



## Rural-Urban Outlooks: Unlocking Synergies (ROBUST)

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# Rural-Urban Governance Arrangements and Planning Instruments

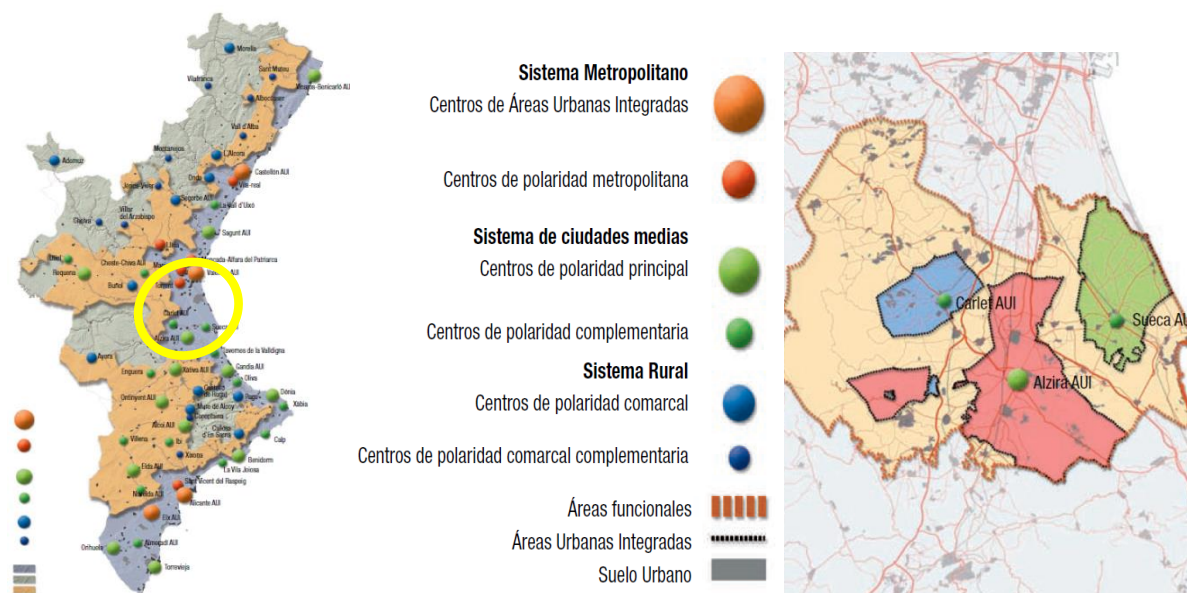
## Consorcio de la Ribera - Ribera Consortium

Valencia Metropolitan Region, Spain

### 1. Overview

Governance is a key factor for the objective of territorial balance, as a more efficient way to provide services and implement policies with significant territorial impact. It is related to the concepts of polycentrism, new urban-rural relations and territorial cooperation. The improvement of accessibility should not be related only as a greater provision of infrastructures but can also be improved by rethinking the spatial distribution of goods and services throughout the territory, which in turn reduces obliged mobility.

Figure 1: Ribera County within the Valencian Urban System



Source: ETCV, 2011 (Valencian Community Spatial Vision).

The comarca<sup>1</sup> of La Ribera is part of the urban system of medium-sized cities, strategically important for structuring the Valencian territory. It includes 35 municipalities and 221,299 inhabitants, with a density of 228 inhabitants / km<sup>2</sup>. Most of these municipalities are included in the Functional Area of the Ribera del Xúquer (also those of Valencia and Xàtiva) (see Figure 1). In the Functional Area of the Ribera del Xúquer there are three centres: the main centre of polarity is the integrated urban area of the city of Alzira (UAI), group of municipalities considered as unit that work together according to criteria such as urban continuum, mobility flows, economic activity and the labour market -see Map 3-. The remainder two other centres have a complementary polarity (AUI of municipalities of Carlet and Sueca).

## 2. Main Challenges

### *Social inclusion and services delivery*

- > The provision of services and actions (and not just the most basic ones) to rural areas covers an ever-widening inventory: medical assistance, education and sustainable energy, broadband internet access, efficient connections to energy networks and strong links between companies and research centres. Access to intangibles such as knowledge and information to generate innovation and economic activity in the rural areas themselves is also of vital importance. Its coordination advises to work under integrated local territorial strategies.

### *Better territorial articulation avoiding forced mobility and promoting efficient local market jobs in a sustainable/green way.*

- > The coexistence of intermediate cities that play the role of urban nucleus of a certain entity, together with municipalities with a small population and availability of services, is the main element that, from the point of view of integrated polycentric and urban-rural development, turn it into an appropriate analysis case, to illustrate this type of development. In this case study the focus is on the urban-rural gear of the medium-sized cities system (as a mix between Scenarios B and C within the ESPON Project 'Scenarios 2050') and inter-municipal and inter-administrative cooperation (association of municipalities and consortiums - Consorcio de la Ribera-), given its importance in the structuring of the territory in the region.

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<sup>1</sup> It is a grouping of municipalities, whose nearest equivalent would be that of a county. In some regions, the comarca have administrative competences, but in others they are only a geographical-historical figure, although they are widely used as reference, even for statistical purposes (as in the Valencian Community).

### 3. Main Insights

More efficient ecological, economic and social relations by improving environmental interactions between rural and urban spaces (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Green Infrastructure connecting urban-rural spaces in the Ribera County



Source: ETCV, 2011 (Valencian Community Spatial Vision).

Promote more local-based 'smart growth' by supporting employment and service provision reframing commuting patterns, traffic, and functional urban region within Valencian Metropolitan Region.

The focus is on the institutions and political and administrative structures that are established to more effectively achieve territorial equity. Inter-municipal cooperation is a fundamental element, both because of the collaborative advantages it implies in terms of efficiency and accessibility to public goods and services (see Table 1).

Table 1: Forms of inter-municipal cooperation by type of structure and nature

	Normative nature	Induced nature	Voluntary nature
With administrative structure	Metropolitan areas	Territorial agreements Local Action Groups Tourism Governance and Promotion Plans	Municipal associations Consortium Public sector organizations Associations
Without administrative structure	Territorial Action Plans Spatial planning and management tools for natural -designed- areas (PORN and PRUG)		Inter-administrative agreements Networks of municipalities Informal cooperation

Source: Gomis, A. (2017)

### 3.1. Insights related to the broad area of “network governance”

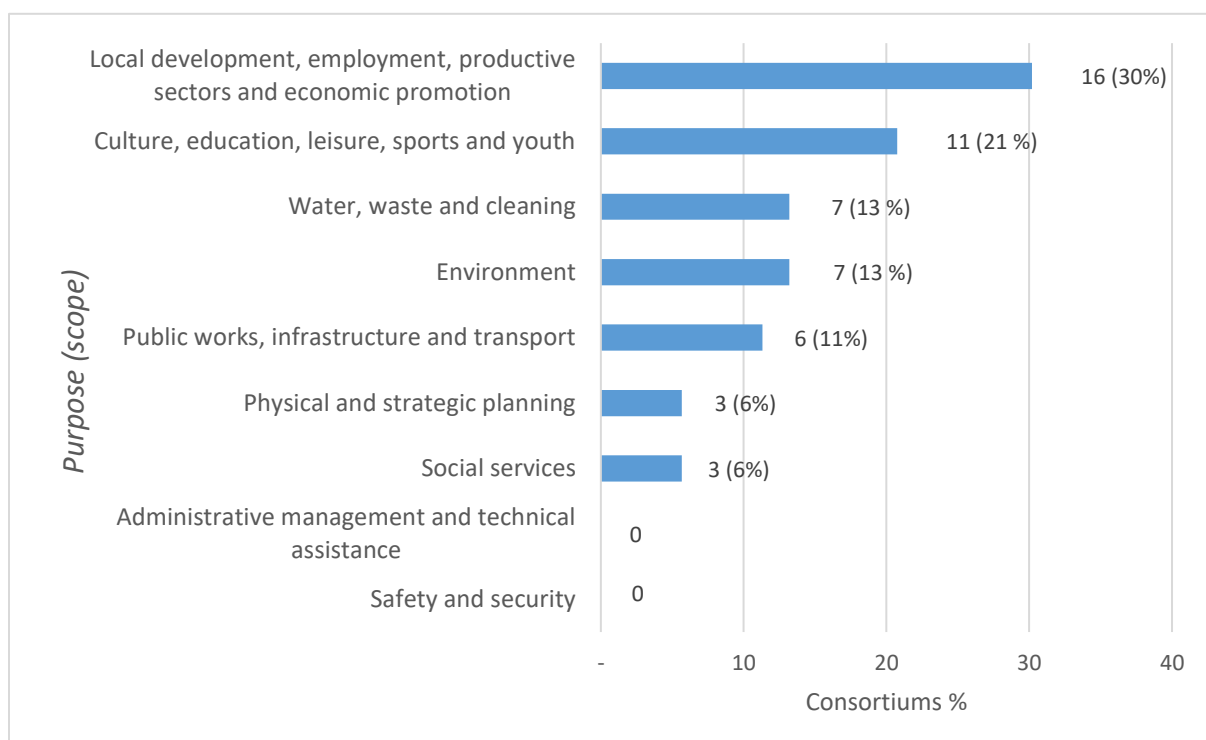
The consortia, together with the administrative agreements, are the instruments through which the economic, technical and administrative cooperation between the different public administrations takes shape. According to the Valencian laws, the consortium "is a voluntary and associative public entity, with its own legal personality and full capacity to create and manage services and activities of local or common interest". Municipalities can establish these agreements for common public interest purposes together with other local public administrations (as counties and provincial governments –*Diputaciones Provinciales*), as well as with those of regional level (Valencian autonomous regional government departments), and with non-profit and private entities too. They are institutions with legal personality (aspect that differentiates them from other kind of agreements), subject to public law (although private organizations participate) and are created for purposes of local interest.

They allow, first, the cooperation between public organizations of different territorial levels and between public and private actors with the creation of a public body; second, to develop a more fluid multilevel collaboration; and third, to accommodate the participation of private actors, so that services can be provided more effectively. The consortium is the figure that best meets the demands and needs of modern public management, which is characterized in a multilevel context by a transversal and holistic approach, participation and collaboration between actors in both a horizontal and vertical sense. These are elements that contrast with the public administration's tendency to compartmentalization and a strict separation between functions and between actors that does not correspond to real situation.

There is enormous diversity in terms of the purposes that consortiums have adopted in practice (for a single or several purposes, for specific municipal services and for higher

levels that affect other administrations, for short-term objectives but also for permanent objectives, ...). All of these aspects illustrate its versatility (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Purposes of local consortia



Source: Gomis, A. (2017). *Op. cit.*

### 3.2. Insights related to mechanisms of cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation

The Ribera Consortium is made up of the *Mancomunitades* of Ribera Alta and Ribera Baixa (an example of territorial cooperation of the second level). It coordinates services delivered by the Ribera Tourism Agency, the Ribera Energy Agency (AER) and the Ribera Employment Territorial Pact (PATER) (see maps 1 & 2). Through it, several EU projects in the area are articulated, as a clear example of achieving economies of scale and lobbying. An important part of these projects is articulated through the AER and are related to sustainability and energy efficiency, both through awareness and training programmes and with services provided to municipalities for savings. These programmes complement and frame medium-term strategies, thus incorporating a certain planning component. An example of this is the initiative of the Covenant of Mayors. PATER also implements European projects in the comarca. These projects, in 2014, were related to job placement of unemployed in the construction sector for the development of sustainable building, the promotion of entrepreneurship, the inclusion of rural women and the social inclusion (also in relation to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy).

This type of European projects facilitates direct contact with real situations, experiences and different practices, being a good way to take into account the principles of sustainability, participation and consensus in the policies and action of the municipalities' government. It is also a way of seeking social and political innovations. European projects usually require the articulation of various governance structures, and participation in both the management and the implementation of the programs. This facilitates the development of new governance models, such as advisory councils with the presence of local actors, collaboration and exchange of experiences between municipalities and stakeholders, participatory strategies for the elaboration of Action Plans, or cooperation between municipalities, companies and universities. Structures of participation and consensus are being developed, seeking to incorporate a strategic approach, better adapting to the territorial current situation.

### 3.3. Insights related to the role of (actual, potential) social, organizational, institutional innovations

Intermunicipal cooperation, in its ordinary operation and limited to the provision of services, contributes significantly to improve access to them by small municipalities, thus contributing through tangible and concrete elements to greater territorial equity (cohesion). Bearing in mind that most municipalities in the region have less than 5,000 inhabitants, the economies of scale generated by the cooperation allow these municipalities to facilitate the access of their citizens to services beyond what is required by law to provide, and that otherwise would not be possible. It is the generation of economies of scale the element that facilitates access to services.

It is in the three municipalities of more than 20,000 inhabitants, where the services related to mobility and urban sustainability become more relevant. Meanwhile, the municipalities with the smallest population adhere to more basic services, the bigger ones do so to more specialized services. If we talk about optional services, this accession does not differ substantially among municipalities of any demographic size below 20,000 inhabitants (a threshold that is decisive).

A balanced development model based on urban-rural complementarity must contemplate compensation mechanisms and flexible governance structures that enable the surrounding municipalities to access economic activity, services and innovation thanks the role intermediate cities can play. Along with the traditional culture and the traditional “assistance” conception and clientelism structures, through the European Union impulse more proactive approaches are being developed, capable of promoting social innovation as well as indigenous initiatives that aim towards new, more sustainable, alternative development patterns, or at least complementary to the current model (which just helps to explain this behaviour).



## 4. Effectiveness Indicators

The consortium (which includes several *mancomunidad*s), provides several types of services. Some of them are general ones, such as the Regional Development Agency (which includes a labour insertion service, a business advisory point and an agency for the promotion of commercial innovation) and the regional Agency for Diversity Management (AMICS). Some other are ordinary services, such as the PATER (Ribera Employment Territorial Pact), the Energy Agency of the Bank (AER) and Ribera Tourism.

In the tourism field we must highlight the Governance and Dynamization Tourism Plans (PGDT -see Map 5), promoted by the regional government and consisting of agreements between the Valencian Tourism Agency (AVT), the provincial governments and inter-municipal local public institutions (usually *mancomunidad*s), and which in some cases include associations of entrepreneurs. Its purpose is to execute actions for the suitability, improvement, adaptation of offer and creation of competitive tourist products, within the framework of the guidelines of the Tourism Areas Plan over three years.

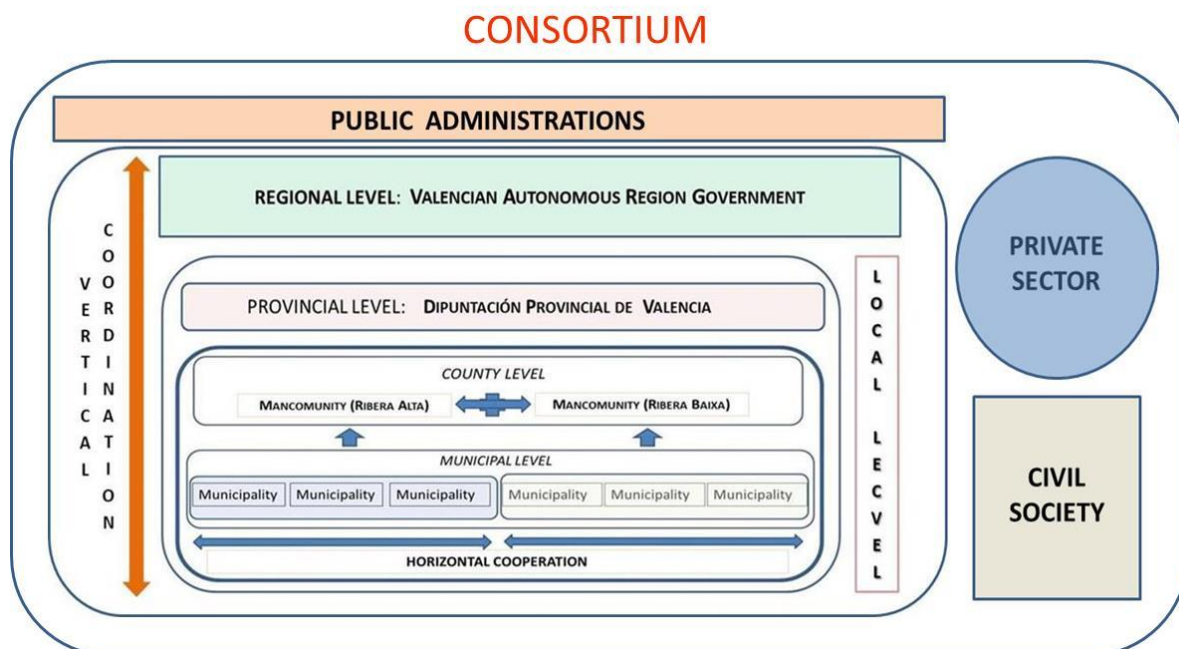
As a continuation of the previous Territorial Employment Pacts, it is worth highlighting the Programme of Territorial Agreements for Employment and Local Development (for areas with more than 100,000 inhabitants or five municipalities with certain characteristics), which is promoted by the Valencian Training and Employment Service -SERVEF- (within the *Avaler Territori Plan*), which is partly funded by European Social Fund. This programme has two modalities: the agreements for carrying out a territorial diagnosis and those which, together with this diagnosis, also include an experimental project (see Map 4). The agreements are based on consultation with public and private actors representing the territory, and include local authorities, SERVEF and, generally, business associations and trade unions, without prejudice to the participation of other associations representing local actors. They present a certain parallelism, from the urban-rural point of view, of what was previously developed by the Local Action Groups of the LEADER programme in strictly rural areas (disadvantaged ones).

A territorial agreement for employment and local development for the Consortium of la Ribera area has been promoted. The agreement includes the territorial diagnosis and the realization of an experimental or innovative project, which is being managed through PATER (Ribera Territorial Employment Pact), an autonomous body dependent on the Consortium of La Ribera (created in 2004, within the framework of the Territorial Employment Pacts Programme).

The Mayors' Covenant for Climate and Energy of 2015 is an initiative with the support of the European Commission based on the adoption by local governments of a series of commitments on energy, CO<sup>2</sup> reduction and combating pollution and climate change. It uses a series of public subsidies to encourage it (reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and greenhouse gases by 40% and adaptation to climate change in 2030). This Pact is addressed to the municipalities and local authorities, who ratify their accession, but also gives special importance to a series of organizations in charge of coordinating and promoting adherence to the Pact and giving support to the municipalities for compliance with the commitments.

Currently, there are 228 municipalities in the province of València that are members of the Pact, being the highest coordinating entity the provincial government (*Diputación* of València). However, the Ribera Consortium, which supports 30 municipalities, is also a coordinating organization (see Map 6).

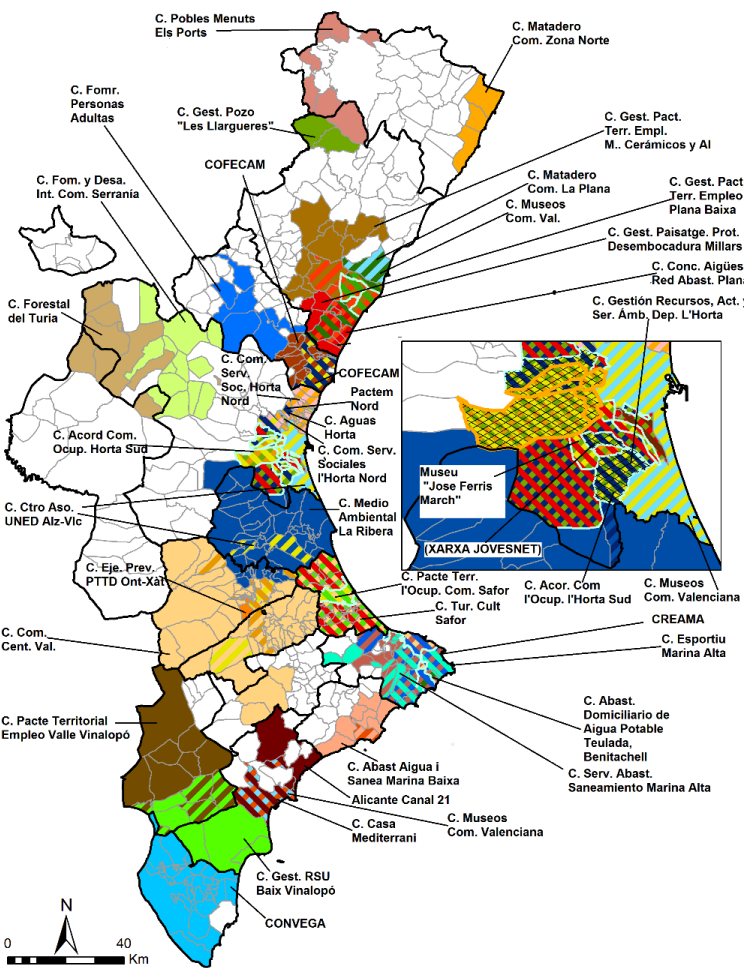
The Pact also grants a relevant role to local and regional energy agencies, which provide technical assistance and advice to municipalities, and among them is the Energy Agency of the Ribera (AER), linked to the aforementioned consortium and in which they participate 19 municipalities. The AER has played a very important role in the most innovative municipal experiences and considered a case of success and best practices at the regional and EU level (Esparcia, 2014). In several municipalities (such as Llaurí, l'Alcúdia and Carlet) AER has carried out its emissions inventory and has designed its respective Sustainable Energy Action Plan. In general, it is important to note that in this comarca there are some of the most advanced initiatives in terms of sustainability.



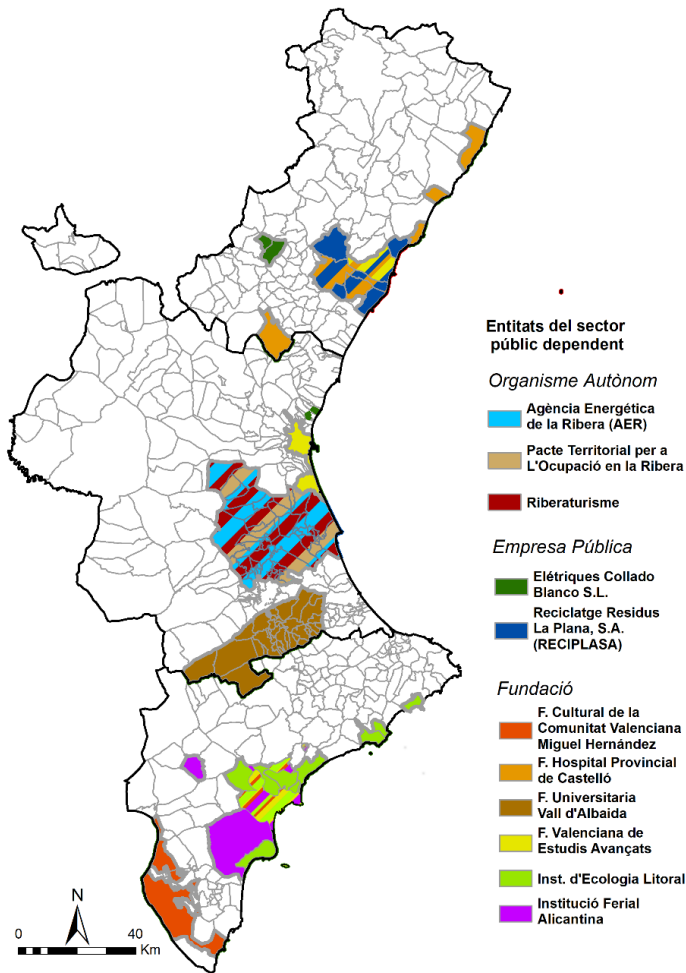


# 5. Illustration and further information

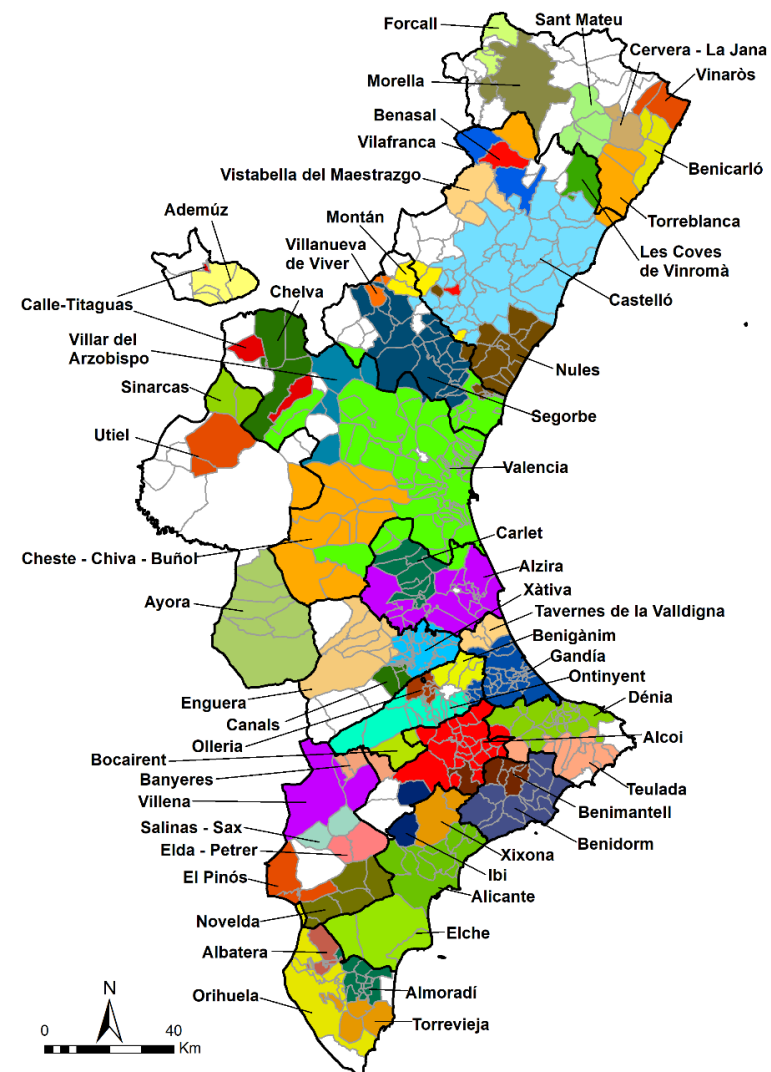
Map 1: Local consortia and functional areas



Map 2: Public institutions at local level

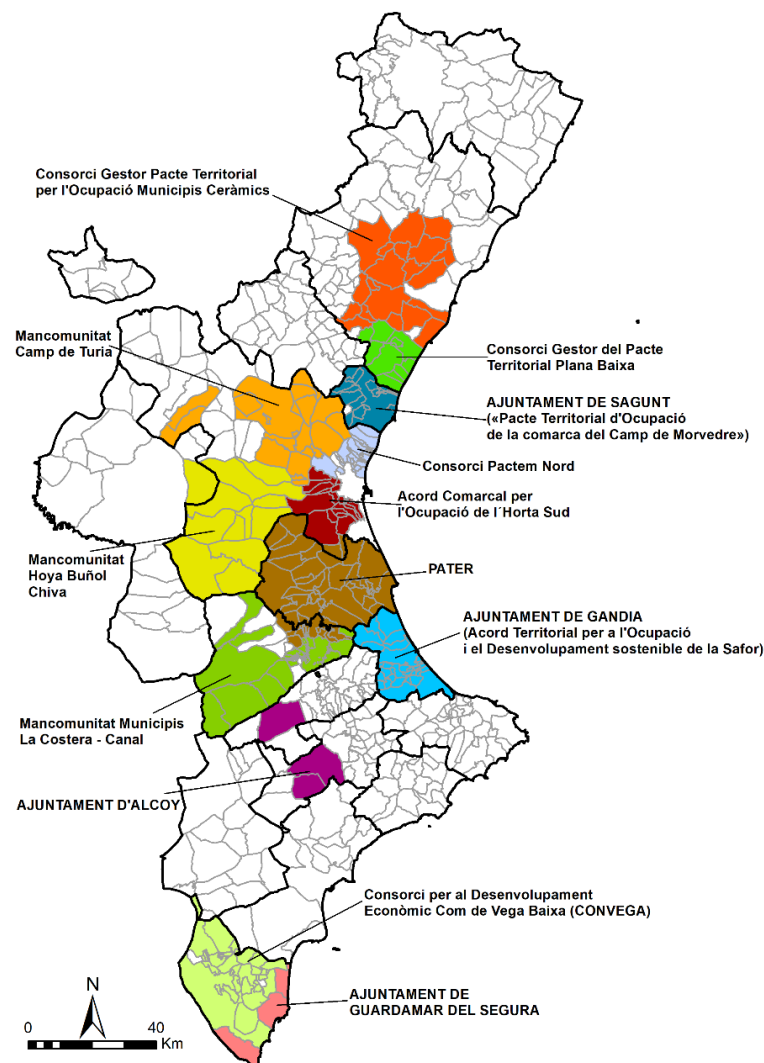


Map 3: Functional areas of Local labour markets

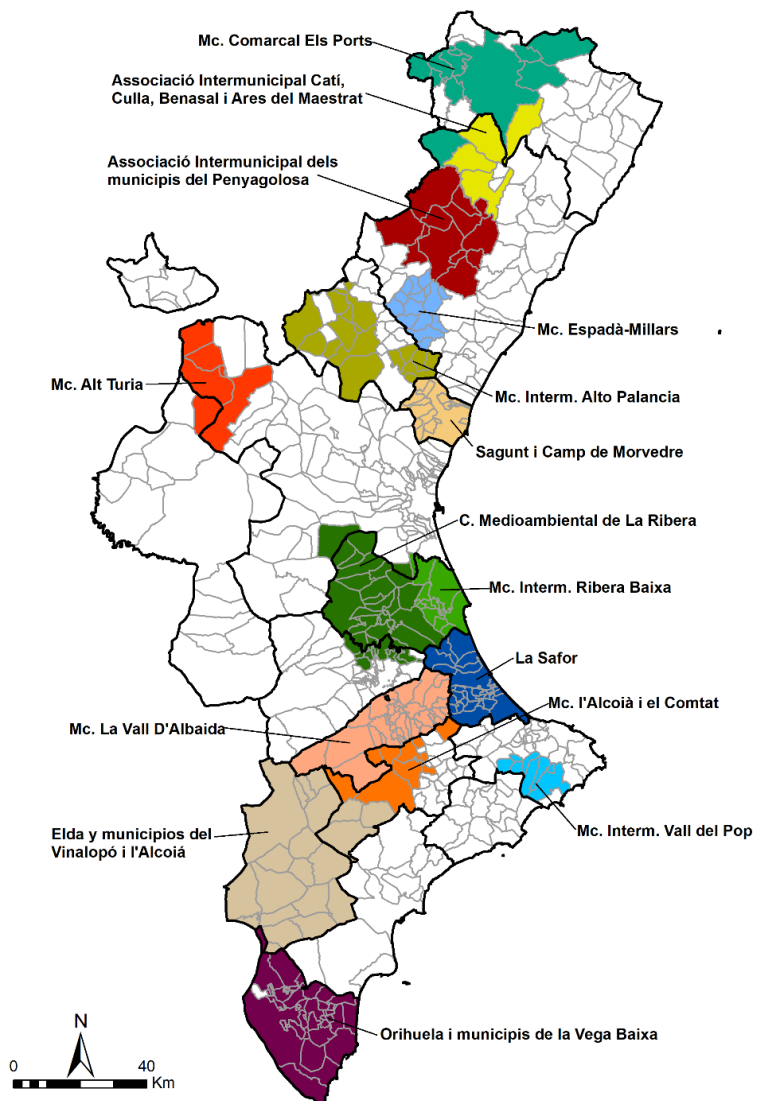


Source: Gomis, A. (2017)

Map 4: ATODL (diagnosis and experimental project) and functional areas

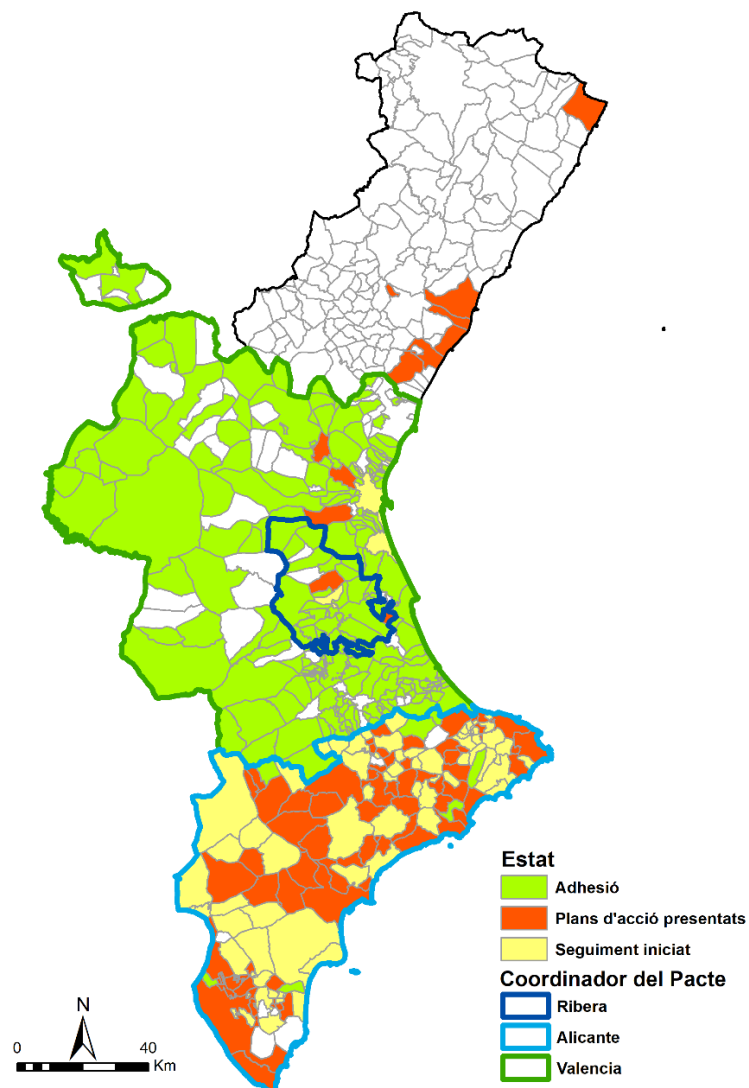


Map 5: Forecast of agreements for PGDT in 2017 and functional áreas



Source: Gomis,A. (2017)

Map 6: Municipalities of the Covenant of Mayors and coordinating entities



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