Smart Villages: a territorial tool to address local needs & 'green' challenges

Rural Pact Policy Lab: Territorial Approaches to Green Transition
19 September 2024
DG AGRI, B3 'Social sustainability'

Smart Villages concept: a brief background

2017

EU ACTION FOR SMART VILLAGES

2017-2020

ENRD

Thematic Group on Smart Villages

2019
Pilot Project: Smart eco-social villages

European Commission

Pilot project on smart eco-social villages: Smart Village Definition

- Local **communities** in rural areas.
- Use **innovative** (often digital) **solutions** to improve their resilience.
- Build on **local strengths** and opportunities
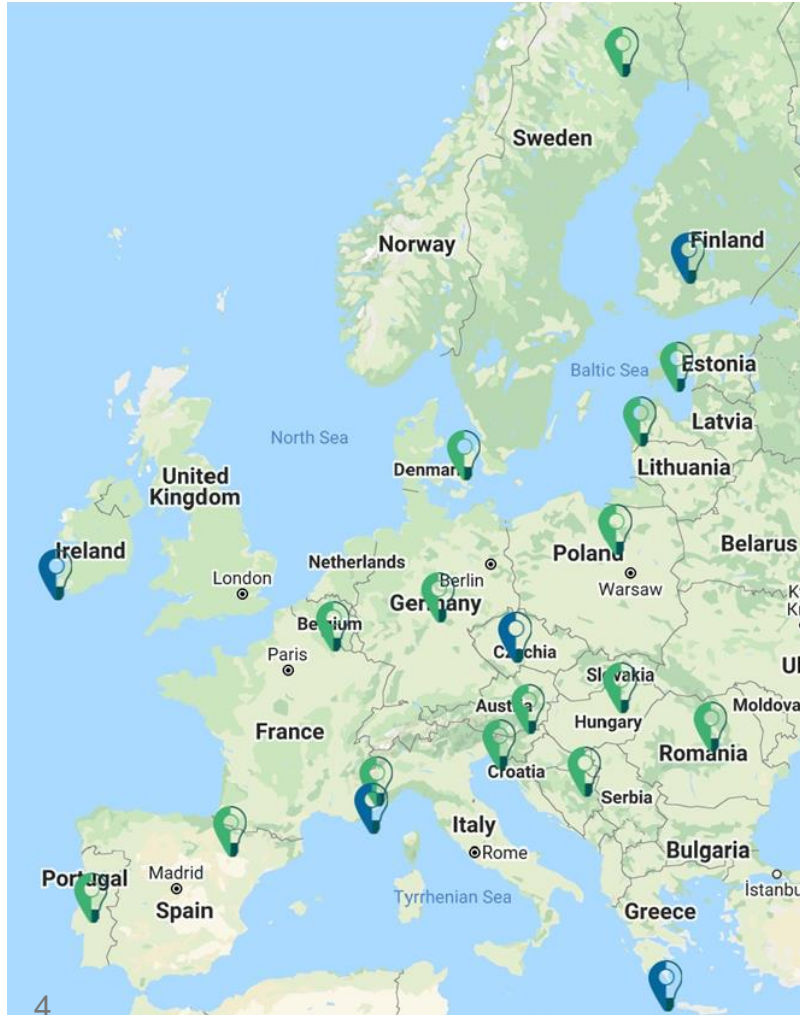- Develop and implement their strategy through a **participatory approach**.

Pilot Project: Smart eco-social villages

Final Report

Written by ECORYS   April 2019

- Focus on economic, social and/or environmental development aspects through a **strategy.**
- **Cooperate** with other communities/actors in rural and urban areas.
- Complement **existing initiatives**
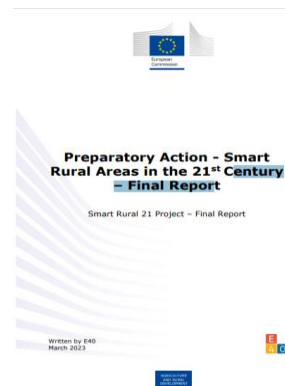- Raise funding from **various public and private sources.**

Source: Smart eco-social villages (pilot project) | European Commission (europa.eu)

European Commission

1ˢᵗ Preparatory Action: "Smart Rural 21" (2019-2023)

- **Testing the concept** on the ground & its principles **in 21 villages across** the EU
- **Developing tools** (e.g. roadmap) and communicating directly with many more villages
- **Final report:** Drawing conclusions on how to best support rural communities in the future

Preparatory Action - Smart Rural Areas in the 21ˢᵗ Century – Final Report

Smart Rural 21 Project – Final Report

Written by E40
March 2023

https://www.smartrural21.eu/

FINAL REPORT: Preparatory action - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)

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2nd Preparatory Action – "Smart Rural 27" (2021-2024)

- Complement pilot project and 1st preparatory action.
- **Prepare Member States and rural communities** for the implementation of CAP interventions 2023-2027.
- Focus on **current and future possibilities** for MS **support for Smart Villages** – through CAP, cohesion policy and other EU policies.
- Provide an **interactive geo-mapping** tool presenting Smart Villages initiatives and lighthouse examples.
- Create a **supportive policy framework.**
- **Analysing CAP Strategic Plans** and their support on Smart Villages.
- Running of an **EU Smart Villages Pilot Observatory**.
- **www.smartrural27.eu**

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Smart Villages: how rural communities are addressing EGD aspects? (1)

- Review of 169 examples from the databases of Smart Rural 21 & Smart Rural 27
- **Better understanding how Green Deal aspects have been addressed by rural communities**
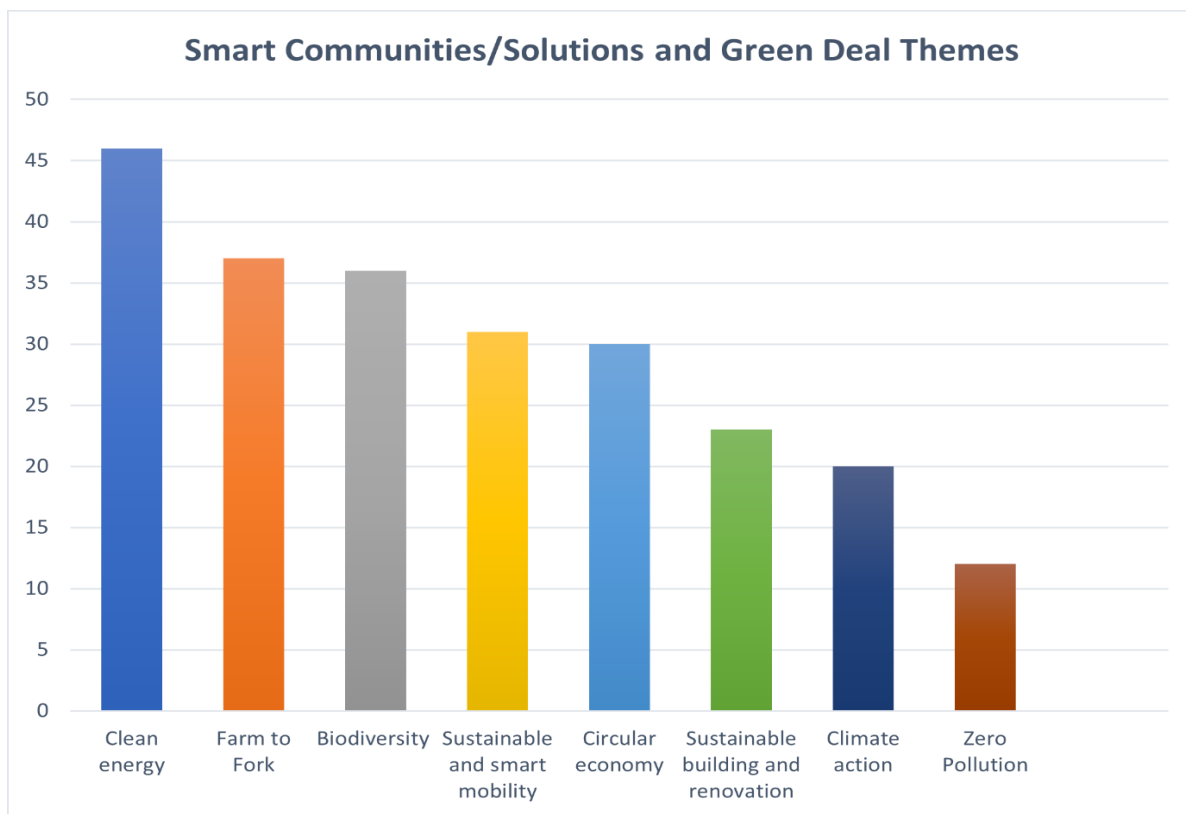
Source: Smart Rural 27: Internal Report on Report on Smart Villages contribution to the European Green Deal, Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies

- **Green energy initiatives:** Solar power, wind power, biogas, energy communities, energy efficiency, rainwater harvesting, participation for climate action.
- **Biodiversity:** environmental education, ecosystem restoration, ecotourism & recreation, biodiversity data collection and monitoring, sustainable land manager.
- **Farm-to-Fork:** 'Local', 'organic' and 'slow', Farmers cooperation, smart farming, sustainable food education, food spaces, food related events, permaculture, culinary heritage.
- **Smart mobility.**

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Smart Villages: how rural communities are addressing EGD aspects? (2)

Smart Communities/Solutions and Green Deal Themes

Source: Smart Rural 27: Internal Report on Report on Smart Villages contribution to the European Green Deal, Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies

Among 169 smart communities and solutions:
- clean energy (43%),
- biodiversity (33%),
- farm-to-fork (33%), sustainable
- smart mobility (29%),
- circular economy (28%),
- sustainable building and renovation (21%),
- climate action (19%) and
- zero pollution (11%)

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Inspiring smart solutions contributing to green transition

Source: Smart Rural 21 project

- **Smart Rural 27 Lighthouses examples:** Stanz (Austria): local energy communities, Tomarzyn (Poland): generative agriculture, Häradsbäck (Sweden): self-sufficiency and resilience.
- More examples on **Geomapping tool - Smart Rural 27)/specific section on Environment:** smart solutions related to climate activities, bioeconomy, resource-efficiency, low carbon, renewable energy etc.
- **Most relevant EGD themes in the Smart Villages Context:** Farm-to-fork strategy, smart mobility, clean, affordable and secure energy, energy & resource efficiency, biodiversity, climate ambitions, circular economy, zero pollution.

More information: Smart solutions – Smart Rural Areas (smartrural21.eu) and Geomapping tool - Smart Rural 27

SMART VILLAGES & CAP Strategic Plans (2023-2027)

© Smart Rural Areas - in the 21st Century (smartrural21.eu)

- **Preparation & implementation** of smart villages strategies [Article 77 (e) of R.2021/2115].

- Through **COOPERATION** (specific intervention for SV, LEADER) or **INVESTMENTS.** [Article 73 & 77 of R.2021/2115]

- Contribution to **SO8** (promotion of local development) mostly, but also **SO4** (climate change mitigation & adaptation) and **SO6** (biodiversity, eco-systems services).

- **LEADER** is expected to support Smart Villages in **18 out of 28 CPSs** (AT, BE-Flanders, BG, HR, CY, CZ, EE, EL, FI, HU, IR, IT, LT, LU, PL, RO, SE, SI)**.**

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- **6 CSPs** (AT, FI, HU, IT, LT, PL, ES) have planned to support smart village projects under **investments intervention and under Cooperation beyond LEADER.**

- **CSPs Interventions linked directly or indirectly to EGD:**
  e.g.: food supply chains (IT), refurbishment of underused buildings (AT), contribution to environmental objectives and climate change mitigation in villages (HR, IR, PL, SE, SI).

- **927** smart villages strategies/projects are expected to be implemented (RI 40) [September 2024]

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Smart Villages: Some recommendations (Smart Rural 27 project)

- Continued capacity-building and awareness-raising on smart villages is still needed.

- Smart villages initiatives needs to be continuously shared:
  - ✓ Inspiring examples of smart villages and smart solutions.
  - ✓ Thematic exchanges between rural communities working on similar topics.

- Strategies should be simple and understandable: people want actions with tangible benefits, not abstract or vague statements of intent.

- Rural communities need more guidance about what is a smart solution.

- Improving the policy framework for smart villages and ensure multi-funding for smart villages.

- Supporting more LEADER Local Action Groups in implementing Smart Villages.

- Vertical alignment of different level of strategies (European, National, Regional levels) & ownership of rural stakeholders.

Some questions: feedback from rural stakeholders…..

- ✓ How to translate higher level green transition goals to the local context?
- ✓ How rural stakeholders can adapt them to the local context and translate into a smart village vision/strategy/plan?
- ✓ How can rural communities benefit from existing structures and initiatives?
- ✓ Do rural communities have the human capacity or resources to set-up such initiatives?
- ✓ Do rural communities need technical, technological, legal support for smart solutions on energy, mobility, farming issues etc?
- ✓ Are there any specific capacity building needs?
- ✓ How to mobilise and engage local population and especially young people in green transition projects within smart villages strategies?
- ✓ How to involve environmental partners?
- ✓ How to develop smart sustainable solutions? Links with research, EIP AGRI Operational Groups?

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