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Directorate General for Research

**WORKING PAPER
ABRIDGED EDITION**

TOWARDS A EUROPEAN POLICY FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development Series

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TOWARDS A EUROPEAN POLICY FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

PROBLEMS, RESULTS OBTAINED
AND ADJUSTMENTS NEEDED

Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development Series

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BACKGROUND

Mountain regions represent a resource for the future of Europe. In order to fully exploit the potential of these regions to the benefit of the continent as a whole, improvements are needed in the framework of existing EU policies.

One of the major objectives is to pinpoint a clearer, more coherent and more effective strategy aimed at promoting sustainable development of EU mountain regions.

In view of EU mandates, proposals have been drawn up on the basis of current policies and the opportunities they offer for development prior to enlargement so that a better balance can be achieved between the needs of and opportunities open to the mountain regions, for the benefit of Europe as a whole.

1.1.9. GROUNDS FOR AN INTEGRATED EU APPROACH TO MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Apart from the aim of achieving environmental cohesion, several reasons favour an integrated approach to mountain regions by the European Union.

The reasons why an integrated approach to the future of mountain regions needs to be formulated at EU level are as follows:

- there are European wide problems which call for concerted action on the part of the Member States (a shared natural and cultural heritage, trade flows in the transport and tourism sectors, but also pollution, infrastructures and projects where cross-border cooperation is needed, migration from less-favoured mountain regions to more developed regions and urban areas of the EU),
- no solution has been found to the problems of emigration and depopulation, and indeed they have worsened in some mountain regions in the countries of northern and southern Europe and will do so still further with the accession of new Member States from central and eastern Europe, posing a serious threat to the cohesion of the enlarged Europe of the future, unless an appropriate strategy is followed in these countries in cooperation with the European Union,
- European policies have already had a substantial impact on the development of mountain regions (agricultural policy, environmental policy and structural funds, but also the cohesion fund and transport), but greater integration and consistency are needed, together with improved efforts to adapt to the specific requirements of some mountain regions and the opportunities they offer,
- the true potential for sustainable development in mountain regions must be given better consideration in order to draw up adequate responses to the two main challenges the European Union must face in future, namely the environment and employment, so as to bring mutual benefits to both urban and mountain areas,
- the opportunities and needs in terms of cooperation and exchange of know-how at international, interregional and in particular at local level should be taken into account insofar as

they are a key element in the sustainable development of European mountain regions, concerning the capacity of the populations of these regions to increase their competitiveness on the world market which will benefit the whole Union.

NEED FOR A SPECIFIC EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGY FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

The EU has drawn up a policy for disadvantaged regions and, as a general rule, sees rural areas as a priority sector on which future initiatives should be focused. The guidelines in this area are crucial to the future of mountain regions.

However, mountain regions must be the focus of particular efforts and a specific strategy at European Union level for social, economic and environmental regions. It is not a matter of settling the claims of mountain regions against other categories of economically sensitive regions, such as rural areas, less-favoured areas, environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands and coastal zones. An accurate assessment of the effects of Community policies is needed in all these areas, with measures being geared to the goal of developing their potential, protecting their environment and ensuring cohesion within the Union.

Nevertheless, the economic, social and ecological situation of mountain regions varies. Some regions have to deal with more difficult conditions than others and there are wealthy and poor mountain regions. Any strategy adopted by the Union must be sufficiently flexible to adjust to this diversity, in line with the principle of subsidiarity.

It is not a question of drawing up a new and specific structural policy or a new cohesion policy applying the same criteria to all mountain regions, but rather adapting existing instruments to local situations in order to achieve economic and social cohesion. Greater attention should be paid to the specific natural conditions, whether this is environmental wealth or its vulnerability, economic handicaps or potential, with better targeting of sectoral policies which have a crucial impact on these regions, in particular those relating to agriculture, the environment, transport, education and information.

By comparison with other less-favoured, rural or environmentally sensitive areas, the mountain regions require a specific European strategy because:

- they represent a very specific heritage of vital resources for Europe as a whole (water, protective forests, rare species and habitats, and also unique cultural roots, areas for physical and mental renewal, relaxation and pleasure), but the ecological services provided to society by the mountain communities through the protection and management of these resources are not repaid in full,
- it is more difficult for them to move forward, even in traditional areas such as agriculture and forestry, and this factor has already prompted the adoption of specific compensatory measures at Union level,
- these regions need basic infrastructures to enable them to maintain population levels sufficient to allow sustainable development and to be able to cope with large numbers of temporary visitors from all over Europe,

- the development of these regions often lags behind that of adjacent rural areas, even in the less developed countries and regions, and, despite the measures adopted up to now, they still frequently suffer from continuing depopulation,
- there is a real risk that depopulation will become irreversible, with the associated loss of human resources and traditional knowledge concerning the management and protection of the environment, since once mountain villages are abandoned they cannot easily be repopulated.

This last point is a major difference by comparison with the situation in other rural areas. Furthermore it is increasingly difficult for the younger generations to live in the isolation of mountain regions because of the widening gap by comparison with the areas in which service and communications facilities are concentrated, despite recent developments in new technologies which have not yet fulfilled all the hopes they raised in these regions. This is a key preoccupation for the mountain regions and a major challenge to be taken up by the Union.

The main objectives of a Community strategy for mountain regions should be to ensure fair compensation for the environmental benefits they provide to society and to develop not so much a permanent aid system as the ability of the population and communities in these regions to practice sustainable development themselves, concentrating on their future potential rather than their handicaps, at a time when cohesion and competitiveness at European level are increasing.

MAIN CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE MOUNTAIN REGIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Sustainable development requires economic efficiency, environmental integrity and an equitable social situation.

The European mountain regions are facing certain key challenges and opportunities:

- in terms of the social situation, there is a major risk of gradual but irreversible depopulation, an unfair distribution of basic infrastructures by comparison with lowland areas, a lack of compensation for the services provided by the population in mountain regions to society as a whole, in the form of management and protection of resources, landscapes and ecosystems; at the same time there are opportunities for offering leisure and recreation to citizens and responding to the growing demand for discovering different ways of life in environments where both the natural and cultural situations have been preserved;
- in economic terms, while traditional activities such as agriculture, forestry and tourism are becoming increasingly precarious, new sources of income and employment can be envisaged thanks to the development of new technologies, in particular in the information and communications sectors, which should allow some of the past handicaps to be transformed into opportunities for the future by the creation of new types of economic activity;
- in environmental terms, on the one hand increasing pressure is being exerted on the sensitive areas because of the abandonment of the land, poor management of water resources, the seasonal influx of visitors and the overloading on the road network, but on the other hand there are the new prospects created by advanced technologies (in the area of renewable energies, multimodal transport and geographic information systems) and by a general trend towards a dynamic partnership (in place of static opposition) between the environment and development.

Possible responses to these major challenges could be as follows:

- in social terms, by providing equitable compensation and infrastructures for the services provided by the population of mountain regions to society as a whole in managing the natural resources and services which are of direct benefit to visitors;
- in economic terms, by encouraging local initiatives leading to endogenous development, by creating and diversifying activities, with products based on an authentic identity and quality so as to ensure acceptable added value and to safeguard the capacities for self-development;
- in environmental terms, by disseminating the necessary knowledge, encouraging awareness and strengthening the skills of all those involved to ensure rational and multi-use management of natural resources, and integrated spatial development and planning.

Maintaining adequate population levels, in particular of young people, is an absolute priority. It is therefore essential to provide the necessary infrastructures in the area of education and communication.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S MANDATES AND POLICIES

Before setting out the responses which could be given within the framework of EU policies, an analysis should be made of the changes needed to the existing policies and the new prospects opened up by the on-going discussions under Agenda 2000 'For a stronger and wider Union'¹.

Better adapted EU policies will involve taking the following aspects into account:

- the common agricultural policy: it is generally accepted that compensatory payments have had a positive social impact as they have encouraged farmers and people in mountain areas to remain in these regions². However, the economic and environmental impact is not proven. There is a consensus in favour of strengthening the compensatory measures for farming in mountain regions so as to make them more effective in economic and environmental terms. To this end stronger incentives would be needed to improve regional planning, the quality of production and the protection of the environment instead of just encouraging production. Multi-functionality should also be facilitated and the agri-environmental measures extended horizontally to cover the management of forestry resources,
- cohesion policy: the structural fund and the cohesion fund should be oriented more effectively towards the less-favoured areas, and specifically the mountain regions. Within the Objective 1 areas the needs and potential of mountain regions should be considered more carefully in the formulation, implementation and assessment of multi-annual programmes. The determination of Objective 2 (ex 5b) regions and the definition of the programmes should be sufficiently detailed to take account of the real social and economic discrepancies within a region and the very clear boundaries and the barriers which take effect between the lowland and

¹ European Commission, 'AGENDA 2000 – For a stronger and wider Union', *Bulletin of the European Union*, Supplement 5/97, Brussels, 1997, p.69

² European Commission: Support for farms in mountain, hill and less-favoured areas, 'Green Europe', Office for official publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg

mountain regions, often within a very short distance. The Cohesion Fund should pay greater attention to the needs of mountain regions in terms of basic transport and telecommunications infrastructure, while respecting the environment,

- Community initiatives and innovative actions by the Commission in the area of rural development, interregional and international cross-border cooperation: there are several initiatives which are of interest for the mountain regions, in particular under the LEADER, INTERREG, RECITE and ECOS-OUVERTURE programmes. However, because of the administrative and geographical isolation, the lack of human resources and inadequate access to information these initiatives do not really reach those who could be the direct beneficiaries, in this case the mountain communities, the local authorities, undertakings and everyone working at local level, those, indeed, who provide the real driving force for the development of mountain regions.

Among the opportunities offered by the current discussion on a wider and stronger Union, some point to interesting developments, in particular those relating to:

- the new guidelines for the common agricultural policy and the accompanying measures under Agenda 2000, the general aims of which are to guarantee a reasonable living standard to farmers, the integration of environmental objectives and the recognition of the multi-functional role of farmers and rural areas in general, with more specific objectives concerning the reorganisation of the rural policy instruments, the key role given to agri-environmental measures, the possibility of transforming the less-favoured areas policy into a basic instrument to promote low-input farming systems, and the strengthening of targeted agri-environmental measures for services which require the farmer to make a special effort, for example organic farming, conservation of semi-natural habitats or maintaining an alpine farm holding;

- the new guidelines for the Structural Funds in Agenda 2000, with the general objectives of confirming the priority given to economic and social cohesion and making the structural funds more effective by improving visibility, flexibility, selectiveness, decentralisation, monitoring and evaluation and the specific objectives of continuing to give high priority to Objective 1, including rural areas in decline and those facing depopulation in the new Objective 2, while paying special attention to education, training and access to new technologies, the potential for local development and environmental protection and, lastly, establishing a strategy for human resources by means of a new Objective 3, which will promote access to employment, life-long learning and promotion of local development;

- the new guidelines for Community initiatives with the main objective of concentrating on three priority sectors which are directly related to the main challenges, together with the solutions which can be envisaged for mountain regions, namely a) interregional, transnational and cross-border cooperation, b) rural development, c) human resources and equal opportunities;

- the enlargement of the EU to include countries which have huge mountain regions and where specific policies for these regions are either in existence or under discussion at national level, for example Cyprus, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia, all of which are ready to start negotiations shortly, or Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia which are preparing to take part in the second wave of negotiations;

- the consideration being given at EU level to regional development, through the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), and its implementation.

In conclusion, it should be stressed that the problems of mountain regions go hand-in-hand with two questions vital for the future of the EU beyond the year 2000, namely the environment and employment.

These must form the cornerstones of the new strategy to be developed by the European Union for the sustainable development of mountain regions.

FOUNDATIONS FOR A EUROPEAN APPROACH TO MOUNTAIN REGIONS – ENVIRONMENTAL COHESION

Mountain regions represent a unique environmental heritage, both natural and cultural, for Europe as a whole. This heritage offers resources vital for the Union's socio-economic welfare, which must be protected and managed.

1.2. The need to maintain viable population levels

To safeguard this unique heritage and maintain the hydrological balance and harmony of the landscape, the protective role of forests, biodiversity, open spaces and the capacity to welcome visitors seeking peace and quiet, relaxation and recreation it is vital to maintain a viable permanent population.

By its constant presence from generation to generation and by its activities, in particular those relating to farming and forestry, such a population is the only way to safeguard and preserve the collective memory of the area and to manage the land and its resources so that they remain accessible to the whole of society.

1.3. The foundations for sustainable development in mountain regions

In order to survive in the modern globalised world, this population must preserve and reinvent the foundations for sustainable development. In order to be sustainable, this development must be based on sound management of local, natural and human resources and must be endogenous, founded on an economy which respects local identities and derives its strength from the individual's sense of belonging to a community, its past as well as its future, and which can operate viably by providing the market with goods and services meeting the growing demand by consumers for authentic, high-quality and attractive products. For the most part, the populations of mountain regions have already turned to the development of high-quality agricultural products and quality tourism.

Herein lies their future and the only way to maintain their way of life with the least possible dependence on the outside world. However, this will not be sufficient as, apart from the income from economic activities, there is also the matter of maintaining the minimum services and infrastructures required by a permanent resident population in this specific physical environment.

The need to provide recompense for the environmental services provided to society by ensuring that the populations in mountain regions enjoy basic services

Maintaining infrastructures and basic services is a task that goes beyond the capacities of redistributing the wealth available to local authorities.

It is thus essential that, in recognition for the services provided to the whole of society by the mountain communities, they receive a level of compensation which will maintain their presence, mainly through basic infrastructures and services.

Assistance is already provided for hill farming and was originally intended to take account of the specific handicaps of these areas; today, it is increasingly justified by the recognition of the fundamental role played by the farmers in managing the countryside and ecosystems in mountain areas.

Maintaining farming and forestry in these areas is vital and should remain one of the cornerstones of Community activity. Yet today the problem goes further. What is the use of maintaining agricultural activity if the living conditions needed to enable the rest of the population to remain in these regions cannot be assured?

A policy to assist these regions must therefore go far beyond agriculture and rural development policy and must, as a matter of principle, involve a regional, national and community partnership, reflecting the fact that the Union as a whole can benefit from the resources of mountain regions.

Community environmental cohesion as the basis for a new European Union approach to mountain regions

Above and beyond considerations related to economic and social cohesion, the foundations for a Community policy to assist these areas must therefore be environmental in nature. What is needed is environmental cohesion, a new objective to be pursued in the medium to long term with a view to achieving Community cohesion.

Since the European Union is not equipped with instruments designed to meet this objective, the solution must be to propose the appropriate adjustments to existing mechanisms, with particular reference to the Structural Funds and while distinguishing two different cases.

In the first case, that of mountain regions eligible for Structural Fund support, it is possible to propose a better use of these funds, without necessarily modifying the basic regulations but by specifying the conditions for their implementation.

In the second case, that of areas which are not eligible for Structural Fund support, it should be possible to find answers on a case by case basis, by identifying the specific needs of mountain regions more effectively in horizontal regulations and in the framework of specific Community initiatives or programmes.

But in any case, the European Union needs to develop a global, integrated and coherent approach to mountain regions, in order to gain a better grasp of the vast diversity of these regions, strengthening rather than jeopardising Community cohesion through cooperation and solidarity between mountain areas.

PRIORITY GUIDELINES – new orientations for development of a global, coherent and innovatory policy at Community level for mountain regions

The following priority guidelines are proposed for a new Union approach to mountain regions:

- mountain regions should be made more attractive and viable for the local population, with economic activities supported by the Community to offset the higher costs of living for local communities.

Emphasis should be placed on safeguarding infrastructures and essential services, whether the traditional ones such as education, health and transport or new services which will play a strategic role for the future of these regions. Such services include in particular those associated with the new communication and information technologies, the development of which will be vital to keep young people in the area, to develop new jobs and to establish new activities so as to achieve a sound environment which conserves essential features, thus avoiding a situation where mountain areas remain on the fringes of the globalisation process;

- all aspects of the natural and cultural heritage of the mountains should be protected and enhanced.

This guideline is in step with the environmental cohesion objective which should underpin the Union's new approach to mountain regions. It should, however, also help to maintain diversity and local identity and to promote specific economic activities which provide proof of endogenous development and are less dependent and more sustainable for the mountain communities and provide consumer satisfaction. Policies relating to the environment, culture and quality will play an essential role here. In particular, the creation of an 'EU mountains' label will be a crucial stage in the new approach, reconciling economic, social and environmental demands.

- the structural bases for the sustainable development of mountain communities should be supported and promoted.

These bases include, of course, support for traditional land management activities, which are the pillars of sustainable development, multi-functionality, essential for the flexibility of the market but also for planning on a regional basis and above all the integrated development of local communities. Integration, involving both compatibility and coherence, should be promoted at all levels and cover the three aspects of sustainability: economic (integration of activities), environmental (integration of activities, environmental protection and renewable resources), social (integration between the partners in the local society, associations, economic actors and local authorities). In particular, encouraging interaction between communes is essential to the structuring of local development;

- encouragement should be given for the development of trade and cooperation between mountain communities at the European level, giving priority to Union countries and applicant countries.

This guideline is particularly necessary for the development of local communities which, by definition, are subject to similar constraints but also very isolated from each other. It also represents an effective way of helping to strengthen Community cohesion, especially with a view to enlargement.

RECOMMENDED STEPS FOR ESTABLISHING A NEW APPROACH TO MOUNTAIN REGIONS BY THE UNION

A three stage approach could be recommended for moving towards the establishment of a new approach to mountain regions by the Union.

The first stage concerns the negotiations on the Commission proposals under Agenda 2000. The aim is to adapt the regulations to the needs of mountain regions, by pinpointing their requirements and possibilities more effectively, with particular reference to the Commission's new legislative proposals (Structural Funds, reform of CAP, pre-accession instruments). In doing so, the principle that measures must be adapted to cater for individual circumstances should be observed.

The second stage should follow on immediately and take the form of a Commission position paper on the actual situation of mountain regions. In practical terms it could take the form of a 'Commission communication to the Council on mountain regions in the Union' with a view to enlargement.

The third stage should involve the adoption of a horizontal action plan based on this communication and translating the new Community approach to mountain regions into operational terms. This plan of action would be based on:

- instruments, regulations and measures specifically relating to mountain regions;
- programmes or parts of programmes taking into account specifically the needs of mountain regions in the context of the new Community initiatives – in particular cross-border, international and interregional cooperation and rural development – new innovative measures and technical assistance provided for under the Structural Funds;
- parts of Community programmes dealing with the specific needs and opportunities of mountain regions in certain sectors which are crucial for their future (tourism, telecommunications, transport, education, training and research, equal opportunities).

Implementing such a three stage approach will rely on a global and coherent vision of the objectives to be achieved, but one which is also detailed and specific. The definition of the priority guidelines – as proposed – will help to preserve the coherence of the principles and proposals which could be put forward on a more specific basis.

Complementing this approach, and in particular the action plan, a regrouping of the relevant budget lines could allow movement towards a European mountain fund.

SPECIFIC PROPOSALS¹

1. Information, communication, monitoring and assessment of Community policies for mountain regions

Given the lack of transparency and visibility with regard to Community actions in mountain regions, the lack of accessible information to assess the needs of these areas, and the effects of existing policies, as well as the need to strengthen monitoring and assessment of all EU policies, it is proposed that:

1.1. available information should be gathered and processed in such a way as to provide easily accessible and regularly updated documentation (maps, data bases, booklets and reports: see below);

¹ See summary of proposals in table form, pages 19-24.

- 1.2. the main regulations having a significant impact on mountain areas should be published in a single volume which is updated regularly (EU mountain code);
- 1.3. regular reports should be drawn up describing the progress made in implementing the measures and programmes (targeted monitoring of policies);
- 1.4. evaluations and impact assessments on sensitive matters for the future of mountain regions should be commissioned at Union level.

2. Integrated regional approach to mountain regions, programming

Given the experience acquired in the field of rural development under the LEADER programme and the lessons that could be drawn from pilot projects on land-use planning implemented under the TERRA programme, it is proposed that a strategy be formulated which is designed to improve the integrated regional approach to mountain areas, taking into account the interaction between various decision-making levels (vertical integration) and in particular that:

2.1. a seminar should be held on 'mountain regions and spatial planning' as a contribution to the wide-ranging debate planned on the 'European Spatial Development Perspective' (implementation of ESDP¹, phase 2);

2.2. a Commission communication to the Council on EU mountain regions should be drawn up, extending and adapting to mountain regions the method applied to coastal areas, as set out in COM(95)511² (see in particular point 3.2.1);

2.3. on the basis of that communication, a Community action plan for mountain areas should be drawn up and submitted to the Council for approval, grouping together horizontally a package of measures which could be carried out by the Union under different Community regulations, programmes and initiatives (outworking of the EU mountain code and the guidelines proposed in the Commission communication to the Council on the European Union's mountain regions, in terms of practical projects);

2.4. as part of the new initiative on rural development, a specific sub-programme for mountain regions should be developed, as provided for in Agenda 2000 (first part, 2.2) with a view to applying the methodological experience gained under LEADER to all EU mountain regions with the emphasis on matters of key importance for the sustainable development of these areas.

3. Trade and cooperation between mountain communities at Union level

Given the need for mountain populations and communities to become more active and to allow them to benefit more directly from the measures designed to assist them, to take better account of the positive effects of 'soft' measures with regard to infrastructures and production structures and bearing in mind that increased know-how through exchange of experience with other regions is vital for the future of European mountain regions, it is proposed that:

3.1. under a new initiative on cross-border, international and interregional cooperation set out in Agenda 2000 (first part, II.2), a specific sub-programme should be drawn up for mountain regions, so as to allocate an appropriate budget share to these regions in future programmes, disseminate information and ensure fair competition for isolated mountain regions.

¹ European Commission, *European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP)*, first official project, approved at the meeting of regional planning ministers, Noordwijk, 9-10 June 1997, duplicated document, p. 79.

² European Commission, 'Communication of the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the integrated management of coastal areas', in *Documents*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, p. 26 and annexes

4. Needs and specific potential of mountain regions under the EU's economic and social cohesion policy

In view of the priority accorded to Objective 1, defining a new objective 2 and maintaining the Cohesion Fund, it is proposed that:

4.1. the procedures for assessment, monitoring, information and communication governing the use of these funds should be strengthened so as to ensure that due account is taken of mountain regions, that the populations of these regions are aware of the possibilities available and the outcome of the measures taken, and that the environmental vulnerability of these regions should not be overlooked;

4.2. under the individual programmes for each region, with particular reference to Objective 1, it is also proposed that there should be a detailed comparative assessment (ex ante and ex post) of the measures adopted and their impact on mountain areas in the regional context;

4.3. when defining the eligible areas under the new Objective 2, account should be taken of the economic and social data available through NUTS V (commune level), using relevant eligibility criteria and the wealth indices, which can be used to estimate GDP indirectly, as well as other criteria;

4.4. the intercommunal level should be taken as the most appropriate level for defining the mountain regions which should be the subject of a single rural development plan, consistent with regional-level planning, for the application of regulations relating to development and the structural funds;

4.5. under the Cohesion Fund, in particular for mountainous countries such as Portugal, Spain and Greece, the mountain regions should be provided with adequate and fair infrastructures in the field of transport and telecommunications;

4.6. the special situation of mountainous islands which suffer from both the disadvantages of a mountain terrain and their island situation should be taken into account where they do not benefit from targeted programmes of the POSEI type, in this case mainly the Mediterranean islands (Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, Crete and in the future Cyprus); this is particularly relevant in relation to the reassessment of their eligibility for Objective 1 and the pre-accession instruments.

5. Improved compensation for services provided to the European Union as a whole by mountain communities

With a view to providing the infrastructures and services needed to maintain an adequate population, including young people in particular, and to cope with the seasonal influx of visitors, for which purpose priority must be given to local transport services, education, health, information and communication, it is proposed:

5.1. in the short term to strengthen the level of assistance provided by the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund to eligible areas (see points 4.1, 4.2, 4.3);

5.2. also in the short-term, in the mountain regions which do not benefit from these funds, to encourage Member States to establish regional and national compensatory policies, which then facilitate negotiation with the Community of a partnership which is in line with local data;

5.3. in the longer term, to institutionalise clear compensation procedures at Union level so as to give populations in mountain regions the necessary confidence, an essential part of establishing sustainable development and stable population trends.

6. Aid for hill farming and forestry

In the light of the memoranda forwarded to the Commission by Austria, France and Italy on hill farming and forestry, the opinion drawn up by the Committee of the Regions on a policy for hill farming in Europe, and the broad consensus regarding these traditional activities, which are seen as the cornerstone of any form of sustainable development in mountain areas, it is proposed that:

6.1. income support be stepped up for farms by means of compensatory allowances, by negotiating modulation provisions at the appropriate level to prevent adverse effects from allocation of payments purely on a per hectare basis so as to maintain small farm structures (basic allocation not linked to a minimum area), medium-sized holdings (degressivity above a certain size), maintain the population and support jobs (basic allocation per AWU) and to curb the trend towards enlargement of holdings (capping);

6.2. the principle of differentiated rates of assistance for mountain areas with regard to aid for investment, facilities, technical improvements, processing and marketing of products (farming, stockbreeding, forestry and other basic activities) should be maintained (reintroduced) in the regulation on rural development;

6.3. special attention should be given to providing support for certain production systems where sufficient measures are not taken, in particular the breeding of sheep and goats for milk production, and the use of local indigenous breeds and/or varieties, with a view to achieving sustainability;

6.4. agri-environmental measures should be extended to farming and forestry practices which are environment-friendly, bearing in mind the key elements for the sustainable development of mountain farming and forestry (balanced and environmentally-friendly exploitation of high pastures, forests, pastures and meadows, management of protective forests, conservation of varied landscapes, forest-grazing systems, conservation of habitats of endangered species, conservation of the quality of surface and ground water, management of biodiversity);

6.5. firm incentives should be introduced (in progressive but rapid stages) for land-use management, high-quality products and cultivation systems with low inputs, grouping together the funds currently paid in the form of compensatory allowances on the one hand and accompanying measures on the other in a single payment procedure, to create a new allowances system with sufficient transparency and guarantees for the future;

6.6. the new compensatory scheme should be applied as far as possible in a decentralised and flexible manner so as to ensure that the measures fit each specific context, within a coherent framework and with a view to achieving the major objectives at Union level;

6.7. this new scheme should not include measures detrimental to the specific requirements of mountain economies so that the population of mountain regions can carry on several activities at the same time (multifunctionality);

6.8. aid for the reforestation of agricultural land must be subject to the principle that due care and attention must be exercised and compatibility must be ensured with the harmony, openness and conservation of the quality of the landscape, protection of the environment and biodiversity;

6.9. local authorities in mountain areas must be clearly included in the list of beneficiaries of aid provided for operations to maintain the ecological stability of forests, and protect against and prevent fires by means of farming and stockbreeding activities;

6.10 measures should be introduced to develop systems for producing energy from wood in mountain regions.

7. Access to new technologies, telecommunications and transport

As these objectives can be achieved through appropriate and combined use of several existing instruments (in particular the Structural Funds, the Cohesion Fund, the Community sectoral programmes for transport, transeuropean networks and telecommunications), it is proposed that when these instruments are applied in mountain regions the following principles should be taken into account:

7.1. for transport infrastructures, promotion of decentralisation and the creation of networks, short distance supply networks and combined transport systems suitably adapted to local conditions, in particular for seasonal tourism, promotion of rail transport and adjustment of the unequal competition between rail and road, awareness of the sensitive nature of and the access to mountain areas in planning the TENs, linking the establishment of new infrastructures with economic development programmes so as to counteract the magnetic effect of more developed areas;

7.2. for telecommunications infrastructures, new communication and information technologies ('infostructures'), a key aspect of cohesion and spatial management at European level, reversal of the current trend towards a marked imbalance favouring the more developed regions and provision of greater possibilities for and priority to mountain regions so as to prevent the exodus of young people and guarantee future development of these regions;

7.3. for tourism, in the knowledge that neither small-scale tourism nor mass tourism have in themselves proved positive, encouragement of careful planning designed to avoid the adverse effects of mass tourism and to encourage local cooperation between the different forms of tourism, in cooperation with all the actors concerned, with a view to restoring and encouraging local cultures (local products, cultural landscape, local crafts and housing) and diversifying what is available throughout the year.

8. Marketing and labelling of quality products and services in mountain regions

Given that the marketing of clearly identified goods and services, offering a guarantee of authenticity, is a means of securing an acceptable value added on the market and boosting the confidence of local populations in their potential to expand and export, thereby reducing the dependence of economies in mountain regions on cohesion policies it would be useful:

8.1. to create an 'EU mountains' label, to supplement existing measures in a consistent manner, encourage competitiveness and cooperation between European mountain regions in the export of their products (goods and services) on the world market;

8.2. to make better qualification of the populations of mountain regions to market their own products one of the priorities for all the future EU programmes for these regions and to give practical form to this priority through the Structural Funds and the Community initiatives;

8.3. as regards the manufacture and delivery of products from mountain regions, to promote short distance delivery systems, thus avoiding the concentration of unacceptable environmental burdens at certain points in the regions (pollution and nuisance associated with transport, discharges and waste) because of the fragility of mountain ecosystems;

8.4. to maintain high quality standards, yet still reflecting the actual conditions of production, by applying less restrictive standards to farm products;

8.5. to encourage investment, modernisation and support in the technical and management areas for small production units, and in particular to resuscitate lost craft skills and specific local characteristics.

9. Taking mountain regions into account in relation to the enlargement of the Union

Given the need to bear in mind the prospective enlargement of the Union when implementing the new approach to mountain regions and the fact that significant progress has been made towards taking account of the special needs of mountain regions in most of the applicant countries, it is proposed that:

9.1. awareness of mountain regions be made part of the accession partnership with each applicant country;

9.2. under the PHARE programme, targeted support should be given to pilot projects to promote sustainable and integrated development in mountain areas;

9.3. support for agriculture, forestry and rural development in mountain regions should be singled out as priorities under the agricultural pre-accession instrument, paying special attention to basic public services and sustainable tourism;

9.4. under the accession instrument for structural policies, individual projects should be specifically tailored to mountain regions and areas of the countries concerned as regards environment, transport and telecommunications.

1.3.1. SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR A EUROPEAN UNION APPROACH TO MOUNTAIN AREAS

1.3.2. FIELD OF ACTION	<i>INSTRUMENTS to be used</i>	1.3.2.1. ACTIONS PROPOSALS	
		1.3.2.2. Immediate applicability (including during the discussion of the Commission's legislative proposals for the implementation of Agenda 2000	1.3.2.3. Likely to require a special procedure or an improvement in the legislative framework
1 – Information, communication, monitoring and assessment of policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Studies . Resource centres (statistical, mapping, documentary material) . Publications 	1.1 – gathering and processing of available information and regular updating 1.3 – drawing up regular reports (targeted monitoring of policies) 1.4 – commissioning evaluations on sensitive matters for mountain regions	1.2 – publishing the main regulations having an impact on mountain regions ‘EU mountain code’
2 – Integrated regional approach to mountain regions, programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) . Communication from the Commission to the Council . Community action plan . Community initiative on Rural Development 	2.1 – organising a seminar on mountain regions and spatial planning 2.2 - preparing a Commission Communication to the Council on the mountain regions of the European Union	2.3 – submitting for Council approval a Community action plan for mountain areas 2.4 – developing a specific sub-programme for mountain regions as part of the new rural development initiative
3 – Trade and cooperation	. Community initiative on cross-		3.1 – drawing up a specific sub-

1.3.2. <i>FIELD OF ACTION</i>	<i>INSTRUMENTS to be used</i>	1.3.2.1. <i>ACTIONS</i> <i>PROPOSALS</i>	
		1.3.2.2. <i>Immediate applicability (including during the discussion of the Commission's legislative proposals for the implementation of Agenda 2000)</i>	1.3.2.3. <i>Likely to require a special procedure or an improvement in the legislative framework</i>
between the mountain communities at Union level	border, international and interregional cooperation		programme for mountain regions under the new initiative on cross-border, international and interregional cooperation
4 – Awareness of mountain regions under the EU's cohesion policy	. Structural Funds . Legislative proposals on the Structural Funds . Legislative proposal on rural development . Cohesion Fund	4.1 – strengthening the assessment, monitoring, information and communication procedures relating to the use of the structural funds for mountain regions 4.3 – taking data at NUTS V level (commune level) to define the areas eligible under the new Objective 2 4.4 – taking into account the intercommunal level for defining the mountain regions which should be the subject of a single rural development plan 4.5 – providing the relevant	4.2 – carrying out, under the individual programme for each region , a detailed comparative assessment (ex-ante and ex-post) of the measures adopted and their impact on the mountain areas 4.6 – taking into account the special situation of mountainous islands which do not benefit from targeted programmes of the POSEI type, mainly the Mediterranean islands (Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, Crete and, in the future, Cyprus), in particular in relation to the reassessment of their eligibility

1.3.2. FIELD OF ACTION	<i>INSTRUMENTS to be used</i>	1.3.2.1. ACTIONS PROPOSALS	
		1.3.2.2. Immediate applicability (including during the discussion of the Commission's legislative proposals for the implementation of Agenda 2000	1.3.2.3. Likely to require a special procedure or an improvement in the legislative framework
		mountain regions with fair and adequate infrastructures for transport and telecommunications under the cohesion fund	for Objective 1 and the preaccession instruments
5 – Improved compensation for services provided to the Union as a whole by mountain communities	. Legislative proposals on the Structural Funds . Cohesion Fund . Legislative proposal on rural development	5.1 – strengthening the level of assistance provided by the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund to eligible areas (see 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6) 5.2 – encouraging , in mountain regions not eligible for structural funds, national and regional compensatory policies , facilitating negotiation with the Community of an appropriate partnership	5.3 – institutionalising clear compensation procedures at Union level – environmental cohesion
6 – Aid for hill farming and forestry	Legislative proposal on rural development	6.1 – increasing income support for farms by means of compensatory allowances 6.2 – maintaining (reintroducing)	6.5 – introducing (in progressive but rapid stages) firm incentives for land-use management, high quality products and low-input farming

1.3.2. FIELD OF ACTION	<i>INSTRUMENTS to be used</i>	1.3.2.1. ACTIONS	PROPOSALS
		1.3.2.2. Immediate applicability (including during the discussion of the Commission's legislative proposals for the implementation of Agenda 2000	1.3.2.3. Likely to require a special procedure or an improvement in the legislative framework
		<p>the principle of differentiated rates for mountain areas for aid for investment, facilities, technical improvements, processing and marketing</p> <p>6.3 – supporting certain production systems where sufficient measures are not taken (goats and sheep for milk production, local indigenous breeds and/or varieties, with a view to sustainability)</p> <p>6.4 extending agri-environmental measures to forestry and agri-forestry-grazing practices</p> <p>6.6 – applying the new compensatory scheme as far as possible in a decentralised manner</p>	<p>systems, grouping together the funds currently paid in the form of compensatory allowances on the one hand and accompanying measures on the other hand in a single payment procedure, the new compensatory scheme with sufficient transparency and guarantees for the future</p> <p>6.10 – introducing measures to develop systems for producing energy from wood in mountain regions</p>

1.3.2. <i>FIELD OF ACTION</i>	<i>INSTRUMENTS to be used</i>	1.3.2.1. <i>ACTIONS</i> <i>PROPOSALS</i>	
		1.3.2.2. <i>Immediate applicability (including during the discussion of the Commission's legislative proposals for the implementation of Agenda 2000)</i>	1.3.2.3. <i>Likely to require a special procedure or an improvement in the legislative framework</i>
7- Access to new technologies, telecommunications and transport to maintain the population and develop sustainable tourism and other activities	. Decision on transeuropean networks . Proposal for a directive on taxation on heavy goods vehicles . Multiannual programme for tourism	6.7 – excluding measures detrimental to mountain regions, in particular to multifunctionality 6.8 making reforestation aid subject to the principle that due care and attention must be exercised and the principle of protection (environment, landscape, biodiversity) 6.9 – including mountain communes as beneficiaries of aid to maintain the ecological stability of forests and fire-breaks	7.1 – promoting the short distance and combined transport networks, being aware of the sensitive nature of mountain regions in the TENS 7.2 – for the new information

1.3.2. FIELD OF ACTION	<i>INSTRUMENTS to be used</i>	1.3.2.1. ACTIONS PROPOSALS	
		1.3.2.2. Immediate applicability (including during the discussion of the Commission's legislative proposals for the implementation of Agenda 2000	1.3.2.3. Likely to require a special procedure or an improvement in the legislative framework
	. Action plan for the information society		technologies, giving greater priority to mountain regions 7.3 – for tourism, encouraging planning, local cooperation between the various forms of tourism and local cultures
8 – Marketing and labelling of quality products and services in mountain regions	. Structural Funds . Legislative proposal on rural development . Community initiatives . Regulations on quality	8.2 – making better qualification of the population of mountain regions to market their own products one of the priorities for any EU programme for these regions 8.5 – encouraging investment, modernisation of small production units, resuscitation of lost craft know-how and local identity	8.1 - creating an ‘EU mountains’ label 8.3 – promoting short distance delivery systems to avoid the concentration of environmental burdens, because of the fragility of mountain ecosystems 8.4 maintaining high quality standards yet still reflecting actual conditions of production, by applying less restrictive standards to farm products
9 – Taking mountain regions into	. PHARE programme	9.2 – under the PHARE	9.1 – creating awareness of

1.3.2. FIELD OF ACTION	<i>INSTRUMENTS to be used</i>	1.3.2.1. ACTIONS PROPOSALS	
account in relation to enlargement of the Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Agricultural pre-accession instrument . Pre-accession instrument for structural policies . Accession partnerships 	1.3.2.2. Immediate applicability (including during the discussion of the Commission's legislative proposals for the implementation of Agenda 2000	1.3.2.3. Likely to require a special procedure or an improvement in the legislative framework
		<p>programme, targeted support to pilot projects for sustainable and integrated development in mountain areas</p> <p>9.3 – singling out as a priority support for agriculture, forestry and rural development in mountain regions under the agricultural pre-accession instrument, paying special attention to basic public services and sustainable tourism</p> <p>9.4 – under the preaccession instrument for structural policies, tailoring projects specifically to the mountain regions and areas of the countries concerned, as regards environment, transport and telecommunications</p>	mountain regions as part of the accession partnership with each applicant country

1.1.1.1.1.

1.1.1.1.2.

1.1.1.1.3.

1.1.1.1.4. ANNEXES

1.1.1.1.5. DESCRIPTION OF NATIONAL SITUATIONS

. IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

- AUSTRIA
- FINLAND
- FRANCE
- GERMANY
- GREECE
- ITALY
- PORTUGAL
- SPAIN
- SWEDEN
- UNITED KINGDOM

. OUTSIDE THE EUROPEAN UNION

- BULGARIA
- POLAND
- ROMANIA
- SLOVENIA

AUSTRIA

National territory: 83 849 km²

MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Main mountain areas: the Alps

1.3.3. Extent of mountain regions

-% of national territory: 70%

-% of agricultural land: 60%

1.3.4. NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITUATION

The country is divided into nine provinces, with some of them considered to be mountain areas in their entirety. As far as rural policies are concerned, the country is divided into four categories, towns, peripheral rural areas, rural areas, remote rural areas.

1.3.5. NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

As Austria has a federal political system, certain mountain provinces have set the pace for national policies.

Laws and regulations: This federal political structure means that the policies on mountain regions have always been an integral part of agricultural and regional policies. There has therefore been no reason to have a specific law on mountain regions.

Achievements: The main tool for Austrian policy on mountain regions is the land register of mountain farms. Created in the 1950s, it now uses modern technologies such as aerial photography, digitised and geo-referenced information. The system has been used for the management of compensatory payments and premiums, using five categories of farm, related to the handicaps faced. This system of sophisticated individual definition was not completely compatible with that of the EU, which is based on regional definitions. A derogation was granted when Austria joined the EU. For the application of regulations on the EU structural funds Austria has concentrated on Objective 5b.

Objectives: The Austrian policies for mountain regions were always planned to take all sectors of the economy into account, with mountain agriculture and forestry, however, playing a pivotal role with the following objectives:

- protection of natural resources, in particular soil, water and air,
- conservation and recreation of traditional landscapes,
- guaranteed infrastructures and adequate population density,
- securing jobs,
- maintaining useful agricultural land and know how for future generations.

1.3.6. CONCLUSIONS

The pillars of Austrian mountain agriculture remain individual classification (by holding) within the definition system of less favoured areas and the EU structural funds programmes. Stable and long-term measures are needed, however, for better recognition of the environmental services provided by the people and farmers of mountain regions so as to ensure communications and basic services comparable with those in urban areas, in particular for young people. New technologies and regional planning, seen as tools to cope with the future, are considered absolutely essential for sustainable development of mountain regions in Austria.

Sources: from information provided by Dr Ignaz Knöbl, Federal Ministry for Agriculture and Prof. Heinrich Wohlmeyer, Vienna (Austria)

FINLAND

National territory: 337 000 km² (305 000 km² lakes not included)

MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Most of Finland is classified as a 'mountain region' under the Act of Accession to the EU which classifies all areas north of the 62nd parallel as such. Most of the Finnish less-favoured areas are Objective 6 regions (including mountain areas) and others come under Objective 5b and 2.

Main mountain areas: Karelian mountains in the north, Kainuu and Lapland.

Extent of mountain regions: 151 313 km²

- % of national territory: 45%,
- % of forests in mountain areas: 95% (86% of total land area of the country),
- % of agricultural land: 85% in less-favoured areas, 6% in mountain areas,
- number of communes: 441 in less-favoured or remote areas,
- number of towns: 94 in less-favoured areas, 10 in remote areas.

Population of mountain regions: 3.5 million inhabitants in less-favoured areas.

- % of national population: 68% in less-favoured areas, 9% in mountain areas,
- population density: 2.6 inhabitants/km² (16 inhabitants/km² is the national average),
- main activities: agriculture, forestry, tourism, reindeer breeding.

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITUATION

Finland has five administrative regions. The mainland has 15 centres for economic development and employment which manage, inter alia, the EU aid for agriculture. Five regions are classified as NUTS 2 and 18 regions and 85 subregions are classified as NUTS 3.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

On accession to the EU Finland abandoned its system of agricultural support and moved over to the single market in 1995 without a transition period. At present there is no real legal framework for mountain regions in Finland but EU policies and regulations have simply been adapted.

Laws and regulations: there is a national legal framework for forestry comprising:

- the environmental programme for forestry, 1994,
- the forestry strategy for Lapland, 1996.

Achievements: EU measures and structural funds have been adapted:

- compensatory payments for permanent natural handicaps,
- Finnish agri-environmental programme,
- structural funds implemented in 1996 for the development of innovative projects in agriculture (technology, quality, marketing), forestry (diversification, wood for energy production), green tourism and cultural tourism (qualitative evaluation system), the integrated development of villages.

In April 1998, the report concerning the development of remote areas was communicated to the working party on rural policies.

Objectives: to maintain the population, habitat, basic services and the sustainable use of natural resources in rural areas.

CONCLUSIONS

At present Finland is looking at new paths for development of its national policies so as to encourage sustainable development and a range of activities in rural areas. In aid payments, greater priority should be given to the management of land and not just to production. The compensatory payments should basically be applied to areas with major handicaps, with support being linked more closely to the area used and the programmes for the development of tourist areas and reindeer breeding being considered as a priority.

Source: from information provided by Mrs Seija Hakkarainen, Ministry for Agriculture, Helsinki (Finland).

FRANCE

National territory: 551 600 km²

MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Main mountain areas: Alps – Jura – Vosges – Massif central – Pyrenees – Corsica

Extent of mountain regions

- % of national territory: 17.4%,
- % of forests and pasture by comparison with the national territory:
 - . forests: 33.7% of the mountain area, 23.5% of the national territory,
 - . pasture: 9% of the mountain area, 2.3% of the national territory,
 - . agricultural land: 31.4% of the mountain area, 52.6% of the national territory.
- number of communes: 6 128 communes, 17% of total in France (36 000),
- number of towns: 92.

Population of mountain regions: 3.6 million inhabitants (of whom 2 million are farmers).

- % of the national population: 7.7%,
- Population density: 31 inhabitants/km² (15 in Corsica, 83 in the Vosges), less than 2/3 of the national average.

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITUATION

The country is organised into (22) regions, (99) departments, (6) overseas departments and (36 000) communes. The regions, departments and communes have an elected assembly (special arrangements for Corsica). There are no autonomous departments or regions.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

The mountain area in France is divided into seven massifs and, depending on the physical disadvantages, into high mountain areas, mountain areas and dry mountains. The concepts underpinning the national initiatives on mountain areas have been the need to maintain farming activities and minimum population levels, to recognise the specific nature of mountain areas (economic, cultural and natural aspects), to protect the environment (in particular against urbanisation) and to encourage local endogenous development.

Laws and regulations: The 'Loi montagne' (law on mountain areas) No 85/30 of 9 January 1985 on the development and protection of mountain areas updates and replaces previous laws including:

- . the law on the pastoral land associations in mountain areas of 3 January 1972.

Objectives: The aim of the law on mountain areas is to offer a complete framework integrating different sectoral policies. The areas touched on cover the definition of mountain areas and massifs, the creation of specific bodies (consultative councils), the development of agricultural, forestry and grazing activities, tourism, protection (natural risks, regional and national parks, regulation of new tourist units), the full use of specific resources (skiing, hydroelectric schemes).

Implementation: the main instruments for implementing the legal framework are:

- the consultative councils (national, per massif), especially for the new tourist units,
- the special interministerial funds for local development (ex FIAM and FNADT),
- the support measures for agriculture in application of Community regulations.

CONCLUSIONS

Current assessments have shown that there are clear positive developments in certain areas but that there are also major disparities, with local situations which are extremely fragile. They should make it necessary to continue and strengthen the policy for mountain areas based around three main priorities, continuation of support and adjustment of sectors and traditional activities,

conservation and full use of all aspects of the mountain heritage and development of key activities and sectors, while respecting the environment.

Sources: Law on mountain areas – assessment report on policy on mountain areas in France, provided by Gilles Bazin, INRA (France).

GERMANY

National territory: 248 454 km²

MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Main mountain areas: Alps, Swabian Alb, Black Forest

Extent of mountain regions:

360 000 hectares designated as such, i.e. 4% of the less-favoured areas defined using EU criteria.

1.3.7. NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITUATION

Federal state. The German mountain regions are basically situated in the Länder of Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg.

1.3.8. NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Several aid systems are important for farming and the development of mountain regions. The Federal government and the relevant Länder share the cost of compensatory payments and other support measures which have a special role to play in mountain areas. There are also support programmes at Land level, which do not receive federal co-funding.

Laws and regulations: Germany basically uses Community regulations. Compensatory payments for less-favoured areas based on Article 9 (aid for less-favoured farming areas) of Regulation 950/97/EEC, which seeks to improve the efficiency of agricultural structures, is the main aid system. Support for production methods which are compatible with environmental and landscape protection requirements under Regulation 2078/92/EEC is particularly important in mountain regions, e.g. aid to maintain hay meadows on slopes or high mountain pastures.

Objectives: The aid system contributes considerably to the continuation of farming activity and the protection of the cultural heritage.

Implementation: In Bavaria compensatory aid has been granted to about 10 400 mountain farms with a total surface area of 240 000 hectares. Two-thirds of the German mountain areas which benefit from these aid payments are in Bavaria.

In Baden-Württemberg about 6 000 mountain farmers with about 119 000 hectares receive compensatory aid payments.

They also benefit from joint support from the Federal government and the Länder, promotion of investment in individual enterprises, support for diversification of farm incomes, in particular through rural tourism and the organisation of short distribution channels for regional products.

As an example of support by a Land, attention should be drawn to the programme in Bavaria for farming landscapes which supports investment in certain types of buildings or machinery for hill farming.

1.3.9. CONCLUSIONS

Although it does not have a specific law for mountain regions, Germany has made use of Community regulations and initiatives by the Länder to produce real support for mountain regions. At local level it offers exemplary experiences relating to sustainable development, with harmonious integration of the objectives and methods of various systems of aid, whether

European, national or regional. At international level Germany plays an active role under the Alpine Convention, for the protection of the Alps.

Source: from information provided by Mrs Marlies Reimann, Federal Ministry for Agriculture and Forests, Bonn (Germany).

GREECE

National territory: 131 944 km²

MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Main mountain areas (from north to south)

Rhodope Mountains-Papikio-Menoiko-Falakro-Paggaeo-Krussia-Kerdyllio-Holomon-Athos-Paiko-Vermion-Piera-Olympus-Pindus-Askio-Kam Voúnia-Ossa-Pelio-Othris-Mourgana-Tomaros-Athamanica-Agrafa-Acaranica-Tymfrestos-Bardussia-Kallidromo-Parnassus-Elicon-Kithaeron-Durfys-Ohe-Panachaico-Erymanthos-Aroania-Kyllene-Maenalo-Arachnaeo-Taygetus-Parnon-Leuka-Ide-Dicte.

Extent of mountain regions

- % of national territory: 50%,
- % of forests and pasture in mountain areas: forests, 90.8% of mountain areas (39.5% of national territory), pasture, 79.5% (39.5% of national territory),
- % of agricultural land: 46% of mountain areas, 29.7% of national territory,
- number of communes and towns: 3293 (56.8% of the national total)

Population of mountain regions

- % of national population: 10.2%,
- Population density: 36 inhabitants/km², national average 74 inhabitants/km².

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITUATION

The country is divided into 10 regions, 52 counties, 454 cantons and 5 343 communes. With the exception of the regions, each has an elected council. A new law reducing the total to 900 communes and 133 cantons should be adopted soon.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

There is no specific administrative or legal definition for mountain areas. However, their geographical characteristics have been defined. The state and many citizens are particularly concerned to maintain minimum population levels in mountain areas by supporting and encouraging the creation of activities linked to agriculture, stockbreeding, forestry and tourism so as to guarantee a standard of living and stable incomes for local workers.

Laws and regulations: there is no specific national law or regulation on mountain areas. However the Ministry for Agriculture considers that a separate policy for mountain areas must be formulated.

Achievements: There has not been a properly integrated policy for a long time, in fact not since accession to the EU in 1981. This is clearly visible in the series of complex measures gradually implemented as a result of the EU at national level, with differing levels of success depending on the very variable local conditions. It is very difficult to assess the impact of the various measures applied to mountain areas over the last 20 to 30 years. Up until now there has been no appropriate research to take account of and analyse the effects of a specific policy or a group of policies.

CONCLUSIONS

The mountain ranges are clearly defined by the current administrative system. The concentration of a large number of communes in a small number of cantons should soon be made effective by a new law which should have a positive effect on the development of rural areas and in particular mountain areas.

However there are certain basic questions to which there are still no answers, whether these relate to the definition of clear and specific objectives, the complexity and problematic integration of policy instruments or the possibilities of assessing their impact on local development.

Sources: based on original unpublished work by Prof. Christos Zioganas of Thessaloniki University (Greece).

ITALY

National territory: 301 000 km²

MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Main mountain areas: Alps, Apennines, mountains of Sicily and Sardinia

Extent of mountain regions: 106 107 km²

. % of national territory: 35.2%

. % of forests in mountain areas: 58.1%,

. % of agricultural land: 24.4%,

. number of communes: 2 605.

Population of mountain regions: 7 502 653 inhabitants,

. % of national population: 13.1% (57 138 489 national population)

. population density: 70.7% (national average – 190)

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITUATION

The country is divided into 20 regions, subdivided into 104 provinces, 8 104 communes and 337 'mountain communities'.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Laws and regulations: the 1971 law on mountain areas defined a solid framework for action to benefit mountain areas. In particular it defined 'mountain communities' as groups of local authorities, defining a homogeneous micro-region of about 10 communes and with authorisation for the preparation of cross-sectoral socio-economic plans.

The law on mountain areas was updated in 1994 to improve the organisation and effectiveness of public support to the economies of mountain regions, in both structural and financial terms, and the links between regions, the state and the European Union. It provides a national framework that the regions must adjust to fit their own situation.

Objectives: to solve the problems of rural areas through interventions in all sectors and not only in agriculture; to develop local autonomy and the capacity of endogenous development; to obtain clear and sustainable compensation for the services provided by the mountain areas so as to maintain a viable population and giving priority to young people.

Achievements: in view of the great diversity of local and regional situations, it is difficult to have an overview of the situation at national level.

Mention should be made of some remarkable examples of very diversified local economies, local autonomy and endogenous development but also of problems with regard to the implementation of certain somewhat complex regulations relating to nature conservation and spatial planning.

CONCLUSIONS

Italy is certainly the country which has made the most progress in terms of creating a legislative and policy framework for mountain areas. It also demonstrates some interesting achievements in relation to local development. However, it is still very difficult to assess the impact of the national legal framework on the actual local situations.

Source: based on the Italian laws on mountain areas of 1971 and 1994 and information provided by Prof. Ettore Bove, University of Potenza (Italy).

PORTUGAL

National territory: 92 082 km²

MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Main mountain areas: on the mainland, from north to south, inland Minho , Trás-os-Montes and Beira Alta, Beira Baixa, Serra do Algarve, archipelagos of Madeira and the Azores (highest point in Portugal is at 'Pico', 2839 metres).

Extent of mountain regions

- % of national territory: 40%,
- % of forests and national grazing land: 50%,
- % of farm holdings: 50%,

Population of mountain areas

- % of national population: 23%,
- population density: -

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITUATION

The country is organised in 'concelhos' (305) grouped into 'distritos' (21) and divided into 'freguesias' (5000). There are plans to create actual regions with elected assemblies.

THE NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Laws and regulations: there is no specific law for mountain regions in Portugal, apart from the EU regulations (compensatory payments, aid for joint investments).

Objectives: special attention is paid to the development and diversification of activities such as tourism and crafts and to the quality of products (cheese, honey, beef and veal, olive oil, etc.).

Achievements: Portugal has made full use of the EU structural measures, especially for agriculture and rural areas.

The main measures taken have been compensatory payments which at present help 60 000 farmers, and cover 1.22 million hectares of agricultural land in use. The average aid per holding was ECU 410 in 1994.

30% of the investment subsidies granted for farming related to mountain areas.

The LEADER programme applies to the whole country and in particular to the mountain areas. The agri-environmental measures apply more specifically to mountain areas to maintain the traditional agricultural systems.

CONCLUSIONS

The EU regulations cannot take into account and solve all the problems of Portugal's mountain regions which have very specific cultural and structural characteristics, connected in particular with emigration and demographic and land structures. The situations differ greatly, particularly between the mainland and the island archipelagos. A national policy for mountain areas is required to prevent the abandonment of agricultural land and to halt the fall in population which started some 30 years ago. Possibilities for development exist through quality products which are typical of the Mediterranean mountains and in particular through tourism, from which the mainland mountain areas benefit little.

Sources: based on information specially provided by Mr Antonio Lobo Alves, Ministry of Agriculture, Lisbon (Portugal).

SPAIN

National territory: 504 782 km²

MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Main mountain areas: Galician and León ranges, Cantabrian mountains, ranges in the Basque country, Pyrenees, Catalan range, Iberian and central massifs, Montes de Toledo, Sierra Morena, Andalusian system (including the Sierra Nevada), mountains of the Balearic and Canary Islands.

Extent of the mountain regions

- % of national territory: 38%,
- % of forests in mountain areas: 88% (forests, pasture and maquis),
- % of agricultural land: 16%,
- number of communes: 35.7% of all communes.

Population of mountain regions: 6 300 000 inhabitants (approx.)

- % of the national population: 16%,
- Population density: 32.7 inhabitants/km².

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITUATION

The country is divided into autonomous communities (regions). Each region has mountain areas, including the Balearic and Canary archipelagos.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Laws and regulations: Since 1982 and the law on agriculture in mountain regions there has been a national sectoral policy for mountain regions. For the purposes of implementation, mountain regions were divided into mountain agricultural zones (ZAM). A programme for the management and promotion of agricultural resources (PROPOM) was drawn up in each zone. The financial instruments for implementing local programmes include per capita payments for mountain agriculture, in accordance with EU regulations, and collective and individual investment aids.

Objectives: The law provides a way of defining the mechanisms for the transfer and management of EU funds from the state to the local communities, by means of the autonomous communities (regions).

Achievements and impact: The law came into force in 1986 but does not appear to be very satisfactory. The direct payments are limited and spread unevenly across the regions. The programmes for the management and promotion of agricultural resources are often drawn up too formally to respond adequately to the real challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

The professional representatives of the mountain regions consider that the national legal framework for mountain areas is inadequate as a whole because it is too sectoral in approach and (as in other Mediterranean countries) they are afraid that EU enlargement will be to the detriment of the poorest mountain regions.

Sources: national regulations setting up the ZAM and PROPOM and information from Dr Luis Pérez y Pérez, Zaragoza and Prof. Luis Gómez Moreno in Malaga (Spain).

SWEDEN

National territory: 449 964 km²

MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Main mountain areas: Scandinavian mountain massif (along the frontier with Norway)

Extent of mountain regions: as in the case of Finland, a distinction must be made between mountain area as defined in the Community regulatory sense, i.e. Objective 6 areas, and physical mountains, as defined by the massif. 241 640 km² are covered by the EU Objective 6 area (defined as an area of very low population with a population density of less than 8 inhabitants per km²).

- % of national territory: over 50% falls within Objective 6 (of which 16% are mountain ranges)

Population of mountain areas:

- % of the national population: 5%,

- population density: 2 inhabitants /km².

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITUATION

The country is divided into 25 provinces plus the Stockholm district.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

The mountain areas have the advantage of forming part of the Objective 6 area, but the various support measures are not specific to the mountain ranges.

Laws and regulations:

. a recent government report (SOU 1995:100) and a proposal from the government to parliament (Prop. 1995/96:226) were based on sustainable development in mountain areas,

. the areas of national interest are listed in the planning law on natural resources (1986) and in mountain areas these areas of national interest are associated with nature conservation objectives (reindeer breeding, tourism, open air leisure activities, etc.).

Achievements: In Sweden spatial planning is the responsibility of the local authorities. The whole Swedish mountain massif is managed by about 20 different communes. They are responsible for the development of their territory, which in physical terms only partly comprises mountains. Large parts of the mountain range have been made into national parks or nature reserves. Almost 50% of the whole range is protected in this way and the aim is to reach 75% over the next 10 years.

Objectives: The measures for the development of Objective 6 areas are designed:

- to develop competitive fisheries and agriculture, while ensuring a better use of natural resources (forestry activities and mining) in an ecologically sustainable environment,
- to promote local development by encouraging initiatives to create jobs at grass-roots level in particular for women and young people and to provide a good level of services in the rural environment,
- to encourage the preservation and development of Lapp culture and reindeer breeding,
- to develop competitive enterprises, in particular SMUs, for exports and tourism.

CONCLUSIONS

The future of mountain and Objective 6 areas in Sweden is closely linked to the EU's structural fund policies and the follow up of the government proposal on sustainable development in mountain areas which is currently under discussion.

Source: based on information from Prof. Lars Nyberg, University of Östersund (Sweden).

UNITED KINGDOM

National territory: 244 046 km²

MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Main mountain areas: Lake District, Pennines, highlands and uplands of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITUATION

The United Kingdom is divided into four historic regions (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) and 102 counties.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Laws and regulations: no specific regulation applies to the mountain areas, which are not recognised as such from a legal point of view.

In particular, the United Kingdom does not have any mountain areas as defined by the Community under Directive 75/268/EEC. However it applies fully the regulations and measures for less-favoured areas deriving therefrom which include in particular highland and hill regions, but not those alone.

Objectives: Without a clearly defined legal and policy framework, the administration has put forward the following objectives for these somewhat vaguely defined 'hill and upland areas':

- to encourage sustainable development of natural resources and sources of renewable energy so as to bring together the well-being of the local communities and nature conservation,
- to find an adequate balance at local level to move from confrontation to partnership,
- to obtain general recognition of the growing inter-dependence between the needs of urban populations and those of the populations of upland areas.

Achievements: Following the realisation, during the post-war period, of the problem of the depopulation of the upland areas, there have been numerous compensation and reforestation measures and aid for agriculture.

The 1950s saw the creation of national parks in England and Wales.

Recently, 1995 saw the launch in Scotland of a local integrated rural development policy through a partnership involving all the local actors concerned ('Cairngorms partnership').

Source: based on the United Kingdom's communication to the European Intergovernmental Consultation on sustainable development in mountain areas 1996.

BULGARIA

National territory: 100 912 km²

MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Main mountain areas: Stara Planina, Rila, Pirine, Rhodope

Extent of mountain regions:

- % of national territory: 46.7%,
- % of forests in mountain areas: 85%,
- % of agricultural land: 39% (90% of meadows and pasture in mountain areas),
- number of communes: 2 172 (56% of the country's towns),

Population of mountain areas:

- % of the national population: 28.2% (2.5 million inhabitants),
- population density: 48.3 inhabitants/km² (81 at national level).

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITUATION

The country is divided into 28 provinces. The local and regional authorities can have an important role within the autonomous provinces.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Laws and regulations: the finance law guarantees the annual allocation of a subsidy for mountain areas (in particular to compensate for transport costs).

Objectives:

- to adopt a law on mountain regions (a draft has existed for several years),
- to draw up an overall national policy for mountain areas which concentrates on:
 - . promotion and co-ordination of state interventions for mountain areas,
 - . aid for sustainable development projects in agriculture and stockbreeding,
 - . drawing up a management plan for protected areas.

Achievements:

- 1992 – the temporary parliamentary committee for the development of mountain areas was set up and then made into a permanent committee in 1995,
- 1995 – the special committee on matters relating to mountain and semi mountain areas and frontier regions was created by the government to promote co-ordination of state action in respect of these regions.
- 1996 – the Special fund for mountain regions was set up by the Ministry for the Environment and the National fund for the protection of the environment,
- in anticipation of a policy and national law for mountain regions, there are a series of initiatives and measures concerning regional strategies, inter-regional cooperation, local development, protected areas and sustainable agriculture.

CONCLUSIONS

The role of non-governmental organisations and local authorities should also be stressed because of their effectiveness in 'correcting' the policies of the state and developing innovative projects for tourism, biodiversity and the integrated management of natural resources in mountain areas.

Sources: based on the communication by Bulgaria to the Intergovernmental consultation on the sustainable use of mountain areas, 1996, and information from Prof. Radi Radev, Sofia (Bulgaria).

POLAND

National territory: 312 677 km²

MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Main mountain areas: three main physio-geographic units, with the Carpathian (17 000 km²), the Sudeten (5 000 km²) and the Świętokrzyskie mountains (2 500 km²).

Extent of the mountain regions: 25 000 km² have been classified as mountain areas.

- % of national territory: 8%,
- % of forests in mountain areas: 40%,
- % of agricultural land: 50%,
- 30% of water resources are provided by the mountain areas.

Population in mountain areas: 45% of the active population is employed in agriculture.

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITUATION

The country is divided into 22 districts.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Laws and regulations:

No specific law on mountain areas has been adopted up to now but the Polish government intends to draw up new legislation which would guarantee a certain number of advantages for the mountain areas.

Objectives

Protection of the culture, modernisation of hill farming, construction of environmental centres, cure treatment centres or tourist resorts are some of the main areas underlying government activities.

Achievements

In 1995-1996 the government was working on new legislation dealing with measures such as tax exemptions for farmers, the increase of resources for rural infrastructures, municipal budgets, support for reforestation, livestock farming and crop farming.

In February 1997 Parliament adopted a resolution on sustainable development in mountain areas which required the government to prepare a plan to stimulate socio-economic activities in mountain areas.

In June 1997 parliamentary representatives from Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland met in Warsaw ('Carpathians united') with a view to stepping up cross-border cooperation for sustainable development of the Carpathian mountain regions and to encourage environmental, cultural and social cohesion beyond the frontiers.

CONCLUSIONS

All these initiatives show that Poland is moving toward a national policy for mountain areas but nothing has yet been definitely established.

Source: based on information provided by Mr Marek Halinian, Ministry for the Environment in Warsaw (Poland).

ROMANIA

National territory: 237 000 km²

MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Main ranges: the Carpathians

Extent of mountain regions: 74 000/79 000 km²

- % of national territory: 32%,
- % of forests in mountain areas: 53.3%
- % of agricultural land: 41%,
- number of villages: 3 706,
- number of communes: 729,
- number of towns: 92.

Population in mountain areas: 3.6 million inhabitants (of which 2 million are farmers).

- % of national population: 15.4%,
- population density: 45.6 inhabitants /km²

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITUATION

The country is divided into counties (41), communes (2686) and towns (262).

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

One cannot really speak of a national policy framework for Romanian mountain regions and the mountain areas have not yet been legally defined. A first step was taken in 1990 with the creation of the national commission for mountain areas, which in 1993 became the National Agency for Mountain Regions (NAMA). The NAMA is now part of the Ministry for Agriculture, Public Works and the Environment.

Laws and regulations: no specific law or regulation has yet been adopted but many initiatives have been taken and there are many ideas and plans.

Objectives:

- to recognise mountain regions and their specific characteristics at national level.
- to maintain the current population in mountain areas and prevent a mass exodus to the lowlands,
- to improve standards of living, infrastructures and the education services,
- to develop the possibilities for tourism,
- to create a specific legal and institutional framework for mountain areas with a view to EU accession.

Achievements:

- study on the definition of mountain areas in Romania (NAMA 1990-95),
- support by NAMA for the creation of non-governmental organisations and the drawing up of mountain development policies at local and regional level,
- support of the European PHARE programme to develop local initiatives for hill farming (training, development services, action plans).

CONCLUSIONS

Important measures have been started by the administration to stress the special nature of the mountain areas, with a view to Romania's integration into the European Union, but they suffer mainly from a lack of financial support and clearly expressed political will at governmental level.

The reason is the relatively paradoxical situation which currently exists in Romania, where the reorganisation of the large co-operative and state farms is a problem which has not yet been resolved and is being given priority at national level. Because agriculture in the mountain areas

was not collectivised, the mountain rural areas are now perceived as having a capacity for endogenous development which is relatively more favourable than that in the plains. Thus, except for the Apuseni mountains, the mountain areas are not part of the 'main rural areas with economic and social problems', which are mainly on the plains, where they are the subject of specific revitalisation plans.

There is thus still a lack of awareness at the highest political levels in Romania of the importance, complexity and specific nature of the mountain areas.

Sources: based on information from Mr Mihai Serban Nadejde, Urban project, and Mr Radu Rey, NAMA, Bucharest (Romania).

SLOVENIA

National territory: 20 256 km²

MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Main mountain areas: Alps, Karst

Extent of mountain regions:

- % of national territory: 62% (hills: 26%, mountains: 36%),
- % of forests in mountain areas: forest covers 50% of the national territory and 60% of the mountains in the mountain areas,
- % of agricultural land: 49%.

Population in mountain areas:

- % of national population: 24.6%,
- population density: 41.1 inhabitants/km²

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Laws and regulations

Since 1981 Slovenia has been using a system of intervention for agriculture and rural development. Most of the incentives are not geared specifically to mountain areas but, because half the agricultural holdings of the country are in mountain areas or regions, they are also taken into consideration.

The specific instruments applied to mountain areas seek to balance production costs, support the collection of milk in remote mountain areas and encourage the rearing of cattle, horses, sheep and goats.

A Slovenian forestry service has been established to guide and advise on the establishment of forestry management plans and the reorganisation of earlier forestry management activities.

Objectives

- to encourage agriculture in regions subject to natural constraints,
- to reintroduce and rationalise the use of summer and common grazing,
- to preserve the population density, the landscape and the agricultural land,
- to maintain the development of forests, taking into account their biodiversity and their multifunctionality – ecological, social and productive.

CONCLUSIONS

Up till now the regional policies were geared mainly towards the regions considered at risk of a decline in population, the majority of which were in the peripheral valley and mountain regions. In 1996 a law on the promotion of rural development was drawn up and it represents, inter alia, a step towards the EU approach on regional policy with the designation of three types of area facing difficulties, characterised either by industrial decline, rural under-development or a peripheral situation.

Source: based on a communication by Slovenia to the European intergovernmental consultation on sustainable development in mountain areas, 1996.