

8. Mountain policies in Europe

This chapter includes an overview and analyses of policies affecting the mountain areas of the countries considered in the report. In addition to information available from various European sources, this chapter and the next are derived from national-level information and SWOT analyses for the mountains of each country provided in the national reports. These were based on the synthesis and analysis of available information, and interviews with a total of 111 mountain actors (policy makers, representatives of professional organisations, elected people, researchers, Annex 2)¹. The interviews utilised a questionnaire with closed and semi-open questions. In addition, European and supra-national organisations concerned with mountain issues were contacted with a similar set of questions as covered in the interviews.

A wide range of public interventions is available to support development in European mountain areas. These interventions vary considerably, according not only to the importance and the diversity of these areas, but also to the institutional setting of each country (centralised, federal, EU Member States, acceding countries, others, etc.) – which is undergoing rapid change in most of the acceding and candidate countries, particularly with regard to integration.

8.1. National policies and instruments

For the purposes of analysis, we address ‘mountain policies’ in the widest sense, including:

- general measures and policies with a territorial impact relevant for some mountain issues (e.g., planning);
- sectoral policies which have a particular effect on the development of mountain areas (e.g., agriculture, tourism policy);
- relevant actions or programmes involving mountain zones (e.g., Interreg);
- explicit measures and policies directed at mountain areas in order to meet their particular needs;
- explicit integrated mountain policies.

Mountain policies

Almost all countries with mountainous or hilly regions have some kind of implicit or explicit ‘mountain policy’ or a mountain approach for certain issues. However, there are significant differences from country to country. At the national level, four different types can be described:

1) Countries where no mountain policies can be identified

These include:

- countries without mountains (Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, The Netherlands);

¹ The interviewees mainly represented actors or stakeholders connected with mountain policies, and as such their opinions cannot reflect a general or “neutral” point of view and still further an official one.

- countries with very few or low mountains (actors spoke of “uplands” or “hills”). Even where the situation in these regions is considered as different, development policies are often voluntarily included in rural policies (e.g., Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg) or included in regional plans (e.g., Poland);
- countries which are largely mountainous (e.g., Greece, Norway, Slovenia), and mountain policy is effectively synonymous with general development policy.

2) Countries where mountain policies/measures are sectoral

These are principally countries with middle mountains and/or acceding/candidate countries. The most frequent sector to which mountain-focussed policies are addressed is agriculture (17 countries). This tendency emerged with the Directive (CEE 75/268) on mountain and less favoured areas and later Regulations (EC 950/97 on improving the efficiency of agricultural structures; EC 1257/1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund), and is expanding to new countries in the context of enlargement. Sectoral policies in agriculture are often linked to environment (13 countries) and rural development (13 countries). In Ireland, Hungary, Portugal, and Slovakia these policies are quite exclusively addressed to agriculture, environment, and tourism.

3) Countries where mountain policies are addressed to multi-sectoral development

The starting point is always mountain agriculture, but with time the relative importance of agriculture in the mountain economy has decreased, and policies have been widened to include other economic sectors (mainly tourism), public infrastructure or services, and/or environment. The list of sectoral policies with specific adaptations is now broad, including issues such as training, education, regional development, land-use, and spatial planning, because of their transversal character. Germany and Spain are included in this group, mostly with regional-level implementation, as is Austria, which has a quite integrated policy with long-standing initiatives (1960 for agriculture, 1975 for global development), and a strong provincial power in a federal country.

4) Countries where mountain policies are addressed to overall development

In the countries where a sustainable development approach is most advanced, the compensation of handicaps through agricultural policies has given way progressively to a more integrated policy. In a few countries, such policies emerged before the 1970s through the consolidation of sectoral policies and the approval of specific tools such as mountain laws and mountain funds.

- Three countries have a formal integrated mountain policy at the present time: France (Creation of Massif Commissariats, 1973; Mountain Law with delimitation of massifs, 1985), Italy (General principle of special policy for mountain areas, 1948; mountain communities, 1971; Mountain Law, 1994) and Switzerland (Law on Investment in Mountain Regions [LIM], 1974). However, some interviewees consider the Swiss LIM as not being an integrated policy. In addition, Norway has an integrated policy, but it does not specifically address mountain areas.

- in two countries (Bulgaria, Romania) there is an emerging, integrated mountain policy built on the French and Italian model. However, this has not yet been ratified through legislation.

While it is possible to speak of integrated mountain policies, the concept of integrated mountain policy is not strongly defined and has to be consolidated. For Switzerland, an integrated mountain policy is effectively equivalent to the combination of regional and agricultural policy; in other countries, it is multi-sectoral. Thus the sectoral and territorial coordination of such policies is the major component of the concept.

In conclusion, in most European countries, implemented ‘mountain’ policies are mainly implicit: effectively, they are mainly sectoral policies with specific adaptations. From the perspective of many public and private actors, they are also often essentially equivalent to rural or regional policies.

Instruments and tools

Linked to the development of these policies, a range of tools has been developed to implement strategy, programmes and actions.

Mountain definitions

A critical need for any policy aimed at mountain areas is the delimitation of these areas. In most countries, criteria relating to EU Directive CEE 75/268 and subsequent Regulations have been used: altitude, combined in many cases with slope and, in some cases, other criteria (climate, topography). Generally, there is a decrease in the altitude threshold from south to north (Table 8.1). The primary reason is that such limits are largely defined for the purpose of defining areas which should receive agricultural subsidies because of limits on productivity. Thus, this trend reflects the shorter length of the growing season at higher latitudes, with national or regional adaptations. Mountains have also been defined for similar reasons in acceding and candidate states (Table 8.2) and Norway (600m). Across the study area, thresholds are generally higher in the most mountainous countries, for example, in Switzerland, only 24% of the country is considered mountainous according to the definition within the LIM, and population is included as a criterion. Many of the experts interviewed in the study think that mountain areas should be more broadly defined, also using social and environmental indicators.

In certain cases, two or three definitions exist with overlapping delimitations or not included parts (see also section 3.7):

- mountain defined as a part of agricultural less favoured areas (LFA) according to Directive 75/268 modified in the Regulation 950/97 and later in article 18 of Regulation 1257/99. This is more common with new applications in preparation in acceding countries because delimitation of less favoured farming areas is a precondition for receiving compensatory allowances;
- mountain defined for agriculture before the enlargement of EU (in Austria or Bulgaria);
- mountain defined for multi-sectoral policies or overall development in a regional or national context (e.g., massifs in France);
- mountain areas defined for international agreements (e.g., Alpine Convention);

- mountain defined for specific studies or purposes (e.g., areas above tree line, as in a Swedish report on environmental protection).

These delimitations, together with other areas eligible for Structural funds (objective 1, 2, former 5b and 6) make the understanding of mountain development policies rather complex.

Table 8.1: Criteria for definition of mountain area in EU Member States

Member State	Minimum elevation	Other criteria
Austria	700 m	also above 500 m if slope >20%
Belgium	300 m	
France	700 m (generally) 600 m (Vosges) 800 m (Mediterranean)	slope >20% over >80% of area
Germany	700 m	climatic difficulties
Greece	800 m	also 600 m if slope >16%; below 600 m if slope >20%
Ireland	200 m	
Italy	600 m	altitudinal difference > 600 m
Portugal	700 m (north of the Tejo river) 800 m (south of the Tejo river)	slope >25%
Spain	1000 m	slope >20% elevation gain 400 m
UK	240 m	

Source: national reports

Table 8.2: Criteria for definition of mountain area in acceding and candidate countries

State	Minimum elevation	Other criteria
Bulgaria	600m	also >200m altitudinal difference/km ² ; or slope >12°
Cyprus	800 m	also above 500 m if average slope >15%
Czech Republic	700 m	
Hungary	600 m	also above 400 m if average slope >10%; or average slope >20%
Poland	350 m	or >12° for >50% of agricultural land in a municipality
Romania	600 m	also on slopes >20°
Slovakia	600 m	also above 500 m on slopes >7°; or average slope >12°
Slovenia	700 m	also above 500 m if more than half the farmland is on slopes of >15%; or slope > 20%

Sources: national reports; European Observatory of Mountain Forests (2000)

Delimitation of massifs

Only France has developed the concept of massif as a political and operational level to propose, discuss, and implement policies and measures at a trans-regional level coherent with the mountain perimeter. The massifs exist as a concept since 1973 but

were only delimited in 1995 according to the ‘Mountain Law’ as an extension of the mountain zones to contiguous areas linked with them. Massifs are continuous areas, but some parts of isolated French mountains (Morvan) are not included in the Massif delimitation. In Italy, Mountain Communities (groups of communes or parts of communes) are a specific tool used to implement mountain policy.

The Alpine and Carpathian Conventions are implemented at a wider trans-national massif level. At present, while a map of the area to which the Alpine Convention applies has been agreed by the Parties to the Convention, this is not true for the Carpathian Convention.

Mountain-specific legislation

Specific legislation for mountain areas exists only in countries with a well-developed policy toward mountain areas, such as Italy, France or Switzerland. The first of these was the Swiss Law on Investment in Mountain Regions (LIM), passed in 1974 and revised in 1997. In Italy, the 1948 Constitution mentioned mountains as areas with specific needs, mountain communities were defined in 1971, and a mountain law was passed in 1994. The first delimitation of mountains in France was in 1961, and the national mountain law followed in 1985. In Spain, a charter for mountain areas was prepared during the International Year of Mountains, 2002.

Concerning the acceding and candidate countries, mountain laws are at various stages of preparation or approval in Bulgaria, and Romania. In Poland, the mountain act in existence from 1986 was annulled in 1989 at the end of the communist era. Other acts have been prepared, but none has passed into law. Mountain legislation may also be at a sub-national level, such as the High Mountain Law of the Province of Catalunya (Spain), passed in 1983, and the law for the Apuseni mountains (Romania), dating from 2000.

In Austria, the Federal Chancellery introduced in 1979 the ‘Mountain Area Special Initiative’, but this was extended to other parts of the country in 1985 and renamed as the ‘Initiative for Endogenous Regional Development’. In certain countries, legislation applies specifically to mountain agriculture in general, as in Austria, where the special programme for mountain farmers, dating from 1972, was expanded to other parts of the country in 2000; and Spain, where the Law on Mountain Agriculture was passed in 1982. In other countries, legislation may apply to specific agricultural activities, such as milk production – which mainly occurs in mountain areas – in Romania. Table 8.3 presents a summary of the countries with the most advanced mountain delimitations and laws.

Table 8.3. Countries with more advanced mountain delimitations and laws

Country	Mountain delimitations			Mountain law
	LFA	Nat/Reg	Convention	
Austria	yes	no	Alpine	Mountain Area Special Initiative (1979) Mountain Farmers' Special Programme
Bulgaria	no	yes	No	Mountain act in preparation (draft)
France	yes	yes	Alpine	Mountain Law (1985)
Italy	yes	1952	Alpine	Mountain Law (1994)
Poland	no	Project	Carpathian	Previous Mountain Law (1986-89); act in preparation
Romania	in prep	yes	Carpathian	Mountain law waiting for approval
Spain	yes	yes	No	Law on Mountain Agriculture (1982)
Switzerland	yes	yes	Alpine	Law on Investment in Mountain Regions (1974, 1997) Law on Agriculture (with mountain areas)

Research and training centres and programmes

In countries with a significant mountain area, research and training centres have been established to undertake inventories, analyse mountain trends, promote new ideas for development, and provide training in both research and resource management (Annex 10). These centres are of critical importance for improving mountain the development and implementation of mountain policies, both through the provision of essential information (especially on trends, to define the need for policies and evaluate their implementation) and for fostering innovation and adapted management of mountain resources.

Research Centres are numerous and strong in Austria, France, Italy, Norway and Switzerland, and also in some acceding countries such as Romania and Slovakia. In general, there are more such institutions in Alpine countries than others. Training centres are mainly oriented to agriculture with a lack for other mountain professions apart from mountain guiding and skiing.

Strong mountain policies are everywhere linked with existence of research centres. Thus, to continue to improve our understanding of the issues in mountain regions, effective local/national institutions and Centres for education, research and training are necessary in different countries – both current EU Member States and acceding countries.

8.2 Principal national and regional sectoral policies for mountain areas

This section presents the key issues and sectoral policies for mountain areas in the various countries of the study area and, in some cases, their constituent regions. It is not an exhaustive evaluation of the extremely diverse range of situations across Europe, but shows major trends. Unless stated otherwise, the information is drawn from the national reports.

Agriculture

Agriculture is a crucial sector for mountain economies and land uses and for safeguarding scattered human settlements in mountain areas, but is rarely the principal activity. Its situation varies greatly from one country to another, due not only to the geographical context but to its links with other activities, e.g., part-time agriculture

within pluriactivity, and to the general social conditions, e.g., dependence on subsistence agriculture in Romania. The products of mountain agriculture are very diverse, depending on soil fertility, climatic conditions, traditions, and markets. As shown in Chapter 4, land uses include: livestock grazing (cattle, sheep, reindeer) in humid ranges; cultivation of cereals and vegetal crops in drier areas; extensive farming at higher altitudes, sometimes associated with transhumance; and specialised production, for instance of olives, fruits, vines, tobacco, and aromatic and medicinal herbs. The latter systems are generally practiced on small farms.

In general, the diagnosis is pessimistic. All the national reports highlight the relative handicaps which face mountain agriculture: low productivity and high production costs. Consequently, the agricultural area is generally declining rapidly as, even more drastically, are farm number and active population (-22% in 10 years for Italy, -42% in 15 years for France, more than half in Finland, -2.5% a year in Switzerland). The farming population is growing older, many are part-time, and they often lack training and have inadequate access to markets.

Given that mountain agriculture cannot generally compete with lowland farms, alternative solutions generally focus on the implementation of tailored models based on specific products or know-how, quality products (though these may not command higher prices), and links with tourism activity. Food processing in some mountain areas is very dynamic, linked with increases in tourism.

As discussed above, agriculture policy is the fundamental mountain policy (initially often the only one), and the CAP provides the framework of action and the most extended set of measures addressed to mountain areas. Direct payments were introduced in 1975 to support farming systems in Less Favoured Areas, but grants and subsidies are distributed nationally and not only in mountains. Despite the financial adaptations of horizontal measures, several national assessments (Italy, French, Spain, Germany) show that the CAP is more favourable to lowland than mountain agriculture. For instance, a 2002 study on the income effect of compensation payments in Bavaria shows that mountain farms have a lower livestock density and a much lower percentage of arable land than in non-LFA areas, and that grants per farm are 30% (7,000 €) lower and profits per farm are 20% (5,000 €) lower than in non-LFA areas.

Before 1992, the CAP was principally oriented on two aims: targeted agricultural production to market needs (guidance) and maintenance of farm incomes (guarantee). Since the 1992-93 reform, the CAP has been better coupled to EU structural policies (environment and cohesion), with increasing emphasis on non-market oriented measures. Agenda 2000 and the 2000-2006 regulation have reinforced the ‘second pillar’, focusing assistance from the EAGGF-G toward support for rural development, i.e., aids to agricultural structures and actions in favour of all groups of actors in rural areas. The second pillar includes a relatively small proportion of the total funds deriving from the CAP, but the decoupling process has opened agricultural policies to overall rural development and could facilitate turning some of the natural handicaps of mountains into advantages: for instance, cultural heritage, landscape, high-quality products, diversification. For an increasing number of countries, the maintenance of agricultural land use in mountain areas is more important than production. Examples include the Bavarian Cultural Landscape Programme in Germany; Austria, where

agriculture “plays an important role in maintaining multifunctional mountain landscapes”; Switzerland, where the federal constitution redefined the role of agriculture in 1996 as ‘multifunctional agriculture’ in the service of a sustainable Switzerland; and Ireland, where the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) “refocused the aims of agriculture away from production and towards the environmental dimension”. In addition, the mountain agriculture protocol of the Alpine Convention should be mentioned.

Numerous measures targeted at mountain agriculture have been adopted by most countries through general or more specific supports, such as:

- farm investment aids;
- direct payments to farmers;
- improvement of equipment and facilities;
- grants for retirement;
- installation grants to young people start-up in farming;
- support to maintenance of pastures;
- suppression of livestock limitation within LFA schemes;
- specific dairy quota for mountain areas;
- mountain labels for quality products;
- support to eco-farms;
- strengthening environmental considerations in mountain farming.

A summary of such measures in EU Member States, as of May 2002, is shown in Table 8.2. Such agricultural mountain measures and policies have generally had positive results in terms of maintaining farmers in mountain areas. However, particular challenges remain, such as the vulnerability of modernised mountain agriculture in Spain, and erosion and pollution linked to overgrazing by sheep encouraged by CAP subsidies in Ireland. In the acceding and candidate countries, the situation is rather different, with major efforts being made in Romania in the perspective of accession, and a small number of mountain projects in the National Plan for Rural Development supported by SAPARD in Bulgaria.

Table 8.4. Mountain measures in the implementation of the General Regulation on Rural Development (n° EC/1257/1999) - Period 2000-2006

Member State	Mountain subcategories for compensatory allowances (Article 18)	<u>Agro-environmental Measures</u>	Other rural development measures
France	High mountain Mountain Piémont	Rhône-Alpes, Aquitaine et Midi-Pyrénées: (maintenance of silvo-pastoral areas; management of summer meadows in the Pyrenees); Aquitaine: higher levels of aid (zone de l’Ours, zone du parc en Pyrénées-Atlantiques)	
Spain		Practice of transhumance/ migratory herding covers 15 of 17 autonomous communities	
Asturias			Access to mountain pastures as part of the improvement of infrastructure/rural roads
Basque		Support to conserve pasture in	

country Cantabria Catalonia Galicia Navarra		mountain areas, to reduce damage when pastures are abandoned Improvement and fertilization of mountain pastures invaded by scrub, watering spaces for livestock, improvement of quality of life and protection of natural spaces and forest Agri-environmental preservation	Improvement of forest Forest conservation and sustainable forestry management: Improvements of technical forestry-management plans, plant health, reforestation, infrastructure, preventive forestry
Germany Baden-Württemberg Bayern Sachsen	Steep meadows inappropriate for mechanisation Areas worked by hand Grassland Arable land	Higher subsidy for the extensification of meadows on steep slopes (> 35%) Environmental use of meadows: distinction between subsidies for mountain and high-altitude meadows and those in humid zones	Regrouping of parcels; maintenance of the existing landscape while assuring better separation between meadows and forests (better use of meadows that are not susceptible to erosion)
Austria	Areas for forage Other areas	Maintenance of the landscape on steep slopes, summer meadows; maintenance and breeding of races in danger of extinction; measures against erosion	
Italy Bolzano Trento	High mountain zone without mechanisation	Measure for alpine meadows: maintenance of mountain farms, of the landscape and prevention of landslides, maintenance of biotopes; intervention in summer pastures with milk processing; maintenance of biotopes and landscape preservation particularly in natural parks	Management of protective forests Article 33: renovation and improvement of villages (buildings and mountain chalets in traditional style; management of sites; management of tourist circuits: wines, gastronomy, cultural)

Note: these measures can be modified. Member States have the possibility to introduce once a year an amendment of their Rural Development programme (Article 44.3, Regulation EC/445/2002).

Forestry

As shown in Chapter 4, forests cover a large proportion of the mountains of the study area. Mountain forests vary greatly in terms of species, planting systems (from steppes or Mediterranean wood to timber trees), productivity, major roles, ownership (e.g., in Poland 90% state ownership, in Portugal 85% private), and environmental

condition. Mountain forests are increasing in all massifs (European Observatory of Mountain Forests, 2000), covering land abandoned by agriculture, sometimes rapidly: for instance an increase of 30% in Spain.

Forests play significant roles in the mountain economy through providing employment in planting, maintenance, harvesting, wood processing and paper production; as well as contributing to opportunities for recreation and tourism; providing habitat for fauna and flora and protection against natural hazards; and contributing to the value of the landscape. In addition, the harvesting of berries, mushrooms and lichens, as well as commercial hunting can be important. Some mountain forests in regions that are lagging behind face difficulties because of their lack of accessibility, which restricts both forest industries and recreation. Given the general limitations on mechanisation, greater natural hazards, particular challenges in fighting fires, and high susceptibility to air pollution, insect and fungi attacks, it is relevant to speak about specific handicaps to the management and improvement of mountain forests. In some respects, forest resources in mountain areas in certain countries (e.g., Spain, Portugal, some French massifs) are considered as under-utilised.

With regard to EU policies, the recognition of forestry is not so strong as that of agriculture, and the Treaty of Rome stipulates that rules of the Common Market for agriculture do not include forests and forest products. Implemented policy has been modified from 1988 when the EU adopted a new strategy (Com. 88/255) and a 'Forestry action programme'. This highlights all the various roles of forests (production, environment, and recreation), with the aim of encouraging the entire forestry sector in take all of them into consideration and broadly to contribute to rural development. The programme is focused on five points: afforestation of agricultural land, better use of forests in rural areas, cork, forest protection, and accompanying measures. In 1992, regulation 2157/92 (amended in 1997) strengthened Community measures to better protect forests from atmospheric pollution and fires. Overall, an equitable balance has to be found between the diverse roles of mountain forests. With time, their multifunctional nature is becoming recognised, with an integrated forestry policy part of rural development policy.

In accordance with the subsidiarity principle – and to be more efficient – forest strategies and measures are implemented at different levels. In some areas, the regional or local level is adopted; e.g., in Germany, where there is a federal law on pasture and forests, but policies are implemented by the Länder; or in Spain, where regional plans for mountain areas are extremely diverse and reforestation is quite uncontrolled. In Austria, the national level has played an important role in defining the mountain forest strategy with numerous utilization restrictions, with measures to promote sustainable forestry through support for forestry investments, forest work, training, research and information to foster public awareness.

A number of problems at the interface of public and private forests can be recognised; an evolving situation, especially in the acceding and candidate countries. There is no global policy for mountain areas, but a more or less coordinated set of measures, including:

- support for planting new forests;
- conservation of indigenous species and increasing the area they cover;

- compensatory allowances for sustainable forest management;
- coverage of afforestation costs and loss of income from reforesting agricultural land and certain maintenance costs;
- expansion of forests with protection roles (65% in Finland, 60% in Germany, 32% in Austria, 15% in Slovakia);
- improvement of wood production structures;
- diversification of activities in predominantly forested regions;
- prevention against natural damage;
- fire prevention and control.

Mountain forests are also the subject of specific resolutions adopted by the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe, and the mountain forest protocol in the Alpine Convention.

Overall, the effects of these policies appear to be encouraging but not sufficient; forest policy cannot have immediate results because it is a long-term process. There are also instances of competition and contradiction of subsidies for forests, e.g., in Ireland (REPS and farm forestry subsidies for uplands).

Mining and manufacturing

Mining is a traditional activity in some mountain areas, due to the occurrence of specific mineral resources, including coal, iron, precious metals, salt, kaolin, bauxite, copper, and uranium. It was a major driving force of the 19th century Industrial Revolution in certain mountain regions in current EU Member States (e.g., Austria, Germany, UK), as well as Norway and Switzerland, and later in the current acceding and candidate countries (e.g., Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania). Many mining operations in mountain areas are now restructuring or closing because their lack of competitiveness. Two kinds of policies are being implemented to renew these sites: the creation of new business areas after conversion or demolition of the former buildings, and the transformation of the mining heritage into tourist attractions.

As discussed in Chapter 6, manufacturing in mountain areas is often underestimated by policy makers. In Austria, 36% of the employment in mountain areas is in manufacturing; in Italy, 25%; in France, 22%. Mountain manufacturing is based on small and medium-sized, but diversified enterprises. New mountain industries are developing around food processing industry (e.g., cheese, salting, jam), winter sports (mountain equipment, sportswear, footwear, ski-lifts), and innovative activities (from atomic research in the Alps to car testing industry in Northern Sweden). Few policies are implemented to specifically support such enterprises. Problems are generally evaluated and supported through the general economic support system at national or regional level. This supposes that mountains are included in the eligible areas for support from Structural Funds, which is not always the case because mountainousness is not a criterion for eligibility; the criteria are more typically under-industrialization or isolation. For example, in Finland, support for business and industry depends on peripherality; and in France, the most recent zoning for support industrial investments and job creation removed formerly classified mountain areas (Lozère, Cantal) with the explanation that there were not enough potential projects in comparison to urban regions (in the context of EU limitations for the eligible population).

Among measures to support manufacturing which are likely to be particularly beneficial to mountain areas, one can mention:

- preferential credits;
- location rules: application of qualitative criteria (appropriate to environmental conditions) in the choice of new location for industry;
- support for local crafts;
- rehabilitation measures;
- energy recycling;
- ICT support to SMEs;
- promotion of teleworking;
- networks of mountain local enterprises.

In Germany, the pilot programme “Regionen aktiv” is relevant for some of the mountain regions. Its aim is to increase local demand by enhancing regional labels, broadening the scope of activities and enlarging regional economic chains.

In some acceding and candidate countries, certain recent programmes encouraging the development of small and medium business activity have been implemented particularly in mountain regions, e.g., the ‘Structurally Handicapped Regions’ programme in the Czech Republic and the ‘Regions of industrial decline’ programme implemented in Bulgaria under the 1999 Regional Development Act.

Tourism

The tourism industry, and the presence of large numbers of tourists, has played an important role in mountain transformations in recent decades in many European countries, particularly in the Alps, where tourism in some locations dates back to the mid-19th century. As discussed in Chapter 1, mountain regions offer a wide range of activities in different seasons around different local resources. Development strategies based on tourism deal with different market segments (domestic or foreign, national or regional towns, specific age groups) depending on geographic position and local potentials.

The potential impact of tourism varies greatly, from isolated middle mountains without specific resources to high mountains where a double season is possible, with possibilities for winter and summer sports attracting visitors in an international market. All types of tourism are present in mountain areas through Europe linked with the different market segments listed above: mass tourism, special interest tourism (spas, religious, heritage monuments, hiking, hunting), rural tourism (summer stays, circuits, nature tourism, kayaking, rafting), resort tourism (riding, walking, week-end tourism, restaurants).

Tourism has major economic and social impacts in some areas. For example, in Austria tourism contributes 15% of the GDP; expenditure by foreign visitors in Switzerland contributes 3% of the GDP; 120,000 seasonal and permanent jobs were estimated at French winter resorts in 1996; and in some Italian mountainous provinces (Trento, Bolzano, Val d’Aosta) there are 50 to 100 tourist stays per inhabitant. Despite the divergence between very small-scale tourism in some mountain areas and industrial winter tourism in others, there is a strong summer tourism in many mountain ranges. In some countries, such as Italy, Bulgaria and Switzerland, mountain tourism is declining or stable. Possible explanations for this stagnation or

regression could include the lack of modernisation of old tourism infrastructure (hotels, thermal equipment), lack of professional staff, and relatively high costs in a competitive market.

In general, it appears that policies initiated by public authorities to develop tourism are weak, and that few initiatives are specifically oriented towards mountain tourism. However, a wide range of initiatives have an interest for mountain tourism, such as:

- improvements in the quality of accommodation;
- restructuration of thermal facilities;
- renovation of historical villages;
- modernisation of skiing infrastructure;
- improvement of local factors of attractiveness (e.g., landscape, cultural heritage, villages, leisure facilities);
- walking tourism;
- diversification of tourism products;
- support to alternative forms of tourism;
- development of information systems and education;
- extension of the tourism season;
- co-ordination of local initiatives;
- inclusion of sustainability principles;
- visitor taxes.

Support for tourism is generally developed through local initiatives in co-operation with tourism associations (e.g., Council of the German mountain and touring associations, Italian Touring Club, Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board, Norwegian Tourist Board, Club Alpin Français), rather than national policies. Even in Switzerland, a country which is largely mountainous, there are no federal policies focused on mountain tourism. In view of this lack of national initiatives, the importance of projects encouraging tourism development within LEADER is often quoted. There is also competition between mountain and seaside tourism development in some Mediterranean countries, which may lead to a lack of consideration for mountain areas. For example, the 2000-2006 'Integral Plan for Quality Spanish Tourism' refers only very marginally to tourism in mountain areas. Likewise, in Portugal, the tourism development strategy focuses on coastal projects.

Two examples can be noted from acceding and candidate countries with regard to the development of tourism in areas which previously had a limited tourism industry, if any. In Bulgaria, the PHARE project 'Development of Bulgarian eco-tourism' involves a large partnership (with NGOs) and mainly concerns mountain areas. Its aims are:

- to improve the quality of tourism production for eco-tourism and increase its contribution to the national GDP;
- to widen the geographical scope of the Bulgarian tourist industry;
- to prolong the tourist season in Bulgaria.

In the Czech Republic, an ambitious programme for the development of tourism including the spa industry (mostly in mountain areas) is in progress with four strategic goals:

- improvement of the legislative framework and support to entrepreneurial activities in tourism and the spa industry;

- promotion of tourism and development of information systems and education in the sector;
- development of tourism infrastructure and products in connection with the specificity of local resources;
- development of new forms, products and infrastructures in the spa industry.

Infrastructure

As discussed in Chapter 7, infrastructure provision in mountain areas is generally perceived as being more scarce and of poorer quality than in other parts of Europe. This especially concerns transport infrastructure, as only few mountain areas – except those with a major tourism industry – have levels of accessibility comparable to those in lowland areas. Reduced accessibility is consequently the most unanimously recognised weakness of mountain regions across Europe. Switzerland is a major exception in this regard, due to major and continuous investments in transport infrastructure (roads and railways), allowing easy access even to very remote areas. Infrastructure policies favouring northern and mountain peripheries can also be found in Sweden and Norway. Conversely, in some lagging mountain regions, the availability of infrastructure is very limited, e.g., in Romania where less than 8% county and communal roads are considered to meet modern standards with regard to the quality of the road surface.

In many countries, the situation with regard to railway infrastructure is particularly dramatic, as most networks were established in the 19th century and many are now often either very deteriorated or simply abandoned, after years and years of under-investment. Physical and climatic handicaps make it all the more difficult and costly to compensate for this lack of investment and maintenance in railway infrastructure. In contrast, the standard of high mountain roads has been substantially improved in recent years, particularly through Objective 1 funding in the most disadvantaged mountain regions. All countries have a National Road Plan which includes mountain regions. However, highway projects are rarely designed to meet the needs of mountain communities. As discussed in Chapter 7, the primary objective is to connect large urban centres which are separated by mountain areas. Nonetheless, major road connections through mountain areas indirectly benefit their populations. In some cases, road construction projects have been a good opportunity to promote tourism in attractive massifs close to urban centres. In rarer cases, the same applies for railways improved for developing a local forestry industry (e.g., a new railway from Salla to North-West Russia in Finland).

One particular phenomenon of mountain areas is that of transit traffic, which has become a very sensitive problem in recent years, especially in the Alps and Pyrenees, leading to difficult debates and conflicts between local and non-local interest groups, as well as between environmentalists and economic actors. These ranges are natural barriers to flows between the countries of northern and southern Europe. The intensification of trade relations and exchanges between EU Member States is a natural consequence of the EU integration and one aim of cohesion policy. The problem of transit traffic exists not only for freight transport but also for passenger transport, where recreational and holiday traffic overloads the capacity of the roads and tunnels. Such increases in traffic can have negative environmental consequences

if transport modes and infrastructure design are not adapted to the specific context of mountain areas; and can also create a risk of social disruption in traditional mountain communities. The negative effects of intense traffic in narrow valleys on environment have been widely described. They concern a wide range of environmental aspects, including air and noise pollution, landscape, biodiversity, and forests. One solution is to transfer freight traffic from road to rail transport. This solution is being applied by the Lyon-Turin project, which will significantly increase the tonnage of freight transported by rail and reduce pollution). Likewise, Swiss authorities have planned an ambitious programme of new railways through the Alps (“Rail 2000”), with the EU Commission and through bilateral conventions with Germany, France and Italy.

As discussed in Chapter 7, the populations of mountain areas face other challenges with regard to access to infrastructure. Access to information and communication technology (ICT) is increasingly vital issue for the development of any region. However, in general, mountain areas generally lag behind with regard to both mobile phone coverage and access to broadband connection; a situation that is particularly regrettable as ICT can compensate for low physical accessibility in mountain areas. These potential socio-economic benefits could justify public policies in favour of improved access to ICT in mountain areas, as these will generally be too sparsely populated to be of interest for private operators. Only such initial incentives could allow ICT to offer great opportunities to open up mountain areas and to enhance communication and competitiveness, for example through the development of teleworking.

While hardly any mountain range has a global plan to guide transport and infrastructure policies, some specific measures aimed at mountain areas can be identified:

- upgrading forest roads for general traffic;
- special multi-year plan to provide access to a massif;
- restricting policies for lorries (e.g., heavy vehicle fees, ...);
- “Rail motorway” for lorries (through the Alps);
- tele centres;
- VAT compensation fund for local communities for mobile phone net infrastructure;
- grants for satellite technology equipment for isolated SMEs.

Living conditions in mountain areas

The population decline that characterises many mountain areas, described in Chapter 5, is a result of not only the decline of economic activities and the loss of jobs, but also bad living conditions, that play a particularly important role for rural women and young couples.

Housing is a key issue. In many countries, both around the Mediterranean and in the acceding and candidate countries, mountain dwellings often have fewer facilities (e.g., lack of running water, electricity, heating system, sewerage) and are older than in lowland areas. There are often significant differences in housing supply and quality between remote mountains and those close to urban centres or attractive for tourism. In some cases, the exodus from mountain areas can lead to many dwellings being

empty (e.g., an estimated 200,000 in the mountains of Bulgaria); in other areas, people complain with the “reconquest” of villages by second home owners.

The development of secondary homes appears to be a common problem in Mediterranean mountains: 30-35% in the mountains of Portugal; a “dramatic increase in second homes” in Spain; in Italy, government policy has been to limit as much as possible further development of secondary residences. The process is sometimes characterised as ‘out of control’, with land speculation, competition and escalating prices for houses, and strong pressure on services. Yet second home development in other mountain areas avoids the risk of buildings falling into ruins and contribute to saving village heritage. As second homes bring intensive house-building activity, employment in the construction sector is often higher than average in massifs with high percentages of second homes. In mountain areas without a developed tourism sector, there is little private investment in lodging to rent, and a very small proportion of houses can be rented by new immigrants or young people, even when there is a large proportion of unoccupied dwellings. Young people of local origin are therefore often caught between a lack of affordable housing of adequate quality and limited economic opportunities. A few measures to address such problems have been identified:

- elimination of local building taxes in mountain areas (e.g., Portugal);
- grants for restructuring mountain villages (e.g., France);
- programme for housing in small towns of (e.g., PROSIURB in Portugal).

Public services in mountain areas suffer from remoteness and the sparseness of the population. They are difficult to maintain because of the population decline, the trend towards centralisation in trade and services modernization, and sometimes new behavioural trends in mobility from users and consumers. Except for a limited number of attractive locations, it can be difficult to keep civil servants in remote rural mountain areas resulting, for example, in high teacher turnover, vacant posts, and young temporary employees and thus low quality services and unequal opportunities for mountain inhabitants. Loss of local services at commune level means greater distances to obtain basic daily services, and to access education, health care, information, and administrative services, as discussed in Chapter 7. The problem is exacerbated when internal communications within massifs are not easy, and public transportation is non-existent or inappropriate, especially for the elderly, youth, and excluded people. In many acceding and candidate countries, transport, educational, and medical facilities have worsened during the transition period, and there is a high expectation that structural funding will improve the situation.

The maintenance and improvement of public services in mountain regions is an important challenge in territorial planning not only in term of ‘parity’ of living conditions compared to the lowlands, but also to develop the attractiveness of mountain areas for new residents and for tourists. National rules are sometimes adapted to a mountain context (i.e., low population density) and numerous local initiatives have been taken and projects implemented in this field, for example:

- concentration of facilities in major centres;
- specific ratios to close or to open public services (e.g., schools);
- ‘on demand’ transport systems with minibuses or taxis;
- tele-school for isolated villages in winter;
- support (or obligation) to attract doctors to mountain villages;

- grants to travelling commercial enterprises;
- mobile public services (with buses);
- decentralised antennas of university centres;
- E-mountain projects to provide public administration services.

Environment

The landscapes of most European mountain areas do not result primarily from natural processes, but have been shaped by human management over generations through farming, forestry, and other economic activities.

The decrease in the total area of cultivated land, which in most countries is more rapid in mountain areas than in the lowlands, is accompanied by major ecological changes, particularly the expansion of scrub and forests on abandoned land. The construction of buildings, roads, and other types of infrastructure has to be added to these forces of change, especially in regions where tourism is highly developed. Climate change is already having certain effects, for instance through the melting of permafrost and glaciers, and can be regarded as a long-term agent of change for many mountain environments.

Long-recognised natural risks in mountain areas, linked to their geological characteristics, slope, and climate, are therefore enhanced by human interventions in three main ways: changes in landscapes related to the abandonment of traditional activities; pressures related to the uncontrolled construction of infrastructure and high levels of tourist use; and sensitivity to climate change. Beyond the risk aspects, these changes often pose threats to the specific cultural heritage of mountain regions, and the many endangered species, often endemic and/or relic, for which these areas are often a last refuge. As significant changes in mountain land uses and environmental characteristics can be expected in the future, the development and implementation of policies encouraging the preservation of mountain environments is a priority. Three main types of tools have been implemented, relating to spatial planning, risk management, and nature conservation.

Spatial planning: In almost all countries, there are no planning regulation and guidance tools specific to mountain areas. Classic instruments such as local master plans are sometimes established within the wider framework of regional level guidelines or plans. In these plans, there is a general trend away from an earlier focus on urbanised areas, and towards an integration of urban and rural land use planning in order to create a common framework covering all types of territories. This trend is particularly important for mountain areas, where non-agricultural uses of non-urban open areas often occur. It is now commonly accepted that long term land-use planning has to be used to prevent natural risks. In this regard, policies in the acceding and candidate countries are progressively being harmonised with EU standards. In EU Member States, a few specific procedures for mountain areas have been developed, for instance:

- the *Unités Touristique Nouvelles* (UTN) system in France. This is a strict regulation to protect mountain landscapes when a local community wants to expand a resort or to create a new one. An authorization has to be requested from the Ministry of Equipment. A presentation of potential short- and long-term

environmental, social and economic impacts is considered by the regional UTN committee, which includes local stakeholders and is advisory; final decisions are made by the state representative. When there is no economic basis for the project or if it is in a protected area, it is usually refused;

- the Protected Area Land Use Plan (POAP) in Portugal: a specific land-use plan restricting and controlling some activities, sometimes creating conflicts with local population;
- the Alpenplan in Bavaria (Germany): a specific instrument to coordinate recreational development with respect to mountain area (aimed at nature and landscape conservation).

Risk management: Risk management is a specific issue in mountain areas. The most common risks are flooding, landslides and mudflows, avalanches in high mountains, forest-fires in Mediterranean countries and, occasionally, seismic activity. The abandonment of traditional land uses often leads to an increase in natural hazards and a greater need for public control and prevention systems. Improved knowledge of vulnerability and risks at local level, of natural hazard processes, and of mitigation options is crucial to prevent such events or minimise their effects when they do occur. Risk management measures that are likely to be particularly beneficial to mountain areas include:

- integration of risk assessment in planning;
- zoning according to degree of sensitivity to natural hazards and availability of prevention infrastructure;
- emergency planning (mountain rescue services);
- designation of catchment areas for flood prevention;
- reforestation after fire;
- replacement of exotic conifers by indigenous species.

In many cases, a trans-boundary framework is necessary for efficient public prevention and response.

Nature conservation: Across Europe, each country has its own system of environmental conservation, adapted for the different national conditions (especially with regard to the density of settlement) and the purpose and degree of protection. Designations within these systems include national and regional parks, natural and nature reserves, forestry reserves, sites of special scientific interest, wilderness reserves, protected and cultural landscapes, classified sites, heritage monuments, and many others. The origins of some protected areas stretch back many centuries, when they were established as royal hunting grounds. Some were established in the early 20th century, for instance the Swiss National Park (1914), but most were established from the 1970s onwards, and new large protected areas are still being created. At the EU scale, the Natura 2000 system, deriving from the Species and Habitats Directives, is the principal tool for nature conservation, though its application has been severely delayed in many countries. The acceding and candidate countries are generally developing similar policies. Many regulations are built on the same model with different categories of protection: strictly protected areas where generally all activities are forbidden; controlled activities (farming, fishing, forestry, hunting, research); authorised activities with restricted rules (seasonal or targeted activities). While none of these policies is explicitly aimed at mountain areas, a significant proportion of the most highly protected areas, such as national parks, are located within them.

8.3 Trans-national policies and instruments

Regional institutions

A number of trans-frontier institutions for regional cooperation exist in various parts of Europe. The longest tradition is in the Alps, involving small numbers of regional governments, for instance around Mont Blanc and the Lakes of Constance and Geneva. Most were established in the 1970s or 1980s, but two date from the 1990s, both between Italy and Switzerland: the Regio Sempione across the Simplon Pass and the Regio Insubrica in the area surrounding Lake Como. At a larger scale are the working communities of regional governments for the western Alps (COTRAO, established 1982), central Alps (ARGE-ALP, 1972) and eastern Alps (ALPE-ADRIA, 1978). There are also working communities of regional governments in the Pyrenees (Andorra and seven regional governments in France and Spain, established 1983) and the Jura (France and Switzerland, 1985). Many of these initiatives have been supported in recent years through Interreg programmes.

In the mountains of central Europe, the Neisse-Nisa-Nysa Euroregion, established in 1991, covers the western Sudety mountains of the Czech Republic, Germany, and Poland; and there are also other bilateral regions between the Czech Republic and Poland. The Carpathian Euroregion, established in 1993, has now largely been overtaken by the Carpathian Convention (see below). The CBC Phare cross-border co-operation programme has provided support for many of these initiatives.

International agreements

International agreements, such as mountain range conventions, are important tools with considerable potential for the implementation of mountain policies (Villeneuve et al., 2002). While this potential is only now beginning to be realised, they can be valuable for the recognition of the specific region as having distinct environmental and cultural characteristics, the harmonisation of policies at the regional scale, the dissemination of good practice, and for enlarging the scale and the coherence of action in projects.

The first international agreement was the Alpine Convention, initially signed in 1991, and now ratified by all Alpine states (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia) as well as the European Union. As a framework convention, its primary application is through protocols on specific themes. To date, those on energy, mountain agriculture, mountain forests, nature protection and landscape conservation, regional planning and sustainable development, soil protection, tourism, and transport have been prepared and ratified. Their application varies considerably from country to country (Treves et al., 2002). In 2002, a Secretariat and scientific secretariat were established in Austria and Italy, respectively. The scientific secretariat extended the work of the Alpine Observation and Information System/Alpine Observatory established in 1995. Also of note as an outcome of the Convention has been the establishment of a network of protected areas (national parks, nature reserves, etc.) in the Alps, and 'Alliance in the Alps', a network of nearly 150 communities with the aim of implementing the goals of the Convention for sustainable development. Notably, while the former initiative is mainly supported by

governments, the latter derived from the work of the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA), an NGO which provided much of the initial impetus towards the Alpine Convention (Price, 1999).

The Carpathian Convention was signed in 2003 by the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, and Ukraine. Like the Alpine Convention, it is a framework convention whose aims will be implemented through thematic protocols. As in the Alps, the development of cooperative research and monitoring on environmental, social and economic themes is envisaged, and initial assistance is being provided by the scientific secretariat of the Alpine Convention.

8.4. Community Initiatives in mountain areas

EU policy with regard to mountain areas began in 1975 in the context of the expansion of the scope of the CAP, from the objective of regulating production towards the maintenance of farmers in areas considered as being at risk from depopulation and abandonment. The compensation of ‘handicaps’ was the key argument for the measures taken (support for infrastructure and investment, subsidies for grazing and dryland crops, etc.). However, the implementation of approaches was left open to the individual Member States, who adopted rather different delimitations of their ‘mountain area’ and implemented a great diversity of approaches in very contrasting ways.

With regard to the acceding and candidate countries, the EU programmes directed at them are mentioned in the national reports. For instance, in Bulgaria and Hungary, there are both PHARE and SAPARD projects with relevance to mountain areas. The PHARE projects involve co-operation with other countries and the SAPARD projects concern, for example, support for production and marketing of arts and craft, regional products and rural tourism. Romania has a PHARE programme specifically directed towards ‘Agriculture in mountain areas’, undertaken with assistance from France and Germany.

Less favoured areas

Figure 8.1 shows the proportion of national area subject to specific LFA designations. Mountain areas as defined in this study are almost completely covered by one of the LFA categories in the EU 15 (Figure 8.2). Although the definition of mountain areas goes well beyond the one used within the LFA system, it is notable that the fringes of massif areas are often identified as being in danger of depopulation, as can be seen in Figure 8.3. Nevertheless, as discussed in section 3.5, many of these areas are adjacent to transition zones with relatively high population densities. This issue needs further investigation.

Three types of LFA are defined: mountain areas (Article 18), other less-favoured areas (Article 19), and areas affected by specific handicaps (Article 20). It should be emphasised that the delimitation of lowland less-favoured areas in compliance with the regulation is based on following criteria:

- the presence of land of poor productivity, difficult for cultivation and with a limited potential which cannot be increased except at excessive cost, and which is mainly suitable for extensive livestock farming;

- production which results from low productivity of the natural environment which is appreciably lower than the average, with regard to the main indices of economic performance in agriculture;
- a low or dwindling population predominantly dependent on agricultural activity, the accelerated decline of which would jeopardise the viability of the area concerned and its continued habitation.

Figure 8.1. Proportions of national area subject to specific LFA designations

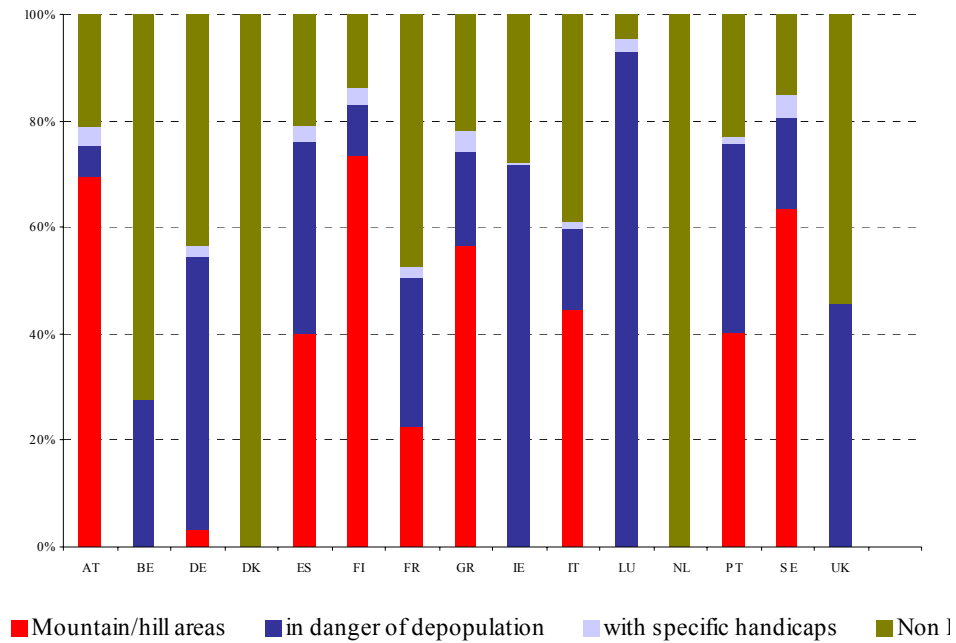


Figure 8.2. Massifs and Less Favoured Areas

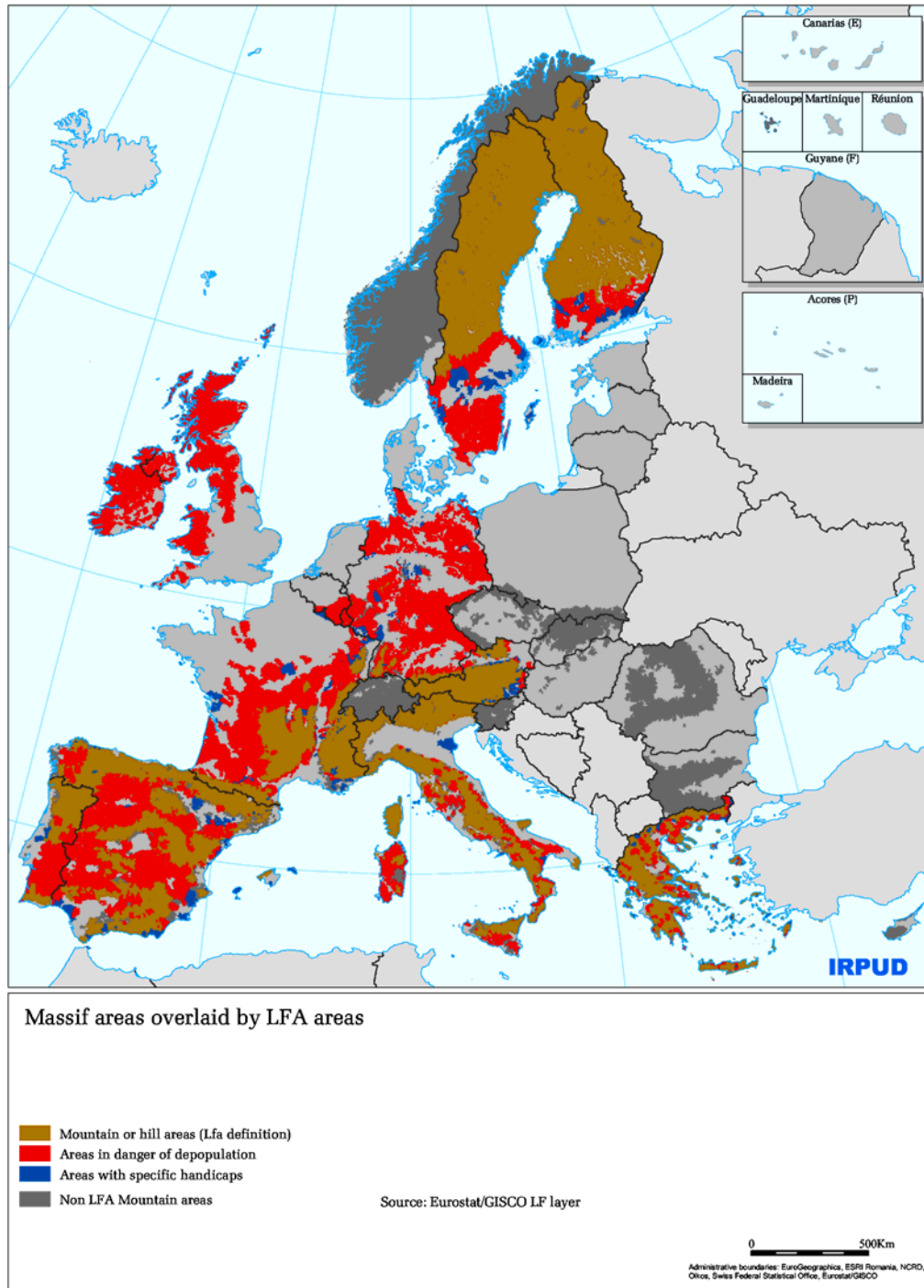
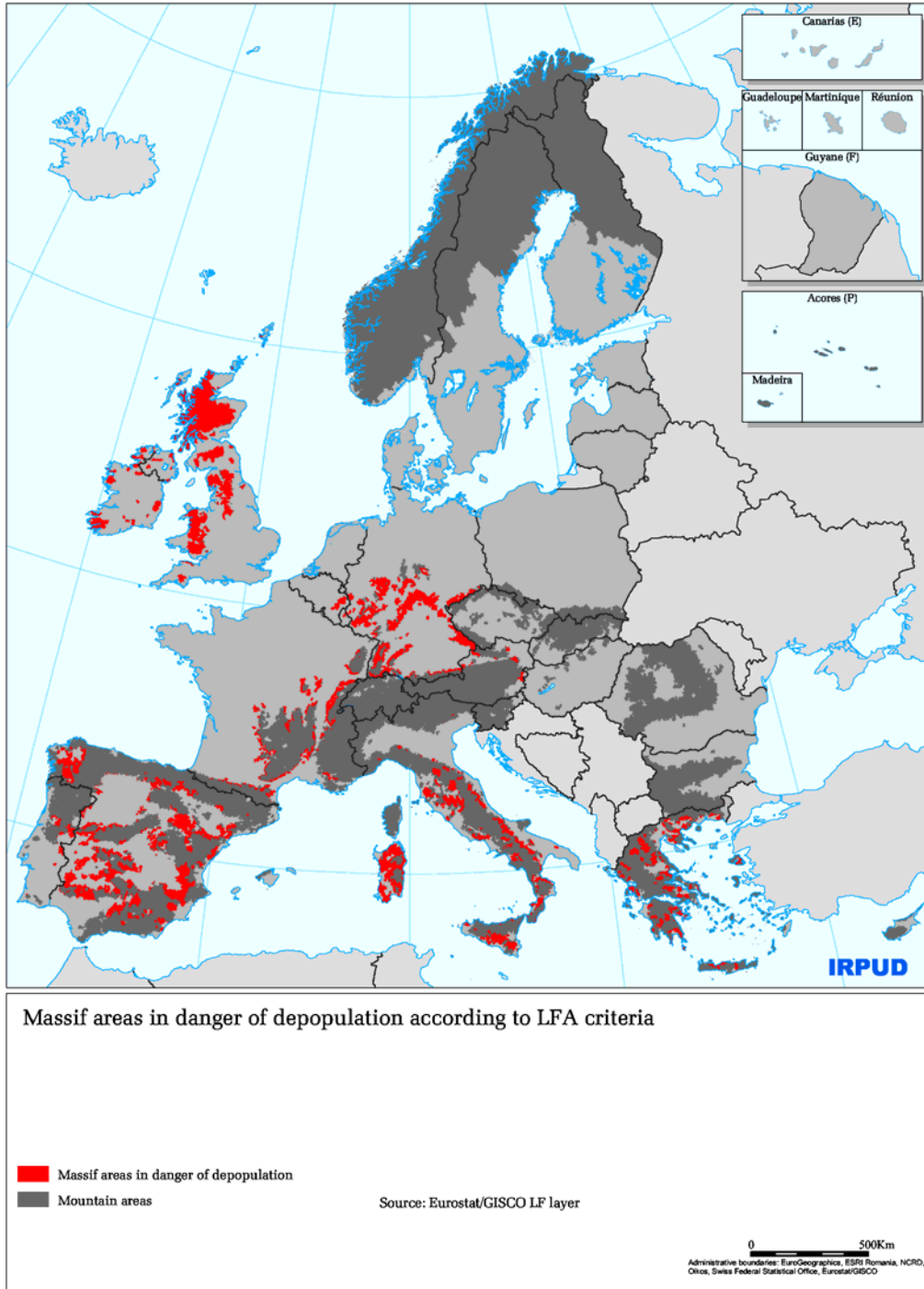


Figure 8.3. Massif areas in danger of depopulation according to LFA criteria



Objectives 1 and 2

The reform of the Structural policies in the mid-1980s introduced zonations for a number of the objectives (1, 2, 5b and 6). Most mountain areas with the greatest difficulties were included in Objective 1 areas, i.e. NUTS II regions below the threshold of 75% of EU GDP per person (PPP).

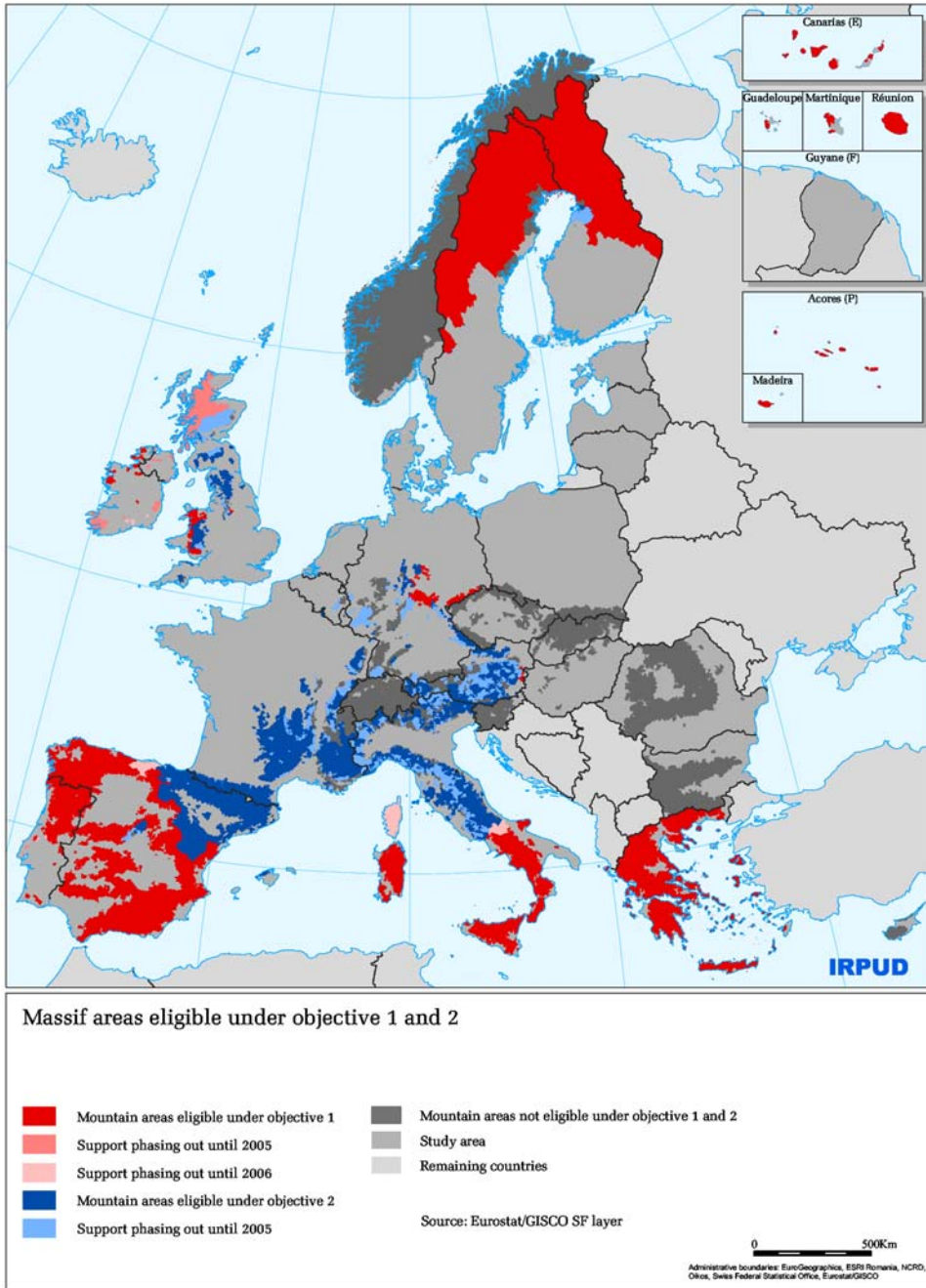
Mountain characteristics were included in the criteria for eligibility for Objective 5b from 1988-93 and 1994-99. Such criteria were not explicitly included in those for eligibility for the new Objective 2, but were implicitly taken into consideration in the areas proposed by most Member States.

A total of 78% of the area of the EU15 is covered by Objective 1 or 2 for 2000-2006; Table 8.4 provides this information for the mountain ranges defined in the study, and Figure 8.4 shows the mountain areas covered by Objective 1 and 2. The largest parts of massifs that are not covered are in Germany (Black Forest and Bavarian Alps), France (Northern Alps), and Italy (Western Alps); some other parts of massifs are in the phasing out stage for both Objectives 1 and 2. Nevertheless, within each region, mountain problems are treated within the framework of the overall strategy of regional Single Programming Documents and not in a specific manner (with certain exceptions).

Table 8.5. Proportion of mountain ranges eligible for different Objectives (% of area)

MASSIF	Country	Objective 1			Objective 2	
		Obj. 1	phasing out until 2005	phasing out until 2006	Obj. 2	phasing out until 2005
Ångermanland	SE	51	0	0	0	0
Austrian Alps	AT	1	0	0	43	34
Austrian Bohemian mountains	AT	0	0	0	75	17
Balearic Islands	ES	0	0	0	68	32
Basque Mountains	ES	4	0	0	96	4
Bavarian Alps	DE	0	0	0	0	20
Betic Systems	ES	100	0	0	0	0
Black forest, SFA	DE	0	0	0	5	19
Canary Islands	ES	100	0	0	0	0
Cantabrian Range	ES	80	20	20	0	0
Catalan Range	ES	0	0	0	99	1
Central Alps	IT	0	0	0	47	27
Central Apennines	IT	0	0	0	0	0
Central System	ES	85	0	0	7	6
Cordilheira central	PT	99	1	1	0	0
Corsica	FR	0	100	100	0	0
Cotes bourguignonnes	FR	0	0	0	11	19
Crete	GR	99	0	0	0	0
Eastern Alps	IT	0	0	0	64	16
Evia-Viotia-Attiki	GR	98	0	0	0	0
Galician Massif	ES	100	0	0	0	0
German Bohemian mountains	DE	0	0	0	70	29
German low mountains (north)	DE	24	0	0	62	6
German low mountains (south)	DE	11	0	0	1	39
Highlands and Islands	UK	0	73	2	1	23
Iberic System	ES	60	0	0	39	0
Italian Dinaric mountains	IT	0	0	0	0	0
Jamtland-Harjedalen-Dalarne	SE	100	0	0	0	0
Macico Noroeste	PT	100	0	0	0	0
Mediterranean Alps	FR	0	0	0	56	15
Norrbottn	SE	65	0	0	0	0
Northern Alps	FR	0	0	0	58	5
Northern Apennines	IT	0	0	0	63	34
Olympos, Central Greece	GR	99	0	0	0	0
Ostrobothnia, coastal hinterland	FI	72	0	0	2	13
Pindos	GR	99	0	0	0	0
Rodopi	GR	99	0	0	0	0
Southern Apennines	IT	90	10	10	0	0
Västerbotten	SE	100	0	0	0	0
Western Alps	IT	0	0	0	1	1

Figure 8.4. Massif areas eligible under Objective 1 and 2



Interreg and LEADER

EU initiatives have been of interest in many mountain areas. This is particularly true for Interreg which, from the beginning, addressed trans-frontier cooperation and is therefore of relevance to many mountain regions because of their trans-frontier character. Interreg allowed the initiation or reinforcement of many programmes of cooperation on areas and themes which were more coherent than in national policies. There are examples of mountain-specific projects, as the ‘Euromountains.net’ project, a co-operation of European mountain regions initiated by Euromontana.

Figure 8.5 identifies Interreg IIIa programme areas with land which is mountainous on both sides of the border. Almost all mountainous national boundaries of EU 15 Member States are covered by one or more Interreg programmes. In total, 24 Interreg programmes seek to develop cross-border cooperation in an area across a mountainous border. Along the borders of acceding and candidate countries, there are many mountainous borders that could also benefit from similar initiatives, as discussed in Chapters 9 and 10.

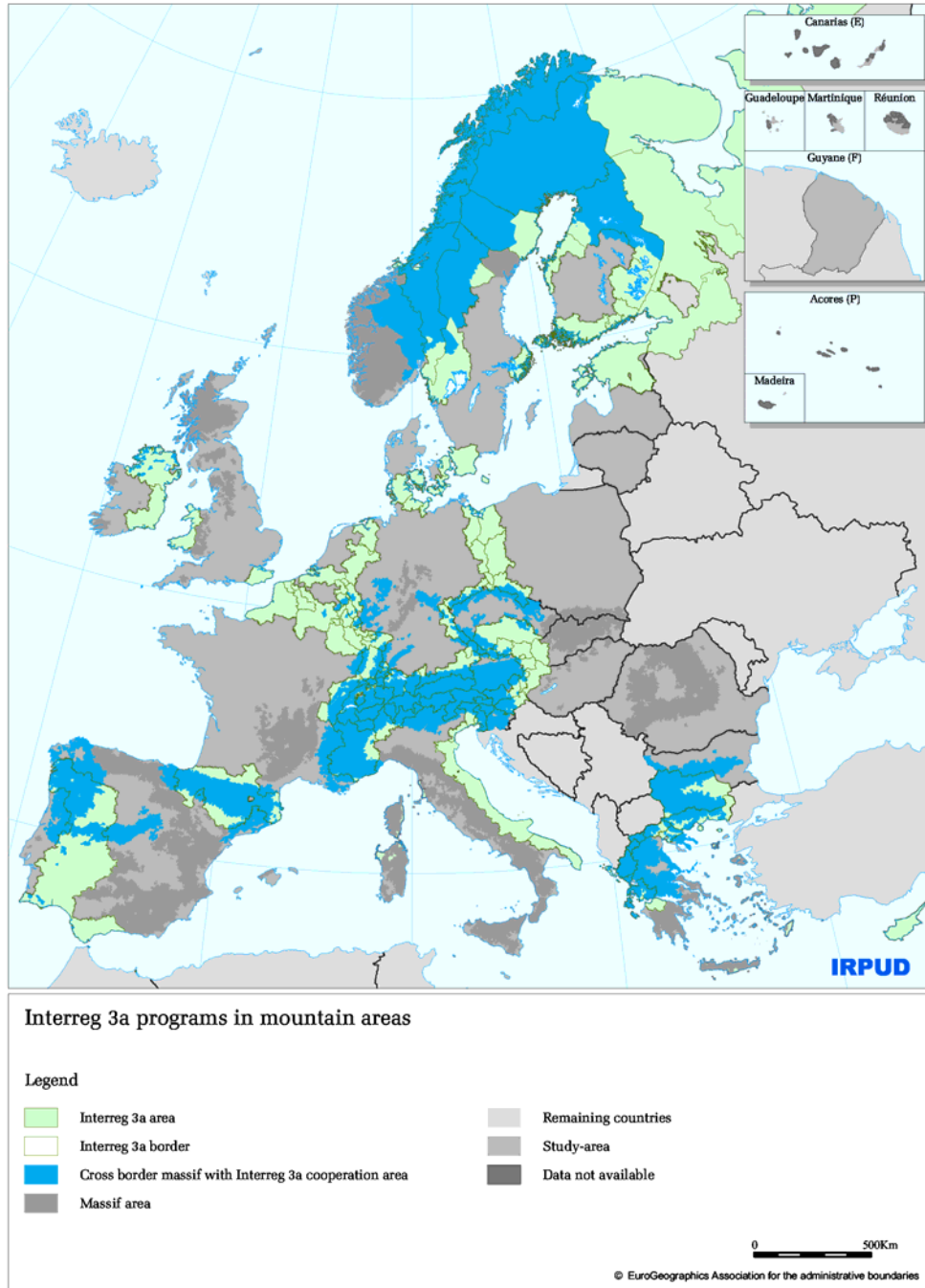
LEADER is also well-regarded for its contribution to ‘bottom-up’ approaches and innovative responses to local issues (e.g., valuation of resources, promotion of new activities, experiments with services, training). The strong identity of mountain populations has reinforced their involvement in such initiatives: many Local Action Groups are in mountain areas. To a large extent, the Alpine and Carpathian Conventions were also demanded by local stakeholders.

While LEADER (I, II, +) is the EU programme that is most often mentioned in the national reports, PHARE appears as the most important initiative for the acceding and candidate countries. Some examples from the participating countries on types of programmes and projects are presented below.

In Greece, EU support has resulted in activities in fields such as ‘agri-tourism’, arts and crafts, and preserving the cultural heritage. There are special LEADER+ projects in areas close to mountain regions and with structural problems, which should be able to contribute to the development of the mountain region. Interreg appears to have been more important during the previous programme period, with activities protecting the forests.

In Finland, Norway and Sweden, cross-border co-operation has a long tradition, and experienced a major revitalisation after Finland and Sweden became members of the EU and hence gained access to Interreg funding. Without any mountain profile, cross-border programmes include the designated mountain areas.

Figure 8.5. Interreg 3a programmes in mountain areas



In Germany and Austria, LEADER has resulted in many Local Action Groups (LAGs) and a specific Interreg project with mountain relevance is “Alpenraum” (Alpine Space) that aims at improving the competitiveness of alpine regions, making the living environment better and positioning the regions as nodes in the polycentric EU structure. CADSES (Central Adriatic Danubian South Eastern European Space) is a project with partners from Austria, Germany, Greece and Italy, as well as some acceding countries and other countries in eastern and southern Europe. For Germany, it is mentioned that areas formerly eligible for support from Objective 2 no longer receive funding. The same is true for Portugal.

In France, 36% of the LEADER+ LAGs are in mountain areas with various themes for their business plans and Interreg projects cover all Massifs. Italy and Spain also have several LEADER+ and Interreg projects with implications for the mountain areas. In Interreg there are examples of cooperation with Slovenia, Austria, and Italy and regarding LEADER it is stated that “[t]he role of Mountain Communities in LAGs has been particularly effective in the Alpine regions, where Mountain Communities have close ties with local institutions and populations.”

In the UK, the Objective 2 programme ‘Highlands and Islands Special Transitional Programme (HIPP) affects the designated mountain areas. The England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) also affects mountainous areas, but is not specifically targeted at them. Parts of the Objective 5 areas are no longer eligible for support. LEADER also has importance for mountainous areas. The influence of Interreg is more limited: there are a few examples of projects regarding plant conservation and winter road maintenance. In Ireland, only LEADER is of importance. Without a specific mountain profile, it has had effects on rural mountain areas. It has however been criticised for leaving out those most in need, who are the least likely to participate in community partnership programmes.

In general, it seems that EU programmes have implications for the various mountain regions, but not specifically since they are mountainous. The reasons tend to be rurality and peripherality, lagging industrial development, and a tourism sector which is important, or is growing in importance. The projects are often focused more on these aspects rather than the mountain aspects.

8.5. Effects and impacts of mountain policies and/or measures

Assessment of the impacts of policies/measures is only possible in countries where explicit mountain policies exist, and has to be based on existing evaluations. Consequently, such assessment is not possible for the majority of countries with no significant policies or no specific attention to mountain trends and situation. In addition, it is difficult to separate general trends and other general policy effects from the effects of specific mountain policies.

A small number of evaluations on the effects of mountain policies have been undertaken. Five key points emerge.

As shown in Chapter 5, total populations in most mountain areas are declining, despite the implementation of policies either to support specific sectors – usually agriculture and/or transport – or more specifically to maintain people in mountain areas. However, economic diversification and improvements in the quality of life – usually promoted in mountain policies – are beginning to have positive effects in the most urbanised countries, reducing the population decline by increasing accessibility, and providing both job opportunities and services which are adequate to attract both those who wish to work from mountain locations, often part-time, and those who wish to retire there. A number of massifs are now attractive territories, particularly in the Alps and the mountains of the UK.

CAP and the national applications of its instruments receive mixed assessments. Investment and agricultural income are largely augmented by additional European subsidies that contribute to maintaining farmers in mountain areas where production is not competitive, but these subsidies do not necessarily slow down or stem population decline. In several countries, there have been negative effects. Where the CAP has contributed to favoured ‘orthodox models’ of agriculture (e.g., large-scale farms, intensive methods), this has tended to cause the loss of small farms and traditional agricultural species/varieties, traditional practices such as transhumance, and know-how; and to contribute to reductions in landscape and social diversity in some mountain areas. This point is considered as crucial in Ireland and in acceding and candidate countries where collective agriculture and small independent farms previously existed.

Mountain economies have, in many places, become more diversified through the development of tourism. However, both manufacturing (e.g., textiles) and mining, where they have existed, are everywhere in difficulty because of the processes of globalisation and, in acceding and candidate countries, because state support is being withdrawn in view of their imminent membership of the EU (e.g., in Bulgaria and Romania). As shown in Chapter 6, unemployment rates are rather high in some mountain regions; and it should be recognised that many mountain economies, both in current Member states and, especially, acceding and candidate countries, remain subsistence economies.

Environment, landscapes and cultural values are now better protected through both EU and national legislation; however, there are many contradictions with development aims and economic initiatives.

The barrier effect has been reduced through improvements in transport infrastructures (e.g., major highways); but this is mainly at the regional level, because of the lack of investment in local roads and secondary railways.

The main positive fact is a growing appreciation of mountain values for urban and global society, and also among government agencies; a point emphasised during the International Year of Mountains, 2002, when national committees were established in five EU member states (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain), three acceding countries (Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia), Romania and Switzerland.

8.6. Examples of best practice

A great variety of projects are implemented and financed by public funds in the European mountains, so an inventory of ‘best practice’ cannot be representative. A good range have been presented in the EU brochure on ‘Structural policies and European territory: The mountains’ (European Commission, 2000). Consequently, the following list provided by the national experts must be considered as somewhat random. However, they provide significant information with regard to recent tendencies and it is possible to identify some lessons:

- they address all fields from economic projects (farm diversification, restructuring industry, tourism) to social ones (poverty eradication), and also address infrastructure (E-programmes), environment (biodiversity conservation, parks), training and expertise (for unemployed people, farmers, local actors, visitors) institutional arrangements (mountain associations, forum), co-operation (Inter-regional conventions);
- they involve all kind of actors – public, associative, firms and entrepreneurs, inhabitants – and all kind of territories, with an emphasis on local and sub regional levels;
- some are EU (Interreg, LEADER) or international initiatives (with non-EU countries), but many in a national or regional context;
- there are certain differences between EU Member States and acceding/candidate countries in the centres of interest and the way to solve problems (e.g., through the industrial transition in the UK and Slovenia).

This kind of ‘anthology’ shows the richness of experiences and the necessity to collect them in a mountain network.

Table 8.6. Examples of best practice

Country		Best practice examples	
Austria	1	Innovative sustainable local development by jointly implemented projects in : Energy, product and service development, culinary, regional identity, Alpine tourism in an annual cycle, positioning marketing cooperation	Leader
Bulgaria	1	Programme “From social assistance towards employment”	
	2	“Steel and Mining Areas Employment Project” : implementation of a system for grant assistance to local initiatives for permanent employment and training of the unemployed people	EU pr
	3	National Parks Management Plans to biodiversity conservation and to develop scientist activities	
	4	Cross-border cooperation with Greece	Interreg
Finland		Lapland Centre of expertise focused in experience tourism industry (know how, new media and entertainment industry)	
France	1	Inter regional conventions for Massifs (joints funding from regional programmes to Massif level)	
	2	Inter-Massif agro pasture Plan to promote the image of these territories	
	3	E-Massif Central	
Germany	1	Pilot programme “Regionen aktiv” to promote new initiatives in different fields	
	2	UNESCO biosphere reserve focusing on the preservation and development of cultural landscape	Leader
Ireland	1	Countryside Warden Scheme to Protect Mountains: Volunteers to help users (weekends pressure)	Leader
	2	Irish Uplands Forum (non governmental voluntary body) : establish a resource centre and information system in sustainable development of mountain regions, facilitate conflict resolution, ...	
Italy	1	E-mountain projects to provide public administration services to citizens and businesses	

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Norway	1	Integrated development programme in an inland area involving municipalities and local businesses	
	2	Promotion sustainable territorial development in a large nature conservation area	Interreg
Poland		Land consolidation co-ordinated with a more global development plan at the local level	
Portugal		PDRITM Agricultural programme of modernisation with a social infrastructure component	R/N
Romania	1	Training for mountain rural development through a Romanian-French cooperation project	
	2	Mountain Farmers Federation	
	3	Training and Innovation Centre for Development in the Carpathians	
	4	National Association for Mountain rural Development (Romontana)	
Slovenia	1	Landscape park in a protected area as a starting point to mountaineering	
	2	Economic restructuring after the closure of a mercury mine in a deep mountain valley	
Spain	1	Housing poverty eradication	
Sweden	1	Regional Growth Agreement (RGA) facilitate partnership between local actors to improve attractiveness and business development	
Switzerland		Cross-border Programme with Italy for sustainable development of the economies	Interreg
UK	1	Upland Habitat action Plans for preserving and enhancing biodiversity	
	2	Revitalise a community in transition of imminent closure on a smelter (Kinlocheleven Devt Trust)	Obj 1
	3	Agri-environmental schemes for farm diversification in Wales	
	4	Forest initiatives	
	5	Tourism development in an area in economic recession with the closure of industries	