

INCEPTION REPORT //

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

Targeted Analysis

Main report // November 2020

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The final version of the report will be published as soon as approved.

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Abbreviations

AMB	Barcelona Metropolitan Area
ANCI	National Association of Italian Municipalities
BCR	Brussels Capital Region
BMA	Brno Metropolitan Area
CF	Cohesion Fund
CLLD	Community led local development
CMT0	Metropolitan City of Turin
CMFi	Metropolitan City of Florence
EC	European Commission
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EGTC	European Grouping on Territorial Cooperation
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESPON	European Territorial Observatory Network
EU	European Union
FUA	Functional Urban Area
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IB	Intermediate Body
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
JRC	Joint Research Centre
LMA	Lisbon Metropolitan Area
MAG	Metropolitan Area of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot
MC	Metropolitan City
MdL	Lyon Metropolitan Area
NOP	National Operational Programme
PQ	Policy Question
RMA	Riga Metropolitan Area
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
ROP	Regional Operational Programme
SCM	Steering Committee meeting
TA	Targeted Analysis
ToR	Terms of Reference

1 Introduction, aim and objectives

This Inception Report develops the aim and objectives, conceptual and methodological framework and research context for the ESPON targeted analysis METRO – The role and future perspectives of Cohesion Policy in the planning of Metropolitan Areas and Cities. The report follows on from the discussion occurred in the kick-off meeting, that was held virtually on October the 9th, 2020 and also served as first meeting of the project's Steering Committee. The content of the report reflects (i) the results of a focus group organised together with the kick-off meeting, that involved the research team, the ESPON EGTC and the stakeholders engaged in the METRO project¹, (ii) a number of bilateral contacts between the members of the research team and the stakeholders and (iii) relevant information and policy documents provided by the latter.

As stated in the Terms of Reference (ToR), ESPON METRO aims at:

- understanding how Cohesion Policy goals can be integrated in the planning and implementation of policies at metropolitan and city scale, by investigating new governance solutions for Metropolitan Areas and Cities in the framework of post-2020 Cohesion Policy;
- understanding how Cohesion Policy can help achieve socio-economic and territorial goals at metropolitan and city scale and contribute to a generation of better cooperation and governance dynamics at metropolitan level;
- examining how Cohesion Policy can reduce territorial disparities within cities and metropolitan areas by developing area-based approaches and integrated territorial strategies;
- connecting strategic planning at city and metropolitan level to Cohesion Policy funds and instruments at regional, national and EU level;
- developing a comparative analysis on roles, institutional contexts, capabilities and perspectives of the nine (9) stakeholders in the framework of programming and implementing Cohesion Policy, taking into account (a) the national context and (b) the level of participation of urban and metropolitan bodies in programming and management of ESI Funds.

The research design is pivoted on the comparative analysis of nine metropolitan areas: Metropolitan City of Turin (CMT), Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB), Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA), Brno Metropolitan Area (BMA), Metropolitan Area of Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot (MAG), Metropolitan City of Florence (CMFi), Lyon Metropolitan Area (Mdl), Brussels-Capital Region (BCR), Riga Metropolitan Area (RMA). It focuses on the stakeholders' roles, institutional contexts, capabilities and perspectives in the framework of the EU cohesion policy, also in relation to their respective national contexts. In particular, the case studies will provide information on: (i) the stakeholders' role in the development and implementation of the cohesion policy; (ii) the types of instruments used in each context in its implementation; (iii) the scope of the implementation in terms of policy areas and the added value in the promotion of integrated territorial development; (iv) the existing and potential interrelations between cohesion policy goals and the planning and implementation of metropolitan goals. The collected evidence will be elaborated and assessed also in relation to the role that metropolitan areas and cities and the EU cohesion policy are called to play in the COVID-19 emergency and aftermath.

The analysis will be based on experiences and practices identifiable in the nine territories, and will be developed in close connection with the stakeholders that commissioned the research. In so doing, it will deliver realistic sets of evidence-based policy recommendations focusing on how to achieve socio-economic, integrated territorial development objectives in connection with the EU cohesion policy, and on how to contribute to a larger extent to the development, management and implementation of the latter. Furthermore, the results of the project will improve understanding on how metropolitan areas throughout Europe can contribute achieving cohesion policy objectives through their policies, by engaging with the participating stakeholders

¹ In detail: Metropolitan City of Turin, Barcelona Metropolitan Area, Lisbon Metropolitan Area, Brno City Municipality, Metropolitan Area of Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot, Municipality of Florence, Lyon Metropolitan Area, Brussels Capital Region Planning Agency – perspective.brussels, Riga City Council Development Department, EUROCITIES (observer), METROPOLIS (observer).

in knowledge transfer and outreach activities based on networks of knowledge exchange and advocacy, such as the EUROCITIES working groups on Metropolitan areas and Cohesion Policy and the European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA) Initiative. At the same time, they will provide meaningful advice on how cohesion policy should take the metropolitan dimension into account during the programming period 2021-2027.

The following section outlines the context of the study, taking stock of recent research activity on metropolitan governance in Europe and the metropolitan dimension of the EU cohesion policy (§2). The conceptual framework around which the research is built is then detailed, together with the methodological steps to be adopted and the engagement plan that accompanies the implementation of the research (§3). Finally, a preliminary aggregated overview of the METRO case studies is presented, together with an outline of the stakeholders' policy needs and objectives and a set of preliminary hypotheses (§4).

2 Metropolitan governance and EU cohesion policy

Building on a review of previous and ongoing research and studies, as well as on relevant policy documents (such as the just adopted Territorial Agenda 2030 and the New Leipzig Charter on Sustainable Cities), this section sketches out the context within which the research team will answer the project objectives and policy questions. To this end, the following subsections respectively focus on:

- the main issues and challenges surrounding metropolitan governance in Europe (§2.1);
- the position and role of metropolitan areas and cities in the EU cohesion policy framework (§2.2).

In so doing, we set the foundations for the conceptual and methodological framework of the project, contextualising our understanding and facilitating the exploration and analysis of the two main thematic focuses of this Targeted Analysis: the role that metropolitan areas and cities play in the framework of the EU cohesion policy and, in turn, the role that the EU cohesion policy plays in the planning of metropolitan areas and cities.

2.1 Governing the metropolitan dimension

Metropolitan areas and cities are responsible for the production of almost 70% of the EU GDP (EUROSTAT, 2016). However, development challenges at this scale remain hard to address, also due to the complex relations among the centres, the suburban areas and the large peripheries that characterise metropolitan territories (Healey, 2010; Ahrend et al., 2014; Salet et al., 2015; ESPON-POLYCE, 2013; ESPON SPIMA, 2017). As a matter of fact, no univocal definition of the metropolitan dimension has been agreed upon so far, also due to the territorial and institutional heterogeneity that characterises the European countries and regions. The OECD, in collaboration with the European Commission and Eurostat, has developed a methodology for defining urban areas as functional economic places in a consistent way across countries. Using population density and travel-to-work flows as key information, urban areas emerge as characterised by densely inhabited urban cores and less-populated municipalities whose labour market is highly integrated with the cores (OECD 2012, 2013). Since then, a number of theoretical and methodological conceptualisation followed up, as for instance the work from Fadic et al. (2019) that classify small regions on the basis of metropolitan population, density and remoteness, and the Eurostat methodological manual on territorial typologies (Eurostat, 2019). Most recently, the joint EU-OECD definition (Dijkstra et al., 2019) has also been adopted and endorsed within the NUTS classification.²

In parallel to, and in some cases drawing on the introduced conceptual elaborations, metropolitan areas and cities in Europe have been both the scope of and the reason for institutional experimentation. For almost three decades, local authorities in Europe engaged in the development of strategic visions and plans oriented towards a metropolitan perspective, as a way to guide the integration of different spatial developments and engage the authorities at different governmental scales, beyond the core city authority alone (Kübler & Heinelt 2002, Albrechts, 2003, Healey, 2010, Albrechts et al., 2017, Malý J., 2018). Whereas metropolitan activities often occur thanks to informal inter-municipal cooperation, that varies through time and in relation to the issues at stake, a number of governance structures have been institutionalised from the bottom-up, aiming at strategic planning and policy coordination across local governments. In some countries, formal administrative bodies have been established top-down and provided with the responsibility to manage and promote the development of metropolitan territories. Overall, various ‘forms’ and ‘models’ of metropolitan governance have been identified, that differ greatly in relation to their level of institutionalisation, the distribution of powers, competences and resources, their internal structure and the actors involved (Tomàs, 2016, Zimmermann et al, 2020). As part of a study on metropolitan indicators commissioned by Metropolis, the London School of Economics developed a metropolitan coordination indicator assessing the number of sectors under some formal arrangement of metropolitan coordination and the coverage of that institutional ar-

² Further details are available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Territorial_typologies_manual_-_metropolitan_regions

rangement, in score from 0 to 5, with 0 meaning 'no coordination at all' and 5 meaning that there is metropolitan government/supra municipal structure.³ As shown by the heterogeneity of results, the exact nature of the cooperation is often unique, and different arrangements may also derive from the different spatial governance and planning systems that characterise the European continent (ESPON COMPASS, 2018, Nadin & Stead, 2008, Berisha et al., 2020).

Additional complexity emerges when the institutional arrangement is compared to the functional dimension of the metropolitan area (ESPON SPIMA, 2017; Albrechts et al., 2017). In this concern, recent studies highlight the interpretative and administrative difficulties in adapting traditional planning practices to urbanisation trends that go beyond the jurisdictions of a single administrative authority, and to the emergence of 'soft spaces with fuzzy boundaries' for planning and policy (Allmendinger et al., 2015; Salet et al., 2015; Zimmermann et al., 2020). The key challenge seems to find a 'problem owner' that is able to address it at the right scale and with the relevant tool(s) in order to grasp the changing metropolitan landscape (ESPON SPIMA, 2017).⁴ That is to say that the functional, political and representational relations within a given metropolitan area need to be understood in their institutional context before taking action (Salet et al., 2015). This is clearly in line with the arguments brought forward by the recently published Handbook on Sustainable Urban Development Strategies (JRC, 2020), that highlight how having an explicit territorial focus means that needs, challenges and opportunities for development must be matched with the appropriate spatial scale and territorial context. Here the challenge consists in overcoming fragmentation and inefficient actions caused by administrative boundaries, and ensuring more coordinated action between territories. In this light, better insight is needed in the onset of a new political and governance landscape with complex interdependencies between multiple actors at different governmental scales (Faludi 2015, 2018).

When it comes to the definition to be adopted in the project, the term 'Metropolitan Areas and cities' will be used when referring to the territories that are subject to the more or less institutionalised cooperation activities that see the nine METRO stakeholders at the centre. At different stages of the project, these territories – and the socioeconomic and territorial trends therein – will be compared in relation to the characteristics of the territories included within the boundaries defined in the context of other classifications, as in particular the EU-OECD definition of Functional Urban Areas (Dijkstra et al., 2019).

2.2 The metropolitan dimension of the EU cohesion policy

Through time, the EU has allocated an increasing share of funds to urban development goals, recognising urban areas as key components for social and economic development and, at the same time, places of social unrest and environmental concerns (Atkinson & Zimmermann, 2016, Cotella, 2019; Medeiros, 2019). This momentum is still very high, as it clearly emerges from the works that led to the renewal of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable Cities (DE Presidency, 2020a), and then to the recent approval of the EU Territorial Agenda 2030 (DE Presidency, 2020b). More in detail, whereas the Territorial Agenda 2030 advocates place-based territorial development and multilevel policy coordination as overarching principles for all places and policy sectors, the New Leipzig Charter provides guidance for applying these principles in cities, urban areas and their functional regions.

As a consequence of the growing academic and political debate on how to address the needs of functional urban areas in a sustainable, integrated manner, metropolitan areas and cities have progressively entered the EU cohesion policy discourse⁵ and started to receive attention by EU funding programmes and tools. As

³ Some of the ESPON METRO areas were covered by the study, achieving the following scores: Barcelona and Turin: 5; Brussels and Lisbon: 4, i.e. there is a multipurpose/strategic mechanism for formal cooperation and all jurisdictions participate on it; Grand Lyon: 3, i.e. There is a multipurpose/strategic mechanism for formal cooperation but not all jurisdictions participate on it. The complete results are available at: <https://indicators.metropolis.org/>

⁴ Whereas institutional structures and governance practices often remain geared towards core-centric urban models, putting outer areas in a dependent position, some studies argue that fragmented metropolitan governance structures have lower levels of productivity than those featuring legally established metropolitan governance bodies (EP, 2019). This governance conundrum often prevents politicians from adequately tackling problems like spatial fragmentation, uneven development, differences in quality of life, social disparities etc. (Janssen-Jansen & Hutton, 2011).

⁵ Among many studies, the Cities of Tomorrow report argues the importance of a metropolitan administrative reorganisation as a crucial step towards the relaunch of the economy after the 2008 crisis (CEC, 2011). Similarly, arguments are emerging in favour of a growing role for metropolitan areas and cities in the mitigation of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the promotion of socioeconomic recovery in its aftermath (Metropolis, 2020; UN-Habitat, 2020; EWRC, 2020).

metropolitan areas may feature different territorial characteristics, a number of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and tools have been progressively adapted to cater to their diverse needs. For instance, in the programming period 2014-2020, at least 5 % of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) allocation is dedicated to sustainable urban development strategies, through projects related to urban mobility, the regeneration of deprived communities, research and innovation capacity, tackling climate change, but also digitalisation and entrepreneurship. On its hand, the European Social Fund (ESF) co-finances employment-related projects and investments targeting workers, young people and unemployed at a metropolitan scale⁶. Importantly, new instruments were introduced to ensure greater flexibility in tailoring ESIF allocations to territorial needs. Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) were used to favour the development and implementation of integrated metropolitan development strategies, addressing the challenges of given areas from priority axes of one or more ESIF programmes.⁷ Community-Led Local Developments (CLLD) were employed to mobilise local communities and organisations to contribute to achieving the Europe 2020 Strategy goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The Commission 2021-2027 long-term EU budget and Next Generation EU, agreed on November the 10th, 2020, further strengthens the urban dimension of cohesion policy, earmarking the 6 percent of the ERDF for investments in sustainable urban development. Additionally, the new configuration in five policy objectives should allow a simplified management of the ESIF and their integrated use through ITI and CLLD. At the same time, the new European Urban Initiative should foster city-to-city cooperation, innovation and capacity-building across all the thematic priorities of the EU Urban Agenda. However, to adopt suitable metropolitan governance and multi-scalar institutional arrangements that can exploit at its best these opportunities remains a challenge. Many metropolitan areas still lack the tools, jurisdiction and funding that would allow them to embrace their role to a full extent. Despite their importance for the development of Europe, they do not yet play a primary role neither in the design of the national strategies and operational programmes, nor in the decision to use new instruments such as ITI and CLLD, which stays within the responsibility of the national and/or regional levels. This situation is further worsened by the fact that the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the main operative arm through which the Next Generation EU programme will promote transformative economic, environmental and social recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, refers only to the Member States and does not include any explicit obligation or requirement for the engagement of subnational authorities, in so doing contradicting the fact that, across Europe, large urban and metropolitan areas have been the ones hit hardest by the pandemic (EMA, 2020). This situation reflects the multilevel governance tensions resulting from the different perspectives and priorities of the various government levels, and is particularly worrying in relation to the unprecedented crisis that awaits us in the aftermath of the COVID-19 emergency, that metropolitan areas and cities will be required to mitigate as far as possible, while facing other challenges as those related to global climate change. In this light, the need of a better coordination among levels is more evident than ever, and so is a further recognition of the role of metropolitan areas and cities within the scope of the EU cohesion policy.

⁶ Additional support can be drawn from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

⁷ According to the Commission's seventh report on economic, territorial and social cohesion (CEC, 2017), ITIs are being used flexibly in 13 Member States, accounting for around 150 strategies. However, their adoption amongst EU countries is uneven, mostly as a consequence of the difficulties stemming from their structure, the administrative burden they place on local authorities, and the reluctance of many EU Member States to delegate responsibilities to the local level.

3 Conceptual framework, methodology and stakeholders' engagement

This section details the conceptual framework developed by the research team and the methodological steps that will be carried out to meet the project objectives and to deliver the outcomes as defined in the METRO ToR (§3.1). It then presents the engagement strategy conceived to ensure the participation of different groups of actors during the various steps of the project (§3.2). Finally, it provides an overview of the main issue that will be dealt with in the report on “The role of Metropolitan Areas and Cities in Cohesion Policy and vice versa the role of Cohesion Policy in the strategic planning of Metropolitan areas and cities” (§3.3).

3.1 The conceptual framework and methodological steps

The project's conceptual framework and the resulting methodological steps build on the information presented in Section 2, on previous own research (ESPON COMPASS, 2018, ESPON POLYCE, 2012, ESPON TANGO, 2014, ESPON FOCI, 2010, ESPON TOWN, 2014) as well as on recent literature (Ahrend et al. 2014; McCann, 2015; Pierre, 2016; Zimmermann et al., 2020), projects (ESPON ET2050, 2014, ESPON SPIMA, 2017, ESPON ACTAREA, 2017) and policy documents (ESPON, 2018a, 2018b and 2018c). It has been further detailed on the basis of the kick-off meeting discussion with the Steering Committee.

So far neither the role that metropolitan areas and cities play within the EU cohesion policy framework, nor the implications of the latter for the integrated development of metropolitan territories have been explored to a reasonable extent. This knowledge gap derives from the high heterogeneity and the multiple level of complexity that characterise the field of inquiry (Figure 3.1). First of all, the level of institutionalisation, scope and character of metropolitan governance and cooperation activities within a given context are strongly dependent on the overall institutional framework of the country within which they exist. In particular, the country and regional administrative tradition and structure play a relevant role here, together with the spatial governance and planning system, any ongoing attempt towards metropolisation, as well as the attention to functional regions in policy-making and the attitude towards inter-municipal cooperation. Furthermore, the overall institutional framework of a country and its features also influence the peculiar architecture of the EU cohesion policy therein, and more in particular the role of the national and regional levels, the role of municipalities, the decision to adopt or not technical implementation tools, the decentralisation of specific competences and budget shares etc. In turn, and together with the actual characteristics of metropolitan governance in a given area, the national architecture of the EU cohesion policy determines the actual role played by metropolitan areas in relation to their engagement in the development, management and implementation of programmes and tools and through other possible inter-institutional agreements.

Metropolitan territorial development goals are framed within regional and urban territorial policy framework and on the territorial characteristics and challenges identified therein. The process of framing depends on the level of institutionalisation, the characteristics and the scope of metropolitan governance, on the available budget etc. At the same time, the goals and action of the EU cohesion policy within a given metropolitan context are strongly intertwined with the overall goals and actions of the EU cohesion policy in the country, and in particular with the priorities detailed in the National and Regional Operational Programmes (NOPs and ROPs) and other implementation tools. In this light, they are directly dependent on the national cohesion policy architecture, as well as on the specific role played by metropolitan areas.

Acknowledging the multiple levels of complexity and interrelations in metropolitan governance and development, the project will analyse, compare and assess the specific experiences and challenges that the stakeholders' metropolitan areas and cities face in engaging with the EU cohesion policy and in employing the latter to achieve relevant metropolitan goals. In this light, three main policy questions animate the study:

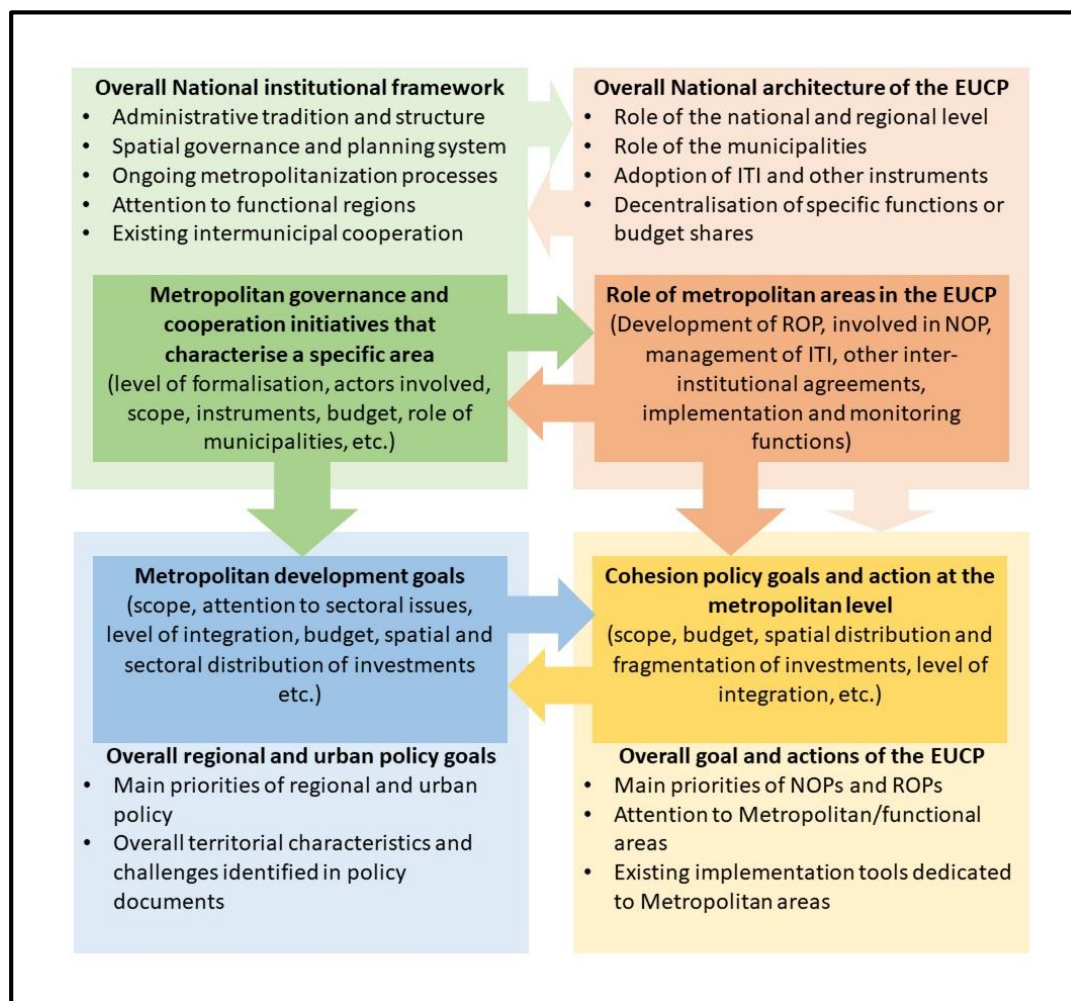
PQ1 | What role do metropolitan areas and cities play in the development, management and implementation of the EU cohesion policy?

PQ2 | What is the added value of the EU cohesion policy in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies?

PQ3 | What role does the EU cohesion policy play in consolidating metropolitan governance and cooperation activities?

Figure 3.1

The multiple levels of complexity of the metropolitan dimension of the EU cohesion policy



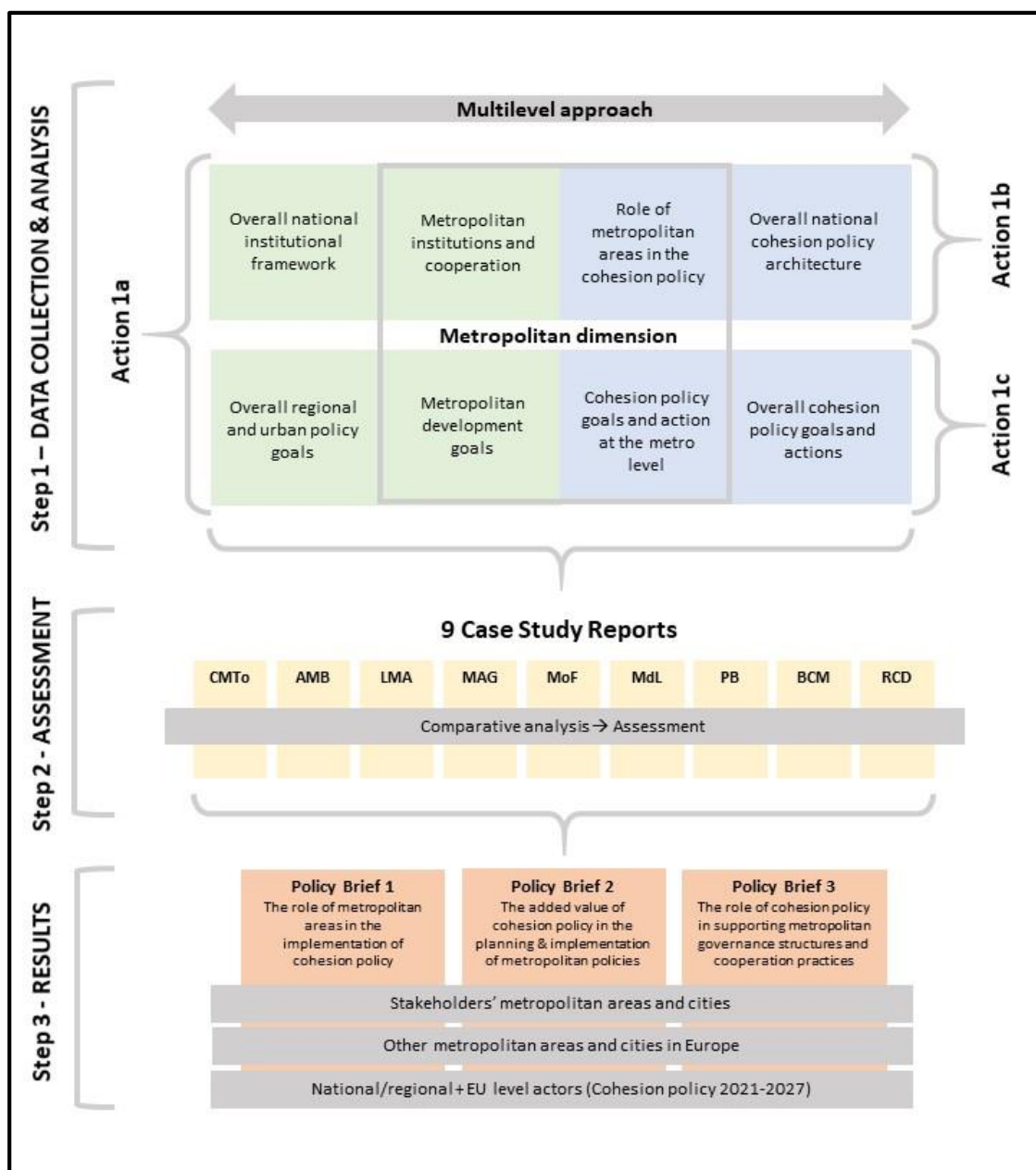
Source: authors' own elaboration

To answer these questions, the conceptual framework is implemented through three subsequent methodological steps (Figure 3.2). **Step 1** concerns data collection and analysis in the case study areas, and is further detailed into three closely interrelated activities (territorial, institutional and policy framework; cohesion policy governance; cohesion policy impact) that will lead to the production of nine comprehensive, comparable case studies on the role of metropolitan areas and cities in cohesion policy and, vice versa, the role of cohesion policy in the strategic planning of metropolitan areas and cities.

Step 2 compares metropolitan case studies, assessing the role of the different actors, and the institutional interplay between authorities at the different governmental levels, with a focus on the relevance of the governance scale for metropolitan planning to engage with the EU cohesion policy framework. It will determine to what extent the current administrative structures, institutional frameworks and governance support the virtuous engagement of metropolitan actors with cohesion policy development, management and implementation, and the development of synergies between metropolitan policies and cohesion policy goals.

Finally, **Step 3** is designed to produce results supporting effective spatial policy definition, improving the knowledge base for deliberations, discussions and decision-making regarding the participation of metropolitan areas and cities in cohesion policy across the stakeholders' territories as well as in other metropolitan areas in Europe and at the EU level.

Figure 3.2
ESPON METRO methodological steps



Source: authors' own elaboration

3.1.1 Territorial, institutional and policy framework (Step 1a)

This first analytical step is propaedeutic to the other two and aims to identify the institutional arrangements and cooperation experiences that characterise the metropolitan areas under scrutiny, in relation to the overall institutional arrangement of the countries where they are located. It also aims to sketch out the main metropolitan development goals, to be read within the overall territorial characteristics of the areas at stake. Overall, it will also contribute to establish trust and working cooperation routines with the project stakeholders, and to open knowledge sharing channels.

A common analytical protocol composed by two dimensions will be applied to analyse the nine cases. The first aims to understand the institutional features that characterise metropolitan governance in each area, to

individuate the relations linking territorial features and administrative and governance organisation, and spatially relevant policy and instruments therein. It will be analysed on the basis of data and information on existing formal and informal governance and cooperation arrangements, among which:

- The institutional framework for metropolitan cooperation and its level of formalization in the country (when did metropolitan governance begin? Is it fully formal, informal or in transition from informal to formal? Is there any national and/or regional law regulating metropolitan cooperation? Is there any local, bottom up formal/informal agreement?);
- The actors involved and the geographical and thematic scope of metropolitan cooperation (how many municipalities? under what conditions? on what matter(s)?), also specifying variable geographies of cooperation in relation to different issues;
- The role and participation of various social groups and business actors in metropolitan governance and related practices and the activation of public-private partnerships;
- The participation to relevant policy networks at various levels;
- Metropolitan financing and budgeting, especially in relation to the funds dedicated to spatially relevant policies and actions (is there a metropolitan budget beside cohesion policy funds? How is it composed? What bodies manage it? What instruments is this budget attached to?);
- Metropolitan level spatial development and planning tools and relevant sectoral tools (strategic plans, incentives programmes and other coordination tools) that are not directly deriving from the EU cohesion policy.

The second dimension concerns the identification of the main metropolitan development goals. It entails an analysis of the characteristics and challenges that metropolitan areas and cities involved in the project identify in their strategies and policy documents, and of the goals and actions included in the latter, to be read in comparison to the overall regional and urban policy framework. Moreover, selected quantitative data will be collected in order to allow for a comparison of all metropolitan areas and, when possible, also between the institutional metropolitan area, its core and the actual Functional Urban Area (FUA) (among others: population, area, number of municipalities, population growth, density, age groups, employment trends, etc.). All these issues will be used as a background to contextualise the territorial development goals defined in the metropolitan cooperation initiatives and spatial development, planning and sectoral tools identified above. Particular attention will be devoted to initiatives put in place at the metropolitan level to limit the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, invert its negative socioeconomic impact and prepare for future similar events.

The analysis will lead to the definition of nine coherent portraits presenting the way existing metropolitan cooperation initiatives position within their respective countries' institutional frameworks, as well as the main goals of these cooperation initiatives and the instruments they develop in relation to the overall regional and urban policy framework. These portraits will provide common ground upon which to analyse and assess the role that the metropolitan areas and cities under scrutiny play within the EU cohesion policy framework, as well as the impact generated by the EU cohesion policy in these areas.

3.1.2 Cohesion policy governance (Step 1b)

This second step explores, from a multilevel governance perspective, the models and mechanisms through which the EU Cohesion policy is developed and implemented in the metropolitan areas under scrutiny. It does so in relation to the programming period 2014-2020, as well as taking into account the provisions that have been developed for the programming period 2021-2027.

The analysis focuses on two dimensions. The first one aims at qualifying, for each case study, the position of metropolitan and city actors in the definition, implementation and monitoring of the EU cohesion policy, also in relation to their interaction with national and subnational levels of government. The analysis of each country's overall cohesion policy governance framework is particularly important here to understand the EU-national-metropolitan nexus. Of similar importance are the links with the institutional arrangements framing their cooperation and governance among municipalities in each metropolitan area, for which Step 1 provides solid ground. The comparison and assessment of this analysis in the nine cases will allow to draw lessons on how to integrate efficiently actors bearing metropolitan challenges in the post-2020 cohesion policy. A second line of analysis explores the influence of metropolitan authorities and cities on the cohesion policy, in those policy fields where they detain legitimacy and capacity to operate. The question here is what are

the metropolitan policies and competences related to cohesion policy. This analysis also builds on the distribution of competences among levels of government in the nine case studies explored in Step 1. In each metropolitan area, we will examine whether there has been a rescaling of competences in order to address the reality of metropolitan development flows and challenges.

More in detail, the analytical protocol will explore, among others, the following elements:

- The institutional architecture of cohesion policy in the country, with particular reference to metropolitan policies and competences of metropolitan areas;
- The development of the EU cohesion policy documents at the national and regional levels, and role played by metropolitan areas and related stakeholders in the process of elaboration, management and implementation of NOPs and ROPs;
- The metropolitan areas' technical approaches and instruments for the implementation of Cohesion Policy and their scope (ITI, CLLD and other plans, programmes, projects, inter-institutional agreements for the transfer of funds);
- The challenges met by metropolitan areas through usage of these approaches and instruments in strengthening their resilience to adverse exogenous shocks, such as the COVID-19 emergency;
- At the metropolitan and/or city level, the actual bodies that are responsible for developing and implementing these tools, and for monitoring their implementation;
- The (mechanisms of) involvement of private operators and/or civil society in the development and implementation of these tools;
- The policy documents that integrates cohesion policy objectives (or shall integrate them in the future) and the existence of any formal/informal mechanism aiming at coordinating metropolitan territorial and sectoral tools and priorities with the tools and priorities put in place to manage and implement the EU cohesion policy.

The above elements will be analysed on the basis of qualitative information collected through interviews and focus groups with the stakeholders and key actors of each metropolitan area, and through documents, data and information on existing formal and informal governance and cooperation arrangements. The collected information will be compiled in a dedicated section included in the case study reports, concerning the mechanisms and instruments through which the stakeholders' metropolitan areas and cities are engaged within the EU cohesion policy, the reasons for choosing particular mechanisms and instruments, the results obtained and the challenges encountered, all contextualised within the respective national and regional contexts and the characteristics of metropolitan governance.

3.1.3 Cohesion policy impact (Step 1c)

The third step is developed in parallel to the second one and in relation to the first step, and aims to understand how the metropolitan institutional arrangements integrate the cohesion policy objectives in their strategies and policies and how to better connect the metropolitan level goals to the goals of the cohesion policy funds and vice versa. It explores the quantitative and qualitative importance of the EU cohesion policy in metropolitan policies not only in general terms, but also as a consequence of specific urban policies. Moreover, having identified the specific fields in which cohesion policy invests, it analyses the spatial print of cohesion policies as well as the specific actions related to the different funding instruments.

More in detail, the analytical protocol for this step includes a number of quantitative indicators. It will concern the amount of EU funds that land on a metropolitan area, through the official body/bodies in charge, to be read in relation to the budget of these entities. The importance of the different priorities in the EU funds will be quantified and, whenever possible, compared to the overall budget of the metropolitan area for these priorities. The spatial distribution of funds will also be analysed, for instance in relation to the share of the core city in the allocation of EU funds or the share of other municipalities or deprived neighbourhoods. Moreover, the objectives of the EU cohesion policy in the area and the actions funded through the latter will be tested in relation to their coherence with the territorial development goals defined in the metropolitan cooperation initiatives, spatial development, planning and sectoral tools identified in Step 1.

Interviews will be used to qualitatively assess how cohesion funds and their management systems make the difference or not in achieving identified objectives, with particular reference to the specific instruments used to implement cohesion funds within each metropolitan area. Key issues for investigation include, among

others, how the thematic priorities for metropolitan cooperation reflect/resonate EU and national cohesion policy priorities in relation to different fields (infrastructure, transportation, social inequalities and territorial disparities, economic development, education etc.), and in what field successful outcomes were achieved, why and how. Moreover, the analysis will reflect upon the role that the EU cohesion policy could have in supporting actions aimed at mitigating the implications of the COVID-19 emergency.

The above activities will also allow to investigate in a comparative manner the role that the EU cohesion policy plays in inducing changes in the governance arrangements in each metropolitan area. We will explore whether or not the implementation of the EU cohesion policy is stimulating cooperation, partnerships and joint vision and strategy making, and what are the characteristics of the introduced governance arrangements and mechanisms and their level of formalization. In this light, the activity will discuss whether metropolitan areas, by benefitting from the cohesion policy, have been influenced by a common European methodology for sustainable territorial development; and whether this approach has fostered metropolitan cooperation and consolidated metropolitan governance.

The collected information will be compiled in a dedicated section included in each of the nine case study reports, exploring the impact and the added value of cohesion policies in all metropolitan areas, from a quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Altogether they will constitute a common comparative dataset portraying the use of cohesion funds in the nine cities and the possible trend and impact in different sectors. Foreseeable challenges and opportunities concerning the use of ESIF and their impact will be presented for every metropolitan area. At the same time, the impact of the EU cohesion policy in favouring metropolitan cooperation and further consolidating metropolitan governance will be identified.

3.1.4 Comparison and assessment (Step 2)

The information collected through the analytical phase will be brought together and compared, to assess the role that the nine metropolitan areas (and actors therein) play in the multi-level governance of the EU cohesion policy, with particular reference to its planning, management and implementation, and to the added value generated by the EU cohesion policy implementation in relation to the achievement of metropolitan goals and the activation and consolidation of metropolitan governance structures and cooperation initiatives.

First of all, this step entails the comparison of:

- The institutional characteristics of the metropolitan areas at stake and of the goals of metropolitan cooperation initiatives, instruments and policies, to be read against the various national and regional institutional and policy frameworks;
- The governance models characterising the programming, management and implementation of the cohesion policy, with particular attention to how they engage the metropolitan dimension;
- The impact and added value of the EU cohesion policy, in achieving metropolitan goals as well as in fostering metropolitan cooperation and the consolidation of metropolitan governance.

The comparison will map the (changing) institutional relations that metropolitan areas and cities entertain with actors at the national, regional and local levels, within and outside the EU cohesion policy framework. It will highlight similarities, differences, good practices and critical elements across the areas, and result in general conclusions concerning the current challenges in managing metropolitan development and the policy implications at the metropolitan scale. It will be based on quantitative data, like the revenue of the local governments implied in the metropolitan area and its origins (local taxes or state grants) as well as on qualitative ones, like the national/regional recognition of metropolitan challenges and the subsequent alignment (or not) of the strategies of the various levels of national and subnational governments.

On the basis of the comparison of the nine case studies, the research team will assess the engagement of the metropolitan areas and cities within the framework of the EU cohesion policy development, management and implementation, the specific instruments put in place in each context, as well as the added value of the implementation of the EU cohesion policy therein in the achievement of metropolitan development strategies and goals and in the promotion of metropolitan cooperation, including policy design and implementation system, processes and their long-term consolidation. As the delivery of EU-funded policies varies considerably between countries and also within them, the assessment will adopt a multi-level perspective, considering the level of autonomy and the scope of action of each metropolitan area. In particular, it will concern the effectiveness and efficiency of the national, regional and metropolitan institutional setup for the programming, management and implementation of the EU cohesion policy, assessing how successful is the EU in

enhancing its vision of metropolitan cooperation and how active are national and regional/local governments in taking this priority on board, where national, regional and metropolitan levels work together, where can we see different views between national, regional and metropolitan priorities etc. It will also assess the coherence of EU and metropolitan policy goals and the role that the EU cohesion policy plays in the articulation of metropolitan goals and vice versa. It will concentrate on the achievement and outcomes deriving from the implementation of specific EU cohesion policy instruments in metropolitan areas, assessing their territorial impacts in different areas and sectoral fields, and the role they play in the promotion of metropolitan cooperation processes and their long-term consolidation. By added value, we mean not only to what extent the EU funds are decisive for tackling metropolitan challenges, but also to what extent the instruments have an innovative character amid those already used in the considered area.

The assessment will allow to identify an open list of drivers, achievements, barriers and failures, whose relevance will be discussed with the stakeholders in order to produce a picture of common and different factors favouring the participation of metropolitan areas to the EU cohesion policy, the mechanisms that produced a positive impact, the main barriers that hampered it and the key achievements.

The outcome of this activity is a report that comparatively assesses the engagement of the metropolitan areas at stake within the EU cohesion policy framework, and in particular (i) the governance models allowing for this engagement, (ii) the instruments adopted for the cohesion policy implementation and how they are combined with other metropolitan instruments, (iii) the results achieved on the ground and (iv) the added value that cohesion policy generates in promoting metropolitan cooperation and consolidating metropolitan governance, including policy design and implementation system. The activity will also generate a preliminary typology of metropolitan governance in Europe, particularly focusing on the engagement of metropolitan areas and cities within the EU cohesion policy framework and reflecting on the main strengths and weaknesses of the individuated types.

3.1.5 Policy recommendations (Step 3)

This step builds on the comparative assessment of the case studies to produce realistic, evidence-based policy recommendations on how the metropolitan areas and cities at stake, as well as other metropolitan areas in Europe may use the EU cohesion policy to achieve integrated territorial development objectives. At the same time, it will lead to advice on the development of the EU cohesion policy 2021-2027 in a way that fosters the integration of metropolitan agendas with the regional and national priorities and contributes to the further recognition of metropolitan authorities in cohesion policy setting and management. The developed recommendations will dedicate particular attention to how the EU cohesion policy could support metropolitan areas and cities in the long-term mitigation of the impact of different external shocks (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) in the coming years.

Importantly, policy recommendations and messages will be tailored on the needs of the stakeholders engaged in the project. The produced policy messages will be helpful to the project stakeholders in the context of the negotiation of the regional and national operational programmes supported by the ESIF in the framework of the cohesion policy 2021-2027. At the same time, they will advise on how to further integrate ESIF and cohesion policy instruments in their policies and planning. Finally, they will also contribute to capacity-building in the stakeholders' administrations, by providing evidence of a wide set of metropolitan policy practices and the related implementation instruments in the field of the EU cohesion policy. In general terms, the above will contribute to foster the integration of metropolitan and urban agendas with the regional and national priorities for both reaching territorial cohesion targets and contributing to the recognition of metropolitan and local authorities in cohesion policy setting and management. Specific recommendations will concern the enhancement of the role of metropolitan areas and cities in the EU arenas in which the urban and metropolitan dimension of the cohesion policy is debated, as the Urban Agenda for the EU and the renewed Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities. To contribute to this end, the pan-European organisations involved in the project will be provided with relevant evidence that may be used to advocate for a stronger links between cohesion policy and strategic planning at metropolitan level as well as in favour of a stronger metropolitan dimension of cohesion policy and a better involvement of cities and metropolitan areas in the programming, management and implementation of the cohesion policy 2021-2027.

More in detail, the activity will produce:

- nine sets of policy recommendations, targeting the METRO metropolitan areas and cities;
- recommendations targeting other European metropolitan areas and cities, together with the discussion on the conditions according to which they may be relevant and where;

- policy advice targeting national and regional authorities setting the frame for the EU cohesion policy – with particular attention to the countries where the stakeholders' territories are located – aiming at a further inclusion of metropolitan areas and cities;
- policy advice towards the strengthening of the metropolitan dimension of the EU cohesion policy and the further engagement of metropolitan areas and cities in the development, management and implementation of the latter, targeting EU level policy-making as well as providing an added value to the activities of the umbrella organisations involved in the project.

Moreover, drawing relevant policy messages from the recommendations, three complementary policy briefs that build on the results of the project will be produced⁸:

- The role of metropolitan areas in the implementation of cohesion policy. Focusing on the role that metropolitan areas and cities play in the cohesion policy, on the most effective governance models and mechanisms that could be put in place to this end in relation to different territorial and institutional characteristics, and with a special focus on wider policy-creation and policy-setting role;
- The added value of cohesion policy in planning and implementation of metropolitan policies. Focusing on the added value that the cohesion policy could play in achieving metropolitan goals and reducing territorial disparities within cities and metropolitan areas by developing area-based approaches and integrated territorial strategies.
- The role of cohesion policy in supporting metropolitan governance structures and cooperation practices. Focusing on the role that cohesion policy could play in enhancing better cooperation and governance dynamics at the metropolitan level across Europe, in relation to differential territorial and institutional characteristics and including examples of how to engage with local stakeholders.

3.2 Engagement strategy

The methodological steps described in the previous section will be pursued in close connection with the ESPON EGTC and the project's Steering Committee⁹, and through continuous bilateral contacts between each research partner and the stakeholder located in the area they are responsible to explore. Moreover, additional actors will be engaged with in relation to each metropolitan area, in order to enrich the analysis with different perspectives. This section details the participatory approach set up by the research team to engage with local stakeholders at the different stage of the project implementation (Figure 3.3).

The METRO research started with the kick-meeting and will end with the delivery of the revised version of the Inception Report. This **Step 0** led to the consolidation of the methodological framework for the project, and saw the engagement of the Steering Committee during its first meeting (SCM1), held at the project's Kick-off, the SCM2 that will take place one week after the delivery of the Inception Report, and the comments that will be produced in reaction to the latter. Moreover, this phase also included initial analytical work aimed at collecting contextual information and data in relation to the nine metropolitan areas, as well as at the definition of each stakeholder's objective and policy needs and at the identification of the main actors and policy processes to engage with throughout the analysis (as reported in § 4 and Annex 1). This activity has been pursued through bilateral contacts between each research partner and its respective stakeholder, and its results will be refined following the SCM2 discussion and the comments received on the Inception Report.

Following this initial phase, **Step 1** will be dedicated to the collection and the analysis of a heterogeneous set of qualitative and quantitative data. In particular, as already detailed above:

- **Step 1a** (Territorial, institutional and policy characteristics) is aimed at the collection of data concerning the main territorial characteristics and challenges as identified by the stakeholders, and of qualitative information concerning the metropolitan governance and cooperation therein, the distribution of competences, the actors involved, the instruments put in place and the goals they pursue.
- **Step 1b** (Cohesion policy governance) is aimed at the collection of qualitative information concerning the metropolitan dimension of cohesion policy governance and implementation in the areas at

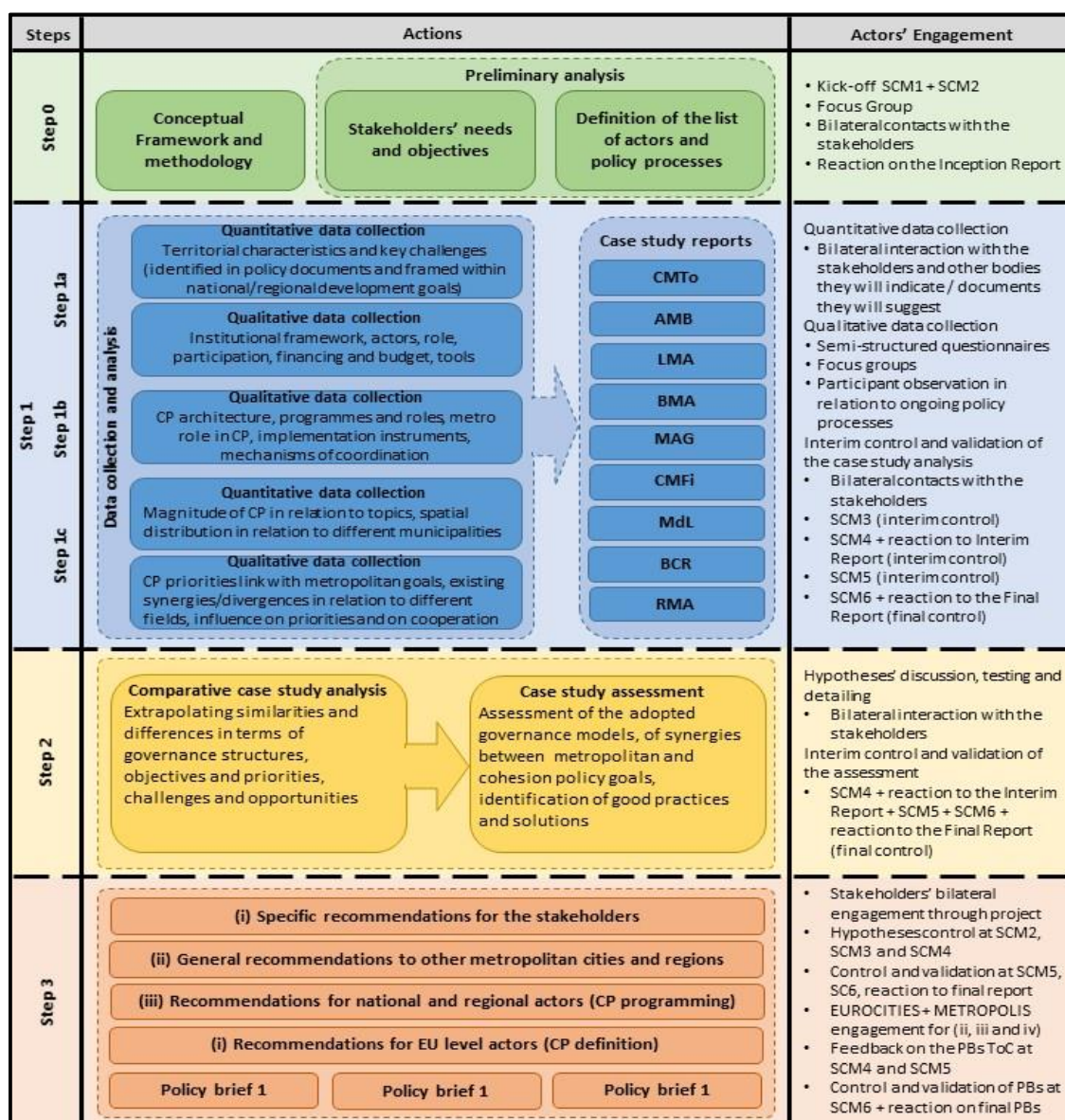
⁸ A tentative structure of all three policy briefs will be presented in the Interim delivery.

⁹ The METRO Steering Committee is composed by representatives of all stakeholders involved in the project, by representatives of the ESPON EGTC, and by the unit coordinators of the consortium partners. It also includes representatives from the umbrella organisation EUROCITIES and METROPOLIS.

stake, read within the national framework, the distribution of competences and the instruments and mechanisms adopted.

- **Step 1c** (Cohesion policy impact) is aimed at the collection of quantitative data concerning the resources dedicated to the various objectives pursued through the EU cohesion policy, their spatial distribution, the magnitude of these resources also in comparison to local resources dedicated to territorial development. It will also collect qualitative information concerning the coherence between the goals and actions pursued through EU programmes and instruments and metropolitan strategies and goals, and the role that the former plays in the definition of the latter and vice versa. Similarly, qualitative information will be collected in relation to the impact that the EU cohesion policy plays in the promotion and consolidation of metropolitan governance and cooperation.

Figure 3.3
The ESPON METRO engagement strategy



Source: authors' own elaboration

Quantitative data will be collected by the research teams in close contact with the stakeholders. In particular, each research team will interact with its respective stakeholder to get access to relevant policy documents, reports from previous studies and specific data from the stakeholder area. When available, relevant data will be retrieved from European database. Qualitative data will be gathered from semi-structured interviews with relevant actors in the stakeholder areas, following the list identified in Step 0. Semi-structured questionnaires (composed of three sections respectively focusing on Steps 1a, 1b and 1c) will be used to conduct the interviews, and then analysed and compared¹⁰. In relation to each metropolitan context, the responsible research team, in agreement with its respective stakeholder, will consider the option of setting up one or more focus groups to engage different actors in a discussion around a number of specific topic, in order to grasp different views and perspectives. Finally, upon agreement with the stakeholders, the various research team will participate as observers to the meetings and activities that characterise relevant policy processes overlapping with the lifetime of the METRO project.¹¹ The collected data and information will be analysed and compiled in nine comparable case study reports. This report will be subject to a number of control and validation steps that will engage the Steering Committee. More in detail, the progresses of the case study analysis will be discussed during the SCM3 (that will take place at month 4 or 5), the SCM4 and the comments received on the Interim Report (month 7), the SCM5 (month 10) and finally during the SCM6 and the comments received on the Final Report (month 13).

Step 2 concerns the comparative analysis of the case study reports and their assessment. In the framework of these activities, the various research teams will engage bilaterally with their respective stakeholders to discuss, test and further detail emerging hypotheses in relation to the assessment of the various context *vis-à-vis* the three main policy questions that animate the study: (i) what role metropolitan areas and cities play in the development, management and implementation of the EU cohesion policy; (ii) what is the added value of the EU cohesion policy in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies; (iii) what is the role that the EU cohesion policy plays in consolidating metropolitan governance and cooperation activities. Moreover, the METRO Steering Committee will control the results of the assessment *in itinere*, in the occasion of the SCM4, SCM5 and SCM6, and by reacting to the Interim and Final Report.

Step 3 concerns the production of realistic, evidence based recommendations to various groups of actors: (i) the nine stakeholders active in the metropolitan areas involved in the project; (ii) other metropolitan regions in Europe; (iii) national and regional actors responsible for the programming and management of the EU cohesion policy and (iv) EU level actors responsible for the definition of the cohesion policy framework. The stakeholders active in the nine metropolitan areas will be engaged bilaterally in order to discuss, test and validate the recommendations directly directed to them in relation to their pertinence, relevance and viability. Moreover, in occasion of the SCM5 a focus group involving all the stakeholders and the ESPON EGTC will be organised, in order to discuss and validate the recommendations also in relation to other metropolitan areas in Europe. At the same time, the focus group will also focus on the discussion and validation of the recommendations targeting the national and regional actors responsible for framing the EU cohesion policy in the various contexts, as well as those actors that at the EU level are responsible for the definition of the overall EU cohesion policy framework. In relation to this last step (i.e. the discussion and testing of the recommendations targeting the national and regional actors as well as the EU-level actors), of particular importance will be to engage with the representatives of the pan-European organisation involved in the project (EUROCITIES and METROPOLIS) and with the ESPON EGTC and the ESPON MC members. In agreement with them, separate moments of discussion of the results of the project may be organised. Overall, the Steering Committee will have the opportunity to provide comments on the recommendations deriving from the analysis and of the development of the three policy briefs that the project will produce in the occasion of the SCM4 and related comments on the Interim delivery (Policy briefs tables of contents), of the SCM5 (Policy briefs' preliminary drafts + the mentioned Focus Group on the policy recommendations) and of the SCM6 and related comments on the final delivery (final version of the policy recommendations and policy briefs).

¹⁰ Given the high heterogeneity of the cases, for each section the questionnaire's structure includes a "customisable" part, that will be adapted to the specific characteristics of each metropolitan area.

¹¹ Interviews and focus groups will be recorded, upon agreement with the interviewees/participants, and for each of them a one-page anonymised summary will be produced and provided as annexes of the reports/deliveries.

3.3 Contents of the Final Report

The METRO Targeted Analysis will produce a report on “The role of metropolitan areas and cities in cohesion policy and, vice versa, the role of cohesion policy in the strategic planning of metropolitan areas and cities”. This report will summarise the results of the various stages of the analysis, ranging from the preparation of the nine case studies reports, to their comparison and assessment, up to the production of meaningful recommendations for metropolitan areas and cities in Europe as well as for the other levels and subjects involved in one way or another in the EU cohesion policy framework.

More in particular, we plan to structure this report as proposed in the following box.¹²

FINAL REPORT STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

1. Introduction
 - Introduction to the METRO stakeholders and their policy needs.
2. Conceptual framework, methodology and data
 - The challenges surrounding metropolitan governance in Europe
 - The metropolitan dimension of the EU cohesion policy
 - The conceptual framework
 - Methodology and data
3. The governance of metropolitan areas and cities
 - Comparative presentation of the metropolitan areas and their characteristics
 - Comparative presentation of the characteristics of metropolitan governance and of the cooperation activities in the various areas
 - Presentation of the instruments in place in the various areas and their thematic scope
 - Metropolitan financing and budget
 - Role and participation of social groups and business community to metropolitan governance
 - Role and instruments in place in relation to the management of and reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic and its territorial impact
4. Cohesion policy governance
 - Comparative analysis and assessments of the role that the nine metropolitan areas/cities play within the cohesion policy governance, to be read within the respective national frameworks
 - Comparative and assessment of the programmes and instruments in place in each context
 - The involvement of social groups and of the business community in the development and implementation of these tools
 - Participation of metropolitan areas and cities in the funding programmes put in place by the EU to face the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath
 - Reflections on relevant changes that will characterise the 2021-2027 programming period
5. Cohesion policy impact
 - Analysis of the main goals of the cohesion policy in the nine metropolitan areas (funds magnitude, thematic scope and spatial distribution according to themes)
 - Assessment of the coherence and individuation of existing synergies between the main goals of the EU cohesion policy and metropolitan development/planning/sectoral goals
 - Assessment of the added value of the adopted programmes, instruments and tools in establishing synergies between EU and metropolitan goals
 - Focus on the formal / informal platforms and other mechanism aiming at coordinating metropolitan development/planning/sectoral tools and priorities with the tools and priorities put in place to manage and implement the EU cohesion policy
 - Focus on the relations of influence linking the development of metropolitan goals and the contents of the EU cohesion policy, episodes of Europeanisation.
 - Focus on the role played by the EU cohesion policy in the consolidation of metropolitan level governance structures and cooperation activities in the nine contexts.
6. Recommendations
 - Recommendations targeting the METRO stakeholders, aiming to strengthen the metropolitan dimension of the EU cohesion policy and to exploit it to achieve metropolitan goals
 - General recommendations targeting other metropolitan areas and cities in the EU, with indications concerning the institutional conditions required for their successful application
 - Recommendations for national and regional actors, towards a further consolidation of the metropolitan dimension of the EU cohesion policy
 - Recommendations for EU level actors, towards a consolidation of the metropolitan dimension of the EU cohesion policy
7. Final message and recommendation for future research
8. References

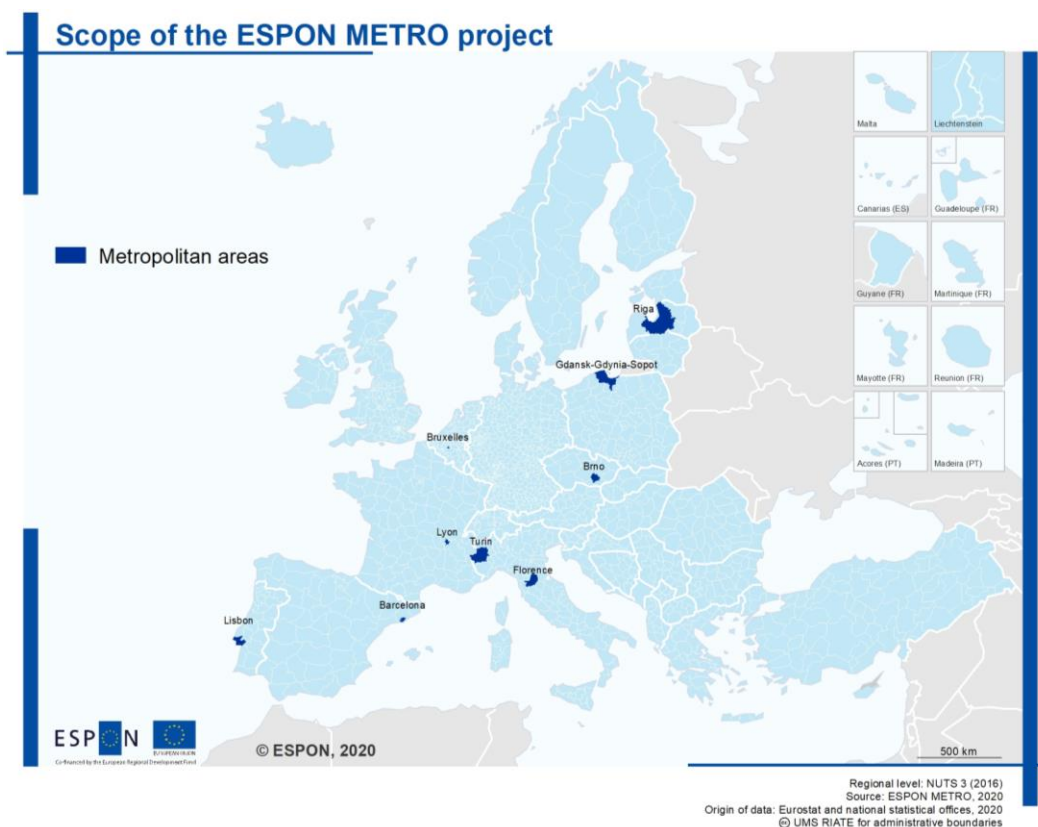
¹² This report structure is tentative and open to further revision on the basis of the comments received by the ESPON EGTC and the Steering Committee. A consolidated version will be presented in the Interim Report.

4 Introduction to the METRO case studies

As already highlighted above, the METRO TA will provide recommendations for a better integration of metropolitan areas and cities within the framework of the EU cohesion policy on the basis of the information collected through nine detailed case studies (Figure 4.1). Whereas the collection of data and information and their analysis on the basis of the Step 1 of the methodological framework will only formally start after the delivery of this Inception Report, the metropolitan areas under scrutiny are here introduced, building on the information collected during the focus group that followed the kick-off meeting and on a series of preliminary contacts established between the research teams and their respective stakeholders. More in detail, the following sections provide an overview of the institutional framework for cooperation that characterises the nine cases, as well as of the role they play within the EU cohesion policy framework (§4.1). The objectives and policy needs of the project's stakeholders are then introduced, together with a first list of preliminary hypotheses that will be tested during the analysis (§4.2).¹³

Map 4.1

Scope of the ESPON METRO project



Source: authors' own elaboration

4.1 Overview of the Metropolitan areas

This section first presents the main characteristics of the metropolitan governance and cooperation activities that characterise the nine metropolitan areas, together with an overview of their territorial scope in relation

¹³ More detailed information concerning the metropolitan areas under analysis is collected in Annex I.

to their FUAs¹⁴ and of their development and planning competences. The second part shifts the focus on the role that each context's actors play within the EU cohesion policy framework. Finally, a preliminary reflection on the activities put in place in order to react to the COVID-19 pandemic is presented.

4.1.1 Institutional framework

The METRO metropolitan areas are located in Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Latvia, Spain, Portugal and Poland. They are highly heterogeneous in terms of size, population and number of municipalities (Table 4.1). At the same time, they present relevant differences in relation to their origin, level of formalisation, and initiation of the cooperation (Table 4.2). When it comes to the geographical scope of the metropolitan institutions, some are responsible for territories that are part of larger metropolitan functional agglomerations (Barcelona, Brussels, Lisbon, Lyon), while others (Florence, Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot, Riga, Turin) cover a very wide and diverse territory, much larger than the FUA. Brno metropolitan area's spatial delimitation explicitly follows the FUA.

Table 4.1
Size, population and number of municipalities

Metropolitan area	Acronym	Country	Size (sq.km)	Pop. (x1000)	Municipalities
Metropolitan city of Turin	CMTTo	IT	6,827	2,256	312
Barcelona Metropolitan Area	AMB	ES	636	3,292	36
Lisbon Metropolitan Area	LMA	PT	3,015	2,840	18
Brno Metropolitan Area	BMA	CZ	1,978	697	184
Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area	MAG	PL	6,700	1,500	58 (including 8 counties)
Metropolitan City of Florence	CMFi	IT	3,514	1,012	41
Lyon Metropole	MdL	FR	534	1,390	59
Brussels Capital Region	BCR	BR	161	1,209	19
Riga Metropolitan Area	RMA	LV	n.a.	Over 1,000	n.a.

Source: authors' own elaboration

Table 4.2
Status, origin and nature of the cooperation

Metropolitan area	Status	Origin	Initiation
Metropolitan city of Turin	Formal (metro unit)	Institutional	Top-down
Barcelona Metropolitan Area	Formal (metro unit)	Institutional	Top-down
Lisbon Metropolitan Area	Formal (metro unit)	Institutional	Top-down
Brno Metropolitan Area	Semi-formal (ITI)	Policy-based	Mixed
Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area	Formal (ITI)	Policy-based	Mixed
Metropolitan City of Florence	Formal (metro unit)	Institutional	Top-down
Lyon Metropolitan Area	Formal (metro unit)	Institutional	Bottom-up
Brussels Capital Region	Formal (regional unit)	Institutional	Top-down
Riga Metropolitan Area	Informal (in transition)	Voluntary → Institutional	Bottom-up

Source: authors' own elaboration

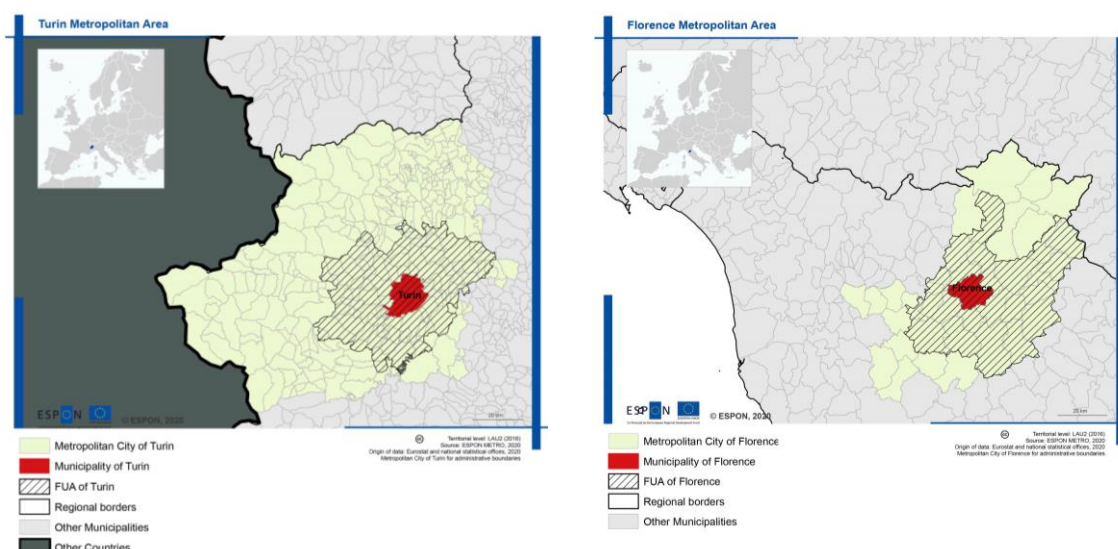
¹⁴ The maps included in this Inception Report adopts the definition of FUAs developed by the EU-OECD (Dijkstra et al., 2019), unless differently agreed with the METRO stakeholders.

Importantly, whereas some of the METRO stakeholders' metropolitan areas are characterised by long-standing formal institutions, or by institutions that have been formalised after a first phase of informal metropolitan cooperation, others are just at the beginning of their history of metropolitan cooperation. Also among these clusters of formal, informal and semi-formal metropolitan entities, a variety of structures, mechanisms and tools for metropolitan governance emerge, that in turn are strongly dependent from the national and regional institutional frameworks within which the metropolitan areas under scrutiny are located.

More in detail, most of the metropolitan areas are formally acknowledged in their country's administrative framework (Barcelona, Brussels, Florence, Lisbon, Lyon, Turin). However, also among them significant differences emerge, in terms of history, competences and governance models. The Metropolitan Cities of Turin and Florence (CMTo, CMFi) are regulated by the same national law (56/2014), which reformed local authorities and established Metropolitan Cities as second level institutions replacing the respective Provincial authorities. The Mayor of the capital city also acts as President of the metropolitan city, acting as executive and administrative officer of the body. Although institutionally similar, CMTo and CMFi feature rather different governance environments, as a consequence of geographical, political and organizational variables. CMTo covers 312 municipalities, and concerns a very fragmented environment, where the power and competences are distributed among different (public and private) bodies, over a wide and very diverse territory, from the dense urban agglomeration surrounding the capital city to remote rural and mountain municipalities, that extends much wider than the actual functional relations (Map 4.2). Whereas CMFi includes only 42 municipalities and a population that barely exceeds a million inhabitants, also here the lack of correspondence between the administrative boundaries and the functional urban area (FUA) has been highlighted by administrators and scholars since its institution (Map 4.2). Importantly, both metropolitan institutions include municipalities characterized by strong historical roots and the self-perception of being "outside" and "other" than the capital city.

Map 4.2

Metropolitan Cities of Turin and Florence

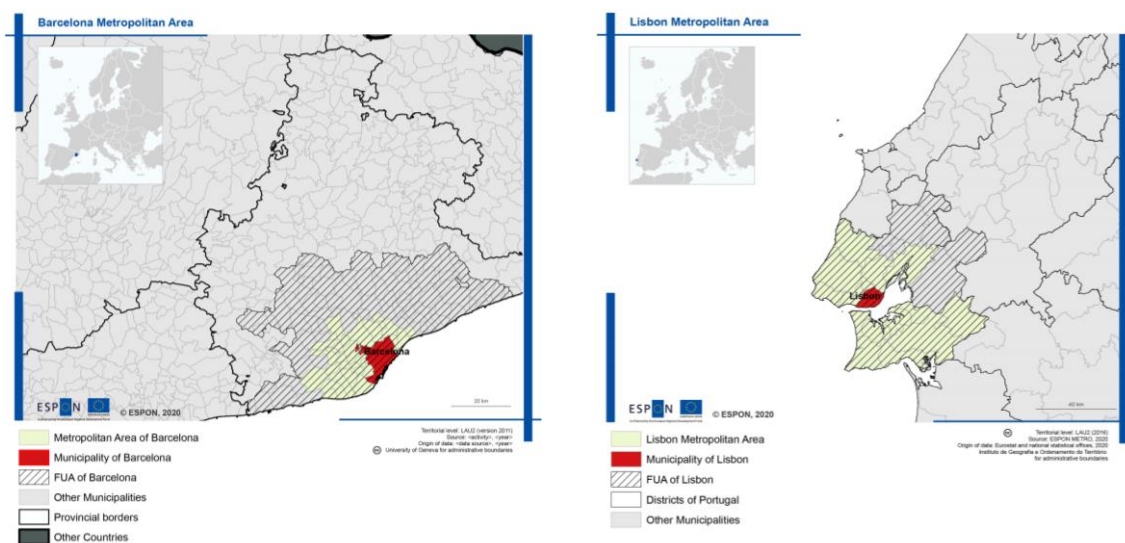


Source: authors' own elaboration.

Also Barcelona and Lisbon metropolitan areas are second level institutions. Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) comprises the city of Barcelona and 35 surrounding municipalities, and is the only institutionalised metropolitan government in the Spanish context, as a consequence of a law approved by the Catalan Parliament (Law 31/2010). Whereas the Law shapes it as a "true local government" at the metropolitan scale (Font, 2018) and defines its governing bodies and funding, AMB is characterized by a low level of fiscal

autonomy and a rather fragile democratic legitimacy¹⁵. Similar to Turin and Florence, the main decision-making body of AMB is the Metropolitan Council, formed by the mayors and councillors elected locally. Lisbon Metropolitan Area has been established a few years later than Barcelona by the Portuguese government, through a Law (75/2013) that introduced 21 inter-municipal communities and two Metropolitan areas pivoted on the cities of Lisbon and Oporto. Its constitutive bodies are the Metropolitan Council, formed by the mayors of its 18 municipalities, the Metropolitan Executive Committee, formed by members elected in the assemblies of the municipalities of the metropolitan area, and the Strategic Council for Metropolitan Development, composed by representatives of institutions and organizations in the metropolitan area (business community, universities, non-governmental agencies, infrastructure operators, as well as public administration bodies). Both Barcelona and Lisbon metropolitan areas are smaller than their functional urban areas (Map 4.3), but while Barcelona is part of a much larger FUA, in Lisbon the FUA includes six municipalities north-east of the metropolitan area.

Map 4.3
Metropolitan Areas of Barcelona and Lisbon



Source: authors' own elaboration

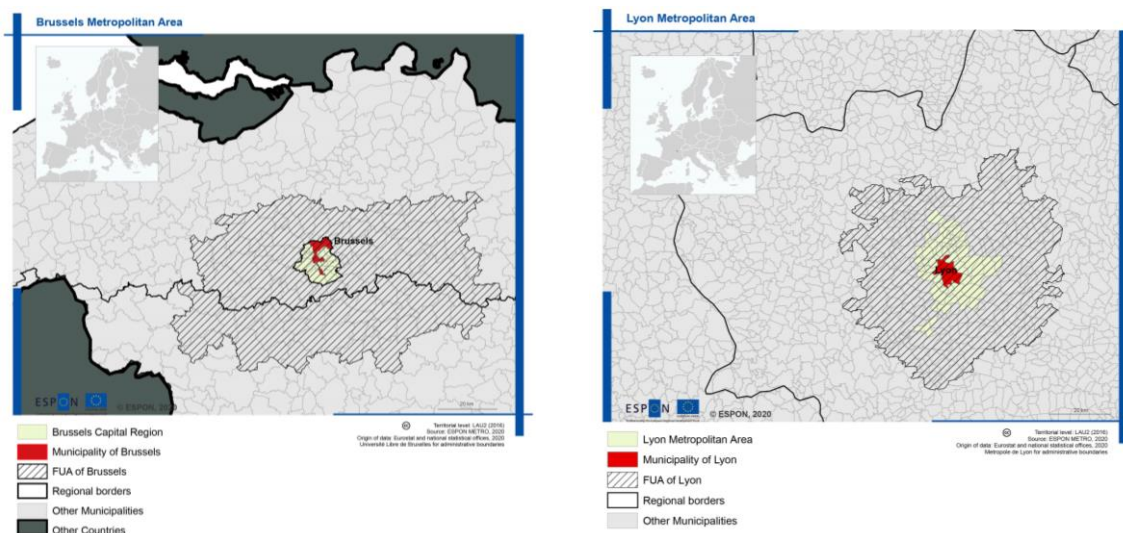
Differently from the above cases, Lyon Metropolitan Area (MdL) is the result of a bottom-up approach to metropolitan government that has been acknowledged in 2014 through a national law instituting metropolitan governments for large cities. More in detail, the three largest French cities (Paris, Marseille and Lyon) are characterized by their own metropolitan arrangements, and are positioned at the interface between the State and certain local authorities. However, while the metropolitan bodies of Paris and Marseille were created top-down by the national government, the metropolitan area has been created in 2015 by will of the Mayor of Lyon (also President of the EPCI Grand Lyon) and the President of the Rhône General Council. On its territory, MdL implements urban planning and economic development, but also social competences which have been granted to it by the department. This tailor-made status is unique in France, and MdL is the only metropolitan body to be a fully-fledged local authority. The Metropolitan Council deliberative assembly consists of metropolitan councillors directly elected by the citizens. Being composed by 59 municipalities, however, MdL concerns only the core of the metropolitan area of Lyon, and it is eight times smaller in size than the FUA (Map 4.4).

The Brussels Capital Region (BCR) is characterized by yet another institutional configuration. Since the federalization process occurred in the 1990s, Belgium is composed of three regions (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels), competent in domains such as territorial and economic development, and of three communities

¹⁵ Whereas the indirect election process partly weakens the AMB government, the latter finds its main source of legitimacy in the ability to effectively manage and provide public goods and services.

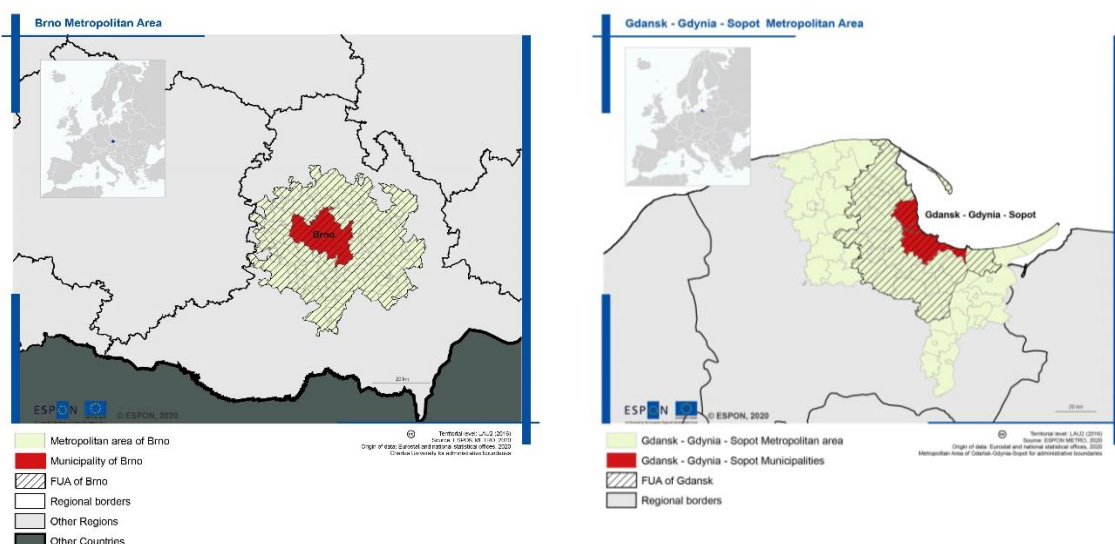
(Flemish, French and German), competent for cultural issue, including education. Among the three regions, the Brussels's one is specific because of its bilingual status and its urban configuration. It is composed by 19 municipalities, and does not include any relevant suburban area, with all surrounding municipalities that formally belong either to Flanders or Wallonia. The functional area of Brussels is nowadays much larger than the official Capital Region, and metropolitan cooperation therein faces a number of challenges related to the complex institutional arrangements in Belgium, and especially around Brussels. As a Region, the BCR features large competencies on a territory that is much smaller than the functional urban area, grouping 1.2 million inhabitants, while the FUA counts between 2 and 2.5 million people (Map 4.4).

Map 4.4
Brussels Capital Region and Lyon Metropolitan Area



Source: Authors' own elaboration

Map 4.5
Brno and Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Areas

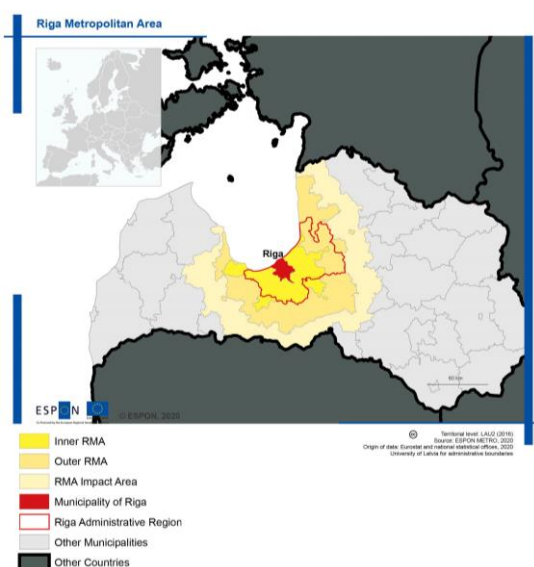


Source: Authors' own elaboration

Brno and Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot metropolitan areas are not formally recognised within their countries administrative structures, and their role is strongly linked to the management of EU cohesion policy instru-

ments. In the Czech Republic, there is no formal recognition of metropolitan-level institutions, and metropolitan cooperation has been pursued only since 2014, as a consequence of the introduction of a ITI in the framework of the cohesion policy programming period 2014-2020. Within this context, Brno Metropolitan Area (BMA) was formed in 2014 as a policy-based cooperation, that draws its legitimisation from the ITI. In the programming period 2014-2020, BMA is composed of 167 municipalities (that will raise to 184 in the programming period 2021-2027), ranging from a dense urban core to small industrial towns and rural municipalities in the hinterland. The spatial delimitation of BMA explicitly follows the FUA (Map 4.5), reflecting commuting flows, migration patterns and suburban housing construction. In March 2020, the ITI Steering Committee approved the establishment of an additional horizontal working group to address the cross-cutting issues of the metropolitan area, aiming at stimulating cooperation and the further institutionalization of the Brno metropolitan area, addressing issues beyond the scope of ITI and ESIF. On its hand, the Metropolitan Area of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Association was legally established in 2011 as the result of the voluntary agreement between 58¹⁶ local and county governments located in the neighbourhood of Gdańsk and Gdynia, an area that is larger than the FUA (Map 4.5). In fact, the association combined two previously established co-operation networks formed around these two cities. The Association works mainly through the meetings of thematic committees that discuss different themes of mutual interest for the members, e.g. joint purchase of goods and services or the preparation of development plans covering several local authorities. The committees also facilitate the exchange of experiences and good practice among local governments. One of the key tasks is the joint preparation of the strategic documents for the development of the metropolitan area. It also manages its own projects as e.g. the Social Economy Support Centre, Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, etc. Since 2015, the Association acts as Intermediate Body for the Pomorskie ROP, responsible for the ITI implementation.

Map 4.6
Riga Metropolitan Area



Source: authors' own elaboration

Finally, Riga Metropolitan Area is still an informal governance body, whose process of institutionalisation only started in 2018, with the decision of the Riga Planning Region to start developing the recently approved Action Plan for the Development of the Riga Metropolitan Area. However, municipalities have been engaging

¹⁶ At the beginning in 2011 there were 25 members, today they are 58 (<https://www.metropoliagdansk.pl/kim-jestesmy/inicjatywy-metropolitalne-1990-2011/>)

in cooperation activities beforehand. The most notable example of this is the Riga planning region (29 municipalities), that was established at the end of 2006 as a derived public entity, in accordance with the status and functions of the region specified by the Latvian Regional Development Law. The planning region has been the main initiator and coordinator of cooperation in the Riga metropolitan area. In addition to this, the region ensures regional development planning, coordination, cooperation of local governments and other public administration institutions and networking among planning specialists. The geographical scope of the Riga Metropolitan Area is not yet precisely defined and, at the moment, it consists of the city of Riga and other 51 surrounding municipalities and matches the three Riga metropolis areas (Map 4.6).

The metropolitan areas and cities at stake present a high level of heterogeneity also in relation to development and planning competences they are provided with, and to the instruments they are responsible for (Table 4.3). In general terms, competences and instruments are directly linked to the level of institutionalisation of metropolitan governance in each context. More in detail, Barcelona, Florence, Lyon and Turin are characterised by a similar level of competences and instruments (with Lyon that groups different sectoral issues in a single instrument). On the contrary, policy-based bodies such as Brno and Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot metropolitan areas derive their territorial development competence from the ITI they are responsible for. Although the Riga Metropolitan Area is currently an informal body, in transition to becoming more formal, the Riga Planning Region is developing an Action Plan for the Development of the Metropolitan Area.

Table 4.3
Main competences and instruments

Metropolitan area	Status	Competences	Instruments
Metropolitan City of Turin	Institutional	Strategic development; spatial planning; services, infrastructures and communication; mobility and road network; economic, social and sustainable development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Metropolitan Plan; Metropolitan General and Coordination Spatial Plan; Metropolitan Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan Metropolitan Agenda for Sustainable Development
Barcelona Metropolitan Area	Institutional	Territorial competences (urban planning, metropolitan infrastructures, public space); transport and mobility (mobility infrastructures, public transport service, information, mobility reports); ecology (water, waste, environmental education, climate and energy); housing (housing promotion, asset management); economic development (employment, industry, brand, economic promotion); social cohesion (programmes, support for town councils)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metrop. Action Plan Metrop. Urban Master Plan Metrop. Urban Mobility Plan Metrop. Programme for Prevention and Management of Resources and Municipal Waste Climate and Energy Plan
Lisbon Metropolitan Area	Institutional	Strategic and spatial planning; environment; economic development; social policies; mobility / transport; services, infrastructures and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Strategy AML 2030 (with CCDD LVT) Management of ROP and NOP measures Metropolitan Sustainable Urban Mobility Action Plan Climate Change and Adaptation Plan (PMAAC AML)
Brno Metropolitan Area	Policy-based	Strategic planning in the fields of competitiveness and education; social cohesion; smart mobility; environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated Development Strategy of the Brno Metropolitan Area for the Application of the ITI

Metropolitan area	Status	Competences	Instruments
Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area	Policy-based	Socio-economic development and long-term planning; integrated urban planning; integration of public policies; coordination of selected public services; sustainable mobility; energy and environment; management of ITI Cohesion Policy funds; culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy 2030 (general) ITI Strategy 2020 Transport and mobility strategy 2030 Low emission Plan Spatial development plan 2030
Metropolitan City of Florence	Institutional	Strategic development; spatial planning; services, infrastructures and communication; mobility and road network; economic and social development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Metropolitan Plan; Metropolitan General and Coordination Spatial Plan; Metropolitan Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan
Lyon Metropolitan Area	Institutional	Spatial planning; economic, social and cultural development; local housing policy; urban policy; environment and local amenity/liveability; management of public services of collective interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Plan for Urbanism and Housing (PLU-H) Territorial Coherence Plan (SCoT – spatial and strategic relevance)
Brussels Capital Region	Institutional	Territorial and economic development, housing, environment, energy, mobility, public transports, employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional sustainable Development Plan (PRDD) Good Move Plan T.OP Noordrand strategy
Riga Metropolitan Area	Informal – in transition	(Riga planning region) Regional development planning; coordination of local governments and public administration institutions; planning specialist networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action Plan for the Development of the Riga Metropolitan Area

Authors' own elaboration

4.1.2 Role in the EU cohesion policy

Besides the mechanisms that characterise the organization of the cohesion policy funding and that are common to all the member states (Partnership Agreements, NOPs, ROPs, etc.), the role of the METRO stakeholders in the EU Cohesion Policy varies according to a number of factors, such as the level of institutionalisation and national and regional decisions concerning the management of the cohesion funds. Whereas, in general terms, one could assume that the more institutionalised bodies are provided with a more relevant and articulated role in the programming, management and implementation of the EU cohesion policy, a preliminary overview of the METRO case studies shows that also less institutionalised bodies can play a significant role, especially through dedicated tools.

Brussels Capital Region, due to its institutional status, is the body playing the most relevant role in the EU cohesion policy framework: it fully manages ERDF and has some latitude in defining the priorities. In contrast, ESF is characterised by a more complex management which include Regional institutions, such as ACTIRIS in Brussels, but also trans-regional (communities) management, for example in the field of training. It is important to underline that, although the Capital Region plays a prominent role in programming and managing ERDF, due to the limited territorial scope of its ERDF ROP the interventions promoted through the latter hardly affect the metropolitan agglomeration's dynamics.

In the other contexts where metropolitan governance is institutionalised – Barcelona, Florence, Lisbon, Lyon and Turin – metropolitan-level bodies are involved in the EU cohesion policy to different extents. The capital cities of Florence and Turin metropolitan areas are involved as Intermediate Bodies (IB) in the NOP Metro, a national programme that is formally dedicated to metropolitan cities but actually mostly concentrates investments on the territory of the main municipalities therein. Two NOP axes feature an explicit metropolitan dimension, and are dedicated to Metropolitan digital agenda and Services and social inclusion. The ERDF and ESF ROPs (and also EAFRD) are directly managed by the regions, that involve in the design of the

programmes all the institutional, economic and social actors that are relevant for them (among which Metropolitan Cities), but only in a rather formal way. Both Florence and Turin metropolitan areas are involved in the ROP ESF as IB for some activities. At the same time, they are also beneficiaries of a number of EU-funded projects, through which they have the possibility to make up for the limited involvement in the management of the cohesion policy funds and to try to catalyse EU funds on their territorial development priorities.

Also Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) played a limited role in the early stages of the 2014-2020 period. Local governments were mainly consulted (in an informative way, rather than participating actively) via the associations of municipalities of Catalonia. The Metropolitan Area was also able to participate in the ROP preparation, in an informal way, and contributed mainly in areas related to transport and mobility. However, in 2017 the Catalan government and AMB reached an agreement by which the metropolitan government would manage 30 M€ ERDF under the Catalan ROP. This is an important milestone in the establishment of synergies between EU and metropolitan policies, and it was possible also thanks to the alignment of the Barcelona Metropolitan Action Plan 2019-2023 with the ROP priority areas. Moreover, AMB has benefited from ERDF funds through a number of projects funded by URBACT, INTERREG MED and INTERREG SUDOE programs. The Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA) is concerned by the EU cohesion policy in two ways: the ROP, whose geographical delimitation coincides with the metropolitan area but is managed by a decentralised body from the central administration (the Commission of Coordination and Regional Development of Lisbon and Tagus Valley – CCDR LVT), and a number of thematic operational programmes. The Metropolitan Area also acts as IB for the ROP, underpinned by the *Pact for Development and Territorial Cohesion* signed by LMA and ROP and Sustainable and Efficient Resource Use NOP managing bodies, managing a total of 89.3 M€ (51 M€ ERDF, 37 M€ ESF and 1.3 M€ Cohesion Fund). LMA and CCDR LVT are currently cooperating in the regional strategy design for the 2021-2027 programming cycle. Also Lyon Metropolitan Area is responsible of implementing an ITI, after being selected in 2014 by the Rhône-Alpes Region through a call for applications. Moreover, since 2017, it acts as IB for the ESF that is managed by the central state. These two lines of action led however to a differential impact: whereas the ESF made it possible to develop an integrated approach to the return to employment, and to support partnerships with companies and NGOs, the ITI ERDF produced a minor impact due to the lower amount of resources and to a lack of alignment the actors involved.

Besides the differential involvement of metropolitan formal institutions in the EU cohesion policy, policy-based cooperation exists, that developed as a direct consequence of the latter. This is the case of Brno and Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Areas, that are responsible for the management of dedicated ITIs. In the case of Brno, the ITI has triggered the creation of a dedicated metropolitan governance body. The ITI combines ERDF, CF and ESF, and is seen by the central government as the core instrument for metropolitan policies. As a consequence of the Partnership Agreement for the Programming Period 2014–2020, the Czech Ministry for Regional Development legally empowered the local level to define the boundaries of their metropolitan regions, design the objectives and manage the deriving actions. In the absence of legal regulation for metropolitan cooperation in the country, local partners interact on the basis of a memorandums of cooperation¹⁷. In the context of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area (MAG), on the other hand, the ITI follows previous voluntary metropolitan cooperation experiences among the involved municipalities. In Poland, ITIs are implemented in 24 areas and financed as special purpose “envelopes” of the ROPs. The delimitation of the areas covered by ITI has been agreed jointly by the regional self-government and the municipalities interested in implementing the ITI. The ITI implementation began with the establishment of ITI Associations (among which MAG), which developed the strategies for their areas, and then agreements were signed between the ITI Associations and the ROP Managing Authority.

Finally, Riga Metropolitan Area currently has no role in the EU cohesion policy, and also the Riga Planning Region have had a relatively small impact on the programming and management of the ESIF. At the metropolitan level there have been no initiatives, as decisions have been made centrally for the entire country. The local governments in their Development Programs set medium-term priorities and directions of action and detail national and EU investments at the local level. However, the functions and boundaries of the

¹⁷ For the 2021-2027 period, the spatial delimitations of the ITIs were proposed by the Ministry for Regional Development and then confirmed by BMA and by the other metropolitan areas' bodies.

planning (soon to be called administrative) regions (NUTS3) are being reassessed and the 2021-2027 programming period envisages an increasing role of the regions, particularly regarding the distribution and co-ordination of ESIF.

Table 4.4
Role in the cohesion policy 2014-2020

Metropolitan area	Role/tools	Fund
Metropolitan City of Turin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediate body ESF Beneficiary of territorial cooperation funds (ERDF) and direct funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESF ERDF
Barcelona Metropolitan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiary of direct funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ERDF
Lisbon Metropolitan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediate body ROP Manages an ITI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ERDF ESF
Brno Metropolitan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manages an ITI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ERDF ESF CF
Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manages an ITI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ERDF ESF
Metropolitan City of Florence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediate body ESF Beneficiary of direct funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESF ERDF
Lyon Metropolitan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediate body ESF Manages an ITI (ERDF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ERDF ESF
Brussels Capital Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing authority ERDF Partial role for ESF¹⁸ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ERDF ESF
Riga Metropolitan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None (assessment of ITI projects) 	

Source: authors' own elaboration

4.1.3 Measures put in place in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic

Metropolitan areas have been seriously impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and could play a significant role in facing the emergency and its consequences.¹⁹ Current assessments predict that both the frequency and level of impact of these disasters are likely to increase over the coming years.²⁰ However, numerous barriers exist that contribute to hamper the multi sectorial coordination of COVID-19 reactions that the metropolitan governance should perform. In order to shed light on the matter, a preliminary overview of how the METRO metropolitan areas and cities are dealing with this task is proposed.

In the management architecture of the Recovery fund, the Metropolitan Cities of Florence and Turin play a similar role. Italy identified in the European Affairs Committee the place in which to elaborate the Recovery and Resilience Plan. The Minister of European Affairs does not interface directly with metropolitan cities and municipalities, addressing instead their collective representative, the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI). In the city of Florence, the mayor has activated a working group which acts as the collector of proposals from the metropolitan city and the municipality of Florence, on the base of ongoing activities

¹⁸ ESF is managed by different authorities in Brussels, depending on the domain of action. For employment, ESF is directly managed by the Brussels Capital region, while for example for the programme of training the COCOF and the Flanders Region are the managing authorities, because training is not a regional but a community competency.

¹⁹ "A call to Rethink Metropolitan Spaces". https://www.metropolis.org/sites/default/files/resources/EN_Metropolis-call.pdf

²⁰ Emergency Governance Initiative, Policy Brief N°2. <https://www.metropolis.org/sites/default/files/resources/Emergency-Governance-Cities-Regions-%20Policy-Brief-2.pdf>

(as the NOP Metro actions). This working group analyses the correspondence of these projects with the ministerial guidelines and collect them into a proposal to be presented by ANCI to the Ministry. Within this framework, the NOP Metro structure has been used as an opportunity to have an overview of the actual and future projects, so that the Recovery Fund is conceived in continuity with the NOP Metro. In Turin, the Metropolitan City is to some extent involved in dealing with the emergency, due to a partial competence for civil protection, and is dialoguing with ANCI through the proposition of priorities for intervention. However, cooperation between the capital city and the rest of the metropolitan city appears less structured in comparison to the Florence case.

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area has the aim to give maximum support to municipal initiatives that mitigate the effects of the crisis caused by the pandemic and, to deal with the situation, is developing a series of measures in relation to the exercise of its powers (included in article 14 of the Law of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona). It should be noted that although some of the measures were planned before the covid-19 pandemic, the total amount of the investment has been doubled in response to it, reaching a total budget of 125 million euros to invest in sustainable urban mobility, ecological and energy transition and social cohesion (see Annex 1). In Lisbon, a gap between the institutional and legal competence framework of the metropolitan administration and the stakeholders' expectations constitute a challenge. If, on the one hand, the Lisbon Metropolitan Area sees in the metropolitan level the most relevant level to coordinate multi-sectorial action to react to the pandemic, the legal framework does not allow for that. Similarly, the lack of a more direct access to EU funding constitute a challenge that the pandemic crisis made more explicit. Conversely, Lyon Metropolitan Area (MdL) is directly acting against COVID-19 related issues through a set of dedicated measures. First, to help businesses to cope with the COVID crisis, MdL voted in April 2020 an emergency fund of €100 million. Then, following the elections held in June, MdL's standing committee adopted a series of deliberations to deal with the COVID-19 health crisis, and decided to implement a support plan for metropolitan social and medico-social establishments and for services dedicated to child protection. The new executive also wishes to strengthen the fight against poverty with dedicated funds.

In Riga Metropolitan Area, while no metropolitan level initiatives were introduced to react to the COVID-19 crisis, municipalities can apply for state loans, for the implementation of investment projects. The Riga City Municipality applied for funding aiming at increasing the energy efficiency of municipal buildings, developing the transport infrastructure and new ways of providing services' solutions that reduces the need for face-to-face communication. Moreover, taking into account the initiative of the Ministry of Transport to develop a conceptual model for reducing environmentally harmful emissions from transport in Riga and its agglomeration, creating preconditions for restructuring traffic flows, thus changing users' habits and reducing the negative impact of transport, Riga City Municipality is currently actively working on project applications within the framework of the European Recovery and Resilience Facility developing the establishment of Baltic and regional multimodal transport hubs, development of bicycle infrastructure, mobility points, public transport services and other projects in the field of transport infrastructure development. In the case of COVID-19 the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area (MAG) authorities undertook awareness-rising initiatives to fight the negative consequences of the pandemic (e.g. encouraging online food orders, to help local gastronomy to survive). Such activities are of soft and bottom-up nature since MAG has no institutional responsibility and formal mandate similar to other types of local or regional governments, neither resources to support businesses in fighting the pandemic consequences.

Finally, in Brno Metropolitan Area, no specific activities to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts were put in place yet at the metropolitan level.

4.2 Stakeholders objectives, policy needs and preliminary hypotheses

The objectives and policy needs of the stakeholders that commissioned the METRO Targeted Analysis are directly related to one or more of the three policy questions underpinning the project. In general, the more institutionalised their metropolitan governance is, the less the stakeholders show interest in the added value of the cohesion policy for strengthening metropolitan governance structures and cooperation (PQ3), while their main needs concern the increasing acknowledgment and influence of metropolitan areas on the development and implementation of the EU cohesion policy (PQ1), and the role that the latter can play in relation to metropolitan policies and development goals (PQ2). But this does not necessarily mean that formal insti-

tutionalisation is the only way for metropolitan areas to have an impact on the development of the EU cohesion policy, nor that more institutionalised bodies are able to fully pursue their goals and ambitions in the implementation – and as a consequence – of the EU cohesion policy.

In particular, in relation to **the efficiency and effectiveness of the governance of cohesion policy at the metropolitan level (PQ1)**, all stakeholders (except RMA) highlight the need to explore what is the room to increase their influence on the development and implementation of the EU cohesion policy, in a way that the latter takes into account the metropolitan dimension to a more reasonable extent. The more institutionalized ones (CMTo, CMFi, AMB, LMA, MdL) wish to be more directly and extensively acknowledged as a relevant body to define the EU cohesion policy priorities, as well as in the manage and implementation. Despite the high level of institutionalization, they presently do not play a relevant role in the development and management of the EU cohesion policy. An exception is BCR, that has significant scope in the implementation of the EU cohesion policy, but due to territorial, institutional and political factors, only manages to produce a limited impact on the Brussels metropolitan area. Moreover, while some of them are implementing dedicated ITIs and would like to bring to the attention of the EU the importance and added value of this instrument for metropolitan governance, others would like to know more about that, or be provided with the possibility to implement one. Policy-based bodies (MAG and BMA) want to show how relevant the metropolitan level is in implementing cohesion policy goals through integrated tools as the ITI, in order to legitimize and strengthen the position of strategic metropolitan leaders in the local and national arena, also in order to gain more discretionary powers and financial resources to pursue metropolitan development.

In a nutshell, the common need of most of the METRO stakeholder is, on the one hand, to show how relevant metropolitan areas are (or could be) for the implementation of the EU cohesion policy, also through integrated tools such as the ITI and, on the other hand, to explore and share knowledge and good practices of metropolitan governance of EU funds, also combining top-down and bottom-up logics.



Preliminary hypotheses (PQ1)

The institutionalization of metropolitan cooperation is crucial to improve the role of metropolitan areas in the implementation of EU cohesion policy.²¹

Including metropolitan areas in the governance of cohesion policy can improve efficiency and effectiveness, but the articulation of geographical and administrative scales is critical to achieve positive results. Since the EU cohesion policy operates through a cascade logic, from the EU level to the regional level, a more nuanced relation is expected to be put in place, one that combines “top-down” with “bottom-up” logics.

If the body that is in charge of metropolitan governance includes only a part of the municipalities of the much larger functional metropolitan area, the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the EU cohesion policy may be hampered.

Fragmented governance structures in metropolitan areas limit the effectiveness of the implementation of EU cohesion policy.

Functional and institutional stabilisation of territorial-administrative structures of metropolitan areas in Europe would rise the quality and the effectiveness of democratic governance.

The metropolitan governance modes and the capacity to implement integrated planning tools are context-sensitive.

In the time of systemic transformation accelerated by the pandemic, the metropolitan level should be recognised as the territorial level better representing functional urban areas, and should be empowered to play a role dealing with emerging socio-economic challenges.

²¹ See the recently published Policy Brief #1 on the Emergency Governance Initiative (https://www.metropolis.org/sites/default/files/resources/PB01_final%20for%20publication.pdf).

In relation to the **added value that cohesion policy could provide in implementing metropolitan policies and achieving metropolitan spatial development goals (PQ2)**, a shared need highlighted by the stakeholders is the development of stronger synergies between metropolitan and EU cohesion policy goals. Nowadays, European programmes have their own rationality and the link to the main policy goals of the metropolitan areas is not everywhere fully explicit. EU cohesion policy goals are rather broad and, in principle, it should be rather easy to plug metropolitan development goals into them. But a closer look at the implementation of the cohesion policy shows that a number of challenges exists for metropolitan areas and cities to meet their objectives through the cohesion policy. Furthermore, there is the need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the relationship between the cohesion policy and the “Next Generation EU” program at the metropolitan level.

A deeper knowledge on the impact of the EU cohesion policy on metropolitan governance is also needed with respect to two important issues: the way it can enable and support engagement between municipalities and metropolitan areas; and its inclusion within the strategic and sectorial plans managed by metropolitan bodies. To do so also requires further knowledge sharing on how the EU funds and tools that are managed by metropolitan areas are implemented, in terms of internal organisation and involvement of private operators and civil society. This would also help understanding how metropolitan areas can shape the EU cohesion policy in their territories, contributing to the further territorialisation of public policies. EU funding can be a powerful boost to deliver metropolitan policies and increase the value-added of EU intervention but, to achieve this aim, it is necessary to understand their mechanisms and bottlenecks.

The potentials and opportunities to transfer ITI implementation experiences and practices into different geographic or policy areas also deserve investigation, both by the metropolitan areas that have already implemented it and by those that are looking at it with interest. Cohesion policy tools, such as ITI or CLLD, can be used to influence the objectives of local projects advocating for more general and long-term policy goals formulated at EU level and their integration into local strategies and concrete projects.



Preliminary hypotheses (PQ2)

Metropolitan areas represent the appropriate scale to generate higher value-added EU intervention, due to the large population and the concentration of economic activities, contributing to the territorialisation of public policies.

While the institutional fragmentation of governance and government in metropolitan areas is hard to overcome, the cohesion policy and its tools (such as the ITI) can help to introduce mechanisms for metropolitan cooperation and to promote learning on how to incorporate EU strategic policy objectives into local strategies, policies and projects.

The implementation of cohesion policy tools at the metropolitan level will significantly and effectively help to overcome the strongly differentiated interests of basic territorial units constituting the metropolitan areas and to stimulate them to develop joint objectives and strategies.

The active involvement of the representatives of international and national organisations and associations representing the metropolitan areas in cohesion policy planning would improve addressing the metropolitan governance needs in Europe.

Ideally, the development of cohesion policy goals and action for a metropolitan area should follow the goals of the stakeholders responsible for the promotion of territorial development therein, in order to trigger relevant synergies. However, often EU cohesion policy goals formulated at higher levels end up influencing the priorities of the metropolitan actors.

The priorities of metropolitan areas should be taken into consideration at the EU, national and regional level, to have an influence on the programmes and on the selection of funded projects.

To pursue a multi-fund perspective, a clear and shared definition of the priorities is needed in order to establish strategies that successfully combine European and metropolitan goals.

There is a potential for more connection between the EU objectives and processes, and the aims and processes of strategic planning in metropolitan areas.

For what concerns the **added value that cohesion policy could provide in favouring the institution and consolidation of metropolitan governance structures and cooperation practices (PQ3)**, the less institutionalized metropolitan organizations are those seeing the most value. However, also formal metropolitan bodies raised interest in this respect, generally acknowledging the potential added-value of cohesion policy in favouring the consolidation of metropolitan governance structures through direct or indirect funding mechanisms. More in particular, some areas would like to better understand whether and to what extent sharing responsibilities of EU cohesion policy implementation among different entities in the metropolitan areas would compromise the efficiency of the cohesion policy and, in turn, if cohesion policy may be the way to consolidate integrated metropolitan governance structures. To this respect, it is worth analysing existing and potential models of cooperation in delivering cohesion policy across Europe, that can be scaled up and/or transferred and adapted to other metropolitan areas.

The implementation of ITIs at the metropolitan level is seen as a good practice to mainstream the metropolitan dimension, triggering and strengthening formal and informal metropolitan cooperation, so that metropolitan thinking and acting become an integral element of decision making at the local, regional and national levels. At the same time, metropolitan authorities in charge of managing the EU funds are interested to learn how the cohesion policy may be used as a leverage to developing metropolitan cooperation. Where territorial dynamics are not matching with the borders of metropolitan institutions, as in many of the METRO stakeholders' territories, EU funds may help in stimulating institutional actors to cooperate. Ways and mechanism to favour such inter-institutional cooperation mechanisms need to be explored. Area-based rather than institutional-based approaches may also favour such metropolitan governance and cooperation practices.



Preliminary hypotheses (PQ3)

Cohesion policy can improve metropolitan governance and consolidate cooperation practices between variegated stakeholders both horizontally and vertically (region, state and EU level).

Including long-terms goals of strategic metropolitan planning in the cohesion policy can help consolidating metropolitan governance structures and fostering metropolitan cooperation practices.

EU cohesion funds may be an efficient tool to encourage the authorities involved to implement metropolitan cooperation in all relevant matters.

The assignment and management of European funds to metropolitan bodies reinforces their leverage in stimulating metropolitan governance and cooperation.

Establishing a European Metropolitan Policy Observatory providing statistical data for metropolitan areas in EU could support more realistic, evidence-based metropolitan strategies and policies.

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