



EUROMONTANA
2, Pl. du Champ de Mars, B-1050 Bruxelles

DRAFT DECLARATION URGING THE PRESENTATION OF A GREEN PAPER ON THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN MOUNTAIN AREAS

Thursday, 02 August 2007

Having regard to

- the consideration of the principle of territorial cohesion and the specificity of mountain areas during the informal Council of Leipzig on 25 May 2007,
- to the regulations for the European Regional Development Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development,
- the conclusions of the Taormina Informal Ministerial meeting on the “Specificity of Mountain Areas in the European Union” 15.November 2003;
- the European Parliament report on structurally disadvantaged regions (A5-0188/2003);
- the work of the Committee of the Regions and Economic and Social Committee;
- the European Union as a partner to Alpine and Carpathian Mountain Conventions;
- the statement of President Barroso on 7 December.2006 on the presentation of a future policy towards mountainous regions

Whereas:

- Mountain areas cover 40% of the territory of the European continent and provide a home for 20% of its people. Mountain areas represent a great reservoir of European diversity, in both environmental and cultural terms. They also share common problems linked to their geographical situation – and common development potentials. In geopolitical terms, they offer a unique binding influence on the European Union.
- The citizens of Europe as a whole benefit from many economic and public goods and services that mountain areas provide. These include the mitigation of natural hazards (relevant both for mountain inhabitants and others, e.g., by safeguarding transport corridors), landscapes for recreation and tourism (essential for the citizens of an urbanised continent and for European competitiveness), areas with high levels of biodiversity, and high-quality food and other products. Unless mountain areas are appropriately managed by the people who live in them, the provision of these goods and services may be jeopardised.
- Significant new challenges have arisen and will do so in the future – including increasing economic competition, demographic change, and climate change. While these challenges affect all territories, their impact is much more tangible in mountain areas and therefore needs specific responses.
- Most policies influencing mountain areas are sectoral and often promulgated from outside mountain regions without appropriate regard for specificities of these regions. Public policies dedicated to mountains have become more diluted and less concerned with the specificities of mountains. On the other hand, European and national public policies are more and more based on the specificities and polarised advantages of territories which are to be promoted and developed.
- Despite their significance at a European level, mountain areas tend to be somewhat marginalized in terms of European policy; their considerable potential to contribute to European growth and well-being by innovative approaches is largely unrecognised..

We, the representatives of European mountain interests:

1. contend that a much more coherent and integrated policy response is required. Mountain areas need a transversal and territorial approach to their sustainable development.



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2. consider that a European Green Paper on future policy towards mountainous regions would serve to streamline and consolidate existing policies and initiatives at the European level, making them more efficient in the specific context of mountain areas.
3. therefore urge that the **Green Paper on future policy towards mountainous regions be put on the European Commission's work schedule as soon as possible** to specify the strategic issues for mountain areas in the Member States of the European Union; to clarify the roles of and coordination between the different governance levels and the different economic sectors; to consolidate the specific statistical information supporting policy in these areas; to study the accompanying and support measures in these territories in response to the strategic objectives fixed by the European Union; and to make proposals on the evolution of European and national public policy.
4. equally urge that the territorial specificity of mountain regions be adequately taken into consideration in the ongoing definition of European Union's cohesion policy and the Territorial Agenda process.

By facilitating the development of the comparative advantages of the mountain areas, the **Green Paper on future policy towards mountainous regions** will also respond to the renewed Lisbon strategy and Gothenburg agenda, so contributing to the creation of growth and jobs and helping the European Union to be a globally more competitive knowledge economy. Mountain areas have significant contributions to make to the whole of Europe and their potential for innovation and growth should be fully utilised.