

1st Policy Group Workshop

13 December 2021, 14.00-16.00 CET-ZOOM

1. Objective

The main objective of the policy workshop was to present the outcomes of the Smart Rural 21 (SR21) project to date, with specific focus on policy findings and recommendations, and relevant cases across the EU. The workshop aimed to contribute to the identification and selection of future policy case studies and identify specific needs of policymakers to develop more effective Smart Villages policy instruments in the future through exchange of experience.

2. Target group/ participants

The main target of the Policy Group discussions are policy representatives – especially CAP Managing Authorities, National Rural Network support units and regional policy representatives – from more advanced Member States in terms of Smart Villages policy and support planning. Member States have been identified based on the information collected through the ‘*What’s Happening in My Country*’ pages by the SR21 project in each country. It was also important to keep the group of a ‘reasonable’ size to ensure meaningful exchange. The findings will be widely disseminated and shared to all Member States for mutual learning.

No of participants: 22. See participants list in the Annex III.

3. Presentations and summary of key findings

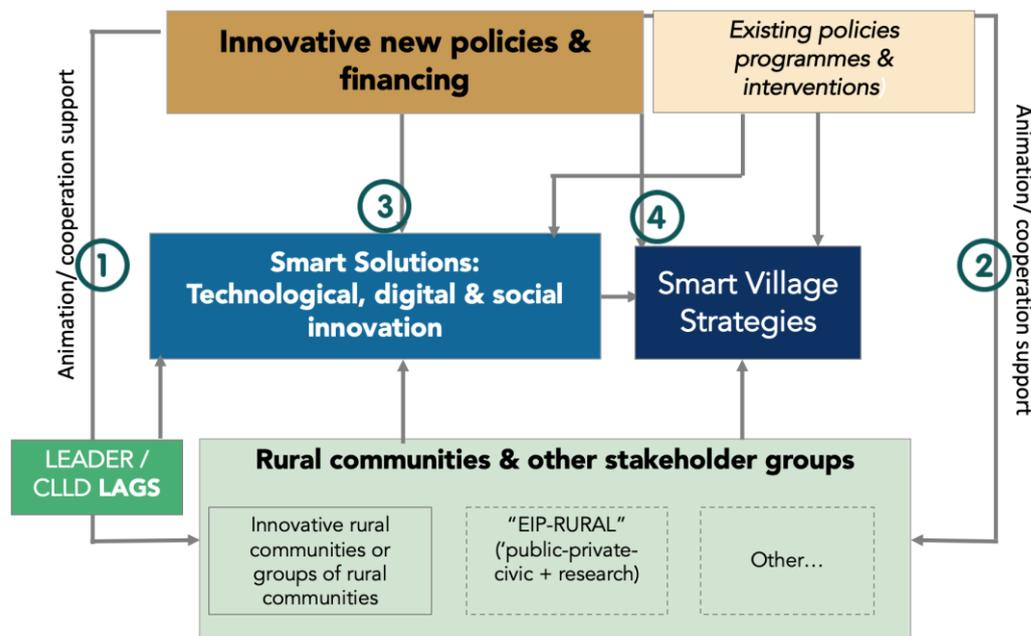
3.1 Presentations & discussion

After a short introduction of the participants of the meeting, Edina Ocsko (SR21 Project Coordinator) held a presentation **about the Smart Rural 21 project**, briefly summarised the SR21 and Smart Rural 27 (SR27) projects clarifying different objectives, tasks and synergies between the two projects, as well as the state-of-play of SR21 project to date.

A Smart Villages policy framework was also presented (see chart below), including the key areas of intervention for Smart Villages support:

- **Animation, cooperation and capacity-building** support for Smart Villages implementation for rural communities:
 - Either through intermediaries, such as LEADER LAG
 - Or directly (e.g. through animation and capacity building by CAP Networks)
- **Direct support / financing** (calls) for:
 - Smart village strategies (integrated, innovative strategic approaches)
 - Smart solutions in various thematic areas

How Smart Villages add value?



Key policy findings identified in the course of the **SR21 project** include:

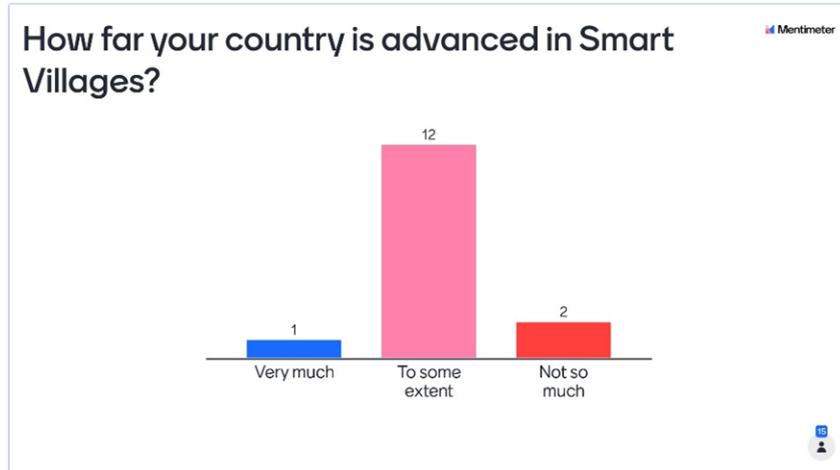
- In most Member States LEADER is likely to be the key instrument for implementing SV
- Lot of uncertainties – some frontrunner countries – piloting/ experimentation
- Digital is not the only means to become smart – but still a key feature in a number of MS of future SV support framework
- Many NRNs follow/ share information about SV
- Some NRNs have targeted activities on SV (competitions, awards, thematic groups)
- Several Smart Village-type initiatives supported through other policies
- There is a gap between 'top-down' (what is available: programmes, funding, measures, etc.) and 'bottom-up' (what rural communities actually access) accessibility of funding.

Sarah Peters (IfLS, SR21 partner) presented the findings of the desk research analysis led by IfLS. She described the key SV thematic fields identified by the study (including rural services, renewable energy, food system, mobility, rural diversification) and cross-cutting topic (such as cooperation), as well as the data (text) analysis methods – based on a comprehensive code system - used to carry out the analysis.

During the discussion data analysis methods were further explained, the differences between 'technological' and 'digital' innovations have been briefly discussed. It was highlighted that the framework conditions are very different in the different Member States and the biggest challenge is to find the most suitable (administrative) level for the intervention/ to implement smart village strategies.

3.2 Interactive session

As a short ‘warm-up’ exercise, participants were asked to indicate how far they think their country is advanced in terms of Smart Villages policies and support framework (see outcome below).

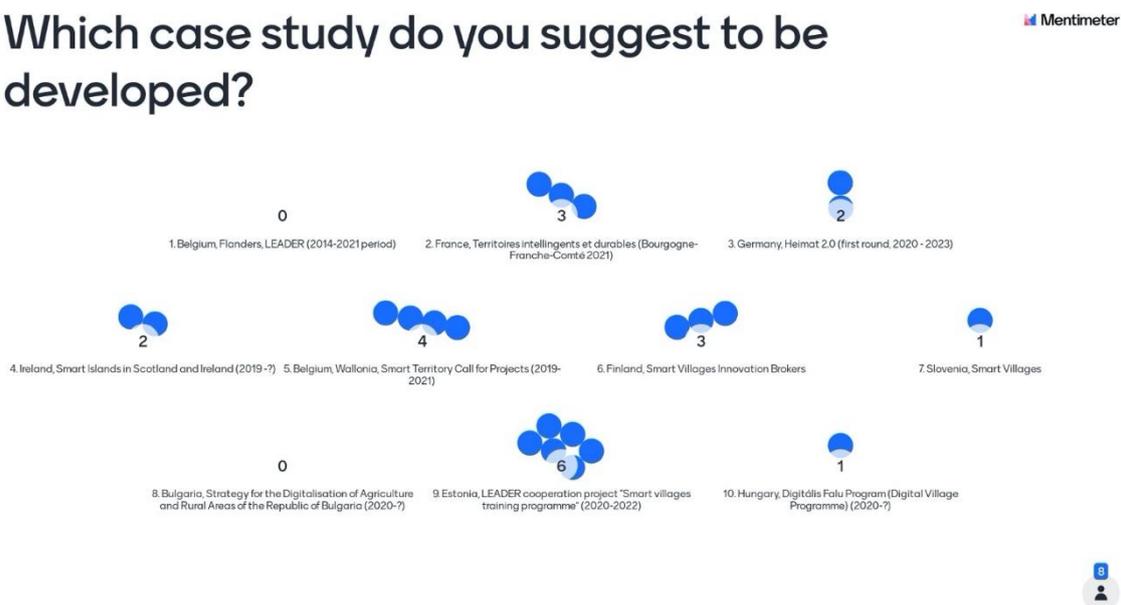


Interactive exercise: Which kind of support your country is already providing or planning to provide in the next programming period?

Using Miro board, different schemes & ideas were collected (see picture of the board in Annex I) according to the Smart Villages policy areas. These will inform the selection of case studies and further Smart Rural policy work.

Simone Sterly (IfSL) presented **10 case studies/ examples** identified as potential policy examples on supporting Smart Villages policy instruments in various Member States, demonstrating successful interventions under the CAP and other policies (e.g. Cohesion Policy). The outcome of the informal voting is presented below. Participants have been informed that the voting will inform the selection, but it will not be the only basis of selecting the final set of case studies (other criteria such as policy focus/ funding instruments, availability of experts and policymakers, feedback from the Steering Group will also inform the final decision). Experts and policymakers provided feedback on the examples that were presented from their countries.

Which case study do you suggest to be developed?





4. Conclusion

The meeting was concluded with explaining the next steps. Participants were informed that the very short list/ selection of cases will be submitted to DG AGRI. Following feedback from the Steering Group and from the participants of the Policy Group (within the 2nd Policy Group discussion, 18 January 2022), experts will start working on the detailed elaboration of case studies. The purpose is to explore practical implementation (including challenges and bottlenecks, etc.) and help other countries to learn from the experience.

In this context the final meeting (planned at the end of February 2022), the case studies and key findings will be presented to a wider interested audience.

Annex I:

1st Policy Group Discussion

Agenda

13 December 2021, 14.00 – 16.00

Platform: Zoom (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83576476240>)

The main objective of the policy workshop is to present the outcomes of the Smart Rural 21 project to date, with specific focus on policy findings and recommendations. The workshop aims to contribute to the identification and selection of future policy case studies, and identify specific needs of policymakers to develop more effective Smart Villages policy instruments in the future through exchange of experience.

Timing	Agenda item
14.00 – 14.20	Who is in the r(z)oom Introduction of participants
14.20 – 14.35	Presentation about the Smart Rural 21 project <i>Edina Ocsko, Smart Rural 21 project (Project Coordinator)</i>
14.35 – 14.50	Presentation about policy findings: Smart Villages policy framework, findings from the Smart Rural 21 & Smart Rural 27 projects <i>Edina Ocsko, E40 Group & Sarah Peter, IfLS</i>
14.50 – 15.20	Q&A and discussion <i>Interactive session: Type of support planned in Member States</i>
15.20 – 15.50	Presentation of identified policy cases <i>Presentation and reflection by participants from the relevant countries. “Voting” on the most relevant/ interesting policy cases for further elaboration.</i>
15.50 – 16.00	Final remarks & next steps



Annex II: Outcomes of policy instrument review exercise (miro board)



Project led by:



Funded by:



Annex III: List of participants

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	COUNTRY	POSITION / COMPANY
BALOGH	Anita	Hungary	E40 Group
BÍZKOVÁ	Rut	Czechia	ISFOR (Smart communities)
BREMSE	Ave	Estonia	National Rural Network
CONWAY	Shane	Ireland	National Rural Network
DELMON -	Xavier	Belgium, Wallonia	National Rural Network SR21 national expert
FISCHER	Michael	Austria	National Rural Network SR21 national expert
HLAVINKA	Antonin	Czechia	Olomouc University
JERIČ	Marjeta	Slovenia	Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food
KAEMPER	Stefan	Germany	National Rural Network
KRZECZUNOWICZ	Paweł	Poland	National Rural Network
MAASTIK	Meeri	Estonia	National Rural Network
MABILLE	Jérôme	Belgium, Wallonia	National Rural Network
OCSKO	Edina	Hungary	E40 Group
PARIZÁN	Anna	Hungary	E40 Group
PÄTILÄ	Salla	Finland	National Rural Network
PETER	Sarah	Germany	IfLS (SR21 partner)
SMEDSLUND	Kim	Finland	SR21 national expert
STERLY	Simone	Germany	IfLS (SR21 partner)
TAMMETS	Kristiina	Estonia	SR21 national expert
TOTH	Peter	Belgium	ENRD Contact Point
VARGAS	Aldo	Poland	SR21 national expert
WEHMEYER	Anke	Germany	National Rural Network