



Annex II: Meeting Reports

3rd Smart Villages Taskforce Meeting – [LATVIA]

Purpose of the meeting

The task of the meeting is to emphasize and discuss the role of LAGs for the development of Smart Villages. Introduction of the EU concept of Smart Villages, good practices, results of the European pilot projects Smart Rural 21 and Smart Rural 27. Good practice in citizen activation. Digital support tools for working with communities. Discussion of the LAG role for the development of Smart Villages, challenges and the necessary support.

Date of the meeting

10 November 2023

Location

Skangaļu muiža, Cēsu novads, Liepas pagasts, Skangaļu muiža 1, Cēsu novads, LV-4128

Participation

The third meeting of the working group was attended by 29 representatives of local action groups – both administrative and representatives of LAGs councils.

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

Although the Smart Village concept has been used for some time, it is still often understood and interpreted in different ways. Together with the Local Action Groups, we explored the Smart Village concept in more depth, including the definition, features and steps developed in the European Commission pilot project on Smart Eco-social Villages (2018–2019), outlining the steps developed in the "Smart Rural 21" project.

During the event, we discussed the experiences and plans of other EU Member States regarding the implementation of Smart Villages in the local area. Approaches vary, but in general LEADER funding will be the main funding to support Smart Villages. During the event, I highlighted that Smart Villages are a tool for sustainable local development.

Later, the participants divided into three working groups and we discussed the role of Local Action Groups for development of Smart Villages:

- 1) Preparation of a long-term development vision (strategy or development plan);
- 2) Training for Local Action Groups;
- 3) Characteristics of a Smart Project (what characteristics could a Smart Village project have?).

Key message: Local Action Groups need in-depth support and an accessible Smart Village methodology – explaining how to work with a Smart Community step by step. As the key elements of a Smart Village is a long-term development vision, and that rural communities find the strategy as a document to be cumbersome and formal, it would be important to develop and propose a simplified development plan – a roadmap – as part of the future work process.

Main outcomes/conclusions of the objectives of the taskforce:

1. A common understanding of the Smart Village concept requires more publicity and explanation.
2. A simplified development plan needs to be developed and offered to rural communities (where the strategy as a document seems complex and formal).
3. LAGs need practical training in the development of Smart Village Development Plans, practical methods for promoting Smart Villages, training on digital tools, etc.

Next steps

4rd Smart Villages Taskforce Meeting on February 2024 (online).

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



