



2nd International EUSALP Workshop on Territorial Brands in the Alpine Region

On June 10-11, 2021, the workshop on Territorial Brands in the Alpine Region took place. Territorial brands are collective promotional initiatives established with the aim to promote local produce, foodstuffs, crafts, and services from a specific area. Compared to other collective instruments such as geographical indications or destination brands, they are still under-studied and little-understood. The workshop, at its second edition, had the goal to bring together policy makers, experts, territorial brand managing organisations, NGOs, and interested parties to discuss together about the challenges of smaller-scale brands and their specific contributions to sustainable economic, social, cultural and environmental development in peripheral Alpine areas.

The workshop was organized in the framework of the activities of [Action Group 6](#) (natural and cultural resources) of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP), by the Permanent Secretariat of the [Alpine Convention](#), the [Land of Carinthia](#), [Eurac Research](#), and [Polo Poschiavo](#). The scientific coordination of the workshop was undertaken by prof. Diego Rinallo, [Kedge Business School](#), who also assured its moderation. The workshop took place over two consecutive days. The session on the first day was dedicated to clarifying the characteristics of territorial brands and their institutional and political context in the Alpine region. The key message emerging from the first day is that territorial brands, if adequately supported, can contribute to help farmers and producers deal more effectively with the climate emergency and the need to switch from a linear to a circular economic model and to better communicate – to policy makers and to consumers – their positive effects on the environment. After these “big picture” messages, during the second session of the workshop we focused on the current state of territorial brands in different countries, giving the word to researchers, territorial brands, member firms and technology providers. About 80 attendees took part in the workshop on each date – most participated on both days. The majority came from Alpine countries, but others came were from other countries in Europe and elsewhere, and some from as far as India, Nepal or Australia, showing that territorial brands are an important topic in different parts of the world. As one could expect given the institutional nature of the event, most participants from regional/national governments and public institutions or from universities and research institutions, with good presences of NGOs, consultants.

Session 1: the Big Picture

After the introductory greetings of Mr **Roland Psenner**, President of Eurac Research, Ms. **Christiane Barret**, general delegate for the French Presidency of EUSALP, welcomed participants and underlined that the international scope of the workshop is very coherent with the overall mission of EUSALP, that is to deal with the common challenges faced by the Alpine regions thanks to strong cooperation and mutual support beyond national borders. Ms. Barret also recalled the activities carried out by the French Presidency of EUSALP to promote sustainable development in the Alpine region, including the recently approved [Manifesto for a Sustainable and Resilient Alpine Region](#) (June 2020), as well as the importance of promoting sustainable agro-pastoral activities and food systems, protecting local businesses, strengthening innovative processes, favouring local consumption and short supply chains, and safeguarding the alpine food heritage.

Ms. **Alenka Smerkolj**, Secretary General of the Alpine Convention, further welcomed the audience by saying that the workshop is an important part of the work programme of the EUSALP Action Group 6, led by the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention and the Austrian Land of Carinthia. Ms. Smerkolj continued by highlighting the role that territorial brands can play to deal with the challenges of climate adaptation and carbon footprint reduction, and how these initiatives are consistent with the article 11 of the [Mountain Farming Protocol](#), which calls for the establishment of nature-friendly and sustainable marketing conditions in the Alps, along with cross-sectorial cooperation between tourism, forestry, agriculture and handicraft, as further specified in article 20 of the Protocol. Territorial brands can also have an impact in terms of climate adaptation, as laid down in the [Climate Action Plan 2.0](#) adopted during the last Alpine Conference, which defines mountain agriculture as one of the pathways for the Plan's implementation. The activities in this area of the Alpine Convention can thus be considered as a local and targeted application of the UN Agenda 2020, and specifically the Sustainable Development Goals 2, [Zero Hunger](#), and 12, [Responsible Production and Consumption](#).

Territorial brands, a confusing term? Towards a shared terminology

Mr. **Diego Rinaldo**, marketing professor at Kedge Business School (France), highlighted how academic work on territorial brands is still limited and fragmented across different disciplines that do not share widely accepted terminologies or definitions. The term brand comes from the practice of livestock branding as a technique to mark animals to identify their owner. Brands are names, symbols, logos or other marks that identify products from specific suppliers allowing consumers to distinguish them from those offered by other producers. The value of a brand mostly resides in consumers' perceptions – the extent to which it is known (brand awareness), the image it is associated to, and how it is evaluated (i.e., positively or negatively). Unlike individual brands (e.g., Dior, Coke) that sometimes highlight their territorial origin in their marketing communications (i.e., Dior Paris), territorial brands are collective brands, which federate producers from a specific region that satisfy agreed-upon quality criteria. Territorial brands are not the only typologies of collective brands: these include place brands focused on attracting exogenous investments and new inhabitants from the creative classes, destination brands (aimed at increasing tourism) and geographical indications (focused on only one product category, such as Champagne or Camembert de Normandie). Unlike the latter, which are very well-studied and the object of specific public policies, territorial brands can cover products from different supply chains, beyond agri-food products, including restaurants, tourist attractions, and other services.

Territorial brands can operate at different geographical scales – from national to regional to municipal/local. Their areas are often delimited by administrative borders (e.g., Cantons, Lands, Departments, Regions, Provinces, Municipalities), particularly when they are established by public authorities that want to include all local producers from their territories. The areas delimited by these administrative borders are sometimes too large to convey a coherent image to consumers and to facilitate cooperation. It can therefore make sense to establish smaller-scale territorial brands with a stronger identity within a larger territory rather than a territorial brand covering a larger area but with a watered-down image and federating producers without a shared identity. Territorial brand born out of bottom-up processes can also cover cross-border areas – within a state or across states. It is normally better to facilitate these processes with appropriate policies rather than imposing top-down structures that might risk becoming 'empty boxes' for lack of local support.

Territorial brands can set product specifications and rule of the games that do not only serve as a guarantee of local origin, but also accompany producers to improve on their environmental performances by favouring biodiversity, climate resilience, the transition to a circular economy, and resource sensitivity. Hopefully, this second EUSALP workshop will facilitate the identification of best practices but also highlight common challenges to design, implement, and support successful brands that generate sustainable economic, social and environmental development for all involved stakeholders.

The Farm to Fork Strategy, the Common Agricultural Policy and their role in supporting short supply chains and territorial brands

In her keynote speech, Ms **Antonia Lütteken**, representative of the Directorate-General on Agriculture and Rural Development of the EU Commission, described the [Farm to Fork](#) (FTF) strategy within the [EU Common Agricultural Policy](#) (CAP), and its role in the support of short supply chains and territorial brands. The main goal of the CAP is to foster a resilient farming sector, bolster the environment and climate, and strengthen the socio-economic fabric in rural areas. Among its 9 specific objectives, those

that are more strictly connected to territorial brands are those related to (i) the farmers' position in the food chain, (ii) societal demands on food, health and animal welfare, and (iii) the support to a generational renewal in agriculture. The FTF approach represents a crucial element within the [EU Green Deal](#), as it tackles all the three pillars of sustainability (social, economic and environmental). This permits to cover all current challenges to the EU food system, from food affordability and the preservation of biodiversity to a just transition to green jobs.

The goals of the FTF strategy include: (i) the reduction of the environmental and climate footprint of the food system, (ii) leading a global transition towards a competitive sustainability, (iii) the creation of new economic and social opportunities, and (iv) the creation of a robust and resilient food system. Sustainable food production can be boosted by reaching some key targets within 2030, such as the reduction by 50% of hazardous chemical pesticides, the reduction by 50% of nutrient losses (meaning a reduction in the use of fertilizers), the reduction by 50% of antimicrobials in aquaculture, and the ensuring that at least 25% of EU agricultural land falls under the label of organic farming. The concrete actions involved in the FTF approach include the creation of a legislative framework for a sustainable food system, ensuring policy coherence at EU level and collective stakeholder involvement. The roadmap in the next few years will consist of several initiatives, starting with the submission of the CAP strategic plan, the cooperation of primary producers, the adoption of a framework for responsible business and marketing conduct, and the proposal for a sustainable food labelling framework to empower consumers to make sustainable food choices. In terms of research, innovation and investments, more funds will be made available for the Horizon 2020 programmes and the activities of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and a larger flexibility will be granted to Member States to design and propose rural development interventions addressing their specific needs in their CAP Plan. Finally, further support will be given in terms of data analysis and knowledge sharing, especially in order to allow SMEs to develop new business models in line with CAP policies. Ms. Lütteken concludes her intervention by stressing the importance of a collective approach required to ensure the success of the transition.

Circular Economy and Innovation in Mountain areas: A role for territorial brands?

Euromontana is the European multisectoral association for cooperation and development of mountain areas. It gathers regional development agencies, local authorities, agricultural organizations, environmental agencies, forestry organizations and research institutes from different European countries, with the goal to promote living mountains through sustainable development and the improvement of quality of life. Its director, **Marie Clotteau**, highlighted that the new European framework, especially with the introduction of the Farm to Fork strategy, can support the development of a higher level of circularity in the economic sector. Circular economy is based on the principle that someone's waste can be an input for someone else. Our current linear economy is depleting finite resources and creating an increasingly amount of waste. Circular approaches are beneficial for the environment and can increase economic and resource security as well as decrease dependency on global supply chains and price variability. Transportation in mountain areas is characterized by higher costs. It is therefore important to reduce them through innovative systems and better collaboration. In this regard, circular economy provides a viable alternative, as it allows to decrease the level of imported and exported materials. Another remarkable advantage is that it offers the possibility to create jobs at the local level, because natural resources are transformed by local companies on site.

Territorial branding approaches can contribute to a transition to a circular economy model. For example, Pyrénées Création (France) is a wool product company that has contributed to a revalorization of Pyrenean wool by giving a new life to a precious material that is normally thrown away or exported at a very low price to be transformed in Asia. This company committed to use local wool has provided a market for local sheep breeders, who have realized that better breeding practices can result in higher quality wool. The valorisation of local natural resources, the quality of every step of the process, and the quality of the product were key to boost the wool sector and design products appreciated by local consumers and tourists. Another example is Rakeistus (Finland), a company that designs and manufactures machinery for ash granulation, helping processing granulated ash into a forest fertilizer. Bio-ash is a by-product of energy as well as paper and pulp production. The company helps energy companies to transform their side streams into a profitable and environmentally friendly business, and to generate local products that meets the principle of sustainable development. The [Natural Regional Park of the Pyrenées Ariègeaises](#) has developed a territorial brand that certifies products satisfying three conditions: link to the territory, human dimension and authenticity, and respect for the environment. The Park label certifies products such as cheese from a farm in Castelnau, which aims to function in the most circular way possible: it

is self-sufficient in terms of herd feeding; the herd is adapted to the size of the pastures, which allows feeding in the pastures for 7-8 months a year; no fuel is used in barn drying, thanks to solar energy; the waste treatment allows to recover cow dung that is used as field fertilizer. The Couserans community of municipalities in the Park employs wood chips produced throughout the department to produce energy, so reducing heating costs. Using wood presents many advantages: the resource comes from the nearby area (less than 30 km from the place of production); the process permits the creation of local jobs, and it reduces the impact on the environment. In addition, a cooperative society is a new form of enterprise for a social and solidarity economy. In Pailhès, a country bistro was renovated with local wood. This can be considered a concrete example of circular economy in the building sector: the materials used are recycled materials found in the region (wood and hemp concrete), and local builders were engaged. To facilitate the participation of local contractors, the municipality divided its public contract into several small lots, as a single local company would not have been able to respond to the entire project. The bistro will be privately managed, but the venue will be made available for local cultural events, contributing to the animation of village life.

Territorial Brands and Climate Change

Helmut Hojesky, member of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action and Chairman of the Alpine Convention's Alpine Climate Advisory Committee, presented Alpine Convention's [Climate Action Plan 2.0](#), with a focus on agriculture and mountain tourism. The [Alpine Climate Board \(ACB\)](#), established in 2016, it is made up by all the Alpine States and representatives of NGOs such as WWF. Tackling climate change is crucial for the Alpine region, being among the areas of the world which are mostly affected by the effects of increasing temperatures. For this reason, the ACB has drafted, in April 2019, an Alpine Climate Target System (ACTS) for the year 2050, namely a set of verifiable objectives with the aim of enhancing the added value of alpine-wide cooperation related to climate change.

The political outcome of the ACTS is the Climate Action Plan 2.0 (an updated version of a former action plan drafted in 2009) which will include several tools for its implementation in cooperative terms. Its overall target system is embedded in the existing legal framework of the Alpine Convention, with its Protocols and Decisions and their specific objectives and targets. Also, it is guided by the overall targets of the Paris Agreement as well as the [UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). General principles will guide all activities of the Alpine Convention with respect to climate change mitigation and adaptation. These principles refer to a transition based on the Alpine cultural heritage, the benefit of cooperation and the importance of local models for integrated action. Overall strategic targets define relevant policy aims/visions and frame the sectoral targets (e.g., soil, water, tourism, energy) as well as all operational measures to be identified and implemented in later steps. Communication targets support the target system. To shift to concrete action, the Climate Action Plan 2.0 has envisioned 16 implementation pathways that have sought not to duplicate existing quantitative targets such as the UN SDGs. Such pathways need to be complemented with effective participatory processes, as well as with the political message that economic development is important also to create a climate-resilient recovery. [Mountain agriculture](#) is one important implementation pathway which plays a central role in safeguarding Alpine traditional landscape, regional breeds and species and preserving local culture, heritage and traditional techniques. Mountain agriculture is also highly environmentally sensitive and therefore especially vulnerable to climate change. Alpine food products are high quality and can constitute a market niche. This paves the way for additional climate-change efforts of mountain farmers. Besides reducing greenhouse-gas emissions, these efforts may also help increase value-added and income in the agricultural sector in the Alps. Thus, the Alpine Climate Action Plan targets for mountain agriculture are: (i) energy self-sufficiency of Alpine farms, (ii) alpine value chains for agricultural products, (iii) the Alps as model regions for organic farming, and (iv) resilient and climate-friendly mountain agriculture. Such targets are framed by two specific pathways, namely the promotion of Alpine products (with the increase in locally retained value added for a sustainable and climate-friendly agriculture) and moving to organic and climate-friendly methods in Alpine farming. Territorial brands, while not explicitly mentioned in the Alpine Climate Action plan, can play an important role in this respect.

Reterritorializing supply chains: The 100% Local model

Christian Hoffman from Eurac Research presented the project [100% Local](#), supported by the Alpine Region Preparatory Action Fund (ARPAF). Coordinated within the EUSALP Action Group 6, the 100% Local identifying the possible characteristics of territorial development model based on the preservation and valorisation of natural and cultural resources through fully local supply chains. Besides Eurac Research,

the main partners were Polo Poschiavo, Università della Svizzera Italiana and the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Art. The project was built upon previous EUSALP activities and Interreg projects dealing with food supply chains, food value chains and the food heritage, including the Alpine Space [AlpFoodway](#) project. The 100% Local project owes its name to the [100% Valposchiavo](#) territorial brand, which has been one important source of inspiration. Five pilot areas were identified in order to set up a participatory process with local actors aimed at assessing the sustainability of processes in the food supply chain, identifying existing gaps, detecting solutions and skills, and finally extracting the core elements that might allow the replicability and transferability of the model into other regions. The research focused on products that are entirely processed and produced locally, which correspond to place-specific food tradition and assets, such as typical crops, animal breeds, food specialties, or typical production techniques.

The 100% Local model developed through the project consists in a participatory bottom-up process to engage all relevant local stakeholders and provide a set of principles that need to be adapted to local conditions, as 'one-size-fits-all' solutions are unlikely to work given the diversity in institutional settings and local conditions in the Alpine region. The first step in applying the model, consists in an analysis of the current local situation: who is the current cooperating network? are there any existing territorial brands or other collective promotional initiatives? What is the current state of the local agriculture, food, craft, and tourism sectors? How collaborative and engaged in territorial development are local cultural, environmental, education, and civil society stakeholders? What are the policies in support of territorial development, and are local actors able to access funding? Based on these preliminary analyses, the second step of the model is based on a methodology for participative envisioning and collective decision-making based on future literacy approaches. First, mega-trends are analysed to anticipate probable, plausible and possible futures and their effects on local conditions and strategies to be developed. Second, local actors adopt the 3 Horizons methodology to identify current concerns, aspirations for the future, and the required innovations that need to be implemented to achieve the aspirations. These future literacy methodologies constitutes an innovative feature of the model, that makes it particularly suited to deal with challenges such as the climate emergency or the transition to circular economy. During the third step in the application of the model, once a desirable future has been envisioned, the cooperating network and the engaged stakeholders should decide together key actions to be implemented in the short term. To facilitate the visualization of the collectively agreed territorial development model emerging from the application of the methodology, the project developed a 100% Local territorial development canvas, which is free to download and use from the project website.

Quantifying and measuring the economic impacts of positive and negative externalities

Mountain agriculture results in products that are more expensive compared to those produced in flatlands or those issued from globalized supply chains, intensive farming, and industrialized production. Market prices however seldom take into consideration the positive and negative effects on the environment of specific production methods – which economists call externalities or external effects. For example, using pesticides may result in a lower production cost, but can generate negative environmental and health problems, which will ultimately result in further costs for individuals and communities (e.g., water or soil depuration, health treatments). It is not always easy to measure or estimate externalities and to demonstrate their economic impacts, but by doing so mountain farmers could more easily demonstrate their positive effects on the environments. With this broader goal in mind, two speakers presented existing methodologies that territorial brands can integrate in their product specifications to better communicate to policy makers and consumers alike their added value – but also to learn how to further improve their environmental performances.

Alessa Perotti, Young Transformer at the [Bites of Transfoodmation](#) initiative by the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations in Rome and the Swiss Embassy in Italy, presented her Master's thesis on estimating the [true cost of food](#) in Switzerland. This includes all external costs generated by food over its life cycle (from production to consumption and waste disposal) by accounting all environmental, social and economic external costs generated by the product, which are not currently included in food prices. Knowing the real cost of food is crucial for including all the side effects connected to food production and consumption, especially when considering that the growing demand for resource-intense and unhealthy diets will further increase these impacts and the costs they cause. These impacts can be classified in six key dimensions: biodiversity, animal welfare, environment, economy, human health and livelihoods. The results of Ms Perotti's study shows that if the real costs were considered, food prices would go up by 87%, with external costs estimated at 32 billion CHF in 2018. Moreover, this is a conserv-

ative estimate: true costs are likely higher due to limited data availability and accessibility. The reduction of external costs of the food system is key to achieving sustainable development. However, this cannot be achieved without creating a common data-driven approach for assessing food system costs and benefits. This new approach has a huge potential not only to establish food systems where sustainable decisions become the default decision along the entire value chain, but also to quantify the value of small-scale territorial brands.

Christian Hiss, founder and CEO of [Regionalwert AG Freiburg](#) in Germany, proposed a methodology for a more correct accounting system in agriculture. Regionalwert AG Freiburg was founded in 2006 to invest in the equity of small and medium-sized organic farms and food producers. Returns on investments are calculated not only based on economic indicators, but also taking into consideration social and ecological performances of partner farms. On the one hand, society and farmers strive for issues such as the upkeep of biodiversity through diverse cultivation, building soil fertility, and the adequate remuneration of farm managers and employees. On the other hand, current income subsidies lead to excessive specialisation, too many short-term high-yield cultivations, no performance-related remuneration of farm managers and employees, and little promotion of animal welfare due to industrial meat production standards. Current accounting methods to determine losses and profits fail to consider these aspects, despite the fact that soil fertility, cultural expertise and biodiversity are not just ideal values, but a real capital that can be accumulated or depleted. Through sustainable management, related assets are created and maintained in the long term, so that little or no damage or risks are externalised. Therefore, it is necessary to re-calculate costs in the farming sector based on the real value of farming activities. Such an assessment should be based on sustainability performance, and not only on monetary/economic criteria. Mr Hiss' company has developed a methodology to do so, which makes it possible to identify sustainability performances and risks and share information about these aspects to farmers and workers, public authorities, stakeholders and consumers transparently and clearly. Such methodology includes more than 200 different parameters and is now promoted in other countries due to its practical relevance.

Session 2: Territorial branding in practice

Mr. **Wolfgang Mayrhofer**, the legal adviser at the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, which is the co-leader of the Action Group 6 of EUSALP, opened the session and expressed his enthusiasm for the high interest for the topic of territorial brands and explained that after a first day focused on the political and institutional level, during the second day the practical and socioeconomic aspects of territorial branding will be discussed by speakers from different Alpine countries representing different typologies of organizations. Mr **Christian Hoffmann**, research group leader at the Institute for Regional Development, brought the welcome of Eurac Research and highlighted the importance of discussing practical aspects of territorial brands.

Development Challenges of Territorial Brands in Rural Areas of Slovenia

Mr **Erik Logar**, Research Assistant at the [Anton Melik Geographical Institute](#), ZRC SAZU Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and PhD student at the University of Ljubljana, delivered a keynote speech presenting emerging results of his doctoral research on territorial brands in rural areas of Slovenia, which highlights not only the benefits but also the challenges of such territorial development initiatives. Slovenia is a small and mainly rural country. To be competitive in a global marketplace, sustainable development approaches are particularly suited for small producers, as they permit to be economically viable but also preserve the natural environments. In Slovenia, there is some support for smaller producers, such as programmes funded by the State, municipalities, or the EU (particularly through CAP funds), whereas private investors are rare. In the context of these policies, territorial brands were considered a possible approach to foster regional development. Taking inspiration from best practices in territorial branding in Italy and Austria, Slovenia too has experimented with these collective promotional initiatives. Territorial brands were widely adopted and some of them appear to be quite successful. There is however no mapping of these initiatives and no research on their local effects. To fill this gap, Mr Logar's research seek to make an inventory of territorial brands in Slovenia and identify their effects on local areas as well as the problem they face.

At the beginning of his research 3 years ago, Mr Logar was told that at most, in Slovenia there were 10 territorial brands. So far, he counted 45 (and his work is not over yet). His work, based on a survey

methodology, highlights that 50 out of 212 municipalities in Slovenia have introduced a territorial brand. Some that have not established one yet are in the process of doing so. Thus, one fourth of Slovenian municipalities are covered by a territorial brand, and new ones are added every year. This figure does not include parks and other protected areas. When adding these park-related initiatives, half of the Slovenian territory is covered by territorial brands of one typology or another.

Positive effects of territorial brands cannot be however taken for granted. Thanks to 120 interviews carried out with territorial brand managers and firms taking part in them, Mr Logar concluded that territorial brands can indeed create a feeling of belonging among producers; small producers perceive the most the positive effects of territorial brands because they improve market presence and access to distribution channels (e.g., dedicated shelves on supermarkets or online stores) and can benefit from professional support and consultancy services such as packaging design; cooperation in marketing reduces promotional investments (participation in fairs, collective websites, advertising on television or social media); there are also networking effects that can improve collaboration, learning, and knowledge sharing. Informants however mentioned several negative impacts: authorities often introduce territorial brands through top-down approaches and do not listen to the wishes of member firms – bottom-up approaches are under-developed in Slovenia, and local communities could be more involved; territorial brand management organization have limited and overburdened staff, which is often non-specialized – as a result, they have limited time to develop the brand affecting market presence and profits; some territorial brands are established through EU funds, and when the funds run out, they face difficulties continuing their activities are sometimes close down; the young do not recognize the added value of local products, and as a result generational turnover has not taken place, threatening the survival of many firms; the prices of territorial brand products are higher than those of unbranded ones, and not everybody can afford them; finally, some producers do not recognize the value of networking and cooperation.

Panel: Testimonials from Territorial brands in the Alpine Region

During this session, we gave the floor to territorial brand managing organizations to ask about their histories, institutional contexts, development trajectories, and key challenges. Many territorial brands and communities across the Alpine regions experience similar challenges but they can develop different solutions according to their geographical and administrative contexts. It is therefore important to learn from each other so that new knowledge can be developed.

Mr **Pascal Denolly**, founder and president of the Comité d'Agrément of the [Marque Is\(h\)ere](#), explains that the brand was developed in the French department of Isère, a semi-alpine area near Grenoble. The decision to create a territorial brand covering this area was taken in 2015-16, when many farmers were in crisis as milk, crops, and meat were badly remunerated. A group of engaged farmers decided to seek the help of the Chamber of Agriculture and the Isère Department to strengthen the local agrifood supply chains and reclaim shelf space on local supermarkets. The Isère, unlike other areas such as Savoy and Tyrol, does not have a strong identity. It was therefore necessary to invest in quality and customer satisfaction and to define a common image. The territorial brand federates local farmers, producers, craftspeople, and distributors. Product specifications were defined in agreement with INAO – France's National Institute of Origin and Quality. It was decided to position the brand based on three values: guarantee of origin; fair remuneration of producers; respect of environmental standards – organic or the French HVE (*haute valeur environnementale*) certification, which stresses respect for biodiversity, responsible use of water, reduction of pesticide use, natural fertilizers. Thanks to this flexible approach, the brand can include a greater number of producers and accompany local farmers in the process of conversion to more environmentally friendly practices. The brand has been successful in increasing farmers' remunerations (up to 10-15%) and to communicate its values to consumers thanks to the involvement of distributors. The brand now includes 90 farmers, 30 craftsmen and 4 mills. Prospective members are evaluated by an agreement committee, with support from the Chamber of Agriculture, which ensures that products follow the specification. Funds are granted by the Isère Department and the municipality of Grenoble, but the brand is trying to develop autonomous sources of financing. Territorial brands need to harmonize their communication with that of other brands to avoid possible confusion. In practice, this means that the brand Ishere needs to distinguish itself from the geographical indications from the area on the one hand, and that it should coordinate itself with the brand created by the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region [La Région du Goût](#).

Mr. **Michael Fend** is the manager of Association for the Promotion of Styrian Volcanic Land ([Steierisches Vulkanland](#)) in Austria, near to the borders between Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. The landscape of this region is hilly and scattered. The brand was developed for the internal market

and covers 130 municipalities. The most spread crop is grapevine, but agriculture is quite varied, with chicken breeding and fruit trees playing a central role. Fields are generally small, which makes it difficult to compete with bigger producers. Volcanic Land thus invested in quality improvement. The advantage of being small is that these producers are more flexible than big companies and can adapt quickly. During and just after the pandemic this was a huge advantage, and unemployment rates in the area are already back to the pre-pandemic level. The 30 inactive volcanoes in the region shape its landscape and are a strong element of the brand's communication.

The vision that the brand developed for 2025 place people and sustainability at the centre of every decision. They preferred to aim at a close deadline and not to postpone their ambitions to 2040 or 2050. The brand is an instrument that supports small-scale voluntary measures and provides a way to make initiatives and people's efforts visible. Vulkanland as a brand can act as a federating platform, since all the members work together under the same label. So far 200 licenses to use the brand have been distributed to about 160 companies. The brand aims to set a quality standard in the region and to stand for the common values that are shared in the network. Mr Fend also highlighted that administrative difficulties generate barriers to entry for smaller producers. Smaller-scale brands should adopt rules that are easy to follow and put in place if they really want to be inclusive. The network members cooperate based on the territorial brand's emotional appeal, that is because they share a common vision and objectives and want to contribute to the sustainable development of their homeland.

Michael Hofer is the deputy chairman of the [Upper Vinschgau Citizen Cooperative](#), which is part of the territory of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, in Italy. The area (also known as Alta Val Venosta) has been the cradle of social movements in recent years. Agriculture (and as a result, landscape) in the Vinschgau Valley is clearly divided: the upper valley produces milks, cereals and crops, whereas the lower valley is an example of monoculture, covered with apple trees treated with pesticides. The Cooperative was founded to give form to a new idea of cooperation in which local citizens could get engaged in territorial development. It organized several campaigns to raise public awareness of sustainable local development and called for a referendum on pesticides in the municipality of Mals, where 75% of the population voted to ban their use starting a legal battle that is still ongoing. The Cooperative operates an Alpine dairy and supports small producers by organizing cultural events and farmers' markets, where they can sell their products, cultural events. It also networks with areas from other regions and countries to spread the message that another agriculture is possible. The Cooperative deals with culture, agriculture, production, tourism, and locally based knowledge. At the moment, they do not have a territorial brand yet, but thanks to the ARPAF 100% Local project they are thinking of establishing one adapted to the local conditions.

Making territorial brands impactful: The perspectives of producers adhering to territorial brands

In this panel, we gave the floor to two firms who joined territorial brands. Mr **Reto Rauch**, general manager of the [Bieraria Engiadinaisa](#) in the municipality of Valsot in Switzerland, pointed out that his company is proud to say that they belong to the territorial brand [Bun Tschlin](#): "We are Buntschlin!". Member firms need to play a central role in territorial brands and strongly identify with them. The brand is not just something that they carry with them: producers are the brand! Companies thus need to promote the products that stand behind the brand. Customers should not only know the territorial brand: it is much more important that they know the products behind it. It is the image of these products that gives meaning to the overall territorial brand image. Effective cooperation and a common vision of the future are necessary for successful territorial brands. It is also important to simplify rules for taking parts in territorial brands.

Ms. **Nina Grah**, from Vrtnarstvo Grah – a farm producing flowers and vegetables – is a member of [Babika in Dedek](#), a territorial brand which promotes high quality products from the Škofja Loka region in Slovenia, made in a traditional manner and mainly from local raw materials, and targeting the tourist market. There are many advantages for small businesses such as Ms Grah's in joining a territorial brand's network. When she joined four years ago, her access to distribution channels improved and the collaboration opened new markets. Consumers trust the brand as a quality guarantee and are thus more likely to buy branded products. In addition, belonging to a territorial brand network legitimises the business in the eyes of the local community. Surviving alone in the market can be much more difficult. The brand works smoothly, and she likes to keep up with new ideas and promotional programmes. The key issue is not the functioning of the territorial brand, but rather the fact that projects are often short-term. Another problem is that small producers do not have time to engage themselves more with the territorial brand. Ms Grah thinks that member producers should be motivated to keep projects alive after funding pro-

grammes have come to an end. Within the producers' community, there are those who do not want to belong to territorial brands and those who are happy to be part of the network. For younger producers that would like to join the brand it can be quite challenging to have access to the network, and efforts should be made to make the brand more open to newcomers. Another important issue is that of the higher prices of the products that are territorially branded. Some customers do not buy labelled products because they are more expensive than unbranded ones. Part of the reasons include the specialized distribution in souvenirs' shops with higher distribution margins, which contribute to higher retail prices (but not necessarily higher producer profits).

Communicating the distinctiveness of territorial brands

In this concluding session, two presentations dealt with the issue of better communication. Ms. **Paola Gioia**, Ph.D. student and research assistant at Kedge Business School's Marketing & New Consumption Centre of Excellence (France), analysed tourist perceptions of territorial brands through TripAdvisor reviews in the context of Valposchiavo, an Italian-speaking Swiss region where the 100% Valposchiavo brand has been established to certify products made with locally produced raw materials. The project also involved local restaurateurs, 13 of whom have signed a Charta that requires the presence in the daily menu of at least three dishes prepared with certified ingredients. TripAdvisor is the most used online platform allowing tourists to decide where to eat and which places to visit. These restaurants' reviews can thus provide some insights on consumer perceptions of territorial brands and the relevance of ingredients' local origin. The study dataset consists of 1,046 consumer reviews of the restaurants that signed the Charta. Finding shows that only a very limited number of reviews explicitly mentions the 100% Valposchiavo brand, which might be perceived by consumers but not spontaneously come to mind when writing reviews. This might be a sign of limited territorial brand awareness, despite the fact that the 100% Valposchiavo logo is reported on restaurant menus. One of the most striking results of the analysis is that consumers tend to conflate dishes that are made with locally produced ingredients (e.g., flour from local cereals or cheese made with local milk) with dishes that are traditional in the area, but made with non-local ingredients. For example pizzoccheri, typical tagliatelle made of buckwheat flour, are one of the most mentioned dishes in the reviews, but consumers don't seem to distinguish those made with flour from local cultivations, which have been relaunched in the area thanks to the 100% Valposchiavo brand, from those made with flour from external areas. It therefore seems that typicality and the local origin of raw materials are difficult to disentangle for consumers, as if the former necessarily implied the latter. One wonders if the restaurant staff sufficiently explains clients the meaning of 100% Valposchiavo logo. Certainly, more needs to be done, for example in terms of taste education and storytelling, for consumers to really understand the value of dishes made with ingredients from local supply chains. Help in this direction can come from technological solutions that facilitate the implementation of narrative labelling solutions. Mr **Ciro Borrelli** is co-founder and business development manager at QualityChain, a startup created in Switzerland in 2019 from the idea of three young Italian entrepreneurs. How many times have we enjoyed a good typical meal, perhaps with a good wine, without knowing anything about what we were eating? We normally do not know that much about the food we eat. If we sit in front of a bottle of wine, it cannot tell us the story behind it and the story of the people that produced it. The only thing we can do is to read the short description on the bottle itself, which does not tell much, and which is normally in only one language, which makes it difficult to understand to tourists and foreign clients. QualityChain was founded to provide QR code-based solutions so that consumers can access with their smartphones information about the story of the product and the producer and what makes it special. All the information is translated into 36 languages and saved via the blockchain system. QualityChain also makes it possible for tourism consortia to cooperate with farmers and producers thus promote the territory and its attractions. Alto Piemonte Turismo provides a good example: the consortium has chosen QualityChain to communicate events and activities to the people that visit the area (bike, tours, hiking opportunities...). The products thus become an ambassador of their territory. QualityChain can also be used to support projects that focus on sustainability and social inclusion. An example is the Libera beer, which is produced using geothermic energy from a source in Tuscany by young people following a rehabilitation programme at the Volterra prison. Product discovery is another useful feature: products can join a network and promote each other. If a consumer is looking at a page that showcases a wine, he will receive the suggestion to try some cold cuts and cheese from the same territory. All QualityChain clients can also benefit from consumer data (language, age, geographic position, product details they look at). QR codes are designed in line with the product that is promoted: for example, a goblet for wine or a piglet for cold cuts. Having a funny QR-code attracts more people. QualityChain scan rate is above average (31%) and people spend quite some time on the webpage they are looking at.

What can public policies do to support territorial brands?

A discussion ensued on what public policies can do to support territorial brands. Mr **Pascal Denolly** said that policy support is essential for the success of territorial brands. The IsHere brand relies on funds coming from the Department, the Municipality of Grenoble and the Chamber of Agriculture, but does not benefit from regional funds. Having different territorial brands in the same areas, with different goals and different standards and expectations, can create conflicts. The IsHere brand does not currently benefit from EU funds, but the brand can help participant firms to increase their quality and, by doing so, the brand's actions can contribute to several goals of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Also the post-pandemic recovery plan of the French Governments has goals, such as the creation of new jobs, that the territorial brand could help achieve. So it makes a lot of sense to support territorial brands.

Mr **Michael Fend** underlined that territorial brands are a means (and not the only possible one) to an end, that of regional development. A territorial brand can play an activating role, that is, a trigger for the involvement of different actors in regional development processes. A territorial brand can thus improve the visibility of all the initiatives that go in the same direction and carry all these initiatives forward. The role of public policies is to ensure that the added value stays in the region. LEADER projects can help developing territorial brands. EU policies can support these initiatives by providing funds that recognize their positive external effects – which however result in higher operating costs. Only in this manner, territorial brands can remain competitive. Good, sustainable initiatives can be set up, but they need to find the right conditions to survive. Another way of supporting these brands would be a EU-wide label for organic, sustainable products.

Mr **Erik Logar** highlighted that pan-Alpine networks enabling territorial brand managers and participating firms to learn from each other and get in touch with academic experts could do a lot to strengthen local initiatives, since managerial challenges are very similar everywhere. Policies supporting this kind of networks could do a lot to improve the effectiveness of local approaches.

Questions from the public

The public made various questions at the end of the sessions, not all of which could be answered within the short timeframe of the workshop. One theme that during the discussion emerged is the multiplicity of brands and marks with different objectives and different scales. Territorial brands coexist with geographical indications and organic certification schemes. In the context of the Alpine region, the optional quality term “[mountain product](#)” can also be employed (see also the [Euromontana study](#) on this topic). Doesn't the growth of territorial brands risk weakening geographical indications or other quality schemes? Shouldn't there be a minimum common denominator integrating the environmental objectives linked to the European green deal, fair remuneration for farmers, etc.? Bringing in results from consumer psychology, prof. **Diego Rinallo** highlighted that too many logos on the packaging of a product risk not being perceived. Another problem is that logos “do not speak by themselves” and sizeable promotional investments are required to explain their meaning so that consumers can associate to them a favourable brand image. A recent EU [study](#) carried out by the EU suggests that in many member states, there is limited awareness of even geographical indications such as the protected denomination of origin (PDO) and the protected geographical indications (PGI). Consumers do not always understand the meaning of these well-established quality marks and often confuse between the two – for example, they sometimes assume that PGIs have stronger links to the local area just because their name includes the term ‘geographical’, while it is instead PDOs that ensure that the entire supply chain (including raw materials) is of local origin. This lack of understanding might be true also in the case of recently established territorial brands. This in turn brought the issue of the target market for territorial brands. While products recognized by geographical indications might target export markets, for smaller-scale territorial brands the key market should be the local one. According to Mr **Michael Fend**, it is important that a regional brand becomes internally strong. These initiatives do not need to be known externally. To remain realistic, it is difficult to generate strong brand awareness outside the region: it is therefore better to concentrate on the internal market, targeting the local population who is there all year round with advertising campaigns suggested that they buy local products. The issue of the coexistence of territorial brands with other quality marks is an important one, which is however under-studied and would make an important topic for future initiatives on territorial brands.