

"Mountain municipality - Youth, our future": a label to encourage mountain municipalities to act for youth

Youth migration is a major issue for many mountain areas; due to the lack of satisfying socio-economic opportunities or of territorial attractiveness, many villages are faced with the departure of younger generations. This demographic decline makes services and infrastructures less and less viable and results in a cyclical loss of attractiveness of the territory. The label "Mountain Municipality - Youth, our future" is awarded by the SAB to municipalities acting in favour of youth and intending to reverse this demographic trend.

A label to encourage local action

MORE INFO

Young people are the future of mountain areas, but they are struggling to remain attractive. The recent [Euromontana's report on youth](#) shows that 66% of young mountain people in Europe would like to stay and work in the mountains, but deplore the difficult access to employment, transport and education, which pushes them to leave.

In order to encourage municipalities to act in support of young people and for the attractiveness of the territory, the SAB (Swiss Association for Mountain Regions) launched in 2015 the label "[Mountain Municipality - Youth, our future](#)". The label aims to recognise the efforts of these municipalities and to give them a positive and attractive image towards new inhabitants.

In order to obtain the label, interested municipalities can [apply](#) to the SAB between September and December each year. Applications are assessed from January onwards and a decision is taken in the spring with a view to awarding the label in the summer. To be awarded, applicant municipalities must comply with a list of requirements. These criteria were drawn up by the SAB on the basis of a survey conducted among young people in mountain regions in 2014 as part of the project "A future for young people in mountain regions". The analysis of this survey helped to identify priority topics for young mountain people. Therefore, each theme has to be addressed by the municipalities applying for the label. However, not all measures listed in the award criteria are mandatory. To obtain the label, a candidate municipality must meet all the mandatory requirements and cover at least 50% of the optional measures.

Award criteria

Mandatory requirements for certification relate to governance. The aim is to maintain a constant dialogue between young people, the labelled municipalities and the SAB and to ensure that the priorities of young people continue to be taken into account over time. Mandatory requirements include the following:

- Include the topic of mountain youth in the municipality's school programme. This topic, which is addressed freely by teachers, should be discussed at least once a year. This should help identifying the demands of pupils, which are then passed on to the SAB so that the voice of young people can be taken into account in the political advocacy at federal level.



- Delegate a young person from the municipality to the [SAB Youth Forum](#). In addition, the municipality must ensure dialogue with its delegate to the SAB Youth Forum in order to exchange information on the measures planned in the other labelled municipalities.

Optional criteria are more thematic. Municipalities are free to choose the topics that are relevant to them and to combine them as they wish, depending on the specific challenges of their territory and the profile and age of the young people on whom they wish to focus their efforts. In order to obtain the label, municipalities must cover at least 50% of the optional topics. However, the commitments made by the municipalities do not necessarily have to be implemented within their territory; indeed, they have the possibility to look for solutions on a regional scale, for example by financially supporting the construction of an infrastructure in the neighbouring municipality. The following topics are included in the list of optional themes:

- **School infrastructure:** municipalities must prove that they are committed to maintaining their school. The existence of a school avoids long journeys to the next town or village for families, contributes to the vitality of a community and attracts young adults. If the local school is already closed, municipalities can nevertheless introduce measures to facilitate and shorten the journey to neighbouring schools.
- **Childcare:** the municipalities should improve childcare facilities, either through private childcare or through the creation of a kindergarten.
- **Employment:** Municipalities should support youth employment, for example by taking measures to encourage local businesses to create apprenticeship or internship placements, or by promoting economic diversification and the establishment of new business sectors.
- **Mobility and accessibility:** municipalities should improve public transport provision.
- **Housing:** municipalities should facilitate access to housing for young adults.
- **Leisure:** municipalities should offer a range of leisure activities and should support related initiatives, for example by carried out associations or private individuals.
- **Intergenerational exchange:** municipalities should encourage intergenerational exchanges by creating a framework in which this exchange can take place, for example, a café, a demonstration or an event.

The label is valid for 10 years. Labelled municipalities must comply with the mandatory criteria throughout the duration of the label, on pain of withdrawal. After 10 years, the municipality must again comply with the requirements of the label by submitting a file summarising the measures taken during the previous period and the ambitions for the next.



Credits SAB (Swiss Association for Mountain Regions)

Results

28 municipalities in 6 cantons have received the label "Mountain Municipality - Youth, our future". The actions implemented in these municipalities depend on the needs of young people and the target group of each municipality.

For example, the municipality of Hergiswil has supported a housing cooperative offering affordable housing for young adults and is committed to providing low-cost land to ensure the municipality's population growth.

In order to promote the professional insertion of young mountain people, the municipality of Leukerbad organises annual workshops for young people to familiarise them with local jobs and companies. Thanks to this measure, about 40 students find their apprenticeship placement in Leukerbad every year. Likewise, the municipality of Safiental has integrated a presentation of the region's jobs and sectors into its career orientation courses.

Several municipalities are working to promote youth mobility. Since 2019, Albinen is financing and operating an on-demand night taxi service, which connects the community with Leukerbad and Flaschen. In Flühl-Sörenberg, night buses are available for young people on weekends.

Educational activities are also carried out in order to maintain the attractiveness of the area for young families. The municipality of Andermatt, for example, promotes cooperation with the other municipalities in the Urseren valley in order to maintain a school in the village. This includes the organisation of transport from Realp. The municipality has also invested funds to extend and refurbish the village school.

Other measures aim to better involve young people in local decision making, for example through the creation of youth councils at the municipal level, as done by the municipalities of Safiental and Poschiavo.

An overview of all measures is available in the recent SAB report "[Successful solutions to meet the needs of young people living in mountains](#)".

Resources and governance

"Mountain Municipality - Youth, our future" is a label registered by the SAB. It is awarded by the SAB Youth Forum, which is composed of young delegates from the labelled municipalities.



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The annual contribution for the use of the label amounts to CHF 200 per municipality. This fee covers the operating costs of the SAB Youth Forum and helps sustaining the initiative. The review procedure to maintain the label after the 10-year period is free of charge.

Innovative aspect

With the creation of this label, the SAB promotes public action in favour of young people and the attractiveness of mountain areas. Eligibility criteria allow municipalities to adapt measures to their own challenges and ensure both the involvement of young people in decision-making and the inclusion of their demands on the advocacy work at federal political level. The experience of labelled municipalities can inspire other territories facing similar challenges regarding the preservation or development of schools, transport, and employment.

