

# PLATFORM ON NATURAL HAZARDS OF THE ALPINE CONVENTION PLANALP



Historical flood in August 2005, Bern, Switzerland (Picture: Simone Hunziker, FOEN)

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

**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 8<sup>th</sup> 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. It is 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:**

#### **First priority:**

- ◆ integrated risk management
- ◆ early-warning systems
- ◆ risk dialogue

#### **Second priority:**

- ◆ sustainable protection concepts and protective measures
- ◆ event documentation
- ◆ strategies of reconstruction after a disaster

## 2. Members



Upper row from left to right: A. Bianchini, I. Roblek, J.-M. Bernard, A. Loipersberger, P. Frei, R. Hornich, J. Papež.  
 Lower row from left to right: G. Giannella, M. Patek, G. Luciani, A. Goetz (Chair), C. Guggisberg, F. Gillet, A. Leutwiler

### Chair

**Andreas Götz** Vice-Director, Federal Office for the Environment FOEN, Bern/Switzerland

### Members

**Wolfgang Burhenne** International Union for the Conservation of Nature IUCN  
**Jean-Marc Bernard** Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Territorial Development, Paris/France  
**Thomas De Lannoy** European Commission, Bruxelles/Belgium  
**Peter Frei** Bayer. Staatsministerium für Umwelt, Gesundheit und Verbraucherschutz, München/Germany  
**Gianluigi Giannella** Ministry of the Environment, Land and Sea, Rome/Italy  
**François Gillet** Expert, Grenoble/France  
**Andreas Götz** Assistant Managing Director CIPRA International, Schaan/Principality of Liechtenstein  
**Claudia Guggisberg** Federal Office for Spatial Development, Bern/Switzerland  
**Rudolf Hornich** Amt der Steiermärkischen Landesregierung, Schutzwasserwirtschaft und Bodenwasserhaushalt, Graz/Austria  
**Anton Loipersberger** Bavarian Environment Agency, Munich/Germany



Jože **Papež**                      Avalanche and torrent control, Slovenia  
Maria **Patek**                      Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management  
  (BMLFUW), Vienna/Austria  
Igor **Roblek**                     Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, Innsbruck/Austria  
Eutizio **Vittori**                 High Institute for Environment Protection and Research ISPRA, Rome/Italy  
Stephan **Wohlwend**            Amt für Wald, Natur und Landschaft, Vaduz/Principality of Liechtenstein

#### **Guests**

Andrea **Bianchini**             European Academy of Research, Bolzano/Bozen / Italy  
Martin **Grambow**             Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment, Public Health and Consumer  
  Protection, Munich/Germany  
Giacomo **Luciani**             European Academy of Research, Bolzano/Bozen / Italy  
Murièle **Millot**                Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Territorial  
  Development, Paris/France  
Andreas **Zischg**               European Academy of Research, Bolzano/Bozen / Italy

#### **PLANALP is assisted by**

Peter **Greminger**             Federal Office for the Environment FOEN, Bern/Switzerland  
Silvia **Jost**                     Federal Office for Spatial Development, Bern/Switzerland

#### **Secretariat**

Astrid **Leutwiler**             Federal Office for the Environment FOEN, Bern/Switzerland



### 3. 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting PLANALP formulated its long term working programme for the attention of the Permanent Committee of Alpine Convention.

#### ***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](http://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.

## **4. 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 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.

### ***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](http://www.planat.ch). There is also a restricted area for inter-member communication between meetings.

### ***Hotspot papers***

PLANALP formulated a position paper with four fields of action:

- Residual risk arising from natural hazards
- Adaptation to climate change
- Risk dialogue: information & education of the public
- Land use

On the basis of these position papers, recommendations were formulated to the attention of the X. Alpine Convention of March 2009. 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.

## 5. Projects

### 5.1 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.

### 5.2 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 makes a contribution as editor for publishing this manual to a wider public.



## 6. 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.

## 7. Further Information:

### Secretariat of the Platform on Natural Hazards of the Alpine Convention

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