

The XIII European Mountain Convention was held from 15 to 18 October 2024 in Puigcerdà, in the the Catalan mountains, and co-organised by Euromontana, the Generalitat of Catalonia and the Centre for Ecological Research and Forestry Applications.

Mixing plenary sessions and workshops, policy makers and local stakeholders, the event contributed to shaping the future of mountain economies.

Plenary report

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Presentations

Plenary report

To launch the 13th European Mountain Convention, welcome addresses were shared by **Jordi Gassió Borràs**, Mayor of Puigcerdà, **Jean-Louis Cazaubon**, Vice-President for Food Sovereignty, Viticulture and the Mountains at Occitanie Region, **Víctor Puga López**, Secretary for Regional and Urban Development and Urban Planning at the Government of Catalonia and **Francés Xavier Boya Alòs**, General Secretary for the Demographic Challenge from the Spanish Government.

Juan Andrés Gutiérrez, outgoing President of Euromontana welcomed participants to the 13th edition of this major gathering of Europe's mountain stakeholders, and warmly thanked the co-organisers, the Generalitat of Catalonia and CREAM.



High-level panel

The policy panel explored the **challenges for European mountain economies in a context of transitions**.

Francés Xavier Boya Alòs, General Secretary for the Demographic Challenge at the Spanish Government, outlined the primary challenges that **depopulation** brings to territorial development and mountain economies. He emphasised the shortage of young people and women in Spain's rural areas, advocating for a renewed narrative around mountain life and economies. Boya stressed the importance of small towns, like Puigcerdà, and of **functional areas** where essential services are accessible within 30 minutes.

Continuing on the topic of demographics, **Herbert Dorfmann**, Member of the European Parliament, addressed the



transitions affecting mountain farming, particularly the issue of low **generational renewal**, which leads to land abandonment. Regarding the green transition, he encouraged mountain regions to see demands for greater sustainability and the Common Agricultural Policy's **eco-schemes as opportunities rather than threats**, especially for livestock farming.



Expanding on environmental considerations, **Amaia Barredo**, Minister of Food, Rural Development, Agriculture, and Fisheries of the Basque Government, cautioned against policies that might deter rural economic actors. She advocated for **incentive-based measures**, including payments for ecosystem services and carbon storage in forests, which could both support the **green transition** and enhance the prosperity of mountain regions. She also called for a **new narrative** and a revised definition of "active farmer" in the post-2027 CAP.

Turning to mountain economies more broadly, **Jean-Louis Cazaubon**, Vice-President for Food Sovereignty, Viticulture, and the Mountains in the Occitanie Region, presented his region's mountain plan. He argued that **regions are at the forefront of the green transition** and that mountain areas should not be "put under a glass dome" but instead supported in their diverse economic development efforts. He highlighted housing as a critical issue for Occitanie, essential for enabling young people to establish roots in the region.

Finally, **Eva Fiter Cirera**, Director of the Institute for the Development and Promotion of the High Pyrenees and Aran, echoed this focus on **housing**, particularly in the Catalan Pyrenees. She underscored the impact of second homes and tourism on the local housing market and stressed the need for sustainable solutions to ensure affordable housing access for the local population.



Keynote speeches

Smart economy | **Genís Roca**, President of Fundació.cat provided a keynote speech on his vision of a **smart economy** in mountain areas, questioning the evolving digital landscape and the increasing role of artificial intelligence in shaping future services. Raising more questions than providing straightforward answers, he questioned the real impact of **remote work** or digital platform such as those used for selling mountain products. Yet, Roca identified some opportunities for **digital tools** in the future mountain economies, including for real-time services and data management for public policies.

The future of European mountain value chains | **Thomas Egger**, Director of the Swiss Association for Mountain Regions highlighted the evolution of mountain value chains in sectors such as farming, forestry, energy, and tourism, emphasising that each has adapted to modern challenges like climate change and the digital transformation. He advocated for a **transformation of territories** based on place-based approach and resources, **cooperation between value chains**, innovation and strong cross-regional cooperation between mountain massifs.



Reconciling territorial development and demographic decline | **Enrique Garcilazo**, Deputy Head of the Regional Development Division and Head of the Rural Unit at the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities emphasised the need for region-specific policies to address demographic and economic challenges in mountainous areas, particularly due to **globalisation** and **technological shifts**. He highlighted the importance of rural-urban linkages, **place-based policies**, well-being and quality of life and raised the question of a **common definition of mountain areas**.

The new Catalan strategy for mountains regions | **Carlos Guàrdia Carbonell**, General Director for Mountain Policies at the Government of Catalonia presented the outlines of **Catalonia's forthcoming new mountain law**, which will replace the existing 1983 law. The new law will be more focused on high mountain areas, and will primarily aim to **fix the population** and **promote economic activity** in the mountains with the help of a mountain observatory. He emphasised the **participatory process**, with all citizens currently able to give their opinion on the law before it is adopted in 2025.

Working for and with nature in mountain areas | **Ulrike Müller**, Member of the Bavarian Parliament discussed the importance of traditional mountain **farming practices for environmental protection**. She especially highlighted Bavaria's conservation programme, which, through the Common Agriculture Policy, contains measures and **payments for the preservation of forests** and specific local ecosystems.



Laying the foundations for success: how to attract and retain workers | **Joan Martí**, Director of Business Strategy at ACCIÓ – Government of Catalonia focused on strategies for **attracting and retaining talent** in rural and mountain areas. He emphasised the need for **purpose-driven businesses** and supportive local ecosystems and advocated for businesses to tap into what makes them attractive to employees, which can differ from one sector to another.

Beyond the local: how to take advantage of rural-urban linkages | **František Kubeš**, Head of Strategic Development and Cooperation Department at the Brno City Municipality outlined the importance of fostering **rural-urban linkages** and integrated planning within metropolitan areas, using Brno as a case study. He also showcased different examples fostering **economic resilience** and **balanced regional**

development in mountain cities such as Grenoble, Bergen or Turin, available in the Eurocities policy brief 'Delivering EU's Rural Vision 2040 through urban-rural cooperation'.

Closing panel

The closing panel gave the floor to the active listeners from the workshops to report back collectively on the ideas emerging on the 8 specific thematic axes of the Convention.

From the entrepreneurship workshop, **Laura Gascón Herrero**, President of Euromontana and member of the EU Rural Pact Coordination Group, emphasised the essential role of women, public-private partnerships, and **social entrepreneurship in rural development**. She underscored the need for institutions to maintain open dialogue with local actors to avoid stifling ongoing grassroots initiatives. Reflecting on Workshop 8, focused on housing and land access, she highlighted the **pressures which tourism places on real estate**, the restrictive legal framework around ownership and renovation, and the importance of applying **rural proofing** to address these issues.

Anna Giorgi, Director of the Research Centre for Sustainable Mountain Development (GESDIMONT) and head of the UNIMONT centre at the University of Milan, noted a significant challenge discussed in the mountain products workshop: the **contrast between the high quality of mountain products and their lack of competitiveness** due to high costs. She suggested that education, communication, and policy support—particularly through



the CAP—could help bridge this gap. From Workshop 7, she stressed the **importance of small local communities** and the need for local governance, collaboration, and innovation, with a particular focus on engaging young people.

Eva Garcia Balaguer, Coordinator of the Pyrenean Climate Change Observatory for the Pyrenees Working Community Consortium, shared insights from the workshop on reindustrialisation, emphasising the **potential to revitalise former industries and establish new ones**. She noted the importance of cooperation and innovation to scale these efforts, as well as the need to attract young talent. In Workshop 5 on tourism, she observed that **transforming the tourism sector will require time**, locally tailored models, data, and substantial investment, particularly to support the transition of winter tourism.

Lastly, **Bernat Claramunt López**, Researcher at the Centre for Ecological Research and Forestry Applications (CREAF), Lecturer at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, and Coordinator of NEMOR (Network for European Mountain Research), highlighted insights from the digitalisation workshop. He emphasised that while **the digital transition is inevitable, it must be adapted to meet the specific needs of local communities**, with education, training, and data protection being crucial elements. From Workshop 6 on **ecosystem services**, he stressed the broad range of benefits provided by pastoralism and the importance

of recognising these services for their **value, rather than just their cost**.

Convention closure

To conclude the three days of discussions, **Laura Gascón Herrero** presented a **vision of prosperous, sustainable, and resilient mountain economies** that will be central to the Puigcerdà Declaration. She emphasised that mountains are not merely tourist destinations but vital places for living and working.

Addressing the recommendations from the workshops that will inform the Declaration, **Blandine Camus**, Policy Officer at Euromontana, noted that **many proposals align closely with the European policy agenda**, which includes plans for a new Circular Economy Act, a European housing strategy, and reforms of the CAP and Cohesion Policy. She also stressed that additional suggestions, such as new approaches to taxation and public procurement hold significant relevance for regional policy.

Finally, looking ahead, **Bernat Claramunt López** announced that the **Final Declaration would be collaboratively developed** in the coming weeks based on participant feedback. **The Puigcerdà Declaration will be officially presented in Brussels on December 11, International Mountain Day**, by Euromontana, the Government of Catalonia, and CREAM.



Workshops report

The Convention featured **8 thematic workshops** highlighting inspiring examples, as well as giving the floor directly to participants to formulate ideas and recommendations for the future of mountain economies.

Workshop 1 – How to bring more value to mountain agricultural products?

This workshop focused on needs and strategies to better promote mountain products and **valorise the mountain assets on the market**. Discussions explored the challenges in using **certifications** and branding **marketing** and **distribution** among others.

A first part of the workshop was dedicated to showcasing inspiring initiatives from across Europe. **Xavier Farré**, representative of Pyrenees Plant Protection Association presented the example of the Catalan apple and the challenges associated with promoting it as a quality mountain product. **Jérémie Bosch**, Mountain Officer at La Coopération Agricole explained the ambition of the French association Altitude to increase the volume and value of mountain products through strong collective promotion of a common logo that would emphasise the mountain dimension without competing with existing geographical indications or private labelling. **Cristina Stuffer** and **Elisa Hölzl**, Economic



researchers at the Institute for economic research from the Chamber of Commerce Bolzano explored the strengths and challenges of South Tyrolean quality products, including wine, apples and meat and dairy products. Finally, **Mar Delgado-Serrano**, Full Professor at the University of Cordoba presented the conclusions and recommendations of the MOVING research project to enhance the value of mountain products by working with producers, consumers and institutions.

The second part of the workshop, designed to be more interactive, allowed participants to pinpoint themes that required further discussion in groups. The 6 following ideas came out of participants' work:

1. Creating a register of abandoned lands

The participants discussed the importance of creating a registry for abandoned lands to maintain productive use of mountain terrains. By clearly identifying available rural lands and facilitating property transfers or temporary management rights, local authorities can help revive abandoned plots for agricultural use. However, this initiative requires strong support from both local authorities and EU funds to overcome barriers such as high property transfer



costs and challenges in identifying rightful landowners.

2. Working together for a common benefit

Local producers face challenges in reaching the market, particularly within their own regions, due to limited consumer awareness and sales opportunities. This idea focuses on creating associations among producers, establishing collective branding, and developing shared sales platforms. By leveraging local restaurants as ambassadors and collaborating with supermarkets, producers can tell their product stories more effectively and build a strong regional brand identity. Key obstacles include logistical isolation, pricing constraints, and stringent supermarket conditions.

3. Creating participatory guarantee system along the entire value chain

To ensure quality and uphold the unique identity of mountain products, participants proposed a participatory guarantee system. This approach would unite local clusters of similar producers who would collectively define and enforce standards, creating transparency and maintaining value across the production chain. Such a system requires financial support to manage transaction costs and overcome resistance from larger brands, which often have opposing interests. Collaboration with external experts and support from organisations like Euromontana were highlighted as essential steps for implementation.

4. Building a collective promotion of mountain products

A unified promotion strategy for mountain products across Europe was identified as key to raising awareness and educating consumers. Participants suggested

organising mountain sectors at a national level, with one official label per country to streamline the messaging and prevent consumer confusion. To support this initiative, countries must coordinate closely and establish a common message about the benefits of mountain products. Challenges include the low level of consumer awareness and resistance from producers hesitant to cooperate.

5. Promoting local transformation agents with context-adapted policies

The need for local transformation agents (such as infrastructure and trained workers) was emphasised, with a focus on reactivating and modernising existing resources. Key actions include a participatory diagnosis to identify local needs, developing integrative policy strategies, and securing funding. Significant barriers include high costs and a reluctance among some communities to cooperate due to past experiences. To mitigate these, stakeholders should establish clear governance and communication strategies that include all value chain actors.

6. Restructuring mountain product pricing logic

Lastly, participants explored alternative pricing models that reflect the unique costs of mountain production. This includes establishing a minimum price guarantee for farmers, incentivising sustainable practices, and fostering transparency across the value chain. The primary barriers are lobbying from large-scale agricultural companies and bureaucratic hurdles. Proposed steps include promoting cooperative structures among small producers, researching true-cost pricing models, and establishing policies to make margins fairer for small-scale farmers.



7. Promoting short food chains in tourism – from Farm to Fork

This idea was initially discussed by participants during workshop 5 but organisers move it here as it fits the topic better.

Participants ed the value of integrating short food supply chains within mountain tourism, promoting local products through farm-to-fork networks. This initiative aims to boost local agricultural economies by creating spaces where tourists can purchase labelled and quality local products directly from farms, on the model of the “Local Gastronomic Points”. Key needs include training for product certification, access to national and EU funding, and collaboration between producers and tourism stakeholders. Barriers include farmers’ reluctance due to authorisation costs and challenges with pricing. The initial steps involve establishing a promotional network, providing training and consultancy for producers, and securing funding.



Workshop 2 – From raw materials to processing: how to bring the secondary sector back into mountain territories?

This session focused on strategies to encourage the **relocation of industries** to mountain areas. It discussed the challenges of reindustrialisation and explored opportunities for industries from the **circular economy**.

A first part of the workshop was dedicated to showcasing successful initiatives from different mountain areas. **Josep Gravet Cases** from the Export & Marketing department of Cadí presented the Cadí cooperative from Catalonia and the day-to-day operational challenges of collecting and processing milk in the mountains. **Marie-Thérèse Chaupin**, Coordinator and Delegate for European relations at ATELIER-Laines d'Europe association outlined the various possible uses for wool, from textiles to insulation materials, and the opportunities for making the most of this natural resource. **Joël Maitia**, Europe and Cross-Border Cooperation Project Manager at the Pyrenees Agency, presented how the agency has helped to restructure the bicycle manufacturing industry in the heart of the French Pyrenees. Finally, **Leonardo La Rocca** Project and innovation manager and **Giuditta Mascetti**, Junior project manager from CISA Consulting presented an example of Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) used to bring some industries back to the Valmalenco valley.

As second part of the workshop, interactive discussions allowed participants to identify 5 topics to be debated in groups:

1. Diversifying local economies

Participants recognised the need to diversify mountain economies to attract and retain industries. They discussed conducting comprehensive diagnoses to understand the specific strengths of mountainous regions and using these insights to build a cultural narrative that highlights mountain living's unique quality of life. Supporting policies that encourage local value chains, improve worker qualifications, and provide infrastructure are vital. However, significant barriers exist, including limited internet access, demographic challenges, and inadequate social services. Addressing these would require strong public and economic stakeholder involvement.

2. Creating a network of workshops and shared infrastructures

Establishing networks of workshops and shared infrastructures was seen as a mean to revitalise the primary sector, retain residents, and attract young people. Such networks would facilitate training, best practices sharing, and community building. Public-private partnerships, legal adaptations, and core teams are essential for implementation. Nevertheless, participants highlighted potential obstacles such as sanitary restrictions, legislative barriers, and a lack of investment. The initial steps include forming a core team, securing investment, and organising study visits to existing successful models.

3. Rebuilding wool ecosystems in European mountain regions

The group discussed transforming wool from waste into a valuable resource in mountain economies. Suggested uses included fertilizer, packaging, geotextiles, and insulation, aligning with circular

economy principles. This initiative would require public support, financial incentives, and educational initiatives for instance on wool transformation in shepherd schools to encourage the shift. Key challenges include consumer preference for synthetic alternatives, legislative hurdles, and high production costs especially for the lower quality wool. A phased approach, starting with awareness campaigns among consumers and producers on the local added value and transdisciplinary research projects, was recommended to support sustainable wool processing in rural areas.

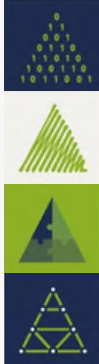
4. Rebuilding the wood value chain closer to mountain territories

Participants proposed strengthening local wood value chains to reduce dependency on imported materials and support sustainable forest management. This would involve encouraging the use of native tree species, promoting biomass for heating in public buildings, and enhancing worker training. Key challenges include the long timeframes required for sustainable forestry, political demands for quick results, and the impact of climate change on local species. Proposed actions include policy reforms to prioritise bioconstruction, incentives for using local wood, and further training opportunities to attract workers to the sector.

5. Scaling up excellence sectors in mountain areas

A last group discussed strategies to create high-quality economic activities that contribute to fixing populations in mountainous regions by leveraging the unique appeal and resources of these areas. Participants mentioned examples such as the automotive sector in Bragança, Portugal or the shoe manufacturing in Italy branded





“designed in the Dolomites” which helps maintain essential skills and conveys a positive image of the region. Participants also stressed that a niche mountain market can be scaled up to global leadership – the Petzl company, based near Grenoble, France, was highlighted as a model. Originally producing mountaineering equipment, Petzl’s commitment to excellence evolved from mountain sports to global work-at-height industries and rescue operations.



Workshop 3 – How to tap into the potential of digitalisation for mountain economies?

Workshop 3 explored the potential of **digital tools for local economies**. It helped to identify if and how digitalisation can support sustainable economic development.

During a first part of the workshop, 2 presentations of inspiring examples were given. **Natia Chopliani**, Deputy Executive Director of the Caucasus Network for Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions introduced the Caucasus Trading

Platform, a digital tool supporting the sale of tourism and niche products of the South Caucasus. In addition, **Danijel Bertović**, Chief Executive Officer of Sensum Consulting presented the Climatig software and how it can help businesses understand and anticipate the impact of climate change on their business.

During the second part of the workshop, interactive discussions allowed participants to discuss in groups 4 ideas that they identified as interesting for the digitalisation of mountain economies:

1. Using digital tools to share your story and sell your product

Participants explored the potential of creating a digital platform where farmers and shepherds can market their products and share their stories to reach wider audiences. This platform aims to increase the visibility and value of local products, while allowing producers to access new markets. Critical needs include communication, marketing, and digital skills, necessitating professional support. Key barriers are financial limitations, lengthy implementation timelines, and potential conflicts over platform ownership. Initial steps involve defining the platform concept, hiring a skilled facilitator, and organising sessions to align stakeholder goals.

2. Achieving better communication with local communities

The group highlighted the importance of enhancing digital communication to engage mountain communities effectively. Participants recommended adding digital channels to traditional ones to encourage citizen participation, noting the benefits of saved time and money. To engage residents

and gather feedback, various digital tools and research on stakeholder needs were deemed essential. Barriers include the infrastructure and resources required, as well as a potential loss of face-to-face interaction. Environmental impact (water and energy use) of digital technologies should also be taken into account. Suggested actions included stakeholder mapping, choosing appropriate communication channels, and designing digital surveys to collect data and share results.

3. Creating an AI ecosystem in mountain areas

Establishing an AI ecosystem in mountain regions was proposed as a way to create local value and reduce reliance on urban centres. AI applications could support agriculture, health services, and tourism, among other sectors. Key needs include effective communication of AI benefits, data access, and strong digital infrastructure. Participants cited significant challenges such as limited computing resources, a shortage of skilled workers, and user reluctance. The first steps involve forming an internal working group at Euromontana, organising a public conference, and setting up partnerships with tech experts and stakeholders.



4. Facilitating a digital hinge

This group discussed the crucial need to co-design with local communities the digital tools and services with a dedicated digital “mountain manager” or facilitator to connect local communities with digital resources. The objective is to bridge the gap between local needs and available technology, ensuring digital tools are relevant to mountain residents. Essential needs include community involvement, training, and promoting intergenerational participation to prevent knowledge loss. Barriers include scepticism toward technology, infrastructure gaps, and the isolation of some mountain communities. Recommended steps include securing funding, fostering community identity, defining specific needs, and co-developing digital tools.





Workshop 4 – How to foster entrepreneurship?

This workshop explored **strategies to encourage the creation of businesses** in mountain areas. We looked at the challenges entrepreneurs face and as well as their needs. Discussions also covered **legal structures** like cooperatives and **infrastructures** like incubators or other shared spaces.

During the first part of the workshop, 3 speakers shared their views and experiences of entrepreneurship. **Lluís Rabaneda**, Chief Executive Officer of RocRoi shared his own experience as entrepreneur in the outdoor sector. **Adriana Cantos**, representative of the business association Empresariat Cerdanya presentend Cerdanya’s strategy to boost competitiveness in the tourism sector through public-private cooperation. Finally, **Elena Badeanschi**, International Relations and Projects Manager of the Federation of Trentino Coopératives stressed the importance of social entrepreneurship in the mountain areas and presented ways to better support coopératives.

The second part of the workshop, designed to be more interactive, allowed participants to decide of topics to be further discussed in groups. The 4 following ideas came out of participants’ work:

1. Creating a mountain entrepreneur network

Participants highlighted the need for a dedicated network to connect mountain entrepreneurs and foster innovation in rural areas. This network would enable established businesses to share experiences with new entrepreneurs,

promoting knowledge exchange and collaboration. Essential actions include identifying and onboarding inspirational mountain businesses, defining network governance, and creating a support system to help businesses overcome administrative and practical challenges. Cultural resistance to collaboration and a lack of resources were noted as primary barriers. The first steps involve forming a “scout group” to locate businesses and establishing a marketing plan for the network.

2. Fostering youth and women entrepreneurship

To address the low engagement of young people, especially women, in mountain entrepreneurship, participants proposed transnational projects that link young entrepreneurs with experienced mentors across Europe. Key needs include building partnerships, securing funding, and tapping into existing youth and women’s networks. Barriers include limited funding, skill gaps among young entrepreneurs, and challenges in engaging younger generations. Recommended actions include exploring funding sources, connecting with relevant networks like Rural Youth Europe, and collaborating with organisations such as Euromontana to foster support for youth-led mountain initiatives.

3. Promoting public-private collaboration for entrepreneurship projects

Improving collaboration between public and private sectors was seen as a vital step in promoting entrepreneurship in mountain regions. Key actions include establishing a working group with representatives from both sectors, mapping regional resources, and defining shared objectives. Participants emphasised that stakeholders should be

actively involved to bridge the trust gap and overcome regulatory obstacles. Initial steps include stakeholder engagement, setting clear objectives, and creating a detailed work plan to consolidate public-private initiatives.

4. Seeing employment renewal as a rural revitalisation strategy

Addressing the ageing workforce and dwindling traditional businesses, this idea for action aims to facilitate business renewal and attract new talent to rural areas. Suggestions included creating a mentoring programme to support the renewal of essential services, incorporating entrepreneurship into educational programmes, and shifting the narrative around rural business opportunities. Challenges include fragmented support programmes and lack of a unified vision. The first steps involve convening a round table of key stakeholders and developing a coordinated strategy to promote rural business renewal and innovation.

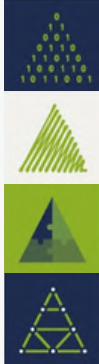


Workshop 5 – Working with nature: how to rethink tourism in mountain areas?

Workshop 5 discussed sustainable mountain tourism and helped to shape a future vision for tourism. Discussions explored different **types of tourism**, including **cultural and winter tourism** and covered topics such as **labelling** and **transition**.

During the first part of the workshop, 4 inspiring presentations covered different aspects of mountain tourism models. **Konstantinos Zapounidis**, Head of Unit, Department of Projects and Programmes Management at Pieriki Anaptixiaki S.A.–O.L.A presented the EmbleMatiC Mediterranean Mountains network and how it helps to rethink tourism practice in the Mediterranean mountains. **Adrian-Radu Rey**, President of RoMontana provided an overview of the European Tourism Sustainability project and covered topics such as labelling for sustainable tourism. **Bernadette Campà Roca** from FGC Turisme, outlined the Catalan strategy for transitioning to a sustainable tourism model in the region's mountain resorts. On a similar topic, the last speaker, **Emmanuelle George**, Researcher at INRAE presented the TranStat project for the transition of mountain resort, with a specific focus on the case of Saint-Pierre-de-Chartreuse/Le Planolet ski resort.

During the interactive part of the workshop, participants further discussed in groups the topics they believed to be essential for the future of tourism. The 3 following ideas came out of participants' work:



1. Promoting regenerative mountain tourism

Participants discussed shifting mountain tourism toward regenerative practices, which aim not only to minimise impact but to actively benefit local ecosystems and communities. Key actions include establishing criteria for regenerative tourism, promoting the use of local resources, and encouraging public transportation options to reduce environmental strain. However, potential barriers like greenwashing, high implementation costs, and resistance to change were identified. Initial steps involve defining a regenerative framework, gathering case studies of good practices, and creating an online platform for open communication and education on sustainable tourism.

2. Using local quantitative and qualitative assessment questionnaires for new tourism models

To measure the success of new tourism models, participants proposed developing assessment tools such as visitor questionnaires and stakeholder surveys. These tools would provide valuable data on visitor satisfaction and local impact. It would also help to understand if tourists come for the new model offer or for other reasons. Tracking tools like mobile applications or discount cards were also suggested to enhance data collection. The main challenges include finding effective ways to measure tourism's impact in open spaces and overcoming scepticism from some local businesses. Key steps include defining tourism goals, designing surveys, distributing them through local stakeholders, and analysing the results for continuous improvement.

3. Transitioning in ski-dependent territories

With climate change affecting snowfall and ski tourism, participants explored strategies to diversify economies in ski-reliant regions. This involves creating place-based transition plans tailored to each region, with an emphasis on municipal involvement and bottom-up approaches. Challenges include conflicting regional funds, lack of climate data in some countries, public subsidies supporting non-profitable resorts and involving local communities including non-permanent residents in the transition pathway. Initial actions involve securing funding for transition, for instance with a European just transition fund for ski-reliant regions. Other steps include data collection, developing criteria for funding based on detailed transition plans, and involving local communities in planning processes to ensure tailored solutions.



Workshop 6 – Working for nature: how to quantify and remunerate ecosystem services from agro-pastoral activities?

The 6th workshop discussed solutions to remunerate the ecosystem services produced by pastoralism. It covered issues like challenges in **creating and using payment systems** and questioned the way to create **easy-to-use and efficient mechanisms**.

As for other workshops, the first part of the session was dedicated to the presentation of inspiring examples. **Elena Górriz**, Co-Head – Socioeconomics and Governance of Rural Systems at CTFC presented some economic incentives for ecosystem services from extensive grazing gathered by the FIRE-RES project, with a focus on the ecosystem services related to fire prevention. On the same topic, **Raphaële Charmetant** and **Anne Rouquette**, Pastoralism Officers at the Occitanie Chamber of Agriculture presented examples of CAP schemes encouraging grazing practices for fire risk management strategies. **Josep Milà Puigdomènech**, Biologist, Technical Office of the Catalan Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food at the Government of Catalonia Resilient landscapes in Catalonia presented the region's Resilient Landscape Programme and how it reinforces ecosystem services. Last but not least, **Marc Garriga Lujan**, Director of the Alt Pirineu Natural Park showcased the 'Del Parc al Plat' initiative and presented the forest climate credits system of Catalonia.



During the workshop's interactive part, participants decided to further discuss 3 main ideas that could support better remuneration of the ecosystem services provided by pastoralism:

1. Defining the value of ecosystem services

Participants discussed establishing a fair calculation and valuation method for ecosystem services provided by pastoralism without distorting these services' intrinsic value. They highlighted the need to recognise a value that exceeds mere maintenance costs and consider the full ecosystem impact. Essential steps include comparing existing valuation methodologies, involving stakeholders in the calculation process, and setting up mechanisms to ensure fairness. Challenges include reconciling differences in value versus price and the complexity of defining appropriate valuation dimensions. Initial actions involve comparing methodologies and engaging researchers and authorities to set a comprehensive valuation framework.

2. Implementing financial measures to improve access to ecosystem services-linked products

To enhance accessibility to high-quality agropastoral products that provide ecosystem services, participants proposed to explore economic incentives. Ideas



included vouchers for low-income residents to purchase local products, reducing VAT on these products, and exempting ecosystem service providers from certain taxes. Essential needs involve setting up voucher systems, reforming tax structures, and creating a registry of farms that offer ecosystem services. Barriers include price competition from imports, market volatility, and potential pushback on tax reductions. Initial steps include tax reform efforts, creating an inventory of qualifying farms, and implementing a public-private voucher system.

3. Creating a European network of fire farming

This idea aims to establish a network for exchanging practices on “fire-farming” techniques, which help manage wildfires in pastoral areas through grazing practices. The network would connect existing groups across Europe and coordinate efforts around funding, communication, and knowledge sharing, with a special milestone being the Year of Pastoralism in 2026. Critical needs include a coordinator and preliminary funding to support the network. Key challenges include low awareness of pastoralism’s role in wildfire management and limited farmer engagement. Initial actions involve organising an online meeting for key stakeholders and planning cross-regional study tours.

Workshop 7 – What makes mountain communities tick? Is it only about access to services?

This session explored the conditions that make the mountains a great place to work

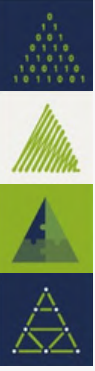
and live. It aimed to identify key factors that help **attract and keep workers**, including in regions or economic sectors where it is hard to employ workers.

Participants were first introduced to 4 interesting examples from across Europe. From Catalonia, **Isabel Guasch**, Chief Executive Officer of Làctics L’Esquella shared her personal experience as entrepreneur and insights on the importance for businesses to be part of the local community. Then, **Laia Ciuraneta Martí**, Member of the Alliance of Organisations of Rural Women – PIMEC Foundation | ADR shared another personal experience focused on the role of women in mountain economies, highlighting especially the specific needs they have and how to encourage their socio-professional integration. **Sotiris Tsoukarelis**, Founder and President of The High Mountains social cooperative then presented the Epirus Mountain Labs Network and stressed the importance of social innovation to create sense of belonging among communities. Finally, **Kjell Overvåg**, Professor at the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences presented some findings from the RURALPLAN project, with a focus on territorial planning strategies.

During the workshop’s second part, the interactive methodology led participants to identify 3 ideas that were then further debated in groups:

1. Promoting socialisation spaces and events

Participants discussed the importance of creating social spaces and events to foster a sense of community among local populations. By organising festivals, communal workdays, workshops, and



sports activities, communities can bridge generational gaps and build local identity. Key needs include local authority support, accessible transportation, and a focus on intergenerational engagement to pass on culture and heritage. Primary barriers include low population density and a lack of infrastructures for social spaces like public community buildings, cafes or shops. Initial steps involve appointing a local coordinator to oversee activities and co-creating an event agenda with community members.

2. Facilitating engagement and collaboration among associations

To strengthen civil society, participants proposed initiatives to support local associations, including an annual “Day of Associations” for community outreach and a shared cultural agenda. Creating attractive spaces for associations to gather and collaborate was also highlighted. Needs include training for associations in areas like in IT and fundraising and fostering leadership renewal to avoid burnout. Barriers include challenges in attracting young people and the skills gap in rural associations. First actions involve creating new associations, supporting their development, and establishing a communication platform for coordination.

3. Creating a network of repopulation ambassadors

This idea involves establishing a network of “repopulation ambassadors” to attract new residents to mountain areas. These ambassadors, drawn from local people and associations, would promote their regions through outreach and networking. Key needs include resources for outreach campaigns and support for ambassadors. Challenges include the high communication demands of reaching urban audiences and

maintaining momentum. Initial steps involve conducting large-scale outreach campaigns to recruit ambassadors and providing training to equip them with the skills needed for effective promotion.



Workshop 8 – Overcoming barriers to attractiveness: how to tackle housing and access to land?

The last workshop discussed key difficulties to **attractiveness for workers**: difficulties in **access to housing and to land**, with a bigger focus on housing issues.

During the presentation first part, 4 initiatives were showcased to participants. **Débora Serrano Martínez**, Chief Executive Officer and Founder of Realserma Rural first explained how Realserma Rural tackles housing issues in the rural mountain areas of Spain working with the public and real estate sectors. Still on housing, **Simon Moulines**, Mission director at Region Occitanie provided an overview of the region’s sustainable housing plan for the mountains and highlighted the

contributions of the regional mountain parliament. Then, **Elisabeth Tuà Sardà**, Activity Coordinator for the Regional and Urban Planning and Architecture Authority at the Government of Catalonia presented the region's Territorial Equity Rooting Programme, which will promote actions in a wide range of topics including housing to support the depopulating areas of Catalonia. Finally, moving to land issues, **Ilaria Zorzi**, PhD and Project Manager at Bluebiloba, innovative start-up – University of Florence spin-off showcased the Forest Sharing solution, a platform promoting the transfer of management responsibility of forest areas.

Afterwards, participants had the opportunity to further discuss those challenges during the workshop's interactive part. Participants decided to focus on the 2 following ideas:

1. Implementing rural proofing and zonification of rural areas

Participants discussed applying rural-proofing practices and zoning policies to better accommodate housing needs in rural areas. This would involve a detailed analysis of each area's population, tourism activities, economic potential, altitude and

housing demand. Key benefits include attracting new residents and promoting dynamic local economies. Essential needs include cooperation between public and private sectors, budget allocation, and communication. Barriers such as political challenges and limited civic engagement may impact implementation. Initial steps involve engaging policymakers, adopting a bottom-up approach, and establishing shared goals among stakeholders.

2. Securing a house for everyone

Addressing housing shortages in tourist-heavy mountain areas, this initiative proposes converting existing housing stock for locals and potential new residents. Suggested actions include offering subsidies for housing renovations, creating a mediator role to ensure secure rental agreements, and setting up frameworks to manage rental and renovation processes. This initiative requires data on housing availability, incentives for property owners, and infrastructure for cooperative support. Major barriers include difficulties in persuading property owners and administrative challenges related to taxation. First steps include gathering data, engaging policymakers, and developing cooperative platforms.





More info

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