



Background paper on sustainable mountain tourism

Note: This document is intended to feed the debates of the conference “Sustainable active tourism—mountain communities leading Europe in finding innovative solutions” held in Inverness on 27-28 September 2011. It is available in English version and for the sake of sustainability it will only be distributed in pdf version.

*Euromontana thanks its members and all respondents
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Introduction

Tourism is an important economic sector for Europe and represents a considerable factor of development and prosperity for mountain areas. There are no doubts that the tourism sector, generating many direct or indirect positive impacts, is a very important driver of economy. But at the same time, in order to protect the natural environment and to ensure the maximum tourism profit for mountain communities, the negative and precarious effects of tourism also have to be tackled. The issue is sensitive especially in fragile territories such as protected areas, national parks, etc. where a sustainable approach is essential but it is important in all mountains, which have the common feature of hosting rich environmental and cultural heritage which must be valorized but also preserved.

Therefore, the promotion of an adequate policy framework, which will guarantee that mountain tourism is managed in a sustainable way, is absolutely necessary for the long-term development of these areas. So far the competencies of the European Union as regards the tourism sector are limited (article 195 of the Treaty for the European Union foresees that the EU only complements actions from Member States) **and the promotion of the value of sustainability is in the hands of national and regional governments.**

Tourists themselves also have a role to play. We see an increasing demand for forms of tourism that can be alternatives to mass tourism. And, for some people at least, the consequence of how they travel on local environment and communities is likely to influence their choices. This trend is likely to increase with the on-going awareness raising on the impact of consumers' choices on environmental and social issues. But we know as well that, especially in these days of economic downturn, there are many other criteria taken into account when people choose a destination, price being a major one. Mountains, in that respect, are facing the competition of cheaper "all-included" destinations inside and outside Europe, especially in coastal areas or in cities, which provide for easily accessible short stays. It is essential to define strategies that allow mountain people to retain and increase their tourism attractiveness by promoting their own values towards their potential consumers.

In order to achieve that the principle of sustainability is respected when designing tourism policies in Europe, it is crucial to first understand how priorities are set in current mountain tourism policies and how policy-makers approach the issue of sustainability. For the preparation of this background paper, we have carried out an analysis of tourism policies at various levels and an exploration of how the concept of sustainability is defined in different official publications.

We have divided this document into four parts:

- The first part is a compilation of background work and elements on the theme of **"mountains and tourism"**, presenting some important tourism documents and the views of diverse institutions and organisations who have reflected on these issues. We have focused there on the specific context of European tourism by outlining the main characteristics of tourism policies and respective responsibilities of the different levels of governance.
- The second chapter is dedicated to the **concept of sustainable tourism and its implementation**

in a mountain context. It reviews a diversity of existing definitions and principles of sustainable tourism in order to explore the possibility for Euromontana to endorse a definition of “Sustainable tourism”. Principles and types of sustainable tourism, as well as the issues which should be addressed when talking about sustainability are presented. We have ended this chapter on proposals for actions which could be undertaken in order to promote sustainable tourism in mountain areas and presented a small selection of interesting sustainable mountain tourism examples from across Europe.

- The third part of the document is the result of a **survey of Euromontana members** carried out at the end of 2010 by Veronika Korcekova, working in the Euromontana secretariat in the framework of an ERASMUS university project, focusing on the **place given to i) mountain tourism, ii) sustainable tourism in some national and regional tourism strategies and policies across 10 European Countries.**
- The fourth and final part of the document is aimed at introducing **key questions that should guide the discussion among Euromontana members** in particular, and mountain stakeholders in general, on how to promote sustainable tourism development in our European mountains.

This document has no pretention to be exhaustive or fully exact or even the result of comprehensive science on the subject. Its content is based on documentation that could be assembled and on the results received to surveys. Its objective is to provide a basis for reflection and discussion to the Euromontana network, This discussion will take place on the occasion of the conference “**Sustainable active tourism – mountain communities leading Europe in finding innovative solutions**“, in Inverness, on 27-28 September 2011, with some 140 participants from all over Europe.

Our objective there will be to identify the **key features of sustainable tourism policies for mountain areas** which are likely to increase the protection of mountains’ environment and heritage while improving quality of life and income of mountain communities. Euromontana intends to adopt on the occasion of this conference, a set of recommendations which will try to cover the economic, social and cultural, as well as environment dimensions of sustainability.

1. Mountain areas and tourism

1.1. Background

Mountains are rich in natural resources that include water, timber, minerals, and biodiversity. Equally important is the rich cultural heritage of mountain people. As desired destinations for many tourists, migrants and pilgrims, mountains also offer places for rest, solitude, adventure, recreation and scenic beauty.

Over recent decades, travel and tourism have become large contributors to the world's economy. While its economic importance varies widely, it is clear that tourism plays an important role in supporting economic growth even through the current recession¹. Mountain regions host famous tourist destinations, generating employment and social integration, while contributing to the economic, service and infrastructure development.

However, Europe's mountain regions are not only key tourism destinations but they are also – and this is closely inter-related – areas with rich environmental assets and fragile rural economies. As such, they are particularly sensitive to several dimensions of sustainability related to environmental protection and marginalisation of rural communities. Furthermore, tourism practices in mountain areas have not always been sustainable and they are likely to contribute to climate change in various ways when at the same time, mountain areas are among the areas with greater vulnerability to the long term impacts of climate change.

Thus, we want to **promote the development of sustainable tourism models**, as a major path to sustainable development of mountain areas.

1.2. Global tourism context

Chapter 13 of Agenda 21, the primary document resulting from the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Earth Summit) in 1992², entitled “**Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development**” states that “*Governments at the appropriate level, with the support of the relevant international and regional organizations, should diversify mountain economies, inter alia, by creating and/or strengthening tourism, in accordance with integrated management of mountain areas*”

In 1995, at the meeting which led to the establishment of the Mountain Forum, the concluding action plan, known as the “**Mountain Agenda**”³, developed in cooperation with 110 non-governmental organization leaders, from 40 countries, addressed the global tourism industry, prioritising the issue of sustainability: “*Careful management is needed both to maintain the exceptional recreational values of mountains while capturing benefits locally. Over use in confined corridors requires intensive management for waste disposal, infrastructure maintenance, and fragile ecosystem protection*”.

¹ The OECD Tourism Committee: OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2010, http://www.oecd.org/document/24/0,3343,en_2649_34389_44607576_1_1_1_1,00.html

² Chapter 13 of Agenda 21, 1992, <http://www.mtnforum.org/au/Chapter13Agenda21.pdf>

³ Mountain Agenda, 1995, <http://www.mtnforum.org/oldocs/1012.pdf>

Most recently, in the eighth of its resolutions on sustainable mountain development (2009), the **United Nations General Assembly** welcomed “*the growing contribution of sustainable tourism initiatives in mountain regions as a way to enhance environmental protection and socio-economic benefits to local communities and the fact that consumer demand is increasingly moving towards responsible and sustainable tourism*”⁴.

More generally, but not with specific reference to mountains, key international documents dealing with tourism policy and sustainability should be highlighted:

- **the Decision 7/3** of the United Nations General Assembly and its **Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD)** formulated in 1999, which main goal is to “advance sustainable tourism development, inter alia, through the development and implementation of policies and national strategies or master plans for sustainable tourism development based on Agenda 21”⁵;
- **the Decision COP/7/14**⁶ of the UNEP (**Convention on Biological Diversity CBD**) in 2004, which adopted the Guidelines for Biodiversity and Tourism Development⁷;
- **recommendation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development** in 2002 expressed in paragraph 43⁸

In addition to the policy background mentioned above, important global actors and initiatives also need to be mentioned:

- **The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**⁹ is a specialized agency of the United Nations, which serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and focuses mainly at the developing world.
- **The World Travel & Tourism Council**¹⁰ (WTTC) is non-governmental and non-profit business leaders’ forum for Travel & Tourism. Established in 1990, nowadays it comprises one hundred Chief Executives of the world’s foremost organizations.
- **The Environment and Tourism Program**¹¹ is operating within *the Sustainable consumption and production branch of UNEP’s Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE)*. Its mission is to mainstream sustainability into tourism development by demonstrating the economic, environmental, and socio-cultural benefits of sustainable tourism.
- At the UNEP Governing Council in Dubai in February 2006, **The International Task Force on Sustainable Tourism Development (ITF-STD)**¹² emerged as the result of the initiative of France. The role of the Task force is to undertake actions that promote sustainable tourism.

Many discussions are currently on-going on the follow-up of the Earth summit and in preparation of the Rio +20 conference. Undoubtedly, the issue of sustainable tourism should be raised again in relation to tourism in general and to mountain development in particular.

⁴ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/474/13/PDF/N0947413.pdf?OpenElement>

⁵ http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/dsd_aofw_mg/mg_integovedeci.shtml#csd7

⁶ <http://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-07/cop-07-dec-14-en.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.cbd.int/tourism/guidelines.shtml>

⁸ http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/WSSD_POI_PD/English/WSSD_PlanImpl

⁹ <http://www.unwto.org>

¹⁰ <http://www.wttc.org>

¹¹ <http://www.unep.fr/scp/tourism/>

¹² <http://www.unep.fr/scp/tourism/activities/taskforce/index.htm>

1.3. European tourism context

The EU tourism industry generates more than 5% of the EU GDP, with about 1.8 million enterprises employing around 5.2% of the total labour force (approximately 9.7 million jobs). When related sectors are taken into account, the estimated contribution of tourism to GDP creation is much higher: **tourism indirectly generates more than 10% of the European Union's GDP and employs about 12% of the labour force.**¹³

Mountain tourism destinations “are characterized by consolidation of businesses to increase profits and efficiency through reduced management costs and internal structural adjustments” (Nepal, 2002)¹⁴. An increasing trend in European countries is toward small, specialized offers based on “green”, “nature”, and “sustainable tourism” concepts¹⁵.

In spite of this trend, no official initiative has been undertaken in order to precisely define and strictly distinguish the term of “sustainable tourism” from more frequently used term “tourism”. This is the reason why both terms can be incorrectly used as equivalent, while the attribute “sustainable” indicates only the subset of tourism-related practices, which are implemented in the sustainable way (more in Chapter 2).

The main official statement up to now, which links together tourism and European mountain regions is the “**Protocol on the implementation of the Alpine Convention of 1991 in the field of tourism**”¹⁶. This Protocol was signed by the European Community, Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia and Switzerland in 1998 and entered into the force in 2002. The provisions of the Protocol on Tourism primarily concern tourism management and controlling tourist flows, structural developments such as ski lifts and ski slopes, accommodation and the balanced development of economically weak areas.¹⁷ The Alpine conference, meeting in Brdo (Slovenia) in March 2011, decided to theme the 4th report on the State of the Alps on the issue of sustainable tourism.

1.4. European Union policy considering tourism

1.4.1 Legal background

The Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties included tourism among the EU’s objectives¹⁸, but did not provide any specific instruments for implementing this objective. Therefore, until the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force, there was no legal basis for the European tourism policy.

This situation has changed with the introduction in the Treaty of Lisbon of **Article 195** (TFEU, Part Three, Title XXII¹⁹) **establishing a legal basis specifically on tourism:**

“1. The Union shall complement the action of the Member States in the tourism sector, in particular

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/index_en.htm

¹⁴ NEPAL, S.K. (2002): Mountain Ecotourism and Sustainable Development, 2002, in Mountain Research and Development, <http://geog-www.sbs.ohio-state.edu/courses/G820.01/SP06/Nepal%202002a.pdf>

¹⁵ NEPAL, S.K. (2002): op. cit.

¹⁶ Protocol on the implementation of the Alpine Convention of 1991 in the field of tourism, <http://www.alpconv.org/NR/rdonlyres/B44EC4DC-2200-4EC5-BE38-5641BD085B4D/0/TourismProtocolEN.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/world/agreements/prepareCreateTreatiesWorkspace/treatiesGeneralData.do?step=0&redirect=true&treatyId=5561>

¹⁸ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/expert/displayFtu.do?language=en&id=73&ftuld=theme4.html>

¹⁹ http://en.euabc.com/upload/Reader_friendly_sept_2009-net.pdf

by promoting the competitiveness of Union undertakings in that sector. To that end, Union action shall be aimed at:

- (a) encouraging the creation of a favourable environment for the development of undertakings in this sector;
- (b) promoting cooperation between the Member States, particularly by the exchange of good practice.

2. The European Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, shall establish specific measures to complement actions within the Member States to achieve the objectives referred to in this Article, **excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States.**"

Also, for the purpose of adopting specific measures on tourism, Article 195(2) provides the use of the ordinary legislative procedure (formerly the co-decision procedure) by Parliament and Council, with the latter acting by a qualified majority. Nevertheless, tourism is an area in which **the Union has competence only to support, coordinate and complement the actions of the Member States** (Article 6(d) TFEU, Part One, Title I).

Provisions on the free movement of people, goods and services, SMEs, consumer protection, the environment and combating climate change, as well as transport and regional policies, are all relevant to tourism. The measures taken in these policy areas can affect tourism within the Union, whether directly or indirectly.

We can already note that Member States did not include the issue of sustainability in the Treaty.

1.4.2 European Commission

The European Commission²⁰ has been increasingly involved in tourism since the early 1980s, in co-operation with the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions.

An important step forward was taken with the establishment of the **Tourism Advisory Committee** in 1986, the role of which is to facilitate exchange of information, consultation and co-operation on tourism. At present, the Advisory Committee, which is composed of representatives from all Member States, provides information on the measures taken at national level in the area of tourism. This Committee meets several times a year.

Into consideration should be taken the following provisions:

- the Report carried out by European Commission about **implementation of Agenda 21 at European level**²¹;
- **The Habitats Directive 92-43-EEC** and the **Birds Directive 79-409-EEC**, which require the management of ways of utilization, including tourism, in areas identified to ensure stable and long-term quality of habitats and species.

The crucial role that tourism plays for the EU economy has already been recognised by the Commission in several of its communications, as for example, the **"Communication on a renewed EU Tourism Policy"** from March 2006, having as main objective to contribute to *"improving the competitiveness of the European tourism industry and creating more and better jobs through the*

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/promoting-eu-tourism/community-commitment-tourism/index_en.htm

²¹ <http://www.un.org/esa/agenda21/natlinfo/countr/ec/Eco.htm#tour>

sustainable growth of tourism in Europe and globally” or the **“Communication on an Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism”** from **October 2007**, which invited *“stakeholders to undertake the necessary steps in the view of strengthening the contribution of sustainable practices to facilitate the competitiveness of Europe as the most attractive tourism destination.”* Furthermore, the Communication builds the framework for the implementation of supportive European policies and actions in the tourism domain as well as in all other policy areas which may have an impact on tourism or on its sustainability and competitiveness.” It needs to be remarked that, **since this communication, European policy started to focus on the issue of sustainability of tourism.** However the concept of sustainable tourism is often confused with general tourism practices.

The most recent Communication of European Commission from 30th June 2010, **“Europe, the World's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe”**²² outlines a new action framework, which consists of following four priorities:

- (1) Stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector;
- (2) Promote the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism;
- (3) Consolidate the image and profile of Europe as a collection of sustainable and high quality destinations;
- (4) Maximise the potential of EU financial policies and instruments for developing tourism.

The enhancement of the competitiveness of the European tourism sector is also included in the recently adopted **Europe 2020 Strategy**²³, which intends to transform EU in a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy.

The European Commission covers the topic of tourism within **DG Enterprise and Industry, Unit “Tourism”**, which undertakes action through projects like Calypso (social tourism), Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) or Sustainable Tourism - Iron Curtain Trail (Future EuroVelo Cycling Route). The European Commission has also adopted on 9 March 2010 a proposal to establish a **European Heritage Label**. Following its adoption by the European Parliament and the Council, the Commission's proposal could come into effect in 2011 or 2012.²⁴ We will come back to the work of the European Commission in the following chapter where we will explain in greater detail their initiatives related to sustainability.

1.4.3 European Parliament

The European Parliament has made vital contributions to the development of a new tourism policy, particularly through the **resolution of 29 November 2007 on ‘A renewed EU tourism policy: Towards a stronger partnership of European Tourism’**²⁵. In this document, the European Parliament dealt with the effect the visa policy has on tourism. Furthermore, it advocated greater harmonisation of labels and quality standards for tourist accommodation in Europe as well as the further development of quality management schemes in this area. In addition, in order to improve consumer protection, it asked for measures to be established for Internet bookings, via Directive 90/314/EEC, for information on passenger rights to be improved, and for protection to be extended to passengers abandoned by charter operators, introducing a European black list for this purpose.

²² http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/files/communications/communication2010_en.pdf

²³ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

²⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc2519_en.htm

²⁵http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/expert/displayFtu.do?language=en&id=74&ftuid=FTU_4.16.html

1.4.4 Other initiatives

Besides the initiatives of EU institutions, worthy of note is the **European Tourism Stakeholders Conference**²⁶, which was held in Madrid on 14 April 2010. This conference preceded the Informal Ministerial meeting for Tourism, hosted by the Spanish Presidency on 15 April. Within the scope of the Informal Ministerial meeting, the '**Declaration of Madrid**' was signed, having motto "Towards a socially responsible tourism model". The Member States declared their willingness:

1. To take part in the **implementation of the new consolidated EU tourism policy framework**, to be established in light of the Lisbon Treaty, subject to the principle of subsidiarity.
2. To promote **responsible and ethical tourism and, especially, social, environmental, cultural and economic sustainability of tourism**.
3. To **raise awareness to the importance of knowledge and innovation in tourism**, the strengthening of the use of new technologies by the public and private tourism actors, the encouraging of networking and the exchange of best practices, as tools for the competitiveness of European tourism.
4. To support measures and initiatives encouraging the **lengthening of the high season in tourism**, thus contributing to reduce seasonality and to maintain tourist employment in off-season.

²⁶http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/promoting-eu-tourism/tourism-stakeholder-conference/index_en.htm

2. Sustainable tourism

2.1 Definitions

Several definitions of the sustainable tourism exist today as different organisations use different formula to talk about this concept. We will quote here some of the most used.

The **UN World Tourism Organization** defines sustainable tourism as *“tourism that leads to the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems”*.

According to the **UNEP** (UN Environmental Programme) *“sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability”*.

The **OECD** considers sustainability together with quality, competitiveness and evaluation as the four key concepts central to national governments’ priorities. It suggests that the sustainability of the destination depends *“on the ability of a diverse range of stakeholders, across levels of government, business and local communities, to work together to implement suitable measurement and regulatory instruments for ensuring community- and environment-friendly outcomes”*.²⁷

European Institutions recognized the crucial role of sustainability in the EC Communication “Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism”²⁸ from October 2007, where the achievement of sustainable tourism has been described as *“sustainable management of destinations, integration of sustainability concerns by businesses and sustainability awareness by tourists”*.

In addition to these definitions, a definition of the sustainable tourism in its **purest sense** could be *“an industry which attempts to make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate income, employment, and the conservation of local ecosystems”*, as some stakeholders have agreed.²⁹

The review of these 5 approaches shows that the building blocks of a definition include **generation of income and employment** by tourism understood as a **business sector**, **fair distribution of this income to communities**, preservation and promotion of environmental and cultural heritage in order to ensure **long-term viability**. It requires education of business operators as well as consumers –tourists- on the impact of their choices. It also includes **cooperation** between stakeholders, businesses, authorities and tourists to provide for the **right framework**. And, last but not least, it does not describe one part of tourism businesses but is **a concept that should apply to the tourism sector in general**.

http://www.oecd.org/document/24/0,3343,en_2649_34389_44607576_1_1_1_1,00.html

²⁸http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/documents/communications/commission-communication-2007/index_en.htm

²⁹ Sustainable tourism Gateway: <http://www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/st-what-is.html>

2.2 Proposed principles

Several studies have addressed the question of principles and content of the sustainable tourism doctrine. As stated in the "Manual for Sustainable Tourism Destination Management"³⁰ these principles could include:

- **Tourism initiation** with the help of broad-based community-inputs and control of tourism development maintained by the community
- **Quality employment to community residents** and a linkage between the local businesses and tourism
- **Education and training programmes to improving and managing heritage and natural resources**
- **Creation of a code of practice for tourism at all levels - national, regional, and local - based on internationally accepted standards including guidelines for tourism operations, impact assessment, monitoring of cumulative impacts, and limits to acceptable change.**

In 2002, one of the background papers for the **Bishkek Global Mountain Summit**, held in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) outlined four major principles focusing specifically on tourism in mountain areas³¹. These could be used as a starting point in the definition of sustainable tourism principles in mountain areas:

- *tourism should be one, and not the only, means of livelihood and economic development in diversified mountain economies;*
- *the **benefits and opportunities arising from mountain tourism must flow consistently and in adequate proportions to mountain people;***
- *the **impacts of tourism on biodiversity and cultural diversity must be well-documented, minimized, and managed, and a portion of tourism revenue reinvested in conservation and restoration of bio-resources, cultural heritage and sacred sites;***
- ***mountain people must play an active and responsible role** in planning and carrying out mountain tourism, supported by other stakeholders and networks, by government policies and actions, and by technical and capacity building assistance.*

Other interesting examples could be found on internet platform www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org.

2.3 Types

There exist several concepts of sustainable tourism in mountain areas. The concepts mentioned below are only a selection of sustainable tourism initiatives. As these types are all based on sustainability, they often overlap with each other.

Rural tourism can be defined as tourism "which takes place in rural areas, relates to low population, open space and locations with less than 10 000 inhabitants."³²

Agritourism is a "commercial enterprise at a working farm, ranch or agricultural plant conducted for

³⁰ Jamieson, Walter and Alix Noble, "A Manual for Sustainable Tourism Destination Management" CUC-UEM Project, AIT, 2000

³¹ Brewer Lama W & Sattar N. (2004) Mountain Tourism and the Conservation of Biological and Cultural Diversity In Price MF, Jansky LF, Iatsenia AA (eds) Key Issues for Mountain Areas, United Nations University Press, Tokyo: 111-148.

³² Simkova, E.: Strategic approaches to rural tourism and sustainable development of rural areas, 2007, <http://journals.uzpi.cz/publicFiles/00291.pdf>

the enjoyment or education of visitors, and that generates supplemental income for the owner.”³³ Agritourism overlaps with geotourism, ecotourism, rural tourism and culinary tourism. Other terms associated with agritourism are "agritainment", "value added products," or "farm direct marketing".

Ecotourism³⁴ is "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people." Sometimes it is defined as a sub-category of sustainable tourism or a segment of the larger nature tourism market. It includes an interpretation/learning experience, is delivered to small groups by small-scale businesses, and stresses local ownership, particularly for rural people.” The difference between ecotourism and nature-based travel is that, while nature-based tourism is just travel to natural places, ecotourism provides local benefits - environmentally, culturally and economically. A nature-based tourist may just go bird watching; an ecotourist goes bird watching with a local guide, stays in a locally operated eco-lodge and contributes to the local economy.

Community-based tourism³⁵ is “tourism de facto planned and managed by a group of individuals/households comprising the community as a communal enterprise. It could also be managed by a private entrepreneur whose activity agenda is set by the community and is accountable to it. Between these two extremes there could be a number of other arrangements.”³⁶ The participatory, community-based approach to mountain tourism is therefore according to the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit “recommended path to sustainable mountain tourism”³⁷.

Cultural tourism is considered by UNESCO³⁸ as the “relationship between tourism and cultural diversity, tourism and intercultural dialogue, and tourism and development”. Accordingly, “the activities related to cultural tourism provide concrete opportunities to encourage genuine dialogue between visitors and hosts, to promote new types of cooperation, to become more familiar with the heritages of different territories, and to contribute to economic and human development”. Along with the EU position to cultural tourism, better promotion of this kind of tourism could be supported by cross-border initiatives in the “full range of heritage: cultural heritage (including cultural itineraries), contemporary culture, protected natural sites, health and wellbeing (including spa tourism), educational, wine and food, historical, sport or religious tourism, agri-tourism, rural tourism, or tourism capitalising on the maritime and sub-aquatic cultural heritage, industrial heritage or the economic fabric of a region.”³⁹

2.4 Issues to be addressed in mountain areas

Besides the key issue – the general lack of targeted policies and plans that specifically address

³³ <http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/agritourism/>

³⁴ Sustainable tourism Gateway: <http://www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/st-what-is.html>

³⁵ Community based tourism for conservation and development: A resource kit, 2000, <http://www.mountain.org/docs/CBT-Kit-final-2003.pdf>

³⁶ Mountain Ecotourism and Sustainable Development, 2002, in Mountain Research and Development, <http://geog-www.sbs.ohio-state.edu/courses/G820.01/SP06/Nepal%202002a.pdf>

³⁷ Bishkek Global Mountain Summit: Thematic paper B3, Mountain Tourism and the Conservation of Biological and Cultural Diversity, 2002, www.mountains.unep.ch/bgms/papers/B3.doc

³⁸ UNESCO portal:

http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=36700&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

³⁹ Communication on the renewed EU Tourism Policy Framework, 2010,

http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/planned_ia/docs/60_entr_tourism_en.pdf

sustainable (mountain) tourism - there are several different issues to address. They could be classified as following:

Social

- Ensuring good quality of life for local inhabitants and high-quality services for visitors
- Preservation and protection of cultural heritage and cultural diversity
- Professionalization of tourism actors
- Involvement of young generation and highly trained/skilled people
- Emphasis on local ownership and good governance
- Facilitating networking to generate/gather innovations and best-practices
- Adopting practices of social tourism (tourism accessible for disadvantaged society groups), which could help to prevent seasonality
- Public education and awareness raising campaigns

Environmental

- Ensure a right balance between protection of biodiversity and degree of tourism performance
- Enable tourists access to protected areas while pursuing their ecosystem fragility
- Adopting soft and eco-friendly mobility
- Lower negative impacts of waste water disposal
- Raise the awareness of climate change's impacts on tourism activities (skiing, hiking etc.)

Economic

- Tackle relative isolation of mountain areas - lack of infrastructure/services, energy supply, etc
- Launch discussions on certification - to overcome the threat of "quasi" sustainable tourism,
- Creation of microfinance system for local artisans to preserve traditional local production
- Facilitate international and regional cooperation
- Use the innovations and information and communication tools (ICT) to support sustainable tourism development
- Promotion of the sustainable tourism concepts, its products
- Creation of territorial cluster initiatives
- Tackle seasonality of employment and income
- Protection and development of mountain farmers

2.5 Actions to promote sustainable tourism in mountain areas

In order to **ensure the diversification** of the mountain sustainable tourism offer, to **extend the seasons of tourism activities**, to **raise the profitability** of activities in mountain areas, to **improve the communication and the accessibility to mountain destinations** and in particular **to support local mountain communities and to enhance their benefits** from mountain tourism, several actions could be carried out:

- Carry out **studies** for developing tourism strategies appropriated to local/regional opportunities
- **Involve local actors** in the definition of future actions and priorities
- Develop **integrated touristic products and tourism itineraries**, which could promote cultural and natural heritage in a sustainable way and integrate tourism with other sectors of the economy
- **Facilitate cooperation and exchange of information between different tourism actors** (municipalities, entrepreneurs etc.) at the local but also interregional and European level

- **Exploit the internet opportunities and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT)** for communicating, attracting new tourists (accessibility of complete and attractive information on the internet, online booking system, development of integrated programs, etc.)

Mountains can also benefit from actions regarding sustainability carried out at European level by the European Commission.

Since 2009, the European Commission implemented a programme called "Sustainable Tourism-Preparatory Actions"⁴⁰ having as an aim the application of the [Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism](#) (2007). During the 1st year, the focus was put on cycling with organisation of events along the Iron Curtain. In 2010, the cross-border and trans-national cycling routes and cycle networks were promoted more around Europe. In 2011, they have focused on the **enhancement and promotion of different thematic transnational** tourism products such as: routes, itineraries or trails (either physical or virtual).

Furthermore, within the next priorities of the European Union, the European Commission outlined in the recent communication "Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe"⁴¹ some actions to be undertaken in the tourism sector. The following selection can be related to mountain areas:

- **Develop a coherent strategy for diversifying the promotion of tourist services** and capitalise on Europe's common heritage, particularly by creating a European heritage label, alongside actions such as European Heritage Days or the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage.
- In order to support **training** in the tourism sector, the Commission will endeavour to promote the opportunities offered by various EU programmes such as Leonardo or the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) with its 'Erasmus for young entrepreneurs' and 'E-skills for innovation' strands'.
- **Provide a voluntary tourism exchange mechanism between Member States**, enabling in particular certain key groups such as young or elderly people, people with reduced mobility and low-income families to travel, particularly during the low season.
- Develop, on the basis of NECSTouR or EDEN (see below), a **system of indicators** for the sustainable management of destinations. Based on this system, the Commission **will develop a label for promoting tourist destinations**.
- Organise awareness-raising campaigns
- Promote the website www.visiteurope.com website in order to increase the attractiveness of Europe

The European Commission is also working at the creation of a system of indicators promoting sustainability in tourism (on the 3 pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental and social). In that respect, they are currently evaluating the existing indicators in order to elaborate for end 2012 a **Charter of Sustainable Tourism** that would be proposed to private establishments, on a voluntary basis.

⁴⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/iron-curtain-trail/index_en.htm

⁴¹ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/files/communications/communication2010_en.pdf

2.6 Examples of sustainable tourism initiatives

- **EDEN** “European Destinations of Excellence” is a project of the European Commission which promotes sustainable tourism development models across the European Union. The project is based on national competitions that take place every year and result in the selection of a tourist “destination of excellence” for each participating country. More on: <http://ec.europa.eu/eden>. Example from mountain areas could be “**The tourist wine route of the Jura**” (France), which has gained the EDEN award for preserving local intangible heritage in 2008 (More on: <http://www.laroutedesvinsdujura.com/>) , or Soca Valley in Slovenia, the beautiful valley of the river with the same name which was recognised as EDEN as well in 2008.
- **Cultural routes of the Council of Europe:** since 1987, 29 theme-based cross-border cultural routes have been certified by the Council of Europe. The role of Council of Europe is to define the policy direction for the Cultural Routes programme, to adopt new themes and routes and to approve the networks. These routes represent transnational cultural project and include among others the Santiago di Compostela pilgrim route, Via Francigenita or The Pyrenean Iron route, which are more or less related to mountain areas. See more on: <http://www.coe.int/routes>
- **NECSTouR** (Network of European regions for Competitive and Sustainable Tourism) is an open network of European regions (which embraces also 7 mountain regions from France, Swiss, Italy and Spain). The aim is to develop and strengthen a coherent framework for the coordination of regional development programmes and research on sustainable and competitive tourism following the communication published by the European Commission, entitled "Agenda for European sustainable and competitive tourism" (COM (2007) 0621). More on: <http://www.necstour.eu/necstour/necstour.page>
- **The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas** is working on developing a common sustainable tourism strategy. The Charter and the Charter Network are coordinated by the EUROPARC Federation of protected areas, representing around 440 members in 36 European countries. The aim of all Charter projects and activities is the protection of the natural and cultural heritage and the continuous improvement of tourism in the protected area in terms of the environment, local population and businesses as well as visitors. More on: <http://www.european-charter.org/home/>
- **PAN Parks** is the network of European protected areas certified in accord with PAN Parks quality standards. The network is focusing on wilderness areas protection and development of these areas through the active promotion of local and sustainable tourism. More on: <http://www.panparks.org>
- **GREEN** is an Interreg IVA Cross Border project “Borderless Energy Cooperation” between Norwegian and Swedish ski resorts. The main objective of the project is to increase the rational use of energy and renewable energy systems in ski resorts to reduce the environmental impact of winter sports activities in the Inner Scandinavian skiing resorts. More on: www.green-project.info
- **The Quality Label for Swiss Tourism** is a certification for quality standards provided by the Swiss Tourism Federation. It is aimed at improving quality awareness and the further development of quality services for tourists in all Switzerland’s tourist enterprises. Founded in 1998, the label has been awarded to 4034 establishments. Once awarded, the period of validity is three years.⁴² More on: http://www.swisstourfed.ch/index.cfm?parents_id=939
- **“LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF VILLAGES”** is a European project in Central Europe which main goal is to increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of rural marginal areas, which have unexploited

⁴² <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/en/index/infothek/publ.Document.111308.pdf>

tourist potential, through the setting up and implementation of new area governance tools and the drawing up of new pilot projects within the sector of sustainable tourism. The most important project activities are based on the **drafting of a new scheme for governance of these territories, testing this model through the use of pilot projects** and **capitalising on the results and output achieved**. This capitalisation will be carried out by establishing the “Vital Villages” Association, a transnational organisation, and by organising training activities involving exchange of the best practice. The project partnership is made up of universities, guaranteeing a scientific approach to definition of the model, and of bodies and development agencies in the area expressing the real needs and problems of rural villages. The project is financed by ERDF CENTRAL EUROPE Programme. More on: <http://www.listentothevoiceofvillages.org/>

- **PRESERVE project** - the main objective is to contribute to the improved effectiveness of regional development policies, specifically of regional **policies considering cultural heritage as an endogenous factor of economic development and supporting sustainable tourism**. Based on commonly defined methodologies, the partners will exchange best practices in the field, mainly through the means of on-site peer reviews and exchange seminars. The project activities will also lead to policy recommendations and holistic regional action plans. More on: <http://preserve.aer.eu/>

3. European tourism policies regarding mountain areas

3.1 Methodological note

This chapter is the result of a survey carried at the end of 2010 by Veronika Korcekova, working in the Euromontana secretariat focusing on the place taken by the sustainability issue today in some national tourism policies.

The study was covering various mountain areas in Europe (The Romanian part of the Carpathians, Pyrenees, Alps, Central Massif in France, Balkans and Norwegian Mountains). Nevertheless, it is not exhaustive in terms of European country's policies. The data used for this study were gathered from respondents representing 10 European countries, namely Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Macedonia, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Switzerland (cited on the second page of the document).

Data on mountain tourism policies were collected in two ways: firstly, through a survey among Euromontana members to which 12 organisations replied. The survey had closed and semi-open questions and was addressed online from late November - early December 2010. In addition to the information available from Euromontana members, the study has been complemented with data gathered through contact with tourism-related governmental authorities in Austria, Germany, Slovakia and Macedonia. These countries were selected in order to cover as many European mountain countries as possible.

3.2 General overview

As we have seen in chapter 1.4 regarding the European Union, tourism policy is one of the fields where National authorities have entire competency, in respect of the subsidiarity principles.

Supranational interventions at EU level are restricted to support, coordination and complementation of some of the Member States' actions only⁴³. The Directorate General Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission (DG ENTR) is dealing with legislative proposals and communication from the EU perspective. In addition to that, other EU policies which directly or indirectly affect tourism at EU level are: regional development, internal market, transport, environmental issues, social issues, agricultural and rural development, etc⁴⁴.

At national level, the implementation of mountain policies is often part of other policies and thus not dealt with explicitly as "mountain policy". The tourism related policies are mainly sectorial, with specific adaptations⁴⁵. National interventions are dominant for economic and social issues, but also *"the sub-national level (regional and local authorities) emerges as increasingly relevant"*⁴⁶.

In addition to supranational, national and sub-national tourism policies in Europe, various transnational policies and instruments (such as Alpine and Carpathian Conventions) are shaping the

⁴³ TFEU, 2007, Part One, Title I, Articles 6(d) et 195

⁴⁴ CoR, 2006

⁴⁵ NORDREGIO, 2004

⁴⁶ CoR, 2006, p.132

development of the tourism sector in mountain areas⁴⁷.

Considering the share of mountain areas on the total area of a certain country, mountain policies in Europe could be classified in the following four categories⁴⁸:

- a. **Countries where no mountain policies can be identified:** *No mountain policies occurred either in countries with no mountains (Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands), or in countries with only “hilly” landscape (Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg) or in countries with majority of its surface declared as mountainous area (Norway, Greece, Slovenia)*
- b. **Countries where mountain policies/measures are sectoral:** *This group contains countries with middle mountains and/or acceding/candidate countries. Mountain development is addressed in sectors like agriculture (the most frequently), environment, rural development as well as sometimes, tourism.*
- c. **Countries where mountain policies are addressed to multi-sectoral development:** *The starting point is very often mountain agriculture, but with the time the relative importance of the agriculture in the mountain economy has decreased, and policies have been widened to include other economic sectors: tourism, public infrastructures or services, environment, education, etc. Germany and Spain are included in this group, mostly with regional-level implementation, as well as Austria, which has a quite integrated policy with long standing initiatives (1960 for agriculture, 1975 for global development).*
- d. **Countries where mountain policies are addressed to the overall development:** *in countries where a sustainable development approach is most advanced. This group is characterized by a “consolidation of sectoral rules and the approval of specific tools such as mountain funds⁴⁹).* *However, in reality it is multi-sectoral and territorial coordination. Three countries have a formal integrated mountain policy: France (Creation of Massif Commissariats, 1973; Mountain Law with delimitation of massifs, 1985), Italy (General principle of special policy for mountain areas, 1948; mountain communities, 1971; Mountain Law, 1994) and Switzerland (Law on Investment in Mountain Regions, 1974). In addition, Romania and Bulgaria have started to deal with mountain policies in an integrated manner following the Italian and French model. However, this has not been ratified through legislation.*

Starting from the classifications above, policies and legislations in mountain areas as regards tourism are mostly sectoral and under national competencies. However, it “seems that policies initiated by public authorities to develop tourism [in mountains] are weak, and that few initiatives are specifically oriented towards mountain tourism⁵⁰.”

Addressing the major and multi-faceted challenges faced by the tourism industry demands an integrated approach to policy development across many government departments. Coherence and consistency are essential in the design and application of policies between all levels of government to ensure that tourism policies are effective. This understanding has led to an increased emphasis on a

⁴⁷ NORREGIO, 2004

⁴⁸ NORDREGIO, 2004, p.147

⁴⁹ NORDREGIO, 2004

⁵⁰ NORDREGIO, 2004, p.159

“whole of government approach” commitment as outlined in the Riva del Garda Action Statement for Enhancing Competitiveness and Sustainability in Tourism⁵¹ at the High level meeting of the OECD Tourism Committee in October 2008. It has been shown at that occasion that the development of a tourism strategy can play a key role in engaging government, industry, destination communities and other stakeholders to identify a vision and direction for tourism development in setting priorities for implementing a long-term and sustainable vision for the tourism sector.

Since tourism is a mainly local activity, **regional and local tourism actors should not be excluded from the development of mountain tourism policies**. Tourism strategies are increasingly emphasising public-private sector co-operation. Good governance in this sector and its transformation into a **sustainable strategy** therefore needs to **involve all stakeholders** from the tourism sector and **respects certain principles such as integration, multi-sectoral vision, transparency, involvement, accountability and efficiency**⁵².

3.3 Tourism policies at national level

In order to get an overview of mountain tourism policies at national level, the following two aspects have been looked at in the present study:

- **existence of a national tourism strategy**
- **consideration of mountain tourism within this strategy.**

Considering, that the national tourism strategy identifies the rough policy direction and sets priorities for tourism developments in one country, it appears to be an ideal source of information to analyse the role given to mountain tourism by national governments.

As shown in table 1, all countries that were integrated in this study have developed a **national tourism strategy**. This is a very positive finding, because as stated in Riva del Garda Action Statement⁵³, one of the policy tasks in order to take full advantage of the tourism potential is to establish a comprehensive policy framework.

On the other hand, **apart from two exceptions, evident lack of specific mountain tourism policies at national level can be observed**. One reason for this might be the possible competition between mountain and coastal tourism development within some countries (e.g. France, Italy). The importance of coastal tourism might result in the lack of consideration for mountain areas. *“For example, the 2000-2006 ‘Integral Plan for Quality Spanish Tourism’ refers only very marginally to tourism in mountain areas. Likewise, in Portugal, the tourism development strategy focuses on coastal projects*⁵⁴.”

Table 1: Tourism policies at national level of researched countries, according to responses

⁵¹ OECD, 2008

⁵² CoR, 2006

⁵³ OECD, 2008

⁵⁴ NORDREGIO, 2004, p.159

Country	Existence of tourism strategy at national level	Reference to mountain tourism	Current National tourism strategy, Year of publication
Austria	yes	yes	"Die neue österreichische Tourismusstrategie" (New Austrian Tourism strategy), February 2010
France	yes	yes/no*	Plan for French Tourism 2010
Germany	yes	no	"Tourismuspolitische Leitlinien der Bundesregierung" (German Federal Gouvernement Policy Guidelines on Tourism), March 2009
Italy	yes	yes/no*	"National Strategy to enhance the development of tourism in Italy", May 2008 (IT, 2008)
Norway	yes	yes	The government's tourism strategy "Valuable Experiences", December 2007
Republic of Macedonia	yes	no	"National Tourism development strategy 2009-2013", Jun 2009
Romania	yes	yes/no*	"National Tourism Development Master Plan 2007 - 2026"
Slovak republic	yes	no	"New Tourism Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic until 2013", August 2005
Slovenia	yes	no	"Development Plan and Policies of Slovene Tourism 2007-2011", November 2006
Switzerland	yes	no	"Stratégie de croissance pour la place touristique suisse" (National Tourism strategy), June 2010
*survey responses differ			

Although the vast majority of the researched countries have not identified mountain tourism as one of their tourism strategy priorities, many of them are dealing with various types of tourism linked to mountain areas. This approach is justifiable, because in mountain areas throughout Europe one can find all types of tourism: mass tourism, special interest tourism (spas, religious, heritage monuments, hiking, hunting), rural tourism (summer stays, circuits, nature tourism, kayaking, rafting), resort tourism (riding, walking, week-end tourism, restaurants)⁵⁵ etc. It is a reason why mountain location of a destination may not appear as the key element to define a strategy, and therefore why mountain is not retained in some strategies as an angle to approach the issue of tourism.

⁵⁵ NORREGIO, 2004

To go into some detail about some of these strategies, we can quote extracts from a diversity of them, showing what is retained as important, in order for us to assess if it is relevant for mountain areas or not.

As stated in the survey responses, tourism products defined by the **Republic of Macedonia** are: well-being activities, natural heritage, cultural heritage, performing arts, museums and galleries, active tourism, rural tourism and wine/food specialty tourism. Likewise Macedonia, tourism types referring to mountain tourism in **Romania** are the following: tourism in national parks and nature reserves, winter sports tourism, well-being and balneal activities, cultural tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism and agro-tourism, hunting tourism and active tourism. In **Slovenia**, the basic types of tourism are as follows: active holidays (winter and summer sports), cities and culture, tourism in the countryside and ecotourism, nature, food and beverages, health and well-being, MICE tourism (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions), entertainment and gambling, offers for more demanding tourists and finally offers for young people.

Based on the analysis of the national tourism strategy of **Germany**, the federal government is not stressing mountain tourism as a specific issue. The “tourism in nature” or “cycling tourism” are mentioned between defined types of the tourism alongside with “Urban and cultural tourism”. According to the national tourism strategy of **Slovakia**, high potential of mountain areas for tourism development is recognized: *„Nearly 62% of the country’s area could be classified as mountainous, which gives very good preconditions for development of the winter tourism. This is one of the few competitive advantages that Slovakia possesses in comparison with the neighboring countries (except Austria).⁵⁶”* However, mountain tourism is not mentioned explicitly. The tourism activities are classified in five main types of tourism: 1. summer tourism and stays by water, 2. spa and health tourism, 3. winter tourism and winter sports, 4. urban and cultural tourism and 5. rural tourism and agro-tourism.

Exceptional examples of pro-mountain tourism promotions are the national strategies of Austria and Norway. In the case of **Austria**, the National Tourism Strategy defines four key elements of the policy focus: Alps, Danube + lakes, cities and culture. In this strategy, the Alps are mentioned explicitly. They are considered as *“worthy of cultural and natural heritage protection”*, but at the same time the strategy mentions that this *“should not serve only as a background scenery, but have to deliberately become the content of the tourism experience by green tourism, national parks or the functioning alpine infrastructure.”⁵⁷*

The National tourism strategy of **Norway** entitled **“Valuable Experiences”** could be also considered as representative example regarding mountain tourism support. Among the destinations identified in the strategy, “Mountains and the interior” are considered as separate category with an own definition and vision for future development. *“Tourism in the mountains and interior is often based on activities such as hunting, lake fishing, farm tourism, hiking, cycling and winter sports. There are challenges related to great seasonal variation⁵⁸.”* Besides the green tourism based on the farm and the rural communities’ resources, focus areas are product development, competence development, marketing and cooperation/alliance building.

⁵⁶ "New Tourism Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic until 2013", August 2005, available in English at: <http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00002751/>

⁵⁷ "Die neue österreichische Tourismusstrategie"

⁵⁸ The government's tourism strategy "Valuable Experiences"

3.4 Tourism policies at regional level

As it has been recognized by all institutions and stated by the Committee of Regions, “tourism is a global phenomenon that is shaped locally”⁵⁹. Hence, regional governments play or should play a crucial role in ensuring sustainability of the tourism industry. They shape the identity of the region/city/territory; determine the development of a strategy and its successful implementation⁶⁰. As a result, **the design of tourism policies at regional level, in concordance with regional needs, is essential for the recognition of the regions’ touristic specificities and quality improvements**. Following the recommendation of Riva del Garda Action Statement⁶¹, “to take full advantage of the potential of tourism development, a strong public sector management and a multi-actor system of governance should support tourism.”

In Europe, the majority of states is somehow delegating competencies to the “lower level” authorities. However, “the degree of regional autonomy varies considerably from one member state to another”⁶². In comparison to other EU countries Germany, Austria and Spain have most powerful regional authorities, followed by the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom. France and the new EU Member States are appreciated to have the administrative capabilities indeed, but do not have sufficient financial means available⁶³.

Based on the survey results (Table 2), most of the responses indicate the existence of regional tourism strategies. However although all the studied areas are situated in mountainous regions, they do not all refer to a mountain integrated tourism approach.

Table 2: Tourism policies at regional level of researched countries according to responses

Country – Region/County	Existence of tourism strategy at regional level	Reference to mountain tourism
Austria- Carinthia county	yes ⁶⁴	yes
France- Auvergne	yes	no
France - Midi Pyrenees	yes ⁶⁵	yes
Germany- Baden-Württemberg	yes ⁶⁶	no
Germany- Bavaria	yes ⁶⁷	no
Italy - Piedmont region	yes	no
Macedonia	NA	NA
Norway - Sogn og Fjordane county	yes ⁶⁸	yes

⁵⁹ CoR, 2006, p.1

⁶⁰ CoR, 2006

⁶¹ OECD, 2008, p.3

⁶² CoR, 2006, p.139

⁶³ CoR, 2006

⁶⁴ “Weißbuch Tourismus Kärnten: Entwicklungsplan für Tourismus und Freizeit 2005-2015”

⁶⁵ Action plan for development of touristic cluster in Pyrenees “Pôles touristiques Pyrénéens”

⁶⁶ “Tourismuskonzeption für den ländlichen Raum”

⁶⁷ “Tourismuspolitisches Konzept der Bayerischen Staatsregierung”

⁶⁸ Tourism strategy of Region Sogn og fjordane for 2010-2025

Norway- Buskerud county	yes	yes
Romania - North-Eastern region	yes	yes
Slovak republic – county Žilinský kraj	yes ⁶⁹	no
Slovenia	no	no
Switzerland - mountainous cantons	yes	yes

At the regional level of **Austria**, most of the Federal States having a remarkable proportion of mountain areas, the issue of mountain tourism is actively integrated in many regional strategies. For an illustration, the Federal state of Carinthia is demarking in the “White book on Tourism in Carinthia”⁷⁰ (Tourism development plan for the time period 2005- 2015) the mountainous region separately, labeled as “natural area”. However there is no explicit reference to mountain tourism.

In **Germany**, the federal states (Länder) that are relevant for the promotion of mountain tourism are the Land Bayern and Land Baden-Württemberg. **Both regions have identified mountain areas as destinations with high touristic potential.** The Bavarian government's tourism strategy⁷¹ recognizes the importance of the Bavarian Alps for the tourism development as well as the strategy of the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg⁷² which gives a high touristic potential to the Swabian Alps and the “Schwarzwald” (Black Forest). However, both federal states are not mentioning mountain tourism explicitly. As regards tourism in these mountainous areas, emphasis is given mainly to agro-tourism, ecotourism and related activities as e.g. hiking, cycling and skiing.

The national authority of the **Republic of Macedonia** has not included a tourism strategy at regional level; moreover, few indications about the involvement of local actors have been provided. However, it has been underlined that the local governments, the non-governmental organizations and national parks are all involved in the organization and management of hiking and biking activities.

According to responses gathered from **Romania**, the North-East region is explicitly dealing with mountains in its tourism strategy,⁷³ as one development and dynamism opportunity for the region.

In the case of **Slovakia**, the competence to prepare regional tourism strategies belongs to eight administrative regions (“kraje”). All of them are to some extent devoted to support sustainable tourism in mountain areas, but only some have their own strategy. A good example is the region “Žilinský kraj”, which contains the High Tatra mountains. The different forms of tourism which can be realized in mountain areas like active tourism, hiking, skiing, etc are supported.

In **France**, within the mountain area of Massif Central, the region of Auvergne is largely concerned about the development of mountain areas but has not defined yet a policy strategy for mountain tourism. Moreover, in the south of France, we find a good practice in the Pyrenees where the region Midi-Pyrénées developed a touristic cluster in Pyrenees “Pôles touristiques Pyrénéens”⁷⁴.

⁶⁹ Regional tourism strategy of Žilinský kraj for 2007-2013

⁷⁰ “Weißbuch Tourismus Kärnten: Entwicklungsplan für Tourismus und Freizeit 2005-2015”

⁷¹ “Tourismuspolitisches Konzept der Bayerischen Staatsregierung”

⁷² “Tourismuskonzeption für den ländlichen Raum”

⁷³ “Regional Action Plan for Tourism 2008-2013 North East”

⁷⁴ Action plan for development of touristic cluster in Pyrenees “Pôles touristiques Pyrénéens”, more information available in French at: <http://interventions.midipyrenees.fr/guide.asp?id=1570>

The Norwegian region Sogn og Fjordane has outlined its vision for the development of tourism until 2025 in the regional tourism strategy “Vision Sogn og Fjordane”⁷⁵. The main objective of the region Sogn og Fjordane is to achieve “World Class Sustainable Tourism” by delivering locally distinctive, high quality and sustainable world-class experiences in fjords, glaciers, mountains, waterfalls, coastlines and oceans.

According to the response form **Slovenia**, no tourism strategy on regional level exists.

In **Switzerland**, most of the Swiss cantons have a tourism strategy and legislation. Tourism is mainly a domain of the cantons and not of the central government (Confederation). Cantonal tourism strategies/laws of the mountainous cantons are often mountain specific.

In conclusion, we can assert that the mountain regions are more active in including references to “mountain tourism” in their policies than the national authorities. At the same time, we could consider that a fully mountainous region would not be interested in differentiating its strategy based on the mountainous character of its area but rather on other criteria. However, tourism strategies and regions of the same country demonstrate a different degree of activism⁷⁶. Consequently, policy recommendations to develop mountain tourism shall be addressed not only to national authorities, but also to different responsible stakeholders from regional level.

3.5 Some policy measures to support sustainability in mountain areas

We report here measures that have been highlighted by survey respondents in their replies. There are many more, including in the framework of the rural development policy, which provides for specific measures for diversification of agricultural activities towards tourism.

The measures developed at national and regional policy level in order to support tourism in mountain areas include general tools such as the **legal definition of mountain areas, mountain-specific legislation, research and training activities within these areas**⁷⁷ as well as policy support directly targeting mountain tourism industries. Some regional policy tools assist tourism enterprises by ensuring a business friendly environment, attractive services and market-oriented programmes⁷⁸. *“Successful participation of firms and destinations in the global tourism market requires policy programmes and instruments which address a wide range of challenges, such as overcoming the disadvantages of the small sized tourism enterprises by cooperation and participation in global value chains, upgrading the standards and quality of tourism services, improving the attractiveness of the tourism labour market, reducing unnecessary obstacles to tourism development, developing coherent policy measures in support of sustainable character. Notably the use of natural and cultural resources in a sustainable way and the strengthening of institutional governance mechanisms will allow tourism-related policies to*

⁷⁵ Tourism strategy of Region Sogn og fjordane for 2010-2025 “Vision Sogn og fjordane”, October 2010, available in Norwegian at:

[http://www.sfj.no/cmsdff/cmspublish.nsf/\\$all/9C1F7A100D232437C12577A5003B38AA](http://www.sfj.no/cmsdff/cmspublish.nsf/$all/9C1F7A100D232437C12577A5003B38AA)

⁷⁶ CoR, 2006, p.140

⁷⁷ NORREGIO, 2004, p.X

⁷⁸ OECD 2004, p.2

*maximize their economic and social effects*⁷⁹"

As table 3 demonstrates, **most used policy measures in study areas are regional funding schemes and mountain tourism packages, followed by training and requalification activities.** Worthy of notice is the **weak use of measures such as tax reduction or knowledge sharing platforms, ICT tools and systems.** In many cases other specific measures are available, like the promotion of soft mobility measures (see table 3) which could be possibly transferred in similar conditions. In general, policy measures provided by the state are rather general, oriented at the tourism sector as a whole.

Successful public-private partnerships are being developed often by tourism industries at regional scale. An example comes from Austria where the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth appointed the Austrian Hotel and Tourism Bank, a private institution, to implement funding programmes for tourism SMEs. The objectives of these programmes are: **encouraging investments, improving the quality of services and increasing the size of tourism enterprises, upgrading the quality of softwares, the training of actors, enhancing co-operations, optimizing enterprises' financial resilience, encouraging new business start-ups, attracting new sources of finance for tourism enterprises.** This practice is anchored in the Austrian Tourism Funding directive 2007.⁸⁰

The tourism industry in mountain areas is characterized by a large number of small and medium-sized enterprises. In Germany, the Federal government has launched a whole series of initiatives which significantly **improves conditions for SMEs operating in the tourism sector.** Key elements of the initiative are: **strengthening of innovative capacity, reduction of administrative procedures (red tape) and improvement of financing opportunities.** The access of mountain tourism SME's to the "KfW-StartGeld" i.e. micro-credit programme and the ERP (Enterprise resource planning) programme has been facilitated by legislation.

In France, financial support is provided mainly to tourism SMEs operating in low and middle mountains, as compensation to their relatively low profit when comparing to tourism businesses from high mountain resorts in the Alps and Pyrénées.

According to the Norwegian national tourism strategy⁸¹, *"approximately 2,500 businesses are involved in rural tourism in Norway. Based on the agricultural negotiations (...) the agricultural industry has established a separate development program for green tourism based on the farm and the rural communities' resources. Focus areas are product development, competence development, marketing and cooperation/ alliance building"*.

The potential of **synergy effects between local food producers and the tourism** industry is large and exploited in some mountain regions. In order to bring local products to the forefront, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in Norway developed in collaboration with the Norwegian Agricultural Quality System and Food Branding Foundation, Innovation Norway and Rica Hotels the project *"Local food on*

⁷⁹ OECD 2004, p.2

⁸⁰ "Förderungsprogramme für die Tourismus- und Freizeitwirtschaft" (Austrian Tourism Funding directive 2007), 2007, available in German at:

<http://www.bmwfj.gv.at/Tourismus/Tourismusfoerderung/Seiten/Foerderungsprogramme2007-2013.aspx>

⁸¹ The government's tourism strategy "Valuable Experiences", December 2007

the menu". "Through the project 69 local suppliers to Rica Hotels have been found, and local food is now on the menu for all meal types in the eight Rica hotels that are included in the project so far"⁸².

The **training and requalification of mountain tourism providers** is another initiative that has been identified within this survey. In Germany, with the project "Gastfreundschaft für Alle" (Hospitality for all) supported by the Federal government of Germany, a large range of tourism operators, i.e. hoteliers, restaurant owners, operators of cultural and leisure facilities, staff of tourist information offices and organisations, have been sensitized for the importance of a quality service.

Against the background of current demographic trends in Germany, **social tourism** is also gaining importance since the proportion of older and disabled persons is increasing quickly due to an aging population.. Achieving this objective is the centrepiece of the Behindertengleichstellungsgesetz (BGG) (**Equality for Persons with Disabilities Act**), which entered into force at federal level in 2002.

Measures focused on "**soft mobility**" aim at offering possibilities to arrive to ones holiday destination without a car, to have easy access to public transportation on site, etc. In Austria, such measures were privileged by the federal and regional ministries since 1990⁸³. These initiatives led to two important EU INTERREG-projects (2000-2006) supported by the Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth:

- 'Alps Mobility II': aiming at the development and implementation of the transnational 'Alpine Pearls'⁸⁴, which stands for vacations with Soft Mobility in more than 20 Alpine destinations in Europe (Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Slovenia, and Switzerland).
- "Alpine Awareness": promotion of environmentally friendly travel (essentially public transport, but also travel by bicycle, by foot, etc). The outputs of these pilot projects are e.g. "mobility service centres" with a focus on tourism transport or establishment of the new public transport connections for tourism (e.g. by Austrian Federal railways (ÖBB)).

Other policy measures, which are implemented in order to attract more tourists and secure the quality standards of tourism services are also dealing with **tourism packages** or **local branding systems**.

The project "Wanderbares Deutschland" (Hiking in Germany), launched in 2003 by Federal Government and German Hiking Association aims at promoting hiking activities in the German mountains. This project coordinates **regional hiking networks** at national level and introduces innovative marketing tools on internet platform (www.wanderbaresdeutschland.de). Other outcomes of this project are the practical guide for hiking tourists or the setting of quality standards through the **national certification brand** "Qualitätsgastgeber Wanderbares Deutschland", awarded to accommodation or food services providers.

In Austria (national level), an initiative worthy of note is the establishment of an "Alpine trail information system" (Alpines Wegeinformationssysteme - AWIS). This is a GPS-based **digitalised hiking trail network**. In Carinthia (Austria) there exists an ambition to promote the innovative and unique concept of summer tourism in the Alps by the introduction of the "**Alpine adventure**" **tourism packages**.

⁸² The government's tourism strategy "Valuable Experiences", December 2007

⁸³ Pilot projects are accessible at: <http://www.alpsmobility.net/>; <http://www.xeismobil.at/>;
<http://www.eco-travel.at/>

⁸⁴ <http://www.alpine-pearls.com>

In Northern Europe, Norway directs many efforts to fostering **innovation in tourism industries** through different projects like “Innovative Mountain Tourism”, assessing the needs for green tourism development.

In Romania, a national scale project "Super skiing in the Carpathians area" is aimed at supporting **winter sport activities** in mountain areas.

Table 3: Measures implemented in order to support promotion of mountain tourism

Country/ respondent	Measures												
	Tax reduction for tourism actors	National funding scheme	Regional funding scheme	Social tourism measures in mountain areas	National/regional mountain tourism packages	Promotion of soft mobility	Support for network organization of tourism providers (accommodation, restaurants, resorts, etc) at national/regional level	Support for mountain actors system for mountain actors	National/regional/local branding or certification	Support of platforms for knowledge sharing	Promotion of EU initiatives	Training and requalification of mountain services providers	Other
Austria*		X			X	X			X		X		X
France - Massif Central		X	X		X								
France - Midi Pyrenees			X			X	X						X
France - Auvergne	X	X	X								X	X	X
Germany*				X					X		X	X	X
Italy	X		X		X						X	X	X
Italy - Piedmont region			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Macedonia	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Norway - Sogn og Fjordane County		X	X		X	X	X	X	X			X	
Norway -Buskerud county		X	X		X		X					X	
Romania													
Romania - Nord-Eastern region		X	X	X	X							X	
Slovak republic*		X	X	X	X							X	X
Slovenia					X		X						
Switzerland			X		X	X	X		X				
*measures were estimated on the ground of information provided by national authorities or online sources													

3.6 The aspect of sustainability in mountain tourism so far

When asked if the national tourism strategies deal to some extent with sustainability issues in their country, the majority of respondents are positive and consider that specific measures are already foreseen. However, in order to promote sustainable mountain tourism, tourism policy must fulfil all aspects of sustainability so that it contributes to growth, environmental protection and further social progress simultaneously⁸⁵. Within the scope of this study, it was not possible to access in detail the sustainability of indicated measures and the replies gathered in Table 4 reflects the opinions of respondents.

The sustainability of mountain tourism activities is a very important policy challenge. The **involvement of all tourism stakeholders**, under **clear guidelines and incentives** coming from a **central public and disinterested body** are essential requirements for the sustainable tourism development. As rightfully expressed by the Committee of the Regions, *“since sustainability has a long term horizon and is costly, it will never be obtained by market forces alone; there is a need for a vision and strategy, with persistence and political commitment. But it is also a typical area, where long term private and social return on investments coincides and thus the public sector and tourism stakeholders can and should share these costs.”*⁸⁶ Regional and local public-private partnerships can ensure the respect of these values. *“Better collaboration between the private sector (local SMEs) and the public authorities is necessary to create the conditions for a sustainable management of the [tourism] activity.”*⁸⁷

Table 4: Sustainability issue in tourism policy according to the perception of respondents of this study

Country - region	Reference of tourism strategy to sustainability	Specific regulations to strenghten sustainability
Austria	yes	NA
France - Auvergne	yes	yes
France - Massif Central	yes	yes
France - Midi Pyrenees	yes	yes
Germany- Baden-Wuertenberg	yes	yes
Germany- Bavaria	yes	yes
Italy	no	no
Italy - Piedmont region	yes	yes
Macedonia	NA	NA
Norway - Sogn og Fjordane County	yes	yes
Norway - Buskerud county	yes	yes
Romania	no	no
Romania - Nord-Eastern region	yes	yes
Slovak republic	yes	NA
Slovenia	yes	yes
Switzerland	yes	no

⁸⁵ CoR, 2006

⁸⁶ CoR, 2006, p.160

⁸⁷ CoR, 2006, p.136

4. Key issues for the discussion within Euromontana in view of strengthening sustainability of mountain tourism

From this partial overview of the issue of sustainable mountain tourism in Europe, we can formulate the following key questions which should guide our future discussions:

Definitions and principles:

- Should the EU adopt a **binding definition of sustainable tourism** and the set of guiding principles? The Commission seems to follow that path but with no competency as regards the promulgation of binding laws.
- Should **Euromontana promote one definition of sustainable mountain tourism** and the associated set of principles? How to choose it from the different existing sources? How to relate it to the wide diversity of different forms that initiatives' can take?

Data, indicators and monitoring:

- The still blurred concept of sustainability can only be strengthened by smarter and more comprehensive description of what sustainability means when it comes to tourism destinations and services, in **concrete and –when possible - quantitative terms**. The Commission proposes to develop a set of indicators depicting this and allowing benchmarking. Should Euromontana support this initiative? How? **What should the indicators be used for:** simply benchmarking? Targeting support? Promoting destinations based on a sort of official ranking related to a label with for example one to five stars depending on the level of sustainability?
- Should the EU develop a comprehensive monitoring system of sustainability of the tourism sector, considering the relevance of this sector to the achievement of its EU 2020 strategy and the share of direct and indirect GDP and employment derived from this sector? Should this be formerly structured in a dedicated body or carried out by Commission services themselves? An **“EU observatory of tourism sustainability”**? Should this look only at offer or also at demand?

Tourism policies, mountain development

- We have reviewed whether tourism strategies and policies at different levels included a specific reference to mountains and seen that the situation in that respect was diverse, without necessarily a high correlation between the inclusion of a specific reference to mountains and the actual relevance of the strategy to mountain tourism, especially in areas with a high

proportion of mountain area. **Should we demand a specific mountain approach to tourism and sustainable tourism in European policies? National policies? Regional policies?**

- We have seen that mountain tourism covers a wide range of tourism types, from mass tourism to eco-tourism. There is certainly no “one-size fits all” policy for all mountain destinations. **What policy recommendations can we formulate for these different types of destinations?** What are the various needs? What is the market situation of this business sector? What are the threats and opportunities?
 - **What is the demand from consumers?** Does sustainability count as a part of their concerns or are they concerned only about price and access to facilities? How can we raise their awareness on their impact as a tourist?
 - **What are the impacts of climate change on different mountain tourism destinations?** What should they do to mitigate it and adapt to it in order to secure maintenance of their revenues in the long run?
 - **How can we enhance greater sustainability in big winter sports resorts while retaining the economic value added from these stations?** How can we encourage greater links with communities? How can they diversify their offer? How can we ensure better conservation of natural and cultural heritage? How can we encourage innovation that can lead these areas to greater resource efficiency and quality service for consumers? How can we promote diversification and overcoming the problem of seasonality and high sensitivity to climate change?
 - **How can we improve accessibility to the most remote areas** without damaging the precious environment tourists are looking for in these areas ?
 - **How can we encourage partnership, clustering for coordination of a tourism offer by a high number of small businesses and operators?** How can we encourage innovation in the development and promotion of new models/products for sustainable active tourism? How can we enhance profitability of small-scale tourism and secure provision of enough resources to ensure investment in water and waste management facilities?
 - **How can mountain people take advantage of the rising trend of cultural tourism?** How can mountain culture be better promoted? What products? How to market them? How to reach the public?
 - **What are the needs in terms of education and training and skills development in the tourism sector for these different types of destinations?**

- **How can we make better use of ICT** to improve the cultural offer (more information), the social return to communities (easing access to a wider diversity of hosting capacities), mobility (allowing for better coordination of soft mobility), booking and flexibility...?

Comprehensive and integrated approach

Tourism is at cross roads of many different policies. At European level, nearly all policies can impact in one-way or another on tourism activity. The coordination competence of the EU could already provide for a big progress provided a European vision is properly integrated in all related policies.

In particular, the European Union proposes to set-up a **common strategic framework for all territorial development policies**. We, at Euromontana, recommend that this should translate in concrete terms in the establishment of programmes or sub-programmes targeted to mountain ranges in different member states, with good coordination for transnational issues.

- **How do we see the inclusion of the promotion of sustainable mountain tourism development within these programmes?** What should these programmes target in order to respond to EU 2020 priorities and to the different policies priorities?
- **Can macro-regional strategies contribute** to these?
- Closer to the field and to what we can do ourselves, **what can we recommend to local stakeholders?**

These questions will be debated in Inverness from 27-28 September 2011. Euromontana then aims to adopt a list of recommendations.

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