



# PADIMA

## Policies Against Depopulation In Mountain Areas

Newsletter no 1, May 2011

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### What is PADIMA about?

PADIMA is an innovative INTERREG IVC project looking at the opportunities of developing the human capital in mountain areas, with the aim of exchanging good practices in fighting depopulation in mountain areas. 8 partners from 5 European countries are engaged in a 3-year collaboration that will produce policy guidelines on successful methods to attract new inhabitants to mountain areas. The regions studied during this project include mountain territories and communities from: Teruel province (Spain), Lombardy and Piemonte region (Italy), Hedmark and Buskerud counties in Norway, Dalarna region in Sweden and Massif Central in France.

**We do believe that in order to be able to satisfy inhabitants' needs and to attract new population, mountain regions need to be able to provide people with good living conditions. The population needs to find diverse employment opportunities, to be offered public services, education and training facilities of good quality. Regions must also be able to communicate about themselves in order to be known by people who could be interested in moving there.**

Thus the partnership has identified 3 key themes: education and training, territorial marketing, economic diversification which will be focusing successively.

### Filling in the gap of information on education & training in mountains

During the first months of the project the partnership has undertaken a comprehensive work on the education and training sector. It consisted of five steps:

1. Statistical analysis of changes in population in studied areas (birth and net migration, age structure, education level, distances to upper secondary schools and universities, commuting, education & training offer)
2. **Surveys of young people's** interests, aged 14 – 19, and of employers, both private and public, regarding present and future staff requirements
3. SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)
4. Collection of good practices (initiatives, instruments, policies)
5. Interviews with stakeholders working in the implementation of these successful initiatives

The aim of this detailed collection of good practices was to evaluate on one hand the needs from population and business in the study areas in term of policy development and on the other hand to provide partners and other European regions facing similar situation with successful practices that have given positive results in other areas.

The results of this survey are being extensively treated within the WP1 Policy Guide. This newsletter communicates some key findings and main conclusions of the work.

Project cofinanced by:



The opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of EU programmes.

## What demographic situation in studied territories?

Population density in studied territories varies from 1.7 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> (in Hedmark county mountain areas) to 79 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, in the mountain areas of the Italian Alps, in province Torino. But in all cases, population density is way below that of the administrative entity immediately above (county, region or country) as the table down shows it.



Map: PADIMA partners distribution in Europe

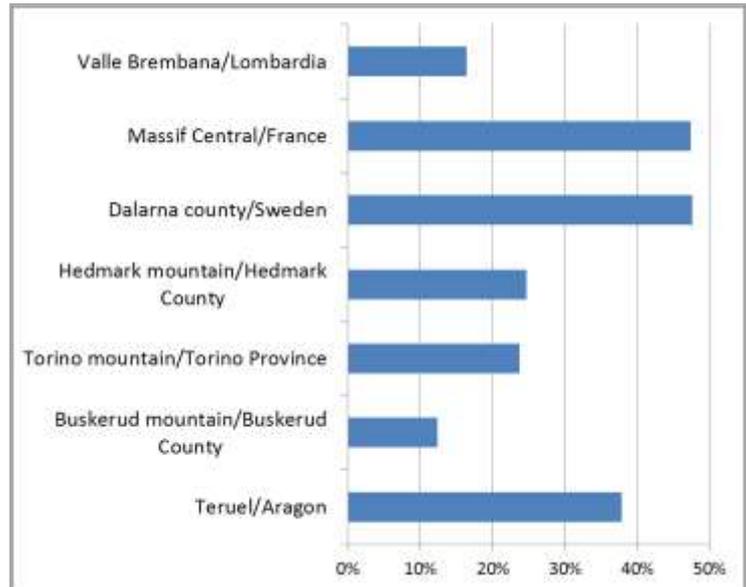
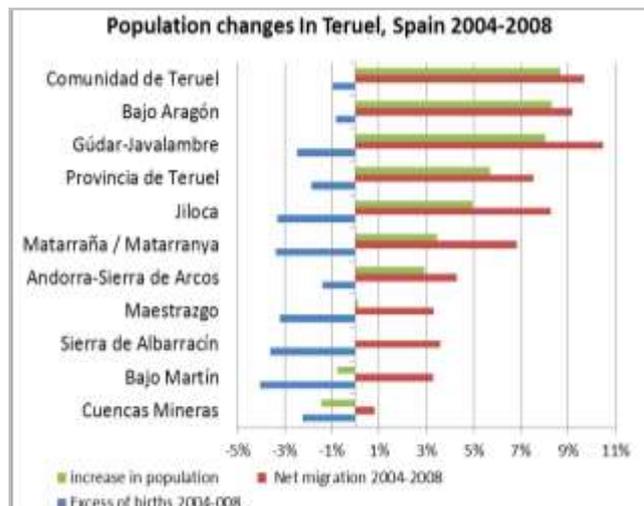


Table: density of population in PADIMA studied areas compared with the superior administrative level

The project's study areas vary in size, overall population and age structure, but we also have some features in common:

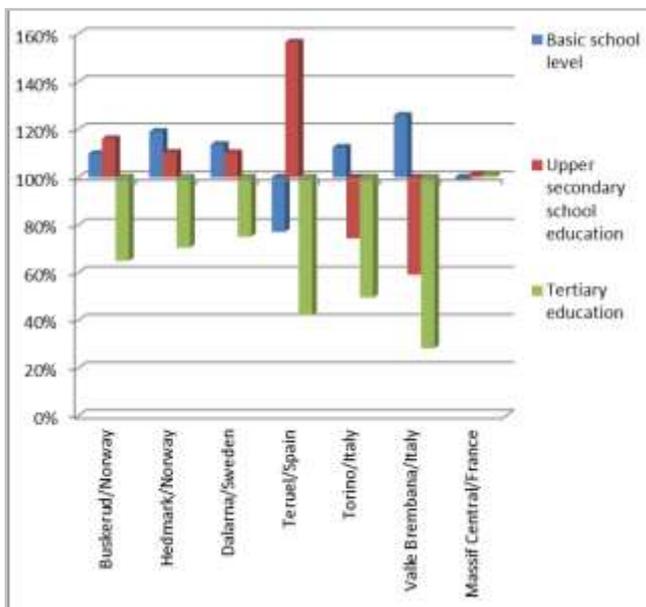
- The age structure is characterised by more elderly people than young people. This gives a negative birth balance, because fewer children are born than the number of people who die.
- Many of the municipalities are able to have a stable population, and even a small growth, due to positive migration. In the past years, we have observed that fewer and fewer inhabitants of the municipalities were born there. It is too early to tell the socio-economic consequences of this trend in the long run, but it is obvious that, so far, the growth and maintenance of these municipalities' population depend on their capacity to attract and integrate new comers. See table below, with the Spanish example where the region grows thanks to new comers.
- The age profile of migrants varies a lot between partners regions. In some of the regions most people migrating to the area are elderly people, which move to the country side as they retire. This means that in-migration, on which municipalities depend to keep up their population, is worsening the age structure problem. Elderly people also have greater demands regarding health care than youngsters and this generates extra expenses for the local society, as well as some opportunities. However, in some regions, (Dalarna, Torino, Teruel) authorities have managed to provide sufficient job offers to interest young people to settle in and to achieve both positive migration and improvement of the age structure.

**“Positive demographic trends in mountain municipalities depend on in-migration”**



## Key findings about education and training offer in mountain areas

The 7 regions cooperating in PADIMA also are in different situations with regards to the offer and development of education and training. Despite this they have a lot in common:



- The level of education of people living in mountain regions is, on average, **lower than the country's** average. The result of this is that businesses requiring highly qualified people might leave the district or not settle there due to recruitment difficulties.

- The surveys show that there is a bad correspondence **between young people's expectations** regarding working opportunities and the offers available at local level. But in general, youngsters would be very interested to stay if they could.

- Young people (and in the study areas of Hedmark, Teruel and Dalarna young women in particular) are migrating out from mountain areas mostly due to the following reasons:

1. lack of higher education institutions within the areas,
2. lack of interesting jobs,
3. lack of urban life,
4. lack of other young people living in the area.

Table: Average education level of people of the age of 16 and above in study areas as compared to the country

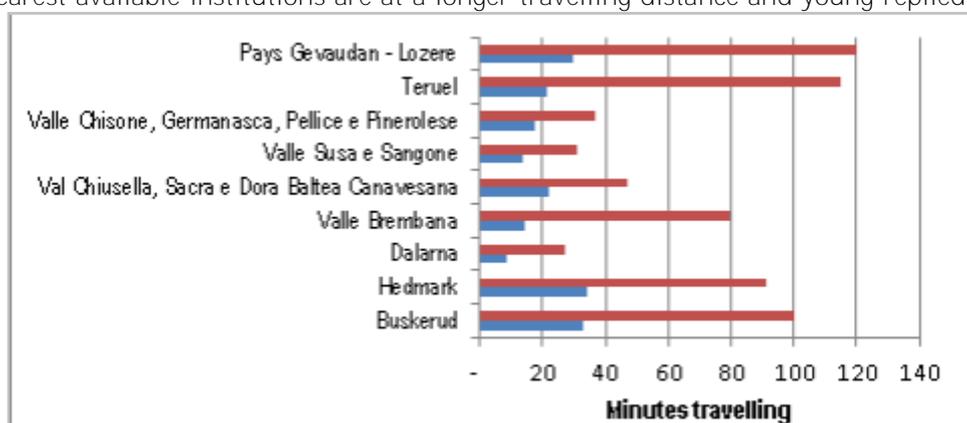
Note: For Massif Central, numbers are very close to 100%.

## Expectations and plans of young people for the future

Within the 7 study areas, the offer of Upper Secondary Schools at an acceptable commuting distance (30 min away) is satisfactory and the majority of youngsters attend those classes, estimating it offers their preferred courses. But when it comes to university, the nearest available institutions are at a longer travelling distance and young replied that these does not offer their preferred course. (See table)

Table: average travelling time to nearest education institution

- Upper Secondary School
- University



“The main qualities respondents see in their local society and appreciate are that people know and care about each other, outdoor activities are diverse and accessible, and they consider that there is less criminality than in big cities.”

Moving away to attend university often results in young people leaving the area and not coming back. Previous surveys show that graduating students often search for a job in the region where they have studied. In consequence, what could have been a potential job in their region of origin is often not even considered.

Surveyors in upper secondary school asked pupils if they would consider living and working in their areas. 54% of youngsters replied positively and some other 30% said they would consider it. In Italy alone, as much as 62% answered yes. In both Italy and Norway, “family and friends” was the most frequently quoted reason to stay. Other main arguments for staying are: interesting job opportunities (as young people do believe they will find an interesting working opportunity on site) and leisure activities.

## Businesses needs in terms of competences

Some PADIMA partners also conducted interviews with businesses and municipalities from the study areas in order to assess what their recruitment needs were, if they encountered any problems in recruiting to the jobs they offer and what their needs would be in the years ahead. For interviews with businesses, partners chose an economic sector to focus on. Industry and tourism sector, major employers in the mountain areas, where the most frequently selected.

One of the conclusions from this work is that companies look for employees first locally and regionally (a trend more pronounced in Southern countries, Italy and Spain) before searching far away.

Companies also perceive the recruitment as more problematic in the next five years due to the specific needs they have and the lack of these competences locally (or difficulty to find them).

Another conclusion is that businesses needs for competences in recruiting include neither higher university education nor knowledge intensive skills, or include these to a very small though maybe increasing extent. They usually need people trained to specific or technical activities (like wood processing, care services, etc) and in lower measure very qualified skills. This result can be biased by the fact that businesses from traditional sectors were privileged within this questionnaire, given that these sectors still dominate the supply of jobs in these areas. However, in Hedmark managers reported that the recruitment to qualified skills, i.e. to positions of managers and leaders, is difficult already and that it seems to be even more problematic in the future.



We can note that the main offer is not entirely consistent with younger **generations' aspirations** to follow higher education (choice of more than 56% of high school respondents) and find related jobs. However the partnership considers that, in the study areas, there is room for more qualified jobs and already a diversity (even if limited) offer of jobs for highly educated people, especially in the context of broadband development. This will be addressed in a third work package on economic diversification, which is currently starting.

Companies perceive the recruitment as more problematic in the next five years due to the specific needs they have and the lack of these competences locally.

## A better match **between the future recruitment needs and employees' educational profile?**

The first conclusion from interviews with the mountain businesses and pupils is that there is room for more coordination and communication between the education and training institutions in mountain areas and businesses. On one side, young people wish to live and work in their region of origin but they choose to acquire competences which are not yet needed enough in their region, and on the other side, local businesses do not find skilled people for the jobs they offer. In order to reduce this mismatch two solutions have been identified:

- Contacts between the business sector and secondary/upper secondary schools and pupils needs to be increased, **maybe even “institutionalized”** at the local or at least regional level (ie at Massif level) – we provide an example of how this can be done page 6 **“Recruiting to wood industry”** in Buskerud.
- **Students' access to relevant studies and educational/training institutions** should be improved ie by reducing travelling distances and increasing the supply of distance learning. We provide an example of how this can be achieved page 6 **“Adult continuing training for employees and managers”** from Massif Central.



## What opportunities to further exploit in mountain areas?

The SWOT analysis conclusions were broadly presented in the education and training seminar, held in Torino on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2010, by Kay Bjerke, project manager at Buskerud County, Norway and co-leader of education and training seminar. With his presentation, Kay mainly concentrated on common challenges for the mountain regions, but also touched some of the main differences. The complete conclusions of this analysis are presented in the seminar report; this newsletter will only focus on opportunities to further develop education and training offer in mountain areas.

The partnership saw opportunities to exploit in the two main challenges faced by mountain areas, besides depopulation, which are ageing population and low education level:

- Ageing also offers opportunities for young people. The large number of retirements gives increasing opportunities to young people and migrants to the region for development of care and health services and related education. Dalarna in Sweden is an example of how to exploit this.
- The low education level might also be looked at as an opportunity. The reason why the population does not have more education is not that they are not able to learn. Most of them are very competent in the kind of work they are doing, but traditionally they did not need education to do the available work. Today with decline in agriculture and more computerised industry the lack of education is more obvious. The demand for unskilled workers is getting lower. However people between 30 and 50 still have time to learn new skills and do a good job before they retire. This demands close relationships between employers, both in private and public sector, and institutions of education. Examples of this can be found among the good practises.
- Also, development of tourism places from winter-destinations to all-year destinations, can be hard work but also represents an opportunity, which some have exploited successfully. A good example is Hemsedal in Norway, which population is growing at least as fast as the national average and which population average age is going down.
- Access to broadband can also remove some of the problems related to distance to big centres. Through broadband you can access distance-learning of all kinds and you can also do a good, highly qualified job for an employer situated in another part of the country, and even another part of the world. Possibilities in this field are endless.



Picture: Torino seminar participants in the study trip

Ageing also offers opportunities for young people as job offers become available in mountain areas.

The results of SWOT analysis have been further used by the partnership during one interregional training sessions organised by Buskerud County Council in Geilo, Norway. This session explored the opportunities of developing cultural tourism related training and education in mountain areas.



PADIMA partners during the training session in Geilo, Norway

For more information about SWOT analysis results, Torino seminar and Geilo interregional training session, please visit [www.padima.org](http://www.padima.org).

## What Good Practices to encourage the development of targeted education and training offer in mountain areas?

Within this part of the survey, PADIMA partners identified 42 good practices that have given positive results both in delivering targeted education and training offer to mountain areas inhabitants and to encourage new comers to settle in. Interviews with people working on field in the implementation of these initiatives have been undertaken by each partner and were used in the characterisation of good practices.

For detailed information about these initiatives we recommend to refer to the PADIMA website where they are presented individually and in a collection of education and training good practices. We will only mention here two initiatives with considerable results and which partners are willing to transfer to their own regions.

### **“Recruiting to wood industry”, GP 33 from Buskerud**

In the context of aging labour force in wood industry, businesses were concerned about the recruitment of skilled workers in the following years. Thus, some 43 manufacturers of furniture, interiors and wood products took the initiative to meet students from the secondary schools and to present them their jobs. Young people prefer jobs that media promote as modern like communication, new technologies, music and categorise directly as un-interesting and old fashioned other opportunities. Wood industry representatives have presented their profession and encouraged young pupils to design their own little furniture. 30 applications for new jobs were sent to companies from students after the meeting. Companies selected the best students and employed them.



Picture: MaterialBanken, Norway

The province of Torino and ERSAF, Italy, as well as UCCIMAC, Massif Central, France and Dalarna, Sweden have showed interest in implementing this initiative in their areas.

### **“Adult continuing training for employees and managers”, GP 11 from UCCIMAC, France**

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Lozère offers tailor-made training programs to companies (all settled outside big urban centres) which have no training programmes locally. The main characteristic of companies in the region is that they are small and face difficulties (costs, time, distance,...) in sending employees away to get the training they need to continue their activities and to improve their competences. Within this initiative, professional trainers travel to mountain to provide the training.

This initiative can be co-financed through European funds (European Social Fund) and contributions from public funds, the companies paying only the remaining difference of costs and has been highly praised by all the companies participating in the programme.



The counties of Hedmark and Buskerud in Norway and ERSAF from Italy have showed interest in implementing this initiative in their areas.

## Which policies to improve the education offer in mountain areas?

Appropriate legislation is a necessary condition for the development of education and skills provision in mountain areas. **The European Strategy EU2020 is specifically stressing the need for improvement of the educational systems' performance and the importance of enhancing the attractiveness of higher education systems for students.** But more targeted measures are needed for mountain areas:

At EU and national levels:

- Local and regional authorities as well as local and regional training and education institutions should be given sufficient flexibility for them to be able to adapt their education offer to the specific set of i) expectations from students ii) needs from local businesses.
- The close inter-relation and potentially mutually beneficial effects of actions on economy and education call for a greater coordination of policies contributing to these various objectives, allowing the development of integrated approaches at local levels (see infra).
- Access to broadband has proved essential to a lot of the good practices developed and it must be provided in priority in mountain areas where ICT has the strongest distance-shortening effect.

At local/regional levels:

Surveys carried out with young people show that they are in a positive attitude regarding the place where they come from and that, at school stage, they would be rather eager to stay and work there and keep enjoying the warm community life and beautiful surroundings. The real or perceived lack of job opportunities in **“modern” sectors and the low availability of higher level of education is the reason why they move out.** Responses to this situation requires several type of actions:

- Investing in education and training facilities which take the best advantage of local resources: it can be a high level institution in the field of environment, a **top-education center in tourism etc...** **It can overcome** obstacles of remoteness and accessibility by increased use of ICT and distance learning. These institutions should aim to attract as well students from outside the area.
- Modernizing the traditional sectors on which mountain areas are and will remain for some time extremely reliant: forestry, agriculture, tourism. This can be done by working on innovation in these sectors and providing targeted education and training to companies and employees in these sectors.
- Encouraging the development of alternative economic sectors by decreasing all obstacles to their settling in mountain areas as compared to lowland accessible or densely populated areas: in the field of education and training, this requires the provision of tailored-made courses which can help improving human capital and employees skills without having to travel far away.
- Improving for both traditional and new economic sectors, the knowledge of young people regarding their job opportunities in their region: this means developing partnerships between companies and schools, thanks to the intermediation of municipalities or regional authorities, to organise presentation of companies in schools, stands in job forums, and, the most efficient certainly, practical experience of what the job can be.
- Improving relationships and building partnerships between businesses, schools, training centers and universities, to foster the development, at the smallest commuting distance from mountain areas, of training courses adapted to mountain needs.



## Further work to be done in PADIMA

The work carried out in this work package has then raised several issues that will be addressed in greater detail through the following work packages and in the integrated approach to fighting depopulation:

- How to improve the image of local businesses as places which can offer career opportunities and improve at the same time the image of the region as a place with a future, likely to retain its young people and to attract new workforce?
- How to foster diversification of local economy to provide more opportunities for people who want to live and work there?

The other way round, work carried out in the future packages will send back some requirements for education and training. Interrelations will be examined in the end of the project and a thorough analysis of what an integrated approach to fighting depopulation should be will be presented in the final recommendations guide to be delivered in June 2012.

Current EU policy discussions on a common strategic framework for the use of EU funds which contribute to territorial development (EAFRD, ERDF, ESF, EFF) and on possibility of multi-fund programmes, offer interesting perspectives for mountain areas, where integrated local development projects combining an economic diversification or development component and a skills development component, in areas which are mainly rural, are likely to bring a much more positive impact than separate programmes addressing these issues in a demarcated way. This integrated approach needs to embrace as well issues related to support to innovation and research which are very likely to produce simultaneously education and job opportunities in mountain areas. The recent recognition of the University of the highlands and Islands in Scotland is a promising example of how first class research and education can drive regional development.

The partnership aims to disseminate these first results to foster reflection in this direction.

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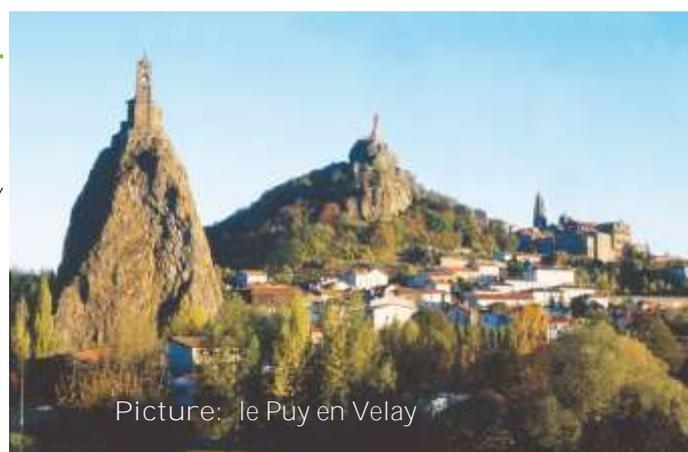
### Our next events

September –October 2011: Interregional training session *“Developing strategies to attract and welcome new migrants and new populations in mountain areas”*

29-30 November 2011: Le Puy en Velay, France:

Economic diversification seminar

June 2012: Final conference of the project in Brussels



Picture: le Puy en Velay

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