

Taskforce Action Plan - Finland

Version 2 (November 2022)

Table of contents

1.	CONTEXT	1
2.	THE PURPOSE OF THE TASKFORCE	1
3.	LINKS TO EXISTING SMART VILLAGE EXCHANGES	2
4.	MEMBERSHIP	3
5.	PLANNED ACTIONS	4
5.1	First set of taskforce meetings	4
5.1	Other actions of the Taskforce	5

ANNEX II: MEETING REPORTS



1. Context

Finnish villages have long been tackling concerns and issues as they appear. Urbanisation and centralisation trends involved exodus of people, capacities, services, resources, brains etc. to urban areas. At policy level decision-making and programming has favoured cities or central towns. Villages were not considered as partners in development and as such left behind or not really listened to. As reactions to these developments, active villages became innovative, self-committed and forward-looking. To look after villages' interests and capacity building the Village Action Association of Finland (SYTY), today the Finnish Village Movement Association was created in 1997, based on already existing village councils and movements since the 80's. A diversity of situations in Finland is observed as some areas are more active, some areas do consider villages or grouping of villages as partners in action.

Efficient and bottom-up village-led partnership building has led to success stories in parts of Finland. In other parts top-down or co-created partnerships have achieved similar results. When some MEPs and the EC initiated the Smart Village process in the EU, it gave a certain boost to a top-down thinking in Finland giving more attention to villages as potential development units/territories. A multi-actor smart village working group was created and a smart village competition launched. The working group organised several informative events, collected ideas and good practices, created a website and co-organised the smart village competition. This working group is not existing anymore, but a more limited smart village thematic group within the Swedish-speaking thematic group pursues partly some of the work.

In the latest developments, smart villages got their own chapter in the Finnish CAP-strategy. LEADER is considered to be the main tool for Smart village development whereas other financing tools are expected to be used.

Discussions in Finland around smart villages in villages /LEADER-groups vary. Some say that they already are smart and as such already cover the EU smart village definition and thought processes. Many villages in Finland make strategies and implement them. The variety is of course large going from sleeping to extra active villages or territories. One is individual, another is partnership orientated. Some think broader on smart or clever or intelligent or innovative or creative. Some active villages think through added value and economy, others through history or heritage. Digital is considered as a new potential tool for villages to explore, learn and use in future activities. Altogether the well-being of rural people and villages is a common denominator where action happens. Social indicators are not to be neglected.

The local development framework is also quite different in different territories eg. on how authorities or bigger (support) structures work with villages or territories. The scale again is very large going from meetings, village committees to actual co-planning, co-creating or co-implementing through projects, partnerships or contractual relations. Specific budgets can be earmarked to local action or participative budgeting used in different ways.

The last thing is that programs, actions and funding directed to smaller rural territories are quite dispersed in different ministries, regions or other funding structures and an overall view is lacking.

2. The purpose of the taskforce

Key policy areas of taskforce interventions

- ✓ Advancing Smart Villages capacity building and dialogue (events, innowebinars)
- ✓ Identification and sharing of good practices related to Smart Villages (both on national and EU levels).

- ✓ Specific Smart Village themes (digitalisation, technologies, smart green...)
- ✓ Bring together specific stakeholders to boost the Smart Villages measure implementation within the Finnish CAP strategy.
- ✓ Prepare/write a draft paper on a future horizontal Smart village policy/ programme
- ✓ Work to integrate Smart Villages into other (EU) policy measures, national programs, regional or local strategies

During the SR27 process some tasks may be finalised, others will be initiated and developed further. The taskforce regroups sectoral actors, focuses on enhanced capacities, information and support to "smart" villages or local rural development structures. Compiling sectoral data and connecting relevant expertise leads to added value for smart village developers. The digital and green waves are taken into account.

The Taskforce follows within its existing resources discussions and developments around policies closely connected to smart villages, e.g. energy, fiber, innovations, digital transition in order to make proposals on future cooperation and/or programming. This activity is a longer-term process. It is though connected to preparing already the upcoming programming period. Communication will be ensured through the Rural Network Support Unit of Finland (NSU) and Finnish Village Movement networks.

In order to mobilise the concept on the village level, the Taskforce aims to **integrate "smart village plan" in existing/ future village development plans**, which almost all 4000 Finnish villages have in some format. The Taskforce will provide with background information and supportive data relayed through Finnish village movement and the regional village NGO's as well as LAGs to villages. A short study of 3-4 pages will complement the CAP-analysis done in the SR 27 project. The study compiles data from different policy programmes and to them related funding that is of relevance for smart villages. This will be done through keywords and context analysis supporting later policy work. The most relevant sectoral actors will be invited to the taskforce meetings.

3. Links to existing Smart Village exchanges

a) In house committee work (Village, LEADER, International committees)

The task force being developed under the Finnish Village movement gives the in-house possibility to link the work with the different committees. Information flow related to smart villages is ensured between the task-force and the Committees. At least one person of each committee sits in the taskforce as a contact person. Common meetings or webinars can be organised. The committees follow actions, activities, policies related to villages from their perspective. The main contact here is the village committee.

b) National network (incl. ministry) smart village work

The taskforce will link to the national network (incl. the ministry) smart village activities. The network is represented in the taskforce and common activities during webinars and events are possible.

c) Smart rural areas thematic group

The Swedish speaking minority works on the smart rural areas theme. The taskforce will connect to the process. The chairwoman will be part of the taskforce.



4. Membership

The taskforce will be formed from people having participated in the stakeholder interview. As the process is a long-term process for the Finnish Village Movement Association, other inhouse expertise may be used), as well as invited experts around the chosen theme. The membership is meant to cover the many aspects of local rural development. The selected taskforce includes in addition to the SR27 national experts, decisionmakers, people from support structures to villages, LEADER-groups and from the smart rural theme group, including:

- Ministry, network (4)
- Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment 1
- Village ombudsman/woman 1
- NGO´s/Village group/Villager 1
- Youth representative 1
- Municipalities Association 1
- LEADER (2)
- Finnish Village Movement 2
- Thematic expertise (1/invitation)

5. Planned actions

5.1 First set of taskforce meetings

Planned timing	Focus of meeting
02/02/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Action plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Taskforce composition, presentations ✓ Discussing the role and activities of the Taskforce

Planned timing	Focus of meeting
07/06/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Horizontal approach
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sectoral policies discussed ✓ Discussing a potential study on sectoral approaches ✓ Presentation of Smart Rural 27 and Taskforce by Edina Ocsko

Planned timing	Focus of meeting
28/11/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Webinar on Energy Efficient Communities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ State of play: regulations and opportunities ✓ EC Energy Hub, Energy Community Taskforce in Finland ✓ Connecting ministries, next steps

Planned timing	Taskforce meeting on-line
2.3.2023	Action reports on CAP-analysis and sectoral study. Next steps plan.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Speaker from ministry or funding programme ✓ Reports (CAP-report draft and short study report 28.2) and follow-up ✓ Next steps planning, webinar theme early May, communication plan

Planned timing	Webinar
May 2023	Theme to be chosen. Digital transition as option
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How to best use new tools in smart villages ✓ Specialists invited ✓ Case studies

Planned timing	Taskforce meeting on-line
May 2023	Full study and CAP analysis reports, Webinar analysis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sectoral emphasis, inviting officials, researchers ✓ Green and security ✓ Next steps

Planned timing	Taskforce meeting and webinar on-line
September 2023	Planning on smart places in future programmes and policies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Suggestions on a place-based smart rural strategy/programme/actions ✓ Case-studies on partnership models ✓ Taskforce: communication, next steps

5.1 Other actions of the Taskforce

The Taskforce will within existing resources see if some of the other objectives set above in point 2 can be delivered. This is done in cooperation with the National Rural Network. Communication will be ensured through the NRN and the Finnish Village Movement.



Annex I: List of members Membership of the Taskforce

Name of member	Name of organisation of member	Type of organisation (policy, village, research, NGO, private...)	Short description of role of organisation in the taskforce (reason why member was included)	Participated in 1 st meeting?	Participated in 2 nd meeting?
Marianne Selkäinaho	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Policy, programme planning	Representing the ministry	x	x
Sami Tantarimäki	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Policy / research	Researcher, representing the ministry, former smart village	x	-
Kaisa Teurajärvi	Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment	programme management and implementation	Representing implementation authority	x	-
Taina Väre	Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities	Policy, municipalites	Representing (small) municipalities	x	x
Petri Rinne	Finnish Village Movement (international section)	Policy, village	Secretary of the Taskforce	x	x
Mervi Niemi-Huhdanpää	Chair of the national (informal) Leader Network	Policy, NGO	LEADER-policy	x	-
Kim Smedslund	Finnish Village Movement Association	policy, Village, NGO	Chair of the Taskforce	x	x
Tuija Takamäki	LEADER-suupohja, Village ombudswoman	Village	Regional village representative	x	x
Kaisu Haataja	Vuolijoki Village NGO	Village representative	Representing the grassroots	x	x
Nina Kuusisto-Huuskanen	Finnish Village Movement Youth & Future committee	NGO/private	Representing the youth	(Emmi Sarvijärvi)	-
Ann-Sofi Backgren	Theme group "Smart Rural Areas in Swedish Finland and the Nordic Countries"	National support unit for the CAP-programme	Support to smart village activities	x	(-)
Pirjo Oikarinen	Oulujärvi LEADER	NGO / LAG	LEADER actor	x	(-)
Salla Pätilä	National Rural Network	National support unit for the CAP-programme	Responsible for smart villages in the NSU	x	(-)

Annex II: Meeting Reports

1st Smart Villages Taskforce Meeting – [Finland]

Purpose of the meeting

Planning the Taskforce activities

Date of the meeting

[03/02/2022]

Location

On-line, Zoom

Participation

In the first Taskforce meeting all invited (13 people) were present, one of them through a substitute. The participants represented both the private and the public sector, from individuals to the Ministry of Agriculture.

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Main outcomes & lessons learnt (including deviations from initial plan)

- The participants felt that the national level taskforce is needed for:
 - strengthening the smart village networks and making the initiative more concrete
 - building the link to the EU level smart village planning and implementation (the Smart Village Observatory)
 - improving the information flow and knowledge exchange
 - reaching more thematic focus (e.g. digitalization, fast internet, green deal)
 - identification and sharing good practices and examples of smart solutions between villages and municipalities
 - improving the rural youth participation in the smart village strategy planning and implementation
 - learning from other countries and international examples, such as these in Sweden: www.digiby.se, www.smartabyar.se, www.ungasmartabyar.se
- The NRN is investing in new web-based information platform, which works like social media and could assist in info spreading.
- The Finnish CAP strategy has a specific measure for smart villages, enabling them to cooperate with other villages, municipalities, education institutions, urban neighborhood associations etc. – both Leader LAGs and ELY centers may support smart village projects that can be also about animation and info spreading on sub-regional, regional and national scale
- In order to mobilise the concept on the village level, the task force could aim to integrate “smart village plan” in existing/ future village development plans, which almost all 4000 Finnish villages have in some format
 - Smart villages also need smart support / funding schemes. For example Leader LAGs have launched a series of small-scale municipal funding initiatives, such as Youth Leader, Start Up Leader, Pandemic Leader etc. The task force could find



more examples of those, also internationally, and promote and disseminate.

- Villages may often think that they are not “smart enough” for these type of development activities. The task force should make the threshold lower for the villages to participate. One example could be “How to become a Smart Village?” training program that e.g. the Irish have already implemented.

Next steps

The next meeting is planned before summer.

Supporting documents

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2nd Smart Villages Taskforce Meeting – [Finland]

Purpose of the meeting

Planning the Taskforce activities

Date of the meeting

[07/06/2022]

Location

On-line, Zoom

Participation

The second meeting was held 7.6.2022 to clarify the action plan. Eight people from the Taskforce and Edina Ocsko were present. Not all were able to join the meeting and it was not considered as an official taskforce meeting.

Main outcomes & lessons learnt (including deviations from initial plan)

Edina Ocsko presented the Smart rural 27 project in general and the role of the taskforce in detail to the Finnish participants. The presentation gave insight to the objectives of the taskforces. The Finnish taskforce works also independently from the Smart Rural 27 project. One of the main goals of the taskforce is to study and include a cross-sectoral approach to smart villages. Different ministries and actors connected to local development will be invited to the taskforce. Programming, funding and support structures will be analysed by the taskforce.

Next steps

During Autumn, a second Taskforce meeting will be organised live or on-line.

Supporting documents

Energy Efficient Communities webinar – [Finland]

Purpose of the meeting

Energy-efficient communities webinar

Date of the meeting

[28/11/2022]

Location

On-line, Zoom

Participation

The event was promoted through the NSU and the Taskforce- All Leader groups and Regional Village NGO's received an invitation. The event was partly in English. Altogether

Main outcomes & lessons learnt (including deviations from initial plan)

The Taskforce organised together with the National Support Unit a webinar on Energy Efficient Communities and the state of play. Some concerns were expressed. The Finnish legislation and regulations on Energy Communities is quite complex and dispersed in general. Nor is the definition of Energy community totally clear. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (Taskforce) delivers a report in the beginning of 2023 on Energy Communities. One objective was to connect The Ministry of Agriculture to the the process and inform about the upcoming opportunities. The event also promoted the technical assistance call by the Rural Energy Hub for emerging or existing Energy communities.

Next steps

The Taskforce will meet in February 2023 to look at next steps. Another webinar will ne organised on a topic decided by he Taskforce before summer 2023. Digital transition is one option.

Supporting documents

Link to event Youtube stream and documents:

[Maaseudun energiayhteisöt ja -ratkaisut: webinaari 28.11.2022 - Maaseutuverkosto](#)

