



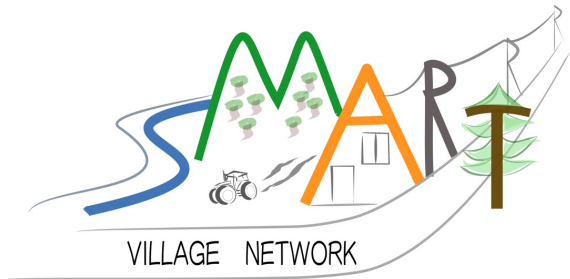
RURAL

PACT

**EUROPEAN RURAL PACT &
LOCAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

EDINA OCSKO, VICE-CHAIR OF THE RURAL PACT COORDINATION GROUP

GOCORE SEMINAR - INTERREG EUROPE, 15 NOV 2024



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My role (in the Rural Pact)

- E40 is a consultancy in rural and local development (among others): www.e40.eu/europe
- E40 was coordinating two EU-funded service contract projects (Smart Rural 21 & Smart Rural 27): www.smartrural21.eu & www.smartrural27.eu
- We are currently coordinating the Smart Village Network – network of villages/ rural communities across Europe (on a voluntary/ pro-bono basis): www.smart-vilage-network.eu
- Smart Village Network Services (E40) is member of the Rural Pact Coordination Group / I'm Vice-chair of the Group

Key messages of today

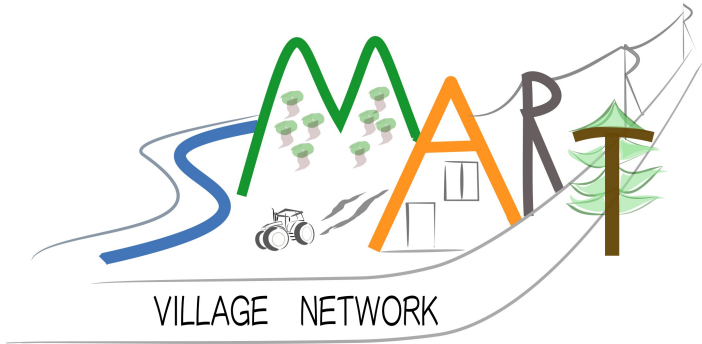
1. Smart Villages is a relatively new EU policy tool that helps local community engagement – useful Smart Rural resources and lessons!
2. We continue the engagement of local rural communities through the Smart Village Network
3. The needs of rural communities have to be taken much more seriously in policymaking (beyond words!)
4. The Rural Pact is an important advocacy and networking mechanism and tool to make the voices of rural communities better heard



Smart Villages & the Smart Rural projects

- **Smart Villages** – a relatively new EU policy instrument - is about supporting local rural communities to overcome challenges and help them to become resilient
- **Focus on local community level**, development of local vision (“strategy”), participatory approach, innovation (especially social innovation)
- **The Smart Rural projects** of the EU supported and raised awareness about inspiring communities and their smart initiatives, provided many tools to be used locally
- **21 lessons** from the Smart Rural 21 project for those who work with / engage rural communities





The Smart Village Network

- We **continue our work** in supporting and engaging local communities
- **Sharing information** (database) so that they find each other and others find them (cooperation)
- **Enabling exchange and inspire:** online events (Smart Café sessions – next 11/12/24!) and visits
- **Technical support:** to help them better access funding (joint applications), develop strategies, develop project ideas and implement projects
- **Policy advocacy:** Make villages visible and help them to make their voices better heard in policy-making (e.g. Rural Pact)

RURAL PACT



Amplifying **rural voices** and bringing them higher on the **political agenda**



Structuring and enabling networking, collaboration & mutual learning



Encouraging and monitoring voluntary commitments to **act for the vision**

What is the Rural Pact?

- Launched in 2021 by the European Commission
- To achieve the shared goals of the Long-Term Vision for Rural areas
- Facilitate interaction on rural matters among all types of stakeholders
- Mobilise public authorities and other stakeholders to act on the needs and aspirations of rural residents

Dilemmas and questions

- No dedicated funding – What's the added value?
- What does it really give to rural communities and other local stakeholders?
- What are the means to achieve the RP goals?

Key challenges in policy-making

Rural areas and communities are most often not being heard...



- Engagement of communities in EU/ national/ regional policy making is important **BUT...**
- ...ultimately local communities are interested in (support for) practical solutions on the ground that help them survive & become resilient – often no capacity to get engaged in policy;
- Rural communities do not have sufficient access to EU and other public funding (stronger sectoral – e.g. agriculture – and territorial – e.g. urban interests) – Rural areas and community-led approaches are underfunded (e.g LEADER or SV);
- Lack of local capacity in many areas – also often “don’t speak the EU jargon”;
- There are many projects and a lot of talking about the importance of rural communities & engagement – but these are not mirrored in EU/national/regional policies & support.

FINALLY LET’S NOT JUST TALK BUT ACT ALSO IN POLICY!

What can the Rural Pact do for communities?

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- The Rural Pact represents a political commitment towards rural areas and communities at the EU level – e.g. the RP Coordination Group Declaration on the Future EU policy is coming soon!

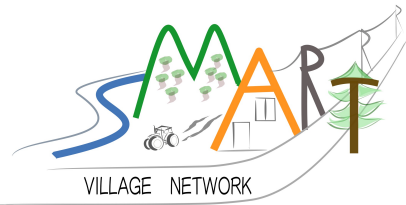
You can use the RP as an advocacy tool – Support letters are available!

- The Rural Pact needs to be translated into action at EU, national and regional levels (See *‘Making the Rural Pact happen...’* publications of the RPSO)

Create national and local Rural Pacts (collaborations between policymakers & communities...) to demonstrate that you take rural areas and communities’ needs seriously – The Rural Pact can give visibility to your commitment!

- Plenty of opportunities for knowledge sharing and networking!

Join the RP Community and take part in the activities (access to information, events, online community groups e.g. on Smart Villages)!



Get in touch!

www.e40.eu/europe

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Check out the Smart Rural outcomes!

www.smartrural21.eu

www.smartrural27.eu

Final Report: <https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/cmef/rural-areas/final-report-first-preparatory-action-smart-rural-areas-21st-century>

Join the Smart Village Network

www.smart-village-network.eu

info@smart-village-network.eu

Join the Rural Pact Community and community groups!

<https://ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/>