



Interreg IIIB-Project, Alpine Space Programme, co-financed by the EU



This autumn numerous conferences deal with climate change issues (see page 7). This may suggest that global warming is the most urgent topic in the Alpine Space. Nevertheless, DIAMONT decided to concentrate on another key issue, namely on urbanisation processes, with a special focus on the relation between local centres in the Alpine valleys and their fringes. To compete with peri-Alpine metropolises they have to come to a fruitful cooperation which avoids wasting resources. In future, best practice examples may be funded by the latterly initiated Austrian programme on „Rural Development 2007 – 2013 (Grüner Pakt)“ which specifically comprises a chapter on the successful implementation of the Alpine Convention.

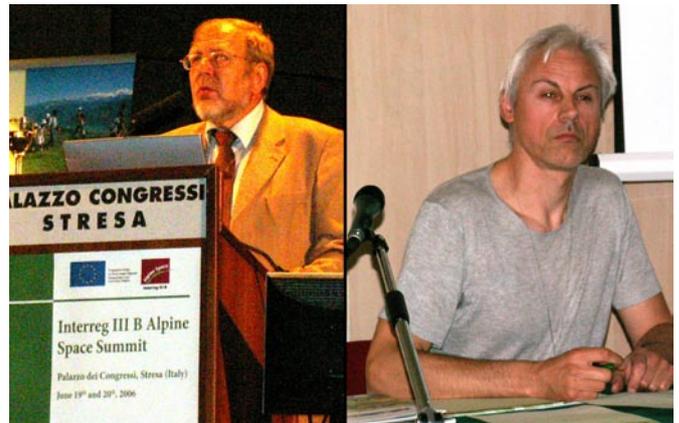
Participation of DIAMONT in the Alpine Space Summit in Stresa/I, 19th/20th of June

In June, the Managing Authority and the Joint Technical Secretariat organised a summit meeting to present the activities of the projects financed by the Alpine Space Programme. The close cooperation between DIAMONT, the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention and the national SOIA contact persons was presented as one of the success stories in the plenary session of the meeting.

Additional side events dealt with typical Alpine products, transport issues or natural hazards. DIAMONT coordinated a session on spatial development in the Alpine space: “Marginalisation versus urbanisation: How to achieve a balanced development in the Alpine space?” This side event was realised in cooperation with PUSEMOR, QUALIMA and GENDERALP.

The Alps are facing a significant polarisation of spatial development. Urban centres and suburban areas in the valley floors are growing whereas unfavourable areas are increasingly marginalised. Following different approaches, the four Interreg IIIB projects try to figure out how a balanced development could be achieved. DIAMONT, for example, attaches great importance to strengthen the cooperation between urban centres, its fringes and the remote mountainous areas. For PUSEMOR and QUALIMA it is likewise important to improve public services in sparsely populated areas. Broadband internet access and mobile nurseries shall be provided in remote areas. Cooperative efforts are needed to concentrate services in polyfunctional centres. Finally, it was highlighted by GENDERALP that instruments integrating the different needs of women and men have to be implemented.

Cooperating projects:
 PUSEMOR – www.pusemor.net
 QUALIMA – www.qualima.org
 GENDERALP – www.genderalp.com



Axel Borsdorf (left) presented DIAMONT in the plenary session of the Alpine Space Summit; Manfred Perlik (right) moderated the side event on spatial planning.



DIAMONT stand in Stresa.

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DIAMONTs` focus on urbanisation issues in the Alpine regions

The first half of DIAMONT project has already passed. What did we reach so far? One study (WP5) revealed the decreasing impacts of cultural differences on regional development in the Alps whereas another survey (WP6) dealt with present key questions in Alpine development, like the marginalisation of peripheral rural areas in contrast to urban growth, urging transport pressures as well as climate change and tourism issues. Considering the results of the expert's estimations in WP6 and the chosen phenomena forming the basis for the indicator selection in WP7, the DIAMONT Steering Committee decided to dedicate its further work to urbanisation processes in the Alps, in particular to the relation between local centres and their fringes. For the future development of the Alpine space traditional cultural issues will play a minor role (WP5). In contrast, the Alpine urban centres will have to position themselves in competition with peri-Alpine metropolises. Thus, it is decisive that they seek a fruitful cooperation – instead of competition – with their emerging fringes (suburban, peri-urban and post-suburban zones).

Competition between local centres may result in an ineffective use of financial resources (for investments, infrastructure), an impairment of natural resources (soil surface, air pollution, landscape aesthetics, natural habitats, etc.) or an increase of traffic (commuters, daily life needs). This may cause additional environmental impacts as well as changes of social structure and life quality. Cooperation and the wise spatial division of regional functions and services may help reducing existing problems and avoiding harmful developments. Provided that certain measures are taken, the development could be steered towards sustainability.

The local centres in the Alps represent an important link between metropolises and rural areas. The “Prospective Study” of the Alpine Space Interreg IIB Programme stressed the importance of investigations on the interrelation between those MEGAs (Metropolitan European Growth Areas) outside the Alps and the urban centres within the Alps. DIAMONT, however, decided to concentrate its work mainly on local centres and its fringes in the Alpine space as defined by the Alpine Convention. Even the bottom-up orientated approach with workshops applied in DIAMONT is only feasible up to a certain size of agglomeration. The important role of such small and medium towns („SMESTO“) has been underlined already in the ESPON Programme (European Spatial Planning Observation Network).

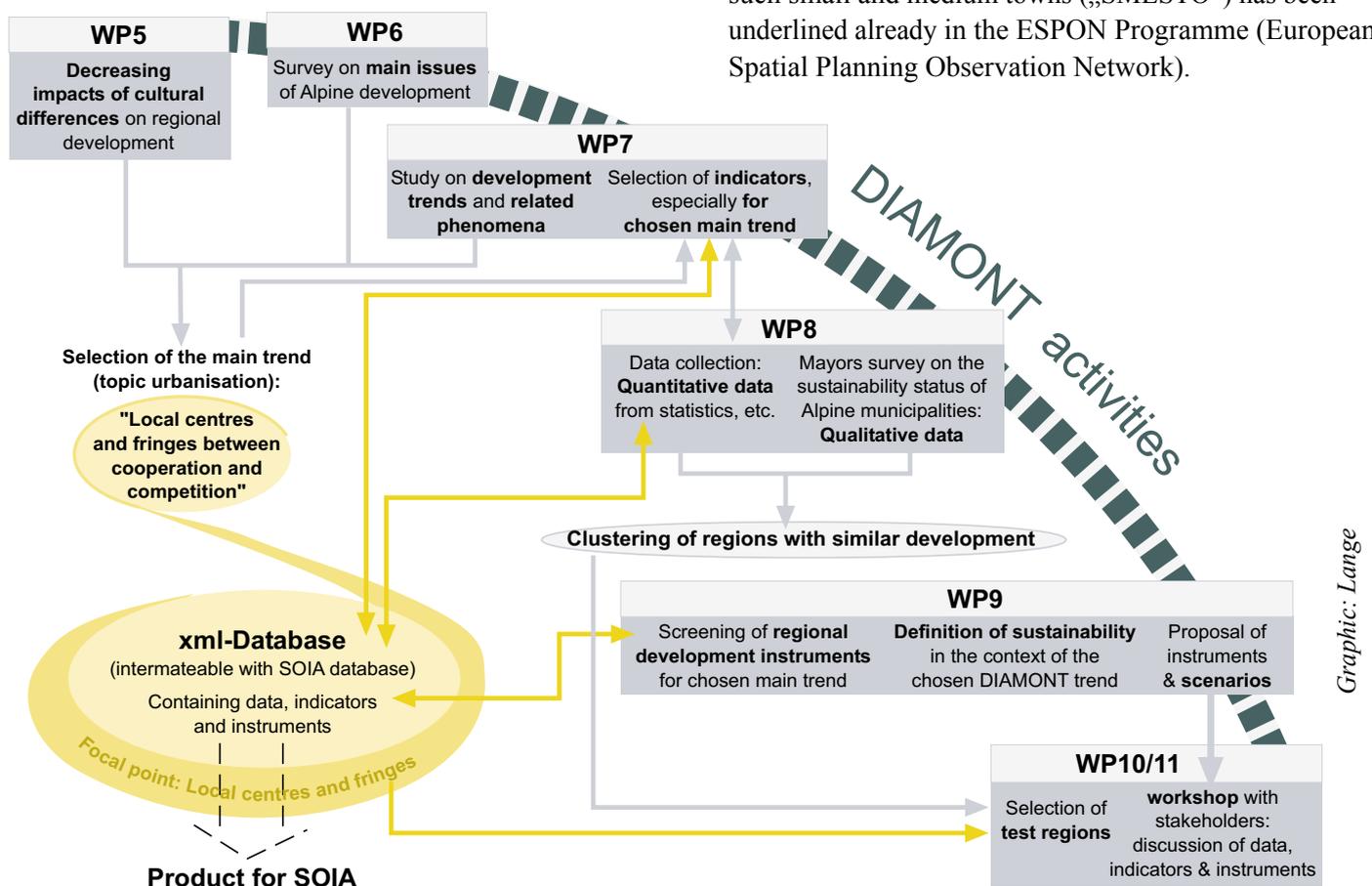


Fig. 1: Overview on the work steps and the team play in DIAMONT project.

Efforts to determine appropriate indicators and instruments for sustainable development will focus on the different characteristics of local centres in the Alpine regions. Some gain in importance as they are able to develop supra-regional functions (e.g. for international tourism) or are embedded in bigger and expanding urban regions (dynamic development types). Others are at least able to maintain their traditional central functions because they benefit from their isolated position within a low populated rural region far away from other competitive centres (stagnating development types). A third group is characterised by the decline of former key economic sectors which got meaningless in the national or global market (losing development types). It can be divided in either regions with no positive impulses at all or those with innovative initiatives as “starting points” for slowing or even turning the decline.

The presentation and discussion of all results with regional stakeholders in the test regions, foreseen for spring and autumn of next year, will reveal what measures seem the most appropriate ones to steer the overall development in the Alpine regions towards sustainability.

Definition of “local centres”

For a common understanding of the term “local centres” we followed the approach of the ESPON project to find a definition for small and medium sized towns (SMESTOs) valid on a pan-European level. In our project, we define “local centres” as “entities with less than 20.000 inhabitants within a continuous built-up area, a typical urban architecture, a good access to a wide array of networks and the proximity with specific functions”.

New DIAMONT collaborator

Caroline Pecher joined the DIAMONT team of the **EURAC** in Bolzano in July supporting her colleagues in the field of **environmental indicator calculation**.



Caroline Pecher

She just finished her studies in **Physical Geography** with main focus on Geo-informatics at the University of Augsburg and the TU Munich. During her studies she was already interested in (Alpine) environmental research. Therefore she was working as an undergraduate assistant at the University of Augsburg and the TU Munich as well as at the Institute of Meteorology and Climate Research – Atmospheric Environmental Research Division (IMK-IFU) at Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

After a one-year-lasting study-visit at the University of Trento when having dealt intensively with Informatics and the application of programming languages, she came to the European Academy of Bolzano in summer 2005. Within the framework of DIAMONT she was writing her diploma thesis on the development and application of GIS-based, environmental indicators within the alpine space, whose results will be introduced in WP8.

Steering towards sustainability

Elaboration of instruments stimulating sustainable regional development in the Alps (WP9)

Since the Earth Summit 1992 in Rio de Janeiro “sustainability” is the magic word related to development questions on local, regional and global level. By signing the Alpine Convention, eight countries and the European Union agreed on the preservation and the sustainable development of the Alps as a unique ecosystem within Europe. In several protocols basic objectives were specified which have to be achieved by the executing partners. Spatial planning, for example, should be harmonised with environmental requirements, the economy in the Alpine regions has to be strengthened and a balanced demographic development seems worthwhile.

In fact, signing a general declaration of intent is easier than taking the right measures to achieve the desired development in practice of an Alpine municipality. Following a logic approach first of all the specific problems and future challenges have to be analysed. In a second step concrete objectives shall be determined for each region. Finally, appropriate steps have to be taken to achieve these goals on regional level.

DIAMONT acts on such a logic. A Delphi survey recently revealed the main issues of Alpine development. One of these issues, the urbanisation processes in the Alps, in particular the competition and coopera-

tion between local centres and its fringes, was chosen to be studied in more detail in the course of the project. Whereas “Bosch & Partner” determines indicators to describe and observe the different characteristics and related problems of growing, stagnating or losing local centres in the Alps (WP7), the German consultant “ifuplan” will come up with an interpretation on what is meant by sustainable development in the context of these processes in the Alpine urban centres (WP9). This will be the basis for the definition of objectives and selection of instruments suitable to steer the development at municipality level. Planning instruments at regional level, economic incentives as well as legal instruments are types of feasible instruments for regional development. The DIAMONT partners will be responsible for the compilation of the most promising instruments for the respective country.

Together with information on indicators (WP7) and Alpine wide available data (WP8), the gathered instruments will be stored in a database provided by the Bavarian Ministry for the Environment. This database acts as an information platform ensuring the exchange and cooperation between the different work packages in DIAMONT. After a thorough analysis with respect to data availability, indicators and feasibility, certain instruments are selected from the database for an application in the test regions.

At present different options (descriptive analysis, qualitative scenarios, regional data analysis, etc.) are under discussion how far in a test run the usefulness of instruments can be analysed in the test regions. These test run might be a substantial part of the workshops carried out in the test regions from next year on (WP10). Stakeholders are encouraged to discuss the practical use of the DIAMONT results. Considering their feedback the indicators and instruments will be improved and presented once again in a second workshop (WP11).

In the end a guidebook and the database of instruments will summarise options to deal with the challenges of local centres and their fringes concerning the sustainability of their development. Indicators to observe the on-going processes and instruments to steer them towards sustainability are proposed. The guidebook is expected to be a helpful tool for all Alpine municipalities as it contains not only theoretical scientific results but rather in scenarios tested information on instruments for future spatial planning decisions.

New DIAMONT collaborator at ifuplan

Florian Lintzmeyer is also a new member of the DIAMONT team joining ifuplan in Munich in July. Florian holds a diploma as **geographer** from Munich Ludwig-Maximilians University with a focus on **spatial planning, land tenure and rural development**. He did his thesis in development of **sustainability indicators for tourism in the Alps**.



Florian Lintzmeyer

He has working experience from his engagement at Hochschule für Technik in Rapperswil/CH on sustainable regional development in terms of sustainable tourism. More exotic knowledge he collected in studies on **rural development in Laos** working for the “Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit” (GTZ). As well he was engaged for CIPRA Germany on the organisation of the conference on the Alpine process in 2002.

„Alliance in the Alps” – Municipalities heading for a sustainable future

In November 1991 seven Alpine states and the European Union signed the Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Alps, the “Alpine Convention”. By means of a pilot project auditing the eco-friendly behaviour of municipalities the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps CIPRA initiated the foundation of the “Alliance in the Alps”. The network was meant to implement the requirements of the Alpine Convention on regional level. At the beginning 27 municipalities participated in the project. Meanwhile almost 200 mayors from all Alpine states struggle for a concrete implementation of a sustainable development. Rainer Siegele, head of the Alliance and mayor in the Austrian community Mäder in Vorarlberg, and Elke Klien, secretary of the Alliance and member of DIAMONT’s advisory board, report on their experiences with this initiative.

Interview by Sigrun Lange.

SL: The network “Alliance in the Alps” implements the requirements of the Alpine Convention. What is meant by the sustainable development of a municipality in the Alpine space?



Rainer Siegele

Answer: Together with our citizens we would like to organise our living in a manner that our children and grandchildren are able to enjoy the same quality of life as we do currently. This means that we construct energy-saving buildings using only a minimum of energy. Our supply is fully satisfied with renewable energy sources like wood chips and biomass facilities.

SL: In DIAMONT an Alpine wide survey started recently collecting the different perceptions of mayors on sustainable development. Did you also experience that sustainability is evaluated differently in the Alpine regions?

Answer: According to our experience the term sustainability is usually construed in a similar manner. However, the importance of its implementation varies from municipality to municipality. Definitely there are differences according to the development status of a region. Generally, the term is given more attention in German speaking countries.

SL: Could you give us concrete examples for sustainable solutions in our associated municipalities?

Answer: “Breakpoint in Langenegg” is a good example from an Austrian community. Students of architecture, citizens, non governmental organisations and political decision-makers cooperated in the construction of a new centre in the middle of the municipality. Workers from the region built a multi-functional building with resources from the region. Naturally, the criteria for environmental friendly constructions developed by the “Umweltverband” of Vorarlberg were considered. Now Langeneggs’ centre disposes of a kindergarten, a room for music

sessions, a meeting place for young people, a café and offices. You will find more interesting examples at the web pages of the Alliance or the Dynalp project.

SL: What is meant by the “Autodidactic Learning for Sustainability (ALS)” which was tested in pilot municipalities in the course of the Interreg IIIB project Dynalp?

Answer: The ALS is a method which was invented by the University of Bern/CH for the development of Central Asian mountain communities. Within Dynalp the method was adapted to the needs of smaller Alpine municipalities. The final report will be available soon. Generally spoken, it is a method to define sustainable projects in a participatory approach and to initiate their implementation.

SL: In April the succeeding project Dynalp² started. Which ones are the new focal points of the project?

Answer: The members of the Alliance for the Alps implement the results of “Future in the Alps”, a project on knowledge transfer in the Alps operated by CIPRA International. For example, two Austrian municipalities will dedicate themselves to mobility questions, one of the six main topics in the CIPRA project. While the municipality Werfenweng near Salzburg aims at realising a car-free tourism, the municipality Ludesch in Vorarlberg tries to reduce the commuter traffic flows.



The new multi-functional centre in Langenegg was jointly planned and constructed only with resources from the region.

Both communities agreed on a close cooperation. They will exchange their experiences on occurring conflicts and problems but also on success stories.

SL: Does the experiences with long term political processes, like the Alpine Convention, suggest that regional action for sustainable development should be preferred to global political approaches?

Answer: Naturally, global political approaches would be the ideal solution for common problems. But these are still lacking or only rudimentary existing and they are almost without any effects. The only apparent results are achieved on local and regional level.

SL: Could initiatives like the Alliance in the Alps be transferred to other mountainous regions to advance sustainable development?

Answer: Generally, the networking between like-minded people is quite important as resources could be saved, the motivation could be stimulated and solutions for similar problems could be exchanged. The establishment of the Alliance of Central Asian Mountain Communities (AGOCA), for example, followed the model of the Alliance in the Alps.

SL: Currently, another network modelled on the example of the Alliance for the Alps is established. What kind of advice would you give these communities? What do they have to consider and which mistakes should be avoided?

Answer: The Carpathian network was initiated top down by the government, while the Central Asian and the Alpine networks were developed from the bottom up. We think that programmes prescribed top down can hardly be enduring. For a long-term success it seems crucial to spread the sustainability principles broadly amongst the citizens and the political decision makers. An intensive and open communication flow is likewise important. In general, we assume that the challenging objectives could only be achieved with a slow and high-quality growth.



Elke Klien

SL: Ms Klien, you are a member of DIAMONT's advisory board. What do you think DIAMONT has to perform to foster the sustainable development in the Alpine space?

Answer: The resulting methods and instruments have to be adapted to the needs of the communities.

It has to be assured that the information gets through to the mayors and that it is easy available for them. According to our experience, only few municipali-

ties use search programmes or even websites to search for databases or other relevant information. A method has to be found to supply the mayors with the adapted and easily prepared information. Personal contacts for example during conferences are one of the promising possibilities.

SL: What kind of results in the DIAMONT project are of special interest for the communities merged in the Alliance in the Alps?

Answer: This can only be assessed after the availability of the results. In general, we are interested in all results. For example, the study on the impacts of cultural differences on regional development is of special interest for the Alpine communities. And if the indicators are developed in a way that also smaller communities can work with them in practice, we will be happy to use them.

SL: What do you expect from the future cooperation between DIAMONT and the Alliance in the Alps?

Answer: We expect that there is a close cooperation on community level as foreseen in the test regions. Frequently, a huge gap can be observed between the results and recommendations of such projects on the one side and the concrete work on regional or municipal level on the other side. At the end, the success of DIAMONT will be matched with the question if it succeeded in minimising this gap.

More information on the Alliance in the Alps, DYNALP and CIPRA are available at:

www.alpenallianz.org

www.dynalp.org

www.cipra.org/future



News and dates relevant for the Alpine space

August 12th/13th 2006: Fires across the Alps

This year, once again 30 fires will burn as an international symbol for a sustainable future of the Alps. The current motto: "Marginal regions with future". The organisers hope to add to the discussion on the future of the Alps, currently dominated by economic and spatial development issues, the often neglected ecological and cultural dimensions.

September 4th – 6th 2006 in Bad Ischl/A: Upper Austrian Environmental Congress 2006 (Klima außer Rand und Band)

The congress deals with the already occurring climate change and the chances for turning around the development. An interdisciplinary team of experts – ranging from NGO representatives to scientists, politicians and economists – will present up-to-date knowledge and alternatives.

September 5th/6th 2006 in Lucerne/CH: MONTESPON-Seminar for transnational exchange and networking on mountain topics: The seminar aims to foster better understanding of the specific situation, challenges and opportunities in the European mountainous regions and to facilitate mutual learning between different actors dealing with mountain development. In that respect, it will also be an opportunity to bridge the gap between the ESPON-programme and Interreg IIIB projects dealing with mountain topics.

September 10th – 12th 2006 in Neukirchen am Großvenediger/A: Symposium "climate:change >> natural:hazards". The symposium will deal with the consequences of the present climate change for the economic development as well as the recreational and ecological functions of the Alpine space. Possible scenarios of natural hazards will be presented and different alternative shall be discussed with the participants. (*Information in German at: www.umweltdachverband.at*)

September 14th/15th 2006: Conference on Alpine Habitat Diversity (HABITALP) in the National Park Berchtesgaden/D. Running since November 2002 the Interreg IIIB project HABITALP is now approaching an end in October 2006. Under the leadership of Berchtesgaden National Park eleven partners of the Alpine Network of Protected Areas committed themselves to the ambitious objective of producing standardized landscape datasets according to a commonly developed Alpine methodology. The vision was to create a transnational database for future Alpine applications which could serve to develop trans-boundary strategies for a sustainable landscape management of protected areas. In the conference the experiences of HABITALP shall be communicated to an international circle of potential users, to foster existing networks and to initiate future collaborations. (*More information in German, French, Italian, English: www.habit alp.de*)

September 28th/29th 2006 in Innsbruck/A: The Water Balance of the Alps – What do we need to protect the water resources of the Alps? Alpine water plays an important role in whole Europe. Both, the rapid climate change and social changes, such as the liberalisation of the energy market and the privatisation of the public services, call for an integrated approach to develop new concepts and perspectives. The conference will provide policy-makers and institutions with a list of themes that must be dealt with if we want to safeguard or even improve the ecological status of rivers, lakes and wetlands and to guarantee a sustainable use of the Alpine water resources. The meeting is organised by the Austrian Lebensministerium, the Research Platform Alpine Space of the University of Innsbruck and the International Scientific Committee on Alpine Research ISCAR. Register at: www.uibk.ac.at/alpinerraum/meetings/water_2006.

October 2nd – 6th 2006: Educational trip in Switzerland and Austria with focus on "Alpine Protected Areas and Ecological Construction". The trip is organised by "climalp", a CIPRA-project, and the Alpine Network of Protected Areas. (*More information in all Alpine languages and English at www.alparc.org*)

October 4th – 6th 2006 in Wengen/CH: Workshop on „Adaptation to the Impacts of Climatic Change in the European Alps". This workshop will bring together experts from the climate science, policy, and economics communities together with decision-makers from countries within the Alpine Arc to examine the vulnerability of particular sectors and systems to climate change impacts, and more importantly to assess progress on the formulation and implementation of adaptation responses at local, regional, and national levels. (*More information in English: <http://www.unifr.ch/geoscience/geographie/EVENTS/Wengen/05/Wengen2005.html>*)

New publication: Global Change in Mountain Regions (2006). The publication outlines all abstracts submitted to the Open Science Conference on „Global Change in Mountain Regions“ (GLOCHAMORE) which was held in October 2005 in Perth. (*More Informationen at <http://mri.scnatweb.ch>*).

diamont calendar

September 26/27th 2006: LP Seminar in Rosenheim/D

September 8th 2006: Submission of a rough financial overview on project expenditures for 2006 to Managing Authority

October 16th 2006: Submission of activity report to LP

October 30th 2006: Submission of fourth financial report and valid certifications to leadpartner (LP)

4th accounting period in DIAMONT: March – August 31st 2006

web-site

The DIAMONT web-site provides up-date information on the project. <http://diamont.uibk.ac.at>

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