SmartCommUnity Project

Report on the links between WP1 and WP3

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Introduction

The present report, D.1.3.1 – Report on the links between WP1 and WP3, is prepared within the framework of the Interreg Alpine Space SmartCommUnity project (ASP0100041). This deliverable aims to provide an updated overview of the interactions and synergies between Work Package 1 (WPEU – EUSALP uptake and integration at policy level) and Work Package 3 (WPIT – Innovation Tools for SmartCommUnity), with a particular focus on the development, promotion, and integration of Smart Alps tools. This report covers the period November 2022 – October 2025 and reflects the latest activities, feedback, and lessons learned from project partners and stakeholders. The report will provide a background context, a summary of communication activities, survey results, feedback from WP3 leaders, test area experiences, a synthesis of findings, and updated recommendations for future actions.
The objective is to ensure that the links between WP1 and WP3 are clearly documented, facilitating knowledge transfer, policy alignment, and the effective deployment of innovative tools across the Alpine region.

Background: WP1, WP3 and Smart Alps tools

Work Package 1 (WP1 – EUSALP uptake and integration at policy level) and Work Package 3 (WP3 – Innovation Tools for SmartCommUnity) are two core components of the SmartCommUnity project, each with distinct but complementary objectives.
WP1 focuses on strengthening the link between the project and the EUSALP AG5 Smart Alps network, ensuring that the project's activities and outputs are aligned with macro-regional strategies and policy frameworks. WP1 also supports the dissemination of best practices and the integration of smart community concepts into regional and national policies across the Alpine Space.
WP3 is dedicated to the development, consolidation, and deployment of innovative digital tools designed to support smart transitions in rural and mountain areas. These tools aim to facilitate civic engagement, data collection and analysis, and the sharing of good practices among project partners and stakeholders.
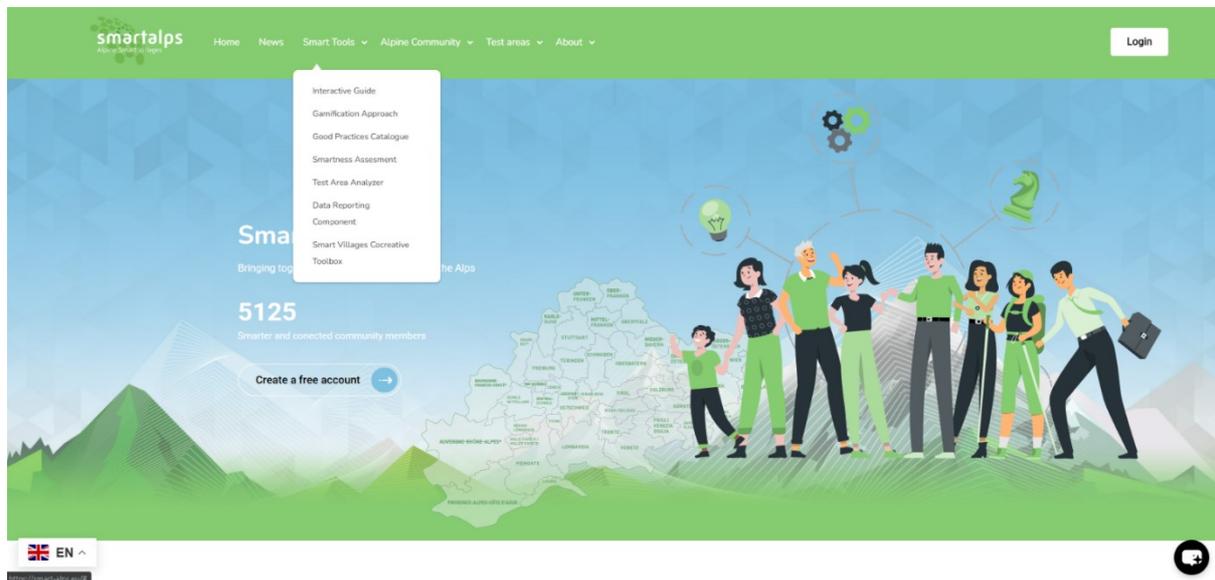
Figure 1. The Smart Alps Tools on the smart-alps website

The **Smart Alps tools** represent a suite of digital resources and methodologies developed within the project to support the smart transition of Alpine communities. These include interactive guides, assessment instruments, catalogues of good practices, and platforms for stakeholder engagement and knowledge exchange. The tools are designed to be adaptable and scalable, enabling their use across diverse territorial contexts within the Alpine region.

The effective collaboration between WP1 and WP3 is essential to ensure that the Smart Alps tools are not only technically robust but also strategically aligned with policy objectives and widely adopted by target communities.

Given the strategic relevance of these activities, the WP1 and WP3 leads have agreed to hold a series of regular meetings to exchange guidance and identify possible improvements. At the same time, through events organized by WPEU, the tools already developed have been promoted to various external stakeholders.

Promoting the Smart Alps tools: communication activities overview

During the reporting period, the promotion of Smart Alps tools has relied on a multi-channel communication strategy, combining high-profile events, targeted workshops, and active online engagement.

As RAVA is the leader of Action Group 5, which focuses on the digitization of the Alps, the Smart Alps network and its tools were presented during AG5 meetings and at key events promoting the EUSALP strategy.

Key activities included participation in major events such as the Digital Alps Conference (DAC) 2023, 2024 and 2025, where the Smart Alps tools were presented to a wide audience of stakeholders through plenary sessions, thematic workshops, and best practice visits. Project representatives also acted as ambassadors at external conferences and project events, further expanding the reach of the tools across the Alpine region.

Figure 2. Presentation of Smart Alps at the Digital Alps Concerence 2023 in Courmayeur

Online dissemination has been supported by the Smart Alps website and the SmartCommUnity Facebook channel, which have been used to share news, blog posts, event announcements, and project milestones. These platforms have enabled ongoing engagement with local communities, policymakers, and the general public.

The Smart Alps tools were also presented during the SmartCommUnity project study visits and during the dissemination events organised by the partners in their test areas. Finally, the tools were promoted within the Smart Alps network as the main communication tool (thematic forums on the various smart components, e.g. Smart mobility) and for assessing municipalities (webinars to present the smart assessment tool).

Communication activities have been tailored to reach a diverse set of stakeholders, using newsletters, press releases, and direct invitations to maximize participation and impact. Feedback collected during events and through online channels has informed the continuous improvement of the tools and the overall communication strategy.

This was made possible thanks to the continuous exchange of information between ANCI Liguria's communications representatives and the leaders of the WPEU (SAB and RAVA).
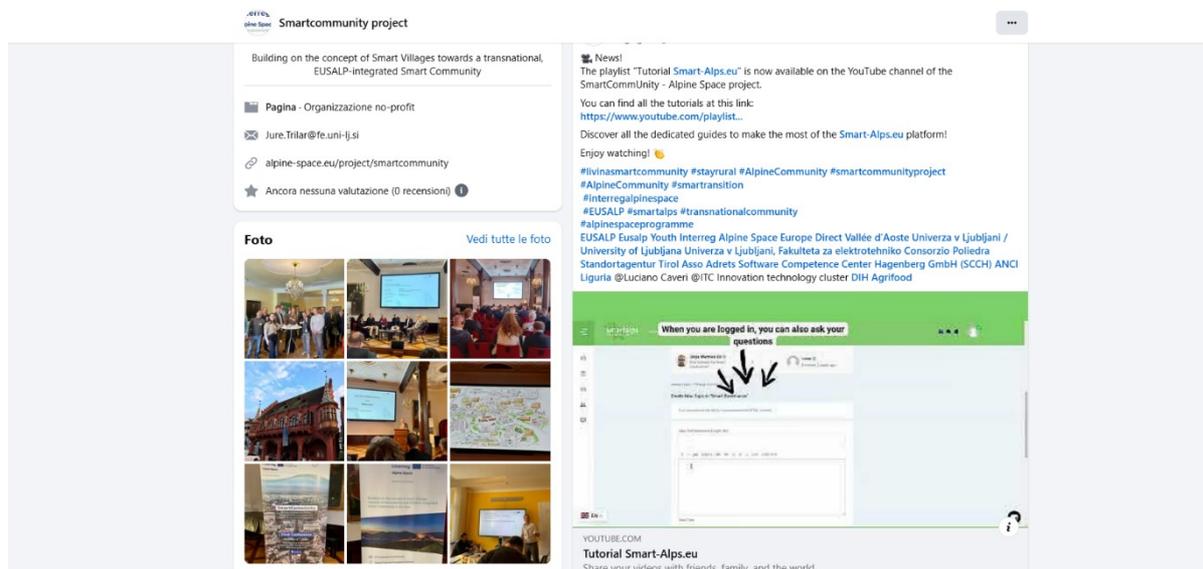
Figure 3. A screenshot of the SmartCommUnity project Facebook page presenting the Smart Alps Tools video tutorials

Survey Results: Smart Alps Tools

Survey Development and Distribution

The idea of conducting a survey on Smart Alps tools was developed collaboratively with the leaders of WPTAN (University of Ljubljana and RVSO) and WPIT (SCCH and Adrès). The survey was initially distributed to members of the test areas to assess whether the tools met their needs and to collect suggestions for improvement. Based on the feedback received, the Smart Alps tools were refined according to the guidelines identified.

Subsequently, the survey was extended to Smart Alps network members to obtain broader feedback, with adaptations made to the questionnaire as needed. The main aggregate results are summarized below, while the template of the survey is provided in the annexes.

Aggregate Results and Key Insights

Tool Coverage
The survey evaluated several digital tools available on the Smart Alps platform:
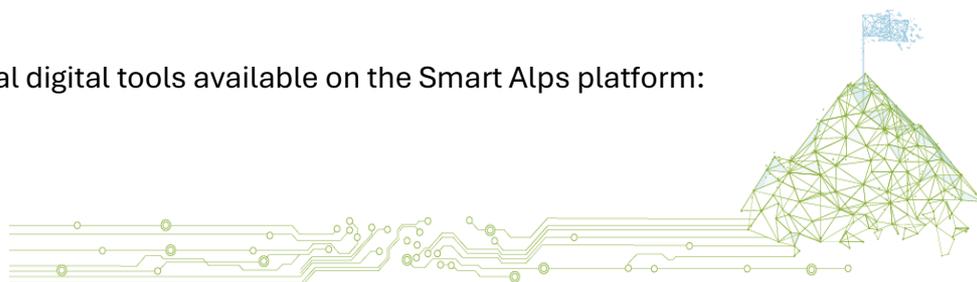
Interactive Guide: Empowering rural communities through digitalization and engagement.

- Strengths: Clear, user-friendly, practical structure, accessible design, useful examples.
- Weaknesses: Limited interactivity, navigation issues, could benefit from more video content.
- Suggestions: Add case videos, local best-practice examples, progress tracking.

Digital Exchange Platform (DEP): Self-assessment of community 'smartness' across six macro-areas, with a certificate and access to a database of good practices and methods.

- Strengths: Comprehensive, immediate feedback, relevant database.
- Weaknesses: Indicators sometimes too general, database could be expanded, technical issues.
- Suggestions: Simplify questions for small communities, enable regional filtering, allow upload of local cases.

Toolbox for Smart Villages: Methods and techniques for participatory processes, project planning, and stakeholder mapping.

- Strengths: Logical structure, clear method descriptions, integration with DEP.
- Weaknesses: Overlapping methods, lacks export features, technical glitches.
- Suggestions: Add templates, online facilitation guidance, multi-layered access for different user types.

Chatbot: Provides answers to user questions about smart community solutions and project results.

- Strengths: Multilingual, intuitive, fast responses.
- Weaknesses: Limited contextual understanding, few external links, language inconsistencies.
- Suggestions: Expand scope, improve training, add guidance on funding and policy instruments.

Test Area Analyzer: Visual mapping of amenities and smartness dimensions using open datasets.

- Strengths: Clear visualization, supports data-driven analysis.
- Weaknesses: Limited dataset coverage, integration issues, display delays.
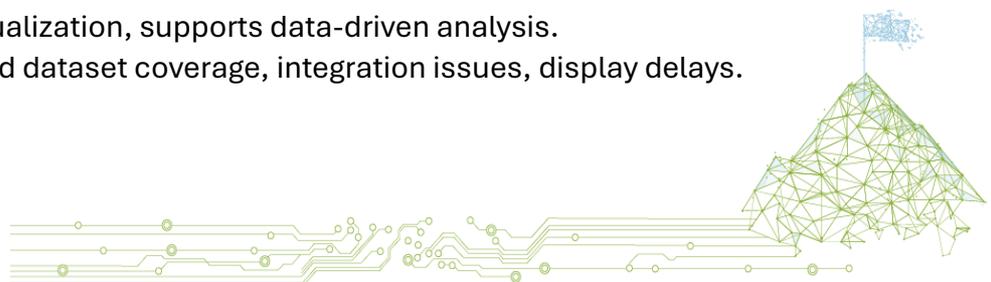
- Suggestions: Allow upload of local datasets, improve filtering, check data before public release.

Reserved Area & Gamification: Forum for user interaction, discussion groups, and gamified engagement.

- Strengths: Networking potential, targeted exchanges, gamification encourages use.
- Weaknesses: Limited activity, interface could be improved, few incentives.
- Suggestions: Expand challenges, simplify navigation, add expert-moderated threads.

Impact and Usefulness
- The tools were generally considered useful for structuring local workshops, defining priorities, and guiding community initiatives.
- The self-assessment and certificate features helped identify areas for improvement and provided actionable feedback.
- The database of good practices and suggested methods supported the adoption of participatory and governance practices.
- The reserved area and gamification features were seen as promising but require more active user engagement and regular updates.

Feedback and Recommendations
- Respondents suggested integrating more practical examples, improving interactivity, and expanding the database of good practices.
- Technical improvements were recommended for navigation, export features, and data integration.
- The need for multi-layered access and support for non-professional users was highlighted, especially for the toolbox.
- Continuous updates and maintenance of the chatbot and platform were emphasized.

WP3 Leaders' Feedback and Discussions

Throughout the project, feedback and discussions regarding the Smart Alps tools have been facilitated through a combination of regular and ad hoc meetings among project partners and work package leaders.

Monthly Partner Meetings (PMB Meetings):
Regular monthly meetings (PMB meetings) have served as the main forum for coordination among all project partners. These meetings have provided an opportunity to discuss progress, share feedback, and address any issues related to the development and deployment of the Smart Alps tools.

Ad Hoc WP Meetings:
In addition to the scheduled PMB meetings, ad hoc meetings were organized between representatives of the different work packages (WPs), particularly involving the leaders of WPTAN and WPIT. These meetings focused on exchanging opinions, sharing best practices, and ensuring that the tools were adapted to meet the needs of stakeholders.

Testing and Feedback Workshops:
The testing phase for the Smart Alps tools began immediately, with a dedicated workshop held during the study visit to Valle d'Aosta from 5 to 7 March 2024. During this workshop, partners had the opportunity to test the tools in practice and provide direct feedback for improvement.
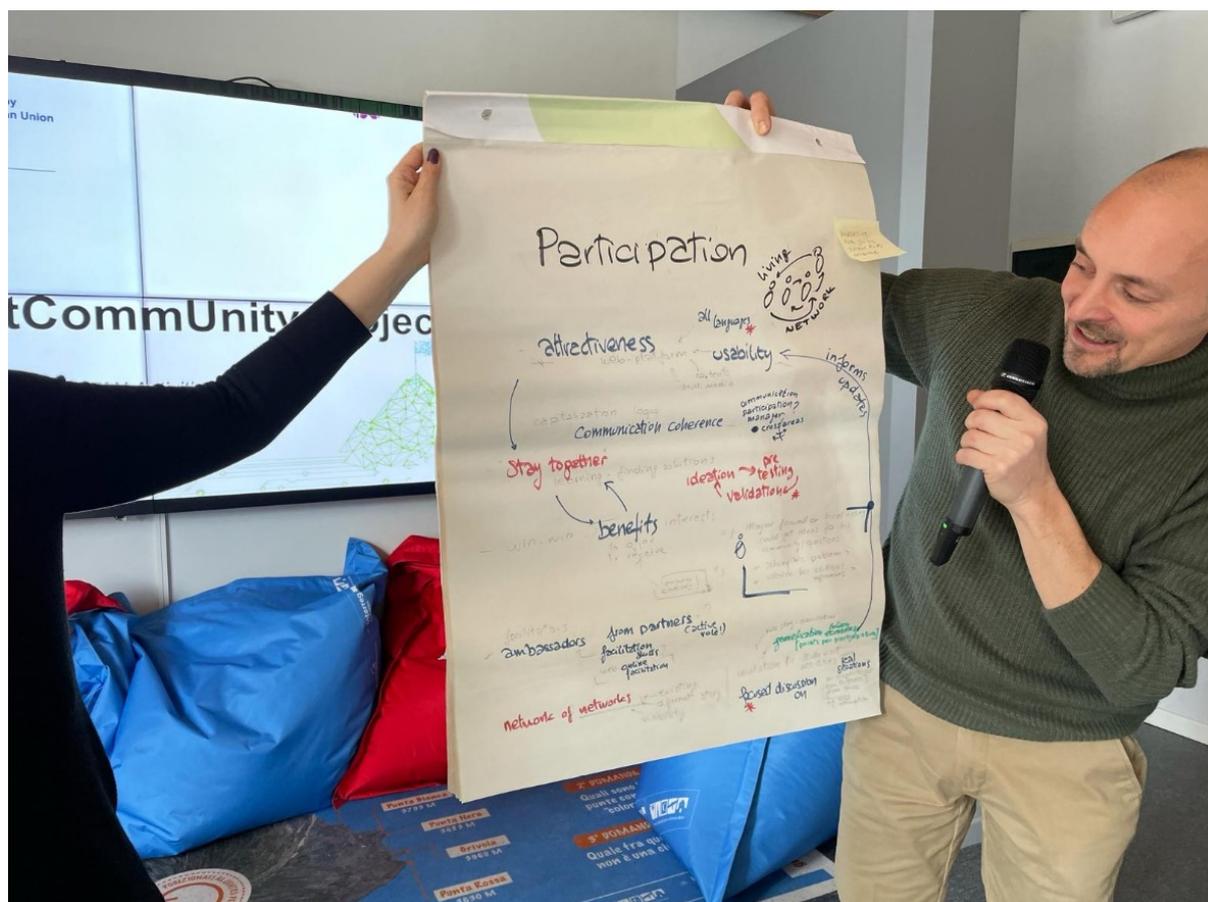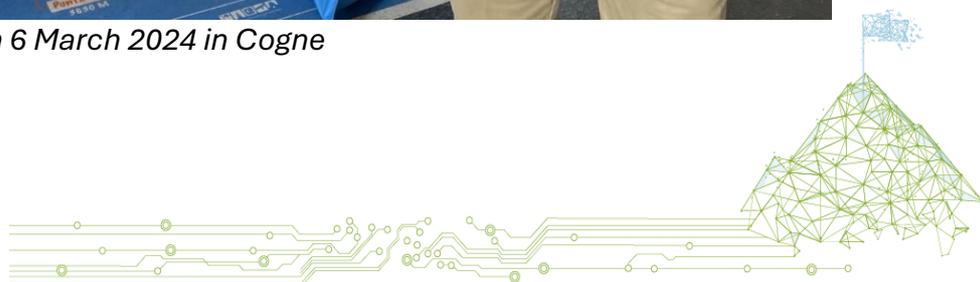

Figure 4. WPIT workshop on 6 March 2024 in Cogne

Online Exchanges:
To facilitate ongoing communication and avoid overloading partners with additional video calls, online meetings were organized as needed. These sessions enabled partners to exchange views and best practices efficiently.

Integration of Feedback into PMB Meetings:
Recognizing the challenge of coordinating additional meetings for tool testing and feedback, the project team decided to integrate these discussions into the regular monthly PMB meetings. This approach streamlined communication and ensured that feedback from all partners was consistently gathered and addressed.

Test Area Experiences and Lessons Learned

During the project, feedback from the test areas was systematically collected through meetings and workshops. Several important lessons emerged, particularly regarding the practical use and limitations of the Smart Alps tools.

Data Reliability and the Test Area Analyzer

One of the main challenges highlighted by test area representatives was the difficulty in obtaining reliable and comprehensive data for use in the Smart Alps tools, especially the Test Area Analyzer. This tool relies on open-source data from OpenStreetMap to visualize and analyze amenities and smartness dimensions within each test area. However, in some regions—such as the Aosta Valley—the available data was insufficient for accurate analysis, limiting the tool's effectiveness.

Recommendations for Data Improvement

To address these data gaps, it was recommended to organize dedicated events aimed at enriching local datasets. Suggestions included hosting OpenStreetMap Hackathons or similar collaborative events, where stakeholders and community members could contribute additional data relevant to their territories. Such initiatives would not only improve the accuracy of the Test Area Analyzer but also foster greater engagement and ownership among local actors.

Additional Lessons from the Test Areas

Further analysis of a survey with Tes Areas reveals several other key points:

Tool Usability: While the Smart Alps tools were generally well received, their usability depended heavily on the availability and quality of local data. Tools designed for professional audiences (such as the Digital Exchange Platform and Toolbox) were sometimes challenging for non-specialists to use, highlighting the need for more accessible interfaces and support materials.

Community Engagement: The reserved area and gamification features showed promise for fostering transnational networking and knowledge exchange, but require ongoing monitoring to ensure active participation and avoid self-referentiality.

Continuous Improvement: Feedback from test areas was instrumental in identifying areas for improvement, such as expanding the database of good practices, simplifying assessment tools, and integrating more practical examples relevant to local contexts.

Conclusion

The experiences of the test areas underscore the importance of reliable data, user-friendly tools, and active stakeholder engagement for the success of the Smart Alps platform. Dedicated data enrichment events and continuous feedback loops are essential for ensuring that the tools remain relevant and effective across diverse Alpine territories.

Synthesis: What Works, What Needs Improvement

What Works

Strategic Collaboration: The regular coordination between WP1 and WP3, including monthly PMB meetings and ad hoc exchanges, ensured that policy alignment and tool development were closely integrated.

Multi-channel Communication: The use of events (e.g., Digital Alps Conference), study visits, webinars, and online platforms (website, Facebook) effectively promoted the Smart Alps tools and engaged a diverse range of stakeholders across the Alpine region.

Tool Utility: The Smart Alps tools (Interactive Guide, Digital Exchange Platform, Toolbox, Chatbot, Test Area Analyzer, and Reserved Area) were generally considered
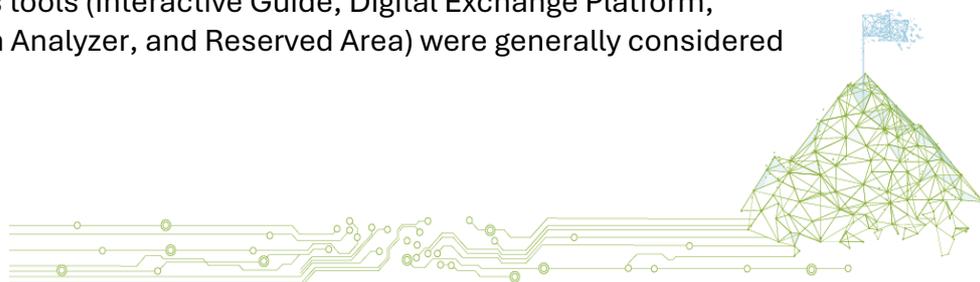
useful for structuring workshops, guiding community initiatives, and supporting participatory processes.

Feedback Integration: Continuous feedback from partners and test areas led to iterative improvements, making the tools more relevant and responsive to user needs.

Community Engagement: The reserved area and gamification features fostered networking and knowledge exchange, laying the groundwork for a transnational smart community.

What Needs Improvement

Data Reliability: The effectiveness of tools like the Test Area Analyzer was limited by gaps in open-source data, especially in certain regions. Reliable, comprehensive datasets are crucial for accurate analysis.

Tool Accessibility: Some tools, particularly those designed for professional audiences, were challenging for non-specialists. More accessible interfaces and support materials are needed to broaden user engagement.

Sustained Engagement: The reserved area and gamification features require ongoing monitoring and active facilitation to avoid self-referentiality and ensure vibrant participation.

Continuous Data Enrichment: Dedicated events (e.g., OpenStreetMap Hackathons) were recommended to address data gaps and foster local ownership, but their implementation and impact should be further evaluated.

Recommendations and Next Steps

As the SmartCommUnity project concludes, the following recommendations and next steps are proposed to ensure the continued relevance and impact of the Smart Alps tools and network:

Ongoing Management and Maintenance
The Smart Alps tools should continue to be managed and maintained by the Smart Alps network and its partners. Regular updates, technical support, and user engagement activities are essential to keep the tools functional and relevant.

Integration into Future Projects
Rather than further improving the tools within the current project, future initiatives should build on the foundations established here. The Smart Alps tools and methodologies should be integrated into new projects, leveraging lessons learned and expanding their reach across the Alpine region.

Data Enrichment and Community Events
Organize dedicated data enrichment events (such as OpenStreetMap Hackathons) in collaboration with local stakeholders to improve the quality and coverage of datasets used by the tools. This will enhance the accuracy of analyses and foster greater community involvement.

Broaden Stakeholder Engagement
Continue to promote the Smart Alps tools through multi-channel communication strategies, targeting both professional and non-professional audiences. Encourage participation from a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, community organizations, and citizens.

Monitor and Evaluate Usage
Thanks to the monitoring mechanisms developed within the project, continue monitoring the use of the tools, user satisfaction, and community engagement. Use these insights to inform future development and ensure that the tools remain aligned with evolving needs.

Foster Knowledge Exchange
Maintain and expand the reserved area and gamification features to support transnational networking, knowledge sharing, and collaborative learning among Alpine communities.

Annexes – Survey questionnaire

1. Introduction

In this report, the 'smart tools' on the Smart Alps platform will be presented and evaluated. In particular, the effectiveness and validity of the following tools will be assessed: the Smart Villages digital exchange platform (i.e. Digital Exchange Platform), the Smart Villages toolbox (i.e. Digital Toolbox), the chatbot, the Test Area Analyzer and, finally, the reserved area, created by applying gamification techniques.

The report will be structured as follows. It will begin by briefly recalling the origins of the Smart Alps platform and the foundations on which its further and future development is based. It will then go into detail and evaluate each individual tool, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses and suggesting possible improvements. Finally, we will conclude with an overall assessment of the platform and suggestions for its development and public involvement.

2. Origins of the Smart Alps platform and basis for its further development

The Smart Alps platform was developed within the framework of the SmartCommUnity project, and is intended as the project's innovation platform. It has as its predecessor the Smart Villages platform, initially created within the framework of the European project SmartVillages as an exchange and support tool on smart policies for the local authorities and stakeholders involved. With the SmartCommUnity project, the intention is to further develop this platform, making it an integrated tool that opens up to the public, facilitating the involvement of citizens in the definition and implementation of 'smart' actions for their communities, as well as the transparency of decision-making processes.

These platform evolutions are based on a basic idea: true 'intelligence' can only be realised when everyone actively participates in community life, from local authorities to ordinary citizens. Furthermore, digital technologies have the potential to make direct citizen involvement easier and more practical. These are the main foundations for the development of an open platform.

3. The Smart Villages Digital Exchange Platform (DEP)

The DEP Smart Villages essentially consists of two tools. A tool to (self-)assess and quantify the level of 'smartness' of a community, where 'smartness' is divided into six macro-areas:

- Smart people;

- Smart environment;

- Smart governance;

- Smart economy;

- Smart mobility;

- Smart living.

The user is asked a series of questions about the community's priorities and these six dimensions, and then a certificate is drawn up that quantifies the community's smartness levels in the six macro-areas. This identifies the macro-areas in which the community excels, those that could be improved and those that need to be improved, i.e. the critical dimensions.

The second tool provided is a database of 'good practices' and 'methods' to be applied in their design and implementation. In particular, for 'good practices' a description of the practice with possible difficulties encountered, etc. is provided, as well as the contact details of a person involved in its implementation.

The database is always accessible, but if you take the smartness assessment test, one or more 'good practices' are suggested and you are directed to one or more 'methods' (clearly chosen according to the results of the test).

There are also additional resources on the DEP that allow you to learn more about the 'smartness' universe. In particular, there are descriptions of the Test Areas and a collection of broader policies, including national ones, which can serve as inspiration for the promotion and design of smart policies. There is also the possibility of creating one's own profile in the reserved area, but the functions of the reserved area are unclear, often lacking content or with blocked access.

Overall evaluation
- INSERT YOUR EVALUATION HERE

Pros

- …

- …

- …

Cons

- …

- ...
- ...
- ...

Suggestions for improvement

- INSERT YOUR SUGGESTIONS HERE

4. The toolbox for smart villages

This tool is strongly related to DEP, as it suggests that set of methods and techniques to carry out a participatory process in order to effectively address the challenges of a community. Again, you are guided through a form to create a roadmap of your project, where one or more methods are associated with each project phase. These methods are suggested to the user, who then selects the one(s) that seem most appropriate to him/her. The project is divided into the following phases and sub-phases:

1. Define the problem and objectives:
   a. define the problem
   b. define the objective
2. Build relationships:
   a. map relevant stakeholders and invite them;
   b. map the state of the art;
3. Participatory process;
4. Follow-up and evaluation:
   a. Evaluation;
   b. continuation.

Upon completion of the form, a copy of the roadmap just outlined is provided and you are referred to DEP's good practices.

Overall evaluation

- INSERT YOUR EVALUATION HERE

Pros

- ...
- ...

- ==...==

Cons

- ==...==
- ==...==

- ==...==

Suggestions for improvement
- ==INSERT YOUR SUGGESTIONS HERE==

5. The chatbot

The Smart Alps platform makes it possible to interact with a chatbot that can provide answers to users' questions concerning possible solutions to be implemented to increase the smartness of a community and/or concerning the results achieved by the Smart Villages project. Interactions with the chatbot can take place in all languages of the Alpine countries.

In a nutshell, it is a real-time assistant that provides quick access to information, giving the user an additional channel for communication and learning. A channel that, as it is informed by new Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning technologies, is characterised by its ability to always be up-to-date and resemble human interactions. Also not to be underestimated is the double thread that binds chatbot and user, as the latter's questions help the former to improve and refine its answers. The user thus becomes an active contributor to the chatbot's 'training'.

Looking ahead, it is the intention of the SmartCommUnity project to 'feed' the chatbot with the results of the project itself, in order to make it also a publicity and transparency tool, as it would allow the user to quickly access information, updates and other resources related to the project.

Overall evaluation
- ==INSERT YOUR EVALUATION HERE==

Pros

- ==...==
- ==...==
- ==...==

Cons

- ...
- ...
- ...

Suggestions for improvement
- INSERT YOUR SUGGESTIONS HERE

6. The Test Area Analyzer

The Test Area Analyser is an innovative tool to automatically assess the different TAs of the project and show the different amenities on a map.
The data are loaded from open datasets and are displayed by smartness dimension.
Overall evaluation
- INSERT YOUR EVALUATION HERE

Pros

- ...
- ...
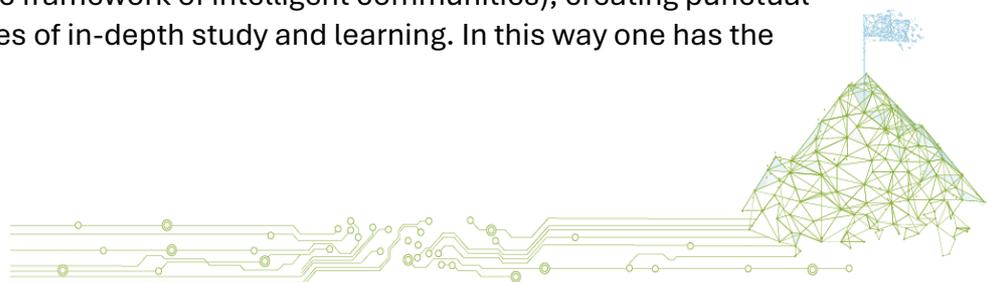- ...

Cons

- ...
- ...
- ...

Suggestions for improvement
- INSERT YOUR SUGGESTIONS HERE

7. The reserved area: the gamification of the platform

On the Smart Alps platform, it is possible to register free of charge for a reserved area, which is a virtual space where it is possible to interact with other users. Interaction with other users takes place mainly through the forum tool, which is potentially very useful. In fact, one has the possibility of creating discussion groups on the most diverse topics (always remaining within the framework of intelligent communities), creating punctual and transversal communities of in-depth study and learning. In this way one has the

opportunity to exchange ideas, seek advice and interact in a relevant way with people involved in smart community projects.

The entire reserved area is formed by the principles of gamification, in order to attract and activate users even more. There is therefore a structure reminiscent of a game, with points, levels, rewards and rankings.

Overall evaluation
- INSERT YOUR EVALUATION HERE

Pros

- …

- …

- …

Cons

- …

- …

- …

Suggestions for improvement
- INSERT YOUR SUGGESTIONS HERE

8. General evaluation of the Smart Alps platform and conclusions

THIS PART WILL BE COMPILED BY WP LEADERS WITH THE RESULTS FROM PARTNERS EVALUATION.