



# SMART VILLAGE STRATEGY OF OSTANA (ITALY)



DECEMBER 2020

This strategy has been developed based on the template prepared by E4o (Project Coordinator) in the context of the 'Preparatory Action for Smart Rural Areas in the 21st Century' project funded by the European Commission. The opinions and views expressed in the strategy are those of the participant villages only and do not represent the European Commission's official position.

## Table of Contents

<b>FOREWORD: SMART RURAL OSTANA</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>I. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN ITALY	2
1.2 WHAT IS A 'VILLAGE' IN ITALY?	3
1.3 WHAT SMART IS FOR OSTANA	4
<b>II. CONTEXT</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 CONTEXT OF THE SMART VILLAGE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT	5
2.2 EXISTING STRATEGIES & INITIATIVES	6
2.2.1 LINKS TO EXISTING LOCAL STRATEGIES	6
2.2.2 LINKS TO HIGHER LEVEL (LOCAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL, EUROPEAN) STRATEGIES	6
2.2.3 REVIEW OF PAST AND ONGOING (FLAGSHIP) PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES	7
2.3 COOPERATION WITH OTHER VILLAGES	10
<b>III. KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF OSTANA</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VILLAGE AND RURAL AREA	11
3.2 KEY CHALLENGES	14
3.3 MAIN ASSETS & OPPORTUNITIES	16
3.4 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY	19
3.5 SWOT ANALYSIS	22
<b>IV. INTERVENTION LOGIC</b>	<b>24</b>
4.1 OVERALL OBJECTIVE	24
4.2 SPECIFIC & OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES IN RESPONSE TO SWOT	24
4.3 SMART SOLUTIONS: ACTIONS, OUTPUTS AND RESULTS	29
<b>V. MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING</b>	<b>34</b>
5.1 MANAGEMENT	34
5.2 MONITORING	35
<b>VI. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>35</b>
6.1 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND IN STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT	36
6.2 PLANNED ACTIONS TO MOBILISE STAKEHOLDERS, CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS RAISING AMONG CITIZENS	37



## Foreword: Smart Rural Ostana

Ostana is an Occitan multicentric settlement in the north-western Alps, in the Po valley, facing Monviso mountain at an altitude of 1000-2000 mt on the sea. Depopulation strongly affected the village along decades: in 1921 there were 1200 inhabitants, while at the end of the 20th century only 5 residents were left in the village, with a depopulation rate of 99,5%.

Ostana has already reversed the process of depopulation and the number of inhabitants is growing. Today 50 residents live in Ostana all the year long, while in the summer and high season the number grows to 500 tourists and second-home owners overall.

The rebirth of the village began in the late 1980s, when a bunch of former Ostana inhabitants (at the time living in Turin) took the decision to come back to the village with the idea of starting a process of high-quality architectural renovation based on very strict rules, and the protection and promotion of alpine landscape and culture.

Giacomo Lombardo, Mayor of the village from 1985 to 1995 and then from 2004 to 2019, was able along the years to attract a network of qualified supporters and build a system of skills and alliances from outside the valley.

A small and tough community created together with the Mayor the conditions for a better quality of life in the village based on architectural renovation, providing services to the inhabitants, developing both traditional and contemporary cultural projects, and taking care of the deployment of renewable energy, agriculture and forest management. In 2017 Ostana also welcomed a group of asylum seekers: some of them are now living and working in the village on a permanent basis.

Ostana is one of the 100 smallest towns in Italy, but the story of its regeneration shows that the strategy planned in the late 1980s, and still in ongoing implementation, shows how innovation is possible even in such a peculiar demographic situation. The experience of Ostana demonstrates that small and marginal areas might be the model of future and wise development. Ostana is a collective project about living in the Alps in a contemporary and *glocal* way and it is recognized as a leading model of alpine regeneration. In order to strengthen its vocation and avoid any real estate and touristic speculation, Ostana needs now to foster a new liveability in the village facilitating new permanent residential settlements, easing the creation of new entrepreneurship and ensuring the cohesion of local community.



## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Local governance in Italy

The Italian Republic is divided into regions (regioni), provinces (province), and municipalities (comuni). The Region is the most important local state administrative body provided for by the Italian Constitution. Italian territory is divided into twenty Regions.

The Province is the intermediate local body, between the Municipality and the Region. As part of its planning, the Province is responsible for the coordination of Municipalities' proposals; it contributes to establishing regional programs and works on the basis of multi-annual programs, both in general as well as those aimed at specific sectors. Italy has eighty-eight provinces.

In the Italian system, the Municipality is the basic governance and representative body, responsible for the definition of, and compliance with, the municipal budget, town planning, public policy and security, traffic, management of public buildings, waste disposal, management of the impact of weather and natural disasters.

Ostana is an Italian municipality (Comune). Mayor and City Council are directly elected by the resident population. Administratively, it is located in the Cuneo Province and Piemonte Region.

The Mayor is the legal representative of the Municipality, head of the local authority, elected every 5 years. Next local elections in Ostana will be held in 2024. The Municipal Board (Giunta Comunale) is appointed by the Mayor, working in cooperation with the Mayor in the implementation of the broad guidelines established by the City Council (Consiglio Comunale).

The City Council is the administrative and governing body and the number of its members vary according to the demographic dimension of the municipality: in the case of Ostana, the City Council is composed of 10 members as indicated by Italian law.

The village with its 89 inhabitants, belongs to the category of small Italian municipalities, namely municipalities with less than 5000 inhabitants. It is a member of Unione dei Comuni del Monviso (Union of municipalities in the Monviso mountain area), an aggregation of municipalities sharing the common management of services with the aim of improving the efficiency and save resources.

In relation to national policies, Ostana refers to:

UNCCEM. Unione Nazionale Comuni Comunità Enti Montani (National Union of Mountain Municipalities and Authorities).

<https://uncem.it/>

Uncem is a national association of mountain municipalities and communities, which has been gathering and representing for more than sixty years municipalities located fully or partially in a mountain area, mountain communities and the Unions of mountain municipalities, as well as associating various administrations and bodies (provinces, consortia, chambers of commerce) operating in the mountains, representing a territory corresponding to 54% of the Italian surface, and in which over 10 million Italians live.

ANCI – National Association of Cities and Municipalities

[www.anci.it](http://www.anci.it)

Ostana is a member of ANCI, which is the association representing Municipalities at institutional level in the dialogue with national and regional authorities on all the main topics of interest of the Municipalities (local finance, welfare, social inclusion, innovation, services, etc.). Ostana is an active member of the local regional branch Anci Piemonte. In that framework, Ostana takes part in the activities related to small villages (Piccoli Comuni) and shared management of local services.

SNAI. Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne (National Strategy for Inner Areas)

<http://www.programmazioneeconomica.gov.it/2019/05/23/strategia-nazionale-delle-aree-interne>

In September 2012 a National Strategy for the Development of the so-called “Aree interne” (Inner Areas) was launched at governmental level, with the aim at of improving the quantity and quality of services such as education, healthcare and mobility, as well as promoting development projects focusing on the enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage of these areas, with an emphasis on local production chains.

The National Law on Small Municipalities. Law of the 18 April 2007.

This law, as described in article 1, “promotes and favors the sustainable economic, social, environmental and cultural development of small municipalities, (...) promotes the demographic balance of the country, encouraging people to take residence in these municipalities, in addition to protecting and enhancing their natural, rural, historical-cultural and architectural heritage”. Article 1 of the new Law provides for the definition of a “small municipality”. The first part of this definition refers to its size. In order to be defined as “small”, the municipality must have a resident population of up to 5,000, or being the result of a merger between municipalities, both with a population of less than 5,000. In addition to the size requirement, the municipality must fall into one of the types listed in the same article: municipalities located in areas affected by hydrogeological instability; municipalities lagging behind significantly in terms of the economy, and municipalities where the resident population has decreased significantly compared to the 1981 census, etc.

### 1.2 What is a ‘village’ in Italy?

Village (*borgo, paese, villaggio*) in Italian refers to small size rural settlements. Villages may be administratively autonomous in the form of Municipalities, or may be aggregated in bigger administrative contexts (Municipalities, Unions of Municipalities, etc.). About 70% of Municipalities in Italy have less than 5000 inhabitants, that is the administrative recognized limit of population to be defined as a small Municipality (according to the law n.158/2017).

At national level, around 100 Municipalities are defined as “very small villages” (micro-comuni) with less than 150 inhabitants. Ostana belongs to this category, having 89 residents at present. This number decreases to about 50 residents if just referred to people living all the year long in the village, including winter, which is the hardest time of the year to live in areas such as Ostana due to severe weather conditions.



Villages can be multicentric settlements (like Ostana) or can be territorially more homogeneous, with a village center where most of the population is concentrated.

In the country, villages are identified mainly as places with a low density of inhabitants, usually offering less services than cities. Rural youth often tend to leave the village for higher education and better employment opportunities, and often do not come back to live and work in small villages. When the village is located in proximity of a big city, commuting workers and families choose to live there for better residential opportunities, having clear benefits in terms of financial condition and general lifestyle.

In peripheral areas such as Alps and Apennines, villages have suffered a severe drainage of population during the second half of the XX century, due to industrial development of cities and modernization of the country. Wide parts of the country have been abandoned and became merely nostalgic places to go back on holiday mainly in the summer or winter season.

### 1.3 What smart is for Ostana

Being a very small village in Italy can bring to having a marginal vision of the future. For Ostana this is very far from being true. Along the decades, the municipality and its community opened to external and forward-thinking visions for the construction of a sustainable future for the residents. The community, although preserving traditions, became itself a core of innovation, sometimes foregoing national trends.

Ostana became along the years a collective project about living in the Alps in a contemporary and *glocal* way and it is recognized as a collaborative model of alpine regeneration and resilience.

The Ostana smart strategy is based on the growth of the village quantitatively and qualitatively. Ostana aims to attract new qualified inhabitants with different professional competencies: professionals, researchers, farmers, shepherds, artists, freelancers, with special attention to city quitters. The covid-19 emergency is increasing this phenomenon, with a lot of people opting out of increasingly regulated and pressured urban spaces, looking for spaces to explore and experiment in their own disciplines, in a nice and relaxing environment, with a cohesive community.

Ostana, in order to implement its smart strategy has to face some weaknesses: a better access to broadband, mobility, reduction in state transfers, the lack of affordable housing. By following this roadmap Ostana aims to be, in the near future, a living laboratory for testing innovative solutions for small and medium villages in Italy and Europe, in collaboration with Universities, Institutes, enterprises:

The strategy takes into account different aspects connected to quality of life and is nurtured by a continuous and osmotic exchange among different scales and trends.

## II. CONTEXT

### 2.1 Context of the smart village strategy development

The process of creation of a smart strategy in a small village as Ostana needs to be necessarily connected to the current condition of small municipalities in Italy, which are suffering the effects of decade of lack of investments by higher levels of governance (provinces, regions, central government) and reduction of funds transferred by the national government to municipalities. The effects are clearly under the eyes of citizens and visitors, such as the lack of effective management of local infrastructures (roads, etc.) and services, which are suffering the effects of the climate change which are bringing exception rainfalls and meteorological events.

Fostering a stronger collaboration among different levels of governance is therefore seen as a decisive factor for the wider success of the Ostana's Smart Strategy, which could be the engine for promoting a stronger connection with regional and national strategies, promoting innovative actions to be necessarily paired with basic interventions in the framework of a balanced, multilevel governance.

Furthermore, an operational link will be necessary in relation to the location of the resources under the next EU, regional national programming period 2021-2027, in order to allocate funds in an effective way, covering the most urgent aspects of daily management and innovation in Ostana.

Mountain inhabitants have been historically very flexible and resilient, possessing a wide range of skills to take care of private assets as well as of the common good. In a similar way, new entrepreneurs, innovators and activators of change need to interact with the surrounding environment using different strategies and skills to succeed.

The creation of a lively community is the result of an optimal synergy among local administration, private entrepreneurs, regional and national entities.

The Smart Rural 21 call was forwarded by UNCEM to the Municipality and was immediately recognized as an important opportunity by the mayor, the council and the local community, in order to strengthen and improve a local development strategy that has already been drafted and fine-tuned along the last decades. This strategy contributed to make the local community more resilient and to respond to external shocks with collaborative responses which made the village a model of collaborative innovation and inclusion.

One of the main examples is given by the experience of inclusion of asylum seekers during the migratory crisis in 2015-2016, which saw a considerable number of refugees and migrants asking for asylum and integration in Italy. One of the national reactions to this phenomenon was the development of an increased system of widespread reception of asylum seekers, in order to avoid the overcrowding of asylum seekers and migrants in precarious structures in big cities and towns. The Municipality of Ostana was one of the few small villages in Italy to spontaneously propose to set up a CAS (Centro di Accoglienza Straordinaria / centre for emergency reception) and manage it directly. This experience contributed to raise the awareness among residents on the need of coordinated and integrated strategies for sustainable local growth, created through the collaboration among residents, stakeholders and local institutions.



### 2.2 Existing strategies & initiatives

#### 2.2.1 Links to existing local strategies

Ostana municipality developed its strategy from the late 1980s focusing on a multilevel approach to become an appealing place to live, through the following flagship projects:

- **LANDSCAPE AND ARCHITECTURE:** the recovery and valorization of the traditional architecture was a priority for the local authority. A strong focus on architecture and energy efficiency is combined to landscape valorization and protection of natural heritage, as well as the network of historical paths and stone walls.
- **ENERGY:** the village has implemented some smart solution for renewables such as solar panels, geothermal solutions, renewable public lighting.
- **MOBILITY:** in order to decrease emissions and overcrowding, Ostana organized some shuttle service at tourist peak times.
- **AGRICULTURE AND FOREST MANAGEMENT:** Ostana is dealing with abandonment of green spaces in a framework of climate crisis by promoting sustainable agriculture and forest management, also through collective action and involvement of the local community. This is the case of the Landowners Association, that manages unused land promoting new businesses in agriculture.
- **BASIC SERVICES AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP:** While basic medical assistance and postal services are currently guaranteed, new services are under development. In fact, the Municipality has encouraged in early 2020 the foundation of the social enterprise (VISO A VISO) for the management of public spaces, culture and the provision of basic and innovative services targeting elderly people and to provide other special needs (e.g. medicaments and goods delivery, and maintenance services).
- **CULTURE:** The Occitan Culture and the safeguard of minority languages are central to the life of the village, as well as educational and research projects involving Universities, research centers, academies. Many local NGOs are carrying on activities related to media production, cinema, politics, environment, sustainability and youth. A new Library (BAO, Biblioteca Aperta di Ostana / Ostana Open Library) as a multifunctional hub and cultural infrastructure is now under development, managed by VISO A VISO Social enterprise.

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

The Municipality have shown along the decades a proven capacity to carry on fundraising and project management activities at regional, national and international level through the LEADER programs (GAL Terre Occitane), European and national projects.

Public infrastructures in Ostana have been supported for a total amount of nearly 6.000.000€ funds including: EAFRD, European agricultural fund for rural development, “6000 campanili” National Programme funded by the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure

<http://www.mit.gov.it/mit/site.php?p=cm&o=vd&id=2979>, regional funds for tourism and others.

Architecture, energy efficiency, community energy and mobility are topics carried out by Ostana in line with the EU 2030 climate & energy framework and its targets, that are implemented in regional and



local legislation and guidelines. A Local Plan for Energy and Climate has already been developed and will be further deepened thanks to the participation to a Life Climate Action Project (GreenChainSAW4Life).

Sustainable agriculture and forestry projects and initiatives are carried on taking into account the EU 2020 Biodiversity strategy, the EU Forest strategy and the regional Rural development plan. The municipality has joined the Covenant of Mayors, the world's largest movement for local climate and energy actions and is implementing a local energy community based on the use of smart grid and renewables ([www.covenantofmayors.eu](http://www.covenantofmayors.eu)).

Furthermore, specific actions on building restoration, culture, services have been funded by regional banking foundations such as Cassa di Risparmio di Torino, Compagnia di San Paolo, Cassa di Risparmio di Cuneo.

### 2.2.3 Review of past and ongoing (flagship) projects and initiatives

#### **PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURES AND CULTURE AS A DRIVER FOR GROWTH**

Ostana developed relevant public infrastructures used for activities related healthcare, work, leisure, culture and community life: Lou Pourtoun Cultural center, La Mizoun de la Villo (hosting healthcare services and a bakery), a covered market structure, an outdoor climbing wall, La Galaberna mountain hut-hotel, the Ethnographic museum, two structures for herdsman.

Along with the natural alpine environment, public spaces and the ongoing projects (co-working spaces, library, educational facilities) aimed at attracting new qualified inhabitants, Ostana is not only a beautiful touristic destination, but also a nice place to live in, both for farmers and local enterprises and for professionals and researchers who can do smart working and are looking for a healthier and more relaxing environment.

All basic services are provided (cash dispenser, post office, health service, culture), including public transport for young students who attend daily classes at the schools located in Paesana and Saluzzo.

Ostana has been building its reputation in Italy and the entire Alpine region triggering the rebirth of the village through high quality contemporary architecture, at the same time recovering local and traditional savoir-faire and skills. It is now a renowned alpine architecture laboratory.

In the years Ostana received the following awards and recognitions in Italy and abroad:

- Fare Paesaggio Award 2016 [www.premiofarepaesaggio.it](http://www.premiofarepaesaggio.it),
- Cresco Award 2017 <https://crescoaward.ideatre60.it/>
- European Award on Landscape MIBACT (Italian Ministry for Culture and Tourism) in 2017 (special mention)  
<http://www.premiopaesaggio.beniculturali.it/category/edizione-2016-2017/>
- Constructive Alps. Finalist 2020 and 2018 (Lou Pourtoun and Mizoun de la Villo)  
<http://www.constructivealps.net/it/>
- Architecture Venice Biennale in 2018 (Lou Pourtoun and a covered market structure called Porto ousitano) <http://www.arcipelagoitalia.it>

Full list: <https://www.comune.ostana.cn.it/riconoscimenti>

Other articles mentioning Ostana's experience:

<http://www.ilgiornaledellefondazioni.com/content/focus-montagna-xxi-secolo-l%E2%80%99affaire-ostana-o-della-rigenerazione-molteplice>

[https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2016/02/29/crotti\\_de\\_rossi\\_forsans\\_lou\\_pourtoun.html](https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2016/02/29/crotti_de_rossi_forsans_lou_pourtoun.html)

### RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ostana municipality in the last decade attracted many researchers, professionals and higher education institutions that found a fecund place for workshops, classes, creative/artistic projects, experimental projects in both an astonishing landscape and excellent educational facilities. Collaborations have been consolidated with the following entities:

-Politecnico University of Turin: laboratory classes, conferences, projects for restoration of public buildings.

<http://international.polito.it/it/content/download/2484/42864/file/Locandina%20Summerschool%201A-M%202020.pdf>

-Alpstream, Alpine River Study Centre: setting up of a research laboratory, educational and research classes, conferences. <http://www.parcomonviso.eu/visite/i-centri-visita/il-centro-studi-fiumi-alpini>

-Monviso Institute - Research institute on sustainability: setting up of a research laboratory, educational and research classes, conferences. <http://monviso-institute.org/>

-L'aura scuola di Ostana - videomaker school: classes for professionals. <http://www.laurascuoladiostana.it/>

- Ambornetti Retreat: entrepreneurial project developing a new “techno rural” settlement, featuring a relationship between multiple projects and activities. <https://ambornetti.it/en/>

- From december 2020 Ostana is hosting a self sufficient housing projects: the Chestnut cabin, a project by Iris srl.

<https://www.facebook.com/iris.playground.for.new.ideas/>

Ostana is establishing its reputation as a testing ground for innovative research, design, artistic production.

### FOREST MANAGEMENT

In the past years Ostana has been involved in different projects regarding collective and sustainable forest management and local wood supply chain valorization. The projects, funded through different regional and European programs (Rural development plan, Life Climate Action) or managed on a voluntary basis, aim at launching a new model of forest management able to include social, climatic and economic objectives and needs:

- Landowners Association: gathers abandoned lands in order to manage them and offer opportunities to agricultural enterprises and forest companies.
- Project CoBoFi: is aimed at the production of a local high quality and hi-tech parquet, entirely made of local wood
- Project Consorzio Forestale del Monviso has the purpose of creating a forest Consortium, able to manage local forests and revitalize local wood supply chain through collective management of public and private forests, involving citizens and forest companies

- GreenChainSAW4Life Project will develop a multifunctional Decision Support System that will combine local energy consumption and emissions, climate risks and availability of timber and biomass in order to create a local strategy plan for the transition to a bio-economic system. <http://www.greenchainsaw4life.eu/en/home-eng/>

### **SOCIAL INCLUSION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS**

During 2015-16 Ostana's Municipality set up a CAS (Centro di Accoglienza Straordinaria/ Centre for Emergency Reception) and managed it directly. The project aimed at welcoming the asylum seekers in the local community, providing them Italian language courses, cultural mediation, legal protection, professional empowerment, integration in the Italian society.

The project lasted from 2017 to 2019, welcoming six asylum seekers with excellent results in terms of social and professional integration. Four of them decided to remain in Ostana at the end of the project after having received the refugee status and two are still working and living in Ostana at present.

This was a very good result for the village, both at human and cultural level, because it attracts new inhabitants and finally it develops a new economy connected to the reception of asylum seekers. The results of the project also offer a good example of a win-win strategy between hosting migrants and stimulating interactions with residents, valid both for cities and small villages.

The project is totally in line with the recent story of Ostana, focused on the reconstruction of the community and not on a purely esthetic restoration of the hamlets, which would be a fake rebirth just made up of second houses. Ostana fostered the birth of a new community: a mixture of old and new inhabitants, rural workers, entrepreneurs, researchers, artists and intellectuals, asylum seekers: all these new residents were welcomed to Ostana with the only condition of being an active part of the village.

The project was supported by Ministry of Home Affairs' funds, covering daily subsistence allowance for asylum seekers and related services for local inclusion. With these funds the Municipality was allowed to pay one FTE (through the Union of Municipalities of Monviso) for all the activities developed by the project (material reception, legal advice, cultural mediation, linguistic education, school, professional training course).

The association Bouligar, based in Ostana, developed a cultural program about migration, funded by Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation, for increasing awareness among citizens.

The project stopped due to a change in the national legislation, but the Municipality still hopes to find new tools to ensure its sustainability.

## 2.3 Cooperation with other villages

Ostana is cooperating with other villages at different levels.

### Cooperation at local level

- Ostana is member of Unione Montana dei comuni del Monviso (Union of Mountain municipalities of Monviso) sharing management of trails, tourism, energy and forest, <http://www.unionemonviso.it/>
- Ostana cooperates with the Municipality of Saluzzo on tourism projects such as “Terres Monviso” and EU co-funded projects.
- Ostana cooperates with nearby authorities i.e. Po, Bronda, Infernotto valleys planning innovative projects on forest management (<http://www.greenchainsaw4life.eu/en/home-eng/>)

### Cooperation at regional and national level

Ostana is member of the following associations / networks:

- I borghi più belli d’Italia - The most beautiful Italian villages. Events, exchange and communication (<https://borghipiubelliditalia.it/en/>).
- Uncem: Unione nazionale comuni comunità enti montani (National union of mountain municipalities, communities, institutions) <https://uncem.it/>. Ostana plays an important role in the union enhancing mountain role in regional and national policy
- ANCI – Italian Association of Cities and Municipalities [www.anci.it](http://www.anci.it) . Ostana deals with associated services.
- Parco Regionale del Monviso, Regional Monviso Park.<http://www.parcomonviso.eu> Ostana belongs to the natural park and collaborate with the authority in several programs such as the Monviso Transboundary Biosphere Reserve of Unesco and the Alpstream research centre.
- Rete dei comuni solidali. Network of solidarity municipalities. <https://comunisolidali.org/>
- Legambiente, Environmental preservation association, <https://www.legambiente.it/>
- Borghi sostenibili, Sustainable villages, <https://www.italiachecambia.org/2018/02/borghi-sostenibili-del-piemonte-localita-per-un-turismo-responsabile/>

### Cooperation at european level

- Ostana is a member of Alleanza nelle Alpi, Alpenallianz: <https://alpenallianz.org/en/about-us>

Along the years of the rebirth of the village the main lesson from cooperation was the acknowledgement of the existence of a wider community, of the necessity to think beyond the village itself, beyond its geographical boundaries and dimensions. Thanks to the Alleanza nelle Alpi network, exchanges between villages have empowered the Ostana’s community with knowledge of sustainability strategies, technologies and innovations. The national network “Borghi più belli d’Italia” (The Most Beautiful Italian Villages) gave greater touristic visibility to Ostana and access to a wider network of cultural institutions and associations which made it possible to offer events in the village itself. Every network in which Ostana is involved has made Ostana a stronger village from different points of view.

Ostana, along the years, welcomed different delegations from villages involved in national and European projects, such as MAB (Man and Biosphere) Unesco, Legambiente national and international camps and Italian networks in which it is involved as a member, strengthening the local economy as well.

Former mayor Giacomo Lombardo and the actual Mayor Silvia Rovere are enthusiast network builders: in this shared and inherited ability lies one of Ostana's strengths, together with a very welcoming and open-minded community.

### III. KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF OSTANA

#### 3.1 Key characteristics of the village and rural area

Ostana is an Occitan multicentric settlement in the north-western Alps of the Cuneo Province. The village is located in high Po valley (1.000-2.000 mt on the sea) and it faces Monviso, one of the most emblematic mountains of the Italian and international alpinism.

Until the end of the First World War (1921), the village hosted approximately 1.200 people, with an economy based on subsistence farming and few other basic activities serving the local community, since the village was scarcely served by infrastructures (electricity, roads, phone lines). During the economic boom after the Second World War, the fast growth of near urban centers (Turin on top of all) attracted a great part of Ostana's population, thus causing a dramatic process of out-migration. As a consequence, at the end of the 20th century only **five** people still lived in the village, with a depopulation rate of 99,5%.

The rebirth of the village began in the late 1980s, when a group of former Ostana inhabitants at that time living in Turin gained Municipal elections with a new vision for the village, focused on the valorization of the traditional alpine architecture, Occitan culture, natural-agricultural heritage and, in most recent years, sustainable economy and renewable energy. The community was able, through the years, to attract a network of qualified supporters and build a system of competences and alliances from outside the valley. A small and tough community together with a charismatic mayor created the conditions for a better quality of life in the village going on with architectural renovation, providing services to the inhabitants, developing both traditional and contemporary cultural projects, and taking care of the deployment of renewable energy, agriculture and forest management. In 2017 Ostana also welcomed a group of asylum seekers, some of which are now living and working on a permanent basis in the village.

Today, the official residents are about 90, while 50 are the people effectively living in the village in winter. However, due to high seasonality of touristic fluxes, in summer and high season the number grows to 500 tourists and second home owners overall. The initiatives promoted by the local administrations and the different cultural organizations allowed to attract new inhabitants with high educational and professional backgrounds that successfully relaunched local economy with new activities related to several fields, eco-tourism, organic farming and agriculture, scientific research, arts.



For comparability, some of the most relevant quantitative information should ideally include (based on official statistical data whenever possible):

### 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
Crissolo	150	5 km
Oncino	80	10 km
Paesana	3.000	15 km
Saluzzo	17.000	36 km
Pinerolo	35.000	43 km
Cuneo	56.000	68 km
Alba	31.000	85 km
Torino	870.000	93 km

Table 2: Key statistics

Indicator	Value (Ostana)	Value (nat. average)	Comments	Source of information
Population <i>Out of which migrants</i> <i>Out of which people with disabilities</i>	89 10% 4%	60.244.639 8.8% 5%		Source: Internal municipal population records and national ISTAT data 2019
Elderly dependency ratio %	45%	35.6%	The ratio between the elderly population (aged 65 and over) and the working age population (aged 15-64)	Source: Internal municipal population records and national ISTAT data 2019
Unemployment rate %	Not available	9.7%	Percentage of unemployed aged 15 and over, divided by the labour force (those aged 15 and over)	National ISTAT data July 2020

Indicator	Value (Ostana)	Value (nat. average)	Comments	Source of information
Employment rate %	Not available	57.8%	Percentage of those employed who are aged 15 and over divided by the working age population (aged 15-64)	National ISTAT data july 2020
Participation rate %	Not available	62.4%	Percentage of the labour force aged 15 and over divided by the population of those aged 65 and over	National ISTAT data 2020
<b>Age structure:</b>				
Share of population aged 0-14	6%	13%		Source: Internal municipal population records and national ISTAT data 2019
Share of population aged 15-59	55%	58%		Source: Internal municipal population records and national ISTAT data 2019
Share of population aged 60-65	10%	6%		Source: Internal municipal population records and national ISTAT data 2019
Share of population aged 65+	29%	23%		Source: Internal municipal population records and national ISTAT data 2019
<b>Educational attainment:</b>				
Share of workers with tertiary education	16%	17%		Source: Internal municipal population records; ISTAT
Share of workers with primary education	18	29,7%		Source: Internal municipal population records; ISTAT

## 3.2 Key challenges

### 3.2.1 Limited number of residents

The most important challenge for Ostana is to increment the number of residents living permanently in the village reaching the minimum number of 100 people. This will strengthen the community and reinforce the presence of services on the territory. It is well known that living in the Alps in a contemporary way means to build new complex and cohesive communities. In Ostana this process has already been ongoing since decades, along with an action to protect the natural alpine environment and public spaces. This action contributes to attracting new qualified inhabitants. Along the years, Ostana became not only a beautiful touristic destination, but also a nice place to live, both for farmers, shepherds, local enterprises and for professionals, researchers, artists, freelancers who might do smart working and are looking for a healthier and more relaxing environment.

Contemporary new inhabitants, adults and children, need social and cultural meeting places to foster community cohesion, to get high quality cultural incentives and to be encouraged to settle and remain in Ostana.

### 3.2.2 Seasonal (unbalanced) tourism

A demanding challenge is to increment visitor arrivals in the low tourist season, trying to avoid pressure on the village at peak times. This would have a strong effect on sustainability of local enterprises and settlement of new inhabitants.

### 3.2.3 Lack of fast broadband

Like many areas in the Alps, the lack of infrastructure also includes the unavailability of fast broadband, which creates a digital divide between the villages of the valley and urban areas. This disadvantage prevents the full development of on-going projects and a huge number of services (smart social services e.g. health-care and education, smart working and e-commerce) both to the local community and researchers and entrepreneurs that Ostana is trying to attract.

### 3.2.4 Lack of affordable houses

In Ostana there is a good number of high-quality architectures, many excellent private restorations (mainly as vacation units), though paradoxically a few affordable housing solutions for young/low income families that might come to live and work permanently in the village.

Due to the increasing popularity of the village many investors came to Ostana and restored houses for vacation. The real estate market is at present distorted, having high prizes for restoration, houses not suitable for families living all year long in the village due for example to lack of efficient heating systems. The Municipality is planning the recovery of some buildings in la Villo hamlet (the main one in the village), as already happened in the 1990s, to activate a social housing program.

This becomes particularly evident nowadays when the pandemic has highlighted how the urban spaces are too dense and tend to hold most of the causes of the emergency we are living. The tendency will focus on relocation of families in smaller cities and villages, in order to find better life conditions in case of new epidemic restrictions. This is a topic that might be an important opportunity of growth for villages such as Ostana.

### 3.2.5 Pressure on mobility and economic resource at peak times

Ostana is located in a small valley, nearly 2 hours from Turin and 30 minutes from Saluzzo, the biggest town in the area where high schools, cultural infrastructures and train/bus stations are located. The territory of the Municipality stretches from around 900m to 2000m.

The scattered hamlets of the village, at different elevations, are connected by small narrow streets. No public transport is currently available, except a school bus for students.

In high season, when the number of inhabitants and visitors increases, parking places are not sufficient and the traffic has a strong impact on daily life. So, both for security and environmental reasons, a sustainable mobility solution must be implemented in the village and in the whole valley, creating ways for collaboration with neighbouring villages.

Economic activities are under pressure at peak times while are unloaded in the rest of the year: the creation of a constant working economic flow is complicated by this factor connected to the seasonality of the offer. The community is trying to promote activities all year long in order to stabilise overall economic income.

### 3.2.6 Biodiversity/traditional landscape loss, difficulties in land management and barriers to new agri-businesses

In centuries of strict and harmonious coexistence between Ostana's community and the environment, likewise in the rest of the Alps, the territory was transformed into a complex pattern of semi-natural ecosystems (rangelands and pastures, crop fields, forests, wetlands, etc) characterized by high biodiversity, where human agricultural activities were part of the natural balance.

After the out-migration and the consequent abandonment of agriculture and farming, this balance was broken, and such semi-natural ecosystems were abandoned and were replaced by new born unmanaged forests and bushlands with lower biodiversity, high hydrogeological risk, blocking new agricultural/livestock farming/forest activities. Besides the lack of manpower, the recovery of abandoned land through sustainable agriculture, farming and forestry is made difficult by the excessive fragmentation of land parcels, that prevents new businesses to start the activities.

### 3.2.7 Climate risks

As reported by the Alpine Convention, the Alps are among the ecosystems most threatened by the climate crisis. Among the certain impacts, water is one of the biggest issues. With the variation of precipitation patterns, the decrease of snowfalls will impact on the availability of water in summer, both for domestic and farming purposes (pasture management depends on water availability). The exceptional rainfalls are more and more causing hydrogeological instability, alternated to drought periods that will increase the frequency of wildfires. Thus, adaptation and mitigation measures have to be undertaken in order to contrast such new challenges.

### 3.2.8 Energy poverty and transition to renewables

The forthcoming Green Deal set the ambitious objective to cut GHG emissions of 55% by 2030. The achievement of this goal is very difficult for mountainous and low-density settlements like Ostana

because there are currently few solutions for affordable and environmentally-friendly technologies able to provide heat and power on the small scale. Since it is not always possible to rely on wind, solar and hydro power for geomorphological barriers, a smart power system based on a balanced mix of renewables must be implemented on a larger area, with the creation of a renewable energy community. Also the generation of thermic power is a relevant issue: due to the impossibility to develop a methane network (a fossil but less impacting energy carrier), heating systems are powered by diesel or LPG in biggest buildings, while households often rely on traditional wood stoves without any filters for the particulates. The lack of locally provided certified wood-based fuels with low humidity causes a further risk of direct and indirect pollution. The aforementioned energy community should be thus capable to provide high quality intermediate energy carriers based on forest biomass and other locally available materials, in order to completely satisfy the energy needs of the local community.

### 3.3 Main assets & opportunities

#### 3.3.1 Mont-viso transboundary biosphere reserve

Ostana is located in the Mont-Viso Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, included in the Unesco World Network of Biosphere Reserves, a glacial cirque situated between the Alpine mountains and the Mediterranean. It is surrounded by river valleys and high-altitude lakes and has a dry and sunny climate. With 20 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, the area has a relatively low population density. Human activities are linked to the local culture and include high-mountain agriculture, forestry and handicrafts.

International nature conservation bodies, such as Natura 2000 and Important Birds Areas (IBAs) with corresponding Italian designations (SIC, ZPS) have recognized the importance of different areas of this biosphere reserve.

The whole biosphere reserve receives many visitors throughout the year and tourism plays a major role in its economy. Ostana welcomes especially low-impact, sustainable tourism (hiking, trekking, biking), often in cooperation with Monviso Regional Park.

#### 3.3.2 Cohesive, integrated local community and strong leadership

Ostana is located in a mountain and marginal territory, but thanks to a small but highly motivated community and excellent local leaders, Ostana has been able to take decisive actions in reversing the national trend of depopulation and unemployment and triggering the process of rebirth and it is now considered a renowned mountain repopulation laboratory.

Ostana's community is varied. There are people who were born in Ostana before 1950 and came back to the village after having migrated to a bigger town; younger people who left bigger towns and chose to live in the village; second home owners concretely involved in the life of the village. Groups are organized in associations depending on the main interest of the members.

In Ostana high levels of educational attainment and civic participation, shared knowledge and active networks contribute to the social cohesion and the growth of the community.



There is a strong sense of community and people in Oстана are directly organizing themselves in informal groups (from 8 to 80 years old) in the collaborative care of the commons, especially natural common assets like woods and paths.

There is also a group of temporary residents (cultural operators, artists, intellectuals, researchers, professors) who actively participate in the projects and life of the village, and also as ambassadors and networkers.

The average age of the community is 50 years, considerably younger than the other villages in the area.

### Leaders:

Mayor Silvia Rovere (2 February 1974) mayor since 2019 residing in Oстана since 2011. Entrepreneur, manager of the mountain hut-hotel “La Galaberna”, the local shop and the touristic office. Mother to three sons, an untiring animator of the Oстана’s community.

<https://www.targatocn.it/2019/06/11/mobile/leggi-notizia/argomenti/politica/articolo/silvia-rovere-e-il-primi-sindaco-donna-di-ostana-mi-mettero-al-servizio-della-comunita-con-mo.html>

Former Mayor Giacomo Lombardo (29 may 1943), mayor of Oстана since 1985 for two mandates and from 2004 to 2019, now deputy mayor. Emblematic figure of the Oстана renaissance, president of “Chambra d’Oc” (Association for minority language safeguard), an untiring funding seeker, had the foresight to welcome to Oстана politicians, intellectuals, researchers, thus building a network of strong supporters of the village development. He got the prestigious “Vassallo National Prize” in 2015 for best practices in Italian municipalities active on legalità and effective local governance (<https://www.comune.ostana.cn.it/riconoscimenti/premio-vassallo-2015>).

### 3.3.3 Public infrastructures

The most relevant strategy adopted by the Municipality in the last thirty years is the creation of innovative public infrastructures in order to attract economic and cultural activities, thus facilitating new permanent residential settlements and finally inverting the process of depopulation, ensuring the community cohesion.

The Municipality found the necessary European and regional funding for the regeneration of public infrastructure and provided resources for architectural rules to recover the houses, with private owners working in synergy with the Municipality (10.000.000€).

Synergies between public administration, private entrepreneurs and the community have been a fundamental prerequisite for the success of new enterprises such as Galaberna mountain hut-hotel, Bakery “Quel Po di pan”, a covered leisure/market structure, an outdoor climbing wall, two structures for herdsmen.

La Mizoun de la Villo (bakery, medical facilities, municipality archive), the Ethnographic museum, a wellness centre, Lou Pourtoun cultural centre (library, co-working, research centre, educational space, design gallery, auditorium, restaurant) are managed by VISO A VISO social enterprise, entrusted by the Municipality as a winning solution to develop coherent projects with the same strategy carried on

in the last years. The social enterprise is directly financed by the management of the public infrastructures.

### 3.3.4 Cooperation with universities and research centres

Ostana is a living laboratory for innovation, collaboration and experimentation.

Ostana municipality in the last decade attracted many researchers, professionals and higher training institutions being able to merge an astonishing natural and architectural landscape with excellent educational and research facilities.

For 2021 year, cooperation with the existing partners will be strengthened and new partnerships with educational Institutions in Italy and abroad have been built such as CAI Club alpino Italiano (Italian Alpine Club) and Museo della Montagna (Mountain Museum of Torino), Abadir Accademy of Design and visual communication, local schools of the valley.

### 3.3.5 Culture as a driver for social and economic growth

Since 1985 high quality architecture has been key to the rebirth of the village and today the process is still going on in the same direction.

Residents and homeowners in Ostana followed the example and the rules of the Municipality, giving a considerable contribution to the preservation of Alpine landscape. Today two thirds of the 500 buildings of the village have been restored, making Ostana a true collective project.

Another decisive element has been the Occitan and contemporary culture. From the setting up of the ethnographic museum, to festivals like Premio Ostana (Festival award on minority languages), to contemporary culture events, the new born library, the community has always been involved and supports the Municipality in a common strategy.

### 3.3.6. A defined path towards sustainability

Thanks to the involvement in a wider innovation network, the Municipality of Ostana is permanently engaged in projects and initiatives aimed at increasing the sustainability of its community. Such projects are developed around different pillars:

- Sustainable land management: Initiatives in this area aim at increasing landscape value, biodiversity and resilience to the climate crisis of local natural capital (pastures, forests, wetlands and other natural environments) while at the same time developing sustainable economic activities capable of offering employment opportunities to locals.
- Energy transition and efficiency, green mobility: Ostana is investing for the decrease of the carbon footprint of its community. The investments are directed to renewable energy production, energy efficiency, electric and smart mobility. The municipality has also joined the Covenant of Mayors for Energy and Climate, developing a specific action plan
- Education and sensibilization: Besides green investments, in cooperation with local NGOs and other public and private entities, the Municipality involves all the stakeholders in the organization of public meetings dedicated to topics related green development

The expertise in the above-mentioned fields allows the local community to be able to deal with the increasing opportunities related to green development.

### 3.4 Key characteristics of the local community

The local community is extremely active and a wider community exists outside the village that strongly support and enrich the resident community.

Ostana includes a complex community, consisting of people with parental roots in the village both elderly and young people, owners of vacation houses, people that have chosen to live and work in Ostana due to the appealing natural environment and working opportunity. The average age is relatively low (50 years) compared to other similar villages in the western Alps. Interaction among generations is very high. Daily life changes strongly during the year according to the big change in population during high/low seasons.

In 1985 Ostana was a ghost village with 5 elderly residents and no economic activities. Today, Ostana is a lively laboratory of contemporary alpine regeneration with several entrepreneurs (in tourism, agriculture, freelance), cultural activities, research centers (ALPSTREAM, Monviso Institute).

The municipal council conceives the village development process and strongly interacts with private stakeholders. The village has a dense network of associations in relation to the inhabitants and a rich cultural context.

List of key stakeholders of the village:

Stakeholders	Short Description
<i>Local public administrations</i>	
Municipality of Ostana	Represents the village and drive local development
Unione dei comuni del Monviso (Union of municipalities in the Monviso mountain area)	Local provider of services and public efficiency
Parco del Monviso – Riserva MaB Unesco Regional Monviso Park and MaB Unesco Reserve	Promotes the territory throughout scientific research , safeguards of biodiversity, promotes local economy
UNCEM (Unione nazionale comuni comunità enti montani, National union of mountain municipalities, communities, institutions) VEDI 1.3	Gathers and represents mountain municipalities

<u>Local entrepreneurs and economic activities</u>	
Rifugio Galaberna Mountain hut-hotel	Besides accommodations organizes cultural and leisure events
Panetteria Quel Po di Pan Local bakery	Produces and promotes local products, preserves use of ancient wood oven at local feast
Il bosco incantato The enchanted wood	Offers naturalistic, wellness, educational events in a equipped wood
Agriturismo A nostro mizoun Holiday farm	Offers hospitality and produce local products (handmade liqueurs and cashmere products)
La porta del Monviso	Info point and local products shop
B&B (Lou Batent, Amelu, etc)	Offer hospitality
<u>Local NGOs</u>	
Associazione Bouligar	Offers cultural activities
Proloco	Gathers local people and organizes feasts
Associazione Nazionale Alpini	Gathers mountain infantry corps on leave of the Italian Army. Organizes one event/year
I Reneis	Keep the memory of ancient customs and traditions
Associazione fondiaria Ritorno ai prati Landowners Association	Gathers abandoned lands in order to manage them and offer opportunities to agricultural enterprises and forest companies
Consorzio Archo	Gathers local agro-pastoral entrepreneurs
Squadra di Protezione civile comunale Municipal Civil Protection team	Deals with the prediction, prevention, management of emergency events and maintenance of the territory.
<u>“Innovators” and knowledge centers</u>	
VISO A VISO soc. coop.	Social private enterprise operating on culture, services, wellness and ecotourism

Monviso Institute	International private research Institute focusing on sustainability
Alpstream	Public Center for research of alpine rivers (university and national Monviso Park)
Ambornetti srl and Iris srl eco-resort	These two private companies are developing a project for the recovery of an abandoned hamlet in order to transform it in a self sufficient eco-resort
Walden	Innovative private start-up, working on the field of sustainable management of natural resources and energy efficiency



### 3.5 SWOT Analysis

Table 3: SWOT analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mont-viso transboundary biosphere reserve</li> <li>• Cohesive, integrated local community and strong leadership</li> <li>• Public infrastructures</li> <li>• Cooperation with university and research centres</li> <li>• Culture as a driver for social and economic growth</li> <li>• A defined path towards sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited number of residents</li> <li>• Seasonal (unbalanced) tourism</li> <li>• Lack of fast broadband</li> <li>• Lack of affordable houses</li> <li>• Pressure on mobility and economic resource at peak times</li> <li>• Biodiversity/traditional landscape loss, difficulties in land management and barriers to new agri-businesses</li> <li>• Climate risks</li> <li>• Energy poverty and transition to renewables</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing funding opportunities regarding rural sustainable development and territorial management, green technology and ICT</li> <li>• Increasing attention towards new liveability, new “ways of living” in rural areas (semi-permanent and temporary residency, smart working), also as an answer to climate change, covid-19 emergency and general inadequacy of urban spaces)</li> <li>• Potential synergy between sectors (agriculture, tourism, culture, sport, etc..)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Village becoming lively only in high season peaks for touristic purposes</li> <li>• Lack of houses for new inhabitants, loss of young people taking up residence</li> <li>• Excessive pressure on natural resources and local infrastructures during high season and seasonality of economic activities</li> <li>• Lack of political attention from decision makers</li> <li>• High risk and low appeal of investments from private sector</li> </ul>



- |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increasing interest towards slow/eco/cultural tourism locations</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increasing climate and environmental risk (forest fires, biodiversity loss, rainfalls patterns)</li><li>• Lack of solutions for sustainable/green development in low density populated areas (services, transport, land management, energy efficiency)</li><li>• Wrong perception of the potential attractions of mountain territories for potential users (who usually focus just on outdoor sports and gastronomy, ignoring that mountain villages can be also great places for cultural activities and events)</li></ul> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|



## IV. INTERVENTION LOGIC

### 4.1 Overall objective

The intervention logic for Ostana envisages strategic actions on several fronts looking overall at a new liveability in the Alps. Our goal is to keep the village alive and give services to new and actual inhabitants through smart mobility, social housing, cultural and social innovation, forest management.

Since 1985, the local community has been actively involved in defining needs, objectives and strategies. The administration is closely related to the inhabitants and this strong link is the crucial key for cohesive development of the community.

### 4.2 Specific & operational objectives in response to SWOT

#### Specific objective 1: OSTANA GREEN COMMUNITY

In the coming years sustainability issues will have to be reinforced. Many actions have already been implemented, like: public street lamps powered by solar and wind energy; solar panels on the municipality's rooftop; geothermal and solar energy for the wellness center and for the Mizoun de la Villo (bakery, medical facilities); shuttle bus during events.

Ostana is evaluating the shifting from private to public mobility through the analysis of data and different hypotheses. This work is carried out with several partners and stakeholders such as Monviso Institute.

Many other initiatives are aimed at a better management of local natural resources (pastures, crops, forests), combining nature preservation with economic development.

The strategy has partially been funded with:

- Regional funds and local incentives for renewable energy and energy efficiency (closed projects, but the administration is looking for further funding)
- Regional funds for a preliminary research on the implementation of an energy community (ongoing project)
- GreenChainSAW4Life project, that is developing a strategy for the green transition of the valley, combining sustainable forest management with energy efficiency

#### Operational objective 1.1: Sustainable mobility

In order to decrease CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and overcrowding, Ostana intends to develop a new mobility model based on wider use of electric mobility, creation of a local car pooling system, installation of new infrastructure for recharging electric bikes and the creation of new interchange areas for intermodal mobility.

### Operational objective 1.2: Energy transition

To fully achieve the transition towards a fully renewable local energy system, further investments in renewable energy must be carried on. Despite energy production, investments must be directed towards energy storage and energy efficiency (decrease the consumption). For the inclusion of private entities in this kind of process, a local energy community will be developed.

### Operational objective 1.3: Waste reduction

In local shops, restaurants and hotels, activities of education focused on business owners are promoting more sustainable behaviors by a gradual shifting to plastic-free dishware and objects. For the gradual reduction of waste there is a collective composter at the entrance of the village.

### Operational objective 1.4: Sustainable management of natural capital

Initiatives centered on sustainable management of natural resources will create new job opportunities, and at the same time increase landscape value and climate resilience. The activities will focus on:

- Cooperative management of public and private land parcels
- Sustainable forest management and cascade use of wood
- Sustainable pasture management
- Better use of water resources (both for pastoral, agricultural and domestic/productive use)
- Improvement of rare natural habitats (most of all wetlands)
- Valorization of ecosystem services (tourism, air quality, CO<sub>2</sub> storage, water management, etc)

## Specific objective 2: HOUSING

The municipality is planning the recovery of some buildings in la Villo hamlet (the main one in the village), as already happened in the 90s, to activate a social housing program, settling the conditions to attract new young working inhabitants and thus avoiding touristic speculation.

### Operational objective 2.1: Development of experimental projects for social housing

Ostana has built a strategic alliance with Politecnico di Torino, IAM Istituto di Architettura Montana since 1997. In this specific project, full professor Antonio De Rossi's course will be based on the development of an experimental architectural project for the social housing program in Ostana.

### Operational objective 2.2: Renovation of housing heritage suitable for new inhabitants

The municipality is in contact with some citizens willing to renovate houses in the surroundings of the main social house building in order to create a consistent project including houses suitable for long rental hosts. The creation of common service spaces and heating systems is currently under discussion in order to improve cost-effectiveness.

### Operational objective 2.3: Attraction of new investment / Creation of new financial tools

Envisage of new financial schemes for the renovation of social housing structures and management of infrastructural services in support to new quality of living in the Alps.

### Operational objective 2.4: Awareness raising in potential new inhabitants

Open day for new potential inhabitants, communication campaign, open call for temporary residency in the “Chestnut cabin” a self sufficient housing module in Ostana for 2021.

## Specific objective 3: CULTURE AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

Ostana has been building its reputation in Italy and the entire Alpine region triggering the rebirth of the village through high quality contemporary architecture, at the same time recovering traditional and local savoir-faire. In this phase Ostana relaunches its role as a contemporary culture centre, with a high level and diversified cultural offer for its community, not in competition with main cities in the region, but developing its own unique vocation, commitment and identity.

### Operational objective 3.1: Reinforcement of cultural and community centre

Culture has been one of the drivers of the Ostana renaissance. During the decades, a rich cultural program and some festivals and venues (i.e. Ostana Award in minority languages; Festa dell’umanità - sciences and arts festival; Videomaker School of Ostana; Politic School; Chantar e Dançar - occitan music and dancing) contribute to the reputation of Ostana as a living cultural laboratory.

In 2020, the newly born social enterprise VISO A VISO succeeded in the management of Lou Pourtoun cultural centre and the ethnographic museum bringing new collaborations aimed to increase the cultural offer all-year long through musical and theatre performances, co-working spaces, contemporary art exhibitions, movie screenings, advanced training courses for Institutes and Universities, workshops, superior craftsmanship showroom, community library for kids and adults.

Lou Pourtoun aims to become a lively civic centre for the community of residents, workers and visitors, not only hosting events, conferences and courses, but becoming a place where culture is made, where different disciplines meet and new contents are created.

Lou Pourtoun is part of a nationwide phenomenon of the new cultural centres, decentralized and located in marginal areas, all of them responding to the needs of a grounded, high level culture of proximity, all of them characterized by a relational nature.  
<https://www.che-fare.com/cosa-sono-nuovi-centri-culturali/>

The final goal is #ostana365, the consolidation of the cultural offer during the summer and its extension all year long, for different kinds of public.

A measurable indicator: 24 events/year

### Operational objective 3.2: Promotion of new cultural forms and community cohesion

The Municipality, together with a group of citizens and the social enterprise VISO A VISO, is now promoting a newly born community library, widespread between the hamlets.

The Ostana library will be specialised in alpine culture (nature, architecture, illustrations, media, magazines). Intended not only as a place to read and borrow books, the library will be a public meeting place for the community, to study, work and consult digital contents.

The library will also be on wheels (bibliobus), providing book access to all the people in the Po valley, educational resources for schools, workshops and readings.

Being widespread in the hamlets, some book collections will be in the village, others in more remote hamlets, surrounded by woods and providing different environments for different activities. Along with the public catalogue, it will be possible for inhabitants to share their own private libraries with inhabitants and visitors.

Ostana library will also be a living one, promoting dialogue between old and new inhabitants, traditional knowledge, practices and innovations. <https://humanlibrary.org/>

Ostana public library will be the highest in Europe.

### Operational objective 3.3:

#### Reinforcement of collaboration with universities and research centre. Educational community

Ostana has been hosting academic activities of various Institutes and Universities. In 2021 at least 5 academic institutions will work in Ostana bringing classes, summer schools, didactic and research activities. Ostana with the social enterprise VISO A VISO aims to become a reference as an educational space in the Alps and a laboratory for social innovation, scientific research, and artistic production.

### Operational objective 3.4: The Ostana Residency program

The Ostana Residency program (from 1/1/2021) is dedicated to all the professionals, researchers, artists, entrepreneurs (individuals or families) who want to spend a period in Ostana in order to develop their own projects, contributing to the growth of the community or simply experimenting the life in the village. The Ostana Residency program is at the same time a intercultural laboratory, a way to test liveability in the Alps.



Table 4: Setting objectives in response to SWOT

Specific objectives	Operational objectives	Challenges & threats	Strengths & Opportunities
OSTANA GREEN COMMUNITY	1.1: Sustainable mobility - 1.2: Energy transition - 1.3: Waste reduction - 1.4: Sustainable management of natural capital	Excessive pressure on natural resources and local infrastructures during high season and seasonality of economic activities /Lack of solutions for sustainable/green development in low density populated areas (services, transport, land management, energy efficiency)	Vibrant, cohesive and participatory community with proven capacity to carry on fundraising and project management activities at regional and international level, volunteering, mutual help, etc // Lower average age, high educational background and innovation potential if compared to other villages in the alpine area / Presence of many undergoing initiatives regarding sustainable development (land use, sustainable tourism, energy efficiency, mobility) / Increasing funding opportunities regarding rural sustainable development and territorial management, green technology and ICT
HOUSING	2.1: Development of experimental project for social housing - 2.2: Renovation of housing heritage suitable for new inhabitants - 2.3: Attraction of new investments / Creation of new financial tools	Limited perception of mountain territories from potential users (outdoor sports and food only)	Increasing attention towards new liveability new “ways of living” in rural areas (semi-permanent and temporary residency, smart working), also as an answer to climate change, covid-19 emergency and general inadequacy of urban spaces)
CULTURE AND SOCIAL INNOVATION	3.1: Reinforcement of cultural and community centre - 3.2: Promotion of new cultural forms and community cohesion - 3.3: Reinforcement of educational community	Excessive pressure on natural resources and local infrastructures during high season and seasonality of economic activities /Limited perception of mountain territories from potential users (outdoor sports and food only) / High risk and low appeal of investments from private sector	Representative example of territorial regeneration in the western Alps / Wide network with regional, national and international private and public actors / Rich cultural capital, valorized by an all year round cultural programme / Lower average age, high educational background and innovation potential if compared to other villages in the alpine area / Existence of local activities with high added value (culture,ecotourism, agriculture) / Potential synergy between sectors (agriculture, tourism, culture, sport, etc..) / Increasing interest towards slow/eco/cultural tourism locations



### 4.3 Smart solutions: actions, outputs and results

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

Specific/ operational objectives	Activities planned or taken	Expected results	Expected outputs
<b>SO1:OSTANA GREEN COMMUNITY</b>			
1.1. Sustainable Mobility, Resource aware development model	1.1.1 Reinforcing Charging station system for e-bikes and e-cars + provide new e-bikes available for tourists and residents	Energy saving (transition to sustainable energy consumption) Decreasing of circulating vehicles, decrease of polluting emissions better use of alternative transport means	Creation of 1 or 2 new charging stations at different hamlets + buying 5 new e-bikes
	1.1.2 Car pooling system	increasing number of km covered with sustainable vehicles	Creation and management of an app for Carpooling
	1.1.3 Shifting from private to public mobility. Bus service from Ostana to Saluzzo	Decrease of circulating private vehicles, decrease of polluting emissions, road safety.	Attracting 30% more of younger visitors in the village (with a particular focus on who don't own a car)
	1.1.4 Shuttle bus during peak season	Road safety between the hamlets, decrease of polluting emissions	1 shuttle bus available for booking
	1.1.5 New interchange areas both in the valley and in the village.	Decrease of circulating vehicles, decrease of polluting emissions	Attracting 50% more tourists in 2021 compared to 2021



	1.1.6 Mobility app development (for coordination of car-pooling and car-sharing)	improving the sustainable mobility, new users of the app	Development and adoption of an app to be downloaded by the majority of inhabitants for carpooling and car sharing; creation of an app/online programme for giving info to visitors
	1.1.7 Exchanging with other national and international villages/strategies	share solutions with other small villages	Organization of one exchange activity with European villages
1.2 Energy Transition. Local energy community based on a smart grid and renewables.	1.2.1 Setting up solar panels on public roofs	increasing in renewable energy use	10 kW of new solar panels on public roofs
1.3 Waste reduction	1.3.1 use of collective composter	increasing of number of people using the composter	Decreasing of undifferentiated waste
1.4 Sustainable management of natural capital	use of local wood for high quality projects	local wood supply chain valorization	Production of 500 m2 of high quality and high-tech parquet made by local wood
<b>SO2: SOCIAL HOUSING</b>			
2.1 Development of experimental projects for social housing	2.1.1 Ostana has built a strategic alliance with Politecnico di Torino, IAM Istituto di Architettura Montana since 1997(taken)	Proceed on the basis of concrete guidelines, of recognized value, by building alliances outside the town.	Establishment of an agreement/protocol of understanding with a national or international prestigious partner in the field of architectural quality projects



	2.1.2 Design course 2020/2021 lead by Antonio De Rossi design (Politecnico di Torino full Professor) for the development of an experimental architectural project for the social housing program in Ostana	Stimulating production of projects for restoration of social housing buildings	Launch of a high- quality project for Ostana’s social housing program
2.2 Renovation of housing heritage suitable for new inhabitants	2.2.1 Regular meetings with stakeholders	Building of a consistent project for long rental housing	Renovation of 1 or 2 apartment to make them suitable for long rental needs
2.3 attraction of new investments/creation of new financial tools	2.3.1 Checking calls for public and other fundings	Getting sustainability for renovation	Renovation of one public building for social housing
2.4 Awareness raising in potencial new young inhabitants	2.4.1 organization of an open days / communication campaign / open call to live one month in the “chestnut cabin” a self sufficient housing module.	potential families, getting to know and visit the village	New long term inhabitants (minimum two in 2021)
<b>SO3: CULTURE AND SOCIAL INNOVATION</b>			
3.1. Reinforcement of cultural and community centre: a multi-purpose space for social, recreational and community development, hosting: bistrot, co-working, performance	3.1.1 The Municipality got funds to build Lou Pourtoun cultural and community centre. The architectural project has been developed by Politecnico di Torino and got international and national recognition (Constructive Alps finalist and shown in Biennale di Venezia) From 2015 to 2020 hosted cultural events and festivals occasionally (taken)		Establishment of new partnership agreements with National and international partner such as Politecnico di Torino, to guarantee high quality of the architectural project



space (theatre, cinema, conferences), part of the Ostana Open Library, educational spaces, art - exhibition gallery.	3.1.2 From 2020 the newly born social enterprise VISO A VISO manages the center in dialogue with the Municipality and in accordance with community development principles and good governance. (taken)	Spawning of new activities	Creation of a multipurpose space for everyone from 0 to 99 years old; a friendly, peaceful, welcoming, inclusive space in which everybody feels comfortable and proud.
	3.1.3 Learning from national and international cultural centres and fostering partnerships, fundraising	Networking, new energy	Building of a reputation as a national and international cultural centre
	3.1.4 Setting up all year long cultural programmes. Partnerships with Cultural Institutions in big cities. Ostana as a bridge connecting Alps and cities.	broaden the off peak season cultural offer	Setting up at least 1 event/week in off peak season time
	Public coworking + setting up 10 new workstations  3.1.2 promote contact with professionals/artist that may look for a place to carried out a residential experience	new energy, transit of new users  having temporarily new inhabitants on the village	Creation of new services for entrepreneurs, students, community  Settlement of 4 people staying in Ostana for 1-12 weeks in the year
<b>3.2. Promotion of new cultural forms and community cohesion</b>	3.2.1 making BAO. Biblioteca Aperta di Ostana (Ostana Open Library), a lively entity  Widespread in the hamlets, a public meeting place for the community, to study, work and consult digital contents. CAI (Club Alpino Italiano)official library.	having a recognized attraction point for families, visitors, researchers, mountain lovers	Setting up 1 event / months related to the library



<p><b>3-3:</b>  <b>Reinforcement of collaboration with universities and research centre. Educational community</b></p>	<p>3.3.1 Expanding and strengthening the network of Universities, Institutes and schools that can benefit from it. Adapting educational and research activities to the needs of a mountain community</p>	<p>Easing the mobility of qualified and young students in Ostana and the valley</p>	<p>Organization of 30 days of classes and 3 summer schools in 2021</p>
<p><b>3-4: The Ostana Residency program</b></p>	<p>multidisciplinary residency program dedicated to all the professionals, researchers, artists, entrepreneurs (individuals or families) who want to spend a period in Ostana in order to develop their own projects, contributing to the growth of the community or simply experimenting the life in the village.</p>	<p>attracting new temporary inhabitants and producing cultural contents with the community.</p>	<p>Creation of 12 residencies individual programs in 2021</p>





## V. MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

### 5.1 Management

The smart village process and strategic planning is the continuation of what has been initiated by the previous administration, by the mayor Giacomo Lombardo, now Deputy Mayor. The whole strategy will be managed now directly by the Mayor Silvia Rovere with the small, cohesive and participatory community of Ostana (residents and stakeholders) directly engaged in the decision-making process through a kind of direct democracy, thanks to the extremely small number of inhabitants. People are involved in every stage of the strategy through collective open meetings, events, calls to action.

Since Ostana daily governance is based on listening to the requirements of all the inhabitants, the process might take advantage of the adoption of the Local Group system, mutated from the experience of URBACT programme, with the creation of one or more group of citizens, stakeholders and actors from both inside and outside the community of residents. These methodologies for citizens' participation such as URBACT may be useful in order to design and implement local policies in an integrated and participative way, enabling residents and stakeholders to play an active and influential role in decision-making process. The support of an independent expert and/or facilitator, possibly not originally from Ostana, will be necessary in the initial stage for monitoring the implementation of the smart strategy and have a positive, critical role in supporting the management of the participatory process.

The management of the implementation of the smart strategy in Ostana will be ensured by a constant cooperation between the Municipality and the social enterprise Viso a Viso, which played a decisive role in including village's needs into the smart strategy. The design of the actions and a daily connection to monitor the implementation of the intervention carried out in the framework of the strategy will be co-managed by the Municipality and Viso a Viso.

The implementation of the strategy will be managed also in close collaboration with other local actors, with the aim of sharing responsibilities in terms of design of the actions on specific topics, involving stakeholders active at different levels

#### Actions on Mobility:

The implementation of the actions will be managed and controlled by the Municipality in close collaboration with the local transport company and the startup which will support the Municipality in establishing the app for the car pooling system. A strong contribution in the management and implementation will be given also by the app developer who will settle in Ostana in one of the first experiments of creative residency, aimed at supporting the integrated development of actions for the Municipality with the active support of knowledge and skills transferred from elsewhere, with an action of constant dialogue with the needs of the local community.

#### Actions on Culture



The management of the strategy and the actions carried out in this framework will be ensured by the social enterprise Viso a Viso, which contributed to develop the whole strategy incorporating needs and inputs by the local community while is already in charge of implementing some of the most interesting actions in the field of cultural growth (new library, etc.).

Action on Environment:

The Municipality will closely collaborate with the regional branch of UNCEM, in order to strengthen any form of collaboration with local and regional authorities and entities which may contribute to improve the environmental condition of the village, with interventions on forestry management and other urgent needs that has to be managed at a higher scale than the local one.

### 5.2 Monitoring

The process of strategy implementation is monitored constantly by the Administration and by the whole small community of Ostana.

The creation of thematic local groups within the URBACT methodology for citizens' participation will help the monitoring action while setting a brand new monitoring system, which will be based on the collaborative definition of indicators and periodic control of strategy implementation, in the framework of online and local meetings with representatives of local stakeholders and residents. Despite a culture of monitoring of objectives and actions on medium and long term is not part of the traditional mindset of a village such as Ostana, where the daily interaction among residents ensure a good participatory governance on constant basis, the Smart Strategy paves the way to establish a monitoring system which may be useful also beyond the implementation of the strategy itself. It may give a boost to a stronger integration among functions and a better governance of village challenges, monitoring the impact on medium and long term of the ambitious actions carried out by the village, and foster a stronger engagement of the whole community in updating objectives and fields of action.

## VI. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The development of the Smart Strategy was for Ostana the opportunity to involve residents on a medium and long term vision, summarizing the most relevant inputs and requests highlighted in the everyday life of Ostana. At the same time, the implementation of the Strategy is seen as a possible driver for further growth of the collaborative framework of action, testing new tools also in view of attracting new residents in Ostana (one of the main goals of the Strategy).

Main local stakeholders were actively involved in the development of the Smart Strategy strategies identifying opportunities and setting objectives. The active collaboration between different types of stakeholders, such as external actors (as Politecnico di Torino, UNCEM) and local actors (local enterprises and groups of citizens) was useful to enlarge the scope of the actors involved and to set the basis for a stakeholder engagement along the implementation of the strategy.

The collaborative effort in the development of the strategy made visible that a more structured working method is now required, in order to fulfill the expectations of the subjects involved in the realization of the strategy and to foster an active role of all the actors in its implementation.

The establishment of a Local Group, composed by different types of actors (at external and local level), is the solution proposed that Ostana wants to implement on medium and long term to foster an effective participation of the residents and to mobilise different types of stakeholders. The objective is to make the Local Group not only an “observatory” of the implementation of the Smart Strategy but a permanent participatory tool that Ostana may use for ensuring active involvement of residents and external actors with interest in supporting Ostana in the process of integrated development.

The active involvement of potential new permanent or temporary residents will be ensured also with a wide range of actions combining communication, engagement and participation, such as Open days to visit Ostana, targeted communication campaigns, thematic trainings and events.

### 6.1 Stakeholder engagement in needs assessment and in strategy development

The development of the Smart Strategy is the ultimate evolution of a participatory process of regeneration started 20 years ago by the former Mayor Giacomo Lombardo, who attracted a network of qualified supporters, stakeholders and actors able to bring an added value in terms of skills, knowledge and networking for the growth of Ostana.

The added value of this hybrid model of local development was transferred into the process of collaborative creation of the Smart Strategy, ensuring the active involvement of different types of stakeholders and the inclusion of the concrete needs of the resident seen on the medium and long-term strategies.

The Smart Strategy was developed by the social enterprise Viso a Viso and the Municipality of Ostana collecting inputs from a plurality of local and regional stakeholders through an informal and continuous action of listening and incorporation of needs and elements to be included in the final strategy.

The dialogue established with all the subjects was continuous and on a daily basis in order to include different angles of view in the Smart Strategy, on the basis of the indications received by the local authority.

The reduced dimension of Ostana made possible an extensive action of listening and assessment of needs, in order to define a clear vision leading to a long-term strategy addressing some of the more urgent challenges of the local population (mobility, etc.) with new needs emerged during the pandemic, such as reviving the attractiveness of the village for remote workers and city quitters willing to settle in Ostana.

Attracting new residents in Ostana is not only one of the main objectives of the Smart Strategy but also a potential driver for growth of the democratic process, with the progressive inclusion of new residents in the strategic process and in the implementation of the challenges included in the Strategy. Opening up the participatory approach to new actors, such as people with relationships to Ostana but

living in Turin or in other villages or temporary residents and potential newcomers, is a challenging element that Ostana wants to promote in order to make the hosting community richer in terms of skills and abilities that are more than needed to guarantee the survival of the village and the improvement of local services.

### 6.2 Planned actions to mobilise stakeholders, channels of communication and awareness raising among citizens

The implementation of the Smart Strategy is also the opportunity for improving the way Ostana communicate with its residents and with potential newcomers, innovators and other possible recipients of a communication based on innovative strategies and actions carried out by the village.

One of the main actions to be developed as a side action to the implementation of the Smart Strategy is the creation of an integrated communication strategy of the village, aimed at presenting how is living in Ostana and how Ostana is implementing its Smart Strategy as sign of innovativeness and openness to new visions and knowledge.

The creation of an official channel on Facebook or on Instagram could be, for instance, one of the actions to include in a communication strategy which aims at creating a hybrid community composed by residents and visitors, offering long-term promotion to the actions carried out by the Municipality and the local community and presenting the village as a smart place where universities, research centers, individuals can propose and implement innovative projects promoting new ways of living in mountain and reinforcing a revived community spirit.

The establishment of stronger relation with regional institutional players and the adoption of stable participatory schemes, such as the Local Group, can provide useful inputs from the outside and inside the village on the main elements of this integrated communication strategy, which may be fueled with innovative initiatives connected to the communication of most of the actions included in the Smart Strategy.

These are some examples

#### Specific actions:

- 1) Communication on Smart Mobility: launch of a promotional campaign to promote the use of the new app for sustainable mobility and its related platform, with the aim of presenting to residents and visitors a vision on how a smart mobility valley can be turned into reality and incentivize them to use the new tools launched in the framework of the Smart Strategy
- 2) Communication on Housing and opportunities for new residents: organization of a series of live experiences, such as training for designers and craftsmen willing to settle in Ostana or to rediscover ancient craft activities, Open days for inviting new potential inhabitants to visit the village with the view of encouraging them to settle in Ostana. A campaign on regional media could be launched with the aim of changing the perception of what living in a Mountain village

looks like, possibly presenting some of the smart actions included in the Strategy of Ostana and how them are connected to the long-term strategies launched since the 80's by the village.

- 3) Communication on cultural and social innovation: organization of projects and development of cultural paths and events ideas to be defined with cultural Institutions active in big cities such as Turin, in order to encourage an integrated functional approach based not only on win-win partnerships but on the recognition of the added value brought by rural areas to the liveability of the region. Recognizing mountain territories for their expertise, cultural specific contribution, capacity for innovation can be key to change the perception that city dwellers have of small villages and increase a process of city-quitting which could be particularly beneficial to Ostana.

