

Why do research and innovation on rural areas and rural communities matter?

Rural areas cover more than 80% of the EU. These are territories that host natural and cultural heritage, provide food, energy as well as ecosystem services for all. They play an essential role in the green and digital transitions. Rural areas are also home of approximately 30% of the European population.

Rural areas are diverse and rural communities can vary widely in terms of their economic, social, and cultural characteristics across the EU. Some rural areas are thriving with a prosperous economy, while others face challenges such as ageing, depopulation, poverty, lack of job opportunities, and limited access to services (e.g. education, healthcare, transport, internet connectivity), infrastructures, and amenities.

Research and innovation support rural areas and communities to develop or regenerate in a sustainable, balanced, fair and inclusive manner thanks to a better understanding of the rural dynamics, needs and drivers for change. Multi-actor research projects funded under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe are supporting community-led innovations that empower rural communities to become stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous in line with the [Long-term Vision for the EU's rural areas](#) and its research and innovation flagship initiative.

Rural areas and rural communities under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe



CORDIS search keywords
rural areas, rural innovation



Nb of projects
15 Horizon 2020
13 Horizon Europe



EU contribution
€80 million
€65 million

Horizon 2020 Societal Challenges 2 and Horizon Europe Cluster 6 projects, Work Programme 2023-2024 expected projects included / Selection of a few projects logos





Success stories dedicated to research on rural areas and rural communities

New entrants into farming and in rural areas

NEWBIE - *New Entrant netWork: Business models for Innovation, entrepreneurship and resilience in European agriculture* was a project that targeted new entrants to agriculture and supported them overcoming challenges in developing a sustainable farming enterprise. The project fostered practice-oriented agricultural education and provided an online space where to access user-friendly information for setting up new businesses in agriculture.

RURALIZATION - *The opening of rural areas to renew rural generations, jobs and farms* aimed to contribute to the development of “a new rural frontier” by generating new policy-relevant knowledge. The project sought to understand rural newcomers needs and life aspirations. It analysed young people dreams and practices that facilitate the rural regeneration and generation renewal.

Grasping rural diversity for policies tailored to rural contexts

RUSTIK - *Rural Sustainability Transitions through Integration of Knowledge for improved policy processes* is a project that focuses on strengthening existing policy tools and on designing better strategies and policies that support sustainability transitions of rural areas. The project will improve the understanding of the variety of rural features and functionalities.

GRANULAR - *Giving Rural Actors Novel data and re-Useable tools to Lead public Action in Rural areas* will generate new insights for characterising rural diversity based on a multi-actor and interdisciplinary approach. The project will generate novel datasets using a wide range of methods and primary data, such as remote sensing or mobile phone data, to create a Rural Compass that will support rural actors and policymakers in designing tailored rural policies.

Boosting women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas

FLIARA - *Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas* focuses on a transdisciplinary methodology to improve awareness and recognition around women’s role and practices in farming and rural areas. The project focuses on increasing gender consciousness of women in rural economies and development.

GRASS Ceiling - *Gender Equality in Rural and Agricultural Innovation System* the objective is to empower rural women and increase the number of socio-ecological women-led innovations in agriculture and in rural economy. The project will establish living labs for rural women innovators and contribute to transform gender norms and stereotypes by sharing and capturing insights on policy and practical experience.

SWIFT - *Supporting Women-led Innovations in Farming and rural Territories* project will provide new insights and co-create novel approaches to advance gender equality in farming and rural areas. The project will provide theoretical and practical tools, such as gender-responsive budgeting and feminist farm viability indicators, to enable a changes towards more just, effective and diversified farming.

Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe projects on rural areas and rural communities

Follow the **CORDIS** link for more information on the start-end date, EU contribution, coordinator and results.

List sorted by ascending start date.

Website	Project	CORDIS
SALSA	Small farms, small food businesses and sustainable food security	677363
SIMRA	Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas	677622
ROBUST	Rural-Urban Outlooks: Unlocking Synergies	727988
IMAJINE	Integrative Mechanisms for Addressing Spatial Justice and Territorial Inequalities in Europe	726950
COASTAL	Collaborative lAnd Sea inTegration pLatform	773782
RUBIZMO	Replicable business models for modern rural economies	773621
NEXTFOOD	Educating the next generation of professionals in the agrifood system	771738
NEWBIE	New Entrant netWork: Business models for Innovation, entrepreneurship and resilience in European agriculture	772835
LIVERUR	Living Lab research concept in Rural Areas	773757
RURITAGE	Rural regeneration through systemic heritage-led strategies	776465
RURALIZATION	The opening of rural areas to renew rural generations, jobs and farms	817642
PoliRURAL	Future Oriented Collaborative Policy Development for Rural Areas and People	818496
DESIRA	Digitisation: Economic and Social Impacts in Rural Areas	818194
SHERPA	Sustainable Hub to Engage into Rural Policies with Actors	862448
MOVING	Mountain Valorization through Interconnectedness and Green Growth	862739
SmartCulTour	Smart Cultural Tourism as a Driver of Sustainable Development of European Regions	870708
MATILDE	Migration Impact Assessment to Enhance Integration and Local Development in European Rural and Mountain Areas	870831
WELCOMING SPACES	Investing in 'Welcoming Spaces' in Europe: revitalizing shrinking areas by hosting non-EU migrants	870952
Whole-COMM	Exploring the Integration of Post-2014 Migrants in Small and Medium-sized Towns and Rural Areas from a Whole of Community Perspective	101004714
GRANULAR	Giving Rural Actors Novel data and re-Useable tools to Lead public Action in Rural areas	101061068
RUSTIK	Rural Sustainability Transitions through Integration of Knowledge for improved policy processes	101061051
RURALITIES	Climate smart, ecosystem-enhancing and knowledge-based rural expertise and training centres	101060876
XGain	Enhancing Competitiveness, Resilience and Sustainability of Remote Farming, Forestry and Rural Areas through Holistic Assessment of Smart XG, Last-mile and Edge Solutions' Gains	101060294
COMNECT	Bridging the digital divide and addressing the need of Rural Communities with Cost-effective and Environmental-Friendly Connectivity Solutions	101060881
SWIFT	Supporting Women-led Innovations in Farming and rural Territories	101084561
GRASS Ceiling	Gender Equality in Rural and Agricultural Innovation Systems	101083408
FLIARA	Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas	101084234
SafeHabitus	Strengthening the Farm Health and Safety Knowledge and Innovation Systems in Europe	101084270
TRANS-Lighthouses	More than green - Lighthouses of transformative nature-based solutions for inclusive communities	101084628
COEVOLVERS	Coevolutionary approach to unlock the transformative potential of nature-based solutions for more inclusive and resilient communities	101084220
IN SITU	Place-based innovation of cultural and creative industries in non-urban areas	101061747
TexTOUR	Social Innovation and TEchnologies for sustainable growth through participative cultural TOURism	101004687
INCULTUM	Visiting the Margins. INnovative CULTural ToUrisM in European peripheries	101004552
FUTURAL	Empowering the future through innovative smart solutions for rural areas	
RURACTIVE	Empowering rural communities to act for change	



Relevant sources of information supporting rural areas and rural communities

Innovation in rural areas and with rural communities under other programmes

Smart villages

Smart villages are communities in rural areas that use innovative solutions to improve their resilience, building on local strengths and opportunities. They rely on a participatory approach to develop and implement their strategy to improve their economic, social and/or environmental conditions, in particular by mobilising solutions offered by digital technologies. The Preparatory Action Smart Rural 27 organizes networking between smart villages and develops further guidance to create an enabling policy environment.

Find out more about the preparatory actions [Smart Rural 21](#) and the ongoing [Smart Rural 27](#).

Startup Village Forum

The [European Startup Village Forum](#) facilitates knowledge exchange and cooperation activities and works as an open space where institutions and stakeholders can meet, discuss and shape action for startup-driven innovation in rural areas. It is supported by the [European Commission's Joint Research Centre](#) through scientific analyses on rural innovation and entrepreneurship, in connection with the activities of the [Rural Observatory](#).

In the pipeline and future funding opportunities

- [HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-1](#): Enhancing social inclusion in rural areas: focus on people in a vulnerable situation and social economy
- [HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-2](#): Improving rural future through better territorial governance and rural-urban synergies
- [HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-3](#): International benchmarking of rural and territorial policies and delivery mechanisms
- [HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-01-2](#): Innovating for climate-neutral rural communities by 2050
- [HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-01-2](#): Societal perceptions and benefits of rural life and jobs: will COVID generate a long-lasting shift?
- [HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES](#): New business and production models for farmers and rural communities

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