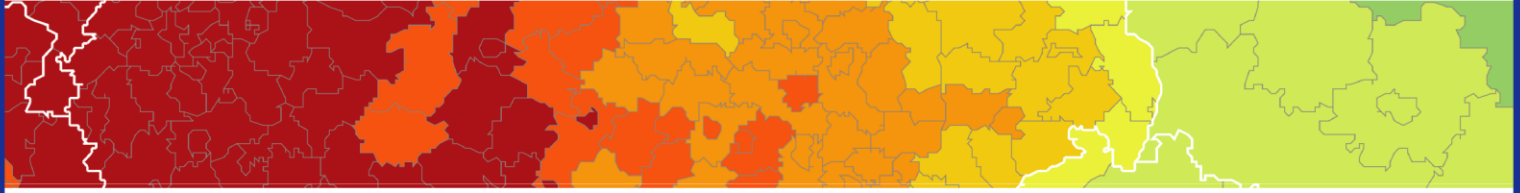


Inspire policy making by territorial evidence



# Urban-rural Connectivity in Non-metropolitan Regions (URRUC)

Targeted Analysis Activity

**Executive Summary**

5/06/2019

This targeted analysis activity is conducted within the framework of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme, partly financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

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## Abbreviations

CP	Cohesion Policy Programmes
EC	European Commission
ECF	European Cohesion Fund
ESPO	European Territorial Observatory Network
EU	European Union
NMR	Non Metropolitan Regions
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
UK	United Kingdom
URUC	Urban-rural Connectivity in Non-metropolitan Regions

# 1 Introduction

The objective of the 'Urban-Rural connectivity in Non-Metropolitan Areas' project is to contribute to understanding of how to improve connectivity and accessibility in Non-Metropolitan regions within the EU. Metropolises are classified according to population, territories where a large urban centre(s), 250,000 persons or more, serves as the focal point for an identifiable region. NMRs are territories where smaller urban centres struggle to attract the same levels of support and priorities for policyholders and suffer from comparative under-development. URRUC addressed the challenge of countering under-development in NMRs by focussing on four case study areas across the EU and making recommendations, both specific and general, that are transferable to comparable territories across Europe.

The four territories focussed on were: Scarborough Borough, in the UK; Marina Alta, Spain; Valle Arroscia in the Province of Imperia, Italy, and; Västerbotten County, Sweden. All four were coastal territories with comparable challenges around transport and connectivity, but were also substantially different enough to add value to case study analyses. Notably, one of these territories, Marina Alta in Spain, was classified as a small metro region at federal level, but as a non-metropolitan region at national level. This particular case study demonstrated the importance of a bottom-up approach to investigation and subsequent policy recommendations.

Central to the URRUC project was the concept of functional regions. This idea views the internal functioning dynamics of a region as being best perceived as the social, economic and spatial linkages across a territory, connecting urban and rural areas in terms of governance, services provision, employment, leisure and lifestyle. By optimising transport solutions these urban-rural linkages would be strengthened, improving access and movement across this urban-rural divide. Accessibility could also be improved for both groups of residents by focussing on other delivery formats for certain Eservices so recommendations were also made in relation to these.

The project therefore focussed on exploring urban-rural linkages in the four case study areas. A set of policy development tools were created based on literature and case study analysis. The policy development tool generated specific recommendations for each area and were central to a tailored case study report developed for each individual territory. As transferability was a core component of the project, general policy recommendations for improving transport connectivity and accessibility in comparable NMRs were also created, details of which are included in the main report and scientific annexes. The final and integral component of the project were EU policy recommendations for improving and optimising interactions with stakeholders in NMRs, as well as informing about potential gaps in policy coverage and how to address them. These recommendations from the project are captured below.

## 2 Policy recommendations

Building on data collection, territorial typologies and case studies, a number of specific policy recommendations are made for improving connectivity and accessibility in non-metropolitan regions. These are derived from tools generated during the project, as well as recommendation from analysing Cohesion Policy programmes juxtaposed to findings from URRUC.

### 2.1 Guidelines and Recommendations for European regions

Recommendations were captured under two broad categories, **Specific** and **General**. These overarching themes were then further sub-divided into; **Market, Consumers perceptions, Stakeholders, Policy and government, Economic, Sociocultural and technological features**. Tailored solutions for the four regions are viewable in the scientific annexes. The transferable solutions that inform policymakers in comparable NMRs are described here.

#### 2.1.1 Operational recommendations

URRUC focuses on **Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)** solutions to encourage a shift from private car use. In this way accessibility and connectivity can be optimised. Policy tools developed offer a range of DRT ideas and outlines their usefulness to various consumer groups, detailing their cost value, social value and optimal operation. **Possible alternatives to private car considered include**; taxis and shared taxicabs, village minibus (mixed use), social transport, shuttle vans, feeder transport, buses on demand, car sharing and car clubs, ride sharing and service delivery.

The second area that was considered was **non-material and transversal actions**. This included focusing on improving accessibility through solutions such as digital platforms and smart ticketing, as well as dematerialisation of services, for example telemedicine, telecare, e-learning and e-government. Central to the success of such activities, which can be considered at levels such as NUTS 2, NUTS 3 or even consortia of LAU 1 and 2, is collaboration and coordination of local institutions.

The final area that was focussed on in the cases studies that have transferable components was **structural interventions and intermodality**. Possible interventions to structurally improve mobility and support multimodality include: road or rail extension, intermodal parking facilities for bikes and cars, integrated multimodal ticketing and intermodal passenger transport e.g bike racks on public transport.

#### 2.1.2 Recommendations for the specific context

The following actions are recommended to improve urban-rural connectivity in NMRs:

- Careful analysis of users' needs
- Targeted policies (various users)
- Strengthen a public transport friendly culture
- Mixed use of transport services
- Strengthen local skills and roles
- More funds for transport projects
- More importance given to the tourism sector
- To better inform population

### **2.1.3 Recommendations for the general context**

The following actions and measures are recommended for transport policy:

- Governance (horizontal and vertical)
- Flexibility (rules and procedures)
- Compact urban development
- Reverse marginalisation
- Bridge the digital divide

## **2.2 Recommendations for EU policy making**

Building on the above recommendations, as well as on the evidence collected through the case study analysis and on the review of the literature and recent European research projects on the matter, this section aims to address guidelines and recommendations to the EU transport and connectivity policies impacting in urban-rural connections.

### **2.2.1 Guidelines relevant to EU transport and connectivity policy**

- Strengthening territorial cohesion: Rural-rural and rural-urban connections in NMRs should be considered as an element that strengthens territorial cohesion and, therefore, central in terms of policies.
- Transport and tourism: In those case study territories where tourism is an economic driver, significant seasonal differences in terms of transport demand and number of users of public transport services can occur.
- Strengthening rural-urban collaboration: Strengthening rural-urban collaboration in development policy planning is fundamental to allow both rural and urban population, economic activities and organizations to access all local services and activities
- Organic development of transport policy: Area-based strategy formulated by local stakeholders through a community-led approach should steer in multi-faceted solutions backed by regional, national and EU resources
- Improving understanding of functional regions: a representative model of urban-rural linkages should be investigated, to better understand the functional nature of regions

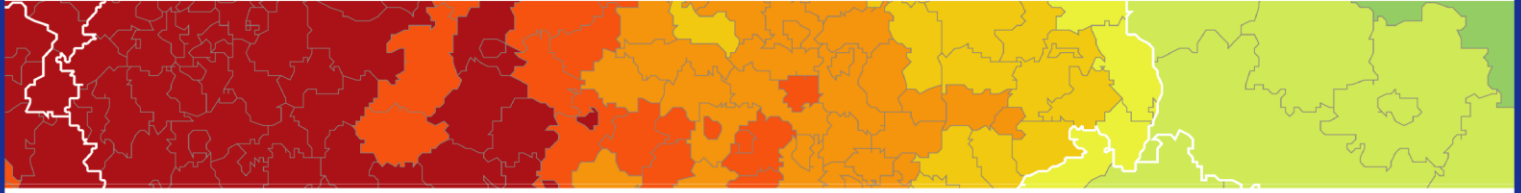
- Maintaining economic activities and encouraging growth: EU transport policy should stimulate flexible, cost and energy-saving, solutions
- Streamlining EU funding application processes: further effort towards the simplification and lightening of the bureaucratic burden in EU funded projects
- Digitisation of services: Digitisation of services (e-care, e-education, e-administration, etc.) reduces displacements and optimises public administration resources
- Improved governance and collaboration: European, national and regional institutions should include mechanisms that bind the funding of transport and connectivity projects in rural areas.
- Sustainable transport policy: Planning and testing periods should also be considered, in order to verify the feasibility of proposed solutions.

### **2.2.2 The UK as a member of the European Union**

The delayed agreement on the future partnership of the EU and UK means that the URRUC project was not completed before the final treaty agreement. Therefore it is not possible to determine with absolute accuracy the impact of withdrawal. One measure that can be used to estimate the impact of leaving the EU is that of European funding. It will prove difficult to fill the void created by EU funding. Below are some approaches to mitigate the challenge;

- Improve dialogue between funding authorities and regional and local actors
- Clarify and appropriately structure the remit of regional and local authorities for investment and economic development
- Address the constraints created by matched funding requirements
- Central funding is frequently too cyclical
- Market led solutions are too short term and create social gaps
- Longer term investment is crucial to the well-being of local authorities
- A strong place-based approach is required for Scarborough





### **ESPON 2020 – More information**

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