XII European Mountain Convention

SMART MOUNTAINS

How to make our territories attractive and future- oriented?

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EVENT REPORT

Venue
Camigliatello Silano, Italy
Sila National Park and Biosphere Reserve

EUROMONTANA

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SUSTAINABLE
MOUNTAIN
DEVELOPMENT

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During the XII European Mountain Convention, participants discovered the rich mountain heritage around the Sila National Park during study visits. They were able to discover the specificities of the agricultural and forestry sectors, the valorisation of the local cultural and natural heritage and the importance of rural tourism and agritourism.

Giants of Sila

The Biogenetic Reserve of Fallistro Sila National Park hosts the Giants of Sila, a local variety of pines, some of which are 400 years old. At an altitude of 1420 meters, some of the trees in this pine forest can rise up to 45 meters in height and 2 meters in diameter. These trees are an ancient variety, which used to cover the whole Sila area and whose wood was used to build ships and their resin for lamps.

The reserve is a unique biodiversity hotspot, itself included in the Sila National Park, also rich in biodiversity. As the National Park of Sila itself is located within a mountain biosphere reserve, this provides 3 layers of protection to the Giants of Sila. The Giants are protected by the Foundation Fondo Ambiente Italiano and their management is placed under the supervision of both the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Culture. Activities are very restricted in the reserve: visits are authorized in season and only with a guide along the route laid out, no cutting or clearing is carried out.

Abbey of San Giovanni in Fiore

The abbey of San Giovanni in Fiore was built in 1198, under the concept and ideas of Joachim da Fiore. This abbot is considered to be one of the most important thinkers of medieval times. In his writings, he developed his theory of the three ages and documented it with drawings and sketches. His influence marked the centuries, with Michelangelo reportedly finding inspiration in the drawings of Joachim da Fiore for his works, and Dante recognising his influence on the Divine Comedy. Today, the abbey - which is also home to a museum - therefore contributes to the cultural influence of the region and has an important role in local tourism.

Open farms network

"Fattorie aperte in Sila" is a network of farms in Calabria that open their doors to the public to visit the production, eat or sleep on the farm. The network is a key aspect of rural tourism - and more specifically of agritourism in the region. Visitors can also participate in farm activities, such as milking, to understand the daily tasks of a farmer.

During the study visits, participants had the opportunity to discover the farm "Terre d'altopiano" in Scrivano, which produces artisanal ice cream, cheese, strawberries, vegetables, and PGI Sila potatoes. Participants also visited "Fattoria Biò", which produces typical cheeses and home-made beer and breeds dairy cows and black Calabrian pigs.

Local value chain of the PGI Sila potato

Participants visited a farm producing the Sila Potato, which is a Protected Geographical indication (PGI). The visit took participants through the full production process, including harvesting, sorting by quality and size, storage, and packaging. The farm is able to process large volumes of product thanks to semi mechanised processes.

"Sila Potatoes" are also branded "Mountain Products". Patata della Sila PGI is produced on the Sila Plateau, which is characterised by different ranges of temperature during the day and prolonged sunlight, conditions which favour the slow and constant growth of the plants and a high accumulation of dry substances, producing high quality tubers with an extremely long shelf-life.

Silvana's wooden houses

The village of Silvana Mansio is located at an altitude of 1,470 meters above sea level. Silvana Mansio arose in the mid-1930s under the initiative of Alessandro Vanotti, a Lombard entrepreneur from Varese who was involved in the construction of some sections of the Calabro-Lucano railway.

Alessandro Vanotti fell in love with the place and decided to build a village that would be able to respect and integrate with the surrounding nature. He succeeded in his initiative and nowadays this village is perfectly integrated into the surrounding habitat and contributes to tourism activity of the area. 90 percent of the constructions are wooden huts perfectly set in the context of a forest that covers about 100 thousand square meters.

Bitonti forestry company

During the 18th century, Calabria started to experience an intense reduction of the forested area in favour of the creation of new land to cultivate. In addition, huge cuts were made before, during, and after the World Wars (the total surface covered by forest was less than 400.000 hectares). This heavy deforestation led to important negative consequences during the floods that happened in the early 1950s. Because of this, the Italian government issued special laws targeted at Calabria. These Laws provided over 30 years, a plan of works related to hydraulic forestry, among which an intense plan of reforestation. This represents the largest soil protection intervention carried out in the Nation so far. After the end of the works, the forest area increased to 550,000 hectares.

Unfortunately, in the years after the reforestation, no proper cutting plan was made, and the forests suffered general neglect, which led to poor wood quality. Nowadays, it is not possible to use wood for construction functions. The only use is wood chips, and the value chain of those forests has not yet been established. The foresters and local authorities are working to renew the management plans and to make them approved. In this way, it will be possible to start sustainable forest management that aims to both maintain biodiversity and production of quality wood.

Official opening

Juanan Gutiérrez Lazpita, President of Euromontana, opened the XII European Mountain Convention by mentioning the structural challenges faced by Europe's mountains, but also the cyclical crises, such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis. In this year 2022, European Year of Youth and International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development, Mr Gutiérrez Lazpita insisted on the need to build smart mountains for the future, which can be resilient in the face of crises and changes and remain attractive to people. The President of Euromontana also warmly thanked the co-organisers of the Convention for hosting the event in Camigliatello Silano, in the mountains of Calabria.

Italian officials stressed that Calabria is rich in heritage and can help sustainable mountain development. **Gianluca Gallo**, Councillor for Agriculture at the Region of Calabria, stressed that Region Calabria intends to valorise mountain heritage, to manage and protect natural spaces and forests, to promote employment in key sectors and to maintain the attractivity of the territory.

The natural heritage of the mountains also plays an important role in Calabria. As pointed by **Francesco Curcio**, President of Sila National Park, Calabria is home to 3 national parks, including the Sila National Park, a biosphere reserve and 3 lakes that also help to provide local energy.

Agriculture is also a key asset in Calabria and its maintenance can contribute to fighting depopulation, underlined **Cristiano Fini**, President of CIA agricoltori Italiani. Europe is covered at 30% by mountains and Italy at 48%. Policies encouraging environmental, social and economic sustainability, promoting the digitalisation of SMEs, creating fiscal and housing incentives can contribute to valorising the territory and making the mountains more attractive, stated Mr Fini.

Session 1: How can European policies support a smarter approach in mountain areas?

This session aimed at understanding how and which EU policies can help the transition towards smart mountains. High level speakers explained how different policies are essential for mountain development but also why further legislative efforts are needed. Discussions with the audience demonstrated that many policies are essential for mountains, but that better coordination between European, national, regional, and local levels is sometimes needed.

The session was opened by a video intervention from **Elisa Ferreira**, European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms. The Commissioner outlined how the EU Cohesion Policy can support mountain areas. It can promote the development of innovative activities, through smart specialisation strategies or the digital transition and teleworking.

It can help mountains to shift towards a low-carbon economy and support territories that are more vulnerable when it comes to mitigating and adapting to climate change. Cohesion Policy can also support local development strategies, designed to fit local specificities. Through the Cohesion Policy, the European Commission already supports the exchange of experience in mountains, such as through EUSALP. A smart solution, stressed Commissioner Ferreira, is a solution designed to meet the challenges of each territory and not by copying the success of others. With the new programming period starting, Ms Ferreira also invited all participants to take advantage of the new funds and programmes to transform their territory into a smart mountain.

Access the video

Ole Gustav Narud, Norway's State Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, underlined the importance of EU policies, including for non-member countries such as Norway. This country, 93% of which is covered by mountains, for example, implements smart specialisation strategies, has been participating in Interreg projects since 1996 and contributes to the activities carried out by ESPON - for example, in the current Small Places Matter pilot action. Norway also welcomed the integrated approach adopted in the EU's Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas. It is a similar approach that Norway intends to apply in its policies, and not only in those policies that are identified as being mountain related such as tourism, agriculture or hydroelectricity.

Władysław Ortyl, Marshal of the Podkarpackie Region, Poland & member of the European Committee of the Regions, noted that his region is facing a major crisis in relation to the war in Ukraine. 6 million Ukrainians have fled to Poland, including 3 million in the Podkarpackie region. These refugees are mostly women and children, as well as older adults, and this requires intervention in terms of social assistance and education. While Poland has received funding from the European Union, from the REACT-EU fund, this war has highlighted the geopolitical importance of certain regions in Europe. This context calls for a reinforcement of the cooperation between actors in the Carpathian region, Mr Ortyl insisted. The Carpathian Convention, the Carpathian Euroregion, the Forum of Carpathian Municipalities and an interregional Carpathian group in the European Committee of the Regions already exist. Cooperation should go further, with the creation of a European Union Strategy for the Carpathians, according to Mr Ortyl, an idea promoted in his opinion for the European Committee of the Regions.

Access the presentation

Herbert Dorfmann, Member of the European Parliament, stressed that all mountains are different. In his constituency of South Tyrol, for example, the problem is not depopulation but over-tourism, with inadequate local infrastructure. Yet, the mountains share common challenges, such as maintaining employment and agriculture. The European Parliament's RUMRA & Smart Villages Intergroup is looking for solutions to address these issues. The concept of Smart Villages can be one of them, but, Dorfmann stressed, efforts are needed as many villages are not ready for such a transition due to a lack of connectivity. Other EU policies are key for mountains, such as the Common Agricultural Policy, which can help mountains, using Pillar 2 measures to revitalise villages - but it is not the only one, stressed Mr Dorfmann, as Cohesion Policy is also essential for the development of territories.

In this respect, **Roberto Berutti**, member of the Cabinet of the European Commissioner for Agriculture, stated that the European Commission, and in particular DG AGRI and DG REGIO, have been paying particular attention to mountains. These efforts were illustrated by the adoption of the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas, a new EU flagship policy that seeks to revitalise territories by coordinating funds and policies. Moreover, other European policies, such as those on digital transition and research and innovation have a crucial role to play for rural Europe, according to Mr Berutti.

Coming back to the topic of the Common Agricultural Policy, **Giuseppe Blasi**, Head of Department for European and International Policies and Rural Development at the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Policies, illustrated how European policies can be adapted to the challenges of each State. Italy intends to encourage sustainability and support agricultural activity in mountain areas, stated Mr Blasi. To do this, Italy proposes a co-financing rate of 55%, compared to 30% in France and even 25% in other countries. The distribution of funds will also favour inner areas and mountain areas in order to support the activity in these territories. In addition, the Italian Strategic Plan implements specific support measures for livestock farming, which is crucial in mountain areas, and incentives to join PDOs and valorise products.

Session 2: How can smart governance help shape future-oriented mountain areas?

This session aimed at defining smart governance is and why it is essential for the future development of mountain areas. Speakers illustrated their vision of smart governance through concrete examples of citizen involvement in political decisions and transition processes. Discussions demonstrated that smartness is not limited to digital tools. Smart mountains is about asking the right question to the right person to understand local needs and better respond to them. Local communities must therefore be at the core of inclusive governance to build the smart mountains of 2050.

The topic of governance was introduced by **Stefano Sala**, Project Officer at UNIMONT, University of Milan. Unimont produced a study on mountain governance, in cooperation with the Lombardy region and Carla Lostrangio from Euromontana. There is no European definition of mountain areas, each country has its own definition of its mountainous territory. The Unimont study analysed how each European State deals with mountain issues. In general, there are measures for mountains in policies related to agriculture, services, or tourism. However, policies in favour of digitalisation, education, tax exemptions or research and innovation very rarely have measures dedicated to mountain areas.

Some countries have even included mountains in their Constitution, as is the case in Italy. Although policies pay particular attention to mountains, Mr Sala nevertheless underlined that the Italian national Strategy for Inner Areas concerns all these areas, and not only mountains. The full study is still being finalised and will soon be published. `Access the presentation`

Tom Jones, President of the European Rural Community Alliance (ERCA), opened this round table by calling for co-designing rural policies with local communities. Policies can only be in perfect harmony with local needs if they include citizens in the decision-making process. Smart governance, stressed Mr Jones, must take into account the voices of public authorities, private bodies and civil society organisations. Yet, he also insisted on the fact that smart governance must well combine the local, regional, national, and European levels. These levels must show solidarity with each other and learn from each other, which should notably be facilitated by the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas and the Rural Pact.

Giulia Paoletti, Researcher at Eurac Research, presented the opportunities offered by the New European Bauhaus to foster a bottom-up governance in mountains. The New European Bauhaus, launched in 2021 by the European Commission, promotes the implementation of the Green Deal at local level. Eurac Research, together with 3 other organisations, launched in July 2021 in South Tyrol the New European Bauhaus of the Mountains. A festival was organised in Bolzano in June 2022 and cross-thematic workshops will be held annually.

The New European Bauhaus of the Mountains, as implemented in Bolzano, will work on 7 key sectors ranging from education to construction and the bioeconomy, and all citizens are invited to join the discussions. The initiative is based on a participatory process, so it is not possible to know the results and future decisions at this stage. It is an example of smart governance, underlined to Ms Paoletti, as it puts the citizens at the heart of the sustainable mountain development strategy.

`Access the presentation`

Thierry Antoine-Santoni, Senior Lecturer at the Pasquale Paoli University of Corsica, mentioned another domain where governance plays a major role, that of the digital and environmental transitions. As part of the Smart Paesi project ("Smart Village" in Corsican), researchers from the University of Corsica conducted various activities in the village of Cozzano, 280 inhabitants. With the aim of contributing to the objectives of the COP21 in a context of increased use of digital tools, the project has implemented various initiatives: use of artificial intelligence, transformation of the energy mix to become a positive energy village, installation of sensors to improve the culture of organic saffron or installation of weather stations to facilitate firefighting.

Governance played a key role in the success of the project, underlined Mr Antoine-Santoni. At the beginning, these initiatives were not very well received by citizens. Researchers from the University of Corsica therefore decided to change their strategy and communication. They involved the local community more in the project, especially pupils of the municipal school, and communicated better on the benefits of the technologies. The project was then further developed with close collaboration between citizens, researchers, and local authorities. A smart village makes use of innovation but, as Mr Antoine-Santoni pointed out, smart governance must establish a direct dialogue with local communities for the success of future transitions.

`Access the presentation`

To ensure a more inclusive governance, **Idoia Arauzo González**, Coordinator of the Development and Dynamization Unit of the Pyrenees Working Community (CTP), explained how the CTP is involving youth in the development of the Pyrenees. The Trans-Pyrenean Youth Forum project was launched by the CTP in 2021 in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme. It aims at strengthening the voice and influence of young people on the public policies of the Pyrenean territories.

Since the launch of the project, young people from all over the Pyrenees had opportunities to discuss the challenges they face. In October 2021, young people met directly with regions' Presidents and presented their youth manifesto. Given people's distrust of institutions, it is essential to open spaces for discussion between young people and authorities, as part of a smarter governance for our mountains, affirmed Ms Arauzo González. In the next months, the Youth Forum will focus on issues related to employment and mobility in the Pyrenees.

`Access the presentation`

Still on the involvement of young people in policymaking, **Maxime Bernard**, from the EUSALP Youth Council, presented how this recent initiative contributes to the inclusion of youth in mountain governance. EUSALP's Youth Council is composed on 27 members aged from 18 to 29 years old. These young people, from all backgrounds and from all EUSALP countries, are working on economic development, mobility, and connectivity and on environment and energy. Among their actions, they intend to focus on the challenge of depopulation and encourage municipalities facing this problem to cooperate in an Alpine network. The Youth Council also wants to work on education and access to employment, for example by mapping out internship and apprenticeship opportunities. Members of the Youth Council can share their ideas and recommendations within EUSALP's Executive Board, where they own 2 seats, Actions Groups and General Assembly. This way, Mr Bernard stressed, the governance of the EUSALP area is smarter, listening to the needs and ideas of young people, who are the future of this territory.

Access the presentation

Session 3 – parallel workshops: How to develop innovative solutions for a better quality of life in the mountains?

Smart living: *this session explored local solutions to improve quality of life and maintain access to qualitative services in mountain areas. The concrete examples presented in this workshop can be found in detail in the brochure of initiatives of the XII European Mountain Convention.*

Torunn Kornstad, Senior Advisor at Innlandet County, presented how the Vang I Valdres village was able to create enabling conditions for newcomers to settle. To make Vang more attractive, the Innovangsjon cooperative works on several fronts: improving the housing offer, promoting the development of local and sustainable businesses, and creating socio-cultural meeting places. So far, several initiatives were created, and this has led to make Vang more vibrant and to stabilise the number of inhabitants. During the following years the Innovangsjon and other private initiatives will keep on working for reaching the goal of reaching the number of 1724 inhabitants.

Access the presentation

Another example on how to incentivise people to live in sparsely populated areas, was given by **Laura Gascon Herrero**, Senior Project Manager at the Provincial Government of Teruel. Ms Gascon described how the Province of Teruel has granted subsidies to municipalities to maintain viable businesses and preventing the discontinuation of economic activities such as bar or shops trough rural multiservice points. To improve the provision of services rural multiservice points, an app will be created, offering a map of the network of rural multiservice points and a virtual showcase to facilitate the buying process and improve the user experience. It is particularly relevant to maintain those multiservice points active. In fact, they not only play a role in maintaining jobs, but they also promote local businesses and encourage local and responsible consumption.

Access the presentation

These two examples from the field illustrated possible solutions to develop innovative solutions for a better quality of life in the mountains. The two examples triggered a discussion among participants that concluded that to make such initiatives successful, local communities as well as authorities need to clearly see the scope of such initiatives and fully understand the need for an improvement. Therefore, when talking about "quality of life" it should be considered the context of each specific country and the cultural framework (e.g., having access to drinkable water is an issue in some rural areas but not in other countries).

Smart employment: this session looked into the solutions to maintain jobs, including skilled jobs, all year round in the mountains. The concrete examples presented in this workshop can be found in detail in the <u>brochure of initiatives</u> *of the XII European Mountain Convention.*

Javier Ruiz, Employment and Entrepreneurship Officer of the LAG AGALSA Sierra de la Demanda, presented opportunities created by <u>Demanda Coworking Rural</u>, a network of coworking spaces created in the Province of Burgos, Spain. The creation of coworking spaces aims to address depopulation, to attract talents and to provide technological facilities. These infrastructures do more than just providing a workspace. Mr Ruiz underlined the importance to also provide workers and companies with training and support and stressed the role to be played by a community builder to connect these workers. So far, the main users of the spaces proposed by Demanda Coworking Rural, are urban dwellers moving to this rural mountainous area for a few days.

`Access the presentation`

Still on the topic of employment, **Barbara Harterink**, Senior adviser at Vestland County Council, explained how the <u>YESpecialists</u> Erasmus+ project can boost youth entrepreneurship. Throughout the project, rural and mountainous areas have built local ecosystems involving schools, especially vocational training centres, NGOs, companies, and the public sector. It was found that more positive communication on youth entrepreneurship would be needed in the mountains, showcasing models to identify with, as some already do with their TikTok account, illustrated Ms Harterink. Proper training within schools to become entrepreneur would also boost business creation in the mountains, as done in Norway, but is so far not possible everywhere due to legislative frameworks.

`Access the presentation`

These two examples from the field illustrated possible solutions for developing employment in the mountains, by focusing on remote work and youth entrepreneurship. Following a broader discussion on employment challenges, participants concluded that mountains' smart employment must maintain a fair balance between traditional sectors such as agriculture and promising new ones and must build on the potential of remote work and social innovation. To achieve this, participants recommended in particular to develop digital infrastructures and coworking spaces and to build local ecosystems allowing the creation of jobs based on local assets or needs. They also suggested to further encourage people to work in the mountains, for example through rural internship programmes or tax exemptions. Participants also called for the creation of more training offers in the mountains, whether decentralised branches of universities or vocational training schools.

Smart mobility: this session presented potential options to develop new, clean, and alternative modes of transport for people and goods. The concrete examples presented in this workshop can be found in detail in the <u>brochure of initiatives</u> *of the XII European Mountain Convention.*

Mihaela Lite, Superior councillor at the International Relations Office of the Maramures County Council, kicked off the parallel session by presenting how better policy making helped <u>overcome mobility barriers in the Transcarpathian region</u>.

This was done in the frame of a 37-month project that aimed to improve the mobility of citizens in the border regions of Transcarpathia (Ukraine), Maramures (Romania), and Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg (Hungary). Three main activities were implemented: the reconstruction of bicycle paths and modernization of public transport stops at the international border in Vynohradiv city (Ukraine), the modernisation of border stops in the Barabás village (Hungary), and the modernisation of public transport network in the Maramures county (Romania). Such improved mobility options are expected to upgrade access to border areas and decrease transportation times for people and goods, thus having a long-term impact on communities.

`Access the presentation`

A second presentation by **Idoia Arauzo,** Coordinator of the Development and Dynamization Unit of the Pyrenees Working Community, focused on the opportunities of hydrogen for mountain areas. Through the project H2PyiR, funded under the Interreg V-A programme for Spain, France and Andorra, 4 hydrogen fuelling stations were installed in France and Spain, and 10 hydrogen powered bicycles were deployed for demonstration purposes. Other initiatives demonstrating the use of hydrogen for public transport were presented, though or particular interest was the preliminary conclusion that hydrogen is only suited for particular cases, such as heavy transport vehicles as well as in the industrial sector, and not meant to replace gas and electric vehicles on a large scale.

`Access the presentation`

In the discussion that followed, it was emphasised that mobility remains a concern for mountain communities, that it should be conceived not only from the point of view of rural-urban connections, but also for mobility between valleys. In order to reduce the investment and operational costs of mobility infrastructures, participants underlined the need for better cooperation between regional stakeholders to ensure transport routes are not limited by administrative borders (between regions, municipalities, countries) but rather provide service where needed in a more efficient way. It was also emphasised that while digital solutions and innovative business models can improve the mobility offer, investment decisions are too often based on the perceived demand, with services being discontinued when the number of users falls below a certain level. A shift of mindset is needed, one that recognises that offer can foster demand when planned strategically.

Session 4: How can research and innovation help boost the attractivity and resilience of mountain areas?

This session aimed at understanding the contribution of research and innovation to the future attractivity and resilience of mountain areas. Speakers gave examples of programmes or projects that can help develop services, adapt agriculture and forestry to recent and future changes or protect local value chains. Discussions with participants stressed that research and innovation should not only be carried out in rural areas but for and with rural people. In smart mountains, innovation must contribute to overcoming mountains' specific challenges by driving change with communities.

Enrique Nieto, Head of Policy Unit at AEIDL, opened this session by mentioning the different tools that can encourage rural research and innovation. At the European level, the EIP-AGRI supports cooperation between researchers and farmers. The Horizon Europe programme allows the development of projects for rural areas, such as DESIRA, MOVING and SHERPA. The Smart Village approach also supports innovation in rural areas, beyond the digital dimension. Finally, LEADER is an important programme to support rural innovation, insisted Mr Nieto. It is the flagship tool for bottom-up cooperation, with tailor-made solutions and a multi-actor approach. Some approaches, including LEADER, help to develop local social capital - an essential element, Mr Nieto stressed, which the EU's Court of Auditors does not seem to fully recognise, as it doubts the usefulness of investing in LEADER.

All these tools encourage innovation for the future of rural areas by facilitating cooperation between researchers, who bring scientific knowledge, and local communities, who bring territorial knowledge. This approach is encouraged by AEIDL, stressed Mr Nieto, which has just launched the <u>European Local Innovation Forum</u>.

`Access the presentation`

This approach was nuanced by **Bill Slee**, Honorary Research Fellow at James Hutton Institute, who pointed out that these tools, especially LEADER, are too complicated and are an administrative burden for local communities. Mr Slee explained that all the notions related to Smart Villages or Community Led Local Development are political concepts but are based on people: people who should be the focus of rural innovation and in this there is a lot to learn from social innovation. Social innovation is triggered by a need for change, a sense of injustice, and provides people-driven solutions to local needs.

In the framework of the H2020 <u>SIMRA</u> project (Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas) Innovation Actions have been implemented in this sense. In Norway, migrants have been integrated into the community through hiking. In South Tyrol, a care farming model has been developed for children and older adults. Social innovation is a key tool for rural innovation, concluded Mr Slee, as it can exist outside of traditional policy frameworks and competition for funding, while developing solutions tailored to each territory.

`Access the presentation`

Mar Delgado-Serrano, Researcher at University of Cordoba and Coordinator of MOVING, presented how the <u>MOVING</u> research and innovation project can support the resilience of mountain areas. The project approaches the mountain from a socio-economic perspective and analyses mountain value chains in a holistic way. Local communities are involved in these analyses, including women, youth and social enterprises. For different mountain territories, explained Ms Delgado-Serrano, the project analysed the resilience of value chains to climate change, demographic decline, soil degradation etc.

The project will provide a detailed picture of the risks impacting the resilience of mountain value chains by 2050 and make recommendations for strengthening it. MOVING is therefore a concrete example of research and innovation applied to the mountains to support their resilience.

`Access the presentation`

Gian Antonio Battistel, Senior technologist at CRI-FEM, also presented his perspective on how research and innovation can support mountain resilience. In particular, technological innovation can support the sustainable management of mountain resources, Mr Battistel stressed: the Interreg Alpine Space project AlpTrees uses it for example to better manage non-native tree species, digital technology can also be a tool for citizen science, artificial intelligence or the Internet of Things can be used to quantify the CO_2 stored in grasslands and to inform citizens through QR codes etc. There are many examples, and some tools are still nascent. The important aspect, underlined Mr Battistel, as did other speakers at the event, is to engage in dialogue with citizens to understand the interest and usefulness of the tool. The use of technology is a topic addressed by EUSALP, in which Mr Battistel is involved within the Action Group 6 on resources.

Access the presentation

Session 5 – parallel workshops: Which economic tools and sectors to encourage?

Smart economy: this session explored opportunities for the mountain economy to contribute to the Green Deal objectives. The concrete examples presented in this workshop can be found in detail in the brochure of initiatives of the XII European Mountain Convention.

Klavdija Gornick, Project Manager at the Regional Development Agency for Podravje – Maribor, presented an initiative to foster the sustainable tourism in the Pohorje mountains through enhanced cooperation between regional authorities, municipalities, and economic actors. The initiative relies on a multi actor governance structure allowing stakeholder to engage in joint reflections on touristic products, research and development, marketing, and infrastructure management. This model allowed the region to build a consistent offer along with a recognisable brand. Ms Gornick presented some of the outcomes of the work carried out in the region, including touristic materials and messaging.

Access the presentation

Veronica Blumenthal, Senior researcher at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, followed with a presentation on the potential of the sharing economy for tourism in mountain areas. The work, carried out in the frame of the CREATUR project, characterised what is considered the sharing economy, assessed its perceived benefits and disadvantages, and mapped potential opportunities for tourism in rural and mountainous areas in related to a number of trends. Specific activities to understand the expectations of young generations carried out, and essentially highlighted the need for flexible, simple offers. Ultimately, the determining driver is the ability to offer an "experience" to users. Veronica Blumenthal concluded with recommendations for public authorities and the tourism industry to seize the opportunities of the sharing economy.

Access the presentation

In the joint discussion that followed, participants reflected on the economic sectors that have the highest potential to contribute to the Green Deal objectives. Clean mobility was perceived as an obvious sector, as well as the need to development more local value chains, in the agricultural sector and beyond. Food and non-food products, such as wood products, should be used or consumed as locally as possible to reduce the environmental footprint related to transport and storage. In the case of food specifically, it was underlined that public authorities could prioritise the procurement of local products for schools. Beyond schools, cooperation between actors can help ensure local market opportunities for local producers.

Enabling tools: *this session looked at how digitalisation can benefit mountain areas. The project presented as an example in this workshop can be found in detail in the* brochure of initiatives *of the XII European Mountain Convention.*

Gianluca Lentini, Researcher and Project Manager at Poliedra - Politecnico di Milano, introduced how the Interreg Alpine Space SmartVillages project supported the digital transition of mountain areas. The project created a common methodology to assess the smartness of a mountain area (village, valley, group of municipalities or even county). Actions were then co-created with local actors: use of blockchain in agriculture, implementation of on-demand transport through mobile apps or creation of digital hubs. Mr Lentini emphasised the importance of cooperation between researchers and residents to understand local needs and habits: for example, researchers proposed an app to support citizen science and glacier monitoring, but the community in a village had no use for it as they were already sharing information via a WhatsApp group.   `Access the presentation`

This example illustrated how digital tools can benefit mountain areas, by involving people in the digital transition and co-designing solutions. During the group discussion, participants concluded that mountains need good digital infrastructure and skills but that the key to success in the digital transition is the involvement of local populations, to ensure that the tools developed match their needs. The digital transition can also rely on local heroes or informal leaders to bring together communities with key stakeholders.

Smart management of natural resources: *this session presented how innovation can support the sustainable management of resources. The concrete examples presented in this workshop can be found in detail in the* brochure of initiatives *of the XII European Mountain Convention.*

Javier Perez Perez, Natural Environment Area Officer at HAZI, explained that Basque mountains are facing changes in the traditional management of livestock and / or in land use. This has led to the the decline in pastoral and grazing practices. To face this problem, a collaboration between Natura 2000 managers and shepherds is crucial for the conservation of mountain pastures. Mr Perez presented the LIFE project Oreka Mendian, as an important start for an efficient collaboration between the different actors involved in the use and management of mountain grasslands, which will be beneficial in the long term for the conservation of habitats. In addition, Oreka Mendian was inspired by other countries' practices to promote the use of digital technologies, such as GPS collars, for monitoring livestock and grazing in the mountains. Such innovations can help to improve land use planning in the future.   `Access the presentation`

Georgia Dimopoulou, Volunteer at the Social Cooperative Enterprise for the Protection of Menalon, presented how technologies are helping local municipalities to gather data to monitor the conservation of the environment after the restoration of old routes on the Menalon trail. Mrs Dimopoulou explained that the remote sensors installed along the trail are very useful to analyse peak season for hikers, peak hours of trail use during the day and the impact of human activities along the trail. Such systems can help improve visitor management plans, refine the distribution of visitor reception points and service infrastructure, as well as help optimise the emergency response infrastructure. `Access the presentation`

These two examples illustrated how innovation can support the sustainable management of resources and benefit mountain areas. During the group discussion, participants concluded that local actors need to be stimulated to get in contact with policymakers and show the economic and social benefit that a smart management of resource can provide. This can be done through conference and field events.
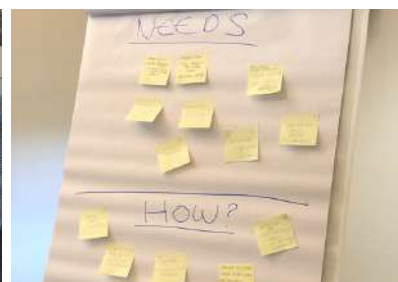
Closure

Italian officials closed the XII European Mountain Convention, illustrating how the mountains of Calabria can be smart. **Giacomo Giovinazzo**, General Director of the Agriculture Department and Managing Authority of the Rural Development Programme Calabria, presented the new Rural Development Programme of the Calabria region, which includes measures to support mountain farmers, the sustainable water use and smart coexistence with wildlife. The Calabria 2014-2022 programme was the second most successful in Italy in terms of absorption of funds, and in this new programming period the region intends to make a smart use of funds, with selection criteria that allow for the coordinated use of investments in the mountains.

Pasquale Tridico, President of INPS illustrated how livestock farming in Calabria and beyond can benefit from the tools of smart agriculture. The "pastore 4.0" project has shown that new technologies can help to better manage cattle using sensors and to increase the attractivity for the agricultural sector.

Nicodemo Podella, Regional president of the Cia Agricoltori Italiani Calabria, stressed the importance of the development of the Calabrian agribusiness sector, with stronger, more representative and more balanced supply chains to protect the income of agricultural enterprises. Mr. Podella concluded thanking Euromontana for giving the chance to show that it is possible to address the challenges of mountainous areas in a sustainable way.

Juanan Gutiérrez, President of Euromontana and **Guillaume Corradino**, Director of Euromontana, closed the XIIth edition of the European Mountain Convention by thanking participants and co-organisers and by reading the Sila Declaration for Smart Mountains.