



The Right to Stay Strategy

A stakeholder guide to the EU call for evidence

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Information session on the call for evidence on the “Right to Stay” strategy

20 May 2026



1. Why to participate

WHY THIS STRATEGY EXISTS

“Every European should have the possibility to live and build a life in a place they call home.”

High-Level Launch Event (6 May 2026)



Raffaele Fitto

Executive Vice-President for Cohesion & Reforms

Why to participate?

Why?

Bring rural and territorial realities into EU policy

Why?

Help share post 2027 policies

Why?

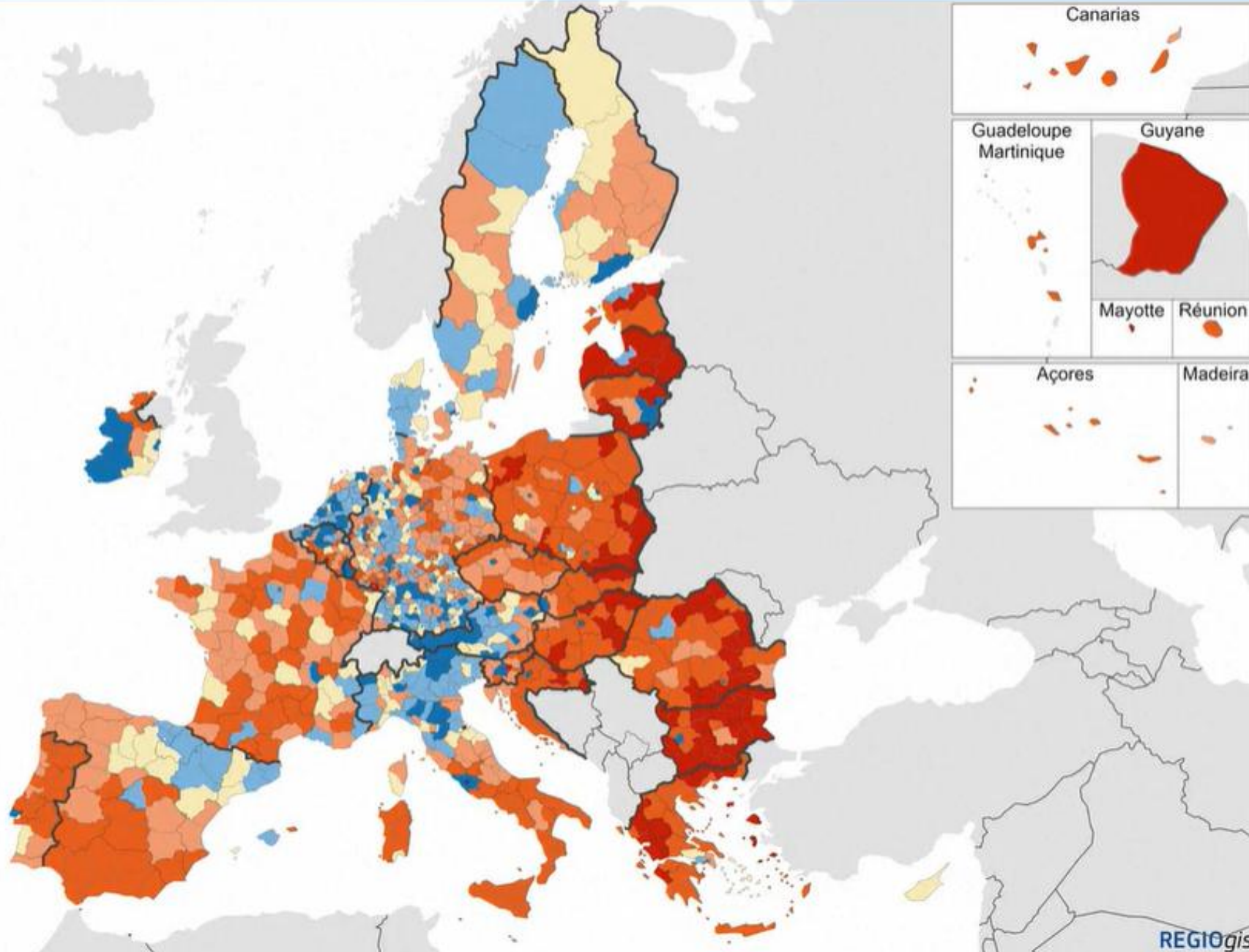
Showcase practical solutions and successful approaches



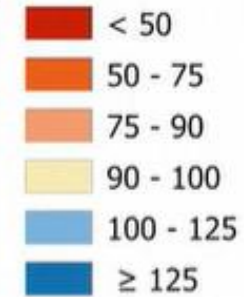
Watch the High-Level Launch Event (6 May 2026)

<https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/media/video/l-288184>

Economic disparities are still high

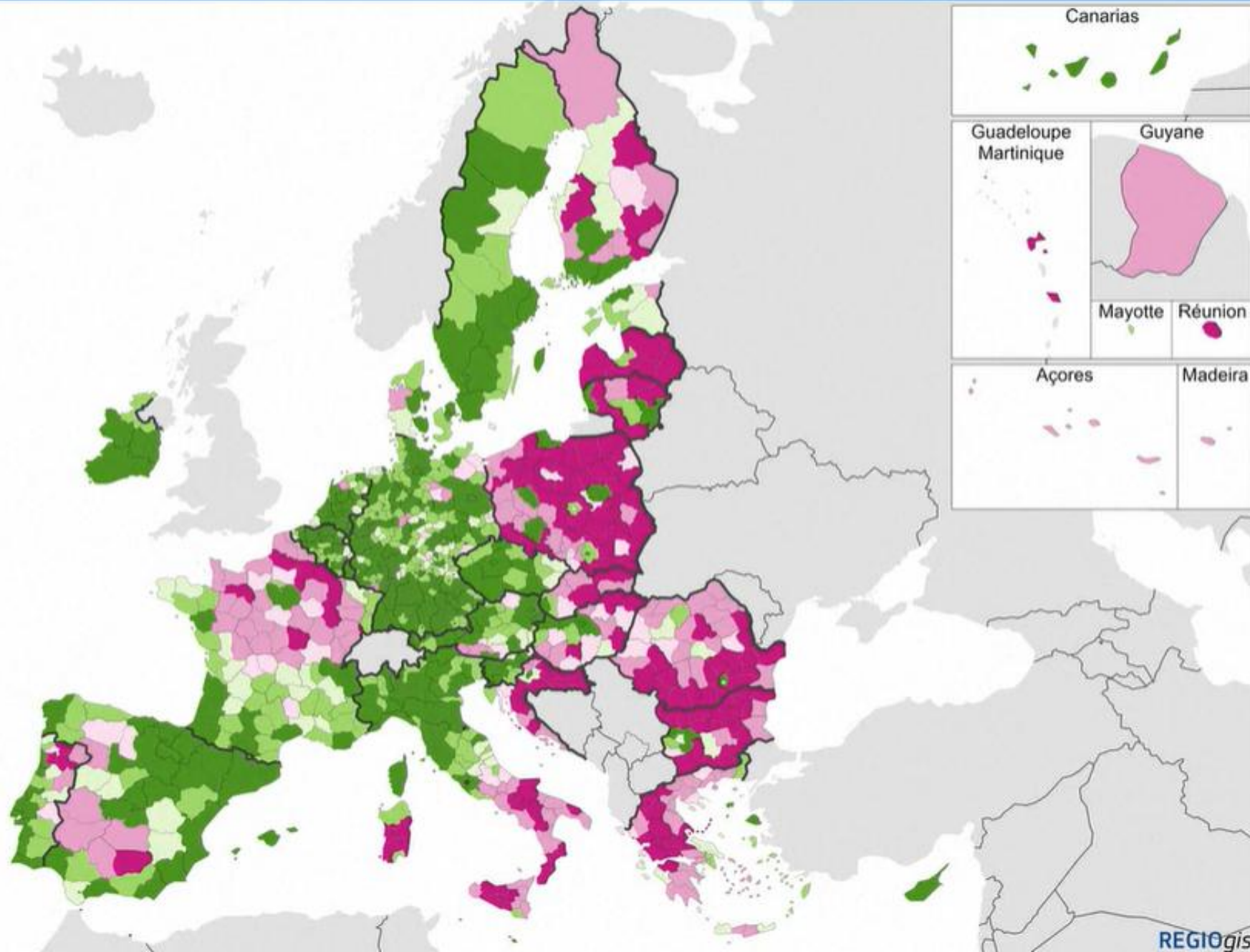


GDPpc as % EU average, PPP, 2023



- ▶ Close to 1 in 3 Europeans live in regions with GDP per capita below 75% of the EU average
- ▶ Lower income levels reduce opportunities and quality of life in many territories
- ▶ Economic disparities are a key driver of youth outmigration and territorial inequality

Regions are losing their young workforce

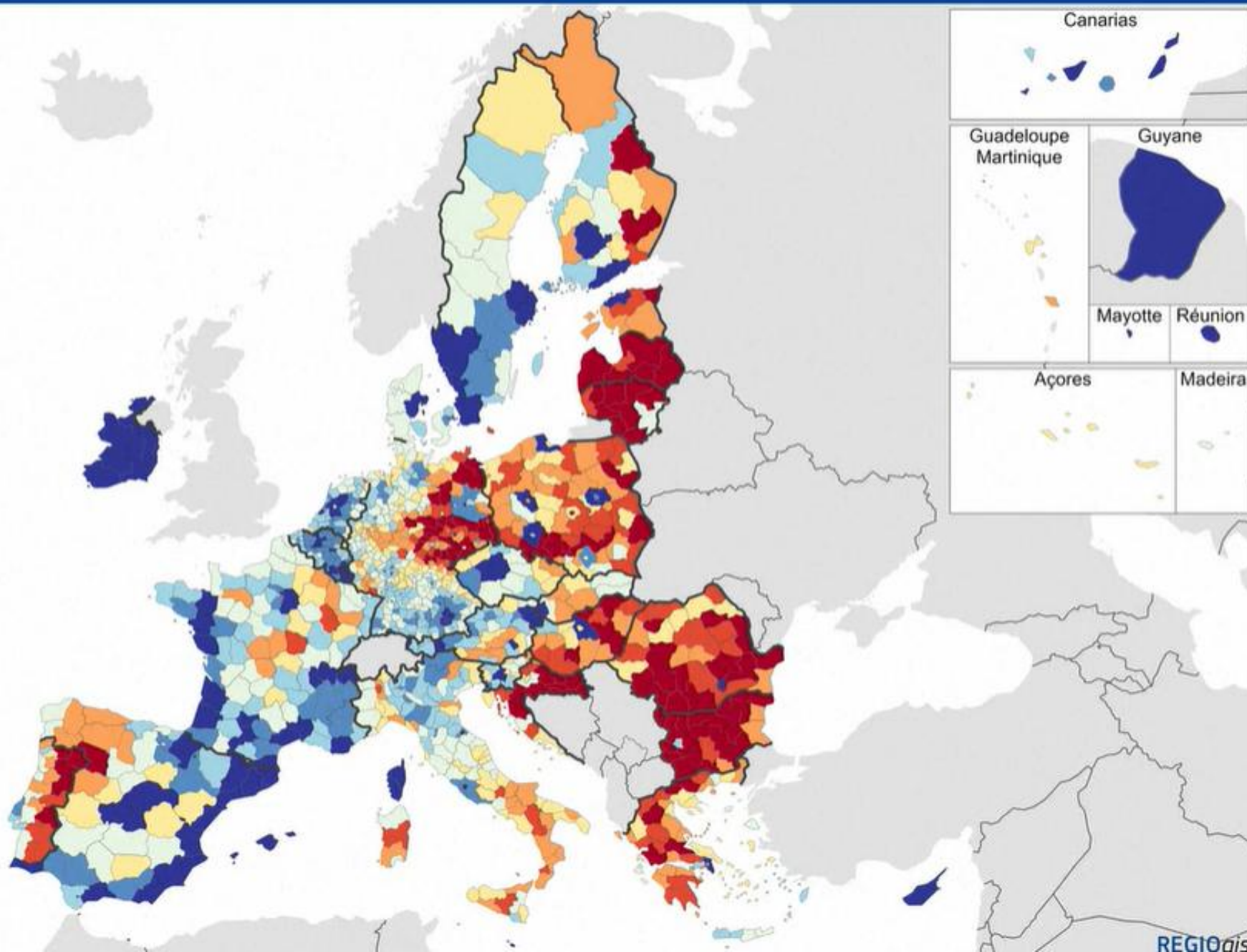


Average net migration rate per 1 000 persons (15-39 yrs old), 2014-2023

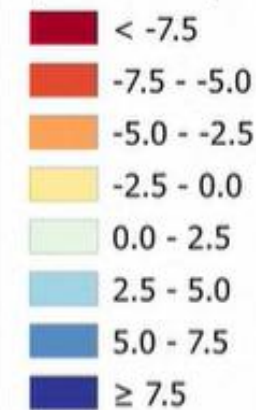


- ▶ Many EU regions are experiencing a decline in their young working-age population
- ▶ Youth outmigration reduces labour availability and economic dynamism
- ▶ Ageing populations increase pressure on health, care and social services

Population decline is affecting regions across Europe

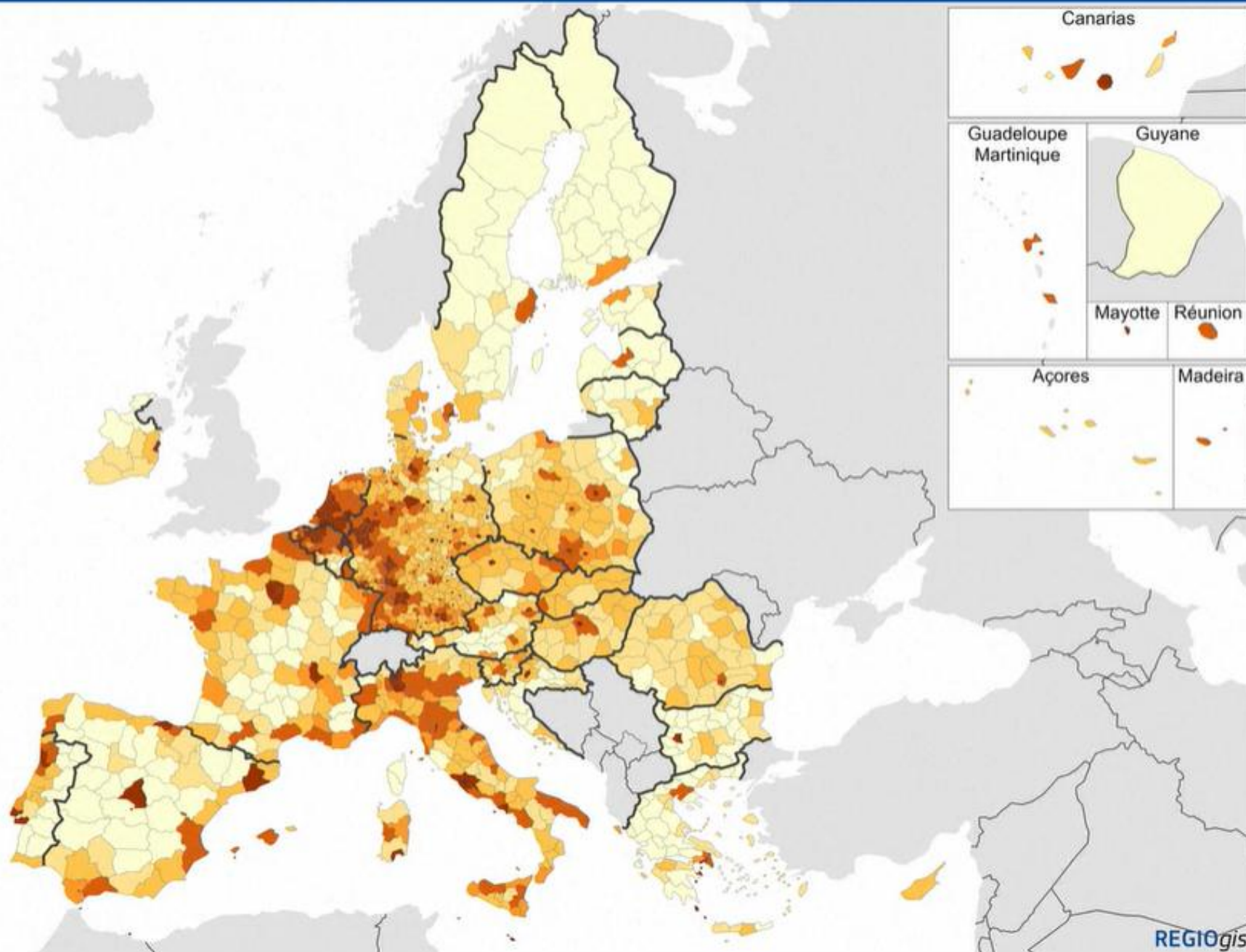


Average annual population growth rate per 1 000 persons, 2004-2023



- ▶ Population decline affects regions across nearly all EU Member States, particularly visible in parts of Eastern and Southern Europe
- ▶ Shrinking populations make it harder to maintain essential services such as healthcare, education and transport
- ▶ Declining working-age populations discourage private investment and reduce territorial attractiveness

Low population density creates structural challenges



Population density per km2, 2024



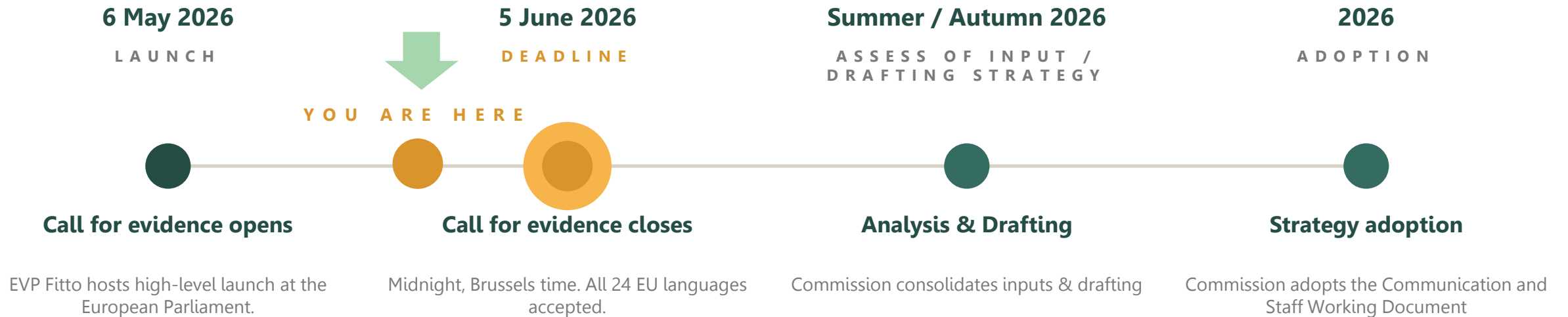
- ▶ Europe shows major territorial differences in population distribution
- ▶ Sparsely populated areas face higher costs for public service delivery and infrastructure
- ▶ Structural disadvantages risk reinforcing territorial inequalities and weakening the "right to stay" in rural areas

Sources: REGIO-GIS, Eurostat (demo_r_d3dens, 2024)

Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © UN-FAO © Turkstat

From launch to strategy

The call for evidence is one step in a longer process. Here's how it fits.



2. How to participate — three steps

DAYS LEFT

13

Submit before 5 June 2026

midnight, Brussels time

01

Visit the portal

Open the Right to Stay initiative page on the Have Your Say portal.

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/18032-Right-to-Stay-Strategy-Your-Region-Your-Future_en

02

Sign in with EU Login

Free to create — about 2 minutes. Required for all contributors.

Citizens · NGOs · businesses · public authorities · non-EU welcome

03

Submit your evidence (click on “give feedback”)

Fill the form (max 4 000 characters) and optionally attach a PDF.

All 24 EU languages · published publicly on the portal

PORTAL https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/18032-Right-to-Stay-Strategy-Your-Region-Your-Future_en

Organisations are advised to register in the EU Transparency Register first before sending their contributions. If you encounter technical issues accessing the form, try refreshing the page or using a different browser. For further information: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say_en

3. What makes a strong contribution

WHAT STANDS OUT

- ✓ **Anchored in a place and aligned to the consultation scope**
Name the region, country and type of community (rural, peripheral, mountain, island) and on aspects related to the scope of the call.
- ✓ **Transparent about who you represent**
Be explicit — LAG, NGO, university, public authority, citizen — and the constituency you speak for. Underheard and underrepresented groups are encouraged.
- ✓ **Solid evidence & ideas of solutions (What is working and what is not working)**
Don't just describe problems — suggest practical solutions and policy directions.
- ✓ **Propose concrete, scalable recommendations**
Propose feasible actions, that the EU could realistically implement, with a solution-oriented approach and scalable actions/pilots
- ✓ **Uses the attachment option**
Attach a PDF for evidence beyond 4 000 characters: studies, reports, position papers.

IDEAS OF USEFUL AREAS TO COVER

- **Access to essential services**
Health, education, transport, digital and admin services in remote areas.
- **Depopulation, Talent & Youth retention and attraction**
What keeps young people in (or pulls them out of) their home regions?
- **Local economy, multilevel governance, Cross-border cooperation**
How reinforce economies, governance and cooperation across countries for instance on service delivery (e.g. health)?
- **Successful practices**
What's working in your region — and why — that could scale.
- **Ideas / recommendations on what can the EU do**
Focus on areas of competence of the EU.

Dos and Don'ts for stakeholders

HOW TO MAKE YOUR CONTRIBUTION COUNT

✓ DO

- ✓ **Be clear, structured, concise and aligned to the scope**
Avoid jargon and acronyms unless defined, use plain language and follow a readable structure
- ✓ **Connect challenges and SOLUTIONS (IMPORTANT)**
Explain what the issue is, who is affected, why it matters, what could improve it, how can the EC help.
- ✓ **Show integrated thinking (how to territorilise action?)**
Highlight links between services, housing, mobility, jobs, governance and quality of life.
- ✓ **Bring local and underheard voices**
Young people, women, elderly, entrepreneurs, civil society, local authorities, marginalised groups.
- ✓ **Highlight practices & ideas that the EC could support**
Show what could inspire other territories and in which the EU can take action.
- ✓ **Be constructive**
Focus not only on problems but on opportunities, solutions, innovations and governance improvements.

✗ DON'T

- ✗ **Don't stay too general**
Avoid generic statements without evidence or broad political declarations only.
- ✗ **Don't focus only on agriculture**
The strategy is expected to cover wider territorial and societal dimensions.
- ✗ **Don't submit only problems without proposals**
The Commission wants to know what should change, what support is needed, what already works.
- ✗ **Don't assume quantitative data is the only valid evidence**
Practical experience and qualitative evidence are also valuable.
- ✗ **Don't work in isolation if partnerships are possible**
Joint submissions can strengthen visibility, legitimacy and impact.

Formats and approaches you can use

EXAMPLES OF WAYS TO STRUCTURE YOUR CONTRIBUTION

FORMAT 01

Short policy input

A concise document covering:

- Key challenges
- Main evidence
- Recommendations
- Territorial examples

Good for: organisations, networks, public authorities

FORMAT 02

Case study / good practice

A useful structure:

- Context / problem
- What was done & by whom
- Results & impacts
- Lessons learned & transferability

Very impactful — it shows practical, working solutions

FORMAT 03

Territorial evidence note

Can include:

- Local trends & maps
- Demographic changes
- Service-access & housing evidence
- Labour market & community views
- Other

FORMAT 04

Collective submissions

Joint contributions from networks, local authorities, rural organisations, youth & community actors.

- Demonstrate broad territorial support
- Bring collective territorial challenges, opportunities and solutions

Strength in numbers: shared legitimacy and visibility

FORMAT 05

Community consultation input

Stakeholders can also gather grassroots views directly:

- Organise local discussions
- Gather views from communities
- Summarise recurring concerns & priorities

Demonstrates participation and territorial legitimacy

4. From submission to strategy

1**Receive**

All submissions logged on the portal and published for transparency.

**2****Analyse**

Commission services process each contribution and group themes from across the EU.

**3****Synthesis of results**

Staff Working Document report consolidates results from the call for evidence.

**4****Draft**

DG REGIO drafts the Commission Communication, drawing on findings and stakeholder input, among other inputs.

**5****Adopt**

Commission adopts the Right to Stay Strategy Communication — indicative within 2026.

What the Commission must do with your input

EU BETTER REGULATION FRAMEWORK

KEY POINT The Commission is **not obliged to follow** stakeholder recommendations — but it **is obliged to transparently explain** the consultation results and how stakeholder input informed policy preparation.

WHAT THE COMMISSION MUST DO

- ✓ **Collect and consider every submission**
Review submissions and use evidence to shape policy options, identify challenges, impacts and solutions.
- ✓ **Be transparent about how input was used**
Publish a staff working document explaining main views received and how feedback informed the strategy.
- ✓ **Publish contributions publicly**
Submissions appear on the Have Your Say portal (unless confidentiality is requested).

WHAT IS NOT REQUIRED

- **Adopt specific stakeholder suggestions**
The Commission retains full discretion on the final policy proposal.
- **Follow recommendations from any contributor**
Even strong, well-evidenced submissions don't bind the Commission to a particular position.
- **Respond individually to each submission**
The Commission groups inputs and summarises them — not a one-to-one reply service.
- **Reach consensus with stakeholders**
Different views are recorded and acknowledged; divergence is documented, not resolved.

Ideas of relevant aspect to focus on



Data & research about your territories



State of services and solutions:

Connectivity

Housing

Health / Care

Education/skills

Mobility

Culture



State of rural economy and competitiveness

Jobs

Talent

Entrepreneurship



Rural resilience

Community participation

Integrated approaches

Governance

Cross-border cooperation

Territorialisation of action

Border regions

Where to find rural evidence

RURAL OBSERVATORY & RURAL PACT PLATFORM — PART 1 OF 2

FLAGSHIP DATA PLATFORM

The Rural Observatory

The JRC's interactive platform — maps and indicators on demographics, services, connectivity and the economy, down to municipal level. The single strongest source of hard data to back your submission.

Rural focus

My place

Trends

Analysis

observatory.rural-vision.europa.eu



MORE ON THE RURAL PACT PLATFORM

EU rural vision
Rural Pact Community Newsletter

Rural Pact Community

MAIN PLATFORM
Community Platform
ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu

ON-TOPIC

The Spanish region Castilla-La Mancha had faced long-standing demographic challenges in its rural interior. Around three-quarters of its municipalities had lost population over recent decades, and many small towns' population densities are far below the national average, reflecting sustained out-migration and population ageing.

In response to these challenges, the regional government implemented targeted policy responses establishing a comprehensive framework to reverse these trends. Read from the region's Commissioner for Demographic Change about how long-term legislation, investments and integrated policies improved services, connectivity and opportunities.

A pioneering legislative commitment to addressing rural depopulation
Castilla-La Mancha was the first region in Europe to adopt a [demographic law](#).

TOPIC PAGE
Access to Services
[.../topics/access-services_en](https://topics/access-services_en)

European Union

Rural Pact Community Platform

Home > Knowledge hub

KNOWLEDGE HUB
100+ resources
[.../knowledge-hub_en](https://knowledge-hub_en)

Country list

Enter a keyword

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Ireland Latvia Poland Spain
Sweden The Netherlands

COUNTRY PAGES
Initiatives by country
[.../countries_en](https://countries_en)

Publications & good practices to cite

RURAL PACT PLATFORM — PART 2 OF 2

Concrete materials you can reference, cite or attach as a PDF in your submission.



POLICY BRIEFING

Making the Rural Pact happen

RPSO guidance on place-based policies for rural areas.

ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/publications



GOOD PRACTICES

Inspiring projects & case studies

Searchable database — filter by topic, country and type.

ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/good-practice



MAGAZINE & NEWS

Rural Vision Magazine

Annual magazine and in-depth articles on rural policy.

ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/publications

RURAL PACT EVENTS

ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/events

Recordings, slides and discussion summaries on the themes most relevant to the call for evidence.

● Housing

● Mobility

● Digital skills

● Rural innovation

● Youth

● Health

● Climate change

● Energy transition

● Rural proofing

● Depopulation

● Policy coordination

● Green transition



Thank you



Let's build the rural future, together.



JOIN THE COMMUNITY

Become a member of the Rural Pact

ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/become-member_en



VISIT THE PLATFORM

Explore resources

ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu

