



# COHESION POLICY IN MOUNTAIN AREAS :

## How to increase the contribution from mountains and benefits for mountain territories?

**7 JUNE 2017**

**BORSCHETTE CENTRE, BRUSSELS**



DG Regio  
[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy)



Euromontana  
[www.euromontana.org](http://www.euromontana.org)

# Context and objectives of the conference

**Mountains cover nearly 30% of the EU territory and are home to roughly 17% of the EU population.** Europe's mountains are the continent's ecological backbone containing a huge reservoir of natural resources. Often located in border areas, mountains provide invaluable ecosystem services. They provide places for recreation and inspiration and are places of residence, of production, of life, which provide food, energy, employment and quality places to live to the entire continent.

Mountain territories have **strong innovation and growth potential in areas of key importance to the European Union's 2020 strategy**, for example in smart growth (bioeconomy...), green growth (energy, sustainable agriculture and forestry...) or inclusive growth (strong communities, welcoming territories...). **Exploiting fully this potential requires active, ambitious and targeted policies**, which help mountain areas to overcome constraints related to difficult geography and a changing climate, constraints that mean that every action is more expensive to implement than in lowland areas.

The Cohesion policy aims "at reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions" and states that "**particular attention shall be paid to (...) mountain regions**" according to the article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. Thus, the Cohesion policy has a key role to play in addressing the specific challenges of mountain areas. **Macro regional strategies, in this context, play a key role.** The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) as well as the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) provide frameworks for cooperation in two of the main mountain ranges of Europe (Alps and Carpathians), both involving several countries (including non-EU countries) and regions. These macro regional strategies, along with the transnational and cross-border Programmes derived from European structural and investment funds (ESI), are decisive tools to better exploit the potential of mountain areas.

2017 is a turning point, with discussion being started on the future of Cohesion policy. Numerous reports, including at the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee, as well as individual countries or group of countries are currently being released and feed the debate on how to maintain and reinforce the EU Cohesion policy, in particular in the current challenging financial context. Now is the time to demonstrate that mountain areas can contribute to and benefit from the Cohesion policy.

With some concrete examples and good practices, this conference will present the **innovative potential of mountain areas** and show how they can continue to be **active contributors in the achievement of the EU2020 objectives and UN Sustainable Development Goals.**

This conference will reflect on how to **develop a more place-based and territorial integrated approach for the EU Cohesion policy** based on governance experiences at local, regional, national and EU levels. Finally, the conference will present **examples of solutions** to some of the specific challenges facing mountain areas today.

We hope, through this conference, to help decision makers and mountain residents themselves find **promising solutions to better implement the Cohesion policy in the future.**

The conference is moderated by **François Constantin**, journalist.

## Target audience

- National and regional authorities, universities, training institutes, chambers of agriculture and of commerce, regional development agencies, environmental agencies working in mountain areas
- Representatives of European policy-makers: European Commission, Members of the European Parliament, members of the Committee of the Regions and of the European Economic and Social Committee
- Representatives of networks working on mountain issues



# Morning Programme

9.00 – 9.30

Welcome

## Opening

- **Jean Pierre Halkin**, DG REGIO, Head of Unit Macro-regions, Transnational /Interregional cooperation, IPA: Enlargement: setting the scene on cohesion and cooperation
- **Iliana Iotova**, Vice-President of Bulgaria: The role of mountains in the future Cohesion policy
- **Mercedes Bresso**, MEP and President of the RUMRA (Rural, Mountainous and Remote areas) inter-group: How the European Parliament can encourage a better Cohesion policy in mountain areas
- **Juanan Gutierrez**, President of Euromontana: Why mountains matter in the Cohesion policy?

*Each panel session is organised as follows: a speaker presenting the contribution of mountain areas, a Commission speaker presenting relevant EU policies and a success story; followed by debate with the audience.*

9.30 – 10.30

Session 1

## How to encourage innovative and competitive SMEs in mountain areas?

*Most businesses in mountain areas are small or medium-size enterprises. 96.2% of businesses in the French Pyrenees had less than 10 employees in 2012. High production costs due to physical characteristics of mountains, remoteness from markets, lack of accessibility and sparsity of businesses and related transport costs and limited economies of scales are specific challenges for the competitiveness of mountain SMEs, including farm and forest businesses.*

- **André Marcon**, President of MACEO, former President of CCI France: What do SMEs need in order to be prosperous in mountain areas?
- **Giacomo Mattinò**, DG GROWTH, Head of Unit Enterprise Europe Network and Internationalisation of SMEs
- **Gauthier Mestrallet**, Director General of Tri Vallées enterprise: Successful example of recycling ski material
- Exchanges with the audience

10.30 – 11.00

## Coffee-break

11.00 – 12.00

Session 2

## How to enhance access to, use and quality of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and high-speed broadband in Europe's mountains?

*The digital divide is common in mountain areas, where access to broadband is insufficient or even inexistent. The challenge is therefore to implement innovative solutions that allow mountain people and businesses to benefit from the advantages linked to good ICT infrastructure to the same degree as those living in lowland or urban areas.*

- **Marie Clotteau**, Director of Euromontana: How to encourage ICT applications and high-speed broadband in mountain areas?
- **Jan Dröge**, Director of Broadband Competence Offices Support Facility: How to facilitate access to broadband in mountain areas ?
- **Jose Manuel Hernandez Luque**, DG AGRI, Unit F.1 Initiatives for rural and remote areas including Smart Villages
- **Guido Giardini**, Responsible Mountain Medicine Centre: Example of telemedicine in Valle d'Aosta region
- Exchanges with the audience

12.00 – 13.00

Session 3

Roundtable

## How can civil society help strengthen a European Mountain Agenda?

*Different organisations at regional, national or European levels represent the mountain civil society. But there is not always enough coordination at European level. How can this voice be better heard at the EU level? How can different actors better work together to facilitate the implementation of Cohesion policy and other policies in their territories?*

- **Marco Onida**, DG REGIO, Competence Centre Macro-regions and European Territorial Cooperation
- **Andreas Pichler**, Director of the International Commission from the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA)
- **George Elzière**, Expert, member of the French Federation of Alpine and Mountaineering Associations (FFCAM)

13.00-14.30

Lunch

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# Afternoon Programme

14.30 – 15.30

Session 4

## How to encourage adaptation and mitigation to climate change?

*With the adoption of the Paris Agreement and the commitment towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the EU has to encourage more mitigation and adaptation measures to respond to climate change challenges. Because of their exceptional natural heritage and vulnerability to the effects of climate change, mountain areas should take the lead in responding to the challenges raised by climate change.*

- **Raul Cazan**, Member of 2Celsius Network: Mountain areas are the sentinels of climate change
- **Dina Silina**, DG CLIMA: EU policy on adaptation to climate change and related financial opportunities for the territories
- **Prof. Sandor Szalai**, Chairman of the Working Group on Adaptation to Climate Change, Carpathian Convention: Example of Risk Management in the Carpathians
- Exchanges with the audience

15.30 – 16.30

Session 5

Roundtable

## How regions are implementing the Cohesion policy for mountain areas?

*In the implementation of the Cohesion policy, in particular through the different Operational Programmes, how are regional and local authorities taking into account mountain specificities? How are their priorities and governance taking into account the particular needs of mountain areas?*

- **Peter Takacs**, DG REGIO, Inclusive Growth, Urban and Territorial Development
- **Sabrina Lucatelli**, Coordinator of the Technical Committee for Inner Areas, Department for Cohesion Policies, Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers
- **André Marcon**, President of MACEO, former President of CCI France, representative of a "Comité de massif"
- **Armin Schabus**, EU-program coordination in Carinthia region in Austria
- **Dag Ronning**, Chairman of the County Council of Hedmark, Norway

16.30 – 16.45

Coffee-break

16.45 – 17.45

Session 6

Roundtable

## What is the place for mountain areas in the future Cohesion policy? What can EU policy-makers do?

*In May 2016, the European Parliament adopted a report on the Cohesion policy in European mountain areas and requested a specific agenda for mountain areas. How will this request be taken into account? How can the EU level better take into account mountain areas and, more broadly, all rural areas in the Cohesion policy?*

- **Franc Bogovic**, MEP, Member of the RUMRA (Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas) intergroup at the European Parliament
- **Iliana Iotova**, Vice-President of Bulgaria
- **Henri Malosse**, former President of the European economic and social committee, member of the European economic and social committee, member of the section of Economic affairs
- **Anthony Gerard Buchanan**, European Committee of the Regions, Vice-President of the Commission for Natural Resources (NAT)

17.45

Closure

**Normunds Popenis**, Deputy Director General, DG REGIO

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