



European  
Commission



## HOW THE EU HELPS MOUNTAIN AREAS

Europe's mountain communities can be remote and difficult to reach, creating challenges such as limited access to resources, services and markets. Balancing tourism and environmental protection can also be difficult. EU support can help turn these hurdles into opportunities to create jobs, boost local economies and improve lives. The EU-funded Bois des Alpes project is one such example.

## Certification scheme boosts Alpine timber industry

An EU-funded project is helping wood producers in the French Alps improve their competitiveness and commercial standing. The 'Bois des Alpes' certification scheme has been developed to provide a guarantee of quality for local wood construction products.

The Alpine wood industry faces a number of challenges. The products it develops for the timber construction market are not competitive, particularly in the face of stiff competition from other parts of Europe such as Finland and Germany. In addition, local companies have found it difficult to adapt to existing wood classification standards while efforts to market Alpine wood have proved unsuccessful.

To bring about a change in fortunes, the Association Bois des Alpes was formed in 2008, linking industry players from the French Alpine Massif region. The Association's goal is to drive up standards through the roll-out of a unique quality assurance function.

EU funding supported the development of the **Bois des Alpes certification scheme**. The goal is to deliver a guarantee of quality that existing and new customers can rely on. The certification – unique in France – requires wood to have been harvested solely from the Alpine Massif, be fully traceable and conform to technical and industry standards. While 75 companies have been certified by the scheme, some 60 public buildings have been built with Bois des Alpes-marked wood.

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## Backing a good product

Despite its struggles in the market place, Alpine wood has great commercial potential. The timber is intrinsically of good quality and has all the characteristics required by the construction sector.

It can also be produced sustainably in significant quantities. In addition to maximising this potential, the project aimed to improve forest resources and develop local skills while maintaining jobs in Alpine areas. Moreover, the use of more Alpine wood by the local construction industry produces lower emissions than would be created by transporting alternative supplies from other parts of the world.

Technical support is provided to organisations wishing to make use of the certification. The association also highlights the value of the Bois des Alpes mark through promotional activities and is examining new ways to commercially exploit local timber products and improve the competitiveness of producers.

Other activities undertaken through this initiative include re-searching into how to optimise timber quality. The association offers support to local wood industry clusters that aim to develop new operating practices and approaches to commercialisation. Help to regroup local industry actors and create new clusters in the Massif region is also being provided.



## BOIS DES ALPES

**Project full name:** Déploiement de la certification Bois des Alpes

**Sectors:** Wood

**Project website:** <https://boisdesalpes.net/index.php>

**Total cost:** EUR 325 975

**EU CONTRIBUTION:** EUR 130 975

**Fund:** European Regional Development Fund

**PROGRAMME:** Interregional Alpes 2014-2020

**Project start/end:** 2018 to 2020

