



EUROMONTANA

XII European
Mountain
Convention

25 - 26 - 27 October 2022



SILA DECLARATION

SMART MOUNTAINS

Making our territories more
attractive and resilient in the
face of social, economic and
environmental transitions

*Presented during the XII European Mountain Convention
in Camigliatello Silano on 27 October 2022*

We, representatives of Euromontana, assembled here in the Natural Park & Biosphere Reserve of Sila on the 27th October 2022, do declare:

Though mountain areas are different across Europe, on a pan-European level they are facing several **environmental, societal, economic and migratory challenges** that impact not only the communities living in such areas but also the rich natural environment that characterise mountains. Often remote and rural, mountain communities struggle with unsatisfactory logistical and technical infrastructure, in delivering basic services and too often lack job and education opportunities for young generations. This has over the years translated into a brain drain and population decline. At the same time, achieving a balance between economic development and environmental protection remains an issue for many regions, while climate change has started to noticeably impact core economic sectors such as agriculture, forestry and tourism.

Yet, **mountains are also territories of opportunities**, not only within the mountain areas themselves but also for Europe, because of the many **ecosystem services** provided by mountain areas. Mountains are suppliers of raw materials for circular and biobased value chains and can play a key role in the energy transition. They produce healthy, wholesome food. They are important reservoirs of **biodiversity** and **carbon sinks**. Finally, the covid-19 crisis has created a new potential for attractiveness that needs to be seized by mountain communities. More importantly, mountains are territories with a strong identity and sense of community, where young people decidedly want to live, as evidenced by Euromontana's survey on the topic published in January 2022.

It is therefore crucial to create the framework conditions to seize those opportunities and **make mountains more attractive, while at the same time more resilient to the socio-economic and environmental challenges they are facing**. In this context, our vision of a "smart mountain" is a mountain that uses the potentials of digitalisation and locally grounded social and economic innovation to overcome challenges of mountain areas and create new opportunities in a context of social, economic and environmental transitions.

Smart mountains strive to become resilient territories that are adapted to the impacts of climate change, contribute to food & energy security, and rely on a diversified future-oriented economy.

Smart mountains strive to become attractive territories that can provide jobs, a good quality of life for both young and older adults, better connectivity to its inhabitants, and that are embedded in virtuous functional relationships with urban areas.

Smart mountains strive to better manage and adequately value its natural resources and ecosystem services, in particular those provided by agriculture, while also ensuring the protection of its rich biodiversity and cultural landscapes.

To help make our territories more attractive and future-oriented, we call on the European, national and regional institutions to:

- Make the smart transformation of mountain areas a political priority by **dedicating special funding** for smart mountain initiatives.
- Support **future-oriented sectors and accompany traditional sectors**, including agriculture and tourism, on the path to resilience and sustainability, through place-based approaches.
- Better recognise, value, and where appropriate remunerate **ecosystem services** originating from mountain areas and more generally from rural areas.
- **Boost digital innovation** by creating the appropriate regulatory framework for an improved access and management of data and foster the robust rollout of IT infrastructure and skills so as to ensuring that every SME and citizen has access to high-speed internet access in rural and mountain areas.
- Intensify the **sharing of experiences and good practices** at regional, national and European levels. The CAP Network, the Rural Pact, and national rural networks are examples of appropriate forums for such knowledge and experience sharing to take place.
- Support **cooperation and knowledge sharing at macroregional level** as well as between macro regions and accelerate the creation of a new macroregional strategy in the Carpathians.
- Support and facilitate the adoption of **new participatory approaches** in territorial policy making, with focus on opportunities for youth, women and older populations.
- Foster **community-led initiatives** to enable socio ecological transformation in mountains, for example in the frame of the New European Bauhaus. Specific funding should be made available to kick start such initiatives and enable experience sharing at European level.
- Further support the characterisation of **functional interactions** between urban and rural areas, in particular for education, mobility, agriculture, services, tourism, and the connections between blue and green infrastructures.
- Implement **natural risks management** strategies in regional policies to enhance resilience to climate change and other natural disasters.
- Support **interdisciplinary research** networks at regional, national, macroregional and European levels, as a way to foster mutual understanding and cooperation between all disciplines relevant to the smart development of mountain areas.

Finally, we, Euromontana, undertake to contribute with our activities to further advance smart mountain approaches by:

- Supporting policy makers and research organisations in the identification of **measurable indicators** relevant to the attractivity, sustainability and resilience of mountain territories and value chains.
- **Sharing enabling knowledge** relevant to smart employment, smart mobility, smart economy, smart living, data driven innovation, and the smart management of natural resources. This will take the form of the dissemination of good practices from mountain territories.
- Encouraging EU institutions to better take into account the **specific constraints** of mountain territories, but also their **potential contribution** to tackling global challenges.
- Encouraging our members as well as local and regional authorities to engage actively in the **Rural Pact** and better involve all stakeholders in the shaping and implementation of long-term visions for the sustainable development of mountain territories.
- The development of **European projects** promoting solutions for the smart and sustainable development of mountain areas, in particular in the areas of resilience to climate change, valuation of ecosystem services, skills for diversified mountain economies, remote working, smart villages, and rural functional areas.
- Using the **Network for European Mountain Research**, of which Euromontana is a co-founder, to foster interdisciplinary approaches to the challenges faces by mountain areas and formulate recommendations on how to better integrate social sciences and humanities in research policies.



EUROMONTANA

www.euromontana.org



@Euromontana



@Euromontana



Euromontana

Euromontana

2 place du champ de mars - 1050 Brussels - Belgium

T: + 32 2 280 42 83

Email: info@euromontana.org