

Highlights of the Smart Village Strategy of Penela Rural Innovation Villages Portugal



About Cummeira

The Municipality of Penela has a population of about 5 983 inhabitants. It is located in the district of Coimbra, in the Centro region of Portugal.

Cumeeira is a village and also the seat of the Parish in the municipality of Penela whose area is 19.53 km² and population is 1 072 inhabitants (2011). The village itself has 106 inhabitants, of which only 9% are aged under 20. Cumeeira presents an original nucleus, from which the agglomerate expanded with new residential units. It features some proximity services and equipment in which the Day Center stands out.

The village community lives by maintaining relations with the agricultural and natural surroundings, although most of the employment is supported by the third sector. The village provides cultural and recreational activities through its Cultural association and an easy access to health, education, culture and leisure due to its proximity to the town of Penela and the city of Coimbra (located at 12 and 36 km, respectively).

Key challenges & assets

Regarding key challenges, depopulation, combined with an ageing population and the gap in terms of services associated with health care that this age group permanently needs are two of the most significant issues.

These, combined with a fragile economic activity and an absence of features to develop touristic activities linked to natural resources, results in a context which is very difficult to revert. In addition, the village has a rather degraded construction. Another challenge is the lack of fast internet connectivity which is considered an essential factor to promote development.



In terms of assets, the village of Cumeeira offers its inhabitants a good quality of life away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life in a large city. Also, its environmental quality promotes the well-being of its residents and visitors. The village also provides a primary school and occupational activities that meet the needs of the resident population. The village inhabitants maintain habits and customs of mutual help and keep some traditions alive.

Strategic objectives of smart village strategy

- **Objective 1: Preserving and protecting.** Focuses on enhancing the natural heritage of the village and the surrounding territory, and, subsequently, on enhancing its rural and community identity, as well as the intergenerational dialogue based on traditional values.
- **Objective 2: Integrating.** Mainly aimed at creating new cultural, social and entertainment activities that enhance residents' well-being, namely, orientated to the needs of the social sector and of an active ageing.
- **Objective 3: Rehabilitating.** Focused on improving the spaces for collective use and on adapting them for older people. Additionally, focus on the need to rehabilitate degraded houses through their refuncionalisation to senior tourism.
- **Objective 4: Valuing the territory.** Focus on enhancing the local identity through the creation of active ageing programmes and innovative and alternative therapies with the aim of promoting senior cultural tourism through the development of training actions that contribute to the strengthening of the local economy.
- **Objective 5: Dynamising and boosting the economy.** Focus on enhancing and supporting investment in the local economy, contributing to the sustainable development of the village, the population's well-being, the decline of the depopulation trend and to leverage regional development.

What is smart?

The inhabitants of Cumeeira were approached from the beginning about the idea of the municipality to develop the concept of a 'Social Village'. Since then, the inhabitants have been involved through face-to-face meetings with the municipality of Penela where everyone got the opportunity to identify problems and raise their concerns and needs for the development of the smart strategy.

In these meetings, the advantages of defining a smart strategy for the village were perceived as an appropriate way to meet the inhabitants' needs, but, above all, to surpass the village's structural problems. Following ample discussions, it was agreed that the vision for the smart village of Cumeeira would have to be focused on urban development to accommodate the concept of a 'Social Village'.

Links to other strategies

The smart strategy derives mainly from two wide-ranging instruments:

- ✓ The **Director Programme of Innovation, Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship for the Municipality of Penela** which has adopted the vision "Local resources at the service of innovation, innovation at the service of local resources", focusing on local singularities as competitive advantages for the sustainable development of the territory.
- ✓ The **Strategic Programme for Sustainable Development 2020**, a general instrument framing the development of the municipality for the period 2014-2020 and aligned with the premises of the EU2020 Strategy, of the Partnership Agreement PT2020, the Regional Operational Programme of the Region Centro, and the Strategic Development Plan for the Region of Coimbra.
- ✓ As to existing local strategies, the intervention for the village's sustainable development follows the **Strategic Programme for Urban Rehabilitation**, aiming at ensuring the rehabilitation of the building in poor conditions, thus, improving the conditions of habitability of the urban real estate and functionality

- ✓ of the public common spaces, promoting social inclusion and territorial cohesion, and developing new solutions to answer the social need of housing for families.
- ✓ It should also be noted that Cumeeira is covered by the Territory of intervention of the **Local Action Group (LAG) Terras de Sicó** and that the mentioned strategic documents are perfectly framed within the scope of the respective Local Development Strategy, particularly with regard to the objective of “Competitiveness: Dynamising and diversifying the local economy”.

What smart actions are and planned?

‘Smart for Cumeeira’ aims to develop innovative territorial development strategies that promote the settlement of new residents, albeit seniors, to the territory through smart approaches linked to social innovation and health care intended for active ageing as a tool for helping people.

The ‘Cumeeira Social Village’ project aims to transform the village into a dedicated place for receiving and offering an exclusive service for the elderly with chronic or degenerative diseases (e.g. Parkinson and Alzheimer) and for users in rehabilitation and recovery.

The ‘Cumeeira Social Village’ intends for users and patients to live alone in homes, taking care of themselves. Thus, the concept offers:

- Privacy and autonomy (each patient lives at home, accompanied or not by family members, taking care of their daily tasks);
- Controlled freedom (living without locks and fences);
- Independence (possibility for patients to continue managing their lives);
- Solidary technology (devices to support daily life, location and identification of patients and communication link with family members).

The project is still in the definition and planning phases.

A smart action that we are planning...

Definition of the concept and planning of the ‘Cumeeira Social Village’. The preparation work is still very scarce, only based on the concept that is intended to be developed.