MOVING
MOuntain VAlorisation through INterconnectedness and GREEN growth

D1.5: Youth engagement report

Final report of Youth engagement activities

Authors: Rachel Creaney (Hutton): Chloe Thompson (Hutton); Kirsty Blackstock (Hutton); Sharon Flanigan (Hutton); Liz Dinnie (Hutton)

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Authors	Rachel Creaney (Hutton); Chloe Thompson (Hutton); Kirsty Blackstock (Hutton); Sharon Flanigan (Hutton); Liz Dinnie (Hutton)
Work Package Leader	WP1 – AIEDL
Project Coordinator	University of Cordoba

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Acronyms

EVCA: Extended Value Chain Analysis

LTVRA: Long Term Vision for Rural Areas

MOVING: MOuntain Valorisation through INterconnectedness and Green growth

MAP: Multi Actor Platform

MRL: Mountain Reference Landscape

MRR: Mountain Reference Region

PDO: Protected Designation of Origin

UNIMONT: Universita Della Montagna

VC: Value Chain

Executive summary

One important aim of the H2020 MOVING (MOuntain Valorisation through INterconnectedness and Green growth) project was to engage with young people living in and around our 23 Mountain Reference Landscapes, around the findings of the MOVING project and to understand their views and the potential roles that they could play in shaping the future of these rural mountain areas and value chains. To capture these views and experiences two youth engagement activities were planned in each MRL (Mountain Reference Landscape) throughout the course of the project. Partners were given guidance on how to organise the event, and a template on the specific information to collect. Overall, 54 events were organised across the MRLs, engaging with over 1300 young people. Generally, the young people we engaged with were under 25, but in some cases under 40 was accepted, given the links to the 'young farmer' definition. Events tended to take the form of in-person workshops with school or university students, with invited presentations/discussions from either local value chain producers or those involved in the running of businesses or organisations within the local mountain areas (e.g. environmental organisations, researchers, youth organisations etc), along with discussions about how the young people view the future of their mountain areas (and their role in this futures/area). In several cases, fieldtrips to the MRLs/ or to explore the specific Value Chains were also undertaken. The young people offered positive suggestions around how to improve the sustainability and resilience of the MRLs and Value Chains including diversifying the VCs, technological advancements and building collaborations. At the same time, the young people were concerned with the challenges emerging in some of these mountain areas, given rising economic, environmental and socio-cultural pressures. Addressing these pressures was key to improving the sustainability and resilience of these mountain areas and value chains. The findings support those of the Europe's Long Term Vision for Rural Areas (LTVRA) and aim to add to the knowledge base (and policy discussions) around how best to meet the areas for action as highlighted in the LTVRA. Finally, the young people made suggestions on how their roles, as young people and the next generation working in the mountain areas, could be strengthened when looking to the future. Suggestions included creating new jobs from diversifying the products created in the Value Chains and improving access to land for budding entrepreneurs. There were also calls to improve the awareness of rural careers within these mountain areas through careers fairs, networking events and sustained dissemination of research (e.g. MOVING) into mountain-based jobs and businesses. There were also strong calls for better involvement of young people in rural and mountain area policymaking.

1. Introduction

This report highlights the youth engagement work carried out within the Horizon 2020 MOVING project. MOVING (MOuntain Valorisation through INterconnectedness and Green growth) is a Horizon 2020 funded European project that aims to improve the climate change and rural development policies for mountain areas by better understanding the context, trends and potential trajectories of mountain areas across Europe through exploring value chains across 23 European MRLs (Mountain Reference Landscapes). For context, the illustration below highlights the location of these 23 MRLs, and the subsequent table highlights the specific value chains under study in the project, and the MRLs, in which they are situated.

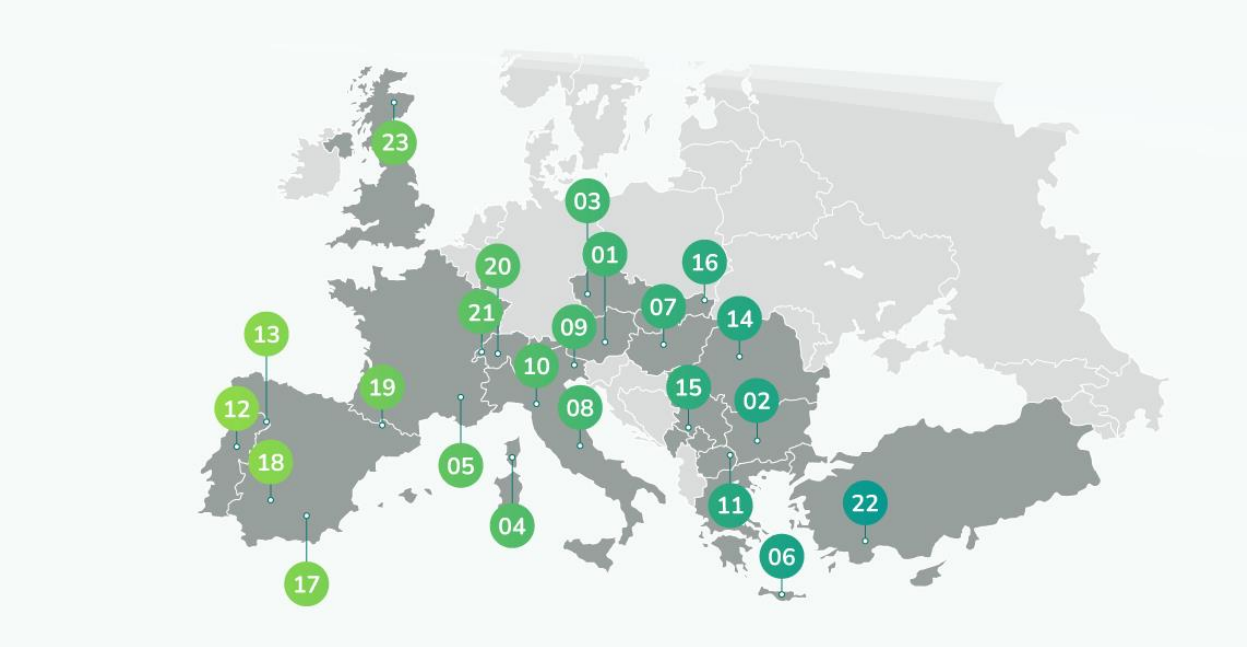

Figure 1: Location of the 23 MOVING Mountain Reference Landscapes

Table 1: Summary of MOVING case studies and Value Chains

	Country name	MRR name	MRL name	VC focal Product	VC abbreviation
1	Austria	Styria	Weiz Bergland	Lamb	Weiz Lamb
2	Bulgaria	Stara Planina	Western Stara Planina	HNV Farming	Western Stara Planina HNV
3	Czech Republic	Sumava	Strazny, Lenora, Horni Vltavice	Beef	Sumava Beef

4	France	Corsica	Bucugnà, Ghisoni and Nuceta	Chestnut flour	Corsican Chestnut Flour
5	France	Pre-Alps	Drome Valley	Lamb	Drome Lamb
6	Greece	Crete	Central Rethymno	Carob flour	Rethymno Carob Flour
7	Hungary	Transdanubian Mountains	Barnag, Pecsely	Agro-ecological knowledge	Transdanubian A-E Knowledge
8	Italy	Central Apennines	Alto Molise	Spun paste cheese	Alto Molise Cheese
9	Italy	Eastern Alps	Trento	DOC Wine	Trento Wine
10	Italy	Tuscany	Stazzema, Seravezza	Chestnut flour	Tuscan Chestnut Flour
11	North Macedonia	Maleshevski Mountains	Berovo, Pehchevo	Rural tourism	Maleshevski Tourism
12	Portugal	Cordilheira Central	Serra da Estrela	PDO Cheese	Serra da Estrela Cheese
13	Portugal	Alto Douro	Vila Nova de Foz Coa	Wine	Alto Douro Wine
14	Romania	Southern Romanian Carpathians	Brasov county: Zărnești, Bran, Moieciu and Fundata Argeș county: Rucăr, Dragoslavele and Dâmbovicioara	Certified Ecotourism	Brasov Certified Ecotourism
15	Serbia	Dinaric Mountains	Sjenica	Lamb	Sjenica Lamb
16	Slovakia	Slovak Carpathian Mountains	Polomka, Bacuch, Bravacovo	Bio-honey	Carpathian Bio-Honey
17	Spain	Betic Systems	Carcabuey, Priego de Cordoba, Zuheros	Organic Olive Oil	Betic Organic Olive Oil
18	Spain	Huesca	Ayerbe and Loarre	Wine	Huesca Wine

19	Spain	Sierra Morena	Villanueva de Cordoba, Pozoblanco, Cardeña	Iberian ham (PDO)	Sierra Morena Ham
20	Switzerland	Swiss Alps	Grisons	Grain	Grisons Grain
21	Switzerland	Swiss Jura	Jura, Berne	Cheese	Tête de Moine PDO Cheese
22	Turkey	Beydaglari	Elmali	Tomatoes	Elmali Tomatoes
23	UK (Scotland)	Highlands and Islands	West Moray, Badenoch & Strathspey	Scotch Whisky	Speyside Whisky

In the project, there is a strong focus on participatory approaches linking with policy makers, stakeholders, and local populations. Furthermore, there is a great deal of importance placed of the role and potential of local young people in these regions.

The youth engagement work aimed to engage young people living in mountain regions, through one participatory activity per region with young people (secondary school and school leaves/young adults up to 25, or on occasion under 40 when considering young farmers) as well as follow up activities disseminating MOVING results to school-age children within or near to the reference regions. MOVING will promote the links of these young people with the rural youth parliaments, since they directly link to the Europarc Youth Manifesto, which calls for the engagement of young people in connecting to their communities and developing sustainable futures.

Section 2 highlights the context within which the youth engagement sits (i.e., why is a focus on youth engagement and young people important?), followed by the specific methodology followed by the 23 reference regions for undertaking the youth engagement work (section 3). Next, we offer some results (section 4), followed by some discussion (section 5) and conclusion (section 6) on what the findings mean for the future of sustainable mountain development and the young people that live (or may wish to live) in rural mountain areas.

2. Context for youth engagement work

2022 is the European Year of Youth, and as such our focus in T1.5 is of utmost importance. According to the recent Euromontana report, '*Europe's mountain areas are facing a constant threat to their attractiveness, especially among younger generations. In some regions, the rural exodus of young mountain people and the ageing of the population endanger the demographic balance, social cohesion, and economic appeal of our mountains. Yet, the new generations are the future of our territories'*. As such, it is vital to include the viewpoints and engagement on young people into the MOVING project research activities, so they can both shape and participate in the sustainable development of Europe's Mountain areas and industries. In 2021, Euromontana gathered the views of 1134 young people living in mountain areas across 20 European countries. The results identified that these young people want to remain living (and potentially) working in Europe's Mountain areas. Such motivation to live in these mountain areas can only continue if development in these mountain areas continues to be sustainable and attractive to young people. By this we mean in terms of being able to appreciate the surrounding natural environment and have the potential to work and live in the area, either through commuting to, or working in, the mountainous area. Furthermore, given the Europarc Youth Manifesto calls for the engagement of young people in connecting to their communities and developing sustainable futures, and the widely signed UNIMONT manifesto which highlights drawing attention to the specificities of mountain areas, MOVING is well placed to add to and further such engagement and discussions. Furthermore, for EU member countries, the EU reinforced a Youth Guarantee in 2021 whereby *'all young people under 30 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship'.* However, this is not yet rural/mountain area specific. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the European Commission's Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas identifies areas of action towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas and communities. We encouraged participants to draw on the materials for the current Long Term Vision for Rural Areas and the Inventory of Future Dreams by the youth, from the H2020 Ruralization project.

As such, the work of Task 1.5 (engaging young people living in mountain regions) is of huge current importance. The voices of young people in mountain rural development are important because ensuring the sustainability of mountain areas will require positive engagement of young people who either are already, or may desire in the future, to base themselves in (or return to) these mountain areas (i.e., those who identify as belonging to the MRL).

These participatory workshops were designed to be somewhat flexible to address the issues of most relevance to the specific region/ value chain. The results from the workshop were used to feed into the participatory aspects of WP4's vulnerability and resilience analyses, the thematic clusters in WP5 and the foresight exercises in WP6.

3. Methodology

The youth engagement work in Task 1.5 consisted of two aspects. The first was a participatory workshop, or other similar activity, to gather and explore the views of local young people in the MRL on sustainable mountain development of their region and how the VC assemblage can support their vision of sustainable mountain development. The second part consisted of engagement and dissemination activities with school and school-aged groups.

We have engaged young people firstly through a flexible participatory workshop (at least 1 per MRL), and secondly, through engaging and disseminating MOVING findings to school-age children in and around the 23 mountain reference landscapes. For the purposes of this work, we follow the United Nations definition for young people: “the United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth without prejudice to other definitions by Member States”. However, we also realised that the European Commission definition of a young farmer (those aged 40 and under) was also appropriate for our study and we accommodated this adaptation where necessary. During the second stage of youth engagement activities, a key group to approach (for some partners) was primary school age children. Hence these younger voices were also incorporated where and when partners adhered to the specific ethical guidelines of working with younger children. In this second stage, partners were encouraged to share relevant MOVING outputs with school-age children, in a way that would be relevant and beneficial to them i.e. through field visits, workshops or invited talks.

3.1. Youth engagement 1: Participatory workshop

This workshop went beyond simply exploring and analysing the value chain, instead looking at how the value chain can help to further their vision of sustainable mountain development. In terms of the benefits that the young people obtained from participation, these included: an additional opportunity to feed into policy recommendations on sustainable development (and climate change and the VC) in their area and an increase in their professional and personal networks.

Within this task project partners engaged with any young people who lived (or wish to return to live) within the MRL. Partners drew on existing youth groups in the area (e.g., young farmers groups, conservation groups, school groups, summer school groups, rural youth parliaments), who had, a) an interest/connection to the MRL/ VC, b) an interest in local Sustainable Mountain Development. Most of these events were held between June and October 2022. Some, however, were delayed due to logistical or seasonal issues in their Value Chains and instead held their workshops in early 2023.

The specific methodology suggested for the participatory workshops provided to partners are highlighted in the table below.

Table 2: Proposed methodology for the first stage youth engagement workshops

Steps	Details
1	Identify (existing if possible) group of young people to engage with for the workshop: e.g., rural youth parliament, summer school, scout group, youth action group, school class, young farmers group, college students.
2	Identify the existing vision of Sustainable Mountain Development from young people in the area (if it exists) and base your event on this. Explore how the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas may fit in your area.
3	Identify the 3 MAP members best placed to present at the event regarding sustainable mountain development in the MRL.
4	Organise an appropriate date for the meeting. If possible, you can link into one of the youth group's existing meetings.
5	If in person organise room and catering. If online, organise meeting software.
6	Hold event

As an overview, partners were asked to record their findings on:

1. Main activities of event
2. Main recommendations for sustainable mountain development i.e. the proposed visions connecting to the LTVRA
    a. How do you see this future of the region in 2040?
    b. How would they improve the sustainability and resilience of the Value Chain/MRL?
    c. What can be done to strengthen the role of young people in building the present and future of the mountain region?
3. Role of Value Chain in local Sustainable Mountain Development (if any)

3.2. Youth engagement 2: Engagement with school aged groups

Finally, in 2023/2024, each MRL promoted the latest and ongoing MOVING results to children at school age, with a focus on local schools in the MRL or nearby urban areas. The aim of this additional activity was to raise the children's awareness about the potential of mountain areas in

the provision of public and private goods and the vulnerabilities they face. This could be through highlighting some of the work undertaken in MOVING to inform young people about sustainable mountain development issues. Similar guidance to the first phase activity was given in advance of these engagement activities, and a similar template was circulated for partners to fill out with information about their events (e.g. time, location, number and age of participants, lessons learnt for MOVING and recommendations for future sustainable mountain development in their areas). Most of these activities were completed in late 2023, or early 2024, depending on when best suited the availability of the young people, MOVING researchers and any potential mountain value chain participants.

4. Results

4.1. Who did we engage with, and how?

In total, 54 different activities were held across the 23 MRLs. Overall, MOVING engaged with over 1300 young people (mostly under 25) throughout these 54 activities, these ranged from visits into schools, colleges and universities, workshops with invited speakers from the value chains, fieldtrips to specific value chain businesses with young people, and even a youth festival. In most cases, partners conducted at least two events, one workshop in 2022 with invited young people and MAP members, and one in 2023 with school-age children. In some cases, it was deemed more useful to hold a combined event (covering the two activities in one event), and in one case no youth engagement activities were undertaken. Almost all activities were carried out in-person, with just a small number carried out online or as hybrid activities.

For the first phase activities, some partners conducted workshops that aligned very closely with the suggested methodology, inviting speakers from their Multi Actor Platforms (MAPs) to highlight what their organisation is doing to plan for, and improve, the future sustainability of their regions and value chains in line with the long-term vision for rural areas. Others, meanwhile, adapted the workshop questions to fit more closely with the specifics of their value chains, or to have broader questions given that their participants were not familiar with the LTVRA. Generally, all workshops consisted of discussions with young people around the opportunities and challenges for sustainability when looking to the future in their value chains and reference regions.

Figure 2: Youth participants from the second workshop held in the Spanish Sierra Morena case [Credit Mar Delgado]

Similarly, for the second phase activities, partners used the opportunity to engage directly with young people and highlight the relevant work of MOVING to date. Many partners engaged with rural secondary school children or university/college-age young people undertaking rural development or agricultural courses. In a few cases, partners engaged with primary school aged children around general discussions on the importance of mountains or the importance of mountain products.

Table 3: Summary of the youth engagement activities per Value Chain

VC (Country)	Abbreviated VC	1st phase activities	2nd phase activities	Total number of young people*
1 (Austria)	Weiz Lamb	Rural Youth festival highlighting MOVING work, research on climate change and the VC to young people	Primary school visit to sheep farm to learn about the activities of the farm/VC	37
2 (Bulgaria)	Western Stara Planina HNV	Online workshop about the VC activities with young farmers	Not possible	9
3 (Czechia)	Sumava Beef	Workshop about the EVCA with young people	Workshop/presentation about MOVING with technical college students	23

4 (Corsica, France)	Corsican Chestnut Flour	2 workshops with agricultural college and environmental MSc students	1 workshop with young professionals about MOVING and VC	27
5 (France)	Drome Lamb	Workshop with people training to become shepherds/cowherds	Not possible	12
6 (Crete, Greece)	Rethymno Carob Flour	2 workshops in two different mountainous Crete villages	5 workshops with students from secondary schools/ tertiary education	183
7 (Hungary)	Transdanubian A-E Knowledge	Participatory walk about the VC and discussions with VC farmers	Participatory walk about the VC and discussions with VC farmers	22
8 (Italy)	Alto Molise Cheese	Workshop with young people and MAP members	Presentation and workshop around activities MOVING with high school students	43
9 (Italy)	Trento Wine	Workshop about MOVING with students and MAP members	Workshop with discussions with young people on MOVING and local producer presentations	76
10 (Italy)	Tuscan Chestnut Flour	Workshop/presentation with MOVING, MAP and high school students	Practical event showing high school students how VC is produced	102
11 (North Macedonia)	Maleshevski Tourism	Workshop with MOVING MAP and young people	None	24
12 (Portugal)	Serra da Estrela Cheese	None	None	n/a
13 (Portugal)	Alto Douro Wine	Presentation of the project to university students and a subsequent workshop	Workshop with young people around MOVING, VC, incl. wine tour/tasting	22
14 (Romania)	Brasov Certified Ecotourism	3 workshops about MOVING/ EVCA with university and agricultural college students	7 presentations to university students about importance of mountain areas/MOVING research	137
15 (Serbia)	Sjenica Lamb	Workshop with young people in the MRL	Not possible	12
16 (Slovakia)	Carpathian Bio-Honey	Workshop on MOVING and future of mountain areas with tourism/rural business students	Workshop on MOVING and VC with young people	36

17 (Spain)	Betic Organic Olive Oil	Workshop with young people and olive oil producers	Presentation about MOVING to primary school students	62
18 (Spain)	Sierra Morena Ham	Workshop with young people about MOVING, VC and presentations from young MAP members	Presentation about MOVING to primary & high school students	83
19 (Spain)	Huesca Wine	Workshop with young people and MAP members on MOVING and VC	Vineyard visit and discussions around VC with primary school students	91
20 (Switzerland)	Grisons Grain	Presentations about MOVING/ VC to local high schools	Two workshops with high school students on food systems and MOVING	63
21 (Switzerland)	Tête de Moine PDO Cheese	Workshop with young farmers group around future of area/VC	Hybrid workshop with young farmers	39
22 (Turkey)	Elmali Tomatoes	Workshop with young farmers	Workshop/presentation with MOVING, MAP and high school students	35
23 (Scotland)	Speyside Whisky	Distillery trip, MAP presentations and workshop with young people	Stall at rural careers fair for high school students & presentation to primary school students about mountains	147

*In addition, some activities also attracted some participants who were not considered 'young' i.e. 'over 40'. However, the table refers to only those aged under 40.

4.2. Activities and discussions per value chain

4.2.1. Styria, Austria: Lamb (Weiz Lamb)

The Austrian partners organised two youth engagement events. The first was a session at a rural youth festival (20 youth participants), and the second was a fieldtrip with 17 primary school children from a neighbouring city. At the first event the MOVING project and some findings were introduced through poster presentations as part of a new regional 'sustainability4you' exhibition. In terms of views of the future, and the role of young people, the participants predicted changes to the area due to climate change (i.e. larger farm businesses, less winter tourism). Improvements for the area were suggested including more education around sustainability, better transport infrastructure and policies to support a continuation of small-scale farming, which they saw as key for sustainable development in the area. They also called for more opportunities to be involved in

local policymaking. Although, it was not always clear to the young participants how and where they could influence policymaking.

For the second event, the Austrian partners had difficulties in recruiting young people (e.g. young farmers, youth city council) to attend a second engagement event. Eventually they decided to engage primary school pupils from a neighbouring urban area. These pupils took part in a field trip to visit a sheep farm in the MRL. The children visited the farm and participated in wool crafts. Many of the children had never had an opportunity to visit a sheep farm and/or the MRL before. Although the event highlighted the importance of participation in wool crafts and visits to the farm itself to better understand the activities that are undertaken in the MRL, and their value/importance – both directly for the young people, and for their wider friends and family. For one young person, this fieldtrip was considered *'one of the most wonderful days in my life' (girl, 9 years old, 2023)*

4.2.2. Stara Planina, Bulgaria: High Nature Value Farming (Western Stara Planina HNV)

In the case of the Bulgarian MRL, the partners conducted one online engagement activity with 9 young farmers around the findings of MOVING to date and their views of the future of the value chain/MRL and how their role (as young people) could be improved. Participants were not familiar with the LTVRA but agreed with the values it promoted. In general, the participants called for more capacity to help strengthen farming in their area, as well as improvements to general living conditions (e.g. difficulties with cost-of-living and rising fuel prices). Positively the young farmers suggested creating new direct short-supply chains and direct-to-market chains for the raw products that they farm – both public and private goods. They also called for better access to CAP payments (Pillars I and II), better local services and infrastructure, more investment in local jobs/training and better networking opportunities for local young people. As one young farmer highlighted, '*We want to continue living in our rural areas. If our needs and concerns can be put in the focus of rural development policy then we can keep our rural communities alive" (young farmer, 2022).*

There was unfortunately no opportunity to conduct a second youth engagement activity in the Bulgarian MRL.

4.2.3. Sumava, Czechia: Beef (Sumava Beef)

In the Czech case, two youth engagement activities were undertaken. Both activities comprised of a presentation of the MOVING project, and associated findings, followed by a discussion around the future vision for the VC/MRL and how the role of young people could be strengthened in the area. The first event was held online with six young people, and the second was held in person with 17 secondary school (agricultural) students. In both activities the young people considered the future of the MRL/VC to be a continuation of 'much of the same' as the VC appears

to be sustainable and resilient to threats. There are some potential tensions between different local interest groups (e.g. farmers and tourists). Sustainability of the MRL could be further enhanced by reducing the out-migration of young people through better opportunities for housing, services, and more sustainable tourism ventures/tourist numbers. Furthermore, there could be better access to land for young farmers. The young people were interested in the presentations of the Extended Value Chain Analysis that were presented at these events, particularly as they gained new knowledge about farm size in the area, and undertook challenging discussions based around the LTVRA-framed questions. The Czech partners noted that, *'it has been a pleasant surprise for us how much young people value "traditional" qualities of the regions, such as pure nature, wilderness, calm environment, safety etc' (Czech MOVING partner, 2024).*

4.2.4. Corsica, France: Chestnut Flour (Corsican Chestnut Flour)

In Corsica, three youth engagement activities were carried out. One with seven agricultural secondary school students, one with 12 environmental MSc students, and one with eight young professionals. Each activity followed the same format comprising of MOVING research presentations followed by discussions around the future of the VC/MRL (in general, and specifically for young people). In one instance chestnut flour (the VC product) tasting was also undertaken. The young people were quite pessimistic about the future of their MRL, especially in relation to the likely impacts from climate change. More positively, they recognised tourism benefits from a changing climate (i.e. longer/ more popular season). They called for a greater diversity of VC products and greater recognition of the value of these products as well as more opportunities for training and collaborative working.

4.2.5. Pre-Alps, France: Lamb (Drome Lamb)

One youth engagement activity was held in the Drome Valley area. It comprised of an in-person workshop promoting the MOVING research and exploring the future visions of the VC/MRL for young people. It was conducted with 12 young people (predominantly under 40) who were training to become shepherds or cowherds. Participants were fearful of a potential abandonment of the mountainous area in the future and the emerging impacts of climate change on the VC. The participants suggested such fears could be alleviated through training and raising awareness of the importance of the MRL/VC from a very young age. Local collaborative ventures working to improve management of the land (e.g. fixing fences, creating shepherd huts etc) were spoken of highly. The pastoral system that is followed in this VC/MRL is considered fairly sustainable. Caution was highlighted in respect to a difficulty that some participants faced in considering future sustainability given uncertain present-day factors such as the level of management of predators in the MRL.

A second youth engagement activity in the Drome area was unfortunately not possible.

4.2.6. Crete, Greece: Carob Flour (Rethymno Carob Flour)

The Crete partners undertook seven in-person youth engagement activities, reaching over 180 people in total. These included workshops with secondary school students, with international youth carob farmers, and with young people living and/or working in or around the MRL. All activities followed the standard MOVING presentation and future visioning discussion format, with some specific focusing on Carob production/findings in certain cases. Many of the young participants were pessimistic about the future of the VC/MRL due to overreliance on EU subsidies and the impacts of climate change and the general rising cost of living. The participants felt the role of young people could be strengthened through a greater diversification of activities/ job opportunities in the MRL (e.g. more agritourism), and better collaborations across sectors/industries in the MRL (e.g. tourism, gastronomy, cultural heritage) through the creation of Carob festivals for example. Furthermore, the implementation of policies that encourage young people to live in rural mountain areas would be welcomed. Overall, the Crete partners found that, '*Maintaining local traditions while expanding on the experiences of those living in rural areas and opening out to global networks must be balanced in order to shape sustainable futures' (Crete MOVING partner, 2024).*

4.2.7. Transdanubian Mountains, Hungary: Agro-Ecological Knowledge (Transdanubian A-E Knowledge)

The Hungarian partners had trouble organising multiple youth engagement activities but did undertake one youth engagement activity in the form of a fieldtrip to the VC/MRL with 22 young people, to better understand the activities of the VC and the realities of living in the MRL. In terms of a vision for the future the participants predicted that tourism in the area would continue to grow, at the expense of small-scale farms. They suggested the sustainability of VC/MRL could be improved through better tourism branding/advertising and young people could be better involved through volunteering opportunities and encouraging of youth-led initiatives.

4.2.8. Central Apennines, Italy: Spun Paste Cheese (Alto Molise Cheese)

In the Central Apennines, partners undertook two in-person youth engagement activities with 43 young people (mainly secondary school students). The standard workshop formats were followed. Many of the young people were quite pessimistic about the future of the VC/MRL due to dwindling essential services, however there was also potential hope that the region will gain 'attractiveness' from a better understanding of the importance of the products and values that these local products can offer to the wider region. Suggestions for improvements to the region, and for the role of young people, included improved transport links to and within the area and better promotion of

the area to attract more tourism. There also needs to be greater training and education for young people to fully understand the concepts of (and opportunities from) rural development, sustainability and resilience, and help create networks and cooperatives to improve their local mountain areas.

4.2.9. Eastern Alps, Italy: DOC Wine (Trento Wine)

In the Eastern Alps, young people participated in two in-person engagement event, following the standard format, with an additional wine tasting activity. 76 young people participated. In terms of their view of the future of their region some of the young participants were concerned over the impacts of a changing climate (e.g. negative impacts on biodiversity and water usage), however others viewed the impacts from a changing climate as an opportunity. Positively they believe new varieties of grape/wine will be creating through the changing climate and adaptations through technological advancements. Unsustainable practices can be lessened through more disease-resistant grape varieties, farmers moving to organic production and improving the links between the aspects/products of the VC as well as tax breaks for new (youth-led) businesses in the region. Furthermore, there was a suggestion that young people should be given more responsibility in the region/ VC and (practical) training around the difficulties with mountain viticulture should be strengthened. However, in the second event, no major changes were suggested, with the young people already feeling happy and included in their MRL.

4.2.10. Tuscany, Italy: Chestnut Flour (Tuscan Chestnut Flour)

In Tuscany, partners organised two in-person youth engagement events, reaching 80 young people from local secondary schools enrolled in classes on e.g. business, tourism, and agriculture). The initial workshop followed the standard format, with an additional activity asking students to ‘create their newspaper of the future’ and a practical fieldtrip to see how chestnut flour is produced. The students did not have a clear vision for the future in the region but did appreciate the importance of the mountainous area in terms of natural beauty and tourism opportunities. The sustainability of the areas could be improved through protecting the local nature, increasing the use of renewable energy source in the region, and increasing the range of products created in the MRL. They suggested that the MRLs need careful and continued management to ensure they continue to develop sustainably and offer opportunities for young people. For the second event the Tuscan partners instead organised a practical fieldtrip with some of the young people who participated in the initial engagement event, as this was thought to be of most benefit to the local MOVING partners and the associated young people who viewed the VC/MRL as *‘a treasure to be discovered’* (young participant, 2022) but were keen to understand the local economic opportunities in more detail.

4.2.11. Maleshevski Mountains, North Macedonia: Rural Tourism (Maleshevski Tourism)

The North Macedonian partners undertook one in-person event, reaching 24 secondary school age young people. The workshop followed the standard format of MOVING presentations followed by discussions about the future of young people and the VC/MRL. Overall, the young people were quite unsatisfied with the lack of job opportunities, poor investment in services and housing in the region. Furthermore, the tourist activities (e.g. hiking and biking trail) often faced poor levels of upkeep. However, positively, the natural areas offered good opportunities for organic growing and there are low levels of pollution in the area which is very scenic for tourists to visit. The young people believed fixing the negative issues would help with sustainability, but in terms of improving the role of young people, this may be more difficult still as the young participants did not feel 'listened to' by policymakers. There were calls for strategy building sessions between policymakers and local young people to create a long-term future and roles for the young people in the region. Positively, the young people showed genuine interest in the MOVING project and saw it as acting as a facilitator between the local rural tourism businesses and the local government.

4.2.12. Cordilheira Central, Portugal: PDO Cheese (Serra da Estrela Cheese)

Unfortunately, no youth engagement activities were possible in this area.

4.2.13. Alto Douro, Portugal: Wine (Alto Douro Wine)

Two youth engagement activities took place in the Alto Douro area, comprising of an online presentation of the MOVING project, followed by in-person discussion with 22 young people around the future of the VC/MRL and the role of young people in these. The young people viewed the future of the Alto Douro area as potentially quite bleak, with continued depopulation of young people out of the area leading to increasingly fewer farms (especially in the case of small farms). It may simply become an area of production for large companies based outside of the region, with few people living in the area. To make this future, and the mountain area, more sustainable the young participants made suggestions such as diversification (into tourism as well as winemaking), education of local people, improved cooperation, improved services and infrastructure and tax alleviation to allow local people to comfortably remain living in the MRL. By achieving these suggestions this will also enable/encourage young people to live and work in the MRL.

4.2.14. Southern Romanian Carpathians, Romania: Certified Ecotourism (Brasov Certified Ecotourism)

The Romanian partners undertook nine youth engagement activities, reaching around 140 young people studying university courses relating to food, tourism, business and environment studies. The workshops took the standard format. For many of the young participants there was a desire to live in the mountain areas when they finish their studies as these are calm and peaceful areas that they aspire to live in. However, they also acknowledged the difficulties these areas face in terms of lack of job opportunities, low wages, poorer infrastructure, for example. Furthermore, there was also a more pessimistic view that these areas may also become overcrowded and, as such, less attractive places to live. The region can become more sustainable through improving infrastructure, reducing pollution and by maintaining the local population. The young people also highlighted that often they were not consulted over local development issues, and believed this should change if they are to take a more prominent role in their MRL. The young participants were also eager to contribute to the MRL through internships and volunteering opportunities within the eco-tourism VC. The Romanian partners will also further engage with young people during a summer school event to be held in May 2024. Results from this summer school will be presented via a blogpost or report.

4.2.15. Dinaric Mountains, Serbia: Lamb (Sjenica Lamb)

The Serbian partners organised one in-person workshop with 12 young participants. The workshop followed the standard format and also presented the LTVRA in more detail, focussing discussions around the four main concepts in the LTVRA (stronger, connected, prosperous and resilient). In terms of the future vision of the area, the participants were proud to live in a beautiful natural area which is full of culture and people who are respectful of the local nature. In terms of sustainable improvements and strengthening the role of young people, the youth participants suggested improving the education opportunities in the area, better protection for the local natural environment (as well as more sustainable tourism ventures to create more jobs), better infrastructure, and finally, raising more awareness of the value of the area.

4.2.16. Slovak Carpathian Mountains, Slovakia: Bio-honey (Carpathian Bio-Honey)

The Slovakian partners completed two in-person youth engagement events, with 30 young participants. The first group were university students studying rural development entrepreneurship or tourism management, and the second group were rural vocational school students. The standard workshop format was followed for both events. In terms of the future vision

both groups viewed the future of the area as a place of greater nature protection, but less as a place of sustained local communities (i.e. it's a difficult place to live and work). The VC/MRL sustainability could be improved through better biodiversity and tourist management and attracting more people to live and work in the mountain areas. Revenue (and recognition of the additional benefits) from honey production could be improved too. To strengthen the role of young people in the area the communities in these mountain areas need to become more 'attractive' for young people e.g. better infrastructure, services, networks and job opportunities (e.g. supporting small family farms). The young people highlighted that the bio-honey is a good example of how a high-quality environment can be translated into a high value product.

4.2.17. Betic Systems, Spain: Organic Olive Oil (Betic Organic Olive Oil)

The Spanish Betic systems partners conducted two in-person workshops with 62 young people in total. The events followed the standard workshop format, including presentations from local businesses and a breakfast with local produce. The second workshop was conducted with primary school students (around 12 years old). The young people understood the potential of the area in the future, in terms of natural beauty and nature protection, but also recognised the area faced severe challenges in terms of drought, depopulation and overcrowding from tourism. In fact, there was a lot of 'existential pessimism' in the discussions. To make the area more sustainable, water management and permaculture practices were suggested, as water shortages is a serious threat. Better knowledge exchange of the olive growing, and mountain protection traditions would support better involvement of young people in the VC/MRL. The primary school students, when asked to give one word to define the future of their mountain area gave words such as *'solidarity'*, *'sustainable'* and *'loneliness'.* Furthermore, the Betic systems partners highlighted that having presentations from local businesses helped the young participants to see a more positive future of their mountainous area over and above the existential pessimism.

4.2.18. Huesca, Spain: Wine (Huesca Wine)

The Huesca partners conducted two youth engagement events. One was hybrid, and one was in-person. They engaged with over 90 young people in total. The standard format was followed for the first event, and the second event (with primary school students) included a fieldtrip to the local vineyard. In the first event, the young people tried to be optimistic about the future but found this difficult due to many potentially worrying future scenarios (e.g. depopulation, larger farmers, high land and grape prices, extreme weather impacts). More positively, some participants thought the impacts of extreme weather events may lead to more sustainable agricultural practices as well as technological advancements. In the second event, positively, more than 80% of the young participants stated that they would live in the mountain area in the future. They highlighted the importance of the natural environment, culture and traditions, as well as the importance of

education to improve sustainability and the role of young people. For the older young people in the second workshop, sustainability can be improved through environmental awareness, technological advancements, research, infrastructure improvements and improving the attractiveness of rural jobs to those outside the MRL (i.e. potential new young residents). Subsidies for new young-person led businesses, improved digitalisation and networks to help to valorisation of new products from youth-led businesses were the main suggestions of how to strengthen the role of young people in the mountain area.

4.2.19. Sierra Morena, Spain: Iberian Ham (PDO) (Sierra Morena Ham)

The Sierra Morena partners conducted two in-person youth engagement events, reaching over 80 students (mixture of primary and secondary school students). In the first event, the students were those interested in rural careers in the area, and in the second event the discussions were framed around 'International Day of Women and Girls in Science' highlighting the specific roles that women have played in the VC and MRL. In the first event, the young people were quite pessimistic about the current future that they could see in MRL, even though it was an area they would live to live and work in. The second event's participants were more positive, feeling empowered through the presentations from women working in the MRL. In terms of suggestions to improve the MRL/VC's sustainability, additional training on sustainable crop and land management, better networking and collaboration opportunities for farmers and improving economic development were all offered as examples. In terms of opportunities to strengthen the role of young people, the second workshop – 'women move mountains' was viewed as very empowering and successful so can be one such example, as well as the common suggestions such as improving job opportunities, incentives for local young residents and housing options.

4.2.20. Swiss Alps, Switzerland: Grain (Grisons Grain)

The Swiss Alps partners conducted three workshops with young people from local secondary schools. The first two workshops introduced the MOVING project and its findings, an interactive session playing an online game about food systems, followed by a discussion about the MRLs future and the role of young people. The third workshop followed the standard format. When discussing the future of the MRL, the young participants were fairly positive highlighting the recreation opportunities and the natural beauty, and opportunities to improve infrastructure. More negatively were the impacts of depopulation and the cost to visit and undertake activities in the mountain area. Increases in tourist numbers is considered to be positive to some, and negative to other participants. To improve the sustainability/resilience of the MRL there needs to be a good balance between production (of high-quality products) and conservation, and an adoption of renewable sources of energy. Surprisingly there was not a lot of appetite for new products/innovative ideas, and rather a continuation of the traditional products and ways of

producing. The role of young people could be strengthened through increased job opportunities, networking opportunities and better access to (and within) the MRL. One specific suggestion was to establish 'a mountain university' to teach about specific mountain issues and production. Involvement of young people in policymaking and politics was also very important.

4.2.21. Swiss Jura, Switzerland: Cheese (Tête de Moine PDO Cheese)

The Swiss Jura partners undertook two youth engagement events (one hybrid, one in-person), reaching 39 young people. The participants were mainly young farmers living/working in the Swiss Jura area. In both cases, the standard workshop format was followed, but they also included a min-survey to rank the 2040 priorities of the participants in terms of the LTVRA. The young farmers recognised the importance of the MRL when looking to the future, in terms of economic production and to maintain cultural heritage and the cheese-making practices. However, they were also fearful of some potential challenges including (inter)national market fluctuations and economic pressures from competitor cheese-making regions. To improve the sustainability of the VC/MRL, adaptation to climate change impacts (e.g. environmentally friendly practices, water collection, development of new cheese varieties) is key. To strengthen the role of young people the VC production needs to be maintained and improved (e.g. better promotion through social media to reach new customers). The mini-survey highlighted that the 'environment and landscape' followed by 'job opportunities' were most important to the future of the young farmers.

4.2.22. Beydaglari, Turkey: Tomatoes (Elmali Tomatoes)

The Turkish partners carried out two youth engagement workshops. The first was in-person with 19 young farmers, and the second was online with 16 young people living and studying rural skills in the MRL. Environmental pressures were of utmost concern to the young participants, specifically the threats from climate change, natural resource misuse and agricultural waste. Tourism is a positive opportunity for the area, with several festivals held in the MRL annually. Sustainability of the VC/ MRL could be improved through increasing wages and subsidies for local producers and better control of greenhouse building and water-use. Education opportunities should also be improved, both for existing producers, but also to encourage new young farmers to work in the area. Subsidies could also be targeted at new young farmers.

4.2.23. Highlands and Islands, Scotland, UK: Scotch Whisky (Speyside Whisky)

Three in-person youth engagement activities were undertaken by the Scottish partners, reaching over 140 young people in total. The first activity comprised of a fieldtrip and workshop at a whisky

distillery with seven young people. The second event was a presentation and discussion to 57 primary school children. The third event was a presentation at a rural careers fair to approximately 80 secondary school pupils living close to the MRL. In terms of the future vision, the young people highlighted many challenges present in the MRL including difficulty land tenure practices, poor transport, lack of housing and long-term jobs. Tourism was also thought to be increasing which brought some opportunities but also some challenges. Sustainability within the VC/MRL could be improved through greater use of renewable energy, shorter supply chains, tourist tax and more funding for community groups to develop the local area. In strengthening the role of young people in the area, better input into policy was suggested, along with more extensive opportunities for rural work experience. In fact, the careers fair which the Scottish partners attended was also well received by the young people as a means to strengthen their (or their potential) role in the MRL. The discussions with the primary school children took a different form (given their level of knowledge of the VC and the MRL) but they were very interested in learning about mountains, and many had not previously considered the mountains as places were people lived/worked -and rather they were simply beautiful landscapes without people.

4.3. What was discussed?

Below are more detailed compiled summaries of the specific discussions undertaken with young people. These discussions were framed in terms of creating youth-led recommendations for sustainable mountain development, specifically focussing on: the future of their regions; and the role of young people in these futures; how they would improve the sustainability of their MRLs and value chains; and, the role of the VCs/MOVING in local sustainable mountain development.

4.3.1. How do the young people see the future of the region in 2040?

Responses differed across all the MRLs. Positively, there was also a view in some cases that changes to the climate may necessitate a change to more sustainable farming practices and the development of new business ventures, or the need to protect more areas as nature reserves (e.g. in the Slovakian case). There was also an understanding that even with these pressures and predicted changes, mountain areas often represented calmer and ideal ‘ways of life’, albeit not without their (increasing) pressures. In some MRLs there was also a recognition of the potential of their areas (e.g., in the Slovakian case) or optimism due to technical innovations such as robotic milking (e.g., in the Swiss Jura case).

Additionally, there was a clear view that young people were generally proud to live in and/or come from their rural regions, however, often they were also worried about the future of their regions due to issues such as lack of investment in services, infrastructure and jobs (e.g., in the Bulgarian, Czech and Central Italian cases), as well as ongoing pressures from the current cost-of-living crisis. Issues such as these were often resulting in out-migration of young people from their regions, leading to issues with a ‘lack of capacity’ and some MRLs being understood as ‘areas of production’ rather than areas for living. Furthermore, there were concerns about the impacts of the changing climate, in terms of water shortages (important for the production of mountain areas

and products), and potential resulting land/mountain abandonment and loss of associated local ecological knowledge. There was also a frequent prediction of a move to larger scale agriculture units, which could lead to less sustainable practices.

Figure 3: Slovakian youth workshop, 2022 [Credit: Diana Sorova]

Overall, the young people we engaged with, although recognising the importance of the VCs and the mountain areas, were often fearful of the future – faced with many overarching pressures and problems, however this is not to detract from their eagerness to help to improve the situation if given the opportunity. In fact, sections 4.3.2 to 4.3.4 offer some more positive suggestions and feelings in terms of how the VCs can be made more sustainable and young people better integrated into these areas.

4.3.2. How would the participants improve the sustainability and resilience of the Value Chain?

Although there often pessimism about the future of their regions, the young participants also offered many suggestions of opportunities around how to improve the sustainability and resilience of their Value Chains. These included economic, environmental and socio-cultural suggestions. In terms of economic suggestions, there were calls for more financial investments in the VC (e.g., Bulgarian and Turkish cases as well as others), a need to diversify the MRL economies, for example, through new short-supply chains (e.g. Slovakian case) and better links to existing global networks for their specific VC products. There were also suggestions around reducing the barriers

for new entrant and young farmers wishing to farm in the MRLs including high land prices, and investment in improving local services such as road infrastructure (e.g., Romanian case) and public transport. Salaries in VC/MRL related jobs could also be increased to attract more young people. New technologies and businesses could also be explored to improve the economic viability and attractiveness of the MRL (e.g. IT hubs and hiking trails in the Crete case), as could local food policy, with greater appreciation for local and MRL based food products.

In terms of suggested environmental improvements, these included, maintaining, and even improving biodiversity (e.g., Slovakian and Spanish Sierra Morena cases) and water management practices, aiming to avoid environmental damage (e.g., Italian Northern Apennines case), reducing pollution (e.g., Romanian case) and improving education of both producers and consumers.

Figure 4: Romanian youth workshop, 2022 [Catalina Rogozan]

Finally, there were numerous socio-cultural improvements suggested including, better access to training resources, such as for marketing and e-commerce (e.g., Crete case), and awareness building of (to outsiders) the importance of local food and agriculture (e.g., French Drome, Italy

Eastern Alps and Swiss Alps cases). There were also suggestions for more housing and access to better services for young people such as healthcare and job opportunities (e.g., Scottish case, Spanish Betic and Czech cases). Improving education and raising awareness was another frequently cited social sustainability measure, particularly to highlight the products created in the VC/MRL and the knowledge and practices necessary for such production, as well as highlighting the importance of vocational education in comparison to academic education.

Concerning all three pillars of sustainability, discussions also centred around the importance of strengthening connections between the numerous actors within the VCs, retaining/improving the sense of community within the MRL, and a call for more accessible research highlighting the sustainability issues in these mountainous areas, whilst valuing the important perspectives that local knowledge can add to such research.

4.3.3. What can be done to strengthen the role of young people in building the present and future of the mountain regions?

Many suggestions again were given around how to strengthen the role of young people in improving the future of their mountain regions. Community building and retaining was a frequently cited suggestion. Other suggestions ranged from creating new opportunities for budding entrepreneurs (including access to more land and creating new financial incentives), which requires good internet connectivity, as well as establishing new cooperatives both within the region and with those living out outside the regions – to encourage new ideas to flourish. Again, there were continued calls for improving job opportunities, infrastructure, and services in the regions as well as calls for education (both formal and informal) on good practice for sustainability and resilience. This is key, as the young people need to be able to remain living and working in the MRLs to subsequently help to improve the future visions of these areas. New job opportunities for young people could be created by increasing the products derived in the MRLs, or from the VCs directly. Additional opportunities for education and training on MRL/VC specific careers (e.g. rural careers fairs) were suggested as beneficial in many of the cases. Finally, there were multiple calls for involving young people more directly in policy discussions, as there was a recognition that young people were often not consulted as well as they could be on policies that will directly affect their future livelihoods and lives more generally.

4.3.4. What is the role of the Value Chain/MOVING in local Sustainable Mountain Development?

In the first stage of youth engagement activities the young people were asked about the role of their specific VC in relation to Sustainable Mountain Development. Whilst, in the second phase, participants were asked about the wider role of MOVING in relation to Sustainable Mountain Development.

Overall, participants viewed the role of their Value Chains in local sustainable mountain development as important. There was widespread recognition that the VCs were useful for

maintaining populations and livelihoods in otherwise often remote locations. Furthermore, there was a recognition of the public goods that multiple VCs were creating for their regions, and thus improving the sustainability of these areas. However, there was also a note by participants that raising consumer awareness of the importance of the VCs (i.e., in terms of production costs, and environmental sustainability) and their contribution to wider sustainability was needed to justify their continued existence. Overall, though there was widespread agreement of the important role that the VCs played in helping to create a maintain the sustainable development of these fragile mountain areas.

Meanwhile, in terms of the role of MOVING, the young participants tended to define this as a role of bridging together different actors/activities in their MRL that may not otherwise have an opportunity to meet and build relationships. In one it was referred to as ‘a safe space’ for discussions between tourism, agriculture and governmental actors. Furthermore, MOVING was raising the awareness of the specific resources that are held/developed within the MRLs and exploring how these resources/products can be further developed or valorised in a sustainable way.

5. Discussion

Overall, there was a substantial amount of engagement with young people in the project – reaching over 1300 people across more than 50 activities. The activities undertaken were varied – from field trips to workshops, to seminars – but, largely, the content was similar in undertaking discussions around the potential vision for the future of the MRLs, and the specific role that young people could (and would like to) play in improving the sustainability of both the VCs and the wider MRLs. The findings from the engagement activities highlight that, in general, the current view that young people hold for the future of their MRLs is very mixed. The young people often recognised the importance of the MRLs, for retaining cultural traditions, for maintaining mountain products and nature, and tourism opportunities. However, at the same time, they were concerned with the series of large-scale and multidimensional pressures on (and within) the MRLs including lack of economic opportunities, demographic ageing, lack of housing and necessary services and environmental factors including water shortages from climate change. More positively, the young people offered many helpful suggestions in terms of how the MRLs and value chains could be made more sustainable and resilient when looking to the future, including improving infrastructure, services and job opportunities in these regions.

The subsequent discussion and conclusion are categorised according to the four 'areas of action' stated in the Long Term Vision for Rural Areas:

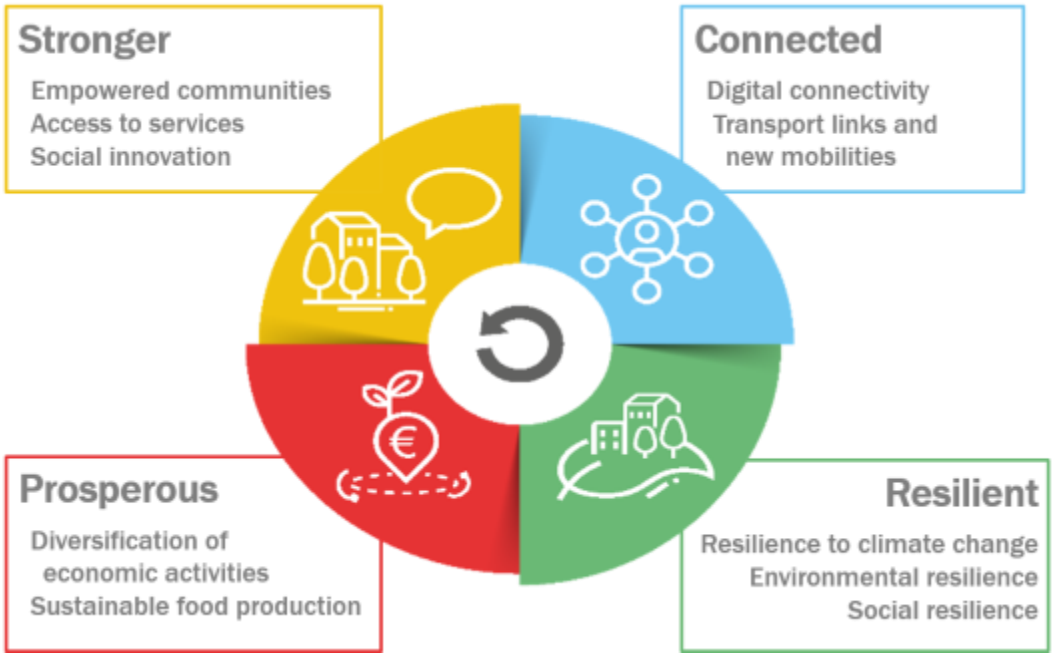

Figure 5: LTVRA's Areas for Action

5.1. Stronger

The importance of an empowered community with good access to services and opportunities for (and examples of) social innovation were found to be key within the LTVRA. These categories were also frequently cited by our young people. Our young participants often cited the importance of networking and collaboration opportunities (Social innovation) to overcome the challenges that the MRLs faced, or that they faced in trying to live and/or work within the mountain area. Some of the youth engagement events were also examples of, or opportunities for, social innovation, including the 'women move mountains' day in the Spanish Sierra Morena case or the rural careers fair in the Scottish case. Furthermore, many of these engagement events offered a space for different organisations/producers in the VCs/MRLs to come together and discuss their future with each other and with the young people wishing to live and work in the MRLs in the future. Access to services was also frequently mentioned in terms of healthcare and education. Lack of housing should also potentially be added here as it was mentioned within most of the youth engagement events, as without appropriate (and affordable) housing it is impossible to create 'stronger' and sustainable communities to help the rural areas flourish and thrive. Such a sentiment is widely understood and accepted in the wider academic literature (e.g. Gkartzios and Ziebath, 2016; Sucksmith, 2023).

5.2. Connected

'Connected' was highlighted in the LTVRA in terms of digital connectivity, transport links and new mobilities. Improvements to transport links and new mobilities were frequently mentioned by the young people in terms of improving the accessibility to (and within) the mountain areas – both as a means to attract new young residents, but also to improve the efficiency of the VCs and help to foster new VCs and products. Existing research has highlighted the importance of flexible and connected rural transport options for improving the wider sustainability of rural areas (Poltimae et al, 2022). Digital connectivity was mentioned less frequently, perhaps because digital connectivity improvements as just taken for granted that they will be rolled out across the MRLs when available, or because we engaged with young people in this instance who are generally already well connected in a digital sense. It was, however, mentioned in terms of opportunities for advertising of the VC/ MRLs through social media campaigns, and in creating better e-commerce opportunities and IT Hubs in a few MRLs. Furthermore, digital exclusion can be more likely in rural areas, and as such efforts should be made to reduce any potential instances of exclusion in these MRLs.

5.3. Prosperous

Prosperous includes 'diversification of economic activities' and 'sustainable food production'. These were very important for the young participants in our workshops, both as means to make

the Value Chains and mountain areas more resilient to shocks and impending challenges (e.g. climate change impacts, demographic ageing), but also as access points into the value chains for young people through new businesses, sustainable technology production or creation of new food products through practices such as agroecology or agrobiodiversity. Other research (Romeo et al, 2022) has highlighted that such practices can lead to more resilient agricultural and food systems. Keeping the link to the land was often cited as important for the young people, as well as ensuring the rural area maintained its prosperity. There was also a focus on training and raising awareness of, and around, the processes in the value chains and a desire to find new opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship in their regions, be that in sustainable food production or new job opportunities.

5.4. Resilient

Being ‘resilient’ to climate change and having environmental and social resilience represent the fourth and final area of action for the LTVRA. This was another important area of discussion for the young people’s involvement in the youth engagement activities. Discussions on the pressures from, and impacts of a changing climate were present in almost every engagement activity undertaken. Such discussions are already well captured in academic literature too (Altieri et al, 2015; Nelson et al, 2010). There was a lot of pessimism around the future of these MRLs, largely due to the fears from the impacts of climate change in terms of water shortages and a reduction in small-scale farming. However, others offered suggestions of how to be ‘resilient’ to climate change in terms of rainwater capture, technological changes, and the creation of new varieties of raw ingredients for the VCs. Obtaining environmental and social resilience was also frequently cited in terms of using more renewable energy sources, diversifying production and maintaining a balance between production/ consumption (farming, tourism ventures) and nature conservation. We consider social resilience in terms of opportunities to influence policymaking. This is something that is generally lacking (although warranted and desired) for young people in the MRLs. The youth engagement activities have highlighted the key role that young people can and should play in the future development of our rural mountain areas and communities if they are given the right tools, opportunities and a ‘seat’ at the decision-making table, and as such better social resilience could be gained by giving a greater voice and decision-making power to the young people who wish to live and work in the MRLs.

6. Conclusion

This report has highlighted the MOVING project's youth engagement activities and findings from across more than 50 events and with over 1300 young people. These activities built on the work of the LTVRA, gathering young people's perceptions of the future of some of Europe's rural mountain areas, along with their suggestions over how to improve the sustainability and resilience of these areas and the VCs present within these areas, and how they think their role (as young people living or working in these areas (or with a desire to move to)) can be strengthened. The discussions were far-ranging, recognising the challenges that these mountain areas are currently facing in light of a changing climate and demographic ageing, whilst offering a sense of optimism about the future through appreciating these areas of nature alongside diversification opportunities, technological advancements and ways to improve the living conditions in these mountainous areas.

Finally, in terms of some policy implications, we urge policymakers to take a greater interest in (and implementation) the discussions presented in this report, as well as those highlighted in the LTVRA and the Europarc Manifesto. Additionally important are discussions held at youth-focussed events such as the Rural Youth Parliaments, Young Farmers and Rural Youth Europe, that are taking place across many of our case study countries, and often specifically within our MRLs. Furthermore, our data and engagement have highlighted that young people have a great deal to add to discussions around the future of rural mountain areas which can be translated as active participation in, and sustainability and renewal of our MRLs and rural mountain areas, with the aid of locally-relevant (and easy to understand and utilise) policies that can help to enable and support such future opportunities and growth.

There is some appetite for arranging a European-level event specifically exploring good practice examples of youth engagement, however with the additional recognition that regional or national events may also be relevant and prevent a lack of engagement due to potential language barriers. There may also be scope for follow on projects that focus more fully, and longitudinally, on the impacts and opportunities for young people living and working in mountain areas.

The report will end with some specific recommendations for policy and practice:

6.1. Recommendations for policy

- Ensure policy decisions and policymaking discussions that relate to rural mountain areas are made with the engagement and consideration of the views of the young people of live and work in these areas.

- Consider financial subsidies and grants for young people wishing to start sustainable businesses within Europe's mountain areas.

- Consider how the findings of this report, and other similar reports, fit with the LTVRA and the EU Member States' Youth Guarantee which commits to all young people under 30 receiving a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship, or traineeship. For example, can a Rural Mountain Resident Youth Guarantee be implemented across Europe?

6.2. Recommendations for practice

- Implement training programmes, and practical work experience opportunities, at an early age, across Europe, to highlight the range of careers that are possible within mountain areas.

- Create national advertising campaigns and educational campaigns to highlight the range of sustainable products and public goods that are derived from, and are situated within, rural mountain areas.

- Building on the work on MOVING, maintain and establish new youth-focussed networks and collaborations across Europe's Mountain areas to encourage the exchange of knowledge and good practice in maintaining sustainable production, conservation and livelihoods in these mountainous areas.

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