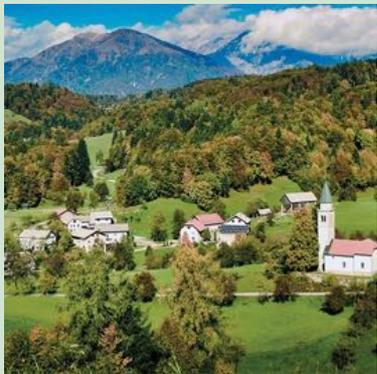


# SMART RURAL 21



PREPARATORY ACTION ON SMART RURAL  
AREAS OF THE 21ST CENTURY (2020–2022)  
Supporting Smart Villages in Europe ([www.smartrural21.eu](http://www.smartrural21.eu))

# SMART VILLAGES & THE SMART RURAL 21 PROJECT

Over the past years, **the Smart Villages concept has been widely discussed** at European, national, regional and local levels. Several **local communities have been drawn to the concept** and started to actively work to apply it in their local contexts. Member States and regional authorities are increasingly considering **how to best support Smart Villages through the Common Agricultural Policy, Cohesion Policy and beyond**. Smart Villages is now widely accepted and promoted as a key community-led local territorial development instrument.

At the **European level the concept has been launched at the initiative of the European Parliament and supported by the European Commission (DG AGRI)** through the Thematic Working Group of the European Network for Rural Development (2017-20), the Smart Eco-social Villages Pilot project (2018-19) and the

1st & 2nd Preparatory Actions on Smart Rural Areas in the 21st Century (2019-22 and 2020-23) referred to as Smart Rural 21 & Smart Rural 27 projects respectively. The Smart Rural 21 project **aimed to promote the uptake of the Smart Villages concept across the EU, at both local (rural community) and policymaking levels**. It supported 21 villages in Europe to meet 21st century challenges and seize opportunities through developing and implementing smart village strategies.

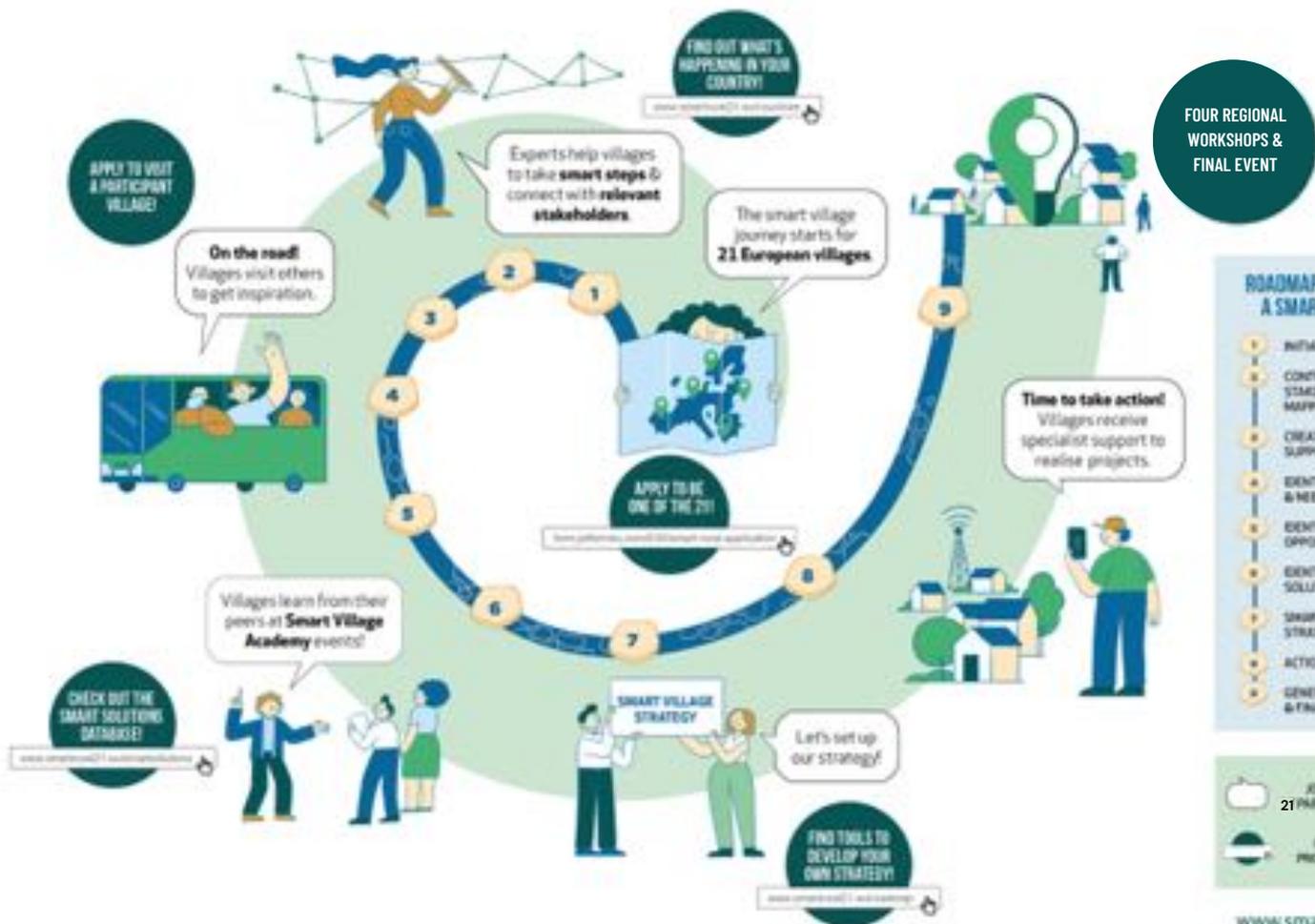
**PROVIDE TARGETED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO RURAL COMMUNITIES**

**ANALYSE APPROACHES TO SMART VILLAGE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION & DRAW LESSONS**

**ENSURE COOPERATION & EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE**

**CONTRIBUTE TO TARGETING SMART VILLAGE POLICY INTERVENTIONS**

# JOURNEY TO BECOME A SMART VILLAGE



# 1 SELECTION OF VILLAGES



Five villages were pre-selected prior to the start of the project. The selection of further 16 villages has been implemented through **an open call of applications** across Europe in early 2020. Until the deadline, 736 applications have been received across Europe.

To meet the large interest, the **Come Along! process** has been launched to allow – some further 200 – interested villages to get engaged in the Smart Rural 21 process.

## Selection criteria

### Main criteria

- Level of coherence: quality of strategic intervention logic
- Level of motivation
- Level of human capacity
- Expected added value

### Secondary criteria

- Level of technical & physical development
- Innovation potential
- Intention to cooperate
- Level of transferability

### Cross-cutting criteria

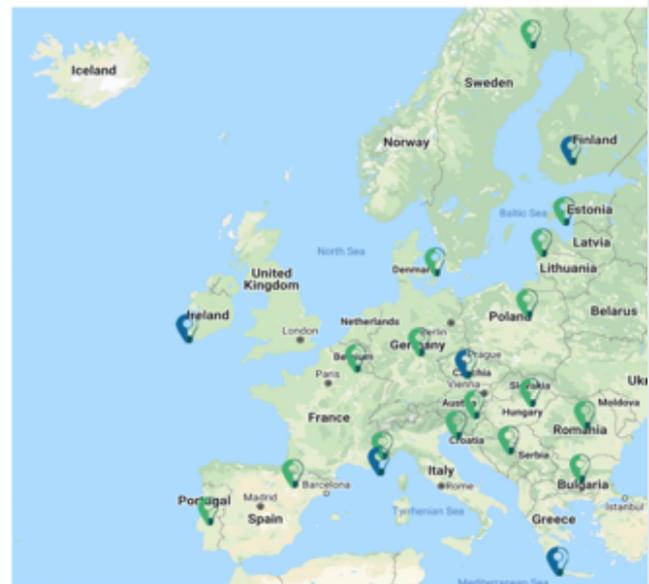
Geographical, country & thematic balance

### Selected villages

- Alsunga (Latvia)
- Ansó (Spain)
- Babina Greda (Croatia)
- Brestovo (Bulgaria)
- Ostana (Italy)
- Penela (Portugal)
- Profondeville (Belgium)
- Remetea (Romania)
- Šentviška Gora (Slovenia)
- Solstedt (Germany)
- Stanz im Mürztal (Austria)
- Tomaszyn (Poland)
- Torup (Denmark)
- Uppony (Hungary)
- Virtsu (Estonia)
- Vuollerim (Sweden)

### Pre-selected villages

- Mukařov (Czechia)
- Dingle (Ireland)
- Mouans-Sartoux (France)
- Kythera (Greece)
- Raudanmaa (Finland)





## 2 STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Smart village strategy is at the core of the Smart Villages concept. **According to the definition** developed by the EU-funded Smart Eco-social Villages Pilot Project, Smart Villages “rely on a participatory approach to develop and implement their strategies to improve their economic, social and environmental conditions”. Smart strategies include a clear intervention logic, and planned smart actions.

The 21 selected villages (and 19 among the Come Along! villages) have developed their smart village strategies with expert support from the project (whenever requested).

Villages received **guidance on strategy development and a strategy template** that they could use optionally. Lessons have been drawn from the monitoring of strategy development & implementation.



### Core elements of the Smart Village Strategy template

- Context
- Key characteristics of the village
- Intervention logic: objectives, strengths – weaknesses – opportunities, planned smart actions
- Management & monitoring
- Stakeholder engagement in strategy development



# 3 SMART PILOT ACTIONS



The Smart Rural 21 project provided technical support for strategy implementation to selected villages through specialist expert days. The support was always tailor-made to the needs of the village and planned together with the village representatives. The project supported a wide-range of diverse actions such as: **training in programming** for youth (Alsunga – Latvia), **youth engagement** (Mukařov – Czechia) planning of the



Raudanmaa (Finland)

**rehabilitation of the old buildings and sites** or new ones for community use (Ansó – Spain, Raudanmaa – Finland, Šentviška Gora Plateau – Slovenia, Virtsu – Estonia, Uppony – Hungary), **training of farmers** in organic production (Babina Greda – Croatia), **support for planning (e-)health and (e-)care** services (Cumeeira/ Penela – Portugal, Dingle – Ireland, Sollstedt – Germany), use of **smart farming** solutions (Kythera – Greece), planning **smart mobility** solutions (Ostana – Italy), setting up an **energy community** (Stanz im Mürztal), **community App** (Torup – Denmark), planning of construction of **eco-buildings** (Earthship idea) (Tomaszyn – Poland).

\*Due to the high interest more – than the initially planned 12 additional – villages were selected.



## 4 REAL-WORLD TESTING

Three villages were supported further for the **real-world implementation** of their strategies:

- **Stanz (Austria):** The Smart Rural 21 project contributed towards the planning of the **infrastructure and the organisational framework of the Renewable Energy Community**, combining social innovation (stakeholder engagement and local currency) and technological development based on blockchain technology & a token-system.
- **Tomaszyn (Poland):** Experimented with various sustainable and **smart agricultural production methods, and has explored an eco-building construction**. Tomaszyn develops Regenerative Plans for the village including landscape plan, animal regenerative grazing plan, localisation of agro-forest, crop and field regenerative production plan and educational path.
- **Ferraria de São João – Penela (Portugal):** A series of actions have been supported to ensure **innovative goat and forest management practices to prevent forest fires** including the use digital economy through improving a new version of the digital platform: FarmReal, and improving community action in ecological design and tourism.



# 5 CAPACITY-BUILDING & EXCHANGE



The Smart Rural 21 project has supported the exchange of experience among stakeholders, with focus on peer-to-peer learning among local communities. Two [Smart Village Academy events](#) were organised online to support strategy development and implementation of smart actions (including options for financing).

Regular [Smart Rural Community Café sessions](#) were held that allowed learning about the holistic smart approach of one community each time followed by an informal discussion ('over a morning coffee').

Online tools, such as the [Smart Solutions Database](#) and the [Roadmap Toolkit](#) have provided interested communities with practical ideas, methods and approaches for designing and implementing smart village strategies and solutions.

Finally, during the second half of the project – when the Covid-19 situation already allowed – a [series of cross-visits](#) were organised and financially supported to:

- Tomaszyn – Poland
- Stanz – Austria
- Torup – Denmark
- Mukařov – Czechia
- Ansó – Spain
- Ostana – Italy
- Alsunga – Latvia
- Virtsu – Estonia
- Remetea – Romania
- Mutual visits between Raudanma – Finland and Šentviška Gora Plateau – Slovenia



Ostana cross-visit (Italy)



## 6 SUPPORT POLICIES

Policies and support for smart projects have been reviewed in each Member State\* and based on the information collected, '[What's happening in my country pages](#)' have been created to elaborate on the support for smart villages through the CAP, Cohesion Policy and beyond.

A policy analysis has been carried out to review the state of play across Europe, including the [identification and analysis of selected policy cases](#). A policy working group has been set up with the participation of CAP Managing Authorities, National Rural Networks and other policy stakeholders to select and discuss relevant policy cases. Four case studies have been elaborated in details:

- Call for 'Smart and sustainable territories', Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Region (France)
- Call for innovative projects 'Smart Territory' Wallonia (Belgium)
- Innovation Camp methodology (Finland)
- National Smart Villages Programme (Estonia)

The 2nd Preparatory Action on Smart Rural areas in the 21st Century (2021–2023) – [Smart Rural 27 project](#) – builds on the experience accumulated through the Smart Rural 21 project and is focusing on enabling an effective Smart Villages support framework both at the local and policymaking levels. It includes the analysis of the support provided through the 2023–2027 CAP Strategic Plans.



\*Has to be noted that at the time, the CAP Strategic Plans have not yet been public.

# SMART RURAL – 21 LESSONS

1. There is no unique smart way: No direct correlation between type of area and the smart village journey.
2. 'Village' means different things in different country contexts.
3. Exchange of experience should be facilitated with focus on peer-to-peer and practical learning.
4. Common themes of interest do emerge from different villages contexts.
5. Youth engagement requires innovative approaches.
6. Consider the specificities of local governance models when providing support to rural communities.
7. Elected leaders bring legitimacy but also need to build trust.
8. Encourage working with local professionals / influencers.
9. More recognition of the power of local self-governance.
10. Consider the circumstances of villages before raising too high expectations on the participatory approach.
11. Many local plans & strategies exist on paper, but longer-term strategic thinking is still lacking.
12. Support for strategic planning is needed in local communities.
13. Sustaining engagement in actions is challenging.
14. Lot of local presence is needed to support local engagement.
15. Innovation is one of the key aspects that distinguishes the Smart Villages approach.
16. Villages must be provided specialist expertise to realise innovative actions.
17. Let the villages take the lead on what expertise they need.
18. New innovative "eye-opener" solutions are needed to avoid path-dependency.
19. Clear & targeted Smart Villages policy support framework would be crucial.
20. Alternative financing needs to be encouraged.
21. The Long Term Rural Vision offers a useful framing for Smart Villages.

Source: *Smart Rural 21 Village Models Report & Final Report*

The Preparatory Action on Smart Rural Areas of the 21st Century (AGRI-2019-409) is supported by the:



This publication has been produced under a contract (No AGRI-2019-409) with the Union and the opinions expressed are those of the contractor only and do not represent the contracting authorities official position.

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Catalogue Number: KF-09-23-012-EN-N  
ISBN: 978-92-76-98607-2  
DOI: 10.2762/426581

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