



## **The Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion 'Turning territorial diversity into strength'**

**Response to consultation  
26 February 2009**

**Registered organisation number: 5446623780-39**

**Euromontana** is the European multisectoral association for co-operation and development of mountain territories. It embraces regional and national mountain organizations throughout greater Europe, including regional development agencies, local authorities, agriculture organizations, environmental agencies, forestry organizations and research institutes. Currently Euromontana comprises 72 members in 17 countries. Euromontana's mission is to promote living mountains, integrated and sustainable development and quality of life in mountain areas.

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

Euromontana, together with partner organisations, was instrumental in the lobbying efforts to include territorial cohesion in the draft constitution, currently recast in the Lisbon Reform Treaty. Ever since, Euromontana has worked on developing and refining the concept in dialogue with its members and other stakeholders, including the European institutions. For instance:

- Euromontana organised an "Olympus" lecture, on 25th October 2007 in Brussels, on "Reflections on the evolution, progress and expected impact of the Territorial Agenda concept" through a high-level round table discussion bringing together the senior responsible representatives of the German, Portuguese and Slovenian Presidencies
- Euromontana organised a Round Table discussion on the implications of the Territorial Cohesion Green paper for mountain and similar areas, 19.2.2008, Brussels

Euromontana has delivered various written contributions on the topic, such as:

- Correspondence with the German presidency on the Territorial Agenda in 2007
- Reply to the Cohesion Consultation in January 2008
- The role of mountain regions in territorial cohesion: a contribution to the discussion on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion (April 2008).

Euromontana is a member of the "Group 158" representing the economic, social and political interests of the territories beset by severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps; namely northernmost areas with very low population density, islands and mountain areas.

This response has been prepared by F. Gaskell in strong collaboration with Euromontana secretariat, Board and members, and officially approved by the Board of Directors on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2009.

## *Territorial Cohesion...*

'the cohesion principle expresses nothing but a common concern for rebalancing the uncertain distributive effects of an internal market without borders and, in so doing, avoiding the pernicious risk of Europe disintegrating' (Janin Rivolin 2005,95).<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Janin Rivolin,U,2005, Cohesion and subsidiarity: towards good territorial governance in Europe, *Town and Country Planning Review* 76(1):57-69

## **Introduction**

The term 'territorial cohesion' is deployed in the Lisbon Reform Treaty in juxtaposition to the related concepts of economic and social cohesion. We contend that it both embraces and transcends these notions in the light of its potentially much more fundamental importance to the European idea.

Territorial cohesion is a geographic concept.

We believe that territorial cohesion is a profoundly practical principle. As an agent for equity among citizens it can be the ultimate operational expression of European solidarity; as the path to optimal use of all of Europe's territorial diversity - which constitutes a considerable comparative advantage in an era of global turbulence - it is vital to Europe's economic future.

Territorial cohesion must pervade the formulation of Europe's policies and invigorate the day to day efficiency of their delivery. Unlike the objectives of economic and social cohesion, to be successfully achieved, territorial cohesion can and must take the form of a methodology. Its practice must be applied across a whole range of European policies and be as central to strategy formulation as the closely related principle of sustainable development.

In recognition of this reality we propose some specific actions<sup>2</sup> that if adopted will influence how European policies are delivered and so transform their impact especially, perhaps, on areas most vulnerable to the effect of economic polarisation and most exposed to disaffection.

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<sup>2</sup> Proposed Actions are identified in the text thus ■

## KEY POINTS

- Territorial cohesion is related to, but guides and informs economic and social cohesion.
- It is a spatial concept. Geography matters.
- It contemplates :
  - differentiation on a spatial basis,
  - spatially balanced development,
  - spatial equity to secure solidarity,
  - fair and equivalent access to services throughout the European territory.
- Territorial cohesion is an aspiration for Europe that must embrace all EU policies, especially those with a strong territorial impact.
- Europe's territorial diversity is an increasingly important comparative advantage in an era of global turbulence.
- Territorial cohesion has the characteristics of a methodology.
- 15 concrete actions are proposed:
  - systematic prior assessment of the territorial impact of all proposed regulation [p. 12 ]
  - cooperation between Commission services to deliver territorial cohesion including the establishment of a lead territorial cohesion service [p. 12]

- integrated governance involvement with policy design [p.12]
- adoption of vertical integration between European, national and regional levels using the open method of coordination [p. 12]
- horizontal integration of delivery of structural policies [P. 12]
- efficient collection of territorial data at a sufficient level of disaggregation [P. 12]
- adoption of a framework directive on Services of General/General Economic Interest. [p. 14]
- Services of General Economic Interest to be extended to include Information and Communication Technology [p. 14 ]
- adoption of a policy dedicated to regions with specific geographic features [p. 14]
- identification of other indicators to measure social aspects, quality of life, intra and extra regional accessibility [ p. 16 ]
- the production of periodic reports on areas with specific geographic features [p. 17 ]
- establishment of a Commission inter services group on areas with specific geographic features [p. 17]
- funding for implementation of European measures commensurate with the additional costs incurred through geographic impediment [p. 18]
- substantial reinforcement of the territorial cooperation objective both in terms of funding allocated and resource applied to its efficient delivery [p. 19].
- supplement the orthodox approach to inter-regional cooperation with output based contracts negotiated by the Commission with existing European networks to address specific issues [p. 20]

## **‘Turning territorial diversity into strength’**

The sub heading chosen for the Green Paper is perceptive in identifying the diversity of the European Union and recognizing its position as the focal point for territorial cohesion.

Europe’s rich variety of languages, cultures and topography marks it out from the other macro regions of the world and in global terms represents a real - but largely unrealised - comparative advantage. These assets reside or are rooted in the diverse regions of Europe; they are substantial and offer the principal potentials that territorial cohesion can best build upon for the economic, social and environmental welfare of the entire Union.

The mountains of Europe are a unique reservoir of diversity: biodiversity, diversity not only of languages and culture but of authentic local products and artisanal skills, often fragile and once lost, totally irretrievable. But here lies an abundance of opportunity - a resilient and resourceful population with world class tourism and high technology research and production conditions - if only the infrastructure and communication links can be secured, population sustained and services preserved.

A significant proportion of Europe’s high nature value farmland is in mountain areas where the current creeping threat of land abandonment could be replaced by future generations of entrepreneurial farmers selling their quality products at premium prices - if the positive externalities their activity produces were equitably rewarded and if a designated local labelling regime were available.

Mountains are potential: their diversity can provide the good news story that proves the economic, social and environmental virtue of territorial cohesion.

## Questions for Debate

### Definition

#### ***What is the appropriate definition of Territorial Cohesion?***

The task of providing a definition of territorial cohesion is not a simple matter of devising a convincing text. The page is not blank.

##### *Provenance*

The concept has a provenance dating back at least to the introduction of the term in relation to services of general economic interest by the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997. This history shows that *inter alia* it was generated - as were the concepts of economic and social cohesion - by the need to counteract the centripetal impact of the Single Europe Act, - the need to react to the concentration of economic activity in what was ultimately christened as the 'pentagon' of Europe - with London, Paris, Milan, Munich and Hamburg as its corners. This polarisation of economic activity - and the social and economic disparities it brings - continues and can only encourage the further alienation from the European process of the people and communities affected.

##### *Legal context*

Territorial cohesion also has two other recent legal contexts that can provide guidance - the references in the Convention on the Future of Europe's draft of a treaty establishing a constitution (2003/C 169/01) and in the Lisbon Reform Treaty (2005/C306/01). The latter although not yet comprehensively ratified must be regarded as offering the most compelling evidence available, having been signed by the heads of state or government as recently as 13 December 2007, less than a year before the publication of the current Green Paper.

*'In order to promote its overall harmonious development, the Union shall develop and pursue its actions leading to the strengthening of its economic, social and territorial cohesion. In particular, the Union shall aim at reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions. Among the regions concerned, particular attention shall be paid to rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps such as the northernmost regions with very low population density and island, cross-border and mountain regions.'*



*The third Cohesion Report*

Nor can references in the Commission literature be ignored including the most comprehensive mention in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cohesion Report, 2004<sup>3</sup>. After observing that Article 2 of the Treaty '*implies that people should not be disadvantaged by wherever they happen to live or work in the Union*' the report continues:

*'The concept of territorial cohesion extends beyond the notion of economic and social cohesion by both adding to this and reinforcing it. In policy terms, the objective is to help to achieve a more balanced development by reducing existing imbalances and by making both sectoral policies which have a spatial impact and regional policy more coherent. The concern is also to improve territorial integration and encourage cooperation between regions.'*

As has been recognised by other authoritative commentators<sup>4</sup>, this passage discloses the tripartite nature of the concept: territorial cohesion is *corrective*, addressing territorial disparities; *preventative*, in ensuring coordination policies with spatial impact and *incentive or stimulative*, in promoting territorial cooperation<sup>5</sup>.

Certainly the Treaty of Lisbon reference cannot be regarded as a binding precedent, not least because of the lack of full ratification, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cohesion Report quotation is simply one view expressed from a Commission perspective; however the evidence those texts provide is relevant and persuasive.

*The key elements essential to any definition*

It is entirely justifiable to conclude that the principle must apply to the entire European territory *as a starting point*, but the concept is clearly geographic/spatial in character.

Ultimately both the evidence and rational analysis demonstrates that territorial cohesion is about:

- differentiating between policy impacts on a spatial/geographical basis,
- delivering some form of spatially balanced development,
- recognising the need for achieving a degree of spatial equity in order to secure sustainable development.

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<sup>3</sup> 'A new partnership for cohesion' EC 2004 p27

<sup>4</sup> European Economic and Social Committee draft opinion ref ECO/238 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2009

<sup>5</sup> Based on « Territorial cohesion : From theory to Practice », Notre Europe, Marjorie Jouen.

It is also about:

- providing fair or equivalent access – access to services, infrastructure and opportunities no matter where European citizens live.

*The disadvantage of precision*

While debate on the meaning of territorial cohesion has appropriately ranged extremely wide, the provenance of the term - and indeed simple logic - dictates that its definition cannot be treated as infinitely flexible. However, in a Union of many different administrative traditions and policy cultures a degree of ambiguity of interpretation is inevitable and probably useful. Indeed the pursuit of absolute precision would be counterproductive.

*Therefore, beyond offering the above observations on the irreducible essential elements of territorial cohesion, we do not propose a precise definition.*

***What additional elements would it bring to the current approach to economic and social cohesion as practiced by the European Union?***

*The primacy of territorial cohesion*

We do not share the view of those responsible observers who have suggested that there is little substantive difference between territorial and economic and social cohesion. As already indicated, territorial cohesion is both a principle and a practical approach that can guide, inform and facilitate the achievement of economic and social cohesion.

*Strategic*

Territorial Cohesion brings a strategic element that is not as present in economic and social cohesion. It is not realistic, we would argue, to expect territorial cohesion approaches to address limited local disparities that are atypical of their spatial context such as 'pockets of deprivation, crime and social unrest in many of the more prosperous cities' as is suggested in the Green Paper. These matters are serious but amenable to other more appropriate remedies and levels of approach. The role of territorial cohesion is rather to tackle issues that manifest at a spatial level upon which the territorial cohesion tools – policy impact assessment and inter policy coordination at European, national and regional level– can realistically focus and where the balance of that location's assets against its impediments is negative, meaning that these assets are not sufficiently valorised.

### *A methodology*

It is important to recognize that territorial cohesion can be a methodology, a cipher key, and transcend not only economic and social cohesion but the various specific policies or approaches with which it is commonly associated and consequently at risk of being erroneously categorised and constrained.

### *Distinction from other approaches*

Territorial cohesion should not be confused with the European Spatial Development Perspective or polycentric development. ESPD is a specific system with its admirers and detractors and the concept of polycentric development is too narrow and prescriptive even in its widest interpretation.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly the notion of urban centres as vectors of rural development and the undoubted benefits of better linkages between urban and rural areas can be nothing more than components of the territorial cohesion solution. These measures are not universally applicable or of consistent value but depend for their effectiveness on the functionality – the economic footprint – of the urban centres concerned. This leaves significant parts of Europe, particularly in the remote, mountainous and sparsely populated fragile areas, beyond their influence.

## **The scale and scope of territorial action**

### ***Is there a role for the EU in promoting territorial cohesion? How could such a role be defined against the background of the principle of subsidiarity?***

#### *Placing Territorial Cohesion at the core*

The European Union can promote territorial cohesion by raising awareness of the concept in the formulation of all relevant policies and by putting balanced territorial development at the core of its strategy for a sustainable development of Europe's competitiveness.

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<sup>6</sup> Arguably the metropolitan polarisation of economic activity widely evident in Europe, with which any territorial cohesion approach must now contend, is nonetheless consistent with the principles of polycentric development at its highest stratum. Polycentrism at a European level can accommodate monocentrism at the nation level. Even if polycentric development is interpreted to embrace the very much wider 'gateways and hubs' approach e.g of the Irish National Spatial Strategy - which perhaps most faithfully reflects the spirit of territorial cohesion - it is still simply a system and not the pervasive principle that territorial cohesion can be.

### *Actions*

In practical terms the EU can intervene in the preparation and implementation of European measures in order to:

- *introduce systematic prior assessment of the territorial impact of all proposed regulation. Care would be necessary to achieve simplicity of operation and the minimum administrative burden consistent with maintaining the rigour and effectiveness of scrutiny.*

- *enhance cooperation between services and those responsible for the different sectoral policies, in order to take into account and modify the conflicting effects of those policies, in an integrated approach.*

A specific service of the Commission should be identified to oversee this process.

- *associate all levels of governance with the design of relevant EU policies together with organisations and actors that have the knowledge and concrete understanding of the impacts of policies on the different specific types of territories.*

- *adopt a vertically integrated territorial cohesion framework using the open method of coordination. The structural funds pattern of European level Community Strategic Guidelines, National Strategic Reference Framework and local Operational Programmes illustrates the sort of approach that respects, and can provide the opportunity of better involvement at, all levels of subsidiarity (but which at all levels needs better stakeholder engagement.). This model could accommodate an element of spatial planning coordination that would not require any adjustment to competencies and could be monitored through the open method of coordination.*

- *operate a truly horizontally integrated approach to the delivery of the Union's structural policies. The current principle of one fund per programme is impeding effective delivery and is retrograde by comparison with practice under the previous programme period. Integration of delivery of the structural funds with the rural development fund of the first pillar of the CAP is essential and could be achieved by associating the implementation of their respective operational programmes. It need not be predicated upon the integration of the funds themselves.*

- *encourage, facilitate and enable the collection of data in a consistent form and at a sufficient level of territorial disaggregation and accuracy across the Union to achieve a meaningful spatial measurement and diagnosis of territorial state and perspectives of Europe.*

## ***How far should territorial scale of policy intervention vary according to the nature of the problems addressed?***

### *Varying the scale*

The scale of intervention *must* vary according to the nature of the challenge addressed.

The reality of low population density areas is apparent only at NUTS 2 or NUTS 3 level. Density cannot rationally be recognized at finer levels without producing absurdities. However, of course, it could be that the most effective scale at which to address the problems and opportunities of low population density areas, would be at a level identified at overall NUTS 2 or 3 but incorporating contiguous smaller (i.e. LAU 1 or 2) level areas of similar demographic nature. Similar considerations could apply *mutatis mutandis* in respect of the scale of response appropriate to deal with mountain conditions. In other words, mountainous areas can most accurately be identified by permitting the aggregation of appropriate statistical areas rather than relying exclusively on NUTS 2 or NUTS 3 designation. By contrast, clearly, it must be appropriate on occasions to address issues of insularity at less than NUTS 3 level e.g. where this is justified by the small size of the islands(s) concerned and by their lack of proximity to the functional impact of a major centre.

### *Local focus?*

Beyond the case of individual settlements affected by industrial transition, such as isolated fishing villages, it is difficult to envisage an issue realistically addressable by a territorial cohesion approach at a single LAU 1 level or below. (see also --- supra)

### *Services of General Economic Interest*

The issue of access to services of general interest and services of general economic interest warrants separate treatment not just because of its status as the only spatial focus of territorial cohesion currently acknowledged within the Treaty but because:

it responds so directly to the sentiment introduced by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cohesion Report, and echoed elsewhere, 'that people should not be disadvantaged by wherever they happen to live or work in the Union'.

it is a fundamental precondition to development of territorial capital

■ *Here again we support the EESC call for all such services including social services to be set out in a framework directive, adopted under co-decision procedure whereby a Community framework can be established which reflects their specific characteristics.*

*'Fair or equivalent'*

As the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cohesion Report intimates, territorial cohesion must ensure fair or equivalent access to services of general interest (both economic and non-economic) no matter where the European citizen lives or works in the Union. The provision of universal access to identical levels of excellence is clearly impracticable but equivalent access to identified appropriate common levels of service must be assured.

*SGEI to include ICT*

■ *The definition of these services should be extended to include the provision of information and communication technology such as access to broadband. Here, however, the target must indeed be universal access to a level of service precisely equal in terms of quality - and simultaneous in terms of upgrade - although for obvious reasons this might mean, for example, access through strategically placed but readily accessible nodes in the most fragile peripheral areas. ICT can play a central role in achieving real territorial cohesion but the claim that it has the capacity to bring 'the death of distance' will remain an illusion until it is universally and instantly available at its latest commercial quality.*

### ***Do areas with specific geographical features require special policy measures? If so, which measures?'***

*A policy for regions with specific geographic features*

■ *We support the European Economic and Social Committee's call for true equal economic opportunities between regions involving the adoption of a policy dedicated to regions with specific geographic features, 'based on the principles of permanence, positive discrimination and proportionality in order to take account of diverse situations'*<sup>7</sup>. **To contribute to and inform the development of such a policy initiative we now attach at Appendix 2 recommendations for mountain policies and action.**

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<sup>7</sup> For detailed specific recommendations for mountain policies and actions please see Appendix 2

<sup>8</sup> EESC opinion on 'How to achieve better integration of regions suffering from permanent natural and structural handicaps', OJ C 221,8.09.2005,p141

*Geographical features are a constraint to competition*

Geographical constraints are an obstacle to competition: territories with handicaps are not linked to the market in the same way and they cannot compete on a level playing field with others. Investing to remove obstacles as much as possible is a way to increase and improve competition within the EU and to better deliver the Lisbon strategy.

*A litmus test*

Territorial cohesion obviously concerns the whole of the EU and is not relevant only to areas with specific geographic features, but as principal places that indisputably experience challenges and possess opportunities of a geographic/spatial nature, they represent a litmus test for the effectiveness of the territorial cohesion approach.

*A better appraisal necessary*

It is unfortunate therefore that the level of appraisal of these areas permitted within the constraints of the Green Paper has inevitably been misleading in its generality and is - in respect of mountain areas - *prima facie* inaccurate. A rudimentary profile of mountains largely based on the Commission's own 2004 report on 'Mountain areas in Europe'<sup>9</sup> is attached by way of clarification as an appendix to this submission. Particular attention is drawn to the critique we offer therein on the 2004 Report, the limitations of its analysis and the significant omissions from its coverage.

*A real constraint*

It is clear that areas with specific geographic features vary in the intensity of their conditions or to the extent that their circumstances are mitigated by, for example, proximity to an exceptional local market or are alleviated by atypical demographic features. Yet it remains axiomatic that the physical constraints of these areas *do* impair *substantially* their capacity to develop their assets in comparison with areas with similar resources but no such physical challenges.

*Better indicators required*

These physical challenges have social, environmental and demographic impacts that are not reflected in the single economic performance measure of GDP per capita which also fails adequately to reflect the increased input costs that adverse physical impediments invariably create. Typically, these include more difficult transport and construction conditions, lack of economies of scale and distance to

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<sup>9</sup> Mountain areas in Europe – analysis of mountain areas in EU Member States, acceding and other European countries Nordregio Report 2004:1

market all generate higher local prices. Additionally the severe physical topography, extreme climate situations, high costs of transport infrastructure construction and maintenance, and sparse settlement patterns mean accessibility is a challenge in peripheral mountain areas.

■ In view of these factors *we propose that:*

GDP per capita be retained as a criterion but calculated at local purchasing power parity, not Member State PPP.

Other indicators be identified to measure social aspects, quality of life, intra and extra regional accessibility.

#### *Cumulative constraints*

As indicated already the assessment of the territorial reality of the Union must in effect be an audit examining the balance between the impediments of an area against its relative wealth or assets. Here it is important to recognize that the classic specific geographic features of mountainousness, insularity and sparsity of population do not necessarily exist in isolation one from the other but are often cumulative: many islands are mountainous and some mountain areas are among the most sparsely populated areas in Europe. Where the geographic features are aggregated their impact is cumulative. Indicators must be found to reflect the intensity of these effects.

#### *A caveat*

The way that multiple indicators can be used is problematic, however, and here caution must be exercised. The proposal for a European Territorial Cohesion Index is interesting but inevitably, like other synthetic indices in the past, its practical application is likely to be limited and contentious as its product will differ according to the weightings attributed to each component element.

#### *A need for cyclical appraisal*

While in a long term time frame it is accurate to think of the mountain and island situation as permanent and in a shorter time frame the situation of less densely populated areas undoubtedly has a significant degree of permanence, the whole point of territorial cohesion is to neutralize as much as possible the permanence of these conditions. As a basic proposition it must therefore be recognized that *'the degree of cohesion and disparities changes not only across the geographical scale. It also ebbs and flows across the temporal scale, indicating that territorial cohesion cannot be captured in a snap shot'*<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Simin Davoudi 'Territorial cohesion, European social model and spatial research' in *Territorial Cohesion and the European Model of Society*, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2007



### *Periodic reports*

■ For this reason *we propose that periodic reports on the areas with specific geographic features should be produced using the three existing principal reports<sup>11</sup> as the base line. In this way trends can be tracked, statistics refined and the whole debate about areas with specific geographic features can become less conjectural and more factual and so not as vulnerable to misinterpretation.*

### *What measures?*

With regard to measures appropriate to address specific geographic territories, detailed reference has already been made to the need for firmer action in respect of Services of General Economic Interest and these regions are among those that would benefit most from such an improved regime.

### *An inter-service group for areas with specific geographic features?*

The major practical opportunities to recognize areas with specific geographic features lie in the processes of territorial impact assessment of policies and coordination of policies to modify potential territorial impact that are now contemplated in support of the territorial cohesion, as referred to above. For example, as part of the process of assessing the territorial impact of new regulation, Member States might be invited to reflect on the implication of the new measure for specific geographic territories and where appropriate to establish suitable consultative arrangements. The justification for coordination of sectoral policies to support territorial cohesion is general, compelling and clear and is not particularly related to regions with specific geographic features but it is often in these economically, socially and environmentally fragile areas that sectoral policies interact most dramatically and where the consequences are most severe.

■ Notwithstanding our recommendation that an EC service be designated to oversee the territorial cohesion process ( Section ---- above) we submit that, within this arrangement or in parallel, *an Inter Service group should be established tasked with coordination of the design and application of EU policies in these areas of permanent disadvantage.*

### *Commensurate funding*

Finally the increased costs already described that must be borne by areas with specific geographic features and which spring from those features apply of course to any policies that require physical implementation in these regions.

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<sup>11</sup> Mountain areas in Europe – analysis of mountain areas in EU Member States, acceding and other European countries Nordregio Report 2004:1; Islands Planistat Study 2003 for DG Regio; Northern Peripheral, Sparsely Populated Regions in the European Union Nordregio Report 2005:4

■ *These regions therefore require correspondingly enhanced funding allocations by comparison with regions unaffected by these challenges.*

## **Better cooperation**

### *Special significance for mountains*

All three dimensions of the Territorial Cooperation Objective – cross-border, transnational and interregional - can contribute to territorial cohesion generally but especially in respect of mountain areas. This is because mountains are frequently at the borders of members states, suffer particularly from lack of cross border and massif level cooperation and are perhaps chief among European regions that can benefit from interregional cooperation, particularly, with other mountain regions.

Trans-regional cooperation has been widely used in mountain regions within the same state or between mountain border regions.

### *Mountain/Lowland linkages*

Due to their intermediate location often the development of mountain regions, their foothills and surrounding areas is closely interlinked. As inter-regional linkages and social demands from the lowlands increase, cooperation becomes crucial to improving the wise management of natural resources and cultural heritage. It is increasingly realized that mountain regions' opportunities and future perspectives cannot be analysed in isolation from other regions. This spatially integrated view must be supported by cooperation activities between mountain and other areas. The notion of massif and experiences of cooperation organised within Massif committees are in that sense promising.

### *Benefits for the wider Union*

Closer cooperation and international collaboration will be required to cope with the increasing environmental, economic and societal challenges of mountain areas which affect both mountain regions and lowlands. This requirement will increase under the accentuated impact of climate change that will be experienced in mountain areas. Mountain areas will be among the regions most affected by climate change<sup>12</sup>. At the same time mountains are, and will remain, reservoirs of natural resources that will become scarce with climate change and highly demanded by society (water, air, natural green spaces for recreation). The pressure on mountain economies to preserve their

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<sup>12</sup> Studies conducted by several laboratories, including EDYTEM from Savoy University, indicate that amplification effects of cycles created by climate change will be three times more intense in mountain areas than in others. Some other studies suggest that for every 1°C increase the Alps will lose 150m of snow line with consequent predictable economic but unpredictable civil risk impacts.

natural resources will increase and cooperation will be needed to ensure appropriate compensation for the constraints faced. It is important to achieve sustainable development processes, to keep the mountain areas innovative and attractive living spaces and to ensure that these features continue to contribute to the economic and social welfare of wider Europe.

*Exchanging experience vital*

It is particularly important to explore methods of exchanging experiences between mountain ranges. This would contribute to the implementation of cohesion aspects by attaching significant relevance to issues of mountain development and its integration into regional planning strategy considerations.

For all these reasons we are convinced that the achievement of better European cooperation is vital to the achievement of territorial cohesion.

***What role should the Commission play in encouraging and supporting territorial cooperation?***

*The Commission's unique position*

Clearly the Commission occupies a unique position in respect of the encouragement and positive orchestration of territorial cooperation and, arguably, it is here that it can add most value to the European process.

*More Territorial cooperation & better delivery*

■ *We therefore call for the substantial reinforcement of the territorial cooperation objective both in terms of funding allocated and resource applied to its efficient delivery. This must extend to the significant simplification of the inter-regional application procedure and its transformation to a dynamic and flexible rather than process driven system.*

***Is there a need for new forms of territorial cooperation?***

*A role for existing networks?*

The inter-regional strand of territorial cooperation has all the considerable merits already described and, in concentrating on promoting activity where none existed previously, it is dynamic and innovative. This approach however necessarily carries significant risks of failure and of the disappearance of ad hoc networks and their activity at the end of a project. In

concentrating solely on this model the Commission neglects the much lower cost and less precarious opportunity of encouraging the organic dynamism of existing European networks which ultimately have more self sustaining potential.

■ *We therefore propose that to supplement the orthodox approach to inter regional cooperation the Commission enter into negotiated output based contracts with existing European networks to address specific issues such as capacity building in candidate countries or implementation adapted to different territories of European sectoral policies. A simple arrangement to support the costs of translation of strategic information and training meetings into candidate country/neighbouring country languages might usefully be considered.*

***Is there a need to develop new legislative and management tools to facilitate cooperation, including along the external borders?***

We support the establishment of the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation mechanism and will take every opportunity to encourage its use.

We believe that inter-regional schemes can indeed bring interesting results. In France for example, inter-regional massif conventions, prepared by a massif committee and managed by programming committees associating State, regions and sometimes Europe (in the framework of interregional operational programmes) are good examples of fruitful cooperation that could be expanded and encouraged. They have allowed delivery of concrete development actions, applying rules that respect European aims of competition and innovation, within territories that constitute an homogenous geographical entity although split in several administrative units.

Finally, legislative and management tools should bring the necessary flexibility to ensure regions can collaborate with one another depending on their needs and not only within pre-defined administrative limits or categories.

## **Better Coordination**

All the observations we have to make in respect of these questions have already been covered in our responses to the preceding questions.

*The centrality of territorial cohesion again*

We would simply stress again here, however, that territorial cohesion is not an isolated policy issue. It is simultaneously *a strategic objective*

for the European Union, *a principle* that must be respected in the formulation of all policies and *a framework* for procedural and operational measures.

*Policies with territorial impact – state aid*

Although informing all policies, territorial cohesion has immediate relevance to those with a clear potential territorial impact such as regional policy, the CAP, transport, energy, ICT and research and development policies and, particularly important among these, is competition policy. European competition policy has in the past substantially inhibited the use of state aid to address regional disparities and enhance territorial cohesion yet the stronger member states have also used state aid in a way that has detracted from territorial cohesion. These aspects have to be, and can be, remedied. Competition policy, sensitively employed, can be a major lever to achieve territorial cohesion. The flexibility demonstrated by the Commission, for example in development of the 2007-19 Regional Aid guidelines in respect statistical effect areas, is helpful but *the whole climate of State Aid adjudication demonstrated by the Commission and the European Court must become more enlightened, realistic and proportionate.*

## **New territorial partnerships**

***Does the pursuit of territorial cohesion require the participation of new actors in policymaking, such as representatives of the social economy, local stakeholders, voluntary organisations and NGOs?***

*Vital role of stakeholders*

Partnership is the most dynamic of the four well established principles of the structural funds - completed by programming, concentration and additionality - and must now be extended to give the partners listed here in the Green Paper a similar involvement in the broader process for the achievement of territorial cohesion outlined earlier in this response. This must be done carefully to encourage a recognition of shared ownership among these stakeholders but also to benefit from their experiential knowledge to enrich the output and ensure its practical relevance. Our finding is that this approach is powerful and - with involvement of the appropriate stakeholders - can be productively transferred to related fields of research.

## **Improving understanding of territorial cohesion**

We have addressed the issue of indicators at page 15 and 16 above under the section on areas with special geographic features and at page 13 when discussing the scale of territorial intervention.

# Appendix 1

## Mountain Profile

### The issue

Given the comparative brevity of the entire document, the Green Paper's appraisal of mountain areas is, perhaps inevitably, cursory in nature. This however does not explain why its basic assessment that the proportion of the European mountain population is 10% of the EU total population. This differs dramatically from the proportion of 17.8% in the mountain statistical report commissioned by the Commission itself, the Nordregio Study<sup>13</sup>, which is nevertheless quoted as the authority for the mountain definition adopted in the Green Paper.

This compromises fundamentally the validity of the remainder of the analysis.

Set out hereunder therefore are further observations and a profile of European mountains based on the Nordregio report, together with some comments on the limitations of that document and on the mountain aspects it did not include.

### Comment

The Green Paper and its working document provide controversial information on the characterization of mountain areas. The broad impression conveyed -that populations are growing, transport is in a good situation, most people are poorer - but not a fourth of them - requires responsible elucidation. The absence of any context regarding the paper's analysis of European aid intensity permits an inference to be drawn that mountain populations benefit disproportionately.

#### **Population:**

*The Green Paper:* states that the European mountain population amounts to 10% of the European Union total.

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<sup>13</sup> Mountain areas in Europe –analysis of mountain areas in EU Mountain States, acceding and other European countries Nordregio Report 2004:1

*The Nordregio study:* the data provided by this study at NUTS 5 level indicate that, in 2004, 17.8% of the population was living in the mountain areas of the EU-27.

### **Demographic trends:**

*The Green Paper:* gives an average population increase of 0.9%.

*The Nordregio study:* provides maps and indications that show great diversity of population trends among mountain areas. The Alpine area is more dynamic but many mountain areas show a negative evolution. The realities of depopulation and ageing of population must be stressed.

### **GDP/ per capita:**

*The Green Paper:* the paper quotes an average GDP per capita for the mountain population of 80% of the EU average specifying that 25% of the population is above EU per capita average. It would be of at least equal significance to specify the proportion that are below 80%.

*The Nordregio study:* contains no analysis of GDP per capita of mountain areas.

### **Transport:**

*The Green Paper:* exhibits maps in the accompanying working document showing only the main agglomerations and highways: it does not illustrate much about the reality of intra regional accessibility and how this impacts the daily life of people locally.

*The Nordregio study:* contains seven maps illustrating transport links via car, air rail and road, including a significantly more detailed road traffic flow map.

### **Aid Intensity:**

*The Green Paper:* exhibits text and a table in the accompanying working document describing annual ERDF and CF aid intensity per capita during the 2000 - 2006 programme period. In specifically identifying aid intensity as high in mountain (and island) areas without any simple accompanying comment recognising the extenuating factors of substantially higher average infrastructure costs in mountains and the benefits of economies of scale in urban areas, the paper is more prejudicial than informative. Indeed in a remote mountain area the cost of erection of a bus shelter could easily be higher per capita of the community served than the costs

per capita of constructing an entire transport terminal serving the population of a major conurbation.

The Nordregio study: attempts no analysis of aid intensity nor does it analyse comparative infrastructure construction costs.

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## **Observations on the Nordregio Report 2004:1**

The report provided an excellent statistical profile of the mountains of the European Union where none previously existed. Its main limitation is that it represents work concluded in 2003 which has not yet been repeated. *Being a one off exercise therefore it is only a snapshot and alone is of no value in identifying trends.* It remains, nevertheless, the most authoritative European mountain study available.

It has some deficiencies, most – but not all - of which are a function of the level of data available at the time of its publication, and they concern:

- Delimitation of mountain areas
- Accessibility analysis
- Environment
- Tourism

### **Delimitation**

The difficulties involved with any attempt to achieve a classification of areas into mountain and non-mountain areas underpin the inherent problems with delimitation methods. There is a requirement for a more in-depth analysis and interpretation of the internal divergences within the generic category of mountains. This implies both the issue of the boundary of the mountain areas and the differentiation within the mountain areas into different types and geographical parts of the mountain space of Europe.

The Europe-wide delimitation carried out for the European Commission (Nordregio 2004) did not address the first part of this differentiation process. It neither answered the question of internal differentiation of the core areas of each mountain massif and the pre-massif areas surrounding the core, nor could it provide detailed analysis of different types of settlement structures in the mountain regions. This produced the result



that some major cities with no specifically visible mountain characteristics were included within the mountain area boundary. As larger towns and cities often preoccupy a prominent place at the edge of the mountain area, they should, on the other hand, not be excluded automatically from a mountain classification. There is indeed a need for additional data interpretation of such cases which should arrive at a more precise definition and inclusion/exclusion of highly densely populated centres into mountain areas. Such a refinement of the analytical base could improve the presentation and increase acceptability of the delimitation proposed.

### **Accessibility Analysis**

Whereas the European perspective (Map 7.1) is oriented towards the European core regions and shows good accessibility in mountain regions close to the “Pentagon” core area of Europe, the national perspectives (Map 7.2) give a completely divergent picture. According to the position and distance with regard to the national centre, low accessibility values can be found even in areas where European accessibility is excellent (and vice versa).

*The practice of measuring access from the main urban centre is distortive: accessibility should more appropriately be measured from an area’s centroid.*

### **Environment**

A major omission from the study is any adequate analysis of the mountain environment, largely because reliable spatial data for the most significant environmental designations (eg Natura 2000 sites) and typologies (eg High Nature Value Farmland) were not available at the time.

### **Tourism**

An assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of tourism is essential to an understanding of mountain resources and no such analysis is included in the study. This was because of the lack of comparable national data for an analysis at the European scale.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Recommendations for mountain policies and action**

The analysis of mountain development from regional actors, research activities and policy implementation reveals common experiences for mountains in Europe. These address a vision that mountain regions are a considerable part of European (mainly rural) areas and greatly reflect the situation in peripheral contexts. As such they are an important case for the development of territorial cohesion objectives across Europe. Some key issues for mountain development, due to mountain characteristics, are summarized here. They particularly address the integrated view on ecological, social and economic features in these areas.

#### **Key elements and principles**

Key elements and principles for a policy approach to focus on sustainable development in mountain areas (Mountain Agenda 2002) and to prevent marginalisation tendencies would be:

##### **(1) recognition of mountain areas as specific development areas**

It is crucial for developing action for mountain areas to start from a widely recognised and accepted definition of mountain areas. The difficulty is that topographical and natural conditions often are different within short distances and contexts for neighbouring areas might diverge. According to the objective of the delimitation, a more restricted or a more extended definition is applied.

The most relevant typologies for mountain policy are the one used by DG Agri (for the application of the LFA scheme since 1975) and the calculation elaborated for DG Regio within the mountain area study (Nordregio 2004) which aimed at creating a harmonised geographical database and a set of relevant indicators for European mountain areas.

This recognition of the mountain area has potential practical significance. For example mountain designation could be referred to in specific labels taking account of the mountain situation or origin of its products. Mountain regions thus need a voice in policy and decision making.

This perspective also emphasises that support programmes should not be conceived with the prime target of compensation of difficulties, but be oriented at nurturing the potential that can be detected in mountain regions. In many cases,

these opportunities are not straightforward production schemes or services. In general, they have to be located and generated, with the participation of local actors, to become real development assets.

## **(2) remuneration for services rendered to surrounding lowland areas**

This implies particularly the concept of positive externalities which are not only effective for the local/regional context of the mountain areas themselves, but largely extend to non-mountainous areas in the lowlands.

The calculation at the global level that about half of the world's population is linked to, and dependent on the provision of goods and services produced from, mountain areas underlines this linkage. (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Koerner et al ) Without doubt this greater relevance exceeding the mountain areas themselves is specifically true also for Europe. The analysis in the European Commission study (Nordregio 2004) focused on the delimitation issues and bordering areas outside the mountain areas in varying perimeters of 10, 20 and 50 km. A particularly high population density is often found in these surrounding areas, underpinning the attractiveness for many people and businesses to locate close to the mountains to take advantage of the mountains' resources.

However, the use of these resources and an adequate remuneration of services provided by mountain actors are not always secured. There is a need for the local population within mountain regions to take hold of the potential and that remuneration should not be endangered by liberalisation policies.

The Alpine Space Programme under Interreg IIIB (now continued in Interreg IVB) addressed a series of aspects of providing services in the mountain range of the Alps and aimed at increasing service provision and remuneration in these regions through enhancing cooperation and exchange of experiences ([www.alpinespace.org](http://www.alpinespace.org)). The main action fields for this include the management of natural resources and biodiversity (environmental development), prevention of risks of natural hazards and cultural landscape development. All these shape the most important attractiveness elements and therefore become a core base for other economic uses of the space (e.g. tourism).

Euromontana has paid particular attention to the issue of positive externalities in two studies, the background paper for the Aviemore seminar (Bryden etc. 2005) and connected case studies (2005) and the discussion paper by Robinson (2007) for the Adelboden Group within the FAO activity on SARD-M.

### **(3) diversification and exploitation of the local potential for innovation**

In many regions, the local potential for innovation is to be found in small-scale activities. It involves a thorough analysis of the current activities, local actors and institutions, all economic sectors and the spatial specific relationships. An extensive overview on the scope of diversification activities and innovative action within the mountain areas is increasingly looked for in many mountain ranges. For example the research project "Future in the Alps", carried out by CIPRA (2008) over the last years has listed and analysed a wide range of activities of different types. The project has compiled a huge database of knowledge available on the Alpine countries, filled with publications, projects and links. The particular aim is to enhance exchange between different mountain ranges and to support dissemination of best practice examples. Hundreds of examples have been collected to show the creativity of the regional economy, and more than 500 projects participated in the competition for the call of the Future of the Alps project to reward the most innovative projects.

To cite just some examples as a reference, there are very interesting projects

- in increasing the use of wood in construction,
- in developing new products within co-operations, e.g. by using organic plants and aromatic plants ([www.plantes.ch](http://www.plantes.ch))
- in developing new markets through a focus on specific arts quality which are combined under a regional specific label (of crafts)
- in new combinations of regional products and services, including agricultural products and new technologies
- in the use of natural resources (e.g. water) as a specific link for development of a region

Another well-known programme on diversification is the Leader programme which has achieved, after three programme periods, a wealth of experiences in many European regions. In some countries, like Austria, Italy, Greece and others, the majority of Local Action Groups (LAG) are situated in mountain regions and hence reveal many best-practice examples. The EC publication (EC 2002) on innovative projects in the mountain regions already included a number of examples from mountain areas.

#### **(4) cultural change without loss of identity**

It is important to see mountains not primarily or exclusively as areas with long traditions that are far away from our modern life. In many respects, some of the development potential is rooted in the traditions. However, this potential has to be realised by taking account of on-going cultural development.

A series of activities in many mountain regions is engaged in addressing the cultural heritage of these areas. For example the Alpine Space Programme (2000-2006) had an activity (measure 3.2) on "good management and promotion of landscapes and cultural heritage" within which eight projects were selected to analyse the potential and find activities in this field. Also the new programme has an activity on "enhancing development options based on traditional sectors and cultural heritage" as an important element to enhance competitiveness and attractiveness of the Alpine Space.

Changes are expected to be particularly strong in a context of rapid integration, as can be seen for the new Member States. The Carpathian mountain regions (but also the areas in the Balkan mountains of additional countries or the mountains of Turkey) are particularly affected by social and cultural changes.

For example the Carpathian Foundation encourages the development of public/private/NGO partnerships, including cross-border and inter-ethnic approaches to promote regional and community development and to help prevent conflicts (see Roma projects (<http://www.cfoundation.org/cf/web/hq/index.jsp>)).

#### **(5) sustainable management of mountain ecosystems and biodiversity**

This is a central aspect of mountain development and programme orientation. In addition to the long-lasting activities of the Alpine Convention, one can follow in particular the trend to spread such action programmes to other mountain regions. The most clear and accurate example is provided by the initiative taken in the Carpathian region which is in its extent and population comparable to the Alpine Space.

The Carpathians are not just one of Europe's largest mountain ranges, a unique natural treasure of great beauty and ecological value, and home of the headwaters of major rivers. They also constitute a major ecological, economic, cultural, recreational and living environment in the heart of Europe, shared by numerous peoples and countries.

The Carpathians are an important reservoir of biodiversity, and Europe's last refuge for large mammals - brown bear, wolf, and lynx - and home to populations of European bison, moose, wildcat, chamois, golden eagle, eagle owl, black grouse, plus many unique insect species.

Transition to a market economy, increasing and integrating role of the civil society and dynamic economic development imply profound changes and challenges. The Carpathians are shared by seven Central and Eastern European Countries, five of which have already joined the European Union. This increases the possibilities of sustainable development based on the rich natural, environmental, cultural and human resources of the region, and for preserving its natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

The Carpathian Convention provides the framework for cooperation and multi-sectoral policy coordination, a platform for joint strategies for sustainable development, and a forum for dialogue between all stakeholders involved (<http://www.carpathianconvention.org/index.htm>).

## **(6) taking account of spatial aspects to support cooperation and strategic approaches**

Regional development of mountain areas depends on driving forces that go beyond the mountain areas themselves. As such, the analysis of the economic base and perspectives for mountain regions has to address the relevant linkages to other areas. More and more, the interrelations have entered into the core set of aspects for regional assessment.

A deeper analysis of local and regional developments reveals the divergent situations which can change within very small distances. In particular, the mountain area context requires sufficient consideration as well as the inclusion of local approaches as core actors, since socio-economic conditions and strategies might vary considerably. Although all administrative levels and geographical attributions from micro to macro level have a specific role, the regional authorities and actors have - in many respects - a pivotal role and can be seen as the strategic actors for project development. This reflects programme experience and improvements might be due to the capability to work on network structures.

It is crucial to note that pilot projects tend to be situated at a more local level, which implies the strong involvement of local actors. Up to now Alpine-wide networks of communities have been established where the local actors are important partners in the projects, and the continuation of local action examples will be important for extending small-scale cooperation to other parts of the mountain area. Main activities include a network of municipalities engaged in a

strategy to achieve more sustainable ways of tourism development, including public transport facilities, (<http://www.alpine-pearls.com/home.php>) and a network of municipalities focusing on alliances in the Alps to enhance sustainable development (<http://www.alpenallianz.org/de>) and a network of Alpine protection areas, ALPARC ([www.alparc.org](http://www.alparc.org)). The involvement of these small-scale actors not only takes account of the specific situations, but also contributes to increase participation and creativity at the local level.

### **(7) institutional development to focus on sustainable resource use**

Development, and particularly regional development, is driven by a wide range of factors and has to be assessed by different indicators which reflect the various dimensions of the development concept. Development experiences often depend on the actors and institutional framework in which they take place.

An EU research project focused on the specific requirements and some experiences related to the institutional development of mountain regions (Innovative Structures for the Sustainable Development of Mountainous Areas – ISDEMA, 2001-2003). In many respects, it is not sufficient to conceive regional programmes, but necessary to establish an institutional framework that is adequate to deal with the development of the mountain regions.

The process to establish an appropriate policy framework has to be undertaken over a long period and with a continuous commitment. Such a process can only be oriented towards common goals if societal consensus and institutional support provide a guiding reference. In this process, development agencies and the networking of local, regional and national institutions are crucial to concentrate on regional strengths and elaborate adequate strategies.

The focus of policy development would be seen in the following six areas:

- promoting efforts to secure land use and development of local resources
- accounting for the impacts of livestock, forest and hydropower in mountains
- creating regional networks of conservation areas
- improving knowledge about mountains through integrated research, monitoring and education
- developing institutions and co-operation at the level of mountain ranges and regions
- integrating mountains into projects and policies of development agencies

The analysis proves that the wide geographical and cultural diversity of European space is particularly expressed in mountain areas. The resulting territorial challenges distinguish these from other economic areas, as different regional contexts can be discerned at low geographical levels. It is important to take account of this diversity and the cross-border dimension of spatial issues, relevant particularly for the mountain situations, when addressing territorial cohesion aspects. Following the demand of the European Parliament (2005) for a multi-centric development, a territorial cohesion strategy integrating the challenges and opportunities of the peripheral and mountain areas is called for.

When taking territory as a strategic factor in any targeted approach to sustainable development, it seems important to tackle the challenges of peripheral areas. Competitiveness, social cohesion and environment are the key aspects for the development of the cohesion policy. The mountain areas can be an important case for raising awareness and understanding the need for integration of all regions into this concept. The diversity and wealth of the significant potential of the European mountain regions can be taken into account in an integrative manner. The basic requirements reflect general territorial development options. Crucial issues include, in particular, the interface between sector-specific and structural policies, the development of multi-level governance of territories and accessing the region-specific contexts in the formulation of strategic considerations.

When aiming at the reduction of inter-regional disparities, one has to integrate the challenges and opportunities of the worse-off areas. These include some of the mountain areas. With regard to spatial integration, there is an even more straightforward need for inclusion of mountain areas as they are often synonymous to peripheral situations. Economic, social and territorial cohesion can only be realized if structural disparities between regions are reduced. Accordingly it is up to the regions to develop spatial strategies, which reflect the European territorial development trends. Mountain regions can be important partners to address the regional disparities and to enhance the trans-regional cooperation which is at the core of cohesion processes.



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*Appendix 2 is extracted in main proportion from the report commissioned by Euromontana to Thomas Dax "The role of mountain regions in territorial cohesion: a contribution to the discussion on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion".*