

**LEADER Reloded  
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**In practice, the politicians** in the European Parliament **receive many suggestions**, to submit pilot projects or preparatory actions annually. This is a tool in the hands of the MEPs to try out new ideas.

**“SMART, eco, social villages” pilot project. This is the name and the way how ‘smart villages’ started in the EP** and become a broad approach. It includes various fields such as agriculture, regional development, digitalization, environmental-, energetic-, social-and transport question.

**The aim of the SV** is to provide a **playing field, a framework** for the rural communities. The idea **does not create competition for Leader**: it is about finding new ways for multifunding/integrated approach and **boost investments**, while the **LEADER remains the most important methodology. Flagship as Josefine said in the morning.** The smart villages concept **is about what and not about how.** It doesn't want to say how to create smart villages, because there are different ways. **It is like a box of lego**, which is spilled out on the table. It is up to the player, what kind of result will be created, it **does not propose a one-size-fits-all solution.**

**The concept is similar to** the smart city concept – which is existing since 2007 in the EU, while the idea was born in the 90s. But of course there are **many differences** between cities and villages, so we need different set of tools. **Digitalization and providing connectivity and technology is crucial but only one aspect** of keeping up with developments; it is **also about social aspects and skills. It aims to make rural areas attractive, where people can and want to live because innovative, digital solutions improve their lifestyle.**

**The definition provided by the EU Action Plan for Smart Villages** is a basis. **We have a running pilot project** about the definitions. This project was **proposed by Tibor Szanyi**, Hungarian socialist member of the European Parliament in 2015. Of course in **close cooperation with citizens and colleagues from the Commission. Right after this, Franc Bogovic**, Slovenian Member of the EP from the People's Party joined to the initiative as he approached the Commission with similar concept.

**The Commission and from the stakeholders' side, the ENRD plays an important role** with the Smart villages portal, best practices and the Thematic Working Group, I'm sure you are aware of this activity.

In the EP, since the pilot project, **a larger preparatory action** has been successfully submitted by the two MEPs, which will **provide some practical examples on the field**. The 'Smart Villages' initiative is **emerging in the EP as a multi-party project**, mostly through the joint efforts of these two MEPs Szanyi and Bogovic.

There is **a third, already submitted stage** as well, that plans to **target all Member States with pilot villages** and it is already supported by many MEPs from many Member States.

Likewise, **we can rely on your professional support and the dedicated interest of Commissioners on the field of agri (Hogan), regi, digital and transport issues and also the energy aspects are coming in** with vice-president of the Commission, Maros Sefcovic.

They all generously and gradually **contributed to the various Smart Villages conferences**, such as the high level **kick-off conference** in Brussels in April 2017, **the Bled conference**, in Slovenia last April. **The next important event** will be a high level Stakeholders' Conference in Hungary, on October 8, 2018.

**The final definition under the pilot project is still to be announced** and to be honest, these kinds of **discussions help us** to identify the key elements. We **already have a draft definition** and there was also a consultation, which you can see it on the webpage of ECORYS.