

# Being young in a mountain area

## Mountain youth's needs in 2022 and aspirations for the future



EUROMONTANA





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# Foreword by Juanan Gutiérrez

Europe's mountain areas are facing a constant threat to their attractiveness, especially among younger generations. In some regions, the rural exodus of young mountain people and the ageing of the population endanger the demographic balance, social cohesion, and economic appeal of our mountains. Yet, the new generations are the future of our territories. They are the ones who will shape the sustainable development of Europe's mountains and who will preserve our cultural and natural heritage in the future.

As Euromontana celebrates its 25th anniversary, the next European Mountain Convention in October 2022 will aim to shape the smart mountains of tomorrow, mountains that are attractive and future oriented. The place of young mountain people in this reflection is essential and it is essential to consult them and to understand and respond to their needs.

This is why Euromontana launched a wide European survey among young mountain people in 2021, which enabled us to collect 1134 testimonies from young people living in more than 20 European countries. I would like to thank our members, the UNITA project and the Educ'Alpes network, who participated in the dissemination of our questionnaire, as well as all the young people who took part in this study and so contributed to its success.

The results of this survey are encouraging. Young people want to stay in the mountains, they enjoy both our quality of life and our natural environment. This has not changed in 10 years, since our previous survey on mountain youth<sup>1</sup>.

Young people have many aspirations for our territories, they want to be entrepreneurs, they want to take action against climate change, and they want other young people to come and settle in the mountains. Our report

also shows that the COVID-19 crisis could have beneficial demographic consequences if the trend towards a "return to the countryside" is to be confirmed, and provided we can avoid the process turning into an urbanisation of rural areas. Nevertheless, it will be necessary to convert these hopes into reality by supporting young people, including newcomers, in their projects for the mountains. Young people are also drawing attention to the lack of services and opportunities in our regions. This calls for political action to develop the means of mobility, create sustainable and diversified jobs, and improve access to education and housing.

The messages conveyed by young mountain people must now be echoed by European, national, regional, and local policy makers. It is by listening to young people and responding to their expectations that mountain areas will remain attractive and dynamic. At the European level, the voice of young people in mountain areas must be heard during this new year 2022, designated as the European Year of Youth, but also in the work and conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe. The tools deployed through the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas must also benefit young people, leaving no territory behind, especially the most remote.

In order to convey the messages of young people and build the attractive mountains of tomorrow, we are looking forward to seeing many of you at the next European Mountain Convention, on 25-26-27 October 2022 in the Sila Natural Park and Biosphere Reserve in Italy, where we will reflect on how to make mountains smart and future-oriented territories.

Juanan Gutiérrez  
President of Euromontana



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<sup>1</sup> Euromontana, [Youth and mountains](#), preparatory document for the VIII<sup>th</sup> European Mountain Convention on Youth in Chambéry, 2012

# Introduction

This study was conducted by Euromontana, the European Association of Mountain areas and its members, in collaboration with [UNITA](#) project and [Educ'Alpes](#), with the aim of understanding the needs and aspirations of young Europeans living in the mountains.

A first study on mountain youth was conducted by Euromontana in 2012 in the framework of the [European Mountain Convention in Chambéry](#) (France). This [study](#) also intended to capture the needs of young people and to reflect on how to improve their quality of life in the mountains.

Today, 10 years later, Euromontana gives again a voice to young mountain people to find out what has changed, with a view to building smarter mountains for tomorrow at the next European Mountain Convention in 2022.

In a decade, new challenges and opportunities have emerged in Europe, including in mountain areas. Sectors and employment areas are constantly changing, with the development of the bioeconomy, the circular economy or the renewed interest in regional value chains. Digitalisation brings new opportunities for the development of SMEs, the provision of public services or the emergence of teleworking applied at a large scale, especially since the COVID-19 crisis.

Climate change is increasingly visible in the mountains. In the Carpathians, summer temperatures have increased by up to 2.4°C between 1961 and 2010, causing repeated droughts which are not without consequences for mountain grasslands and pastoralism<sup>2</sup>. In the Alps, temperatures are growing at twice the global average and if they increase up to 4°C by 2100 in the Italian Alps, only 12% of the current ski facilities would be still suitable for snow tourism in the future<sup>3</sup>. At the same time, environment protection has become a more visible issue in Europe, be it in the media, in political decisions with the European Green Deal or in local initiatives.

Some territories have also changed, with some sinking into structural demographic decline or ageing while others have succeeded in reversing the trend through the implementation of territorial attractiveness strategies.

All these changes invite us to question the place of young people in the mountains today and in the future and to give them a voice in order to understand together how to build the mountains of tomorrow. This report can therefore serve as a basis for understanding the needs and aspirations of young people in mountain areas, to determine why they want to stay in the mountains or not, to identify the types of jobs they are looking for in the mountains, to know if they are satisfied with the existing services and above all to grasp their vision of the ideal mountain for 2040.

This report describes the main results of our survey at European level as follow:

- **Part 1:** offers an overview of the profiles of respondents throughout Europe
- **Part 2:** explores the attractiveness of mountain areas and details the assets and weaknesses of mountainous regions among the youth
- **Part 3:** outlines the aspirations and priorities of young people for the future of mountain areas

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<sup>2</sup> CARPATCLIM, CARPIVIA, CarpathCC, [Future imperfect - climate change and adaptation in the Carpathians](#), synthesis report, 2014

<sup>3</sup> Legambiente, [Nevediversa](#), 2021

# Methodology

The survey was carried out over a period of 3 months, between June and August 2021, among young people aged between 18 and 29 years old. To enable wider dissemination across continental Europe, the questionnaire was available in 12 languages: English, French, Spanish, Catalan, Basque, Portuguese, Italian, Slovenian, Greek, Romanian, Polish and Norwegian.

The questionnaire was composed of a maximum of 25 questions; each respondent, depending on their answers to the previous points, was redirected to the most relevant questions (for instance respondents living in mountain areas did not answer to the question on the reasons why they come to the mountains, which was limited to those not living in mountain areas). To facilitate the analysis of the data while allowing young people to freely share their views, the questionnaire was composed of 21 tick-the-box questions and 4 open ones.

To reach out a large amount of young people, Euromontana disseminated its survey through its website and social media and collaborated with several partners (universities, training centres, education networks, regions, local development agencies, mountain networks especially in the Alps, the Pyrenees and the Carpathians) to further increase engagement with the survey. In particular, the 66 Euromontana members all over Europe, as well as the UNITA project, an alliance of six comprehensive research universities from five countries, and Educ'Alpes, a French network supporting education in the Alps, played a decisive role in the dissemination of the survey and the collection of the 1134 responses from 18 European countries, which is considered a good sample.

To facilitate the data analysis, all answers and quotes were translated into one common language (English); Euromontana members also helped to translate the answers to open questions from their native language to English. This report outlines the main results of the consolidated data at European level. The differences that may exist from one country to another will be specified when relevant but the main data per country will also be available in the annexed country factsheets at the end of this report.

Factsheets have been compiled only for countries for which we have received a minimum number of responses. It ranges from 22 in Norway to 798 in France. Because of the often-limited number of responses, or because they are sometimes centralised in a particular region, country factsheets cannot of course be considered to represent the voice of all young people in the mountains. On the other hand, these factsheets do offer some interesting food for thought about the desires of part of the mountain youth. Above all, the particularities observed in each country reveal trends that are useful for rethinking the attractiveness of the mountains for young people. Country factsheets are available at the end of the report for the following countries: [France](#), [Italy](#), [Norway](#), [Poland](#), [Romania](#) and [Spain](#).



# Part 1: Who are our respondents?

Who are our respondents? What is their profile, their age, where do they come from and what jobs do they have or would like to have? This section provides a brief portrait of the young people who responded to our survey, without omitting to shed light on the biases inherent in this type of approach.

By focusing on where they live and work, this section provides the first elements of reflection on the future of European mountains and their potential attractiveness.



# 1. General portrait of our respondents

Our survey aimed to collect the views of young mountain people aged between 18 and 29 years old. The definition of a similar age range to define all young people in Europe is already a choice in itself, which may not be appropriate for all countries. We felt that this was the most common age range for European countries to target young people who are of age to make their own choices in early adulthood. In fact, the definition of young people at EU level is not always the same, depending on the topic being addressed. For example, Eurostat, the EU's statistics office, defines young people as those aged between 15 and 29 years old; but when it seeks to calculate the percentage of young people who are neither in employment, education or training, it uses the 15-24 age group. The new Youth Strategy of the EU also never defines the age of the young people concerned. When it comes to agriculture, a crucial sector in the mountains, the age of a young farmer goes beyond our definition. The new Common Agricultural Policy for 2023-2027 leaves it up to the Member States to define it in their CAP Strategic Plans but imposes an age limit of between 35 and 40 years. The age range can therefore be very diverse, the one chosen by Euromontana (18-29) is also the same age group that was used for the previous Euromontana youth study in 2012 and therefore it facilitates comparison. However, Euromontana is aware that the term "young" may be applied in some countries up to the age of 25 or 35 years old.

Among our 1134 respondents, almost half are aged between 21 and 25 years old; a further quarter is aged from 18 to 20 years old, and the remainder aged from 26 to 29 years old (Figure 1). There is also a slight over representation of women with 56% of our respondents (Figure 2), but overall, the sample is demographically well balanced.

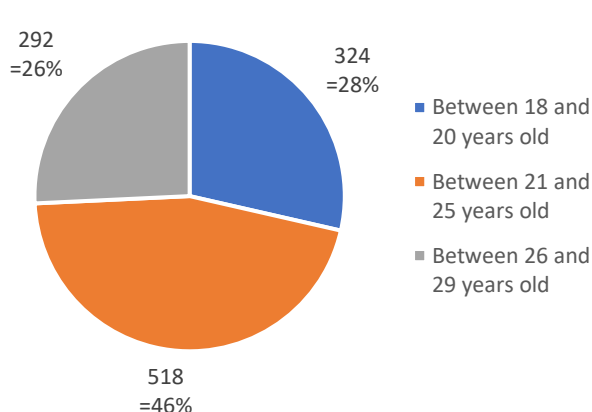


Figure 1: How old are you?

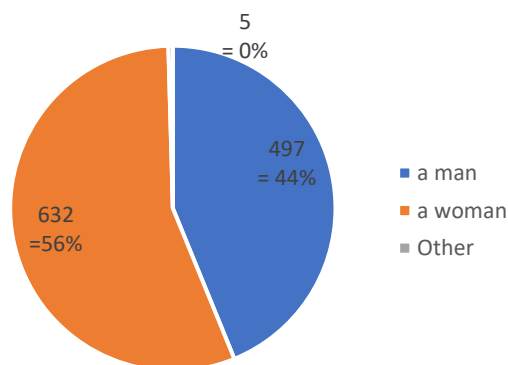


Figure 2: Gender representation

# 2. Origin of respondents

Respondents refer to almost all European countries in their responses to the survey, demonstrating a good representation across Europe. For instance, 798 young people live in France, 89 in Spain, 88 in Romania, 60 in Italy, 36 in Poland, 22 in Norway, 18 in Slovenia, and a few in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Greece and Sweden.

Nonetheless, we must mention an important bias in the balance of responses. Indeed, when asked about their country, 798 respondents (70.4%) indicated they live in France (figure 3). This can be explained by the important role of some French members or partners of the Euromontana network,



and in particular efforts by Educ'Alpes to disseminate our survey. However, the overwhelming majority of French young people cannot represent all young people in the mountains. Consequently, the French responses will, where necessary, be analysed separately so as not to distort the data analysis.

The over representation of French people among our respondents also explains the strong presence of French speakers (figure 4), as most respondents used the language of the country they live in. Yet, some French speakers also come from Switzerland and Belgium for instance. Moreover, among the 89 respondents living in Spain, 27 answered the survey in Basque and 1 in Catalan, which demonstrates the importance of regional languages for young people, especially in the Basque country.

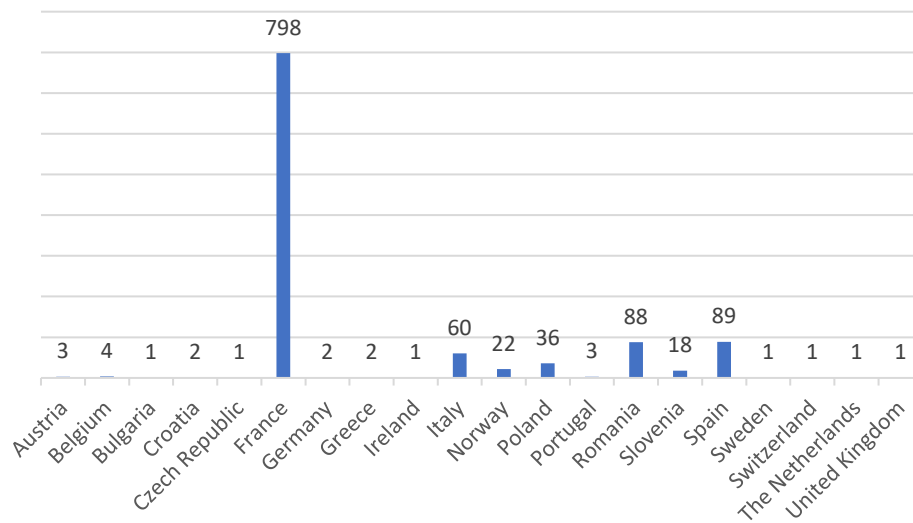


Figure 3: In which country do you currently live?

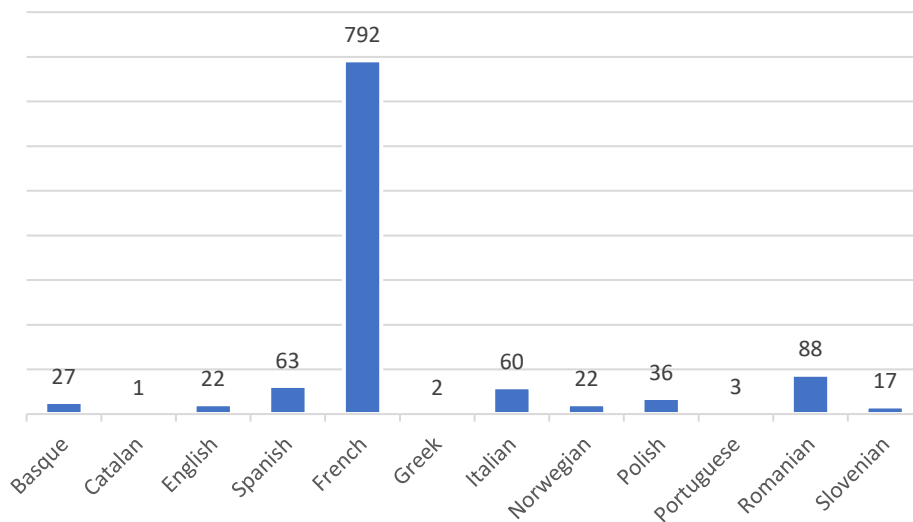


Figure 4: What is the language used by our respondents?

In this survey, we asked young people whether or not they live in the mountains. Depending on their answer, respondents were then directed through different sections of the questionnaire and not all young people answered the same sequence of questions. This approach will allow us, in a following chapter, to look in more details at why young people do or do not want to live in the mountains.

In total 77% of our respondents live in the mountains (figure 5), either permanently (55%) or occasionally (22%), for example to undertake seasonal work.

The remaining 23% do not live in the mountains but have an interest in these regions. These young people, even if they do not live in the mountains, visit mountainous regions several times a year (figure 6). Most of them go there to enjoy mountain's nature and landscapes (22% - 248 occurrences) and to enjoy summer outdoor sports like hiking or rock climbing (20% - 223 occurrences). Outdoor winter sports such as skiing are also an important reason for going to the mountains – but not the main one (14% - 159 occurrences) – and we must underline that pursuing general well-being is also well-positioned in this ranking (13% - 149 occurrences). In spite of the fact that they do not live in the mountains, Euromontana wanted to hear the views of these young people in order to sound out their appetite for a life in the mountains, beyond their holidays. This segment of respondents will therefore be analysed separately in our study.

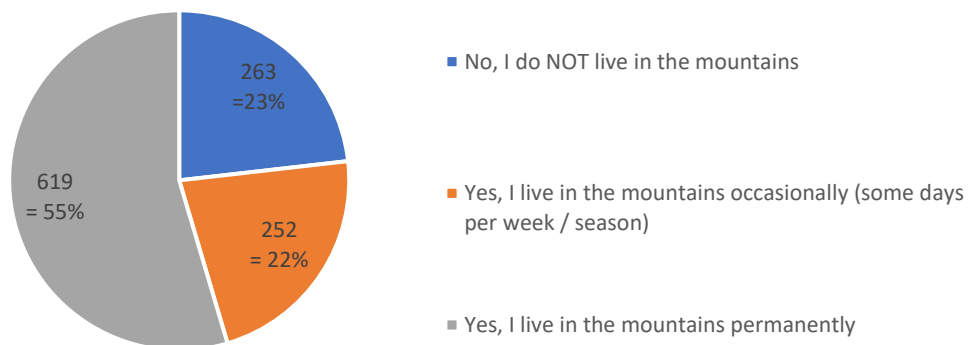


Figure 5. Do you live in the mountains?

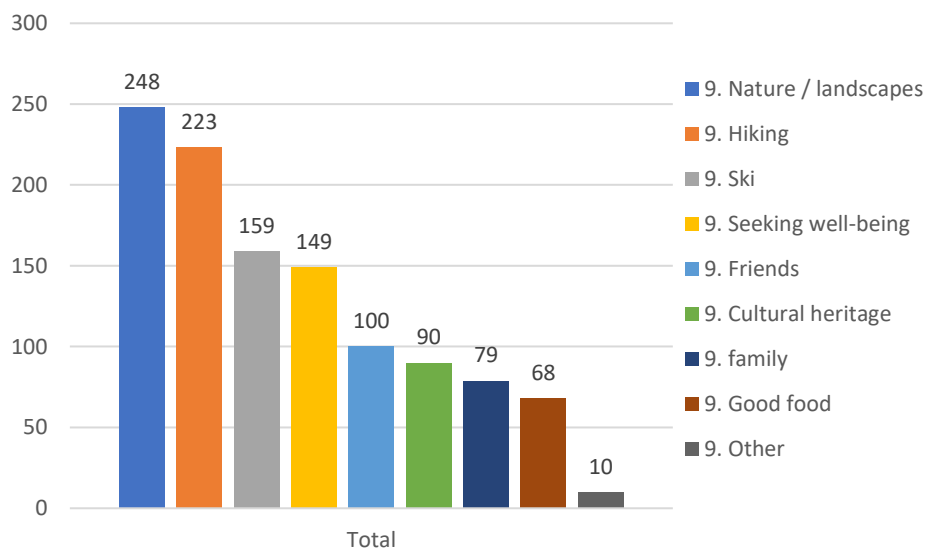


Figure 6. If you do not live in a mountain area, for which reason(s) do you go to the mountains?

### 3. Occupations of respondents

Our survey questioned young people on their current status: student, worker or job seeker for example (figure 7). 56% of our young respondents are students while 37% are employed and 4% are seeking employment, and 3% do something else: either they are both studying and working (sandwich courses, PhDs, professional retraining etc.) or they do not know yet what they will do in the future and do not currently hold a specific role.

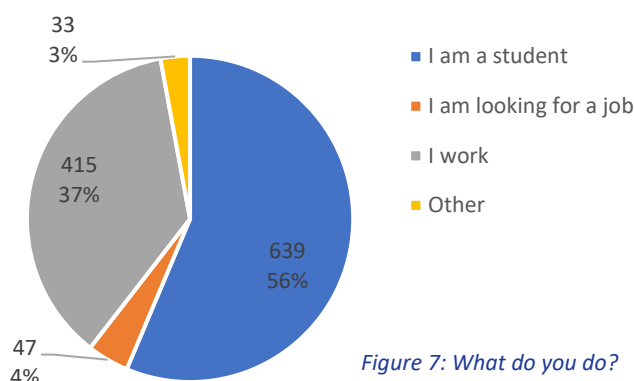


Figure 7: What do you do?

The slight over-representation of students in our respondents may have different explanations. Firstly, the share of young people in higher education, whether general or vocational, is increasing in the European Union<sup>4</sup>. Secondly, this may also derive from the dissemination channels of our survey, which was widely disseminated by mountain universities and research centres. Finally, we also observe that there is an overrepresentation of students among French respondents; the share of students falls to 30% if French residents are excluded, with in this case a majority of those in work (59%).

What does the status of these young people tell us? If we look in more details at those who have a job or are looking for one, their profile allows us to draw some conclusions about the current ambitions and aspirations of young people in the mountains.

The majority of young people have specialised during their studies in a specific domain or sector in which they work or seek to work (44% of responses). Examples of these young people include IT specialists, nurses, purchasing managers, lawyers, cooks and journalists. The multiplicity of their occupations demonstrates the diverse professional aspirations of young people in the mountains and therefore indicates the diversity of professional opportunities to be found or have the potential to exist in mountain areas.

Young people also want to have a job allowing them to telework from the mountains (22% of responses). Almost all of these young people are students or workers with a higher education degree, be it a bachelor, master or doctorate. Such a high proportion is most likely linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread adoption of telework since 2020. These potential remote workers mainly come from France (73%) but this is mainly due to the over representation of French respondents; if we look only at other countries, the proportion of these young people wishing to work remotely is evenly distributed, whether in Romania, Spain, Italy or Norway. The health crisis has therefore opened up opportunities across Europe to work outside the cities for some professions. The provision of good Internet connection and equipment, as the existence of third places (e.g., coworking areas) to facilitate socialisation despite remote working, could therefore become an even more important opportunity common to mountain regions in Europe.

“

*Telecommunications must be working as if I were in a city in order to stay connected to the world and allow me to work remotely.*

**Young trainee in economics, district of Coimbra, Portugal**

“

<sup>4</sup> Eurostat, [Being young in Europe today - 2015 edition](#), p. 116



A significant proportion of our respondents stated that they wanted to start their own business in the mountains (18% of responses). Some young people are, for example, oriented towards engineering, IT security, food chemistry, marketing, communication or medicine – sectors indeed often suited to self-entrepreneurship. This trend is reminiscent of our 2012 study, in which young people also expressed their attraction to self-entrepreneurship as a way to offset the job shortage. Both then and now, young people tell us that setting up their own business may be the only way to get a job in the mountains, although it takes commitment and requires support (e.g., to obtain funding, to be guided through the administrative tasks and to promote the company). In terms of entrepreneurship, many other sectors mentioned in our study are also related to more traditional mountain activities - or at least more associated with nature-based activities. This is especially the case for those respondents who said they wanted to set up a yoga and nature guide business in the mountains, develop a tourism company, work in heritage management or agriculture and forestry.

Finally, only 12% of young respondents would like to occupy what we called a “traditional mountain job”. What do we mean by this? We define this classification to include all the professions traditionally carried out in the mountains (although not exclusively) and which are often linked to the use and preservation of mountain landscapes or assets. This classification for instance includes ski instructors, farmers, foresters, shepherds, mountain hut keepers, mountain guides etc. This relatively low percentage can be explained by two factors. Firstly, these traditional professions do not represent the majority of the workforce in mountain areas. While there are exceptions in some regions where the population is highly specialised in wine production, tourism or agriculture, mountain areas host all professions to maintain a balance of available goods and services. Secondly, as explained earlier, our survey was very widely distributed by mountain universities, and this may explain a certain bias in the responses collected towards particular professional aspirations

These results reflect our entire survey. If we look at the responses by country, it is interesting to note that there are great disparities. In Romania for example, of 88 total respondents, 44.7% of young people said they want to create their own business in their mountain area, while only 11.4% want to work in a typical mountain sector and the rest wish to telework or find a job in a sector in which they have specialised (see [Romania's country factsheet](#)). On the contrary, among the 89 respondents living in Spain, 37% seek a traditional mountain job, such as ski instructor, farmer or mountain guide (see [Spain's country factsheet](#)).

## KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- Although there are differences between countries, the young people interviewed mainly want to find a job in a sector in which they have specialised through their studies and experiences, such as law, medicine, marketing or IT. This highlights the need to create more diversified jobs in mountain areas to attract these young people who might otherwise have to leave the region.
- A significant proportion of young Europeans are attracted by the possibility of teleworking in the mountains. The COVID-19 crisis, combined with the improvement of digital tools, create new employment opportunities in the mountains. Mountain territories will therefore need to develop the necessary infrastructures (Internet access, co-working spaces, but also rural-urban transport) which will allow these young people to settle in more remote mountain areas while maintaining access to the main cities.
- Entrepreneurship seems to be attractive to young people with very different profiles. Mountain regions should therefore be able to develop appropriate support schemes for rural entrepreneurship for young people, who represent the future for innovation, job creation and dynamism in the mountains.

## Part 2: Are mountains attractive for young people?

The future dynamism of the mountains depends on its population trends and whether or not young people want to stay or move there. The loss of attractiveness of a territory can initiate a self-perpetuating circle of demographic decline and lower quality of life, in relation to the services available, further reducing the appeal of the area.

In this survey, we asked the youth if they wanted to remain living in or move to the mountains and why in order to grasp their main motivations to live in the mountains.



## 4. Do young people want to live in the mountains?

Our survey has allowed us to analyse the reasons for why young people are attracted to living in mountain areas. Firstly, we consider whether young people resident in the mountains wish to remain there in the future.

### 4.1. Young people want to stay in the mountains, but their life cycle must be considered

As previously explained, 77% of our respondents currently live in the mountains (figure 5), either permanently (55%) or occasionally (22%), for example for seasonal work. We therefore specifically asked them whether they would like to continue living there in the future. Responses are really encouraging. Indeed, 66% of young residents would like to stay in the mountains (figure 8).

A very positive element is that this rate is equally distributed, we did not observe any country where young people are predominantly willing to leave, although there are differences. Poland for example records the highest rate of young people wanting to leave (29%), but it is similar to the European average, and Romania the lowest (1%).

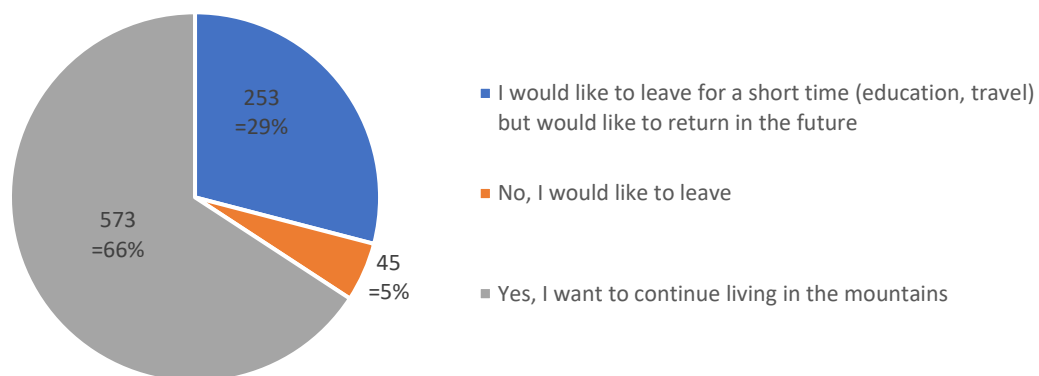


Figure 8: Do you want to stay living in the mountains (for those already living there)?

Only 5% categorically answered that they would like to leave. But why do they want to leave? We observe that 53% of them are engaged in a specialised academic or professional career, such as law, psychology, medicine, or engineering, and none of them wish to pursue a "traditional" mountain job. It is therefore very likely that it is the educational and employment opportunities that make them want to leave the mountains. This reinforces the need for the diversification of economic activities and jobs in mountain areas. The discrepancy among countries seems to validate this hypothesis. Indeed, the countries where young people are the least willing to leave the mountains are Spain and Romania, where only 2% and 1% of respondents respectively would like to leave. Spain and Romania are also the countries where, as previously explained, young people are mainly interested in working in traditional mountain sectors or in starting their own business. Job security could therefore explain this greater willingness to live in the mountains.

Finally, a fairly large proportion (29%) also want to leave for a while, for example to study or travel, and then return to the mountains. Although we did not explicitly ask the reasons for wanting to leave for a while, we could again find an explanation in their academic and professional background. Indeed, 78% are currently studying and 43% of them are engaged in a specific professional trajectory, in a sector in which they would like to work and most of the time they are or have been students at



university with a Bachelor or Master level. For the vast majority of these young people, we can easily estimate that they have to leave a mountain village for a while to study a specific branch of law or medicine for example in a university town. Among the 29% of young people who want to leave for a period of time, only 7% declare that they want to do a so-called "traditional" job in the mountains, such as ski instructor, mountain guide or farmer. In this case, these young people can more often easily find in their mountain region the educational programme that will enable them to access these jobs. This may therefore explain why a smaller proportion of this segment of young people wish to leave for a time and it might confirm the hypothesis that studies push young mountain people to leave their region for a time before returning.

## 4.2. Potential newcomers, including in connection with COVID-19

What about the 23% of all our young respondents who do not live in a mountain area but often go there for spending holidays, visiting family, or enjoying nature-based activities? Are they interested in moving in the mountains? Once again, answers are encouraging. 51% of these respondents answered this question positively (figure 9). Among them, a very large majority of these young people have obviously been thinking about it for a long time (46%). But we also wanted to evaluate the possible impact of the COVID-19 crisis on possible moves to the mountains. We observe that for 5% of young people, the influence of the health crisis has encouraged them to consider the option. The majority of this 5% are young people who would like to be able to telework in the mountains (53%) or find a job in the professional branch in which they have specialised (38%). However, it should also be noted that the arrival of new inhabitants, especially from urban areas, can create conflicts in the mountains. The territories concerned will therefore have to ensure the social integration of newcomers and deploy mediation mechanisms if necessary.

“

*Currently, mountains welcome many newcomers (since the COVID-19 crisis) who, for many, do not wish to adapt to the mountains, but that THEY adapt to them (less noise, less disturbing smells...) it creates unnecessary conflicts that impact the well-being of everyone.*

***Young agricultural engineer in the Hautes-Alpes County, region Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, France***

“

37% of those who currently do not live in the mountains are undecided about living there in the future and 12% state that they do not wish to live in the mountains. Thus, even without taking into account the 37% of young people who are undecided on this question, we find that a majority of young people who do not live in the mountains would like to move there, which demonstrates the attractiveness of our territories to young people.

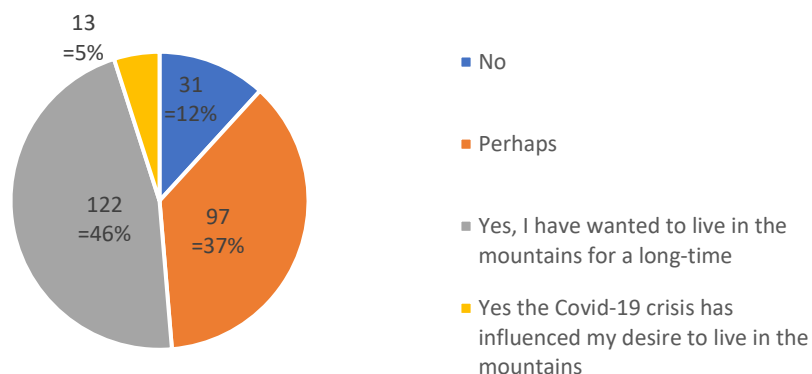


Figure 9: Do you want to live in mountain areas (if you do not currently live there)?

## KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- Mountains are attractive for young people: a majority of young people want to live and work in a mountain area in the future.
- Many young people wish to leave the mountains temporarily, for example to study elsewhere, and then return to the mountains afterwards. Mountain territories must therefore develop territorial attractiveness strategies that take into account their life cycle. In particular, this means supporting the creation of qualified jobs but also the installation of infrastructures useful for young workers (access to housing, childcare facilities).
- The coming years will tell whether mountain territories have attracted more young people as a result of the COVID-19. So far, it is difficult to identify the territories that could benefit from a "return to the countryside" and there is a risk that peri-urban territories will capture most of this positive demographic change than more remote areas. It will therefore be necessary to check in the future if the COVID-19 crisis has a concrete impact on the settlement of newcomers in mountain areas. In this respect, the EU Rural Observatory, whose creation has been announced for 2022 in the EU Communication on the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas, will have to help in providing data on post-COVID-19 population movements and in analysing which territories benefit from them.

## 5. Reasons why young people stay or leave

### 5.1. Life close to nature and quality of life: strongest assets of mountain areas

Whether they already live in the mountains or not, a majority of our young respondents expressed their wish to stay or settle there. But what are their motivations? What does attract young people to the mountains?

We asked them to choose 4 main reasons for staying in the mountains, but some have chosen more. In order to facilitate the data analysis, we favoured a list of defined options, while being aware of the influence that multiple choice questions can have. However, we left it open for respondents to specify any other reason. Respondents were able to choose from the following list of options:

- University / School / training programme
- Employment opportunities
- Friends
- Family
- Leisure activities
- Life close to nature / environment
- Quality of life
- Human values (solidarity, being part of a community)
- Sense of place/attachment to area
- Other

1058 persons (out of the 1134 respondents) answered this question. The two options for staying that were most selected by respondents were living close to nature (22% - 940 occurrences) and the quality of life (19% - 814 occurrences), followed by the leisure activities available (16% - 686 occurrences) and their attachment to area (14% - 613 occurrences) (figure 10). Human values, family and friends are

also well placed in the ranking of reasons why young people want to stay and are also related to the wider attachment to the area.

Interestingly, it should be noted that employment, study and training opportunities are the reasons least emphasised by young people. However, the next sections of our report will show that these topics are of strong interest for young people and remain decisive to stay or leave in some mountain areas.

What about those who mentioned another main reason for staying in the mountains? In fact, most of the examples they gave relate to the environment and the quality of life in general: they particularly enjoy being close to nature, mountain flora and fauna, they like the specific mountain landscapes, they appreciate the low population density and the quietness of mountain villages, and they value the more peaceful life they can offer to young children.

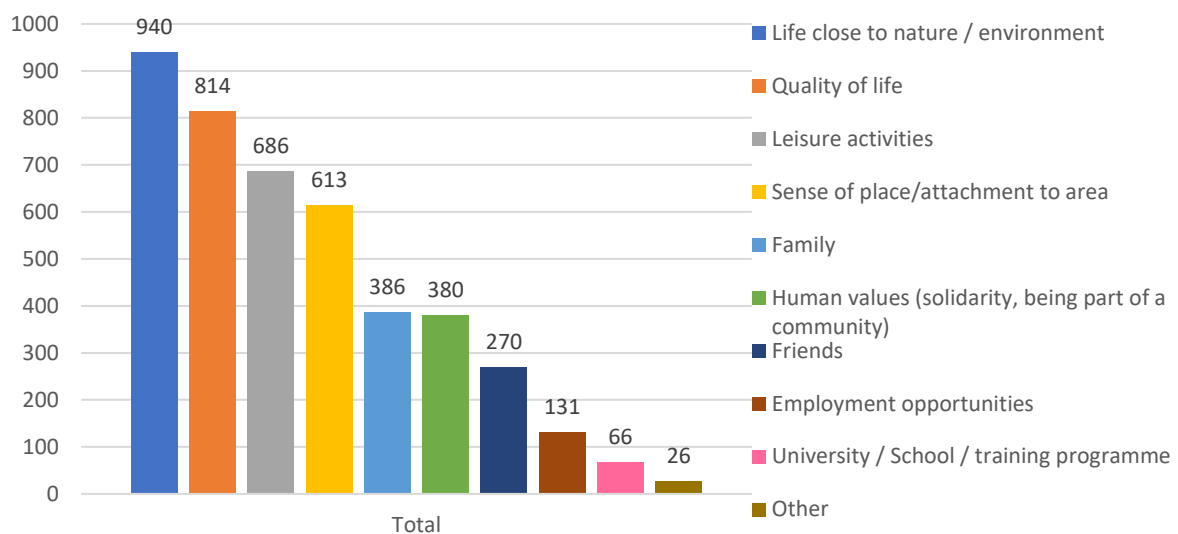


Figure 10: If you want to live in the mountains, why? (For those already living and willing to stay and for those willing to settle in mountain areas)

These elements tell us that, since our last study in 2012, the main motivations for young people to live in the mountains have not changed. Back then, the quality of life, together with the proximity to nature, were evidenced as the main assets of mountain areas for young people.

## 5.2. Lack of dynamism and employment, main factors for leaving or not settling

It is interesting to highlight the attractive features of the mountains for young people, but it is also important to look at the reasons why some do not want to settle there. Through a multiple responses question, we questioned the 76 young people who declared they do not want to live in the mountains or want to leave their area in order to understand the reasons. Respondents were able to choose from the following list of options:

- Education opportunities you would like to pursue elsewhere in other locations
- Lack of work
- Lack of employment opportunities adapted to your studies/ambitions
- Attraction of lifestyle in another environment or urban area
- My friends do not live there
- My family does not live there
- Scarcity of services
- Lack of accessibility (mobility)



- Lack of good Internet connection
- Cost of living in a mountain area
- Difficulty in finding accommodation
- Lack of dynamism (ex: cultural offer, social and associative activities)
- Other

Among these possibilities, the one that came up the most in the young people’s responses was their attraction for the lifestyle in another place like urban areas, which was quoted 34 times (12% of the reasons given – figure 11). The matter of attraction to another lifestyle remains relatively subjective, and hence it is interesting to look at the other main reasons mentioned: the lack of dynamism of mountain areas, such as cultural offer, social and associative activities (quoted 32 times, meaning 11.5% of the reasons), followed equally by the lack of mobility offer and of employment opportunities adapted to their diploma (quoted 30 times each, meaning 10.8% each). These findings echo our 2012 study, in which the lack of jobs and dynamism were already the main obstacles for young people to settle in the mountains.

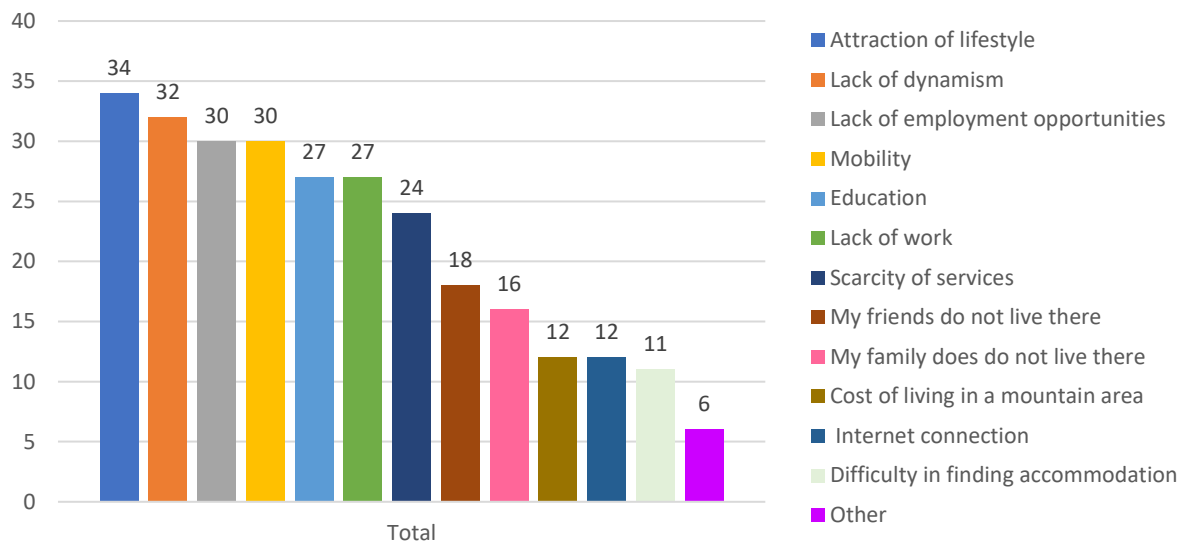


Figure 11: If you do NOT want to live in the mountains, why?

Difficulties with access and cost of housing and surprisingly access to good Internet connection are the reasons the least mentioned by young people. On the specific case of Internet access, we must stress that significant progress has been made over the last 10 years in terms of rural broadband. In 2012, 83.2%<sup>5</sup> of rural households in the European Union had access to fixed broadband, which has risen to 89.7% in 2020<sup>6</sup> (compared to 97.4% of total European households). If broadband coverage levels in rural regions remain lower than total national coverage, the gap has narrowed in the last decade, especially for Next Generation Access technologies: only 12.3% of rural residents had such access in 2012 compared to 59.8% in 2019. Although there is still investment to be made to further reduce this gap, especially in white areas, the efforts deployed no longer make access to the network as much of a burden on the attractiveness of the mountains – this is particularly important in the digital age and for the potential of remote working but also for auto-entrepreneurs and more broadly for the digitalisation of SMEs. In addition, our respondents contributed through an online survey and

<sup>5</sup> European Commission, [Broadband coverage in Europe in 2012](#), 2013

<sup>6</sup> European Commission, [Broadband coverage in Europe in 2020](#), 2021

therefore have access to the Internet; therefore, it seems logical that it is less of a problem for them than for other segments of the population.

Once again, the analysis per country will bring valuable nuances. For example, we observe that in Poland, employment is the main reason that hinders young people from moving to the mountains (see [Poland's country factsheet](#)).

## KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- The natural environment and quality of life to be found in mountains are the major drivers of the attractiveness of the mountains for young people: landscapes, open spaces, easier and better life are assets for territories and should be emphasised in territorial development strategies targeting youth, including through ambassadors who could promote the key assets of mountain regions.
- The lack of employment and education opportunities remain the primary factor behind the lack of attractiveness of the mountains among young people, whether they live in the mountains all year round or not. These barriers have not changed in 10 years and should be addressed by public authorities concerned with the efficiency of job creation policies.



# Part 3: How to build the ideal mountain for the future?

The analysis of the collected responses indicates that the mountains remain mostly attractive for young people. For respondents, this is mainly related to the proximity to nature and the good quality of life, although the lack of socio-cultural dynamism and the scarcity of employment and education opportunities are still weaknesses for mountainous regions.

The future of mountain areas depends on its population and the aspirations of local communities. We therefore asked young people to tell us about their ideal mountain, the initiatives they would like to see implemented and the services they would like to see improved.



## 6. What needs to be developed to meet the needs of the youth?

### 6.1 Mobility, education, and housing services not satisfying enough

In our survey, we asked young people living in the mountains to assess the different services that form part of their quality of life on a daily basis, such as transport, access to the Internet, culture, health care or communication platforms to exchange with local communities or to share job offers. Young people's feedback on these services can help to identify sectors where efforts still need to be made to improve the quality of life of mountain people and increase the attractiveness of mountain areas, including among the younger generation.

For some of the services, the satisfaction rate of young respondents is very encouraging. Above all, access to the Internet, with which 75% of young people are satisfied or very satisfied (figure 12). Likewise, access to healthcare facilities (figure 13) does not seem to be an issue for a vast majority of respondents (73% are satisfied or very satisfied). This is not really a surprise knowing that generally young people are not the segment of the population with regular need of large and diversified healthcare services. Country level analyses are interesting in that they reveal significant differences. In Romania, for example, the rate of young people satisfied or very satisfied with available health care drops to 50% (see [Romania's country factsheet](#)).

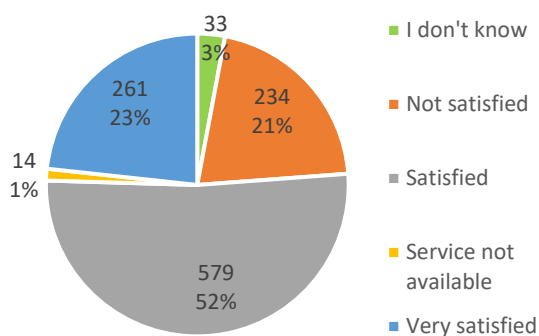


Figure 13: Are you satisfied with the Internet access in your mountain area?

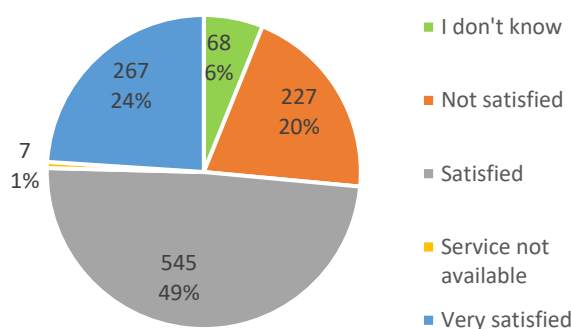


Figure 12: Are you satisfied with your access to health care services in your mountain area?

Surprisingly, 65% of all participants say they are satisfied with the cultural offer in their region, whereas, as we will see in the next section, culture is one of the main demands of young people in the mountains.

For other services, however, opinions are more mixed. When it comes to public transport for example, 52% of young respondents feel that the offer is either unsatisfactory or non-existent (figure 14). It is interesting to note that young people are more satisfied with alternatives to public transport, such as cycling or car sharing.

This may be attributed to the fact that the lack of investment in public transport in some regions has encouraged the development of alternatives or strengthened the solidarity of local communities through car sharing or hitchhiking for example.

“

*[We need] much more public transport (frequent and cheap) to move easily between valleys, villages and not feel dependent on our car for small daily trips.*

**Young animator in a social centre in the Vercors, region Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, France**

“



Likewise, there is no great consensus on educational programmes in the mountains, as there is on the access to Internet or healthcare. 35% of young people indeed consider the offer to be unsatisfactory or non-existent while 46% are globally happy with the offer (figure 15). This same divergence of opinion can also be observed on the issue of access to housing (only 53% satisfied or very satisfied). Country factsheets provide more analysis on the territorial aspect of services satisfaction, for example in Spain, where housing seems to be more problematic than in other countries (see [Spain's country factsheet](#)).

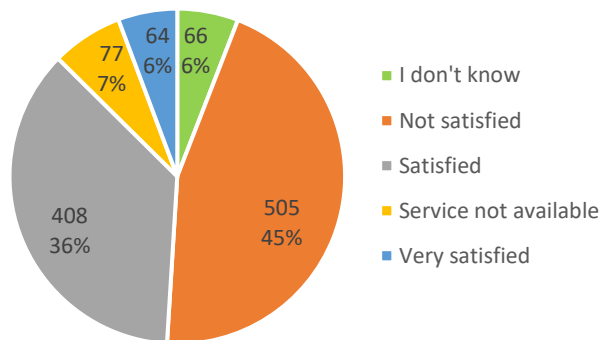


Figure 15: Are you satisfied with the access to public transport in your mountain area?

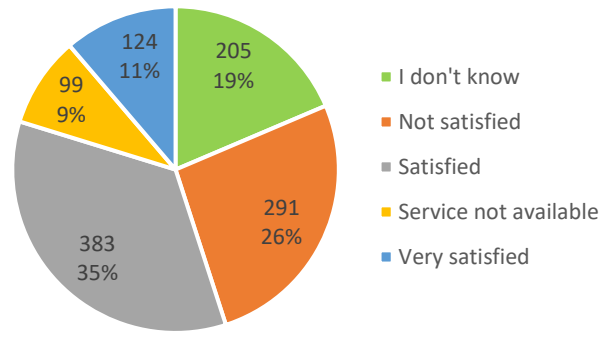


Figure 14: Are you satisfied with your access to education programmes in your mountain area?

For other services on which we questioned them, a large proportion of young people declared that they did not know (such as community platforms, job search and sharing services or childcare facilities). We believe that the large number of students among the respondents may explain the fact that they have not yet used these services. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that these results only concern young people and do not reflect the quality of services in the mountains as a whole. The overall satisfaction of young people with the available healthcare infrastructures or cultural offer does not mean that these services are widely available in the mountains; another age group, such as people in their forties or retired adults might have a different level of satisfaction with the same offer.

## 6.2 Young people top 5 priorities for the future of mountain areas

To understand young people's vision for the future of their mountain area, we questioned them about the initiatives they would like to see more in the region they live in – or visit the most for those who do not live in a mountain area. Our questionnaire gave all respondents the opportunity to choose priorities from the following list. The choices offered have been deliberately defined to better explain what is meant by general concepts such as “cultural activities”, “wilderness” or “digital and social innovations”. The following options were chosen to better echo Euromontana's 2012 survey on mountain youth and, after reflection with partners, to reflect the different needs that young people may have. An open question at the end of the questionnaire also gave respondents the opportunity to address any other specific needs not mentioned in our list:

- Participatory democracy to involve young people in local decisions
- Lifelong education and vocational learning to upgrade skills and capacities and make them fit for a fast-changing world
- More support to create my own business such as youth entrepreneurship programme, young entrepreneur fairs, apprenticeships, micro-business projects
- Using more digital solutions and social innovations to find adequate responses to my needs (for instance to provide transport services or telemedicine)

- Promote more behavioural change through environmentally friendly initiatives such as sustainable transport or recycling systems
- Encourage more initiatives to tackle climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Support the integration of newcomers including migrants in mountain areas (reinforcing links between “old” and “new” inhabitants / give classes to migrants...)
- Support for more cultural services (cinema, theatre, fairs, exhibitions, museums...)
- Support for more social activities for young people (associations, places to meet, leisure activities)
- More intergenerational links to increase solidarity but also to share cultural heritage
- Encourage more wilderness in our mountains (e.g., reforestation, limit human activities...)

1103 persons answered the question “what would you like to see more in your mountain area” and picked up their options from the proposed list. It results that encouraging more wilderness and environmental behaviour change are the most frequently mentioned preferences by respondents (respectively mentioned 562 and 559 times by respondents, representing 12% of total responses each – figure 16).

“

*Mountains are places where water and many other natural resources exist, and therefore must be protected. People who live there understand the world differently, thanks to their connection with nature.*

*Young environmental engineer from the Province of Alava, Spain*

“

Also of high importance is the desire for more action to tackle climate change adaptation and mitigation (quoted 506 times - 11% of responses). Rounding out the top five priority demands of young people are the desire for more places dedicated to social and cultural activities, which both received 10% of responses (quoted 460 and 453 times respectively).

This ranking of young peoples’ priorities clearly reveals that concern for environmental issues holds a major place in the minds of young mountain people, occupying the top 3 priorities. This is in line with a more general tendency towards awareness about the importance of environmental and climate issues. In the European Union, the last special Eurobarometer on climate change revealed that more than nine in ten Europeans (93%) believe that climate change is a serious problem<sup>7</sup> and a second one showed that young Europeans put the protection of the environment and the fight against climate change (67%) at the top of their priorities for Europe<sup>8</sup>. It also particularly echoes recent youth movements such as Youth4Climate which have made more visible the importance of the fight against climate change and the role of young people for the future of the planet. This is also consistent with the recent investigation conducted in 16 countries and to be published in The Lancet Planetary Health journal. The researchers showed that three quarters of young people aged 16-25 are affected by eco-anxiety and worried about their future because of climate change<sup>9</sup>.

In addition, the desire for more places to meet and go out is clearly an element that emerges from this survey, and which probably also echoes the lack of dynamism of mountain regions pointed out earlier.

<sup>7</sup> European Commission, [Special Eurobarometer 513 - Climate Change](#), 2021

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, [Flash Eurobarometer 478 - How do we build a stronger, more united Europe? The views of young people](#), 2019

<sup>9</sup> Marks, Elizabeth and Hickman, Caroline and Pihkala, Panu and Clayton, Susan and Lewandowski, Eric R. and Mayall, Elouise E. and Wray, Britt and Mellor, Catriona and van Susteren, Lise, Young People's Voices on Climate Anxiety, Government Betrayal and Moral Injury: A Global Phenomenon. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3918955>

The other options given all score fairly equally. It would seem that they are all of some importance to young people in the mountains, but none of them is an emerging priority nor a disliked option. However, it is interesting to note that digital and social innovation comes last in this ranking. There are several possible explanations for this. Firstly, as we have already said, our questionnaire was widely disseminated to young people who already have access to digital tools. Secondly, as mentioned before, digital coverage in the mountains and related tools have made great strides in the last decade and the digital divide has narrowed, with also the development of Smart Villages and with some regions becoming pioneers in innovation like Valley d’Aosta in telemedicine. Finally, it is possible that the "social innovation" facet of our question is a term that is still not widely used in society and that does not resonate with young people's daily lives.

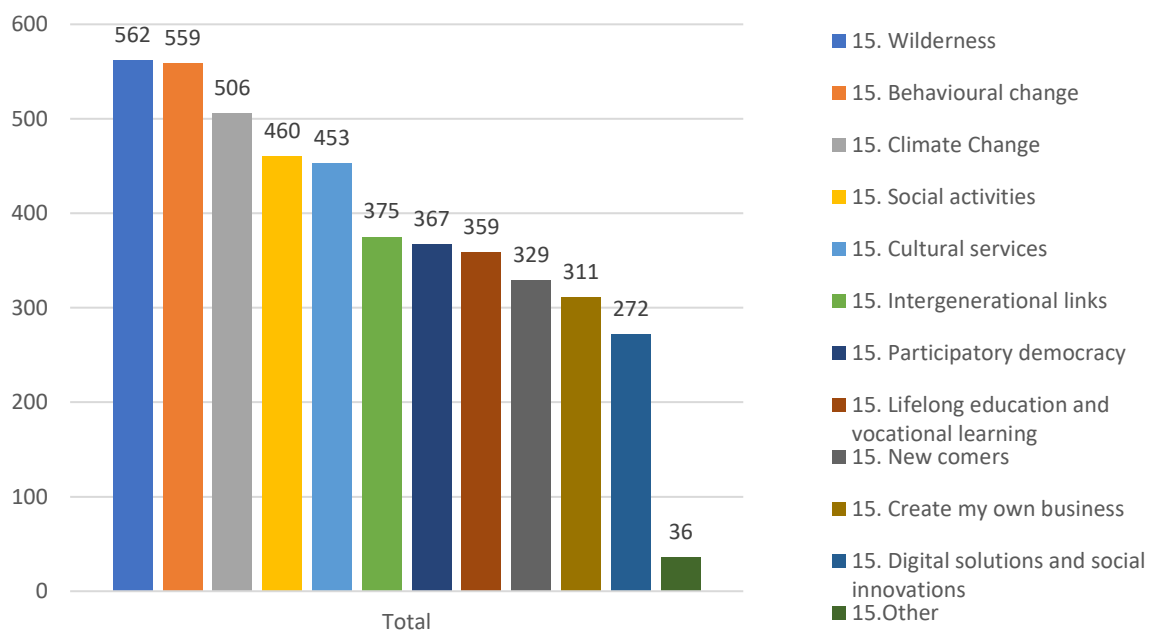


Figure 16: What would you like to see more in your mountain region?

Interestingly, the ranking of priorities is very different if we remove the French respondents, who represent 70% of the participants. Looking at the responses from all countries together, except France, the main priority for young mountain people is the development of support schemes for youth entrepreneurship (quoted 160 times, 11.4% of responses – figure 17). The top 3 is completed by more opportunities for social activities (quoted 151 times, 10.8% of responses) and more efforts to promote behavioural change and environmentally friendly initiatives (quoted 144 times, 10.3% of responses). Then we find almost in equal position the need for more lifelong or vocational training programmes and more participatory democracy (mentioned 133 and 132 respectively, 9.5% of responses). There are therefore strong differences with the previous responses, with a clear call for the development of education opportunities. The importance given to the environment and social activities nevertheless remains high in all the countries surveyed.

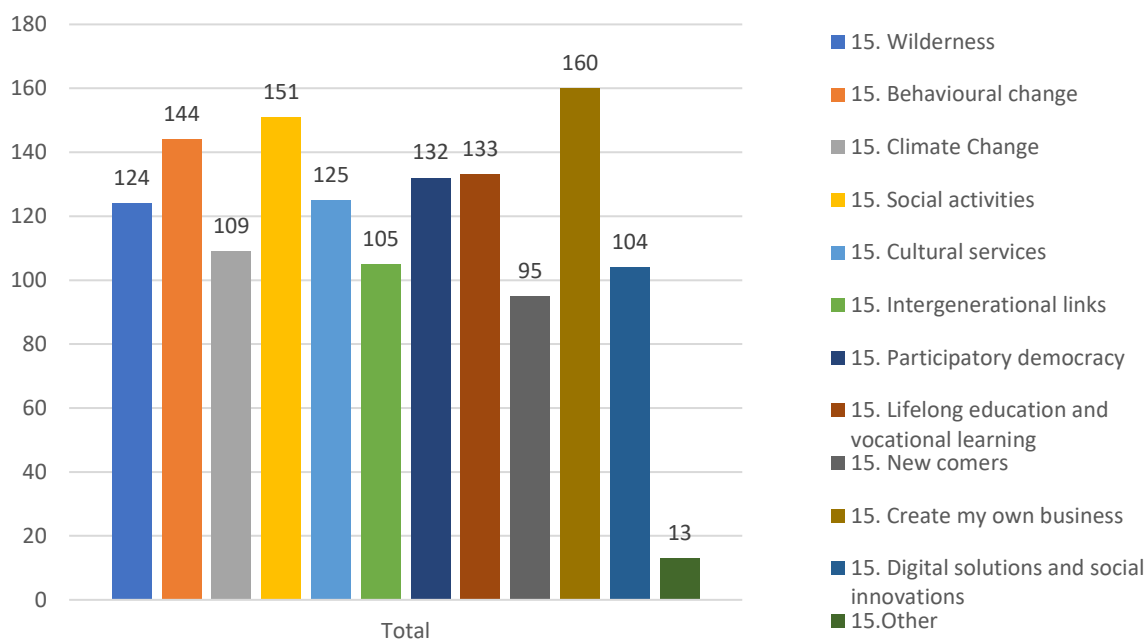


Figure 17: What would you like to see more in your mountain region? (all countries except France)

## 7. What vision for the future?

### 7.1 A mountain committed to sustainability

As part of our survey, we gave young people the opportunity to describe with their own words their ideal vision of the mountains for 2040. Their contributions were analysed on a case-by-case basis in the country profiles, in order to better understand the expectations of young people for the next two decades. What we can learn from our study is based on the great diversity of visions between countries, and even between regions. Young peoples' dreams diverge greatly depending on the specific context of the country.

The issue of tourism is central in several of the countries studied. Although the concerns vary from one country to another, the desire of young people in the mountains is unanimously focused on more sustainable tourism. In the case of France and Italy, where the majority of young respondents live in the Alps, we find that their ideal mountain is no longer mostly tourism oriented. Moreover, in both countries, young people also complain about the impact of tourism on the rising cost of living, especially for housing.

In particular in France, young people imagine a mountain that does not rely on a 100% ski model, and where resorts are managed in a more sustainable way, with less construction and land artificialisation, and more diversification of activities throughout the year. In Italy, in addition to environmental concerns, young people express concerns that an overly tourism-oriented economy does offer insufficient professional opportunities for young people in other economic sectors.

Young people in Romania also dream of sustainable tourism. They imagine a mountain in 2040 where this sector would be more developed than it is now, by enhancing the natural and cultural heritage of

“  
*A mountain that is open to all, but also to a population that lives there all year round, and that not all is designed for tourism, because this leads to desertification and social fragility of those who live there.*  
**Young jobseeker from Barcelonnette, region Provence-Alpes-Côte, France**

“



the mountains, including handicrafts and agricultural products. The ideal tourism described by the youth should be sustainable, in environmental, economic, and social terms. Young people in Romania envisage a tourism model based on small local businesses.

Sustainability, environment, and ecology are at the heart of the ideal vision of the mountain in each country, with specific issues. The vision described by the youth is a life in harmony with mountain nature. In particular, they want a less polluted mountain and more protected areas. We also observe that young people are very keen to welcome newcomers to their region, but they would like all inhabitants and tourists to be better informed about mountain nature and more aware of how to respect it.

This vision focused on the respect of nature does not mean that young people in European mountains are against any economic development. On the contrary, they imagine vibrant and dynamic mountains, where different economic sectors could sustain the population. Their ideal mountain would also provide more services and infrastructures to the local population. Moreover, they do not necessarily expect basic services to be located precisely in their village, but to be accessible within a reasonable distance. In this sense, mountain youth reflect under the prism of functional space, whether it is a whole valley or an area within the radius of a small town. To achieve this, mobility however remains an elementary axis. This is one of the main pillars of young people's demands in this survey.

“

*Those who live in the mountains are more conscious and aware of the importance of conserving our nature.*

**Young nature guide and yoga teacher from Asturias, Spain**

“

“

*The ideal mountain area has decentralized infrastructures and is thus more connected to the valley.*

**Young student in natural sciences from Slovenia**

“

If we aggregate the contributions from all the countries, we find that what young people are dreaming about for 2040 is ultimately a balance to be maintained between the development of infrastructures and services for the population, available all year round and not only during the tourism season, and the preservation of the mountain environment, of which they are aware of the great value.

## 7.2 A willingness to attract new inhabitants

Demographic change is a crucial issue for the future of Europe's mountains. Today, the ageing of the population, the abandonment of agricultural land, the attraction of young generations for urban areas linked to the lack of job offers in the mountains weigh on the demographic structure of mountain villages. Many mountain regions are already considered as being sparsely populated, as in Spain or Greece, and demographic decline is foreseen to affect other mountain areas in the future, as in the Massif Central (France) or in the Romanian Carpathians<sup>10</sup>.

These demographic changes create a vicious circle regarding the attractiveness of mountain territories which, due to a lack of resources, can less and less provide the services that make up the quality of life of mountain communities and help to keep the area attractive. In addition, depopulation – or at least demographic decline – impacts the dynamism of a region; and, as explained above, this is an element that has been identified by young people as a weakness of mountain territories.

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<sup>10</sup> ESPON ESCAPE, [Final report](#), 2020

For this reason, we asked all young people about their views on the demographic future of the mountains. Overall, 68% of the 1134 young respondents believe that it is important to attract more people in their mountain area – the one they live in or often visit (figure 18). For 52% of interviewees, repopulation strategies must however maintain a certain balance so as not to bring in too many newcomers. Almost one third of respondents (32%) feel that their area is already too crowded and do not want to see more people settle.

“  
*My ideal mountain area is a lively place and a well-populated community of people.*  
**Young graduate from Slovenian Carinthia, specialised in organic agriculture engineering, looking for a job**  
 ”

Yet, there are disparities among the different countries. In Spain for instance, 86% of young people are in favour of repopulating their area, and in Italy the rate reaches 95%. In some countries, like France, opinions diverge more, with 42% of respondents feeling that their area is already too crowded and that there is severe pressure on housing due to tourism and second residences (see [France’s country factsheet](#)).

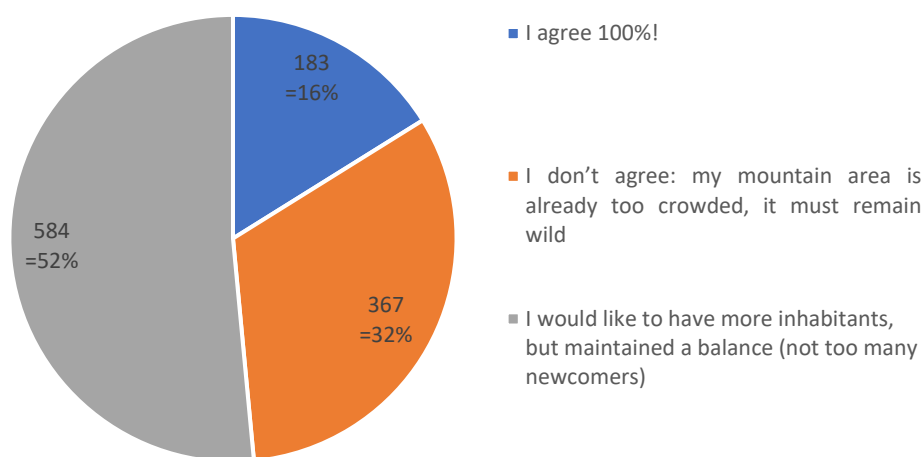


Figure 18: Do you think it is important to attract more inhabitants in your mountain area?

To further investigate this, we also asked the 68% of young people who support the arrival of newcomers what profiles of people they would like to welcome in their village (figure 19). By far, they would much prefer to welcome other young people or families (respectively 31% and 27% with 230 and 199 occurrences) - profiles that are highly associated with vitality. On the contrary, few young people would like to see more older adults settling in the mountains (8% with 59 occurrences), as this is a segment of the population already significantly represented in many mountain areas, in particular in Southern countries<sup>11</sup>.

“  
*I am not against the arrival of new inhabitants, but against the need to attract them. The mountains are already overpopulated, and the transport axes (roads and small train lines) are not adapted to the volume of our population. So first improve the quality of life of those who live in the mountains, and then ask whether there is a need to attract new inhabitants.*  
**Young cameraman and editor in the audio-visual sector from Haute-Savoie, region Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, France**  
 ”

<sup>11</sup> Euromontana, [Ageing in mountain areas - Contributions of Euromontana for the Green Paper on Ageing](#), March 2021

Apart from these criteria, which are more related to the age of the newcomers, young people do not have any particular preference regarding their origin. Indeed, they do not make much distinction between newcomers from the same country, from the European Union or from third countries.

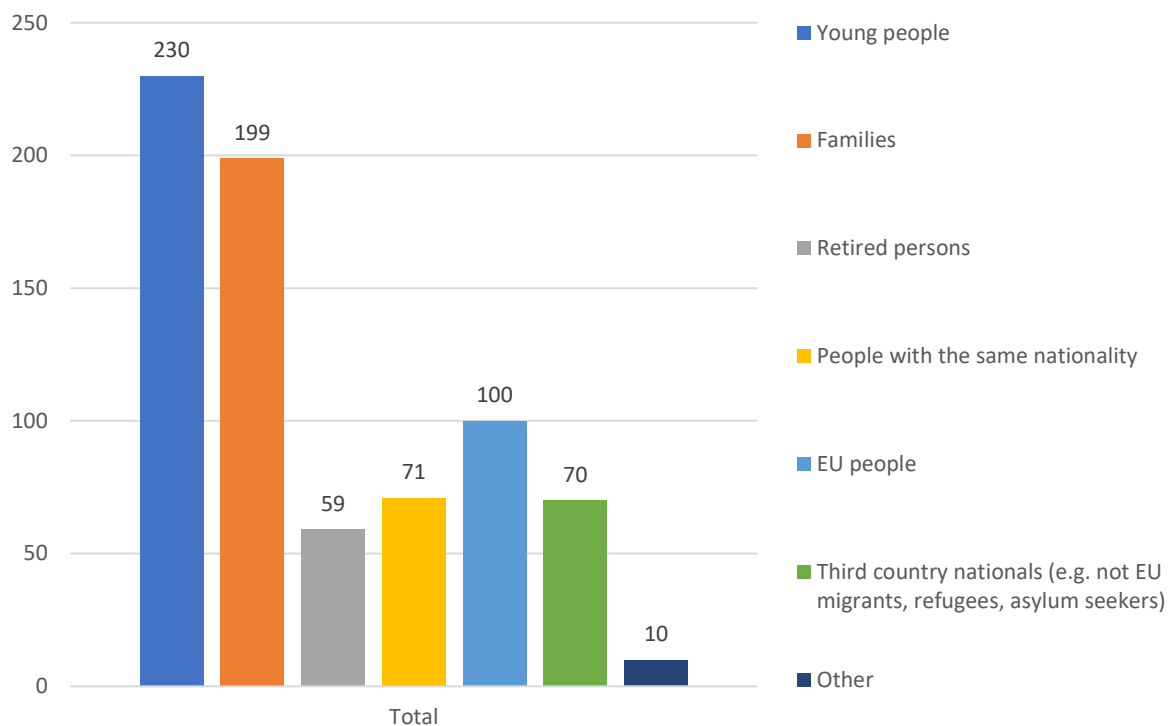


Figure 19: If you would like to have more newcomers in your mountain area, which kind of categories can contribute the best to the life of your community?

### 7.3 A European future

As the on-going Conference on the Future of Europe questions citizens about their feelings towards the European Union, we asked young people about their sense of belonging. Do mountains create a distinctive identity? Do they help people to get closer to each other, generate social bonds and communities? Do cross-border areas, which are very often mountainous in Europe, create new spaces of citizenship for young people?

It would seem that life in the mountains does indeed contribute to shaping a mountain identity, with 83% of respondents stating that they feel a difference between people living in the mountains and others (figure 20). It also appears that this mountain identity brings communities closer together, beyond national borders, as 59% of young people feel closer to another inhabitant of a mountain area in Europe than those residing in non-mountainous areas of the same country (figure 21).

“

*[Mountain people] are used to a closer social network and that everyone knows everyone, which means that they function differently socially, and perhaps are more open to new people.*

**Young worker in spatial planning, Norway**

“

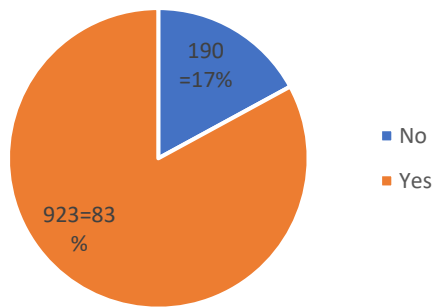


Figure 20: Do you perceive any differences between people living in the mountains and the others?

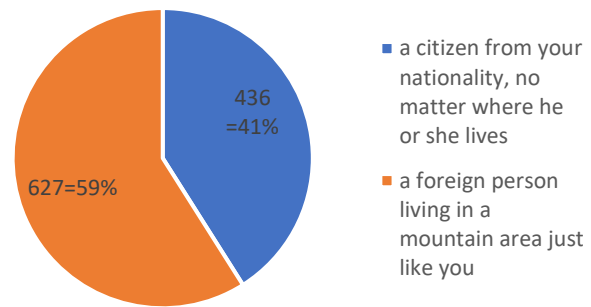


Figure 21: Who would you feel closer to?

However, when questioned about the cross-border factor of their identity, young people are more mixed in their views. Only 41% of them feel that living in a cross-border area has an influence on their perception of the European space (figure 22). Even when looking at the results per country, there is no mountainous country where young people perceive themselves to belong more to Europe through exchanges and cross-border life. This is surprising, but it does not mean that young people do not feel part of the European area, simply that the cross-border factor is not significant.

This may be due to the fact that today's 18–29-year-olds are a generation that has grown up with the development of European exchanges and that they have always known, for example, the freedom of movement within the Schengen area, whose agreements date back to 1985.

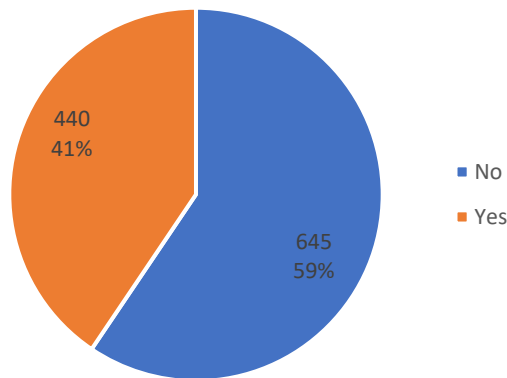


Figure 22: Would you say that living in a cross-border mountain area (near or on the border with another country) influences your sense of belonging to a European space?

“

*The nation-states still divide Europe too much. The Savoie area is cut off from the Valle d'Aosta and the Valais, whereas I feel closer to these neighbouring populations and living in the same environment than Breton and other people, whom I also appreciate a lot but whom I know less than my mountain neighbours. [...] In the manner of the United States of America, I would like to see the 'United Cantons of Europe' come to life.*

**Young geology student at the University of Savoie Mont Blanc, region Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, France**

“



## KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- The ideal mountain described by young people is a place where they can fulfil their potential. They picture a mountain in 2040 where they can study, work and commute easily. This raises questions about the infrastructure and services currently available in the mountains and provides ideas for improving the development of educational or professional opportunities or raising awareness about existing services.
- The ideal mountain of young Europeans is resolutely sustainable. This is one of the main messages of this survey: in all the countries studied, the preservation of mountain environments and the fight against climate change are at the heart of young people's concerns. By 2040, they envisage mountain areas where habitats would be better protected, where tourism would be redirected towards practices that are more respectful of the environment and local populations, and where more grassroots initiatives would be undertaken to protect nature.
- Young Europeans would like to see the mountains repopulated by 2040. They dream of a more dynamic mountain, where young people and families live, and where repopulation brings territorial development.

# Conclusion

What can we learn from this report? First of all, European mountains are attractive to young people. They want to live there, work there, meet their friends and spend their leisure time there. This is a strong message that young people are giving us through this report and that should encourage mountain actors and policy makers to keep these regions attractive for current and future generations.

Young people also want to contribute to shaping the mountains of tomorrow. They want to bring their ideas, their priorities and be heard by both decision makers and local communities. The ideal mountain for 2040 as described by young mountain people must leave room for more sustainability and more balance between territorial development and nature preservation.

In addition, this report sends another strong message about access to mountain services and in particular mobility, education, and employment, which are constant across all the countries studied. If young people do not find in the mountains places to learn, opportunities for work or efficient means of transport then many mountain regions are at risk of continued depopulation and ageing. Through this survey, the youth suggest possible approaches, such as supporting economic diversification to create new jobs and developing innovative and less expensive modes of transport.

This report aimed to understand what it means to be young and live in a mountain area in 2022. Our survey across 18 countries showed the difficulties that young people face in their daily lives. However, this report also demonstrates that young people are proud of their identity as mountain people and that they have plans to achieve the ideal mountain of 2040. They want to preserve their traditions, but at the same time bring about new life. They want to put their priorities on the agenda while proposing solutions, and above all they want to associate quality of life with the protection of natural areas.

It is now up to policy makers to take up these messages and take action in response to the demands of young people. European, national, regional and local decision-makers must work hand in hand to maintain the attractiveness of mountain territories in the future, including by improving access to education and employment and by pursuing greater sustainability.

Being young in a mountain area

France





## Respondents' profiles in brief

Of all the countries studied in our mountain youth survey, France was the one where we collected the most contributions, with 798 questionnaires filled by young people. As explained in our report, this can be attributed to the important efforts of some French members of the Euromontana network, and the key role played by Educ'Alpes to disseminate our survey.

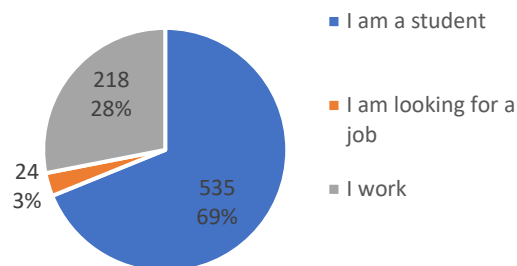


Figure 23: What do you do? Answers from France

The distribution of our survey in France by universities also explains the fact that a very large majority (69%) of our respondents are students (figure 23). This is well above other European countries, where the majority of young people surveyed were workers: 67%, 65% and 32% respectively in Romania, Spain and Italy for only 28% in France.

## French mountains are attractive for the youth

The French mountains are attractive to young people. When asked whether young people living in the mountains would like to stay there, a majority of them (63%) answer positively (figure 24). Due to the weight of France in the total number of respondents in our study, these results are very similar to those obtained at the European level (66%). Moreover, young people who want to stay in the mountains give the same reasons as those presented in our report; they value first and foremost life close to nature and the quality of life in the mountains.

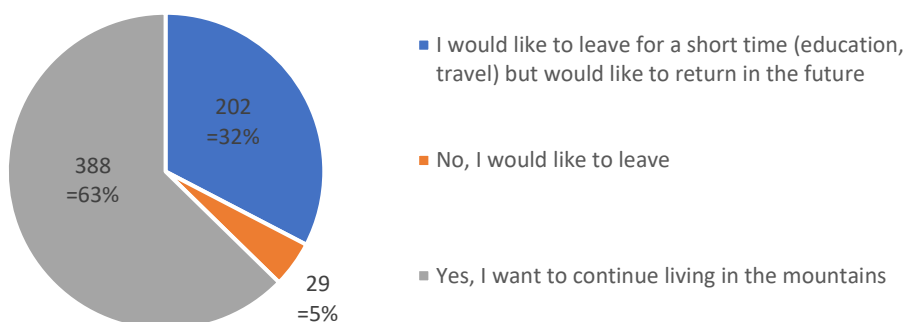


Figure 23: Do you want to stay in the mountains? Answers from France

Likewise, young people who do not live in the mountains (but go there for landscapes, hiking and skiing in France) are rather inclined to move to the mountains (52%, figure 25).

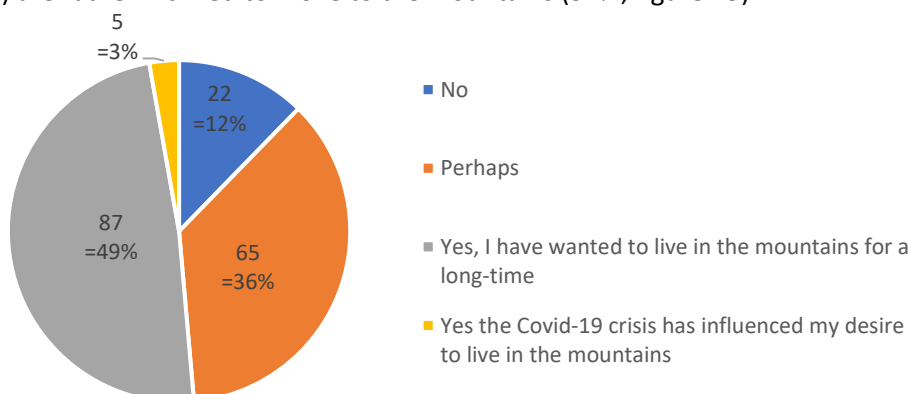


Figure 24: If you don't live in a mountain area, would you like to live there? Answers from France



## Access to services welcomed but progress needed on mobility

We asked young people living in France about their perception of the services available in their mountain area. France stands out from the other countries of our survey because no service appears to be highly problematic. While in some countries it is sometimes access to health care that is highly criticised and sometimes access to housing, no specific issues emerge in France. This does not mean that young people are 100% satisfied with services, nor that certain services are not a concern at a more regional or local level, these are national results.

For some services, the results obtained in France are very similar to the European average: 76% of young people in France are satisfied with access to the Internet (compared to 75% in Europe), 77% with the provision of health care (77% in Europe) and 55% with the housing offer (compared to 53% at European level). The youth also seem to be satisfied with the cultural offer in French mountains, at 68% (for 65% at European scale).

The particularity of France lies in the fact that we observe higher satisfaction rates with services than in other countries. Regarding the provision of educational programmes in the mountains, for example, only 27% of young people in France are dissatisfied (figure 26), compared to 35% at the European level, 52% in Italy and up to 73% in Romania.

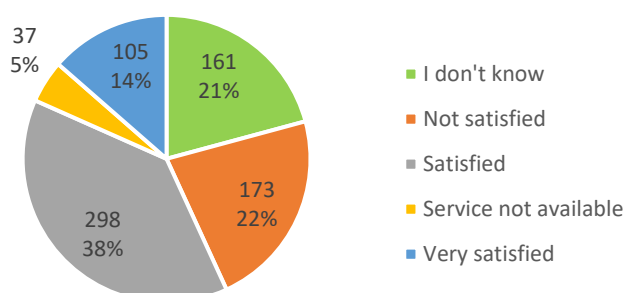


Figure 26: satisfaction with education programmes. Answers from France

In terms of employment services, France does slightly better than the European average. 21% of young people consider the offer to be unsatisfactory or non-existent (figure 27), compared to 24% in Europe and up to 77% in Romania. It should be noted that there was a large proportion of "I don't know" responses (31%), probably due to the large proportion of students among respondents in France, who may not yet have used this type of service.

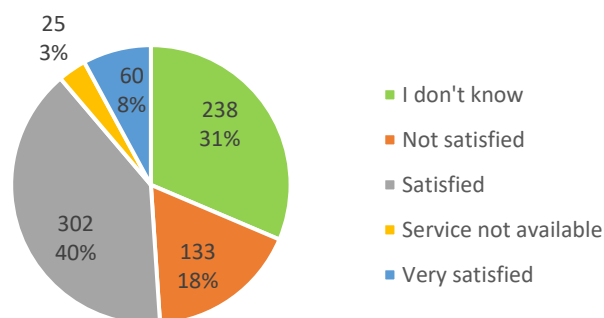


Figure 27: satisfaction with employment services. Answers from France

In these matters, even if the provision of services seems to be somewhat better than in other countries, there is still room for improvement, as sometimes up to 20 per cent of young people remain dissatisfied with the offer.

It should however be pointed out that, as in all the countries surveyed, the provision of public transport remains a problem for young people in French mountains. Almost half of them (49%) tell us that the transport offer is unsatisfactory or non-existent in their region (figure 28).

In fact, mobility seems to be a point of attention to for the attractiveness of French mountains. When we surveyed the 12% of young people who would not like to settle in a mountain area in France, mobility was the second justification given (23 occurrences, 11.8% of responses – figure 29). The two other main reasons are similar to the ones presented in our report: attraction for another way of life and lack of dynamism of the mountains. However, France is the only country in our survey where mobility plays such an important role in the opt-out from life in the mountains.

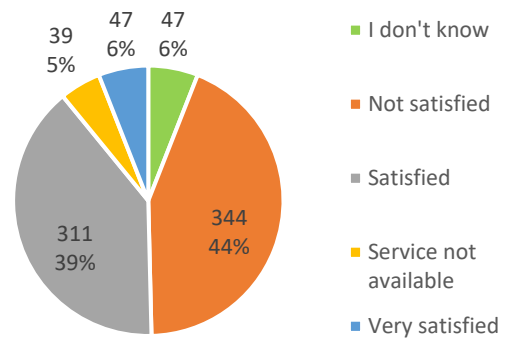


Figure 28: Satisfaction with public transport. Answers from France

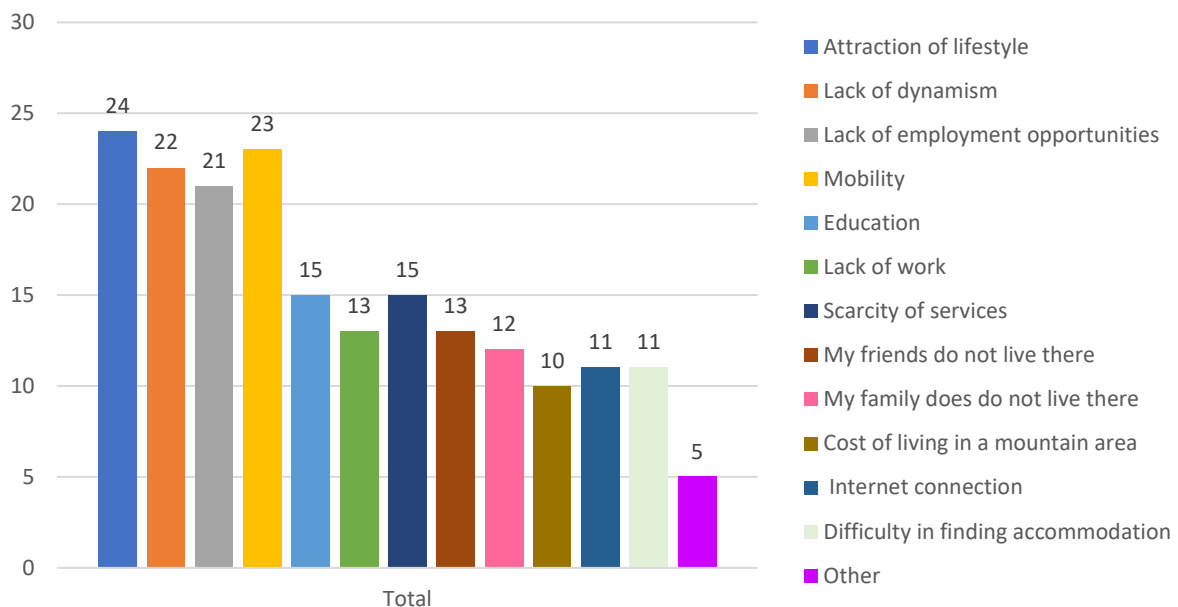


Figure 28: If you don't want to live in a mountain area, why? Answers from France

## The ideal mountain for 2040: wilder, less tourist-oriented, less urbanised

What is the ideal mountain in 2040 for young people in France? We gave mountain youth the opportunity to describe it to us in a free contribution. Their ideal mountain is based on a well-balanced village life, with no mass tourism, with more protected areas and public transport.

France is the country with the highest demand for wilderness, protected areas and waste reduction. Overall, most of the contributions call for mountain areas with limited construction and a higher protection level for natural areas. Many young people in France, and this is a specificity compared to other countries in our survey, call for strictly protected areas to preserve the environment and leave it untouched.

“

*As wild as possible, and above all WITHOUT ANY urbanisation and with the return of all the animal species that have suddenly disappeared over the last few decades (especially birds!)  
Young jobseeker from the county of Haute-Savoie, region Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, France*

“

In the ideal mountain of 2040 described by young people, the transition of the tourism sector has a central place. In their written contributions, we find a strong dislike of tourist facilities, particularly ski resorts. In the words of young people, ski resorts are very much associated with the artificialisation of mountain soils and habitats, whether it be for the slopes or ski lifts, but also due to all the other related services that are built nearby (restaurants, hotels, car parks etc.).

However, some young people propose solutions, to move away from mass winter or summer tourism and to limit the demographic and environmental impacts of tourism, like the development of all year-round activities.

*Rewilding, limiting urbanism, the tourism flow, and the environmental damages caused by luxury tourism ...*

**Young engineer in population and natural habitats management from the County of Haute Savoie, region Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, France**

*A mountain focused on 4-season tourism, where you can reach ski resorts with shuttles from the valleys.*

**Young student of geology from the county of Savoie, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, France**

In France, youth’s criticism of tourism is structured around two axes. On the one hand, the pressure of tourism infrastructures on mountains’ environment and landscapes and on the other hand the tension caused by tourism on local demography. Young people are concerned about the impact of tourism on the housing offer and in general on the cost of living in the mountains. They resent the fact that there are too many second homes occupied for a few weeks of the year when they are struggling to buy a property. The housing issue in France is particularly focused on purchasing property, not necessary access to rental.

*There are more and more second homes in the mountains; beautiful houses that unfortunately are bought by people who do not work here, with high incomes and who live here maximum 2 months in the year and for some houses 2 weeks in the year! And we cannot find accommodation.*

**Young jobseeker from region Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, France**

The impact that tourism and the number of second homes can have on mountain communities has an inevitable influence on the way young people in France perceive newcomers. This is a French peculiarity: young people in the mountains are rather opposed to the arrival of newcomers in their region. 42% of them believe that their region is already too crowded (figure 30), compared to 32% in Europe and 14% in Spain. In fact, they state that their villages are mostly overcrowded during the tourist season, with the arrival of visitors and secondary residents.

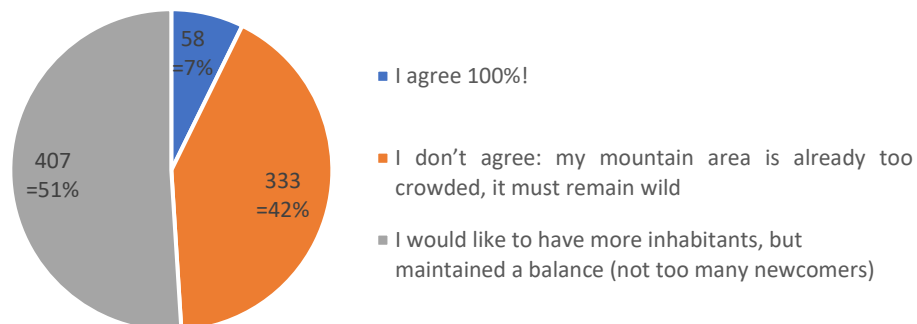


Figure 30: Would you like to welcome newcomers in your area? Answers from France

Mobility is also a recurring theme in young people's descriptions of an ideal mountain in 2040. They dream of a territory with a more developed transport offer, with buses several times a day and all year round. Some even suggest innovative ideas which are already implemented in some regions, such as cable car transport or rail freight to limit truck traffic in the mountains.

“

*The cable car has a great future as a public transport in the mountains: less construction than for rail, few areas to be destroyed, flies over steep areas so straight trajectory and time saved, runs on electricity.*

***Young student in neuroscience, from the county of Haute Savoie, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, France***

“

However, this ideal mountain described by young people in France reflects different territorial realities. It is interesting to note that some young people recalled in their contributions that one mountain region differs from another, sometimes even one valley from another. In our survey, we mainly collected responses from young people living in the French Alps.

“

*There are great disparities between regions. I spent most of my life in the Pyrenees and have been studying in the Alps for the last 3 years. The two massifs are incomparable. The Pyrenees are much wilder, more enclosed. They offer few possibilities once you leave aside agriculture, crafts and the (para)medical sector. It is an ageing population, not very dynamic. Public transport is non-existent (2 buses a day in winter, only 1 the rest of the year). [...] The Alps have the advantage of being in constant movement, more job opportunities, in more diverse sectors. Ease of movement. But careful with the abuse (more and more people).*

***Young student in sports and science from Hautes-Pyrénées, studying in Savoie, France***

“

## KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- Young people are attracted by mountain life in France. The youth values the proximity to nature and mountain landscapes as well as the quality of life offered in the mountains in comparison to other areas.
- Services in the French mountains seem to better satisfy young people than in other countries. Yet, mobility is still a challenge and remains an obstacle for young people to settle in the mountains. They need improved public transport, with more frequent services and better connections with the main lines.
- Young people in France have a clear vision of the mountains of tomorrow, which they want to be more natural. They are opposed to the construction of new large tourist complexes in the mountains and reject the artificialization of land. The youth in French mountains raise the issue of the impact of tourism on the environment but also on the local demography and the quality of life of mountain people.



# Being young in a mountain area

Italy



## Respondents' profiles in brief

Within the course of our European survey, we collected the contributions of 60 young mountain people living in Italy. For this group of respondents, there is an overall balanced representation of males and females. Respondents from Italy are older than our European average: 97% of them are 21 years old and over, compared to 72% at European level. There are only 2 respondents aged between 18 and 20 years old.

Among these 60 young people, there is a slight over-representation of workers (62%), an important proportion who are students (34%) and few job seekers (4%). What kind of jobs do young people in the mountains have or want to have in Italy? In general, there is a high consistency with the European average. Many young respondents from Italy have specialised in a specific field. However, we can note a higher share of young people in Italy who want to work in a so-called traditional mountain profession (16 occurrences, 22%, figure 31), such as farmer or mountain guide, compared to the European average (12%).

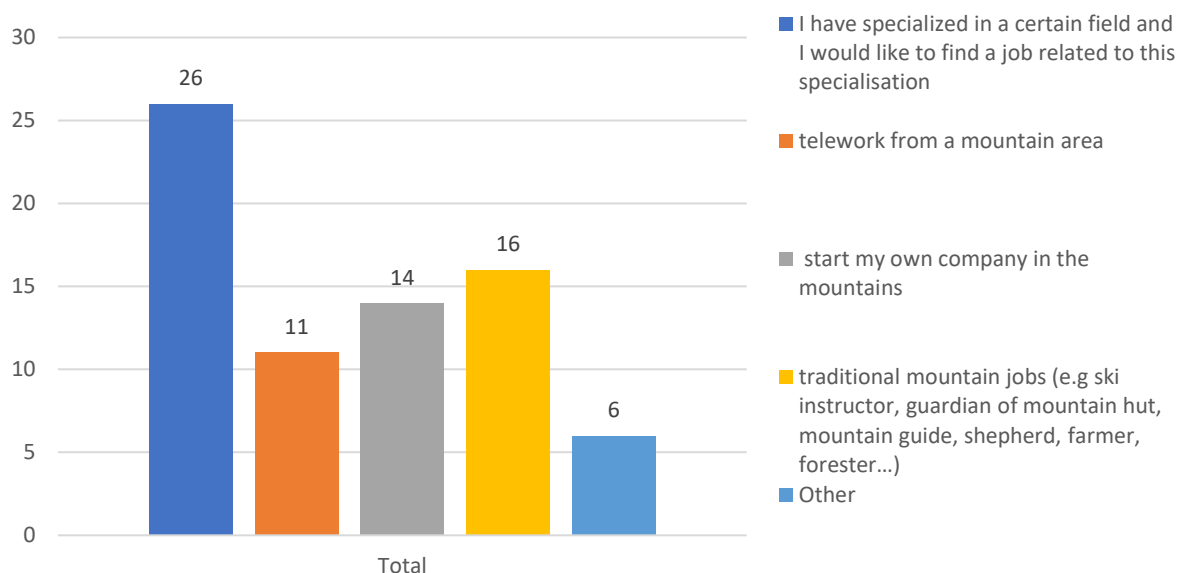


Figure 29: What kind of job are you doing or looking for? Answers from Italy

## Italy: attractive mountains for young people, especially since COVID-19

In the case of Italy, there is an interesting singularity when it comes to young people who currently do not live in mountain areas. There is a significant proportion of young people surveyed who live permanently in the mountains, 65% (figure 32), which is higher than at European level (55%). However, very few live there only occasionally, such as seasonal workers for example, they only represent 5% of young people in Italy, compared to 22% at European scale. Moreover, 30% of respondents in the Italian case do not live at all in mountain areas, compared to 23% for Europe.

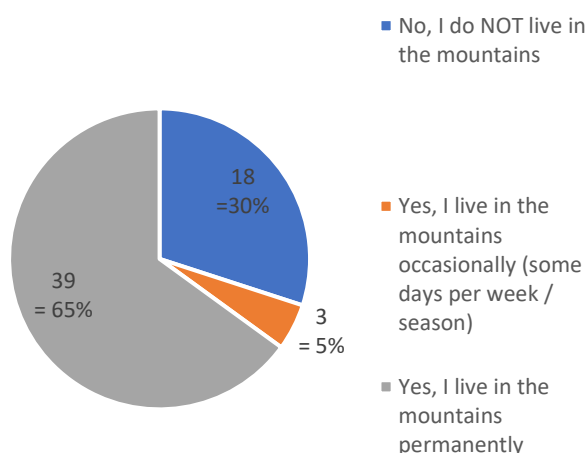


Figure 30: Do respondents live in mountain areas? Answers from Italy

It is therefore interesting to take a closer look at these profiles. If we look at the young people who already live in the mountains, the vast majority wish to stay there, a few would like to leave for a while and then return, and very few want to leave for good. In this respect, the Italian results are very similar to the percentages obtained at the European level. Why do most of them want to stay in the mountains? Again, the answers are similar to those obtained at European scale: they value first of all the proximity to nature and the quality of life in the mountains. There is therefore no real specificity in this respect.

The particularity of the Italian case lies rather in the attractiveness of the mountains for young people who do not yet live there, the 30% of young people from Italy visible on figure 32. When asked whether they would like to live in the mountains, the share of young people who answer categorically "no" or who are undecided is relatively close to the figures reported for Europe: respectively 16% and 39% (figure 33) in Italy compared to respectively 12% and 37% for Europe. Those who say no do so for the same reasons as their European neighbours: they point to the lack of dynamism in the mountains, their attraction for a more urban lifestyle and the lack of employment in the mountains.

Italy is singular when looking at those who want to move to the mountains, and especially when looking at how long they have wanted to live there. While fewer young people have been thinking about moving to the mountains for a long time than the European average (28% in Italy against 46% in Europe), Italy records the highest rate of young people wanting to move to the mountains in response to the COVID-19 crisis (17% in Italy against only 5% in Europe), although this percentage is also high in Romania (13%).

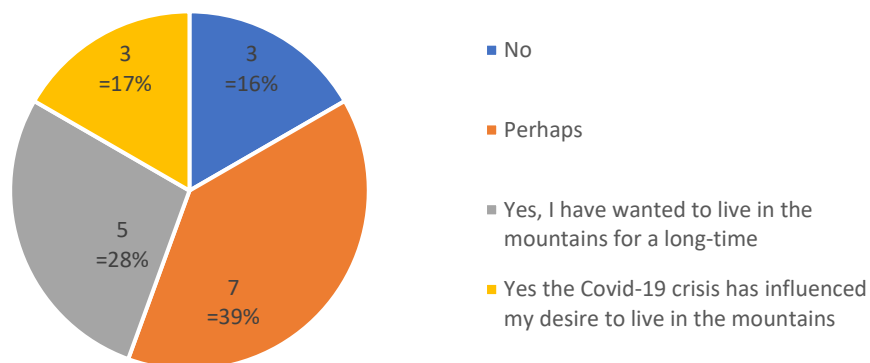


Figure 31: Do you want to live in mountain areas? Answers from Italy

## Internet access, public transport provision and cultural offer disapproved

Regarding the appreciation of the services available in mountain areas, Italy differs a lot from its European neighbours in terms of Internet access. Italy records the highest level of dissatisfaction with Internet access of all the countries in our survey. On a European scale, 75% of young people are satisfied or very satisfied with their connection, 74% in Spain and even 79% in Romania. However, in Italy, only 54% of the young people surveyed told us that they were happy with their Internet access (figure 34).



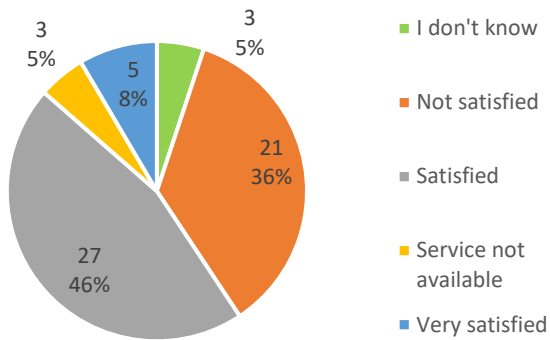


Figure 32: Satisfaction with the Internet Access. Answers from Italy

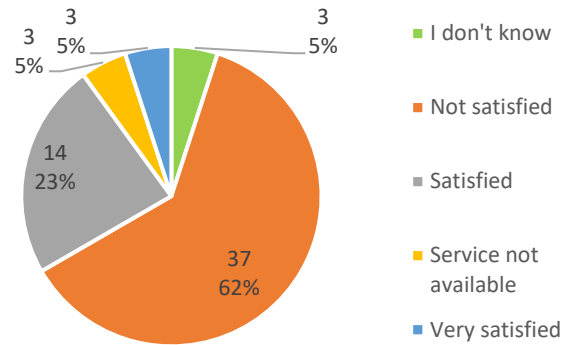


Figure 33: Satisfaction with public transport. Answers from Italy

Mobility also seems to be a problem for young people in the mountains in Italy. 67% of them tell us that they are dissatisfied with the public transport offer in their region, or even that the offer is non-existent (figure 35). In general, in none of the countries surveyed did young people say they were satisfied by transport in the mountains (on a European scale, 52% of young people said they were dissatisfied or reported that the offer was non-existent). However, Italy is the country where young people are most dissatisfied with mobility.

Where Italy also stands out in terms of access to services is on the matter of culture. Of all the services on which we questioned young people, this is the one on which there are the greatest differences between countries. In Europe, on average, 65% of young people in mountainous areas say they are satisfied or very satisfied with access to culture. The record is set in Norway with 87%. In Italy, on the other hand, only 35% of young people are happy with the cultural offer (figure 36).

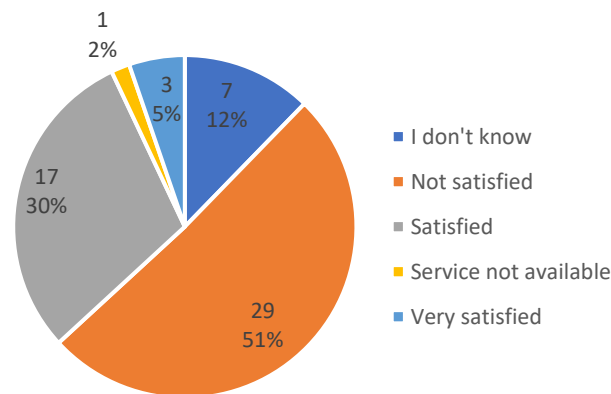


Figure 36: Satisfaction with cultural offers. Answers from Italy

Finally, this is not a peculiarity as the same phenomenon can be observed in other countries studied, young people living in the Italian mountains are mostly dissatisfied with both the educational offer and the employment services. For 52% of young people, educational opportunities in the mountains of Italy are either disappointing or non-existent (figure 37). Although the dissatisfaction rate does not reach that of Romania (73%), it is well above the European average (35%). It is very close to the opinion of young people living in Spain (53% dissatisfied). The same is true for employment services. Even though Italy is not the country where young people are least satisfied, 41% are dissatisfied and 16% cannot access services at all (figure 38), which is well above the European average (24% of young Europeans living the mountains are not satisfied with employment services and these are non-existent for 11% of people).



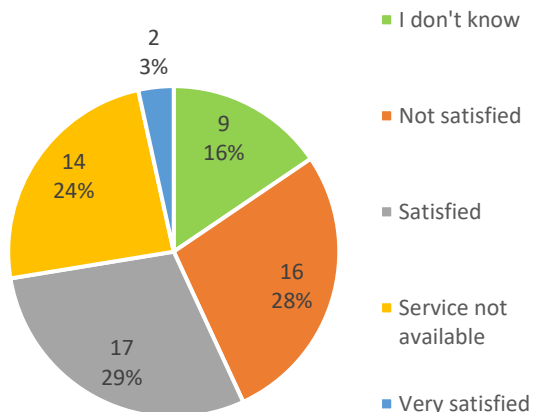


Figure 34: Satisfaction with Education programmes. Answers from Italy

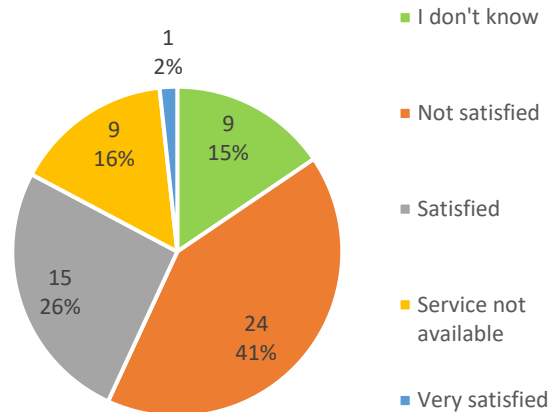


Figure 35: Satisfaction with services to share job opportunities. Answers from Italy

## The ideal mountain for 2040: economic and social diversification at the heart of the concerns

In this survey, we have left the youth the possibility to freely describe their ideal mountain for the future in a written contribution. In the case of Italy, the ideal mountain for young people could be summed up in this word: diversification. In their description of the mountain of 2040, all the demands of young people living in Italy come back to this idea of diversification: they want more socio-cultural dynamism and a mix of cultures, and they also aspire to an economic diversification of their territory.

The statements of young people are a call for more socio-cultural mix in the mountains, and, in particular, a mix of generations and their respective cultures. Young people want to continue living in the mountains and to a large extent (95%) they want to see their regions repopulated (figure 39). As in all the other countries in our survey, they want to see mainly other young people and families settle.

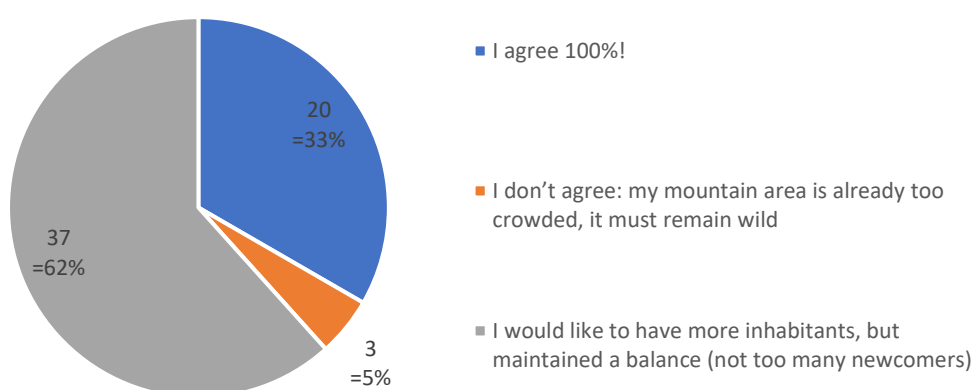


Figure 36: Would you like to see more inhabitants in your mountain? Answers from Italy

“

*I would like to live in a clean mountain, but above all a repopulated one.*  
**Young farmer from Piedmont region, Italy**

“

“

*Inclusive villages that make cultural diversity a value; overcoming mountain culture in the sense of respect for ancient traditions towards a new, more contemporary culture, in which the positive aspects of ancient culture are preserved but to which new values of inclusion of open cultural and artistic expression are added.*

**Young researcher from Lombardy region, Italy**

“

Mountain youth in Italy wants to stay and wants to see others settle too but they regret that mountain people are not open-minded enough, nor completely open to new ideas. As a matter of fact, young people say that it is difficult to find their place in existing Italian mountain communities. They aspire to renew the mountain culture, while preserving the traditions.

“

*A mountain inhabited by people who are open-minded, cooperative and aware of technological progress and environmental issues.*

**Young researcher from Lombardy region, Italy**

“

*Where the community offers social spaces to historical inhabitants and new citizens, who can arrive from distant countries or cities, transmitting the oral tradition of the place (e.g.: the dialect, local traditions, legends).*

**Young student in Italian literature, Piedmont region, Italy**

“

“

At the same time, we observe that mountain youth from Italy is also calling for economic diversification. They regret not being able to easily find a job in the mountains that is compatible with their degree and deplore the fact that most of the economy and employment is based on tourism.

“

*In the mountains there is a need for "stable" life and not just waves of tourism. Many professions and job opportunities have disappeared because the territorial management chains have been cut off (forestry production, livestock farming and mountain agriculture, related services, professional training).*

**Young forester from Tuscany region, Italy**

“

“

Overall, young people are not against tourism in itself but rather criticizing a mountain economy only oriented towards tourism, neglecting other sectors of the economy, both traditional and new professions, and decreasing the attractiveness of the area. For them, the diversification of the mountain economy is not only related to their own employment. It is also connected to the demographic and socio-economic impact of tourism, which many young people criticise.

*I believe that mountain villages that now depend heavily, almost exclusively, on a tourist economy are not an effective solution, in my opinion we should develop the local economy as it was in the past. That way there would be less depopulation and more attention to the different problems that arise over the years. A population that lives permanently in a place is more capable of taking care of its territory because it knows it better.*

**Young pizzaiola, unknown region, Italy**

“

The desire to be heard and to find their place in the life of mountain communities is also reflected in the priorities expressed by young people from Italian mountains. Indeed, the demand for more participatory democracy to involve young people in local decision making is a top priority (30 occurrences – 11.4% of responses, figure 40). It is the only country in our survey to put democracy above all other priorities.

“  
*A mountain where young people can stay, be listened to and helped to realise their aspirations.*  
**Young student in law and management of protected areas, Piedmont region, Italy**  
 “

Equally high on the list is the need for more social activities for young people in the mountains; it also correlates with their desire to see more young people and families settle (25 occurrences – 9.5% of responses). Respect for the mountain environment through behavioural change and more initiatives to combat climate change, which is reflected in the young peoples’ free contributions, are also tied for second place in their ranking of priorities (both 26 occurrences – 9.9% of responses). Of similar importance and, on equal terms, are the desire to welcome newcomers and the need for more support in setting up a business (both 25 occurrences – 9.5% of responses).

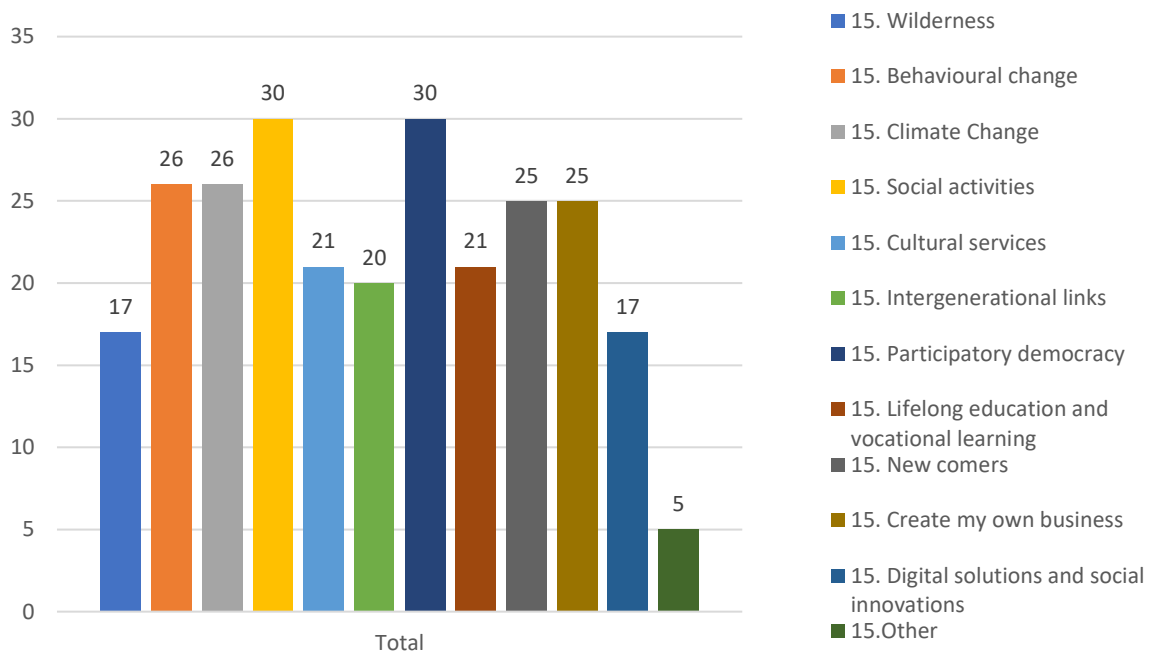


Figure 40: What would you like to see more in your mountain area? Answers from Italy

In the words of the young people living in the Italian mountains, through their answers to our questions or their open contributions, we can perceive a need to be heard, to be able to participate in the life of mountain communities, and to take part in the decision-making process to build their society of tomorrow. What emerges is a desire to bring into the public debate the issues that affect young people, such as climate change and the lack of jobs.

## KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- Italian mountain areas are attractive for young people. In Italy, the COVID-19 crisis seems to play a particularly important role in the attractiveness of the mountains, with many young people now eager to move there. Among the countries covered by our survey, Italy is the one that could benefit most from an urban exodus.
- Young people's dissatisfaction with the accessibility of services is strong in Italy. In particular, they identified the greatest issues as a low access to the Internet, a poor availability of public transport and a lack of cultural activities. The lack of employment and educational provision, as in most other countries, is also problematic. This is a key issue for the attractiveness of the mountains. Young people who want to stay in the mountains, and the large number of those who want to move there, must be able to find a job, transport and a reliable internet connection. For their personal development, they should also find a good socio-cultural offer and educational programmes, otherwise they might not stay.
- In terms of employment and economic development, young people in Italy would like to see the mountains move away from the 100% tourism model. They negatively perceive the demographic effects of mass tourism on the mountains, but also the lack of diversified jobs, due to an economy mainly focused on one sector.
- Italy is the country in our survey where we observe the greatest demand from young people in the mountains to be heard and to participate in local life. They want to be involved in decisions, to renew the culture of mountain communities and to bring their ideas into the debate.



# Being young in a mountain area

## Norway



## Respondents' profiles in brief

In the framework of our European survey on mountain youth, we collected 22 questionnaires from young people living in Norway. This is a fairly low figure, which we obviously cannot claim to be representative, but it can provide some food for thought.

Respondents from Norway are mostly young workers (55%). The average age is much younger on a European scale, with 64% aged 18-20 compared to 28% in Europe. In the Norwegian case, all young people surveyed live in the mountains, either permanently (77%) or occasionally (23%), like seasonal workers for instance (figure 41).

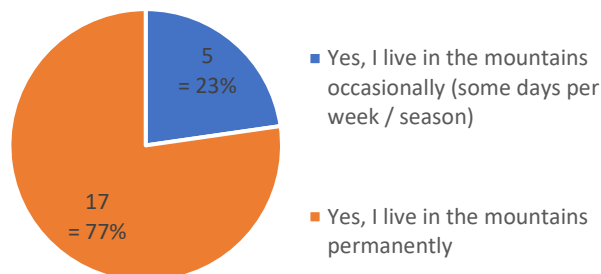


Figure 41: Do you live in a mountain area? Answers from Norway

## Norway: education prompts young people to leave the mountains

All the young people surveyed in Norway currently live in the mountains. But do they want to stay there? A majority of young people say "no". Norway is, along with Poland, the only country in our survey where the majority of young people say they want to leave. However, the Norwegian case is different from the Polish profile. In Norway, 18% of young people want to leave permanently (figure 42), compared to 29% in Poland.

A marked difference in Norway is the proportion of young people who would like to leave for a while and then come back to the mountains. They are 59% in Norway, and thus represent the majority of respondents.

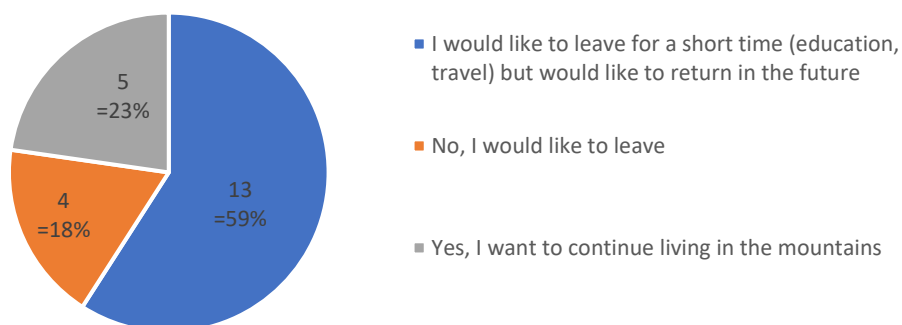


Figure 42: Do you want to stay living in the mountains? Answers from Norway

As in many of the countries studied in our report, the main reasons why young people leave include an attraction to a more urban lifestyle and the lack of dynamism of the mountains (2 occurrences, 16% each, figure 43). Equally important is the lack of job opportunities in the mountains. But the main motivation cited by young people who want to leave is education, with training opportunities elsewhere than in the mountains (4 occurrences, 33% of responses).



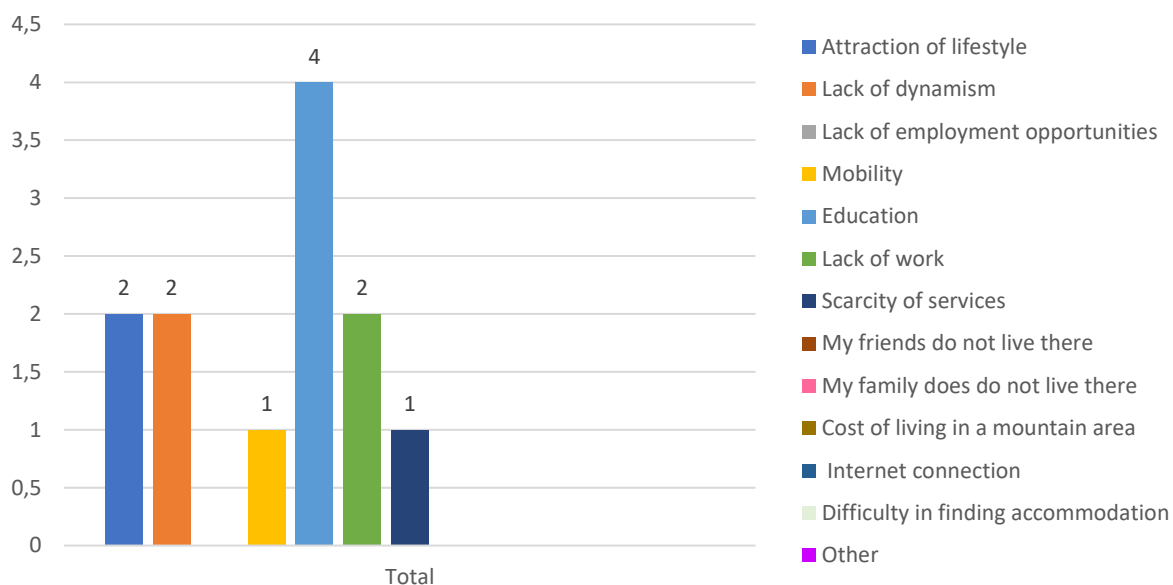


Figure 37: If you do not want to live in the mountains, why? Answers from Norway

Moreover, it is also interesting to observe that in Norway, the quality of life is not the main asset of the mountains emphasised by young people. The reason why they appreciate mountain life the most is the presence of their family (16 occurrences, 19.5% of responses – figure 44). The presence of friends and the sharing of common values, such as solidarity and belonging to a community, are also more important than in other countries (12 occurrences each, 13.6%).

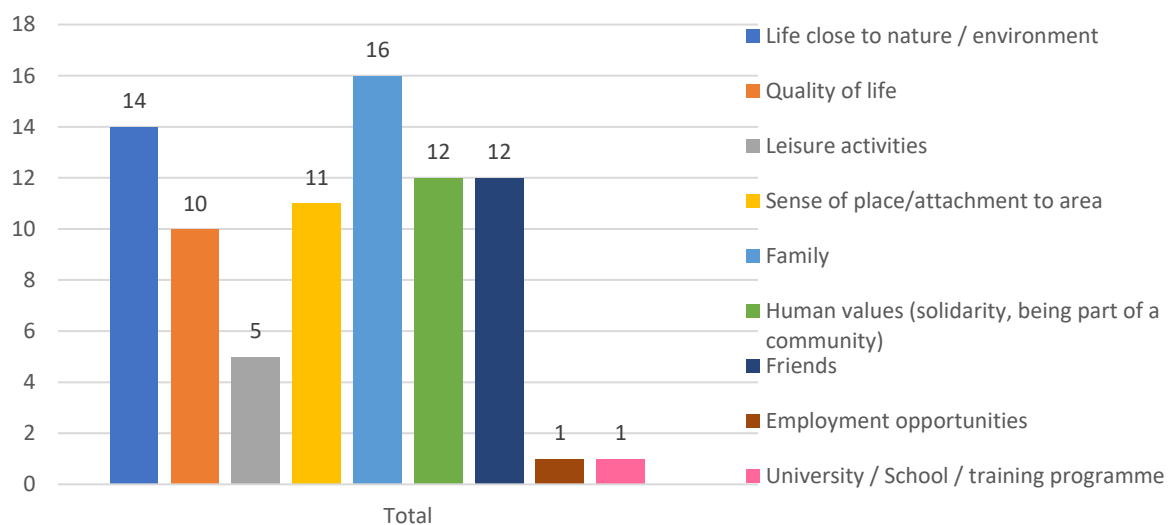


Figure 44: If you want to live in the mountains, why? Answers from Norway

## Strong dissatisfaction over education and mobility

We asked young people living in Norway to assess the services available in their area. For some, Norway has similar satisfaction averages to those recorded at the European level: young people are very satisfied with access to the Internet and healthcare for example.

For other services, young people in Norway are much more satisfied than their European neighbours. For example, 87% of young people are satisfied with the cultural offer in their mountain region, compared to 65% in Europe and only 35% in Italy.

On the other hand, there are certain services for which young people are very dissatisfied in Norway and this may be an obstacle to the attractiveness of the territories. Firstly, the public transport offer, which is considered unsatisfactory by 91% of young people (figure 45). Norway ranks far ahead of Italy (67% dissatisfied) and of the European average (52%).

The provision of educational programmes is also a weak point according to young people in Norway. Dissatisfaction with education in the mountains is a common theme in our results; but with 55% of young people dissatisfied in Norway (figure 46), this makes it the second most dissatisfied country (after Romania, where the rate rises to 73%). On the contrary, employment services do not seem to be a challenge in Norway.

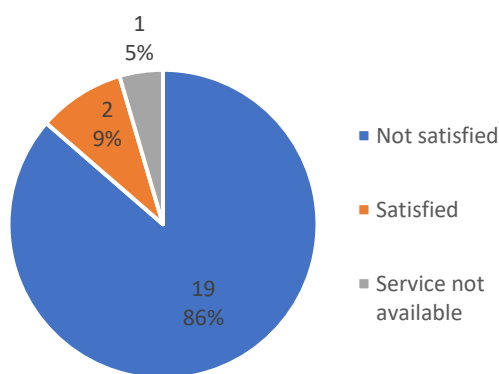


Figure 38: Satisfaction with public transport. Answers from Norway

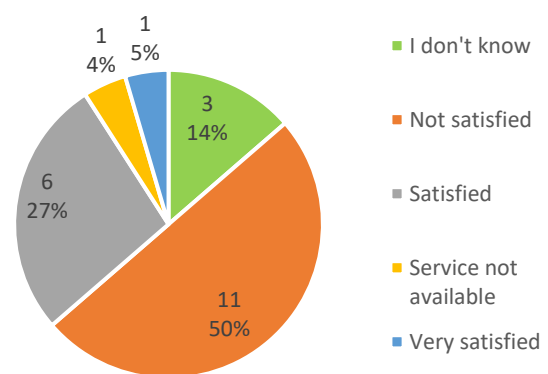


Figure 39: Satisfaction with Education programmes. Answers from Norway

## The ideal mountain for 2040: a dynamic community to attract young people

Few written contributions were sent by respondents living in Norway to describe their ideal mountain for 2040, so a clear picture could not be established. The answers to some of the other questions may, however, provide some insights. When asked about what they would like to see more in the mountains, young people in Norway replied that they would like to have access to more social activities (16 occurrences, 19.5% - figure 47) and to cultural and inter-generational engagement (10 occurrences each, 12.1%).

“

*An urban society of diversity with adapted meeting places across generations and ages. A good leisure and activity offer, protection of some nature areas, but where nature is used by the inhabitants frequently.*

**Young high school student from the county of Innlandet, Østlandet region, Norway**

“

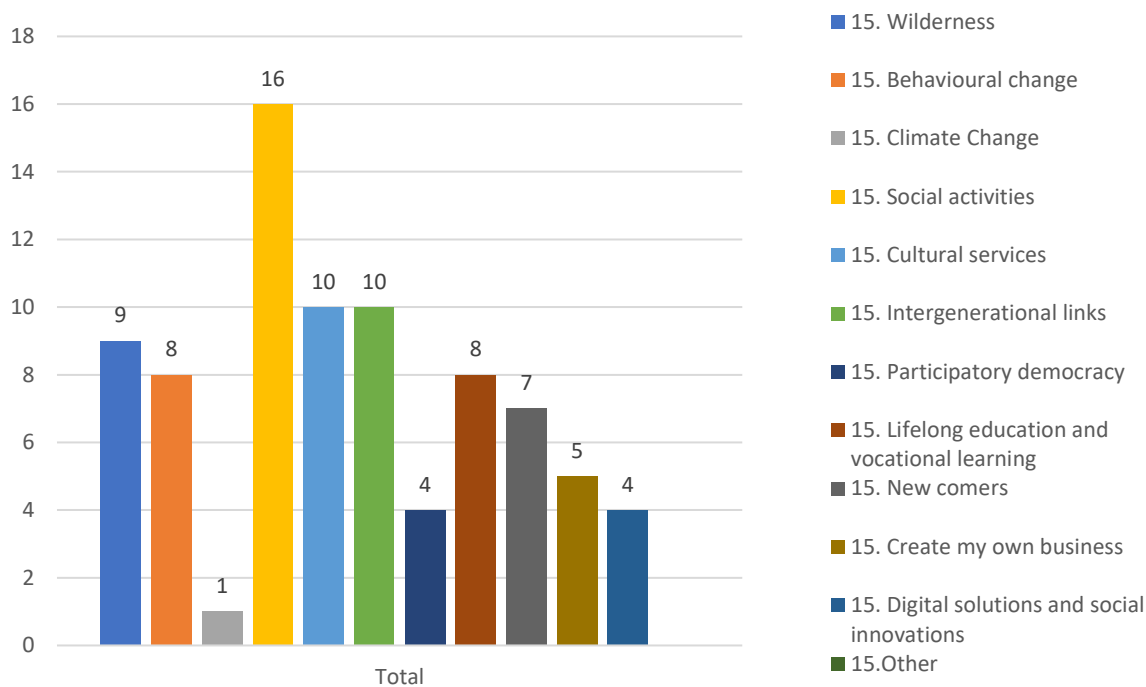


Figure 40: What would you like to see more in your mountain area? Answers from Norway

Access to other types of services is also mentioned in young people’s description of the ideal mountain area. There is no specificity in this case, it is rather a global call for more services in general.

“

*Proximity to nature, but most importantly proximity to services such as health, school, work, etc.  
Young student from the county of Innlandet, Østlandet region, Norway*

“

“

*More jobs, hospitals, shops, better public transport and trains.  
Young nursing student from the county of Innlandet, Østlandet region, Norway*

“

Young people in Norway are 100% keen to see more people settle in the mountains (figure 48). As in the other countries studied, there is a particular willingness to welcome other young people or families. A particularity compared to their European neighbours is that young people in Norway then prefer to give priority to other Norwegian citizens than to EU or third country citizens.

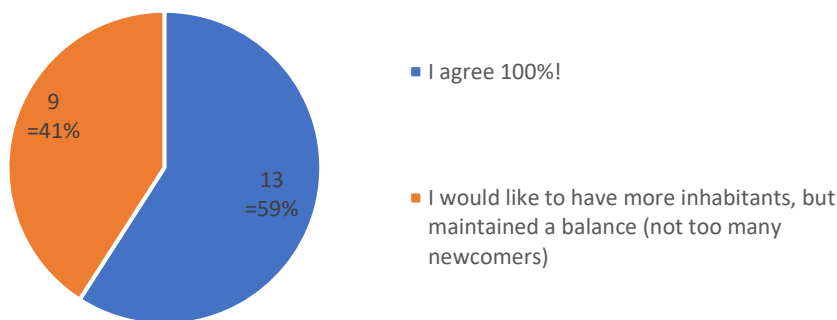


Figure 41: Would you like to welcome more inhabitants in your area? Answers from Norway



## KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- Young people currently living in Norwegian mountain areas feel attracted by other territories. They want to leave their region, especially to experience education opportunities elsewhere. Thus, in Norway, more than in other countries in our survey, the life cycle of young people must be taken into account. These profiles must also be integrated into territorial attractiveness strategies to encourage them to return later.
- The quality of life and the environment, unlike in other countries, are not the main attractants for young people to the mountains. It is necessary to work on educational and employment opportunities and to develop social and cultural offers so that young people have a greater appreciation of life in the mountains.

**Being young in a mountain area**

**Poland**



## Respondents' profiles in brief

As part of our survey, we collected 36 questionnaires from young people living in Poland. The majority of them (55%) are aged between 21 and 25 years old. They are either workers (47%) or students (45%) and only a few are looking for a job (8%).

The particularity of the young people surveyed in Poland is that the majority of them (53%) do not live in the mountains (figure 49). However, they often go there and for the same reasons as observed at European level: to enjoy nature and landscapes, hiking and skiing.

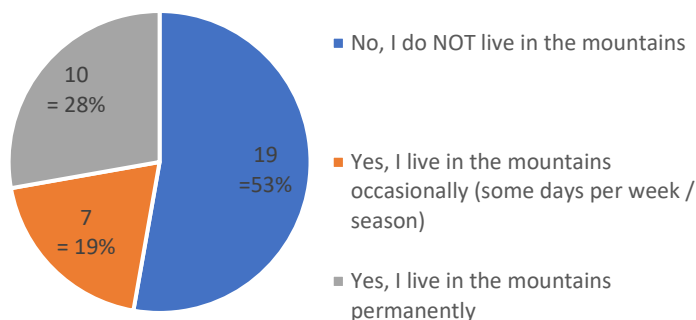


Figure 42: Do you live in a mountain area? Answers from Poland

## Polish mountains suffer from a lack of attractiveness

How do young people perceive the mountains in Poland? Do they want to stay or even move there? For those who already live in the mountains, either permanently or occasionally (as seasonal workers for example), we observe that almost one third of young people (29%) would like to leave the mountains (figure 50). This figure is much higher than at the European level, where only 5% of young mountain residents express a wish to leave. The share of those who would like to leave for a while and then return (30%) is comparable to that found at European level (29%); however, due to the large number of young people intending to leave, there is only a minority of young people who say they want to stay in the mountains (41%).

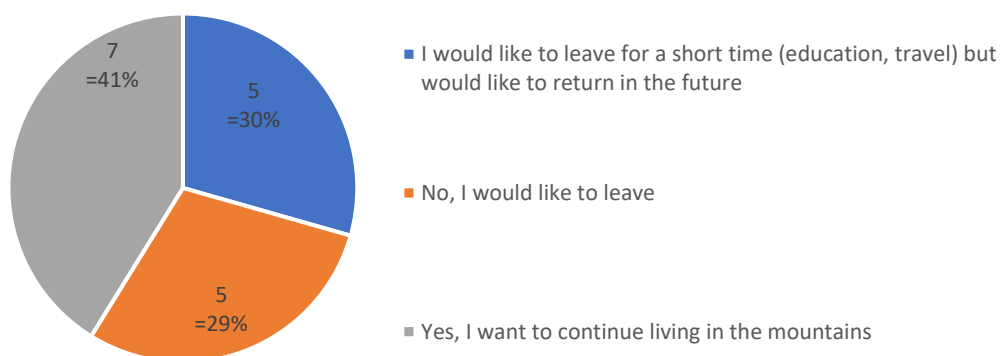


Figure 50: Do you want to stay in a mountain area? Answers from Poland

The 41% of young people who want to stay mainly stress the life close to nature in the region (22 occurrences, 22% of responses - Figure 51) and their attachment to their region (16 times, 20% of responses). Poland is, together with Norway, the only country covered by our survey where the duo "living close to nature and quality of life" does not come out on top of the reasons why young people want to stay in the mountains.



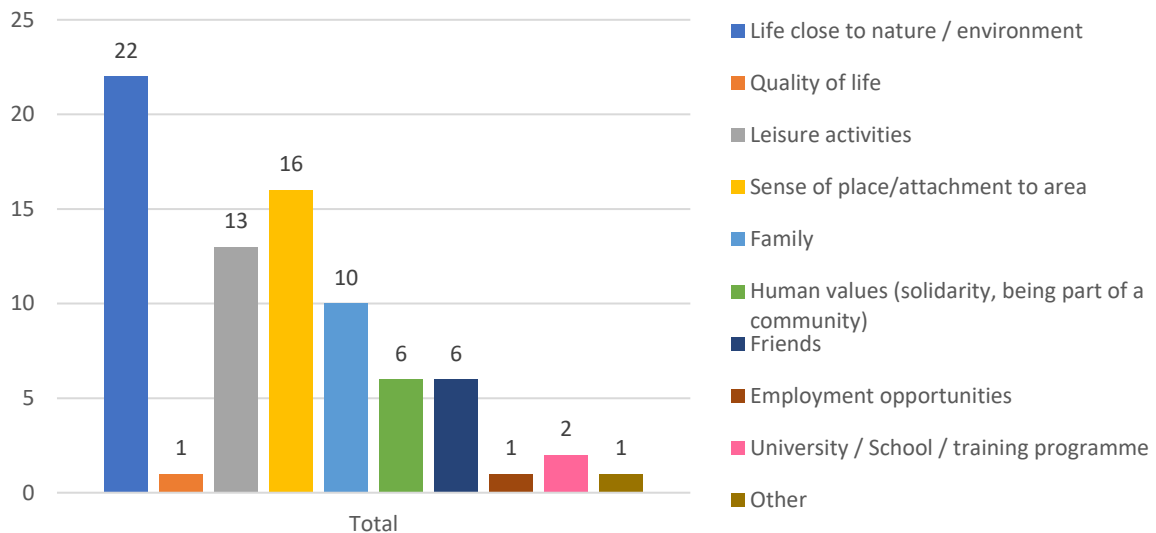


Figure 51: Why do you want to stay in the mountains? Answers from Poland

What about young people who live in Poland but not in the mountains? Would they want to move there? Unfortunately, we cannot say that mountains are attractive for young people in this case. Only 26% of them would like to start a life in a mountain area (figure 52), either for a long time or since the COVID-19 crisis, compared to 51% at European scale. When asked why they do not live or want to live there, the lack of employment is the main reason mentioned.

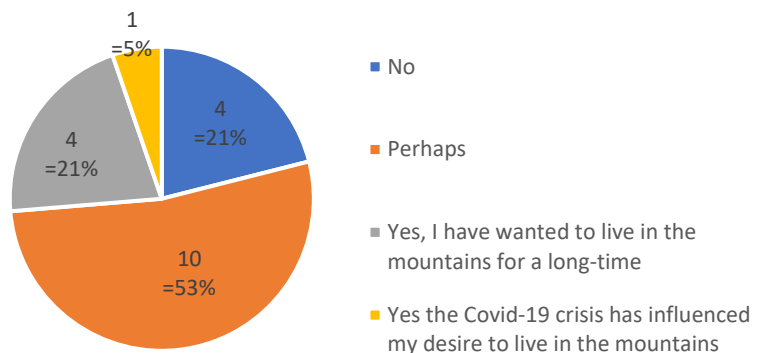


Figure 43: Do you want to live in the mountains? Answers from Poland

## Low satisfaction with the provision of education and training

What about young people's satisfaction with the provision of services in Poland's mountains? While in the other countries covered by our survey, we can see significant peculiarities emerging, such as dissatisfaction with housing in Spain or with health in Romania, there is no very specific trend apparent in Poland. For most of the services on which we questioned young people, the satisfaction rate is consistent with the European average.

Access to education, whether lifelong or for vocational training, appears to be deficient: 38% of young people in Poland consider the provision to be inadequate or non-existent in the mountains (figure 53). Again, this phenomenon is encountered in most of the countries surveyed, Poland is slightly above the European average of 35%.

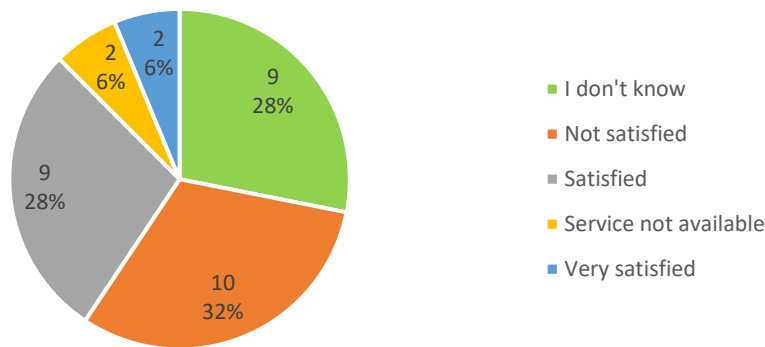


Figure 53: Satisfaction with education programmes. Answers from Poland

The assessment of the services available in the mountains is also reflected in the priorities of young people for their mountain area. In their top 5 priorities (figure 54), both the development of educational offer and of cultural activities are in equal fifth position (14 occurrences each, 10% of responses each). We also find the demand for more support mechanisms for youth entrepreneurship in first place (18 occurrences, 12.9% of responses), perhaps in response to dissatisfaction with employment services.

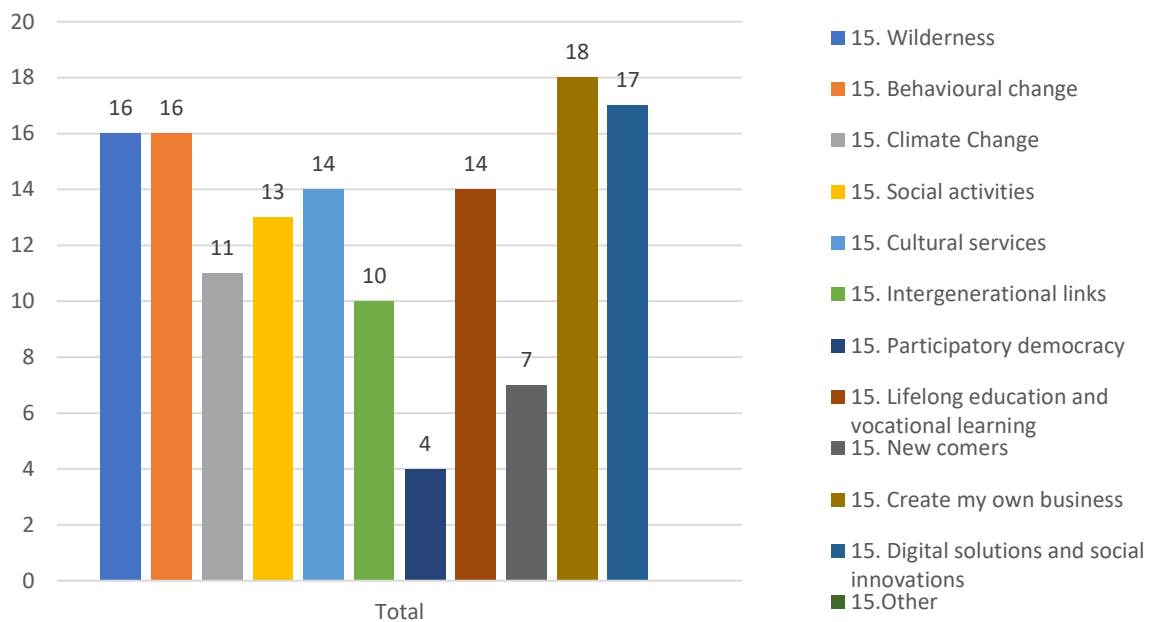


Figure 44: What would you like to see more in your mountain area? Answers from Poland

## The ideal mountain for 2040: living in harmony with the mountain environment

Of the 36 young respondents living in Poland, only about ten agreed to describe in writing their ideal vision of the mountains in 2040. Therefore, it is clearly not possible to draw any conclusions, but only to report their words.

All the written contributions of the young people are focused on the preservation of the mountain environment. In particular, the young people mention the need to live in harmony with nature and to respect it. They also mention a lot less polluted air and clean environment.



“

*A place which is not polluted, with well-developed ecological infrastructures, clean water, where people live in harmony with nature.*  
**Young employee in an administration from Podkarpackie region, Poland**

“

This is also in line with the fact that their top 5 priorities (figure 54) include in equal third place more wilderness and more behavior change towards more nature-friendly initiatives (16 occurrences each, 11.4% of responses each). Living in harmony with the mountain environment is moreover cited for both permanent residents and tourists.

“

*One where there is balance, where there are lots of tourists, foreigners and citizens from my country, but who can still behave with respect and humility towards the area. I would like an environment which is not polluted, which has a lot of green space and untouched nature. I would like such a place to be developed culturally for tourism and businesses.*  
**Young barmaid from Małopolska region, Poland**

“

## KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- Poland is the country where mountains seem to be the least attractive for young people. Those who already live there are tempted to leave and those who do not live there regularly are not interested in moving there. However, it is important to keep in mind that these figures only reflect the opinion of the 36 young people who contributed to the survey.
- The youth from Poland seems to regret in particular the lack of training and employment opportunities in mountain areas. This could be a factor to address in order to make these territories more attractive.
- The preservation of the natural environment of the mountains is a central element of the young people's vision of the future of the mountains. It is therefore an essential asset for the mountainous regions of Poland.

Being young in a mountain area

Romania



## Respondents' profiles in brief

In the framework of our European wide survey on mountain youth, we collected 88 questionnaires from young people living in Romanian mountain areas. For Romania, there is the exact same balanced distribution of women and men than in our European report. Overall, our respondents from Romania are older than the European average, since 58% are between 26 and 29 years old (compared to 46% at European level). As in the case of Spain, this may explain why we have here a higher proportion of young workers (67%), and fewer young students (25%), still in comparison with our European average (respectively 37% and 56%). The specificity of the profiles of young respondents from Romania is their occupation. The vast majority of them want to create their own business in the mountains (51 occurrences – 44,7% of responses – figure 55).

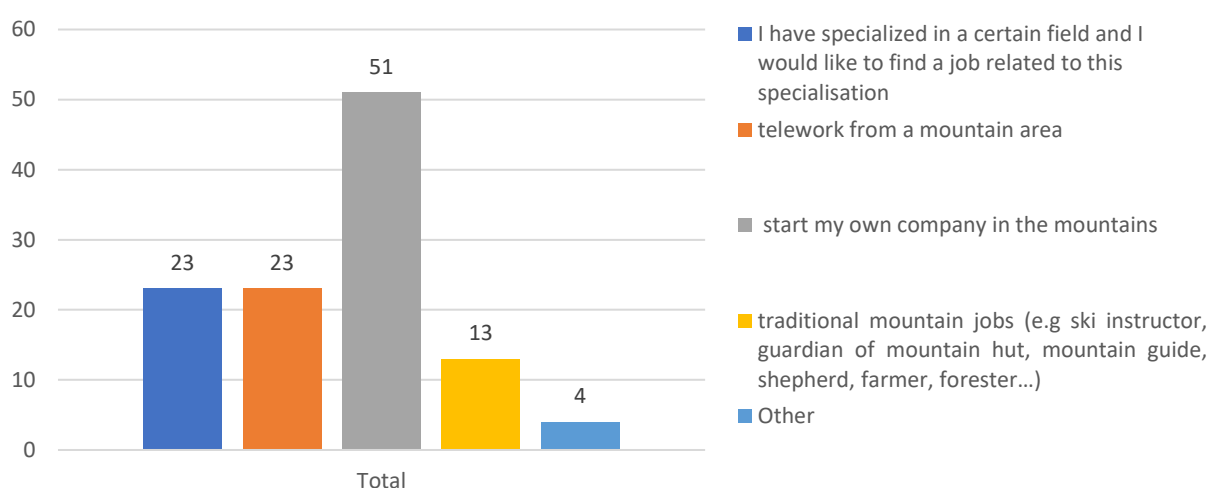


Figure 45: What kind of job are you doing or looking for? Answers from Romania

In fact, when questioned about what they would like to see more of in their region, the most common request from young people living in Romanian mountains is more support mechanisms for youth entrepreneurship (51 occurrences, 13,5% - figure 56).

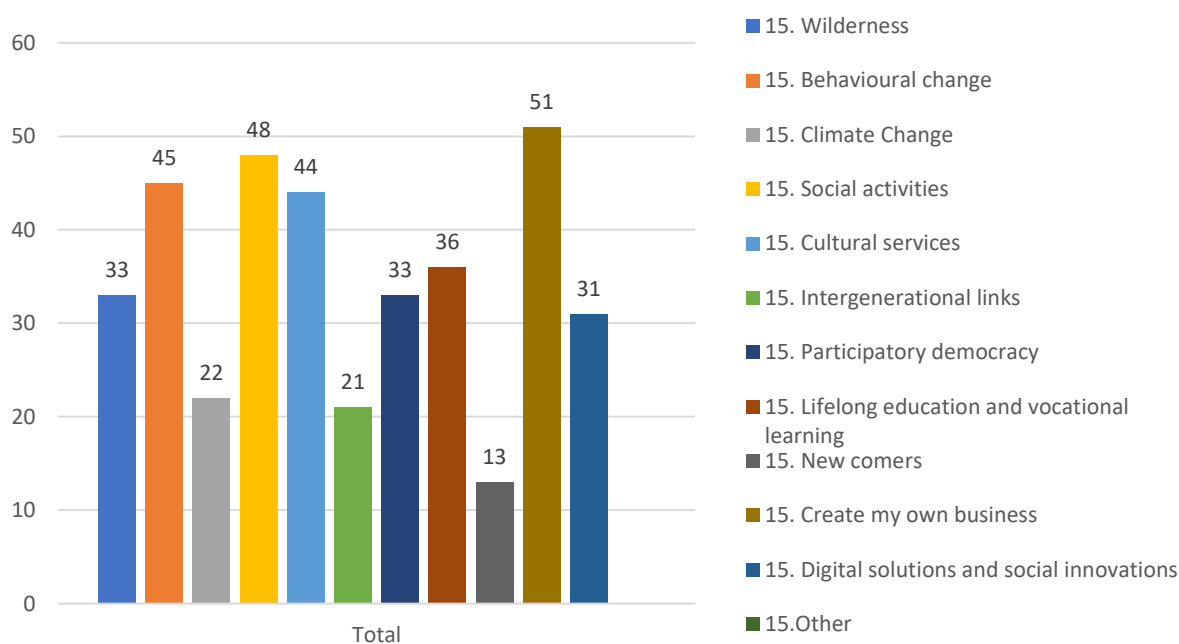


Figure 46: What would you like to see more in your mountain area? Answers from Romania

## Romania: the most attractive mountainous country for the youth

In total in Romania, 70% of our respondents live permanently in the mountains and another 21% do so occasionally (figure 57). In the Romanian case, as also observed at European scale, those who do not live in the mountains visit them frequently to enjoy their natural environments and landscapes and to go hiking.

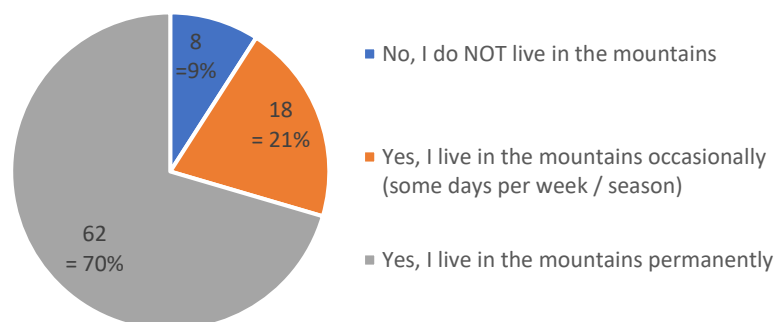


Figure 47: Do you live in the mountains? Answers from Romania

Among all the countries covered by our survey, Romania is the one with the highest attraction rate of young people for the mountains! When questioned about their desire to stay or leave, of the young people who are currently already living in a mountain area, 88% claimed that they wanted to stay (figure 58). And even if we take a closer look at those who do not yet live in the mountains (the 9% of young people visible on figure 59), they seem to be significantly attracted by mountain life: 63% of them have wanted to live there since a long time or since the COVID-19 outbreak, which has influenced 13% of young people (figure 59).

If we analyse the main reasons why young people in Romania want to live in the mountains, we see that they are the same than the ones observed at European scale: a life close to nature and the quality of life. Yet, in Romania, an attachment to the area and the presence of family seem to play the greatest role.

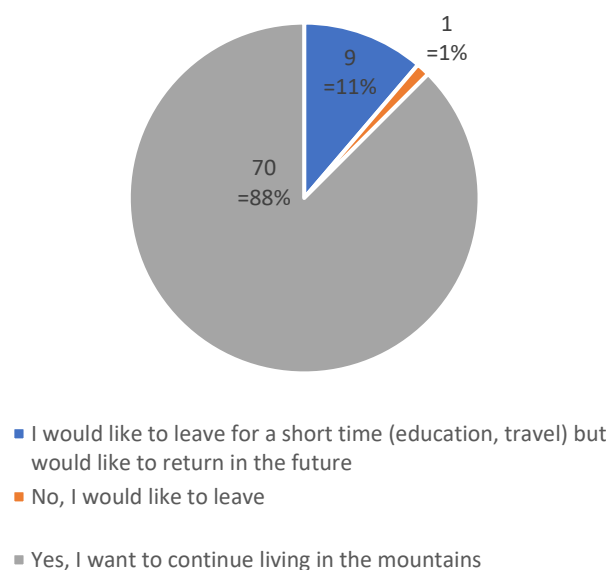


Figure 58: Do you want to stay living in the mountains? Answers from Romania

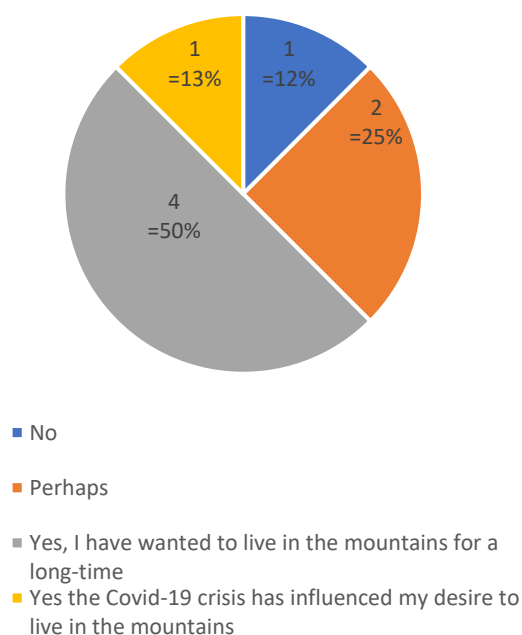


Figure 59: If you do not live in the mountains, would you like to live there? Answers from Romania



## Dissatisfaction over access to health, education, and employment

Regarding the accessibility of a wide range of services in Romania, the discontent of young people in the mountains differs from other countries. While the satisfaction on the access to Internet is even higher than at European level (79% of young people in Romania are satisfied or very satisfied, compared to 75% at European scale), other services are subject to high rates of dissatisfaction.

77% of the mountain youth in Romania claim to be unhappy with services to share and receive employment opportunities (figure 60). Among them, 21% of young people say the service is not even available in their area; in comparison, this percentage is only 11% at the European level. In relation to education, 73% of young people in the mountains tell us that access to training, for example lifelong or vocational, is either unsatisfactory or non-existent (figure 61). Therefore, Romania records the highest dissatisfaction rate on education across all Europe.

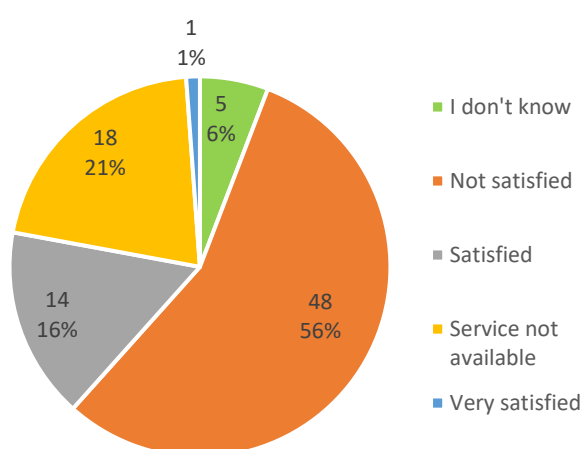


Figure 60: Satisfaction with services to share job opportunities. Answers from Romania

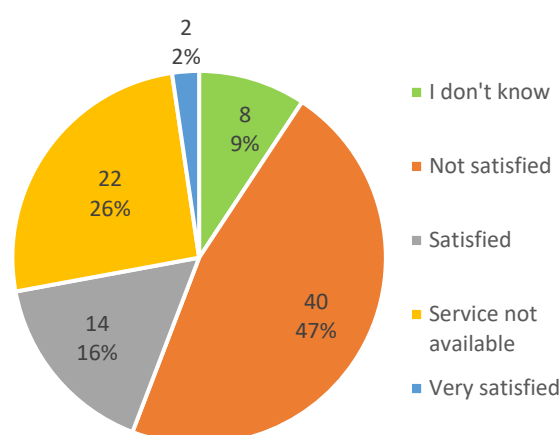


Figure 61: Satisfaction with Education programmes. Answers from Romania

Finally, another specificity that stands out on access to services in Romanian mountains is the access to health infrastructure. While on a European scale, 73% of young people are satisfied with healthcare, Romania has the lowest satisfaction rate in this respect, with only half of respondents being satisfied (figure 62). Euromontana has already stressed the important inequalities in terms of access to healthcare between different countries and between mountainous areas and other regions; in the Romanian Apuseni mountains, for example, there is an important lack of pharmacies. With only 1 pharmacy for more than 5.000 people in most of the region, this is four times less pharmacies than in the rest of the country and, with the natural constraints in mountain areas, such poor supply means a long distance to travel for medication<sup>12</sup>.

“

*In the Brateş area, where I stay, it takes 50 minutes or even an hour to reach an ambulance, and I specify the road is very good and paved.*

*Young student in economy from the Neamţ judeţ, Romania*

”

<sup>12</sup> Euromontana, [Ageing in mountain areas: Contributions of Euromontana for the Green Paper on Ageing](#), March 2021

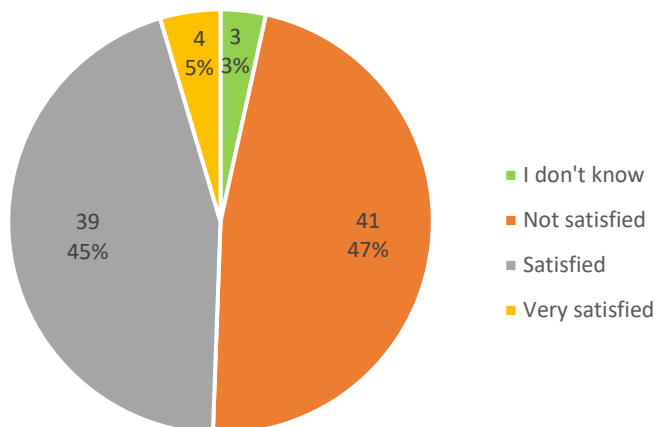


Figure 62: Satisfaction with access to health care. Answers from Romania

## The ideal mountain for 2040: more basic infrastructure for residents and a sustainable and small-scale tourism model for visitors

What is the ideal mountain area described by mountain youth in our questionnaire? Responses from young people living in Romanian mountain areas are more diverse than in other countries. They mention many topics, ranging from attracting young people to avoid an ageing population, valuing cultural heritage and traditions, developing tourism, building infrastructure to create employment and preserving the environment. Due to the diversity of priorities mentioned by young people in Romania, it is difficult to define a clear trend, but three issues are particularly highlighted in their written contributions.

Firstly, young people in Romania describe a mountain oriented towards sustainable tourism. Many of them would like to see the development of a mode of tourism based on the enhancement of local traditions, and in particular gastronomy. For this, many young people believe that, in order to attract tourists, there is a need for increased mobility, including sustainable mobility with more bicycle paths. Tourism is one of the most mentioned topics by young people describing their ideal mountain for the future, and almost all of them insist on the sustainability of the model, referring to small accommodation providers, activities that connect tourists to nature and to a model that depends on a network of small local businesses.

“

*Development of tourist infrastructure, like health centres based on youth initiatives (yoga), local brands, adventure tourism, ecumenical tourism, traditional festivals, local gastronomy.*

**Young administrator in a video company from the Vâlcea judeţ, Romania**

“

*Infrastructure for all means of tourist travel (bicycle, car, bus, electric scooter, ATV). The accommodation units should be agritourism. Supporting local businesses in the mountain area (farms, agriculture) through local businesses. For example, agritourism pensions should only buy products from local producers.*

**Young student from the Cluj judeţ, Romania**

“

Mobility is not mentioned by young respondents only when it comes to tourism, many young people would like to have more infrastructures in general. Roads, and in particular highways, are the most mentioned ones by respondents, and Romania is unique in that sense among all the countries covered by our survey.

“  
*In my view, the ideal mountain area means first useable roads, access to essential services such as health, education, security, internet access and telephony.*  
**Young job seeker from the Alba județ, Romania**  
 ”

Moreover, nature conservation seems to be an important aspect of young people’s image of the future of Romanian mountains. More than a third of them want habitat conservation and restoration to be more central in the future, with a particular focus in Romania on forests.

Finally, for the youth in Romania, the future of mountains also seems to depend on younger generations. Although it is not a major tendency in written contributions, some respondents tell us they want to see more young people living in mountain areas. In fact, Romania is without a doubt the country where young people fully agree the most with the need to attract newcomers (53%) and another 38% believe there should be more inhabitants but still maintaining a balance (figure 63). Altogether, this makes 91% in favour of mountain repopulation, compared to 86% in Spain and only 68% at European level.

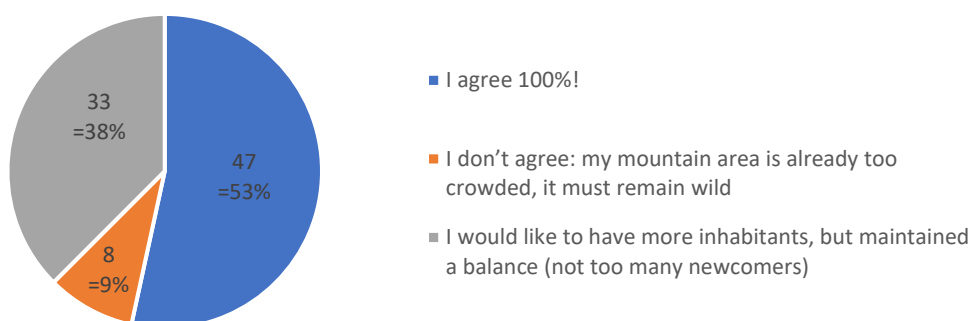


Figure 63: Would you like to have more inhabitants in your mountain? Answers from Romania

## KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- Among all the countries covered by our survey, Romania is the one where mountain areas seem to be the most attractive for young people. They are attached to mountain areas, value their natural environment and the quality of life they have, although there are demands for more infrastructures and services.
- There is an important disaffection among the mountain youth in Romania regarding some basic services such as healthcare infrastructures and roads. Education and employment services also seem to be an issue. This should be a point of attention since young people say they want to stay in the mountains and want to start their own business, but they need to be able to get adequate training and then the support they need to get started.
- The natural and cultural mountain heritage seems to be important for young people in Romania. They value the natural areas and want them to be better preserved in the future. They also want to preserve and promote their traditions.
- The tourism sector appears to be key for the sustainable development of the mountains: young people describe a model of sustainable tourism oriented towards nature, outdoor activities, local gastronomy, rural tourism and agritourism, and relying mainly on small local businesses.



# Being young in a mountain area

## Spain





## Respondents' profiles in brief

During our study, we collected 89 questionnaires from young mountain people living in Spain. 61 of them contributed in Spanish, 26 in Basque, 1 in Catalan and 1 in English, showing the importance of regional languages among young people.

Overall, Spanish respondents were older than the average European respondent, 60% of them are between 26 and 29 years old (while they only represented 26% at European level). This also explains why they were predominantly employed (65% of them), with a smaller proportion of students.

A specificity to be noted in Spain is the professional aspiration of young mountain people. Among the 18 European countries where we collected responses from young people, Spain is the one with the highest proportion of young people who work or want to work in a so-called traditional mountain sector, such as ski instruction, farming, or mountain guiding (43 occurrences, 37% - figure 64).

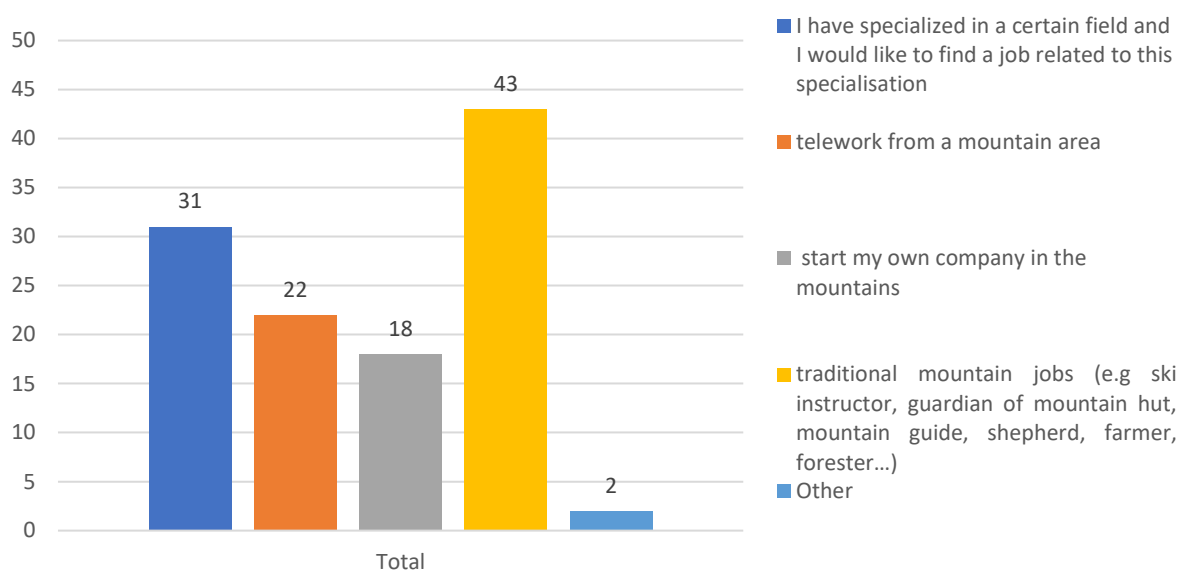


Figure 64: What do you do? Answers from Spain

## Attractive Spanish mountains

Among our 89 Spanish respondents, 47% live permanently in the mountains, and another 21% do so occasionally, for example as seasonal workers (figure 65). As in our European report, those who have contributed but do not live in the mountains travel there frequently to enjoy the landscape and to go hiking. It is worth noting that in the Spanish case, cultural heritage matters more than at the European level: it is the third most important reason for young people to come to the mountains when they do not live there, whereas it is ranked sixth in our European results (figure 66), in other words, cultural heritage accounts for only 7% of the responses in the European case, whereas it rises to 14% in Spain.

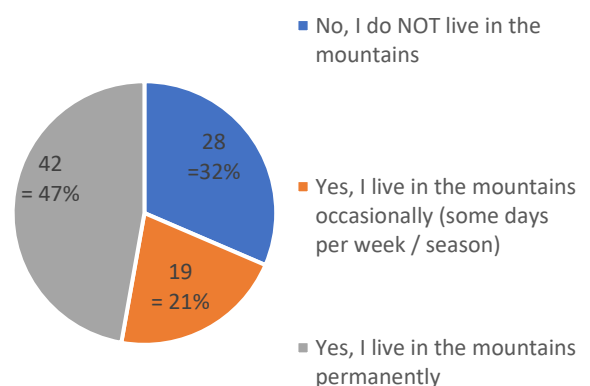


Figure 65: Do you live in a mountain area? Answers from Spain

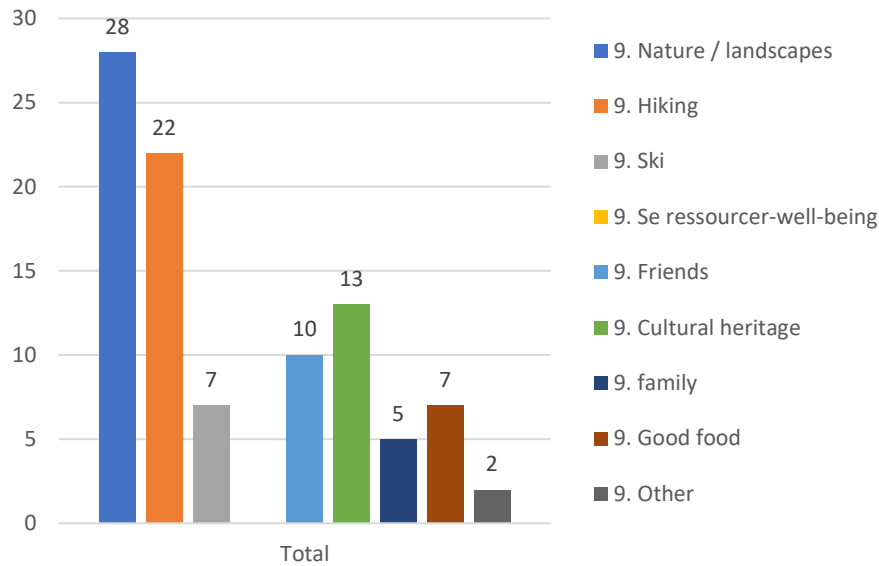
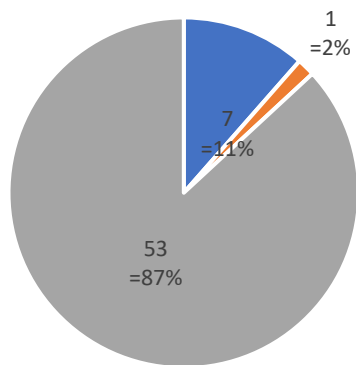


Figure 48: If you do not live in a mountain area, why do you travel there? Answers from Spain

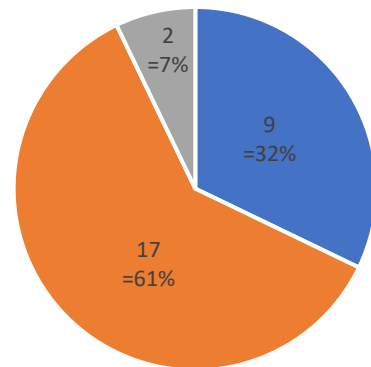
Among the young Spanish participants living in the mountains, 87% want to stay (figure 67). Spain is distinctive in that respect; it is one of the countries we covered with the highest rate of young people desirous to stay, the highest rate being in Romania with 88%. Mountain areas seem to be attractive for the same reasons exposed in our report, since the life close to nature and the quality of life come first in young people’s motives for staying.

Even when looking only at young people who currently do not live in a mountain area, the call of the peaks seems clear, with 61% firmly stating that they would like to live there (15 percentage points more than at the European level) and in addition no young people rejecting the possibility (figure 68).



- I would like to leave for a short time (education, travel) but would like to return in the future
- No, I would like to leave
- Yes, I want to continue living in the mountains

Figure 67: Do you want to stay living in the mountains. Answers from Spain



- Perhaps
- Yes, I have wanted to live in the mountains for a long-time
- Yes the Covid-19 crisis has influenced my desire to live in the mountains

Figure 68: If you don't live in a mountain area, would you like to live there? Answers from Spain

## Accessibility of housing and educational provision decried

In terms of the availability of services, young people in the Spanish mountains are globally in line with the European average. They are satisfied or very satisfied with access to the Internet and health facilities. As in our European report, they are mostly unhappy with the public transport offer, which is judged to be mostly unsatisfactory or non-existent, at 57% (compared to 52% on a European scale).

As in most countries studied, young people living in Spain mostly feel that the offer of educational programmes in the mountains is poor. For 53% (figure 69) of them, the offer is unsatisfactory or non-existent in the mountains. It is higher than the European average (35%) but similar to Italy (52%) or Norway (55%).

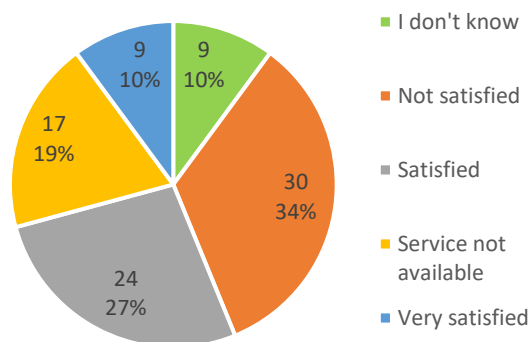


Figure 69: are you satisfied with the access to education programmes? Answers from Spain

The need for more educational programmes in the Spanish mountains is also reflected in the top 5 priorities of the young people surveyed. It is at the top of the ranking, mentioned 45 times by young people (12,3% of occurrences – figure 70). This is followed by a desire for more support to start their own business (stated 43 times – 11,7% of occurrences) and more participatory democracy (mentioned 42 times – 11,4% of occurrences). This top 5 is completed by a particular attention to the environment in mountains areas, as also reflected in our European results: more wilderness and more initiatives to tackle climate change are respectively mentioned 36 and 33 times (9,8% and 9% of occurrences).

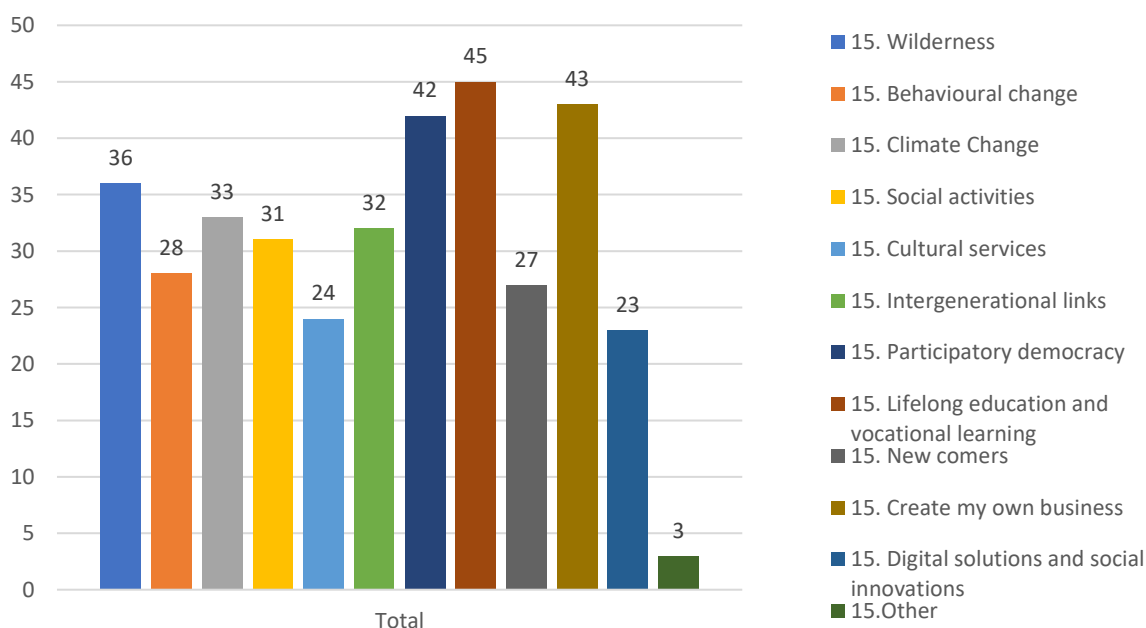


Figure 70: What would you like to see more in your mountain area? Answers from Spain

Finally, access to housing seems to be particularly problematic in Spain. While 53% of young Europeans are satisfied or very satisfied with the housing offer, this percentage drops to only 40% among young people living in Spain (figure 71). However, no justification was given by respondents in the case of Spain, unlike in Italy and most of all in France, where young people insisted on the real estate pressure caused by tourism and second homes.

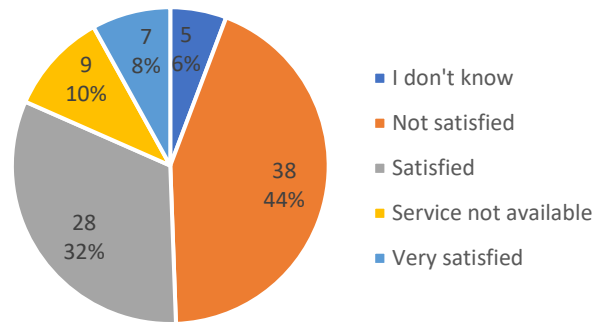


Figure 71: Are you satisfied with the housing possibilities? Answers from Spain

## The ideal mountain for 2040: a balance to be found between territorial development and mountain preservation

In this survey, we have left young people the possibility to freely describe their ideal mountain for the future. Overall, what the description of young people is pointing out is the wish for a balanced territorial development that would encourage the repopulation of villages and the development of more rural-urban linkages while still preserving mountain's natural environments and agricultural traditions. Eventually, a balance must be found between rural development and sustainable development to shape the ideal mountain for future generations in the Spanish mountains.

What emerges from the responses of young people living in Spain is primarily the need for a more populated and dynamic mountain. The demographic aspect is more important in Spain than in the other countries in our survey. In terms of territorial dynamism, it is interesting to note that many young people mention a desire to live in the countryside while being close to an urban centre. This may translate in the future into a disaffection for more remote areas. Above all, this requires reflecting on the organisation of infrastructures in a functional space, such as mobility offers and roads. It also requires consultation with local communities, to satisfy both the wishes of those who would like to be better connected to urban areas and those who would prefer to see the mountains spared from new construction and motorways.

“

*An area that had the minimum services (health, education, and shops) no more than an hour away. Transport services that avoid the depopulation of remote places and favor connectivity.*

***Young job seeker from the Province of Huesca, Spain***

“

“

*We should better communicate the different instruments of support that the government has established for young people who live and work in the mountains and improve them.*

***Young agricultural vet in the Province of Gipuzkoa, Spain***

“



In fact, in terms of repopulation of the mountains, Spain stands out from our European results. There is a greater desire among young Spanish mountain people to repopulate villages. 28% of them say so categorically and 58% also agree, bearing in mind the need to maintain a demographic balance (figure 72). However, there is no difference with the European results on the type of profiles that young people would like to see more in the mountains: those who want to see more people in their village would favour the dynamism of other young people or families.

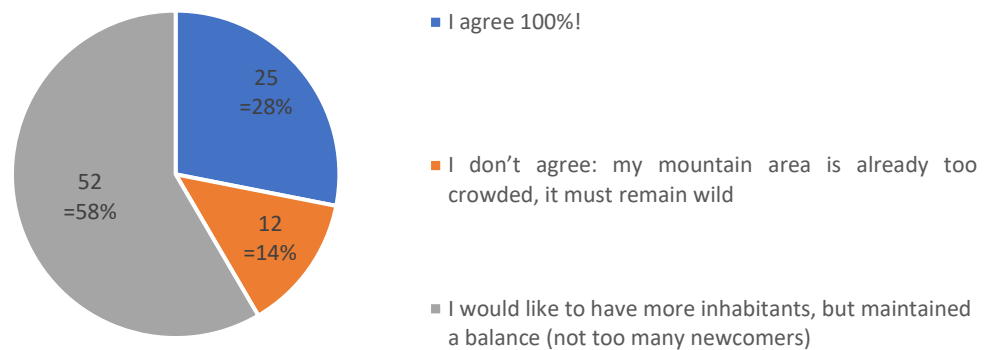


Figure 72: Do you think it is important to attract more inhabitants in your mountain area? Answers from Spain

The preservation of nature in a broad sense is the second most important issue raised by young people. Many would like to see more initiatives to protect or restore habitats, especially forests and meadows and some insist on education on nature to encourage people to protect mountain landscapes.

“

*A town that would respect nature, that would promote sustainable agricultural projects, that would educate visitors about sustainable ways of living.*

***Young psychologist from Zaragoza, Spain***

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The primary sector also plays an important role in the ideal mountain of the young people surveyed. Many of them mention the importance of agriculture and pastoralism for life in the mountains and ask for more recognition for these professions or more support to settle down. This is probably related to the high proportion of young people living in Spain who, in our survey, said they were doing or wanted to do a so-called traditional mountain job, such as farmer or shepherd.

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*I think more help should be provided to people who want to make a living in rural areas and in the primary sector, instead of putting more obstacles. In fact, the lives of those people living in rural areas and making their living from the primary sector is very difficult and ungrateful.*

***Young job seeker from the Province of Gipuzkoa, Spain***

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## KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- Spanish mountainous areas are attractive to young people whether they are already resident in the mountains or not. Spain's mountain territories can rely on their assets to value mountain areas: quality of life, life close to nature and a rich cultural heritage.
- Traditional mountain jobs represent important sectors for young people, who value the connection with nature. Entrepreneurship is another significant option according to our survey and young people are demanding more support mechanisms for business creation and guidance for young entrepreneurs.
- Young people are not satisfied with the provision of education, either vocational or lifelong learning. Development of education and training is one of their priorities for the future of the mountains.
- Mobility is a key issue to further increase the attractiveness of the mountains. Young people living in Spain are widely dissatisfied with the public transport offer in the mountains and, at the same time, they would like to enjoy easier access to the services available in the functional area where they live.
- Young people want to welcome new residents to the Spanish mountains, especially other young people and families. However, access to housing seems to be a point of tension to address in the territorial attractiveness strategy, in order to ensure quality housing for newcomers.
- For the future of mountain territories, young people opt for a balance to be found between areas that are more populated and more connected to urban centres and areas where the environment and the traditional activities associated must be protected.