



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

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I would like to add my congratulations to the Slovenian Presidency to those expressed by the previous speakers. Your team has done a truly excellent job.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate but more specifically for the opportunity to contribute. This group's very progressive decision to involve the stakeholders in this extremely important exercise is welcomed by Euromontana and we are committed to responding positively at this and future meetings.

Euromontana is the European Association of Mountain Areas and it is perhaps unique among European networks in its cross-sectoral composition. Euromontana comprises development agencies, environmental agencies, technical Institutes, universities, regions and farmers and foresters associations. So you may be impressed by the breadth of response we can give if you decide to grant earlier speakers' pleas for questionnaires, that to date have been circulated only to Member States, to now be extended to stakeholders also wherever appropriate.

Mountains comprise 36% of the land mass of Europe and are home to 20% of Europe's population.

Perhaps Euromontana can serve a purpose in balancing the impressive weight of our city colleagues' contribution so far in this debate. Certainly Euromontana is convinced of the importance of the urban aspect in any consideration of Territorial Cohesion. We cannot deny that urban centres can be the vectors of rural development... but not for everywhere in Europe. There are many places particularly in mountain areas that are well beyond the functional foot print of their nearest urban centre. Here I share – perhaps from a totally different perspective – the view expressed a moment ago by the UK speaker on the need to be flexible in the definition of cities and polycentric poles - in some areas these may have to include towns and even larger strategically positioned villages.

Finally I must take the opportunity to report on the determined commitment of ourselves and other partners under the leadership of Switzerland to proceed vigorously on Action 2.3 on mountains. In this concerted effort Euromontana are privileged to be working with Norway, Austria, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus, Sweden, Rumania, Wales, Basque Region, the Alpine Convention, the Carpathian Convention and the Balkan Foundation all of whom share the same enthusiasm. The project involves the production of a new typology of mountain areas based on potentials rather than challenges. You can therefore imagine our joint disappointment when our application failed because of a minor formality. Nevertheless you may be assured that we are determined to resubmit and even now are exploring the possibility of working together informally in the interim. This commitment of course is because of the general importance of taking action to reinforce territorial cohesion but our urgency springs from the fact that the practical interpretation of the concept is absolutely vital for Europe's mountain areas.

Thank you

Frank Gaskell  
President of Euromontana