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# ESPON Seminar

## Small and medium-sized cities in Europe

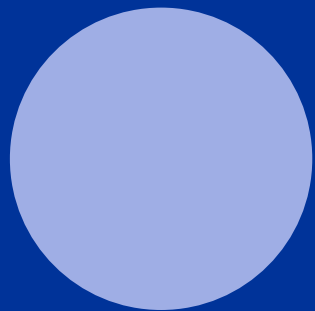
15-16 November 2023 in Cuenca, Spain

***Small Places Matter: TA2030 Pilot Action***

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# Pilot Action on Small Places Matter and the Preparatory Action on Smart Rural Areas



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## Small Places Matter in TA2030

- ✓ **Cushion polarisation**  
between core and periphery
- ✓ **Role in regional economic development and social wellbeing,**
- ✓ Scope for **cooperation** across levels of governance

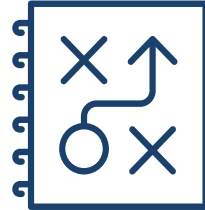
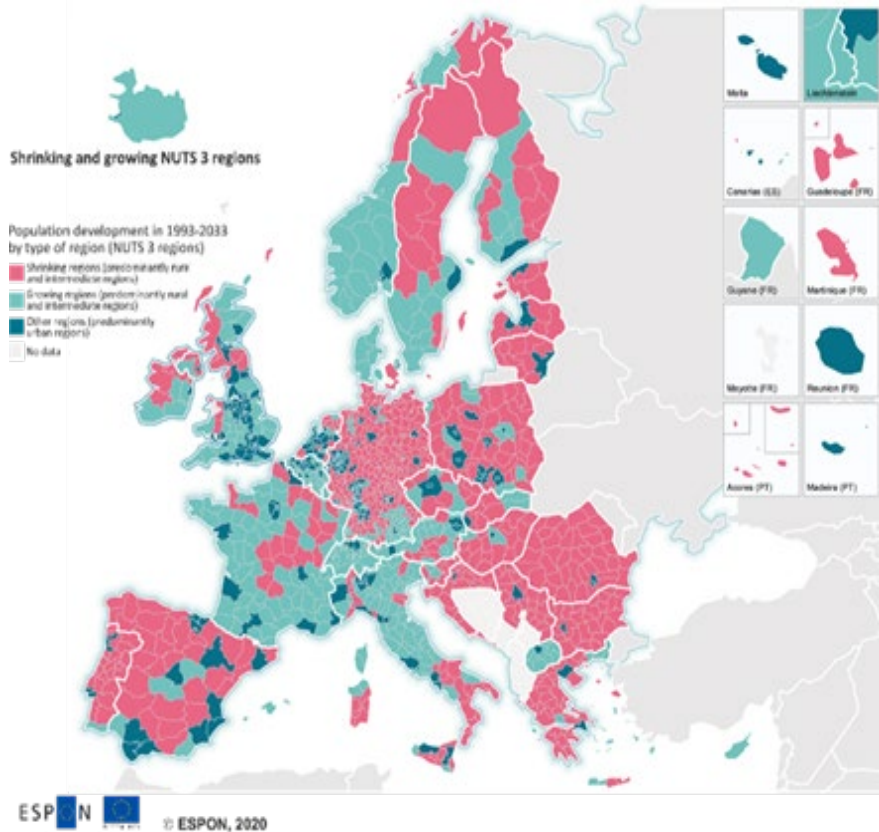


- + Increased policy focus on small towns
  - + Role in informing top-down policy
  - + Enabling bottom-up initiatives
- + High expectations of small towns
  - + Role beyond size
  - + Hubs and connectors
  - + Local engagement and consultation
- + Numerous opportunities for cooperation

**Capacity**

Pilot Partners	Supporting TA 2030 & Small Places	Example
 many	Capacity Building Participation and engagement	Small Town Academy Revitalisation of small town centre/ public participation in planning (Rodewisch)
 nd	Domestic Strategic Policy Coordination	Town Centre First Framework
 nd	Intermunicipal cooperation Supporting capacity building for strategic planning	Programme for Local Development Intermunicipal cooperation
 ay	Cross border and transnational cooperation Capacity building	InterregNorway/Sweden CBC and Northern Periphery and Arctic Transnational Interreg Programme Disstriktssenteret
 Sweden	Intermunicipal cooperation Capacity	Region 10 Municipal Cooperation
 Switzerland	Thematic engagement Place-based responses	Pilot Action on addressing Climate change in Alpine towns
 DG Regio, DG Agri.	Collaboration Synergies	Development of rural vision Data/Analysis

# Examples



- **TA 2030/DG AGRI/Rural Vision**
  - integrating policy approaches and resources



- **ESPON**
  - Data and analysis on the role of small places
  - Work with NO/SE CBC Programme



- **Intermunicipal Cooperation** - Poland

- Addressing 'loss of economic function' of small town
- Technical assistance approach strengthening joint local development planning in marginalized rural municipalities



- **Cooperation Platforms** – Sweden

- Region 10 runs joint advocacy work, both regionally, nationally and internationally



Source:  
<https://region10.se/region-8/>



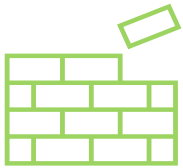
- **Northern Periphery and Arctic** - Interreg Transnational

- Work with small places
- Arctic cross programme collaboration - visibility for small places and capitalisation of projects

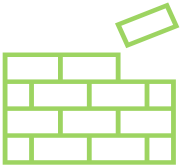




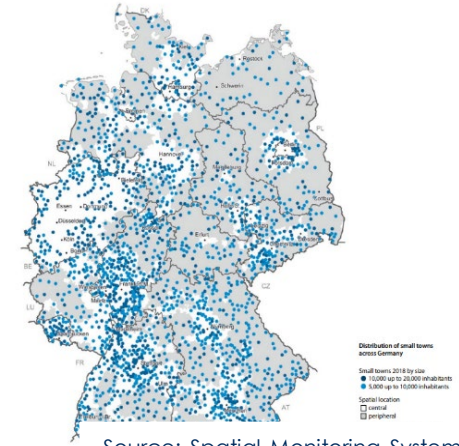
- **Cross-border cooperation** - Scandinavian Mountains (NO/SE)
  - Connections to municipalities within the cross-border area as closer than those with other municipalities within their own countries



- **Capacity Building** – Germany
  - Small Town Academy (DE)
    - ‘Developed by, with and for small places’



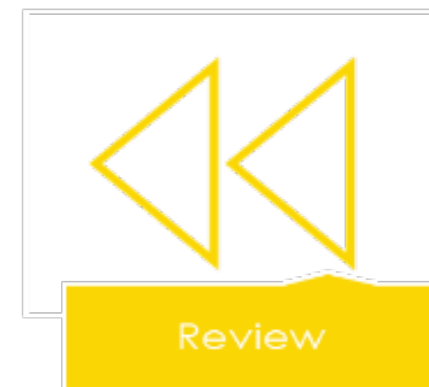
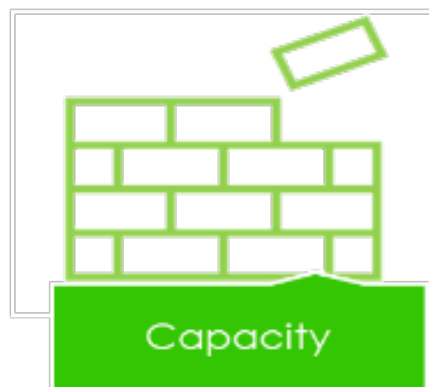
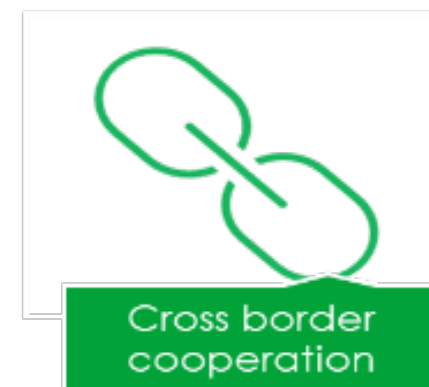
- ***Distriktssenteret: Norway***
  - Strengthen municipalities and regions' ability to develop attractive and fast-growing local communities
    - capacity building support for place-specific interventions



Source: Spatial Monitoring System of the, BBSR Geometry: municipal. conglomerations, (generalised borders), 31.12.2018 © GeoBasisDE/BKG Author: A. Milbert



# *Pilot Action identified tools and steps to help small places build capacity and better integrate and involve small places in territorial development*





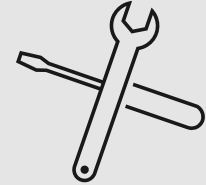
# Observations and take aways

## Key principles:



- Small Places do matter!
- Value of territorial/place-based approach
- Capacity building is key  
    'First Step' capacity building a priority
- Territorial cooperation add value
- Links across initiatives and link to future

## Tools:



- **Strategy, e.g.** TA 2030 as enabler/lever
- **Data and insight:** solid comparative information and analysis (e.g. ESPON)
- tailored place specific insights (e.g. citizen engagement tools, expert advisory support,
- **Formulation and prioritisation:** managing dialogue and exchange
- **Delivery:** Tailored place-based solutions should not imply working in isolation

# **Linking Small Places and Smart Villages**

## **Policy Lab at EWRC 2023 in Brussels**

# The European Smart Village Journey

## HISTORY OF THE EU'S SMART VILLAGES CONCEPT



# Smart Rural 21

## Objective of Smart Rural 21

To support rural communities in developing Smart Village Strategies and implement smart actions (including renewable energy, digital services, local entrepreneurship, rural mobility, etc.).





# Smart Rural 27

## Overall objective of Smart Rural 27

To prepare Member States and rural communities for the implementation of the CAP post-2020 as well as other policies and initiatives which could potentially support the emergence of Smart Villages across the EU.





# Table Discussion: What we've done in the Smart Rural project to support communities? And you?

- **Capacity-building:** What we learned from working with local rural communities across Europe while supporting them in Smart Village strategies and actions?
- **Cooperation:** How we enable cooperation among rural communities and between different governance levels? (The Smart Village Pilot Observatory)
- **Funding:** How we are trying to make sure that small local communities get access to various (EU) funds?

Actions putting the Territorial Agenda into practice

## Small places matter

Small places matter: Understanding how small places can boost their role for the development of a wider territory

Small and medium-sized places are an important pillar of Europe's territorial DNA and home to a large part of Europe's population. The pilot action's focus is on the vital role of small towns and villages in the development of integrated territorial development processes, strengthening the territorial coordination of policies and cooperation between territories. The work addresses the questions: how can the Territorial Agenda become relevant for small



places; and how can small places be 'boosted' in their role for territorial development? Of particular

Actions putting the  
Territorial Agenda into  
practice

A future for lagging  
regions

Understanding how  
sector policies shape  
spatial (im)balances

Small places matter

Cross-border spatial  
planning

Climate action in Alpine  
towns

Climate change  
adaptation and resilience  
through landscape  
transition

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Thank you!

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