

1. Demand for property on the coast

Key message

- Irrespective of density and location, population in Europe in general tends to concentrate in coastal areas.
- Detailed spatial elaboration of processes shows that population structure and tendencies can vary among different countries even within the same sea region.



Above: Photo: *Sebastien Colas, IFEN*

Right: Seashore in June, Northern Latvia. Photo: *Jānis Kauliņš, UL*



Why monitor demand for property on the coast?

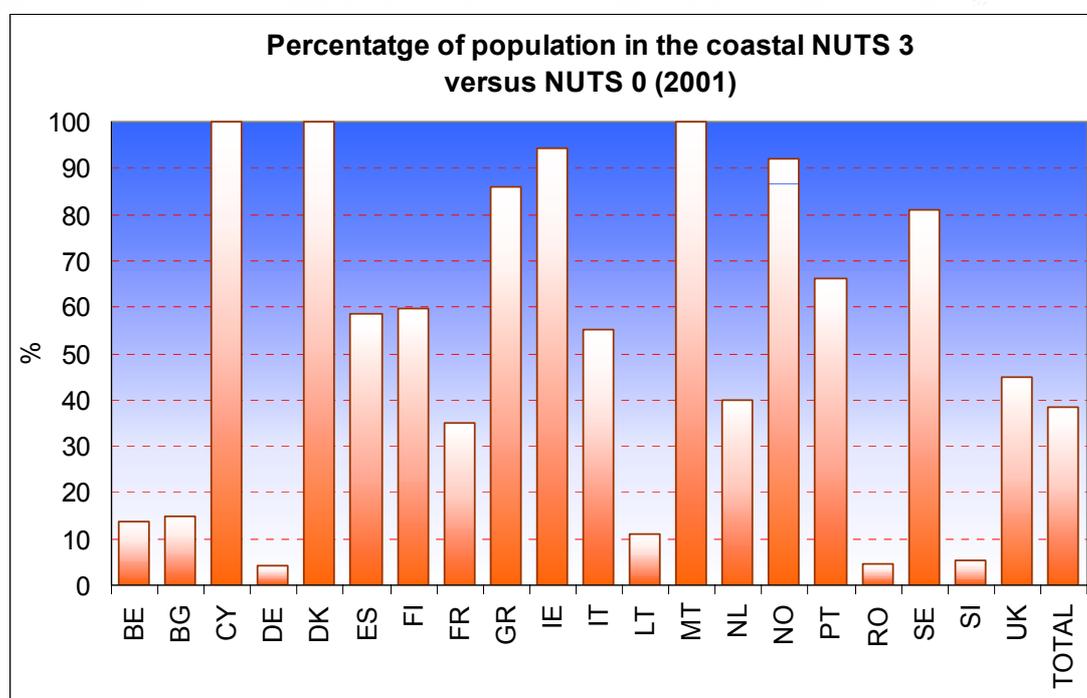
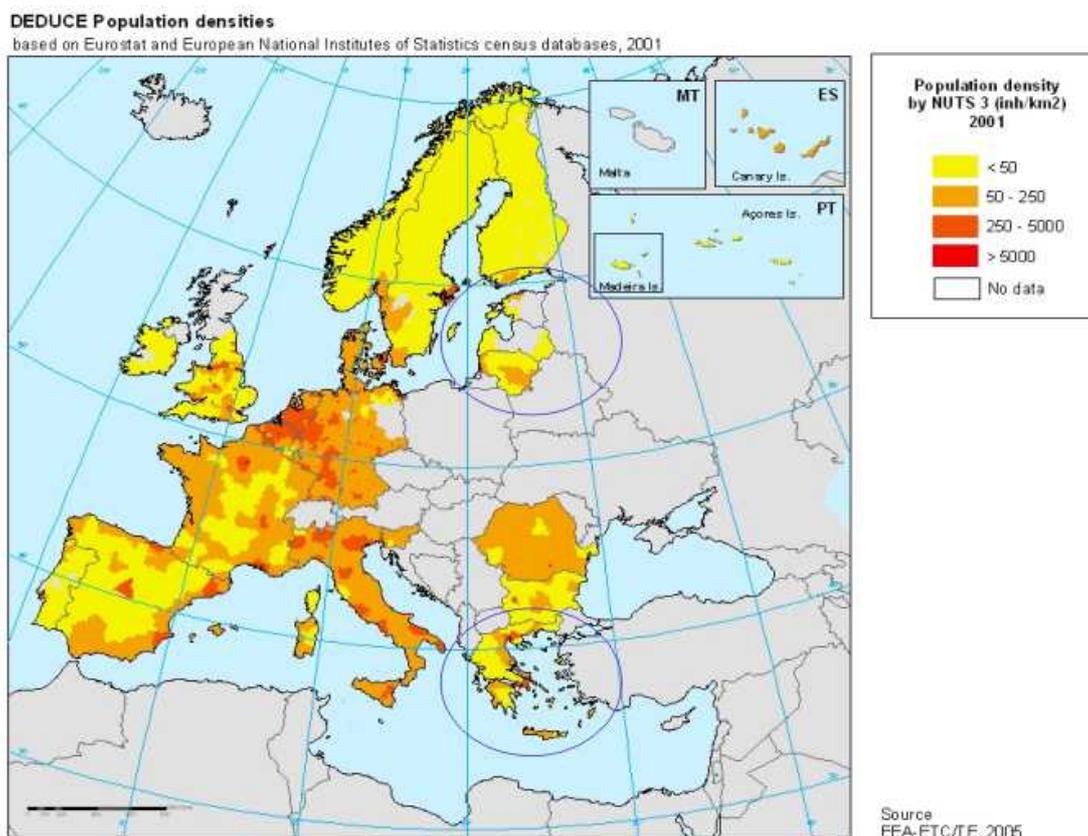
Population density measures the pressure on land from population concentrations and their requirements for natural resources, housing and public services and transport. For planning purposes it is important to determine whether such pressure is general throughout the wider reference region or concentrated in the coastal zone. The increasing demand often takes place in areas where the most valuable natural resources and open spaces need to be protected.

This indicator belongs to the set of 6 indicators that monitor the progress towards achieving the first goal for coastal sustainability set out in the EU Recommendation concerning the implementation of ICZM: to control as appropriate further development of the undeveloped coast. This set of indicators will enable partnership to evaluate, every few years, the effect that their coastal strategies are having on the coastal development.

The indicator has only one measurement: **1.1 Size, density and proportion of population in coastal zones.**



What does the indicator show from European to local level?



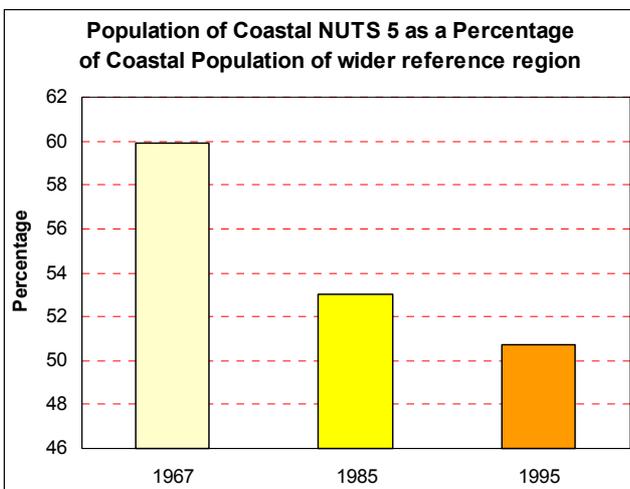
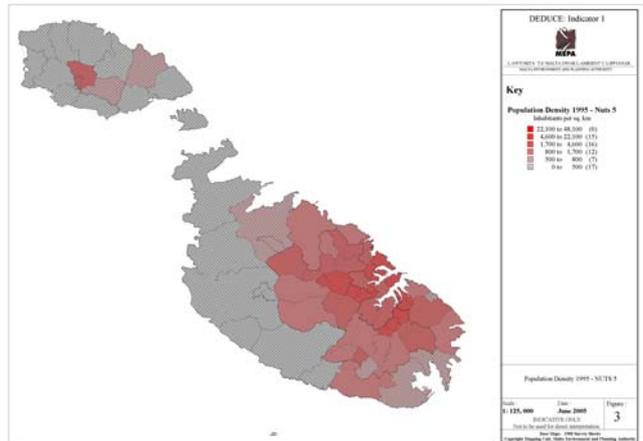
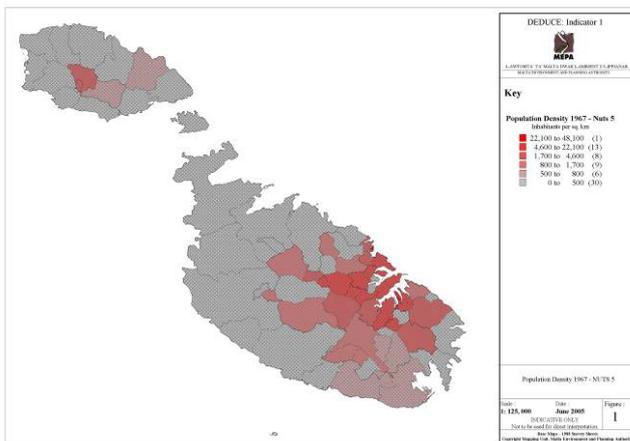
In most European countries population is concentrated particularly in coastal areas. According to this feature countries can be theoretically subdivided into several groups:

- densely populated countries with very extended coastline (including insular countries), where more than 70% of population live in coastal NUTS3 zone. They are for instance Malta, Denmark and Cyprus;
- countries with medium to high density of population and particularly high concentration in the coastal zones like Spain and Greece;
- countries with extended coastline and certain concentration of population along the coastline, but low average density of population like most North European countries and Ireland;

Results and assessment

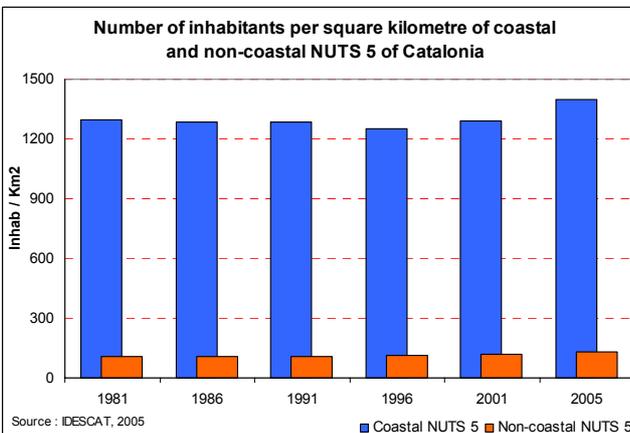
- d) countries with medium and high density of population and tendency to grow in coastal areas, but it does not stand out against the average background values, for example Belgium, The Netherlands. France is very close to falling into this group, but it has also identifying features of the group b countries;
- e) countries with proportionally short coastline and populated quite densely, but it represents a small part of the total population, like Lithuania and Romania.

Great Britain is an exception among these groups as being an insular country with an extended coastline and high density of population; it does not show particularly high concentration of population at the coast. This population structure to great extent is determined by those climatic and geographic conditions, which make coastal areas more or less attractive to population. Economic factor also plays its role here like location of shipping lanes and harbours.



Situation analysis for example in Malta (map above) shows that population density at NUTS3 level does not always mean the same also at NUTS5 level. Comparing year 1967 to 1995 we can see that population density has increased, concentrating mainly around the capital La Valetta.

Diagram on the left shows that during this period relative population density has even decreased by more than 9%. At the same time we should keep in mind that the average population density in the country is very high and with stable tendency to grow.



In Spain, represented by the province of Catalonia, situation is diametrically opposite (diagram below). Population density at the coast considerably – up to 8 – 10 times exceeds population density in hinterland areas. Besides, since 1996 this proportion has certain tendency to grow.

In the Pomeranian region, Poland, proportion of population living at the coastal and hinterland areas (including absolute data on population density) is quite constant at least since 1994. Fluctuations here did not exceed 1%, without any fixed tendency.

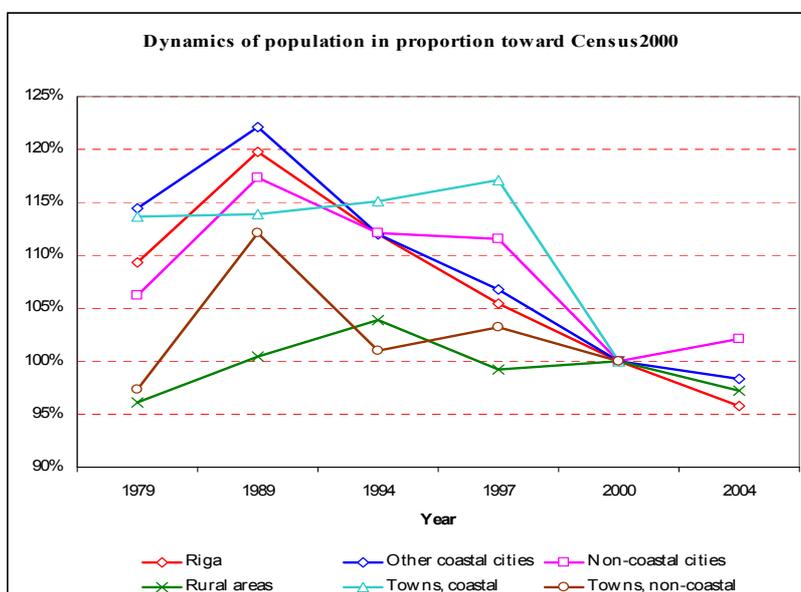
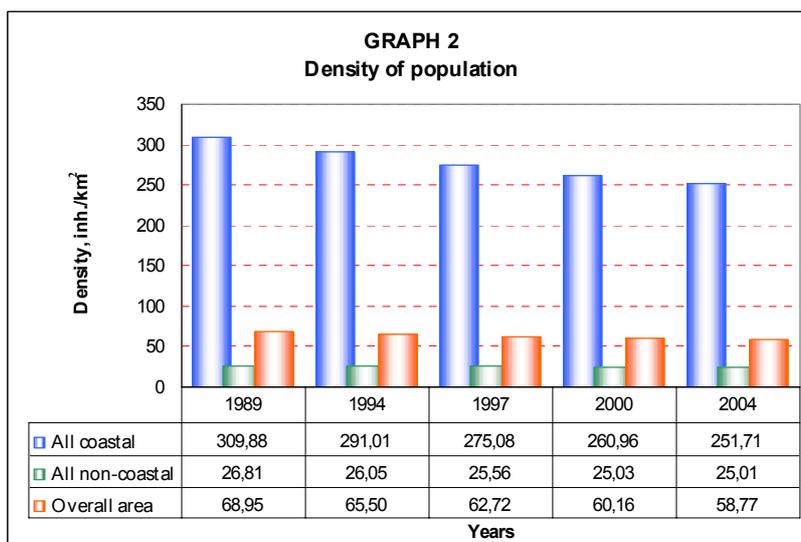
Results and assessment

Another country of the Baltic Sea region – Latvia differs from both Mediterranean countries as well as from not far-distant Poland.

Proportion of population living in the coastal and hinterland areas here is similar to that in Poland, but unlike Poland, figures here decrease towards hinterland. Depopulation takes place in the whole territory and its pace is higher on the coast comparing to hinterland. This phenomenon is caused by the prevalence of death rate over the birth rate during the last 15 years; lately emigration (mainly migrant workers) contributes to this process too.

Study was done to find out what sort of territories are responsible for the mentioned process (diagram below).

To a high degree this tendency is determined by the coastal cities. Capital city of Riga concentrates one third of the countries population and a half of its economy. Rural territories and towns follow the tendency yet the situation here is not that dramatic. Differences between coastal and hinterland territories are less dramatic.



West Flanders represents the fourth group of territories mentioned above. Processes here are more similar to those in the South. Population density in the coastal zone is higher and increasing at a faster pace: from 510 inhabitants per km² in 1990 to 526 inhabitants per km² in 2000 in the coastal zone, compared to 246 inhabitants per km² in 1990 and 254 inhabitants per km² in 2000 in the hinterland. This situation is most typical for West Flanders and Nord-Pas de Calais, where population density at the coast is from 2 and up to 6.5 times higher than in the hinterland.

What are the implications for planning and managing the coastal zone?

The EU Recommendation for Integrated Coastal Zone Management urges regions 'to control, as appropriate, further development of the undeveloped coast'. Urban sprawl is one of the major concerns about the state of the coast in Europe. If living at the coast is to be maintained as a healthy mix of social and economic functions, it needs to build on a structural housing policy that takes into consideration local planning strategies. As an example, spatial planning tools in Wales address the problem by creating a separate category of land use for 'second homes'. This strategy is based on the concept that the ownership of second homes in some coastal towns is jeopardizing the basic right to housing for the local community.

Land-take for new built-up areas and transport has been mostly at the expense of agricultural land and to a lesser extent semi-natural areas such as forests and grasslands. By the conversion from greenfield to brownfield development, the potential for recreational use is gradually lost while noise and air pollution, traffic congestion and pressure for further infrastructure increases. Policies related to land-use issues and spatial planning is generally the responsibility of the local planning authorities. Although subsidiarity rules (the principle that promotes local decision-making) assign land and urban planning responsibilities to national and regional levels, most European policies have a direct or indirect effect on coastal development.

Where development on the coast is justified, opportunities for the development or reuse of vacant land and buildings should be considered in the first instance as this should:

- avoid the use of greenfield sites,
- reduce pressure on more sensitive stretches of the coast and
- contribute to renewal and regeneration.

It is not, however, always possible to reuse vacant land: in some areas there will be little or no potential to recycle land, or the sites may be too small, or they are located close to developments which restrict the uses that can be accommodated in close proximity.

Related indicators:



Further work needed

In order to specify loads on the coast more precisely, it would be appropriate to define tendencies in different types of coastal NUTS5 areas: major cities and small towns, rural areas etc.

Data sources

Autonomous University of Barcelona (ETC/TE)

Source: Eurostat

The Maltese Environment and Planning Authority

Source: National Census from National Statistics Office in Malta

Government of Catalonia

Source: Statistics Institute of Catalonia (IDESCAT)

University of Latvia

Source: Census 1979, 1989 and 2000, Statistical Yearbooks. Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia.

Province of West-Flanders

Source: Nationaal Instituut voor de Statistiek – NIS

Reliability of the indicator

Statistics on inhabitants and population density is one of the most reliable statistical data. Special attention and care is paid by governments to the collection of the respective data as accurate information about the number of population which is one of the basic parameters and it is periodically verified by applying direct monitoring method – population census.

Rise to some doubts could be given by the connection between the density of population and real demand for property on the coast; it might not be always unambiguous.



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