Rural Pact Conference

15-16 June 2022

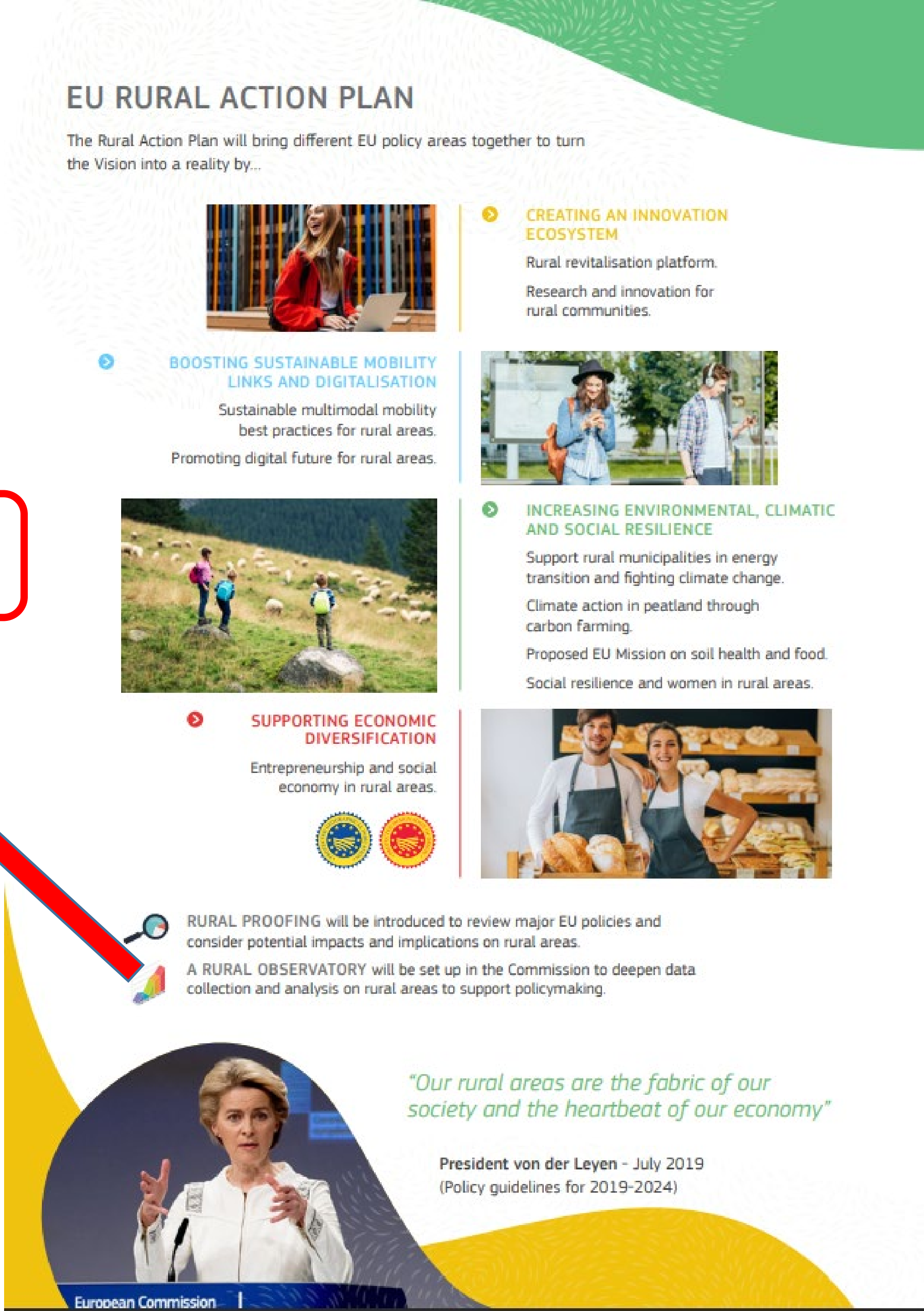
Towards a Rural Observatory

EU Rural Action Plan: Transversal actions

RURAL PROOFING will be introduced to review major EU policies and consider potential impacts and implications on rural areas.

A RURAL OBSERVATORY will be set up in the Commission to deepen data collection and analysis on rural areas to support policymaking.

- …is an integral part of the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas, under the EU Rural Action Plan
- …is a transversal action in support of policymaking and rural proofing



EU RURAL ACTION PLAN

The Rural Action Plan will bring different EU policy areas together to turn the Vision into a reality by…

CREATING AN INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

Rural revitalisation platform.

Research and innovation for rural communities.

BOOSTING SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY LINKS AND DIGITALISATION

Sustainable multimodal mobility best practices for rural areas.

Promoting digital future for rural areas.

INCREASING ENVIRONMENTAL, CLIMATIC AND SOCIAL RESILIENCE

Support rural municipalities in energy transition and fighting climate change.

Climate action in peatland through carbon farming.

Proposed EU Mission on soil health and food.

Social resilience and women in rural areas.

SUPPORTING ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Entrepreneurship and social economy in rural areas.

RURAL PROOFING will be introduced to review major EU policies and consider potential impacts and implications on rural areas.

A RURAL OBSERVATORY will be set up in the Commission to deepen data collection and analysis on rural areas to support policymaking.

"Our rural areas are the fabric of our society and the heartbeat of our economy"

President von der Leyen - July 2019
(Policy guidelines for 2019-2024)

Scope of the Rural Observatory

- **Collection and production of indicators** targeted to the analysis of rural areas
- Setup of a **Rural Data Platform** to disseminate data and knowledge on rural areas, which provides:
  - comparability
  - full EU coverage
- Elaboration of **analytical papers** with focus on prominent rural topics
- Integration of **contributions from external stakeholders and experts**

Thematic areas

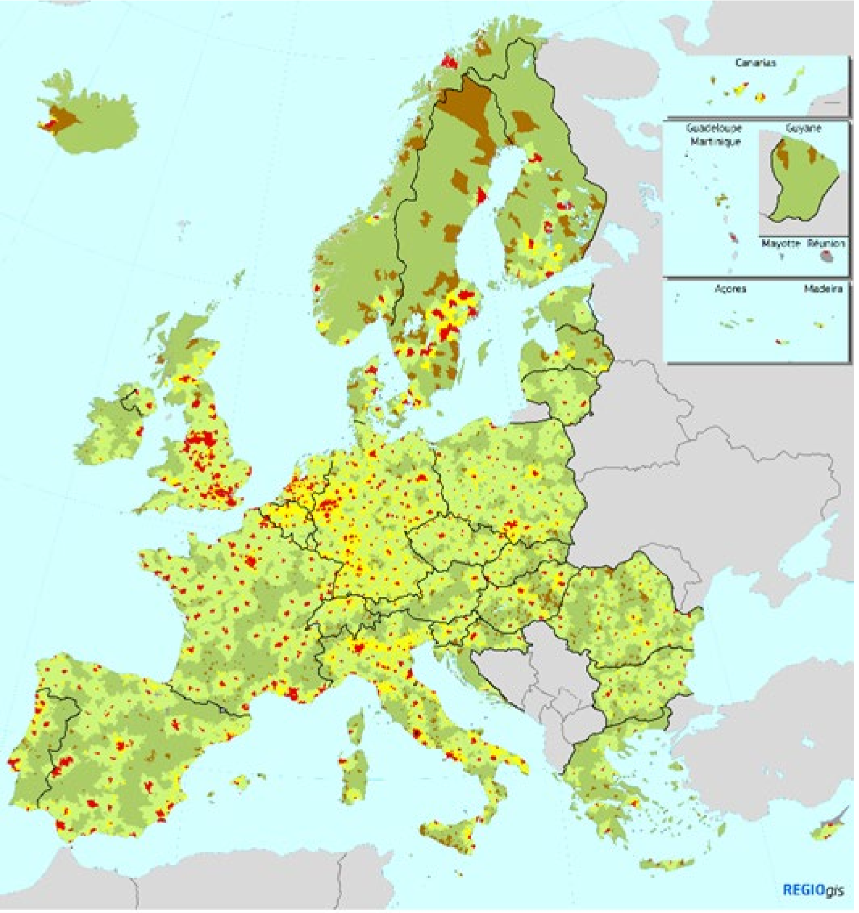
- **Demography** (depopulation, age structure, projections)
- **Economic development** (GDP, tourism, farming)
- **Labour** (employment and unemployment, gender gap)
- **Education** (tertiary education, early leavers, digital skills)
- **Social inclusion** (risk of poverty or social exclusion)
- **Infrastructure and accessibility**
  (service accessibility, transport networks, high-speed broadband access)
- **Environment and climate** (green transition)
- **Rural innovation** (digitalisation, cooperation and networks)

Where are the rural areas?

- Focus on “territorial typologies”, which divide the territory of each country into sets of homogenous areas:
  - **Degree of Urbanisation** (based on municipalities – or LAU)
  - **Urban/Rural Typology** (based on districts/provinces, or NUTS3)
  - Mountain/Non mountain (NUTS3)
  - Metro/Non Metro (NUTS3)
  - Coastal areas (LAU, NUTS3)

The Rural Observatory will contribute to the analysis of diverse territories (**cross-border, outermost regions, mountains, islands, sparsely populated, etc**.) to reflect the multiple dimensions of rural areas and their **links with other territories**.

Where are the rural areas?

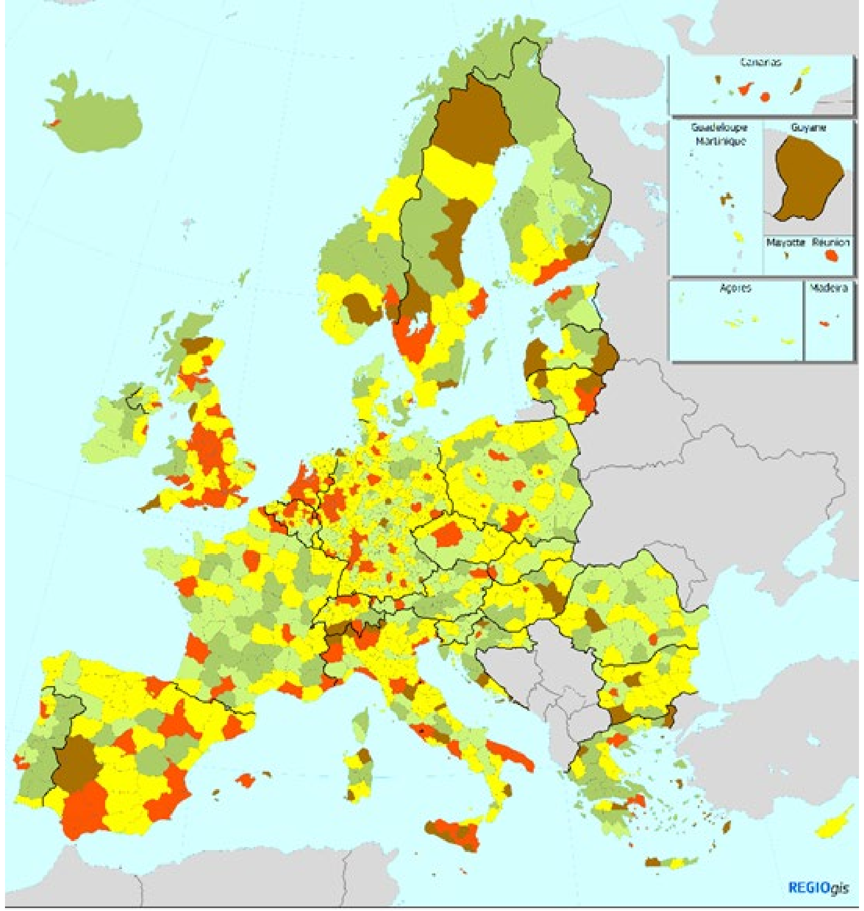


Canarias
Guadeloupe
Martinique
Guyane
Mayotte
Réunion
Açores
Madeira
REGIOgis

LAU's: Degree of Urbanisation including remoteness (45 minutes)

- 🟥 City
- 🟨 Town and suburb, close to a city
- 🟫 Town and suburb, remote
- 🟩 Rural area, close to a city
- 🟩 Rural area, remote

Sources:
LAU 2011, CGC 2012, population 2011, TomTom 2020



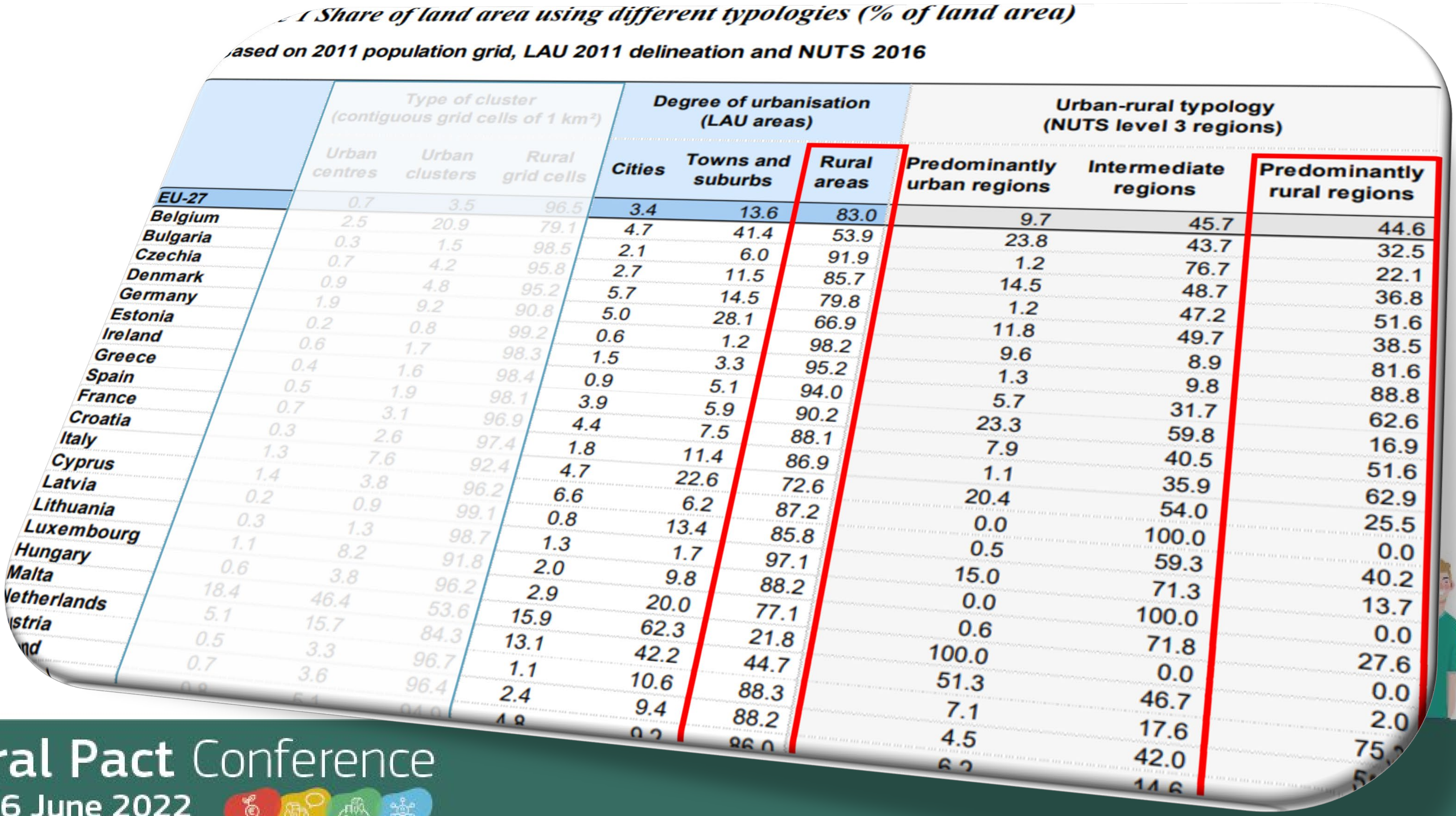
Canarias
Guadeloupe
Martinique
Guyane
Mayotte
Réunion
Açores
Madeira
REGIOgis

Urban-Rural NUTS3 typology including remoteness (45 minutes)

- 🟧 Predominantly urban regions
- 🟨 Intermediate regions, close to a city
- 🟫 Intermediate, remote regions
- 🟩 Predominantly rural regions, close to a city
- 🟩 Predominantly rural, remote regions

Sources:
NUTS3 2016, CGC 2012, population 2011, TomTom 2020

Different scales, different stories…

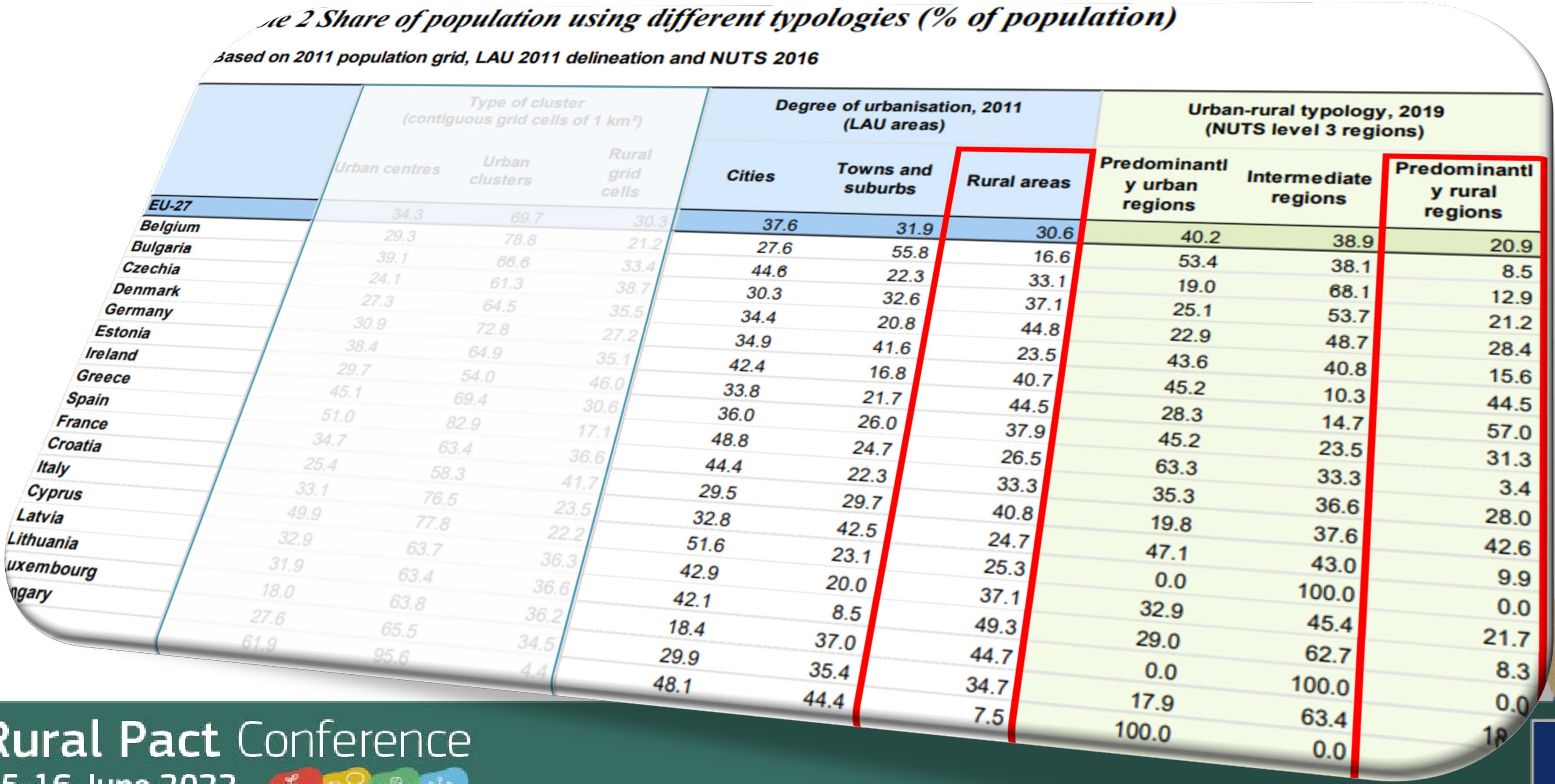


1 Share of land area using different typologies (% of land area)

ased on 2011 population grid, LAU 2011 delineation and NUTS 2016

	Type of cluster (contiguous grid cells of 1 km²)			Degree of urbanisation (LAU areas)			Urban-rural typology (NUTS level 3 regions)		
	Urban centres	Urban clusters	Rural grid cells	Cities	Towns and suburbs	Rural areas	Predominantly urban regions	Intermediate regions	Predominantly rural regions
EU-27	0.7	3.5	96.5	3.4	13.6	83.0	9.7	45.7	44.6
Belgium	2.5	20.9	79.1	4.7	41.4	53.9	23.8	43.7	32.5
Bulgaria	0.3	1.5	98.5	2.1	6.0	91.9	1.2	76.7	22.1
Czechia	0.7	4.2	95.8	2.7	11.5	85.7	14.5	48.7	36.8
Denmark	0.9	4.8	95.2	5.7	14.5	79.8	1.2	47.2	51.6
Germany	1.9	9.2	90.8	5.0	28.1	66.9	11.8	49.7	38.5
Estonia	0.2	0.8	99.2	0.6	1.2	98.2	9.6	8.9	81.6
Ireland	0.6	1.7	98.3	1.5	3.3	95.2	1.3	9.8	88.8
Greece	0.4	1.6	98.4	0.9	5.1	94.0	5.7	31.7	62.6
Spain	0.5	1.9	98.1	3.9	5.9	90.2	23.3	59.8	16.9
France	0.7	3.1	96.9	4.4	7.5	88.1	7.9	40.5	51.6
Croatia	0.3	2.6	97.4	1.8	11.4	86.9	1.1	35.9	62.9
Italy	1.3	7.6	92.4	4.7	22.6	72.6	20.4	54.0	25.5
Cyprus	1.4	3.8	96.2	6.6	6.2	87.2	0.0	100.0	0.0
Latvia	0.2	0.9	99.1	0.8	13.4	85.8	0.5	59.3	40.2
Lithuania	0.3	1.3	98.7	1.3	1.7	97.1	15.0	71.3	13.7
Luxembourg	1.1	8.2	91.8	2.0	9.8	88.2	0.0	100.0	0.0
Hungary	0.6	3.8	96.2	2.9	20.0	77.1	0.6	71.8	27.6
Malta	18.4	46.4	53.6	15.9	62.3	21.8	100.0	0.0	0.0
Netherlands	5.1	15.7	84.3	13.1	42.2	44.7	51.3	46.7	2.0
stria	0.5	3.3	96.7	1.1	10.6	88.3	7.1	17.6	75.
nd	0.7	3.6	96.4	2.4	9.4	88.2	4.5	42.0	5
	0.8	5.4	94.0	4.8	9.2	86.0	6.2	14.6	

Different scales, different stories…



e 2 Share of population using different typologies (% of population)

ased on 2011 population grid, LAU 2011 delineation and NUTS 2016

	Type of cluster (contiguous grid cells of 1 km²)			Degree of urbanisation, 2011 (LAU areas)			Urban-rural typology, 2019 (NUTS level 3 regions)		
	Urban centres	Urban clusters	Rural grid cells	Cities	Towns and suburbs	Rural areas	Predominantly urban regions	Intermediate regions	Predominantly rural regions
EU-27	34.3	69.7	30.3	37.6	31.9	30.6	40.2	38.9	20.9
Belgium	29.3	78.8	21.2	27.6	55.8	16.6	53.4	38.1	8.5
Bulgaria	39.1	66.6	33.4	44.6	22.3	33.1	19.0	68.1	12.9
Czechia	24.1	61.3	38.7	30.3	32.6	37.1	25.1	53.7	21.2
Denmark	27.3	64.5	35.5	34.4	20.8	44.8	22.9	48.7	28.4
Germany	30.9	72.8	27.2	34.9	41.6	23.5	43.6	40.8	15.6
Estonia	38.4	64.9	35.1	42.4	16.8	40.7	45.2	10.3	44.5
Ireland	29.7	54.0	46.0	33.8	21.7	44.5	28.3	14.7	57.0
Greece	45.1	69.4	30.6	36.0	26.0	37.9	45.2	23.5	31.3
Spain	51.0	82.9	17.1	48.8	24.7	26.5	63.3	33.3	3.4
France	34.7	63.4	36.6	44.4	22.3	33.3	35.3	36.6	28.0
Croatia	25.4	58.3	41.7	29.5	29.7	40.8	19.8	37.6	42.6
Italy	33.1	76.5	23.5	32.8	42.5	24.7	47.1	43.0	9.9
Cyprus	49.9	77.8	22.2	51.6	23.1	25.3	0.0	100.0	0.0
Latvia	32.9	63.7	36.3	42.9	20.0	37.1	32.9	45.4	21.7
Lithuania	31.9	63.4	36.6	42.1	8.5	49.3	29.0	62.7	8.3
uxembourg	18.0	63.8	36.2	18.4	37.0	44.7	0.0	100.0	0.0
ngary	27.6	65.5	34.5	29.9	35.4	34.7	17.9	63.4	18
	61.9	95.6	4.4	48.1	44.4	7.5	100.0	0.0	

Rural Pact Conference

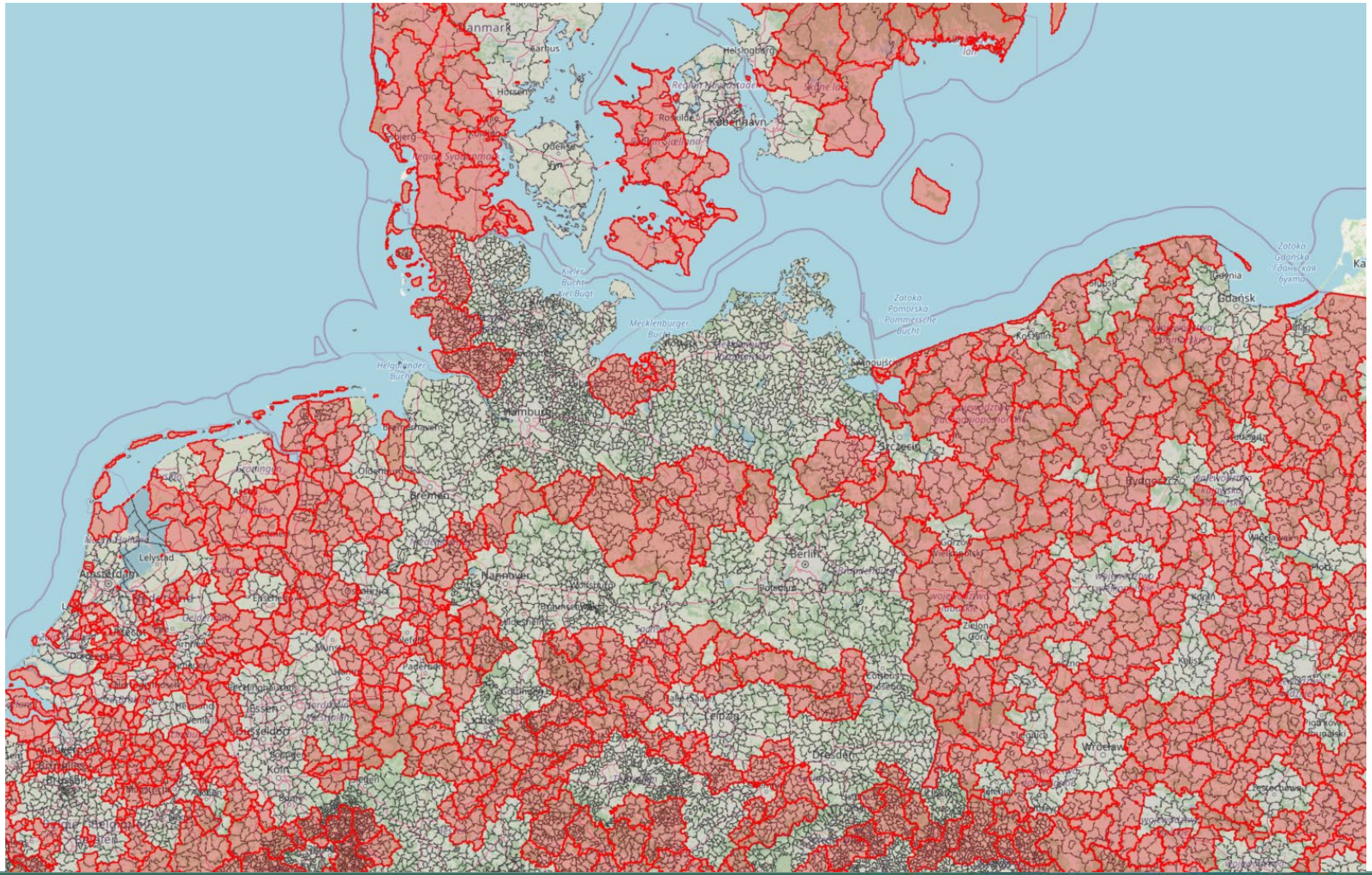
15-16 June 2022

New! Functional Rural Areas

The “**Functional Rural Areas**” (FRAs):

- do not overlap with the “Functional Urban Areas (FUAs)”
- FRAs and FUAs, together, cover the entire EU territory

Catchment areas around towns and villages are firstly identified. The smallest catchment areas are then combined with the closest one, until a minimum population size is reached



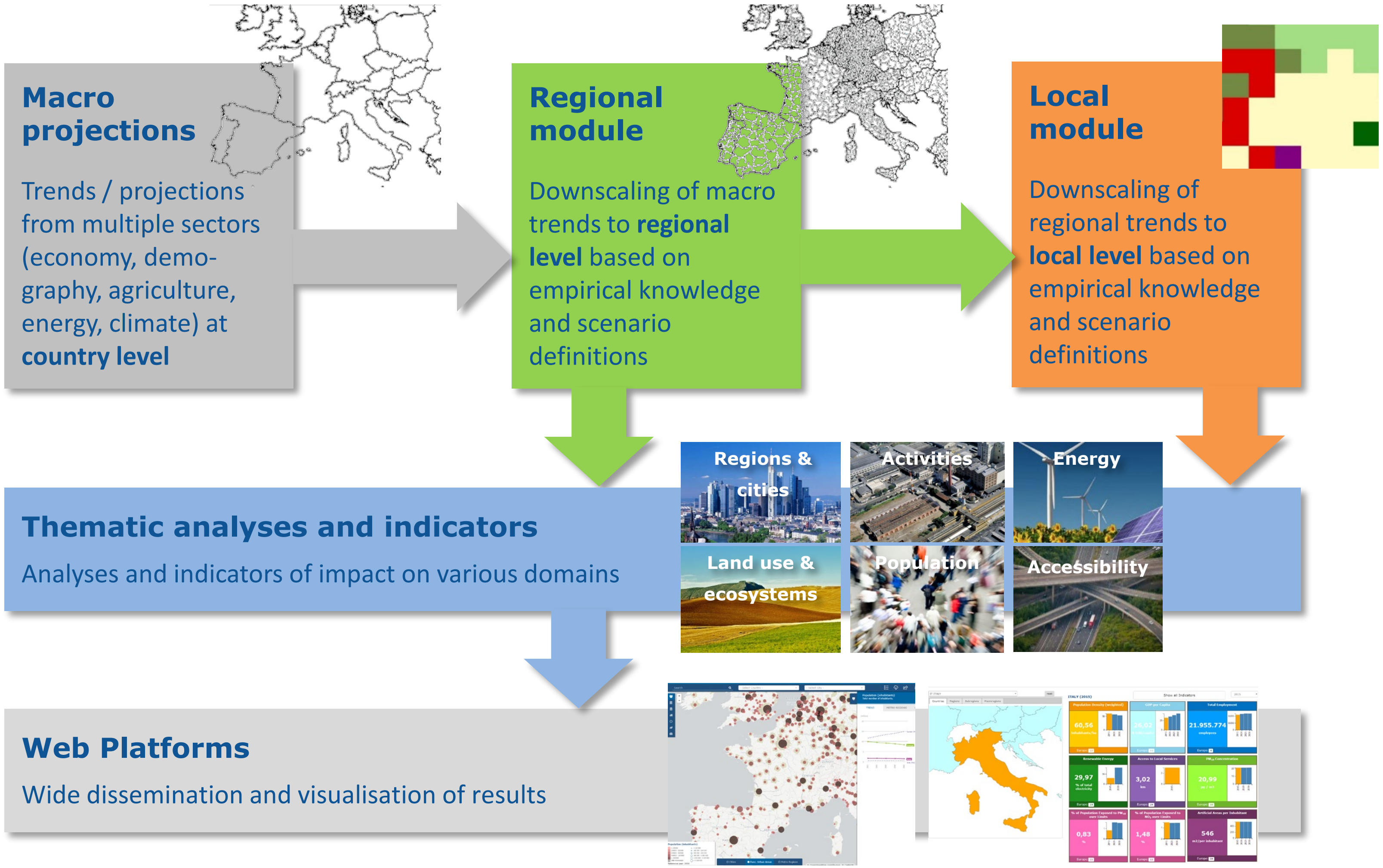
Beyond official statistics

- Data modelling
- Big Data

	Official statistics	Beyond official statistics…
Spatial and time coverage	Depending on the availability of official data	Full coverage is normally possible (based on estimates)
Future projections	No	Possible

LUISA Modelling Platform

LUISA is an integrated modelling platform to assess regional and local impacts of macro trends and sectorial policies and a key tool of the **Knoweledge Centre for Territorial Policies** (KCTP)



Macro projections

Trends / projections from multiple sectors (economy, demo-graphy, agriculture, energy, climate) at **country level**

Regional module

Downscaling of macro trends to **regional level** based on empirical knowledge and scenario definitions

Local module

Downscaling of regional trends to **local level** based on empirical knowledge and scenario definitions

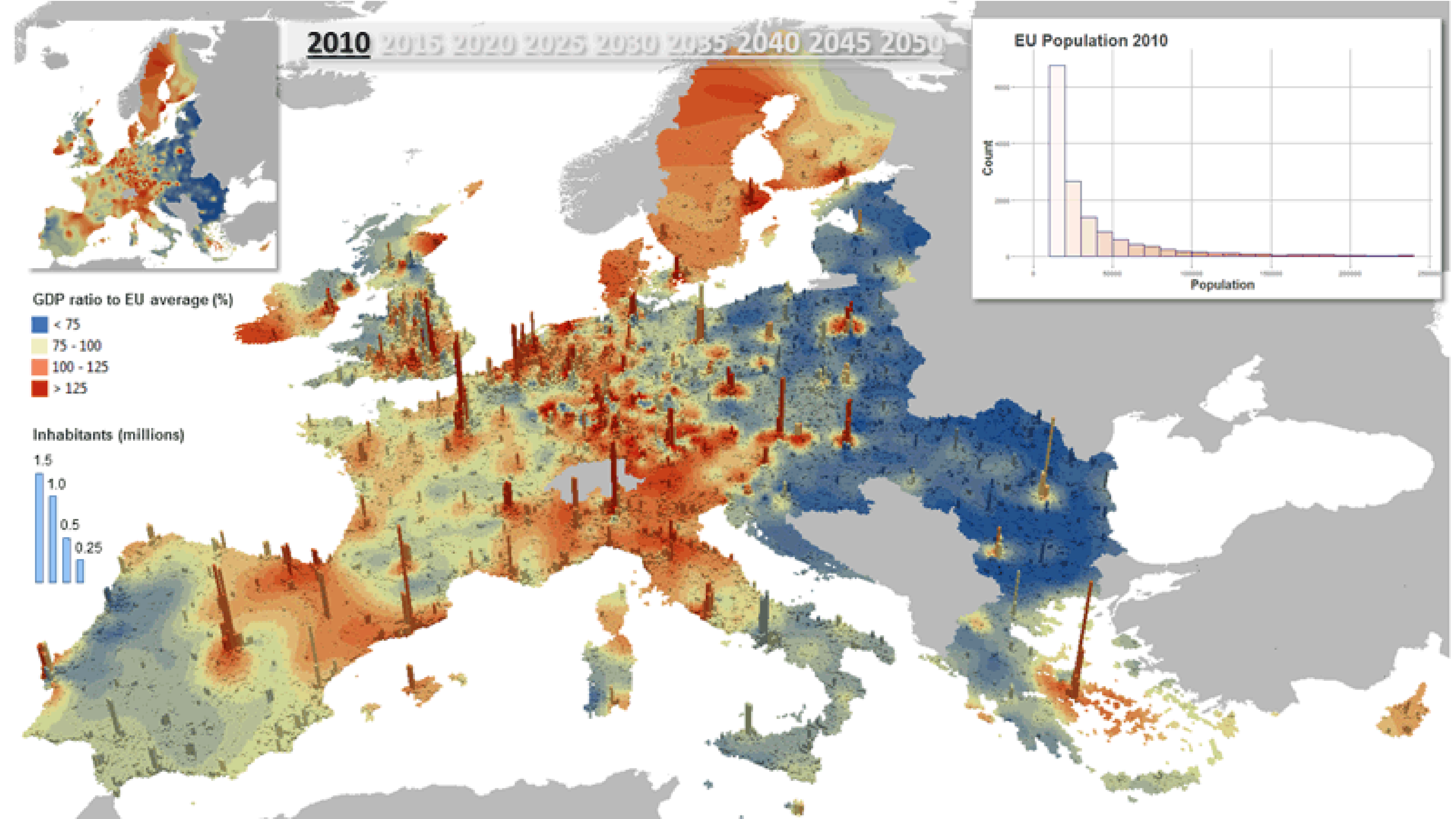
Thematic analyses and indicators

Analyses and indicators of impact on various domains

Regions & cities
Activities
Energy
Land use & ecosystems
Population
Accessibility

Web Platforms

Wide dissemination and visualisation of results


2010
2015
2020
2025
2030
2035
2040
2045
2050
EU Population 2010
Count
0
Population
GDP ratio to EU average (%)
< 75
75 - 100
100 - 125
> 125
Inhabitants (millions)
1.5
1.0
0.5
0.25

Big Data

Milan, Italy

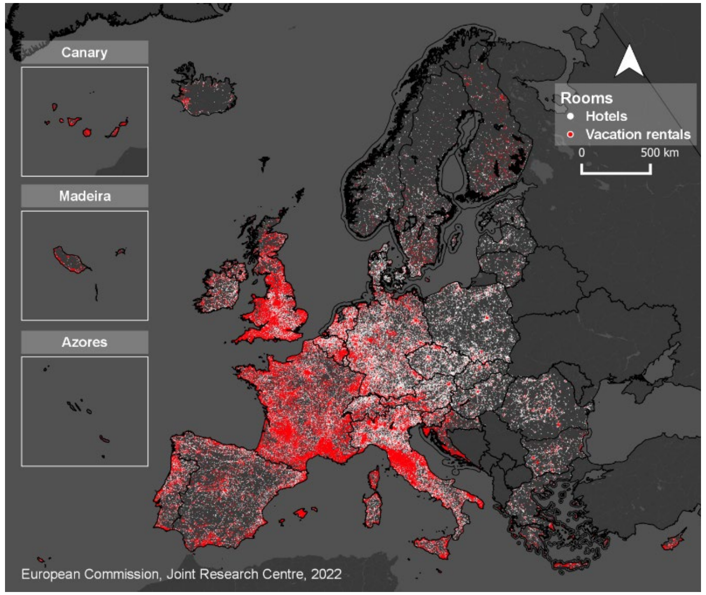
Attractions

Hotels

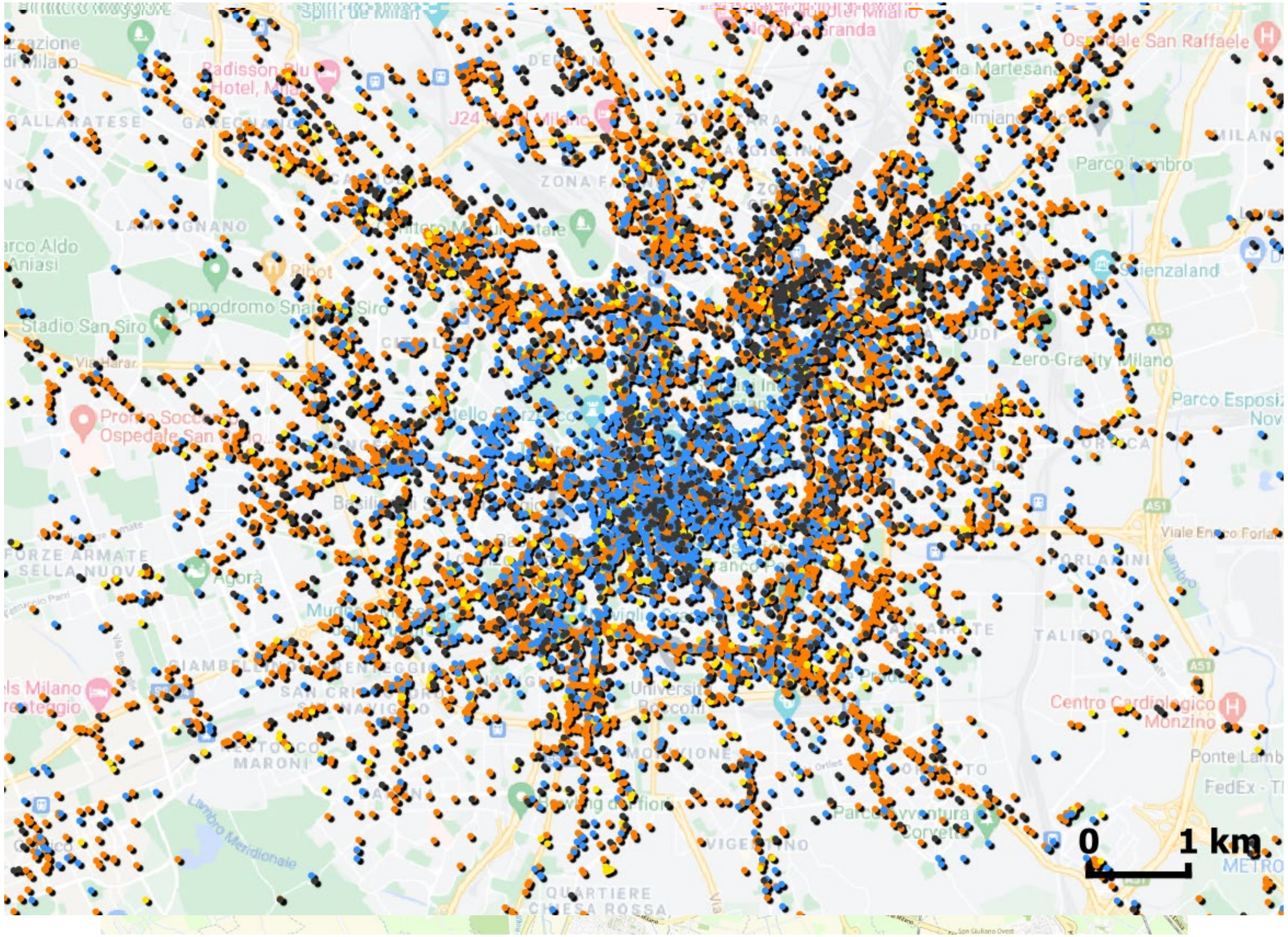
Vacation rentals

Restaurants & Bars

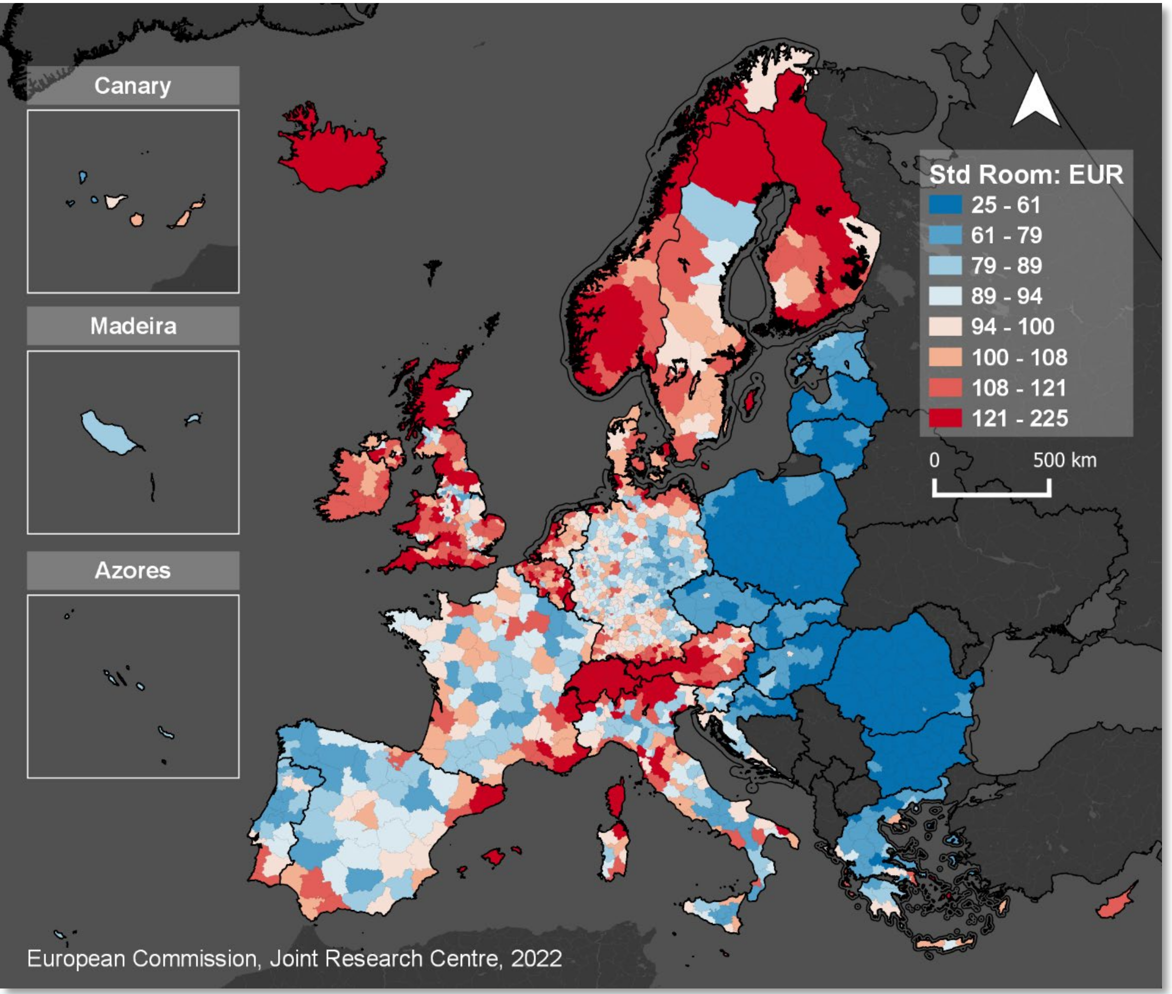
All POIs


Canary
Madeira
Azores
Rooms
Hotels
Vacation rentals
0
500 km

European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2022

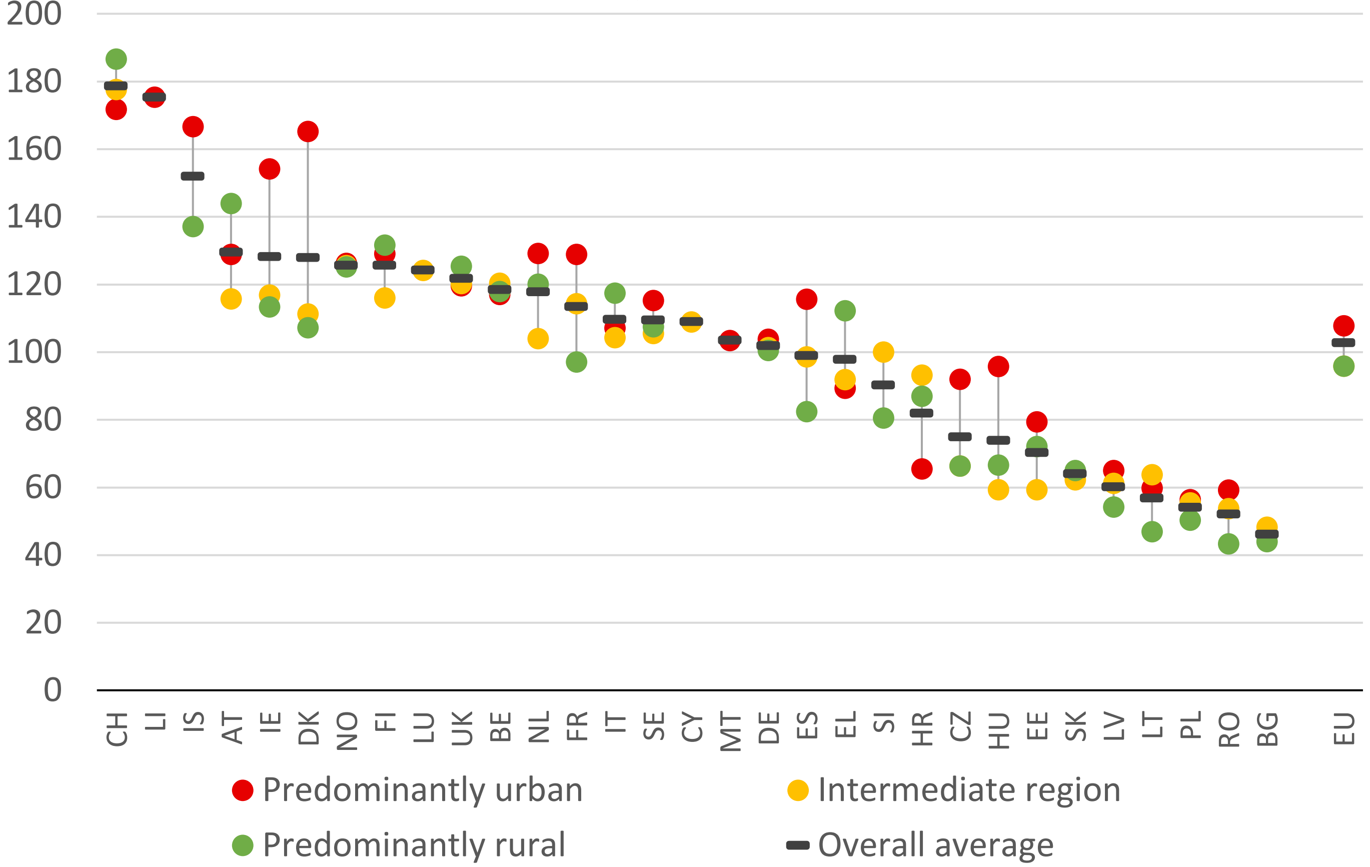

Radisson Blu Hotel, Milan
J24
ZONA F
LAMPUGNANO
Parco Aldo Aniasi
Ippodromo Snai San Siro
Stadio San Siro
Parco Lambro
Ospedale San Raffaele
Zero Gravity Milano
Parco Esposizioni Novegro
FORZE ARMATE
SELLA NUOVA
Agorà
Ospedale San Carlo
SAN CRISTOFORO
NAVIGLIO
LORENTEGGIO
MARONI
Università Bocconi
VIGENTINO
QUARTIERE CHIESA ROSSA
Lambro Meridionale
Centro Cardiologico Monzino
Ponte Lambro
FedEx
FORLANINI
TALIEDO
CORVETTO
0
1 km

Big Data


Canary
Madeira
Azores
Std Room: EUR
25 - 61
61 - 79
79 - 89
89 - 94
94 - 100
100 - 108
108 - 121
121 - 225
0
500 km

European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2022

Average hotel room price across the urban-rural typology: EUR/standard room



ARDECO

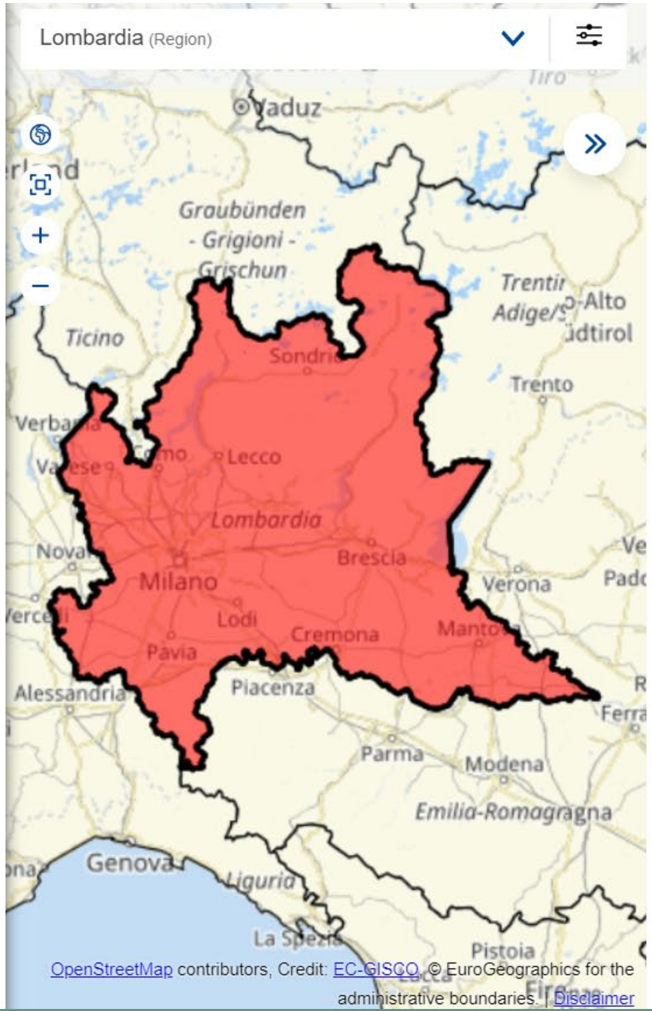
Indicator	Detail	Disaggregation
Population	NUTS3, Metro	
Employment	NUTS3, Metro	NACE* Rev. 2 6 sectors
GDP	NUTS3, Metro	
GVA	NUTS3, Metro	NACE* Rev. 2 6 sectors
Active Population	NUTS2	
Hours Worked	NUTS2	NACE* Rev. 2 6 sectors
Compensation of Employees	NUTS2	NACE* Rev. 2 6 sectors
Gross Fixed Capital Formation	NUTS2	NACE* Rev. 2 6 sectors

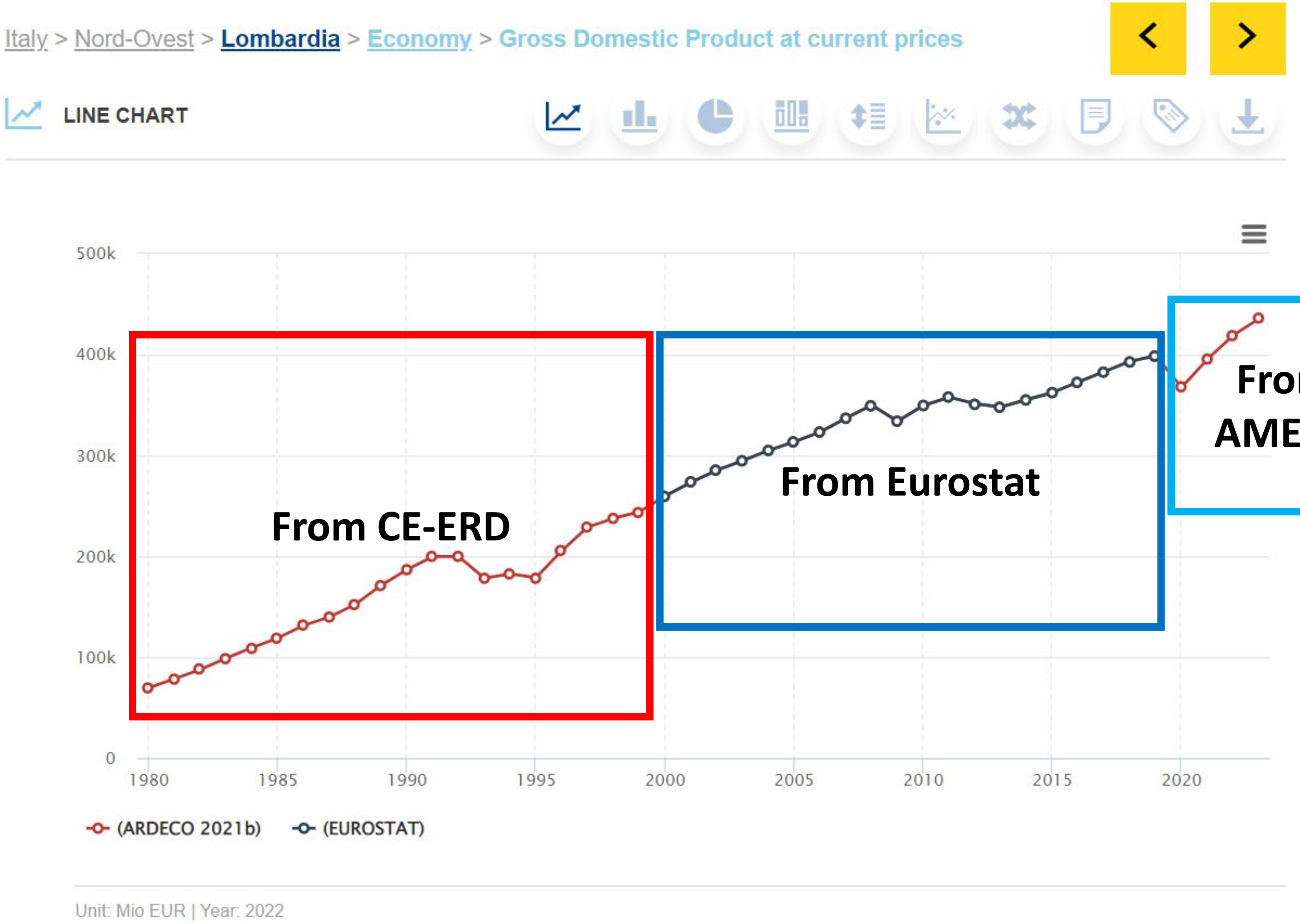
*Statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community

NACE Sectors:

- Agriculture
- Industry
- Construction
- Financial and Business Services
- Other Market Services
- Public Services

ARDECO: added value


Lombardia (Region)
Vaduz
Graubünden - Grigioni - Grischun
Ticino
Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol
Trento
Sondrio
Verbania
Varese
Como
Lecco
Lombardia
Novara
Milano
Brescia
Verona
Vercelli
Lodi
Cremona
Mantova
Pavia
Alessandria
Piacenza
Parma
Modena
Emilia-Romagragna
Genova
Liguria
La Spezia
Pistoia
Firenze
OpenStreetMap contributors, Credit: EC-GISCO, © EuroGeographics for the administrative boundaries | Disclaimer


Italy > Nord-Ovest > Lombardia > Economy > Gross Domestic Product at current prices

LINE CHART

From CE-ERD

From Eurostat

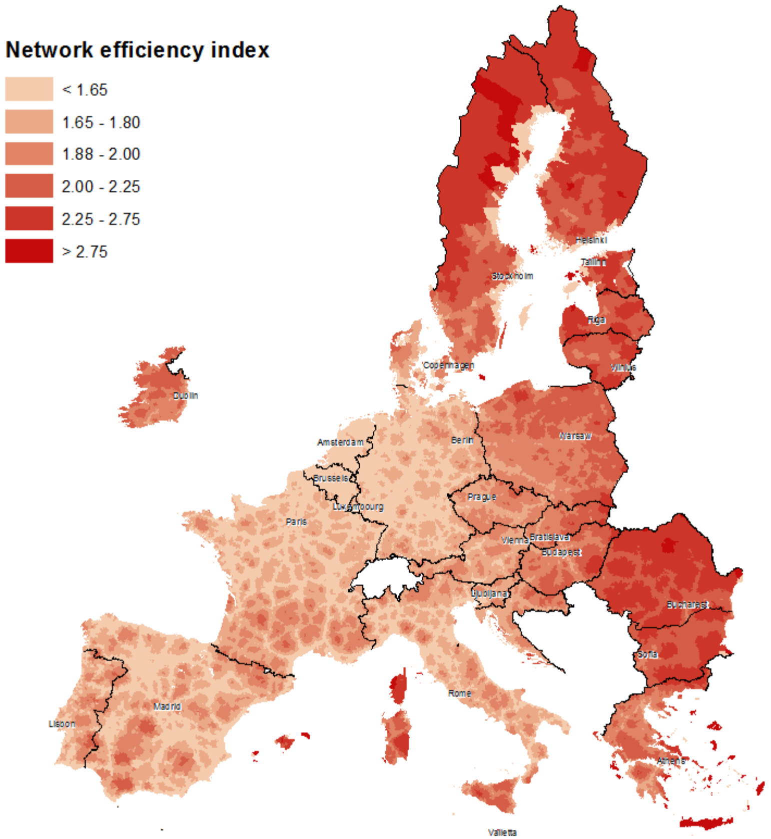
From AMECO

Unit: Mio EUR | Year: 2022

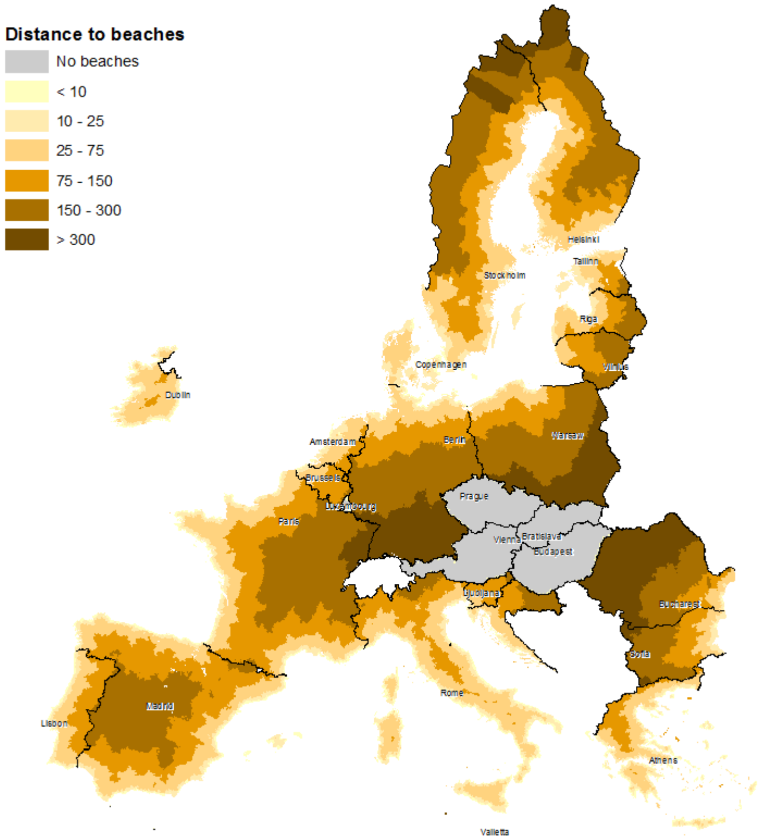
Examples of experimental indicators

Thematic domain	Indicator	Description	Resolution
Demography	Population: total, shares, changes, depopulation, population density	2018 LUISA population base map LUISA demographic projections (also by age and gender)	50 metres
Economy	Tourism capacity	Number of accommodation rooms in 2017 - source: Booking and TripAdvisor	100 metres
	Industrial/commercial areas	Share of ICS (Industrial, commercial and services)	100 metres
	Agricultural land abandonment	Share of agricultural land abandonment	100 metres
Accessibility	Access to services	Accessibility of primary services: hospitals, primary schools, etc.	POI
	Transport accessibility	Potential accessibility, network efficiency and transport performance	100 metres
Connectivity	Speed of the broadband	Internet connection speed (mobile and fixed line) and population share with access to high speed internet connection – source: Ookla	600 metres
Geographical context	Built-up, agriculture, forest, grassland and other natural areas	Share of built-up areas, agricultural land, grassland, forest and natural areas	100 metres
	Distance to cities	Average minimum travel time to the nearest city (> 50,000 inhab.)	100 metres
	Distance to coastal areas	Average distance to the nearest beach	100 metres
	Elevation, slope	Digital elevation model and derived indicators	100 metres

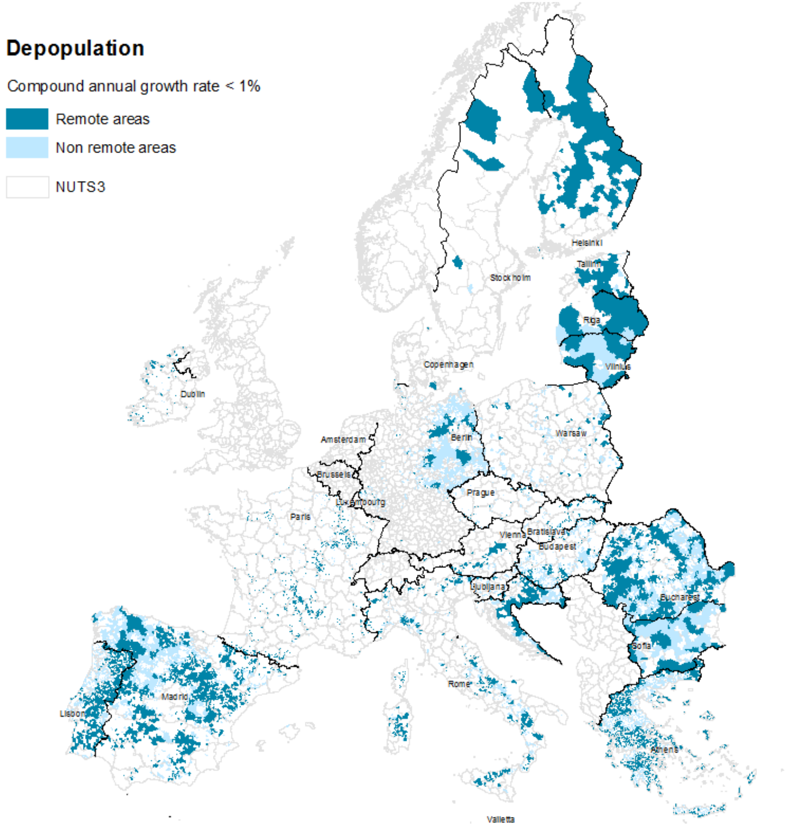
Network efficiency


Network efficiency index
< 1.65
1.65 - 1.80
1.88 - 2.00
2.00 - 2.25
2.25 - 2.75
> 2.75
Helsinki
Tallinn
Stockholm
Riga
Copenhagen
Vilnius
Dublin
Amsterdam
Berlin
Warsaw
Brussels
Luxembourg
Prague
Paris
Vienna
Bratislava
Budapest
Ljubljana
Bucharest
Sofia
Rome
Madrid
Lisbon
Athens
Valletta

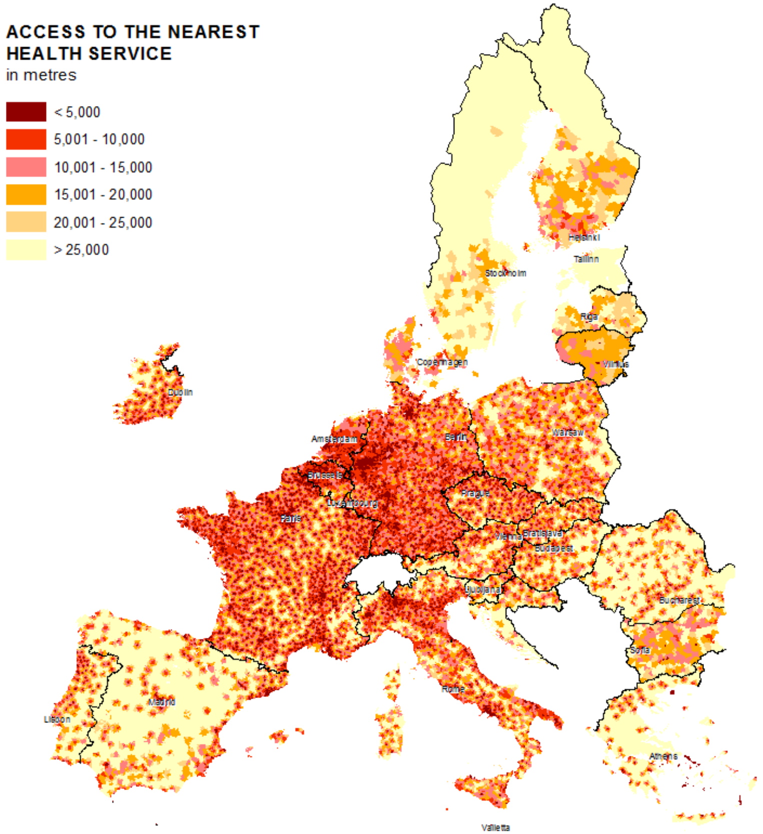
Distance to Beaches


Distance to beaches
No beaches
< 10
10 - 25
25 - 75
75 - 150
150 - 300
> 300
Helsinki
Tallinn
Stockholm
Riga
Copenhagen
Vilnius
Dublin
Amsterdam
Berlin
Warsaw
Brussels
Luxembourg
Prague
Paris
Vienna
Bratislava
Budapest
Ljubljana
Bucharest
Sofia
Rome
Madrid
Lisbon
Athens
Valletta

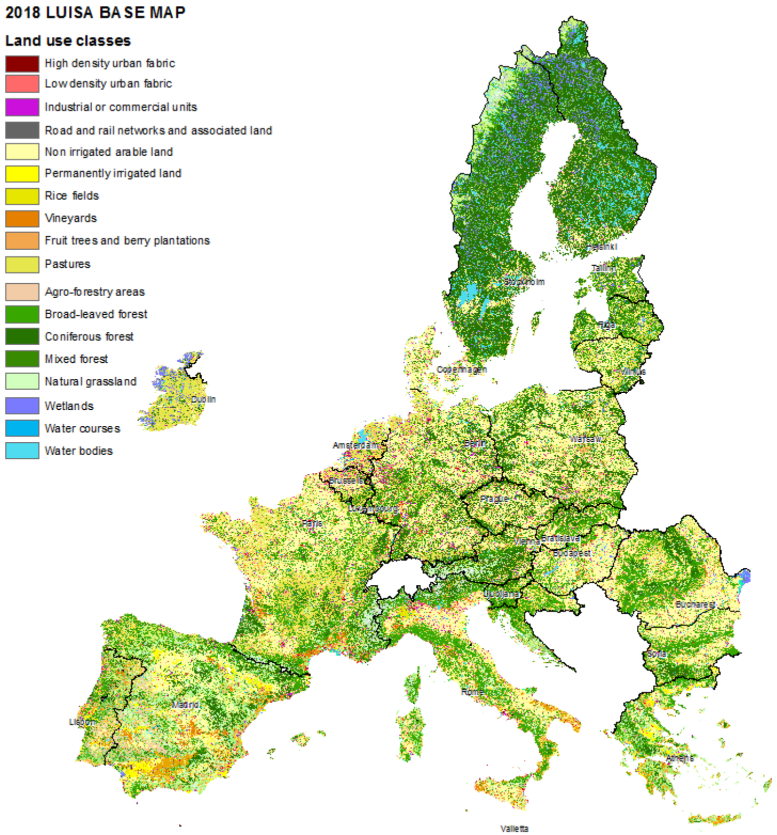
Depopulation


Depopulation
Compound annual growth rate < 1%
Remote areas
Non remote areas
NUTS3
Helsinki
Tallinn
Stockholm
Riga
Copenhagen
Vilnius
Dublin
Amsterdam
Berlin
Warsaw
Brussels
Luxembourg
Prague
Paris
Vienna
Bratislava
Budapest
Ljubljana
Bucharest
Sofia
Rome
Madrid
Lisbon
Athens
Valletta

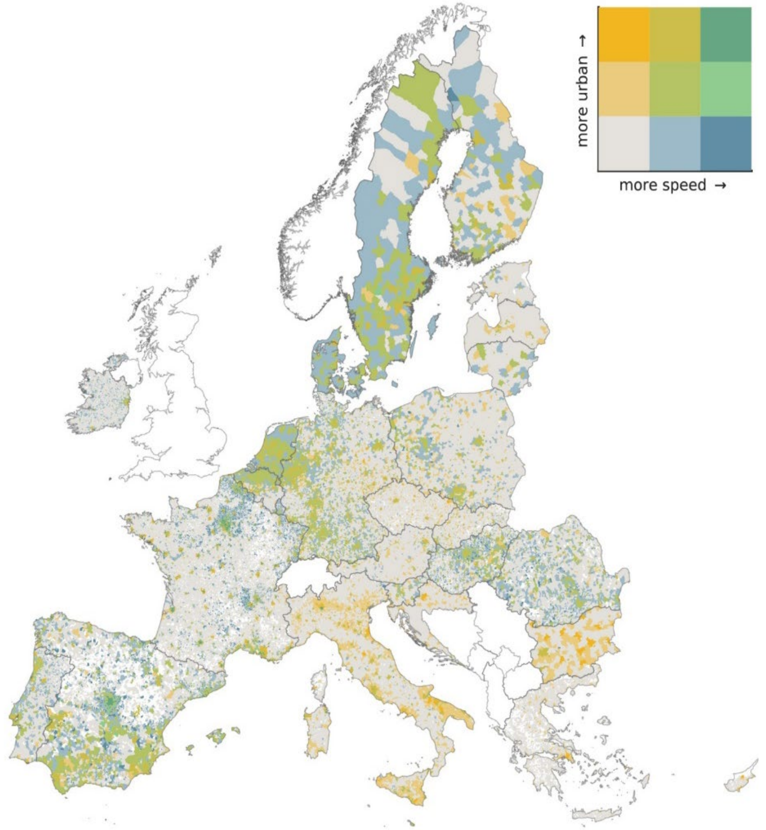
Access to health services


ACCESS TO THE NEAREST HEALTH SERVICE
in metres
< 5,000
5,001 - 10,000
10,001 - 15,000
15,001 - 20,000
20,001 - 25,000
> 25,000

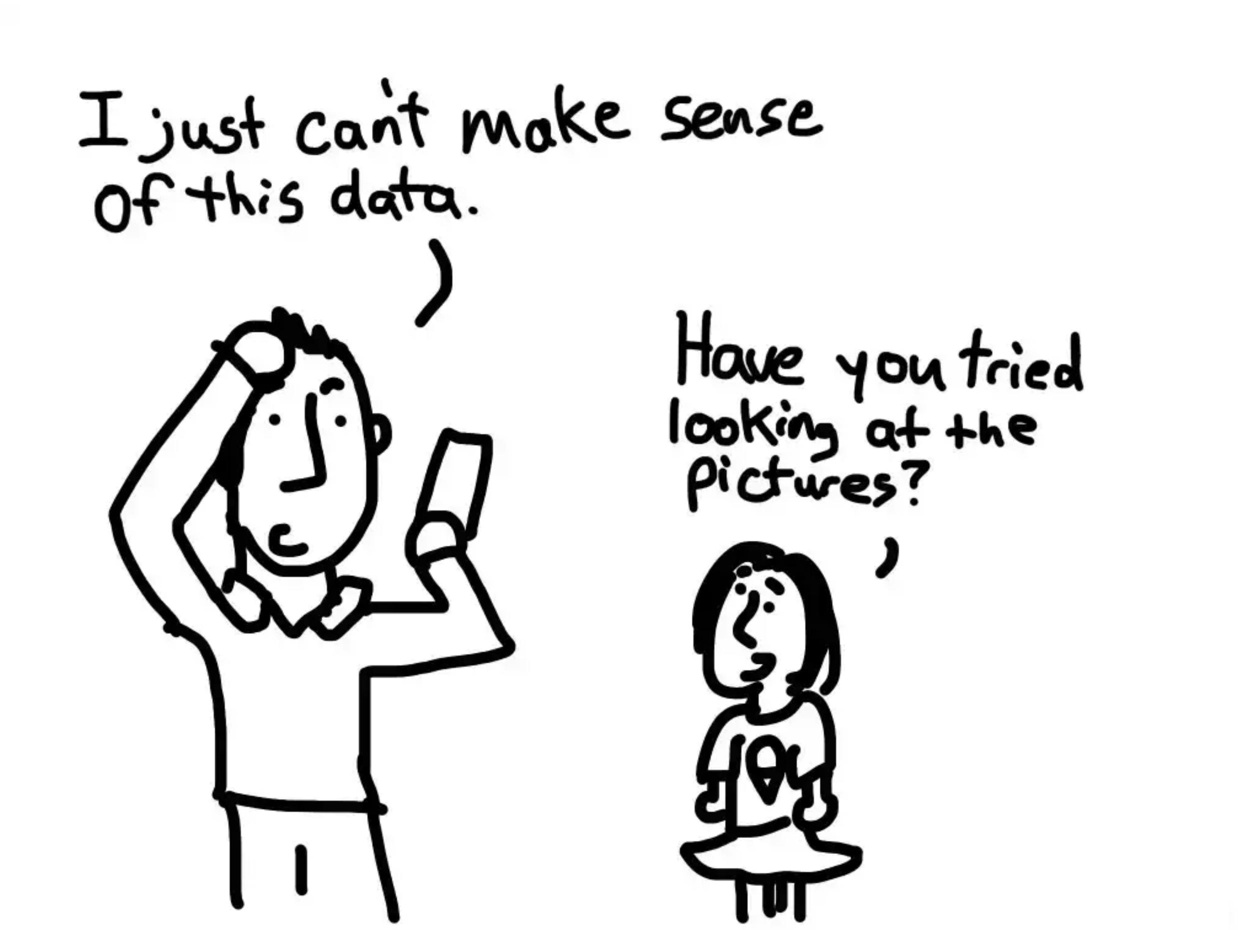
Land use


2018 LUISA BASE MAP
Land use classes
High density urban fabric
Low density urban fabric
Industrial or commercial units
Road and rail networks and associated land
Non irrigated arable land
Permanently irrigated land
Rice fields
Vineyards
Fruit trees and berry plantations
Pastures
Agro-forestry areas
Broad-leaved forest
Coniferous forest
Mixed forest
Natural grassland
Wetlands
Water courses
Water bodies

Broadband connection


more urban →
more speed →

Rural Data Platform

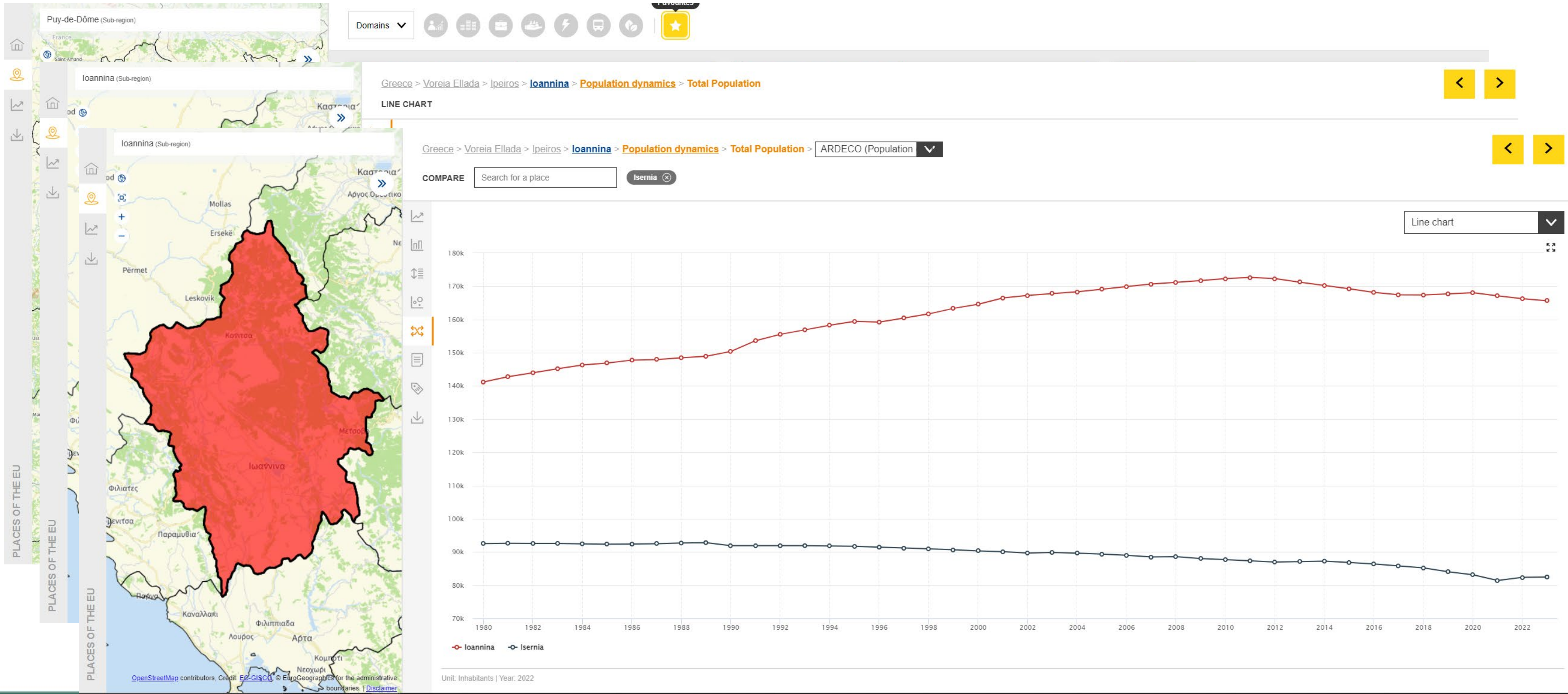

I just can't make sense of this data.
Have you tried looking at the pictures?

To be usable, data must be:

- **accessible**
- **understandable**

➔ visualisations, infographics and sound research

Focus on «Places»...



Puy-de-Dôme (Sub-region)

Ioannina (Sub-region)

Ioannina (Sub-region)

PLACES OF THE EU

Domains

Greece > Voreia Ellada > Ipeiros > Ioannina > Population dynamics > Total Population

LINE CHART

Greece > Voreia Ellada > Ipeiros > Ioannina > Population dynamics > Total Population > ARDECO (Population

COMPARE Search for a place Isernia

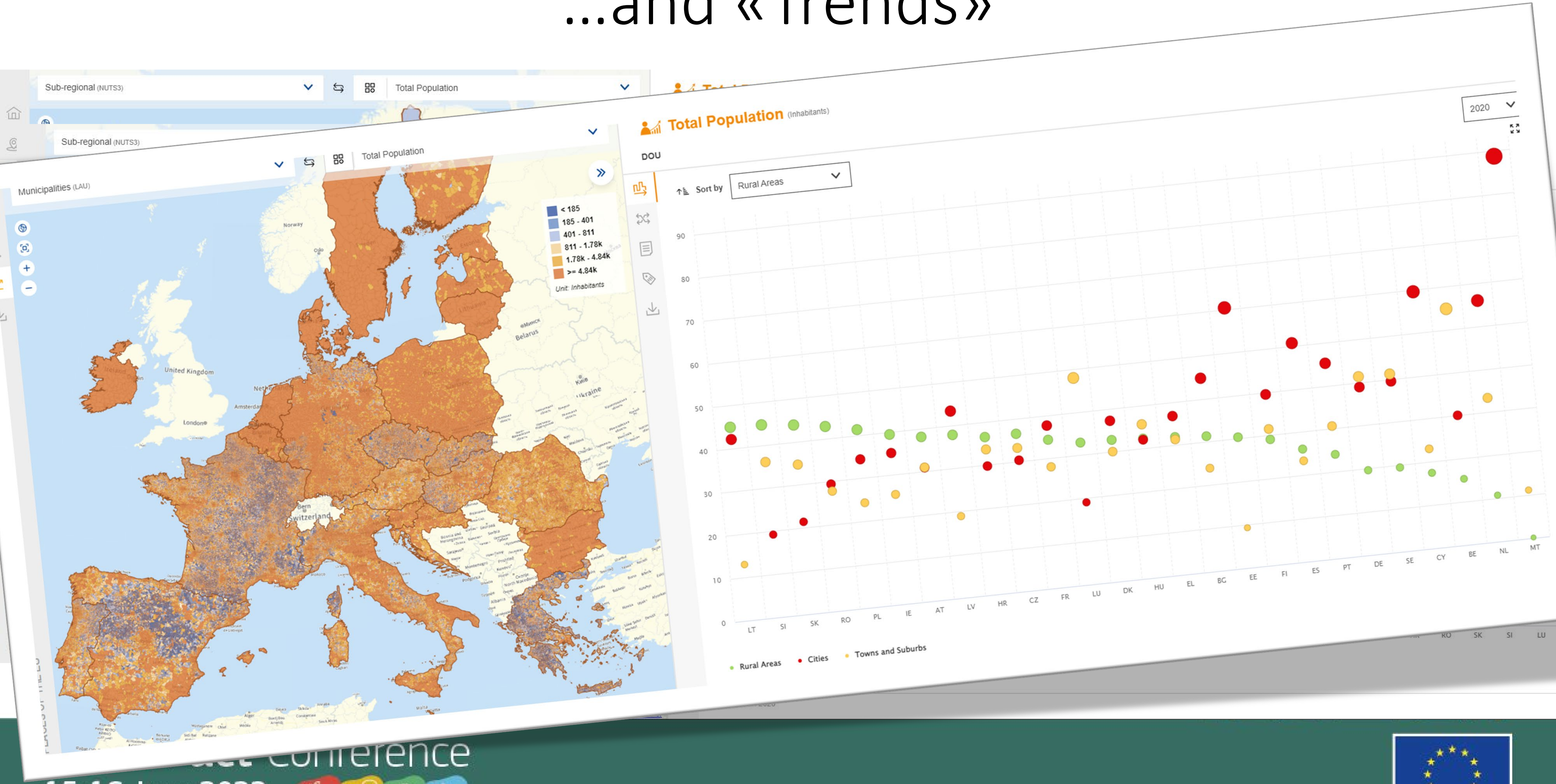
Line chart

Unit: Inhabitants | Year: 2022

OpenStreetMap contributors, Credit: EC-GISCO, © EuroGeographics for the administrative boundaries. | Disclaimer

Mollas
Ersekë
Përmet
Leskovik
Κόνιτσα
Ιωάννινα
Μέτσοβο
Φιλιάτες
Παραμυθιά
Πάργα
Καναλλάκι
Φιλιππιάδα
Λούρος
Άρτα
Καστοριά
Άργος Ορεστικό
180k
170k
160k
150k
140k
130k
120k
110k
100k
90k
80k
70k
1980
1982
1984
1986
1988
1990
1992
1994
1996
1998
2000
2002
2004
2006
2008
2010
2012
2014
2016
2018
2020
2022
Ioannina
Isernia

…and «Trends»


Sub-regional (NUTS3)
Total Population
Municipalities (LAU)
< 185
185 - 401
401 - 811
811 - 1.78k
1.78k - 4.84k
>= 4.84k
Unit: Inhabitants
United Kingdom
Ireland
Norway
Switzerland
Belarus
Ukraine
Total Population (Inhabitants)
2020
DOU
Sort by
Rural Areas
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
LT
SI
SK
RO
PL
IE
AT
LV
HR
CZ
FR
LU
DK
HU
EL
BG
EE
FI
ES
PT
DE
SE
CY
BE
NL
MT
Rural Areas
Cities
Towns and Suburbs

Publications

European Commission

JRC TECHNICAL REPORTS

Territorial Facts and Trends in the EU Rural Areas within 2015-2030

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15-1

European Commission

SCIENCE FOR POLICY BRIEFS

Broadband accessibility and quality connection in Europe by urban-rural typology including remoteness

Headlines

- In 2019, 97% of the EU households had access to fixed broadband, and 93% in rur improvements in high-speed less than 40% of rural house broadband (> 30Mbps) compar ones.
- Whereas the accessibility to f good in urban regions of the remote population living in L Spain, Hungary, Estonia, Finla are facing a disadvantaged situ
- In some Member States, a hig has access to high-speed broad Netherlands, 85% of the popul regions has such access. This sh 20% for residents of rural and Ireland, Austria, Cyprus, Greec
- The difference in EU averag (30,305 kbps) and mobile (connection varies across regio average speed is recorded in ci rural and remote areas (approx
- Cities show the highest speed Malta and Denmark, average also in rural areas. Similarly, S and Luxembourg provide high remote and rural residents.
- In general European rural mun broadband connection, howe Finland and The Netherlands enjoy high-speed connection e
- The poor or lack access to hig leave rural and remote areas b the right infrastructure, capab Digital Single Market Comm importance of Internet connect

Motivation

This policy brief has been elaborated based on the methods and

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better- say/initiatives/12525-Long-term-vision-

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SCIENCE FOR POLICY BRIEFS

Accessibility to services in Europe's member states – an evaluation by degree of urbanisation and remoteness

Headlines

- This policy brief outlines present-day challenges to service accessibility across the EU, with particular focus on rural and remote rural areas.
- It provides information on the accessibility of selected Services of General Interest (SeGI) including retailers, banks, pharmacies, hospitals, cinemas, primary and secondary schools.
- The results of the analysis suggest that service accessibility shows substantial differences among member states, and between urban and rural areas.
  - Urban areas in the EU provide better opportunities in terms of accessibility to services compared to rural areas.
  - In rural areas, it is harder to provide necessary conditions for economic viability of a service. Hence, service accessibility in these areas is lower and people have to travel larger distances to reach a service area or facility.
  - Unfortunately, expected changes in demographic factors might exacerbate this separation of service accessibility between urban and rural areas.
- New technologies in digitalization, smarter consolidation, collaboration, and management policies of service provision, together with innovative solutions in the transportation sector, might allow rural and sparsely populated regions to mitigate this undesired trend in the face of ongoing demographic challenges.

Motivation

The sustenance of access to services is a key concern for Europe's rural areas. Poor access to services reduces quality of life; worsens economic disparities with urban areas; increases dependency on unsustainable transport modes; and forms an additional hardship for mobility-impaired citizens.

This policy brief outlines present-day challenges to service accessibility across the EU, with particular focus on rural and remote rural areas. It has been produced in pair with the staff working document for the upcoming Long Term Vision for Rural Areas[1], and is meant to provide more descriptive detail on the analyses shared in that document. More generally, this report is part of a broader effort by DG REGIO, OECD and the JRC to assess challenges in the sustenance of service accessibility, which is done to assist in identifying sound cohesion and social policies. OECD (2021) describe potential measures to maintain quality of education in the face of demographic change. A report from JRC and OECD, forthcoming in 2021, will sketch the cost and access implications of foreseen demographic change. Other planned reports and papers will examine the local accessibility implications of population changes that occurred recently, between 2011 and 2018, and the relationship between regional settlement structures and service provision.

Introduction

Accessibility is an important component of integrated land-use and transportation systems. In broad terms, it measures ease of reaching economic opportunities and / or service areas using proper transport infrastructure and means. It is a key instrument for regional policy in monitoring sustainable urban and rural development. Accessibility measurements are given particular importance for the evaluation of the European Union's cohesion and territorial policy. They are seen as a key element to provide useful information on the fair and balanced distribution of services among regions, as well as on the adequacy of transportation infrastructure.

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12525-Long-term-vision-for-rural-areas

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SCIENCE FOR POLICY BRIEFS

Tourism capacity, expenditure and seasonality in Europe by urban-rural typology and remoteness

Headlines

- Tourism is an important activity contributing to employment and economic growth. In 2018 tourism contributed directly, indirectly and induced around 10% of the European GDP and employment.
- In 2018 tourism expenditures amounted a total of 455,026 million euro, Domestic tourism was the most important component for urban regions and regions close to cities, while rural remote regions attracted EU and extra EU tourists.
- In 2018 the total number of nights spent by tourists was rougly three times more in urban and areas close to a city than in rural and remote areas. However, in some countries (e.g Austria, Greece, etc.) the rural turism (per capita) was relevant.
- Certain rural regions in France, italy, Spain have already considerable capacity to accommodate visitors. Austrian rural regions are models of mountain and nature tourism.
- Tourists prefer summer months than winter ones. Looking only at data for rural remote areas, Finland, Bulgaria and Austria are the only countries where tourism is the highest during winter. Seasonality peaks in rural remote areas are mainly linked to mountain and nature tourism.
- Tourism can act as "engine" of regional/local development especially in rural and remote places and if several economic sectors are developed at the same time and provide a diversification of business and income opportunities
- Tourism was highly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with a considerable decrease in tourists' trips and expenditures. Results of recent surveys show new preferences for low tourist density destinations after the COVID-19 outbreak.

Motivation

This policy brief has been elaborated based on me findings in support to the EC Communication on a *Vision for Rural Areas*, preparing an analytical Sta Document showing the situation and trends in rural regions, including remote ones. The document is b elaborated by the DG for Agriculture and Rural De DG for Regional and Urban Policy, DG EUROSTAT an Research Centre.

The main objective of this policy brief is to provide e capacity, expenditure and seasonality of tourism in urban-rural typology and remoteness before the pandemic and, at the same time, to enrich this inforn new evidences acquired during this first year of C analysis can support policies aiming at turning chal opportunities, especially in remote areas, both in the the recovery and beyond.

Introduction

EU is a major tourist destination, with five Member States among the world's top ten destinations for holidaymakers, according to UNWTO data[1]. Tourism has been one of the first and most severely affected sectors since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe. During 2020, tourism came to an almost complete halt in EU-27 (European Commission, 2020).

Variations in tourism flows can be substantial both at a national and regional levels. While some countries and regions host mostly domestic tourists, others rely more on foreign visitors from both EU and extra-EU (Ribeiro Barranco et al, 2020). The recovery also differs depending on tourists origin where regions more dependent on foreign tourism are more vulnerable when compared to those with a strong focus on domestic flows.

Recent surveys show new preferences for low density destinations and to an increase in a more sustainable and eco-inclusive consumer behaviour especially among younger generations. In addition, regions less affected by COVID-19 are

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[1] World Travel&Tourism Council Region Report 2018: https://wttc.org

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SCIENCE FOR POLICY BRIEFS

A demographic assessment of EU remote areas by 2050

Headlines

- By 2050, the main EU wide demographic trend in remote rural areas is characterised by an ageing population, along with a decline of the working age and youth population.
- In 2015, remote rural regions were home to 6.5% of the EU population, representing about 22.6 million inhabitants. Since the 1960s, remote areas have lost more than 5 million people and they are expected to decline continuously in the far foreseeable future.
- The old-age dependency ratio is expected to increase in remote rural areas in all the EU countries by 2050. This might plausibly lead to an increased burden on the working population to maintain the rest of the economically dependent population.
- In terms of gender, there are less women living in remote rural areas compared to non-remote rural, cities or towns. While shares of women in the economically active age classes are typically under 50%, elderly women are overrepresented in most of the remote rural areas.
- Municipalities located in Bulgaria, Spain, Romania, Cyprus and Austria may face the possibly worst-case demographic scenario by 2050 in terms of depopulation and age group trends.

Introduction

This brief focuses on the territorial dimension of remoteness, especially in rural areas. Past and future population trends, age structure, dependency ratios and gender issues in remote rural areas are analysed. Future work will further explore the economic performance (sectoral employment) along with the land-use transformations that characterise remote rural areas.

During the last decades, population living in remote have experienced different demographic challenges such as depopulation and ageing. In many territories depopulation is caused by natural population change, negative net migration or both, while ageing is mainly due to the decline of the birth rate and the raise of life expectancy. A strong relationship exists between both demographic processes that can impact on economic growth, attitudes, social and political behaviours (Goujon et al., 2021).

Moreover, remote areas are traditionally characterised by low density of population along with scarce and probably inefficient infrastructures and public services, lower accessibility (physical and digital) and higher risk of land abandonment (Perpiña et al., 2018). This implies that remote areas might have limited socioeconomic opportunities and developments due mainly to long travelling time to urban centres and associated markets, then, with high costs and less competitiveness (Lange et al., 2013).

In spite of this challenging situation, remote rural areas present a range of possible opportunities that could focus on restoring biodiversity and counteracting land degradation, promoting

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What’s next?

European Commission

New perspectives on territorial disparities

From *lonely places* to places of opportunities

EUR 31025 EN

Joint Research Centre

Launch event: **23 June at 14:30**

From lonely places to places of opportunities

Functional Rural Areas

Are rural remote areas remarkable? (Part I)

Which factors are driving depopulation in rural remote areas? (Part II)

Implementation of the EU Rural Observatory

Thank you