



**MOVING**  
MOUNTAIN VALORISATION THROUGH  
INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND GREEN GROWTH

**Policy Brief**

# TRANSDANUBIAN MOUNTAINS | Cold mountain shelter – Knowledge economy



Photo credit: Pető Piroška



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# Transdanubian mountains: Cold mountain shelter – Knowledge economy

Authors: Gusztáv Nemes and Éva Orbán (Rural Bt)

## Summary

Cold Mountain Shelter is a community of 8-10 families, young, educated, environmentally-conscious lifestyle migrants, co-operating with the neighbouring local authority, a tiny village (Barnag, Hungary). They produce food through permaculture, forest agriculture, contour farming, and extensive animal husbandry. They also organise courses, events and exhibitions in permaculture, sustainable water management, building, etc., and are creating an online knowledge platform for sharing environmental- and community-friendly technology (both innovative and traditional). They run a nationwide association of lifestyle migrants, and are developing local and regional nodes of environmentally-aware communities. The value chain activities are relevant for land use, saving and creating environmental and community value. It is also an excellent example of a community creating and spreading knowledge about resilience and sustainability. The community represents an important socio-economic trend, spreading fast in developed countries, trying to find links between innovation and tradition.

**Know more about the Transdanubian Mountains Reference Region**, its selected value chain and the regional multi-actor platform (MAP), [here](#).

## Key policy messages

- Self-help and social organisation
- Neo-endogenous approach for policies
- Integration of local producers into short food supply chains

## 1. The Mountain Reference Region (MRR)

Transdanubian Mountains (Hungary) is the second largest mountain range in the country, covering some 7 200 km<sup>2</sup>, 200 km long and 30-40 km wide. The highest peak is 756 m (Pilis Mountain). It is a clastic mountain built mainly of sedimentary rocks, having a high level of forest cover, with dry oak forests (karst scrub forests, karst oak forests), hornbeam-oak forests and beech forests being the most common. Forestry activities mainly produce timber for buildings, furniture and firewood. Crop production is not significant in the area, for topographic and climate reasons. However, wheat and potatoes are grown on the foothills, in the lower hilly areas and in basins. Fruit growing (peaches, almonds) and vines are also important.



Our closer study is the Balaton Uplands, an uneven plateau rising 250-400 m above sea level, composed predominantly of Permian and Triassic sediments. The proximity of Lake Balaton (the largest lake in Central Europe), the beautiful landscape, old buildings and the many premium services made it traditionally a prime tourist destination. It is subject to strong visitor and urbanisation pressure, with many urban incomers and holiday homes. Therefore, property prices are rising steeply, the original inhabitants are moving away and traditional farming activities such as viticulture are declining, as the main motivation for buying property in the vineyard is no longer agricultural work but for the beautiful view of the vineyard, tranquillity and relaxation.

The value chain (VC) community under study is located on an abandoned, forested vine hill (Cold Mountain) between two small villages (Barnag and Pécsely, Hungary). An important player in the area is the Balaton-Highlands National Park, which was established in 1997 in Veszprém and Zala counties, covering an area of about 57 000 ha. Its main activities include nature conservation, landscape protection, nature management, awareness-raising and ecotourism.

## 2. Cold mountain shelter – Knowledge economy

[Cold Mountain Shelter](#) is a small community of 8-10 families, young, educated environmentally-conscious lifestyle migrants. They have an emergent co-operation with the neighbouring local authority, a tiny village (Barnag) sharing similar values, already having some joint action and planning for more. The community produces food through permaculture, forest agriculture, contour farming, extensive animal husbandry, etc., though most is consumed within the community. However, they organise courses, events, and exhibitions in permaculture, sustainable water management, building, etc., where they charge participants for the knowledge and the food too (made of their own products). They are creating an online knowledge platform for sharing environmental- and community-friendly technology (both innovative and traditional). The community also runs a nationwide association of lifestyle migrants (with many members) that organises courses, festivals, and helps to develop local and regional nodes of environmentally-conscious communities. In co-operation with the local authority, they are starting a project to use abandoned pasture for extensive husbandry, for producing milk, cheese and other milk products, and meat. There is also an interesting small enterprise run by a couple who hunt truffles with dogs, selling the experience and very high quality/price truffle products.

## 3. Value chain contribution to sustainability and resilience of the Mountain Reference Region: barriers and opportunities

The VC's activities are relevant for land use, saving and creating environmental and community values. It is also an excellent example of how a well-informed and powerful community can



create and spread knowledge about resilience and sustainability. They represent an important socio-economic trend, spreading fast in developed countries, trying to find links between innovation and tradition. On the other hand, this is not a well-established project (like one of the old eco-villages), but an emerging one. The next 3-4 years (the duration of [MOVING's](#) project) will be crucial for its development and long-term sustainability; thus our project team has a great opportunity to engage and support their activities.

Concerning policies, marketing small-scale agricultural products used to be very difficult but was significantly facilitated by the national “small producers’ decree’ (FAO, 2011), that freed small-scale agricultural producers, food processors and farmers’ markets from several regulations and compulsory standards. They also enjoy exemption from value added tax (VAT), and some bureaucratic obligations normally burdening agricultural enterprises. However, these exemptions only apply for direct selling (by the producer or his/her close family members), thus, the use of any kind of short food supply chains (e.g. box schemes, speciality shops, consumers’ co-operatives) is rather ambiguous for small producers. This seriously limits the value chain’s possibilities to market their organic products too. On the other hand, support for NGOs in Hungary is very much politically biased, and environmental and social sustainability, decentralisation and small sustainable communities are hardly supported by government funds. Other challenges concern: (1) climate change (global warming, emerging pests, extreme weather events, etc.); (2) civilisation/urbanisation pressure on the mountain landscape and abandonment of agricultural activities (in one of the most favoured tourist destinations in the country); (3) turning knowledge on sustainability into income, and finding a balance between commercial and volunteer actions; (4) social distancing and events cancelled due to COVID-19.

The nearby city of Veszprém, together with its rural hinterland will be the [Cultural Capital of Europe in 2023](#) and the [Cold Mountain Shelter](#) community is involved in various activities. This creates both threats and opportunities for the value chain.

#### 4. Policy relevant considerations

Making short food supply chains (SFSCs) more available for small producers, by changing the regulatory and policy framework would support the value chain’s activities (alongside hundreds of thousands of other small producers in the country). According to the general opinion of value chain actors, current European rural development (and agricultural) policies are still often more damaging for environmental and social sustainability than supporting it. They can achieve structural improvements only if local communities are conscious, organised, taking a strategic, long-term approach to their own future, and using available central support according to that strategy. Policies should consider more the local demands and induce bottom-up participatory community action.



Giving value to the creation and spreading of knowledge on sustainable production, building and lifestyles would be a good policy direction, which is currently largely lacking from the system.

## References

Decree No. 52 of 2010 of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development on the conditions of food production, processing and marketing by small-scale producers:  
<http://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC114670/>

## Authors

Gusztáv Nemes, Rural Bt., [nemes23@gmail.com](mailto:nemes23@gmail.com)

Éva Orbán, Rural Bt., [orbaneva95@gmail.com](mailto:orbaneva95@gmail.com)