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INCEPTION REPORT //

**RURALPLAN –
Innovative planning in shrinking
societies**

Targeted analysis

Main report // January 2024

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This document is a inception report.

The information contained herein is subject to change and does not commit the ESPON EGTC and the countries participating in the ESPON 2030 Cooperation Programme.

The final version of the report will be published as soon as approved.

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Abbreviations

AESOP	Assembly of European Schools of Planning
ECP	European Policy Centre
ENRD	European Network for Rural Development
ESPON	European Territorial Observation Network
ESPON EGTC	ESPON European Group on Territorial Cooperation
ESPON ESCAPE	ESPON European Shrinking Rural Areas: Challenges, Actions and Perspectives for Territorial Governance
ESPON PROFECY	ESPON Processes Features and Cycles of Inner Peripheries in Europe
EWRC	European Week of regions and Cities
FSO	Federal Statistical Office
INN	Inland University of Applied Sciences
IGU	International Geographical Union
LAU	Local Administrative Units
LIU	Linköping University
NGM	Nordic Geography Meeting
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NO	Norway
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
RDI	Research development and innovation project
RLL	Rural Living Lab
RN	Researchers Night
RUPIL	Rural Planning and Innovation Lab
SAB	Arbeitsgemeinschaft für die Berggebiete
SCB	Statistics Sweden
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SSB	Statistics Norway
TA	Target Analysis

Foreword by Project leader Ulla Higdem

This Inception Report develops the aims, conceptual and methodological framework, and the research context for the Targeted Analysis RURALPLAN- Innovative planning in shrinking societies. The report follows on from the feedback on the technical offer and the discussions and documents connected to the kick-off meeting that was held virtually the 8th of December 2023.

We thank the evaluation committee, the ESPON EGTC, and the stakeholders for their contributions and proposals we have received. We look forward to cooperating in this Research-development and Innovation project (RDI).



Ulla Higdem,
Professor in Planning, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences

1 Innovative planning in shrinking societies

This Targeted Analysis RURALPLAN, aims at producing evidence on how strategic planning regarding rural areas responds to shrinking, leading to a model for knowledge-based strategic planning and policymaking. We anticipate that the model will be applicable to all European regions experiencing the challenges related to shrinking, as we will base the model on the diverse challenges faced by three focussed areas, or ‘Pilot Cases’, which include Norway (Innlandet), Sweden (Dalarna), and Switzerland (Albula/Albula Alps). Hence, RURALPLAN is a Research Development and Innovation project (RDI).

In these initial pages, we will outline two main concepts guiding our research and development-work, offered in this tender. First is the concept of Innovative planning as a strategic, territorial, and holistic planning for societal development. Secondly, the concept of a democratic and inclusive arena to facilitate strategic and innovative planning practice, a Rural Planning and Innovation Lab (RUPIL). We shall also pay attention to ESPON’s valuable contributions regarding rural and shrinking areas. However, we will first pay a visit to the existing knowledge on how planning in shrinking areas traditionally has been handled.

1.1 Shrinking societies

‘Shrinkage’ has long been on the international research agenda, mostly with a focus on shrinking cities in North America and in parts of continental Europe (e.g. Gans 1975; Hollander et al. 2009). For rural and peripheral areas, there has been a small but growing body of research on planning in shrinking regions. Broadly the literature has identified four policy responses to shrinking in Europe (Hospers 2014). Even though these responses address urban shrinkage, we find it relevant for us to mention here, as the responses are similarly applicable for rural shrinkage: 1) *trivialising*, where shrinkage is overlooked and denied; 2) *countering shrinkage*, with policies directed at attracting new people and businesses to resolve the problem of shrinkage; 3) *accepting shrinkage*, adapting the content of policies to mitigate the effects of shrinkage, improving the quality of life for the current population; and 4) *utilising shrinkage*, where the approach confirms that quality of life does not necessarily depend on population density, and tries to take advantage of it. For rural areas in Northern Europe, Syssner (2020) finds that there is a general unwillingness among planners and politicians to face the consequences of shrinkage, which can be seen in connection to ‘trivializing’ shrinkage in cities.

Literature discussing shrinking in Europe in general, however, finds that the most common response in planning is to keep a strategy for economic growth with a goal of resuming population growth (Sousa and Pinho 2015). This strategy normally fails, and scholars so far view that an approach of acceptance and some sort of adaptation is the most suitable strategy to address shrinkage (Hospers 2014, Syssner 2020). *Thus, the starting point for this project is to accept shrinkage and find new and innovative ways to utilize and adapt to shrinkage.* In the literature, there is

broad agreement that growth-oriented planning, which disregards the data and insists on unrealistic ideas about growth, has hindered the development of other proactive strategies for dealing with decline (Lang 2012, Syssner 2020). We experience as other researchers do, that shrinking is a ‘stigma’ at odds with the ideals of decision-makers, and that current theories and policies may lead to the impression that societies are ‘doomed’ if their populations are not growing (Sousa & Pinho 2015). Such growth-oriented planning perspectives have hindered the development of other proactive strategies for dealing with the decline (Lang 2012, Syssner 2020).

Our review of research on shrinkage (Hagen, Higdem, & Overvåg 2023) leads us to conclude that it has succeeded in revealing the challenges of planning in shrinking regions and contributed to increasing awareness of this issue, but it has also discovered a general unwillingness among planners and politicians to face the consequences of shrinkage. In a Norwegian context, we have also revealed hybrid and non-consistent planning responses to shrinking (Hagen, Higdem, & Overvåg 2023). Of course, such unwillingness to address the complexity of shrinking in planning for the future tends to make local- and regional governments fail in their societal development efforts.

The complexity of shrinking

The complexity of shrinking is properly addressed by ESPON’s ESCAPE project (2020 a, b). Rural areas today face several challenges related to economic, social, and environmental sustainability. For many rural municipalities, the combination of population decline, ageing populations, low population density, an expected reduction in economic activity, and stronger competition for labour, presents novel challenges for municipalities to fulfil their roles as both community developers and service providers. ESPON’s ESCAPE defines, amongst other factors, five different clusters of shrinking regions (ESPON, 2020 b), which we shall return to in relation to the three pilot cases (cf. Table 1 under Task 1.1).

Our position is that the tight coupling between growth (in population) and development needs to be de-coupled, meaning that it is possible to plan and create (sustainable) societal development in shrinking regions without population growth. This is what we will test and develop in this project. However, this point of view calls for a new mind-set of strategic planning and policymaking. ESPON (2020 a) also provides support for such a view by stating that approaches for shrinking areas must be based on evidence and reflect an analysis of pathways to shrinkage. ESPON (2020 a, 31) emphasises the need for a policy for shrinking rural areas that “... reflect[s] broader societal objectives than economic growth, such as inclusion, spatial justice, and wellbeing, and support[s] a Just Transition – towards a sustainable society”.

ESPON (2020 a, 31) also calls for “... practical guidance and support for local action, across a wide menu of interventions, [to] increase its potential for real changes”, The development of novel theories and planning models and methods requires

close co-creation and cooperation between researchers and local governments. In addition, for planning that incorporates shrinking as a premise, to gain the necessary legitimacy, knowledge, and acceptance, it needs to co-create with the existing local population and actors, to adapt it to the place-specific context, and to recognize the importance of the interaction between informal and formal planners and planning practices (Syssner & Meijer 2020). In our project, researchers will also join the collaboration with the local actors and provide their competences and knowledge into the co-creation process. Research conducted in cooperation with local and regional authorities will advance the concepts, theories and models for rural planning that recognizes shrinkage.

1.2 Innovative planning

There currently is no theory on planning for shrinkage, and the literature is unclear and confusing (Sousa and Pinho 2015). This is particularly so for rural and peripheral regions (Syssner 2020). Keeping this in mind, there is a need for innovation in planning, including policy development, to address the issues arising in shrinking rural societies (Hagen & Higdém 2019, Hagen & Higdém 2020). This also calls for innovation in planning processes, methods and models (Beetz et.al. 2008), where co-creation between public and private entities, non-governmental organisations (NGO's) and other actors is vital for collaborative innovation (Torfing & Triantafiliou 2016).

In this study, our point of departure is the development within the innovative perspective of planning (Hagen & Higdém 2020 a), where *innovative planning [is defined] as being mainly concerned with systematic, territorial, societal and co-produced change, which breaks with established practices and seeks to legitimize new social objectives or effect a major reprioritization of existing objectives.* (Hagen & Higdém 2020 a, 5).

However, we emphasize that the term 'innovation' may be in danger of becoming a buzzword describing a quick fix for complex societal issues or to legitimize public sector downsizing or cutbacks. We do not support these uses. It is important to note that innovation has the potential to both succeed as well as fail. This element of uncertainty separates innovation from work on development and change (Hartley 2005, Osborne & Brown 2011). Furthermore, innovation in the public sector is not limited to services or products, but may also be reflected in processes, organisations, policy, and governance (Moore and Hartley 2008, Crosby et al. 2017). This is important for planning purposes, since planning may spur innovation in each of these areas, including the form of planning itself, and has the potential to contribute to public value. Results of public value may be created and achieved as a collective effort of societal improvement within policies and strategies approved by public authorities in a given territorial context (Hagen & Higdém, 2020 a, 17).

Innovative planning is interactive, as innovations are most often created through collaborations between diverse actors (Edquist 2005, Healey 2006, Powell & Grodal 2005) and the output is co-produced (Albrechts 2012).

This focus on interaction will naturally bring out the underlying theories guiding the actions of participants, including intentions and interpretations. This might result in the emergence of new kinds of agents driving change. Innovative planning comprises a broadened and context-sensitive understanding of a society's planning capacity, wherein citizens, societal organizations, and businesses can contribute to the total capacity (Sysner & Meijer 2020).

Depopulating rural municipalities increasingly engage societal actors in planning practice to increase local governments' contextual knowledge and competence in planning, as well as to help mobilize the society's net resources for development. This is a vital perspective for shrinking regions with scarce planning resources and competence.

Because innovative planning is value-based and democratically anchored, politicians must manage and steer public strategic societal planning (Hagen & Higdrem 2020b). Politicians may take an interactive role (Sørensen 2016) in innovative planning. Research shows, however, the difficulties politicians have in doing so (Sønderskov 2019). Therefore, rural societal planning must absorb and apply positively the inherent ideological contradictions of politics, harnessing political conflicts as sources of development and innovation (Hagen & Higdrem 2020). Planning can thus become a political tool for innovation in the politics and policies of public value (Hartley, Sørensen, & Torfing 2013, Higdrem 2017). The forms of democracy in which innovative planning exist include the new democratic forms of governance (Osborne 2010) that have developed from perspectives of participatory co-production and co-creation of planning (Agger & Sørensen 2016, Higdrem 2014, Mäntysalo 2002) where politicians take on new roles. These new forms encompass deliberative and participatory approaches. In traditional liberal democratic states such as Sweden, Switzerland and Norway, government and governance exist side by side in planning situations (Hanssen Sandkjær 2012, Higdrem & Sandkjær Hanssen 2014). Related to the three cases, the mix of these forms in the local planning processes is important to detect (Mahoney & Thelen 2010).

1.3 The Rural Planning and Innovation Lab (RUPIL)

Living labs are an established methodological concept which often operate in a territorial context, such as a municipality. They are a helpful tool for involving larger parts of the society into the formal planning processes. Living labs are both a novel form of collaboration and ideal for mutual learning, leading to the co-creation of concrete, innovative results (Voytenko et al. 2016). Our Rural Planning and Innovation Lab (RUPIL) will draw on the concept of Rural Living Labs (RLL) (Perez-Terjo et al. 2020), which serve as local arenas where collaborative, interactive planning to address the challenges of shrinking rural regions takes place. In RUPIL, we will expand on the basic methods with a transdisciplinary approach by placing a greater emphasis on:

- (1) engaging societal actors in planning to mobilize more resources for development,
- (2) having a knowledge-based and realistic approach,

- (3) developing new roles for politicians,
- (4) developing processes to legitimize other social objectives, and
- (5) developing innovative processes for searching for alternative goals, strategies, and solutions.

Pivoting from a growth paradigm to a more realistic understanding of the complex challenges of population decline when it comes to planning and policy development will contribute to more realistic and sustainable planning in municipalities experiencing, or expecting to experience, population decline. Thus, we aim to facilitate planning based not only on more realistic assumptions about how populations are changing, but also by considering the population's own interests, preferences, needs and wishes for what constitutes a 'good life' in the context of their local community. To be knowledge-based and realistic here means that we will incorporate data and projections on environment, economy, quality of life etc., which will provide a solid foundation for a holistic understanding of status and trends, but also will frame goals and strategies for future planning and development, as well as what alternatives can be applicable. In such manner, we aim at increasing the local and regional willingness to foresee and plan for a future where population growth is not equivalent to success and living good lives. That is, to 'break the bond' between growth and development, traditionally embedded in policy-making and planning practice.

RUPIL contributes to innovative approaches within a strategic and holistic planning approach. In the liberal democratic contexts of Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, the legitimacy of such planning approaches is dependent on the combination of its creative and innovative forces and its capacity to deliver positive outcomes and formal acceptance by government. The role of local and/or regional politicians, who constitute the planning authorities, is therefore important to address in the three pilot cases. In the Norwegian case, politicians will be invited to take on an interactive role in the RUPIL, to come to the forefront and co-create new policies of public value for their societies. In the case of Sweden, we will test and develop how mobilizing civil society actors, NGO's and businesses contributes to society's (municipalities') total strategic planning capacity, in terms of competence, co-creating new goals, means and measures. In the case of Switzerland, which is interested in small functional areas, we will investigate how peripheral regions organise themselves to maintain services and employment in general, what role the small centres in these regions play and how the surrounding localities are linked to these centres (services of general interest, etc.). In the Swiss case, we will therefore apply a similar approach as in the Swedish case but adjusted for small functional areas.

Another relevant topic is technology and smart solutions as a promising path for rural development in Europe (ENRD 2022), and in Norway, such as Smart Cities Norway (2022). Our project will address technology and infrastructure as possibilities in the co-creation of municipal master plans.

Our purpose is to develop a methodology for innovative planning in rural municipalities and counties that face the challenges described above, ref. task 2. Methodologically, we will develop an arena for innovative planning in rural areas as a ‘rural living lab’ in combination with an organized innovation process in 6 phases: 1. Thematic/contextual orientation; 2. Exploring the problem; 3. Gathering insights; 4. Developing and creating the ideas; 5. Implementing solutions; and 6. Scaling and dissemination (see also Figure 1, below).

Summing up

We have introduced the concept of innovative planning to constitute the framework of the Rural Planning- and Innovation Lab (RUPIL), a model for knowledge-based strategic planning and policymaking, to address the complex problems of rural and depopulated areas. Our knowledge of such areas, together with an up-to-date literature review and an assessment of today’s planning practices in the case regions, will lead to producing evidence on how strategic planning regarding rural areas responds to shrinking. We will also introduce, test, and disseminate RUPIL—in cooperation with each stakeholder, i.e., Norway (Innlandet), Sweden (Dalarna) and Switzerland (State Secretariat of Economic Affairs), and EU-ROMONTANA.

For RUPIL to be applicable to a wide variety of European regions the pilot regions represent challenges faced by a diverse, cross-cutting array of in different planning contexts. Our approach with innovative planning and testing of RUPIL in the stakeholder’s area will contribute to lay the foundation for developing a model for planning in rural shrinking areas with broad involvement and with a comprehensive and realistic knowledge basis. In addition, we will perform data analysis, literature reviews and document studies (both general and in the stakeholders’ areas), and a few interviews with key informants (described in greater detail in Task 1). These will allow us to build an overview of development trends, local and regional strategies and planning activities in targeted shrinking rural regions.

In total, this will answer the following questions:

1. Overlaying on the economic and demographic trends, how local and regional planning authorities in Europe handle rural shrinking?
2. How to improve the response to shrinking and aging in rural areas, including the approach to smart shrinking in general and how this could be applied in the stakeholders’ areas?
3. How can local master planning and strategic planners co-create new policy responses in a democratic and fair manner and with all stakeholders involved (citizens, local and regional authorities, private sector, enterprises etc.)? Which model can be suitable to foster knowledge-based and innovative local and regional planning?
4. What strategies can be used by local and regional policymakers to ensure that shrinking and aging rural areas become as inclusive, resilient and attractive as possible?

This will provide a basis for delivering all the expected outcomes of the project. This will be further elaborated and described in the following chapters.

2 Frameworks, implementation, and outcomes of the tasks

In this chapter we will describe the specific approaches and methods to be applied in the three tasks, as well as the sources, data to be used, and the deliveries.

2.1 TASK 1: Methodological framework and literature review on strategic local planning in shrinking rural areas

This task provides the methodological framework for how we will collect, sample, and analyse different types of data and information needed for this project. The data and results from this task fulfil several purposes; they provide a reference point for further analysis; they inform the detailed selection of pilot municipalities/regions; and they provide some of the knowledge needed as part of the RUPIL-process (Task 2). Referring to the expected outputs of this project, this task will provide territorial evidence on shrinking in the stakeholders' area, identify planning practices, and an assessment of effectiveness and gaps in the current planning practices.

We consider it as appropriate to break this task into three sub-tasks, which is: data on shrinkage in the stakeholder's area: literature review and existing planning practices in the pilot regions/municipalities.

2.1.1 TASK 1.1 Data on shrinkage in the stakeholder's area

In this task, we will collect territorial evidence including projections on shrinking in the stakeholders' areas. Data will be collected and analysed on both NUTS 3 level (Dalarna, Innlandet, Albula/Albula Alps) and for all LAU-level regions within these NUTS 3 regions. In Sweden and Norway this means all municipalities within these regions. All regions within the study areas will thus be included. In the analysis, focus will be on medium/short term timespan, as it is today's situation and development which is mostly relevant. Consistency will be ensured as best as possible, due to the availability of data.

We suggest that we mainly start from the indicators for simple and complex shrinking that were used in the ESPON ESCAPE project. In this project, comprehensive and solid work was done to analyse and understand the multiple dimensions of shrinking. In addition, we will use data from the ESPON PROFECY project (and PROFECY update projects) as a basis to analyse access to services. Other relevant indicators may be discussed, and minor details will be clarified in a cooperation between ESPON EGTC and the service provider during the implementation of the analysis.

The different categories of complex shrinking defined in the cluster analysis in ESPON ESCAPE, along with the ranking of explanatory power of different variables

contained in Annex 2 (ESPON, 2020 b) can be used to identify key variables. This analysis enables us to discuss to which clusters of shrinking our pilot-cases belong (like the 5-cluster-solution in table 1), and thus have similarities with.

Table 2.1
Typology of complex shrinking and intermediate regions (5 classes)

Category	Label
1	Agricultural, very low-income regions with severe legacy and active shrinking
2	Industrial, mid-income regions with severe legacy and active shrinking
3	Agro-industrial, low-income regions with moderate, mostly legacy shrinking
4	Servitised, mid-low-income regions with moderate legacy shrinking
5	Industrial or servitised, mid-income regions with moderate, mostly legacy shrinking

Source. ESPON, 2020 b)

Identifying which categories our pilot cases belong to will help inform the detailed selection of municipalities/sub-regions where we want to test the RUPIL - which must of course be done in close cooperation with the stakeholders. In general, it can be said that it would be a strength for the project to have sub-regions/municipalities in different types of clusters, to test the model in different contexts of shrinkage.

We have selected 14 variables (table 2) which are most useful for categorizing shrinking regions, based on the analysis in ESPON ESCAPE (2020 b). Our criteria are that variables should have a proven impact according to the analysis ESCAPE, but also be directly relevant to the main differences between the 5 categories derived from the cluster analysis. Selection is also based on what data is available at NUTS 3 and at the LAU level: for instance, ESCAPE uses share of gross value added for different economic sectors since employment as gross value added is usually not calculated at the LAU level.

Table 2.2
Variables in the analysis of shrinking in the stakeholders' areas

	Name	Description	NUTS-level	Years	Source	Comment
Geography	Accessibility (Multimodal – road, rail, air, access to services)	A multi-modal accessibility index Access to services (SEGI)	NUTS 3 LAU	2001-2016 (and updates from ESPON PROFECY)	ESPON ESCAPE, ESPON PROFECY (and updates)	Concerning ESPON ESCAPE this variable (multimodal accessibility index) seems to not have been updated since 2014. Recalculation is beyond the scope of this project. Access to services is available through ESPON PROFECY, and ESPON has access to updated data on the location of services. Accessibility to those can be calculated using the population grid.
	Second homes	Second homes per inhabitant	NUTS 3 and LAU	2000-2022	SSB, SCB, FSO	Data for Norway and Sweden are provided for both NUTS 3 and LAU. For Switzerland further investigation on availability is necessary
	Urban-rural relations	Indicators like commuting, commerce (trade patterns), use of services across LAU.	LAU	2000-2022	SSB, SCB, FSO	Further clarifying will be done on indicators, levels, and sources.
Demography	Simple Shrinking Typology	Rate of shrinking from year A to year B as a percentage of the Year B population	NUTS 3 LAU	2000-2022 2010-2022	Eurostat SSB, SCB, FSO	For the case studies local data will make it possible to calculate this on the LAU level
	Simple Shrinking Typology (Historic)	Number of decades of shrinking from LAU data (1961-2011)	NUTS 3 LAU	1961-2021	DG REGIO, Eurostat	These indicators are based on the same dataset and proved relevant indicators in the ESCAPE analysis. Data up until 2021 will be available in March 2024, and will then be included in the analysis. Data might need to be interpolated or re-aggregated if geographical units have changed significantly within our case studies.

	Name	Description	NUTS-level	Years	Source	Comment
Economy	Internal population distribution	Share of population living in LAUs that were shrinking in	NUTS 3 LAU	1961-2021	DG REGIO, Eurostat	
	Share of working age population 15-64	2001-2011 (2011) The share of working age population refers to the ratio of 15-64 years old population to the total population.	NUTS 3 LAU	2018-2022 2018-2022	Eurostat SSB, SCB, FSO	Given that potential ageing of population is part of this project, this variable is included. Substitutes may be considered.
	Population projection, total population	Projected total population	NUTS 3 LAU	2023-2050	SSB, SCB, FSO	
	Population projection, age group 20-64	Projected population aged 20-64 as share of total projected population	NUTS 3 LAU	2023-2050	SSB, SCB, FSO	
	Population projection, age group 65+	Projected population aged 65+ as share of total projected population	NUTS 3 LAU	2023-2050	SSB, SCB, FSO	
	GDP per capita (Purchasing Power Standards)	GDP per capita refers to the ratio of total Gross Domestic Product (expressed in Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) and total population	NUTS 3	2012-2021	NSI, OECD regional database, Eurostat	5th most important variable in ESCAPE analysis. It is probably necessary to calculate GDP for all NUTS3 in each country, to use this as a proxy for GDP at LAU level. PPS needs to be adjusted by currency exchanges rates and PPS index
			LAU	2015-2022	SSB, SCB	

Name	Description	NUTS-level	Years	Source	Comment
Share of employment in sector A	The share of gross value added by sectors.	NUTS 3	2017-2021	Eurostat, OECD regional database	
Share of employment I sectors B-F	Sectors defined by NACE rev.2 expressed as percentage of total employment	LAU	2020-2022	SSB, SCB	
Share of employment in sectors G-N					
Share of employment in sectors O-U					

Source: Authors own elaboration

These 14 variables (with LAU alternatives where necessary and possible), should be sufficient to understand the complexity of shrinking processes in our case studies as well as to categorize the variation and differences between them. We aim to limit the use of variables here to make room for the possibility that the different case studies may require specific data. It is difficult to know before the work in each case study has started what data is needed to support the local processes of planning. We want to ensure that we have resources available to support each RUPIL-process with further data based on needs specific to the local context of each process. Given that we want to be sensitive to the needs of the RUPIL-process, a full accounting of every variable used will not be available until the case studies have progressed to the point where their need for data or analysis becomes apparent.

These data will be uploaded in a database, which will serve as the basis to produce dynamic and static maps.

2.1.2 TASK 1.2 Literature review

In this task we will perform a literature review of policies and practices of local and regional planning and development in shrinking rural areas. The review will be based on scientific literature and on reports from projects, cases etc. We will concentrate on studies/projects that include evaluations, documentation, etc. of actual planning and development processes, practices, and models, as this will be most relevant for RURALPLAN. We have already done thorough reviews of theories and analyses of challenges with planning in rural areas (part of which is presented in chapter 1 of this inception report). The review will cover all countries but have a focus on Europe as this is the most relevant context. The focus will be on literature from shrinking rural regions. Literature on shrinking cities can in addition be used, as an inspiration for rural areas. The review will be based on scientific literature and on reports from projects, cases etc.

The literature review will cover, among other things, the following issues:

- Methodologies and strategies (including smart shrinking)
- Current policy responses to shrinking, both in general/holistic local and regional planning and in diverse sectors
- Analysis and discussions on the effectiveness and impact of current policy responses and planning practices
- A summary of what are considered the most suitable ways (recommendations) on how shrinking can be approached.

This general review will also contribute to suggestions and recommendations on how to approach planning in the three pilot cases in Sweden, Switzerland, and Norway, with local contextual adaptations which are fitted for the specific focuses that shall be applied in those three pilots (see next sub-task).

2.1.3 TASK 1.3 Existing planning practices in the pilot regions/municipalities

In this sub-task, we will do a specific study of the three pilot cases/regions. This study will cover the following:

- Identification of planning practices and responses in the stakeholders' areas. The main method will be to document studies of planning and development strategies etc. Documents will be collected on several scales (regional, municipal, community levels) and cover broad societal and master plans/strategies or specific themes, sectors, or services. Information will be collected in line with what is relevant in each of the three pilots. Information from qualitative interviews with key actors can provide valuable additional information.
- Analysis and assessment of the effectiveness of the current policy responses in the stakeholder's areas. The analysis will be based on the documents described above and supplemented with viewpoints from key actors in the local areas.
- Identification of policy needs and objectives in the stakeholder's areas. This will be based on a combination of interviews with key informants and discussions with the stakeholders of this projects (in kick-off meetings etc.), together with valuable input from data on shrinkage in the regions (task 1.1.), and the two points above here in task 1.3. Section 2.2.2 already gives some directions on this question.
- A first suggestion on what strategies and detailed model/method (variants of the main method, described in task 2), can be applied in each of the three pilots. This recommendation will be based on the information and analysis performed in all the sub-tasks described here, and further discussed and developed together with the stakeholders of each three pilot cases.

The methods for this sub-task are thus document studies and interviews with key informants (in addition to discussions with the stakeholders). Key informants will be identified with the help of both the document study (by identifying who has been responsible for the plans/strategies), the stakeholders in this project and through the network we as service providers have in these regions. Key actors to

be interviewed will be selected in cooperation with the stakeholders and in agreement with ESPON EGTC.

2.1.4 Outcome Task 1

In combination, these three sub-tasks and the methods they apply provide a solid and flexible approach that secures a comprehensive, relevant, and valid basis for the rest of the project.

In line with the call for tender, there will be three outcomes of Task 1:

OUTCOME

Report

A report, containing all main descriptions, analysis, and results from this task. An indicative table of contents is as follows:

1. Summary (approx. 1 page).
2. Introduction, main approach, and framework for Task 1 (approx. 2 pages).
3. Analysis of shrinkage in the three pilot cases. Including what types of shrinkage characterize the three cases seen in relation to the different types of clusters identified in the ESPON ESCAPE-project and accompanied by maps and other illustrations. Other and more detailed data and maps will be found in outcome 2 (Database) and 3 (Maps) (approx. 5 pages).
4. General literature review of planning in shrinking areas. Analysis and presentation following the structure of the four issues described for this task (approx. 4 pages).
5. Existing planning practices in the pilot regions/municipalities, including future policy needs, (approx. 5 pages)
6. Suggestions on what local areas/municipalities to focus on for RUPIL and detailed method to apply in each pilot case (approx. 2 pages).

A summary and visuals from the report will be made accessible in local languages at the project's webpage.

OUTCOME**Database**

Database, with all the detailed statistics (variables and indicators), and projections collected when analysing both simple and complex shrinking in the stakeholders' areas. All available data on NUTS 3 level and all LAU within the respective regions, including the selected municipalities/ local communities will be included. The variables are specified in task 1.1. This will be uploaded on the ESPON Database portal in accordance with current database documentation.

OUTCOME**Maps**

Dynamic and static maps. With data from the database, a range of dynamic and static maps will be developed and uploaded for publication within ESPON's GIS Portal (GIS HUB), due to these instructions: <https://database.espon.eu/doc/how-to-deliver-my-data.html>. Many of the same types of maps as in ESPON ESCAPE. However, here they will be updated and for Switzerland and Norway, added, since they were not previously covered by the ESCAPE-project. A selection of the static maps will be used in the report, according to ESPON standards. Maps will be made in accordance with the template, which was introduced at the kick-off meeting.

In combination, these three sub-tasks, the methods they apply, and the three outcomes, will provide a solid and flexible approach that secures a comprehensive, relevant, and valid basis for the rest of the project, and fulfil all the purposes which we aim for with Task 1.

2.2 TASK 2: A model for innovative planning and policy making

The aim of this task is to develop and test a model for knowledge-based innovative planning and policymaking in shrinking peripheral areas. The model described below, RUPIL, aims to be a democratic participatory tool to support the local governments in their master planning. We aim to facilitate planning based on more realistic assumptions about how regions are shrinking, as well as on the population's own interests, preferences, needs and wishes for what constitutes a 'good life' in the context of their local community. Our purpose is to test and further develop a methodology for innovative planning in rural municipalities and counties that face the challenging combination of population decline, ageing populations, low population density, an expected reduction in economic activity and stronger competition for labour.

We will break this task into two sub-tasks: First the development of the model, and second the piloting of the model in both Innlandet in Norway, Dalarna in Sweden, and Albula/Albula Alps in Switzerland.

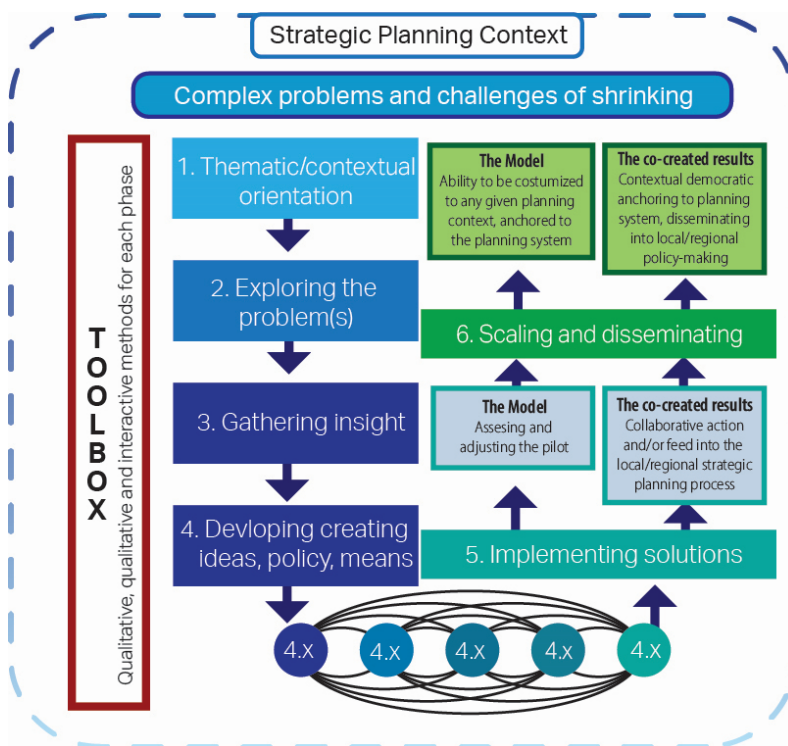
2.2.1 Task 2.1 Development of a model for innovative strategic planning and policymaking in shrinking peripheral areas, the Rural Planning and Innovation Lab, RUPIL

The challenges the shrinking regions of Norway, Sweden and Switzerland face today are multifaceted and have complex interdependencies characteristic of wicked problems, which are extremely difficult to solve and should be handled with appropriate strategic measures. The starting point for the development of an appropriate model for innovative strategic planning and policymaking is the acknowledgment of the complex challenges the regions are facing.

Methodologically, we will facilitate an arena for innovative planning in shrinking peripheral areas as a rural living lab, the Rural Planning and Innovation Lab – RUPIL. The use of living labs is an established methodology that encourages broad participation in planning processes and is both an innovative form of collaboration and an arena for knowledge sharing and learning in the cooperative creation of concrete innovations (Voytenko et al. 2016). RUPIL will follow the principles of living labs as well as employ various creative and innovative methodologies to facilitate co-creation in planning workshops. RUPIL will be implemented via creative workshops which will serve as meeting points for public institutions, politicians, businesses, volunteers, academics, residents, and users of various types of services. By inviting a wide range of stakeholders to the RUPIL arena, we mobilize local resources and promote participation from local community residents (Torfing et al. 2016). As co-creation is central to our methodology, it is important that both the development of ideas and the identification of possible solutions take place via interactions between stakeholders. This will require the exchange of knowledge, resources, and ideas as part of the joint solution (Hvitsand & Richards 2017). At the Rural Planning and Innovation Lab we will facilitate a creative, yet systematic, innovative process with six phases (see also Figure 1):

1. Thematic/contextual orientation
2. Exploring the problem
3. Gathering insights
4. Developing and creating ideas
5. Implementing solutions
6. Scaling and dissemination

Figure 2.1
Rural Planning and Innovation Lab- the innovation process



Source: Based on Eide, Tholstrup & Higdem 2023

Attached to RUPIL, we will develop Toolboxes with suggestions and descriptions of different kinds of tools (quantitative and qualitative, interactive, and facilitative to apply related to the actual context). We will suggest some of the appropriate tools also below, in relation to the different phases of the RUPIL.

The ESPON evaluation committee/EGTC’s advice on the model itself is to add a phase describing the process, the number of stakeholders/participants, and if digital participation is possible. We agree that the processes as defined above, should be described in the model, related to each case. Also, the types of tools employed to facilitate the processes will be described. However, the processes are to be developed in the context of each case, and it is by now premature to be more concrete. As the project description outlines RUPIL will be implemented via creative workshops that will serve as meeting points for public institutions, politicians, businesses, volunteers, academics, residents, and users of various types of services. Each case will influence the composition of actors in RUPIL. We do have techniques to facilitate up to 30 participants at a time.

In our experience, it is necessary for the processes to be held in real life, and at a place within the context. It should be easy for the participants to participate, and the threshold must be low. The stakeholders in RURALPLAN will be invited to participate in several possible ways, that could be discussed, for example by contributing to the facilitation of the process itself in each case, observing and taking notes from the processes feeding into the final evaluation, and so on. Finally,

digital participation from ESPON or other external actors in the processes is welcomed. We invite to a discussion with ESPON EGTC for observation purposes, how and where in the processes it could be fruitful to join in.

We present a simplified timeline for the RUPIL-processes, which is included in the popularized pamphlet.

Figure 2.2
A simplified timeline for the RUPIL-processes

February/March	April/May/June/July	August
Preparations	Implementation	Evaluation report
<i>RUPIL is planned for Sweden, Switzerland, and Norway</i>	<i>The three workshops are carried out in all the three countries</i>	<i>Report based on conducted workshops.</i>

Source: authors' own elaboration

INN will arrange a common RUPIL workshop for facilitators (and collaboration partners) to prepare the testing phase, organized from lunch to lunch at INN Lillehammer, Norway. The participants are to be the Norwegian, Swedish, and Swiss facilitators and representatives from the stakeholders. The workshop is due at the end of February, or early March. For representatives who might not be able to attend, we will offer one summing-up online session. However, it is necessary to underline the importance of this being a physical meeting, to establish a common and solid ground for the facilitation and the methods in the three cases.

Further, we describe the 6 phases of RUPIL.

Phase 1: Thematic/contextual orientation.

The model for the innovation process in the lab is a generic model that fits equally in urban as well as rural contexts. It is in the description of the wicked problems and the exploration of the problem that the model is contextualized and adapted to the specific challenges in shrinking areas. Quantitative data will be used to describe the challenges specific to the actual shrinking areas in our three cases (see also Task 1). Based on how we describe the problem, RUPIL's participants will decide which problem/s or challenges to explore further in Phase 2.

Phase 2: Exploring the problem.

In this phase, participants gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the problem and associated challenges. Further, this contributes to establishing a shared understanding of how the challenges at hand can be linked to strategic planning. Citizens, local businesses, NGOs, and the scientific community will be invited to participate in this work. Quantitative as well as qualitative data will be presented to explore the problem.

Phase 3: Gathering insights.

The insight phase concentrates on gathering further knowledge about the challenges we seek to handle. This may involve data, in the form of statistics and survey results, but it also includes knowledge about what citizens' perceptions, experiences, wishes and needs are. It is crucial that we gather insights from the various stakeholders participating in the testing process. RUPIL is designed to involve those who are affected in a variety of ways, and to employ suitable tools to gather insight. The knowledge provided by the participants will add to the insight. This phase may provide a more unified picture of the problem for the participants/stakeholders, which will serve as a basis for phase 4.

Phase 4: Development and creation.

In the fourth phase, ideas and strategies will be developed, tested, and evaluated. This is the most comprehensive phase and starts with idea development. Once an idea has been developed, it is conceptualized by the RUPIL participants. The fourth phase may have several loops, meaning that the participants iteratively assess, change, and then assess again, until the measure/idea/strategy/plan, is regarded as possible to be successfully implemented. Based on the discussions and judgements, an action program will be drawn up.

In strategic planning work, this phase may, for example, involve assessing strategies against sustainability goals. Another appropriate tool for strategic master planning is 'future scenarios', also known as 'strategic foresight', to identify emerging trends and discuss them in a strategic context.

In this phase, two perspectives must be given attention: A meta-perspective on how realistic planning can be carried out to meet place-specific challenges ('the model' box in figure 1), and a substantial perspective where the focus is on concrete strategies to reach local development goals ('the co-created results' box in figure 1). In other words, this phase is about mobilizing planning resources, creating legitimacy for new development goals, and developing concrete strategies to achieve these goals.

Phase 5: Implementation.

The implementation phase in this project is divided into two parts: First, a substantial focus on how to implement co-created strategies in the local context, and second, a methodological focus on how the innovation model can be adjusted and adapted based on the experiences from the different phases. The substantial focus concerns the co-created results in RUPIL, which are to be fed into the local

and/or regional strategic planning process. This part may take several forms, depending on the priority areas identified in the previous planning phases. The collaborating actors in RUPIL strategy and planning work should cooperatively decide how the implementation of, for example, a new, policy, strategy or action program should be carried out (co-created results' box in figure 1).

The methodological part is concerned with assessing the testing of the RUPIL pilot in each case, in cooperation with the participants of the RUPIL, the researchers, and the project's stakeholders ('the model'- box in figure 1).

Phase 6: Scaling and dissemination.

The final stage of the innovation process is the scaling and dissemination is also twofold. Firstly, it concerns scaling and disseminating of innovative strategies, policies or measures developed through the work. The co-created results may, if needed, include establishing a connection to democratic anchoring in the local planning system, in cooperation with the stakeholders and local or regional authorities. Innovative and good co-created results, ideas, and suggestions from phase 5 are also to be disseminated to similar planning authorities and societies in Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and other countries with shrinking peripheral areas. Secondly, the scaling and dissemination process will also be applied to the RUPIL-concept and innovation model.

The six phases will collectively answer how the challenges related to shrinking in rural areas can be understood and facilitate the development of effective and innovative policy responses. These policy responses have their strength in being knowledge-based and democratically developed through close dialogue and innovative processes. Furthermore, the implementation of the policy responses is closely linked to the local/regional planning systems to ensure that the solutions are incorporated into strategic planning in shrinking peripheral regions.

2.2.2 Task 2.2 Testing the model in the three pilot cases

The RUPIL model will be tested in three different case regions, with different thematic focuses and in different planning contexts. In general, the outcome of the testing should be 1) Methodological refinement: Rigorous testing of a model tailored to the specific challenges of demographic change, and 2) Co-creation: Fostering a collaborative environment between stakeholders to achieve tangible local outcomes and outputs. The pilot case in Os municipality, Innlandet, Norway (CASE 1) will focus on the consequences of ageing and depopulation and will be applied in the planning context at a municipal level. The pilot case in Malung-Sälen municipality, Dalarna Sweden (CASE 2), will focus on recruitment, competence provision for the private and public sector and labour market issues derived from ageing of the population on a municipal level. The pilot case in Albula municipality, Switzerland (CASE 3) will focus on what role regional centres play in a situation of decline, either on the average decline of the region as a whole or a decline of the villages located in the outskirts of the region(s). The Swedish and Swiss cases are concerned with informal planning, where civil society actors take initiative – and will be invited to attend the RUPIL process—in addition to local planners and

politicians. In the Norwegian case, the planning authorities, administrative and political, will be invited to attend the RUPIL-process together with civil society actors, and the process will initially be connected to the local planning system. In the following, we give a tentative description of the three case studies.

Initial description of the RUPIL-process:

In all three cases, RUPIL will initially be planned in a similar way, however in close collaboration with each of them. In Norway, we collaborate with the Innlandet County and the testing municipality which is Os. The Dalarna case in Sweden will be implemented in Malung-Sälen municipality. In Sweden RUPIL will of course also be planned in close collaboration with Dalarna County and the testing municipality. In Switzerland, the testing will be planned in close collaboration with the Albula region as described in Case 3 below.

Our initial concept involves conducting a series of local Labs, essentially workshops, as part of a co-creation process. The first Lab, referred to as Lab 1, will primarily focus on phases 1 and 2 of RUPIL. Its objectives are to establish a realistic thematic framework and to examine the issues from the diverse perspectives of various stakeholders. We estimate that Lab 1 will span a single workday.

Subsequently, we will follow up with two additional half-day Labs, Lab 2 and Lab 3, which will emphasize phase 3, involving gathering insights, and phase 4, centred on the development and testing of ideas and strategies. The time intervals between these Labs are designed to provide ample opportunities for actors and researchers to work and reflect on the different phases of the RUPIL.

To ensure active engagement from all participants throughout the process, we will employ various co-creation techniques from our toolbox. If feasible, participants will also take part in the "testing" of prototypes between Lab 2 and Lab 3. This step is crucial in obtaining valuable feedback regarding the realism of these prototypes when tested outside the confines of the RUPIL-arena.

2.2.2.1 The Three pilot-cases

On the following pages will we present the three case studies:

CASE STUDY**CASE 1 Os, Innlandet, Norway****Background**

As described in the tender, ageing and population decline are key concerns for rural municipalities in Innlandet county. The demographic development in these rural areas is characterized as multi-faceted, where the three challenges of population decline, ageing, and scattered settlement occur simultaneously.

Planning authorities

The municipalities in Norway have extensive responsibility over their territories, including, but not limited to welfare services, education, infrastructure, and societal development. The 356 municipalities of Norway are all political-administrative entities with equal status as autonomous bodies, grounded on a principle of municipal self-government. The municipalities are required to plan for societal development (comprehensive planning) as well as organization of public services (PBA 2008). The municipal council itself directs the planning process (§3-3). Municipal planning serves as a common arena for addressing different public interests (national and regional laws, strategies, budgets, etc.) in a multi-level system of governance. The purpose of planning is to 'promote sustainable development in the best interests of individuals, society and future generations' (§1-1).

Focus

As described in the tender, the pilot case in Innlandet (NO) will focus on the consequences of ageing and depopulation. The municipalities have the responsibility of formulating strategy and policy for local development that is holistic and sensitive to the local context. It is crucial, therefore, to develop concepts and models for more suitable knowledge-based and innovative local planning that can meet this complex societal challenge.

Objectives

The Innlandet case aims to enrich local planning processes and strategies in the Innlandet region and to promote sustainable solutions to the complex challenges of an ageing population. We also aim to test the RUPIL-model in Os municipality and from that draw experiences that will contribute to developing and adjusting the model and to developing new knowledge about how to face the challenges of shrinking to be used in the local and regional planning context. The selection of a testing municipality, local planning context/process, and type of municipal plan has been discussed with the Innlandet County Authority and Os municipality.

Participants in co-creation

We aim to include a broad spectrum of participants from local politicians, planners, citizens, and local businesses to NGOs. This is to enable new and innovative types of strategies and solutions to be derived from the co-creation process and to challenge established planning practices. Participants in the co-creation process of the RUPIL will be discussed with Os.

Projected Outcomes

- a. New knowledge on how to understand the challenges related to ageing and population decline in the Norwegian planning-context.
 - b. Sustainable and innovative strategy proposals on how to face ageing and population decline in the Innlandet-context. Ideally, this outcome will be integrated into an ongoing planning process.
 - c. Proposal of co-creation models that can support local master planning to create innovative solutions to ageing and depopulation.
-

CASE STUDY**CASE 2 Malung-Sälen, Dalarna, Sweden****Background**

The Dalarna region, spanning 28,183 square kilometres, approximately 6 percent of Sweden's land area, is home to a population of 281,046, comprising around 3 percent of Sweden's total population. In this region, the Dalarna Region organization is the largest employer, boasting a workforce of over 9,300 individuals. Notably, the regional hospital, with approximately 3,700 employees, takes the lead as the largest workplace. The health and social services sector thrive in Dalarna, with one in five workers engaged in this field.

Planning authorities

In Sweden, municipalities bear the responsibility for delivering essential work-intensive services such as childcare, education, social welfare, and elderly care. Municipalities elect representatives directly through citizen votes, granting residents influence and control over local governance. Central to this decentralised model of governance lies municipal planning, serving as the core of community development and the fulfilment of municipal duties. Amongst the municipalities within Dalarna, demographic shifts reveal intriguing nuances. Demographic transformations present these municipalities with substantial challenges, emphasizing the critical need to address the implications of demographic change in the region.

Focus

The pilot case in Dalarna, Malung-Sälen will focus on recruitment, competence provision for the private and public sector and labour market issues caused by an ageing population. The focus areas include:

- Recruitment strategies: The initiative will focus on developing innovative recruitment strategies that meet the needs of a digital and hybrid workforce.
- Skills utilisation: Exploring strategies to harness the untapped skills in the community, for example among second homeowners and drop-outs, and their potential contribution to the local economy.
- Extending working lives: Drawing on insights from the literature on the 'silver economy', the project aims to explore mechanisms for integrating older people into the labour market, thereby extending their productive engagement.

Objectives

The overall aim of this project is to enrich local planning processes and strategies in the Dalarna region and to promote sustainable solutions to the complex challenges of recruitment and competence provision related to an ageing population. This initiative is driven by two core objectives:

- Methodological refinement: Rigorous testing of a model tailored to the specific challenges of demographic changes.
- Co-creation: Fostering a collaborative environment between stakeholders to achieve tangible local outcomes and outputs.

Participants in Co-Creation

In the case of Malung-Sälen, the co-creation process will require the active participation of a wide range of stakeholders, including citizens, local businesses, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In addition, the engagement of local and regional politicians, planners, residents, and businesses will play a crucial role in identifying organisation-specific challenges and co-creating tailored solutions.

Projected Outcomes

- a) Proposal on recruitment strategies: aimed at developing innovative recruitment strategies that meet the needs of a digital and hybrid workforce.
 - b) Proposal on strategies to harness the untapped skills in the community, and their potential contribution to the local economy.
 - c) Contribute to integrating older people into the labour market, thereby extending their productive engagement.
-

CASE STUDY**CASE 3 Albula, Switzerland****Background**

In the mountainous part of Switzerland (the Alps and Jura) one can observe a very heterogeneous demographic development. Whereas in the main valleys the population is growing, the lateral valleys often face a demographic change characterised by outmigration and an ageing population. According to statistical data SAB was collecting in 2022 (<https://www.sab.ch/dokumente/berggebiet-in-zahlen/>), three regions in particular would be interesting to work with as pilot areas: (1) the Vallée de Joux in the French speaking part of Switzerland (slightly decreasing in the last 5 years, ageing population); (2) the Kandervalley in Bernese Oberland in the German speaking part of Switzerland (stagnating, ageing population); and (3) the Albula region (decreasing in the last 5 years, ageing population), also in the German speaking part of Switzerland. Albula region is selected as a pilot area.

Planning authorities

In Switzerland, municipalities have the competence to organise parts of public transport, parts of spatial planning, infrastructure, childcare, education, social welfare, and elderly care. These competences are bound into cantonal and national concepts and laws, however always following the idea of subsidiarity, which means that solutions should be sought on the level on which a particular challenge can best be solved. The Swiss tax system also leaves a considerable share of tax income within the competence of the municipalities, so that the latter have financial means at their disposal to implement measures that ensure proper community development and fulfilment of municipal duties. With the New regional policy introduced in 2008, the Swiss regions and adhering municipalities have been regrouped (<https://regiosuisse.ch/en/new-regional-policy-nrp>). The possible test areas are such entities, as they are coordinated by regional managers and committees, and in some cases also have established regional conferences (parliaments) as tools of governance. These regions often have extensive competences in the field of spatial planning, public transport, and the promotion of the local/regional economy. As in Sweden and Norway, citizens elect representatives directly for the municipal council leaving to them a high control and influence on local governance.

Focus

The focus will be put on the delivery of services of general interest and how services can be planned and assured in a future of stagnating/decreasing population numbers in peripheral mountain areas (Alps and Jura). An intrinsic assumption of the New regional policy is that regional centres serve as engines of local and regional development and when doing well have a positive economic and social impact on neighbouring municipalities. That is why a particular focus will be put in this project on what role regional centres play in a situation of a stagnating/decreasing population numbers. Furthermore—as a transversal topic—the utilisation of digital tools in service provision shall be evaluated.

Objectives

The aim of this project is to improve and amend ongoing local planning processes and strategies and/or to create new strategies in terms of planning and assuring the access and delivery of services of general interest in a peripheral, mountainous areas in Switzerland facing declining and ageing populations. Furthermore, the positive aspects that bring digitalisation into service delivery will be evaluated and promoted. The project will promote sustainable solutions to the complex challenges of recruitment and competence provision related to an ageing population.

Participants in the co-creation process

In the co-creation process, regional stakeholders will be involved including citizens, service providers, formal planners, regional managers, and NGOs. Academics and policymakers will be involved as necessary.

Projected Outcomes:

- a. Proposal of a regional strategy that serves the local and regional authorities to assure the accessibility and delivery of services of general interest despite a shrinking population. Ideally this outcome is integrated in an ongoing planning process. The strategy is accompanied by recommendations to the SECO (national level) to adapt/improve the New regional policy in view of the role of regional centres in response to a decreasing population and can also be used by local and regional policymakers to ensure that shrinking and/or ageing rural areas become as inclusive, resilient and attractive as possible.
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-
- b. The improvement and adaptation of a co-creation model that can support local master planning and strategic planning to create innovative responses for development in shrinking and/or ageing rural areas.
-

2.2.3 Outcome – the nature and format of the delivery

In line with the call for tender, there will be three outcomes of task 2:

OUTCOME

Report

A report of about 30 pages (including the three pilot cases) accompanied by a general and interactive visualization. An indicative table of contents is as follows:

1. Summary (approx. 1 page)
2. Introduction of the RUPIL-concept and the innovation model, main approach and framework for this task (approx. 2 pages)
3. Presentation of the three case studies, including a description of the shrinking/ageing situation (including maps), presentation of the testing of the model, and results for the testing including outcomes related to the model (method) and the co-creation results¹. (approx. 6 pages for each case).
4. Discussion of the experiences derived from the three case studies, including the model (assessing the pilot-testing, co-learning, improvements, adjustments, and so on) and co-creation results (local planning practices). (approx. 5 pages)
5. The last chapter will 1) propose strategies that can be used by local and regional policymakers to ensure that shrinking and/or ageing rural areas become as inclusive, resilient, and provide opportunities for quality of life as satisfactorily as possible and 2) propose a revised co-creation model to support local master/strategic planning to create innovative responses for development in shrinking and/or rural areas. (approx. 4 pages)
6. The interactive visualizations accompanying the report, will e.g. be story maps presenting main challenges of each case, the RUPIL-process and outcomes. This is to be agreed on at a later stage with the ESPON EGTC and the stakeholders.

OUTCOME**Database**

The specific database for the testing of pilot cases will be an elaboration of the data collected in Task 1.1, based on the more specific needs for the focus of each case. Which local indicators needed in addition to those described in Task 1.1 will be discussed for each case.

OUTCOME**Presentation**

A general and interactive presentation of the results and conclusions. The general presentation will be a PowerPoint-presentation describing the three case-studies, the local processes, the main findings, and the conclusions from the report, accompanied by short video clips from each case study. These will show the local process, reflections from stakeholders and participants, as well as results and conclusions. Separate presentations will be made in the respective local languages for each of the pilot case regions.

By testing RUPIL in these three pilot cases we will have a solid foundation for developing a model for innovative strategic planning and policy making in shrinking rural areas which can be scaled up and applied in Europe. The model will contribute to understanding of challenges related to shrinking, how effective and innovative policy responses can be developed and how this can be elaborated into an action plan for effective solutions.

2.3 Task 3: A policy brief on innovative planning model for rural shrinking territories

In task 3 we will summarize experiences and draw conclusions from the previous tasks. These will form the basis for two main outputs:

1. Recommendations for a model for innovative planning and development in shrinking rural areas. As the initial model has been presented in Task 2 (above), adjustments and specifications will be developed from the experiences in the three pilot cases with different contexts and themes in focus, giving a solid basis for presenting a model that can be applied in a variety of shrinking rural regions.
2. Policy recommendations regarding the planning and development processes itself (and where these recommendations are closely related to the model), as well as on how regions may approach the challenges of shrinking connected to ageing, recruitment/competence in the labour market derived from ageing of the population,

the role of regional centres and other issues that arose in the pilot cases.

All recommendations will initially be suggested by the service providers and should also be thoroughly discussed and given input from the stakeholders and others involved in the steering committee for this project. This will contribute to making the recommendations realistic and relevant for governments and actors with stakes or responsibilities in planning and development activities across Europe.

OUTCOME

Policy brief

The outcome of this task will be a policy-brief of approximately 15-20 pages, inclusive illustrations. The detailed outline will be discussed with the stakeholders of this project in coordination and steering-committee meetings; however, we may suggest the following table of content for the policy brief.

1. Introduction. This policy brief focuses on the challenges of demographic change in rural areas, specifically the difficulties of planning in shrinking regions. It aims to encourage planners and politicians to confront the complex and diverse issues and consequences associated with this type of challenges. The brief also provides suggestions on how to incorporate innovative planning approaches within a realistic demographic framework, which includes the involvement of citizens and stakeholders from a variety of sectors, including private, public and NGO's. The brief draws on findings from the ESPON project RURALPLAN, Innovative Planning in Shrinking Societies, which includes the testing of RUPIL, the Rural Planning and Innovation Lab.
2. Key policy messages
3. What do we know about planning in rural areas?
4. What is innovative planning?
5. Why is innovative planning important in rural areas having demographic challenges?
6. Introduction of Rural Planning and Innovation Lab – RUPIL
 - a) engage societal actors in planning to mobilize more resources for development.
 - b) a knowledge-based and realistic approach (including statistics and maps)
 - c) innovative processes searching for alternative goals, strategies, and solutions.
 - d) possible paths for development – examples from the three cases
7. Conclusions and recommendations Policy recommendations regarding the planning and development processes
8. This is a proposal for a table of contents which we now see as appropriate. Details in this table of contents might change during the process. Any changes will be discussed, and agreed upon, with ESPON

3 Organisation, milestones, and management

Through the implementation of Tasks 1-3, our project will fulfil all the main outputs of this service.

We especially want to highlight the importance of giving valuable knowledge and relevant input back to the regions and local communities that participate as pilot cases. Thus, in addition to the outcomes of the three tasks, we suggest having a Researchers Night (RN) as a platform for additional input to the project.

OUTCOME

Researchers' night

RN is a Europe-wide public event, taking place yearly on the last Friday of September, in this case on Friday, September 27th. We suggest arranging RN 2024 in parallel in our case-areas of Innlandet, Dalarna and Albula/Albula Alps with the working title: Rural Planning and Innovation Lab: Towards innovative solutions to complex rural shrinking issues.

Since RN aims to bring research closer to the public and showcase the impact of researchers' work on people's daily lives, we will have a broad target group: local society actors in addition to politicians, and planning professionals.

RN could start with a short virtual presentation of our project (film) as presented as delivery 3 in task 2 (Table 3, below), followed by researchers presenting the state of the art in this rural area. After this, we will have a mini-living lab, a co-creation arena where we use methods from the toolbox developed in the model. Such 'mini living lab' is to be arranged as a demonstration of the model and demonstrate some of the tools for interested actors. As service providers, we shall bring back any inputs that will contribute to the outcomes and will be included in the final deliveries.

Stakeholder communication and participatory events will be conducted in the local languages. Accessibility of information and deliveries in local languages will ensure that the model can be more easily applied.

The research team will continuously support and communicate on the project in the form of articles or event material. This content can be used in the various the various ESPON communication channels (i.e. magazine, website, portal, social media, events organised by ESPON or the ECPs, podcasts etc). ESPON and INN will cooperate close on this matter.

The research team is positive to participate at relevant ESPON events (for example seminars during the Belgian and Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU, session at the EWRC in Brussels). This matter will be further discussed during the implementation meetings.

Together with the predefined deliveries described in the call and the outcomes connected to each task, the table below (table 3) gives a total overview of the deliveries and outputs for this project:

Table 3.1
Deliveries and output from RURALPLAN tasks

Delivery	Output	Task
D1	Inception delivery – based on the tender and feedback in the kick-off meeting. Content as described in the call, pages 13 and 14 and as agreed in kick-off meeting	
D2	Report on main approach, methodological framework and literature review	Task 1
D3	Statistics on shrinking in the stakeholder's area in ESPON Database Portal	Task 1
D4	Maps illustrating shrinking, on ESPON GIS Portal	Task 1
D5	Progress report. As described in the call.	
D6	Report from the testing of the model in three pilots	Task 2
D7	Statistics/data on each pilot, in ESPON Database Portal	Task 2
D8	Presentations of results and conclusions	Task 2
D9	Researchers Night	
D10	Policy brief	Task 3
D11	Final delivery. As described in the call, and further agreed with steering committee	

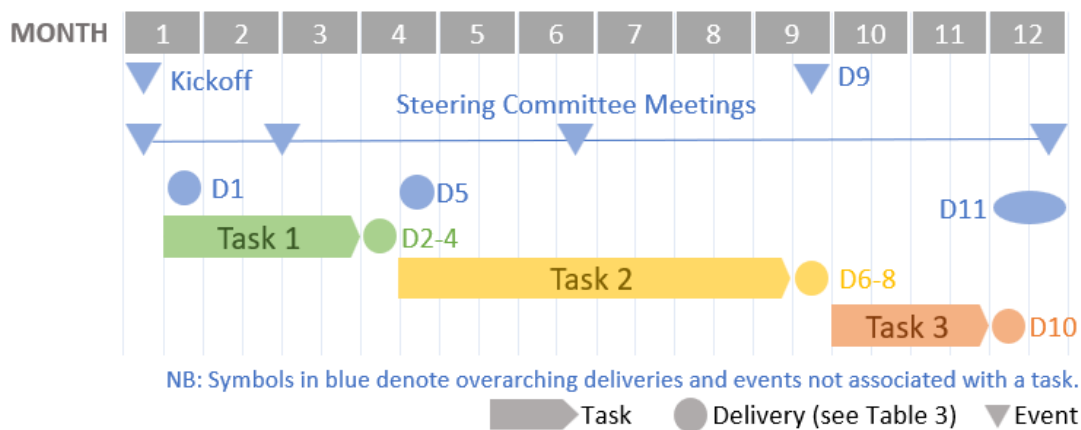
Source: authors' own elaboration. NB: Deliveries not associated with a task are overarching or management-related deliveries.

Concerning the policy brief (task 3), the main delivery will be in English. We suggest also providing a summary in local languages. The project also aims for publications in local newspapers connected to activities in task 2 and the RN, and to publish articles in popular science journals in Sweden, Switzerland, Norway and/or Science Nordic. These are considered as an initiative of the service provider implemented outside of the contract RURALPLAN.

It is further worth mentioning that the results and data generated by RURALPLAN will contribute to several types of outputs also after the project period has ended. We aim to publish two scientific papers in relevant journals, such as *Regional Planning Studies* and *Fennia*. Results will also be presented at conferences connected to regional development and planning, such as AESOP (the Assembly of European Schools of Planning) and the NGM (Nordic Geography Meeting). Another such event will be the annual conference of the Commission on Dynamics of Economic Spaces – International Geographical Union (IGU) in Lillehammer in 2025. This

conference we will arrange in cooperation with researchers affiliated with the Norwegian research project ‘Regional dynamics and innovation capabilities in non-metropolitan contexts. The conference will provide an arena for presenting conference papers based on findings from ESPON. Together with researchers affiliated with Shrinking Geographies and Societies research group at Inland University of Applied Sciences (INN), we aim to present two papers at relevant conferences. Since two of the project members are also universities (INN and LIU), an added value of dissemination by lessons to students of public management and planning and human geography may be expected. Also, INN provides special courses for rural municipalities and counties in Norway, which will use the knowledge from this project and of a successfully adjusted RUPIL-model. We suggest the following timetable for the implementation of the tasks, main deliveries/outputs, and main meetings. The more detailed work-plan is shown in the Appendix 1.

Figure 3.1
Timetable RURALPLAN



Source: authors' own elaboration

In addition, there will be regular project coordination meetings, where the time will be agreed with the ESPON EGTC. As for now we have indicated, in line with the call, that the progress report (D5) will be delivered four months after the kick-off.

We propose to allocate the human resources by task and by partner as follows:

Table 3.2
Allocation of human resources

Tasks- activities/Man days	Man days total	Man days INN	Man days LIU	Man days SAB
Task 1	48	33	5	10
Task 2	186	123	5	58
Task 3	35	20	7	8
Inception delivery	6	4	1	1
Progress report	11	8	1	2
Final delivery	26	16	4	6
Intermediary deliveries (Researchers Night)	10	7		3
Meetings (incl. preparation and minutes etc)	12	8	2	2
Administration	3	3		
Project leadership	20	20		
SUM	357	242	25	90

Source: authors' own elaboration.

Total man-days for this project will be 357. As INN is the project-leader, will provide the main competence within GIS, statistics, communication, the RUPIL-model, and also will implement the pilot case in Dalarna, Sweden, a substantial part of the budget is allocated to INN. There is, however, sufficient resources for LIU and SAB to fulfil their contributions to the tasks as described here in the tender.

3.1 Work plan presenting the next steps foreseen in the project's implementation, including meetings with selected target groups in relation to the pilot cases.

Regarding Task 1 the next steps is to implement task 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3. All these tasks will mainly be performed before 1st March 2024. In the period from 1st March until 15th March the deliveries D2 until D4 (see table 3 in the project description) will be prepared and delivered.

These deliveries are as follows:

- D2: Report on main approach, methodological framework and literature review
- D3: Statistics on shrinking in the stakeholder's area in ESPON Database Portal
- D4: Maps illustrating shrinking. Delivered to the ESPON database, as described earlier in this inception report.

Task 2 has started, which involves the RUPIL processes. The RUPIL team arranged meetings with three stakeholder groups in December 2023 to discuss possible cases. In Innlandet county, we met with experts from the planning and development team and together we identified three potential cases that meet the prerequisites of RUPIL. Os municipality, our number one priority, was then contacted, and they responded positively to join the project and implement RUPIL in their local planning process, specifically related to the Master Plan's societal part. We also met with Dalarna county's länsstyrelsen and they are currently discussing participation with potential candidates, such as Malung-Sälen or Älvdalen, and will update the RUPIL team accordingly. Finally, we had meetings with SECO as well and discussed possible cases, such as the Albula region. The Swiss case is also yet to be decided upon.

We are currently working on a RUPIL pamphlet. This pamphlet will include information about the RUPIL model, as well as our intentions and goals. We aim to provide brief and practical information for municipalities and regions that are participating in or considering the project. The pamphlet can also be used to inform other interested parties. We plan to produce the pamphlet in German, Swedish, and Norwegian, and it is due 30th January.

As described also earlier, INN will arrange a common RUPIL workshop for facilitators (and collaboration partners) to prepare the testing phase, organized from lunch to lunch at INN Lillehammer. The participants are to be the Norwegian, Swedish, and Swiss facilitators and representatives from the stakeholders. The workshop is due at the end of February, or early March.

All pilot cases are to be decided upon at least mid-February, key actors and stakeholders in the pilot cases will be contacted, and further and practical details on the implementation of the RUPIL will be discussed and decided upon. This process has already started in Norway, in cooperation with Os municipality (the pilot case), Innlandet county, and INN.

3.2 Description of the format and content of the next deliveries

The format and content of the next deliveries is in this Inception report described in detail. Further clarification and detailing will be clarified in a cooperation

between ESPON and the service provider, and is especially relevant for statistics, maps and databases.

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Appendix 1

	RURALPLAN workplan	When
1	Methodological framework and literature review on strategic local planning in shrinking rural regions	15/1 – 15/3
1a	Collaboration with the main stakeholders- discussing the choice of case- and establish contact with actual candidate	Dec 23 -
D1	Inception Report	24/1
	Coordination meeting ESPON	18/1
1.1	Analysis of shrinkage in the three pilot cases. Including what types of shrinkage characterize the three cases seen in relation to the different types of clusters identified in the ESPON ESCAPE-project, and accompanied by maps and other illustrations.	When the three cases are decided upon 2/1-15/3
1.2	Literature review- planning in shrinking rural areas.	15/1- 1/3
1.3a	Registration and assessment of existing planning practices in the pilot municipalities (2 Innlandet and Dalarna) and one region (CH).	When the three cases are decided upon 2/1-1/3
1.3b	A first suggestion on what strategies and detailed model/method (variants), can be applied in each of the three pilots. This recommendation will be based on the information and analysis performed in all the sub-tasks described here, and further discussed and developed together with the stakeholders of each three pilot cases.	15/1- 1/3
	Make an information Pamphlet in each language – for the municipalities, the regions, the different stakeholder groups invited to the RUPIL-process, etc.	10/1 -1/2
	Steering committee 2	8 February
D2-4	Report on main approach, methodological framework, and literature review + statistics and maps (D3 and D4)	15/3
2.1	Develop RUPIL in each case – cooperation with stakeholders and cases.	02/2-15/3
2.1.1	Plan, prepare, and facilitate internal RUPIL workshop for facilitators and stakeholders to prepare the testing phase. Workshop February 28.-29. in Lillehammer- for the RURALPLAN-team.	15/1 – February 28.-29.
2.1.2	Develop the assessment- strategy – how to do this in cooperation with the cases and the stakeholders.	15/2
D 5	Progress report	8 April

	Steering Committee 3	June
2.2.	Testing the model in the three cases	April-May-June- July
	Case1 Innlandet	
	Case 2 Dalarna	
	Case 3 Alpine-region	
2.2.3 (D6)	Assessment of experiences in the three cases (see 2.1.2)	August -October
2.2.4	Propose strategies that can be used by local and regional policy-makers to ensure that shrinking and/or ageing rural areas become as inclusive, resilient, and provide opportunities for quality of life as satisfactorily as possible	August- October
2.2.5 (D7)	Statistics and interactive visualization Statistics/data on each pilot, in ESPON Database Portal	September- October
D6-8	A general and interactive presentation of the results and conclusions	1. November
D9	Researchers night	September 27
3	A policy brief on innovative planning model for rural shrinking territories: A policy brief on innovative planning model for rural shrinking territories	
3.1	Recommendations for a RUPIL-model	
3.2	Policy recommendations	
D10	Policy Brief	20 November
D11	Final Delivery	29 November
	Steering Committee 4	5 December

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Disclaimer

This delivery does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the members of the ESPON 2030 Monitoring Committee.