POLIRURAL plus

DEVELOP CALL

Call for Proposals

Financial Support for Third Parties

Disclaimer
Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency (REA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

**Funded by
the European Union**

Overview

The Develop Call, part of the PoliRuralPlus project funded by Horizon Europe, invites proposals aimed at enhancing rural-urban interactions through community-driven innovation, AI, and local/regional hackathons. The call targets nine pilot regions across the EU, focusing on sustainable development, economic diversification, and stakeholder engagement. Successful proposals will receive 30,000 - 100,000 EUR, with a total of 450,000 EUR allocated to fund up to fifteen sub-projects.

Applicants must be eligible organisations from EU Member States or Associated Countries. Single applicants or consortia of up to **three entities** are eligible to apply. In the case of consortia, one partner must act as the lead applicant (Coordinator). Proposals should align with the specific objectives of the designated pilot regions. Subcontracting is not allowed, and proposals will be evaluated based on objectives, impacts, and implementation.

Objectives of the Develop Call

- **Develop and deploy practical, place-based digital applications** aligned with PoliRuralPlus pilot-specific objectives (see Guidelines for Applicants, Section 2.4)
- **Translate promising concepts into action**, moving from ideation to implementation by funding pilot activities that apply advanced technologies such as AI, machine learning, Internet of Things (IoT), geographic information systems (GIS), or data-driven decision tools.
- Be designed to be interoperable with the **PoliRuralPlus digital tools** (see Guidelines for Applicants, Section 4) and technical frameworks, allowing for smooth integration and exchange of data if required, including licensing and communication compatibility.
- **Demonstrate replicability and scalability**, showing how proposed solutions could be adapted and applied across other regions or contexts in the EU.
- **Support the principles and values of the New European Bauhaus (NEB)** by promoting sustainability, inclusion, and aesthetics in the development of rural-urban solutions.
- Ensure that **all data** collected during implementation is **incorporated** into PoliRuralPlus tools, including the JackDaw platform and related AI components, to enhance decision-making capabilities and generate stronger project-wide results.

Financial Support

- **Funding:** from 30,000 to 100,000 EUR lump sum for successful proposals.
- **Total allocation:** 450,000 EUR, expected to fund 5-15 sub-projects.

Subcontracting or transferring funds to third parties is not permitted.

Eligibility Criteria

Who can apply?

- **Type of entities:** Open to all types with operational and financial capacity.
- **Individual or consortium applications:** Single applicants or consortia of up to **three entities** are eligible to apply. In the case of consortia, one partner must act as the lead applicant (Coordinator).
- **Eligible countries:** Legally established in an EU Member State or Associated Country.

Other eligibility criteria:

- **Third parties:** The proposal should not include any subcontracting or transfer of financial contribution to third parties.
- **One proposal per applicant:** Only one proposal will be accepted for funding per applicant.
- **Declaration of honour:** Applicants must declare their eligibility and no conflict of interest in the online application.
- **Pilot-specific proposals:** The proposal must address specific objectives identified within one of the 9 designated pilot regions of the PoliRuralPlus project.
- **Language:** English.
- **Compliance:** GDPR adherence required.
- **Non-beneficiary clause:** Current PoliRuralPlus beneficiaries and their affiliated entities are ineligible.
- **Deliverables commitment:** As outlined in Chapter 6 of the Guidelines for Applicants.
- **Proposal page limit**: The total length of Part B is 13 pages, including the cover page.

Scope of the Develop Call

The Develop Call aims to fund small-scale, applied innovation projects that deliver place-based digital solutions addressing rural-urban challenges identified in PoliRuralPlus pilot regions. These projects will also contribute to the technical advancement of the PoliRuralPlus platform and ecosystem.

- Develop and pilot digital applications that respond to pilot-specific rural-urban challenges, as outlined further and aligned with the overarching policy framework of PoliRuralPlus.
- Translate innovative concepts into operational prototypes, leveraging advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), Internet of Things (IoT), Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and data-driven decision-making tools.
- Ensure interoperability with existing PoliRuralPlus digital infrastructure, including the JackDaw platform, the Multi-Actor Approach Tool (MAAT), and the Knowledge Space ecosystem (See Guidelines for Applicants, Chapter 4).
- Demonstrate replicability and scalability, providing documentation (APIs, user manuals, or open standards) to enable adaptation in other EU regions.
- Embed New European Bauhaus (NEB) values, promoting sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusivity through human-centred design and stakeholder co-creation.
- Contribute to data integration by feeding collected data into PoliRuralPlus AI tools to enhance geo-intelligence, foresight, and stakeholder decision support.

Specific Objectives per Pilot Area

Proposals must align with the specific objectives identified in one of the nine designated pilot regions of the PoliRuralPlus project.

Pilot 1, situated in Ireland's Monaghan County:

- Uncover pathways for sustainable enterprise development in the circular economy
- Identifying emerging sectors and innovative practices in the circular economy.
- Highlight opportunities for growth in the circular economic sector with focus on innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Full integration of social enterprises advancing inclusive, community-driven circular growth.
- Enhanced quality of life, with Monaghan serving as a model for balanced and regenerative rural-urban collaboration.

Slovakia's pilot (Pilot 2), **covering the entire country**:

- Enhancing rural leadership: Equipping local leaders with digital and AI tools to address rural challenges and opportunities effectively.
- Boosting governance: Improving decision-making processes and increasing rural engagement to ensure inclusive and effective policies.
- Encouraging collaboration: Strengthening ties between sectors and communities to foster a cohesive approach to regional development.
  To address regional challenges and opportunities effectively, the Slovak RAP has identified three strategic goals:
- Strengthening stakeholder engagement and capacity building
- Drive digitalisation and smart transformation
- Enhanced cross-sector strategic cooperation

Pilot 3, located in the region of Central Greece:

- Training for sustainable agritech technologies
- Promotional services for agritourism
- Increase in digital skills among AKIS actors
- Diversification of agritourism opportunities and promotion of local agricultural products

Italian pilot (Pilot 4), situated in Apulia:

- Support measures for the establishment of short food supply chains
- Promotion of healthy diets and lifestyles
- Creation of direct linkages between rural and urban citizens
- Enhance awareness about the quality and accessibility of local food products
- Explore and/or implement digital solutions and tools that contribute to SFSC innovation

Pilot 5 in Finland, situated in the Mallusjoki rural district:

- Promote the rural events industry **ecosystem dynamics and economic opportunities**. The ecosystem includes businesses involved in local food production, nature and outdoor activities, culture, and the creative arts.
- Strengthening territorial identity and legacy for **community spirit and well-being** for example, through digital cultural heritage platforms, community storytelling by augmented reality or digital archives and memory projects.
- Use publicly available geospatial data such as **infrastructure, land use, mobility, and waste management** combined with AI-driven models to help individuals, businesses, and communities plan socially and environmentally sustainable solutions, in line with New European Bauhaus principles. These may include energy-efficient building upgrades, sustainable land use strategies, circular economy initiatives, and improved rural-urban connectivity.

Pilot 6, the Bavaria-Czechia rural innovation network, defined by the Bohemian Forest (Šumava and Bayerischer Wald) and surrounding areas:

- Establish a cross-border Rural Innovation Hub to support climate-smart and sustainable agriculture.
- Support small and medium-sized farms in adopting precision farming, drone services, and AI-powered decision tools.
- Deliver AI and digital skills training for farmers, youth, and public sector workers.
- Foster cross-border collaboration through joint activities with Bavarian innovation hubs and shared solution development.
- Enhance access to funding via AI-powered tools for grant matchmaking and expert consulting.
- Improve access to affordable and shared digital technologies to increase adoption in rural areas.
- Strengthen territorial identity and enable inclusive, community-driven rural development.

Spanish pilot (Pilot 7), situated in Segobriga and region of Sierra y Mancha Conquense:

- Promotion of rural-urban synergies and cultural heritage
- Utilisation of interconnected sites engaging public and private stakeholders, supported by ADESIMAN as Local Action Group
- Economic development through community collaboration
- Bridging the gap between rural and urban areas

Pilot 8 in Latvia's Vidzeme Planning Region:

- Develop an integrated, intuitive and sustainable ICT solution/tool for the systematic impact monitoring of the Development Programme of the Vidzeme planning region.
- The ICT solution/tool must include a section on the assessment of the development of the Vidzeme planning region as a territory (NUTS 3) that reflects the regional data and their sources, linkages with municipal and regional planning documents, relevant interventions, measures, KPIs, SDGs etc. It also should include a section containing a monitoring and

evaluation system of interventions implemented by the administration of the Vidzeme planning region, following best practices used in impact monitoring.

- The ICT solution/tool has a dashboard that creates interactive and visual information (including GIS-based) on the regional development progress and foresight in correlation with macro-level indicators.
- The main user of the developed ICT solution/tool is the administration of Vidzeme planning region that can also measure internal contextual and financial contribution to the overall Development Programme for the whole territory, at the time the ICT solution/tool provides the opportunity for external stakeholders (municipalities, LAGs, NGOs) to create their own profile and monitor their own progress on the development.
- Iterative involvement of the users should be ensured during the development of the ICT solution/tool.

Pilot 9 in Malta:

- Digital transformation and entrepreneurial capacity building in rural areas
- Levelling up of agricultural sectors through digitisation
- Empowerment of youth and promotion of circularity
- Bridging societal divides between rural and urban areas

Please note that a detailed description of the specific objectives and the spatial extent of the pilot regions are described in the Guidelines for Applicants.

Submission Process

- **Online submission:** Via the [PoliRuralPlus Knowledge Hub](#).
- **Parts of the proposal:**
  - **Part A:** Administrative Form including documentation verifying the legal status and beneficial ownership of the lead applicant (Coordinator).
  - **Part B:** Technical Description (PDF format).

Early submission is highly recommended. Errors in submissions can be corrected and resubmitted before the deadline; only the latest version will be considered.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on three main criteria:

1. **Objectives** (0-5 points)
2. **Impacts** (0-5 points)
3. **Implementation** (0-5 points)

A minimum score of 3 in all criteria and an overall score of at least 11 is required for funding. In the event of equal overall scores within a region, the proposal with better relevance to PoliRuralPlus will be selected to ensure that the most potentially transformative project is chosen.

The detailed conditions for the evaluation of the call are set out in Annex 2 Guidelines for Applicants under Chapter 7. Proposal Evaluation.

Key Dates

- **Call opening:** 26 May 2025
- **Submission Deadline:** 31 July 2025, 17:00 CEST
- **Expected notification of results:** August 2025
- **Signature of Contract for provisioning of financing:** September 2025
- **Expected implementation period:** 9 months, October 2025- June 2026

Contact and Assistance

For additional support, including consultancy on proposal preparation, applicants are encouraged to contact the designated contact points for each pilot region, whose details can be found on the PoliRuralPlus Knowledge Hub. For any other questions, please use the primary contact details for this call at opencall@poliruralplus.eu.

Disclaimer: Applicants are advised to regularly check the PoliRuralPlus Knowledge Hub for the latest information and updates regarding the open call. PoliRuralPlus reserves the right to make any updates to the open call at any time without prior notice.

Open Call Documents

Additional requirements, terms, and conditions are part of the open call documents, including:

- **Guidelines for Applicants** (PDF)
- **Template for Part B - Technical Description** (MS Word document)
- **Model Contract for Provisioning of Financing** (PDF)

Applicants are advised to carefully review all accompanying documents available on the PoliRuralPlus Knowledge Hub to ensure full compliance and understanding of the submission process and requirements.