

## Report

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

#### Seminar: Metropolitan Area Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot, 3.02.2022 (online)

- **About 100 people** participated in the meeting, including representatives of
  - project leader ESPON METRO and ESPON EGTC,
  - institution coordinating the Partnership Agreement and EU programs at the national and regional level,
  - universities from the region and the country (Gdansk, Warsaw, Slupsk, Wroclaw, Lodz, Szczecin),
  - metropolis: MAG, The Upper Silesian and Zagłębie Metropolis, Union of Polish Metropolis
  - regional and local governments,
  - planning offices (municipal, regional - Pomeranian and others from the country).
- **The aim of the seminar** was to present the key conclusions and recommendations of the project, as well as to discuss with stakeholders. In the first part of the meeting, the participants listened to the following presentation:
  - **The Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot metropolis against the background of 9 European metropolises**, Jacek Zaucha, Head of the Department of International Economics and Economic Development at the University of Gdańsk,
  - **Conclusions and recommendations from the METRO project for OMGGS policy**, Iwona Sagan, Head of the Department of Socio-Economic Geography at the University of Gdańsk,
  - **The Cohesion Policy as a tool to improve the efficiency of MAGGS operations**, Radomir Matczak, an expert on regional development, cooperating with, inter alia, with the Association of Polish Cities and University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Sopot.

The meeting was moderated by Michał Glaser, Director and CEO of MAG.

- **key conclusions from the discussion:**

1. **Programming the new perspective of the Cohesion Policy 2021-2027**

- 1) The issue of the ITI instrument is almost absent in discussions with the European Commission. The Polish government and the regions have a lot of freedom in programming this mechanism. ITI in Europe is rarely used as an instrument for programming metropolitan policies. However, western metropolises gain a great influence on the European Social Fund. This is a good direction, added value should be sought in the context of other programmes (e.g. regarding migrants);
- 2) In Poland, a very wide application of the ITI mechanism is planned, also in smaller cities. The works are aimed at the great fragmentation of the instrument. From the perspective of spatial planning, government laws distort the sense of integrated planning;
- 3) It is necessary to position metropolitan cooperation in the field of the most important common metropolitan problems and undertakings. The scale of the needs is huge, it is necessary to select them and isolate the strategic ones;
- 4) There is a need to focus on cross-sector cooperation, which may be an argument in the discussion with the government in the context of the implementation of national operational programs.

2. **Creating municipal and metropolitan policies in Poland:**

- 1) In the Pomeranian Voivodeship, the first initiatives regarding the need to create a metropolis date back to the beginning of the 90s and the activity of the President of Gdansk, Paweł Adamowicz. The region was actively involved in the creation of the metropolis, provided a platform for discussion and feels responsible for metropolitan policies - which is not so common elsewhere in the country;

- 2) The government plans to adopt a comprehensive strategy - the National Urban Policy in June this year, which will identify legal barriers, challenges and goals regarding the implementation of urban policies;
  - 3) The new instruments are supra-local strategies concerning socio-economic and spatial development. One of the sources of financing these strategies will be European funds. However, it is difficult to implement them in a system that is currently in some sense defective. Metropolises in Poland have concentrated around ITI due to the lack of any other formal framework;
  - 4) There is still no uniform approach to what the central city should be in relation to the region. Shared vision and cooperation in this area is the only way to reduce the development gap;
  - 5) The municipal financing system is not conducive to metropolisation - local governments become poorer, their income base is decreasing, and the number of inhabitants in municipalities around the metropolis is increasing. There is also a common belief that metropolises "suck" resources from neighboring municipalities and cities, are the target direction of migration, that development is not even and that metropolises benefit more from such cooperation than their surroundings;
  - 6) Poland does not offer metropolises an orderly, predictable, multi-level development tool. - No reconciliation of strategic metropolitan investments with the government level, based on knowledge and transparent procedures.
- 3. The role of Cohesion Policy and the ITI instrument in metropolitan policies:**
- 1) There are competency problems - in Poland, the scope of ITI (territorial, material and financial) depends on the decisions of the government and regions. Negotiations from the metropolitan level are informal and depend on good relations. In addition, there is no framework for cooperation (soft - planning), different paths to the effectiveness of activities are sought;
  - 2) The ITI strategy should include a broader view, taking into account various financing tools (including local CLLD projects, revitalization);
  - 3) A consensus of local government units in the metropolis on a uniform approach to strategic matters is needed. Unfortunately, the financing system influences the perception of metropolises by individual municipalities in terms of their own interests. The breakthrough may be the awareness of better access to good practices of neighboring territories, which will make it easier for others to function. The role of the metropolis and its strength must be built on opening and integrating communes and "involving" external entities into this cooperation, which will help in creating needs that the local level, overwhelmed with daily duties, cannot yet see;
  - 4) Although metropolises are not created by formal regulations - it is a space where companies want to develop and a space that attracts residents with a high quality of life. To achieve their goals, metropolises need real power, financial resources and a legal framework. In the case of MAG, the main unresolved issue is the lack of a metropolitan act, i.e. the formal recognition of the metropolis by the Polish Government.
- 4. What metropolises can give the country and the European Union:** Modern development policies will not be implemented without metropolises. It is necessary for metropolises to go beyond the framework of the Cohesion Policy. ITIs are an important but small piece of intervention. Metropolises should think more broadly, apart from the current policy of EU programmes and the ITI territory (especially in the field of cooperation between local government units and universities), also in the longer term (except 2030). Metropolises should develop as forums for good practices and meetings. The role of metropolises and their strength must be built on such an opening.

Conclusion: invitation to the conference summarizing the project on March 24 (tbc) this year and to other ESPON projects.