



# Taskforce Action Plan – Czech Republic

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## 1. Context

There are two policies in the Czech Republic relevant to this project – the Concept of Rural Development and the Smart Cities Concept - resilience through SMART solutions for municipalities, cities and regions. Both concepts were approved by the government in 2020 and 2021. A special feature of the Czech Republic is its 6,258 municipalities, of which 5,800 have less than 3,000 inhabitants. So Smart Villages development is very important for the country.

The Czech Rural Development Concept sets out the vision of rural development in the Czech Republic: 'The countryside is an area that is both good to live in and referred to be good to live in'. So that the countryside is attractive for living, working and doing business, a destination for tourism, etc.

**The Rural Development Concept** sets out 5 strategic objectives:

1. Stable population in rural areas characterised by high human and social capital ensuring dynamic endogenous rural development
2. Sufficient infrastructure and facilities in rural settlements ensuring the quality of life of the inhabitants and creating opportunities for rural economic development.
3. Healthy, recreationally attractive, biodiverse and climatically stable rural environment.
4. Efficient, stable and diversified rural economy enabling the self-fulfilment of rural residents and forming an important component of the economic base of the state.
5. Developed multi-level strategic planning and knowledge-based development management and successful cooperation among municipalities

**The Smart Cities concept - resilience through SMART solutions for municipalities, cities and regions** is focused on harnessing innovation in the territory for the benefit of municipalities, cities and regions, and in particular for the people who live in them, and - as stated in the title of the document - to strengthen resilience in the face of the rapid societal changes we have to cope with. Using the potential of people and the potential of territories, through new technological tools and innovative approaches in municipalities, cities and regions, it is possible to achieve quality living conditions for people, a good environment and to strengthen the competitiveness of the Czech Republic in international cooperation and competition.

**Seven principles of the Smart Cities Concept:**

1. The principle of change of direction - this means creating conditions so that where possible and practical, services can be delivered to people and work and business can be done from home or from a place close to home.
2. The principle of resilience - this is about the resilience of people and communities, the local economy, the environment and cohesion in an area based on digitalisation and innovative solutions.



3. The principle of one solution with multiple effects - a solution is expected to deliver multiple significant effects (addressing multiple needs at once) through a holistic approach.
4. The principle of "short distances" - everything that can be provided locally should be provided locally or in the shortest possible distance (using the 3E rule - economy, efficiency, effectiveness).
5. Principle of cooperation and financial sustainability to achieve the effectiveness of the solution - it is about cooperation with all partners in the territory, the use of multi-source financing with regard to long-term sustainability.
6. Principle of cohesion and complementarity, horizontal and vertical interconnection - new solutions lead to balancing opportunities and reduce tensions. Solutions build on each other, cooperation and interconnection at all levels (including all levels of government) create prerequisite for achieving resilience and cohesion.
7. The principle of evidence-based solutions is based on relevant information and facts, openness and sharing of data, transparency and equality of opportunity - generating data that is understandable and accessible for innovative applications and development of people's lives, communities, and for business (Sharing is caring).

Notice: See also Lednice declaration and <https://cor.europa.eu/nl/news/Pages/66-NAT-in-Lednice.aspx>

and Targets and tools for a Smart Rural Europe - <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Pages/OpinionTimeline.aspx?opId=CDR-4320-2022>

At the national level three working groups were established that can discuss the issue of smart villages: the working groups for rural development and for smart cities and the LAG platform. A task force within the project will be formed from the regular participants in the meetings of these groups.

All three working groups intensively deal with three topics - community energy, the availability of medical care in the countryside and the development of local business. These topics are an important part of all three Czech strategies mentioned above.

Community energy (energy communities) is a natural part of the development of rural areas and is currently a "hot issue" for the development of them. The development of RES is essential for local energy utilities, and the Czech Republic (similar to other EU countries) is changing its national energy system from a centralized to a combination of central and decentralized energy utilities. Local action groups in particular act as advisors in this.

Similarly, access to medical care is a big topic being addressed by the Rural Development Task Force for implementation of the Rural Development Concept. The Czech population is aging, the number of medical doctors - especially general practitioners and pediatricians - is not sufficient. The Czech Republic has 6,258 municipalities (5,800 with less than 3,000 inhabitants, as mentioned above), and, until now, citizens have been accustomed to a high standard of care in their place of



residence. This will no longer be possible, so new ways of providing medical care in rural areas are being sought, especially with the use of eHealth, or telemedicine.

Until now, investment incentives for foreign investors have been a feature of the Czech Republic, which meant that large industrial zones were created on the outskirts of Czech cities and towns, mostly hosting production with lower added value. However, this approach was not suitable for the development of municipalities and is currently more oriented towards supporting local business. Knowledge and financial support for this is mainly provided by local action groups and, at the national level, by the Ministry of Industry and Trade. Localization of business, support of start-ups and SMEs is a big topic of all three strategies and the working groups linked to them.

## 2. The purpose of the taskforce

### Key policy areas of taskforce interventions (Summary)

- ✓ Energy communities
- ✓ Medical services in rural areas
- ✓ Business in smart villages

### Energy communities

Energy communities (EC) represent currently a much-discussed topic in the CR, especially because of the energy independence and resilience of communities. At present an amendment to the Energy Act of the Czech Republic is being drafted which enables EC formation. National network of local action groups is supported to provide advice in this area. The creation of the EC is supported through cohesion policy and the national programme. The first experiences of small municipalities with community energy will be collected and evaluated for the further improvement of support tools (Ministry of Regional Development and Ministry of the Environment) and for the dissemination of good practice in the regions. For this, cooperation will be implemented especially by LAGs in central and southern Bohemia. The goal of taskforce interventions is to support changes in legislation so that small energy communities are not discriminated against in access to distribution networks and energy communities in the Czech Republic will grow.

### Medical services in rural areas

Due to the large number of small municipalities in the Czech Republic, the problem of availability of medical care, especially general practitioners, pediatricians and dentists, is growing. The change is possible especially in cooperation with the General Health Insurance Company and with the use of e-Health, or telemedicine. As an emerging issue for the Czech Republic, telemedicine is supported mainly through research and innovation national programs. The task force will look at the possibilities of expanding good practice in cooperation with the Ministry of Regional Development working group



for rural areas and the “5G initiative for 5 cities”. The goal of taskforce interventions is to spread good practice to smaller territorial units based on examples from Jeseník.

### **Business in smart villages**

New infrastructure, especially digital one, enables new types of business in rural areas. Especially during the Covid 19 pandemic, it was verified that business and life in the countryside can prosper well (a large number of people from cities in the Czech Republic have cottages in the countryside, where they moved during the pandemic and realized that they can live there very well). Today, it is possible to establish start-ups in the countryside as well as in the cities. An initiative was created by the Ministry of Industry and Trade that supports entrepreneurship in smart villages. In cooperation with this initiative and with regional innovation centres, the task force will look at the expansion of smart business in the smart villages as an option to prevent the migration of young people to cities. The goal of taskforce interventions in cooperation with CzechTrade and CzechInvest is to support innovation centres on regional level in their SMART activities – how to support new small businesses in villages.

Each task force meeting will be preceded by a small research, the results of which will be discussed at the meeting.

## **3. Links to existing Smart Village exchanges**

Taskforce will be based on the Atelier Czech Republic platform. Atelier CR is a non-profit organization, its members are participants of all three platforms meant above (national working groups for rural development and for smart cities and the national LAGs platform).

At the national level, there were until now two bodies that brought together all potential stakeholders of smart solutions - the board of the Minister for Local Development for smart cities and the Czech Smart City Cluster. These entities included representatives of business, research and innovation, municipalities and non-governmental organizations. After the last Parliamentary elections, these bodies ceased their activities. Their role was taken over by Atelier, which is a new initiative to support the quadruple helix at the national and regional levels. Representatives of all four components of QH, including representatives from the national level as well as from the regional and local levels, gather for discussions on SMART solution topics. It is currently the only action entity of its kind in the Czech Republic with the potential to spread information to a wide range of municipalities and to support implementation of all three strategies meant above.

Therefore, Atelier CR can influence both legislation and subsidy programs and will contribute to the spread of good practice in the territory of the Czech Republic.

## **4. Membership**

Atelier CR platform gives possibility for meeting of the academic sector (esp. CTU Prague, VŠTE and SBU České Budějovice, TBU Zlín), private sector (according to selected



municipalities and territories) and municipalities (representatives of villages with less than 500, 1 000 and 3 000 inhabitants) and for communication of findings to the national level. Regional RIS3 (regional innovation strategy – strategy for intelligent specialization) teams will be involved, esp. South Bohemian one. Stakeholders from national level will be involved as well, esp. from the Ministry of Regional Development and from the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

## 5. Planned actions

### 5.1 First set of taskforce meetings

The core team in the CR:

- Radim Sršeň, deputy minister, major of Dolní Studénky and member of the EU Committee of Regions
- Rut Bízková, co-author of the national Smart cities concept and expert for the document named Targets and tools for a Smart Rural Europe (<https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Pages/OpinionTimeline.aspx?opId=CDR-4320-2022> )
- Vít Král, coordinator of the Atelier CR platform, territorial expert, involved in smart activities for cities and municipalities for a long time, esp. on national level and South Bohemian Science and Technology Park

During the project, the team will work continuously throughout the period and milestones through joint meetings and previous research in the countryside. Both will be documented by measurable indicators of progress towards achieving the goals. These meetings would be organized 3 times a year.

The preparation and involvement phase is a fundamental prerequisite for the success of this project. Activities must therefore primarily be directed towards understanding of the objectives by municipalities (territories).

### 5.2 Other actions of the Taskforce

Before Taskforce meetings a pre-research will be prepared. The basis (background document) for each topic will be prepared through the desk research and field research.

The methodology will be followed in two steps:

1. Desk research based on the materials obtained by the Atelier as a part of its activities in 2022:
  - o from the creation and implementation of National strategic documents and action plans in the given area;
  - o from interviews with administrators (employees of ministries of the Czech Republic) of the measures listed in the implementation plan of the Czech Smart cities concept;
  - o from field research carried out previously.
2. A field investigation will be carried out - a survey among members of the task force and interviews in several municipalities that deal with the issue of smart cities/smart villages.



The planned timing of activities – outcomes will be available on the Smart Rural 27 website

Planned timing	Focus of meeting or activity	Main outcomes
June 22, 2023	Business in smart villages	Recommendations for ministries of regional development, agriculture and industry and trade how to support business development in smart villages; communication on social networks and the Atelier website, and the national smart city website
Sept 26, 2023	Energy communities	Recommendations for ministries of regional development and industry and trade to support the development of community energy, contribution to estimate the potential for KE in the Czech Republic; communication of results on social networks and the Atelier website and the national smart city website
Nov 30, 2023	Medical services in rural areas	A list of examples of good practice for the national website on smart city issues; recommendations for applied research in this area (TA CR)



### Annex I: List of members Membership of the Taskforce

Name of member	Name of organisation of member	Type of organisation (policy, village, research, NGO, private...)	Short description of role of organisation in the taskforce (reason why member was included)	Participated in 1 <sup>st</sup> meeting? (planned)	Participated in 2 <sup>nd</sup> meeting?	Participated in 3 <sup>rd</sup> meeting?
Adéla Pixová	MAS Růže	LAG	Long-term cooperation – development of smart village concept	Yes		
Iva Černá	MAS Pomalší	LAG	Long-term cooperation - development of smart village concept	Yes		
Milada Troblová	SMS Jižní Čechy	LAG	Long-term cooperation - development of smart village concept	Yes		
Tomáš Sládek	Tálín	Village	Opportunity for growth - development of smart village concept	Yes		
Andrea Honzová	Vitín	Village	Opportunity for growth - development of smart village concept	Yes		
Vlastimil Štěrba	Klec	Village	Opportunity for growing of the smart village concept	Yes		
Karel Holý	Jindřichův Hradec	City (21.000 inhabitant)	Smart city/smart village with potential for growth in rural area	Yes		
Michal Herma	Milevsko	City (8.200 inhabitant)	Smart city/smart village with potential for growth in rural area	Yes		
Miloš Prokýšek	Písek and University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice	City (31.000 inhabitant) research	Research and development for smart village (IT, business, services)	Yes		
Otomar Linhart	Vodňany and University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice	City (6.900 inhabitant) research	Smart city/smart village with potential for growth, research (business, environment)	Yes		
Petra Nováková	Týn nad Vltavou	City (7.900 inhabitant)	Potential to become smart city/smart village in rural area	Yes		



Rut Bízková	Ateliér and ISFOR	NGO, policy	development of the smart village concept	Yes		
Vít Král	Ateliér, RIS3	NGO, policy, StartUp	development of the smart village concept	Yes		
Leonard Wallezký	Masaryk University	research	Scientific support of the smart village concept	Yes		
Lucie Nencková	ISFOR, University of Economics and Business, Prague	NGO, research	development of the smart village concept	Yes		
Radim Srsen	Ministry of Regional Development, deputy minister	policy, research	development of the smart village concept	Yes		
Klára Horzinková	Freelancer, previous head of dept. MRD	business	development of the smart village concept	Yes		
Dana Fefrllová	South Bohemian Chamber of Commerce	Business, policy	territorial partner for the smart village concept development	Yes		
Marie Zezůlková	ČEZ	business	Potential for the smart village concept development, esp. energy community	Yes		
Ladislav Mlčák	Technology Agency of the Czech Republic	policy	support of the smart village concept from the national level	Yes		
Miroslav Scheiner	Ministry of Industry and Trade	policy	development of the smart village concept	Yes		
Dominik Opálka	Ministry of Regional Development	policy	development of the smart village concept on the national level	Yes		
Jan Špunda	Czech Trade Agency	business	development of the smart village concept and its export potential on the national level	Yes		