

Module « Mountains as challenging areas »

Content of the module

This module is an introduction to local development issues, taking the case of European mountain areas as an example. Mountain areas are often considered as being areas facing many natural constraints (climatic, topographic... etc). The frequent use of the terms « less favoured areas », « areas with natural handicaps », « areas with natural constraints » etc... illustrate quite well how mountain areas can be considered. Nevertheless, mountains can also be seen as areas with many assets : biodiversity reservoirs, recreational areas.... The preservation and the development of these areas are therefore of real interest for national and local authorities as well as for local stakeholders. Various challenges have to be tackled : preservation of natural resources, maintenance of rural populations and of economic activities, accessibility, adaptation to climate change etc.... In this module, we will focus on strategies, projects and initiatives set up by local stakeholders to develop these areas and show off their assets and on how public policy set up at European, national or local level can support this development.

The main questions that will be dealt with in the course are : what are the main issues to be faced in mountain areas ? Which strategies are set up by local stakeholders to tackle them ? How do public policies support these strategies and projects ? Which role does agriculture play in the development of these areas ?

We will mainly focus on mountain quality products and tourism to illustrate strategies and initiatives set up locally to enhance the sustainable development of European mountain areas.

Learning outcomes :

The main learning outcomes of the module are :

- Appreciate concretely the physical, ecological, social and economic specificities of mountain areas
- Understand the local development challenges to be faced there
- Know the main policies that can be implemented in mountain areas
- Understand and analyse the points of view and strategies of local stakeholders
- Develop a prospective vision of future challenges and means of action to be developed in mountain areas.

Activities :

The module will be based on lectures and practicals given by researchers from ISARA as well as by experts and stakeholders working on local and sustainable development issues in mountain areas. Having this large panel of speakers will allow to get diverse perspectives on this topic, with presentation of various experiences and case studies.

Next to this, a case study analysis will be carried, with visits and local stakeholders interviews. This will allow students to analyse a local case.

Examination :

The examination will aim at evaluating students' capacity to make holistic analysis of development issues in mountain areas. It will be organised in two parts :

- Group work which will result in an oral presentation
- A report analysing the outcome of the case study analysis

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