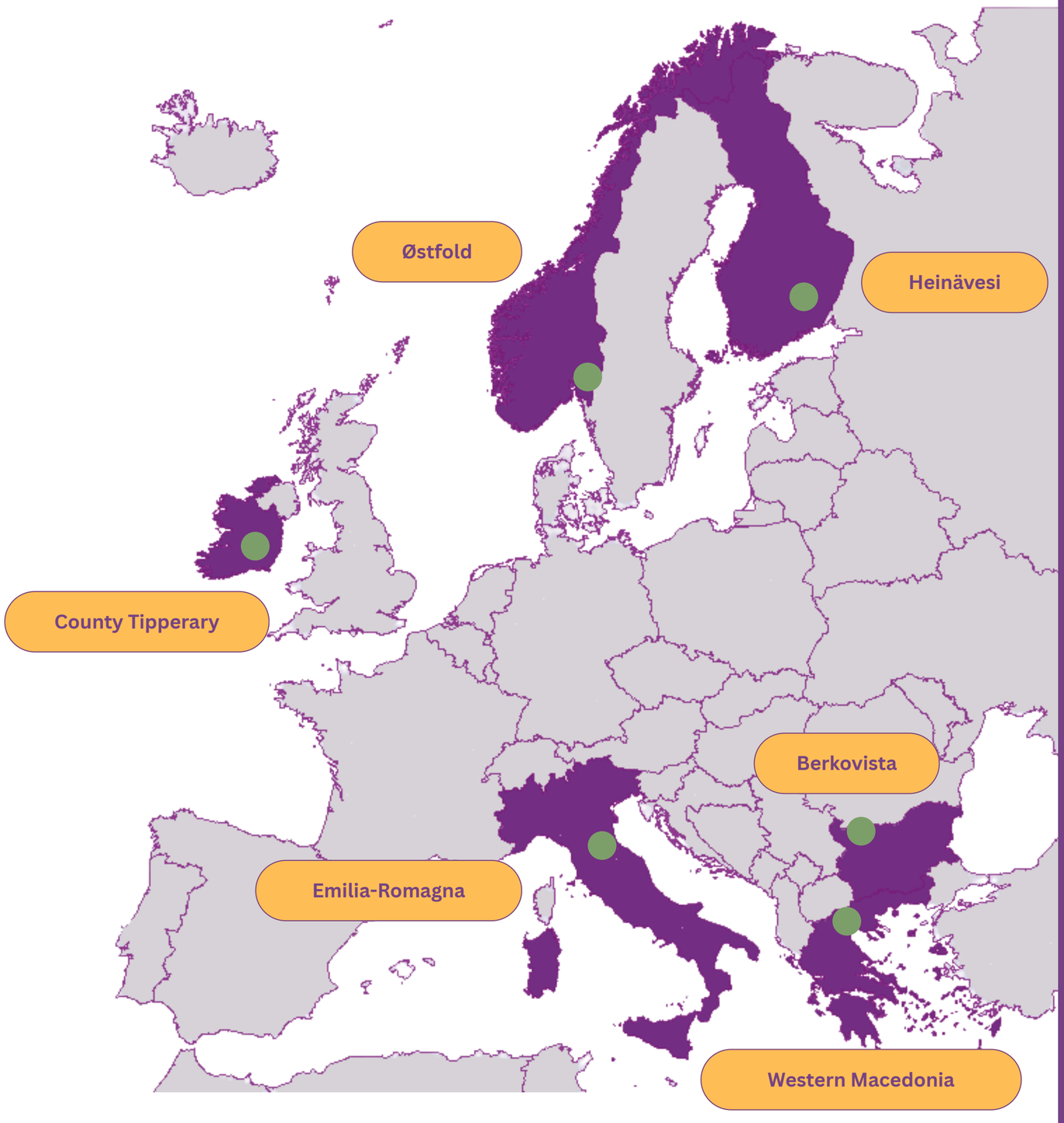

Berkovitsa, Bulgaria

The most critical challenges in this pilot relate to housing quality and energy inefficiency, affordability of housing renewal and upgrades, securing the right to housing, and ensuring access to affordable housing for vulnerable groups. Ruralise will develop locally tailored frameworks for energy-efficient and affordable housing designed to meet multigenerational needs, promoting the adaptive reuse of underused or vacant buildings and homes, and boosting energy efficiency to help prevent depopulation.

Heinävesi, Finland

The pilot area faces a range of interconnected challenges, namely a significant population decline and vulnerable groups also increasingly facing problems in accessing services, which are iscarce and difficult to reach due to long distances. Infrastructure issues include a high number of vacant buildings, outdated housing, limited rental options, and uneven digital connectivity. Ruralise will by create rental models for vacant dwellings, including community- and/or publicly-owned properties.

Western Macedonia, Greece

The post-lignite transition poses major structural challenges but also presents a critical opportunity for green regeneration and inclusive development. Moreover, the region faces severe demographic decline, with a rapidly aging population and high levels of youth outmigration: as a result, many rural villages are shrinking or have already become depopulated. Ruralise will consolidate fragmented housing and property data, align practical financing, and reactivate vacant dwellings into affordable, low-carbon homes through co-design with municipalities, energy communities, and local actors.

Østfold, Norway

This pilot faces out-migration and dependency on urban labour markets, but also in-migration of commuters to urban areas, like Oslo, pushing up housing prices. At the same time, lower housing costs in the rural regions attract low-income domestic and immigrant households. There are very low renovation rates and a structural exclusion of vulnerable groups. Ruralise will map underused and abandoned dwellings and develop plans for how to convert to release stock for permanent residency, and also address transitional housing needs across the life course to reduce exclusion.

County Tipperary, Ireland

This region includes 72 rural villages with a population of under 150 people. There are significant housing affordability challenges due to urban generated rural housing demand. Population decline has been triggered partially by extensive self-provisioning of new houses built in the open countryside which has led to significant loss of commercial and public services. Ruralise will focus on the adaptive reuse of abandoned town-center commercial buildings into social housing, employing circular and low-carbon renovation methods.

Emilia-Romagna, Italy

Many historic farmhouses and hamlets are increasingly uninhabited in this pilot. Most of this rural archetypal heritage is abandoned, underutilized, or poorly renovated due to the end of family-run farming but also because little knowledge of the historical/architectural value of these settlements. Ruralise will demonstrate sustainable reactivation and inclusive reuse of underutilised rural housing heritage in the regional Emilia-Romagna area.