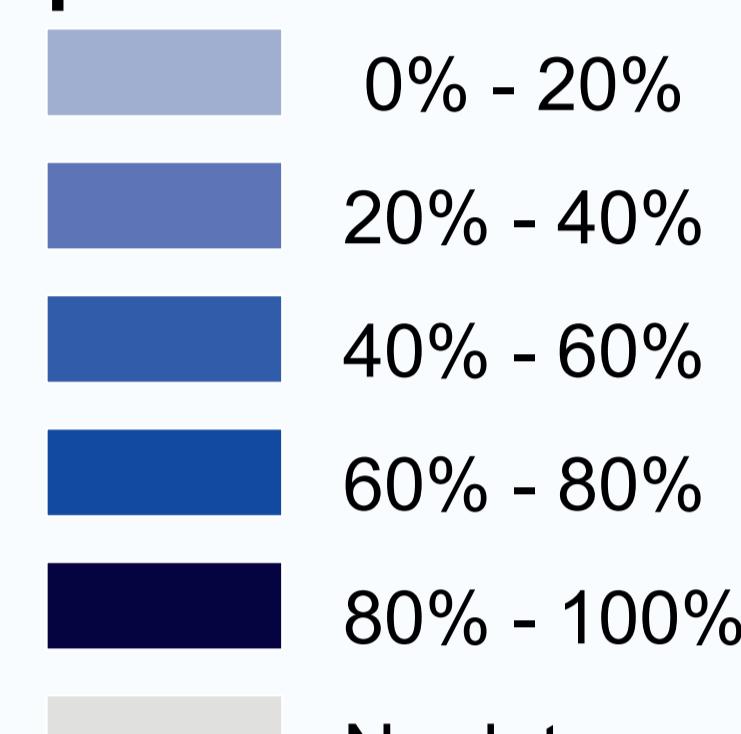


Coverage of potential green infrastructure (GI) and changes of urban green areas

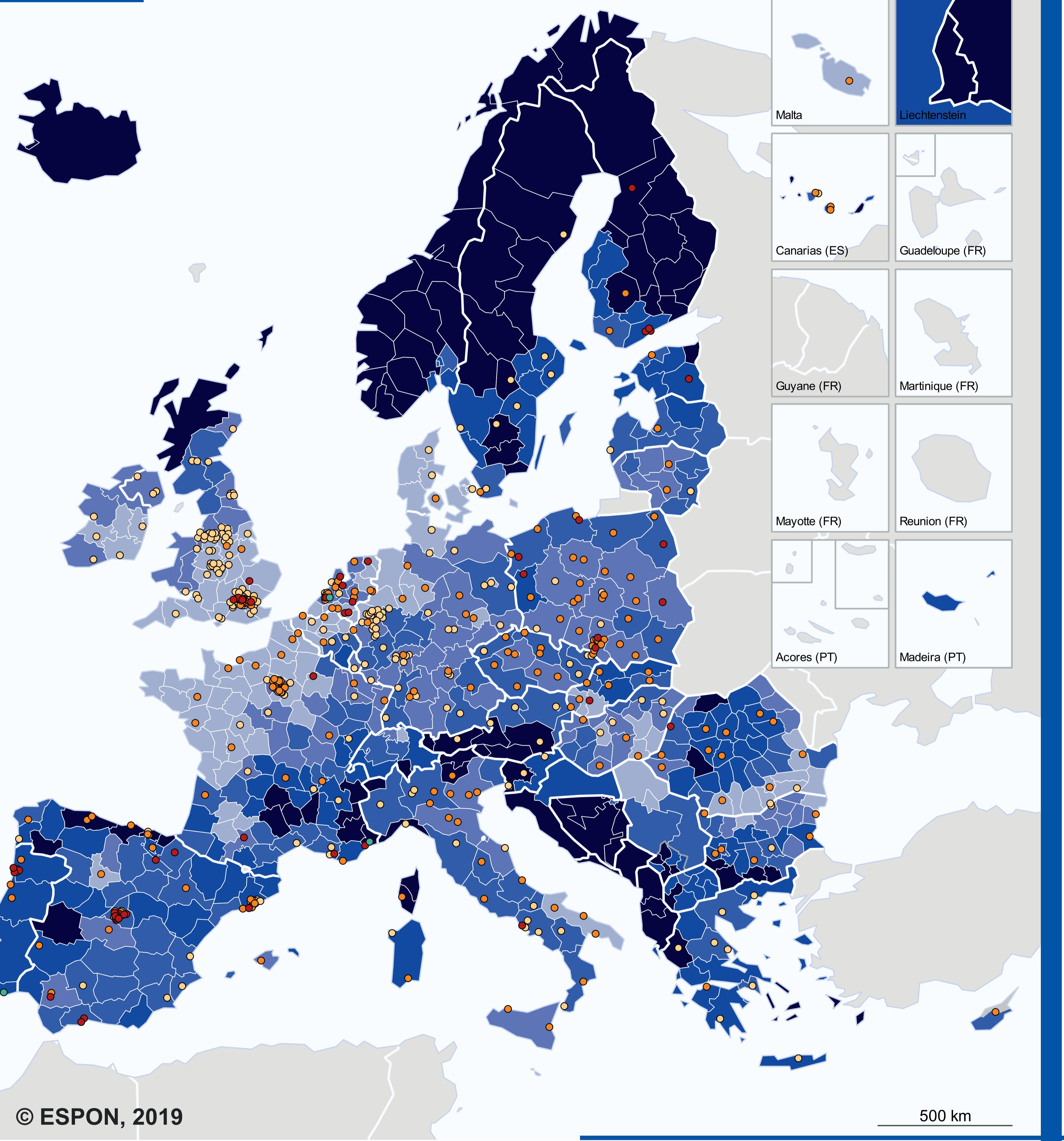
Regional coverage of potential GI network



Change of green areas within cities, 2006 - 2012*

- increase
- stable
- slight decrease
- strong decrease

* Change values are recorded by comparing datasets from the Urban Atlas, version 2006 and 2012. Cities without symbols are not included in the two datasets.



Potential Green Infrastructure shows different territorial patterns on regional and urban level

While the regional distribution of potential GI networks shows a differentiated pattern, urban green space coverage is generally stable or decreasing across the entire European territory.

The potential GI network at regional level shows low coverage in north-western Europe, south-eastern UK and Ireland. A high coverage of GI can be observed in Nordic countries, the Balkan countries along the Adriatic Sea, and in the eastern Alpine region.

Regions with low potential GI network coverage require improved connectivity of existing GI. Regions with high potential GI network coverage should be supported through policies promoting sustainable land use and increased biodiversity in locations that have a high potential contribution to the GI network.

The European territory is dominated by cities in which green areas have remained stable (central and north-western Europe and Alpine countries) or have decreased (eastern and southern countries). The reasons for this developed are mainly urbanisation and economic development after the accession to the EU, or for touristic purposes in Southern Europe. This development can also be observed in the Netherlands and Finland. Only a few cities show an increase in green space coverage.

Policies targeting urban GI should focus on improving the connectivity of urban spaces along with replacing land uses dominated by non-vegetated open spaces (e.g. former industrial platforms, parking lots, brownfields) with green (and blue) spaces with improved ecological qualities.

Further reading: GRETA – Green infrastructure: Enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem services for territorial development (ESPON 2019).