

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS FOR A « MOUNTAIN » GREEN BOOK

Preface

1. Introduction

Should the EU have an integrated mountain policy? If so, on what scale? (Trans-regional, by mountain chain, trans-frontier or international ranges? On a regional or local level?) How could the policy be more pertinent and the least in competition with existing national or regional policies?

2. Preserving European supremacy for sustainable development in mountainous areas:

2.1 A competitive mountain economy

European mountain economy is far from monolithic: it goes beyond the diversity between different European ranges. It is not likely to be reduced to a single economic sector, the very opposite in fact, marked by strong interdependence between sectors of activity, especially due to the necessity of poly-activity for mountain dwellers.

Geomorphologic factors (climate, steepness of terrain, altitude, isolation) are the reason for structural expense, but have also led mountain populations to strive for excellence. The competitiveness of mountain economy is due to the quality of local products and the precision of mountain know-how.

How can this competitiveness and complementarity be maintained between the different sectors of activity in European mountain economy, while taking into account the specific needs of the small local businesses that make up its structure?

What mechanisms can be put into action to ensure sustainable development for new mountain activities, while actively contributing to the renewed objectives undertaken at Lisbon (competitiveness and employment)?

2.2 A rich and fragile natural mountain environment

The natural richness of the mountain environment is equal only to its fragility. Biodiversity is more important here than in any other territory as it is increasingly valued by growing numbers of visitors, which, in return, requires more and more attention to the preservation of this environment. However, making it a sanctuary should be avoided: present and future planning should strike a balance between development and the preservation of natural surroundings. Mountainous regions are inhabited and alive, and must be the object of truly durable development, development born of local populations, bringing them equal shares in its benefits.

How can European policy for mountainous areas contribute to conserving natural resources and our environment?

How can European strategy for mountain regions serve the objective of retaining local populations and their mountain activities while preserving biodiversity in a mountain environment given the context of climatic changes?

How can risk-evaluation be used to increase security in the mountains?

2.3. Remaining at the top of science and technology

The lifestyle and surroundings of mountain areas encourage intellectual activities and meditation. Once again, geo-morphological difficulties are now transformed into advantages for mountain dwellers: their difficult and hostile environment has forced them to develop specific means and to adapt production methods used in the “plains”: their isolation has obliged them to develop exchanges and complementary skills within the same valley or plateau, thus creating efficient local cooperative systems producing creative and innovative ideas. In a science-based economy, these interactions can be developed by increased access to information technology and communications, and encouraged to open up to the outside world.

How can a European strategy be implemented for research linked to the mountain environment to help us increase our knowledge and promote new technology? Do we need a specific European research network for the mountain milieu?

What mechanisms would be appropriate to transform knowledge into growth and job-creation?

What participation should we expect from local bodies such as public authorities, socio-economic or scientific partners?

2.4. Innovation in a context of evolution

European mountain people are familiar with innovation; their capacity to adapt has left its mark on the landscape and has generally contributed to enriching techniques and technology from other areas. This tradition is a huge advantage in a modern economy based on science in which creation and conception draw production along.

However, structural expense in mountain regions means extra investment, which means that logical differentiation has to be used so that competitive prices can be maintained, within the framework of the Wagner CJCE ruling of February 1983. Thus we can consider it not totally against the philosophy of the E.U. to dedicate public funding specifically to providing ICT access for example, if we consider the social, economic and territorial objectives to be attained!

What other measures should the EU take to limit the effects of global warming on mountain environment and to adapt to it?

How should innovative technology for energy production in mountainous regions be promoted and implemented? How should energy efficiency be increased in buildings and energy resources used in the mountains be diversified?

What measures should be taken to reinforce potential advantages of our biotechnology and safeguard employment in nanotechnology?

2.5 Development of European mountain know-how, and promotion of lasting employment in mountain regions.

In mountain regions, many families are familiar with job plurality, especially as linked to the rhythm of the changing season; summer work and winter work are different, and it takes imagination and adaptability to combine activities for a stable existence. This job plurality implies plurality of training, of tax and social security situations, and often, enormous difficulty with administrative tasks. Solving these problems contributes to current debates about future job forms, and especially “flex-security”.

By what means should the drop in numbers of European citizens adopting certain careers in the mountains be reversed, job security be insured and jobs be made more attractive, to women in particular?

How should working conditions, salaries and job-security be improved while maintaining sector-based competitiveness?

How can the quality of teaching, training and the level of diplomas be insured?

2.6. Formation of clusters

Reconciling the objectives of Gothenburg and Lisbon, the development of territorial research units grouping university academics, representatives of the private economic sector and local public institutions puts a promising future for mountain zones at stake. The creation of numerous clusters allows us to foresee harmonious planning for the whole EU territory, and, whatever legal form they may take, above all, a dynamic socio-economic environment, as their formation will provide growth and competitiveness for mountain regions, while boasting the advantages of the mountains and their natural resources.

However, setting up such local partnerships implies slight reorientation of industrial and commercial policy, to reinforce regional investment and encourage research in favour of small business.

What role can mountain clusters play in increased competitiveness, especially for small business, in reinforcing attractiveness for mountain economic activity and in promoting a certain idea of mountain identity?

2.7. Statutory framework

European agricultural policy was first to contain specific dispositions for mountain normalisation in 1957. Modifications to this policy would seem more and more necessary, as the inscription of the mountain areas among territories most directly concerned by cohesion policy in the Lisbon Treaty (article 158) would indicate. Since then, cohesion policy (general ruling, Structural Funds 2007-2013) and other European policies (Eurovignette Order 7th PCRD, etc.) have incorporated this territorial specificity. However, this can not mean instating one single policy for all mountain territories, but, with good “bottom-up” management, to take into account the specifics of each European mountain massif and their capacity to know, decide, and put to use the means best suited for their sustainable development.

What is the best way to organise subsidiarity while respecting territorial autonomy, fruit of endogenous development and local differences? How can the experimental nature of mountain regions be integrated on a European scale?

How could the statutory framework for socio-economic activity in mountain areas be improved to avoid unexpected and adverse effects on the objectives for sustainable development in mountain territory?

What parts of European Community social legislation would it be appropriate to exclude from the mountain sector? Should new legal instruments specifically concerned with working conditions in mountain areas be encouraged? How can EU statutes concerning job security be simplified or adapted while maintaining high standards?

How far should ruling by public bodies be completed by the private sector by economic incitation, auto regulation and social responsibility?

What fresh action should the UE undertake to improve insufficient transport services and a transfer towards more ecological transportation or to improve working conditions for transporters while preserving good living conditions for mountain valley populations?

How can EU agricultural policy evolve to fulfil its objectives for sustainable development in mountainous areas, supporting grazing, forestry and mountain vineyards?

3. Maximising quality of life in mountainous regions

3.1. Increasing attractiveness of mountain zones for living and working

In Europe, some mountain territories are devalued while others are very attractive, which is a sign that nothing is pre-established.

In the attractive areas, the issue is developing and maintaining competitiveness while preserving the quality of life, which is one major advantage of mountain zones. The extension of European borders is going to modify economic exchanges and the most recently integrated areas will become the most attractive.

ICTs and partnerships between private and public sectors are solutions for preserving high living standards for mountain populations.

How can we maintain a high standard of living in mountainous regions while increasing income and durable employment?

What is the best way to improve and to renovate general public services in the mountains, and in particular, services to individuals? What mechanisms would allow them to be economically viable (mutualisation of costs and PPP, federalised taxes, equalization funds, reserving products from resources, tax free zones, state aid)?

What data is necessary for planning in mountainous regions ?

3.2. Adapting to natural risks in the mountains

The mountains are areas of high natural risk (rock falls, landslides, avalanches, mud slides, forest fires etc. etc.). Global warming will accentuate these risks. Human activity and infrastructures, more costly and fragile than in flat areas, must be protected. European cooperation is necessary to best develop management methods integrating mountain hazards, to anticipate or to cope with them together.

What steps should be taken to reduce exposure of mountain zones to hazards linked to flooding and erosion?

How should European cohesion be reinforced so that natural catastrophes are dealt with correctly?

How should better surveillance of mountain zones be set up to obstruct threats such as avalanches, slides, forest fires etc.?

3.3 Development of sustainable tourism in the mountains

Mountainous areas are generally areas where tourism has been developed: many European massifs have the benefit of modern summer and winter resorts, with considerable potential for “eco-tourism”. This activity requires intelligent management of water resources, waste, and transportation, as well as of marketing and attractiveness.

Employment generated by tourism is important but global warming is likely to have a strong influence on winter activity (and an opposite effect on summer?)

Diversification and poly-activity are solutions for facing the evolution of tourism in years to come. They are the way to maintain a permanent social structure in the mountains.

Innovative tourism is developing in mountain areas with new marketing concepts. This will need an international network and cooperation across the borders.

What is the best way to efficiently encourage innovation of products and services linked to tourism in the mountains?

What specific measures are needed to encourage the development of sustainable tourism?

3.4. Management of city and mountain interface

Following a basic schema, mountain territories attract because of their recreational and natural advantages, whereas urban zones attract because of their competitiveness. However, imbalance can occur between cities and rural areas. Partnerships are being set up between cities and the mountains to allow people to benefit from the advantages of both types of territory and to find more synergy in each massif zone and in each valley.

How can progress be made in Integrated Management of Mountain Zones?

How can the European Union insure the best continuous and durable development of towns situated near mountain massifs or in the valleys while preserving a “valley” system?

What role can mountain clusters play?

3.5. The role of massifs in the RTEs

Mountain massifs often constitute border areas between nations in extended Europe, and commercial exchange is likely to increase significantly in these zones. They play a strategic role in completing the broad European market. Very numerous mountain regions are concerned by Trans European Networks (TEN Transport, Telecommunications and Energy). These projects must be ‘territorialised’ in order to benefit from local support.

In particular, if transportation has a heavy impact on mountain ecosystems and if it is indispensable to develop inter-modality and rail use, the mountains should benefit from freight transportation and seize the opportunity for the economic development provided by these links.

How can local population be involved and how can local advantages be found in the freight crossing of massifs while improving the environmental aspect of the TENs?

How can the development of logistic platforms at the foot of the massifs be sustained as regional economic relays and zones of transfer of means of transportation?

How can free circulation of goods, services and citizens be reconciled with accessibility of European massifs in terms of infrastructure for transport, energy and telecommunications?

4. Tools for management of interaction between foothills, valleys and mountains on a local (massif) level

4.1. Data for use for multiple activities

Mountainous regions are under new pressure since the European Union expanded, particularly with fluctuation exchanges. Their social, economic and natural systems will be modified. It is thus essential to look at each massif individually in order to apprehend these changes.

Several organisms are working specifically on European mountain zones, sector by sector or with a multi-discipline slant. Databases are being built up but they mainly concern mountain ecosystems. Data on human activity and its repercussions is short.

A multi-discipline European observatory of mountain territories would fill this gap, pool “mountain” institutes, and valorise existing databases produced by different research and observation initiatives. Analysis of this information would permit the creation of tools and instruments for planning management in mountain territories.

What bases should be used to create an Atlas of European mountains?

What is the best long-term way to set up, manage and finance a European network for observation and data on the mountain milieu?

Would it be suitable to set up on a European scale a common network pooling present and future systems for observing transportation similar to the system which already exists in the

Alps? What data base would such a network use? How would these sources of information be integrated and who would use them?

4.2. Planning a space for an expanding mountain economy

The Member States of the European Union are not all concerned at the same level by the planning of mountain zones. Some of them have national, regional or local committees to manage planning in mountain territories. Policy by sector allows tools to be created to encourage economic development. Protected areas, which are numerous in mountain regions, have interesting management structures which federate and often allow innovative projects to emerge.

As we saw in chapter 4.1, research must continue to compile databases to discover new instruments adapted to mountain territory planning. Each massif could thus use methods appropriate to its own development and show its specifics to their best advantage within Europe.

What are the main principles and mechanisms which should underlie planning systems in mountainous areas and massifs?

What are the best planning systems where foothill areas, valleys and mountain zones are compatible?

4.3. Making the best use of financial support for mountain regions.

*As they represent a **large part of the European territory**, mountain zones benefit from European funding thanks to policies by sector and several community initiative programs.*

***Territorial co-operation programs** are best adapted to mountain regions as they work by massif, which is a coherent geographic space.*

*However, their **specific problems** are not yet sufficiently taken into account and are often **marginalized**.*

How can European Union financial instruments best contribute to attaining objectives in mountain region policies?

How can the specifics of mountain territories be better taken into account and no longer be seen as commonplace?

Is better data on mountain regions and mountain activity necessary?

How should European mountain strategy be taken into consideration in discussions relative to a future European Union financial framework?

5. Mountain governing

5.1. Policy writing within the European Union

European ruling cannot take place without reflection upon government of its specific territories, particularly those with permanent natural handicaps creating strong identities.

We can take for granted that in a Europe with 27 members and 268 regions, institutions can no longer continue to make policies along the lines of "one size fits all"; there is legitimate need for strategic approaches customised for different territories according to their specifics. This is also true for relations with the rest of the world, if the EU hopes to improve the efficiency of its action for global sustainable development. European Comitology could allow better decision-making processes.

What is the best way to set up an integrated approach to mountain activity in the European Union? What principals should it be founded on?

Would it be appropriate to organise an annual conference on good practice for mountain ruling along the lines of the one organised in October 2002 by Commissioners Barnier, Fischler and Liikanen?

5.2. State activities in mountain regions

It is no longer necessary to demonstrate what is at stake in European mountains on a national and inter-governmental scale. Whatever the institutional organisation of European Union territories, most mountain States or Nations concerned by mountain regions have set up specific, transversal or sector-based actions in favour of the mountains.

***How can the European Union contribute to the growth of coherence, profitability and co-ordination of the activities of public authorities in its mountain zones and its massifs?
What other activities would it be useful to include in the creation of a common European mountain space?***

5.3. International rules for world activities

Taking into account the specifics of mountain territories on a world scale is not new. In fact the poorest regions with the most difficulties worldwide are among the mountainous regions and the populations in the most difficulty and the most ill treated are mountain populations. The United Nations and international authorities have been preoccupied by the specifics of mountainous regions for several decades and the FAO is the UN agency in charge of questions relative to mountain zones. Things have accelerated over the last ten years. From Agenda 21 to Mountain Partnership, international co-operation on mountain regions has seen major development. Among many subjects, work on sustainable development in mountain territories and decentralised co-operation has intensified (Rome Workshops, 18th October 2006 and 20th June 2007).

***What is the best way for the European Union to influence international authorities concerned with mountain regions?
Should the European Community belong to and participate in more multilateral organisations in charge of questions relating to mountain regions?
What actions should the EU take to reinforce international efforts to fight pauperisation and desertion of mountain territories?
How should the European Union use its external policy to encourage fair competition for all actors in mountain economy worldwide, and to encourage sustainable mountain practice and policies by outside countries?***

5.4. Taking into account geographic facts

The geographic and territorial diversity of the European Union has been accentuated since its expansion; its continental dimension has been underlined. Socio-economic signs can no longer be the only thing to back up analysis by European decision-makers as the situations can vary and territorial contexts create multitudes of combinations of relations between human activity and the environment which hosts and feeds them. The European Union must take these geographical facts into account and provide coherent territorial analysis at the right time.

***What territorial characteristics should be taken into account in EU mountain policy?
What is the best way to integrate these characteristics into the objective of territorial Co-operation and to make them into a real strategy for sustainable development in the massifs for territorial cohesion in the EU?***



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How should these questions be better integrated into the politics of neighbouring countries and the development of the European Union?

6. European mountain heritage and European mountain identity: re-appropriation and reaffirmation

There is a real European mountain identity beyond the backward looking and recreational vision of mountain territories ; it is based on solidarity, innovation and poly-activity, and also on specific cultural and economic systems.

Tourism and activities linked with it are a vector for reinforcing this identity and highlighting the cultural and natural heritage.

Border country zones are rich culturally and linguistically. Numerous cultural exchanges in mountain zones exist on national and trans-frontier levels, in spite of the difficulty of access to culture and art. The European Union “Culture” program could help development in mountain zones from this point of view.

With the new extended Europe, the mountains will restructure themselves both socially and economically. They will reinforce their links with the outside world.

What measures should the European Union take to support mountain heritage and educational activities on the subject, and contribute to the emergence of a sentiment of mountain identity?

7. Conclusion : the next stage : The European commission task force prior to editing the Green paper and a consultation process.

What procedure do you expect from the European commission?

What Commissioner should take responsibility for this “Mountain” Green paper? Which DG should “host” a trans-service Task force?

Postscript



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Please answer these questions generically :

1. Is the above analysis applicable to your mountain territory?

Do you know of any examples to back up these ideas?

2. Do you know any European policies in favour of sustainable development of mountain activities? Any which make it more difficult?

3. Do you think a European mountain strategy could help this situation? If so, how? If not, why not?