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More than a Village

TRANSNATIONAL ACTION PLAN

Transnational smart village transition action plan for South Warmia, Alta Val Polcevera, Hajdú-Bihar, Pomurje and Buzet.

TRANSNATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR SMART VILLAGE TRANSITION

Transnational smart village transition action plan to support development of rural areas in South Warmia, Alta Val Polcevera, Hajdú-Bihar, Pomurje and Buzet.

Document information

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Introduction

The present document represents the embodiment of the Actions to be performed in the five pilot areas of More than a Village, namely South Warmia in Poland, Alta Val Polcevera in Italy, Hajdú-Bihar in Hungary, Pomurje in Slovenia and Buzet in Croatia. The two main deliverables of Work Package 1, the Joint Strategy and the Action Plans, are closely connected to each other since the Strategy, arising from a more conceptual framework, finds its concrete and effective implementation in the formalization (and of course, the operationalisation) of the Action Plans.

The common structure of the Action Plans is composed of seven sections, co-constructed by the partners with Poliedra, and with each section (from A to G) to be discussed and approved by the Regional Stakeholder Groups: at present, at the end of Semester 1 of the project and of the Work Package 1, in fact, each section of the Action Plans has been discussed, agreed upon and co-built with the Regional Stakeholder Groups, following the meetings to this end in the first six months of the project, but the finalization of each Action Plan is ongoing.

Section A, in each of the local Action Plans, summarizes the core aspects of the smart transition actions in each of the five territories, starting from the main agreements at the level of Regional Stakeholder Groups in terms of what action(s) to perform in the remaining two years of the More than a Village project. The core aspects of the smart transition actions included in this section refer to the territorial challenges and needs in the regions specifically addressed by the action, the main aim(s) of the action and how it contributes to tackle the identified challenge(s), the technical description of the action (e.g. scope, main features, innovative elements etc., and the results, as in the expected change and lasting effects in the territories generated specifically by the action, its uptake by relevant organizations and benefits for target groups. All the actions described above include the integration among policy levels, and the integration among elements, set in the presented Joint Strategy, and more specifically addressed in section B of each Action Plan.

Section B, in fact, encompasses a reasoned list of ‘ingredients’, or integrated elements, to build the recipe for the smart action foreseen in each of the five territories. Integrated elements may include data, maps, policies and engagement models for the local stakeholders (vertical and horizontal integration elements), finances, technical infrastructure, and so forth: the section gathers, in brief, the

toolbox to build a successful implementation of the smart action in each of the pilot areas.

Section C of the Action Plans gets into details on how and when the agreed integrated elements for the implementation of the action will be put into practice. This section is being agreed both with the relevant partner and the Regional Stakeholder Group of the territory that works with the partner. The schedule is considered to be tentative, but will cover the remaining two years (and two WPs) of the project, and will also allow for any post-MTAV commitments.

Section D of the Action Plans details examples of possible elements of risk in the implementation of the activities in the five pilot areas, with a possible outline of remedial or reorientation actions to be taken. This section will be completed both with the relevant partner and after meeting with the five different territories, and its initial input will come from a dedicated workshop to be held at the project meeting in Genoa, on March 13 2024.

The main overall conclusions of the Action Plans is drafted in section E: the overall conclusions have the form of the main transnational aspects of the Action Plans, with recommendations on how the MTAV transnational learning process can support the implementation of the five territorial smart actions.

In each of the Action Plans, section F includes any possible further and complementary actions in each of the territories, going beyond the MTAV Action Plan itself: further projects, future plans, complementary activities that can provide future/complementary changes in each of the MTAV territories. Section G includes some requirements regarding indirect state-aid rules and other project-related financial issues.

The Action Plans are considered living documents throughout the More than a Village project, hence the use of both present and future tenses in the previous description of each section. While finalized at the end of Semester 1, it is intended that the Action Plans will also be characterized by the iterative and recursive nature of the process described in this Joint Strategy: reorientations and rescheduling will be possible, since the whole process, faithful to its nature of integration among actors and elements, is not intended to be fixed once and for all. The agreed aim of the Strategy, and each of the Action Plans, is in any case to provide each pilot areas, at the end of More than a Village, with the implementation of one concrete smart change that is beneficial to the local population, and that is easy to use, to understand, to maintain and possibly to further develop.

1. Action Plan in South Warmia (Poland)

A. The core of the smart action in South Warmia

The South Warmia LGD includes 8 communes (including 4 rural communes and 4 urban-rural communes) inhabited by 86,778 people (as of December 31, 2020). One of the rural communes in the LAG SW area is Purda commune.

The population density for the LAG area is 41.7 people per km² (in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship the ten index is 57.3 people/km², and in Poland - 121.8 people/km²).

An increase in the population was recorded in the Stawiguda Commune - Olsztyn's inhabitants were inaccessible to suburban settlements/villages in rural communes, which had the most extensive municipal infrastructure.

In terms of age, the number of young people on LGD is decreasing, and the number of seniors is growing, regardless of women and men.

Despite the increase in the total number of inhabitants in the South Warmia LGD area thanks to the growth in practically one commune, Stawiguda, a decreasing number of inhabitants is noticed in communes more distant from Olsztyn. In most rural areas of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship and the country, this is due to natural demographic processes, but also to young people leaving the countryside. Young people abandon rural areas due to the lack of satisfactory infrastructure - availability of shops, restaurants and pubs.

Young people do not perceive their current place as particularly attractive or promising. On the other hand, they notice some advantages of living "in the provinces", such as a slower pace of life or closer contact with nature.

Seniors generally do not plan to change their place of residence, but they perceive it in some aspects similarly to young people. They generally feel good in their towns, feel proud of their rich and interesting history, and feel connected to the community. They point out similar shortcomings: the lack of publicly available and organized activities (workshop training) in places intended for this purpose, such as community

centers, outdoor gyms, recreation areas or the aesthetics of public places. Seniors are looking for opportunities to improve their level of knowledge, especially in the field of new technologies, as well as to expand the range of offers for attractive leisure activities. It has been noticed that some of them, especially the oldest ones, are in a more difficult financial situation, live alone, away from their families, and often struggle with health problems. For these reasons, they have difficult access to even basic medical care or rehabilitation services.

Micro-enterprises dominate the LAG area. This structure, with a predominance of micro-enterprises, can be considered a strong point of the area, because dispersed entrepreneurship responds more quickly and flexibly to macroeconomic changes.

Despite the instability of the law and excessive changes in the regulations regarding running a business, residents of the South Warmia LAG area are still looking for opportunities to provide financial support for new or development of existing businesses. This is important in rural areas in order to retain young people who can run their businesses not only locally but also remotely. However, a necessary condition here is access to broadband Internet and support in access to the necessary infrastructure and services of business environment institutions.

The average number of economic entities entered in the REGON register per 1,000 inhabitants in the area of the South Warmia LGD is below the average of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship and the national average.

Key needs and challenges of the LAG area:

1. activation and social inclusion of residents - there are social problems in the LSR area, and residents expect a wider range of activation activities. Support in connection with demographic challenges should focus on young people and seniors and take into account disadvantaged groups.
2. demographic changes - in the LGD area, the population is aging and the number of seniors is constantly growing.
3. local products and resources - the resources of the LAG area in the form of natural resources, social and entrepreneurial activity, access to social and technical infrastructure require networking and cooperation of various sectors and entities. Thanks to this, it will be possible to develop the area in synergy with the smart specializations of the voivodeship, i.e. high-quality food, healthy life, water economy, wood and furniture, as well as automation and digitalization.

Residents of rural areas of LGD SW need basic knowledge and extensive support in the development of their towns towards Smart Villages.

Main aim of the action:

Pilot action will be implemented in the LAG South Warmia area, in one of the rural communes: Purda commune, in the village Marcinkowo. Marcinkowo - a village in Poland, Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, Olsztyn County, Purda Commune, located 12 km from the provincial capital, Olsztyn. The main goal is to create a Smart Village Center in Marcinkowo, called Smart Village Hub (SVH), where extensive support will be provided to the inhabitants of not only Marcinkowo but also the entire area, especially in the field of creation and development of SMEs and NGOs. Particular attention will be paid to young people and seniors. SVH will provide assistance in creating the Smart Village concept and in its implementation, as well as counteracting exclusions (digital, communication, economic, social, etc.).

Ultimately, workshops will be implemented for people who want to try their hand at business or expand an existing company. This opportunity will be especially given to young people who want to start a business for the first time. SVH will provide space, internet access and support as needed.

Support for SMEs will be valued on the basis of market services in PLN/h and will not exceed EUR 20,000 per SME.

Main actions to be implemented:

- Creating Smart Village Center in Marcinkowo, Purda commune, called Smart Village Hub (SVH), where extensive support will be provided to the inhabitants of not only Marcinkowo but also the entire area, especially in the field of creation and development of SMEs and NGOs. Creation of SVH with an advisory offer in the field of Smart Village, creation and development of rural areas and their inhabitants.

Incubator - documentation is currently being prepared and funds are being sought for the renovation of the building. Activities within the Incubator will be launched independently.

- Creating the Marcinkowo Smart Village concept and starting its implementation, as well as counteracting exclusions (digital, communication, economic, social, etc.).

- Assistance in creating at least 6 Smart Village concepts, for the villages in the areas of LAG SW
- Awareness creation about the challenges and problems that face rural areas and possibilities to develop them in terms of smart village criteria
- Good practices database.

Results:

- Established Smart Village Hub in Marcinkowo village, Purda commune.
- Organization of 6 workshops (5 already planned and 1 additional for Marcinkowo)
- Organization of 2 “Forum of knowledge and opportunities” in cooperation with the University of Warmia and Mazury, which will take place twice a year. Creation of an MTaV working group that will work together with LGD representatives and the university - on smart village concepts.

Stakeholders involvement:

- Involvement of minimum 10 SMEs in the pilot activities and the Hub created. Through the pilot, they will be able to create the offer of the Hub, according to their needs and problems.
- Involvement of at least 12 NGOs in the pilot activities and the Hub created, on the workshops in order to get familiar with the concept of Smart Village and creating an offer of the Hub.
- Minimum 60 actors on the workshops concerning Smart Village concepts, including inhabitants, also youth, and the groups mentioned above (NGO, SME).
- Reaching 4000 citizens via promotion of a concept of Smart Village in frames of the project activities, particularly from the LAG SW area (workshops, events, social media, website).

B. The ingredients of the smart action in South Warmia

In the context of the Joint Strategy developed in Work Package 1 - Building, an Action Plan can be concretized and implemented by means of specific elements, or ingredients, that support the project partners as well as local stakeholders in

effectively acting on the selected transition action. For the South Warmia Action Plan, the following ingredients are considered useful for a consistent implementation of the activities:

- **INGREDIENT 1 - SMARTNESS ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY AND SURVEY**, to be administered to the RSGs including representatives of the three selected municipalities. An online version of the smartness assessment survey can be found here: <https://smart-villages.eu/language/en/home/>
- **INGREDIENT 2 - PARTICIPATORY LEARNING FOR ACTION, PARTICIPATORY APPROACH IN AN INTEGRATION OF POLICY LEVELS RATIONALE**, aiming at the selection of the relevant Good Practices, as well as the selection/purchase/rent of the building to be used to develop the activity, the services covered, the costs and finances
- **INGREDIENT 3 - RURAL TOOLKIT**, for the relevant policies to be taken into account while developing the service in South Warmia. We are considering funds in frames of Interreg program Lithuania - Poland 2021-2027.
- We will explore policies regarding food waste that could help in the implementation of our model, especially in the context of education and raising awareness. It will be explored starting from Semester 2.
- **INGREDIENT 4 - THE EUROPEAN START-UP VILLAGE FORUM**, part of the EU Vision for rural areas, that facilitates the exchange of knowledge and expertise on how to promote startup-driven innovation in rural areas. See here for further guidance: https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/scientific-activities-z/european-startup-village-forum_en

C. Scheduling of implementation activities for the smart action in South Warmia in WP2 and WP3

The Action Plan is to be considered as a living document, open to modifications, integrations and re-directions in case of need. However, a tentative schedule of the activities to be carried out in South Warmia is provided in this section, defined as precisely as possible as per March 2024:

Period 3 - meetings of stakeholders from the LGD SW region to develop methodology and tools based on materials prepared in Periods 1 and 2.

Preparation of an Action Plan for the implementation of the pilot project in the LGD SW area.

Help in creating 6 Smart Village concepts.

Period 4 and 5 - launch of consulting services in the field of creating the Smart Village concept and its implementation.

Conducting smart village workshops.

Consulting for SMEs in connection with the operation of Smart Village, addressed to young and senior people.

Period 6 and beyond - provision of services by SVH to SMEs from rural areas, including young people and seniors.

D. Risk assessment for the smart action in South Warmia

The risk is the possibility of failure to complete the renovation of the building in Marcinkowo, which will ultimately house the Smart Village Hub, within the assumed time frame. The solution that will allow for the timely launch of the services offered under SVH will be to use the nearby infrastructure belonging to the cooperating SME - Krozmet Sp. z o. o. or a neighboring location belonging to the local government unit - Purda Commune.

Consulting services directly related to Smart Village will, to a large extent, also be provided externally - in towns that declare their accession and willingness to benefit from SVH's support.

E. The Transnational Action Plan - transnational recommendations and learning process for the implementation of the Action Plans

The following transnational outcomes can be described both as pillars for the transnational aspects of the More than a Village Joint Strategy, and as recommendations on how the interregional learning within More than a Village can support the implementation of each of the Action Plans. The following transnational recommendations will also be followed for the implementation of the Action Plan in South Warmia.

- 1) *Enhancing the capacity, awareness, openness and readiness of the local population with respect to digital innovation*

There is no economy, attractiveness, live ability or sustainable future without the local populations in rural areas. Working with them in order to increase their awareness, capacity, openness and readiness with respect to digital innovation, its opportunities and its ever-changing realities, is fundamental. More than a Village has created the methodological rationale for this, the smartness assessment, and one of the key findings is the need to work closely with rural people to future-proof them with respect to all possible coming digital changes. Digital rural areas are rural areas that become more attractive both for local people and possibly newcomers.

2) Embedding integration of policy levels in rural policy decision making

More than a Village believes that, especially for rural areas, integration is key, so much that it is the cornerstone of the present Joint Strategy. Integration of policy levels should be embedded in all rural decision making processes, even more so than for urban areas, since rural areas often lack the critical mass to influence decision making at higher policy levels. Integration of policy levels is being experimented in the project's pilot areas and of course difficulties are emerging, but integration avoids (at least in theory) redundancies, resistances and delays, and should facilitate swifter and more concrete changes at local levels.

3) Including young people in rural decision making

As trivial as it may sound, there is no future without the younger generations, defined as people below 30 years of age. Including them in a participatory process aiming at co-building decisions for rural areas is also key: young voices often embody a vision that escapes older people, and that is often future-oriented, something that sometimes rural areas sorely lack. Participatory processes, like the one implemented in More than a Village, can and should openly declare they want to include the younger generations.

4) Enhancing and facilitating public-private rural-centered partnerships

All forces in rural areas must gather and join in, in an integrated approach, to guarantee smart and sustainable development and to counter the circle of decline. In the same integration approach of the Joint Strategy, rural areas must go beyond integration of policy makers and facilitate public-private cooperation and partnerships, in a well set policy and planning context, in order to also underline the business opportunities, for tourism and beyond, that abound in rural areas.

5) Allowing experimentation in rural strategies and action plans

Innovation in policy making for rural areas should be supported by allowing some degree of experimentation within the policies themselves, in order to foresee and encompass possible changes and re-orientations, incorporating resilience and adaptability in the act of policy making, in the spirit already embodied by the EU-supported Smart Specialization Strategies (S3), as well as in all EU-supported plans and initiatives dedicated to smart-village development. The present Joint Strategy and the Action Plans, which are themselves characterized by an iterative and recursive nature, embody this ‘experimentation’ recommendation.

F. Beyond the Action Plan: further and complementary activities in South Warmia

Creating a co-working space in Smart Village Center in Marcinkowo.

Complementary activities will be cooperation with the UWM in Olsztyn in the field of research and monitoring of implemented solutions.

The first meeting with University of Warmia and Mazury took place on February 14 with UWM and LGD SW as part of the 1st Cooperation Forum - Knowledge and Possibilities (WiM Forum). One of the areas of cooperation is "Smart Village concepts as a tool for local development". Regular meetings are planned as part of the WiM Forum twice a year. Smaller working groups will also be created and will meet more frequently (proposed creation of the "MTaV" group).

G. Attachments

Picture of the pilot area:

Marcinkowo building (the building in which Smart Village Hub will be created),
author: Tomasz Piłat.

More than a Village



2. Action Plan in Alta Val Polcevera (Italy)

A. The core of the smart action in Alta Val Polcevera

In the first draft of the project, three valleys were identified: Val Fontabuona, Valli del Sol and Alta Val Polcevera. In the following redesigns it was decided to focus on the Alta Valpolcevera because the other two Valleys became part of the Regional Inner Areas and therefore benefited from investments on other funding lines.

The Polcevera Valley is one of the main valleys in the Genoa area: it takes its name from the Polcevera stream, one of the two river basins that delimit the western and eastern parts of the historic core of the city of Genoa and flow into the Ligurian Sea (the other is the Bisagno, which flows through the valley of the same name).

The history of the Polcevera Valley is linked to that of Genoa, of which it has always constituted one of the natural hinterlands as well as the main connection with the hinterland and the Po Valley. The post-war period was heavily marked by the establishment of industries and oil depots, as well as by uncontrolled urban development. Starting in the 1980s, the dismantling of the oil installations and the settlement of small and medium-sized, non-polluting industries and commercial and service centers, gave rise to a more balanced urban reorganization, with the recovery for productive and residential use of degraded areas, formerly occupied by industries and then abandoned to themselves.

Upper Polcevera valley is divided between the municipalities of Ceranesi, Campomorone, Mignanego, Sant'Olcese and Serra Riccò. All this area has a surface area of 120,98 Km² and 26.718 inhabitants.

This is a territory with varied characteristics, in some parts more 'city-like' and in others typically Apennine, with aspects that are still rich in vegetation and wildlife habitats, which in some areas recall the realities of many Alpine areas in our country. Examples of this second aspect are the Praglia area, in the Municipality of Ceranesi, many stretches of the upper parts of Campomorone, the slope included in the Municipality of Mignanego with the Giovi Pass, part of the left bank of the Secca Torrent and part along the secondary valleys in the Municipality of Serra Riccò.

There is a dense network of hiking itineraries, which guarantee the fruition of the territory, in particular the network of paths that along the slopes rising from the various streams and along the ridges, cross the territory of the Polcevera valley area, partly included in the Beigua Park areas, towards Praglia and the Capanne di Marcarolo, and partly affected by the presence of Special Areas of Conservation (ZSC). It is a tourist-hiking road system that permits the use of rural areas.

The action plan is developed along two different lines

1) Identifying a space a space of the Campomorone Library or near it to organize a co-working space equipped with a projector, screen, PC etc., equipment made available by the MTAV project (7500.00 euro) start bringing the idea of the innovation hub to the area and to facilitate the use of a co-working space by economic subjects, resident citizens and visiting citizens such as tourists passing through or temporarily staying in the area.

2) Develop an interactive video to promote co-working activities and also to give useful info about what happens in the Upper Alta Val Pocevera to citizens and tourists. The video will also promote enterprises and other economic and touristic activities.

B. The ingredients of the smart action in Alta Val Polcevera

In the context of the Joint Strategy developed in Work Package 1 - Building, an Action Plan can be concretized and implemented by means of specific elements, or ingredients, that support the project partners as well as local stakeholders in effectively acting on the selected transition action. For the ANCI Liguria Action Plan, the following ingredients are considered useful for a consistent implementation of the activities

- **INGREDIENT 1** - PARTICIPATORY LEARNING FOR ACTION, PARTICIPATORY APPROACH IN AN INTEGRATION OF POLICY LEVELS RATIONALE, aiming at the selection of the relevant Good Practices, as well as the selection/purchase/rent of the building to be used to develop the activity, the services covered, the costs and finances.
- **INGREDIENT 2** - GOOD PRACTICE MAISONS DE SERVICE (FRANCE), a model of service provision for a rural/mountain area that uses one single building to

provide a wide-range of services to local people. See, as an exemple, here:

<https://www.economie.gouv.fr/particuliers/france-services#>

- **INGREDIENT 3** - RURAL TOOLKIT, for the relevant policies to be taken into account while developing the service in Liguria. See here for further guidance: https://rural-vision.europa.eu/action-plan/cross-cutting/toolkit_en
- **INGREDIENT 4** - COOPERATION WITH LAG SOUTH WARMIA, and the area of Marcinkowo. In their own Action Plan, LAG South Warmia aims at developing a Smart Village Hub in Marcinkowo, that includes the development of specific buildings for the provision of services and as innovation hubs.

C. Scheduling of implementation activities for the smart action in Alta Val Polcevera in WP2 and WP3

Period 3 (1/04/2024 - 30/09/2024) meetings on the territory with mayors and stakeholders in order to discuss about the use of the co-working space and how it could be presented to the citizens, workers and enterprises. Analysis of the development project of the Campomorone digital space at the service of citizens. The space identified could be a street-level room adjacent to the public library. The space has access from street level and is already known to the citizens because one day a week it is used by the Job Centre.

As planned in the AF, the original partner GALGE decided to create a new APP to promote new tourist services. Expanding on the idea of the app, ANCIL proposes an interactive video that, like a video game, The interactive video elevates the viewer from mere spectator to protagonist and integral part of the story. The latter will therefore be more motivated and inclined to conclude the experience, which will be more personalized, appreciated and engaging.

This video will promote the new co-working hub and all the activities that will be organized in the space. It will be useful for citizens, enterprises and also tourists because it will also promote tourist info for the Valley.

Periods 4 and 5 (1/10/2024 - 30/09/2025) Setting up of the co-working space. We connect this idea with the Borghi Sparsi cooperative because it's a subject well known either by the Mayors and by the citizens and will help us to revitalize the economic sector and to promote the importance of the new co-working space. Prepare the interactive video

Period 6 (1/10/2025 to 31/03/2026) promotion of the co-working space and of the interactive video.

D. Risk assessment for the smart action in Alta Val Polcevera

The main risk of failure is related to two elements:

- 1) The possibility of not being able to complete the overall set-up of the digital space and thus give partial use to citizens. In order to reduce the possibility of this risk ANCI is working with the stakeholder to concentrate the technological investment in the space find in Campomorone
- 2) Not finding, once the project is finished, useful resources to continue the promotion and the correct use of the co-working space. In order to reduce this possibility ANCI will work a lot on the promotion to demonstrate the concrete importance of that kind of space

E. The Transnational Action Plan - transnational recommendations and learning process for the implementation of the Action Plans

The following transnational outcomes can be described both as pillars for the transnational aspects of the More than a Village Joint Strategy, and as recommendations on how the interregional learning within More than a Village can support the implementation of each of the Action Plans. The following transnational recommendations will also be followed for the implementation of the Action Plan in Liguria:

- 1) ***Enhancing the capacity, awareness, openness and readiness of the local population with respect to digital innovation***

There is no economy, attractiveness, liveability or sustainable future without the local populations in rural areas. Working with them in order to increase their awareness, capacity, openness and readiness with respect to digital innovation, its opportunities and its ever-changing realities, is fundamental. More than a Village has created the methodological rationale for this, the smartness assessment, and one of the key findings is the need to work closely with rural people to future-proof them with

respect to all possible coming digital changes. Digital rural areas are rural areas that become more attractive both for local people and possibly newcomers.

2) Embedding integration of policy levels in rural policy decision making

More than a Village believes that, especially for rural areas, integration is key, so much that it is the cornerstone of the present Joint Strategy. Integration of policy levels should be embedded in all rural decision making processes, even more so than for urban areas, since rural areas often lack the critical mass to influence decision making at higher policy levels. Integration of policy levels is being experimented in the project's pilot areas and of course difficulties are emerging, but integration avoids (at least in theory) redundancies, resistances and delays, and should facilitate swifter and more concrete changes at local levels.

3) Including young people in rural decision making

As trivial as it may sound, there is no future without the younger generations, defined as people below 30 years of age. Including them in a participatory process aiming at co-building decisions for rural areas is also key: young voices often embody a vision that escapes older people, and that is often future-oriented, something that sometimes rural areas sorely lack. Participatory processes, like the one implemented in More than a Village, can and should openly declare they want to include the younger generations.

4) Enhancing and facilitating public-private rural-centred partnerships

All forces in rural areas must gather and join in, in an integrated approach, to guarantee smart and sustainable development and to counter the circle of decline. In the same integration approach of the Joint Strategy, rural areas must go beyond integration of policy makers and facilitate public-private cooperations and partnerships, in a well set policy and planning context, in order to also underline the business opportunities, for tourism and beyond, that abound in rural areas.

5) Allowing experimentation in rural strategies and action plans

Innovation in policy making for rural areas should be supported by allowing some degree of experimentation within the policies themselves, in order to foresee and encompass possible changes and re-orientations, incorporating resilience and adaptability in the act of policy making, in the spirit already embodied by the EU-supported Smart Specialization Strategies (S3), as well as in all EU-supported plans and initiatives dedicated to smart-village development. The present Joint Strategy

and the Action Plans, which are themselves characterized by an iterative and recursive nature, embody this ‘experimentation’ recommendation.

F. Beyond the Action Plan: further and complementary activities in Alta Val Polcevera

The action plan is set in a context of territorial development that is already partly present in the area; from the description of the area made above, it is evident that in the Upper Val Polcevera area a process of deindustrialization and urban regeneration has been underway for some years to make the area more welcoming to both citizens and tourists. Slow tourism linked to families and outdoor routes can in fact be a source of work and income. The new co-working space could help the revitalisation of the Valley giving citizens, enterprises and tourist a space where they could discuss, find info and present new ideas

G. Attachments



3. Action Plan in Hajdú-Bihar (Hungary)

A. The core of the smart action in Hajdú-Bihar

Following some detailed discussion with stakeholders in Hajdú-Bihar, actors agreed that the pilot should focus on the digital improvement of rural areas and small villages focusing on the people living in these areas, not just to put the county on the map but actively utilizing the silver economy potential for the 55+ (60+?) age group.

In order to boost the rural economy in Hajdú-Bihar, considering that the level of digital maturity in the rural areas of Hajdú-Bihar county is very low, its improvement is essential for the wider deployment of smart solutions and for the real and long-term exploitation of the potential of the silver economy.

This statement is not only relevant for the population in general, but also for rural businesses active in different economic sectors.

The pilot activities are intended to raise these potentials to a higher level, taking into account new practices and solutions, particularly in agriculture and tourism as two leading sectors in rural businesses.

The most important challenges to reflect on:

- lack of local knowledge and expertise - there is the greatest need for capacity and competence building in rural areas
- growing demand for a calm, green environment and domestic tourism in the post-crisis period is also a potential to be exploited
- development of short supply chains and the strengthening of local markets which can alleviate vulnerability and strengthen resilience
- through the international network of settlements, localities should recognize the potentials of smart development, find out what kind of “resource mix” they can get support for
- sharing resources - mapping potential of silver economy

- development efforts that exploit the potential of digitalization can help improve access to services in rural areas
- village hub - actual database of service providers and associations

The pilot action's scope and objectives are formulated in close cooperation and detailed discussion with the members of the regional stakeholder group.

Actors agreed that a primary survey to map the digital maturity of the population and local businesses is essential to move forward.

There was also agreement that the concept of "smart village" does not exclusively mean the application of digital solutions at any cost, but rather a range of innovative, forward-looking, conceptual interventions and developments reflecting real local needs, which of course include, or may include, digitalisation opportunities.

The main objective of the project and particularly the pilot activities at regional level is to explore the potential of the silver economy and to strengthen local entrepreneurs and businesses in this direction, to create an ecosystem to support business and initiatives by people 50+ and to create a platform for silver economy, so that the optimal combination of these two development areas will lead to effective cooperation.

The actions to support this achievement are as follows:

- A primary survey in 3 municipalities of different sizes (under 1000 inhabitants, 1000 - 5000 inhabitants, over 5000 inhabitants), to assess digital maturity and to formulate further activities in the light of this information
 - Municipalities of Bojt (492 inh.), Ebes (4619 inh.) and Nádudvar (9164 inh.) are included in this activity in strong collaboration with municipality leaders. The survey is planned to be conducted with the support of the researchers of the University of Debrecen.
- Based on the outcomes of the mapping phase, concrete demands of the local population as well as entrepreneurs will be defined.
- Assessing the local needs, proper solutions are planned to be offered including dedicated onsite and/or online training to help locals for the selected digital skill/s to be improved, and the formulation of a widely applicable and accessible material/training content is also planned. For this purpose, it is planned to involve local young people.

- Synthesising the results and considering the county ecosystem, a preliminary mapping of the silver economy potential will be implemented focusing first on the three municipalities.
- In order to stimulate local economies, the formulation of a county silver economy platform is planned to be prepared - its form (physical or online) will be agreed following a wide scale discussion with municipalities.

B. The ingredients of the smart action in Hajdú-Bihar

- **INGREDIENT 1 - SMARTNESS ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY AND SURVEY**, to be administered to the RSGs including representatives of the three selected municipalities. An online version of the smartness assessment survey can be found here: <https://smart-villages.eu/language/en/home/>

This ingredient is planned to be used to carry out the primary survey in the 3 selected municipalities. The methodology will support the overall evaluation of the digital literacy of these communities and helps to identify gaps where the upcoming activities should overcome the missing elements.

- **INGREDIENT 2 - GOOD PRACTICE INTERREG EUROPE PROJECT SILVER SMEs**, supporting the development of new SMEs in the Silver Economy, an intrinsic objective is to generate services and goods that will contribute to improve the quality of life within an aging society, in particular in rural or remote EU areas. It can be consulted here: <https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/silversmes/>

This good example will serve to support the formulation of local needs, community demands and also the definition of the proper solutions including the training content.

The GP is also a great basis to contribute to the assessment of local silver economy potentials.

- **INGREDIENT 3 - PARTICIPATORY LEARNING FOR ACTION, PARTICIPATORY APPROACH IN AN INTEGRATION OF POLICY LEVELS RATIONALE**, aiming at the selection of the relevant Good Practices, as well as the selection/purchase/rent of the building to be used to develop the activity, the services covered, the costs and finances

Participatory approach will be followed during the whole pilot process from the first discussion of the smartness assessment methodology to the final evaluation of the silver economy potential. This method is strongly based upon

the regular involvement of the regional stakeholder group, strengthened by onsite talks with the members of the local community. This approach is a core factor to ensure that the pilot content and results can and will strongly support the well-being of our rural communities, taking into consideration real and actual needs.

- **INGREDIENT 4 - GOOD PRACTICE DIGITAL HELPDESK IN THE GRAND-PARADIS AREA, Aosta Valley, Italy.** It can be consulted here <https://www.gal.vda.it/sportello-digitale-grand-paradis/> (in Italian), and it can be further explored with a closer cooperation with partner Poliedra.

This ingredient will be used to formulate the content and form of the county silver economy platform. It is planned to have further discussions with Poliedra to get a deeper insight into the operation of the helpdesk to find the most appropriate and applicable elements.

C. Scheduling of implementation activities for the smart action in Hajdú-Bihar in WP2 and WP3

Tentative scheduling of the Action Plan's activities:

- A primary survey in 3 municipalities of different sizes (under 1000 inhabitants, 1000 - 5000 inhabitants, over 5000 inhabitants), to assess digital maturity and to formulate further activities in the light of this information - to be performed in Semester 3.
- Based on the outcomes of the mapping phase, concrete demands of the local population as well as entrepreneurs will be defined - to be performed in Semester 3.
- Assessing the local needs, proper solutions are planned to be offered including dedicated onsite and/or online training to help locals for the selected digital skill/s to be improved, and the formulation of a widely applicable and accessible material/training content is also planned. For this purpose, it is planned to involve local young people - to be performed in Semester 4.
- Synthesising the results and considering the county ecosystem, a preliminary mapping of the silver economy potential will be implemented focusing first on the three municipalities in order to support business and initiatives by people 50+ - to be performed in Semesters 4 and 5.

- In order to stimulate local economies, the formulation of a county silver economy platform is planned to be prepared - its form (physical or online) will be agreed following a wide scale discussion with municipalities - to be performed in Semesters 5 and 6.

D. Risk assessment for the smart action in Hajdú-Bihar

There are 3 groups of risks to be considered during the activities:

- The most relevant risk is the outcome of local elections in June 2024 - in case the mayor of the 3 selected pilot municipalities will change, the engagement of the leadership can be affected and other contributors should be selected.
- The citizens' **willingness** to actively participate in the survey is also a factor to be considered - in case of a relatively low level of participation/willingness, further actions should be taken to make them understand the rationale behind the survey and the overall actual level of digital literacy.
- The lack of **financial or human capacity** can also endanger the proper implementation of the schedule and/or the content. In order to avoid such difficulties, it is planned to regularly revise the implementation process.
- There is also a slight chance **that doubts** can be defined by some actors about the role and potential of the silver economy in Hajdú-Bihar county. The compilation of baseline information, the outcomes of the recent development strategies and also national initiatives could support the efforts to overcome such doubts.

E. The Transnational Action Plan - transnational recommendations and learning process for the implementation of the Action Plans

The following transnational outcomes can be described both as **pillars for the transnational aspects of the More than a Village Joint Strategy**, and as recommendations on how the **interregional learning within More than a Village** can support the implementation of each of the Action Plans:

- 1) *Enhancing the capacity, awareness, openness and readiness of the local population with respect to digital innovation*

There is no economy, attractiveness, liveability or sustainable future without the local populations in rural areas. Working with them in order to increase their awareness, capacity, openness and readiness with respect to digital innovation, its opportunities and its ever-changing realities, is fundamental. More than a Village has created the methodological rationale for this, the smartness assessment, and one of the key findings is the need to work closely with rural people to future-proof them with respect to all possible coming digital changes. Digital rural areas are rural areas that become more attractive both for local people and possibly newcomers.

This recommendation will be strongly linked to the first step (primary survey) of HBCG's actions and also will be applied in the county silver economy platform.

2) Embedding integration of policy levels in rural policy decision making

More than a Village believes that, especially for rural areas, integration is key, so much that it is the cornerstone of the present Joint Strategy. Integration of policy levels should be embedded in all rural decision making processes, even more so than for urban areas, since rural areas often lack the critical mass to influence decision making at higher policy levels. Integration of policy levels is being experimented in the project's pilot areas and of course difficulties are emerging, but integration avoids (at least in theory) redundancies, resistances and delays, and should facilitate swifter and more concrete changes at local levels.

This point is especially relevant in the definition of HBC's local needs considering the wider (national) ecosystem and this will be also applied in the establishment of the silver economy hub.

3) Including young people in rural decision making

As trivial as it may sound, there is no future without the younger generations, defined as people below 30 years of age. Including them in a participatory process aiming at co-building decisions for rural areas is also key: young voices often embody a vision that escapes older people, and that is often future-oriented, something that sometimes rural areas sorely lack. Participatory processes, like the one implemented in More than a Village, can and should openly declare they want to include the younger generations.

To involve the youngsters living in rural areas is a must have for the conservation and revival of local communities; their strong and regular active participation in the formulation of the community's development will be supported in each action

planned. Their involvement is mostly expected through targeted discussions and also invitation to the upcoming stakeholder meetings.

4) Enhancing and facilitating public-private rural-centred partnerships

All forces in rural areas must gather and join in, in an integrated approach, to guarantee smart and sustainable development and to counter the circle of decline. In the same integration approach of the Joint Strategy, rural areas must go beyond integration of policy makers and facilitate public-private cooperations and partnerships, in a well set policy and planning context, in order to also underline the business opportunities, for tourism and beyond, that abound in rural areas.

For Hajdú-Bihar county, this approach will appear particularly when synthesising the results of the preliminary survey and discussions and considering the county ecosystem, in the mapping of the silver economy potential. These types of collaborations are strongly considered also in the successful formulation and operation of the future silver economy hub.

5) Allowing experimentation in rural strategies and action plans

Innovation in policy making for rural areas should be supported by allowing some degree of experimentation within the policies themselves, in order to foresee and encompass possible changes and re-orientations, incorporating resilience and adaptability in the act of policy making, in the spirit already embodied by the EU-supported Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3), as well as in all EU-supported plans and initiatives dedicated to smart-village development. The present Joint Strategy and the Action Plans, which are themselves characterised by an iterative and recursive nature, embody this ‘experimentation’ recommendation.

This recommendation seems to be a core element following the establishment of the silver economy hub in Hajdú-Bihar, strongly supporting the revision and update of local, regional and national rural strategy documents and processes.

F. Beyond the Action Plan: further and complementary activities in Hajdú-Bihar

In case of an indicative success, it is planned to extend the silver economy development to a wider scale of county municipalities.

Within Priority 3 of the county’s development strategy, the importance of silver economy is defined as an important measure in 2021-2027. An improved silver

economy can provide new potentials through the economic opportunities arising from ageing, building on the needs of the growing number of older people in the county and the new markets that are emerging. The development of the silver economy aims to address relevant activities in a coordinated and complex way, such as efforts to promote active and healthy ageing, with particular attention to addressing the health risks of climate change, increasing the employment rate of older workers (focus on agriculture and tourism), and employment opportunities arising from the growing demand for elderly care and related health care.

The intervention will build on the existing potential in the county to identify development opportunities, identify areas of deficiency and refine development needs. This will be followed by the development of a package of products and services, and the development of institutions that would provide services to target groups within and outside the county.

The implementation of More than a village pilot actions is expected to serve as a basic step to build on in the upcoming years.

G. Attachments

Pictures of the territory or pilot site, including author/source. - these might be used for communication purposes.

Photos: Booklet titled “Hajdú-Bihar County - The home of values” - published by Hajdú-Bihar County Government



More than a Village



More than a Village



4. Action Plan in Pomurje (Slovenia)

A. The core of the smart action in Pomurje

Territorial challenge and needs:

Every inhabitant of Slovenia throws away an average of 68 kg of food per year. All food waste generated in Slovenia in 2018 was almost 139,900 tons. It is estimated that 38% of this food waste was edible, and this amount could be reduced or prevented through awareness and the right attitude towards food. 62% of food waste was inedible parts, e.g. peelings, bones, shells, eggshells, etc.

Food waste is growing yearly, while latest data from 2018 shows that 52% of food waste was generated in households, 30% of food waste was generated in catering and other food-serving activities, e.g. in schools, kindergartens, hospitals, nursing homes, 10% of food waste was generated in distribution and food stores due to damage during transport, improper storage, expiration date and 8% of food waste was generated in food processing (without primary food production). Considering edible food waste, the average Slovenian citizen throws away 27 kg of edible food per year (only food processed in the waste management system is considered).

Regionally, food waste is highest in Central Slovenia and Eastern Slovenia (region Pomurje), where food waste accounts for 85 kg/person per year.

Food loss around primary production and residues of organic origin from the activity of food production and diverted to the production of animal feed is not considered in these numbers and there is no statistical data available. Yet, it is estimated that this organic waste is highly important in Slovenia, contributing largely to production of greenhouse gas emissions, if not properly processed. It is estimated that around 14% of all waste produced in Slovenia is biological waste (data available from 2015), which is a large contributor of GHG emissions, is not properly processed. In Pomurje region, where agriculture is predominant industrial activity (with a large number of small farms), the food and biological waste is usually left in landfill sites where waste

converts into greenhouse gases and leachate, which is still a predominant way of discharging biological waste.

From the perspective of Slovenia (focusing on Pomurje region), causes of food loss and waste (FLW) along the food supply chains are following:

1. Production system (primary production and food processing):
 - inadequate harvesting time, non-efficient practices applied at harvest and climatic conditions
 - lack of systemic solutions for re-using or disposing food waste
 - challenges in marketing produce, especially for the produce not following cosmetic requirements and market standards (“ugly food”)
2. Food supply chains and distributors
 - inadequate transportation and storage infrastructure
 - short shelf life and long supply chains
 - lack of cooperation and business models in the supply chain where FLW could be re-used or donated
 - lack of food processing capacity
3. Consumers, retailers and consumer organisations (restaurants, schools, kindergartens, elderly homes, ...)
 - poor purchase and meal planning
 - poor storing
 - excess buying (influenced by over-large portioning and package sizes)
 - low public awareness about FLW
 - lack of food donation/sharing concepts and inadequate policy framework
4. Waste processing actors
 - lack of systems and circular business models for waste treatment
 - waste treatment capacity

Overall, there is a lack of systemic approach in collecting data (new / innovative ways of collecting data) and monitoring of the FLW along the whole value chain, which would allow interventions at critical stages of the value chain and reduce food losses and waste on long term, through systemic innovation methodology, which will involve collaboration of all relevant actors (Multi-Actor Approach).

Main aim of the action:

Pilot action will be implemented in the Pomurje region. It will be based on developing and enhancing an approach to reduce food loss and waste in the agri-food value chain by establishing an innovation system supported. PP4 ITC will focus its activities by

using the fully operational short food supply chain called Green Point. The Green Point is operated as a living lab and has a long track record in promoting and engaging citizens in changing dietary habits, especially using locally produced healthy/sustainable food, while also empowering citizens to make sustainable choices through buying, cooking, treating and eating food. This has however been done through promotional events, co-creation workshops, training and general communication, while there is a need to use a more systemic approach, based on using respective tools/data.

Moreover, ITC is involved in many projects (ZEROW; CHORIZO, ClrcEco, Breadcrumb) focusing on reducing food loss and waste in the whole supply chain, including consumers, HORECA sector and primary producers. More about these actions is presented in chapter F of this document.

Main actions to be implemented:

- setting up surplus food supply/demand marketplace by:
 - re-using unsold fruits and vegetables that are to be perishable for further processing;
 - collecting surplus food along the whole supply chain;
- Awareness creation about the challenges and influence of food loss and waste
- Exploring food donation models and systems (collection, redistribution)

Results:

- Established platform (marketplace) of surplus food
- Organisation of 2 regional workshops
- Organisation of 2 regional events
- Promotional campaign

Stakeholders involvement:

- Involvement of minimum 10 users in the pilot activities and the platform created: Food producers/processors (minimum 10 users). Through the pilot, they will be able to monitor the flow of the raw materials and what are the amounts of food they will be able to save.
- Involvement of minimum 150 actors on the workshops and events in order to get them familiar with the concept of food loss and waste Supply chain actors
 - HoReCa sector & Public procurement actors, consumers, Supply chain

stakeholders - Policy makers (Cities, Government institutions), Research organisations, Agricultural advisors, Solution providers (min. 150 actors)

- Reaching 3000 citizens via promotion of the Food Loss and waste concept and More than a village's project activities via online tools (website, social media, newsletter, etc.)

B. The ingredients of the smart action in Pomurje

In the context of the Joint Strategy developed in Work Package 1 - Building, an Action Plan can be concretized and implemented by means of specific elements, or ingredients, that support the project partners as well as local stakeholders in effectively acting on the selected transition action. For the Pomurje Action Plan, the following ingredients are considered useful for a consistent implementation of the activities:

- **INGREDIENT 1 - RURAL TOOLKIT**, for the relevant policies to be taken into account while developing the service in Pomurje, with specific reference to policies against food waste and promoting circular economy. ITC will be following Strategy to reduce food loss and food waste in the food supply chain: "Respect food, respect the planet" and its action plan issued by Ministry for agriculture, forestry and food of Slovenia.¹ In addition ITC will explore farm to fork strategy and follow EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste². Additional policies and good practices from other countries will be explored during semester 4 and 6.
- **INGREDIENT 2 - RURAL OBSERVATORY**, for the relevant guidance on data collection and on relevant indicators for rural areas, including environmental indicators and analyses based on data from multiple sources and at the most appropriate territorial granularity, covering the economic, social and environmental dimensions. ITC is also building its own data space (DIH AGRIFOOD DATA SPACE)³, where regional data sources will be integrated and further explored within the pilot action.

¹ <https://www.gov.si teme/zmanjsevanje-odpadne-hrane/>

² https://food.ec.europa.eu/safety/food-waste/eu-actions-against-food-waste/eu-platform-food-losses-and-food-waste_en

³ <https://dataspace.dih-agrifood.com/>

- **INGREDIENT 3 - SOFTWARE INTEGRATION**, to be further expanded with ITC. ITC is building a platform (marketplace) of surplus food, which is a web application, mainly based on the PHP scripting language. It therefore needs an Apache web server with support for PHP (version 7+) and a MySQL data server (version 8+) to function. The application itself is built with extensive use of the CodeIgniter PHP Framework and certain JavaScript libraries.
- **INGREDIENT 4 - GAMIFICATION ASPECTS OF THE EXPANSION OF THE MARKETPLACE.** Gamification includes a behavioural component in a smart transition, normally by adding a reward system for virtuous actions, such as the reduction of food waste. ITC will explore different gamification aspects for the expansion of the marketplace together with RSG. This will be potentially explored in future semesters, during the workshops with stakeholders.

C. Scheduling of implementation activities for the smart action in Pomurje in WP2 and WP3

The Action Plan is to be considered as a living document, open to modifications, integrations and re-directions in case of need. However, a tentative schedule of the activities to be carried out in Pomurje is provided in this section, defined as precisely as possible as per March 2024:

Action	Timeline
Awareness creation about the challenges and influence of food loss and waste	From period 3 until period 6
Finalization of surplus food supply/demand marketplace	End of period 4
Integration of users and potential trainings on how to use the platform	From period 4 to until period 6
Organisation of the study visit for partners in the project	End of period 4

Organisation of 1 st regional workshops together with actors working on the topic of food loss and waste and potential users of the marketplace	End of period 4
Organisation of 2 nd regional workshop to discuss	End of period 5
Organisation of 1 st regional promotional event within the Green Point Living Lab in order to present the results of the project to different stakeholders	End of period 4
Exploring food donation models and systems (collection, redistribution) in Slovenia	End of period 6
Organisation of 2 nd regional promotional event within the Green Point Living Lab in order to showcase final results of the project to different stakeholders	End of period 6

D. Risk assessment for the smart action in Pomurje

This section details examples of possible risks connected to the activities to be carried out in the Action Plan, and possible mitigation measures:

Risk ID	Description	Likelihood	Level of severity	Mitigation measures
1	Difficulties with the development and finalization of the platform	Low	Medium -High	ITC has internal staff to work on the development and can also look for external experts to help them work on that.

2	Ability to attract producers/processors to use the platform	Low	High	ITC, through Green Point has a very strong network of producers/processors. This way we are counting that they will participate in our actions to test the platform.
3	Not enough interest from regional stakeholders on the thematic of Food loss and waste	Low	Medium	ITC is working on this important topic, which is integrated also within the action plans on the national level. We are sure that regional stakeholders are already interested about this topic and measures on how to solve it.
4	Ability to reach KPI's set down in the application form	Medium	Medium	KPI's have been done following some actions that ITC was planning to take. Unfortunately, between the process of evaluation and approval of the MTAV project, ITC has already performed the activity of questionnaires related to food loss and waste in the HORECA sector, which involved main KPI target. ITC will try to elaborate new ways on involving stakeholders on this thematic.

5	Difficulties with resources in order to implement all the actions	Low	Medium	ITC is involved in many different initiative and projects, which is why we are employing new staff in order to be able to follow the implementation of the MTAV project. This measure is proactive approach towards the underspending in first two periods.
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E. The Transnational Action Plan - transnational recommendations and learning process for the implementation of the Action Plans

The following transnational outcomes can be described both as pillars for the transnational aspects of the More than a Village Joint Strategy, and as recommendations on how the interregional learning within More than a Village can support the implementation of each of the Action Plans. The following transnational recommendations will also be followed for the implementation of the Action Plan in Pomurje.

1) *Enhancing the capacity, awareness, openness and readiness of the local population with respect to digital innovation*

There is no economy, attractiveness, liveability or sustainable future without the local populations in rural areas. Working with them in order to increase their awareness, capacity, openness and readiness with respect to digital innovation, its opportunities and its ever-changing realities, is fundamental. More than a Village has created the methodological rationale for this, the smartness assessment, and one of the key findings is the need to work closely with rural people to future-proof them with respect to all possible coming digital changes. Digital rural areas are rural areas that become more attractive both for local people and possibly newcomers. All these aspects will be integrated within the regional living lab, which is running under the scope of a short food supply chain, and where different regional stakeholders will be included within the pilot area.

2) Embedding integration of policy levels in rural policy decision making

More than a Village believes that, especially for rural areas, integration is key, so much that it is the cornerstone of the present Joint Strategy. Integration of policy levels should be embedded in all rural decision making processes, even more so than for urban areas, since rural areas often lack the critical mass to influence decision making at higher policy levels. Integration of policy levels is being experimented in the project's pilot areas and of course difficulties are emerging, but integration avoids (at least in theory) redundancies, resistances and delays, and should facilitate swifter and more concrete changes at local levels.

3) Including young people in rural decision making

As trivial as it may sound, there is no future without the younger generations, defined as people below 30 years of age. Including them in a participatory process aiming at co-building decisions for rural areas is also key: young voices often embody a vision that escapes older people, and that is often future-oriented, something that sometimes rural areas sorely lack. Participatory processes, like the one implemented in More than a Village, can and should openly declare they want to include the younger generations.

4) Enhancing and facilitating public-private rural-centred partnerships

All forces in rural areas must gather and join in, in an integrated approach, to guarantee smart and sustainable development and to counter the circle of decline. In the same integration approach of the Joint Strategy, rural areas must go beyond integration of policy makers and facilitate public-private cooperations and partnerships, in a well set policy and planning context, in order to also underline the business opportunities, for tourism and beyond, that abound in rural areas.

5) Allowing experimentation in rural strategies and action plans

Innovation in policy making for rural areas should be supported by allowing some degree of experimentation within the policies themselves, in order to foresee and encompass possible changes and re-orientations, incorporating resilience and adaptability in the act of policy making, in the spirit already embodied by the EU-supported Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3), as well as in all EU-supported plans and initiatives dedicated to smart-village development. The present Joint Strategy and the Action Plans, which are themselves characterised by an iterative and recursive nature, embody this 'experimentation' recommendation.

F. Beyond the Action Plan: further and complementary activities in Pomurje

As stated in chapter A, ITC is involved in different research projects (ZEROW; CHORIZO, ClrcEco, Breadcrumb) focusing on reducing food loss and waste in the whole supply chain, including consumers, HORECA sector and primary producers. Here are more details about those projects:

Project	Description	ITC action
<p>ZeroW - Systemic Innovations Towards a Zero Food Waste Supply Chain (H2020-LC-GD-2020 - Building a low-carbon, climate resilient future: Research and innovation in support of the European Green Deal)</p> <p>https://www.zerow-project.eu/</p>	<p>ZeroW provides significant impacts through the demonstration of innovations in nine real-life food chains by employing a systemic innovation approach to effectively address the multidimensional issue of FLW. ZeroW establishes a clear ‘FLW impact trajectory’, from demonstrator results, scaled up to meet the F2F 2030 goals, and steered through a ‘just transition pathway’ towards a near-zero FLW in 2050.</p>	<p>ITC is responsible for the Systemic Innovation Living Lab, delivering and piloting an open, data-driven IT-based solution for capturing FLW data throughout the supply chain and providing analytics to address the requirements of the Sustainable Development Goals.</p>
<p>CHORIZO - Changing practices and Habits through Open, Responsible, and social Innovation towards ZerO food waste (HORIZON-CL6-2021-FARM2FORK-01-13 - Evidence-based</p>	<p>CHORIZO aims to improve the understanding and knowledge to increase the effectiveness of decision-making and engagement of food chain actors in changing social norms towards zero food waste.</p>	<p>ITC is responsible for implementing the real-life Case Study in Pomurje region, focusing on reducing food waste in restaurants at three layers: (i) retail and short food supply chains -</p>

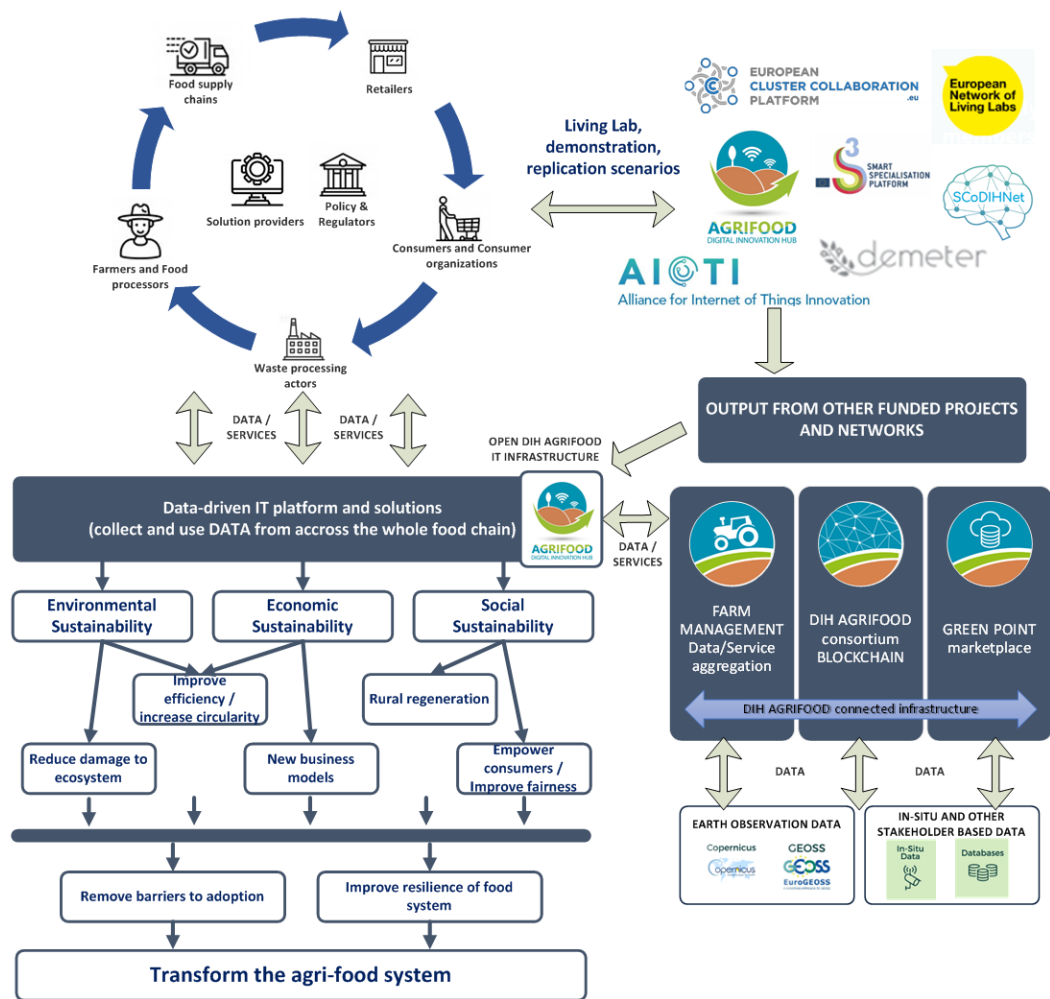
<p>decision-making to change social norms towards zero food waste) https://horizoproject.eu/</p>	<p>The project is focused on (i) building upon previous FLW actions, (ii) generating new evidence on social norms & FLW behaviours, (iii) utilising advanced modelling techniques to produce solutions that integrate behavioural and economic theories and embedding research results into innovative products that can foster a change of FLW-related social norms.</p>	<p>delivery of fresh ingredients to restaurants, (ii) restaurants - storing and preparing food, managing FW and leftovers, (iii) consumers - ordering, leftovers perception.</p>
<p>CircEco - Towards circular economy in food waste using a cloud platform (DigiCirc project funded under H2020-INNOSUP-2019-01 - Cluster facilitated projects for new industrial value chains) https://digicirc.eu/circ-eco</p>	<p>CircEco project aims to develop and commercialise a cloud-based marketplace, enabling citizens, farmers, businesses, public organisations and others to sell their close-to-expiry, ugly foods directly to consumers.</p>	<p>ITC has been working on potential business model and outlook of such solution, that could be implemented in the regional food supply chain.</p>
<p>BREADCRUMB - BRinging Evidence-based food Chain solutions to prevent and RedUce food waste related to Marketing standards, and deliver climate and circularity co-Benefits (HORIZON-</p>	<p>BREADCRUMB is focusing on preventing and reducing food waste related to marketing standards, through a series of actions: (1) creating an inventory of private and interrelated public food marketing</p>	<p>ITC is responsible for the coordination and implementation of a Slovenian pilot focusing on Fruits & vegetables and Cereals, representing the whole food supply chain, while contributing with</p>

<p>CL6-2023-FARM2FORK-01-14 - Providing marketing solutions to prevent and reduce the food waste related to marketing standards)</p>	<p>standards, (2) creating an empirical evidence base to generate estimates of FW related to marketing standards in fruit & vegetables, meat, eggs, cereals and fish, (3) modelling the underlying mechanisms through which, marketing standards lead to FW generation, (4) improving market access to suboptimal foods and (5) structuring the previous results into operational and policy guidance on how to prevent/reduce FW related to marketing standards.</p>	<p>collecting and modelling FW related data.</p>
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Mission of the ITC is to become one of the most advanced, digitized rural regions in Europe for food production and supply, based on the cooperation of all actors in the food system. By implementing different projects a long term goal is to bring together actors from across the entire agri-food systems in a Participatory Multi-Actor Approach (pMAA) to reach its mission in following years. In order to make this happen this will be supported by:

- Data-driven IT platform to collect and use data from all across the food chain to deliver benefits for the society and lead to a more sustainable, resilient and transparent food system with empowered stakeholders who are in the position to take smarter, more sustainable, healthier and more personal food and dietary choices, taking into account data regarding environmental impact, origin, nutrition, safety and integrity.
- DIH AGRIFOOD Data Space, providing secure, sovereign system of agrifood data sharing in which all participants can realise the full value of their data.

More than a Village



G. Attachments

Pictures of the territory or pilot site, including author/source. - these might be used for communication purposes.



5. Action Plan in Buzet (Croatia)

A. The core of the smart action in Buzet

Buzet lies in the very heart of the northern part of Croatian Istria. It covers an area of 165 km², with about 6,000 inhabitants. Buzet is also known as the 'City of Truffles' since it is situated in an area rich in this highly prized mushroom. Forests surrounding Buzet are habitats to Istrian truffles and especially to very valuable white truffles, so in 1999 Buzet was named as the City of Truffles. Truffle Weekend is an event that takes place every year in November and includes exhibitions, sales and tasting of truffles. There is a series of activities initiated to strengthen the recognition of Buzet as the City of Truffles (Buzet Tourist Board has initiated the project of establishing and running a multimedia centre The House of Truffles, etc.). Buzet is known for enterprise and industry, and the city is often mentioned in the context of good practice and the development of entrepreneurship and innovation (company P.P.C/CIMOSS - is the most important company in the production of automobile parts in Croatia, because of its high technology and innovative level). The City of Buzet and the area of Buzestina, like the whole of Istria, are characterised by diversity relief. The area abounds with small and large valleys, canyons, hills and mountains, partly overgrown forest cover at altitudes of 100 to over 1000 metres. The City of Buzet, along with the Lanisce municipality, belongs to the landscape region of White Istria, which was named after the steep cliffs of white limestone rocks of Cicarija. Forest cover takes up more than half of the total area of Buzestina. Most of the forests have an economic purpose, and smaller parts are protection forests. Agricultural land in the area of the city of Buzet occupies an area of 5,800 ha, of which 5,223 ha or 90% is workable. The other 10% is uncultivable and refers to pastures. The average size of agricultural property in the town of Buzet is 5.73 ha, including forests, or 3.44 ha of agricultural land alone. According to the latest data from 2023, 359 family farms were active in the area of the city of Buzet. Fragmentation of agricultural land and small farms are the basic feature of the land from small family farms, which is largely a consequence of historical circumstances, but also the physical division of land parcels. In individual agricultural production, almost all branches of agricultural production

are represented, from traditional viticulture and winemaking, animal husbandry and farming to fruit growing, which has a slightly smaller tradition (except olive growing).

Pilot action for City of Buzet will be the development of the web agri-food web platform where local producers could sell and advertise their products, gather useful information on novelties in agriculture and also track conditions of the meteorological data with the stations that will be installed during the project. Mentioned web platform will be created from scratch and will be a pilot project for our area but the development of the platform has been recognized as a need a few years ago so it is not something that came “out of nowhere”.

The web platform will also be useful for regular customers and people with small private gardens where they can order and pick up products they don't grow, gather information on soil status and many other useful information to help them grow organic food and also to get some news, offers in the area, new technologies in agriculture etc. Implementation of the web platform, better placement of agricultural products and much information about agriculture along with the measurement of soil status with lots of other meteorological data will be a base for development of agriculture using new technologies. Better placement and advertising of agricultural products will improve competitiveness of the agricultural producers in the area and reduce the percentage of non-organic food. The need to create such a system for the direct sale of agricultural products stems from the fact that the global market for agricultural products is saturated with cheap products of mass, industrial production, often with an insufficiently known method of production, whose main goal is to maximise profits, often at the expense of quality itself. Such developments mostly affect small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises, which are unable to satisfactorily modernise and specialise technologically, cannot produce large enough quantities of certain products, which would bind certain wholesalers and larger consumers, and also do not have room to lower production costs in order to be price competitive. Bearing in mind the importance that small and medium-sized agricultural farms have on the management and sustainable development of the entire rural area, the sociological, ecological and cultural role in its preservation, it is clear that one of the most important tasks of agrarian policy, especially in the Mediterranean area, is to find new opportunities and sources of income for the survival of that group of stakeholders in the agricultural sector. The City of Buzet still doesn't have the proper physical market, a place where residents and tourists can buy local products groceries and etc so creation of web platform where local producers could advertise and sell their products could be a good start to work on the visibility and availability of local

agriculture products not just for the locals but also for the tourists and visitors of the area. The web platform could also be great for tourists because the City of Buzet area lacks a place where you can find all of the local products in one place, especially products from truffles.

Agrometeorological stations will be installed on 4 different locations in the wider Buzet area and will be targeted to cover different kinds of terrain and altitude because the City of Buzet area is rural and there are lots of micro-locations with different climate specifications to be covered. The idea is to cover a large area and to offer only the most important and general data for agriculture, such as the temperature and air humidity, leaf moisture, precipitation, wind speed, etc. Task of the stations will be precise monitoring of weather conditions and timely planning and execution of activities to ensure sustainable and profitable production of all cultivated crops. Locations of the stations will be agreed with the Ministry of Agriculture Office in Buzet which will give us their opinions on which area and places we should cover. They will be fully automatic and measurements will be read remotely and the collected data will help in determining microclimatic conditions and facilitate the implementation of other agrotechnical measures. They provide timely information on the possible onset, duration and intensity of attacks of certain plant diseases and pests. With measuring cells, we assess the development of harmful insects and mites, but also the development of plant crops, the assessment of the need for irrigation or frost protection ("anti-frost systems") or for the possible announcement and assessment of damages from natural disasters. Recognizing unwanted organisms in agriculture, as well as the real need and optimal deadlines for their control, is an important prerequisite for successful plant health. Misdiagnosis and late application unnecessary, excessive and less effective application of pesticides.

B. The ingredients of the smart action in Buzet

In the context of the Joint Strategy developed in Work Package 1 - Building, an Action Plan can be concretized and implemented by means of specific elements, or ingredients, that support the project partners as well as local stakeholders in effectively acting on the selected transition action. For the Buzet Action Plan, the following ingredients are considered useful for a consistent implementation of the activities:

- **INGREDIENT 1** - THE EUROPEAN START-UP VILLAGE FORUM, part of the EU Vision for rural areas, that facilitates the exchange of knowledge and expertise on how to promote startup-driven innovation in rural areas:
https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/scientific-activities-z/european-startup-village-forum_en
- **INGREDIENT 2** - RURAL TOOLKIT, for the relevant policies to be taken into account while developing the services (both the web platform and the agro-meteorological stations) in Istria. Funds and policies will be explored in the Rural Toolkit to ascertain the durability of the More than a Village actions beyond the end of the project: https://rural-vision.europa.eu/action-plan/cross-cutting/toolkit_en
- **INGREDIENT 3** - RURAL OBSERVATORY, for the relevant guidance on data collection and on relevant indicators for rural areas, including environmental indicators and analyses based on data from multiple sources and at the most appropriate territorial granularity, covering the economic, social and environmental dimensions:
https://rural-vision.europa.eu/maps-data_en
- **INGREDIENT 4** - GAMIFICATION ASPECTS OF THE EXPANSION OF THE MARKETPLACE. Gamification includes a behavioural component in a smart transition, normally by adding a reward system for virtuous actions, such as the reduction of food waste. Can a reward system be included in the web platform, with a system of awards/points to be allocated to particularly virtuous businesses, or municipalities, or people? Reward system of awards/points is to be discussed after a few years of actually using the web platform and/or maybe if the City of Buzet builds physical market which will lead to establishing a web market but for now it's too early to discuss about it and too early to foresee such a system.
- **INGREDIENT 5** - COOPERATION WITH ITC MURSKA SOBOTA, and the area of Pomurje. In their own Action Plan, ITC is developing/expanding a web platform and a marketplace mostly devoted to counter food waste: technical and practical hints can and should be exchanged with Buzet.

C. Scheduling of implementation activities for the smart action in Buzet in WP2 and WP3

We can consider the pilot action in Buzet as a two separate actions but also connected actions, Installation of 4 agrometeorological stations in Buzet area - which will be carried out in period 4 while the other action the “Creation of the web platform” will start with the activities in semester 4 and end up in semester 5. Activities related to the agrometeorological stations will firstly start with the identification of the locations where stations will be installed because installation is very specific and requires a couple of things to be fulfilled. Firstly, the location needs to be on a private property or at least near the property (private or public) to have the power source and to also have the stable internet connection which is key for data to be transferred instantly on the platform and other servers to avoid sim cards and internet that is not stable as the wired one. Along with the power source and good connection location must be identified as a good starting point to measure a couple of meteorological parameters mentioned earlier in the document and has to have agriculture products which are most known for the area. Locations that will be identified need to have an owner which is willing to cooperate and enable use of the electricity and internet. Both activities, agrometeorological stations and web platforms require a questionnaire which will be sent to all of the small farmers and producers in the area, more than 300 subjects are in our database we created during the project. After that regarding the stations, public procurement (simple procedure) will be conducted and we believe that there will not be any delays or issues regarding the contracting.

Activities related to web platforms will start also with the questionnaire that will be structured in a way that farmers and producers can also suggest how to develop the web platform and what will be the content of the platform because the platform will be created from scratch. After that in semester 3 or beginning of the semester 4 photographs and other materials will be collected so as the content which will be created for some time along with the developer which will be contracted after the public procurement (simple procedure). Plan is to also visit some of the owners of other platforms that are being used and function properly in the nearest destinations.

D. Risk assessment for the smart action in Buzet

City of Buzet is thinking that lots of risks that can occur will be identified and during the activities in the planning and developing the actions, they will be reduced to a minimum. Some of the risk we can mention are:

- Lack of physical market - „place” to buy and sell products from the platform (logistics) which will probably end up in developing the web platform without the web market and to be used only for promotional activities.
- Due to the terrain data from the weather stations will not be exact for each farmer or producer in the area
- Less interest by general public and / or farmers and producers in using of the web platform
- Tourists will not be informed about web-platform (private accommodation) because we cannot force private landlords to promote the platform but we believe that most of them will work on promoting the platform for their tourists
- Malfunction of the agrometeorological stations which can occur and will try to be fixed as soon as possible
- Procurement delays that can occur but because of the simple procedure there are minimum risks

E. The Transnational Action Plan - transnational recommendations and learning process for the implementation of the Action Plans

The following transnational outcomes can be described both as **pillars for the transnational aspects of the More than a Village Joint Strategy**, and as recommendations on how the **interregional learning within More than a Village can support the implementation of each of the Action Plans**. The following transnational recommendations will also be followed for the implementation of the Action Plan in Buzet.

- 1) *Enhancing the capacity, awareness, openness and readiness of the local population with respect to digital innovation*

There is no economy, attractiveness, liveability or sustainable future without the local populations in rural areas. Working with them in order to increase their awareness, capacity, openness and readiness with respect to digital innovation, its opportunities and its ever-changing realities, is fundamental. More than a Village has created the methodological rationale for this, the smartness assessment, and one of the key findings is the need to work closely with rural people to future-proof them with respect to all possible coming digital changes. Digital rural areas are rural areas that become more attractive both for local people and possibly newcomers.

2) Embedding integration of policy levels in rural policy decision making

More than a Village believes that, especially for rural areas, integration is key, so much that it is the cornerstone of the present Joint Strategy. Integration of policy levels should be embedded in all rural decision making processes, even more so than for urban areas, since rural areas often lack the critical mass to influence decision making at higher policy levels. Integration of policy levels is being experimented in the project's pilot areas and of course difficulties are emerging, but integration avoids (at least in theory) redundancies, resistances and delays, and should facilitate swifter and more concrete changes at local levels.

3) Including young people in rural decision making

As trivial as it may sound, there is no future without the younger generations, defined as people below 30 years of age. Including them in a participatory process aiming at co-building decisions for rural areas is also key: young voices often embody a vision that escapes older people, and that is often future-oriented, something that sometimes rural areas sorely lack. Participatory processes, like the one implemented in More than a Village, can and should openly declare they want to include the younger generations.

4) Enhancing and facilitating public-private rural-centred partnerships

All forces in rural areas must gather and join in, in an integrated approach, to guarantee smart and sustainable development and to counter the circle of decline. In the same integration approach of the Joint Strategy, rural areas must go beyond integration of policy makers and facilitate public-private cooperations and partnerships, in a well set policy and planning context, in order to also underline the business opportunities, for tourism and beyond, that abound in rural areas.

5) Allowing experimentation in rural strategies and action plans

Innovation in policy making for rural areas should be supported by allowing some degree of experimentation within the policies themselves, in order to foresee and encompass possible changes and re-orientations, incorporating resilience and adaptability in the act of policy making, in the spirit already embodied by the EU-supported Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3), as well as in all EU-supported plans and initiatives dedicated to smart-village development. The present Joint Strategy and the Action Plans, which are themselves characterised by an iterative and recursive nature, embody this ‘experimentation’ recommendation.

F. Beyond the Action Plan: further and complementary activities in Buzet

The Pilot action in Buzet and the activities related to the agrometeorological stations and web platform, especially web platforms are great start-up points in developing the proper physical market in the city which Buzet has needed for years. Web platform itself will probably not serve as a web market because of the logistics problems but if a proper market has been built the web platform could easily become a web market as well. We can say that a web platform is a precondition for a physical market which will then serve as a platform where you can communicate with the customers, offer daily fresh products and lots of other activities related to one another.

G. Attachments



More than a Village

