



# SMART VILLAGES FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

Sparsely populated, Mountainous And Rural Territories



## 2019 European Parliament Manifesto

Building a Sustainable Future for Rural Communities in Europe

## THE INTERGROUP

**SMART Villages for Rural Communities**, the Intergroup on **Sparsely Populated, Mountainous and Rural Territories**, builds on the achievements of the RUMRA Intergroup (2014-2019).

The **SMART Villages for Rural Communities Intergroup** promotes integrated development for European territories in all their diversity. The Intergroup enables exchanges on innovative ways to create vibrant and attractive rural communities. It encourages new ways of governance and cooperation in EU territories, through place-based initiatives and the use of technology. The Intergroup aims to strengthen integration and ensure a sustainable future for all Europeans.

The Intergroup connects civil society organisations and policymakers, acting as the voice of rural communities to the European Parliament, with the objective to:

- **Promote** the implementation of a dedicated **cross-sectoral approach** to territorial development in these areas.
- **Ensure** that sparsely populated, mountainous and rural territories are recognised as **areas of opportunity** and centres of development, innovation and creativity.
- **Strengthen** territorial cohesion in the EU, a key principle of the Lisbon Treaty, by addressing the **specific needs** of these areas.

## We believe in SMART Communities

The well-being of all Europeans relies on the diversity of the EU territories. The EU needs to engage with rural communities in order to reach its **economic, social, political and environmental goals**.

- In their everyday life, EU citizens and businesses largely depend on rural areas for food, land use, energy, water, clean air and raw materials.
- Stronger urban-rural cooperation is needed to ensure territorial cohesion and sustainable development across the EU.
- Sparsely populated, mountainous and rural territories are a source of creativity and innovation, in which a large part of the European cultural and natural heritage is rooted.

**SMART Rural Communities are an integral part of the European project.**

## THE FACTS



**Sparsely populated** areas tend to grow much less than the EU average.



**Mountainous** About **30%** of the EU territory is covered by mountainous areas.

**And**



**Rural** **25%** of the rural population has no access to internet.



**Territories** sparsely populated, mountainous and rural territories constitute **80%** of the EU territory, are home to **57%** of its population and account for **46%** of gross value added.



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## YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE. SUPPORT THE SMART EUROPEAN RURAL AGENDA.

The **Smart European Rural Agenda** is a **holistic framework** to define policies aiming to build a **sustainable future for rural communities** in Europe.

On 3 October 2018, the European Parliament adopted a **Resolution on addressing the specific needs of rural, mountainous and remote areas**. The Smart European Rural Agenda builds on this key document and focuses on concrete priority areas to improve the quality of life in these territories and foster opportunities for all Europeans.

### SMART

- **Increase connectivity and access to public services** through investment in high-quality transport, reliable energy solutions and the deployment of high-speed broadband.
- **Develop Smart Villages** to revitalise public services through digital and social innovation, and encourage the roll-out of lower carbon decentralised energy solutions.
- **Invest in human capital** and collective skills through accessible and life-long education and training programmes.

### SUSTAINABLE

- **Tackle environmental challenges** by promoting innovation and the development of small-scale renewable energy and technologies in the circular economy.
- **Protect cultural heritage -material and immaterial- and natural resources**, by developing sustainable tourism and promoting the identity of rural communities.
- **Support decarbonisation and better air quality** by delivering cost-effective and cleaner energy solutions to rural buildings.

### SOCIETY

- **Overcome the rural-urban gap** through an integrated approach fostering cooperation between rural and urban partners, to reach common goals and yield collective benefits.
- **Bring equal economic opportunities to citizens**, especially women in rural areas, by supporting businesses and investing in the strengths of each territory.
- **Empower young farmers and rural youth** through targeted investments facilitating entrepreneurship and the diversification of the economy.

### About SMART Villages for Rural Communities

**SMART Villages for Rural Communities, the Intergroup on Sparsely Populated, Mountainous and Rural Territories**, builds on the achievements of the RUMRA Intergroup.

During the 2014-2019 legislature, the RUMRA Intergroup was supported by a wide range of civil society movements and a large number of MEPs from across the political spectrum.

The three partners that initiated RUMRA are:



Euromontana



The Future of Rural Energy  
in Europe (FREE) Initiative



Rurality – Environment –  
Development (R.E.D.)

In collaboration with:



The European Countryside  
Movement (M.E.R.)



The European Council of  
Young Farmers (CEJA)



Southern Sparsely  
Populated Areas (SSPA)

In 2019, two new members join the SMART Villages for Rural Communities Intergroup: