

Taskforce Action Plan - Cyprus

Version 6 (September 2023)

Table of contents

1. CONTEXT	1
2. THE PURPOSE OF THE TASKFORCE	1
3. MEMBERSHIP	2
4. PLANNED ACTIONS	3
4.1 Taskforce meetings	3
4.2 Other actions of the Taskforce	4
ANNEX I: LIST OF MEMBERS	7

1. Context

The Smart Villages (SV) approach is a completely new and an undiscovered concept for Cyprus. The National Taskforce has no option but to start with the basics. The SV policy needs a public body, a policymaker, the appropriate ministry, to get the ownership of the policy. The policy needs an owner that is recognised as the one responsible for the definition of SV, the planning of actions, the planning and the implementation of a Strategy, the monitoring and the promotion of any activities, funding schemes etc., under the SV approach.

There is an EU definition for Smart Villages, but a national definition, customised to the national reality is needed. A national definition is expected to define and specify the content of SV approach. Defining specific and measurable preconditions, for a village or an area to get the title of a Smart Village or a Smart Rural Area, is also needed. **The Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy is already supporting scientific research**, investing in innovative entrepreneurship and implementing an ambitious digital transformation reform. It aspires to develop a modern and efficient state, competitive at European and international level, and a dynamic digital economy, where every citizen and every business will be able to grow and prosper. **The Deputy Ministry is designing the “Smart Cyprus Platform”**, focusing to the urban areas of Cyprus for the moment, but also planning to include rural areas in the near future. The ownership of the Smart Villages Policy is expected to be owned to the Deputy Ministry.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment is the Managing Authority of the Rural Development Programmes and the CAP Strategy 2023-2027. The Managing Authority is responsible for the management and implementation of the programmes in an efficient, effective and correct manner. It is expected to bring together the stakeholders coming from the primary sector with all the other relevant Smart Villages stakeholders. National NRN, that is also working under the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment is expected to add value to activities connected to networking, exchanges, capacity building and promoting of the policy, including the planning of the policy, Smart Villages or Smart Villages in transition at national level, good practices and successful approaches of other countries.

The National Taskforce is expected to suggest specific CAP policy interventions, securing that duplications are avoided. For that purpose, the Taskforce is built in a way that most of the relevant interventions and funding schemes are represented (Smart Waste Management, Smart Resources Management – Water, Smart Energy, Smart Mobility, Smart Farming).

The National Taskforce is also expected to “bring together all the pieces of the puzzle”, as many different interventions take place or planned in villages or rural areas but are not connected under a specific strategy or local/regional policy.

2. The purpose of the taskforce

Key policy areas of taskforce interventions

- ✓ Specific CAP policy intervention (e.g. LEADER, EIP-AGRI)
- ✓ Other relevant EU, national or regional policies & Smart Villages
- ✓ Bringing together representatives of different EU funds (for a multi-funded approach)
- ✓ Creating ownership of the Policy,
- ✓ Developing National SV definition,
- ✓ Identifying categories of proposed interventions under the SV concept & avoiding duplications

- ✓ Planning specific interventions for capacity building in rural communities to develop and implement smart village strategies
- ✓ Prioritizing the needs of rural communities, concerning smart solutions

The specific aims of establishing the Taskforce have been:

- Defining the state of play of Smart Villages at national level
- Bringing together representatives of different EU funds, not only the representatives and stakeholders connected to CAP Strategy 2023-2027
- Proposing specific CAP policy interventions, securing that duplications are avoided.
- Capacity building at local level, where it is needed or asked.
- Promoting the SV approach in rural areas, as it is a new philosophy, not promoted yet in Cyprus.
- Integrate results into the regular work of the relevant ministries and agencies (desirably it should result in changes to the legislation, and to the method / procedures of defining and developing policies).

3. Membership

The membership of the taskforce includes representatives that are stakeholders connected to:

- (a) policy planning, mostly the representatives from ministries,
- (b) local authorities, including representatives from LAGs
- (c) farmers
- (d) research and innovation and
- (e) networks, like the national NRN.

The Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy is expected to have a key role.

By supporting scientific research, investing in innovative entrepreneurship and implementing an ambitious digital transformation reform, the Deputy Ministry aspires to develop a modern and efficient state, competitive at European and international level, and a dynamic digital economy, where every citizen and every business will be able to grow and prosper. Other policymakers – ministries include innovation and new technology projects under their strategies, most of them connected with Smart Village approach. For example, one of the missions of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works is the qualitative upgrade of providing services with use of modern technology and the reduction of environmental repercussions caused by the road transports, promoting funding schemes for smart mobility and electric vehicles.

The Cyprus Digital Innovation Hub is also expected to have a key role at the taskforce, with relevant on the ground experience. The Hub is a national network hub of research, innovation, business and industry organizations, utilising state of the art infrastructure, in order to bring the fourth digital revolution in Cyprus by offering cutting-edge digital technology innovations and services to the manufacturing industry.

Other entities may also be added with a more local nature (e.g. Associations of Village Residents, representatives of Parish Councils), and/or with a national institutional nature (Programme Management Authorities and national funds financing the RPPI).

4. Planned actions

4.1 Taskforce meetings

The table below contains the list of meetings carried out and planned and their focus.

Planned timing	Focus of meeting
12/01/2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ownership of the Policy ✓ National SV definition ✓ Categories of proposed interventions under the SV concept ✓ Avoiding duplications ✓ Specifying CAP policy interventions ✓ Having an Owner of the SV policy ✓ Having a definition and the preconditions of a Smart Rural Area. ✓ Mapping funding schemes of the ministries that are connected with the SV approach ✓ Proposing specific measures under CAP policy
25/11/2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Presenting the results for the National Definition of Smart Villages ✓ Presenting the results of the priorities of Rural Communities for Smart Solutions ✓ Presenting the National Strategy for Smart Cyprus ✓ Presenting the way in which municipalities worked to develop and implement Smart Cities Strategies ✓ Organising consultation and promotional meetings at the villages / areas that are interested about SV approach ✓ Checking what is already done, under CAP or other funds ✓ Identifying and promoting SV practices and examples at the national level ✓ Promoting the development of procedures and funding schemes to approach the SV philosophy ✓ Ensuring that duplications are avoided ✓ Smart Villages or Smart Villages / Areas in transition ✓ Promoting the results of the Final Conference of “Smart Rural 21” Project ✓ Promoting Smart Solutions from the database produced by the “Smart Rural 21” Project
11/2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Thematic workshop on Forests Management (?) ✓ Checking what is already done, under CAP or other funds ✓ Lighthouse Examples and Smart Villages / Areas in transition ✓ Ensuring that duplications are avoided ✓ Organizing Regional Consultation Meetings with the Dep. Ministry of Innovation

4.2 Other actions of the Taskforce

4.2.1 National Definition for Smart Villages

The Internal Note of the National Taskforce for the “National Definition for Smart Villages” was finalized in March 2022 and implemented during the period February to March 2022. The Internal Note includes four basic chapters: (a) the EU definition for Smart Villages, (b) Definitions and Approaches on Smart Villages in Member States, (c) the proposal for the National Definition and (d) the context of the National Definition.

The need for a National Definition was highlighted during the 1st Meeting of the National Taskforce for the "Smart Villages" of Cyprus, held on January 19, 2022.

After discussions, consultation meetings, e-mails and feedback exchanges, the National Taskforce's proposal for the National Definition for the Smart Villages was the following:

The "Smart Rural Areas" are Collaborating Rural Areas that design and implement Smart Local Strategies based on the participatory approach in order to promote their attractiveness as living and working areas.

Smart solution interventions, including smart agriculture interventions, are implemented, stemming from the needs of the local community and utilizing, where possible, digital technologies, to improve their resilience and so that sustainable development, social cohesion and environmental optimization become characteristics of these areas.

In this part, the methodology is recorded, which is directly linked to the definition of "Smart Rural Areas", as recorded above.

The context - methodology for characterizing areas as "Smart Rural Areas" was suggested to include the following criteria:

(A) Adopt / Apply the definition of "Smart Rural Areas" (concerning collaboration, local strategy, participatory approach etc.) and

(B) Designing and implementing at least four "smart solutions", in addition to "Smart Agriculture". For example, smart solutions could be smart waste management, smart water management, smart energy, smart mobility, smart e-health and volunteerism.

Regarding the definition, the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy accepts the National Definition for SV given by the National Taskforce. Concerning the emphasis given in the definition to smart agriculture solutions, the Dep. Ministry also agrees on the importance of farming in rural areas and the importance of adopting smart solutions in the primary sector as well.

The approved version of the new Cypriot CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2026, includes the following reference:

"Especially for the Smart Rural Areas initiative and strategy, there is continuous consultation and communication with the contractor of the '2nd Preparatory Action for Smart Rural Areas in the 21st century' project, shortly 'Smart Rural 27' or 'SR27' project, funded by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture. The project has set up a Taskforce in cooperation with the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy and the support of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment, whose aim is to give suggestions and proposals for the development of smart rural areas."

4.2.2 Survey to define the priorities of rural areas on adopting smart solutions.

The study "Defining the Priorities of Rural Areas in terms of Designing and Implementing Smart Solutions" was written in September 2022 and implemented during the period April to August 2022. The study includes three basic phases: (a) bibliography review, (b) research at the field – including questionnaires and (c) results analysis.

The need for study was highlighted during the 1st Meeting of the National Taskforce for the "Smart Villages" of Cyprus, held on January 19, 2022.

Specifically, the need for the study was highlighted by the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy, as another corresponding study was elaborated by the Deputy

Ministry itself, in collaboration with the Union of Municipalities of Cyprus, for the urban-mayoral areas.

It is noted that the research at the field, which was the most important part of the study, was elaborated with the cooperation and support of the Union of Cyprus Communities.

The Survey tackles the priorities of the Rural Areas in terms of the planning and implementation of Smart Solutions.

The Aim of this Study was to identify and to track down the opinion of the representatives of the Local Authorities in the Rural Areas of Cyprus, regarding the current priorities of their areas, in relation to the utilization of specific Smart Solutions.

Through bibliographic research, the main concepts and definitions used in the Study were examined, such as the concept and the legal framework of Local Authorities in Cyprus and the definitions of Rural Area, Smart Solution and Smart Rural Area.

The Study includes recording of the current situation in Local Authorities in Cyprus, the transitional period – considering the upcoming reform of Local Governance (May 2024), conducting qualitative interviews and the SWOT and PEST analyses.

It also captures the implementation of primary research, which highlights important evidences regarding the planning and implementation of a Smart Development Strategy and the most important smart solutions (priorities), the implementation of which is expected to significantly enhance the resilience of rural areas.

Smart solutions are then prioritized, based on the responses deriving from the primary survey participants. For each smart solution, local authorities, Ministries or departments involved in its planning and implementation are also listed.

Finally, specific suggestions were made, regarding the preparation of Smart Development Strategies, the undertaking of the coordination of actions for Smart Rural Areas by the competent Ministry, the implementation of pilot projects, etc.

The priorities of the Communities of rural areas, as highlighted by the survey, concern:

- Smart waste management,
- Smart energy management, including smart lighting,
- The smart management of water resources and hydrometry (telemetry) and
- The smart management of sustainable mobility and the analysis of traffic conditions – smart mobility, including the smart parking and the promotion of electric mobility – EVs.

The study also suggests such as:

- The Communities of Rural Areas, through the Service Complexes to be established, proceed to draw up Smart Development Strategies, in order to highlight the needs and record specific and targeted smart solutions to be implemented.
- The Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy to undertake the coordination of similar actions and projects for rural areas, within the framework of the National Strategy for Smart Cyprus.
- Actions to be taken to adapt and include applications - smart solutions in the National Platform for Smart Cities which is under construction, for those solutions which are the priorities of the Communities of rural areas.
- Resources allocation for the preparation and implementation of a Pilot Smart Development Strategy in a rural area per Province, so that there is a pilot project in each Province, which may



also constitute a Good Practice to be adopted (with corresponding adaptation) by the rest of the rural areas.



Anex I: List of members

Membership of the Taskforce

a/a	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)	Member on GROOP?	Participated in meetings?
1	Mrs. Elena Poulli	Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy	Ministry, (Policy) Implementing Body	By supporting scientific research, investing in innovative entrepreneurship and implementing an ambitious digital transformation reform, the Deputy Ministry aspires to develop a modern and efficient state, competitive at European and international level, and a dynamic digital economy, where every citizen and every business will be able to grow and prosper	YES	1 st , 2 nd
2	Marios Adamides	Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment	Ministry, (Policy) Managing Authority of CAP Strategic Plan	The Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment acts as the Managing Authority of the Rural Development Programmes. The Managing Authority is responsible for the management and implementation of the programmes in an efficient, effective and correct manner.	YES	1 st , 2 nd
3	Yiannos Mavrommatis	Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment	Ministry, (Policy) Managing Authority of CAP Strategic Plan		YES	1 st , 2 nd
4	Kyriakos Kareklas	Mayor, Municipality of Athienou	Local Authority	The Municipality Council, together with the Municipality's services, the political parties and the youth of Athienou, are working hard for realising the vision of transforming	YES	1 st



				Athienou into a small modern and smart rural city.		
5	Christos Papapetrou	Pancyprian Farmers Union	Farming Organisation	The Pancyprian Farmers Union (PEK) aims at the promotion and resolution of agricultural issues. It is a Union with special interest in innovation and smart agricultural practices.	YES	1 st , 2 nd
6	Andreas Savvides	Agronomy's Council of Cyprus	Non-Profit, Think and Do Tank	Purpose of Agronomy's Council of Cyprus is the unification of the agricultural potential of Cyprus to serve the goals of Rural Development and the strengthening of ties between the agronomists.	YES	1 st
7	Christina Christodoulou	Cyprus Organic Farmers Association	Farming Organisation	The Cyprus Organic Farmers Association is the body that represents organic farmers in Cyprus. It organises, represents, trains and claims the best for its members. It was founded in 2002, by a small group of ideological organic farmers. In 20 years, the number of organic farmers in Cyprus has exceeded 1000 people, with a 6% of the total cultivated area of the island. Basic crops are olives, cereals, vines, herbs and vegetables.	YES	1 st , 2 nd
8	Constantinos Stavrou	Union of Cyprus Communities	Village Association	Basic aims of the Union of Cyprus Communities are: - the promotion of the Members interests, rights and privileges and, generally, of the independence and	YES	1 st , 2 nd



				<p>self-sufficiency of the Local Authorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the permanent and organised cooperation for achieving common targets among Communities. - the expression of opinions to Authorities (including the Government and the House of Representatives). 		
9	Petros Chatzikostas	Development Agency of Troodos	LEADER Local Action Group	The Development Agency of Troodos unities all the regions (7 sub-regions / 68 communities as a Leader Local Action Group to date and 110 communities at the Geopark level) that constitute the Troodos region and develops inseparable links, aims at their development and promotion. It is a reliable and effective development mechanism for the area.	YES	1 st
10	Flourentzos Papanikolas	Department of Agriculture	National Rural Network	Networking is widely recognised and adopted as a key tool for supporting and promoting sustainable rural development. The main added value of networking is to provide solutions to the problems faced by rural areas through sharing knowledge and information and encouraging the dialogue between the stakeholders.	YES	1 st , 2 nd
11	Michalis Stylianou	Cyprus Digital Innovation Hub	NGO	The Cyprus Digital Innovation Hub (CyDi-Hub) is a regional network hub of research, innovation, business and industry organisations, utilising state	YES	1 st



				of the art infrastructure, in order to bring the fourth digital revolution in Cyprus by offering cutting-edge digital technology innovations and services to the manufacturing industry.		
12	Christiana Syzinou	European Funds Unit of the Ministry of Interior	Ministry, (Policy) Intermediary Body	The European Funds Unit aims, through the European resources, at the following: - achieving efficient management of migration flows; - creating development and infrastructure projects; - implementing projects contributing to the economic growth and social development in general;	YES	
13	Eliana Elia	European Funds Unit of the Ministry of Interior	Ministry, (Policy) Intermediary Body	- ensuring sustainable development; - maintaining social cohesion, prosperity and welfare of the citizens in a constantly changing environment.	YES	
14	Giorgos Adamides	Agriculture Research Institute	Research Institute	The Agricultural Research Institute conducts research aiming to create and transfer knowledge for the development of the primary sector and to solve problems at the farmer's level. The research results are transferred to stakeholders through modern educational programs and dissemination tools. Its research activity strengthens rural development and contributes to the	YES	1 st , 2 nd
15	Andreas Stylianou	Agriculture Research Institute	Research Institute		YES	1 st , 2 nd



				adoption of a sustainable rural policy and innovation offer.		
16	Iakovos Iakovou	Cyprus Agricultural Payments Organization	Payments Agency	The Cyprus Agricultural Payments Organization (CAPO) was established under Council Regulation (EC) No. 1258/1999 on the financing of the Common Agricultural Policy, of the European Union.	YES	2 nd
17	Iosif Spyrides	Energy Service, Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry	Ministry, (Policy) Intermediary Body	The mission of the Energy Service is to formulate and implement the state policy in the field of energy, with the main strategic goals of creating a sustainable and competitive energy market and utilizing the national potential of Energy Saving and domestic Renewable Energy Sources. One of its most important actions to achieve its mission is the implementation of financial incentive plans for households and businesses, with the aim of implementing Energy Saving measures and / or the use of RES.	YES	1 st , 2 nd
18	Kyriaki Kyrmani	Department of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment	Ministry, (Policy) Intermediary Body	The mission of the Department of Environment is to protect the environment through effective management, and strengthening public awareness for the benefit of public health, quality of life and against loss of biodiversity both for today's society and future generations.	YES	1 st , 2 nd



				Environmental protection is achieved through the rational management of resources and waste, the impact assessment, pollution control, tackle actions on climate change and halt the risk of loss of species and habitats, while helping to promote green growth within the contents of circular economy.		
19	Giorgos Georgiou	Forests Department	Ministry, Implementing Body	The vision of the Forests Department is to maintain the forests in the best possible condition and achieve the greatest environmental, social and economic benefits that will be balanced, will be based on the principle of sustainability and will fulfil the expectations of the society.	YES	1 st , 2 nd

