



EUROMONTANA



GOOD PRACTICES BOOKLET | JANUARY 2024

Good practices for the sustainable development of mountain areas

Introduction

Europe's mountain areas face a number of specific challenges due to their geographical and demographic constraints. They are particularly affected by climate change, declining public services and natural hazards.

However, they are also areas of opportunity for embracing the energy transition, improving the quality of services to local communities, adapting to climate change, promoting a rich cultural heritage and sustainable tourism, and producing quality food products.

This booklet is the result of the exchange of good practices conducted by Euromontana in 2023 with the aim of showcasing innovative initiatives for the sustainable development of mountain areas in Europe. It brings together inspiring initiatives that can be adapted and replicated in other areas.



Table of contents

01	Climate change
03	Demography
05	Energy
07	Forest
09	Mountain products
11	Nature
13	Rural development
15	Sustainable tourism
19	Territorial cohesion

📍 Province of Trento - Italy

INFORMING AND TRAINING TO HELP BETTER COMMUNICATE NATURAL RISKS IN THE MOUNTAINS

The Alps are very prone to flooding, a risk that is expected to increase with the impact of climate change. In Trentino, the LIFE FRANCA project has improved knowledge, communication, and anticipation of the flood risk by training all mountain stakeholders and improving the availability of information.

An increasing flood risk in the mountains

The Alps are particularly vulnerable to floods due to their topography and atmospheric conditions that can contribute to large and sudden flooding events. This is particularly the case in the Trento Province, where floods are not uncommon. The last significant event occurred in the summer of 2022, when around 100 mm of rain fell in one hour in some areas, causing flash floods and mudslides.

Floods threaten local communities in many valleys and cause significant environmental and economic damage. Unfortunately, these events are expected to increase in the coming decades as a result of climate change, which accelerates the process of warming in the Alps with melting of glaciers and more frequent heavy rainfall. The Trento Province already has prevention infrastructures in place, but there is little public awareness of the risks.



Credits Unione Provinciale dei Corpi dei Vigili del Fuoco Volontari dell'Alto Adige

500 people trained to better communicate flood risk

To address this risk, the LIFE FRANCA project promotes a culture of environmental risk prevention in the Alps in order to improve the safety of the region and the population.

Three experimental study areas have been identified in the Province of Trento due to their high risk of flooding, despite the numerous mitigation infrastructures already in place. Two are in urban areas - the city of Trento crossed by the Adige river, and Borgo Valsugana on the Brenta River, while the Rendena Valley, next to the Sarca Basin, is located in a rural area.

Within these areas, the project worked with both the general public and with stakeholders involved in flood risk management or communication. Educational activities were organised for the local population to raise awareness of the flood risk in the region, in the form of workshops, Science Café events or interventions in schools. In addition, more than 500 professionals, such as administrators and journalists, were trained to improve their skills in communicating regional risks to the general public and local populations.

Another important achievement consisted in improving the collection, analysis and structuring of data on flood risk.

Scenarios were also identified to assess the **impact** of potential flood events on the population and on some activities, such as **tourism** or **agriculture**. The data and scenarios have been used to communicate with the public and the stakeholders involved.



An online portal to centralise information

The project has also launched a new [online portal on flood risk](#) in the Trento Province. The tool offers both information and training material on flood risk, legal and administrative content, an overview of the different regional actors involved in the region, maps of flood risk areas and real-time information to better communicate with the public. It also provides detailed real-time weather information and allows anyone to report unusual hydrological phenomena observed in the region.

The portal is updated by the **Mountain Basin Service of the Autonomous Province of Trento**. This ensures that the tool is not only kept up to date by the authorities responsible for natural disaster management, but also remains useful **after the project has ended**.

Governance & resources

These actions were carried out within the framework of the **LIFE FRANCA** project (Flood Risk ANTicipation and Communication in the Alps). The project was carried out from **2016 to 2019** and was coordinated by the University of Trento, with a total budget of **€1,058,242** (60% of which was funded by the European Union **LIFE programme**).

→ Why is this a good practice?

The LIFE FRANCA project used a **participatory approach** to raise awareness and train citizens and the various actors who communicate or intervene during floods. The methods and materials developed during the project are easily replicable in other regions and can be adapted to other risks, such as fires or avalanches. In addition, the creation of an online educational and real-time portal, which will be operated by the region **beyond the end of the project**, is the most sustainable and significant result of the project. For these reasons, LIFE FRANCA has been nominated for the **2021 LIFE Awards** in the Climate Action category

[More info: good practice website](#)

📍 Province of Burgos - Spain

FUNDING MOBILE SERVICES IN AGEING VILLAGES TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OLDER ADULTS

Population ageing is expected to accelerate in many rural and mountainous areas in the coming decades. This trend poses challenges for the quality of life of older people, particularly in terms of ensuring the availability of goods and services adapted to their needs. As part of the SILVER SMEs project, the province of Burgos (Spain) has promoted the development of mobile services for the most ageing rural communities.

The challenge of ageing in rural mountain areas

Spain is one of the European countries most affected by **population ageing**. By 2050, the ageing trend is expected to accelerate, sometimes combined with the remoteness of some villages and the out-migration of young people. The province of Burgos in Spain is no exception. Today, 23% of the population of the province of Burgos is over 65. This share rises to 27% in the province's rural areas.



Credits Andrea Piacquadio

The significant increase in the proportion of the over-65s in the local population urges to consider how to **maintain their quality of life** and adapt the goods and services available to them. The service sector is the most developed in the rural areas of the province of Burgos, accounting for 65% of the overall economic activity, far ahead of industry (13%) or agriculture (12%). However, few of these services are adapted to the specific needs of older people. This

has a significant impact on their quality of life and may even drive some older people to move to more urbanised areas that offer more services adapted to their needs. In order to address this problem, SODEBUR – the Society for the development of the province of Burgos - has undertaken to support the development of **mobile services** aimed primarily at **older people**.

A call for funding to help SMEs create mobile services for older adults

As part of the Interreg Europe **SILVER SMEs** project, SODEBUR aimed to develop the **Silver Economy** in **rural areas**. The Silver Economy refers to all goods and services intended for older people. It is a sector that is increasingly developed in urban areas, but is still in its early stages in rural Europe. In the province of Burgos, a **study** showed that only 20% of economic operators were familiar with the term Silver Economy, although there was a strong interest in engaging in this sector. To encourage companies in doing so, SODEBUR launched a **call for funding** for local businesses. The call aimed at promoting the marketing of **new mobile services useful for senior citizens in the rural communities** of this mountainous province. Eligible services included home deliveries, home care, maintenance services, socio-cultural services, etc.

Eligible companies had to provide such itinerant services in at least **4 rural municipalities** in the province. Another selection criteria for the call was the **percentage of older people** living in the municipalities concerned.

The call for funding, launched by SODEBUR between June and July 2022, had a total budget of €150,000. Successful companies could receive two types of funding:

- €3,000 or €6,000 if no major investment was needed to develop the new offer (depending on the number of municipalities where the service is offered).
- Maximum of €15,000 if the company required a significant investment.

30 Silver Economy SMEs funded in rural areas

In December 2022, **30 companies** were selected as beneficiaries of the call. The call was popular with businesses, with 79 applicants (of which 58 were eligible). Of the 30 selected companies, 28 are developing new services and 2 are receiving investment support. These businesses include mobile food delivery services in villages, such as mobile bakeries and butchers. One of the selected companies is Hasta la Cocina, a family run SME that prepares healthy home-cooked meals and delivers them to older people in the province. They operate in 13 rural municipalities.



Credits SILVER SMEs

The 2022 call for funding was so successful that the General Committee of SODEBUR approved a new call for 2023 with a budget more than doubled (€340,000).

Governance & resources

This initiative was carried out within the framework of the **Interreg Europe SILVER SMEs** project (2018 - 2023), which aimed to support the emergence of the Silver Economy in rural and mountain areas.

The call for funding was one of the measures designed by SODEBUR in its **SILVER SMEs Action Plan for the province of Burgos**. The funds for the first call in 2022 (**€150,000**) and the second call in 2023 come from **SODEBUR's own budget**.



Why is this a good practice?

Mobile services in rural areas are deemed crucial against the population sprawl and the lack of viability of some small shops. By supporting in particular mobile services for older people, SODEBUR has **adapted the concept to a specific segment of the population**, thus responding to an important demographic challenge and providing the increasing number of older people in the coming decades with a better quality of life.

 [More info: good practice website](#)

SERRE CHEVALIER: A LEADING SKI AREA IN RENEWABLE SELF CONSUMPTION

Ski resorts have a key role to play in climate change mitigation and energy transition. Some ski areas have started to produce renewable energy. In the French Alps, the Serre Chevalier ski area has launched the "EnR by Serre Chevalier" programme, with the objective of achieving 30% self consumption of renewable energy by 2023.

Electricity consumption in ski resorts

The Alps are home to 36% of Europe's ski resorts and 84% of the major ski areas, attracting some 20 million skiers each year who generate an annual turnover of 40 billion euros ([Smart Altitude](#) project). Rising temperatures and decreasing snow cover raise questions about the role of ski resorts in adapting to and mitigating climate change. In response, projects such as Smart Altitude and [TranStat](#) aim to support resorts in their transition.

The **energy consumption** of resorts is an essential lever for mitigation, especially as mountain infrastructures are becoming more and more energy intensive. In the Alps, the **electric power of ski lifts increased fourfold** between 1980 and 2017 ([Environmental Atlas of ski resorts and resort support municipalities](#)). Generally speaking, in France, the electricity consumption in municipalities that support ski resorts is twice as high as the national average. In the resorts where snow sports can still be practiced, the energy transition is therefore crucial to mitigate the impact of ski areas on climate change but also to reduce the resorts' energy bills.

A mix of 3 renewable energy sources

The ski area of Serre Chevalier began its [energy transition](#) in 2018 in order to mitigate climate change.

The energy transition of Serre Chevalier is based on 3 energy sources: solar, wind and hydraulic.

Buildings and lift stations were equipped with **photovoltaic panels** in 2018. In total, 1722 m² of panels are installed on 27 existing buildings. Thanks to a good sun exposure, with an annual average of 300 days of sunshine, as well as the sun's reverberation on the snow, photovoltaic panels represent a total of **27% of the ski area's renewable energy production**. These favourable conditions allow Serre Chevalier to produce 10% to 25% more energy than originally estimated by the supplier.

Serre Chevalier also uses wind power. Two **small wind turbines** less than 12 metres high are installed on the top of the slopes, on an **experimental** basis. At the moment these installations represent a very small share of the ski area's energy production. However, this makes Serre Chevalier the first ski area to test the use of wind turbines at an altitude of 2,400 metres and the experimentation could help improve existing technologies.



Credits Thibaut Durand

Finally, Serre Chevalier is banking on **hydroelectricity** to become the resort's main source of renewable energy. A hydroelectric plant is installed on the artificial snow network and a second one will be added in November 2023. As they are **installed on existing infrastructure**, the impact on the surrounding mountain landscape is minimal.

30% of renewable energy self-consumption by 2023

The energy installations in the Serre Chevalier ski area produce **4.5 gigawatts annually**, equivalent to the annual consumption of 2,000 inhabitants. The energy produced by photovoltaic and wind power is consumed by the ski area, in particular to power the ski lifts, machine rooms and snow guns. Due to its low storage capacity, hydroelectric energy is not self-consumed but sold and fed back into the electricity grid.

While **renewable energy** represented only 0.63% of the ski area's consumption in 2018, this share rose to **28% in 2022**. The objective is to reach 30% in 2023 and eventually **50% in the long-term**.

These objectives are part of a more global low-carbon strategy that touches upon transport too. In fact, at Serre Chevalier, emissions from snow groomers account for 95% of the total emissions.



Governance & resources

The installation of photovoltaic, wind and hydroelectric infrastructures required an investment of **€3,600,000**. The project received support from the "Caisse des Dépôts" and the Region Sud, as part of the **2015 - 2020 Mountain Plan**. Due to their innovative aspect, some installations required more investment. For example, a budget of €100,000 was required to carry out a **feasibility study** regarding the installation of a hydroelectric power plant to harness the power of the water flowing in the artificial snow network.

→ Why is this a good practice?

Serre Chevalier has successfully engaged in climate change mitigation by developing ambitious energy installations in just a few years. The initiative takes advantage of **existing buildings and structures**, reducing the impact on the **landscape** and biodiversity. In addition, experimenting with **new technologies** such as wind power at high altitudes and hydro power on the artificial snow network, can advance new energy production techniques in the high mountains. For these reasons, the Serre Chevalier ski area has been awarded during the **2022 EUSALP Energy Award**.

[More info: good practice website](#)

📍 Poland

FORESTS AND WATER CYCLE: ADAPTING POLAND'S MOUNTAIN FORESTS TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Forests cover 41% of Europe's mountain soils and play a vital role in balancing the hydrological cycle. Their ability to store and redistribute water makes forests an essential asset in the face of climate change and extreme events such as heavy rainfall. In Poland, the State Forests have been active in adapting to climate change by maintaining and strengthening the water storage capacity of mountain forests.

Forests' contribution to the hydrological cycle

Forests play an important role in the water cycle. The forest canopy intercepts much of the rainfall, and forest soils absorb and filter water before redistributing it to rivers, groundwater, and other wetlands. The **retention capacity of forests** therefore has a significant influence on the quantity of surface water and the rate at which it returns to the ground.



Credits Grisha Bruev

This water storage capacity is particularly **important for risk management**, including climate risks associated with extreme weather events. Forests can retain excess rainfall, preventing heavy run-off and flooding. Conversely, during periods of severe drought, forests help to maintain a hydraulic balance that limits the risk of fire.

Maintaining the water retention capacity of forests can therefore help **prevent climate risks** and help mountain areas adapt to climate change.

Water erosion prevention and small-scale retention in mountain forests

In Poland, the [State Forests](#) implemented a project to strengthen the **resilience of mountain forest ecosystems** to the threats posed by climate change. Based on the role of forests in the water cycle, the project aimed to reduce the impact of floods, droughts and fires on forests and surrounding areas.

Forest districts involved in the project implemented investments such as:

- construction, conversion or reconstruction of small retention reservoirs and dry tanks (dry reservoirs).
- improving the condition and **protection of wetlands**, thanks to small-scale dams in forest ditches, such as thresholds, damming up devices, or small water gates.



Credits CKPŚ

- **anti-erosion equipment** on roads no longer used for forestry purposes, some of this equipment also allows water to be stored or dispersed on slopes (for example, water ramps equipped with dispersal hedges or finished with small holes that retain rainwater);
- securing the facilities of forest infrastructure against excessive water erosion caused by violent precipitation (e.g. strengthening slopes along stream banks, applying rock riprap or planting plants and bushes);
- the **conversion or demolition of hydrotechnical facilities** (dams, small culverts) **unsuitable to flood waters** which are replaced with fords, bridges, and culverts with a larger diameter of opening; constructions of this kind also allow to maintain the **biological continuity** of the watercourse (migration of aquatic organisms, rubble transportation).



Credits CKPŚ

A significant part of the investment in the project involved the pre-existing infrastructure of the State Forests (mainly retention reservoirs and water flow regulators) which had lost its functionality or had been faulty.

All undertakings combined **environmentally friendly technical methods and materials**, while **minimising concrete** or steel elements. They enabled the free movement of aquatic organisms and made the facilities well-suited to the

local landscape. This project was carried out by **47 forest districts** in **5 mountain regions**: Lower Silesia, Opole, Silesia, Lesser Poland and Podkarpackie. It is estimated that the project helped to retain additional **400,000 m³ of water** on in reservoirs in the targeted forest areas (this does not include water retained in the soil).

Governance & resources

The "Comprehensive adaptation of forests and forestry to climate change – small retention and prevention of water erosion in mountain areas" project was led by the **Polish State Forests** and coordinated by its **Centre for the Coordination of Environmental Projects**. Running from **May 2016 to December 2023**, the project had a total budget of PLN 198,210,514 (**€44,062,197**). On this amount, PLN 168,478,936.90 (approx. €37,452,867) were co-financed by the European Union through the **Poland's 2014-2020 Infrastructure and Environment Operational Programme**. The project falls within measure 2.1 "Adaptation to climate change" of the Operational Programme. Other costs were covered by the **State Forests' own funds**.

→ Why is this a good practice?

Forests play a crucial role in the water cycle and in the prevention of natural hazards. This project successfully implemented adaptation measures respecting forest ecosystems. It also illustrates the **diversity of funding** available **to help mountain areas adapt to climate change**, including the Cohesion Policy funds.

[More info: good practice website](#)

📍 Austria & Germany

"GOOD FOR BIODIVERSITY, GOOD FOR THE CLIMATE - HAY MILK, SIMPLY GOOD": PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN FOODS

Mountain products are generally considered by consumers to be very tasty, but the general public is not necessarily aware of their sustainability. Yet, mountain farming provides many ecosystem services, including for protection of biodiversity. Austrian and German hay milk producers decided to promote the sustainability of hay milk through a communication campaign funded by the European agrifood promotion calls.

Hay milk: a sustainable production

Hay milk is a traditional way of producing milk, particularly in mountainous areas. The animals are fed on grass in summer and hay in winter, with a ban on silage and genetically modified feed. This practice is considered particularly sustainable, especially with regard to **biodiversity**, **landscape protection** and **animal welfare**.



Credits ARGE Heumilch Österreich

The [Austrian Association of Hay Milk Producers](#) has documented how this production method contributes to [achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals](#). By contributing to the storage of CO2 in permanent mountain grasslands, livestock farming contributes to SDG 13 on **climate action**. Mosaic grasslands and the limited use of concentrated feed also contribute to SDG 12 on **responsible consumption and production**. Moreover, the sector also helps to maintain

employment and dynamism in mountain regions, thus contributing to SDG 8 for **decent work and economic growth**.

Targeted communication to raise consumer awareness

To encourage more sustainable consumption, the Austrian Association of Hay Milk Producers, together with its German counterpart, is running a [campaign](#) to promote the product. The campaign aims to **raise awareness of hay milk** in German regions where the product is less known to consumers. While in Austria hay milk represents 6,000 farmers and 15% of the volume of milk produced, in Germany it represents 500 farmers and 1% of the volume.

This communication campaign targeted Southern German regions such as Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, located cross-border with Austria and mainly mountainous, as well as major economic areas such as Berlin, Hamburg or North Rhine-Westphalia.



Credits ARGE Heumilch Österreich

STRÖER

To achieve this, the campaign implements the following actions:

- Setting up 40 "rustic alpine kitchens" in the most frequented supermarkets to communicate with consumers. The various hay milk products, in particular cheeses, are cooked live and offered to the clients.
- Participating in 9 **food fairs** per year.
- Organising an annual **study visit to hay milk production areas** with retail staff to raise awareness of production methods.
- **Communicating to consumers** through leaflets, social media, press conferences and advertisements on TV or in train stations.



With these actions, the campaign aims, among other objectives, to raise awareness about hay milk among German consumers by 5%, and to increase knowledge and understanding of the **Traditional Speciality Guaranteed label** associated with hay milk production by 5%. Furthermore, in a context where consumers are increasingly favouring sustainable products, the aim is to increase the **perception of hay milk as a sustainable product** by 10%.

Interestingly, the campaign initially focused on the contribution of hay milk production to the **protection of permanent grassland biodiversity**. However, by the time the project started, consumer attention had shifted to climate action. The producer organisations therefore adapted their campaign, highlighting in particular the benefits in terms of **carbon sequestration**.

Governance & resources

The communication campaign has been carried out since the beginning of 2022 by two organisations, the Austrian Association of Hay Milk Producers and the German Association of Hay Milk Producers. They have formed a project consortium within the framework of the **2021 European calls for proposals for the promotion of agri-food products**, under the call dedicated to **sustainable products**. The project lasts 3 years and has a total budget of **€4,486,324**, 80% of which is funded by the EU through its Agri-Food Promotion Programme. This funding comes from annual calls, which fund each year communication projects to promote specific products. They offer interesting **opportunities for mountain products**, whether they are labelled with the Optional Quality Term "mountain product", with Geographical Indications, or promoted for their unique know-how or sustainability.

→ Why is this a good practice?

ARGE Heumilch's communication campaign took advantage of the new calls to promote sustainable agri-food products. Created in 2021, they add to existing calls for quality schemes and allow to emphasise not only the quality of the product, but also its sustainability. In the context of the climate challenges and increased **consumer demand for sustainable products**, it is valuable to make consumers aware of the **benefits of mountain livestock farming** for biodiversity and climate protection.

 [More info: good practice website](#)

📍 Italy & Switzerland

CITIZEN SCIENCE TURNS PEOPLE INTO ALPINE LAKES OBSERVERS

Water is an important natural resource in the mountains. Alpine lakes provide many ecosystem services to mountain and lowland communities. However, water resources are under increasing pressure and better water management is needed. The SIMILE project promoted citizen science as a way to involve citizens in monitoring and raising awareness for better water management in mountain areas.

Water: a precious but endangered resource

Many mountain lakes are under threat from **human pressures** and the effects of climate change, which can affect water quality and quantity. Lakes face water **pollution** as well as multiple and sometimes **competing uses**, such as agriculture or energy production. Climate change is also reducing the precipitation and snow cover that feed mountain lakes.

Yet mountain lakes are valuable natural resources and provide many **ecosystem services**. For example, mountain lakes provide fresh water for mountain and lowland communities. In the northern Alps for instance, [Lake Constance supplies drinking water to about 4 million people](#) in 320 towns and communities in Baden-Württemberg. The 2022 [IPCC report](#) also highlighted that, globally, 68% of irrigated agricultural land in the lowlands depends on significant contributions from mountain runoff.



Credits Sergio Cerrato

Citizen science to support data collection

In the Southern Alps, the [SIMILE](#) project improved water monitoring through citizen science. The project aimed to **improve the monitoring of mountain lakes**, focusing on the lakes of Como, Maggiore and Lugano, and more recently Varese, located between Italy and Switzerland.

The project included a **citizen science approach** by involving the general public in the collection of data on the lakes. To this end, the mobile app "[SIMILE Monitoraggio Laghi](#)" was created to collect people's observations on the state of the lakes. The app has been made available for both Android and IOS devices. It allows citizens to view content on an interactive map, send pictures and comments, and take water measurements. For example, they can note the presence of algae, foam, waste or pollutants, and measure water temperature or pH.

The data collected through the citizen science approach helps to improve water management. It complements the other two approaches used by the SIMILE project: the use of [sensors](#) and [satellite maps](#). Various sensors are indeed placed in the lakes and allow continuous monitoring of the water.

In Lake Maggiore, for example, a buoy packed with sensors has been installed near Pallanza. It can measure pH, oxygen, chlorophyll and algal pigments.

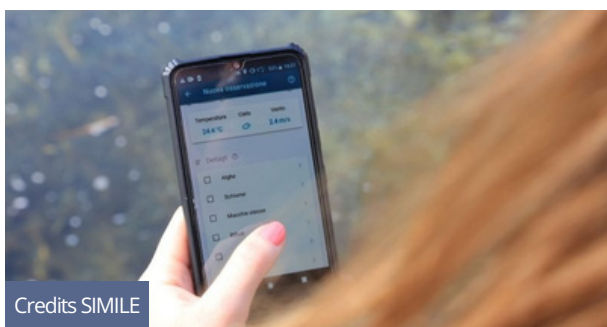
The buoy also has a weather station that monitors wind direction and speed, air temperature, solar radiation and atmospheric pressure. In addition, satellite maps provided an extra layer of information, allowing comparisons to be made over large areas.



Improved water management capacity

The combined use of citizen science, sensors and satellite maps has **improved water management** and the **response capacity** of the relevant authorities. For example, the use of satellite maps made it possible to circumscribe the spread of a surface foam phenomenon that occurred in Lake Maggiore in September 2019 and the presence of a cyanobacteria bloom in Lake Lugano in late 2019.

In addition, the creation of the mobile app and the citizen science approach have helped to raise awareness of the importance of Alpine lakes. For example, high school students and members of local associations have been involved and sensitised.



Governance & resources

The activities were carried out within the framework of the **SIMILE** project (Information System for the Integrated Monitoring of Insubric Lakes and their Ecosystems). The project was carried out from **2019 to 2022** with a budget amounting to **€1,345,914**, 85% of which was co-financed by the 2014-2020 **Interreg Italy-Switzerland** programme.

→ Why is this a good practice?

The SIMILE project not only used technology to improve the monitoring of Alpine lakes, but also involved citizens. By relying on **citizen science**, the project has found an innovative way to raise public awareness of water management issues, and has also promoted a more **inclusive and innovative governance of natural resources**.

[More info: good practice website](#)

📍 Viscri, Brasov County - Romania

VISCRI 38: WHEN LEADER FUNDS SUPPORT THE CREATION OF A LOCAL GASTRONOMY POINT

In Viscri, a low-mountain village in Brasov County, Romania, LEADER funds have supported the creation of a Local Gastronomy Point. This new catering service promotes local products and traditional know-how and contributes to the revitalisation of this remote village.

"Viscri 38": a new local and traditional dining experience

In the small village of Viscri, 422 inhabitants, support from the Common Agricultural Policy through the Local Action Group [Transylvanian Association Brasov North](#) has enabled the creation of the **Local Gastronomic Point "Viscri 38"**.



Credits Viscri 38

Local Gastronomic Points were **created in 2019** by the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, with the aim of promoting **rural tourism** and regional gastronomy as part of the country's cultural heritage. They respond to the growing demand for the promotion of **gastronomic heritage** and are a complementary offer to conventional restaurants; while they must comply with the same hygiene standards, Local Gastronomic Points must offer a more limited choice of dishes, focusing on the quality of ingredients and the traditional features of products and recipes.

Thanks to the financial support received, the project owner has completed the renovation of a former barn and converted it into a catering facility for 40 people.

The funding also enabled the Local Gastronomic Point to be fitted out with the necessary equipment for its operation, including dining room furniture and kitchen equipment. This included the purchase of more than 50 chairs, 10 tables, two cookers and solar panels to power the water heater.

In addition, part of the funding was used for communication purposes to raise awareness of the Local Gastronomy Point, including the production of business cards and around one hundred promotional flyers.



Credits Viscri 38



Credits Viscri 38

Promoting heritage and rural revitalisation

The creation of this new Local Gastronomic Point is an asset for the village of Viscri. It helps to promote **local products and traditional know-how**. In addition, the installation of solar panels adds a sustainable energy dimension to the concept. While the village of Viscri is committed to restoring and promoting its cultural heritage, in particular its UNESCO-listed fortified church, the creation of the Local Gastronomic Point "Viscri 38" contributes to **improving the offer** for visitors. Located in a rural area with few catering facilities, this new offer also contributes to the **revitalisation** of the neighbouring municipalities covered by the Local Action Group.



Credits Calin Stan

Governance & resources

LEADER funding has made a significant contribution to the project, which was implemented from **2018 to 2021**. **€50,000** have been allocated to the project through the **Local Action Group Transylvanian Association Brasov North**. This funding is part of the **2014-2020 programming** of the rural development funds and the sub-measure 19.2 "Support for the implementation of actions as part of local development strategies".



Why is this a good practice?

This initiative illustrates the diversity of solutions funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. By focusing on local development by local actors, the LEADER programme allows for the funding of **measures tailored to each specific area**, such as the specific legal framework of Local Gastronomy Points in Romania. This new dining offer contributes to the promotion of Romania's **gastronomic cultural heritage**, to the enhancement of local agricultural products and to the development of this low mountain rural area. This has helped to create a new service at a lower investment cost in an area where tourism is developing but where there are few catering facilities.

 [More info: good practice website](#)

📍 Province of Teruel - Spain

EL CAMINO DE LOS PILONES: RESTORING CULTURAL HERITAGE TO REVITALISE MOUNTAIN AREAS

Mountain areas are rich in cultural heritage, but sometimes it is not protected or used in a sustainable way. As part of the RAMSAT project, the province of Teruel (Spain) has carried out actions to preserve an ancient cultural route and improve coordination between administrative bodies to promote it as part of a single tourist offer.

The ancient cultural heritage of the Teruel mountains

The mountains have a **rich cultural heritage** that attracts many visitors. However, this heritage is not always promoted or protected. This was the case of the Pylons Route in the province of Teruel, Spain.

"[El camino de los pilones](#)" or the "Pylons route" is an ancient path that has been used in the province of Teruel since the 12th or 13th century. The road is lined with stone and mortar pylons, some up to 2.5 metres high. In the past, this road was used by wool merchants and shepherds with their livestock, and the pylons helped travellers and merchants find their way through the snow and blizzards that often fell in this area, as the road passes through villages at an altitude of 1,500 metres.



Credits Punto de Partida Aragón

The route of the pylons is therefore an integral part of the history and cultural heritage of the province of Teruel. However, both the road and the **pylons have not been very well protected** in the past and

are not particularly promoted. Only a 6-kilometre stretch has been recognised for its cultural interest.

Preserving cultural heritage and coordinating its promotion

The objective of the action initiated by the province of Teruel was to **promote the cultural heritage** of the Pylons route by **preserving the pylons** and creating a common **tourist offer** in the different counties of the province.

To this end, the province of Teruel set up a working group in 2022 to bring together all the stakeholders involved in promoting the route of the pylons and to jointly define the actions to be carried out. The working group included the Provincial Government of Teruel, the comarca of Maestrazgo, the comarca of Comunidad de Teruel, the Regional Government of Aragon's Department of Heritage and the School of Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage of Aragon (ESCYRA).

A public call for tenders was launched in order to **trace the entire route**, as well as to develop **common branding**, including a logo, slogan, maps and materials such as promotional brochures.

In addition, the School of Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage of Aragon is **testing materials and techniques to**

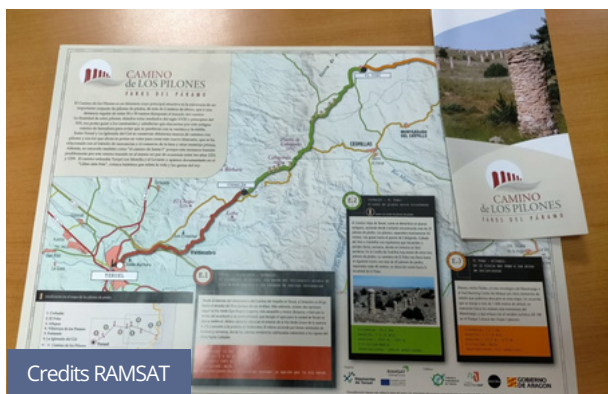
preserve the pylons damaged by time, erosion and wind.



Credits Emilio Vera

A new tourist offer beyond administrative borders

As the route crosses the counties of Maestrazgo and Comunidad de Teruel, the project has helped to bring together all the public bodies to create a **single tourist offer** that overcomes administrative boundaries. As a result, 7 technicians from the **4 different public bodies** have collaborated in the working group to map and brand the route and will jointly promote the Pylons route in the future. Cooperation is therefore a key achievement of this initiative, together with the preservation and promotion of the heritage.



Credits RAMSAT

Since 2023, the Pylons route is promoted as a tourist offer and maps and signals are installed along the route to guide tourists. The promotion of the route of the pylons is important in the context of the province of Teruel, a **sparsely populated mountainous area** that is building on **sustainable rural tourism**. In the comarca

Maestrazgo, and even more so in the comarca of Comunidad de Teruel, the service sector is a major contributor to local gross value added.

Governance & resources

These actions were implemented within the framework of the **2019 - 2023 Interreg Europe** project **RAMSAT** (Revitalizing Remote And Mountainous areas through Sustainable Alternative Tourism). Activities were designed through the **RAMSAT Action Plan** of the Province of Teruel, aiming at promoting mountain tourism. The costs of these activities are covered by the 2023 budgets of the Provincial Government of Teruel and the Counties of Maestrazgo and of Comunidad de Teruel.

→ Why is this a good practice?

The initiative has been inspired by other **good practices** aiming to rebuild a cultural tourism offer in every sense of the word. Experience has shown that **cooperation** at all levels of governance is beneficial for the coherent promotion of cultural heritage.

[More info: good practice website](#)

📍 Vestland County - Norway

PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE RECREATION IN POPULAR NATURAL SITES: THE TROLLTUNGA EXPERIENCE

The beauty of natural mountain sites attracts large numbers of visitors. Tourism supports jobs and local communities, but the popularity of certain sites can also lead to damage sensitive natural areas. This is the case of Trolltunga in Norway, which has suffered as a result of its popularity. The ASCENT project has brought stakeholders together to find a balance between tourism and preservation of the mountains.

The downside of Trolltunga's popularity

In Norway, the site of Trolltunga (the Tongue of the Troll) has seen an exponential [increase in visitors](#), driven largely by social media. Located in the municipality of Odda, the site is accessible via a 22km loop trail through the mountain and has always been popular with Norwegian hikers.

In **2009, 1,000 people** made the journey to Trolltunga, 99% of whom were Norwegian hikers. In the 2010s, photos of Trolltunga began to be widely distributed, first by tourism operators and then via social media. By 2013, the number of annual visitors to the site had reached 21,000, then doubled to 40,000 in 2014 and increased to **75,000 annual hikers in 2016**.



Credits Benjamin Davies

Although the influx of tourists has greatly benefited the shops and services in Odda and the wider region, the **site was not adapted** to handle so many visitors, some of whom were not experienced hikers and

did not have enough information about Trolltunga. Hordaland County Council joined the [ASCENT](#) project to address the many challenges posed by Trolltunga's **over-visitation**.

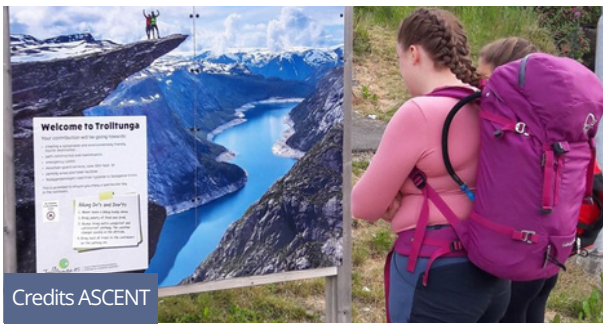
Restoration and prevention measures

Various [measures](#) have been implemented to limit the impact of hikers on the natural site, particularly on the ecosystems, but also on the local community.

Some **sections of the footpath have been restored**. Some were suffering from severe erosion caused by trampling or had become too narrow to accommodate so many hikers, leading some to stray off the path, with **consequences for local ecosystems**. After studying various options, it became clear that certain solutions, such as installing stone steps, were not suitable for the Trolltunga site. Local stakeholders therefore opted to use drainage and planting of local species to restore paths and guide visitors.

In addition, more **educational signs** have been placed along the trail to make hikers aware of the impact of human waste on the ecosystem.

Finally, thanks to the project, an **emergency shelter** and [mountain guides](#) were stationed on the trail in 2017.



This safety measure was in response to an increase in accidents on the trail to Trolltunga. Previously, the local Red Cross was responsible for rescues. As the number of visitors increased, so did the need for **emergency assistance**, which reached 40 requests in the summer of 2016, placing a heavy burden on this community of volunteers.

The creation of an emergency shelter, equipped with medical and basic supplies, and the presence of mountain guides **reduced the number of rescues** to 15 in the summer of 2017. A crucial task of these guides is to identify visitors who are not properly equipped or start the route too late in the day and advise them to go back. In addition, communication materials have been adapted in several languages to meet international demand and help visitors prepare for their visit and hike at Trolltunga.

Governance & resources

The activities carried out in Trolltunga are part of the **ASCENT** project (Apply Skills And Conserve Our Environment With New Tools). This **2016-2018** project, which received funding of **€1,659,253** from the **Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme**, facilitated the exchange between stakeholders to find solutions for maintaining tourism in natural mountain areas while limiting its impact on the environment.

→ Why is this a good practice?

The ASCENT project has sought to implement solutions that respect local traditions and practices. **In Norway, access to natural sites is not regulated** and the practice of outdoor sports is strongly encouraged. By **limiting the impact of tourism** without restricting access to natural sites, the measures taken at Trolltunga respect local cultural practices in accordance with the **1957 Norwegian Outdoor Recreation Act**.

[More info: good practice website](#)

📍 Auvergne area - France

OPTI'SOINS: A MOBILE MATERNITY UNIT FOR MOUNTAIN WOMEN

In some mountainous regions, women face growing inequalities in access to maternity care. In Auvergne (France), the "Opti'soins" initiative was launched in September 2022 to address these inequalities and better identify the need for mobile care. 110 pregnant women in 4 mountain areas today benefit from this new medical assistance.

The territorial inequalities in access to care for pregnant women

Access to healthcare tends to deteriorate in many mountain areas, with the closure of many public infrastructures and the centralisation of health facilities. Obstetric care is not spared from this **medical desertification** of mountain areas.



Credits Jordi Roy

In the Auvergne area, for example, there were 17 maternity units and 1 local perinatal centre (CPP) in 2003, compared with 10 maternity units and 3 CPPs in 2021. There is also a decline in the number of specialists able to monitor women's pregnancies. In Auvergne, for example, the number of gynaecologists and obstetricians has fallen by 20% in 7 years (2008-2015), with a further drop of 15% between 2015 and 2020.

These **inequalities in access to healthcare** bear consequences for pregnant women, as research has shown that a **distance of 30 minutes or more** from a care structure leads to an increase in the risks during the pregnancy. In Auvergne, 220 municipalities

and 400 women are beyond this 30-minute distance.

An obstetrics van in 4 mountain territories

The "Opti'soins" initiative was launched in September 2022 to address this lack of access to perinatal care in Auvergne.

Inspired by a project carried out in the overseas territory of Mayotte, the initiative is based on **organisational innovation** in the care system by bringing care as close as possible to patients using a van and a **mobile medical unit**.

The van acts as a mobile care service for women living in **four mountainous areas** of Auvergne: Cantal, Puy-de-Dôme, Haute Loire and Allier. It consists of a small mobile consultation room, including a small reception room and a medical examination room equipped with a monitor or ultrasound machine. The vehicle must be connected to a 220-volt socket in the municipality to ensure the operation of the medical equipment.



Credits Radio France - Victor Dhollande



Credits Jérémie Fulleringer

A midwife, an ultrasound midwife and a nurse are on board to receive patients. These staff carry out follow-up consultations and complementary examinations on the spot, directly in the municipality where the patients live.

Expected impact of the experiment

For the time being, Opti'soins remains an **experiment and a research project**. Within this framework, **400 women** have been identified in **220 municipalities**. In the first 110, women are accompanied by the maternity bus (in addition to their usual midwife) throughout their pregnancy. The other 110 small municipalities are used as "controls" for the research project, meaning that the pregnant women are not monitored by Opti'soins staff, but are interviewed about their care.



Credits Mathieu Farcy

The aim of this experiment is to determine the benefits of mobile obstetric care. Although the impact on the area will remain small until the experiment ends in 2024, the project leaders are aiming to make the initiative permanent and even extend it to other types of medical care. In this case, the intention is **not to replace existing**

services, which are already scattered, but to **complement** them by bringing routine medical examinations closer to patients, while supporting the maintenance of complementary medical actions in hospitals.

Governance & resources

Opti'soins is a two-year experiment running from **2022 to 2024**. With a total budget of over **€700,000**, it is funded by the **Ministry of Solidarity and Health** (€662,663) and the **European Regional Development Fund** (ERDF) via the Auvergne-Rhône Alpes region (€78,000). This initiative is supported by the Auvergne Perinatal Health Network (RSPA), which is in charge of the experiment, and the Clermont-Ferrand Hospital, which is in charge of the research activities.



Why is this a good practice?

Mobile services and **organisational innovation** are booming in many mountain areas, with the aim of **bringing services closer to the communities** of the most remote and least well-served areas. The Opti'soins experiment will provide a further key to understanding by allowing a **comparison** to be made between patients who have been followed by this service and those who have used the traditional care pathway available in their area.

 [More info: good practice website](#)



More information

www.euromontana.org

Interested in suggesting a good practice from your mountain area? Contact us!

info@euromontana.org

Find us on social media!
@Euromontana

