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# Small and Medium-Sized Towns and Cities

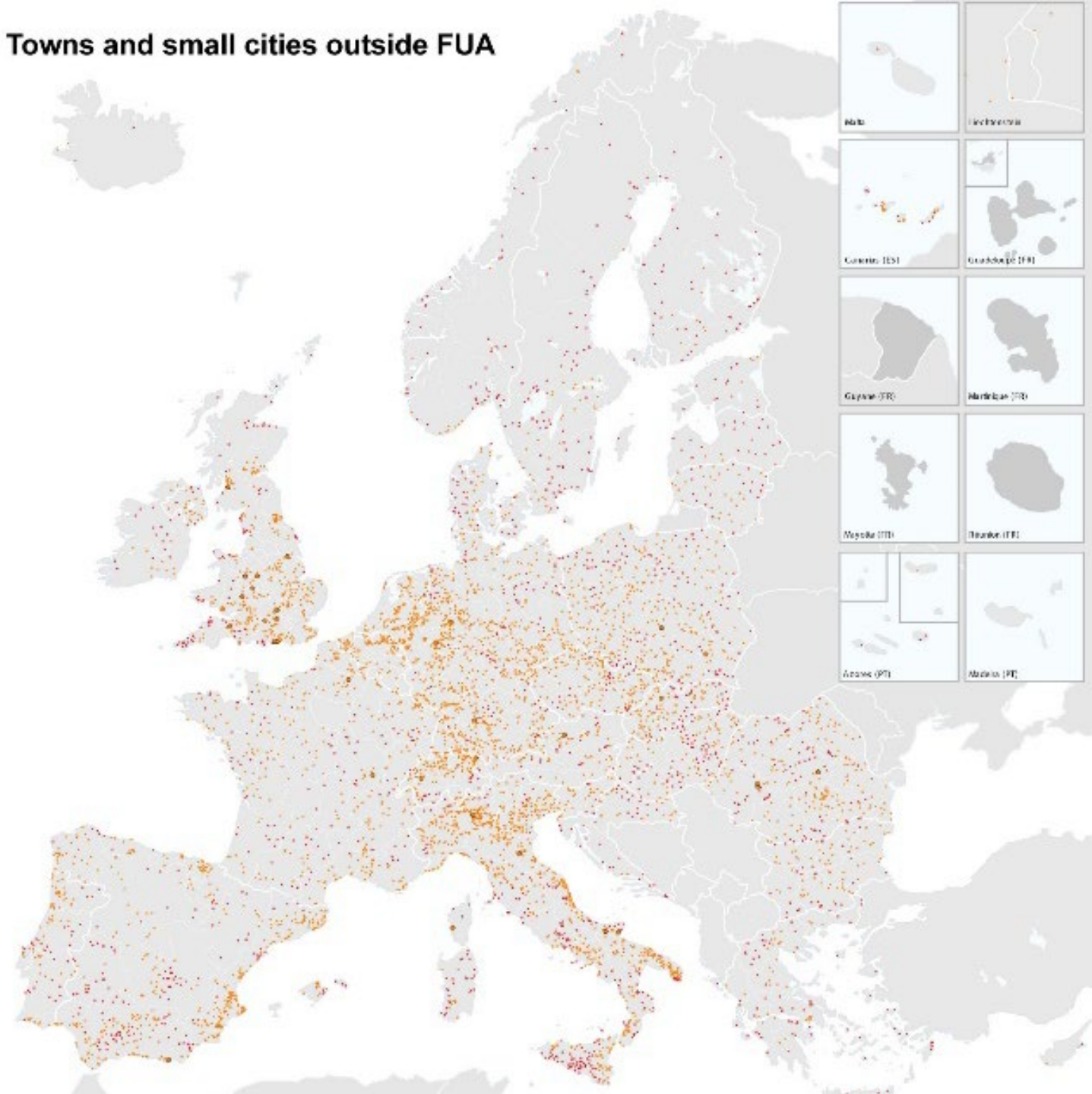
*Strengthening their role in achieving active,  
inclusive and functional territories*



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15-16 November 2023, Cuenca, Spain

Small and medium-sized towns and cities form a backbone of the polycentric urban structure of Europe

Towns and small cities outside FUA



# A new policy paper by ESPON

ESPON service requested to address the key territorial priority of the **Spanish Presidency** of the Council of the EU through new territorial evidence

Two policy questions formulated:

How could small and medium-sized towns and cities contribute more to the social and territorial cohesion of the EU in general and of some countries in particular?

How should national, regional and local policies support the development of small and medium-sized towns and cities in a long-term perspective?

Spotlight on policies at the **EU level**, in **Spain, Portugal, Italy and Germany** + local success stories

## POLICY PAPER //

### Small and medium-sized towns and cities

Policies strengthening their role in achieving active,  
inclusive, and functional territories

Draft // November 2023





# Local success stories

- Soria (**ES**) – a small but vibrant capital of a demographically “bleeding” rural province
- Villena (**ES**) – town in the national transport corridor
- Merida (**ES**) – a medium-sized capital of the autonomous community but not the capital of its lower-tier administrative unit (province)
- Fundão (**PT**) – a node in the polycentric regional urban system
- Saluzzo (**IT**) – a pivotal point of connection between a system of mountain valleys and the flatland
- Oschersleben (**DE**) – a small but important urban centre in the German Central Place



# Successful policy pathways in the six towns/cities

The orientation of public policies to achieve strategic transformation and make the SMSTC the drivers for regional development in low-density territories:

- Strategic urban transformation for achieving sustainable development models
- Supporting territorial cooperation between small and medium-sized towns and cities
- Attracting funds and providing engineering support to foster project implementation
- Developing own economic models based on local assets





# A selection of policy options ...

- Design financial instruments at both national and European level to allow the development of **urban-rural projects** managed by intermediary cities (regardless of the number of inhabitants).
- Foster **functional urban-rural spaces** that bring these centres together, generating the articulation of mobility dynamics, provision of services, support for entrepreneurship and access to centres of excellence and the strategic vectors in line with the idea of the 30 min territory.
- Develop synergies of **governance** and institutional (**intermunicipal!**) **cooperation** that incorporate the diversity of local scales, with special emphasis on the management of common elements linked to strategic services.
- Boost **capacity building**, among others by facilitating mutual learning and networking between authorities and administration.
- Stimulate **participatory approach** to pursuing the transformation of local development, based on innovation, the use of territorial capital and internationalisation.
- Provide dedicated **evidence and data** to track the development paths of SMSTC to be able to undertake place-sensitive development measures.



# Good practices and new approaches

A new integrative **policy instrument** between rural and urban areas to achieve inclusive and functional territorial development

Key approaches to support the development of small and medium-sized towns and cities:

- promoting **integrated place-based methods** and tools;
- developing **local skills and administrative capacities**.
- supporting **networks for mutual learning** and empowerment;
- funding **targeted development strategies**;



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**// Thank you**

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