



## Functional Rural Areas and beyond. Other definitions

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## Objectives of Task 1 Methodological framework

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“A refined understanding of functional characteristics of territories, functional relations between rural places and other rural and/or urban places within a territorial continuum”

“The importance of these relations for sustainable development, to design synergistic approaches favouring a networked and interlinked development”



## Main methodological issues (reported in Deliverable 1.1)

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- ▶ Analysis of literature concerning the functional relations - bases for the FRA
- ▶ Identification of necessary steps in classifying a new typology of rural areas based on 14 Pilot Regions
- ▶ Theoretical framework to analyse relations between functions, process of transition and resilience capacity to respond to transition
- ▶ data/indicators to identify the different functions and resilience capacity



## An interpretation of the most recent literature achievements on rural area definitions

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- **Diversity of rural areas** within the urban-rural continuum is more complex than that deriving from proximity to urban centres
- **The functional area concept** is usually applied to urban and regional development to identify the intensity and nature of urban influences upon the surrounding territory, but it is strongly biased in favour of the urban part
- studying rural diversity in the case of rural areas implies focusing on the role that the countryside can play in **production, consumption and ecosystem functions**, not only for nearby urban areas but also for broader society
- Need for **mixed approaches** and information available at the most granular level (grid or LAU2 level) from different sources

## Specific issues concerning the FA method applied non-urban areas in Europe



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- 📍 **FA definition:** a territorial unit that results from the structure of social and economic relations between residents across space
  - 📍 **Most common approach:** commuting-to-work flows within a labour market area or employment zone
  - 📍 But **criteria and parameters** differ among European countries depending on policy aims, commuting structures and different population distribution in the territories
  - 📍 **Used for a broad set of policies:** employment policy (FR and DE); industrial development (UK); industrial renewal policy (IT); public transport planning (EE); housing needs (UK); local government restructuring (FI). But never for agricultural and rural development policies

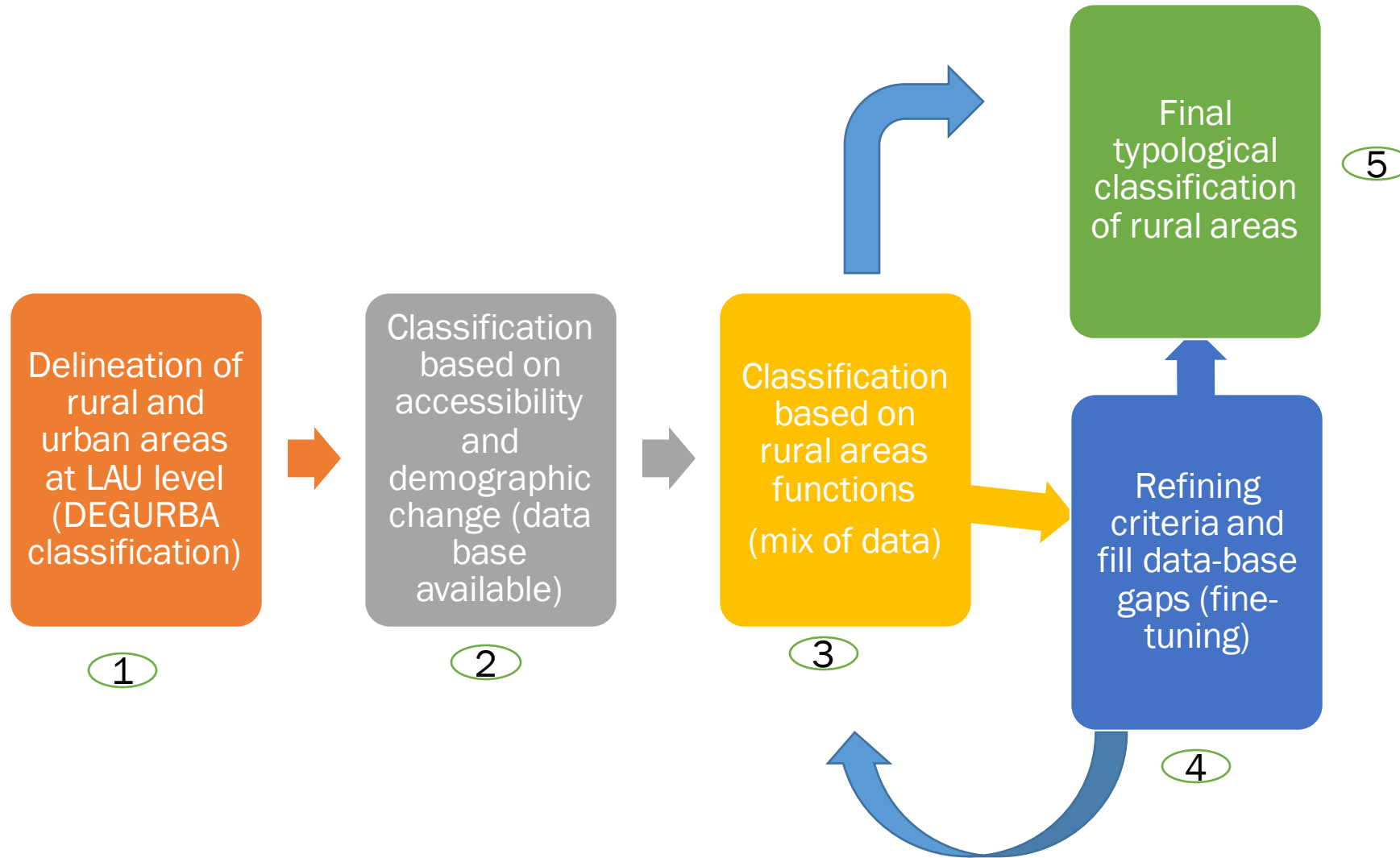
# Reasons for exploring a new definition of rural area



- ▶ Neo-endogenous theories: capacity to generate development mechanisms/opportunities
- ▶ Role of networks enabling connectivity between areas, even beyond the geographical proximity
- ▶ Rural areas as providers of complex and diversified functions (traded and non-traded assets)



# Combining top-down and bottom-up data provision based on subsequent steps involving the partners of pilot regions

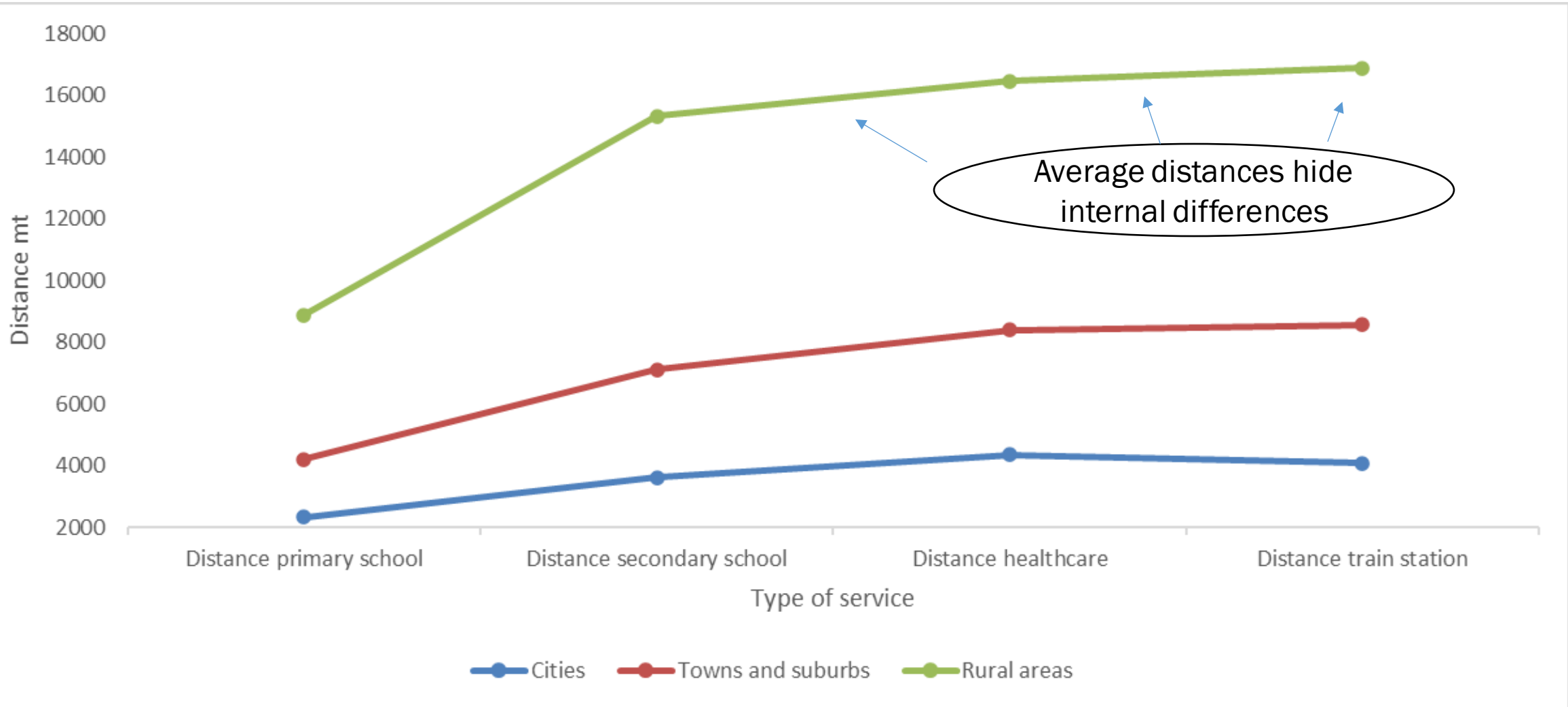


## Analysis of rural areas at the LAU level (according to the DEGURBA classification)

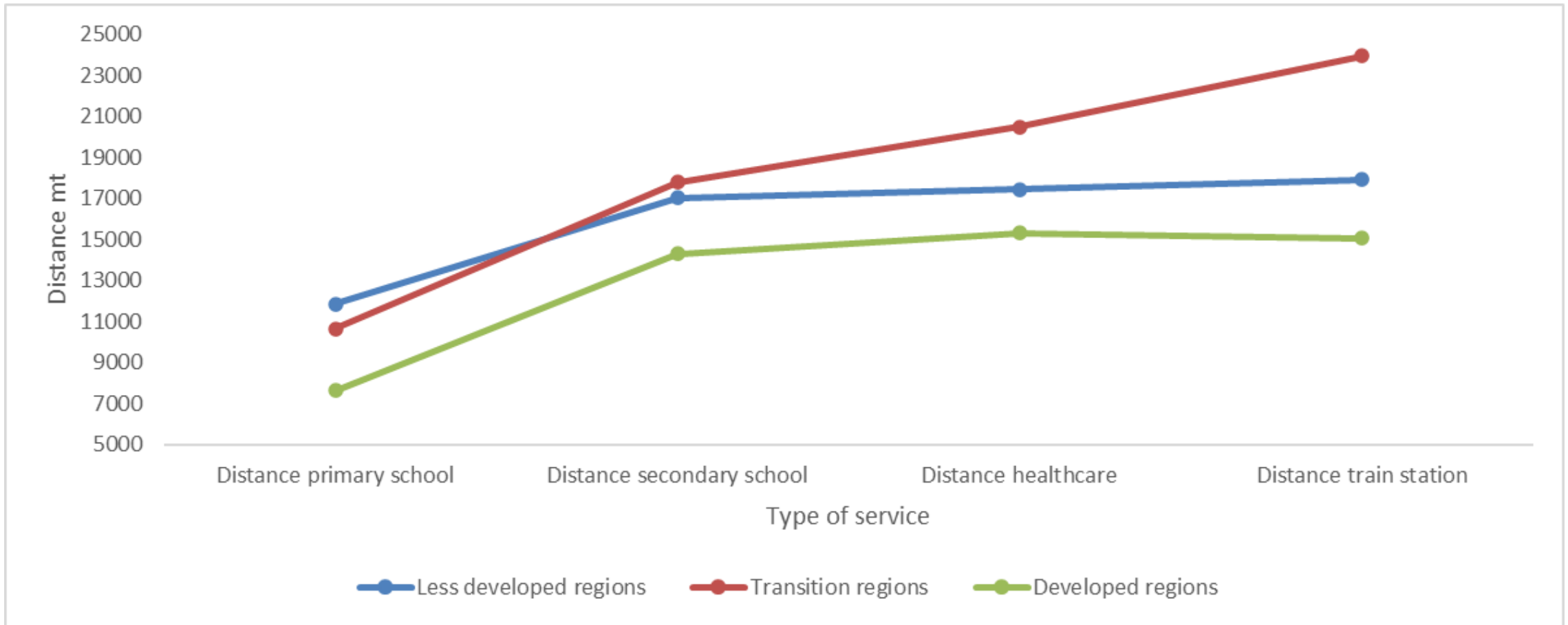
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- **Social disparities are not only between cities and rural municipalities**
  - **Disparities are along the rural continuum:**
    - between developed regions and less developed regions (at NUTS2 level)
    - between mountain, hill and lowlands (altitude level and degree of geographical remoteness)
    - between demographic decline and demographic growth (demographic dynamics)
  - **Need to combine different criteria, not only travel time**
  - **Criteria used depend upon the policy use**



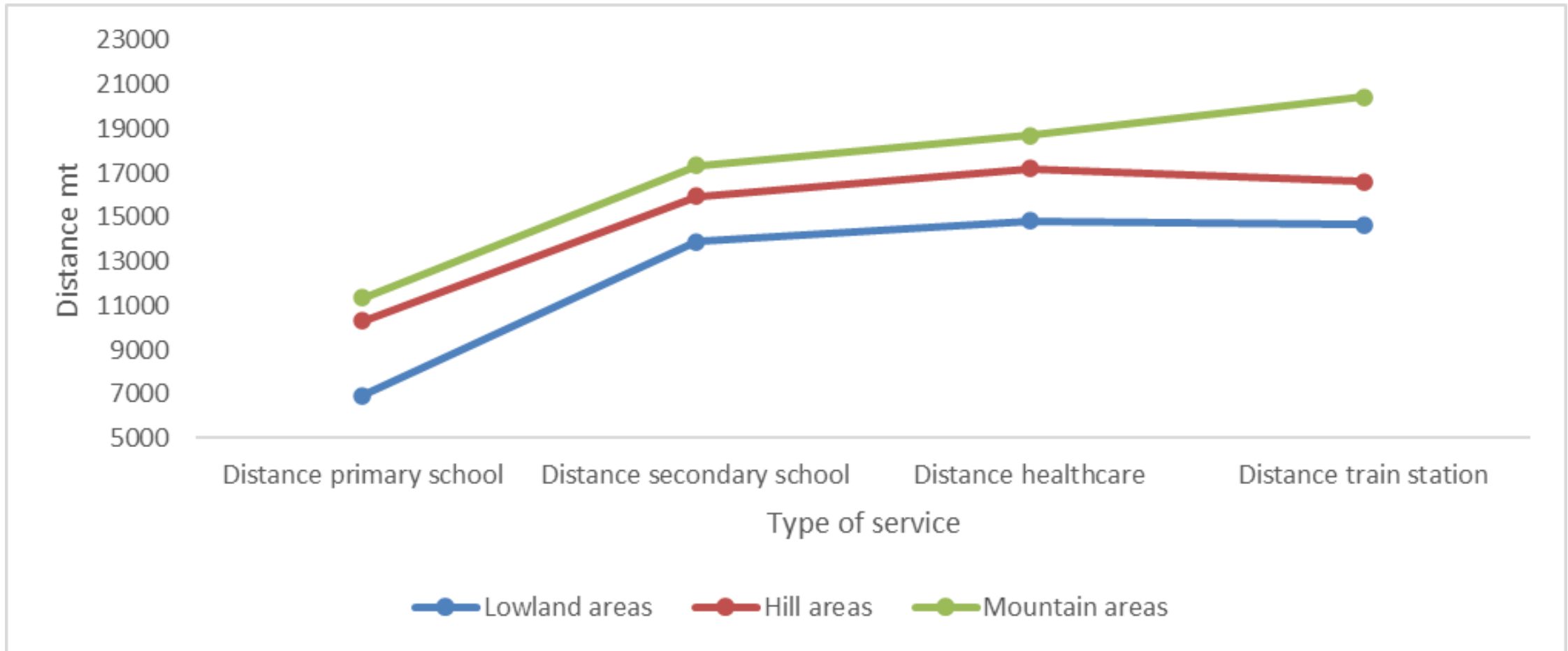
# Access to service at LAU level- Italy 2018



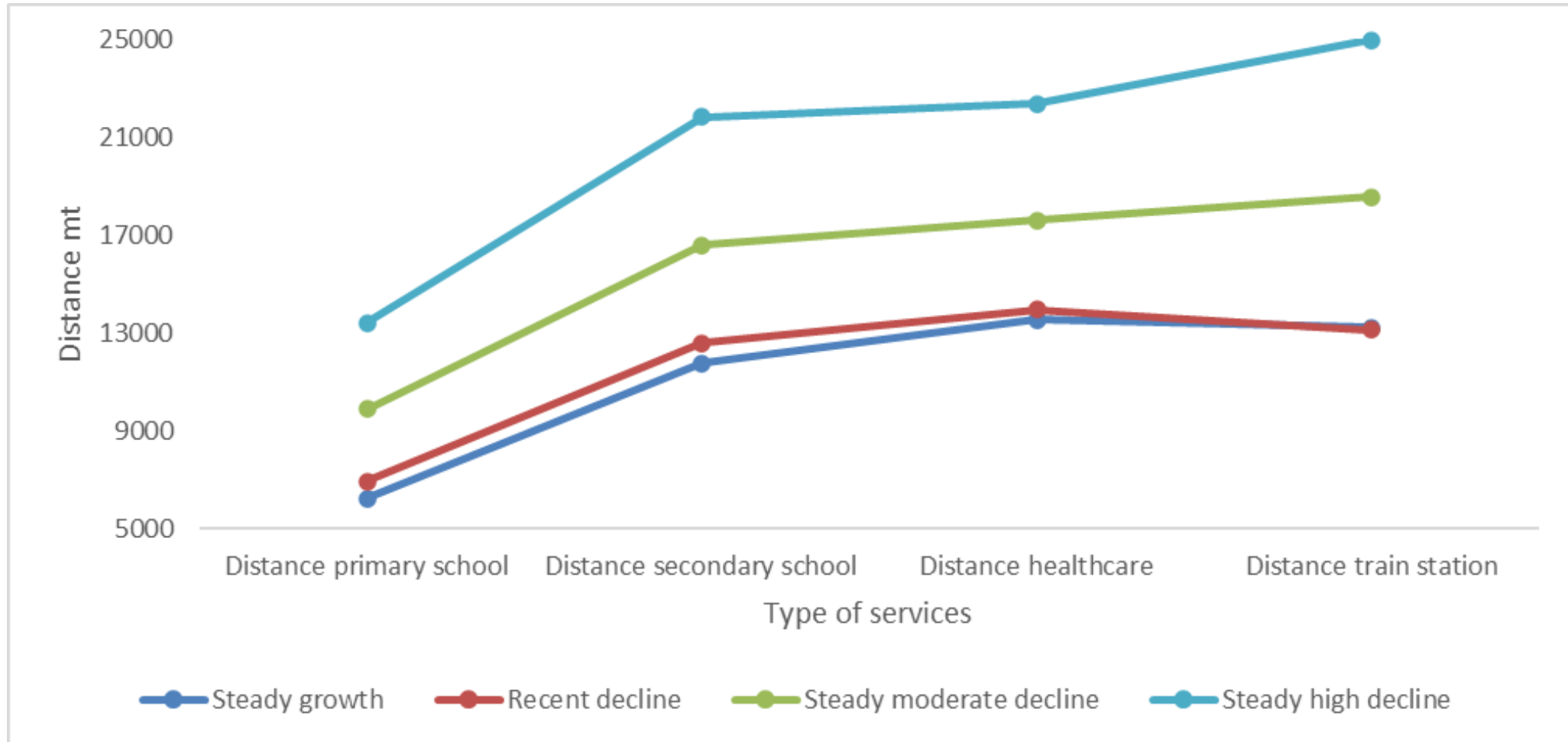
# First type of disparities: regional development- Italy 2028



# Second type of disparities: geographical remoteness – Italy 2028



# Third type of disparities: demographic dynamics 2001-11 and 2011-20 -Italy 2018



# Main implications for clustering rural municipalities (LAU2)

- Need to find intermediate level of granularity between NUTS3 (too large and heterogenous) and LAU2 (too small)
- But economic, geographical and demographic disparities need to be taken into account
- FA methods based on travel time to the nearest settlement implicitly assume the nearest settlements can provide most of services
- Nevertheless, in a setting of deep territorial disparities this assumption could lead to overestimate the role of nearest settlements and underestimate the needs of the most marginal communities
- Need to test more carefully some combined criteria in selected pilot regions