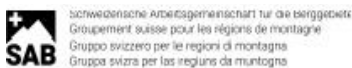# A synthesis report

The SmartVillages project

Alpine space mountain and rural communities are often deprived of highly sought-after jobs, good provision of services as well as a favourable climate for entrepreneurship and social innovation. This is one of the most important drivers behind out-migration and the brain drain, a phenomenon which again reinforces a circle of decline. Digitalisation is a promising approach to counter this phenomenon. However, the digital divide between rural and urban areas has actually increased in the last few years. A smart village (SV) approach for mountain and rural areas is intended to unlock the potential of local players to make their region a more attractive place to live and work. The Interreg SmartVillages project has aimed to apply an SV approach and has brought together - in so called Regional Stakeholder Groups (RSGs) - policymakers, business, academia and civil society in a quadruple helix approach (4H) to improve the framework for innovation, through new forms of stake-holder involvement facilitated by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). After three years of project implementation, we are proud to present to you the main results of the SmartVillages project. The Covid 19 crisis has been both a risk and an opportunity for the project and its goals. However, all the project goals set have been achieved and we have experienced extremely high momentum for our concept during the current health crisis. We have seen that "smart villages" have been performing quite well due to better communication, more agility and stronger resilience thanks to the utilisation of digital technologies, participative methods, and new organisational approaches.

A Smart Village approach…

…builds on existing local strengths and opportunities to engage in a process of sustainable development of their territories.

…relies on a participatory approach to develop and implement strategies to improve economic, social and environmental conditions, in particular by promoting innovation and mobilising solutions offered by digital technologies.

… benefits from cooperation and alliances with other communities and players in rural and urban areas.

…includes ideally all sectors of smartness that are   Smart Mobility, Smart Governance, Smart Economy, Smart Environment, Smart Living and Smart People.

These four pillars formed the structure according to which the partnership organised all activities.

Some Numbers and a map

Figure 1. SmartVillages partners and test areas

- 13 partners from 6 countries

- 9 regional stakeholder groups built to support pilot activities

- 21 pilot activities in 11 test areas

- 1 Digital Exchange Platform including a smartness assessment, a set of best practices, a toolbox and various opportunities of interactions and exchange between interested stakeholders.

- project implementation: April 2018 - October 2021

- total budget: EUR 2,685,381

- ERDF contribution: EUR 2,061,999

The DEP – a tool for facilitating smart tranformation

The SmartVillages **Digital Exchange Platform** (DEP) contains a smartness assessment tool that provides a user with an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of a particular municipality/region in all smartness dimensions such as *Smart Mobility, Smart Governance, Smart Economy, Smart Environment, Smart Living and Smart People*. In a second step, the user is guided via the toolbox through a project implementation process where tailored best practices and methodologies are proposed in order to develop a project successfully. The different components of the smartness assessment and the **toolbox** are interlinked with a matchmaking process. The DEP as well as the embedded best practices and methodologies evolve over time and according to user feedback received.

The *Digital Exchange Platform* is accessible here: https://smart-villages.eu/

A Video tutorial for the digital exchange platform is accessible here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Us-xVtEKlGY&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR2WUgtSa_exsDx_lXT8vujNeIFEgI0Y5V4qBvltGY_eVqF2IFdSRn3vfbA

Smart villages in action

The following section provides a selection of project activities developed in the framework of the project partnership and implemented in different smart villages in the Alpine space. The examples are presented in different categories, however they are interconnected with other activities in the same smart village/region.

Co-working spaces/meeting places

"La Place des Possibles" (Test area Royens-Vercors France, PP Adrets)

What is it?

La Place des Possibles is the transformation of a former textile factory into a "third place" under collaborative governance. It is still in its experimentation phases, but it already hosts music and crafting workshops, options for further education and is a perfect meeting place for smart villages initiatives!

What are its success factors?

Its success factors are genuine involvement of citizen and local organisations and vibrant support by local authorities.

How can it be replicated?

The initial steps focused on studies and diagnosis both on the needs of the territory and architectural rehabilitation, partly funded by Leader subsidies. 5 organisations were involved from the beginning, other NGOs joined the project afterwards, mainly as users of the place, but also involved in the governance processes. The experimentation phases consisted in integrating activities that allowed testing ideas with little costs.

Figure 3. Visitors at the converted textile factory in Royans Vercors (SAB)

Contact and further information:

https://smart-villages.eu/language/en/good_practice/third-place-la-place-des-possibles/

Other interconnected activities in smart village/region Royans Vercors:

car/ridesharing operation zoé Royans Vercors collaborative platform *L'echo des falaises* (accessible under good practices https://smart-villages.eu)

Further Smart Villages examples in this category:

Co-working spaces Ernen und Saas Fee (PP SAB, Switzerland) (accessible under good practices https://smart-villages.eu)

Digital village squares/collaborative platforms

Figure 4. The core group members of the "co-working space Saas Fee" organise their community building work with the collaborative platform "crossiety" (SAB)

Collaborative platform Crossiety in Saas Fee (Upper Valais, Switzerland, PP SAB)

The municipality of Saas Fee introduced the *collaborative platform "crossiety"*. It offers a communication channel between the local authorities and citizens but also among citizens. However, it goes far beyond the functionalities of usual municipality apps. It is a kind of village social medium allowing users to get together around a multitude of specific topics of interest. In this way a group for the co-working space Saas Fee has been established and it is constantly mobilising further "helpers" and users, for example the crowdfunding of the restoration of a historic irrigation system or the management of a co-working space has been assisted.

What are its success factors?

Usually, it is the administration of a municipality that is the forerunner, introducing the platform and uploading the initial content on the system. It is important that the municipality then continues to use this new information channel. A community building is provided by the platform company involving workshops in the municipality on the platform's potential and how to use it.

How can it be replicated?

The first step is the assessment of needs involving authorities, public administration and interested citizens. Then the system is introduced by different community building workshops with village associations to reach a critical mass. The app is then massively promoted by the municipality.

Contact and further information:

https://smart-villages.eu/language/en/good_practice/municipality-apps-in-canton-wallis/

Other interconnected activities in smart village/region Upper Valais:

Co-working space Saas Fee, municipality apps Upper Wallis, smart metering Fieschertal (accessible under good practices https://smart-villages.eu)

Further Smart Villages examples in this category:

Digital Plattform Löffingen (PP RVSO, Germany), collaborative platform *L'echo des falaises* (PP ADRETS, France) (accessible under good practices https://smart-villages.eu).

Digital transformation of compact villages – Šmarje/Padna (PP University Ljubljana, Slovenia)

Figure 5. Marketplace of the municipality of Šmarje – Presentation of Wi-Fi access points for the promotion of local products (SAB).

At the beginning, the municipality of Šmarje was interested in the internet coverage in the village. Wi-Fi access points were installed at the market square, community centre building, the church and at a service station on the main road to the coast, where many tourists usually stop for a short break. After the installation of the Wi-Fi access points, several farm stays, without internet access due to geographical constraints (located in a valley), were able to communicate by email and to promote their services via their web pages and social media channels regularly. Moreover, they were able to use POS terminals for non-cash payments, which was not possible earlier. In addition, a mobile application was developed to promote local products and services. Whenever users request free Wi-Fi access from the local network, they agree to receive targeted promotions for local products and services, such as olive oil, wine or accommodation at local facilities.

This led to the creation of a new platform *Meet the Local Producer*, where buyers are able to receive more information not only about the products, but also about the farmers.

What are its success factors?

Motivated locals (local heroes), who act as coordinators on a local level and are the glue between the community and other stakeholders. An agreement with a telecom provider is very beneficiary for technical and financial support.

How can it be replicated?

Identification/mobilisation of local coordinators - local heroes. Identification and prioritisation of Wi-Fi spots in the village that need internet access. Installation of Wi-Fi access points; Identify digital services that will have high social, economic, and environmental impact for the residents; Look for funding; Design and develop digital products and services; Measure impacts.

Contact and further information:

https://smart-villages.eu/language/en/good-practices-categories/

Other interconnected activities in the smart village of Šmarje

IoT in vineyards, wine hub Divino.

Further Smart Villages examples in this category:

Blockchain-based digital transformation of a short food supply chain (PP University of Maribor, Slovenia), *Jemlokalno application for the marketing of regional food products* (PP Smartis, Slovenia) (accessible under good practices https://smart-villages.eu).

Car/ridesharing

Figure 6. Ridesharing "Ummadum" (Ummadum)

Pitztal Ummadum ridesharing (PP Regionsentwicklung/Standortagentur Tirol, Austria)

Ummadum ridesharing supports the municipalities in the Pitztal valley to reduce single-occupancy motor vehicle traffic and to promote the local economy. People who share rides receive "points" from passengers. These points can be used to purchase items in local retail shops. The points can be bought on the "Ummadum" platform either by the passengers or via a sponsor (e.g. employers, municipalities, shops).

What are its success factors?

The system needs open-minded people and companies so a pre-analysis should check the willingness of people to share their rides and the readiness of companies to provide incentives to car/ridesharers.

How can it be replicated?

First a pre-analysis of potential users, companies and retail shops is being performed by the company Ummadum. The Ummadum system also depends on a communication/awareness raising campaign of the municipalities involved. Regular monitoring is part of the business. The system is especially interesting for municipalities with more than 10% commuters.

Contact and further information:

https://smart-villages.eu/language/en/good-practices-categories/

Other interconnected activities in smart village/region Pitztal:

Gem2go municipality app, smart tourism strategy and smart government strategy (accessible under good practices https://smart-villages.eu).

Further examples:

Opération ZOE: a local e-car sharing system (PP ADRETS, France), *Citizen Taxi in Municipality of Löffingen* (PP RVSO, Germany), *Free bus in the Park* (PP GAL Genovese, Italy) (accessible under good practices https://smart-villages.eu).

Good governance

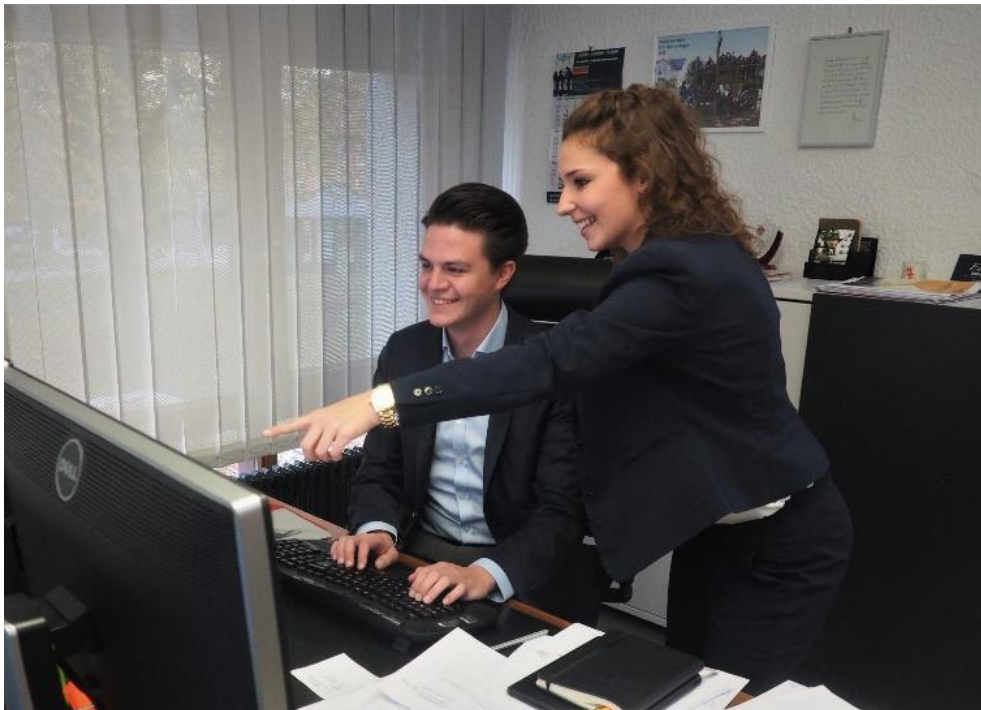**E-Government in Tengen (PP Bodensee Standort Marketing, Germany)**

Figure 7. The mayor of Tengen – Marian Schreier (on the left) - initiated the participative waste management process in Tengen (Elmar Veeser).

The municipality of Tengen digitised a process of waste management involving rubbish bin ordering, replacement, collection, delivery etc. in a participatory action integrating the needs of a working group involving citizens.

What are its success factors?

Thanks to a participative process, the willingness to use the digital service of Tengen is guaranteed because the citizens receive ownership of the different steps.

How can it be replicated?

In a first step, the existing, analogous processes were surveyed, and the potential of optimisation is identified from an administrative point of view. During the workshop, the citizens developed an ideal process flow for digital rubbish bin management based on various cases (e.g. rubbish bin should be

replaced, new rubbish bin ordered). In addition, the previous designs of the later form masks were checked linguistically and visually. Finally, the ideal process flow from a citizen's perspective and that of the administration were compared. The practical technical implementation of this process was then carried out in the SmartVillages project in cooperation with Bodensee Standort Marketing GmbH. Finally, the citizens of the workshop were invited to test the tool as pilot users and to give their feedback, whereby the process was again adjusted. Thus, the ideal process flow was compared from both a citizen and an administrative perspective.

Contact and further information:

https://smart-villages.eu/language/en/good_practice/citizens-workshop-tengen-digital-process/

Other interconnected activities in smart village/region Bodensee:

Cooperation platform for the economy in the four-country region of Lake Constance (accessible under good practices https://smart-villages.eu).

Further examples in this category:

Smart Governance Strategy Piztal (PP Regionsentwicklung/Standortagentur Tirol, Austria) (accessible under good practices https://smart-villages.eu).

Infrastructure and smart integration of infrastructure

Figure 8. The local fibre optic network of Luthern being installed (RLW)

Fast broadband Luthern (PP Region Lucerne West, Switzerland)

The major Swiss telecommunications companies limit fibre optic network expansion to densely populated areas. Therefore, the local council of the municipality of Luthern (1369 inhabitants) has proposed to the population the independent construction of an area-wide fibre optic network in Luthertal inspired by a French project (La Fibre pour tous). The project with the extraordinary credit of 3.6 million Swiss francs and

the regulations "Fibre optics for all" was approved by the voters of Luthern with a large majority on May 17, 2020. The project foresees that all buildings in Luthern (1369 inhabitants) will be connected to the optical fibre network (of at least 500 Mbit/s download speed) by the end of 2022. This would be voluntary, and residents and businesses would have to contribute to the initial costs with a one-time connection fee. Subsequently, a monthly connection fee will be charged, as is the case today with most cable connections (TV, telephone, etc.).

What are its success factors?

A funding system that is sustainable and fair containing public money and private contributions. Local/regional strategic partners in the telecommunication and energy provision sector.

How can it be replicated?

A feasibility study has been performed evaluating potential users, solutions and costs. The vote was preceded and accompanied by an information campaign within the municipality to explain why a fibre optic network is necessary. A small pilot project has been carried out. The Project has been fine-tuned (Business plan, rules, partners). Start implementation.

Contact and further information:

https://natuerlich-luthertal.ch/aktuelles/glasfasernetz/

https://smart-villages.eu/language/en/good-practices-categories/

Other interconnected activities in smart village/region Lucerne West:

Coworking spaces region Lucerne West; Digital strategy canton Lucerne (accessible under good practices https://smart-villages.eu).

Further examples in this category:

Smart Metering roll out in Fieschertal (PP SAB, Switzerland)(accessible under good practices https://smart-villages.eu).

Digital facilitation

Digital Pilot "Digitallotse" in Löffingen (PP Regionalverband Südlicher Oberrhein , Germany)

In order to support the digitalisation of administrative services in Löffingen, a local administration employee was trained as a *Digital Pilot* ("Digitallotse") during a three-day training course. In this process individuals can acquire specific digitalisation skills and thus support smart digital transformation in their communities. Digital Pilots are intended to provide inspiration to initiate necessary measures as well as transformation and change processes and act as motivators for digitisation projects.

What are its success factors?

Municipalities must be open to consider suggestions from Digital Pilots and promote these ideas in the implementation process in the long term. Projects of the Digital Pilot must be tailored to the needs and circumstances of the community.

How can it be replicated?

1) Find a suitable person from the administration who is willing to be trained as a Digital Pilot 2) Choose a suitable training programme and place 3) What has been learnt must be adapted to the conditions and needs of the community 4) Regular evaluation of the previous measures initiated by the Digital Pilot

Contact and further information:

https://smart-villages.eu/language/en/good_practice/training-of-a-digital-pilot-for-the-municipality-administration-digitallotsen/

Other interconnected activities in the smart village of Löffingen:

Innovation Lab, Citizen Taxi, Digital Townhall and a comprehensive strategy process in the municipality of Löffingen (incl. final report and action plan) (accessible under good practices https://smart-villages.eu).

Further examples in this category:

Digital support for administrative purpose (PP ADRETS, France) (accessible under good practices https://smart-villages.eu).

Territorial marketing

Figure 10. Digital fair "Expo Fontanabuona Tigullio" on the internet (GAL Appenino Genovese)

Digital fair "Expo Fontanabuona Tigullio" (PP Development Agency GAL Genovese, Italy)

Due to the covid-19 emergency it was necessary to face the need to carry out some events of territorial promotion digitally. Therefore, GAL Genovese and GAL Verde Mare created, together with the digital services company *Isola che non c'è*, a digital platform for the promotion of events where artisans and farmers could showcase their activities and sell their products. The Expo Fontanabuona Tigullio digital platform opened for 2 weeks, from 29th of August to 13th of September 2020. Artisans and farmers became "virtual exhibitors" at the on-line Expo. Each exhibitor had a virtual shop available to showcase its own business, both with a description and with a gallery, to make the products known and book them through a simple online registration. In addition to the exhibitors, territorial marketing initiatives were also included, all of these in presence and bookable online.

What are its success factors?

A continuous and collaborative dialogue with stakeholders as well as clarity in objectives and monitoring of results. Due to its success, this model has been replicated in other nearby areas of the Genoa hinterland as a good practice for other local events. Users quickly gained confidence with the tool and the target audience has seen an increase in users within the 20-40 age group, usually less interested in the traditional fair model.

How to do it?

1) Focus on the villages' needs and objectives and stakeholder involvement 2) Conception and configuration of the digital platform 3) Monitoring of virtual visits, included timing, selected pages and bookings. 4) Analysis of users' satisfaction and analysis of exhibitors' satisfaction.

Contact and further information:

https://smart-villages.eu/language/en/good_practice/regional-and-local-fairs-digitalization/

Other interconnected activities in the smart region of Genovesato:

Free bus in the park (accessible under good practices https://smart-villages.eu)

Further examples in this category:

Business to Business (B2B) cooperation platform 4 countries region Bodensee (PP BSM, Germany) (accessible under good practices https://smart-villages.eu).

Blockchain based digital transformation

Blockchain-based digital transformation of a short food supply chain (PP University of Maribor, Slovenia)

The short food supply chain called the "Green Point" uses blockchain technology to help local farmers in food production, connect them in a cooperative, and collect and distribute their products locally. Furthermore, blockchain technology enables traceability and prevents fraud. The dedicated Web application is currently in the pilot phase and is being used by the stakeholders (e.g. farmers, transporters, logistics centres) who add, store and confirm their activity within the supply chain. Upon receiving the product, the customer can easily access all the relevant supply chain information via a QR code.

What are its success factors?

The technical community can manage and facilitate the digital transformation, as well as educate the stakeholders, such as farmers and transporters. Therefore, to successfully implement a short food supply chain using blockchain technology, support from the technical community plays a key role. Furthermore, the stakeholders involved have to adapt their routines and activities and adjust to the digital tools accordingly.

How can it be replicated?

The first step was to identify the local relevant stakeholders, such as farmers and transporters. At the same time, we found support from ICT professionals. What followed was the establishment of the new supply chain process, with the focus of linking the real-life activities and the digital trail. The supply chain process was then linked to existing or newly created ICT tools and blockchain ledgers. After the technical aspect was established, the stakeholders were educated on the usage of the ICT tools, and the prototype was tested and adapted if necessary. Lastly, attention was paid to informing and educating the customer.

Figure 11. The short supply food chain using blockchain technology

Contact and further information:

https://smart-villages.eu/language/en/good_practice/blockchain-based-digital-transformation-of-a-short-food-supply-chain/

Other interconnected activities in Pomurje smart village/region:

KULTNATURA (connecting different regions into one integrated touristic product offer, DIH AGRIFOOD (development, technology transfer and innovative application of smart farming solutions)

Policy recommendations

The Smart Villages Project is a strategic implementation initiative of the Macroregional strategy for the Alpine area EUSALP. The project is running from 2018 to 2021 and is financed by the Interreg Alpine Space Program. The Policy Recommendations coming out of this project are thus a major contribution to the implementation of EUSALP. The draft recommendations were elaborated in autumn 2020 by the project consortium. Basis was a survey carried out amongst the 13 partners of the project coming from all Alpine countries. The draft recommendations were presented and discussed at the International Smart villages policy conference of 10th November 2020 with 150 participants from all over Europe. Initially, this meeting was meant to be a physical meeting to be hold in Bern (CH). But due to the Covid-19-situation, the meeting was reorganised into a virtual-only meeting. The draft recommendations have been amended after the discussion at the International Smart Villages policy conference. They will flow into the policy cycle of the Macroregional strategy for the Alpine region EUSALP and will be made available to policy makers in the Alpine area and outside of it like the other Macroregional strategies, the EU Commission, Managing authorities and so on.

The Smart-villages-approach is important for villages in mountain and rural areas to become more attractive and vibrant. Smart villages are not only attractive for residents, but also for people from outside, who may stay in these villages for a certain period either as tourists or for work (concept of "third places" with e.g. coworking spaces). In this respect, the concept of Smart villages helps also to create linkages between urban and rural areas. The Smart-villages-approach helps those villages to use the potentials offered by digitalization and to bridge the natural handicaps of distances. With the Smart-villages-

approach, the communities can contribute to the European Green Deal and master their smart transformation. And last but not least, the Covid-19-crises has shown that Smart villages are much more resilient to such crisis.

The Smart-Village-approach is an integrative approach using the potentials offered by digitalization and developing new solutions through participatory processes, thus relying on open and social innovation. This basic understanding of the Smart-Village-approach leads to the following policy recommendations. These policy recommendations address all institutional levels ranging from EU-level, through macroregional level to national, regional and local level. Where appropriate, the respective level is directly addressed and good examples are given.

R1: Consider the smart transformation of mountain, rural and peripheral villages as a strategic priority

The smart transformation of mountain and rural villages helps to bridge the natural handicaps of those areas and give them new perspective. In some mountain areas, with low population density, the Smart Villages concept can also help to develop digital services and mobility offers for instance, while operators have been reluctant to invest in local infrastructure projects that are not viable. The smart transformation of those areas should therefore become a strategic priority. At the EU-level, a strong focus is already put on this topic with amongst others the EU Action plan on Smart villages, the activities carried out by the ENRD Network on Smart villages and the new intergroup RUMRA & Smart villages in the EU Parliament. This intergroup is an ideal platform to evaluate, whether it would be appropriate to create an explicit legal basis or an overarching strategy for the Smart villages-approach at EU-level. At macroregional level (EUSALP), Smart villages is considered as one of the five strategic priority policy areas for the period 2020 - 22. This is already a major success of the ongoing smart villages ASP-project. The creation of a network of Smart villages in the Alpine area is envisaged in 2021. The seven countries and 48 regions represented in EUSALP are invited to actively support this process. At national level, several countries have already integrated the Smart villages approach into national strategies, such as the "Strategie digitale Schweiz" in Switzerland and the Strategy for Inner areas in Italy or the rural development program of Slovenia. At regional level, the Smart villages approach must also become a priority, such as e.g. with the Law on digital transformation in Graubünden (CH). The same holds of course true at municipal level, as exemplified by the city of Tengen in Germany.

R2: Embed Smart Villages in existing and future strategies and policies

The Smart-villages-approach is an inter-sectorial approach. It covers many thematics ranging from e.g. tourism and mobility to E-Government and to energy. It is therefore crucial, that the Smart-villages-approach is embedded in the existing and future policies. The Smart Villages concept should e.g. be integrated into Pillar II of the CAP and in the Cohesion policy (including crossborder cooperation) and a certain budget allocated to it. The Rural development programs for the period 2021-2027 including the LEADER/CLLD-approach should have a strong focus on digitalisation and open/social/technical innovations. As regards the Cohesion policy, the operational programs at national and regional level should also include special lines on the Smart-villages-approach. Form the side of the EU-Regulation, two out of the five Policy Objectives for 2021-2027 are offering significant potential for Smart Villages: Priority Objective 3 (A more connected Europe – mobility and regional ICT connectivity) and Priority Objective 5 (Europe closer to citizens – sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas through local initiatives). PO 3 addresses the more technical aspect, PO 5 the community-based. These opportunities need to be taken up in the operational programs at national, regional and crossborder level. At this actual stage (autumn 2020) when the programs are being drafted, it is therefore important, that stakeholders interested in the topic of Smart villages contact their respective national and regional authorities. The Smart-villages-approach is not only relevant for agricultural and cohesion policy, it is as well relevant for transport, education, health, social care, tourism, energy, housing etc. All the relevant policies should therefor take the Smart-villages-approach into account and encourage it.

R3: Allocate funds to integrative approaches such as Smart Villages

Integrative approaches such the Smart-villages-approach face the common problem, that there's no dedicated funding available. Specific funding schemes should be established at all levels to allow such approaches to be developed and put into practise. Ring-fenced funds and active facilitation by skilled animators would help local actors to implement transformations. In the scope of EUSALP, the Alpine Region Preparatory Action Fund ARPAF made available by the European parliament was extremely helpful to develop cross-sectorial thematics. This type of funding schemes should urgently be perpetuated, which requires an action by the European Parliament and the Commission. An initiative in this sense is to establish a EUSALP Innovation Facility, which could mobilize fundings from different sources, including public and private funds. On national level, Switzerland is working with "Modellvorhaben Raumentwicklung", which translates roughly into "Models for spatial development". Several federal offices agree on common topics and allocate common funding for them, actually e.g. for access to public services and digitalization. Another example is the "Ecologic Transition Contract" in France. Other good examples on regional level are the SCORAN and Departemental digital infrastructure schemes and/or digital use schemes in France as well as the Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030) of the Metropolitan City of Genova.

R4: Allow room for innovation and experimentation

Smart villages is a participatory approach based on local needs identified on the territory. When starting the process, the outcomes are not yet defined. Policies which support the Smart-villages-approach must therefore leave room for innovation an experimentation. They must also allow thematic openness. Good examples are e.g. the "Zukunftsraum Tirol" in Austria and the strategy for Inner Areas in Italy. The numerous programs for innovation like Horizon Europe are also very helpful to develop the Smart villages approach. But very often, these innovation policies are "territorially blind". They lack a territorial perspective. In addition, programs like Horizon Europe are very difficult to access by "small local players". This should be corrected in order to encourage place based approaches as Smart villages.

R5: Encourage networking and the exchange of experiences

Policies should encourage networking and awareness raising of relevant stakeholders for digitalisation and foster the exchange of know how between stakeholders eg. Universities and SMEs. The ENRD network on Smart villages is very helpful at EU-level. In EUSALP, the creation of a network of Smart villages is planned for 2021. A good example at regional level is the project BodenseeMittelstand 4.0 (BoMi 4.0) in Germany, which supports SME's in their digital transformation by bundling and coordinating the expertise from business, science and SME-related institutions and make it more accessible to regional SME's. In the same sense, the potential of digitalization must also be used to a greater extend to improve crossborder public services. EUSALP with its multilevel-governance and transnational approach should take up this request and develop appropriate solutions.

R6: Use the potential of the Smart Villages approach to communicate the innovation potential and attractiveness of mountain and rural areas and to link urban and rural areas

With the smart transformation under way or even accomplished, mountain and rural areas can position themselves as being at the forefront of innovation and attractive for residents and new inhabitants. The Smart-village-approach helps to develop new business models and job opportunities and with that new economic perspectives for marginalized territories. Good cooperations with the business sector are therefore important. The Smart-village-approach helps also to strengthen the resilience of rural villages, as highlighted during the Covid-19-crisis. These achievements need to be communicated in a clever way including towards newcomers and young families: Smart Villages offer new opportunities in rural mountainous areas for job creation, innovation and social inclusion and can enhance the quality of life of local communities. Strengthening the linkages between urban and rural areas is also one of the main goals of EUSALP. The EUSALP-perimeter encompasses not only the core alpine area but also the surrounding

major urban areas like Lyon, Milan, Ljublijana and Munich. Communication within EUSALP is therefore crucial. On the other side, cities should also reflect on their connections with the surrounding regions. A good example for communication at regional level is Tirol 2050 (Austria).

R7: Develop digital infrastructures and skills according to the needs and to the technological possibilities

Good digital infrastructures are a necessary precondition for Smart Villages. Policies that bring forward these infrastructures are urgently needed. Good examples are the National Ultra-Wideband Project in Italy, the Strategic Digital Program of the Liguria Region 2016-2018, the Strategy for Inner Areas in Italy with its Digital Agenda and the Public service obligation in Switzerland, which guarantees a minimum bandwidth of 10Mbit/s assured for all households and enterprises. Raising this minimum bandwidth to 80 Mbit/s is actually being discussed in the Federal Parliament. In territories with a failure of market, public investments are necessary to avoid a digital gap. Public investments in these territories must be excluded from the state aid rules. Special attention must be paid to border areas. EUSALP has identified numerous gaps in the fibre optics backbone across borders in the alpine area. These gaps must be filled by a coordinated approach of the national and regional authorities with support from macroregional and EU-level. Furthermore, the availability of digital infrastructures tends to be lower in border areas, as infrastructures are often planned and developed from a national or regional perspective. To plan and co-develop digital infrastructures in functional areas across borders should be a task encouraged by EUSALP. Basis could be the foreseen "Common Spatial development perspective", which will be elaborated in the years 2021 – 22. Digital infrastructures alone are not sufficient. Equally important are the digital skills. The potentials of digitalization can only be used, if the digital skills are well developed. Education, training and coaching are therefore crucial functions which have to be strengthened with a clear focus on rural and mountain territories.

Further information

Partners:
Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für die Berggebiete SAB, LP, Switzerland
Univerza v Mariboru, ERDF LP, Slovenia
Univerza v Ljublijani, Slovenia
Smartis d.o.o, Slovenia
Poliedra - Centro di servizio e consulenza del Politecnico di Milano su pianificazione ambientale e territoriale, Italy
Agenzia di Sviluppo Gal Genovese S.r.l., Italy
Niederösterreichische Energie und Umweltagentur GmbH, Austria
ADRETS - Association pour le Développement en REseau des Territoires et des Services, France
Regionalverband Südlicher Oberrhein, Germany
Bodensee Standort, Germany
Tiroler Zukunftsstiftung (Standortagentur Tirol), Austria
Software Competence Center Hagenberg GmbH, Austria
Region Luzern West, Switzerland

For more information about the project results and good practices, please refer to the SmartVillages deliverables available here:

https://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/smartvillages/en/home

For more information about the ongoing activities of the Eusalp AG5, please visit:

https://www.alpine-region.eu/action-group-5

This project is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund through the Interreg Alpine Space programme