



RIGHT TO STAY

STRATEGY



The Right to Stay strategy

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DG REGIO

Ensuring the ‘right to stay’

Commission’s Political Guidelines 2024-2029

*“You will strive for all citizens to have an effective **right to stay** in the place they call home by supporting what a community needs: public services and private activities, education and skills, health, transport and digital connectivity. You should **tackle regional disparities**, providing tailor-made solutions to regional and local challenges and supporting regions to catch-up.”*

Mission letter to Raffaele Fitto

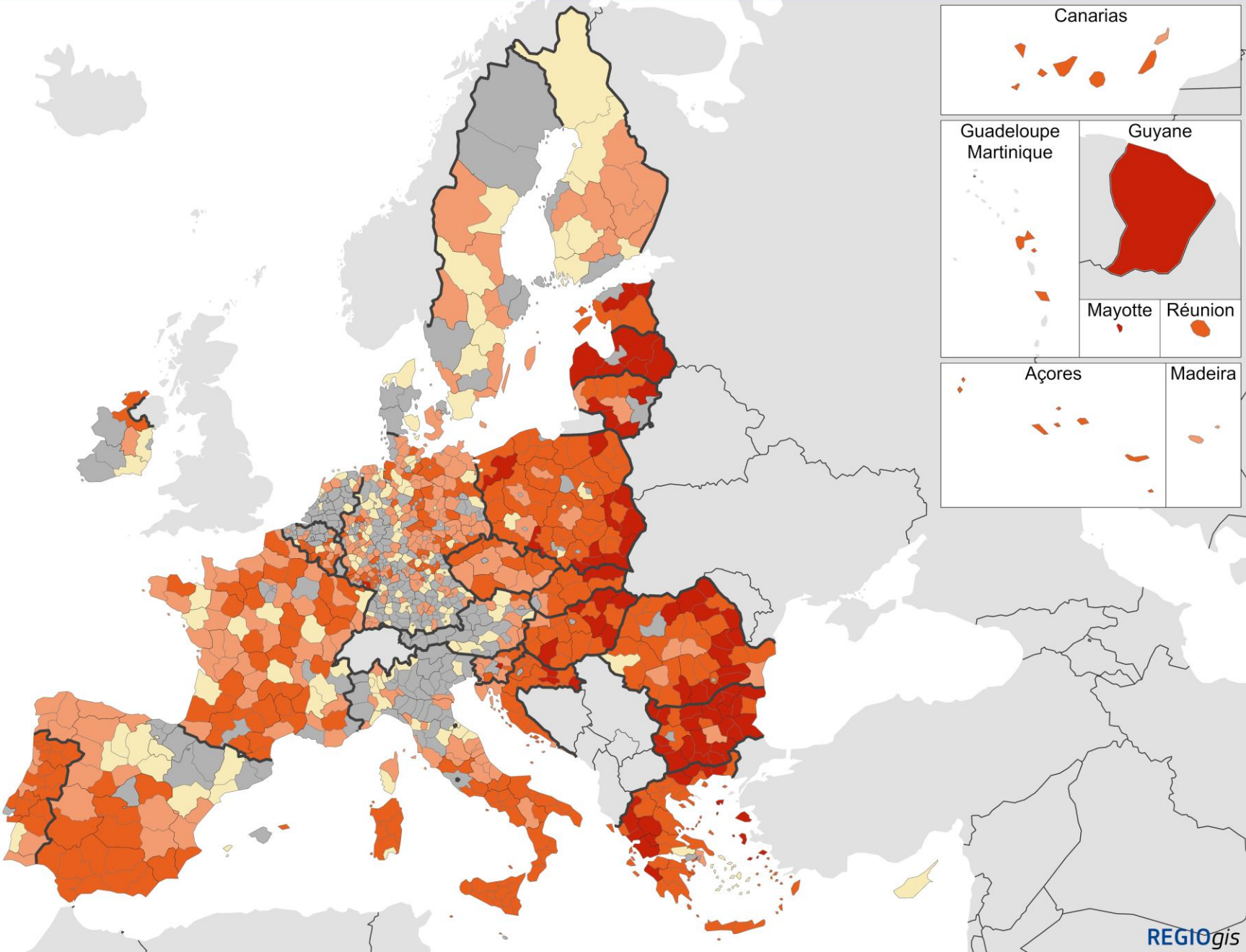
Executive-Vice-President for Cohesion and Reform



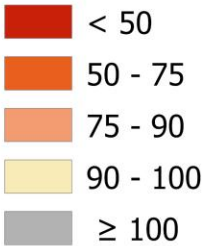
The right to stay concept is rooted in Enrico Letta's report "Much more than a Market" (2024)

- **Key message: Our greatest asset is the Single Market – but it remains unfinished.**
- Deepening of the Single Market needs to be accompanied by actions to ensure that all EU citizens can contribute and benefit from it
- Regional and territorial differences could lead to a new **geography of discontent** and create regional development traps, **prompting people to relocate.**
- **Cohesion policy is essential** as a complement to the internal market, playing a key role in breaking this cycle and ensuring that mobility remains a choice, not a necessity.
- But **conditions vary** across EU regions

Economic disparities are still high



GDPpc as % EU average, PPP, 2023



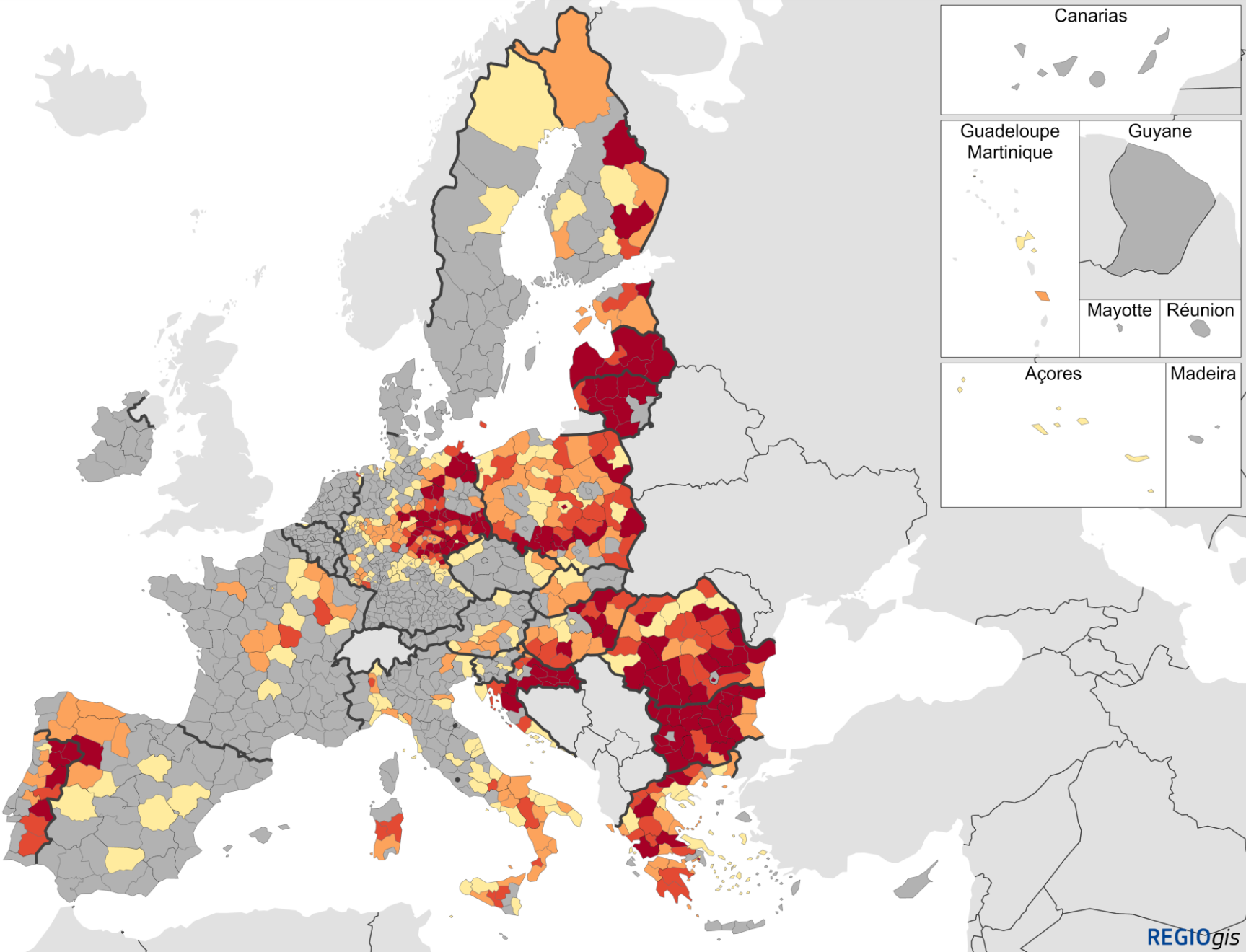
Sources: REGIO-GIS, ARDECO

Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © UN-FAO © Turkstat

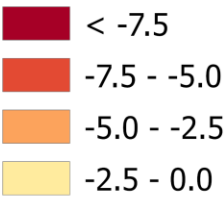
Some regions in the EU are confronted with stagnant or declining growth and prosperity

- **Many challenges:** global issues, including a volatile geopolitical landscape. Megatrends like the green and digital transitions.
- **Persisting economic disparities that bear many risks:** threats for the sustainability of welfare systems but also the prosperity and competitiveness of the EU.
- Today, **about 134 million people** - nearly one third of the EU population - lives in places that have gradually fallen behind over the last two decades.
- Declining growth and prosperity lead to less opportunities and quality services for citizens.

Population decline is affecting regions across Europe



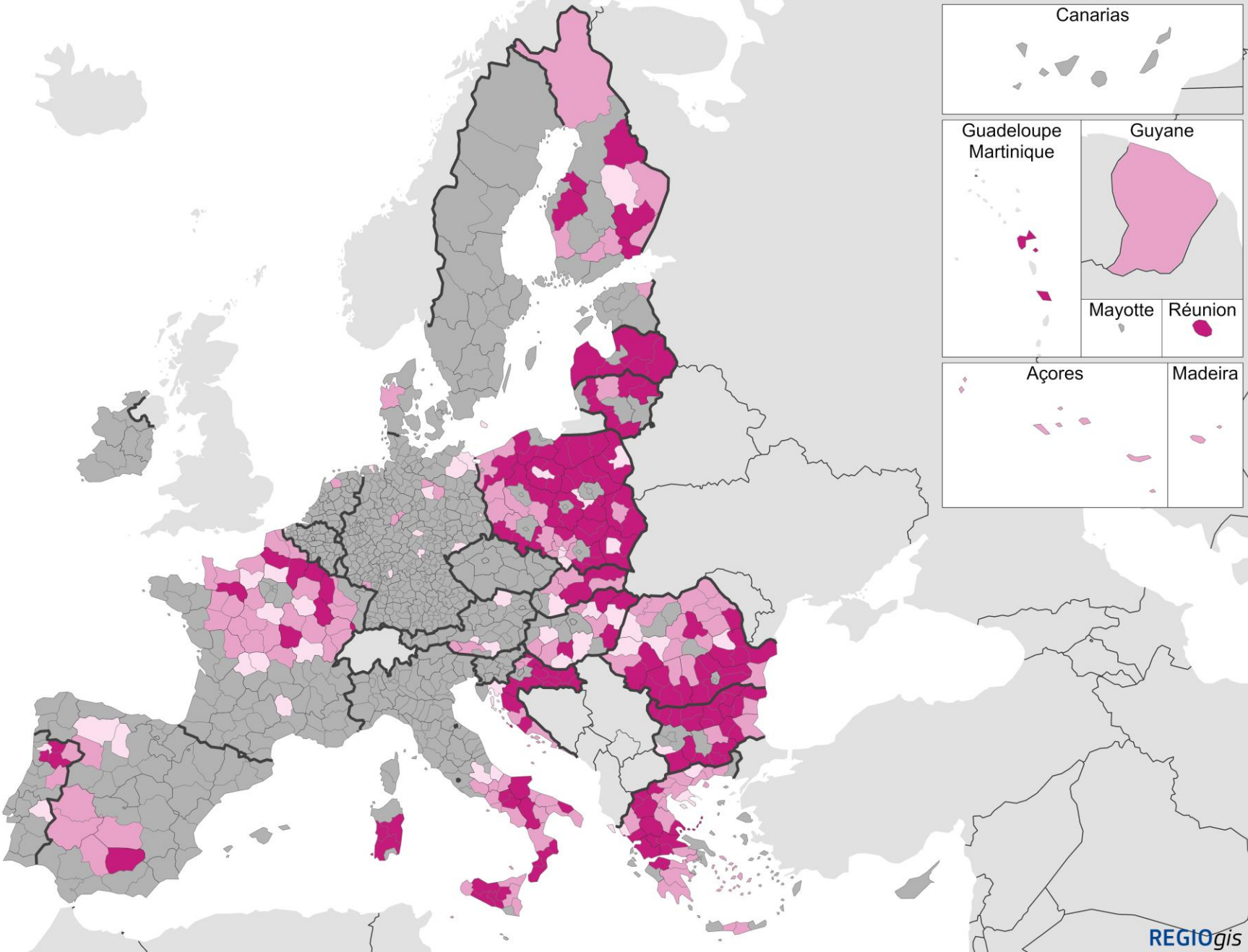
Average annual population growth rate per 1 000 persons, 2004-2023



Sources: REGIO-GIS, ARDECO

Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © UN-FAO © Turkstat

Regions are losing their young workforce



Average net migration rate per 1 000 persons (15-39 yrs old), 2014-2023

- 33 - -7
- 6 - -3
- 2 - 0
- 1 - 54

Many EU regions are also confronted with acute demographic transformations, including an aging population, youth outmigration and a diminishing labour force

- Today, 149 million people, **33 % of the population of the EU lives in a region that lost population** over the last twenty years.
- **Rural and remote regions**, including islands, outermost regions and the Eastern border regions, **face greater risks** and already also the reality of population loss.
- The EU population stops growing and is projected to decline;
- Demographic change worsens labour shortages and increases pressure on public finances;
- We get into a **vicious circle of outmigration, economic stagnation and deterioration of public services.**

The Right to Stay strategy aims to reverse these trends

- The strategy will address **areas** such as:
 1. Fostering economic development, boosting competitiveness,
 2. People, employment, education, skills
 3. Infrastructure, connectivity, energy
 4. Essential services, public administration capacity, enabling conditions
- Identify the **key regional and territorial challenges** and the support they need
- Showcase the **EU policies, programmes and actions** that help fostering the attractiveness and competitiveness of EU regions and territories
- Bring **examples of territorial solutions**
- Highlight the **need for place-based solutions and integrated territorial strategies**

The Right to Stay strategy is an opportunity

- Its success will largely depend to what extent various actors at national, regional and local level **take ownership** of it.
- It is a new concept, but closely linked to the notion **of balanced territorial development**, which has been at the very heart of Cohesion Policy for decades.
- It will require **multi-level governance, place-based approaches**, which are core principles of Cohesion Policy.
- It will support Member States and regions in preparing their **National and Regional Partnership Plans** and in translating the right to stay objective into concrete measures.
- **A Call for Evidence was open from 6/5 to 12/6, with 704 contributions received**, including ELARD and Rural Youth Europe.
- **EC adoption** foreseen between end 2026 and beginning 2027.



Thank you!

