



Briefing for Mr Ossi Martikainen

**Debate on Smart villages: Integrated strategic approaches to
innovation in rural areas**

29 January 2019

Dear Colleagues,

The concept of Smart City was commonly associated with the development of cities. Nonetheless, rural areas are also well positioned to take on the concept. The rural setting has certain specific advantages such as a more homogenous population than cities and citizen involvement rooted in the locals' habits and practices. However, issues of accessibility, mobility and critical mass are more problematic in rural areas and it is left to ICT to resolve them.

On 11 April 2017, the European Commission presented the document "EU action for Smart Villages". The document was designed to consider villages of the future, by announcing a series of initiatives within the framework of policies and European funds linked to rural development, regional development, research, transport, energy and digital technology. The action plan follows the Cork 2.0 Declaration of September 2016 in which one of the 10 priorities is "investing in rural viability and vitality". Strictly speaking, there are no new tools presented in this communication but rather a compilation of pre-existing

initiatives, which are put into perspective in the context of different events that will take place.

In its opinion on Revitalisation of rural areas through Smart Villages, the CoR calls for greater ambition and the development of a targeted and forward-looking policy on Smart Villages with a view to the post 2020 period and for incorporating the initiative into the European Rural Agenda.

This conference has a double objective:

1. to launch a political momentum for debating how to better promote the smart villages initiative in all structural policies after 2020;
2. to showcase inspiring projects at regional and local level exploring new approaches to health services, care, education, mobility, energy, broadband and others in rural areas.

I give the floor to Mr Tom Jones, rapporteur of the European Economic and Social Committee on "Villages and small towns as catalysts for rural development, challenges and opportunities", for the first session.