



Ostana

Country: Italy

Population: 89

Type of area: Mountainous, Remote

Governance: Local elected mayor

Administrative level: LAU



About Ostana

The Municipality of Ostana is one of the smallest villages in Italy, an Occitan multi-centric settlement facing Monviso mountain and located in Piedmont Region about 60 kilometers southwest of Turin and about 45 kilometers northwest of Cuneo. The village is inhabited only by 89 residents, a large majority of them is living in Ostana since a couple of decades, more precisely from the late 1980s when a process of resettlement slowly started and contributed to create a cohesive local community.

A small and tough community created together with the Mayor the conditions for a better quality of life in the village based on architectural renovation, providing services to the inhabitants, developing both traditional and contemporary cultural projects, and taking care of the deployment of renewable energy, agriculture and forest management. The activation of a strong system of relationships and alliances with innovators, academia and knowledge centres was a crucial element for making Ostana a laboratory for innovative solutions of sustainable architecture and smart living. Ostana became a collective project about **living in the Alps in a contemporary and glocal way and it is recognised as a leading model of alpine regeneration.**

The main challenges for the village are sustainable mobility system, decrease in financial resources provided by the government, and the lack of affordable housing solutions. While Ostana has been mostly perceived along the years as a beautiful destination for tourists, the village aims at attracting new residents and potential entrepreneurs and innovators who can contribute to social and economic growth.

Smartness of Ostana



Along the decades, the municipality and its community opened to external and forward-thinking visions for the construction of a sustainable future for the residents. **The community, although preserving traditions, became itself a core of innovation**, sometimes foregoing national trends.

Since the late 1980s Ostana municipality developed its strategy from focusing on a multilevel approach to become an appealing place to live through projects on prioritising and valorising local **landscape and architecture, energy efficiency, mobility, agriculture and forest management, basic services, social entrepreneurship and culture.** The Ostana smart strategy is based on the growth of the village quantitatively and qualitatively.

The **local community is extremely active** and a wider community exists outside the village that strongly supports and enriches the resident community. The creation of an **innovative cultural center** (Lou Pourton) was part of a wider strategy fostering the creation of a renewed community spirit. Ostana with its **Residency Programme and intense collaboration with research centres** and universities are both contributing to the growth of the community and to the aims of the village to become an **educational space in the Alps and a laboratory for social innovation**, scientific research, and artistic production.



The Smart Journey of Ostana



Regeneration of public infrastructure

The rebirth of the village began in the late 1980s with the the starting of the process of a **high-quality architectural renovation based on very strict rules**, and the **protection and promotion of alpine landscape and culture**.

2011

Since then, Ostana has been building its reputation in Italy and the entire Alpine region triggering the rebirth of the village through high quality contemporary architecture, and it is now a renowned alpine architecture laboratory. The Municipality with the necessary European and regional funding implemented the regeneration of public infrastructure to attract economical and cultural activities and provided resources to recover the houses according to the architectural rules, with private owners working in synergy with the municipality. Synergies between public administration, private entrepreneurs and the community have been a fundamental prerequisite for the success of new enterprises such as Galaberna mountain hut-hotel, Bakery "Quel Po di pan", a covered leisure/market structure, an outdoor climbing wall.



Culture and social innovation

In 2012, the municipality decided to create an innovative centre combining cultural production and civic engagement. The construction of the 'Lou Pourtoun' centre was carried out by local enterprises, coordinated by Politecnico of Turin. The creation of the cultural centre is part of a wider strategy fostering a renewed community spirit,

2012



Title of initiative: Building of Lou Porton community centre
OVERALL BUDGET: € 950.000
Public fund: Piemonte Region, RDP 2007-13 Measure 3.2.2.: € 950.000
Duration: 2012

2014

One of the first activities carried out at Lou Pourtoun was the creation of ALPSTREAM, a research center for studying Alpine Rivers. Lou Pourtoun hosts the activities of the research center, which is a reference point for scholars and experts from all over Europe. Ostana puts a special emphasis to expand and strengthen the network of universities, research institutes and schools, adapting educational and research activities to the needs of a mountain community.

Title of initiative: ALPSTREAM Research Center
OVERALL BUDGET: € 350.000
EU fund: € 350.000 (Interreg Alcotra)
Duration: 2014-2020





Ostana launched Ostana Res, a Residency programme in 2020 to attract professionals, researchers, artists, entrepreneurs, individuals or families) who want to spend a period in Ostana in order to develop their own projects, contributing to the growth of the community or simply experimenting the life in the village.

Title of initiative: Ostana Residency Program
OVERALL BUDGET : € 20.000
Public fund: (Association of the Chambers of Commerce Piemonte region) : € 20.000
Duration: 2021-2022

During 2015-16 Ostana set up CAS (Centro di Accoglienza Straordinaria/ Centre for Emergency Reception) and managed it directly. The project lasted from 2017 to 2019, welcoming **six asylum seekers** with excellent results in terms of social and professional integration. This experience contributed to raise the awareness among residents on the need an open and inclusive local society, created through the joint work and collaboration among residents, stakeholders and local institutions.

Title of initiative: Center for Emergy Reception
OVERALL BUDGET: € 150.000
Public fund: € 150.000 (Ministry of Home Affairs)
Duration: 2017-2019

2020



Title: Cultural activities of Lou Pourtoun cultural centre
OVERALL BUDGET: € 36.000
Private fund: (Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation): € 36.000
Duration 2021/2022

In 2020, the newly born social enterprise VISO A VISO succeeded in the management of LouPourtoun cultural centre and the ethnographic museum bringing new collaborations to increase the cultural offer all-year long through musical and theatre performances, co-working spaces, contemporary art exhibitions, movie screenings, advanced training courses for institutes and universities, workshops, superior craftsmanship showroom, BAO - Biblioteca Aperta di Ostana (Ostana Open Library) community library for kids and adults. VISO A VISO manages the center in dialogue with the municipality and in accordance with community development principles and good governance.

Ostana Green Community

Agriculture and forest management: Ostana is promoting sustainable agriculture and forest management through collective actions and involvement of the local community. The Landowners Association 'Ritorno ai Prati' (free union between owners of public/private land) was born in Ostana in 2013 with the aim to facilitate the recovery and productive use of fragmented and abandoned agricultural lands through renting them out while also protecting the environment and promoting new businesses in agriculture. The Piedmont Region has provided financial support for this project, and in addition to Ostana, over twenty Landowners Associations have been formed within the region.

Title of initiative: Landowners Association 'Ritorno ai Prati'
OVERALL BUDGET: € 4.973 (one-off)
Public fund (regional): € 4.973 (one-off)
Duration: 2013 - ongoing



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Ostana has been involved also in different cooperation projects regarding collective and sustainable forest management and local wood supply chain valorisation. Project CoBoFi aimed to experiment an innovative supply chain through the production of a local high quality and hi-tech parquet, entirely made of local wood.

Title of initiative: Project CoBoFi
Overall budget: € 199.864
EU fund (RDP): € 199.864
Duration: 2018-2020

GreenChainSAW4Life aims to manage local forests in an innovative, sustainable, and collaborative manner to address climate and environmental risks. By implementing an integrated local plan for climate, energy, and bioeconomy, the project seeks to benefit the local economy and nature in the Po, Bronda, and Infernotto Valleys.

Title of initiative: GreenChainSAW4Life
Overall budget: € 1.559.970
EU fund (LIFE): € 838.731
Other funds: € 721.239
Duration: 2019-2021

Several sustainable actions have been implemented in the municipality to promote better resource management and sustainable living. These actions include the use of solar and wind energy to power public street lamps, installation of solar panels on the municipality's rooftop, utilisation of geothermal and solar energy for the wellness center and bakery/medical facilities, and provision of shuttle bus services during events.

The photovoltaic installations in Ostana were co-financed by Po River Basin Integrated Water Management Consortium (Consorzio B.I.M del Po) through a call to the municipalities of the consortium with the ultimate goal to create one or more Renewable Energy Community. The Municipality of Ostana intends to promote interest in joining the RE.C. from both consumers and producers and collecting expressions of interest from the local community.

Title of initiative: Co-financing photovoltaic systems in Ostana
OVERALL BUDGET: approx. 50.000 €
Public fund : approx. € 50.000 (B.I.M. del Po Consortium + Municipalities of the Consortium)
Duration: 2022-2023

To decrease CO2 emissions and overcrowding during the summer season, Ostana intends to develop a new mobility model based on wider use of electric mobility, creation of a local car pooling system, installation of new infrastructure for recharging electric bikes and the creation of new interchange areas for intermodal mobility. With the support of Smart Rural 21 project a Smart Mobility Plan was developed in order to overcome the mobility challenges.



Title of initiative: Smart mobility plan of Ostana
OVERALL BUDGET: €6.000
EU fund: €6.000 (SR21 project)
Duration 2021

2023

Social Housing

The municipality is in the process of the **recovery of some buildings** in la Villo hamlet (the main one in the village) to activate a social housing programme, setting the conditions to attract new young working inhabitants (semi-permanent and temporary residency, smart working), making “ways of living” in rural areas attractive, also as an answer to climate change, crises (like Covid-19).

Title of initiative: Social housing
OVERALL BUDGET: 750.000€
EU fund : NRRP 100.000
Public fund: 650.000€
Duration: 2021- 2024

Education

Educational infrastructure and community welfare: As a result of a dialogue with young families and the joint work of the Community Cooperative and the municipal administration, Ostana first opened its music school, then a Summer School and finally in the autumn of 2022 opened its school for children between the age 1-3 years.

Title: Community welfare (school, library and other services)
OVERALL BUDGET: €250.000
EU fund : NRRP €250.000
Duration: 2023-2025



In Focus: New ways of living Youth, Culture & New entrepreneurship

Goal:

Along with the natural alpine environment, public spaces and the ongoing projects (co-working spaces, library, educational facilities) Ostana aims to attract new qualified inhabitants with different competencies. Ostana is not only a beautiful touristic destination, but also can be a nice place for farmers, local enterprises, professionals, researchers who can do smart working and are looking for a healthier and more relaxing environment. Ostana's goal is to become a **living laboratory for the new ways of living in the Italian Alps**. The village wants to test strategies to attract new residents that can be replicated in marginal, alpine and rural areas in Italy and Europe.

Experience to date:

In order to achieve its goal, from 2021 the local authorities of Ostana and Viso A Viso - Community Cooperative have been focusing on the set up of cultural and educational infrastructures and workspaces to make Ostana an attractive place for families and entrepreneurs.

The strategic alliance between the local authority and the private sector is the key factor of the innovation process. The '**Community cooperative**' is a **new model of social innovation**, where inhabitants are both producers and users of goods and services. An enterprise's goal is to improve the wellbeing of the community, working in different fields, such as sustainable tourism, culture, education, managing public infrastructure and creating welfare services, creating jobs and attracting new entrepreneurship in the above mentioned fields.

- **Lou Pourtoun - Civic and cultural centre** has been created to become an innovative centre combining cultural production and civic engagement - a public space for community, where people can meet, celebrate, work, play. The cultural centre includes an auditorium with various cultural programmes organised, exhibition place, a restaurant, a public library and a co-working space with access to broadband.
- **Youth engagement activities:** co-design, theatre and animation workshops have been organised in Ostana in which teenagers were prosumers (producers & consumers) of cultural processes and products and active players in the new contemporary perception of the Alps.
- **Opening local schools:** as a result of a dialogue with young families and the joint work of the Community Cooperative and the municipal administration and the Ostana Music School, the summer school and finally the school for children between 1-3 years was opened (open for 12 months/ year)

Next steps:

During 2023 and 2024 Ostana plans:

- the set up of **community welfare services** for Ostana and the Valley Po for families, elderly people and disabled people;
- **cultural welfare projects**, promoting the wellbeing and health of individuals and community through practices rooted in the arts and in cultural heritage (e.g. the new Ecomuseo project)
- the set up of a **new entrepreneurs hub** in Ostana linked to the public library BAO Biblioteca Aperta di Ostana: co-working space and digital services.
- to continue with the Ostana Res - the **Ostana Residency Programme**, including European call for attracting new inhabitants.
- **Reinforcing the community participation** through Lou Pourtoun - Civic and Cultural Centre of Ostana and the Valley.

"Ostana is a collective project... this is the main difference with the other villages in the Western Alps. Ostana has always been led by strong leader. They always had a strong idea about new ways of living in the area that they shared with (local) people. Now its also very attractive for new people, for enetprenours. Ostana is small but also very strong."
Laura Cantarella (Viso a viso)





Local governance (public sector):

Ostana is a municipality (at Local Administrative Level / LAU) with an elected mayor & municipal council. The Mayor is the legal representative of the Municipality, head of the local authority, elected every 5 years.

Former mayor Giacomo Lombardo and the actual Mayor Silvia Rovere are enthusiast network builders: in this shared and inherited ability lies one of Ostana's strengths, together with a very welcoming and open-minded community.

Next local elections in Ostana will be held in 2024

Local community (civil society):

The local community is extremely active and a wider community exists outside the village that strongly supports and enriches the resident community. The municipal council conceives the village development process and strongly interacts with private stakeholders. The village has a dense network of associations (7 NGOs in the region across Po Valley) in relation to the inhabitants and a rich cultural context.



Businesses (social enterprises):

Synergies between public administration, private entrepreneurs and the community have been a fundamental for the success of new enterprises such as Galaberna mountain hut-hotel, Bakery "Quel Po di pan", a covered leisure/market structure, an outdoor climbing wall. La Mizoun de la Villo (bakery, medical facilities, municipality archive), the Ethnographic museum, a wellness centre, Lou Pourtoun cultural centre (library, co-working, research centre, educational space, design gallery, auditorium, restaurant) are managed by VISO A VISO social enterprise, entrusted by the Municipality to develop coherent projects.

Research (scientific sector):

Ostana municipality in the last decade attracted many researchers, professionals and higher education institutions that found a place for workshops, classes, creative/artistic projects, experimental projects in both an astonishing landscape and excellent educational facilities.

Collaborations have been consolidated with such entities as Politecnico University of Turin, Alpstream, Monviso Institute, L'aura scuola di Ostana, Ambornetti Retreat.

Community engagement process

There are about 90 official residents, while 50 are effectively living in the village throughout the year. Ostana's community is varied. There are people who were born in Ostana before 1950 and came back to the village, younger people who left bigger towns and chose to live in the village and second home owners concretely involved in the life of the village. Groups are organised in associations depending on the main interest of the members. There is also a group of temporary residents (cultural operators, artists, intellectuals, researchers, professors) who actively participate in the projects and life of the village, and also as ambassadors and networkers.

Since 1985, the local community has been actively involved in defining needs, objectives and strategies. The administration is closely related to the inhabitants and this strong link is the crucial key for cohesive development of the community. There are regular meetings between the residents and/or the wider community (e.g house owners, people and enterprises involved in different kind of projects) and the administration of the village. **The creation of a lively community is the result of an optimal synergy among local administration, private entrepreneurs, regional and national entities.**

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Further information:

Smart Rural 27 website: <https://www.smartrural27.eu/village/ostana/>
Smart Rural 21 website: https://www.smartrural21.eu/villages/ostana_it/
SWebsite of Ostana: <https://www.comune.ostana.cn.it/>