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Newsletter #1 - September 2025

SMARCO

SMART Communities Skills Development in Europe



Let's Discover the Project

The **SMARCO - Smart Communities Skills Development in Europe Project**, launched in February 2025 under the Erasmus+ programme, is a Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills, designed to address urgent challenges through a comprehensive, cross-sectoral approach. The project, coordinated by **the European DIGITAL SME Alliance**, brings together a consortium of **21 organisations from 14 European countries, and 1 associated partner**.

SMARCO will serve as an all-encompassing umbrella for smart communities skills on both sides – industry and public administrations – offering evidence-based research, trend analysis, training programmes, certification and other resources.

Project Results & Updates

Skills Supply and Demand Analysis

One of the core components of SMARCO is the skills supply and demand analysis, which already started at the beginning of the project, in February 2025. Its primary goal is to create a robust, science-based approach for analysing the skills supply and demand within the smart communities sector. This involves several key actions: analysing the current skill needs of ICT professionals and public administrations, projecting future demand, and mapping existing training and reskilling initiatives into an open online catalogue.

Next year, at the beginning of 2026, the consolidated results will be fed into the Smart Communities' Skills Mismatches and Future Foresight Report.

Let's take a look at what has been achieved so far!

SMARCO Methodology Report Sets the Foundation for the Skills Gap Analysis

In May 2025, a collaborative effort led to the completion of the SMARCO Research Methodology, establishing the scientific foundation for analysing the supply and demand of skills in Europe's evolving smart communities. It incorporates coordinated desk research, interviews, foresight exercises, and continuous updates through trends monitoring, supporting, at the same time, the design and piloting of training programmes for Higher Education Institutions and VET providers.

The methodology reflects the joint contributions of the University of Alcalá, Fondazione Piemonte Innova, the National Centre for Scientific Research Demokritos and the University of Thessaly, under the leadership of the University of Applied Sciences Utrecht.

As part of these research activities, two surveys have been launched this summer.

Survey on Emerging Skills and the Role of Smart Community Professionals

SMARCO is currently conducting a European-wide survey on the skills needs of professionals working in smart and resilient communities. The survey aims to collect insights from smart

communities stakeholders, regarding the current and emerging skills needed in smart communities, and the evolving roles and profiles of professionals working in this field.

The information gathered will contribute to building a robust and evidence-based skills demand report, supporting the development of future training programmes within the project.

Open until 10.10.2025

[Take the survey](#)



Mapping the Skills Supply for Smart Communities

Open until 10.10.2025

We have just launched a survey to map the existing training offer in terms of smart communities' skills development, and your contribution would weigh considerably in addressing the skills gap and understanding the current landscape.



If your expertise revolves around smart communities' trainings and you have knowledge of any existing learning materials, we invite you to spread the word through our short survey.

The results of this questionnaire will contribute to the creation of an online smart communities' skills resources catalogue with learning resources.

[Take the survey](#)

Development of the Competence Matrix for Short-Term Trainings

We are pleased to share the completion of the **Competence Matrix for Short-Term Trainings**. This document defines the essential competences, skills, and knowledge required for two key

professional profiles: [the Smart Community Resilience Engineer and the Smart Community Resilient Solutions Procurer/Planner](#).

The matrix is structured around 21 competence clusters, each aligned with EQF levels, and distinguishes between core and optional competences. It was developed through a methodology combining desk research, stakeholder consultation, and alignment with European frameworks such as ESCO, GreenComp and e-CF.

This work lays the foundation for the design of short-term training curricula and materials, and will guide the pilot training sessions to be launched in at least 5 European countries. The goal is to train 150 professionals and refine the training offer based on feedback from participants and trainers.

[Discover the matrix](#)

External Advisory Board

9 European experts in the field of smart communities have joined SMARCO's External Advisory Board

On 9 July 2025, the SMARCO consortium welcomed the first 9 leading experts in the smart communities field, appointed as part of the project's External Advisory Board.

The members will provide strategic guidance and advice for the project consortium. They will work closely with the partners to support the delivery of intended project results and increase its impact. The EAB experts will also advise SMARCO on the main approaches and methods taken, key developments and upcoming trends in the field of smart communities.



[Anthony Van De Ven](#)



[Bernadette Spieler](#)



[Carl Piva](#)



Eoin Costello



Giulia Zampedri



Ilpo Laitinen



Marine Cornelis



Okan Geray



Roelof Hellemans

Expertise from the Consortium

Building the Cities of the Future: Harnessing Disruptive Technologies

To not lag due to inactivity, city leaders must learn to effectively harness the most advanced technologies, which are evolving more rapidly than ever. In order to meet the evolving needs of urban populations and remain competitive in an increasingly connected world, cities must adopt and integrate advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Data Analytics, Cloud Computing, Internet of Things and Cybersecurity, which are among the most critical technologies and hold the greatest potential to drive the transition toward truly smart, sustainable, and people-centred cities.

There is no doubt that the SMARCO project will foster the development of skills necessary for the generation of Smart Communities, serving as a hub for upskilling, reskilling and ultimately contributing to the economic competitiveness and sustainability of smart communities across Europe.



article written by
Amaia Sasiain

Project Manager



[Read the full material](#)

Smart Communities Need Smart Skills: Bridging the Gap for a Sustainable Future

While digital tools and infrastructure are crucial, it's the engineers, public officials, and urban planners who make smart communities possible. And right now, many of them are facing a challenge that often goes unnoticed: a growing skills gap.

Despite growing investment in smart infrastructure, many professionals lack the training or support to fully engage with new systems:

- **Engineers** may be highly skilled in traditional roles but find themselves navigating unfamiliar tools, green standards, or digital platforms.
- **Public procurement staff**, who make key decisions about which technologies to buy and implement, often struggle to assess complex, innovative solutions.



article written by
Andrianna Georgiou

Project Coordinator



[Read the full material](#)

Partners in Spotlight

European DIGITAL SME Alliance
Project Coordinator



The European DIGITAL SME Alliance (DIGITAL SME) is the largest network of ICT small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Europe, representing over 45.000 digital SMEs. The Brussels-based Alliance is the joint effort of 30 national and regional SME associations from EU member states and neighbouring countries to put digital SMEs at the centre of the EU agenda.



Cluj IT Cluster

Cluj IT was founded in 2012 in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Cluj IT Cluster is Romania's largest innovation ecosystem built along the IT industry value chain. Their business and innovation community has well over 100 members, with more than 80 thriving companies, 17 universities and research institutes, as well as a wide array of catalyst organizations.



BASSCOM

The Bulgarian Association of Software Companies (BASSCOM), established in 2001, is a leading non-profit industry association dedicated to fostering the growth and global competitiveness of the Bulgarian software industry. By uniting the expertise and capabilities of their members, BASSCOM is committed to enhancing the quality of life and driving sustainable economic progress in Bulgaria.



SMARCO Events

Kick-Off Meeting in Brussels

On 19 and 20 February 2025, in Brussels, a consortium of 21 organisations across Europe and 1 associated partner from France launched “SMARCO - SMART Communities Skills Development in Europe”.

The 2 days meeting brought together representatives of partner organisations, to get to know each other, and to align on goals, timelines, roles, and expectations.



Events from Partners

OpenLivingLab Days 2025

Date: 30 September - 3 October 2025

Location: Andorra la Vella Congress Centre, Plaça del Poble, s/n Andorra la Vella.

Hosted by **ENoLL**, this year's edition explores how Living Labs can drive regenerative change—restoring and revitalizing the ecological, social, and economic systems that support life on Earth.

The event features three days of keynotes, workshops, site visits, and interactive sessions designed to spark collaboration and inspire action.

[Overview](#)[Tickets](#)

Date: 15 October 2025, 11:30-13:00 CET

Location: the European Committee of the Regions, Van Maerlant, VMA23

Date: 24-25 March 2026

Location: Utrecht Science Park (Padualaan 101 and 99)

This year's event, "Empowering Cities and Regions through Data and People-Centred Digitalisation," will bring together mayors, regional leaders, and key stakeholders to shape the future of Europe's digital and green transition.

The agenda includes a keynote speech, a high-level panel discussion on data-driven and human-centric policymaking, and the signing ceremony of the 'Join, Boost, Sustain' Declaration, followed by an informal networking lunch.

The 2nd edition of the event will be hosted by the Centre of Expertise Smart Sustainable Cities at HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht.

SEED 2026 will be a platform to share innovative approaches, best practices, and strategies for advancing sustainable energy education.

Submission of academic papers/ expert articles/ posters is open until 15 September 2025.

[Overview](#)[Register](#)[Overview](#)[Register](#)

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