ESCAPE – The future of Europe's Shrinking Rural Regions
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Why this project?
- Predominantly rural regions have the lowest rates of GDP per capita (72.4% of EU average).
- The population of predominantly rural regions is projected to decrease towards 2050.
- Recent EU territorial development policy is primarily directed at cities.
- What can be done to support shrinking rural regions?

Key policy questions:
- Where are Europe’s shrinking rural regions?
- What are the specific factors that determine rural shrinkage?
- What are the critical challenges and potential opportunities?
- What are the implications of rural shrinkage for EU territorial cohesion and convergence?
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Time table:
- Inception delivery, 13 May 2019
- Interim delivery, 13 December 2019
- Draft Final delivery, 13 May 2020
- Final delivery, 14 September 2020

Lead service provider:
- University of Eastern Finland, FI
ESCAPE – the big picture

- **Simple shrinking**: a region losing a significant proportion of its population (outmigration and natural decrease of population)
  - relatively easily measured matter of population numbers → indicating just one side of the coin
- **Complex shrinking**: a region is a simultaneously demographic and economic process
  - number of associated issues: levels of economic activity and employment, sectoral structure, productivity, innovation, social capital, “institutional thickness” and governance capacity
  - opens up the question to discover background socio-economic cause and effect processes → the other side of the coin
- In terms of both shrinking processes **key questions are**:
  - When territorial assets fall short of a critical mass required for “meaningful” endogenous development processes?
  - What are the appropriate methods to underline not only the demographic, economic and political but also the social and psychological determinants of shrinkage?
ESCAPE – innovative outcome

- We will not look on two sides of the coin but also the third side of the coin – using edge of the coin as a vantage point.
- We will make clear distinction between mitigation policies and those which accept, and adapt to the inevitability of continued shrinking, by increasing individual wellbeing.
- We will make a deep dive to different shrinking processes in eight case studies: DE, FI, BU, HU, HR, ES, EL & PL

**Innovative outcomes:**

- potential for innovation in secondary and market service growth sectors
- relevance of non-economic driving forces for shrinking processes
- relevance of a healthy degree of egocentrism as efficient local management
- building a stronger capacity of place-based neo-endogenous development in Europe’s shrinking rural areas