

GRANULAR will produce a rural compass with novel data and tools to characterise rural diversity and guide actors in the design of tailored rural policies

Rural areas cover 80% of the European Union's surface and represent 30% of its citizens. Today, rural areas have to face several challenges and opportunities in the light of their digital and green transition, under global environmental change. Such needs, challenges and opportunities can be very different across Europe due to the diversity of geographical, economic, societal, environmental and cultural characteristics of rural areas, and they are also constantly changing.

The three main difficulties encountered by scientists and policy-makers to grasp the diversity of situations are the lack of consensus in conceptualising and defining "rural", the lack of relevant data at the appropriate granulometry, and the lack of practical tools to help align territorial diagnosis with place-based policies. The European project GRANULAR - which stands for "Giving Rural Actors Novel Data and Re-Usable Tools to Lead Public Action in Rural Areas" - will contribute to bridge this gap.

On 12 and 13 October 2022, the European project GRANULAR held its kick-off meeting. Funded by the Horizon Europe programme and the United Kingdom funds on research and innovation, GRANULAR is a four-year project and it aims to generate new insights to characterize rural diversity. To this end, GRANULAR will generate novel datasets and methods to better understand the characteristics, dynamics and drivers of rural areas. In addition, a Rural Compass will be created for rural actors in order to help them grasp the specificities and diversity of their territories, with the objective of identifying main challenges and designing tailored place-based policies to address them.

7 Living Labs and 9 Replication Labs

Co-creation and multi-actor engagement are at the core of GRANULAR approach. GRANULAR will run 7 Living Labs in different regions of Europe (France, Netherlands, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, United-Kingdom). Living Labs will bring together actors from science, policy and civil society, to co-design, test and validate GRANULAR work. In addition, 9 Replication Labs will assess how to replicate the tools and methods of the project in other countries, namely Albania, Finland, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Romania and Serbia.

A multi-disciplinary approach

The [Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Montpellier](#) (IAMM) will coordinate the GRANULAR project, together with other 23 organizations from all Europe. The partnership includes 16 universities and research institutes, 4 local and territorial development agencies, 1 association, 1 private company and 2 European rural networks. Different expertise and skills are represented amongst the consortium, such as in social sciences, rural development, environmental sciences, economics, political science, society, sustainability and spatial planning, statistical analysis, modelling, remote sensing, artificial intelligence and big data. Thanks to this participatory and multi-disciplinary approach, GRANULAR will be able to go beyond traditional representations of rural areas in order to deliver innovative data, tools and findings to guide local action.

Moreover, GRANULAR partners bring in the expertise and results of other European-funded projects on rural areas, such as DESIRA, POLIRURAL, ROBUST, SIMRA and SHERPA.

For further information

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