COHESION FOR GROWTH

Mountain as natural ingredients for Europe's competitiveness

5th European Mountain Convention Final Report 14-15 September 2006, Chaves, Portugal

Euromontana



Challenges



Policies



Vision

WHAT ARE EUROPEAN MOUNTAIN CONVENTIONS?

The European Mountain Conventions are an initiative of Euromontana, the European association comprising regional development agencies, agricultural organizations, regional authorities, research institutes, environmental agencies or mountain associations with a strong interest in rural and sustainable development of mountainous areas. This network of organizations covers about 18 countries in all the European mountain massifs, facilitating therefore a co-operation between Western, Central and Eastern Europe.

Among the other projects of the association, these Conventions represent special times for gathering together and clarifying issues in a deliberately open and wide debate.

European Mountain Conventions are organised every 2 years for the attention of professionals and, in the context of the general theme of mountain rural sustainable development, are intended to provide:

- Updated information on current European issues and their impact on mountain areas
- Open consultations and exchanges between representatives of different countries and different types of organisation
- The extension and strengthening of a European network of co-operation for mountains, beyond the network of Euromontana member organisations.

The 5th European Mountain Convention concentrated on making the case for mountain areas as contributors to the Lisbon Strategy which sets targets for Europe in the fields of growth, innovation and jobs. Until now much debate on the strategy has been dominated by assessments of the contribution that poles of

economic activity and centres of academic excellence can make. The Convention set out to illustrate the significant offering that mountain areas and their unique natural and environmental diversity can make for growth in seven distinct contexts. The Convention took place is Chaves, Portugal on the 14th and 15th September 2006 and gathered over 300 participants and illustrious group of speakers, including the Commissioner for Regional Policy Danuta Hübner and Ministers from Portugal, Norway and Romania.

The following report is providing a short overview of the aims and the context of the Convention, summarizing the presentations held during the conference as well as analyzing the results and outcomes of the speeches, the workshops and the round table discussions.



who is Euromontana?

Euromontana is the European multisectoral association for co-operation and development of mountain territories. It embraces regional and national mountain organizations throughout greater Europe, including regional development agencies, local authorities, agriculture organizations, environmental agencies, forestry organizations and research institutes.

Euromontana's mission is to promote living mountains, integrated and sustainable development and quality of life in mountain areas.

In order to achieve this, Euromontana facilitates the exchange of information and experience among these areas by organizing seminars and major conferences, by conducting and collaborating in studies, by developing, managing and participating in European projects and by working with the European institutions on mountain issues.

www.euromontana.org



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OPENING SESSION

Frank Gaskell, President of Euromontana

The world is seeing a constant reduction in the barriers to trade, an increase in worldwide business networks and international companies, and growth of new markets. All these developments have implications for mountain networks - and not all of the implications are negative. What seems undoubtedly negative is the spiralling world energy crisis. High fuel costs already have disproportionate impacts in mountain areas and the recent rises can only add to these on-costs, which effect not only transport but heating and permeate the fundamental day-to-day challenge of living and working in the mountains.

At the European level, there have also been momentous changes as the effects of the enlargement of the Union. In the future there will be less access to the Structural Funds in the old European Union of the 15 member states. Euromontana must now work on helping mountain stakeholders to identify and access other sorts of European funding and, in the East, support members' efforts to use the new convergence funding efficiently.

An equally important development has been the review and revision of the

Lisbon strategy in February 2005. It should be pointed out that mountain regions can also be engines for growth, innovation and jobs and that is the focus of this conference. Europe's diversity resides largely in its mountain areas and similar areas. If in the race for growth they are neglected, the precious and powerful mountain diversity will be lost. And once lost, also that comparative advantage – the route to growth through excellence - will be lost forever.



Fernando CAMPOS, member of the Directive Council of National Association of Portuguese Municipalities

Mountain regions have largely been abandoned by the Central Governments. For these regions to continue to provide their environmental and cultural functions, it's necessary to avoid their total depopulation. Therefore it may be necessary to discriminate positively these zones. To guarantee the development of mountain regions it will be necessary to promote the synergies of several sectional politics, in an integrated development strategy for the entire country and for Europe and based on territorial solidarity.

The development strategies should promote equal opportunities, sustainable development and modernisation, be bottom-up and based in a spirit of entrepreneurship. The neighbouring economies should be fostered by identifying and supporting the strong economic sectors in each. Investments in qualifications and capacities are important prerequisites. New information and communications technologies should be developed to provide favourable conditions for distance working, - medicine, and -training, the sale of products and services on-line, the enhanced exchanging of experiences and the contacts with family and friends.

Attention should be paid to the differentiating quality aspects that add value to these areas: products, water, landscape, and environment, by enhancing them with the use of new technologies, research, innovation and development of qualification. These efforts require sustainable support of national and community politics.

PLENARY SESSION

Challenges facing European mountain areas



Mountain areas cover over 40% of the European landmass, 20% of the population and 27% of the European municipalities.

Tor BREMER, Councillor from Sogn og Fjordane, Norway and a Vice-President of Euromontana,

notes that already the vastness of this area makes it vitally important to highlight the mountain challenges, which are basically the same in all mountain areas but with different degrees of intensity, different specificities and different solutions.

Lucien BOURGOIS, President of SFER, France

The mountain agriculture is in a difficult position today. The excessive attention on agricultural products within the world trade negotiations has managed to almost disguise the fact that agriculture represents only 10% of the word trade. The Luxembourg agreements and the Common Agricultural Policy are not ambitious enough in reducing inequality in Europe, increased by the enlargement to Eastern countries. The milk quota suppression has not been favourable to mountains and the 2nd pillar negotiations of the CAP have made the compensation policy for mountains difficult.

The international and European trends have experts worrying about a possible disengagement of public

authorities from agriculture and mountain policies. Yet Europeans still want to eat three times a day, they prefer a varied and fresh diet based on highly perishable products. Consequently, an agriculture policy is as necessary for the European society as a foreign or a domestic policy. As far as agriculture depends on weather conditions, production risks are possible and even more and more likely due to the global warming. Another good reason for maintaining mountain agriculture is the success of some mountain quality products, which demonstrates that it is possible to overcome the handicap of the higher production costs with higher price premiums. Nevertheless, a minimum degree of private or collective organization is needed to achieve this success and political will must accompany the initiatives.

Milan BOLESLAV, Union of Marginal Areas, Czech Republic

Before 1989 there were State enterprises in the Less Favoured Area regions, farming in accordance with the traditional way of production in the Czech Republic. Given the unfavourable weather conditions, these enterprises were strongly financially supported by the State. After the 1989 and the opening of the borders, it was clear that the traditional agricultural exploitation was no longer possible. Along with the transfer to the market economy the exploitation in the less productive areas was abandoned. Supporting a reasonable intense herbivore breeding in LFA areas provides a less expensive way of maintaining agriculture activities. A medium-size farm in the Czech or Slovak Republic is still relatively large compared to the farm sizes in Austria or Greece. The Union of Marginal areas is convinced that reducing the subventions of the large enterprises which in these regions, along with the smaller farms, manage the landscape in harmony with the environment is not acceptable.

Domenico MASTROGIOVANNI, CIA (Italian Farmer's Confederation), Italy

Euromontana is working on identifying and promoting mountain quality products through its European Charter for Mountain Quality Food Products, written with the aim of creating added value for the products and of promoting local development through them.

The Euromontana research project into Mountain Quality Products 2002-2004 had intrinsic quality as the main entry point, but soon it was realized that it was not the only quality that must prevail in these products. Agricultural practices have positive repercussions in difficult areas also in multifunctional terms. The group of values in the core of products with "mountain" identity is based on is a combination of the intrinsic and extrinsic qualities. Mountains have had accessibility problems wherever they are located, although the virtual dimension has brought about new opportunities.



Michel BOUVARD, Vice-President of AEM, Association of Mountain Elected People (delivered by Nicolas Evrard)

The mountain areas obviously suffer from accessibility problems due to their geomorphologic characteristics. This is the main cause of the over-costs in the economic and social activities. That is also, in addition to the climatic conditions, what has favoured the emigration towards the plains and littoral urban zones. But today accessibility is not only based on physical transport but also virtual, that is to say, Internet.

The water management guarantees the future of our

mountains. The mountains are also rich in landscapes and in forests. The technical innovations and the crisis in fossil energies make these resources strategic.

An interregional dynamic that takes into account the people's ambitions and is close to them is indispensable for a European revival. European mountains as a central coherent factor in the European geopolitics could be the driving engine.

Mountains are directly influenced by the WTO negotiations and European regulations. At this stage the public authorities should not break their engagement with the mountain areas; in fact the support should be increased and projects like the European Charter for Mountain Quality Food Products promoted. The priceless mountain resources such as forest and landscape have to be protected.

WORKING GROUPS

Innovative services of General Interest in Mountain Areas



The main aim of this workshop facilitated by Thomas EGGER, Director of the Swiss Mountain Grouping SAB and treasurer of Euromontana, was to discuss the services of general interest in the mountain areas and look for good transferable practices through different study cases.

Cécile LEVRET and Pascaline MAROT, Euromontana

presented some innovative processes in the framework of a Euromontana project "European exchanges of experience on mountain development and dissemination on the LDRT (French law on rural territories development)", developed on the request of the French Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. The first objective of the project was to disseminate information about the law. Secondly there was an inventory on the European regulation on certain targeted services. Finally, some case studies from the Europe mountain areas were gathered.

Examples of experiences:

 Cybercantal II is a project aiming to make Information and Communications Technologies easy to use in particular for elderly persons and beginners. The "Conseil Général du Cantail" has employed ICT experts in Cantal department in order to help the public to use the terminals and surf in internet and to stimulate the ICT use and to add some conviviality.

 The national convention for mobile telephony in France is an operational framework to achieve the complete mobile telephone coverage of the territory. It organizes the cost repartition between the operators and the local collectivities.

The national convention on Post Offices in France aims at maintaining the post offices in isolated and low demographic density territories.

Thomas EGGER, SAB, Switzerland

PUSEMOR Interreg IIIB project aims to develop sustainable strategies and innovative solutions for improving the provision of public services in sparsely populated regions.

All test areas in the project from different regions and countries are faced with a different mixture of problems. Nevertheless, similar common problems were identified. There are some examples of cooperation between municipalities to prevent intensification of spatial distinctions within the test areas and regions.

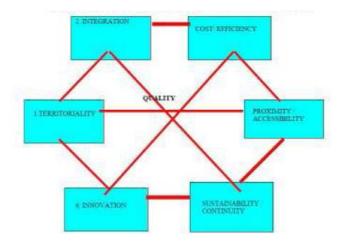
In 'Education', 'Health care' and especially 'Care for the elderly' the demographical change causes changing demand and need for adjustment of infrastructure. Currently infrastructure and transportation of persons, goods and data via the internet are the greatest challenge for the test areas.

Elena Di BELLA, Province of Turin, Italy

Some of the outcomes worth highlighting in theme 1 on public services from the Euromountains.net INTERREG IIIC SUD project are the identification of macro-indicators and the discussion on the local service systems and overcosts, in addition of course to the description of local services and their analysis (through micro-indicators).

Europe is characterized by diverse mountains in where the transferability of models and good practices is not always easy: we need to try to build a shared values framework.

The sustainable development level of a territory is linked to two things: the balanced and harmonised development of the different areas and the quality of life. At this level, mountains play an important and non-marginalized role, a role of opportunity and not of problem. The over-cost problems could be solved by applying a "Territorial local system". The study demonstrated that for example the cultural services are more efficient and cheaper in mountain areas than in cities.



Maria do Mar PEREZ-FRA, Assistant director of coordination and planning for rural development department in Xunta de Galicia, Spain

According to the study on the Galician Mountains the economic and social decline leads to a major loss of population in this area, as well as a lack of economic dynamism and social value.

Geographical access difficulty is considered as one of the causes of this decline, in addition to the distance from the economic poles. Currently the opportunities existing in these areas are simply impossible to be exploited due to a lack of infrastructures and the structure of the population (old, not qualified, low incomes...).

In order to avoid the decline, the analyses showed that the agriculture, agro-industrial and tourism sectors should be vitalized and improved, in addition to improving life conditions of the inhabitants through a better access to services and infrastructure.



Vasso PAPAVASSILIOU, Panormos Research Institute, Cyprus

Children in mountainous areas exhibit in comparison with urban children and contrary to common beliefs a higher rate of violent behaviour, less peer connectivity, a slightly lower rate of substance abuse and more school absences.

The majority of the parents who live in mountainous areas have a comparatively lower educational standard and are employed in agricultural or tourism sector. Often their better-educated children can find no work in the mountainous areas. However, this has lately been changing due to ecotourism and eco-farming.

In order to unlock the potential of the mountainous people inter-departmental coordination is needed, in addition to governmental planning and activities by NGO's and international organizations, as well as developing public services at a local community level.

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Services of general interest are crucial for the future of mountain areas. The national legislations should integrate the notion of services of general interest in order to develop these services in mountain regions. National authorities have an important role here, but also regional and local authorities can participate using the subsidiarity concept. However, we should have a further discussion on whether a European framework or guideline would be needed for the services of general interest.

Good practices for the provision of services of general interest exist but they are not always transferable. The role of Euromontana is to spread the knowledge of good practices and help mountain people implement them taking into consideration their own local or regional context.



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Mountains as Repositories of Renewable and Alternative Energies



The workshop facilitated by **Drew MacFarlane-Slack**, **Councillor at the Highland Council, Scotland** aimed to show the impact of medium to large scale renewable energy projects in mountain areas, such as hydro, biomass, biofuel, wind and - in the Northern Periphery of Europe – tidal and wave.

Jean Didier HACHE, CPMR

Many of the issues which affect the islands also affect in the same way the mountain territories. Numerous mountain regions are also at the same time seaside periphery. These regions consider energy on the one hand as a problem, and on the other hand as an asset. Energy is considered a problem because the regions are vulnerable to the greenhouse effect and the global warming, and they are highly vulnerable to energy crisis. Energy price in these isolated areas is higher. Nevertheless, these regions have a strong potential in renewable energy. In the recent European Commission Green Paper on Energy three European Union goals are presented: competitive markets, security of energy supply and better environmental resources. The EU wants these three things together, but there are contradictions. If the EU emphasizes the free market, the renewable energies will not be competitive. On the other hand if the EU emphasizes the security or the environment, then the renewable energies could be developed in remote areas.

Una LEE, Highland Council, Scotland

There are significant opportunities for Highland communities to benefit from both large and smallscale renewable energy development. However, it has to be born in mind that securing these benefits involves strong political leadership, working in partnership and support for the communities.

Community ownership, developed through appropriate grants, loans and technical advice, is the

key to long term, lasting benefit. In Scotland that has been possible thanks to the economic support from the Highlands & Islands Enterprise and the Forestry Commission and the political support from the Highland Council.

José CAVALHERO, Porto University, Portugal

Thicket should be reintegrated in the economic circuit as a way to protect the forest. In Portugal, the high producer areas are unfortunately also high risk areas for fires. The fires are increasing in Portugal

every year and consequently the associated costs are constantly increasing. Biomass and land management could be solutions for this problem.

Xoán Ramón DOLDAN, Director of INEGA, Spain

the most of biomass originates from by-products of forestry. If the supply of biomass to thermal centres can be guaranteed, the costs of generating heat from biomass will be lower than those of conventional fuel such as diesel or natural gas. Biomass also offers appealing possibilities of reducing overall energy costs when used in combination with other energy forms.



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Mountain communities could get a lot of benefits from the renewable energy development in their areas. Nevertheless, these communities need to be supported in the development and use of renewable energy forms at regional and European level. Studies show that developing renewable energy forms brings along also interesting positive externalities, such as the protection of forests from fires.

Opportunities Offered by New Information and Communication Technologies

The main aim of the workshop facilitated by Juan Andrés GUTIÉRREZ from the Basque Government, Spain, was to disseminate examples of good experiences in the implementation of the Information and Communication Technologies in order to improve the quality of life of the mountain areas inhabitants, using ICT in training and increasing the capacities of mountain inhabitants, and providing relevant contents and services.



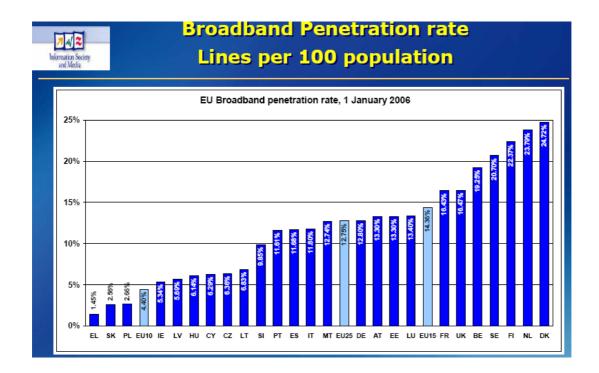
Iker BILBAO, technician of Medinet, Basque Country, Spain

KZ@gunea is a free of charge public centres network for using ICT and training in its use. The centres aim to bring new technologies close to those who would not get in touch with them otherwise. KZ communities try to promote citizens participation and interest in ICT. KZ@gunea makes expertise and infrastructure available to local entities in order to create their own web sites. Itelazpi is a company hired to bring broadband to the rural areas in the Spanish Basque Country establishing a wireless network. It has a special bus in which classes are given to people who need them. The company also develops ICT systems to facilitate management of agrofood companies.

Guido ACCHIONI, DG INFSO, European Commission

The European Commission communication "Bridging the broadband gap" aims to demonstrate that broadband has the potential to increase productivity, stimulate innovation and improve productivity across Europe. Rural, remote and less developed areas of Europe, including mountainous areas, cannot miss this opportunity. All funding instruments available at the EU level, such as information society, cohesion and rural policies, are mobilized to achieve this goal. The "Broadband for all" policy goal may deliver close to 100% coverage by 2010 if it is supported by all 25 EU Member States.

Public intervention may accelerate broadband deployment in less profitable areas. A close coordination of the Rural Development policies with projects under Cohesion policy for comprehensive strategy is needed. The European Commission urges governments to use regional and rural development funding to spur broadband in areas where the market is unable or unwilling to invest.



Emilio MARTINEZ RIVAS, Manager of "Sociedade Anónima para o Desenvolvemento Comarcal", Portugal

The main ICT challenges for the mountain population are both connection and contents. These challenges have to be faced by institutions, private companies and public authorities with an integrated approach. Establishing the connection should bring benefits to local people, jobs, local integration, etc., and foster endogenous development. Infobrion.com is an interesting experience that tries to make ICT attractive to local rural people by creating a virtual community services.

Jorge MENDES RIBERO, Portuguese Agency of Investment, Portugal

Several organizations all over the world have adopted the SSC concept (Shared Service Centers). The companies that have implemented SSC's provide a broad scope of services. As common transactional processes are already present in most SSC's, more qualified processes are moving into the Shared Business Model.

Companies are striving to cut down administrative costs while geographical and cultural barriers fade, the challenge nowadays is to find a location with the appropriate mixture of cost, skills and infrastructure for their shared processes. European Mountains, Mediterranean and Eastern European Countries can positioning themselves serve European Operations with lower costs without sacrificing risk, skills, infrastructure and convenience of a Western location.



Stuart ROBERTSON, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scotland

Highlands and Islands Enterprise implemented the "Bridging the Broadband Gap Case Study" with the aim of increasing the amount of internet users. The goal was achieved with 363 ADSL exchanges enabled; 254 with "full" ADSL and 109 with "basic" ADSL. Wireless networks were fixed to cover 21 exchange areas in Western Isles. 97% of the total coverage was obtained, with access to at least 512k bps and more than 50% with access to "up to 8M bps". All this was done in general with prices comparable with rest of UK. However, unfortunately the universal coverage or

full equality of service was not achieved.

Mountain areas suffer inevitably a five year delay in catching up to the latest standards. In order to avoid this, significant public intervention is needed, and must be supported by an extensive use of structural funds. The digital divide is currently re-opening with the increasing customer expectations due to the increase in the importance of the electronic communications.



Traditional mountain problems such as unemployment, depopulation, etc. can partly be tackled through Information and Communication Technologies that have the potential to increase productivity and stimulate innovation



Nature Areas as Tools for Territorial Management

The natural spaces can be considered as the main indispensable resource to the territorial development and maintaining activities in the mountain areas. According to the working group facilitator, **Thierry PERCIE DU SERT from ARPE Midi-Pyrénées, France**, all land management projects aim to ensure the continuation of the natural space as a resource. The working group identified some examples where nature areas are used as tools for land management and discussed about how to improve some approaches to protect natural spaces.

Nature areas present a great variety of management structures in Europe. There are large juridical differences among the different countries as well as an increasing influence of the regional policies.



Carlos GUERRA, agriculture Regional Director of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Portugal

- The mountain zones are an important and complex ecosystem which guarantees fundamental resources as the water, the energy and the biodiversity. About 10% of national population lives in mountain zones, developing an agro-farming-pastoral activity,

that forges habitats, landscapes, varieties and cultures which perpetuate in time, contributing to mould the identity of the regions.

Adrian PATRULESCU, National Park "Piatra Craiului", Romania



The park policy on the local communities is :

- Financing and providing logistical support to develop activities which reduce the possible negative impacts of local communities on the park
- Cooperation with local authorities
- Raising the awareness of the public
- Promoting the park at national and international level
- Maintaining traditions

The Small Grants Programme is part of the Biodiversity Preservation Management project, which is financed by WB, the Romanian Government and ANF (National Forest Administration). Thanks to this program it has been possible to finance information points for tourists, a water transport net for the pastures in the park, an easier garbage recollection, some little dairies, a point to rent sport equipment, a little local traditions museum, etc. In addition, rural tourism infrastructure was built, including equipment and material to start building accommodation services for tourists.

Martin PRICE, Perth College, Scotland

Scotland has many different types of protected areas. As much of Scotland is privately-owned, only a small proportion of the land which is of importance for conservation is owned by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the national conservation agency. Consequently, to ensure that the management of the most important sites meets conservation goals, SNH has implemented management agreements with landowners.

It is important to recognise that biodiversity management is needed also outside the protected areas (e.g., nature reserves) and that policies influencing the conservation of biodiversity are not only the ones specifically relating to biodiversity. Other policies, such as agri-environmental measures, are often just as important especially in terms of the financial incentives they provide to landowners. However, landowners find that accessing these funds is difficult: they require filling in several forms and different policies can be in conflict. Landowners have therefore called for a simplification in the system of incentives and subsidies, and it is hoped that this will be achieved through the Land Management Contracts.

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Through these presentations it is appreciated that mountain areas need three conditions to ensure their sustainable development. First, a good control of preservation of the resources is necessary, taking into account biodiversity, water, soil and know-how. It is certainly important to have a good capacity of programme facilitation and implementation of the infrastructures so as to develop the territory. The final condition is maintaining the social cohesion in the area.

Future of Mountain Agriculture in Support of Rural Communities



Jean-Louis CAZAUBON, APCA, France facilitated a workshop on the place of the mountain agriculture in the rural development policy. Case study examples were provided to clarify the future of mountain agriculture in support of rural communities.

Jean Michel COURADES, European Commission

The rural development approach for the next European programming period is more strategic than the current one. The lack of coordinated policies has been recognized in the European commission evaluation. The new approach, with some communitarian priorities, should bring coherence to the rural development programs.

The future conditions for natural handicaps and other handicaps support (Article 35 and 48) are:

- To undertake to continue farming in areas designated for at least 5 years from 1st payment.
- Application of cross compliance standards on the whole farming (if no compliance reduction or exclusion)

The future level of compensation (Article 35) is based on:

- To compensating additional costs and income foregone related to the handicap for agricultural production
- Mountain areas: between 25-250 euros/ha
- Individual payments higher in duly justified cases provided that the average at Member State level does not exceed the maximum amount.
- Payments degressive above a threshold level of areas per holding

Specific handicaps are areas where land management should be continued in order to conserve or improve the environment, maintain the countryside and preserve the tourist potential of the area or in order to protect the coastline. These areas are homogeneous from the point of view of natural production conditions.

Sylvain LHERMITTE, APCA, France

In its report on "The future outlook for agriculture in areas with specific natural handicaps (upland, island and outermost areas)", the European Economic and Social Committee wants to emphasize the value of agriculture in the mountain areas. The ECOSOC demands the European Council and the Commission to concentrate the rural development funding in these natural handicap areas. These areas are the most critical in the provision of public goods and therefore they need more public support than plain areas.

The ECOSOC underlines that agriculture in these areas suffers from over-costs due to isolation. Services are in general more expensive than in plain areas. The 2003 CAP reform stated that the mountain agricultural products should adapt to the free marked, but applying that strictly would mean the disappearance of the mountain agriculture.

Lucien BOURGEOIS, SFER, France

If the effect of all the subsidies would be erased, mountain areas might actually fare better than other territories, because there is innovation in these areas we never speak about.

Mr Bourgeois suggests that the CAP has a Maria Antoinette syndrome of "liking to play in the farm next to her castle". Ironically nowadays agriculture is considered as an amusement, sometimes even useful in protecting the landscape. But production itself seems to be increasingly discouraged on the grounds that it is said to pollute. Our wealthy societies think that there is no use in maintaining agricultural activities as they currently are. The society is willing to award funding to agriculture only to avoid pollution.

In the mountain areas people have innovative ideas. However, they do not have enough opportunities to succeed due to the colonial nostalgia that impregnates the WTO policy-makers.

Giuseppe PELLEGRINI, Province of Belluno, Italy

"Tourist road of cheese" is a small Interreg project with the aim to increase the value of traditional products, in particular cheese. The project led by the Province of Belluno with an Austrian partner begun in 2004 and will continue until 2006. It involves 12 cooperatives, 8 alpine farmers, 34 restaurants and 17 public and private bodies.

François LEFEBRE, CNASEA, France

The high mountain agriculture is defined to exist in municipalities which have an average height of 1200m. According to the research carried out by the "Secteur Etudes du CNASEA" in France, the population in these high mountain areas is growing more than twice the French national average. There are not many farmers or installations in the high mountains, but contrary to the lower mountain areas, the high mountain installations are steady.

The role of the high mountain agriculture: To protect the environment and landscape. Targets of the cheese road project:

- To enhance the traditional products
- To create a link between producers, market and consumers.
- To restore farms

Territorial management Indirect economic role in tourist areas

The people set up in the high mountains feel isolated, although they generally have set up on the holding with the entire family. These farmers have the feeling of being second class citizens in the society because they think the agricultural organisations have forgotten them. One out of three can currently be estimated to be in an economically precarious situation.



Ana Isabel GARCIA ARIAS, Santiago de Compostela University, Spain

the study carried out by the Santiago de Compostela University discusses the effects of the agroenvironmental measures aimed to increase innovation in the rural mountain areas of Galicia. The programme had two targets:

- Landscape conservation and erosion prevention in extensive systems of communal pasture
- Protecting autochthonous animal races in danger of extinction

An important point that emerged was that herding animals in the mountain areas saves money for the breeders that hence avoid buying the feed. The agricultural use of the extensive areas also reduced the risk of fire.

Danut UNGUAREANU, CEDIFEC, Romania

There are new challenges to enhance mountain rural space in Romania in the context of the integration in the EU. Some possible strategies could be:

- 1. Promoting and stimulations investments in agricultural exploitations
- 2. Keeping and attracting young people.
- 3. Stimulation of natural handicap areas

- 4. Agriculture compatible with the environment
- 5. Stimulating investments to improve agricultural products transformation and commercialization
- 6. Diversifying and developing rural services
- 7. Developing programs to protect the forests.

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Mountain areas play an important role in the protection of landscape, protecting animals in danger of extinction, etc., but it is important to remember that they are also an economic engine where people have innovative ideas for development. Unfortunately, if mountain agricultural products had to be strictly adapted to the free market it would mean the disappearance of the mountain agriculture as we know it. Therefore, the European institutions cannot afford to neglect the mountain agriculture and should increase their support to the areas most in need of it.

Recognizing and Rewarding Public Goods in Mountain Areas



Mountain areas and their populations provide a wide range of unique benefits for the society as a whole, such as pure and abundant water, forests, minerals, distinctive food, outdoor recreation, outstanding landscapes and biodiversity of the highest quality. As it was exposed in this workshop facilitated by **Amanda BRYAN from Scottish Natural Heritage**, there is little opportunity to extract market value from these 'public goods' and thus there is a challenge of supporting both individuals and communities whose activities support the retention of these activities with no direct financial reward.

Gerard VIATTE, Former Director at OECD, Adviser to the Swiss Federal Office of Agriculture and to FAO, Switzerland

There is a need to increase awareness by the public, in particular the urban people, of the benefits of public goods from the mountain regions in order to have better policies and to justify more funding for their provision.

Population in mountain areas is providing the sociocultural dimension of these public goods, which should be better identified so that they can eventually be evaluated. Also the impact of policies that have been applied to public goods needs evaluation.

A better understanding of the complementarity between the public and the private actions in this field is necessary.

Pedro RUIZ AVILES, CIFA, Spain

A study by the IFAPA carried out in Andalucía, Spain between 2002 and 2005 aimed to find key factors to evaluate the landscape. Some homogeneous areas taking into consideration the height, slope, etc. were chosen and a model by means of simple equations was established. Several variables were chosen: water in movement, percentage of green terrain, relief, negative human fingerprints, texture, isolated elements, etc.

The results suggested that in Andalucía water in movement was highly valuated as well as green landscapes. There were also elements such as the open sky or a great variety of colours that were highly appreciated. The less valuated areas presented a lot of negative human fingerprints.

Rui AZEVEDO, CPMR, Portugal

The characteristics of the public goods should be clarified. These goods cannot be sold; hence nobody wants to exploit them, and this makes difficult to give them a value and develop them in mountain regions. Several studies show the importance of the Public Goods for both mountain and urban people. Provision of some of these goods is a burden for mountain populations since these goods are not profitable to produce but they can be enjoyed by everyone. Awareness should be raised among urban people in order to find a new balance between the value and cost of mountain Public Goods.

Planting seeds for future Carpathian and Balkan Generations: towards new policy packages for SARD-M in light of regional challenges



The workshop facilitated by **Vlatko ANDONOVSKI from Makmontana, Macedonia**, aimed to show the expected outcomes, cohesion and possible joint activities of the SARD-M Project in the Carpathians and INTERREG IIIB Carpathian project. Furthermore, a possible SARD-M policy assessments strategy for South East Europe was tackled, considering the priorities, entry points and interested partners.

Solomiya OMELYAN, Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, UNEP

The Carpathian Convention is a trans-national framework for cooperation and multi-sectorial policy coordination, including sustainable agriculture. It provides a platform for joint strategies and policies for sustainable development, a forum for dialogue and permanent communication between all stakeholders involved.

Its main goals are to preserve biological and landscape diversity, endangered flora and fauna species and their natural habitats, ethnic-cultural, historical and aesthetic heritage, and traditional knowledge. Besides, the sustainable develop of water/river basin management, of agriculture/rural areas, of forestry/forest management, of transport/ infrastructure, of tourism and of industry/energy.

The idea of the INTERREG IIIB Carpathian project is to create a Carpathian space which will use the experience of the Alpine one.It originates from the fusion of the Carpathian Convention process with the conclusions of the INTERREG II C Vision PlaNet Project. Developed by UNEP-Vienna ISCC and RTI Polska, it builds upon the intergovernmental cooperative framework of the Carpathian Convention.

UNEP-Vienna ISCC leads the Project with the support of the seven Carpathian countries - signatories of the Convention.

Dragi POP-STOJANOV, Makmontana, Macedonia

In the South East Europe (Balkan area) a regional and integrated approach is a necessary precondition for sustainable development. The mountain regions must find and develop their strategic policy instruments and programmes, share ideas enhancing networking between various stakeholders, which would also enable them to promote the sustainable development in the SEE for the wellbeing of the vulnerable population.

In developing a legal framework for the South East European mountain areas, it would be wrong to generalize and to simplistically transfer the Alpine and Carpathian experiences for cooperation and sustainable development to South Eastern Europe. The different conditions in each of the SEE countries should be taken into account and solutions should be tailored to specific local needs and circumstances, while cross-referencing with international experience is necessary and valuable.

The Convention for the Protection and Sustainable Development of Mountainous Regions in South Eastern Europe which is in the process of elaboration will provide good framework for the development of the sustainable agriculture and rural development in the SEE mountain areas at the regional level.

The future involvement of SARD-M in SEE should be based on the following:

The role and value of SEE mountain ecosystems;

The evaluation of the current policies for sustainable agriculture and rural development in mountain regions of SEE as well as the design and implementation and of new policies; Strengthening the national capacities in the SEE countries for the promotion of SARD mountain policies and instruments, according to a participatory approach.

Dominique LEGROS, SARD Mountains Project, FAO

After the international Conference for the preparation of the Johannesburg summit on sustainable development a group of FAO participants agreed that the main problem of sustainable agriculture and rural development was the elaboration processes and implementation of policies, even if the institutions worked well. The SARD-M project coordinated by FAO shares the approach of the Carpathian Convention, what lead it to create a partnership. Through the SARD-M policies in three Carpathian countries (one inside the EU, one entering and one outside) were evaluated. At this moment the recommendations and propositions are still being elaborated.

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Diversity, which is so threatened nowadays, can be promoted by applying already existing frameworks into new territories, always taking into account the local circumstances. Good frameworks, which are those that facilitate the process, can help SEE countries develop themselves.

OPENING OF THE 2ND DAY



Danuta HUBNER, Commissioner for Regional Policy, European Commission

The cohesion policy for 2007-2013 will seek improvements in two fields of importance for Europe's mountain areas: the reinforcement of territorial cohesion and the deepening of partnership arrangements. The Commission will make every effort to ensure that Member States and regions set ambitious targets in these fields.

Territorial cohesion is about promoting a more balanced development of Europe's territory, taking into account the diversity of problems and opportunities faced by different areas. The mountain areas represent a classic example. Geography, climate and demography combine to present a particular set of challenges and opportunities to the Union's efforts to promote balanced development. The challenges and opportunities are not always the same and we need to treat each mountain area according to circumstances.

We need to use the new programmes to achieve measurable results in terms of economic regeneration and economic diversification, using all the resources available at national and regional level as well as at Community level.

"The challenges and opportunities are not always the same and we need to treat each mountain area according to circumstances"



ROUND TABLE Vision 2020 of the European mountains

The challenges faced by the mountain areas are different from one region to another. Some suffer from depopulation and unemployment, while others struggle with the preservation of their natural and environmental resources. There is not a homogeneous answer to all the problems, but solutions should be tailor-made for each territory. However, good practices can be shared. A good practice could be exchanges of experience between regions with the same features, in order to facilitate the transfer from one region into another. Furthermore, a tight collaboration between different kinds of policies, between rural territories and cities should be promoted. Finally, using the protected areas, parks and natural reserves as resources could be an opportunity for mountain areas.

Inge BARTNES, Vice-Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Norway

People want to preserve a clean environment in the mountains. At the same time they want to stimulate economic growth in these regions. Norwegians certainly want to preserve the cultural and natural heritage that makes many mountain regions unique.

The different paths of development in different mountain regions have led to different situations today, some regions are facing problems of industrial decline and restructuring, whereas other regions are facing challenges in preserving the population levels and their natural and environmental resources. This indicates that there is no single answer to the challenges of mountain regions; they are as different from each other as other regions with local and regional advantages and disadvantages.

A decentralized strategy is the most suitable way to achieve this.



Christoph BÖBNER, Federal Office of Agriculture, Switzerland

The Constitution of Euromontana describes very well what should be done for the future of the mountain areas. There are five aims mentioned for Euromontana: firstly, political, cultural, economical and scientific lobbying for the common interests; secondly, more scientific knowledge about the sustainable development of the mountain areas; thirdly, public relations and information; fourthly, further research and education and the fifth point is international collaboration in marketing aspects.

The consumers' trust in mountain products has to be maintained through correct labelling. In a liberalized

market, marketing is increasingly important in creating growth. There should be an international mountain label and its use and protection should be harmonized. The collaboration between the different policies that are important for the rural regions and for the mountain regions must be improved. Moreover the dialogue between cities and rural regions and between the countries sharing a mountain range should be also improved. Mr. BÖBNER stated: "Switzerland will defend the mountain areas in a sustainable manner as stated in our constitution. Keywords will be: multifunctionality, sustainability, collaboration between towns and regions, collaboration also Sicily is the largest island in the Mediterranean. It is at the same time insular and mountainous, mountains represent 36% of the total area and there are 185 mountain towns from a total of 390.

The current regional government of Sicily is implementing a new policy for mountains. The mission is to identify the challenges facing the mountain regions of the island in order to plan a new strategy of sustainable development that can be shared by regional and national governments.

The two most important elements in the regression of the mountain communities in Sicily are depopulation and unemployment. As the environment councillor Ms Interlandi considers that the solution to improve the territory is the development of protected area resources, parks and natural reserves that could represent a partial solution for the historic social diseases of the mountain areas.

The three most important historic parks in Sicily and the new park in progress are situated in the mountain area. According to Mrs. Interlandi, it's necessary to exchange different experiences and proposals of south Mediterranean insular regions. She declared: "In the hypothesis of sharing this principle and that the community wishes to recognize and give strength to this value, Sicily declares it's willingness to become a primary reference mark of a geographical centrality, considered as the laboratory of a big common project aimed at the evaluation of the diversity and the mountain insularity of the Mediterranean regions."

Danut APETREI, State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Romania

The Romanian mountain regions are characterised by subsistence farming, which naturally leads to the farmers being less market oriented than perhaps in other countries. Therefore, the Romanian Government gives a high importance to increasing competitiveness.

In order to achieve this goal, several measures are implemented such as increasing the investments in the human capital (training targeted to specific categories of people) or increasing the investments in agriculture, fisheries, tourism, forestry, in order to obtain quality products and services. The Romanian Government tries to improve the quality of life for the mountain population (through basic services infrastructure, ICT, rehabilitation of heritage value buildings). Mountain farmers receive supplementary income as compensatory payments, in order to slow down the depopulation process. Preserving the traditional agriculture methods within an ecosystem with high nature value (for ex. - grassing and sheep breeding) is another one of the measures used, in addition to protecting sustainable management of the forests and taking into account the multiple ecological functions of these forests, in order to increase competitiveness.



PLENARY SESSION

Current and better policies for mountain and fragile rural areas

Rural development policy needs a new strategic direction linked to the revised priorities of the Lisbon agenda. This is about unlocking the potentials in all EU regions, taking into consideration the territorial cohesion and enhancing the economic, social and territorial cohesion. Rural development policy should focus on competitiveness, renewing the bases of rural and mountain areas inter alia through innovation, ICTs, creating more sustainable jobs, investments in research, education and training and of course not only in the well-of regions. If we want to make the mountain areas engines for growth and development we may need to change an approach in how European funds are managed, prioritised and spent. Rural development is no longer a playground on its own but it has to be seen in the framework of complementarity between EU policies.



José SOUSA UVA, Director, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission

Mr Sousa Uva started his presentation by reminding of the importance of mountain areas, a fact that is only reinforced by the enlargements. These are diverse areas that need adapted policies and invaluable for the heritage and potential they contain.

The mountains have been taken into consideration in the European rural development policies since the birth of the community support to the mountain areas in 1975. They have been in the period of 2000-2006 supported through the less favoured area support, agro-environmental measures where in particular Austria and Germany developed actions adapted to mountain areas, forestry measures, article 33 measures for diversification of agricultural activities in rural areas and promotion of the quality of life. In addition several Leader+ local action groups are located in mountain areas such as LEADER Portugal and their extensive work on products. Finally, there were higher co-financing rates for the less favoured areas. It should be remembered that the second pillar of the CAP is not the only avenue of the community support for rural development, there are also the regional policy, transport, research, and environmental policies

In the new programming period the community strategy defining the European priorities for the rural development has been approved by the Council in February 2006. The National Strategic Plans are to be approved during the autumn on 2006 and will define at the national level the community priorities and ensure the coherence with other policies. National or regional programmes will be decided in the end of the year – beginning of 2007.

The general principles are complementarity with other policies (coherence), strategic approach, partnership and divided responsibility. We hope in Brussels that this has been the approach adopted by all member states, involving and taking into consideration all parties, for the mountain area this is especially crucial – networking crucial – appeal for the LEADER-wind, using this bottom-up approach.

Ronald HALL, Director, DG Regional Policy, European Commission

Mr Hall started the presentation by stating that the European Mountain Conventions of Trento and Inverness represented a breakthrough in the position of mountains in the European Regional policy.

The current programming process requires vigilance from the mountain areas to make sure their interests are taken into consideration by the Member States and regions. The areas suffering from natural handicaps have been taken into consideration in the European Structural Funds regulations. The General Regulation states a political priority for strengthening action for areas with natural handicaps, and that assistance shall support areas with natural handicaps. In the competitiveness objective there is a population density criteria introduced into the national resources. Since these criteria are at national level, the mountain areas should make sure that the additional resources are translated into the appropriate level. In programming the Member States and Managing Authorities may take into account the special features of areas with natural handicaps within the Operational Programme and should pay particular attention to addressing the specific difficulties of those areas. Therefore the percentage of EU support in these areas can be higher, but once again, it is eventually in the hands of the Member States on whether they translate the higher funding levels to the areas they were intended to or choose to keep them on the national or regional level.

Growth and jobs are increasingly significant also in regional and cohesion policies that should contribute to the renewed Lisbon agenda. Mountain areas should also target their approach according to this and make sure to develop innovative projects. In the National Strategic Reference Frameworks the 60% (for Convergence regions) and 75% (for the Competitiveness and Employment regions) of the funds should be earmarked for the Lisbon targets, where the current situation is around 50%.

Mr Hall reminded the conference that the European Commission will be approving the regional programmes, but not national strategies which are sent just for information. He also urged the development actors to be active in making sure territorial cohesion is reflected in these documents, making it easier for the Commission to follow-up on the details.

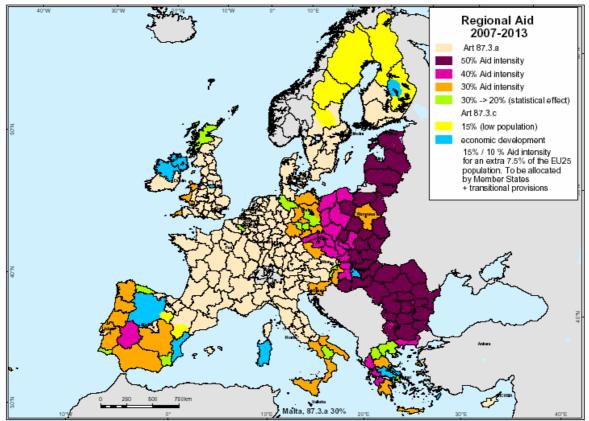
Robert HANKIN, Head of Unit, Regional Aid, DG Competition, European Commission

Robert Hankin gave the Conference a very comprehensive overview of the relevant state aid regulations for the mountain regions. His presentation represents an invaluable synopsis of this complex field and Members are encouraged to refer to it on the Euromontana web page.

The State Aid action plan adopted in 2005 aims to provide less and better targeted state aid. Under the action plan several measures have already been adopted, such as Services for General Economic Interest (July 2005), Regional Aid Guidelines (December 2005) and Risk Capital Guidelines (July 2006). The Regional Aid Guidelines reduced the total coverage of the areas exempt from state aid restrictions to 43.1% of the EU25 population. Significantly for mountain areas in addition to the EUlevel set exemption categories, the Member States have a flexibility to select additional regions under Article 87(3)c by criteria of population density, regions that are adjacent to other exempt category regions or third countries, or for example small communities of less than 5000 inhabitants based on relative isolation.

In enterprise aid, a new form of aid to encourage business start-ups in the assisted areas, there is a possibility for the Art87(3)a regions that have a GDP under less than 50% of the European Union GDP to grant a bonus of \pounds 1 million based on low population density or geographic isolation.

Finally, in the current revision of the *de minimis* rule the limit of state aid that can be granted without notification has been doubled to \in 200 000. This would cover all sectors except transport and primary agricultural production (off-farm activities such as processing and marketing will in future be under the *de minimis* rule).



Based on EUROSTAT statistics of 7.4.2005 (GDP in PPS per Capita 2000-2002 Avg) / Cartography: DG COMP - G1 12/2005 / @ EuroGeographics for the administrative boundaries

Dominique BARRAU, FNSEA, France

the Secretary General of FNSEA, France, pointed out that mountain areas should be able to maintain their farmers. In order to do that the current quality schemes on offer in Europe are not enough, there should be a mountain label as per the Euromontana Charter on Mountain Quality Products to support and build added value in mountain areas. People are needed in mountain areas to sustain the environmental diversity and guarantee the food safety also in the future. Therefore the life of the farmers should not be made impossible with excessive rules and regulations on the agro-environmental measures, by excluding agriculture from the 3rd pillar of the CAP as it has been done in some countries. Diversification is great but exclusion should be avoided. Further, Europe should guarantee the compensation of handicaps for the mountain areas, which left on the mercy of the member states alone might risk disappearing.

Elena DI BELLA, Province of Turin, Italy

Ms Di Bella made a call for the construction of a common culture on territorial development. We should get rid of the artificial distinction between mountains and urban areas, but rather view them in a cohesive way as interdependent parts of the same territory. In a similar way the concept of innovation should not be limited to technological innovation only, but also remember the innovation of organisational models, financial engineering, immaterial transport of information etc.

Frank GASKELL, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scotland

The President of Euromontana reminded Mr Sousa-Uva that the planned European Observatory of Rural Development should incorporate a mountain dimension in reference to the specificity of these areas. Further he requested the European Commission to encourage the member states to respect the spirit of the recommendations in identifying and making special provisions for the mountain areas that are possible in the Regional policy regulations but seem to be largely discretionary.

Regional development, rural development, and state aids are important instruments to make regions more attractive to live in and work in. "Future is something we have to make ourselves".

PLENARY SESSION Towards tomorrow together

Ruggero SCHLEICHER-TAPPESER, Secretary-General of the Alpine Convention

A common point heard in all the workshops of the Convention is the fact that mountain areas are very diverse. They have very different environmental structures, population structures, etc. There are of course common elements, but they are difficult to analyse and prove with statistics studies. The similarities that we can find are more cultural. The mountain areas do have problems, but we should avoid calling them handicap areas.

Mr. Ruggero Schleicher-Tappeser sees two possible scenarios for mountains in the future. The mountain can become back-yards for the large cities. For example in the Alpine area people are currently very much following the urban life-style and values. The second scenario looks for a new way of life adapted to the areas and integrating the Alpine space with a noneconomic model, which is the scenario that we should look forward to.

The Alpine Convention is a model in many regards. It established a strong framework which has been useful even in bad times. Nevertheless, we should strengthen our cooperation with areas that have more difficulties.

Rui AZEVEDO, director of CPMR

In spite of the great diversity of natural and cultural resources (whose importance is largely recognized for the community), the mountain zones still count negative demographic and socio-economic dynamics which menace the preservation of these resources and values. This could have as consequence the abandon of culture zones and the smaller profit of the forest and its products, but with the emergency of new activities linked to the rural tourism rural and to nature tourism, that will also provoke changes in the subject of the territory occupation and management.

For cohesion reasons, the European Union can not ignore the specificities and the development of the mountain regions and, so, it may assume, in the future communitarian budget, the social cost to maintain and to preserve these spaces. The EU cannot either for competitiveness reasons stop promoting the valorisation of these regions, for example through their conditions improvement to accessibility and communication, as the development of broadband connections.

Fernando CAMPOS, vice-President of the Mountain Section of National Association of Portuguese Municipalities

The delivery of services of general interest in the mountains is an essential theme for the population living in the mountain areas. The collaboration between the Mountain Elected People Association (AEM) and Euromontana is very important. Further, partnerships between the public and the private sectors should be developed.

It's very important that European Union and its members allow the mountains to overcome their permanent natural disadvantages, namely accepting the increasing costs of the economic and social activity in the mountain, and consulting, in a transparent way, the representative authorities of the mountain and its actors.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE

Frank GASKELL, President of Euromontana

Much of the variety of Europe emanates from the mountains, the principal reservoirs of diversity. This diversity is richer and more intense in the mountains of Europe than anywhere else in the developed world.

Mr. Gaskell expressed in this regard: "Seen in this context the responsibility we bear is almost frightening. How could we explain to future lost mountain generations if we fail to secure the mountain cause when we have such unique and precious ingredients?"

But there are also real threats – aging population, loss of young people and desertification. Mr. Gaskell suggested: "My point is that Europe is in danger of sleep walking into the blandness of being a second United States – the United States is an excellent and dynamic country but one USA in the world is enough". Our current challenge is to transform into action the obvious good will arguments that have been generated today. The first step has been done, that is to say, the draft of a declaration that has achieved the consensus of this impressive assembly of stakeholders which Frank Gaskell suggest, is an excellent cross-section of professionally informed mountain opinion.

As Ronnie Hall hinted we have to accept the Growth & Jobs Lisbon theme – the alternative view that this is in danger of seriously neglecting the social issues and territorial cohesion.

This convention has demonstrated that mountain areas can embrace the Lisbon strategy – mountains are a real Lisbon asset.

ANNEX: CHAVES DECLARATION



Cohesion for Growth – Mountains as natural ingredients for Europe's competitiveness

Following a Euromontana Conference 14-15 September 2006 in Chaves, Portugal

THIS DECLARATION IS ADDRESSED TO THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND TO EUROPEAN STATES BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE COMMUNITY

IT REVIEWS THE KEY ROLE THAT THE MOUNTAINS OF EUROPE CAN PLAY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LISBON AGENDA AND CURRENT EUROPEAN POLICY CHANGES

DISCUSSES SEVEN PERSPECTIVES WITHIN WHICH MOUNTAINS MUST BE PERMITTED TO MAKE THEIR CONTRIBUTION

AND MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS IN RESPECT OF EACH FIELD

Preliminary

We, the representatives of mountainous Europe assembled here at Chaves on 15 September, *call for* recognition of the value of Europe's mountain areas as assets that can contribute to the Lisbon agenda and its three pillars of economic growth and competitiveness, social inclusion and environmental sustainability and the Gothenburg agenda.

We **agree** that growth and sustainable employment are vital to the economic and social wellbeing of the European population and that all of Europe's assets must be deployed for this important purpose. Europe's centres of excellence must be free to exploit their comparative advantages in the marketplace, but we **submit** that the European Union must assure territorial cohesion. If Europe is to realise its economic potential, all regions, wherever they are located, need to contribute to economic growth and all people living in Europe must be given the chance, within the appropriate business and regulatory climate, to compete on the basis of their excellence. Europe's mountains represent assets of comparable excellence in specific regards but require recognition and encouragement to compete and, in some cases, to survive. We **welcome**, therefore, the guidance provided in the European Commission's Community Strategic Guidelines for the Structural Funds Programme 2007-2013, particularly the recognition expressed in Article 2.2 that "high returns are available on investments in regions with the potential to catch up rapidly with the rest of the European Union but where domestic funds may be insufficient to pursue all available opportunities".

Review

Negotiation of National Strategic Reference Frameworks – the Mountain Perspective in European Union regional and rural development policies

The European Union Member States' proposals for delivery of Structural Funds must take into consideration the Commission's preparatory work in the form of the 3rd Cohesion Report and the exhaustive discussions involved in the negotiation of the draft European Constitution, particularly the elaboration of the concept of Territorial Cohesion to supplement the well-established concepts of economic and social cohesion.

The 3rd Cohesion Report gave strong support to the concept of Territorial Cohesion, and in effect recognises that

Territorial Cohesion "implies that people should not be disadvantaged by wherever they happen to live or work in the Union" (p. 27). Moreover, the Report (pp 30-33) related the special challenges of regions with geographical handicaps such as certain islands, mountains and sparsely populated areas – categories that overlap in many regions. The Report's approach provided the foundation for two positive advances instigated by the Commission:

The reassertion that the Structural Funds Policy, while supporting the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs, does so in the context of concentration on the potential of areas whose development is lagging.

The recognition of the special needs of areas with geographical handicaps.

We are *pleased to note* that the first approach is currently being robustly promulgated in European Commission dialogues throughout the European Union, and to see that it also provides the first of the seven ways that Cohesion Policy can continue to make a significant contribution to the Lisbon Priorities proposed in the Community Strategic Guidelines.

Having welcomed the recognition that the 3rd Cohesion Report gave to areas with geographical handicaps, we were delighted to see the provision made in Article 52 of the earliest versions of the Structural Funds General Regulation granting a 5 percentage point increase of the ERDF contribution to Priorities under the Regional Competitive and Employment Objective where the Priority concerned mountain areas. While it was a severe disappointment, therefore, that this provision has not been retained in the final mandatory General Regulation approved by the Council, but relegated to the discretion of Member States, we **strongly submit** that the implicit principle that mountain areas can be recognised by operational programmes cannot lightly be abandoned.

The Convention set out to illustrate the significant offering that mountain areas and their unique natural and environmental diversity can make for growth in seven distinct contexts. This Chaves Declaration addressed to the European Institutions and the European States both within and outside the EU is the product of workshops examining these seven key fields.

Innovative Services of General Interest in mountain areas

Services of general interest are an important asset for private households and enterprises. Mountain areas lagging behind in the quality of services of general interest would lose much of their attractiveness and competitiveness. In its White Paper on Services of General Interest, the European Commission recognised several important elements for the benefit of public services. First, it recognised that the services of general interest are a pillar for social cohesion and increased competitiveness in the European Union. Then, the Commission committed itself to formulate sectoral community directives in fields with a clear European dimension, recognising that responsibility over public services should be divided between the Union and the Member States. This reinforces the subsidiarity principle. Ultimately, Member States decide the organisation, funding and control mechanisms of services of general interest.

European countries have found solutions to improve the situation of the services of general interest. These solutions are often born within a partnership involving all levels (national, regional and local) and also the private sector.

Mountains as repositories of renewable and alternative energies

Mountain areas can contribute to European policies on climate change by supplying clean, sustainable and renewable energy. Through the use of their indigenous energy sources, mountain areas can become more self-sustaining and competitive and able to contribute to growth and job creation. Clean energy may help define the value of public goods/positive externalities in the mountains.

All mountain areas have the capacity to contribute to EU policies by generating clean, sustainable energy and by counteracting CO₂ emissions produced largely in Europe's urban centres.

Mountain areas on the western, northern and southern peripheries of the European continent, as well as the mountains of central Europe, are important current and potential sources of potential clean energy. These include hydro-electric power (with over 100 years experience of delivering renewable energy), and the nascent and growing sources: wind, solar, biomass, and the associated opportunities in hydrogen storage.

Clean energy is one of the very few strategic resources provided by mountain regions; its careful development could provide new financial resources to invest in the environmental, social and economic futures in the mountains.

Opportunities offered by new information and communication technologies

The development of the Information Society should benefit all European citizens without exclusion. Areas with natural handicaps, such as mountain areas, have the potential to gain from opportunities offered by the new information and communication technologies (ICT) in providing services to their citizens. Yet, a gap between urban and rural – and especially mountain - areas in the coverage of broadband and in the use of ICT still exists.

The gap must be filled in by establishing a compromise between urban and rural areas in order to reach territorial cohesion, as the current and future development is largely based on access to ICT, in rural and urban areas alike.

Mountains should of course be provided with a good broadband coverage. It is also necessary to ensure a sufficient use of services by the mountain populations to make profitable the technological infrastructures. And finally this infrastructure should be upgraded at the same pace as in the urban areas.

Exchange of experiences and promotion of new activities and new services based on new information and communication technologies should be one of the cooperation fields between Euromontana and the different actors, public (at the European, national and regional level) and private, to develop the "information society" and "new economy" opportunities in the mountain areas.

Protected areas as tools for territorial management

Protected areas in the mountains are essential in maintaining the activity and therefore the development of mountain areas. These areas provide many opportunities for the livelihood of mountain areas.

A precondition for all land management plans in mountain areas is to take into consideration and guarantee the permanence of nature areas as a resource, because the resources for the activities which maintain many of their vital characteristics are diminishing.

Euromontana, through its network, is in the position to promote sustainable tourism and establish and facilitate a dialogue between the agriculture, environment and tourism.

The future of mountain agriculture in support of rural communities

Mountain agriculture in Europe is in a more serious predicament than other forms of agriculture faced with economic and competitive pressures arising, inter alia, from the decision to reduce tariff protection (WTO and the Doha round) and a new reduction in Community and national support from 2008. The consequences could be overexploitation or abandonment of agricultural activity.

For centuries, mountain agriculture has shaped Europe's natural and cultural heritage; a study by the European Environmental Agency recognises the link between ecological diversity and an adapted agricultural activity (neither overexploitation nor abandonment). It is therefore a duty of everyone, particularly the public authorities, to maintain this public good for the benefit of future generations.

Recognising and rewarding Public Goods in mountain areas

We believe that Europe's mountains and their people provide a wide range of unique benefits for society, such as pure and abundant water, clean and renewable energy sources, forests, minerals, food and drink linked with the territory, outdoor recreation, outstanding landscapes, and biodiversity of the highest quality. The value placed by society on the maintenance of cultural diversity, environmental assets, landscapes and recreational resources

provided by our mountain (and other) areas is shared by urban and rural peoples alike. However, as these assets are 'public goods', there is little opportunity to extract market value for them. This creates a challenge in supporting both individuals and communities whose activities support the provision of these goods with no direct financial reward.

Planting seeds for future Carpathian and Balkan generations; Sustainable agriculture and rural development in mountain areas (SARD-M)

Euromontana is convinced that cooperation across massifs is an important tool for the development of mountain areas. Euromontana therefore supports initiatives like the Alpine Convention, the Carpathian Convention and the efforts for a stronger cooperation in the Balkans. The Carpathian mountain region is facing a challenge to find key resolutions and strategies to successfully implement policies related to sustainable agriculture and rural development in mountain areas (SARD-M), both individually and jointly, to build on diverse mountain potentials and cope with existing challenges in a sustainable development perspective. We believe that an open dialogue on cooperation between the Carpathian countries and the European Union will provide a foundation for future collaboration and integrated activities, including those related to the SARD-M policies.

The future for the South East European (Balkan) region is very challenging. This region in transition still faces many difficulties and threats. Specifically in the light of accession to the European Union, increasing integration with Western Europe and the liberalization of markets, governments have to take the responsibility to steer development towards a sustainable future. The conditions in the various parts of the mountains of South East Europe (Balkans) vary widely, and in economic and social terms the region's states represent small markets. Their economic sustainability depends on the creation of a common economic area that will attract foreign investors. In this sense, the regional approach is a necessary precondition for sustainable development. Solutions to the region's problems should derive from its countries.

In the recent European Union document, "The Western Balkans on the road to the EU: consolidating stability and raising prosperity" (Brussels, January 27, 2006), the European Commission proposes measures to help integrate Western Balkan societies progressively into the European mainstream. This is especially encouraging for the countries of the Western Balkans to increase their ownership of regional cooperation.

Institutionalised multilateral regional cooperation should be complementary to and support the European integration process of the Balkan countries. The coordination of actions and common goals foster this process, strengthen their voice, and reinforce EU efforts to create an effective regional policy. The EU has set regional cooperation as a necessary condition and target.

Recommendations

Recommendation - Negotiation of National Strategic Reference Frameworks – the Mountain Perspective regional and rural development policies

We **strongly recommend** that the European Commission should maintain the consistency of the position it has established in respect of both Territorial Cohesion and the recognition of mountains - and indeed other areas with severe geographical handicaps - in the discussions now to be undertaken on the Member States' National Strategic Reference Frameworks. In particular, Member States should be encouraged not only to make provision for the appropriate mountain areas but also to ensure that commensurate allocations of funding are provided for that purpose.

In the framework of the European observatory on rural development, we **request** the establishment of a working group specifically on mountains. To optimise the European added value, the European Commission should take into consideration existing European networks such as Euromontana. It should also build on work previously undertaken, such as the study on mountain areas for the Directorate-General for Regional Development completed in 2004, encouraging improvements in subsequent versions in for example higher level of disaggregating of data.

Recommendation - Innovative Services of General Interest in mountain areas

We **urge** the continuation of the debate on services of general interest at the European Union level and that the opinion of, and the specific circumstances of, the peripheral areas on this topic are taken into consideration.

We **call** for the National Governments and the European Union to keep in mind the commitment to territorial cohesion and equality between regions contained in the 3rd Cohesion report and the draft Constitution and to develop strategies and a legal framework for the services of general interest. Services of general interest are of particular importance for mountain areas as well as for other areas and must therefore be exempted from the general rules on state aids. In this context, the funding of «heavy» infrastructure such as roads, railroads and telecommunication networks as well as the provision of services on these infrastructures needs particular attention.

We **recommend** stakeholders in regions with low densities of population to actively search for new more flexible solutions, adapted case by case in order to ensure the quality of services with the full support of national and community authorities.

Recommendation - Mountains as repositories of renewable and alternative energies

We **recommend** that the full potential of Europe's mountain areas for providing renewable and alternative energy should be realised. Releasing this potential requires that barriers which reflect conflicts in EU policy are addressed or removed. These barriers relate to development costs, distribution networks and environmental costs. How much do we need clean power, and how much are we willing to pay the overall costs? What are our priorities? Can we have both clean energy and unspoilt landscapes?

The development of biomass energy appears to provide one of the best answers, as this is a clean resource that performs well against conventional generation, and has the added benefit of being carbon-neutral. Nevertheless, challenges remain. For example in Portugal as in other states of southern Europe, reductions in land management have increased the risk of loss of resources through natural and accidental fire. Techniques for dealing with these risks will need to be factored into the future planning processes.

Clean energy is one of the 'public goods' that come from the mountains; measurement of energy production potential can be considered as one method for giving a value to public goods.

Recommendation - Opportunities offered by new information and communication technologies

We **recommend** that access to broadband should be considered as a service of general interest and that access to the Information Society in terms of quality and timing should be guaranteed to all citizens, including those living in isolated areas such as the mountains.

We **maintain** that public intervention (applied cautiously, limited to benefit the final users, whilst not distorting the market among suppliers) is particularly necessary in mountain areas, given their accessibility problems. Therefore, we require an increase in efforts by the Member States, the international community and private enterprises to breach the digital divide, assigning resources to programmes and financial mechanisms established to address such aims.

Such strategies must be adapted to local and regional needs; the role of the European Commission is to ensure that national strategies take into consideration the least accessible areas such as the ultra-peripheral and mountain regions. The European Commission should guarantee a proper level of coordination between the cohesion and rural development policies. Attention should also be paid to coordination between the regional and national decision-making levels.

Connectivity by itself is not sufficient. Connectivity is only the "technology of opportunity" that opens the door to:

- the development of new economic activities
- the development of services based on new technologies, adapted to the mountain areas, giving an impulse to a local demand that should become more and more self-reliant in maintaining the technological infrastructure.
- facilitating exchange both between the mountain communities and between them and the rest of the society: development of joint projects, exchanges of experiences...

At the same, time, the classic approach of development of basic services and improvement of the physical access should continue.

Finally, all interventions must include the active cooperation of mountain actors and people, so that activities are adapted to local conditions and based on real demands that ensure their sustainability. Otherwise, we risk opening a second digital divide, linked to the type and quality of digital services, substituting or adding into the infrastructural digital divide.

Recommendations - Protected areas as tools for territorial management

We recommend that protected areas must be integrated into the territorial management of mountain areas, through:

- Effective consultation concerning management/ development and decisions
 - * A priori the consensus between preservation of protected areas and territorial management seems difficult; common ground must be established and maintained
 - * Territorial management policies have to be bottom-up, come up from the local level
 - * Public authorities have an essential role in the development projects
- Full recognition by all actors within the territory of all the dimensions and development projects of every protected area
 - * To give life to territorial management projects and to avoid confrontation or rejection, local stakeholders must be fully informed and involved so that they have ownership of projects and participate actively. There is a need for information tools to help in decision making (e.g., geographic information systems)
- Recognition of the need to convince elected representatives and socio-professionals of the importance of conserving protected areas.
 - * The value of the mountain resources is linked to their quality (e.g., quality of products and services, regional cultural identity)
- Support for the territorial management in mountain areas
 - * Maintaining the natural resources in mountain areas requires constant work from people; this fully justifies support for mountain agriculture and forestry
 - * Territorial management programmes must include support to fund local actions to diminish negative impacts on protected areas
 - * Where different categories of protected areas overlap, this must be made clear, and procedures of financial support in these areas must be simplified.
- Territorial management should have three integrated objectives:
 - 1. Preservation of resources (e.g., biodiversity, water, soil, knowledge)
 - 2. Capacity to facilitate and to programme the implementation of infrastructures and equipment for the sustainable development of the territory
 - 3. Social cohesion

Recommendation - The future of mountain agriculture in support of rural communities

We deplore the decision of the European Union's Heads of State and Governments to cut the budget for rural development in the Financial Perspectives.

We **declare** that it is the responsibility of the public authorities, at regional, national and Community levels, to determine the objectives and to put in place the necessary means to achieve sustainable mountain agriculture within the context of the sustainable development of mountain areas.

Therefore we **call for** a reaffirmation and reinforcement of the policy of compensation for natural handicaps in order to respond to the on-costs of production on farms and to continue the provision of agricultural products to markets which are essential to maintain the biodiversity of mountain areas.

Furthermore, we **call for** improved and consolidated support for the diversification of production and revenue systems, in order to better address the opportunities of the mountain areas derived from the quality of products, valuation of the landscapes, tourism potential and support provided to other activities, and to increase the value of mountain biodiversity and protection against natural hazards.

Recommendation - Recognising and rewarding Public Goods in mountain areas

We **call for** ongoing support for both individuals and communities who provide the wide range of public goods that are so highly valued by the wider population. We are committed to raising awareness, at all levels, of the range of public goods provided by mountains and their communities and both their value and the costs of maintenance. We will engage in a debate about how these goods should be paid for.

Given the process of change that has already commenced through CAP Reform, EU enlargement, alterations to Structural Funds and evolving national policies, we demand that public agencies at a national level establish effective and consistent monitoring of the impact of policy reform on mountain areas at the earliest opportunity. We are committed to securing a partnership to develop a complementary programme that will explore both the underlying factors for change and those that support mountain communities rich in both natural and cultural public goods. We will use our findings to influence future policy and funding reform in securing the future of public goods.

Recommendation - Carpathian Mountains

We recommend

- the use of the European Union policy development and accession process to create opportunities for biodiversity conservation, rural development and implementation of SARD-M related policies through EU programmes;
- that national capacity be built to promote policies, instruments and operational recommendations for SARD-M at national and regional levels, using participatory and multi-stakeholder approaches;
- that awareness be raised among policy makers, the international community and civil society on the role and value of the Carpathian Mountain ecosystem and the need for SARD mountain-specific policies or the integration of their components in sectoral policies;
- the support and facilitation of the in-country assessment and implementation of SARD-M policies, where needed, by facilitating the mobilization of the necessary institutional, human or scientific support.

Recommendation - South East European (Balkan) Mountains

We recommend that a strategy to build SARD-M in South East Europe (Balkans) should be based on the following:

- recognition of the role and value of the region's mountain ecosystems;
- evaluation of current policies for sustainable agriculture and rural development in the region's mountains, as well as designing and implementing new policies;
- strengthening of national capacities in countries of the region to promote SARD mountain policies and instruments, using a participatory approach.

Mountain areas are indispensable for a Europe of growth and sustainable development. We call for the European, national and regional policies that will enable the mountain areas to contribute as equal partners to this agenda.

Chaves, Portugal, 15 September 2006

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