

Press Release

Joint strategies for climate-afflicted Alpine Region

Natural hazards at a time of climate change – results of the AdaptAlp transnational project are presented and discussed at an international Closing Conference

Over the course of the last hundred years, the temperature in the Alps has risen by 1.5°C. This is twice the global average. The inhabitants of this highly sensitive ecosystem are already experiencing the consequences of this rise in temperature. They have to cope with increasingly frequent incidents caused by natural hazards such as floods, debris flow or avalanches. What actions can be taken jointly by Alpine countries to deal with the consequences of climate change? To what extent can the Alps be made into a safer place for humans to live? These were the fundamental questions underlying the AdaptAlp project, and its findings were presented in Munich during the international Closing Conference on July 6th 2011.

Further to the 16 project partners from ministries, local authorities, research institutes and NGOs in the Alpine countries, numerous other interested parties from administrative, scientific and practical fields were present to share in this concluding event. The agenda featured technical presentations and panel discussions with representatives of the EU commission as well as national and regional coordinators and decision-makers.

During the course of the three year project, data were collected systematically over the entire Alpine region, which were subsequently evaluated and analysed, charting, for example the development of discharge intensities and landslides. The information collected is being exploited to improve models for climate prognosis and impact analysis within the Alpine region. So, for example, there were reports which, applying the very latest climate scenarios, described the changes in the hydrological conditions in the river catchment areas of the Inn, the Alpine Rhine, the Soča, the Upper Rhone and the Adda. The transnational partnership also served to break down language barriers as well as develop unified methods of hazard mapping. The collaboration between the administrative offices of all the Alpine countries (and additionally those of Spain and England) resulted in the compilation of a glossary which makes more accessible the geological concepts dealing with natural hazard management, thus simplifying communication amongst participating partners.

An additional bonus, reaching beyond the scientific work, was the enhanced awareness of natural hazards in times of climate change which was achieved by reaching a wider audience. Information leaflets and initiatives were not just aimed at experts, representatives of the communities and politicians, but also addressed children and other young people. The information portal 'Biber Berti' ('Berti the Beaver') provides an easy way for teachers and children to find out more about natural hazards and climate change.

Additionally, in the so-called "Common Strategic Paper" (CSP), there is a summary of all the project results which are designed to support political decisions. The CSP lists the most important recommendations of the project partners. Apart from project activities, and background information ensuring a better understanding of climate change scenarios and risk management, this final



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publication also contains ten examples of adaptation strategies implemented in the Alpine region. The CSP recommendations are all based on well-founded scientific data compiled and collated by the project partners from all Alpine regions. The document was prepared during workshops run under the scientific aegis of the European Academy of Bolzano, in close collaboration with the leading project partner, the Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Public Health.

Full details of the project and its outcomes are available on our website: www.adaptalp.org.