

Smart!



ON  
line

18  
JANUARY

# Technology and innovation as allies for a smart rural environment

## Summary document of the conference



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# Technology and innovation as allies for a smart rural environment

## Reason

New technologies are part of the solution to the challenges faced by rural areas and contribute to generating quality employment, added value and economic activity. Useful information will be provided at this webinar conference on the European Commission's view of this matter and some European and Basque experiences will be discussed, which may be inspiring.

## Aim

Organisation of a high-level event that will enable the Basque Country to demonstrate its position in the field of technological innovation and digitalisation in the primary sector and the rural environment, from the exchange of knowledge and good practices.

## Held on

18 January 2022

On line

## Technical support

Jarkatza

## Attendees

Total: 131 persons



This document includes the most important issues that were discussed in each of the talks developed during the day and the conclusions extracted from them.

### WELCOME

**Bittor Oroz.** Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Policy for the Basque Government.

#### *Highlight the following points:*

- The infrastructure (broadband) has to respond to a why and wherefore.
- The digitalisation and new technologies are an instrument for improving agricultural activity and the rural environment. The quality of life must be improved in the rural environment, as well as the efficiency of agricultural activity; activity linked to the rural environment.
- Digitalisation is also an opportunity to respond to the ODS, for the transformation to sustainability of the agricultural sector and rural areas.
- Awareness and training of the rural population in digital skills, hence the need to make a very special effort.
- In the Basque Country, we are interested in establishing frameworks and partnerships for this digital transformation.

### KEYNOTE ADDRESS

#### *A European perspective on digitalisation in rural areas.*

**Doris Marquardt.** Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development.

#### *Highlight the following points:*

- EU Frameworks: Long-term vision for rural areas (2021); Digital Declaration (2019); Digital data strategy (2020); PAC; Green Deal and Farm to Fork.
- In 2019, the Member States signed the declaration for a “*smart and sustainable digital future for agriculture in European rural areas*”, which contains commitments for action for the R&D&i, the common deployment and exchange of agricultural data.
- One of the proposed objectives for the PAC is broadband for 100% of people in all rural areas, by the year 2025.
- Digitalisation, research and innovation are key to achieving the Green Deal and Farm to Fork objectives.
- Digital technologies facilitate the work of all farmers at various levels: They make it more attractive, more competitive, more diverse.. for rural communities, digitalisation and new technologies are an opportunity for attracting populations through services, teleworking, platforms, ...
- Digitalisation is a facilitating element. Its potential has not been fully exploited. Cost-efficiency needs to be improved, as well as people’s faith in technology.
- Digital skills, broadband, R&D&i and advisory services should be provided.
- Changes should also be made to employment structures, with monitoring of digital skills.
- There is a digital divide between areas and types of agriculture. There must be a comprehensive approach in the promotion of digitalisation. However, there is no single strategy for every region. Not everything should be promoted by the EU; this should be done at regional and local level. The EU prepares the broad frameworks, such as the PAC.
- And provides the financing tools such as Horizon Europe or Digital Europe (new).

- The Commission is developing testing and experimentation facilities (TEF) from Artificial Intelligence (AI), testing whatever can be digitalised and subsequently scaling it. To do this, an exchange of experiences, as well as working in these test fields, is required.
- Digital Innovation Hubs (DIH) are also being developed at regional level, which will work in a network supported by the Commission.

### Conclusions:

- Europe provides the framework for digitalisation. There are different overall strategies, highlighted among which are the PAC and Green Deal and Farm to Fork.
- Digitalisation and R&D&i are key for achieving the objectives of the European strategies.
- The push for digitalisation must be at regional level, according to the characteristics of each area.
- Programmes such as Horizon Europe or Digital Europe are an opportunity to encourage digitalisation.
- There will be a need to work in cooperation in order to probe the possibilities, both at EU level (in the TEF for the AI) and in the Digital Innovation Hubs network.
- There are connections between Horizon Europe, Digital Europe and the PAC (linked to Horizon through the EIP Agri), that will allow digitalisation to be improved in the rural areas.

[See the presentation](#)

## EUROPEAN BLOCK

### *Long-term vision for rural areas in Europe.*

**Enrique Nieto.** European Network for Rural Development (ENRD).

### *Highlight the following points:*

- The Commission document, “*Long-term vision for rural areas*” contains four objectives (with an outlook until 2040): rural areas that are stronger (empowered communities), connected (digital and mobility), prosperous (sustainable economic activities, diversification of economic activities beyond those of the food sector) and resilient (to climate change and socially).
- Digitalisation, aside from being an objective, contributes equally to achieving these four objectives using a cross-cutting approach.
- The vision of the rural environment is a more holistic vision that needs collaboration between the various policy areas, and not just from a classical perspective.
- To achieve these four objectives there is an Action Plan with 9 flagships, one of which is the Rural Digital Future (RDF).
- To get to this future (RDF), infrastructure, which is already on its way, will be required, but it is not enough. This is the starting point. From there, innovation will be needed (not just research) and new technologies that must be transferred to the local level (Smart Villages), while also taking people into account.
- It’s important to monitor how the rural digitalisation is being implemented.
- The Action Plan also lists horizontal actions: RurRural Proofing, European rural observatory with combination of European funds.
- European Rural Pact (2021): The Commission intends to create a space for dialogue at European level, which all actors may join, working cooperatively to achieve the set objectives.

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- There are three Thematic Groups of the ENRD: 1) Long-term vision (completed), 2) Revival of rural areas (2021-2022), 3) Rural Proofing (2021-2022).
- Key messages: opportunities arising from the green and digital transition, complex processes depending on digital maturity, cooperation, positive as well as negative impacts of digitalisation.

### Conclusions:

- The Long-term Vision document for Rural Areas was carried out through the collaboration of the various European directorates-general, not just the classical ones.
- In addition to infrastructure, digitalisation needs innovation and new technologies, reliance on people and follow-up.
- Important cornerstones for digitalisation: investment, human capital and governance.
- There is an Action Plan for achieving the four objectives proposed in the Long-term Vision for Rural Areas.
- And also a European Rural Pact for working jointly.
- To highlight the importance of networking and cooperation for achieving optimum development of digitalisation.

[See the presentation](#)

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### Mobility in rural areas.

**Marie Clotteau.** Euromontana.

### Highlight the following points:

- The European strategy for mobility is divided into three pillars: 1) Sustainable mobility: reducing GGGs by 90% by 2050; impetus to high speed trains for 2025. 2) Intelligent mobility: using the potential of the data, multimodal transport. And 3) Resilient mobility: construct a single, strong transport market. Furthermore, rural areas must be better connected and mobility must be affordable for everyone, including people with disabilities.
- The Commission makes a recommendation to the regions and the Member States so that sustainable mobility strategies can be developed with a focus on the challenges of the cross-border areas.
- On the European level, the opportunity for multi-modal mobility has not been taken advantage of.
- Available funds: Horizonte Europa; FEDER, FEADER.
- Inspiration from other experiences: Euromontana has listed various experiences on its [web](#).
- Messages: mobility is key in order for rural areas to be attractive. Different solutions must be implemented, not just one, and connected to each other.

### Conclusions:

- The Commission is focussing on the mobility of the rural areas, as mobility in rural and remote areas is very complicated.
- Multi-modal mobility must be improved.
- Horizonte Europa presents financing opportunities.
- Mobility for everyone, everywhere and at a good price. Mobility is key to making rural areas attractive. It's now time to get it up and running.

[See the presentation](#)

### *Highlands and Islands of Scotland - To be transformed into a Digital Region.*

**Rob Clarke.** Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

#### *Highlight the following points:*

- These are small areas and the aim is to improve their productivity while reducing the differences with other areas of the country. 81% of these areas already have broadband and this continues to improve.
- There will be no development without digital input. Especially the digitalisation of the companies.
- Digitalisation will also contribute to sustainability and to the provision of public services.
- It is important to have connectivity, but also to know how to use it. And to this end, support must be given to the development of digital skills (especially in the companies).
- What rural areas really need is infrastructure, demand for digital technology and ambition.

#### *Conclusions:*

- Digitalisation is a fundamental element for the region's development in order for it to have the same opportunities as the rest of the country.
- It is important to have infrastructure and know how to use it.

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### *Andorra initiative.*

**Marc Font.** Andorra Innovation Hub.

#### *Highlight the following points:*

- Andorra's small size is the great advantage of this Hub, because it enables connection between a wide range of actors and offers services and projects.
- They have a solid connection that allows them to reach remote areas and prototype experiences.
- They have focussed their efforts on themes of high potential: mountains and tourism.
- They are starting up the Data Hub platform, which gathers information (data), processes data from many sources of information, analyses them and better understands processes and dynamics. It is an advanced, open data platform that allows them to have an overall vision of the country.
- In addition, they have created the "Casa de Muntanya", a Mountain Living lab for the co-creation of new services, products and projects, as well as an interactive place for getting to know the mountain better.

#### *Conclusions:*

- They have focussed on just two areas: mountains and tourism.
- They integrate everything into an open data platform.

[See the presentation](#)

### *Smart villages for a lively future in remote areas.*

**Stefano Sala.** Mountain University – UNIMONT (University of Milan).

#### *Highlight the following points:*

- Trains the students to solve mountain problems and work with the local communities.
- EUSALP Strategy (Smart Villages): Involves local politicians and communities in getting to know their priorities and which smart solutions that need to be implemented in response. Co-creation. And with integrated approaches.
- The rural areas must be connected with the urban centres. To have relations with the main political core.
- SMART ALPS Network: is its informal network of smart villages. From this network, the approach of the smart village is disseminated and exchange encouraged. And identify problems when implementing this approach. Transmit a modern picture of the mountain areas and contact other mountain networks.

#### *Conclusions:*

- Work from the co-creation with integrated approaches. From participation and collaboration.
- The rural areas needs to connect with the urban areas.
- And to boost the smart villages approach.

[See the presentation](#)

## BASQUE COUNTRY BLOCK

### *Basque Country Master Plan for an Intelligent Rural Region and Digital Innovation.*

**Goio Manrique.** Director of Digital Transformation and Organisation in HAZI.

#### *Highlight the following points:*

- The aim of this Master Plan is a more comfortable and attractive rural environment in which to live.
- The maximum distance from any point to basic services (local and general) is ground covered in a time of 15'-20'.
- There are five pillars: Innovation, technology, environmental sustainability, accessibility and quality of life.
- 95.33% broadband in the Basque Country: 85% in scattered population and 98% in urban nuclei.
- Work is being carried out to connect the whole country and deploy all the initiatives.
- Technologies 4.0 will be used in the digital transformation of companies and sector entities.
- Work is also being carried out on a public/private platform for monitoring digitalisation activity and new technologies, and to serve as an access portal to the information.
- Project Labean: social innovation project is underway.

[See the presentation](#)

### ***Teknoadineko Model for the detection and intervention with vulnerable elderly people in rural environments. The Landalab experience.***

**Mila López de Aldama.** Departament of Technical Development of Agintzari.

#### ***Highlight the following points:***

- TEKNOADINEKO LANDALAB Project: Is about the early identification of people in a situation of loneliness and to intervene in cases of vulnerability and risk. The intervention is carried out in three phases: 1) Technological system applied, 2) diagnosis of the reality and 3) community activation.
- To do this, data engineering and new technologies are used.
- In all the phases there is much community, public participation.
- It is a tandem between technology and human/community participation.

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### ***Smart Aralar. Digitalisation of municipal services in the municipality of Abaltzisketa.***

**Jon Zubizarreta.** Mayor of Abaltzisketa.

#### ***Highlight the following points:***

- They are digitalising the services with a clear philosophy: project the village outwards.
- Focussed on three areas: Digitalisation of public services, sustainable tourism and farming, and improvement of living conditions. And they have integrated various solutions for each one of these areas.
- They have placed three antennas, distributed throughout the district (Lora network).
- With a simple App installed in your mobile phone you have diverse information (position of livestock, fires, tourism..) and also a warning system in the future.

[See the presentation](#)

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### ***Smart Bidea - Enkarterrialde***

**Mónica Alonso.** Enkarterrialde Association of Rural Development.

#### ***Highlight the following points:***

- They want to promote the Rail Trail and the region's lighthouse to promote it.
- Smart Bidea is a pilot project for the digitalisation and connectivity of a territory from the rail trail.
- They intend to improve the experience, enliven the area and obtain data that will help them make decisions. This is technology in the service of the land and its people.
- They have created their own network connectivity with 9 wifi points and 1 optical sensor, and expanding. And a Smart App that also aims to be a platform for bi-directional land revitalisation.
- Smart Bidea is geolocated in Google Street View and there are 360° photographs. Through the App, they are infusing new energy with the organisation of lotteries and prizes.



- Key components of the project: working collaboratively, sharing expenses, commitment and political involvement.
- Lessons: training is essential, adaptability to change, obtaining tangible results and knowing how to listen.
- Difficulties: financing, human resources for management and knowing how to communicate and convey.

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CLOSE

**Jone Fernández Landa.** Director of Rural Development, Coastal and European Policies for the Basque Government.

***Highlight the following points:***

- This is the right time for digitalisation of the rural environment. There are European frameworks and many initiatives are underway.
- Opportunities for a more balanced Rural Development should be taken in order to bridge the digital divide.
- The importance of innovation and new technologies has become apparent for a holistic vision of local needs.
- And also the importance of networking, with shared visions, focussing on the needs of the rural areas.
- Highlight the participation of the public and the importance of people, as they the ones who best understand the weaknesses and strengths of the rural environment. And the relevance of working from the co-creation and the integrated approach, involving the various agents.
- Technology is not an end in itself, but a facilitating element for achieving the aim.