



Conclusion

The thematic seminar in Flaam – 10 and 11 May 2006 - was the final step in the process of getting results and conclusions on the theme 2- allowed to synthesise 6 key ideas the exchanges made during the seminar, that we briefly report as follow (see also the Final Document worked out by Euromontana “Conclusions and Main Lessons Learned from the Thematic and Consultative Seminar Flaam”):

1. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are Essential: territorial dynamism is crucial to design sustainable development; this requires intersectorial collaboration and cooperation, commitment of the population and business community as well as the activation and maximisation of local competences; the bottom-up approach, which the EU Commission so vocally advocates, must find its place in PPPs with the active involvement of the local population;
2. Cooperation Between Territorial Authorities and Project Stakeholders: Mixed Experiences: territorial authorities are not just a funding source: “While territorial authorities must be able to produce a cheque book, they should also be expected to produce a notepad to discuss projects with citizens”;
3. Knowledge and knowledge management as a success factor for promoting mountain products: mountain people live in a “knowledge society” and mountain areas are by some believed to be “low-knowledge societies”; therefore, it as well as the territorial authorities need a broad set of knowledge: knowledge “in”, “for” and “about”;
4. Evaluating and Supporting Projects: The Holistic Approach Is Essential: thanks to this approach to evaluation, it is possible to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual projects as a whole and therefore to devise a specific project support strategy tailored to the needs of the initiative; public authorities must provide a range of appropriate tools – i.e. adjusted to the requirements of individual projects – over a suitable period of time including finance, networking, training, monitoring, advice, services, etc.;
5. The Mission of Territorial Authorities: Effectiveness in the Use of the Public Founding of Course, But There Is Also a Need to Accept to Take Risks: public authorities only play their role fully when taking risks (i.e. testing and supporting innovative projects), as this kind of intervention alone allows them to retain both the ability to modulate regional development and the ambition to influence outcomes;
6. Finding Specific Mountain Dimension to the Role of Local and Regional Authorities: It is also important to define mountain areas not by comparison to or in competition with other European regions, but rather according to their specific features and assets. It is hazardous to leverage the uniqueness of the mountain environment for the sole purpose of securing additional support. However, the very nature of mountain areas means that they should secure specific competencies.