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DIPLOCAT AGORA 13

Challenges for mountain regions in Europe

From depopulation to sustainability

DIPLOCAT DIGITAL TALK - 6 May 2021



Report by Marcel·lí Pascual Pascual, moderator of the debate. Pascual is a graduate in Journalism and Political Science from the Autonomous University of Barcelona and he is currently the editorial director of Edicions Salòria and the magazine “Viure als Pirineus”.

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1. Contextualization

This session belongs to the DIPLOCAT Digital Talks cycle. The speakers debate some of the current challenges for the mountain regions of Europe, focusing on three different geographical areas that have dealt with those issues: the Vall d’Aran in northern Catalonia, the alpine cantons of Switzerland and the Occitanie region of France.

DIPLOCAT has a working group for the internationalization of Catalonia’s municipalities and has also a specific plan of activities linked to it. Specifically, this conference was organized in response to the interest shown by the General Council of Aran and the city of Viella i Mitjaran.

This summary of the event maintains the basic chronology of the discussion, which can be seen in full in [this video](#).

2. Goals

Laura Foraster i Lloret, Secretary General of DIPLOCAT, opened the debate by stating that the exodus from rural areas represents one of the main current challenges in developed countries and is one of the major concerns of small towns and villages. If we look at the cartographic data regarding depopulation, it mainly takes place in those territories that are considered “mountain areas”, which also often receive avalanches of visitors during the summer holidays or the ski season.

The study carried out by the Observatory of the Rural World in 2020, however, indicated that the demographic indicators for 2019 showed for the first time a slight growth in the rural population as a whole, which, despite not being very significant, is a break from the depopulation dynamic of recent years. As a result of the pandemic and the accelerated implementation of remote working, a slow but steady flow of people has been moving from urban areas to less populated areas, rethinking their ways of life.

There are numerous recent initiatives that clearly illustrate this trend, such as the Catalonia Rural Hub project promoted by the Government of Catalonia, the Mobile World Capital Barcelona encouraging digital talent to take root in rural areas of Catalonia, or the project of the Tarragona Provincial Council and the Universitat Rovira i Virgili to prevent the depopulation of the rural areas of Camp de Tarragona and Terres de l’Ebre. It will therefore be necessary to continue analysing the data to find out whether or not Covid-19 has definitively changed the residential habits of the Catalan population.

Foraster then shifted the focus of the debate to the need to talk about life in mountain regions and the direct effect of tourism on the territory and the natural environment. She stressed that the debate should be framed within the United Nation’s sustainable development goal number 15, relating to the protection of terrestrial flora and fauna. Therefore, our concern is not merely European but global, and a matter which needs to be addressed urgently. We need to consider how we can promote the sustainability of the environment in mountainous natural spaces, and whether we can make this sustainability compatible with the economic and social development of high mountain areas, and which tourism and territory model we should focus on in order to ensure that the plans are compatible.

The objective of the debate is to share good practices and discuss the need to ensure global sustainability in terms of life and tourism, but also, and in particular, the recreational use of mountain areas, the sustainable development of its natural resources and other forms of economic development within the territory.

3. Territorial model and sustainability

At the initial point of the debate, the three speakers reflected on their respective territorial models and how this model fits in with a concept that was almost unknown just a few years ago but has become crucial today: sustainability.

The Aran Valley

The General Council of Aran is the highest institution in the Aran Valley, in force from 1313 to 1834, when it was suppressed during the creation of the Spanish provinces. It was restored through the special regime laws of 1990 and currently has several powers granted to it by the Catalan government: tourism, environment, health, social services and culture.

The socio-economic reality of the Aran Valley has long been based on livestock, agriculture and logging. Until the sixties, the economy of the families in this area was basically in the primary sector, but this changed with the birth of snow tourism. As a result, the connections of the area improved with the opening of the Viella tunnel, the first *parador* (mountain hotel), the ski resort, etc. The territory underwent a great transformation over the last fifty years, both in terms of its landscape and the socio-economic field.

The General Council of Aran had plans and projects to renew the strategic approach of the territory, but as explained by the Council's President Maria Vergés, Covid-19 has complicated everything. For some time now, the Aran Valley has begun to rethink on which economic, environmental and social factors it should base certain projects. One of the most relevant factors to consider has been the process of citizen participation carried out during the months of confinement, called Aran 2030. One hundred people took part. They were able to show that the territory was willing to bet on sustainability as an intrinsic value. So much so that the Council has defined sustainability as one of the basic priority values for the development of the Valley over the next 10 years.

Based on the Aran 2030 plan, one of the first projects for the development of sustainable tourism has been launched. Submitted in response to several calls from the Catalan government, it has finally been accepted and the Council has started work, in parallel with the application to become a UNESCO biosphere reserve and the creation of a mountain rural innovation centre. Vergés stated that these projects must be the drivers that help change the tides to achieve changes and accomplish the region's goals, such as innovation, keeping talent at home and the redefinition of how the territory should be managed.

The Council is also aware that the environmental balance is a basic necessity, even more so when the territory is currently dedicated to tourism. Work has also begun on diversifying the economy. Climate change has affected the sustainability of the ski resorts because when there is no snow, they cannot function. So there is always a debate on the table concerning the socio-economic impact. Likewise with Covid-19.

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important to keep in mind the value of mountain areas and the environmental value of these territories. The Council believes that there is a risk that urban areas think of the mountain and remote areas merely as parks or gardens where the landscape and nature must be kept intact. This is fine but you must take into account that people living there must be able to live with the same conditions, opportunities and rights as people living in the cities. Vergés noted that it is important to have an in-depth debate with the urban areas to ensure they understand the challenges of these rural societies. Also with other mountain areas, so that they can get to know each other better and discover good practices and shared challenges.

Occitania

Thierry Rebuffat, Head of Territory, Mountain and Area Management for the Occitania Pyrenees-Mediterranean region, explained that Occitania is a very large area, which includes the Midi-Pyrénées and Roussillon regions, with large cities such as Toulouse and Montpellier. Occitania has 6 million inhabitants and 1.2 million live in mountain areas, divided between the Pyrenees and the Massif Central. Between Toulouse and Montpellier, there are about 5 million inhabitants, but they are in metropolitan areas very close to the mountains, and therefore have economic and historical links connecting them to life in the mountains. Many problems are very similar to those in the mountain areas, but with a different geography.

According to Rebuffat, there has been a very large rural exodus over the last 30 or 40 years. However, the mountain population has not decreased much. Levels have been preserved thanks to the regional policies implemented. In 2018, the Occitania Pyrenees-Mediterranean region drew up a Mountain Plan for 2025, together with the state government and general councils. This project seeks to serve the needs of mountain regions and is open to citizens, associations and businesses. It currently has 800 members. The main goal is to create a more inclusive culture and produce greater wealth in the territory by detecting strengths and generating employment. “The mountain is a territory where we live and we cannot limit ourselves only to being a space for leisure. We are complete territories, we have a full life and the people there are inhabitants, not just tourists” said Rebuffat.

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The strategies for the region are focused on protecting resources and improving life in the mountains thanks to new travel connections, new telecommunications and improvements in road and highway transport. Occitania obviously has vitally important goals for tourism, but they believe that, compared to other territories, they have a much more holistic view in terms of development, which goes beyond tourism. It is necessary to attract activity of another economic nature. For Occitania, the university and research centres in small urban centres in the mountain region are very important.

In order to exploit its potential, Occitania has territorial agreements between the various regions and disposes of some autonomy, although not as much as the Aran Valley. In Occitania, they have what they call “small centralities”: small towns or cities that are allowed a certain political freedom to put their decisions into practice. This strategy allows them to be more attentive to what the people and citizens who live there are saying, so that ideas and projects are not always coming from the big cities. According to Rebuffat, it could be called a “republic of the territory”, because everyone is important, everyone collaborates and everyone must give an opinion and get involved to help improve the territory.

The mountain offers many resources to urban areas, such as food, agriculture or leisure, and it is therefore only fair that urban areas provide funding to help carry out these development strategies. The region is

not the only area that finances territorial policies. They also try to receive direct funds from the state and the departments that represent the state. For example, the Pyrenees Agency has recently been created with co-financing from the department and the state to promote tourism and stimulate commercial activity, as well as to provide training and development for professional projects. The aim is to generate technical skills and professional knowledge and train citizens. There are many opportunities in the French mountains and professional projects are chosen with rigid controls, which ensure very positive results.

There are also other organizations, such as CIDAP (Interregional Committee for the Development and Improvement of the Pyrenees), which has worked on assisting those areas that had no internet or mobile connectivity, and on other issues such as cross-border cooperation. Occitania strongly defends cooperation between regions in the Pyrenees, with examples such as the Three Nations Parks, which also includes natural parks in Catalonia and Andorra. This provides even more value to the region.

Swiss Cantons

The Alpine Canton Conference is the union of eight independent governments, with twelve institutional representatives. There are 26 cantons in Switzerland and the conference of cantonal governments includes only those eight. This represents 43% of the Swiss mountain area but only 13% of the population. 85% of the rest of Switzerland's population lives in urban centres, with a clear separation and difference between mountain and city life.

Fadri Ramming, general secretary of the Government Conference on Alpine Cantons, explained that this institution is currently dealing with many issues, although it was created with the initial goal of improving water management. Over time, the issues that most interest the citizens of the cantons, such as tourism, agriculture and finance, have been added so that they can reach the parliaments of the various Swiss regions and make their voices heard.

Unlike other rural areas, the alpine cantons are 100% mountainous regions, with very poor travel connections and no solid structures. Therefore, they do not have the same possibilities for development as cities have. However, the cantons are not homogeneous. There are cantons that have very good economic conditions because they are not very far from the urban centres. In contrast, other regions are much more isolated: The valleys where the country's major rivers flow, for example, have little industry and very little economic activity. Other valleys are even more peripheral, where there is almost nothing. They have very serious problems related to population stagnation, economic constraints and little agriculture or tourism. The economic possibilities are very scarce and depopulation is growing.

It is in these kind of regions where the cantons are investing most efforts. The idea is that the people in the mountains must be able to live, go to school and get an education just like in the urban centres. "Why should we have this destiny? If we were born in the mountains, do we have no other choice but to go to the city to study and never come back? We want to come back!" says Ramming. He believes that economic progress is basic, because it provides incentives to continue living there and helps families to be able to stay in the area. Without a stable economic base, there will be serious problems in the more isolated mountain areas.

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4. Mountain tourism

At this point, it was time to debate on the values and problems posed by tourism in the respective geographical areas. Is it a necessary evil or is it the pillar that allows the development of other activities? Or both at the same time? How can the communities sustainably manage tourist seasonality and overcrowding?

Swiss Cantons

According to Fadri Ramming, tourism does not offer any added value, but it is the economic basis for the cantons. Often there is no other alternative and this creates a strong dependence on tourism.

There are three types of tourism areas in the cantons. Firstly and most well known, Sankt Moritz, Davos and the large ski resorts, which are the economic engines of the cantons. They are evolving very well and providing economic benefits that can be allocated to the neighbouring regions. Secondly, the areas where there are small villages with more family tourism, which are helped financially with the benefits of the tourism cited above. Finally, there are other areas where there is agricultural activity and other complementary economic activities, which do not receive any economic impact from the ski resorts and have little tourism for themselves.

Ramming emphasizes that tourism is very important for Switzerland and they are aware of the great global competition with other ski resorts and destinations, such as the United States or the Maldives. In addition, the Swiss franc is very expensive, which makes it difficult to attract large numbers of foreign tourists. He explains that in recent years, a number of tourism sectors have disappeared, but they are adapting by trying to increase domestic tourism options, differentiating themselves from their competitors and promoting an offer that is environmentally friendly.

Ramming concluded his speech by emphasizing that people in mountain areas believe that mountain life is something that needs to be protected and that this often slows down economic development, especially because of the problem posed by the creation of infrastructure. That is why he demands that certainly infrastructure should be created locally and integrated into nature, but it must be built, because the mountain cannot simply be the city's garden and it needs its own economic development more than ever.

The Aran Valley

Vergés began her speech by supporting Ramming's position and admitted that tourism has been demonized, especially because the overcrowding has complicated life in the territories and the management of resources. But she insisted that we must not forget that it represents 80% of the Aran Valley's GDP and is, therefore, the economic base for the region. However, the President of the General Council of Aran explained what kind of tourism suits the territory. It is not about fighting tourism, but about attracting the right kind of tourism. According to Vergés, the candidacy to become a biosphere reserve is intended to help make the Aran Valley visible in the international arena and help it stand out for its landscapes and its commitment to sustainable development.

The candidacy will not involve a restrictive attitude towards the use of the territory, but will put it at the centre and help promote local development. For a long time, the relationship between territories and the far-away decision-making centres, located in the large cities, has not been as smooth as one would expect. In the cities, they make regulations and laws that affect the territories, but often no specific consensus or realities are taken into account. Therefore, the aim is to help give the Aran Valley some

recognition which already comes with marked criteria and seeks coordination between the administrations, but with the added participation of the territory.

Vergés explained that biosphere reserves are zones that not only aim to conserve and improve biological diversity, but want also to promote cultural and traditional heritage, local economy, sustainable tourism and, very importantly, territorial knowledge as a laboratory for learning, research and the dissemination of sustainable development.

In short, what the Aran Valley is trying to do is, in the first place, to reorient the tourism sector, which will continue to be the fundamental economic pillar. However, work needs to be done to decrease the seasonality of the economy and retain talent, opportunities and skilled jobs. Secondly, it is necessary to diversify the economy by promoting different activities, especially entrepreneurship, whether in sustainable agriculture, training, healthcare services, etc. The biosphere reserve can be a big help towards these goals. Last but not least, the people of the territory must be the ones who decide where and how they want to live.

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Occitania

Rebuffat began his speech by highlighting one of the objectives of Occitania's tourism policy: a four-season tourism. This must be achieved by diversifying activities suitable to different times of the year and avoiding seasonal activities. Rebuffat highlights the need to get out of the winter skiing mono-industry, something that all the territories present today focus on. Occitania wants to escape the duality of ski slopes in winter and hiking and excursions in summer. Along these lines, the area has started to promote thermal tourism and medical therapies.

The Occitan administration believes that tourism is not a necessary evil, but an opportunity, and diversifying the range of activities on offer is the key to success. They are looking to the Massif Central as their example for a possible tourism model, with more widespread tourism, much more rural, not so industrial, with points of concentrated tourism, but with economic diversification. Rebuffat explained that they have action plans with local parties to diversify nature and leisure activities, especially to make them more accessible to a non-professional sports audience. For example, the Guzet ski resort has electric bicycles that allow many more people to enjoy the sport. He also highlights other activities, such as handicrafts, bee-keeping and local products related to tourism but which point to other sectors of activity.

The financing model for these areas is based on the Company of the Pyrenees, a public-private entity that provides funds to those territories with fewer resources and makes it possible, for example, to reform or convert ski resorts into spaces with other activities. In terms of sustainability, Rebuffat explained the intention to no longer invest in artificial snow cannons, but to respect existing snow infrastructures.

5. Mountain life and depopulation

Various data and reports such as the EU's social exclusion and poverty report highlight the importance of urgently identifying solutions to the problem of depopulation. The speakers reflected on which measures could be useful to address the problem, what role access to telecommunications and transport networks can play and whether there are any other sectors that they consider key in linking population and territory.

Occitania

Rebuffat notes that there are many factors involved in this issue and highlights infrastructure, transport and telecommunications as some of the most important. In Occitania, good travel connections make it possible to develop new activities that were impossible 25 years ago. Funding is provided by the presidency of the region to develop the high-speed network and good connections, even in completely isolated areas. For example, thanks to the existing infrastructures and connections, companies in the aeronautical or automotive sector of the Massif Central can now also settle in the mountain area.

According to Rebuffat, the Covid-19 crisis has exacerbated the demand for relocations, but this will only happen if the infrastructure allows it. However, Rebuffat emphasized that the Pyrenees must be assertive in order to retain or “import” talent. He explained a case in which, given the possibility of moving, the employees of a company in the digital field of Toulouse preferred the Ariège over the Massif Central due to the leisure activities and quality of life. Ariège has all the essential needs: high school, nursing home, hospital, leisure and culture, broadband and good travel connections, as well as spectacular landscapes. This makes families choose to go there, which makes it possible for tertiary activities to be put in place.

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Therefore, quality infrastructure, connections and public services are key to maintaining the population in the territory and the challenge must be faced with a global vision.

The Aran Valley

Vergés explained that in the Aran Valley, despite having a very stagnant population, the population pyramid is very balanced. However, Vergés explained several measures to prevent depopulation which contrast with the structural approach of Occitania.

The Aran Council has been more focused on improving the quality of life of citizens, offering more services, especially care for people and culture, as this also creates employment. She emphasized that they will work to improve internet connections and access to housing, so that young people who go abroad to study can return and develop their life and professional careers, thus retaining talent. Vergés called for specific taxation and affordable rent policies to allow young people who wish to emancipate themselves to stay in the Aran Valley.

Vergés explained that the pandemic has highlighted the fact that the overcrowding in the cities is not working and that there will be a before and after in the management of cities and rural areas. To carry out these plans, the Council believes that it is key to have an administration, legislation and taxation adapted to mountain areas. Vergés called for the empowerment of mountain areas and to improve cooperation between the territories that have the same problems.

Swiss Cantons

As for the strategy for dealing with depopulation and activating the economy, Ramming admitted that there is no specific formula behind the strategy, although there are different aspects that need to be intensified and consolidated. The strategy is like a Swiss watch, with various parts and gears, which must

be joined so that they fit together properly. Ramming believes that it will take a lot of work and a lot of political initiative to be able to move forward and ensure that those who are born in the mountains can return to the mountains and have good living conditions. What is clear is that the foundations need to be laid so that the people who want to do so can live in the mountains.

6. Culture

It may seem that culture is detached from the territorial and economic model of an area or that its importance is somehow secondary. The three speakers reflected on whether this is the case or not.

Swiss Cantons

Ramming explained that culture is very important to the cantons. The various areas have very different cultures, and they are very strong and diversified. Switzerland has not only four national languages, but there are also many dialects. According to Ramming, there are deep-rooted traditions.

The philosophy of the canton conference is that everyone should be aware of what their roots are and all Swiss citizens need to understand the reality of mountain areas. By discussing the mountain lifestyle, urban centres will become aware that the mountain is not only isolated, but that the people who live there are interesting both for their wealth and all what they can provide to the inhabitants of the cities. More than measures, projects or economic funds, the area needs to create awareness and a new sensibility that takes into account that the lifestyle in the mountains is also positive for the environment.

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Culture serves to create an economic base in the mountains, especially traditional culture, which allows for services that will attract qualified professionals.

Using the relocation of the company from Toulouse as an example, Ramming expressed the need to have an administration that responds quickly and efficiently, adapted to the needs of companies and citizens in the region. Culture serves to create an economic base in the mountains, especially traditional culture, which allows for services that will attract qualified professionals.

Occitania

The region is addressing the cultural issue based on three premises, which are complementary and necessary.

The first one is that culture contributes to the quality of life of the territories and facilitates contact between people throughout the year. Rebuffat sees it as very positive that the people who live in the mountains are often part of associations and create a cultural life for themselves, which contributes to social cohesion.

The second consideration is that cultural events, especially festivals and exhibitions, create an economic impact on the territory in terms of accommodations and tourism business. According to the analysis of the region, the return on investment in cultural events is very high for the territory, generating an economic impact 8 or 10 times greater than the investment.

The third premise is that culture covers a very wide range of concepts, which makes it possible for the area to diversify its mountain tourism and help reduce its seasonality if cultural events are planned at the end of the season to lengthen it or between peaks of activity.

The Aran Valley

Vergés presented the Aranese language and culture as the reason for the General Council to exist. Aranese is and has been an official language of learning and communication. From now on, the goal is to use the language as a cross-border economic engine, promoting cultural creation in Aranese and also as a way to retain people in the territory, to make them feel rooted to the area, with an emotional bond through culture.

The Council intends to allocate more resources towards disseminating Aranese culture and traditions. Rebuffat complemented Vergés' contribution by emphasizing that Occitan, a variant of Aranese, is much more alive in the Aran Valley than in Occitania, attracting more citizens but also more tourists.

7. Housing and emancipation of young people in the area

This topic, which was included at the request of the audience, affects both rural and urban areas, but has a number of special features in mountain areas, which the speakers briefly dealt with in this final section of the debate.

Swiss Cantons

Because of the pandemic, more young people are relocating to the cantons and the area is trying to make housing options easier for them. Ramming talked positively about the flexibility of young people, who are less demanding and live a more austere and dynamic life, even nomadic, something that has facilitated adaptation. According to Ramming, the combination of being able to work and have a life in the mountains is very appealing to young people. He also stressed the importance of social structures and services that allow families to find housing in the area and acknowledged that there were outstanding needs to be met.

Occitania

Rabuffat explained that the region has competences in the field of youth and that at the local level, there are organizations funded by the region called "local committees for the autonomous housing of young people". The aim is to find private homes or rehabilitated public buildings that could provide six months of housing when a young person arrives in a territory and has no family, so that they can find work and then seek a longer lease and better housing. It is a real estate park for attracting young people in transition. There is also another important issue: the housing for workers who work in mountain regions only in high season, but cannot afford the cost of tourist housing. For Occitania, it is essential to have this kind of support, because if young people do not have a place to live, they will not be able to revitalize the territories.

The Aran Valley

Vergés also highlighted the housing challenge for temporary workers and young people who want to settle in the area but are unable to find housing due to the high cost of tourist accommodations. The Council is working to get the local governments to provide land for building social housing for young people and the Department of Housing of the Catalan government has also begun to build social housing.

Annex. Participants

> LAURA FORESTER

SECRETARY GENERAL OF DIPLOCAT

Laura Foraster i Lloret (Barcelona, 1976) has a degree in Business Administration and Management from Pompeu Fabra University and in Humanities from the Open University of Catalonia. She has a masters degree in European Studies, for which she studies at Leaven University and specialist training in public diplomacy and Election Observation Missions. She is currently General Secretary of DIPLOCAT. Until the temporary closure of the organisation in April 2018, she was its executive director.

> FADRI RAMMING

SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE OF MOUNTAIN CANTONS IN SWITZERLAND RKGK (2012-)

Secretary General of the Intergovernmental Conference of Mountain Cantons in Switzerland RKGK (2012-). He studied law at the University of Bern, working as a lawyer and notary in his own practice in Chur (Switzerland). He had previously been Director General of the Cantonal Conference of Energy Directors (EnDK) and the Cantonal Conference of Energy Specialists (EnFK).

> THIERRY REBUFFAT

ADVISER TO THE CABINET OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REGION OCCITANIE / PYRÉNÉES-MÉDITERRANÉE, RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF TERRITORY, MOUNTAIN AND RURAL AREAS

Adviser to the Cabinet of the President of the French region Occitanie / Pyrénées-Méditerranée, responsible for the management of Territory, Mountain and Rural areas. Urban geographer from the University of Montpellier III Paul Valéry, specializing in local rural development. Former territorial project manager in Couserans, Pyrenees of the Ariège, and the centre of the Rebuffat, specifically in the part of the Southern Larzac.

> MARIA VERGÉS PÉREZ

PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF ARAN (2019-)

President of the General Council of Aran (2019-). Born in Vielha (Val d'Aran), she is a forestry technical engineer from the Lleida School of Agricultural Engineering (University of Lleida) and a university expert in "Emotional skills in organizations" with a Master's Degree in the Emotional Intelligence in Organizations from the University of Lleida (2013). She also has a Postgraduate Degree in "Organization and Management of Cultural Enterprises" from the UOC (2007). She is the director of the "Quate Sons" choir and a member of the traditional dance group "Còlha de Santa Maria de Mijaran".

Debate moderated by **Marcel·lí Pascual**, director of the magazine “Viure als Pirineus”, an informative magazine of the counties of the High Pyrenees and Aran. As a journalist, he is a regular contributor both in Catalonia and Andorra dealing with issues related to the Pyrenees.

The member entities of DIPLOCAT

» Public institutions and municipal entities

- Government of Catalonia
- Barcelona City Council
- Tarragona City Council
- Girona City Council
- Lleida City Council
- Vielha e Mijaran City Council
- Barcelona Provincial Council
- Tarragona Provincial Council
- Girona Provincial Council
- Lleida Provincial Council
- Conselh Generau d'Aran
- Catalan Association of Municipalities and Counties
- Federation of Municipalities of Catalonia

» Entities of the business sector

- General Council of the Official Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Navigation of Catalonia
- Entrepreneurs association Foment del Treball Nacional
- Association of Micro-, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises of Catalonia (PIMEC)
- Confederation of Cooperatives of Catalonia
- Multi-Sector Business Association (AMEC)
- Private Foundation of Entrepreneurs (FemCAT)

» Entities of the social, trade union and sports sector

- The Group of Entities of the Voluntary Sector of Catalonia
- Trade union Unió General de Treballadors de Catalunya (UGT)
- Trade union Comissions Obreres de Catalunya (CCOO)
- Football Club Barcelona

» Universities, business schools and academic institutions

- University of Barcelona (UB)
- Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)
- Technical University of Catalonia (UPC)
- Pompeu Fabra University (UPF)
- University of Lleida (UdL)
- University of Girona (UdG)
- Rovira i Virgili University (URV)
- Ramon Llull University (URL)
- Open University of Catalonia (UOC)
- University of Vic - Central University of Catalonia (UVic-UCC)
- International University of Catalonia (UIC)
- Abat Oliba CEU University (UAO CEU)
- Barcelona Institute of International Studies (IBEI)
- EADA Business School
- Barcelona Graduate School of Economics (Barcelona GSE)