

“Mountains for Europe’s Future” meets the European Commission in Brussels

20

May
2016

“Mountains for Europe’s Future” meets the European Commission in Brussels

Posted by Claudia Drexler

SHARE
THIS PAGE ON



183
visits

0
comments

Posted in [EUROPE](#)

The Swiss-Austrian Alliance for Mountain Research (CH-AT) launched its strategic research agenda as input for the Horizon 2020 work programme 2018-2020 in Brussels on Monday 25 April. The event „Mountains for Europe’s Future: Putting mountains on the agenda of Horizon 2020" was very well attended and drew the interest of the European Commission. This confirms the importance of [...]

NEWER

OLDER



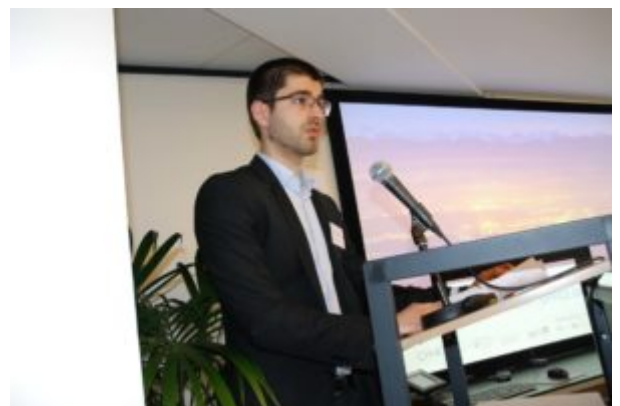
We chose a different format to bring our message across!

The Swiss-Austrian Alliance for Mountain Research (CH-AT) launched its strategic research agenda as input for the Horizon 2020 work programme 2018-2020 in Brussels on Monday 25 April. The event „Mountains for Europe’s Future: Putting mountains on the agenda of Horizon 2020" was very well attended and drew the interest of the European Commission. This confirms the importance of this effort!

Participants braved the rain and the cold and started the event with a walk through the Parc du Cinquantenaire, where they explored impacts of mountains on distant locations – such as Brussels – by discussing climate change, energy, demographic change, infrastructure, and agriculture.

Viktor Blaskov, Assistant to Bulgarian MEP

Iliana Iotova, opened the main event by making the connection to the current report on “Cohesion Policy in the Mountainous Regions of Europe”, of which Mrs Iotova is the rapporteur. In his speech, he stressed the fact that up to now there has been very little political will to recognize mountainous areas into EU policy, and very little recognition of the fact that they constitute one third of the territory of the EU. “Why shouldn’t EU policy focused on renewable



Viktor Blaskov, Assistant to Bulgarian MEP Iliana Iotova

energy begin from mountainous regions? Research on climate change, energy efficiency and renewables should have a strong mountainous dimension”, he declared. He also stressed the need to streamline the various existing policies that affect mountain regions.

opened the event. “Why shouldn’t EU policy focused on renewable energy begin from mountainous regions?”

In the panel discussion, the authors of the Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) “Mountains for Europe’s Future” briefly stated their key research recommendations for the Societal Challenges as defined within Horizon 2020. Discussants from the EC’s Directorates-General, regional or national representatives in Brussels, and relevant research institutions and NGO’s replied to the input statements. Some of the key points are summarized below.



Valerie Braun, the Austrian CH-AT Coordinator, and Nathalie Saint Marcel, Vice-Director of Cluster Montagne in France

The main differences in discussants’ positions became evident in the fundamental question whether mountains should be recognized as distinct territories generating specific research topics, or whether this very approach leads to a marginalization of mountain research.

Marie Clotteau, Director of Euromontana, stressed the fact that added value and the potential for creativity, innovation and research in mountain areas are often under-recognised and underexploited. If we want to achieve the ambitious objectives of the EU 2020 strategy, we need to mobilise all the territories and to recognise mountain areas as development and

innovation poles. **Nathalie Saint Marcel, Vice-Director of Cluster Montagne in France,** pointed out that there are already lot of topics within H2020 that are relevant to mountain areas, including smart specialisation, smart cities, energy, security, etc. Although mountains aren’t specifically mentioned in the respective work programmes, the calls are still open to the mountain research community.

Marc Duponcel, DG AGRI, confirmed that there are a lot of convergence with ongoing activities. He stressed the social innovation aspect of all desired developments, which is covered by both Horizon 2020 and by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). He made the point that research projects should be horizontal, looking at mountain regions within a

larger context. **Vesna Caminades, Head of the Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano-South Tyrol Office Brussels**, supported this point, saying that the SRA neglected to recognize mountains and lowlands as complex but inseparable systems. **Farah Fahim, representative of the EURAC office in Brussels**, warned the authors of the danger of marginalization by looking only at mountainous regions. She called for approaches in which mountains are part of a larger system.

Richard Hampton, DG Research and Innovation, noted that in the energy sector technology is the easy part. He argued for social science projects that examine the production, distribution, and consumption of renewables. Several of the discussants identified additional topics of interest that were not included in the SRA, namely governance, spatial planning, the integration of spatial and agricultural planning, rescue and emergency issues, and security and civil protection.



Plenary session in Scotland House Conference Centre

Opinions varied with regard to data: **Marco Onida, DG REGIO and EUSALP**, stressed that we have plenty of data, and what we need is integration. **Elisa Palazzi, Institute of Atmospheric Sciences and Climate (ISAC) and the Italian National Research Council (CNR)**, on the other hand, argued that high altitude data were still missing for future-based scenarios on e.g. climate change in mountain regions.



Derek Christie, one of the speakers for "Demographic change"

At the closure of the event, we informed the audience that CH-AT, the Swiss-Austrian Alliance for Mountain Research, will come to an end in fall 2016. But the efforts of the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI) in Switzerland and the Institute of Interdisciplinary Mountain Research (IGF) in Austria will continue to support the implementation of the Strategic Research Agenda "Mountains for Europe's Future". We encouraged participants to distribute the Strategic Research Agenda "Mountains for Europe's Future" widely among colleagues,

experts and relevant committees, and to contribute to the discussion on relevant research for European mountains by holding sessions or meeting based on the propositions of the SRA.

Please do the same: Help us to distribute the Strategic Research Agenda and to make the case for the inclusion of mountain research topics in the relevant funding programmes!

Yours sincerely,

Claudia Drexler

Swiss Austrian Alliance Coordinator

Mountain Research Initiative

<http://www.chat-mountainalliance.eu/en/>

<http://www.chat->



Martin Price, speaker of "Europe in a changing world", in front of the Arc de Triomphe

mountainalliance.eu/images/Mountains_for_Europes_Future_04_16_d.pdf

<http://www.chat-mountainalliance.eu/en/about-brussels.html>

TAGS: advocacy Brussels climate change Energy EU food security

Horizon2020 research agenda transport

About Claudia Drexler