MOVING
MOuntain Valorisation through INterconnectedness and Green growth

Policy Brief

CLUSTER G

Governance, Cooperation and Territoriality

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Policy Brief Cluster "G": · Governance, Territoriality, and Cooperation

MOVING is a 4-years Horizon 2020 funded project whose main objective is to build capacities and codevelop relevant policy frameworks across Europe for the establishment of new or upgraded/upscaled value chains that contribute to the resilience and sustainability of mountain areas, using a bottom-up participatory process that engages value chain actors, stakeholders, and policymakers. The project is developed in 23 European mountain regions. Some additional objectives are:

- Establish a European-wide Community of Practice (CoP) on Mountain Value Chains, including actors from the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS), value chain and policymaking stakeholders and society.
- Develop a conceptual and analytical framework based on the understanding of mountains as Social-Ecological Systems, describing and interpreting the diversity of mountain value chains, and assessing their contribution to the sustainability and resilience of mountain areas and population.
- Provide visual tools to raise awareness of the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS), value chains actors, civil society, and policymakers on the diversity of land use and production systems of mountain areas, the threats they face, the bio-physical assets they can mobilise, their sustainability, and their resilience to climate change.
- Study the configurations, strategies, dynamics, and value distribution of different value chains in the main European mountainous areas to assess their contribution to sustainability and resilience.
- Develop in-depth, participatory, critical benchmarking of clusters of mountain value chains to identify enablers and blocking factors affecting the sustainability and resilience.
- Carry out foresight exercises to capture and anticipate the long-term trends affecting mountain areas, co-constructing shared visions and strategies for a balanced mix of public and private goods.
- Elaborate an evidence-based and performance-focused policy roadmap and policy design toolkit for the next generation of policy interventions to enhance the connectivity, sustainability, and resilience of mountain regions.

Figure 1. The 7 common objectives of MOVING

During the project development, an in-depth analysis of a value chain in each mountain area was conducted to determine its contribution to sustainability and resilience. Subsequently, the 23 value chains were categorised into five distinct clusters for cross-comparison and benchmarking. Each cluster aimed at addressing a specific challenge: Social and Demographic aspects (S), Innovation and infrastructures (I), Governance, Territoriality and cooperation (G), Nature and ecosystem services (N), and Value and quality products (V). To facilitate the analysis, seven common objectives were established (see Fig. 1), and various participatory activities were carried out. These included a cluster workshop involving stakeholders from all value chains within the cluster and a questionnaire answered by experts from each value chain. This Policy Brief serves as a synthesis overview of the results obtained in Cluster S (Social and Demographic aspects).

1. Synthesis of Cluster G in mountain areas of Europe

Cluster G is concerned with Governance, Territoriality and Cooperation in mountain regions. The governance of mountain landscapes involves many actors and institutions at different scales – local, regional, national and international. Cluster G examines how different actors and institutions govern and cooperate in mountain areas to manage social and environmental resources sustainably to enhance the resilience of mountain regions. In particular, it looks at inclusiveness, cooperation between public and private partnerships, and the contribution of the Value Chain (VC) and wider assemblage to the creation and maintenance of governance institutions and strategies within the region.

Rural areas face many challenges, including changing demographics, climate change, economic diversification, infrastructure, digitalisation, wellbeing and land use change. One question is whether such challenges can trigger social innovations through reconfiguration of governance led by civil society (Slee et. al., 2020). Moodie et al. (2023) outline four core governance sub-themes: place-based policymaking, enhanced rural-urban interconnections and interdependencies, participatory and inclusive rural governance, and collaborative rural network governance. In this Cluster, we look at how these governance themes play out in six case studies selected from the wider MOVING project.

There are six mountain regions and value chains considered in Cluster G:

N°	Mountain	Value Chain	Country
03	Sumava – Cesky Les	Beef production	Czechia
05	Drome Valley	Sheep meat	France
09	Eastern Alps	Trento DOC wine	Italy
11	Maleshevski Mountains	Rural tourism	Macedonia
14	Southern Romanian Carpathian Mountains	Certified ecotourism	Romania
23	Highlands and Islands	Speyside Malt Whisky	Scotland (UK)

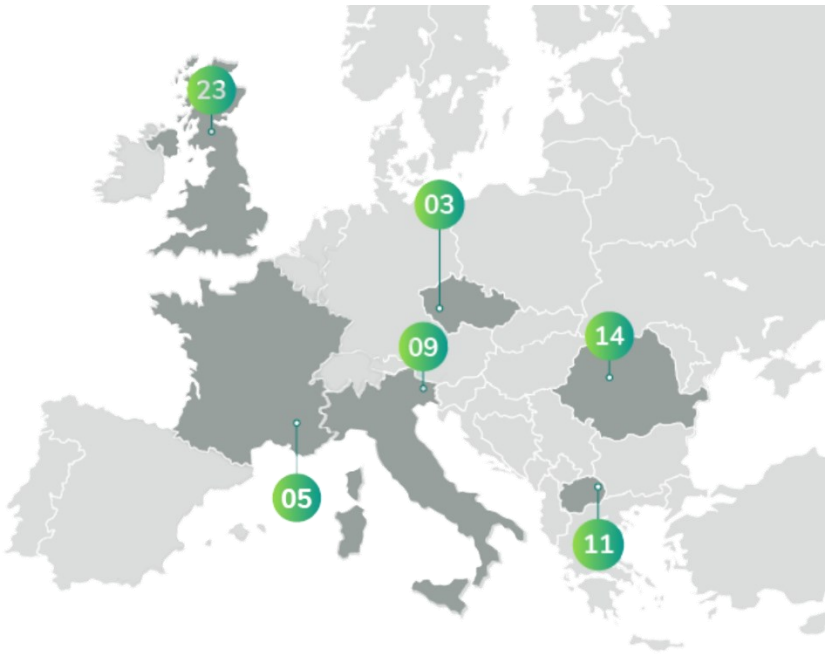

Figure 2. Reference region that are part of the Governance, Territoriality and Cooperation Cluster: Sumava – Cesky Les (03), Drome Valley (05), Eastern Alps (09), Maleshevski Mountains (11), Southern Romanian Carpathian Mountains (14), Highlands and Islands (23). Source: MOVING 2020

For each of the reference regions, Cluster G analysed the performance of the value chain in terms of contribution to Governance, Territoriality and Cooperation in their wider mountain region, through the fulfilment of the set of shared objectives developed for all clusters (Figure 9). In Cluster G, four objectives were analysed for each of the partner/case study regions using the data from the Participatory Value Chain analysis (Blackstock et. al, 2023):

- Cooperation
- Sustainable use of local assets
- Inclusiveness
- Adaptive capacity

Each of these objectives was assessed through indicators tailored to the cluster:

- Cooperation
  - Trust and cooperation between actors
  - Sharing information and resources between actors
  - Local ownership and control of VC
  - Local participation in decision-making
  - Collective action institutions
- Sustainable Use of Local Assets
  - VC contribution to cultural landscape
  - VC contribution to symbolic capital
  - Sustainability of resource use
  - Protected areas
- Inclusiveness
  - Immigrants involved in the VC

    - Age of actors in the VC
    - Gender balance
    - Accessibility of the resource system to local entrepreneurs
    - Knowledge, training, skills
- Adaptive Capacity
    - Sectoral strategic plans
    - Territorial plans for each stage of the VC
    - Legal obligations at each stage of the VC

Conclusions from the study of these VCs were tested and validated against the experience of the regions' stakeholders participating in the Workshop 'Unlocking the Power of Mountain Value Chains', held in Hungary from 6 to 8 November 2023. Stakeholders confirmed findings from the analysis of the objectives and the indicators.

1.1. Cooperation

Analysing the indicator data from MOVING WP4, we can see that levels of trust and cooperation between actors varies between regions in Cluster G, with Czechia and France being lowest and Italy/Trento, Romania, and Scotland highest. Similarly, levels of sharing information and materials between actors varies across regions, with Italy/Trento, Macedonia and Scotland having highest levels, and France and Czechia lowest.

Most regions in Cluster G sit at medium levels of local ownership of the assets and control of the finances in the VC, and most regions have a medium level of local participation of VC actors in decision making.

The final indicator tells us that all regions have formal collective action institutions that support the production stage of the VC. These vary between the Mountain Reference Landscape level and national level, and demonstrate the existence of multi-actor, multi-level governance.

1.2. Sustainable Use of Local Assets

The contribution of VC practices to existing cultural landscapes is higher in three regions, and medium high for two. In all regions traditional imagery is used to sell products. The contribution to symbolic capital is high for the all VCs with some regions having rules in place relating to the labelling of products, which reinforces the contribution to symbolic capital. Sustainability of resource use varies between VCs, with packaging and high water demands of some products limiting their sustainable use of natural resources. The VCs are all located in, or near, protected areas. These include national designations (e.g. National or Natural Park) and international (i.e., UNESCO).

1.3. Inclusiveness

The indicator immigration refers to the involvement of non-locals in the VC. VCs with lack of participation of non-locals may lack good links with other VCs and governance levels and can therefore indicate inclusiveness based on social capital. There is almost no difference in immigration into the VC of outside actors between cluster cases as all VCs tended towards having

local actors rather than having high numbers of immigrants/outsiders involved in the VC. A majority of actors in all VCs tend to be older (>60 years) with the exception of Romania, which are mostly younger (<40). VC actors are overwhelmingly male or a mix of male and female. There are no VCs composed of mostly female actors. Three VCs in Cluster G have medium levels of accessibility of the resource system to local entrepreneurs (Czechia, Italy and Scotland) and two have high accessibility (Macedonia, Romania). This means that Macedonia and Romania VCs may be more accessible by local entrepreneurs. The question asks about resource system; the indicator uses entrance costs (inaccessible = high entrance costs). Only the Scotland VC has skills and training available at all scales; other VCs in this cluster had lower levels of skills and training available and/or limited available data.

1.4. Adaptive capacity

In terms of adaptive capacity, Czechia and Scotland reported more sectoral specific strategies and plans at each stage of the VC than France, Italy and Macedonia. These could be used to support multi-level governance in the region through the inclusion of actors from different scales of governing in each mountain region. Scotland also reported more territorial plans but from the data it is not clear if this is a result of having more data than the other regions or represents a real difference. France and Scotland have the highest number of legal obligations associated with their VCs; Czechia and Macedonia medium and Romania lowest. There are similarities here between Czechia and France because both VCs involve the slaughter of animals. Other common legal obligations concern environmental quality and tourism. Scotland may be unique here in that whisky production has many legal obligations on malt whisky processes imposed by the industry.

In summary, VCs from Cluster G showed differences in the levels of trust and cooperation between different actors in the region, leading to different levels of participation in formal and informal governance in each region. Lower levels of trust in Romania, Macedonia and Italy led to lower levels of engagement and participation in decision-making in local governance whereas higher levels of trust and cooperation in Scotland, France and Czechia led to higher levels of participation and the existence of formal and informal mechanisms and institutions of governance in each region.

2. Challenges addressed

2.1. Facilitating multi-level governance in mountain regions

In multi-level governance of rural areas, local participation and adaptive capacity are the most important factors. The most common/serious problems are low levels of participation and giving the impression of encouraging local participation but making it difficult for local actors to engage, for example by not giving enough notice of meetings or arranging at a time that does not suit local actors because of other commitments, meaning that people and communities are unable to fully participate in decision-making processes. Policies for participation can be well-meaning but they are not effective if local people are not empowered to become involved or if they have little confidence that their involvement will make a difference in the outcomes of decisions.

Solutions include strengthening civil society to create a more active civil society. The Community Forum model was considered successful in some mountain regions because they are adapted from models used 50 years ago and local people can understand how they fit with other levels of governance (Burghs in Scotland; socialist institutions in Romania and Macedonia). Regional forums can also be useful as can enabling local people to set their own budgets through, for example, participatory budgeting. In all these examples decision-making is localised rather than involving actors from the national scale, encouraging greater subsidiarity and participation.

Farmers and other rural actors of the mountain regions can find it challenging to maintain the social presence for multi-level governance because of the nature of their work and the timing of meetings and events. One way to manage this is through creating institutions that reflect the different levels of participation - primary (i.e., taxes), secondary (being informed), and tertiary (being interested) (Pascaru & Buţiu, 2010). Thus, people can participate through being involved in different ways and at a level that suits them and in which they may have influence.

2.2. Empowering mountain regions through place-based policies

Formal and informal community groups are formed around specific issues, pertinent to the local region. Mountain regions and VCs can support local asset-based development through the creation of forums such as community development trusts (Scotland). Asset-based development can enable profit and resources to be kept in the local economy and reinvested back in the community in ways that the community decides. The participation of formal groups can be very low unless there is a strong interest in a specific local issue. Regional variations can affect the culture of involvement, including geography, infrastructure and timing of meetings. Building up structures to support multi-level governance takes time (e.g. 20 years +) to overcome initial resistance to something new. It is important that the voice(s) of the local community are heard and listened to in development decisions. This can be done through strong, existing institutions initially, to build up trust and through existing actors to reach out to new entrants. Long-term strategy and planning documents should involve communities and new ways of reaching people could be tried, such as through different ultra-local organisations (e.g. churches, cultural centres) and trusted gatekeepers to capture the experiences of migrants. In the case of the UK, leaving the EU and the subsequent loss of EU funding required authorities and other third sector organisations to look elsewhere for funding to support local development and causes. While this presented challenges, it also created opportunities to engage with different partners and funders.

2.3. Challenging top-down policy-making processes

Rural and agricultural EU policy including for mountain regions, is largely dominated by top-down policy making processes, despite attempts to encourage governance through national and subnational actors. Where there are low levels of inclusiveness and decisions continue to be dominated by the interests of one sector (agriculture in some regions, tourism in others) then poor decisions are often the result. Poor decisions can also result from a lack of skills and training, and a focus on economic development sometimes to the detriment of the environment, e.g. the example given by one stakeholder during the Budapest workshop of the development of a ski

resort at a low altitude when globally we are experiencing higher temperatures, and the long-term forecast is for less snow at lower altitude. With greater participation then planning for future tourism could have included a broader range of options that focused on sustainable development.

Within the cluster there was also a need for proper resourcing for local institutions so that they had the capacity to implement national and EU policies at a local level. Too often cluster partners said that the offices or institutions regulating local implementation was underfunded, short of staff or that staff did not have the knowledge or training to implement their responsibilities.

3. Policy recommendations

Policy recommendations were discussed by participants during the cluster session at the Budapest workshop during which several themes emerged between cluster VCs. Analysis of discussion identified six specific policy recommendations for enhancing the governance of mountain regions and their linked VCs. These include decentralization of national policies, reducing bureaucracy around spatial planning policy, adopting a more participatory approach in developing local markets through VCs, strengthening cooperation between local governments and rural/mountain tourism VCs, supporting local actors to take decisions at local level and strengthening public/private partnerships. These recommendations are given in greater detail below.

3.1. Decentralisation of national policies at regional or local level

The process of decentralization encourages regional and local governments take more responsibility for the interpretation and application of EU, national and regional policies at a local level. Two examples were highlighted in Cluster G value chains in Macedonia and Romania. Smaller rural authorities, like in the Maleshevski region in Macedonia, can struggle with budgets and human resources in terms of employments and professional capacities of the employees. The burden for coordinating many aspects of local development, including rural tourism and value chain, lies with two offices: Local Economic Development and Sector Tourism. These offices have one, or two employees, seriously constraining their capacity to respond to the needs of the tourism VC, especially in terms of access to funding and mediating between sectors within the VC that are looking to attract the support of national authorities.

In Romania, local public authorities highlight the urgent need for decentralisation of certain national policies at regional, or even local level. Challenging and complicating bureaucracy, that requires a considerable amount of time and human resources to interpret for specific local application, is considered a constraint for the sustainable development of the area. While a decentralised policy and decision making could respond to local needs, take into account the local context, require far fewer human resources and be much quicker to implement.

3.2. Lessen bureaucracy in spatial planning policy

The need for decentralising policy and decision-making process was mainly concerning spatial planning policy (in Romanian Carpathians). Local public authorities, and in particular the regional

mayors, find the process for defining and getting approved the General Urban and Area Urban Planning is very bureaucratic, complicated, and lengthy because they need the final approval of a national institution. Considering the importance of spatial planning for the development of a sustainable form of tourism in the area (solving the agricultural land abandonment, as well as the chaotic building development), this is one of the most important policies to consider for subsidiarity purposes. Developing plans for the management of Natura 2000 sites and for the resilience of the area towards climate change and natural disasters, in collaboration with other institutions (e.g.: Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Forestry) were also mentioned as specific policies for decentralization and decision making at regional and local levels.

3.3. Adopt participatory approach in developing local markets

The VCs in mountain regions provide opportunities for participation of local citizens and local actors in general to collaborate and discuss visions for the development of production, processing and distribution infrastructure within the mountain region and beyond, so the process of market driven development is bottom-up as well as top-down. Encouraging public discussion and debate between actors across the different sectors of the VCs in mountain regions will help the vision for the future of the region to be realised across different sectors.

3.4. Strengthen cooperation and communication between local governments and rural tourism value chains

Poor implementation of top-down policies at a local level can burden and weaken the value chain in mountain regions, particularly tourism. Lack of good, local implementation of national and EU policies affects the environmental quality of the regions, e.g woodlands, and the availability and quality of private accommodation in the region for visitors. For example, in Macedonia, private entities are not registered at the tax office, thus not categorized according to the tourism services they provide. This is jeopardizing the quality of the tourism experience since the visitors do not have a process to feedback their experience if they do not get the quality they were expecting. Advertising on social media also raises expectations of tourists. There are two reasons for the absence of registration: the process of categorization of the service is centralized and dependent on the institutions from the capital, Skopje, and the short stay of the tourists, the poor financial turnover for the owners. Decision makers in the Multi-Actor Platform of the MOVING project working with the research team in the Foresight visioning exercise outlined this lack of categorisation as a serious threat that should be prioritized and in order to provide greater local accountability of tourism services in the mountain region.

3.5. Support local actors to develop institutions to make decisions at local and regional levels

Municipalities and VCs along with other local institutions should be supported from the national government to establish local and regional organisations for the professionalization of the tourism sector, identify and attract funding and thereby increase the quality of the sector and the tourism experience in the region. In tourism, laws and policies are created and mostly implemented by institutions at national level. Decentralisation would create opportunities for local governments

and non-governmental actors within civil society to take responsibility for implementation of some policies and measures at a regional and local level. It should however be emphasised that most local governments are facing challenges over financial resources, attracting professional staff, have small and reducing number of employees and frequently lack funding for full implementation of local development measures.

An example in Macedonia recommends the support of national government for municipalities and VCs in the Maleshevski region to establish a Destination Management Organisation which, although small, will take over responsibility for professionalization of tourism in the region and for achieving goals for rural tourism development.

3.6. Strengthen public/private collaboration through partnerships

Public authorities consistently highlight the need for decentralisation of decisions to regional and even local level, to avoid underfunding of rural areas and to reduce the bureaucratic process (considered cumbersome, time-consuming and an obstacle to solving problems). While some regions (e.g. Romanian Carpathians) can point to a poor history of collaborations in the region, only through the establishment of public-private partnerships (e.g. Scotland) can they contribute and ensure the sustainable development of the region. A collaborative process should happen, bringing all actors around the same table, to start projects targeting building the resilience of the region.

Expected impact on Cluster G objectives

The above recommendations can be seen in line with the objectives of Cluster G, namely cooperation, sustainable use of local assets, inclusiveness and adaptive capacity.

Recommendations aimed at enabling greater local decision-making and empowerment for local institutions impact cooperation of local actors and inclusiveness within the region, since governance is more impactful when it includes a range of actors from different sectors, and when knowledge and social capital can flow between the VC and institutions from out with the region.

Several recommendations include enhancing partnerships and collaboration between public and private sector actors, for example between local government and mountain tourism VCs. This includes the non-tourism VCs since they play an important role in helping to attract tourists to the mountain region through provision of local products. Greater cooperation between VCs and tourism organisations could impact the sustainable use of local assets, including the natural environment, as well as support the production of local products enhancing the cultural heritage of the region.

Recommendations that aim at creating local institutions and taking more decisions at local level impact on the region's adaptive capacity and long-term sustainability, especially in the face of funding cuts from EU and in national governments following recent geopolitical events. Building regional capacity in local skills and supporting local actors will be important in ensuring the success of institutions at a local level and supporting local decision-making into the future.

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