

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL

concerning Community participation in the negotiations on the framework
Convention on the protection of the Alps

Communication from the Commission to the Council concerning Community participation in the negotiations on the framework Convention on the protection of the Alps

1. In May 1989, the Federal Republic of Germany invited the other six Alpine countries (Switzerland, Austria, France, Italy, Yugoslavia and Liechtenstein) to an international conference to examine the problems involved in safeguarding and protecting the Alpine ecosystem, one of the most important in Europe, which is threatened in particular by the very rapid development of economic and social activity in the region.
2. After a series of preparatory meetings, a conference took place at ministerial level between 9 and 11 October 1989 in Berchtesgaden. It was attended by representatives of the seven Alpine countries and by the Commission.

The Berchtesgaden conference adopted:

- . a resolution calling for increased cooperation between the Alpine countries in a number of areas, including town and country planning, the environment (prevention of air pollution, soil protection, water management, conservation of nature and the countryside, waste management), tourism, agriculture, forestry, transport, energy and research and education;
 - . an initial work programme designed to pinpoint priorities for a group of senior civil servants entrusted with the task of implementing the resolution.
3. The priority tasks entrusted to the group of senior civil servants encompass in particular:
 - preparation of a draft framework Convention;
 - preparation of first drafts of binding provisions (protocols) in the following four areas:
 - . conservation of nature and the countryside (including water management);
 - . transport;
 - . tourism;
 - . mountain farming.

With these aims in mind the group of senior civil servants, chaired by Austria, set up a number of working parties with the task of assessing the situation and propose guidelines for the preparation of possible protocols.

These working parties are as follows:

Conservation of nature and the countryside:	chaired by the Federal Republic of Germany;
Transport:	chaired by Switzerland;
Mountain farming:	chaired by Italy;
Tourism:	chaired by France;
Town and country planning:	chaired by France.

5. Clearly, the framework Convention and at least some of the protocols envisaged will impose obligations in areas which fall within the Community's sphere of competence, such as agriculture, transport, nature conservation and tourism.
6. The next ministerial conference will be held in Vienna in the last three months of 1991 with Austria in the chair. It is planned to sign the framework Convention at this conference, and if possible one or more of the protocols.
7. Accordingly, the Commission recommends that the Council decide as follows:
 - the Community shall participate in the negotiations on the framework Convention on the protection of the Alps and the protocols thereto:
 - the Commission shall represent the Community's views in consultation with the Member States and in accordance with the attached guidelines.

A N N E X

The Commission must ensure that the draft Convention and the protocols thereto are compatible with the provisions of Community law and with the objectives of the common policies in general and of the environment policy in particular, and contain the appropriate clauses to enable the Community to become a contracting party.

The provisions contained in the framework convention must be drafted in a manner which does not prejudice in any way the negotiations on Alpine transit and the European Economic Area.

In the same way, talks on the protocol relating to transport problems, insofar as it could affect Alpine transit, must not begin until the negotiations begun in other arenas on matters such as alpine transit or the creation of a European Economic Area are sufficiently advanced to exclude any risk of interference.