

Taskforce Action Plan – [LATVIA]

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1. Context

The Smart Village (SV) approach is a completely new and an undiscovered concept for the communities in Latvia. The Ministry of Agriculture is currently the only state institution supporting the concept of Smart Villages - the policy maker. In the next CAP period 2023–2027, support for the development of the Smart Village approach in Latvia will be available under the LEADER program. However, a holistic approach to Smart Villages is very important and therefore requires a broader perspective and support for Smart Villages and rural communities.

Even though the approach of smart villages seems interesting and tempting to many, when you dig deeper it becomes clear that it is complicated and complex at the same time. It is therefore very important to inform the public and explain how it works and how it differs from, for example, the LEADER approach or citizen councils.

At the moment, there is no concrete approved definition of what a Smart Village is at the national level. The National Rural Network in its work with the concept of Smart Villages uses and accepts the definition set out in the SR21 project, while not particularly emphasising the need for digital technologies. Digital technologies are only relevant if they help and are useful to the rural community. It is intended that within the framework of working groups, its members - important promoters of rural development, etc., will mutually agree on a commonly used definition.

It is intended that the members of the working group will mutually agree on the necessary support for rural communities in the implementation of an effective and meaningful approach to Smart Villages, each of them determining their own contribution.

The Smart Villages (SV) process in Latvia is mainly driven by 3 categories of actors – national policy makers, national networks and NGOs:

- ✓ **The Ministry of Agriculture** is currently the only ministry that supports Smart Villages with funding opportunities. It ensured that Smart Villages receive support in the LEADER program to support the creation of Smart Villages;
- ✓ **The Ministry of Environmental protection and Regional Development** is the only ministry that has worked on the development and support of local strategies for villages. It has developed guidelines of development of village strategies;
- ✓ **The National CAP Network**, which has developed its own methodology in working with Smart Villages and which encourages active action by communities to promote the development of their territory;
- ✓ **The Latvian Rural Forum**, which implements territorial cooperation projects and community support projects in cooperation with local action groups. The organisation recognizes the needs of the communities and seeks opportunities to provide them;
- ✓ **LAGs** that are familiar with the Smart Village concept and Smart Village operational approach, are implementing territorial cooperation projects and solutions in cooperation with the communities in their territory.

The working group is intended to be formed as a broader representation of various sectors, including representatives of various ministries and organisations, researchers and promoters of rural development.

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2. The purpose of the taskforce

Key policy areas of taskforce interventions (Summary)

- ✓ Create a multidisciplinary working group, bringing together representatives of various sectors and interests from various regions, thus promoting a holistic view and understanding of the concept of smart villages;
- ✓ Promote the cooperation of various interested parties for the development of the concept of Smart Villages;
- ✓ Promotion of public knowledge and common understanding;
- ✓ Create a support system for the smart village approach;
- ✓ Building policy co-responsibility.

The specific aims of establishing the Taskforce have been:

- Defining the state of play of Smart Villages at national level and defining the national principles of Smart Villages.
- Bringing together representatives of different EU funds, not only the representatives and stakeholders connected to CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027.
- Proposing recommendations of the specific measures.
- Capacity building at local level, where it is needed or asked, including encouragement to create village strategies.
- Identification of villages-in-transition, Smart villages and StartUp villages.
- Promoting the SV approach in rural areas.
- Carry out a short study to prioritise the needs of rural communities.
- Integrate results into the regular work of the relevant ministries and agencies (desirably it should result in changes to the legislation, and to the method / procedures of defining and developing policies).

3. Links to existing Smart Village exchanges

The actions are directly linked to communication/awareness actions carried out by the Latvian CAP Network Unit on the subject.

4. Membership

The membership of the taskforce includes representatives that are stakeholders connected to:

- public sector and policy planning, mostly the representatives from ministries, an association that unites and represents the interests of local governments,
- policy implementation, including representatives from LAGs and Regional institutions for municipal initiatives for joint development planning,
- public and private organisations, LEADER association,
- local authorities,
- research and innovation,
- networks, like the National NRN and community network,

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- thematic experts on the different aspects of SV development,
- representatives of the rural areas, communities, and SVs.

5. Planned actions

5.1 First set of taskforce meetings

Some **three meetings are expected** from early 2023 (until end of 2023).

The table below contains the list of meetings carried out and planned and their focus.

Planned timing	Focus of meeting and/or main outcomes (agreed next steps)
13 April 2023 with parallel working groups	Getting to know the concept of Smart Villages and building a shared vision of the concept of smart territories. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Concept of smart villages ✓ Ownership of the Policy and existing support under the CAP ✓ Agreement on the national SV definition ✓ Having an Owner of the SV policy ✓ Mapping of potential stakeholders and their responsibilities ✓ Analysis of the challenges of rural municipalities and the needs of rural development actors in terms of smart territory, formulation of recommendations and identification of good practices/case studies ✓ Identify the necessary points, capacities that need support ✓ Proposing recommendations of the specific measures
30 May 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Review of what was discussed and agreements on previous meeting ✓ Each stakeholder action involved in the creation of SV support system ✓ Action plan with responsibilities of stakeholders
24 October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Actions implemented by the participants within the action plan

5.2 Other actions of the Taskforce

What other actions are planned in the taskforce? You can submit a budget proposal for additional research and other activities for approval by the Core Team (request excel for this purpose), describe the relevant work, purpose, expected outcomes, how it will inform/contribute to the taskforce activities, etc.

How were these discussed/agreed with the members?

A short study will be carried out to prioritize the needs of rural communities in order to create a targeted support system of SV. The Methodology of the study will be clarified after the 1st Taskforce meeting.

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ANNEX I: LIST OF MEMBERS

Membership of the Taskforce

Name of member	Name of organisation of member	Type of organisation (policy, village, research, NGO, private...)	Short description of role of organisation in the taskforce (reason why member was included)	Member on GROOP?	Participated in 1 st meeting?	Participated in 2 nd meeting?
Liene Jansone	The Ministry of Agriculture	Ministry, (Policy) Managing Authority of CAP Strategic Plan	The Ministry of Agriculture is currently the only ministry that supports Smart Villages to some extent. It ensured that Smart Villages receive support in the LEADER program to support the creation of Smart Villages.			
Andra Karlsonē	The Ministry of Agriculture	Ministry, (Policy) Managing Authority of CAP Strategic Plan	The Ministry of Agriculture is currently the only ministry that supports Smart Villages to some extent. It ensured that Smart Villages receive support in the LEADER program to support the creation of Smart Villages.	x		
Jevgēnija Butņicka	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	Ministry, (Policy) Managing Authority	The official responsible for public participation in the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development is Coordination Senior expert of the department's Strategy and Sustainable Development.	x		
Ilze Trušinska	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	Ministry, (Policy) Managing Authority	The official responsible for public participation in the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development is Coordination Senior expert of the department's Strategy and Sustainable Development.			

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Mārtiņš Cimermanis	Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre / The National Rural Network	The National Rural Network	The National CAP Network is a platform of national importance for the exchange of information and knowledge between rural and agricultural participants, while creating opportunities to bring together various interested parties and partners for further cooperation in the creation of new knowledge and innovations within the framework of AKIS. NRN has developed its own methodology in working with Smart Villages and it encourages active action by communities to promote the development of their territory.	x		
<i>TBC</i>	Ministry of Economics					
Sniedze Sproģe	The Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments	An organisation representing the municipalities	A public organisation associating local go-vernments of the Republic of Latvia on a voluntary basis.	x		
Anita Sejicka	NGO "Latvian Rural Forum"	LEADER association	The association's mission is to promote the balanced development of the Latvian countryside, so that the Latvian countryside becomes a place where satisfied people live, who can realise their economic and social needs in their place of life. Organisation is implementing territorial cooperation projects and community support projects in cooperation with local action groups.	x		
Artis Gustovskis	Latvian Digital Innovation Hub	Latvian IT cluster	The organisation helps entrepreneurs find the most powerful smart tools and not get lost in the possibilities of digital solutions and knowledge.	x		

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leva Birbele	NGO "Let's do it ourselves!"	Local Action group	LAG that are familiar with the SV concept and SV operational approach, is implementing territorial cooperation projects and solutions in cooperation with the communities in their territory.	x		
Maija Rieksta	Vidzeme Planning Region	Regional Institution, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	Regional institutions have been formed based on municipal initiatives for joint development planning.			
Dace Dzenovska	Associate Professor in the Anthropology of Migration at the University of Oxford and the Principal Investigator of the EMPTINESS project	Research	<p>She holds doctoral and master's degrees in Social Cultural Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley, as well as an interdisciplinary master's degree in Humanities and Social Thought from New York University.</p> <p>Her research interests pertain to the changing relationships between people, territory, political authority, and capital in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. To that end, she has studied how residents of Latvia were summoned to change their understandings of self and community via European Union supported tolerance promotion projects. She has also studied what it means for the Latvian nation and state when most of its subjects migrate to live and work in other states – for example, in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Currently, she is researching the emptying towns and villages in Eastern Europe and Russia in order to understand what it means to live in and govern emptying</p>			

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			places, as well as what such places can tell about how flows of capital and shifts in political authority are reconfiguring the world we live in.			
Dāvids Svēte		Youth representative, eco community living	Youth representative, building eco houses and believes in the power of communities.			
TBC	NGO "Latvijas Mazpulki"	Non-governmental youth organisation	Today it is the largest and strongest youth non-governmental organisation in Latvia, which through practical work and informal education guarantees the growth of Latvian society leaders and young entrepreneurs, implements environmentally friendly actions and develops Latvian countryside attractive to young people.			
TBC	Ministry of Education and Science	Ministry, (Policy) Managing Authority				
Daiga Kalniņa	Alsunga Smart Village	Village	SR21 Village, one of the first SV in Latvia.	x		
Edgars Ricevs	NGO "Greenfest"	NGO	The purpose of the association is to promote the sustainable use of Latvia's natural resources and the planning of the sustainable development of the Gauja National Park, looking for innovative solutions for the mutual interaction of man, the environment and nature; To create and develop public environmental awareness, understanding and ethics, as well as to promote public participation in the protection of the environment and nature in order to create sustainable development of society and the Latvian state; Increasing public awareness of			

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			existing good practices related to environmentally friendly management and healthy lifestyle.			
Edvards Kušners	Latvia Bank, The Department of Sustainable Development					
Āris Ādleris	NGO "Alliance for Cross-Sectoral Sustainable Development"	NGO	The main activities of the association: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Capacity building; ✓ Civil society development; ✓ Sustainable and long-term planning 	x		
Ieva Jātniece	Community network "Sēlijas Salas"	Interterritorial LEADER cooperation project for sustainable development of region	To promote balanced economic and social development in the territory of Selia by activating the small settlements of Selia – "islands". Promote the development of entrepreneurship and the labour market at the regional level, as well as the general recognition of the region at the national and international level. To improve the economic potential of the "islands" for the development of competitive tourism products and common marketing based on traditional values and a unified concept.			
Ilze Turka	NGO "Partnership for Rural and the Sea"	Local Action group	LAG that are familiar with the SV concept and SV operational approach, is implementing territorial cooperation projects and solutions in cooperation with the communities in their territory.	x		
Inga Krekele	NGO "Biedrība "Daugavpils un Ilūkstes novadu partnerība "Kaimiņi"	Local Action group	LAG that are familiar with the SV concept and SV operational approach, is implementing territorial cooperation projects and solutions in cooperation with the communities in their territory.			

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Ieva Kalniņa	NGO “Cēsis district rural partnership”	Local Action group	LAG that are familiar with the SV concept and SV operational approach, is implementing territorial cooperation projects and solutions in cooperation with the communities in their territory.			
TBC	Kurzeme Planning Region	Regional Institution, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	Regional institutions have been formed based on municipal initiatives for joint development planning.			
TBC	Latgale Planning Region	Regional Institution, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	Regional institutions have been formed based on municipal initiatives for joint development planning.			
Regita Zeiļa	NGO “Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia”	NGO	The aim is to promote the development of social entrepreneurship in Latvia.			
Andris Bērziņš	TechHub Riga	NGO	TechHub Riga is a startup based community known for sharing knowledge and offering a platform for innovative entrepreneurship. Through various programs and events, we're reinforcing the existing tech ecosystem and building the next generation of founders.			
Daiga Mieriņa	The Economic, Agricultural, Environmental and Regional Policy Committee of the Saeima	Saeima				
Pēteris Vilks	The National Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre		The leading institution in national development planning and coordination in Latvia. CSCC is responsible for developing and monitoring the highest national development planning documents:			

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			National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021-2027 (NDP2027), National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014-2020 (NDP2020) and the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 (Latvia 2030), and implementation of national development planning documents in relation to the EU.			
TBC	The Ministry of Transport		The Ministry of Transport is a leading institution of state administration of transport and communication branches which elaborates legal acts and policy planning documents regulating the branch. It provides the implementation of the transport policy.			
Ilvija Ašmane	Aizkraukle Partnership	Local Action group	LAG that are familiar with the SV concept and SV operational approach, is implementing territorial cooperation projects and solutions in cooperation with the communities in their territory.			
Ieva Vītola-Deusa	NGO “Partnership for Rural and the Sea”	Local Action group	LAG that are familiar with the SV concept and SV operational approach, is implementing territorial cooperation projects and solutions in cooperation with the communities in their territory.	x		
Gunta Abaja	NGO “North Kurzeme Business Association”	Local Action group	LAG that are familiar with the SV concept and SV operational approach, is implementing territorial cooperation projects and solutions in cooperation with the communities in their territory.			
Līga Sausiņa	Chairperson of Sigulda County Municipal Council	Municipality	The chairwoman is aware of the great power of the community and its values, emphasizing the need for public			



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			participation in decision-making. Participates in the creation of the first bioregion by promoting organic agriculture etc.			
Andris Klepers	Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences	University	Vidzeme University associate professor, doctor of geography and researcher in the spatial analysis laboratory. His work focuses on geography, regional economy and tourism. Within the limits of his competencies, the professor looks for solutions for the sustainable development of the tourism industry, as well as delves into ecosystem services, landscape quality, urban-rural interaction, understanding mobility, or place marketing and branding issues.			



ANNEX II: MEETING REPORTS

1st Smart Villages Taskforce Meeting – [LATVIA]

Purpose of the meeting

The 1st meeting of the National Taskforce aimed to:

1. Bring together all the relevant stakeholders,
2. Receive their engagement for supporting the Smart Villages philosophy,
3. Mobilise stakeholders with capacity, ability and interest in shaping future Smart Villages policies,
4. Define the role of the Taskforce.

Date of the meeting

[DD/MM/YYYY – DD/MM/YYYY]

Location

Participation

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

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

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

What are the main findings/ lessons?

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

Next steps

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

Supporting documents

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

The event in pictures

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