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Urban-intermediate-rural regions **Around 40% of the EU27 population live in urban regions...**

...and almost a quarter in rural regions

On 1 January 2011, 41% of the population of the **EU27** lived in urban regions, 35% in intermediate regions and 23% in rural regions. These figures, published by **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**, are based on a new urban/rural typology¹ developed by the European Commission. This classification is carried out on NUTS 3 regions². The regions are classified as rural, intermediate or urban based on an analysis of population density and total population. A second dataset provides detailed statistics on the EU's main metropolitan areas³, also based on NUTS 3 regions.

Largest share of the population living in rural regions in Ireland, Slovakia and Estonia

On 1 January 2011, the largest proportion of the population lived in urban regions in nine Member States, in intermediate regions in seven and in rural regions in ten. In **France**, the share of the population living in urban and intermediate regions was equal.

The largest shares of the population living in urban regions were recorded in **Malta** (100% of the population), the **Netherlands** and the **United Kingdom** (both 71%) and **Belgium** (68%). **Luxembourg** and **Cyprus** are each considered as one NUTS 3 region and were classified as intermediate. With the exception of these two Member States, the largest proportions of the population living in intermediate regions were observed in **Sweden** (56%), **Estonia** (52%) and **Bulgaria** (45%). The largest shares of the population living in rural areas were registered in **Ireland** (73%), **Slovakia** (50%), **Estonia** (48%) and **Hungary** (47%).

Fastest urban population growth in Sweden and Denmark in 2010

In the **EU27** in 2010, the population of urban regions grew by 5.2 per 1000 inhabitants and intermediate regions by 2.2‰, while rural regions decreased by 0.8‰. In nearly all Member States, it was in urban regions that the population grew most rapidly. **Ireland** was an exception with growth in its rural population, while the urban population declined. The highest population growth in urban regions in 2010 was observed in **Sweden** (+17.3 per 1000 inhabitants), **Denmark** (+15.0‰), the **Czech Republic** (+10.2‰) and **Finland** (+10.0‰). **Lithuania**⁴ (-13.6‰), **Ireland** (-5.7‰) and **Latvia** (-5.4‰) recorded a decrease in their urban populations.

The rural population rose in ten Member states and fell in fourteen. The largest increases were registered in **Belgium** (+7.3‰ in 2009), **Ireland** (+6.1‰) and **France** (+5.1‰ in 2009), and the largest decreases in **Lithuania**⁴ (-31.6‰), **Bulgaria** (-13.2‰) and **Latvia** (-11.6‰).

Population by urban-rural typology, 1 January 2011

	In thousands			% of total population		
	Urban	Intermediate	Rural	Urban	Intermediate	Rural
EU27*	206 683	177 293	117 464	41	35	23
Belgium**	7 322	2 581	938	68	24	9
Bulgaria	1 259	3 371	2 875	17	45	38
Czech Republic	2 522	4 536	3 475	24	43	33
Denmark	1 210	2 002	2 349	22	36	42
Germany	35 006	32 750	13 996	43	40	17
Estonia	-	696	644	-	52	48
Ireland	1 201	-	3 280	27	-	73
Greece	5 281	1 198	4 831	47	11	43
Spain**	22 305	17 616	6 069	49	38	13
France**	23 022	23 099	18 573	36	36	29
Italy	21 573	26 694	12 359	36	44	20
Cyprus***	-	804	-	-	100	-
Latvia	1 090	297	843	49	13	38
Lithuania	839	1 015	1 391	26	31	43
Luxembourg***	-	512	-	-	100	-
Hungary	1 734	3 587	4 665	17	36	47
Malta	418	-	-	100	-	-
Netherlands	11 885	4 665	107	71	28	1
Austria	2 908	2 228	3 269	35	27	39
Poland	10 814	12 965	14 421	28	34	38
Portugal	5 188	1 622	3 827	49	15	36
Romania	2 267	9 387	9 759	11	44	46
Slovenia	533	637	880	26	31	43
Slovakia	629	2 077	2 729	12	38	50
Finland	1 436	1 646	2 294	27	31	43
Sweden	2 054	5 278	2 083	22	56	22
United Kingdom**	44 187	16 032	1 808	71	26	3

- No NUTS 3 region classified within this type

* EU27 aggregates refer to available data and are estimates

** Data for 1 January 2010

*** Cyprus and Luxembourg are each considered as one NUTS 3 region

Population change* per 1000 inhabitants by urban-rural typology, 2010

	Urban regions	Intermediate regions	Rural regions
EU27**	5.2	2.2	-0.8
Belgium***	8.5	7.1	7.3
Bulgaria	7.7	-8.9	-13.2
Czech Republic	10.2	-0.1	0.2
Denmark	15.0	4.8	-0.8
Germany	2.0	-1.7	-4.7
Estonia	-	1.2	-1.2
Ireland	-5.7	-	6.1
Greece	1.3	1.2	-0.7
Spain***	4.3	3.5	0.7
France***	5.9	4.9	5.1
Italy	5.9	5.1	2.0
Cyprus****	-	1.6	-
Latvia	-5.4	-10.0	-11.6
Lithuania⁴	-13.6	-27.6	-31.6
Luxembourg****	-	19.3	-
Hungary	7.0	-1.9	-7.3
Malta	7.8	-	-
Netherlands	6.0	2.3	-2.9
Austria	7.9	3.5	-0.6
Poland	1.6	2.0	-0.7
Portugal	2.0	0.4	-3.0
Romania	2.5	-2.0	-3.6
Slovenia	6.7	1.0	-1.1
Slovakia	9.6	1.1	0.8
Finland	10.0	3.9	1.3
Sweden	17.3	7.1	1.2
United Kingdom***	7.7	5.5	2.7

- No NUTS 3 region classified within this type
- * The ratio of the total population change during the year to the average population
- ** EU27 aggregates refer to available data and are estimates
- *** 2009 data
- **** Cyprus and Luxembourg are each considered as one NUTS 3 region

1. The urban–rural typology is based on a classification of grid cells of 1 km² as either urban or rural. To be considered as urban, grid cells should fulfill two conditions: a population density of at least 300 inhabitants per km² and a minimum population of 5 000 inhabitants in contiguous cells above the density threshold. The other cells are considered as rural. NUTS 3 regions have been classified into three groups based on the classification of these grid cells:
 - predominantly urban region: population in grid cells classified as urban make up more than 80% of the total population;
 - intermediate region: population in grid cells classified as urban make up between 50% and 80% of the total population (population in rural cells between 20% and 50%);
 - predominantly rural region: population in grid cells classified as rural make up 50% or more of the total population.
 For further information: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/rural_development/introduction and http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Regional_typologies_overview
2. For further information about the NUTS classification: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/nuts_nomenclature/introduction
3. For further information: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/region_cities/metropolitan_regions
4. Due to administrative reasons emigration recorded in Lithuania in 2010 may include emigration that took place over the previous years. For comparison, the growth rate in 2009 for urban regions was +0.6‰, for intermediate regions -5.7‰ and for rural regions -10.7‰.

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