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Please provide summary information on the process by which this report has been prepared, including information on the types of stakeholders who have been actively involved in its preparation and on material which was used as a basis for the report

This report has been prepared by Unit B2 – Nature and Biodiversity – of the Environment Directorate General of the European Commission (EC). Information was obtained through consulting many other Units within the EC and stakeholders throughout the European Union (EU). In particular information was gathered during a conference on 17 and 18 October 2002: “EU policies and the mountain”. This conference was hosted by the EC and many stakeholders from throughout the EU were represented.

Mountain Ecosystems

1. What is the relative priority your country accords to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems?					
a) High	X	b) Medium		c) Low	
2. How does your country assess the resources available for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems, both domestic and international?					
a) Good		b) Adequate		c) Limiting	X
3. Has your country requested financial assistance from GEF for funding the activities for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems?					
a) no					X – N/A
b) yes, please provide details					

Assessment, Identification and Monitoring

4. Has your country undertaken any assessment of direct and underlying causes of degradation and loss of biological diversity of mountain ecosystems?	
a) no (please specify the reasons)	
b) yes, please specify major threats and their relative importance, as well as gaps	X
c) If yes, please specify the measures your country has taken to control the causes of loss of mountain biodiversity	
5. Has your country identified taxonomic needs for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity of mountain ecosystems?	
a) no, (please specify the reasons)	
b) yes, please specify	X
6. Has your country made any assessment of the vulnerability or fragility of the mountains in your country?	
a) no, please specify the reasons	
b) yes, please specify the results and observed impacts on mountain biodiversity	X
7. Has your country made any assessment important for conservation of biological diversity of mountain ecosystems at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels? (You may wish to use the Annex I of the Convention for categories of biodiversity important for conservation)	
a) no, please specify the reasons	X
b) yes, some assessments or monitoring undertaken (please specify)	
c) yes, comprehensive assessments or monitoring programmes undertaken (please specify where results can be found, and opportunities and obstacles, if any)	

Regulatory and Information System and Action Plan

8. Has your country developed regulations, policies and programs for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems?	
a) no	
b) yes, please specify sectors	X
9. Has your country applied the ecosystem approach (adopted at COP 5) in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems?	
a) no	
b) yes, please provide some cases or examples	X
10. Does your national biodiversity strategy and action plan cover mountain biological diversity?	
a) no, please specify why	
b) yes, please give some information on the strategy and plan, in particular on mountain biodiversity	X
11. Has your country disseminated the relevant information concerning management practices, plans and programmes for conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems?	
a) no	
b) yes, please provide details where information can be retrieved concerning management practices, plans and programmes	X

Cooperation

12. Has your country undertaken any collaboration with other Parties for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems at the regional level or within a range of mountains?	
a) no	
b) yes, please specify the objectives of this collaboration and achievements	X
13. Has your country signed or ratified any regional or international treaty concerning mountains?	
a) no	
b) yes, please specify which treaty and provide as much as possible a report on the progress in the implementation of the treaties, including any major constraints in the implementation of the treaties	X

Relevant thematic areas and cross-cutting issues

14. Has your country taken account of mountain ecosystems while implementing thematic programmes of work on agricultural; inland waters; forest; and dry and sub-humid lands biological diversity?	
a) no	
b) yes – but in only one or two thematic programmes of work	
c) yes, included in all programmes of work	X
d) if yes, please specify details	
15. Has your country taken any measures to ensure that the tourism in mountains is sustainable?	
a) no , please specify why	
b) yes, but in early stages of development (please specify the reasons)	X
c) in advanced stages of development (please specify the reasons)	
d) relatively comprehensive measures being implemented (please specify the reasons)	
16. Has your country taken any measures to protect the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems?	
a) no	
b) not relevant	
c) yes, but in early stages of policy or programme development	
d) yes, in advanced stages of development	
e) some programmes being implemented	X
f) comprehensive programmes being implemented	
17. Has your country developed any programmes for the protection of natural and cultural heritages in the mountains?	
a) no	
b) yes, please provide some information in the programmes	X
18. Has your country established protected areas in mountains?	
a) no	X
b) yes, please specify the percentage of mountains under protected areas out of total mountain areas in your country	
19. Has your country undertaken any activities to celebrate the International Year of Mountains and Eco-tourism?	
a) no	
b) yes, please specify	X

Case-studies

Please provide case-studies made by your country in conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems.

Below is a list of projects supporting NATURA 2000 protected areas in mountainous regions. Most of these projects use the ecosystem approach and provide details of management plans and conservation actions. Further information about these projects is available through the hyperlinks.

LIFE-Environment projects carried out in mountainous areas, by country:

AUSTRIA:

Integrated Environmental Management for Sustainable Development in the alpin region Grosses Walsertal - Austria (LIFE00 ENV/A/000249)

Comparison of technology, costs and environmental benefit of wastewater treatment plants in mountainous areas in the Alps (LIFE98 ENV/A/000547)

FRANCE:

Mountain forests : techniques for a multifunctional sustainable management (LIFE94 ENV/F/000713)

GERMANY:

Creation of a joint nature resource centre in the border-crossing biotope Pfälzer Wald - Vosges du Nord (LIFE94 ENV/D/000063)

GREECE:

PROMOTION OF TOURISM ACTIVITIES WITH REGARD TO NATURE CONSERVATION IN THE MOUNTAIN AREA OF PAIKO (LIFE94 ENV/GR/001396)

Demonstration to plant trees - forest zone creation on the west rocky egaleo mountain above the town of Perama. (LIFE97 ENV/GR/000380)

HYMETTUS. Innovative management of the suburban space with integration of environmental considerations into the various fields of activity and promotion of sustainable urban development. (LIFE99 ENV/GR/000525)

ITALY:

Realisation of a sustainable tourism project in the Council of Jesolo with the application of an Integrated Product Policy (IPP) model. (LIFE00 ENV/IT/000010)

Strategies and Tools Toward Sustainable Tourism in Mediterranean Coastal Areas (LIFE00 ENV/IT/000167)

ALEA (accompanying the midterritory of the two Lakes towards Eco-tourism actions) (LIFE99 ENV/IT/000051)

Environmental restoration of woods in Veneto region mountain areas (LIFE99 ENV/IT/000097)

PORTUGAL:

Ecotourism development project for Castanheira de Pêra (LIFE99 ENV/P/000667)

SPAIN:

Integrated recovery and sustainable system for the pasture land in the natural park of Somiedo. (LIFE94 ENV/E/001465)

SWEDEN:

Demonstration of methods to identify and preserve the biocultural heritage in European Forests (LIFE99 ENV/S/000628)

UNITED KINGDOM:

COMMON LAND MANAGEMENT IN UPLAND WALES (LIFE94 ENV/UK/000557)

LIFE-Nature projects for mountainous areas:

AUSTRIA:

Bear protection program for Austria (LIFE95 NAT/A/000399)

Wilderness area Dürrenstein - Niederösterreich (Lower Austria) (LIFE97 NAT/A/004117)

Management of Natural Forests in the National Park Kalkalpen (LIFE99 NAT/A/005915)

Combine of the flood plain-forests of the Upper Drau-river valley (Kärnten) (LIFE99 NAT/A/006055)

DENMARK:

Re-establishing lichen and coastal heaths in the Anholt desert, Denmark (LIFE94 NAT/DK/000492)

FINLAND:

Combining protection with other forms of land use in the natural boreal forests of the Syöte area (LIFE99 NAT/FIN/006268)

FRANCE:

Bearded Vulture conservation in Corsica (LIFE98 NAT/F/005197)

The protective management of moors and short-grass prairies in the Mediterranean (LIFE98 NAT/F/005200)

GERMANY:

Restoration and conservation of xeric grasslands in Germany (Rheinland-Pfalz) (LIFE02 NAT/D/008461)

Habitat Protection in the Rhön (LIFE93 NAT/D/010200)

Südlicher Chiemgau (LIFE94 NAT/D/000432)

Integrated Habitat Protection for the Grouse in the Black Forest (LIFE98 NAT/D/005087)

GREECE:

Protection and Management of the Population and Habitats of Ursus arctos in Greece (first phase) (LIFE93 NAT/GR/010800)

PROGRAMME FOR THE STUDY, PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF THE ENDANGERED SPECIES OF LAMMERGEIER (GYPAETUS BARBUTUS) (LIFE94 NAT/GR/001557)

Conservation of Ursus arctos and its habitats in Greece (2nd phase) (LIFE96 NAT/GR/003222)

Conservation and management actions in special protected areas in Greece (LIFE97 NAT/GR/004243)

Conservation of Gypaetus barbatus in Greece (LIFE98 NAT/GR/005276)

Implementation of management actions for Tavropos Lake area in Greece (LIFE99 NAT/GR/006480)

Conservation and management of Mainalo Mountain (LIFE99 NAT/GR/006481)

Amelioration and conservation of Rouva's Forest on Idi Mountain (LIFE99 NAT/GR/006497)

Implementation of Management Plans in Gramos and Radopi Areas, Greece (LIFE99 NAT/GR/006498)

HUNGARY:

Funding the base of long term large carnivore conservation in Hungary (LIFE00 NAT/H/007162)

IRELAND:

The re-introduction of Golden eagle into the Republic of Ireland (LIFE00 NAT/IRL/007145)

Restoring Active Blanket Bog in Ireland (LIFE02 NAT/IRL/008490)

ITALY:

Conservation of Tuscan Appennines mountain grasslands (LIFE00 NAT/IT/007239)

Alpe Veglia and Alpe Devero: actions of conservation of mountain grasslands and peatlands (LIFE02 NAT/IT/008574)

First phase of conservation of the mammals of the Alps and Appennines (LIFE92 NAT/IT/013000)

First phase of conservation of the mammals of the Alps and Appennines (LIFE92 NAT/IT/013001)

First phase of conservation of the mammals of the Alps and Appennines (LIFE92 NAT/IT/013002)

Second phase of a coordinated action plan in favour of the mammals in the Alps and the Apennines (LIFE94 NAT/IT/000575)

Conservation programme for the Po Delta Park geographical area (Second phase) (LIFE94 NAT/IT/000598)

Second phase of conservation of the mammals of the Alps and Apennines (LIFE94 NAT/IT/000607)

Second phase of a coordinated action plan in favour of the mammals in the Alps and the Apennines (LIFE94 NAT/IT/001077)

First phase of a coordinated action plan in favour of the mammals in the Alps and the Apennines (LIFE95 NAT/IT/004800)

First phase of a coordinated action plan in favour of the mammals in the Alps and the Apennines (LIFE95 NAT/IT/004802)

Protection and fruition of the sites of the Mont Avic Park included in the Nature 2000 Program. (LIFE96 NAT/IT/003052)

Proposed sites of conservation importance (SCIs - Bioitaly) environment restoration on the Groane Regional Park. (LIFE96 NAT/IT/003068)

Biocenosis requalification in Valvestino-Corno della Marogna (LIFE97 NAT/IT/004108)

V. Curone - V. S. Croce : protection priority habitats (LIFE98 NAT/IT/005037)

Naturalistic management in the Bitto Valley of Gerola (LIFE98 NAT/IT/005044)

R.I.S.M.A. Ambientale Revision of Natural Reserve Sasso Malascarpa (LIFE98 NAT/IT/005047)

Urgent safeguard actions for the SCI areas within the future Gennargentu N. P. (LIFE98 NAT/IT/005093)

Urgent actions for Bear in the SIC of the Sirente-Velino Regional Park (LIFE98 NAT/IT/005114)

Protection of biodiversity in Tuscan Valtiberina (LIFE98 NAT/IT/005125)

Beigua : urgent interventions for priority grasslands (LIFE98 NAT/IT/005136)

Project for the conservation of the wolf in the Pollino National Park (LIFE99 NAT/IT/006209)

Restoration of grassland habitats in the Monte Gemelli, Monte Guffone SIC (LIFE99 NAT/IT/006237)

Protection of habitats featuring the Silver Fir in the SCIs of the central and southern Apennines (phase II) (LIFE99 NAT/IT/006260)

PORTUGAL:

Conservation of the Wolf in Portugal (LIFE94 NAT/P/001055)

Conservation of the wolf in Portugal (LIFE95 NAT/P/004804)

NATURA 2000 network of the Setúbal Peninsula/Sado (LIFE98 NAT/P/005235)

Recovery of habitats and preys of the Lynx pardinus in Serra da Malcata (LIFE99 NAT/P/006423)

Gerês valley natural habitats restoration (LIFE99 NAT/P/006439)

ROMANIA:

In situ conservation of large carnivore in Vrancea County (LIFE02 NAT/RO/008576)

Conservation of an Euro-siberian-wood with oak (Quercus robur) (LIFE99 NAT/RO/006391)

Habitat conservation in the Bucegi National Park/Romania (LIFE99 NAT/RO/006411)

Enhancement of Piatra Craiului National Park (LIFE99 NAT/RO/006435)

SLOVENIA:

Management plan and urgent actions for Veternik and Oslica high dry meadows (LIFE00 NAT/SLO/007223)

Conservation of endangered habitats / species in the future Karst Park (LIFE02 NAT/SLO/008587)

SPAIN:

First phase of a conservation programme for the brown bear and its habitats in the Cantabrian mountains - Asturias (LIFE92 NAT/E/014500)

First phase of a conservation programme for the brown bear and its habitats in the Cantabrian mountains - Cantabria (LIFE92 NAT/E/014501)

First phase of a conservation programme for the brown bear and its habitats in the Cantabrian mountains - Galicia (LIFE92 NAT/E/014503)

First phase of a conservation programme for the brown bear and its habitats in the Cantabrian mountains - Fund. Oso Pardo (LIFE92 NAT/E/014504)

Documentation, analysis and diagnosis of the state of the basic network of drovers road (LIFE94 NAT/E/001126)

Second phase of Project 2001 - Creation of ecological corridors for endangered species (LIFE94 NAT/E/001164)

Plans for the restoration, conservation and management of the threatened flora species of Andalusia (LIFE94 NAT/E/001203)

Conservation programme for the the brown bear and its habitat in the Cantabrian mountains - 2nd phase (Galicia) (LIFE94 NAT/E/001458)

Action program for the conservation of the brown bear and its habitats in the Cantabrian mountains - 2nd phase (Asturias) (LIFE94 NAT/E/004827)

Action program for the conservation of the brown bear and its habitats in the Cantabrian mountains -2nd phase (Castilla y León) (LIFE94 NAT/E/004829)

Action program for the conservation of the brown bear and its habitats in the Cantabrian mountains - 2nd phase (Cantabria) (LIFE94 NAT/E/004830)

2nd phase of a conservation programme for three threatened vertebrates in the Pyrenees (LIFE95 NAT/E/000624)

Action programme for the conservation of the brown bear and its habitat in the Cantabrian mountains - 3rd phase (Cantabria) (LIFE95 NAT/E/001154)

Action programme for the conservation of the brown bear and its habitat in the Cantabrian mountains - 3rd phase (Asturias) (LIFE95 NAT/E/001155)

Action programme for the conservation of the brown bear and its habitat in the Cantabrian mountains - 3rd phase (Galicia) (LIFE95 NAT/E/001156)

Action programme for the conservation of the brown bear and its habitat in the Cantabrian mountains - 3rd phase (Castilla y Leon) (LIFE95 NAT/E/001158)

Conservation of threatened vertebrates in the Pyrenees - Cataluña (LIFE95 NAT/E/001159)

Conservation of threatened vertebrates in the Pyrenees - Aragon (LIFE95 NAT/E/001160)

Conservation of three threatened vertebrates in the Pyrenees - Navarra (LIFE95 NAT/E/001162)

Conservation of three threatened vertebrate species in the Pyrenees (french part) - III phase (LIFE95 NAT/E/001164)

Recovery actions for the Bonelli eagle (Hieraaetus fasciatus) in Navarra (LIFE96 NAT/E/003114)

Recovery plan of the Bearded Vulture in Northeastern Spain (LIFE98 NAT/E/005296)

Program for the conservation of the brown bear in Asturias (LIFE98 NAT/E/005305)

Conservation of the cantabrian Brown bear breeding nucleus (LIFE98 NAT/E/005326)

Recovery of areas of threatened flora in Sierra Nevada (LIFE98 NAT/E/005358)

Ancares project : co-ordinate management of two adjoining comunitarian sites of interest (LIC) (LIFE99 NAT/E/006352)

Ancares Project : co-ordinate management of two adjoining sites of community interest (LIFE99 NAT/E/006371)

Recovery of the Bonelli's eagle (Hieraaetus fasciatus) in La Rioja (Spain) (LIFE99 NAT/E/006419)

SWEDEN:

Kinneulle plateau mountain - restoration and conservation (LIFE02 NAT/S/008484)

Protection of Western Taiga, Grossjöberget in Bollnäs (LIFE97 NAT/S/004200)

Preservation of the Arctic Fox, Alopex lagopus, in Sweden and Finland (LIFE98 NAT/S/005371)

UNITED KINGDOM:

Combatting urban pressures degrading European heathlands in Dorset (LIFE00

NAT/UK/007079)

CONSERVATION OF ACTIVE BLANKET BOG IN SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND (LIFE94 NAT/UK/000802)

Integrating monitoring with management planning: a demonstration of good practice on NATURA 2000 sites in Wales (LIFE95 NAT/UK/000821)

LIFE-Third countries projects for mountainous areas

MOROCCO:

Evaluation of pollution risks and prevention measures in Chefchaoun and Tetouan (Morocco) (LIFE96 TCY/MA/24)

TUNISIA:

Conservation and rehabilitation of fragile insular ecosystems (LIFE97 TCY/TN/055)

Further Relevant Projects

There are also many relevant projects financed under the Fifth Framework Research Program. The following lists some of these. Links to the CORDIS database give further information:

1. MOLAR : Measuring and modelling the dynamic response of remote mountain lake ecosystems to environmental change. A programme of mountain lake research
2. AASER : Arctic and alpine stream ecosystem research
3. GLORIA-EUROPE "The European dimension of the global observation research initiative in alpine environments - a contribution to gtos"
4. CARBOMONT "Effects of land-use changes on sources, sinks and fluxes of carbon in European mountain areas"
5. Restoration of degraded Nama Karoo - the role of conservation islands
6. Protection and fruition of the sites of the Mont Avic Park included in the Nature 2000 Program
7. European mountain lake ecosystems: regionalisation, diagnostics & socio-economic evaluation
8. ECOMONT: Ecological effects of land use changes on european terrestrial mountain ecosystems. Research on ecosystemic processes in the alpine area, the Spanish Pyrenees and the Scottish Highlands
9. RANGE MANAGEMENT OF THE GRAZING LANDS IN MIDDLE AND HIGH MOUNTAINS
10. PASTORAL: The agricultural, ecological and socio-economic importance of extensive

livestock farming in Europe (includes coverage of mountain ecosystems)

11. LACOPE Landscape Development, Biodiversity and co-operative Livestock Systems in Europe (a new project with a major mountain component)
12. SAGRI-ALP: Sustainable Agricultural Land Use in Alpine Mountain Regions
13. MEDMONT: Tools for evaluating investment in the Mediterranean mountain areas – an integrated framework for sustainable development
14. REGALP: Regional Development and Cultural Landscape Change: The example of the Alps. Evaluating and Adjusting EU National Policies to Manage a Balanced change
15. IMALP: Implementation of Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Alpine Mountains, Based on a previous R&D project (SAGRI-ALP)
16. FOREST: Forest response to environmental stress at timberlines: Sensitivity of Northern, Alpine and Mediterranean forest limits to climate
17. SUSTALP: Evaluation of Instruments of the European Union in view of their Environmental Relevance in Structuring Agriculture in the Alpine Region
18. EMERGE: European Mountain Lake Ecosystems Regionalisation, Diagnostic & Socio-economic Evaluation
19. GLORIA-EUROPE: The European dimension of the Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments - a contribution to GTOS
20. SCANNET: Scandinavian/North European Network of Terrestrial Field Bases
21. BIOFORUM: European Biodiversity Forum - Implementing the Ecosystem Approach
22. LOWGREP: Landscape-use Optimisation with Regards of the Groundwater Resources Protection in the mountain hardrock areas
23. PAN: PAN European Thematic Network on Cultural Landscapes and their Ecosystems
24. BIOSCENE: Scenarios for reconciling biodiversity conservation with declining agricultural use in the mountain of Europe
25. CADZIE: Catastrophic Avalanches: Defence Structures and Zoning in Europe
26. DAMOCLES: Debrisfall Assessment in Mountain Catchment for Local End-Users

Further comments

Question 1. What is the relative priority your country accords to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems?

High: The importance of biodiversity protection is identified in various policy areas (environment, regional policy and agriculture) of the EU and many instruments, including recognition of the alpine biogeographic region (where alpine is a technical description of a high-altitude environment, not a geographical description of the European Alps – see the Biogeographic map of the European Union and Accession countries) have been adopted to promote support for biodiversity protection in mountainous areas. However, up until now, it has not appeared necessary to create a specific instrument for the conservation of mountainous biodiversity, particularly because its activities would often be duplicated by other instruments.

The EC's Sixth Environmental Action Programme identifies the need to halt biodiversity decline by 2010 and to promote the establishment of the NATURA 2000 network of protected areas (estimated to account for 15% of EU-15 territory) and to implement the provisions of the Habitats and Birds Directives. A substantial proportion of the proposed protected areas within the NATURA 2000 network will be located in mountainous areas. Supplementary actions foreseen for forests and for landscapes will also aid the global objective of biodiversity protection in mountainous areas.

For many years, the EC has recognised that agriculture in mountainous areas needs specific attention and as early as 1975, the EC introduced direct income support for farmers in mountain areas. The answer to question 8 gives further information about the effects of the EC's current agricultural policies on mountainous regions.

Mountain areas have also gained political significance in the European institutions. Members of the European Parliament have created the "Friends of the Mountains group". The Economic and Social Committee has also created a group to look at the future of mountain areas.

On 6 September 2001, the European Parliament adopted an initiative called "25 years' application of Community legislation for hill and mountain farming" (i.e. Council Directive 75/268/EEC). The subsequent resolution calls for a comprehensive plan for sustainable development of the Union's mountain regions and those of applicant countries, including safeguards for agriculture. In the coming months the EC will transmit to the European Parliament the follow up to this report.

2. How does your country assess the resources available for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems, both domestic and international?

Limiting: The EC addresses issues of conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems within broader fields such as policies regarding sustainable development in an environmental, agricultural or regional context. It is therefore difficult to identify precisely what resources are available for supporting the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems. It appears, however, that the lack of dedicated funding means that available resources are scarce. In the case of international projects, funds for mountain biodiversity have to come from the environment and tropical forest budget line and in the case of domestic projects, funding comes mainly from the "LIFE" budget which is also intended to fund all other types of environmental projects within the EU and neighbouring countries.

3. Has your country requested financial assistance from GEF for funding the activities for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems?

This question is only applicable to developing countries. Conversely, the EC manages financial programmes which are open to third countries, notably economies in transition and developing countries (see questions 7 and 11 and the “case studies” above).

Assessment, Identification and Monitoring

4. Has your country undertaken any assessment of direct and underlying causes of degradation and loss of biological diversity of mountain ecosystems?

Yes: Although the EC has not undertaken specific assessments of the direct and underlying causes of degradation and loss of biological diversity of mountain ecosystems, the status of biological diversity in mountainous areas and general environmental conditions are frequently addressed through the reports by the European Environment Agency (EEA). For instance, chapter 15 of the 1999 EEA report entitled “Environment at the European Union at the turn of the century” identifies several factors that have negative impacts on mountain ecosystems and that probably play a role in degrading mountain biodiversity. The EEA’s work in this area is ongoing and its current project “Europe’s Biodiversity”, is documenting the history of the European Alpine region, explaining how its current social and ecological conditions have arisen.

5. Has your country identified taxonomic needs for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity of mountain ecosystems?

Yes: Following the Habitats Directive (EC 92/43) and Birds Directive (EC 79/409), the EC has carried out extensive work on the taxonomy of biological diversity. In particular, it has worked to establish inventories of habitat-types and of species in the Alpine Biogeographical Region and the Mediterranean, Boreal and Continental Regions. Research activities have further promoted taxonomic work on biodiversity (e.g. the bear projects – see case studies above) and some LIFE projects have been used to promote habitat-type and species inventories in EU countries (e.g. Greece) and in accession countries (e.g. Cyprus).

Lists of Biogeographical zones, EU-wide habitat categorisation and the establishment of the NATURA 2000 network all build on this work and further work on taxonomy of biodiversity is expected following the new Research Framework of the Sixth Environmental Action Programme. This will contribute to work undertaken through the PELBS (Pan-European Landscape and Biodiversity Strategy) and work following the multi-annual programme of research deriving from the CBD and the UNFF programme.

6. Has your country made any assessment of the vulnerability or fragility of the mountains in your country?

Yes: The EEA studies mentioned in the answer to question 4 provide detailed information on the biodiversity of mountain habitats and the current threats to mountain societies and ecosystems such as socio-economic shifts, increasing tourism and traffic, changes in land use, global climate change and environmental degradation resulting from current use-patterns. The studies also

recognise that in accession countries more mountain areas may become endangered through rapid economic development and that re-establishing plant communities is a very slow process at this altitude and sometimes impossible. EC services – such as DGs Agriculture, Environment and Research have also carried out assessments of the vulnerability of mountainous areas and the fragility of mountain ecosystems (see, amongst others, the lists of projects given in “case studies” above).

7. Has your country made any assessment important for conservation of biological diversity of mountain ecosystems at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels? (You may wish to use the Annex I of the Convention for categories of biodiversity important for conservation)

No: However, the EC envisages that such assessments will, in the future, be carried out in response to the Habitats and Birds Directives. It is also envisaged that the establishment of the NATURA 2000 network will require assessments of mountain ecosystems (at the species and ecosystem level) in order to manage and monitor the mountain areas within this network. The answer to question eight also gives information about relevant projects regarding genetic resources. In addition to these, there are many current research projects assessing biodiversity conservation within mountain ecosystems. However, these often focus on single sites, small mountainous areas or specific ecosystems or species (see, amongst others, the lists of projects given in “case studies” above).

Research projects

The EC has financed a variety of research projects which aim to evaluate management practices and assess the adequacy of EU policies to achieve the objectives set by the CBD, the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the targets set in the Environmental Action Programmes and other documents in key policy areas. A full list of biodiversity related research projects and demonstration actions can be found in the [CORDIS database](#).

The Fifth Framework Programme of Research also had a key action on “Sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry and integrated development of rural areas, including mountain areas”. Following this, a number of research proposals were financed which had a direct or indirect mountain or mountain ecosystem focus. One project specific to mountain biodiversity, called BioScene, started in 2002.

Further information may also be found at the EC’s Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) - <http://biodiversity-chm.eea.eu.int/>.

Regulatory and Information System and Action Plan

8. Has your country developed regulations, policies and programs for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems?

Yes: The European EC has prepared the EU Biodiversity Strategy and four thematic Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) for: conservation of natural resources; agriculture; fisheries; and development and economic co-operation. All identify the need to integrate biodiversity concerns into other EU policies and to develop actions and programs to enhance conservation.

Agriculture

The agriculture BAP identifies positive measures to protect biodiversity, conserve local livestock breeds and plant varieties through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Support for mountain regions is co-financed by the main financial instrument of the CAP (the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund – EAGGF) and member states.

The EU also explicitly recognises that agriculture has a role to play in maintaining landscapes and habitat management. The 1999 “Rural Development” Regulation reformed funding under the CAP to be directed not only at agricultural production but also the other roles farming plays. The latest rules for applying this regulation require that the EAGGF funds a broad scope of rural development measures such as:

- supporting Less Favoured Areas (LFAs);
- agri-environmental measures including: rearing endangered indigenous breeds of farm animals and preserving genetic resources of endangered, locally adapted plants;
- forestry measures; and
- Article 33 measures (for example diversification off-farm, protection of rural heritage, protection of the environment, or land improvement).

The following table gives examples of some measures adopted by EU Member States under rural development programmes that are funded by the EAGGF.

Member State	Agri-environmental measures in mountainous areas
France	Aquitaine : amount of agri-environmental grants increased in the bear zone and in the Pyrenees national park
Spain - Catalonia - Galicia	Protection of natural spaces and forests Agri-environmental preservation
Austria	Preservation of endangered local breeds
Italy - Bolzano	Biotope conservation mainly in natural parks

Progress of the above measures is evaluated using agri-biodiversity indicators developed by the EC.

Many activities and integrated projects relevant to biodiversity within mountain areas are financed under the EC LEADER+ initiative. This initiative gives support to agricultural production methods which are compatible with the protection and improvement of the environment, the landscape and its features, natural resources, soil and **genetic diversity** (articles 22-24). More information can be found at: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/rur/publi/info_en.pdf.

9. Has your country applied the ecosystem approach (adopted at COP 5) in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems?

Yes: The ecosystem approach has been proposed by the EC as a way to implement the EU biodiversity strategy and subsequent action plans and the strategy itself lists taking an ecosystem approach as one of its “guiding principles”. In particular, the EC is taking an ecosystem approach to establish the NATURA 2000 network.

This network has been established by partitioning the EU into bio-geographical zones. Within these zones, ecosystem and habitat-types have been identified and in all member states an inventory has been made of areas which could be entered into the system of proposed “Sites of Community Interest” (pSCIs). The ecosystem approach has been used to assess the adequacy of designation of habitats and in the future the ecosystem approach will be used to formulate management plans for the NATURA 2000 sites. Member states will then be responsible for the creation and maintenance of these sites.

10. Does your national biodiversity strategy and action plan cover mountain biological diversity?

Yes: However, not in great detail.

The BAP for the conservation of natural resources specifically mentions that mountain areas should be given special consideration in particular adequate EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) must be carried out for any public or private projects that are likely to affect mountainous regions.

The BAP for agriculture similarly mentions the effects, both positive and negative, that agriculture can have on mountain ecosystems and gives suggestions of how to ensure agriculture supports the aims of the CBD.

These are being implemented through various instruments such as NATURA 2000 and the EIA directive. Indicators for biodiversity in mountainous areas have also been developed (see answer to question 8) in order to monitor the effectiveness of current measures.

11. Has your country disseminated the relevant information concerning management practices, plans and programmes for conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems?

Yes: The EC, through its provision of financial support, is directly involved with management practices, plans and programmes for conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems. In all cases, financial support requires that information about the implementation of management practices, plans or programmes, including information on lessons learned, is reported back to the EC. This reported information is then disseminated through the web-sites of the EC funding instruments and in many cases also through the web-sites of the beneficiaries. The main funding instrument for such projects is LIFE. The LIFE database contains information on over 1000 LIFE-funded projects of which over 110 concern mountainous areas).

A list of financed projects on mountainous areas is presented in the “case studies” section above and further information about research projects can also be found in the answer to questions 6, 7 and 8.

Cooperation

12. Has your country undertaken any collaboration with other Parties for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems at the regional level or within

a range of mountains?

Yes: The EC has promoted the establishment of programmes and projects that promote cross-border co-operation between member states (e.g. in the Alps and Pyrenees). The LEADER+ initiative (see answer to question 8) may also give funding to such cross-border co-operation within the EU.

Programmes and projects that exceed the boundaries of the EU-15 are also promoted. For instance, special programmes financed by the INTERREG initiative provide for cross-border co-operation that extends beyond the EU borders – such as a co-operation programme between Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Slovenia. The implementation of the NATURA 2000 network will also expand to the ten accession countries when they join the EU. Active collaboration with accession countries to amend the annexes of the Birds and Habitats directives, taking into account the enlargement of the EU, is nearly completed.

13. Has your country signed or ratified any regional or international treaty concerning mountains?

Yes: The EC is a signatory to the Alpine Convention. However, it does not currently participate regularly in the works of the Convention due to lack of adequate human resources. This is intended to be remedied in the future.

Relevant thematic areas and cross-cutting issues

14. Has your country taken account of mountain ecosystems while implementing thematic programmes of work on agricultural; inland waters; forest; and dry and sub-humid lands biological diversity?

Yes, included in most programmes of work: The EC has considered mountain ecosystems when producing many policies that have a cross cutting effect, including those that apply to sectors other than the environment. The EC also recognises that mountainous areas require differentiated planning that is adapted to local conditions and mountain communities frequently receive a high rate of support for maintaining their traditional ways of life and for protecting their environment – see answer to question 8.

DG Regional Policy has recently launched a study in member states and accession countries in order to look at problems related to the application of structural policies in mountainous areas and to better define mountainous zones. The study aims to:

- improve the concept of what is considered a mountainous region;
- collect comprehensive statistical information for mountainous areas; and
- analyse the socio-economic structure of mountain regions and the impacts of national policies and EC programmes.

The first results are expected in 2003; further information can be found at: www.nordregio.se.

Within environmental policy, issues concerning mountainous areas and their ecosystems are being researched in:

- the application and implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives;
- the Water framework Directive (EC 2000/60), where mountain areas are recognised for

- their role as water catchment areas; and
- the EU Soil Strategy (see “[Towards a Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection](#)”), where attention is being paid to the problems of soil erosion in mountainous areas.

15. Has your country taken any measures to ensure that the tourism in mountains is sustainable?

Yes, but in early stages of development: Tourism is not an EC competence. However, the various EC programmes and policies which encourage sustainable development (and in particular the Cardiff process which mandates integrating environmental considerations into all policies) are having an increasing impact on tourism and the EC does financially support sustainable forms of tourism in rural mountain areas through structural funds. In order to analyse the EC’s potential to influence tourism, a working group has been convened within the EC’s Enterprise Directorate General – see http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/services/tourism/index_en.htm.

Sustainable tourism has also been analysed in relation to NATURA 2000 network in the EC. This has produced the publication “[Sustainable tourism and NATURA 2000: guidelines, initiatives and good practices in Europe](#)”.

16. Has your country taken any measures to protect the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in mountain ecosystems?

Yes, some programmes being implemented: LEADER+ projects may help to protect local knowledge and support local development adapted to specific environmental conditions. Local traditions that use land in a sustainable manner also may be supported through providing increased subsidies to offset any additional effort involved. Such programmes are available for implementation by all EU member states.

17. Has your country developed any programmes for the protection of natural and cultural heritages in the mountains?

Yes: A variety of funding instruments are provided by the EC to encourage the protection of natural and cultural heritage in mountainous areas of the EU. Article 33 of the Rural Development Regulation (see question 8) allows for the development of projects related to natural and cultural heritage. Structural Funds provide support for actions that promote cultural issues and nature protection within the EU and SAPARD (the Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development – EC Regulation 1268/99) provides support for agriculture and rural development in accession countries, including agri-environment, forestry and IAS control measures. Member States and accession countries set their own priorities through their programming documents, which are approved by the EC and are implemented by the Member States and the project's beneficiaries.

18. Has your country established protected areas in mountains?

No: Establishing protected areas is within the remit of member states, not the EC. However protected areas are supported within the framework of EC regulations, particularly following the

NATURA 2000 initiative – see the case studies and answers to questions 1, 5, 7, 9, 10, 18.

19. Has your country undertaken any activities to celebrate the International Year of Mountains and Eco-tourism?

Yes: the EC organised a Conference on "EU policies and mountain areas", as a contribution towards the International Year of Mountains. This two-day conference involved around 400 stakeholders from the EU and candidate countries.

The target of the conference was to discuss how the EU, working with other stakeholders in mountain regions, can help to create opportunities for sustainable development. In particular, the conference hosted an intensive question and answer session on the impact of current EC policies (including regional, agriculture, rural development, transport and environment policies) on mountainous areas.

Further information about the conference can be found at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/events/mountains/index_en.htm