

European cities

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Introduction

The Treaty of Lisbon states that the European Union 'shall work for the sustainable development of Europe'. The EU's sustainable development strategy ⁽¹⁾ aims at 'continuous improvement of the quality of life and well-being on Earth for present and future generations'. To improve the quality of life in cities, governments must work at local, national and international levels to come up with policy responses and effective measures to deal with environmental, economic and social vulnerabilities. To assist policymakers in their efforts, data on European cities were collected in the Urban Audit project. The ultimate goal of the project is to contribute to improving the quality of urban life. It supports exchanges of experience between cities, helps to identify best practices, facilitates benchmarking at European level and provides information on the dynamics within cities and their surroundings. How? This can be explained by looking at the topics, the time frame and the spatial dimension of the Urban Audit.

The topics

The EU's sustainable development strategy brings together many strands of economic, social and environmental policy under one overarching objective ⁽²⁾. To capture the complexity of the sustainable development of cities, a wide range of topics have to be looked at. The topics covered by the Urban Audit include demography, housing, health, crime, the labour market, income disparity, local administration, educational qualifications, the environment, climate, travel patterns, the information society and cultural infrastructure. For each topic several indicators are defined. These are derived from the variables collected by the European Statistical System. Data availability differs widely. Demographic data, for instance, are available for almost every city, whereas environmental data are available for fewer than half.

The time frame

Sustainable development, as mentioned in the introduction, meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs ⁽³⁾. This definition imposes requirements on the time frame of the statistics. Data must be available

on the present situation but the time series must be long enough to allow projections. The Urban Audit tries to meet both these requirements. The oldest data are for 1991, the latest for 2008. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 display some of these long time series from 1991 to 2008. Collecting 'historical' data or the most recent data is always more difficult, so for these years only figures on key indicators are available. Most of the data are for 2001 and 2004. If data for these years were not available, data from adjacent years are provided.

The spatial dimension

Sustainable development policy is, first and foremost, targeted on people. However, most people in Europe have addresses, i.e. they live in places, and many of them live in cities. To provide information on these addresses, places and cities, the Urban Audit has a multilayered spatial dimension.

Most of the data are collected at **core city** level, i.e. the city as delimited by its administrative or political boundaries. However, economic activity, labour flows, air pollution, etc. do not stop at the administrative boundaries of a city nor are workplaces, labour force and air pollutants evenly distributed within the boundaries of a city. To make it easier to analyse the interaction between a city and its surroundings, for each city participating a second level called the **larger urban zone** was delineated. The larger urban zone is an approximation of the functional urban area centred on the core city. To provide information on internal disparities within the core city's boundaries, a third spatial level, the **sub-city district**, was introduced. The data used to produce Maps 2.1 and 2.2 refer to the core city, whereas Map 2.3 presents information at sub-city district level.

Urbanisation

The declared geographical scope of the EU's sustainable development strategy covers well-being 'on Earth', so it is appropriate to take a brief look at global trends. One of these is urbanisation, 'the world goes to town' ⁽⁴⁾. The industrial revolution in the late 18th century triggered one of the greatest human migrations in history. The mass exodus from rural areas to cities swept through Europe and North America first and is still in the process of transforming Asia. Europe

⁽¹⁾ Council of the European Union, 'Review of the EU sustainable development strategy (EU SDS) — Renewed strategy', 10117/06.

⁽²⁾ Eurostat, *Sustainable development in the European Union — 2009 monitoring report on the EU sustainable development strategy*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009.

⁽³⁾ United Nations, 1987, 'Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development', General Assembly Resolution 42/187, 11 December 1987.

⁽⁴⁾ *The Economist*, 'The world goes to town', *The Economist Newspaper Limited*, 3 May 2007.



is considered to be at the advanced stage of urbanisation. Asia is still at the middle stage, but nevertheless 11 of the 19 largest cities in the world were in Asia in 2007 ⁽⁵⁾. The two most populous cities in the European Union were London (UK) and Paris (FR) in 2007. The larger urban zones of both these cities had more than 10 million inhabitants, that is more than several of the countries in the European Union. Nevertheless, these cities account for a small share of the urban population in Europe, in contrast to the United States, where 80 % of the country's population are classified as living in a metropolitan area and one third of them live in large cities with populations of over 5 million.

In Europe the distribution of urban-dwellers across cities of different sizes is more even, as illustrated in Map 2.1. Each circle on the map represents an Urban Audit city. At present, the Urban Audit data collection includes more than 300 cities from the EU-27, plus 26 Turkish, five Croatian, six Norwegian and four Swiss cities. In the near future, the number of Swiss cities participating in the Urban Audit will increase to 10. The size of the circle reflects the number of inhabitants in the core city. Six cities in the Urban Audit have more than 3 million inhabitants: Berlin (DE), Madrid (ES), Paris (FR), London (UK), Ankara (TR) and İstanbul (TR). Another 20 have fewer than 3 million but more than 1 million inhabitants. They are spread all over Europe, from northern to western, southern and central Europe. Smaller cities, with fewer than 1 million but more than half a million inhabitants, are considerably more numerous. The next tier, made up of cities with populations ranging from 250 000 to just under half a million, numbers 80. One noteworthy point is that the total population in each size category mentioned so far is about the same, approximately 30 million, underlining the balanced distribution of the urban population in Europe. However, the Urban Audit does not include every city in Europe. Several, especially in the smaller size groups, i.e. with fewer than 250 000 inhabitants, are not included. To fill this gap in the Urban Audit data collection, the 'Large City Audit' was launched. It includes all 'non-Urban Audit cities' with more than 100 000 inhabitants in the EU-27. For these cities a smaller set of 50 variables is collected. The data set including all Urban Audit and Large City Audit cities is available in Eurostat's databases.

Present and future generations — the demographic challenge

The sustainable development strategy identifies seven key challenges: climate change and clean energy; sustainable transport; sustainable consumption and production; conservation and management of natural resources; social inclusion; demography and migration; public health and global poverty. Building on the Urban Audit, it is possible to take a closer look at the demographic challenge.

One major challenge facing socioeconomic development is the ageing population. This is reflected in the growing old-age dependency ratio. As shown by Map 2.2, in most Urban Audit cities the old-age dependency ratio stands at between 22 % and 26 %. For example, in the Maltese capital Valetta the value is 25 %, meaning that for every person aged 65 or over there are four of working age. Besides the two largest cities in Europe, smaller cities in most of the 'new' Member States and Greece stand out as having a low old-age dependency ratio. Irish and Turkish cities also fall into this group, irrespective of their size. Cities located in the core of Europe, i.e. in Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Italy, tend to have higher old-age dependency ratios, as do most Spanish and Portuguese cities.

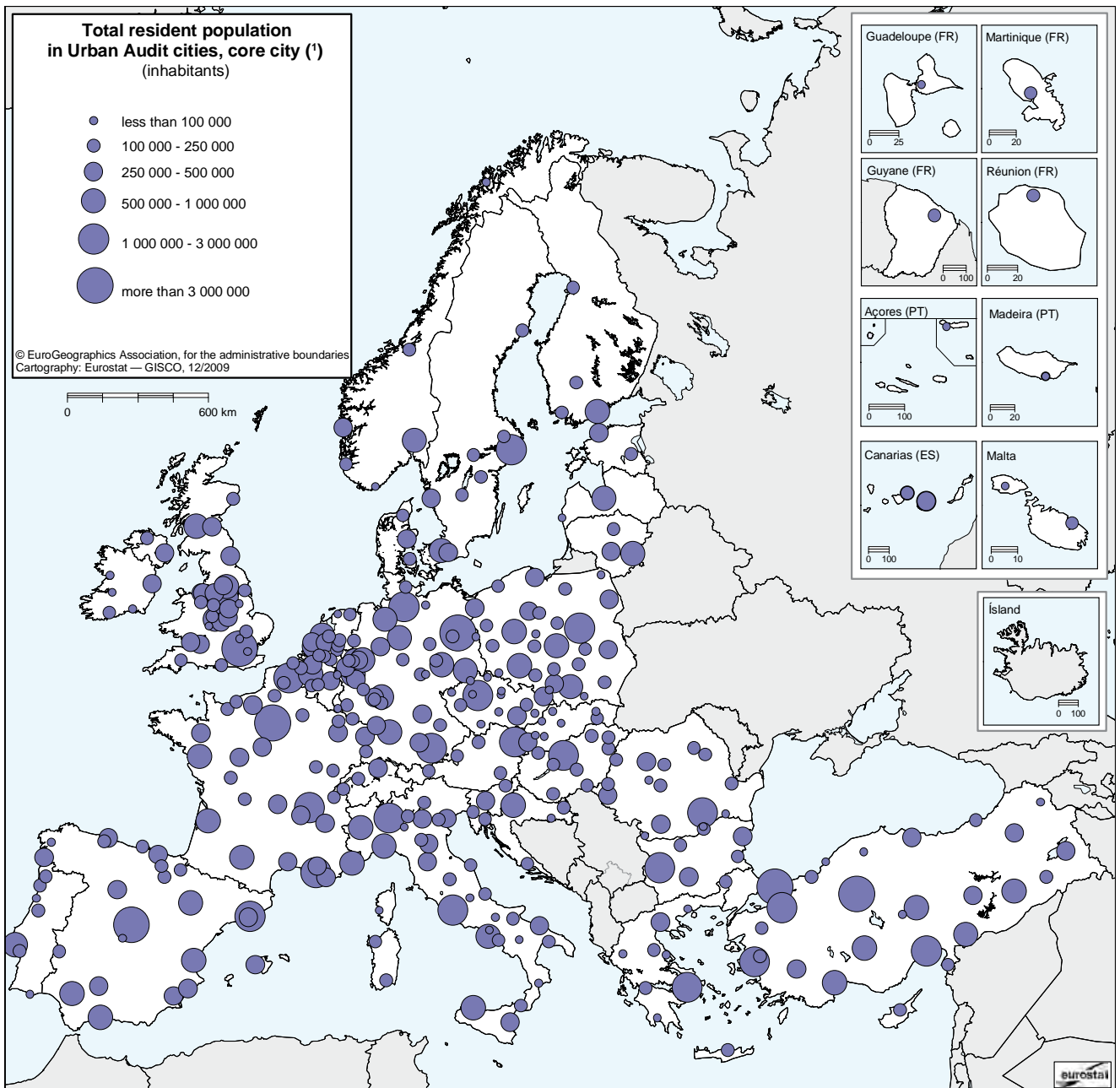
Looking at the indicator value for a city tells only part of the story. Even in a city with a low value, like Amsterdam (17 %), neighbourhoods can be found with exceptionally high old-age dependency ratios (above 30 %), as shown in Map 2.3. The map also confirms that differences between neighbourhoods within the same city can be much larger than between cities. In some cities certain spatial patterns can be observed: in Berlin (DE) or Zürich (CH) there is a big difference between the city centre and the surrounding districts, whereas in Budapest (HU) there is an east/west divide along the River Danube. Analysing the spread of indicator values within individual cities makes it possible to paint a detailed picture of an ageing society.

Another way to examine the phenomenon of ageing cities is to focus on the time dimension. Figure 2.1 focuses on two cities, Madrid and Milano, and shows how the age structure of the population changed between 1991 and 2008. 'Population pyramids' are commonly used to illustrate the distribution of age groups in a

⁽⁵⁾ UN, Habitat, *State of the world's cities 2008/2009, Harmonious cities*, London, 2008.



Map 2.1: Total resident population in Urban Audit core cities ⁽¹⁾
(inhabitants)

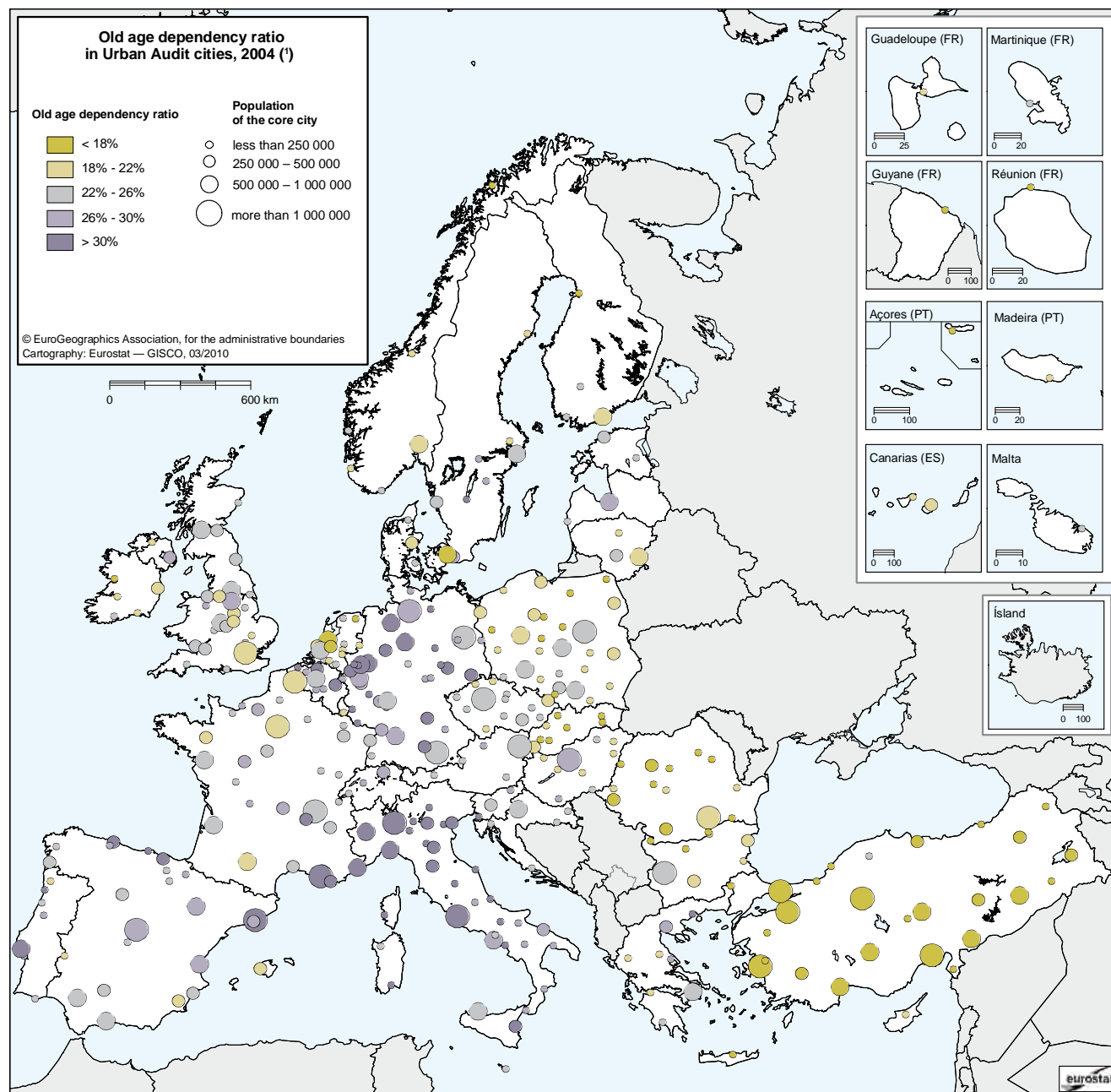


⁽¹⁾ The data are based on the most recent reference year. For København, Athina, Paris, Lisboa and Stockholm the so-called 'kernel' level data have been used.

Source: Eurostat ([tgs00079](#)).



Map 2.2: Old-age dependency ratio in Urban Audit cities, 2004 (1)

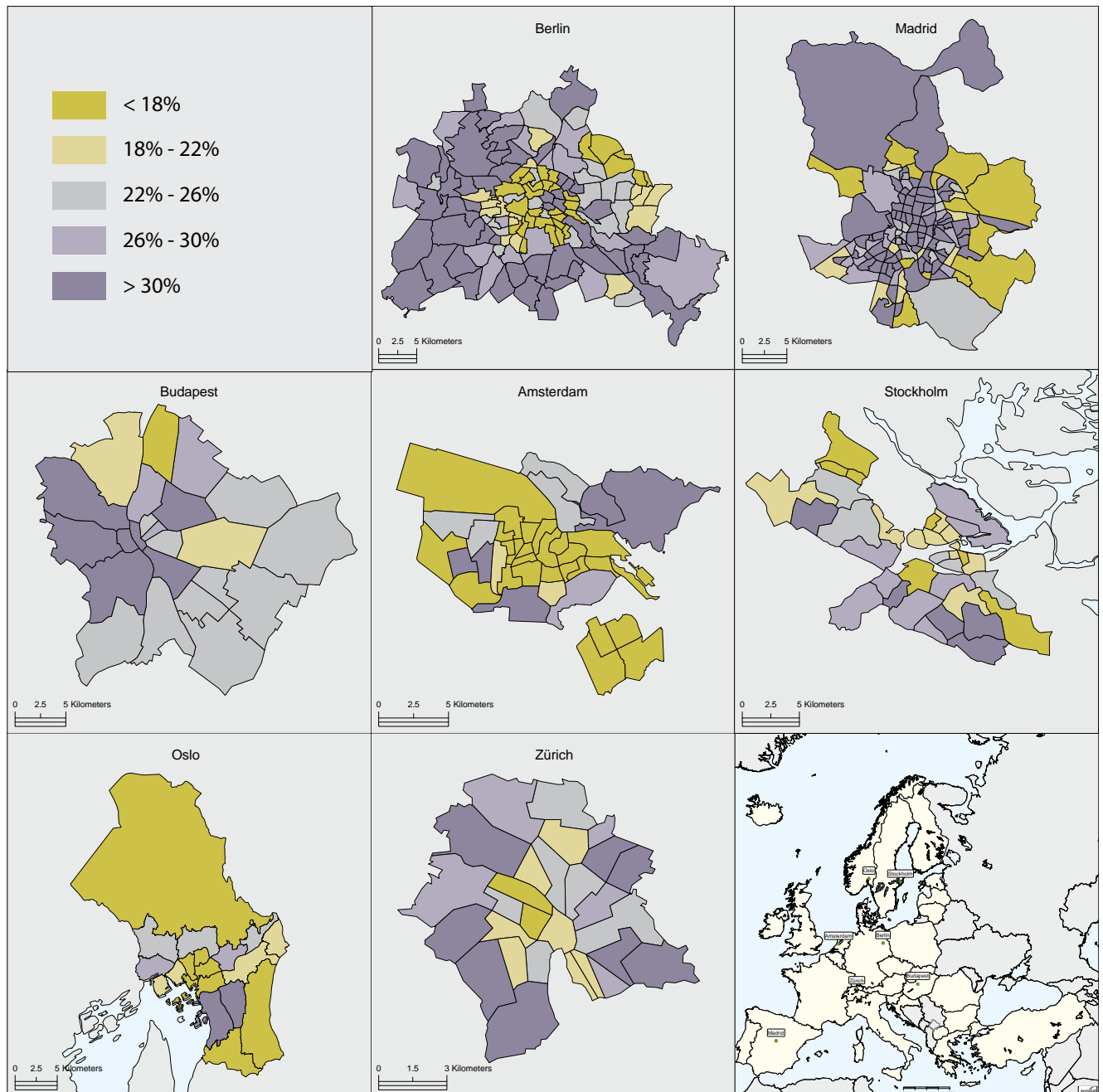


(1) Finland and Croatia, 2001; Hungary, 2005; France, 2006.

Source: Eurostat ([urb_icity](#)).



Map 2.3: Old-age dependency ratio in selected Urban Audit cities, by sub-city district, 2004 ⁽¹⁾

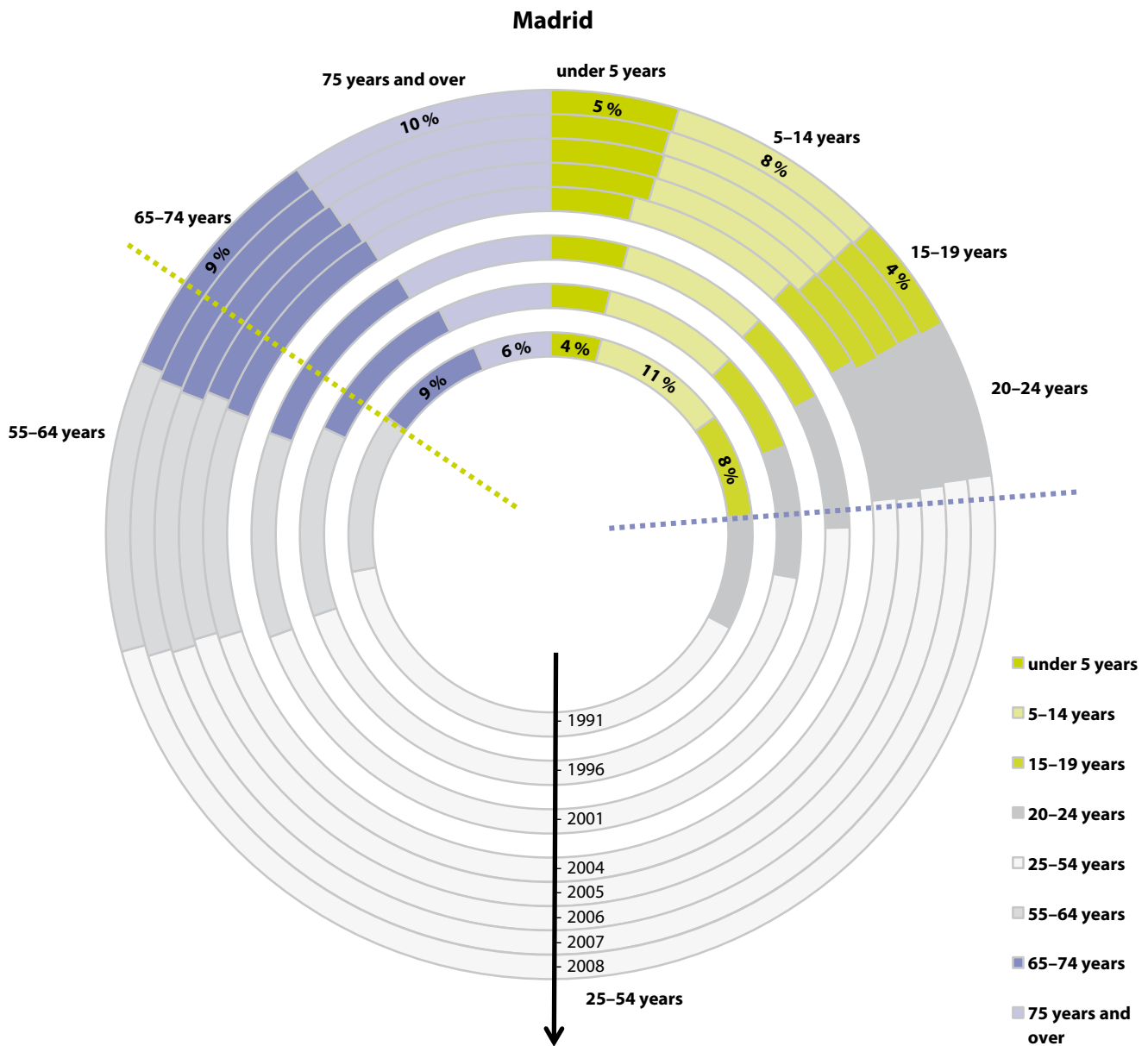


⁽¹⁾ Estonia, Latvia, Finland and Turkey, 2000; Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovakia and Croatia, 2001; Italy and Hungary, 2005; France, 2006.

Source: Eurostat ([urb_iscd](#)).



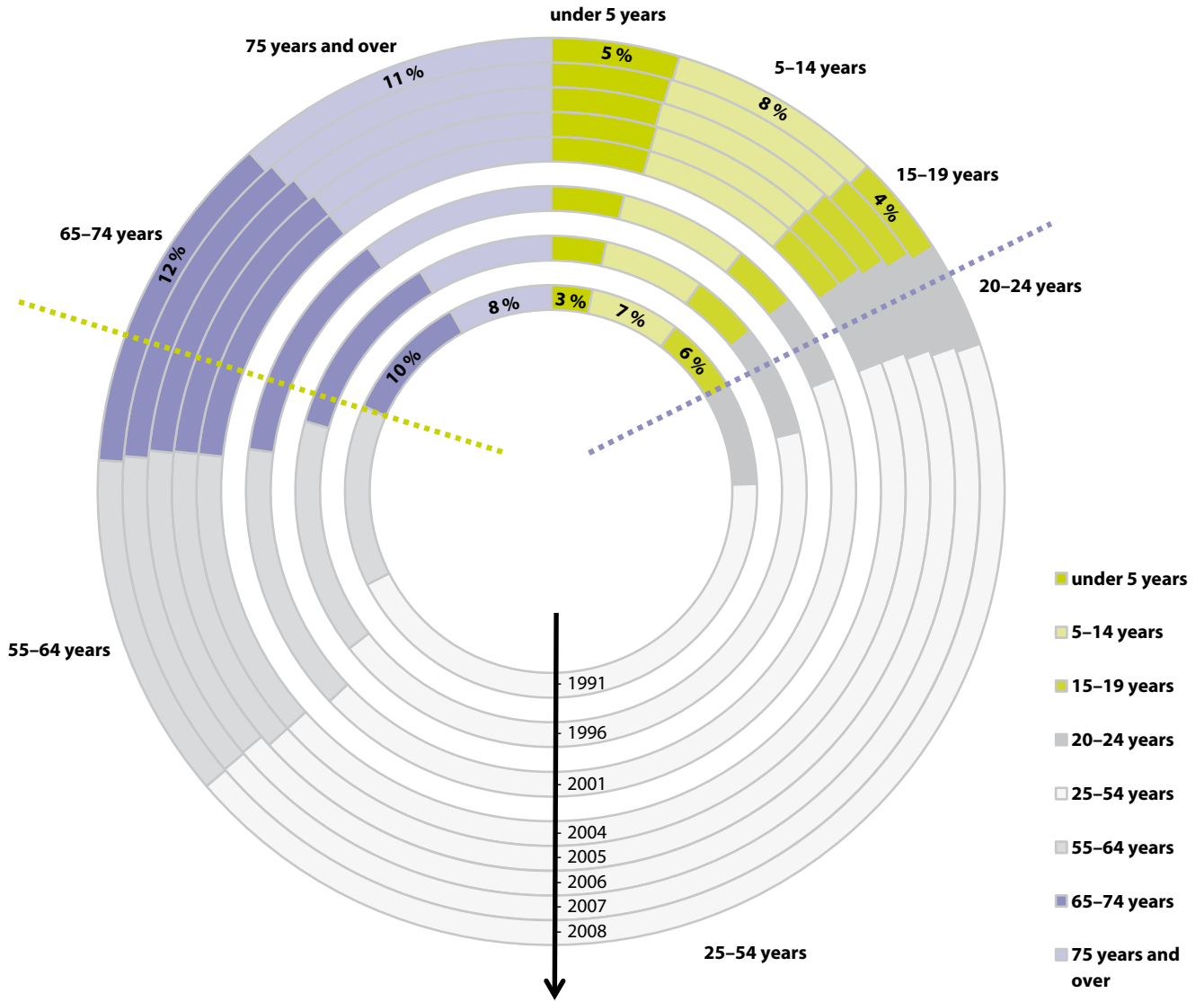
Figure 2.1: Age structure of the population in Madrid and Milano, 1991 - 2008
(% of the total population by age groups)



Source: Eurostat ([urb_icity](#)).



Milano



Source: Eurostat (urb_icity).

country or city. However, population pyramids show the proportion of population in age cohorts at one point in time. In Figure 2.1 each ring depicts one year, like the growth rings of a tree. The different colours indicate the different age groups. In 1991 in Madrid almost a quarter of the population were in the under-20 age group. This proportion shrank gradually to approximately 17 % in 2008. The decrease in the young slice of the population was counterbalanced by an increase in the proportion of elderly residents. A similar trend can be observed in Milano, but starting from a slightly different position. In Milano, over-65s already outnumbered under-20s in 1991, when the opposite was the case in Madrid.

A society's ability to cope with an ageing population does not depend directly on the old-age dependency ratio. The question is how many inactive people have to be supported by the active population. Attracting nationals from other countries is one way of preventing labour-force shortages ⁽⁶⁾. Map 2.4 provides an overview of the proportion of nationals in Urban Audit cities. Most cities in the 'new' Member States, candidate countries and eastern Germany have a very small or no foreign population, except Tallinn (EE) and Berlin (DE). In southern Europe the big cities, for example Madrid (ES), Barcelona (ES), Milano (IT) and Athina (EL), all have a large share of non-national population. The same pattern can be observed in Ireland, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and Norway, where foreigners are concentrated in the biggest city in the country. On the other hand, in German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria and Switzerland), the overwhelming majority

of cities, irrespective of their size, have a large share of non-nationals.

After looking at the spatial dimension, this indicator can be analysed along the time line as well. This can be illustrated by two very different capitals, Roma (IT) and Luxembourg (LU). Of all European cities, Luxembourg (LU) had the lowest proportion of nationals in 2007. Over the last two decades this proportion has been decreasing steadily, from more than 50 % in 1991 to less than 40 % in 2008, as shown in Figure 2.2. This means that the majority of residents in the city of Luxembourg are foreigners. By contrast, almost all residents of Roma were Italian. The proportion has decreased since 1991, but is still over 90 % ⁽⁷⁾.

Conclusion

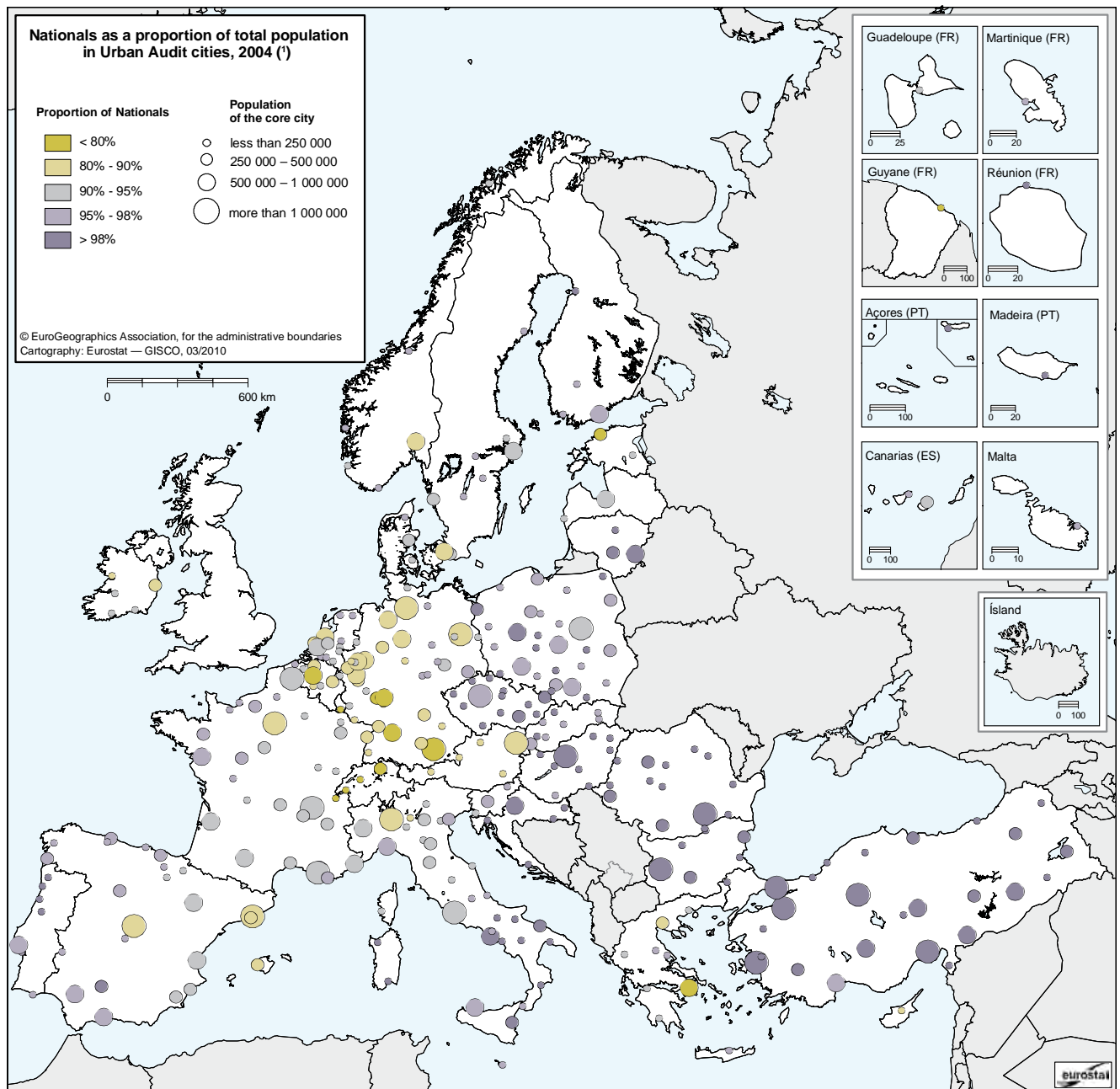
This chapter presented a few indicators reflecting the demographic challenge facing cities, looking back at longer and shorter periods and focusing on different spatial levels. Besides these indicators, there are many more, just as besides the demographic challenge there are also many more challenges. Cities are focal points of consumption of energy and materials; they are hubs of transport networks, bringing together polluters and protectors of the environment, skilled workers and unemployed, homeless and wealthy, culture and crime. Are they sustainable? Eurostat invites everyone to formulate their own assumptions in response to this question and to test, quantify or reject them themselves after looking at the figures in the various domains of the Urban Audit data collection available on the Eurostat website.

⁽⁷⁾ United Nations Population Division, *An Overview of Urbanisation, Internal Migration, Population Distribution and Development in the World*, United Nations Secretariat, New York, 21–23 January 2008.

⁽⁶⁾ European Commission, *Demography Report 2008: Meeting Social Needs in an Ageing Society*, Brussels, 2008.



Map 2.4: Nationals as a proportion of total population in Urban Audit cities, 2004 (%)

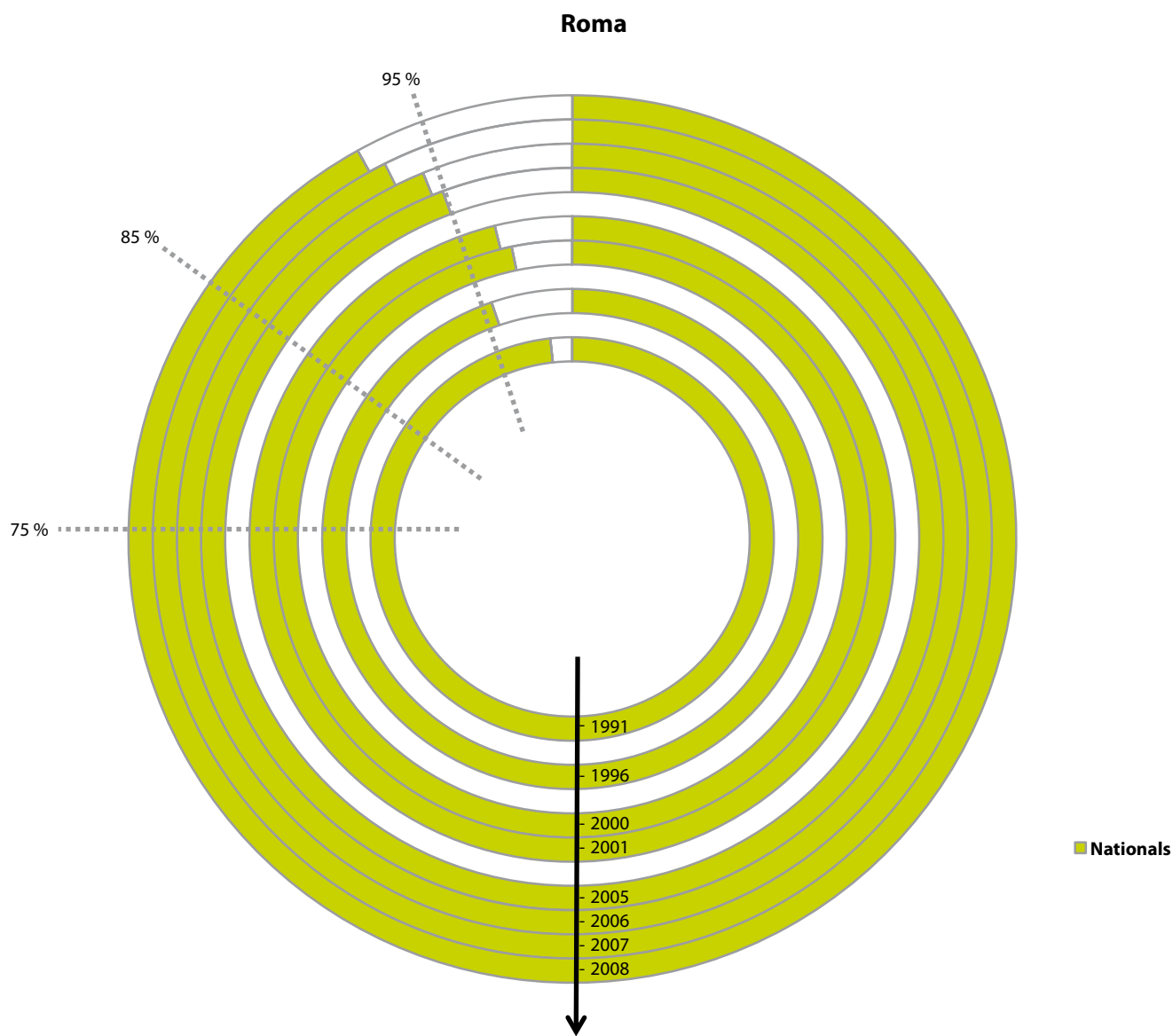


(*) Estonia, Latvia, Finland and Turkey, 2000; Bulgaria, Czech, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovakia and Croatia, 2001; Italy and Hungary, 2005; France, 2006.

Source: Eurostat ([urb_iscd](#)).



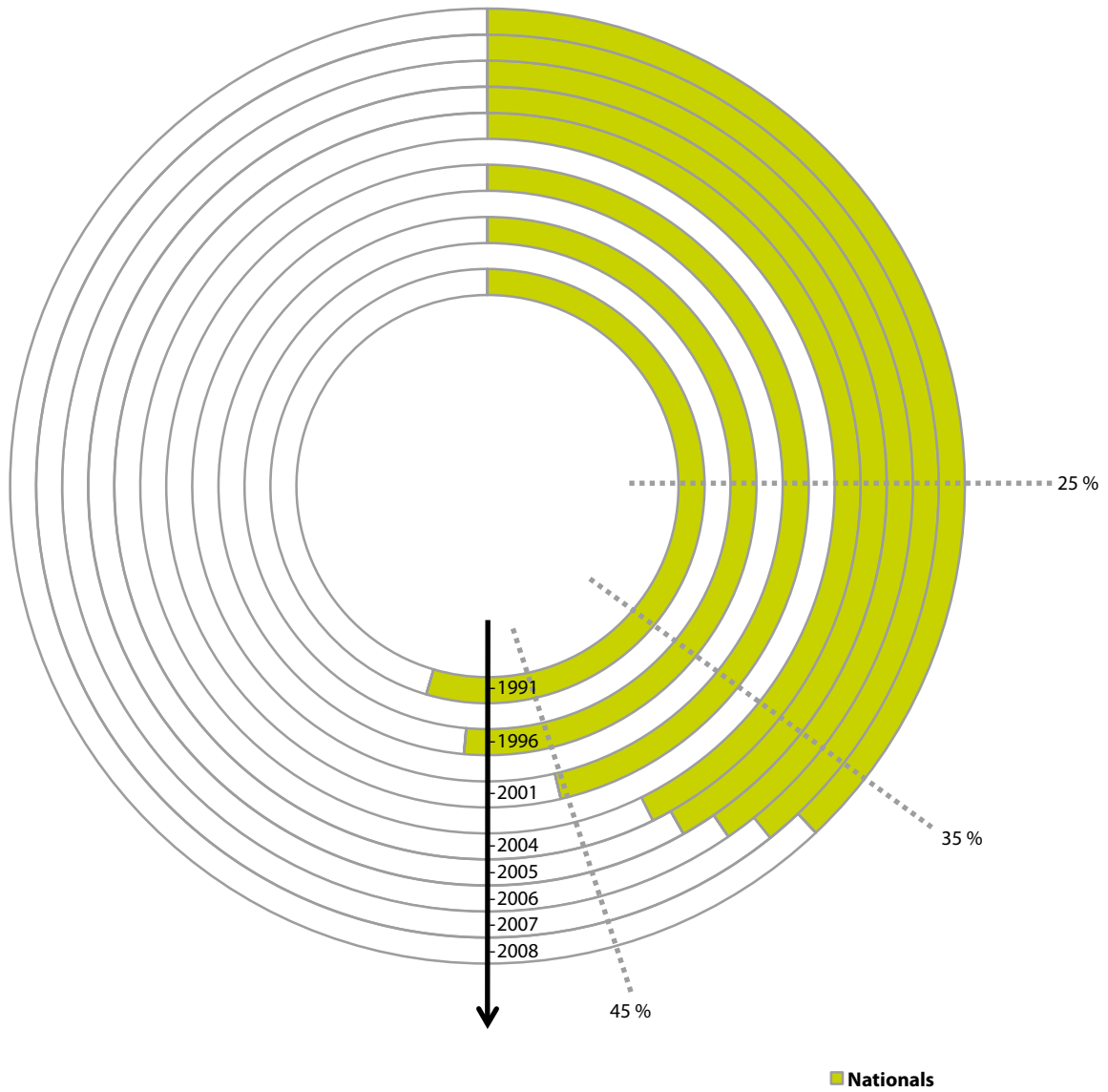
Figure 2.2: Nationals as a proportion of total population in Roma and Luxembourg, 1991–2008 (%)



Source: Eurostat ([urb_icity](#)).



Luxembourg



Source: Eurostat (urb_icity).