

Annex II: Meeting Reports

2nd Smart Villages Taskforce Meeting – [LATVIA]

Purpose of the meeting

Building of a shared vision of the concept of smart territories. Identification of important stakeholders in the development of smart villages and identification of existing/necessary actions. Discussions on whether the sustainable development of Latvian countryside requires a coordinated and managed concept of smart villages on a national scale, or whether it should remain a local initiative without certain restrictive conditions.

Date of the meeting

15 June 2023

Location

Ērgļi, Madonas novads, within 6. Latvian Rural Communities Parliament

Participation

[Please specify how many participants, the organisations that participated and their role]

In the second Taskforce meeting there were present 10 participants. The participants represented both the private and the public sector, from individuals to the various regional and National organizations, university. The participants who took part in the meeting were involved in the development and implementation of the CAP Strategic Plan for the development of Smart Villages at the regional and local level.

Main outcomes & lessons learnt (including deviations from initial plan)

At the meeting there were several participants that didn't participate in the 1st Taskforce meeting. As Smart Village concept is quite new and unknown and as there has been always a different understanding among those who knows of what Smart Village is – at the meeting we explained the concept of Smart Village. One of the most important tasks of the working group was to agree on a common understanding of the concept of Smart Villages.

Within the framework of the working group, discussions took place about what a Smart Village is, its features/criteria. Often, participants want to identify the Smart Village with some legal form, without fully understanding the true nature of the Smart Village – it is based on rural communities willing to work, who have a long-term development vision and who, in cooperation, seek and implement creative solutions to the challenges they encounter. Although the availability of funding can be important in the development of Smart Villages, the concept is related to a genuine desire to develop the local area, creating a better life in it.

During the meeting, the National CAP Network and the association “Latvian Rural Forum” presented the activities implemented so far for the development of Smart Villages in Latvia. In general, many different activities are carried out, however, there is a distinct lack of a single platform/website where information can be clearly found that explains the concept and methodology of Smart Villages in a simple language, as well as tells about local and foreign good examples.

Also there were discussions on whether the sustainable development of Latvian countryside requires a coordinated and managed concept of smart villages on a national scale, or whether it should remain a local initiative without certain restrictive conditions.

Main outcomes/conclusions of the objectives of the taskforce:

1. The Smart Village concept is related to a genuine desire to develop the local area, creating a better life in it.
2. In general, the participants believed that the opportunities offered at the national level (exchange of experiences, seminars, mentoring, etc.) are necessary for the development of Smart Villages in rural areas. The formation of nationally led groups of local activists, joint discussions and activities is needed.
3. To promote the Smart Villages initiative, regular coordinated actions provided by national organizations are necessary, providing targeted support at the local level, including creating a regional Smart Villages cooperation network.
4. The Smart Village is of local scale by nature and it should be, but as a tool of territory development, it can only be at the national/regional level.
5. Many different activities are carried out, however, there is a distinct lack of a single platform/website where information can be clearly found that explains the concept and methodology of Smart Villages in a simple language, as well as tells about local and foreign good examples.

Next steps

3rd Smart Villages Taskforce Meeting on 10 November 2023.

A Short Research: What changes in the local area if the community chooses to develop the local area using the Smart Village concept?

Supporting documents

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The event in pictures







