



European Union  
Regional Policy



# Regions for economic change

EN



## Regional policy responses to demographic challenges

January 2007

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The conference Regional Responses to Demographic Challenges on January 25-26, 2007 is the second in a series organised in the context of the Regions for Economic Change initiative. The aim of this initiative is to ensure that the wealth of experience and good practice which exists in Europe's regions in a wide range of policy areas is shared as widely as possible and exploited fully to promote competitiveness, growth and job creation. One of the themes identified in the initiative is "meeting the demographic challenge".

In recent years the European Commission has worked actively to take forward the debate on demographic issues. Most recently, following an EU-wide consultation, it laid down proposals for a long-term response to the issue in the Communication 'The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity'. This Communication makes clear that the magnitude and rhythm of population trends varies substantially from country to country and from region to region. To give just a few examples, fertility rates are much lower in Germany and Italy compared to France. Beyond changes in the size and age-structure of the population, there is a trend of population movement away from rural and isolated regions towards urban areas. Many European regions are already experiencing such depopulation, with outward flows of working-age people leaving a very elderly population behind. Certain urban areas, on the other hand, find their infrastructure – housing, transport, and social services – under growing pressure from rapidly increasing populations.



The upshot of this is that a uniform policy response is impossible. Effective policies must be based on an understanding of these differing medium- and long-term trends. The objective of this conference – Regional Responses to Demographic Challenges – is precisely to arrive at a better understanding of the diverse challenges which Europe's regions face on the demography question. It will also focus on the key role which regional policy plays in dealing with these challenges. Regional policy, by involving all relevant partners in the design and implementation of policies, by promoting medium-term strategic planning and a stable financial framework, allows regions to respond to population change through policies which are tailored to their specific needs.

The conference will focus on concrete examples from over 20 regions which are at the forefront of dealing with rapid demographic change, and will present projects demonstrating the innovative policies they have adopted. These experiences and the success stories they have generated need to be heard, understood and learnt from. This conference is an excellent opportunity to do so.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'DHübner'.

**Danuta Hübner**  
**Member of the European Commission responsible for Regional Policy**

## Regional policy responses to demographic challenges and opportunities

In Europe, the trend towards greater life expectancy, often in good health, is primarily due to the unprecedented peace we have known for 60 years, the constant improvement in living conditions and the progress in medicine enabling us to live longer. This success partly explains the demographic perspective facing Europe of an ageing population with rising old age dependency ratios.

Initially, discussion around this ageing trend concentrated on the sustainability of social security, pensions and health policies. However, it is increasingly recognised that an ageing population will require the adaptation of practically all major public policies, including education, employment and social affairs, transport, public services and infrastructures and urban planning, to address ageing and exploit the opportunities it presents. The Lisbon Strategy up to 2010 takes the broad European demographic trends into account. Indeed, those trends reinforce the essential objective of seeking to improve EU competitiveness by raising overall employment rates and employment rates of women and older workers, and by promoting innovation and higher-value-added economic activities in order to raise productivity.

However, at regional level demographic structures and likely future patterns often vary greatly from the EU and national averages. In order to address the demographic challenges effectively and seize the opportunities presented there is a need for regionally adapted policy responses. EU Cohesion Policy is well suited to such a task, especially in those policy areas identified as EU Cohesion Policy priorities in the Community Strategic Guidelines 2007-2013 and in the specific funds regulations. In addition, the Commission Communication 'The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity'<sup>1</sup> sets out how the EU can constructively respond within an overall strategy. While national governments will retain the policy prerogative in many policy areas affected by demographic trends, notably social and employment policies, many necessary reforms can be supported by EU Cohesion Policy.

### Basic demographic trends

During the last four decades, the population of the countries of today's EU-25 has grown from over 376 million (1960) to about 459 million (2005). Population change has two components: the so-called 'natural increase' (defined as the difference between the numbers of live births and deaths), and net migration (the difference between inward and outward migration). The strength and composition of

EU-25 population growth has varied significantly over this period. There has been a sustained decline in the 'natural increase' since the early 1960s in contrast to the period before, while international migration has gained importance to become the major force of population growth from the beginning of the 1990s onwards.

It is now widely understood that there is a strong demographic ageing of the EU population due to low fertility levels combined with longer, healthier lives and the fact that the baby boomers are approaching retirement age. In 2004-05, the EU-25 average life expectancy for men increased to 74 years and for women to 80 years (up from 69 and 76 respectively since 1980). In the EU-25, the total fertility rate has declined from a level of above 2.5 children in the early 1960s to around 1.5 in 1995 where it has remained ever since. That rate compares to the fertility rate of 2.1 children commonly accepted to be the replacement level. Interestingly enough, surveys show that most European couples aged 40 and over consider that it was mainly social and economic factors which prevented them from having as many children as they would have liked.

Trends in migration and immigration, compared to the predictability of 'natural change' in population, are more difficult to foresee and their effects can be more pronounced in a shorter period<sup>2</sup>. This has been true during the long history of European migration and immigration. Intra-European and intra-regional population movements slowed considerably in the mid 1970s as the demand for foreign workers fell following the first oil price shock in 1973. In the period since then, the improving economic performance of the poorer countries within the EU has contributed to lower migrant worker flows. However, the development of migration patterns has been complicated by 'quality of life' factors, including environment and cost-of-living issues countering the traditional rural-to-urban (intra-national) trends, and the rise of cross-national flows in urban areas, particularly amongst the higher qualified.

According to national statistics and Eurostat estimates, the total number of non-nationals living in the EU in 2004 was around 25 million, or just below 5.5% of the total population. In absolute terms, the largest numbers of foreign citizens reside in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK. In the period 2000-2004, the non-national population varied from less than 1% of the total population in Slovakia, to 39% in Luxembourg, while in the majority of countries the figure was between 2% and 8%. In the 24 years up to 2004, the percentage of foreign nationals either did not change significantly in most Member States or it increased.

<sup>1</sup> European Commission, 'The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity', Communication 571 (2006) of 12 October 2006.

<sup>2</sup> For more details see the 2006 Employment in Europe report: [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/employment\\_analysis/employ\\_2006\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/employment_analysis/employ_2006_en.htm)



# Old age dependency

Population ratio (in %)

by age: > 64 / 15-64

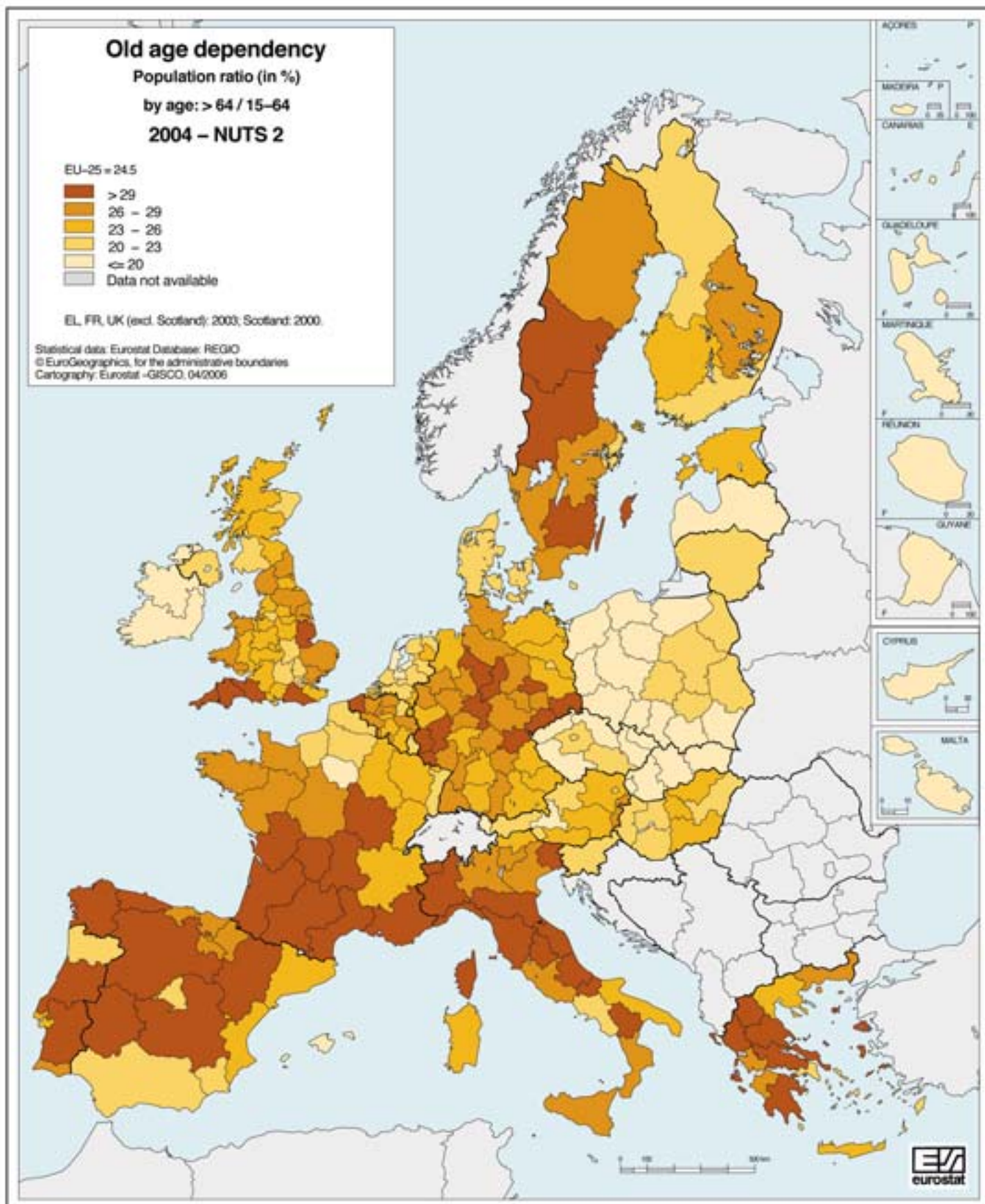
2004 - NUTS 2

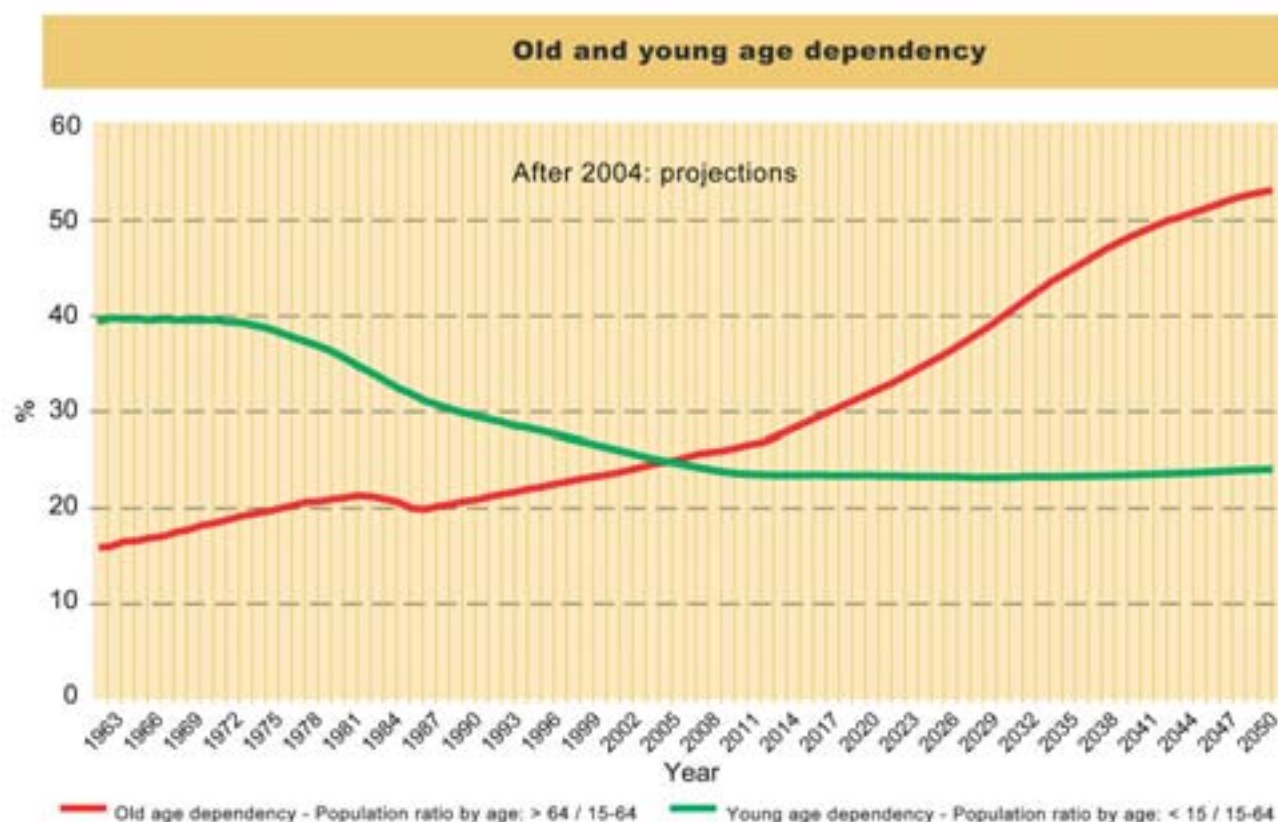
EU-25 = 24.5

- > 29
- 26 - 29
- 23 - 26
- 20 - 23
- ≤ 20
- Data not available

EL, FR, UK (excl. Scotland): 2003; Scotland: 2000.

Statistical data: Eurostat Database: REGIO  
© EuroGeographics, for the administrative boundaries  
Cartography: Eurostat - GISCO, 04/2006





The most significant growth was observed in Luxembourg, followed by Spain, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland and Austria. Latvia was the only country registering a significant decrease.

In 2004, the number of citizens from the ten new Member States residing in the EU-15 was comparatively small at around 0.2% of the total EU-15 population, with the largest proportion in Germany. However, the loss of these workers has a higher incidence in their native countries where it is contributing to population reduction.

With ageing, the proportion of older people is increasing compared to the decreasing share of those of working age. If current trends prevail until 2050, a person of working age then might have to provide for up to twice as many retired people than is usual today. The regional differences already visible now in age-dependency indicators might see more dramatic developments in some regions than in others.

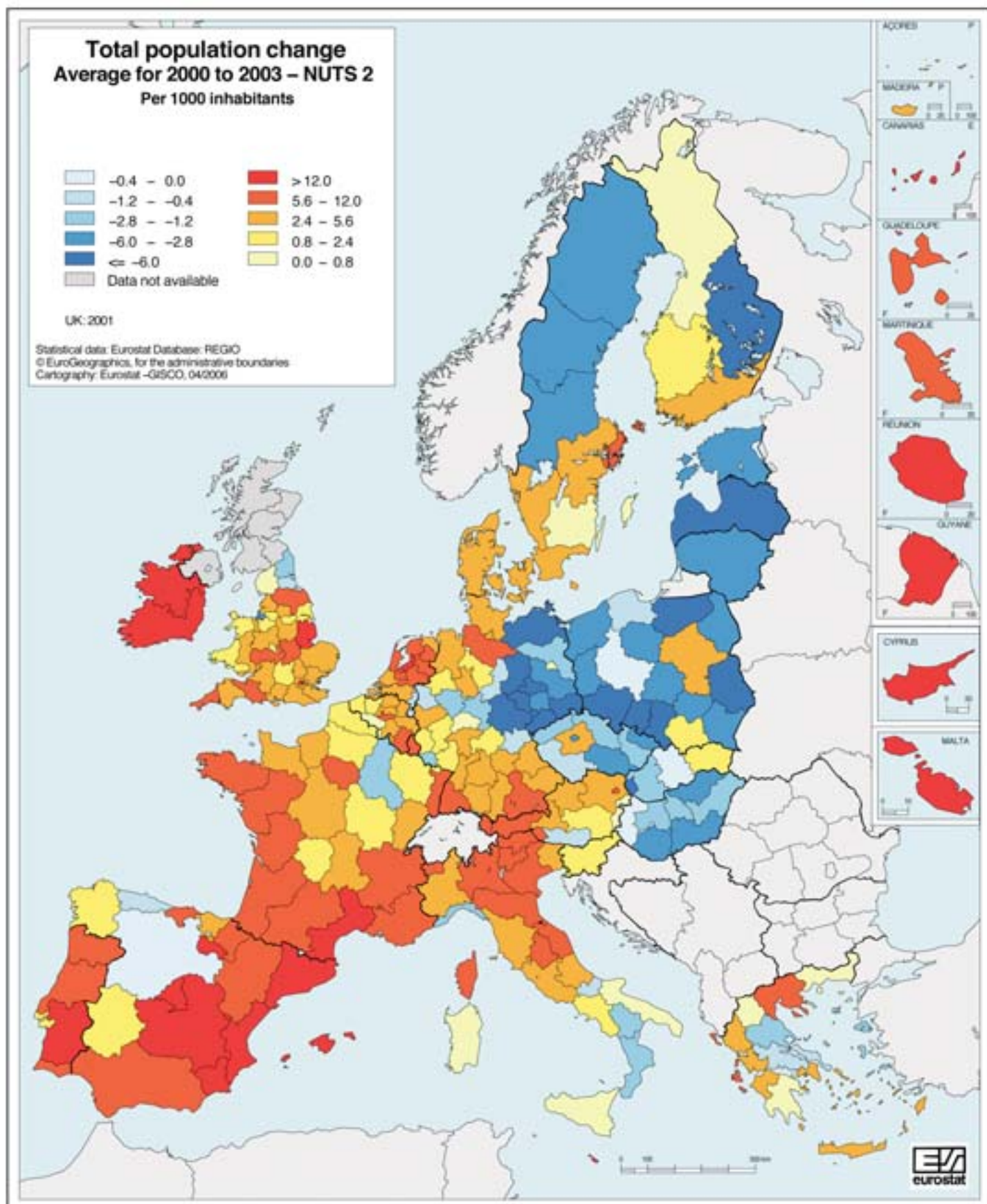
While an ageing population is a challenge that all EU Member States are facing or will have to face, it has a stronger and more immediate impact for some countries and regions than others. In the face of very different existing patterns and likely trends, a range of major demographic phenomena need to be better understood to enable policy-makers to form robust proactive policies to meet the challenges and exploit the opportunities of a changing population.

**Regional effects of demographic change:** the main recent historic trends identified by Eurostat<sup>3</sup> at national and regional level can be summarised as follows:

- In the north-east of the European Union the population is decreasing. Most affected by this decline are eastern Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, and to the north the three Baltic States, and parts of Sweden and Finland.
- In many EU regions, since the start of the new century more people have died than have been born. The resulting negative 'natural population change' is widespread and the pattern is less pronounced than for the total population change. This negative pattern predominates in Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and adjacent regions, as well as the Baltic States, Sweden in the north and Greece in the south.
- Ireland, France, the three Benelux countries and Denmark are mainly experiencing a 'natural increase' in the population.
- In some regions, a negative 'natural change' has been compensated by a positive net migration. This is most conspicuous in western Germany, eastern Austria, the north of Italy, and Slovenia, as well as the south of Sweden and regions in Spain, Greece and the United Kingdom.
- The opposite is much rarer: in only a few regions (namely in the north of Poland), a positive 'natural change' has been offset by a negative net migration.

<sup>3</sup> Eurostat, Regions: Statistical yearbook 2006.





Whilst, according to the average, the phenomenon of demographic ageing will become considerably more important in the coming decades, different European regions are currently facing very divergent developments in population. Some regions face 'natural increase' accompanied by positive net migration (i.e. Ireland), while others have experienced or will experience dramatic sustained population loss (i.e. the eastern *Länder* in Germany). (See Eurostat map – total population change.)

*The example of the eastern Länder in Germany demonstrates that in some regions the demographic ageing of the population is already developing quite quickly. In the five Länder (excluding Berlin), there were over half a million fewer people on 1 January 2005 than on 1 January 2000, reflecting a total population loss of 3.7% of the population in five years. This movement is not homogeneous across the generations: the very young (aged up to 14 years) decreased by almost a quarter (-24%) while the population at retirement age increased by 18.2%, reflected in a rise in the old age dependency ratio from 23.5% to 29.2%.*

### Regional responses to ageing

With the diversity of demographic structure and trends and the increasing importance of regional and local public authorities as policy initiators and service providers, it is vital that the effects of long-term population trends are taken into account in framing medium-term strategies. A number of regions have already been active and are at the forefront of strategic thinking and actions in relation to the demographic challenge. Under existing EU programmes, a number of projects have addressed aspects of demographic change. These include successful initiatives to address depopulation in urban, rural and sparsely populated areas, positive migration initiatives, reinforcing non discrimination and gender equality, and making regions more attractive places to live.

Even in regions which believe they will suffer 'inevitable' population reduction – arising, for instance, from the delayed effects of urbanisation – proactive thinking in responding to depopulation and ageing can have an important effect in securing quality of life and mitigating the effects of these likely trends on the remaining population. Indeed, the experience of some regions is that proactive, integrated policies can begin to redress patterns which were previously considered irreversible.

The Union's Cohesion Policy provides Member States with a valuable tool to adapt regional and national economies in the context of ageing. The Community Strategic Guidelines for EU Cohesion Policy identify three overarching guidelines in line with the Lisbon Agenda:

- making Europe and its regions more attractive places to invest and work;
- improving knowledge and innovation for growth;
- more and better jobs.

The regulations governing the Cohesion Policy funds (ERDF, ESF, Cohesion Fund) further develop the priorities to be addressed in the mainstream convergence and competitive programmes. Ageing is specifically mentioned in particular in relation to several priorities under the guideline: **More and better jobs**. In any event, the successful achievement of the objectives identified in the Community Strategic Guidelines can only be guaranteed in the medium and long term by ensuring that the underlying demographic trends are factored into national and regional strategic planning, if policies are adapted to regional and local needs, and if the opportunities presented are exploited.

In conclusion, it is clear that as an underlying societal trend demographic change requires a broad range of policy responses. EU Cohesion Policy – promoting integrated strategic planning to address development objectives through partnership working – allows regional responses to be tailored to the specific circumstances faced by each region with financial support in the form of a multi-annual budget.



**Redevelopment of old industrial sites in Graz West, Austria.**



## The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity

Most measures to respond to demographic change are the responsibility of the Member States – central, regional and local government; many involve the social partners and civil society organisations. Nevertheless, the European Union can play a useful role in facilitating the process of adapting to change. Demographic change is a shared concern across the EU, as was made clear by the heads of state and government who, at the 2005 European Summit in Hampton Court (UK), studied the future of Europe in the context of globalisation. Over the last year, the issue has been discussed extensively within the European Commission on the basis of the consultation following the 2005 Green Paper, hearings with experts, and extensive research work carried out with the support of the European Parliament.

The conclusions drawn from this intense activity can be found in the recent Communication **‘The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity’**<sup>4</sup>. The message is that ageing is a challenge which we can meet if we exploit the opportunities that are available to us, particularly over the next ten years. The Commission has put before the Member States a comprehensive strategy covering **five key areas** in which to take action:

### Europe can do more to promote its demographic renewal.

This implies creating conditions enabling all Europeans to realise their desire to have a family. Having children should be an option for everyone and requires, in particular, being able to reconcile work, family and private life. Far too often, women still have to choose between a job and a family. The Commission, at the same time as adopting the Communication on demography, has consulted the social partners on further measures that should be taken to facilitate this reconciliation, notably in the areas of parental leave and work organisation.

**Europe must raise employment levels further.** We need to increase the activity rates for women, young people and the elderly in order to achieve a better balance between the active and the retired. This is already a priority under the Lisbon Strategy. In particular, we must reduce early retirement from the labour market and develop “active ageing” strategies, including within enterprises. This requires investing in training and high-quality working conditions during the entire life cycle.

### Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion

Adopted by the Council on 6 October 2006<sup>5</sup>, the Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion contain the principles and priorities of Cohesion Policy and suggest ways the European regions can take full advantage of the funds and instruments available for national and regional aid programmes between 2007 and 2013. The guidelines supplement the specific regulations on the funds and seek to provide a balance between the twin objectives of the growth and jobs agenda and territorial cohesion, and to help Member States when preparing their national and regional strategic priorities for that period. In this respect, programmes co-financed through cohesion instruments should seek to target resources on the following three priorities:

- **improving the attractiveness of Member States, regions and cities** by improving accessibility, ensuring adequate quality and level of services, and preserving their environmental potential;
- **encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship and the growth of the knowledge economy** by research and innovation capacities, including new information and communication technologies; and
- **creating more and better jobs** by attracting more people into employment or entrepreneurial activity, improving adaptability of workers and enterprises, and increasing investment in human capital.

Addressing the demographic challenge should not necessarily be seen as a separate priority but rather as a challenge to be met by regional policy in taking account of the ageing labour force and population in general. Due to declining or low population density, certain regions and areas are more affected than others, or simply face threats and opportunities earlier. For example, demographic effects will require a costly restructuring of social service facilities and care services for older people, which will have knock-on effects for business. Building upon the potential of the regions, with the support of EU Cohesion Policy, the challenges of rapid economic and social restructuring and demographic ageing could be met by:

- increasing the competitiveness of regional economies;
- adapting existing infrastructure and services to changing needs;
- anticipating bottlenecks in the labour market and skills requirements;
- increasing occupational and geographic mobility;
- maintaining a healthy workforce.

Following the adoption of the Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion, the EU framework was completed within which presentation of the National Strategic Reference Frameworks and future programmes should take place.

<sup>5</sup> Council of the EU: Decision 702 (2006) of 6 October 2006, published in the Official Journal of the EU, 21 October 2006, pages 11–32.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, ‘The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity’, Communication 571 (2006) of 12 October 2006.

We need a **Europe that is more productive and competitive.**

Future economic growth will depend increasingly on productivity gains and our capacity for innovation, and thus on investment in training and research and development. It will also depend on the degree to which enterprises can exploit new market opportunities associated with the needs of an older population, comprising very active elderly consumers who may be very demanding, but also an increasing number of the very old who will need social and health care. Our economies and societies must prepare for these new demand patterns by developing new and better goods and services and by training people for the new jobs that come with them.

**Europe needs to prepare to receive and integrate migrants.**

Immigration will not prevent ageing and the challenges that come with it. But as working age populations decline, increasing labour market needs for migrants can be expected. The question is not whether to have immigration or not, but whether Europe will be able to manage immigration well, in the interests of labour markets, of the immigrants themselves and of their countries of origin.

Finally, **Europe needs sound public finances.** Ageing will require increased expenditure on pensions, health and long-term care. Only if social protection is based on sustainable funding can we expect it to deliver adequate benefits in the long run. Such sustainable funding will come not only from public budgets – savings and private insurance will also have a role to play in this context.

The Communication provides a framework for the development of policies to tackle the challenges of demographic change. It builds on the Lisbon Strategy and adds a **longer-term perspective**, notably with its new focus on demographic renewal. The Commission intends to act as a facilitator in this process. As a first step, on 30-31 October 2006 it organised a forum on Europe's demographic future – such a forum will take place once every two years. This will comprise events where good practice can be exchanged between all those involved in dealing with demographic change. At the same time, they will provide a platform for presenting new scientific research on demography and its impact on the economy and society. Ultimately, these fora should forge a common approach to tackling the challenges of demographic change. The Commission also hopes the European forum will be replicated, with support from the Structural Funds, at the national, regional and perhaps even local levels so that decision-makers and stakeholders at all levels can prepare for the changes ahead.

The work of the forum will be accompanied by a new high-level **group of government experts** through which closer co-operation between the Member States will be established on demography and family issues. The Commission also envisages a review of the state of preparedness for demographic change in

the annual progress reports presented in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy.

## Regions for Economic Change

In addition to the preparation and adoption of the mainstream operational programmes, the Commission continues to address the core issues faced by European regions. 'Regions for Economic Change' is a proactive initiative being offered to Member States, regions and cities to help them implement the renewed Lisbon Agenda through actions aimed at economic modernisation. It intends to draw on the experience and good practices of high-performing regions and to transfer this to regions wishing to improve. Moreover, it aims to link this exchange of good practice more solidly to the implementation of the mainstream Convergence and Competitiveness Programmes.

The Regions for Economic Change initiative is described in the Commission Communication (2006)675<sup>6</sup>. It will work through the mechanisms for interregional co-operation and urban development networks under the Territorial Co-operation Objective to accelerate the exploitation of good ideas.

Compared to the existing mechanisms, it features several new ones, such as:

- identification of 30 priority themes focused on economic modernisation and the renewed Lisbon Agenda;
- creating a 'two-way bridge' between networks and mainstream programmes;
- enhanced communication through an annual conference and awards;
- a fast-track option, through which the Commission will establish volunteer networks around selected priority themes in order to provide a rapid testing ground for policy ideas.

A Commission working paper accompanied the Commission's Communication setting out the 30 priority themes. One such theme is 'meeting the demographic challenge'. Regions working on this theme will pool their experience in dealing with the effects of demographic change and design measures which could be applied in their mainstream regional and national programmes. Many other themes have a direct link to adapting to an ageing society, including 'making healthy communities', 'better ICT connections between regions', and 'integrating marginalised youth', to name but a few.

The first Regions for Economic Change annual conference will be held on 7-8 March 2007 in Brussels when the topic will be 'Fostering competitiveness through innovative technologies, products and healthy communities'.

<sup>6</sup> European Commission: Regions for Economic Change, Communication 675 (2006) 8 November 2006.

## Life in European cities: The Urban Audit

Demographic change and its challenges impact on the cities of Europe. Home to 80% of the EU population, institutions involved in town planning have to respond to changing demands as regards public transport, housing, health services and education. Established in 2003 by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional Policy, in co-operation with Eurostat and national statistical institutes, the Urban Audit enables comparisons between more than 250 cities throughout Europe. Three hundred data are being collected in nine key domains such as demography, employment and the environment. This will make it possible to get indicators for core cities and larger urban zones above a population of 50,000 as well as sub-city districts.

Based on that data, a "State of European Cities Report" has been prepared for the European Commission. It stresses, *inter alia*, an overall urban decline in 80 Urban Audit cities and wider agglomerations. Such a decline can be found primarily in East Germany and in all Central and Eastern European countries. Data on age groups' structure and migrations complete the picture. It calls for further quantitative and qualitative analysis on related phenomena, such as the urban sprawl and out-migration processes. Comparison of data on specific groups, such as one-person households, is also possible (see box). The map on page 10 is drawn from this report.

More information about the Urban Audit is available at:  
[www.urbanaudit.org](http://www.urbanaudit.org)

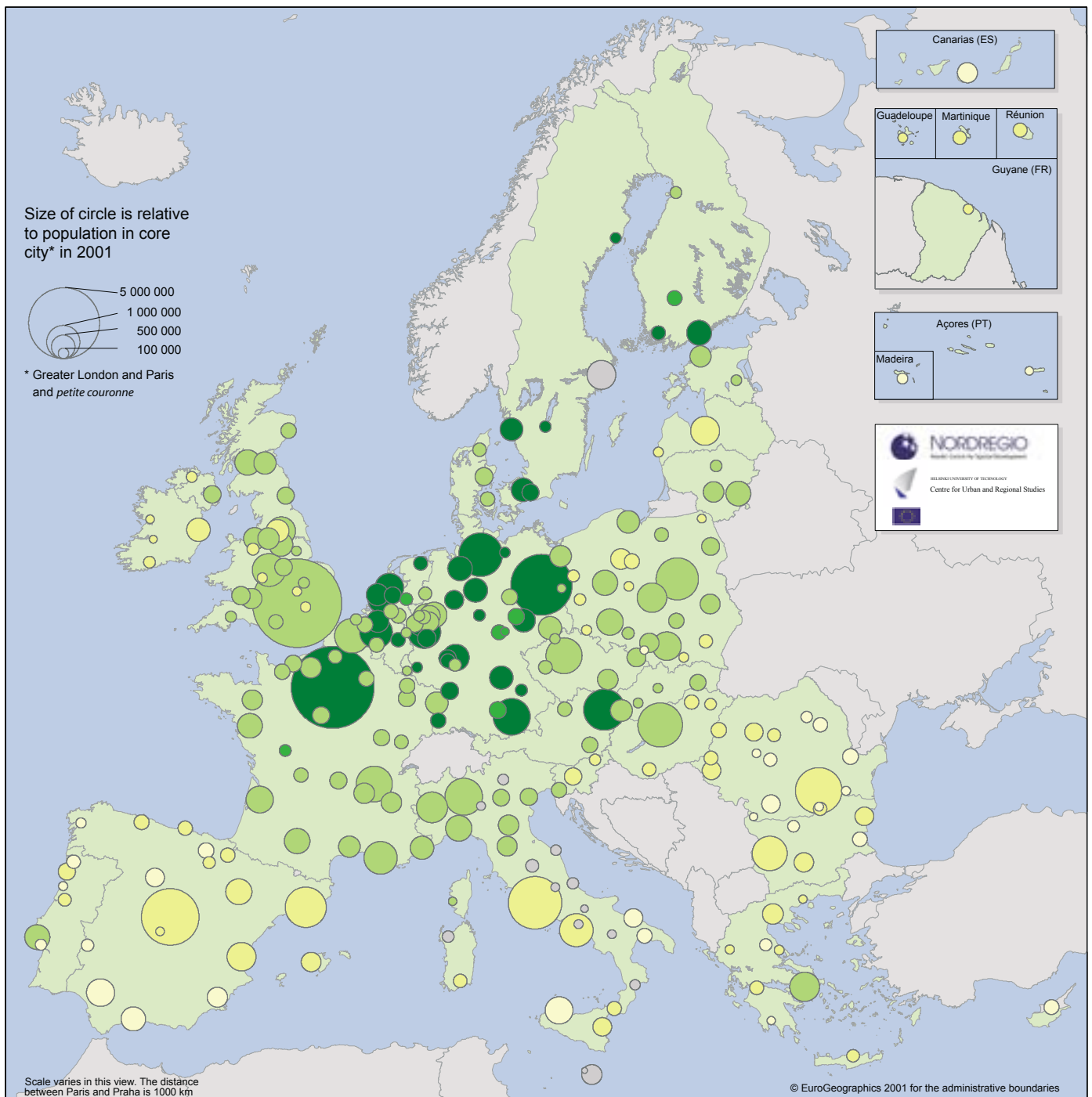


Royal Canal, statue of the writer Brendan Behan, Dublin, Ireland.

### Singles in the City

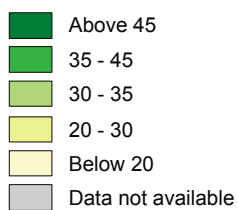
City living does not have the same appeal to everyone. Some people cherish the hustle and the bustle of city life, while others prefer the tranquillity of the countryside or the intimacy of living in a village. As people age, their preferences may also change. For example, someone may move to a city alone as a student, share a flat with a partner while starting his or her first job, then move to the suburbs to start a family, and move back when the children have grown up to take advantage of the proximity to restaurants, museums and galleries. But it is not only a question of personal choice. Housing in the city centre is often considerably more expensive than in the suburbs and some people are forced to live in a remote suburb. Differences in lifestyle, income and age all contribute to the fact that the demographic profile of city residents is very different from the national profile. A good example is the proportion of singles. Singles (one-person households) tend to live in cities. In virtually all of the cities covered by the Urban Audit, the proportion of singles is higher, often much higher, than in the country as a whole. In several predominantly large and capital cities in the heart of Europe, as well as in some cities in Finland and Sweden, more than 50% of all households comprised only one person. Examples include Groningen and Amsterdam in the Netherlands; Trier, Munich and Frankfurt am Main in Germany; Stockholm and Gothenburg in Sweden; and Copenhagen in Denmark. In the Mediterranean and Central and Eastern European countries, living alone is less common. In several cities in Bulgaria, Burgas, Pleven and Vidin; in Italy, Palermo, Taranto and Bari; and in several Portuguese, and Spanish cities the proportion was less than 20%. The proportion of singles is also influenced by gender. A young urban single is more likely to be male, while a senior urban single is more likely to be female. While the proportion of one-person households is larger in cities located in the core of Europe, the numbers are now increasing over time in all parts of the EU and is growing especially fast where the proportion used to be low. Many one-person households tend to gravitate towards each other, commonly towards the centre of the city. Clearly, city centres have high service levels and are well placed to respond to the needs of singles and other individuals living alone. Younger citizens are likely to be attracted by the leisure facilities, while elderly citizens find comfort and convenience in the proximity to stores, public transport and health-care facilities. The housing market responds to such demands, and housing for one-person households can be difficult to find outside city centres.





## One-person households

Total number of one-person households as a share (%) of all households 2001, in core cities



Source: Urban Audit Data Base

Data from Estonia and Latvia 2000; France 1999, Ireland, Poland, Romania and Slovenia 1996-2002. Values from Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom are estimates. Data available in part from Italy and Sweden. Data not available from Malta.

## Sweden

### Broadband for the far north

*The Objective 1 programme has enabled the outermost regions of northern Sweden to access broadband. This has had practical implications for education, health and industrial research.*

The quality of infrastructures related to information and communication technologies (ICTs) is essential for such remote, extensive (165 000 km<sup>2</sup>), sparsely populated (3 hab./km<sup>2</sup>) regions with very harsh climate conditions, as found in the county of Norrbotten in the far north of Sweden. In this market area, which is considered unprofitable by the private sector, the Swedish state had to install and guarantee the quality of these infrastructures, all at a reasonable usage cost for the populations concerned. Structural Fund assistance has extended the state's action by providing it with additional funding to enable the most remote areas of its territory to have access to these facilities.

ICTs form a significant part of the Objective 1 'Norra Norrland' programme, with a total budget of €75 million for the development of these technologies. The aim is to make Norrbotten "a high-tech region in a high-tech country". In Norra Norrland, they have made it clear that expansion of information technology infrastructure must benefit all users, households, companies and the public organisations. The programme therefore prioritises two lines of action: the extension of the internet broadband network and the development of applications based on broadband communications.

#### Inhabitants and operators in synergy

The laying of some 3 000 km of fibre-optic cables was entrusted to the public company, IT Norrbotten AB, owned by the council and the county's 14 municipalities. The local councillors had to decide on the order of priority for connecting the villages. Once they had been equipped, various internet service providers took over.

Apart from the considerable technical challenges created by climatic conditions, the entire procedure relied on close, sustained relations between technical operators and the local populations in order to guarantee the best service at the best price. The fact that inhabitants and municipal departments were included in the process also facilitated the appropriation and encouraged the use of this technology, which was new to many people.

#### Innovative applications

Over 300 villages in Norrbotten now have broadband and, once the work has been completed at the end of 2006, 93% of the regional population will have access to broadband.

Perceived as an opportunity for rural development, the initiative involves a number of citizens, associations and regional organisations, thereby reinforcing territorial cohesion. The project has led to the creation of 60 jobs and three businesses.

Investing in broadband internet promotes growth and local services. In this respect, the connection of northerly areas to information highways has already generated innovative applications in three specific areas:

- Education: all the schools in the region are now connected, and the whole of Norrbotten has access to significant training facilities.
- e-health: owing to the digital and audio-visual possibilities offered by broadband, the 'Tryggve' project aims to test remote solutions for a whole range of therapeutic services: routine medical checks (pulse, blood pressure, etc.); post-operative physical rehabilitation for patients suffering from chronic kidney diseases; post-childbirth check-ups and assistance for new parents; and monitoring the quality of healthcare in old people's homes.
- Industrial research and engineering networking: for practical reasons (extreme conditions, the need for secrecy) car testing is often undertaken in remote rural environments. Access to broadband has enabled Volvo to remotely test its new vehicles in real time in Norrbotten, where pilots and test platforms are directly connected to the manufacturer's laboratories in Gothenburg, a thousand kilometres away.



**Because of frost, broadband cables are usually suspended from overhead electricity pylons rather than buried.**

**Project:** Broadband expansion in the county of Norrbotten

**Programme:** Objective 1 (2000-2006)

**Total cost:** €10 200 000

**EU contribution:** €4 500 000

**European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**

**Implementation:** 2000-2006

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<http://www.itnorrboten.se/>

## The Netherlands

### 'A la carte' public transport

*Locally implemented with the help of the European Regional Development Fund, this new concept in public transport is well on its way to being applied throughout the youngest province in the Netherlands.*

Until recently, the province of Flevoland suffered from drawbacks of the regional public transport system: lack of buses in the evenings and at weekends, suspension of certain lines and, for many inhabitants, a lack of public transport within the vicinity of their homes. At the same time, there was greater need for public transport on account of the ageing population and an increase in the number of handicapped and ill people.

Conscious of the social and economic role of public transport, as well as its environmental benefits, the Dutch authorities devised a national policy to provide a better match for the requirements of efficiency, availability and security in public transport. It was also necessary to put into practice the new law relating to the handicapped ('Wet voorziening gehandicapten', WVG) which came into force in 1994. In relation to this a single global system for transport of the disabled was preferred to several distinct systems. From discussions to studies, soundings were taken and adapted to regional and local levels. Thus, a new concept was born: 'A la carte' public transport.

#### A new concept

This is a flexible formula which combines taxi-style service with traditional public transport. With one telephone call, an itinerary is organised on request to take the traveller where he or she wishes, including places inaccessible to the public transport lines. People can therefore travel from door to door or attend sporting or cultural events making use of the best possible combination of different methods of transport. All this is available for tariffs only slightly higher than (or in some cases equal to) normal lines, and significantly lower than taxi charges. Further reductions are

offered to disabled holders of a 'WVG' card, and the taxis and buses are accessible to wheelchairs.

#### A nudge from the ERDF

The concept, simple in principle and sophisticated in practice, is entirely orientated towards peoples' needs. The first ERDF subsidy was directed to the 'Mobimax' project which came into operation in April 2000 in the suburban area of Noordoostpolder. Then October 2001 saw the beginning of the implementation of the 'Public transport on demand' project ('Collectief Vraagafhankelijk Vervoer', CVV) in the region of Dronten, also co-financed by the European Union.

The new formula has been very successful and the number of users has surpassed expectations. So much so that on 4 April 2005 'Regiotaxi Flevoland' was set up to take over from the preceding projects, this time without assistance from ERDF. It covers the areas of Noordoostpolder, Dronten, Zeewolde and, from 2006, the provincial capital Lelystad.

Regiotaxi Flevoland is currently accessible to all the region's inhabitants, seven days a week, from 6am to 1:30am, given half an hour's notice or more. Fixed tariffs apply to journeys within a maximum of five 'zones', beyond which a surcharge is added; total cost of travel is given at time of reservation. If, for logistical reasons, joint itineraries can be organised for several travellers, time guarantees are provided with a maximum leeway of 15 minutes before or after the fixed time.

**Projects:** Mobimax/Collectief Vraagafhankelijk Vervoer (CVV)

**Programmes:** Objective 1 Flevoland 1994-1999 (Mobimax); Objective 1 'Phasing out' Flevoland 2000-2006 (CVV)

**Total cost:** €318 181 (Mobimax); €192 175 (CVV)

**EU contribution:** €105 000 (Mobimax); €78 311 (CVV)

**European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**

**Implementation:** 2001-2004

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**Providing transportation for disabled people.**



## United Kingdom

### Stemming the brain drain: the Combined Universities in Cornwall

*A partnership of higher educational institutions is stimulating economic development in this rural, peripheral region in the south-western corner of the UK.*



**Combined effort on this mine - surveying project.**

With its unique lifestyle and dramatic scenery, the county of Cornwall (population: 500 000) has been one of Britain's top tourist destinations for over 100 years and is still regarded as a desirable area in which to spend one's retirement. However, more recently, one of Cornwall's most serious challenges was the annual exodus of young school leavers who could not pursue their preferred university subjects close to home. In addition, once they had graduated, very few returned to Cornwall, which divided families and made it difficult for local businesses to rejuvenate their workforces.

The Combined Universities in Cornwall (CUC) was established to tackle this loss of young, creative talent and to help the region to embrace the opportunities presented by the knowledge economy. The partnership includes the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth, Falmouth College of Arts, the Open University, The College of St Mark and St John, Cornwall College, Truro College and Penwith College.

#### Economic regeneration in line of sight

CUC has adopted a phased approach. Phase 1, which benefited from a €97 million funding package secured in 2001, included the development of the Tremough Hub Campus in Penryn and the addition of new and/or refurbished higher education buildings in other locations throughout Cornwall, catering for over 2 000 students. Phase 2 was agreed in March 2005 and includes further work on new and existing facilities with the aim of creating an additional 2 400 higher education places by 2007. Even now, work is under way on the proposals for a possible Phase 3, as Cornwall prepares for Convergence funding from 2007 onwards.

Infrastructure development is an important aspect of the project, but it is the spirit of innovation that drives it forward. Economic regeneration is central to the CUC initiative and whilst over 400 university-level courses are now on offer, new approaches are being

pioneered in conjunction with local businesses that will contribute to the area's economic and social renaissance. For example, Friday 14 July 2006 saw the graduation of the first-ever UK students in renewable energy studies. This course anticipates an expansion of related employment opportunities, particularly as a recent report from the UK Department of Trade and Industry forecasts that up to 35 000 new jobs will be created in 'renewables' by 2020.

#### Skills and jobs

The predicted Gross Value Added (GVA) generated by CUC in Cornwall will exceed €265 000 000 by 2025, and it is assumed that most of this GVA will be accumulated through the development of graduate skills and the extension of graduate employment. Phases 1 and 2 are expected to lead to the creation of some 4 000 jobs by 2025, and over 430 new teaching and support jobs have already been established as a direct effect of the CUC initiative.

As a result of its experience, the project has a lot to offer to other regional initiatives in the EU. The success of CUC was also recognised by the Commissioner for Regional Policy, Danuta Hübner, during her visit to Cornwall in May 2006. She felt that CUC *"responds to the demand for a major higher educational institution that will not only stem the 'brain drain' but will even attract talent and knowledge into the region from outside, becoming an economic hub that will generate practical and commercial spin-offs, as it grows and develops."*

In the years ahead, the combined effect of a larger graduate workforce, expert support for local businesses, and the creation of new businesses as a result of academic research will play a very major role in the development of a knowledge-based economy which should ensure Cornwall's future prosperity.

**Project:** The Combined Universities in Cornwall  
**Programme:** Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Objective 1

**Total cost:** €220 000 000

**EU contribution:** €112 100 000 (ERDF: €95 400 000, ESF: €16 700 000)

**European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)/European Social Fund (ESF)**

**Implementation:** Phase 1: January 2001 – October 2005; Phase 2: March 2005 – October 2010

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## Estonia

### Reconciling two trends at the same time: 'children taken care of, mothers at work'

*Innovative approaches to the extension of childcare facilities in Estonia.*

Estonia's total birth rate has increased to an average of 1.5 children per woman from an average of 1.3 children per woman in the late 1990s. This is a result of a government initiative aimed at sustaining the nation's population by providing women who have children with monthly grants. However, the statistics show that 80% of women want to harmonise their careers and family lives but there are only places for less than 50% of all one to four year olds in nursery schools or playgroups. As 48% of local governments have queues for kindergarten places and alternative childcare is too expensive, the only solution for many parents is provision in the black or grey market.

In Põlva, an EQUAL Development Partnership (DP) is playing a key role in the evolution of new childcare opportunities. The Children Taken Care of, Mothers at Work DP unites the Ministry of Population and Ethnic Affairs, the Perekasvatuse Instituut, which is the Family Education Institute, and the Põlva Union for Child Welfare, an NGO promoting the interests of mothers and children.

#### Test bed

In the project, some 30 women have already received training that was specifically designed for family care. After this first stage, the group has been offered entrepreneurship training, continuing advice and financial subsidies to enable its members to set up in business or to become self-employed.

However, the legal responsibility for providing childcare in Estonia rests with the municipalities. Some private childcare services are available in the bigger towns but the project wants to provide the services that are needed in smaller towns and villages.

The test bed is Põlva, where the project has established a playgroup in a building that belongs to the municipality and which also houses other community services. Now, many parents from the



**A trainee getting 'hands-on' experience of caring for children.**

surrounding rural area are bringing their children to the playgroup. While their children are being cared for, these parents can take on a part-time job or maybe visit other public agencies or simply do some shopping. All the lessons learned in the Põlva pilot case will help the EQUAL partners to forge partnership and cooperation between local authorities and new childcare providers.

#### Raising awareness

The partners still have to face a number of challenges if they are to really transfer the new model into the regular childcare system in Estonia. One of these is to raise the awareness of the general public of the problems that young parents, and particularly young mothers, face in reconciling their family and working lives. Thus, the DP organises a range of information and publicity activities to promote a culture that is supportive to children and families.

The concrete outcomes of the DP also enabled it to make an important contribution to the drafting of a law that will come into force in 2007. This new legislation will integrate alternative forms of childcare into the existing generous and comprehensive Estonian family policies.

In terms of influencing other countries, the Children Taken Care of, Mothers at Work DP is co-operating with three transnational partners in France, Italy and the United Kingdom. These partners intend to exchange good practices in the empowerment of potential carers through innovative guidance, training, coaching and business support.

**Project:** Children taken care of, mothers at work  
**Programme:** EQUAL Community Initiative (1st Round of Selection)  
**Total cost:** €216 640  
**EU contribution:** €154 356  
**European Social Fund (ESF)**  
**Implementation:** January 2005 - December 2007  
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# Éire-Ireland

## Caring for working women

*The Women's Community Projects (Mullingar) Association knows how to make good use of EU funding to develop services and activities for working mothers, single-parent families and immigrant women in the new context of rural Ireland. Co-funded by the ERDF, its childcare facility is a real success.*

In 1985, Sr. Finbarr Breslin, together with some of the women from the small town of Mullingar (population: 15 000), in the rural county of Westmeath, founded an association of women who wanted to initiate certain projects which would meet their needs. It began with childcare services which are still sadly lacking in Ireland despite increasing numbers of working mothers and single-parent families.

In addition to various socio-professional insertion training schemes (home economics, crafts and literacy, secretarial, accountancy and computer courses, English language courses for immigrant women, etc.) and local community services (meals on wheels, financial advice, etc.), the association created 'Women's Community Projects Pre-School Services Ltd', a company which manages a magnificent childcare facility.

### Towards a comprehensive childcare facility

By 1994, the Board of Management had expressed their desire to develop a first-class facility for all its activities including childcare, so the process of planning for the development of a comprehensive facility began. With capital funding secured from statutory departments, including the Community Support Childcare Initiative, and many fund-raising activities undertaken, the first sod for the new development was turned on 25 February 1997, and it opened for use in October 1997.

With the growing demand for childcare places it was necessary to find additional accommodation to cater for after-school children. With funding from the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme, a room was refurbished in 2001 to facilitate the after-school service. It was back to the drawing board again for the board of management with plans for the development of an after-school facility and outdoor play area co-funded by the ERDF and the ESF along with 15 or so public and private partners. The construction of this new facility commenced in October 2002 and was completed in August 2003.

The childcare facility itself is made up of two nurseries, two crèches, two pre-schools and an after-school/out-of-school service. It provides care for the equivalent of 110 full-time places Monday to Friday, 47 weeks of the year, to children aged from 12 weeks to 12 years. It is availed of, in the main, by parents attending the education and training programmes or other community education initiatives organised by the Association. The latter accommodates over 100 families a year enabling parents to develop work skills thereby encouraging them back into the workforce.

On average, 145 children attend the childcare facility each year. Each child receives professional quality care from 27 experienced qualified staff, 12 full-time and 15 part-time staff.



**Childcare facility in Mullingar.**

**Project:** Women's Community Projects Pre-School Services  
**Programme:** Border, Midland and Western Region Operational Programme (Priority 4: Social inclusion and childcare)

**Total cost (childcare facility):** €520 650

**EU contribution:** €438 746

**European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**

**Implementation:** 2002-2003

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## INTERREG IIB - Northern Periphery

### DESERVE – delivering services in remote and rural areas

*The DESERVE project seeks to establish the transferability of models of service delivery to remote and rural areas among the participating partner regions within the Northern Periphery INTERREG IIB area.*

The DESERVE project has partners in Scotland, Sweden, Finland and Iceland and each country has implemented a project in its native region utilising a model, or elements of various models, previously tested by partners in their own region.

#### Approach

The main objectives of DESERVE are:

- To improve the viability of service provision;
- To test the transferability of models of rural service delivery among partners by implementing models employed in other partner regions;
- To improve the delivery and accessibility of services to remote and rural areas within the Northern Periphery region.

The planning phase in Scotland, Finland and Sweden brought together representatives from the voluntary, public, educational and private sectors with an interest in providing services to remote and rural areas. Each of the partners in the DESERVE project provided a model detailing how certain aspects of service provision are delivered within their own region. Aspects of these models were then transferred and tested by partner groups.



**DESERVE steering group members in the geothermal spa lagoon at Myvatn, Iceland.**

**Project:** NPP DESERVE (Delivering services in remote and rural areas)

**Programme:** INTERREG IIB Northern Periphery Programme

**Cost:** €2 261 000

**EU contribution:** €1 695 750

**European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**

**Implementation:** 2004-2007

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#### Four countries, four projects

The Scottish project, which is located in the Cowal area of Argyll, aims to improve access to services for vulnerable people living. The project directly employs five staff based in Dunoon and has delivered services to over 320 users. The total number of services accessed is over 70, which includes services such as banking, chiropody, doctor, lunch club, educational facilities as well as more traditional shopping requirements.

The Finnish project focuses on local experiments and strategies of rural services. Six pilot actions are implemented in the Kainuu region.

The Swedish project's main objective is to promote co-operation between public, private and non-profit associations according to service matters in the rural and remote areas of Västerbotten and Norrbotten.

The Icelandic input to the NPP DESERVE project, led by the Icelandic Regional Institute, is to report implementation of the "Smart Communities Rural Initiative" which aims to establish and demonstrate the usefulness of ICT in improving access to rural services.

#### Sharing good ideas

Following a visit to several Scottish village halls, staff from the Swedish village of Rusksele made several amendments to the operation of their own village hall. There is now much more co-operation and sharing of facilities between "local authority provision" and "private individuals". For example, a restaurant that was previously only used for the school and elderly care is now an open restaurant where local residents and visitors can go for a meal. The local village hall is now used to provide a hairdressing and chiropody service. Discussions are also taking place to have a bank service operating from the hall at least once a week and for a nurse to provide clinics from the hall, again as a weekly service.

The Scottish project has recently been approached by a private transport provider with a suggestion which would see the utilisation of school transport vehicles during the period when they are not actually being used to ferry children back and forward to school, to be available as a resource to provide local transport for vulnerable people.

The Finnish Vuolajoki village shops' electronic points project has equipped two village shops to become multi-service points in the manner of the Swedish shops. Computers equipped with internet connections and webcam have been sited in the shops and access is free of charge.

## Denmark

### SOS-MX: combating the crisis in care

*A regional approach to changing employment patterns in the health and care sector.*

In Denmark, the number of elderly and very old people who need daily support and health care has increased dramatically over the last few years and it will continue to grow. At the same time there is a serious shortage of qualified care and nursing personnel and many existing members of staff are themselves approaching retirement age. There are also fewer and fewer candidates, and especially male candidates, who are interested in a career in this almost entirely female domain.

Conversely, there is a large number of men who have lost unskilled or semi-skilled jobs in industry and are encountering great difficulties in re-accessing the labour market. These are the issues that the EQUAL Development Partnership (DP) "Social og Sundheds Mainstreaming Experimentarium" (Social and Health Mainstreaming Laboratory), or SOS-MX for short, set out to address.

#### Coalition

SOS-MX has forged a coalition of all the relevant players in the region. These include the County of Northern Jutland, local communities that are responsible for the provision of care for the elderly, vocational training providers, social and health care schools, the Danish Educational and Vocational Guidance Coordination Committee and relevant Social Partner Organisations.

At the outset, a study was undertaken to identify and map out the aspirations and needs of current and future employees, both male and female, in terms of their working and private lives. The results indicated that existing approaches to training and labour market integration, which have been designed by women for women, do not respond to men's ways of learning or their ideas on job performance.

Thus, the project established four development and learning groups: **Gender and culture in careers guidance** to develop

new methods for information and counselling; **Education** to revise the existing training programmes to integrate a better gender dimension; **Organisational development** to create a new flexible work organisation; **Image** to develop and market an improved image of the sector.

#### Training and jobs

The Danish care sector was thoroughly scrutinized from a gender sensitive angle in the project's report entitled "Florence Nightingale in Retreat". Educational tools were also developed to support stereotype-free counselling and an introduction course was created to support care sector recruitment processes. A documentary called "A Job for Real Men" and two film spots were produced by the project and shown on regional television to initiate a debate about gender sensitive issues in the work place.

Whilst over the next decade the proportion of elderly people will continue to increase, the proportion of young people will decrease and so it will be even more difficult to recruit young entrants to the care sector. In such a situation, the sector will have to develop a really competitive edge, if it is to attract enough people of all sorts into training and employment. A second EQUAL project, 'Factor 2007', has been launched to help create this edge. This project is now building a positive description of the future "senior service sector" by focusing on recruitment systems based on the principle of lifelong learning.



**Training for a career in the care sector in North Jutland.**

**Project:** SOS-MX - Social og Sundheds Mainstreaming Experimentarium

**Programme:** EQUAL Community Initiative (1st Round of Selection)

**Total cost:** €2 130 000

**EU contribution:** €1 065 000

**European Social Fund (ESF)**

**Implementation:** May 2002 - December 2004

**Project:** Faktor 2007

**Programme:** EQUAL Community Initiative (2nd Round of Selection)

**Total cost:** €1 330 000

**EU Contribution:** €665 000

**European Social Fund (ESF)**

**Implementation:** May 2005 - December 2007

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## Germany

### Back to the city

*The 'Owner-Occupier Programme' in Leipzig is an innovative approach to fight the desertification of city centres.*

From being the largest city in the former GDR after Berlin, Leipzig saw its population fall from 750 000 inhabitants in the 1930s to 493 000 in 2000, before rising again to reach the 500 000 mark today. In the 1990s alone, Leipzig lost 100 000 inhabitants. The very low birth rate accounted for a population decline of 25 000 and the reunification led to the loss of 60 000 industrial jobs, prompting 25 000 inhabitants to move to Western Germany. At the same time, 50 000 Leipzigers abandoned the city centre in favour of the suburbs or neighbouring countryside. The net result was empty buildings, 60 000 vacant homes and a deflated urban fabric. On certain major streets in some neighbourhoods as many as one building in four is empty.

#### The Leipzig Owner-Occupier Programme

The first objective of the Leipzig Owner-Occupier Programme (LOOP) is to make the city centre more competitive compared with the suburbs, thereby reducing suburbanisation with all its negative effects (housing scattered over large areas, more traffic, empty inner-city properties, increased costs due to under-utilised inner city infrastructures and the need to create new infrastructures on city peripheries). The LOOP will also contribute to asset creation and in this way support provision for old age. Finally, by generating small orders for Leipzig's building industry, the programme is providing an additional economic stabilisation effect.

#### Activities

**Marketing** – The idea is to make the qualities of urban owner-occupied housing visible through intensive press work, events, fair stands, bus tours to appropriate properties, etc.

**Network building** – Architects, engineers, building financiers and smaller builders are co-operating closely in the LOOP.

**Financial encouragement** – Economic conditions for inner-city owner-occupation are currently very favourable, with realistic land prices, low interest levels and therefore low building costs.

**Group moderation** – Considerable savings potential for would-be owner-builders lies in the organisational approach taken in the Leipzig owner-occupier projects. In the east of Germany, people have very limited assets. Although a lot of them would like to own their own homes, few of them have the means to buy and renovate a house. With the aid of architects who provide their services free of charge, the role of the Immothek social housing agency, that is supported by URBAN and the City of Leipzig, is to seek available buildings that can be renovated at a reasonable cost and propose them to families who are seeking to buy. Immothek brings together these potential buyers – an average of six households per building – so they can get to know one another and see whether they think they get on well enough to buy the building together on a joint ownership basis.



**Making the city centre of Leipzig more attractive: Zschochersche Straße, one of the main routes revitalised under the URBAN programme.**

#### Multiplier effect

After just five years, almost 225 householders have acquired property. The operation is believed to have generated €40 million in investments and about 200 new jobs. The projects that have been carried out serve as good examples with a multiplier effect. During the project's lifetime (2001 to 2006), around €0.9 million were spent on financing the LOOP with its personnel-intensive advisory programme. This was financed out of various urban renewal programmes, with the city of Leipzig itself putting up €0.3 million. This money has served to initiate the acquisition and renovation or building of 225 apartments/houses (situation April 2006). The private investments have amounted to around €41.1 million, the main beneficiaries of which have been the local building industry (around €32 million).

**Project:** 'Private asset creation'  
**Programme:** URBAN II Community Initiative  
**Total cost:** €400 000  
**EU contribution:** €300 000  
**European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**  
**Implementation:** 2001-2004  
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# Lithuania

## Access to culture for all

*The Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania is using digitisation to preserve cultural heritage and to make it more accessible to the elderly, the disabled and to people living in remote areas.*

The name of Martynas Mažvydas (1510-1563), a prolific author whose reformatory ideas led to his persecution, is synonymous with the birth of printed Lithuanian literature, and it is to him we owe the first published works. Five centuries later, the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, established in 1919, contains 7 million publications, manuscripts, audio and video documents stored on 77 km of shelves. It is dedicated to bibliophilic research and the management of cultural heritage (literature, music and fine arts), is open to the public, and permanently hosts exhibitions, conferences and other events.

The proper management of cultural heritage involves appropriate archiving, constant updating and, by keeping the handling of original documents to a minimum, its long-term preservation. It also involves making it accessible to everyone in the best possible manner in relation to time and usage – including for elderly or disabled people, as well as those living in remote regions. Needless to say, access to culture for all citizens is one of the EU's fundamental objectives. At the same time, it guarantees the widest international diffusion of works. All of this nowadays implies transferring this heritage into the digital dimension.

Lithuania's accession to the EU, in May 2004, encouraged the Ministry of Culture and the national conservation institutions to step up their participation in Community initiatives aimed at establishing a shared digital space for European cultural heritage.

### A harmonised, euro-compatible system with free access

Thus, since early 2005, with EU financial assistance, the Martynas Mažvydas National Library has developed a concept for digitising cultural assets on a harmonised database, which

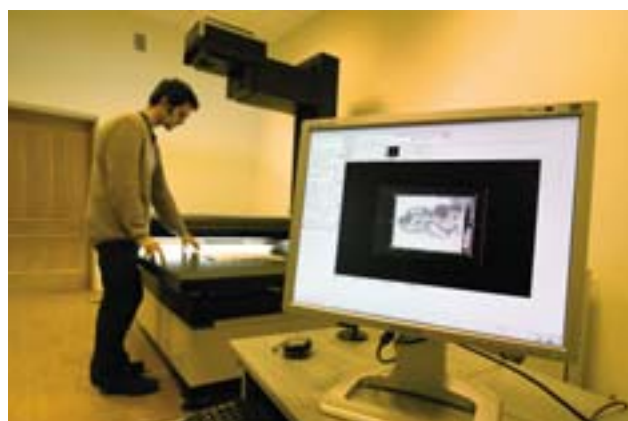
has been associated with all the institutions concerned, be they libraries, museums, archives, etc. The adoption of the concept by the Ministry of Culture and the government has enabled these institutions to systematically introduce new information technologies to guarantee the long-term preservation, updating and direct, free accessibility of Lithuanian cultural heritage.

Led by the National Library working with the main partners at the Lithuanian Museum of Fine Arts and the Department of National Archives, the project began in September 2005 and has gradually established the database and electronic services for users. When completed, the virtual system will feature shared content and standardised functionalities; it will be compatible with the European Information Space and consistent with the EU objectives in relation to the information society.

### Just a 'click' away

At the end of the project, the database will contain some 3 605 000 digital pages presenting original manuscripts, ancient books, works of art and folklore, historic documents, magazines and journals, etc. It will all be just a click away from everyone, in Lithuania and elsewhere, and will be particularly useful for people who find it difficult or impossible to physically visit museums, libraries or archive centres. Distance training courses are also envisaged.

Since it was launched, the Martynas Mažvydas National Library project has encouraged citizens to make suggestions and send them to the Ministry of Culture. It has also provided the opportunity to update and improve already existing on-line public-sector services.



**Scanning ancient books at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania.**

**Project:** Development of an integrated virtual library information system

**Programme:** Objective 1 Lithuania (2004-2006), Measure 3.3.

**Total cost:** €4 207 135

**EU contribution:** €2 815 170

**European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**

**Implementation:** August 2005 – May 2007

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## Spain

### 'Opening Pathways' to fight exclusion

*To help tackle social exclusion, the City Council of Lugo in Galicia established a programme called 'Opening Pathways' offering training and employment support to the area's most marginalised groups, particularly women and long-term unemployed people. The idea has been transferred to eight other Spanish regions.*

The level of economic activity in the city and region of Lugo in north-west Spain remains low compared to the rest of Galicia and Spain. Unemployment in the city is particularly high (14%), and those over the age of 45 are the most affected (30%). Women are also poorly represented in the labour market.

The Opening Pathways programme began in March 2002 with support from the Spanish ESF operational programme for employment in Objective 1 regions. In March 2004, the third year of the programme was launched.

#### A targeted and personalised programme

*"We owe our success largely to the level of participation of the most marginalised groups, and to the individual attention given to their employment skills,"* says Isabel Villamor, one of the coordinators from the City Council of Lugo.

During the first year, 210 people were involved in the programme, 194 of whom completed the training and 93 found work. Around 90% of the participants were women, and nearly 18% were over 45.

The training courses focused primarily on the delivery of social services to people with special needs, such as children, the elderly, the sick, or people with disabilities. There are plenty of

employment opportunities in these areas, and they often do not require high levels of formal qualifications.

#### Micro credit for business start-up

Besides its training and counselling services, the Opening Pathways programme also offered participants advice on how to become self-employed or to set up a business. To help them get started, the City of Lugo teamed up with a local financial institution to provide micro credits to local enterprises created as a result of the programme. Three such enterprises have now been established, mainly offering services to the elderly – a growing niche market resulting from the city's ageing population.

In March 2003, the Council launched its second programme, offering 13 new courses in a range of professions for which local and regional demand is growing. New initiatives were also launched, including three pilot projects aimed at creating enterprises that provide home-care services, and activities to support teleworking for people with disabilities.



**Opening Pathways: training people as carers for elderly people.**

**Project:** Lugo, Abriendo Camiños

**Programme:** Objective 1 (ESF Operational Programme for Employment)

**Total cost:** €1 198 733

**EU contribution:** €839 113

**European Social fund (ESF)**

**Implementation:** March 2002 - March 2003

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## Glossary

**Cohesion Fund:** Applying to Member States with a Gross National Income of less than 90% of the Community average, the Cohesion Fund co-finances projects in the field of transport and environment including Trans European Networks (TENs), energy efficiency and renewable energy. For the period 2007-2013, €69.58 billion will be available for the Cohesion Fund in the framework of programmes managed by the Member States.

[http://ec.europa.eu/comm/regional\\_policy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/regional_policy/index_en.htm)

The **Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion** give an indicative framework for Structural Funds interventions. Based on a European Commission proposal, the Council and the European Parliament adopted the CSG for the period 2007-2013 on 6 October 2006.

[http://ec.europa.eu/comm/regional\\_policy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/regional_policy/index_en.htm)

**EQUAL** is an initiative to support new ideas within the European Employment Strategy and the social inclusion process. Its mission is to promote a more inclusive work life through fighting discrimination and exclusion based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. EQUAL was implemented as a Community Initiative until 2006 and will be a part of national and regional ESF programmes as of 2007.

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/equal/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/index_en.cfm)

The **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** is – together with the Cohesion Fund and the European Social Fund – one of three financial instruments of EU cohesion policy and the major financial source to develop the endogenous potential of regions. Set up in 1975, the ERDF can contribute to the financing of productive investment, entrepreneurship, transport and environment infrastructure, research and technological development, innovation, the information society, sustainable development and other activities. The specific priorities of ERDF support are defined in the framework of multi-annual programmes jointly managed by the Commission and the Member States and regions.

[http://ec.europa.eu/comm/regional\\_policy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/regional_policy/index_en.htm)

The **European Social Fund (ESF)** is one of the EU's three cohesion instruments and the main EU source of financial support to develop employability and human resources.

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/esf2000/introduction\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf2000/introduction_en.html)

**Interreg III (European Territorial Cooperation)** is a Community initiative which is an objective of the Union's Cohesion Policy 2007-13 and aims to stimulate cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation between the regions of the EU. It is financed under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and an amount of €7.85 billion has been allocated to co-finance about 95 cooperation programmes.

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/interreg3/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/interreg3/index_en.htm)

**Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs:** Assessing the achievements of the Lisbon Strategy by 2004, the European Council agreed in spring 2005 to refocus common efforts on growth and employment. The Integrated Guidelines comprise 23 actions, and a governance cycle between 2005 and 2008 includes a set of structural indicators and annual progress reports on National Reform Programmes (NRP).

**Migration** can be extremely difficult to measure. A variety of different data sources and definitions are used in the Member States, meaning that direct comparisons between national statistics can be difficult or misleading. The net migration figures calculated by EUROSTAT are not directly calculated from immigration and emigration flow figures. As many EU Member States do not have complete and comparable figures for immigration and emigration flows, net migration is estimated in the 2006 Statistical yearbook as the difference between the total population change and the 'natural increase' over the year. In effect, net migration equals all changes in total population that cannot be attributed to births and deaths.

**NSRF:** When programming the Structural Funds Interventions for the period 2007-2013 Member States have to present a **National Strategic Reference Framework** which ensures that the interventions are in line with the Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion.

Population density is the ratio of the mid-year population of a territory on a given date to the size of the territory.

**Population projections:** The Eurostat population projection is just one among several scenarios of population evolution based on assumptions of fertility, mortality and migration. It should be noted that the assumptions adopted by Eurostat may differ from those adopted by National Statistical Institutes. Therefore, results can be different from those published by Member States. The EUROSTAT "current trend scenario" does not take into account any future measures that could influence demographic trends, though it does comprise different variants: the 'baseline' variant as well as 'high population', 'low population', 'zero-migration', 'high fertility', 'younger age profile' and 'older age profile' variants.

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>

**Regions for Economic Change:** The Commission proposals for strengthening the exchange of good practices in the context of interregional co-operation during the period 2007-2013 were set out in Communication (2006) 675 of 8 November 2006.

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/cooperation/interregional/ecochange/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperation/interregional/ecochange/index_en.cfm)

**Total fertility rate** is defined as the average number of children that would be born to a woman during her lifetime if she were to pass through her childbearing years conforming to the age specific fertility rates that have been measured in a given year.

## Info regio

Consult the Info regio website for an overview of EU European Regional Policy:

**[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy)  
[regio-info@ec.europa.eu](mailto:regio-info@ec.europa.eu)**



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