GRANULAR

QUALITY ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

D 1.2

DECEMBER 2022

Funded by the European Union

D1.2 QUALITY ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

Project name	GRANULAR: Giving Rural Actors Novel data and re-Useable tools to Lead public Action in Rural areas
Project No	Horizon Europe Grant Number (101061068); UKRI Grant Numbers James Hutton Institute (10039965) and University of Southampton (10041831).
Type of funding scheme	Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Action (RIA) - UK Research & Innovation Grant
Call ID & topic	HORIZON-CL6-2021-COMMUNITIES-01-01
Website	www.ruralgranular.eu
Document type	Deliverable
Status	Final
Dissemination level	Public
Authors	Kirsch Aurélie (CIHEAM-IAMM)
Contributions from	Berchoux Tristan (CIHEAM-IAMM)
Work Package Leader	Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Montpellier (IAMM)
Project coordinator	Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Montpellier (IAMM)

SUMMARY

GLOSSARY

Action   Means GRANULAR project

Affiliated entity   Means entities affiliated to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries (obligation to implement action tasks and right to charge costs and claim contributions)

Beneficiaries   Means the signatories of the Grant Agreement benefiting from the EU grant awarded for GRANULAR project

CA Consortium Agreement   Means the agreement to specify with respect to the Project the relationship among the Parties, in particular concerning the organisation of the work between the Parties, the management of the Project and the rights and obligations of the Parties

Coordinator   Means the CIHEAM Montpellier as the intermediary between the Parties and the Granting Authority

Deliverable   Means a report that is sent to the granting authority, providing information to ensure effective monitoring of the project. There are different types of deliverables (e.g. a report on specific activities or results, data management plans, ethics or security requirements)

Executive Board   Means the supervisory body for the execution of the Project, which shall report to and be accountable to the General Assembly, constituted by the Coordinator and representative of each WP leaders.

FAIR principles   Means data which meet principles of findability, accessibility, interoperability, and reusability as FAIR principles for scientific data management

General Assembly   Means the ultimate decision-making body of the consortium constituted by one representative of each Party (General Assembly Member)

Grant   Means the EU grant awarded for GRANULAR project

GA Grant Agreement   Means the contract setting out the terms and conditions of the relationship between the Granting Authority, the Coordinator and the Beneficiaries

Granting Authority	Means the body awarding the grant for the Project
Milestone	Means control points in the project that help to chart progress. Milestones may correspond to the achievement of a key result, allowing the next phase of the work to begin. They may also be needed at intermediary points so that, if problems have arisen, corrective measures can be taken. A milestone may be a critical decision point in the project where, for example, the consortium must decide which of several methods to adopt for further development
Outcomes	Means the expected effects, over the medium term, of projects supported under a given topic. The results of a project should contribute to these outcomes, fostered in particular by the dissemination and exploitation measures. This may include the uptake, diffusion, deployment, and/or use of the project's results by direct target groups
Party	Means the members of the Consortium, jointly responsible for the technical implementation of the action
Results	Means what is generated during the project implementation. This may include, for example, know-how, innovative solutions, algorithms, proof of feasibility, new business models, policy recommendations, guidelines, prototypes, demonstrators, databases, trained researchers, new infrastructures, networks, etc…
Third Party	A Party that enters into a subcontract or otherwise involves third parties (including but not limited to Affiliated Entities or other Participants) in the Project

Introduction to the quality assessment guidelines

Scopes and objectives

This deliverable establishes all quality methods and processes to ensure **quality management, quality monitoring of the project and its outcomes** according to the main rules and standards of Horizon Europe and to allocate responsibility for ensuring that these procedures are followed. The procedures described here apply to all activities financed by the project and therefore to all Parties of the consortium to achieve their specific missions and tasks.

This guide aims to provide guidance to all partners with regard to questions of quality assessment by providing a formal framework to obtain **a high degree of quality, where outcomes are achieved in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of working practices, as well as ensuring the technical quality of project deliverables and outputs**. A particular focus will be laid on **risk monitoring and reporting**.

This document is part of the deliverables of the project and will be submitted to the granting authority in December 2022. All procedures and rules are governed by:

- The Grant Agreement GA (Project 101061068 — GRANULAR) and the Consortium Agreement CA;
- The HORIZON Europe programme's rules (Annotated Grant Agreement November 2021, EU Financial Regulations 2018/1046)

Please note that all paragraphs and articles from the GA and CA included in the present document will be presented with a bordure.

This guide is a chapter of the GRANULAR Procedures Manual which serves as a core reference throughout the project. It does not include the **Ethical guidelines**, the **Data Management Plan** nor **the Communication, Outreach, Dissemination and Exploitation (CODE) strategy**, which are specific reports delivered in December 2022 and March 2023 respectively.

Updating

The quality assessment guidelines is applicable as soon as it is validated by all parties and is open to revisions if necessary. The responsibility for maintaining and updating this document lies with the Coordinator who ensures notification of changes to all Parties likely to be affected by these changes.

Communication and conservation

A PDF version of this document will be sent to the representatives of each party, who will be responsible for transmitting and sharing this document within their team, the associated partners and contractors.

1. Quality Responsibilities

An effective Project management structure is central for the successful implementation of the project while providing active project monitoring and control. The general structure set up is detailed in the Procedures Manual.

Good financial and technical management of the project is responsibility of all partners involved. To guide them, the project management structure is composed of different governance bodies with specific roles assigned related to project's quality management.

The **General Assembly** is the ultimate decision-making body of the consortium, guiding the overall strategy of the project. Consisted of one representative of each Party and chaired by the Coordinator, the General Assembly is responsible for ensuring that the project progresses as planned.

Consisting of all WP leaders, the **Executive Board (EB)** is the supervisory body for the execution of the Project, which shall report to and be accountable to the General Assembly. The EB contributes to the project's quality management by ensuring that all activities are executed, consequently by defining a set of expectations, criteria and means that help to verify the progress of work, the quality of results and their correspondence with the overall project objectives and time scheduling.

The **Coordinator's team** oversees the quality management on a day-to-day basis and is composed of the Project coordinator responsible for the scientific coordination and management of the project and the Project Manager who will manage administrative and financial procedures, monitoring and evaluation with all the project partners. The Coordinator is responsible for the successful coordination of all activities and the timely implementation of the project, while ensuring the fulfilment of administrative requirements. In particular, the Coordinator has to: (i) ensure the timely and efficient completion of tasks, deliverables with the highest quality standard; (ii) ensure that the project complies with the open science strategy of the European Commission through the development of an effective Data Management Plan and the management of Intellectual Property Rights; (iii) support WP and Tasks leaders and co-leaders in the planning and implementation of activities; (iv) control the quality of outputs in terms of content, scientific soundness, readability and appropriateness to target audiences; (v) enable a continuous communication flow with the European Commission; and (vi) ensure compliance with research ethics requirements.

At WP-level, each **WP leader is responsible to coordinate the work in their WP and meet targeted outcomes and objectives**. They organize the programme of activities and monitor the work and progress of partners involved in their WP. They identify and manage deviations from schedule that may affect other tasks and initiate, side-by-side with the Coordinator, corrective actions. They are also responsible for ensuring the timely completion of milestones and deliverables. During the weekly meeting of the EB, they give feedback to the Coordinator about the development and progress of work, advise on known or potential problems that require management action and propose changes in future plans.

The project **Ethics Commitee (EC)** provides oversight for all ethics related aspects for studies conducted in the context of GRANULAR. Composed of an ethics referent for each team leading a Task, the EC is responsible for assessing potential ethical issues transversal to research activities during the project; checking the viability of the ethic and data protection process and, when relevant, ask for modification in the activities to ensure ethical compliance; and seeking advice from the **Independent Ethics Advisor** on ethical considerations when necessary.

The whole consortium is supported and advised by an **external Advisory Board (AB)**, comprised of three independent members. The AB aims to provide critical feedback, intelligence and insight to guide and support the activities of GRANULAR and ensure their alignment with scientific integrity and excellence, but also their relevance with local issues and policies in EU rural areas. The Advisory Board also advises the Executive Board on relevant work being done in the academic sphere, on potential new areas of focus, and helps guarantee the quality of output.

2. Quality methods and processes

Quality assurance formalises all quality methods and processes that have be followed to help monitor the progress of the project and ensure quality in the processes by which outputs are achieved. It applies to all project activities, looking at how outputs were achieved and evaluating activities that drive the project implementation.

> **Quality assurance is a joint responsibility of all partners** during the project lifecycle.

2.1 Quality monitoring of project outcomes

GRANULAR implementation relies on **8 work-packages** with dedicated objectives, leaders, tasks and deliverables.

The Coordinator remains responsible for:

- collecting, reviewing to verify consistency and submitting reports, other deliverables (including financial statements and related certifications) and specific requested documents to the Granting Authority;

- the above includes reviewing any document or information required and verifying their quality and completeness, after they have been first reviewed and verified by the corresponding WP Leader; adequate time should be allocated to these reviews;

- transmitting documents and information connected with the Project to any other Parties concerned.

However, quality assurance foresees a **three-step process, for project outcomes where scientific outcomes of the project are presented** – i.e., deliverables and milestones from all WPs but WP8 *Ethics Requirement*:

- The WP leaders are in charge of approving the deliverables and milestones within their WP;

♦ The Coordinator validates and approves definitively the deliverables and milestones and submits all project deliverables to the Granting Authority.

At the consulting level, the External Advisory Board provides independent and practical expertise and guides the Consortium.

Please note that the timeframe as presented as below is **indicative**. Any longer timeframe could be decided when multiple interactions are foreseen.

Table 1: Timeframe, roles and responsibilities in the production of all deliverables and milestones

Steps	Time before submission
The WP leader sends a reminder to the Task Leader in charge of the deliverable/milestone	**75 days**
A progress report/update dedicated to the Task and associated deliverable/milestone is presented by the WP leader during the Executive Board	**60 days**
The Task Leader sends one first draft for internal review to the WP leader and the Coordinator	**40 days**
The WP leader and the Coordinator send their comments and feedback to the Task Leader	**30 days**
The Task Leader finalizes the draft with final corrections	**20 days**
The Coordinator checks final technical, administrative and format	**10 days**
The Coordinator submits to the granting authority and checks that the Continuous Reporting Module is updated in time	**Deadline: Due contractual date**

2.1.1. Milestones

Milestones are control points in the project that help to chart progress. Milestones may:

♦ correspond to the achievement of a key result, allowing the next phase of the work to begin;

♦ be needed at intermediary points so that, if problems have arisen, corrective measures can be taken;

♦ be a critical decision point in the project.

Each Party has to report milestones achievements in the **Portal Continuous Reporting tool** (see more details as listed in the table 2 as below). **To ensure quality of Milestones**, the internal review process defined as above is set in motion before submitting them to the granting authority.

Table 2: Overview of Milestones and Lead Beneficiary

Lead Beneficiary	Number	Name	Due Date (in months)	Means of Verification	Work Package No.
IAMM	M1	Kick-off meeting	6	Meeting report validated and shared among all partners	WP1
	M2	Mid-term report	24	Mid-term report is consolidated among all partners and shared with the EU Commission	
	M3	Final report	48	Final report is consolidated among all partners and shared with the EU Commission	
WU	M4	Workshop on the Rural Compass	14	Workshop report on the rural compass prototype	WP2
ECR	M5	Prototype and indicators	10	Launch of prototype dashboard of a set of indicators for monitoring and evaluating policies	WP5
	M6	Validation of policy recommendations with LL	24	Completion of validation of policy recommendations with living labs: summary of feedbacks received	
	M7	Knowledge exchange programme	46	Completion of programme of knowledge exchange with policy-makers and rural actors: report (number of meetings, participants, feedback survey).	
UNIPI	M8	MALs Action Plan (1)	12	Detailed action plan is shared for Year 2 (LL)	WP6
	M9	Joint meeting MALs	30	D4.1 to D1.5 and results from LL are presented at a joint meeting with LL and RL	
	M10	MALs Action Plan (2)	24	Detailed action plan is shared for Year 3 (LL+RL)	
	M18	MALs Action Plan (3)	36	Detailed action plan is shared for Year 4 (LL+RL)	
AEIDL	M11	Workplan of the Knowledge Transfer Accelerator	8	Workplan of the Knowledge Transfer Accelerator adopted	WP7
	M12	Conference report adopted	48	Final conference report	
	M13	Updated CODE Strategy	24	Report with updates of the CODE strategy	
	M14	Final CODE Strategy	48	Report with activities implemented and results achieved	
AUA	M15	Digital platform online	7	Prototype digital platform is available online.	
	M16	Digital platform activity (1)	23	Report on the analysis of user needs and updates. Platform updates verified and agreed within the consortium. Code updated on open repository.	
	M17	Digital platform activity (2)	35	Report on the analysis of user needs and updates. Platform updates verified and agreed within the consortium. Code updated on open repository.	
	M19	Digital platform activity (3)	47	Update of D7.2 with final architecture and description of digital platform and toolkit. Update on the analysis of user needs. Platform updates verified and agreed within the consortium. Final code updated on open repository.	
IIASA	M20	Iteration on methods for LL	22	Feedback from LL regarding methods	WP3
NOR	M21	Iteration on indicators for LL	17	Feedback from LL regarding indicators and tools	WP4
	M22	Feedback on rural typology	27	Feedback from LL and RL regarding rural typology	

2.1.2. Deliverables

Deliverables are reports that is sent to the granting authority, providing information to ensure effective monitoring of the project. There are different types of deliverables as presented in the table 3 as below:

- documents, reports (R) on specific activities/results or standards deliverables such as financial and technical reports;
- data management plans (DMP);
- websites, patent filings, videos, etc (DEC);
- ethics.

All deliverables have to be submitted in the **Portal Continuous Reporting tool. To ensure quality of Deliverables**, the internal review process defined as above (*see chapter 2.1*) is set in motion before submitting them to the granting authority.

Dissemination level (Art. 13 of the GA)

Dissemination means sharing research results with potential users - peers in the research field, industry, other commercial players and policymakers).

Dissemination level means whether the deliverable is:

- **Fully open and therefore for public use (PU)** – please note that deliverables which are declared for public use will be automatically posted online on the Project Results platforms and will be publicly available on the project website;

- **Sensitive (SEN)** — limited under the conditions of the Grant Agreement (see chapter 2.2.3 as presented below and in accordance with the Art. 13 of the GA) – only Ethics reports produced by the independent Ethics Advisor are considered under this dissemination level category;

- **or of confidential kind (R-UE/EU-R - RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED) i.e. EU classified** (Art. 13.2 of the GA) because its use for information could be disadvantageous to the interests of the European Union or of one or more of the Member States. Three project deliverables fall into this category: the first version of the Data Management Plan (D1.3), the Living Labs catalogue (D6.1) and the CODE Strategy (D7.1).

For this last dissemination level (classified information), please note that each Party must handle classified information in accordance with the applicable EU, international or national law on classified information[1].

Action tasks involving classified information may be subcontracted or contracted out only after explicit approval (in writing) from the granting authority. Classified information may not be disclosed to any third party (including participants involved in the action implementation) without prior explicit written approval from the granting authority.

---

[1] In particular, under Decision *2015/444* and its implementing rules

Table 3: Overview of Deliverables

Work Package No.	Lead Beneficiary	Number	Deliverable Name	Type	Dissemination Level	Due Date (in months)
WP1	CNRS	D1.1	Ethical guidelines	R	PU	3
	IAMM	D1.2	Quality assessment guidelines	R	PU	3
	CNRS	D1.3	Data Management Plan (1)	DMP	R-UE/EU-R	6
	CNRS	D1.4	Data Management Plan (2)	DMP	PU	28
WP2	WU	D2.1	Synthesis report on the multi-spatial understandings of rural diversity and rural policy notions	R	PU	12
		D2.2	Prototype rural diversity compass	DEM	PU	16
WP3	IIASA	D3.1	Repository of existing and new rural data sources and methods	DATA	PU	6
	LUKE	D3.2	Report on benchmark performance and cost	R	PU	15
	IIASA	D3.3	Report on implementing new data and methods for replication, validation and upscaling	R	PU	46
WP4	IAMM	D4.1	Report & dataset on environmental resilience & climate hazards in EU rural areas	DATA	PU	31
	NOR	D4.2	Report & dataset on socio-economic resilience, social cohesion, vulnerability in EU rural areas	DATA	PU	31
	IAMM	D4.3	Report & dataset on food systems and land tenure models in EU rural areas	DATA	PU	37
	TI	D4.4	Report & dataset on wellbeing and quality of in EU rural areas	DATA	PU	37
	NOR	D4.5	Report & dataset on rural attractiveness and perceptions in EU rural areas	DATA	PU	43
	NOR	D4.6	Scoping of rural typology for the EU	R	PU	6
	NOR	D4.7	Novel rural typology for the EU	R	PU	46
WP5	ECR	D5.1	Guidelines for the rural proofing of transition policies in Europe	R	PU	20
	HUT	D5.2	Report on the rural proofing of selected policies	R	PU	30
	ECR	D5.3	Multi-media recommendations for tailored rural policies (policy brief)	DEC	PU	46
WP6	UNIPI	D6.1	Living Labs catalogue	R	R-UE/EU-R	9
	UNIPI	D6.2	Guidelines and training materials for data collection	R	PU	24
	ERDN	D6.3	Practice Abstracts – Batch 1	R	PU	17
	ERDN	D6.4	Practice Abstracts - Batch 2	R	PU	47
WP7	AEIDL	D7.1	CODE Strategy	R	R-UE/EU-R	6
	AUA	D7.2	Digital platform and toolkit	DEC	PU	11
	AEIDL	D7.3	Knowledge Transfer Accelerator implementation report	R	PU	48
WP8	IAMM	D8.1	OEI - Requirement No. 1	ETHICS	SEN	3
		D8.2	OEI - Requirement No. 2	ETHICS	SEN	18
		D8.3	OEI - Requirement No. 3	ETHICS	SEN	36
		D8.4	OEI - Requirement No. 4	ETHICS	SEN	48

2.1.3. Dissemination of results, Communication and Visibility

This section summarizes the general information contained in the GA and CA. For more details and guidelines, please refer to **the Communication, Outreach, Dissemination and Exploitation (CODE) strategy**, which is a specific report delivered in March 2023.

Dissemination results — Promoting the action (Art. 17 of the GA and Art. 8.4 of the CA)

Please note that all paragraphs and articles from the GA and CA included in the present document will be presented with a bordure as below.

Unless otherwise agreed with the granting authority, the beneficiaries **must promote the action and its results by providing targeted information to multiple audiences** (including the media and the public), in accordance with Annex 1 of the GA and in a strategic, coherent and effective manner. Before engaging in a communication or dissemination activity expected to have a major media impact, the beneficiaries must inform the granting authority.

The beneficiaries must **disseminate their results as soon as feasible, in a publicly available format**, subject to any restrictions due to the protection of intellectual property, security rules or legitimate interests.

Results generated during the project implementation may include, for example, policy recommendations, guidelines, prototypes, databases, trained researchers, networks, etc…

During the Project and for a period of 1 year after the end of the Project, the dissemination of own Results by one or several Parties including but not restricted to publications and presentations, shall be governed by the procedure of Article 17.4 of the Grant Agreement and its Annex 5, Section Dissemination, subject to the following provisions.

Prior notice of any planned publication shall be given to the other Parties at least 15 calendar days before the publication (unless agreed otherwise), together with sufficient information on the results it will disseminate. Any objection to the planned publication shall be made in accordance with the Grant Agreement by written notice to the Coordinator and to the Party or Parties proposing the dissemination within 7 calendar days after receipt of the notice. If no objection is made within the time limit stated above, the publication is permitted.

Open science: open access to scientific publications (Art. 17 of the GA)

The beneficiaries must ensure **open access to peer-reviewed scientific publications relating to their results**. In particular, they must ensure that:

- at the latest at the time of publication, a machine-readable electronic copy of the published version or the final peer-reviewed manuscript accepted for publication, is deposited in a trusted repository for scientific publications;

- immediate open access is provided to the deposited publication via the repository, under the latest available version of the Creative Commons Attribution International Public Licence (CC

BY) or a licence with equivalent rights; for monographs and other long-text formats, the licence may exclude commercial uses and derivative works (e.g. CC BY-NC, CC BY-ND) and;

- information is given via the repository about any research output or any other tools and instruments needed to validate the conclusions of the scientific publication.

All Parties promote integrity in scientific publication. Authorship of each publication (defined as scientific articles, reports, conference proceedings or books) based on the Project's Results is attributed in accordance with accepted practices of the relevant research community. Individuals who have not met the authorship criteria but provided valuable contributions will be acknowledged.

Metadata of deposited publications must be open under a Creative Common Public Domain Dedication (CC 0) or equivalent, in line with the FAIR principles (in particular machineactionable) and provide information at least about the following: publication (author(s), title, date of publication, publication venue); Horizon Europe; grant project name, acronym and number; licensing terms; persistent identifiers for the publication, the authors involved in the action and, if possible, for their organisations and the grant. Where applicable, the metadata must include persistent identifiers for any research output or any other tools and instruments needed to validate the conclusions of the publication.

NB: Only publication fees in full open access venues for peer-reviewed scientific publications are eligible for reimbursement.

Visibility — European flag and funding statement (Art. 17.2 of the GA)

Unless otherwise agreed with the granting authority, communication activities of the beneficiaries related to the action (including media relations, conferences, seminars, information material, such as brochures, leaflets, posters, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media, etc.), dissemination activities and any infrastructure, equipment, vehicles, supplies or major result funded by the grant must acknowledge EU support and display the European flag (emblem) and funding statement (translated into local languages, where appropriate):

The emblem must remain distinct and separate and cannot be modified by adding other visual marks, brands or text. Apart from the emblem, no other visual identity or logo may be used to highlight the EU support.

When displayed in association with other logos (e.g. of beneficiaries or sponsors), the emblem must be displayed at least as prominently and visibly as the other logos.

For the purposes of their obligations under this Article, the beneficiaries may use the emblem without first obtaining approval from the granting authority. This does not, however, give them the right to exclusive use. Moreover, they may not appropriate the emblem or any similar trademark or logo, either by registration or by any other means.

Quality of information — Disclaimer (Art. 17.3 of the GA)

Any communication or dissemination activity related to the action must use factually accurate information. Moreover, it must indicate the following disclaimer (translated into local languages where appropriate):

"Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them. UK participants in the GRANULAR project are supported by UKRI- Grant numbers 10039965 (James Hutton Institute) and 10041831 (University of Southampton)."

2.2 Quality monitoring of project management

2.2.1 Project documentation

Standards and templates

A set of standard document templates are produced under WP6 (*Task 7.2 Implementation of the CODE Strategy)* for partners to use with the GRANULAR visual identity.

Regarding financial management and monitoring, the Coordinator provides to each partner practical information sheets and templates. These documents **will be updated as soon as the HORIZON Europe programme is officially published online.** The responsibility for maintaining and updating these documents lies with the Coordinator who ensures notification of changes to all Parties.

Templates for documents for the EC, including deliverables, technical and financial reports, explanation of the use of resources and financial statements are provided with the Horizon Europe programme's rules and guidelines.

Collaborative platform

Nextcloud is open-source file sync and share software. *As an easy project collaboration* platform, the whole consortium of GRANULAR use this tool in order to share, coordinate and collaboratively work on the project activities. **Nextcloud is based on Coordinator's servers.**

Each partner can connect to the NextCloud server using any Web browser by following the link https://cloud.ruralgranular.eu and can have access to all common folders and files e.g. **WP activities and documents, deliverables, reports and meeting minutes as well as templates, guidelines and practical information sheets**. The Coordinator is responsible for providing each Party with such appropriate access.

In addition to sharing, NextCloud offers real-time document editing, enabling each Party involved in one task or activity to collaboratively work on documents such as deliverables. The NextCloud agenda allows the common scheduling of project activities (e.g. events, reports, deliverables, workshops etc.). and can be shared in a visually memorable form with all partners, with explicit milestones and deadlines. Automatic reminders of key deadlines will be sent to all partners.

A basic user manual developed by the Coordinator is provided for guidance on how to collaboratively work on Nextcloud and and presents the structure tree to be followed in the creation of new folders.

2.2.2 Preparation and organisation of meetings

Effective coordination and collaboration involve clear responsibilities and regular meetings.

a) General Assembly (Art. 6.3.1 of the CA)

The Coordinator shall convene meetings of the General Assembly and give written notice of the meeting to each Member. The Coordinator shall jointly prepare the draft agenda with the Executive Board then send all Members the final agenda. Any Member of the General Assembly may add an item to the original agenda by written notice to all of the other Members.

Each task shall be done no later than the minimum number of days preceding the meeting as indicated below.

Table 4: Organisation of meetings - General Assembly

Tasks	Ordinary meeting	Extraordinary meeting
Convening meeting	**At least once a year**	At any time upon request of 1/3 of the Members of the General Assembly
Notice of a meeting	45 calendar days	15 calendar days
Sending the agenda	21 calendar days	10 calendar days
Adding agenda items	14 calendar days	7 calendar days

The Coordinator shall produce minutes of each meeting which shall be the formal record of all decisions taken. He/she shall send the draft minutes to all Members **within 10 calendar days of the meeting** or make them available via project repository to which all Parties shall have appropriate access. The Coordinator is responsible for providing each Party with such appropriate access.

The minutes shall be considered as accepted if, within 15 calendar days from receipt, no Member has sent an objection by written notice to the Coordinator with respect to the accuracy of the draft of the minutes by written notice or a motivated veto right notice in stipulated period.

Voting rules and quorum

Quorum: Each General Assembly shall not deliberate and decide validly in meetings **unless two-thirds (2/3) of its Members are present or represented (quorum).** If the quorum is not reached, the Coordinator shall convene another ordinary meeting within 15 calendar days. If in this meeting the quorum is not reached once more, the Coordinator shall convene an extraordinary meeting which shall be entitled to decide even if less than the quorum of Members is present or represented.

Decisions**:** Decisions shall be taken by a **majority of two-thirds (2/3) of the votes cast.** Each Member present or represented in the meeting shall have one vote. A Party which the General Assembly has declared to be a Defaulting Party may not vote. The General Assembly shall be free to act on its own initiative to formulate proposals and take decisions in accordance with the procedures set out herein.

In addition, all proposals made by the Executive Board shall also be considered and decided upon by the General Assembly.

The following decisions shall be taken by the General Assembly:

-> *Content, finances and intellectual property rights*

- Proposals for changes to Annexes 1 and 2 of the Grant Agreement to be agreed by the Granting Authority
- Changes to the Consortium Plan
- Modifications or withdrawal of Background in Attachment 1 of the CA (Background Included)
- Additions or modifications to Attachment 3 of the CA (List of Third Parties for simplified transfer)
- Additions to Attachment 4 of the CA (Identified entities under the same control)

-> *Evolution of the consortium*

- Entry of a new Party to the Project and approval of the settlement on the conditions of the accession of such a new Party
- Withdrawal of a Party from the Project and the approval of the settlement on the conditions of the withdrawal
- Identification of a breach by a Party of its obligations under this Consortium Agreement or the Grant Agreement
- Declaration of a Party to be a Defaulting Party
- Remedies to be performed by a Defaulting Party
- Termination of a Defaulting Party's participation in the Project and measures relating thereto
- Proposal to the Granting Authority for a change of the Coordinator
- Proposal to the Granting Authority for suspension of all or part of the Project
- Proposal to the Granting Authority for termination of the Project and the Consortium Agreement

-> *Appointments*

On the basis of the Grant Agreement, the appointment if necessary of:

- Executive Board Members
- External Expert Advisory Board Members

Decisions without a meeting

Any decision may also be taken without a meeting if:

a) the Coordinator circulates to all Members of the General Assembly a suggested decision with a deadline for responses of at least 15 calendar days after receipt by a Party and

b) the decision is agreed by a majority (i.e. at least 51%) of all Parties.

The Coordinator shall inform all the Parties of the outcome of the vote. A veto according to Section 6.2.4 of the CA may be submitted up to 20 calendar days after receipt of this information on the decision. The decision will be binding after the Coordinator sends a notification to all Parties if there is no exercise of veto. The Coordinator keeps records of the votes and make them available to the Parties on request.

b) Executive Board (Art. 6.3.2 of the CA)

The Coordinator shall convene meetings of the Executive Board, give written notice of the meeting to each Member; and prepare jointly with the Executive Board and send each Member an agenda. Any Member of the Executive Board may add an item to the original agenda by written notice to all of the other Members.

Each task shall be done no later than the minimum number of days preceding the meeting as indicated below.

Table 5: Organisation of meetings – Executive Board

Tasks	Ordinary meeting	Extraordinary meeting
Convening meeting	**Every Friday (11:00 to 12h30 CET)**	At any time upon request of any Member of the Executive Board
Notice of a meeting	One reminder per week	7 calendar days
Sending the agenda	Decided each week for the next meeting	7 calendar days
Adding agenda items	2 calendar days	

The Coordinator shall produce minutes of each meeting which shall be the formal record of all decisions taken. He/she shall send the draft minutes to all Members **within 10 calendar days of the meeting** or make them available via project repository to which all Parties shall have appropriate access. The Coordinator is responsible for providing each Party with such appropriate access.

The minutes shall be considered as accepted if, within 15 calendar days from receipt, no Member has sent an objection by written notice to the Coordinator with respect to the accuracy of the draft of the minutes by written notice or a motivated veto right notice in stipulated period.

c) Ethics Committee

The Ethics Commitee meets upon request of the General Assembly or Executive Board but at least once a year. The Ethics Committee advises the General Assembly and the Executive Board upon request of the Coordinator and provide non-binding advice to the General Assembly and the Executive Board as decision making support.

The Coordinator shall convene meetings of the EC, give written notice of the meeting to each Member; and prepare and send each Member an agenda. Any Member of the EC may add an item to the original agenda by written notice to all of the other Members.

Each task shall be done no later than the minimum number of days preceding the meeting as indicated below.

Table 6: Organisation of meetings – Ethics Advisory Board

Tasks	Ordinary meeting	Extraordinary meeting
Convening meeting	**At least once a year**	At any time upon request of 1/3 of the Members of the EC
Notice of a meeting	45 calendar days	15 calendar days
Sending the agenda	21 calendar days	10 calendar days
Adding agenda items	14 calendar days	7 calendar days

The EC shall produce minutes of each meeting which shall be the formal record of all decisions taken. The EC sends the draft minutes to all Members **within 10 calendar days of the meeting** or makes them available via project repository to which all Parties shall have appropriate access. The Coordinator is responsible for providing each Party with such appropriate access.

The minutes shall be considered as accepted if, within 15 calendar days from receipt, no Member has sent an objection by written notice to the Coordinator with respect to the accuracy of the draft of the minutes by written notice or a motivated veto right notice in stipulated period.

d) External Advisory Board (Art. 6.5 of the CA)[2]

The Advisory Board meets **at least once a year** for the duration of the project (4 years). Meetings are set and organised by the Project Coordinator. A Chair (Coordinator), the Advisory Board and representative(s) of the Executive Board are invited to participate in the annual meeting.

Other people may be invited by the Chair to attend all or part of any meeting. The Coordinator shall write the minutes of the EAB meetings and submit them to the General Assembly. Travel costs incurred in the context of the Advisory Committee will be reimbursed by the Coordinator.

Members of the Advisory Board are also invited to participate as observers in General Assembly meetings with no voting rights.

---

[2] Referred as External Expert Advisory Board in the CA

2.2.3 Document confidentiality (Art. 13.1 of the GA and Art. 10 of the CA)

The Parties must keep confidential any data, documents or other material (in any form) that is identified as sensitive in writing ('sensitive information') — **during the implementation of the action and for at least up to 5 years after final payment.**

If a beneficiary requests it, the granting authority may agree to keep such information confidential for a longer period.

Unless otherwise agreed between the parties, they may use sensitive information only to implement the Agreement.

The beneficiaries may disclose sensitive information to their personnel or other participants involved in the action only if they:
> (a) need to know it to implement the Agreement and
> (b) are bound by an obligation of confidentiality.

The granting authority may disclose sensitive information to its staff and to other EU institutions and bodies.

It may moreover disclose sensitive information to third parties, if:
(a) this is necessary to implement the Agreement or safeguard the EU financial interests and
(b) the recipients of the information are bound by an obligation of confidentiality.

The confidentiality obligations no longer apply if:
(a) the disclosing party agrees to release the other party
(b) the information becomes publicly available, without breaching any confidentiality obligation
(c) the disclosure of the sensitive information is required by EU, international or national law.

2.3 Project reporting

All official technical and financial reporting templates are added as Annexes to the guidelines **as soon as the HORIZON Europe programme's guidelines are published online.**

2.3.1 Continuous reporting (Art. 21.1 of the GA)

At the beginning of the project, each Party received a notification that the Continuous Reporting Module is activated with a link, and that each Party can contribute to it on an ongoing basis.

The Continuous Reporting module is **collaborative (all partners can edit) and is open** from the beginning so that it can be updated at any moment during the project (submit deliverables, report on milestones, etc.).

Each Party must continuously report on the progress of the action (e.g. **deliverables, milestones, outputs/outcomes, critical risks, indicators**, etc) in the **Portal Continuous Reporting tool – eGrants system**[3].

<u>All Parties complete their own data as soon as they are available.</u>

---

[3] Please refer to the official online manual – available <u>here</u> (version 1.1 - 15.09.2022)

Virtual sessions with a special focus on how the **Portal Continuous Reporting tool – eGrants system** has to be filled have to be organized by the Coordinator and guidelines have to be provided as well.

Online, each Party shall fulfil in the following information:
- ♦ Researchers involved in the project

Please note that any change regarding the researchers' involvement and contributions (inclusion or replacement) in the project should **be mentioned and explained in the technical periodic report.**

- ♦ Results

Under this category from the Portal Continuous Reporting tool, each Party should focus on the content of the results, for example discoveries and theories, products, services, methods, etc.
> Publications, intellectual property rights, datasets, software, algorithms, protocols, etc. will be linked to these results later in separate tables. It will also be possible to add these to the project as a whole.

- ♦ Results ownership list
- ♦ Impacts
- ♦ Publications
- ♦ Datasets
- ♦ Intellectual property rights (IPR)
- ♦ Standards
- ♦ Other results
- ♦ Dissemination and Communication activities

The Coordinator remains responsible for checking that the Continuous Reporting Module is updated in time (before the end of each reporting period presented as below). At the end of the reporting period, **the continuous reporting is locked for review and changes to the data are not possible anymore.**

When the periodic report is locked, a snapshot is taken from the data entered for the continuous reporting and automatically feeds Part A of the Periodic Report (see more details as below).

2.3.2 Periodic reporting (Art. 21.2 of the GA)

Three reporting period (RP) are set up as following:

- ♦ from Month 1 to Month 18 (end of March 2024): **RP1**

- ♦ from Month 19 to Month 36 (end of September 2025): **RP2**

- ♦ from Month 37 to Month 48 (end of September 2026 – end date of the project): **RP3**

The Periodic Reports (including Interim Reports and the Final Report) are the **pre-condition for receiving payments.** It must be submitted through the EU Funding & Tenders Portal Grant Management System by the Coordinator **within 60 days after the end of the reporting period**, therefore end of May 2024, end of November 2025 and end of November 2026 respectively.

The Consortium should start preparing the periodic report in the Grant Management System right after the periodic reporting is opened at the end of each reporting period (— deadline for submission is 60 days). The Periodic Report must be then submitted to the Coordinator who can check and ask to clarify before signing and submitting to EU services.

The Report is divided into a technical and financial report. Quality assurance of each periodic report foresees specific timeframe, roles and responsibilities as detailed below:

Table 7: Timeframe, roles and responsibilities in the production of the Periodic Report

Steps	Time before submission (max 60 days after the end of the reporting period)
The Coordinator sends a reminder to each Party and checks that the Continuous Reporting has been updated in time	**80 days**
Each WP leaders sends a reminder to each partners involved in their WP to start periodic report	**60 days**
Technical report: ♦ **Each Party sends one first draft for internal review to the concerned WP leader and the Coordinator** Financial report: ♦ **Each Party fills in its individual statement on the EU Portal**	**40 days**
Technical report: ♦ The WP leader and the Coordinator send their comments and feedback to the Party Financial report: ♦ The Coordinator sends its comments and feedback to the Party	**30 days**
The Party finalizes the financial and technical report with final corrections Each WP leader sends the technical report concerning their WP to the Coordinator	**15 days**
The Coordinator checks final technical, administrative and format and generate the consolidated financial statement	**7 days**
The Coordinator submits to the granting authority	**Deadline - due contractual date**

Focus on Technical Reporting

The Technical Report consists of 2 parts:
- ♦ Part A contains structured tables with project information
- ♦ Part B is a narrative description of the work carried out during the reporting period.

Part A is generated by the eGrants system. It is based on the information each Party enter into the Portal Continuous Reporting tools.

Part B needs to be uploaded as PDF on the Technical Report (Part B) screen. The template to use will be published by the EC. It mirrors the application form and requires all Partners to report explanations for all deviations from Annex 1 or Annex 2 of the GA (delays, work not implemented, new subcontracts, budget overruns etc), the consequences and the proposed corrective actions.

The Coordinator remains responsible for checking that the Report is coherent and that information in Part A and B is consistent and making sure that the template has been followed and all sections are completed and no annexes are missing.

### *Focus on Financial Reporting (Art. 7 of the CA)*

Seven financial reports have to be prepared by each Party all along the project.

In accordance with its own usual accounting and management principles and practices, each Party shall be **solely responsible for justifying its costs** (and those of its Affiliated Entities, if any) with respect to the Project towards the Granting Authority.

Neither the Coordinator nor any of the other Parties shall be in any way liable or responsible for such justification of costs towards the Granting Authority.

The specific periods for financial reporting are at M9, M14, M18, M27, M36, M42, M48.

Financial reporting schedule
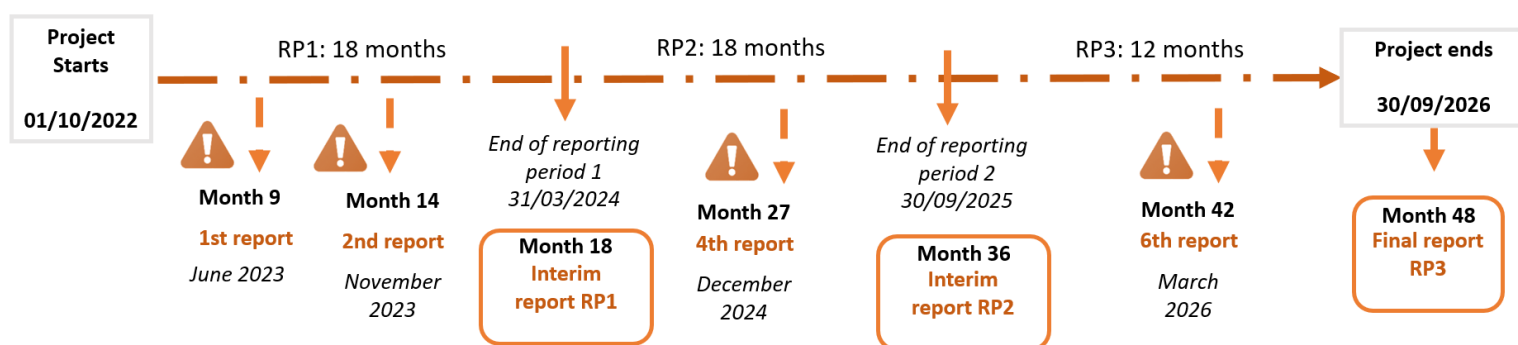
These seven financial reports are presented as following:

- ♦ four are **internal reports**, submitted by each Party to the Coordinator;

- ♦ three are **part of the Periodic Reports** (two Interim Reports RP1&RP2 and one Final Report RP3) which will be submitted to the granting authority as pre-condition for receiving payments.

a) Financial internal reporting

In regards with the prefinancing schedule (see Art. 7.2.2. of the CA), each Party shall prepare one first financial report submitted to the Coordinator **after Month 9** (covering expenditures incurred by the end of June 2023).

Depending on expenses, a second report is expected **after Month 14** (covering expenditures incurred by the end of November 2023).

For these two internal reports, the Parties must provide one financial report and proof of expenditure to the Coordinator. The internal financial report must contain the following documents and accounting vouchers:

1) Excel file listing the expenses by category, indicating by line:
    . Date of expenditure
    . Document number and Title
    . Amount in local currency/Amount in euro

2) Financial report in euro

3) Scan of all supporting documents (with the exception of confidential documents e.g. payslips, employment contracts, etc)

> The Coordinator assists each Party in consolidating these two first financial reports which are **part of the internal control process** aiming at ensuring the quality of each individual statements (costs calculation, records and supporting documents, monitoring of the budget deviations, etc).
>
> Nevertheless, these exchanges and guidance **does not ensure costs eligibility and preclude the conclusion of future audits.** Each Party remains **solely responsible for justifying its costs** (and those of its Affiliated Entities, if any) with respect to the Project towards the Granting Authority.

In addition to these reports, two other financial reports are requested by the Coordinator after **Month 27** (covering expenditures incurred by the end of December 2024) and **Month 42** (covering expenditures incurred by the end of March 2026) **in order to ensure that the financial reports and costs statement are kept are in conformity with the EU requirements.**

b) Financial periodic reporting

The Financial Interim Report normally consists of:

♦ the individual financial statements (**Annex 4 of the GA**) for each Party;

♦ a summary financial statement explaining how the resources were used during this period: for each cost the Party declares, the Party is prompted to give a justification and indicate the linked WP – template;

♦ a certificate on the financial statements (CFS)[4] to provide within the final report. The CFS is a report produced by an independent auditor (or, for public bodies, public officer) using the template available on Portal Reference Documents. Its purpose is to give assurance to the Granting Authority about the regularity of the costs claimed.

The Financial Interim Report is generated by the eGrants system on the basis of the financial information entered into the Periodic Reporting module (and any other documents uploaded, e.g. CFS).

Each Party (and linked third parties) shall fill in its **financial statement in structured forms in the eGrants system** (under *Financial Statement drafting*).

They are combined automatically by the system into a consolidated financial statement. Each Party **is responsible of the financial statements** declared through the Electronical Portal.

The Coordinator then checks each individual statement within the consolidated statement and are in charge of the final submission to the granting authority.

2.4 Project monitoring and evaluation

Project monitoring aims to generate, collect, consolidate and make available the information necessary for good management, learning and reporting on the results and performance of the project. It relies on deliverables, milestones and **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** to measure **project progress and impacts**.

Project evaluation is carried out internally, based on the monitoring of outputs and expected impact which have to be detailed for each reporting period. Furthermore, the granting authority will have its own project checks and reviews as well as impact evaluation.

---

[4] Beneficiaries with requested EU contribution to costs ≥ EUR 430 000.00 have to provide **certificates on their financial statements (CFS)** included in the final report at final payment. The certificates must be provided by a **qualified approved external auditor** which is independent and complies with Directive 2006/43/EC18.

2.4.1 Project monitoring and linked indicators

Key performance indicators (Annex 1 of the GA)

Achievement of KPI is verified by the endorsement of suitable deliverables as regards with:

♦ the **General Objective (O1)** of the project presented as following:

General Objective	Key Performance Indicators	Means of Verification
O1. To support just digital, economic and ecological transitions in rural areas through integrated place-based evidence and multi-actor processes	- Rural proofing methodology applied to 4 EU main policies - 7 local policies informed with place-based integrated data during the project - Rural proofing approach presented at 25 policy events during the project. - At least 350 local actors and policy-makers informed in their policy decisions	D5.1 to D5.3 Participant lists

♦ the **three Specific Objectives** (O2 to O4) declined in six expected results in the table as below:

Table 8: Key Performance Indicators for GRANULAR

General Objective	Specific objectives	Expected results	Key Performance Indicators	Means of Verification
O1. To support just digital, economic and ecological transitions in rural areas through integrated place-based evidence and multi-actor processes	**O2.** Conceptualize the diversity of features and functionalities of rural areas	**R1.** A **Rural Compass** (D2.2) will be designed to conceptualize diversity to inform EU, national and local actors in the development of evidence-based, place-based, integrated and tailored policies; and provide a refined understanding of functional characteristics of rural territories, to design synergistic approaches favoring a networked and interlinked development	♦ State of the art report on functional characteristics and functional relations of rural areas, with practical recommendations to take those into account in policy-making ♦ Benchmark of performant and cost-efficient data collection methods for upscaling	D2.1 D2.2 D2.3 D3.2
	O3. Enrich knowledge for rural actors on the diversity of rural areas, their functional characteristics, challenges and opportunities	**R2. Novel rural data** will be generated and assessed: by developing methods to generate novel rural data and populate a repository with them (D3.1); by benchmarking their performance and costs (D3.2); by assessing their accuracy, validating their relevance, and evaluating their potential for replication and upscaling (D3.3) **R3. Indicators for rural areas** will be developed: by quantifying trends, analyzing determinants and assessing resilience to major threats; with specific attention to the various dimensions of just digital, economic and ecological transitions. The project will provide five thematic reports and datasets to cover those key dimensions (D4.1 to D4.5) and will compile theoretical approaches and data analysis to produce operational typologies for EU rural areas (D4.5). **R4. Rural proofing of policies** will be operationalized: by developing a tool and guidelines to operationalize rural proofing of policies based on the Rural Compass (D5.1). This tool will be tested on four selected policies (D5.2) and lead to the production of recommendations for tailored rural policies (D5.3).	♦ Novel datasets and indicators for rural communities tested and validated in 16 MALs ♦ 10 innovative data collection methods developed and validated at scale ♦ At least 13 publications in recognized journals and 13 presentations at conferences ♦ 2 doctorates supported by the project. ♦ 4 post-doctorate researchers have reinforced their qualification	D3.1 to D3.3 D4.1 to D4.5 D6.2 D6.3 Publications
	O4. Empower rural actors to engage into just, carbon-neutral, inclusive transitions	**R5. Engage with rural actors in a diversity of contexts**: to collect, analyze, validate data to assess replicability and elaborate innovative local policies based on local needs (D6.2 to D6.4). **R6. Share knowledge and give rural actors tools for decisions-making**: to develop a regularly updated platform describing and monitoring rural characteristics and provide relevant tools for rural actors to inform local action. To ensure a broad dissemination of project results during the project timeframe, GRANULAR will set-up a Knowledge Transfer Accelerator, and build on rural actor networks participating in the project (D7.3, to D7.5).	♦ 16 rural communities empowered through MALs across Europe ♦ Rural compass presented to 500 policy makers and rural actors ♦ 240 rural policy makers and rural practitioners trained to use the rural compass ♦ At least 150 rural communities reached ♦ At least 70 public and private actors in rural communities have learned to codevelop and use innovative methods and smarter solutions	D5.1 to D5.3 D6.2 M6.2 M6.3 D7.2 D7.3

End-users (rural actors and policy makers) are also be surveyed on their satisfaction through the **16 local Multi-Actor labs**, and **9 knowledge transfer accelerator events** at EU level. In particular, participants will be asked their point of view on whether GRANULAR has significantly improved or facilitated their policy design, monitoring or evaluation.

Focus on specific indicators as regards with Dissemination, exploitation and communication

The inter-related functions of 'communication as raising awareness about / encouraging interaction with project activities and that of 'dissemination and exploitation' of the project results more specifically, are essential to maximise the impact of GRANULAR.

Measures to maximise impact and indicative indicators are detailed in the Strategy for Communication, Outreach, Dissemination, Exploitation (CODE) of the project (D7.1).

Impact monitoring

The section below describes how GRANULAR results will contribute to the impacts listed as following:

♦ **Impact 1.** "Rural areas are developed in a sustainable, balanced and inclusive manner thanks to a **better understanding** of the environmental, socio-economic, behavioural, cultural and demographic drivers of change as well as deployment of digital, nature-based, social and community-led innovations"

♦ **Impact 2**. "Rural communities are **empowered to act for change**, better prepared to achieve climate neutrality, adapt to climate change, and turn digital and ecological transitions into increased resilience to various types of shocks, good health and positive long-term prospects, including jobs, for all including women, young people and vulnerable groups."

♦ **Impact 3**. "**Rural communities are equipped with innovative and smarter solutions** that increase access to services, opportunities and adequate innovation ecosystems, including for women, youth and the most vulnerable groups, improve attractiveness and reduce the feeling of being left behind, even in the most remote locations."

Table 9: Project impacts

Impact No.	Detailed impacts and linked tasks and deliverables	Linked KPI
1	**Scientific impact**. Scientific advancements achieved during the project will improve the understanding on a wide range of driver of change (D4.1 to D4.5), will build on data collection methods (D3.3), data aggregation to build novel indicators (D4.1 to 4.5), conceptualisation of rural diversity (D2.1), and evidence-based multi-actor policy design and evaluation (D6.1, D6.3, D6.4). Those will be made fully available in open-access to the scientific community and non-scientific rural actors, and thus continue supporting sustainable transition policies in the medium and long-term.	♦ open-access publication of at least **13 scientific articles** in recognized peer-reviewed journals ♦ **presentation at 13 scientific conferences**, and a **final project conference** (M12); ♦ at least **6 young researchers** (doctorate and post-doctorate) will be directly involved in the project.
	Policy impact. To maximize impact on local, national and EU policies beyond the project timeframe, GRANULAR will produce a full set of tools for Rural Proofing. Those tools will be fully tested, adjusted for replicability, disseminated and made available in open-access in a permanent repository. Close links maintained throughout the project with EU institutions (T1.4 and T5.5) will facilitate the uptake and replication of tools and indicators designed within GRANULAR, including through the future <u>Rural Observatory</u>, thus impacting policy design, monitoring and evaluation <u>throughout Europe</u>	♦ tools for Rural Proofing will be tested through at least **16 rural communities through MALs across Europe** ♦ Rural proofing methodology applied to **4 EU main policies** ♦ at **least 350 rural actors and policy-makers** will be better informed in their policy decisions during the project time-frame ♦ at least **150 rural communities** will be reached
2	**Societal impact**. To maximize societal impact, GRANULAR will base all research and innovation activities on a 3-level multi-actor approach, with a multi-actor Advisory Board, multi-actor Consortium and multi-actor labs. Networks of rural actors, including rural governments and rural NGOs, will participate in the GRANULAR consortium and Advisory Board. Those networks will participate in priority in GRANULAR training courses (T7.2) and receive replicable training material (D6.2). In addition, <u>operational guidelines</u> will be made at the disposal of rural policy-makers and rural actors willing to replicate GRANULAR methods for a participatory, place-based, information-based policy design, evaluation and monitoring in rural areas (D5.1), relevant to different levels of governance (i.e. EU, national, regional). Through the Rural Compass, GRANULAR will have a positive impact on the respect of the "<u>Do no Significant Harm Principle</u>", as it will allow local, national and European policy makers to assess the consequences of policy decision in rural areas on all six environmental dimensions considered in the "Do No Significant Harm" principle. Those data and analyses will be made available to policy makers and rural actors through the online repository and platform (D7.2); and appropriation boosted through a Knowledge Transfer Accelerator (KTA) (D7.3).	♦ at least **16 local or regional communities** will be empowered **through MALs across Europe** ♦ **70 multi-actor lab meetings** will be organized as well as **7 cross-visits**

3	**Economic impact**. GRANULAR will produce smart, innovative, open-source data collection methods and indicators; benchmarked and tested for replicability, costs and performance (D3.3). Through the participatory LL and RL, public and private innovators be fully involved in the testing and co-development of those innovative and smart solutions (T6.3), including social innovation techniques, digital technologies, citizen science, earth observation and interactive visualisation. A Set of Practice Abstracts will be disseminated broadly through the project platform and repository (D6.3, D6.4). Public and private innovators among and beyond LL participants will thus be trained through the project and will have at their disposal smart, innovative solutions that they can further develop and help disseminate in rural areas.	♦ at least **70 public and private actors** in rural communities have learned to codevelop and use innovative methods and smarter solutions

Monitoring report

Each Partner **is responsible for monitoring Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** and shall provide a summary table of the KPI (general template provided in relation with the CODE strategy) at the end of each reporting period.

Each individual monitoring report will be consolidated by the Coordinator to measure **project progress and impacts**.

The monitoring of KPI is detailed in the Interim Reports and Final Report.

2.4.2 Project reviews

Internal checks (Art. 25.1.1 of the GA)

The granting authority may — during the action or afterwards — **check the proper implementation of the action and compliance with the obligations under the Grant Agreement**, including assessing costs and contributions, deliverables and reports.

Project reviews (Art. 25.1.2 of the GA)

The granting authority will **carry out reviews on the proper implementation of the action and compliance with the obligations under the Grant Agreement (general project reviews or specific issues reviews).**

Three project reviews (RV) are set up as following:

♦ Month 21 (June 2024): **RV1**

♦ Month 37 (October 2025): **RV2**

♦ Month 49 (October 2026): **RV3**

To organize these project reviews, the Coordinator shall contact the Project Officer **at least 3 months in advance**. Location will be then decided. The coordinator or beneficiary concerned **may be requested to participate in meetings, including with the outside experts.** For on-the-spot visits, the beneficiary concerned must allow access to sites and premises (including to the outside experts) and must ensure that information requested is readily available.

If needed, the granting authority may be assisted by independent, outside experts. If it uses outside experts, the coordinator or beneficiary concerned will be informed and have the right to object on grounds of commercial confidentiality or conflict of interest.

The coordinator or beneficiary concerned must cooperate diligently and provide — within the deadline requested — any information and data in addition to deliverables and reports already submitted (including information on the use of resources). The granting authority may request beneficiaries to provide such information to it directly.

Information provided must be accurate, precise and complete and in the format requested, including electronic format. On the basis of the review findings, **a project review report will be drawn** up. The granting authority will formally notify the project review report to the

coordinator or beneficiary concerned, which has 30 days from receiving notification to make observations.

Additional project reviews could be decided **during the implementation of the action and until two years after final payment.** They will be formally notified to the coordinator or beneficiary concerned and will be considered to start on the date of the notification.

2.4.3 Impact evaluation

According to Art. 26.1 of the GA, the granting authority may **carry out impact evaluations of the action, measured against the objectives and indicators of the EU programme funding the grant.**

Such evaluations may be started **during implementation of the action and until five years after final payment.** They will be formally notified to the coordinator or beneficiaries and will be considered to start on the date of the notification.

If needed, the granting authority may be assisted by independent outside experts. The coordinator or beneficiaries must provide any information relevant to evaluate the impact of the action, including information in electronic format.

2.4.4 Audits

According to Art. 25.1.3 of the GA, the granting authority may carry out audits on the proper implementation of the action and compliance with the obligations under the Agreement.

Such audits may be started **during the implementation of the action and until five years after final payment.** They will be formally notified to the beneficiary concerned and will be considered to start on the date of the notification.

The granting authority may use its own audit service, delegate audits to a centralised service or use external audit firms. If it uses an external firm, the beneficiary concerned will be informed and have the right to object on grounds of commercial confidentiality or conflict of interest.

The beneficiary concerned must cooperate diligently and provide — within the deadline requested — any information (including complete accounts, individual salary statements or other personal data) to verify compliance with the Agreement.

For on-the-spot visits, the beneficiary concerned must allow access to sites and premises (including for the external audit firm) and must ensure that information requested is readily available. Information provided must be accurate, precise and complete and in the format requested, including electronic format.

On the basis of the audit findings, **a draft audit report will be drawn up**. The auditors will formally notify the draft audit report to the beneficiary concerned, which has 30 days from receiving notification to make observations (contradictory audit procedure). The final audit report will take into account observations by the beneficiary concerned and will be formally notified to them.

3. Risk Management

3.1 Identified risks at the proposal stage and mitigation measures

Critical risks for implementation

The critical risks defined in the GA are graded into **low/medium/high[5] risk levels as indicate level of (i) likelihood, and (ii) severity**.

The table as presented below shows the 7 identified critical risks and how they could be mitigated in order to avoid any negative influence on the project objectives. It is the role of the Coordinator to ensure that the appropriate proposed risk-mitigation measures are timely taken, if necessary.

Table 10: Critical risks for implementation

Description of risk (indicate level of (i) likelihood, and (ii) severity: Low/Medium/High)	Work package(s) involved	Proposed risk-mitigation measures
Various necessary rural datasets not available to develop indicators **(Medium/Low)**	WP3, WP6(LL)	Various alternative sources of data are considered GRANULAR will establish Citizen Science campaigns in the context of the Living Labs to fill gaps
Street-level imagery not available from Mapillary **(Medium/Low)**	WP3	Use Google street-level imagery (potential costs involved have been accounted for) where available
Free and open very high-resolution satellite imagery not available **(Low/High)**	WP3	Either we will consider purchasing some data or will modify the methods to work with free and open datasets of the best available quality
Data lost after project ends - data are not curated nor maintained **(Low/Low)**	WP3, WP7	The Data Management Plan addresses long-term data preservation and curation. The data will be deposited in a data repository: Zenodo.
Delivery delays in one WP cause delays in dependent WPs **(Low/Low)**	All WPs	The WPs within the project are structured in a way such that most critical components from different tasks are developed within the same WP to minimize this risk. Strict and regular monitoring by the Executive Board will flag potential delays in delivery or unsuitable quality at an early stage.

---

[5] Low as in low probability of occurrence and low impact, medium as in low/ high probability of occurrence and high/low impact and high as in high probability of occurrence and high impact

Insufficient participation by Citizen Scientists - In-situ data are not collected; users do not engage with the tools **(Low/Medium)**	WP3	The project has a strong involvement of grassroots organizations, with established memberships and networks. Many project partners have had successful involvement of citizens in their initiatives, the experiences of which will be fed into the action plans and engagement strategies for the LLs.
Covid or new pandemic prevents international travels **(Medium/Low)**	WP1, WP2, WP6, WP7	Virtual communication will be organised, mobilizing a range of media partners became familiar with during Covid. Additional budget allocated to live translation to ensure much broader participation.

Potential barriers, evolution over time and mitigation measures

Despite the intense attention given to designing a project with excellent chances of a smooth implementation, **barriers and obstacles outside the scope of the project may raise** and limit the project's impacts.

Five potential barriers identified at the proposal stage are listed below, together with the appropriate mitigation strategies proposed by the consortium.

1. The Rural Observatory, planned under the LTVRA, is delayed or does not have the necessary resources to take advantage of GRANULAR findings during the period of implementation
=> Mitigation: GRANULAR will establish strong collaborations with EU institutions involved in setting-up the Rural Observatory all along the project (contacts have been made and preliminary interest confirmed). In addition, all GRANULAR findings, datasets, and replicable methodological guidelines will be accessible in open access in a self-sustained repository.
2. Data and software which were open-access become proprietary, or new proprietary developments outperform available open-access solutions
=> Mitigation: GRANULAR will give a strong preference to open-data and open software and tools, but budget has been set aside to acquire proprietary data if absolutely required, and to contract resources to customize open access tools if useful to the project results.
3. Ethical guidelines evolve at EU or national level and jeopardize access to personal data for research purposes
=> Mitigation: Personal data will be fully anonymized. A project partner with specific expertise will coordinate the design of a project ethics strategy. In addition, an ethics committee will be set up within the project to ensure that ethics best practices, including EU and national guidelines will be fully complied with, in particular with regards to data collection, sharing and repository. Dedicated resources have been allocated. Local actors involved in LL will be invited to raise any ethical concerns that they might have.

4. Economic difficulties restrict funding dedicated to local science-policy-society platforms carrying LL
GRANULAR has planned the necessary resources to implement the LLs. But, by design, many LLs are embedded in active science-policy-society platforms. Economic difficulties in LL countries or local governments may jeopardize the continuity or some of those platforms. => Mitigation: GRANULAR partners have chosen platforms with either proven longevity or diversified funding sources. In addition, if a platform carrying a LL was to be discontinued, several Replication Lab have the potential and have expressed the interest to become full LL, giving GRANULAR the possibility to continue covering a representative diversity of rural areas in Europe through LLs.
5. Local or national policy agendas evolve and abandon key policy areas targeted in GRANULAR LL
=> Mitigation: In each LL area, several active policy initiatives on themes of interest to GRANULAR have been identified. In addition, each key theme is covered in several LLs. As a result, minor changes would allow to cover the diversity of priority themes in GRANULAR even if policy focus evolves in a LL.

3.2 Risk monitoring

To guarantee the achievement of the objectives of the project, it is crucial to identify and understand the significant project risks.

The Coordinator remains solely responsible for monitoring the project process and the risk management, as well as monitoring the risks that may be identified during the action of the project. To achieve this goal, good communication and collaboration is essential with all partners.

As all partners participate in the project, the whole consortium is involved in the **continuous risk management process:**
- ♦ by communicating to the Coordinator the status of each risk and effectiveness of the mitigation measures;
- ♦ by updating any potential additional risk which could occur based on the early identification of, and the fast reaction to, events that can negatively affect the project.

The weekly meetings of the Executive Board serve as the main forum for risk monitoring.

3.3 Risk reporting

The Coordinator **is responsible for monitoring the risk management** and will fill in a summary table of the risks and associated mitigation measures **every five months** (template provided in Annex 2). A specific report dedicated to the **five potential barriers** identified at the proposal stage together with the appropriate mitigation strategies is included as well in the Interim Periodic/Final Report (template provided in Annex 3).

The risks are reported by the Coordinator in the **Portal Continuous Reporting tool – eGrants system as well as the Periodic Reports.**

Annex 1 - Project outcomes

The section below describes how GRANULAR results will contribute to the outcomes listed as following:

♦ **Outcome 1.** "More **evidence-based, place-based, integrated and tailored policies, strategies and governance framework**s at local, regional, national and EU levels to drive the sustainable transition of RA and communities";

♦ **Outcome 2**. "A refined understanding by policy-makers and rural actors of the **diversity of rural situations**, and of the challenges and opportunities associated with megatrends, potential major shocks and upcoming transitions, in particular climate, environmental and social challenges, to tailor policy interventions to local realities;

♦ **Outcome 3**. "A refined understanding by policy-makers and rural actors of **functional characteristics** of territories, functional relations between rural places and other rural and/or urban places and the importance of these relations for sustainable development, to design synergistic approaches favouring a networked and interlinked development";

♦ **Outcome 4**. "A refined assessment by policy-makers of the impact of **all current and upcoming policies on rural communities** (rural proofing), including sectoral or thematic policies (e.g climate, energy, mobility, digitalisation, health and social inclusion), or policy frameworks designed to accompany sustainability transitions, to tailor interventions to maximise possibilities for rural communities to contribute to and benefit from these transitions".

Outcome No.	Linked activities	Expected outputs
1	GRANULAR will produce sets of data and replicable methodologies and tools to guide the preparation of evidence-based, place-based rural policies, strategies and governance frameworks at various scales, including: • A Rural Compass Framework (D2.2) The Rural Compass will will allow to integrate data and indicators across thematic areas for a comprehensive policy analysis. • A repository of existing and new rural data sources and methods (D3.1), benchmarked for performance and costs (D3.2), and evaluated for replicability and upscaling (D3.3); including 6 methods validated at scale To facilitate dissemination, appropriation and replication, during and after the project lifetime, data and tools will be put at the disposal of end-users open access. GRANULAR data, methodologies and tools will be used to support the design, monitoring and evaluation of sustainable transition policies in 16 regions across Europe, through multi-actor labs (LL and RL).	- Development of the Rural Compass, presented to at least **500 local actors and policy-makers in the project** - Policy recommendations emerging from multi-actor labs will be presented in highly communicable forms using a **range of multi-media products** (D5.3), including spatially-explicit interactive storymaps, augmented reality, mini-videos and infographics - Creation of a **dedicated platform** (D7.2), placed in a **permanent repository** (such as Zenedo), and accompanied with **methodological guidelines and training material for local data collection** (D6.2)
2	Building on work already conducted in EU-funded projects on rural areas (such as SHERPA), GRANULAR will review the literature on rural diversity in Europe and produce an informed set of Rural Typologies for the EU (D4.6), and a Synthesis report on the multi-spatial understandings of rural diversity and rural policy notions (D2.1). Various information sources will be compiled to develop synthetic indicators of megatrends, and identify potential major shocks and upcoming transitions. GRANULAR will produce in particular reports and accompanying datasets on: • environmental resilience and climate hazards (D4.1); • socio-economic resilience, social cohesion and vulnerability (D4.2); • food systems and land tenure models (D4.3); • wellbeing and quality of life (D4.4); • and rural attractiveness and perceptions (D4.5). Those data and analyses will be made available to policy makers and rural actors through the online repository and platform (D7.2); and appropriation boosted through a Knowledge Transfer Accelerator (KTA) (D7.3).	- Based on project findings and reviews, production of **indicator factsheets and 5 thematic** datasets integrated across multiple sources (D4.1 to D4.5) - Implementation of the **Knowledge Transfer Accelerator (KTA)** detailed in the associated report (D7.3) - Creation of a **dedicated platform** (D7.2), placed in a **permanent repository** (such as Zenedo), and accompanied with **methodological guidelines and training material for local data collection** (D6.2)

3	Synthesis report on the multi-spatial understandings of rural diversity and rural policy notions (D2.1) will identify Functional Areas, investigated through a specific project task (T2.2), and objectivized based on high spatial and temporal resolution mobility metrics (T3.3). Conceptual models, data and analyses will be discussed with the project Advisory Board (high-level multi-actor platform), and made available to policy-makers and rural actors through the online repository and platform (D7.2); their dissemination will be accelerated through the KTA (D7.3).	- Implementation of the **Knowledge Transfer Accelerator (KTA)** detailed in the associated report (D7.3) - Creation of a **dedicated platform** (D7.2), placed in a **permanent repository** (such as Zenedo), and accompanied with **methodological guidelines and training material for local data collection** (D6.2)
4	The 'Rural Compass' framework (D2.2) will be operationalized (T5.1) for rural-proofing local, national and EU policies in line with the Cork Declaration 2.0 ; and a dashboard of indicators for monitoring and evaluating policies produced (M5). Uptake of the Rural Compass during and after the project will be specifically taken into account and tailored to the needs of different levels of governance across Europe. Policy-makers, policy advisers and rural actors will be trained on using the 'Rural Compass' (T5.4). To facilitate uptake, criteria for rural proofing will be validated with the Advisory Board (T5.2); a training course and toolkit developed (T5.4); and knowledge exchange actively organised at EU, national and regional levels (T5.5).	- the Rural Compass will be used to **rural-proof at least 4 policies at EU level, and at least 7 policies at local level through LLs** - Development of a **training course and toolkit** on using the 'Rural Compass' - At least **240 policy-makers, policy advisers and rural actors are trained** - Involvement of transnational rural networks as members of the consortium and Advisory Board - at least **9 acceleration events** will be organized

Annex 2 – Reporting table for monitoring risks and mitigation measures

Risk status are described with a color code presented as following:

- Green: The risk has been defined and captured; risk mitigation measures have succeeded.
- Orange: The risk has been identified; risk mitigation measures have to be set in motion.
- Grey: The risk has not yet materialized but could be expected to occur in the coming months.

No	Description of risk (indicate level of (i) likelihood, and (ii) severity: Low/Medium/High)	Risk status										Risk-mitigation measures taken
		M5 Feb 2023	M10 July 2023	M15 Dec 2023	M20 May 2024	M25 Oct 2024	M30 Mar 2025	M35 Aug 202	M40 Jan 2026	M45 June 2026	M48 Sept 2026	
1	Various necessary rural datasets not available to develop indicators **(Medium/Low)**											
2	Street-level imagery not available from Mapillary **(Medium/Low)**											
3	Free and open very high-resolution satellite imagery not available **(Low/High)**											
4	Data lost after project ends - data are not curated nor maintained **(Low/Low)**											
5	Delivery delays in one WP cause delays in dependent WPs **(Low/Low)**											
6	Insufficient participation by Citizen Scientists - In-situ data are not collected; users do not engage with the tools **(Low/Medium)**											
7	Covid or new pandemic prevents international travels **(Medium/Low)**											
8	(to add with any potential additional risk which could occur)											

Annex 3 – Reporting table for monitoring potential barriers and obstacles

Potential barriers status are described with a color code presented as following:

♦ Green: The barriers and obstacles have been defined and captured; mitigation measures have succeeded.
♦ Orange: The barrier has been identified; mitigation measures have to be set in motion.
♦ Grey: The potential barrier has not yet materialized but could be expected to occur in the coming months.

No	Description of the potential barriers identified at the proposal stage	Potential barriers status										Mitigation measures taken
		M5 Feb 2023	M10 July 2023	M15 Dec 2023	M20 May 2024	M25 Oct 2024	M30 Mar 2025	M35 Aug 202	M40 Jan 2026	M45 June 2026	M48 Sept 2026	
1	The Rural Observatory, planned under the LTVRA, is delayed or does not have the necessary resources to take advantage of GRANULAR findings during the period of implementation											
2	Data and software which were open-access become proprietary, or new proprietary developments outperform available open-access solutions											
3	Ethical guidelines evolve at EU or national level and jeopardize access to personal data for research purposes											
4	Economic difficulties restrict funding dedicated to local science-policy-society platforms carrying LL											
5	Local or national policy agendas evolve and abandon key policy areas targeted in GRANULAR LL											