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SMART VILLAGE LABS

D3.3 Report on local services needs and social economy solutions

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Executive Summary

This report presents the results of Task 3.3 "*Report on Local Services Needs and Social Economy Solutions*", focusing on the identification of local services needs and the development of selected social economy (SE) solutions across the seven INSPIRE Smart Village Labs (SVLs). Building on the findings of the previous SVL co-creation activities, its main purpose is to answer three questions: *What local services needs were identified? What SE solutions emerged? What can be learned from the user-innovation process implemented in the pilot areas*?

The real added value of Task 3.3 lies not only in identifying local needs on services, but in supporting the transition from identified needs to prioritised solutions grounded on the principles and values of the SE, together with initial implementation pathways. Through the user-innovation workshops, SVL members, representing groups in vulnerable situations, local organisations and other key local stakeholders, together with additional participants were actively involved in discussing local challenges, generating ideas, selecting priority solutions, and exploring how these priorities could be translated into concrete actions.

Between April and June 2026, two user-innovation workshops were implemented in each pilot area, resulting in 14 workshops and 193 participants in total. The first workshop focused on identifying and selecting priority solution ideas, while the second focused on translating these priorities into initial implementation pathways through deployment roadmaps. The process was supported by common methodological framework and a set of participatory tools, including inspiration examples, the INSPIRE Services and Social Economy Atlas, the Impact-Feasibility Matrix, participatory voting methods and the Roadmap Template. Most participants were part of the groups in vulnerable situations targeted by the respective SVLs, ensuring that the solutions developed were grounded in the experiences and perspectives of those most directly affected by the identified challenges.

The workshops revealed a wide range of local services needs reflecting the social, economic and territorial conditions of each pilot area. These included mobility barriers, social isolation, limited access to services, digital exclusion, employment and training gaps, weak coordination among local actors, insufficient support for groups in vulnerable situations, and limited opportunities for participation in decision-making, skills development and community engagement. The needs identified varied across the pilots, reflecting differences in rural context, target groups, existing local assets and SVL priorities.

The solutions selected through the process were equally diverse. They included mobility and inclusion platforms, cooperation and promotion initiatives in the local food systems, women's empowerment and cultural heritage actions, language and employment support pathways, community hubs, digital access tools, training initiatives and disability-inclusive mobility and employment pathways. While different in form, the selected solutions shared a common orientation towards social inclusion, community empowerment, cooperation, improved access to opportunities and services, and community-led local development.

The cross-pilot analysis shows that user-innovation can help rural communities move beyond the discussion of challenges and actively participate in the co-creation of locally relevant solutions. Participation shaped the direction of the selected priority solutions, while local knowledge, lived experience and stakeholder engagement helped ensure that the selected solutions were relevant to

each area. The deployment roadmaps further supported this process by helping participants clarify objectives, expected results, target groups, stakeholders, activities, resources, risks, funding needs, and future opportunities, thereby providing a practical bridge between co-creation and future implementation, supporting the next phases of the SVLs.

The findings demonstrate the value of participatory and place-based approaches for addressing local services needs and supporting communities facing vulnerabilities in rural areas. They show that user-innovation can mobilise local knowledge, strengthen stakeholder engagement and create meaningful opportunities for groups in vulnerable situations and other local stakeholders to contribute to the identification of priorities and the co-design of locally relevant SE solutions. Moreover, this report contributes to INSPIRE's broader objectives of promoting rural empowerment, social inclusion and community-led innovation, while providing the foundation for the next phases of solution development, testing and implementation within the SVLs.

Keywords: *Local services needs; social economy; user-innovation; Smart Village Labs; rural communities; groups in vulnerable situations; participatory workshops; co-creation; deployment roadmaps; social inclusion.*

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List of Terms and Definitions

Table 1. Terms and Definitions

Abbreviation	Definition
DGASPC	Direcția Generală de Asistență Socială și Protecția Copilului [Department of Social Assistance and Child Protection]
EPRS	European Parliamentary Research Service
EU	European Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SCE	Social Cooperative Enterprise
SE	Social economy
SVL	Smart Village Lab

1. Introduction

1.1 Scope and objectives

The *Report on Local Services Needs and Social Economy Solutions* (Deliverable 3.3) presents the results of the user-innovation process implemented across the seven INSPIRE SVLs, focusing on the identification of local needs on services, the prioritisation of solutions based on the principles and values of the SE, and the development of initial deployment roadmaps. It captures how SVL members, representing groups in vulnerable situations, local organisations and other key stakeholders, together with additional participants engaged through the workshop process, contributed to identifying priorities, generating solution ideas and shaping initial pathways towards implementation.

The analysis combines pilot-level results with a cross-pilot synthesis. The pilot sections show how each SVL translated its own context, target groups and capacities into selected priorities and potential solutions. The cross-pilot analysis provides an overview of the local services needs and the prioritised solutions that emerged through the process, examines the value of user-innovation in supporting participatory solution design and identifies key lessons and implications for future rural innovation and community-led development processes.

The contribution of D3.3 lies in documenting the transition from consultation to action-oriented planning. The findings clarify which solutions grounded in the principles of the SE have been prioritised in each SVL, what conditions may support their further development, and how user-innovation can contribute to INSPIRE's wider objectives of rural empowerment, social inclusion and community-led innovation.

The contribution of D3.3 lies in documenting the transition from consultation to action-oriented planning. The findings clarify which solutions grounded in the principles of the social economy have been prioritised in each SVL, the conditions that may support their further development, and the initial implementation pathways identified by local stakeholders. They also demonstrate how the user-innovation approach can support the co-design of locally relevant solutions and provide a foundation for the next phases of the INSPIRE project, particularly the further development, testing and implementation of the selected solutions under the SVLs in WP4 of the project.

1.2 Structure of the deliverable

As the output of Task 3.3, this deliverable is structured to document and analyse the user-innovation process, from the conceptual and methodological foundations to the pilot findings, cross-pilot synthesis and conclusions.

Chapter 2 | Conceptual background: introduces the key concepts informing the analysis, focusing on local services needs, SE solutions and user-innovation in rural areas.

Chapter 3 | Methodology: describes the workshop design, participatory tools, data collection and analysis approach, alongside the ethical and data protection safeguards applied.

Chapter 4 | Implementation of the user-innovation workshops: provides an overview of workshop participation and coverage across the pilot areas and examines the main implementation dynamics.

Chapter 5 | Local services needs and social economy solutions: presents the findings from each SVL, including the local context, identified needs, generated solution ideas, prioritisation process and selected solutions together with their initial implementation pathways.

Chapter 6 | Cross-pilot analysis: synthesises the findings across the project SVLs, providing an overview of the local services needs and selected solutions, examining the value of the user-innovation process and highlighting key lessons learned and implications for future practice.

Chapter 7 | Conclusions: summarises the deliverable's main findings and contribution and explains how the results will inform outlines their relevance for the next phases of INSPIRE, particularly the further development, testing and implementation of the selected solutions.

2. Conceptual background

2.1 Local services needs and social economy solutions in rural areas

Previous research conducted within the INSPIRE project, particularly D1.1 *"Measuring Social Inclusion and Wellbeing in European Rural Areas: A Systematic Review"*, D1.2 "*Drivers and Factors of Social Exclusion in Rural Areas: Macro-, Meso-, and Micro-Level*" and D1.3 "*Typology on Social Wellbeing, Resilience and Exclusion of European Rural Areas*", highlighted that rural territories across Europe face a range of interconnected structural, demographic, economic and institutional challenges affecting social inclusion, wellbeing and access to essential (social) services. Demographic decline, population ageing, geographical remoteness, limited transport connectivity and the concentration of public and private services in urban centres often create significant service gaps in areas such as healthcare, education, social care, mobility, employment support and community services. At the same time, digital exclusion, economic insecurity, limited social participation and unequal access to opportunities continue to affect many rural communities, particularly those located in remote or peripheral areas. These challenges are frequently compounded for groups in vulnerable situations, including older people, women, young people, migrants, people with disabilities and individuals at risk of social exclusion, who may experience additional barriers in accessing information, services, employment opportunities and community life.

In the context of this deliverable, these challenges are reflected in a range of local services needs, understood as gaps, limitations or opportunities for improvement in the availability, accessibility, quality or coordination of services that support the wellbeing, social inclusion and quality of life of rural communities. Addressing these needs requires the combined effort of a wide range of actors, including municipalities, public authorities, health and social care providers, employment and education services, civil society organisations, community groups and social economy organisations. Together, these actors contribute to the provision, coordination and continuous improvement of local services, although their respective roles and capacities vary considerably across rural territories.

The findings of D2.4 "*Services and Social Economy Atlas on Rural Empowerment*" complement this perspective by illustrating how these challenges manifest across European rural territories and highlight examples of initiatives developed to address them. While limited public transport options, shortages of qualified professionals in health, care and education sectors, insufficient social and community services and restricted employment opportunities remain common concerns, the Atlas also demonstrates that rural communities often possess important local assets. These include strong social networks, local knowledge, community organisations and traditions of mutual support that can provide a foundation for locally led responses to these challenges.

Complementing the role of public and community service providers, the SE has increasingly been recognised as an important contributor in addressing unmet service needs and promoting social inclusion. As outlined in D2.2 "*A Common Conceptual Framework on Social Economy in Europe*", the SE includes organisations such as cooperatives, mutuals, associations, foundations and social

enterprises that produce goods and services while pursuing a social or societal objective and/or the general interest. In line with the European Commission (2021), these entities prioritise social and environmental purposes over profit, reinvest most of their surpluses to achieve their mission, and are managed according to democratic and participatory governance principles. Their strong social orientation and close connection to local communities make them particularly relevant actors in addressing rural service needs and strengthening community wellbeing, participation and inclusion.

Building on this understanding, D2.3 “Business Models Typology of Rural Social Entrepreneurship: Facts, Strengths and Limitations” identified several broad categories of SE-based solutions commonly found in rural areas. Within the INSPIRE project, the term *“SE-based solutions”* refers to solutions that aim to address local services needs and strengthen social inclusion by drawing upon the principles and values of the social economy, including collective action, participation, democratic governance and the generation of social value. Their implementation may involve SE organisations and social enterprises, but these solutions are not limited to specific organisational forms. They may also be developed through wider partnerships involving public authorities, community-based organisations, educational institutions, volunteers and other local actors.

Such solutions include initiatives focused on the provision of essential services and care, community-building and social participation activities, education, information and support services, labour-market integration and employability pathways, as well as specialised initiatives targeting the specific needs of groups in vulnerable situations, such as people with disabilities, women, migrants and older adults. The analysis highlighted that such initiatives seek to address needs that are insufficiently covered by public or market actors. Although they differ in their organisational forms and governance models, they share a common objective of generating social value, strengthening community resilience and improving quality of life. In many cases, they also contribute to local economic development, skills development, community empowerment and the mobilisation of local resources, demonstrating the important role that social economy principles and actors can play in supporting inclusive and sustainable rural development.

The diversity of local services needs identified across rural areas, together with the broad range of SE-based solutions capable of addressing them, highlights the importance of participatory approaches that place local communities at the centre of the innovation process. Effective and sustainable solutions are more likely to emerge when they are grounded in the experiences, knowledge and aspirations of those directly affected by local challenges. For this reason, the INSPIRE project has adopted a user-innovation approach within the SVLs, creating opportunities for local stakeholders and groups in vulnerable situations to move beyond their role as beneficiaries and become active contributors to the identification of needs, the generation of ideas and the co-design of SE-based solutions. The following section presents the conceptual foundations of this approach and its relevance for participatory solution design in rural areas.

2.2 User-innovation and participatory solution design

A core feature of the Smart Village concept is the active participation of local communities in the design, governance and implementation of local development strategies. Rather than relying solely on external expertise or top-down planning, Smart Villages adopt participatory and bottom-up

approaches that enable local actors to identify challenges, define priorities and contribute to the development of locally appropriate solutions (Slee, 2019; European Commission et al., 2020; Zavratnik et al., 2020; Anastasiou et al., 2021; EPRS, 2021; Smart Rural 21, 2023; Dembogurski et al., 2026). Community participation is therefore considered essential for ensuring that development interventions respond to local needs, reflect territorial specificities and build on existing social and cultural capital (Anastasiou et al., 2021).

Participatory approaches are particularly important in rural areas, where challenges and opportunities often vary considerably across territories (Anastasiou et al., 2021). Through consultation, dialogue and collective decision-making, local stakeholders contribute not only to the identification of needs but also to the design and prioritisation of potential responses. As noted by Slee (2019), participatory processes guided by Smart Villages strategies can stimulate local thinking, encourage collective action and help communities articulate shared aspirations for the future.

Within this broader participatory framework, user-innovation refers to the active involvement of citizens, including groups in vulnerable situations, in identifying needs and developing solutions that directly respond to their lived experiences. Rather than acting as passive beneficiaries, participants become co-creators of solutions, contributing their knowledge, experiences and perspectives to the innovation process. This approach recognises that those directly affected by a challenge often possess valuable contextual knowledge that may not be available to external experts or service providers (von Hippel, 2005).

Although user-innovation was initially developed in relation to technological and product innovation within corporate environments, its principles have increasingly been applied to public services, social innovation and community development (Bason, 2010; Neumeier, 2012; Fursov & Linton, 2022). In these contexts, innovation may involve new forms of organisation, collaboration or service delivery rather than technological advances or mass market products. The active involvement of users and communities can help reveal unmet needs, identify locally relevant responses and increase the likelihood that proposed solutions will be accepted, implemented and sustained over time (Garg et al., 2025).

User-innovation is closely linked to co-creation and participatory design approaches, which view citizens, service users and community members as active partners rather than passive recipients. These approaches emphasise collaboration, mutual learning and shared ownership of the innovation process (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). In rural areas, where local conditions and service needs often differ significantly from one territory to another, such approaches can help ensure that solutions are grounded in local realities and make effective use of local knowledge and resources.

The INSPIRE project adopts this perspective through the user-innovation workshops implemented within the SVLs. The workshops provide a structured participatory environment in which SVL members representing groups in vulnerable situations, local organisations and other key local stakeholders, alongside additional participants, actively contribute to identifying services needs, generating solution ideas and selecting priorities for future action. Rather than focusing on technological innovation, the process supports the co-design of SE-based solutions that address local service gaps and contribute to social inclusion and community resilience in rural areas.

3. Methodology

3.1 Workshop design and process

The methodological framework for identifying local services needs and solutions grounded on the principles and values of the SE was implemented through a **coordinated workshop schedule** that merged user-innovation activities with the initial capacity-building efforts of Task 4.1 (*Capacity building in business, technical, digital and soft skills*). This integrated approach followed a three-month implementation cycle from April to June 2026, designed to ensure the efficient use of participants' time and prevent logistical overburdening. In line with the project's methodology, each SVL implemented **two user-innovation workshops**. The process focused on a structured transition from identifying needs to planning SE-based solutions:

1. **Workshop 1 | Identification and selection of solutions:** The workshop focused on translating identified challenges into concrete solution ideas. Participants explored inspiring initiatives from the *INSPIRE Services and Social Economy Atlas on Rural Empowerment* (Task 2.4), generated local solution concepts, and selected three priority solutions or actions through voting procedures.
2. **Workshop 2 | Development of initial deployment roadmaps**: The workshop focused on the practical planning of the selected priorities. Using a structured Roadmap Template – which will eventually feed into Task 4.2 – *"Deployment roadmaps through technical and business incubation"* and was developed in collaboration with T4.2 leader – participants defined the objectives, key activities, practical steps and resources required to put the ideas into practice.

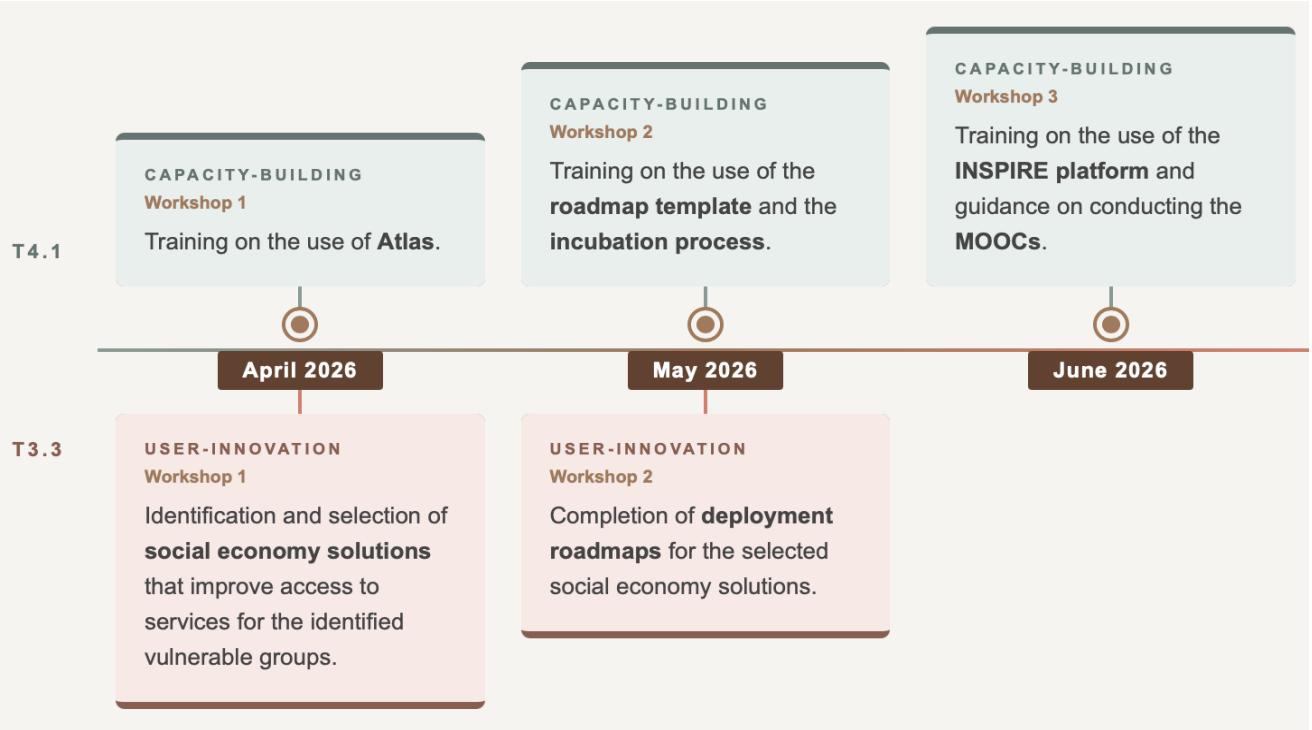

Figure 1. Coordinated, harmonised schedule merging user-innovation (Task 3.3) and capacity-building (Task 4.1) workshops.

3.2 Participatory tools, data collection and analysis

A suite of standardised participatory tools was applied across all SVLs to support structured decision-making while allowing local flexibility:

- **INSPIRE Services and Social Economy Atlas on Rural Empowerment:** This online repository served as an inspiration source and reference tool, providing a collection of inspiring initiatives and practical solutions implemented in different rural contexts. It assisted participants in identifying relevant and transferable solutions that matched their own local needs.
- **Inspiration Cards**: To overcome potential language barriers and time constraints, facilitators utilised simplified 'Inspiration Cards' translated into local languages. These cards presented specific examples (from the Atlas or other resources) as short stories, focusing on the challenge addressed, the solution implemented, the actors involved, and the achieved impact to help participants see how ideas could be adapted locally.
- **Impact - Feasibility Matrix:** This prioritisation tool was used to filter solution ideas based on two specific questions: *Impact* (How much the idea benefits identified groups in vulnerable situations) and *Feasibility* (How realistic implementation is with available resources and time). The matrix (Figure 2) allowed participants to categorise ideas into *Priority* (high impact and feasible) or *Strategic* (high impact but less feasible), focusing the group's discussion on the most promising concepts before the voting stage.

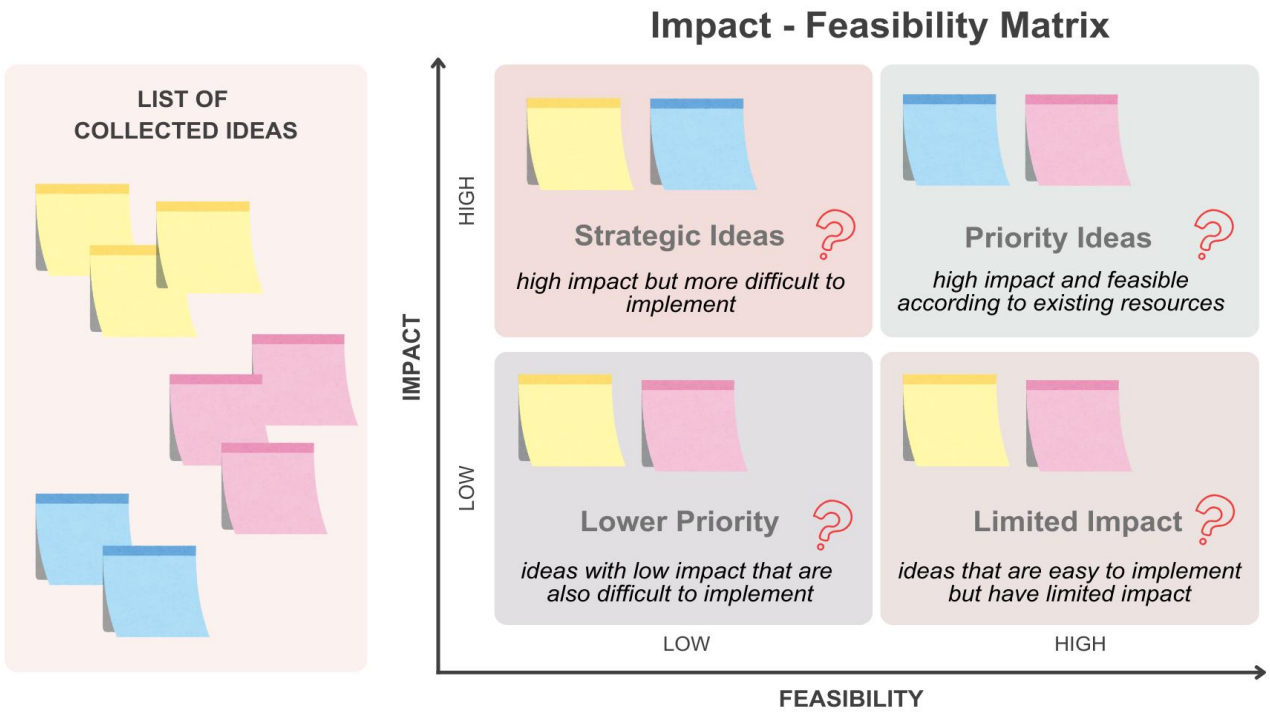

Figure 2. Explanatory illustration of the Impact-Feasibility Matrix, showing how collected ideas are positioned across four prioritisation categories.

- **Participatory Prioritisation:** A democratic selection process used to identify the three priority solutions. Pilots utilised e-democracy tools or offline methods such as stickers or hand voting. Participants were encouraged to consider the complementarity of ideas, i.e. how solutions might reinforce each other or maximise overall efficiency.
- **Roadmap Template:** This 10-step planning tool (the '10 stops') was used in the second workshop to translate the three priority solutions or actions into initial deployment roadmaps. The template guided participants through defining the objective, expected results, and maturity of each solution, identifying target groups and stakeholders, and outlining main activities, required resources, funding sources, timelines, potential risks, and future development opportunities.

The outputs generated through these participatory tools were systematically captured to provide a rigorous basis for analysis. Data were collected through structured workshop reporting templates and roadmap templates completed by the pilot partners, which documented the identified services needs, the proposed solution ideas, and the specific outcomes of the prioritisation and voting processes.

The collected material was subsequently reviewed and synthesised using a qualitative and interpretative approach. Particular attention was given to the services needs identified across the pilot areas, the SE-based solutions proposed by participants, and the dynamics of the user-innovation process itself. This analytical approach enabled the extraction of key findings and lessons regarding both local services needs and the contribution of user-innovation to participatory solution design in rural areas.

3.3 Ethical considerations and data protection

All workshop activities were conducted in strict compliance with the **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** and the ethical procedures established in the **INSPIRE Data Management Plan** (D7.3). To translate these high-level regulatory requirements into practice, the project implemented a series of operational safeguards designed to protect participant rights while fostering an inclusive and respectful research environment. These measures were integrated into the core workshop methodology through three **key operational areas**:

3. **Formalisation of informed consent and facilitation ethics:** Participation was strictly voluntary and facilitators obtained informed consent through a unified form –covering both data protection and SVL membership– prior to any activities. Participants were informed of their absolute right to withdraw at any time. Furthermore, facilitators were specifically instructed to avoid references to participants' levels of knowledge or confidence during the workshops to ensure that attendees did not perceive the process as a social experiment.
4. **Inclusive engagement and safe environments:** Significant emphasis was placed on the meaningful involvement of groups in vulnerable situations, whose composition differed across the pilot areas according to the locally identified target groups and territorial context, as defined in Deliverable D3.1. Each workshop aimed to engage at least five participants from these target groups. Facilitators were trained to create a safe environment for dialogue and to ensure balanced participation, including gender considerations. This was supported by techniques

such as inviting quieter participants to share their views, using written idea collection (e.g. sticky notes), and encouraging peer-to-peer support for participants with lower digital literacy.

5. **Technical management of respondent data:** To maintain respondent anonymity while matching pre- and post-workshop survey answers, collected as part of the project's monitoring and evaluation framework to capture the impact of user-innovation activities under the SVLs (monitoring and evaluation is methodologically organised and supervised in Task 4.4), the consortium utilised private self-generated identification codes. These codes followed a standardised format (e.g. two letters and two numbers, such as 'KE93') that allowed for data matching to determine workshop effects without compromising individual privacy. Facilitators ensured that participants wrote down and saved these codes rather than attempting to memorise them.

The rigorous application of these procedural safeguards ensures that individual privacy is maintained not only during the collection phase but also throughout the analysis and reporting stages. Consequently, all findings are presented in this report (D3.3) in an aggregated and anonymised format, ensuring that no individual participant can be identified. Any references to specific examples, opinions, or proposals are reported at the SVL level rather than the individual level. To safeguard privacy, real names have been substituted with fictitious ones, and faces in workshop photographs have been blurred upon request.

4. Implementation of the user-innovation workshops

4.1 Workshop participation and coverage

Between April and June 2026, the INSPIRE pilot partners successfully delivered the foreseen two-round workshop sequence across the seven pilot areas, supporting the transition from local needs identification to the selection and preliminary planning of **21 SE-based solutions**.

In total, **14 workshops** were organised (two in each pilot area) and **193 participants** were recorded: 102 in the first workshop round and 91 in the second. Compared with the planned benchmark of 140 participants, this represents 53 additional participants or nearly **38% above target**. The overall participation level confirms satisfactory coverage across the pilot areas and indicates substantial engagement that was maintained during both rounds.

Table 2. Workshop implementation overview.

#	Pilot area	1st User-Innovation & Capacity-Building Workshop		2nd User-Innovation & Capacity-Building Workshop		Modality
		Date	Participants	Date	Participants	
1	Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Region | France	30 April 2026	10	19 May 2026	9	In-person
2	Municipality of Kythera | Greece	13 May 2026	18	27 May 2026	11	In-person
3	Municipality of Konitsa | Greece	17 May 2026	19	24 May 2026	19	In-person
4	Eastern and Midland Region | Ireland	6 May 2026	10	20 May 2026	11	In-person
5	Parczew district | Poland	5 May 2026	12	26 May 2026	8	In-person
6	Maramureș and Suceava Counties | Romania	19 May 2026	23[1]	3 June 2026	23[2]	Hybrid
7	Košice Region | Slovakia	15 May 2026	10	29 May 2026	10	In-person
	TOTAL		**102**		**91**	

Notes: [1] 15 in-person and 8 online; [2] 8 in-person and 15 online.

Beyond overall participation levels, the workshops also succeeded in securing the active involvement of the groups in vulnerable situations targeted by each SVL. Representatives of these groups contributed to all stages of the user-innovation process, from the identification of needs and the generation and prioritisation of solution ideas to the development of initial deployment roadmaps. Accounting for more than half of all workshop participants, they helped ensure that the solutions developed were grounded in the experiences and perspectives of those most directly affected by the identified challenges.

The implementation records show a process that was predominantly place-based and in-person. Twelve of the 14 workshops were held fully in-person, while the Romanian pilot used a hybrid format to respond to the territorial spread of the pilot area across Suceava and Maramureș counties. This difference in format was not incidental: it reflected the practical conditions of participation in each pilot area, including distance, accessibility, availability, and the location of relevant stakeholder groups.

The two workshop rounds had distinct and predefined functions. The first round focused on identifying and selecting priority solution ideas, while the second focused on developing the selected priorities through initial deployment roadmaps. The participation figures should therefore be read in relation to this structured sequence, rather than interpreted only as changes in attendance between two similar events.

4.2 Participation conditions and implementation dynamics

The implementation of the user-innovation workshops demonstrated the importance of adapting a common methodological framework to the specific characteristics of each pilot area. While all pilots applied the same overall workshop structure and participatory tools, facilitation approaches, participation conditions and organisational arrangements were adjusted to local contexts, target groups and practical constraints.

A key factor supporting implementation was the use of local, accessible venues. In Kythera, workshops were organised on a rotating basis across the premises of local agricultural cooperatives, helping to engage different stakeholder groups and reinforcing the connection between the workshop process and the island's food community. In Konitsa, the Women's Association "Myrtali", which also hosts the SVL, provided a familiar and trusted environment for participants. The second workshop was organised alongside the Association's elections, creating an opportunity to reach women who had not previously participated in SVL activities. In Moate, both workshops were hosted in a local community and arts centre, providing a welcoming and inclusive space for participants. In Poland, the District Labour Office and the availability of municipal premises in Dębowa Kłoda provided a practical setting for discussions related to women's empowerment, entrepreneurship and local economic development. In Slovakia, participants particularly appreciated the opportunity to meet in-person, as mobility barriers often limit opportunities for face-to-face interaction.

The Romanian pilot demonstrated the value of adapting participation formats to territorial realities. Given the geographical distance between participants located in Suceava and Maramureș counties, the workshops were organised in a hybrid format, combining in-person and online participation. While this approach increased accessibility and territorial coverage, it also required additional facilitation efforts to ensure that online participants remained actively involved in discussions and decision-making processes.

Accessibility considerations also influenced workshop implementation. In France, facilitators adapted explanations and allowed additional discussion time to ensure that administrative and procedural topics remained understandable and accessible for participants with cognitive disabilities or associated disorders. In Slovakia, volunteer support helped reduce mobility barriers and facilitated

the participation of young people with disabilities. In Ireland, facilitators tailored workshop arrangements to accommodate language barriers, varying levels of English proficiency and childcare needs, enabling broader participation among migrants and asylum seekers. Across several pilots, facilitators emphasised the importance of using clear language, simple instructions and flexible discussion formats to support meaningful engagement.

The workshops also highlighted the importance of flexibility in facilitation. In several pilots, participants required more time for discussion and reflection than initially foreseen, particularly when addressing topics closely connected to their personal experiences or everyday challenges. Facilitators therefore frequently adjusted the pace of activities while maintaining the overall workshop objectives. Informal discussions, refreshment breaks and opportunities for open exchange often played an important role in stimulating ideas and encouraging participation.

Participatory decision-making methods were intentionally kept simple and adapted to the needs of each group. Depending on the local context, pilots used hand voting, sticker voting, individual ranking exercises and other accessible methods to support the prioritisation of solution ideas. These approaches allowed participants to engage directly in decision-making while avoiding unnecessary procedural complexity.

Overall, the implementation experience demonstrates that the effectiveness of the user-innovation workshops depended not only on the application of a common methodology but also on the ability of facilitators to adapt the process to local circumstances, participation needs and practical realities. The combination of a shared methodological framework with locally appropriate facilitation approaches contributed to the successful delivery of the workshops across all seven pilot areas.

5. Local services needs and social economy solutions

This chapter presents the pilot-level results of the user-innovation process implemented across the seven INSPIRE SVLs. For each pilot area, it describes the local context, the local services needs identified by participants, the solution ideas generated during the workshops, the prioritisation process, the selected SE-based solutions, and their initial implementation pathways.

To ensure consistency across the pilot narratives, each case study follows a common structure. The contextual profile of each pilot area is based on the territorial analysis developed in D3.1 (*Report on territorial profiles of pilot sites*), while the description of the SVLs, its mission, target groups and co-creation process draw on the findings presented in D3.2 (*Smart Village labs governance frameworks and operating models*). The remaining sections are based on the results of the user-innovation workshops and the reporting material collected under Task 3.3.

This chapter presents how the user-innovation process unfolded in each SVL and how participants transformed locally identified needs and priorities into selected solutions and initial implementation pathways. The pilot narratives highlight the influence of local contexts, target groups, challenges and assets on the solutions that emerged. Together, the seven cases provide the empirical foundation for the cross-pilot synthesis presented in Chapter 6.

5.1 Bourgogne-Franche-Comté (France)

Pilot Partner: LADAPT

Pilot Area: Monéteau & Sougères-en-Puisaye, France

Type of Rural Area: Predominantly rural area with small towns and dispersed settlements

Smart Village Lab: MIA - Mobilité Inclusive et Active (Inclusive and Active Mobility)

Focus of the Lab: Improving accessibility, social inclusion and community support for vulnerable residents

5.1.1 Context

The French SVL operates in the rural communes of Monéteau and Sougères-en-Puisaye in the Yonne department of the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region. The area is characterised by dispersed settlements, ageing populations, limited public transport services and low population density, conditions that create significant accessibility challenges for groups in vulnerable situations. Both territories face structural constraints commonly associated with rural peripherality, including geographical isolation, restricted mobility options and difficulties in accessing essential services, employment opportunities and support networks. These challenges are particularly acute for people with disabilities, who often experience multiple and overlapping barriers related to transport, service accessibility, social participation and labour-market inclusion. At the same time, the region benefits

from strong community cohesion, active associations and local solidarity networks that can support social participation, autonomy and community-based innovation.

The SVL, operating under the name "**MIA - Mobilité Inclusive et Active" (Active and Inclusive Mobility)**, was established through a participatory process that brought together people with disabilities, active citizens, volunteers, local associations, NGOs and public authorities committed to improving social inclusion and access to services in rural areas. During the co-creation phase of the project, participants identified key barriers related to mobility, social isolation and access to support services affecting vulnerable residents, particularly people with disabilities, older adults and socially isolated individuals. In response, the SVL seeks to develop innovative and community-based approaches that improve access to essential services, strengthen social participation and enhance the autonomy and quality of life of groups in vulnerable situations. It promotes a hybrid model combining digital tools, local volunteering and community-based support in order to facilitate mobility, strengthen social participation and improve access to local services. Through these efforts, MIA aims to create a more connected and supportive local ecosystem where technology complements rather than replaces human interaction.

The user-innovation workshops provided an opportunity to further refine the priorities and ideas that had emerged during the co-creation phase. Both workshops were conducted in-person and brought together members of the SVL, representatives of local associations and residents experiencing barriers to mobility, social participation and access to services. Participants shared their experiences and perspectives, helping to further shape the proposed solution and its implementation pathway.

Rather than focusing on the generation of multiple independent solutions, the discussions concentrated on how a common support mechanism could address several interconnected challenges simultaneously. Participants examined the barriers they face in their daily lives, including limited mobility options, digital exclusion and difficulties in accessing local services and support networks. The workshops therefore focused on exploring how these challenges could be addressed through an integrated solution combining mobility support, social participation and stronger connections between residents, volunteers, associations and local service providers.

5.1.2 Local services needs

Building on the challenges identified during the co-creation phase and the discussions held during the first user-innovation workshop, participants highlighted a number of interconnected services and support needs considered essential for improving the autonomy, inclusion and quality of life of vulnerable residents in the area.

These included:

- **Improved access to mobility and transportation services**, particularly for people with disabilities, older adults and socially isolated residents living in dispersed rural settlements.
- **Greater opportunities for social participation, community engagement and inclusion**, helping to reduce loneliness and strengthen social connections.
- **More accessible and user-friendly digital tools**, combined with appropriate support mechanisms to help residents access information, services and community opportunities.

- **Improved accessibility to essential services, activities and support networks**, enabling vulnerable residents to participate more fully in everyday community life.
- **Stronger coordination, communication and cooperation** among local associations, volunteers and service providers, facilitating the delivery of more integrated and responsive support.

Overall, participants emphasised the need for an integrated and accessible support system capable of combining mobility assistance, social participation opportunities, digital inclusion and stronger community cooperation in order to reduce isolation, strengthen autonomy and improve the wellbeing of vulnerable residents.

5.1.3 Solution ideas generated

The discussions during the first user-innovation workshop focused on generating practical solution ideas capable of addressing the interconnected challenges faced by vulnerable residents in the territory. Drawing inspiration from examples presented through the INSPIRE Services and Social Economy Atlas, participants explored how different forms of community action, digital innovation and stakeholder cooperation could contribute to more inclusive and accessible local support systems.

The Atlas presentation helped participants explore existing examples developed in other European countries of community-based services and social innovation initiatives. Particular interest was shown in solutions that facilitated access to services, strengthened local networks and created opportunities for participation among groups in vulnerable situations. Participants appreciated the possibility of filtering examples according to specific needs and local challenges, which helped stimulate discussion on solutions that could be adapted to the local context.

Rather than generating a large number of independent solution ideas, participants concentrated on the development of a single integrated solution in the form of a common platform capable of addressing several interconnected challenges simultaneously. Discussions focused on identifying the key functions that such a platform should provide in order to improve mobility, strengthen social participation and enhance cooperation among local actors. As a result, three complementary modules emerged as the core components of the proposed solution:

- **Mobility Assistance** - A mobility module within the platform connecting volunteers and residents requiring regular or occasional transport, helping to improve accessibility and reduce mobility barriers.
- **Social Inclusion Activities** - A community engagement module enabling residents, volunteers and organisations to organise, promote and participate in local social and cultural activities aimed at reducing loneliness and strengthening community participation.
- **Connecting Associations** - A networking and coordination module providing local associations and volunteers with a shared space to exchange information, coordinate actions, share resources and strengthen collaboration.

Together, these modules outline a common approach to addressing the challenges of mobility, social isolation and fragmented local support services. While each module responds to a specific need,

participants recognised their strong interconnections and their potential to operate within a shared platform. The discussions therefore laid the foundations for the future development of the MIA platform, an integrated solution combining mobility support, social participation and community coordination.

5.1.4 Participatory prioritisation process

Following the Atlas presentation and the discussion on the proposed platform modules during the first user-innovation workshop, participants engaged in a structured prioritisation process supported by the Impact-Feasibility Matrix. The exercise encouraged participants to assess the practical feasibility of the proposed solution and identify the most important functions and implementation priorities within the available resources and opportunities of the territory.

Rather than comparing competing solution ideas, the discussions focused on refining the emerging concept of the MIA platform and identifying the elements required for its successful implementation. Participants recognised that mobility support, social inclusion activities and improved coordination among local actors were strongly interconnected and could be most effectively delivered through a common platform combining digital and human support mechanisms.

The Impact-Feasibility Matrix proved particularly useful in helping participants move from broad discussions and brainstorming towards a more realistic implementation pathway. Through the exercise, participants explored the practical requirements of the proposed solution, including the selection of a pilot area, the identification of target groups and the selection of appropriate services and communication mechanisms.

The prioritisation process highlighted several key implementation priorities considered both impactful and feasible within the local context:

1. **Development and promotion of the MIA platform**, including communication activities, assessment of local needs and the creation of an accessible application capable of connecting residents, volunteers, associations and local services.
2. **Definition of an initial pilot area and implementation pathway**, including the identification of priority target groups, focusing primarily on people with disabilities and socially isolated residents, and the gradual expansion of the initiative to neighbouring communities.
3. **Facilitating access to key destinations and services**, including healthcare, employment opportunities, cultural activities and opportunities for social participation, through coordinated mobility and community support mechanisms.

Participants also identified several strategic elements with significant long-term potential but requiring additional resources, coordination and organisational capacity. These included the maintenance and long-term management of the platform, the integration of support services similar to the France Services model, and the development of complementary mobility infrastructure and services.

Overall, the prioritisation process confirmed strong support for the further development of MIA as an integrated solution capable of addressing mobility barriers, social isolation and fragmented local

support networks through a combination of digital tools, community engagement and local cooperation.

5.1.5 Selected solutions and initial implementation pathways

The second user-innovation workshop focused on further refining the concept that had emerged from the previous discussions and exploring how it could be translated into an initial implementation pathway. Building on the priorities identified in the first workshop, participants further developed MIA, an integrated platform designed to address the interconnected challenges of limited mobility, social isolation and fragmented support services affecting groups in vulnerable situations in rural areas. By combining digital tools with local volunteering and community-based support mechanisms, MIA aims to improve accessibility, strengthen social participation and provide easier access to information and local support services through a single-entry point.

As the concept evolved, participants identified three complementary functions that the future MIA platform could incorporate in order to address the needs and challenges highlighted during the workshops:

- **Mobility Assistance Function** - Supporting residents in accessing regular or occasional transport and improving connections between villages and local service centres. The objective is to facilitate access to healthcare, employment opportunities, cultural activities and everyday services, particularly for people with disabilities, older adults and socially isolated individuals. During the workshop, participants discussed the possibility of developing partnerships with existing mobility providers, including the Atchoum platform, in order to explore potential collaboration within the Monéteau area.
- **Social Inclusion Function** - Promoting local activities, events and community initiatives that encourage social participation, reduce loneliness and strengthen connections among residents. The platform would provide opportunities for users and volunteers to engage in local events and community activities designed to foster inclusion and wellbeing.
- **Association and Volunteer Network Function** - Creating a shared space where local associations, volunteers and support organisations can exchange information, coordinate activities and develop synergies between existing initiatives. Participants highlighted the importance of improving communication and collaboration among local actors in order to strengthen the overall support ecosystem within the territory.

Throughout the workshop, participants also discussed key implementation considerations, including the identification of an initial pilot area, the engagement of priority target groups and the communication activities required to promote the platform among residents and local organisations. Particular attention was given to ensuring that the solution remains accessible to people with different levels of digital literacy through the combination of digital tools, telephone support and human assistance.

Participants recognised that the long-term success of MIA would depend not only on the technological platform itself but also on the active involvement of volunteers, associations and local stakeholders capable of sustaining and animating the initiative over time. Discussions therefore highlighted the

importance of building local partnerships, strengthening community engagement and progressively expanding the platform's functions and geographical coverage as experience is gained.

By combining mobility support, social participation and community coordination within a single framework, the local SVL (MIA) seeks to create a more accessible and inclusive local ecosystem capable of improving autonomy, reducing isolation and strengthening the quality of life of vulnerable residents across the territory.

5.2 Municipality of Kythera (Greece)

Pilot Partner: MedINA - Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos

Pilot Area: Municipality of Kythera, Greece

Type of Rural Area: Remote rural island

Smart Village Lab: KYTHERIAN LAND - Our Land, Our Food

Focus of the Lab: Building a shared vision and collective action about food

5.2.1 Context

Kythera is a remote Greek island with dispersed villages, a strong local identity and a long agricultural tradition. Olive cultivation, beekeeping and wild harvesting are important to the island's rural economy, alongside seasonal tourism and small local businesses. The agricultural sector is under pressure from low profitability, rising production costs and limited generational renewal, contributing to the gradual abandonment of agricultural activities. Farmers and producers also face fragmented landholdings, high transport costs, limited access to advisory services and increasing exposure to climate crisis-related impacts, including extensive summer drought periods, extreme heat and wildfires. The island is further affected by seasonality, limited connectivity, and fewer employment and training opportunities for younger residents. Despite these constraints, active agricultural cooperatives, strong community networks and active citizenship, local knowledge, renowned high-quality products (thyme, olive oil, honey, salt, rusks, etc.), and a growing interest in sustainable agricultural practices provide a valuable foundation for locally led cooperation and future rural development.

The Kythera SVL, operating under the name "**Kytherian Land - Our Land, Our Food**", was established through a participatory process that brought together agricultural cooperatives and associations, individual farmers and producers, scientific professionals connected to the agricultural sector, local organisations and active citizens committed to the future of the island's agri-food sector. During the co-creation phase, participants collectively defined the SVL's mission, identified its members and selected its name, establishing a shared vision centred on the revitalisation and long-term sustainability of the local food sector. The SVL seeks to strengthen cooperation among actors involved in the island's agri-food system and support a more resilient and sustainable agri-food sector. It promotes knowledge exchange, capacity building and collective action while encouraging collaboration among producers, agricultural cooperatives, local organisations and public actors. At the same time, it aims to enhance the visibility and added value of local high-quality agricultural products, contributing to the island's economy, identity and long-term sustainability.

The user-innovation workshops built upon this existing foundation of stakeholder engagement and collaboration. Both workshops were conducted in-person and brought together a committed group of SVL members who had already been actively involved in the co-creation process, alongside a small number of additional stakeholders interested in supporting the initiative. This continuity helped create an open and constructive environment where participants could build on previous discussions, draw upon their collective experience and further develop shared priorities for the future of the island's agri-food sector.

The workshops were implemented in a context where participants had already developed a common understanding of the main challenges affecting the agri-food sector of Kythera. These included the gradual abandonment of agricultural activity, the absence of local agricultural advisory and support services, insufficient promotion and marketing of local products, limited coordination among local actors and increasing pressures associated with climate change and adaptation. The workshops therefore focused on moving beyond the identification of challenges towards the co-development, prioritisation and initial planning of potential solutions.

5.2.2 Local services needs

Building on the challenges identified during the co-creation phase and the discussions held during the user-innovation workshops, participants highlighted a number of interconnected service and development needs considered essential for the future of Kythera's agri-food sector.

These included:

- Improved institutional, advisory and technical support services for farmers and agricultural stakeholders.
- Stronger coordination, collaboration and dialogue among producers, cooperatives and local actors.
- Enhanced promotion, branding and visibility of local products and producers.
- Development of a common agricultural identity and collective strategy for the island.
- Stronger inks between food production, local gastronomy, tourism and entrepreneurship.
- Increased support for youth engagement, intergenerational knowledge transfer and the long-term renewal of the sector.
- Promotion of sustainable, climate-resilient and quality-oriented production practices.
- Greater recognition, protection and valorisation of local varieties, products and food heritage.
- Measures to strengthen the long-term viability, competitiveness and resilience of local production systems.

Overall, participants emphasised the need for a more coordinated and strategic approach to agricultural development that would strengthen both the economic and social sustainability of the sector while preserving the distinct agricultural identity of Kythera.

5.2.3 Solution ideas generated

The first user-innovation workshop focused on the exploration and development of potential solutions capable of addressing the needs identified by the SVL. Prior to the workshop, several ideas had already emerged through previous SVL meetings, local consultations and informal discussions among stakeholders. These preliminary ideas were presented during the workshop as a starting point for collective reflection, brainstorming and further development.

The workshop provided an opportunity for participants to discuss, refine and expand existing proposals, while also generating additional ideas inspired by local priorities, participants' experiences and examples presented through the INSPIRE Services and Social Economy Atlas. Through this process, participants identified a range of complementary ideas aimed at strengthening the agricultural sector, enhancing local cooperation and increasing the visibility and resilience of local production.

The main ideas discussed included:

- **Conference on the Agricultural Sector in Small Greek Islands** - Organisation of a participatory conference focusing on the challenges and opportunities facing small-island agri-food systems, aiming to exchange experiences, develop policy recommendations and promote the establishment of permanent agricultural support services in Kythera.
- **Kythera Agricultural Narrative & Basic Marketing Concept** - Development of a common identity and basic marketing concept for Kythera's local products through collaboration among producers, local businesses and tourism actors.
- **Small Festival - Kythera Gastronomy & Local Products** - Organisation of a local festival promoting gastronomy, local products and culinary traditions through tastings, demonstrations and community participation.
- **Youth Engagement & Agri-food Sector Image Campaign** - Awareness-raising and engagement activities aimed at improving the image of agriculture and encouraging the participation of younger generations.
- **Development of New Crops & Adaptation to Climate Change** - Exploration of alternative crops and sustainable agricultural practices adapted to local climatic conditions.
- **Certification of Local Varieties, Genetic Material and PDO/PGI Products** - Actions supporting the recognition, certification and promotion of local varieties and quality products to increase their added value and market differentiation.

Together, these ideas addressed different aspects of the challenges identified by the SVL, ranging from marketing and promotion to climate adaptation, youth engagement, agricultural support and the valorisation of local products and traditions.

5.2.4 Participatory prioritisation process

Following the presentation and discussion of the proposed ideas during the first user-innovation workshop, participants engaged in a structured prioritisation process supported by the Impact-Feasibility Matrix. The tool was introduced along with the main implementation parameters of the INSPIRE project, including the available budget, implementation timeframe and the possibility of combining complementary actions under a common objective.

The matrix provided a useful framework for reflecting on the potential impact and practical feasibility of the different ideas. However, participants found it challenging to strictly categorise the proposals within the different sections of the matrix and preferred a more open discussion focused on identifying realistic actions capable of generating long-term benefits for the island. As a result, the facilitator played an active role in guiding the discussion, clarifying the assessment criteria and supporting the collective decision-making process.

The discussions revealed a strong preference for solutions that could strengthen cooperation, create a shared vision for the agricultural sector and generate benefits beyond individual producers. Rather than focusing on a larger number of separate actions, participants gradually converged towards a smaller set of interconnected priorities.

Following the discussion phase, participants used a simple hand-voting process to indicate their preferred priorities. The voting confirmed the strong support for the development of a common agricultural narrative and marketing concept, while also highlighting the importance of collective advocacy through the preparation of a policy brief. As a result, the following ideas emerged as the most relevant and feasible:

1. **Kythera Agricultural Narrative & Basic Marketing Concept**, selected as the main solution.
2. **Development of a Collective Policy Brief**, building on the discussions initially envisaged through the conference proposal, to communicate the needs and priorities of Kythera's agri-food sector to relevant public authorities and support evidence-based policy dialogue.

The prioritisation process also highlighted the interconnections between different ideas. Elements related to visibility and promotion of local high-quality products, local identity, tourism, youth engagement and empowerment of local producers were gradually incorporated into the broader concept of a shared agri-food narrative and marketing initiative. This marked the beginning of a transition from a collection of individual ideas towards a more integrated vision for the future development of Kythera's agri-food system.

5.2.5 Selected solutions and initial implementation pathways

The second user-innovation workshop focused on refining the priorities identified during the first workshop and translating them into an initial implementation pathway. Building on the results of the voting process, participants explored how the selected ideas could contribute to addressing the structural challenges facing Kythera's agricultural sector and discussed the conditions required for their successful implementation.

Rather than pursuing a number of independent actions, participants concluded that the most effective approach would be to develop a single integrated initiative supported by a set of complementary actions contributing to a common objective. While several potential solutions were initially discussed, participants recognised that many of them addressed different dimensions of the same underlying challenge and could therefore be combined into a coherent intervention package. The resulting approach consisted of a core solution accompanied by supporting actions, each contributing to the achievement of a shared vision for the agricultural sector.

The selected solution, entitled **"Kytherian Land: Building a Common Agricultural Narrative and Collective Vision"**, seeks to strengthen the identity, visibility, sustainability and collective organisation of the island's agri-food sector. The solution was structured around **three interconnected pillars**:

- **Agricultural Identity & Promotion**
  - Development of a common agricultural narrative and brand identity for Kythera.
  - Promotion of local producers and high-quality products through a map, QR code system and common promotional materials.
  - Strengthening links between agriculture, tourism and local businesses.
- **Governance & Collective Organisation**
  - Exploration of the setup of a Social Cooperative Enterprise (SCE) as a common coordinating structure for producers, cooperatives and other actors involved in the island's agri-food system.
  - Engagement of stakeholders in defining future governance and coordination arrangements.
- **Advocacy & Policy Dialogue**
  - Preparation of a collective policy brief highlighting the needs and priorities of the agri-food sector.
  - Engagement with local, regional and national authorities to advocate for stronger technical support and rural development on the island.

The workshop discussions demonstrated that participants viewed the challenges facing Kythera's agri-food system as highly interconnected. Limited product visibility, fragmented initiatives, weak stakeholder coordination and insufficient institutional support were not perceived as separate issues but as different dimensions of a broader need for collective organisation and a stronger shared identity for the island's products and producers.

A particularly significant outcome of the roadmap discussions was the emergence of a proposal to establish a common SCE involving producers, cooperatives and other members of the SVL. Participants recognised that branding and promotional activities alone would be unlikely to generate long-term impact unless supported by a governance mechanism capable of coordinating stakeholders, sustaining collaboration and promoting collective action beyond the duration of the project. The proposed SCE was therefore envisaged as a vehicle for collective action, bringing

together agricultural stakeholders under a shared vision while strengthening coordination, promotion, marketing, collective initiatives and the representation of the sector.

At the same time, the development of a collective policy brief was incorporated into the solution as a complementary advocacy mechanism. Participants emphasised that strengthening the agricultural sector would require not only local collaboration but also improved communication with local, regional and national authorities regarding the specific challenges faced by small island agri-food systems.

The initial implementation pathway therefore combines identity-building, promotion, governance and advocacy actions into a coherent strategy for strengthening Kythera's agri-food system. Together, these elements form a shared vision aimed at enhancing cooperation among local actors, increasing the visibility and added value of local products, and supporting the long-term sustainability, resilience and competitiveness of the island's producers and food economy.

5.3 Municipality of Konitsa (Greece)

Pilot Partner: MedINA - Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos

Pilot Area: Municipality of Konitsa Municipality, Greece

Type of Rural Area: Mountainous rural area

Smart Village Lab: Bridge to Tomorrow - Women of Konitsa - Empower. Create. Connect.

Focus of the Lab: Empowering women through collective action, heritage and creativity

5.3.1 Context

Konitsa is a remote, mountainous municipality in north-western Greece, distinguished by its natural environment and rich cultural heritage. Geographic isolation, limited transport connections and uneven access to services, training and employment shape everyday life across the area. Population ageing and youth outmigration add further pressure to its long-term, sustainable development. Women face additional barriers, including traditional gender roles, limited employment prospects and fewer opportunities to develop skills or pursue entrepreneurial activities. At the same time, Konitsa benefits from active local associations, deep-rooted knowledge and traditions, a rich food heritage and gastronomy, and a growing tourism sector. These features create opportunities for initiatives that broaden women's participation, encourage creativity and strengthen their contribution to the area's social and economic life.

The Konitsa SVL, operating under the name "**Bridge to Tomorrow - Women of Konitsa - Empower. Create. Connect.**", was established through a participatory process that brought together women, local associations, community actors and other stakeholders interested in strengthening the role of women in the social, cultural and economic life of the area. During the co-creation phase of the project, participants collectively defined the SVL's mission, identified its members and agreed on a shared vision centred on women empowerment, social inclusion and community participation. The SVL seeks to create a safe and supportive space where women can connect, develop new skills and collaborate on collective initiatives. It aims to address social isolation and restrictive gender norms while

encouraging learning, creativity, entrepreneurship and active participation in community life. The SVL also promotes local cultural traditions as a valuable resource for strengthening women's confidence, visibility and contribution to the development of Konitsa.

The user-innovation workshops built upon this existing foundation of stakeholder engagement and collaboration. Both workshops were conducted in-person and brought together active members of the SVL, primarily women from the local community, alongside additional participants interested in contributing to the initiative. Members of the Women's Association of Konitsa "Myrtali", active citizens and other local stakeholders actively contributed to the discussions, bringing local knowledge, personal experiences and a strong commitment to improving everyday life and opportunities for women in Konitsa.

The workshops were implemented in a context where participants had already identified a number of common challenges affecting women and the wider community. These included social isolation, limited opportunities for participation and self-development, insufficient recognition of women's contribution to local history and cultural heritage, restricted opportunities for entrepreneurship and creative expression, and the gradual loss of traditional knowledge and practices. The workshops therefore focused on moving from the identification of challenges towards the co-development, prioritisation and initial planning of solutions capable of strengthening women's participation, preserving local heritage and fostering community development.

5.3.2 Local services needs

The discussions held throughout the co-creation phase and the user-innovation workshops revealed a number of social, cultural and community development needs that participants considered important for improving the quality of life of women and strengthening community cohesion in Konitsa.

These included:

- Greater opportunities for women's participation, empowerment and personal development.
- Stronger social connections, cooperation and community engagement among women.
- Accessible spaces and activities that support dialogue, mutual support and collective action.
- Preservation, documentation and promotion of local knowledge, traditions and cultural heritage.
- Support for intergenerational learning and the transfer of traditional skills and experiences.
- Increased opportunities for creative expression, cultural participation and lifelong learning.
- Development of digital, storytelling and entrepreneurial skills.
- Greater visibility and recognition of women's contribution to local history, culture and community life.
- New initiatives linking local heritage, creativity and community-based development.

Taken together, these needs reflected participants' aspiration to create more opportunities for women to connect, learn, create and contribute actively to local life. At the same time, they highlighted the

importance of safeguarding local cultural heritage and transforming it into a resource for community development, social inclusion and future initiatives.

5.3.3 Solution ideas generated

The first user-innovation workshop focused on the identification and development of potential solutions capable of addressing the needs previously identified by the Konitsa SVL. Prior to the workshop, several ideas had already emerged through previous SVL meetings, informal discussions and consultations with members of the local community. These preliminary ideas were presented as a starting point for collective reflection and further development.

The workshop provided participants with an opportunity to discuss, refine and expand the proposed ideas, drawing both on their own experiences and on examples presented through the INSPIRE Services and Social Economy Atlas. The discussion focused on identifying realistic and locally relevant initiatives that could strengthen women's participation, enhance community life and promote the cultural identity of Konitsa.

The main ideas discussed included:

- **Supporting Women's Wellbeing and Empowerment in Konitsa** - Organisation of group support activities aiming to strengthen women's self-confidence, wellbeing, social connectedness and participation through professionally facilitated group sessions focused on empowerment and mutual support.
- **Traditional Recipes of Konitsa & Digital Storytelling** - Development of participatory activities centred on documenting traditional recipes, sharing local stories and producing digital content that promotes Konitsa's gastronomic heritage while empowering women through creativity and learning.
- **Traditional Weaving & other Handicrafts** - Activities focused on preserving traditional weaving and handicraft skills while creating opportunities for creativity, cooperation and potential entrepreneurial development.
- **Film Nights (Screenings & Discussions)** - Organisation of community film screenings and facilitated discussions addressing social issues, women's empowerment, local identity and rural life.
- **Professional Workshops on Women's Entrepreneurship** - Practical seminars and workshops designed to strengthen entrepreneurial skills, creativity and professional development opportunities for women.
- **Walks & Stories of the Women of Konitsa** - Community storytelling activities highlighting the experiences, memories and contributions of women to the social and cultural history of Konitsa, potentially supported by digital tools and interpretation materials.

Together, these ideas reflected participants' interest in combining cultural heritage, creativity, empowerment and community participation. While addressing different aspects of local life, they shared a common objective of strengthening women's active role in the community and creating new opportunities for social, cultural and personal development.

5.3.4 Participatory prioritisation process

Following the presentation of the proposed ideas during the first user-innovation workshop, participants engaged in a collective prioritisation exercise aimed at identifying the initiatives that best responded to local needs while remaining realistic within the available resources and timeframe of the INSPIRE project. To support this process, the Impact-Feasibility Matrix was introduced as a discussion tool, alongside an overview of the project's implementation framework, available budget and opportunities for combining complementary actions under a broader intervention.

Rather than using the matrix as a strict scoring mechanism, participants approached it as a means of reflecting on the relative strengths, opportunities and practical requirements of the different ideas. The discussion focused less on categorising proposals within predefined matrix quadrants and more on exploring which initiatives could generate meaningful benefits for women and the wider community. Throughout the process, the facilitator supported participants in comparing options, identifying synergies between ideas and gradually building consensus around a set of shared priorities.

The discussions revealed a strong preference for solutions that could combine cultural heritage preservation, women's empowerment and community participation. Rather than focusing on a larger number of independent activities, participants gradually identified opportunities to connect several ideas through a common theme and shared objective.

The prioritisation process also revealed a strong interest in creative and hands-on activities, particularly those related to handicrafts and traditional weaving. Although these ideas were not prioritised for immediate implementation, several participants expressed a clear desire to engage in such activities in the future. This highlighted an important unmet need within the community and demonstrated the interest of participants in initiatives that combine creativity, social interaction and the preservation of local traditions.

Participants used a sticker-voting exercise to express their preferences among the proposed ideas. The process encouraged active participation and helped identify the initiatives that generated the strongest collective support while also revealing potential synergies between them. As a result of the discussions and voting process, the following ideas emerged as the most relevant and feasible priorities:

1. **Traditional Recipes of Konitsa & Digital Storytelling**, selected as the core solution.
2. **Supporting Women’s Wellbeing and Empowerment in Konitsa**, adapted as a complementary support action focusing on cooperation, self-esteem, communication and empowerment.
3. **Film Nights (Screenings & Discussions)**, selected as a low-cost and accessible activity promoting participation, dialogue and community engagement.
4. **Professional Workshops on Women's Entrepreneurship**, adapted into practical seminars on entrepreneurship, storytelling and digital promotion to support the visibility and long-term sustainability of the initiative.

As the discussion evolved, participants recognised that several of the proposed ideas shared common objectives and could be combined into a broader initiative. Rather than selecting isolated actions, they favored an approach in which activities related to cultural heritage, women's empowerment, entrepreneurship and community engagement would support and strengthen one another. This helped shape a more integrated vision linking local traditions with personal development and community participation.

5.3.5 Selected solutions and initial implementation pathways

During the second user-innovation workshop, participants focused on further developing the priorities identified during the first workshop and translating them into an initial implementation pathway. Building on the results of the voting process, participants explored how the selected ideas could be transformed into practical actions capable of generating lasting social and cultural benefits for the local community.

Throughout the discussion, the selected solution, entitled **"Traditional Recipes of Konitsa & Digital Storytelling"**, evolved from an initiative centred on documenting local recipes into a broader concept linking cultural heritage, women's empowerment and local development. Participants considered the initiative particularly relevant because it builds upon existing local knowledge and traditions while fostering social interaction, digital engagement and the promotion of Konitsa's cultural identity.

The integrated solution was structured around **three complementary dimensions**:

- **Cultural Heritage & Storytelling**
  - Identification and documentation of selected traditional recipes and their associated stories, memories and local practices.
  - Development of digital content, including videos and visual material, showcasing Konitsa's gastronomic heritage.
  - Preparation of a digital recipe book bringing together recipes, narratives and audiovisual material.
- **Women's Empowerment & Capacity Building**
  - Organisation of group sessions under the guidance of a professional psychologist, focusing on cooperation, self-esteem, communication and empowerment.
  - Delivery of entrepreneurship and/or digital storytelling seminars to strengthen skills and support future initiatives.
- **Community Participation & Visibility**
  - Promotion and dissemination of the material produced through digital channels and local networks.
  - Organisation of film screenings and discussion events as accessible opportunities for community participation and social interaction.

Participants increasingly recognised that local food heritage could serve not only as a means of preserving traditions but also as a catalyst for strengthening social connections, increasing women's visibility and creating opportunities for personal and collective development. Consequently, the proposed initiative expanded beyond heritage documentation to incorporate learning, creativity, empowerment and community engagement.

The discussions also highlighted the importance of recognising and valuing the knowledge, experiences and contributions of women to local identity and community life. The proposed activities were therefore designed not only to safeguard local traditions but also to create opportunities for participation, confidence-building and collaboration among women of different ages and backgrounds.

The initial implementation pathway combines heritage preservation, digital storytelling, empowerment and community participation within a single coherent framework. Together, these elements seek to strengthen women's active role in local development while promoting the cultural identity, social vitality and long-term resilience of the Konitsa community.

Participants viewed the selected solution as a first step towards broader women-led activities linked to local heritage, entrepreneurship and community development. The experience and material that are expected to be generated through the project were considered capable of supporting future initiatives and potentially inspiring similar approaches in other rural communities.

5.4 Eastern and Midland Region (Ireland)

Pilot Partner: The Wheel

Pilot Area: Moate, County Westmeath, Ireland

Type of Rural Area: Traditional rural: small rural town and surrounding rural hinterland

Smart Village Lab: The Moate Hub

Focus of the Lab: Social inclusion, community participation and equal access to opportunities

5.4.1 Context

Moate is a small rural town in County Westmeath, Ireland, serving as an important local service centre for the surrounding rural hinterland. While benefiting from a strong community identity, active voluntary organisations and established cultural and community facilities, the area also faces several challenges common to rural regions, including an ageing population, limited local employment opportunities and increasing pressures on access to services. A distinctive feature of the area is the presence of a nearby accommodation centre for international protection applicants (direct provision centre), which has contributed to greater cultural diversity while also highlighting challenges related to social inclusion, mobility, community participation and access to opportunities. These characteristics make Moate an important setting for exploring community-led solutions that strengthen inclusion, participation and equal access to services.

The Moate SVL, operating under the name “The Moate Hub”, emerged from a collaborative process involving local residents, community organisations, service providers and representatives of groups

in vulnerable situations who shared a common ambition to create a more inclusive and connected community. The SVL focuses primarily on the challenges faced by migrants, asylum seekers and people aged over 65, who experience multiple and often interconnected barriers related to transport, employment opportunities and language. During the co-creation phase of the project, participants highlighted how these barriers can restrict access to services, training, work opportunities and social networks, while also limiting participation in community life. The discussions revealed that these challenges frequently reinforce one another, contributing to social isolation, reduced wellbeing and unequal access to opportunities. Therefore, the SVL seeks to create a welcoming and inclusive space where people can connect, share skills and access opportunities, services and support. It promotes collaboration, mutual learning and community participation while helping to reduce barriers related to language, mobility, social isolation and access to information. Through these efforts, the SVL aims to strengthen social inclusion, community connections and equal participation in local life.

Building on this foundation, the user-innovation workshops explored practical ways to reduce barriers to participation and strengthen social inclusion within the community. The workshops engaged SVL members with diverse backgrounds and experiences, including migrants, asylum seekers, older residents and local community advocates, ensuring that the discussions remained grounded in the realities of those most affected by the challenges under consideration. The SVL was established to address the needs of both migrants and older residents of the area. However, participation during the user-innovation workshops was stronger among migrants and organisations supporting migrant communities, which influenced the focus of the ideas that emerged during the process.

Throughout the workshops, participants explored solutions aimed at improving access to information, training, employment, social activities and community support networks. They emphasised the importance of creating welcoming and accessible spaces- both physical and digital- that enable people from different backgrounds to connect, share experiences, develop skills and access opportunities. The discussions highlighted a strong preference for solutions that not only address individual challenges but also strengthen community connections, encourage mutual support and foster a greater sense of belonging within the wider community.

5.4.2 Local services needs

Building on the challenges identified during the co-creation phase and the discussions held throughout the user-innovation workshops, participants highlighted a number of interconnected services and development needs considered essential for strengthening social inclusion and community participation in Moate.

These included:

- Improved access to employment opportunities, training and pathways to economic participation.
- Better access to information, advice and support services, particularly for people unfamiliar with local systems and services.
- Opportunities to develop language and communication skills, enabling greater participation in community life.

- Stronger social connections, community participation and opportunities for interaction across different groups.
- Greater support for community integration, inclusion and a sense of belonging, particularly for migrants, asylum seekers and socially isolated residents.
- Solutions to reduce transport-related barriers affecting access to services, employment, training and social activities.
- Accessible opportunities for learning, skills development and personal growth.
- Improved coordination between local organisations, service providers and community initiatives.

Overall, participants emphasised the need for practical and accessible solutions that could help individuals overcome barriers to participation while strengthening community connections, mutual support and equal access to opportunities.

5.4.3 Solution ideas generated

The first user-innovation workshop focused on identifying practical solutions capable of addressing the barriers to participation, inclusion and access to opportunities previously identified by the SVL, namely transport, employment and language. To support the discussion, participants were introduced to the INSPIRE Services and Social Economy Atlas and explored examples of initiatives addressing challenges similar to those experienced in Moate. Attention was given to examples supporting asylum seekers, migrants and older people, helping participants reflect on how local challenges could be translated into concrete community-led solutions. Among the examples presented through the Atlas, the award-winning social innovation initiative *Vincles BCN* served as an inspiration for discussing community support and social inclusion for older people.

Several preliminary ideas had also been prepared by the facilitation team to stimulate discussion and provide a starting point for collective brainstorming. These ideas were presented during the workshop and further developed, adapted and expanded through participants' contributions and lived experiences. Throughout the discussion, participants demonstrated a strong preference for solutions that combined practical support with opportunities for social interaction, learning and community participation.

The main ideas generated included:

- **Rural Connect** - A multi-component community platform bringing together a local job hub, language support, transport solutions, accommodation exchange and community feedback mechanisms. The concept aimed to address several of the challenges identified during the co-creation process through a single integrated approach.
- **Have a Tea on Me** - An initiative designed to make social spaces more accessible to people experiencing financial hardship or social isolation by enabling community members to possibly offer prepaid refreshments and create opportunities for informal social interaction.
- **Skills Share and Creativity Workshops** - Community-based drop in service enabling participants to share practical skills, exchange knowledge and learn from one another through informal workshops and creative activities.

- **Local Sports Dashboard** - A platform bringing together information on local sports clubs, activities and opportunities, with the aim of improving participation, strengthening social connections and supporting integration through sport.
- **Online Learning and Wellbeing Hub** - A central point of access to training, educational opportunities and wellbeing resources, helping residents develop skills, access support and improve their prospects for employment and personal development.

Together, these ideas reflected participants' desire to address both practical barriers and broader issues of social inclusion. While some proposals focused on access to employment, training and services, others sought to strengthen community connections, reduce isolation and create opportunities for interaction between different groups within the local community.

5.4.4 Participatory prioritisation process

After exploring and refining the proposed ideas during the first user-innovation workshop, participants engaged in a structured prioritisation exercise supported by the Impact-Feasibility Matrix. The tool was introduced as a means of assessing the different proposals according to two key criteria: their potential contribution to addressing local challenges and their practical feasibility within the available resources and implementation context.

The matrix provided a useful framework for discussion and helped participants reflect more systematically on the strengths and limitations of each idea. At the same time, the exercise revealed that perceptions of impact varied among participants. While some considered impact in terms of the number of people potentially reached, others focused on the significance of the benefits that a solution could generate for specific target groups. Participants also tended to assess individual components of more complex proposals separately. This was particularly evident in the case of the Rural Connect concept, whose different elements were evaluated independently rather than as a single integrated initiative.

As the discussion progressed, it became clear that participants recognised value in several of the proposed ideas and found it difficult to identify a single preferred solution. Rather than forcing consensus around one concept, the facilitator adapted the process and invited participants to identify and rank their three preferred ideas. This approach enabled participants to acknowledge the complementary nature of different proposals while still establishing a clear set of priorities.

The discussions highlighted several ideas as particularly promising. Elements of the Rural Connect concept, especially the “local employment hub” and the “language corner”, were considered among the most impactful and feasible proposals. Participants also identified education, training and employment support, together with initiatives promoting participation through sport, as priorities capable of generating tangible benefits for the local community.

The final ranking exercise was conducted through individual voting, with participants recording their three preferred concepts on post-it notes. The results identified the following priority solutions:

1. **Online Local Work Hub / Listings**
2. **Language Corner**
3. **Local Sports Dashboard**

Participants did not seek to merge these priorities into a single overarching solution. Instead, they concluded that each addressed a distinct but equally important dimension of social inclusion and community participation. Consequently, the three concepts were retained and further developed as separate but complementary solutions during the second user-innovation workshop.

The solutions prioritised during the workshops reflected, to some extent, the composition of those actively engaged in the process. As the first user-innovation workshop attracted stronger participation from migrant communities, the prioritised ideas focused primarily on migrant inclusion and support. Nevertheless, older residents also participated in the discussions and prioritisation process, and several elements of the proposed solutions remain relevant to a broader range of groups in vulnerable situations within the community.

5.4.5 Selected solutions and initial implementation pathways

The second user-innovation workshop focused on further developing the three priority solutions identified during the first workshop and translating them into initial implementation pathways. Participants were introduced to the roadmap concept and template as a practical tool for planning the next steps of each initiative. Through collaborative discussions, they explored the objectives, target groups, key activities, required resources, implementation requirements and longer-term potential of each solution.

- **Education, Training and Employment Hub**

  The Education, Training and Employment Hub was selected as a response to the need for improved access to employment opportunities, training and information, particularly for migrants, asylum seekers and other residents seeking to enter or re-enter the labour market. Participants highlighted that information on employment opportunities, training programmes and support services is often fragmented and difficult to access, creating additional barriers for those already facing challenges related to language, mobility or social networks.

  The proposed solution aims to create a centralised hub, combining a physical space and an online platform providing information on local job opportunities, training programmes, educational resources and employment supports. The initiative also seeks to strengthen connections between jobseekers, employers, education providers and community organisations, facilitating access to opportunities while supporting skills development and employability.

  The initial implementation pathway focuses on identifying relevant stakeholders, mapping existing resources and developing a structure through which information can be collected, updated and shared. Participants viewed the solution as having significant long-term potential, particularly if it can evolve into a sustainable community resource that supports labour market integration and lifelong learning beyond the duration of the INSPIRE project.

- **Language Corner**

  The Language Corner emerged as a priority solution aimed at addressing language barriers experienced by migrants and asylum seekers within the local community. Participants

highlighted that limited English language proficiency can affect access to services, employment, social activities and everyday interactions, often contributing to isolation and reduced participation in community life.

The proposed initiative seeks to combine language learning with opportunities for social interaction and community integration. Participants envisaged the development of a simple website acting as a central access point where residents could connect with language educators, access learning opportunities and find information about relevant community activities. The initiative would also involve partnerships with educators, community organisations and local groups to support both formal and informal learning opportunities.

Beyond language classes, participants emphasised the importance of creating safe and welcoming spaces where people can practise communication skills, build confidence and establish social connections. Suggested activities included conversation groups, sports activities, cultural events and movie nights that could bring together newcomers and longer-term residents in an informal setting.

The initial implementation pathway focuses on developing the digital platform, establishing partnerships with educators and community organisations, and exploring practical measures to improve accessibility, including support for transport where needed. Discussions highlighted that the initiative should not be limited to language acquisition alone but should also contribute to confidence-building, social integration and mutual understanding within the wider community. Participants also noted that the model could be replicated beyond Moate, with the digital platform potentially enabling connections and knowledge exchange between communities at local, national and even international levels.

- **Local Sports Dashboard**

  The Local Sports Dashboard was developed as a response to the need for greater social interaction, community participation and access to recreational opportunities. Participants noted that sport can provide an effective mechanism for bringing people together, overcoming social and cultural barriers and fostering a sense of belonging. However, information on local sports activities, clubs and participation opportunities is often fragmented and difficult to access, particularly for newcomers and individuals seeking to expand their social networks.

  The proposed solution centres on the development of a digital platform that brings together information on local sports clubs, training sessions, recreational activities and participation opportunities in a single, easily accessible location. The dashboard would help residents identify activities of interest, understand participation requirements and connect with existing sports groups, thereby lowering barriers to involvement in community life. Particular emphasis was placed on making opportunities more visible and accessible for migrants, asylum seekers and socially isolated individuals.

  The initial implementation pathway focuses on mapping existing sports clubs and activities, engaging relevant organisations and developing an accessible and user-friendly platform for information sharing. Participants highlighted the potential of the initiative to improve physical wellbeing, strengthen social integration and create new opportunities for interaction among

people from different backgrounds. The model was also considered capable of expansion over time through the inclusion of additional activities, organisations and community groups.

The roadmap discussions during the second user-innovation workshop demonstrated that, although the three selected solutions address different needs, they share a common objective of reducing barriers to participation and improving access to opportunities, information and community networks. Participants emphasised the importance of ensuring that the solutions remain accessible, inclusive and adaptable to changing community needs. They also recognised that long-term sustainability would depend on continued community engagement, strong partnerships and the ability to build upon the foundations established through the INSPIRE project. In this respect, the selected solutions provide a flexible foundation that can continue to evolve and respond to the needs of both migrants and elderly people, who constitute the main target groups of the Moate SVL, while also benefiting the wider community.

5.5 Parczew (Lubelskie Voivodeship, Poland)

Pilot Partner: European Rural Development Network (ERDN)

Pilot Area: Parczew, Poland

Type of Rural Area: Predominantly rural peripheral area

Smart Village Lab: Women's Development Zone - Parczew

Focus of the Lab: Empowering rural women in Parczew through skills, collaboration and locally rooted social entrepreneurship

5.5.1 Context

Parczew district is a predominantly rural peripheral area in eastern Poland, characterised by agricultural landscapes, extensive forests and dispersed rural settlements. While the local economy relies on family farming, food processing, forestry and small-scale entrepreneurship, the area faces several long-term challenges common to many rural regions, including population ageing, youth outmigration and limited employment opportunities. Rural women are particularly affected by economic inactivity, unemployment and barriers to entrepreneurship, often linked to limited access to finance, care responsibilities, social norms and restricted access to markets. At the same time, Parczew benefits from strong social capital, active women's associations, local organisations and community networks, providing a valuable foundation for initiatives that support women's economic empowerment, entrepreneurship and participation in local development.

The Parczew SVL, operating under the name "**Women's Development Zone - Parczew**", was established through a participatory process that brought together rural women facing barriers to employment and entrepreneurship, alongside public institutions, local organisations and other stakeholders committed to strengthening women's economic independence and participation in local development. During the co-creation phase of the project, participants collectively defined the SVL's mission and vision, identifying the need for a coordinated support framework capable of transforming local skills, knowledge and experience into sustainable income-generating opportunities. The SVL

seeks to strengthen women's entrepreneurial capacity, improve access to markets, training and support services, and create pathways for women to develop and professionalise locally rooted economic activities while increasing their visibility, confidence and long-term agency within their communities.

The user-innovation workshops built upon this existing foundation of collaboration and focused on identifying practical solutions capable of transforming local skills, knowledge and resources into sustainable income-generating opportunities. The process brought together rural women, including unemployed women and women in vulnerable situations, alongside representatives of local institutions, NGOs and cultural organisations. Discussions remained strongly grounded in the experiences and aspirations of women themselves, while benefiting from the perspectives and support of relevant local stakeholders.

The workshops were implemented in a context where participants had already identified a number of interconnected challenges affecting women's economic participation, including limited access to financing, insufficient opportunities for skills development, time constraints associated with care responsibilities, persistent social stereotypes and difficulties accessing clients and markets. The workshops therefore focused on moving from the identification of barriers towards the co-development and prioritisation of solutions capable of supporting women's entrepreneurship, economic activation and social empowerment.

5.5.2 Local services needs

Building on the challenges identified during the co-creation phase and the discussions held during the user-innovation workshops, participants highlighted a number of interconnected needs considered essential for strengthening women's economic participation, entrepreneurship and community engagement in Parczew.

These included:

- Greater access to financing opportunities and support mechanisms for women-led initiatives.
- Improved access to training, skills development and entrepreneurship support that enables women to transform local knowledge, skills and experience into sustainable income-generating activities.
- Better access to markets, clients and promotional channels, including digital tools that increase the visibility of local products, services and women's initiatives.
- Stronger cooperation, networking and locally accessible support structures that facilitate collaboration, learning and entrepreneurial activity.
- Opportunities to connect local heritage, gastronomy, tourism and cultural resources with economic development and women's entrepreneurship.
- Actions that reduce social barriers to women's economic participation, including restrictive gender norms, care responsibilities and limited visibility of women's contributions to local development.

Overall, participants emphasised the need for a coordinated support framework capable of combining skills development, entrepreneurship, community engagement and local economic development, while creating practical pathways for women to develop sustainable economic activities rooted in local resources and opportunities.

5.5.3 Solution ideas generated

Building on the challenges identified during the co-creation phase, participants used the first user-innovation workshop to explore practical solutions capable of strengthening women's economic participation, entrepreneurship and social engagement in Parczew. Inspired by examples presented through the INSPIRE Services and Social Economy Atlas, discussions focused on how local skills, traditions and resources could be transformed into sustainable economic and social opportunities for rural women.

The Atlas presentation proved particularly useful in stimulating reflection on women-led entrepreneurship, educational services, tourism initiatives and community-based economic activities. Participants appreciated that the Atlas presented real and verified European examples that could provide practical inspiration for local action in Parczew. They showed particular interest in initiatives combining local traditions with entrepreneurship, workshop-based educational activities, tourism and experience-based services, digital promotion tools, and practical approaches to financing and organisational development. The examples helped participants move beyond the identification of challenges and towards the development of concrete and feasible actions that could be adapted to the local context.

Through the discussions, participants generated and further developed a range of complementary ideas. The main ideas discussed included:

- **Social Services Hub in Dębowa Kłoda** - Establishment of a community-based hub providing educational, social, cultural and entrepreneurship-related activities for rural women and the wider community, supported by premises offered by the Municipality of Dębowa Kłoda.
- **Women-led Educational, Culinary and Handicraft Workshops** - Development of workshops focused on regional cuisine, baking traditions, handicrafts and creative activities, combining skills development, cultural heritage and opportunities for entrepreneurship.
- **Gastronomy, Catering and Local Products Initiative** - Creation of women-led gastronomy and catering activities promoting local food traditions, supporting local events and strengthening the visibility of regional products.
- **Rural Tourism and Recreation Activities** - Development of tourism services and recreational activities linked to local natural and cultural resources, including cycling, nature-based tourism and outdoor experiences.
- **Cultural, Integration and Community Events** - Organisation of festivals, cultural activities and community events aimed at strengthening local identity, social inclusion and community participation.

- **Digital Promotion and Communication Activities** - Development of digital communication tools and social media activities supporting the visibility and promotion of local initiatives, services and products.

Together, these ideas reflected participants' aspirations to strengthen women's economic participation, promote local entrepreneurship and support community-led development. While differing in scope and focus, all proposals aimed to create new opportunities for rural women while contributing to the wider social and economic vitality of the Parczew district.

5.5.4 Participatory prioritisation process

Following the presentation and discussion of the proposed ideas during the first user-innovation workshop, participants engaged in a structured prioritisation process supported by the Impact-Feasibility Matrix. The exercise encouraged participants to assess the different proposals according to their potential contribution to local development and their practical feasibility within the available resources of the INSPIRE project and the opportunities available in the area. Particular attention was given to identifying initiatives that could simultaneously support women's economic participation, community engagement and the long-term sustainability of local activities.

The discussions revealed strong complementarities between the different ideas. Rather than evaluating each proposal as a stand-alone initiative, participants increasingly explored how educational activities, gastronomy, tourism, cultural events and digital promotion could reinforce one another within a broader local development framework. The availability of premises offered free of charge by the Municipality of Dębowa Kłoda significantly increased the feasibility of establishing a Social Services Hub, which gradually emerged as a promising concept capable of integrating several of the proposed activities under a common structure.

As discussions progressed, participants moved beyond the assessment of individual projects and began shaping a broader vision centred on women's empowerment, entrepreneurship and community participation. Within this emerging vision, the Social Services Hub was increasingly viewed as a potential coordinating mechanism capable of supporting and connecting a range of complementary initiatives while strengthening their visibility, sustainability and overall impact.

The final ranking exercise was conducted through sticker voting combined with moderated discussion. The prioritisation process highlighted three ideas as particularly impactful and feasible within the available resources and opportunities of the INSPIRE project:

1. **Social Services Hub in Dębowa Kłoda** as a coordinating structure for local social and economic activities.
2. **Women-led educational, culinary and handicraft workshops** linked to local products, gastronomy and entrepreneurship.
3. **Digital promotion and communication activities** supporting the visibility of the Hub and local initiatives.

Participants also identified a number of strategic initiatives with significant long-term potential but requiring additional resources, infrastructure and organisational capacity. These included rural

tourism and recreation activities, cultural and intermunicipal events, and the broader development of tourism infrastructure and community services.

Overall, the prioritisation process not only identified a set of preferred actions but also encouraged participants to consider how different initiatives could be developed in a complementary manner. This laid the groundwork for the next stage of the process, where participants further explored how selected ideas could be translated into more concrete and integrated implementation pathways.

5.5.5 Selected solutions and initial implementation pathways

During the second user-innovation workshop, participants focused on further developing the priorities identified during the first workshop and translating them into an initial implementation pathway. Building on the earlier discussions, participants explored how the selected ideas could be combined into a coherent initiative capable of generating sustainable economic and social benefits for rural women in Parczew.

The workshop discussions led to the consolidation of several previously identified ideas into a single integrated solution entitled **“Integrated Ceramics and Culinary Workshop Studio - Parczew / Dębowa Kłoda”**. Participants recognised that artisan crafts, local food heritage, entrepreneurship and tourism-related activities could complement one another and create a diversified model for women's economic activation. Rather than pursuing separate initiatives, the proposed solution combines multiple activities within a common framework that seeks to strengthen women's skills, generate new income opportunities and support local development.

The proposed solution is structured around **three complementary pillars**:

- **Community-Based Ceramics and Culinary Activities**
  - Establishment of a combined ceramics and culinary workshop space in the Municipality of Dębowa Kłoda, supported by premises provided by the municipality.
  - Initial delivery of ceramics workshops, with culinary envisaged as a complementary component in a subsequent phase.
  - Development of artisan products and, progressively, local food products and catering services to generate new income opportunities and support local entrepreneurship.
  - Gradual expansion of activities through a mobile model delivering workshops across villages and community centres throughout Parczew district.
- **Women's Empowerment and Capacity Building**
  - Organisation of a structured capacity-building programme for a core group of SVL members combining domestic and international learning activities covering ceramics production, culinary heritage, entrepreneurship, cooperative governance and enterprise management.
  - International learning and exchange activities, including a potential training visit to Greece, selected because of its rich traditions in ceramics production and local gastronomy, together with its well-established network of women's rural cooperatives and social enterprises

- Development of local leadership and facilitation capacities, allowing trained participants to transfer knowledge and support other women within the district.

- **Tourism, Promotion and Market Development**
  - Integration of the studio's activities into the local tourism offer through experiential workshops and cultural activities.
  - Development of digital promotion tools, including a tourism application linking workshop activities, tourism routes and local products.
  - Strengthening the visibility and market access of local products and services through fairs, tourism networks and digital communication channels.

During the workshop participants devoted considerable attention to the long-term sustainability of the initiative. The roadmap envisages a strong partnership between the Municipality of Dębowa Kłoda, which has committed to providing premises for the studio, the SVL working group and supporting institutions. Discussions highlighted the importance of gradually developing the initiative into a self-sustaining model through workshop fees, product sales, catering services and future external funding opportunities. Participants also recognised the potential for replicating the model across other villages within the district through mobile workshops and local partnership.

Beyond the immediate activities and implementation steps, participants viewed the initiative as a long-term investment in women's empowerment and local development. The integrated studio was seen as a practical response to the lack of accessible spaces for creative and economic activities, the limited opportunities for women to transform traditional knowledge into viable businesses, and the insufficient access to entrepreneurship support. By combining community-based activities, capacity building and tourism-related opportunities, the proposed solution seeks to create new opportunities for rural women while contributing to the social, cultural and economic vitality of the Parczew district.

5.6 Maramureș and Suceava Counties (Romania)

Pilot Partner: ROMONTANA

Pilot Area: Panaci, Poiana Stampei (Suceava county) & Botiza Ocna Șugatag (Maramureș county), Romania

Type of Rural Area: Mountainous rural area

Smart Village Lab: Rețeaua Binelui (The Goodness Network)

Focus of the Lab: Bringing digital access and social services closer to mountainous communities

5.6.1 Context

Suceava and Maramureș are predominantly mountainous counties in northern Romania, characterised by dispersed settlements, long travel distances and uneven access to public services. Geographic isolation, limited transport options and varying levels of digital literacy can make it difficult for residents, particularly older people, persons with disabilities and special needs, and other groups

in vulnerable situations, to access administrative, social and healthcare services concentrated in county centres. At the same time, the area benefits from strong local identity, active civil society organisations and growing interest in practical digital solutions capable of improving the quality and accessibility of public services in mountain communities.

The Romanian SVL, operating under the name "**Rețeaua Binelui (The Goodness Network)**", was established through a collaborative process involving local and regional authorities, social service providers, educational, research and development institutions, NGOs, community representatives and groups in vulnerable situations from the mountain areas of Suceava and Maramureș. During the co-creation phase of the project, participants identified a range of challenges affecting local communities, including limited access to social services, digital exclusion, restricted employment opportunities and difficulties in accessing education and training. Attention was given to the needs of older adults, young people and persons with disabilities and special needs, who were identified as being disproportionately affected by these barriers.

The SVL seeks to improve access to essential social services by bringing practical digital solutions closer to citizens and reducing the barriers created by distance, limited mobility and digital exclusion. Through cooperation between public institutions, local authorities, NGOs and community actors, it promotes innovative approaches that enable vulnerable residents to access services more easily while strengthening digital inclusion and participation in community life. A central feature of the SVL is its ambition to develop and test concrete and scalable solutions that can improve the accessibility and efficiency of public services in mountain areas.

Building on this foundation, the user-innovation workshops focused on refining and operationalising practical solutions capable of improving access to services in mountain communities. Supported by an established network of institutional partners, local authorities, NGOs and community representatives, participants concentrated on validating strategic directions, strengthening cooperation mechanisms and developing implementation pathways for concrete pilot actions with long-term replication potential. Both workshops were organised in a hybrid format, enabling the participation of stakeholders from different locations and reflecting the SVL's broader commitment to the use of digital tools and accessible forms of engagement.

5.6.2 Local services needs

The discussions held during the co-creation phase and the user-innovation workshops highlighted a number of interconnected needs affecting mountainous communities in Suceava and Maramureș. Participants emphasised that geographic isolation, limited mobility, uneven digital readiness and restricted service provision continue to create significant barriers for groups in vulnerable situations, particularly older people, persons with disabilities and young people. At the same time, participants recognised the need to strengthen local capacities, enhance coordination among stakeholders, improve access to services and economic opportunities, and encourage greater participation in community life.

These needs included:

- Improved access to social and public services through more accessible, efficient and citizen-centred delivery models.
- Greater digital inclusion and improved access to training opportunities that support the development of digital, entrepreneurial and professional skills.
- Expanded opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship and participation in the digital economy and local labour market.
- Stronger coordination and collaboration mechanisms connecting citizens, public institutions, NGOs and community actors.
- Improved availability of information, resources and support services through integrated digital platforms and community networks.

Overall, participants emphasised the need for practical and integrated solutions capable of reducing the barriers created by geographic isolation while strengthening digital inclusion, service accessibility and community resilience. Rather than addressing individual challenges in isolation, the discussions highlighted the importance of combining technological innovation, institutional cooperation and community engagement to improve quality of life and expand opportunities for residents of mountain areas.

5.6.3 Solution ideas generated

The first user-innovation workshop focused on exploring strategic directions and practical solutions that could improve the quality, accessibility and efficiency of services available to mountain communities. Participants examined how digital innovation, institutional cooperation and community engagement could contribute to addressing persistent social and economic challenges in the area. Inspired by examples presented through the INSPIRE Services and Social Economy Atlas and the Rural Social Inclusion Policy Dashboard, discussions focused on how digital tools, institutional cooperation and community-based support mechanisms could help address the barriers faced by groups in vulnerable situations living in remote rural areas.

The Atlas proved particularly valuable in stimulating discussions around digital service delivery, community coordination and the use of interactive mapping tools to support social inclusion. Participants expressed strong interest in the possibility of visualising local needs, services and community resources through digital platforms. These discussions also influenced the future development of the Rețeaua Binelui (Goodness Network), with participants highlighting the potential of integrating map-based functionalities to support collaboration between public institutions, NGOs, volunteers and community members.

Rather than generating a large number of unrelated proposals, participants focused on a set of interconnected ideas that addressed different dimensions of social inclusion, digital transformation and local development. The main ideas discussed included:

- **Digitalisation of Public Services, DIGIMONT (Mountain Digital Inclusion Center) and the Rețeaua Binelui Application** - A set of integrated strategic directions focused on improving access to public services, promoting digital inclusion and strengthening community support mechanisms through practical digital solutions.

- **Extension of the Disability Assessment Digitalisation Pilot to Maramureș County** - intention to expand the existing remote disability assessment model that was initially considered to be tested in Suceava county pilot area to additional mountain communities in Maramureș county, with the main objective of reducing travel burdens and improving access to essential social services for persons with disabilities and/or special needs.
- **Affiliate Marketing Support System for Local Businesses** - Development of digital marketing tools and support mechanisms aimed at increasing the visibility and competitiveness of local businesses and entrepreneurs.
- **Entrepreneurship, Artificial Intelligence and Digital Skills Training Programmes** - Practical training opportunities focused on entrepreneurship, digital skills, online marketing, agriculture and tourism-related competences.
- **Local Job Fair and Online Employment Platform** - Creation of mechanisms connecting jobseekers, employers, local authorities and support services while improving access to employment opportunities.
- **Remote Working Hub for Mountain Communities** - Development of remote working infrastructure and services aimed at attracting digital workers and supporting economic diversification in mountain areas.

Taken as a whole, the proposed solutions outlined a comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges faced by mountain communities. While differing in scope and maturity, they shared a common objective: reducing the barriers created by geographic isolation and strengthening the capacity of rural residents to access services, opportunities and support through innovative and collaborative approaches.

5.6.4 Participatory prioritisation process

Following the presentation and discussion of the proposed ideas during the first user-innovation workshop, participants engaged in a structured prioritisation process supported by the Impact-Feasibility Matrix and a participatory voting exercise. The process aimed to assess the proposed solutions according to their potential impact on local challenges, their feasibility within the available resources and partnerships, and their capacity to generate sustainable benefits for mountain communities.

The discussions revealed a high degree of consensus among participants regarding the relevance of the proposed solutions. Rather than competing alternatives, most ideas were perceived as complementary interventions addressing different dimensions of a shared objective: improving access to services, strengthening digital inclusion and creating new opportunities for social and economic participation in mountain areas.

Attention was given to the maturity, scalability and institutional feasibility of the proposed actions. Participants highlighted the importance of building on existing partnerships, ongoing initiatives and available technological solutions in order to maximise impact and ensure long-term sustainability. The discussions also emphasised the value of developing solutions that could be replicated across different mountain communities and potentially inform wider administrative practices.

The final prioritisation process combined facilitated discussion with an online vote conducted through Google Forms. The results confirmed broad support for all major proposals, reflecting a high degree of consensus among participants regarding the strategic direction of the SVL. The highest levels of support were recorded for the digitalisation of public services, the extension of the disability assessment pilot, entrepreneurship and digital skills development, and employment support mechanisms. Participants also expressed strong interest in initiatives promoting digital entrepreneurship, remote working opportunities and innovative forms of local economic development.

While several ideas received broad support, the discussions gradually converged around three closely connected strategic directions:

1. **Digitalisation of public services**, with particular emphasis on improving access to disability assessment services through assisted digital solutions.
2. **DIGIMONT - Mountain Digital Inclusion Centre**, supporting digital skills, entrepreneurship and access to digital opportunities.
3. **Rețeaua Binelui Community Platform**, strengthening information sharing, coordination and community engagement through digital tools.

These strategic directions were viewed as mutually reinforcing components of a broader vision for improving quality of life, service accessibility and digital inclusion in mountain communities. Rather than selecting a single preferred solution, participants recognised the value of developing an integrated approach capable of addressing multiple challenges simultaneously.

5.6.5 Selected solutions and initial implementation pathways

During the second user-innovation workshop, participants focused on further developing the strategic directions identified during the prioritisation process and translating them into concrete implementation pathways. While participants reaffirmed the importance of the three interconnected strategic directions –Digitalisation of Public Services, DIGIMONT and the Rețeaua Binelui Community Platform– they also recognised the need to prioritise a solution that could realistically be implemented within the timeframe and resources available through the INSPIRE project. As a result, discussions concentrated on the further development of the pilot solution **“Digitalisation of Public Services for the Assessment of Persons with Disabilities in Mountain Areas”**.

The proposed solution seeks to improve access to disability assessment services for residents of mountain communities by enabling remote evaluations through secure videoconferencing and assisted digital access points located within local public institutions. The solution responds directly to the challenges created by long travel distances, limited mobility and restricted access to county-level services, particularly for people with disabilities and older residents living in remote rural areas. Its selection was further supported by the existence of established institutional partnerships and a well-defined implementation pathway.

Rather than requiring beneficiaries to travel to county centres, the proposed model enables the assessment process to take place closer to citizens' place of residence, with local assistance available where necessary. The solution therefore combines digital technologies with community-based support mechanisms in order to improve both accessibility and user experience.

The initial implementation pathway is structured around **three complementary components:**

- **Assisted Digital Access Points**

  The roadmap foresees the establishment of assisted digital access points within local public institutions in the Dornelor Basin. These access points would provide secure videoconferencing facilities, technical support and guidance for beneficiaries participating in remote disability assessment procedures. Emphasis was placed on ensuring accessibility, ease of use and support for individuals with limited digital skills.

- **Institutional Cooperation and Service Delivery Model**

  A central element of the proposed solution is the strong collaboration between municipalities, county-level social services (DGASPC), NGOs and other relevant stakeholders. Participants devoted significant attention to defining operational procedures, responsibilities and communication channels required to ensure the effective delivery of the service while safeguarding data protection, accessibility and the quality of the assessment process.

- **Replication and Scaling Potential**

  Participants also highlighted the potential for replicating the model in other mountain communities facing similar accessibility challenges. The roadmap therefore includes the development of operational protocols, implementation guidelines and supporting materials that could facilitate future adoption by additional municipalities and regional authorities. Discussions also explored opportunities to extend the approach to other types of social and administrative services where distance and mobility constraints create barriers for rural residents.

Although the digitalisation of disability assessment services was selected as the priority solution for implementation within the INSPIRE project, participants viewed it as part of a broader transformation agenda. The “DIGIMONT Mountain Digital Inclusion Centre” and the “Rețeaua Binelui Community Platform” remained important strategic directions that complement the selected solution by strengthening digital skills, improving access to information and enhancing community coordination. Together, these initiatives form an integrated vision for improving service accessibility, digital inclusion and quality of life in mountain communities.

Beyond its immediate objective of improving access to a specific public service, participants viewed the proposed solution as a practical demonstration of how digital innovation can help overcome the barriers created by geographic isolation in mountain areas. The initiative was seen not only as a means of improving service delivery for people with disabilities, but also as a model that could inform future approaches to digital public services, strengthen institutional cooperation and contribute to the long-term digital transformation of rural communities.

5.7 Košice Region (Slovakia)

Pilot Partner: PEDAL

Pilot Area: Košice Region, Slovakia

Type of Rural Area: Rural and peri-urban areas

Smart Village Lab: Social Impact Hub

Focus of the Lab: Empowering people with disabilities through innovation, digital skills and inclusive employment opportunities

5.7.1 Context

The Slovak SVL operates in the Košice Self-Governing Region, a region characterised by a combination of urban, peri-urban and rural areas and by significant differences in access to services, employment opportunities and infrastructure. While the city of Košice functions as a strong metropolitan centre, many surrounding settlements face limited transport connectivity, restricted access to social and health services and fewer opportunities for social and economic participation. These barriers are particularly pronounced for people with disabilities, who often experience multiple forms of exclusion related to mobility, access to services, employment opportunities and community participation. Despite these constraints, the region benefits from a strong knowledge and innovation ecosystem, including universities, research institutions, community organisations and cultural actors that can support the development of inclusive and community-led solutions.

The SVL, operating under the name "**Social Impact Hub**", was established through a participatory process that brought together young persons with disabilities, family members, caregivers, researchers, public authorities and representatives of local organisations committed to strengthening disability inclusion and social innovation in the region. During the co-creation phase of the project, participants identified a number of interconnected challenges affecting the disability community, including fragmented support ecosystems, accessibility barriers, social isolation, limited opportunities for skills development and weak pathways towards employment. The SVL seeks to enhance social inclusion, independence and quality of life for people with disabilities by building a collaborative ecosystem that connects communities, families, institutions and innovators. Through participatory and community-driven processes, it aims to support social participation, skills development and working inclusion while empowering people with disabilities as active contributors and co-creators of solutions that respond to their real needs and experiences.

The user-innovation workshops provided an opportunity to transform these identified challenges and priorities into concrete solution ideas and initial implementation pathways. The workshops brought together active members of the Social Impact Hub including young persons with disabilities and family members, alongside researchers, students, social workers and other supporting actors, creating a highly participatory environment where lived experience played a central role in shaping the discussions. The discussions were characterised by a high degree of openness, trust and active participation, with members drawing extensively on their own experiences, aspirations and ideas for change. The workshops therefore focused on identifying practical solutions capable of strengthening

social inclusion, independence, skills development, employability and community participation for young people with disabilities and their families. At the same time, they further reinforced the collaborative ecosystem emerging around the Social Impact Hub and strengthened participants' sense of ownership over the solutions being developed.

5.7.2 Local services needs

Building on the challenges identified during the co-creation phase and the discussions held during the user-innovation workshops, participants highlighted a number of interconnected services and support needs considered essential for improving the inclusion, independence and quality of life of young people with disabilities and their families.

These included:

- Improved accessibility of mobility, transport and community participation opportunities, enabling people with disabilities to access education, employment, services and social activities more easily.
- Greater opportunities for social participation, peer support and community engagement aimed at reducing isolation, strengthening confidence and fostering a stronger sense of belonging.
- More accessible pathways for skills development, lifelong learning and personalised capability-building, including opportunities to develop digital competences and practical life skills.
- Enhanced access to employment opportunities, mentoring, career guidance and inclusive working environments that better match individual abilities, interests and support needs.
- Improved availability of accessible information, guidance and support mechanisms helping people with disabilities and their families navigate services, opportunities and support systems more effectively.
- Stronger coordination and collaboration among families, public institutions, educational organisations, employers, community actors and support services.
- Increased opportunities for self-advocacy, empowerment and active participation in the design of solutions affecting the disability community.

Overall, participants emphasised the need for a more integrated and person-centred support ecosystem capable of combining social inclusion, skills development, mobility support and employment pathways while recognising the diverse needs, abilities and aspirations of people with disabilities.

5.7.3 Solution ideas generated

After identifying the key needs and challenges affecting young people with disabilities and their families, participants used the first user-innovation workshop to explore practical solutions capable of strengthening social inclusion, accessibility, employability and community participation. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their everyday experiences and identify actions that could contribute to greater independence, inclusion and quality of life.

The INSPIRE Services and Social Economy Atlas was presented during the workshop as a source of inspiration. Participants appreciated the opportunity to explore examples through the INSPIRE Atlas, although they found relatively few cases directly relevant to the specific needs of the local disability community. As a result, the discussions were shaped primarily by participants' own experiences, aspirations and ideas for change, generating a diverse range of proposals closely connected to the realities of the local disability community.

The following solution ideas were generated and discussed during the workshop:

- **Inclusive Mobility** - Community-based mobility solutions enabling persons with disabilities to access education, employment, services and social activities more easily.
- **AI-Enabled Education for Independence and Inclusion** - Educational activities aimed at helping persons with disabilities use artificial intelligence and digital tools to support independent living, communication, learning and social participation.
- **Funding for Small Social Inclusion Initiatives** - Small-scale funding mechanisms supporting community-led inclusion activities, creative projects and local initiatives developed by persons with disabilities and their supporters.
- **Working Inclusion and Employment** - Initiatives designed to strengthen employability, facilitate access to meaningful work opportunities and promote more inclusive employment pathways for persons with disabilities.
- **Relax and Free Time** - Inclusive leisure, recreational and wellbeing activities aimed at improving mental wellbeing, reducing stress and strengthening social inclusion.
- **Community Mentoring and Hobby Groups** - Mentoring and peer-support initiatives connecting persons with disabilities with volunteers and community members through shared interests, hobbies and personal development activities.
- **AI-assisted Navigation in Social Support and Rights** - Digital tools designed to help users access information about services, rights, benefits and administrative procedures more easily.
- **Accessible Education and Study Pathway Support** - Guidance and support services helping young persons with disabilities identify and pursue appropriate educational and training opportunities.

A particularly encouraging outcome of the workshop was the initiative shown by two young participants with disabilities, who proposed developing a small community-based project focused on social inclusion and digital solutions. The idea immediately attracted interest from other participants and stimulated a collaborative discussion on possible implementation pathways, partnerships and funding opportunities. This exchange demonstrated the strong level of engagement within the SVL and highlighted the potential of the user-innovation process to empower participants as active contributors and co-creators of solutions.

The proposed ideas addressed different aspects of the disability experience. However, they shared a common objective of empowering people with disabilities to participate more actively in education, employment and community life. Collectively, they reflected participants' aspirations for a more

inclusive support ecosystem that promotes independence, equal opportunities and meaningful participation in society.

5.7.4 Participatory prioritisation process

The participatory prioritisation process combined the use of the Impact-Feasibility Matrix with a simple ranking exercise adapted to the needs of the participants. The proposed ideas were presented and discussed, with particular attention given to the practical ways in which they could be implemented. The exercise generated extensive discussion, as participants often considered several ideas equally important and strongly interconnected. As a result, many participants found it difficult to prioritise individual ideas, noting that several proposals complemented and reinforced one another. The process therefore focused not only on identifying priority solutions, but also on exploring how different interventions could contribute to a broader ecosystem of support for people with disabilities and their families.

To facilitate participation, participants with motoric disabilities were invited to rank the proposed ideas using paper sheets displaying the different solutions, arranging them from the highest to the lowest priority. Rather than producing a strict ranking of individual solutions, the exercise resulted in the identification of three priority tiers:

1. **Priority 1**
    - AI-enabled Education for Independence and Inclusion
    - Working Inclusion and Employment
2. **Priority 2**
    - Inclusive Mobility
    - Community Mentoring and Hobby Groups
3. **Priority 3**
    - Relax and Free Time

The results demonstrated particularly strong support for initiatives that could strengthen independence, employability and active participation in society. Participants viewed AI-enabled Education for Independence and Inclusion and Working Inclusion and Employment as complementary pathways towards greater autonomy and social inclusion, making it difficult to distinguish between them in terms of priority. Similarly, Inclusive Mobility, and Community Mentoring and Hobby Groups were considered equally important, reflecting the close relationship between accessibility, social participation and community support.

The discussions highlighted that many of the proposed ideas addressed different dimensions of the same underlying challenges. As a result, participants emphasised that the selected priorities should not be viewed as competing alternatives but as complementary interventions contributing to a shared vision for inclusion and empowerment. The prioritisation process therefore served not only to identify ideas for further development, but also to strengthen a common understanding of how accessibility,

skills development, participation and working inclusion can reinforce one another in improving the lives of people with disabilities and their families.

5.7.5 Selected solutions and initial implementation pathways

During the second user-innovation workshop, participants focused on further refining the priority solution ideas that had emerged from the discussions and participatory prioritisation process of the first workshop. Working collaboratively, they developed initial implementation roadmaps by defining objectives, target groups, key activities, required resources, potential partners and future development pathways. Participants chose to further develop three solution ideas that address different but interconnected dimensions of disability inclusion: digital empowerment and skills development, working inclusion, and accessible mobility.

- **AI-enabled Education for Independence and Inclusion**

  The first solution focuses on the development of educational activities aimed at helping people with disabilities make practical use of artificial intelligence and digital tools in their everyday lives. The solution aims to design and gradually test a practical training scheme for members of the disability community and the Social Impact Hub focused on using AI in meaningful, every day and community-oriented ways. Participants identified AI as a promising mechanism for strengthening independence, communication, learning, self-advocacy and social participation.

  Rather than focusing solely on technical skills, the proposed training programme seeks to help participants understand how AI can support everyday problem-solving, communication, access to information and participation in community life. The activities are expected to be creative, cooperative and problem-based, allowing participants to work on practical tasks and small projects connected to their own experiences and needs. The proposed activities include introductory workshops, peer-learning opportunities and practical demonstrations designed to build confidence and digital competences among participants. The successful development and implementation of the initiative will require the active involvement of universities, researchers, technology experts, companies, volunteers and community organisations working together within the Social Impact Hub ecosystem.

- **Working Inclusion and Employment**

  The second solution focuses on improving access to meaningful employment opportunities for young people with disabilities by strengthening the links between their skills, interests and support needs and the realities of the labour market. Participants highlighted that employment barriers are not limited to formal qualifications or technical skills, but also include confidence, communication, mobility constraints, workplace culture and the limited availability of flexible working arrangements. They also stressed the importance of addressing employers' perceptions and increasing their understanding of disability-related needs.

  The solution aims to design a realistic support pathway that helps identify barriers and opportunities on both sides of the employment relationship. Proposed activities include consultations with employers, labour-market institutions and social enterprises, mentoring and

career guidance, soft-skills development, and the exploration of flexible employment models such as part-time, remote or supported work arrangements. Particular attention is also given to the potential role of social enterprises as more inclusive pathways towards employment and independence. In the longer term, the initiative seeks to strengthen employability, improve job matching, promote more inclusive workplaces and create stronger cooperation between the Social Impact Hub, employers, public institutions and SE actors.

- **Inclusive Mobility**

  The third solution focuses on addressing the mobility and transport barriers that often prevent young people with disabilities from accessing education, employment, public services and community activities. Participants highlighted that accessible and suitable transport is a fundamental condition for social participation, employability and everyday independence. The discussions emphasised the need for more flexible, user-oriented and affordable mobility options, particularly for people whose transport needs are not adequately covered by existing public transport systems or support schemes.

  The solution aims to design a practical mobility support pathway based on the needs identified by the disability community itself. Discussions focused on the potential development of a digital matching tool or mobile application capable of facilitating access to disability-sensitive transport services, as well as on building cooperation with taxi drivers and mobility providers to make inclusive transport options more visible and accessible. Beyond improving transport access, the initiative seeks to reduce isolation, facilitate access to education, employment and essential services, and strengthen everyday independence. The roadmap also highlights the importance of close cooperation between the Social Impact Hub, technology developers, mobility providers, public institutions and members of the disability community in order to ensure that any future pilot solution responds to real user needs and can be scaled over time.

Although developed as separate pathways, participants recognised strong connections between the three selected solutions. Greater digital confidence can support access to employment opportunities, while improved mobility can facilitate participation in education, training, work and community life. The discussions therefore highlighted the complementary nature of the selected initiatives and their collective contribution to the broader mission of the Social Impact Hub.

Participants also devoted considerable attention to questions of implementation, sustainability and future funding opportunities. While recognising the limited resources available through the INSPIRE project, they identified a wide range of potential partners and funding sources capable of supporting future development, including universities, public institutions, employers, social enterprises, community organisations and external funding programmes. The roadmaps therefore represent more than a set of proposed activities. They provide a shared strategic framework through which members of the Social Impact Hub can continue to develop, test and expand solutions that promote disability inclusion, independence and meaningful participation in community life. Beyond the individual solution pathways, the workshops also contributed to strengthening the Social Impact Hub community itself, creating new connections and opportunities for collaboration among young people with disabilities, researchers, students and supporting organisations.

6. Cross-pilot analysis

6.1 Key findings on local services needs and social economy solutions

The user-innovation workshops revealed a diverse range of local services needs faced by rural communities and groups in vulnerable situations. More importantly, they created a structured space where participants could analyse these needs, reflect on their everyday implications and translate them into possible responses. The process actively involved the groups most directly affected by the identified challenges, allowing their experiences, priorities and aspirations to shape the generation of solution ideas. As a result, the solutions that emerged were grounded in the principles of the SE, emphasising collective action, community benefit, inclusion and locally rooted forms of cooperation. While all SVLs operated within rural or rural-peripheral settings, the priorities identified by participants were strongly influenced by local characteristics, existing challenges, available assets and the specific target groups engaged in each process.

The findings demonstrate that local services needs remain highly context-specific and closely linked to the social, economic and territorial realities of each pilot area. The following examples illustrate the diversity of needs identified across the seven SVLs.

The French SVL, **“MIA - Inclusive and Active Mobility”**, focused on the needs of vulnerable residents, particularly people with disabilities, older adults and socially isolated individuals. Participants highlighted the need for improved mobility and transportation services, greater opportunities for social participation, stronger support mechanisms to address social isolation and digital exclusion, and better coordination among local organisations and volunteers providing support services.

The SVL in Kythera (Greece), **“Kytherian Land - Our Land, Our Food”**, focused on the needs of the island’s agricultural sector, with particular emphasis on small- and medium-scale farmers. Participants identified the need for improved advisory and technical support services, stronger cooperation among agricultural stakeholders, enhanced promotion and branding of local products, greater youth engagement in agriculture and increased support for sustainable and climate-resilient farming practices.

In Konitsa (Greece), the SVL **“Bridge to Tomorrow - Women of Konitsa: Empower. Create. Connect.”** centred on the needs of women living in a remote mountainous area. Participants highlighted the need for opportunities that strengthen wellbeing, confidence and social participation, improve skills and entrepreneurial capacities, support intergenerational knowledge transfer and create inclusive spaces where women can meet, learn and collaborate.

The SVL in Moate (Ireland), “**The Moate Hub**”, focused on the needs of migrants and older residents and sought to strengthen social inclusion and community participation. Participants identified the need for improved access to information, language support, employment and training opportunities,

stronger community connections and initiatives capable of reducing social isolation while fostering a greater sense of belonging and integration within the local community.

The Polish SVL, **“Women's Development Zone”**, focused primarily on the needs of women living in rural areas. Participants highlighted the need for capacity building, professional development opportunities, entrepreneurial support, stronger local networks and mechanisms that enable women to play a more active role in local economic and social life.

The Romanian SVL, **“The Goodness Network”**, concentrated on the needs of residents living in remote mountainous communities, particularly older adults, young people and people with disabilities and special needs. Participants identified the need for improved access to information and services, stronger community support structures, greater digital inclusion, opportunities for social participation and mechanisms capable of reducing geographical isolation and improving quality of life.

Finally, the Slovak SVL, **“Social Impact Hub”** focused on the needs of young people with disabilities and their families. Participants highlighted the need for improved accessibility, greater independence and social inclusion, stronger employability pathways, better access to education and skills development opportunities, enhanced mobility and more coordinated support services capable of supporting long-term participation in community and working life.

Despite the diversity of contexts and target groups, several common themes emerged across the SVL. Social inclusion and the reduction of isolation were recurring priorities, regardless of whether participants were discussing agricultural communities, women, migrants, older residents or people with disabilities. Across the pilot areas, participants emphasised the importance of creating opportunities for meaningful participation in community life, strengthening social connections and ensuring that groups in vulnerable situations can actively contribute to local development rather than remain passive recipients of support.

The need for improved access to services, information and support mechanisms was also evident in multiple SVLs. Participants frequently highlighted barriers related to geography, mobility, accessibility, fragmented service provision or limited awareness of existing opportunities. In response, many discussions focused on the need to strengthen local capacities, improve coordination among stakeholders and create more accessible pathways to information, support and participation. Skills development, employability and empowerment also emerged as important cross-cutting themes. Whether expressed through agricultural capacity building, entrepreneurship support, language learning, digital skills, educational opportunities or pathways to employment, participants consistently highlighted the importance of equipping individuals with the knowledge, confidence and competences needed to improve their quality of life and participate more fully in society.

Finally, many participants recognised that addressing local challenges requires collective action and stronger collaboration among local actors. The importance of partnerships, community networks, volunteering, peer support and cooperation among organisations emerged repeatedly throughout the workshops, highlighting the central role of social capital and community engagement in the development of sustainable local solutions.

The SE-based solutions generated through the user-innovation workshops reflected both the diversity of local needs and the specific characteristics of each SVL. Rather than converging towards a single

model or type of intervention, participants developed a broad range of ideas tailored to their local realities, target groups and available resources. In several cases, the proposed solutions focused on strengthening community networks, creating spaces for interaction and mutual support, and fostering collaboration among local stakeholders. In others, participants prioritised initiatives aimed at improving access to information, training opportunities, employment pathways, mobility services or digital tools capable of addressing specific barriers faced by groups in vulnerable situations.

The solutions also differed in their level of ambition and maturity. Some focused on the establishment of permanent community structures, such as local hubs, support networks or coordination mechanisms, while others proposed smaller-scale initiatives, including mentoring schemes, cultural activities, educational programmes, awareness-raising actions and community events. Several SVLs explored the potential of digital platforms and online tools to facilitate access to services, information and opportunities, whereas others placed greater emphasis on face-to-face interaction, peer support and community engagement.

Despite these differences, the solutions shared a number of characteristics commonly associated with SE approaches. They sought to address unmet local needs through collective action, community participation and collaboration among a wide range of actors, including citizens, volunteers, civil society organisations, educational and research institutions, cooperatives, social enterprises and public authorities. Rather than focusing solely on service provision, many of the proposed initiatives aimed to empower individuals, strengthen local capacities, build social capital and create long-term social value for the wider community.

Taken together, the solutions demonstrate the flexibility of the SE as a framework for addressing local challenges. Rather than prescribing predefined interventions, the user-innovation process enabled communities to identify and shape responses that reflected their own priorities, resources and aspirations. As a result, the solutions generated across the SVLs ranged from agricultural support initiatives and women's empowerment actions to mobility services, inclusion pathways, community hubs and digital platforms, illustrating the wide variety of forms that SE solutions can take when rooted in local needs and community participation.

Beyond the diversity of solutions generated, the experience of the SVLs highlighted the value of a structured participatory process. Across all pilot areas, participants progressed from identifying local needs and challenges to generating ideas, prioritising the most relevant and feasible options, and developing initial implementation pathways. This stepwise approach helped transform local concerns into concrete proposals while ensuring that the selected solutions remained grounded in community priorities and local realities.

6.2 Dynamics and value of user-innovation

The user-innovation workshops provided an opportunity not only to identify local services needs and generate potential SE-based solutions, but also to explore in practice how participatory innovation processes can support rural communities in shaping their own development pathways. Across the seven SVLs, participants actively contributed to the identification of needs, the generation of ideas, the prioritisation of solutions and the development of initial implementation pathways. This was achieved through a carefully designed and facilitated process combining inspiration examples, participatory discussions, prioritisation exercises and roadmap development activities, creating a structured yet flexible environment for collective reflection and co-creation. The findings demonstrate that user-innovation can serve as a valuable mechanism for mobilising local knowledge, strengthening local capacities and supporting the co-design of innovative solutions that are closely aligned with local realities and aspirations.

6.2.1 From challenges to opportunities

One of the clearest findings emerging from the workshops was the ability of the user-innovation process to help participants move from discussing challenges towards identifying opportunities for action. In several cases, participants initially focused on the difficulties affecting their communities, including social isolation, accessibility barriers, limited employment opportunities, declining agricultural activity or restricted access to services. Through facilitated discussions, inspiration examples and collective reflection, these challenges were gradually transformed into concrete ideas and implementation pathways.

In Kythera, discussions initially centred on the multiple difficulties affecting the agricultural sector but gradually evolved towards more solution-oriented thinking, leading to the development of concrete initiatives and even the proposal to explore the creation of a SCE. In Poland, participants moved from discussing a range of separate ideas towards a shared vision centred on the establishment of a Social Services Hub integrating community activities, gastronomy, handicrafts and tourism. Similarly, in France, discussions evolved from broad concerns about mobility and social isolation towards a more concrete and feasible concept based on partnerships, community coordination and the development of the MIA platform. In Slovakia, participants rapidly progressed from identifying barriers faced by young people with disabilities to discussing funding opportunities, implementation scenarios and practical steps for turning ideas into reality.

These examples illustrate how user-innovation is socially oriented (Fursov & Linton, 2022) and can unlock the innovation potential of local communities by enabling participants to combine their knowledge, experiences and ideas in the co-creation of solutions that are both locally relevant and practically feasible.

6.2.2 Participation as a driver of innovation

The workshops demonstrated that participation itself shaped the solutions that emerged. Rather than producing predefined or externally designed outcomes, the user-innovation process allowed priorities to develop organically through interaction, discussion and collective decision-making. The

composition of participants, their experiences and their interests directly influenced both the direction of the discussions and the solutions that were ultimately selected.

The SVL in Moate (Ireland) provides a particularly clear example. Strong participation from migrants, asylum seekers and organisations supporting them contributed to the prioritisation of solutions focused on language support, employment opportunities, social integration and community participation. As reflected in the workshop feedback, a different composition of participants would likely have resulted in different priorities and solutions. Similarly, in Slovakia, facilitators observed that ideas generated directly by participants created significantly stronger engagement than concepts introduced from outside. The proposal by two young participants with disabilities to develop a small project around social inclusion and digital solutions generated immediate interest and mobilised other participants to discuss implementation options and funding opportunities.

The findings therefore suggest that the value of user-innovation lies not in producing uniform outcomes across different territories, but in enabling local priorities, experiences and aspirations to shape the innovation process itself. The resulting diversity of solutions reflects the diversity of communities and participants involved.

6.2.3 Strengthening ownership and collaboration

Another important finding concerns the ability of the user-innovation process to strengthen ownership and foster collaboration among participants. In many cases, participants became active co-creators of solutions rather than passive recipients of externally designed interventions. The workshops created opportunities for individuals and organisations to exchange ideas, build relationships and identify common interests, often leading to new forms of cooperation.

In Konitsa, inspiration examples and proposed ideas resonated strongly with women participants because they could connect them with their own experiences, memories and local knowledge. Through the discussion, participants enriched these ideas and adapted them to the cultural heritage, food traditions and community life of Konitsa. The workshops also attracted new participants and increased interest in the activities of the SVL. In Kythera, the rotating organisation of workshops among local cooperatives helped strengthen cooperation among agricultural actors and reinforced participants' commitment to the process. In France, the development of MIA encouraged collaboration among associations, volunteers and local stakeholders, while in Romania the workshops facilitated dialogue between NGOs, public authorities, social service providers and community representatives. In Slovakia, participants not only contributed ideas but also actively explored ways to secure funding and mobilise additional support for future activities.

These experiences suggest that user-innovation can generate value beyond the solutions themselves by fostering ownership, strengthening local networks and creating the foundations for future collective action.

6.2.4 Conditions for effective participation

Across the pilot areas, the effectiveness of the user-innovation process depended not only on the methods employed but also on the social conditions within which participation took place. A recurring theme was the importance of creating an environment characterised by trust, openness and

inclusiveness, where participants felt comfortable sharing experiences, expressing concerns and contributing ideas.

Trust and local social dynamics also played an important role in shaping participation. In Kythera, existing networks and a tradition of cooperation among local actors facilitated engagement and open participation from the outset. In contrast, in Konitsa, where opportunities for collective action have traditionally been more limited, the gradual development of trust and relationships through the SVL process proved essential in creating a supportive environment where participants felt comfortable sharing experiences, expressing concerns and contributing ideas.

In Moate, facilitators adapted the workshop process to accommodate childcare needs, language barriers and varying levels of English proficiency, ensuring that groups in vulnerable situations could participate meaningfully. Romania demonstrated the importance of adapting participation methods to hybrid settings and different levels of digital literacy, while France highlighted the need for facilitation approaches capable of accommodating participants with diverse backgrounds and organisational cultures.

The workshops also revealed that highly structured methodologies are not always the most effective approach. In several cases, participants preferred open discussion and collaborative reflection over rigid agendas and formal evaluation procedures. Informal exchanges during breaks, community events or parallel activities often generated valuable ideas and strengthened relationships among participants. These findings suggest that successful user-innovation processes require a balance between structure and flexibility, providing sufficient guidance while leaving space for creativity, reflection and dialogue.

6.2.5 From ideas to action

A further contribution of the user-innovation process was its ability to support the transition from idea generation to implementation planning. Through the roadmap development process, participants were encouraged to reflect not only on what should be done, but also on how proposed solutions could realistically be implemented, sustained and scaled over time.

In Poland, discussions highlighted the importance of capacity building, entrepreneurship skills and international learning opportunities to support the future development of the proposed Social Services Hub. In France, participants refined their initial concept by exploring partnerships with existing mobility providers rather than creating entirely new systems. In Romania, discussions focused on the coordination mechanisms and institutional partnerships required to support future implementation, while in Slovakia participants identified funding needs and explored opportunities for small-scale pilot projects. Similar reflections emerged in Kythera and Konitsa, where participants recognised the importance of local partnerships, organisational capacities and realistic implementation pathways.

Importantly, the process also helped reveal the resources, skills and support mechanisms required to transform ideas into practice. Participants frequently identified needs related to training, technical expertise, funding, governance arrangements and stakeholder cooperation. In this sense, the workshops generated not only solution ideas but also a clearer understanding of the conditions necessary for their successful implementation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that user-innovation functions as a mechanism through which rural communities can collectively identify priorities, mobilise local knowledge, build partnerships and develop realistic pathways for action. Importantly, the Smart Village Labs created inclusive spaces in which groups in vulnerable situations and other local actors who are often underrepresented in strategic planning and decision-making were able to actively influence the identification and prioritisation of solutions. This contributed to the emergence of solutions that were closely aligned with local realities while simultaneously strengthening the capacities, relationships and commitment required for their future implementation. The process also encouraged participants to consider how digital tools, new technologies and innovative approaches could be adapted to local contexts and used to respond to community needs. As such, user-innovation contributed not only to the identification of SE-based solutions, but also to the development of the social, organisational and innovation capacities necessary to sustain and further develop these solutions over time.

6.3 Lessons learned and implications

The implementation of the user-innovation workshops across the seven SVLs generated a number of practical lessons regarding participatory innovation processes, community engagement and the development of SE-based solutions in rural areas. Although the pilot areas differed significantly in terms of geography, target groups and local challenges, several common lessons emerged from the implementation experience.

A first lesson concerns the importance of grounding innovation processes in locally identified needs and priorities. The workshops demonstrated that communities are more willing to engage when discussions focus on issues that directly affect their everyday lives and when participants can clearly recognise the relevance of the process to their own context. Rather than applying predefined solutions, the user-innovation approach created opportunities for communities to explore responses that reflected local realities, resources and aspirations.

A second lesson relates to the importance of meaningful participation by groups in vulnerable situations. The active involvement of women, migrants, older people, people with disabilities, young people and other groups in vulnerable situations ensured that the solutions developed were informed by lived experience and responded to actual rather than assumed needs. The process demonstrated that these groups can contribute not only to the identification of challenges but also to the generation of ideas, prioritisation of actions and planning of future initiatives when appropriate support and facilitation conditions are provided.

A third lesson concerns the role of facilitation and local adaptation. While the common INSPIRE methodology provided a useful structure, successful implementation required flexibility and adaptation to local circumstances. Differences in digital skills, mobility constraints, language barriers, organisational cultures and participant availability often required facilitators to modify the pace, format or delivery of activities. The experience suggests that effective participatory processes benefit from combining a common methodological framework with sufficient flexibility to respond to local needs and opportunities.

A fourth lesson relates to the importance of collaboration and partnership building. Across the pilot areas, many of the proposed solutions depend on cooperation between community members, civil

society organisations, public authorities, educational institutions, businesses and volunteers. The workshops helped identify potential partners and strengthen relationships among local actors, highlighting the importance of social capital and collective action in addressing complex rural challenges.

A further lesson concerns the value of the roadmap development process. While the first workshop focused on identifying and selecting priorities, the second workshop encouraged participants to consider what implementation would require in practice. By exploring objectives, activities, stakeholders, resources, funding needs, risks and future opportunities, the roadmaps helped transform ideas into initial implementation pathways. In this sense, they acted as an important bridge between co-creation and implementation, allowing participants to move beyond the identification of desirable solutions and begin reflecting on their practical feasibility.

Finally, the workshops demonstrated that innovation in rural areas is not limited to technological solutions. While several pilots explored the potential of digital tools, online platforms and emerging technologies, many of the proposed initiatives focused equally on new forms of cooperation, community organisation, service delivery and social support. This highlights the importance of recognising social innovation and community-led action as essential components of rural development and social inclusion strategies.

Taken together, these lessons suggest that user-innovation can provide a valuable framework for supporting the design, development, and future implementation of locally driven SE-based solutions in rural areas. At the same time, the experience confirms that there is no single pathway from needs identification to implementation. Each SVL developed its own trajectory, shaped by local priorities, stakeholder composition, available resources, and territorial characteristics. The approach proved particularly valuable because it combined a shared methodological framework with sufficient flexibility to accommodate these differences. By bringing together participatory methods, local knowledge and collaborative planning, the process helped communities identify priorities, strengthen local capacities and develop realistic pathways towards more inclusive, resilient and sustainable forms of rural development.

7. Conclusions

This report presents the results of the user-innovation workshops implemented across the seven INSPIRE SVLs and provides a cross-pilot synthesis of the local services needs and SE-based solutions identified through this participatory process. Building on the needs and challenges previously identified through the SVL activities, the workshops supported communities, groups in vulnerable situations and local stakeholders in moving beyond the identification of needs towards the generation, prioritisation and further development of place-based solution pathways.

The findings demonstrate that local services needs in rural areas remain highly diverse and closely linked to local social, economic and territorial realities. SVL participants identified challenges related to social inclusion, accessibility, mobility, employability, access to information and services, sustainable agricultural development, women's empowerment, migrant integration, and community participation. At the same time, the workshops highlighted important local capacities, knowledge, and willingness to engage in collective action when appropriate opportunities and support structures are provided.

The user-innovation process proved effective in creating a structured yet flexible environment in which participants could actively contribute to the identification of priorities and the co-design of potential solutions. The selected SE-based solutions took different forms depending on local needs and contexts, ranging from agricultural support initiatives and women's empowerment actions to mobility services, community hubs, educational initiatives and digital platforms. Despite this diversity, they shared a common orientation towards social inclusion, community benefit, cooperation, and improved access to opportunities and services.

An important outcome of the workshops was the development of initial deployment roadmaps that helped translate selected priorities into preliminary implementation pathways. By clarifying objectives, stakeholders, activities, resources, risks and future opportunities, the roadmap process encouraged participants to move beyond idea generation and begin considering the practical requirements for implementation and long-term sustainability.

Overall, the report demonstrates the value of participatory approaches for supporting community-led innovation in rural areas. The findings show that user-innovation can mobilise local knowledge, strengthen stakeholder engagement, and support the co-creation of responses to local service gaps and social challenges. Importantly, the process enabled groups in vulnerable situations and other local stakeholders to play a more active role in shaping priorities and co-designing solutions, ensuring that the proposed actions reflected local needs, experiences and aspirations. At the same time, the findings confirm that there is no single pathway from needs identification to implementation. Each SVL developed its own trajectory, shaped by local priorities, stakeholder composition, available resources, and territorial characteristics.

In doing so, the findings contribute to INSPIRE's broader objectives of promoting rural empowerment, social inclusion, and community-led innovation through solutions grounded in the principles and values of the SE. They also provide an important foundation for the next stages of the project under WP4, where the selected solutions and implementation pathways will be further refined, tested, and developed in collaboration with the SVL members and other local stakeholders.

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