

EUROPEAN MOUNTAIN CONVENTION

***Employment in the service of
sustainable development***



Employment and the environment are two basic concerns of European society today.

Can the mountain regions, those areas with a key role in meeting these expectations, survive policies focused on production and competitiveness?

Will the European reforms (agricultural policy, rural development, enlargement of the Union) provide the means these regions need to deal with these preoccupations ?

EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAP

- 1950's - The CAP is created after the second World War when priority had to be given to feeding the population.
- 1970's - **A European mountain** policy is born in 1975 with **regulation 268/75**.
- 1980's - **Stocks** start growing. Export becomes an essential option.
- 1980's - A new social sensitivity is developing : some **environmental policies** emerge to address the risks of intensive production.
- Since the end of the second World War, **the rural areas have seen their population decrease**, even more in mountain regions (lower productivity).
- 1990's - New concepts appear : **sustainability** and **integration**. But the CAP does not deliver a real change on the basis of the principles of **McSharry's report**. Premium are linked to production volumes.
- Today - The situation is characterized by a growing demand for **a multifunctional approach of the development** in order to face the threats of an excessive liberalisation. **Enlargement** of the UE to the CEEC is now an additional element of the Common Policy.

Hence the three dimensions to be covered by the new Common Policy :

- ✎ New **CAP**
- ✎ New **Rural Policy**
- ✎ **Enlargement**

with concern for a strong decentralisation at the level of the States.

THE MOUNTAIN AREAS IN THIS CONTEXT

- **Mountain areas in Europe**

- ✎ represent **30% of the territory**.

- ✎ are the living areas for **30 million people**; many more benefit indirectly from their resources.

- ✎ constitute a strategic reservoir of : Biodiversity, cultural and landscape **Diversity**, water **Resources**, touristic resources, specific food productions, unfragmented natural areas (very often border areas).

- **Mountains** are particularly well adapted for **multifunctional** development, based on the use of local resources.

- **Mountain agriculture** has always adapted to make the most of the constraining physical and geographical conditions. It relies very often on **fine and complex production systems developing the environment**.

- The social and economical development, the environment of these regions are **still fragile** and threatened by abandonment. This is why architects of **European** and national **policies must be vigilant** and attentive in order to support **the development of resources by human activities**, and not to neglect them.

Historically the CAP has always given priority to highly intensive production. The structural policy has facilitated the reduction of differences between the Member States but rather less inside each State.

Do **the proposals of Agenda 2000** respond to the needs of the mountain regions ?

- ✎ The defence of a multifunctional development model is an essential contribution of Agenda 2000 as set out in the explanatory memorandum.

- ✎ However the proposed regulations do not allow the consideration of a real development of the rural regions and mountain areas. Agenda 2000 contains contradictions.

- ✎ So the mountain areas have not benefited from any special analysis and are submerged in the whole rural policy, which is itself insufficiently upheld and mixed with urban policies.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE ?

To preserve and allow a full social, territorial and cultural development of these regions, the following conditions should be achieved :

- While considering the principle « **no agricultural development without rural development, no rural development without agriculture** »:

- ✎ Maintain the rights to produce

- ✎ Encourage quality products in a stronger way.

- ✎ Pay for the function of maintenance of mountain agriculture.

- A **specific approach and a higher eligibility** in the framework of structural policy all the more since this **structural attention** has been awarded to other threatened zones : ultra-peripheral areas, islands, urban areas...

- A development from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) towards a **Common Agricultural and Rural Policy (CARP)** which would integrate all the policy measures in rural areas.

- A specific policy for employment which would be the result of permanent dealings between local actors and decision-makers.

- An approach which would take into account the needs of mountain regions in the general management of the territory, including the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP).

- The defence during the next WTO's round of a **European rural exception** in order to face the social and ecological dumping from agricultures which only suit a pure liberal and productivist model. All the more since the accession of the CEEC will open the EU to new economies where

agriculture is a larger contributor and where the mountain regions are sometimes very important.

GUIDELINES OF THE PROPOSALS

CAP reform

Modify the distribution of the funds with a ceiling for direct payments and give priority to production using more labour, less inputs, preserving and developing the environment, producing quality products in regions economically and ecologically threatened.

Support prices by controlling the volumes of production.

Establish a strong european policy as regards quality, labels, « mountain » designation...and have it recognised by other countries at the WTO round.

Structural funds and rural development

Development using local resources but open to new actors.

Development of programmes relying on new technologies (information and communication) in order to relocate urban activities which could nowadays be rural.

Development based on local resources, respecting the principle of right to diversity (by avoiding the imposition of urban development schemes which are not appropriately adapted), and the encouragement of quality products.

Set up a specific Mountain Community Initiative.

Introduce a systematic identification of the measures applied in mountain regions in the SPD.

Higher recognition of mountain eligibility in the structural policy and rural development measures.

Identify clearly the mountain territories in the new ESDP.

The Compensatory payments must retain their essential characteristic as means of providing compensation for permanent hardship.

Develop rural tourism according to sustainability and compatibility criteria. Not only as regards safeguarding the environment but also the socio-cultural integration.

Develop subsidiarity in the application of rural policies in order to allow an optimal adaptation to local conditions.

ENLARGEMENT OF THE UNION

- Mountain areas of the CEEC show **mixed situations** : small family farms in the Romanian Carpathians, co-operatives and low agricultural employment in the Czech and Slovak massifs...
- However **identical needs** can be easily identified in the framework of the enlargement : training, exchanges, information, support for economic changes...
- In this context, **which projects** should be developed in order to facilitate the integration and the development of the mountain regions of the CEEC ?

COOPERATION BETWEEN EUROPEAN MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Agenda 2000 is certainly decisive for the future of the mountain areas of the EU Member States and the future adherents.

But the promotion of the sustainable development is also based on the co-operation and the exchanges with other European countries, contributing largely to the political and the cultural balance of our continent.



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