

INTRODUCTION

Europe's mountainous areas cover almost 40% of the continent's land area and are home to 17% of Europe's population. They are vital sources of environmental, economic, and social value. However, and despite recent improvements resulting from distinctive policymaking and bottom-up societal initiatives, current mechanisms and research approaches are insufficient in securing a sustainable future for European mountains and their inhabitants.

MARGISTAR is an EU-funded COST Action that brings together 100+ scientists, policymakers, and local stakeholders from 30+ countries to address sustainability and connectivity challenges faced by marginalised mountainous regions. We reflect on the natural, environmental, social, and economic relationships and interactions within marginalised mountainous areas to collectively work with mountain stakeholders towards real-world solutions, or *post-marginalisation pathways*.

OBJECTIVES

MARGISTAR aims to fulfil the following objectives:

Research Coordination

- Synthesise interdisciplinary knowledge on drivers of change in marginalised European mountainous areas.
- Define periphery traps based on knowledge synthesis and problem definitions from stakeholders in marginalised mountainous areas.
- Mainstream the results into local, national, European, and global discussions and decision-making.

Capacity Building

- Establish the *FAIRWAY in Europe* online platform for transdisciplinary dialogue.
- Facilitate consensus building in a common language and effective networking.
- Synthesise evidence of periphery traps and transformation pathways.
- Create training opportunities for Early Career Investigators.
- Develop "green deal diplomacy" for sustainable development in marginalised mountain areas.

METHODOLOGY

The Challenge

Europe's mountainous areas are characterised by disparity, poorer territorial cohesion, unbalanced protection and use of ecosystem services, exploited natural resources, and marginalisation. This is often associated with insufficient infrastructure and geographical remoteness, and, consequently, rising unemployment and outmigration. In addition, mountain areas often face *periphery traps*, or problematic conditions that reinforce existing negative development pathways. Key policy challenges for mountain areas are thus related to mitigating these traps through territorial cohesion and the reduction of disparities, underdevelopment, and marginalisation.

The MARGISTAR Approach

MARGISTAR is a forum for knowledge synthesis, exchange, and co-creation in which scientists, stakeholders, and policymakers discuss the sustainability challenges facing marginalised mountain areas. MARGISTAR also hosts the *FAIRWAY in Europe* online platform that connects mountain stakeholders with network experts, each other, and EU-level policymakers.

MARGISTAR is organised into three working groups:



Collaboration and networking



Knowledge synthesis and co-creation with stakeholders



Capacity building and outreach

Together, these working groups apply three innovative concepts on which the Action is based:

- 1. Pinching the policymaker:** Changing decision-makers' mindsets to take the concerns and opinions of citizens and stakeholders seriously.
- 2. Nudging the citizen:** Using cues and prompts to encourage citizens to make choices that align with long-term goals.
- 3. Post-marginalisation:** Achieving improved social, economic, and political integration and opportunities.

EXPECTED RESULTS

MARGISTAR will synthesise knowledge on drivers of change in European marginalised mountainous areas and mainstream results into local, national, European, and global decision-making.

Identify marginalised areas and the causes of marginalisation

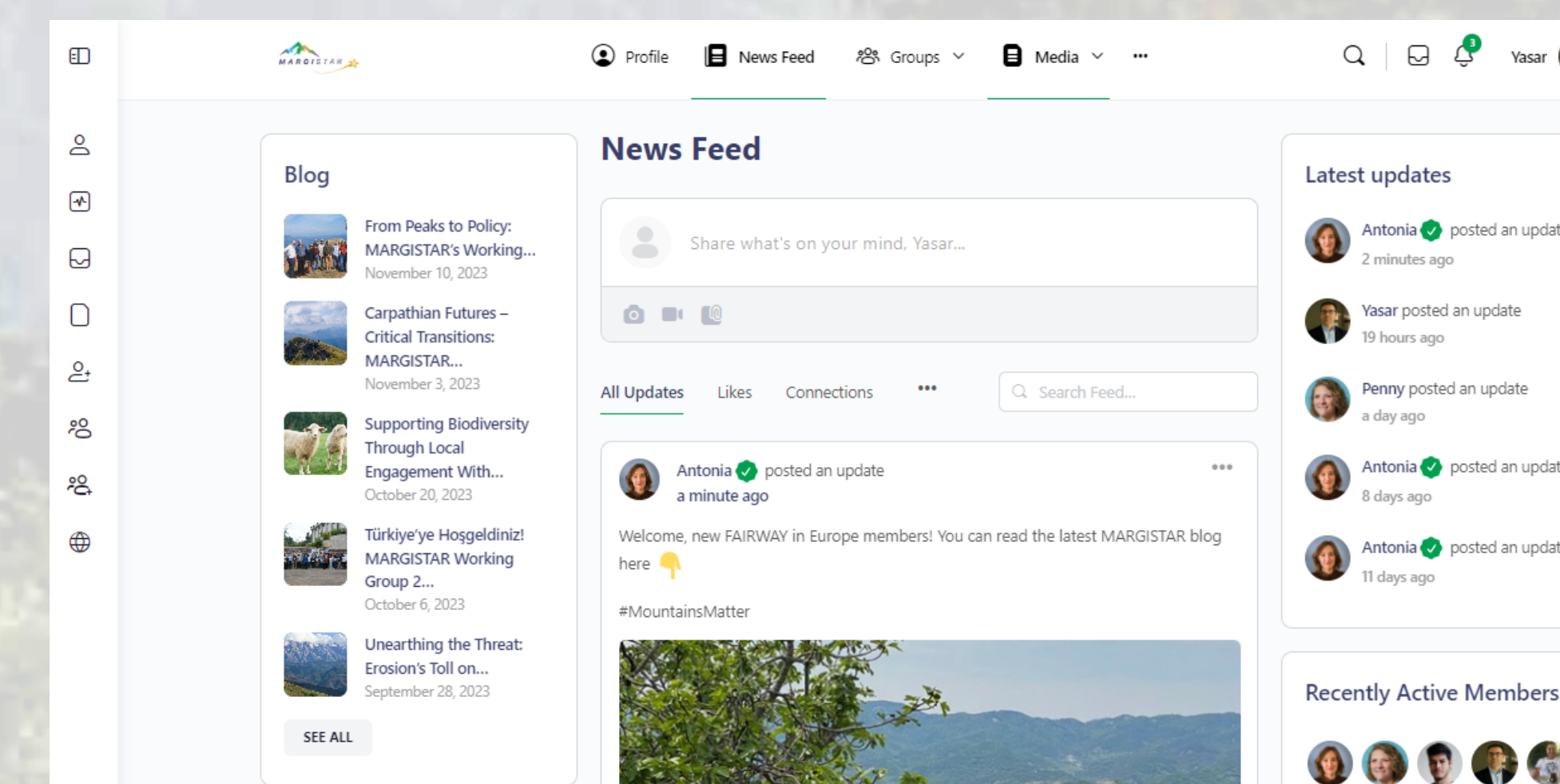
Create visions of post-marginalisation

Design pathways towards post-marginalised mountain areas

This will foster scientific developments, new concepts and products, and strengthen Europe's research and innovation capacities associated with marginalised mountain areas. Our collaboration relies on trans- and interdisciplinary approaches and integrates a variety of actors, including:

- **Mountain stakeholders**, such as farmers, foresters, nature-based tourism entrepreneurs, SMEs, and local and rural development agents.
- **Citizens**, including those who may visit, work, invest, reside, or otherwise influence the sustainability of a mountainous region.
- **Scholars, research centres, and projects** in the fields of rural development, the natural sciences, digitisation, entrepreneurship, and public policy.
- **NGOs**, including rural development and environmental organisations.
- **EU institutions and funding bodies**, in particular national and sub-national policymakers.

MARGISTAR's key deliverable, *FAIRWAY in Europe*, is an international and interlingual online platform that connects stakeholders to collectively identify and discuss marginalisation issues.



CONCLUSION

MARGISTAR aims to support community stakeholders as much as it relies on them to achieve its co-creation objectives. This particularly involves stakeholders currently working and living in marginalised mountain areas and those whose work aims to improve the sustainability, connectivity, and marginalisation status of these locations. Together, MARGISTAR will work towards supporting marginalised mountainous areas to achieve their green, digital, and healthy futures.



CONTACT

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Join our newsletter for the latest project news and collaboration opportunities!



This poster is based on work from COST Action MARGISTAR, CA211125, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

MARGISTAR is a COST Action funded by the European Union. COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career, and innovation.