



La Région
Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes



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For a European Mountain Pact

Mountains are on the front line of climate change: they have been affected earlier and more severely than the rest of Europe and are subject to increased natural risks that sometimes call into question their habitability.

At the same time, mountains are **Europe's main sanctuaries of biodiversity and reservoirs of natural resources:** they are home to ecosystems that are vital for the whole of Europe, particularly through their role as 'water towers' and 'carbon sinks' that act as climate regulators. As a result, Europe has a major strategic interest in preserving them as it adapts to climate change.

Today, the mountains face a major challenge: **preserving all these resources while maintaining the conditions for their development** so that they remain prosperous, dynamic and inhabited areas.

At a time when the European Union is having to make a green and digital transition, and is facing global competition and increasing geopolitical tensions, the Alpine region can serve as a model of development and adaptation for other mountain regions, particularly through its ability to balance economic progress with environmental objectives.

Following the renewal of the European institutions and in the context of the opening of discussions on the future budget of the European Union, **we are calling for the specific characteristics of mountain regions to be considered across the board and in a coherent way in all European policies and programmes for this period and the next.**

The "European Mountain Pact" invites the European institutions to pay particular attention to European mountain areas that face challenges linked to the uniqueness of their natural environment, and to implement concrete actions in response to the recommendations put forward by European mountain stakeholders, first and foremost the European Strategy for the Alpine region (EUSALP).

A shared strategic objective: keeping mountains alive, dynamic, inhabited and accessible

Keeping mountain areas alive, dynamic, accessible and inhabited requires appropriate measures to promote the economy, housing and living conditions, including environmental, transport and energy aspects, as well as the management and anticipation of natural risks. The prosperity of mountain areas must be understood to include everyone, including young people who want to settle there or stay.

To achieve this, European policies must target the following strategic sectors:

» **Tourism**, to diversify and promote all-season tourism, while consolidating winter activities wherever possible.

» **Industry and economic competitiveness**, with a triple objective of diversification, decarbonization and digitalization, and support for innovation and training, without neglecting to bolster traditional activities such as agriculture, agropastoralism, forestry and crafts.

» **The energy transition**, with the development of renewable energies, particularly hydroelectricity, and new energy sources such as hydrogen. This energy transition will be essential to meet the mobility issues, in addition to the necessary modal shift from road to rail and housing that must be addressed in these areas.

» **Risk management**, where the challenge is commensurate with the growing exposure of mountain regions, and goes beyond borders by impacting major traffic routes.

European policies and programmes to preserve the specific characteristics of mountain regions

Sub-regional disparities remain significant, particularly in the Alpine regions, between urban centres and more peripheral rural areas.

In this respect, the European Union's cohesion policy remains an essential tool for reducing development disparities and enabling growth in all European territories.

It must continue to be deployed around the principle of shared management, including the cross-border and transnational strand (Interreg programmes) and with the direct involvement of the regions, the relevant level for deploying these funds in the territories.

In the same way, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) must be pursued with the involvement of the regions, to support the development and transition of mountain farming.

In the context of preparing the future European budget, it is essential to **maintain sufficient budget for these historic policies, which enable action to be taken on sub-regional disparities, such as in mountain areas.**

In concrete terms, the European Mountain Pact calls for:

- » **Recognition at the European level of mountain as areas of strategic interest for Europe**, both as essential natural resources and as continental sanctuaries of biodiversity and territories with competitive and innovative economies, in their agropastoral, forestry, energy, industrial and tourism dimensions.
- » **A strong commitment from those involved in upland policies at national, regional and local level** to unite their efforts at European level and encourage direct and constructive dialogue with the European institutions to ensure that upland issues are considered across the board and across sectors, in application of Article 174 TFEU and beyond cohesion policy alone.
- » **A strong commitment of financial support from the European Union for projects with an inter-regional, cross-border and transnational dimension**, and adaptation of directly managed European programmes, particularly under the future European Competitiveness Fund, to the specific characteristics of upland areas.
- » **Technical and political monitoring dedicated to the European Mountain Pact**, both at the level of interregional bodies, based on the EUSALP model, and at the level of the European institutions.
- » **A results-focused approach, with the creation of a European Observatory for Mountains and the creation of a harmonized European statistical database** to monitor changes in the situation of Europe's mountains in several key areas (economy, risks, mobility, housing, etc.).