



Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

POLICY BRIEF

Inner peripheries in Europe

Possible development strategies
to overcome their marginalising effects

Inner peripheries have in common the fact that their general performance, levels of development, access to services of general interest, and quality of life of the population are relatively worse than those of their neighbouring territories. Regions that are inner peripheral exist as the result of multiple combinations of processes, features and evolutionary dynamics affecting all kinds of territories across Europe. Inner peripheries are present in almost all European countries. The purpose of this policy brief is to explain what inner peripheral regions are and where they are located in Europe; explore key development challenges and opportunities; explain what inner peripheries should consider when developing strategies to overcome their marginalising effects; and present policy recommendations at European, national and regional levels to support the actions of local stakeholders to deal with the associated challenges.

KEY POLICY MESSAGES

Inner peripheral areas can be (a) enclaves of low economic potential, (b) areas with poor access to services of general interest or (c) areas experiencing a lack of relational proximity. A combination of these is, of course, also possible.

For these areas, it is important to develop **strategic institutional capacity** by establishing cooperation and connectedness across boundaries and making use of established national and EU programmes. **Connectedness** generates synergies, networks and other types of links that allow inner peripheries to have a presence when relevant decisions are made.

Developing **strategic plans** with an **integrated approach**, addressing in particular the need to overcome the lack of cooperation, appears to be important for all

types of inner peripheries. This makes visible the specific needs of inner peripheries, enlarges their influence at higher policy decision-making levels and increases their development potential in general.

To support inner peripheries in developing strategic plans and cooperation, it is recommended that the role of intermediary **regional agencies or platforms** is strengthened and that their long-term effectiveness is ensured.

Inner peripheral regions appear to have a shared perception of “being forgotten” in the national political agenda. Therefore, at the regional, national and European levels, inner peripheries need to be given the necessary **political attention** and support for their development processes to overcome their marginalising effects.

1. What are inner peripheries and where are they located in Europe?

Understanding inner peripherality

Inner peripheral areas exist as the result of multiple combinations of processes, features and evolutionary dynamics. This causes significant limitations in their development potential and affects all kinds of territories across Europe.

A core aspect of inner peripherality is the capacity of a territory to “connect” with its environment. This is determined not only by “geography” but also by relational connectedness, i.e. non-spatial factors and processes. Relational connectedness generates synergies, networks and other types of links that allow regions to have a presence when relevant decisions are made.

The way local actors interact, the level of insertion in relevant networks, and the capacity of local institutions, organisations and companies to establish links with other entities in contiguous territories and beyond illustrate the relevance of being “connected”.

A well-connected territory offers more and better possibilities for development, better conditions of access to services of general interest (SGI), and a more dynamic labour market capable of retaining a skilled population. All these advantages, in turn, generate opportunities to establish new connections, generating virtuous circles that favour better-connected territories. Conversely, highly “disconnected” areas, whatever the combination of causal processes and factors, tend to reproduce that situation over a longer time because of the evolutionary character of “disconnection” and its feedback effects.

Three main concepts of inner peripherality have been identified, each characterised by its own drivers and impacts and, therefore, by its own intervention possibilities.

In **enclaves of low economic potential** (IP1) the connectivity gap is the long travel time to centres of economic activity, leading to low “economic potential”. Responses need to consider improving connections to main transport networks through conventional infrastructure improvements, logistics systems or travel cost reductions.

In **areas with poor access to services of general interest** (IP2) the emphasis is on intra-regional service delivery/access, perhaps incorporating novel IT-based solutions. Restructuring administrative areas in search of scale economies may cause or worsen this type of IP.

In **areas lacking relational proximity** (IP3) the emphasis is on non-spatial factors and processes leading to low levels of socio-economic performance. Interventions suggest strengthening the interaction among local actors.

Map 1 shows the areas in Europe identified as inner peripheral according to one of the three concepts. For each area, the main drivers provoking peripheralisation are indicated as follows:

1. areas where the main driver is a poor economic or demographic situation (IP1 and IP3) (46 % of the total);
2. areas whose main driver is poor access to services and/or to regional centres (IP2) (45 %); and
3. areas showing evidence of both drivers that constitute acute forms of IP (IP1, IP2 and IP3), which affect 9 % of the total.

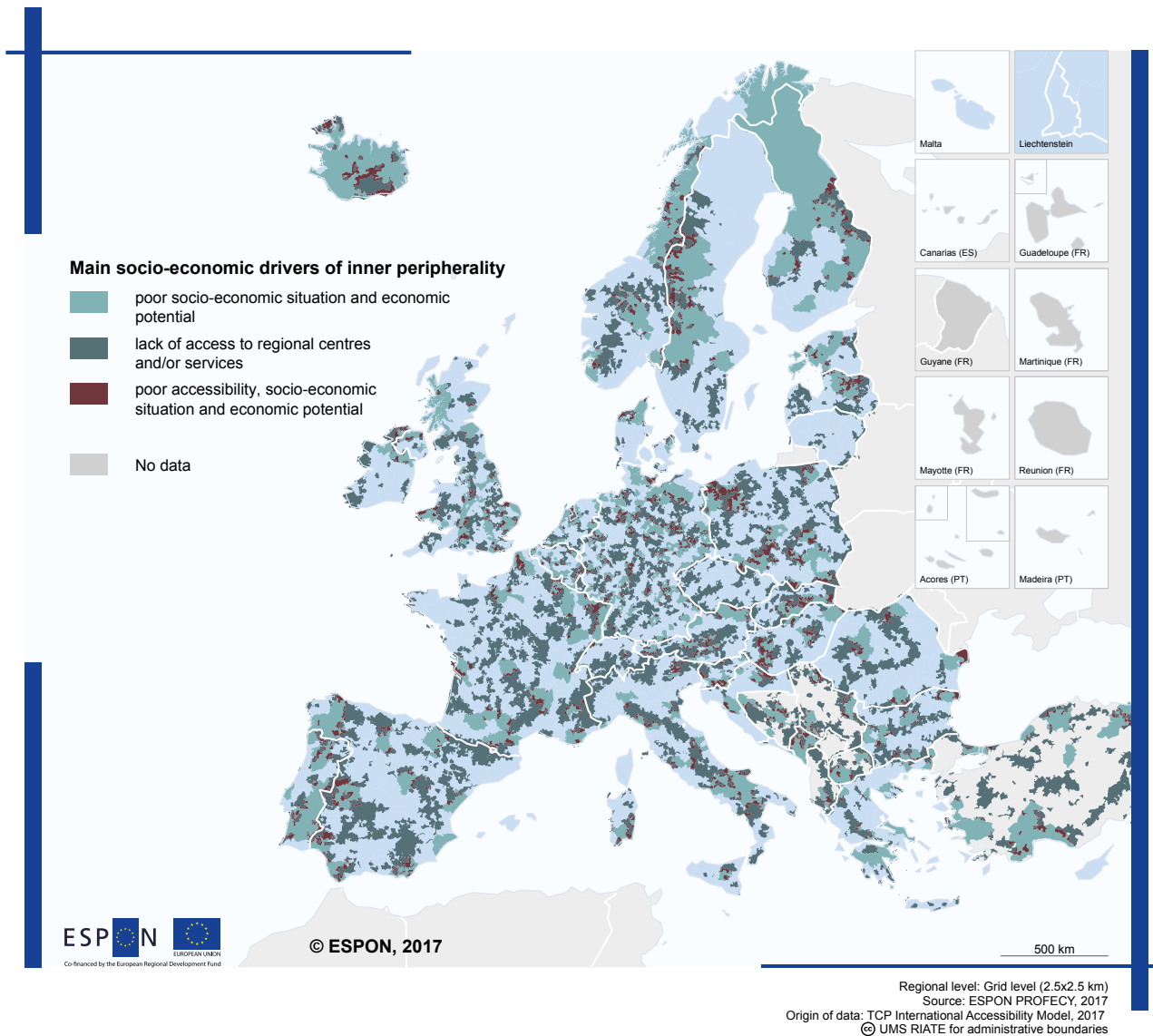
The map shows that peripheral areas in geographical terms frequently appear as inner peripheries. In addition, border regions, not only national but also regional, show a greater incidence of being inner peripheral than their non-frontier counterparts.

It appears that 80 % of the inner peripheries with low economic potential (IP1) or poor accessibility (IP2) are located in non-urban regions, equally spread over rural and intermediate regions. Moreover, around half of the inner peripheries with poor accessibility (IP2) are found in mountainous regions.

Areas lacking relational proximity (IP3) are found in urban (32.2%) and metropolitan areas (43%) more often than IP1 and IP2. Processes of peripheralisation due to a poor socio-economic situation could apparently also affect “enclaves” in these territories.

The proportion of lagging regions among inner peripheries also seems high, especially those lagging from a national perspective. Enclaves of low economic potential (IP1) and areas lacking relational proximity (IP3) seem to be more affected, which may be because these concepts have a more direct connection with economic performance.

Map 1
Main drivers of inner peripherality



2. Key development challenges of inner peripheries

An inner peripheral area has specific challenges related to the phenomena of peripherality. To investigate these specific challenges, indicators have been selected and analysed related to demographic, labour market and economic tendencies.

Inner peripheries appear to be demographically disadvantaged compared with other regions. They show decreasing population, increasing old-age dependency and ageing, and lower ratios of children and people of working age. In terms of economic performance (GDP, GVA), inner peripheries also seem to be at a greater dis-

advantage, although their positions are not clearly unfavourable regarding entrepreneurship and access-to-SGI indicators. In terms of the labour market (unemployment, inactivity rates), inner peripheries are in moderate or even, in some cases, favourable positions. However, the out-migration of young and skilled populations is perceived as a particular problem.

These insights have been obtained by looking at the development over time of multiple indicators and at the relative position of inner peripheral areas compared with other regions.

Population dynamics

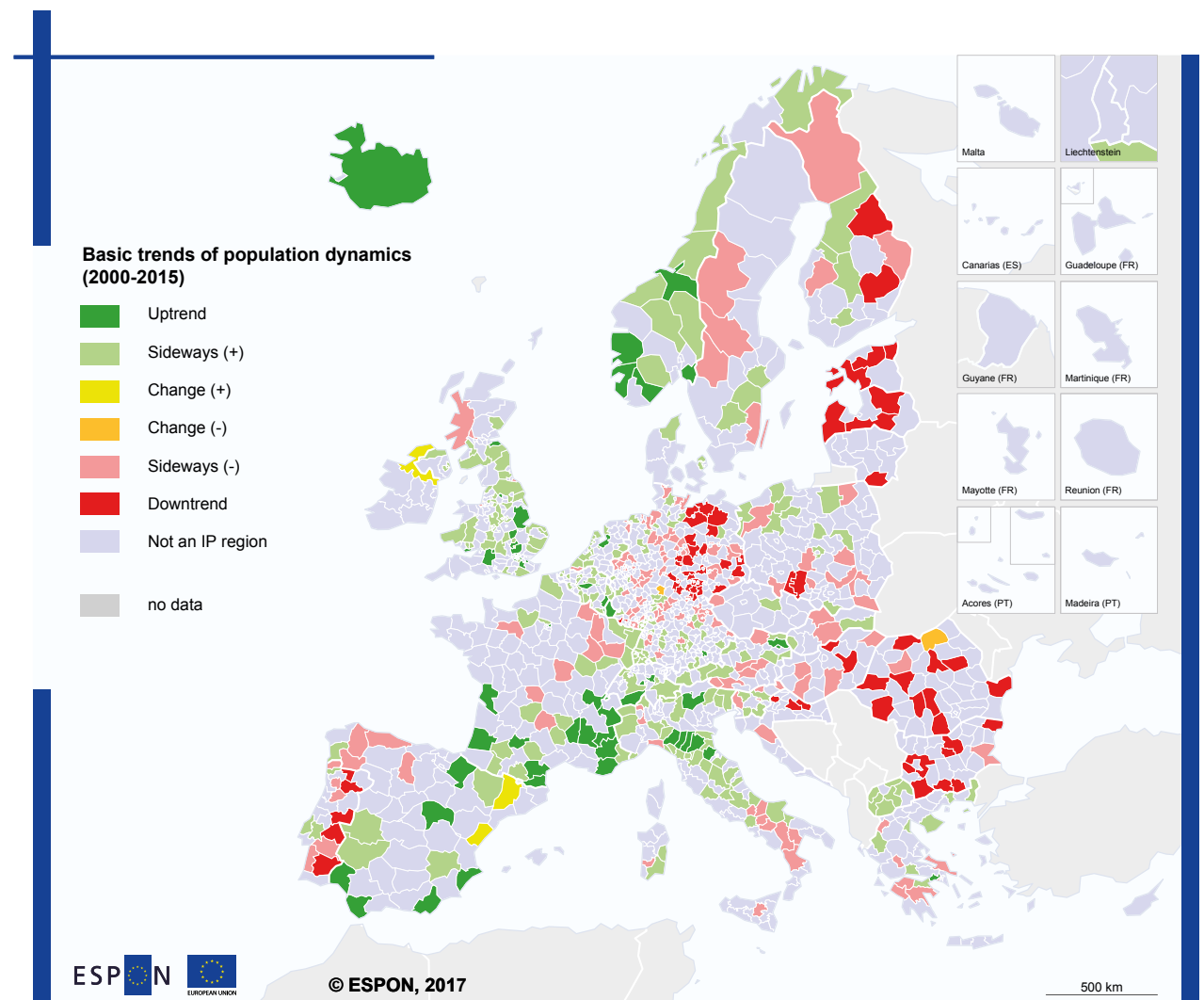
Inner peripheries are more disadvantaged regarding demographic processes, e.g. they have a bigger share of shrinking regions. Negative position shifts of population dynamics in inner peripheries are more striking than in other national territories, which might draw attention to the current demographic vulnerabilities of these territo-

ries, and potentially outline their future socio-economic risks.

Differences in demographic tendencies are mostly found between inner peripheral areas of Western (more frequent positive dynamics) and East Central Europe (higher probability of out-migration and shrinkage) (Map 2).

Map 2

Development paths of inner peripheries regarding population dynamics (2000–2015)



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Explanation of the legend:
 Uptrend: significant increase of population
 Sideways (+): minor-average increase of population
 Change (+): overall increase of population with trend change (stagnation/increase; increase/decrease)
 Change (-): overall decrease of population with trend change (stagnation/decrease; decrease/stagnation)
 Sideways (-): minor-average decrease of population
 Downtrend: significant decrease of population

Regional level: NUTS 3 (version 2013)
 Source: ESPON PROFECY, 2017
 Origin of data: Eurostat, 2017
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Unemployment rate

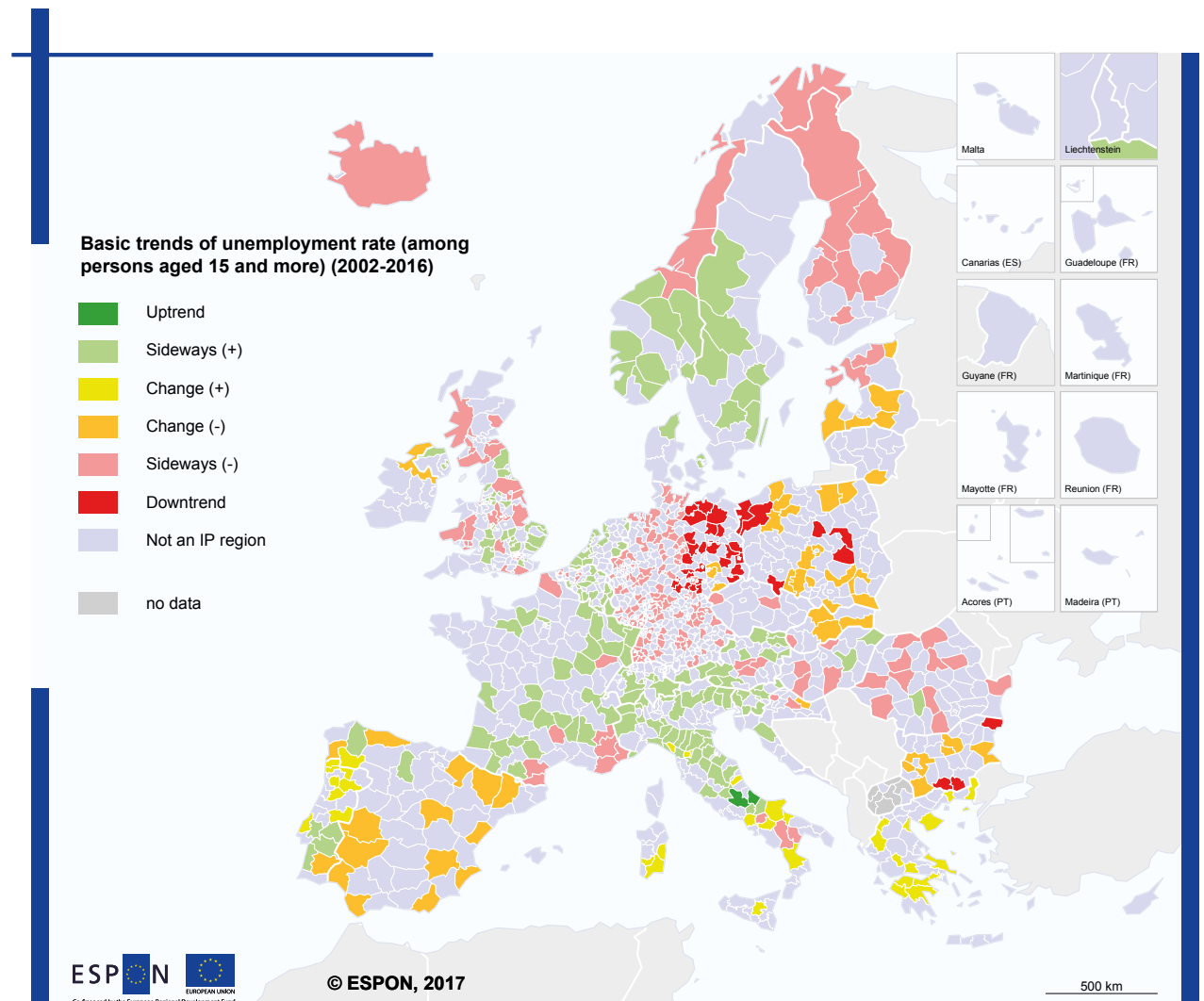
IP regions are not disadvantaged in terms of unemployment: many had low rates at the beginning of the 2000s and have still had low to moderate levels of unemployment in recent years. The stable situation of IP regions regarding unemployment rates is also shown by the fact that about 80 % of these areas had moderate growth or a decrease in unemployment rates (Map 3). In general, the majority of European regions kept their advantages or disadvantages during this period.

Most of the inner peripheral areas that had a continuous increase in unemployment rates from 2002 to 2016 are in

Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Major shifts in unemployment rates highlight those inner peripheral areas whose labour markets were hit harder by the effects of the economic crisis of 2008. Some of them supposedly returned to a more favourable path after the first shocks (e.g. regions of Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia and Spain), whereas others – all of them in the Mediterranean area – had to face bigger shocks or a prolonged impact that continues today (e.g. Greek inner peripheries).

Map 3

Development paths of inner peripheries regarding unemployment rate (among persons aged 15 years or more) (2002–2016)



Explanation of the legend:
 Uptrend: significant increase of unemployment rate
 Sideways (+): minor-average increase of unemployment rate
 Change (+): overall increase of unemployment rate with trend change (stagnation/increase; increase/decrease)
 Change (-): overall decrease of unemployment rate with trend change (stagnation/decrease; decrease/stagnation)
 Sideways (-): minor-average decrease of unemployment rate
 Downtrend: significant decrease of unemployment rate

Regional level: NUTS 3 (version 2013)
 Source: ESPON PROFECY, 2017
 Origin of data: Eurostat, 2017
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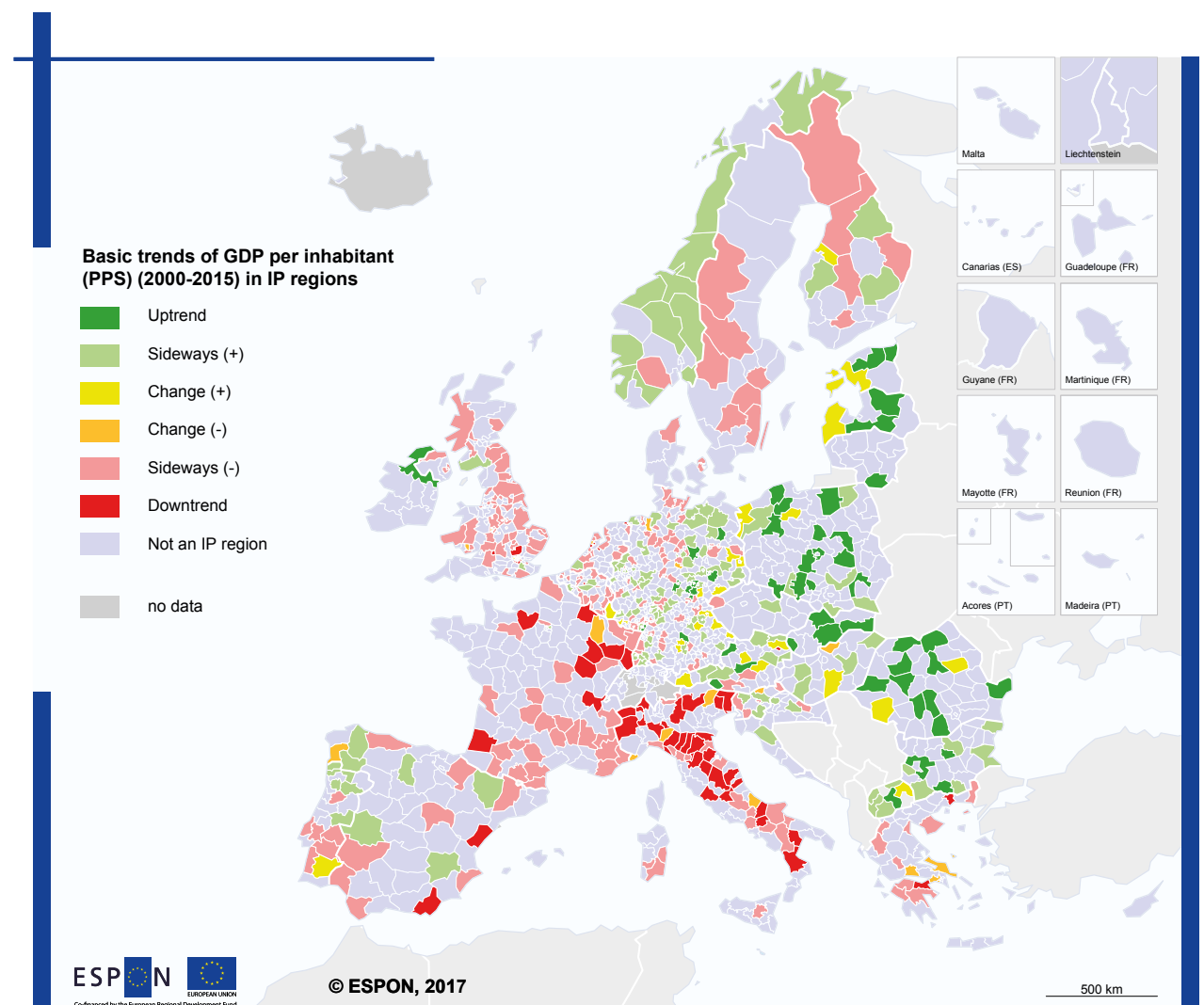
Economic performance

Position shifts in GDP per inhabitant between 2000 and 2015 generally show the somewhat locked positions of regions in Europe in general. Most of the European regions remained in their original positions relative to the EU-28 average. The inner peripheral regions are clearly disadvantaged compared with other regions. Their economic performance usually lags behind that of other national territories, a situation that has not really changed since 2000.

Regional variations in development paths of inner peripheries regarding economic performance from 2000 to 2015 show uptrend dynamics for inner peripheral areas in East Central Europe (the Baltic States, Poland, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria). This, however, reflects tendencies affecting all regions in these parts of Europe. Downtrend dynamics and negative shifts can be found in French, Italian Spanish and Greek peripheral territories (Map 4).

Map 4

Development paths of inner peripheries regarding GDP per inhabitant (in purchasing power standards) (2000–2015)



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Explanation of the legend:
 Uptrend: significant increase of GDP per inhabitant
 Sideways (+): minor-average increase of GDP per inhabitant
 Change (+): overall increase of GDP per inhabitant with trend change (stagnation/increase; increase/decrease)
 Change (-): overall decrease of GDP per inhabitant with trend change (stagnation/decrease; decrease/stagnation)
 Sideways (-): minor-average decrease of GDP per inhabitant
 Downtrend: significant decrease of GDP per inhabitant

Regional level: NUTS 3 (version 2013)
 Source: ESPON PROFECY, 2017
 Origin of data: Eurostat, 2017
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3. Development strategies to overcome the marginalising effects of inner peripheries

Much of the recent discourse on regional development has emphasised the role of urban areas as “engines of growth”, powered by agglomerative advantages. The expectation is that this radiates beneficial effects to their hinterlands through “spillover” and “spread” effects. In a general sense, inner peripheries are places “left behind” by, or excluded from, this process.

Inner peripherality can be associated with poor performance or marginalisation. It can be identified, characterised and overcome if proper strategies are planned and implemented.

A strategy to ameliorate or reverse the process of peripheralisation requires a focused intervention logic and appropriate integrated implementation structures developed within the local, regional and national governance systems, and needs to be pragmatic, exploiting existing policy frameworks and available “levers” to achieve impact.

Building a strategy should start with identifying the issues associated with the inner peripheralisation of an area and

trying to understand the triggers and drivers. A specific focus should then be put on those processes that are driven by inadequate connectedness of some form, because this is what distinguishes an IP from other kinds of marginal region. The challenge then is to find drivers that can make a change at an early stage and that turn around the “spiralling-down” processes of inner peripheries.

Note that, although each of the three IP concepts has distinctive characteristics, they have in common a focus on the need to enhance different forms of connectedness.

Intervention logic

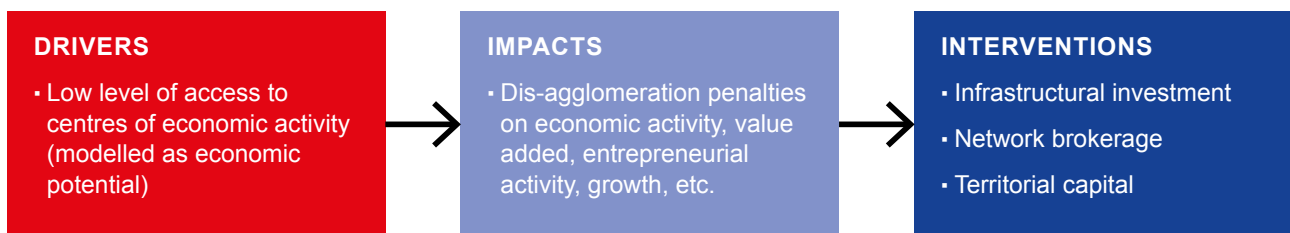
An intervention logic provides an overarching rationale that can help to steer policy. To ensure that it addresses the relevant weaknesses and potential, it is important to have a clear understanding of the specific place-based assets and limitations and also of the way forward.

Each of the three inner periphery concepts forms its own basis for an intervention logic.

CONCEPT 1

Enclaves of low economic potential

Figure 1
Outline intervention logic for enclaves of low economic potential (IP1)



Enclaves of low economic potential are located between core areas. They have disadvantages associated with (geographical) distance to centres of economic activity (i.e. longer travel times and thus higher costs of travel to markets). This affects their potential for entrepreneur-

ship, innovation and economic growth through the cost and quality of labour (job matching), weakening of business linkages and networks, lower access to sources of information and innovation, and weaker development of business services and institutions.

Potential policy responses might be of two kinds:

- a) Accessibility can be directly addressed through investments in physical infrastructure, especially roads, rail, airports and broadband communications, but also investments in new types of mobility.
- b) As infrastructure investments are known to result in negative “pump effects”, whereby the improvements in connectivity benefit core areas more than inner

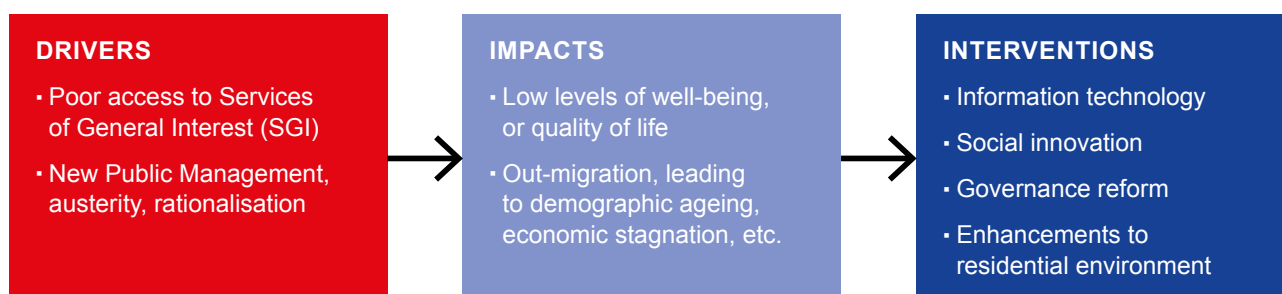
peripheries, accompanying measures are necessary to build human, social and institutional capital. These are intended to give an inner periphery capacity to respond to the opportunities provided by increased access to markets and business networks. Specific examples of interventions could be network brokerage, urban-rural partnerships, and a range of small-business/entrepreneurship advisory and support services.

CONCEPT 2

Areas with poor access to SGI

Figure 2

Outline intervention logic for areas with poor access to SGI (IP2)

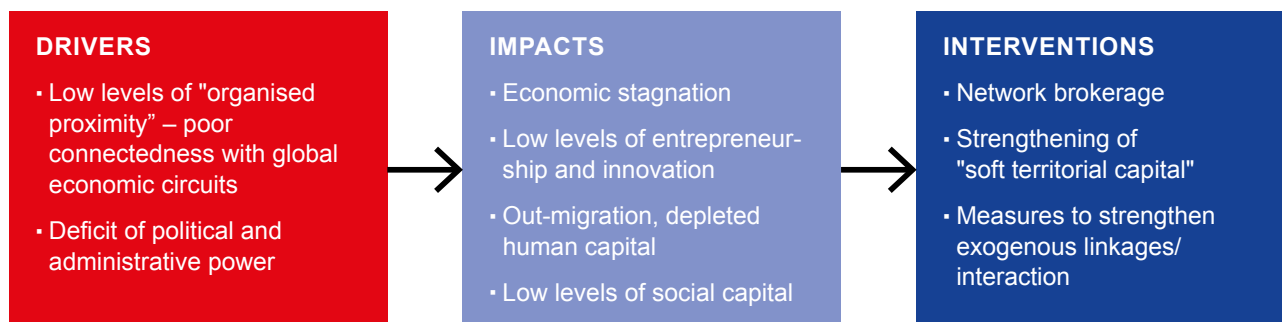


Areas affected by poor access to services of general interest are primarily concerned with levels of social well-being rather than economic development, although the latter may be indirectly involved. Areas affected by such processes may have long suffered this deprivation because of their remote location or sparse population. Alternatively, they may be areas from which the population has drifted away in recent years, with associated effects on age structure, levels of economic activity, tax-raising potential and old-age dependency. Recent quests for greater cost effectiveness, the introduction of New Public Management approaches in local administration, and austerity are likely to have exacerbated these situations. At the same time, new expectations for services are raised by changing societal and cultural norms.

Forms of intervention to match this narrative of inner periphery formation would need to focus on innovations

in service delivery. These would be too various and issue-specific to set out in detail here. However, most would feature one or more of the following:

- a) use of new technology to overcome geographical distance (telemedicine, online administration, etc.);
- b) reconfiguration of the responsibility for delivering certain services from the public sector to the third sector, social enterprise or the community, often involving some form of social innovation;
- c) attempts to encourage population retention by enhancing residential environments and local facilities, and by making general improvements designed to increase well-being;
- d) restructuring of local governance to facilitate greater coherence between a range of providers, and greater responsiveness to the needs of inner peripheries.

CONCEPT 3**Areas experiencing non-spatial peripheralisation processes****Figure 3****Outline intervention logic for areas suffering peripheralisation (IP3)**

This concept illustrates how an inner periphery may be formed by a less tangible process of "peripheralisation", a kind of "territorial exclusion" that does not necessarily reflect geographical remoteness. Here, "peripheralisation" has a broader focus, encompassing social processes and governance in addition to economic development. The relative importance of economic development versus social well-being or governance is likely to vary from case to case. However, it seems probable that aspects of both recent and more distant cultural and institutional legacies of economic structures and structural change play a key role, inhibiting the development of interaction and connectedness in various ways. Long-established configurations of governance and power probably play a part. On the other hand, relatively sudden discontinuities that are

difficult to adjust to, such as the accession of formerly socialist countries to the EU, are widely acknowledged as part of the process of disempowering this kind of inner periphery.

The diverse and multifaceted nature of this kind of inner periphery underlines the importance of focused case study work to explore these.

Following the logic of the above narrative suggests that policy prescriptions for this kind of inner periphery are likely to address "softer" aspects of the socio-economic milieu. This implies interventions designed to strengthen all forms of exogenous interaction, in turn strengthening networks that deliver greater capacity for economic development (overlapping with the first narrative above) and social/community well-being (as in the SGI narrative).

Integrated approach

Interventions will profit from an integrated policy approach to limiting "pump effects" whereby core areas benefit more than inner peripheries. An integrated approach appears to be important for all types of IP. Specifically, it should address the need to overcome the lack of cooperation and enhance cooperative schemes to increase interaction within the IP region and with other spaces. The level of outside interaction, although very diverse, is considered highly influential.

Cooperation could also be established by asking local stakeholders to think across established boundaries and paths. Although long-term, established, local-to-local cooperation can be a good basis, effective cooperation

can also be built up on the basis of current common challenges and involve different governance levels, e.g. for tackling questions of lagging mobility and digital infrastructures.

To overcome fragmentation in action, integrated strategies need to address the various components that lead to IP processes. In general, no single aspect is responsible for IP processes (alone), and challenges extend to a number of interrelated aspects of socio-economic and cultural development. Hence, strategies should address the most common features of IP processes and monitor how the observed regions fare using indicators to measure the following processes:

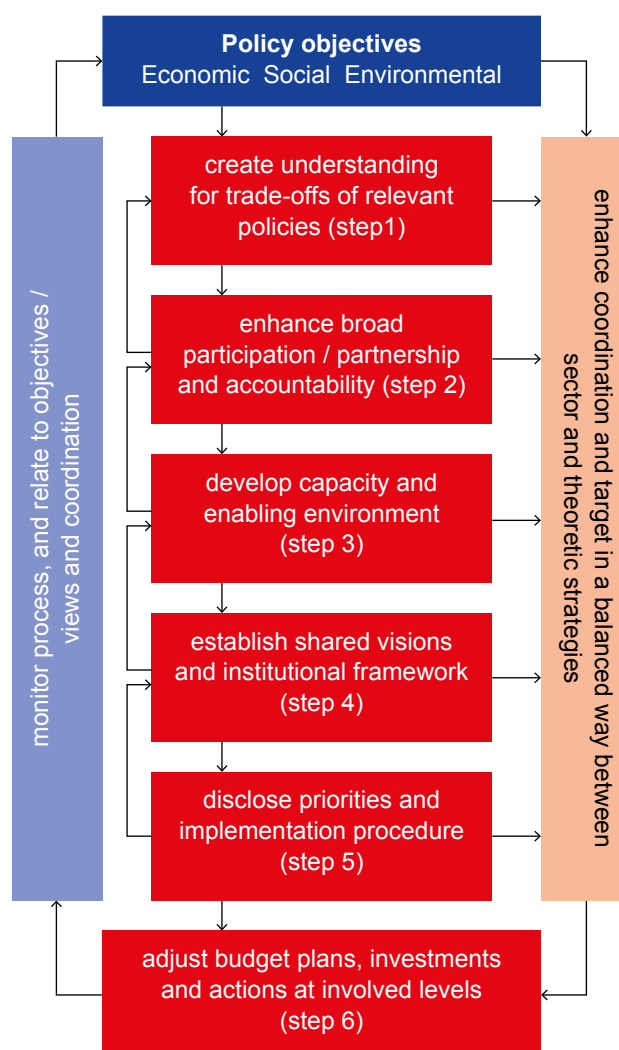
- high levels of out-migration, in particular among young people;
- a strong relation of the economic sector to traditional activities and/or monostructural economic activity;
- a weak local and regional institutional basis that lacks experience and understanding of cooperation, collaboration and cohesion targeting;
- a low skill level among the labour force and limited attractiveness to the external workforce;
- a sense of being neglected by policy actors, objectives and programmes as well as national (or trans-regional) spatial perspectives.

In developing a policy rationale for inner peripheral areas, it is essential to be pragmatic. In the real world, two, or all three, types of inner peripherality process may coexist, alongside other causes of underdevelopment, in complex hybrid cycles of decline that are unique to their locational context.

IP regions are therefore advised to consider the following:

- Each IP region has to elaborate its own place-specific strategies. Regions can, of course, learn from action taken by other, similar IP regions on how their process could be organised, which steps it should include and which interventions can be used.
- A region should look for specific resource allocation from operational programmes, as well as from those that have no specific territorial targeting. It would seem opportune to earmark some of those programmes' financial plans for subregional territories facing challenges in demography, access to services and local development, as this would guarantee the necessary resources to develop integrated and multisectoral projects in these areas.
- To face the peripheralisation process efficiently, the intervention promoted by EU programmes should be complemented by national programmes.
- IP regions are recommended to consider all steps for regional policy integration when building their regional development strategies (Figure 4).
- The first five steps are interrelated. They influence each other, and they have to be continuously sustained and supported when designing a regional strategy.
- Finally, action at IP level has to be seconded by larger administrative levels to become effective (step 6).

Figure 4
Steps for regional policy integration



Tools to support strategies for IPs

Local connectedness and interaction can be pursued successfully by making use of established national and EU programmes. For example, LEADER/community-led local development (CLLD) programmes can be used by local stakeholders as a vehicle to enhance cooperation. These are reported to be particularly successful when bundling a local economy-oriented project and linking this to a wider supra-regional market, be it through a specialised product or through the creation of a positive regional image.

EXAMPLE

A particularly successful example of employing LEADER to combat peripheralisation is provided by the Italian case study. A group of local stakeholders involved in bergamot production and processing used the programme to establish a platform of action and connection to the wider market, “jumping over” the hindrances to development in regional administrative structures.

EXAMPLE

A similarly positive application of the LEADER programme was reported in the Polish case study with regard to strengthening local networking and action capacity.

Four kinds of policy instrument have been identified for local strategies to receive policy support in the context of inner peripheries: (a) integrated territorial investments (ITI), (b) CLLD, (c) other forms of integrated approaches funded by EU programmes (e.g. a territorial pact or an integrated value chain scheme) and (d) some national/regional approaches. These different forms of a place-

based approach are usually perceived (by people interviewed at local level) as more suitable than the territorially blind mainstream programmes for local development and social needs.

Local development strategies allow several advantages for IPs, including earmarking financial resources on a relatively small territorial scale and in a programming period; having interlinked projects instead of independent and isolated projects; designing and implementing at the relevant scale and possibly adapting to changes in the local situation; and an opportunity to design a strategy encompassing economic development and access to services.

EXAMPLE

The Austrian case study area provides an example of a regional cooperation across national borders, which has reactivated the area’s former links to Slovenia. This trans-national cooperation is fostered through the EUSALP programme and includes engagement in the cross-border CLLD programme.

CASE STUDY**Siegen-Wittgenstein, Germany (IP2)**

Siegen-Wittgenstein has approximately 280 800 inhabitants and a population density of 243 people per km². The district is located in the state North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany and consists of two parts: the former district Siegen and the former district Wittgenstein. These two districts were separate until 1975. The region is considered an IP according to IP2, with low access to centres and services, but still has good economic potential and has not yet been depleted.

Challenges: The area is characterised by rather stable economic development, being home to manufacturing and production industries. However, it faces challenges regarding (a) the management of demographic change and the supply of skilled workers, (b) the adjustment of traffic and data infrastructures to current standards

and (c) the adaptation of planning system structures for dealing more effectively with challenges in the rural, sparsely populated and border regions.

Actions taken: A new regional structural development programme, REGIONALE, was set up by the federal state. REGIONALE seemed to have established a valuable and effective cooperation platform to integrate local development concepts, to learn from each other, and to gain visibility, recognition and influence regarding higher governance levels. It also provided a linkage between the district and the federal state that was previously lacking. Such stable and effective networks on the local as well as on the regional level are considered the most powerful resource for tackling peripheralisation (ESPON 2017).

CASE STUDY**Montsià, Spain (IP3)**

Montsià County is located in Catalonia in eastern Spain. The area has 67 646 inhabitants and a population density of 92 inhabitants per km². It has 12 municipalities grouped into two distinct geographical zones: a mountainous zone and an axis connecting the Ebro River and

the Mediterranean coast. The region is considered an IP according to IP3, having a lack of relational proximity, although, in addition, its accessibility and economic potential are not very good.

Challenges: At the regional level, there has traditionally been a lack of policy arenas to debate, share and expose supra-municipal or municipal problems. As the main powers are assigned to the Catalan government, or to the regional government of Tarragona, local governments are far from decision-making centres. In addition, their competences regarding certain issues are very limited. Therefore, there is little debate and a lack of strong political and economic cooperation networks at this territorial scale, which are needed to solve their socio-economic disconnection from main regional decision centres that leads, for example, to low provision of health and education.

Actions taken: Over several steps and organisational forms, the Montsià 2026 Strategy was developed, a cooperation framework for technical, institutional and private actors. This strategy contains interesting incentives

for economic reactivation and employment. In addition, a sound communication strategy has been developed to successfully involve local actors and promote public participation.

It started in 2003 at the local level with the creation of the “Taula del Sénia”, a grouping of 27 municipalities near the Sénia River. The grouping provided a meeting point for debate, networking and cooperation towards improving the quality of life and well-being of the local population. In 2011, the Catalan government started a programme addressing employment promotion and local development policies in seven counties including Montsià. This resulted in the “Montsià Actiu”, an occupation and training programme that has been the basis for reversing some peripheralisation trends and developing a common vision and a shared territorial strategy (ESPON 2017).

4. Policy recommendations

The key policy recommendations for dealing with the phenomenon of inner peripherality are derived from the findings of the analyses and case studies of the PROFECY project. They are presented for four geographical scales: local, regional, national and EU.

LOCAL LEVEL

Develop strategic institutional capacity

An influential and decisive factor for breaking downward cycles, changing routines and reversing trends is the institutional capacity at the local level. This can successfully be pursued in different organisational forms and for different monofunctional or multifunctional purposes:

- **Making use of established national and EU programmes:** For example, LEADER/CLLD programmes can be applied by local stakeholders to enhance cooperation and improve local self-governance. These are reported to be particularly successful when linking a local economy-oriented project to a wider supra-regional market, be it through a specialised product or through the creation of a positive regional image.
- **Establishing new horizontal cooperation:** Local stakeholders are asked to think across established bounda-

ries and paths. Some of them are successful in establishing new SGI catchment areas to provide improved and more efficient service delivery and accessibility.

- **Establishing new vertical cooperation:** Effective cooperation between local stakeholders can also be built on common challenges and involve different governance levels, e.g. for tackling questions of lagging mobility and digital infrastructures.

Improve service provision

To improve service provision, it is important to involve new ways and combinations of measures incorporating socially innovative models of service delivery and novel IT-based solutions. This can be organised at the local level through:

- **social innovation processes and spatial restructuring,** so that services can be accessed in places formerly inaccessible or services are brought to places where they were previously unavailable or under threat of becoming unavailable;
- **activating civil society** and letting it take over activities and tasks formerly provided by public or economic stakeholders and, through this, compensating for otherwise economically unsustainable markets;

- responsibly *allowing market-driven solutions* to take over and by transferring responsibility to private households;
- making use of *adapted digital solutions* to support or complement the above, going beyond the already established fields of digital shopping and administration infrastructures.

Connect territorial capital

When reflecting the localities' territorial capital, local policy makers could adopt an explicit focus on connectedness and interaction capacity. Territorial capital can take diverse forms. Local stakeholders should consider the following fields for detecting specific strengths of their IP area:

- *Skills, specialised products or industries* inherent in the local labour market and economic institutions and related to the labour market.
- *Social features* such as powerful, constructive cooperation or the ability of network and resource brokerage to support the attraction of external labour force to the region, or joint initiatives for qualifying the local labour force. In response to deficits in service provision, it might involve new ways and combinations of measures incorporating novel IT-based solutions.
- *Cultural legacies* that might strengthen feelings of belonging and create visibility beyond the IP.
- *Specific natural assets or infrastructures* that might provide the essential basis for development and competitiveness if further acknowledged and developed.

EXAMPLE

The case of Vimmerby provides a good example of making use of a local cultural legacy. Efforts to capitalise on the local area's relationship to the well-known author Astrid Lindgren were successful in branding Vimmerby for tourism.

EXAMPLE

The Hungarian case study allowed insights into how locally available infrastructures and skills can gain in value again after a phase of economic downturn. Industrial production sites are used to attract companies from other areas to the case study locality and to create jobs that in turn decrease the need for commuting and improve the well-being of the local inhabitants.

REGIONAL LEVEL

Strengthen the role of intermediary regional agencies or platforms

Regional stakeholders are recommended to create, or use existing, regional platforms to facilitate exchange, decision-making, implementation and evaluation. While many regions include some activities to establish relevant regional platforms, the long-term effectiveness of these platforms has to be nurtured by a dedicated institution and political commitment. Such a platform fulfils purposes such as:

- *coordinating efforts from below* and providing a platform to develop a common understanding of the important topics and goals of the peripheralisation situation and beyond;
- *providing a conceptual framework* that links development plans at the local, regional and supra-regional levels;
- *negotiating peripheralisation issues* such as resources and infrastructure provision or representation and network integration with upper decision-making levels and giving the IPs a voice in decision-making fora;
- providing a *permanent and balanced platform* for monitoring and evaluation.

EXAMPLE

A platform has been established in the case study of Siegen-Wittgenstein, Germany.

Create a comprehensive institutionalised vision of synergies and complementarities

At the regional level, it is also recommended that strategic plans or regional perspectives or visions are developed through regional cooperation. With regard to the perception of the region as an IP, it is particularly important to link trans-regional contacts, exchange experiences and strengthen regional assessment of local assets, with a specific focus on natural amenities and regionally distinct features. This would:

- generate more *visibility for the challenges* in inner peripheral localities and create attention for their specific needs – be it physical connectivity, SGI access or support for organised proximity;
- *increase positive visibility* and locality branding of the affected regions;
- solve *urgent problems*, for example by retaining or attracting skilled workers by connecting companies, voicing interest in training facilities or providing a clear and positive image of the current and future local working and living conditions;

- *foster innovation* through R&D and SME development by elaborating clear goals and ambitions, and defining supportive structures; and
- strengthen *regional cooperation* and mutual support.

EXAMPLE

A good example is the development of the Montsià 2026 Strategy in the Spanish case study.

NATIONAL LEVEL

Pay political attention to inner peripheries

There is a common perception among political stakeholders in inner peripheries of “being forgotten” in the national political agenda in a twofold sense. On the one hand, it is difficult to get sufficient attention and support from higher political levels for dealing with the specific challenges of their region. On the other hand, there is a feeling of being little connected to the decision-making policy arenas at higher policy levels, and thus not being able to influence future agenda-setting processes. Therefore, it is recommended that the national level should open or create communication channels to decision-making levels for IP regions.

EXAMPLE

Italian national policy already pays particular attention to “inner areas”, which are far from the larger urbanised areas, lack essential services and face demographic challenges.

Monitor and support access to funding

National governments are advised to pay political attention to the presence of inner peripheries in their national context. They should investigate how these might be better targeted in existing programmes and monitor their development. Existing programmes should be reconsidered in terms of their adaptability to IPs’ special needs, such as out-migration, demographic change, lack of skilled workforce, insufficient SGI provision or unsuitable connectivity. As a further step, they could even consider positive discrimination in favour of IP areas to break a downward spiral, e.g. in issues of digitalisation.

EXAMPLE

German spatial planning law stipulates “comparable living conditions across all areas”, meaning not that there must be the same level of SGI provision or of infrastructure everywhere but that all areas can develop their specific quality of life. This provides a solid basis for discussing the issues of spatial justice and spatial differentiation.

Support decentralisation of decision-making

Consider the subdelegation of competencies and resources to the lowest possible regional/local level to allow cooperative governance and strategy building that is sensitive to local specificities. This could ensure greater ownership of and responsibility for how funds are allocated.

EU LEVEL

Improve access and transparency

It is recommended that local stakeholders accessing supra-local funds are promoted on the basis of locally defined priorities and a place-based approach. IP-specific indicators such as out-migration, population dynamics and a lack of skilled workers should be considered as new criteria for allocation of funding. In addition, stabilising rather than growth-oriented goals should be accepted in funding future schemes.

Simplify implementation

IP areas should be relieved of the administrative and accountability burden that accompanies the implementation of EU policies and programmes, as these disadvantage IP areas disproportionately compared with more integrated areas. Control of compliance with rules and legality should not overshadow attention to the quality of interventions and to their impact with regard to overcoming or reversing peripheralisation processes.

Reference

ESPON. 2017, “Inner Peripheries: National Territories Facing Challenges of Access to Basic Services of General Interest | ESPON.” <https://www.espon.eu/inner-peripheries>.



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