

# Group III Members in the Spotlight playing a key role



We stand in solidarity with you – civil society actors and human rights defenders in Hungary and elsewhere. The further shrinking of civic space in Europe can no longer be tolerated.

Together, we will work to create a Europe that truly respects human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.



**Dilyana SLAVOVA (BG)**  
National Association "Mountain Milk"  
Member of the Various Interests' Group  
President of REX section

***It is high time for mountains to move up the EU Agenda***

*"Mountains are the cathedrals where I practise my religion"*  
Anatoli Boukreev

Mountain areas are represented in the Economic and Social Committee by Group III. Whenever there are events on the issue, Group III members actively participate and present their views.

On 7 June more than 100 stakeholders from mountain areas all over Europe met in Brussels to take part in a high-level conference on "Cohesion Policy in Mountain Areas: How to increase the contribution from mountains and benefits for mountain territories".



## Why are mountain areas so important for the EU?

Mountains cover 35% of the land area of Europe (including Turkey) and 30% of the EU. People living in mountain areas number 112 million (17%) in Europe and 64 million (13%) in the EU (EEA 2010). For the EU, these numbers and proportions changed considerably with the accession of new Member States in central and eastern Europe in 2004, 2007, and 2013. Many of them have significant mountain areas and populations, in particular Slovenia (76% of its land area and 51% of its population), Slovakia (60% and 39%, respectively), Bulgaria (49% and 36%), Croatia (40% and 13%), and Romania (38% and 12%).



Although mountains account for a significant proportion of both the area and the population of the EU, relatively little specific attention has been paid to them in EU policies or even on a wider European scale. Article 174 of the 2007 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union includes mountains among the regions with "severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps" (this category also includes sparsely populated areas, islands, and border areas, many of which are also mountainous). Article 174 refers to the goal of economic, social, and territorial cohesion, which aims to reduce disparities in levels of development across the EU; this is generally known as "cohesion policy". Apart from this important mention, mountains are given specific attention in EU policy only with regard to agriculture and rural development; they have been identified as "less favoured areas" since 1975, and since 2013 as "areas with natural or other specific constraints".

## How can we put mountain areas at the heart of the EU agenda?

Firstly, we as representatives of organised civil society should support the idea of having "an agenda for mountainous regions" that could be "at the heart of an EU strategy on the development of mountainous regions".

Secondly, we need active, ambitious and targeted policies for mountain areas that help them to overcome constraints in order to make the most of their enormous potential.

Moving forward, we should show our support for a dedicated approach to mountain areas that is reflected in an integrated approach to EU funds.

In concrete terms, EU policy should target an EU mountain strategy by:

- prioritising actions in mountain areas in R&D programmes
- tailoring specific measures for mountain areas
- giving priority to mountain areas when selecting projects
- integrating CSF funds
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The European Rural Parliament hosted by the EESC proclaimed that "All Europe shall live". Mountain areas are part of Europe and the EU should take proper care of them.



**Roman HAKEN (CZ)**  
 Ředitel Centra pro komunitní práci (CpKP)  
 Member of the Various Interests' Group

### **Participation approaches and a danube strategy**

One of the possible future directions for EU cohesion policy could involve regional strategies. As the Czech Republic is part of the EU Danube Strategy (EUSDR), a National Participation Day – a meeting of regional stakeholders involved in the strategy – was held in Prague on 30 May 2017. **The event was co-organised by Group III member Roman Haken, member of the Czech government's Council for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organisations and chairman of its committee on regions and partnership.**

The Danube Strategy has emerged as the second of the four current EU macro-strategies and defines the concept of regional cooperation, which brings together not just the regions, but above all the whole Danube basin, including the Czech Republic. The EU Danube Strategy was launched in June 2011 and involves a total of nine EU Member States and five non-EU countries. It focuses on the four main pillars of regional development: better connectivity, environmental protection, building prosperity and strengthening the region.



**Thierry LIBEART (FR)**  
 Fondation Nicolas Hulot pour la Nature et l'Homme  
 Member of the Various Interests' Group

### **Is advertising compatible with the ecological transition?**

**There is no sense in talking about sustainability whilst ignoring advertising. The latter is, together with private monetary creation & banks and loans creation, the mere engine of consumerism and productivity. In this frame, Group III Member Thierry Libaert contributes to the debate through this study, which analyses whether advertisement is compatible with the ecological transition.**

For too long the ecological transition has focused on a strictly economic approach: the functional economy, the sharing economy, degrowth, new development indicators, the circular economy etc.

The dominant impression was that a successful transition is a matter for economists in which the public has no part to play. It was based on the belief that history is determined by graphs, figures and curves, although change is also driven by our ideas and our imagination.

Is advertising, whose main purpose is to constantly sell us new products and services, responsible for the environmental crisis?

According to the author of the study, advertising is part of an economic growth model with major environmental consequences in which our ideal of happiness depends on our capacity to consume more and more.

Oddly enough, apart from the degrowth movements and the criticism of abuses in connection with advertising poster campaigns and “greenwashing”, the responsibility of the advertising industry in the context of the necessary ecological transition has rarely been analysed.

The report does not aim either to pillory the world of advertising or to absolve it of blame, but it does not flinch from taking sides. It does not necessarily reflect the position of the Fondation Nicolas Hulot, but the Fondation felt that a debate needed to be launched.

In any event, the author makes a case for the industry's responsibility; the opposite case – advertising that contributes to a different vision of society – still remains to be made. Meanwhile we have a summary of possible solutions.

The Study can be found here:

[http://www.fondation-nicolas-hulot.org/sites/default/files/pub\\_et\\_transition.pdf](http://www.fondation-nicolas-hulot.org/sites/default/files/pub_et_transition.pdf)

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