

Mountains of opportunity: Science convene remote areas are no more marginal



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From March 19 to 21, mountain experts, researchers, policy-makers, and stakeholders convened in Cordoba, Spain, for a [Scientific Conference](#), organised in the framework of the EU-funded [MOVING project](#) (MOUNTAIN VALORISATION THROUGH INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND GREEN GROWTH). This gathering delved into the last four years' scientific results of the MOVING project on the transformative capabilities of mountain regions and their value chains, aiming to foster resilient and sustainable futures, and set the tone for the [MOVING Final Conference](#), to be held on 13-14 June in Brussels, Belgium.

Hosted by the University of Cordoba, the conference kicked off with a warm welcome from notable regional leaders, including **José Carlos Gómez Villamandos** from the Regional Ministry of Innovation and Universities, and **Salvador Fuentes**, President of Cordoba Province Government. The university's Vice rector of Scientific Policy **María José Polo Gómez** contributed her insights, setting the tone for an in-depth exploration of the mountains' potential.

Hence, **Mar Delgado**, the Project Coordinator, underscored MOVING's significant achievements and impact on sustainable mountain development. Prof. Dr. Delgado stressed the importance of raising awareness about the **significance of mountains and valuing local expertise**, pointing out the need to "connect mountain areas with lowlands and the wider world", as events in the mountains resonate globally.

Kirsty Blackstock from the James Hutton Institute delved into the enablers, barriers, and added values within the [MOVING 23 value chains](#) by exploring economic, social and environmental dimensions. **"It's important to raise awareness of societal values provided by mountains"**, she emphasised, highlighting the revitalisation of traditions, preservation of cultural landscapes, and improvements in identity, trust, and employment as key factors.





The event showcased a diverse range of presentations addressing environmental challenges, contributions of MOVING mountain value chains, and the promising future of mountain areas, drawing insights from across Europe. From [mountain grape](#) production and [Sjenica](#) and [Weiz lamb](#) to [Czech beef](#), cheese varieties from [Serra da Estella](#) and [Alto Molise](#), as well as [tomato farming](#) in Turkey, tourism in [Romania's Southern Carpathians Mountains](#) and [North Macedonia](#), and the world of Speyside Malt Whisky from the [Scottish Highlands](#), we covered the results from nearly 4 years of work across various MOVING regions. **"The most valuable aspect of MOVING was the dialogue with local actors. Using local knowledge is important for contextualising and understanding firsthand the challenges mountains face"**, remarked Lukáš Zagata, a partner of the MOVING project from the Czech University of Life Sciences.

Given that several of MOVING's value chains are protected designations of origin (PDO), an analysis of the implementation of the **EU optional quality term "mountain product"** was part of the agenda. **Francesca Alampi** from the Association of European Regions for Products of Origin highlighted that despite the low awareness among consumers and producers about this scheme, the formulation of specific measures is crucial. These include initiating targeted promotional campaigns to highlight its unique features and benefits, providing financial support for producers investing in mountain areas, and involving mountain producers in consultations on CAP strategic plans, among other strategies.

Other leading projects on mountains were showcased during the conference. **Stefano Sala** from the Università della Montagna presented [MountResilience](#), an ambitious EU-funded project tackling climate change effects in European mountain regions. **Mikko Jokinen**, scientific coordinator of [MARGISTAR](#), outlined how mountains can overcome the peripherality trap. **Andrea Membretti**, University of Pavia, introduced the [MICLIMI project](#), which explores the concept of vertical migration as a strategy for adapting to climate-induced changes in the Alps.

François Casabianca and **Isabella Maglietti-Smith**, representing the Forum Origin, Diversity and Territories, explored the Strategic Options that emerged from the MOVING foresight analysis. These options are seen as community-driven interventions aimed at creating better futures, distinct from policies. By emphasising the diverse nature of Europe's mountain regions, they argued against a one-size-fits-all approach to policy-making: **"It's impossible to design a single policy for all of Europe's mountains. Instead, policy should provide a framework that enables local actors to implement these Strategic Options"**. They also suggest that Strategic Options should be compatible with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Cohesion Policy.

In the same line, the Director of Euromontana **Guillaume Corradino** offered his perspective on the role of mountain areas in European policy-making. He highlighted the years 2024-2025 as pivotal, emphasising the necessity for mountain areas to receive greater consideration in the post-2027 CAP and Cohesion Policy, as well as in the EU's Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas. This was further enriched by **Serafin Pazos-Vidal** from the European Association for Innovation in Local Development, who outlined potential EU policy directions for mountain regions. He provided insights into a roadmap that anticipates future engagement and the evolution of policy, proposing



"a **common strategic framework** that encompasses partnership agreements, CAP Strategic Plans, the EU Social Climate Fund, and specific territorial targeting that includes mountain areas".

The event also set the stage for future strategies by unveiling the progress of the MOVING Policy Analysis and Roadmap. **Mark Redman**, leading the MOVING Policy Roadmap, emphasised the collaborative nature of this endeavour, saying, "this is a co-creation process building upon project results and inviting your blue sky thinking. **Every bold idea is welcomed as we come together to forge our policy roadmap**". The goal is to refine these recommendations to fully unlock the power of mountain value chains. Redman expressed a strong commitment to **generating "fresh and new recommendations"** that align with the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas, aiming to build on existing momentum.

On March 21st, on-site excursions organised by the local hosting partners, the University of Cordoba and ADEGUA, provided firsthand insights into the [Organic Mountain Olive Oil production](#) and the [Iberian Ham](#) value chains analysed in the MOVING project.

The MOVING Scientific Conference emerged as a beacon for collaboration, fostering a commitment among the scientific community and local actors towards enhancing the vitality, resilience, and sustainability of Europe's mountainous regions. The conference not only paved the way for fruitful discussions and exchanges but also set the stage for the [MOVING Final Conference](#), to be held in Brussels, Belgium, on the 13th and 14th of June 2024.

About the MOVING Project:

The [MOVING project](#) is an EU-funded H2020 project focused on building capacities and co-developing policy frameworks to establish new or upscaled value chains, contributing to the resilience and sustainability of mountainous areas in Europe.

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