

Preparatory Action on Smart Rural Areas in the 21st Century



Policy Analysis – Task 4.2: Assess options for future
actions

Case study: Call for ‘Smart and sustainable
territories’, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Region,
France

Case study report

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1 Summary

The call ‘Smart and sustainable territories’ was launched by the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region, in March 2021. Aiming to provide new solutions to local needs, it targeted both rural and urban areas in order to create interconnection at the regional scale. The main objective of this call for projects was to give opportunities to territories to combine their development, the preservation of natural resources, and the well-being of citizens by using digital means.

This call appears as a first step for the laureates to develop a long-term smart strategy and start their transformation toward a more connected and more participative management of public issues. These digital projects are multi-sectoral in terms of environmental, economic development, mobility or governance issues. It also provides an opportunity to experiment with solutions about data management and transparency. Having for main criterion projects’ replicability, the call allows to highlight good practices that are transferable. Two rounds of selection are planned: 16 applicants were selected in December 2021. The second round should be selected by April 2022.



Figure 1: Logos of the call



2 Background of the call for ‘Smart and sustainable territories’

2.1 Context of the intervention

Table 1: Overview of the intervention

Name	<i>‘Territoires intelligents et durables’</i> Call for projects ‘Smart and sustainable territories’
Level of implementation	Regional (Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region)
Date of the call	Opening 1 March 2021 – Closure 31 December 2021 (two rounds of application: April 2021 and December 2021)
Period of project implementation	February 2022 – September 2023
Policy context/source of funding	Funds provided by the regional government (investment subsidies)
Amount of funding (EUR)	€ 10 million Limit of € 500 000 per project <i>(from 30% to 70% of eligible costs, according to selection criteria)</i>

2.2 Objectives

Challenges addressed by the call:

- Breaking down the boundaries between fields and departments of the Regional Council (environment, urban management, waste management...) through digital means to create a global or transversal approach to territorial management.
- Improving the participation of all to the management and development of the territory through citizen participation and horizontal cooperation within the local authority.
- Preserving the natural resources and supporting the environmental transition, thanks to digital facilitation (waste management system, public transport offer, energy consumption...).

General objectives of the call (*at the regional scale*):

The objective of this call is to support local authorities in the development of digital projects covering all the topics addressed by the territories. More precisely, it encourages the development of:

- Inclusive digital territories that provide answers to identified needs and/or to improve the quality of existing services. The services will facilitate the work of civil servants and the life of users.
- Responsible territories which participate in a civic and transparent use of the data.
- Sustainable digital territories that use digital means as a tool for the environmental transition.



More specific objectives of the call (*at the scale of the project*):

- Encourage local authorities to launch their digital transition with a long-term vision;
- Make digital transformation a vector of ecological transition (achieve the COP21 objectives, reinforce the environmental health capital, limit global warming/climate change...);
- Develop transversal projects at different territorial scales;
- Improve the quality of services provided to users, create new services meeting their needs;
- Improve the effectiveness or efficiency of public services;
- Support public actors and civil servants in the use of digital development within their activities and services provided (Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, optimised management of data...);
- Support local authorities to use data improving knowledge of their territory.

2.3 Understanding of the ‘Smart Villages’ concept

The call for projects does not explicitly mention the ‘Smart Village’ concept. Nevertheless, the description included in the call comes very close to the definition of Smart Villages. It mentions digital as a means to meet social, economic and environmental issues and to build sustainable, inclusive, attractive and connected territories. The term used is ‘Smart Territories’ with the following definition: *“A smart territory is above all a territory that seeks to combine its development, the well-being of the citizen and the preservation of its natural resources by using the digital.”*

Through this call, the region wishes to become a leading territory in terms of this ‘smart’ approach. The call also ensures an integrated approach, both providing multi-sectorial solutions (on environment, social, economic issues), taking into account the territorial needs and challenges. The call finances different types of actions (smaller or larger) that are complementary and lead to interconnection between the municipality (whatever its size) and its surrounding area.

3 Implementation of the intervention

3.1 Spatial context of implementation

Table 2: Basic information on the spatial context

Name of locality/region	Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region
Surface area (km ²)	47 783 km ²
Number of inhabitants, population density	2 784 900 inhabitants (data from 1 January 2021) 59 inhabitants per km ² (Insee Statistics)
Three main strengths	1 A regional ambition on digital issues with financial support for territories in various fields: digital third places; mobility; tourism; services etc. through a regional digital transition strategy (Coherence Strategy for Digital Development in Bourgogne-Franche-Comté – SCORAN BFC).



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2 A rural region with a great potential for digital and ecological transformation (the first most rural region in France with a dedicated department to develop ‘Digital innovating uses’). 3 Existing initiatives launched by local authorities for the development of the smart territories approach (for example, ‘OnDijon’ working to develop a digital management of public spaces, and the digitalisation of the mobility system in the Pays Montbéliard Agglomération).
<p>Three main challenges</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Breaking down the boundaries between fields or services (environment, urban management, waste management...) through digital means to create a global or transversal approach of territorial management. 2 Improving the participation of all to the management and the development of the territory through citizen participation and horizontal cooperation within local authorities. 3 Preserving the natural resources and supporting the environmental transition, thanks to digital facilitation (waste management system, public transport offer, energy consumption etc.).

3.2 Target groups/beneficiaries

Beneficiaries of the call:

- Municipalities of all sizes (from a village to a metropolitan area);
- Inter-municipal organisations;
- Regional Natural Parks;
- Organised territorial areas called ‘Pole of territorial and rural balance’ (‘Pôle d’équilibre territorial et rural’ – PETR).

Conditions and eligibility criteria:

Thematic priorities (the project should concern at least two thematics to ensure its transversality)

- Logistics and mobility: improvement of local mobility (infrastructures, information, better visibility), access to services and goods, promotion of sustainable mobility;
- Energy and environment: better management of natural resources, water, waste and energy, energy efficiency for buildings and public equipments;
- Governance and citizenship: better information, awareness-raising, education, citizens’ participation, digital access to public services, e-governance;
- Attractiveness and economic development of the territory: digital transition for economic stakeholders (trade and craft sectors), cooperation, promotion of the territorial assets in terms of tourism, culture, natural heritage.



Characteristics of the projects (*investment projects only*)

- Interoperability of the data produced by the digital service(s);
- Sovereignty and control of all data, by citizens and public bodies, through replicable and interoperable solutions;
- Replicability of the project.

Criteria for selection of the projects (highest score: 100)

- Contribution to the regional strategies and notably to the priorities of the Coherence Strategy for Digital Development in Bourgogne-Franche-Comté (SCORAN BFC) and the Regional Plan for Development, Sustainable Development and Territorial Equality (SRADDET): support transitions, turn the diversity of the region into strength, support the digital transition of the territory, innovate through data (score: 10/100);
- Innovative features of the project: replicability, potential for evolution, interoperability, accessibility, transversality (score: 30/100);
- Sovereignty and data management: governance and sovereignty, cyber-security, contribution to open-data, propriety, interoperability (score: 30/100);
- Citizens' participation: concertation, co-construction, experience feedbacks (score: 15/100);
- Functionality: number of services created, conception of digital tools centered on user, evaluation of the project thanks to data, actions dedicated to animation and continuity of the project at the medium term (score: 15/100).

Eligible costs

- Study costs (pre-operational studies, feasibility studies...);
- Equipments, materials and all the works necessary to the project implementation.

3.3 Activities implemented, methodology and/or key features of the intervention

The call is managed by the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region and specifically supported by the SCORAN BFC and the SRADDET (see section 3.2).

The call was disseminated through different means at the regional level. It was published on the [Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region website](#), on the [CEREMA website](#) (national public institution for the green transition and territorial cohesion) and other informative websites dedicated to regional news in France. The service dedicated to the call informed different stakeholders of the territory on this opportunity.

To be selected, the applicants should elaborate a global strategy on the existing features, projects and initiatives on the territory, to explain the added value of their project. Through this state of play, the territory should justify its project and provide some directions for future actions.

The projects selected through the call should have a special focus on a participatory approach, with one selection criterion focusing on citizens' participation as a determinant feature. Moreover, 'governance and citizenship' is one of the four thematics to be explored by the projects. In this frame, one of the main objectives of the call is to enable the development of a territory with a use of transparent data open to citizens.



The projects should concern all territorial levels (centre and periphery) and ensure actions at different scales. For the methodology, the projects have to create connection between local stakeholders, addressing at least two thematics to ensure a transversal approach and a communication between thematic fields.

To illustrate the type of activities implemented, here are three examples of laureates territories:

- [Municipality of Granges \(521 inhabitants\)](#) – The municipality developed a strategy to improve interactions between public servants, citizens and local stakeholders through two axes. The first one is to develop [local food systems through the installation of lockers](#) to collect the products without time constraints. The second axis is to raise awareness on natural patrimony through the creation of a participative atlas to be completed by natural guides, public employees or citizens.
- [Municipality of Lons-le-Saunier \(17 320 inhabitants\)](#) – The municipality developed a strategy to ‘create a human size city of the 21st century’, using digital means to improve local governance and citizens’ participation. The project is implemented along three axes. The first one is to develop the participation process of citizens in public decision-making thanks to e-governance; the second is to improve the local life through information dissemination through local shops, events, or on environmental issues (implementation of a service to inform on composting possibilities in the area, for example); the last axis is about data management and uses. As the two first axes mobilise different types of data, this last one concerns the stockage, as well as how to use this data to identify new needs.
- [Montbelliard Agglomération \(142 000 inhabitants\) including 72 municipalities](#) – The territory wishes to improve the digital transition through the development of digital infrastructures. The strategy has several axes. The first is to develop fibre optic to all its inhabitants and companies for 2022. The second axis is to create digital training courses for seniors, to help them use computers and simple digital tools. The strategy would lead to other actions such as the development of an online platform for health professionals to help them to settle on the territory, or the implementation of sensors to improve waste management.

4 Impact of the intervention in terms of key features of the Smart Village approach

4.1 General impact

Impact at sectoral level:

The first round of applicants has just been selected and there is no observable impact to this day. Nevertheless, the impact of projects is expected to be multisectoral.

- The projects should impact the field of mobility and logistics, contributing to the improvement of movement on the territory, and facilitating the access to goods and services. Through the sustainability objective, they should contribute to the development of new modes of transport, with fewer pollutants, such as bicycles or electric buses. They should also ensure a new management of transportation through collaborative management of equipments, for example.
- The projects should foster an efficient management of energy and natural resources, improving knowledge on water, energy and waste management, as well as energy consumption of buildings. They should lead to the development of smart grid infrastructures, data collection, mobile application to measure energy consumption for citizens or public stakeholders.
- The projects are expected to improve knowledge and information for citizens, through digital tools. They aim



to facilitate their participation, the following and evaluation of public policies. All these features would be a way to identify citizens' needs and to implement new solutions. It could be projects such as citizens' contribution to urban planning, digital application to involve citizens and users to public policies' implementation, for example.

- The actions are intended to contribute to economic development and improve the attractiveness of the territory. Specifically, they should support the digitalisation of economic stakeholders (craftsmen, shops...) or associative structures. Digital could also contribute to the territorial influence, promoting cultural or patrimonial specificities.

Through this multi-sectoral approach, the projects should give a new potential for touristic activities and for the enhancement of local heritage (both natural and cultural). They should also impact on the management of services, leading to a participative and collaborative building of public policies. In the private field, they should improve the development and visibility of local companies or associations/NGOs.

Impact for rural communities/municipalities/villages; rural people, participation, cooperation; rural organisations (e.g. NGOs):

The objective of the call is also to create a connection on the different scales (rural communities, cities, metropolises) to cross needs and mutualise solutions. Through the exchanges between the laureate territories, the call will contribute to a strategic vision common at the region scale, without creating a rural-urban divide.

At a smaller scale, the projects will improve participation processes, and contribute to addressing specific issues. The management of data is central to the implementation of a 'smart' strategy, as it should be used, analysed and contribute to answering citizens' needs. It requires technical competences on the part of the providers of the service, as well as transparency toward the data-givers (citizens, for example). The call will help to open the debate on this question and to better manage data information.

Impact on the region/the territory:

Through the interconnection of rural and urban areas, the call will ensure a larger impact of the projects. It will be a first step to create synergies at the regional scale, and to create a network addressing common issues. The projects should create a larger dynamic for the digital transition, without excluding any territory from these changes.

4.2 Interplay of social and technological innovation (digitalisation)

The call mixes social and technological innovation. Social innovation can be understood as the way of giving new answers to social needs not (fully) satisfied. In the call, the idea of 'innovation' is defined as a selection criterion for the projects, but social innovation is not specifically mentioned.

- The projects should improve services and their uses, through the introduction of new management systems helped by digital. The citizens' participation, combined with digital means, should enable the identification of needs and answers.
- Technological innovation is then a means to meet social needs, identified through a participatory approach.

4.3 Other aspects of relevance

The call was built thanks to a concertation with local stakeholders, municipalities, public bodies, to identify their needs and projects they could develop. The region supported applicants through digital meetings around the four thematics to disseminate information and advice and to help them develop their smart and sustainable strategies. Moreover, the Regional Council plans to create a network gathering all laureates in order to stimulate exchanges among peers, presentation of good practices, etc.



The call puts a particular focus on the environmental issue. Indeed, projects with a strong environmental aim will have an additional amount of funding (10% of the project’s total).

5 Lessons learned from the intervention

5.1 Success factors and bottlenecks

Table 3: Main success factors of the intervention

Success factors	Short explanation
A call designed from the local needs expressed by stakeholders	The department in charge of the digital strategy of the region, designed the call from the needs expressed by local stakeholders. The criteria and thematic were selected through different exchanges and interviews.
Support tailored to applicants all along the design of the smart strategy	The region supported candidates in the preparation of their smart and sustainable strategy through the presentation of existing good practices from other territories. The region also organised webinars to discuss the thematics chosen and to create an exchange among local stakeholders.
A network to exchange and create a link at the regional scale among laureates	The region develops a network dedicated to smart and sustainable laureate territories to ensure debates and exchanges on their respective objectives and strategies.

Table 4: Main bottlenecks of the intervention

Bottlenecks	Short explanation
A difficult concept for potential candidates	The concept of ‘smart and sustainable territories’ is not easy to grasp and does not have a single definition. The notion ‘smart’ can include a lot of different features, as mentioned in the call, and be an obstacle for potential candidates.



5.2 Transferability

5.2.1 Key principles transferable to other thematic contexts

'Replicability' is one of the key aspects of project development, whatever the thematic chosen. The idea is to create transferable management systems, or approaches that can be used in different contexts. This is mentioned as a selection criterion for all projects.

The principle of data management and transparency, could easily be transferred to other digital projects or smart strategies. To complete the call, the region published a '[Data guide](#)', with advice and examples of data management and uses in France. The guide shows that the principle of data management is recurrent in all types of digital projects and should appear as a key principle for their implementation.

Moreover, through the creation of a regional network, the region aims to collect good practices from these projects, to ensure the dissemination and the transferability of the solutions. The feedback from the laureates will make it possible to assess the potential of these actions for other thematic contexts.

5.2.2 Spatial transferability

The approaches used or management modes are based on digital tools that can be easily transferred to other geographical/structural contexts. The needs identified are common to different territories (urban, rural) and could be implemented in other contexts as it is based on general objectives (development of citizens' participation, improvement of local life...).

6 Conclusions

6.1 Scope of the intervention for supporting the Smart Village approach

According to the definition given by the European Commission, the call contributes partly to a Smart Village approach, however with a different scale criterion. Here is the definition, used as a reference:

"A smart village is a rural territory that develops 'smart' solutions to solve its local challenges with a view to sustainable development of the territory. A smart approach is based on a participatory multi-actor approach to develop and implement strategies to improve economic, social and environmental conditions (in the service of employment, health and social services, mobility, etc.). These approaches take stock of the digital transformation of our territories, and use collaborative tools, social innovation, open data." ([Definition from the work of the European Commission](#))

The call specifies that digital solutions should only be a means (and not an end) to address issues of general interest, to improve the quality of public services and the citizens' quality of life, making the link with the Smart Village approach. The four thematics targeted by the call demonstrate the transversality of the objectives (environment, governance, citizenship), as well as the desire to impact daily sectors (mobility, energy, economic development). Citizens' participation is also a criterion for the selection of project applications. To complete the definition, the idea of open data and of transparency is specifically highlighted in the call for projects as a main point for the success of the projects.

Moreover, the call is not only targeted at rural territories, but also at urban areas, and aims to create interconnection between these spaces.

In some ways, it can be a first step toward a Smart Village strategy for laureates from rural areas as the main



objective is still to solve local challenges with ‘smart’ solutions, taking into account sustainability issues.

6.2 Implications for further development of the ‘Smart Village’ concept

The special focus on data is interesting as the call mentions that one of the objectives is to develop a ‘*responsible territory, contributing to a citizen and transparent use of data*’. This last point could get importance in the definition of Smart Villages, as digital is central to the development and implementation of actions, and raises the issue of protection and access right to data.

7 References

- [Call for projects ‘Smart and sustainable territories’](#)
- [Insee statistics on Bourgogne-Franche-Comté](#)
- [Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region website](#)
- [Cerema Website](#)
- [Data Guide – Bourgogne-Franche-Comté](#)
- [Innovating uses of digital – Region Bourgogne-Franche-Comté](#)
- [Guide on fundings for digital transition in Bourgogne-Franche-Comté](#)

8 ANNEX: Methodological approach of the case study

8.1 Desk research

- Statistical database
- Strategic documents (call)
- Websites (regional or national)
- Journal or news articles on regional policies

8.2 Expert interviews

This case study was built on the interview of two representatives of the intervention (people in charge of implementing the intervention in the case study regional area). The interview was carried out online.

- Sarah Pineau Poupelin – Project manager – Digital Strategy at the Region Bourgogne-Franche-Comté
- Pascal Minguet – Project manager – Digital transition and uses at the Region Bourgogne-Franche-Comté

8.3 Other

List of the laureates territories of the call in January 2022 (first call):

- Communauté de Communes du Val d’Amour
- Pays de Montbéliard Agglomération
- SIDEC du Jura



- Commune de Berche
- Grand Dole
- Communauté de l'Auxerrois
- Communauté d'Agglomération de Vesoul
- Commune de Baume les dames
- Communauté de Communes de Val de Gray
- SIEEN
- Nevers agglomération et ville de Nevers
- Dijon métropole
- Lons le Saunier
- Granges
- Venarey les Laumes
- Louhans-Châteaurenaud