



# **COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

## **COMMUNICATING THE SMART VILLAGE**

### **STRATEGY OF OSTANA**



Prepared by the national expert Simone d'Antonio in the framework of the project on:

**Preparatory Action on Smart Rural Areas in the 21st Century**

## Communicate the Smart Village Strategy - Guidance document

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.

Over the last two years, the definition of a rural innovation strategy has represented a participatory exercise for Ostana both in terms of defining interventions and their implementation. This action had a strong impact on an international scale, as part of the Smart Rural communication ecosystem, helping to position Ostana on the European map of rural innovation, along with twenty other villages across Europe.

This document provides useful information to combine the medium and long-term promotion of the innovative actions contained in the Smart Strategy implemented as part of Smart Rural 21 with a more comprehensive promotion of Ostana as a place of innovation and experimentation. The indications contained in the document also aim to systematize a communication effort that has often been directed more from the outside towards Ostana, so as to innovate the narrative on the village's innovation potential and promote the most interesting elements for different types of audience.

### How to enhance the Smart Strategy in communicative terms

Although the process of implementing the Smart Strategy is a process now concluded and which has already had a significant communicative echo, from the channels of the National Rural Network to those of Smart Rural 21 and media such as Il Sole 24 Ore and others, the implementation of the interventions it is a medium-long term process that has an impact on various community activities.

Giving visibility not only to the actions strictly connected to the Smart Strategy but also to those that can be indirect effects of its realization can be a valuable element to innovate the story of Ostana as a place of innovation where it is possible to experiment new ways of life in the mountain area. .

From the analysis of the actions carried out or in progress in the Smart Strategy, elements of value emerge for an integrated communication action, which like



indicated below, it can contribute more generally to making Ostana's communication and management more efficient.

### ***The objectives and actions of the Smart Strategy***

#### - Ostana Green Community: Sustainable mobility

The implementation of a series of interventions to reduce the environmental impact of mobility can be at the center of specific communication campaigns addressed to residents and seasonal visitors, with the aim of promoting the new forms of clean mobility created ad hoc in Ostana ( among these interchange parking lots, shuttles, car pooling and car sharing systems, cycle and pedestrian paths). Communication campaigns can be carried out in-house or using external support to the administration (VisoaViso, GAL or Comunità Montana, etc.), having different targets and timing but always with the aim of conveying not only the innovation itself but the Ostana's message as a place where one moves differently and in a more sustainable way both in the past and in comparison with other neighboring countries. This can be the starting point for attracting further experimentations, as well as companies, research subjects and universities who intend to test their innovative solutions in terms of mobility in Ostana.

#### - Ostana Green Community: Energy transition, waste reduction and sustainable management of natural capital

The communication of aspects that may appear at first glance as extremely technical can instead have an important impact, above all in favoring the involvement of residents and visitors in making Ostana more sustainable and clean. Specific communication actions can in this case be addressed to citizens and operators to encourage the use of composting plants to reduce the quantity of unsorted waste. At the same time, actions to promote local wood, such as meetups with businesses and artisans, can be useful to encourage a more accurate use of the natural capital of the territory. Also as regards the installation of solar panels on public and private buildings, communicating their use can have both benefits in terms of the image of sustainability perceived by visitors and to present to the residents of the territory and the vast area such solutions as productive of possible effects on an employment scale as well as economic benefit for the entire community. Such communication actions can contribute to improving the perception of just transition a



local level, also presenting traditional technical professions (such as installers, carpenters, etc.) as possible contributors to a broader plan of sustainability and energy transition in the area.

- Social housing: development of experimental projects

The collaboration with Piedmontese universities, such as the Polytechnic of Turin, represents a consolidated element of value of the innovative design action carried out by Ostana for some time. The use of the university's communication channels not only to promote courses but also the research works carried out by students and intersectoral teams can represent a useful channel of visibility to present Ostana as a place of experimentation and stimulate the conservation of historic buildings through innovative projects.

- Social Housing: Renewal of the housing stock to attract new inhabitants and public-private investments

The enhancement of the actions carried out by Ostana over the years, which through the publication in national and international magazines has consolidated its visibility for some time, and the promotion of new schemes that involve old and new residents, local actors and possible investors are elements which lend themselves to a strategy that uses a multiplicity of channels to convey the message of quality habitability as a basis for a better quality of life in the mountain area. The creation of kits and reviews with articles and insights that have appeared in the press and sector magazines in recent years can be a useful tool to be made available online to learn about the background of the new interventions underway in Ostana, so as to optimize the web as well. research of available resources. At the same time, the organization of meetings on a monthly / bimonthly scale, advertised on social channels and local / regional media, the involvement of micro-influencers active on the theme of city escape or the opening of a blog or podcast channel (Medium, Spreaker, Anchor, etc.) for telling the stories of those who already live in Ostana may be some of the communication solutions that combine online and onsite in the story of innovative ways of living in the area.

- Social Housing: awareness raising among potential young inhabitants

The launch of an experimental call for short stays in the Chestnut Cabin represents one of the most innovative elements of the entire strategy, which can be accompanied by a massive communication action on thematic social channels (Uncem, etc), contributors channels particularly active on the topic , national media active on the issues



rural innovation (CheFare, Italiachecambia, etc.) and local backs of national media (Corriere della Sera, La Stampa, etc.) so as to favor a broad response not only from those who already follow the Ostana experience and are informed on its most recent developments but also by new audiences. The possible targets of the communication action can be digital nomads, young couples and families, aspiring rural entrepreneurs and other categories interested not only in a temporary life experience in a small village but also in establishing a life and work project, which can also be only in terms of aspirations one of the evaluation elements to be included in the call and on which to base the entire communication campaign of the operation.

- Culture and Social Innovation: Strengthening the activities of the cultural center of Lou Pourtoun

The strengthening of Lou Pourtoun's activities is certainly one of the most visible aspects of the entire Smart Strategy. The communication of activities has so far mainly taken place through social channels and direct communication (Whatsapp, etc.) but the opening of a channel specifically dedicated to Lou Pourton (Facebook or Instagram page) can help to better systematize activities and appointments, functioning as single digital landing point for residents and visitors. The communication of other new cultural centers active in Italy and in particular in peripheral, rural and mountain areas can constitute an element of inspiration both for the informative form of the contents and for the relaunch of visual contents (photos, videos, etc.). they favor greater visibility on the platform but also greater sharing by users. Each cultural activity or service created by Lou Pourtoun can be at the center of a monthly or weekly content schedule, which can therefore guarantee timely information but also an agile and scheduled management of content.

- Culture and Social Innovation: Promotion of new cultural forms and cohesion community

The new services offered by Lou Pourtoun, such as the Open Library of Ostana, can be communicated not only in the forms highlighted in the previous paragraph but also be at the center of ad hoc communication actions that aim to communicate original contents, texts, etc. present in the library and to engage further national and international realities active on similar topics (Book Festival, etc.). This communication action can certainly foster greater knowledge of innovative cultural activities in the area and foster new forms of cohesion through sharing



of stories, engaging contents and forms of collective co-production by local users and visitors who can experiment with new forms of narration (meetings, presentations, stories, reels, etc.) potentially expandable to other Lou Portuoun activities or to communication of other interventions of the Smart Strategy.

- Culture and Social Innovation: Strengthening collaboration with universities and research centers

The creation of ad hoc contents to foster the connection with possible subjects who may be at the center of new collaborations with Lou Pourtoun can be an important element of visibility for the cultural center. The focus of these products is not only on the spaces and opportunities for research and experimentation but also on the results achieved by other educating communities, institutions and cultural bodies that already collaborate with Lou Pourtoun. Presenting the results of studies and research carried out in the area contributes to making the communication of the place an element of innovation itself, enhancing the result of existing collaborations and favoring the creation of new networks of widespread relationships.

- Culture and Social Innovation: Ostana's temporary residency program

The definition of an ad hoc communication strategy to promote the launch of the multidisciplinary program aimed at professionals, researchers, artists and entrepreneurs can be a key element not only to encourage massive participation in the call but also to affirm the themes of the new quality residential in the mountain area in the public debate. Encourage the creation of reportages and insights specifically dedicated to the topic, select stories of those who have already lived in the past temporarily in Ostana and has decided to stay, the dissemination of practical information on living in Ostana at different times of the year may be some of the contents that can be conveyed both through press kits made available online or sent to the sector press and interested in specific topics, or can be at the center of channels created ad hoc (e.g. Living in Ostana, etc.) inspired by similar experiences carried out in Italy and abroad, accompanied by possible strategies of territorial marketing and promotion on specific media (professional associations, Italian magazines or international such as Monocle Magazine or Rivista Studio, etc.).



## **The Smart Strategy as an element of strategic value for Ostana's communication**

The realization and participatory implementation of a local development strategy represents a relaunch factor for the territory, which in the case of Ostana consolidates a successful story of repopulation of a mountain area subject to progressive abandonment and as a place of experimentation for architectural and cultural and social innovation solutions.

The assignment of the title of Smart Village in Ostana has so far been communicated communicatively on several occasions, but it can more widely constitute a driving force for more integrated territorial marketing strategies and to improve the perception of Ostana on different scales.

Below are indicated various actions that can be carried out to innovate the communication of Ostana in connection with innovative actions and interventions conducted in the area, with the aim of preparing different types of audience for the further innovations that will take place in the area upon completion of the implementation. of the Smart Strategy and encourage a new perception of living in a mountain area in an innovative way.

### ***Use of the Smart Village brand in Ostana's strategic communication***

The recognition of Smart Village certainly represents a significant step in Ostana's innovation path, especially in the debate between experts from internal areas and policy makers. The use of the name and / or logo of the project with a byline that indicates the recognition of Smart Village in institutional sites, official documents, project proposals can constitute an element of value to favor greater recognition of the innovation path and more generally the affiliation to experimental but impactful European programs and initiatives in many other European countries.

The widespread use of the project name and / or logo can also be extended to cooperatives, associations, small businesses in the area and other subjects who can see it as a positive element to combine with the Ostana Smart Village claim for their own external communication. . This helps to increase the external communication of the project's innovation actions, but also to create a shared awareness based on being part of a cohesive, supportive community that innovates and participates together, becoming good practice on a national and European scale.



### ***Creation and animation of new communication tools to promote Ostana in a more integrated way***

The plurality of experiences and innovative actions in progress for some time in Ostana is made visible on traditional and online media thanks to the powerful horizontal communication network structured starting from long networks of connection with experts, scholars, technicians and other subjects interested in the original dynamics of local development conducted on the territory. This often spontaneous and informal communication action has favored a multiplier effect at different levels, making the case of Ostana well known to an audience of experts even before the implementation of the Smart Strategy. The frequent interactions with the national and international press demonstrate the interest in this success story and its newsworthiness for the various aspects of the innovation path, but a greater organization of information could also be positive for improving the management of interactions with the press. .

The preparation of a press kit with general indications on Ostana's innovation paths (including the strategic orientations on the medium-long term defined through participation in Smart Rural 21) can represent a good solution to provide basic information that can be reproduced in stories and press coverage . The combination with sets of photographs and video footage that can be mounted and reused by the national and international press can represent a useful support for the creation of stories and reportages.

The creation of a page within the institutional site of Ostana to give visibility to the actions carried out within the Smart Rural 21 project can constitute a useful support to tell, in addition to the actions on culture, tourism and associations, an innovation path that touches different themes, and traces a broader vision of the territorial context. The page can represent an Italian version of what has already been published on the project site, which can also be reported on the institution's English page.

The opening and animation of channels on one or more social media platforms can also constitute an additional starting point for visitors and for those who intend to do business or temporarily move locally. The definition of an agile management model, in coordination with associations and cooperatives present in the area, can diversify the information to be conveyed according to the type of social platform chosen but also make content programming more effective, without necessarily providing information or coverage in real time but using such





channels as further digital showcases in which to describe Ostana as a small place of widespread innovation.

In particular, the Facebook channel can address a higher target in terms of age and contain information on events and activities, leaving limited space for interaction with users.

Instagram, on the other hand, can address a younger target, in particular those potentially interested in a new idea of mountain living, promoting quality photo and video content that tell the everyday life in a territory like that of Ostana and bringing out the elements of uniqueness. Although less significant for the purposes related to the implementation of the Smart Village than those mentioned above, the opening of a Twitter channel can provide support in terms of institutional communication and facilitate interaction with an audience of experts and policy makers on a regional, national and European scale.

The planning of the contents to be published on the different platforms, at different intervals but in any case proportional to the communicative commitment to be used, can favor the alternation between static contents (such as articles and videos made by the national and international press on Ostana) with more dynamics regarding the implementation of the Smart Village strategic interventions which can be presented as a widespread and key innovation path for a narrative that touches on various aspects referred to in the strategic plan (among these quality living, environmental sustainability, innovation social and cultural).

This can help a greater recognition of actions and contents by other national subjects (foundations, sector media, academia, etc.), promoting new forms of interaction useful for the realization of new projects and activities that are inserted in the furrow of the lines priority identified by the Smart Strategy.

The connection with the other communication channels already used by the territory (the VisoaViso accounts, the Whatsapp group composed of inhabitants and contact networks of Ostana, etc.) can contribute to further fueling the visibility of the social channels and favoring a constant exchange of contacts and contents, so as to increase reach and views of posts even without the use of campaigns or sponsorships.

As highlighted above, in an alternative form to what has been identified for the social channels or in addition, depending on the availability and commitment of the administration and / or possible external parties involved in the management of the channels, it is also possible to imagine a type of communication of the different innovation and more



"Slow", therefore also more in line with the message to be conveyed.

It is possible to put into practice a similar type of communication, for example with the production of longform articles-insights, which provide for a wide use of images and in-depth analysis on specific topics, also achievable in collaboration with authors / writers interested in narrating Ostana in innovative way. For this purpose, opening a Medium channel can certainly be useful for connecting to a community of authors who write and relaunch similar in-depth content, but alternatively the creation of a blog or a narrative site that incorporates a communicative approach. similar can be an effective solution.

At the same time, the creation of a series of podcasts that explore particular aspects of living in Ostana, with interviews with residents, experts or external testimonials, can be an interesting element for a widespread, broad and detailed narration, which harks back to the tradition of oral story in line with the Occitan cultural heritage. Also in this case, the production of contents can be either by the work teams that support the administration for specific activities, or by external subjects hired (even on a voluntary basis) for long and alternative storytelling projects. In this case, the Spreaker and Anchor platforms are particularly suitable among the usable channels, which allow a certain production agility and automatic distribution on Spotify and other audio content distribution platforms.

### **Concluding elements**

With respect to the communication of urban themes, the narration of mountain and inland areas poses a series of challenges, above all due to the need to find an interpretative key that avoids an abused narrative and presents such places as potential places for widespread innovation.

The implementation of the Smart Strategy represents an element of uniqueness on a national scale and can be the starting point for Ostana to contaminate the debate on mountain and inland areas as places of innovation in a broader way, both in terms of content and style. and the language of communication. Making the aspect of rural innovation a long-standing element of the Ostana narrative can constitute a factor capable of relaunching in turn a spirit of community and positive narration of the solutions, in line with international standards such as constructive



journalism or solutions journalism which have only rarely been applied to mountain and rural areas. Smart Rural 21's adoption of these communication paradigms can also be a factor of inspiration for the communities involved, such as that of Oстана, with the aim of structuring a quality communication in the medium-long term that amplifies the message of innovation. widespread well beyond the duration of the project itself or the implementation of its actions.



Prepared in the framework of the 'Preparatory Action on Smart Rural Areas in the 21st Century' project funded by the:



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.



---

Prepared in the framework of the 'Preparatory Action on Smart Rural Areas in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' project funded by the:

