

Smart Villages: **A view from Romania**



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Some Context

- Around 10.7 million people (**54% of total population**) live in 12,373 villages organised into 2,861 communes (LAU2)
- Predominantly agricultural communities dominated by **subsistence / semi-subsistence small-holdings** (*ca. 3.1 million + declining rapidly*)
- Rural communities are very diverse, but face **common challenges**: persistent poverty & social exclusion (50% AROPE); lack of basic utilities & services; low education standards; high out-migration etc.
- Around 27% (EUR 2.5 billion) of total RDP budget 2014-2020 was committed to **Priority 6 (Social Inclusion & Local Development)**
- Concept of Smart Villages is unknown, but **inspiring examples** (*with numerous drivers*) do exist. Smart Cities are an emerging concept
- Great potential for Smart Village actions! But **capacity for action varies greatly** → beware accentuating existing disparities
- Poor administrative / financial integrity at local level **discourages** many local actors from engaging with funding opportunities

What is needed for delivering Smart Village Strategies at local level?



AVOID! Nice idea, highly relevant and well-funded.....



.....but (8 years later) still **unused!**



- Start now to **prepare** the ground, **craft** the language (*sate inteligente*) and **weave** the ‘common threads’ of Romanian village life into the SV concept -> **not necessarily digital!**
- Develop a **meaningful menu of national measures** to offer to **existing community-based initiatives**, including LAGs (239), FLAGs (22) and urban LAGs (37) -> **avoid** creating parallel structures
- Work from the **bottom-up** -> be **participatory** & **inclusive** to ensure that SV Strategies are as **meaningful** and **relevant** as possible to **local communities** in the **great diversity** of Romanian rural context

Be pragmatic -> *“proceed in a sensible and realistic way that is based on practical rather than theoretical considerations”*



Thank-you for your attention

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