



X° European Mountain Convention

Mountains' vulnerability to climate change:

how can people and territories adapt and mitigate its effects?

3-5 October 2016

Bragança Declaration

« Face the challenge of climate change: adaptation for future generations »

We, representatives of Euromontana, assembled here in Bragança on the 4th October 2016, do declare:

The first to be affected by climate change, mountain populations are among the most sensitive to the disruption to the global balance caused by climate change. This sensitivity was recognized in the Declaration Rio +20, "The Future We Want". If we positively welcome the ratification of the Paris agreement signed at the end of the COP 21, we nevertheless regret the lack of reference to mountain territories.

Mountain populations will be the first to be affected by the economic, environmental, physical and social effects of climate change, but the impacts will also be felt far beyond on the populations in the lowlands. Measures to combat the effects of climate change will not be able to completely prevent these, but rather only alleviate them.

Mountain areas, and mountain people who have always been used to adapting to difficult conditions, are also an asset in the fight against the effects of climate change, with their ecosystems that can contribute to carbon storage, prevent soil erosion, slow down landslides, and permit the provision of many types of renewable energy.

The situation asks for people living in mountain areas to adapt to climate change. This means that they should position themselves to anticipate the adverse effects of climate change and act to prevent or minimize the damage they cause, by limiting CO₂ emissions and implementing adaptation strategies. This also implies seizing opportunities to ensure a high quality of life for future generations in these regions.

To cope with the challenge posed by climate change in mountain areas and to adapt for future generations, we call on institutions:

- To **take into account territorial specificities** and to **recognize the key role played by mountain areas in climate regulation.**
- To implement a **European strategy specific to mountain areas**, as called for in the own-initiative report of the European Parliament from 10th May 2016 on cohesion policy in European mountain areas.
- To support adaptation and mitigation measures through the **implementation of efficient grant programmes and funding opportunities** (for example a tax credit) that permit organisations, companies and also individuals not only to change governance but change their behaviour too.

- To **accompany the change in the long-term** by implementing strategies to maintain funding over several years, in a multi-stakeholder logic.
- To **strengthen regional production chains** in agriculture, forestry, and industry to avoid unnecessary transport of goods and in so doing to strengthen the regional added value. To this end, the effective labelling of regional products is an important tool for raising consumer awareness.
- To **redirect research and innovation towards adaptation processes** in mountain areas and, above all, to propose new paths and tools to adapt to climate change.
- To **encourage a circular economy** in order to reduce waste and energy use and preserve limited natural resources.
- To **mobilize actors at all levels**, specifically European political decision makers at the national, regional, and local levels, through a **participatory approach**.
- To encourage the **exchange of good practices in adaptation** across mountain regions in Europe and other mountain regions across the world.
- To **raise awareness among mountain actors**, especially among young people, of ways to mitigate climate change including through daily behaviour and activities.

Agriculture and Forestry

Climate change will increase periods of drought and bring about more extreme storms which will alter the land in ways that will force farmers to adapt. Farmers will also have to adapt to invasive species and new diseases. In this context, we call on European institutions and farmers to:

- **Maintain the agro-environmental measures** in the CAP;
- **Develop and use crops and varieties adapted** to longer seasons and changes in the availability of water and more resistant to new temperatures, rainfall patterns, diseases and invasive species;
- **Adjust the timing of agricultural operations** such as sowing, mowing, and harvesting;
- **Encourage the conservation of grasslands** which are an asset for biodiversity and carbon storage;
- **Valorise mountain products**, in particular through the European Charter for Mountain Quality Food Products and the optional quality term “mountain products”, both of which encourage quality local production that is sustainable and respectful of the environment;
- Promote **local consumption** via the promotion of short production supply chains and sustainable public procurement policies for school canteens and hospitals notably.

Mountain forests present a great potential in the protection against natural hazards, the production of biomass, prevention of soil erosion and the storage of carbon, but they are also in danger from the increased likelihood of extreme drought due to climate change. We call for:

- The **conservation and preservation of mountain forests that capture CO₂**. This requires planning for regeneration of species over the long term, reducing natural risks from wild fires and insect outbreaks, and encouraging the use of wood as a substitute for fossil fuels;
- **Improve governance with inclusive forest management** in terms of production and land policy;
- The **use of biomass** as a source of energy and as building material.

Sustainable use of water and renewable energy

Mountains act as water towers for Europe, supplying water to mountain areas and downstream communities. We call for:

- An **integrated approach to sustainable management of water resources** that avoids water loss and improves storage;
- **Improved irrigation systems** that will secure farming systems in their adaptation to climate change.

With the objective of reducing energy production and producing increased sustainable and renewable energy, we call for:

- **Energy savings** through increased energy efficiency, notably at the local level;
- The **development of renewable energy**, in particular through the combined use of different energies (hydroelectric installations, small wind turbines, photovoltaic and solar heat systems) to contribute to the development of renewable natural energy resources, available in mountain regions;
- **Adequate compensation of mountain communities** for the use of their renewable energy and resources.

Biodiversity and protected areas

Knowing that a large number of habitats and species are exclusively or almost exclusively in European mountain areas, this unique mountain flora and fauna must be protected. Euromontana calls for:

- The **preservation of species and habitats** through a sustainable development approach while maintaining economic activities;
- The **support of the maintenance of biodiversity** in general and, in particular, the diversity of mountain production systems and the genetic diversity of breeds and varieties. This diversity, gives value to all mountain areas through farming, especially those with the greatest challenges.

- Appreciation of the **ecosystem services** provided by mountain farmers and forestry owners and better compensation of these ecosystem services, which contribute to the well-being of the whole population;
- **Ensure that payment for ecosystem services** is used for the provision of these services;
- The preservation of **ecological continuity** between reservoirs of biodiversity and protected areas, through the maintenance and construction of natural corridors between Natura 2000 areas and existing protected areas, including across borders;
- **Encourage successful local initiatives to develop at a bigger scale** and help them in achieving a critical mass.

From snow tourism to four-season tourism and the development of sustainable destinations

Every year, mountains welcome tens of millions of tourists. Climate change will continue to decrease the availability of snow for winter sports thus there is the need to have a diversification in the tourism offers. Euromontana calls for:

- The **preservation and promotion of the rich natural and cultural heritage of mountain areas**, which is a key asset in the promotion of tourism, as well as the basis for local identities;
- The development of new products and services based on traditional activities, local products, the mountain environment and the heritage and unique culture of mountain areas in order to **make the touristic season last beyond the traditional tourist season** and encourage new customers, such as seniors;
- Having a **targeted approach to the different types of tourists** and adapt the tourism offer accordingly;
- The development of **agro-tourism**, and synergies between agriculture and tourism and the **direct sale of local products** (farm-gate sales);
- The updating of tourist information on **public transport options** enabling travel to and from destinations and within mountain areas;

Accessibility of mountain areas: developing sustainable transport and ICT

To further **develop sustainable transport options** in order to reduce the number of journeys and enable soft mobility respectful of the environment, Euromontana calls for:

- The European Commission to **develop a legislative package on rural mobility**, as has been done for urban mobility;
- **Strengthening basic and applied research on electric vehicles**; and its implementation in the territories;
- National and regional authorities to implement ambitious policies to **support sustainable transport options** (public transport, on-demand transport, electric vehicles);

- Regional and local transport authorities to **develop multi-services** in public transport (like transportation of people and goods at the same time) in order to avoid empty vehicles and to increase the viability of public transport.

Access to high speed broadband and ICT in mountain areas is a major challenge. Addressing this challenge will prevent unnecessary travel and reduce the carbon footprint, making it also possible to collect information on climate change. Euromontana calls for:

- The **prioritization of access to high speed broadband** by favouring remote areas where public incentives should be stronger than in densely populated areas;
- The promotion of **teleworking and smart teleworking centres** that bring together different services and users in one place;
- The **training of ICT personnel and notably young people**, especially for alert and prevention tools in case of avalanches, landslides and floods;
- **The collection and analysis of climatic data at a more local level.**

Innovation linked to management of natural hazards:

To prevent natural risks and improve responses to emergencies, Euromontana calls for:

- The integration of climate change variability into the **calculation** of prevention measures against natural hazards;
- The consideration of future variations due to climate change in **spatial planning**;
- The **sharing of risk-related data in open access**;
- The promotion of an **integrated approach** to natural hazards management
- The training of risk experts.

Finally, we, Euromontana, commit to:

Contribute with our activities to develop a **clean, competitive, resilient and low carbon economy for live mountains in Europe** through:

- The development of **European projects** on the theme of adaptation to climate change;
- The stimulation of **multidisciplinary scientific research** through the development of new research projects on the impacts of climate change in mountain areas, and effective communication between researchers and the many local stakeholders;
- The **dissemination of options for adaptation to climate change and good practices** in different European territories;
- Proposals to **better integrate the mountain dimension in the national contributions of the countries** following the Paris Agreement;

- **Lobbying** in the European institutions to encourage them to take into account the **specificities of mountains** in the development of policies and programmes;
- The possibility for our members to have **a platform for dialogue and advice on adaptation to climate change in mountain areas** and support for their local efforts;
- The adoption of **daily behaviours** to fight against climate change through exemplary good practices concerning the consumption of local products, use of adapted mobility, recycling, etc.