



11th Thematic Group meeting on Smart Villages in Poland

After the first Lab in [Finland](#) (19-20 November 2019), this webinar focused on how to design support for Smart Villages in the future CAP Strategic Plans (SP) based on the ideas being discussed by Poland. Other Member States were able to exchange information and questions about their own situations. Participants heard about the challenges facing rural villages in Poland and listened to a first-hand account from the village of Piaseczna Górka, winner of the Polish Smart Villages competition. The Polish Managing Authority presented its ideas for supporting this and other Polish villages through a dedicated framework for Smart Villages. At the core of their proposal is an easy to access, two stage approach to cooperation, complemented by investment support, LEADER/CLLD and the use of Lump Sums.

Event Information

Date: 1 April 2020

Location: Virtual meeting.

Participants: 45 participants - including EU institutions, Managing Authorities, National Rural Networks, European organisations, Local Action Groups (LAGs), local authorities, stakeholder organisations and researchers.

Outcomes: Insights on possible interventions for supporting Smart Villages in the future CAP Strategic Plans in Poland and other countries.

Website: [11th TG meeting on Smart Villages](#)

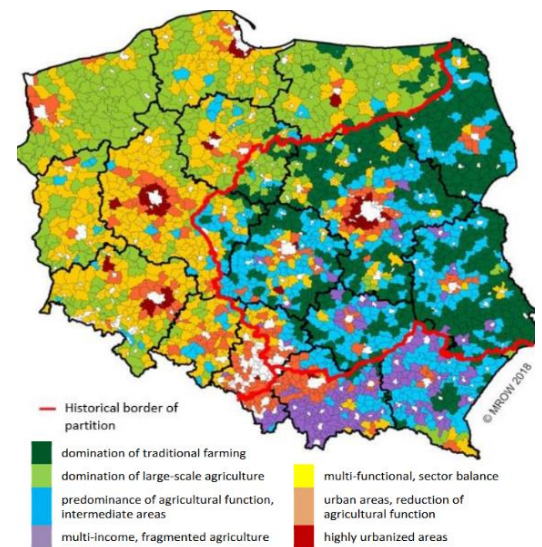
Polish Villages today and the importance of Smart Villages



[Ryszard Kamiński](#) (Undersecretary of State - Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Poland) explained that, in general, rural areas in Poland are growing in population and their situation has improved. However, poverty is still high and peripheral and Eastern areas are suffering from population decline. Key challenges that Smart Villages might address include: education and poverty, digitalisation, climate and the environment, and new sectors (circular economy, social economy, leisure sectors). In preparation for the CAP Strategic Plan, each region is preparing proposals for meeting the needs of its rural areas including those to be supported through Smart Villages.

[Alicja Jamorska-Kurek](#), from Piaseczna Górka, a village in the South-East of Poland, explained the steps that her community of 600 inhabitants had taken, and which led them to win the Polish Smart Village competition. They started by gathering people together and identifying their needs through a Facebook community. They then set up a village association which carried out a sequence of small but inspiring actions to improve community facilities, education and the environment. Alicja argued that every village should have its own Smart Village roadmap based on a simple diagnosis of needs and resources which could support local action in different fields (see [video](#)).

[Łukasz Komorowski](#) described the key lessons from the Polish 'My Smart Village' competition (2019). This showed that smart actions start small (with one village) but grow through partnership. Many Smart Villages already exist even if they do not use the name, and it is vital to build on what exists. Village leaders play a vital role and flexible and systemic financial support is needed (see [video](#)).



Supporting Smart Villages with the future CAP Strategic Plans: The ideas in Poland

[Beata Rodak on behalf of Joanna Gierulska](#) (Poland's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development) described the existing instruments that are relevant for Smart Villages such as LEADER (M19), Investments in Basic Services and Village Renewal (M07) and Cooperation by EIP-Agri Operational Groups (M16). She then went on to present how Smart Villages could add value by further strengthening local action by rural communities.

Key ideas for the future support framework for Smart Villages in Poland

The main purpose of Smart Villages interventions is to ensure the availability of a wide variety of services using digital tools, to support actions with a positive impact on the environment and climate, to increase the production capacity of energy from renewable sources, and to deal with depopulation and ageing. These interventions should stimulate further socio-economic development and innovation in the villages based on their social, economic, cultural and environmental assets. The Smart Villages intervention could contribute to the climate change and environmental objectives of the CAP.

Smart Villages support would be targeted at the level of one or two village settlements – in other words at a smaller territorial scale than LEADER and even smaller than an average Polish municipality. However, cooperation among a greater number of villages would be encouraged to deal with large-scale challenges such as the energy transition. All cooperation should involve at least two entities. The idea is to provide easily accessible support for a **preparatory phase** for Smart Villages through a lump sum financed through the Cooperation intervention of the future CAP Strategic Plans. If successful, this preparatory support would open the door to support for further tangible and intangible investments in an **implementation phase** financed under the Investment intervention and/or LEADER.

Preparatory Support

Art 71 Cooperation

Preparatory support could be offered to help local communities in the preparation of Smart Villages concepts or plans/strategies. The beneficiaries of the preparatory support could be natural or legal persons, NGOs or LAGs. The Smart Villages plan could contain a light SWOT and identification of needs, a description of the participatory process and the planned operations, expected effects and the digital, environmental and climate components.

Form of support: Simplified Cost Option - Lump Sum

Implementation of Smart Villages plan/strategy

Art.68 Investment & LEADER

Additional support could be provided for the implementation of small-scale actions and further investments through other CAP interventions such as Investments and LEADER (e.g. by defining specific criteria in other interventions) and through other EU, national, regional and private Funds. Smart Villages can be integrated into Local Development Strategies but this will not be part of the LEADER intervention.

Form of support: Reimbursement of eligible costs but advance payments could be assured. Possibly Simplified cost option – Lump Sum for non-infrastructure projects.

Innovation brokers

Advisory services, LAGs, NRN

Innovation brokers could be used to improve the access to knowledge and encourage innovation. Advisory services, LAGs and CAP Network could all play a role in preparation of Smart Villages plans, supporting animation and providing links to specialised providers of knowledge.

The ideas for these interventions will be described in more detail in a dedicated Thematic Group [Briefing](#).

Finally, participants shared views about the selection criteria for smart villages, the links between LEADER and Smart Villages, possible CAP interventions to be used for supporting Smart Villages, links to other funds and how to improve access to information and knowledge for Smart Villages. The [Annex](#) to this highlight report provides useful information based on the results of previous thematic Groups.

