FOREWORD

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CR SPECIAL 9 results from the 'Atmospheric Circulation Classification and Regional Downscaling' (ACCORD) project funded by the European Union (ENV4-CT97-0530). This project had a number of objectives, including: the evaluation of existing circulation classification patterns; the development of new automated schemes; investigation of relationships between scales from the hemispheric through the North Atlantic Oscillation to the local; and the exploration of long timescale changes in links between classification schemes/indices and local temperature and precipitation. The overall aim was to improve the potential of circulation-based approaches for downscaling to regional and local scales. The project ran from December 1997 to November 1999. Further details, including the final report and a regularly updated list of publications arising from the project, are available at http://www.cru.uea.ac.uk/projects/accord/

This special issue of *Climate Research* reflects a number of themes addressed by the ACCORD project, ranging from assessment of the quality of the National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP) Reanalyses to the stationarity of circulation/surface climate relationships and circulation classification based on clustering of extreme precipitation events focusing on Alpine regions.

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