



RURBANIVE
RURAL · URBAN · IMMERSIVENESS

RURal-uRBAN synergies emerged in an immersIVE innovation ecosystem

Open Call for Financial Support to Third Parties as a mechanism to increase the number of Rural-Urban Enablers available to end-users

**Annex 4
Applicants' Guide**



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Glossary

RUCL	Rural-Urban Co-creation Lab
RUE	Rural-Urban Enabler
RUI	Rural-Urban Immersiveness
IF	Innovation Framework
CoPS	Community of Practice Suite
OC	Open Call
FSTP	Financial Support to Third Parties

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1. Introduction

This document provides guidance information regarding the **RURBANIVE Open Call**, describing the eligibility and evaluation criteria. The document in its entirety and all associated documents of the Open Call kit must be read carefully before the submission of an application.

1.1. About RURBANIVE

RURBANIVE aspires to establish a novel **rural-urban innovation framework (IF)**, supported by **technical and social innovations to enhance territorial governance** and existing **policy tools**. A **Community Store of Rural-Urban Enablers (RUEs)** coupled with a **Community of Practice Suite (CoPS)** of policies, realised through an **immersive layer**, will promote experimentation and innovation.

The **Community Store** will focus on boosting the well-being and economy of rural-urban areas and disrupting the traditional ways by which rural and urban actors interact through **enhanced social connectivity, cooperation, and instant realisation**. In the context of co-creation, **7 Rural-Urban co-creation Labs (RUCLs)** will be equipped with **social and technological innovations** supporting further visualisation. Experimentation between members of the quadruple helix (i.e. from academia, civil society, local & regional administration and industry) will be brought forth, effectuating the social connectivity and innovation aspect of RURBANIVE. The **7 RUCLs** will experiment utilising **6 Rural-Urban Enablers (RUEs) - innovations in six domains** known to favour bi-directional urban-rural synergies and a well-being economy:

- i) **improving logistics, and shortening value chains**
- ii) **ecosystem and biodiversity restoration**
- iii) **regional circular bioeconomy development**
- iv) **user engagement, empowerment, society and territorial awareness**
- v) **culture, landscape and heritage access and promotion and**
- vi) **enhanced mobility**

RURBANIVE will design and develop **6 RUEs** in **6 domains** responding to well-being and economy-related rural-urban challenges offering both digital and social innovations. The development will follow an iterative approach rolled out within the context of the participatory processes in the **7 RUCLs**. Demonstration activities will ensure that feedback is collected to feed the development iterations with valuable insights.

RURBANIVE's experimentation and participatory processes, social and technical innovations, along with the establishment of the **rural-urban IF, policies, business models and schemes**, will be implemented in rural areas (in proximity to urban centres) covering a wide variety of landscapes and geographies across Europe:

- **plateau/basin** being challenged by low consumer awareness and access to know-how about the benefits of short value chains;
- **island/volcanic/coastal** being challenged by low diversification of ecosystem restoration and integration with agriculture;
- **mountains/rivers** being challenged by underserved by public transport and unsustainable cultural tourism; lowland/agricultural/artificial lake being challenged by low innovation, institutional thickness and city-centric regional outlook;
- **plateau/reservoirs/lakes** being challenged by rural depopulation and sustaining cultural tourism;
- **valley/rivers** being challenged in commuting to work and engagement towards business opportunities; and
- **hilly/flatland/river** being challenged in transporting resources from rural areas, economic stagnation.

A multi-actor approach will be implemented in the **7 RUCLs** where testing and validation activities in real-life settings will not only demonstrate the urban-rural synergies through various domains but also realise them through physical and immersive realisations.

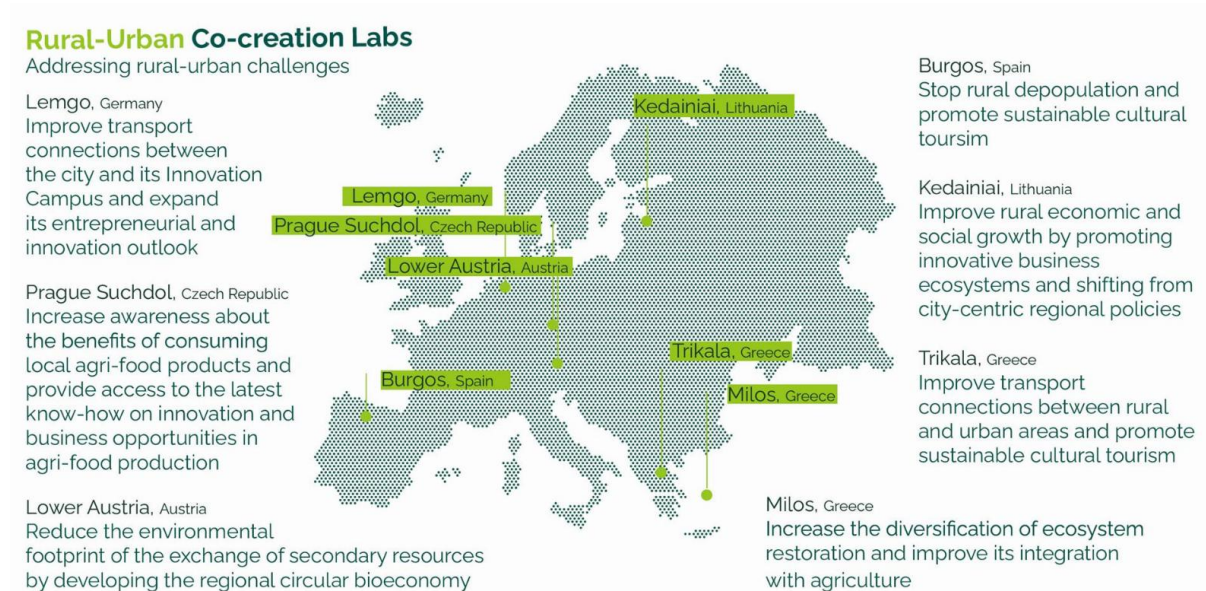


Figure 1 Seven (7) Rural-Urban Co-Creation Labs of RURBANIVE

Seven (7) RUCLs will be established across Europe to engage rural stakeholders in participatory activities for a bottom-up co-creation of innovations. Based on the 6 RURBANIVE domains, social, technological, and business innovations will be prototyped, tested, piloted, and demonstrated in the seven (7) RUCLs in rural areas in the EU representing various contexts in terms of location, population, and challenges.

1.2. RURBANIVE Objectives

RURBANIVE will develop Rural-urban Enablers (RUEs) -innovations in six (6) domains known to favour bi-directional urban-rural synergies and building up well-being economies (as described in Section 1.1):

- i) improving logistics, and shortening value chains**
- ii) ecosystem and biodiversity restoration**
- iii) regional circular bioeconomy development**
- iv) user engagement, empowerment, society and territorial awareness**
- v) culture, landscape and heritage access and promotion and**
- vi) enhanced mobility**

Participatory processes in a multi-actor scheme will allow experimentation across the EU, in locations varying in topographies and facing unique rural-urban challenges. Extended Reality will be used to realise immersiveness and through an integrated platform (namely community store) that stores the main project results, the rural-urban stakeholders will be equipped with the appropriate tools to develop their cultural literacy and sensitivity in an inclusive setup supporting experimentation and innovation. Rural-urban immersiveness (RUI) consisting of immersive applications will access the community store of RURBANIVE's results (including, RUEs, knowledge and practices) available as campaigns, and will further enable

experimentation through virtual access to RUEs, support on-line interaction, dialogue, collaboration, as well as enable assessment and evaluation through the Community of Practice Suite, and finally integrate concepts and ideas from the NEB to promote NEB principles for beautiful, sustainable and inclusive communities.

Seven (7) Rural-Urban Co-Creation Labs (RUCLs), in diverse geographic and socio-cultural contexts, will be equipped with social and technological innovations supporting further visualization, realization, and experimentation, to highlight the social connectivity and innovation aspect of RURBANIVE bringing together various Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) fields in an inclusive and accessible setup.

The overall objective of RURBANIVE will be achieved by realising the Key Objectives (KOs) as follows:

- Enhance rural-urban synergies through participatory approaches and the development of the rural-urban innovation framework?
- Rural-urban enablers development, delivery and demonstration through physical and virtual realisation contributing to integrated territorial development that improve well-being and economy
- Rural-urban actors and stakeholders are equipped with rural-urban immersiveness and a community store of RURBANIVE results (inventory, campaigns, RUEs, practices) supporting visualisation, realisation, experimentation, and assessment of RUEs and scenarios to improve social connectivity in an inclusive setup.
- To support on-line interaction, dialogue, collaboration, and participation of rural-urban actors and stakeholders in the making of policy recommendations and bi-directional rural-urban synergies
- To maximise the project's contribution in achieving sustainable and resilient rural-urban communities through innovative services and develop business models to mainstream solutions

and through the following scientific and technological outputs:

- 6 RUEs developed through 7 RUCLs by RURBANIVE partners
- 6 RUEs developed through the Open Call
- 3 XR applications developed
- 1 Community of Practice Suite developed
- 30 Practice abstracts
- Policy recommendations
- Knowledge and capacity development

1.3. Rural-Urban Enablers of the RURBANIVE Project

RURBANIVE's RUEs have been selected to match the challenges of each RUCL as identified by the project as well as their diverse geographical attributes. The following tables describe the RUEs that will be developed by project partners for each of the six domains of the seven RUCLs:

Prague, Czech Republic	
Domain	Improving logistics, and shortening value chains
RUE	<p>A socially driven digital platform to educate and popularise the food industry for the general public.</p> <p>A unique technology centre has been established in Prague to educate and popularise the food industry for the general public - Agricultural processing training centre. The learning centre offers a hands-on experience of the whole chain of operations in the production of a wide range of foodstuffs. From the principles of agriculture itself, animal and plant production, through variant ways of technological processing of primary raw materials to launching the final product on the market. Practical training enables learning various techniques for processing meat, milk, cereals, oilseeds, fruits, vegetables and medicinal plants. The comprehensive concept of food production technologies is rounded off with an introduction to analytical evaluation in the sensory laboratory or nutritional and dietary advice.</p>
Milos, Greece	
Domain	Ecosystem and biodiversity restoration of degraded, arid soil ecosystems, like quarrying operations, targets in local plant community re-installation (drought tolerant plant species) and integration of natural and agricultural ecosystems in a uniform landscape by introducing novel, microbiome-based, restoration technologies and processes.
RUE	<p>Quarry Restoration with Mediterranean biome adapted plants & crops, and a Botanical Path tour</p> <p>Quarrying operations cause irreversible damage to the local environment, creating vast degradation problems, including fertile soil depletion, vegetation removal, and alterations in the original topography. Restoration practitioners aim to restore ecosystem functions by re-installing plants, focusing on recreating specific plant communities based on historical, reference, or desirable output. This RUE will develop three Actions</p> <p>Action 1: Quarry Restoration with Mediterranean biome adapted plants.</p> <p>Action 2: Quarry Restoration with Mediterranean biome adapted crops T activities.</p> <p>Action 3: Botanical Path tour</p>

Lower Austria, Vienna, Austria	
Domain	<p>The regional circular bioeconomy domain focuses on creating a sustainable economic system that efficiently utilizes biological resources while minimizing waste and environmental impact. It prioritizes resource recovery by transforming waste into valuable materials, promoting sustainable agricultural practices and fostering innovation. By designing closed-loop systems where waste from one process becomes input for another, the circular bioeconomy aims to enhance resource efficiency and create economic opportunities in city-region areas.</p>
RUE	<p>Key Enablers for the Circular Bioeconomy:</p> <p>Standardized Data Sets: The first critical aspect is the collection and standardization of data on regional biomass streams. This includes quantitative data (e.g., production capacities, waste streams) and qualitative insights from reports and stakeholder interviews, forming the foundation for further analysis.</p> <p>Sankey Diagrams: With the standardized data, Sankey diagrams visualize the flow of residual biomass streams. These diagrams illustrate how resources move through the system, highlighting inefficiencies and opportunities for optimization.</p> <p>Multi-Criteria Resource Analysis (MCRA): MCRA provides a structured approach for evaluating various biomass utilization pathways, considering different environmental, social and economical factors. By integrating stakeholder input and co-creation processes, MCRA helps identify the most promising innovation pathways for resource optimization.</p> <p>Innovation Pathways: Based on data analysis and MCRA results, specific innovation pathways are developed to enhance the utilization of residual biomass. These pathways focus on circular solutions and resource management methods that can be scaled and transferred across regions.</p> <p>By integrating AI functionalities, this domain could become a regional data and resource exchange hub, applicable to other regions as well.</p>
Kedainiai, Lithuania	
Domain	<p>User engagement, empowerment, society and territorial awareness</p> <p>The User Engagement, Empowerment, Society, and Territorial Awareness is centered on empowering individuals and communities, particularly in rural and underserved areas, by fostering a deep connection to their environment and society.</p>
RUE	<p>Leverage local resources to drive equitable economic development & balanced exchange of value between rural and urban areas.</p> <p>The User Engagement, Empowerment, Society, and Territorial Awareness Enabler will emphasize the importance of territorial awareness in shaping the future of rural communities. It will encourage a collective understanding of how local resources, culture, and environment can be leveraged to drive economic</p>

development. This enhanced awareness will also foster a sense of ownership and pride among community members, leading to stronger societal bonds and a shared vision for the future. The Enabler will help rural communities not only survive but thrive, transforming them into dynamic hubs of innovation and sustainable growth that contribute positively to the broader regional and national economies. By attracting urban investment and creating a balanced exchange of value between rural and urban areas, the Enabler will ensure that the benefits of growth are equitably distributed, fostering resilience and long-term prosperity in rural territories.

Burgos, Spain

Culture, landscape and heritage access and promotion

Domain

The domain focuses on enhancing the appeal and accessibility of rural cultural and natural heritage for urban visitors, and potentially prospective future inhabitants for the rural areas. RURBANIVE proposes the use of cognitive computing to analyze visitor preferences and create personalized, engaging tourism (even living) experiences. The so-called 'affective value' will be calculated as a tangible indicator to properly configure the most appropriate messages to generate the necessary emotion that invites someone to visit, or even live in a particular area.

Additionally, this domain emphasizes sustainable tourism practices that balance economic benefits with the preservation of cultural and natural resources.

RUE

Employ different cognitive computing tools to foster sustainable tourism by attracting urban populations to rural areas through personalised experiences.

It is designed to foster sustainable tourism by attracting urban populations to rural areas through personalised experiences that put forward the value of the rural area. By means of cognitive computing this enabler gathers and analyses data related to the preferences, behaviours, and emotional responses of potential visitors to situational content from the rural areas that is presented to them. This data-driven approach allows for the creation of highly targeted tourism campaigns that resonate with urban dwellers, encouraging them to explore and appreciate the cultural and natural heritage of rural areas.

Through the integration of different cognitive computing tools, urban audiences can virtually experience rural landscapes and heritage sites before visiting them, which fosters interest and awareness about the targeted rural area. This enables tourism operators to design promotional campaigns closely aligned with the preferences of the targeted audience, making the experiences more attractive and relevant. By promoting a deeper connection between urban visitors and rural destinations, this enabler not only boosts sustainable tourism but also supports the economic and cultural vitality of rural communities, making them take advantage of endogenous resources and helping to stop rural depopulation.

Lemgo, Germany Trikala, Greece	
Domain	<p>Enhanced mobility Enhanced mobility is a term used to comprise all kinds of mobility, such as walking, driving, cycling, commuting, ride-sharing or carpooling, as well as all people living in an urban, suburban or rural space, irrespective of their ability to drive, walk, ride a bike. Enhanced mobility paves the way for a holistic approach towards mobility, where all people, and especially Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs), can optimally utilize the urban space and reach their destinations on time.</p>
RUE	<p>A simulation software that will explore alternatives to enhance connectivity between urban centres and their suburban and rural counterparts Within the scope of this RUE, the mobility and accessibility issues of two different cities (Trikala, Greece and Lemgo, Germany) will be investigated in order to propose, at a simulation level in the first place, some alternatives that could enhance connectivity for everyone residing near those urban centers, in sub-urban or rural regions. Interviews with several stakeholders (bus or taxi drivers, students and professors at the universities located near the cities, vulnerable road users such as elderly people, disabled people, persons with visual impairments, people residing in towns or villages not properly connected with the city centers, etc.), will help understand the mobility patterns of citizens and road users, as well as the existing infrastructure and other accessibility constraints. Afterwards, several scenarios will be simulated through a simulation software; in those scenarios, on-demand and fixed-schedule commuting solutions, such as shuttle buses, will be proposed. Comparisons between the “before” and “after” the introduction of such services scenarios will be performed, travel-timewise and accessibility-wise, in an alpha (initial) and beta (final) version, and the results will be mapped, statically and dynamically, whilst a constant communication and feedback discussion with the stakeholders will be held throughout the enabler time process.</p>

1.4. RURBANIVE Open Call

1.4.1. Purpose and Objectives of the Open Call

RURBANIVE Open Call encourages technology & service providers to develop and apply their own RUE within the 6 RURBANIVE domains, increasing the number of RUEs available to end-users. To ensure that the RUEs will be tailor-made to meet each rural-urban area's needs, the Open Call poses requirements for the submission of proposals from consortia of **min 2-max 4 parties** including **at least 1 technology & service provider** (e.g. entities such as SMEs and other private for-profit or non-profit organizations, technological spin-offs, research institutions etc.) **and at least 1 end-user** (e.g. actors from the rural-urban environments, such as Local & Regional Administrations, Civil Society, Cooperatives, Associations, NGOs, Local Action Groups, Chambers and other Trade representative organizations, etc.). The newly developed **RUEs** will become available in English and in the local language. In addition, during

sub-project implementation matchmaking activities between the developed RUE and the RUEs developed by the RURBANIVE consortium will be pursued and the opportunity will be given to develop the RUE in all relevant languages. Lastly, every developed RUE will have to produce a SUMMARY, which will also be available through **RURBANIVE's Community Store**, in all languages of RURBANIVE's consortium.

The purpose of the Open Call is to provide more solutions for the rural-urban areas, accelerate the expansion of the RURBANIVE innovation ecosystem and ensure an adequate motivation of the end-users. The participants will contribute to the enrichment of the RURBANIVE's Community Store, which will serve as a one-stop-shop offering enhanced capabilities for searching and accessing digitised solutions and services.

The selected RUEs will be enhanced by new Business Models through participatory processes with rural and urban communities and relevant good practices. The OC will also enable the transfer of good practices and the creation of RUEs in other European rural-urban territories, facilitating the transferability and the replicability of these innovations to EU areas facing similar conditions.

Under the framework described above, the OC aims to:

- Address a wider range of societal and environmental challenges related to the 6 RURBANIVE domains.
- Harness the potential of using data from multiple sources and make users themselves part of the solution.
- Enable the transferability and accelerate the uptake and upscale of the RUEs at a pan-European level towards sustainable and resilient rural areas.
- Enhance RURBANIVE's Community Store by adding at least 6 more RUEs based on the synergies between rural and urban environments across Europe.

1.5. Open Call Expected Outcome

Applicants are expected to propose RUEs, meaning digital solutions or other types of advanced technologies, based on the six identified domains of RURBANIVE as presented in Table 1 and **other than the RUEs already developed within the project**, exemplified in **Chapter 1.3**. Each consortium must propose a RUE selecting only **one of the pre-defined domains**.

Table 1 RURBANIVE targeted domains

Domain	Brief Description
Improving logistics, and shortening value chains	The domain refers to the flow of resources between rural communities and urban hubs, investigating new ways by which reciprocal growth can be achieved.
Ecosystem and biodiversity restoration	The domain includes degraded, arid soil ecosystems, like quarrying operations, targets in local plant community re-installation (drought tolerant plant species) and integration of natural and agricultural ecosystems in a uniform landscape

Domain	Brief Description
Regional circular bioeconomy development	by introducing novel, microbiome-based, restoration technologies and processes.
	The circular bioeconomy domain includes optimizing regional residual biomass streams by data collection, visualizing resource flows, and developing innovation pathways based on environmental, social, and economic factors in sustainable and resilient city-region areas.
User engagement, empowerment, society and territorial awareness	The domain is centred on empowering individuals and communities, particularly in rural and underserved areas, by fostering a deep connection to their environment and society.
Culture, landscape and heritage access and promotion	The domain focuses on enhancing the appeal and accessibility of rural cultural and natural heritage for urban visitors, and potentially prospective future inhabitants for the rural areas.
Enhanced mobility	The domain refers to mobility patterns of citizens, existing infrastructure and other accessibility constraints to investigate how commuting between rural and urban communities takes place. Enhanced mobility paves the way for a holistic approach towards mobility, where all people, and especially Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs), can optimally utilize the urban space and reach their destinations on time.

Important note: The above descriptions of the Domains are indicative or RUE-specific. Other proposed RUEs that will fall within one of the six (6) domains will also be considered.

The proposed RUEs will have to be applied to geographical areas **other than the existing 7 RUCLs at the local/ municipal level and on the regional level**, according to table 2, below:

Table 2 RUCL NUTS Regions

Domain	Location	NUTS Code & Classification	
Improving logistics, and shortening value chains	Prague, Czech Republic	CZ01	3
Ecosystem and biodiversity restoration	Milos, Greece	EL422	3
Regional circular bioeconomy development	Lower Austria, Austria	AT12	2
User engagement, empowerment, society and territorial awareness	Kedainiai, Lithuania	LT022	3

Domain	Location	NUTS Code & Classification	
Culture, landscape and heritage access and promotion	Burgos, Spain	ES412	3
Enhanced mobility	Lemgo, Germany	DEA45	3
	Trikala, Greece	EL611	3

Proposed solutions must demonstrate their innovative character at a high level of scientific and technological excellence. RUEs are expected to start at minimum **TRL5** and reach a maximum **TRL8**¹ (for all domains) by the end of the project.

Applicants are advised to take into consideration Annex A: Recommendations regarding data accessibility for the RURBANIVE Open Call.

1.6. Approach & Planned Open Call Realisation

RURBANIVE through this **Open Call (OC)** will provide **Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP)** as a mechanism to **increase the number of RUEs** available to end-users (e.g. actors from the rural-urban environments such as Local & Regional Administrations, Civil Society, Cooperatives, Associations, NGOs, Local Action Groups, Chambers and other Trade representative organizations, etc.) and accelerate network expansion through the technology & service providers (e.g. entities such as SMEs and other private pro-profit or non-profit organisations, technological spin-offs, research institutions etc.).

The Open Call will result in at least **6 sub-projects** (max 100k euro per sub-project – with the funds dispersed amongst the consortia members, with at least one technology & service provider and at least one end-user, as mentioned above). In total, a **600k euro budget** will be allocated to **financial support to third parties**. The following table provides the key number of the OC:

Table 3 Open Call key numbers

RURBANIVE Open Call	Total amount	Project Funding size	minimum no. of projects	Partners per project	Budget per partner
	600k Euros	100k Euros	6	min2-max4	20k≤partner≤60k

The funding rate of the eligible costs is 100% and applies to all consortium partners.

To minimise administration and financial errors, each selected consortium will receive the funding on a lump sum basis, in compliance with EC's Guidelines about lump sum grants in Horizon Europe and according to the terms of the contract signed between the selected consortia and RURBANIVE. A payment calendar tied to milestones, such as reports and corresponding deliverables, will be set in advance according to the implementation phases of the sub-projects as described below. Implementing this approach, rather than a payment tied to complex administrative justifications, will decrease the administrative burden of the Open Call. No pre-financing is foreseen, and payments will follow the "General eligibility conditions

¹ in accordance with the [EU TRL scale](#)

for lump sum costs” according to the EU Grants: AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement: V1.0 – 01.05.2024 and specifically Article 5.

The RURBANIVE Open Call will be launched in January 2025. Before assigning external evaluators, each proposal will be verified by the RURBANIVE OC Advisory Board for eligibility according to the predefined criteria of the OC. The proposal evaluation and sub-grant agreement preparation will take place between April 2025 and August 2025. Selected projects will be launched in September 2025 having an implementation timeframe of 12 months (until August 2026). The 12-month implementation period will be divided into 3 phases:

- Phase 1 – Design (Duration: 4 months / September 2025 – December 2025) [Deliverable: Activity plan]
- Phase 2 - Development (Duration: 5 months / January 2026 – May 2026) [Deliverable: RUE solution demonstration]
- Phase 3 - Validation (Duration 3 months / June 2026 – August 2026) [Deliverable: Report on market or community associated activities].

An initial timeline for RURBANIVE Open Call can be seen in the following table. The dates may change due to unforeseen events and situations. Therefore, these are an indication of what is initially expected; the dates are to be confirmed by the RURBANIVE team along the process and in agreement with the EC. The dates are not legally binding.

Table 4 RURBANIVE Open Call Timeline

Step	Start	Completed
Open Call preparation plan	January 2024	December 2024
Open Call launch - Receiving proposals	January 2025	March 2025
External expert selection eligibility and proposal evaluation	April 2025	June 2025
Subgrant agreements	July 2025	August 2025
Open Call Project implementation	September 2025	August 2026
Project Implementation Phase 1 - Design	September 2025	December 2025
Project Implementation Phase 2 - Development	January 2026	May 2026
Project Implementation Phase 3 - Validation	June 2026	August 2026

The RURBANIVE OC will be carried out in compliance with the basic principle calls of the European Commission, which are: Excellence, Transparency, Fairness, Impartiality, Confidentiality, Efficiency and Speed.

1.7. Specific requirements for the sub-projects

Selected consortia will receive funding for developing and applying their own Rural-Urban Enabler, i.e. different from the six (6) Rural-Urban Enablers that will be developed by the RURBANIVE partners (described in section 1.1), representing regions beyond the existing RUCLs, within the six (6) domains as described previously. These digital Enablers should be followed by tailor-made **Business Models**, which will be exemplified using the appropriate Business Model Tool (e.g. business model canvas), co-created with end-users of the targeted areas of the applicants and inspired methodologically by the RURBANIVE's RUCLs.

Proposals must consist of original work by the applicants and their anticipated developments do not infringe upon any third-party rights. Any challenges stemming from third-party claims resulting from the sub-granted projects are the responsibility of the applicant. It is not the

obligation of the RURBANIVE Consortium to verify the authenticity of the ownership of the proposed solution.

Proposals must implement the multi-actor approach², bringing together service providers alongside rural community organisations, action groups or networks with a demonstrated ability to connect with a large number of local communities and disseminate and exploit project results.

Proposals must demonstrate their long-term commitment and alignment to RURBANIVE objectives, must deliver co-created solutions that have a market potential supported by a sustainable plan for upscaling the digital Enabler and bring it more in line with market needs. i.e.:

- demonstrate their acceptance from the rural-urban communities
- Include a business case and exploitation strategy, considering:
 - State-of-play overview, including key traditional and emerging Business Models (BM) in markets relevant to the proposed digital Enabler
 - Development of one new BM for each digital Enabler developed, meeting a) location-specific requirements and the diverse needs of different population groups, b) replicability requirements tailored to user needs while taking into consideration technical, economic, environmental, and social aspects;
 - Validation of the new business models with feedback from the stakeholders involved in the respective rural communities.

RUEs are expected to start at minimum **TRL5** and reach a maximum **TRL8**³ (for all domains) by the end of the project; please see **Table 3 RURBANIVE Open Call RUE positioning in terms of R&I maturity**.

All of RURBANIVE's **12 RUEs** (**6** developed by RURBANIVE Partners and **6** developed by the selected consortia of the OC) will be integrated into the **Community Store**, which is a **key outcome of RURBANIVE**, integrating enablers, practices, models and other results of the project to be access and visualise through **Rural-Urban Immersiveness (RUI)**. RUI will utilise immersive technologies (such as, mixed and augmented reality). This immersive digital environment will allow vivid realisations, what-if scenarios, and experimentation techniques in the rural-urban settings generating rural-urban synergies. **Enablers realised through rural-urban immersiveness will promote experimentation and innovation focused on building up the well-being economies of rural and urban areas.**

The activities that qualify for the financial support to third parties are:

- Personnel costs mainly associated with development, integration, deployment and networking activities
- Software, hardware and data justified for the needs of the project
- Access to and use of infrastructure justified for the needs of the project
- Audio/visual products and other communication activities related to the project
- Travel for meetings with RURBANIVE consortium, connections associated with the project and event/conferences

² Proposals can adopt or use as guideline RURBANIVE's RUCL approach.

³ in accordance with the [EU TRL scale](#)

1.8. Submission procedure

RURBANIVE's Open Call for proposals will be submitted digitally through the opencalls.fund platform developed by reframe.food. Interested Applicants should visit [RURBANIVE's website](https://rurbanive-project.eu/open-call/) (<https://rurbanive-project.eu/open-call/>) for any updates and the FAQ section available in the opencalls.fund platform as well as on the project website.

Submissions received through any other channel will be automatically discarded.

Documents required in subsequent phases will be submitted via dedicated channels (e.g. via email or via the opencalls.fund), which will be indicated by the RURBANIVE consortium in the contracting phase.

In case multiple versions of the same application are submitted, only the last version will be evaluated. All the previous ones will be discarded.

Throughout the entire process, the confidentiality of applicants' identities and the contents of the proposals will be rigorously upheld. Any details pertaining to the proposed solution will be handled with the utmost discretion.

By applying to RURBANIVE Open Call consortia automatically accept the terms and conditions of the Open Call as described in the Open Call Kit.

1.9. Language

English is the official language for the RURBANIVE Open Call. Applications submitted in any other language will not be evaluated. English is also the only official language throughout the whole execution of the RURBANIVE project. This means all requested contributions (documents of the OC kit) must be submitted in English to be eligible. In the case of official documents as a proof of the legal existence of the applicant, they can be submitted in original language, however if it is deemed essential to facilitate the eligibility check, Applicants may be requested to provide additional documentation (i.e., translation of an official document into English) in a timely manner.

1.10. Documentation format

Any document requested by the Applicants in any of the phases (e.g submission, eligibility check) must be submitted electronically in PDF format without restrictions for printing. The structure of the provided proposal template must be followed when preparing the proposal and should not exceed the limit of **15 pages**. All tables, figures, references, and any other element pertaining to the application must be included as an integral part of the application and are thus counted against this page limit. Excess pages will not be considered during the evaluation of the proposal.

The reference font for the body text of applications is Arial and the minimum font size allowed is 11 points. Paragraph spacing of 6 pts and a minimum of single line spacing is to be used. This applies to the body text, including text in tables. Text elements other than the body text, such as headers, foot/end notes, captions, formula's, may deviate, but must be legible. The page size is A4, and all margins (top, bottom, left, right) must be at least 15 mm (not including any footers or headers). The cover page and the ToC are not included in the limit of the 15 pages. Removing explanatory text in the proposal template, located below the paragraph subtitles is allowed.

Applications that do not comply with these requirements will be excluded from evaluation as non-eligible.

1.11. Origin of the funds

All sub-grantees will sign a dedicated Sub-grant Agreement with RFF. The funds provided to the Sub-grant Agreement originate from the funds of the European Project RURBANIVE which is funded by the European Commission under Grant Agreement Number 101136597, and remain therefore, property of the EU until the balance is paid, whose management rights have been transferred to the project partners of RURBANIVE. This relation between the sub-grantees and the European Commission through the RURBANIVE project carries a set of obligations to the sub-grantees with the European Commission. It is the responsibility of the sub-grantees to fulfil these, and of the RURBANIVE consortium partners to inform them on these.

More details on the obligations of sub-grantees can be found in Chapter 4.

2. Proposal Submission and Selection

All Open Call selected consortia must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in this section and sign and submit the same documents. The proposal is submitted by the Consortium Leader, on behalf of all participating parties. **At the time of submission, all Applicants** must submit the following documents:

- Consortium Declaration,
- Declaration of Honour,
- Declaration of Conducting Business.

The Consortium Declaration is submitted by all OC consortium partners. The document must be filled in appropriately, signed by each partner's legal representative and stamped (with the institution's stamp if applicable), scanned, merged in one pdf file and uploaded as one pdf file.

The Declaration of Honour is submitted by all OC consortium partners. The document must be filled in appropriately, signed by each partner's legal representative and stamped (with the institution's stamp if applicable). Partners' scanned documents are then merged in one pdf file and uploaded as one pdf file.

The Declaration of Conducting Business is submitted only by SMEs and declares that the Applicants are SMEs according to EC standards. The document must be filled in appropriately, signed by SMEs' legal representatives and stamped (with the SMEs stamp). SMEs' scanned documents are then merged and uploaded as one pdf file.

In the case of Research Institutes (RI), confirmation from a responsible authority/registry (e.g., Commercial court or similar) must be submitted (any official document from the respective registration authority is acceptable).

Public organisations do not need to submit the Declaration of Conducting Business.

For private entities (NGOs, etc.), any official document from the respective registration authority or any official document as proof of their legal existence at the moment of application is acceptable.

Important:

As a rule, all documents that require to bear stamps and signatures must be signed by the legal representatives of the consortia parties. **In the case of parties coming from a country where the use of stamps is not mandatory, it is required to provide relevant justification documents in English.** E-signatures are also acceptable and in this case the existence of stamps is not required. PadES and CadES are acceptable e-signature formats for the RURBANIVE OC.

Although there is no requirement for letters of support/intent, parties can make a reference in their proposal.

During the contracting phase, all parties participating in the selected consortia of the RURBANIVE Open Call for co-creating digital Enablers with rural communities must provide Annex 9 - Bank account information (payments will be made separately to each partner directly from the RURBANIVE consortium partner/treasurer) and three signed copies of the Sub-grant Agreement for RURBANIVE Open Call selected consortia (indicative model given as an Annex 10), which will be sent to them following the evaluation phase. No pre financing will be paid to the OC project partners.

2.1. Open Call Publication

The RURBANIVE Open Call will be published on the Funding and Tenders portal as well as on RURBANIVE's website (<https://rurbanive-project.eu//rurbanive-open-call/>), on January 13th, 2025 and it will remain open until March 31st, 2025, at 17:00 CET.

The publication will be supported by the Open Call Kit, which includes the following documents:

- **Open Call text**, which provides the scope and objectives of the open call.
- **Applicants' Guide**, (present document).
- **Proposal template**, word document to be completed by the applicant, saved, and submitted as .pdf in the application phase.
- **Budget template**, excel document to be completed by the Applicant, saved and submitted as .pdf in the application phase.
- **Consortium Declaration**, which describes composition of consortium (signed by all parties and submitted as .pdf in the submission phase)
- **Declaration of Honour (DoH)**, which confirms the ability of all parties to execute the sub-project (if selected), exclusion of conflict of interest, etc. (signed by all parties and submitted as .pdf in the submission phase)
- **Declaration of conducting business**, which secures that the applicants are eligible for the OC (in terms that they are SMEs according to the EC rules). In the case of Research Institutes (RI), confirmation from a responsible authority/registry (e.g., Commercial court or similar) should be submitted (any official document from the respective registration authority is acceptable). Public organisations do not need to submit the respective document. For private entities (NGOs, etc.), any official document from the respective registration authority or any official document as proof of their legal existence at the moment of application is acceptable.
- **Bank account information**, which collects information of all the participating parties' bank accounts where the RURBANIVE payments will be transferred to (only for selected consortia, it's applicable only at the contracting stage).
- An indicative **Sub-grant agreement contract**, as a reference for the Applicants (applicable only at the contracting stage and subject to changes by the Treasurer only).

Interested Applicants have to regularly check the FAQ section in the opencalls.fund platform. FAQ is also available and will be regularly updated on the project website.

2.2. Eligibility Criteria

2.2.1. Overall eligibility criteria

RURBANIVE will accept applications, involving consortia of 2-4 parties (≥1 technology & service provider and ≥1 end-user) and proposed solutions **must fall within one of the following domains:**

- i) improving logistics, and shortening value chains
- ii) ecosystem and biodiversity restoration
- iii) regional circular bioeconomy development
- iv) user engagement, empowerment, society and territorial awareness
- v) culture, landscape and heritage access and promotion and
- vi) enhanced mobility

An automatic filtering to discard non-eligible proposals will be based on the following criteria:

- Legal entity in eligible country (as defined in section 3.2.2);
- Uniqueness of the proposal (one proposal per consortium);
- Each party can participate in only one proposal; If any applicant is found to participate in multiple applications, all such project applications will be rejected.
- Proposal includes at least one technical party (e.g. *entities such as SMEs and other private for-profit or non-profit organizations, technological spin-offs, research institutions etc*) and at least one rural community (e.g. *actors from the rural-urban environments, such as Local & Regional Administrations, Civil Society, Cooperatives, Associations, NGOs, Local Action Groups, Chambers and other Trade representative organizations, etc.*);
- Proposed solutions fall within one of the six (6) domains: circular economy, ecosystem and biodiversity restoration, improving logistics, and shortening value chains, user engagement, empowerment, society and territorial awareness, culture, landscape and heritage access and promotion & enhanced mobility.
- Proposed solutions must be different from the six (6) RUEs being developed within the RURBANIVE project as described in section 1 of the Applicants Guide.
- Proposed solutions must be applied in rural areas, different from those covered by the existing RUCs areas as described in section 1 of the Applicants Guide.

Table 5 Six (6) Rural-Urban Enablers (RUEs) developed in seven (7) RUCs within the RURBANIVE project

Domain	Brief Description of the Rural-Urban Enabler	Rural-Urban Co-creation Lab
Improving logistics, and shortening value chains	A socially driven digital platform to educate and popularise the food industry for the general public	Prague, Czech Republic
Ecosystem and biodiversity restoration	Quarry Restoration with Mediterranean biome adapted plants & crops, and a Botanical Path tour	Milos, Greece
Regional Circular Bioeconomy Development	The enabler for the circular bioeconomy is built to optimise regional biomass streams by standardising data collection and visualising resource flows.	Lower Austria, Austria
User engagement, empowerment, society and territorial awareness	Leverage local resources to drive equitable economic development & balanced exchange of value between rural and urban areas	Kendainiai, Lithuania
Culture, landscape and heritage access and promotion	Employ different cognitive computing tools to foster sustainable tourism by attracting urban populations to rural areas through personalised experiences	Burgos, Spain
Enhanced mobility	A simulation software that will explore alternatives to enhance connectivity between urban centres and their suburban and rural counterparts	Lemgo, Germany
		Trikala, Greece

On top of that, the following eligibility criteria apply:

- Existing consortium members of the RURBANIVE project and their affiliated entities are not eligible for the OC.
- The proposal must be delivered before the defined deadline (March 31st, 2025 @ 17:00 CET), applying the requested submission procedure.
- Proposals shall only ask for funding for that part of the work that is not yet accomplished and will be carried out once having been selected for funding. Of course, this does not exclude the usage of e.g., results, IP, infrastructures or approaches already held by the applicants.
- All Applicants must have a valid VAT number and must be active and operational. However, in case having VAT number is not mandatory according to the national legislation of the applicant's country, a registration number from the respective national authority (National business registry, Commercial court or similar) must be provided.

Only proposals that comply with these criteria are eligible to move on to the evaluation round.

2.2.2. Definition of eligible countries

Association with Horizon Europe is governed by the Horizon Europe Regulation 2021/6951. Legal entities from associated countries can participate under the same conditions as legal entities from the EU Member States, unless specific restrictions or conditions are set in the work programme and/or call/topic text. Such measures could include the limitation of participation in certain actions to legal entities established only in the EU, or in the EU and specified non-EU countries, to safeguard the EU's strategic assets, interests, autonomy or security.

Important notice:

The Open Call adheres to the **Council Implementing Decision 2022/2506** that stipulates that legal commitments must not be entered into with any public interest trusts established on the basis of the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity maintained by such a public interest trust, concerning inter alia financial support to third parties. Consequently, the concerned Hungarian entities are excluded from receiving FSTP (financial support to third parties) from this Open Call. For further information please follow this [link](#).

According to the EU Grants: List of Participating Countries (HE): 2.9 – 21.03.2024⁴, besides the EU Member States (including their outermost regions, as well as **Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) linked to EU Member**), the following **Horizon Europe associated countries** are eligible to receive funding through RURBANIVE Open Call (listed in alphabetical order): Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo⁵, Moldova, Montenegro, New Zealand (associated to Pillar II 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness' as from the Work Programmes 2023 onwards, including for the institutionalised European partnerships), North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom (associated to the entire Programme,

⁴https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

⁵ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

with the only exception of the EIC fund⁶, for award procedures implementing Union budget for the year 2024 and onwards⁷).

Until association agreements start producing legal effects either through provisional application or their entry into force, transitional arrangements may apply if provided for in the particular Horizon Europe Work Programme. The transitional arrangements apply with regard to the following countries and legal entities established in these countries, with which association negotiations are being processed or where association is imminent (listed in the alphabetical order):

1. Canada (applicable to Pillar II 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness', including for the institutionalised European partnerships, and for award procedures implementing Union budget for the year 2024 and onwards)
2. Morocco (applicable for the entire Programme)
3. Switzerland (applicable to calls under the ERC Work Programme 2024 with opening date after 18 March 2024; legal entities established in Switzerland are currently not covered by the transitional arrangement with regard to other parts of Horizon Europe)

Participants (other third countries) from the following low - to middle - income countries are automatically eligible for funding⁸:

- Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan
- Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi
- Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Comoros, Congo (Democratic Republic), Congo (Republic), Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba
- Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic
- Ecuador, Egypt (Arab Republic), El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia
- Fiji
- Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana
- Haiti, Honduras
- Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic), Iraq
- Jamaica, Jordan
- Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Korea (Democratic People's Republic), Kyrgyz Republic
- Lao (People's Democratic Republic), Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya
- Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania,

⁶ The UK will participate in all parts of the Horizon Europe programme with the only exception of the EIC Fund (which is part of the EIC Accelerator of Horizon Europe that provides investment through equity or other repayable form)

⁷ The transitional arrangements continue to apply to grant award procedures implementing Union budgets 2021 to 2023. However, no Horizon Europe grants will be signed with entities established in the UK for the budgetary appropriations for years 2023 or earlier (even if the grant agreement is signed in 2024 or later), save for exceptional circumstances clearly defined by the work programmes and rules of the Programme (e.g. based on being essential for implementing the action)

⁸ Subject to the respect of EU restrictive measures (Please note that entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/05 are NOT eligible to participate in any capacity (including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties, if any).

- Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States), Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar
- Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria
- Pakistan, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines
- Rwanda
- Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic
- Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu
- Uganda, Uzbekistan
- Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic), Vietnam
- Yemen Republic
- Zambia, Zimbabwe.

2.3. Eligible costs

RURBANIVE project follows the guidelines of the European Commission in terms of cost eligibility for financing within its open calls. Payments will follow the “General eligibility conditions for lump sum costs” according to the EU Grants: AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement: V1.0 (01/05/2024) and specifically Article 5 and 6.

As mentioned above (Section 1), each selected consortium will receive the funding on a lump sum basis. To justify the lump sum, Applicants need to provide a detailed explanation with cost estimations. The cost estimations are subject to the basic eligibility rules of Horizon Europe, that is the proposed budget may be adjusted to exclude costs that are deemed ineligible. If the evaluators find overestimated costs, this is recorded in the Evaluation Summary Report and will be reflected in a modified lump sum amount in the sub - grant agreement. If the pre-selected sub-grantee does not agree with the amount of the grant offered, they are at liberty to withdraw their proposal.

The following cost categories are considered eligible:

1. **Personnel costs** – Costs of the personnel realising the work and preparing the deliverables/reports during each of the 3 phases. Applicants must calculate personnel costs according to the rules and regulations of their country and real labour market data regarding the relevant positions. For the proposal template, only the final amount allocated to personnel costs is necessary. Personnel costs are considered direct costs and can't be managed as indirect costs.
2. **Travel costs** – Travel costs necessary for the execution of the sub-project.
3. **Equipment costs** – Borrowing or loaning of the necessary equipment is not eligible, only depreciation costs for purchased equipment are eligible.
4. **Other goods & services** – Other goods and services include, for instance, consumables and supplies, dissemination (including open access), protection of results, certificates on the methodology, translations, and publications.
5. **Subcontracting** - Subcontracting should be clearly justified. Costs must be reasonable and comply with the principle of sound financial management. Coordination tasks cannot be subcontracted. Applicants should ensure that there are sufficient details for the action tasks, the estimated budget, the procedure that will be followed to ensure best value-for-money. Any kind of organisation could be subcontracted, provided that they are not part of the RURBANIVE consortium. The evaluators will assess the scope and value-for-money aspects of subcontracting and

their assessment will be reflected in the score of each proposal. Subcontracting is allowed for up to a maximum of 25% of the proposed budget when properly justified. When submitting the proposal, Applicants should only write the total amount for subcontracting. Selected Applicants should follow the standards for subcontracting set by the European Commission, ensuring best value for money and absence of conflict of interest, during the project implementation. Procurement should be done according to the national and European regulation that is applied to each applicant's institution.

6. **Indirect costs** - Indirect costs (overheads) could be up to 25% of the direct cost. Subcontracting is not included in indirect cost calculation.

In the submitted proposals, costs must be described by each participating party in the consortium. The budget must be filled in for each proposal using the excel template available. Applicants will then save the excel sheet as pdf and upload it on the opencalls.fund platform.

Applicants should take into consideration that adequate budget must be allocated to dissemination activities, focusing on spreading concise messages addressing challenges of each region. A minimum 7% of the funding will be allocated to the deployment of dissemination activities such as organisation of info days, workshops and informal events to promote the RURBANIVE results.

Applicants **should explain and justify the budget (for each budget category separately)**. For personnel costs, indicate the number of person months, and link such personnel effort to the contents (tasks, goals) of the proposal. If Applicants use subcontracting, must justify it, and specify the role of subcontractor.

Important:

In terms of financial monitoring of the sub-projects implementation, no financial justification is required by the project, however the Subgrantee shall keep the originals or, in exceptional cases, duly authenticated copies – including electronic copies – of all documents relating to the Contract for at least three years after final payment. These shall be made available to the EC when requested during any audit under the Grant Agreement.

2.4. Application process

2.4.1. Applicant's registration

Applicants should register at the RURBANIVE Open Call page on the opencalls.fund (OCF) platform. This will be the central interface for managing the proposal applications for the remainder of the Open Call.

The information on the RURBANIVE Open Call will be available on <https://rurbanive-project.eu/open-call/>, as well as on the [Funding & Tenders Portal](#).

It is important to note that **proposals and all corresponding documents need to be submitted once by the consortium Lead Partner**. Nevertheless, all members of a consortium can register to the opencalls.fund platform and submit questions via the dedicated FAQ section.

Questions can be submitted until Wednesday 26th of March, 2025 at 17:00 CET through email to the RURBANIVE support team at rurbanive@opencalls.fund or through the FAQ section of the OCF and responses will be made available by Friday 28th of March, 2025.

Please note that, and particularly for the week 24/03~29/03, questions will be answered using the same method in which they were submitted. For example, questions sent via email will receive a response by email, while those submitted through the online platform will be answered through the platform.

2.4.2. Application preparation

Applicants should follow the steps below:

1. The **consortium Lead Partner** needs to register to the platform prior to the submission of the proposal.
2. For the application preparation, the **consortium Lead Partner** is requested to apply online and provide all necessary information. Applicants must submit all requested documents on the opencalls.fund platform.
3. **Consortium Partners** that do not accept the terms and conditions and do not sign and upload to the platform the completed Consortium Declaration (Annex 5), Declaration of Honour (Annex 6) and the Declaration of Conducting Business (Annex 7) or any other document as stated in paragraph 3. Proposal Submission and Selection, in .pdf format, will not be able to submit the application. Later submission of these documents will not be accepted. The above annexes need to be signed by all consortium partners.
4. In case Applicants have any technical difficulties, they should contact RURBANIVE's OC team at rurbanive@opencalls.fund until March 26th, 2025 at 17:00 CET.

It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the application. Failure of the application to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays or working from multiple browsers or multiple browser windows, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the application as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

Technical issues may occur with large documents in different formats. The RURBANIVE project does not bear responsibility for technical problems at any stage. Make sure to check and test upload on time.

2.4.3. The application reception

Applications will ONLY be submitted via the opencalls.fund platform. A full list of Applicants will be drafted containing their basic information for statistical purposes and clarity (which will be also shared with the EC for transparency). The application reception will close at 17:00 CET (Brussels time) on March 31st, 2025.

2.5. Evaluation process

2.5.1. Eligibility check

Once the Open Call for co-creating RUEs is closed (31st of March, 2025) and before assigning the applications to external evaluators, each proposal will be checked against the overall eligibility criteria. During April 2025, the eligibility check will be carried out by the RURBANIVE OC Advisory Board (AB), a team of consortium members with expertise on domains (AUA), digital technologies & data (ICCS) and exploitation and business modelling (RFF). Please note that only complete applications will be considered, those with missing or incomplete information will be discarded.

This procedural part of the evaluation will verify if:

- Legal entities are established in an eligible HE country, have a valid VAT number and are active and operational. However, in case having VAT number is not mandatory according to the national legislation of the applicant's country, a registration number from the respective national authority (National business registry, Commercial court or similar) must be provided.
- Each proposal is unique (i.e., one proposal is submitted per consortium).
- Each party participates in only one proposal. If any applicant is found to participate in multiple applications, all such project applications will be rejected.
- Proposal includes at least one technical party (e.g. entities such as SMEs and other private pro-profit or non-profit organizations, technological spin-offs, research institutions etc.) and at least one end-user (e.g. actors from the rural-urban environs, such as Local & Regional Administrations, Civil Society, Cooperatives, Associations, NGOs, Local Action Groups, Chambers and other Trade representative organizations, etc.).
- Proposed solutions fall within one of the six (6) domains, namely: i) circular economy, ii) ecosystem and biodiversity restoration, iii) improving logistics, and shortening value chains, iv) user engagement, empowerment, society and territorial awareness, v) culture, landscape and heritage access and promotion, and vi) enhanced mobility.
- Existing consortium members of the RURBANIVE project and their affiliated entities are not members in any consortium.
- The proposal is submitted on time and according to the described application process.
- Proposals only ask for funding for that part of the work that is not yet accomplished and will be carried out once having been selected for funding. This does not exclude the usage of e.g. results, IP, infrastructures or approaches already held by the applicants.

During the eligibility check the Applicants might be requested to provide additional explanations if their application raises questions such as, but not limited to, ambiguity of the information, inconsistencies which are obvious errors, among others. In that case, Applicants will be given 3 working days from the day of notification to correct or provide additional documents to complete their initial application. If the requested corrections are not provided in the specified time, their application will be discarded and will not move on to the evaluation round.

2.5.2. Remote Evaluation and key points

Each proposal will be reviewed by two (2) external evaluators with specific technical and/or business expertise related to the topics of the call. The evaluators will have to evaluate each proposal under the specific evaluation criteria.

All eligible proposals will be assessed by two expert evaluators against the following **award criteria**:

Concept and feasibility [Scoring 1-5; min 3] Proposed solutions must align with RURBANIVE's Open Call⁹ objectives.

- Alignment with the objectives and priorities of the open call. Sub-projects should focus on one of the following domains: i) circular economy, ii) ecosystem and biodiversity

⁹ Open Call for Financial Support to Third Parties as a mechanism to increase the number of Rural-Urban Enablers available to end-users

restoration, iii) improving logistics, and shortening value chains, iv) user engagement, empowerment, society and territorial awareness, v) culture, landscape and heritage access and promotion, and vi) enhanced mobility.

- Description of the tasks that need to be completed in order to successfully execute the sub-project.
- Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives, and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and is aligned with the RURBANIVE project, and more specifically with RURBANIVE's Open Call's objectives
- Soundness of the proposed solution including the engagement of citizens, civil society and end-users

Technology readiness and innovation development [Scoring 1-5; min 3] Projects must demonstrate the maturity of the proposed solution.

- Maturity level of the technology and its capability to deliver the desired outcomes
- Cutting-edge technologies or innovative approaches that can enhance the project's excellence and effectiveness
- Alignment with emerging trends or market demand
- Unique features or advantages of the proposed solution compared to existing solutions.

Impact & Exploitation [Scoring 1-5; min 3] Applicants must define a precise set of deliverables connected to these objectives.

- Demonstration of impact on the RURBANIVE ecosystem. Describe how the proposal aims to create an impact on target stakeholders (i.e. Rural-Urban communities, Policy makers, service & technology providers, Academia)
- Extent to which the proposed digital RUE will enhance rural-urban connections, increasing the economic, social and environmental resilience of rural communities.
- Demonstration of contributing to the further development of rural-urban services, increasing the possible transition to greener and climate-neutral communities.
- Strategies for exploiting the project's results such as commercialization, dissemination of knowledge, or policy influence.
- lasting value beyond the project's initial implementation phase and how its results can be leveraged for future endeavours.

Organisational capacity and sufficiency in the team's background [Scoring 1-5; min 3] Applicants must provide credible evidence that the project delivery team has the necessary skills, infrastructure and management experience to deliver the project in the timeframe and budget as specified. **Organisational capacity and sufficiency in the team's background** will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan outlining key milestones, tasks, responsibilities, and timelines.
- Appropriateness of the skills and experience of the team. More specifically: relevant experience in: a) EU funded projects, b) familiarity with the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas and its initiative "Research and innovation for rural Communities" and with the EU Territorial Agenda for 2030, c) in systems integration and interoperability of different systems components
- Quality of the team, including complementarity, gender balance and diversity.

- Necessary resources (e.g. availability of personnel, infrastructure, equipment) in order to participate in events/ workshops/ infodays and engage with stakeholders.
- comprehensive budget definition including the amount of funding requested and how it will be spent, the implementation steps and consequently the value/benefit.
- Capacity and role of each participant, the extent to which the consortium brings together the necessary technical capacity, and excellence of the technology provider, especially in being highly experienced in digitalization, innovation and technology development related to the domain of choice. (Domains: i) circular economy, ii) ecosystem and biodiversity restoration, iii) improving logistics, and shortening value chains, iv) user engagement, empowerment, society and territorial awareness, v) culture, landscape and heritage access and promotion, and vi) enhanced mobility.)

All award criteria have the same weight. Each award criterion can be scored from 1 to 5 with a threshold of 3 points in each category, and a minimum of 12 points in total.

Specifically, a score of:

- 1 corresponds to 0.2 times the maximum points for the criterion,
- 2 corresponds to 0.4 times the maximum points,
- 3 corresponds to 0.6 times the maximum points,
- 4 corresponds to 0.8 times the maximum points, and
- 5 corresponds to the maximum points allocated for the given criterion.

In case of a need for consensus, an online interview of the applicant by the external evaluators will be conducted. The following criteria will be evaluated:

- (i) confirmation of proposed solution (40%);
- (ii) acceptance of the solution from the end-users (30%);
- (iii) reliability to successfully complete the project (30%).

Emphasis is given to ensure the engagement of the end-users as their participation in the OC ensures they are the source of a major part of project's data, as well as the eventual RUE end-users.

The Advisory Board will be formed to run the eligibility check of the submitted proposals and select the external experts who will evaluate the proposals.

Important note: RURBANIVE OC aims is to select six (6) different digital RUEs, one for each one of the 6 RURBANIVE domains. If two or more proposals are focused on the same domain among the 6 predefined by RURBANIVE, the one with the higher score will be selected whereas the next proposal in the ranking list will be selected provided that it concerns a different domain and it is above threshold. The proposals with the highest score in each of six (6) separate domains (considering the above rule) will be qualified.

For example, if we have three proposals ranked as follows: first for the domain of 'circular economy', second *again* for the domain of 'circular economy' and third for the domain of 'ecosystem and biodiversity restoration', the first and third proposals will be selected.

All Applicants will receive their Evaluation Summary Report (ESR).

2.5.3. Redress procedure

Within five (5) working days of the reception of the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR), Applicants may submit a **written request for redress** to the RURBANIVE OC Advisory Board via email at rurbanive@opencalls.fund if they believe there was a shortcoming in the way their proposal was evaluated, which may have affected the final decision on whether they were selected as beneficiary or not, or if they believe the results of the eligibility checks are incorrect. A designated internal review committee (RURBANIVE OC Advisory Board) of the RURBANIVE project will examine the requests for redress.

The RURBANIVE OC Advisory Board's role is to ensure a coherent interpretation of such requests and an equal treatment of all applicants. Requests for redress must be:

- Related to the evaluation process or eligibility checks;
- Clearly describe the complaint and reasons for potential consideration;
- Received within the time limit (5 working days) from the reception of the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR);
- Sent by the same applicant's legal representative that submitted the proposal.

The RURBANIVE OC Advisory Board will review the complaint within five (5) working days and will recommend an appropriate course of action. If there is clear evidence that a shortcoming(s) could have affected the eventual funding decision, it is possible that all or part of the proposal will be re-evaluated.

The redress process is concerned with the evaluation and/or eligibility checking process:

- The RURBANIVE OC Advisory Board will not call into question the scientific or technical judgement of the evaluators
- Any redress request that calls into question the scientific or technical judgement of the evaluators will be automatically rejected.
- A re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that could have affected the final decision on whether to fund it or not. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if a proposal has failed anyway to meet other criteria.
- The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. This score could be lower than the original score. Only one request for redress per proposal will be considered by the RURBANIVE OC Advisory Board. All requests for redress will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

2.5.4. Contracting

Based on the evaluator comments in each ESR, the Advisory Board will start negotiations for the contract preparation with the representatives of the selected (winning) proposals (if shortcomings were identified and changes are needed in the proposals). If the negotiations do not finish successfully, the proposal will be rejected and the next highest ranked proposal will be selected. Contract preparation will go via an administrative and financial checking. On a case-by-case approach, a phone call or teleconference may be needed for clarification.

The objective of the contract preparation is fulfilling the legal requirements between the RURBANIVE consortium and every beneficiary of the call. The items covered will be:

- To validate the status information of the consortium, the following documents will be required from all parties:

- **Legal existence:** Company Register, Official Gazette or other official document per country showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number and a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent. However, in case having VAT number is not mandatory according to the national legislation of the applicant's country, a registration number from the respective national authority (National business registry, Commercial court or similar) must be provided).
 - **Legal proof** that the applicant's organisation is not under liquidation or has filed for bankruptcy.
- **Bank Account Information:** The account where the funds will be transferred will be indicated via a form signed by the legal representative and the bank representative. The account should be a business bank account of each beneficiary. The financial information should not be older than three months.

The Subgrantee assumes full responsibility on the bank account info they provide through Annex 9 – Bank account information. For instance, if they provide a wrong IBAN, and the Treasurer proceeds with the transfer to that account, they will assume responsibility for any costs related to the transfer (expenses with the return of the amount from the wrong bank account and/or expenses with the new transfer will be deducted from their grant transfer). Ultimately, in a worst-case scenario, if the Treasurer does not manage to recover the amount transferred to the wrong bank account, the beneficiary who provided a wrong IBAN will not be able to claim that payment.

The request, by the RURBANIVE consortium, of the above documentation will be done within designated deadlines. The sub-project contract negotiations will be carried out from July to August 2025. In case negotiations have not been concluded within the above period, the application is automatically rejected and the next application in the reserve list is invited.

After successful negotiations, the legal representative of the open call winner will be invited to sign a contract, which will then be signed by the Open Call Manager / Treasurer (RFF). The final list of accepted proposals will then be published.

3. Implementation of RURBANIVE Open Call

3.1. Implementation timeline and activities

Selected projects will be launched in September 2025 having an implementation timeframe of 12 months (until August 2026). The 12-month implementation period will be divided into 3 phases:

- Phase 1 – Design [Deliverable: Activity plan] (September 2025 – December 2025)
- Phase 2 - Development [Deliverable: RUE solution demonstration] (January 2026 – May 2026)
- Phase 3 - Validation [Deliverable: Report on market or community associated activities]. (June 2026 – August 2026)

In all selected sub-projects, payments are deliverable based, meaning that the sub-grantees have to deliver a specific report after the end of each phase in order to receive the payment (no pre-financing is foreseen).

4. Applicants' responsibility

The selected Subgrantees are indirect beneficiaries of European Commission funding. As such, they are responsible for the proper use of the funding and ensure that they comply with the obligations set out in HE specific requirements as described in the “Enhancing social inclusion in rural areas: focus on people in a vulnerable situation and social economy (HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01) call. The obligations that are applicable to the beneficiaries include (but are not limited to):

4.1. Conflict of interest

The Subgrantees must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the Sub-grant Agreement could be compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other direct or indirect interest ('conflict of interests'). At the same time, Applicants cannot be affiliated with consortium partners, nor can they be employees of the consortium partners. All potential conflicts of interest will be assessed carefully. Please see more info [here](#).

They must formally notify the RURBANIVE consortium without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation. The RURBANIVE consortium may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

If a Subgrantee breaches any of its obligations, the Sub-grant Agreement may be automatically terminated. Moreover, if the Sub-grant Agreement is terminated due to a breach made by a Subgrantee, the RURBANIVE consortium reserves the right to suspend further payments to the Subgrantees sub-grantee and claim the full refund of all payments made to the Subgrantee up to date.

4.2. Ethics, Data Protection & Confidentiality

Prior to granting financial support, RURBANIVE will require Applicants to identify and explain any ethical issues that may arise during the subproject implementation as part of their project proposals. A dedicated chapter in the proposal template will require from the Applicants to describe how they will comply with European Union ethical rules/principles and outline how

ethics principles will be integrated into the project, addressing aspects such as participant involvement, informed consent, privacy protection, data management, and any other relevant ethical considerations. All subprojects should follow an “ethics by design”-way of working, whereby ethical and legal principles, on the basis of GDPR, competition law compliance, absence of data bias are implemented since the beginning of the design process.

Once a project is selected for FSTP funding, regular monitoring and reporting will be conducted to ensure ongoing adherence to ethics principles. This monitoring mechanism contributes to the overall integrity and ethical excellence of the RURBANIVE project and reinforces its commitment to ethical research and innovation

During implementation of the sub-project and for at least five years after the final payment of the sub-project, the beneficiaries must keep confidential any data, documents or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at subcontract signing time (‘confidential information’).

If an OC beneficiary makes a request for a longer period of data protection and confidentiality, the European Commission and the RURBANIVE consortium may agree to keep such information confidential for an additional period beyond the initial five years. This will be explicitly stated in the Sub-grant Agreement.

If additional information is identified as confidential during the sub-project execution or through verbal communication, it must be accepted by the RURBANIVE coordinator and confirmed in writing within 15 days of its disclosure. Unless otherwise agreed between the parties, they may only use confidential information to implement the Sub-grant Agreement. The OC beneficiaries may disclose confidential information to the RURBANIVE consortium and to the selected external reviewers, who will be bound by a specific Non-Disclosure Agreement.

Applicants must confirm that all proposed services, including the means of their delivery and upkeep, have been reviewed to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation on data protection, privacy, and fundamental rights.

OC beneficiaries will have to submit three deliverables (1. Activity plan, 2. RUE demonstration, 3. Report on market or community associated activities) during the sub-project implementation. In these deliverables the beneficiaries will report any ethics measures in a dedicated chapter. The deliverables will be reviewed by the Advisory Board of the Open Call, while the appointed Ethics Advisor will examine and assess the ethics measures if needed.

Throughout the project's implementation, the RURBANIVE Ethics Advisor will provide ongoing guidance and support to the FSTP projects. He will assist project implementers in addressing ethical challenges, ensuring continuous improvement in ethics compliance, and promoting a culture of ethical responsibility.

By implementing this proposed mechanism, RURBANIVE aims to foster ethical conduct and responsible practices in all projects funded through the FSTP. It establishes a system of checks and balances, providing assurance that the ethical commitments of RURBANIVE are upheld by external entities receiving financial support. This monitoring mechanism contributes to the overall integrity and ethical excellence of the RURBANIVE project and reinforces its commitment to ethical research and innovation.

The importance of involving women, youth, and vulnerable groups must be considered by all participants. The inclusion of women, youth, and vulnerable groups brings a wealth of knowledge, expertise, and unique perspectives to the project. Their participation promotes a holistic understanding of societal challenges and facilitates the development of effective

solutions tailored to their specific needs. Furthermore, it aligns with RURBANIVE ethical responsibility to promote equal opportunities and ensure that marginalised groups are not further excluded by the project.

Personal data from individuals (such as: name, last name, address, country of residence, phone number, email address) will also be gathered via the Open Call during the process of potential applicants' and evaluators' registration and application on the opencalls.fund platform (to post a question or apply to a specific open call or enter the pool of external evaluators). The majority of the information (if not all of them) that will be required, for SMEs, startups, research organisations, NGOs as potential applicants, are already publicly available in business registries across Europe (i.e. owners' name, company address and email). No sensitive personal data will be collected (e.g. health status, race, sexual lifestyle, ethnicity, political opinions, religious or philosophical conviction, receipt of social support, victims of violence, criminal records and sexual life).

Personal information (such as IP address, device type, geographic location etc) may also be collected (automatically) for statistical reasons and to better understand the people who visit the opencalls.fund platform, where they come from and what content they are interested in. the activities related to the Open Call, since personal information received will not be shared by default. Access to the opencalls.fund platform is also feasible following a registration process and obtaining user credentials. With respect to the personal data protection collected during the Open Call, all collected data will be anonymized, encrypted and stored on a server, which will have server-side encryption. Only the required personnel (specifically assigned for this project) will have access to the data.

According to the Grant Agreement, data will be kept for at least 5 years after the completion of the project (or 3 years for data related to Open Call grants of not more than EUR 60 000). However, the data will always be stored anonymously and will not be accessible by external third parties.

4.3. Promoting the action and giving visibility to the EU funding

The Subgrantees must promote the sub-projects, the RURBANIVE project and its results, by providing the description of their project upon request from the RURBANIVE Consortium and highlighting the financial support of the EC.

Unless the European Commission or the RURBANIVE coordinator requests or agrees otherwise or unless it is impossible, communication activities of the beneficiaries related to the action (including media relations, conferences, seminars, information material, such as brochures, leaflets, posters, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media, etc.), dissemination activities and any infrastructure, equipment, vehicles, supplies or major result funded by the grant must:

- acknowledge EU support and display the European flag (emblem) and funding statement:
 - *For communication activities: "Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them."*
- display the RURBANIVE logo

When displayed in association with other logos (e.g., of beneficiaries), the European emblem must be displayed at least as prominently and visibly as the other logos. This obligation to use

the European emblem in respect of projects to which the EC contributes implies no right of exclusive use. It is subject to general third-party use restrictions which do not permit the appropriation of the emblem, or of any similar trademark or logo, whether by registration or by any other means. Under these conditions, the Subgrantee is exempted from the obligation to obtain prior permission from the EC to use the emblem. Further detailed information on the EU emblem can be found on the Europa web page.

Any publicity made by the Subgrantee with respect to the project, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, must specify that it reflects only the author's views and that the EC or RURBANIVE consortium are not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

The EC and the RURBANIVE consortium shall be authorised to publish, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, the following information:

- the name of the Subgrantee,
- contact address of the Subgrantee,
- the general purpose of the sub-project,
- the amount of the financial contribution foreseen for the sub-project; after the final payment, and the amount of the financial contribution actually received,
- the geographic location of the activities carried out,
- the list of dissemination activities and/or of patent (applications) relating to foreground,
- the details/references and the abstracts of scientific publications relating to foreground and, if funded within the subproject, the published version or the final manuscript accepted for publication,
- the publishable reports submitted to RURBANIVE,
- any picture or any audio-visual or web material provided to the EC and RURBANIVE in the framework of the sub-project.

The Subgrantee shall ensure that all necessary authorisations for such publication have been obtained and that the publication of the information by the EC and RURBANIVE does not infringe any rights of third parties.

Upon a duly substantiated request by the Subgrantee representative, the RURBANIVE consortium, if such permission is provided by the EC, may agree to forego such publicity if disclosure of the information indicated above would risk compromising the beneficiary's security, academic or commercial interests.

4.4. Financial audit and controls

The European Commission (EC) will monitor that RURBANIVE partners and the Subgrantees comply with the conditions for financial support to third parties set out in Annex 1 of the RURBANIVE grant agreement and may take any action foreseen by the grant agreement in case of noncompliance vis à vis the beneficiary concerned.

Moreover, the EC may at any time during the implementation of the RURBANIVE project and up to 2 (two) years after final payments, arrange for financial audits to be carried out, by external auditors, or by the EC services themselves including the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF). Such audits will be formally notified to the beneficiary concerned and will be considered to start on the date of the notification.

Such audits may cover financial, systemic and other aspects (such as accounting and management principles) relating to the proper execution of the grant agreement. They shall be carried out on a confidential basis.

The Subgrantee shall make available directly to the EC all detailed information and data that may be requested by the EC or any representative authorised by it, with a view to verifying that the grant agreement is properly managed and performed in accordance with its provisions and that costs have been charged in compliance with it. This information and data must be precise, complete and effective.

The Subgrantee shall keep all sub-project deliverables and the originals or, in exceptional cases, duly authenticated copies – including electronic copies – of all documents relating to the sub-project contract for up to five years from the end of the project (or 3 for grants of not more than €60,000.00). These shall be made available to the EC when requested during any audit under the grant agreement.

In order to carry out these audits, the Subgrantee shall ensure that the EC's services and any external body(ies) authorised by it have on-the-spot access at all reasonable times, notably to the sub-project applicant offices, to its computer data, to its accounting data and to all the information needed to carry out those audits, including information on individual salaries of persons involved in the sub-project. For on-the-spot visits, the beneficiary concerned must allow access to sites and premises (including for the external audit firm) and must ensure that information requested is readily available. Information provided must be accurate, precise and complete and in the format requested, including electronic format.

On the basis of the audit findings a draft audit report will be drawn up and it will be formally sent to the Subgrantee concerned, which may make observations thereon within 30 days of receiving the notification to make observations. The Commission may decide not to consider observations conveyed or documents sent after that deadline. The final audit report shall be sent to the beneficiary concerned within two months of expiry of the aforesaid deadline.

Based on the conclusions of the audit, the EC shall take all appropriate measures which it considers necessary, including the issuing of recovery orders regarding all or part of the payments made by it and the application of any applicable sanction.

The European Court of Auditors shall have the same rights as the EC, notably right of access, for the purpose of checks and audits, without prejudice to its own rules.

In addition, the EC may carry out on-the-spot checks and inspections in accordance with Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/96 of 11 November 1996 concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the Commission in order to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities.

Audits (including audit reports) will be in the language of the Sub-grant agreement.

4.5. Sub-project Communication

The Sub-grantee representative should:

- Provide any notices in writing to the RURBANIVE consortium.
- Notify the RURBANIVE coordinator immediately of any change of persons or contact details. The address list shall be accessible to all concerned.
- Notify the RURBANIVE coordinator about the dissemination activities that the Open Call recipient will organise.

4.6. Originality of the sub-granted projects

It is required that applications submitted are based on original works by the Applicants and that their foreseen developments are free from third party rights. RURBANIVE consortium is not obliged to verify the authenticity of the ownership of the foreseen products/services. Any issues delivered from third party claims that arise as a result of the sub-granted projects are on the sole responsibility of the applicant.

4.7. IPR ownership of the sub-granted projects

Each Subgrantee that generates results owns the attached Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) generated during the development process and will own results that are not IPRs. Each contractor is responsible for the management and protection of its IPRs and bears the costs associated with this.

The Subgrantees funded within the RURBANIVE project will be the unique owners of the technologies created within the framework of their sub-granted projects. Parts of their works will be requested to be public for RURBANIVE dissemination purposes.

4.8. Liability

The RURBANIVE consortium and the European Commission cannot be held liable for any acts or omissions of the applicant in relation to the selected sub-granted project implemented by the Subgrantee. The RURBANIVE consortium shall not be liable for any defaults of any products, processes or services created in the sub-granted project. Including, for instance, anomalies in the functioning or performance thereof.

In case any damage is caused to a third party by the Subgrantee, the Subgrantee will assume full responsibility for the damage caused. In no way will the RURBANIVE Consortium be responsible for any damages caused by the Subgrantee. Subgrantees shall bear sole responsibility for ensuring that their acts within the framework of their sub-granted projects do not infringe third parties' rights.

4.9. Do No Significant Harm

Subgrantees must always respect the 'Do No Significant Harm Principle'. This means that the subproject's methodology should be designed in a manner which does not significantly harm any of the six environmental objectives of the EU Taxonomy Regulation. EU Taxonomy is a science-based classification system for determining whether an (economic) activity can be considered environmentally sustainable. It establishes six environmental objectives (as listed in Article 913 of the EU Taxonomy):

- Climate change mitigation
- Climate change adaptation
- The sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources
- The transition to a circular economy
- Pollution prevention and control
- The protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

while Article 17 specifies what can constitute a “significant harm” for these objectives. Thus, the regulation provides that no measure should lead to significant harm to any of the six environmental objectives within the meaning of Article 17 of the Taxonomy Regulation.

5. Checklist

- 1. Is your proposal eligible?** The eligibility criteria are given in chapter 3 “Proposal Submission and Selection”. Make sure that you satisfy the minimum participation requirements (entities from eligible countries).
- 2. Is your proposal complete?** Have you completed all mandatory OC questions?
- 3. Have you checked all technical details related to submission?** Difficulties with application and submission arising from technical aspects will not be taken into consideration by the RURBANIVE project. Applicants should do test rounds and make sure to submit everything on time.
- 4. Does your proposal fulfil questions requests/comments?** Proposals should be precise, concise and must answer requested questions, which are designed to correspond to the applied evaluation. Omitting requested information will almost certainly lead to lower scores and possible rejection.
- 5. Have you maximised your chances?** There will be strong competition. Therefore, edit your proposal tightly, strengthen or eliminate weak points.
- 6. Have you submitted your proposal before the deadline?** It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the proposal. Failure of the proposal to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the message as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.
- 7. Have you provided the necessary annexes?**
- 8. Have you described the dissemination activities as 7% of your budget?**
- 9. Does your planned work fit with RURBANIVE Open Call for co-creating Rural-Urban Enabler with rural-urban communities?** Check that your proposed work does indeed address the topics open in this call and addresses enhancing and increasing rural-urban connections.
- 10. Does your proposal address key societal and environmental challenges relating to the six (6) RURBANIVE domains?** Check that your proposed work does indeed address all the specific requirements set.
- 11. Do you need further advice and support?** You can reach out to the RURBANIVE Open Call team via rurbanive@opencalls.fund. Technical team can provide assistance to the extent possible, up until the 28th of March 2025 @ 17:00 CET.

6. Points of contact

All questions concerning the Call must be in writing and be stated on the FAQ section on the opencalls.fund or sent by e-mail to rurbanive@opencalls.fund. The deadline for asking clarification questions or requesting additional information is 17:00 CET on 26th of March 2025. The answers shall be given no later than 17:00 CET @ 28th March 2025.

We strongly recommend Applicants to regularly visit the FAQ section to get valuable feedback for the preparation of their proposal.

Annex A: Recommendations regarding data accessibility for the RURBANIVE Open Call

General

This document contains a set of recommendations regarding exposing data from your app or service. It is important to ensure that your dataset or your real-time data generator follows the FAIR principles, meaning is/are **findable** (not necessarily in the sense of having a DOI, think in terms of metadata), **accessible**, **interoperable** and **reusable**, such that it can be used for other applications as well.

Your service or app will (most likely) produce either data that is (i) **dynamic**, such as real-time data, or simply data that may change or update over time and data that is (ii) **static**, consisting of datasets, charts, image collections, etc. It may also be the case that your data falls in both categories. Below we list a few options for exposing your data to third-parties, depending on its static/dynamic trait, as well as the specifics of your application. The list of options is not exhaustive, and you may consider other options as well, as long as they follow the same principles described previously.

API recommendations

If your application will be responsible for creating a **data stream service** (e.g. real-time environment monitoring system), or data which will be continuously updated and maintained, an open-source API for accessing the service should be available. Below, we enumerate a list of types of APIs and data access features:

- **RESTful APIs** are **simple**, **broadly** used, offer a uniform interface, are **scalable** and are ideal for web services that require wide-spread compatibility. They are often used for web-services, IoT and mobile applications.
- **GraphQL** is a query language for APIs and a runtime for executing those queries by using a **type system** you define for your data. Unlike RESTful APIs, which rely on predefined endpoints to handle different types of operations, a GraphQL API allows clients to request exactly the data they need, nothing more and nothing less, through a single endpoint. GraphQL APIs are defined by a schema using GraphQL's Type System. This schema serves as a contract between the client and the server, ensuring the data adheres to a specific structure. You should use GraphQL for any app that requires optimising network data transfer and if your app needs to aggregate data from multiple sources, and in those cases where you will provide a wide variety of types of data to end-users.
- **gRPC (Google Remote Procedure Call)** is an open-source high-performance RPC (Remote Procedure Call) framework initially developed by Google. It uses HTTP/2 for transport, Protocol Buffers (protobuf) as the interface description language, and provides features such as authentication, load balancing, and bidirectional streaming. gRPC is particularly useful if your app requires low latency and high throughput. It works best in scenarios where you need to efficiently connect more services (including mobile devices) in a microservices architecture.
- **OData (Open Data Protocol)** is a REST-based API that allows clients to query and manipulate data using more involved query options such as filtering, sorting and

paging. It can also be successfully used for exposing and consuming data from relational databases over web APIs. We recommend using OData for exposing data from a relational database, where there are no specific latency or throughput requirements.

Dataset recommendations

If your app/service will produce a dataset, it should be made available as an open-source artefact, and be published on at least one dataset aggregator platform such as, for instance:

- kaggle.com
- Google Dataset (<https://datasetsearch.research.google.com/>)
- EU Open Data Portal (<https://data.europa.eu/en>)

The dataset(s) should be accompanied with metadata that offers detailed information regarding its contents and structure. Metadata should be available in English. Metadata information should minimally include:

- **Title:** A descriptive name for the dataset.
- **Creator/Author:** The person(s) or organisation(s) responsible for creating the dataset.
- **Date of Publication:** When the dataset was published or released.
- **Dataset Version:** Information on the version of the dataset, if applicable.
- **Description/Abstract:** A detailed summary of the dataset, including its purpose, scope, and main findings.
- **Keywords:** Words or phrases that describe the subject matter of the dataset.
- **Data Type:** The nature or genre of the content (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, images, text files).
- **Methodology:** Information on how the data were collected or generated, including tools, techniques, and protocols used.
- **Geographic Location:** The geographic area covered by the data.
- **Temporal Coverage:** The time period the data covers.
- **Language:** The language(s) of the dataset content.
- **Data Format:** The file format of the dataset (e.g., CSV, JSON, XML, TIFF).
- **Access and Use Conditions:** Information about the terms under which the dataset can be accessed and used, including any restrictions or licensing.
- **Related Publications:** References to publications that use or are based on the dataset.
- **Data Repository:** Where the dataset is stored or archived, including the URL if it's available online.
- **Citation:** Suggested citation for users who reference the dataset in their work.
- **Funding Information:** Details on the funding source(s) that supported the creation of the dataset.
- **Contact Information:** How to reach the dataset creator or custodian for questions or further information.

It is recommended that you also consider the Eurostat and the European Statistical System (ESS) single metadata structure (SIMS) [2], which are aimed at standardising metadata.

[1] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/metadata/reference-metadata-reporting-standards>

[2] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/64157/4373903/SIMS-2-0-Revised-standards-November-2015-ESSC-final.pdf>