

Highlights of the Stanz Smart Village Strategy

Austria



About Stanz im Mürztal

Stanz im Mürztal is located in a rural area in the Austrian province of Styria with a total population of 1 855 inhabitants. As a municipality, Stanz is a local authority with elected political representatives. In the 2015 municipal elections, a non-partisan list of citizens became the strongest force in the municipal council and have held the office of the mayor ever since.

Over the past few years, the topics of enhancing the village centre, the creation of new mobility offers and measures to improve the quality of life have been successfully developed. And the residents value the quality of life in the village: the results of a recently conducted survey reveal that the school, kindergarten and civic life were the highest rated by residents.

Key challenges & assets

The region is industrial and has been affected by economic structural change in recent decades, which is one of the reasons for strong depopulation and ageing of the population. The small-scale economy of the village is reflected in the high percentage of residents who commute to work in neighboring areas.

In facing given challenges and planned structural changes at the administrative level, Stanz decided to take new paths in the community building: to strengthen direct democracy, to actively involve citizens in municipal development, to build sustainable infrastructures, and consequently, to improve resilience at the local level – in that sense, people and their engagement can be seen as one major asset. A further asset is that 80% of the municipal area of Stanz is forest, which provides opportunities for sustainable energy production. Stanz is also embedded in a mountainous landscape, far away from mass tourism – this offers possibilities to create an alternative path to sustainable tourism.



Main objectives of smart village strategy

Objective 1: To be energy self-sufficient by 2030

Objective 2: To establish sustainable tourism as a new economic pillar

Objective 3: To further develop civil society

What is smart?

Community Participation in Strategy Development

This strategy is mainly based on several 'Local Agenda 21' processes, starting back in 2016. Since then, a large number of citizens have been working in a structured way and with great commitment on (further) developing a mission statement for the village of Stanz. In the first phase, topics, opinions and needs were collected and structured. From 2017, the process has been managed by the agency SCAN and concrete projects were designed and implemented in six fields of action. Results and experiences from these various process-elements were directly incorporated into this strategy. It is designed as a living paper and should therefore be and adapt to new circumstances, opportunities and challenges.

"We, the people of Stanz, are convinced that it is not a linear planning paradigm that takes us forward - but the main drivers of human behaviour (seeking rewards, avoiding losses) are those factors that are necessary to initiate changes in a village."

Fritz Pichler, mayor of Stanz

What smart actions are implemented?

- ✓ Stanz established a new local food supplier where 50% of goods are from local producers. To reduce waste, a nearby restaurant cooks products from the shop such as fruits, vegetables or meat are cooked and provided as take-away food in the shop. A food vending machine provides additional 24h service!
- ✓ To provide offers for alternative and sustainable mobility, Stanz initiated 'Mitfahr-Bankerl' – yellow/green painted bench seats next to public streets have an umbrella attached. Whenever this umbrella is opened up, the person sitting on the bench indicates that he/she needs a lift.
- ✓ Over the past three years, vacant buildings in the centre of the village have been sustainably refurbished and complemented with timber construction. This has created a new multifunctional centre which includes flats for young and elderly people, the aforementioned shop, two service facilities and the new administration building of the municipality to provide a better community administration.

A smart action that we are planning...

We want to build up an Energy Community by the end of 2021. In doing so, we want to create a future-oriented model by integrating new technologies (e.g. blockchain), disruptive business models, and social innovation.

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