



## 9. PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COMBATING POVERTY

### What does the EU want to achieve ?

Promoting social inclusion, in particular through the reduction of poverty, by aiming to **lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion.**

### How?

Member States are invited to tackle this thematic objective by **active inclusion** of people who are excluded from the labour market, including marginalised communities such as the Roma, through **better support and guidance, access to general and vocational education, and modernisation of social protection systems.** They want to achieve, in particular, better coordination of education, social protection systems, and labour market policies. They also want to **promote access to sustainable, high-quality services of general interest, including health care.**

The ESF can provide income complements but only as part of an integrated pathway to the labour market and for a limited time. Public employment schemes can be supported only as a transitional measure with the aim of increasing the skills, competences and qualifications of people and thus help them reintegrate the labour market. Member States are invited to create, update and make use of **maps of poverty** when designing and implementing integrated strategies to support the most disadvantaged groups and areas. These maps need to be elaborated at the relevant scale to highlight the particular challenges of mountains as much as is feasible.

### How can mountains contribute?

Mountains are both home to marginalised communities and welcoming territories for refugees and migrants from all over the world:

- Home to **marginalised communities** because people living in many poor mountain villages, especially in the East and South of Europe, have very difficult conditions. In the most remote parts of the Carpathians, access to water and electricity is not guaranteed. People live from semi-subsistence farming and are very sensitive to any environmental or social change.
- **Welcoming territories** because some remote territories have developed initiatives to welcome an increasing variety of new inhabitants. These can be **refugees, migrants** from abroad in general or, more and more with the economic crisis, people who had moved away and **are moving back to the mountains**, turning a holiday home (often their old 'family home') into a permanent home. A further group consists of people who are not from the mountains and move there in search of a **better, quieter and healthier life**, sometimes after losing their job in the city. All of these types of people may start to farm (again) or create a small business. For mountain areas, these people are new inhabitants who can dynamise local development in a context of depopulation.

Other problems are related to **employment that is seasonal and/or requires low qualifications.** People employed in such jobs can suffer from social insecurity, especially young people, and particularly in tourist areas where living standards and costs of living are quite high.

Finally, mountain areas are often **facing difficulties to maintain existing services** due to their poor profitability and the need to respond to new or changing needs of the local population. The on-going territorial concentration of services of general interest (SGI) leads to a vicious circle of further deterioration in the quality of provision which, in turn, decreases demand for the existing services.



## What do they need in order to contribute?

**Poverty and social exclusion in mountain areas stem from depopulation, slow dismantling of communities and related services, and low income and insecure jobs.** Needs and strategies to address those needs vary from one mountain range to another. Services are critical in most mountain areas, as well as the modernisation of the agro-food sector and development of market access which forms the vital basis for other economic activities, especially in the **poorest mountain areas of South-Eastern Europe and some Mediterranean mountain areas.** In these economically deprived areas, **modernisation of the agro-food and forestry sectors, through measures described in priorities 1 to 3,** are essential to build a mountain economy providing more secure and income-generating activities for local people and to slow down the on-going exodus, especially of younger generations.

Nearly everywhere, and aside from territorial development policies, mountains need **legislation that prioritises Services of general interest (SGI).** Legislative frameworks must be put in place specifying which services must be provided and the minimum standards for their supply. As technologies and customer needs evolve over time, **constant adaptations of the requisite frameworks are required.** As mentioned several times before in this document, **next generation broadband & ICT should first be rolled out in mountain and rural areas** to improve their accessibility and economic potential. Changes in legislation in this field should be preceded by a **territorial impact assessment** taking into account the specificities of mountain areas. **Independent regulatory authorities** should be installed to verify whether the SGI are provided as foreseen by legislation. In addition, **state aid rules must facilitate the development of innovative solutions** for the provision of services. It is necessary to focus on the spatial distribution of services within a region. A sound spatial planning policy can contribute to fostering SGI, and **decentralised economic activities** will help to maintain demand for services. Finally, **new and innovative approaches to provide services need to be developed** proactively. Best use must be made of ICTs, possible synergies of different networks, and inter-municipal cooperation as well as multi-functional offers.

Once these conditions are in place, mountains need to be **supported in their integrating functions,** through sound **welcoming policies,** fostering the **social economy,** helping people to integrate and **improving the social condition of mountain workers,** especially young people. They need better education and lifelong learning programmes to help people get the competences needed to improve their competitiveness in their economic activity or find jobs, at all ages (as discussed especially under priority 10).

**They also need support to their territorial marketing and communication campaigns at both territorial and sectoral levels, to improve their attractiveness.** This could benefit the production and marketing of quality foods and artisanal products from mountain areas, as well as other sectors.

## Example of actions/practices/policies/projects which could deliver on that objective

- **Enhance access to sustainable, high-quality services of general interest, including health care** – some interesting initiatives have been implemented:
  - **Transport:**
    - Sogn og Fjordane County (Norway) is a member of the “[European Safe Communities Network](#) (ESCON)”. One programme implemented in this framework, called “*Safely home for 50 kroner*” targets young people between 16 and 24, the group of people most often involved in accidents. Bus lines run on



Saturday nights (the day with highest accident rates) from most urban centres that have an upper secondary school to the rural areas, including the mountains.

- In the Central Doubs area (France), a transport-on-demand system, [TADOU](#), has been developed to allow inhabitants of this sparsely populated area to move within the area and to bus stations connecting to the nearest town.
- **Daily needs:**
  - The “[Wolfach bringt's](#)” initiative (Germany) was designed to improve accessibility to basic goods, strengthen the local pattern of retail and services and generate new ways how to distribute groceries. 8 to 15 local retailers participated, including small supermarkets, bakeries, butcher shops, pharmacies and direct selling farmers. Local residents could order groceries by internet as well as by phone, fax or catalogue. The local geriatric nursing service delivered once a week, picked up the goods at the different suppliers and distributed them.
  - The [MERKUR programme](#) in Norway has been established to support retailers in areas with population decline and long distances to other retail opportunities. 11 counsellors throughout the country fulfil a range of services aiming to support business development, provide advice on how to obtain better bulk prices when ordering products, choose products, and devise new offerings. They also help mobilizing communities to support their local shops by sufficient purchases to try and counterbalance the attraction exerted by shopping centres in nearby towns.
- **Health:** mountain people are often remote from health care centres and hospitals. In the most remote locations, emergency procedures must be in place to ensure quick transport to the nearest hospital. Apart from emergencies, provision of health care services must be professionalised.
  - In the Dalarna region, Sweden, through the initiative [Health and Social Care College](#), private employers, training providers and public authorities have decided to face the challenge of providing on-site very high quality services for retired people. The initiative aims at developing and adapting the skills of existing staff and training younger generations so that they can excel in care service.
- **Post:** The pilot project Post Partner Kooperation im ländlichen Raum (Post Partner cooperation in rural areas) was realised by the Carinthian Government (Austria) together with the Carinthian Chamber of Commerce and the Austrian Post Corporation. It aims to maintain an area-wide provision for postal services in the Carinthian municipalities, through the establishment of common “Post.Partner” services by local retailers.
- **Improve the social condition of seasonal workers by:**
  - **Multi-skills training:** some mountain schools have developed “multi-skills qualifications” where young people are educated in different professions: they increase their employability throughout the year.
  - **Combining several jobs with one umbrella employer:** in the municipality of Luchon (Pyrenees, France), local employers (ski stations and a paper factory), wanting to have permanent staff have signed year-long contracts with people who work in the ski resort in winter, when the paper factory is closed; and in the paper factory during summer, when the ski station is closed. Staff is hired by an intermediary organisation representing both employers.
- Support entrepreneurship and job creation, particularly through **specific training solutions and support for the creation of businesses for partners of workers** (newly) settled in mountain areas. In these territories, the concentration of jobs is low and so are the chances

for both partners to find a long-term job. In particular, the jobs available for women are not very diversified and they encounter many difficulties in finding a job. **Their involvement in the local economy needs to be fostered.**

- **Improve access to housing, including in touristic areas:** provide social housing and housing for young people and seasonal workers to rent (e.g. [Youth housing](#) in Rhône-Alpes, France);
- **Facilitate integration of migrants and “returnees”:**
  - In Buskerud County, Norway, through the “**placement and immigration programme**” (PADIMA Good Practice 19 on territorial marketing) six municipalities have put their efforts together to create a platform of job offers available for people who look for a job in the region. This platform permits many unemployed partners to find a job and has been very successful.
  - In the province of Teruel, Spain, immigrants are helped to undertake a competence review and, depending on this, and job needs in the area, they follow a fast-path training that helps them to get a job quickly. Men get a faster training and obtain a job more easily in the sectors of maintenance, as drivers, and in agriculture; and women in the tourist and health care sectors. These are not the only sectors hiring, just the ones which integrate people best.
- **Facilitate integration of women on the labour market:** PADIMA partner regions support the development of niche sectors in which women can get a job/create a business.
  - The initiatives [Albergo Diffuso di Ornica](#) Bed & Breakfast, in Lombardy region (Italy) and the Route of the Iberians in Southern Aragon (Spain) have contributed to the employment of women in the tourist sector, developing at the same time the profile of the area.
- **Promote the social economy and social enterprises:**
  - The “**Deaf School**” in AI, Norway, has developed expertise in teaching programmes for deaf children. Back from a trip to Kenya, Marit Kolstad Bråten (leader of the “Deaf Aid project”) joined forces with the ICT expertise at AI Folk high school. They developed support and assistance to school children without education in Kenya and the desire to develop a professional development organization in AI, leading to business development in Hallingdal.
- **Community-led local development:**
  - The “FlyttHit” or ‘[Move Here](#)’ project in the mountain regions of Norway has been started based on a local initiative, where all the municipalities in the region work together to make them attractive, so people will move there.
- **Infrastructure investments in healthcare, childcare, elderly care:**
  - In the province of Torino (Italy), some farms have jointly established [on-farm agri-schools for infants](#) aged 0-6 years old. Compensating for the lack of childcare infrastructure in the mountain area, 3 schools were established, providing services to 18 families and preventing depopulation, with public funding only in the first stages of the process.
- **Small-scale infrastructures in rural areas:**
  - In the Region of Aragon (Spain), the three provinces of Teruel, Zaragoza and Huesca collaborate on the « [Multiservicio rural project](#) » in which they work together with the provincial chambers of commerce and the Regional Government to guarantee the maintenance of commercial activities in the smallest towns. They seek to avoid rural depopulation, help entrepreneurial people to settle in the territory (most of them come from urban areas) and to guarantee a basic commercial structure combined with tourist services.

**More information:**

Euromontana [position paper on services of general interest](#)

PADIMA [good practice guide on economic diversification](#)