Pilot European Smart Villages Observatory

Report of the 1st Observatory Meeting

Preparatory Action - Smart Rural Areas in the 21st Century -

Contract No: AGRI-2020-0332

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1. Context of the event

1.1. Purpose

The main purpose of the European Smart Villages Pilot Observatory meeting was **to present the concept & operation of the Pilot Smart Villages Observatory**. The meeting aimed at discussing the specific needs of stakeholders from all levels – including possible support by the Observatory – to implement the Smart Villages concept efficiently within and beyond the Common Agricultural Policy. Furthermore, the meeting focused on the smart topic of sustainable energy and renewable energy communities, which is the topic of the 1st Knowledge Cluster of Rural Communities within the Smart Villages Observatory. The event was organised by Smart Rural 27 Project (supported by DG AGRI) in collaboration with the Styrian Regional Authority and the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management.

1.2. Target audience

The meeting was targeted at Managing Authorities of CAP Strategic Plans and other relevant EU Programmes (especially Ministries of Climate & Environment), CAP Networks, regional authorities, LEADER LAGs and rural communities/ villages - in particular those with an interest in the renewable energy topic.

Selected sessions of the first day of the event were livestreamed on the Smart Rural 27 Youtube channel. Since the online transmission the event to date (June 2023) the recording was viewed 136 times. The event has been advertised on SR27 website, FB and Twitter before and during the event.

1.3. Agenda of the meeting

The agenda of the meeting is presented below. You can read the main **findings of the sessions** by clicking the main titles that brings you further down in the report to the relevant section. You can also have a look at **presentation slides** and/or listen to the **livestream recording** of various sessions by clicking the links and 'camera icon's below.

<p align="center">11 May: 1st Day of the event</p>

8.30-9.30 Welcome (click to read outcomes)

PRESENTATIONS		
Styrian Regional Authority & Regional Administration, Gerhard Vötsch (Head of Department of State and Regional Development	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Ministry for Agriculture, represented by Michael Fischer (Expert)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, innovation and Technology, Florian Galler (Energy Market and Statistics Department)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
DG Agriculture and Rural Development (European Commission), Margaret Bateson-Missen (Head of Unit) (online)	No PPT available	Watch presentation
Stanz im Mürztal, Fritz Pichler (Mayor of Stanz)	Download PPT	Watch presentation

9.30 – 10.30 Role and structure of the Pilot European Smart Villages Observatory (click to read more)

PRESENTATIONS		
The Role & Structure of the European Smart Villages Pilot Observatory, Edina Ocsko (E40, Project Coordinator)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Overview of taskforces by Katrina Idu (E40)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Poland, Andrzej Halasiewicz(SR27 National expert)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Latvia Zanda Dimanta-Svilpe (SR27 National expert)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Finland Kim Smedslund (SR27 National expert)	Download PPT	Watch presentation

10.30-13.15 Parallel workshops (click to read outcomes)

PRESENTATIONS	▣
Rural Communities and Smart Villages: How to support rural communities in developing and realising Smart Village strategies. The practice of knowledge clusters. Presenter: Klara Hoss (Alsómocsolád, HU)	Download PPT
LEADER & Smart Villages: How LEADER/CLLD Local Action Groups can support the emergence of smart village strategies and projects? Presenter: Kroflic Primoz (LAG Raznolikost podezelja, SL)	Download PPT
Smart Villages in the CAP Strategic Plans: How to support the implementation of Smart Villages CAP interventions? How could CAP Networks support the work of CAP MAs through capacity building and networking? Presenter: Miklós Maácz (Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary) (PPT 1) & Backgren Ann-Sofi (Finnish Rural Network -CAP-network) (PPT 2)	Download PPT 1 Download PPT 2

14:15 - 15:15 Feedback on workshop outcomes and Panel discussion

PRESENTATIONS	▶
Panel discussion with Michael Fischer (SR27 National Expert - AT), Jaana Oikarinen (LAG Mansikaa, FI), Paweł Krzeczunowicz (Polish National Rural Network), Peter Plant (Torup & LAG Halsnæs-Gribskov)	Watch panel discussion

15:15 - 16:00 Observatory Knowledge Cluster Work: Renewable Energy Communities (click to read outcomes)

PRESENTATIONS	▣	▶
Stanz Energy Community- Engaging community members in renewable energy community and other local actions, Fritz Pilcher & Rainer Rosegger	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Haradsback Energy Plans, Hans-Olof Stalgren	Download PPT	Watch presentation

16:30-17.45 Workshops on 'How to engage community members in local smart actions / social innovations' (click to read outcomes)

PRESENTATIONS		
Local engagement: How and why? Peter Plant (Torup, DK)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
How to create engagement through village networks? Philip Donner (Luoteis-Kuhmon, FI)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Engaging community members in renewable energy community and other local actions through the Local Agenda 21 Rainer Rosegger (Stanz, AT)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Selonian Islands: Strengthening community leaders Ilvija Ašmane (Aizkraukle District Partnership / Ērberģe village, LV)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
What's in it for me? - Community engagement in Samso Ivona Prar (Samso, DK	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Smart municipal and city center development Sabina Cimerman (Styria, AT)	Download PPT	Watch presentation

12 May: Field visit to Stanz (click to read outcomes)

9.30-10-30 Presentations

PRESENTATIONS	
Smart Village Stanz: The Stanz Way (Fritz Pichler)	No PPT available
An innovative, energy-flexible plus-energy quarter - the village centre of Stanz Armin Knotzer	Download PPT
Token System & Blockchain Pilot Project on the energy community, (Kai Sievert, Riddle & Code)	Download PPT

10:30 - 11:30 Discussion tables around the presentation topics
12:00 - 13:00 Tour around the village
13.15- 16.00 Discussion with cluster members on next steps of cluster work
- Networking session for others
- Feedback from both sessions
- Introduction by Fritz Pichler – Flood Management Tool

2. Outcomes of Day 1: 1st Pilot European Smart Villages Observatory Meeting

2.1. Welcome speeches

After welcoming the audience **Gerhard Vörtch** (Head of Department of State and Regional Development Styria) described the regional **support provided to Smart Villages through various programmes and initiatives in Styria,** including the Local Agenda 21 programmes. He emphasised the importance of introducing fresh incentives for the growth of Smart Villages Gerhard further elaborated on the region's particular emphasis on fostering the development of village and urban centres with an inclusive and sustainable approach, aiming to establish long-lasting and progressive development.

Michael Fischer (*Smart Rural 27 expert representing the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture)* provided an overview of the Austrian **CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) Strategic Plan's approach towards Smart Villages.** He discussed three key pillars: LEADER, the strengthening of village and town centres, and the rural innovation system. He emphasised the need to interconnect existing measures that align with the concept of Smart Villages. He highlighted the significance of implementing actionable steps; stating that while local strategies are important, the primary focus should be on executing initiatives that bring about tangible change. Michael stressed that strategy serves as an essential instrument, but the true emphasis should be on actively undertaking efforts to generate meaningful transformations.

Florian Galler (*Energy Market and Statistics Department)* Florian Galler, from the Energy Market and Statistics Department, discussed the **roles and regulations of the energy market in Austria** within the context of Renewable Energy communities. He emphasised the significance of citizen participation in the energy transition and the establishment of renewable energy communities to achieve Austria's goal of becoming a 100% renewable energy-based

Florian Galler (Energy Market and Statistics Department)

country in the electricity sector by 2030, as well as carbon neutrality by 2040. Florian Galler highlighted that a crucial and positive outcome of the energy transition is the increased awareness and acceptance among the population regarding renewable generation plans.

> "*A very important side effect of the energy transition is raising of awareness and acceptance of the people in our country to accept renewable generation plans – e.g wind, grid reinforcement, new grid line.*" (Florian Galler)

Margaret Bateson-Missen (Head of Unit at the European Commission) welcomed participants (through an online intervention) and introduced the Smart Rural 27 Pilot Observatory that aims to support Smart Village development and provide a networking platform for rural stakeholders. She highlighted that the platform's launch aligns with CAP strategic plans, offering an opportunity to promote and actualise Smart Villages. The European Commission encourages Member States to leverage CAP support for local Smart Village strategies. Building on the Smart Rural 21 project, Smart Rural 27 aims to establish a strong foundation within CAP and EU-funded initiatives, fostering collaboration between policymakers and rural stakeholders. She added

that the Observatory's success may pave the way for future activities within the European CAP Network.

Fritz Pichler (Mayor of Stanz) in his welcome speech highlighted the importance of diversity as a significant advantage for the smart concept.

> "*I'm a forester. I've talked to trees for many years. I'm also a mayor. I've talked to people for many years. One of the commonalities between trees and people is Diversity.*" (Fritz Pichler)

Fritz Pichler (*Mayor of Stanz)*

He emphasised the need for cooperation, effective communication, and active community participation as the key foundation and additionally he mentioned that the upcoming field visit would provide an opportunity to showcase the successful transformation achieved in Stanz.

2.2. Role and structure of the Pilot European Smart Village Observatory and overview of taskforces

Edina Ocsko (Smart Rural 27 Project Coordinator) presented the overall Structure and Purpose of the Pilot European Smart Villages Observatory and its three pillars: (i) the Knowledge Clusters of Rural Communities, (ii) the National Taskforces and the (iii) European Stakeholder Platforms.

Katrina Idu (E40 Expert) provided an overview of the **taskforce activity** of the Smart Rural 27 project. National Taskforces are one of three pillars of the Pilot European Smart Villages Observatory. They act as **multi-actor platforms** that bring together wide range of **relevant stakeholders** in a given national and/or regional context in selected Member States. The focus of taskforces is on **the national/ regional needs and the specific policy context** of each country. The aim of National Taskforces is to

Katrina Idu (E40) and Zanda Dimanta-Svilpe (SR27 National Expert)

improve policy implementation – especially that of the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan interventions but also other programmes and interventions - promoting and supporting Smart Villages strategies and projects.

The Taskforces are set up, coordinated and supported by Smart Rural 27 national experts. Concrete goals, timeline and activities are defined in a Taskforce Action Plans (published on the Smart Rural 27 website). Taskforces are running through a **series of meetings & discussions** (typically 2-3 meetings per year) to assess the situation and plan specific actions together. The work of the taskforces is often supported through **analytical work** of the national experts (or other experts), including the development of guidance and training material. Tas

Taskforces are currently running in 9 Member States: Austria, Belgium-Wallonia, Cyprus, Czechia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Portugal. 6 Taskforces were briefly presented by Katrina:

- The Taskforce of **Austria** is exploring synergies between LEADER, village-and city-centres development and regional innovation systems and their managements for Smart Villages amongst the broader (rural) development system in Austria.
- The Taskforce of **Belgium - Wallonia** focuses on analysing and disseminating the experience of Smart Villages actors to prepare other stakeholders for the call for "smart territories" projects to be launched by Digital Wallonia.
- The Taskforce of **Cyprus** is expected to suggest specific CAP policy interventions to create complementarities with "Smart Cyprus Platform" supervised by Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy.
- The Taskforce in **Portugal** targets a specific Integrated Territorial-based Intervention and aims to enable the introduction of the Smart Villages concept in the design and implementation of the Transforming project P09. Villages.
- The action plans of further 2 taskforces are under development

The work of three taskforces from Latvia, Finland and Poland were presented in detail by National Experts during the event:

Poland (presentation Andrzej Hałasiewicz and Pawel Krzeczunowicz)

The purpose of the Polish Taskforce is to help in using the opportunities created by the CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 for emergence and implementation of the Smart Villages. The Taskforce also aims to explore the possibilities and expand the scope of financing the Smart

Villages concept from various European funds and national sources and initiate technical assistance for interested parties. One of the key policy areas on which Taskforce is focusing is the Smart Village implementation under LEADER intervention as it is foreseen in the CAP SP. The LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs) can foresee the preparation of the Smart Village concepts in their Local Development Strategies (LDSs), and the projects being part of a Smart Village concepts will receive extra points in calls organised by LAGs, therefore, it is important to raise the capacity and understanding of LAGs on the Smart Village concept.

Finland (presentation by Kim Smedslund)

The Smart Village Taskforce in Finland serves as a pathway to build a Smart Village framework by analysing the development of the concept and building bridges and connections between sectors. In the Finnish CAP SP and other programmes there is an emphasis on support for innovative and smart actions as well as capacity building for NGOs and citizens. Meanwhile the localisation of these actions seems to have less importance. The following suggestions are in the scope of the Taskforce work: (1) include local participation and funding by earmarking, (2) finding policy solutions and funding for smart villages (eg. "Smart place programme or subprogramme") through innovation partnerships tools (e.g. EIP) or local consortium tools (e.g. Horizon and ERASMUS) at a smaller scale, (3) introducing simplified tools as lump-sums.

Latvia (presentation by Zanda Dimanta-Svilpe)

The first meeting of the Latvian Taskforce was held on 13 of April 2023 with the aim to define the further scope of work. One of the key elements of further work is the question of the ownership of the Smart Villages concept at national level. In the Latvian CAP SP Smart Villages are programmed under LEADER intervention, but there is a need of a more complex programming of the concept with an intersectoral approach. One of the first tasks of the Taskforce is the mapping of potential stakeholders and their responsibilities, in order to prepare the ground for a National Smart Villages Strategy.

2.3. Parallel workshops: Advancing Smart Villages implementation

Three parallel workshops took place engaging different groups of stakeholders to discuss Smart Village implementation issues, needs and how the Smart Village Observatory can respond to these:

- **Workshop 1 - Smart Villages in the CAP Strategic Plans**: How to support the implementation of Smart Villages CAP interventions? How could CAP Networks support the work of CAP MAs through capacity building and networking?
- **Workshop 2 - LEADER & Smart Villages**: How LEADER/CLLD Local Action Groups can support the emergence of smart village strategies and projects?
- **Workshop 3 – Rural Communities and Smart Villages:** How to support rural communities in developing and realising Smart Village strategies? The practice of knowledge clusters.

Each workshop was introduced by a presentation from a representative of the relevant stakeholder group. This was followed by a discussion addressing three key questions:

- What is the current situation (state-of-play) in relation to creating a Smart Villages support environment?

- What have been the main challenges/ lessons to date in creating a supportive Smart Villages environment? What are the main dilemma and questions?

- How the process could be better supported from the European or national levels? What kind of support/ guidance is needed? Key topics of interest?

The **detailed outcomes** of the workshops are presented in the Annexes.

2.4. Feedback on workshop findings & Panel Discussion

Each workshop presented the main outcomes from the discussions and a Panel of Practitioners reflected on these findings. The panel consisted of:

- Michael Fischer (SR27 National Expert - AT),

- Paweł Krzeczunowicz (Polish National Rural Network),

- Jaana Oikarinen (LAG Mansikaa, FI),

- Peter Plant (Torup & LAG Halsnæs-Gribskov).

The main discussion points /reflections from the panel members can be summarised as follows.

What is smart?

- At the European level the definition is left quite open – so that the definition is universally appliable. That can be a good thing. **There is no point to keep discussing the definitional issues** of Smart Villages. At this stage, we have to take action, and it will get clearer and clearer through implementation.

> *"We are still in the process of asking what a 'smart village' is? But this is not an appropriate question. It's more what the smart villages do, the process that matters. We should focus our energy on helping people to implement it, and it will get clearer and clearer. Some space will remain unclear, and that's fine for development I think. "* – Michael Fischer

- Possibly **local stakeholders should define what smart village is for them**. We (e.g. LAGs) can create the platform to exchange, but the definition has to be done at the grass-roots level.

- Smart is more about **the new quality of doing something together** (more about the process). "Sharing" is important – might not be a radical innovation at the end. It is rather a social innovation, that can lead to something new. **Inspiration** is important for

> *"What kind of future rural areas would like to have. We have to look into the trends and weak signals that we get. We should have the courage to do new ways of things."* – Jaana Oikarinen

this process. Example of "Tools & Talents" in Torup (Denmark) is an example of inspiration. This idea from the village is picked up by the national level by national funds. "We should see ourselves as innovators and inspirational" – said Peter Plant.

- We need to look into the **new trends and think about the future vision** of rural areas. Problems are getting more and more serious.

Policy-support with focus on LEADER

- 2030 Goals defined by the European Commission focus on Smart – Sustainable - Socially inclusive (3 Ss to remember also in relation to Smart Villages).

- There are **different ways of providing framework for Smart Villages** through national / regional policies: (i) direct interventions that focus on Smart Villages with dedicated budget; (ii) indirectly, e.g. via LEADER. LEADER and Smart Villages are both key instruments

to implement EU policies.

- Is there enough capacity, creativity at the local level to make this happen?

- **LAGs are often facing challenges on how to programme and promote Smart Villages.** Sometimes, it's there but only fairly vaguely (covering several themes). In some of the strategies it's just a word – a concept – but not yet consciously used. "*Am I really going to be able to do something with that*" – many LAGs in Member States are asking.

> "*The assumption is that LEADER is close to the local communities - I would question that. Has LEADER not been captured by bureaucracy. Does it really still animate? We can't assume that LEADER would do it for us.*" – Pawel Krzeczunowicz

- Participatory approach, integrated approach are key features of LEADER as well. However, **LEADER is a regional approach and it is not sure that they always reach the local level**. Smart Villages can very well supplement LEADER at the local level. It's not a competing approach. You have to unveil its potential.

- The integrated approach is crucial for Smart Villages. **LEADER has the "Liaison" feature**, it has to connect initiatives in an integrated way.

> "*LEADER has the word "Liaison". LAGs need to create linkages also in Smart Villages. Those kinds of projects that are creating links that are not just individual projects but those that are linked.*" – Peter Plant

- It's challenging to promote this – as in many Member States the CAP SP does very little rural development in general.

Animation & capacity-building support

- It is important to consider **knowledge to support Smart Villages** – it is a knowledge of its own. To educate the **"agents of change"** at the local level. LEADER LAGs could be stakeholders for this. Need to help with innovation from the CAP Network level – through animation at the local level. Pool of trainers could be provided from the European level to local level.

- **Cooperation** is crucial. The EU can provide the fora for exchange. The European level can support the local villages this way.

- **Managing Authorities also need to be trained** on how to promote local development and Smart Villages (training shouldn't be restricted to the LAGs only). Need to be sure that Smart Villages support will not get bureaucratised.

2.5. Observatory Knowledge Cluster Work: Renewable Energy Communities:

The presentation by **Fritz Pilcher and Rainer Rosegger** focused on **the Stanz Energy Community** and its efforts to engage community members in renewable energy initiatives and other local actions and they explained the community's approach to renewable energy generation, the involvement of residents in sustainable practices, and the positive impacts of these actions on the local environment and economy.

Hans-Olof Stalgren presented Häradsbäck's smart journey towards becoming a self-sustained rural area, equipped to handle crises and embrace the green transition while fostering a strong local economy. Häradsbäck aims to enhance attractiveness, resilience, and community cohesion by improving service accessibility, generating
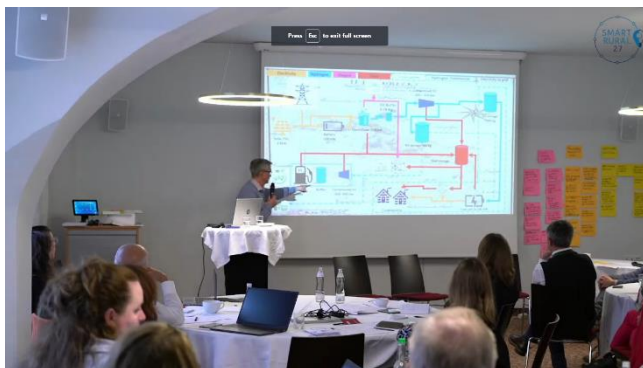
Hans-Olof Stalgren *(SR27 National Expert)*

employment opportunities, and fostering a sense of togetherness. In his presentation, Hans-Olof explained the **formation of the village association** in Häradsbäck and the development of essential services and the formation of the Local Resource Group and their plans about the **photovoltaic energy plant**.

2.6. Open Space session on 'How to engage community members in local smart actions & social innovations on renewable energy and beyond'

The session started by 6 short interventions from participants on how they engage community members in smart actions. This was followed by an open space discussion among participants around 6 tables (with the possibility to join several tables consecutively) hosted by the 6 presenters:

- **Peter Plant (Torup, DK):** Torup's experience of engaging community members in smart actions, including topics such as local engagement strategies, different levels of engagement, approaches to making engagement manageable through work packages, and exploring dilemmas related to voluntary versus paid work.

- **Philip Donner (Luoteis-Kuhmon, FI):** Explore and discuss strategies for creating engagement within village networks, focusing on ways to foster active participation and involvement of community members in various initiatives and projects (e.g. starting small, study the basics, village vs. neighbourhood, 'Don't push').

- **Rainer Rosegger (Stanz, AT):** Engaging **community members in renewable energy projects** and other local actions. It aimed to explore the potential of social innovations in promoting climate-friendly lifestyles and increasing acceptance of technical solutions.

- **Ilvija Ašmane (Aizkraukle District Partnership / Ērberģe village, LV):** The workshop centred around creation of the coopeartion project 'Selonian Islands' in rural areas by creating tourism offer and presenting how the project transformed into a community cooperation network.

- **Ivona Prar (Samso, DK):** Community engagement in Samso and benefits & incentives for individuals to actively participate in community initiatives and projects. It aimed to highlight the positive impact and personal advantages e.g. sense of ownership that community

engagement can bring to individuals e.g. local farmers, craftsmen, experts, politicians, citizens etc.

- **Sabina Cimerman (Styria, AT):** Focusing on how participation is encouraged in the region (Styria) through actively engaging citizens by enabling them to take the matter in their own hands and to create their own environment (e.g. through informing, consulting, involving, collaboration) and the aspects of successful citizens participation.

3. Outcomes of Day 2: Field visit to Lighthouse Site – Stanz & meeting of the Knowledge Cluster on Renewable Energy

During the 2nd Day of the event, participants got the chance to visit Stanz, and get first-hand experience on the smart solutions of the village, with particular focus on its renewable energy community actions, and related blockchain-based token system.

The session started with two inspiring (technical and practical) presentations on the energy-flexible plus-energy quarter of the Stanz Village Centre, and the basics of the use of blockchain technology and preparation of the local token system (linked to the local energy community), followed by an informal discussion with the participants.

The presentations were followed by a 'tour around the village' showing the various local innovations, including the local sustainable housing project where young people live next door to the elderly (supported by the municipality / paying a low rent); the local shop operated by local people and its unique engaging informal setup; and the local community space operated by local volunteers, where people can leave good quality unused objects for others to take for free. Fritz Pichler also presented the digital flood management tool that they are using to predict flooding (that has caused serious problems in the area in the past).

During the visit, the Knowledge Cluster on Renewable energy held its meeting, discussion on the needs and next steps in the cluster's work took place.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The 1st Pilot European Smart Villages Observatory meeting had a very positive vibe and was evaluated high by participants (all the 18 survey respondents indicated that they found the event very useful – i.e. gave the highest possible rating – see Annex 2). The rating of the specific

sessions varies – the average rating is 4,7 (on a scale of 1 to 5), the interactive sessions: parallel workshops and open space discussions being rated the highest.

The event brought together a diverse set of stakeholders, representing all types of organisations and several countries in balanced way. Rural communities were the largest group among participants – with a focus on renewable energy cluster members – with almost one quarter of the participants representing this stakeholder group.

Having a face-to-face meeting among the members of the Pilot European Smart Villages observatory was important, participants appreciated a lot meeting each other in person. The motivation should be kept up as much as possible in the course of the project.

The three workshops paved the way for the future European Stakeholder Platforms that will build on the outcomes of these sessions (such as the upcoming 'LEADER and Smart Villages' session).

Annex 1: Workshop Reports

Workshop 1: LEADER & Smart Villages: How LEADER/CLLD Local Action Groups can support the emergence of smart village strategies and projects?

Facilitator: Hans-Olof Stalgren (SR27 Expert) Presenter: Klara Hoss (Alsomocsolad, Hungary) Notetaker: Edina Ocsko
BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE SESSION
This session aimed to discuss how Smart Villages can be implemented at the local level and how this process can be supported from the national and European levels. The main findings are: • There are several **pressing issues at the local level that could be addressed through the Smart Villages approach** (such as smart mobility, local services, healthcare, etc.) • **"Smart" might be seen differently at the different geographical levels** (local, LAGs, regional, national) depending on the mission of the entity. Local level is most concerned with the implementation of practical "smart actions"; LAG has to make sure it's aligned with LDS and animation support is ready for rural communities; regional level also aims to see the overall picture (milestones and indicators) coming from local support. • At all levels it is important **to create a "smart" vision, milestones** (and possibly indicators to follow progress). Generally, there is **a need for a 'Smart Villages Agent'** at all levels, who are trained in Smart Villages issues (animation) and can support/ advise local people in their area (e.g. placed in LAGs, regions, CAP Networks, etc.)
PARTICIPANTS
15 people participated in the workshop, mostly communities (8) from Italy, Denmark, Finland, Romania, Hungary; LAG from Slovenia, Agricultural Advisory (Poland), Ministry of Agriculture (Croatia), Regional Authority (Austria) and Research (Austria), CAP Network (Latvia)
CURRENT SITUATION
There are several pressing issues in rural communities that could be addressed through Smart Villages, such as caring for the elderly people, transport and mobility, (health) tourism, digital infrastructure, etc. Many of the participant communities are trying to engage in Smart Villages action. LEADER can support the local capacity building in villages. The LAG participant highlighted that they are providing support for local communities in their area. Also several communities indicated that they are receiving support from local LAG for their actions. Also regional authorities can provide support to Smart Villages. For instance, in Austria the Local Agenda 21 was used for this purpose, it involved milestone planning (with clear impact indicators) One of the participants highlighted that "smart" might mean different things at the different administrative levels. For instance a regional authority might have a different angle from that o a community. Overall still many local people don't know about Smart Villages, and it is unclear for many what it exactly means.
CHALLENGES
The main challenge is linked to the fact that little is known about Smart Villages in many communities (and beyond).

Several participants highlighted that that one of the key challenges is to engage the young people in the process. Young people need to be mobilised, and they need a different kind of platform.

Technological innovation is not enough. Social innovation is needed. There is need to think about future scenarios for local communities.

SUPPORT NEEDED

The main support needs identified are:

- Planning of local strategic approaches (at local/regional level) is crucial ("modern-time planning" is needed). Milestone planning with key indicators (like in Local Agenda 21).
- Need to mobilise local expertise beside bringing in external expertise.
- Guidance on how to mobilise people; how to motivate communities.
- Dedicated funding from regional/ national levels.
- Permanent structures need to be established in communities. Citizen's participation has to become part of the local culture.
- Concept of digital and/or Smart Village ambassadors (local "care-taker"): a locally-based person who knows and can give guidance to those interested in Smart Villages. This capacity could also be established within the future CAP networks.
- Understanding what is "smart" ("It has to be something new, that the community didn't do before."). Better/ improved communication about Smart (possibly a better visualisation).

KEY MESSAGE

We need **milestone planning**, clear stages & indicators
We need Smart Village **mentors or animators** ("care-takers") at different levels, local level, LAG level, regional level, national level (CAP Network).

Workshop 2: LEADER & Smart Villages

TITLE OF WORKSHOP: LEADER & Smart Villages - How LEADER/CLLD Local Action Groups can support the emergence of smart village strategies and projects?
Facilitator: Katrina Idu, SR27 Assistant Project coordinator Presenter: Kroflic Primoz (LAG Raznolikost podezelja, SL) Notetaker: Anita Balogh SR27 Supporting expert
BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE SESSION
The session aimed to explore how LEADER/CLLD Local Action Groups (LAGs) can support the emergence of smart village strategies and projects. Kroflic Primoz (LAG Raznolikost podezelja, SL) presented the **current situation (state-of-play)** in relation to creating a Smart Villages support environment, including: • the main challenges/ lessons to date in his LAG, • the main dilemma and questions, • how the process could be better supported from the European or national levels. After his presentation, the participants also briefly presented the current state-of-play of Smart Villages (SV) support in their respective countries, and challenges and possible support framework ideas were discussed. During the session it came out that the situation of LDS development varies from country-to-country (e.g. some of them just submitting now, some of them has submitted already, and some of them are already selected). In many countries that were represented in the WS similar concerns emerged regarding the SV concept. Many of them mentioned that due to the **unclarity of the concept of SV** (e.g geographical requirements, format of strategy) and the lack of funding, LAGs don't always feel motivated to include SV in their strategies. Generally the participants agreed that **the concept of SV should be clarified and defined and the SV strategy documents should be simplified**. Many communities are not aware what LAGs are/ their role is and how they could receive support from them. One of the main findings of the session was that the objective of LAGs should be - instead of implementing SVs - **to create an environment where SVs emerge on local people's initiative**.
PARTICIPANTS
11 participants participated in the workshop: 1 representative of local community (Austria), 6 representatives of LAGS (Denmark, Latvia, Slovenia, Finland), 1 regional authority (Austria), 1 MA representative (Greece), 1 NRN representative (Poland), 1 SR27 National Expert (Poland)

CURRENT SITUATION

Snapshot of the current situation in different EU countries:

- **Slovenia:** 37 LAGs in Slovenia. LAG strategies are in preparation phase. One of the expected result indicators in their LDS is the 'Number of Smart Villages strategies', 1 SV cooperation project. No national or local presentation or discussion about SV concept and who (MA? LASs? Bottom-up approach) should establish supporting environment for SVs. LAGs should present their strategies until July, and LDS and LAG selection are expected until December 2023.

- **Poland**: LAG strategies to be submitted by June 2023, to include SVs in the strategies are optional. Many LAGs will not include in their strategies because the SV concept is unclear and there are limited resources for implementation such strategies. Support would be needed to understand what SVs are.
- **Finland:** LAG strategies are prepared and money was received. SV was not introduced as a concept in a systematic way. Some of the LAGs have SV in their focus, but in form of communities with action plans rather than strategies. The territorial boundaries of SV are not clear (e.g. Could they be smaller neighbourhoods or bigger cooperatives of more communities?).
- **Latvia**: LAG strategies should be submitted by June. SV is optional, some LAGs will include them in their strategies and some of them won't for the same reason as it is in Poland - the concept of SV is not clear.
- **Austria:** national level prepared the basis that LAGs can include in their strategies. In case SV is included in the LAGs' strategy, LAGs will receive more points/ money.
- **Greece:** For LAGs it is optional to put SV in their strategies. The geographical coverage is not clear (only villages or also islands etc.). There is no funding received for SV strategies - the ownership of SV strategies is unclear. Is it LAGs or villages?
- **Denmark:** Strategies are prepared and money was received. SV is presented in some of the strategies. The representative of Danish LAG highlighted that they have prepared LAG strategy to be in line with EU goals, private funds were explored.

CHALLENGES

There are a lot of questions regarding the creation of a supportive environment of SVs.

- How a supportive environment should be initiated and from which level, e.g LAGs, local people, villages, municipalities, all the stakeholders in local environment?
- Whom should LAGs reach to activate the supportive environment?
- Who should define what SV is - should it be bottom up or coming from 'above'?

SUPPORT NEEDED

From **European/ national level the support needed** would be helping initiatives for SV to develop, advocacy of rural development, less bureaucracy and special funding to support villages to write strategies.

General support and support guidance ideas:

- **Networking and field visits** – good practices exchanges;
- **Cooperation projects** – providing different mindsets on solutions for similar challenges;
- **Capacity-building and ideas** on how to include **young people** actively in decision making and actions at the local level.

The **SV Observatory** could **support**:

- Providing external expert support for LAGs to receive an outsider perspective **how specific challenges could be overcome, providing training** (e.g. how to animate local communities);
- **SV to become financially sustainable/ independent** by not relying only on public funds; e.g. looking for private funds, crowd funding;
- Providing possibility for **peer-to-peer exchange**;
- Providing **networking opportunities**, e.g platform where they could be thematically clustered.

How could **LAGs support SVs**?

- Animation-motivation of local communities;
- Clarifying criteria to become a SV;
- Provide support in the elaboration of SV strategies;
- Financing SV strategies;
- Empowerment of local leaders;
- Giving ownership to local communities.

KEY MESSAGE

The objective of LAGs should be - instead of implementing SVs - **is to create an environment where SVs emerge on local people's initiative**. LAGs should focus on animation, to show how SV as a tool could help local communities to **better self-organise** to address their local needs, to support in creating SV strategies and to empower local leaders, which are crucial for the emergence of SV. Main goals for SVs should be to: once emerged (potentially from public funding support) to **become autonomous** and be financially and operationally sustainable by diversifying the financial resources – involving/ looking for public fund and other financial resources, e.g. crowd funding, private funding.

LAGs would need **thematic approach**, possibility for **peer-to-peer learning** and international cooperation project exchange, in order to better see how to make SV actually happen, and external expert support in identifying the places and situations where innovation could emerge.

Workshop 3: Smart Villages in the CAP Strategic Plans

TITLE OF WORKSHOP: Smart Villages in the CAP Strategic Plans: How to support the implementation of Smart Villages CAP interventions? How could CAP Networks support the work of CAP MAs through capacity building and networking?
Facilitator: Michael FISCHER (SR27 National Expert; ÖAR/ Austria) Presenter: Miklós MAÁCZ (Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary), Ann-Sofi BACKGREN (Finnish Rural Network -CAP-network) Notetaker: Emese OCSKÓ (E40/ SR27 Supporting expert)
PARTICIPANTS
Daniel BENETT (Irish Rural Link / Irish CAP Network (NRN)/ Ireland) Roland ESZENYI (Ministry of Agriculture/ Hungary) Patrícia GOMES DA SILVA (CCDR Alentejo/ Portugal) Andra KARLSONE (Ministry of Agriculture/ Latvia) Aleksandar LUKIĆ (SR27 National Expert/ Croatia) Attila NAGY (Ministry of Agriculture/ Hungary) Emilia REDA (National Rural Network - Leader – CREA/ Italy) Kim SMEDSLUND (SR27 National Expert/ Finland)
BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE SESSION
The session aimed to explore How to support the implementation of Smart Villages CAP interventions (including the examples of Hungary and Finland). In the second half of the workshop the question of support of CAP MAs and CAP Networks through capacity building and networking has also been discussed.   Miklós Maácz (Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary) and Ann-Sofi Backgren (Finnish Rural Network, CAP-network) presented the **current situation (state-of-play) in Hungary and Finland** and highlighted the special interventions but also the challenges in both countries. The main topics of the discussion were: - role of LAGs   - networking levels: village-village research-village; EU-LAGs   - funding obstacles   - communication methods   During the presentations it came out that in some countries promising interventions have already been introduced or are at least in a pilot phase. During the discussion the main aspects of the interventions were highlighted and specific ideas regarding support needed from EU level were formulated.

CURRENT SITUATION

In Hungary there's a **CAP strategic plan that contains SV measures**, which are outside of LEADER but **in most of the countries there are no special interventions outside of LEADER**. The latter cases also implicate, that there is no dedicated/additional funding, so it is vital to convince LEADER actors that the SV concept is an opportunity.

There is **dedicated intervention** in Finland (10 milion €) which lets villages apply for preparatory phase (max. 5000 €). There are also **some projects helping with a SV strategy** and some SV actions taken related to projects.

The support (of 10 milion €) in Finland is only enough for a piloting phase which can be enlargened later on. **Competitions** (the smartest village in Finland) and **compulsory trainings** and the Initiative of an innovation camp of **«ideathlon»** (brainstorming events that are not restricted to a common theme) help to come closer to the concept.

Forming thematic groups and finding good examples out of competition can also advance the clarification of the concept.

A preparatory phase is needed with the aim of finding partners and detailing ideas.

An extra result in Finland is the introduction of an additional **SV-indicator** (»number of other actions linked to SV strategy«).

In strategy implementations **cooperation is prerequisite.** The peer to peer (village + village) are more and more supplemented with village + research meetings (in Finland).

In the implementation **the EIP-like funding model** may be converted to SV.

In other (workshop participant) countries there was no special fund for Smart Villages identified during the session. In Italy 69 million € are dedicated to SVs but all of this **targeted support reaches the villages through LEADER**. In Italy a »smart rural lab« was organised by the Italian LEADER association.

CHALLENGES

Generally it's hard to make the villages understand **what they call „smart"** („they don't come to mayors with „smart ideas"), the principals are not clear to rural actors. **It's difficult to open minds** in small villages, it's difficult to ask for a strategy.

The concept sounds too complex, it is not reaching the local level. It deems necessary to focus mainly on local needs (and not primarily on trying to explain the SV-concept) - that might help starting off.

Further specific challenges include:

- **Lack of coordinators** who can help to communicate the concept between the different stakeholders (EU-research-young-old).
- **Lack of capacity** on local level (especially the young). LAGs are considered as facilitators, but will they take this role?
- **Lack of political will** to strengthen the local level.
- **Lack of methods to ensure quality strategies**. Capacity development is needed.

Funded by

European Commission

The effect needs to go beyond strategy (investment is considered as a main result instead of sustainability) but it is also challenging to realise integrated initiatives and not only **isolated, short term projects.**

There is a **lack of creative ideas and/or lack of good examples**. Social innovation knowledge has to be brought down and providing "creativity methods" is important.

New policy support is also needed: Some MS different CAP-SP interventions can be used for SV. Therefore, coordination on MS-level is needed.

SUPPORT NEEDED
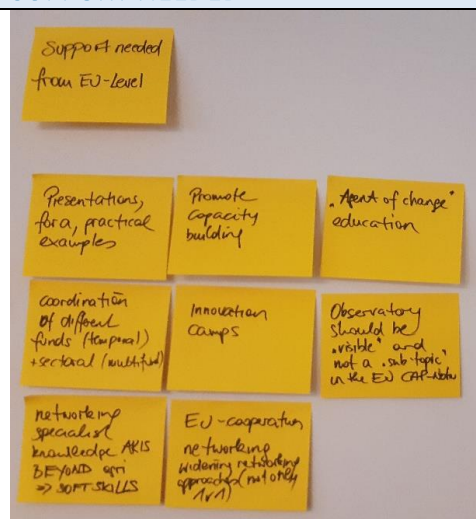
Presentations of practical examples (helps to understand the potential of the SV concept and inspires for innovative solutions).

Promote capacity building to rural actors who cannot see their ideas appear in the LAG's strategy.

The „Observatory" can be a good way to make mayors understand that there can be **other interventions than LEADER**.

Start with an "ideathlon-thinking" (first they have to find out what to do?).

Smart Villages need facilitation - **education of** the „change-makers"/ „**Agents of change**" is crucial.

Soft skills are needed/ Networking needs to be recognised as distinct specialised knowledge that should also be part of AKIS.

A **single** (separated) **rural development fund in the EU** should be considered. Coordination of different funds (temporal) + sectoral (multifund).

Based on **knowledge** coming out **from EU projects** (like SR21 and SR27) **online trainings** could be made for LAGs.

At least two actors are needed: **SV should be broader than 1 village**. EU-cooperation, networking, widering networking approaches.

KEY MESSAGE

- **Smart Village measures exist in many forms:**
  - concept involved in CAP strategic plan
  - dedicated funds (for a preparatory phase)

- competitions, platforms
- ideathlons
- peer-to-peer learning (SR21)
- Observatory (SR27)
- **The role of LEADER/ LAGs should be reconsidered but support is also possible independently from LEADER:**
  - the concept can be treated independently from LEADER
  - it can be a sub-program of LEADER
  - targeted support is needed
- **Networking and capacity building methods and levels:**
  - first the needs have to be clarified: ideathlon
  - good examples are needed in a form that can be well communicated
  - peer to peer learning can be useful
  - "agents of change" : trainers are needed from the managing part
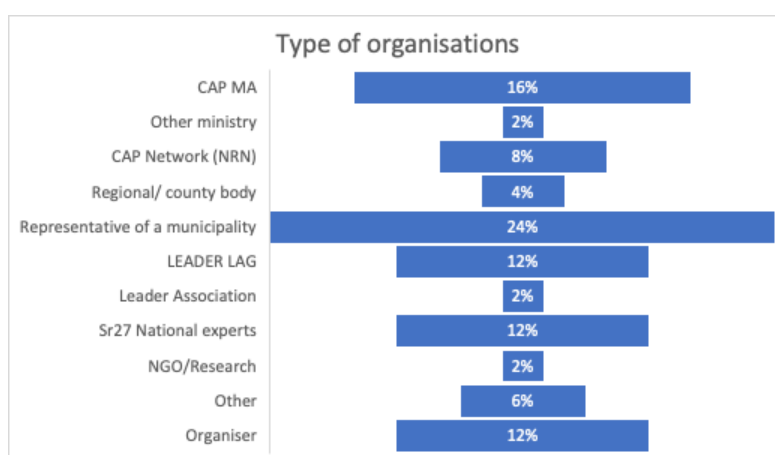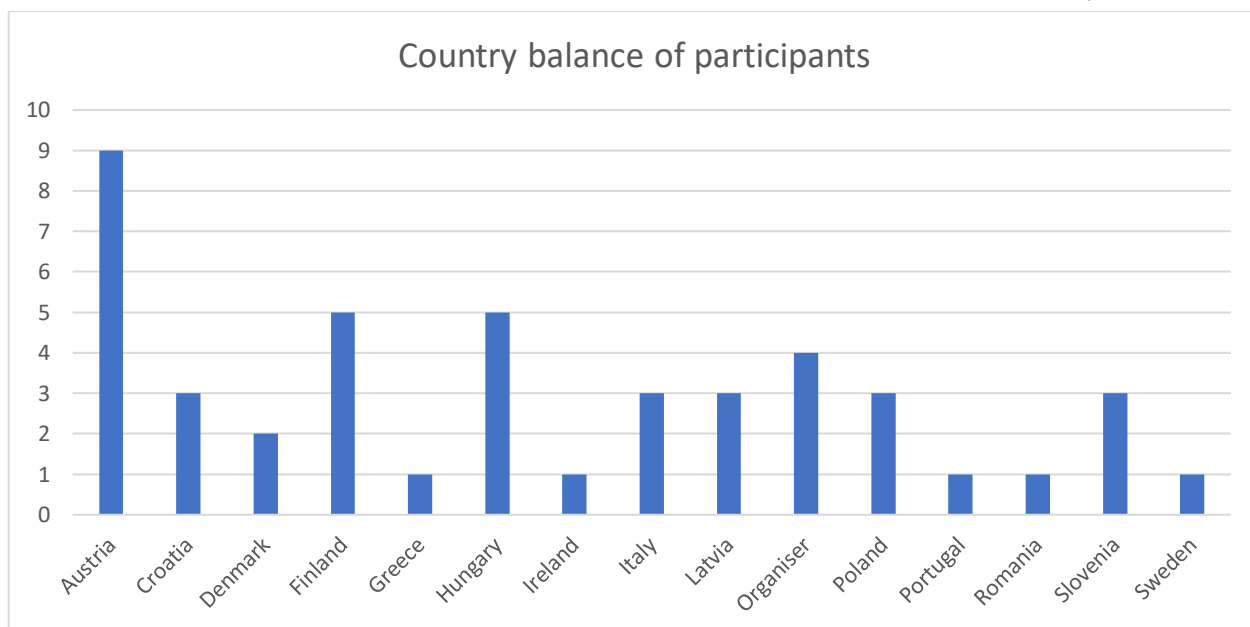 - specialist knowledge of soft skills have to be brought down to village level

Annex 2: Participants & evaluation

1st European Smart Villages Pilot Observatory face-to-face meeting 11-12/ 05/ 2023 in Austria with field visit to Stanz was held **in renewable energy community as a key theme.** Beside European, national and regional level stakeholders the meeting was targeted the energy cluster members and other rural communities interested in the theme.

On the first day of the event **46 participant** from **14 different countries** have participated in the event (see participation details further down)**:**

- The majority of the participants (38%) were representatives of **local rural stakeholders**: 22% of the participants represented municipalities (11 out of 12 rural municipalities were members of the energy cluster) , 12% of the participants represented LEADER LAGs and 2% of the LEADER Association.

- Some 30 % of participants represented **"policy" stakeholders from European, national and regional levels** (including NRNs): 18% of the total number of participants represented CAP ministries or other ministries (from Austria, Croatia, Greece, Latvia and Hungray), 4% of the total number of participants represented regional/ county bodies (Portugal, Austria), 8% of the total number of participants represented CAP Network (NRNs) from Italy, Poland, Ireland, Finland and Austrian.

- **Other participants** included SR27 national experts (12%), research organisations (2%) , and organisers (12%) and other representative (6%)

Type of organisations

|	
CAP MA	16%
Other ministry	2%
CAP Network (NRN)	8%
Regional/ county body	4%
Representative of a municipality	24%
LEADER LAG	12%
Leader Association	2%
Sr27 National experts	12%
NGO/Research	2%
Other	6%
Organiser	12%

Country balance of participants

Feedback:

An online questionnaire was shared with all the registered face-to-face participants to rate the Final Conference.

The overall event received a highly positive feedback, 18 out of 46 participants have rated the event. 100 % of respondents rated it the overall event very useful.

How would you rate the usefulness of the European Smart Villages Pilot…

The individual sessions were rated separately 12 out of 18 participants rated the individual sessions. The summary of the ratings is provided in the table below:
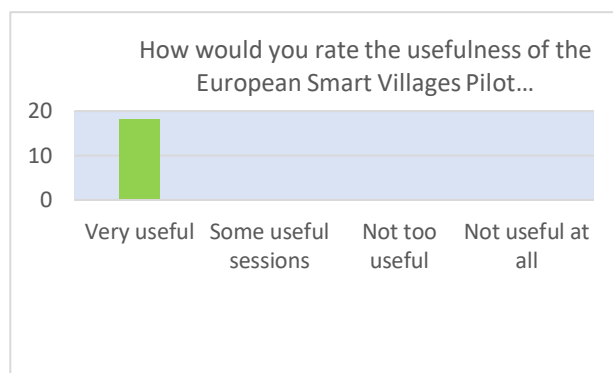
Welcome session: European Smart Villages Pilot Observatory & Taskforces presentations	4,1
Parallel workshops to discuss Smart Village implementation issues, needs and how the Smart Village Observatory can address these	4,8
Panel discussion on the Workshop outcomes	4,5
Observatory Knowledge Cluster Work (Lighthouse example presentations)	4,75
Discussion tables on 'How to engage community members in local smart actions and social innovations'	4,83
Average rating for all sessions:	4,7

The event received many positive comments from participants, such as the ones below:

"Is was a very useful event for contacts, networking, items, and the visit in Stanz. We are already working with some participants. I believe meetings in presence are useful for above reasons. Thanks for the great organization."

"I'm very happy, that I applied for cluster and even more happy, that I came to Graz. Thank you very very very much for this experience. Event was organized very

qualitative, it was a pleasure to be participant. So many new contacts and new people...”

“Smart villages need technical support and a good mechanism as well as a platform for exchanging information and experience. The project should be continued and developed.”

“You did a great job again! Thanks for all your efforts to spread the word. Can't wait for the following outcomes and the next meeting online/offline, as well!”

On the second day a filed visit to Stanz was organised.

Field visit:

The field visit received a highly positive feedback, 15 out of 40 participants have rated the event. 14 (out of 15) respondents rated it the overall event very useful.
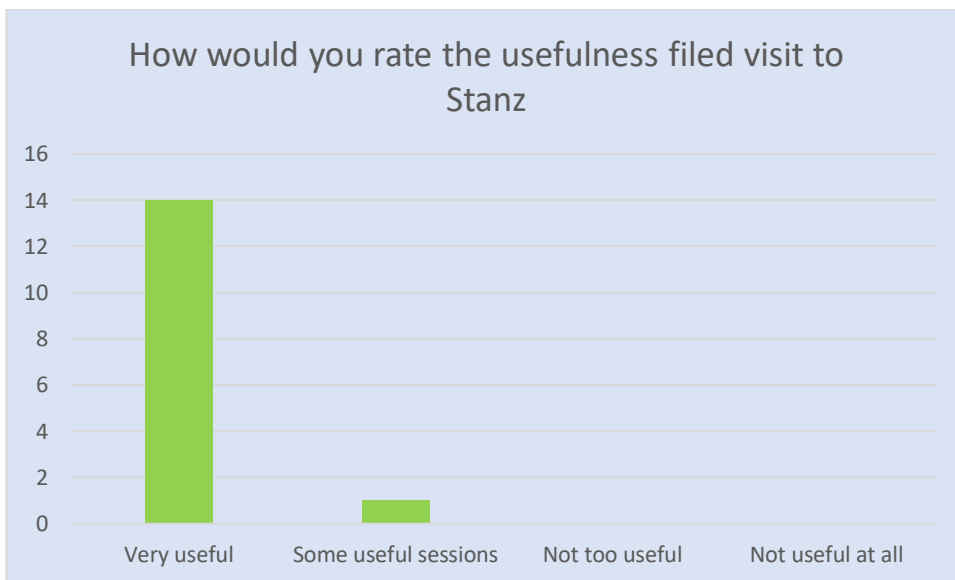
Annex 3: Participants list

	LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	NAME OF YOUR ORGANISATION/ VILLAGE	COUNTRY
1	AŠMANE	Ilvija	LAG "Aizkraukle District Partnership" / Ērberģe village	Latvia
2	BACKGREN	Ann-Sofi	Finnish Rural Network (CAP-network)	Finland
3	BALOGH	Anita	E40	Hungary
4	BENNETT	Daniel	Irish Rural Link / Irish CAP Network (NRN)	Ireland
5	BRUNO	Piero	Nus	Italy
6	CIMERMAN	Sabrina	Land Steiermark	Austria
7	CHACHARIDAKI	Maria	Managing Authority of Rural Development Intervention	Greece
8	DIMANTA-SVILPE	Zanda	SR27 National Expert, Latvian CAP Network	Latvia
9	DONNER	Philip	Luoteis-Kuhmon kyläverkko-osuuskunta	Finland
10	DUZS	Laszlo	Olaszfa	Hungary
11	ESZENYI	Roland	Ministry of Agriculture	Hungary
12	FEKETE	Robert	Szivugyunk Olaszfa Egyesulet	Hungary
13	FICHER	Michael	SR27 National Expert/ ÖAR	Austria
14	GALLER	Florian	Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology	Austria
15	GOMES DA SILVA	Patrícia	CCDR Alentejo	Portugal
16	HALASIEWICZ	Andrzej	RURBAN Wieś Miasto Region	Poland
17	IDU	Katrina	E40	Latvia
18	JÁNOSI	Timea	Remetea	Romania
19	KÄHKÖNEN	Olli-Pekka	LAG Mansikka	Finland
20	KARLSONE	Andra	Ministry of Agriculture	Latvia
21	KISSNÉ HŐSS	Klára	Municipality of Alsómocsolád	Hungary
22	KROFLIC	Primoz	LAG Raznolikost podezelja	Slovenia

23	KRZECZUNOWICZ	Paweł	Agricultural Advisory Centre / Polish Rural Network	Poland
24	LESIEWICZ	Justyna	Kujawsko-Pomorski Agricultural Advisory Center in Minikowo	Poland
25	LUKIĆ	Aleksandar	SR27 National Expert	Croatia
26	MAÁCZ	Miklós	Ministry of Agriculture	Hungary
27	MAMIĆ BAKOVIĆ	Marina	Ministry of agriculture	Croatia
28	NAGY	Attila	Ministry of Agriculture	Hungary
29	NAHRADA	Franz	GIVE Forschungsgesellschaft - Labor für Globale Dörfer	Austria
30	OCSKO	Emese	E40	Hungary
31	OCSKO	Edina	E40	Hungary
32	OIKARINEN	Jaana	LAG Mansikka	Finland
33	OZRETIĆ	Ivana	Ministry of Agriculture	Croatia
34	PILCHER	Fritz	Mayor of Stanz im Mürtzal	Hungary
35	PLANT	Peter	Torup Ting	Denmark
36	PRAR	Ivona	Samsø Energy Academy	Denmark
37	REDA	Emilia	Rete Rurale Nazionale -Rete Leader - CREA	Italy
38	ROSEGGER	Rainer		Austria
39	RUSS	Arno	Gemeinde Stanz	Austria
40	SIEFERT	Kai	Riddle & Code	Austria
41	SMEDSLUND	Kim	SR27 National Expert/ Finnish Village Movement	Finland
42	STÅLGREN	Hans-Olof	Stålgren Kultur och Miljö Consultant	Sweden
43	VIDEC	Katja	LAG From Pohorje to Bohor	Slovenia
44	Vötsch	Gerhard	Styrian Regional Authority	Austria
45	ZANCA	Nicola	Comune di Gaiba	Italy
46	ZUPANC	Ana	Development agency Kozjansko	Slovenia