

# Report

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

*Regional peer learning workshop*

*Stará radnice, Mečová 5, Brno, 602 00, Czech Republic*

*27. January 2022, 13:00 – 15:30*

*Theme of local peer learning workshop:*

## **Metropolitan Development: Potentials and Limits of Local Cooperation and Cohesion Policy**

The key objective of the workshop was to present the results and findings of the international ESPON METRO project "The role and future perspectives of Cohesion Policy in the planning of Metropolitan Areas and Cities" and discuss implications of the project insights and recommendations for strengthening the role of metropolitan and city regions and metropolitan cooperation in the Czech Republic and effective utilization of Cohesion Policy for further support of metropolitan development and metropolitan governance and planning institutionalization.

The workshop was opened by welcome and introduction by:

František Kubeš, head of the Department of Strategic Planning and Cooperation, the City of Brno

Milada Hroňková, national coordinator of ESPON, Ministry for Regional Development

Marie Zezůlková, head of the Department of Regional Policy, Ministry for Regional Development

Luděk Sýkora from Charles University, Prague, member of the research team and coordinator of the Brno and the Czech Republic analyses introduced the ESPON METRO project, its insights and recommendations with a specific focus on the national context of the Czech Republic and local situation in Brno Metropolitan Area.

The ESPON METRO international research project focused on how metropolitan areas contribute to the achievement of cohesion policy objectives through their agenda. Its conclusions highlighted the importance of metropolitan areas in designing programs and strategies to implement cohesion policy. The project also explored the mechanisms for including the metropolitan dimension in cohesion policy, the added value of applying cohesion policy at the metropolitan level with regard to the metropolitan agenda planning and implementation process. The project examined and compared the metropolitan areas of the cities of Turin (main coordinator), Barcelona, Brno, Brussels, Lisbon, Lyon, Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot, Florence, and Riga.

In the Czech Republic, the position of metropolitan areas is still fragile as they do not have any legal status and decision-making powers in terms of territorial governance. Their reflection in national decision-making varies and is not fully appreciated as one of the key aspects of territorial dimension of public policies. The current participation in metropolitan governance, planning and cooperation is primarily driven and motivated by the availability of the EUCP finance provided through the ITI instrument. In national policies, there are currently no instruments and mechanisms (apart from ITI) that would encourage and frame metropolitan cooperation, planning and governance. There is risk, that with the change in the EUCP instruments, the political support for these territorial entities may fade away. The main challenge is to learn and establish the metropolitan governance, planning and

cooperation as a normal practice which does not depend only on the EUCP impulses and external frame. Up to now, the metropolitan governance and cooperation has been primarily top-down policy driven. The key challenge is to strengthen and empower the institutional framework for local bottom-up initiatives and enhance the metropolitan leadership to address key metropolitan issues, trends and challenges.

The key ESPON METRO recommendations were presented to workshop participants. Metropolitan areas and urban regions shall be commonly understood as fundamental units of territorial development of the state and as autonomous self-standing areas that sustain economic, social and cultural life and promote technological and social advancements through innovations. Coordination of metropolitan dimension in national regional, urban and spatial planning policy shall be enhanced. Mechanisms of bottom-up metropolitan cooperation shall be developed to promote complex metropolitan agenda capable to fulfil local, national and EU goals. The metropolitan governance and cooperation shall be enhanced as self-standing, autonomous and independent from the EUCP and development objectives shall be formulated, negotiated and supported beyond the frame of ITI and the incentives coming from the EUCP. New legal framework for metropolitan governance based in active involvement and responsibilities of bottom-up metropolitan actors shall be established. Metropolitan leadership shall find arrangements towards common metropolitan fund to fulfil the metropolitan strategic priorities by own means together with support from national and EU funds.

Petr Šašinka, head of the department of ITI management and cooperation, The City of Brno, introduced the Integrated Strategy for the Development of Brno Metropolitan Area 2021+, key principles of metropolitan cooperation and its major up-to-date achievements. Further, he focused on obstacles and challenges of metropolitan development and discussed possibilities and models of metropolitan institutionalization.

Marie Zezůlková, head of the Department of Regional Policy, Ministry for Regional Development, presented the perspectives of the Ministry for Regional Development on the Role of Metropolitan Areas in the Implementation of Development Priorities of the Czech Republic and the European Union. Specifically, she focused on the relation between the national Strategy for Regional Development of the Czech Republic 2021+ and the CP instrument of Integrated Territorial Investments in relation to long-term sustainable urban development.

The discussion that followed the presentations focused on:

- the role of metropolitan areas in the implementation of cohesion policy;
- the impact of cohesion policy on strengthening governance and cooperation in metropolitan areas;
- the assessment of metropolitan cooperation and governance in the Brno Metropolitan Area in the context of international comparison;
- suggestions for metropolitan cooperation and development in the Czech Republic based on a comparison and evaluation of the experience of nine metropolitan areas in eight EU Member States investigated in ESPON METRO;
- models of metropolitan institutionalization in the Czech Republic.

The workshop was organized by the ESPON EGTC (European Grouping on Territorial Cooperation), Charles University, Prague, the Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic and the Brno Metropolitan Area. The meeting, which was held in a hybrid form (participants could attend on site or connect online), was attended by about 50 participants.