



## VIII<sup>th</sup> European Mountain Convention

### Youth to the top : the mountain path to the future

2-4 October 2012

#### Declaration of Chambéry

##### « Improving the attractiveness of mountain areas for young generations »

We, representatives of European mountains, assembled in Chambéry on the 4th of October, declare :

*Quality of life is central to the aspirations of Europe's young generations. The notion of quality of life is multi-faceted and includes several dimensions such as access to education and career opportunities, a quality environment, healthy food, warm social relationships, housing, services and culture. The importance of each of these dimensions varies from one individual to another and from one stage of life to another.*

*Mountains have much to offer to young people who desire to live close to nature – and they are numerous. Most young people who come from mountain areas say that they would wish to live and work there. But baseline conditions have to be met for young people to be able to feel accomplished and achieve their plans for life in mountain areas. Otherwise, the loss of young people observed in many mountain areas, will continue, with impacts on depopulating mountain communities, on cities which have to absorb ever more people in an increasing congested environment, and on territorial cohesion.*

##### Young people are interested in mountain areas :

- **80%<sup>1</sup> of surveyed young mountain inhabitants say they would like to live and work there;**
- their motives are both **environmental** (they wish to live in a beautiful environment, close to nature) and **social** (they appreciate the quality of relationships in mountain communities);
- they have a strong will to **make a living in mountain areas;**

##### But young people face difficulties in mountain areas:

- **too few and not diverse enough employment opportunities**, limiting career development possibilities; too few highly qualified jobs in economic sectors perceived as 'modern'; short-term and seasonal jobs in the tourism sector; lack of information on available job opportunities;
- an **insufficient supply of educational opportunities**: most existing education centres offer courses that are not diversified enough or of insufficient quality, or are too far away to allow students to access them;

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<sup>1</sup> « Youth in mountains », Summary of the preliminary research carried out by Euromontana for the VIIIth European Mountain Convention, 2012

- a **lack of infrastructure** in terms of housing, health, daily transport adapted to young people's needs to access education or cultural activities; an **inadequate availability and quality of broadband connections**;
- an **insufficient provision of cultural activities**, notably outside touristic centres and seasons.

These difficulties lead young people to leave mountain areas to study elsewhere. Very often, they will remain close to where they have studied. Their return to mountain areas then becomes uncertain.

### **To improve the attractiveness of mountain areas for young people, we call upon all relevant authorities:**

- to recognise mountain areas, in European regional policy and spatial planning policies, as **poles of development** likely to bring a significant contribution to European growth and to the objectives the European countries wish to achieve by 2020;
- **to invest** in these territories, so that a **diversified economy** can flourish, valorising their comparative advantages and their endogenous growth potential; particularly to support **innovation and entrepreneurship** to foster the development of future professions in innovative sectors such as energy, ICT, bio-economy, health and especially e-health, care for the elderly, and to modernise traditional sectors;
- to **favour the recruitment of young people**, whether they originate in the mountains or not, in mountain areas by **improving communication between employers and job seekers** (direct links, recruitment advisors, job offers communication platforms...);
- to **improve the supply of education opportunities and match the gap between education and the local economy**:
  - to support the **development of more diverse education and training**, backed by research centres working specifically on and in mountain areas, likely to meet the diverse expectations of young mountain people, and attractive to young people from other areas (decentralised university branches, specialised schools...);
  - to close **the gap between the provision of education in mountain areas and the needs of local businesses** by encouraging - from primary school to university - links between schools and businesses and by offering traineeships & apprenticeships;
  - to rethink the education system using the **possibilities of ICT**; **to develop and implement e-learning tools** where these are likely to improve the access of students to a wider range of content;
  - to **favour exchanges between schools and education centres from mountain areas and other schools and universities** elsewhere in Europe, using especially Comenius and Erasmus programmes;

- to organise services in mountain areas that can respond to the specific demands of young people:
  - **basic infrastructure:** to provide access to water and electricity where it is not yet available (especially in South-Eastern Europe);
  - **housing:** pressures on land use and accommodation can be very high in mountain areas and housing is hardly accessible to young students or workers and not adapted to seasonal workers. The authorities should provide **social housing and housing for young people to rent** ;
  - **health:** health services should be adapted to the needs of young people and also take seasonality and territorial organisation into account;
  - **ICT :** the roll out of high-speed broadband should be prioritized in mountain areas, because it is an essential pre-condition to the attractiveness of mountain areas for young people, whether for social, cultural, educational or professional uses ;
  - **transport :** transport facilities need to be orientated to the needs of young people (car sharing, taxi or bus on demand, night buses, multi-functional transport, school transport...);
  - **childcare services and schools :** develop childcare services as an important point for young couples with children; deploy collective solutions to maintain access to schools (transport, grouped classes or multi-level classes...);
- to **rethink**, in spatial planning policies, **links between urban and rural areas, uplands and lowlands, in order to favour territorial complementarity:** many nearby small to medium-sized urban centres can effectively provide the services and cultural activities that young people desire;
- to **develop inter-generational links**, with a social aim and also to favour transmission of capital (equipment, buildings, land...) and enterprises;
- to **provide training and support to facilitate the integration of young people** who establish themselves in mountain areas;
- to strengthen, at the level of territorial authorities, the **formal participation of young people in developing political strategies and in decision-making bodies** (prospective initiative 'Montagne 2040' in Rhône-Alpes, Youth conveners, parliaments, forums...) as well as in implementation of projects;

- to recognise that, because of the crucial role played by mountain farming, which produces many positive externalities, **there is a need to support young farmers in becoming established in mountain areas:**
  - to support the development of **efficient and complete supply chains** that add value (short supply chains, niche markets, producer-driven processing), likely to answer the long-term need for the more costly and often smaller-scale production systems in mountain areas to be profitable, and to motivate young people to farm;
  - to grant, in the framework of the CAP, **additional support to young people who set up in mountain areas**, whether through **direct payments** (top-up for young farmers and for mountain areas) or through the **integrated use of rural development measures**;
  - to grant, in particular, **preferential support to young farmers for their investments and establishment**, looking at all innovative ways to provide for this support (mutualisation, financial engineering, transmission facilitation...); to **mentor and support the young farmers** globally in the elaboration and the implementation of their business plans;
  - to secure, at the level of collective authorities especially, the **preservation of agricultural land facing strong urbanisation pressure**, and to facilitate access to land, with the objective to favour establishment of young farmers without a farming family background (urban planning integrating agricultural and environmental stakes, land pre-emption) ;
  - to support also young people in their **pluri-activity**, whether temporary, to secure a sufficient income in business starting phase, or chosen as a longer-term orientation (complementarity with tourism, industry, services...);
- **to favour employment of young people in the field of tourism and especially:**
  - to develop innovative responses to the problems created by low-quality or seasonal jobs; firstly in terms of **housing**, secondly by **combining economic activities** taking place at different times of the day or year (pluri-activity) ; in that respect, explore opportunities related to **multi-skills training** and **groups of employers**;
  - to encourage young entrepreneurs in tourism, especially by **providing risk capital** and by facilitating transmission of businesses;
  - to provide **vocational training** for people working in the field of tourism, to improve the quality of the services they provide;
- to **diversify the supply of leisure and culture**, including in the low season in touristic places, so that young people can blossom and develop their creativity; to support in particular cultural activities - which, compared to sports, tend to be less available - via initiatives such as arts centres, houses of youth and culture, festivals, cultural activities around heritage sites;

## Tomorrow, an integrated development policy for mountain areas

European policies for the period 2014-2020 should offer numerous opportunities to support integrated development strategies for mountain areas.

We call upon the European Parliament and European countries to include, in the legislation that will govern the programming period, sufficient **flexibility** to allow authorities and stakeholders in mountain areas to finance the actions that are most important for their development and their contribution to EU2020. In this context, we draw attention to the needs to create attractive and future-orientated jobs as well as **infrastructure for information and communication technologies**, which require significant funding **in all Europe's mountain regions**. We also insist on the necessity to elaborate regulations and implementing rules which facilitate an **integrated and multi-fund approach**, and **programmes and sub-programmes dedicated to mountain areas**. To this end, we stress once more the need to progress, at European and national level, towards **characterising and delineating European mountain areas for policy purposes**.

We call upon the European Commission, the territorial authorities and all stakeholders involved in the preparation of future programmes **to take the above mentioned points into account in the elaboration of partnership contracts, programmes and integrated development policy tools** (Community-led local development, integrated territorial investments and joint action plans).

### Finally, Euromontana commits itself to:

- provide **a voice to young people in mountain areas**, especially to provide **opportunities for interaction on the internet** and to link political youth representatives from mountain areas;
- **explore ideas for projects** which support young people in mountain areas and contribute to better achievement of the points mentioned above;
- **systematically integrate the youth dimension** in the different themes that we address.