



# FUTURAL

Empowering the **FUT**ure through innovative Smart  
Solutions for **rUR**AL areas

**Open Call for co-creating SS with rural communities**

**Hand out Summary**



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**

## 1. Introduction

FUTURAL aims to deliver a set of digital Smart Solutions (SS) under 5 Smart Solution domains<sup>1</sup> to address pressing social and environmental challenges. An integrated metasearch platform providing a one-stop shop for SS will be the gateway to FUTURAL's solutions, enabling search and access to SS developed by similar initiatives. FUTURAL will prototype, test, pilot and demonstrate community-led social, technological and business innovations based on the proposed SS in six rural pilot areas in the EU, representing different geographical and socio-cultural contexts.

An interdisciplinary consortium of partners and a multi-actor approach will pave a coherent path towards the FUTURAL innovations through joint actions and governance systems. FUTURAL will engage rural communities and pursue public-private interactions to develop new social practices that enable market adoption and widespread social change. A clearly outlined networking, EU-wide Rural Innovation Forum (EU-RIF), building on links with key organisations, networks, projects and initiatives within the European rural development ecosystem will also be developed.

The project's Open Call will fund projects that will develop their own SS, based on the five FUTURAL SS domains, to be applied in other rural areas and be available on the project's metasearch platform. A vibrant and sustainable ecosystem will be created around FUTURAL to maximise the impact of the project. The broad application of the project innovations will be enabled through the creation of business models tailored to the needs of different rural contexts and social groups. Policy recommendations and governance frameworks will be co-created in multi-actor workshops in the project's EU-RIF to support, among others, the European Green Deal, the European Digital Strategy, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the EU's long-term vision for rural areas.

## 2. FUTURAL Open Call

The FUTURAL Open Call for co-creating SS with rural communities aims to attract SMEs and other interested parties including start-ups, research organisations, rural communities (e.g., municipalities, regional authorities, development agencies, NGOs etc.) who can either develop and implement Smart Solutions within the 5 domains or contribute to the expansion of the local ecosystem, capacity building of the community, and improvement of the livelihoods.

The FUTURAL Open Call aims to:

- Address a wider range of societal and environmental challenges related to the 5 FUTURAL domains.
- Harness the potential of using data from multiple sources and make users themselves part of the solution.
- Enable the transferability and accelerate the uptake and upscale of the digital smart solutions at a pan-European level towards sustainable and resilient rural areas.
- Enhance the FUTURAL meta-search platform by adding at least ten (10) more SS co-created within rural communities across Europe.

FUTURAL will accept applications from small consortia consisting of two (2) to four (4) parties, involving  $\geq 1$  (at least one) technical party (e.g., SMEs, startups, research organisations) and

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<sup>1</sup> The 5 domains are: 1. Circular Bioeconomy, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management; 2. Climate Adaptation and Mitigation; 3. Resilience to Shocks; 4. Citizen Engagement and Quality of Life; and 5. Lifelong Education and Training.

≥1 (at least one) rural community (e.g., Municipalities, Regional authorities, Development agencies, NGOs etc) and proposed solutions must fall within one of the following domains:

- Circular bioeconomy, biodiversity and ecosystem management
- Resilience to shocks
- Citizen Engagement and Quality of Life
- Lifelong Education and Training
- Climate Adaptation and Mitigation

The FUTURAL Open Call will be launched in June 2024. The proposal evaluation and sub-grant agreement preparation will take place between October 2024 and May 2025. Selected projects will be launched in June 2025 having an implementation timeframe of 12 months (until May 2026). The 12-month implementation period will be divided into 3 phases:

- Phase 1 – Design [Deliverable: Activity plan] (June 2025 – September 2025)
- Phase 2 - Development [Deliverable: Digital smart solution demonstration] (October 2025 – February 2026)
- Phase 3 - Validation [Deliverable: Report on market or community associated activities] (March 2026 – May 2026)

The Open Call will result in at least 10 projects (max €120k euro per project – min €30,000 - max €60,000 per third party). In total, a €1.2m euro budget will be allocated to financial support to third parties.