

## Report to Partnership Meeting 15 September 2023

### EUROPEAN PROJECTS

#### RURALITIES – Horizon Europe

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members on a proposed change to HITRANS role in the RURALITIES project following the loss to the project of another UK Partner and seek approval of HITRANS taking on additional responsibility and budget.

#### BACKGROUND



The **RURALITIES** project, funded by Horizon Europe, commenced late in 2022. HITRANS is receiving its funding through UKRI while the UK's formal association to the programme is being finalised. HITRANS is a member of the Executive Project Board and attended the first meeting in Brussels on 21<sup>st</sup> March. We are leading one of the six SIMSES lighthouses across Europe (simplified rural socio-ecological systems), with our lighthouse focusing on rural transport. We are working closely with other UK partner, Earthwatch UK, as we start to identify the specific theme and needs of our lighthouse project.

#### PROJECT AMENDMENT

The Project Lead Partner became aware that the UK project partner ASPI had ceased communication on the project because of legal measures related to insolvency. The Lead Partner continued to monitor this process but unfortunately ASPI have now gone under administration as of 4th July 2023. This has required a re-evaluation of the project's work plan, specifically concerning the redistribution of tasks, deliverables, and other responsibilities initially designated to ASPI amounted to a time commitment of 14 person months. ASPI's involvement in the project covers the following project activities:

##### Tasks:

- T4.3 – Gamify RURALITIES, recruit and equip role models and 'replicators'
- T8.1 – Establish multi-actors onsite and online learning settings
- T8.2 – Generate structured learning pathways

Leading: WP8- TRAINING: pioneering multi-points learning framework

Deliverables:

- D4.2 RURALITIES training to empower/equip role models and replicators
- D4.3 RURALITIES role models, replicators and serious game
- D4.7 RURALITIES publication “Rural Thrive Panorama”
- D8.1 Rural scene education nexus characterization compendium
- D8.2 Multi-actors onsite and online learning catalogue
- D8.3 RURALITIES learning platform with educational projects and information
- D8.4 RURALITIES entrepreneurship and mentorship programmes

After extensive evaluation of the potential for another UK Partner to take on ASPI responsibilities and budget the Lead Partner has concluded HITRANS would be best placed to do so as the other UK Partner does not have capacity to do so. For HITRANS part our evaluation has identified an opportunity for the activities to be embedded within the Scottish Islands Passport project ensuring the initial project budget allocated to ASPI could transfer to HITRANS on the same 100% funded basis that applies to the Horizon Europe Guarantee activities. The total budget allocated to ASPI is **151,875 Euros**.

If Members are content with the proposal that HITRANS take on additional responsibilities and budget through the RURALITIES project the budget change request process will proceed through UKRI.

## **RISK REGISTER**

### RTS Delivery

Impact – Positive

Comment – HITRANS EU project work supports several RTS objectives, particularly in the field of low carbon transport.

### Policy

Impact – Positive

Comment – HITRANS EU project work supports broader policy work in a variety of ways, including making areas better connected and rural areas more accessible, and conducting research to assist with policy development.

### Financial

Impact – Positive

Budget line and value – RURALITIES project attracts 100% funding cover through the UK Government Horizon Guarantee.

### Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment – A large proportion of EU project work is targeted at improving the availability and accessibility of transport services in the HITRANS area.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Members are asked to:-

1. Approve the proposal that HITRANS take on additional tasks and budget within the RURALITIES project as set out in the report.

**Report by:** Ranald Robertson  
**Designation:** Partnership Director  
**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> August 2023

