Smart Villages Support Italy

SMART RURAL 27

How is the concept of Smart Villages defined?

The definition formulated by the pilot project on Smart Eco-social Villages, initiated by the European Parliament, is commonly used at national level. The elaboration of a Smart Village strategy based on existing initiatives, the use of digital technologies and participatory approaches to mobilise local communities are considered the key steps in the implementation of Smart Villages.

Is digital innovation a key feature?

The implementation of Smart Village strategies is considered a driver to innovation in a broad sense. Digital technologies are important tools in the adoption of innovative solutions. Their use intends to improve the capacity of villages to address the challenges of their territories, in particular in relation to mobility, communication and public services. Innovative solutions can: i) reduce economic and social disruption; and ii) help villages to adapt projects to their contexts.

The capacity to introduce innovation through the use of digital tools is considered key for improving small communities. The presence of digital services in small villages can boost the creation of new businesses and support the fight against the process of depopulation.

Is social innovation a key feature?

The most pressing social challenges (lack of services, digital divide, lack of employment opportunities, climate change) can be identified in the Italian rural areas, thus, social innovation becomes a key feature in their development and social innovation processes should involve, through participatory approaches, different categories of stakeholders. Boosting social innovation mechanisms started with the implementation of the National Strategy for Inner Areas intended to support the diversification of rural areas' economy (through recreation and leisure, social services, productive labour opportunities, social integration of immigrants).

This process is envisaged to be strengthened by the implementation of Smart Village strategies within the CAP Strategic Plan.

How is Smart Villages supported by the CAP?

CAP 2014-2022

Indirectly, no specific Smart Villages intervention.

LEADER/CLLD
LAGs across the country have had a focus on the development of Smart Villages within their Local Development Strategies. a possible national strategy.

CAP 2023-2027

Yes, direct Smart Village interventions are planned:

Specific intervention
Smart Villages will be supported through the implementation of a specific Cooperation intervention (Cooperation for rural and local development and Smart Villages). This intervention will support the implementation of strategies related to rural tourism; food systems, food supply chains and local markets; social and economic inclusion; and environmental sustainability.

LEADER/CLLD
Smart Villages will be also supported through LEADER. Local Action Groups (LAGs) will be able to implement Smart Village strategies through their Local Development Strategies, when envisaged, and by applying for the Cooperation intervention.

National Rural Network/ CAP Network support for Smart Villages

Yes, specific Smart Villages network activities.

The National Rural Network (NRN) started in 2021 a number of activities to support Smart Villages. The LEADER team within the NRN set up a thematic group on Smart Villages in 2022 (activity included in the action plan of the 2014-2021 NRN for the 2021-2023 period).
A Smart Rural Hub was launched at the beginning of 2022 as a capacity-building initiative, in collaboration with the LEADER Forum (a national association of LAGs for exchange of experiences and debate on topics relevant to local development). The aim of this initiative is to facilitate the implementation of Smart Village strategies within the CAP Strategic Plan.

The main actions to be implemented are:

Training/ workshops and study visits on/ for Smart Villages: four webinars were organised during the first part of 2022. Furthermore, a workshop and the first training actions took place in July 2022.

Collection of specific examples/ good practices on Smart Villages: the collection of examples and experiences will allow to create a reservoir of practices useful to improve the future implementation of Smart Village strategies.

Contact - CAP:

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How is Smart Villages supported by other policies?

Yes, other policies are supporting Smart Villages.

The **National Recovery and Resilience Plan** supports an intervention targeting rural areas. The objective is to support projects developed by villages in order to boost their sustainable development. Twenty-one projects related to economic development have already been selected and the selection procedure of 200 project proposals on cultural development is ongoing.

W: https://cultura.gov.it/pnrr-borghi

The **National Strategy for Inner Areas** is an integrated plan aimed at tackling problems such as depopulation, low access to services and lack of development in remote and ultra-remote areas. The Strategy is funded under the European Structural and Investment Funds and national funds. Local integrated development strategies are financed in 72 pilot areas. The Strategy aims to reinforce the demographic structure of the selected areas by promoting multi-level governance (national/regional/local), improving services and investing in key sectors (e.g., energy, agriculture, culture), using the multi-fund approach to concentrate financial resources, involving communities and local policymakers.

W: https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/

EU - Interreg: The transnational approach makes it possible to bring new ideas and new tools for the implementation of a smart village strategy. The Smart Villages project in the Alpine Space is one example that brings together thirteen partners from six countries.

W: https://www.regione.lombardia.it/wps/portal/istituzionale/
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Where to find more information? ⓘ

For **more detailed information** (including other funding sources and contacts) please visit the 'What's happening in my country' pages of the Smart Rural 21 project:
https://www.smartrural21.eu/countries/italy/

For information on **smart villages and 'villages-in-transition'** in the country:
https://www.smartrural27.eu/smart-communities/

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