



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 08.01.1997
COM(96) 713 final

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION
TO THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Establishment within the JRC of
a section to take on the task of
Alps Observation and Information System Coordination Unit

The Commission wishes to inform the Council and Parliament that it has undertaken to set up a section within the Environmental Monitoring Unit of the Joint Research Centre's Environment Institute at Ispra. The section's task will be to coordinate the activity of the Alps Observation and Information System (AOIS) for and within the framework of the Convention on the protection of the Alps.

1. Background

The Convention on the protection of the Alps ('Alpine Convention') was signed by the seven countries of the Alpine Arc (Austria, Germany, France, Italy, former Yugoslavia, Switzerland and Liechtenstein) and the European Community on 7 November 1991 in Salzburg, Austria. An additional Protocol allows the future accession of the Principality of Monaco. Former Yugoslavia has been replaced by Slovenia.

The Convention entered into force on 9 March 1995. The Contracting Parties are Austria, Germany, France, Slovenia, Liechtenstein and the European Community.¹

It is a framework Convention aiming to ensure the protection and sustainable development of the Alpine range and the consistency of the Contracting Parties' policies in this area. Aside from the adoption of specific Protocols, the instruments for its implementation include a joint effort in research and systematic monitoring (Article 3) and collaboration and exchange of information in the legal, economic, scientific and technical fields (Article 4).

With a view to implementing these two Articles, the Ministerial Conference of the Convention, held in Chambéry on 20 December 1994, decided, on the basis of an expert report, that an Alps Observation and Information System should be set up, to be known as the 'Alps Observatory'. The Conference entrusted the details of its tasks and configuration to an Alps Observation Working Party, the scientific and technical running of which was left to the JRC.

On the basis of a report from the Working Party, the Ministerial Conference of the Alpine Convention, meeting in Brdo (Slovenia) on 27 February 1996, adopted the general organizational structure, based on a network of national Communication Centres and a Coordination Unit, and invited the Commission to accept the task of running the Coordination Unit through the JRC.

The logic behind this request to the Commission was that the JRC is particularly, if not uniquely, suited to the task: it is centrally located in the Alpine Arc, enjoys an international status guaranteeing its neutrality, and has the requisite scientific competence thanks to its long experience in research and the collection of environmental data, etc.

¹ Decision 96/191/EC, OJ L 61, 12.3.1996, p. 31.

The Commission felt this task accorded fully, both scientifically and institutionally, with the JRC's mission and current programme, and so agreed to the request. This contribution to the work of the Alpine Convention is in line with the European Community's participation in the Convention, and enjoys surety in the obligation upon the other Contracting Parties to set up national Communication Centres and cover their costs.

II. Implementation

Under the terms of the 1997-98 programme now being drawn up, the AOIS's activity will include:

- The production of environmental indicators (state, pressure, responses) and socio-economic indicators. These will form the basis of reports on the state of the environment and the socio-economic situation of the Alpine region and/or meet the specific requirements of the specialized Protocols.
- The creation of an Alpine Research Information System, to facilitate the transfer of research findings to potential users.
- The creation of a data telecommunication network for the collection, organization (in the form of decentralized database systems) and dissemination of information.

Under the current terms of the AOIS operating rules now being discussed by the Contracting Parties within the Alps Observation Working Party, the AOIS will be based on decentralized organization and the Coordination Unit will, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, be confined to essential tasks at central level, including:

- production of preliminary drafts for the multiannual activity programmes and for the plans implementing the approved programmes;
- coordination of the national Communication Centres' execution of the approved programmes;
- collation of findings in forms suitable for dissemination; coordination of dissemination;
- performance of essential common tasks, such as liaison with the European Environment Agency, implementation and management of the data communication network, management of studies or services commissioned from third parties, etc.

The JRC will set up and run the AOIS Coordination Unit through existing budgetary provisions, using the resources allocated to the institutional scientific and technical support activities of the specific RTD programme the JRC has to carry out for the European Community (1995-98).

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

1 TITLE OF OPERATION

Creation of a department to take on the task of Alps Observation and Information System Coordination Unit

2 BUDGET HEADINGS INVOLVED

Joint Research Centre:

Article B6-111 Persons associated with the institution

Article B6-121 Resources

Article B6-2131 Environment and climate

3 LEGAL BASES

- Council Decision of 15 December 1994 adopting a specific programme for research and technological development, including demonstration, to be carried out for the European Community, on the one hand, by the JRC and, on the other, by means of activities within the framework of a competitive approach and intended for scientific and technical support to Community policies (1995-98) (OJ L 361, 31.12.1994, p. 114).
- Council Decision 96/191/EC of 26 February 1996 concerning the conclusion of the Convention on the protection of the Alps (Alpine Convention) (OJ L 61, 12.3.1996, p. 31).

4 DESCRIPTION OF OPERATION

4.1 General objective

The Convention on the protection of the Alps ('Alpine Convention') entered into force on 9 March 1995. The Contracting Parties are Austria, Germany, France, Slovenia, Liechtenstein and the European Community.¹

It is a framework Convention aiming to ensure the protection and sustainable development of the Alpine range and the consistency of the Contracting Parties' policies in this area. Aside from the adoption of specific Protocols, the instruments for its implementation include a joint effort in research and

¹ Decision 96/191/EC, OJ L 61, 12.3.1996, p. 31.

systematic monitoring (Article 3) and collaboration and exchange of information in the legal, economic, scientific and technical fields (Article 4).

With a view to implementing these two Articles, the Ministerial Conference of the Convention decided in December 1994 that an Alps Observation and Information System should be set up, and entrusted the details of its tasks and configuration to a Working Party, the scientific and technical running of which was left to the JRC.

On 27 February 1996, on the basis of the Working Party's report, the Ministerial Conference of the Alpine Convention adopted the general organizational structure, based on a network of national Communication Centres and a Coordination Unit, and invited the Commission to accept the task of running the Coordination Unit through the JRC.

The logic behind this request was that the JRC is particularly suited to the task, thanks to its location in the Alpine Arc, an international status guaranteeing its neutrality, and its scientific competence in research and the collection of environmental data, etc.

4.2 Period covered and arrangements for renewal or extension

This proposal only covers the financial years 1997 and 1998. If future framework programmes provide for the JRC to continue its work in the same technical area a proposal could be put forward to extend the coordination functions.

5 CLASSIFICATION OF EXPENDITURE OR REVENUE

NCE/DA

6 TYPE OF EXPENDITURE OR REVENUE

Direct JRC expenditure from the abovementioned budget headings.

These appropriations are intended to cover expenditure on staff and resources for the department concerned, as well as appropriations intended specifically for the task, such as:

- . sundry equipment
- . operating appropriations
- . maintenance of installations and equipment.

7 FINANCIAL IMPACT

The JRC already performs the majority of the tasks in question through its participation in the "Alps Observatory" Working Party (ending on 1 January 1997). The department is to be set up and the necessary personnel assigned to it both to raise their profile (see point 9.2 below) and to formalize a task which is taking on a more permanent character (97-98). However, as this work will continue to come under the same budget heading as before, the creation of the department will in itself have no additional financial repercussions for the JRC.

7.1 Method of calculating total cost

The method is the same as for the JRC's other activities: the costs (in staff appropriations and specific appropriations) of material, administrative and technical support are divided according to the number of persons assigned to the activities in question.

In accordance with the methodology selected by the JRC during the preparation of the 1997 PDB, allowance has been made for an annual increase of 3% in personnel and general service costs.

7.2 Itemised breakdown of cost

values in ECU 1 000

Breakdown	1997	1998	1999 and beyond	TOTAL
Personnel appropriations	636	645	p.m.	1 281
Appropriations - direct	366	370	p.m.	736
Appropriations - general costs	118	120	p.m.	238
TOTAL	1 120	1 135	p.m.	2 255

7.3 Indicative schedule of appropriations

values in ECU 1 000

	1997	1998	1999 and beyond	TOTAL
Commitment appropriations	1 120	1 135	p.m.	2 255
Payment appropriations				
1997	907			907
1998	213	920		1 133
1999 and beyond		215	p.m.	215
TOTAL	1 120	1 135	p.m.	2 255

8 FRAUD PREVENTION MEASURES

The JRC's usual internal audit and control procedures will apply, along with those of the Commissions Directorate-General for Financial Control with their system of prior authorization for all expenditure. The Commission's usual procedures (invitations to tender, examination and comparison of tenders and, where necessary, consultation of the CCAM) will apply to any service contracts with outside companies.

9 ELEMENTS OF COST-EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS

9.1 Specific and quantified objectives; target population

- . Coordination of national activities relating to the Alps Observation and Information System;
- . Coordination with activities relating to the Alps carried out by the European Environment Agency and other international bodies;
- . Dissemination of information.

9.2 Grounds for the operation

The task accords fully, both scientifically and institutionally, with the JRC's mission and current programme. The contribution to the work of the Alpine Convention is in line with the European Community's participation in the Convention, and enjoys surety in the obligation upon the other Contracting Parties to set up national Communication Centres and cover their costs. In addition, this activity will provide the JRC with information useful to it in its other research into environmental impact.

9.3 Monitoring and evaluation of the operation

These activities will be analysed and evaluated like the JRC's other tasks. They will be submitted annually for approval by the JRC's Board of Governors in the form of work sheets. They will also undergo special annual evaluation as an S/T support activity for the Commission.

10 ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENDITURE (PART A, SECTION III OF THE BUDGET)

Since all the planned activities come under chapter B6 of the budget there will be no impact on administrative expenditure.

ISSN 0254-1475

COM(96) 713 final

DOCUMENTS

EN

14 03 01 15

Catalogue number : CB-CO-96-723-EN-C

ISBN 92-78-13948-3

Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

L-2985 Luxembourg