



# Rural Network Support activities on Smart Villages Poland & Wallonia

# Wallonia – Main Challenges

- **Facing crises, accelerate digital transformation**, in order to seize new development opportunities for rural territories in favor of actions that contribute to short-distance models or relocation of activity: teleworking, coworking, e-commerce, distributed production, circular economy, etc.
- **Better territorial balances**, in favour of a model of redeployment of activity in rural territories, of research of attractiveness of the outskirts, of good relations between towns and countryside, of territorial networking and more generally of strong public policies around rurality and small towns.
- Crisis has shown even more strongly that while digital development is an opportunity, it also has a **social (digital divide) and environmental cost** as well as impacts, particularly in terms of data sovereignty.

# Poland – Main Challenges

- **Rural depopulation and rural ageing**, with significant **digital infrastructure challenges**. The negative trends have been mitigated somewhat as a consequence of the pandemic, with greater acceptance of teleworking.
- Continuing **digital exclusion**, especially of the more elderly inhabitants of rural areas (as compared to younger inhabitants), but also of rural areas in general (as compared to urban areas) as regards availability of reliable and sufficient internet access.
- Issues of **data ownership** are rarely discussed, if at all. While there is a policy drive to modernise and innovate (especially in agriculture) and to embrace the brave new digital world, the potential threats related to data protection and ownership of data generated by citizens are not highlighted.

# Rural Network actions in relation to SV since 2017

## Polish activities :

- ✓ Funding a participant of the **ENRD Thematic group** on Smart Villages (2017-2020)
- ✓ **Workshop** on SV for **LAG and regional government representatives** at a meeting of the LEADER Thematic Group of the Polish Rural Network
- ✓ „Smart Villages as an effective way to address key challenges in rural areas – **international workshop** in Warsaw 21-22 October 2019
- ✓ Funding of work by Network partner Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development (IRWiR PAN) to:
  - ✓ organise **SV competitions**
  - ✓ **publish research results** on Polish approaches to SV „The Smart Village concept – Examples from Poland”
- ✓ Support **popularising the SV topic** at successive gatherings of the European Rural Parliament (Candas 2019, Kielce 2022)
- ✓ **On-line training** on the SV concept to Polish LAGs

# Rural Network actions in relation to SV since 2017

## Walloon activities :

- ✓ Follow up the **ENRD Thematic group** on Smart Villages (2017 - 2020)
- ✓ **Monitoring and promotion of actions** carried out by the Provinces of **Namur and Luxembourg** and in terms of the "smart" approach
- ✓ **Promotion of smart actions** carried out by **Walloon municipalities and Walloon LAGs**: LAG Culturalités/jesuishesbignon.be cooperation projects, BiomMap (Rural Inspiration Award)
- ✓ **Organization of a seminar** on the theme of « Opendata » and the digital activities of the LAG Meuse@campagne
- ✓ Dissemination of the **SR21** call for applications & support for applications from Walloon municipalities for the SR 21 call for projects (Profondeville is one of the 21 villages selected)

# Walloon participation in the Smart Rural 21 project

Municipality of Profondeville

[https://www.smartrural21.eu/villages/profondeville\\_be/](https://www.smartrural21.eu/villages/profondeville_be/)

Profondeville's smart strategy revolves around three areas of interest:

1. Data lifecycle and management to help address challenges and improve public policies (e.g. on energy consumption and mobility), implementing a "low maintenance" data strategy to be able to manage a maximum of data with a reduced workforce and tight resources.
2. Strengthen democracy through citizen engagement and participation.
3. Promote our territory to visitors and develop tourism.

Summary highlights of the smart village strategy of Profondeville:

<https://www.smartrural21.eu/wp-content/uploads/Profondedville-Smart-village-strategy.pdf>

# Purpose of the Network action – BE-Wallonia

Gradual networking of the main rural stakeholders involved in the SV approach for :

- Allow them to **familiarize** themselves **with the SV concept**;
- Consolidate the **collaboration with Digital Wallonia** (Regional Agency) started in 2017 and identify / define / specify the challenges to be met (awareness and training of local actors, establishment of IT infrastructure, complementarity between territorial development tools, creation of digital hubs, etc.) and how to respond to them (policy to be put in place, tools and support to be put in place / strengthened, etc.).

# Implementation of a « smart » waloon taskforce

- ✓ A smart working group was set up through the Walloon Rural Development Network, on a voluntary basis
- ✓ Resource people were also called upon to provide **thematic insight** if necessary (responsible digital agency, FuturoCité, BiomMap project, e-square, Trakk, etc.)
- ✓ The scope/objective was initially discussed with **Digital Wallonia**. During the process, the participants expressed their wishes in terms of themes to be treated.
- ✓ **Membership stabilized naturally** (group emulation, networking, interest in the places and systems that hosted the Taskforce meetings)
- ✓ **No particular challenges** encountered during the process except the need to move quickly to meet the different schedules related to the work of the Taskforce

# Taskforce activities

## Purpose

- Building a **shared vision** of the concept of smart territories.
- **Analysis of the challenges** of rural municipalities **and the needs** of rural development actors in terms of smart territory, **formulation of recommendations** and **identification of good practices / case studies** to be capitalized

## Themes worked on

- Economic development
- Energy
- Environment
- Biodiversity
- Mobility
- Quality of life
- Data and human resources at the local level
- Participation

# Taskforce outcomes & lessons learnt - examples

## Cross-cutting recommendations on :

- Connectivity => remains a main challenge for Walloon rural territories
- Mutualisation => natural solution facing limited resources of rural municipalities => purchasing centres for example
- Replicability through knowledge sharing, networking
- Right territorial scale
- Open source
- Interoperability
- Digital responsibility => how to use digital solution in a sustainable way
- Animation => necessary to facilitate adoption of smart solution
- Social innovation => must remain at the heart of the driving forces behind the development of rural areas

## Methodological recommendations

## Thematic recommendations on Economic development

## Identification of good practices / case studies to be capitalized

# Economic development - Examples of thematic learnings and recommendations

- Digital solutions can be used for facilitate recruitment and promote local employment and improve their governance and well-being at work
- Digital tools can facilitate the networking of companies and the pooling/sharing of company resources (collective approaches)
- The digital transition must be supported but it is necessary to better determine the digital transition objectives of companies (energy / climate)
- The optimization of mobility should facilitate links of commuters with their areas of residence
- The digital solutions can facilitate exchanges (logistics) and more knowledge between actors.
- Facilitate the creation of third places in rural areas
- Support data governance between tourism stakeholders and within municipalities.

# Exemples of thematic learnings and recommendations

- **Energy** : Promoting alternative energies at the municipal level and promoting the emergence of energy communities
- **Environment/Biodiversity** : Promote the creation of a shared environmental management tool at the local level
- **Mobility** :
  - Better understand flows through the collection of data in participatory mode
  - Promoting solidarity between inhabitants in terms of mobility
- **Data and human resources at the local level** => Promote the opening of public data (opendata policy)
- **Participation** :
  - Bridging the digital divide and encouraging initiatives aimed specifically at young people
  - Support for the implementation of Crowdfunding tools

# Taskforce meeting



# Actions taken

Transmission of the results of the Taskforce's work to the Walloon MA (digital development = line of work proposed to the LAGs for the period 2023-2027) and to Digital Wallonia, body responsible for defining the framework of the future regional project call "Smart territories" draws it as closely as possible to the needs of the field.

## Next steps

- The Taskforce intends to continue its work and strengthen the Walloon “smart” ecosystem through exchanges of good practices, field visits and intervention by experts.
- Sharing European (SR21, etc.) best practices

# Purpose of the Network action - Poland

Step-by-step approach aimed at –

## Learning

- i) gaining an understanding of the SV concept (ensuring Polish expert participation in the ENRD Thematic Group; helping ensure Polish participation in the Smart Rural 21 project)
- ii) mapping the lay of the land in Poland by supporting a Network partner to fund a SV competition and to publish research results on examples of SV in country

## Sharing

- iii) bringing together stakeholders through workshops – both Polish (LAGs and regional government representatives) and to a broader audience through an international workshop
- iv) supporting European Rural Parliament discussion of the concept

## Training

- v) provision of knowledge through on-line training

# Recommendations regarding SV - Poland

The publication „[The Smart Village concept – Examples from Poland](#)” has made the following recommendations in respect of rural policies:

- ✓ **continue to provide support** for areas particularly digitally excluded in terms of ICT infrastructure in EU and national policies
- ✓ **include the smart village concept in the “CAP Strategic Plan 2023-27”**, especially in the context of the LEADER/CLLD approach
- ✓ encourage the establishment of associations, **local partnerships and support for exchange of experiences** in the approach to smart villages in EU and national programmes
- ✓ include **multidimensionality and diversity** of the smart village approach as well as the so called “**territorial perspective**” in various programmes and policies

# Recommendations regarding SV - Poland

The publication „[The Smart Village concept – Examples from Poland](#)” has made the following recommendations in respect of society and local government:

- ✓ maintain **existing programmes** and enrich the offer of training courses, workshops, study tours for local leaders and persons aspiring to become such leaders
- ✓ run an **information campaign, workshops** and to take other promotion measures on the activity of local governments, sołectwos, third sector and broadly understood public participation
- ✓ **establish a special system of funding** in municipalities which would enable the implementation of bottom-up smart solutions that facilitate support for local leaders' actions
- ✓ provide **support for municipality employees** with a view to finding an appropriate fund and going through the procedure. Support provided by qualified experts would make local leaders' work easier

# Recommendations regarding SV - Poland

The publication „[The Smart Village concept – Examples from Poland](#)” has made the following recommendations in respect of society and local government - continued:

- ✓ disseminate the assumptions behind the smart village approach among residents and carry out activities **promoting and explaining the concept**
- ✓ **reward and promote leaders and local communities** that make smart changes
- ✓ **analyse** the situation **and improve** what exists in a particular village as an impulse for change supported by a thought-over strategy / concept of rural development following the smart village trend

The publication „[The Smart Village concept – Examples from Poland](#)” has made the following recommendations in respect of the research community:

- ✓ allocate **extra funds** for research on the smart village concept in social, agricultural as well as engineering and technological sciences
- ✓ **expand the stock of smart initiatives through measures** (scientific investigations, competitions, conferences, etc.) addressed to local communities, aimed at sharing good practices

# Recommendations to the ERP (1)

The 2019 Warsaw workshop resulted in a set of 7 recommendations being provided to the gathering of the European Rural Parliament in Cadas (Spain):

- ✓ **build on experience** – above all, avoid bureaucracy: Smart Villages must serve the intelligent development of partnerships for innovation (EIP AGRI), "village renewal" and LEADER
- ✓ **Start with one village, but build a partnership:** Smart Villages must be bottom-up in a village / settlement, but the approach will benefit from the involvement of local authorities, LAGs, advisory entities (agricultural advisory services and/or chambers of agriculture), and local development centres
- ✓ **Take note of the digital lag of Villages:** rural areas are lagging behind in terms of broadband internet infrastructure, e-service availability and digital literacy. Coordinated action is required for the Smart Villages approach
- ✓ **People matter:** the involvement of NGOs and volunteering is very important. Smart Villages must be understandable and attractive to people from local communities

# Recommendations to the ERP (2)

The 2019 Warsaw workshop resulted in a set of 7 recommendations being provided to the gathering of the European Rural Parliament in Cadas (Spain):

- ✓ **Reward engagement:** a bonus system for the most active rural areas that use the Smart Villages approach for their development should be considered, taking into account the most interesting initiatives in this regard
- ✓ **Smart Villages can help small farms:** in countries with a large number of small farms, Smart Villages provide an opportunity to create short agri-food supply chains. Advanced IT solutions (purchasing platforms), better cooperation between farmers, the creation of consumer cooperatives and work on building local and regional consumer patriotism are needed
- ✓ **Provide advice and support for Smart Villages:** New technologies can support the development of animation, the process of reaching farmers and consumers, building the trust of all stakeholders as well as building a business model. Smart Villages requires a combination of solid consulting / brokerage with advanced IT and logistics technology



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