



# OUTREACH CALL

## D3 User Needs and Innovation Solutions Report

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**1 Executive Summary**

**42 Introduction**

**43 Implementation**

**44 User Needs Assessment and Innovation Solutions**

44.1 Identified Needs

44.2 Innovation Solutions

**45 Conclusions and Recommendations**

**56 Annexes**

5

# 1 Executive Summary

The DigiStake project aimed to support rural development in Slovakia through enhanced stakeholder collaboration and digital transformation. The main output of the project was the development of an online space, accessible at <https://atraktivnyvidiek.sk>, which facilitated the exchange of ideas, digital innovation, and integration into broader EU strategies. Through stakeholder engagement, user needs assessments, and the implementation of innovative digital solutions, DigiStake enhanced digital literacy and promoted sustainable rural development. The findings highlighted key challenges such as digital literacy gaps and limited stakeholder engagement, while proposed solutions included an interactive platform, participatory vision building, and targeted digital training.

## 2 Introduction

DigiStake aligned with the Slovak pilot of PoliRuralPlus, addressing the need for improved stakeholder collaboration and digital integration in rural development. The project employed participatory methods to identify user needs and proposed innovative solutions to facilitate digital transformation. Key activities included stakeholder consultations, surveys, and workshops designed to assess needs and co-create digital solutions. The primary output, the online space <https://atraktivnyvidiek.sk>, served as a central platform for stakeholder interaction and knowledge sharing. The project fostered collaboration between local authorities, businesses, academia, and civil society to ensure a holistic approach to rural development.

## 3 Implementation

The implementation of DigiStake included the following key activities:

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Identified and recruited stakeholders through local networks, community outreach, and introductory meetings.
- **User Needs Collection:** Conducted surveys, interviews, and workshops to gather insights from local officials, business leaders, farmers, and NGOs.
- **Digital Innovation Hub:** Developed the online collaboration platform <https://atraktivnyvidiek.sk> to enhance communication and support digital projects.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** Organized digital skills workshops to improve stakeholder capabilities in rural development.
- **Challenges Faced:** Low response rates and resistance to new technology were mitigated through targeted outreach and local influencers' involvement.

## 4 User Needs Assessment and Innovation Solutions

### 4.1 Identified Needs

The user needs assessment revealed several critical challenges:

- **Limited Digital Literacy:** Many rural stakeholders lacked the necessary digital skills to leverage online tools effectively.
- **Stakeholder Engagement Barriers:** Limited participation due to unfamiliarity with digital collaboration methods.
- **Infrastructure Constraints:** Inadequate access to high-speed internet in rural areas.
- **Need for Tailored Digital Solutions:** A demand for region-specific technological innovations in agriculture and business.

## 4.2 Innovative Solutions

To address these needs, DigiStake introduced the following innovative solutions:

- **Central Collaboration Platform:** Developed <https://atraktivnyvidiek.sk>, an online hub where stakeholders could connect, share knowledge, and develop digital initiatives.
- **Participatory Vision Building:** Guided stakeholders in co-creating a shared digital development vision, ensuring alignment with regional and EU strategies.
- **Digital Training Workshops:** Provided tailored training programs to equip stakeholders with essential digital skills.
- **Quadruple Helix Engagement:** Encouraged cooperation between government, industry, academia, and civil society to drive digital transformation.
- **Community Feedback Mechanisms:** Implemented suggestion boxes and online forms to facilitate ongoing input from stakeholders.

## 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The DigiStake project demonstrated the importance of stakeholder engagement in fostering digital transformation in rural areas. The main output, the online platform <https://atraktivnyvidiek.sk>, served as a key resource for supporting rural stakeholders in their digital journey. Key recommendations included:

- **Expanding Training Programs:** Increased efforts in digital literacy training to enhance participation and effectiveness.
- **Enhancing Infrastructure Support:** Collaborated with policymakers to improve internet access in rural areas.
- **Sustaining Engagement Mechanisms:** Maintained interactive platforms to ensure continued stakeholder involvement beyond the project.
- **Aligning with EU Policies:** Strengthened the integration of local digital strategies with the EU Rural Pact for greater impact.

## 6 Annexes

*Authors should include any relevant materials from organised events, such as agendas, lists of participants, presentations, or workshop outcomes. Please note that these annexes will be excluded from the public version of the report to protect privacy and sensitive information. Nevertheless, please make sure all content is GDPR compliant.*