

BOOKLET OF GOOD PRACTICES



2020



This booklet is the result of the exchange of good practices carried out by Euromontana in 2019 with the aim of showcasing innovative initiatives for the sustainable development of mountain areas in Europe.

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Pyrénées Création: restoring the nobility of wool

The revalorisation of a traditional sector

Pyrénées Création is a small company from the French Pyrenees that has succeeded, with modern design and innovative creations (slippers, bags, plaids and rugs) to bring the wool of Pyrenean sheep back into fashion. In order to revitalise the industry that has existed in the Occitanie region since 1882, Pyrénées Création works with farmers to better understand the cycle and quality of shearing and to select the beautiful wools that can be used for its production. The washing, spinning and weaving of the wool are done in partnership with local companies as close as possible to the territory.

MORE INFO

Quality comes first

brand Pyrénées Création is part of a qualitative approach, at several levels by selecting its wool from a dozen breeders who respect the wool tradition and by participating directly in wool shearing workshops.

The processing of fleeces by the South-Western textile industry is carried out by a dozen service companies, including Passe Trame, a privileged partner for weaving.

The marketing is mainly done by direct sale through the website, through artisan shops and event markets. This ethical trade approach also benefits from the “Esprit Parc National” brand, which recognises commitment, authenticity and respect for nature, while ensuring the preservation and promotion of an exceptional territory.

Active within the association ATELIER Laine d’Europe, Pyrénées Création respects its charter of values (traceability and ecology).

The transmission of an ancient and authentic product

Well-known by everyone, wool needs to be rediscovered to be appreciated for its right value. Thus, Pyrénées Création revives the rich history of wool by presenting the different stages of its transformation, from fleece to finished product, to the general public at agricultural fairs, to children from 2 to 12 years old, and in the training of high school students.

One example is the inter-school project with the creation and production of felt slippers from local wool. The transformation was entirely done by the students of the agricultural section of the Saint Gaudens high school and the design was then carried out by the students of métiers d’art de Coarrazze high school with very original creations. This action has introduced a hundred high school students to new forms of production and creation.

Innovative aspect



Pyrénées Création has succeeded in using the authenticity and quality of a forgotten traditional product to make a more modern and attractive product, which helps to enhance the value of the sector. The strong emphasis on the transmission of knowledge, including to the younger generations, helps to recreate a favourable ecosystem to revitalise the wool.





GPS tracking to guarantee sustainable products

Why a GPS tracking for mountain herds?

Selling mountain products can sometimes become a difficult task when it comes to justify the quality and sustainability of foods. Ensuring quality is critical for mountain products, since it is key to highlight the specificities of mountain extensive agriculture but also to ensure fair income to farmers in areas with geographical constraints.

To address this issue, the Greek cooperation Terra Thessalia developed a GPS tracking system in Thessaly, Greece, in cooperation with the EU-funded project LACTIMED (Promoting Mediterranean Dairy Products) to track the mountain herds. This innovation is part of the Participatory Guarantee System for the “Terra Thessalia Lactis” label for dairy products and is used to guarantee the producer’s extensive pastoral practices. The application was implemented due to the need for a reliable tool accessible to consumers that would also guarantee the grazing of the herds.

MORE INFO



Consumers’ control over their consumption of sustainable meat and dairy products

During the project, new techniques to geolocate herds were developed and tested in 15 livestock farms. This resulted in the development of a GPS tracking collar. By outfitting livestock with this collar, the herd’s daily movements in mountain areas can be tracked. Collected data allows farms to be certified with sustainable grazing practices and sell their products under the Terra Thessalia Lactis label.



Moreover, the livestock tracking data is stored in an online database and can be accessed by consumers so they can verify the extensive grazing of livestock. The GPS-tracking serves as a certification tool for the extensive grazing of herds and contributes to the products’ added value. High Nature Value farming such as pastoralism directly benefited from the use of GPS-tracking since it helped to increase products’ added value on the market. The GPS-tracking can be installed on any extensive livestock holding with mobile signal.

Indirect benefits of GPS-tracking in mountain pastures

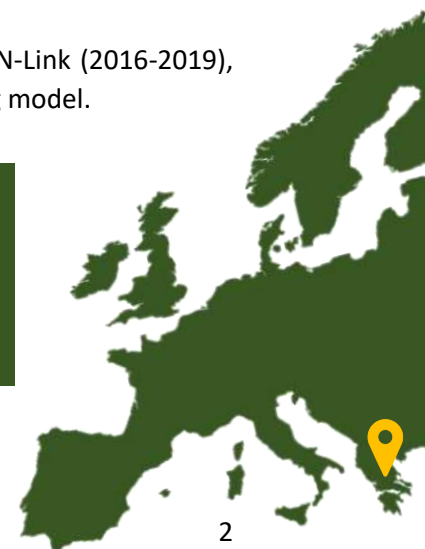
The use of GPS-tracking also implies indirect financial benefits for farmers, especially in cattle holdings, tracking the movement of the animals in the countryside (free range for approximately 6 months) helps to save sick-trapped animals and minimizing the cost from animal losses. Such devices also offer additional benefits for the management of mountain grasslands. It facilitates grassland management, avoids over-grazing of certain pastures and helps collecting data on the pasture quality (quantity of biomass, biodiversity and plant species)

The initiative was part of two EU-funded projects LACTIMED (2012-2015) & HVN-Link (2016-2019), which helped to understand farmers’ needs and to design this innovative tracking model.

Innovative aspect



By using GPS tracking to guarantee the sustainability of mountain products, the cooperative has succeeded in using digital innovations to strengthen the link between producers and consumers, supporting at the same time mountain farming.



Revitalising rural areas thanks to villages' bistros: a practice guide from Massif Central

A step-by-step guide to become a manager of vibrant and inclusive local shops

In rural areas, in particular in the most remote ones, bistros and cafes are places for local communities to meet but most of them also provide services and organise cultural events. They do not only serve drinks, they go beyond their status of private businesses and strongly contribute to the general interest of local communities by also being small restaurants, relays of the tourist office, regional newspapers sellers, and even postal services providers.

MORE INFO

In France, for instance, 500 000 pubs and cafes existed in the beginning of the XXth century while only 30 000 can be counted today. To encourage the multiplication of bistros in rural and mountainous areas, the Network of Natural Parks of the Massif Central, in France, produced a practice guide to help in all steps of the process to create vibrant places for a territory and its inhabitants.

The practice guide mainly targets citizens willing to create or revive a village bistro. Bistro owners can find in the guide all the relevant legal information on accessibility requirements, hygiene rules, terrace right of occupancy and taxes among others. All these technical memos go along with examples of successful, inclusive and vibrant rural bistros which project implementers can get inspired by. The guide is also addressed to municipalities and provides guidance to rural mayors willing to revitalize their territory.

Village cafés in mountain areas: success factors

Diversification: in rural areas, bistros and cafes cannot simply be pubs, they need to provide other services and to achieve a real social function. Among the diversification strategies: proposing fresh homemade food, using local products, hosting a small grocery, a postal relay, a school canteen or even a multimedia access point with Wi-Fi.

Assistance: owing a rural café is not always easy but the practice guide provides advices on how to build a useful network, from the municipality to chambers of commerce, farmers cooperatives and cultural associations.

Culture: whereas going to theatres and concert halls often requires taking the car, bistros in small villages can also be places hosting cultural events. In the Massif Central for example, the annual event "The Spring of Bistros", organised by the association Pay'Sage, is a festival hosted in 50 bistros, programming more than 80 artists and proposing debates and workshops on topics such as hitchhiking, short-circuits or the future of regional languages in mountain areas.

Innovative aspect



The practical guide provides clear and easily transferable tools for revitalizing small businesses in rural areas. The Pays'Sage association, the Economic Chamber of the department of Corrèze and students of the master's degree "Tourism and development of territories" of the University of Clermont-Ferrand co-produced the guide.





Smart Village Scotland: Web communities for Scotland's villages

A platform dedicated to Smart Villages

Smart Village Scotland is a platform aiming at helping the development of smart villages in Scotland, by equipping rural territories with the same technologies as those existing in large cities. It was created by Digital Scotland, a business network supporting the Scottish Government's ambitions in realising Scotland's full potential in a digital world.

Smart Village Scotland provides a dedicated webpage to promote local businesses and social activities of smart villages in Scotland. Each village can promote local activities and celebrations or local businesses like hostels and restaurants, to show how their region is dynamic. The purpose is also to include smart data feeds, like weather conditions, road traffic and flooding alerts, to help communities, businesses and tourists adapting their agenda.

MORE INFO



A tool available to all

The information online varies from a village to another and can include listings of local businesses and their opening hours or explanations on the history and heritage of the village, it can guide tourists through the region and promote local celebration days or any other information of value to the community or future visitors helping to boost the local economy. Each village can adapt its broadcasted content depending on its specific resources or local activities. Lanark for instance promotes its William Wallace heritage to attract visitors. Its website gives thorough information on Wallace's history and touristic information on local castles to visit.



Any inhabitant of the 2112 Scottish villages is welcomed to start and lead a Smart Village for free on the platform, from citizens, representatives of local authorities to local business owners. In addition to promoting their village on the platform, local communities can get inspired from the various good practices available online to implement new initiatives and keep their territory dynamic and attractive.

The example of Strathyre Smart Villages

The Smart Village concept is very developed in Scotland. Strathyre, a village in the Highlands, is the first Smart Village of the country. Different initiatives have been implemented to revitalize the village, such as:

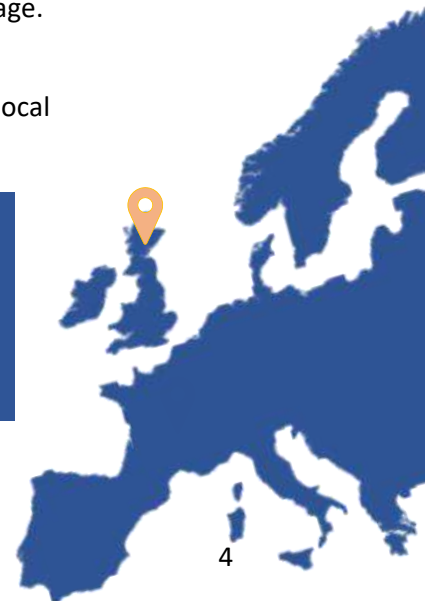
- Re-routing a National Cycle Network Route to the village.
- Purchasing closed hotels and opening them to businesses.
- River level monitoring and early warning system added to protect the village.
- Organising live music sessions in the White Stag Inn, the local pub.

These initiatives attracted more tourists in the recent years and encouraged local communities in developing opportunities in the region.



Innovative aspect

Smart Village Scotland offers each villager the opportunity to promote the attractiveness of their area by contributing to the page dedicated to their municipality while also being able to draw inspiration from good practices from other parts of the country.





“Together it’s better”: carpooling initiative in the Jura Arc

A centralised mechanism to encourage collective trips to work

The carpooling project in the Jura Arc promotes car sharing in this mid mountain region underserved by public transports. The initiative aims at facilitating local workers’ moves while at the same time encouraging social connections between people and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions. The carpooling project is developed along the 230km border of the French-Swiss Jura Arc border. To connect car poolers, a telephone centre has been developed, available on working days from France and Switzerland.

MORE INFO

From 2015 to 2018, the project benefited from a financial support of the European Fund for Regional Development and from the Swiss Confederation through the INTERREG V A France-Switzerland cooperation programme.



Initiated in 2011, the carpooling project of the Jura Arc is supported by 16 institutional partners on both sides of the border. Private entities are also involved in the project with many companies encouraging carpooling among their employees, a communication kit was created to help companies making the system popular. It not only advertises the project but also provides useful guidelines to car poolers as well as legal information regarding car insurance for instance. Information days can also be organised for employees in their company to promote carpooling and answer their questions.



An inclusive governance

The project is supported by 16 local administrations, in majority cantons, agglomerations and municipalities, each one serving as a local contact point for potential car poolers. More than 130 companies also take part in the project and are actively involved in its development. Each year, companies’ mobility officers are invited to participate to mobility task forces to discuss potential issues, possible solutions and further developments to encourage carpooling in the region.

Results and benefits of the carpooling project in the Jura Arc

More than 8.700 persons are already using the carpooling system in the Jura Arc. According to the project managers, carpooling doubled in the region in 5 years. The interests of carpooling are clear in such a region, where workers often cross the border and where traffic is reaching a high level of congestion. Moreover, in a region with poor public transports, it optimizes conditions for new company and job creations. Car poolers can also enjoy the economic benefits of carpooling by saving around 2.300 euros per year in oil and car maintenance. Carpooling also has environmental benefits, with 1.1 tonne of CO2 possibly saved each year by one regular car pooler. This also has implications in term of landscape, as less space needs to be dedicated to car parks.

Innovative aspect

This cross-border initiative has brought together local and regional institutions as well as businesses in the area to set up a unique and user-friendly shared mobility service. The role of local businesses in the governance of the project and in the promotion of car-sharing is a key success factor.





Credits : MiaEngiadina

Coworking spaces in the Swiss mountains to boost creativity and attractiveness

4 coworking spaces

Lower Engadine, Switzerland, is a peripheral area facing different issues such as depopulation, especially youth leaving for cities, loss of jobs and dependency to tourism. To address the challenge of attractiveness, the “MiaEngiadina” initiative decided to create different co-working places in the area, offering all necessary options for businesses development.

4 co-working areas were already created by MiaEngiadina in different villages of Lower Engadine:

- In Scuol, the “Mountain Hub” was the primary area opened to workers and also offers a meeting room and a conference room for rent.
- In Ardez, a small co-working area proposes 2 co-working rooms.
- In Ftan, thanks to a specific collaboration with the Alpine Institute, a co-working area is hosted within the premises of the school.
- In Motta Naluns, the newest co-working place of MiaEngiadina was opened in this ski region. The idea behind, apart from stunning landscape, is to combine leisure activities and work.

MORE INFO



All 4 co-working places are equipped with a very fast Internet connection of 100Mbits/s. Workers can also use some equipment such as printers, photocopiers, computers and flipcharts.

An "à la carte" system to meet various needs

The functioning of each coworking space is different. While some need to be booked in advance, the “Mountain Hub” in Scuol is opened on a daily basis during working hours. Because of its large opening hours and its wide range of equipment, this coworking area proposes different prices. For instance, using the space for only one hour is free while staying for the day costs 24 CHF. Monthly subscriptions are also available and can be a convenient option for new businesses. The other co-working sites are free of charge for anyone willing to use them.

Each site also received different types of support for their creation. The co-working space in Ftan, located in the Alpine Institute, was for instance supported by L’Aide Suisse aux Montagnards, a Swiss Foundation promoting the development of mountain areas since 1943. The association supported the initiative by donating IT equipment and by offering their expertise to shape an open learning environment. In the villages of Ardez and Motta Naluns, municipalities are involved in the projects as they own the buildings used as coworking areas and make them available for MiaEngiadina for free.

These coworking spaces offer a high-quality Internet access - a critical aspect in a territory where connectivity barely exceeds 30 Mbit/s according to the OECD mapping of broadband.



Innovative aspect

The creation of coworking areas in the mountains has many advantages for the local population. It encourages teamwork, stimulates creativity and innovation in the region and encourages other businesses to settle in the area.





Wind farms and wolf conservation in Portugal: an innovative compensation scheme

What is the connection between wind farms and wolves?

Most wind farms in Portugal are located in remote mountain areas, which are also the main habitat for the Iberian Wolf. Around one third of all Portuguese wolves share their territory with windfarms; both the wolf and its prey species are impacted by habitat changes such as habitat loss and fragmentation and disturbance due to wind farms.

MORE INFO

To balance the environmental impacts, in 2006 several renewable energy companies created the non-profit association ACHLI. ACHLI manages the Iberian Wolf Habitat Conservation Fund, with financial contributions coming from the members who must conduct compensatory measures under the EIA. The Fund, based purely on private funding, has as sole purpose to support projects related to the conservation and management of the Iberian Wolf and its habitat.

Activities carried out for the conservation of the habitat of the Iberian Wolf

There are various activities carried out together with many different actors, including national forestry authorities, universities, research and conservation organizations, local authorities, farmers, wind park owners, and local hunters' associations in the two intervention zones: South Douro and Alto Minho.

Between 2017 and 2019 ACHLI has been working on a forest management project covers about 700 hectares of forest area. The aim is to reforest, improve and maintain forest areas adapted to the ecological conditions of the region to provide refuge and food for both the wolf and the wild ungulates it preys on (roe deer, wild boar and red deer).

ACHLI has also financed the handout of 47 livestock guarding dogs since 2014 to encourage the human-wolf coexistence by reducing wolf depredation on livestock.

It is important to assess whether all above projects positively contribute to the conservation of the wolf and its habitat. Therefore, ACHLI has set up two wolf monitoring plans: one for the South Douro and another for the Alto Minho area, conducted together with the Universities of Porto and of Aveiro.

Benefitting from the legal obligation to take compensatory measures to counterbalance the environmental impact occasioned by wind parks, ACHLI links renewable energy production with wolf conservation. The various projects are complementary amongst each other and rely on the community involvement throughout the process, from hunters to researchers.

Innovative aspect



This good practice has the merit of responding to the challenges that the installation of renewable energy can pose in mountain areas that are both biodiversity reserves and key areas for the production of renewable energy.





Credits : Belchite

The Desafío programme: a “rural Erasmus” to fight depopulation in rural and mountain areas

Desafío: an internship programme to attract youth in rural and mountainous areas

Created in 2018 by the Chair on Depopulation and Creativity of the University of Zaragoza (Spain), Desafío is an internship programme connecting rural public and private organisations willing to train young people and students eager to put in practice their academic knowledge. The programme was designed to fight rural depopulation in the Province, where inhabitants gathered around the main cities from the 1960's, abandoning the most rural and remote areas.

MORE INFO

Thanks to Desafío, students of the University of Zaragoza can take an internship in rural areas between June and November, which includes 120 to 500 working hours. Internships must take place in municipalities counting less than 3.000 inhabitants, excluding all the urban belt of Zaragoza.

A public initiative led by the Province and the University of Zaragoza

Desafío is coordinated by the Province of Zaragoza, through its Chair on Depopulation and Creativity, and the University of Zaragoza. While the publication of internship offers and selection process is realised by the University of Zaragoza, the Province is responsible for the promotion and financing of the programme.

9.000 euros were allocated to the pilot phase and, based on Desafío's success, the Province tripled the budget, reaching 30.000 euros for the 2019 edition. This budget covers internship grants allocated to students, covering travel and accommodations costs.

Participants' diversified profiles

If located in villages counting less than 3.000 inhabitants, the following organisations can propose an internship within the Desafío programme: companies from all industrial sectors, public institutions, foundations and Non-Governmental Organizations, LAGs of LEADER and, from 2019, companies with more than 250 employees.

The diversity of host organisations during the pilot phase of the programme testifies the great interest of rural employers in training students. They for instance included a retirement residence in Romanos, two farms in Cubel and Villarreal de Huerva, the Sociocultural Association Purroy Unido and the City Council of Herrera de los Navarros. The success of the pilot phase encouraged other organisations to join the programme for the 2019 edition, such as the City Council of Aladrén or the Association of Industrial Architectural Heritage in Asopia. Located in small villages, these organisations develop initiatives and businesses strongly connected to their territories and wish to attract new talents and possible future workers but also neighbours.

The diverse profile of host organisations is reflected in the heterogeneity of participants' profiles. 13 students were selected to participate in the pilot phase in 2018 and 23 for the Summer 2019. Among them, 5 students of veterinary medicine, but also law, marketing, fine arts, social care, nursery and childcare.

A win-win situation for participants

The Desafío programme offers the chance to University students to complete an internship in rural areas; beyond the size of villages, it often suggests an easier selection process and less competition but also implies working in smaller teams, benefiting from a more personalised professional training and being part of a united community. For most of participating students, beyond tourism and outdoor activities, Desafío is their first everyday life experience in rural areas. “An experience equivalent to going for an Erasmus to another country” claims Luis Antonio Sáez Pérez. “Many times, the contrast between villages and cities in your own Province is greater than between two European cities.”

A few interns from the pilot phase participated again in the 2019 edition and expressed their wish to move out from Zaragoza once graduated, a win-win situation for local businesses, associations and administrations who will enjoy the arrival of a skilled and trained workforce. As for students, most of participating organisations expressed their satisfaction by renewing their participation in 2019.

The benefits of such a programme for the Province’s most rural and remote areas are certainly positive. Attracting youth there is key to reverse depopulation trends and, in a snowball effect, develop more local goods and services.



Innovative aspect

The Province and University of Zaragoza's programme has been successful in attracting young students to rural areas by offering diverse and paid internships. This rural experience can open the doors to an overall revitalisation of the Province through the promotion of professional opportunities in rural areas.





Credits : Caja de Burgos

Helping the unemployed to get out of the woods

Combatting rural unemployment with training opportunities

Although the unemployment rate in the Province of Burgos – 8.70% in 2017 – was 10 points below the national average, the rural areas of the Province were suffering from a lack of training and employment opportunities. Consequently, many young people decided to seek for a job in large cities, amplifying rural depopulation. To tackle this challenge, Caja de Burgos, a local foundation focused on social and economic development, and the Provincial Council of Burgos developed a forestry training for the unemployed rural inhabitants of the Province. The course aimed at answering the education needs of local unemployed population by offering group trainings. It also supported rural entrepreneurship while promoting sustainable forestry, circular economy and biodiversity protection.

MORE INFO

Involving local actors in funding and managing the training programme

Caja de Burgos and the Provincial Council of Burgos jointly financed and structured the training programme. Together, they also decided to prioritize long-term unemployed or socially excluded persons and to put a focus on women and young people below 35 years old. Moreover, municipalities with less than 20.000 inhabitants, and where the unemployment rate was the highest of the region, were targeted hosts for these trainings. Huerta del Rey, Salas de los Infantes and Quintanar de la Sierra, were for instance chosen based on these criteria.

Theoretical parts of the training were organised in the Centres of Social Action of each hosting municipality. Centres of Social Action from the mountainous areas of the Province have been particularly interested to host the forestry training since forestry companies and administrations had previously expressed their employment needs. Other actors were also involved, such as CRECE, a local company of the forestry sector. Thanks to their professional expertise, they helped in designing and leading both theoretical and practical parts of the forestry training.

A training to encourage employment in the forestry sector in mountain areas

Called “the forestry sector for the promotion of biodiversity”, this course aimed at providing technical and practical knowledge for job seekers interested in the sustainable management of forests. Such a course is of particular interest in a mountainous area as it takes advantage of endogenous resources of the territory. In addition to forestry, the training also covered the protection of biodiversity, since it was considered as a professional asset in the forestry sector.

In practice, the course was limited to small groups of 15 persons and included 36 hours of training, of which 75% were practical exercises directly on the ground. The concrete format of the course enabled participants to apply the theoretical knowledge on machines’ use, identification of interesting shrubs and trees and even construction of nests and shelters for local species. Teachers, on their side, were experts of biodiversity protection, forest management, species identification with not only strong theoretical backgrounds but also a long practical experience in giving classes.

An improved employability and global benefits in a mountainous context

The “forestry sector for the promotion of biodiversity” course was evaluated by participants at the end of each session and a satisfaction rate of 4.5 on 5 was attributed. The course has been recognised as a real accelerator for unemployed persons to find a job in this sector. While there is no official data

on participants' future professional integration, organisers testify that some beneficiaries already found a new position. The Centre for Social Action of the Province of Burgos also assessed the course, stating that it increased the employability of participants in at least 25% of cases.

In addition, the forestry course encourages biodiversity protection, with a basic knowledge on local species habitats. The programme also promotes the sustainable management of forest, which is not only crucial in terms of the environment but also for risk reduction in mountain areas. A strong knowledge of local varieties and invasive ones for instance contributes to the reduction of forest fires. This scourge is enhanced by depopulation – with inhabitants abandoning their lands in mountain areas, there is a visible increase of the forest coverage. Beside agriculture, the forestry sector is the cornerstone of the fight against forest fires. By putting a focus on youth, Caja de Burgos and the Provincial Council of Burgos also intend to put an end to the vicious circle of depopulation. Thus, this forestry course offers a comprehensive panel of solutions and successfully connects employment, depopulation, environmental and landscape issues.



Innovative aspect

These courses are a good example of local collaboration between public and private sectors. Involved organisations have succeeded in combining their forces to better combat unemployment in the rural and mountainous areas of the Province, while using the endogenous resources of the mountains to meet the needs of the labour market.





Crédits : A. Barnaud, L. Boutonnet

The Mountain Parliament of the Occitanie region, France: involving mountain communities in their region's future

A special attention to diversified mountains

The Occitanie region, France, created a Mountain Parliament in 2018 to offer a new open discussion space to mountain local communities. In this region where mountain areas represent 55% of the territory, 47% of municipalities and 20% of the total population, the initiative aims at proposing a smarter governance model in the region and to involve citizens in the decision-making process.

The Massif Central and Pyrenees are dominating the region and one objective of the Mountain Parliament is to promote the opportunities offered by these territories, including the mid-mountain areas of the Massif Central. Another goal was to create an open forum where an integrated vision of mountain territories could be discussed, including opportunities offered by all economic sectors. In this very attractive region, tourism is indeed an opportunity but is not a panacea when it comes to the sustainable development of an entire region and all economic sectors should be considered when shaping development strategies

MORE INFO



An open forum and technical working groups

Different discussion platforms were created within the Mountain Parliament to facilitate debates. An online platform is open to anyone, 700 persons are currently active there.

The Mountain Parliament's governance also implies the organisation of plenary sessions in the region open to all. These meetings are open forums, where citizens from the region can express their views about the development of their territory. Plenary sessions are also a place to debate and structure the future work of the Mountain Parliament and adopt an efficient collective roadmap. Deeper work is indeed divided between different working groups. In 2019, participants decided to work on 3 different issues on which they will formulate recommendations:

- Making seasonal employment less insecure
- Including mountain storytelling in tourism marketing
- Promoting non-foods Geographical Indications to maintain economic value in the area, such as knives production

Resources needed

Generally speaking, the Occitanie region is responsible for the organisation of events such as plenary sessions, usually organised in small towns or mountain villages. The region is also in charge of the animation and reporting of these sessions, for which the meeting format usually used is from 10:00 to 16:00 with a regional products lunch provided.

To manage these activities, 2 persons are fully working on the Mountain Parliament in the region's Directorate for Territorial Development. Officials from other services are of course also involved, especially when it comes to the provision of more policy related content or to the consideration of the recommendations formulated by citizens within the Mountain Parliament. Overall, 60.000 to 80.000 euros are needed on an annual basis to animate this new governance body of the Occitanie Region.

A participatory budget in 2019-2020

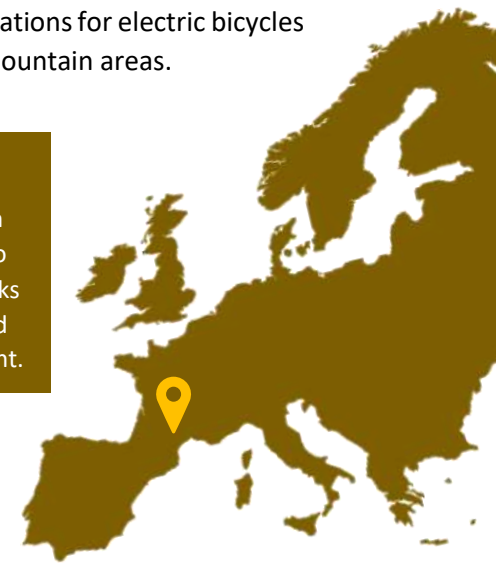
Besides this fixed operational budget, the Occitanie region also launched for the first time in July 2019 a participatory budget for its mountain areas. With an allocated budget of 1.2 million euros for 2019-2020, this initiative aims at financing promising projects in and for mountain territories to boost their development.

70 different initiatives applied in less than a month, hoping to be among the ones selected by citizens and financed by the region. Eligible projects must be developed in a massif area of the region and bring an innovation for the general interest. Investments can range from 2.000 to 100.000 euros. Until September 2019, all citizens of the Region, aged from 15, were invited to vote online to select the 28 best projects they would like the Occitanie region to financially support. Each citizen could in November vote for the best 3 projects; among the projects put to the vote was for instance “VirgoCoop”, a cooperative willing to revitalize the textile regional industry based on hemp cultivation as well as the project of Mende’s Tourism Office to install electric charging stations for electric bicycles in three different locations to promote cycling and sustainable tourism in mountain areas.



Innovative aspect

With the creation of the Mountain Parliament, the Occitan region innovates by applying the principles of participatory democracy to mountain territories. This new governance tool strengthens the links between mountain communities and regional representatives and allows coordinated and integrated action for territorial development.





Are ecology and winter sports compatible? Focus on the Flocon vert label

A label for sustainable tourism in mountain areas

Mountain Riders, a French education association for sustainable development, created in 2011 the Flocon Vert label to raise awareness of tourists on the climate cause and promote sustainable tourism. The objective is to reconcile snow tourism and respect for the environment by encouraging skiers to turn to eco-responsible stations.

The Flocon Vert label joins the international Green Globe label, which lists tourism initiatives in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Mountain Riders' initiative is also supported, since its creation in 2011, by the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, one of Euromontana's member, and by the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region.

MORE INFO

Multidimensional criteria for the labellisation

The Flocon Vert label meets the eligibility criteria defined by 70 organisations experts in eco-responsible mountain tourism, such as ADEME, professionals in the sector or the Foundation for Nature and Human. Applicants must respect 21 criteria, addressing socio-cultural and environmental challenges as well as dimensions related to governance and local economy. This helps to take into account all the range of actors concerned by sustainable mountain management. Therefore, the association does not only target ski stations managers but also tourist offices and local representatives.

Among the 21 criteria of the Flocon Vert label are:

- Diversification of tourism activity (4 seasons strategy).
- Fair working conditions (seasonal housing, local employment prospects).
- Cultural and natural heritage (protection of sites and promotion of protected areas).
- Water management (reasoned management and artificial snow).
- Waste management (awareness of residents, professionals and tourists, composting).
- Climate change (reduction of greenhouse gas emissions).
- Green transports (public transport, carpooling).

The labelling process can be undertaken by mountain stations and mountain tourist villages with a questionnaire including 128 questions, to be answered by the main actors of the station: the mayor, the tourist office and the ski area's manager.

This is followed by an audit to verify the station's commitment to the requirement specification of the label, whereby the labelling committee can decide of the attribution of the label to the station for 3 years.

What is the label's price? Flocon Vert label is a paid label. Its price is however set on a case by case basis according to the attractiveness and the size of the station, it can thus vary between 4.000 and 10.000 euros for the first year. In addition, this rate is decreasing. The first year of certification concentrates most of the costs, particularly related to administrative procedures and the audit process, while these costs decrease in the following years.

6 French stations labelled as Flocon Vert


Châtel, Vallée de Chamonix Mont-Blanc, Les Rousses, La pierre saint-martin, Chamrousse and Valberg are stations ensuring to their inhabitants and tourists a commitment against climate change and for the preservation of the heritage of mountain areas.

The benefits of the Flocon Vert label for mountain areas are numerous, thanks to the wide scope of its criteria, and have consequences on the daily life of tourists, inhabitants and workers of those territories. Initiatives of these labelled stations help preserving the natural heritage of mountain areas by focusing on the sustainable management of energy, natural resources, transport and waste. Awareness-rising actions for residents, tourists and professionals are also a keystone in all labelled stations. Each of them respects the 21 criteria of the label and has established its strategy according to the priority needs of its region.

Transport is one of the priorities for these areas in order to guarantee accessibility and sustainability. The Pierre Saint-Martin has opted for the implementation of a Skibus to reach the station by public transport, an initiative that attracted more than 4,400 people in 2015. An interesting initiative when we know that a full bus emits half the CO2 amount compared to a car carrying two people. The station has also set up an internal bus dedicated to employees, which connects the valley to the station. Similarly, in 2005, the Community of Communes of the Chamonix-Mont-Blanc Valley set up the free movement of transport for inhabitants and visitors, who can move freely on all bus lines and train lines between Servoz and Vallorcine. These transports allow access to the main points of interest such as the different ski areas. On-demand transport service for isolated hamlets and people in need also exist. Same thing in Valberg, where the Departmental Council of the Alpes Maritimes made the choice of a public transport developed in winter as in Summer with the 100% snow bus and the Hiking bus.

The snow cover management is obviously a criterion for the sustainability of these stations. La Pierre Saint-Martin has implemented various measures to reduce the environmental impact of the ski area management, such as drivers training in eco-driving or the optimization of grooming circuits.

Others, such as the Chambrousse station, have also chosen to equip in 2017 the 300 m² roof space of the station with photovoltaic panels, thus benefiting from the high brightness of the mountain tops to produce a greener and cheaper energy.



Innovative aspect

The Flocon Vert label is a good illustration of multi-stakeholder initiatives for the transition towards sustainable tourism, with the involvement of stations, local authorities, tourism offices etc. The role of agencies reputed for their reliability, such as ADEME, as well as the intervention of independent auditing bodies are decisive factors of success.



Euromontana is the European multisectoral association for co-operation and development of mountain territories. It embraces regional and national mountain organisations throughout greater Europe, including regional development agencies, local authorities, agriculture organisations, environmental agencies, forestry organisations and research institutes.

Euromontana's mission is to promote living mountains, integrated and sustainable development and quality of life in mountain areas.

In order to achieve this, Euromontana facilitates the exchange of information and experience among these areas by organising seminars and major conferences, by conducting and collaborating in studies, by developing, managing and participating in European projects and by working with the European institutions on mountain issues.

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