ESPON evidence on small and medium-sized cities

Role of small and medium-sized cities in reducing rural-urban inequality: success stories & policies

European Week of Regions and Cities, Brussels, 10 October 2023
The role of small and medium-sized cities in the integration of the territory is a key priority of the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

These places have an underexploited potential to achieve a better-balanced territorial development.

Avoiding depopulation of these urban centres could promote sustainable development opportunities for all territories, mitigating effects of an excessive concentration of population in great cities and depopulation of rural areas.
Recent ESPON study (*) showed that many countries in Europe were implementing new approaches in supporting the development of small and medium-sized cities:

- promoting integrated place-based methods and tools;
- supporting networks for mutual learning and empowerment;
- funding targeted development strategies;
- developing local skills and administrative capacities.
Delivering an updated overview on the dedicated policies

- A new ESPON research requested by the Spanish presidency

- Scope: EU policies on small and medium-sized cities; specific national, regional and local policy frameworks in Spain, Portugal, Italy and Germany

- Research questions:
  - How could small and medium-sized cities contribute more to the economy and demography of the EU in general and of the studied countries in particular?
  - How should national, regional and local policies support the development of small and medium-sized cities in a long-term perspective?
Delivering an updated overview on the dedicated policies

Three dimensions addressed in an upcoming working paper (November 2023):

1. Role of small and medium-sized cities in EU policies and policy instruments supporting their development

2. Role of small and medium-sized towns in the national context (DE, IT, PT, ES)

3. Analysis of dedicated policies at the different territorial levels in those countries, and their impacts over time

4. Examples of small and medium-sized towns showcasing innovative and efficient development pathways in each country
15 & 16 November 2023

Small and medium-sized cities drivers of sustainable development and urban-rural cooperation

ESPON seminar in Cuenca in cooperation with the Spanish Presidency

Register now on www.espon.eu
ESPON support to Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU

Role of small and medium-sized cities to balance rural-urban inequalities: success stories & policies

JOSEP MARIA LLOP i TORNÉ, Director UNESCO Chair UdL CIMES
EWRC - BRUXELS, 10 OCTOBER 2023
INDEX

1. Zoom of the dimension of intermediate urban cities from the World to Europe
2. Concepts and criteria of their “intermediation” roles for rural-urban balance
3. The ESPON project, its contents, its rhythm and its first working hypotheses
CIMES 20 PLUS METROS BUT ONLY 5% DIFERENCE OF POPULATION

41.2 % METROS o Más de 1 millón de habitantes: 503 con 1.626 millones de personas urbanas
36.1 % CIMES Entre 1 millón y 50.000 habitantes: 6.923 con 1.423 millones de personas urbanas
100% Total ~ 3.945 millones de personas urbanas

Supone casi un 56% de la población mundial estimada en unos 7.000 millones (en 2016, editado para la III Cumbre Mundial del Hábitat en Quito)

Borja Iglesias UNESCO Chair+ GOLD.4 - UCLG - Nota * No existing data less of 50.000 inhabitants
Presentation title: Small and Medium sized Towns and Cities – EWRC - Brussels
Presentation title: Small and Medium sized Towns and Cities – EWRC - Brussels
316 cities with population between 20,000 and 75,000 inhabitants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population ranges</th>
<th>Number of towns and cities</th>
<th>Total population 2022</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Accumulative average annual rate of change 2001-2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 20,000</td>
<td>7,714</td>
<td>14,484,389</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>-0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000 - 75,000</td>
<td>3,102</td>
<td>10,870,313</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 75,000</td>
<td>1,010</td>
<td>22,120,838</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11,826</td>
<td>47,475,530</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Presentation title: Small and Medium sized Towns and Cities – EWRC - Brussels**

**CHART 1** Data (own research with simple maps)

World: about 17.916 cities - more than 20.000 in-Hb (Total 4.383 Millions in-Hb) Mean = 238.579 inhabitants

Africa=255.215  Asia=461.327  Oceania=243.961  North A + South A=139.560  EU=96.192 <<<

**CHART 2** Data (own research with simple maps)

EU Cities with more than 20.000 inhabitants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nº+in-Hb</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>046.844.851</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nº+in-Hb Big cities</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>107.072.550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nº+in-Hb Intermediate</td>
<td>2.566</td>
<td>090.590.752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nº+in-Hb Urban nodes</td>
<td>3.170</td>
<td>244.508.153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHART 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>1. in-Hb</th>
<th>2. Surface</th>
<th>D(1)</th>
<th>3. Nº Municipalities</th>
<th>D(2)</th>
<th>4. Surface(3)</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>82.7 M.</td>
<td>357.021 Km2</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>12.013 (108 City)</td>
<td>06.845 in-Hb/NºM</td>
<td>02.972 Has</td>
<td>232 + 6.845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>61.0 M.</td>
<td>301.336 Km2</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>07.904 (2021)</td>
<td>07.718 in-Hb/NºM</td>
<td>03.812 Has</td>
<td>202 + 7.718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>10.3 M.</td>
<td>072.230 Km2</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>00.308 (see next)</td>
<td>33.442 in-Hb/NºM</td>
<td>29.945 Has</td>
<td>112 + 33.442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>10.3 M.</td>
<td>072.230 Km2</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>03.901(4)</td>
<td>02.640 in-Hb/NºF</td>
<td>02.364 Has</td>
<td>112 + 2.460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>46.4 M.</td>
<td>505.090 Km2</td>
<td>- 92</td>
<td>08.131 (2022)</td>
<td>05.707 in-Hb/NºM</td>
<td>06.223 Has</td>
<td>- 92 + 5.707</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- D(1) Average population density inhabitants (in-Hb) for Km2. for country
- D(2) Average population density inhabitants (in-Hb) for municipality
- Surface(3) Average area (hectares) for one municipality
- Portugal (4) **Freguesias**
- Average = D(1) + D(2)
Number of SMTC in these 4 countries of study:

Germany  approx. ~624
Italy     approx. ~440
Portugal approx. ~082
Spain     approx. ~316
TOTAL     approx. 1.452

Surface total of these 4 countries= ~1,23 M. Km²

Functional Area (~ 25 Km. radium)= 2,81 M. Km²

BIG TERRITORIES (RADIUS 25 km)= 2.000 Km²
DIVERSITY – “small is beautiful” E. F. Schumacher - Leopold Kohr
1. DIVERSE GEOGRAPHIES, TERRITORIES AND LANDSCAPES
2. DIVERSE LOCAL CULTURES, KNOWLEDGE AND VALUES
3. TAKE CARE OF DIFFERENT DOSES IN EACH REGION

POTENTIALS – “small is powerful” Ramon Folch, Ecologic Expert
1. THE NODES OF THE URBAN AND TERRITORIAL SYSTEM
2. EXTENSIVE FUNCTIONAL AREAS WITH SUPPORT NODES
3. SUSTAINABILITY OF DEVELOPMENT AND ADDED VALUE TO THE PRIMARY

WEAKNESSES
1. WEAKER ADMINISTRATION IN SPECIALIZED TOPICS
2. RURAL INCOME DEPENDENT ON GLOBALIZATION...etc. OTHER+
3. WITHOUT THE ADVANTAGES OF THE AGLOMERATION ECONOMY
WHAT POLICIES FOR THIS ROLE OF TERRITORIAL COHESION?

DIVERSITY
GLOCAL: RETHINK THE TOPIC OF SMALL, MEDIUM AND INTERMEDIATE AS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR A “NEW PARADIGM”

POTENTIALS
VERTICAL: ADD ADDED VALUE TO THE PRIMARY, WITH LOCAL AND REGIONAL DOSE THROUGH PILOT PROJECT COMPETITIONS

WEAKNESSES
HORIZONTAL: SUPPORT AGAINST WEAKNESSES, FROM NODES AND NETWORKS

INTERMEDIATION IS NOT AGGLOMERATION – INTERMEDIATION IS SIMBYOSIS
Not only critical mass, taking care of the functional area ecosystem relations, in favor of territorial cohesion and demographic challenge
TEAMS OF REPORTS

Lot 1: Organisation of territories. EU and Spanish experience > Ximo Farinós, University of Valencia.
  - Analysis of how the role of small and medium-sized towns and cities is addressed in EU policies;
  - Showcasing innovative and efficient policy pathways for the functional the organisation of the territory.
  - Analysis of two case studies (Spain): Soria and Villena.

Lot 2: Policy framework stimulating active, inclusive and functional territorial development in Spain > Erika Jaraiz, University of Santiago Compostela
  - Analysis of policies addressing small and medium-sized towns and cities in Spain - One case study (Spain): Mérida.

Lot 3: Policy framework stimulating active, inclusive and functional territorial development in Portugal > Cristina Vasconcelos (NAEUDEN LDA), Borja Iglesias and Rodrigo Vargas - UNESCO Chair
  - Analysis of policies addressing small and medium-sized towns and cities in Portugal - One case study (Portugal): Fundão.

Lot 4: Policy framework stimulating active, inclusive and functional territorial development in Italy and Germany > Loris Servilo and Stephan Kah, University Polytechnic of Torino
  - Analysis of policies addressing small and medium-sized towns and cities in Germany – One case study (Germany): Oschersleben.
  - Analysis of policies addressing small and medium-sized towns and cities in Italy - One case study (Italy): Saluzzo.

1 EU+ 4 Country reports+ 6 case studies+ Synthesis of inputs = “Policy brief”
Hypothesis about the small intermediate or intermediary cities

1. **Notably improve access and the quality of “basic public services”**. To provide local administrations with better economic, technical and human resources. Multilevel governance is key to this process. **For example, the grouping or similar forms of municipal communities (France).**

2. **Promote public and private initiatives of circular, endogenous and social “economies”**. It is vitally important to first add value to the primary sector and to then encourage associations throughout the chain of its products. **For example, promoting second level of cooperatives for the marketing and distribution of agricultural products (Lleida, Spain).**
Hypothesis above the Small intermediate or intermediary cities

3. **Strengthen “accessibility” and physical and technological “connectivity” with their territories.** By improving mobility and providing more innovative transport (e.g., community taxis on demand). Special attention should be given to telecommunications infrastructure, which is key for 21st century solutions, to help promote innovation and improve the management of ecosystem resources. **For example, “CIT” can serve as new “antennas” for innovation and technology (Spanish Government).**

4. **Enhance its functionality in line with the dosage and scale of each “node”.** The capacity of human capital positioned at very specific locations is particularly key to this. Through captivation frameworks, it is possible to root them to their respective territories. **For example: by carefully administering and applying global policies at the local level, through “localisation” and “regionalisation” (UCLG).**

---

Presentation title: Small and Medium sized Towns and Cities – EWRC - Brussels
5. Assume a leading role in the management of “renewable energy” policies. Through multi-level consensuses, in order to achieve the commitments made in the 20230 Agenda, with a minimal environmental impact from the cycle of production and distribution. Example, Local energy communities (Europe).

6. Work with society to formulate creative and innovative socioeconomic actions. Innovation and creativity are basic requirements for achieving the green transition in Europe. This must be achieved at the same time as promoting sustainability, thorough the implantation of the circular economy, and meeting strategic challenges with a guarantee of success. Within this alliance, it will be key to put companies at the centre of the circular economy process; it will also be necessary to include trades and professionals, as well as trade unions and social organisations. For example, the “aeice” Efficient Habitat Cluster (Valladolid).
Hypothesis above the Small intermediate or intermediary cities

7. **Establish a system of horizontal, multilevel, bottom-up governance**: local governments must have a presence and decision-making capacity within national and regional policies. *For example, “Administrative boards” for administering common or rural resources (the Basque Country, Spain)*

8. **Condition the local territory and to plan for action rather than for control**. It is necessary to advance from urban and territorial planning towards strategic management; **this will involve defining lines of action and projects for providing the territory with added value.**
Calendar and teams:
24/07 - KO meeting <

September Draft version of EU and country analyses and 6 case studies
20/10 - October Final versions of all deliveries

November Cuenca-Salamanca Seminars - Presentation Policy Brief document

Increase the quality the policy brief by contributing 1+4 reports: Europe (Ximo Farinós), Germany (Stephan Kah); Italy (Loris Servilo); Spain (Erika Jaraiz); Portugal (Cristina Vasconcelos, Borja Iglesias and Rodrigo Vargas)

Scientific coordination and brief policy document: Mr. Josep Maria Llop - Coordinate and edit the results together with the ESPON management team

Finally, we would like to highlight the great opportunity, available to both Spain and Europe, for making small urban nodes both visible and relevant, for balance rural-urban and for taking on the demographic challenge.
Thanks for your attention

JOSEP MARIA LLOP I TORNÉ, Architect Urbanist - Director UNESCO Chair UdL CIMES

cimes.jmllop@gmail.com
Small Towns in Germany

Dr. Daniel Meltzian
Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building

10 October 2023
National initiative “Small Towns in Germany”

Objectives (since foundation in 2018):

- pool activities around small town development
- support sustainable development of small towns
  - in meeting societal challenges (i.e. demographic change, inner city development, digitalization)
  - in exchanging knowledge

Background: 2126 small towns in Germany:

- are home to 24 million people
- stabilize their surrounding area
- contribute significantly to equivalent living conditions in all parts of the country.
Urban development by, with and for small towns!

- include everyone
- work together
- develop gradually
German Small Town Academy – Pilot Phase

Learning from Model Projects

- at least four associated small towns work together on one self-chosen topic (2019 -2023)

- inner city development
- housing and mobility
- inner city development
- new digital working environments
- inner city housing alternatives
- civic participation
Small Towns in Germany

26.4 million people live in small towns - almost as many as in the 9 largest German cities (5.4 million). The geographical location of small towns, central or peripheral, explains differences in local living conditions. Regardless of their location, small towns contribute significantly to equal living conditions.

- Despite a high proportion of detached and semi-detached houses, small towns also have large urban structures and affluence. Geographical location decisions, pro and con to small towns are a substantial determinant of their demographic development.

- Small towns have a local employment market and sometimes develop into regional or even international economic centers - also in terms of knowledge economy.

- The basic services of generic interest, one of the main tasks of small towns - without destruction of peripheral or centrally located small towns. The less densely populated areas, the more small towns assume the activities of regional centers.

- In order to be able to perform these diverse tasks, small towns require sufficient resources, not only a financial nature, but also well-suited to administrative personal and real social commitment. Digital solutions and cooperative urban development can help to bridge backdrops.

By

Antonio Mierert
Lisa Pernste
Thank you for your attention!

For further details please contact:

Dr. Daniel Meltzian
SIII3@bmwsb.bund.de
// Thank you

piera.petruzzietespon.eu
nicolas.rossignol@espon.eu
wiktor.szydarowski@espon.eu