2nd Policy Group Workshop

18 January 2022, 10.00-12.45 CET-ZOOM

1. Objective

The main objective of the policy workshop was to present Smart Villages policy instruments from across Europe through the active engagement of participants. Following practical presentations on Smart Villages support by members, smaller break-out room discussions were organised with the participants around specific funding mechanisms and schemes. The workshop also aimed to contribute to the elaboration of policy case studies within the Smart Rural 21 project.

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: 30. See participants list in the Annex II.

3. Presentations and summary of key findings

3.1 Presentations

After a short introduction of the participants of the meeting provided by Edina Ocsko (SR21 Project Coordinator), Simone Sterly (IfLS, SR21 partner company) presented the final shortlist of the policy case studies to be developed into more elaborated policy cases:

Country	Topic	Type
Belgium, Wallonia	Territoire Intelligent - Call for Projects (2019-2021)	Project funding
Czech Republic	smart' concept and multi-funded support of smart communities	Project funding
Estonia	„Smart villages training programme" (2020-2022)	LEADER cooperation project Capacity building, knowledge transfer and networking
Finland	innovation camp method for capacity-building and co-developing smart solutions	Facilitation
France, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté	Territoires intelligents et durables (2021)	Project funding

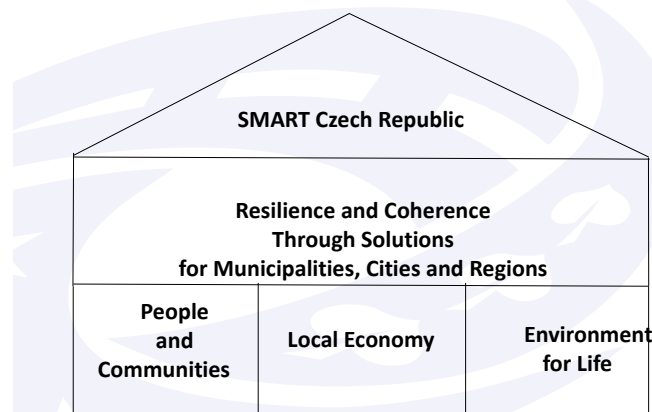The introduction was followed by presentations of Smart Villages support instruments from across Europe.

- **The Smart Villages training programme in Estonia**, Kristiina Tammets

  A 1,5 year LEADER cooperation project started in 2021 on Smart Villages development programme including 13 LEADER LAGs with 24 villages. Expected results:

  - Each village/community drafts Smart Village strategy
  - Each village/community implements pilot action
  - National Smart Villages Network will be established
  - Enhance public awareness and the know-how of Estonian villages
  - LEADER LAGs will gain experience on how to implement the concept of Smart Villages

- **The 'smart' concept and multi-funded support of smart communities in Czechia**, Rut Bízková

  Presentation of the Smart Cities Concept prepared by the Ministry of Regional Development covers resilience through SMART solutions for municipalities, cities and regions.
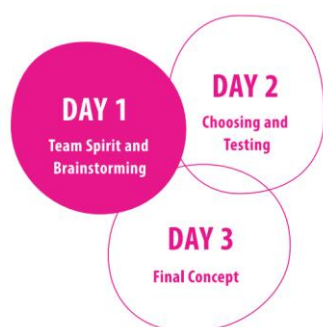

7 principles of SMART solutions:

1. Change of direction - services and jobs following people instead of people following jobs and services

2. Resilience - the resilience of people and communities, local economy and the environment, resilient cohesion within the territory

3. One measure with more equivalent effects - a holistic approach

4. The principle of "short distances" - everything that can be provided locally must be provided locally

5. Cooperation to achieve the effective solutions - with all partners in the territory engaged;

6. Cohesion and complementarity, horizontal and vertical interconnections - balancing opportunities, reducing tensions

7. Evidence based solutions relying on open data and transparency - data must be understandable and accessible for innovative applications and development of people, communities and business

- **The innovation camp method for capacity-building and co-developing smart solutions**, Pätilä Salla & Juha-Matti Markkola

The aim of the 3-day long innovation camps with around 40-50 participants is to create new ideas to develop rural area, as well as challenge and develop the people, economy and networks of the rural areas. A very practical and intensive way to develop new ideas into concrete innovations. They have been implemented by the Finnish NSU since 2012 based on the bottom–up needs.

The Innovation Camp method for capacity-building and co-developing smart solutions

3.2 Working Group session

A working group was organised around each of the presented policy examples to discuss the lessons from supporting Smart Villages, as follows:

- **Supporting Smart Villages through LEADER**

- **Funding innovative solutions in rural communities through the CAP & beyond**

- **Animation support for the emergence of Smart Villages**

The discussions aimed to facilitate exchange among participants with specific focus on the question some key questions:

a) '*What have been the most successful components of support instruments and processes?'*.

A number of successful components have been collected in the three working groups. In general, funding opportunities, synergies with other programmes and initiatives, networking, common understanding and the emphasis on dissemination (including social media) can be mentioned as most important components for successful SV instruments. More specifically key success factors of the examples presented:

Estonia: networking, access to LAG funding by linking Smart Villages to the LAG strategy;

Finland: the innovation camp as a project planning technique and means for generating innovative ('out-of-the-box') ideas, importance of voluntary work of locals;

Czechia: younger/well-educated people returning to villages, important role of LAGs and small villages' mayors in connecting actors and providing motivation.

b) What could (or should) be done differently to make Smart Villages more effective?

A better understanding of the Smart Villages concepts has still been highlighted as an important horizontal aspect. It is a clear that better access to funds beyond the CAP would be needed, especially considering that villages are small actors with limited capacity and therefore, they need support framework that are adapted to this scale, still allowing access to regional policy and other relevant funds. Communication should be strengthened, especially between larger municipalities (as key administrative units) and smaller villages within these municipality administrations. Last but not least, sharing more smart examples and practices would be welcome from both national and European level.

4.   Conclusion of the discussions

Based on the discussions it can be concluded that LEADER will be a key tool in implementing Smart Villages concept. The main question is how to link the LAG strategies and local smart village strategies and smart solutions.

It can be also concluded that Smart Villages definition is still not entirely clear and therefore, not effectively operationalised. However, there is no point to define the concept further, rather clarifications will emerge through the practical implementation of on-the-ground actions.

Finally, the lack of accessibility of funding at the local level still remains a challenge. It would be important to make sure that funding is available for a small community for smart initiatives, especially those that are integrated within holistic smart villages startegies.

5.   Case studies

The next steps will be the preparation of the 5 case studies. Sarah Peter (IfLS, SR21 partner company) presented the purpose and the structure of the future case studies:

5.1   Purpose

The aim is to demonstrate successful interventions to support Smart Villages

- ▪ …under the CAP and other policies (e.g. Cohesion Policy)
- ▪ …covering a range of Member States and thematic foci.

Target groups:

- ▪ Policy-makers at all levels

Methodological approach:

- ▪ Desk research (statistical data bases, strategic documents, reports, websites, journal/news articles etc.)
- ▪ Expert interviews (representatives / managers of the interventions)

5.2   Structure

- ▪ **Common reporting template** allowing flexibility (different types of cases: e.g. project funding, capacity building)
- ▪ **Outline of reports:**
  - o Summary

- o Background (policy context, objectives, SV definition)
- o Implementation (spatial context, target groups, activities)
- o Impact (in terms of SV principles – technological/social)
- o Lessons learned (success factors/bottlenecks, spatial/thematic transferability)
- o Conclusions (contribution to SV approach/concept)

6. Next steps

Following the feedback from the Steering Group and from the participants of the current Policy Group discussion, experts 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.

Timeline of the case studies:

- **18 February 2022**: Completing case studies

- **24 or 28 February 2022:** Discussing case studies & emerging lessons at the 3rd Policy Group meeting

- **From early March 2022**: layout, dissemination and promotion of case studies

In this context during the final meeting (planned 24 or 28 February 2022), the case studies and key findings will be presented to a wider interested audience.

Annex I:

2nd Policy Group Discussion

Agenda

Zoom: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0rc-ihrjkvHNcFR8oX9iipFNL50GhfWnGe

The main objective of the policy workshop is to present Smart Villages policy instruments from across Europe through the active engagement of participants. Following practical presentations on Smart Villages support by members, smaller break-out room discussions will be organised with the participants around specific funding mechanisms and schemes. The workshop also aims to contribute to the elaboration of policy case studies within the Smart Rural 21 project.

Timing	Agenda item
10.00 – 10.15	*Introduction to the meeting and 'warming up', Edina Ocsko (E40) & Simone Sterly (IfLS)*
10.15 – 11.15	**Presentation of Smart Villages support instruments from across Europe to date** (to be confirmed) • *The Smart Villages training programme in Estonia, Kristiina Tammets* • *The 'smart' concept and multi-funded support of smart communities in Czechia, Rut Bízková* • *The innovation camp method for capacity-building and co-developing smart solutions, Pätilä Salla & Juha-Matti Markkola* *Q&A and discussion*
11.15 – 12.00	**Working groups:** *Lessons from supporting Smart Villages* ***Discussion questions:*** *(i) What have been the most successful components of support instruments and processes?, (ii) What could (or should) be done differently to make Smart Villages more effective?* • *Supporting Smart Villages through LEADER* • *Animation support for the emergence of Smart Villages* • *Funding innovative solutions in rural communities through the CAP & beyond*
12.00 – 12.20	**Feedback from working groups**
12.20 – 12.45	**Concluding remarks, comments & next steps (including case study structure)**

Annex II: List of participants

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	COUNTRY	ORGANISATION
BALOGH	Anita	Hungary	E40 Group
BARALLA	Silvia	Italy	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry
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
DI NAPOLI	Raffaella	Italy	National Rural Network
GIERULSKA	Joanna	Poland	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
KENNEDY	Pat	Ireland	eConcepts (SR21 partner) SR21 national expert
KRZECZUNOWICZ	Paweł	Poland	National Rural Network
KUBITSCHKE	Lutz	Germany	Empirica (SR21 partner)
KURVITS	Taavi	Estonia	Ministry of Rural Affairs
MAASTIK	Meeri	Estonia	National Rural Network
MABILLE	Jérôme	Belgium, Wallonia	National Rural Network
MARKKOLA	Juha-Matti	Finland	National Rural Network
OCSKO	Edina	Hungary	E40 Group
OCSKO	Emese	Hungary	E40 Group
PALÁNOVÁ ZAJÍCOVÁ	Zuzana	Czechia	SR21 National Expert
PARIZÁN	Anna	Hungary	E40 Group
PÄTILÄ	Salla	Finland	National Rural Network
PETER	Sarah	Germany	IfLS (SR21 partner)
SMEDSLUND	Kim	Finland	SR21 national expert
SRSEN	Radim	Czechia	Committee of the Regions
STAVROPOULOS	Eleftherios	EU	European Commission
STERLY	Simone	Germany	IfLS (SR21 partner)
TAMMETS	Kristiina	Estonia	SR21 national expert
TOTH	Peter	Belgium	ENRD Contact Point
TRATTNIGG	Rita	Austria	Ministry of Agriculture
VARGAS	Aldo	Poland	SR21 national expert
WEHMEYER	Anke	Germany	National Rural Network