

Welcome statement

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Mountains cover two-thirds of Austrian territory and therefore play an important role in the everyday life of the Austrians.

Alpine areas provide cultural landscapes, traditional food, clean air and beautiful nature. Qualities that are important for the inhabitants as well as for a prosperous summer and winter tourism. Alpine ecosystems are sensitive ecosystems, which provide services to mankind, but react to external effects (such as climate change, urban settlements and deforestation)

at an early stage. Living in alpine areas involves certain risks of natural disasters such as avalanches and landslides, which are common aspects of alpine life.

This diversity requires mountain research to be interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and regionally oriented. It is essential to apply a systems approach to understand natural eco-service functions and the economic, social and political interplay in a comprehensive manner. Research provides the knowledge base – e.g. for identifying effects of climate change in alpine areas, its impact on natural, economic and cultural systems – and helps facing the challenges of future developments through the support of reliable decision-making. Long-term socio-ecological research is crucial to provide sustainable solutions for mountain areas and their inhabitants.

My ministry is proud to always have supported research activities such as the “Global Change Programmes” and the “Man and Biosphere Programme” administered by the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the initiative Long-Term-Ecological Research (LTER) as well as research projects connected to the programmes proVision and Sparkling Science. Recently, we involved ourselves with other European funding bodies in a joint call on mountain research within the frame of the ERANET CIRCLE and we will continue our activities in this field.

The present volume reveals the variety of topics and disciplines covered by the Institute of Mountain Research to deal with the complexity of the theme.

I congratulate the authors and scientists involved on the results achieved so far and wish them further success in their prolific work.

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