

Taskforce Action Plan – [AUSTRIA]

Version [2.0] (16.02.2023)

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1. Context

In the AT CAP strategic plan three different interventions are to be used for implementing the Smart Village approach. The major strand is LEADER, since it is assumed that main impulses and capacities originate from LAG managements as main supporters and knowledge-providers, regional networks as important sources for social capital and regional LEADER budgets as necessary financial levers. Additionally, there is also a CAP intervention for village- and city-center development (vacancy managements) as well as a CAP intervention designated to establish and operate regional innovation systems (innovation broker/enabler) that support Smart Village approaches. **So one focus of the taskforce is to clarify how to communicate about these three anchors and their managements for SV amongst the broader (rural) development system in Austria. Especially the ways how LEADER adds value to the SV-approach and vice versa needs to be sharpened. This requires a proper translation of the EU definition to the national context and possible quality standards of SV, taking into account high profile citizen participation approaches especially according to AT local agenda 21 guidelines.**

The initial taskforce meeting showed, that almost 90% of potential 83 AT-LEADER LAGs include Smart Villages concepts in their local development strategies for 2023-2027. But there is a current need for deeper understanding, how and in which thematic fields LAGs are planning to implement. **With the taskforce activities, an overview should be provided. Hence, a clustering is to be made, identifying villages with similar challenges and/or solution pathways, which could be useful for activities to match clusters of villages. This knowledge will provide the basis for future networking, citizen participation efforts and mutual learning (nationally as well as EU-wide via the SV observatory).**

The taskforce members also stated that sound implementation of smart villages demand high skills and capacities – in terms of resources (time for guiding local processes), methods, facilitation/hosting and communication/Community building (participation, strategy/vision development, sensitisation, art of hosting etc.) thematic expertise (especially digitisation and village center development) and multi-level-governance. **Styria is a very active Austrian province when it comes to participative local development and was one of the early adopters of the Smart Village approach. It could act as pilot to identify how to support LEADER LAGs and the villages in planning and implementing Smart Village initiatives - with a special focus on village center development but also beyond.**

2. The purpose of the taskforce

Key policy areas of taskforce interventions (Summary)

- ✓ Translating the EU definition of SV to the national context, ideally as a set of quality standards. This should help clarify the added value of the SV-approach within LEADER as well as other CAP-instruments. This would build a basis for following communication activities.
- ✓ Overview of SV approaches planned by AT LAGs in their LDS for 2023-2027 and identification of possible village clusters as well as needs for support.



- ✓ Reinforcing regional support to local communities, piloted in/with Styria and possibly transferred to other regions

3. Links to existing Smart Village exchanges

There is an active exchange within the SR27 project. Analysing the 83 LEADER LDS and clustering the approaches, will provide an important basis for SR27 observatory initiatives.

On national level there are currently (early 2023) no specific exchanges on Smart Villages. This is mainly since the AT National Rural Network finished its contract and the new AT CAP network is not established yet.

4. Membership

By the end of 2022 several Smart Village implementation/funding pathways have been developed in Austria. On national level the CAP strategic plan offers three strands for funding Smart Village initiatives with LEADER as a major driver. On federal state level especially Styria emphasised this topic with a focus on village and city center development. By following the logic of “high interest – high influence”, the rationale behind the composition of this taskforce is, to summon actors of these existing approaches for Smart Village from all levels. So there are representatives from the federal ministry of agriculture, forestry, regions and water management (responsible for LEADER and two other SV-related interventions), the national research promotion agency (responsible for rural innovation systems intervention), actors from the Styrian federal state level, representatives from LEADER (national LEADER association/ Styrian LAG) as well as the village level (Stanz). This setting it should be able to display the vertical governance system for Smart Village.

5. Planned actions

5.1 First set of taskforce meetings

Planned timing	Focus of meeting and/or main outcomes (agreed next steps)
13.12.2022	1 st Taskforce meeting (online): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presenting the scope of the taskforce, • finding topics of common interest • draft planning of taskforce actions in 2023
Feb – April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drafting quality standards as a translation of the EU SV-concept to the AT context • Deepen ideas for necessary regional support (communication, capacity building, etc.) together with Styrian taskforce representatives and preparing pilot capacity-building/policy-learning event in 2-3 meetings.
April/May 2023	2 nd Taskforce meeting (online): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting SV Observatory Kick-Off and national implications • Discussing quality standards • Refining pilot capacity building event in Styria
May-June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deskwork: Screening LEADER Local Development Strategies 2023-2027 including SV-approaches by national expert;

	identifying thematic clusters and areas for potential needs in support
June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding pilot capacity-building/policy-learning event for Styria focussing process and essential themes (digitisation, village center development) face-to-face (Graz/Styria)
June 2023 (afternoon after capacity building event)	3 rd Taskforce Meeting (face-to-face) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflections on first capacity-building/policy-learning event, options for further development • Discussing results of screening Local Development strategies: overview of SV approaches, overview of thematic scope • Discussing first attempts of thematic clustering • AOB
Sept/Oct 2023	4 th Taskforce Meeting (online) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refining quality standards for Smart Villages and discussion about their possible implementation • Options for linkages to national rural network activities (if national CAP-network is already operating)

5.2 Other actions of the Taskforce

One focus of the taskforce is to clarify how to communicate about the three funding anchors (LEADER, rural innovation systems, village and city center development) and their managements for SV amongst the broader (rural) development system in Austria. Especially the ways how LEADER adds value to the SV-approach and vice versa needs to be sharpened. This requires a **proper translation of the EU definition to the national context and possible quality standards of SV**, considering high profile citizen participation approaches especially according to AT local agenda 21 guidelines.

With the taskforce activities, an **overview of the approaches in LEADER LDS for the upcoming CAP programming period should be provided**. Hence, a clustering is to be made, identifying villages with similar challenges and/or solution pathways, which could be useful for activities to match clusters of villages and organise peer to peer learning for example. This knowledge will provide the basis for future networking, citizen participation efforts and mutual learning (nationally as well as EU-wide via the SV observatory).

Styria is a very active Austrian province when it comes to participative local development and was one of the early adopters of the Smart Village approach. It could act as pilot to identify how to support LEADER LAGs and the villages in planning and implementing Smart Village initiatives - with a special focus on village center development but also going beyond. **Preparatory actions on provincial level will be conducted as a multi-level-governance process (together with LEADER and village representatives) and will lead to a capacity-building/policy-learning event, especially targeted at LEADER-LAGs, Regional Managements, local communities and villages**. This event would provide the opportunity to present and discuss the AT SV translation (quality criteria), the three CAP interventions foreseen to support SV approaches and help gather further needs for support by the regional (and national) level. The focus on village center development is a further possibility to show the importance for horizontal coordination within the regional authorities since the responsibilities and resources to work on this topic are segmented within the administration as well as politics.



Annex I: List of members Membership of the Taskforce

Name of member	Name of organisation of member	Type of organisation (policy, village, research, NGO, private...)	Short description of role of organisation in the taskforce (reason why member was included)	Member on GROOP?	Participated in 1 st meeting?	Participated in 2 nd meeting?
Christian Rosenwirth	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions, Forestry and Water Management	Policy	Mr. Rosenwirth is head of department that is responsible for LEADER, Smart Villages and Rural Innovation Systems within CAP 2023-2027		Yes	
Rita Trattnigg	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions, Forestry and Water Management	Policy	Ms. Trattnigg is the responsible desk officer in the Ministry for SV (replacing Julian Gschnell)		Yes	
Henrike Hügelsberger	FFG (Austrian Research Promotion Agency)	Policy	Ms. Hügelsberger is responsible MA for the intervention "rural innovation systems" within CAP		Yes	
Wolfgang Berger	National LEADER Association/ LAG manager	NGO	Mr. Berger is vice president of the AT LEADER association		Yes	
Günther Monschein	Administration of the federal province Styria	Policy	Mr. Monschein is responsible for LEADER within the Styrian provincial government office		Yes	
Gerald Gigler	Administration of the federal province Styria	Policy	Mr. Gigler is responsible for participation initiatives within the Styrian provincial government office		No	
Fritz Pichler	Municipality of Stanz	Policy/Village	mayor and main actor of the AT pilot Smart Village in SR21 – represents village viewpoints		Yes	
Rainer Rosegger	SCAN	Research/ consulting/ village	Rainer Rosegger is researcher and one of the main actor of the AT pilot Smart Village in SR21		Yes	



Annex II: Meeting Reports

1st Smart Villages Taskforce Meeting – [Name of Country]

Purpose of the meeting

Date of the meeting

[DD/MM/YYYY – DD/MM/YYYY]

Location

Participation

[Please specify how many participants, the organisations that participated and their role]

Main outcomes & lessons learnt (including deviations from initial plan)

What were the main outcomes/ results of this meeting in the light of the objectives of the taskforce?

What are the main findings/ lessons?

Any deviations from what you initially planned (e.g. lower commitment / fewer participants)? Please explain why.

Next steps

[What will be the follow-up actions, next steps? When is the next meeting planned? What is planned in between the two meetings, e.g. research, etc.]

Supporting documents

[Please provide any agenda, presentations, videos/ recordings, training material as separate files – if applicable]

The event in pictures

Please paste some images here if possible (and send them as separate files if possible).