

MOVING Final Conference charts future for mountain areas in post-2027 EU priorities



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On June 13 and 14, the [MOVING Final Conference](#): “A Future for Mountain Areas in Post-2027 EU Priorities” took place in Brussels, marking the culmination of a four-year journey for the project. This two-day high-level event gathered **over 60 participants** from European Institutions (**European Parliament, European Commission, European Economic and a Social Committee, Joint Research Centre**), EU support services (**ESPON, Joint Research Centre, Rural Pact Support Office**), EU stakeholder groups (**Euromontana, AREPO**), research community and local/regional mountain actors to underscore the crucial role of mountain areas in advancing Europe’s political objectives and targets by 2030.

Organised by the [European Association for Innovation in Local Development](#) (AEIDL) and hosted by AREPO within the framework of the EU-funded H2020 [MOVING project](#) (*MOuntain Valorisation through INterconnectedness and Green Growth*), the event was strategically timed to discuss the pivotal role of mountains and mountain value chains in achieving Europe’s political targets by 2030 and shaping the **post-2027 EU political agenda**.

Mar Delgado, Professor at the University of Cordoba and MOVING Coordinator, and **Serafin Pazos Vidal**, Senior Expert in Rural and Territorial Development at AEIDL, welcomed participants, setting the stage for an insightful journey through the challenges and opportunities facing mountain regions. Delgado emphasised, “This is not the end of MOVING, but the start of a better future for EU policies for mountain areas post 2027.”

The keynote address by **Mario Milouchev**, Director at Directorate D “CAP Strategic Plans II”, at DG AGRI of the European Commission, further highlighted the pivotal role of EU policies in supporting





rural and mountain regions. Milouchev presented the achievements and upcoming steps of the [stocktaking of the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas \(LTVRA\)](#). "We are at a significant political juncture that could transform the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas into a Strategy," Milouchev concluded. **"This conference on mountain areas is a useful contribution to the ongoing debate on future EU policies post-2027".**

Engaging presentations from **Nuno Guiomar**, from the University of Evora, and **Mar Delgado** showcased MOVING's findings on [common and specific challenges](#) impacting mountain value chains, derived from the project's scientific research and local stakeholder involvement. Guiomar noted that drivers of change are consistent across the 23 MOVING mountain regions. "Distance from roads and cities, internet quality, and other factors are key influencers of change in mountain areas," he stressed. Delgado stated that mountain value chains can enhance the sustainability and resilience of mountain areas, calling for awareness campaigns to emphasise the pivotal role of mountain regions as "Europe's ecological backbone."

The challenges faced in European mountainous areas were further debated during the **round table moderated by Gianluca Brunori**, from the University of Pisa.

Wiktory Szydarowski, Director at ESPON EGTC, praised MOVING for providing a valuable toolbox of solutions for mountain regions. "At ESPON, we believe in cross-sectoral and multilevel governance, empowering local communities, enhancing territorial quality of life, and using living labs. The freedom to stay is the way forward," Szydarowski stated.

Maria Gargano, Researcher at Egmont Institute, highlighted the importance of local population skills to ensure that economic diversification does not harm the social and environmental fabric. She also emphasised the importance of understanding the motivations behind the 'geography of discontent' and the need to build trust within these regions, including empowering local communities.

Cristina Micheloni from VINIDEA, who coordinates the MOVING mountain value chains in the Regions of the Eastern Alps (Italy), Maciço Noroeste (Portugal), and the Spanish Pyrenees (Spain), highlighted diverse value chains' potential to make mountain areas appealing. "I would like to see our MOVING case studies becoming triggers for change," she concluded.

The second session of the conference, moderated by **Giulia Scaglioni**, from AREPO, was dedicated to the community and business-driven solutions, showcasing successful initiatives from various mountain regions.

Kirsty Blackstock, Social Researcher from the James Hutton Institute, stressed that value chains create opportunities, contributing to "the LTVRA objectives for prosperous areas and facilitate stronger and more connected communities." Blackstock highlighted [multiple strategies to upgrade mountain value chains](#) and make them fit to existing challenges, including product and process improvement, new governance methods, and collective action within the value chain or collaboration with other value chains in mountain areas.

Dominique Barjolle, President at Origin for Sustainability, elaborated on the process and findings that led to the development of the [30 MOVING Strategic Options](#), emphasising the need to "help communities build a long-term vision at the local level, beyond the European one."



Chloé Berli, a MOVING Regional Partner from the Swiss Alps case study, showcased how the GrainAlpin cooperative recovered and ensured the grain value chain in this mountain region, which had almost disappeared in 90s.

The day concluded with a discussion **moderated by Carla Lostrangio**, from AEIDL, on existing strategies, policies, tools, and practices that support mountainous regions. In particular, the focus was on **evaluating the effectiveness of existing solutions** and identifying any gaps that need to be addressed by post-2027 EU policies.

Eleftherios Stavropoulos, from the Joint Research Centre, highlighted the importance of the Rural Toolkit, which applies the rural lens to EU funds, making them understandable and practical for communities. He noted that the JRC welcomes experiences on Smart Rural Areas and Start-Up Villages, which can serve as inspiration for others in the EU.

Klavdija Noemi-Ramsak, from DG AGRI, highlighted the forthcoming solutions identified with experts of the EU CAP Network [Focus Group 'Competitive and resilient mountain areas'](#), which took place between November 2023 and March 2024.

Anna Giorgi, Head of the UNIMONT Centre of the University of Milan and coordinator of the Horizon Europe MountResilience project, stressed the importance of research in developing innovative models tailored to mountain challenges. She emphasised the importance of addressing local needs to provoke and introduce innovation to value chains in mountain areas.

On June 14th, the conference focused on [MOVING's policy recommendations and Policy Roadmap](#) for unlocking the power of mountain value chains, with an emphasis on the post-2027 programming period. A **roundtable moderated by Serafin Pazos Vidal**, from AEIDL, kicked off the day with a debate on discussions of post-2027 EU policies and their potential impacts on mountain value chains.

Toma Šutić, Member of the Cabinet of Vice President charged with Democracy and Demography from the European Commission, highlighted the transformative phase in EU policy design. "We are in a very interesting time, reimagining the future of EU policies," Šutić remarked. He emphasised that the current Commission has shifted its focus on rural and remote areas by integrating a rural dimension through initiatives like the LTVRA. "We can't drive social cohesion if a third of our territory is left outside this equation. This remains a priority of the commission, and I believe it will remain," Šutić affirmed.

Benoit Nadler, from DG REGIO, underscored that Cohesion Policy – through Article 174 of the TFEU - focuses on regions with persistent geographical and demographic challenges like mountains. "We work to enhance the intelligence of these territories, ensuring no territory is left behind," he emphasised. Nadler also noted that Cohesion Policy shares competences with Member States, and stressed the importance of further strengthening this dimension to address the needs of mountain areas.

Orsolya Frizon Somogyi, from DG AGRI, emphasised the role of research and innovation to strengthen mountain value chains and provide evidence-informed policies. "The LTVRA was key because we changed the way we spoke about rural areas as places of opportunities," she noted. Frizon-Somogyi also stressed the need for data to carry out Rural Proofing, "allowing us to establish baselines and define targets."



Lidija Pavić-Rogošić, from the European Economic and Social Committee, emphasised the importance of infrastructure and broadband networks and highlighted mountain regions' potential as hubs of opportunity. "Including social cohesion and intergenerational solidarity is fundamental for the sustainability of these territories," she stated. Pavić-Rogošić expressed optimism that intersectoral work of different Commission DGs will continue in the post-2027 programming period.

The highlight of the day was a presentation on the MOVING Policy Roadmap by **Mark Redman**, Director of Highclere Consulting. It is built on eight needs-driven building blocks, including implementing better governance and regulation, fostering collaboration and networking, growing skills, knowledge, and innovation, ensuring mountain livelihoods, promoting mountain product quality, sustaining the use of local assets, and preparing and adapting for change.

The unveiling of the MOVING Policy Roadmap was followed by a roundtable discussion on transitioning from theoretical to practical implementation, moderated by Mark Redman.

Gustavo Lopez Cutillas from the REGI Committee Secretariat of the European Parliament remarked, "The MOVING Policy Roadmap is very timely food for thought as the EU institutions will be starting the next Multiannual Financial Framework discussion. Evidence-based, territorial, place-based policy proposals are helpful for the EU institutions to consider, building upon the extensive political work already carried out by the European Parliament."

Guillaume Corradino, Director of Euromontana, noted, "The MOVING Policy Roadmap provides a narrative for work in the mountains in the coming years, and there's still work to be done to connect the value chain with mountain areas."

Erik Gløersen from Spatial Foresight stated, "I'm pleased that the MOVING Policy Roadmap takes a value chain and functional area approach, which is missing in current policies."

Urszula Budzich Tabor from the Rural Pact Support Office praised the MOVING policy recommendations as highly detailed and fully aligned with the Rural Pact policy labs. She also emphasised that the community formed through MOVING can further collaborate by joining the Rural Pact, which includes a dedicated [community focused on mountain areas](#).

The conference concluded with closing remarks by Mar Delgado, who thanked the attendees and extended her gratitude to the partners for their hard work over the past four years towards a better future for mountain areas. The event underscored the vital role mountain areas play in achieving Europe's broader political and environmental goals by 2030.

"AEIDL will circulate the MOVING policy roadmap in the coming days which contains specific proposals for changing EU policies affecting areas facing geographical constraints such as mountain areas, geared for the post 2027 EU policy framework that is already being discussed."

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

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