

# Lessons learned from the implementation of Smart Villages intervention to date

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**21 April 2026 – Good Practice Webinar on Territorial instruments (LEADER/CLLD, Integrated Territorial Investments, and Smart Villages): lessons for the future**



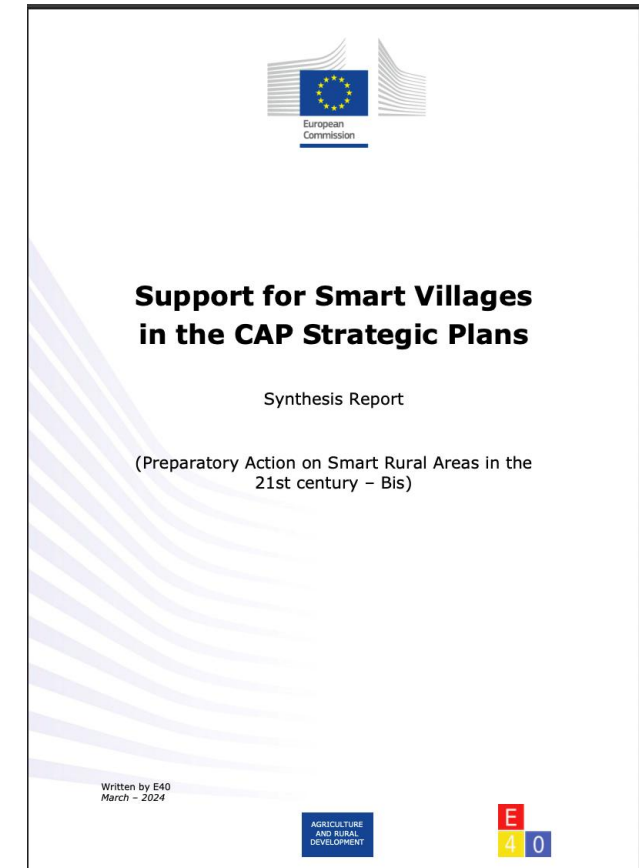
# Prior work on Smart Villages

## HISTORY OF THE EU'S SMART VILLAGES CONCEPT



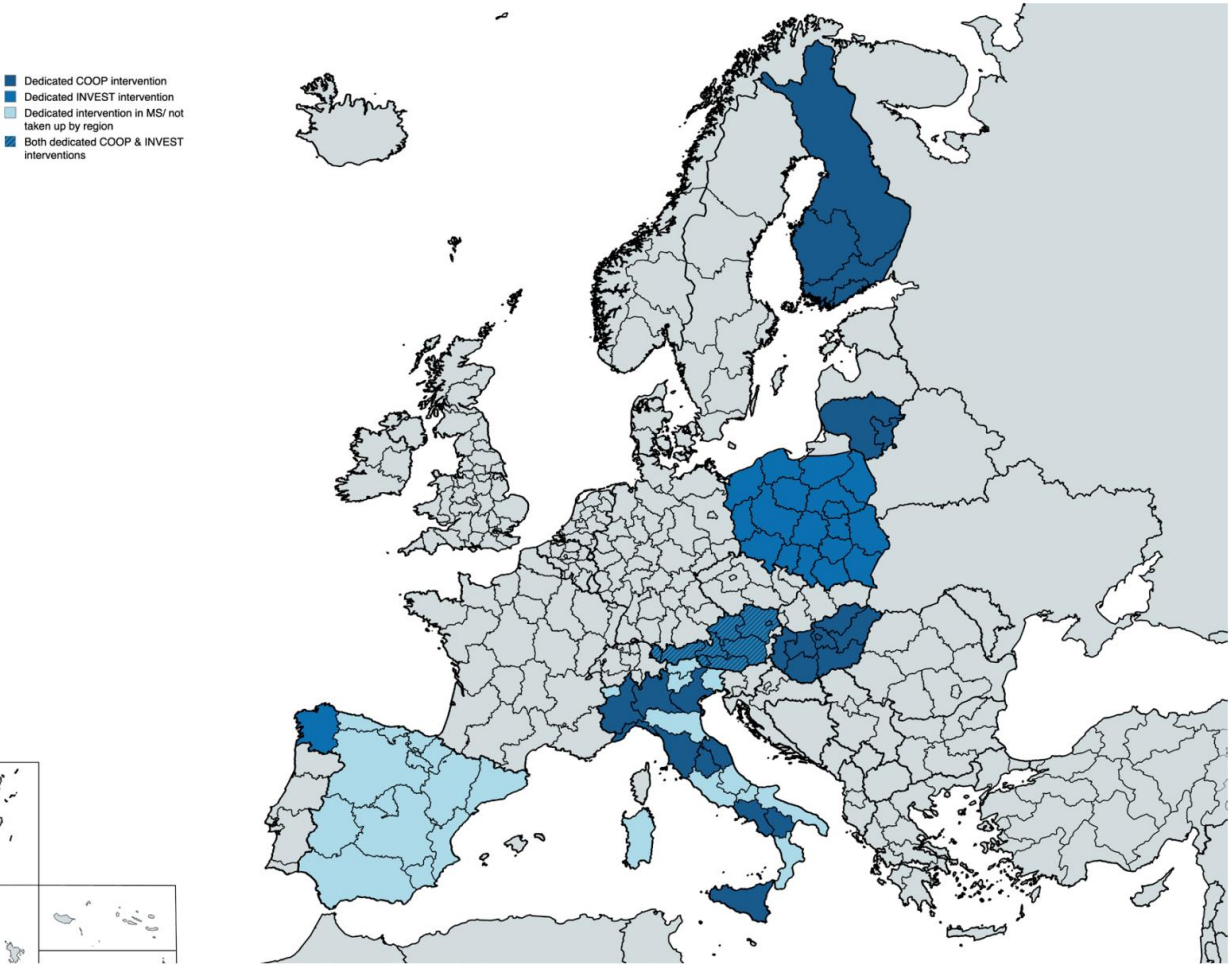
# Where did we leave it off?

- ▶ Stakeholder engagement at all levels (European Smart Rural Observatory)
- ▶ Analysis of Smart Villages in the CAP Strategic Plans - covering all Member States



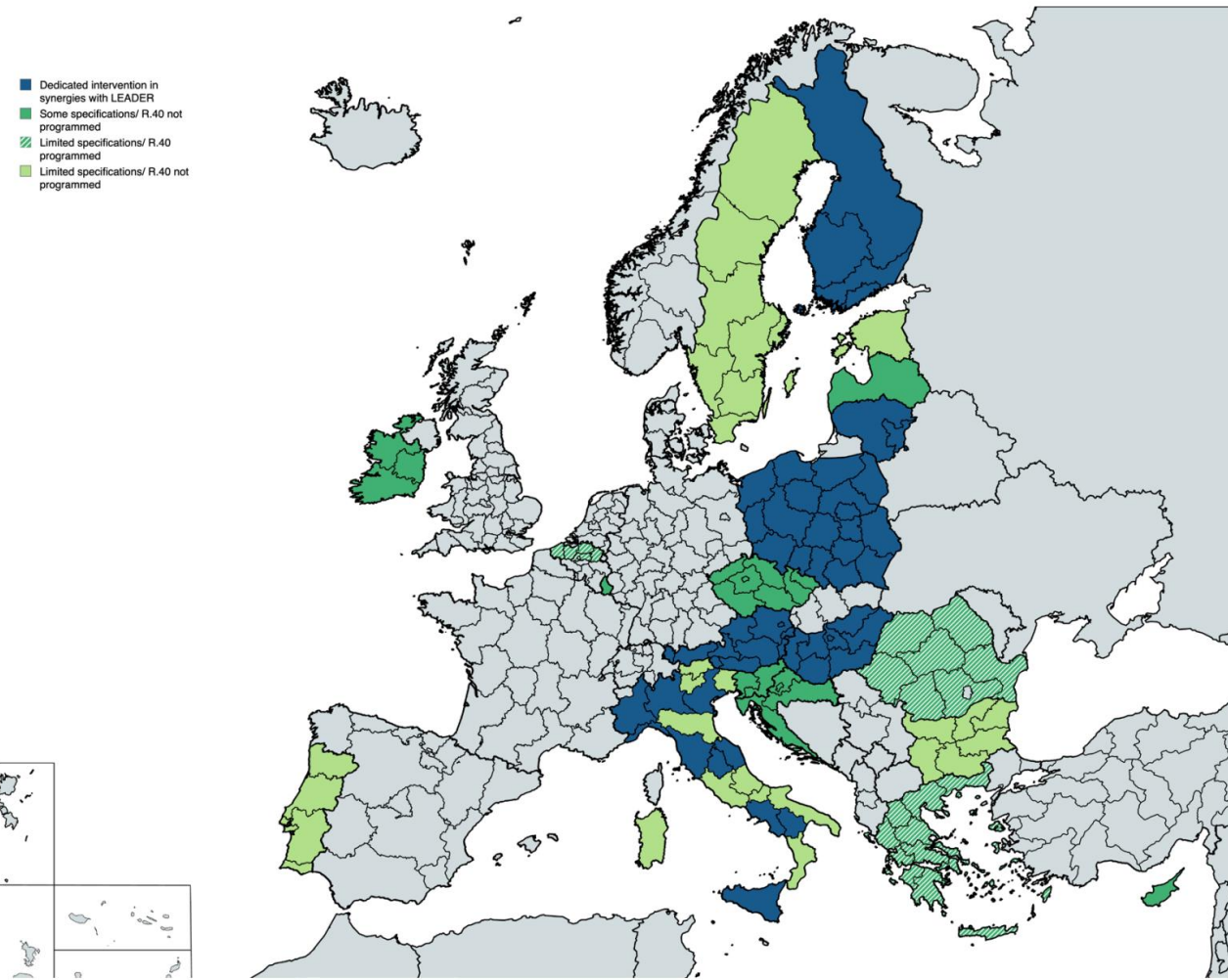
# Dedicated interventions

**Figure 5: Dedicated interventions in CAP Strategic Plans (Member States & Regions)**



Source: E40 Analysis

**Figure 8: Smart Villages support through LEADER in Member States & Regions**



Source: E40 Analysis

# RPSO assignment on Mapping Smart Villages implementation

- ▶ Small expert (Edina Ocsko) assignment supported by the RPSO / European Commission (finalised in June 2026)
- ▶ Methodology:
  - ✓ Interview with **6 Managing Authorities** – that programmed SV as direct intervention (AT, FI, IT, LT, HU, PL + ES-Galicia)
  - ✓ Interviews with identified **CAP SV cases** / 'control group' villages that implement Smart Villages but do not get direct support
  - ✓ **Survey with MAs implementing SV under LEADER** only & with SV beneficiaries

127 cooperation projects  
106 preparatory projects

~30 LAGs included SV in  
LDS

27 LAG applications  
4+4 strategies  
21+11 projects

RURAL  
PACT

## FINLAND

- ✓ Open ongoing calls
- ✓ Cooperation projects (mostly **regional**) – **umbrella projects** (larger scale, 3+ partners), led by village associations - managed by ELY centres (based on rural development plans & selection criteria)

- ✓ **Smaller-scale cooperation projects** (e.g. local services)
- ✓ According to LAG/ LDS priority and selection criteria
- ✓ SV is mandatory in LDS

- ✓ First focus on digitalisation, now shifted to **security & preparedness**

## HUNGARY

- ✓ Initially dedicated intervention, later **integrated under LEADER** but as a separate/ central call
- ✓ Budget of LEADER extended

- ✓ Now **fully integrated under LEADER** (~ 30 LAGs)
- ✓ **SV strategy preparation of communities** & cooperation projects can be supported if SV was included in LDS

- ✓ Initially understood more as digital, but now much more diverse (although LAGs included mostly digital)

## LITHUANIA

- ✓ **Umbrella projects** led by LAGs – who apply with thematic-focused **SV strategies** – aligned with LDS
- ✓ Partnership, selection criteria of projects in SV strategy
- ✓ LAGs define selection criteria in the SV strategy

- ✓ SV under LEADER is not so popular yet – one LAG

- ✓ Not only digital
- ✓ **Diverse themes**: sustainable development, entrepreneurship, quality of life and social inc., environment, digital., services

Dedicated intervention

LEADER

Thematic focus

# Initial common lessons

- ▶ **LEADER** has become a key vehicle for implementing and/or supporting the implementation of SV
- ▶ **Umbrella project** method is most common
- ▶ **Partnership** is key = under 'cooperation' intervention
- ▶ **'Smart'** is still hard to define (what is innovative?)
- ▶ **Challenges of strategy development:** integrated-holistic, links between projects is hard to ensure
- ▶ **Capacity-building on the way:** Early (preparatory, pre-application) and continuous consultation and support is crucial
- ▶ **Learning by doing:** still new / experimentation (refining / simplifying rules on the way, etc.)
- ▶ **Co-financing** is sometimes challenging

# Thank you!

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The screenshot displays the Rural Pact Community Platform interface. At the top left is the European Union logo with the text "European Union". To the right is a "Log in" button and a search bar with a "Search" button. Below this is the main title "Rural Pact Community Platform". A navigation menu includes "Rural Pact", "Rural revitalisation", "The platform", "Act for the rural vision", "Resources", and "News and events". The breadcrumb trail shows "Home > Groups > Smart Villages". The main content area features a 3D rendering of a village with solar panels. Text on the page includes "GROUP Smart Villages", a yellow button "Login or Register to Join this Group", and a list of countries: "Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden". It also shows "created on 06/23/2023 - 16:35" and a language selector set to "English". A "Overview" link is visible at the bottom left of the 3D image.