

In this issue:

Euromountains.net Project	1
Significance of services to the mountain areas	2
Partners involved	2
Which services	3
The working process of the study	3
Quality that coincides with the idea of sustainability System of Macro-indicators	4
The comparison of the study areas	5
The Critical Points and Some Ways to Overcome Them	6
Some Concluding Remarks	7
The study visit in the Region of the Palencia, Spain, 11 - 12 May 2005	8
The study visit in Turin, 11-13 April 2005	10
Euromontana project on development and attractiveness of rural areas	11
Pusemor Interreg IIIB project	
Future events of Euromountains.net and the partners of the project	12

“The sustainable improvement of services in mountain areas”

*First study theme of the project*

## Euromountains.net Project

Mountain regions faced with the economic handicaps linked to their geographic and environmental situations have all across Europe had to innovate in developing various strategies in order to compensate for these difficulties. The territorial development has had to take into consideration, and adapt to, a specific local environment. “Euromountains.net” is a networking project on European mountain regions in order to promote sustainable development.

Part-funded by the Interreg IIIC SUD programme, the project involves 14 partners from 6 countries (Scotland, Spain, France, Italy, Norway and Portugal). Starting with the experiences of the project partners, the project aimed to identify territorial management models in mountain areas and transferable success factors through three themes:

1/ The improvement of services in mountain areas  
2/ The role of territorial authorities in the development

and promotion of resources and mountain quality products;

3/ Managing the fragile mountain landscape, rural environment and natural resources.

The final conference of the project brings all these themes together for discussion, conclusions and recommendation under the heading of “Creating success together”.



## Significance of services to the mountain areas

Services are crucial for the mountain areas to remain alive. In the vicious circle of desertification of certain of our mountain areas services become unaffordable as the population diminishes. With the disappearance of schools, health care, leisure services and services for elderly people, fewer people are able to remain living in mountain areas.

Adequate services are a precondition for inhabited mountain areas and inhabited mountain areas guarantee the maintaining of our cultural landscapes, different cultures and public goods provided by the mountain areas.

European Union has territorial cohesion within its heart and therefore universality of service provision is one of the corner stones of

Europe. However, the mountain actors do not want to just passively wait to be taken care of, but want to take the initiative of service provision in mountain areas into their own hands and look for innovative ways to solve the equation of equality of access to services even in the most difficult to reach corners of Europe.

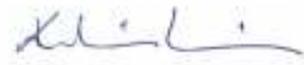
The Euromountains.net project is tackling this by a study in order to get a comparable vision of the state of the services in our mountain areas and some ideas of how that state could be improved.

In this short presentation to the study that we call "Theme 1 of the Euromountains.net" you will find information about the process and methodology of the

study, some indications of solutions and concluding remarks as well as descriptions of some activities undertaken by the project.

For further information we invite you to download the **synthesis report of the theme 1 at [www.euromountains.net](http://www.euromountains.net)** and look at the regional study reports.

Also, do attend the **final conference of the Euromountains.net project 8-9 March in Turin, Italy**, to continue the discussion.



Kristiina Urpalainen, Euromontana

## Partners involved

The partners involved in this study are the Provinces of Turin and Trento, the Regions of Aosta Valley and Lombardia in Italy, the Diputaciones of Cordoba and of Palencia in Spain, four Norwegian Counties (Telemark, Oppland, Buskerud, Sogn og Fjordane), The Region of Highlands in Scotland, the Region of High Tamega in Portugal and the Region of Rhône-Alpes in France.

Each study theme of the Euromountains.net project has a scientific coordinator in

addition to Euromontana functioning as a general coordinator of the project.

Province of Turin, Italy was the leader of the theme 1 and the study was led by the consulting group of "Consorzio Pracatinat". The group was coordinated by Giovanni BORGARELLO and comprised in addition Francesco AGLI, Chiara CASTIGLIONI, Marta PARODI and Giorgio SALZA.



## Which services

Since the services are too large a field to be studied in its entirety the Working Group chose to identify three service systems to be the object of the study:



The System of social and health services

The criteria adopted to make a choice were:

1. The particular importance of the chosen Systems for the mountainous land systems.
2. The particular interest shown by the local community representatives involved in the project.



The System of infra-structural services



The System of services related to culture and free time



## The working process of the study and the main steps

Specific aims of the study on the services and their sustainability in the mountain areas were firstly the search of quality indicators able to describe the quality of services in the mountain areas, highlighting the specific characteristics of the mountain areas compared with plain or metropolitan areas and facilitating the comparison between different mountainous areas.

Secondly, the study tried to identify of critical points, of good practices and of the related success factors, and innovative strategies in the management of public services.

The research for the theme took place from the end of 2004 to the beginning of 2006. It was a practical and theoretical study process, a true learning experience for the partners involved. The main steps of the

process were:

- Development of common definitions
- Choice of the study areas
- Choice of the services to be studied
- A first description of the service systems to be studied, based on a common chart
- The choice of common macro-indicators
- A first definition of indicator systems to describe the services and their implementation in the study areas. Sharing experiences on the identification of the indicators and testing their validity [by *Focus groups* with local actors].
- A comparison of the first results of the local studies at a workshop held in Turin [11/04/2005]. Choosing a method of comparison.
- Study trips in Pinerolese, Piedmont, Aosta Valley, and Palencia. These were a con-

siderable help in comparing the results of the studies and also to better understand each other during the building and elaboration of the. Even if some partners only travelled, others only gave hospitality, the treasure of the exchange and comparison was immense.

- Writing of the local study reports
- A comparative analysis was made by the scientific coordinator and a comparative report was drafted
- Thematic seminar of the theme was held in Palencia, Spain 14-17 June 2005.
- Further collection of the good practices and suggestions
- The writing of the final report together with the drafting of the recommendations or suggestions

## The quality of the services in the mountains: an idea of quality that coincides with the idea of sustainability System of Macro-indicators

Building a system of quality indicators requires a shared vision. It would have been impossible to carry out a research involving 12 partners and 12 areas differing in many ways (institutional, of regulations, socio-economic, geographical, cultural...) without sharing some essential concepts. In particular, the partners had to explain and compare what they meant by "mountain areas", "by public service", by "sustainability" and by "quality".

Some essential integrated criteria to define the quality of the mountain services were identified among project partners. These 6 criteria, which we have called Macro-indicators, can also be used to define Sustainability for the mountain areas. In other words the idea of quality and the one of sustainability substantially coincide in the project partners' vision.

The partners' way to understand these MACRO-INDICATORS was transformed during the research, becoming wider and more precise. At the end of the work, the meaning of each of them can be synthesised in the following terms:

1/ By **territoriality** we mean the ability of a particular ser-

vice to adapt itself to the local context, specific characteristics and resources and being able to develop them.

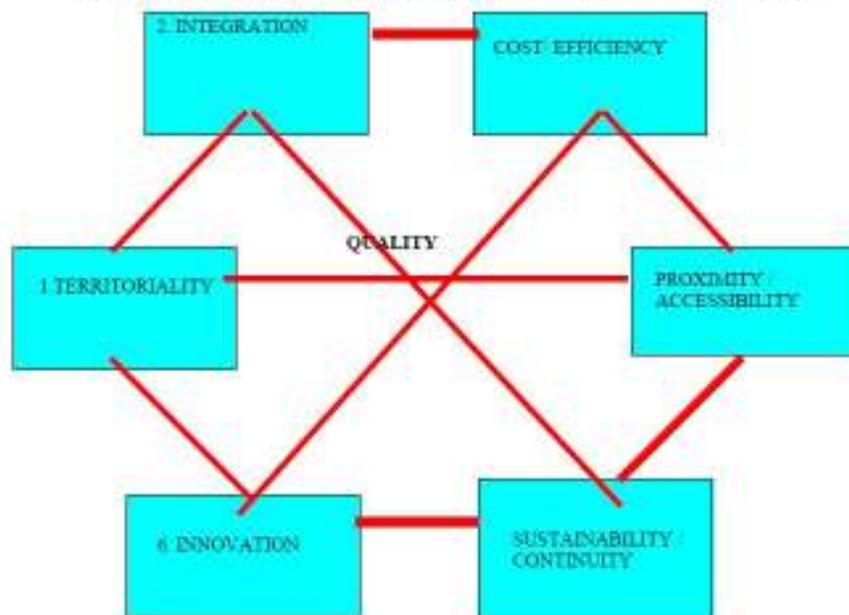
2/ **Integration** is tightly connected to participation and therefore to territoriality besides innovation

sible if not near, through an efficient transportation system

- Giving the possibility to reach the services through a good organisation (for instance booking from a distance)

- Being able to access to though information tech-

Graphic: Criteria that define the quality of the services system in mountain areas



(organisational, methodological, cultural and also technological). Innovation is working to put together different projects, actors, sectors, etc.

3/ The question of the **over-costs** in mountain areas was not dealt with extensively apart from some individual examples.

4/ **Nearness/accessibility** contains the following points:

- Making the services acces-

nologies or electronically, but also through learning, the acquisition of competence and operative and organisational models.

5/ **Innovation** is defined by:

- Productive innovation in the work and in the management of the economic activities
- Organisational and methodological innovation in the production/distribution of the service
- Technological innovation

6/ **Durability** concerns the need of sure and durable financial resources is paramount, even in the cases in which the local community is responsible for the costs and is able to promote in-

telligent solutions which also save money.

Durability also concerns two other aspects: the seasonal nature of needs and the presence of organisations

stable, and acknowledged enough to be able to support and to promote the activities and the strategies of the service management.

## The comparison of the study areas: the different mountains

Each local study included a geographical presentation of the study area, a sort of territorial identity card useful to provide a synthetic picture of the characteristics of the areas.

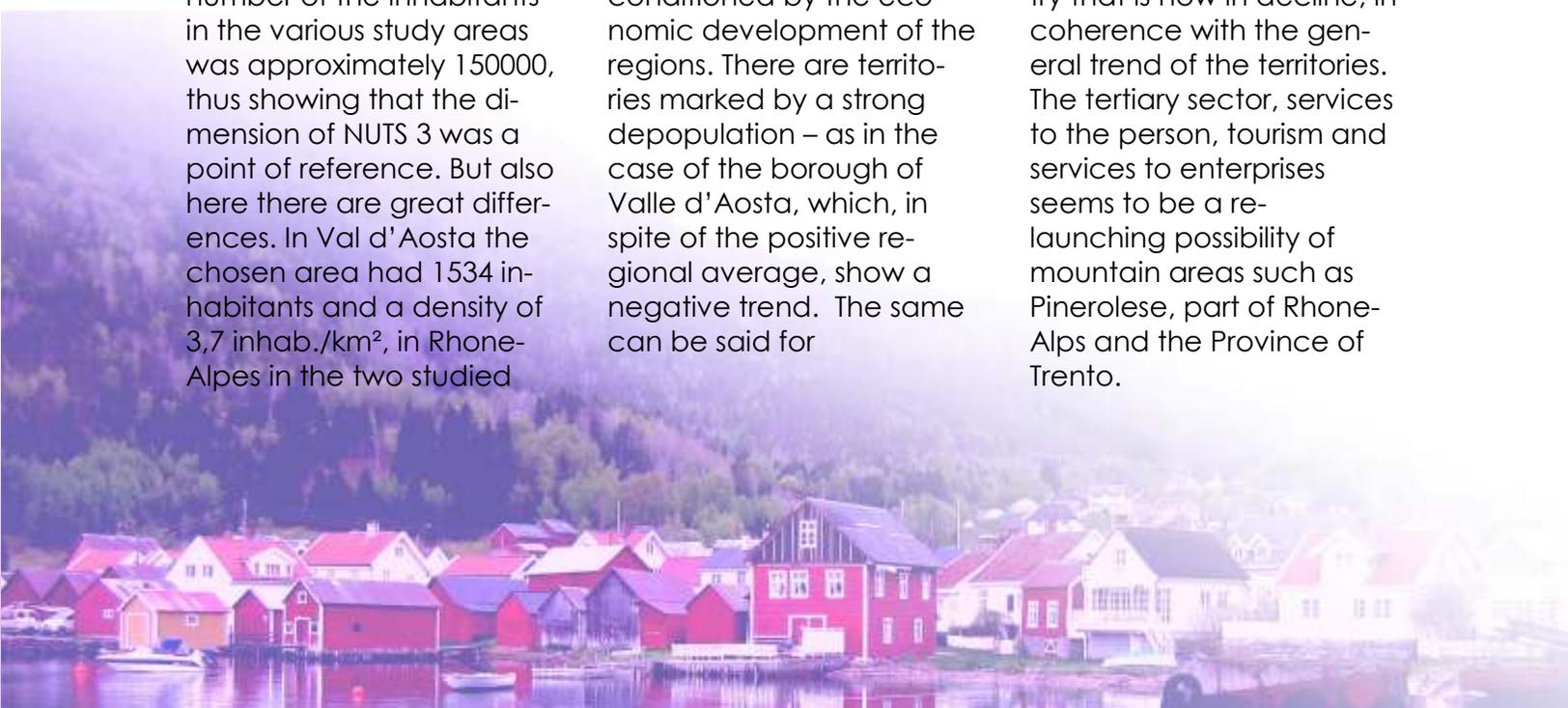
The average dimension of the chosen study areas is about 4500 km<sup>2</sup>. The largest area is certainly the Norwegian one with 29363 km<sup>2</sup> and the smallest the choice of Val d'Aosta, an area of 412 km<sup>2</sup>. In demographics the average number of the inhabitants in the various study areas was approximately 150000, thus showing that the dimension of NUTS 3 was a point of reference. But also here there are great differences. In Val d'Aosta the chosen area had 1534 inhabitants and a density of 3,7 inhab./km<sup>2</sup>, in Rhone-Alpes in the two studied

areas there are 226700 inhabitants and a density of 99 inhab./km<sup>2</sup> (similarly in there Trento area there were 490000 inhabitants and 79 inhab./km<sup>2</sup>). Particularly interesting are the Norwegian area and the Highlands where within a very large surface area there are only 2/3 inhab./km<sup>2</sup> in the Norwegian area and 4,3 inhab./km<sup>2</sup> in the Highlands area.

The trends in demographics also varied and seemed to be strongly conditioned by the economic development of the regions. There are territories marked by a strong depopulation – as in the case of the borough of Valle d'Aosta, which, in spite of the positive regional average, show a negative trend. The same can be said for

Norway (less than 2,3%) and for Scotland (-3%). And there are territories with demographic increase, as in the Pinerolese case in Italy where there is a positive average trend, but there are also territories in decline.

In what comes to the productive activities in the territories, agriculture is the predominant sector, confirming an ancient vocation of mountainous territories. The Rhone-Alps and Pinerolese have old industry that is now in decline, in coherence with the general trend of the territories. The tertiary sector, services to the person, tourism and services to enterprises seems to be a re-launching possibility of mountain areas such as Pinerolese, part of Rhone-Alps and the Province of Trento.



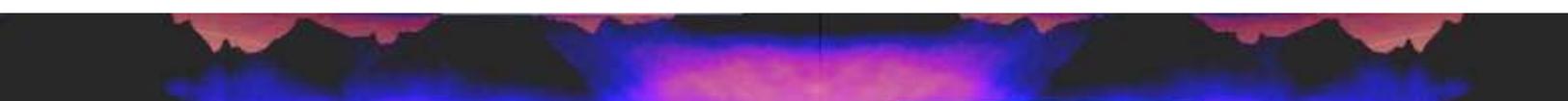
## The Critical Points and Some Ways to Overcome Them

All these critical points are not specific to the mountains; on the contrary many apply also in plain and metropolitan areas. In mountainous areas, however, they are all present together and have a particu-

lar effect on life conditions. Mountainous areas, then, can be conceived as a sort of laboratories which face difficulties that concern everybody and so, for this reason, are interesting for all the territorial systems, in-

cluded the metropolitan one. Some of these critical points and their solutions were:

CRITICAL POINTS	SOLUTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operative separation of the different actors involved and so inefficiency of the intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans that unite under a common methodology and organisation administrative operators and voluntary groups. For example: Associations and projects for a well organised coherent tourist promotion on the territory.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of places dedicated to the mountains where to elaborate problems, for research culture, to build up knowledge and competences.</li> <li>Lack of research and elaboration projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of research centres in which experts, technicians, local actors – that turn from passive to active development promoters – can meet and work together. For example:</li> <li>A research conceived as action that is able to generate territorial transformation at various levels.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Isolation due to dispersion of inhabitants and relative difficulty to move or keep in contact (height, distance)</li> <li>Lack of transportation models suitable for mountain conditions.</li> <li>Difficulty to access services (especially for elderly people).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service project and organisation flexible and adherent to needs and territorial aspects. For example: transportation on request</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Isolation of young couples, especially young mothers due to family and society transformation (families with only one child or single parent - with few relatives, friends and neighbours)</li> <li>Absence of early childhood services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent support services in territorial centres and in the form of a house-to-house service. For example: Creation of service systems for early childhood in the form of associations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impossibility for elderly people to live alone at home in winter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seasonal Residential Services (where it is possible to bring personal effects and things; creation of a familiar setting)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical limitation to access to some areas, (because of snow during winter, or the lack of routes...) . Small possibility to develop profitable economic activities such as forms of tourism for great numbers of people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take limits as resources. For example: limiting the access of vehicles, developing high quality tourism.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital divide. Difficulty of access to ITC opportunities and so difficulties to develop both new economy and new services (Tele-aid, training, Tele-medicine, etc...) and to organise public administrations in new ways. Little interest of economic operators to invest in the mountains.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of supporting public policies (both building infrastructures and promoting competences through training, the creation of economic interest for the operators, without changing free competition).</li> </ul>



## Some Concluding Remarks on the Relationship between Services and Local Sustainable Development

**1. The services are a fundamental territorial development factor.** This is not specific for mountain areas, but particularly crucial there because the service systems allow the overcoming of the typical mountain obstacles.

- Service systems support both the inhabitants and the territorial organisations in LIVING and WORKING (for instance we can consider the importance of a service policy that support parents or promotes young people enterprise)

- They produce social COHESION, TRUST, COMMUNICATION, they are an instrument to build, maintain and interweave SOCIAL TIES.

- They produce KNOWLEDGE (for what concerns school and training, but not only), essential to assure a high level of human resources, in its turn essential development condition.

- They stimulate local ECONOMY and EMPLOYMENT, making resources otherwise unused accessible, as it happens for instance with information infrastructures or with local transportation systems.

- They are instruments of GOVERNANCE: through their project and running they promote and give impulse to local territorial dynamics.

The services are a territorial infrastructure that allows the inhabitants to work and produce and to face social problems.

2. Mountain areas over-costs make it necessary to demonstrate to decision-makers – usually living in urban areas – that

for sustainability it is necessary to invest more in the mountains. **It is necessary to make the links between mountain and other territories visible as well as the links between population, environmental services and people supporting services.**

Mountains are underrated as a strategic area that needs services. Supporting mountain populations (assuring suitable services) means taking care of the strategic function of the mountain and maintaining in time the services that it produces also in favour of larger territorial systems. So "... it would be particularly important to manage to find a way **to record and reckon social costs and impacts (besides the environmental and cultural ones) of territorial transformation policies:** those of the great works, of the developing plans, of re-qualification or environment conservation interventions, of employment and education support. So the central point is to manage to show and to reckon the expenses and the profits that are produced but are never attributed to the involved sector; they are the so-called **"external effects"** (esternalità) usually only considered environmental but that are also social." [B. Zobel, 2006].

3. As the Euromountains.net research highlights, mountain areas are lively and creative and produce original processes and solutions, can produce a lot out of little, doing the best with few available re-

sources. So **the mountain can be seen as a laboratory of sustainability.** This means that new policies capable of supporting this "ability to be laboratory" should be launched policies that can on the one hand recognise the true added value and on the other the effective costs.

**4. The essential conditions for service systems for quality/sustainability are: territoriality, integration, and innovation, which in their turn allow accessibility and produce efficiency.**

All these require continuity in time. Public authorities, at all levels, have the role of promoting and sustaining resources and projects.

**5. All this should happen in a new perspective: the territories start to see themselves and act as collective subjects able to identify and pursue shared aims of sustainable development.**

**6. New connections and inter-territorial and inter-institutional exchanges are necessary: from competition to co-operation.** The Mountain Communities socio-economic plans, in Italy, and other similar institutional planning documents elsewhere, can be the occasion to start these exchanges on the one hand, and on the other, to integrate the different situations and political plans, to fix aims that require integration such as promoting sustainability, health and development.

## The study visit in the Region of the Palencia, Spain, 11 - 12 May 2005



Wheat field



Castilla Canal



Monzon Castle

After welcoming the Val d'Aoste group, the Assessor explained briefly the Palencia Mountains situation, introducing some important issues such as the abundance of little villages in the area (50-60 inhabitants) and the numerous mines, the presence of several Roman structures and the desire to build ski infrastructures. After a quick look of the Diputación de Palencia building, the work group went to Aguilar del Campo. During the trip, the participants could see for themselves the features of the area: the huge wheat fields, some Roman ruins, the Castilla Canal (which is dated of the 18th century and it's still used by more than 200.000 persons for civilian and irrigation aims), several castles (Monzon de Campos, Fuente Stano...)

The first destination was the Fundación de Santa María la Real, which is a non-profit

organization that tries to highlight the cultural, natural/environmental and social heritage. The first project of the foundation was to rehabilitate the Monasterio de Santa María la Real. To do that, the foundation used what in Spain are called Escuelas Taller (trade schools). These Escuelas Taller were out of a Department for Employment initiative targeted at creating employment to 300.000 young people in Spain. This initiative funded projects that let young unemployed (16-25 years old) to learn a trade under an expert direction: salaries are low, but at the end of the project, young people have learnt a remunerable trade in the job market.

The next step was the visit of one of the enterprises born from the Escuelas taller which makes miniature reproductions of the most famous European and

Spanish architectural heritage: churches, cathedrals, palaces, sculptures... these pieces of art are hand-made and therefore unique.

Later, the Val d'Aosta



*Miniature de la ville de  
Carcassonne (F)*

delegation visited the visitor center of the mining sector called Barruelo de Santullán. This museum stands in the old National schools and was conceived essentially for children, which ensures a minimum of visitors even during the winter, when the potential users are only the school

groups. The mining museum has more than 600 m<sup>2</sup> over 3 floors (9 rooms in total) for expositions. In the first floor a more tourism approach is conceived, the second floor is more educational and the third floor more technical dealing with themes like geology, pedology...

The following day, the delegation went from Palencia to Cervera de Pisuerga, a village of 1800 inhabitants, placed to the North of Palencia at 1009 m, in the core of the Palencia mountains. The name Cervera probably comes from the many stags



that used to live in this area. The delegation visited an Ethnographical museum. Created 30 years ago in a novel house from the 15th century, this museum was possible thanks to the funds of: EARDF, Agriculture Department, LEADER+ and the municipality. The idea for museum comes from Ms. Piedad Islas, after realising that the people who visit the mountains have no

memories about how life there used to be like; this phenomenon also reaches the new generations... For this reason, a new wish was born to show tools, cloths, etc. used in the past, but above all, to conserve them for the following generation.

*Report by the visitors from  
Val'Aosta*



## The study visit in Turin, 11-13 April 2005



### Val Germanasca

copyright grafica One G Line Service

The Trento delegation visited in the spring of 2005 the Province of Torino. The Study trip contained a series of visits near the Province of Torino in order to analyse the service management in mountains. The experience was very positive. For the Province of Trento, the meeting with the Eco-museums' management was important, because there have been contacts between both administrations for some years in order to create a European network project among the eco-museums.

The visit started the 11th April at Praticanat. The Praticanat Consortium was born thanks to the reutilization of hospital

building from the early 20th century. Through the years, Praticanat has specialised in environmental education initiatives, due to the creation of a didactic laboratory about environment.

The following day, the 12th April, the visit continued with the eco-museum Scopriminera, placed in the Val Germanasca. This museum is consecrated on mines and mining work, that is to say, an example of the initiatives and tourism services in mountain areas. The mountainous Communities of Val Chisone and Val Germanasca realized and ambitious project for the conservation and valorization of mining

work and of the abandoned mining infrastructures. For the Val Germanasca people, the mining work represented the main wealth source for more than a century.

The way in which the eco-museums are structured for the visits is very satisfactory, and they suit particularly for pupils, groups interested in sustainable tourism founded in traditions and local history. It is also possible to visit a very rich exposition over bibliographical documentation.

MARIA PIA FLAIM  
SERVIZIO ATTIVITA' CULTURALI  
PROVINCIA AUTONOMA DI  
TRENTO.

Copyright © 2004 Consorzio  
Pracatinat



## More on services in the mountain areas:

### Euromontana project on Development and attractiveness of rural areas, in particular mountain areas

Euromontana has been working on a project co-funded by the French Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, on Development and attractiveness of rural areas. In 2006, this project was focused on services of General Interest. Three kinds of services were studied: Information and communication technologies, the postal ser-

vices and education and training services.

The final report gathered examples on EU legislation on services of General Interest and on the three kind of services focused, as well as specific legislation in certain countries. The second part of the report was devoted to descriptions of innovative

experiences (national or local politic measures)

Contact for more information: Cécile Levret, Euromontana, [cecile.levret@euromontana.org](mailto:cecile.levret@euromontana.org)

See the report at [www.euromontana.org](http://www.euromontana.org)

### Pusemor Interreg IIIB Project

PUSEMOR Interreg IIIB project aims to develop sustainable strategies and innovative solutions for improving the provision of public services in sparsely populated mountain regions.

The project is looking at mobility: public transport and roads, Health: Health system, house-to-house service, elderly people care, Youth and Children: kindergarten and schools, ICT: Internet, TV and mobile telephones and Proximity Service:

All test areas in the project from different regions and countries are faced with similar problems

in different mixtures.

In 'Education', 'Health care' and especially 'Care for the elderly' the demographical change causes changing demand and need for adjustment of infrastructure. Currently infrastructure and transportation of persons, goods and data via the internet are the greatest challenge for the test areas.

The first results have revealed similar trends in all the countries: post offices and village stores are closing, there are worries about funding the road maintenance and public transports, public services are being centralised in several fields (police, hospitals, schools). The initiatives of

buses on request are multiplying, even if solutions have not yet been found for commuters and out of the school periods. In the healthcare several regions are battling with a problem of succession of doctors in the countryside. Often multifunctional centres for everyday needs such as food, mail, communal administration, bank, petrol, cultural and sport associations have been set up.

There are some examples of cooperation between municipalities to prevent intensification of spatial differences within the test areas and regions.

See [www.pusemor.net](http://www.pusemor.net)



**Future events of the project:**

**Final conference of Euromountains.net project "Creating Success Together".**  
 8-9 March 2007 in Turin, Italy

Information at [www.euromountains.net](http://www.euromountains.net)



Editorial team: Cécile Levret      Eva Izquierdo      Layout: Anna Kociolek  
 Kristiina Urpalainen      Frank Gaskell

Euromontana wishes to address its special thanks to all the partners, speakers and hosting enterprises of the study visits who actively contributed to the success of this study theme.

## The 14 partners of Euromountains.net project

<p><b>Euromontana</b>                  Association Européenne pour les zones de montagne                  European Association for mountains areas</p>	<p><b>Diputación de Córdoba</b>                  Andalucía                  Spain</p>	<p><b>Conseil Régional Rhône Alpes</b>                  Rhône Alpes                  France</p>	<p><b>Région Autonome Vallée d'Aoste</b>                  Assessorat de l'Agriculture, des Ressources naturelles et de la Protection civile                  Valle d'Aosta                  Italy</p>	<p><b>Istituto di ricerca per l'ecologia e l'economia applicate alle aree alpine</b>                  Lombardia                  Italy</p>	<p><b>Telemark Fylkeskommune</b>                  Telemark                  County Council                  Norway</p>	<p><b>Buskerud Fylkeskommune</b>                  County Council                  Buskerud                  County Council                  Norway</p>
<p><b>ADRAT</b>                  Associação de Desenvolvimento da Região do Alto Tâmega                  Alto Tâmega                  Portugal</p>	<p><b>Diputación de Palencia</b>                  Castilla y León                  Spain</p>	<p><b>The Highland Council</b>                  Highlands                  UK</p>	<p><b>Provincia di Torino</b>                  Assessorato all'Agricoltura e Montagna                  Piemonte                  Italy</p>	<p><b>Provincia Autonoma di Trento</b>                  Assessorato alla programmazione ricerca ed innovazione                  Trentino                  Italy</p>	<p><b>Oppland fylkeskommune</b>                  Oppland                  County Council                  Norway</p>	<p><b>Sogn og Fjordane fylkeskommune</b>                  Sogn og Fjordane                  County Council                  Norway</p>

Further information available at Euromontana: 2, Place du Champ de Mars—B—1050—Brussels  
 Phone: +32 2 280 42 83  
 Email: [info@euromontana.org](mailto:info@euromontana.org)