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ACTIVITY REPORT 2005/2006



**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 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, a 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. An administrative secretariat assists the platform for the time being. Other contracts can be concluded if needed. In 2005 and 2006, the administrative secretariat was affiliated to the secretariat of PLANAT Switzerland.

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

Chair

Andreas Götz

Vice-Director Federal Office for Water and Geology (FDWG), Biel/Switzerland, since 1 January 2006; Vice-Director Federal Office for the Environment FOEN, Bern/Switzerland

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Emanuel Banzer	Tiefbauamt, Abt. Rufen und Gewässer, Vaduz/Principality of Liechtenstein
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Branko Dervodel	Ministrstvo za obrambo RS, Ljubljana/Slovenia
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2. Activities 2005/2006

Formation of the Platform on Natural Hazards of the Alpine Convention

The relevant ministers of the parties to the Alpine Convention appointed the Platform on Natural Hazards at the 8th Alpine Conference on 16 November 2004. Switzerland was first to hold the chair of PLANALP in 2005 and 2006. The first meeting, which served as an informal brainstorming session, was held in Zurich/Switzerland in March 2005 at which PLANALP's objectives, organisation, working methods and the question of a secretariat were discussed. Other topics included task sharing with the secretariat of the Alpine Convention, cooperation with NGOs as well as financing.

In spring 2005, the contracting parties to the Alpine Convention selected representatives to participate in PLANALP. Provision was made for a maximum of two representatives (national and/or regional) to participate per contracting party. Observers to the Alpine Convention were also invited to delegate two representatives selected by the observers themselves.

Furthermore, it was decided that an administrative secretariat would assist the platform for the time being. The administrative secretariat was affiliated to the secretariat of PLANAT Switzerland.

Formulation of the working programme 2005 - 2006

At PLANALP's first meetings in November 2005 and March 2006, the working programme for 2005 – 2006 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 Permanent Committee of the Alpine Conference adopted PLANALP's working programme for 2005 – 2006 in April 2006.

Initialisation of work

PLANALP began its project work at the start of May 2006.

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.

At its 3rd meeting PLANALP formulated its long term working programme for the attention of the Permanent Committee of Alpine Convention.

Exchange of information

Over the whole first 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 2005/2006

23 March 2005

Informal brainstorming meeting, Zurich/Switzerland

The following points were covered:

- objectives of PLANALP;
- organisation of PLANALP;
- members of PLANALP;
- working method and secretariat of PLANALP;
- task sharing with the secretariat of the Alpine Convention;
- cooperation with NGOs;
- first activities;
- finances.

22 November 2005

1st PLANALP meeting, Konolfingen/Switzerland

There were three important parts to the meeting: drawing up the PLANALP working programme for the period 2005 and 2006. In addition to getting to know each other, the checking of the details of Work Package 8 – Interreg IIIB with the future project partners was another important aspect, as was the exchange of information by the PLANALP members.

24 March 2006

2nd PLANALP meeting, Zurich/Switzerland

The main results of the meeting were the agreement on the PLANALP working programme for the period 2005 and 2006, as well as mapping out expectations concerning the Work Package 8 “Flexible Response Network” (WP8) of the Interreg IIIB project “ClimChAlp – Climate Change, Impacts and Adaptation Strategies in the Alpine Space”. This time the exchange of information by PLANALP members focussed on the floods of August 2005.

8 September 2006

3rd PLANALP meeting, Zurich/Switzerland

At the 3rd meeting the long term working programme was discussed and adopted. Members also agreed to extend PLANALP's mandate and adopted the activity report for the period 2005 and 2006 for the attention of the Permanent Committee of the Alpine Convention. Again the exchange of information by PLANALP members was very important.

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 is 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. In WP8, the project partners are seeking to produce the following products by the end of the project:

- Successful practice examples on a “natural hazard tour” through the Alps (some guidelines for the selection of successful “good practice” examples are in discussion).
- Database to obtain an overview of the organisations and their responsibilities on a national, regional and community level in dealing with natural hazard risk management as a working tool for the network.
- Recommendations for future natural hazard prevention work in the Alpine countries (results should be included in WP9).

A demonstration software was developed to improve the efficiency of a common data structure for the flexible response network: www.grsxnet.ch/planalp/index_2.php (see appendix). The data base should be finished by mid of October 2006.

4.2 Communication

Exchange of information

One of the main objectives of PLANALP is to intensify the cross-border exchange of experiences. The members of PLANALP have cultivated 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

Discussions at the first meeting of PLANALP showed that there was some demand to open up certain documents to the public. The secretariat of the Platform on Natural Hazards had repeatedly been asked to make some documents available online. 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.

Media release 9 May 2006

On 9 May 2006 the permanent secretariat of the Alpine Convention published a media release concerning the working programme for the period 2005 and 2006 and the beginning of project work of PLANALP.

Publication

Documentation of Natural Disasters

This manual is designed as a handout for courses as well as being a reference book for field work. The publication emerges in the framework of the INTERREG-Project IIIb "DIS-Alp – Disaster Information System of Alpine Regions" and is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The documentation is not originally elaborated by PLANALP. But PLANALP will make a contribution as editor for publishing this manual to a wider public. In future provision is made for publishing only documents of PLANALP itself.

5. Outlook

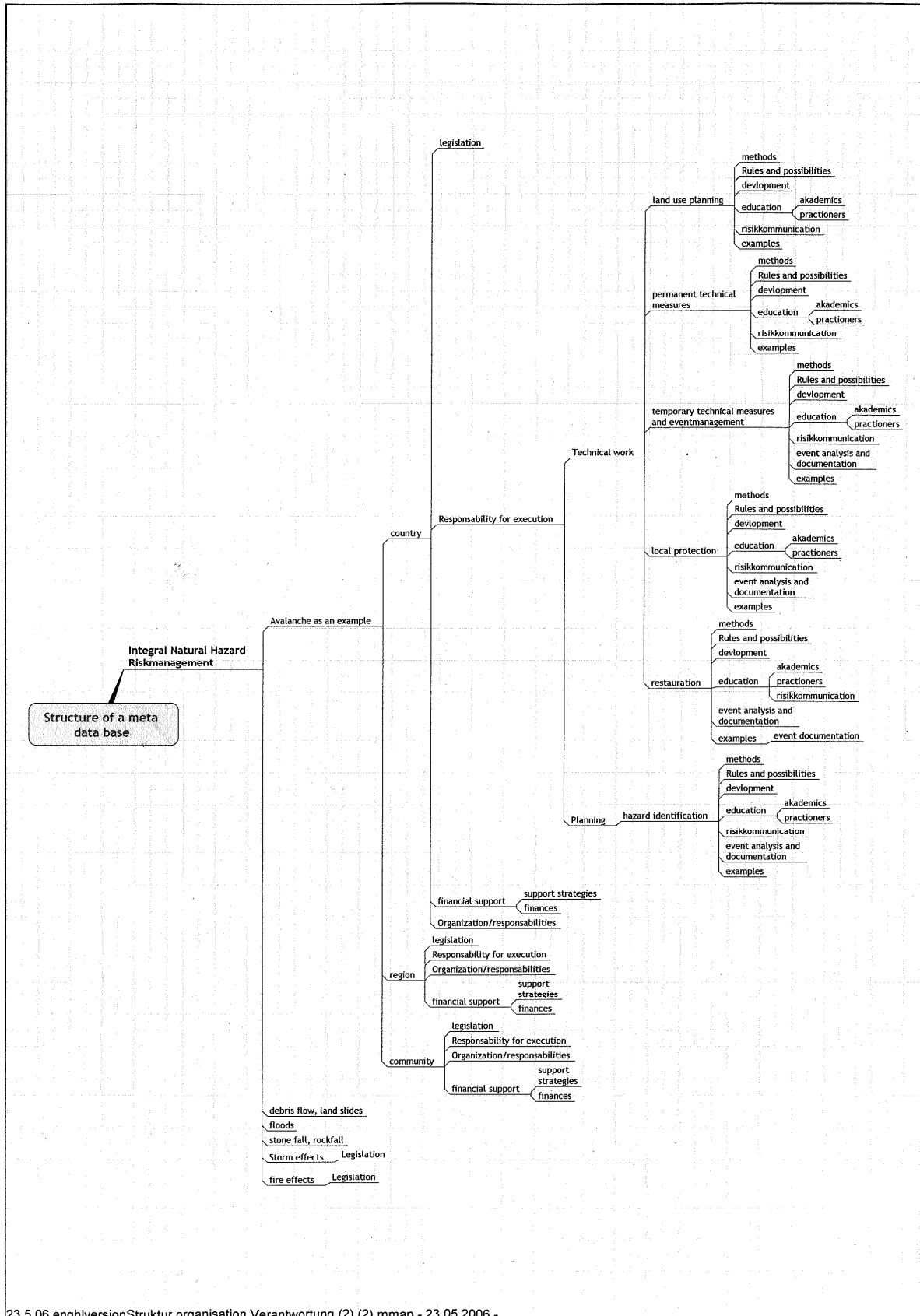
The Platform on Natural Hazards of the Alpine Convention plays an important part in the Alpine Convention as a whole. On the one hand, this is due to specialist know-how in the field of risk prevention, cross-border exchanges and any necessary joint measures on the part of the contracting parties. On 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. It is proposed that Switzerland chair the Platform on Natural Hazards of the Alpine Convention.

From 2007, the platform intends to start the long term working programme in order to implement the measures developed during the first working period.

6. Appendix



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