

# **"UNIVERSITY OF THE MOUNTAINS": MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

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The institutional role of the University is to offer and disseminate the knowledge emerged from theoretical conceptions, methodologically sound research efforts and reliable data review. The social role of the University is to bring science to interact with the lived experience in the context of the community. Recently, in the University of Crete, the idea of declaring the "University of the Mountains" was conceived and shaped, being addressed as a multi-dimensional movement activity and a comprehensive intervention towards rural and remote communities which deserve social support. The "University

of the Mountains” is viewed as the first local action against the brutal effects of financial and social threats, cultural identity loss and geographical isolation.

The “University of the Mountains” is enacted as a movement of vertical intervention at the ‘grass-roots’ level of the society aiming to:

- re-explore the content of the human relationships and accept the cultural diversity,
- protect the micro- and macro- environment of different community groups,
- support local economies by respecting the natural resources,
- eliminate factors which threaten the social coherence,
- improve individuals and community well-being targeting at human and social values.

This is a good example to demonstrate that still exist the opportunity to better understand the real human needs. It is imperative to create social links between community and academics and to offer ideas to be discussed so as to focus on social isolation and poverty. Under these circumstances, ensuring dynamic interactions in the context of the community may contribute to increase overall capacity in order to reduce, as much as possible, the existing inequalities and overcome the controversy related to the modern style of life. It will also be gained empirical knowledge that will promote a more person-centered approach within academic education at a multi-disciplinary level, and help to create contacts between scientists and people most in need.