

# **Climate change and its consequences for nature based tourism, recreation and landscape perception in winter**

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Recreation and tourism are important for the economy in many mountainous areas in Europe. Especially in winter the mountains offer attractive opportunities for winter sport activities. In the last 20 years, many destinations focused their tourism business mainly on the winter season. For these destinations climate change has negative effects on snow security and snow cover. To investigate the possible consequences for mountainous areas, two web-based surveys – one on down-hill skiing and one on cross-country-skiing - were conducted. In each study, about 400 respondents have been involved.

It can be shown that the main motives for both groups are the physical activity and the experience of snow in winter. The cross-country skiers are more attracted by nature and show a significant reaction on crowded slopes.

With the help of a two step choice experiment it turned out that the majority of ski-enthusiasts would choose a more snow secure destination in higher altitudes in the future. However, by increasing the attractiveness of the destination with several extra offers, like spa-facilities and childcare, a significant proportion of respondents (up to 40 %, depending on circumstances) would remain in the lower destinations.

Against this background, adaptation strategies for winter sport destinations and possible consequences for the regional development will be discussed. These findings are important for forestry, because in many mountainous areas, impacts in tourism will have consequences on agriculture and forestry: small scaled farming is often in close relationship with tourism, and an enlargement of forests in mountainous areas is expected.