

Connecting rural innovation, local action and Europe's 2030–2050 ambitions

RURAL THRIVE 2050 OPENING WEBINAR – Online
1st September 2026

Gabor Mester
Project Coordinator of RURALITIES



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation program under grant agreement no 101060876. UK participants in Horizon Europe Project RURALITIES are supported by UKRI grant numbers: 10051963 The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership and 10050988 Earthwatch Europe.



Innovate
UK



Introduction to RURALITIES



Challenge: Rural areas face depopulation, low innovation capacity, fragmented governance, and limited access to services. Top-down models do not work;

HE coordination and support action

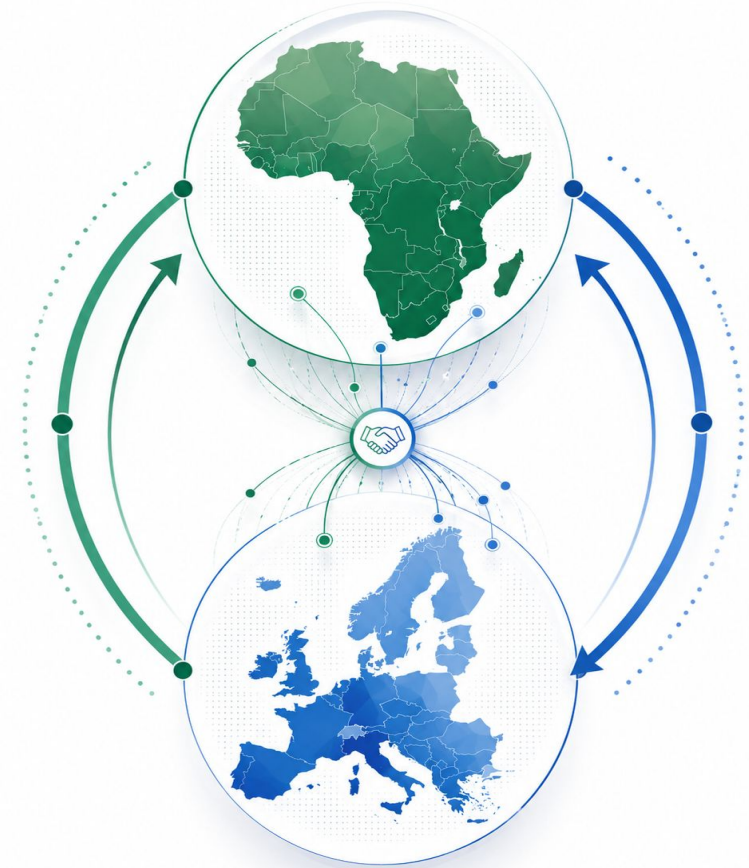
5 Years long project (M48) ending in September 2027

51 partners in the consortium

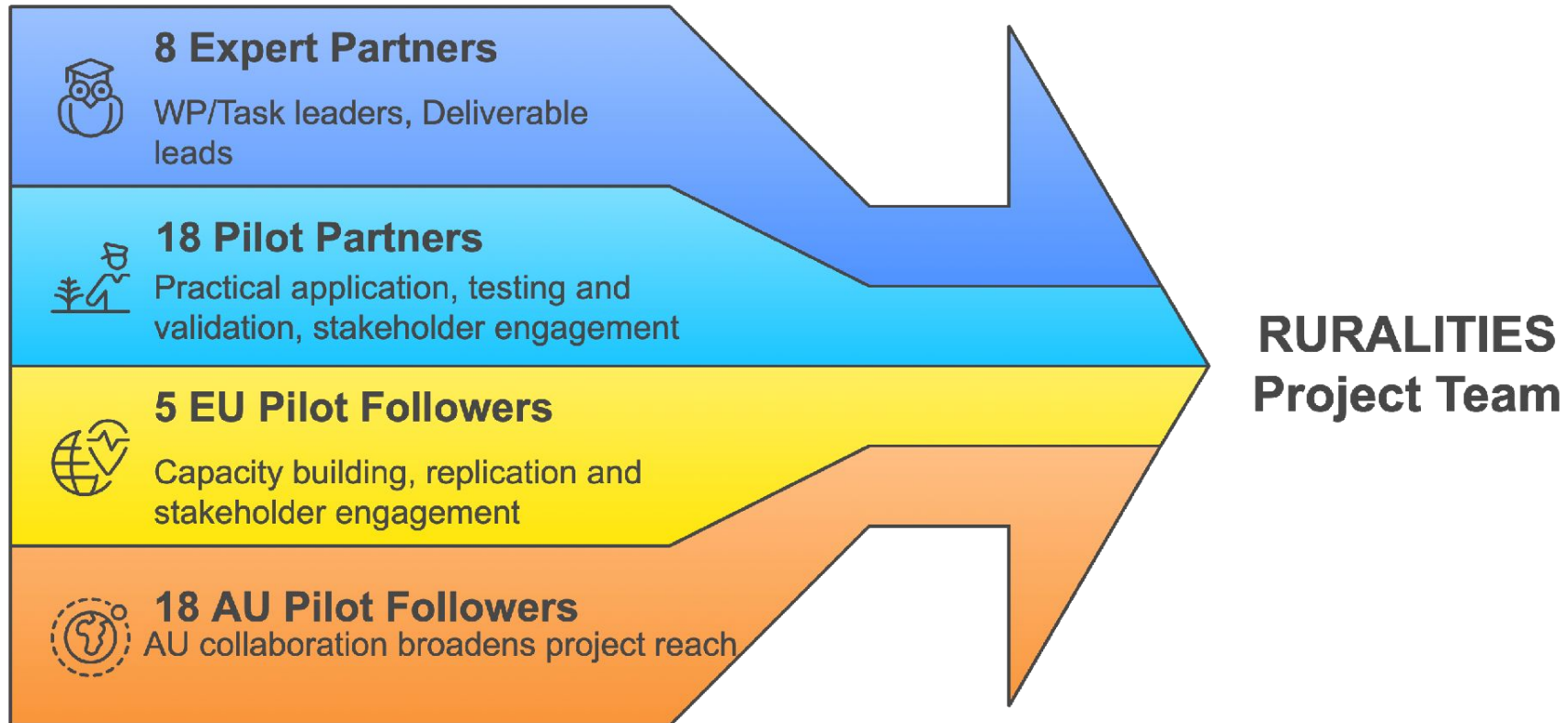
Engage, connect and empower rural actors focusing on collaboration and innovation

Creating learning HUBs – Climate-smart Expertise and Training centers in 6 pilots

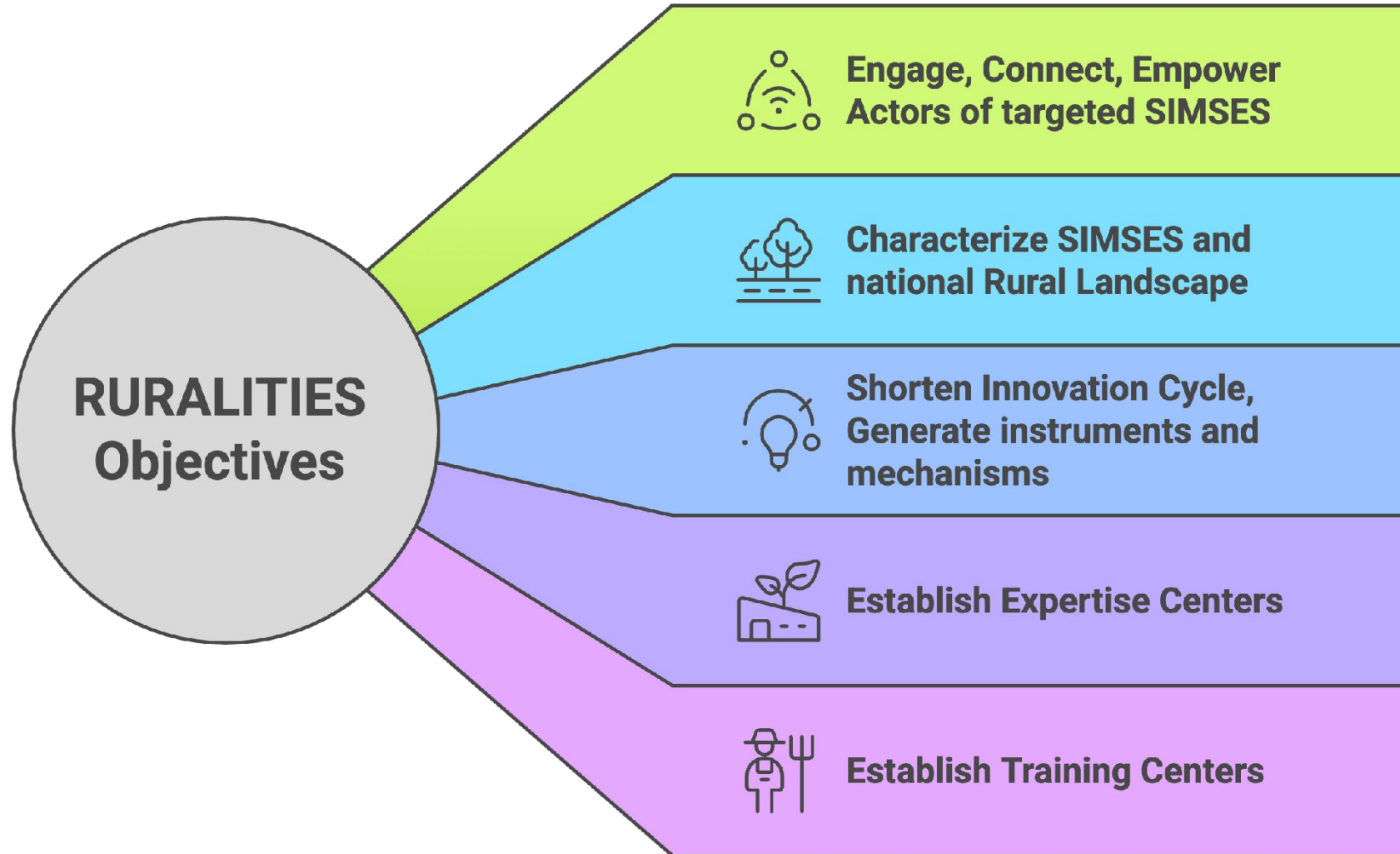
AU – EU collaboration



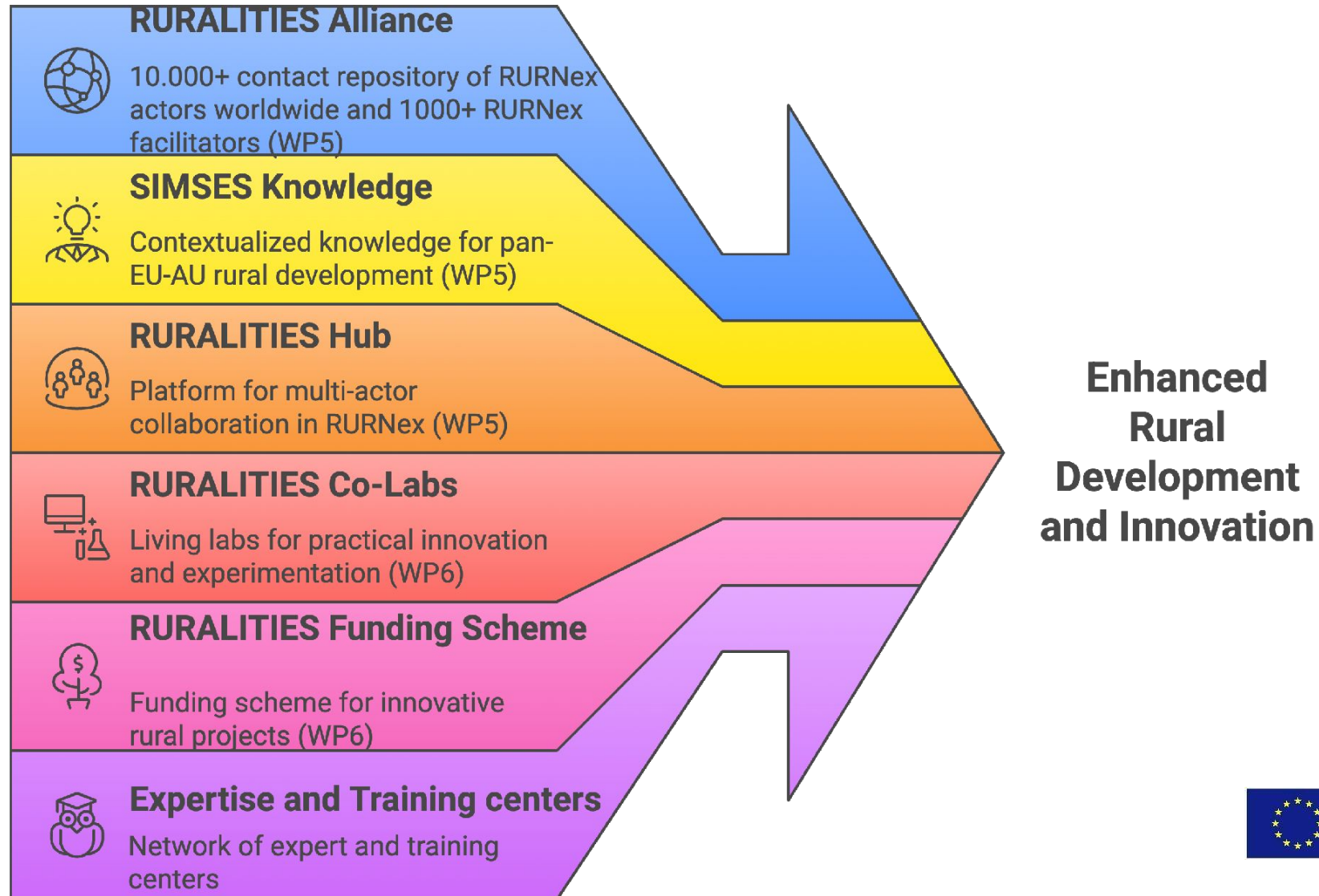
The Consortium



Main Objectives



Key Outcomes



MAP OF PILOT AREAS, SIMSES (Simplified Rural Socioecological Systems)

Pesaro Urbino, Italy

Asiago Plateau, Italy

Highlands and Islands, Scotland

Posavje, Slovenia

Asturias, Spain

Iasi, Romania



Why Rural Thrive 2050?



Rural territories are not short of ideas.

They need stronger connections between people, knowledge, innovation, policy and action.



Near-term transition



Long-term
resilience



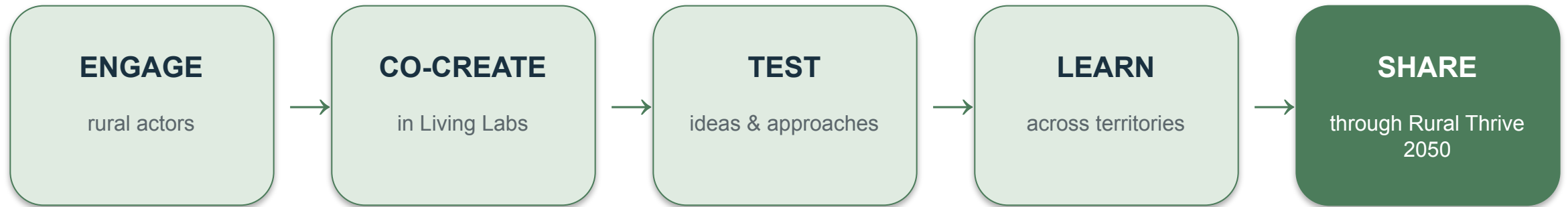
Action that works in
place

Rural Thrive 2050 turns these ambitions into a shared conversation grounded in rural realities.

Why Rural Thrive 2050?



The campaign grows from RURALITIES



The campaign is a channel for transferring tested experiences, practical knowledge and rural voices beyond the project.

A campaign grounded in real rural ecosystems



1,012

actors mapped

105

facilitators

8

EU Living Labs

122+

role models &
replicators

6 SIMSES across Italy, the United Kingdom, Slovenia, Spain and Romania provide the territorial backbone.

What the testing phase told us



Context matters

Use modular approaches that can be adapted locally.

Trust matters

Work through credible rural networks and communication channels.

Exchange matters

Enable peer learning across SIMSES and territories.

Capacity matters

Prepare local actors before asking them to mobilise others.

Inclusion matters

Reach underrepresented groups deliberately.

Policy dialogue matters

Connect local evidence with multiple governance levels.

Thank you

LinkedIn: Project Ruralities

Instagram: @Ruralities52

X: @Ruralities52

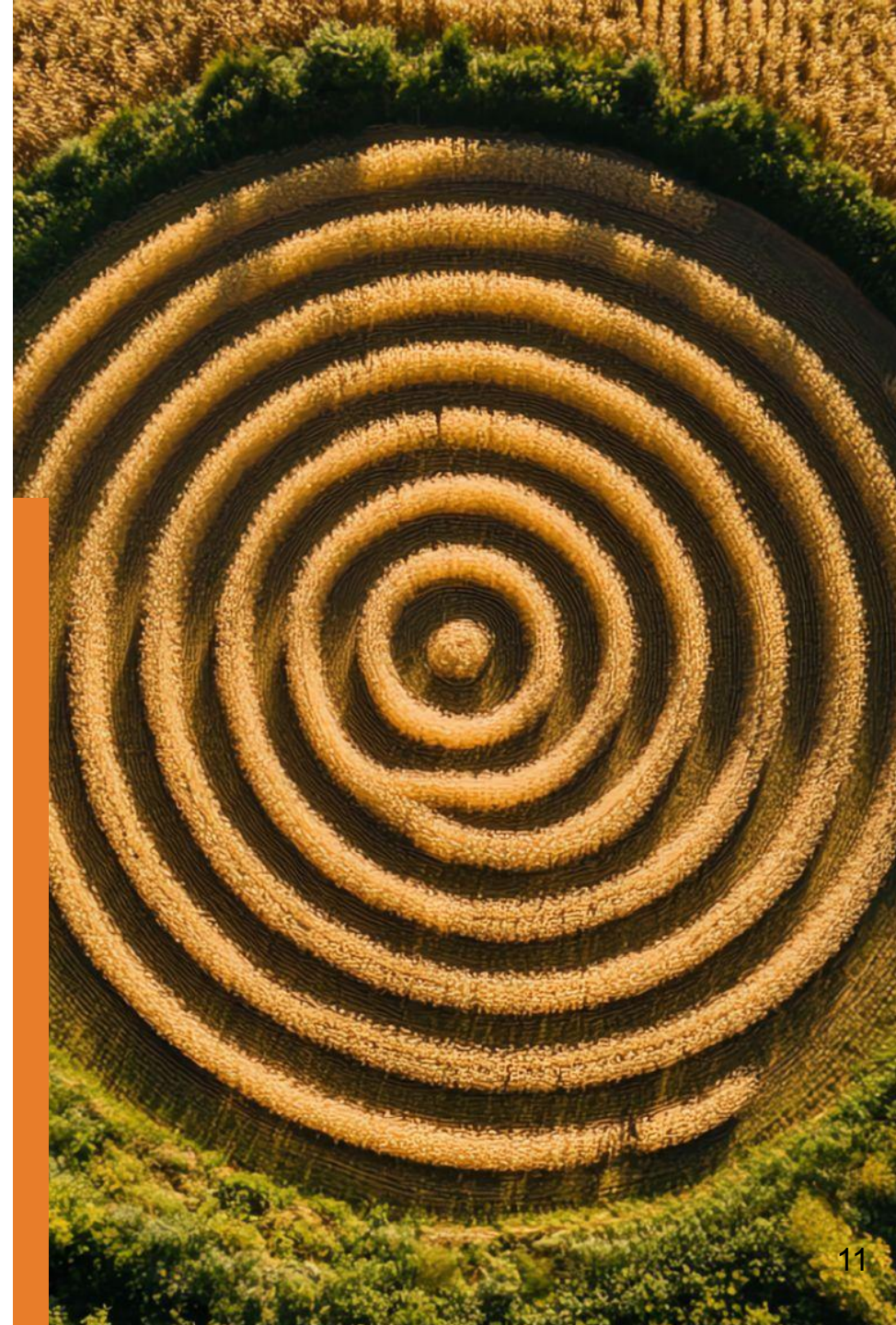
www.ruralities-project.eu



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation program under grant agreement no 101060876. UK participants in Horizon Europe Project RURALITIES are supported by UKRI grant numbers: 10051963 The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership and 10050988 Earthwatch Europe.



**Innovate
UK**





RURALITIES - CLIMATE SMART, ECOSYSTEM-ENHANCING AND KNOWLEDGE-BASED RURAL EXPERTISE AND TRAINING CENTRES

49 Partners across Europe and Africa

Ruralities Consortium



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation program under grant agreement no 101060876. UK participants in Horizon Europe Project RURALITIES are supported by UKRI grant numbers: 10051963 The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership and 10050988 Earthwatch Europe.



Innovate
UK

