

Functional rural areas to deliver essential and other enabling services in 30 minutes

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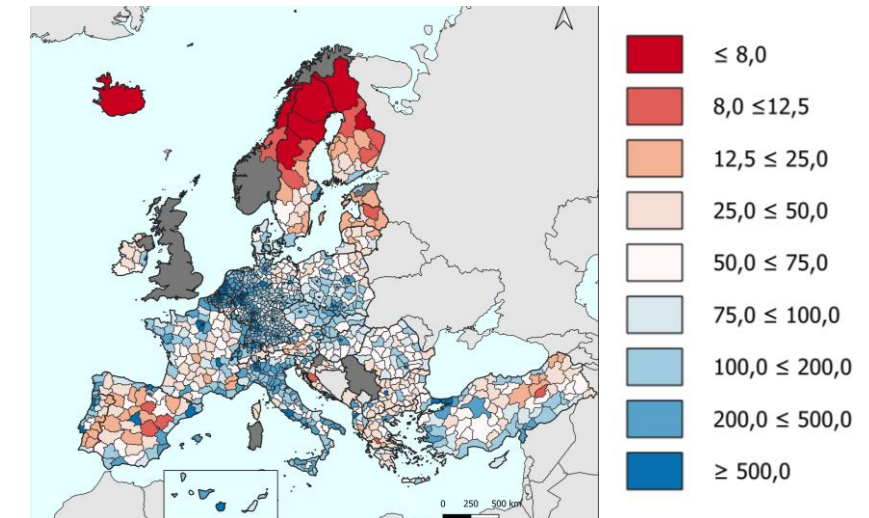
16-17 September



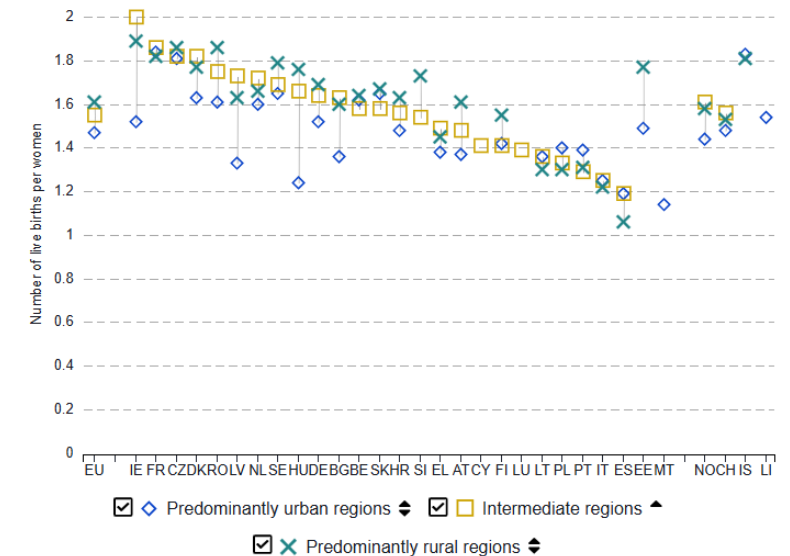
Demographic challenge: a territorial cohesion challenge

- ▶ Demographic change is a global trend but has specific characteristics in Spain:
 - Low fertility rates (1.12 Spain VS 1.38 EU average in 2023).
 - Increase in life expectancy (83.77 Spain):
 - 20% > 65 years old.
 - Rural areas: 25% > 65 years old.
 - Towns < 1,000 inhabitants : 31% > 65 years old.
 - Sparsely populated country + uneven population distribution:
 - > 4,000 municipalities (out of 8,132) < 12.5 inhabitants/km²
 - 56% territory = 8% population VS 6% territory > 40% population.
 - Population concentrates in large cities, the coast, and the Islands.
 - Depopulation generalised in rural areas:
 - > 80% municipalities in rural areas have lost population in the last decade.
- ▶ Not just a demographic issue—it's a territorial cohesion challenge that affects equity, opportunity, and democracy.

Population density per NUT3 (Inhab/km²)

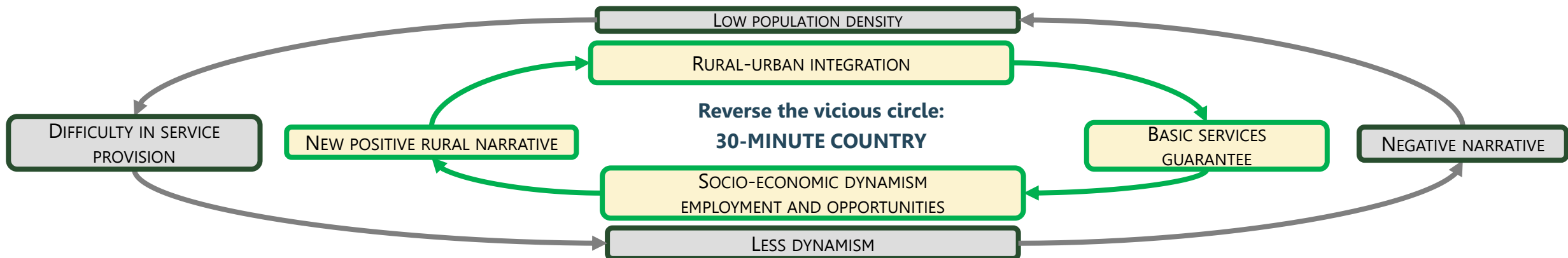


Total fertility rate by type of region, 2021
(number of live births per woman)



Demographic challenge: a country-wide policy

- ▶ Although it focuses in Rural Areas, this is a **country-wide policy for territorial equity and cohesion**
- ▶ Citizens, wherever they live, have the **right to access services and opportunities** under reasonable conditions.
- ▶ It guarantees the **right to stay**. No one forced to leave their place of origin due to lack of opportunities.
- ▶ A more **balanced territorial distribution benefits everyone**:
 - Building a country of **viable territories**, with opportunities and a future, is an asset for the whole society.
 - **Reduces pressure on large cities** (air quality, housing, transport).
 - Strengthens **strategic resilience**: food, energy, biodiversity.
 - Enables **sustainable industrial development** through decentralized renewable energy.



New strategic framework. Instruments for territorial transformation

Current Framework (Year 2019)

- Contextual approach centered on:
 - Channeling PRTR funds
 - Demographic policy
 - Diagnosis



New Framework

- Structural approach
- More policy experience
- Capacity of adjustment

National Strategy
for Territorial
Equity and the
Demographic
Challenge

Country Strategy:
All administrations
Private Sector
Civil Society

Rigorous **analysis** of
the different territorial
vulnerabilities

Identify **challenges
and opportunities**
and set **objectives**

State action plan:
"30-Minute
Country"

State Plan: measures
from all relevant
ministries and state
entities.

Specific allocated
budget for the
measures

Lessons Learned from
130 measures plan.

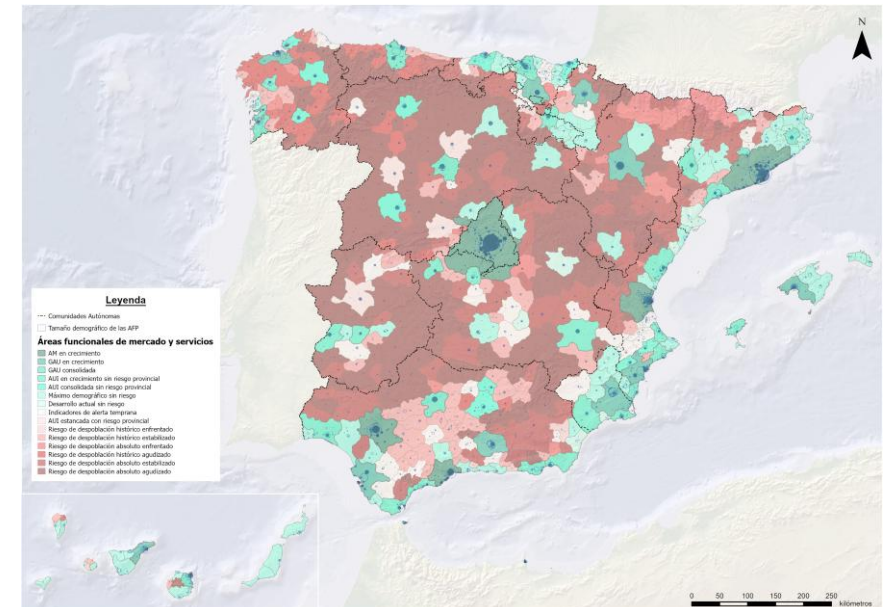
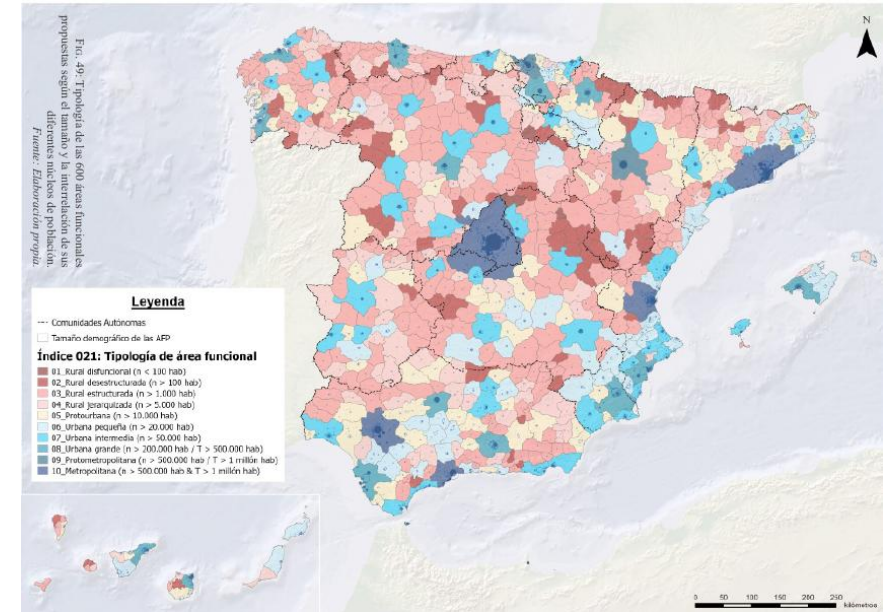
Observatory of
territorial equity
and the
demographic
challenge

**Consultation and
benchmark tool** on
the demographic
challenge and socio-
territorial cohesion

Ensures that the
measures adopted are
based on the best
available evidence

Functional rural areas: ensuring essential services within 30 minutes

- ▶ The vision for the construction of a more balanced territorial distribution in Spain is to aim for a country in which essential services are delivered within 30 minutes.
- ▶ By the end of 2024, the General Secretariat for the Demographic Challenge started a nationwide study to define functional areas based on real accessibility to services within 30 minutes.
- ▶ Using 36,846 population nuclei and Voronoi models, 600 functional areas were obtained. The areas were categorized by:
 - Population thresholds
 1. Dysfunctional rural
 2. Unstructured rural
 3. Structured rural
 4. Hierarchical rural
 5. Proto-urban
 6. Small urban
 7. Intermediate urban
 8. Large urban
 9. Proto-metropolitan
 10. Metropolitan
 - Demographic Challenge
 - Growing Metropolitan Area (AM)
 - Growing Urban Agglomeration (GAU)
 - Consolidated Urban Agglomeration (GAU)
 - Growing Intermediate Urban Area (AUI) without provincial risk
 - Consolidated Intermediate Urban Area (AUI) without provincial risk
 - Maximum demographic level without risk
 - Current development without risk
 - Early warning indicators
 - Stagnant Intermediate Urban Area (AUI) with provincial risk
 - Historical depopulation risk addressed
 - Stabilized historical depopulation risk
 - Absolute depopulation risk addressed
 - Aggravated absolute depopulation risk



Functional rural areas: a tool for smarter territorial policy

- ▶ Statistical analysis and policy impact monitoring
 - Enables consistent tracking of demographic trends and evaluation of policy effectiveness.
- ▶ Identification of functionality gaps
 - Helps detect areas with insufficient service coverage or accessibility issues.
- ▶ Improved service delivery
 - Supports administrations in designing more efficient and equitable service provision strategies.
- ▶ Inter-administrative coordination
 - Raises awareness of the need for collaboration across government levels to address territorial challenges.

“30-Minute Country”: a vision for territorial equity

- ▶ The “30-Minute Country” is a transformative vision to guarantee **equal access to services** across rural Spain.
- ▶ New perspective to look at the territory based on **functionality**, not just administrative boundaries.
- ▶ It promotes a **new rural narrative**: dynamic, inclusive, and connected.
- ▶ A call to action: let’s build a Europe where **no territory is left behind**.



Thank you!

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