

### Discussion of the results of the Brussels case study during an online seminar on 10 March 2022

#### OBJECTIVE

The METRO project (The role of Cohesion Policy in the planning of METROpolitan Areas and Cities) has identified the added value of European cohesion policy in improving the territorial planning of European cities and metropolises. It also shows how a better inclusion of European cities and metropolises in the elaboration and management of the cohesion policy can improve its efficiency. Finally, it lists a series of recommendations to increase the territorial and metropolitan dimension of future cohesion policy.

This project was initiated within the framework of EUROCITIES, the association representing large European cities in which the Brussels Region is active. It brings together nine European cities and metropolises (Metropolis of Turin (IT), Metropolitan Area of Barcelona (ES), Municipality of Brno (CZ), Brussels-Capital Region (BE), Metropolitan Area of Lisbon (PT), Metropolis of Lyon (FR), Metropolitan Area of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot (PL), Metropolis of Florence (IT), and Municipality of Riga (LV)) as well as two international networks (EUROCITIES and METROPOLIS). The project was led by a consortium of European universities and research centres located in each of the participating cities and metropolises, headed by the Polytechnic University of Turin.

#### THREE MAJOR FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY OF THE NINE METROPOLISES

3 major findings from the study of the 9 metropolises

In concrete terms, the project has led to three major findings which have been used to provide a set of recommendations for each of the 9 metropolises.

- × The very notion of metropolitan area is not fixed and can take on different geographies depending on the case, in relation to the pre-existing administrative entities.
- × The role played by the metropolitan areas studied in the programming, management and implementation of cohesion policy in the 2014-2020 programming period is relatively limited. This can be explained by the fact that metropolitan institutionalisation is non-existent or very recent.
- × The role played by metropolitan areas in the implementation and management phases of metropolitan governance depends strongly on the architecture characterising the EU Cohesion Policy of each country but also on the operational programmes and instruments that are in place. Of these instruments, the ITIs (Integrated Territorial Investment) are the most popular because they favour the development and implementation of strategies on a metropolitan scale.

A proposal for a typology has been made on the basis of various factors impacting on the relevance and effectiveness of the establishment of metropolitan governance (size of the cohesion funds allocated and pre-existence of metropolitan cooperation, among others). The potential of Cohesion Policy to create added value in the implementation of metropolitan policies in Brussels is rather limited because the coordination mechanisms to be put in place would have rather high indirect costs compared to the expected effects.

This typology has led to the proposal of global recommendations on the one hand, and recommendations specific to each city on the other. While the global recommendations are fairly transversal and universally applicable (recognise the role of metropolises in economic and territorial development, legislate and give them a status if appropriate, involve metropolises in the design of EU cohesion policy and entrust them with part of its management, introduce operational programmes on a metropolitan scale, strengthen tools such as ITIs, etc.), the local recommendations reflect the specificities of each city.

## MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BRUSSELS METROPOLIS

Thus, although there are planning tools with a territorial metropolitan scope within the Brussels-Capital Region (T.OP Noordrand, PRDD...), the recommendations for Brussels focus on the importance of cooperation between federated entities. This can be explained by the institutional structure of the state, the concentration of powers by the Regions and the weakness of Cohesion Policy funds favouring a metropolitan vision compared to regional budgets. From these observations, several avenues and recommendations specific to Brussels and its periphery aiming at the implementation of a policy with a metropolitan scope are possible:

- × The **creation of a metropolitan governance**, as the tools of the Cohesion Policy would have a greater impact if the notion of metropolitan area were officially recorded in the legislation.
- × The adoption within the federated entities of a more advanced cooperation between them in order to **develop strategies targeted on a metropolitan territory** that does not stop abruptly at the administrative borders (continuum of problems).
- × **Using the Cohesion Policy as a lever to create a metropolitan governance** in order to respond to territorial challenges common to all federated entities such as mobility, the carbon passive economy, housing problems or the management of an economic crisis.

## DISCUSSION BETWEEN BRUSEELS, WALLOON AND FLEMISH STAKEHOLDERS

The results of the study and the recommendations for Brussels were discussed on 10 March 2022 during a webinar bringing together some twenty public officials and researchers from Brussels, Wallonia and Flanders active in the fields of spatial planning and cohesion policy.

The participants agreed that the atypical case of Brussels implies that the process of metropolitan governance must be carried out in a pragmatic manner with the aim of establishing a climate of trust between actors. This trust is absolutely necessary before embarking on any objective to co-construct metropolitan governance. Each entity must be a winner, together with the other partners. A wise choice would therefore be **to implement the metropolisation process in a bottom-up manner**, i.e. by identifying and financing local projects that can create a snowball effect at a higher

level. These small projects, which would constitute **“quick-wins”, would thus serve to trigger a dynamic on a larger scale**. Cohesion policy can initiate and support these metropolitan projects. It is already doing so with certain ERDF projects, such as the trans-regional cycle paths. The participants proposed in particular to draw inspiration from pre-existing tools, which could be adapted to the Belgian federal context. For example, they defended **the possibility of having an INTERREG mechanism allowing cooperation between regions within the same country**. The pilot project on combating urban sprawl in functional urban areas proposed by the three Belgian regions in the framework of the Territorial Agenda could also provide added value. Finally, this governance must be a model of **“soft governance”**, where each actor sees an interest, without losing its own objectives and competences. The examples of cooperation at the level of the transnational metropolitan area of Basel or the Greater Cross-Border Region around Luxembourg were mentioned in this respect, as a source of inspiration.

## Participants sent 35 votes in 3 polls

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what are the 3 most relevant recommendations? 13



what are the most 3 relevant recommendations for Brussels 11

