Smart rural communities – # Strategy

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Parts of the policy landscape

Future CAP

The 9 CAP Objectives

- Increase competitiveness
- Rebalance power in food chain
- Climate change action
- Environmental care
- Protect food & health quality
- Preserve landscapes & biodiversity
- Support generational renewal
- Vibrant rural areas
- Ensure fair income

The European Green Deal

- Promoting clean energy
- Protecting nature
- Leading the green change globally
- Making homes energy efficient
- Financing green projects
- Striving for greener industry
- Investing in smarter, more sustainable transport
- Eliminating pollution
- Ensuring a just transition for all

Future CAP

The European Green Deal
Vision for rural areas

#RuralVisionEU
“Our rural areas are the fabric of our society and the heartbeat of our economy. The diversity of landscape, culture and heritage is one of Europe’s most defining and remarkable features. They are a core part of our identity and our economic potential.

We will cherish and preserve our rural areas and invest in their future.”

President Von der Leyen - July 2019

Policy guidelines for 2019-2024
Communication from the Commission

- Set out a vision for the future of rural areas by 2040
- Create a debate on the role of rural areas in society

“It will also explore innovative, inclusive and sustainable solutions in the light of climate and digital transformation and the COVID-19 crisis.”
Roadmap, July 2020

- Q2 2021
Challenges

Specific challenges for rural communities

• De-population and low population density
• Cuts and centralisation of public services
• Low degree of connectivity – a challenge for rural businesses and quality of life

“The urban-rural divide”
Specific challenges for rural communities

- Small population and low population density
- Cuts and centralisation of public services
- Low degree of connectivity – a challenge for rural businesses and quality of life

"The urban-rural divide"
Smart villages - Background

European Commission: EU Action for Smart Villages (April 2017)

- Initiatives within rural development, regional development, research, transport, energy, and digital policies

Members of the European Parliament: Bled Declaration for a Smarter Future of the Rural Areas in EU (April 2018)

- “Smart Villages have the potential to increase economic and social cohesion, and improve the social equality of our societies, which is especially visible between rural and urban areas”
SMART VILLAGES

- Are communities in rural areas
- Use innovative (often digital) solutions to improve their resilience
- Focus on economic, social and/or environmental development aspects
- Build on local strengths and opportunities

- Develop and implement their strategy through a participatory approach
- Cooperate with other communities/actors in rural and urban areas
- Complement existing initiatives
- Raise funding from various public and private sources

The concept – Pilot project on smart eco-social villages (concluded 2019)
The potential – what is in it?

• Basic public services (e-services etc.) otherwise not possible

• Digital solutions to streamline production in rural businesses and optimise the supply chain

• An integrated, territorial, bottom-up approach to find solutions through digital and social innovation

• Enhancing entrepreneurship and sustainable development, transition to a low-carbon, circular economy (European Green Deal)

• Enhancing quality of life in rural areas – quality education and social inclusion – counteracting de-population
ENRD Thematic Group on Smart Villages

• Awareness-raising and networking within the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) (2017-2020)

• Public and private stakeholders at all levels, including local actors

• Briefs with recommendations for policy-makers on how to best support smart villages

• Smart Villages portal – materials, collection of project examples
EP Preparatory Action: Smart Rural Areas of the 21st Century – “Smart Rural 21”

• 2020-2022 – EUR 3.3M contract

• Experience with animation of development and implementation of smart village strategies in practice, in 21 villages across the EU

• Developing tools (e.g. roadmap) and communicating directly with many more villages

• Draw conclusions on how to best support rural communities in the future

• https://www.smartrural21.eu/
What we have learned so far

- SMART VILLAGES are already there

- SMART VILLAGES find solutions in a wide range of fields – agriculture, infrastructure, public services, transport, renewable energy, environment, rural businesses, tourism, community facilities, bio-economy, social inclusion, young people…

- SMART VILLAGE strategies to complement/enhance existing initiatives

- SMART VILLAGES is not a method or a measure defined at EU level – inspiration

- Flexibility is needed for using the concept for funding in different national/regional/local contexts
A word on funding

• Smart villages is not just about funding, but inspiration for local action.

• But funding in many cases essential for the “bigger steps”

• Future CAP (EAFRD) as well as ERDF, ESF+, EMFF, … programmes, but also national, regional and private funding.

• Relevant support include investments (e.g. basic services), broadband, knowledge exchange, skills acquisition, CLLD, cooperation, …

• Funding to complement existing structures where possible (e.g. regional/local development strategies, CLLD) – to ensure bottom-up in respect of the needs on the ground

• In addition, indirect support through e.g. Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe, and Digital Europe Programme can help
Objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy post-2020

Cross-cutting / horizontal objective:
Modernising the sector by fostering and sharing of knowledge, innovation and digitalisation in agriculture and rural areas, and encouraging their uptake.
Selected relevant policy instruments post 2020

Horizon Europe

- Tailored Horizon Europe themes

Digital Europe Programme

- Common European Data Spaces
- Testing and Experimentation facilities for AI
- Digital Innovation Hubs
- Support to advanced digital skills
Conclusions

• Rural communities face specific challenges, but also have particular potential

• It is important to differentiate between urban and rural communities; but also rural communities are diverse.

• Community-specific locally-driven smart solutions are an asset.

• Rural and urban communities can learn from and supplement each other.

• Communities are essential to achieve many strategic objectives, set at European level.

• Programmes at EU level are important to create an enabling environment for rural communities.

• Programmes and strategies at EU level, ideally consider the specific needs of rural areas.
Thank you

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