
ESPON Policy Brief on the Future of Rural Areas

25th March 2021



REPÚBLICA
PORTUGUESA

ENVIRONMENT AND
CLIMATE ACTION



2021PORTUGAL.EU



Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

2020-2021 TRIO PRESIDENCY OF GERMANY, PORTUGAL AND SLOVENIA

Priorities under the EU Roadmap for Recovery



2020

German
EU Presidency

*Structural change
in coal phase-out
regions*



2021

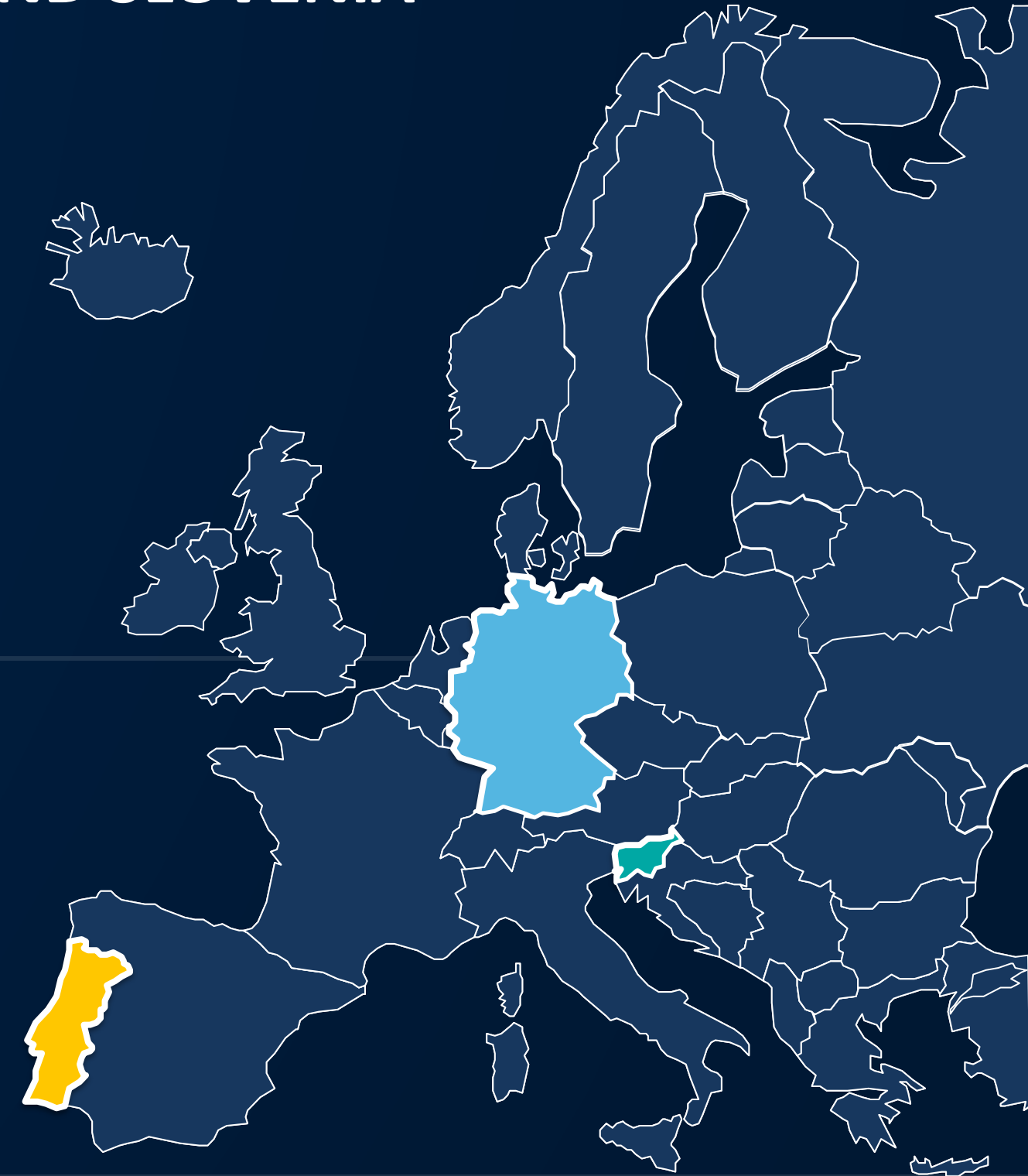
Portuguese
EU Presidency

*Future of the
Rural Areas*



Slovenian
EU Presidency

Quality of life



THE TERRITORIAL AGENDA 2030 ON RURAL AREAS UNDER THE **PORTUGUESE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF EU**

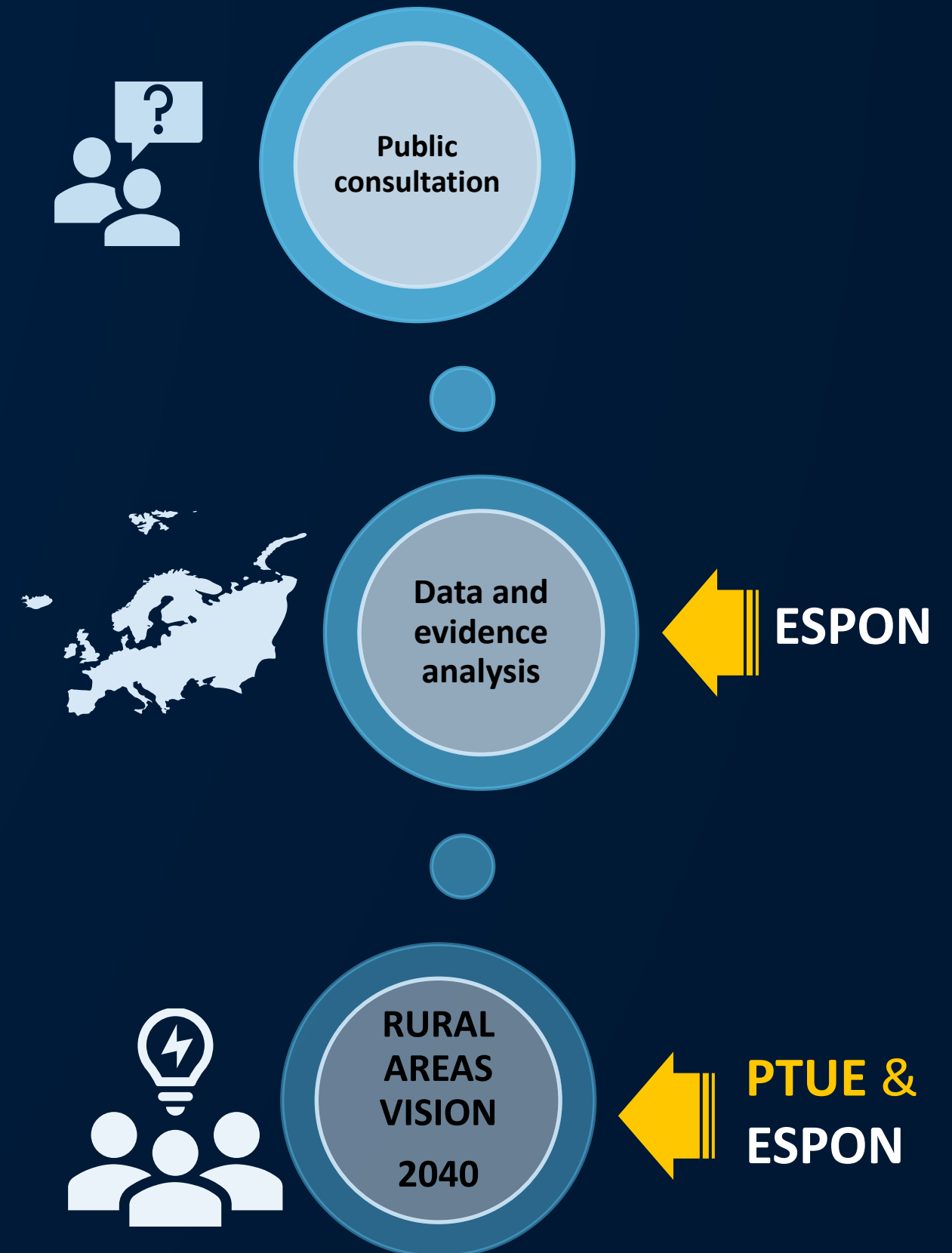
Developing the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas (2040) –
ongoing process led by EU institutions



Contributions to the process – in a joint effort:

- **PTUE** - policy intervention, linking the Long-Term Vision to the framework set out under the Territorial Agenda 2030
- **ESPON** – providing evidence, data and policy recommendations relevant for the Future of Rural Areas

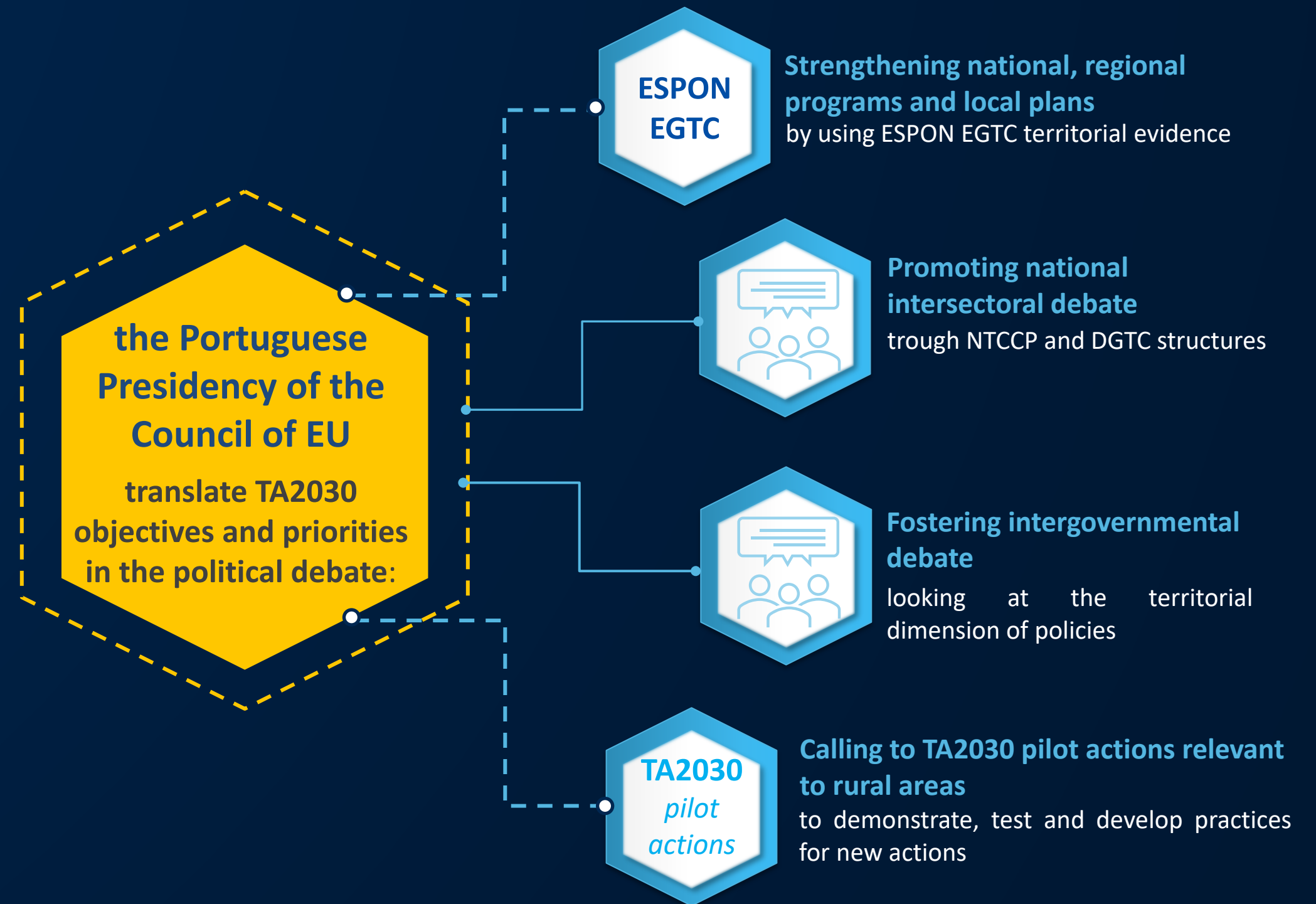
EU Roadmap for the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas (2040)



The TA 2030 on Rural Areas under the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of EU

TA2030: opportunity to promote synergies under cohesion, environmental, agricultural and rural development policies.

Focus the debate and action on intersectoral articulation of policies, so that **European rural areas** can reach a new life.



ESPON and the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of EU

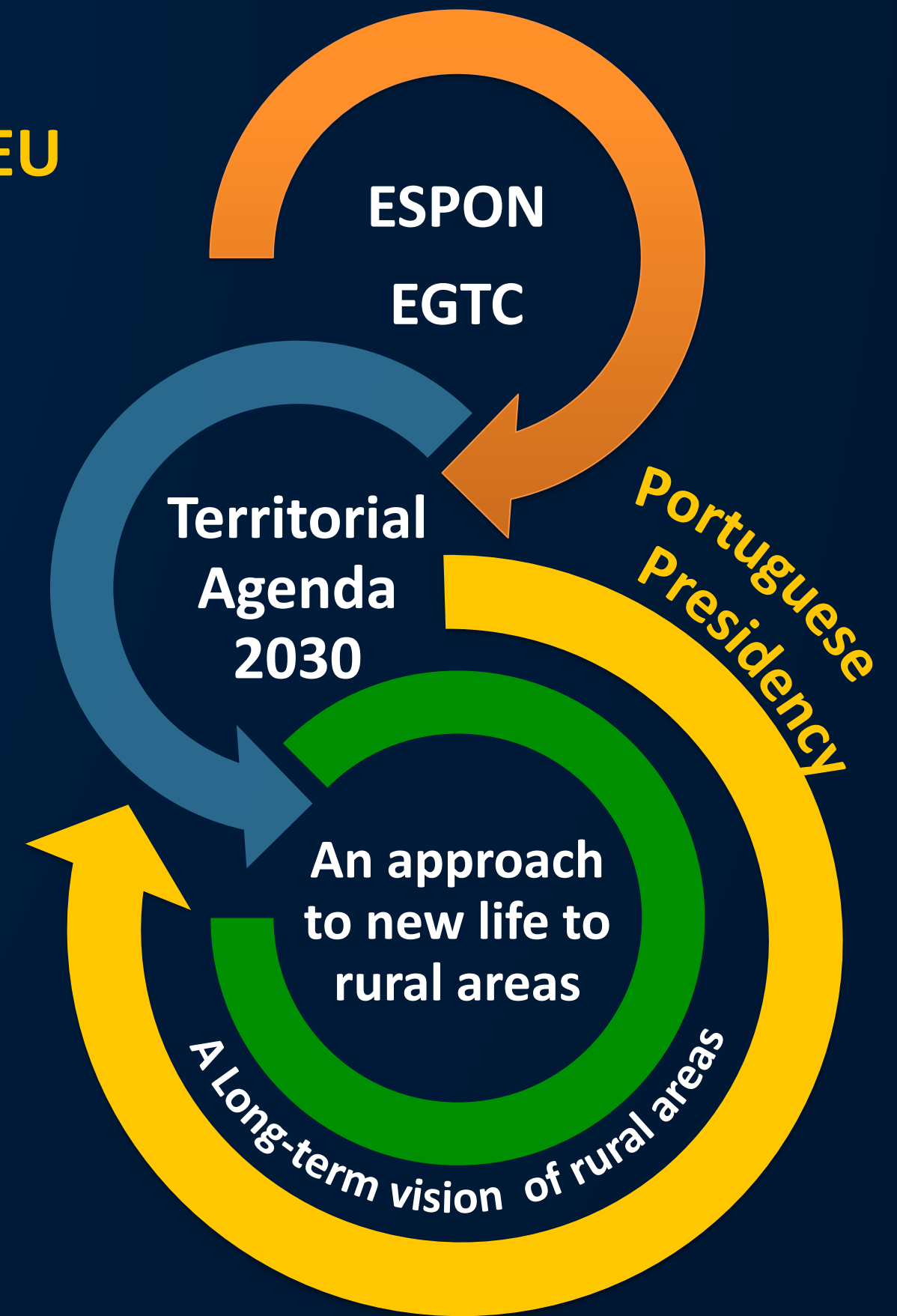
Step up

Use evidence and data to support TA2030 priorities

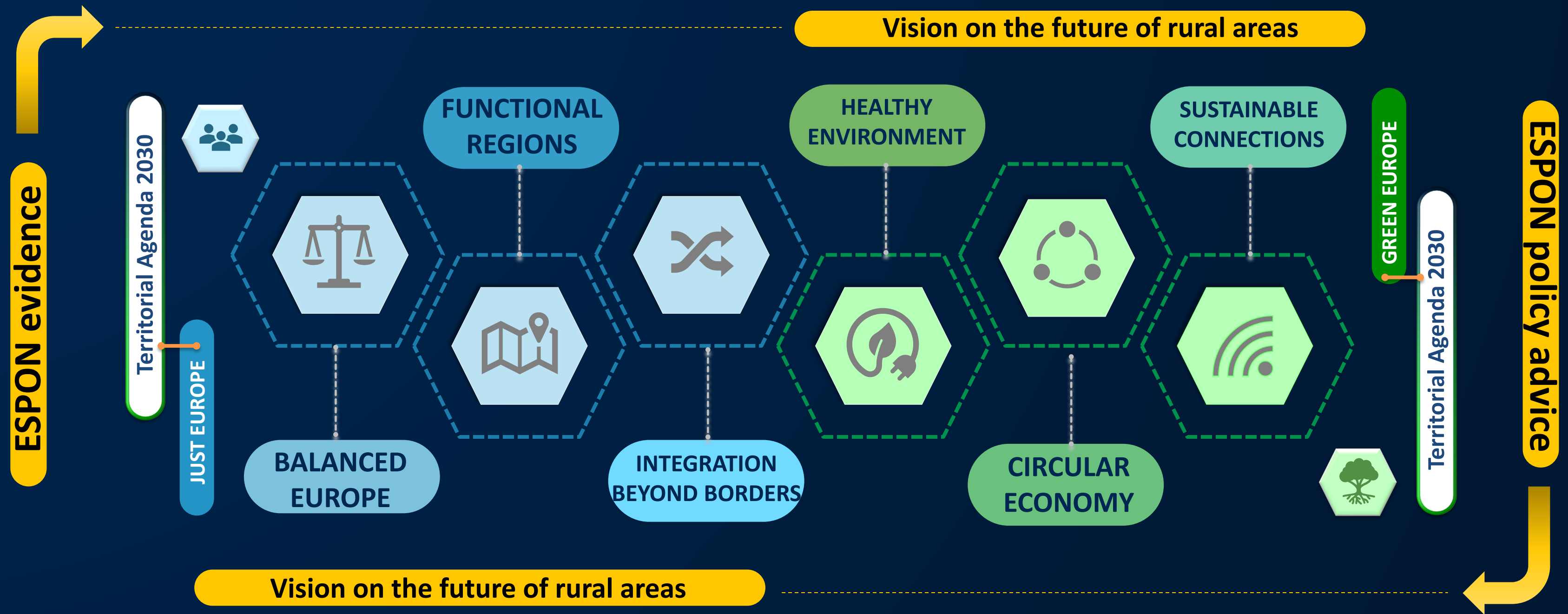
Convert TA2030 priorities into actions through Policy recommendations and Policy responses

Promote a multi-level governance approach to involve all key players

Claim opportunities for a smart approach to rural areas' assets



ESPON brings the territorial dimension into the framework of Territorial Agenda 2030



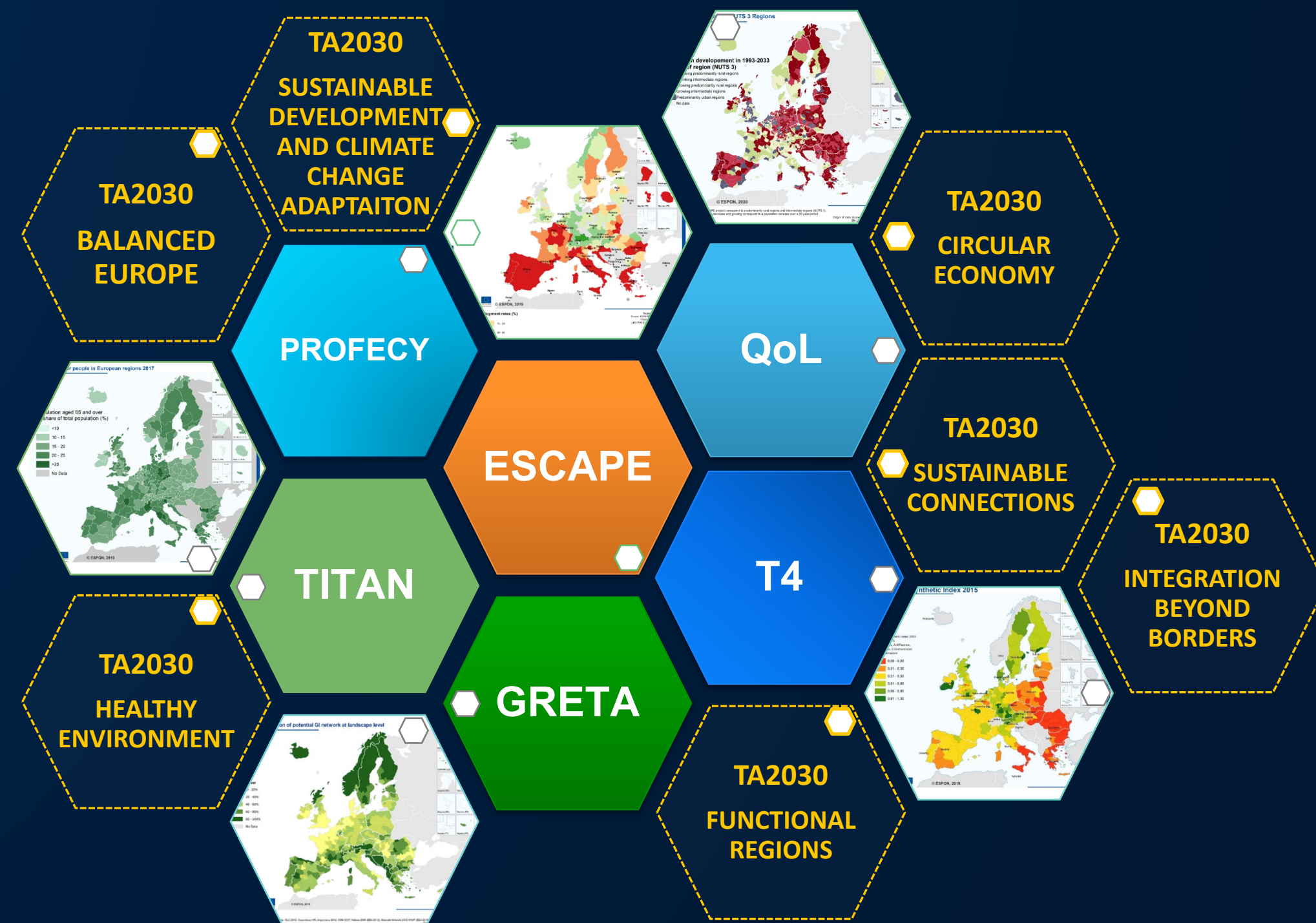
ESPON contribution to the Long-term Vision on **Rural Areas**

Building on evidence to produce policy recommendations

for the Long-term Vision for Rural Areas

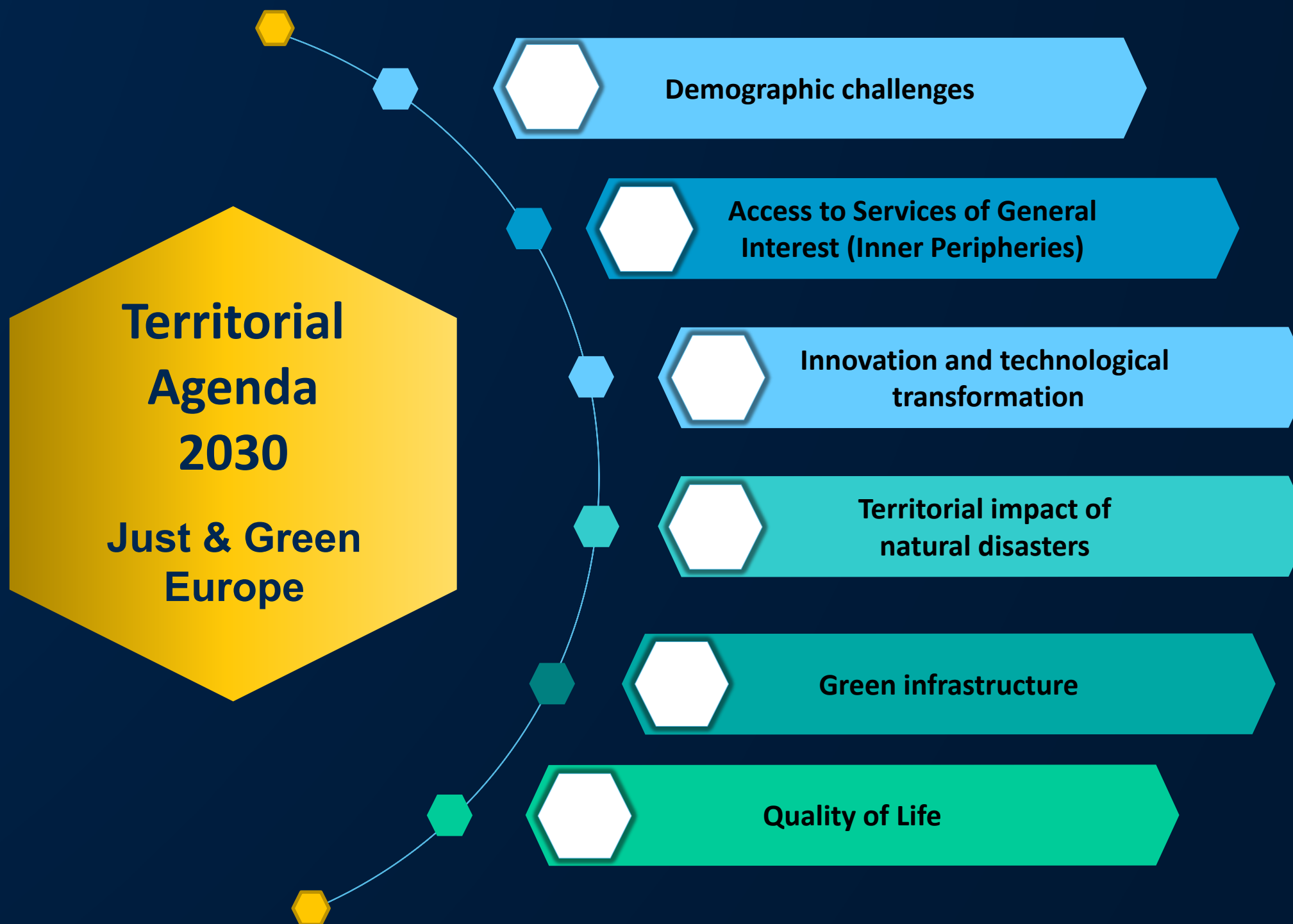
- using the most recent and relevant projects
- identifying the most important:
 - challenges
 - drivers behind processes
 - trends (long-lasting and future)

...under the TA2030 priorities



ESPON contribution to the Long-term Vision on **Rural Areas**

Linking the ESPON evidence
with the priorities of the
Territorial Agenda 2030
and of the
**Portuguese Presidency of
the Council of the European Union**
to ensure a sustainable future
of all places and people
in Europe's rural areas



ESPON evidences on the 6 Cross-cutting domains

Building a sustainable future looking at **all types of rural regions**

687 NUTS-3 regions in Europe

658 NUTS-3 regions in the EU

41%

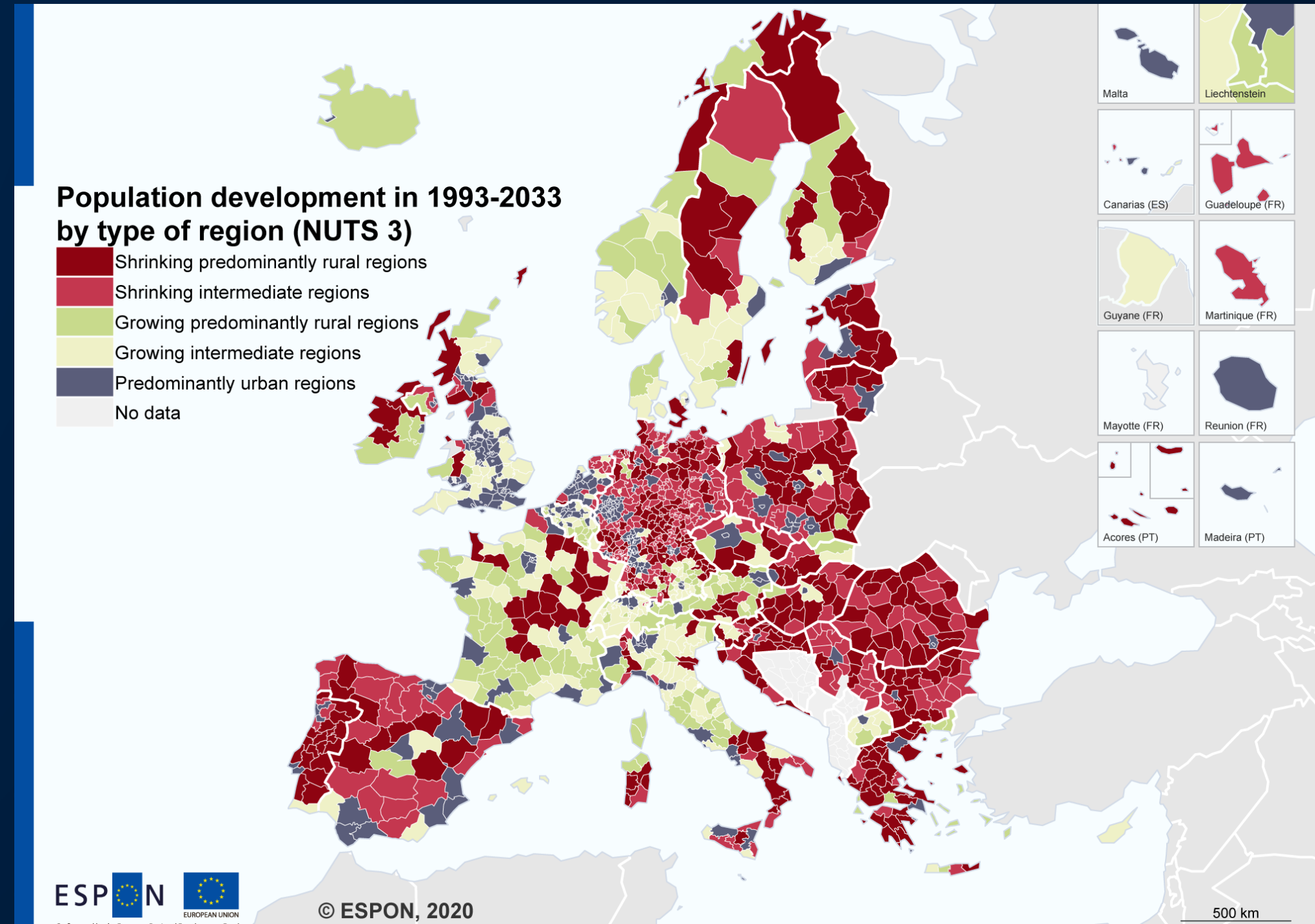
41% of the EU28 predominantly rural and intermediate regions are growing

59%

59% of the EU28 predominantly rural and intermediate regions are shrinking

40% of EU 28 area

30% of EU 28 inhabitants



Understanding rural shrinkage phenomenon

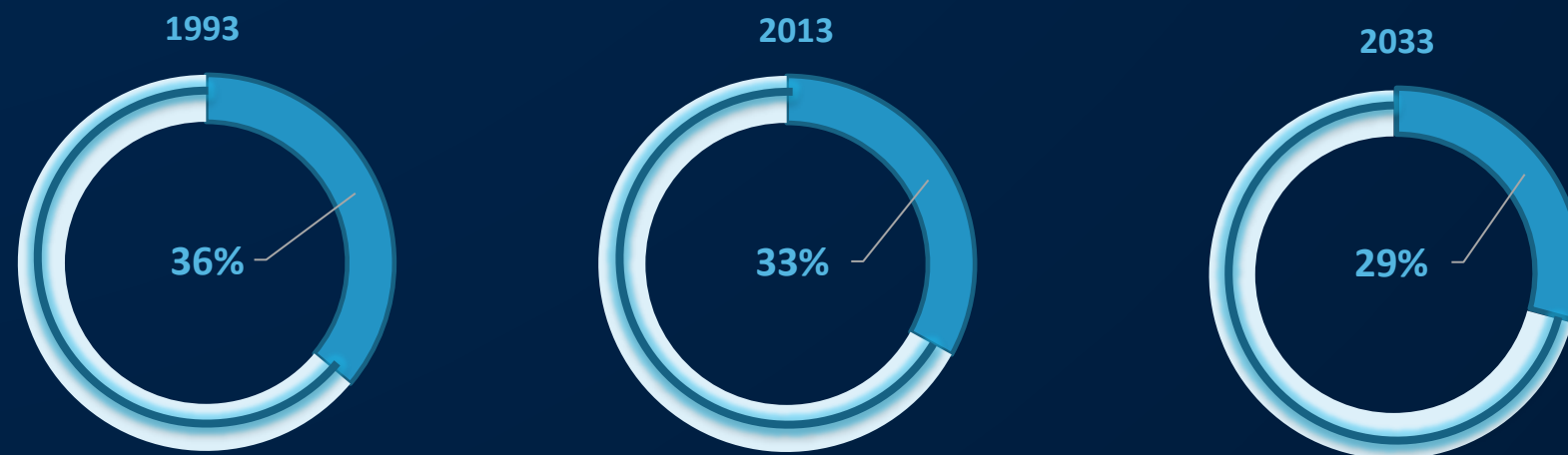
Total population of shrinking rural regions



Acknowledge and adapt to the demographic changes and trends

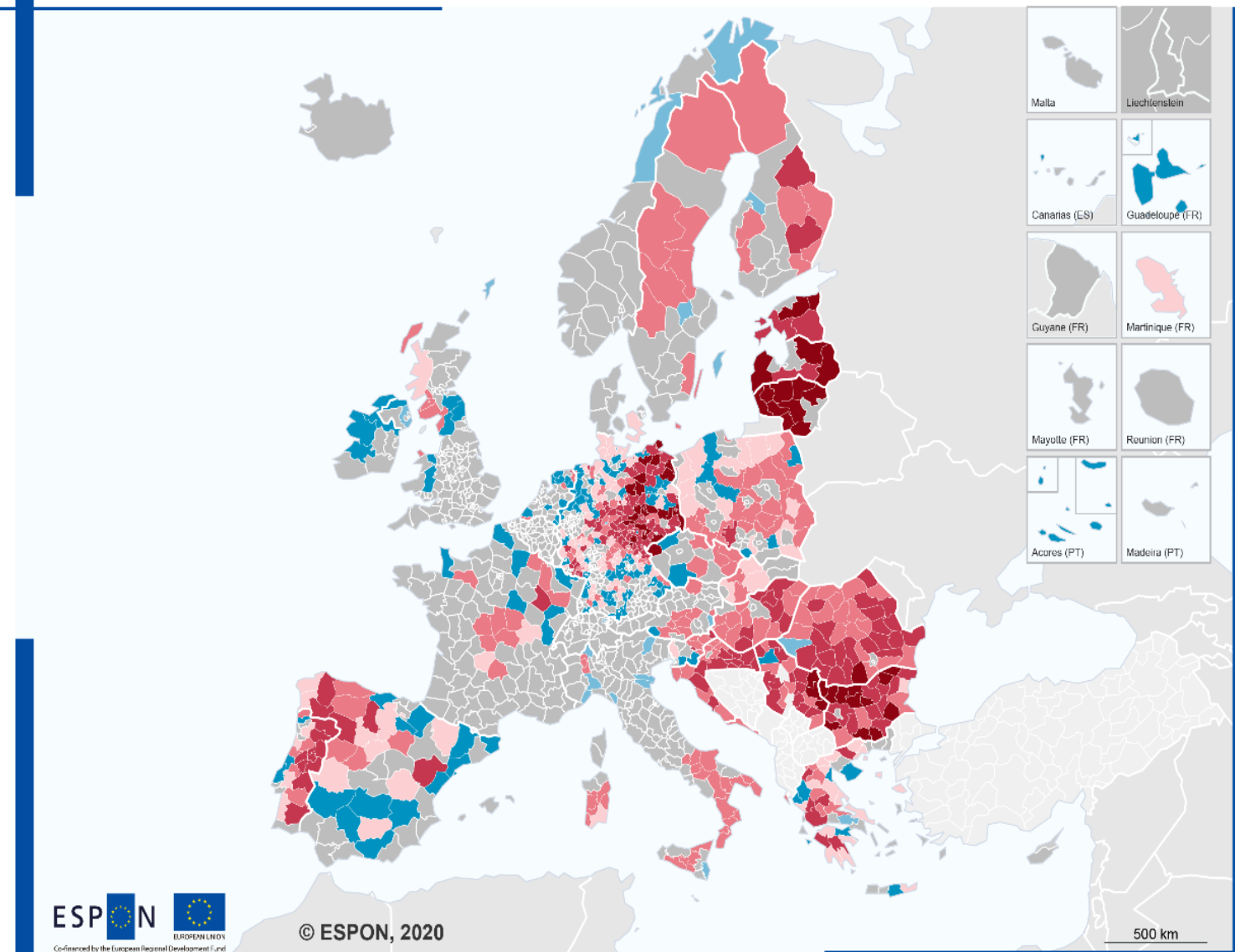
Demographic change is not a driver and actually is a result of shrinkage

Share of European population in shrinking regions (in percent)



*EU27, UK, Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Serbia. Based on Eurostat data.

Chronology of demographic shrinkage



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© ESPON, 2020

Regional level: NUTS 3 (2010)
Source: ESPON ESCAPE, 2020
Origin of data: Eurostat, ESPON database, Nordregio 2020
UMS RIATE for administrative boundaries

Rural regions with population decrease in the period 1993-2033

- Experiencing population decrease in both periods 1993-2013 and 2013-2033 at severe annual average shrinking rates (<-1)
- Experiencing population decrease in both periods 1993-2013 and 2013-2033 at moderate annual average shrinking rate (-1 to -0,5)
- Experiencing population decrease in both periods 1993-2013 and 2013-2033 at modest shrinking rate (>-0,5)
- Experiencing population decrease only in the period 2013-2033 at modest shrinking rates (>-0,5)

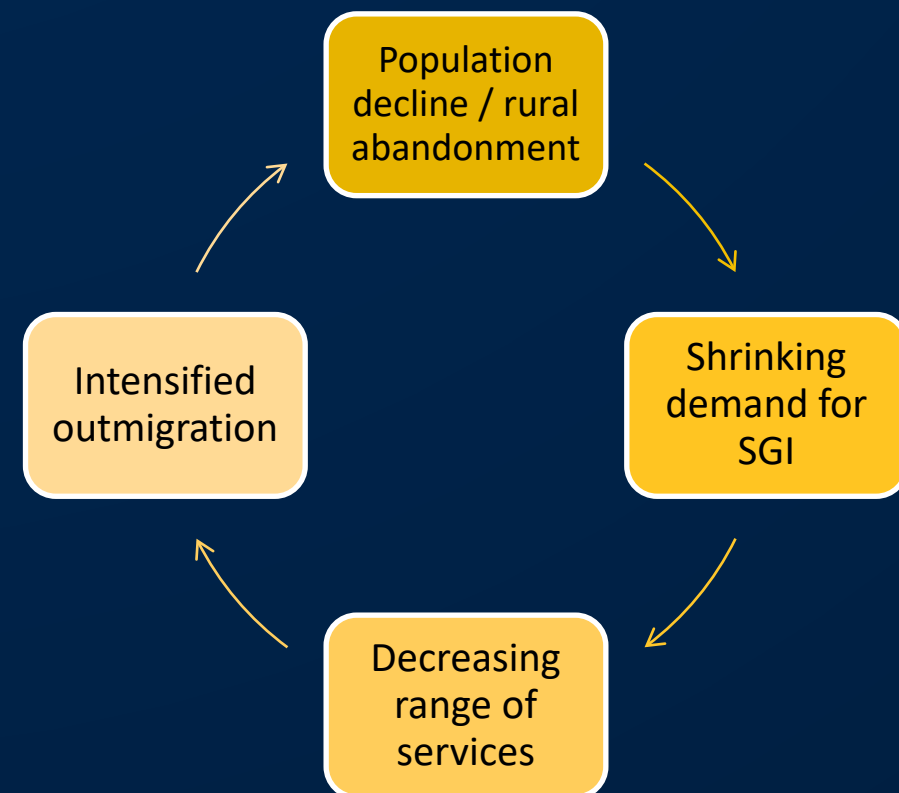
Rural regions with population increase in the period 1993-2033

- Experiencing population decrease in the period 1993-2013
- Experiencing population decrease in the period 2013-2033

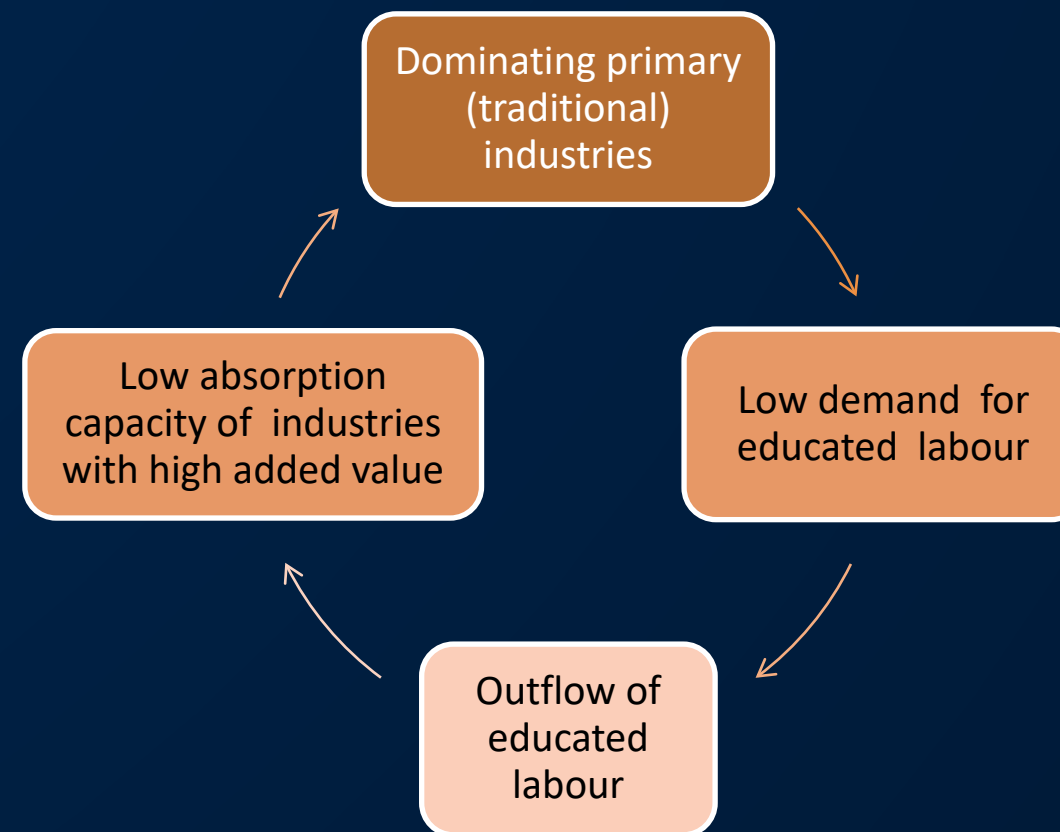
Understanding **different drivers** behind rural shrinkage

Prevailing **vicious circles** attached to the shrinkage phenomenon

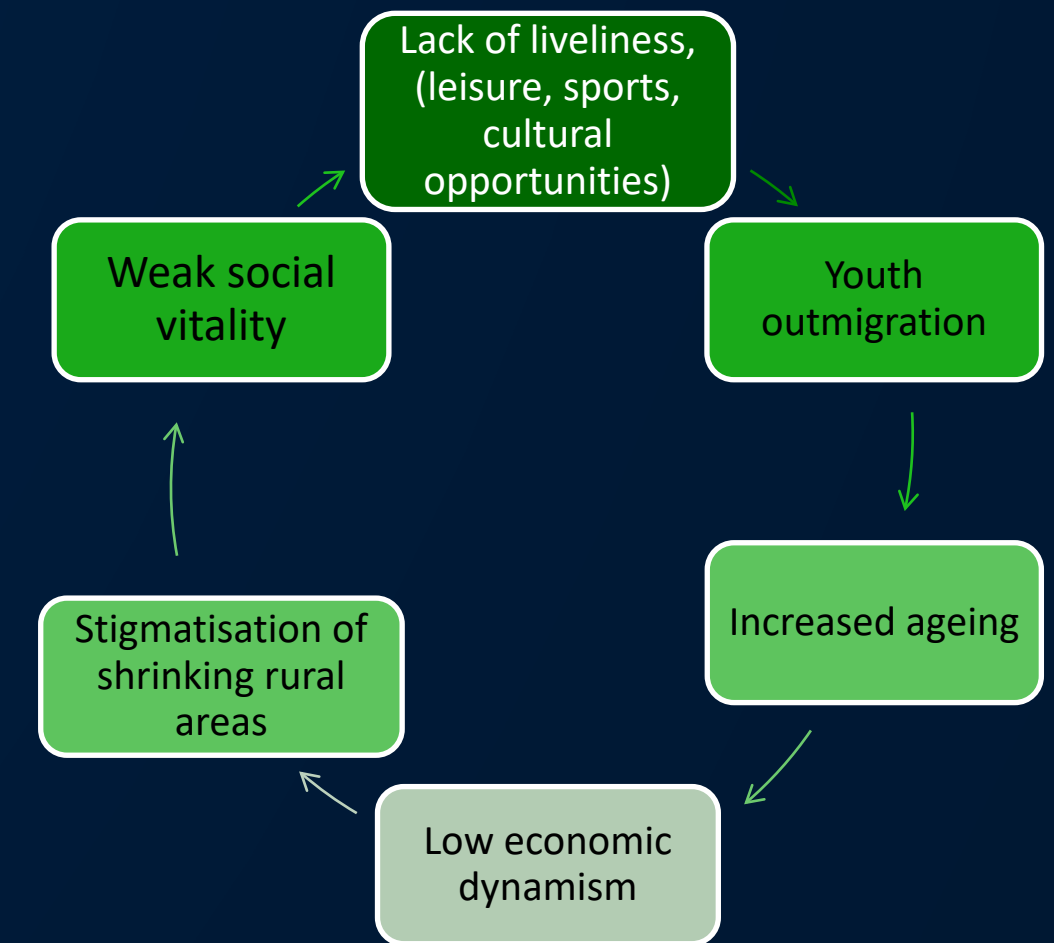
1. Affordability / Services of General Interest (SGI)



2. Selectivity / Labour



3. Vitality / Youth



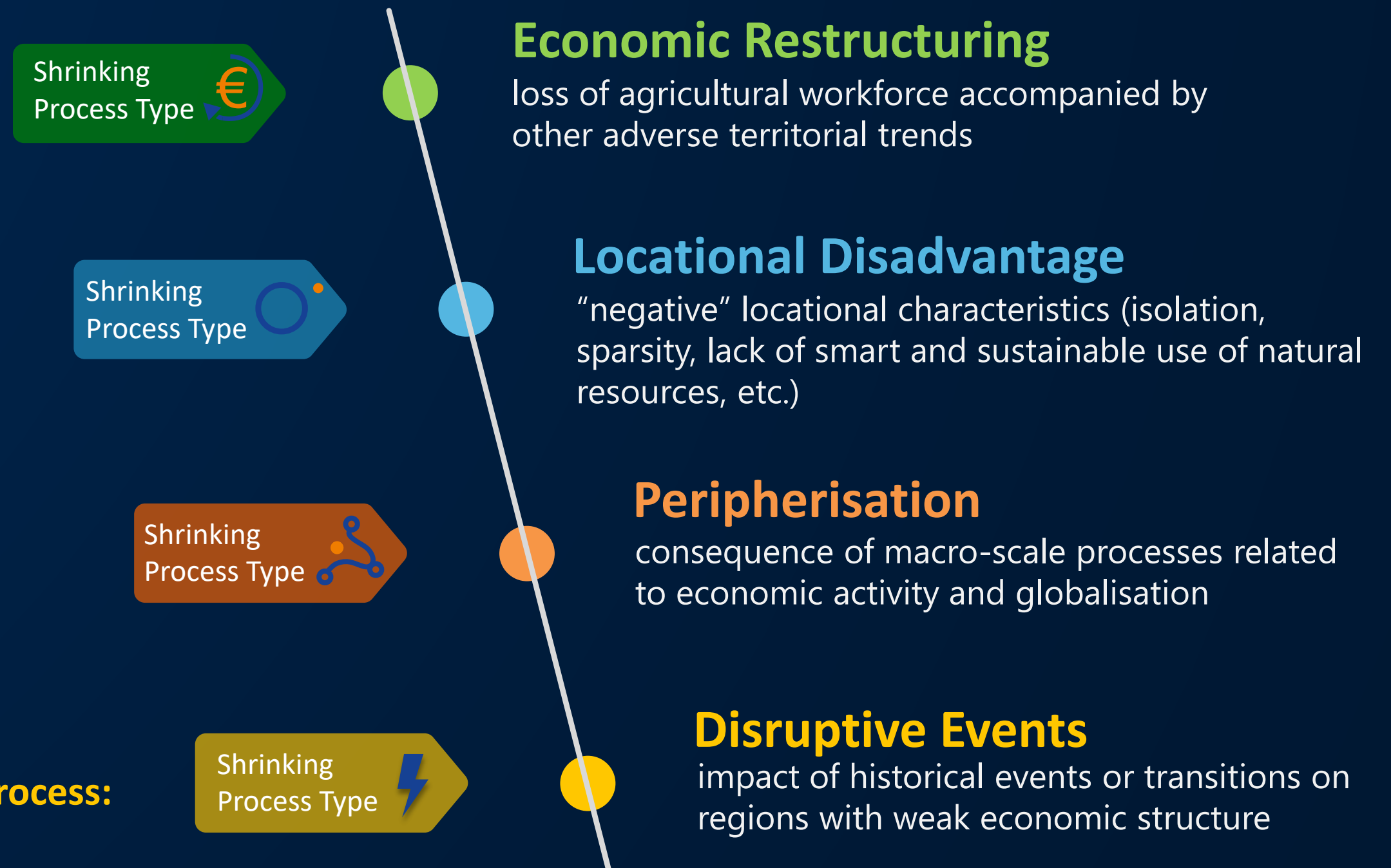
Understanding **different drivers** behind rural shrinkage

**Shrinking: An Old Problem,
Many Faces, Different Responses**

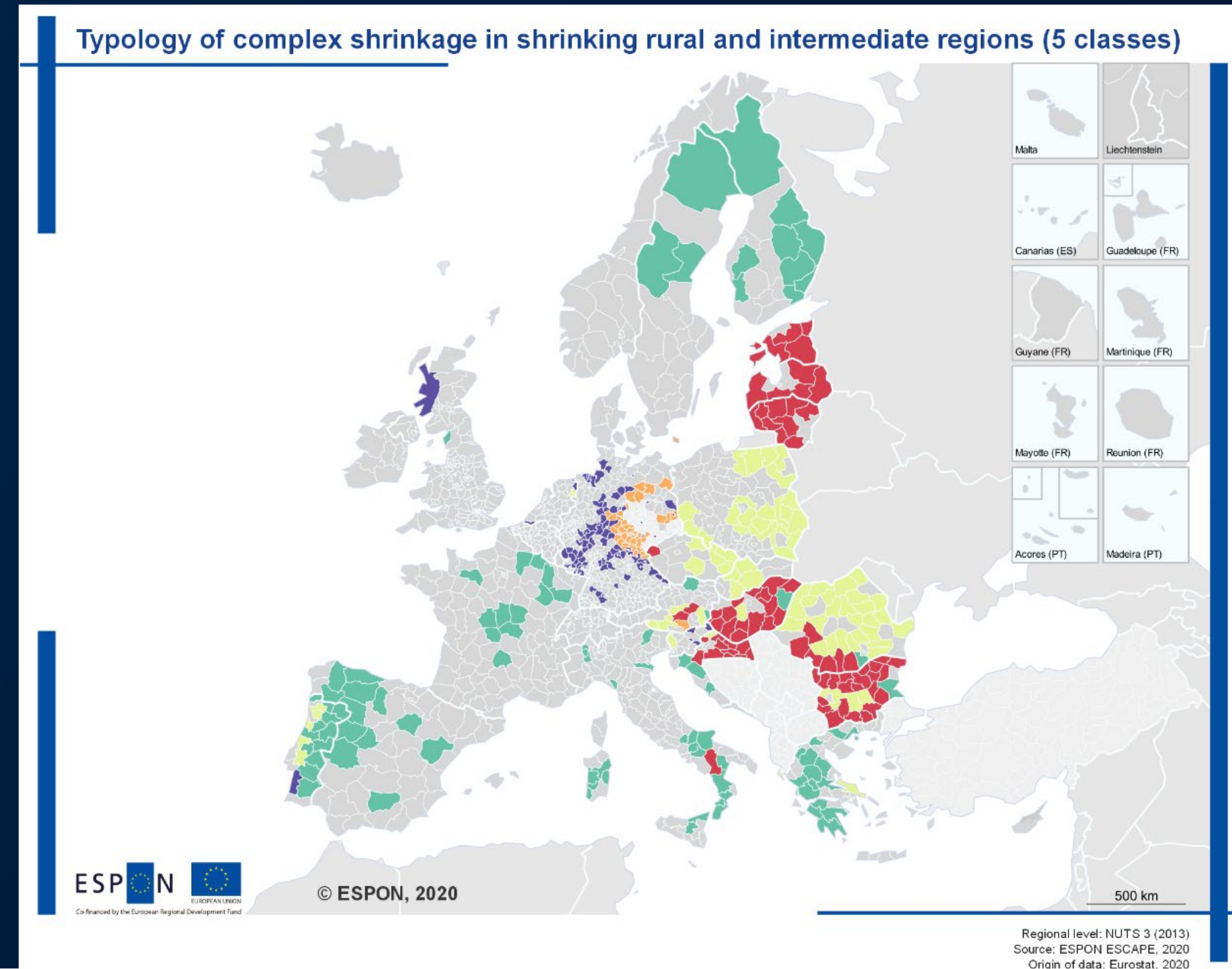
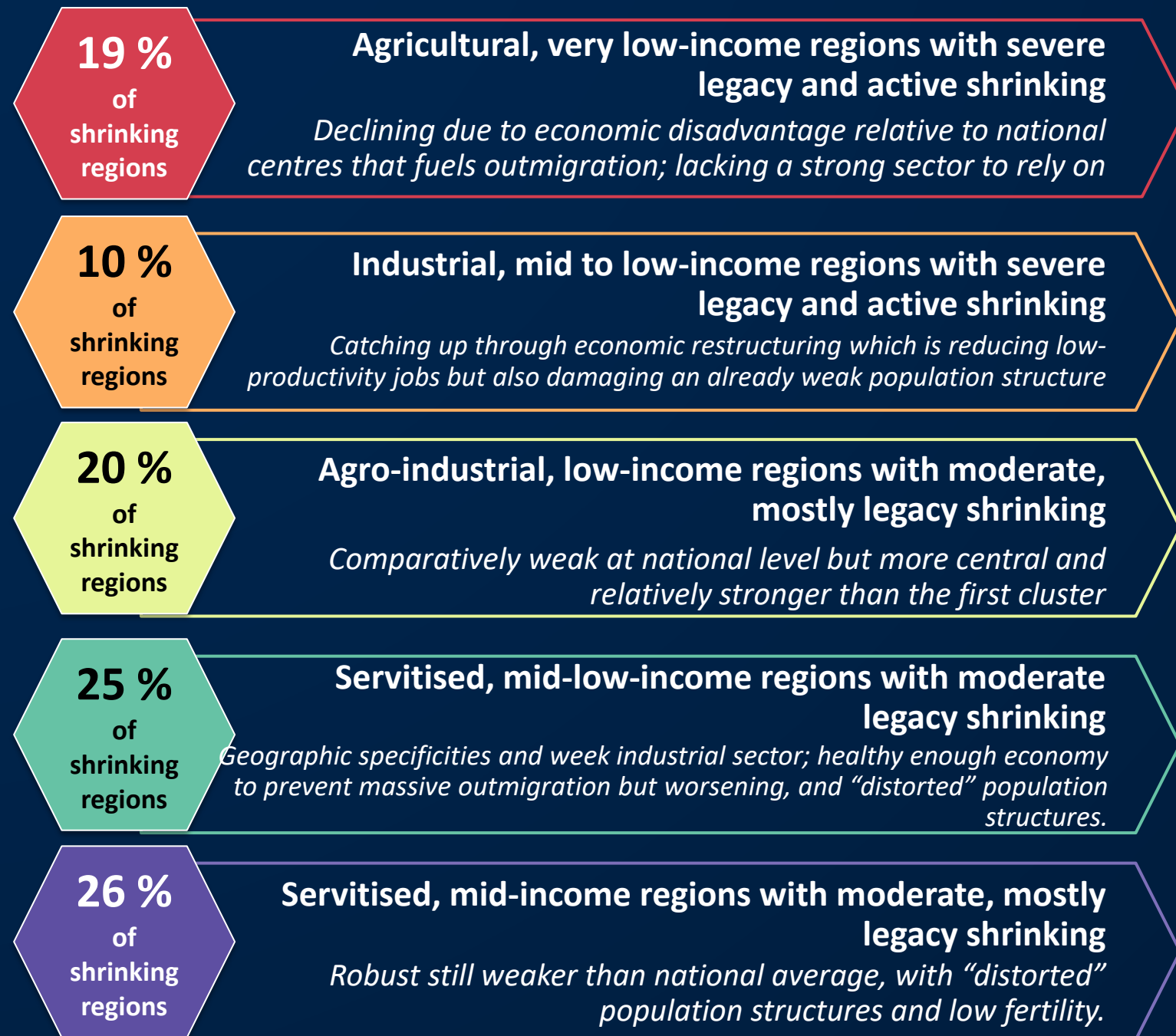
Active Shrinking, driven by current migration, usually combined with **Legacy Shrinking**, caused by age structure effects



Four Types of the Shrinking Process:

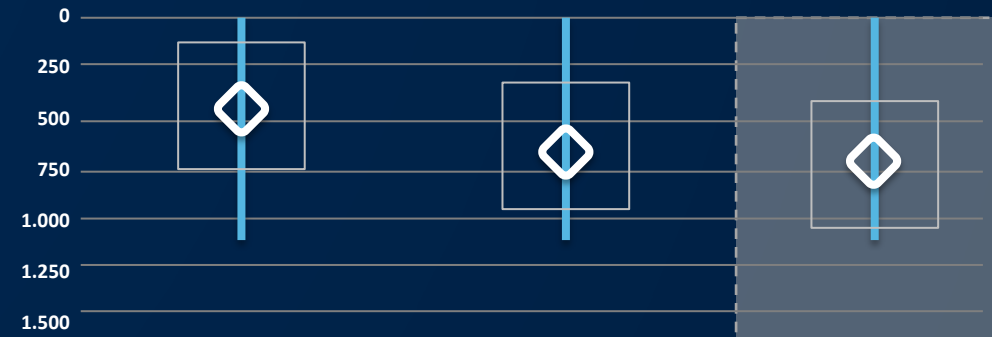


Identifying a territorial typology of the complex shrinking

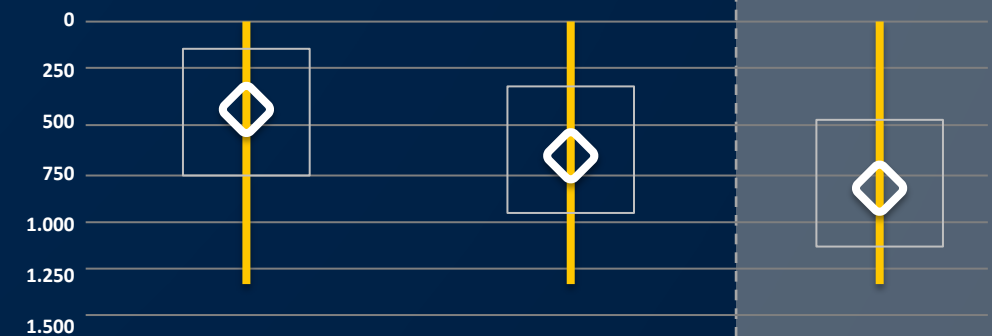


... and assessing how shrinking is impacting the **quality of life**

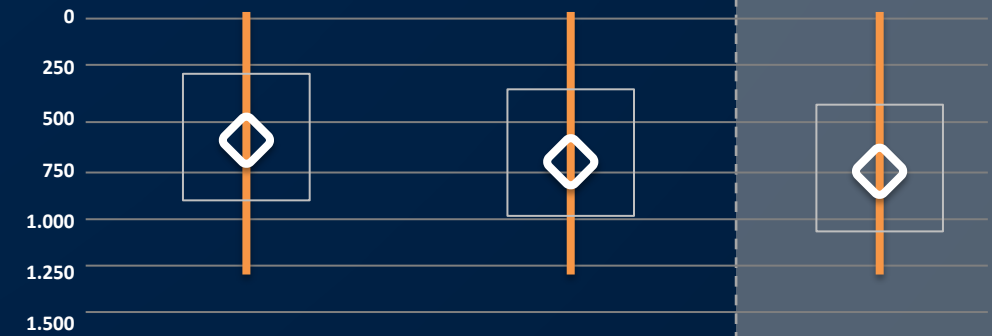
Territorial Quality of Life Index



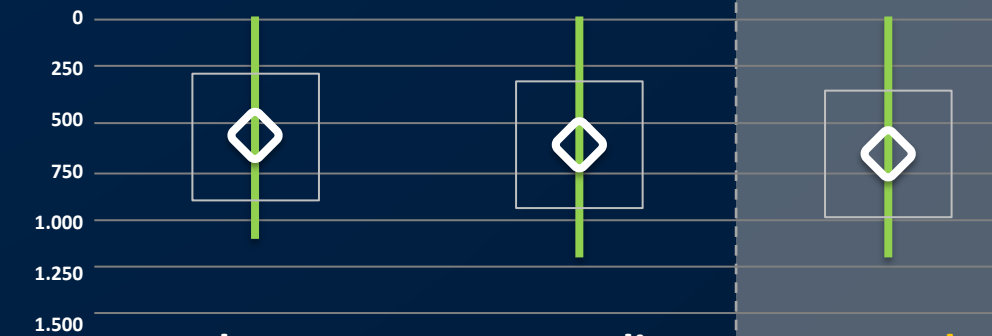
QoL Enablers Index



Life Maintenance Index



Life Flourishing Index

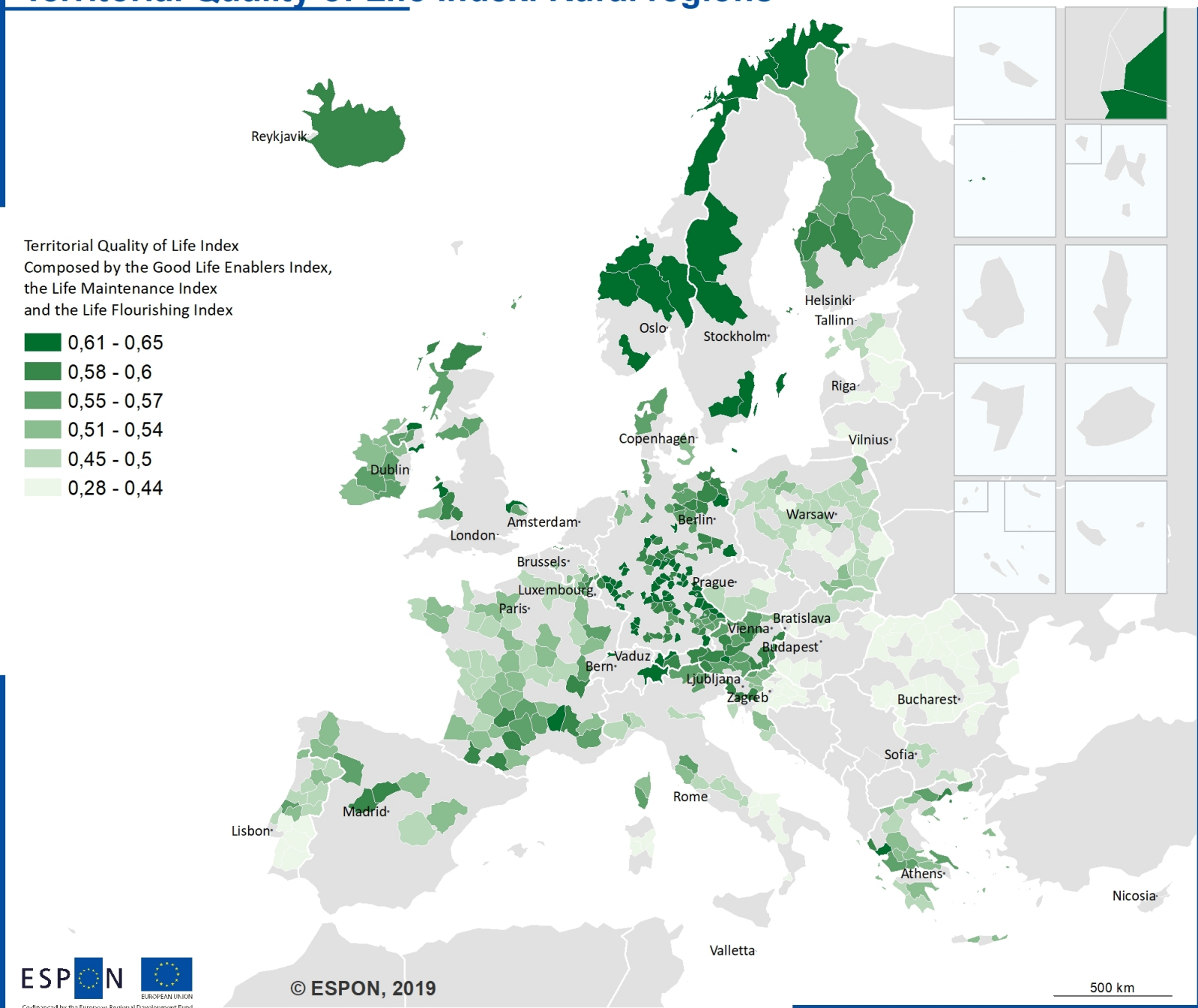


Urban Intermediate Rural

Territorial Quality of Life Index. Rural regions

Territorial Quality of Life Index
Composed by the Good Life Enablers Index,
the Life Maintenance Index
and the Life Flourishing Index

- 0,61 - 0,65
- 0,58 - 0,6
- 0,55 - 0,57
- 0,51 - 0,54
- 0,45 - 0,5
- 0,28 - 0,44

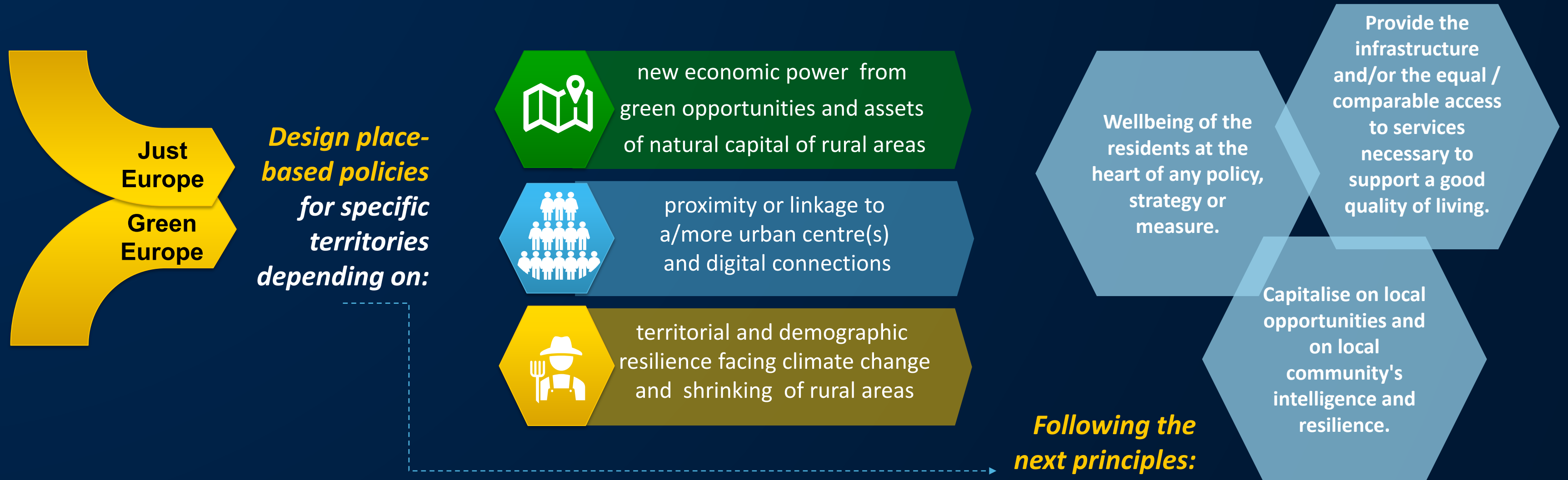


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© ESPON, 2019

Regional level: NUTS3 2016
Source: ESPON QoL, 2020
Origin of data: Eurostat, ESPON projects, EU-SPI, European Regional Database, Eurobarometer, EEA
© UMS RIATE for administrative boundaries

ESPON advice for **place-based policies**



ESPON policy recommendations for rural areas and their linkage to the TA priorities

<i>Policy recommendations // Territorial Agenda priorities and aims</i>	Balanced Europe	Functional regions	Integration beyond borders	Healthy environment	Circular economy	Sustainable connections	Call on all players
Design long-term territorially sensitive policies for the diverse rural shrinking areas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	🔄
Change the focus from mitigating the rural shrinkage to smart adaptation, including better digital connections to boost the economy	✓	✓					🔄
Reboot the agricultural sector through sustainable and optimised supply chains, enhancing green infrastructure connectivity and ecosystem services				✓	✓		🔄
Deploy the potential of green infrastructure in strategies, policies and legislation, within a geostrategic climate change approach		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	🔄
Develop and implement the concept of Functional Rural Areas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	🔄
Breathe new life into rural areas by attracting new residents and enabling them to achieve their professional, social and personal goals	✓		✓	✓			🔄
Enable provision and equal access to Services of General Interest (demographic change is about people and their lives)	✓		✓	✓			🔄
Close the gap between EU policy and local strategies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	🔄
Simplify EU funding processes and develop long term EU projects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	🔄
Harvest the opportunities through territorial governance and empowerment of the civil society	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	🔄
Enhance economic specialization, diversification and innovation based on local potential and initiatives, but also on knowledge transfer and uptake of sustainable practices	✓				✓	✓	🔄

- ✓ Addresses it directly
- Addresses it indirectly

ESPON brings the territorial dimension in the framework of **Territorial Agenda 2030** and contributes to creating a **Long-term Vision for Rural Areas**

You are kindly invited to further explore the set of policy recommendations derived from the most recent ESPON projects and presented in the **Policy Brief**

LINKING THE FUTURE OF RURAL AREAS
WITH THE TERRITORIAL AGENDA 2030

CREATING EVIDENCE- BASED POLICY
RECOMMENDATIONS AIMED AT BETTER
SUPPORTING THE FUTURE OF RURAL AREAS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

PORTUGUESE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



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dgTerritório
Direção-Geral do Território

ESPON policy recommendations help achieve:

A JUST EUROPE that offers future perspectives for all places and people

 **A BALANCED EUROPE** // Better balanced territorial development using Europe's diversity

DESIGN LONG-TERM TERRITORIALY SENSITIVE POLICIES FOR THE DIVERSE RURAL SHRINKING AREAS



NATIONAL CONVERGENCE to address increasing territorial disparities. Discover and develop COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES, capitalizing agglomeration economies and servitisation.

CHANGE THE FOCUS FROM MITIGATING THE RURAL SHRINKAGE TO SMART ADAPTATION, INCLUDING BETTER DIGITAL CONNECTIONS TO BOOST THE ECONOMY



Combined MITIGATION AND ADAPTIVE MEASURES, to support the transition of rural regions. Construct a POSITIVE NARRATIVE ABOUT RURAL AREAS with processes of “transition”, “transformation”, “restructuring” or “smart adaptation”.

ESPON policy recommendations help achieve:

A JUST EUROPE that offers future perspectives for all places and people

 **FUNCTIONAL REGIONS//** Convergent local and regional development, less inequality between places

DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT THE CONCEPT OF FUNCTIONAL RURAL AREAS



Define the TERM “FUNCTIONAL” TO FIT A RURAL CONTEXT to adopt the ‘FUNCTIONAL RURAL AREAS’ CONCEPT. It can greatly improve the territorial classification system and target funding in a more effective manner.

ESPON policy recommendations help achieve:

A **GREEN EUROPE** that protects common livelihoods and shapes societal transition

 **HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT** // Better ecological livelihoods, climate-neutral and resilient towns, cities and regions

ENABLE PROVISION AND EQUAL ACCESS TO SERVICES OF GENERAL INTEREST (DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IS ABOUT PEOPLE AND THEIR LIVES)



Elaborate **PLACE-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES** to highlight the need for **PRIORITY ACTIONS** to improve the access to public service provision (including lowering costs of living) despite the demographic changes, searching for **SCALE ECONOMIES**.



Incorporate **SOCIALLY INNOVATIVE MODELS** using **NEW TECHNOLOGY** to overcome geographical distance reconfiguring responsibilities (third sector, social enterprise or community) and **NEW IT-BASED SOLUTIONS ORGANISED ON THE LOCAL LEVEL**.

ESPON policy recommendations help achieve:

A **GREEN EUROPE** that protects common livelihoods and shapes societal transition

 **HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT** // Better ecological livelihoods, climate-neutral and resilient towns, cities and regions

BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO RURAL AREAS BY ATTRACTING NEW RESIDENTS AND ENABLING THEM TO ACHIEVE THEIR PROFESSIONAL, SOCIAL AND PERSONAL GOALS



Build a **LONG-STANDING VISION** with local strategies to a **CITIZEN-CENTRIC APPROACH** to new representative and deliberative processes focusing on quality of life. **IMPROVING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS**, create attractive living environments and opportunities for grow, by **ACCESSING TO A CONNECTED WORLD**.

DEPLOY THE POTENTIAL OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND LEGISLATION, WITHIN A GEOSTRATEGIC CLIMATE CHANGE APPROACH



GI APPROACH FOR CONNECTIONS across ecological and political boundaries, across policy sectors and different levels of governance. **RURAL AREAS** covered by the GI, can work as successful laboratories to improve and utilise their full potential.

ESPON policy recommendations help achieve:

A GREEN EUROPE that protects common livelihoods and shapes societal transition



CIRCULAR ECONOMY// Strong and sustainable local economies in a globalised world

REBOOT THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR THROUGH SUSTAINABLE AND OPTIMISED SUPPLY CHAINS, ENHANCING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CONNECTIVITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES



A MORE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE and efficient processes improving productivity indicators and **CREATING NEW HIGH PAID JOBS** and a possible **ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION** (linked to post – production, maintenance etc.).

ESPON policy recommendations help achieve:

A **GREEN EUROPE** that protects common livelihoods and shapes societal transition



SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIONS // Sustainable digital and physical connectivity of places

ENHANCE ECONOMIC SPECIALIZATION, DIVERSIFICATION AND INNOVATION BASED ON LOCAL POTENTIAL AND INITIATIVES, BUT ALSO ON KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND UPTAKE OF SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES



TAILORED POLICIES both to needs and to technological transformation, capitalizing, improving and grow of LOCAL ASSETS OR SKILLS, investing in EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICIES to ensure future supply of Industry 4.0 professionals.

ESPON calls for multi-level governance approach to involve all key players

Putting priorities into action

SIMPLIFY EU FUNDING PROCESSES AND DEVELOP LONG TERM EU PROJECTS



Long-term EU level rural programmes and strategies dedicated to rural development and to shrinkage, ensuring continuity and long-term sustainability.

CLOSE THE GAP BETWEEN EU POLICY AND LOCAL STRATEGIES



Substantial FINANCING FOR THE STRATEGICALLY TARGETED NATIONAL PROGRAMMES giving RURAL AREAS, and the issue of RURAL SHRINKAGE, EXPLICIT RECOGNITION

HARVEST THE OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE AND EMPOWERMENT OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY



TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE as an effective tool to empowering the local level in policymaking, giving a voice within MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE PROCESSES AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS