

A Project overview

A.1 Project identification

Title

Improving policies for the promotion of Smart Villages and rural digital transformation

87/110

Acronym

Digital Rural

13/18

Project ID

02C0438

Name of the lead partner organisation

LP01 Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania (CIHEAM MAICh)

Policy objective

Smarter Europe (policy objective 1)

Specific objective

Digitisation

Project duration

	Duration	Start date	End date
Core phase	36 months	01 April 2024	31 March 2027
Follow-up phase	12 months	01 April 2027	31 March 2028
Closure phase	3 months	01 April 2028	30 June 2028

Is this application a resubmission of a proposal that was not approved under an earlier call?

No

A.2 Project summary

Please give a short overview of the project (in the style of a press release) focusing in particular on the issue addressed, the partnership and the overall objective. Please note that, should the project be approved, this summary will be published on the programme's website. (In English language)

In the 2021-2027 MFF administrations, at all levels, have been provided with a wide range of funds to improve digital infrastructure, increase digital usage, enhance digital skills and inclusion, and promote digital innovation in rural areas. MFF and Next Generation have reached rural communities through classical ERDF, Cohesion Funds, and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP 23-27), or newest Just Transition Fund (JTF), Digital Europe or InvestEU Programmes.

However, to optimise the Funds benefits, and overcome digital gaps, these initiatives need to engage and prioritise the needs of rural communities and stakeholders themselves. Otherwise, due to the continuous digital transformation, the digital divide between urban and rural grows naturally.

Administrations must recognise the different starting points of rural areas and co-design digital pathways from the bottom-up, while at the same time building bridges with innovative top-down strategies.

A group of policy makers, from local administration and regions with rural demography, have designed the proposal Digital Rural to work on their policy instruments following a parallel double learning process: bottom-up to define the Digital Policy Assessments; and a top-down to implement those innovative policies learned in the interregional exchange

The OBJECTIVE is to IMPROVE THE COORDINATION on the coming funds from the different EU, national and local policies, making the INVESTMENT MORE EFFICIENT and effective in order to accelerate the implementation of the Smart Village concept, and decrease the digital gap with urban areas.

To achieve it, each rural area has to implement a COMMUNITY-LED process, where the selection of the priorities and funding lines will be marked by a BOTTOM-UP approach, through stakeholders engagement and participation, that will be reinforced by parallel top-down innovative solutions identified through the interregional exchange of experiences promoted in the project.

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C.1 Issue addressed

What is the common regional development issue addressed by the project? Please make sure this information is coherent with the programme specific objective you selected in section A and with the description of the policy instruments in section D.

In the 2021-2027 MFF administrations, at all levels, have been provided with a wide range of funds to improve digital infrastructure, increase digital usage, enhance digital skills and inclusion, and promote digital innovation in rural areas. MFF and Next Generation have reached rural communities through classical ERDF, Cohesion Funds, and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP 23-27), or newest Just Transition Fund (JTF), Digital Europe or InvestEU Programmes.

However, to optimise the Funds benefits, and overcome digital gaps, these initiatives need to engage and prioritise the needs of rural communities and stakeholders themselves.

Administrations must recognise the different starting points of rural areas and co-design digital pathways from the bottom-up, while at the same time building bridges with innovative top-down strategies.

This approach is defended by Smart Villages EC initiative, but it is scarcely implemented, which produces a less efficient implementation of funds.

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Why is this issue important for European regions? Please be as specific as possible (data and statistics are welcome if possible).

Covering 44.6 % of EU and home to 93.1 million people (20.8 % of EU population), the EU's rural regions are generally challenged by depopulation, lack of infrastructure, a poorly diversified economy, lack of education facilities, and digital gap and divide.

From the 14-20 period, EC Smart Villages initiative is pointing that, Smart Villages Digital Strategies could, not only help to solve the rural digital gap and divide, but also integrate the solutions for many of the rural problems.

Regions and rural areas continue to implement top-down initiatives, while the bottom-up processes for policy design are scarcer, even if they have proven to be more efficient and increase funds usability (ENRD Smart Village briefs 2020-21).

Due to the continuous digital transformation, the digital divide between urban and rural grows naturally, and to bridge this gap it is necessary to be more efficient in the fund management and priorities identification.

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How does the project contribute to the EU Cohesion policy? Does it also contribute to other European strategies or policies?

The project contributes to the Cohesion Policy, in 3 Funds, mainly in:

POLICY OBJECTIVE 1. A more competitive and smarter Europe, especially on the Specific Objectives:

- 1.2. Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities
- 1.5. Enhancing digital connectivity

But even PO5 Europe closer to citizens provides funding opportunities.

However, the improvement of policies to achieve a better integration of Smart Villages Digital Strategies, not only contributes to most Cohesion Policy Funds working on digitization (ERDF, ESF, CF, JTF) but also contribute to a large range of policies even outside the Cohesion Policy.

The most important policies are:

- CAP Strategic Plans (EAFRD)
- DIGITAL DECADE policy programme 2030
- DIGITAL EDUCATION Action Plan (2021-2027)

All of them promoting better skills, e-services, e-businesses and connectivity, such as expected in the Smart Villages Digital Strategies.

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C.2 Project's overall objective

The project's overall objective is to improve the implementation of regional development policies in the field of Smarter Europe (policy objective 1), in particular to improve the policy instruments described in section D of the present application.

Please further describe the project's overall objective below.

The project aims to provide a revision of the funding priorities in the selected rural areas of the partners.

The objective is to IMPROVE THE COORDINATION on the coming funds from the different EU, national and local policies, making the INVESTMENT MORE EFFICIENT and effective in order to accelerate the implementation of the Smart Village concept, and decrease the digital gap with urban areas.

To achieve it, each rural area has to implement a COMMUNITY-LED process, where the selection of the priorities and funding lines will be marked by a BOTTOM-UP approach, through stakeholders engagement and participation, that will be reinforced by parallel top-down innovative solutions identified through the interregional exchange of experiences promoted in the project.

The numerous fund lines available for digitalization, coming from ERDF, EAFRD, CS, Next Generation, etc. will be integrated under a common investment guideline, designed both using bottom-up and top-down approaches.

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C.3 Project innovative character

Please explain the innovative character of the project and of its expected results, in particular in comparison to similar initiatives/projects you are aware of.

ERUDITE and CARPE DIGEM have been capitalized due to their similarities with the current proposal. Other passed project, such as DigiBEST, NEXT2MET, SKILLS+, have also been analysed, but they are not considered to be fully linked to Rural Digital.

Innovative character:

- Partnership is new, even with newcomers, with a municipal or rural-region profile, and just includes the advisory partner from ERUDITE.
- Issue addressed is also different, with MAs trying to create more efficient policy frameworks (aiming at creating Digital Strategies) to increase their skills in the implementation of existing funds.
- As detailed in part E, even if the project use tools from past projects (SEROI+), Digital Rural go further, implementing a parallel double learning process: bottom-up to define the Digital Policy Assessments; and a top-down to implement those innovative policies learned in the interregional exchange. Both processes are designed with permanent peer reviews, workshops and events.

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For projects deriving from past Interreg experiences (follow-up projects), please clarify the added-value of this cooperation compared to the previous experience.

Even if the project will use an important amount of work developed by passed projects, nor the partners or the project itself is a follow-up of the existing projects.

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C.4 Project approach

Please describe the approach/methodology adopted to achieve the project's objectives within the core phase.

- How is the learning process organised at regional and interregional levels? If applicable, please describe the different steps you envisage to reach the project's objective.
- What is the purpose of the different types of activities proposed? In particular, how do they contribute to individual and/or organisational learning? How are these activities interrelated?
- How do you ensure the involvement of stakeholders in the learning process?

Following the Programme guideless, the approach of the project is designed to maximize the exchange of experience and the identification, analysis, and transfer of good practices.

In this section, we explain some of the key components of the project learning process:

- Levels of learning
- Stakeholder group
- Quality of the activities carried out
- Role of experts
- Online exchange of experience.
- Integrated approach

LEVEL OF LEARNING

- Learning at INDIVIDUAL level is expected in 3 to 8 staff per organization, who will be involved in direct project cooperation activities.
- Learning at ORGANIZATIONAL level. Each semester, every partner will deliver an internal feedback meeting in which the staff members directly involved in the actions will report back to the relevant colleagues, managers, and elected representatives of the organisation.

QUALITY OF ACITIVITIES

The Semester Leader will coordinate the quality steps:

- PREPARATION: to assure maximum stakeholders involvement in each Interregional Event, the host have to send the details of the exchange 1 to 2 MONTHS in ADVANCE.
- IMPLEMENTATION: the host and UL as advisory partner will lead the exchange events. UL will integrate PARTICIPATIVE activities in the events to increase exchange among stakeholders.
- DOCUMENTATION AND MONITORING: the host will produce the event report in the following month, which will be published, while the advisory partner will deliver the quality report using online questionnaires.

ROLE OF EXPERTS

No experts are expected to be involved in the exchange of experience process.

ONLINE EXCHANGE

Even if most of exchange activities are face-to-face, 1 online interregional exchange is planned per semester between the bi-annual face meetings, to maintain the stakeholder involvement.

INTEGRATED APPROACH

Stakeholders will follow a continuous exchange process at regional and interregional level.

- TOP-DOWN approach for the innovative policies. The interregional exchange will provide a source of innovative actions to be included in the policies Assessment in a top-down mode.
- BOTTOM-UP approach for the definition of the main community-led policies. Through participative actions, partners and communities will define the main policy to be included in the Digital Policies Assessment.

TOP-DOWN

1. Interregional events, face-to-face and online, every 3 months

Purpose: the face-to-face events will share best practices from the consortium, while the online will include consortium practices, and outside practices coming from the Smart Rural 21 and 27. Stakeholders will actively participate in these key actions of the project, creating learning at individual level (staff and stakeholders).

2. Internal feedback meetings (every 6 months)

Purpose: to report to relevant colleagues, managers, and elected representatives of the organisation, to create learning at organization level.

3. Workshops for innovative practices selection (semester 5-6)

Purpose: based on the interregional exchange, stakeholders groups will select best policy practices to be implemented top-down in the phase 1.

BOTTOM-UP

This process follows four levels of participation: information; consultation; joint development and collective decision making.

This learning process is mainly regional, based on face-to-face meetings, even if some of them will coincide with interregional face-to-face events.

The main actions described in Part E are:

- Creation of a Stakeholder Group and Community Group, including project stakeholders and main community actors.
- Launching information campaigns.
- Participative analysis, based on organisation of events, public meetings, village audits, training courses, etc.
- Workshops for Joint development of the policies and Collective decision making on preferred projects.

- Finally, partners will create a permanent bottom-up structure and tool to allow the continuous participation of stakeholders in the policies feedback and creation.

v3 | Approved

Please explain the approach/methodology envisaged for **the follow-up phase** (i.e. last year of the project)? To what extent are the stakeholders expected to be involved in the follow-up phase?

Follow-up phase will monitor the effects of the policy improvements, while keeping exchange related to the monitoring systems:

7.1. MONITORING EFFECTS OF THE POLICY IMPROVEMENTS

Partner regions monitor the effect of the improvements in their territories, following their monitoring systems defined in IE11, guided by the advisory partner, and report it each semester to the Monitoring Unit (MU).

7.2. MONITORING THE IMPROVEMENTS CREATED BY ACTION PLANS.

Partner areas that produced an action plan will report each 3 months to the MU if the improvements have been achieved.

7.2. MONITORING NEW POLICY IMPROVEMENTS.

MU will gather if new improvements area achieved, either identified in phase 1, or phase 2.

7.4. MAINTAINING EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES

At the end of semester 7 (online) and 8 (face-to-face), partners will exchange experience on their monitoring systems, meeting to peer review the different monitoring methods and analyse the modification of the less effective monitoring systems.

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C.5 Project indicators

Output indicators

Code	RC087
Title	N° of organisations cooperating across borders
Target	75
Code	RC084
Title	N° of pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects
Target	0
Code	O14
Title	N° of policy instruments addressed
Target	7
Code	O15
Title	N° of interregional policy learning events organised
Target	14
Code	O16
Title	N° of good practices identified
Target	12

Result indicators

Code	RII2
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Title N° of organisations with increased capacity due to their participation in project activities

51

Performance (%) 68

Code RI3

Title N° of policy instruments improved thanks to the project

7

Performance (%) 100

C.6 Communication strategy

Please indicate the overall objectives of the project's communication strategy.

Digital Rural communication strategy aims at enrolling the maximum number of community representatives, stakeholders and policy makers in the co-creation process and the learning process of the project, focusing on achieving a large participation of community members in the bottom-up sessions, which are expected to be very participative.

Using the participative process, implemented in the initial 3 semesters, communication aims to keep stakeholders involved through the full learning process.

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Please describe the target groups of your communication strategy.

Final targets are the policy makers, but the project initial focus will be community key actors, to be enrolled in the Community Groups, so they support us in the involvement of the community in the bottom-up process. Partners expect to reach a good number of stakeholders, with the objective to reach 100 organizations cooperation across borders.

The organizations, target of the communication, are mainly local and rural: policy makers, NGOs and associations, business representatives, etc.

493/500

Please explain the main communication tools and channels (including social media outreach) that will be used.

As targets are well identified, both the message and the channels are clear, due to the partners are key actors themselves in their rural area.

Part E described how the main communication tools are direct contacts from the partners to the policy and community groups, phone calls, interviews, meetings and emails to promote their participation in bottom-up sessions. After this, website and full social media, using Administrations official profiles, will assure visibility of actions.

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Please describe briefly how the communication strategy will be implemented and evaluated.

Leitrim County Council will be the partner leading the communication, and will identify a person as Communication Manager (CM), responsible for the implementation of the communication strategy. v3 | Approved

Consortium will agree to the strategy, including task allocation and timing, and CM is responsible for periodically reviewing whether the strategy is reaching its objectives.

Communication will be evaluated by Monitoring Unit through questionnaires, delivering results in semester quality report.

493/500

Will the management of the project's communication be externalised?

No

C.7 Horizontal principles

Please indicate to which extent the project contributes to EU horizontal principles, and justify your choice.

Sustainable development

Type of contribution

Neutral

Description of the contribution

Digital Rural partners have designed the proposal with the consideration of non-creating harm to the environment. Every task and project activity has been analysed in the design stage, and will be analysed in the implementation stage, in order to identify any potentially significant environmental issues.

This environmental design principle has been adopted in the design of technical activities, coordination and monitoring, including the risk assessment.

During implementation, the Technical Office will provide permanent review of task pre-development and consider available options to assure that activities do not adversely affect the quality of the environment.

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Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

Type of contribution

Neutral

Description of the contribution

Following the Article 9 CPR and Article 22(2) Interreg directive 2021/1059, the partners have designed the project assuring that project actions, objectives and results are:

- transparent and non-discriminatory,
- guarantee accessibility to people with disability and gender equality,
- have into account the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Partners have taken appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of Rural Digital.

In the design stage, project partners have sought that the proposal includes a proactive focus to the promotion of a positive effect on the horizontal principle of Equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

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Equality between men and women

Type of contribution

Neutral

Description of the contribution

Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU establish that equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas. This principle of equality shall not prevent the adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the under-represented sex.

In order to affect this horizontal principle in a positive way, the consortium has taken into account the measures described in the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 published by the EC in 2020, specifically the Principle 3 "Leading equally throughout society", and especially on measure "Achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics".

As women's under-representation in decision-making positions persists, consortium has determined that:

- The project manager, communication manager and financial manager will be minimum 2 women.
- Steering Group will count minimum 50% of women.
- The Monitoring Unit and external experts unit will count minimum 50% of women.

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C.8 Project management

C.8.1 Overall management

Please describe how the overall management will be ensured? Which body will make strategic project decisions and according to which rule? What will be the composition of this body? If relevant, how will the responsibilities be shared among the partners?

THE OBJECTIVE of the MANAGEMENT is assuring the effective management of the project, to be done through the Project Management Plan and its corresponding implementation.

OVERALL APPROACH TO THE COORDINATION

The project coordination is based on the classic distribution of responsibilities per partner, agreed in the preparation stage, and surveyed by a Monitoring Unit to provide continuous evaluation of the management.

The management structure includes:

- Project coordination bodies (SG, PC, CM, semester leaders), with decision making power, and day-to-day shared tasks.
- Monitoring Unit, led by MAICH, composed by an external controller, and an external Network of experts.

COORDINATION BODIES

Steering Group (SG): is composed by one member of each partner with decision making capacity and the Project coordinator, the SG is the decision-making body meeting twice a year. Decisions are taken by consensus, and if required by voting, where coordinator have double votes in case of tie.

Project coordinator (PC) and Communication Manager (CM). MAICH is the single point of contact between the JS and the consortium, while Leitrim County Council will be the institution in charge of the communication.

MAICH will provide from its staff one project manager and financial manager, while Leitrim will appoint a Communication Manager (CM).

Technical Office (TO). Composed by PC, CM and a permanent staff of one technician from each partner with a technical responsibility (semester leader).

RESPONSIBILITIES SHARED

Semester and tasks are led by partners based on their experience and the calendar actions:

- MAICH is PC and coordinates S1, with proven experience in coordination of projects.
- Leitrim coordinate communication
- Univ. Ljubljana, advisory partner, coordinate several events and support the participative process.
- PNN (HU) coordinates S2
- TARTUMAA (EE) coordinates S3
- WestBIC (IE) coordinates S4
- Vidzeme (LV) coordinates S5
- Rzeszow (PL) coordinates S6

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C.8.2 Day-to-day coordination

Please describe how the day-to-day coordination will be ensured.

The structures created for management and monitoring assure a proper day-to-day management, with the Technical Office delivering the day-to-day coordination with several tools:

MANAGEMENT DOCUMENTATION

Key documents are distributed partners, such as the Project Management Plan, the Partnership agreement and the Quality evaluation Plan.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Tools for the collaboration and communication among partners are email, web-site, Skype/teams, googledrive, Drop Box.

COORDINATION MILESTONES are:

- Coinciding with the face-to-face interregional events each 6 months, allocated in the countries of the task leaders, the SG will meet and analyse project advances.
- In addition, at least once every 3 months the consortium will meet online.

QUALITY MONITORING UNIT

Led by MAICh, is composed by an external controller and a Network of 10 experts that monitor the management, the exchange actions and the communication, using quality questionnaires and delivering one report per semester.

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Will the project coordination be externalised?

No

C.8.3 Financial management and reporting

Please describe how the financial management and reporting procedures will be ensured.

MAICh will assure that the consortium follows the Programme Manual guidelines for reporting and monitoring:

- The progress report will be submitted 3 months after each reporting period, except for the last report which must be submitted by the end date of the Project.
- Each reporting period is six months, only the first and last reports cover a longer period.

To assure a good reporting process and economic expending, the PC will implement a FINANCE UNIT in cooperation with the Technical Office.

The Finance Unit will deliver a calendar of economic reporting, and request the partners to make a prevision of spending for each semester. 30 days before the end of the semester, the Unit will request to fill a drive excel with the paid expending, and the pending expending to be paid before the submission of in the partner report.

The Unit will be able to analyse the data and report to MAICh and Technical Office if there are significant underspending of any partners.

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Will the financial management be externalised?

No

D Main policy instruments addressed

Overview main policy instruments addressed

Number †	Name of the policy instrument	Name of the policy responsible authority	Involvement of the policy responsible authority	Investment for Jobs and Growth programme	Country
1	Regional programme 2021-2027 Kriti	Region of Crete	Partner	Yes	Greece (Ελλάδα)
2	The Regional Innovation Strategy for the Podkarpackie Region for 2021-2030 (RIS).	Rzeszow Regional Development Agency	Partner	No	Poland (Polska)
3	Digital Leitrim – THE DIGITAL STRATEGY FOR COUNTY LEITRIM	Leitrim County Council	Partner	No	Ireland (Éire/Ireland)
4	Vidzeme Planning Region (VPR) Development Program for 2021-2027.	Vidzeme Planning region	Partner	No	Latvia (Latvija)
5	Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme Plus	Vas County Government Office (VVÖH)	Partner	Yes	Hungary (Magyarország)
6	Elva Local Development Plan under Tartu County Development Strategy	Elva Municipality	Partner	No	Estonia (Eesti)
7	Programme active community development – Twente accelerate. Visie 2022-2026 'Actief Noaberschap'.	Municipality Hof van Twente	Partner	No	Netherlands (Nederland)

Overview pilot actions

Number †	Title	Policy instrument(s) concerned
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D.1 Policy instrument 1

D.1.1 Territorial context and general description

D.1.1.1 Territorial context

What is the state of play of the issue addressed by the project in the territory covered by the policy instrument? Which challenge needs to be overcome in this territory? Please be as specific as possible and provide detailed information on the characteristics of the territory.

In the Region of Crete (RoC), the current approach to rural and digital investment is made without an integrated base, and several funds target the same Smart Village concept. The existing investment in Crete 2021-2027 ROP, the Rural Development Programme and the CAP strategic Plans work separately to achieve the same objective of making rural areas of Crete more digital and smarter. Local to national programmes could be coordinated under a common umbrella, such as the expected Digital Policies Assessment or Smart Villages Digital Strategies.

When analysing the main pillars of sound promotion of digital development of Smart Villages, in Region of Crete (RoC), the following issues and problems arise:

- In terms of broadband infrastructure, in 2021, many areas in Crete were still reliant on ADSL or VDSL connections. Recently there have been efforts to expand fibre optic infrastructure in Crete, but rural areas of Crete still face challenges in broadband availability and speeds.
- Regarding digital skills and literacy, the education system of the RoC should aim to improve the ICT skills of citizens and strengthen the capacity of institutions and businesses to conduct applied research for e-products and services.
- Through the "e-Government" platform, residents of RoC can access various government services online, such as tax filings, business registration, and public sector interactions, however usage and awareness are low compared with other continental areas.

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D.1.1.2 General description of the policy instrument

Please name the policy instrument addressed (for Investment for jobs and growth goal programmes, please provide the name of the operational programme concerned).

Regional programme 2021-2027 Kriti

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Is this instrument an Investment for jobs and growth goal programme (i.e. national or regional operational programme)?

Yes

Please indicate the geographical scope of this instrument

Regional

Please select how the authority responsible for this policy instrument is involved in the project:

The authority responsible for this policy instrument is involved as...

Partner

Please select the authority responsible for this policy instrument.

PP04 Region of Crete

Please describe the main features of this policy instrument (e.g. objective, characteristics, priority or measure addressed).

The Kriti 2021-2027 Operational Program adopts the four development objectives of the Region's Strategic Planning for Quality Development, Active Environmental Management, Dynamic Social Cohesion and Effective Governance. It is made up of 8 priorities that correspond to the Cohesion Policy Objectives. v3 | Approved

The main actions and priorities identified for the digital sector in Crete are beyond improvement of the general digital (broadband and 5G) infrastructure and applications to improve the efficiency, competitiveness, consume experience and access to markets of SMEs:

- Precision agricultural technologies to increase efficiency, reduce inputs and pollution.

- The use of AI to improve daily life through improved medical imagery and treatments, digital management systems for sustainable resource use; and improved quality of life, greater opportunities for citizens via smart cities, villages and buildings.

The Smart Specialization Strategy has been implemented in Crete with an expanded business discovery process. More than 400 projects supporting innovative entrepreneurship were funded by the NSRF 2014-2020. The relationship between the business and research community was strengthened by maintaining or creating new jobs for the benefit of brain gain.

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D.1.1.3 Expected policy improvement

What type of improvement do you envisage for this instrument?

New projects financed by the instrument

Yes

The objective is to improve the Kriti 2021 -2027 Regional Operational Program by defining new calls for proposals, or even direct investments, using the coordinated guideline defined in the Digital Policies Assessment or later Smart Villages Digital Strategies.

The new calls will analyse the integration of other existing funding tools provided by the Managing Authority Region of Crete (RoC), or other policy managers, in order to launch specific funding which has been identified in the project, but was not covered by the current policies.

Other potential calls will provide integrated funding, aiming at the coverage of the 3 pillars of the Smart Digital Village concept:

1. Broadband infrastructure
2. Promoting the uptake of digital services
3. Digital skills and literacy

The policy manager will use both, the regional assessment, the interregional exchange and the best practices from other countries, to define new investment for the policy instrument.

MAICh will provide support to the Region of Crete (RoC) in the definition of the call documents, based on the regional assessment and the continuous knowledge exchange with other project partners. The aim is to launch between 1 and 3 calls which will be able to mobilize between 2 and 3M€ of public investment.

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Change in the management of the instrument

No

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Revision of the instrument itself

No v3 | Approved

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D.1.2 Partner(s) addressing policy instrument 1

Partner

PP04 Region of Crete

What are the partner's competences and experiences in the issue addressed by the project?

There is a low level of collaboration between companies, institutions and knowledge providers in Crete region and that both sides as well as the local economy could benefit from such a collaboration. The recognition of the need for an integrated support of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship to realise and accelerate innovation for rapid market growth, led to the establishment of the Unit.

The Regional Economy Development and Openness Directorate of the RoC plays a key role in the coordination of collaboration between entrepreneurs and research institutions. It is also responsible for supporting the development of local SMEs through financial support, digitalization of institutions, e-businesses promotion, and e-services are integrated in their tasks implemented.

This unit aims to inform companies, monitor entrepreneurship, facilitate cooperation between companies, help cooperation of research and education establishments with companies, and promote innovation.

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How will the partner benefit from the cooperation? In case this partner plays a particular role in the project (e.g., responsible for a specific topic, for communication activities), please also indicate it here.

Digital Rural will generate knowledge that will allow it to develop the appropriate regional policies for the fulfillment of the stated objectives to Crete.

The digital transition of the local business environment is lacking a global Digital Strategies which can ensure that the digital needs, priorities and capacities of rural inhabitants are addressed at a local level and help to link these grass-root-level action with broader national and regional strategies for digitalisation in Crete.

Ideas and experiences from other regions will be adapted to Crete to improve the digital transition.

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In case the partner is involved in several Interreg Europe applications/ projects, please justify this multiple involvement.

Region of Crete is not currently involved in any other Interreg applications or project.

RoC has been partner in the following projects ended in 2022:

- INNOVAGRO PLUS project
- MD.net
- DestiMED PLUS
- INTERREG MED: "BLUEfasma
- INCIRCLE
- MISTRAL
- REBUS (ended in 2021)

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D.1.2 Partner(s) addressing policy instrument 1

Partner

LP01 Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania (CIHEAM MAICH)

What is the policy relevance of this partner (the link to the authority responsible for the policy instrument addressed and its capacity to influence this instrument)?

As a 'local' international organization MAICH has long acted as bridge between its intergovernmental parent organization CIHEAM with the EU, other European Governmental and Regional Institutions, research and advanced education providers, experts teaching in the MSc programme of MAICH and the local business community.

It has a long history of collaboration with RoC and is an experienced contributor to major international research applied to the Region.

In this aspect, MAICH has, in previous occasions, provided RoC with technical analysis, studies and local research which has allowed ROC to make decisions about priority investments to be developed in the island, which later finished in the launching of policies, calls for projects or direct investments.

MAICH will bring this experience and pass process to the project, providing RoC with the required support to implement the bottom-up analysis, integrate it in the Assessment and deliver the conclusions for new calls.

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What are the partner's competences and experiences in the issue addressed by the project?

MAICH is a constituent institute of CIHEAM, an intergovernmental organization acting to promote sustainable rural economic and social development, with primary focus post-graduate education and the implementation of research at a local, national and international levels, disseminating knowledge, expertise and innovation in the fields critical to the Cretan Economy – Agriculture and Tourism.

MAICH has developed extensive links with the local community by providing economic analysis and market research to strengthen the economic position and competitiveness of local citizens.

MAICH has the capacity to coordinate this programme, and recognises the ideal opportunity presented to apply its knowledge of the local business and social ecosystems to examine and identify those policy elements and best practices that would be most effectively applied in the Cretan model, and recommend modifications and actions that would most benefit to the digitalization of the local economy.

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How will the partner benefit from the cooperation? In case this partner plays a particular role in the project (e.g., responsible for a specific topic, for communication activities), please also indicate it here.

Digital Rural will provide an excellent opportunity for MAICH to develop and apply its knowledge of the local SME ecosystem to develop actions of maximal benefit to Crete.

MAICH is an integral component of the Cretan social and economic community. The digital transition of the local business environment is essential for the sustainable development of the region and can address many of its current problems.

The better educated youth tend to leave rural areas, but also the cities of Crete, for mainland Greece or abroad due to severely limited employment opportunities as despite its large size and relatively high level of development, Crete's island status restricts connectivity.

Digital transition in Crete will help to open labour markets and provide more opportunities for skilled, non-seasonal employment, and will compensate for the relative remoteness of Crete by enabling local companies to offer higher-quality services and products.

953/1000

In case the partner is involved in several Interreg Europe applications/ projects, please justify this multiple involvement.

MAICh has no current applications or running projects in Interreg Europe.

v3 | Approved

MAICh has been a partner in an INTERREG Europe project, named ZERO202. It brings together 8 partners from different European regions, in order to identify and share measures that address programs targeting energy efficiency, sustainability and use of RES as part of COVID-19 recovery with focus on deep renovation of buildings

MAICh have different running actions in EU projects.

These actions reflect different actions of the developmental activities of MAICh and will not affect the capacity of MAICh to fulfil the obligations of coordinator in Digital Europe.

639/1000

D.1.3 Stakeholder group relevant for policy instrument 1

Please provide an indicative list of the most relevant stakeholders (i.e., name of the organisation concerned) to be involved in the project. It is recommended to have no more than 12 entries.

You have 12 entries.

Foundation for Research and Technology - Hellas (FORTH-ITE)

59/300

The Regional Development Corporation of Crete (P.AN.ETAI.K)

59/300

The RoC Agrifood Partnership

28/300

The Greek Chamber of Commerce corresponding to the Four Prefectures of Crete (Chania, Rethymno, Heraklion and Lasithi)

118/300

The Chania Local Development Company

36/300

The Local Development Company of the Mountainous Region of Mylopotamos-Maleveziou "Psiloritis"

94/300

Technical University of Crete (TUC)

35/300

The Heraklion Local Development Company

39/300

The Agricultural Development Corporation of Rethymno

52/300

The Lasithi Local Development Company

37/300

The University of Crete

23/300

Hellenic Mediterranean University (ELMEPA)

42/300

D.1.4 Pilot action under policy instrument

Is a pilot action proposed to improve this policy instrument?

No

D.2 Policy instrument 2

D.2.1 Territorial context and general description

D.2.1.1 Territorial context

What is the state of play of the issue addressed by the project in the territory covered by the policy instrument? Which challenge needs to be overcome in this territory? Please be as specific as possible and provide detailed information on the characteristics of the territory.

According to RSI 2021-2030 more than half of Podkarpackie enterprises intend to carry out investments in the field of digitization of financial and tax teams in the coming years, counting, among others, on to improve work efficiency and reduce costs. The worst situation is on rural areas.

The current approach to the investment for both rural investment and digital investment is made without an integrated base, where all the current funds aim to the same Smart Village solution. The several local, regional and national programmes should be united under a common umbrella, such as the Rural Digital Strategies or Smart Villages Strategies. The digital management model is becoming more and more popular in various business branches in the Podkarpackie Region.

Thanks to the implementation of technological solutions, enterprises have a much greater opportunity to adapt to new realities. Unfortunately, businesses in rural areas and local communities will otherwise be excluded from these opportunities. Changing the business model to a digital one is a market requirement. Micro and small enterprises as well as those from rural areas have particular problems with e-business solutions due to financial problems and difficulties with financing the transition to digital management models. It doesn't allow them to maintain or even increase competitiveness, and continuously develop their businesses and rural areas.

1422/1500

D.2.1.2 General description of the policy instrument

Please name the policy instrument addressed (for Investment for jobs and growth goal programmes, please provide the name of the operational programme concerned).

The Regional Innovation Strategy for the Podkarpackie Region for 2021-2030 (RIS).

81/150

Is this instrument an Investment for jobs and growth goal programme (i.e. national or regional operational programme)?

No

Please indicate the geographical scope of this instrument

Regional

Please select how the authority responsible for this policy instrument is involved in the project:

The authority responsible for this policy instrument is involved as...

Partner

Please select the authority responsible for this policy instrument.

PP10 Rzeszow Regional Development Agency

Please describe the main features of this policy instrument (e.g. objective, characteristics, priority or measure addressed).

The Regional Innovation Strategy for the Podkarpackie Region for 2021-2030 (RIS) was adopted by the Podkarpackie Region Board as a development program constituting a key instrument for the implementation of the priorities of the Regional Development Strategy – Podkarpackie Region 2030 related to the development of the competitiveness, research and innovation of Podkarpackie Region. v3 | Approved

The RIS is an instrument for building regional consensus for regional development. It is to create an environment for innovation in the Podkarpackie region and transform it into a system that efficiently acquires, produces and uses innovations. Its structure is determined by the smart specializations of the region.

In their arrangement, a diagnosis of regional innovativeness was carried out, analytical arrangements were developed at their level, and a strategic intervention was planned in relation to them.

The specifics and activities of the DigitalRural project are in line with the assumptions of the document "RIS" for the smart specializations "Quality of Life" and "Information and telecommunications". The activities undertaken in the RIS are to contribute to an increase in the level of innovation in the Podkarpackie region by 2030. This goal is planned to be achieved through intervention in strategic areas: e.g. The background, potential and image of the region, Innovation and industrial transformation, or trust, ties and diffusion of knowledge in the innovation ecosystem.

1483/1500

D.2.1.3 Expected policy improvement

What type of improvement do you envisage for this instrument?

New projects financed by the instrument

0/1500

Change in the management of the instrument

0/1500

Revision of the instrument itself

The Regional Innovation Strategy for the Podkarpackie Region for 2021-2030 makes the necessary adjustments to ensure smooth functioning of the system. RIS leaves a huge gap in the scope of activities related to the smart specializations "Quality of Life" and "Information and telecommunications" regarding a digital business (e-business) in rural areas.

v3 | Approved

The strategy lacks detailed solutions for promoting digital solutions among local rural communities and increasing their chances on the labor market and developing rural entrepreneurship. Lack of digitization solutions in rural areas and among rural entrepreneurship results in low economic attractiveness of rural areas of Podkarpackie Region. Thanks to good practices of partners from the other regions as well as jointly developed solutions, the possibility of using digital solutions for improving the attractiveness of rural areas of Podkarpackie Region will increase. This revision will be implemented within the Digital Rural project.

997/1500

D.2.2 Partner(s) addressing policy instrument 2

Partner

PP10 Rzeszow Regional Development Agency

What are the partner's competences and experiences in the issue addressed by the project?

RRDA is a public institution established in 1993 by Self-government of Podkarpackie Region. The role of RRDA is to support and coordinate regional development activities, to promote business efficiency, competitiveness as well as employment and to enhance and support sustainable development in the region.

RRDA plays an active role in achieving the objectives of Strategic documents for Podkarpackie Region. In this context, RRDA is a major resource actor for local authorities to help them to implement the local policies, including measures in the field of digitization in rural areas and among rural entrepreneurship.

RRDA implements EU targets through numerous projects financed on the base of EU funds-not only national but also international ones (ESF, Interreg, Erasmus+, Horizon, etc.). RRDA is composed of co-working specialized departments, which employ more than 200 people, including specialists in the areas of: law, economics, management, IT, architecture and construction.

991/1000

How will the partner benefit from the cooperation? In case this partner plays a particular role in the project (e.g., responsible for a specific topic, for communication activities), please also indicate it here.

Thanks to participation in the project, RRDA will acquire knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- improving the attractiveness of rural areas in Podkarpackie Region
- opportunities to improve policies, at regional and local levels,
- the possibility of establishing cooperation with partners which have similar problems,
- the possibility to remove many of the classical barriers of the rural businesses in Podkarpackie Region
- the possibility to transform rural economic sector into a more resilient model where digital business supports the exploitation of local potentials
- establishing lasting cooperation that will result in other projects and activities in the future.

The implementation of the DigitalRural project and the exchange of good practices with other project partners will allow the improvement and updating of The RIS 2021-2030. RRDA will share with regional stakeholders the best solutions that can be transferred and implemented in the Podkarpackie Region.

986/1000

In case the partner is involved in several Interreg Europe applications/ projects, please justify this multiple involvement.

RRDA is mainly devoted to undertake international activities aiming at the regional development and it is operated under the direct management of its owner- Podkarpackie Region.

RRDA has full capacity to implement international projects, as it employs in 5 different departments over 200 experts specialized in project management, social innovations, technology innovations, tourism, environmental protection, business development, entrepreneurship.

RRDA is not currently involved in any other Interreg applications or projects.

531/1000

D.2.3 Stakeholder group relevant for policy instrument 2

Please provide an indicative list of the most relevant stakeholders (i.e., name of the organisation concerned) to be involved in the project. It is recommended to have no more than 12 entries.

You have 6 entries.

Podkarpackie Agricultural Advisory Support Centre

49/300

Rzeszow Center for Social Economy

33/300

Marshall Office of Podkarpackie Region

38/300

University of Rzeszow

21/300

Podkarpacki Cluster IT

22/300

Technical University in Rzeszow

31/300

D.2.4 Pilot action under policy instrument

Is a pilot action proposed to improve this policy instrument?

No

D.3 Policy instrument 3

D.3.1 Territorial context and general description

D.3.1.1 Territorial context

What is the state of play of the issue addressed by the project in the territory covered by the policy instrument? Which challenge needs to be overcome in this territory? Please be as specific as possible and provide detailed information on the characteristics of the territory.

County Leitrim, the most rural county in Ireland, is demonstrative of rural decline in the northern and western (NUTS II) region of Ireland, similar to other rural regions across the EU. Leitrim's Towns and Villages have traditionally acted as business, service, residential, educational and social hubs for our residents and visitors. Like many rural areas across Europe, these roles have diminished over recent decades and some of our villages have exhibited all the classic features of 'rural decline' – static/falling/ageing population, business closures, growing vacancy rates, shifts to the larger towns and a dangerous loss of community resilience.

The development of smart villages and communities is seen as a way to tackle some of these issues. Digital technology can help to create places and communities that manage spatial development, population growth, mobility, jobs and enterprise, effects of climate change and transition to greater sustainability. Some pilot initiatives undertaken are testament to this objective. Smart villages / communities can serve to optimise planning, transport and utilities, business, community and local services. Smart Communities will promote safety and liveability and connect communities to restore their vibrancy and resilience.

Administrations must recognise the different starting points of rural areas and co-design digital pathways from the bottom-up, while at the same time building bridges with innovative top-down strategies.

1483/1500

D.3.1.2 General description of the policy instrument

Please name the policy instrument addressed (for Investment for jobs and growth goal programmes, please provide the name of the operational programme concerned).

Digital Leitrim – THE DIGITAL STRATEGY FOR COUNTY LEITRIM

57/150

Is this instrument an Investment for jobs and growth goal programme (i.e. national or regional operational programme)?

No

Please indicate the geographical scope of this instrument

Local

Please select how the authority responsible for this policy instrument is involved in the project:

The authority responsible for this policy instrument is involved as...

Partner

Please select the authority responsible for this policy instrument.

PP03 Leitrim County Council

Please describe the main features of this policy instrument (e.g. objective, characteristics, priority or measure addressed).

Vision Statement for the Strategy:

Digital Leitrim reflects a county that is connected, progressive, and responsive to a digital future, while remaining true to its cultural heritage and protective of its natural environment.

Strategy Rationale:

Leitrim will use this Digital Strategy 'Digital Leitrim' to bring together a number of actions and objectives from the community and civic society, enterprise, education, cultural and environmental fields and apply a digital dimension to all aspects of development.

Strategy Pillars & Objectives:

1. Infrastructure & Connectivity: Fibre broadband, Public WiFi, IoT, digital hubs and connectivity
2. Smart Communities: Digital Skills & Literacy, Citizen and Community Engagement & Digital Awareness, Smart Initiatives & Data through collaborative, technology led opportunities.
3. Digital Economy & Enterprise: Digital Skills for Business, E-commerce & Digital Marketing, Technology Clusters & Entrepreneurs, Digital Hubs & Remote Working, Digital Discovery in key sectors – making digital a key development function in emerging and growing sectors including Tourism, Renewable Energy, AgriFood etc.
4. Digital Transformation (Public Service): Institutional leadership in digitalisation and e-service delivery. ICT/digital training, Internal IT systems integration, development of single portal for engagement with citizens.

1374/1500

D.3.1.3 Expected policy improvement

What type of improvement do you envisage for this instrument?

New projects financed by the instrument

0/1500

Change in the management of the instrument

0/1500

Revision of the instrument itself

The current Digital Strategy was the first one prepared for this region and runs until the end of 2029.

Whilst it considered the Smart Villages approach from the EU perspective, the evolving nature of local needs means that it requires updating, towards the development of a new strategy from 2026 onwards. Changing macro factors also require the policy to be updated in order to respond to changes in technology and innovation, along with increasing challenges in the operating environment.

With the benefit of EU good practices from participating partner regions, and indeed across Europe, we hope to achieve this policy improvement in the context of this Digital Rural project.

Leitrim County Council is the owner of the policy document and therefore have the responsibility and capacity to ensure its improvement. We will bring together the necessary stakeholders to achieve this in the context of the good practice learning we can achieve from this Interreg Europe project.

980/1500

D.3.2 Partner(s) addressing policy instrument 3

Partner

PP02 Innovation & Management Centre Limited (WestBIC)

What is the policy relevance of this partner (the link to the authority responsible for the policy instrument addressed and its capacity to influence this instrument)?

WestBIC is the Official EU-BIC (Business & Innovation Centre) for the Northern and Western region of Ireland, which includes Co. Leitrim. This is a predominantly rural region - one which has been downgraded from a more developed region to one in transition for the current EU programming period – emphasising the challenges facing rural economies to keep apace.

WestBIC is a key player in the regional enterprise eco-system, integrated with relevant stakeholders and public agencies and is itself a collaborative stakeholder and implementing organisation for pertinent Policy Actions across the region (e.g. LECs, Regional Enterprise Plans etc.). WestBIC leads actions to advance the development of the regional Entrepreneurship and Innovation Ecosystem.

WestBIC will support Leitrim to mobilise the relevant actors and stakeholders, whilst also providing access to good practices from across the European Business Innovation Centre Network, to facilitate development of improved local policy.

996/1000

What are the partner's competences and experiences in the issue addressed by the project?

WestBIC's experience derives from its role as an EU-BIC for a largely rural region. It is acutely aware both of the challenges facing rural regions, as well as the opportunities, through the adoption of smart digital approaches to achieve competitive advantage, to foster local and regional sustainability and growth.

Working in collaboration with regional stakeholders, WestBIC has assisted in the compilation of previous policy based Local Economic and Community Plans, Regional Enterprise Plans, Rural Development Plans and innovation strategies and regularly contributes to policy formation in this way. This includes use of a variety of participatory consultative processes as a bottom-up approach in the methodologies, which can be adopted to achieve the desired results for Digital policy improvement.

As an added value, WestBIC can reach out to its EU Business Innovation Centre Community to ensure access to further good practices to achieve the desired results.

973/1000

How will the partner benefit from the cooperation? In case this partner plays a particular role in the project (e.g., responsible for a specific topic, for communication activities), please also indicate it here.

Participation in the Digital Rural project will help to identify good practices that can provide policy learning, to improve current practices, and thereby enhance the regional eco-system to support smart digital transition to foster the economies of rural areas. Through its wider operating area in the west and north-west region of Ireland, WestBIC will build on this new knowledge and expertise to ensure appropriate transfer to further regions, as well as diffusion across other EU territories in its network.

As a result, WestBIC staff will be upskilled, not only in performing its own role of supporting regional enterprise, but also be better able to inform and influence future policy, fruitfully engaging with regional stakeholders and policy organisations in this regard. It will also support WestBIC, in the delivery of its core services of fostering innovative entrepreneurship and high-growth enterprise, assisting in attracting and retaining these in the local region.

984/1000

In case the partner is involved in several Interreg Europe applications/ projects, please justify this multiple involvement.

WestBIC is not involved in any another Interreg Europe applications in Call 2.

v3 | Approved

WestBIC is a partner in 2 other Interreg Europe projects from the 1st call, of direct relevance to WestBIC's competences and expertise:

- UNICORN QUEST: policy driven actions to improve the business environment to foster high growth business creation in the pursuit of the next generation of business centaurs and unicorns.
- LOTTI – Local identity to foster industrial transition to S3 sectors using a traditional sense of place – another important topic for the west region of Ireland.

WestBIC has sufficient resources and the specific expertise and necessary experience to participate in these projects.

687/1000

D.3.2 Partner(s) addressing policy instrument 3

Partner

PP03 Leitrim County Council

What are the partner's competences and experiences in the issue addressed by the project?

County Leitrim is the most rural county in Ireland and, as such, the Local authority is acutely aware and experienced in the need to embrace digital technology to enhance the local economy.

In 2018 Leitrim County Council hosted a national conference on Smart Towns and Villages, with contributions from experts from Ireland and Europe. The themes focused on creating policies and supports to enable rural towns and villages to attain self-reliance by exploiting their potential using digital technologies.

In 2021 Leitrim was one of five pilot projects selected under the Irish Atlantic Economic Corridor Smart Pilot Project. This programme is designed to find smart digital solutions to local and regional problems that can be scaled and replicated nationally.

Leitrim County Council has a close working relationship with stakeholders in towns and villages across the county and works with them to foster economic growth and improve quality of life by harnessing digital technologies locally.

997/1000

How will the partner benefit from the cooperation? In case this partner plays a particular role in the project (e.g., responsible for a specific topic, for communication activities), please also indicate it here.

This cooperation provides an opportunity to transfer and exchange experiences across smart village and communities. Experiencing different approaches to developing solutions and schemes will contribute to the development of future policy instruments to support smart villages in the west and northwest regions of Ireland.

Leitrim County Council will gain from the learning from the different good practice approaches taken by public authorities in different areas to develop solutions and inform potential pilot actions, towards policy improvement and the enhancement of its Digital Strategy. The Council also looks forward to sharing its good practice experiences from pilot actions undertaken in the Leitrim rural area.

The project area as a whole will benefit from the diffusion of know-how from partners to inform policy improvement. Local and regional stakeholders will gain insight into different solutions that can be integrated in further development of smart villages.

979/1000

In case the partner is involved in several Interreg Europe applications/ projects, please justify this multiple involvement.

Leitrim County Council is a partner in another application focusing on the development of SMEs and retail following the negative impacts as a result of Covid-19: Only One Commerce Region (O1CR).

This project is focused on making existing retailers resilient in a changing climate and addresses a different policy instrument owned by Leitrim County Council, but is an important topic area for this rural region given the long term negative impact experienced as a result of the pandemic.

If approved, Leitrim County Council have the resource available to participate in both projects.

587/1000

D.3.3 Stakeholder group relevant for policy instrument 3

Please provide an indicative list of the most relevant stakeholders (i.e., name of the organisation concerned) to be involved in the project. It is recommended to have no more than 12 entries.

You have 9 entries.

Leitrim Community Networks

26/300

Local Enterprise Office Leitrim (Leitrim LEO)

45/300

Mohill Sustainable Energy Community

35/300

Leitrim Technology Enterprise Centre – The Hive

47/300

WestBIC

7/300

Leitrim County Enterprise Fund

30/300

Western Development Commission

30/300

Mohill Community Enterprise Centre

34/300

Mohill Credit Union

19/300

D.3.4 Pilot action under policy instrument

Is a pilot action proposed to improve this policy instrument?

No

D.4 Policy instrument 4

D.4.1 Territorial context and general description

D.4.1.1 Territorial context

What is the state of play of the issue addressed by the project in the territory covered by the policy instrument? Which challenge needs to be overcome in this territory? Please be as specific as possible and provide detailed information on the characteristics of the territory.

As a result of rapid digitization processes, the demand for new solutions and competences is increasing. The incompletely used digitization potential of Latvian businesses is related to the limited digitization possibilities of companies based in rural regions of Latvia, which negatively affects the common statistical indicators of Latvia.

To overcome the digital gap in each area, stakeholders must recognise the different starting points of rural areas and villages and co-designing digital pathways from the bottom-up while at the same time building bridges with the essential top-down strategies.

Latvian companies do not fully use their digitization potential, as evidenced by being behind the EU average and no significant progress has been made in the integration of digital technologies in companies. Latvian companies still underutilize the potential of online sales of goods and services, being significantly behind the EU average in terms of e-commerce among SMEs and related turnover. Only 11% of SMEs sell goods online, which is less than the EU average of 17.5%. The proportion of SMEs trading cross-border remains below the EU average (only 6.6% of all SMEs compared to 8.4% in the EU as a whole) and only an average of 5.3% of SME turnover comes from the online segment.

The area will require to analyse these needs and opportunities for digitalisation of different types of villages to be reflected in the SWOT and needs analysis, through a global Strategy or Assessment.

1494/1500

D.4.1.2 General description of the policy instrument

Please name the policy instrument addressed (for Investment for jobs and growth goal programmes, please provide the name of the operational programme concerned).

Vidzeme Planning Region (VPR) Development Program for 2021-2027.

64/150

Is this instrument an Investment for jobs and growth goal programme (i.e. national or regional operational programme)?

No

Please indicate the geographical scope of this instrument

Regional

Please select how the authority responsible for this policy instrument is involved in the project:

The authority responsible for this policy instrument is involved as...

Partner

Please select the authority responsible for this policy instrument.

PP05 Vidzeme Planning region

Please describe the main features of this policy instrument (e.g. objective, characteristics, priority or measure addressed).

Vidzeme Planning Region (VPR) Development Program for 2021-2027. is a regional level medium-term territorial development planning document. The Development Program determines the medium development priorities of the region, the goals to be achieved and actions aimed at the implementation of the strategic settings set out in the VPR Sustainable Development Strategy for 2015-2030. One of the horizontal priorities of the VPR Development Program for 2021-2027 is - Digitization (P3), determining the following actions and tasks:

v3 | Approved

- 1) Cooperation to promote digitization;
 - a) Promote the digital transition in municipalities;
 - b) Promote the benefits of digitization for business development;
 - c) Strengthen the digital skills of public administration;
 - d) Cooperation in improving digital connections.
- 2) Industrial transformation and competitiveness:
 - a) Support modernization and digitization in business.
- 3) Development of an inclusive society
 - a) Reduce marginalization caused by digitization and technological development;
 - b) Strengthen the digital skills of society, including the less protected target groups.

1173/1500

D.4.1.3 Expected policy improvement

What type of improvement do you envisage for this instrument?

New projects financed by the instrument

Yes

New calls are expected to be launched to cover the gaps in the current VPR Development Program, based on the project learning process and exchange of activities developed through the project.

Calls can use specific technical ratios and indicators coming from the Regional Assessment and the EU best practices, to launch new topics in the calls which and also use new rating system to make funding more effective. Vidzeme Planning Region will generate documents based on the Assessment and best practices, with samples of potential projects coming from the exchange of experience. Vidzeme Planning Region will work with the advisory partners and rest of consortium to define the final documents based on the policy objectives of the Region.

The policy manager will use both, the regional assessment, the interregional exchange and the best practices from other countries, to define new investment for the policy instrument.

924/1500

Change in the management of the instrument

No

0/1500

Revision of the instrument itself

Yes

The main target that we aim through this project is to contribute to create better rural environment for citizens by promoting the "Smart Digital Village" concept in the Region.

The main objective of this project is to provide the policy response in Vidzeme planning region to the existing needs and also to facilitate a good understanding of Smart Digital Village characteristics.

As Vidzeme planning region is responsible for the elaboration of the policy instrument, following the interregional exchanges and best practices among the project regions, the policy instrument can be improved with new features. Either through the inclusion of any of the 3 main issues as a priority (connectivity infrastructure, digital services, digital skills and literacy), or through the achievement of integrated approaches to the Smart Digital Village solution.

Therefore, change in the revision of the instrument itself might be happening during the 4 years of implementation, but it is not necessary the main goal, improvements being possible to be implemented while adopting concrete best practices measures, the policy instrument being updated with more explicitly actions and measures in order to improve the business environment.

1230/1500

D.4.2 Partner(s) addressing policy instrument 4

Partner

PP05 Vidzeme Planning region

What are the partner's competences and experiences in the issue addressed by the project?

As a regional level institution VPR has implemented more than 30 international projects and has developed a significant experience in cooperation, work package leader, policy and good practices transfer, stakeholder management, dissemination, and strategic communication planning.

In the digital field, the region has been coordinating and implementing several initiatives in the areas:

- E-Government Services

- Smart City Initiatives

Digital Education and Skills Development

- Vidzeme Entrepreneurship center (VEC), a structural unit of the Vidzeme planning region, provides coordinated support for business development and digitalization in the region.

VEC has held discussions with stakeholders - business-supporting organizations, IT clusters, in order to understand problematic issues related to the development of digitization processes and organized digitization seminars to help entrepreneurs identify processes where digitization is necessary or possible.

968/1000

How will the partner benefit from the cooperation? In case this partner plays a particular role in the project (e.g., responsible for a specific topic, for communication activities), please also indicate it here.

Digitization is a global driving force that is rapidly changing our habits, work, education and life. Digitization creates new opportunities for citizens, companies, state and local government institutions, but it also requires new competences, changes the usual working conditions and creates new risks related to security and privacy. A unified approach to cross-sectoral solutions in promoting the digital transition in all groups and levels of society is a priority.

Project will increase knowledge and competences The experience gained during the project and the activities implemented will help to promote measures and support reducing digital exclusion; improve the digital skills of various target groups and reduce the risks of exclusion caused by technological development.

784/1000

In case the partner is involved in several Interreg Europe applications/ projects, please justify this multiple involvement.

None

The partner is involved in several Interreg applications, the majority belonging to Interreg Baltic Sea Region, in topics which are not connected to the topic addressed by Digital Rural:

- The "CIBioGO" project contributes to the EU Biodiversity's Strategy for 2030, which aims to turn at least 30% of land and sea into effectively managed protected areas. A system of stakeholders is expected to be established in each partner region to promote robust and widely recognized governance structures.

- SPOTLOG's main vision is to involve local communities in creating socially responsible logistics systems, based wherever possible on zero-carbon modes, through the intelligent use of all available resources and taking advantage of the digitalisation of goods and passenger transport services.

VPR has the capacity to implement simultaneously multiple projects at high quality of performance.

900/1000

D.4.3 Stakeholder group relevant for policy instrument 4

Please provide an indicative list of the most relevant stakeholders (i.e., name of the organisation concerned) to be involved in the project. It is recommended to have no more than 12 entries.

You have 8 entries.

Valmiera municipality

21/300

Gulbene municipality

20/300

Latvian IT Cluster

18/300

Valmiera Development Agency – contact point of the European Digital Innovation Center in the Vidzeme region.

108/300

European Digital Innovation Center in Latvia

44/300

Aluksne municipality

20/300

Madona municipality

19/300

Valka municipality

18/300

D.4.4 Pilot action under policy instrument

Is a pilot action proposed to improve this policy instrument?

No

D.5 Policy instrument 5

D.5.1 Territorial context and general description

D.5.1.1 Territorial context

What is the state of play of the issue addressed by the project in the territory covered by the policy instrument? Which challenge needs to be overcome in this territory? Please be as specific as possible and provide detailed information on the characteristics of the territory.

The territory involved in the project is the West-Transdanubian region, in Hungary. There are national operative programs and there is The Modern Enterprises Program which provides no-cost, personalised expert assistance for the IT development for business.

In the region, the current approach to the investment for both rural investment and digital investment is made without an integrated base, even if most funds have lines for the Smart Village concept. The several local, regional and national programmes requires a common umbrella, such as a coordinated approach or Strategy.

In Hungary, the digital economy accounts for 20% of GVA and 15% of employment. The digital economy can be the starting point of the West-Transdanubia region, therefore the well-thought-out, covering all areas developments are of particular importance. Due to the continuous digital transformation, the digital divide between urban and rural grows naturally, and to bridge this gap it is necessary to be more efficient in the fund management and priorities identification.

The region's weaknesses include older entrepreneurs lack of digital competence, business leaders are often not open to new solutions, or if they are open, strategy is missing. Businesses show a heterogeneous picture in terms of digital preparedness, micro-businesses are the worst, some sectors (e.g.: tourism, construction, food industry, logistics, retail) have a more significant and specific lag in digitization.

1473/1500

D.5.1.2 General description of the policy instrument

Please name the policy instrument addressed (for Investment for jobs and growth goal programmes, please provide the name of the operational programme concerned).

Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme Plus

65/150

Is this instrument an Investment for jobs and growth goal programme (i.e. national or regional operational programme)?

Yes

Please indicate the geographical scope of this instrument

Regional

Please select how the authority responsible for this policy instrument is involved in the project:

The authority responsible for this policy instrument is involved as...

Partner

Please select the authority responsible for this policy instrument.

PP07 Vas County Government Office (VVÖH)

Please describe the main features of this policy instrument (e.g. objective, characteristics, priority or measure addressed).

TOP Plus is Hungary's regional operational program for the programming period 2021-2027, which covers the entire territory of the country, thus supporting the development of less developed regions (counties) and the development of Budapest, which is considered a developed region, receives special attention vice versa for the development of the least developed regions and backward areas. Its aim is to improve territorial cohesion at the EU level and within the country, to this end, to improve the development position of regions and counties in relation to the EU average, and to reduce inequalities within the country.

v3 | Approved

The program primarily supports local government developments, its development themes include economic revitalization, job creation and expansion, as well as population retention and ensuring regional and local conditions for family protection, including local economic development and employment, as well as local tourism, the development of settlement infrastructure, settlement management and local public services. In order to achieve the goals, TOP Plus includes 6 priorities: Livable County, A climate-friendly county, Caring County, Budapest infrastructural developments, Budapest Human Developments, Competitive County.

The TOP Plus contains proposals for the transformation of rural digital infrastructure and related digital competence development.

1387/1500

D.5.1.3 Expected policy improvement

What type of improvement do you envisage for this instrument?

New projects financed by the instrument

Yes

TOP Plus currently includes part of the investment priorities which could be used for the promotion of the Smart Digital Village concept, but many of the action lines are not properly addressed by the TOP.

After the bottom-up definition of the ASSESSment, it is expected that Community will request more funded project aiming at the full approach of literacy, connectivity and awareness, so this gap has to be filled and it is expected to achieve it through the launching of new calls based on the project learning process and exchange, depending on the concrete good practices studied in the partner's regions.

The TOP Plus is the program that includes elements of the county programs, and resources can also be applied for. This program has area-specific annexes, in relation to which the Vas County Government Office has the right to comment on the eligibility and selection criteria.

Thus, calls can use the KPI delivered in the Regional Assessment and the EU best practices. Pannon Novum will deliver to the County the draft documents for calls, with samples of potential projects coming from the exchange of experience, calculated funding to be used by the PI, expected impacts and benefits in terms of indicators, and support the city on the process of call selection and tenders definition.

1299/1500

Change in the management of the instrument

No

0/1500

Revision of the instrument itself

No v3 | Approved

0/1500

D.5.2 Partner(s) addressing policy instrument 5

Partner

PP06 Pannon Novum West-Transdanubian Regional Innovation

What is the policy relevance of this partner (the link to the authority responsible for the policy instrument addressed and its capacity to influence this instrument)?

Vas County Government Office is the managing authority of TOP Plus Program in vas county. Majority owner of Pannon Novum is Vas County Government Office. Therefore, there are direct linkages between our organisation and the policy owner/Public Authority.

Pannon Novum regularly takes part in regional policy preparation processes, which provides a direct channel to influence policy making. We are also actively involved with the implementation of the policy instrument: most importantly, through the implementation of European and nationally funded projects.

561/1000

What are the partner's competences and experiences in the issue addressed by the project?

Pannon Novum dealt nearly 400 development ideas last years, contributed to an increased private investment flow in our region, took part in preparation of more hundred projects and implemented 26 projects. As a member of the Regional Innovation Agency network (which is the only nationally initiated non-profit network in Hungary in the field of innovation) Pannon Novum acted as a regional coordinator and expert of the elaboration process of the Smart Specialization Strategy of the National Innovation Office.

Pannon Novum has carried out 2 projects, the contents and results can best be linked to the mission of this project: DIGIUP 4.0 project which the objective was the development of a cross-border service package for companies and the training sector and the TRENDIG project to introduce digital trends to smaller, primarily service businesses, which they can then adapt to their own business activities with the help of experts.

939/1000

How will the partner benefit from the cooperation? In case this partner plays a particular role in the project (e.g., responsible for a specific topic, for communication activities), please also indicate it here.

The Pannon Novum West-Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency has been working for 14 years to support the innovation activities of entrepreneurs and their associated partners. From idea to market entry, our agency supports the whole innovation process, while paying attention to factors such as protection of industrial property, the labour market, enterprise development, trainings, etc.

Main focus areas:

- Innovation management
- Digitization and SME competitiveness
- Sustainable development, e-mobility, circular economy
- Social innovation and CSR

This project would provide new input for the renewal of these services, and with the help of the achieved results and adopted good practices, we could also modernize our digital business consulting service. In this way, the resilience of our own target group, the rural SMEs, could also be improved.

861/1000

In case the partner is involved in several Interreg Europe applications/ projects, please justify this multiple involvement.

Pannon Novum West-Transdanubian Regional Innovation is involved in 4 other Interreg applications (CLIMATE, Green4HEAT, Success skills, Digital Rural).

150/1000

D.5.2 Partner(s) addressing policy instrument 5

Partner

PP07 Vas County Government Office (VVÖH)

What are the partner's competences and experiences in the issue addressed by the project?

Vas County Government Office dealt nearly 400 development ideas last years, contributed to an increased private investment flow in our region, took part in preparation of more hundred projects and implemented 26 projects as project owner or partner. It is in close co-operation with Ministries who are the Managing Authorities of the Operational Programmes for Hungary financed by ERDF.

The office has carried out 2 projects, the contents and results can best be linked to the mission of this project. The most important innovation of the DIGIUP 4.0 project was the development of a cross-border service package for companies and the training sector, which is intended to reduce the shortage of skilled labor by focusing on the driving sectors of Industry 4.0. The goal of the TRENDIG project was to introduce digital trends to smaller, primarily service businesses, which they can then adapt to their own business activities with the help of experts.

952/1000

How will the partner benefit from the cooperation? In case this partner plays a particular role in the project (e.g., responsible for a specific topic, for communication activities), please also indicate it here.

This project would provide new input for the renewal of these services, and with the help of the achieved results and adopted good practices, we could also modernize our digital business consulting service. In this way, the resilience of our own target group, the rural SMEs, could also be improved.

299/1000

In case the partner is involved in several Interreg Europe applications/ projects, please justify this multiple involvement.

Vas is not involved in any other applications or projects.

As a project partner Vas County Government Office participated in 4 Interreg Europe projects' implementation which had been closed successfully:

- SKILLS+
- INNOGROW
- SYMBI
- InnoBridge

246/1000

D.5.3 Stakeholder group relevant for policy instrument 5

Please provide an indicative list of the most relevant stakeholders (i.e., name of the organisation concerned) to be involved in the project. It is recommended to have no more than 12 entries.

You have 7 entries.

Chamber of Commerce and Industry for Győr-Moson-Sopron County

61/300

Tourism Association of Vas County

33/300

Chamber of Commerce and Industry for Zala, County

49/300

Chamber of Commerce and Industry for Vas County

47/300

Vas County and Szombathely City Regional Business Development Foundation

72/300

Kisalföld Foundation for Enterprise Promotion

45/300

Zala County Foundation for Enterprise Promotion

47/300

D.5.4 Pilot action under policy instrument

Is a pilot action proposed to improve this policy instrument?

No

D.6 Policy instrument 6

D.6.1 Territorial context and general description

D.6.1.1 Territorial context

What is the state of play of the issue addressed by the project in the territory covered by the policy instrument? Which challenge needs to be overcome in this territory? Please be as specific as possible and provide detailed information on the characteristics of the territory.

In the 2021-2027 MFF governments and stakeholders, at all levels, have been provided with a wide range of funds to improve digitalization in rural areas. However, to optimise the benefits, these initiatives need to engage with and prioritise the needs and concerns of rural communities and stakeholders themselves.

Several municipalities, under the county support, have initiated the preparation of municipal and supra municipal strategic plans. For example, 2022 Tartu county agreed on new climate and energy plan (SECAP), which have been adopted by several municipalities. In May 2023 the same happened with the circular economy road-map. At the moment, municipalities in Tartu County are lacking the knowledge and expertise in digital economy field.

Urban areas are moving faster, with initiatives such as Tartu Smart City, increasing the digital divide with rural municipalities. The county count on urban samples on smart traffic, smart lighting, or open data platforms, but the knowledge is not reaching the rural municipalities, such as Elva.

The awareness is also very low in rural areas, where we can see the most improvement. In City of Elva they have had some good examples in digital economy, although we see a lots of potential to spill-over to county level. Through the policy instrument they want to empower digital businesses in their municipality and to improve the links between urban areas and rural areas.

1431/1500

D.6.1.2 General description of the policy instrument

Please name the policy instrument addressed (for Investment for jobs and growth goal programmes, please provide the name of the operational programme concerned).

Elva Local Development Plan under Tartu County Development Strategy

67/150

Is this instrument an Investment for jobs and growth goal programme (i.e. national or regional operational programme)?

No

Please indicate the geographical scope of this instrument

Local

Please select how the authority responsible for this policy instrument is involved in the project:

The authority responsible for this policy instrument is involved as...

Partner

Please select the authority responsible for this policy instrument.

PP09 Elva Municipality

Please describe the main features of this policy instrument (e.g. objective, characteristics, priority or measure addressed).

The basic principles of Elva Local Development Plan are co-creation and innovation, a sustainable way of thinking, and urban and rural cohesion. Inside this general principles, the Plan aims to increase development of the rural area of Elva Municipality and to promote a better business environment for both existing and future new companies. v3 | Approved

The Plan general objectives are: 1. WELL-BEING, 2.LIVING ENVIRONMENT, 3. ENTREPRENEURSHIP and 4. MOBILITY. All 4 objectives have other transversal objectives that affects all the objectives, one of such transversal topics is digitization.

Digitization is specially affecting the Objective 3, which includes the measure for ensuring a learning and flexible business support structure for the Elva area. Digitization of both public services for businesses and the capacitation of business are integral part of this objective.

There is a specific Area of action: 3.2.2. Digitisation of companies and joint creation of smart solutions, where the Plan expect to share software for digital solutions for the use of companies: mapping the needs of small and micro enterprises.

Other sub-areas are covering the topic of higher digitization of business in the rural area of Elva, such as the sub-area 4. Development of services in future areas (green transition, silver economy, digitisation, technology renewal).

The implementation of Objective 3 is linked to the development of strong digital capacities of Elva rural business environment.

1485/1500

D.6.1.3 Expected policy improvement

What type of improvement do you envisage for this instrument?

New projects financed by the instrument

Yes

New calls are expected to be launched to cover the gaps in the current Strategy, based on the project learning process and exchange of activities developed through the project.

Tartumaa, as technical partner, will provide to Elva municipality with the required technical ratios and indicators coming from the Regional Assessment and the EU best practices, to launch new topics in the calls. Elva will work with the technical partner to define the final documents based on the policy objectives of the municipality.

There is a lack of funded project aiming at the full approach of literacy, connectivity and awareness, so this gap has to be filled and it is expected to achieve it through the launching of new calls based on the project learning process and exchange, depending on the concrete good practices studied in the partner's regions.

844/1500

Change in the management of the instrument

No

0/1500

Revision of the instrument itself

Yes

The Plan needs to identify the tools and methods to enhance the capacity of digital economy, such as clustering, training, etc on a digital economy. The amendment of such tools will lead to creating jobs and are expected to support the production of digital businesses products. We see potential, especially in rural areas, where the living environment is very good for remote working.

v3 | Approved

In the development strategy digitalization is one of the horizontal topics, therefore we see that through this project we can find the tools and methods how to improve the situation.

576/1500

D.6.2 Partner(s) addressing policy instrument 6

Partner

PP09 Elva Municipality

What are the partner's competences and experiences in the issue addressed by the project?

Elva Municipality as Local authority and plan amanger, is acutely aware and experienced in the need to embrace digital technology to enhance the local economy.

In the digital field, Elva has developped an interesting initiative in the Elva Smart Bike Share System.

Elva Municipality implemented a digital project to promote transportation and improve connectivity within the town. They introduced a smart bike share system in collaboration with local businesses and community organizations.

From 2017 to 2021, Elva Municipality has participated in a project funded by Interreg Baltic Sea called Act Now. This project has strengthened capacity building in the municipality. New approaches in self-assessment and monitoring have been put into practice by piloting in the participating municipality.

In addition to this, Elva municipality participates in the program "Loov Tartumaa - creative Tartu county" with an overview of the current situation and helped set goals for the local development.

996/1000

How will the partner benefit from the cooperation? In case this partner plays a particular role in the project (e.g., responsible for a specific topic, for communication activities), please also indicate it here.

Thanks to the project, the municipality will provide a revision of their action plans by including the digital dimension.

The municipality will generate knowledge that will allow it to develop the appropriate local priority lines for the fulfillment of the stated objectives.

The city and the county will share its knowledge and experiences in Smart Digital Villages with the other partners involved in the project and increase its knowledge by means of the exchange of experiences and good practices with them and the external experts that will take part in the foreseen activities.

Ideas and experiences from other regions will be adapted to Elva and to Tartu to improve its solutions to bridge the digital divide and test new paths to coordinate the Funds into the Smart village concept.

The learnings from the training process will be shared with local stakeholders to increase the impact of the participative process.

926/1000

In case the partner is involved in several Interreg Europe applications/ projects, please justify this multiple involvement.

No, the municipality of Elva is a newcomer within the Interreg Europe projects.

79/1000

D.6.2 Partner(s) addressing policy instrument 6

Partner

PP08 Association of Municipalities of Tartu County

What is the policy relevance of this partner (the link to the authority responsible for the policy instrument addressed and its capacity to influence this instrument)?

The association is in charge of coordinating the development of supra initiatives covering the county municipalities, and also supporting all local governments in their implementation of Strategies and Plans.

Tartu County is the second largest county in Estonia and therefore a county that can lead the way in Estonia and be a positive example to others. However, in order to realise the potential of the county more effectively, clear future goals with an agreed and jointly implemented action plan are necessary.

The association will act as technical supporter of the Plan improvements, developing the Assessment, the participative bottom-up approach, while supporting the municipality in the identification of the innovative top-down policies.

749/1000

What are the partner's competences and experiences in the issue addressed by the project?

Association of Municipalities of Tartu County is a county umbrella organization for local governments. The association is in charge of the process of compiling and also implementing the county strategies, and supporting all local governments in their implementation of Strategies and Plans.

The association has promoted digital industries in the county with the programme "Loov Tartumaa - creative Tartu county". Loov Tartumaa was a development and training program for cultural leaders in Tartumaa. Among other topics, digital economy and creative entrepreneurship were on the agenda. Every municipality got a creative economy road map, which gave the municipalities an overview of the current situation and helped set goals for the development.

The organisation has organised also two social hackathons in Tartu County in order to find new ideas that can help the local communities to develop their social services, social innovation and digital skills.

959/1000

How will the partner benefit from the cooperation? In case this partner plays a particular role in the project (e.g., responsible for a specific topic, for communication activities), please also indicate it here.

Association of Municipalities of Tartu County can contribute to the improvement of the county municipalities through cross-border cooperation and project activities. The association can share its experience with other partners involved in the project. In addition, the partner will benefit from increasing the professional capacity of the staff involved as well as the capacity of other organizations (notably, the municipalities of the county).

As supra-municipal/regional authority it is also expected to uptake and adopt good examples of methodologies and successful participatory processes to enable a better regional governance in the field of digital economy and sustainability.

The partner will organise one of the interregional learning events of the project and will follow the project approach by implementing all necessary tasks as described in the AF.

866/1000

In case the partner is involved in several Interreg Europe applications/ projects, please justify this multiple involvement.

Association of Municipalities of Tartu County participates in the following projects, that started in 2023 and will end in 2026:

- RuralYouthFuture: Improving the role of youth policies for rural sustainable development
- UrbanCoop : Better cooperation governance to attain urban sustainable development
- RuralProofing

Projects are closely connected to the county development plan and are supporting implementation of relevant policy instruments. Projects also help the association:

- to build an international cooperation,
- to exchange best practices,
- to learn from each other's experiences,
- to increase professional capacity.

Association has hired additional staff for the projects.

692/1000

D.6.3 Stakeholder group relevant for policy instrument 6

Please provide an indicative list of the most relevant stakeholders (i.e., name of the organisation concerned) to be involved in the project. It is recommended to have no more than 12 entries.

You have 9 entries.

Kambja Municipality

19/300

Luunja Municipality

19/300

Nõo Municipality

16/300

Kastre Municipality

19/300

Tartu Business Advisory Services

32/300

Peipsiääre Municipality

23/300

Tartu Municipality

18/300

Elva Municipality

17/300

Tartu Science Park

18/300

D.6.4 Pilot action under policy instrument

Is a pilot action proposed to improve this policy instrument?

No

D.7 Policy instrument 7

D.7.1 Territorial context and general description

D.7.1.1 Territorial context

What is the state of play of the issue addressed by the project in the territory covered by the policy instrument? Which challenge needs to be overcome in this territory? Please be as specific as possible and provide detailed information on the characteristics of the territory.

Due to the continuous digital transformation, the digital divide between urban and rural grows naturally, and to bridge this gap it is necessary to be more efficient in the fund management and priorities identification. Most municipalities, such as Hof van Twente, continue to implement top-down initiatives, while the bottom-up processes for policy design are limited, even if they have proven to be more efficient and increase funds usability.

With "Twente Versnelt (literally translated Twente Accelerates)" the city wants to support a number of institutions and businesses, specially located in the most rural places, such as farmers and other bio-businesses, to analyse and transform their operations into alternative or different business models, integrating the digital solutions in their daily work and promoting a SMARTER village. The Smarter model of Twente Accelerates can bring resources from the existing funds to accelerate the bridging of the rural digital divide.

The area is lacking a global digital Strategy to be integrated in Twente Accelerates, which can ensure that the digital needs, priorities and capacities of rural inhabitants are addressed at a local level and help to link these grass-root-level action with broader national and regional strategies for digitalisation.

1300/1500

D.7.1.2 General description of the policy instrument

Please name the policy instrument addressed (for Investment for jobs and growth goal programmes, please provide the name of the operational programme concerned).

Programme active community development – Twente accelerate. Visie 2022-2026 'Actief Noaberschap'.

97/150

Is this instrument an Investment for jobs and growth goal programme (i.e. national or regional operational programme)?

No

Please indicate the geographical scope of this instrument

Local

Please select how the authority responsible for this policy instrument is involved in the project:

The authority responsible for this policy instrument is involved as...

Partner

Please select the authority responsible for this policy instrument.

PP11 Municipality Hof van Twente

Please describe the main features of this policy instrument (e.g. objective, characteristics, priority or measure addressed).

This Vision focuses on the following five themes:

1. Social domain
2. Housing
3. Agriculture
4. Entrepreneurship
5. Sustainability.

Within these objectives, digitization is a transversal priority. According to the policy, the digital transformation has a huge impact on how and where businesses can be placed and develop their activity. This impact can be modified by the municipal policies and services. A proper promotion of digital transformation in the municipal businesses can be expected from Vision of the municipality of Hof van Twente.

The integration of the Vision requires that businesses are more aware of the capacities and opportunities that digitization can bring them, requiring a wider effort in the field of digital security and good digital skills. Digitization also has an effect on the rural business cohesion. Digital platforms, social media and the internet make it possible to find more cooperation opportunities for business in new ways.

In Hof van Twente they want to stimulate digitization of business and society, to promote a more resilient economic sector, to create more business opportunities in rural and municipal areas, and to enlarge the social cohesion. That is why they see it as an important task to promote specific working lines in the Vision, for the improvement of rural business digitization.

1344/1500

D.7.1.3 Expected policy improvement

What type of improvement do you envisage for this instrument?

New projects financed by the instrument

Yes

The city wants to work in the creation and funding of new projects and investments all over the municipality to improve the implementation of the whole Smart Village concept.

It is necessary to increase the number and availability of connectivity infrastructure, to support both business, citizens and public services. But also it is necessary to increase the skills and literacy of both again citizens, businesses and public administration, so specific calls will be designed to fund the integrated approach of connectivity, skills and digital services (e-care, e-mobility, e-logistic)

Municipality will analyse existing best practices in the promotion of integrated Smart Digital Village, coming from the consortium, implementing funding for most suitable solutions. Also additional funding can be used for calls for small project among NGOs and citizens to increase the awareness of e-solutions already offered by the administration and private sector at local level, but also in other partners countries.

1010/1500

Change in the management of the instrument

No

0/1500

Revision of the instrument itself

Yes

v3 | Approved

The improvement can be produced by the modification of the funding priority incomes, moving to a more digital prioritisation, building on the Smart Digital Village by funding projects that create suitable conditions for Smart Digital Village. The change will review the current policy axes, and reinforce the investment in digital facilities for the Smart Digital Village, providing full digital administration, and full e-services, e-businesses facilities and digital literacy, attracting citizens to rural areas thanks to a more digital economic model.

The policy has to review this focus and try to create this easy cooperation ecosystem, Smart Digital Village, where the e-citizens are comfortable because they can live and work with the social benefits they will never achieve in a big urban area.

803/1500

D.7.2 Partner(s) addressing policy instrument 7

Partner

PP11 Municipality Hof van Twente

What are the partner's competences and experiences in the issue addressed by the project?

The municipality was established in 2001 as the result of the merger of the municipalities of Diepenheim, Goor, Markelo, Ambt Delden, and Stad Delden. Since then, the municipality of Hof van Twente has been pursuing an active rural policy for many years.

In the digital field, the municipality has implemented innovative community solutions, such as the Digital Citizen Engagement Platform:

- The Municipality of Hof van Twente has implemented a digital initiative to enhance citizen engagement and participation in local decision-making processes. They have developed an online platform that allows residents to actively participate in discussions, share their ideas, and provide feedback on various municipal projects and policies.

- This digital initiative in Hof van Twente encourages a more inclusive and participatory approach to decision-making, ensuring that the voices of residents are heard and taken into account.

926/1000

How will the partner benefit from the cooperation? In case this partner plays a particular role in the project (e.g., responsible for a specific topic, for communication activities), please also indicate it here.

Through the exchange of knowledge and experience, farmers will be helped to achieve future-proof business operations. Perspectives for these companies contribute to a liveable countryside for the municipality of Hof van Twente.

Cooperation with partners under the project will allow to enriching the knowledge and get acquainted with solutions in the field of digital management. It will give the possibility of adjusting good practices and effective solutions used by partners to the conditions of Hof Van Twente, both improving the current management of this lack and increasing the awareness of residents. It will also allow for the development and improvement of cooperation between relevant stakeholders.

710/1000

In case the partner is involved in several Interreg Europe applications/ projects, please justify this multiple involvement.

No, the municipality of Hof van Twente is a newcomer within the Interreg Europe projects.

89/1000

D.7.3 Stakeholder group relevant for policy instrument 7

Please provide an indicative list of the most relevant stakeholders (i.e., name of the organisation concerned) to be involved in the project. It is recommended to have no more than 12 entries.

You have 12 entries.

Municipality of Enschede

24/300

Municipality of Borne

21/300

Municipality of Dinkelland

26/300

Municipality of Oldenzaal

25/300

Municipality of Losser

22/300

Municipality of Hellendoorn

27/300

Municipality of Haaksbergen

27/300

Waterboard Vechtstromen

23/300

University of Twente

20/300

Wageningen University and Research

34/300

Municipality of Almelo

22/300

Municipality of Hengelo

23/300

D.7.4 Pilot action under policy instrument

Is a pilot action proposed to improve this policy instrument?

No

E.1 Core phase (Exchange of experience)

Semester 1 (Core phase)

Exchange of experience

SEMESTER 1 means the launching of the interregional cooperation, with several events, covering the 2 lines of learning, the activities for the top-down policy improvements and the bottom-up policy improvements:

- Interregional Learning Event 1 and 2.
- 3 BPs.
- Launching Stakeholder Groups and Community Groups.
- Launching information campaign and participative analysis with 1 local event.
- Starting the definition of the Digital Policies Assessment document

1.1 INTERREGIONAL LEARNING EVENT 1 (M2).

- Greece will host a study visit to Region of Crete good samples, such as Heraklion Smart City, Knossos green data centre, or the e-service cloud, with a prior explanation of the visits.
- The IE1 also includes a workshop for the definition of the Information Campaign, and the calendar of actions, of the Participative bottom-up approach to the policy improvements.

All partners participate bringing 2 staff/stakeholders which will be completed with local stakeholders to reach 20 organizations in the IE.

1.2. STAKEHOLDERS GROUPS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS (M3)

Each area will create the groups that will participate in the local and interregional activities:

- Stakeholder group. Representatives from the 10 key organizations defined in the stakeholder list.
- Community Group. Representatives from 15-20 key community institutions, able to mobilise the sectorial and citizen participation required for the bottom-up actions.

Both groups participate actively in the learning actions, so the 20 institutions will count on the indicator RC087 N° of organisations cooperating across borders, with more than 100 participating in the full consortium.

1.3. INTERREGIONAL LEARNING EVENT 2 (M4) online.

The advisory partner (UL) will lead the interregional event based on the analysis of 1-2 practices from the Smart Rural 21 or 27.

All partners participate bringing 2 staff/stakeholders to reach 10-15 organizations in the IE.

1.4. BEST PRACTICES (M6)

Each partner will start identifying 2-3 potential samples of policies and projects related to the Policy Improvements sought, implemented in their area, to share with the stakeholders and the Policy Platform. The objective is to deliver 3 per each of the 4 initial semesters (TOTAL 12 in Semester 4).

1.5. DIGITAL POLICIES ASSESSMENT document (M1-18)

Partners will start the definition of the draft document for the future Assessment.

1.6. LAUNCHING INFORMATION AND COMMUNITY (M3-6)

With the information from IE1 and guided by the advisory partner (UL), each partner will launch the community information campaign, including the first informative meeting of the Community Group.

1.7. INTERNAL FEEDBACK MEETINGS (M6)

Individuals participating in the semester actions will report to colleagues, managers, and elected representatives of the organisation. One meeting per organization.

1.8. Quality evaluation questionnaires and report.

Monitoring Unit (MU) launch 1 questionnaire per activity and create a report of the semester.

Communication

Semester 1 means the launching of communication with the following actions:

1. Delivery of Communication strategy with detailed actions and messages to be sent to the main target groups, the policy makers and innovation ecosystem actors.

Main target groups are the stakeholders groups and the community groups of each area. The number of key institutions expected to be involved in the bottom-up approach is large, with around 20 key institutions and more than 200 citizens involved in the Participative Analysis and the Joint Development. This will assure more than 100 organizations and 1.000 people all over the project regions.

2. Project website and social media. Partners will publish news and updated data on the official website, promoting regional campaigns based on electronic material, and supported by local community groups.

Communication will be evaluated through the quality unit through online questionnaires to partners and to attendants of communication actions.

986/1000

Management

Ongoing management activities to ensure smooth implementation and reporting of the project

N° of interregional policy learning events organised

2

N° of good practices identified

3

Semester 2 (Core phase)

Exchange of experience

SEMESTER 2 continues the interregional cooperation, with activities for top-down policy improvements and the bottom-up policy improvements:

- Interregional Learning Event 2 and 3.
- BP 4, 5 and 6 delivered.
- Increasing information campaign.
- Finalizing participative analysis with 2 local events.
- Working on the Digital Policies Assessment

2.1 INTERREGIONAL LEARNING EVENT 3 (M7).

- Hungary will host a study visit to Vas County good samples, such as DIGIUP 4.0, TRENDIG, or the results from SKILLS+, with a prior explanation of the visits.

After the visits, the IE includes a peer conclusions session where the stakeholders are asked about the main findings, and requested for a peer review. Conclusions are included in the IE report.

- The IE3 also includes a workshop for a better integration of the tools and knowledge developed in previous Interreg EU projects, with special focus on ERUDITE and CARPE DIGEM. The 6 documents in Trello will be presented by the advisory partner (UL, former partner of ERUDITE) and the workshop will summarize conclusions in a report of practices to be used in the bottom-up process.

All partners bring 2 staff/stakeholders completed with local stakeholders to reach 20 organizations.

2.2. PARTICIPATIVE EVENT PE1 (M8)

Based on the IE1 and IE3 conclusions, and supported by Advisory Partner (UL), partners will implement the designed calendar of participative activities (events, public meetings, village audits, training courses, thematic meetings, organising visits, discussions, etc), and will use SEROI+ documents to gather data on the participative analysis of the Policy Instrument, and general Digital tools.

A first draft analysis is delivered per partner.

2.3. INTERREGIONAL LEARNING EVENT 4 (M10) online.

The advisory partner, UL, will lead the event based on a selected practice from the Interreg Platform (most likely from ERUDITE).

All partners participate bringing 2 staff/stakeholders to reach 10-15 organizations in the IE.

2.4. BEST PRACTICES (M12)

Consortium will deliver BP number 4, 5 and 6.

2.5. PARTICIPATIVE EVENT PE2 (M11)

Working on the base of the draft analysis delivered after PE1, the Community Groups, led by the corresponding partner, will meet (public meetings, thematic meetings, discussions, etc) to use SEROI+ and increase the analysis of the Policy Instrument, and general Digital tools existing in the area.

A draft conclusion of analysis is delivered per partner.

2.6. DIGITAL POLICIES ASSESSMENT (M1-18)

The draft conclusions of the PE1 and PE2 will start feeding into the Digital Policies Assessment, which could be converted in some moment into the Smart Village Digital Strategy.

2.7. INTERNAL FEEDBACK MEETINGS (M12)

One meeting per organization (described in semester 1).

2.8. Quality evaluation questionnaires and report.

Monitoring Unit (MU) launch 1 questionnaire per activity and create a report of the semester.

Communication

S2 means the full implementation of the communication strategy:

1. Short video presenting the project (3 minutes) and official project Poster

2. Interregional Event dossiers 3 and 4. The hosting partner will deliver a publishable dossier to be uploaded to the website.

3. Website update and Social Media campaigns. Partners will publish news and updated web data on activities and results. Partners will promote digital communication, especially with social media (if possible, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram) as main channels.

4. Participative campaign and in-person actions. To assure the community involvement, the main tools will be direct contacts to the Community Groups, phone calls and emails to achieve their support in the mobilization of the rural community.

5. Participation in Programme events.

All communication activities will be evaluated through online questionnaires to partners and a report delivered per semester.

951/1000

Management

Ongoing management activities to ensure smooth implementation and reporting of the project

N° of interregional policy learning events organised

2

N° of good practices identified

3

Semester 3 (Core phase)

Exchange of experience

SEMESTER 3 is a milestone in the project, launching the identification of the policy improvements which will start from Semester 4:

- Interregional Learning Event 5 and 6.
- BP 7, 8 and 9 delivered.
- Workshops for Joint development of the policies and Collective decision on the policies to be launched.
- Final document of Digital Policies Assessment

3.1 INTERREGIONAL LEARNING EVENT 5 (M13).

- Estonia will host a study visit to Elva Municipality good samples, such Elva Smart Bike Share System, or Open Data Platform Tartu, with a prior explanation of the visits.

After the visits, the IE includes a peer conclusions session where the stakeholders are asked about the main findings, and requested for a peer review. Conclusions are included in the IE report.

- The IE5 includes a workshop on public e-services, based on the Estonian e-Government Ecosystem, due to Estonia is one of two countries worldwide to offer an e-Residency, a government-issued status and identity granting access to digital business (99% services are online and 98% citizens have e-ID).

All partners participate bringing 2 staff/stakeholders which will be completed with local stakeholders to reach 20 organizations in the IE.

3.2. PARTICIPATIVE EVENT PE3 (M14)

Thematic working groups in each area will meet, with the animation of experts to promote discussion, encourage point of views and catalyse the process. This process of JOINT DEVELOPMENT will deliver a draft proposal of new or reconverted projects and policies to be funded.

3.3. INTERREGIONAL LEARNING EVENT 6 (M16) online.

The advisory partner (UL) will lead the interregional event based on the analysis of 1-2 practices from the Smart Rural 21 or 27.

All partners participate bringing 2 staff/stakeholders to reach 10-15 organizations in the IE.

3.4. BEST PRACTICES 7, 8 and 9 (M18)

3.5. PARTICIPATIVE EVENT PE4 (M16-18)

Several meetings, exhibitions and workshops will be done, per region, until reaching collective decisions about the projects and policies more beneficial for the Community.

3.6. DIGITAL POLICIES ASSESSMENT (M1-18)

The whole process of: Information; Consultation; Joint Development; Collective decision-making will be integrated in one Assessment per Policy Instrument.

Each Assessment will also include the analysis of main Digital macrodata at EU, national and local level, with the identification of best EU practices suitable for the local implementation.

The Assessment is a KEY DOCUMENT before the launching of the policy improvements, and some of the Managing Authorities will transform it into a Smart Village Digital Strategy, which will guide the future funding strategies.

3.7. INTERNAL FEEDBACK MEETINGS (M18)

One meeting per organization (described in semester 1).

3.8. Quality evaluation questionnaires and report.

Monitoring Unit (MU) launch 1 questionnaire per activity and create a report of the semester.

Communication

S3 communication reinforce direct contacts, while maintaining the general implementation of the communication strategy:

- 1. Interregional Event dossiers 5 and 6.
- 2. Website update and social media campaigns.

3. In-person communication.

Profiting the awareness created by PE1 and PE2, the objective is to maintain a high number of stakeholders participating in the exchange process, so they participate in the PE3 and PE4, and keep them involved through the full project.

Again, the direct contacts to the Community Groups, aims to achieve the mobilization of the rural community.

PE3 and PE4 will be used as an opportunity to maximise project visibility.

4. Other communication channels.

Partners will participate in running conferences, exhibitions, round-table discussions, briefings with policymakers, or awareness-raising campaigns, online or in person.

This includes the Programme events.

All communication activities will be evaluated and a report delivered per semester.

988/1000

Management

Ongoing management activities to ensure smooth implementation and reporting of the project

N° of interregional policy learning events organised

2

N° of good practices identified

3

Semester 4 (Core phase)

Exchange of experience

SEMESTER 4 is the launching of the policy improvements, while maintains the exchange of experiences:

- Interregional Learning Event 7 and 8.
- BP 10, 11 and 12 delivered.
- 2 Workshops to analyse the Assessments and produce peer reviews on Policy Improvements.
- Delivery of policy improvements.

4.1 INTERREGIONAL LEARNING EVENT 7 (M19)

- Ireland will host a study visit to Leitrim County good samples, such as the Irish Atlantic Economic Corridor Smart Pilot Project or Smart Green Mohill, with a prior explanation of the visits. After the visits, the IE includes a peer conclusions session where the stakeholders are asked and requested for a peer review. Conclusions are included in the IE report.
- The IE5 includes the first workshop for analysing the Assessment among peers.

In this workshop, 3 Assessments will be presented to the consortium and stakeholders, describing the bottom-up projects and policies selected in the participative process. Peers will participate in the workshop evaluating the bottom-up proposals and providing comments. The 3 presenting partners will gather the peer evaluation to be included in their Assessment.

All partners participate bringing 2 staff/stakeholders completed locally to reach 20 organizations in the IE.

4.2. INTERREGIONAL LEARNING EVENT 8 (M23) online

- The advisory partner (UL) will lead the interregional event based on the analysis of 1-2 practices from the Smart Rural 21 or 27.
- The IE5 includes the second workshop for analysing the remaining Assessments.

This second workshop is similar to the previous one, Assessments will be presented. Peers will evaluate the bottom-up proposals and provide comments. The presenting partners will gather the peer evaluation to be included in their Assessment.

All partners participate bringing 2 staff/stakeholders, to reach 10-15 organizations in the IE.

4.3. BEST PRACTICES 10,11 and 12 (M23)

4.4. PROMOTING POLICY IMPROVEMENTS (M23 to M36)

S4 launches a proactive search of policy improvement, based on the Assessments, using several methods:

- Improvement 1. New calls or new projects. Each technical partner will start defining new call documents, or identifying investment projects, following its Managing Authority indications.
- Improvement 2 and 3 requires a more complex process, with a higher involvement of the MA in a continuous process of validation of the proposals provided by technical partners.

To assure a continuous advance of the improvements, partners will promote:

- Meeting at technical level. Technical partners and MA will meet regularly online, at least once per month, to analyse the advances.
- Meeting at political level. Policy meetings will be maintained every 3 months to show the proposals of calls and new projects.

4.5. INTERNAL FEEDBACK MEETINGS (M24)

One meeting per organization (described in semester 1).

4.6. Quality evaluation questionnaires and report

Monitoring Unit (MU) launch 1 questionnaire per activity and create the report.

Communication

S4 communication maintaining the general implementation of the communication strategy:

1. Interregional Event dossiers 7 and 8.
2. Website update and Social Media campaigns.
3. In-person communication. The objective of the in-person communication will be double:
 - Maintain a high number of stakeholders in the exchange process.
 - Promote the policy change.

S4 launches the implementation of policy improvements, which again will be led by direct phone calls, working breakfasts, and emails sent to the policy makers. As most of the partners are the policy responsables, in-person and direct internal communication will be key in this process.

4. Other communications.
Partners will participate in conferences, exhibitions, round-table discussions, etc., online or in person.

This includes the Programme events.

All communication activities will be evaluated through online questionnaires, and a report delivered per semester.

934/1000

Management

Ongoing management activities to ensure smooth implementation and reporting of the project

N° of interregional policy learning events organised

2

N° of good practices identified

3

Semester 5 (Core phase)

Exchange of experience

In SEMESTER 5 the promotion of policy improvements takes most of relevance, while the exchange of experience continues.

The main milestones are:

- Interregional Learning Event 9 and 10
- Workshop to exchange policy improvement experiences
- Delivery of policy improvements

5.1 INTERREGIONAL LEARNING EVENT 9 (M25).

- Latvia will host a study visit to Vidzeme good samples, such as their EU Digital Innovation Center, with a prior explanation of the visits.

After the visits, the IE includes a peer conclusions session where the stakeholders are requested for a peer review. Conclusions are included in the IE report.

- The IE9 includes a workshop for selecting the Best Practices, among the 12 created, to be promoted to the Policy Platform.

WORKSHOP ON INNOVATIVE POLICIES SELECTION: it will be an interactive process to select BPs, based on scoring of BPs with post-it followed by pitches to defend the selection. Consensus will guide the selection of the most promising policies to be introduced TOP-DOWN and BPs to be sent to the Interreg Policy Platform.

In IE9, all partners bring 2 staff/stakeholders which will be completed with local stakeholders to reach 20 organizations in the IE.

5.2. PROMOTING POLICY IMPROVEMENTS (M23 to M36)

S5 maintain a proactive search of policy improvement, based on the Assessments, using several methods:

- Improvement 1. New calls or new projects. Each technical partner defines new call documents following its Managing Authority indications.
- Improvement 2 and 3 requires a continuous process of MA validation of the proposals provided by technical partners.

To assure a continuous advance of the improvements, partners will promote:

- Meeting at technical level regularly online, at least once per month, to analyse the advances.
- Meeting at political level every 3 months to show the proposals of calls and new projects.

5.3. INTERREGIONAL LEARNING EVENT 10 (M29) online.

- The advisory partner (UL) will lead the interregional event based on the analysis of 1-2 practices from the Smart Rural 21 or 27.
- The IE10 includes the first workshop for catalysing the policy improvements.

WORKSHOP TO EXCHANGE POLICY IMPROVEMENTS EXPERIENCES

As the Semesters advance, partners will try to implement the policy improvements, finding barriers and difficulties, or designing solutions. This workshop will go through the experiences of the advanced partners, trying to share them with the rest of the partners.

The objective of the workshop is to accelerate the early implementation of policy improvements, by sharing the experience of the most advanced partners towards the rest of the consortium, so most of them can reach the end of the core phase having implemented the improvements.

5.4. INTERNAL FEEDBACKS MEETINGS (M30)

One meeting per organization (described in semester 1).

5.5. Quality evaluation questionnaires and report.

Monitoring Unit (MU) launch 1 questionnaire per activity and create a report of the semester.

Communication

S5 communication reinforce the in-person direct contacts, searching for the implementation of the policy improvement, while maintaining the general communication strategy:

1. Interregional Event dossiers 9 and 10.
2. Website update and Social Media campaigns.
3. In-person communication. The objective of the in-person communication will be double:
 - Maintain a high number of stakeholders in the exchange process.
 - Promote the policy change.
4. Other communications.

S5 maintain the implementation of policy improvements, which again will be led by direct phone calls, working breakfasts, and emails sent to the policy makers. As most of the partners are the policy responsables, in-person and direct internal communication will be key in this process.

Partners will participate in conferences, exhibitions, round-table discussions, etc., online or in person.

This includes the Programme events.

All communication activities will be evaluated and a report delivered per semester.

989/1000

Management

Ongoing management activities to ensure smooth implementation and reporting of the project

N° of interregional policy learning events organised

2

N° of good practices identified

0

Semester 6 (Core phase)

Exchange of experience

SEMESTER 6 is the finalization of the exchange of experience on phase 1 and the planning of the phase 2, with the launching of monitoring system or the delivery of Action Plans.

The Semester objectives are double:

- Confirming that the policy improvements have been achieved, and defining the system for monitoring the effects of these improvements in the territories during the follow-up phase.
- If any partner had not achieved the policy improvement yet, they will have to deliver their Action Plans to be sent to JS for approval.

The main milestones are:

- Interregional Learning Event 11 and 12.
- Workshop for definition of monitoring systems.
- Workshops for definition of Action Plans.

6.1 INTERREGIONAL LEARNING EVENT 11 (M31).

- Poland will host a study visit to Rzeszow Region good samples of Digital projects funded with the RIS3, with a prior explanation of the visits.

After the visits, the IE includes a peer conclusions session where the stakeholders are asked about the main findings, and requested for a peer review. Conclusions are included in the IE report.

- The IE11 includes 2 workshops, one for Action Plan definition, and another for Monitoring systems.

All partners bring 2 staff/stakeholders which will be completed with local stakeholders to reach 20 organizations in the IE.

WORKSHOP FOR ACTION PLAN DEFINITION

For those partners who had not implemented any policy improvement in the previous 5 semesters, the Semester 6 will support the partners in their delivery of the Action Plans. The workshop will be a practical exercise of the process to define the Action Plans.

WORKSHOP ON MONITORING SYSTEMS.

The workshop will be dedicated to deep understanding of the monitoring systems for follow-up phase. In this Seminar, advisory partner (UL) or external experts will show partners the ways to design their monitoring systems, proposing activities and tools to check the territorial effects of their policy improvements and monitoring whether additional policy improvements are achieved.

6.2. PROMOTING POLICY IMPROVEMENTS (M23 to M36)

Partner will keep promoting new projects and policies identified in the bottom-up approach, or by implementing innovative policies top-down.

This semester also includes the creation of permanent bottom-up channels.

PERMANENT BOTTOM-UP

Partners will create a permanent bottom-up structure and tool to allow the continuous participation of stakeholders in the policies feedback and creation.

6.3. INTERREGIONAL LEARNING EVENT 12 (M35) online.

Partners will present to the consortium either the monitoring systems, or the Action Plan, with the objective to receive a peer review before the continuation to phase 2. The conclusions will be added to the AP.

6.4. INTERNAL FEEDBACKS MEETINGS (M36)

One meeting per organization (described in semester 1).

6.5. Quality evaluation questionnaires and report.

Monitoring Unit (MU) launch 1 questionnaire per activity and create a report of the semester.

2968/3000

Communication

S6 communication maintain the in-person direct contacts, to assure the policy improvements implementation, while also support a larger dissemination of the project achievements and already monitored effects:

- 1. Interregional Event dossiers 11 and 12.
- 2. Website update and Social Media campaigns.

3. In-person communication. The objective of the in-person communication will be double:

- Maintain a high number of stakeholders in the exchange process.
- Promote the policy change.

4. Communicating project achievements.

Based on the already achieved improvements, partners will increase the dissemination of the monitored effect of the project, both locally, nationally and EU wide. Partners will participate in conferences, exhibitions, round-table discussions, etc., online or in person.

This includes the Programme events.

All communication activities will be evaluated through online questionnaires, and a report delivered per semester.

947/1000

Management

Ongoing management activities to ensure smooth implementation and reporting of the project

N° of interregional policy learning events organised

2

N° of good practices identified

0

N° of pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects

0

E.2 Follow-up phase

Semester 7 (Follow-up phase)

Monitoring results of main phase and, if applicable, exchange of experience

Semester 7 aims at monitoring the effects of the policy improvements, with 2 different focuses:

- To monitor the impacts of the improvements achieved in the phase1.
- To monitor the implementation of the Action Plans for those partners who have not yet achieved the policy changes.

Also, during all the follow-up phase, the consortium will maintain a basic level of exchange of experiences, to continue learning and exchanging experience on the activities of this phase (activities dedicated to monitoring the effects of policy improvements and/or the implementation of action plans).

7.1. MONITORING EFFECTS ON THE TERRITORIES

Partner regions having achieved policy improvements under the core phase will monitor the effect of these improvements in their territories. Monitoring activities will involve checking the territorial effects of those improvements.

Partner will use the guidelines provided in IE11 to implement a monitoring system and gather the main KPI defined in the Assessment.

Monitoring tools will tend to be digital, either by automatic recollection of data, or through stakeholder surveys using similar online questionnaires and collaborative tools as used in phase 1.

7.2. MONITORING NEW POLICY IMPROVEMENTS.

For those partners who have already achieved a policy improvement, the phase 2 is an opportunity to generate new improvements which were identified during phase 1, or that are identified during phase 2. Partners will keep reporting any new policy improvements deriving from the exchange of experience.

7.3. MONITORING THE ACTION PLANS

Finally, for regions not achieving a policy improvement by the end of the core phase, the follow-up phase will monitor to what extent the measures described in their action plans are implemented on the ground, evaluate the results of these measures and gather evidence of any achievements to be reported to the programme.

7.4. MAINTANING EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES

The exchange of experience and the learning process will be maintained, but now focusing on practices and method to monitoring the territorial effects or the Action Plans implementation.

INTERREGIONAL EVENT 1 IN FOLLOW-UP PHASE (M39)

The partners will deliver one online workshop, with 10 to 15 attendants, covering the experiences learned on activities 7.1 to 7.3:

- Partners with policy improvement will present their experience | the monitoring process, the tools implemented and the expected/achieved results.
- Those partners achieving new improvements in the follow-up phase will explain their process to this late implementation.
- Partners on the process to implement their Action Plans will present the roadmap for implementation and receive reviews from the experienced partners.

7.5. INTERNAL FEEDBACKS MEETINGS (M35)

One meeting per organization (described in semester 1).

7.6. Quality evaluation questionnaires and report.

Monitoring Unit (MU) launch 1 questionnaire per activity and create a report of the semester.

2966/3000

Communication

During the follow-up phase, even if general communication will be maintained, project Communication Strategy focuses on informing the public about the project's achievements, especially to the Community Groups involved in the bottom-up approach, and the political stakeholders.

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1. Communicating project achievements.

Based on the already achieved improvements, partners will increase the dissemination of the monitored effect of the project, both locally, nationally and EU wide. Partners will participate in seminars, conferences, Programme and Platform events, etc., online or in person.

This includes the Programme events.

2. Interregional Event dossiers.

3. Website update and Social Media campaigns.

4. In-person communication with stakeholders to assure monitoring data and promote new policy changes.

Follow-up communication will have different communication KPI, which will be evaluated through online questionnaires, and reported in the Communication Report per semester.

985/1000

Management

Ongoing management activities to ensure smooth implementation and reporting of the project

N° of interregional policy learning events organised

1

Semester 8 (Follow-up phase)

Monitoring results of main phase and, if applicable, exchange of experience

Semester 8 is the preparation of the project closing, the reporting and the internal evaluation of achievements.

In a practical term, the 3 types of monitoring are maintained, and a general preparation of the final event will be done.

8.1. MONITORING EFFECTS ON THE TERRITORIES

Each partner having achieved policy improvements under the core phase will monitor the effect of these improvements in their territories. Monitoring activities will involve checking the territorial effects of those improvements.

8.2. MONITORING NEW POLICY IMPROVEMENTS.

For those partners who have already achieved a policy improvement, the phase 2 is an opportunity to generate new improvements which were identified during phase 1, or that are identified during phase 2. Partners can keep reporting any new policy improvements deriving from their exchange of experience.

8.3. MONITORING THE ACTION PLANS

Finally, for regions not achieving a policy improvement by the end of the core phase, the follow-up phase will monitor to what extent the measures described in their action plans are implemented on the ground, evaluate the results of these measures and gather evidence of any achievements to be reported to the programme.

8.4. ONLINE WORKSHOP FOR PREPARING THE FINAL CONFERENCE (M46)

Even if the final event conference is considered communication, in order to have an adequate policy impact, the consortium needs to make a specific effort to gather the main KPIs, the main good practices inside the project policy improvements, and prepare a communication dossier.

This work will be coordinated by MAICh, providing several online questionnaires and gathering key data. This data will be processed in one online workshop, where the full consortium will identify the policy improvements which have more capacity to reach the policy makers.

8.5. INTERREGIONAL EVENT 2 IN FOLLOW-UP PHASE (M48)

Running in parallel to the final conference, the final interregional exchange will be produced, with the vision of providing a final presentation of KPI produced by each PI, and review of effectiveness of different monitoring systems on place.

The final exchange event will also analyse tools to maintain the interregional cooperation after the project, mainly through the appointment of bi-annual meetings coinciding with main EU summits in Brussels, where partners will be able to speak about the advances and try to find new collaborations. Also the google group, open for the project implementation, will be keep for the promotion of contacts.

Finally, partners will seek the way to maintain bi-annual interregional online event to analyse new best practices, provided by the advisory partner (UL) or other technical partner, which can assure that the consortium is maintained up-to-date in the latest innovations of the sector.

2815/3000

Communication

During the follow-up phase, project Communication Strategy will focus on informing the public about the project's achievements.

1. Communicating project achievements.

Partners will specially seek to attract the attention of key political figures in order to bring them to the final conference.

2. Final Conference

Final Conference will present the results of the cooperation to as wide an audience as possible. The project will try to attract high level policymakers relevant to the project's theme as this will also help to attract the press and the general public.

Representatives from the project's stakeholder group institutions will attend to show the lessons learnt from the project in their region. The JS will be invited to bring representatives.

3. Website update and Social Media campaigns.

4. Short video presenting the project's achievements (3 minutes).

Follow-up communication will be evaluated through online questionnaires and reported in the Communication Report per semester.

1000/1000

Management

Ongoing management activities to ensure smooth implementation and reporting of the project

N° of interregional policy learning events organised

1