imaJINE Integrative Mechanisms for Addressing Spatial Justice and Territorial Inequalities in Europe

Integrative Mechanisms for Addressing Spatial Justice and Territorial Inequalities in Europe

Briefing Paper on Evidence from the IMAJINE Project for the EU Long Term Vision for Rural Areas

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INTRODUCTION

This briefing paper sumarises evidence relating to the social and economic situation in rural regions in Europe and rural-inequalities from research by the IMAJINE project, to support the development of the EU's Long Term Vision for Rural Areas. IMAJINE is a Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Action focused on understanding territorial inequalities in Europe and investigating actions to promote spatial justice. IMAJINE is coordinated by Aberystwyth University with a consortium of 15 partners and has been funded for a 60-month period from 1 January 2017 (with pending extension to June 2021). The work of IMAJINE is organized into eight research-focused work packages:

WP1 – Conceptual and Policy Review
WP2 – Analysis of Territorial Inequalities in Europe
WP3 – Territorial Inequalities and Economic Growth
WP4 – Experimental Survey on Solidarity and Territorial Cohesion
WP5 – Migration, Territorial Inequalities and Spatial Justice
WP6 – Multi-level Policy-making and Inequalities
WP7 – Autonomy Movements and Social, Economic and Spatial Justice
WP8 – Reimaging Regional Futures through Participatory Scenario-Building

Although IMAJINE is not exclusively, or primarily, focused on rural regions and also encompasses urban, periurban and ex-industrial areas, consideration of rural-urban inequalities is part of the project's remit and further evidence relating to rural societies is embedded in the data collected through the research. This briefing paper outlines the key relevant findings organized under the LTVRA themes. Sources are indicated for each finding, with further detail on sources and methods, and links to related documents, provided at the end of the paper.

1. RURAL DEFINITIONS AND RURAL-URBAN DISPARITIES

1.1 Regional and national stakeholders associate rural regions with disadvantage

Interviews with national and regional stakeholders (including public officials and civil society representatives) recorded the articulation of policy frameworks in which rural areas were implicitly positioned as socially and economically disadvantaged. In Poland, for example, a representative of a cross-border regional group defined rural areas in terms of the specific challenges that they were considered to face with regard to transport, limited high-speed internet connectivity and digital skills, and a 'brain drain' resulting from out-migration. In Greece and in Wales within the UK, 'rural' and 'peripheral' were used by stakeholders as synonyms for disadvantage when discussing territorial disparities (along with ex-industrial districts in Wales). In Greece in particular, terms such as peripheral and semi-peripheral regions, which were closed linked to ideas of rurality and insularity, were used as means of defining and targeting regions for policy interventions in preference to categorizations framed explicitly with reference to poverty or levels of development.

Sources: WP1 and WP8 interviews with stakeholders; see D1.4.

1.2 Perceptions of rural-urban inequality are reinforced by the media

A number of regional stakeholders interviewed in WP1 noted that perceptions for rural-urban inequality were to some degree constructed and reinforced by the media, which it was argued, had uncritcally accepted the ideas that economic growth is linked to agglomeration benefits and that rural to urban migration is inevitable. Stakeholders in Germany observed that disparities between rural and urban areas in terms of economic performance and unemployment (especially in eastern Germany) were embelished in the public imagination by negative portrayals in the media with the effect of intensifying trends of net out-migration from depressed rural areas. In Finland, one interviewee from a regional council similarly argued that regional development was made more difficult by media stories that emphasized a narrative of declining peripheral regions and the 'natural' tendency of urbanization.

Source: WP1 interviews; see D1.4

1.3 The public perceive rural areas to have more limited economic opportunities than urban areas

Results from the IMAJINE survey of 18,000 residents in eight European countries show that residents in areas self-described as rural or small towns rated economic opportunities in their region lower than residents in larger towns and cities. A weighted aggregated index combining scores (from 0 (very bad) to 10 (very good)) assessing the current situation for 'doing business', 'getting a job' and 'finding housing at an affordable price' shows a mean score of 4.77 given by residents living in the 'open countryside' compared to a mean score of 5.19 given by residents of cities (Table 1).

Type of area	Lowest score	Highest score	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Number of responses
Open countryside	0	10	4.77	2.24	2094
Village or small town	0	10	4.77	2.07	5556
Medium or large town	0	10	4.89	2.12	6161
City or suburb	0	10	5.19	2.22	4391
Total	0	10	4.93	2.15	18202

Table 1: Aggregated scores for current situation for economic opportunities in region of respondent, by type of location of residence. Source: IMAJINE WP4 survey.

There is however variation in the rural-urban differentiation of responses between the seven countries surveyed. The gap in perception of economic opportunities between urban and rural areas was greatest in Poland, Romania and France, with little difference in Spain and the Netherlands. In Germany and Italy, rural areas were perceived to be better for economic opportunites than cities. In the United Kingdom, economic opportunities in cities are rated notably higher than those in small towns, but there is perceived to be little difference in economic opportunities between residents of cities and residents living in 'open countryside' (Figure 1).

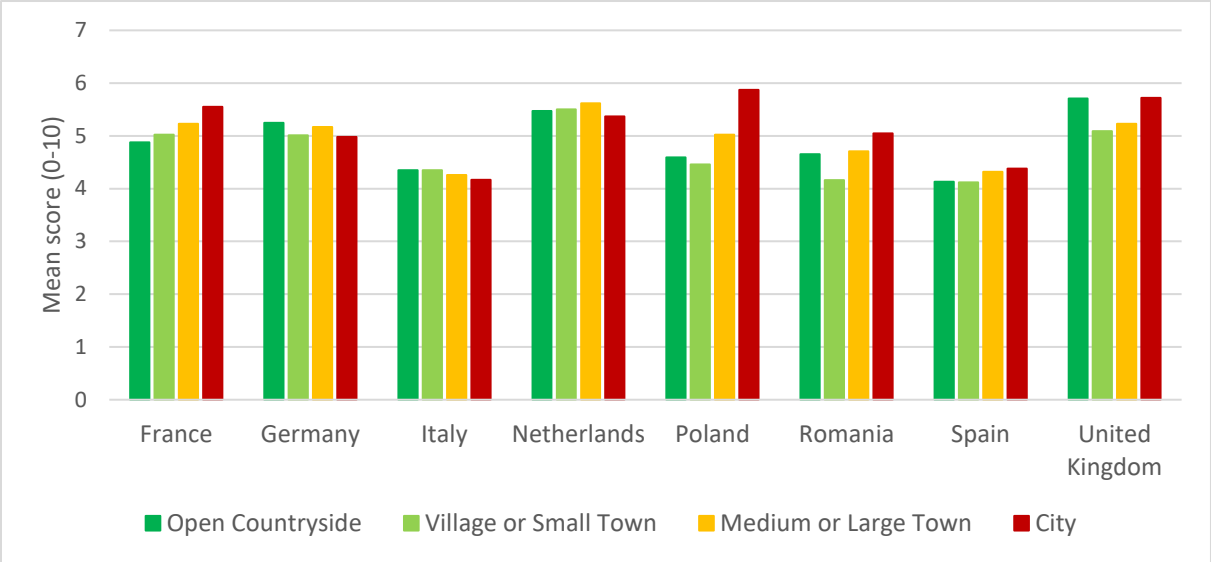

Figure 1: Residents' scores for aggregated economic opportunities in region, by type of area of residence and country (0= very bad, 10 = very good). Source: IMAJINE WP4 survey.

The disaggregation of the figures by the three components of doing business, getting a job and finding housing show that the perceived rural-urban inequalities are greatest with respect to prospects of getting a job appropriate to an individual's level of education or training. Conditions for 'doing business' (including starting a business, installing utilities, dealing with planning and building permits) are also perceived to be better in larger towns and cities than in rural areas. There is no significant different however in respondents' perceptions of access to afforable housing between rural and urban areas, with residents of 'open countryside' giving slightly higher scores, probably as a reflection of lower property prices in rural areas (Figure 2).

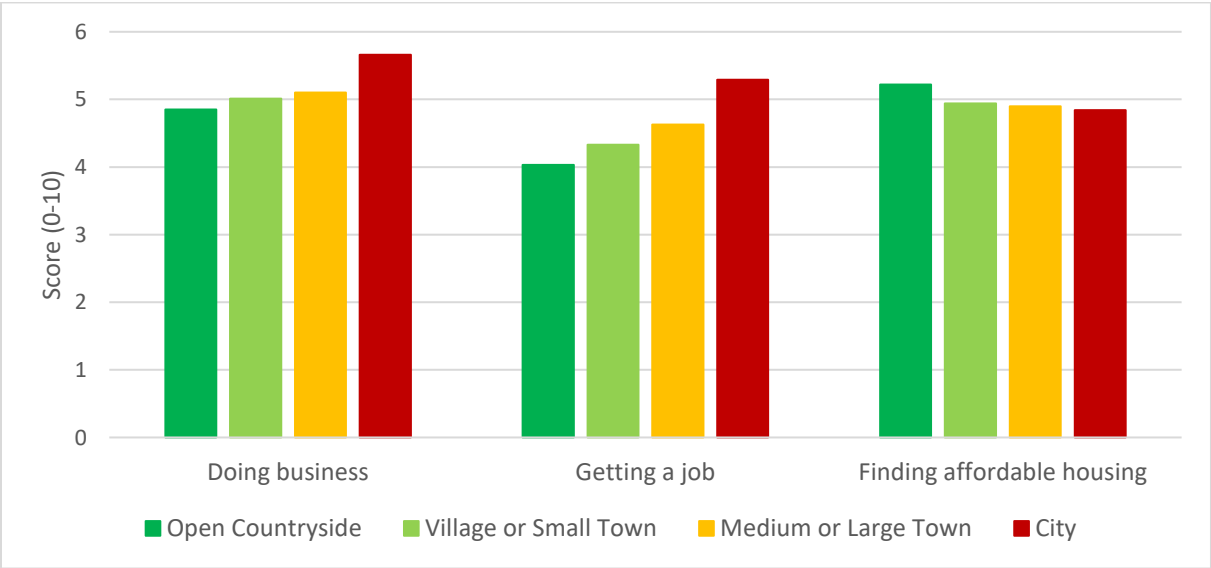

Figure 2: Residents' scores for economic opportunities in region, by type of area of residence (0= very bad, 10 = very good). Source: IMAJINE WP4 survey.

1.4 The public perceive the quality of public services to be lower in rural areas than in urban areas

Results from the IMAJINE survey also show that residents in areas self-described as rural or small towns rated the quality of public services in their region lower than residents in larger towns and cities. A weighted aggregated index combining scores (from 0 (very bad) to 10 (very good)) for eight types of services (health, education, public transport, childcare, cultural facilities, recreational areas, public administration services and internet connectivity) shows a mean score of 5.37 given by residents living in the 'open countryside' compared to a mean score of 6.7 given by residents of cities (Table 2).

Type of area	Lowest score	Highest score	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Number of responses
Open countryside	0	10	5.37	2.02	2094
Village or small town	0	10	5.80	1.83	5556
Medium or large town	0	10	6.23	1.79	6161
City or suburb	0	10	6.70	1.86	4391
Total	0	10	6.13	1.90	18202

Table 2: Aggregated scores for quality of public services in region of respondent, by type of location of residence. Source: IMAJINE WP4 survey.

There are again differences in responses across the eight countries surveyed. The largest differences in scores for the quality of public services between rural and urban areas were in Poland, France and Spain, with the smallest difference in Italy. Respondents in all countries rated public services in larger towns and cities above those in rural areas, however in Germany and the UK respondents living in 'open countrysides' on average gave higher scores for the quality of public services than those living in villages and small towns. There is also notable variation in the scores given to public services in rural areas between the countries, ranging for 'open countryside' from 4.77 in Romania to 6.4 in the Netherlands, and for 'villages and small towns' from 5.04 in Romania to 6.62 in the Netherlands (Figure 3).

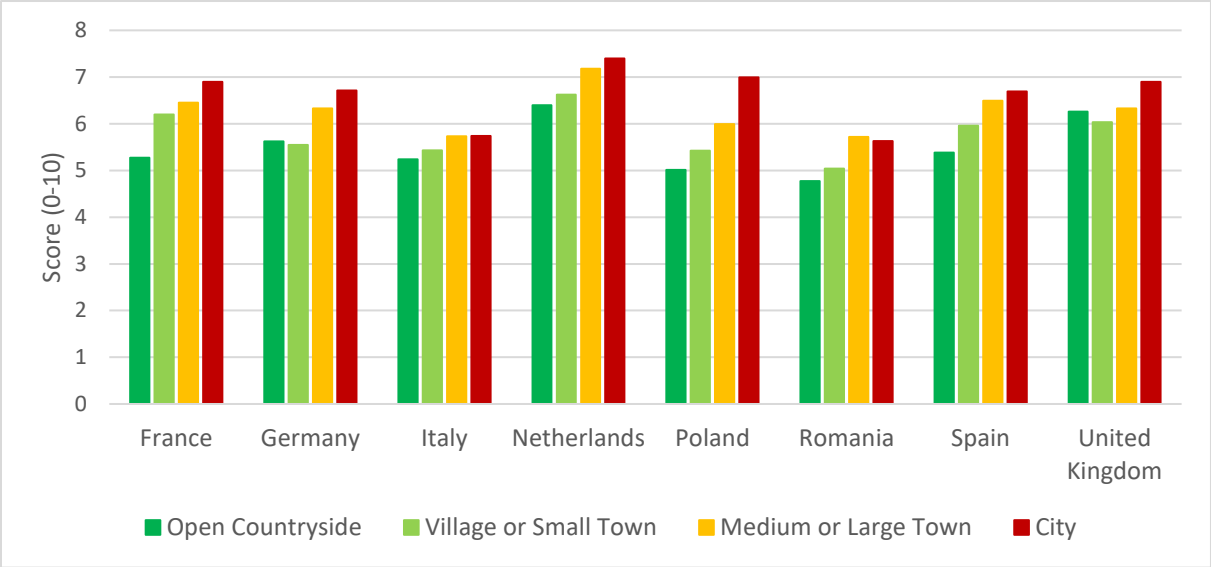

Figure 3: Residents' scores for aggregated quality of public services in region, by type of area of residence and country (0= very bad, 10 = very good). Source: IMAJINE WP4 survey.

The perceived difference in quality of public services between urban and rural areas further varies in relation to the service concerned. The gap is largest for cultural facilities, public transport and internet services, and smallest for education. For all eight service types, quality was scored progressively higher with increasing scales of urbanization. It is also notable that internet connectivity is no longer perceived as a the major weakness of rural areas, with residents in 'open countryside' rating internet services higher than healthcare, public transport, childcare, cultural facilities and public administration services (Figure 4).

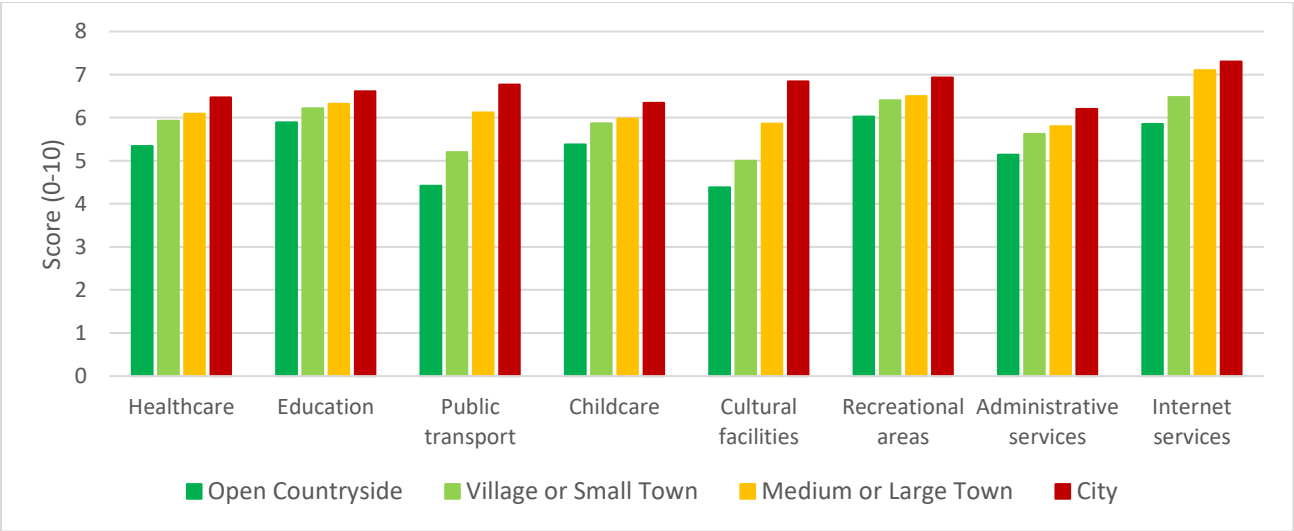

Figure 4: Residents' scores for quality of selected public services in region, by type of area of residence (0= very bad, 10 = very good). Source: IMAJINE WP4 survey.

1.5 Austerity measures are perceived by stakeholders to have had a greater impact on public services in rural regions than in urban regions

Regional stakeholders interviewed in WP1 identified austerity measures introduced by governments in the early 2010s as having had an impact on local scale disparities, including between urban and rural areas. This trend was especially noted by stakeholders in Greece and Ireland, the two countries in the interview set that had adopted the strongest austerity policies. In Greece, cuts to public service provision was noted to have deepened existing territorial inequalities to the detriment of rural areas, with a civil servant from the Ministry of Rural Development and Food observing that:

> *"The crisis reduced public spending and subsequently this caused serious problems in the public services such as schools, hospitals, police departments. Various services were shut down. The crisis also affected the private sector…. [All these] intensified spatial inequalities, and more particularly those among urban and rural areas"* (Civil servant from the Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food) [From Deliverable 1.4]

In Ireland, stakeholders cited austerity policies in respect to the withdrawal of funding for rural and regional development projects and infrastructure schemes, including planned investment in third-level education and support for pathways to sustainable employment in more rural areas. A rise in unemployment in rural districts and increased out-migration from these areas were also identified by regional stakeholders in Ireland as major effects of the post-2008 recession and austerity policies for rural areas.

More recent interviews with stakeholders in the Asturias region of Spain for WP8 further support this association, with stakeholders not only arguing that austerity policies impacted more on rural communities than on urban areas, but also describing a shift in emphasis in understanding of deprivation. Stakeholders explained that prior to 2008, deprivation was primarily understood in Spain as concerned with poverty alleviation, but that as a consequence of the economic crisis and austerity measures, issues of rural deprivation associated with unequal access to services has been highlighted, notably affordable transport and its importance for accessing employment opportunities.

Source: WP1 and WP8 interviews; see D1.4

1.6 The resilience of rural regions is a key factor in decreasing inequality between rural and urban regions in Europe

Analysis of secondary data and published literature in WPs 1 and 2 identified an overall pattern of decreasing inequality between regions in the European Union, including between rural and urban regions, over the period from the mid 1990s to 2019. As a measure of inequality, the Gini co-efficient for disparities in the EU at the NUTS3 scale decreased from 0.19 in 1995 to 0.13 in 2019. The trend is attributed in part to increasing GDP per person in lagging regions relative to change in more affluent regions, especially in the period up to 2008. Following the economic crisis of 2008 the data indicates some widening of disparities, but overall inequality between urban and rural regions has continued to narrow, reflecting the relative resilience of rural economies during the crisis compared with falls in income and productivity in metropolitan regions.

This analysis is supported by observations by national and regional stakeholders in interviews for WP1. In particular, interviewees in Greece noted the relative resilience of agriculture and tourism, and therefore of rural regions, during the crisis. Agriculture was described as a 'safety net' against the economic downturn, but was seen as significant for its strong linkages to the food manufacturing sector, which is important for regional employment in rural areas of Greece.

Sources: WP1 and WP2, interviews, secondary data analysis and literature reviews; see D1.4, D2.1, D2.4.

1.7 Patterns and experiences of rural-urban inequalities can be shaped by the collation of statistical data and its use in social welfare systems

A number of national and regional stakeholders interviewed for WP8 observed that the way in which statistical data is collected, interpreted and used by public agencies has an impact on rural-urban disparities. In addition to limited data availability at local scales and the tendency to produce indices of inequality at higher scales covering rural and urban areas having an effect of disguising localised pockets of rural deprivation (see also finding 4.1 below), some stakeholders also suggested that official statistical measures commonly failed to reflect differences in living costs for rural and urban residents. A civil society stakeholder in Ireland, for example, cited research that had shown that households living in rural areas have different and additional basic expenditure needs than those in urban areas, especially in relation to transport and energy, that are not reflected in universal rates of state pension and benefit payments. Stakeholders in Spain similarly highlighted the issue of energy justice for rural residents with difficulties affording to heat their homes.

Source: WP 8 interviews.

2. DEMOGRAPHY AND MIGRATION

2.1 Residents of rural areas are marginally less inclined to move than residents of cities

Results from the IMAJINE survey of 18,000 residents in eight European countries indicate that respondents living in rural areas are slightly less likely to have considered moving to a different region or country than those living in urban areas. For domestic migration the difference is very small, with 27% of respondents living in areas of 'open countryside' stating that they have considered moving to a different region in the same country compared with 29% of respondents living in cities. The difference for international migration is larger, though still relatively narrow, with 19% of residents in open countryside having considered moving to another country in the EU compared to 24% of city residents, and 10% of residents of open countryside having considered moving to a country outside the EU, compared to 12% of city residents (Figure 5).

The survey results also indicate that fewer residents of rural areas have a sense of place attachment than city residents, which holds at all scales of belonging, from the local town to the European Union. There is relatively little variation in attachment to the region of residence and to the country of resident between rural and urban dwellers, however residents living in areas of open countryside are notably less likely to describe themselves as attached to the local town or city, to Europe, and to their region of birth, than urban residents. The strongest sense of attachment for rural residents is with the region

of residence for those living in open countryside (79% expressing attachment) and with the country of residence for residents of villages and small towns (80% expressing attachment). The weakest attachment is with Europe (61% and 59% respectively) (Figure 6).

These results on place attachment may be considered to be counterintuitive given popular ideas about stable rural communities and mobile and cosmopolitan urban populations, and suggest a possible tension with the results on potential migration, and the survey data in themselves do not provide insight into explanations.

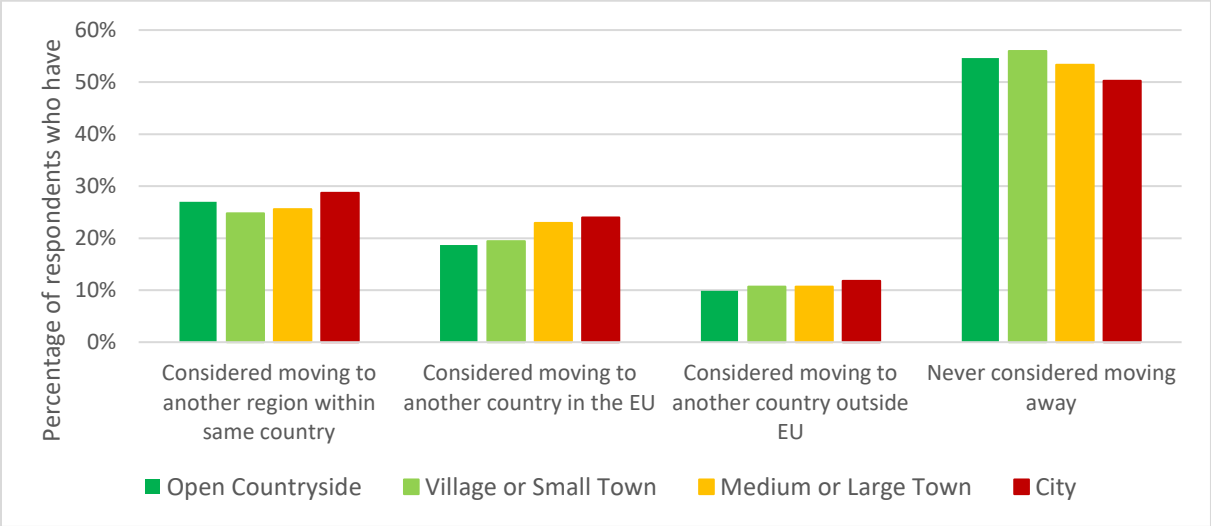

Figure 5: Respondents who have considered moving region or country, by type of area of residence. Source: IMAJINE WP4 survey.

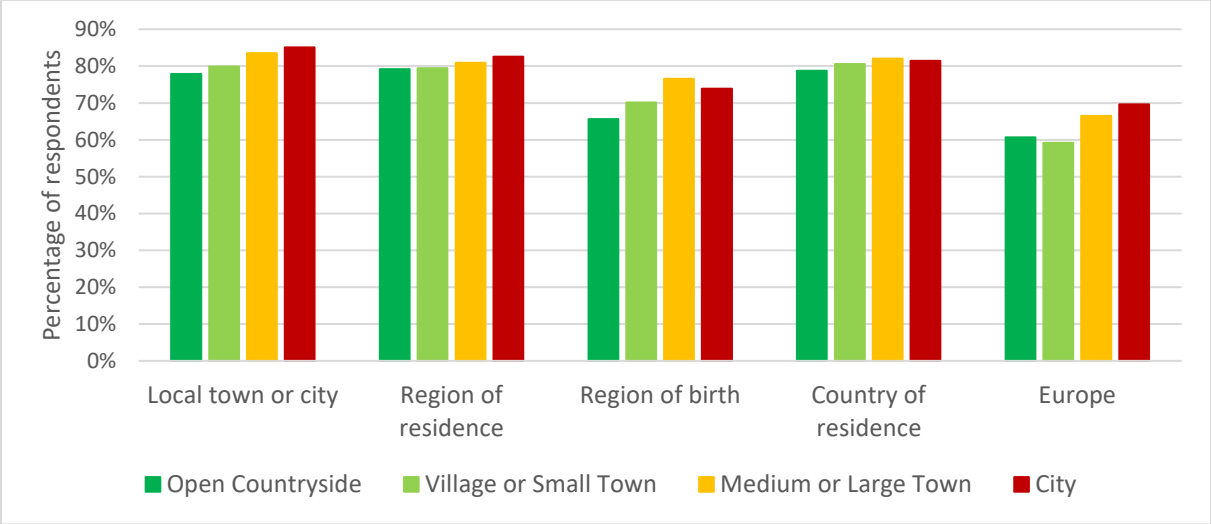

Figure 6: Respondents reporting attachment to place at different scales, by type of area of residence. Source: IMAJINE WP4 survey.

2.2 Migrants to rural areas can find it less easy to settle than migrants to urban areas

Results from the IMAJINE survey show that migrants moving into rural areas can find it a little less easy to settle into the region than migrants to urban areas. Asked to indicate how easy or difficult it was to adapt to life in their new region on a scale of 0 (very difficult) to 10 (very easy), respondents who had moved to areas of open countryside gave a mean score of 6.87 and respondents who had moved into villages or small towns gave a mean score of 7.09, compared with a mean score of 7.22 given by respondents who had moved into a city (Table 2).

Type of area	Lowest score	Highest score	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Number of responses
Open countryside	0	10	6.87	2.93	492
Village or small town	0	10	7.08	2.80	1258
Medium or large town	0	10	7.10	2.63	1206
City or suburb	0	10	7.22	2.68	960
Total	0	10	7.10	2.72	3916

Table 2: Mean score given by migrants for how easy or difficult it had been to adapt to life in their new regions, on a scale of 0 (very difficult) to 10 (very easy), by type of location of residence. Source: IMAJINE WP4 survey.

2.3 Environmental and lifestyle attractions are stong pull factors for migrants to rural regions and may offset economic inequalities

Interviews with domestic and international migrants in Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania and the UK for WP5 have emphasized the significance of environmental and lifestyle factors in attracting migrants to rural regions. These may operate in combination with economic factors, as in the case of labour migrants from the 2004 and 2007 accession states (including Poland and Romania) to countries in western and southern Europe, for whom environmental factors can influence decisions about where to locate in destination countries. They can also be a primary reason for migration, most notably among domestic migrants, but also for some international migrants, as noted for example by some German migrants interviewed in rural Wales. Both dynamics have contributed to the emergence of a pattern of rural-to-rural inter-regional migration in Europe that departs from previous models of urbanization, although research with Romanian migrants noted the continuing significance of rural to urban domestic migration as a stepping stone for international migration.

The environmental amenities of rural regions were cited by several interviewees as reasons to stay in destination regions, even where the initial driver of migration had been economic. For example, a number of Romanian economic migrants interviewed in a rural region of western Greece described the importance of the natural and marine environment, including mountains and proximity to the sea, in their decisions to settle in the region. Other attributes of rural regions cited as attractions by international migrants in case studies in Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK included perceived safety and lower crime rates, the tranquillity of village environments, and greater interaction with long-standing residents, as well as housing. Polish migrants interviewed in Ireland, for example, favourably compared the large houses with gardens that they were able to rent in rural County Galway with small and densely packed urban apartments that they lived in in Poland.

These benefits were widely perceived by interviewees to outweigh both the initial hardships of moving to another country and the material disadvantages of living in a rural region, which included potentially lower wages and less access to shops and services.

Source: WP5 interviews; see Deliverable 5.2.

2.4 Migrants can manipulate rural-urban disparities to improve their relative individual standard of living

The interviews for WP5 also generated evdience of migrants to rural areas (and to less affluent urban areas) knowingly taking advantage of rural-urban disparities to improve their individual standard of living. This included, for example, moving to an area with lower property prices in order to afford to buy a larger house and/or to increase their relative social status within a local community, as recounted by some migrants in both rural and urban areas of Wales. At the same, this form of 'marginal gentrification' has the knock-on effect of restricting the accessibility of housing to lower-income local residents, and thus of increasing inequalities within the region. In Greece, a number of interviewed migrants described reduced employment opportunities and downward pressure on wages in urban areas as a push factor for them to move to (or in many cases return to) rural areas, in a process described in previous literature as 'crisis counterurbanization'.

Source: WP5 intervews; see Deliverable 5.2.

2.5 Migration can help to stimulate economic development in rural regions and to reduce rural-urban disparities

Research in WP5 further included interviews with long-standing residents in rural regions and local stakeholders that in general reported strongly positive attitudes towards in-migration. In-migrants were perceived as helping to maintain or grow the population of rural communities, supporting local services and businesses, and providing labour for agriculture and other sectors of the economy. For example, one long-standing rural resident interviewed in Greece observed that:

> "*Migrants who have families, they have not changed the place. They have changed the place positively. They work here. They help the economy. ...But also, the other people from Pakistan, Bangladesh they also help, too. They come, shop, and spend their money. And they are well-behaved people"* (Long-term resident, western Greece) [from Papdopoulos and Fratsea, 2020, based on WP5 interviews]

Interviewees in Ireland similarly noted the contribution of entrepreneurial activity by international migrants in establishing shops and businesses that increased service provision in the locality as well as the broadening of cultural engagement. Residents and stakeholders interviewed in rural regions tended to be less likely to raise negative impacts from international migration than interviewees in urban regions, though some regional stakeholders interviewed in Greece argued that rural regions need additional resources to cope with a variable seasonal population (from tourism) and with large groups of displaced people housed in camps primarily in rural regions since the 'refugee crisis' of 2015.

Source: WP5 interviews; see Deliverable 5.2, Papadopoulos and Fratsea 2020.

2.6 Migration to and from rural regions is differentiated and not every rural region has the capacity to benefit from in-migration.

Analysis of migration data for WP5 and the evidence from interviews show that migration to and from rural regions is differentiated with a mix of net sending- and net receiving regions, but also complex patterns of both out- and in-migration for specific regions. Rural regions studied in Ireland and Wales, for example, have experienced in-migration by international migrants and some lifestyle-oriented domestic migrants, but also substantial and ongoing out-migration from endogenous households, especially of young people. In Poland, rural regions that have experienced considerable out-migration both to domestic cities and internationally to other parts of Europe, have also experienced in-migration from Ukraine, with immigrants taking up jobs vacated by Polish out-migrants.

Migrants and local residents interviewed for WP5 commonly made distinctions between different forms of migration, and different groups of migrants. Thus, even in localities where in-migration had been welcomed, concerns were also expressed about the out-migration of local, young people, and return migation by members of local households is commonly the most value form of migration. At the same time, interviewees also acknowledged that rural communities frequently do not have the economic opportunities or infrastructure to retain or attract back young people and families.

Source: WP5 secondary data analysis and interviews; see Deliverables 5.1 and 5.2.

3. GROWTH, ECONOMY AND BUSINESS

3.1 Income disparities beween rural and urban areas of Europe have narrowed, but the patterns is not even across member states

Econometric analysis in WP2 using decomposition techniques has identified a decrease in the disparity between the income of rural and urban households over the period from 2004 to 2014, against a background of increasing overall socio-economic inequality in this period. In 2004, the average income or rural households was 12% lower than that of urban households, but by 2014, the gap had narrowed to 5%. At the beginning of the period, the explanation for the difference can be broken down equally between endowment factors and differences in the return of characteristics. However, when households of similar characteristics are compared the income gap is fairly stable over the period from 2004 to 2014 at around 5% (Figure 7). As such, the reduction in the income disparity between rural and urban households can be attributed mainly to a closing in the differences between the characteristics of rural and urban households: in other words, rural households are getting more like urban households and this is removing some of the structural and locational factors that distorted comparisons of income (e.g. agricultural employment, settlement structure, legacies of the post-socialist transition).

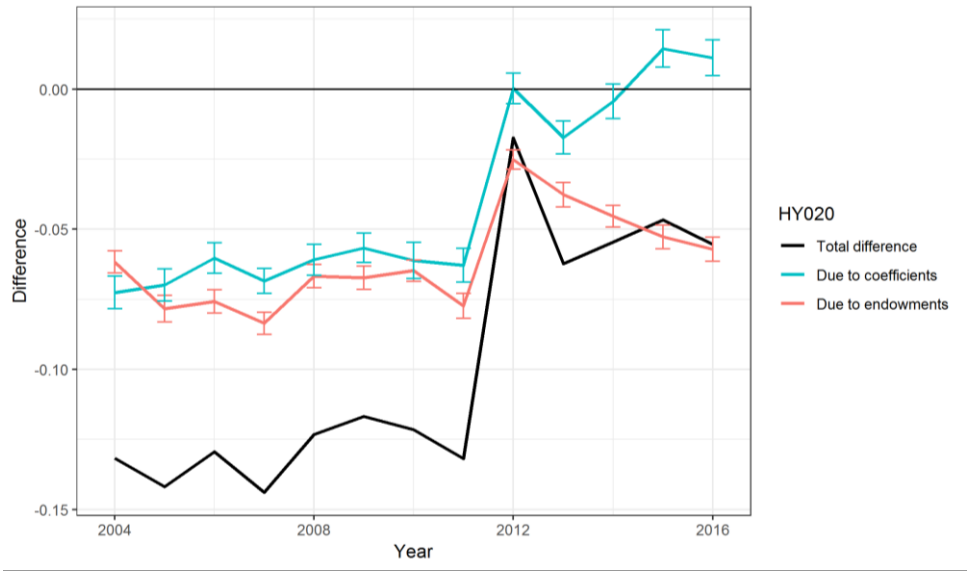

Figure 7: Change in explained and unexplained differences between urban and rural household incomes for EU15 countries, 2004-16. Source: Deliverable 2.6

However, the overal trend of decreasing rural-urban inequalities is not consistent across countries. The WP2 analysis identified four clusters of countries exhibiting different patterns. The first group follows the overall trajectory, with lower incomes for rural households catching up with urban incomes over the period. This group includes Ireland, Italy, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania and Portugal. The second group, however, departs from the overall pattern with lower incomes for rural households than for urban households, but no significant reduction in the gap over the period analysed. This group includes Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Spain.

The third cluster includes countries where there the difference between rural and urban household incomes was already not significant at the start of the period in 2004, and remained largely stable through the period. These include France, Denmark and the United Kingdom. The final group is comprised by countries in which average rural household incomes are higher than those for urban households and includes Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany. With the exception of Germany, the higher average income for rural households in these countries is explained by differences in household characteristics.

Source: WP2 decomposition analysis; see Deliverable 2.6

3.2 The closing of the rural-urban income disparity has been driven by changes for higher income households, with the gap for lowest income households widening

Quartile decomposition analysis for WP2 has revealed that rural-urban inequalities in household income are most pronounced at the lower end of the income distribution. Rural households in the first decile of income distribution report incomes that are 20 to 40% lower than the income for equivalent urban households. Moreover, this gap has not closed along with the overall income disparity, but rather there is evidence that the difference between urban and rural household incomes for these households with the lowest incomes has increased since 2008. In other words, the poorest rural households have not benefited from overall income convergence, which appears to be driven by improvements for higher income households.

The difference in the rural-urban income gap between the bottom and top of the income distribution tends to be more prominent for countries in central and eastern Europe such as Bulgaria, Croatia and Poland, than in countries such as Denmark and Ireland, where the gap fairly consistent across the income distribution. France stands out as an exception, with a greater gap between rural and urban household incomes for higher income households than for lower income households.

Source: WP2 quartile decomposition analysis; see Deliverable 2.6

3.3 EU Cohesion Policies have contributed to reducing rural-urban disparities, but the impact of the EARDF is less significant

The reduction in rural-urban household income disparities described above may be interpreted as a succesful effect of EU Cohesion Policies, especially given that the reduction can be largely explained by a closing of differences in household characteristics that might reflect structural factors targeted by Structural Fund interventions. Econometric analysis in WP3 to model the effects of spending under different Structural Funds (relative to GDP) on inequalities within regions and on regional economic growth indicate that spend from Cohesion Funds, the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) have impacts in reducing in-region inequalies and increasing regional growth, but that spending from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) has less discernable effect. The analysis shows no significant effect from EAFRD spend on regional disparities, and is negatively correlated with economic growth for regions in New Member States (NMS) (Table 3).

Source: Econometric analysis for WP3.

	Within regional disparities			Regional GDP growth		
Full sample	Direct effect	Indirect Effect	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect Effect	Total effect
Total funds/gdp	0.005***	0.001**	0.006***	0.017***	0.029***	0.046***
Objective 1	-0.006**	-0.002**	-0.008**	0.005	0.008	0.013
CF/gdp	0.010***	0.003**	0.013***	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001
ERDF/gdp	0.002	0.001	0.002	0.018***	0.030***	0.051***
EAFRD/gdp	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.019*	-0.030*	-0.051*
ESF/gdp	-0.010**	-0.004*	-0.013**	0.012	0.021	0.033
EU-15	Direct effect	Indirect Effect	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect Effect	Total effect
Total funds/gdp	-0.013***	-0.003***	-0.016***	-0.008	-0.014	-0.023
Objective 1	-0.005**	-0.001**	-0.006**	0.003	0.004	0.007
CF/gdp	-0.009*	-0.002	-0.011*	-0.019*	-0.030*	-0.051*
ERDF/gdp	-0.008**	-0.002**	-0.010**	0.001	0.002	0.003
EAFRD/gdp	-0.006	-0.002	-0.008	0.017	0.029	0.046
ESF/gdp	-0.015***	-0.004**	-0.019***	-0.021*	-0.036*	-0.056*
NMS	Direct effect	Indirect Effect	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect Effect	Total effect
Total funds/gdp	0.011***	0.003***	0.014***	0.027***	0.046***	0.073***
Objective 1	-0.012	-0.003	-0.015	0.040**	0.068*	0.110**
CF/gdp	0.015***	0.004**	0.019***	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001
ERDF/gdp	0.011**	0.003*	0.014**	0.046***	0.078***	0.124***
EAFRD/gdp	-0.008	-0.002	-0.010	-0.079***	-0.137***	-0.216***
ESF/gdp	-0.008	-0.002	-0.010	0.060***	0.103***	0.163***

Table 3: Total, direct and indirect elasticities of Structural Funds on within region disparities and regional GDP growth. Source: WP3 analysis.

3.4 There is no significant difference in the economic outlook of residents in rural areas and residents in urban areas

Results from the IMAJINE survey show fairly consistent views across residents in both rural and urban areas on the economic situation, both for their region and for their individual position. Asked to assess how the regional economic situation had changed over the previous 12 months on a scale of 0 (worsened a lot) to 10 (improved a lot), residents living the open countryside were very marginally more positive on average than those living in villages and small towns, medium and large towns and cities, with a mean score of 3.78 compared with 3.65 awarded by village and small town residents. Respondents in all areas awarded marginally high scores on average for their anticipated change to the regional economy over the coming 12 months, but overall expected a futher detrioration in the situation with mean scores ranging from 3.84 from residents of villages and small towns, to 3.96 for residents of open countryside, to 3.98 for city residents (Figure 8).

In general, respondents were more positive about their personal economic situation, although average scores still show a net deterioation. Residents living in open countryside scored the change in their personal economic situation over the previous 12 months marginally more negatively (4.24) than those in other areas, and were also marginally more pessimistic about the anticipated change over the coming 12 months, giving an average score of 4.38 compared to 4.61 for city dwellers.

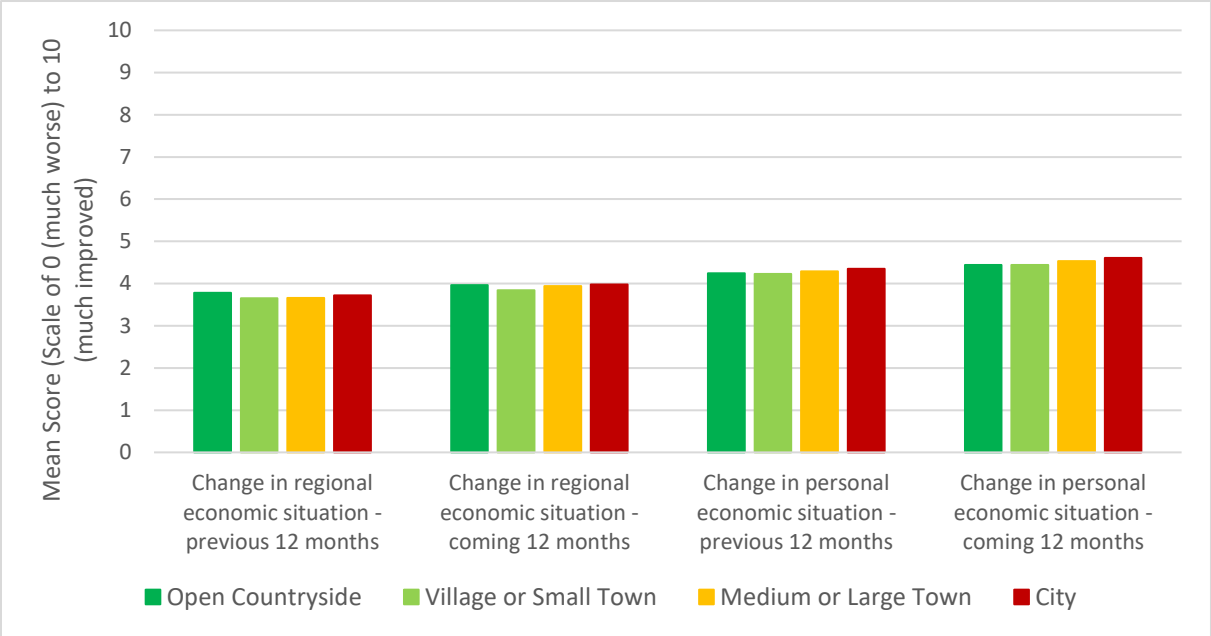

Figure 8: Perceptions of changes in regional and personal economic situation, scored on scale of 0 (much worse) to 10 (much improved), by type of area of residence. Source: WP4 survey

4. SOCIAL INCLUSION, POVERTY AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

4.1 Patterns of rural poverty and deprivation can be disguised by the analysis and presentation of statistical data at regional scale

Statistical data employed to measure socio-economic inequalities in Europe are limited in their capacity to reflect local scale variations and as such frequently under-represent the extent of poverty or other forms of deprivation in rural areas. Indicators in the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) database are commonly only available at NUTS 1 level for large regions, and whilst the AROPE measure (At Risk of Povery of Exclusion) is an important stept towards a multidimensional index of deprivation, it is only available for NUTS 2 regions, which commonly cover a mix of urban and rural areas. Local scale data for indicators of poverty and social inclusion are available for some European countries but are not comprehensive across the EU or comparable between states.

Analysis in WP2 of IMAJINE employed spatial data disaggregation techniques to estimate small-area data (for municipalities or local authorities) for a range of indicators of poverty or social exclusion using social characteristics recorded in SILC and local area profiles obtained from national small area statistics. Further analysis of the estimated local data produced in WP2 through a geographically weighted principal component analysis in WP3 generated nuanced picture of local-scale deprivation, in which rural-urban differences are more evident. This is especially the case for France, as shown in Figure 9, in which more deprived communes (in dark brown) can be observed to be clustered in mountain and rural areas including the Massif Central, Pyrennees, Jura, and parts of Corsica, Normandy and Picardy, while urban areas tend to be lighter shaded, indicating less deprivation.

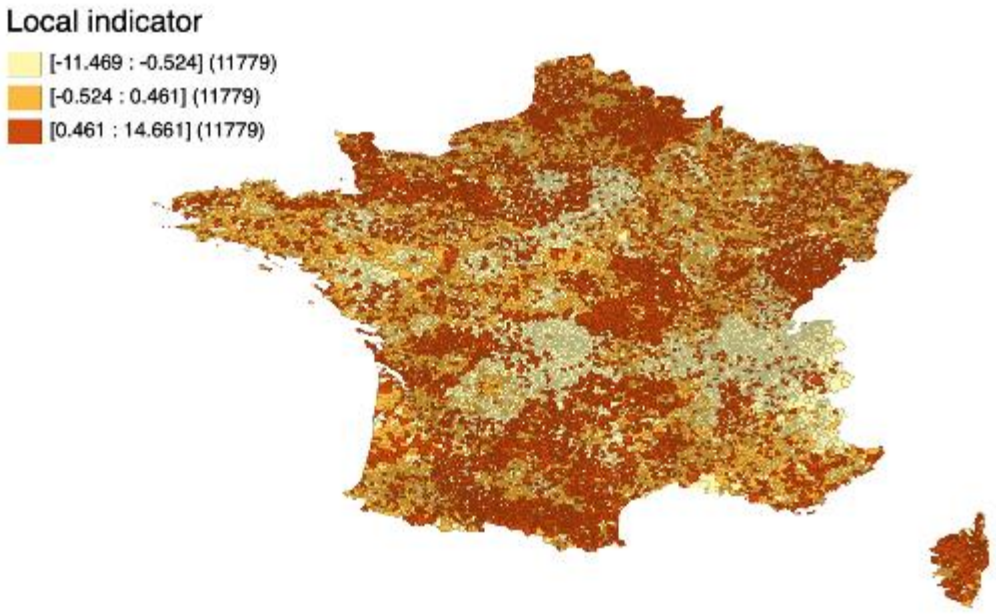

Figure 9: Quantile map of local deprivation indicators for the first component determined from GWPCA for French municipalities, showing more deprived areas in darker colouring. Source: Deliverable 3.3.

Similar analysis for Italy and Spain primarily a reveals strong north-south patterns of relative deprivation, but a secondary rural-urban pattern is also evident, especially in Spain where cities such as Almeria, Badajoz, Cordoba, Malaga, Murica, Granada and Sevilla stand out as less deprived that the surrounding rural districts in Andalusia, Murcia and Extramadura (Figure 10).

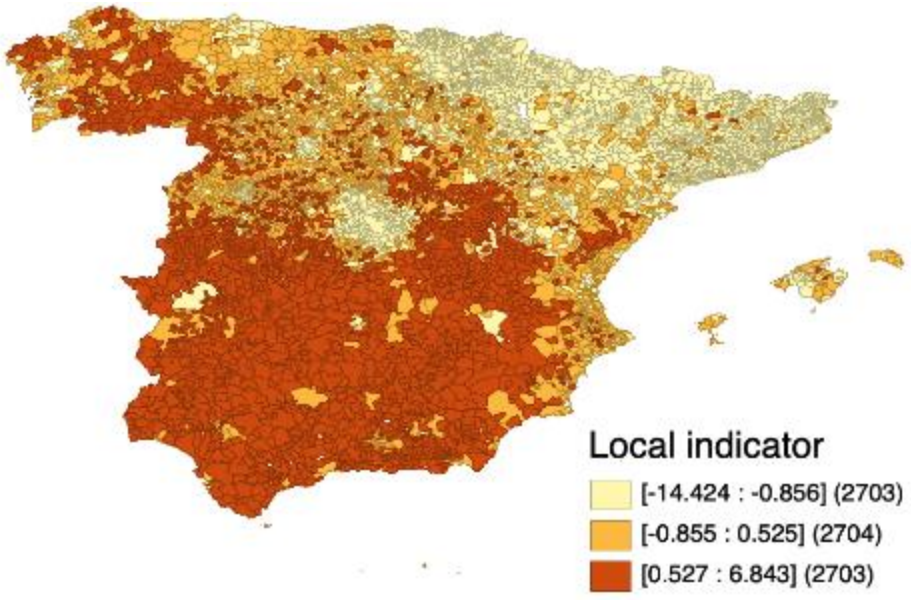

Figure 10: Quantile map of local deprivation indicators for the first component determined from GWPCA for Spanish municipalities, showing more deprived areas in darker colouring. Source: Deliverable 3.3.

4.2 Educational levels are important in explaining rural-urban inequalities in many parts of Europe

The estimation of local-scale data for indicators of territorial inequalities through spatial data disagregation techniques in WP2 revealed notable variations in average levels of education between localities within NUTS 2 region, with educational attainment generally estimated to be lower in rural districts than in urban districts. As Figure 11 shows, the rural-urban differentiation is particularly evident in France, Italy and Spain, but is also evident on a different scale in countries with higher levels of education overall such as Finand and Sweden.

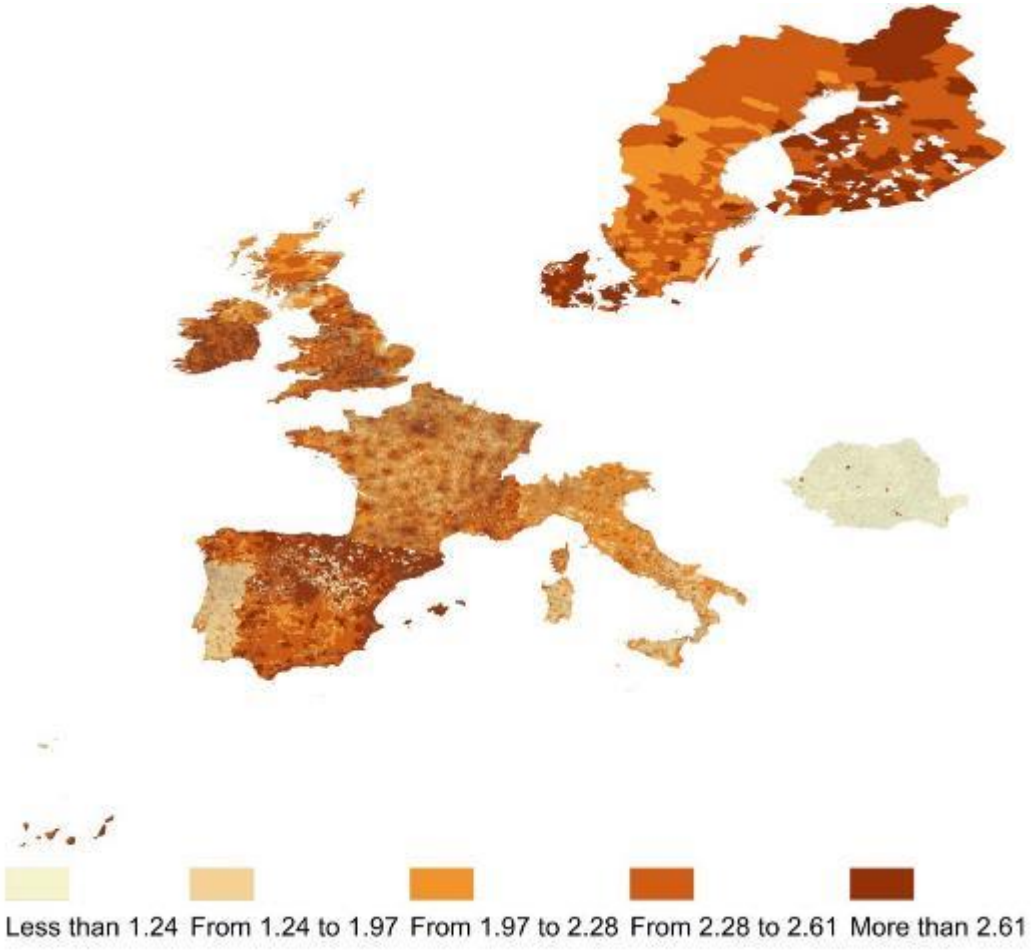

Figure 11: Local scale estimations for weighted educational level. Source: Deliverable 2.4

The importance of educational levels as a driver of territorial inequalities for rural districts in parts of Europe was elaborated by the geographically weighted principal component analysis in WP3, which identified level of education as the most signfiicant variable in explaining local-scale inequalities for 1002 muncipalities in Spain and 4684 municipalities in Italy, in both cases being associated more with rural municipalities than with urban municipalities (Figures 12 and 13).

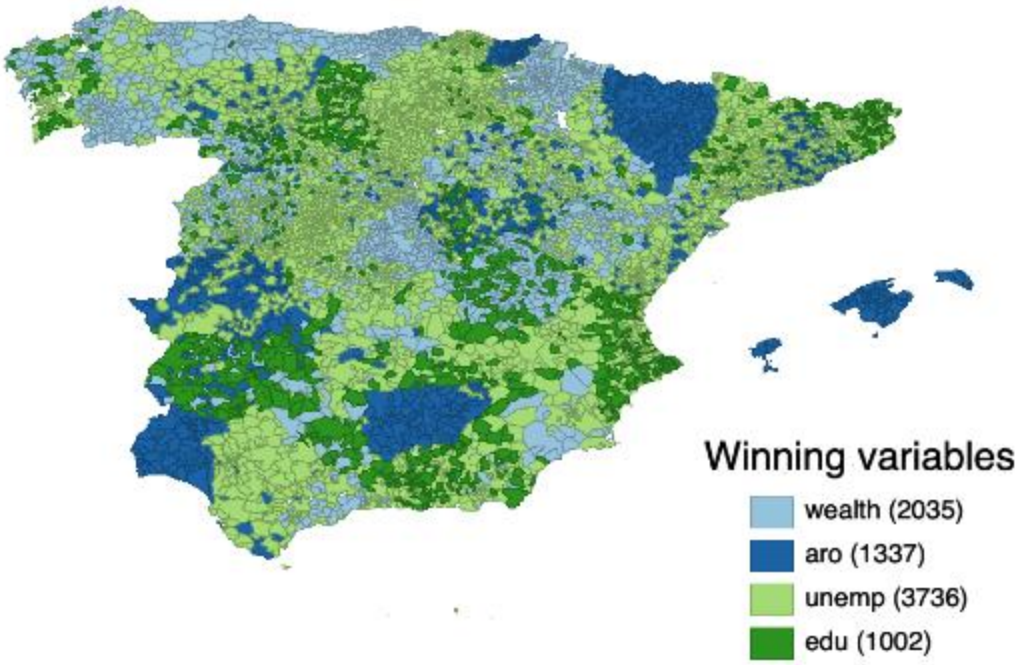

Figure 12: Most significant variable for explaining local scale inequalities for municipalities in Spain (wealth; aro = 'at risk of poverty or exclusion'; unemp = unemployment; edu = level of education). Source: Deliverable 3.3

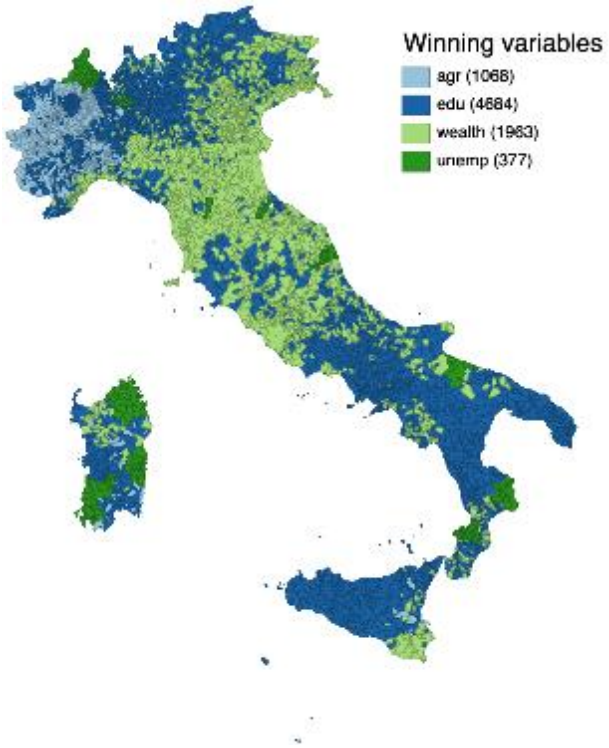

Figure 13: Most significant variable for explaining local scale inequalities for municipalities in Italy (wealth; aro = 'at risk of poverty or exclusion'; unemp = unemployment; edu = level of education). Source: Deliverable 3.3

These findings for the significance of variations in levels of education form the quantitative analysis have been supported by evidence from interviews with regional stakeholders for WP8, especially in Spain. Lack of educational opportunities in rural places were identified as a main source of spatial injustice in the Spanish context. Policies to improve the educational profile of rural populations, particularly for vocational or more applied training, with a view to preparing them to access the employment market were seen as failing to match the reality of regional and local needs and circumstances, and were identified as a significant source of rural inequality leading to a range of consequences for the progression chances and quality of life of younger people in particular. Rural populations were viewed as a homogenous group, with no variety in training offered and no matching to local needs and employment opportunities. The example provided was of both school curriculums and vocational training programmes being set at central government level and then delivered at the local level, with no flexibility available to adapt or innovate with content. In the case of vocational training, the same content was applied year after year with no attention to the local context. Motor mechanic training was cited as a typical example – the comment was that local areas had long filled the quota of employment opportunities available in local garages in which to employ the annual cohort of trained graduates.

Stakeholders in Ireland, however, descrbed a very different situation. In 2013, sixteen regional 'Education and Training Boards' were established under the remit of the Department of Education. ETBs operate at primary and secondary school level, and at further and adult education levels, delivering education and training programmes. Their regional structure allows them considerable flexibility to conduct continuous needs analysis in local communities (while still adhering to national-level education and training strategies) and they provide training specifically designed to meet those needs. There is a high awareness of rural constraints to accessing skills-based education and training, with the priority being to bring training out to communities to overcome transport limitations in particular, and to provide small accommodation allowances where daily transport cannot be provided.

Sources: Analysis of secondary data in WP2 and WP3, interviews with stakeholders in WP8; see Deliverable 2.4 and Deliverable 3.3

4.3 Access to services is identified by regional stakeholders as a factor in social exclusion in rural areas

Stakeholders in Ireland and Spain interviewed for WP8 emphasized access to services as a major problem for rural communities and a key inequality between urban and rural areas. In particular, the deterioration of public transported, in part it was claimed due to the impact austerity policies, was flagged in both countries, both as critical service in its own right and as means through rural residents could access other services located in towns. As well as budget cuts, the centralisation of the management of public transport services was argued by both Irish and Spanish stakeholders to have had a deterimental impact for rural residents. In Ireland, recent changes to local rural transport schemes meant that local level services were now tendered out nationally, based on the best price received. For older, or disabled transport users, knowing their local bus driver was seen as a vitally important part of the service. This had traditionally been a member of the local community, but now it could be a new driver from any part of the country who had no knowledge of the local customers. It

raised quality of life issues that extended beyond the economic cost of the service. Calls for a local 'uber-taxi' type service had not been listened to by policy-makers. Problems faced by many rural dwellers who relied on public transport to keep hospital appointments, for example, remained the same as they had a decade or more ago; taking the single service on offer in the morning and then possibly waiting the entire day to take the single service home again in the evenings.

The case for bringing services out to the community to overcome transport constraints was strongly made by an Irish rural development representative. Her observation was that the focus on transport limitations, while a serious issue, also tended to promote a policy narrative of rural dependency that then influenced the starting point for dealing with the issue; that rural dwellers should be grateful to receive any level of service at all. Bringing out certain services to the community removed significant limitations to achieving quality of life. She also raised the issue of the relevance and suitability of a service to rural populations, particularly one that is centrally devised without the associated public service constraints of more remote populations in mind. Access to high-speed broadband and the issue of the rural digital divide was referenced as a significant issue in this regard. The interviewee referred to the Australian concept of 'No Wrong Door' – a model of social care whereby a local GP as a traditional contact point for health services, has the knowledge of services to refer a patient to a suite of required supports as opposed to being just limited to general practice enquiries. However, support services were frequently unavailable leading to wider economic and social implications for others. For example, caring services for people with chronic illness such as dementia, associated with older persons who in turn constitute a high proportion of rural populations, were often unavailable, meaning a family member otherwise in productive employment would frequently give up this employment to act as a carer.

The problem of sourcing information on services in rural areas particularly information on entitlements to health service supports (with resulting exclusion from services and a loss of quality of life) was also raised by an Irish rural development representative who said that in her experience it was often a case of incidental contacts with individuals like her who possessed a level of expert or insider knowledge and more resource-rich networks, meeting her perhaps at community meetings or other events, where questions of this nature would be put to her once her level of knowledge on one rural issue was recognised. She described the 'reach' of information from the centre to the rural using an 'echo' analogy – the further out from the centre, the weaker and less impactful the waves of information became. She asserted that general assumptions were made by healthcare professionals at central government or at regional government agency levels about the availability of and access to information in the rural; the assumption that everyone actually had access via digital media or other forums; that everyone was literate; that everyone understood their entitlements. This was regarded as a form of spatial inequality particularly evident in more remote, rural areas whereby the right to access services was denied through failure of those in power to act with a duty of care to inform individuals, particularly from more vulnerable and hard to reach groups, of those rights.

Source: WP8 interviews.

4.4 Rural-urban inequalities are intensified for specific groups in rural society who face particular challenges

Regional stakeholders in Ireland, Scotland and Spain interviewed for WP8 noted that specific groups in rural societies faced particular challenges that intensified the effects of rural-urban inequalities. The gendered impacts of limited public transport services, and of the costs for running private transport for households on low income, were highlighted by a interviewee from a NGO in Scotland who emphasized that women with childcare responsibilities had more complex daily mobility patterns, needing to move between childminders, employment, services and facilities in non-linear ways that are rarely facilitated by public transport. It also creates considerable time constraints and has implications for women's (and other marginalised group such as those with disabilities) capacities to move beyond a quite limited spatial range to access better jobs, services or facilities. Raising awareness of specific gendered needs and circumstances with transport planners in local and regional authorities is regarded as a significant and ongoing challenge in both rural and urban contexts.

Specific challenges faced by disabled residents in rural areas were raised by an interviewee in Ireland, who argued that the trend away from institutional care to care in the community could have unintended consequences for indviduals in remoter rural areas as limited infrastructure compromised the objective of promoting freedom, choice and independence for the individual. From her experience working with disabled clients, she observed that if such an individual was provided with a home in a rural area, without access to suitable transport, with limited or non-existent social services, relying on a public health nurse or helper whose contract during austerity was cut to one hour per day with each client, then the individual was worse off than in an institutional setting. She pointed to the inefficiencies of distributing services to individuals across long distances that spread them too thinly to be effective, and that perpetuated inequalities. She advocated for models of support that were co-ordinated with service providers, with housing co-located in settings that also incorporated relevant community involvement, perhaps in smaller town or village settings.

5. CIVIL SOCIETY, RURAL VOICE AND DEMOCRACY

5.1 Rural residents have lower satisifaction in the operation of national and EU institutions than urban residents

Results from the IMAJINE survey indicate that there is little difference in public opinion of local authorities and regional government between citizens in rural areas and those living in cities, but that there is a larger gap in respect to national state institutions and the European Union. Asked to indicate their satisfaction with how democracy works at various levels of governance on a scale of 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied), respondents living in open countryside gave national state institutions a mean score of 4.8 and respondents in villages and small towns a score of 5.11, compared with a score of 5.27 awarded by city residents; whilst the EU was given a mean score of 4.97 by residents of open countryside, and 4.81 by residents of small towns and villages, but 5.43 by respondents living in cities. Respondents in all areas expressed more satisfaction with the operation of democracy at local and regional scales than at national and EU levels (Figure 14).

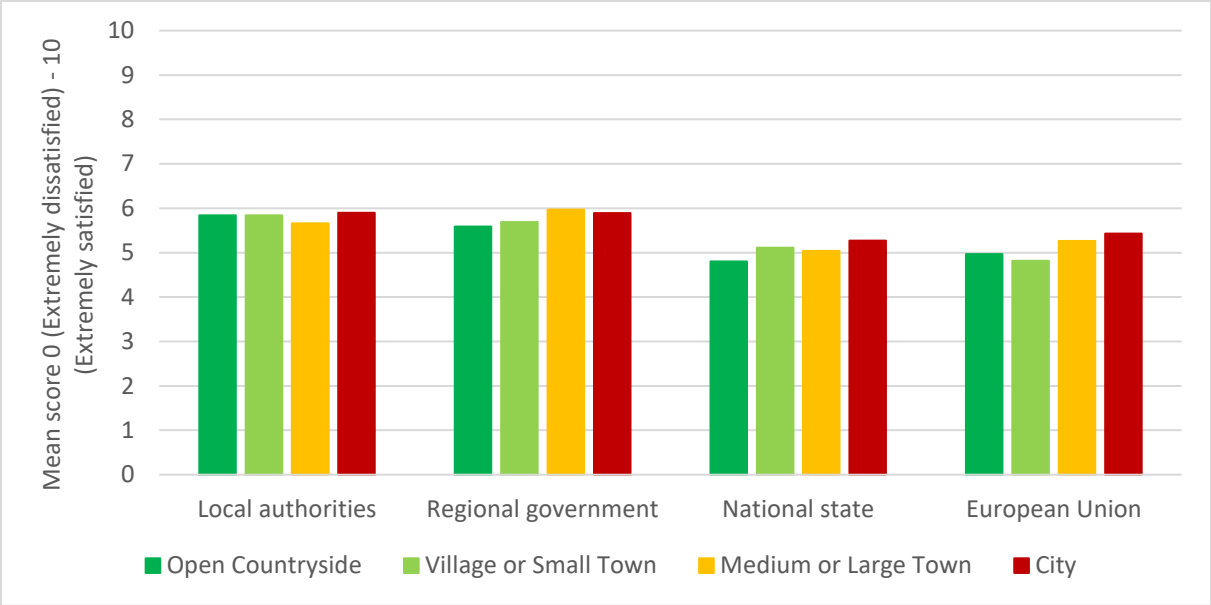

Figure 14: Mean satisfaction with how democracy works at different scales of government, by type of area of residence of respondent, on scale of 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied). Source: WP4 survey

5.2 Rural residents have less trust in the European Union than urban residents, but trust in other levels of government is more variable

Levels of trust in the European Union expressed by respondents to the IMAJINE survey living in different areas traced their expressed of satisfaction in the working of democracy in EU, with residents of open countryside and of villages and small towns awarding mean scores of 4.56 and 4.49 out of 10 respectively that are notably lower than the mean score of 5.08 awarded by city residents. Results for regional and national governments were more variable. Trust in regional governments was similarly notably higher for city residents (5.21) than for residents of open countryside (4.88), but there was little difference between the views of residents of villages and small towns and those of medium and large towns. The highest level of trust in national government, however, was expressed by residents of villages and small towns (4.79) and the lowest by respondents in open countryside (4.09). Across all areas, the greatest level of trust expressed by respondents was in local authorities (Figure 15).

Regional stakeholders interviewed for WP8 provided potential context for these results by expressing frustration at efforts to influence regional, national and EU policy-makers on rural dimensions of issues including housing, transport, health, education and social welfare. In Spain, in particular, some stakeholders identified a lack of trust in regional government with a perceived lack of trust and one-party dominance that was associated with urban areas than with rural districts.

Sources: WP4 survey, WP8 interviews.

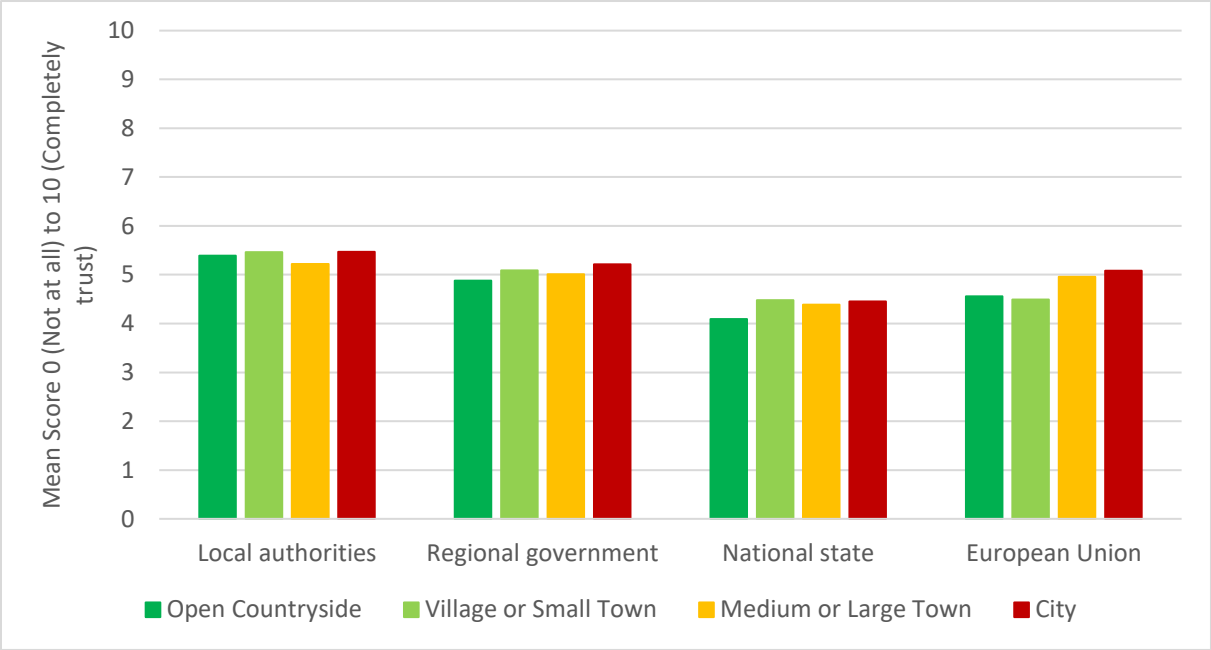

Figure 15: Mean trust in different scales of government, by type of area of residence of respondent, on scale of 0 (do not trust at all) to 10 (completely trust). Source: WP4 survey

5.3 Rural civil society is perceived to be constrained in its capacity to act by limited resources, expertise and a lack of coherence

A number of regional stakeholders interviewed for WP8 across several counties expressed concerns about the capacity of rural civil society to participate in the development process and effectively engage with policy and funding opportunties. In some cases, stakeholders noted variations in social capital and the capacity of civil society actors between different rural areas, observing for example that social capital and capacity had been weakened in areas experiencing significant out-migration and that targeted and sustained forms of capacity-building were required in these districts. More remote, sparsely populated, rural areas with ageing populations were also cited by some interviewees as lacking expertise and a critical mass of active and engaged citizens, with an associated absence of participation in rural development programmes. One Polish stakeholder observed that relative success in obtaining EU funding or not was visible when travelling through different rural regions.

More broadly, an inflexibility in the operation of EU rural development programmes was cited as presenting challenges for civil society organizations and stifling local innovation. Examples were also given of local rural groups constrained by language barriers in applying for EU projects where English was expected.

Source: WP8 interviews.

6. INTERGRATED TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Policy coordination within and between regions is identified by stakeholders as important for addressing rural-urban inequalities

Inteviews with European, national and regional stakeholders for WP1 identified the coherence of policy making and coordination of policy implementation, both within regions and between regions, as important requirments for addressing territorial inequalities. Stakeholders in rural regions frequently mentioned the LEADER model, or Community Led Local Development (CLLD), as good practice for territorial policy design. The 'innovative' methodology of CLLDs, which allows connected and integrated use of different funds to deliver local development was in general positively assessed as it was claimed that *"building synergies between projects is not always easy, but those multi-funded projects may advance social and territorial equity with better results"* (Greek stakeholder). At the same time, the same stakeholder raised a note of caution: *"But the implementation of multi-sectoral and multi-funded projects cannot be successful with a single-sectoral point of view. How can we build synergies in the territory to achieve the highest possible social cohesion? [The next step] is to implement integrated/ complementary policies"*.

Stakeholders in Greece and Italy, as well as EU-level stakeholders interviewed in Brussels, further emphasized the importance of coordination across different tiers of government and across different policy sectors. Italian stakeholders in particular argued that the EU had an important coordinating role in facilitating effective cooperation within multi-level governance. EU stakeholders noted that cooperation and complementarity between policies and measures to address spatial inequalities is important not only implementation but also in policy design and monitoring. Coordination and communication between DG Agri and DG Regio in particular was highlighted by one interviewee as enabling the effective targeting of interventions to address inequalities in rural regions: "*Now, because we have this common forum [between the DG for Regional and Urban Policy and the DG for Agriculture and Rural Development] we can discuss, we can decide together for those white spots whether they still need for interventions"* (EU level stakeholder).

SOURCES AND METHODS

The evidence presented in this briefing paper has been derived from the following research activities and data sources within elements of work packages for the IMAJINE project. Work packages 6 and 7 have not generated evidence relevant to the Long Term Vision for Rural Areas

<u>WP 1: Conceptual and Policy Review</u>

Evidence presented in this paper is taken from interviews with European, national and policy stakeholders conducted between October 2017 and July 2018. A total 68 interviews were conducted in Finland (9 interviews), Germany (17), Greece (10), Ireland (8), Italy (9), and in Wales within the UK (9), as well as 5 interviews at EU level in Brussels. Overall, 31 interviews were with stakeholders in national government institutions, 14 with regional or local government stakeholders, and 10 with stakeholders in NGOs or in EU institutions. The interview schedules were primarily focused on stakeholders perceptions of territorial inequalities and of nationa and EU cohesion policies. This work was led by Helsinki University with contributions by Aberystwyth University, Leibniz-Institut für

Länderkunde (IfL), Harokopio University Athens, National University of Ireland Galway and Universita di Siena.

Contact: Sami Moisio, sami.moisio@helsinki.fi

Relevant ouputs:
Deliverable-1.4-Definitions-of-territorial-cohesion-among-EU-and-national-and-regional-policy-makers-interviews.pdf (imajine-project.eu)

WP2: Analysis of Territorial Inequalities in Europe

Evidence presented in this paper draws on estimates of local scale data for territorial inequalities using with general cross entropy method with data on household incomes, education level, and the AROPE 'at risk of poverty or exclusion' index from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) combined with local area population profiles obtained from national statistical institutes. This work was led by the Universidad de Oviedo with contributions from Aberystwyth University and the Università degli Studi 'G. D'Annunzio' Chieta-Pescara.

The local data estimates were subsequently employed in analysis of spatial temporal variations in household incomes between rural, urban and periurban areas using Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition and quantile decomposition methods. This work was undertaken by researchers at INRA and AgroSup Dijon.

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Relevant ouputs:
Deliverable-2.4-Report-on-Inequality-Indices-at-Local-Level.pdf (imajine-project.eu)
Deliverable-2.6-Spatial-Temporal-Variation.pdf (imajine-project.eu)

WP3 Territorial Inequalities and Economic Growth

Evidence presented in this paper draws on two aspects of work in WP3. First, a geographically weight principal component analysis of composite indicators of local territorial inequality employing estimates of local data produced in WP2, reported in Deliverable 3.3. This work was led by the Università degli Studi 'G. D'Annunzio' Chieta-Pescara with contributions from Universidad de Oviedo. Second, an analysis of the composition effects of EU Cohesion Policy spending on within-region household income disparities and on regional growth in GDP over the period 2000-2006, using a generalised propensity score approach with data at NUTS3 scale on spending by Structural Funds instrument compiled by SWECO for the European Commission and contextual data compiled by Cambridge Econometrics and ESPON. This analysis has been undertaken by researchers at INRA and AgroSup Dijon and will be reported in Deliverable 3.4.

Contacts: Paolo Postiglione postigli@unich.it and Lionel Vedrine lionel.vedrine@dijon.inra.fr

Relevant outputs:
Deliverable-3.3-Report-on-Economic-Growth-and-Spatial-Inequalities.pdf (imajine-project.eu)

Deliverable 3.4 is not yet published. A working paper presenting the analysis drawn on in this paper is available on request.

WP4: Experimental Survey on Solidarity and Territorial Cohesion

Evidence presented in this paper draws on an experimental online survey of 18,204 participants in eight countries (France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain and the UK), administered between 22 September and 15 October 2020. The survey employed a non-probability sampling design using an opt-in online panel administered by sub-contractor Toluna. A quota sampling approach with frequency matching was used, aiming for a target of 170 respondents in each NUTS 1 region. Weight calibration adjustments were applied to the data using STATA package IPFRAKING. The final distribution of respondents was France 2152, Germany 2318, Italy 2599, Netherlands 1991, Poland 2530, Romania 1930, Spain 2458 and UK 2226. This work was led by Università di Siena with input from other IMAJINE partners.

Contact: Linda Basile basile7@unisi.it

Relevant outputs:

Results from WP4 are not yet published. Data tables and copies the codebook and questionnaire are available on request.

WP5: Migration, Territorial Inequalities and Spatial Justice

Evidence presented in this paper draws on interviews conducted for WP5 with international and internal migrants and long-term residents across 13 inter-connected case studies in Greece, Ireland, Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Wales in the UK. A total of 328 semi-structured interviews were conducted during 2019, of which at least 178 were in rural districts. The interviews included 136 international migrants (including 30 asylum seekers/refugees), 56 internal migrants, 91 long-term residents in the region, and 47 interviews with residents in net-emigration districts of Poland and Romania, distributed as follows:

Country	**Region/Locality**	**International migrants**	**Internal migrants**	**Long-term residents**
Greece	Attica (U)	12 Romanian 15 Refugees	0	0
	Western Greece (R)	13 Romanian 15 Refugees	7	13
Ireland	Co Galway (R)	15 Polish	0	11
Netherlands	3 localities (R)	31 Polish	14	30
Poland	Nysa (M)	0	0	15
	Lukow (M)	0	0	17
	Piaseczno (M)	15 Ukrainian	15	16
Romania	Suceava (R)	0	0	15
Wales (UK)	Ceredigion (R)	14 German	8	8
	Swansea (U)	7 Romanian	19	19

R = Rural, U = Urban, M = Mixed

This work was led by Groningen University with contributions from Aberystwyth University, Harokopio University Athens, National University of Ireland Galway and the Instiute for Geography and Spatial Planning of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Contact: Magda Ulceluse m.m.ulceluse@rug.nl

Relevant outputs:
Deliverable-5.2-Synthesis-report-on-migration-inequalities-and-justice.pdf (imajine-project.eu)

WP8: Reimaging Regional Futures through Participatory Scenario-Building

Evidence presented in this paper is drawn from interviews with regional stakeholders conducted as preparation for participatory scenario building exercises. This task is ongoing and the paper draws on 13 interviews completed up to December 2020 with stakeholders in Ireland (5), Poland (1), Spain (6) and Scotland (UK) (1). All interviewees in Spain and 3 interviewees in Ireland are civil society stakeholders in predominantly rural regions, 2 of the Irish interviewees and the interviewees in Poland and Scotland are representatives of national-level NGOs. Due to COVID-19 restrictions the interviews have been conducted online. This work has been undertaken by the National University of Ireland Galway, with support from other partners.

Contact: Marie Mahon Marie.Mahon@nuigalway.ie

Relevant outputs:
These results have not yet been published. A draft Deliverable is available on request.