



SMART VILLAGE STRATEGY OF ALSUNGA (LATVIA)



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Foreword: Smart Rural Alsunga

Alsunga is one of two villages in the second smaller municipality in Latvia. Since 2018, people of Alsunga - NGOs, entrepreneurs, young people, seniors - have joined together to implement a cooperation project and to involve citizens in the development of their village.

The main motivator is to ensure the development of the village and thus a good life for its population, which is particularly topical in the context of the ongoing administrative reform in the country. Following the reform, Alsunga will become the outskirts of a big municipality with the town in the centre, and it will no longer be possible for citizens to decide on their own territory and funding. It is therefore important to set up a village development strategy and action group for its implementation now in order to defend its interests and to continue to ensure the development of the village.



I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Local governance in Latvia

A local government is a local administration which, through bodies of representatives elected by citizens – city or municipality council – and authorities and institutions established by them, ensures the performance of the functions prescribed by law, as well as the performance of tasks assigned by Cabinet according to the procedures specified by law, and local government voluntary initiatives, observing the interests of the State and of the residents of the relevant administrative territory.

In implementing local territorial administration, local governments, within the scope specified in the Law on Local Governments, are subject to public law, but in the field of private law, local governments have the rights of a legal person. Local governments, within the scope of their competence and the law, shall act independently. In implementing delegated State administrative functions and administrative tasks, a local government represents the Republic of Latvia and is subordinate to the Cabinet.

The autonomous functions of local governments are as follows:

- 1) to organise for residents the provision of utilities (water supply and sewerage; supply of heat; management of municipal waste; collection, conducting and purification of waste water) irrespective of the ownership of the residential property;
- 2) to look after the public services and facilities, and the sanitary cleanliness of their administrative territory (building, reconstruction and maintenance of streets, roads and public squares; lighting of streets, public squares and other areas designated for public use; development and maintenance of parks, public squares and green zones; control of collection and removal of waste; flood control measures; establishment and maintenance of cemeteries and places for burial of dead animals);
- 3) to determine procedures for the utilisation of public-use forests and waters if it is not specified otherwise by law;
- 4) to provide for the education of residents (ensuring the specified rights of residents to acquire primary and general secondary education; ensuring children of pre-school and school age with places in training and educational institutions; organisational and financial assistance to extracurricular training and educational institutions and education support institutions, and others);
- 5) to maintain culture and facilitate the preservation of traditional cultural values and the development of creative folk activity (organisational and financial assistance to cultural institutions and events, support for the preservation of cultural monuments, and others);
- 6) to ensure access to health care, as well as to promote a healthy lifestyle of residents and sport;



- 7) to ensure social assistance (social care) to residents (social assistance for poor families and socially vulnerable persons, ensuring places for old people in old-age homes, ensuring places for orphans and children without parental care in training and educational institutions, provision of overnight shelters for the homeless, and others);
- 8) to take care of guardianship, trusteeship, adoption and the protection of the personal and property rights and interests of a child;
- 9) to provide assistance to residents in resolving issues regarding housing;
- 10) to facilitate economic activity within the relevant administrative territory, and to be concerned about reducing unemployment;
- 11) to issue permits and licences for commercial activity, if such is provided for by law;
- 12) to participate in ensuring public order and to combat drunkenness and immorality;
- 13) in accordance with the territorial planning of the relevant local government, to determine land utilisation and procedures for its development;
- 14) to ensure in their relevant administrative territory the lawfulness of the construction process;
- 15) to perform civil status document registrations;
- 16) to collect and provide information necessary for State statistics;
- 17) to perform the necessary measures for elections of city or municipality councils;
- 18) to participate in ensuring civil defence measures;
- 19) to organise public transport services;
- 20) to organise continuing education for teaching staff and pedagogical methodology work;
- 21) to conduct, in the relevant administrative territory, the registration of children residing therein;
- 22) to implement the protection of the rights of the child in the relevant administrative territory.

In the cases and by the procedures provided for in international agreements, laws or Cabinet regulations, the State shall participate in the implementation and financing of specific autonomous functions.

The local government may delegate the tasks arising from each autonomous function of the administration to a private individual or another public person. Procedures for, types and restrictions of the delegation of the administration tasks shall be determined by State Administration Structure Law.

There are 119 local governments (municipalities) in Latvia.

Alsunga village is part of the municipality of Alsunga. Decisions regarding the county administration shall be taken by an elected local government council. Nine members are elected once every four years throughout the municipality of Alsunga (191 square kilometres), which takes decisions on the development and budget of the municipality. The village of Alsunga has no authority. Active villagers work closely with members of the local government council and the administration on issues relating to village development.

1.2 What is a 'village' in Latvia?

Village status may be granted to a part of the county territory in which concentrated building is or is planned, people live permanently and an appropriate infrastructure has been established. The village status shall be granted and revoked by the county council based on the local government spatial plan, in which the border of the village has been determined and the necessity for the establishment of a village is justified. If there are more than 5000 permanent residents in a village, the relevant local government council in accordance with Paragraph three of Section 9 of Law of Administrative and residential areas shall submit to the Cabinet a proposal regarding the determination of the status of the city for the village concerned.

1.3 What smart is for Alsunga

For us, 'smart village' is a community of people who work together to address their challenges through a variety of methods – the whole community benefits from cooperating with residents and entrepreneurs. The smart village is a process rather than a static state.

Therefore the 'Smart Village Action Group' was set up as a voluntary association involving representatives of both the representatives of the Municipality Council, representatives of NGOs, representatives of local authorities and residents. The group is open and calls on all citizens to participate with ideas and concrete actions for the development of Alsunga village.

II. CONTEXT

2.1 Context of the smart village strategy development

Developing smart village activities throughout Latvia, the initiative to get involved in the Smart Rural 21 project and to develop a smart strategy came from the Latvian Rural Network Support Unit and smart village action group members decided to send an application to the call of the Smart Rural 21 project

Before the Smart Rural 21 project Alsunga was already selected through a national smart village process. The Latvian Rural Network is supporting the Smart Village of Alsunga, helping to achieve the set goals and Alsunga is interested in developing a smart village initiative through various activities.



2.2 Existing strategies & initiatives

2.2.1 Links to existing local strategies

Alsunga municipality development program for 2015–2020 defines the municipality's specializations based on traditional sectors – forestry, agriculture, home production and cultural tourism.

ALSUNGA MUNICIPALITY DEVELOPMENT VISION

Alsunga municipality – a place with a strong identity and an environment for creative, enterprising and proud people, where residents, government, entrepreneurs and public organizations interact to preserve and promote the cultural and historical value of the district, creating a new 21st century environment with quality education, infrastructure, diversity accessibility of recreation and culture (Alsunga District Development Program 2015–2020).

Alsunga Smart Village strategy is strongly linked with Alsunga Municipality Development vision, but focuses on objectives and activities outside the competence of the municipality and is based on local cultural values. As the municipality strategy is set to run until 2020, and in 2021 the municipality is being wound down by adding it to the larger municipality, it is important to identify further development directions for the village and surroundings of Alsunga, so that it can be defended and incorporated into the development strategy of the future large municipality (The development of this strategy has not yet been launched).

2.2.2 Links to higher level (local, regional, national, European) strategies

The Alsunga Smart Village strategy have been developed in accordance with the long-term planning document of the national level – Latvia's sustainable development strategy by 2030 ((hereinafter – Latvia 2030) and the long-term planning documents of the regional level – the sustainable development strategy for the Kurland planning region for 2015–2020.

Latvia 2030 – the hierarchically highest long-term planning document of the country. The main settings of Latvia's strategy are a happy man in a prosperous country, a sustainable and healthy lifestyle, a creative, tolerant people and tolerant society, competitiveness created in cooperation and the country as a fast-track partner. The basic concept of sustainable development calls for meeting the needs of the existing generation, balancing public welfare, environmental and economic development interests while ensuring respect for environmental requirements and the preservation of natural diversity so as not to reduce the needs of future generations.

The goal of Latvia: In 2030 Latvia will be a thriving country of active and responsible citizens. Everyone will be able to feel secure and relevant to Latvia, and here everyone will be able to meet their goals. The strength of the nation will be rooted in inherited, dating and newly created cultural and spiritual values, Latvian language wealth and other language knowledge. It will also recognise and respect society for creating new, diverse and unique values in economics, science and culture, which will be evaluated, recognized and respected outside Latvia.



Latvian National Development Plan 2014-2020 (hereinafter – NAP2020) is the country's main medium-term programming document, which sets out the country's medium-term vision, priorities and key directions for their actions. NAP2020 developed according to Latvia 2030. The main theme for Latvia in 2020 is “The economic breakthrough – the growth of every citizen of Latvia and the country's well-being!”. Three priorities have been identified to achieve the theme: the growth of the nation's farm, human security and growth-friendly areas.

The Latvian National Development Plan for 2021-2027 is currently in the process of being developed (hereinafter “NAP2027”). NAP2027 aims at sustainable growth and quality of life for all citizens.

The Kurland Sustainable Development Strategy 2015-2030 (hereinafter referred to as “Kurzeme-2030”) aims to highlight the region's most important long-term developments, reinforcing progress and promoting future changes. The strategy is a regional agreement on objectives, actions and priorities, which forms guidelines for the long-term planning of municipal development. The strategic objectives of the Kurland Planning Region are smart development, an attractive living environment and global commitment and openness.

The development of the territory of the Kurland Planning Region is planned following the settings set out in the Kurland Development Programme for 2015-2020, which are implemented in cooperation with national, regional and local authorities. Development planning documents for the Kurland Planning Region are the main link between national and local development planning documents. A new document has been launched but yet not released to the public for consultation.

Darisim pasi, a community-led local development strategy for 2015-2020 (“Darisim Pasi 2020”) has been aligned and complementary to the planning documents for the municipalities of Kuldiga, Skrunda and Alsunga. Vision and objectives contribute to the achievement of the objectives set by the Rural Development Programme, thereby ensuring an integrated and complementary development. Three objectives have been identified in the international domain:

1. Strengthening the local economy;
2. Improving the quality of the life environment and diversifying public activities, including people with disabilities, young people, seniors and families with young children;
3. Promoting cross-territorial and transnational cooperation.

Alsunga sustainable development strategy 2015–2030 says that Alsunga municipality on 2030 is a place with unique identity, organized and contemporary an area of life in which intelligent, active and creative people live, interacting for the administration, economic operators and public organisations, and preserved cultural and historical values while creating diversity of recreation and cultural accessibility



Based on the main tendencies for rural areas, the main topics will be cooperation, small enterprises and innovations. Therefore, the Alsunga Smart Village strategy is based on existing higher-level planning documents and taking into account the main tendencies for future.

2.3 Cooperation with other villages

Cooperation with Jurkale in Ventspils municipality and Basi in Kuldīga municipality in the rescue and development of the Suiti Cultural Space is ongoing (Suiti – name of local people). The project “Development and promotion of small ethno-cultural regions as tourism destinations” (mainly financed by Interreg Estonia-Latvia), in which exchanged experience, developed materials promoting tourism and suiti culture, training for tourism-related entrepreneurs, and organised the One-Day Cafes 2019 event.

On August 24, 2019, the event "One-Day Cafes Suitsos" took place for the first time. On this day, in total, there were 20 "home" cafes in Suitsos (historically – Jurkalne, Basi, Alsunga), of which 16 - in Alsunga region, 3 - in Jūrkalne and 1 - in Basi. "Home cafe" means that anyone who wanted to participate could open a "one-day cafe" in their home, preparing an offer for their guests. A booklet for this event was also developed, bringing together all the descriptions of the home cafes, the locations and the contact details of each home cafe. The aim of the event is to appreciate local food, offer a great taste experience and local products, as well as a unique cultural program and explore the local area. The event was attended by about 20,000 guests from various places near and far in Latvia. The activity was coordinated with the Food and Veterinary Service in Latvia.

Video from the event (in Latvian) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lw2LlgTwr70>

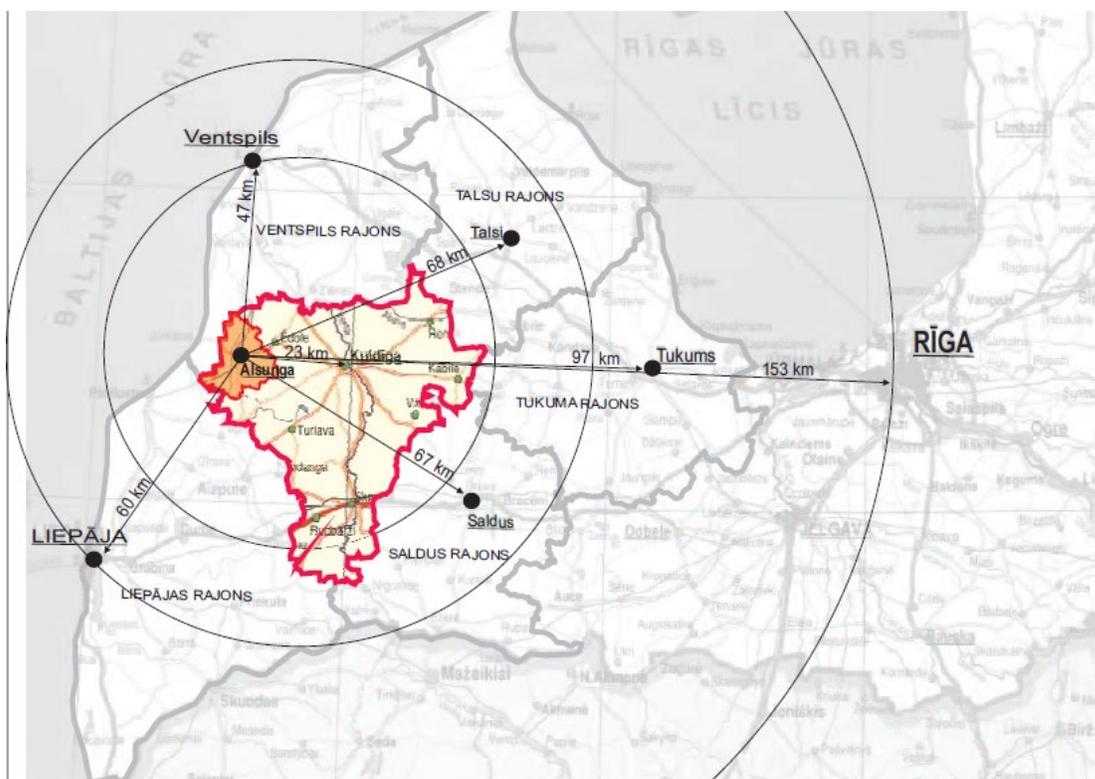
III. KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF ALSUNGA

3.1 Key characteristics of the village and rural area

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Alsunga municipality is a municipality in the west of Kurzeme, in the Kurzeme planning region. It borders with Edole and Gudenieki parishes of Kuldīga municipality, Sakas parish of Pavilosta municipality and Jurkalne and Zirū parishes of Ventspils municipality. The total area of Alsunga municipality is 191 km². Alsunga village is the administrative center of Alsunga municipality.

Alsunga municipality is located between two cities of national importance – Liepāja (83 km away) and Ventspils (55 km away), the nearest cities of regional significance are Kuldīga (30 km away) and Pavilosta (34 km away). The distance to the Capital of the country – Rīga is 175 km.



Although Alsunga is geographically located in the western part of Kurzeme between two cities of national importance (Liepāja and Ventspils), it is still off (approximately 11 km away) from the regional road P111 connecting the two cities, so Alsunga does not reach potential tourists / visitors is not a destination or a pre-planned stop.

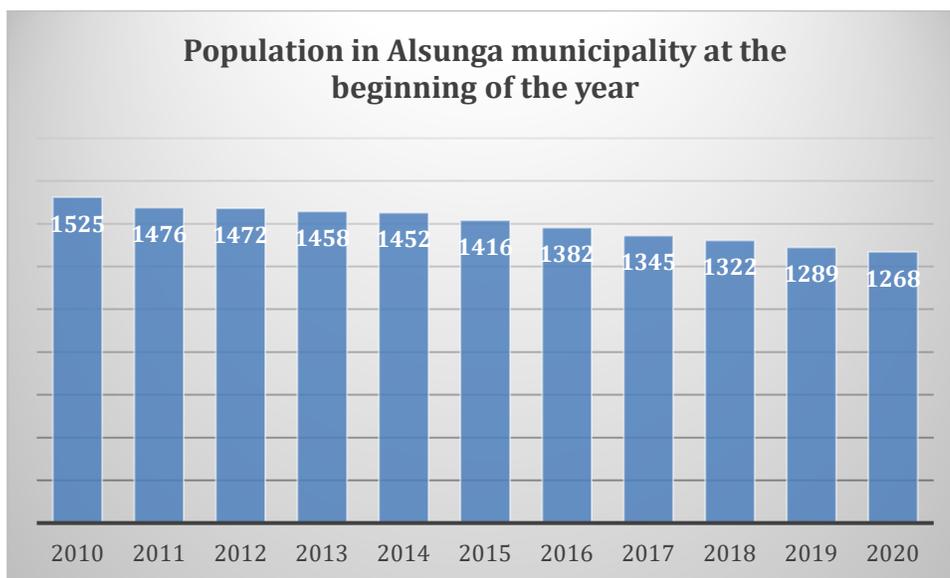
Another important transit route winds through Alsunga – the regional highway P119, which connects Jurkalne with Kuldīga. During the summer season, this route has heavy traffic and the main users of the route are vacationers and tourists, whose destination is the Baltic Sea coast in the section from Pavilosta to Jurkalne. However, even in this case, most holidaymakers and

tourists travel through Alsunga along Raina Street (transit road) without entering the “public center” of Alsunga (church, shops, Alsunga County Tourism Information Center, etc.).

INHABITANTS

The local community is mainly made up of people with old cultural traditions – called *suiti*. The *Suiti Cultural Space* was inscribed in UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in 2009.

According to the data of the Central Statistical Bureau as of 01.01.2020, 1268 inhabitants are registered in the municipality and according to the population, but according to The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs there are 1361 inhabitants. Alsunga municipality is the second smallest in Latvia. The village of Alsunga has a population of about 600. The population of Alsunga municipality has decreased by 16.9% during the last 10 years (data of the Central Statistical Bureau).



The decrease in the population is influenced by a negative natural increase (mortality exceeds the number of new-borns), but even more negative by the migration balance (the number of emigrants exceeds the number of immigrants).

The reasons why people leave Alsunga and move elsewhere are different, but the main ones are as follows:

- Financial – you can find a better-paid job in cities.
- Quality of life – there is little entertainment and recreation in Alsunga.

- Unsatisfactory quality of education provided by Alsunga Secondary School – after primary school, parents send their children to study in other secondary schools or technical colleges.

In recent years, there has been a tendency in Latvia for young families to move from cities (mainly Riga) to live in rural areas. This trend has also been observed in Alsunga over the last four years. These people not only buy and renovate real estate in Alsunga, but also bring with them intellectual capital, set up businesses and create jobs. In addition, the same people are actively involved in Alsunga's public life.

Insufficient information on available/vacant housing in Alsunga. In some cases, newcomers find out about alternatives to buying or renting property from locals after they have already bought the property. Although Alsunga has vacant/empty real estate (mostly apartments), its owners are reluctant to rent or sell their property. Even if several new families choose Alsunga as their place of residence, potential young inhabitants may change their plans and choose to live elsewhere (due to a lack of housing or information about vacant property).

KEY SECTORS

Due to the fact that most of the territory of Alsunga municipality is covered by forests, the use of forests and wood is an important resource. Competitive forestry companies have been established in the region, which successfully operate on the Latvian scale. However, it is important to create added value for the industry by promoting the development of new product designs and brands by attracting qualified specialists.

The second sector that contributes to the development of the county is agriculture - grain growing, animal husbandry and production of agricultural products, which is based on efficient management and use of local natural resources. In terms of agricultural land, Alsunga municipality has the most arable land - 47.5%, as well as a large percentage - 30.7% meadows and 20.7% - pastures, orchards occupy only 1.1% of the municipality. Climatic conditions are a good precondition for the development of the fruit growing sector in the region.

In Alsunga, home production has developed – taking into account the ancient traditions – cheese, baked bread and *sklandraušī* (traditional carrot pie) are specific, as well as handicrafts are woven, weaving fabrics for folk costumes, creating ceramics. Home production and cultural heritage in Alsunga region is the basis for tourism, which is also one of Alsunga's economic specializations. Using the potential of both existing tangible and intangible culture, beautiful, tidy environment, natural resources, it is necessary to increase the attracted flow of tourists. As a result, there are opportunities to develop business services related to tourist services – catering and accommodation, guide services, souvenir production, etc.

Closest towns:

Table 1: Closest town or city

Name of closest town or city	Population of town or city	Distance between village and town/ city
Kuldīga	10891	26 km
Ventspils	37313	55 km
Liepāja	76060	83 km

Table 2: Key statistics

Indicator	Value	Latest year	Comments	Source of information
Population (Alsunga municipality, e.g., Alsunga village with surrounding all together 191 m ²)	1361	01.07.2020		https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/assets/ISPV_Pasvaldibas_iedzivotaju_skaits.pdf
Elderly dependency ratio %	37,9 (2,64 elderly on 1 working age)	01.07.2020	The ratio between the elderly population (aged 63 and over) and the working age population (aged 15-64)	https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/assets/ISDG_Pasvaldibas_darbaspeja_pagasti.pdf
Unemployment rate %	6,1	31.10.2020	Percentage of unemployed aged 15 and over, divided by the labor force (those aged 15 and over)	https://www.nva.gov.lv/lv/bezdarba-statistika-o
Age structure:				
Share of population aged 0-14	174	01.07.2020		https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/assets/ISPV_Pasvaldibas_iedzivotaju_skaits.pdf
Share of population aged 15-63	861	01.07.2020		https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/assets/ISPV_Pasvaldibas_iedzivotaju_skaits.pdf
Share of population aged 65+	326	01.07.2020		https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/assets/ISPV_Pasvaldibas_iedzivotaju_skaits.pdf

3.2 Key challenges

3.2.1 Ageing/youth out-migration

Economic development problems may arise in the long term as the number of people in working age is reduced. Population ageing makes it necessary for different social services. On the other hand, the lack of children and young people have an impact on the existence of educational institutions and on the possibility of developing new ideas and entrepreneurship.

3.2.2 Depopulation

Any decrease in the population will consequently reduce the resources available in the village, thereby changing the living environment and the need for services. The population and age structure also identify possible business developments and the possibility of attracting employees to businesses.

3.3.3 Lack of housing

Young people want to live independently, in their housing. Housing requirements are relevant to modern facilities (central heating, water supply in the apartment, indoor toilet). However, existing housing does not meet these requirements. In addition, there is a very limited number of housing that can be purchased in Alsunga.

3.3 Main assets & opportunities

3.3.1 Strong cultural traditions

A historically formed suiti culture is also the basis for the development of cultural tourism. The Suiti Cultural Space was inscribed in UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in 2009. A lot of people base their small business on suiti traditions – handicrafts, local food, tourism. The municipality financially supports the launch of a new small business.

3.3.2 Good place for living

Alsunga is a good place to live because it is safe with fresh air and beautiful landscape, offers children the opportunity for preschool, school and additional education (music and art school). Every citizen has the opportunity to exercise self-activity and use the gym for free. Citizens have access to a variety of cultural events organised by municipality and entrepreneurs, as well as NGOs. For those who want to develop skills, societies offer a variety of seminars, mainly related to suiti cultural heritage, home production and farming.

3.3.3. Nature as resource

Environmental conditions and natural resources are suitable for agriculture, forestry and nature tourism. Alsunga operates 10 wind power stations as well as a company that recycles fish unfit for food in fish flour for feed. 58 agricultural enterprises (including peasant farms) and 15 forestry enterprises work in Alsunga municipality.

3.3.4 Good collaboration between community and local government

At present, there is one level of governance in the municipality that allows citizens and entrepreneurs to communicate and get decisions quickly. The municipality also uses social networks for communication. For citizens, a group on Facebook “Good to live in Alsunga municipality” has been set up to discuss and solve problems. Development plans are being publicly debated. Meetings of citizens are organised several times a year. The Smart Village Action Group and associations are also organising seminars to build capacity for population participation.

3.3. Key characteristics of the local community

The local community is made up of people with old cultural and catholic traditions - suiti and people who do not associate themselves with suiti.

The Smart Village Action Group has been set up, which is a voluntary population association involving representatives of both the Chairman of Municipality Council, representatives of NGO's, representatives of local authorities and residents. The Smart Village Action Group is open and calls on all citizens to participate with ideas and concrete work in activities organised by the Group. Now there are 40 participants in the Smart Village Action Group including 2 school age children, youth, seniors and other.

There are 21 NGO more or less actively working in territory of Alsunga municipality. Representatives of Alsungas novada attīstības biedrība, "Suitu amatnieki", "Alsungas keramika", "Ziedupīte", “Liepu ielas radošais kvartāls”, "BOKSA KLUBS “PĒRKONS””, “Suitu kultūras mantojums”, "Suitu novads", Meža īpašnieku kooperācijas atbalsta centrs, "Zvirgzdezers" are participating in the Smart Village Action Group. There are not leaders from NGO Ethnical Culture Centre “Suiti” in the Smart Village Action Group, but a lot of group members are also members of this NGO who is the leading organisation in Suiti territory. Participants from informal group “Suiti Parliament” also are participating in the Smart Village Action Group.

In 2019, 4 companies with limited liability newly registered in Alsunga. Overall, there are active companies in the municipality: 41 limited-liability companies, 8 individual merchants, 93 farmers' holdings, 1 cooperative society, 6 individual companies. Companies are most engaged in mixed farming (49), forestry and other forestry activities (8), forestry (6) and residential and non-residential buildings (6). The largest increase in turnover is for forestry and logging companies. 149 companies and 184 individual entrepreneurs established in Alsunga.

3.4. SWOT Analysis

Table 3: SWOT analysis

In Alsunga region, it is necessary to strengthen the opportunities of local entrepreneurs, farmers, home producers to obtain quality services – business, financial consultations, support for project development, implementation, etc. The availability of such services can be ensured both through the support of the municipality and by involving the knowledge transfer and competence of local entrepreneurs, promoting cooperation and self-initiative.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suiti Culture based on old and strong traditions • Good place for living • Nature as resource • Good collaboration between community and local government • Active population • Available public services (school, sport, culture etc.) • Proximity of the sea (transit route) • Good internet connection • Safe environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depopulation • Ageing/youth out-migration • Lack of housing and adequate facilities for small entrepreneurs • Alsunga is not a tourist destination • Unwillingness of people to change • Insufficient financing for infrastructure development • The belief that all problems must be solved by the municipality
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of small business related to tourism • Seniors could become a Service Providers • Development of companies that need the Internet and are bound to work remotely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality reform (the possibility of deciding on their own needs and money will be lost) • Increased decline in the proportion of young people • Declining access to public services • Further depopulation because of migration for better jobs

IV. INTERVENTION LOGIC

4.1 Overall objective

The main objective of this strategy is to make significant input in strategic vision of Alsunga sustainable development strategy 2015-2030:

Alsunga county is a place with unique identity, organized and contemporary an area of life in which intelligent, active and creative people live, interacting for the administration, economic operators and public organisations, and preserved cultural and historical values while creating diversity of recreation and cultural accessibility

4.2 Specific & operational objectives in response to SWOT

Specific objective 1: Development of local value-based small businesses

Alsunga is located in Suti Cultural Space and nearly half of the county area is occupied by forests, while the other half is farmland. Because the big cities are far away, the residents are not going to commute to large cities from Alsunga for work, but rather move to live there permanently. In order to make it possible for people to live well in Alsunga and not to move to cities, it is necessary to develop local value-based small businesses that allow people to employ themselves.

Operational objective 1.1: Development of tourism

Alsunga's wealth is a Suti culture that makes this place unique in Latvia and whole world. However, many holidaymakers are passing through the village without stopping, to the more popular destination in Jurkalne with seaside. A huge potential for tourism development is the flow of transit tourists needed to be stopped in Alsunga village.

Operational objective 1.2: Development of other small business

Natural riches, good Internet speeds and available public services are potential for small business development, which would enable people to earn in the village without travelling to big cities.

Specific objective 2: Stabilising the number of people in the village

The availability of public services depends on the amount of public money available. The amount of money also depends on the amount of working population paying taxes. Shrinking population will reduce the availability of public services and the willingness of people to live in the village. The needs of young people and families are different and young people

increasingly choose to live in cities. It is therefore important to identify missing services in a timely manner and to seek new, original solutions to provide them.

Operational objective 2.1: Improving available services

In order to improve the range of services, it is important to identify the necessary packets. There are often lack of resources, particularly human resources, in rural areas to be able to provide services. Most often, demand is so small that it is not able to give a service provider a full-time job. The solution here could be the involvement of seniors who are no longer able to work full-time but want to remain involved in the labour market.

Operational objective 2.2: Improve environment for young people

In order to create a desire for young families to live in rural areas, it is important to provide a quality educational service for children. Young people should be involved in the planning and development of their place of life, creating a sense of ownership and responsibility for their living environment. Young people have different ideas from older people, but their ideas are very important to make them want to link their lives to the village.

Table 4: Setting objectives in response to SWOT

Specific objectives	Operational objectives	Challenges & threats	Strengths & Opportunities
1. Development of local value-based small business	1.1. Development of tourism	<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alsunga is not a tourist destination <p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further depopulation because of migration for better jobs 	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suiti Culture based on old and strong traditions Nature as resource Proximity of the sea (transit route) Safe environment <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of small business related to tourism Seniors could become a Service Providers
	1.2. Development of other small business	<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depopulation Ageing/youth out-migration Lack of housing and adequate facilities for small entrepreneurs Insufficient financing for infrastructure development <p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further depopulation because of migration for better jobs 	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suiti Culture based on old and strong traditions Good place for living Nature as resource Proximity of the sea (transit route) Good internet connection <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seniors could become a Service Providers Development of companies that need the Internet and are bound to work remotely



Specific objectives	Operational objectives	Challenges & threats	Strengths & Opportunities
2. Stabilising the number of people in the village	2.1. Improving available services	<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient financing for infrastructure development • The belief that all problems must be solved by the municipality <p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declining access to public services 	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suiti Culture based on old and strong traditions • Proximity of the sea (transit route) • Good internet connection <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors could become a Service Providers • Development of companies that need the Internet and are bound to work remotely
	2.2. Improve environment for young people	<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing/youth out-migration • The belief that all problems must be solved by the municipality <p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further depopulation because of migration for better jobs 	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suiti Culture based on old and strong traditions • Good place for living • Nature as resource • Active population • Available public services (school, sport, culture etc.) • Good internet connection • Safe environment <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of companies that need the Internet and are bound to work remotely



4.3 Smart solutions: actions, outputs and results

Table 5: Intervention logic: objectives, activities, expected results and outputs

Specific/ operational objectives	Actions planned or taken	Expected results	Expected output
SO1: Development of local value-based small business			
1.1. Development of tourism	Action 1.1.1. Development of Suiti local food and craft market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suiti market is self-organized by local entrepreneurs, in cooperation with each other in order to stop passers-by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suiti market is held every Sunday during all year 1 discussion have taken place about how Suiti market could become self-organized by local entrepreneurs 3 planning meetings take place Followers and post shares on Facebook page @SuituTirgus increased by 10%
	Action 1.1.2. Improve cooperation between tourism entrepreneurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened cooperation between tourism entrepreneurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobile app developed and introduced to encourage cooperation between tourism entrepreneurs
	Action 1.1.3. Find new ideas for tourism business development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed tourism business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study about existing situation in tourism in Alsunga carried out 1 discussion about new tourism product take place Created at least one idea for new tourism product



Specific/ operational objectives	Actions planned or taken	Expected results	Expected output
1.2. Development of other small business	Action 1.2.1. Create co-working space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better working conditions for independent entrepreneurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of a co-working space where several independent entrepreneurs can take up their activities in a common shared environment
	Action 1.2.2. Identify small business specialization suitable for Alsunga village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People will find ideas for their own innovative business in Alsunga 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation with technology company to reach rapid internet throughout the village Plan for next steps to attract and develop small business in Alsunga
	Action 1.2.3. Train villagers to start or develop small business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded knowledge on how to start and pursue business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 2 trainings for villagers how to start small business At least one people considering to set up new businesses
SO2: Stabilising the number of people in the village			
2.1. Improving available services	Action 2.1.1. Survey to find out the services needed in the village or needed to improve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life becomes more comfortable in Alsunga village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for next steps to improve available services in village



Specific/ operational objectives	Actions planned or taken	Expected results	Expected output
2.2. Improve environment for young people	Action 2.2.1. Make school more attractive for pupils and young families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital technologies integrated into the school environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programming training has taken place Some augmented or virtual reality learning tools created in school
	Action 2.2.2. Involving more young people in village planning and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people participate in to the planning and implementation of village development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 1 activity has been taken to involve young people in the planning and implementation of village development At least three young people joined the Smart Village Action Group

Table 6: Planning actions to achieve results (period Jun 2020 – Mar 2022). Action plan will be supplemented during 2021 for next period

Actions planned	Timeline	Necessary human capacity	Necessary technical capacity	Financial resources needed 2020-2021
Action 1.1.1: Development of Suiti local food and craft market	From: Jun 2020 To: Sept 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local farmers Local craftsmen Elected representatives Tourism information centre NGOs dealing with Suiti culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5000.00 EUR



Actions planned	Timeline	Necessary human capacity	Necessary technical capacity	Financial resources needed 2020-2021
Action 1.1.2: Improve cooperation between tourism entrepreneurs	From: Sept 2020 To: Jun 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism entrepreneurs • Tourism information centre • Smart Village action group members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computers for programming • Teacher of programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20.00 EUR • volunteers
Action 1.1.3: Find new ideas for tourism business development	From: Jan 2021 To: Nov 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism entrepreneurs • Tourism information centre • Smart Village action group members • NGOs dealing with Suiti culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting room 	
Action 1.2.1: Create co-working space	From: Nov 2020 To: Dec 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart Village action group members • Municipality representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room with WiFi • Printer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200.00 EUR
Action 1.2.2: Identify small business specialization suitable for Alsunga village	From: Nov 2020 To: Jun 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart Village action group members • Local entrepreneurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room for meetings 	
Action 1.2.3: Train villagers to start small	From: Jan 2021 To: Dec 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart Village action group members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room for training 	1500.00 EUR



Actions planned	Timeline	Necessary human capacity	Necessary technical capacity	Financial resources needed 2020-2021
business		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LRATC (The Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre) 		
Action 2.1.1: To find out the services needed in the village or needed to improve	From: Feb 2021 To: Jul 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart Village action group members • Villagers • Elected representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room for meeting 	
Action 2.2.1: Make school more attractive for pupils and young families	From: Jan 2021 To: Jan 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart Village action group members • School administration • Parents • Pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computers for programming • Teacher of programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1000.00 EUR • volunteers
Action 2.2.2: Involving more young people in village planning and development	From: Jan 2021 To: Mar 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart Village action group members • Young people • NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room for meeting 	
Entire strategy	21 month			7700.00 EUR

Specific activities for actions planned

Action 1.1.1. Development of Suiti local food and craft market

The Suiti market was set up in June 2020. It includes local craftsmen, home producers and peasants, as well as entrepreneurs from close and distant areas. The market was set up as a fest with the possibility of a good time for the whole family. The establishment of the market, the coordination of marketing activities and the functioning of the market was carried by the members of the Smart Village Action Group. The municipality supported musical performances during the market, as well as equipment for market development (music, tables and a large tent). In order to ensure the sustainability of the market, it is necessary to find a way for the market to continue without local government support and voluntary work every Sunday by non-trading parties. To achieve this goal, there will be a series of discussions and planning meetings for the Smart Village Action Group and local small entrepreneurs participating in the market. Increasing market attendance requires improved marketing activities. It is therefore necessary to develop a social network marketing plan and to train market participants.

Action 1.1.2. Improve cooperation between tourism entrepreneurs

Due to the limits of the Covid19 pandemic, the number of local Latvian tourists increased significantly during the 2020 tourism season. It revealed the problem that cooperation between local tourism entrepreneurs is weak and they are unable to respond quickly to customers' needs, resulting in tourists leaving for the necessary services and goods to the neighboring Jurkalne village. In order to ensure the rapid acquisition of the information needed to meet customers' needs and to facilitate cooperation between tourist entrepreneurs in the village of Alsunga, it was decided to create the application. One of the members of the Smart Village group is a programmer who committed to training other residents in programming and jointly creating an app. This would create opportunities for the villagers involved to improve their skills in order to obtain better-paid jobs while living in rural areas. The app model was developed in August. Programming is scheduled to be completed in December. In the spring of 2021, application testing will take place, then user training, so that the application for cooperation between tourism entrepreneurs can be used in May.

Action 1.1.3. Find new ideas for tourism business development

Many tourists are interested in the Suiti culture, but Alsunga is not their final destination. The income of tourist operators is linked to the ability to keep tourists in the territory of Alsunga for as long as possible. Many tourists use Alsunga as transit route to a nearby beach and they never stopped in Alsuga before the Suiti market was created. Many tourists also went to know the suitu culture and spent up to two hours in Alsunga. In order to attract more tourists, it is necessary to carry out research on the existing supply and to identify the necessary improvements, as well as to create a new tourism product. Therefore, a study will be carried out involving master students from the University. On the basis of the results of the study, discussions with existing and future tourism entrepreneurs by involvement of experts will be organized to create ideas for a new tourism product.

Action 1.2.1. Create co-working space

Alsunga has many small entrepreneurs who can't afford to rent themselves office spaces. However, they have a non-exclusive place to meet with customers and work unhindered. This requires a table, chair, wireless Internet, printer and opportunity to welcome a customer with tea. A Smart Village Action Group surveyed small entrepreneurs and identified that an appropriate site could be a local library. The group's representatives went to the local government members who funded the room for repainting. The work is done on a voluntary basis. The room will use the furniture and infrastructure already existing in the library. Once established, it will be promoted to local entrepreneurs.

Action 1.2.2. Identify small business specialization suitable for Alsunga village

Many young people work in forestry (felling trees) as well as in the local factory that requires physical force. However, young people are increasingly choosing a physically easy job that is available in cities. In order to keep and attract young people in Alsunga and to create jobs that create goods and services with high added value, it is necessary to identify suitable small business specializations. Alsunga has a very fast Internet available within a 300-meter radius of the mail office. Quick Internet availability expands small-business opportunities. Technology companies will be consulted to reach rapid Internet throughout the village. Discussions will be held with experts and citizens on possible small business directions in Alsunga to develop a plan for next steps to attract and develop small business in Alsunga.

Action 1.2.3. Train villagers to start or develop small business

People often lack the knowledge of how to build their own business. Advice is available in towns, such as business incubators. Driving to town is time-consuming and expensive. Therefore, training for starting your business will be organized, including how to register your business, accounting, to promote your product or service. Training will be carried out in cooperation with Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre.

Action 2.1.1. Survey to find out the services needed in the village or needed to improve

The local government shall provide the services specified in the law. However, people have different other needs. For example, in years where there are plenty of apples, some of the crop is blown away because there are not enough high-powered juice compressors in the nearest area. For example, the local government is giving up kindergarten, but there is no one who could look after a child in the evening when parents want to go to town to watch a music show. It is therefore necessary to identify the necessary services so that you can plan to improve or create them, such as a service that might become a business opportunity. Therefore, citizens will be surveyed to find out the necessary services. Based on the results

Action 2.2.1. Make school more attractive for pupils and young families

The village's only school spaces are vast and formal, designed to discipline pupils rather than encourage learning. For today's parents, the school environment is essential and they associate it with

the quality of school. To dormant their children for a better future, parents often choose to send children to city schools. At the same time, there are parents who have decided to move to the countryside so that children have a safer environment. And school quality is a key factor in the choice of a place of life. So in the summer of 2020, the Smart Village Action Group made improvements to the school environment: glued ladders with guides, created a time line with the facts of history, created floor labels to encourage physical activity, and created an informal learning environment in the English language cabinet. There were conversations with the pupils to find out what changes they would still like in school to be more enjoyable to learn. Pupils want more technology use in the learning process. That information was passed on to the school's management, which purchased 10 tablets.

The Smart Village Action Group decided that it would develop the learning tools of an augmented or virtual reality that would be deployed in school environment. They will at the same time build on pupils' desire to use smartphones and display technology capabilities, creating an interest in career opportunities in technology. In January, enrollment for programming training will be announced. The content of the learning tools will be created by a pedagogy specialist working in a Smart Village Action Group, in cooperation with pupils and other members of the group.

Action 2.2.2. Involving more young people in village planning and development

The sustainable existence of the village depends on the desire of young people to live in it. Young people under the age of 30 have shown no interest in participating in smart village activities or other village development activities. A brainstorm will be organized to find ideas for youth engagement. Once the activities are identified, they will be implemented and young people will be invited to express their views and ideas on village development. At least three young people joined the Smart Village Action Group.

V. MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

5.1 Management

Strategy will be managed by Smart Village action group. Responsible person will be group leader to divide responsibilities about actions between group members. The group was initiated by Daiga Kalnina in 2017, which remains the group's leader. At first, 8 people worked in the group. Others joined the group over time because the group is open and calls to participate are regularly published on the group's Facebook page @SmartVillageAlsunga, as well as in the informative edition of Alsunga municipality. The group leader coordinates the group's work. The ideas are discussed and developed in the WhatsApp group and during the monthly meeting, as well as in the sub-groups of people who want to take part in a realisation of specific idea. Everyone has equal rights in creating and implementing ideas. It is planned to make a lot of voluntary work, ask financial support from local government and apply small projects.

5.2 Monitoring

There will be monitoring each month during meetings of Smart Village action group. Meetings of the members of the Smart Village Action Group are organized once a month - during which the goals and achievements to achieve the goals set for the year are reviewed. New tasks can also be set and those responsible identified during the meeting. Responsible for monitoring will be the leader of the Smart Village Action group.

VI. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Local community members, incl. local entrepreneurs, municipal representatives, representatives of NGOs, the National Expert of Smart Villages, were actively involved in the development of the strategy both initially – by identifying the needs, advantages and setting objectives of the territory, as well as in the process of formulating the strategy.

Several meetings and workshops were held to work on the strategy. The members of the working groups were divided into groups to discuss issues, which were later discussed again together.

The Alsunga Smart Village action group drafted the final strategy paper, of course taking into account the interests of the parties involved. Before the final document of the strategy was submitted – again to the community – for consideration and comment.

Community members of different age groups (19–70 old) participated in the development of the strategy. The challenge was to involve young people in particular, but it worked. In order to interest the young people, a discussion was organized especially for them, inviting them to express their opinion - what they think is necessary for the village of Alsunga, so that they would like and enjoy living in the village of Alsunga.

6.1 Stakeholder engagement in needs assessment

In the process of developing the strategy (identifying the needs, benefits and setting goals of the local area), the participants participated in several working groups-discussions, in addition to consultations and surveys. A questionnaire was prepared and completed by the members of the Smart Village Action Group. As the consultations took place in parallel, 22 completed questionnaires were received.

The Smart Village Action Group is open. Using the local government's printed edition and website, local people are invited to take part in the Smart Village Action group activities. Over time, this has also happened, with new members joining the group - locals. In 2020, 9 new members joined the group.

6.2 Key channels of communication and awareness raising among citizens

We are aware of the need to communicate and inform the public. The local community have been informed about the development of the strategy through the social media – Facebook account of the Smart Village of Alsunga and the local government website, which is frequently visited by the local population. For the activist group involved in smart village planning we have a special WhatsApp group.

Information about the working groups also have been published on the website of the State Rural Network and in the local government's newspaper.

6.3 Planned actions to mobilise stakeholders

Experience shows that local people are happy to be involved in various activities if they are addressed individually. In addition, seeing that others are active makes other members of the community more active.

In order for any member of the community to have the opportunity to participate in the activities planned within the strategy, it is necessary to ensure publicity for the planned activities.

For the activist group involved in smart village planning we have a special WhatsApp group and when there is a necessary for a help or active action there are additional volunteers ready to step in.