

## **Destination - Resilient, inclusive, healthy and green rural, coastal and urban communities**

Places and people matter when it comes achieving of a more sustainable Europe. The Sustainable Development Goals and the ecological and digital transitions brought forward by the European Green Deal with its farm to fork and biodiversity strategies, zero pollution action plan, common fisheries policy (CFP)<sup>380</sup>, along with the recent pandemic, bring challenges and opportunities that vary for different places and people. Rural (including mountains and sparsely populated areas) and coastal areas, play a key role in protecting, managing, and using natural resources. The provision of both private and public goods from these areas depends on the resilience and attractiveness of communities there and the capacity of people living and working there to enjoy an adequate level of well-being, which should be guaranteed by, e.g. the access to good quality services. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted deficiencies in digital infrastructures and economic opportunities that hamper resilience. It also highlighted the importance of high-quality and biodiverse green and blue spaces for the health and well-being of local communities, in primis, but also for that of visitors of these areas.

Innovation is a key enabler of the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas (LTVRA)<sup>381</sup> that aims to overcome the challenges outlined above and make rural areas stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous by 2040. Urban communities generally offer better access to many services but are also more vulnerable to supply-chain disruptions, as shown during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, they have a key role to play in fostering sustainable production and consumption as major demand drivers. The New European Bauhaus initiative<sup>382</sup> offers possibilities to redesign living spaces to improve sustainability, inclusiveness, and aesthetics, setting out a path to a more resilient, inclusive, healthy and green (built) environment. In all communities, social, cultural and behavioural drivers play an important role in either enabling or slowing down transitions. Knowledge and innovative solutions need to be developed to strengthen every community's resilience and capacity to contribute to and benefit from the upcoming transitions in an economy that works for all territories and ensures a fair and just transition leaving no one behind.

Under this destination, transdisciplinary R&I with a strong social, behavioural and humanities sciences dimension (SSH), which pay and attention to gender aspects, will enable a sustainable, balanced, equitable and inclusive development and management of rural, coastal and urban areas in three different ways.

Firstly, it will aim to **increase our understanding** of the different ways of climate, environmental, socio-economic and demographic changes affect rural, coastal and urban areas in order to identify ways to turn these changes into equal, and, when needed equitable,

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<sup>380</sup> Common Fishery Policy [https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp\\_en](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/policy/common-fisheries-policy-cfp_en).

<sup>381</sup> Long Term Vision for Rural Areas, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/long-term-vision-rural-areas\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/long-term-vision-rural-areas_en).

<sup>382</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda\\_21\\_4627](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_21_4627).

opportunities for people wherever they live. This would strengthen territorial cohesion and enable a just transition. Secondly, it will **explore innovative ways to tailor policy responses** to the place-based challenges and needs identified at various levels of governance. Thirdly, it will **support bottom-up community-led innovation** to empower communities to develop, test and upscale solutions that answer global challenges in locally adapted ways. Achieving policy goals require providing people with more equitable access to the knowledge and skills needed to make informed choices and ensure they are actively engaged in the conservation. It also requires natural resources to be managed in a sustainable and circular manner, from production or service provision to consumption, in the spirit of the EU competence framework for sustainability. Rural, coastal and urban communities need improved labour conditions, quality of life and long-term socio-economic prospects in the context of major transitions and rising threats to climate, resources and health. This is particularly the case for women, young people older people, people with disabilities, people in vulnerable situations (e.g. income falling below the poverty line, or at risk of poverty), migrants, ethnic minorities and indigenous people and those hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. Their capacity to drive community-led innovations and their resilience must be increased across the diverse European territories including remote and peripheral places such as mountains, forests, archipelagos, sparsely populated areas, as well as the Arctic. The necessary changes will be facilitated and resilient, smart, and climate friendly production and lifestyles will be supported through mobilising the forces of i) digital transformation, ii) upgraded innovation ecosystems, iii) cultural and natural heritage, iv) nature-based solutions, more sustainable and regenerative tourism as well as social and policy innovation will facilitate necessary changes and support resilient, smart, and climate friendly production and lifestyles.

This destination will in particular:

- Address the spatial and socio-economic or behavioural drivers of the **European Green Deal** (including farm to fork, biodiversity and sustainable and smart mobility strategies), especially its just transition component.
- It will make a key contribution to the **flagship initiative ‘R&I for rural communities’** and to the four areas of work under the **long-term vision for the EU’s rural areas**: making areas stronger, connected, resilient, prosperous. It will in particular help achieve to climate targets by putting the focus on the climate-neutrality of rural communities that have specific needs and are often neglected by climate action.
- It will complement the **New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative** that connects the European Green Deal to our living and public spaces; The NEB aims to achieve deep transformation of these spaces, closely involving the public, and integrating the core NEB values of sustainability, inclusion and aesthetics. It will make a key contribution to improving **social inclusion** in Europe in line with the principles of the **European pillar for social rights**, the **EU social economy action plan** and contributing to the **strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities for 2021-2030**.

- It will contribute to the: i) implementation of the **new joint communication on the Arctic** (adopted on 13 October 2021), ii) the fourth Arctic Science Ministerial Joint Statement<sup>383</sup> and iii) to the All- Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance.
- It will contribute to the: i) implementation of the **competence framework for sustainability** prepared by the Commission<sup>384</sup> and the Council Recommendation on education for environmental sustainability for learners of all ages and at all levels of education (part of the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030)<sup>385</sup>.
- It will help implement the **EU agenda for tourism** (expected in late 2022).
- It will contribute and link to the **just, green and digital transitions** called for by the European Green Deal, the European industrial strategy, the circular economy action plan and the updated bioeconomy strategy, by exploiting the potential of digital technologies (e.g., using local digital twins for participatory urban planning and evidence-based policy-making).

The following outcomes are expected.

- Policy makers and the public will have a better citizens understanding of **social inclusion challenges**, the circumstances of **people in vulnerable situations in rural and coastal areas** and how to strengthen **social resilience**, including in relation to ecosystem services, biodiversity and natural heritage for coastal areas.
- Policy makers will have a better understanding of the **behavioural and structural drivers of people's lifestyle choices and people's perceptions of rural life** in the aftermath of COVID-19 and of the long-term trends and opportunities for rural areas.
- A **sustainable post-COVID recovery will be enabled in urban, rural and coastal communities** through biodiversity-friendly actions, and valorisation of natural and cultural heritage for sustainable recovery, professional, collective and personal attitudes.
- There will be an improvement **connections, strategies and governance arrangements that enable synergistic development of rural, coastal and urban areas** and more integrated territorial policies and interventions in a growing number of localities and across several sectors.
- **Rural, urban and coastal actors will be engaged in a just and green transition. They will be** equipped with strategies and innovations to contribute to the EU's climate-neutrality by 2050 and benefit from a climate-neutral economy.

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<sup>383</sup> The Commission has signed the Joint statement of the third Arctic science ministerial and committed to further support Arctic science, including integrating traditional and indigenous knowledge.

<sup>384</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/greencomp>.

<sup>385</sup> [https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/proposal-council-recommendation-learning-environmental-sustainability\\_0.pdf](https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/proposal-council-recommendation-learning-environmental-sustainability_0.pdf).

- Prosperity will increase thanks to the deployment of business models that are fit for the future and greater job opportunities will be provided for rural and coastal people, particularly in relation to territorial and marine economies and critical resources (soil, water, biodiversity). This is in line with the objectives of the EU Missions ‘A Soil Deal for Europe’, ‘Restore our Ocean and Waters’, and ‘Adaptation to climate change’.
- More **innovative and integrated policy framework will be upgraded and developed**, capitalising on international knowledge exchange, including indigenous, traditional and local knowledge<sup>386</sup> and cultural heritage in a bottom-up approach.
- Knowledge on the costs and benefits of **urban farming** and improved policy frameworks will be strengthened to maximise its benefits for European society at large across all dimensions of sustainability.
- More **diverse and systemic approaches and innovative solutions** (digital, nature-based, social and community-led) will be developed **with and for local communities** and there is an increase in the number of local actors with improved capacity to sustain these innovative processes and take up these solutions.
- Connections between food provision and multi-functional nature-based solutions for the benefit and well-being of people will be increased. Resilience (climate adaptation mechanisms) will also increase through the combination of the vision of the **New European Bauhaus initiative** to ‘*call on all Europeans to imagine and build together a sustainable and inclusive future that is beautiful for our eyes, minds, and souls*’ with a sustainable food systems approach and make use of Novel sources of inspiration will be put to best use.
- **Understanding, support and engagement will increase** among young people, professionals, authorities, decision makers and the public **for all dimensions of sustainability**.
- Local, coastal and policy communities will use coastal and nature-based heritage, culture and ecosystem services as a basis for potentially year-round diversified sustainable eco-tourism activities.
- A framework will be developed to measure communities’ well-being beyond economic indicators (e.g. social, environmental) and use both to create collaborative community management models, including for sustainable and/or regenerative tourism.

### Expected impact

Proposals for topics under this destination should set out a credible pathway to achieving **resilient, inclusive, just, healthy and green rural, coastal and urban communities** and more specifically one or several of the following expected impacts:

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<sup>386</sup> Reference for using this expression is UNESCO work: <https://en.unesco.org/links>.

- **Rural, coastal and urban areas are developed in a sustainable, balanced, equitable and inclusive manner** thanks to a better understanding of the i) environmental, socio-economic, behavioural, cultural, architectural and demographic structures, ii) needs and drivers of change and their interconnections, and iii) how digital, nature-based, social and community-led innovations are deployed.
- **Rural, coastal and urban communities are empowered to i) act for change**, ii) be better prepared to achieve climate-neutrality and adapt to climate change, and iii) use the digital and green transitions to increase resilience and provide positive long-term prospects.
- **Rural communities are equipped with upgraded innovation ecosystems and innovative and smarter circular solutions** that i) increase access to services and job opportunities, including for women, young people in vulnerable situations, ii) increase their attractiveness and iii) reduce the feeling of being left behind, even in remote locations like mountains and outermost regions.
- **Sustainable development of coastal areas**, including coastal protection and resilience, is enhanced, reaping the benefits of social, digital and community-led innovations, to deliver nature-based and scientifically validated solutions to current coastal socio-economic and environmental threats.
- **Urban and peri-urban communities** – including people in vulnerable situations – can access, afford and choose healthy, nutritious and environmental-friendly food.

Communities in natural and coastal areas can offer sustainable, quality, environmentally and socially friendly tourism, recreational and leisure activities.

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

The following call(s) in this work programme contribute to this destination:

Call	Budgets (EUR million)		Deadline(s)
	2023	2024	
HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01	38.50		12 Apr 2023
HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-01		15.00	22 Feb 2024
HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-02		22.00	22 Feb 2024 (First Stage) 17 Sep 2024 (Second Stage)

***Horizon Europe - Work Programme 2023-2024***  
***Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment***

Overall indicative budget	38.50	37.00	
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**Call - Resilient, inclusive, healthy and green rural, coastal and urban communities**

***HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01***

**Conditions for the Call**

Indicative budget(s)<sup>387</sup>

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) <sup>388</sup>	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2023		
Opening: 22 Dec 2022				
Deadline(s): 12 Apr 2023				
HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-1	RIA	10.00	Around 5.00	2
HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-2	IA	11.00	Around 5.50	2
HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-3	CSA	3.00	Around 3.00	1
HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-4	RIA	3.00	Around 3.00	1
HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-5	RIA	5.00	Around 5.00	1
HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-6	RIA	6.50	Around 6.50	1
Overall indicative budget		38.50		

**General conditions relating to this call**

<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A.
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General

<sup>387</sup> The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening.  
The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.

All deadlines are at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.  
The budget amounts are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the general budget of the Union for years 2023 and 2024.

<sup>388</sup> Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

	Annex B.
<i>Financial and operational capacity and exclusion</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex C.
<i>Award criteria</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex D.
<i>Documents</i>	The documents are described in General Annex E.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G.

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-1: Enhancing social inclusion in rural areas: focus on people in a vulnerable situation and social economy**

<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 5.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 10.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply: The proposals must use the multi-actor approach. See definition of the multi-actor approach in the introduction to this work programme part.</p>

**Expected Outcome:** The successful proposals will contribute to fostering a sustainable, balanced, equitable and inclusive development of rural areas, supporting the implementation of the following Commission's priorities: the European Green Deal, in particular its fair and just transition component; an economy that works for people as well as to the European pillar of social rights, the EU social economy action plan; and a new push for European democracy, notably to the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas objectives (in particular contributing to rural areas' resilience), and the strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030.



Project results are expected to contribute to all of following expected outcomes:

- Improved understanding of policy makers at different levels (European, national, regional and local) and citizens regarding the challenges to address disparities and marginalisation in rural areas, the various needs of people in a vulnerable situation, and how to enhance social inclusion, social resilience and well-being;
- Improved policies and governance frameworks for social inclusion and social economy in rural areas;
- Increased economic opportunities and development of social entrepreneurship in rural areas;
- Improved social integration and access to adequate services for people in a vulnerable situation in rural areas and to rural dwellers more in general.

Scope: Projects funded under this topic will contribute to build more inclusive, social resilient and prosperous European rural areas by improving the understanding of social inclusion and social economy challenges in rural areas, by taking stock of existing policies responses, and solutions for the provision of adequate services to the population in a vulnerable situation and for enhancing social economy and entrepreneurship.

Projects will also address these challenges by piloting innovative solutions that foster social economy and improve social inclusion of people in a situation of vulnerability.

Proposals are expected to:

- Identify and analyse the drivers of social exclusion and the challenges to address disparities and marginalisation in various rural areas in Europe, (e.g., remote rural areas, rural areas in the EU's outermost regions (defined in article 349 TFEU), coastal and mountain areas, rural areas close to towns and cities);
- Gain a better understanding of the needs of and challenges faced by people in a vulnerable situation in various rural areas of Europe, the possible ways to address economic and demographic challenges, including ageing, disability, and vulnerability of young people where relevant (in particular those not in employment, education or training NEET), and accessibility to adequate services (e.g. considering also universal design), including social ones (e.g. for people with mental or physical disabilities);
- Benchmark policies, services, including social ones, and initiatives developed at various levels to empower people in a vulnerable situation to full and effective participation and inclusion in society, including social economy and entrepreneurship (e.g., social farming, itinerant services and mobility, multishops), pooling of services and creation of meeting places to enhance social interaction (e.g., multidisciplinary health houses, associative cafés), public-private partnerships, and rural-urban linkages. Assess the quality, strengths and weaknesses of these services and to what extent they are used by/reach the target groups;

- Explore the role, potential and limitations of social economy and social enterprises in supporting the population in a vulnerable situation in rural areas, including for the provision of basic and adequate social services;
- Make policy recommendations on how to improve service delivery and other relevant measures in order to meet the needs of people in a vulnerable situation, as well as on how to create and enabling framework for the upscale of social economy in rural areas;
- Accompany pilot innovation actions supporting people in a vulnerable situation and social entrepreneurship to draw additional knowledge from concrete examples.

Proposals should be innovation-oriented and must implement the multi-actor approach, bringing together multiple science fields, in particular the social sciences and humanities (SSH) (e.g., sociology, behavioural sciences, psychology, economics, etc.), and actors with complementary roles and experiences (e.g., representatives of people in a vulnerable situation, service providers, health services, associations, public authorities, universal designers, etc.).

Proposals should cover a representative variety of European rural areas, consider various types of vulnerability (including gender and intersectionality when relevant), and take stock of and experiment a variety of social economy and service provision examples.

Projects should build on existing results, findings and good practices. For instance they could explore activities undertaken by Horizon Europe projects funded under the topics HORIZON-CL2-2022-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-02 and HORIZON-CL2-2021-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-03.

Finally, projects funded under this topic should coordinate activities between them to avoid overlaps and benefit from synergies. Proposals should allocate appropriate budget and resources to implement this task.

**HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-2: Improving rural future through better territorial governance and rural-urban synergies**

<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 5.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 11.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply: The proposals must</p>

	use the multi-actor approach. See definition of the multi-actor approach in the introduction to this work programme part.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:  Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties. The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants. The maximum amount to be granted to each third party is EUR 60 000.

Expected Outcome: The successful proposal will contribute to fostering a sustainable, balanced equitable and inclusive development of rural areas, supporting the implementation of the European Green Deal, in particular to the farm to fork and the biodiversity strategies, the organic action plan, the common agricultural policy (CAP), the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas and its objectives (contributing to make rural areas stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous) and to its flagship initiative “Research and innovation for rural communities”, and the EU territorial agenda for 2030.

Projects results are expected to contribute to all of following expected outcomes:

- Improved connections, strategies and governance arrangements that foster synergistic development and just transition of rural and urban areas and more integrated territorial policies and strategies in a growing number of localities;
- Improved business and innovation opportunities thanks to a more proximate, circular and green economy and renewed vitality of rural places through a better connectivity, improved valorisation of cultural and natural heritage, and stronger innovation ecosystems;
- Improved mutual access of rural and urban actors to services provided by either type of areas;
- Improved social connectivity, social capital, resilience, and capacity to face changes as well as of innovating, and increased understanding of the cultural connections between rural and urban communities and strengthened sense of territorial identity.

Scope: Rural and urban areas are interdependent and can mutually benefit from a territorial planning that takes into consideration their interactive relationship.

People, goods, services, information, financial capitals, energy, etc. flow between these areas, but these linkages are often neglected by policy makers that tend to deal with rural and urban issues separately. Proposals should aim at improving rural-urban cooperation, connections and planning for an integrated territorial development that adopts equitable measures to respond to socio-environmental disparities and foster sustainable growth.

Proposals are expected to support specific projects for developing rural-urban territorial partnerships to enhance the well-being of rural and urban people, increase resilience and favour a more synergistic/interlinked/networked development of rural and urban areas.

Proposal should also prioritise experimentation and innovation in domains that have been demonstrated to favour bi-directional urban-rural synergies and the development of a well-being economy: proximity (shortening distances/value chains including in the agri-food sector with particular attention to organic production), greener economy/society (e.g. ecosystem services and protection and restoration of biodiversity and natural capital, including nature-based solution – NBS), circularity (closing loops/ flows), services (improving social connectivity, new ways of working and living, pooling of and/or itinerant services), culture, landscape and heritage (building territorial identities as well as improving access to a valorised cultural heritage and cultural life) and mobility (sustainable and affordable mobility alternatives for rural residents).

Projects financed under this topic should capitalise on lessons learnt to further upgrade and future-proof policy frameworks and enabling environments.

Proposals should pay attention to the ecological and digital transitions, the potential of digital technologies as well as social inclusiveness, environmental knowledge and access of rural communities to good quality services and opportunities. In addition, they should analyse the impact caused by COVID 19 pandemic on integrated territorial development and address challenges that resulted from it.

Proposals must implement the multi-actor approach and bring together multiple science fields, in particular the social sciences and humanities (SSH) (e.g., economics, human geography, political science, cultural studies, etc.), and actors with complementary roles and experiences (e.g., service providers, transport services, public authorities, associations, innovators, small and medium enterprises -SMEs - etc.).

Proposals should cover a representative variety of European rural areas (e.g. rural-costal areas, mountains areas, remote rural areas) and build on results of relevant Horizon 2020 projects such as RURBAN, ROBUST (e.g., rural-urban learning hub), COASTAL, RURITAGE, RURALURE, SmartCulTour, TExTOUR, and FOODSHIFT 2030 and seek to improve/uptake governance and role models they have identified as promising.

Projects financed under this topic should create synergies with the New European Bauhaus (NEB) projects, facilitating ideas flows from urban to rural settings and vice-versa. For instance, some NEB projects could inspire good practices on the reuse of buildings in rural areas that can function as innovation hubs or build links between urban and rural areas. Proposals should allocate adequate budget and resources to implement this task.

This topic is open to financial support to third parties as an option either to select pilots for developing partnerships or innovative solutions aiming at contributing to integrated territorial development.

Finally, proposals are encouraged to leverage the data and services available through European Research Infrastructures federated under the European Open Science Cloud, as well as data from relevant Data Spaces.

**HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-3: International benchmarking of rural and territorial policies and delivery mechanisms**

<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 3.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 3.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Due to the scope of this topic, legal entities established in third countries are exceptionally eligible for Union funding.</p> <p>If eligible for funding, legal entities established in non-associated third countries/name specific countries may exceptionally participate in this Coordination and support action as a beneficiary or affiliated entity.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>389</sup>.</p>

**Expected Outcome:** The successful proposal will contribute to fostering a sustainable, balanced, equitable and inclusive development of rural areas, supporting the implementation of the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas objectives (contributing to make rural areas stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous), the rural pact, the European Rural Observatory, the European territorial agenda for 2030, and to the European Green Deal more in general, and in particular to the EU climate adaptation strategy.

<sup>389</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under 'Simplified costs decisions' or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

Project results are expected to contribute to all of following expected outcomes:

- Improved understanding of rural development and territorial policies existing across the world, as well as delivery mechanisms by policy makers at different levels (e.g. international, national, regional and local).
- Upgraded and more innovative and integrated rural policy frameworks (e.g. for rural revitalisation and attractiveness, for improving rural innovation ecosystems, for urban-rural linkages, for improved adaptation strategies, plans and measures that aims at addressing climate change in a systemic manner) at different levels (e.g. international, national, regional, local) capitalising on international knowledge exchange to increase inclusive and sustainable rural well-being;
- Enhanced uptake of a positive narrative on the future of rural areas at international level by policymakers.

Scope: The study and implementation of rural policies is unequally advanced across the world. The project funded under this topic should contribute to increase policymakers' understanding of rural challenges and strengthen their capacities to implement adequate policy responses to these challenges in order to increase inclusive and sustainable well-being in rural areas, considering also climate change mitigation and adaptation. Proposals are expected to work by adopting a holistic vision to rural development and/or revitalisation, avoiding a sectorial approach (e.g. rural development should not be limited to agricultural development, but overarch several aspects of the rural life).

Proposals are expected to:

- Perform international benchmarking of rural policies within the EU and third countries who appear as best practice examples of science-society-policy exchange activities, global dialogue on rural policies and capacity building for policymakers working at different levels (e.g., international, national, regional, and local);
- Analyse delivery mechanisms (decentralised vs centralised, quality of multi-level governance, role of politics, etc.) and ways to measure impact combining both quantitative and qualitative methods;
- Focus on multi-dimensional policies (e.g. coordination among different policies and different policy level, from local to international) that address several needs and challenges in an integrated manner;
- Analyse also rural and territorial policies that were developed with and for rural communities and identify effective citizen engagement methods;
- Identify and analyse also successful policy measures aimed at creating opportunities for young people in rural areas;

- Enhance peer-to-peer learning among international, national, regional and local policy makers by experimenting different mechanisms and tools for effective knowledge exchange, even among different levels, on best practices and lessons learnt about rural and territorial policies and delivery mechanisms;
- Provide recommendations to policy makers at different levels (e.g. international, national, regional and local) on how to best address rural needs and challenges and foster sustainable balanced, equitable and inclusive development of rural areas.
- Provide recommendations to policy makers at different levels, in particular regional and local, on how to best access and make use of existing funds.
- Projects should provide relevant results, in particular develop a framework to measure communities' well-being beyond economic indicators (including social, health-related, environmental) to measure policy impacts in rural areas that can be linked with the work of the upcoming EU Rural Observatory.

This topic should involve the effective contribution of social sciences and humanities (SSH) disciplines (e.g., economics, international studies, development studies, political science, citizen engagement studies, and human geography).

In order to achieve the expected outcomes, international cooperation is strongly encouraged.

Legal entities from third countries can take part in the project as associated partner or beneficiary.

**HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-4: Investigating the contribution of geographical indications (GIs) to sustainable development and optimising support for newly established schemes**

<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 3.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 3.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:  Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the

	Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025). <sup>390</sup> .
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Expected Outcome: The successful proposal should support the objectives of the farm to fork strategy for sustainable food as well as to strengthen the contribution of the system of geographical indications (GIs) to support those objectives.

Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Better understanding of the contribution of GIs schemes to sustainable development and in particular to achieve the objectives of the farm to fork strategy.
- Sustainability attributes in GI schemes are widely implemented by the producers and recognized and correctly interpreted and understood by consumers.
- Better design and implementation of GIs policy to foster their delivery of sustainable agriculture, aquaculture and fishery, healthy and sustainable diets and sustainable food systems.

Scope: The EU is renowned for its high quality food products having specific characteristics or farming attributes that distinguish them in the marketplace, and particularly those labelled under registered geographical indications (GIs). The quality and diversity of the Union's food production is one of its important strengths giving a competitive advantage to its producers and making a major contribution to its living cultural and gastronomic heritage.

Quality schemes can benefit the rural and coastal economy. This is particularly the case in disadvantaged areas, in mountain areas and in the most remote regions where the farming sector already takes a significant part of the economy and production costs are high. They can create value for local communities through products that are deeply rooted in tradition, culture and geography.<sup>391</sup>

Building on the state-of-the-art in particular, but not limited to, on results of the Strength2Food project<sup>392</sup>, the proposals are expected to focus on GIs schemes.

Proposals are expected to:

- Provide a sound analysis of the state-of-the art in research on the impacts of GIs schemes in terms of all aspects of sustainability;

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<sup>390</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under 'Simplified costs decisions' or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

<sup>391</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/food-farming-fisheries/key\\_policies/documents/cap-specific-objectives-brief-3-farmer-position-in-value-chains\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/cap-specific-objectives-brief-3-farmer-position-in-value-chains_en.pdf)

<sup>392</sup> <https://www.strength2food.eu/>



- Assess sustainability impacts of all GIs products (>3000) in all three dimensions, i.e., economic, social and environmental (including use of natural resources, cultural heritage preservation, public health);
- Comprehensively map the practices in GIs production systems and identify those that minimise the negative environmental and social impacts and at the same time balance the economic dimension of sustainability;
- Investigate how to better valorise the sustainable deliverables of GIs, including the type and characteristics of public goods generated by the GI production and the benefits for local areas and society at large;
- Identify synergies among different intervention schemes in order to increase the participation of farmers and fishermen;
- Explore consumers' perception of GIs, including the demand for valorising GIs as qualifier of shorter food supply chain, and how to better promote GIs that are aligned with healthy and sustainable diets to increase demand and willingness to pay for GI products.
- Explore and benchmark the approaches/policy followed by the different Member States and Associated Countries when it comes to GIs and sustainability;
- Formulate best practices, decision tools, recommendations to be used by producers and policy makers to improve sustainability of the GIs schemes and optimise the support for newly established GI schemes that are aligned with healthy and sustainable diets;

An adequate representation of consumers' interests by bodies that are knowledgeable of policy issues involved needs to be ensured, at least for those aspects of the project that involve consumers, consumers' information and perception.

#### **HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-5: Assessing urban farming impacts**

<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 5.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 5.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions

Expected Outcome: The successful proposals will support the European Green Deal, farm to fork strategy and impact assessment for the post-2027 common agricultural policy (CAP).

Projects results are expected to contribute to all of following expected outcomes:

- Improved knowledge on impacts and risks of various types of urban farming from the economic, environmental and social perspective, with a particular focus on spill-over effects into rural and peri-urban areas;
- Improved awareness of policy makers helping them adjust policy and legal frameworks to foster benefits and mitigate risks associated to the development of various forms of urban farming and related technologies.

Scope: Proposals are expected to:

- Assess current and future (foresight) contribution of various forms of urban farming to:
  - o Overall food supply, food security and resilience mainly for urban citizens but also addressing potential food security impacts on rural populations, factoring in megatrends and potential risks around key inputs or conditions enabling urban farming;
  - o Evolution of farm income in urban and rural areas, the distribution of value added in the supply chain and possible effects on the bargaining power of supply chain actors;
  - o The provision of ecosystem services in urban and rural areas against the evolution of environment and climate conditions (including water and nutrient use and cycling, biodiversity protection, energy use, soils including soil health, regulation of the urban heat island effect etc.), in relation with European Green Deal objectives;
  - o The provision of social benefits (e.g., access of new and/or young farmers, gender equity, place-based/community development) and improvement of social capital (e.g., values, networks, governance) and community cohesion in urban and rural areas. Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) aspects should be an integral part of the proposal;
  - o The demand for new skills, training and educational offer also taking into account the technological or social dimensions of different forms of urban farming.
- Compare the conditions under which various types of urban, peri-urban or rural farmers operate in order to identify the challenges that may justify targeted regulatory or policy initiatives. Conditions are to be understood in a broad sense, including e.g., initial investments, production, quality control, labelling, marketing and retail as well as the legal and enabling environment in which they operate.
- Support the discussion on rationale for policy interventions in the EU context.

Proposals should build links and capitalise on the results of past and ongoing relevant projects, e.g., Horizon 2020 EFUA and the New European Bauhaus (NEB) in urban food system transformation.

Proposals should describe a credible pathway from their project results and outcomes towards the expected impact of this Destination.

**HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-6: Inclusive and smart ways to communicate sustainability of food**

<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 6.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 6.50 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding.</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply: The proposals must use the multi-actor approach. See definition of the multi-actor approach in the introduction to this work programme part.</p>

Expected Outcome: This topic is in line with the European Green Deal priorities and the farm to fork strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system, as well as of the EU's climate ambition for 2030 and 2050. This will contribute to the Food 2030 priorities: nutrition for sustainable healthy diets, climate, biodiversity and environment, circularity and resource efficiency, innovation and empowering communities and thriving businesses.

This topic contributes to creating a sustainable food labelling framework to empower consumers to make sustainable food choices as part of the farm to fork strategy.

Projects results are expected to contribute to all the following expected outcomes:

- Enhanced understanding of the status of consumer information expectations/needs (conscious and unconscious) related to all three dimensions of sustainability and its drivers and challenges, including the influence of external factors and socio-cultural aspects;
- Identified best means of transmission and presentations of sustainability related information to guide and change consumer behaviour.

Scope: The sustainability food labelling framework can help consumers in making sustainable food choices. An improved understanding of the drivers of food choices and the role of sustainability can support in using EU and national policy makers and government actions and

funds most efficiently and using the best approaches<sup>393</sup>. Information itself may not be enough to change citizens' perception and actions, it should be addressed "in the right way" (emotional cues...etc.) and consider their current knowledge and information needs. Citizens' food choices, although frequently characterized as a matter of personal choice, are subjective largely by food environments<sup>394</sup> and there is a need to understand the influence of marketing and media as part of the environment, sometimes creating adverse effects<sup>395</sup>.

Proposals are expected to address the following:

- Analyse the impact of different influential factors, such as norms/beliefs/cultural environments as well as medias and their way of communicating on the consumer understanding of sustainability, emotional beliefs and response to sustainability information including issues of trust and reliability;
- Analyse the status of consumer information expectations/needs (conscious and unconscious) related to sustainability and understand how sustainability related information expectations/needs can be increased/developed as well as their drivers and challenges;
- Test different means of transmission (including different actors sharing information (private vs public)) and presentations of sustainability related information to guide and change consumer behaviour best (including increased willingness to pay for sustainable products and services);
- Test the response of the public to information related to at least two dimensions of sustainability, including aspects that cover the whole food chain, such as for example biodiversity, packaging or composting, locally produced products;
- Proposals should include a dedicated task, appropriate resources and a plan on how they will collaborate with other projects under the topic HORIZON-CL6-2024-GOVERNANCE-01-3: The role of mainstream media, social media and marketing in fostering healthy and sustainable consumption patterns and how to encourage good practice or incentives”;

Proposals are encouraged to cooperate with actors such as the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC). The JRC may provide expertise on how to strengthen the relationship between scientists and European policy makers and to promote research and collaboration on food systems science.

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<sup>393</sup> Placzek, O., "Socio-economic and demographic aspects of food security and nutrition", OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers, No. 150, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/49d7059f-en>, 2021.

<sup>394</sup> European Public Health Alliance (2019) "Food environments are the physical, economic, political and socio-cultural contexts in which people engage with the food system to make their decisions about acquiring, preparing and consuming food" at <https://epha.org/what-are-food-environments/>.

<sup>395</sup> World Health Organisation "Tackling food marketing to children in a digital world: trans-disciplinary perspectives", [https://www.euro.who.int/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/322226/Tackling-food-marketing-children-digital-world-trans-disciplinary-perspectives-en.pdf](https://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/322226/Tackling-food-marketing-children-digital-world-trans-disciplinary-perspectives-en.pdf), 2016.

Proposals must implement the 'multi-actor approach' and ensure adequate involvement of citizens and civil society, together with social innovators, planners, social scientists, communication and marketing experts and public authorities to develop new methods and approaches to innovation. This topic should involve the effective contribution of SSH disciplines.

**Call - Resilient, inclusive, healthy and green rural, coastal and urban communities**

***HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-01***

**Conditions for the Call**

Indicative budget(s)<sup>396</sup>

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) <sup>397</sup>	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2024		
Opening: 17 Oct 2023 Deadline(s): 22 Feb 2024				
HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-01-1	IA	6.00	Around 3.00	2
HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-01-2	RIA	6.00	Around 6.00	1
HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-01-3	RIA	3.00	Around 3.00	1
Overall indicative budget		15.00		

**General conditions relating to this call**

<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A.
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B.

<sup>396</sup> The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening.  
The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.  
All deadlines are at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.

The budget amounts are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the general budget of the Union for years 2023 and 2024.

<sup>397</sup> Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

<i>Financial and operational capacity and exclusion</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex C.
<i>Award criteria</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex D.
<i>Documents</i>	The documents are described in General Annex E.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G.

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-01-1: Unlock the potential of the New European Bauhaus in urban food system transformation**

<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 3.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 6.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:  The following additional eligibility criteria apply: the proposals must use the multi-actor approach. See definition of the multi-actor approach in the introduction to this work programme part.
<i>Evaluation Procedure</i>	To ensure a balanced portfolio covering demonstration activities in diverse geographical areas of the European Union and Associated Countries, grants will be awarded first to the highest ranked application according to the standard procedure described in Horizon Europe General Annexes D and F, followed by other applications that are the highest ranked among those that ensure the most complementary geographical coverage, provided that the applications attain all thresholds. When assessing geographical coverage, the evaluation will take into account the location of the application's demonstration activities, not the location of the application's

	participants/beneficiaries.
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Expected Outcome: In line with the European Green Deal priorities and the farm to fork strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system, as well as of the EU's climate ambition for 2030 and 2050 and the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030, the successful proposal will support the development of policies, business models and market conditions contributing to the sustainable, balanced and inclusive development of urban and peri-urban areas and to the empowerment and resilience of their communities, who can access, afford and choose healthier, nutritious and environmental-friendly food. The successful proposal will also contribute to the Food 2030 priorities: nutrition for sustainable healthy diets, climate, biodiversity and environment, circularity and resource efficiency, innovation and empowering communities.

The overall aim of this topic and associated R&I activities is to leverage the New European Bauhaus<sup>398</sup> values for urban and peri-urban food system transformation by positively transforming the food environment<sup>399</sup> to enable sustainable, inclusive, and aesthetic ways of food system transformation.

Projects results are expected to contribute to all following expected outcomes:

- Positively transformed food environments that enhance sustainable food system transformation by applying the vision of New European Bauhaus (NEB) to “call on all Europeans to imagine and build together a sustainable and inclusive future that is beautiful for our eyes, minds, and souls”;
- Reconnected and engaged citizens with nature and healthy and sustainable food for their well-being and health while providing multifunctional benefits, such as biodiversity.

Scope: Sustainable food systems can be an integral part of our living spaces including urban gardens, rooftop gardens and other nature-based solutions and positively transform our food environments. Exploiting the vision of New European Bauhaus and providing inclusive access, education and capacity building can provide multi-functional benefits and help transforming food systems especially in urban and peri-urban areas.

Proposals are expected to address the following:

- Involve all three core values of NEB: 1) sustainability, 2) aesthetics/quality of experience, 3) inclusion, for transforming food environments and contribute to a green and sustainable infrastructure;
- Expand food environments by using architecture/local place-based approaches for innovative solutions, including art, for current and future needs linked to sustainable food environments and stronger citizen connection to food and empowered self-

<sup>398</sup> [https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/index\\_en](https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/index_en)

<sup>399</sup> European Public Health Alliance (2019) “Food environments are the physical, economic, political and socio-cultural contexts in which people engage with the food system to make their decisions about acquiring, preparing and consuming food.” <https://epha.org/what-are-food-environments/>

provisioning communities with multi-functional nature-based solutions (e.g., urban gardens connected to parks, edible trees and bushes, edible green infrastructure...etc.);

- Use and demonstrate place-based solutions with considering its specific resource pool and place, e.g., connect food to local cultural values and if possible, to indigenous communities and/or urban citizens' movements and make use of local plants and herbs, also supporting local ecological resilience;
- Apply and demonstrate community-based solutions with strong citizen engagement (especially youth) to simultaneously drive human needs and environmental benefits;
- Connect rural and urban/peri-urban areas and communities for co-benefits and enhanced inclusive experience, by also using data and technology<sup>6</sup>;
- Develop appropriate models to multiply innovations across the EU while considering different types of urban/peri-urban areas (different city size, different countries);
- Proposals should include a dedicated task, appropriate resources and a plan on how they will collaborate with other projects funded under this topic as well as to interact with the New European Bauhaus community, NEBLab and other relevant actions under NEB, e.g. by participating in activities, workshops, as well as common communication and dissemination activities, and connect with learnings from other initiatives such as the “Year of Greener Cities” and “Year of youth”;

Proposals must implement the 'multi-actor approach' and ensure adequate involvement of citizens and civil society, together with urban designers, design thinkers, social innovators, start-ups, planners, social scientists and public authorities to strengthen relationships between urban planning and food choices and to develop new methods and approaches to innovation. This topic should involve the effective contribution of SSH disciplines.

In the context of this topic, geographical areas of the European Union and Associated Countries are NUTS level 1 regions of European Union Member States and of Associated Countries for which they are defined. In the case of Associated Countries without NUTS classification, the country as a whole is to be considered as one geographical area:

- List of Associated Countries not defined by NUTS level 1: Armenia; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Faroe Islands; Georgia; Kosovo<sup>400</sup>; Israel; Moldova; Tunisia; Ukraine.
- List of countries not defined by NUTS level 1 with which association negotiations are being processed or where association is imminent: Morocco.

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<sup>400</sup> 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.



**HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-01-2: Societal perceptions and benefits of rural life and jobs: will COVID 19 generate a long-lasting shift?**

<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 6.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 6.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions

Expected Outcome: The successful proposal will contribute to fostering a sustainable, balanced, equitable and inclusive development of rural areas, supporting the implementation of the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas<sup>401</sup> and its objectives that sees EU rural areas stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous by 2040, and the EU territorial agenda for 2030<sup>402</sup>.

Project results are expected to contribute to all of following expected outcomes:

- Improved understanding by policy makers at different levels (European, national, regional and local) of the behavioural drivers of people's lifestyle choices and rural and urban dwellers' perceptions of rural life in the aftermath of COVID 19;
- Improve understanding of policy makers at different levels (European, national, regional and local) of the behavioural and structural drivers of people's lifestyle choices and people's perceptions of rural life in the aftermath of COVID 19 and of the long-term trends and opportunities for rural areas;
- Improved policy-response to rural areas challenges and needs in the light of the COVID 19 impact;

Improved narrative of rural and farming lives.

Scope: Rural areas are often described by the challenges they face: depopulation, demographic change, low income levels, limited access to services, low connectivity, discontent caused by the feeling of being overlooked and limited resilience. However, rural areas can be places of opportunities<sup>403</sup>. For instance, they are key for green-energy production and for ecosystem services; they have the potential of developing the bio and circular economy; they are also an integral part of the ecological and digital transitions; they can also

<sup>401</sup> A long-term vision for the EU's rural areas - Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0345>

<sup>402</sup> Territorial Agenda 2030, [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/territorial\\_agenda\\_2030\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/territorial_agenda_2030_en.pdf)

<sup>403</sup> OECD, Rural well-being, geography of opportunities, <https://www.oecd.org/regional/rural-well-being-d25cef80-en.htm>

be places rich in terms of cultural heritage and have the potential to develop cultural initiatives.

Overall, there are increasing demands from the society that are putting pressure on rural areas and the Covid-19 crisis showed how important it is to keep essential services, e.g. the agri-food production that is an important part of the rural economies, active.

To better respond to rural areas needs and challenges, and to revert the negative trends that affect the well-being of rural communities, it is important to better understand how rural life is perceived by urban and rural dwellers and to build a new narrative, based on facts, that highlight the opportunities of these places.

Projects funded under this topic are expected to:

- undertake sociological, behavioural, social psychology, social science, history, geographical, cultural, gender, economic studies on societal perception of rural areas and rural lifestyles, including, but not limiting to, societal perception of farming in a variety of places across Europe;
- increase understanding of the drivers of the attractiveness of rural and farming lives and of corresponding criticisms and biases, including the social composition of flows (e.g. age, gender, nationality, economic status, etc.), a geography of departure and destination zones, distinguishing between perceptions and facts, and both from rural people and urban people (including perception of various farming sectors and practices);
- analyse how these drivers have been affected by COVID 19 and are likely to evolve, in the short to long-term (2050) (e.g. economic and trade evolution, new ways of working, multi-local living and second homes, zero pollution, health risks etc.);
- analyse social relations and possible conflicts between new populations and residents, the possible decomposition of social segregation or social mixing;
- identify the policy and financial consequences for local jurisdictions of both new arrivals and depopulation in terms for instance, of public infrastructures sizing (e.g., water treatment, waste management), real estate markets and housing, public services, etc.
- analyse initiatives aiming at shifting perceptions of both urban and rural dwellers on rural and farming lives and pilot new initiatives (e.g. on rural attractiveness for young people also beyond agriculture) in different localities across Europe;
- use foresight (e.g., scenarios, build on trend analysis and disruptive factors, weak signals) to develop adequate strategies to mitigate threats and seize opportunities;
- contribute to build a positive narrative of rural and farming lives based on facts.

This topic should involve the effective contribution of social science and humanities (SSH) disciplines (e.g., sociology, history, human geography behavioural sciences, gender studies, etc.).

### **HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-01-3: Participation and empowerment of Arctic coastal, local, and indigenous communities in environmental decision-making**

<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 3.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 3.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply: the proposals must use the multi-actor approach. See definition of the multi-actor approach in the introduction to this work programme part.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>404</sup>.</p>

**Expected Outcome:** Proposals should contribute to the sustainable and inclusive development of Arctic coastal, local and indigenous communities, supporting the implementation of the European Green Deal and the EU policy for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic, incorporating a better understanding of the environmental, socio-economic, cultural and demographic drivers of change in the Arctic region.

Activities are expected to empower Arctic coastal, local and indigenous people to act for change through capacity building and education actions, leading to positive long-term prospects for all, including women, young people and vulnerable groups.

The research should explore and document traditional environmental knowledge (TEK) of Arctic coastal, local and indigenous peoples, contributing thus to safeguarding and valuing the cultural identity of the Arctic; explore interactions between local and indigenous knowledge

<sup>404</sup> This decision is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

holders and scientists and develop innovative ways to mobilise this knowledge for climate change adaptation, ecosystem restoration and socio-economic goals.

Project results are expected to contribute to the following expected outcomes:

- Better understanding of how different types of knowledge, including traditional environmental knowledge (TEK)<sup>405</sup>, are being mobilised; how scientists and local and indigenous knowledge holders cooperate and dialogue in this context;
- Empowerment of Arctic coastal, local and indigenous people and sectors to innovate<sup>406</sup> for the ecological transition and feel part of it, through participatory methodologies (i.e. a multi-actor approach); to engage in decision-making about their environment and livelihoods;
- Explore, with different actors, and recommend ways to bring traditional, local, and scientific knowledge into the collective effort of solving matters of concern, including (choose at least 2 from the items below):

-Adaptation and mitigation to climate change, ecosystem restoration and environment protection;

-Socio-economic changes in the Arctic, ranging from local level (subsistence economies, local livelihoods) to circular economy, fishing, international trade, shipping routes, tourism, and the socio-economic impact of climate change;

-Health and well-being, taking a One Health approach<sup>407</sup>;

-Gender aspects, in the context of current economic and social development and future challenges, inter alia relating to climate and environmental issues.

Scope: Addressing ongoing Arctic environmental and societal changes requires that all relevant knowledge, indigenous/traditional and scientific knowledge alike, is mobilised to respond and govern the challenges posed by those changes, and communities empowered to take part in environmental decision-making.

Proposals are expected to contribute to sustainable and inclusive development, incorporating a better understanding of the environmental, socio-economic, cultural and demographic drivers of change. They will investigate the participation of indigenous and local communities in the

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<sup>405</sup> A definition is proposed in the JRC Report, Arctic Knowledge: Echoes from the North, European Commission, 2021: Traditional/indigenous/local knowledge refers to the knowledge owned by indigenous and local people and communities. It is a living and dynamic knowledge focused on interconnections in the ecosystem. The knowledge is based on a holistic approach and is systematically resilient. Its practice is closely related to land and sea and the lived experience in an environment. It has its own validation methods which are constantly evolving over generations, within communities and families. It is embedded in cultural upbringings and framed within particular worldviews which shape interactions with the environment, all living beings and the management of resources.

<sup>406</sup> More on social innovation can be found here: [www.siceurope.eu](http://www.siceurope.eu)

<sup>407</sup> The term “One Health” describes a multidisciplinary approach to health risks in humans, animals, plants, and the environment.

governance of their livelihoods and environmental decision-making. Proposals should explore how different ways of knowing, worldviews and perspectives can be brought in dialogue, to enhance understanding and to better respond to the impacts of climate, environmental and related socio-economic changes on Arctic people's livelihoods and the environment. Furthermore, how coastal, local, and indigenous communities could be empowered via participatory research processes, to get involved in environmental decision-making. Proposals should identify opportunities for partnerships and co-production of knowledge based on indigenous and scientific ways of knowing.

Proposals should explore how different ways of knowing, worldviews and perspectives can be brought in dialogue, to enhance understanding and to better respond to the impacts of climate, environmental and related socio-economic changes on Arctic people's livelihoods and the environment. Furthermore, how coastal, local, and indigenous communities could be empowered via participatory research processes, to get involved in environmental decision-making. Proposals should identify opportunities for partnerships and co-production of knowledge based on indigenous and scientific ways of knowing.

Several potential coastal sectors can be addressed, however the proposal will ensure inclusion of marine protection, food security, climate adaptation and resilience strategies, but also other activities such as leisure activities and eco-socio-compatible tourism development in coastal areas.

Projects should include representation from multiple disciplines of research, including environmental, marine, social, cultural, health, design.

Attention should be given to different capacity building and social learning arrangements as well as to innovative governance mechanisms at various levels, and their potential implications for social innovation.

This topic is expected to involve the effective contribution of SSH disciplines. The proposals should adopt a responsible and solidary approach where Arctic local and indigenous communities are seen as research partners, using participatory methods and bottom-up co-creation. Participation of Arctic indigenous partners in the project is encouraged, to be involved from the outset in the co-development of the research proposal. Engaging with local authorities during the project would help increase implementation of the project outcomes and support further uptake.

Projects should build on existing knowledge and integrate results from multiple origins, including other EU, international or national projects. Some cooperation activities with projects financed under Destination 'Biodiversity and ecosystem services' and topics of the European Green Deal Call could be included, as well as with relevant projects from other EU programmes, for example the Horizon Europe Missions Ocean, seas and waters and Adaptation to Climate Change.

International cooperation is encouraged, with a strong linkage with the ongoing activities under the All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance and encouraging participation from countries that take part in the Arctic Science Ministerial meetings.

**Call - Resilient, inclusive, healthy and green rural, coastal and urban communities**

***HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-02***

**Conditions for the Call**

Indicative budget(s)<sup>408</sup>

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) <sup>409</sup>	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2024		
Opening: 17 Oct 2023				
Deadline(s): 22 Feb 2024 (First Stage), 17 Sep 2024 (Second Stage)				
HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-02-1-two-stage	IA	10.00	Around 5.00	2
HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-02-2-two-stage	RIA	12.00	Around 6.00	2
Overall indicative budget		22.00		

**General conditions relating to this call**

<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A.
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B.
<i>Financial and operational capacity and</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex

<sup>408</sup> The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening.  
The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.

All deadlines are at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.  
The budget amounts are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the general budget of the Union for years 2023 and 2024.

<sup>409</sup> Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

<i>exclusion</i>	C.
<i>Award criteria</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex D.
<i>Documents</i>	The documents are described in General Annex E.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G.

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-02-1-two-stage: Innovating for climate-neutral rural communities by 2050**

<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 5.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 10.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Applicants submitting a proposal under the blind evaluation pilot (see General Annex F) must not disclose their organisation names, acronyms, logos, nor names of personnel in Part B of their first stage application (see General Annex E).</p>
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply: The proposals must use the multi-actor approach. See the definition of the multi-actor approach in the introduction to this work programme part.</p>
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>This topic is part of the blind evaluation pilot under which first stage</p>

	proposals will be evaluated blindly.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025). <sup>410</sup>.</p>

Expected Outcome: The successful proposal will contribute to fostering a sustainable, balanced, equitable and inclusive development of rural areas, supporting the implementation of the long-term vision for the EU’s rural areas and its objectives (in particular contributing to stronger and resilient rural areas) and to its flagship initiative “Research and innovation for rural communities”, the European Green Deal, in particular the climate pact, the fit for 55 package, the forest and biodiversity strategies, and the new soil strategy as well as the territorial agenda 2030, the common agricultural policy (CAP) and the REPowerEU plan. In addition, proposals will complement the EU Mission Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities, covering sparsely populated areas, and contribute to the objectives of the EU Mission ‘A Soil Deal for Europe’.

Project results are expected to contribute to all of following expected outcomes:

- rural communities are empowered and engaged in the green transition and equipped with strategies and innovative solutions to contribute to EU’s climate-neutrality objectives (by 2035 and 2050) and benefit from a climate-neutral economy;
- rural communities take advantage of data, interoperable platforms and digital technologies available to help them meet climate-neutrality objectives, such as dashboards, data visualisation techniques, modelling, digital twins of entire rural communities and tools contributing to spatial planning;
- policy makers are better informed about policy and regulatory frameworks, conditions and processes that are likely to encourage rural areas’ climate-neutrality while sustaining an adequate social welfare and well-being and avoiding negative social, economic and environmental externalities;
- a stronger rural innovation ecosystem is in place bringing together public and private players and making rural areas an attractive place for innovators to work and live.

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<sup>410</sup> This decision is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)



Scope: The EU aims to be climate-neutral by 2050 – an economy with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. This objective is in line with the EU's commitment to global climate action under the Paris Agreement and it is reflected in the European Green Deal objectives. Considering that approximately one third of EU citizens live in rural areas, which represent 83% of the EU territory, it is key to empower rural communities to transit towards sustainability by fostering innovation in key areas such as environment and sustainable management of resources (air, soil, water), energy, transport, agriculture, industry, bioeconomy, and finance and ensure that no one is left behind.

Projects funded under this topic are expected to:

- design, prototype and test concrete innovations (technical, social, organisational) supporting climate-neutrality, zero pollution and biodiversity enhancement in rural communities, possibly including initiatives such as nature-based solutions (NBS), circularity and bioeconomy, bio-based solutions, community-energy systems, climate-neutral mobility, fire-prevention, etc. Innovations should be co-created with rural stakeholders to respond to their needs and tested for their feasibility for the territorial development opportunities or drawbacks that they bring;
- include training and capacity building for local administrations and rural stakeholders in order to create and maintain a rural innovation ecosystem and enable them to make use or benefit from the successful innovations developed and from existing funding opportunities for the green and digital transitions;
- boost networking and enhance peer-to-peer learning between communities and capitalise on lessons learnt making them available as recommendations for policy makers at various levels (European, national, regional and local);

Proposals are encouraged to fully exploit and build complementarities with the ongoing work regarding the establishment of the European Open Science Cloud and interact with relevant projects developing metadata standards and added value tools to ensure interoperability within and across fields of study.

This topic should involve the effective contribution of social sciences and humanities (SSH), (e.g., for expertise in behavioural change, etc.) and must implement the multi-actor approach by involving relevant stakeholders from an early stage (e.g. rural communities representatives, small-medium enterprises -SMEs, etc., end-users, local authorities, etc.).

Proposals should cover various biogeographical regions with a balanced coverage reflecting the various pedo-climatic zones in Europe in a representative way.

Proposals are expected to build on the preliminary results of the Horizon Europe projects GRANULAR and RUSTIK, in particular its framework and indicators on climate-neutrality of rural communities.

Proposals should also create synergies and coordinate activities with the other project funded under this topic and should allocate appropriate budget for this task. Proposals are also encouraged to build synergies with relevant projects that will be financed under this call.

**HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-02-2-two-stage: New sustainable business and production models for farmers and rural communities**

<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 6.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Applicants submitting a proposal under the blind evaluation pilot (see General Annex F) must not disclose their organisation names, acronyms, logos, nor names of personnel in Part B of their first stage application (see General Annex E).</p>
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply: The proposals must use the multi-actor approach. See the definition of the multi-actor approach in the introduction to this work programme part.</p>
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Proposals are expected to clearly address only one of the areas: area A or area B. To ensure a balanced portfolio covering both area A and area B, grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but at least also to one project that is the highest ranked within area A or B, provided that the applications attain all thresholds. This will allow to fund at least one project under area A and one under area B.</p> <p>This topic is part of the blind evaluation pilot under which first stage proposals will be evaluated blindly.</p>

Expected Outcome: The successful proposal should support the European Green Deal initiatives notably the farm to fork, the forest, biodiversity and bioeconomy strategies, the common agricultural policy (CAP), the communication on sustainable carbon cycles, the EU

mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”, and the long-term vision for the EU’s rural areas (contributing to make rural areas stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous) and its research and innovation flagship initiative by developing innovative business and production models (i.e. but not limited to, smart farming, social farming, indoor plant factory, aquaponics, unattended horticulture, livestock and fish farms, e-commerce, tourism, cultural and natural heritage management, service delivery) that are fit for the future and foster improved economic outcomes, cooperation, inclusiveness and fairness for farmers and/or rural communities, and at the same time achieve high sustainability, contribute to climate neutrality and meet societal expectations, in particular with regards to local economies and protection and restoration of nature and resources (e.g. water, soil and air).

Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Farmers and/or other rural actors widely adopt innovative inclusive and sustainable business and production models that enhance and remunerate climate action (i.e. increase carbon removals), biodiversity protection and restoration, and the reduction of emissions or concentrations of air pollutants in a variety of farming and rural contexts;
- Farmers and/or rural actors position in value chains is improved thanks to more inclusiveness, fairness and financial sustainability of trading relationships between the various actors in the upstream/downstream agri and rural business;
- It is possible to measure and track the economic, social and environmental sustainability of different farming systems and rural businesses thanks to the development and use of innovative technologies, including but not limiting to digital ones.
- Increased prosperity of farmers and/or in rural areas thanks to the creation of new jobs opportunities resulted from innovative and sustainable production and business models.

Scope: EU agri-food value chains are diverse and dynamic, enabling them to meet the various consumers’ expectations, potentially helping producers increase value added. Farming and other sectors in rural areas provide large numbers of jobs, yet rural communities often face challenges, such as a shrinking and ageing population, a lack of high qualified workers, a lack of good quality services and connectivity, which limit the economic attractiveness of these places.

At the same time agriculture is characterised by a stagnant and low share of value added in the value chain due to: high input costs, structure of the food value chains (concentration upstream and downstream), variation in production and incorporation of new services. Pressure on natural resources and climate change threats make all of the above-mentioned problems weigh more heavily. In an era of very tense discussions on climate change, global warming, air, water and soil pollution the EU stands firmly as a front-runner and targets the very ambitious goal of becoming a climate-neutral continent by 2050. This target seems very

challenging when looking at where we stand today and the pace at which expected changes across different sectors are taking place.<sup>411</sup>

Therefore, rural communities as well as farmers are under increasing pressure to adopt sustainable business and production models that consider not only economic but also both social and environmental aspects. Moving towards more sustainable business and production systems requires adequate tools and measurement methods to assess and monitor the multi-performance of farms and rural businesses under different conditions.

Successful proposals are expected to clearly address only one of the following areas: area A or area B.

### **Area A**

Proposals should:

- Design, test and upscale bottom-up community-led innovative business, cooperation and production models to improve farmers' position in different value chains and enable them to transition to sustainable agriculture and answer global challenges in locally adapted ways. They should cover a wide diversity of pedoclimatic, technical, organisational and economic conditions, including the complexity and dynamics in various production systems and structure of food value chains (additional sustainability requirements for farmers might lead to further unbalances in market power in the food chain).
- Investigate ways to monitor and verify improved social, environmental and climate performance and translate it into economic profit and competitive advantage for farmers. They should consider existing, emerging and potential markets and platforms, take into consideration sound cost-effective business, cooperation among different actors and production methods, sustainability and profitability.
- Investigate the trends in adoption of innovation in farms and how farmers innovate their business, cooperation or production models when they introduce new products and engage in new business activities.

Aim to connect citizens, private companies and public organisations with farmers to increase demand for sustainable agriculture and create a market for new business, cooperation and production models including for, but not limited to, e-commerce, smart farming, indoor plant factory, aquaponics, unattended horticulture, livestock and fish farms. Traceability for products and standards for safety and quality should also be taken into account.

- Create and widely share via an open access platform practical innovations, tools, best practices and guidelines to successfully develop and implement novel inclusive and sustainable business, cooperation and production models.

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<sup>411</sup> [https://eic.ec.europa.eu/documents-0\\_en#ecl-inpage-1107](https://eic.ec.europa.eu/documents-0_en#ecl-inpage-1107)

- Investigate and support the wide-spread applications of highly scalable business models for modern agricultural purposes including aspects of platform, circular and bio-based economies.
- Consideration should be given to innovative approaches in the development of production technologies, the circularity of the processes with the objective of zero waste, cascading of resources and consider public health as well as consumers' concerns and demands.

## **Area B**

Proposals are expected to:

- Pilot innovative sustainable business and cooperation models to foster wealth and well-being of rural communities and villages while taking advantage of the green transition through the deployment of demonstrators. These demonstrators should be implemented in various sectors (i.e. but not limited to energy, transport, social services, tourism, culture, digital, etc.) responding to rural communities' needs.
- Investigate the potential of social economy, cooperatives (or other producer organisations) and of innovative forms of business aggregation and develop at least one of these demonstrators that support local economy by actively involving people in a vulnerable situation.
- Explore and take advantage of cross-sectoral and cross-territory linkages adopting a territorial perspective that aims at improving connectivity of rural areas with surrounding intermediate and urban areas.
- Examine the impacts of different kind of innovation on the development and revitalisation of rural areas and the quality of life and living standards of their residents.
- Identify barriers, as well as drivers (including policies) and enabling conditions for the creation and development of sustainable business models in rural areas.
- Provide recommendations to policy makers, at the local, regional, national and international levels for supporting the creation of sustainable business models fit for the future with the aim to increase quality public services, to make better use of various resources and reduce negative impact on the environment, and that provide new opportunities for rural value chains through different models of innovation.
- Create and widely share via an open access platform practical innovations, tools, best practices and guidelines to successfully develop and implement novel inclusive and sustainable business models.
- Proposals should cover a representative variety of rural areas.

All proposals (independent of the selected focus A or B) should explore social innovation and innovative forms of cooperation. Proposals must implement the 'multi-actor approach' and ensure adequate involvement of relevant actors of the value chain.

This topic should involve the effective contribution of social sciences and humanities (SSH) disciplines. Proposals should build on previous and ongoing Horizon 2020 relevant projects (i.e. but not limited to SMARTCHAIN, NEWBIE, agroBRIDGES, CO-FRESH, RUBIZMO, LIVERUR, etc.). They should include a dedicated task, appropriate resources and a plan on how they will collaborate with the other project funded under this and other relevant topics in Horizon Europe and ensure synergy with relevant activities carried out under other initiatives (i.e. but not limited to EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities, Enterprise Europe Network, Circular Bio-based Europe public-private partnership, etc.).

Beyond open access to scientific publications and research data, open access to software, models, workflows, etc. is required to ensure accelerated uptake of innovation, increase research transparency, support immediate and extensive re-use of research materials, and support collaborative and interdisciplinary work, among others.

Due to the scope of this topic, international cooperation is strongly encouraged, in particular with China. This topic is within the scope of the Administrative Arrangement between the European Commission and the Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China on a Co-funding Mechanism for the period 2021-2024 to support collaborative research projects under the Food, Agriculture and Biotechnologies (FAB) and the Climate Change and Biodiversity (CCB) flagship initiatives.

Actions will contribute to implementing the EU-China Food, Agriculture and Biotechnology (FAB) flagship initiative, which aims to ensure sustainability of agri-food systems, catering for the needs of a growing population, the reduction of food and agricultural losses and waste, and the provision of safe and healthy foodstuffs. Interaction with other actions developed under the EU-China Climate Change and Biodiversity (CCB) Research Flagship and the Flagship on Food, Agriculture and Biotechnologies (FAB) is encouraged if relevant.