

Report

ESPON METRO | The role and future perspectives of Cohesion Policy in the planning of Metropolitan Areas and Cities

The role of cities and metropolitan areas in the Cohesion Policy: Challenges for the period 2021-2027

Presentation of the METRO ESPON project results

IBEI, Barcelona. November 23, 2021

On November 23, 2021, was presented in Barcelona the main results of the ESPON project METRO – The role and future perspectives of Cohesion Policy in the planning of Metropolitan Areas and Cities in the seminar discussion “The role of cities and metropolitan areas in the Cohesion Policy: Challenges for the period 2021-2027”, organized by the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, the Institute of Regional and Metropolitan Studies of Barcelona (IERMB), and IBEI.

The ESPON METRO project is led by the metropolitan area of Torino within the ESPON programme and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. The conclusions presented are the result of a comparative research that analyses the role of the Cohesion Policy in planning and policy implementation in nine metropolitan areas, identifies the main challenges for the period 2021-2027, and provides policy recommendations in order to consolidate the role of metropolitan areas within the cohesion policy framework. The study has been coordinated by the Polytechnic of Torino with the participation of different local research centres, including IERMB for the case of the Barcelona metropolitan area case study.

The presentation in Barcelona was hosted by the *Institute Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals* (IBEI) and had the participation of institutional partners from ESPON, Barcelona and Torino, project researchers from the Polytechnic and IERMB, and around 20 attendants, including public managers and officers from the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, the Barcelona provincial council (*Diputació de Barcelona*), various metropolitan municipalities, and international relations researchers and students. In the weeks and days before the event, the session was announced by partner institutions through their webpages and social networks.

During the event, the director of the IBEI, Jacint Jordana, and the Director of International Relations and Cooperation of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, Oriol Illa, opened the session, welcomed the assistants, and presented the current context and challenges of CP in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area.

In the main table there was a presentation of the main results of the ESPON METRO project and a debate between the project stakeholders, including ESPON's Senior Project Expert, Piera Petruzzi, the Head of EU and International Projects Unit of the Metropolitan City of Torino, Claudia Fassero, the professor of Urban Planning at the Polytechnic of Torino, Giancarlo Cotella, the Head of International Relations of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, Xavier Tiana, and the IERMB researchers Marc Martí and Vittorio Galletto.

The debate was focused on the role and capacities of local and metropolitan government to affect and participate in the elaboration of the EU urban policy, and particularly their role in the Cohesion Policy. Among the main conclusions was highlighted the need for local and metropolitan governments to be involved in the design of European funds, not just in their implementation. Particularly they should participate in the elaboration of National and Regional Operational Programmes. Also, the need to scale up and include more policy objectives and other economic and social sectors.

Among the main learning were stressed the complementarity between core cities and metropolitan areas in the case of Barcelona, and the opportunity that projects such as the ESPON METRO could represent in order to facilitate and boost metropolitan cooperation in the European context. Conversely, was emphasised that NextGen and React-EU funds will not reach metropolitan and local authorities.

In addition, there was a call to reduce administrative complexity in the management of European funds. Such programmes should provide more economic and professional resources in order to provide support to local administrations to deal with the project managerial duties. Finally, there was a discussion about the limited potentials of ITI instruments for the metropolitan area in Barcelona, but could have greater potential impacts in non-consolidated, non-institutionalized metropolitan areas.

The session was closed by the Barcelona Metropolitan Area General Manager, Ramon Torra, whom stressed the relevance of the debate around EU Cohesion Policy programmes and funds for the development of key metropolitan policies in the context of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area.