

Vatra Dornei, Romania

XI European Mountain Convention

Cultural Heritage as an Engine for Creativity, Innovation and Socioeconomic Development for the Future of Mountain areas

Vatra Dornei, Romania
25-26-27 September 2018

PROCEEDINGS OF THE XI EUROPEAN MOUNTAIN CONVENTION

OFFICIAL OPENING AND WELCOME WORDS



Juanan Gutierrez, President of Euromontana

The XI European Mountain Convention (EMC) was officially kicked off on Wednesday 26th September 2018 by **Juanan Gutierrez**, President of Euromontana, and by the Romanian organisers of the event.

The President of Euromontana, **Juanan Gutierrez**, opened the conference by appraising the richness of the exceptional natural and cultural heritage in mountain areas and the need to make better use of this asset, which cannot be relocated, giving future prospects to our youth and our territories in terms of innovation and territorial development. He also reminded the audience that natural and cultural heritage are intrinsically linked through the use that generations of people have made of their natural properties, and that mountain landscapes are therefore cultural landscapes. In the face of today's globalisation and the effects of globalisation, cultural and natural heritage is one of the few resources with an economic development potential that is intrinsically linked to the territories, its inhabitants and their way of living. It is therefore a major strategic resource for the future, which can offer many social, environmental and economic benefits, provided that it is properly and sustainably exploited and developed. Calling for a better preservation and enhancement of this cultural heritage, the President of Euromontana concluded by inviting the participants to use the cultural heritage and its very strong potential for innovation in order to revitalise the territories,



to encourage the development of new entrepreneurial ideas but also to strengthen the attractiveness of the mountains as a whole for all inhabitants.

The Mayor of Vatra Dornei, **Ilie Bonches**, warmly welcomed the participants to his city for the XI EMC under good auspices with the European Year of Cultural Heritage and Romania's Union centenary.

Gheorghe Flutur, the President of the County Council of Suceava, stressed the importance of Romania being part of the European Union to be able to take part in the discussions of such a forum. European programmes are necessary for Romanian rural areas which face the same depopulation and ageing issues as other European rural areas. He argued that the time had come for governments to not only contest the current situation but to act to solve this problem through strategies and concrete solutions: symposia are not enough anymore. Mountains are the regions where the largest quantity of natural resources are exploited, but no progress can be expected if all the added value is taken from the mountains without leaving anything for the local people. The President of the County Council of Suceava pushed for a decentralised management of mountain areas and regretted the lack of resources for areas with natural constraints in Romania. He pleaded for a Strategy for the Carpathians, supported by the European Union, similarly to what already exists for the Danube or the Alps.



From left to right: Claudiu Sorin Rosu Mares, State Secretary of the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; Mirela-Elena Adomnicai, Prefect of Suceava; Gheorghe Flutur, President of the County Council of Suceava and Ilie Bonches, Mayor of Vatra Dornei;

The Prefect of Suceava, **Mirela-Elena Adomnicai**, came back upon the concept of mountain people's identity and welcome culture. Traditions, cultural heritage, idioms are important to rural people. They are part of Romania's hundred years of History and largely deserve a European Year to be dedicated to their preservation and valorisation. She hoped that initiatives such as the European Year of Cultural Heritage could foster discussions, strategies, declarations and the implementation of programmes. She encouraged the development of a welcome culture in our mountain areas to better protect and pass on to future generations the mountainous identity and hospitality and maintain living mountain areas.

Finally, Claudiu Sorin Rosu Mares – State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, excused the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Petre Daea, and he welcomed the participants before opening the first session.



Virgil Ancuta playing on the violin a ballade composed by Ciprian Porumbescu, a composer from the Bucovina region



SESSION 1: WHY IS SHARING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN MOUNTAIN AREAS IMPORTANT?

“Cultural heritage and rural development in the Romanian Carpathians”, Claudiu Sorin Rosu Mares – State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Romania

Claudiu Sorin Rosu Mares introduced the audience to the rich mountainous cultural heritage in Romania, which can be seen in the architectural style of habitations, the traditional costumes, the agropastoral activities, wool products, spiritual celebrations, etc. This precious heritage is now better protected and valued thanks to Romania’s new Mountain Law (adopted in August 2018) designed to invest 1 billion euros of Romania’s State budget into mountain areas over the next ten years. The aim of the Mountain Law is also to protect natural resources, encourage populations to stay in mountain areas, and to develop economic and social activities.



This law emerged from the political acknowledgement of the specific needs of mountain areas and mountain agriculture. The State has implemented a national mountain council and new mountain committees and has regionalised the agency for mountain areas to answer to local needs.

The new mountain law allocates financial envelopes to support specific mountain value chains such as wool, wild berries, medicinal plants. Training and infrastructure are also strong priorities. Concerning infrastructure, credit terms are adjusted for mountain people and a strong emphasis is placed on maintaining rural services of general interest (health centres, banks, etc) as well as broadband infrastructure. Finally, the government now gives an installation premium to any new mountain inhabitant to help attract young people and entrepreneurs. New mountain dwellers must live at least 5 years in a mountainous region to receive the premium.

To summarise the concept of this new Mountain Law, Claudiu Sorin Rosu Mares explained that Romanian mountain people are already entrepreneurs through their work and crafts, and are self-sufficient, but that the Romanian mountain economy was outdated when faced with current global competition and needed to be rebuilt based on the skills of the craftsmen and trades specific to the Romanian mountains.



“Towards a better valorisation of cultural heritage in the Carpathians mountain range”,
Harald Egerer, Head of the UN Environment Vienna Office, Secretariat of Carpathian Convention

Harald Egerer, as Head of the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, reaffirmed the global importance of the Carpathian ecoregion for cultural heritage. Indeed, there are 19 World Heritage Sites in the Carpathians, in majority cultural sites.

The current work of the Carpathian Convention is based on an international ministerial agreement actively working on Cultural Heritage. During their 2nd Conference of Parties in Bucharest, a Cultural Heritage inventory for the Carpathians was even established. The working group on cultural heritage is now drafting a protocol on traditional knowledge, as a way to promote international cooperation, foster common programmes and projects, and involve policy-makers at all levels as well as stakeholders. The protocol will for instance focus on identifying and documenting cultural heritage; preserving traditional architecture, cultural landscapes and land-use patterns; enhancing the education and transmission of the cultural heritage and traditional knowledge – among many other measures.

Harald Egerer stressed the need for more projects, specifically on the themes of cultural tourism, promotion of World Heritages Sites, and awareness-raising about the potential of cultural heritage sites (economic added value, community cohesion, etc.)



“Contribution of EU rural areas to the European Year of Cultural Heritage”, Tom Jones,
Member of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

Tom Jones explained how mountain areas underwent an ideological transition from being areas where sheep were bred to areas protected for the quality of their ecosystems now with programs to protect heather or carbon sinks for instance. However, the ecosystems provided nowadays are due to centuries of human work modelling the landscapes which are now our cultural heritage. Tom Jones was rapporteur for the EESC on an opinion largely adopted in September 2018 on this specific contribution of rural areas to the European Year of Cultural Heritage (EYCH).



According to him, the EYCH was designed to raise the profile and awareness of cultural heritage. However great the ambition, 12 months are not enough to encourage small local action groups and to raise the profile of rural areas. Indeed, culture is not just about music, poetry, sculpture, ... but about EU-wide values such as those brought by rural people, landscapes carved by regional customs and climatic conditions, participative democracy, etc.

Cultural Heritage is an economic motor and adds value to rural economies – which are endangered by loss of population, loss of biodiversity and global competitive markets. The biggest challenge is to



remember that every year, there is a new generation of urban dwellers which need to be encouraged into seeing the potential of rural economies. Rural economies are not stable right now, which is proved by the decline of rural services, the price of housing and the transport offer. The EU budget needs to be rural-proofed and it must be ensured that cultural heritage is a cross-cutting priority. There is a need for support in rural areas in many domains: entrepreneurship, marketing, training, ... Communities need to be inclusive in that way and use cultural heritage to enhance well-being, even beyond the EYCH in 2018. In conclusion, Tom Jones read the following poem that he wrote himself:



SESSION 2: HOW TO BETTER VALORISE BOTH CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE IN MOUNTAIN AREAS?

“Cultural and natural heritage, an opportunity for development. Case studies from UNESCO designated areas”, Andrea Porta, Researcher, Santagata Foundation (CSS-EBLA)

Andrea Porta explained how there is an overall relationship between people and their environment, based on the experience of the Monviso Transboundary Biosphere Reserve.

The Monviso Biosphere Reserve is based on “the Man and the Biosphere programme” of the UNESCO. The rationale is based on the sustainable use and conservation of the resources of the biosphere and on the improvement of the overall relationship between people and their environment. This Biosphere programme has three main components:

- Conservation: protection of indigenous resources, ecosystems and landscapes for the conservation of the world's biological and cultural diversity
- Development: combines conservation concerns with sustainable use of resources through close cooperation with local communities, taking advantage of traditional knowledge, local products and appropriate land management
- Logistic support: Biosphere reserves are linked through a global network; they provide facilities for research, monitoring, education and training at the local level as well as for comparative research and monitoring programmes at an international level.

Currently, there are 686 Biosphere Reserves all over the world, 40% being in mountain areas.

The Monviso Transboundary Biosphere Reserve is between Italy and France, it is a complex territory where 85% of the municipalities have less than 5,000 inhabitants and which includes three UNESCO sites. This Biosphere Reserve has established a management plan. The first two steps of this plan were the analysis of the context and priorities which emerged during the nomination phases and then the analysis of the territorial best practices. Those steps are particularly important to correctly assess the territory, including its cultural and economic characteristics.

For instance, in the Monviso case, 40% of businesses working in agri-tourism or tourism, cultural heritage, or handicraft use the natural and cultural resources. But this first analysis was not enough to know if these businesses were sustainable for the management of the Biosphere. Thus, the identification of experiences capable of being examples for the future development of the Biosphere Reserve was particularly relevant especially for the examples linked to museums and cultural sites; to arts and crafts; to agriculture; to the environment and landscapes; to sustainable energy; and to tourism accommodations and events.

Their sustainability analysis was based on different criteria, including environmental sustainability, inclusive economic development and innovation. They have identified 150 best practices among the 800 examples analysed, and interestingly, these examples were concentrated in the same municipalities.

However, once this study work was done, no action was taken between 2015 and 2018. The spark came from a bottom-up experience with young people. Indeed, based on a suggestion from the UNESCO, they developed a youth camp for 20 young French and Italian people who spent 5 days working to create a new network of people interested in the development of the Monviso region. These young people between 15 and 18 years old implemented actions such as developing social networks or creating transboundary projects. These youth camps were the way to really give a positive



and simple start and life to these biosphere management plans, by using the energy of their young people.

“Ways to preserve and capitalize on the mountain cultural heritage in Romania through open-air museal preservation and creativity in a modern spirit”, Corneliu Bucur, Professor of the Academy of the Traditional Arts from Romania



The way of enhancing natural and cultural heritage has changed over the past several years, Prof. **Corneliu Bucur** explained. Taking the example of Romania, he explained the transformations carried out in the field of heritage valorisation. In the 1950s, a traditional vision prevailed where collections were to be systematically displayed with the aim of forming an awareness of identity through cultural heritage values.

In the 1980s, the establishment of the first museum of Romanian popular civilization History, the Astra Museum, enabled the reconstruction of an evolutionary historical process of Romanian civilization, through outdoor and indoor exhibitions. By combining conservatism and progressivism, traditionalism and modernity, but also rurality and urbanity, this outdoor museum offers a new approach to natural and cultural heritage.

In the 2000s, with the establishment of the Astra National Museum Complex, the evolution continued towards the representation and integrated presentation of all categories of cultural heritage in order to safeguard and transmit it to future generations, and to ensure sustainable development in communities. This transformation enabled the idea of a dynamic museum, part of a multi-purpose space that is both a scientific research centre and a workshop for craft creation, but also a commercial space for original creations of folk art, a school, a cultural embassy and a national stage for folklore shows. The museum has become a living institution and vital source of sustainable development for local society.

“How can Social and Community Theatre help to rediscover natural and cultural heritage? TERRACT project”, Alberto Pagliarino, Actor, Social and Community Theatre Centre, COREP

Alberto Pagliarino explained that the 3-year-long project TERRACT aimed to promote cultural and environmental heritage between France and Italy, based on the social and community theatre methodology. This methodology relies on the involvement of citizens, especially of the young ones.

Usually, in theatre, community is in the dark and not on the stage. But with TERRACT, the goal is to develop another idea of theatre where



actors are professionals, but they work with communities and their territories. Thus, every person can become an advocate of the natural and cultural heritage in their living area, just as everyone can be an actor of the community. Already 325 associations, 55 municipalities and 5 universities have been involved during the past year.

What is their methodology? It is based on cultural empowerment built up over time and on mutual learning among communities, facilitated by professional artists and trainers. First, the project maps and develops some networks to connect with the community, to visit the territory and to know the local actors. These actors can be local associations, schools, crafts associations, citizens, ecomuseums ...

Then, the project involves organisations and people and tries to build a community based on cultural events. They build up their capacities together so that these local actors learn how to develop projects on their own without further support from the professional actors.

To put into practice the skills, the community organises an event open to everyone to try and reach an important social impact. Quite often, a lot of people attend these events and they participate emotionally. Some examples of events organised were a training course with 30 young French and Italian people; or two events based on the railway line and its cultural resource.

In the end, the project evaluates the whole process and redesigns the new one for the coming months.

The real advantage of this methodology is that skills are developed within the territories and young professionals working on cultural heritage can continue using the methodology, without any further support from the TERRACT project team.



Traditional costume show in Vatra Dornei



SESSION 3: HOW TO BE INNOVATIVE IN THE USE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN MOUNTAIN AREAS?

“How can digital technologies help to engage with cultural heritage and how can they create innovate interactions with cultural audiences? The examples of the RICHES and REACH projects”, Prof Neil Forbes, Researcher, Coventry University

Based on the research carried out in the RICHES and REACH projects, **Prof. Forbes** explained that the impact of digital technology on cultural heritage institutions of all kinds is stimulating a transformation and fundamental change. Digital technology is disruptive, challenging, has limitations, but is a driver of growth and creation of new business models. It represents an enormous potential for the way that heritage is curated, presented, digitised and shared. Digitalisation allows for a much greater degree of dialogue – most obviously between the cultural institutions and the public – but also between institutions and external bodies, and therefore digitalisation offers a huge potential for co-creation with communities.



Digital technology also promotes the valorisation of territorial cultural identities, re-shaping our interactions with the natural and built environment. This is the case for food for instance where local ‘slow’ food movements are attempting to revive endangered practices of production. Digital technology contributes to our knowledge-base, skills transmission, preservation of heritage, and improved understanding and tolerance between different socio-economic groups.

However, a note of caution must be sounded: there is a danger of the digital commodification of place, image or identity leading to what has been referred to as a ‘Disneyfication’ effect. Worse still, is the problem of confirming the degree of reliability, accuracy and authenticity of online content.

Digital technology also helps to strengthen economic standing of crafts’ practitioners/makers in the creative economy, giving rise to innovative business models, of which 3D printing is a good illustration.

Digital platforms are the means for communities to represent, preserve, transmit, and reflect on their identity and heritage in digital format to keep alive a sense of ‘belonging’, and engage critically with mainstream cultural heritage. Digital platforms facilitate connections between communities to build understanding, create cohesion by stressing cultural similarities and fostering cultural exchange; innovative digital tools support awareness of cultural pluralism, providing new ways to engage with, or experience cultural heritage. The use of digital resources helps to unite past and present – helping to foster living heritage. This is especially important for younger generations if traditions are to be sustained.



“MEMOLA Project: How can social innovation and ICT tools be used to promote cultural heritage based on traditional agrosystems”, José M^a Martín Civantos, Researcher, University of Granada



Prof. Civantos shared the outputs of the MEMOLA research project, that focused on Mediterranean Mountainous Landscapes: a historical approach to cultural heritage based on traditional agrosystems. The project focused on these socio ecological landscapes, part of the commons and shaped by productive systems and irrigation because of their social significance for the society. The shaping of these landscapes is based on local and traditional

knowledge, which can be supported by complicated technologies, but which often rely on a social effort and on a collective productive strategy. This is the case for the creation of walls and canals that characterise the Mediterranean mountains. These ancient systems are quite often marginalised today and need to be restored, not only to preserve cultural values but also to continue providing ecosystem services.

This is what has been done in the MEMOLA project where 400 people were involved in the restoration of more than 25 km of canals based on a participatory approach. It had a great social, academic, political and environmental impact. Some IT tools have also started to be used to connect local communities which are isolated.

In addition, several policy briefs were written to share the following reflection: cultural heritage should be alive. Its valorisation needs to be adapted to the context and to the specific circumstances. It requires quite often empathy, patience and a knowledge dialogue between the different actors. Dialogue between tradition and innovation should be promoted, notably to better understand the impact of the actions. Thus, cultural heritage is a good tool for social transformation but the participation of all actors has to be carefully integrated in a global strategy. This includes the real involvement of public, communal but also private actors.



“**The Life of an English Mountain Shepherd**”, James Rebanks, Shepherd and Author of ‘*A Shepherd’s Life: a Tale of the Lake District*’

James Rebanks is a shepherd from the Lake district mountains in the United Kingdom. He shared his experience about how his area became a huge touristic attraction recognised for the beauty of its landscapes although the importance of Human activities, including pastoralism, were never acknowledged in the management of these cultural landscapes.



According to the French Historian, Fernand Braudel, “what really shapes history is the way people live”. Thus, with his book, James Rebanks tried to explain how the cultural landscapes are affected and managed by pastoralism and Human activities and how the management of his farm could have a direct impact on the cultural and natural heritage, appreciated by all these tourists.

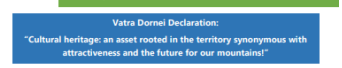
He insisted on the idea that a business, like a farm, is not just about the economic activities but also about the values it brings to society. Thanks to new ICT, such as smartphones and Twitter, nice stories can be told to tourists and values can be shared.

As a result, shepherds and farmers have to be trained to be able to better tell and market stories about their landscapes and their activities, and tourists should be able to better recognise this added value. A part of the income generated by tourists should also come back to these local actors on the ground as, without them, the landscapes would be totally different.

The romantic view of mountain areas should be avoided and the activities that shape these landscapes should thus be better recognised and valorised. Mountain areas are not obsolete, they remain relevant. Mountain people must be defended and have to resist to keep their values and traditions while managing in a more modern way the socio, economic and environmental consequences of tourism.

“**Declaration on Euromontana’s strategy to better use cultural heritage in mountain areas and video on the key messages to bring back home**” by Juanan Gutierrez, President of Euromontana and Marie Clotteau, Director of Euromontana

The President of Euromontana, **Juanan Gutierrez** and its Director, **Marie Clotteau**, read a [common declaration](#) entitled “Cultural heritage: an asset rooted in the territory synonymous with attractiveness and the future for our mountains!” before its approval by the audience.



We, representatives of Euromontana, assembled here in Vatra Dornei on the 27th September 2018, do declare:

Cultural heritage consists of cultural and creative resources of a tangible or intangible nature, with a value for society that has been publicly recognised in order to preserve it for future generations. It includes material, built and archaeological sites, museums, monuments, ensembles, historic sites, agronomic, forestry and food practices, literary, musical, audiovisual and digital works, and the knowledge, practices and traditions of European citizens. The cultural heritage is particularly rich and diversified in mountain areas. This cultural heritage is an integral part of the identity and pride of mountain people.

Mountain areas also have a very rich natural heritage. Many natural sites have cultural aspects, and physical, biological or geological characteristics have influenced the lives of mountain people. In addition, preservation is a typical farming activity that influences the natural aspects of the mountain and which contributes to the biodiversity of mountain ecosystems. Cultural and natural heritage in mountain areas are thus intrinsically linked.

In the face of today's globalisation, cultural and natural heritage is one of the few resources with the potential for socio-economic development directly linked to mountain areas, their inhabitants and their way of life. It therefore is a major strategic resource for the future, which can offer many social, environmental and economic benefits, provided it is properly and sustainably exploited and developed.

This rich natural and cultural mountain heritage also has a very strong potential for innovation that can revitalize mountain areas, encourage the development of new entrepreneurial ideas and also strengthen the attractiveness of mountain areas as a whole.

Faced with declining public funding, the challenges of globalisation and urbanisation, climate change and increasing environmental and physical pressures on heritage sites, sometimes due to poor tourism management, heritage preservation can be threatened. Therefore, better preservation and valorisation is possible and necessary in order to strengthen employment opportunities linked to the attractiveness of our mountains and all the technological potential must be exploited in order to achieve this.

Participants call upon EU, national and regional institutions **to better recognise this mountain cultural and natural heritage**, including in this European Year of Culture and Heritage. They call for the maintenance of an **adequate level of funding** for this mountain heritage and to better preserve and valorise this place-specific resource which represents a source of jobs, including in remote mountain areas.



Innovation must be at the heart of tomorrow's development, whether by bringing together research and stakeholders on the ground or by better sharing technological innovations, such as 3D visualisations or 3D impressions, by making them more accessible, including for small entrepreneurial structures.

Developing a more modern and innovative approach to cultural heritage also contributes to developing **new Smart Villages** and revitalising our mountain areas, both by developing appropriate digital infrastructures and through social innovation.

Finally, the mountain cultural heritage must serve to **bring people closer together**, whether as a factor of integration and attractiveness to welcome new inhabitants; to bring people closer between urban and rural areas through better knowledge and sharing of the mountain cultural heritage, or through intergenerational dialogue.

“A few words of thanks”, Danut Gitan, Director of AZM

After thanking all the organisers and participants, Danut Gitan officially closed this XI European Mountain Convention and invited participants to take part in the XII European Mountain Convention in Autumn 2020 in Calabria, Italy.

Euromontana thanks its members and supporters for their active participation in the organisation of this XI European Mountain Convention

