basis of the position papers, main recommendations for each topic were formulated. Additionally, results of work package 8 (WP8) – INTERREG IIIB-Projekt ClimChAlp, as well as the launch of its succeeding program AdaptAlp, were discussed. Moreover, the situation about natural hazards in the new PLANALP member state Slovenia was presented.

October 29, 2008

7th PLANALP meeting, Munich/Germany

Between the 6th and the 7th meeting, the recommendations were integrated in the position papers and key messages for community authorities were worked out. During the meeting, these papers were discussed and adopted for the attention of the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention.

Moreover, Thomas De Lannoy presented the work of the European Commission in the field of civil protection and natural hazards. A final discussion about the Climate Action Plan took place in order to make comments towards the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention during their next meeting in November.

As usual, the exchange of information by the PLANALP members was very important in all the meetings. The last meeting in 2008 took place on October 29 in Munich.



4. Projects

4.1 Collaboration with Work Package 8 “Flexible Response Network” (WP8) of the INTERREG IIIB “Climate change, impacts and adaptation strategies in the Alpine Space ClimChAlp”

WP 8 was intended to achieve an in-depth analysis of current management tools and practices on the part of the Alpine countries in dealing with natural hazards. Not only national and regional administrative structures in charge of preventing / managing natural hazards will be studied and compared, but also transnational approaches.

The different outcomes of WP8 are:

- A transnational network between Bavaria, Vorarlberg (including BMFL), South-Tyrol, Rhône-Alpes, Valle d'Aosta, Piemonte, Switzerland
- A data platform for best practices and organizational/legal information etc.
- A strategy report “flexible response network 2010”
- An expert hearing – topic: flood protection and climate change
- Publication of the results of the expert hearing, Bozen 2007 (several versions for the different target audiences; Climate change in the alps - be prepared for the unexpected)
- Contribution to the final report: "ClimChAlp" INTERREG III B Alpine Space - Common Strategic Paper"

AdaptAlp is the follow-up project of ClimChalp. The AdaptAlp proposal was submitted at the beginning of 2008. The kickoff-meeting of the project took place on September 18th, 2008.

4.2 Communication

Exchange of information

One of the main objectives of PLANALP is/was to intensify the cross-border exchange of experiences. During the last period the members of PLANALP have cultivated and intensified an intensive exchange of information at the meetings. They have offered their experience and knowledge in the field of **Alpine risk management**, risk analysis and integrated risk management in their country/region. The members have also presented examples of particular projects and shown successful protection strategies and preventive security concepts, databases for natural processes and hazards of their country/region.

Between meetings members communicate via e-mail and internet. Important information between meetings was forwarded by the PLANALP secretariat to all members. Furthermore, the website, www.planat.ch, has a restricted area containing all current documents and information of the Platform on Natural Hazards.



PLANALP on the internet

In addition to the restricted area on the website, there is also an area accessible to the public containing media releases, activity reports, working programmes and PLANALP publications.

5. Outlook

The Platform on Natural Hazards of the Alpine Convention plays an important part in the Alpine Convention as a whole. On the one hand, this is due to specialist know-how in the field of risk prevention, cross-border exchanges and any necessary joint measures on the part of the contracting parties. On the other, the contracting parties see the platform as a vehicle through which to raise the profile of the Alpine Convention and its protocols. PLANALP has a direct influence on various protocols, e.g. mountain forests, spatial planning, natural protection and landscape conservation, tourism and energy. The platform has the opportunity to demonstrate concrete possibilities for action that go beyond legal requirements alone.

Given climate change and its particular impact on mountain areas, the topic is likely to remain an important one regardless of who chairs the Alpine Conference.

In order to continue the projects already under way and due to the reasons outlined above, the members of PLANALP submit a request to the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention to extend the platform's mandate. The new mandate bases on the mandate of this reporting period and the details for the new mandate were worked out during PLANALP's October 2008 meeting. It is proposed that Switzerland chairs the Platform on Natural Hazards of the Alpine Convention.

Platform on Natural Hazards of the Alpine Convention PLANALP

by

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