

MOVING's contribution to open public consultation on Brain drain – mitigating challenges associated with population decline (communication)

MOVING (MOUNTAIN Valorisation through INterconnectedness and Green growth) (<https://www.moving-h2020.eu/>) is a Horizon 2020 project that aims to build capacities and co-develop relevant policy frameworks across Europe for the establishment of innovative or the reconfiguration of already existing value chains that contribute to the resilience and sustainability of mountain areas to climate change. The project brings together 23 organisations and it carries out activities in 23 Mountain Reference Regions across 16 European and neighbouring countries (<https://www.moving-h2020.eu/reference-regions/>).

MOVING proposes a science-society-policy approach to assess the vulnerability of the different mountain regions to climate change and other threats, exploring potential opportunities of mountain farming and forestry systems affecting each specific mountain region in Europe. One of the expected impacts of the project is to help diversifying rural economic activities, improving the skills base and social capital by identifying and promoting policy options which enhance the attractiveness and sustainable development of rural areas and favour generation renewal.

Mountains cover 36% of the European area, crossing many national borders, and accounting for the 16% of Europe's population living in rural and urban settings, with a great diversity of both ecosystems and land use. Drivers of change, such as climate change and depopulation, are already affecting the livelihoods of mountain communities.

According to IPCC (2022, 7), only two out of the five Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SPP) scenarios indicate a slight increase of population in mountain areas in Europe. Climate change puts livelihoods in mountain areas at risk, through, for instance, increase of fire activity (Dupire et al. 2017 in IPCC 2022, 9) and negative impacts on food, fibre and other ecosystem products (IPCC 2022, 14). However, mountain areas could capitalise on higher temperatures and extreme heatwave conditions at lower elevations. As they will be more appealing for human comfort, summer visitation and opportunities for tourism could increase, such as in the European Alps and the Catalan Pyrenees (IPCC 2022, 20).





To keep mountain communities alive and vibrant, strategies to attract and retain young people in mountain areas are necessary. Alongside access to education, business opportunities and provision of public transport, they put an emphasis on environmental action.

In a recent European survey, Euromontana highlights that mountain areas are attractive for young people. A majority of young people (66%) want to live and work in a mountain area in the future. The reasons are mostly linked to quality of life and proximity to nature. In that vein, environmental issues (biodiversity, climate change) are central concerns for young people. The development of ecotourism, biodiversity conservation and agroforestry practices are potential solutions for attracting young people in mountain areas (see references MOVING's case study in Romania on certified ecotourism).

European mountain areas need a personalised approach. Indeed, impacts of climate change, challenges and opportunities are very heterogeneous between locations even within the same region and ecosystem type. That is why the MOVING's project values the bottom-up approach enabling stakeholders to frame recommendations depending on local conditions. This approach aims at involving all citizens in policy-making and fostering community belonging. Specifically, working directly with young people who live in (or wish to live in) mountain areas. Upcoming MOVING research activities will engage with these young people to forge new long-term visions for these mountainous rural areas. Between June and October 2022, MOVING will organise a workshop with young actors in each of its 23 Reference Regions. Such visions will link to and build on the EU's long-term vision for their rural areas (LTVRA) up to 2040 which aims to create 'stronger, connect resilient and prosperous rural areas and communities'. This EU vision will be co-constructed by a Rural Pact, which specifically calls for contributions from a range of stakeholders including young people.

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