

What policy approaches and levers can be used to improve the capacity of European permanent grasslands to deliver a range of ecosystem services?

Objective: To identify, map, and understand the effectiveness of key policies governing Permanent Grassland (PG) management across five European biogeographic regions. *This policy brief outlines the intervention logics of these policies (i.e. the targets of policy instruments and intended outcomes) using the Cascade Framework and their effectiveness from the perspective of key stakeholders across Europe.*

Methodology: Stakeholders from the SUPER-G consortium, together with information derived from desk research, contributed to identifying potentially influential EU and national/biogeographic policies. Delphi policy surveys were sent to key stakeholders in each biogeographic region to validate and rank the most influential policies at both EU and national levels. Publicly available government documents were used to map each policy and their instruments using 50 criteria, capturing e.g. their aims, objectives, targets, monitoring systems, and outcomes. The Cascade Framework was used to analyse each policy's intervention logic. 50 stakeholders across the biogeographic regions provided insights into their perceived effectiveness as reflected by their efficiency, relevance, democracy, and legitimacy.

Key Findings:

EU and national level policies under-utilise available policy instruments. The majority of policy instruments studied use regulations or financial incentives targeted towards land-owners and farmers, while neglecting other potentially effective policy levers such as generating demand for ecosystem services through public information campaigns or directly targeting specific ecosystem services through results based payments.

Perceived effectiveness of PG policies across Europe is impeded by complexity, decentralised information, and insufficient knowledge and engagement among key stakeholder groups. Lack of clarity in intervention logic and reliance on a limited range of policy mechanisms further hinder policy effectiveness.

Policy Implications:

Create comparable and comprehensive national and/or European repository of information characterising PG management policy by e.g. aims, objectives, targets, monitoring systems, and outcomes that are easy for the public to access. The new EU CAP dashboard is a step in this direction, however specific information on PG management policy is difficult to access if not unavailable.

Ensure key stakeholders are actively engaged in the policy development cycle and prioritise education to enhance their understanding and participation. Stakeholder support can further be improved by ensuring EU member states are transparent in how they solicit stakeholder input and use it to develop policy.

Promote alternative policy frameworks that extend beyond the conventional focus on land managers and their practices, which often yield anticipated results for landscape features but may not consistently deliver the desired ecosystem services. Consider, for instance, employing policy instruments to stimulate demand for ecosystem services among citizens or direct payments for the ecosystem services delivered on permanent grasslands.

Key Reference: Hunter, E., Quatrini, S., Lieberher, E., Tindale, S., Sanchez, Z., Gallardo, C., ... & Frewer, L. (2020). The effectiveness of policies promoting sustainable permanent grasslands across five European countries (representing five biogeographic regions): Mapping, understanding, and key stakeholder perceptions. WP4, Deliverable 4.1 c, SUPER-G (Sustainable Permanent Grassland Systems and Policies), EC Project Number 774124-2.