



BACKGROUND PAPER

COHESION POLICY AND RESOURCES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SMART STRATEGY



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Preparatory Action on Smart Rural Areas in the 21st Century

Financing the implementation of the Smart Strategy with the resources of the Cohesion Policy - Background Paper

This document is produced in the framework of the expertise action to support the local implementation of the Smart Strategy produced by Ostana with the Smart Rural 21 project.

The implementation of the Smart Strategy implemented within Smart Rural 21 requires the use of a series of resources available at multiple levels, from the local to the European scale. The complexity and diversity of the interventions included in the strategy developed with the support of the local community requires a strategic approach to finding national and European resources, which can be fundamental not only to give long-term local innovation strategies with new projects but also to address some of the most urgent challenges of the area, from sustainable mobility to the new residential area.

This document provides useful information on the strategic approach to be followed to define a mix of resources that can contribute to the implementation of the actions and objectives contained in the Smart Strategy. The indications contained in the document aim to provide information on the various funding available and on the most suitable ways to establish project partnerships for the implementation of planned interventions with stakeholders and the local community.

The starting point: which elements to exploit for an integrated financing strategy

The tools offered by the Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 can make a decisive contribution to addressing the main challenges linked to territorial innovation even in small-sized centers such as Ostana.

The Smart Strategy implemented as part of Smart Rural 21 highlights the characteristic elements of Ostana, which can be used as a basis for the selection of funds and useful resources from the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy.

The mountainous and internal location, agricultural resources, the periphery with respect to large urban centers and the demographic data are some of the main elements to be taken into consideration to define which are the most suitable financing possibilities for



implement the actions contained in the Smart Strategy.

The objectives highlighted by the Ostana Smart Strategy are also largely consistent with the European Strategy for the Alpine Region - EUSALP, in which Piedmont participates together with other 47 European Regions and which is based on three thematic pillars: economic growth and innovation; mobility and connectivity; environment and energy. Of the seven strategic priorities with which the embedding of EUSALP is carried out in the programs, regional and national, co-financed by European resources (1. Hydrogen-related policies; 2. Circular economy; 3. Smart cities / smart land; 4. Natural risks; 5. Sustainable tourism; 6. Sustainable mobility; 7. Innovation hubs), the Ostana Smart Strategy takes up in various ways six priorities (from 2 to 7), with a potential positive effect in terms of attracting funding from various types of programming.

The following paragraphs of the document review the different types of funds and highlight through which calls or measures it is possible to finance specific actions of the Smart Strategy.

PR ERDF

The 2021-2027 programming of the Piedmont Region was carried out starting from a consultation process that involved stakeholders and institutional actors, bringing together the indications that emerged from the participatory process in the Strategic Document Unit of the Piedmont Region approved in September 2021.

Negotiations with the European Commission for the approval of the Partnership Agreement began at the beginning of 2022, but the main elements of Piedmont's regional planning are explained in documents and summary notes produced during 2021.

The priorities are: the creation of a smarter, more sustainable and more inclusive ecosystem to improve the quality of life of citizens; the consolidation of the networks of innovation and research infrastructures; the formation of new skills and enabling conditions for sustainable development with an impact on the economic and productive fabric of the Region.

The total budget for the program is € 1.494 billion, an increase of around € 500 million compared to the 2021-2027 programming. The program foresees the thematic concentration of resources among the priority objectives, with 87.5% of



resources dedicated to OP1 (more competitive and intelligent Europe) and OP2 (resilient, greener Europe), with 31.5% of the resources allocated to OP2.

From the analysis of the priorities that emerged in the four of the five OPs chosen by the Piedmont Region (CSR, competitiveness and digital transition; Ecological transition and resilience; Sustainable urban mobility; Infrastructures for the development of skills; Cohesion and territorial development), numerous actions are consistent with the interventions envisaged by the Ostana Smart Strategy.

In particular, specific objectives, actions and financial allocations more in line for the implementation of specific points of the Ostana strategy are the following:

OP2 - PRIORITY II - Ecological Transition and Resilience - Objective 4: Promote adaptation to climate change, disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account ecosystem approaches - Action II.4.1 - Recovery and defense of the territory in compliance with existing habitats and ecosystems - Financial envelope: 14,776,000

OP2 - PRIORITY II - Ecological Transition and Resilience - Objective 7: Strengthen the protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructures, including in urban areas, and reduce all forms of pollution - II.7.1 Conservation and recovery of natural heritage and biodiversity levels - Financial envelope: 44,636,000

OP2 - PRIORITY II - Ecological Transition and Resilience - Goal 7: Strengthen the protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reduce all forms of pollution - II.7.2 Development and completion of green infrastructures - Financial endowment: 27,364,000

OP5 - PRIORITY V - Cohesion and Territorial Development - Objective 2: Promote the Integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental development at local level, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and safety in areas other than urban ones - V.2.1: Internal Areas Strategy - Financial endowment: 8,000,000

The objectives of sustainable management of natural capital, waste reduction, energy transition, but also the promotion of new cultural forms and the strengthening of the cultural center contained in the Smart strategy can certainly be achieved starting from the tenders that will be published under the measures



listed above in the PR ERDF.

PR ESF +

The 2021-2027 programming of the European Social Fund Plus of the Piedmont Region was created starting from an analysis of the experiences and strategies implemented in the 2014-2020 programming, diversifying areas of intervention and actions in line with the European macro-objectives. of the program.

The Regional Operational Program of the European Social Fund Plus addresses active policies for work, training, guidance, certification of skills and attention to the vulnerable.

The reduction of social inequalities and the creation of an integrated system of innovation and specialized training, social security and individual and collective well-being are the objectives at the center of the ESF programming in Piedmont, also carried out on the basis of the experience of the PR ERDF starting from listening to the stakeholders, from the coordination of policies and from forms of strategic planning in line with other multiannual programming documents active on a regional scale.

Among the elements of greatest interest for the Ostana experience that emerged from the path of widespread consultation promoted at the regional level include the use of culture for social inclusion, support for smart working, experimentation with community services to support the elderly and the frail, the development of telemedicine services, investment in social projects innovation, the enhancement of cultural heritage in a sustainable key, the training of new skills in the tourism sector.

From an initial analysis of the priorities highlighted by the PR ESF + structure (Employment, Education and Training, Social Inclusion, Youth Employment), in the process of being approved, the points of greatest interest for the implementation of the Smart Strategy Ostana are the following:

PRIORITY N.3 SOCIAL INCLUSION - Specific objective h: Action: Contribute to green skills and employment and to the green economy - Budget:
50,000,000 euros

PRIORITY N.3 SOCIAL INCLUSION - Specific objective K: Action: Measures aimed at strengthening the offer of assistance services to families and the territory - Financial endowment: 62,000,000 euros



PRIORITY N.3 SOCIAL INCLUSION - Specific objective K: Action: Capacity building of civil society organizations - Financial endowment: 5,000,000 euros

PRIORITY N.4 YOUTH EMPLOYMENT - Specific objective A: Action: Specific support for youth employment and socio-economic integration of young people -
Financial endowment: 109,000,000 euros

Furthermore, a front on which there is a need for intervention in the context of the ESF + of particular interest in Ostana is that of housing welfare, with the need to offer support for the creation of experimental social housing projects and development of community networks. Although these measures do not have a dedicated action / objective, they are among the interventions that can be financed under the specific objective K on the improvement of equal and timely access to personal services.

The operational objectives of the development of experimental social housing projects, sustainable management of natural capital and the creation of new skills for the energy transition, contained in the Ostana Smart Strategy, will be fostered thanks to the use of the resources made available by the PR ESF +, which more generally can help create the most suitable conditions for improving quality living space

of the territory and the creation of useful services to improve the quality of life of different segments of the population (including new residents).

INTERREG ALCOTRA

The 2021-2027 programming of the ALCOTRA (Latin Alps Cooperation TRAnsfrontiera) cross-border cooperation program covering the Alpine areas between Italy and France will aim to strengthen the sustainable development of territories and cross-border economic and social systems through forms of interaction capable of involve economy, environment and citizen services.

The main thematic objectives of the program concern Applied Innovation, Safe Environment, Territory Attractiveness, Social Inclusion and European Citizenship.

As part of the broader horizon of European territorial cooperation, and in particular of its dimension of strengthening cross-border cooperation, INTERREG ALCOTRA promotes projects capable of facing the main challenges of local development of the territories involved.

It is possible to submit single projects (with a minimum of two partners) or integrated plans



(which include up to 4 individual projects).

For the period 2021-2027, the ALCOTRA program will receive 182 million euros. The Operational Program, currently under discussion with the European Commission, This will be presented to the European Commission at the beginning of 2022, provides for the launch of the first call and the financing of the first operations starting from the first half of 2022.

Providing a total or partial reconfirmation of the thematic reference axes in the 2021-2027 programming, the thematic objectives that appear most in line with the Ostana Smart Strategy are:

- Preserve and protect the environment and promote the efficient use of resources
- Supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy
- Promote adaptation to climate change, risk prevention and management

- Investing in education and training

The operational objectives of the energy transition, the sustainable management of natural capital, innovative social housing, the strengthening of cultural and personal services contained in the Ostana Smart Strategy can be among the possible targets of cross-border projects that can involve Municipalities with dimensions and similar characteristics in France and also foresee infrastructural interventions.

INTERREG ALPINE SPACE

The 2021-2027 programming of the Alpine Space cross-border cooperation program promotes cooperation between economic, social and environmental actors in seven Alpine countries, with a particular focus on four thematic areas.

- PRIORITY 1: Green and climate resilient Alpine region
- PRIORITY 2: Carbon neutral and resource sensitive Alpine region
- PRIORITY 3: Innovation and digitization in support of an Alpine region
green
- PRIORITY 4: Alpine region managed and developed in cooperation

The Alpine Space program addresses the common challenges of Alpine territories and contributes to improving the quality of life of the inhabitants of the Alpine region. The program is aimed at public authorities at national, regional and local level, at institutes of



higher education, but also to businesses, business support organizations, NGOs and

The program co-finances two types of associations. projects.

- Small-scale projects, lasting from 12 to 18 months, involve from 3 to 6 partners from at least 3 nations of the Alpine space and can be presented on an ongoing basis
- Classic projects, lasting from 24 to 36 months, involve from 7 to 12 partners from at least 4 nations of the Alpine space, with a two-stage selection procedure.

From a first analysis of the priorities highlighted by the Interreg Alpine Space structure, the points of greatest interest for the implementation of the Ostana Smart Strategy are the following:

- PRIORITY 1 - Green and climate resilient Alpine region

Measure: Promote climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account ecosystem-based approaches

Measure: Improve the protection and conservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including urban areas, and reduce all forms of pollution

- PRIORITY 2 - Carbon neutral and resource sensitive Alpine region

Measure: Promote energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Measure: Promote the transition to a circular and efficient economy under the resource profile.

The operational objectives contained in the Smart Strategy of the creation of new sustainable mobility systems, the energy transition, the sustainable management of natural capital and the reduction of waste can be achieved through participation in projects, preferably on a small scale, thanks to which it is possible carry out pilot actions and / or infrastructural interventions intended to have an impact on individual objectives in the medium-long term.

Other possible sources of funding

A plurality of other sources of funding can cover specific interventions consistent with the operational objectives that emerged from the Ostana Smart Strategy. With a view to funding blending, it is useful to highlight some of the strategic priorities and actions that can potentially be financed from other national and European resources, highlighting their consistency with the strategic objectives that emerged during the process



triggered by Smart Rural 21.

LIFE

The new LIFE program pursues the achievement of the objectives set at European level in the field of environment, climate and energy, in particular the objectives of the European Green Deal and the EU strategies on biodiversity, the circular economy and adaptation to climate change.

The financial envelope of the LIFE program for the period 2021-2027 is € 5.432 billion.

The Program is divided into two Sectors and four different Sub-programs:

- the "Environment" Sector, which includes the "Nature and Biodiversity" sub-program; the sub-program "Circular economy and quality of life";
- the "Climate Action" Sector, which includes the "Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change" sub-program; the sub-program "Transition to clean energy".

The program may fund strategic nature conservation projects, which support the achievement of the Union's nature and biodiversity objectives, integrated strategic projects, which implement on a regional, multiregional, national or transnational scale Action plans or strategies for environment or climate, standard action projects, which pursue the specific objectives of the LIFE program, and technical assistance projects.

The Circular Economy and Quality of Life and Clean Energy Transition sub-programs are those most in line with the priorities highlighted by Ostana in its Smart Strategy.

Operational objectives such as the sustainable management of natural capital, the energy transition and waste reduction can be the focus of projects to be carried out in collaboration with universities and research centers under the LIFE program.

HORIZON EUROPE

Horizon Europe is the European Union Framework Program for Research and Innovation for the period 2021-2027. It has a total duration of seven years and a total budget of 95.5 billion, making it the largest transnational research and innovation program in the world.



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The program is implemented directly by the direct Commission and directly funds research and innovation activities with the aim of obtaining a scientific, technological, economic and social impact from EU investments in research and innovation. The projects carried out under Horizon, which involve all types of public administration, contribute to implementing the strategic priorities of the Union and to face global challenges such as the fight against climate change.

From an analysis of the clusters that address the main global challenges faced by the program and those relating to European competitiveness, the clusters of greatest interest for the Ostana experience are Cluster 2 Culture Creativity and Inclusive Society, Cluster 5 Climate, Energy and Mobility and the Cluster 6 Food Products, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment.

In particular, the themes of Innovative Research on European cultural heritage and cultural and creative enterprises (Cluster 2), Cross-sectoral solutions for the climate transition (Cluster 5), Efficient, sustainable and inclusive energy use (Cluster 5), Competitive and clean solutions for all modes of transport (Cluster 5), Smart Mobility and Safe and resilient transport for goods and passengers (Cluster 5), Resilient, green, inclusive and healthy rural, urban and coastal communities (Cluster 6) appear particularly relevant for the assets and objectives that emerged from the Ostana Smart Strategy.

Operational objectives such as the experimentation of innovative solutions for sustainable mobility, the energy transition, the strengthening of the cultural and community center and the promotion of new cultural forms and community cohesion are potentially achievable with pilot actions and experiments carried out thanks to Horizon. Europe, in particular in collaboration with academic institutions and research bodies.

PNRR, EAFRD PSR, FSC

Other national macro-programs use European resources to finance interventions aimed at the development of rural areas, largely in line with the priorities that emerged from the Ostana Smart Strategy.

An analysis of the different types of interventions that can be financed reveals the five priority of the new Cohesion Policy (smarter Europe, greener Europe, Europe more connected, Europe more social, Europe closer to citizens) numerous elements



useful to favor a consolidation of the implementation of many of the measures contained in the Ostana Smart Strategy.

In particular, interventions such as plans for subsidized housing and co-housing in small municipalities (financed with FSC and PNRR), the revitalization plan of historic centers (financed with FSC and PNRR), support for Smart Villages (financed with FSC, PSR and PNRR), support for green communities and energy communities (financed with FSC, PSR and PNRR), new plants for the management of waste cycles (financed with the PNRR) and support for the creation of community businesses (financed with PSR and PNRR) are examples of the importance of a transversal use of the various tools made available to available from these programs.

Operational objectives such as the sustainable management of natural capital, the energy transition, the development of experimental social housing projects, the renovation of historic structures to welcome new inhabitants and encourage repopulation, and the strengthening of cultural services are the priorities of the Smart Strategy that it is possible to put it into practice thanks to the use of the various measures present in the funds managed at national level.

Concluding elements and operational indications

The uniqueness of the Ostana experience in the Italian panorama, especially in connection with the pioneering participation in the first European Smart Rural experimental project, opens the way to a solid and competitive participation in the main European calls on a plurality of issues that touch the environmental dimension , social and economic development of sustainable territorial development.

As emerged from the analysis of the previous pages, the plurality of tools available certainly makes it easier to carry out many of the actions that are already being implemented, promoting a consolidation over the medium-long term but also an update of the measures as indicated since principle in the drafting phase of the Smart Strategy as a lively, flexible tool capable of rapidly adapting to changes in the scenario on different scales.

Here are some operational guidelines to encourage more qualified participation in national and European calls and programs

- Creation of a project coordination between the Ostana administration and



dynamic subjects of the territory, with the aim of participating in a cohesive and coordinated manner in different calls according to the different priorities that emerged from the Smart Strategy and the level of involvement in the implementation

- Consolidation of the wide network of contacts with universities and research centers of regional, national and European value in order to participate in partnership in various programs, possibly highlighting the role of Ostana as a living lab and a place where you can experiment with innovative solutions in different areas mentioned from the Smart Strategy
- Collaborative definition of a chrono-program based on times and methods of exit of the most interesting calls, to outline methods of participation and possible involvement of the various actors
- Creation of a project kit of Ostana, reusable for participation in different calls, highlighting the most characteristic elements of the Smart Rural strategic programming experience and the possible points of interest related to the experimentation of specific measures under the different calls
- Consolidation of the network of institutional contacts at European level, to encourage participation in partnerships and network actions under the different cross-border cooperation programs
- Creation of a “widespread project office”, capable of interacting with subjects dynamic viewpoints (GAL, Europe Direct, etc.) and / or experienced professionals in European planning and project management able to take care, under the coordination of the administration, the definition and management of project proposals, expanding the network of contacts to new ones actors from the world of innovation, the private sector, banking and business foundations.



Contract No AGRI-2019-409 supported by the European Union contributed to the results presented in this document. The opinions expressed are those of the contractor only and do not represent the Contracting Authority's official position.



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