Euromontana's response to the EU Public consultation on the Future of European Tourism

Euromontana is the multi-sectoral association for cooperation and development of mountain areas.

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 organizing 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 related affairs.

Euromontana represents 78 organisations from 20 European countries (including EU and non EU). Its members are diverse in nature: local or regional authorities, socio-economic organizations or chambers, environmental, forestry or development agencies, research institutes, schools, training centres. This diversity enriches the Euromontana reflection on sustainable development of mountain areas, including on sustainable tourism.

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Short summary:

In order to face its main challenges (increased international competition, changes in the needs and behaviour of customers, climate change, technological changes, etc), we, Euromontana, believe that:

1. The future European Tourism should be **sustainable**, fully taking into account the **economic, social and environmental dimensions**, as the only way to preserve the interest of touristic destinations in mountain areas in the long run. Sustainability is the cornerstone that can create real opportunities for tourism activities in mountain areas.

2. The future European tourism should encourage all touristic destinations to become more **competitive**, to foster the value chains of tourism in their crucial role for mountain economies, and help to enable mountain entrepreneurs to adapt to these challenges: facilitating **access to finance**, developing the **use of ICT and extending high-speed broadband** in mountains areas and encouraging a **better trained workforce**, especially among young people**.**

3. The future European tourism should diversify and encourage **new forms of tourism: agri-tourism, accessible tourism, cultural and natural tourism**. These actively **contribute to experience tourism** that tourists are increasingly looking for.

4. Tourism with a clear focus on mountain areas must become a priority of policy actions at the various European and state levels. The importance of the tourism sector should be reflected by developing **integrated strategies** at European and national levels: tourism aspects should be taken into account in all policies (like transport, rural development, agriculture etc) that can have impacts on the tourism sector. Developing **common destination marketing** at regional level will also help mountain areas to increase their touristic attractiveness.

Introduction

Mountain areas cover 29% of the European Union[1]. Each year mountains welcome a large number of tourists: for instance 95 million long-stay tourists and 60 million day-trip visitors visit the Alps every year[2]. Tourism offers some of the greatest economic and development opportunities for mountain areas in Europe. This sector can benefit from numerous advantages in mountains such as:

- **A rich cultural and natural heritage**, including remarkable landscapes, created over the centuries by mountain communities and maintained through diverse human activities –especially agriculture, forestry and pastoralism – as well as traditional and high-quality food products and crafts, and many other cultural traditions;

- **Pure air, a cooler summer climate, a peaceful and quiet environment,** attractive for people experiencing the pressures of urban life and higher temperatures in both the lowlands and coastal areas; in particular a unique environment for the healthy and physical development of young people who are negatively affected by urban sedentary life styles;

- **A year-round choice of diverse recreational activities**, in the forests, on the water, in the air, on the slopes.

- **Welcoming Communities set in unique landscapes** that provide places to stay, meet people and experience a different way of living

These assets make mountains valuable destinations for a wide category of tourists increasingly seeking transformative experiences, alternative activities, connections with nature and an authentic culture. Tourism development can contribute to increasing the income of mountain people while giving value to precious mountain assets, making them available to European society at large and protecting these assets from degradation.

Tourism is now one of the major economic sectors in the European mountains despite strong contrasts: the OECD estimated that tourism accounted for 10-12% of the Alpine labour market including jobs directly and indirectly linked to tourism[3], but only 10% of municipalities have large tourism infrastructures, whereas 40% of municipalities don't have tourism activity in this area[4].

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[1] ESPON GEOSPECS policy fact sheet: Mountain areas in Europe
[2] "Sustainable tourism in the Alps, report on the State of the Alps", published by the Alpine Convention in 2012, page 27
[3] "Sustainable tourism in the Alps, report on the State of the Alps", published by the Alpine Convention in 2012, page 27
[4] Nordregio report : Mountain areas in Europe, Analysis of mountain areas in EU member States, acceding and other European countries, 2004, page 4

Our response

I. The Future European Tourism should be sustainable

1. Challenges to address for improving sustainable tourism in mountains

The development of the mountain tourism sector faces two main challenges linked to sustainability:

- **Climate change**, which is likely to continue to decrease the availability of snow for winter sports; increases the risks of natural disasters, affecting transport infrastructure and settlements as well as tourists' security; and will result in changes to water regimes and the attractiveness of the landscapes on which many aspects of tourism depend; at the same time the growth in nature based tourism that is so vital to many mountain areas may be under threat from climate induced biodiversity changes;

- Development of **unsustainable forms of tourism** in mountain areas which, whilst making a vital contribution to the economy, endanger the environment and need to become more efficient in terms of resource use, taking into account the preservation of landscapes and real community authenticity. We consider as especially unsustainable forms of tourism big mass events of short duration like Olympic winter games, which need huge investments which are neither economically nor ecologically sustainable.

2. Key dimensions of sustainable tourism

For Euromontana, the key elements of a definition of sustainable tourism, applying inter alia to mountain areas, are the following:

- **Generation of income and employment on a long-term basis**, distributing this income to mountain people in a fair way and ensuring that mountain communities receive a fair proportion of the profits ;

- **Preservation and promotion of environmental and cultural heritage**, ensuring functioning ecosystems and keeping natural resources (water, wood..) and securing the long-term viability of tourism activities particularly within protected areas; environmental resources are thus considered as key assets for tourism development

- **Educating business operators as well as tourists on the economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts** of their respective actions and tourism choices;

- **Providing a governance framework for the "pro-active" participation of local actors as well as cooperation between stakeholders, businesses, authorities and tourists** to ensure that the benefits of tourism support other aspects of sustainable development in mountain areas.

We consider that the development of sustainable forms of tourism in mountain areas is not only essential for the long-term viability of this economic sector but is also the way to meet new demands from European society and achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (EU 2020) both for mountain communities and more widely in Europe's regions.

Furthermore, we assert that our ambition, within mountain areas, is not to promote sustainable tourism as an alternative market in contrast to inter alia mass unsustainable tourism but to encourage **all mountain communities and businesses towards sustainable forms of tourism everywhere**, in large-scale destinations as well as in small-scale destinations or in protected areas.

3. Recommendations

We recommend:

- expedited elaboration of a commonly agreed definition of sustainable tourism with the **official adoption of the European Charter on sustainable Tourism at the EU level.**

- establishment of a bench mark for tourism destination by means of a set of indicators: the **ETIS system** (European Tourism Indicators System: for Sustainable Management at Destination Level) could be used if extended to a larger scale.

- practical **implementation of the scheduled European Virtual Tourism Observatory**, monitoring the progress made by the tourism sector towards better performance as regards sustainability. There is a lack of **coherent and systematic statistics regarding the fields of rural and mountain tourism** at the EU level and even at local level.

- harmonization, based on commonly agreed European principles, of the national approaches to sustainable tourism. Current national policies do not always adequately include guidelines or incentives for tourism operators or awareness-raising commitments. Sustainability requires investment, and is profitable in the long term but can seem costly in the short term: it will never be achieved by market forces alone. **National policies should adopt approaches which encourage progress in the field of sustainability, support destinations which are the most committed in that respect, without endangering the diversity of identities of tourist destinations**.

- **strengthening of national initiatives for cross-border cooperation and transnational cooperation** for sustainable tourism: many mountain areas that are cross-border and transnational mountain ranges need to share the solutions they have developed to address common problems and, sometimes, require common strategies.

II. Accompany tourism operators: business support, addressing technological challenges and encouraging the development of a better trained workforce

In order to really encourage sustainable tourism in mountains, the future European tourism policy should generate income and employment on a long term basis, distributing the income in a fair way to mountain people. To do so, the future European tourism policy should encourage tourism businesses to develop and grow by facilitating access to finance. It should also develop the use of ICT, thanks to extensive training of tourism operators and awareness raising campaigns, and provide high speed broadband access in all mountains areas to address the technological challenges. Finally, to remain competitive with small[5] but better trained workforce, these tourism operators should encourage young people to work in this field and help them to develop their skills, giving them the opportunity to access high-skilled jobs in the tourism sector.

1. Supporting tourism operators: ease access to finance

1.1. The difficulty for entrepreneurs to identify the adequate funding schemes

There is an increased competition from cheaper – though not always sustainable – and more accessible forms of tourism offered to consumers in a globalized economy, which may be more attractive to both European and global travellers facing the continuing economic crisis and therefore with limited financial capacity. To face this competition, tourism operators should be able to innovate to improve their infrastructures and their tourism offers. These investments require ability to access finance.

Within the new programming period 2014-2020, several funding instruments have been either created or modified to support investment. Nonetheless, the EU funding opportunities for tourism remain scattered between structural funds (ERDF, ESF or EAFRD) which tend to be the subject of several regional programmes, the new instrument for SME, COSME, the grants of DG enterprise for SMEs and a diversity of other instruments. The

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[5] Example in Austria: 93% of tourism operators have less than 10 employees according to "Sustainable tourism in the Alps, report on the State of the Alps", published by the Alpine Convention in 2012, page 28

multiplication of funding possibilities as opposed to a situation where there would be one EU funding scheme dedicated to tourism makes things difficult for small tourism entrepreneurs. Moreover, the absence of a common approach to funding tourism innovation and improved practice increases risks of duplicating actions and reduces potential opportunities for joint working.

1.2.Recommendations

We recommend:

- **minimised legislative and regulatory constraints**, which, if they are too severe, can slow down the creation or development of businesses, especially small and medium enterprises involved in sustainable tourism, impacts which are magnified in mountain and remote areas where small businesses have a higher percentage of their income affected.

- the **fostering and support of innovation** in mountain tourism in the field of **resource efficiency**: water efficiency, waste management, energy efficiency for access to sites, operation of accommodation facilities as well as all infrastructure related to sports.

- facilitation of access to finance for SMEs tourism operators in the programming period which has just started, to have **all different funding possibilities gathered in the tourism section of DG enterprise's website:** this would ease access to information on funding possibilities which are available for the different types of actors and activities. For the future programming 2021-2028, we would recommend the development of one EU funding mechanism dedicated exclusively to tourism.

2. Addressing technological challenges, by increasing access to ICT and high speed broadband

2.1.The difficult access to ICT in mountain areas

ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) are more and more used by customers to prepare their travel and book accommodation ahead of their stay, to get practical information through their mobile phone during their stay and to share their impressions on the visited destinations during and after their stay, thanks to social networks notably. The customer's increasingly influential role in the tourism purchasing cycle has resulted in a constantly changing market place, in which the consumer/actor is becoming the most important player.

So far, in the mountains, access to the latest level of information and communication technologies remains insufficient and prevents mountain people from developing indispensable services for tourists. Tourism operators need to adapt to these major changes and especially SMEs should be helped to learn how to use these technologies efficiently to attract visitors. In fact in mountain areas currently only a minority of operators has a website and is able to use social networks. In addition, the quality of the existing websites is not always optimal.

DANTE project: a new tourism and ICT approach in rural and mountain areas

Euromontana is involved in the [DANTE (Digital Agenda for new tourism approach in European rural and mountain areas)](#) project. The objective of DANTE is to improve the effectiveness of regional policies in the area of innovation by enhancing the role of ICT in the tourism industry in rural and mountain areas. The project optimises eight innovative good practices that demonstrate the benefits of Information Society for competitiveness of the tourism sector in disadvantaged areas. These good practices include mobile tag systems in 13 minor alpine ski stations of the Province of Torino (Italy); the installation of a set of 129 cameras in Extremadura (Spain) to offer real-time images of the cultural heritage or an integrated booking platform which combines transport and accommodations booking on the same platform in Napoli and Greece. Thanks to DANTE, **a pilot web platform** has been developed. It combines several new technologies in just one website: description of the main touristic points, on-line booking system for accommodations, real-time pictures of the main interesting touristic points, real-time weather forecast. This platform has also developed a community system (like facebook) to easily get feedback from visitors and help tourism operators to share information. All data to transfer this web platform to other tourism destinations will be freely available in 2014.

2.2.Recommendations

ICT offer a real opportunity to attract new tourists and to give information on less known destinations, we believe that tourism operators should be encouraged and trained to use them more efficiently. Thus, we recommend:

- integration of **ICT and tourism in the Smart specialisation Strategies** and in the **Operational Programmes** of the regions, to allow structural funds to finance ICT and tourism projects.

- Integration of the **DANTE pilot web platform into the Tourismlink platform** developed at EU level to share good examples of integrated web platforms, which can be easily transferred to all tourism destinations.

- integration into the Tourismlink platform of some **specific training modules to help SMEs** of remote tourism destinations to learn how to develop and use ICT, how ICT can help to boost their destinations and depending of the context, which ICT could have the most impacts on visitors.

- encouragement of the development of **innovative tourism products or services**, using for example ICT, interactive methods, new forms of interpretation at heritage, cultural and natural sites, by means of training for professional users and through exchanges of good practices to see how tourism operators can benefit from these technologies.

2.3.The necessity to develop high speed broadband and 4G in mountain areas

One of the biggest improvements the EU can make to support technological development and innovation in tourism is to help provide access to High Speed Broadband in the more remote, peripheral, sparsely populated and mountainous areas of the Union. The lack of equivalent broadband services in mountain areas compared to coastal and urban areas is a significant disadvantage and can completely negate much of the positive and innovative work some of our remote and mountainous communities are engaged in. Without making common standards of access to broadband a priority and without providing funds to transform this priority into real results, the opportunity of having parity with Coastal and Urban areas in particular will be lost.

This access to high speed broadband is a key prerequisite to being able to develop new tourism websites, new mobile applications for tourists or new ICT tools (like on-line cameras or e-commerce to book tickets in advance, or mobile phone based trekking guides). To encourage the development of digital infrastructure in rural areas, Euromontana has already signed the **Manifesto for a High Speed Broadband in rural areas** of the ENGAGE project. This initiative should be supported and extended to all mountain areas.

In addition to the development of Broadband, access to mobile services and 3G/4G should also be considered for support. As more populated and easy to service areas gain access to mobile services, the less populated and difficult to service territories are left with a significant disadvantage. Whilst paying to support these services may not be possible, supporting alternatives and uses of other services to provide an equivalent access for modern devices could be of great benefit.

In addition one of the main issues here is the time taken to prove market failure. While public subsidies can be made available to mountain areas the time lag before this is permitted can be too long for fast moving technology developments. 4G was already being rolled out in cities before there was acceptance of the fact that there was market failure and that public subsidy could be used to roll out 2G in rural / mountain areas. This process needs to be much quicker or rural / mountain area provision will always lag behind.

2.4.Recommendations

We strongly recommend:

- **prioritising of developed access to broadband and high-speed broadband, through either fixed or wireless technology, focusing first on the isolated and remote areas**, where public incentives should be more important than in highly populated areas where private actors are already encouraged to invest and guarantee sufficient connectivity

- **integration into the Digital Agenda of an indicator to evaluate the broadband coverage in each region (LAU 2 level) to see how mountain regions, and in general remote areas, are covered at local level**

- encouragement of the **development of 3G and 4G** services in mountain areas

- **reduction of the roaming costs** in the whole EU to encourage tourists to use touristic mobile applications, even when they are not in their own country.

- creation of "**smart and inclusive territories**" for ICT open use (improving broadband and infrastructures, improving the open data, the open sources, the wireless free access, free software..)

- **creation of a new system of data exchange for improving the quality of information** (certification for giving data and information from Public to Private/"filter" criteria for receiving data and information to Public from Private).

3. Encouraging the development of a better trained workforce

3.1. Encouraging young people to stay in mountain areas: the need to develop attractive tourism jobs

One of the main challenges in mountain areas is demography. As in the whole EU, the age of the population is increasing. Where surveys of young people[6] have been carried out, the overwhelming response is that they would like to live and work in mountains, but the difficulty of finding jobs impedes their desires. Mountains have to be attractive economically to favour **employment of young people**. Tourism can give great opportunities of employment for young people in mountain areas. Nevertheless, around two thirds of the jobs in hospitality are low-skilled[7]. A key issue is thus to extend the possibility of having skilled jobs in the tourism sector. This will be a win-win strategy: on the one hand, young people but also other target groups working in this sector (like women, who are overwhelming represented) will be encouraged to work on tourism in the long run, with interesting career opportunities. On the other hand, business operators will have a better workforce, with increased capacities, and as a result they will be more competitive.

3.2.Recommendations

To improve the employment of young people in touristic and skilled jobs, we recommend:

- encouragement of young entrepreneurs in tourism, especially by providing **risk capital** and by **facilitating transfer of businesses**.

- development of innovative responses to the problems created by **low-quality or seasonal jobs**; firstly in terms of **housing**, secondly by **combining economic activities** taking place at different times of the day or year (pluri-activity) ; in that respect, it is necessary to explore opportunities related to **multi-skills training (for instance to be trained to have two different jobs) and groups of employers**; and thirdly by considering solutions such as annualised hours contracts to help young people to stabilise their incomes and access finance (mortgages and loans) more readily and securely.

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[6] Including « Youth in mountains », Summary of the preliminary research carried out by Euromontana for the VIIIth European Mountain Convention, 2012 on 81 young people, below 30 years old
[7] "Sustainable tourism in the Alps, report on the State of the Alps", published by the Alpine Convention in 2012, page 89

- provision of **vocational training for people working in the field of tourism**, to improve the quality of the services they provide. In particular, measures should encourage the transfer of existing and traditional skills (including learning foreign languages) as well as the development of new skill sets such as management, entrepreneurial, ICT skills (including the use of social media) for young people. At managerial level, education should also aim at equipping managers with **creativity and innovation skills**. To help achieve this, an improvement in the high speed Broadband capacity of mountain areas is also required as outlined in section 2 of this paper. These measures should be supported via existing Operational Programmes or new initiatives in the regions.

- strengthening of skills of tourism operators, a maximum use should be made of **e-learning** and **interactive learning tools**. Training should preferably take place in the low season to provide complementary activities for seasonal workers.

III.   Maximize the tourism potential of mountain areas: develop new activities and products to "experience tourism"

Tourists have changed: the seniors market is increasing, young people are encouraged to travel during their studies and travel is facilitated by low costs transport. The family patterns have also evolved: both parents working, pluri-national couples…The expectations have also changed: tourists are now looking for a whole experience when they are on holidays.

"Experience tourism" is replacing the tourism of "destinations". Furthermore individual tourism is increasing (couples, little groups self-organized) as opposed to mass tourism (big groups travels organized by Tour Operators) which is decreasing. Regional policies must fully integrate these changes.

To adapt to these changes, we believe that new sustainable tourism enterprises in mountain territories should develop new products and services based on their traditional activities, local products, the mountain environment and the unique culture and heritage of a mountainous area.

In particular, we encourage the **development of new diversified products and services which can enable tourism businesses to lengthen the season** beyond the traditional peak season(s) of every destination, thus improving the quality of employment, adaptation to climate change, quality of life for permanent populations and attractiveness for new inhabitants seeking lively communities all year-round.

The Optitur company in Extremadura (Spain) is a good example on how a company helps to adapt to these changes, as it provides tourism operators with advice on how to target and build specific tourism products for different target groups

1.   Developing attractive destinations for different types of target groups

1.1.   Making mountains attractive destinations for young people

Mountains areas are not always well known, especially by young people who have always live in highly populated urban areas. Furthermore, the wide range of other leisure activities available (including video games or TV shows) often prevents young people from regularly practising sport. According to WHO, "*an overall evaluation of the evidence suggests that important health benefits can be expected to accrue in most children and youth who accumulate 60 or more minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily*"[8]. Encouraging young people to regularly engage in sport will also have very positive effects on their health. As a result, we should encourage young people to take vacations in mountains areas to discover mountain specificities thanks to sports classes or special sport passports. We should also encourage young people already living in mountains areas to regularly engage in sport, to really establish a culture of sport.

Good example of Rhône Alpes Region: encouraging young people to discover new sports

Rhône Alpes region has developed a "M'ra" card": young people can enjoy activities and discover new sports at preferential rates in the whole region: they can for instance attend the freestyle and skicross word cup

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[8] WHO, Global recommendations on physical activities for health, page 19

competitions or try paragliding tandem. The "Nordic pass" also gives young people the chance to test Nordic skiing in almost all the ski stations of the region at a preferential rate.

Young people in general need a wider cultural horizon and are more likely to leave if the offer of cultural activities is too poor. In such conditions, local and regional institutions need to develop a rich offer of leisure time activities, both cultural & sporting. This can be achieved for example via better organisation of institutions in charge of cultural activities

Good example of Buskerud County: developing the cultural activities for young people

In Buskerud County, 3 mountain municipalities decided to pool all their cultural activities and institutions together in order to develop new activities: the common museum was consolidated, a stronger marketing campaign was developed using a new brand "the Valley of Artists" and various courses were developed for actors involved in promotional activities.

1.2. Recommendations

We recommend that steps be taken to diversify the supply of leisure and culture, including in the low season in touristic places, to support:

- Sports: via development of **sports passport** with preferential rates for young people to discover new sports, development of **multi-stations passport** like les "portes du soleil" between France and Switzerland, where buying only one passport gives access to 12 different ski stations.

- Cultural activities, via initiatives such as **art centres, houses of youth and culture, festival, cultural activities** around heritage sites.

1.3. Increase the accessibility of tourism destinations in mountain areas for senior and disabled people

One in six persons in the EU has a disability from mild to severe, representing around **80 million persons** in Europe, who are often preventing from taking fully part in tourism. In addition, over **a third of people aged over 75** have disabilities that restrict their capacities to some extent, and over 20% are considerably restricted[9]. The European population is getting older: nearly 30% of the population will be 65 years or older by 2060 (against 17% in 2010). Senior people are spending more and more of their income on travel, even during economic crisis: the expenditures spent on tourism activities by Europeans aged 65+ increased by 33% in 2011 compared with 2006[10]. Making tourism destinations accessible to all represents thus not only a key societal question, but also a great economic opportunity to welcome additional public and to ease life of all (including people with pushchairs, young children, or old people, even without disabilities).

The good example of Kaunertal

To facilitate the visit of these specific types of public, several mountain destinations have already developed their accessibility. **Kaunertal**, a small valley, close to Tyrol in Austria was awarded with the EDEN prize in 2013 for its accessible tourism. For over 30 years, Kaunertal has renovated its facilities in order to welcome everybody, including wheelchair users, persons with reduced mobility or families with small children and pushchairs . Everybody can have access to the Kaunergrat Nature Park, its glacier (2750 m) and its restaurant, thanks to a road up to the top and a wooden gondola platform. Tourists can practice barrier-free skiing (handiski /monoski). Thanks to a 4 star hotel entirely built to accommodate the needs of persons in a wheelchair and to 12 apartments entirely adapted; all of the public can have easy access to accommodation. In addition, tourist operators (like ski instructors, persons working in hotels and restaurants) are very well trained to understand and answer to the specific requests of all their guests.

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[9] Figures given in COM 2010 (636) on European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe
[10] Eurostat, statistics in focus 43/2012, Christophe Demunter

1.4. Recommendations

To encourage the development of accessible destinations, we recommend:

- the fostering and support of **social innovation** in mountain tourism by increasing the capacities of mountain destinations as places for social tourism (eg. for people with disabilities and multiple deprivation), and promoting equal opportunities and access, especially –but not only- in the low season; developing accessible information (with websites respecting all the recommendations of the WCAG /WAI of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)), accessible infrastructures (adapted accommodation and restaurants), transport and services (sport and leisure activities).

- **the training of tourism operators** to address the specific needs of disabled and senior persons to better answer to the needs of this specific public.

1.5 Move on Green Project: improving sustainable mobility in mountain areas for all

To tackle more specifically the question of transport, the Move on Green project, in which Euromontana is involved, seeks to improve the design and effectiveness of regional policies on sustainable transport in rural and mountain areas. It has identified 51 good practices of sustainable mobility alternatives to individual cars. In the tourism sector, it is particularly relevant as 84% of tourists are using their own car to come to tourism destinations in the mountains[11].

1.6. Recommendations

We recommend:

- provision of the **framework conditions for mountain destinations and tourist businesses to be physically and virtually accessible**, in the most sustainable way:

  - Investment in local and national transport infrastructure and mobility systems, including soft mobility systems, encouraging access via clean, CO_2-neutral, collective transport systems;

  - Development of **innovative solutions for organising the transport of visitors**, taking environmental impacts into account;

- Provision of guaranteed **access to fuel** in sufficient different locations, primarily for permanent residents, but also to allow tourists to reach the most remote communities where collective transport has not yet been developed

- encouragement of **sustainable mobility in rural and mountain areas** with the development of soft mobility solutions, on-demand solutions, intermodality and public transports that will benefit both to local citizens and tourists. We would especially recommend focusing on alternatives to individual cars for travel up to destination (i.e up to the final kilometre of the tourists travel).

- encouragement of the development of provision of combined **"train/bus/ski pass"** packages at reduced price.

- As tourists are planning their travels by distance, frequently using the Internet, we recommend improvement of the **provision of information on the public transport options** for travelling to, from and within a destination

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[11] "Sustainable tourism in the Alps, report on the State of the Alps", published by the Alpine Convention in 2012, page 54

2. The development of agri-tourism and cross-fertilising links between tourism and promotion of local products

2.1. Cross-fertilising lings between tourism and mountain products

Past research work undertaken in the framework of the European Research (FP6) project EuroMARC - 'Mountain Agrofood products in Europe, their consumers, retailers and local initiatives' has demonstrated that **there can be cross-fertilising effects between promotion of territories and promotion of products produced in these territories**.

This is particularly true of mountain products, understood as products the raw material of which is produced in mountain areas and, in the case of processed products, which processing occurs in mountain areas, which benefit from a positive image of naturality and tradition attributable to their production environment and to the traditional character of the processing techniques. This is mostly true of food products but also applies to wood or crafts. The socio-economic impact of the purchasing act has become an important decision-making element for an increasing proportion of consumers. As tourists, they will be looking for local or typical products. Once back home, they can recognise these products on the shelves of specialised shops.

To increase the economic profitability of tourism for local communities, it is therefore essential to make the most out of the potential synergies between local economy and territory.

This requires the **encouragement of agri-tourism** (tourism at the farm) in the different forms that it can take (full accommodation and board, or just 'coffee at the farm', or visits to educational farms). First this **contributes to experience tourism** that tourists are increasingly looking for. Then it contributes to greater competitiveness of farms which, especially in the mountains, are often below a sufficient level of profitability. The maintenance of these farms is crucial to the **maintenance of land management practices which are indispensable to retention of the cultural landscape** which attract tourists to destinations.

Then, policy-makers and actors on the ground must adopt **integrated approaches to promotion** where hotels, restaurants and local authorities promote the local products to tourists, making the local food an indispensable part of the touristic experience, and in return the products communicate widely about their place of origin. Initiatives can take the form of **territorial brands, food festivals, exhibitions, cooking classes for tourists, competitions between chefs** etc... We also strongly believe in the potential of **itineraries** to increase tourism attractiveness in mountain areas in particular.

For instance the **Cheese Road in Bregenzerwald (Austria)** gives the opportunity to enjoy the various aspects of cheese production. 22 municipalities along 70 km of road, 30 different types of cheeses, 200 members including producers, restaurants, shop keepers, tourism operators have worked together to promote this Cheese Road, with success.

Of course, tourists may be able to be sure of the authenticity of what they purchase and therefore certification schemes are important to provide confidence and avoid misleading practices. Geographic indications (PDOs, PGIs) for instance convey a strong territorial image. The recently adopted European scheme for the optional quality term 'mountain product' also allows consumers to ensure that the product that they buy really comes from the area and contributes to the local economy and therefore to sustainable tourism.

2.2. Recommendations

We recommend:

- - **development of agri-tourism**, which has an important potential for development, especially in the summer season, in mountain areas with a strong tradition of pastoralism. Developing **synergies between the agricultural and tourism sectors**, which share common challenges of seasonality, creation of activities and fixed employment, is vital for mountain areas.

- - development, as proposed by EuroMARC, of **common promotion campaigns** between regions and local authorities to make use of mountain products to better promote the region and vice versa.

- - the organisation of **seasonal events around mountain products,** promoting them and the region and using these opportunities to sell greater quantities of products.

> - - encouragement of **on-farm selling of products** as a means for diversification in agricultural tourism, to better combine possibilities of attracting tourists to the region and selling local products (to be eaten in the region, brought back as souvenirs or requested in their usual shops by tourists once they are back in their home region). It also allows a more balanced distribution of profit among the involved operators.

3. Developing touristic offers linked to cultural and natural heritage

3.1. An exceptional cultural and natural heritage in mountains

Mountains do not only host exceptional natural heritage sites (2/3 of the European flora is found predominantly or completely in mountains[12]) but they are also very rich in cultural heritage. Mountains are indeed home to a wide range of traditional communities with specific cultures, languages, dialects and traditions.

Some mountain areas have already developed tourism offers based on their cultural heritage. The network "**Areas and times of snow**" in French Jura have increased the value of know-how and traditions in the region linked to the snow related occupations thanks to the creation of an ecomuseum, the opening of the last ski-making enterprise to visitors, the possibility to visit Nordic ski and ski jump stations. Another example could be the creation of a **literature park** around a famous writer – Paolo Volponi- very involved in his region of Marche in Italy: specific itineraries were created to follow all the places where Volponi has written something, a collection of writing pieces was produced and exhibitions and public readings have been organised.

3.2. Recommendations

> To diversify the touristic offer, we recommend:
>
> - that structural funds support the development of **specific tourism offers linked to the promotion of cultural and natural heritage and the specificity of mountain territories to develop touristic territory-products strongly linked to the territory**
> - the support and development of natural and cultural **cross-border itineraries** to encourage a European overview of natural and cultural heritage: for example the Via Alpina (one of the longest hiking trails existing, of approximately 5,000 kilometres through 7 different countries), the Via Alta (joining Compostella path in Spain to Via Francigena in Italy passing through France), the Glorious Repatriation and the Exile of Waldenses and Huguenots (2.000 Km from Italy to Germany passing through France and Switzerland). **Another example could be religious tourism in Bukovina in Carpathian mountains between Romania Moldova and Ukraine**

4. Support new and sustainable developments in the Adventure tourism sector

4.1. Encouraging slow adventure tourism

Adventure and active tourism is a major contributor to mountain tourism economies. From Winter Skiing to summer mountain biking, these thrill seeking adventures are accounting for a greater market share of mountain tourism than ever before. Adventure tourism is often portrayed as fast paced, unsustainable and transitory. However new models of adventure tourism are being developed that are not only more sustainable but are also more socially and economically inclusive. Slow Adventure Tourism is an initiative being developed in Norway and Scotland that seeks to promote a different approach to adventure tourism that focuses on more engagement with the environment, local communities, local resources and products and a considered approach to how the tourist moves through their experience. Slow adventure tourism can significantly improve the sustainability of mountain adventure activities for tourists and encourage mountain communities to develop fully inclusive and sustainable adventure tourism products.

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[12] Nordregio report : Mountain areas in Europe, Analysis of mountain areas in EU member States, acceding and other European countries, 2004, page 3

For instance the 'Butinier au Pays du Mont Blanc' encourages slow tourism. It is a network of product and service providers across the French, Italian and Swiss sides in order to allow for a slow-pace, authentic discovery of the natural, cultural and social wealth of the region. It facilitates liaison between small-scale local actors across regional as well as branch frontiers, linking agriculture (cattle owners, pasture managers and local product producers – mostly cheeses, yogurts, honey, jams and wine), artisans (bell-making, wood sculpture), independent certified nature guides and small scale hostelry (mountain huts and B&B) with the local cultural heritage (little museums, including a bell tower and a mill, as well as art galleries) in order to create themselves a sustainable tourism offer complementary to the mainstream tourism catalogues and to international mass tourism on the popular Tour du Mont-Blanc.

By developing active and experiential tourism, based on excursions (hiking, walking tours, horse and donkey riding, bicycle riding) that follow set paths, it is possible to give visibility to all the existing excellent products of local agriculture, craft and culture, mostly if these products are also promoted through events and awareness raising initiatives. The prospect is the creation of interconnected path networks all over Europe.

1.2.Recommendation

We recommend **promoting together the advantages of sports, outdoor and cultural activities**, that can be found in all mountain areas, in comparison with other competing forms of tourism or virtual recreational activities that tend to be more and more developed and attractive, especially to younger generations and in urban environments.

IV. An integrated tourism strategy

The importance of the tourism sector should be reflected in integrated strategies. The future European Tourism policy should thus encourage Member States to develop integrated tourism strategies at central and sub-regional levels.

1. Encouraging a full integrated tourism strategy at European and national levels

1.1. Tourism: a fragmented policy, which requires coordination

Tourism is directly impacted by the Common Agriculture Policy including rural development, environmental policy, education policy (which can have effects on holiday time and thus impacts on seasonality), climate change, transports, innovation policy, social policies, ICT policies... Its fragmented nature requires coordination at European, national and sub-national levels: various Directorates General, ministries and agencies should work together to establish a coherent and effective European tourism strategy. This horizontal policy integration requires the capacity to develop, effective and integrated policy solutions. An integrated tourism strategy involves the definition of common goals and objectives to achieve, responsibilities in the implementation of the measures and a strong follow-up with ministries and organisations who can have indirect impacts on tourism. Too often, decisions are taken in other policy fields, with consequences on tourism, without adequately addressing their impacts.

1.2.Recommendations

We recommend:

- development of an **integrated tourism strategy at EU level** with an intergroup liaising with other EU policies affecting tourism (transports, environment, energy, agriculture...)

- encouragement of the development of **national tourism strategies**, recognizing and valuing all the traditional mountain and upland areas in their countries, considering **article 174 of the Lisbon Treaty**

- strengthening the initiatives for **cross-border cooperation and transnational cooperation for sustainable tourism**: the many mountain areas that are cross-border and transnational mountain ranges need to share the solutions they have developed to address common problems and, sometimes, require common strategies

- Inclusion of the **development of sustainable mountain tourism in the strategy for territorial development**; as a consequence, to elaborate, within the framework of European policies, **dedicated programmes or sub-programmes for mountain areas** which include adequate measures and support systems that meet the demands of local mountain communities.

- launching of a **national awareness-raising campaigns on the environmental and social impacts**, positive and negative, of tourism.

2. Regional branding: one common and shared marketing picture

2.1. A common destination marketing

Marketing of tourism operators alone is generally not enough to really attract new tourists. A common destination marketing is necessary to develop a common attractive image of a region. All tourism operators of a region should agree on common values and cooperate together to develop a unique image for the destinations.

In Entlebuch, a Biosphere Reserve in Switzerland, the brand 'Echt Entlebuch' respects clear specifications elaborated in partnership with local businesses, and applies to both products and services. Restaurants serve locally-produced food. This is a good example of how **strong territorial branding strategies** with territorial brands apply transversally to products and services.

2.2.Recommendations

We encourage cross-sectoral cooperation for common promotion of territories and local production to tourists. To do so, we recommend:

- encouragement of development of **local initiatives** based on promoting the specific identity and know-how of one area or community.

- development of better linkages between **local products (food, handicrafts …) and their local commercialization** within the different elements of the tourism sector, including accommodation, restaurants, cultural sites and activities, taking full advantage of the cross-fertilizing values of common marketing of food, products and territories.

- encouragement of **regional branding** and territorial integrated tourism approaches and products, such as routes or networks.

- promotion of the touristic offer through **clear messages**, strategically coordinated by the concerned regions.