

# THE COHESION POLICY SUPPORTS YOUTH & EMPLOYMENT IN MOUNTAIN AREAS



## **DID YOU KNOW?**

Living and spending time in a mountain area is a dream for many young people across Europe. In a Euromontana survey conducted in 2021 across European mountains, 66% of young respondents said they would like to live and work in mountain areas. The reasons are diverse and include quality of life, beautiful scenery and proximity to nature, closer social ties, and the rich traditional culture.

## **WHY ARE YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT SO IMPORTANT?**

Mountain areas often fail to provide the same job and educational opportunities as cities and more densely populated regions. This is why many young people decide to leave the mountains or find it hard to return. It is, therefore, essential to develop diverse, high-quality offers to make it easier for young people to live in the mountains, to attract skilled workers, mitigate the demographic decline and maintain vibrant villages.

## **WHAT SOLUTIONS ARE BEING FOUND IN THE MOUNTAINS?**

Solutions include the analysis of needs and latest opportunities across the key sectors of the mountain economy to the provision of customized support to mountain businesses. Above all, several initiatives highlight the need to create a new category of mountain professionals, to support collaborations between the private sector and schools, and to facilitate the access of new workers into the mountain job market.

**The European Union creates new opportunities for youth and employment in mountains via the Cohesion Policy.**

**Read on to find out more!**



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# EMER-N

## Entrepreneurship in rural environments

In the Northern Region of Portugal, small and micro businesses in rural mountainous settings can access tailored support in order to face these challenges and grow their business.

Through the EMER-N project, 344 companies situated in 8 provinces of Northern Portugal have received technical support to create, structure and streamline their business, promoting the creation of more than 400 new jobs.



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For entrepreneurs and small businesses, EMER-N provided mentoring and ongoing monitoring by experienced technicians, or specialized consultancy from researchers in higher education institutions. Businesses could also ask for customized support to boost their own promotion and dissemination, along with access to financing. For example, EMER-N helped the Montes De Labreiro tourism operator to boost its nature and adventure tourism.

**Mountain area:** Northern Portugal

**Cohesion support:** European Regional Development Fund

**Period:** 2016-2018

**Website:** <https://empreendedorismo.emern.pt/>

## SCHOOL-TO-BUSINESSES COLLABORATION

### Pole of the Mountain Economy in the Italian Alps



Since 2017, the Italian Municipality of Tolmezzo has been home to the Technical Professional Pole of the Mountain Economy: a multi-disciplinary centre that encourages the economic development of mountain areas thanks to close collaboration with local enterprises, educational organizations, and institutional bodies.

The Pole aims to help young people acquire advanced and technical skills in order to access the job market, with a particular emphasis on 6 sectors of the mountain economy: forestry, furniture, energy and environmental sustainability, bio-construction timber, agri-food, and mountain tourism.

The Pole played a leading role in the creation of an observatory of vocational needs and offers in the 6 sectors, as well as in developing a network of enterprises and schools to boost school-to-work alternation in these domains, and the testing out pedagogical tools to help mountain-based students find jobs in mountain areas.

**Mountain area:** Italian Alps

**Cohesion support:** European Social Fund

**Period:** 2017-2019

**Website:** <http://www.poloecomontfvg.it/>

## The new generation of professionals in mountain tourism and economy

In 2015, the University Savoy Mont Blanc in France and Valle d'Aosta in Italy launched the Dual Master's degree on "Development and Internationalizing of Enterprises and Territories". Two years later, thanks to the financial support received by the Cohesion Policy, these universities decided to strengthen their collaboration by scoping the content of their Master programme for tourism and mountain economy, through the FEAST project.

Their scope was to train a new generation of professionals to understand the challenges and opportunities linked to the specificities of mountain economy and tourism, as well as its transnational character in the Alpine region.

Thanks to this project, several young mountain residents participated in seminars, study days and workshops to reflect on the transformation of mountain areas. They also received funding to allow them to conduct study exchanges outside their country, and placement opportunities to help them gain a foothold in their profession.



© FEAST

**Mountain area:** French-Italian Alps

**Cohesion support:** European Regional Development Fund through Interreg ALCOTRA programme

**Period:** 2017-2020

**Website:** <https://www.interreg-alcotra.eu/fr/decouvrir-alcotra/les-projets-finances/feast-formation-education-et-amenagement-des-synergies>

## PRVI IZZIV

### Overcoming the challenge of getting a first job!

Even after completing their studies, most young people find it difficult to gain a foothold in the job market.

To help young people in Eastern Slovenia, the Prvi izziv (First Challenge) programme was launched. Through this programme, employers can request a subsidy of up to € 7,250 for a contract of at least 15 months, to be used to employ local young people under the age of 30 who are currently unemployed. Young people have access to a full-time contract, with a 3-month probation period.

Approximately, 3,000 young people found their first job thanks to this programme, accelerating their entry into the labour market. At the same time, this programme helps local employers to find and sponsor contracts with new employees.



**Mountain area:** Slovenian Alps

**Cohesion support:** European Social Fund

**Period:** 2015-2016

**Website:** <http://www.eu-skladi.si/sl/ekp/primeri-dobrih-praks/prvi-izziv>

## Matching job offer with demand for skilled workers

The Pyrenees are characterized by an ageing trend and a high rate of inactive individuals. As a result, local enterprises, especially in the food and construction sector, often lack the necessary workforce to carry out their activities. In parallel, the number of unaccompanied minors in mountain areas is also increasing.

The AVENIR project helps local businesses to find skilled workers among new residents. In fact, in the short-term, unaccompanied minors participate in vocational training to do mountain-based jobs and are encouraged to discover more about their mountain environment in terms of recreation, sport and culture. The goal is to reduce the number of minors without qualifications in the Pyrenees and give them access to local jobs.



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As a result, these new residents can contribute to the economic development of the region through their acquired skills and local mountain businesses can draw on a larger pool of trained staff to help them in their economic activities.

Mountain area: Pyrenees (France, Spain)  
 Cohesion support: European Regional Development Fund  
 through Interreg POCTEFA programme  
 Period: 2019-2022  
 Website: <http://www.poctefa-avenir.eu>

## WHAT IS MONTANA174?

Montana174 is a communication campaign to inform you – mountain residents - about the many opportunities offered by the Cohesion Policy in mountain areas.

In mountain areas, the Cohesion Policy provides funds to reinforce digital and social innovation, accelerate climate mitigation and adaptation, support tourism, foster youth employment and enhance mobility.

[www.montana174.org](http://www.montana174.org)

