

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

Challenges for the Future Development of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area at the University of Lisbon, IGOT-Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning and virtually on the Zoom platform, February 22, 2022

On February 22, 2022, a seminar-discussion “Challenges for the Future Development of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area” was held, during which circa 120 participants had the opportunity to know and discuss the results of the international ESPON study “METRO The role and future perspectives of Cohesion Policy in the planning of Metropolitan Areas and Cities” on the Impact of European Union Cohesion Policy on the growth, planning and competitiveness of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. The event took place on hybrid format combining presence and digital participation through the Zoom platform.

In the introduction part, the President of the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning at the University of Lisbon, Professor José Manuel Simões, addressed the audience and welcomed speakers and delegates. The First Secretary of the Área Metropolitana de Lisboa underlined the relevance of the study for the understanding of the role of metropolitan areas in delivery in an efficient way the European Cohesion policy, emphasizing the relevance of the ESPON project results for that matter. Piera Petruzzi, EPSON EGTC, Senior Project Expert apologized her absence.

The first part of the event was dedicated to the presentation and discussion of the results of the study, presented by both local and foreign experts. Giancarlo Cotella, ESPON METRO Leading Researcher, Associate Professor at the Polytechnic University of Turin, provided an overview of the Metropolitan Areas involved in the METRO project, along with overall findings of the project and the need to strengthen the role of Metropolitan Areas at the EU level. Mário Vale, Professor at IGOT, University of Lisbon, team leader of the project in Portugal, characterised the Lisbon Metropolitan Area in the context of territorial, institutional and EU Cohesion Policy, the Metropolitan governance structure and cooperation activities, the ITI case study, and the main challenges and recommendations. The latter emphasized the following: Metropolitan areas are essential to achieve ever-demanding economic, social, and environmental policy goals, since they are the most appropriate and effective scale to act in the global interconnected economy; the efforts to decentralize part of the European Union Cohesion Policy (EUCP) are aligned with the emergence of metropolitan areas as relevant actors in the process of sustainable development; the need to enlarging and upskilling human resources of LMA to effectively respond to the demanding procedures of the EUCP; increase participation of LMA in national and international policy networks; strengthen the network character of LMA to effectively act at FUA level and overcoming the constrains of formal territorial administrative institutions; Explore new policy areas with potential metropolitan-wide impact and EUCP relevance (e.g. transports and climate change; housing and social inclusion; environment and health, innovation, firms and universities...); launch cooperation initiatives with potential beneficiaries

of EUCP in the metropolitan area - namely civil society, business sector, academia, and other sectoral organizations - aiming at articulating policy agendas.

The second part of the event comprised a panel discussion on the challenges and opportunities for the development of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. In the debate participated Elisa Vilares, Head of Division of Territorial Development and Urban Policy at DG Território and Chair of the Working Party on Urban Policy at OEDC, Nuno Romão, Head of Studies and Regional Policies at AD&C - Cohesion and Development Agency in Portugal, and Sónia Alegre, Member of the Board of Transportes Metropolitanos de Lisboa (TML). Filipe Ferreira, Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA) Secretary, chaired the debate and stressed that the study, which included the participation of nine European metropolitan areas and numerous higher education institutions, focused on the role of cohesion policy in the process of planning and implementing metropolitan policies.

The speakers stressed that the research carried out by the European Spatial Planning Network Observatory (ESPON), showed how policies implemented in metropolitan areas can make a decisive contribution to achieving specific objectives of cohesion policy. The speakers also said that it is very important to integrate very complex institutional ecosystems and that is a critical point regarding metropolitan governance. The discussion revolved around governance frameworks and how Cohesion Policy could act as a facilitator of metropolitan governance and at the same time as a key dimension of metropolitan development. It was also argued that the limitations of Cohesion Policy, namely its bureaucratic nature are a limitation to its potential, but it was observed that Cohesion Policy is an integral part of the European Integration project and that would not be possible to think EU without Cohesion Policy.

The closing session panellists underlined the relevance of the study results for the understanding of the role of metropolitan areas in delivering the European Union Cohesion Policy as well acknowledged how EUCP has room for underpinning planning and development of metropolitan areas across the European Union.