

ISCAR`s contributions to the Alpine Convention: Principles of work

In 2000 the Alpine Conference recognised ISCAR as official observer of the Alpine Convention. The signatory partner institutions of the ISCAR Convention (1999) are the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Swiss Academy of Sciences, Italian Ministry for Regional Affairs/Mountain University of Edolo, and French University of Grenoble & Irstea. Each of them delegates 2 competent scientists from various disciplines to assure the interdisciplinary composition of the Committee. The presidency of ISCAR changes every 4 years. ISCAR partner institutions are in contact with national networks of scientists and national administrations.

It was expected that ISCAR will promote the dialogue between science and policy and offer a network of scientists willing to cooperate in bodies of the Alpine Convention and to take up research topics in the interest of the Convention. In respect to these expectations, ISCAR developed manifold activities (e.g. the bi-annual ForumAlpinum, thematic workshops, research agenda to the MAP 2005-2010) and cooperated actively in bodies of the Alpine Convention (e.g. by initiating the Evian declaration of the observers, by co-organising the first water conference in Innsbruck, etc.).

The advantages of having the support of a non-governmental observer providing an international and independent scientific expertise into the processes of the Alpine Convention are potentially great, but, to reach real benefits, a proper way of working has to be defined and accepted by the main actors of such processes.

That`s why ISCAR would like to evidence some principles of its work related to the Alpine Convention, based on established practices of international scientific policy advice.

With reference to the following principles of work, ISCAR expresses its interest and attendance to cooperate with the Alpine Convention on topics and tasks of common interest, and based on corresponding specific agreements.

Contribute in providing scientific support to the Alpine Convention

– Cooperation of ISCAR delegates in Working Groups, Platforms and other thematic bodies of the Alpine Convention:

The ISCAR Committee delegates scientists to bodies of the AC which are thematically well qualified and personally interested. Criteria for qualification are: normally engaged at a University, active in respective research programmes or projects, publications, overview on the respective topic, consider all alpine countries (Remark: To be an ISCAR Committee member is no precondition). Delegates report once a year to the ISCAR Committee for discussing further topic related contributions (consultations of specialists, organisation of workshops, assessments, etc.).

– Cooperation with SOIA:

The responsible person for SOIA from the Permanent Secretariat of AC is invited to all ISCAR meetings and provided with all information distributed to ISCAR Committee members to assure transparency towards the Alpine Convention. On the other hand and if asked for, ISCAR Committee gives advice and contribute to SOIA concerning research issues (planning of workshops, scientific awards, etc.).

– Consultation of documents distributed by the Standing Committee of the Alpine Convention:

ISCAR is focusing its efforts on dossiers with questions concerning scientific evidence of policy or concerning science itself. Normally ISCAR office is following the dossiers and answering to the consultations. In case of important documents, the ISCAR Committee is asked for inputs.

Support scientific integrity

– Review processes for documents of the Alpine Convention using scientific data (e.g. RSA, reports of working groups):

External (independent) review processes should assure or improve the scientific quality and integrity (use of available information, interpretation of results) of AC reports. On demand, ISCAR can support or organise scientific review processes by proposing experts respective to the content of reports or parts of them using its international scientific networking and existing international expert data bases.

– Provide on demand scientific experts in the field of alpine / mountain research to the Alpine Convention:

Based on its international scientific networking with the alpine and mountain research groups, ISCAR is able to suggest lists of referenced and independent experts for each given topic (to be engaged by the Alpine Convention).

Promote topics of relevance for the Alps and in the interest of the Alpine Convention

– Organise scientific workshops for promoting research topics relevant for the Alpine Convention:

ISCAR is cooperating with scientists to develop and prioritise future research topics with relevance for the Alps. Therefore, ISCAR is organising (with partners) singular or series of scientific workshops on specific topics mainly coming from activities of the Alpine Convention (e.g. Chartreuse workshop on regional development 2011, development of a research agenda to the MAP 2005-2010). The decision, if and on which topic a workshop (series) is organised, is taken by the ISCAR Committee. Scientists for workshops are mobilised in all Alpine countries and throughout all needed disciplines in an open process: on one hand important specialists are contacted directly, on the other hand workshops are announced openly, so that any interested scientist can participate.

– Create open forums for debating future challenges of the Alps:

ISCAR provides open international forums for a large public (science and society) to debate on current or future pan-alpine challenges in developing the Alps (as ForumAlpinum or with partners the AlpWeek). Moreover, critical issues for development are assessed by involving different stakeholders (as the assessment on the production of renewable energies in alpine protected areas in 2011). These forums are offered as (inspiring) opportunities to the Alpine Convention, for developing the dialogue with experts and Alpine stakeholders.

Milano/Bern, 1st March 2012 / ISCAR (Anna Giorgi, Thomas Scheurer)