

A wide-angle photograph of a vast mountain landscape in the Alps. The foreground and middle ground are dominated by a rocky, grey slope covered in patches of green moss and small tufts of grass. A large, dense flock of sheep, mostly white with some brown and black individuals, is scattered across the slope, grazing. In the background, steep, rugged mountain peaks rise, some with patches of snow or light-colored rock. The sky is overcast and grey. Two dark red text boxes are overlaid on the image: one at the top and one at the bottom right.

# Potentials and challenges for a cross-border shepherd organisation in the Alps

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# Background

„Knowledge transfer on the co-adaptation of humans and wolves in the Alpine region“ by CIPRA International

(Feb 2020 – Feb 2021)

Interviews in 1st stage of project showed need among shepherds for intensified exchange



Picture: CIPRA International

**→ What would be potentials and challenges for a cross-border shepherd organisation in the Alpine region?**

... from the shepherds' point of view

# What we did

Sixteen interviews with **Alpine shepherds**

Primary focus on shepherds of small livestock

Questions about:

- Perception of shepherds in society
- Representation of shepherds in politics & public sphere
- Conditions of employment
- Membership in existing shepherd organisations
- Need for regional/cross-border shepherd organisation



# Identified potentials

## Public relations

Promote shepherding as demanding profession that requires qualification  
Educate public about work & challenges of shepherds  
Raise awareness on role of pastoralism for nature conservation & regional economic cycles

## Professional training

Provide information on existing training opportunities  
Help benefit from experiences of other countries

## Exchange and networking

Organise conferences, excursions and festivals  
Promote exchange of experiences between shepherds

## Advocacy of shepherds' interests

Increase shepherds' representation in the political sphere  
Improve employment and accommodation conditions  
Achieve representation of shepherds not permanently living in country where they work

## Rights and duties

Serve as contact point for information

# Challenges

*«French shepherds have not grouped themselves by mountains or mountain ranges without reason. Depending on the region, the shepherding techniques, the problems and also the partners with whom an organisation has to cooperate are different. In addition, the pastoralist profession is strongly oriented towards the local level and new initiatives usually emerge from the local context.»*

*«[Depending on who is member] people will think that this structure is not legitimate and they will not want to participate. [...] When it's new and it's in different countries, we don't know who we are addressing and that can be a bit worrying.»*

Legitimacy

Transboundary and yet very close

*«[Challenges for existing organisation are] lack of time, resources and organisation»*

*«The main obstacle [for existing organisation] is that we are volunteers [...] you have to earn your living, you have to find the time to invest yourself»*

Voluntary basis realistic?

Covering rights and duties in different countries

*«[Main challenges for cross-border organisation would be] distance, languages and money.»*

# Further considerations

- Not forgetting the farmers
- Bridging seasonality and high fluctuation
- Wage gaps between neighbouring countries
- Representativeness of study

# Conclusion

In view of **similar problems across Alpine region**, cross-border organisation working to fulfil identified **potentials** seems like a **resource-efficient and sensible approach**.

From interviews, clear **need** among shepherds for a **stronger organisation** is apparent.

However, **reservations** about **cross-border** shepherd organisation exist → Legitimacy, how to work in grassroots and at the same time transboundary way, how to maintain efforts in the long term, ...

**Follow-up project: Determine if and how identified challenges for a cross-border organisation can be addressed.**



Thank you for your attention

Questions?