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Smart Villages in Finland

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The existing policy landscape for supporting Smart Villages in Finland

- 2008 the first national strategy for Fast broadband, **national funding** for rural broadband -> 2018
- 2016: Study for Smart countryside, governmental project
- 2017: New governmental decision for **Rural Digitalization**
- 2018: Governmental alignment: Priority of digital services (public sector)
- **Co-operation** between national administration and other actors → **Broadband Competence Office** Finland www.bco.fi
- National Rural policy council: **target setting** for rural areas
- National **Village Action Association**
- **Rural Development Programme 2014-2020**, regional and local actions (M07, Leader),
 - Broadband funding (village broadband)
 - Digitalisation projects
 - Smartest Village of Finland -competition 2018-2020:
<https://www.maaseutu.fi/en/topical-greetings-from-countryside-and-around-the-world/32-villages-want-to-be-the-smartest-in-finland/>
- Governmental Programme 2019-2022
- Draft for national plan for traffic system may include something for SV
- **CAP 2023 - 2027**

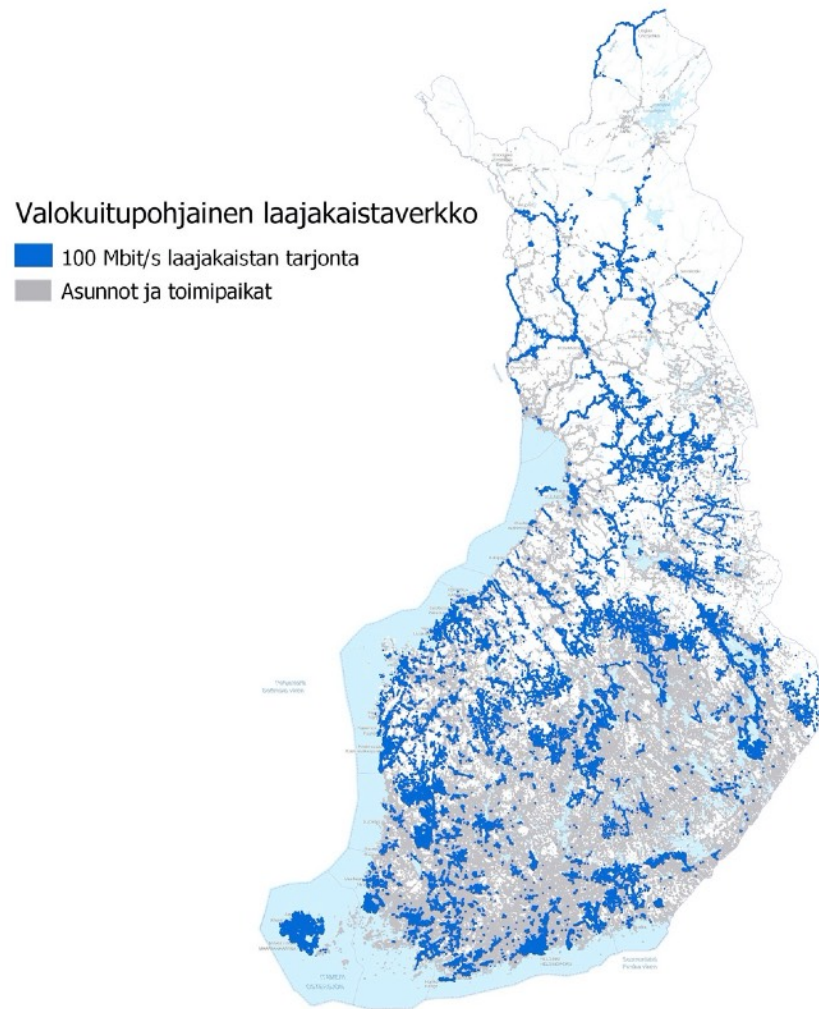
- 'Smart Villages' is the sub-theme of the broader ENRD thematic work on 'Smart and Competitive Rural Areas'.
- A Thematic Group (TG) has worked on this topic between September 2017 and July 2020.
- The Thematic Group (TG) on Smart Villages was to explore how rural services in are as such as **health, social services, education, energy, mobility, retail and others**, can be improved and made more sustainable and innovative through a) the deployment of ICT tools and/or b) by supporting community led actions and projects.



Activities in relation to smart villages in RDP 2014-2020

- **Digital know-how** for seniors and entrepreneurs (M07, Leader)
- Digital tutor actions (M01, Leader)
- **Digitalisation of cultural heritage and other activities** (M07, Leader)
- **Multiservice centers**, integrated services (M07, Leader)
- Digital tools for tourism and different kind of sports (M07 and M16 and Leader)
- **e-health service** and other services for different age groups, local experiments, planning, pilots (M07, Leader)
- **e-learning**, distance learning (M01, Leader)
- skills and know-how for using digital services (M01 and M07 and M16)
- digitalisation of rural businesses, new co-operation (M16)
- integration of immigrants (M07, M16, Leader)
- certain tangible and certain intangible investments and start-up aid for rural enterprises (M6.2 and 4.2)

Outstanding Challenges. What is needed for delivering smart village?



- Broadband infrastructure (fast broadband)
- The activators, “the priests” are needed and a lot of work. Somebody to collect and co-ordinate actors and work. Activists are getting older..
- New attitude and know-how
- **CO-OPERATION:** Strong communication and interaction in the region and between regions
- Quality and reliability of services, Know-how and knowledge transfer
- Change in attitudes towards technology – information gap, knowledge
- New people (immigrants) and young people. Amount of elderly people: dependency ratio 146 in 2016 in Finland

SWOT analysis concerning Smart Villages

The SWOT analysis has led to the identification and prioritisation of a series local needs which are especially relevant for being addressed through Smart Villages:



More and better broadband infrastructure (fast broadband) in rural areas;



Enhanced quality and reliability of services;



Support for local 'activators', local champions that gather and coordinate actors and work locally;



Enhanced knowledge transfer to improve digital literacy and change attitudes towards technology;



Enhanced cooperation and stronger communication and interaction among stakeholders within regions and between regions;



Integrating new people (immigrants) and young people.

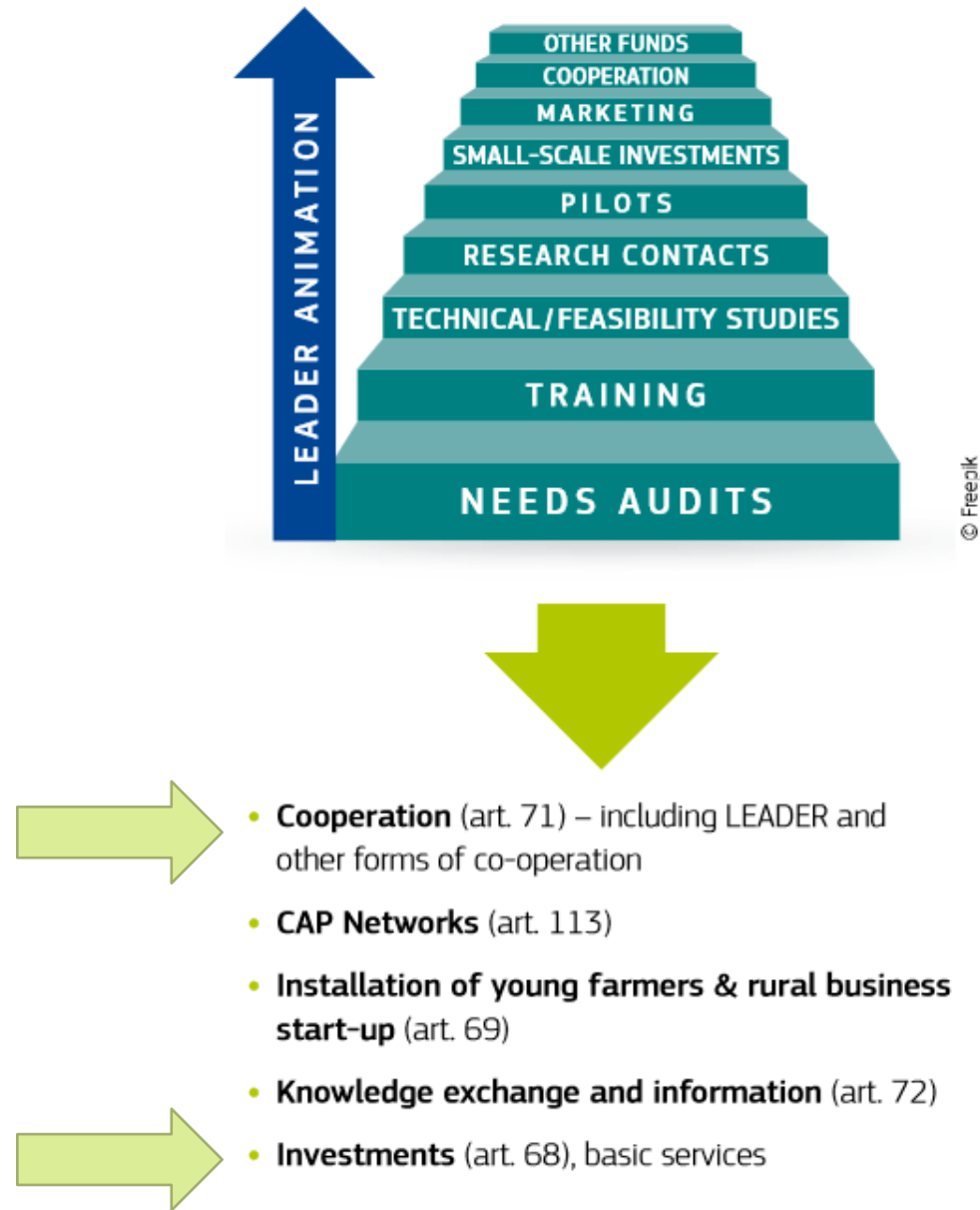
Types of interventions

Several new types of intervention are being discussed and considered in Finland to support Smart Villages in the fields mentioned above.

In particular, two new forms cooperation (art. 71) are being considered to support Smart Villages at different territorial scales and complement LEADER.

In addition, a network of Smart Villages Innovation Brokers is being considered to help Smart Villages in the initial stages with actions such as need assessments, training, feasibility studies, contacts with research, piloting and testing, small scale investments. e Smart Villages Innovation Brokers could be coordinated by the CAP Networks

Possible CAP interventions to support smart villages



4/16/21

	Smart Villages Cooperation projects (local village level – at least 2 villages)	Smart Villages Activation projects (regional or subregional – groups of villages)
Description	<p>The aim is to extend the scope of innovation support beyond agri-food to other rural sectors and fields (e.g. energy, mobility, education, digitalisation, services etc). Cooperation projects will be based on 'local action plans' that aim to provide fast and flexible support for the implementation of innovative actions that respond to a specific local challenge or need.</p> <p>Preparatory support for the development of the plan is also envisaged to support local actors to develop their proposals.</p>	<p>These are long term umbrella and/or theme projects that aim to animate and promote innovation between groups of villages on cross-cutting issues such as digitalisation and broadband connectivity, the networking and clustering of SME's and so on. These projects need to achieve the critical mass for becoming sustainable and can span one or more LAG areas.</p>
Territorial scope	Local: Smart Village initiatives based on cooperation between several actors in 1-2 villages.	Regional or subregional covering more than one LAG area.
Possible eligible beneficiaries	Cooperation between village associations and other actors such as research institutes, SMEs, municipalities public authorities, etc.	Cooperation between several village associations and other actors such as research institutes, SMEs, municipalities, etc.
Indicators	Smart Villages cooperation projects will contribute to the result indicator 'R.33 – % of rural population covered by a supported SV strategy.'	Smart Villages / Countryside Activation projects will contribute to output indicator 'O.28-Number of cooperation groups – excluding EIP OG reported under O.1'. The result indicator to be decided.

Other ideas / plans at this point

- **Smart Villages Innovation brokers – CAP Networks (art. 113).**
 - The idea is to create a team of Smart Villages Innovation Brokers to improve the access of rural communities to specialised knowledge in fields such as digital technologies, energy, mobility, service innovations and so on. In the current proposal, the CAP Network would coordinate the brokers and offer guidance, animation, and share information through meetings, seminars and other networking activities between the villages and brokers.
- **Flexible Finance (Simplified Costs Options)**
 - During the 2014-20 period Finland has used a wide range of Simplified Cost Options in the Rural Development Programmes. These include the use of **flat rate SCO of 15 % and 24 %**. Finland has also been one of the first countries to experiment extensively with **lump sum** SCOs with draft budgets.
 - They can also be used to simplify Smart Village projects.

The scope of the potential support for Smart Villages in Finland

There is no intention to produce an overarching national strategy.

The aim is to be able to respond in a fast and flexible manner to **the needs** expressed by local communities in the following fields, mainly using **digitalization** as a tool or as a helper:

- **Social** – innovations to ensure sustainable and good quality of social and cultural services. Also, investments in skills for the future, support for urban-rural linkages and sustainable wellbeing: preventing segregation and inequality between people, improve integration of immigrants and other new comers, sense of community, living conditions, culture, safety, improving rural know-how, and accessing the “hidden” knowledge of rural communities
- **Environmental** – innovations to improve resource efficiency, create local energy communities, reduce the carbon footprint, enhance biodiversity, both protect and valorise environmental assets. Encouraging municipal authorities, business representatives, local residents, research institutes and experts to work together to devise and tailor new cost-effective solutions to reduce emissions, especially in the contexts of transportation and mobility, housing and food. Low carbon villages: circular economy, sustainable food production and local food
- **Economic** investments and actions to support (business development in) emerging value chains and local economic clusters (both agricultural and non-agricultural) based on local assets and (potential) areas of comparative advantage (bioeconomy, smart tourist destinations, etc.). Smart transport and logistic solutions, smart local services and service chains and smart food chains, digitalization and co-operation of enterprises. Connectivity (broadband) and different models for businesses (for example social entrepreneurship).

<https://www.maaseutu.fi/en/the-rural-network/smart-villages>

