

Foreword

LexALP has worked on the harmonisation of the legal terminology of the Alpine Convention in the field of spatial planning, covering the main subjects of sustainable development. More than five hundred terms in the Convention's languages (French, German, Italian and Slovenian) were harmonised. The project results will be very useful, not only for those who are institutionally concerned in the Alpine Convention, but also for professional translators and the broad public. One reason for this is that in a multilingual context precision in translation helps avoiding misunderstandings. This is important when dealing with sensitive political themes. Furthermore, experience shows that the harmonisation of the documents used during Alpine Convention meetings contributes to improve the efficiency of the meetings themselves, as a better quality of the translations helps focussing on substantive issues while avoiding purely linguistic discussions. In this regard, we can say that LexALP created an instrument which will improve the cooperation between the Alpine States.

The harmonisation of terms leads to fixed translation relations. The equivalence of terms ensures that equal rules for the protection and the sustainable development are applied throughout the entire Alpine Space, which is one of the objectives of the Alpine Convention.

Harmonised terms are, legally speaking, means of interpretation of legal provisions. In case of a multilateral treaty under international law with more than one official language such as the Alpine Convention, they contribute to a consistent implementation of the treaty in the whole area of application. For example, the Austrian Administrative Court interpreted the expression 'fragile area' used in Article 14 of the Soil Conservation Protocol by referring also to its French and Italian meaning. Nevertheless, harmonised terms cannot change the content of legal provisions.

My most sincere thanks go to the project team for its efforts. A broad use of the results achieved by LexALP would be most welcome, not least as they will help to better implement the Alpine Convention.

Marco Onida

Secretary General of the Alpine Convention