



JOINT STRATEGY REPORT FOR COMMUNITY-LED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN MOUNTAIN AREAS

An analytical framework to assist community-based initiatives to upgrade cross-border participatory governance processes.

Isidoro De Bortoli | Eurac research

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The Alps

7 Countries

7 National languages

126 dialects



The Carpathians

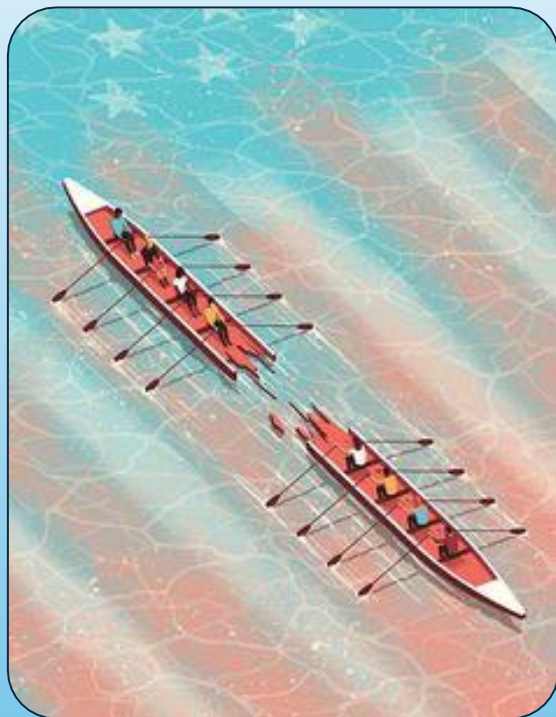
8 Countries

8 National languages

More than 100 dialects

CENTRAL MOUNTAINS - CONTEXT AREAS

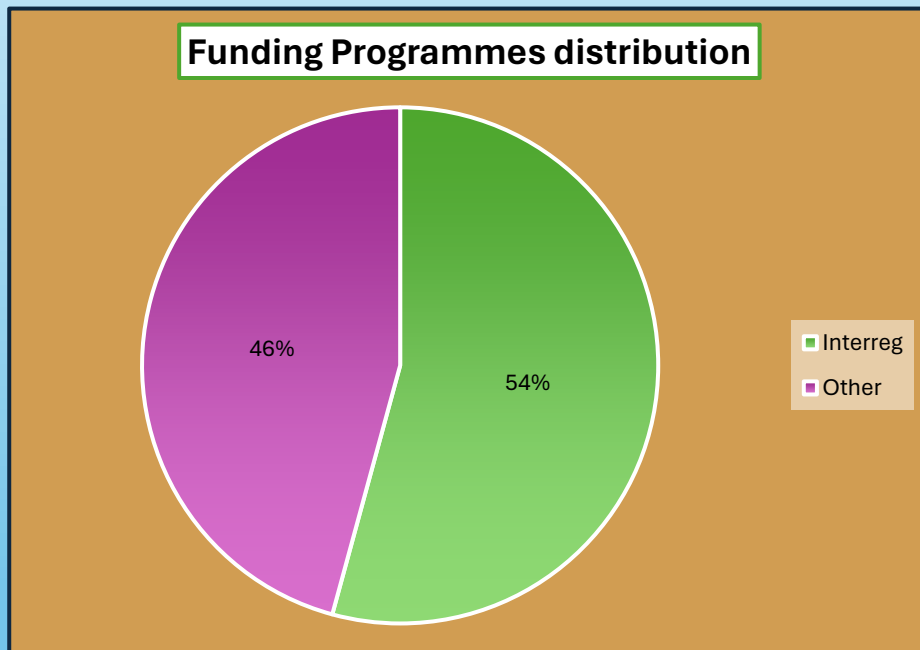
“Institutional” fragmentation



CENTRAL MOUNTAINS - CONTEXT AREAS



WHAT DOES THE RECENT EU PROJECTS' HISTORY SAY ABOUT THE HEALTH STATUS OF GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN CM WORKING AREAS?

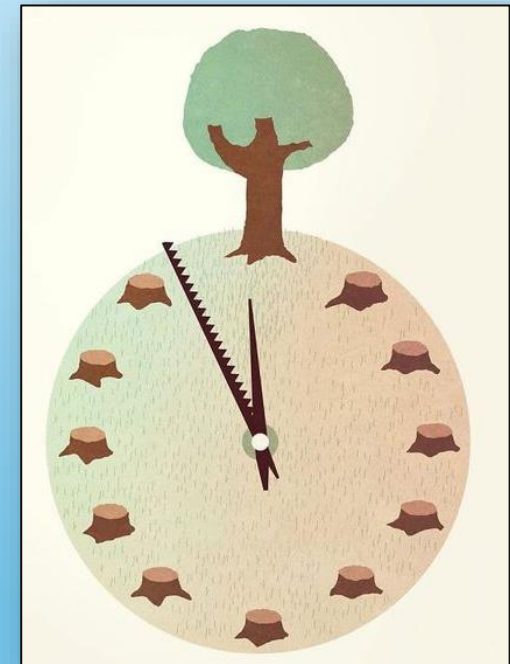


The funding sources are diverse, with a **predominant focus on EU Programs such as LIFE, Horizon 2020, ESPON 2020, and the European Climate Initiative**. Most of the scrutinized projects received funding through Interreg Programs, including Central Europe, Alpine Space, ADRION, and bilateral Interreg collaborations like Italy - Slovenia, Czech Republic - Poland, and others.

A comprehensive investigation was conducted within the Interreg Alpine Space and Central Europe programs, while limitations in language and accessibility hindered a similar in-depth examination of Interreg cross-border cooperation programs

CENTRAL MOUNTAINS CALLS FOR ACTION

1. **Shortage in projects that promote participation**, understood as the engagement of citizens and civil society in decision-making processes and community-led sustainable development.
2. A notable **limitation of the cooperation schemes** established in the analyzed projects is that they often tend to be suspended after the project concludes.
3. **Language barriers** may arise, particularly in the Carpathian area, where stakeholder involvement is crucial.
4. **The conflict in Ukraine** has been identified as a significant barrier to meaningful cooperation in the Carpathians.
5. **The involvement of young people is present in a few projects** and often not well-structured in activities specifically directed towards them.
6. The meaning and representation of Cross Border Functional Areas (CBFAs), strongly demanded by the EU commissioners, seem to be not yet widely diffused and too little debated



CENTRAL MOUNTAINS CALLS FOR ACTION



The report includes all the input from the PPs and SHs collected through different tools and meetings:

- **Canvas***
- **Comments and input** by email/CM Google Group
- **Workshop** with SHs (online)
- The canvas' results were elaborated by PP8 ISIG which carried out the aggregated analysis by geographical areas and the analysis by macro-area (contexts, goals, and processes).

PP10 CIPRA International contributed to the report with substantial additions and comments.

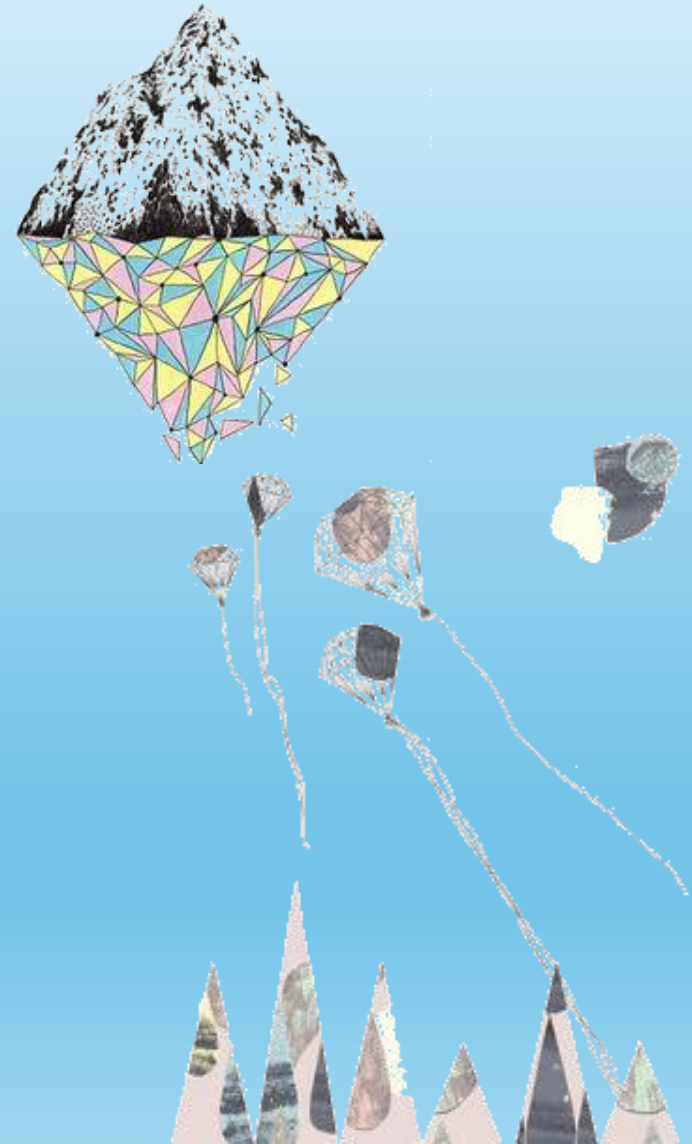
The Joint Strategy Report relies on the following main aspects:

- Central Mountains **taxonomy** common ground
- Lessons learned from the **capitalization of previous projects on better cooperation governance in CE mountain regions**
- Central Mountains' outlook on the **future of community-led sustainable development of mountain areas**

THE CM OUTLOOK ON THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY-LED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAIN AREAS.

The potentials and opportunities of mountain areas need to be considered as much as their challenges. Transboundary territorial cohesion is fundamental to achieving resilience and sustainability but requires **joint efforts and a shared vision.**

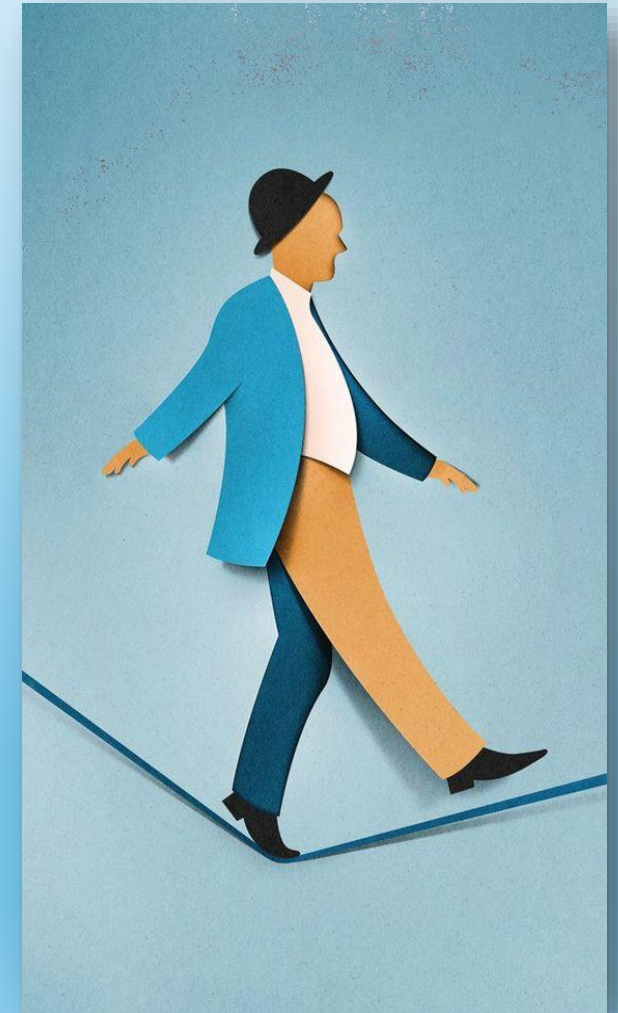
More integrated approaches are needed to address demographic, economic and ecological challenges in mountain areas and should utilise frameworks for inter-sectoral policy coordination.



THE CARPATHIAN OUTLOOK

The Carpathian project actors have identified risks associated with the implementation of the strategy, which can be categorized into four main groups:

- An increasingly **deteriorating environment** for civil society organizations in the **countries of the Carpathians**, political instabilities and changes in leadership, the unfavourable governments' attitude towards civil societies and local autonomy and legislative constraints.
- Risks related to the **willingness to participate**, such as the **passivity of local communities**, the demotivation of local actors due to lack of interest, or even resistance and opposition from local communities.
- A possible **mismatch between the strategy and the needs and priorities of the inhabitants**, or a low level of familiarity/identification, or even misunderstanding.
- Risks related to the **availability of resources**, as the **lack of sufficient financial resources for the implementation of the strategy objectives**, or the lack of expert capacities for strategy-building at a territorial level, can lead to delays



THE CARPATHIAN OUTLOOK: SUCCESSFUL FACTORS

The elements that Carpathian partners believe can contribute to the success of the strategy can be organized into five distinct groups:

- Preliminary activities, such as carrying out a credible needs analysis, **properly mapping stakeholders, and target groups**, and collecting and elaborating relevant knowledge.
- The capability to **guarantee equal access to all stakeholders in the participatory process**, also by raising their awareness of the reasons and ideas underlying the strategy development.
- The capability of the elaborated strategy to **reflect the needs of local communities, and to mobilise their resources to implement it**.
- The capability to **gain the trust and support of higher authorities** (i.e., national levels) by leveraging the importance of local strategies for the country's socio-economic development.
- The capability to **identify smart funding solutions and access to financial resources**.



FINAL REMARKS

Policy-makers recommendations on the national and regional level:

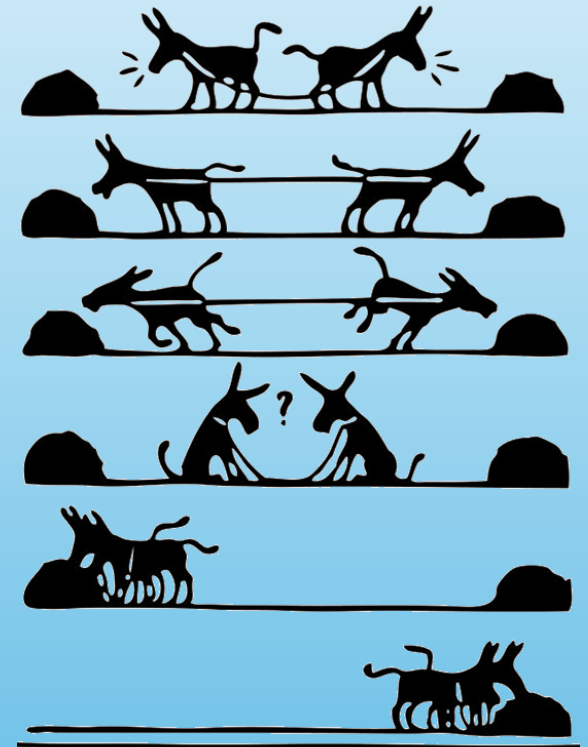
- Multilevel agreements including actors from different administrative levels are needed;
- There is a real demand coming from sub-national authorities for some **alternative models of territorial governance across borders**. Such models should be promoted on a territorial basis;
- The failure of some transboundary cooperation models can be attributed to the **different and asymmetric national institutional frameworks** rather than political motivations;
- Multilevel cross-border governance scenarios have suffered from the fragmentation of preferences and differing administrative practices. **Reducing this fragmentation will be the real challenge for the future of cooperation in CE;**



FINAL REMARKS

Policy-makers recommendations on the national and regional level:

- The multiplicity of goals pursued by the CE Regions, in which in some cases sub-national authorities do not exercise great autonomy, has blurred the impact of many cross-border initiatives for the most part. **Few but shared objectives should be defined through the involvement of all actors.**
- CM is called to support and encourage those organizations that can stimulate the institutionalization processes of **soft forms of re-territorialization**, which should be perceived as complementary to the conventional state-level intervention.
- **The field of governance seems not to be given much consideration in cross-border cooperation projects and activities.** The CE program is invited to support those activities capable of initiating and bracing participatory activism in regional policies.



COOPERATION

FINAL REMARKS

Success factors are consistently intertwined with the motivation that can **mobilize local communities to engage in local governance processes**. Indeed, the three key factors connecting communities and local governance processes can be summarized as follows:

- **ensuring ownership, openness, and transparency of the process** to foster community attachment, heighten awareness among local stakeholders, and legitimize local decision-making bodies;
- **translating the strategy into concrete and practical actions over various timeframes**, involving both local actors and higher authorities to avoid frustration stemming from unattainable goals;
- **ensuring the sustainability of the process by achieving a long-lasting impact**, including addressing the challenge of securing access to a diverse range of economic instruments to finance the developed activities.





CENTRAL MOUNTAINS

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/central-mountains/>



www.eurac.edu



Isidoro.debortoli@eurac.edu, paola.menzardi@eurac.edu



+39 0471 055421



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