



**MOVING**  
MOUNTAIN VALORISATION THROUGH  
INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND GREEN GROWTH

# PROTECTED NATURAL SITES IN MOVING REGIONS

**Implications and added value  
for mountain value chains**



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## AUTHORS

AEIDL | Blanca Casares, Julie de Galard and Alexandre Duporte

## CONTRIBUTORS

All MOVING regional MAPs coordinators: David Steinwender (IFZ), Mark Redman, Cătălina Rogozan, Alina Alexa (Highclere Consulting), Lukáš Zagata, Jakub Husák, Diana Surová (CZU), Jean Michel Sorba (INRAE - UMR Selmet-LRDE), Marco Trentin (CCVD), Kodylia Skrapaliori (Region of Crete), Gusztáv Nemes, Éva Orbán (Rural Bt), Corrado Levoli (UNIMOL), Ekaterina Kleshcheva, Cristina Micheloni, Gianni Trioli, Antonio Tomás Palacios (VINIDEA), Manola Colabianchi, Tarek Allali, Francesco Felici (UNIFI), Elena Sokolevska (CNVP North Macedonia), Catarina Esgalhado (University of Évora), Tamara Zivadinovic (Mena Group), Antonio Zafra (ADEGUA), Sherman Farhad, Carmen Maestre-Díaz, María del Mar Delgado-Serrano (University of Cordoba), Anna Geiser (ZHAW), Luca Piccin (ORIGIN), Filiz Kinikli (EGE), Kirsty Blackstock (The James Hutton Institute)

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[MOVING](#) (MOUNTAIN Valorisation through INterconnectedness and Green growth) is a Horizon 2020 project that started in September 2020 and will last until the end of August 2024. It is a research and innovation action coordinated by the University of Córdoba (Spain) and includes 23 [partner organisations](#).

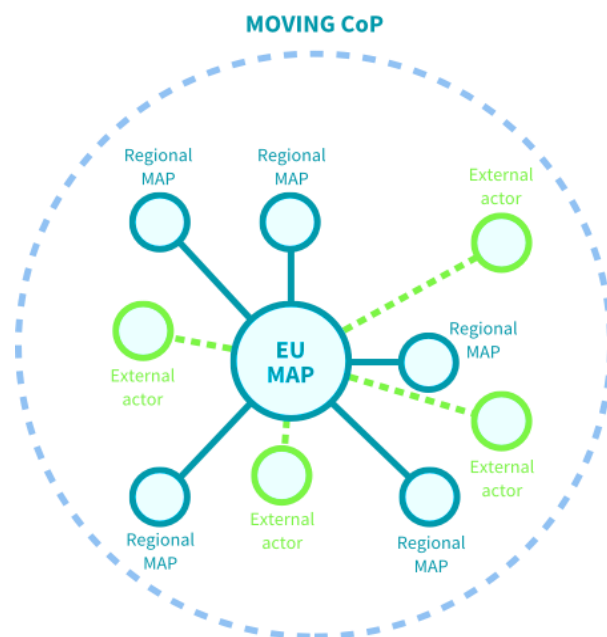
The project selected 23 mountain [Reference Regions](#) (MRR) in 16 countries, which represent the wide diversity of mountain areas in Europe. In these regions, the project deploys its research activities and actions engaging relevant stakeholders.

The project aims to build capacities and co-develop a sound evidence-base to support the policy frameworks that address the needs of mountain areas across Europe. It analyses the existing value chains and identifies new or upscaled ones that contribute to the resilience and sustainability of mountain areas, valorising local assets, and delivering private and public goods. This is done through a bottom-up participatory process with value chain actors, regional and European stakeholders, and policy-makers.

A core feature of the project is the Community of Practice ([CoP](#)). This is understood as a European-wide Science-Society-Policy interface to engage stakeholders around resilience to climate change, and other challenges faced in mountain value chains, and bring together interested stakeholders to contribute in the co-creation and validation of all research outputs delivered by MOVING.

The CoP is built upon:

- [23 regional Multi-Actor Platforms](#) (MAPs) established in the [23 Reference Regions](#) (RRs) of the project;
- 1 European-level Multi-Actor Platform ([EU MAP](#));
- External actors.



# 1. Introduction

Mountains cover 36% of European areas and play an essential role in the well-being of many highly populated European regions. The conservation of mountains is a key factor for sustainable development. To face the challenges of mountain areas, in December 2021 the General Assembly of the United Nations ([UNGA](#)) declared the year 2022 as the [International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development](#) (IYM).

In addition, in an effort to improve the protection of mountainous ecosystems and the livelihoods of mountain communities, [UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme \(MAB\)](#) relaunched in December 2021 its [World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves](#). The goals of the network are to:

- Increase the scientific knowledge of the managers/coordinators of mountain biosphere reserves, to improve the management of their sites.
- Facilitate exchange of scientific and local/indigenous knowledge between scientists and local communities in mountain biosphere reserves.
- Improve knowledge exchange among scientists and policymakers in order to make science-based decisions and facilitate adaptive governance relating to mountain biosphere reserves.
- Improve research *for and with* mountain biosphere reserves, for example, agreements between the management committees of these biosphere reserves and research institutions/scientists.

Inspired by this special moment for the enhancement of mountain areas and their attributes, the MOVING [EU MAP](#) decided to carry out a survey among its [23 Reference Regions](#) in order to identify the presence of different protected natural sites.

To this end, during the months of March and April 2022, information was collected from all the project's reference regions following a participatory approach method including the 23 regional MAP coordinators.

The results provide informative insights on the added value and development implications of these areas for the MOVING regions of work and their selected value chains.



## 2. Objective

The purpose of this research process was to:

- Identify the presence of different protected natural sites in the 23 MOVING reference regions.
- Provide informative insights and generate an overview of the added value and development implications of the natural protected areas for the MOVING regions and their value chains.
- Organise further reflection and actions such as a MOVING thematic webinar under the EU MAP, bringing in other organisations and experts working on this topic.

## 3. Methodology

A survey was sent to the 23 MOVING regional MAPs coordinators. The main objective was to identify the presence of protected natural sites in their Mountain Reference Region and/or Mountain Reference Landscape.

- Mountain Reference Regions (MRR) refers to mountain areas where the project will roll-out its research activities according to the specification in the project proposal.
- Mountain Reference Landscape (MRL) refers to a smaller scale of work, usually at the local level, located within the Mountain Reference Region defined previously.

The methodology used to collect the information involved the design of a survey by the European Association for Innovation in Local Development ([AEIDL](#)), which is one of the partners of the project, responsible for coordinating the [MOVING Community of Practice](#) (CoP). The survey included questions on:

- The main information of the reference region represented.
- The presence of Biosphere reserves, according to the [UNESCO's list](#). The location (MRR, MRL or both), the name and the main characteristics were also asked.
- The presence of natural protected sites, according to the European Environment Agency [database and interactive map](#). It refers to the [EU's Natura 2000 network](#), the [Bern Convention's Emerald Network](#) and national protected areas, according to the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\) classification](#). Information about their location (MRR, MRL or both) and their name were also asked.
- The presence of natural protected areas from another category (e.g., natural sites from the [World Heritage of UNESCO](#)).
- The limitations and constraints caused by the presence of protected natural areas in the sustainability and resilience of the value chain and the community of the reference region represented.

- The opportunities and added value of protected natural areas in the sustainability and resilience of the value chain, the mountain area and the community of the reference region represented. It was also asked the specific relevance for the MRL and/or MRR.

In terms of methodological limitations in the collection of information from the 23 regions, the following should be highlighted:

- The diversity of the 23 selected value chains. A value chain represents the full range of activities and phases required to deliver a good or service. In the [23 MOVING value chains](#), there is a range of traditional and innovative value chains. Some of them are at local, regional, national or international level. Regarding the focal product and service, it varies between: meat (lamb, beef, Iberian ham); crops (carob, chestnut flour, olive oil, cereals, tomatoes); cheese (sheep, cow); bio-honey; alcohol and soft drinks (wine, whisky), tourism and public goods (biodiversity, agroecology).
- Geographical scope of work:
  - Mountain Reference Regions (MRR)
  - Mountain Reference Landscape (MRL)

In this way, reference regions have different sizes and areas of interest. Some work more at a MRR level (e.g., Slovak Carpathian Mountains, Highlands and Islands in UK-Scotland) whereas others work more at a MRL level (e.g., Drôme Valley, Cordilheira central).

Some reference regions are not in the [European Environment Information and Observation Network](#) and/or not covered by the EU's Natura 2000 directives: Maleshevski mountains in North Macedonia, Dinaric Mountains in Serbia, Swiss Alps and Swiss Jura in Switzerland, Beydaglari in Turkey, Highlands and Islands in UK-Scotland. Therefore, reference regions do not have the same standards, classification and databases.



## 4. Key results: presence of protected natural sites in MOVING's Reference Regions

### 4.1. Presence of Biosphere Reserves

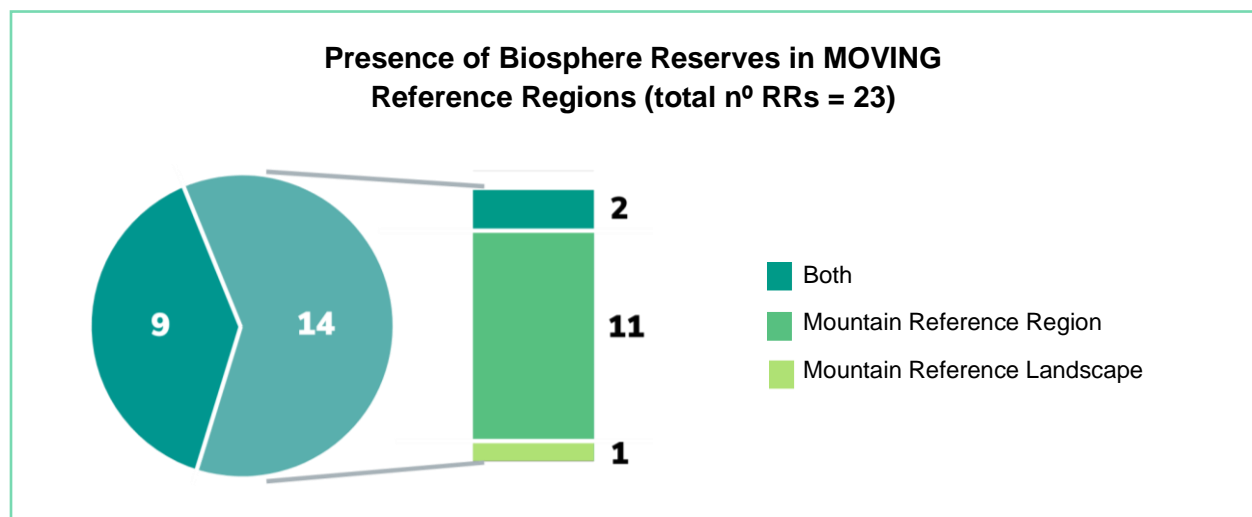
Biosphere reserves include terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems. According to the definition of UNESCO, Biosphere reserves are 'learning places for sustainable development'. They are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity.

Biosphere reserves differentiate three main zones:

- Core area: a strictly protected zone that contributes to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation.
- Buffet zone: surrounds or adjoins the core area, and is used for activities compatible with sound ecological practices that can reinforce scientific research, monitoring, training and education.
- Transition area: where communities foster socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable economic and human activities.

According to the survey responses from the coordinators of the MOVING Reference Regions, 40% of them (9 of 23) do not have any biosphere reserves and 60% of them (14 on 23) comprise at least one Biosphere reserve. Of this 60%, 78.6% are at the MRR level, 7.1% at the MRL level and 14.3% at both (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Presence of Biosphere Reserves in MOVING Reference Regions



Source: MOVING H2020

The oldest BRs designated are the [Wester Ross Biosphere Reserve](#) (1976, UK-Scotland), the [Ordesa-Viñamala Biosphere Reserve](#) (1977, Spain – Spanish Pyrenees), the [Sierra de Grazalema Biosphere Reserve](#) (1977, Spain - Betic Systems), the [Collemeluccio-Montedimezzo Alto Molise Biosphere Reserve](#) (1977, Italy – Central Apennines) and the [Falasorma-Dui Sevi Biosphere Reserve](#) (1977, France – Corsica).

The latest BRs designated are the [Julian Alps Biosphere Reserve](#) (2019, Italy – Eastern Alps) and the [Central Balkan Biosphere Reserve](#) (2017, Bulgaria – Stara Planina).

The following Table 1 shows the presence of biosphere reserve(s) in the area of influence of each MOVING Reference Region as well as the year of designation.

Table 1. Presence, name and year of designation of Biosphere Reserves in MOVING Reference Regions

MOVING Reference Region	Geographical level	Biosphere Reserve(s) that influence the RR (Name of the UNESCO classification)	Year of designation
2. Stara Planina (Bulgaria)	MRR	Central Balkan Biosphere Reserve	2017
3. Šumava – Cesky Les (Czechia)	Both	Sumava Biosphere Reserve	1990
4. Corsica (France)	MRR	Falasorma-Dui Sevi Biosphere Reserve	1977
7. Transdanubian Mountains (Hungary)	MRR	Pilis Biosphere Reserve	1980
8. Central Apennines (Italy)	MRL	Collemeluccio-Montedimezzo Alto Molise Biosphere Reserve	1977
9. Eastern Alps (Italy)	MRR	Ledro Alps and Judicaria Biosphere Reserve	2015
		Julian Alps Biosphere Reserve	2019
		Karst Biosphere Reserve	2004
10. Northern Apennines (Italy)	MRR	Appennino Tosco-Emiliano Biosphere Reserve	2015
15. Dinaric Mountains (Serbia)	MRR	Golija-Studenica Biosphere Reserve	2001
16. Slovak Carpathian mountains (Slovakia)	MRR	Polana Biosphere Reserve	1990
		Tatra Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (Poland/Slovakia)	1992
		East Carpathians Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (Poland/Slovakia/Ukraine)	1998
17. Betic Systems (Spain)	MRR	Sierra de Grazalema Biosphere Reserve	1977



		Sierra de Cazorla, Segura y las Villas Biosphere Reserve	1983
		Sierra Nevada Biosphere Reserve	1986
		Sierra de las Nieves Biosphere Reserve	1995
18. Sierra Morena (Spain)	MRR	Dehesas de la Sierra Morena Biosphere Reserve	2002
19. Spanish Pyrenees (Spain)	MRR	Ordesa-Viñamala Biosphere Reserve	1977
20. Swiss Alps (Switzerland)	Both	At MRL: Val Müstair - Parc Naziunal Biosphere Reserve	1979
		At MRR: Entlebuch Biosphere Reserve	2001
23. Highlands and Islands (UK-Scotland)	MRR	Wester Ross Biosphere Reserve	1976

Source: MOVING H2020

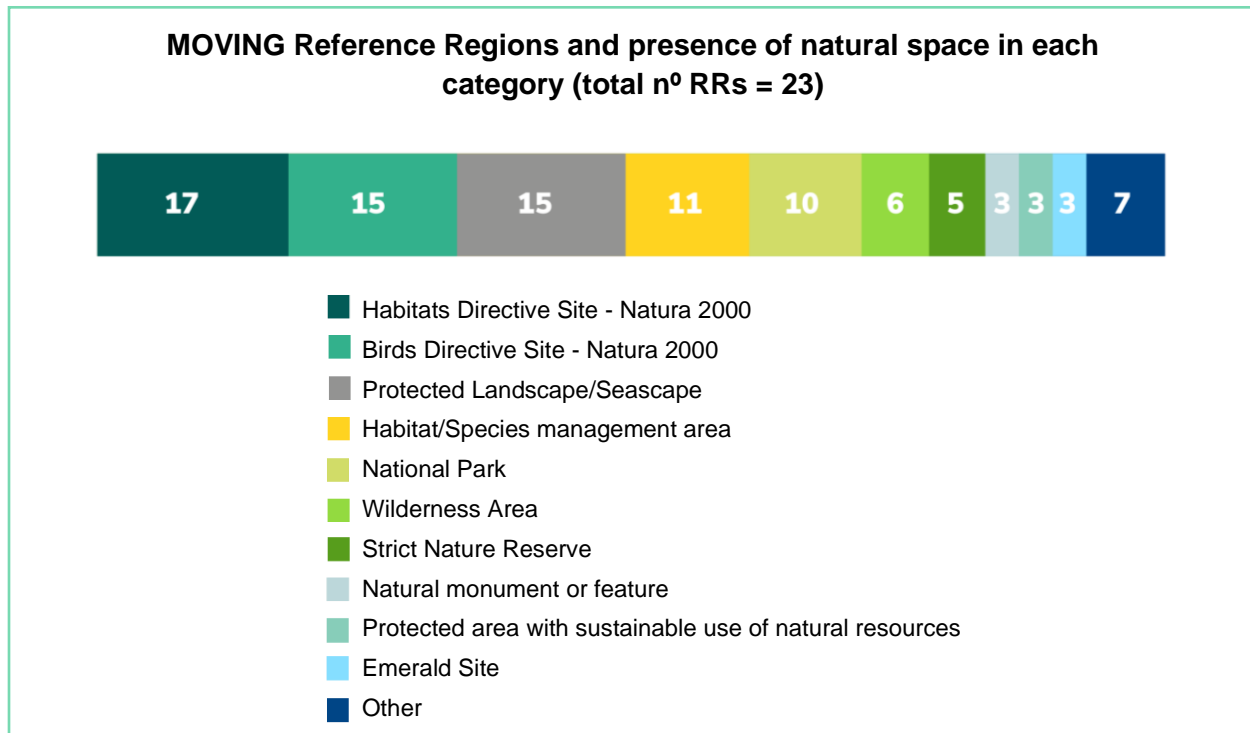
## 4.2. Presence of protected natural sites

Reference regions coordinators were asked to indicate which kinds of protected natural sites are present at their MRL and/or MRR level, according to the European Environment Agency [database and interactive map list](#). The type of protected natural areas considered and consulted with the coordinators is shown in the following table.

Type of protected natural sites considered	
Habitats Directive Site - Natura 2000	Protected Landscape/Seascape
Birds Directive Site - Natura 2000	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources
Strict Nature Reserve	Natural monument or feature
Wilderness Area	Habitat/Species management area
National Park	Emerald Site

Based on the 23 responses, the following Figure 2 shows the presence of natural sites by each category. The Natura 2000 sites seem to be the most common in the MOVING reference regions. Habitats Directive sites are present in 17 of 23 regions and Birds Directive sites in 15 of the 23 regions of the MOVING's project. It is followed by Protected Landscape/Seascape (15 out of 23), Habitat/Species management area (11 out of 23) times and National Park (10 out of 23).

Figure 2. MOVING Reference Regions and presence of natural spaces by category



Source: MOVING H2020

Table 2. Protected natural sites in the MRR or MRL

MOVING Reference Region	Geographical level	Habitats Directive Site - Natura 2000	Birds Directive Site - Natura 2000	Strict Nature Reserve	Wilderness Area	National Park	Natural monument or feature	Habitat/ Species management area	Protected Landscape/ Seascape	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	Emerald Site	Other	None
1. Austrian Alps (Austria)	Both		X						X				
2. Stara Planina (Bulgaria)	MRL	X	X										
3. Šumava – Cesky Les (Czechia)	Both		X			X			X				
4. Corsica (France)	MRR	X	X	X		X		X	X				
5. Drome Valley (France)	Both	X						X	X				
6. Crete (Greece)	Both	X	X									X	
7. Transdanubian Mountains (Hungary)	Both	X	X					X	X				
8. Central Apennines (Italy)	MRL	X	X									X	
9. Eastern Alps (Italy)	Both	X	X		X	X		X					
10. Northern Apennines (Italy)	Both	X				X							

<b>11. Maleshevski mountains (North Macedonia)</b>	Both								X	X			
<b>12. Cordilheira central (Portugal)</b>	Both	X	X						X			X	
<b>13. Maciço Noroeste (Portugal)</b>	MRR	X	X						X				
<b>14. Southern Romanian Carpathian mountains (Romania)</b>	Both	X	X	X		X	X	X	X				
<b>15. Dinaric Mountains (Serbia)</b>	Both	X		X		X	X	X	X			X	
<b>16. Slovak Carpathian mountains (Slovakia)</b>	Both	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	
<b>17. Betic Systems (Spain)</b>	MRL	X	X						X			X	
<b>18. Sierra Morena (Spain)</b>	Both	X	X					X	X				
<b>19. Spanish Pyrenees (Spain)</b>	Both		X		X				X	X			
<b>20. Swiss Alps (Switzerland)</b>	Both	X		X	X	X		X	X			X	X
<b>21. Swiss Jura (Switzerland)</b>	Both				X			X				X	
<b>22. Beydaglari (Turkey)</b>	Both					X				X			
<b>23. Highlands and Islands (UK - Scotland)</b>	MRL	X			X	X		X				X	

Source: MOVING H2020



### 4.3. Limitations and constraints to the value chain, the mountain area and the community

The 56.5% of the 23 RRs indicated that the presence of natural areas did not represent a constraint or limitation to the value chain, mountain area and community, while 43.5% did.

*The two most frequently mentioned constraints and restrictions were those related to regulations in business activity or prevention measures (34,8% of the 23 RRs), and land and resources use (30,4% of the 23 RRs). It was followed by limitations related to tourism and visitor management (13% of the 23 RRs).*

Regional MAPs coordinators explained that regulations in natura protected areas impose limits on value chain activities in relation to activities such as agriculture, livestock and tourism. At the same time, some coordinators have stressed that Natura 2000 designation does not limit traditional farming practices, but does limit the options in land management and the potential opportunities for increased productivity and profitability.

Where permanent grasslands in Natura 2000 sites are identified as Environmentally Sensitive Grasslands (ESGs), this means that they cannot be ploughed up or converted to other agricultural uses. The main restrictions on other forms of agricultural land use in the Natura 2000 sites are for the protection of wild birds, these include prohibition of the removal of landscape elements and features such as field margins, individual trees and groups of trees as well as the use of pesticides and mineral fertilizers in pastures and meadows. The timing of grassland mowing is a restriction in some of the Natura 2000 sites.

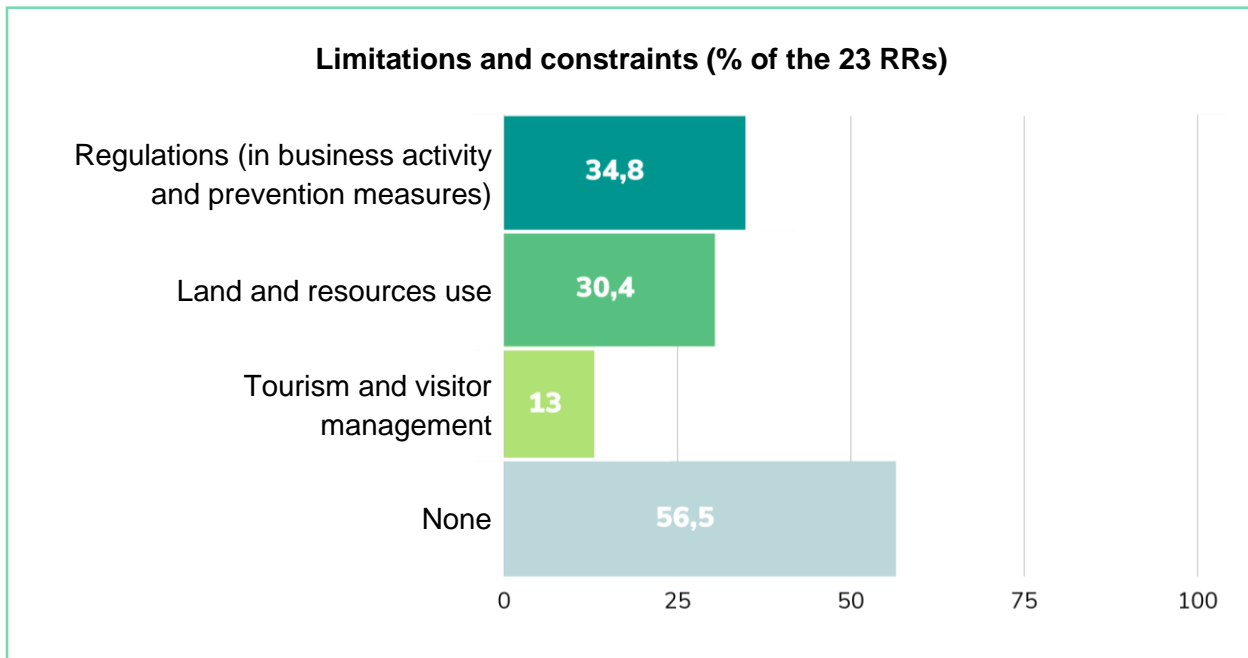
In relation to regulation linked to changes in land use, limitations are found in terms of the creation or improvement of infrastructures and facilities, which affects the improvement and innovation in practices associated with agricultural value chains.

In terms of prevention measures to avoid disturbance of rare/endemic species or to prevent forest fires, limitations are found for value chains linked to ecotourism.

Limitations on land and resource use (especially soil, water and biodiversity) represent restrictions on visitation, use of the natural landscape, construction and certain agricultural practices.

Finally, over-tourism and visitor management can be a constraint. At certain times of the year, an influx of tourists can cause negative effects on the environment, such as increased pollution and waste production. In addition, visitors can have a negative impact on the protection of biodiversity and water resources. Over-tourism and visitor management is undoubtedly an issue of controversy and clash of interests, especially when the ownership of land in protected natural areas is private. On the other hand, in view of the growing post-pandemic interest in the development of sport and leisure activities in protected areas, innovative ways of regulating use and financing maintenance, care and other expenses related to public use should be considered. The need for stricter regulation of visitation and exploitation of the natural landscape and construction can have effects on the performance of tourism-associated value chains.

Figure 3. Limitations and constraints



Source: MOVING H2020

#### 4.4. Opportunities and added value in the sustainability and resilience of the value chain, the mountain area and the community

14.4% of the 23 RRs indicated that the presence of natural areas did not represent an opportunity or provide added value to the value chain, mountain area and community, while 82.6% did.

*The majority of them mentioned mostly economic and environmental aspects, as well as social benefits.*

Economic opportunities and added value are about tourism and the marketing of food products. Indeed, natural spaces attract visitors and tourists, fostering business activity in the reference region. Moreover, designation of natural sites can bring some light upon the products from the region.

On the environmental side, protected natural sites allow extensive management and sustainable farming practices that generate high quality food products, offer ecosystem services, and are a good fit with some particular value chains.

The 39.1% of the 23 RR coordinators highlighted that the main added value lies in tourism because of the good image of the area, which creates benefits through increased traffic of people who want to visit and get to know these areas.

In turn, conservation, preservation and sustainable management act as a bulwark against the risk of deterioration of important habitats and disturbance of wildlife by uncontrolled growth of tourism activities.

Landscape conservation, biodiversity conservation and environmentally friendly practices improve the image of the area and attract visitors, especially through the certified ecotourism label. On one hand, this brings an economic benefit to the activities of the site. On the other hand, it promotes environmental protection and achieves cultural, scientific, educational, recreational and awareness-raising objectives, while maintaining the natural state of the protected area.

With the proper capitalisation of protected areas, using them for tourism and educational purposes (as certified ecotourism does), protected areas can become natural spaces for active relaxation and general well-being.

The 34.8% of the 23 RRs coordinators stressed the opportunity and added value of improving environmental quality, ecosystem resilience and increasing sustainable practices given the presence of natural spaces.

For instance Natura 2000, alongside other natural spaces, plays a key role in maintaining the provision of public goods such as biodiversity, geodiversity, good water resources and landscapes.

It also contributes to the development of extensive agriculture and livestock management that is more resilient to climate change. It also regulates changes in land use and the construction of infrastructure.

Therefore, the designation of natural sites motivates environmentally friendly practices, improves the quality of products and through public support for sustainable practices linked to conservation strengthens the economic situation of farmers.

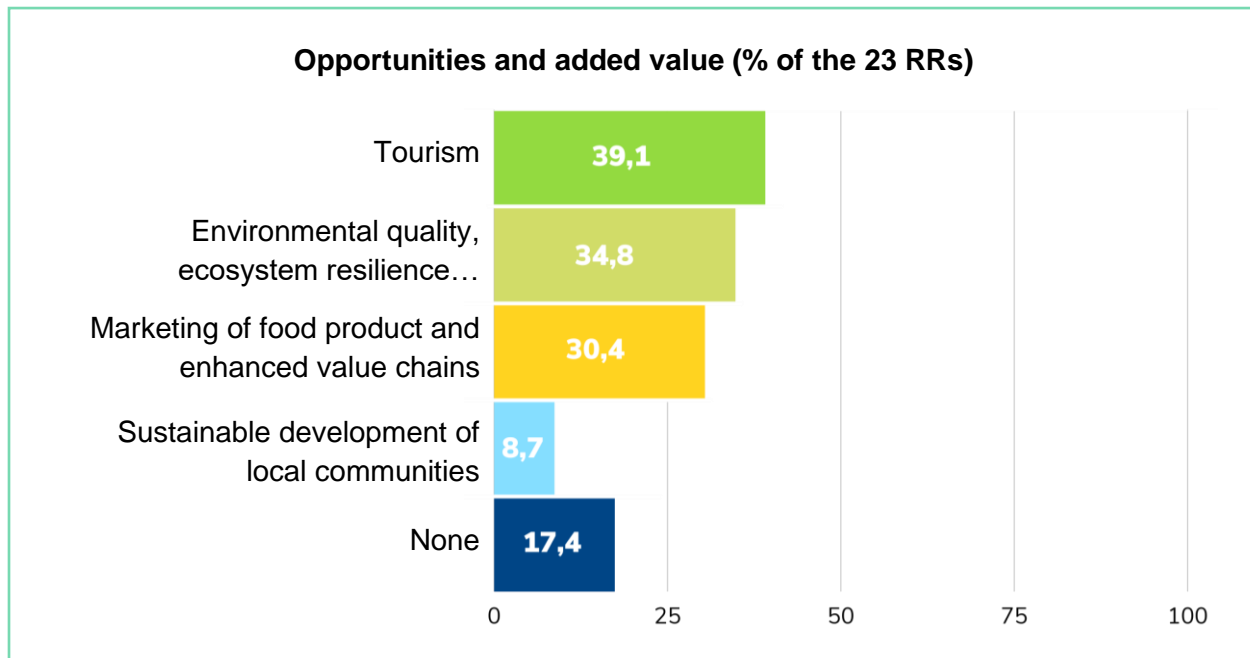
The 30.4% of the 23 RRs coordinators reported opportunities in the marketing of food products and improvement of value chains. The designation of a nature site contributes to enhancing the value of environmentally-friendly local production by serving as a marketing lever, with the result of increasing the income of local producers.

For producers and local communities, the designation of a nature site adds value to products by providing quality assurance and encourages the creation of local outlets in short supply chains. For some natural areas, this opens up a framework of opportunities by indicating the degree of conservation of the area's natural resources, which helps to position the territory and its products under an image associated with the conservation of biodiversity and thus promotes the "Values of the natural area" brand. But it is important to stress that it requires commitment and technical, organisational and financial support that must be effectively coordinated.

Furthermore, the quality of the environment positively influences the performance of many value chains such as those associated with honey, wine, whisky, meat, crops, cheese and tourism and public goods.

Finally, 8.7% of the 23 RR coordinators highlighted a greater sustainable development of local mountain communities through conservation favoured by the presence of natural areas.

Figure 4. Opportunities and added value



Source: MOVING H2020



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## 6. Annex I: Overview Reference Regions responses

Table 3. MOVING Reference Regions, selected value chain, presence of BRs and natural spaces, limitations and opportunities

MOVING Reference Region	Selected value chain	No Biosphere Reserves	No different types of Natural spaces	No of main Natural spaces	Limitations and constraints				Opportunities and added value				
					Regulations (in business activity and prevention measures)	Land and resources use	Tourism and visitor management	None	Tourism	Environmental quality, ecosystem resilience and sustainable practices	Marketing of food product and enhanced value chains	Sustainable development of local communities	None
1. <a href="#">Austrian Alps</a> (Austria)	Sheep farmers from the region of Weiz	0	2	>10		1	1		1				
2. <a href="#">Stara Planina</a> (Bulgaria)	Public Goods from High Nature Value Farming	1	2	7	1	1				1			
3. <a href="#">Sumava - Cesky Les</a> (Czechia)	Cattle	1	5	8	1					1	1		
4. <a href="#">Corsica</a> (France)	Chestnut Flour	1	6	-	1		1						1
5. <a href="#">Drome Valley</a> (France)	Sheep meat locally produced and valorised	0	3	4	1	1				1	1		

6. <u>Crete</u> (Greece)	Central Rethymno Carob	0	3	6	1				1	1			
7. <u>Transdanubian Mountains</u> (Hungary)	Agroecological Knowledge	1	4	>4	1	1	1			1	1		
8. <u>Central Apennines</u> (Italy)	Alto-Molise Dairy	1	3	8				1				1	
9. <u>Eastern Alps</u> (Italy)	Trento Doc Wine	3	5	5				1	1				
10. <u>Northern Apennines</u> (Italy)	Chestnut Flour	1	2	3				1					1
11. <u>Maleshevski mountains</u> (North Macedonia)	Rural Tourism	0	2	1				1	1				
12. <u>Cordilheira central</u> (Portugal)	Serra da Estrela PDO Cheese	0	4	3				1	1	1			
13. <u>Maciço Noroeste</u> (Portugal)	Douro Wine	0	3	1				1	1				
14. <u>Southern Romanian Carpathian mountains</u> (Romania)	Certified ecotourism	0	7	>150	1	1			1	1		1	

15. <u>Dinaric Mountains</u> (Serbia)	Dinaric Alps: Sjenica lamb PDO	1	7	15				1				1	
16. <u>Slovak Carpathian mountains</u> (Slovakia)	Bio-honey	3	9	>100				1		1			
17. <u>Betic Systems</u> (Spain)	Organic Olive Oil	4	4	10	1	1						1	1
18. <u>Sierra Morena</u> (Spain)	Los Pedroches PDO Iberian Ham	1	4	23				1		1			
19. <u>Spanish Pyrenees</u> (Spain)	Mountain Wine	1	1	1				1	1				
20. <u>Swiss Alps</u> (Switzerland)	Mountain Grain	2	8	>100				1	1				
21. <u>Swiss Jura</u> (Switzerland)	Tête de Moine PDO cheese	0	3	>100				1	1				
22. <u>Beydaglari</u> (Turkey)	Greenhouse Tomato	0	2	2				1					1
23. <u>Highlands and Islands</u> (UK - Scotland)	Speyside Malt Whisky	1	5	>100		11						1	

Source: MOVING H2020





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