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## TARGETED ANALYSIS //

# METRO

The role and future perspectives of cohesion policy  
in the planning of Metropolitan Areas and Cities

Annex II // The role of Metropolitan areas within the EU cohesion  
policy

This Targeted Analysis is conducted within the framework of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme, partly financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

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This delivery does not necessarily reflect the opinions of members of the ESPON 2020 Monitoring Committee.

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## TARGETED ANALYSIS //

# METRO

The role and future perspectives of cohesion policy in the planning of Metropolitan Areas and Cities

Annex II // The role of Metropolitan areas within the EU cohesion policy



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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
CMTo	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
GNI	Gross National Income
IB	Intermediate Body
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
JRC	Joint Research Centre
LAG	Local Action Group
LAU	Local Administrativi Unit
LMA	Lisbon Metropolitan Area
MA	Metropolitan Area
MAG	Metropolitan Area of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot
MC	Metropolitan City
MdL	Lyon Metropolitan Area
NOP	National Operational Programme
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OP	Operational Programme
PQ	Policy Question
RMA	Riga Metropolitan Area
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
ROP	Regional Operational Programme
TA	Targeted Analysis

# 1 Introduction

This Annex to the final Report presents and discusses in a comparative manner the evidence collected in the nine case studies that have been explored in the framework of the ESPON Targeted Analysis METRO – The role and future perspectives of cohesion policy in the planning of Metropolitan Areas and Cities<sup>1</sup> (Annexes III to XI). More in detail, the document synthesises and compares the information collected by the various research teams through the application of the project’s analytical protocol and as a consequence of their continuous interaction with the respective stakeholders.<sup>2</sup>

The report is organised following the three main policy questions that have been driving the analysis:

**PQ1** | What role do metropolitan areas and cities play in the development, management and implementation of the European Union (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?

These questions are answered through the comparative analysis and assessment of the territorial and institutional contexts in which the nine stakeholders involved in the projects are active: Metropolitan City of Turin (CMTo), Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB), Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA), Brno Metropolitan Area (BMA), Metropolitan Area of Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot (MAG), Metropolitan City of Florence (CMFi), *Métropole de Lyon* (MdL), Brussels-Capital Region (BCR), Riga Metropolitan Area (RMA).

The report is structured into eight sections. After this brief introduction, the nine case study areas are introduced and compared with particular reference to the territorial features and dynamics that characterise their functional urban areas (FUAs) (§2). Then the focus moves to the presentation of the nine metropolitan areas’ institutional and governance characteristics, dedicating particular attention to the instruments that are produced in each context, the goals and priorities that underpin them, the peculiar financing and budgeting models, and the differential role that in each metropolitan area is played by the business community and different social groups (§3). Section four presents the evidence collected in relation to PQ1, reflecting in particular on the role that the metropolitan areas under scrutiny play in the institutional architecture of the EU cohesion policy, on their involvement in its programming and management activity and on the implementation arrangements that are put in place in each case (§4). PQ2 is answered in section 5, that focuses on the added value that the EU cohesion policy has in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies. A detailed overview of the main EU cohesion policy instruments and of the priorities that underpins them is provided, accompanied by the analysis of the magnitude of the resources delivered through these instruments and of their geographical and thematic distribution. This section also presents a number of success stories, and reflects on the main drivers of success that emerge from the cases (§5). Section six reflect on the issues raised by PQ3, and more in detail on the impact that the EU cohesion policy have played in consolidating metropolitan governance and cooperation in the contexts under investigation. On the one hand, it discusses how, through its policy, the EU has contributed to enhance metropolitan governance at the European level and within selected national and regional contexts. On the other hand, it provides evidence on how the different metropolitan areas have used the EU cohesion policy to further consolidate their position and role, and to foster the cooperation and coordination of local municipalities, social actors and business communities (§6). Finally, a dedicated section discusses the role that metropolitan areas have been playing in the framework of the COVID-19 emergency, how they could make use of the EU cohesion policy to react to the latter, and what role they should play in its aftermath (§7). A last section rounds off the contribution, presenting the main policy messages emerging from the project and addressing them to the relevant territorial levels and actors that uptake them in support of their decision and policy making activity (§8).

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<sup>1</sup> Each of the nine case studies is also presented more extensively in a dedicated Annex (Annexes III to XI).

<sup>2</sup> Additional information concerning the scope of the project and its methodology are provided in Annex I.

## 2 Territorial contextualisation

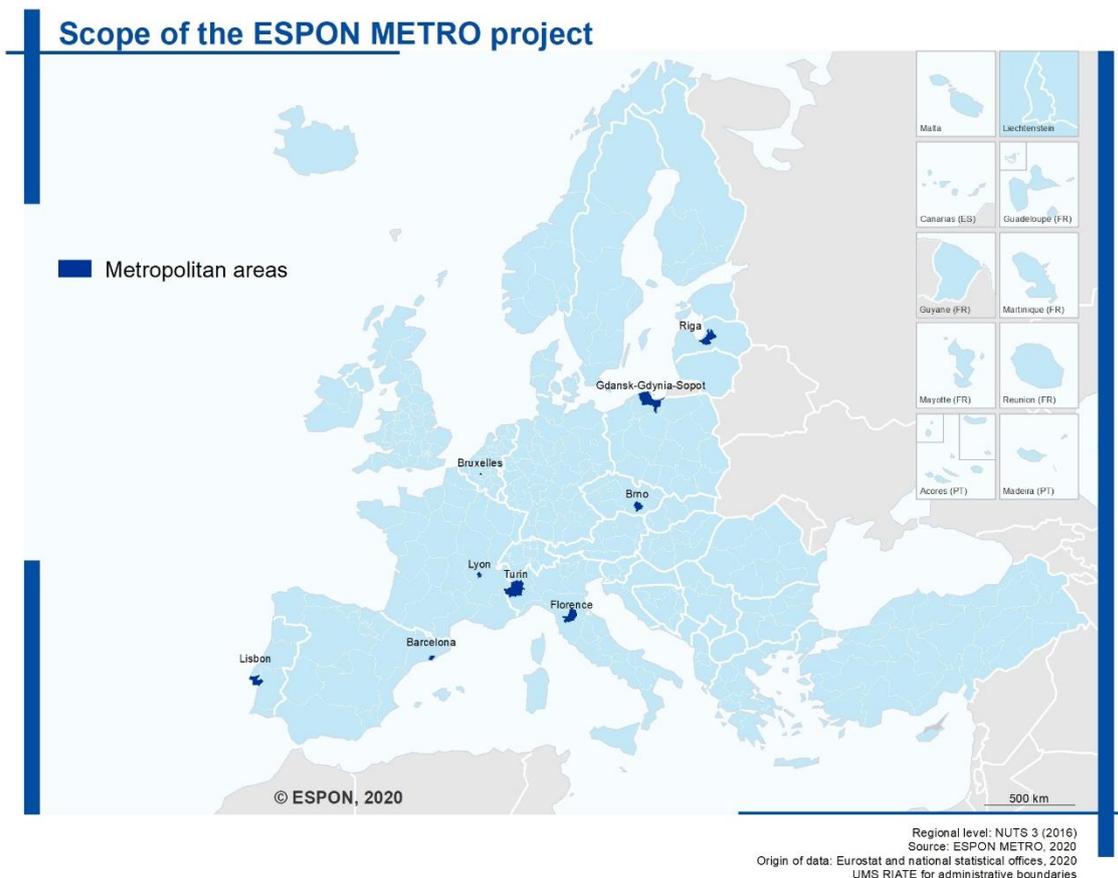
The METRO targeted analysis focuses on nine metropolitan contexts located in eight different EU countries (Map 2.1): Brussels Capital Region in Belgium, the Brno Metropolitan Area in Czech Republic, the Lyon Metropolitan Area in France, the Metropolitan Cities of Florence and Turin in Italy, the Riga Metropolitan Area in Latvia, the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area in Poland, the Lisbon Metropolitan Area in Portugal and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area in Spain.

As already highlighted in the main report and further discussed in Annex I, also here it is important to precise that, when discussing the information collected in relation to the nine cases, this report employs two different terminologies, that refers to two different meanings:

- With the wording 'metropolitan areas', the project refers to the more or less institutionalised supralocal governance bodies that are located in the nine territorial contexts under scrutiny.
- With Functional Urban Area (or FUA), it indicates the functional area delimited around the nine core cities that are located into the nine contexts, through the application of the EU-OECD methodology, and that encompass the economic and functional extent of cities based on daily people's movements (Dijkstra et al., 2019).

### Map 2.1

#### Territorial scope of the ESPON METRO project

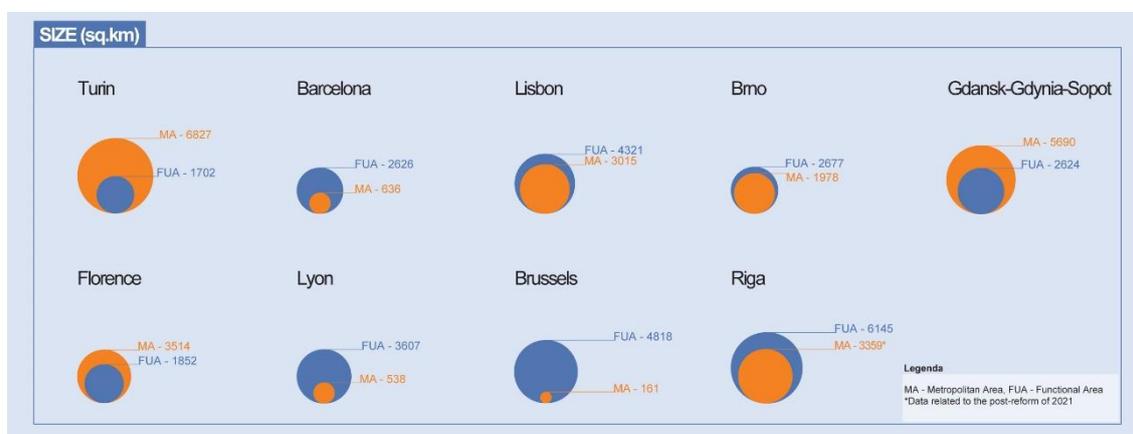


Source: author's own elaboration.

The nine contexts are highly heterogeneous in relation to both spheres. In order to give account of this heterogeneity, this section discusses the territorial, socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the FUAs that characterise the METRO case study areas<sup>3</sup>, while section three will explore and discuss their institutional configurations and governance (§3). Also the actual correspondence between the FUAs and the territories that are interested by the action of the nine metropolitan areas varies from case to case. Some metropolitan areas cover a very wide and diverse territory, that is larger than their respective FUAs (Florence, Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot, and Turin), while others are responsible for territories that are part of larger metropolitan functional agglomerations (Barcelona, Brno, Brussels, Lisbon, Lyon, Riga). Only in the case of Brno the two areas overlap to a reasonable extent (Figure 2.1, Map 2.2).

More in detail, the Metropolitan City of Turin shows the highest discrepancy, as it covers 312 municipalities over a wide, very diverse territory (ranging from the dense urban agglomeration surrounding the capital city to remote rural and mountain municipalities), that extends much wider than the functional relations pivoted around the city of Turin. Also the Metropolitan City of Florence and the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot metropolitan area are larger than their FUAs, including both urban poles and small rural municipalities, but in these cases the discrepancy is smaller. In the case of Lisbon, the EU-OECD FUA exceeds the metropolitan area, with the FUA that includes six municipalities that are located north-east of the latter. The Riga metropolitan area is smaller than the FUA, which intersects it and extends towards south-east. This lack of correspondence is even larger in the cases of Barcelona and Lyon metropolitan areas: the Barcelona FUA includes 99 municipalities in addition to the 36 composing the metropolitan institution, while in Lyon the metropolitan institution is as much as eight times smaller in size than the FUA. Brussels-Capital Region is the case showing the largest discrepancy, as it covers a territory that is much smaller than its FUA, with the latter that extends in the neighbouring Flanders and Wallonia regions. On the other hand, the territory covered by the Brno metropolitan area is to a large extent overlapping with the FUA, with the latter that exceeds the former only of a small number of municipalities.

**Figure 2.1**  
**Comparison of the territorial extension of the METRO Metropolitan areas and their respective EU-OECD FUAs**

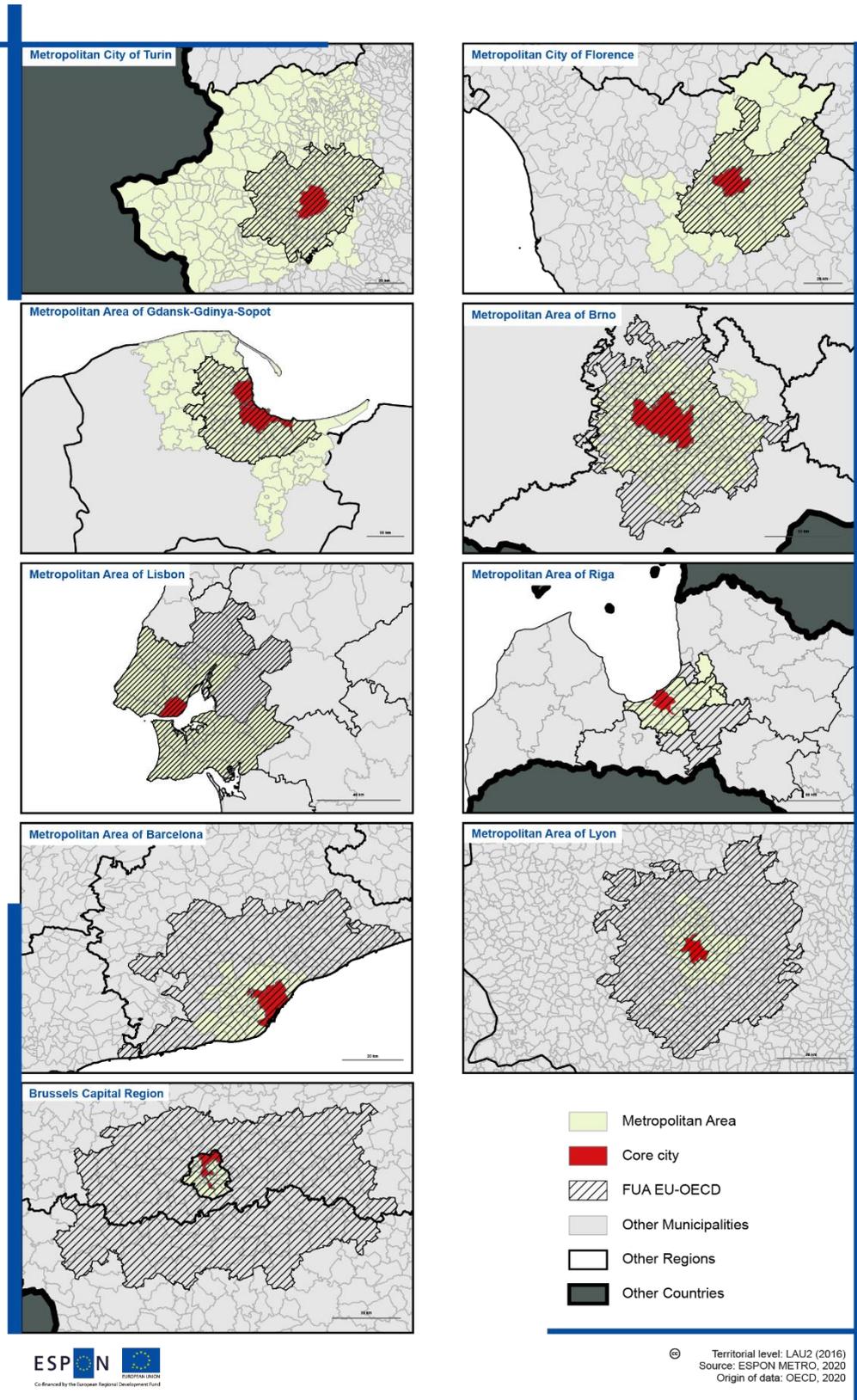


Source: authors' own elaboration. EU-OECD delimitation of FUAs

<sup>3</sup> As already mentioned in Annex I, the adopted EU-OECD methodology for the definition of FUA (Dijkstra et al., 2019) raises a number of challenges in relation to some of the analysed territories. Further specification and discussion of these challenges is available in the case studies reports, where some of the EU-OECD FUAs delimitations are questioned and alternative FUA's delimitations proposed (Annexes III to XI).

**Map 2.2**

**Metropolitan cooperation and EU-OECD FUAs in the METRO case studies**



Source: authors' own elaboration. EU-OECD delimitation of FUAs

When comparing the nine FUAs that characterise the case studies, they display a high heterogeneity in terms of size, population and number of municipalities (Table 2.1, Figures 2.2 and 2.3). The population size ranges from 730,000 inhabitants in Brno to around 5,000,000 in Barcelona, and the territorial extension from the 1,702 km<sup>2</sup> of Turin to the 6,133 km<sup>2</sup> of Riga. Also the population density varies significantly, from 152 inhabitants per square kilometres in Riga to 1899 in Barcelona (Figure 2.4).

If one excludes Lisbon and Barcelona, in all the other cases more the 45% of the FUA's population lives in the core city<sup>4</sup>. The highest value is in Riga, which hosts 67% of the population, while Brno, Lyon and Turin range around 50%, then Brussels and Florence with 45 and 47% respectively, Barcelona with 32% and Lisbon with around 17%.

**Table 2.1**  
Size, population, density and number of municipalities in the METRO areas

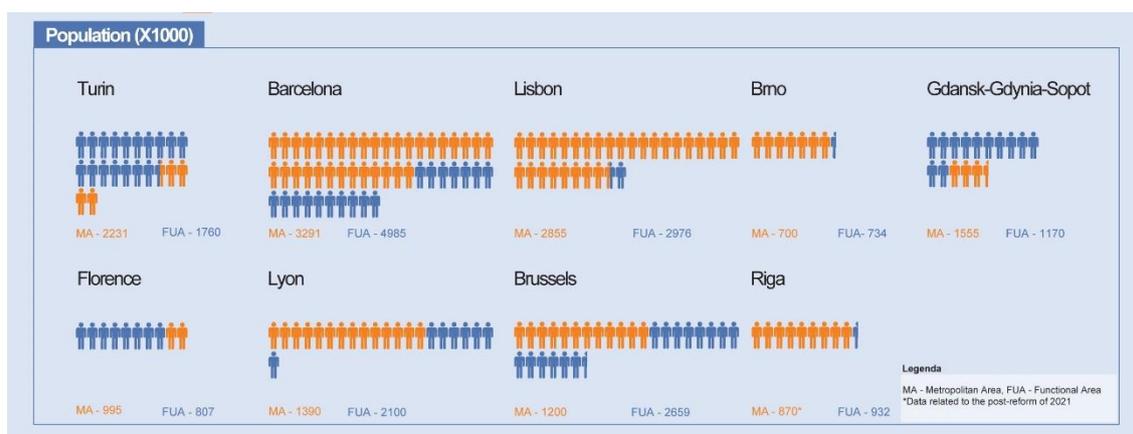
Metropolitan area – Acronym (Country)	Size (sq.km)		Population (x1000)		Density (inh./sq.km)		Municipalities	
	MA	FUA	MA	FUA	MA	FUA	MA	FUA
Metropolitan city of Turin – CMT0 (IT)	6827	1702	2231	1760	327	1034	312	88
Barcelona Metropolitan Area – AMB (ES)	636	2626	3291	4985	5176	1899	36	135
Lisbon Metropolitan Area – LMA (PT)	3015	4321	2863	2976	950	689	18	24
Brno Metropolitan Area – BMA (CZ)	1978	2677	700	734	354	274	184	272
Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area – MAG (PL)	5690	2624	1555	1170	273	446	51	24
Metropolitan City of Florence – CMFi (IT)	3514	1852	995	807	280	436	41	27
Lyon Metropolitan Area – MdL (FR)	538	3607	1390	2100	2596	582	59	326
Brussels Capital Region – BCR (BE)	161	4818	1200	2659	7241	552	19	137
Riga Metropolitan Area – RMA (LV)	3359*	6145	870*	932	259*	152	9*	12**

MA = Metropolitan Area; FUA = Functional Urban Area

\* New Riga Planning Region; \*\*Municipalities (LAU2 units) after the July 2021 municipal reform

Source: authors' elaboration on EU-OECD data, Eurostat and census data, 2019

**Figure 2.2**  
Population of the METRO Metropolitan areas and of their EU-OECD FUAs



Source: authors' own elaboration. EU-OECD delimitation of FUAs

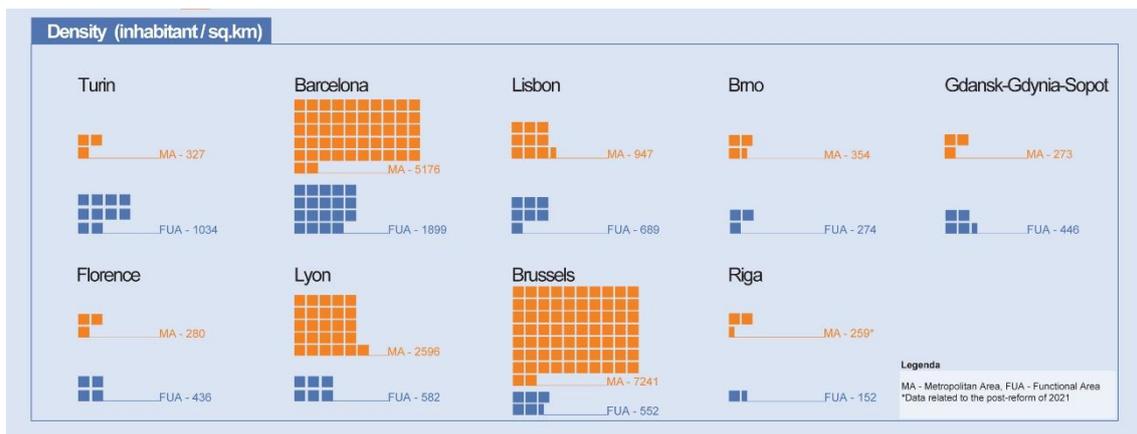
<sup>4</sup> In the case of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot metropolitan area, the core is considered as composed by the three cities.

**Figure 2.3**  
**Number of municipalities in METRO Metropolitan areas and in their EU-OECD FUAs**



Source: authors' own elaboration. EU-OECD delimitation of FUAs

**Figure 2.4**  
**Population density in the METRO Metropolitan areas and in their EU-OECD FUAs**



Source: authors' own elaboration. EU-OECD delimitation of FUAs

When it comes to age composition (Figure 2.5), with the exception of Barcelona, the FUAs located in Southern Europe, i.e. those of Florence, Turin and to a lesser extent Lisbon, are characterized by a rather old population. In contrast, Lyon hosts a relatively high share of young population, and the same is true for the Brussels FUA, for which the population distribution in the other age groups is also similar to the values encountered in the cases of Brno, Riga and Barcelona FUAs, with a rather high share of 25-44 years old persons (that is even higher in the case of the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot). While the age composition in each case study can be related to the respective country or region, the distribution of each age group in the core city or in the rest of the FUA (labelled as “suburb” in Figure 2.5) varies significantly in relation to all contexts, depending on several geographic, social and economic factors. To this respect, most of the case studies show a relatively higher share of old population in the core: this is the case – although to different extents – for Barcelona, Brno, Florence, Gdansk, Lisbon, Riga and Turin, while in Brussels and Lyon the core is relatively younger than the suburb. In more detail, in Barcelona the core municipality has a relatively higher share of population aged 65 or more and of the 25-44 age group, similarly to the municipalities of Florence and Turin, even if to a lesser extent. In the latter population younger than 25 years old is more concentrated in the FUA suburb, as a consequence of the progressive depopulation of the core in favour of the suburban belt. On the contrary, in Brussels older age groups are more concentrated in the suburb, while the core is relatively younger. Here the share of population belonging to the 25-44 age group is also higher in the core in absolute terms, conversely from the other cases. Also in Lyon the core is relatively younger than the

suburb, especially for what concerns the 15-24 age group. In the Brno FUA the age groups are rather equally distributed and there are not very significant variations in terms of higher presence of one specific age group or another neither in the core nor in the suburb. This is also the case for Lisbon and Riga, except for a slightly higher than average presence of people over 65 years' old in the core in Lisbon and of young people below 14 years' old in the suburb of the Riga FUA. In Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot, the over 65 age group is particularly small in the suburb, which on the contrary hosts relatively more people aged 15-25 than the three core cities.

**Figure 2.5**  
**Population and age composition in the nine FUAs' core and suburb**

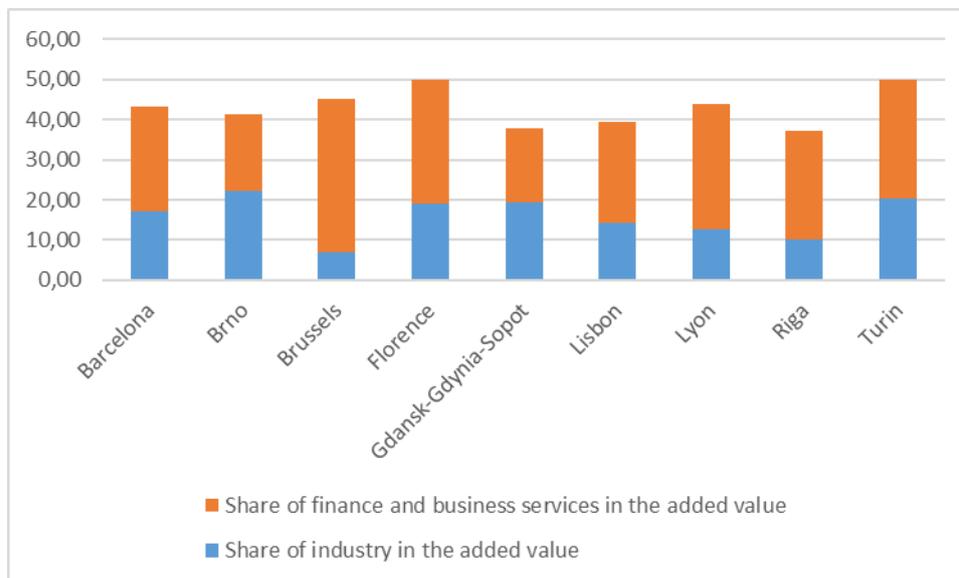


Source: authors' elaboration on Eurostat data, 2019.

The nine areas show rather marked difference in relation to their economic structures<sup>5</sup> (Figure 2.6). The FUAs of Lyon and of the three capital cities of Brussels, Lisbon and Riga are characterized by a low share of manufacturing (lower than 15%), and this is especially true for Brussels. Brussels and Lyon are specialized in highly qualified and remunerated market services, such as finance, which makes them typical north-western cities. In the Riga's and Lisbon's FUA, the leading group of sectors of economic activity is trade, transport, hotels, and restaurants. However, while in Riga there are no significant differences between the core and rest of the FUA, the employment structure shows a clear difference between the Lisbon core city and its FUA. The former is more specialized in service activities, namely public administration (linked to its role as capital city), education and health services, and in advanced producer services such as information and communication, finance, insurance and real estate activities. This typical core city economic structure contrasts with the rest of the FUA, that is characterized by a larger concentration of manufacturing, construction, retail, transport, and hospitality activities.

In contrast, the FUAs pivoted around the cities of Florence, Turin, Gdansk and Brno keep a rather large industrial base, with values around 20%, while Barcelona lays in the middle, with 17% of industry and 26% of finance and business services in the total added value. However, there are different situations: in the Barcelona, Florence and Turin FUAs the most relevant sector is represented by highly qualified services (around 30% in Florence and Turin, 26% in Barcelona), followed by trade, transport, hotels and restaurants, and manufacturing is not the most relevant sector. Conversely, in the case of the Brno FUA manufacturing represents the most relevant sector, with the highest value among the nine metropolitan areas (around 22%), while services account for less than 20% of the total GDP. In the case of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot, the two sectors feature almost the same share, around 19% for manufacturing and 18% for finance and business services.

**Figure 2.6**  
**Economic structure in the METRO areas**



Source: authors' elaboration on Eurostat data. Proxy NUTS3 Eurostat metropolitan regions.

<sup>5</sup> Since comparable economic data on the GDP were not available for all the metropolitan areas under scrutiny, NUTS3 Eurostat metropolitan regions were used as proxies, although in some cases, the NUTS3 is quite different from the FUA.

### 3 Institutional context and metropolitan governance

This section compares the nine metropolitan areas under investigation in relation to their institutional configuration, governance and policy framework. It first explores the institutional framework for metropolitan cooperation that characterises each context (§3.1.1), to then present and compare the metropolitan development goals that have been identified (§3.1.2) and the various policy and planning instruments through which this has occurred (§3.1.3). Additional information is proposed in relation to the actual characteristics, magnitude and source of metropolitan financing and budgeting (§3.1.4), to the role that business actors and social groups play in metropolitan governance (§3.1.5) and to the various policy networks to which the metropolitan areas under investigation participate (§3.1.6).

#### 3.1 The Institutional framework of metropolitan cooperation

Whereas some of the stakeholders' metropolitan areas are characterised by long-standing formal institutions, or by institutions that have been formalised after a first phase of informal collaboration, others are just at the beginning of their history of metropolitan cooperation (Table 3.1; Figure 3.1). Moreover, among these clusters of formal, informal and semi-formal metropolitan entities, a variety of structures, mechanisms and tools for metropolitan governance have been detected, that in turn are strongly dependent from the national and regional institutional frameworks within which the metropolitan areas under scrutiny operate.

**Table 3.1**  
Status and origin of metropolitan cooperation in the METRO areas

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	Bottom-up
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

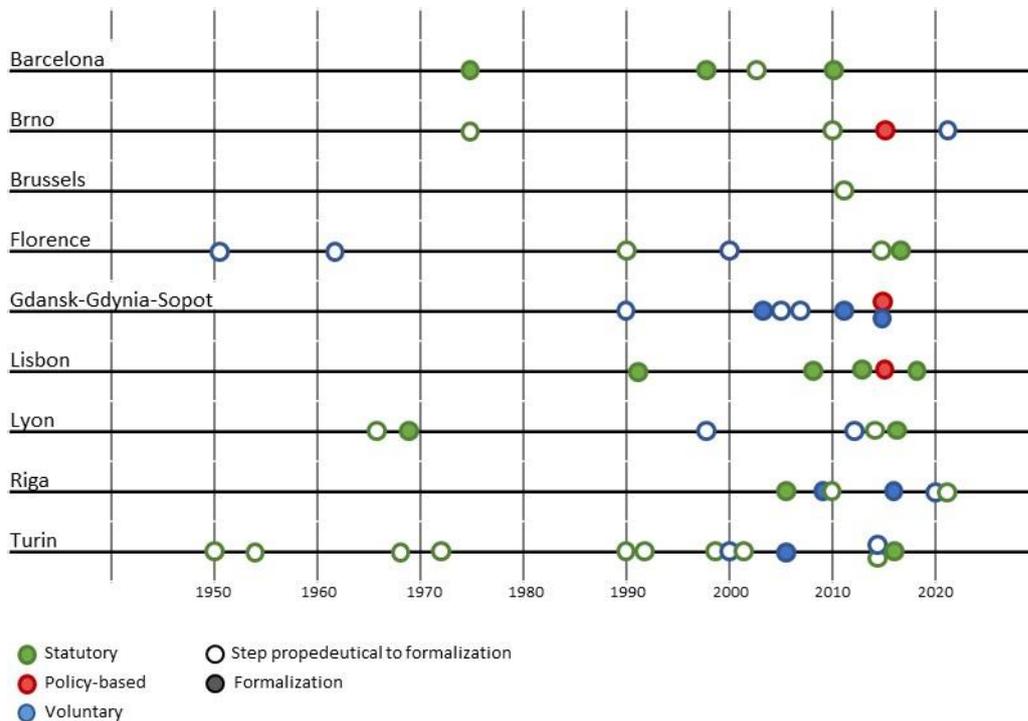
Source: authors' own elaboration

More in detail, most of the metropolitan areas are formally acknowledged in their countries' administrative framework (Barcelona, Brussels, Florence, Lisbon, Lyon, Turin). However, also among them significant differences exist, in terms of history, competences and governance models. The Metropolitan Cities of Turin and Florence are regulated by the same national law<sup>6</sup>, which reformed local authorities and established Metropolitan Cities as second level institutions replacing the respective Provincial authorities. The Mayor of the capital city also serves as President of the metropolitan city, acting as executive and administrative officer for the body. Both Turin and Florence have a long history of metropolitan cooperation, that dates back to the second half of last century and features a mix of voluntary and statutory initiatives. While in Florence the first attempts of metropolitan cooperation were based on bottom-up voluntary initiatives, in Turin they

<sup>6</sup> Law 7 April 2014, n. 56: "Disposizioni sulle città metropolitane, sulle province, sulle unioni e fusioni di comuni".

occurred as top-down inspired initiatives based on national and regional decrees and plans. Although institutionally similar and characterised by an evident misfit between the administrative boundaries and the functional urban area that has been highlighted by administrators and scholars since their institution, the two metropolitan cities feature rather different governance environments, as a consequence of geographical, political and organizational variables. The metropolitan city of Turin 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 composed of 312 municipalities, from the dense urban agglomeration surrounding the capital city to the remote rural and mountain municipalities that extend up to the border with France. Differently, the metropolitan city of Florence embraces only 42 municipalities and features a population that barely exceeds a million inhabitants.

**Figure 3.1**  
Evolution of metropolitan governance in the METRO areas



Source: Authors' elaboration

Also Barcelona and Lisbon metropolitan areas are formally recognised within their respective countries' administrative hierarchies. However, they have a rather exceptional nature, that result from the peculiar paths of institutionalisation that led to the consolidation of metropolitan cooperation. The Metropolitan Area of Barcelona comprises the city of Barcelona and 35 surrounding municipalities, and is the only formal metropolitan government in the Spanish context. It was constituted by the Catalan Parliament in 2010<sup>7</sup>, after a rather long history of metropolitan cooperation that has started in 1974, with the establishment of the Metropolitan Corporation of Barcelona, a body responsible for urban planning at the supralocal scale. With the abolition of the latter in 1987, due to political struggles between the regional and the local authorities, a debate triggered concerning the supralocal dimension of governance, which led to the institutional establishment of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. As the metropolitan cities of Turin and Florence, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area is a second level institution featuring a Metropolitan Council composed by the mayors and councillors elected locally. Therefore, its bodies of government are indirectly elected, there are few mechanisms and spaces for

<sup>7</sup> Regional Law 31/2010.

public participation and deliberation, and its main source of legitimacy lies in its ability to manage and effectively provide public goods and services. Moreover, the metropolitan government's territorial scope is much smaller than the FUA and the metropolitan region, challenging metropolitan governance especially in terms of agglomeration economies related to the metropolitan dimension, and somehow also conditioning the policy-making process and the adequate provision of services at the regional scale.

Lisbon Metropolitan Area has been formally established in 1991, and recently framed within a new legal configuration that instituted 21 inter-municipal communities and the two metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Oporto<sup>8</sup>, after decades of statutory and policy-based efforts aimed at this direction. It is ruled by the Metropolitan Council, composed by the mayors of its 18 municipalities, the Metropolitan Executive Committee, featuring members elected in the municipalities' assemblies, and the Strategic Council for Metropolitan Development, representing public and private institutions and organizations. The devolution of powers to local authorities and the formation of inter-municipal entities was intended to deepen the administrative decentralization process in Portugal, observing the principles of subsidiarity, complementarity, the pursuit of the public interest and the protection of the rights and interests of citizens and the intangibility of the powers of the State. However, in the case of Lisbon the coexistence on the same area of the metropolitan institution and of a regional authority that is a *de facto* central government outpost and is in charge of the programming and management of the EU cohesion policy raises a number of questions in relation to the distribution of regional policy/planning and EU cohesion policy competences.<sup>9</sup>

Lyon Metropolitan Area is the result of a bottom-up metropolitan governance process that has been acknowledged in 2014 through a national law instituting metropolitan governments for large cities, as the last step of an inter-municipal integration process pursued by local and national public actors for more than five decades. The three largest French cities (Paris, Marseille and Lyon) are now characterized by their own metropolitan arrangements, positioned at the interface between the State and local authorities. However, in the case of Paris and Marseille these institutions were created top-down, while *Métropole de Lyon* has been instituted through an agreement between the Mayor of Lyon (who, at that time, was also the President of the *Établissement Public de Coopération Intercommunale Grand Lyon*) and the President of the Rhône General Council. This tailor-made status is unique in France, and *Métropole de Lyon* is the only metropolitan body to be a fully-fledged local authority, featuring a Metropolitan Council directly elected by the citizens.

The Brussels Capital Region is characterized by a strong institutional recognition, that dates back to the federalization process occurred in Belgium in the 1990s. Since then, the country features three regional governments (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels) that are competent in domains such as territorial and economic development, and three communities (Flemish, French and German), that are responsible for culture-related issues. Among the three regions, the Brussels's one is specific because of its bilingual status and its urban configuration. Whereas the 19 municipalities that compose it do not include any relevant suburban area, its functional area is nowadays much larger and extends in Flanders and Wallonia. As a consequence, effective metropolitan cooperation is challenged by the complex institutional framework and its misfit with the actual functional phenomena. In 2011, the institution of a "metropolitan community" was planned by the sixth state reform, aiming at building consensus concerning trans-regional development matters, but no agreement between the three regions has been reached in this direction so far. This community is supposed to shape as a consensus-building organization dealing with transregional matters around Brussels, such as road security or infrastructure. Spatially, it includes all municipalities of Brussels, and of the Walloon and Flemish Brabant provinces, meaning that it should involve all three regions of the country. Regions are indeed the relevant level of authority to actually implement such metropolitan cooperation around Brussels, since it mainly focuses on issues with regional relevance. However, this organization has never been implemented and in any case would have no binding authority.

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 instruments. In the Czech Republic, metropolitan cooperation has been pursued only since 2014, as a consequence of the introduction of a ITI in the framework of the cohesion policy. Without the latter, the metropolitan

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<sup>8</sup> National Law 12 September 2013, n. 75.

<sup>9</sup> This issue is discussed more in detail in §4.

dimension would have most likely remained latent. Despite the top-down nature of the input to metropolitan cooperation, the individual metropolitan areas were allowed to decide whether to undertake or not metropolitan governance and what objectives to attach to it. Within this context, Brno Metropolitan Area was formed in 2014 as a policy-based cooperation aggregating 167 municipalities (184 in the programming period 2021-27) that range from a dense urban core to small industrial towns and rural areas.<sup>10</sup> While the incentive to establish metropolitan governance and cooperation was stimulated from the top-down, the individual metropolitan areas were empowered to decide whether the metropolitan governance will be launched and with what objectives. In March 2020, the ITI Steering Committee approved the establishment of a horizontal working group to address cross-cutting metropolitan issues and to stimulate further institutionalization beyond the scope of the ITI. At present, in the Czech Republic there is no legal framework that would provide for the administration of metropolitan areas.

On its hand, the Metropolitan Area of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot (MAG) Association was legally established in 2011 as a voluntary agreement between 25<sup>11</sup> local and county governments, as a result of a process that started in the 1990s. The Metropolitan Area is governed by the MAG Association, established voluntarily as a bottom-up initiative by agreement between participating local self-governments (LAU1 and LAU2). The association combined two previously established cooperation networks, respectively pivoted around Gdansk and Gdynia, as a response to the growing needs of coordination of some activities beyond the administrative borders of local authorities. Also in this case, the EU cohesion policy contributed to the consolidation of this cooperation through the introduction of an ITI and, since 2015, the MAG Association acts as Intermediate Body for the Pomorskie Regional Operational Programme, responsible for the ITI implementation. The Association mainly works through the meetings of committees that discuss different themes of mutual interest, e.g. joint purchase of goods and services or the preparation of development plans covering several local authorities. These committees also facilitate the exchange of knowledge and good practices among local governments. One of the MAG key tasks is the preparation of strategic documents for the development of the metropolitan area, and it also manages projects related to socio-economic support, sustainable mobility etc.

Finally, Metropolitan governance in the Riga area is still informal and only began in 2018, with the decision to produce an Action Plan for the Development of the Riga Metropolitan Area, approved in January 2020. However, municipalities have been engaging in cooperation activities since 1996, the most notable example being the establishment of the Riga Planning Region at the end of 2006, as a derived public entity ruled by the Latvian Regional Development Law and joining 30 municipalities (prior to July 2021 administrative territorial reform).<sup>12</sup> The Riga Planning Region is responsible for regional development planning, coordination, co-operation of local governments and other public administration institutions and networking among planning specialists. At the same time, it is also one of the main initiators and coordinators of cooperation activities in the Riga Metropolitan Area. Overall, whereas the input to establish metropolitan governance has mostly generated through a top-down approach, a parallel bottom-up momentum exists that derives from the cooperation activities put in place by various organisations of municipalities in the vicinity of Riga.

In all the case studies, other forms of cooperation coexist in the metropolitan area. In most of the cases, these cooperation initiatives are loosely related to the existing metropolitan institution, generally adding complexity to metropolitan governance. This is the case for the Italian metropolitan cities of Florence and Turin: both metropolitan institutions include municipalities characterized by strong historical roots and the self-perception of being “other” than the capital city, as well as a number of other forms of cooperation activities, that concern portions of the metropolitan city territory and in most cases operate independently from the Metropolitan institutions (i.e. Unions of Municipalities and Local Action Groups). Also the Lisbon Metropolitan Area features various inter-municipal cooperation activities (including LAGs) focusing on waste management, water supply, local development and primary healthcare exists, that are not directly related to the

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<sup>10</sup> Informal cooperation activities in the area of Brno however date back to the end of the 1990s, an exception in the Czech context.

<sup>11</sup> A number that through time grew up to 58 units.

<sup>12</sup> It is important to highlight that, as a result of the recent administrative reform, the number of municipalities in the countries decreased from 119 to 43, and the planning regions were re-perimetered. As a consequence, the number of municipalities of the Riga Planning Region decreased considerably (from 30 to 9), and so did its area of competence.

metropolitan institution and contribute to add complexity to the governance framework. In Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot a number of voluntary cooperation initiatives exists, where local governments join forces to manage municipal tasks. Moreover, two legally established inter-municipal unions exist within the metropolitan area – the Metropolitan Union of Public Transport of the Gulf of Gdansk and the Communal Union of Municipalities of the Chylonka and Reda Valley – that however are only loosely related to the other metropolitan activities.

The metropolitan region of Barcelona features a dense network of intermunicipal cooperation, in which the most populous municipalities are the more active actors. These initiatives take mostly the form of policy-based and voluntary public partnerships in areas such as urban planning and mobility, environmental policies and economic development, while there are few cooperation initiatives in areas such as security, social policy, public health or housing. In general terms, there is a strong territorial rationale in the intermunicipal cooperation arrangements, based on longstanding relations at the county level. However, relevant examples of low-institutionalized city networks and arrangements exist, with an extended regional scope. While the metropolitan authority is an active agent and the most relevant institution of metropolitan governance, it mainly participates to this cooperation networks through bilateral cooperation agreements with municipalities. In Lyon, in recent years a number of additional cooperation initiatives have been proposed, to overcome the misfit between the (small) size of the metropolitan institution and its larger functional area (e.g. the “*Pole métropolitain*” partnership involving groupings of municipalities around Lyon) however, until now they have proven scarcely successful. Also within the geographical scope of Brno Metropolitan Area there are additional forms of inter-municipal cooperation, as the micro-regions, the special purpose associations of municipalities<sup>13</sup> and the Local Action Groups. They are not part of the metropolitan governance led by the Brno Metropolitan Area, but may be involved in particular metropolitan projects.

The case is different for Riga and Brussels, in which intermunicipal cooperation initiatives have supported or support metropolitan governance in a way or another. In the case of Riga, cooperation among municipalities already occurred before 2018, in the framework of the Pieriga Municipalities Association<sup>14</sup>, the Pieriga Partnership<sup>15</sup> and the Daugava Downstream Tourism Region<sup>16</sup>. In Brussels, although metropolitan cooperation still needs to evolve based on the agreement for the establishment of the Metropolitan Community, a number of project-based bottom-up, collaborative initiatives based on various thematic areas – such as employment, transport, economy and business, cross-regional spatial development, landscape – have revived the potential of metropolitan cooperation.

### 3.2 Metropolitan development goals

Metropolitan development goals and lines of action have been analysed on the basis of the development and planning instruments produced by or involving the metropolitan areas under scrutiny. In turn, these goals appears largely related to the goals expressed by the main instruments produced at the national, regional and local levels, as a consequence of the activation of formal or informal mechanisms of coordination and other processes of inter-institutional cooperation and participation<sup>17</sup>. Independently from the level of institutionalisation of metropolitan cooperation, a number of goals (such as sustainable economic, social and environmental development, mobility, education, territorial cohesion, etc.) are common to all the areas under examination (Table 3.2 and Figure 3.2).

Although to a different extent, in all the analysed cases, metropolitan development goals are linked more or less explicitly with the objectives of the EU cohesion policy and with those of the Operational Programmes

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<sup>13</sup> Usually established to cooperate in the provision of technical and social infrastructure (waste dumps, schools etc.).

<sup>14</sup> 14 municipalities that voluntarily join forces for the promotion of local economic and social development. This organisation has been succeeded by Riga Metropolis organisation.

<sup>15</sup> A voluntary association of legal entities and individuals aimed at promoting higher quality of life and sustainable rural development.

<sup>16</sup> A voluntary partnership of six municipalities aimed at strengthening tourism.

<sup>17</sup> The case of Brussels stands out as an exception, mostly due to the reported absence of metropolitan cooperation instruments and mechanisms beside the activities of Brussels Capital Region. Further details on the metropolitan development goals and coordination mechanisms in relation to each case study are provided in Annex III to XI.

and other instruments produced at the national and regional levels<sup>18</sup>. In the case of the most recent documents, this is true also in relation to the objectives of the Next Generation EU programming instruments (see for example the Metropolitan Strategic Plan 2021-2023 of the Metropolitan City of Turin). The correspondence of metropolitan and EU cohesion policy goals is particularly evident in relation to policy-based metropolitan areas. In the case of Brno, the metropolitan development goals are directly related to the EU cohesion policy, since metropolitan cooperation is a direct consequence of the management of the ITI. At the same time, despite also being characterised by a policy-based cooperation pivoted on the ITI, the Gdansk-Gdynia Sopot Metropolitan Area has also produced a document that explicitly details the metropolitan development goals, the Metropolitan Development Strategy 2030, whose scope is somehow broader than the one of the ITI. In the cases of Barcelona and Turin, metropolitan development goals are also expressly linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and the Metropolitan City of Florence is currently developing a strategy aiming at positioning metropolitan development within a multilevel programmatic framework at the global, European, national and regional levels.

Table 3.2 shows in more detail the main goals and lines of actions emerging from the metropolitan development strategies and plans. Their recurrence in the various cases under investigation is then visually represented in Figure 3.2.

**Table 3.2**  
**Metropolitan development goals and lines of action in the METRO areas**

Metropolitan area	Goals and lines of action (keywords)
Metropolitan City of Turin	Polycentrism and balanced territorial development; productivity and innovation; biodiversity, green and ecologic development; sustainable mobility and accessibility; education and research; social inclusion and cohesion; resilience; conscious use of resources; integrated metropolitan planning and governance
Barcelona Metropolitan Area	Sustainable mobility; ecology; urban and strategic planning; nature spaces and green infrastructures; social and economic development; governance and transparency; housing; international relations
Lisbon Metropolitan Area	Territorial management capacity; metropolitan mobility and transport system; regional cohesion; education, culture and social inclusion; innovation, modernization and institutional capacity building; LMA closer to citizens; human resources and quality of services
Brno Metropolitan Area	Transportation and mobility; environment; competitiveness and education; social cohesion
Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area	Innovation (society, culture, education, economy, science and research); sustainability (natural environment, spatial development, quality of life, equal opportunities, balanced demographic structure); competitiveness (market, growth dynamics, financial intellectual and natural capital)
Metropolitan City of Florence	Universal accessibility (multimodal mobility; sentient city; cooperative governance, inclusive community); widespread opportunities (innovative manufacturing, training, reuse 100%, integrated attractiveness); lands of wellness (usable landscape, networked supply chains, safe environment)
Lyon Metropolitan Area	Response to climate change; sustainable mobility; social inclusion/support to vulnerable people; sustainable and sober economic development; comprehensive health policy; social and territorial equity; sustainable urban planning
Brussels Capital Region	Polycentrism; sustainable mobility; integrated and sustainable economic, ecological, social and cultural development, urban regeneration, housing, quality of life and public spaces
Riga Metropolitan Area	Balanced settlement structure; efficient and appropriate public services provision; fast and efficient transport and mobility; environment and energy; regional/international competitiveness

Source: authors' elaboration

<sup>18</sup> Additional information in this concern is presented in §5.

**Figure 3.2**  
**Priorities recurrence Word-cloud**



Source: authors' elaboration

### 3.3 Metropolitan policy and planning instruments

All metropolitan areas explored in the context of the METRO project produce some sort of policy or planning instrument. These instruments are however highly heterogeneous in terms of scope, nature and function (Table 3.3). The level of competences and the number of policy and planning instruments seem to directly depend on the level of institutionalisation of metropolitan governance in each context. More in detail, Barcelona, Florence, Lyon and Turin are characterised by a similar scope of competences and instruments, dealing with spatial development, transport and mobility, waste management, climate and energy. The Barcelona Metropolitan Area also develops plans aimed at internationalisation and international cooperation. The competences of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area were reinforced in 2018, when the latter has also become the metropolitan transports authority. Although in Brno and in Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot metropolitan areas the activity of the policy-based cooperation is mostly centred around the ITI they are responsible for, MAG is also responsible for the development of a number of other plans and strategies concerning metropolitan development, transport and mobility spatial development, etc. In Brussels, despite the virtual absence of metropolitan governance, the strategy adopted by the Brussels-Capital Region in 2018 concerning its territorial development could be used as a basis upon which to conceive and further stimulate metropolitan cooperation activities that exceed BCR boundaries and involve municipalities located in the neighbouring regions of Flanders and Wallonia. Moreover, a number of instruments exists, that have been developed in the framework of the existing cooperation initiatives (see section 3.1). Finally, Riga Metropolitan Area has been formally instituted only in July 2021, and the Action Plan for the Development of the Metropolitan Area produced by the Riga Planning Region represents the only document that has been developed until now.

When looking more closely at strategic planning initiatives, most of the metropolitan areas have approved strategies concerning the future development goals and trajectories of their territory and the way they position within the broader regional, national and supranational frameworks. Examples of such documents are the Strategic Metropolitan Plan in Florence and Turin (that are statutory document clearly prescribed by the

law instituting Metropolitan Cities), the Lisbon Regional Strategy 2030, the Territorial Coherence Plan (SCoT, which has a spatial and strategic relevance) in Lyon. Importantly, in the Brno and Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot metropolitan area an important role is played by the strategies for the development of the ITI, whereas in the framework of the latter the ITI strategy is also accompanied by a separate 2030 Strategy that further detail the metropolitan development goals. Beside detailing the main goals and priorities for metropolitan development, these strategic documents also serve as a catalyst of horizontal and vertical coordination between different planning instruments and levels.

**Table 3.3**  
**Policy and planning instruments developed in the METRO areas**

Metropolitan area	Main instruments
Metropolitan City of Turin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strategic Metropolitan Plan;</li> <li>▪ Metropolitan General and Coordination Spatial Plan;               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Metrop. Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Metropolitan Agenda for Sustainable Development</li> </ul>
Barcelona Metropolitan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Metropolitan Action Plan</li> <li>▪ Metropolitan Urban Master Plan</li> <li>▪ Metropolitan Urban Mobility Plan</li> <li>▪ Metropolitan Programme for Prevention and Management of Resources and Municipal Waste               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Climate and Energy Plan</li> <li>▪ Internationalisation Plan</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ International Cooperation Plan               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Action plan for sustainable food 2020-2023</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Metropolitan plan to support municipal social policies 2020-2023</li> </ul>
Lisbon Metropolitan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lisbon Regional Strategy 2030 (with CCDR LVT<sup>19</sup>)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Management of ROP and NOP measures (ITI)</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Metropolitan Sustainable Urban Mobility Action Plan</li> <li>▪ Metropolitan Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change (PMAAC AML)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fare Reduction Support Programme in Public Transport (PART)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Brno Metropolitan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Integrated Development Strategy of the Brno Metropolitan Area for the Application of the ITI</li> </ul>
Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strategy 2030 (general)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ITI Strategy 2020</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Transport and mobility strategy 2030               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Low emission Plan</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Spatial development plan 2030</li> </ul>
Metropolitan City of Florence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strategic Metropolitan Plan;</li> <li>▪ Metropolitan General and Coordination Spatial Plan;               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Metropolitan Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Lyon Metropolitan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local Plan for Urbanism and Housing (PLU-H)</li> <li>▪ Territorial Coherence Plan (SCoT – spatial and strategic relevance)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Territorial Climate Air and Energy Plan (PCAET)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Brussels Capital Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regional Sustainable Development Plan (PRDD)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Good Move Plan</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ TOP Noordrand strategy</li> </ul>
Riga Metropolitan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Action Plan for the Development of the Riga Metropolitan Area</li> </ul>

Source: authors' elaboration

<sup>19</sup> *Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional de Lisboa e Vale do Tejo* - Lisbon Regional Coordination and Development Commission

### 3.4 Metropolitan financing and budgeting

Except for the financial resources provided through the cohesion policy framework (presented in more detail in § 5.2), the existence (and extent) of a metropolitan budget depends on the level of institutionalisation of each metropolitan area and of the competences it is provided with. Institutionalized metropolitan areas such as Barcelona, Florence, Lisbon, Lyon and Turin, are all provided with a budget. The Barcelona Metropolitan Area, which has competences in core policies such as public transport, waste and water management and planning, and other competences such as social and economic development and housing, is mainly funded by transfers from municipalities. It is also entitled to levy its own taxes and, to a lesser extent, receive financial decentralisation from the regional government. Although specific direct transfers from the national government to metropolitan area were expected, these funds have not been transferred in the last years. The budget for *Métropole de Lyon* is necessary to cover competences concerning transport, social assistance, culture, education, international relations, green space and economic development; it is mainly composed of tax revenues from business and households and financial transfers from the central level. In Lisbon, around half of the regular budget of the Metropolitan Area – that has competences in strategic and spatial planning; environment; economic development; social policies; mobility / transport; services, infrastructures and communication – comes from the central administration and the other half from municipal contributions. However, Lisbon Metropolitan Area's budget increased substantially after the integration of transports and mobility competences in 2018, thanks to transfers from the national government. In Florence and Turin, as in all the Italian Metropolitan Cities, the budget comes from the taxation inherited from the former provinces<sup>20</sup>, and is used to pursue competences including strategic and spatial planning, services provision, infrastructures and communication, mobility and road network, economic, social and sustainable development.

Although it may be assumed that the magnitude of the metropolitan budget should be proportional to the competences that are assigned to the various metropolitan institutions, this is only partially confirmed by the METRO case studies. In particular, the issue of financial autonomy and of the inadequacy of the metropolitan budget to perform the competences and responsibilities they are in charge with, has been raised in the cases of Barcelona, Florence, Lisbon and Turin, also as a consequence of the implementation through time of spending review measures. Brussels-Capital Region and the Metropolitan Area of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot are here a partial exception. On the one hand, Brussels-Capital Region is characterised by a rather large budget, but the latter can hardly be dedicated to the promotion of metropolitan cooperation due to the lack of competences in relation to those territories that are located in the neighbouring regions. On the other hand, despite not being institutionalised in the Polish administrative framework, the Metropolitan Area of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot features a budget composed by fees provided by its members and that is used to support its institutional functioning and to initiate projects dealing with socio-economic development and long-term planning, integrated urban planning, public policies integration and the coordination of selected public services, sustainable mobility, energy and environment, cultural initiatives.

### 3.5 The role of social groups and the business community

Social groups and the business community are generally involved in metropolitan development and governance, although to a different extent in the nine metropolitan areas under investigation. In the contexts of Barcelona and Lisbon metropolitan areas, their involvement is rather limited to consultation, without much room for action and voice in decisional processes. In particular, in Lisbon, the involvement of social groups and the business community in metropolitan governance is fairly modest, and their participation is limited to consultancy, without decision-making powers or real power to influence policy, strategies and programmes. In Barcelona, citizen participation and the incorporation of non-institutional actors in decision-making processes is rather weak, still at the initial stage of a true “architecture” of participation. Nevertheless, in recent years, diverse experiences have been developed in order to grant a higher participation of civic and private agents, in particular in the elaboration of plans and programmes. Also in Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot, the role and participation of social groups and the business community is still rather limited, although a number of steps forward can be noticed in recent years.

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<sup>20</sup> Such as the tax on third-party liability insurances, the so-called environmental tax, the solid waste tax, a share of personal income taxes, etc.

Brussels, Florence, Lyon, Riga and Turin show a greater involvement of social groups and of the business community in metropolitan activities. In particular, in Brussels, despite the absence of any institution responsible for metropolitan governance, several forms of cooperation exist involving civil society or business actors, through collaborative initiatives including civil society and the business community based on thematic areas related to metropolitan development. In the case of the Metropolitan City of Florence, also due to the long history of participation and collaboration that characterise the Tuscany region, many decision-making processes are accompanied by participatory processes in which the third sector and the business community are involved and play a relevant role. The same goes for the Metropolitan City of Turin, especially for what concerns the process that recently led to the approval of the Strategic Metropolitan Plan and that has been accompanied by a thorough participation process finalised to the involvement of the different segments of the private sector and of the civil society. In Lyon, the civil society is part of the governance structure, and business actors traditionally have a strong influence on metropolitan development. In Riga, although the Metropolitan Area has not been formalised yet, social groups and the business community are involved in public discussions in various occasions in the planning processes of the Riga Planning Region and in the Pieriga partnership. In the context of Brno, social groups and the business community are involved in metropolitan cooperation mostly through the ITI management and implementation mechanisms.

### 3.6 METRO areas' participation to policy networks

All nine metropolitan areas under investigation in the METRO project participate to the activities of policy networks in different ways, depending on the nature of metropolitan cooperation and on their level of institutionalisation. More in detail, a crucial role in this matter is played by the magnitude of the budget and the number of human resources that are available and dedicated to this task in each context. The metropolitan areas that are more institutionalised and have a longer history of metropolitan cooperation generally participate to several national and European networks related to metropolitan development and governance, as this participation has developed and consolidated through time. The participation to policy networks is particularly important, as through this activity metropolitan authorities may have the chance to engage in organising lobbying activities towards national and supranational institutions, aimed for instance at a further consolidation of the metropolitan dimension within national administrative hierarchies and in the EU cohesion policy framework.

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area is highly active in supra-national networking. It has played a crucial role as one of the leading institutions establishing networks for metropolitan advocacy and cooperation (e.g. European Metropolitan Authorities, Metropolis, MedCities), and is a prominent member of other global networks like United Cities and Local Governments. Also *Métropole de Lyon* participates in several national and European networks: within Eurocities, of which Lyon is a founding member, it participates in the statutory bodies and in various thematic working groups as those focusing on smart cities, transport, social policies, metropolitan areas, etc. The Lisbon Metropolitan Area does not participate to the activities of many policy networks, mostly due to constraints in relation to budget and human resources. However, it takes part to the activities of those networks that represent the interests of metropolitan areas and cities in Europe. Also the Metropolitan Cities of Turin and Florence participate to various international and national policy networks. At the national level, they are also involved in *Metropoli Strategiche*, a project funded by the NOP Governance 2014-20 for supporting the Italian Metropolitan Cities in the process of institutional innovation, organisational change and skill development for the full implementation of integrated policies on a metropolitan scale.

Less institutionalised metropolitan areas – such as the metropolitan areas of Brno and of Gdansk-Gdynia Sopot, whose cooperation and governance is mostly policy-based and pivoted around their ITI, or Riga, for which the institutionalisation process is still in progress – are generally less active within international policy networks. In these cases, the participation to EU programmes such as ESPON and URBACT brings a particularly relevant added value as it contributes to increase their networking activities and to trigger useful processes of good practices and knowledge exchange.

## 4 The role of metropolitan areas in the governance of the EU cohesion policy

After having introduced and compared the nine metropolitan areas that constitute the scope of the ESPON METRO project in relation to their functional and institutional characteristics, this section discusses their differential level of engagement in the development, management, and implementation of the EU cohesion policy. To address this overarching question, the following subsections provide a comparative analysis that builds on the evidence collected in relation to the nine case studies (Annexes III to XI) and position it within the ongoing academic debate on the evolution of the EU cohesion policy governance in the various national contexts.

More in detail, the cases of the metropolitan areas of Barcelona, Brno, Brussels, Florence, Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot, Lisbon, Lyon, Riga and Turin are used to pinpoint the various models and mechanisms through which the EU cohesion policy is developed and implemented in the European metropolitan areas. This analysis is composed of four interrelated components. After this brief introduction, the institutional architecture of the EU cohesion policy in the countries within which the METRO case studies are located is presented, dedicating particular attention to the involvement of metropolitan actors in its design and programming (§4.1). The following section focuses on the management and implementation of the EU cohesion policy. The role played by the national and regional levels and the engagement of the nine metropolitan areas and respective stakeholders in the management and implementation of National and Regional Operational Programmes is explored, together with the instruments that have been adopted for the implementation of the EU cohesion policy in metropolitan areas and their scope (§4.2). After that, the mechanisms and practices put in place to favour the involvement of private actors and civil society organisations in the development and implementation of the EU cohesion policy programmes and instruments are presented more in detail, together with their results (§4.3). Finally, the text explores the policy documents that integrate EU cohesion policy objectives (or shall integrate them) and the existence of formal/informal mechanisms 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.

### 4.1 The institutional architecture of the EU cohesion policy: what room for metropolitan areas?

The EU cohesion policy architecture and the influence that actors at the various territorial level exert in the design of the latter vary from country to country. In order to shed some light on the matter, this section draws on the information collected in the nine case study reports to provide evidence of this heterogeneity.

European governance is frequently described as multi-level, marked by a tangle of relationships (Marks and Hooghe, 2001). The nine case studies explored in the project confirm this argument, revealing that the governance of European cohesion policy concerns a large number of actors at various territorial levels, whose configurations and mechanisms of interaction varies from country to country. Interactions between public actors take place in successive steps, from the identification of challenges and priorities to the implementation of policies and their evaluation, via the formulation of proposals and their negotiation with the European Commission.

Given this multiple levels of complexity, to give account for the process that, in each country, has allowed for the definition of the priorities and instruments that have characterized the EU cohesion policy during the 2014-20 programming period, it is important to focus on the document that formalizes the result of this process, i.e. the so-called “partnership agreement”. In the eight member states hosting the metropolitan areas under investigation, the latter is generally developed in parallel to the Operational Programmes (OPs). In turn, the OPs are defined by different national level institutions (NOPs, typically developed by various ministries) or regional level agencies (ROPs, typically developed by elected regional authorities) and negotiated with the European Commission. However, from country to country, the connection between the two processes may vary. In most of the analysed member states (Czech Republic, France, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal and Spain), the partnership agreement takes precedence over the development of the OPs, which are then required to comply with it. In Belgium, in contrast, the partnership agreement is based on contributions from the three regions, which are autonomous in economic development, employment policy, training,

innovation and the cohesion policy. The list of operational programmes is attached to the partnership agreement and specifies the respective financial allocations by fund, by year and by region. Based on a system of rotating responsibilities, the negotiations on the 2014-20 programming for Belgium were led by the Brussels-Capital Region in consultation with the Flanders Region (which is leading the discussion for 2021-27) and the Walloon Region (which had led the discussions for 2007-2013).

The leadership role played by national authorities in the process is clearly linked to the degree of decentralization that characterises each country. This influences the choices made in the definition of the EU cohesion policy responsibilities and priorities, that in turn translate in the configuration of the OPs and in their thematic objectives. For instance, in Spain, the partnership agreement establishes that the country will contemplate all 11 thematic objectives (TOs) defined in Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013. However, every fund focuses on a limited number of thematic objectives and investment priorities. For instance, the ESF covers only three TOs, the EMFF four and the EAFRD nine. The ERDF covers all TOs but the partnership agreement states that two thirds of the overall allocation will be devoted to TOs 1 to 4 (R&D and innovation; ICTs; SMEs competitiveness; and low-carbon economy). Consequently, this framework is binding on operational programmes, whether national or regional. In France, the national government has decided in 2014 to devolve the programming and management of 35% of the envelope of the European Social Fund (ESF) and of all the resources of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to the regions, as part of a more general policy to “strengthen the regional scale by clarifying competences, but also [through mergers] by giving regions a critical size in terms of geography, demography, and economy” (Geppert, 2017: 227).

In order to shed light on the peculiar features that characterise the EU cohesion policy multilevel governance in the different countries, the following subsection discusses more in detail how local and regional actors were involved in the design of the 2014-20 programming period (§4.1.1). Then, we analyse the role of the metropolitan areas in the design of such arrangements (§4.1.2). Finally, we examine what changes have occurred between the programming periods 2014-20 and 2021-27 in relation to these issues, and to what extent metropolitan actors were involved in the design of the 2021-27 programming period (§4.1.3).

#### 4.1.1 The participation of regional and local actors in the definition of EU cohesion policy

In the last three decades, the EU has paid growing attention to the key role played by urban areas in the development of the European territory and the European Commission has made more and more efforts to involve regional and local actors in the definitions of European policies (Jouen et al., 2016). In the legislative framework underpinning the 2014-20 European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) programming period, the so-called partnership principle has been further strengthened: in accordance with EU Regulation N. 2013/1303 and Delegated Regulation N. 2014/240, all Member States should include programme managing authorities and other socio-economic actors in the development of the partnership agreement. Moreover, the EU Regulation N. 2013/1303 (art.15) urges the Member States to involve city representatives in the elaboration of the partnership agreement. However, according to a report for the European Parliament, “the involvement has no specification and can range from a rather informative character to personal involvement of city representatives in the partnership agreement process” (Hamza et al., 2014: 51). In practice, each Member State involves certain categories of actors to a larger or shorter extent. The national cases analysed in the context of the METRO project illustrate this well, as summarized in table 4.1.

In Belgium, each regional government organised consultations. In the case of Brussels Capital Region, the consultation enabled the involvement of different spheres of society (public institutions, economic and social partners, organisations representing civil society) at the various stages of the process of preparing the Brussels contribution to the partnership agreement (launch, diagnosis, strategy, approval). At the time of the launch of the process, two information sessions brought together a total of 300 participants. Then, a diagnosis of the major issues and challenges was carried out, drawing on interviews conducted with some twenty key players with a strategic and cross-sectoral view of the Region’s situation. The diagnosis was presented and discussed at a participatory workshop attended by around fifty stakeholders. The partnership approach then continued in the design of the ERDF and ESF ROPs’ strategies. The results of these workshops helped to build the final architecture of the OPs and to validate the nature and extent of the needs to be met.

In the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Regional Development is the leading institution in the development of the EU cohesion policy documents. Other ministries act as managing authorities of the OPs. The development of the 2014-20 partnership agreement involved a broad public consultation, and round tables were

organized with various public actors (representatives of national ministries, regions, cities and municipalities<sup>21</sup>), professionals and academics. Afterwards a national platform – National Standing Conference (NSC) was instituted in the framework of the implementation of the partnership agreement and of the deriving OPs, aiming at facilitating the interaction between national ministries, regions, cities, municipalities holders of ITI (metropolitan areas), associations and other institutions.

**Table 4.1**  
**Actors' involvement in the development of the partnership agreements**

Member State	Forms of consultation and categories of actors involved
<b>Belgium</b>	<p><u>Primary role</u>: the three Regions (Brussels-Capital Region, Flanders and Wallonia)</p> <p><u>Public consultations</u>: led by the Brussels Capital Region with municipalities, economic and social actors and associations, civil society organisations, academics, experts.</p> <p><u>Others</u>: Several information sessions, symposiums, discussions were organized in order to build the Brussels Capital Region strategy.</p>
<b>Czech Republic</b>	<p><u>Public consultations</u>: institutions, business and civil society associations, academics, experts, citizens</p> <p><u>Round tables</u>: public actors (representatives of national ministries, regions, cities and municipalities), professionals, academics</p> <p><u>Platforms and working groups for NOP preparation</u>: national ministries, associations, institutions, experts, regions, cities and municipalities</p> <p><u>National Standing Conferences</u>: national ministries, regions, cities, municipalities holders of ITI (metropolitan areas), associations, institutions</p>
<b>France</b>	<p><u>Public consultation</u> via the Internet. Some fifty contributions from citizens, associations and local authorities were received</p> <p><u>Consultation of the 'national partnership' made of</u> public actors (governmental departments, Regions, other organisations of local authorities that represent them at the national level, major national organizations in the social, economic or environmental field). Around 100 written contributions were received</p> <p><u>Thematic tables with members of the 'National partnership'</u>: public actors (governmental departments, Regions, other organisations of local authorities that represent them at the national level, major national organizations in the social, economic or environmental field). 17 thematic tables were organized, gathering 600 participants</p> <p><u>Meetings of the National Forum for the Preparation of the partnership agreement (INPAP) to discuss and amend successive drafts of the PA</u>: national ministries, organisations of subnational governments, major national organizations in the social, economic or environmental field</p>
<b>Italy</b>	<p><u>Public consultation</u>: institutions, associations, representatives of civil society, academics, experts, citizens</p> <p><u>Thematic tables</u>: public actors (governmental departments, Regions, other local authorities or the organisations that represent them at the national level).</p> <p><u>Hearings</u>: economic and social partners (municipalities, associations, interest groups)</p> <p><u>Bilateral meetings</u>: with major national organizations (trade unions, NGOs, large companies).</p>
<b>Latvia</b>	<p><u>Primary role</u>: the Ministry of Finance. Ministries (policy makers). A separate discussion session was planned for each policy goal so as to ensure that the quality of discussions was as high as possible.</p> <p><u>Thematic discussions</u>: organised by the Ministry of Finance, in cooperation with the responsible line Public consultation following procedures according the State Administration Structure Law; Development Planning System Law; Procedures for the Public Participation in the Development Planning Process.</p>
<b>Poland</b>	<p><u>Primary role</u>: national ministries.</p> <p><u>Secondary role</u>: regional governments, local governments regional governments, territorial partnerships (including ITI, associations of local and regional governments), economic and social actors, civil society organisations, representatives of the research sector.</p>
<b>Portugal</b>	<p><u>Primary role</u>: national government.</p> <p><u>Secondary role</u>: regional bodies (CCDRs) and national agencies (AD&amp;C, and other bodies)</p> <p><u>Consultation</u>: metropolitan areas, inter-municipality organisations and other NGOs</p>
<b>Spain</b>	<p><u>Bilateral and multilateral meetings</u>: all the agents involved in the partnership agreement, including governmental ministries, departments and agencies, institutions, regional governments and local authorities, associations, economic and social agents, representatives of civil society, interest groups.</p> <p>All were asked to contribute with opinions and recommendations.</p>

Source: authors' elaboration

<sup>21</sup> As metropolitan areas are not legally established local governments, they were not directly involved in the negotiations.

In France, the 2014-20 partnership agreement was prepared by the coordinating authority for structural and investment funds, namely the *Délégation interministérielle à l'Aménagement du Territoire et l'Attractivité Régionale* (DATAR)<sup>22</sup>. Several ministries participated in this work, in particular those that managed the ESIF over the 2007-2013 period. Following the requirements of the EU Regulation N. 1303/2013 (art.5), two bodies were instituted, including the State, local authorities, social partners, and economic actors and civil society. On the one hand, the so-called National Partnership brought together more than 350 national organisations representing various networks. On the other hand, a more focused forum for debate, the National Forum for the Preparation of the partnership agreement (INPAP), brought together 70 "network head" organisations, also members of the national partnership, which were consulted on successive versions of the partnership agreement<sup>23</sup>. The consultation of the national partnership was organised in three phases between December 2012 and July 2013, with its members that were invited to contribute following a consultation document. Over 90 contributions were received, that led to the organisation of 17 seminars, that focused on "themes", "territories" and "tools" and brought together more than 600 participants. These meetings demonstrated the strong preference of regional and local actors in favour of territorial approaches, as opposed to sectoral or national schemes. The largest influence on the process was exerted by the Association of French Regions, as the latter were to become ERDF managing authorities. Large cities were represented by no less than three networks (*Association des communautés de France*, *Association des communautés urbaines de France*, *Association des maires des Grandes Villes de France*) whose members are not exclusively local authorities based in metropolitan areas.

In Italy, the co-construction of the partnership agreement has been quite extensive (see also Gløersen and Corbineau, 2019). In 2012, the Ministry of Territorial Cohesion presented a framework document, entitled *Methods and Objectives for the Effective Use of Community Funds 2014-20*, which defined the method for developing the partnership agreement. Public consultation on the first proposal occurred with various public institutions, associations, representatives of civil society, academics, experts and citizens. The general orientations of the agreement were then discussed in several "thematic tables" that gathered mainly public actors (governmental departments, regional and local authorities and the organisations that represent them at the national level). This process was completed by the hearing of economic and social partners and a number of bilateral meetings with major national organizations (trade unions, non-governmental organizations, large companies etc.).

In Latvia, the Ministry of Finance is authority responsible to monitor the implementation of the EU cohesion policy. In the preparation of 2014-20 programming documents, it consulted with social, non-governmental and regional partners, thus ensuring compliance with the partnership principle. In order to ensure a comprehensive involvement of partners and the public, the Ministry of Finance also organized thematic discussions on the investments planned in the operational program, in cooperation with the ministries that took NOPs in charge.

In Poland, the national authorities have encouraged the active participation of regional authorities in strictly regulated consultations. The Polish partnership agreement was subject to consultation and discussion within the framework of the "National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013" and then, starting from 2012, in the framework of the so-called "partnership agreement 2014-20 Coordination Committee". The involvement of the regional authorities supported them, as Managing Authorities of the future ROPs, in the launch of the programs' implementation phase.

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<sup>22</sup> Created in 1963, DATAR was replaced in 2014 by the General Commission for Territorial Equality (CGET), itself merged in 2020 into the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (ANCT). To ensure the institutional governance and administrative capacity for managing the cohesion policy funds, the ANCT currently acts as the coordinating authority for European structural and investment funds in France.

<sup>23</sup> Among the 70 members of the INPAP, 16 organizations represented the interests of subnational authorities, including 12 that gather municipalities or voluntary groupings of municipalities<sup>23</sup>. In the French context, such organizations are established according to the size of the communities (large cities, medium-sized towns, small towns, etc.) or their characteristics (associations of mayors of municipalities in need of urban regeneration, of mountain areas, forest communities, rural areas etc.). Due to their rivalry, such organizations of local government officials are traditionally weak in their discussions with the national government (Demazière and Sykes; 2021). Moreover, one should notice that the vast number of different participants involved contributed to downsize the power of the large cities' representatives.

In Portugal, a preliminary version of the partnership agreement has been prepared by the government and discussed with the main representative institutions: the Assembly of the Republic, the Economic and Social Council and the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities. At the same time, an expert committee was set up to monitor the whole process and to discuss the strategic options that were put on the table. A public consultation was held to disseminate and discuss the assumptions of the preliminary agreement, that led to the collection of 145 contributions from a plethora of subjects, among which trade unions and business organizations, civil society entities, representatives of economic sectors, municipalities, and citizens (see also: Gløersen and Corbineau, 2019).

In Spain, the main actors involved in the development of the partnership agreement were the national government and the regional governments (*Comunidades and Ciudades Autónomas*, CCAA). The draft version of the partnership agreement was made available for public consultation in April 2014. This document emphasized the role of cities in contributing to the Europe 2020 objectives in Spain (Hamza et al., 2014). Together with social and economic agents (unions and business representatives), local authorities such as the association of municipalities and provinces (FEMP), and specific municipalities (Madrid, Terrassa and others but not Barcelona) took part in the consultation. In the elaboration of the ERDF NOP (called Multiregional OP in Spain), local governments were represented only through the Spanish Association of municipalities and provinces. In the elaboration of the Catalan ROP, the regional government setup an association with local authorities and other competent public authorities (Association of Catalan municipalities, Catalan provinces, Barcelona City Council, Catalan universities and research centres), social and economic agents (unions and business representatives), and representatives of the civil society. The process was mostly of consultative nature, and did not exert a strong influence on the contents of the OPs. Most importantly in the context of the METRO project, while the municipality of Barcelona took part in the elaboration of the Catalan ROP, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area authority was only involved informally. This cases raises a number of questions on the role that metropolitan authorities played and are playing in the definition of the EU cohesion policy documents in each country, an issue that is discussed more in detail in the following sections.

#### 4.1.2 The role of metropolitan areas in the definition of the EU cohesion policy

Abundant literature is available on the informal influence of cities over the activity of the European institutions, through European territorial associations, such as Eurocities, their permanent representations in Brussels, or through the regular participation in events such as the European Week of Regions and Cities (Payre, 2010; Fricke, 2020). This manifold lobbying activity helps to explain why the European Commission has made important efforts in the last decades to involve cities and urban areas in European policies (Atkinson, 2014, Cotella, 2019). On the other hand, the information concerning the influence of metropolitan actors on EU matters and, more in detail, on the definition of the EU cohesion policy is more blurred, as metropolitan areas often participate to the same networks and associations that also represents cities. As a further evidence in this concern, no formal participation of the metropolitan actors in the definition of the partnership agreements and of the OPs that characterized the 2014-20 programming period has been detected in the case studies analysed in the context of the METRO project. A notable exception is the Brussels-Capital Region that, due to its institutional status in the Belgian context, had led the negotiations on the 2014-20 programming with the European Commission (in association with the two other Belgian regions).<sup>24</sup>

To explain the scarce involvement of metropolitan institutions in the definition of the EU cohesion policy, three reasons are identifiable on the basis of the project's case studies. The first one concerns temporality, as a number of metropolitan institutions did not exist or had just been set up when the internal discussions within each nation were conducted for the 2014-20 programming. In Portugal, the Lisbon Metropolitan Area was consolidated in 2013 as part of a more general administrative reform. In Italy, the Metropolitan Cities of Florence and Turin were formally instituted by the "Delrio law" (Law 56/2014), and they started their activity on January 2015. In France, the *Métropole de Lyon* was created by a similar law in 2014 and also came to force on January 2015. Whereas in both France and Italy, metropolitan areas were on the top of the agenda of national institutional reforms and were created also with the perspective to allow the main urban centres of the two countries to better position at the European level, this did not result in a privileged access to the

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<sup>24</sup> However, it should be noted that Brussels-Capital Region was responsible for the negotiation of OPs that concerns a territory that is much smaller than the actual metropolitan area pivoted on the Region of Brussels.

EU cohesion policy (see also Demazière, 2021). In Italy, the importance of Metropolitan Cities has been to some extent acknowledged with the introduction of the NOP METRO 2014-20, however, the role of metropolitan authorities in the programme is not fully fledged and the actual metropolitan dimension of the interventions pursued through the latter largely depends on local governance relations and dynamics.<sup>25</sup> These issues raise questions on the influence that metropolitan authorities are exerting and will exert on the programming period 2021-27, now that they have been established for some time and are fully functioning (see § 4.1.3).

A second reason concerns the exceptionality of metropolitan institutions in certain national administrative frameworks, which may have led to their marginalization in the debate concerning the EU European cohesion policy and in its development, while ordinary local authorities participate often with a strong voice. The Metropolitan Area of Barcelona is a good example, being the only metropolitan body fully established in the Spanish context. This may be true also in the case of Portugal, where Lisbon and Porto are the only two existing metropolitan authorities, and in Poland, where the process of metropolization has been until now depending on bottom-up dynamics characterised by differential speed.<sup>26</sup>

A third reason corresponds to cases where no (or nearly) metropolitan institution existed at the time of the EU cohesion policy definition and programming. In some of these cases, the EU cohesion policy have triggered processes of metropolisation from the top-down, that partially echo the more or less successful attempts made during the 2000s in a number of Eastern European and Mediterranean countries (e.g. Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Portugal etc.) to create NUTS2 regional bodies to be awarded the management of ESIF ROPs (see Cotella, 2020). Among the METRO case studies, the metropolitan areas of Brno, Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot and Riga have undergone institutional innovation processes as a consequence of this logic. The Brno Metropolitan Area was delimited as a precondition for the adoption of a dedicated ITI, with the municipality of Brno that acted as the holder for the latter. The introduction of the ITIs in the EU cohesion policy framework, in this case, constitutes a crucial trigger, as virtually no metropolitan dimension existed in the country regional policy beforehand.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, the ITI area has been delimited on the basis of the functional relations identified through a thorough analysis, in so doing avoiding the troubles that a misfit between the functional and institutional dimensions may generate. The introduction of the ITIs also contributed to speed up the metropolisation dynamics that had characterised the Polish context since some time. In the case of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot, it led metropolitan actors to agree on what priorities to pursue and what projects to finance. This process favoured the merge of the two metropolitan associations existing in the region – Gdańsk OM and NORDA – that until then did not cooperate to any relevant extent, with the institution of the MAG that allowed to overcome the existing duality of the metropolitan governance. In Latvia, the national government identified from the top the nine cities that, due to their relevance, were to play a role as beneficiaries of ITI projects for the 2014-20 period. Cooperation among municipalities within the Riga region has been ongoing for about a quarter of a century, as the Riga region was established in 1996 in collaboration between Riga and Jurmala and the Riga district. This was done to create a common platform for development planning as well as harmonised action. Two years later, the public organisation "Riga Regional Development Council" was officially registered, voluntarily joining the eight local municipalities of the Riga district. In 2006 with the institution of the Riga Planning Region, that ensures cooperation between local

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<sup>25</sup> The NOP METRO is managed by the national Agency for Territorial Cohesion, and the capital cities of the Italian Metropolitan Cities act as appointed Intermediate Bodies. This led to the risk of an overconcentration of the programme resources on the main municipality, that is reinforced by the requirement to concentrate there all the interventions presenting a material dimension. While, in the case of the Metropolitan City of Florence, the governance dynamics linking the main centre with the metropolitan authority has led to the development of a number of immaterial interventions featuring a strong metropolitan dimension, in the context of the Metropolitan City of Turin this has occurred only to a minimal extent.

<sup>26</sup> The Metropolitan Area of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Association was established in 2011 as the result of a voluntary agreement of the local and county governments. Similar bottom-up initiatives exist in other regions, but only in one case it led to the legal establishment of a metropolitan authority – the Metropolis of Upper Silesia and Zagłębie formally instituted in 2017.

<sup>27</sup> In the Czech context, the Ministry for Regional Development has been the leading institution in the development of the EU cohesion policy 2014-20. The OPs that were produced at the national level and managed by the different ministries, with the only exception of the OP Prague Growth Pole.

governments and other state administrative institutions, the ITI experience and, more in general, the need to experiment new mechanisms to manage and implement the EU cohesion policy has led to cooperation between municipalities and to a gradual institutionalisation process with the creation in 2021 of “Riga Metropolis”, an umbrella organisation for 9 local governments (after the July 2021 administrative reform).

When looking beyond the peculiarities that stem from the METRO case studies, a number of structural reasons for the lack of involvement of metropolitan actors in the EU cohesion policy design should be invoked. Most of the time, city authorities are consulted in the development of partnership agreements or OPs, but it is hard to understand to what extent they are able to exert any relevant influence. Despite the call for a multilevel, multiactor partnership made by the European Commission for the 2014-20 programming period, the development of the cohesion policy seems to have followed a rather top-down path, that saw national and sometime regional governments (in the case of federal or regionalized institutional systems) playing a pivotal role (Hamza et al., 2014). As already argued by a prominent expert of the EU urban policy at the time when the 2014-20 programming period was being drafted, “in the new period of cohesion policy there is the potential for a greater emphasis on the ‘urban dimension’. However, the realisation of this potential will depend on the negotiations between the European Commission (most notably DG Regional and Urban Policy) and the Member States. Much will depend on how the Member States interpret guidance from the Commission (...) and utilise specific new instruments (e.g. integrated sustainable urban development) and embed these within Partnership Contracts and then on how Managing Authorities develop and implement Operation Programmes” (Atkinson, 2014: 3).

### 4.1.3 The changes in the programming period 2021-27

The above information shows that metropolitan areas did not play a relevant role in the definition of the EU cohesion policy 2014-20, due to their late (or lack of) institutionalisation or exceptional nature. This result is in line with a number of studies showing how the involvement of local actors in the design of EU cohesion policy has been rather limited for both the programming period 2007-2013 (METIS-EPRC, 2013) and the programming period 2014-20 (Hamza et al., 2014). As metropolitan areas are the places where the main socioeconomic and territorial dynamics concentrate, their inclusion in the process could certainly bring new ideas and proposals that are complementary to those put forward by the other subnational authorities (regions, provinces, municipalities). However, when looking at the METRO case studies, the process behind the definition of the EU cohesion policy 2021-27 does not seem to differ much in this concern from the previous one, despite the higher institutionalisation of metropolitan area in various countries around Europe (Table 4.2).

In several cases, the interests of metropolitan areas in the development of the partnership agreements at the national level are represented *indirectly* by national associations or alliances of subnational governments, that play an important role in the EU cohesion policy consultation process. For instance, in Italy, the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) has represented the interests of municipalities for more than a century, participating in any national debate that is relevant to local authorities, and represented local governments – including Metropolitan Cities – in all ESIF related consultations. A similar situation occurs in Spain, with the association of municipalities and provinces (FEMP), and in Poland, with the Association of Polish Cities that participates in the work of the Joint Committee of the Central Government and Local Governments. In other cases, as for instance in France, the large number of bodies representing subnational governments that are involved in the elaboration of the partnership agreement ends up diluting the influence of the organizations that represents large cities and metropolitan areas (Demazière and Sykes; 2021). In brief, cases like the Netherlands, where large cities formally participate in the making of the partnership agreement (Gloersen and Corbineau, 2019) and are then entitled of the management of large share of ESIF continue to be an exception in Europe (see also Fernández de Losada and Calvete Moreno, 2016).

The picture is more heterogeneous when examined at the regional scale, especially in federal and regionalised states. In such cases, ROPs are developed by regional level bodies with input from a variety of partners, including metropolitan governments where they exist. However, the engagement of metropolitan areas is still less formal than the one of the main municipalities as testified by the case of the definition of the Catalan ROP, that saw the formal, active engagement of Barcelona municipality and only an informal involvement of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. The complex interplay between the metropolitan and the regional governments is also well illustrated by the Italian cases. Despite its institutional role and geographical relevance as an intermediate level between the Piedmont Region and the municipalities, the Metropolitan City of Turin has a rather limited room for action in the programming, management and implementation of the EU cohesion policy, mostly as a project beneficiary within the ESF and territorial cooperation related programmes.

Furthermore, in July 2020 the Piedmont Region took over the functions on education and vocational training that were assigned to CMTa as an intermediate body in the period 2014-20, in so doing contributing to downsizing the role of the metropolitan authority in the new programming period. Also in Florence the role of the Metropolitan City in the institutional architecture of the EU cohesion policy has been rather limited in the 2014-20 period and seems to be further limited in the 2021-27.

At best, we can see that the priorities and actions proposed by metropolitan authorities encounter a higher consideration in the development of the 2021-27 OPs. In the case of Lisbon, for example, despite the fact that the Lisbon Metropolitan Area and the Lisbon Regional Coordination and Development Commission (CCDR-LVT) are independent entities characterised by distinct mandates (the former emerging bottom from the local authorities and the latter originating from a top-down initiative of the state), they have started a fruitful collaboration in the preparation of the Lisbon Strategy 2030, that in turn will inform the 2021-27 ROP. Also, the *Métropole de Lyon* has managed to exert a “soft influence” on the contents that will be included in the ROP prepared by Region Auvergne-Rhône Alpes. In particular, it contributed to the consolidation of the two main strategic orientations of the ROP (smarter Europe and greener Europe) and in the recalibration of their budget, in a way that reflects the priorities of the new metropolitan green-left executive which was elected in June 2020<sup>28</sup>. In Latvia, the Riga Planning Region, with the respective metropolitan authority still in the making, was directly involved in the Consultative Programming Program of the cohesion policy Objective “European Territorial Cooperation” Program 2021-27, and in a working group chaired by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. However, examples in the opposite direction also exist. For instance, in the Czech Republic, the operational programme Prague Growth Pole which existed in the 2014-20 programming period, will be suppressed in the EU cohesion policy 2021-27, and all OPs will be defined exclusively at the national level.

Overall, the METRO case studies show that progress in the engagement of metropolitan authorities with the definition of the EU cohesion policy from one generation of programming period to another is not necessarily proportional to their increasing institutionalisation. Whereas the latter may contribute to a higher influence, as in the cases of the Lisbon and Lyon Metropolitan areas, this causal link may be easily overshadowed and even counteracted by national, regional or even local logics and governance dynamics. In this light, a number of studies have explored episodes of more or less explicit rivalry between regional and metropolitan authorities (Hulst and van Monfort, 2011; Cremaschi et al., 2015). According to Hulst and van Montfort (2011), the pressure on local governments (i.e. municipalities) to provide for regional coordination and planning through cooperation is lower in a country where a strong intermediate tier of government (i.e. regions) has the formal competencies, resources and the willingness to co-ordinate local policies or to establish regional plans. Conversely, when no intermediate level is between the municipalities and the national level (as in England) or when this institutional level has few resources and competencies, the national government may consider the value of some form of coordination of public policies in city regions (Demazière, 2021).

**Table 4.2**  
**Involvement of metropolitan areas in the definition of the EU cohesion policy 2021-27**

Metro area	Involvement in the development of the partnership agreement	Representation of metropolitan interests in the making of the NOPs	Representation of metropolitan interests in the making of the ROPs
Barcelona	<b>No formal involvement</b> by the EU institutions in the design of the partnership agreements, just some consultations about the possible role of local authorities. However, the AMB has been lobbying, mainly within the EMA framework, for a greater participation in the making of the partnership agreement.	No formal involvement by the national government in the design of the NOPs, just some informal consultations through informal meetings.	In the previous period 2014-20, the AMB has been able to reach an agreement with the Catalan government to manage a ROP. This step represents an important achievement but it is still very limited to the implementation phase. The AMB wants this agreement to be re-edited and improved in the 2021-27 programming period, but nothing has been materialised yet.

<sup>28</sup> The *Métropole de Lyon* has also requested and obtained to manage a larger envelope on the greener Europe priority, in order to be able to directly act in the field of environmental issues and the integration of green mobility.

Metro area	Involvement in the development of the partnership agreement	Representation of metropolitan interests in the making of the NOPs	Representation of metropolitan interests in the making of the ROPs
Brno	<b>Indirect involvement.</b> Cities (holders of ITI) and regions participate in negotiations indirectly, via its representing organization - Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic. The Ministry of Regional Development organised meetings where the city of Brno expressed their priorities.	Representatives of cities (i.e. holders of ITI) and regions participate in negotiations. While they primarily represent their city and regional interests, they can - and in the case of Brno they do - act also on behalf of metropolitan objectives.	Instead of individual ROPs, there is one Integrated national ROP (IROP) in the Czech Republic.
Brussels	<b>Direct involvement</b> (not metropolitan). The Brussels-Capital Region has led the consultation with the EU concerning the formulation of the partnership agreement.	There are no NOPs in Belgium (only ROPs).	The Brussels-Capital Region is responsible for programming its own ERDF and ESF ROPs. However, the latter does not have any influence on the metropolitan area outside BCR borders.
Florence	<b>Indirect involvement.</b> The Metropolitan Cities were represented at the Technical Tables by the associations of local authorities (ANCI).	As in the previous programming period, metropolitan interests were represented by National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) which dialogues with the Territorial Cohesion Agency.	CMFi is involved in the consultation process for the elaboration of ROPs through technical tables and public meetings, in which economic, social and institutional actors participate. It participates in the Committee for the implementation and monitoring of ROPs.
Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot	<b>Indirect involvement.</b> Formal participation in consultations. Only informally in the preparation process (lobbying meetings of metropolitan structures and ITI partnerships)	Formal participation in consultations. Only informally in the preparation process (lobbying meetings of metropolitan structures and ITI partnerships). But NOPs are in the early stage of preparation.	Full-scale partnership in preparation of Pomorski ROP for the new financial perspective. Metropolitan structures are responsible for the important part of the preparatory process. It is expected that metropolitan structures will also act as an IB,
Lisbon	<b>Indirect involvement.</b> MA Lisbon collaborates in the regional strategy plan (drafted by the region). This results from the fact that metropolitan area and region geographical coverage overlaps.	No involvement.	Full scale partnership through an ITI agreement and MA Lisbon participation as an Intermediate Body in the ROP.
Lyon	<b>Indirect involvement.</b> The consultation process takes place within the INCOPAP ( <i>instance nationale de concertation de l'accord de partenariat</i> ), which has 70 members including 16 associations of subnational governments. Two of them represent metropolitan governments and large cities.	MdL had a meeting with the representative of the national government in the region. However, the elaboration of the ESF NOP is top-down.	MdL has been informed and consulted by the regional government. It obtained that the concentration of ERDF funds should be reduced on the SO 1 in favour of an increase of the SO 2.  Together with the 4 metropolitan governments in the region, it claims to be an intermediary body benefiting from an ITI envelope extended to other priorities than SO 5.
Riga	<b>No involvement.</b>	As part of the public consultation, the Ministry of Finance organized six thematic meetings, where the social and cooperation partners could get information about NOP draft suggest changes. The thematic meetings were attended by representatives from almost a hundred different organizations (including Riga City Council).	There are no ROPs in Latvia (only one NOP).

Metro area	Involvement in the development of the partnership agreement	Representation of metropolitan interests in the making of the NOPs	Representation of metropolitan interests in the making of the ROPs
Turin	<b>Indirect involvement.</b> The Metropolitan Cities were represented at the Technical Tables by the associations of local authorities (ANCI).	<b>Indirect.</b> As in the previous programming period, metropolitan interests are represented by ANCI.	The Metropolitan city has been formally involved in the consultation for the Unitary Strategic Document on the programming EU funds 2021-27, which is propaedeutic to the elaboration of the ROPs.

Source: authors' elaboration

## 4.2 The management of the EU cohesion policy: metropolitan institutions as intermediate bodies or beneficiaries

The governance of the management and implementation of European funds varies according to the countries considered. Four main types can be distinguished on the basis of recent studies (Map 4.1) (ESPON, 2017; Sénat, 2019; Gløersen and Corbineau, 2019):

- "regionalized" governance, where OPs are managed and implemented by regional bodies, with limited national coordination (**Belgium**, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, or the United Kingdom);
- "mixed regionalized" governance, where OPs are managed and implemented by regional bodies, relying however on a strong national coordination. This type of organization is found in **France, Italy, Poland** and **Portugal** (where however regions represents outposts of the national government);
- "mixed centralized" governance, where OPs are managed or implemented by national authorities, or where only NOPs exist, whose implementation is however delegated to regional intermediary bodies (Austria, Denmark, Greece, **Spain**<sup>29</sup>, Sweden);
- "centralized" governance, where only NOPs managed and implemented mainly by national authorities exist (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, **Czech Republic**, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, **Latvia**, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia).

Building on a similar classification, the ESPON ReSSI project also developed an interesting overview of regional governance regimes that matches the ways in which the EU countries manage and implement the EU cohesion policy with their specific governance and spatial planning characteristics and traditions (Figure 4.1) (ESPON 2017). More in particular, the proposed overview distinguishes between:

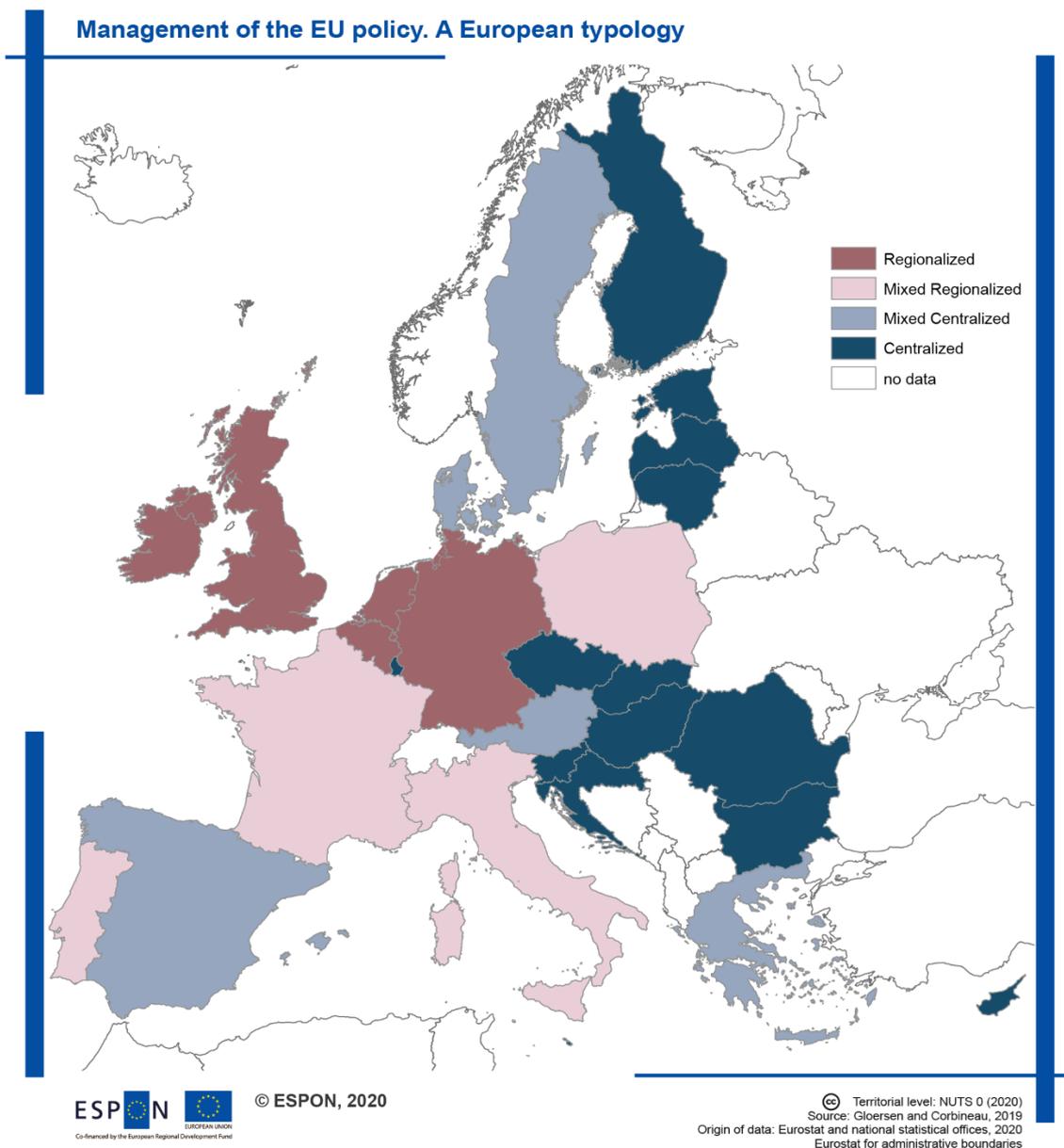
- Countries where the sub-national level plays a crucial role in both domestic and EU perspectives (Germany, France, **Poland**) and/or are characterised by comprehensive-integrated (The Netherlands, Sweden) or by a land-use regulation approach (**Belgium**, Ireland, United Kingdom) to planning, where it is most possible to exploit synergies between domestic regional policies and the EU cohesion policy.
- Countries where, despite the regionalisation of EU cohesion policy management, the exploitation of synergies is less immediate due to traditional governance gaps in vertical and horizontal coordination between levels and sectors (**Spain**, Greece, **Italy**, **Portugal**).
- Countries where EU cohesion policy is centrally managed through specific NOPs that also cater to the regional dimension of each country (Cyprus, Estonia, Croatia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, **Latvia**, Malta, Slovenia). With the sub-national level that either does not exist or is constrained between

<sup>29</sup> The Spanish context lies somewhere in between the mixed centralised and mixed regionalised types, with the region of Catalonia and the other autonomous communities that are provided with their own ROPs.

the others, the quality of governance and the maturity, and integration, of the country's spatial planning system is here a crucial precondition to favouring the required coordination between central and local priorities.

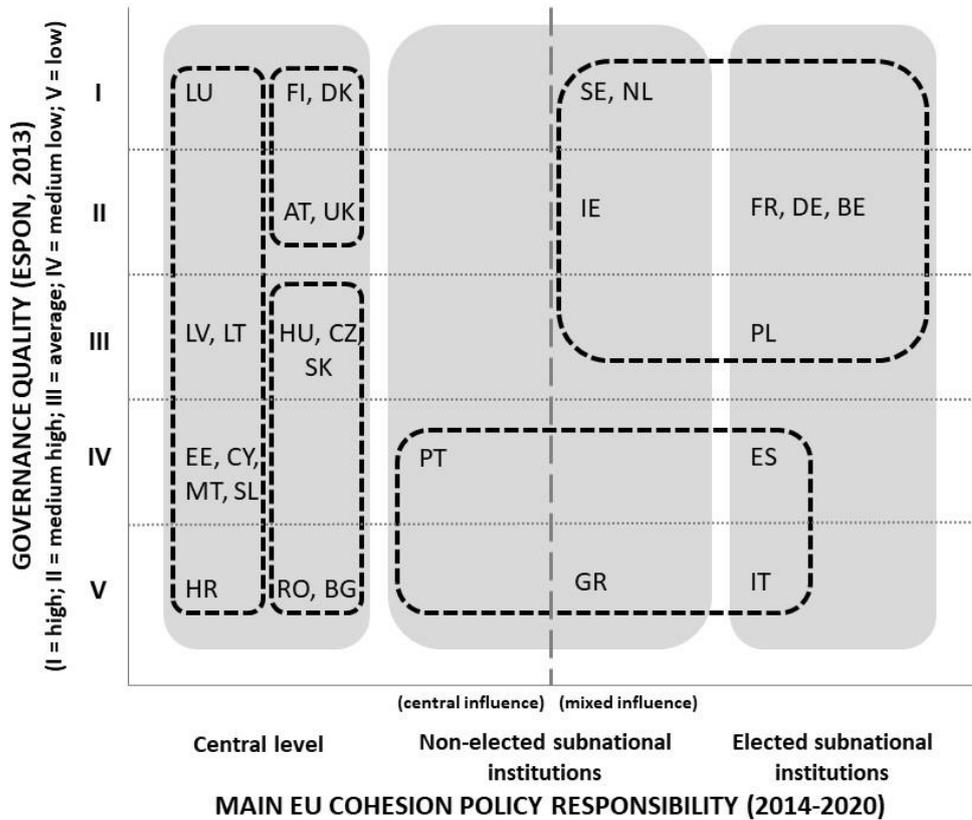
- New member countries that, despite being more or less successful to establish a sub-national layer responsible for regional development during the 1990s and the 2000s, continue to manage EU cohesion policy centrally (Bulgaria, **Czech Republic**, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia).
- Countries that, whilst being characterised by mature spatial planning systems of a comprehensive integrated nature, decided to (re-)nationalize the management of EU cohesion policy, mostly due to the scarce magnitude of the received support whose use is therefore tailored to specific issues (Austria, Finland, Denmark). (ESPON, 2017: 9).

**Map 4.1**  
**Management of the EU policy. A European typology**



Source: authors' elaboration based on Gloersen and Corbineau (2019) and own research.

**Figure 4.1**  
**A typology of multilevel regional development governance in the EU**



Source: authors' adaptation on Cotella et al., 2021

The METRO case studies appear to fit the above typologies rather well. In Belgium for instance, which is an example of regionalised governance, the three regions have the full management of ERDF. As a consequence, the Brussels-Capital Region develops and manages an autonomous ERDF ROP, that however concerns a limited territory if compared to the extension of Brussels FUA, hence depriving it from a clear metropolitan dimension<sup>30</sup>. In order to produce effective metropolitan development strategies, coordination among Brussels-Capital Region, Flanders and Wallonia would be required to this end, but it is rather difficult to achieve due to the lack of leverage that the Brussels-Capital Region can exert over the other two bodies (that may not necessarily have at heart Brussels metropolitan issues) and to the limited amount of resources that characterise the ROP.

France, Italy, Poland and Portugal are characterised by a “mixed regionalized” governance of the ESIF, and the same may be true for Spain when considering the exceptional context of Catalonia. In France, regions are the main authorities managing the whole amount of ERDF and 35% of the ESF. As far as the ERDF is concerned, the Rhône-Alpes region was bound by the agreement between the Ministry for Urban Affairs and the Association of Regions, providing that in France 10% of the ERDF funding must be devoted to urban areas and their priority districts. As a consequence of this agreement, the Rhône-Alpes region decided to devote € 39 million to the use of ITIs to be awarded through a call and, through the latter, *Métropole de Lyon* was entrusted as Intermediate Body for an amount of € 8 million. Moreover, *Métropole de Lyon* is the only

<sup>30</sup> This situation differs from the one of other large cities belonging to Wallonia and Flanders, that do not have any ESIF management role.

French metropolitan government that develops social policies as part of its official competencies, as it exercises the powers of the Rhône department within its territory. As a consequence, *Métropole de Lyon* plays also the role of intermediary body for the related ESF NOP, receiving a grant of € 25.5 million for the period 2017-2020, that were used to support a specific Metropolitan Integration Program for Employment (PMI'e).

In Italy, the cohesion policy is implemented in Italy through 75 NOPs and ROPs. 12 NOPs are managed at the national level and cover the entire territory, in relation to specific national competencies that are not shared with the regions or to investments that are characterised by a supra-regional dimension. Among them, the most interesting in the framework of the METRO project are the NOP Metropolitan Cities and the NOP "Governance and Institutional Capacity". In addition to the NOPs, 39 ROPs (either specific for ESF or EDRF, or encompassing both funds) are managed by the 19 Italian Regions and the 2 Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano. The National Agency for Territorial Cohesion is responsible for managing and implementing the NOP Metropolitan Cities, that however identifies the 14 capital municipalities of the Italian metropolitan cities as intermediate bodies that locally manage the program. Every city is responsible for creating its own operational plan that lists the actions to pursue and the actors to engage. Within this framework, the actual engagement of the metropolitan authority in the definition of this plan varies from context to context and depends on the peculiar local governance and cooperation dynamics, as the differences between the cases of Turin and Florence clearly highlight. When it comes to the NOP Governance and Institutional Capacity, the Metropolitan Cities have not been directly involved in the institutional governance of the programme but were involved by the National Association of Italian Municipalities in the *Metropoli Strategiche* initiative, which contributed to strengthening their institutional capacity. Finally, it is also worth recalling, as already mentioned before, that the Metropolitan City of Turin acted as intermediate body for some ESF ROP measures in 2014-20, in particular for what concerns education and vocational training. These competences were however brought back in the hands of the regional level in the 2021-27 programming period.

In Poland, the EU cohesion policy is under the responsibility of the Minister of Funds and Regional Policy. Its implementation is broken down into two main levels, with EU funding being distributed both by the Ministry and by 16 ROPs managed by regional Marshal offices. The latter distribute ESIF to the municipal and rural communes through call for projects pivoted on the EU policy aims and the main objectives of the respective Regional Development Strategies. More in detail, the Metropolitan Area of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot (MAG) territory has been interested by as many as five national and regional OPs, that have however been implemented without any factual involvement of the MAG association, with the notable exception of the ITI. However, the MAG association could apply for financing from these OPs as a beneficiary. In Portugal, the EU cohesion policy follows a rather hierarchical architecture, that links the national level and the NUTS2 regional bodies (CCDR) through a top-down governance model, despite the EU instances for a more decentralized approach. The programming period 2014-20 brought a number of inputs favouring decentralization, most notably the introduction of the ITIs. One of them is managed by the Lisbon Metropolitan Area as intermediate body, that is responsible to define its priorities, to implement the strategy and to approve investments and projects.

In Spain, in the context of Barcelona, the situation has evolved through time, reinforcing its exceptional nature. An agreement was signed in 2018 between the Catalan government and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, granting the latter with the management of €30 million from the Catalan ERDF ROP to be used to promote metropolitan policies. Despite the importance of this milestone for the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, one should note that the agreement is limited to only 35 of the 36 municipalities that compose the metropolitan area, excluding the municipality of Barcelona. The latter has its own agreement with the regional government, that contemplates a range of actions larger than those of the Metropolitan Area's agreement (5 priority axes against 3) and a higher amount of resources (EUR 40 million against EUR 30 million). As a consequence of these agreements, municipalities belonging to the Metropolitan institution can benefit from the EU cohesion policy in four different ways: (1) ERDF from the Urban Axis of the NOP (Sustainable urban development and low carbon projects); (2) ERDF funds from the ROP through the Catalonia-Barcelona Metropolitan Area agreement; (3) ERDF directly from EC initiative (e.g. Urban Innovative Actions and URBACT); and (4) ERDF and ESF funds from the Catalan ROPs. In the presence of such high level of complexity, local authorities (and especially the smaller municipalities) tend to avoid NOP and ROP related calls, preferring

to participate to direct EC calls in the form of UIA and URBACT, and this reduces the potential metropolitan impact of the EU cohesion policy.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, the Czech Republic and Latvia are characterised by a rather centralized EU cohesion policy governance. In the Czech Republic, the main actors programming and managing the ESIF are the individual ministries, with the Ministry of Regional Development that leads the development of the EU cohesion policy documents and the other ministries that acts as managing authorities of the NOPS. The latter are produced at the national level, with the exception of OP Prague Growth Pole 2014-20, that has been however suppressed in the 2021-27 programming period. Importantly in relation to the scope of the METRO project, the 2014-20 Strategy for Regional Development of the country opted to address regional development through the territorial frame of functional urban areas, in so doing contributing to the adoption of metropolitan ITIs as the one focusing on the Brno Metropolitan Area. On the other hand, in the Latvian context, the central government, acting as the managing authority, signed a delegation agreement for ITIs with the nine main municipalities of the country, recognising them the role of intermediate bodies. Based on criteria defined by the national ministries, each of these municipalities has been required to draft a development programme including a list of potential projects. Under this framework, the planning regions instituted in 2009 (including the Riga Planning Region which was created in 2006) have a relatively small impact on the distribution of investments<sup>32</sup>. The main decision-making body of the planning region (the Regional Development Council) is only asked to provide a statement concerning the programme, before the national government directly contracts with the cities the projects to be implemented under the ITIs umbrella.

Table 4.3 displays the high heterogeneity that characterises the involvement of metropolitan areas in the EU cohesion policy, and demonstrates that different national governments have interpreted the EU requirements differentially. If one excludes Brussels-Capital Region that acts as ERDF managing authority due to its regional status, in all other cases the role of metropolitan actors is limited to that of intermediate body or beneficiaries of funds, that are programmed and managed by other authorities at the national and regional levels. However, not all contexts fit the same cattle of fish. In some cases, as for instance in the metropolitan areas of Barcelona, Lisbon or Lyon, the metropolitan governance structures and cooperation practices that were already in place contributed to structure the EU cohesion policy architecture and ultimately to the devolution of a rather relevant amounts of resources to metropolitan management. In the case of Italy, on the other hand the Metropolitan Cities of Florence and Turin did not benefit from the same treatment and have to come to terms with the availability of scarce or no resource to manage. Finally, in the framework of the Central and Eastern European countries involved in the METRO study, the introduction of the ITIs has contributed to cover for the lack of metropolitan administrative units, providing at the same time precious momentum to the debate on the establishment of the latter.

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<sup>31</sup> In relation to the implementation of the EU cohesion policy in the Spanish context, it is worth mentioning the existence of the Network of Urban Initiatives (RIU), launched in 2009 to coordinate and support local authorities in the implementation of urban strategies co-financed through ESIF. Reinforced for the period 2014-20, the RIU coordinates and supports the management of Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development Strategies (EDUSI) and Low Carbon Economy Projects (both drawing on the ERDF Urban Axis), the UIAs and the URBACT program.

<sup>32</sup> In Latvia, five planning regions were created a decade ago, following the 5 May 2009 decision no. 391 of the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers: "Decisions on Territories of the Planning Regions".

**Table 4.3**  
**The role of metropolitan areas in the 2014-20 EU cohesion policy OPs**

Metro area	Managing Authority	Intermediary Body	Beneficiary
Barcelona (AMB)	No	No	Yes. ERDF ROP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TO 2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, ICT</li> <li>- TO 4. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors</li> <li>- TO 6. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency</li> </ul>
Brno (BMA)	No	Yes (ITI – OPs IROP, OPTAK)	Yes (ITI from NOP ERDF, CF, ESF)
Brussels (BCR)	Brussels Capital-Region (no role of metro area)	-	-
Florence (CMFi)	No	Yes, but only until 2015 (ROP ESF-Employment)	Yes (ROP ESF- Employment)
Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot (MAG)	No	ROP (ITI)	ROP, NOPs (Infrastructure and Environment: public transport, energy, energy efficiency, the transmission of heat, heating systems)
Lisbon (LMA)	<u>No</u>	Yes (ROP ITI)	Yes Lisbon ROP and NOPs: NOPs Competitiveness and Internationalization (ERDF, ESF and Cohesion Fund), Social Inclusion and Employment (ESF), and Sustainability and Efficiency in the Use of Resources (Cohesion Fund).
Lyon (MdL)	No	Yes (NOP ESF, ERDF ITI)	Yes (NOP ESF, ERDF ITI)
Riga (RMA)	No	There are no ROPs in Latvia	Yes (NOP)
Turin (CMT0)	No	Yes (ROP ESF Education and Welfare; Productive Activities)	Yes

Source: authors' own elaboration.

#### 4.2.1 A variety of implementation arrangements

A particularly interesting evidence collected through the METRO case studies analysis concerns the different arrangements put in place to implement the EU cohesion policy. These arrangements are rather diverse, reflecting the choices made by national and regional actors when designing the partnership agreements, the NOPs and the ROPs.

The most relevant innovation emerging from the analysis concerns the introduction of the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs) in the 2014-20 programming period, as instruments aiming at the implementation of integrated territorial development strategies in urban and functional areas. ITIs allow the Member States to

combine investments from several priority axes of one or more OPs in support of multi-dimensional and cross-sectoral interventions.<sup>33</sup>

As shown in Table 4.4 and Map 4.2, in the programming period 2014-20 ITIs have been used by as many as 20 Member States over 28, with the notable exceptions of Denmark, Spain or Sweden. When it comes to federal or highly regionalised countries, states and regions have often decided autonomously whether to adopt the instrument or not. For instance, in France, out of the 27 regions existing in 2014, only 16 decided to use the ITI tool. In Belgium, whereas Flanders has chosen to adopt the instrument, the Regions of Brussels-Capital and Wallonia did not<sup>34</sup>. In Germany, only two Landers opted to develop a ITI.<sup>35</sup>

**Table 4.4**  
**The adoption of Integrated Territorial Investment in the Member States (2014-20)**

Country	ITI	Country	ITI	Country	ITI
Austria	no	Germany	yes (1 out of 16 Länder – urban, rural)	<b>Poland</b>	yes (metropolitan)
<b>Belgium</b>	yes (only in Flanders - rural)	Greece	yes (metropolitan, urban, rural)	<b>Portugal</b>	yes (metropolitan)
Bulgaria	no	Hungary	no	Romania	yes (rural)
Croatia	yes (metropolitan)	Ireland	no	Slovakia	yes (metropolitan)
Cyprus	no	<b>Italy</b>	yes (11 regions over 21 –urban + rural)	Slovenia	yes (urban)
<b>Czech Republic</b>	yes (metropolitan)	<b>Latvia</b>	yes (urban)	<b>Spain</b>	yes (urban)
Denmark	no	Lithuania	yes (urban)	Sweden	yes (urban + rural)
Estonia	no	Luxembourg	Yes (urban)	United Kingdom	yes (only in England – metropolitan + urban)
Finland	yes (national-urban)	Malta	no		
<b>France</b>	yes (16 regions out of 27- metropolitan, urban, rural)	The Netherlands	yes (urban)		

Source: authors' elaboration on <https://urban.jrc.ec.europa.eu/strat-board/#/where>

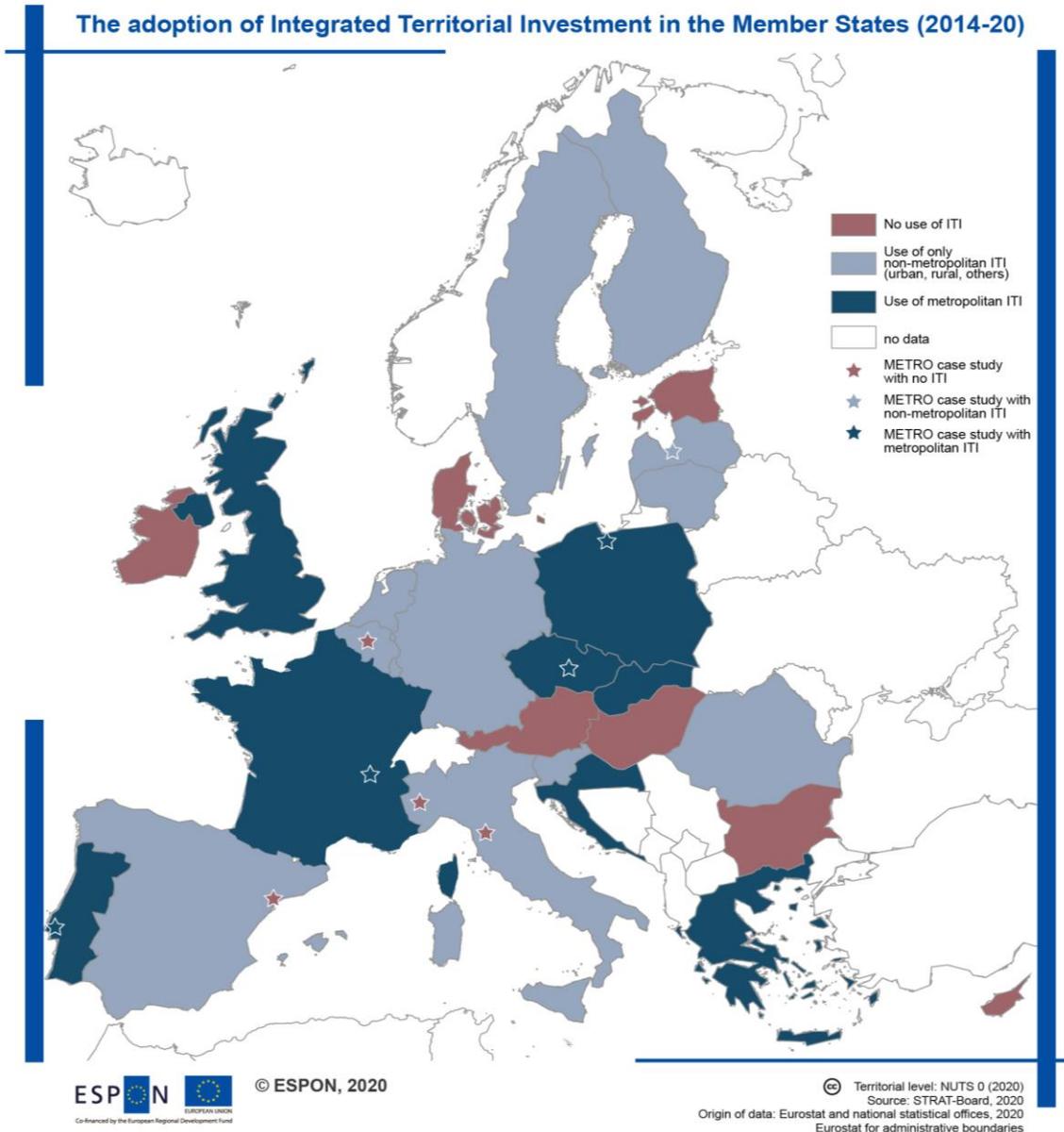
<sup>33</sup> While not being a binding condition for its use, ITI allows the joint use of various funding sources, as ERDF and ESF, but also Cohesion Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and European Maritime and Fishery Fund, in the territories that are eligible for their support.

<sup>34</sup> This can be explained by the fact that the Brussels-Capital Region is already in charge of its own ERDF OP targeting a rather urbanised area, and which aims to contribute to the sustainable development of the city as a whole through integrated actions.

<sup>35</sup> The differential implementation is intrinsic to the voluntary adoption that accompany the ITI model. According to Tosics (2017) the regulatory framework of the ITI is insufficiently prescriptive to successfully challenge national and regional authorities that are unwilling to devolve budgets and responsibilities at the local level.

**Map 4.2**

**The adoption of Integrated Territorial Investment in the Member States (2014-20)**



Source: authors' elaboration

According to the regulation that instituted them, ITIs allow to develop integrated strategies and actions in very diversified settings: deprived neighbourhoods, cities and urban areas, city-regions and metropolitan areas, geographical areas of a region isolated from each other but who share the same characteristics (e.g. a network of small and medium-sized towns), rural areas, cross-border areas, etc. When it comes to their relevance to the issues at stake in the METRO project, however, ITIs developed around the EU can be classified in relation to their spatial scope and, more importantly, to whether or not they concern a metropolitan/functional urban area (CEMR, 2014):

- In several Member States, ITIs target **deprived urban neighbourhoods** which are confronted with specific common challenges as identified following selected socio-economic criteria. In the Nether-

lands, this type of ITI has been adopted in relation to the country's largest conurbations (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht). This approach has been adopted also in France, but the size of the municipalities targeted by ITIs varies from region to region, to encompass both large cities and medium-sized towns (e.g. Chambéry in the Rhône-Alpes region).

- In some countries, ITIs were developed at the **city level**. For instance, in Lithuania, the five largest cities above 100,000 inhabitants have each been provided with an ITI. Similarly, In the Latvian context ITIs were developed for the 9 main cities of the country. Also Slovakia features eight ITIs at the city level, but it also developed eight regional ITIs.
- In other national contexts, ITIs were adopted to address development dynamics at the level of **functional urban areas** or **city regions**. This is the case in Poland, where 24 ITIs were implemented, focusing on the functional area of the 17 regional capital and other 7 regional and sub-regional important centres. Similarly, in the Czech Republic ITIs were introduced focusing on the functional urban areas of Prague and Brno.
- Finally, it is worth mentioning that in Finland one single ITI has been established to cover **the country six largest cities**, which together hosts 30% of the inhabitants of Finland. In this peculiar case, the concerned city authorities have cooperated to the definition of a joint development strategy.

Whereas there are multiple examples of ITIs concerning urban and metropolitan issues, there are also countries in which ITIs have been adopted with a different aim. This is the case in Spain, where the ERDF NOP (called Multiregional OP in Spain) foresees, on the one side, the possibility that urban agglomerations (formed by one or more municipalities with at least 20,000 inhabitants) may develop "Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development Strategies"; and, on the other side, it defines specific ITIs for the cities of Jaén and Cádiz, two cities which were deeply affected by the economic crisis of 2008. Also in Italy ITIs lack a metropolitan focus. Of the 11 regions that decided to adopt the tool, most used it as a framework instrument to develop integrated territorial development strategies in remote rural areas, under the so-called National Strategy for Inner Areas (Cotella & Vitale Brovarone, 2020), and only 6 regions used them in support of integrated urban development.

Of the 9 metropolitan areas analysed in the context of the METRO project, ITIs have been adopted in five cases: Brno, Gdansk, Lisbon, Lyon and Riga. In the cases of Brno, where no metropolitan institution existed, the ITI area has been tailored almost exactly on the boundaries of the functional urban region. In the context of the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area, despite the MAG association boundaries exceeds those of the FUA, the ITI has been shaped accordingly. In Lisbon, it deals with an institutional NUTS3 region that is marginally smaller than the metropolitan area, so the ITI denotes a high functional level content. In the Riga context, the institution of an urban ITI followed the decision from the central government to use the tool to support the promotion of development in the main Latvian cities.

In the French context, a different approach is followed, as it is exemplified by the case in the case of *Métropole de Lyon*. More in detail, the urban axis of the ERDF ROP concerns those deprived urban neighbourhood that have been identified following socioeconomic indicators defined at the national level. Then, as a consequence of an agreement between the French regions and the Ministry of Urban Affairs, the *Métropole de Lyon* was provided with an ITI targeting the deprived neighbourhoods included in its perimeter. The small amount of ERDF resources allocated (€ 8 million, to be compared with € 10.8 million for an Integrated Urban Project during the 2007-2013 period) raises however questions in relation to the impact of the adopted integrated approach. On the one hand, the ITI certainly promoted the consolidation of territorial approach to development that builds on the needs and potentials of the specific places. On the other hand, the implemented actions focus on economic development, digital culture and the thermal renovation of social housing, thus involving a rather limited mobilization of actors in the environmental, social and economic fields. The situation is different in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area ITI, where the thematic scope is wider and includes the transition to a low carbon economy, environmental protection and energy efficiency, actions to fight social integration, poverty and discrimination. This difference may depend on the variable size of funding delivered through the ITI in the different metropolitan areas (Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5**  
**ITI funding in the METRO case studies**

Metro area	ITI funding* (Million €)	Population in the area targeted by the ITI	ITI funding per capita (€)
Brno	235	628,207 (2019)	374.5
Gdansk	390.4	1,365,712	285.9
Lisbon	174.9	2,863,000	61.1
Lyon	17.4	1,390,240	12.5
Riga**	29.028	621,120 (2020)	46.7

\*Total funding (EU and the national or local counterpart) for the whole 2014-20 period

\*\* All figures only for Riga City

Source: Authors' elaboration

When it comes to the role that metropolitan actors play in the implementation of the ITIs, in all cases the official responsibility remains in the hands of the Managing Authority of the OPs (at the national or regional level). However, according to the EU regulations, these authorities are allowed to designate intermediate bodies, including local authorities, regional development bodies or non-governmental organisations, to carry out some or all of the management and implementation tasks. In this light, the form and degree of the ITI management delegation may vary, as a consequence of the administrative arrangements of the Member State or region.

Interestingly, if the ITI implements integrated actions for sustainable urban development (Article 7 of the ERDF regulation), to delegate to urban authorities tasks related to the selection of the projects to be implemented is mandatory, and this has occurred in the case of *Métropole de Lyon* and of the Latvian municipalities (among which are the cities of Riga and Jurmala).

The Metropolitan Area of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot is the intermediate body responsible for the implementation of the respective ITI programme, as it is the case for all 24 regional capitals and regional and subregional centres interested by an ITI in the Polish context. In so doing, the Association of Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area has been acting as intermediate body for the Pomorskie ROP, managing a high quantity of resources that allowed for the implementation of 190 projects. In Poland, the ITI was selected as the core instrument to promote metropolitan policies and to support the territorial development of the urban areas hosting over three hundred thousand inhabitants, through integrated strategies aimed at sustainable urban development. The national framework which was designed for the ITI implementation in 2014-20 enabled cities to set up new arrangements (which may be called ITI metropolitan institutions). They were empowered to programme (within preselected objectives) their own integrated strategies, and to manage their implementation. However, the strategies required the approval from the Ministry of Regional Development, providing some sort of top-down control to the whole process.

A similar situation concerned the case of Brno where the responsible authority, while strongly advocating for moving metropolitan cooperation behind the simple implementation of the ITI had to programme, manages and implements its ITI envelope following the guidelines included in the various NOPs. Thus, while the metropolitan decision-makers of Brno acquired new powers and responsibilities, they remained at the same time subjected to the control of the Ministry of Regional Development and of the NOPs managing authorities.

Building on the METRO case studies, it is possible to highlight a number of pitfalls that has characterised the implementation of metropolitan ITIs in the programming period 2014-20. Even in those cases where their introduction played a positive role in the consolidation of metropolitan governance and cooperation some limits emerge in relation to the fact that the ITI perimeter did not always match the one of the functional urban region (e.g. in the Metropolitan Areas Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot and in the cities of Riga and Jurmala). In some other cases, the organisation implementing the ITI encountered problems of legitimacy *vis-à-vis* other actors (MAG) or of accountability (Brno). Moreover, the case of Brno also highlighted how the ITI structure and regulations set a number of constraints in terms of the scope of the objectives and demonstrated a scarce flexibility in the implementation, due to its strict set of indicators and financial plan. An additional limitation concerns the administrative cumbersomeness of the instruments. In this regard, it is significant that Latvia

has decided not to adopt anymore the ITI in the current form for the next programming period, due to the excessive administrative burden they represented for the local authorities. On the other hand, from all cases emerges that the main asset of the ITI model concerns the possibilities it offers in combining funding linked to different thematic objectives. For instance, the Lisbon ITI brings together eight investment priorities from the Lisbon ROP, funded by ERDF and ESF, and two other from the NOP Sustainability and Efficiency in the Use of Resources (POSEUR), funded by the Cohesion Fund.

Leaving aside the analysis of the ITI and its adoption in the metropolitan areas investigated by the METRO project, other arrangements for the implementation of the EU cohesion policy were setup elsewhere. The case of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area is here emblematic, as it gained an incremental recognition throughout the programming period despite having played only a limited, informal role during the elaboration of the ROP. More in particular, the chapter of the ROP concerning Integrated territorial development approach explicitly mentioned that the Barcelona Metropolitan Area would have had a prominent role due its regional relevance, competences and resources. As a consequence, an agreement between the Catalan regional government and the Metropolitan Area was signed in 2017 however limited to the 35 municipalities surrounding Barcelona municipality but excluding the latter (that signed its own agreement with the regional government, and acts as an intermediate body within the ERDF ROP<sup>36</sup>).

When it comes to the new programming period 2021-27, the introduction of an ITI could indeed represent a good option for the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, as it could contribute to support integrated actions in urban areas and offer the possibility to combine funding linked to different thematic objectives, including the combination of funding from those priority axes and operational programmes supported by the ERDF and ESF. Also in the case of the Brussels-Capital Region, that currently fully manages its own ERDF ROP however on a territory that is around 30 times smaller than the actual Brussels FUA, to explore the feasibility of the ITI model could be a good path to pursue.

In conclusion, a particular mention may be made of the case of Italy. Whereas neither the national level nor the regions have put in place any framework for the introduction of metropolitan ITI, Italy has been the only European country to dedicate a NOP to the development of its metropolitan areas. This initiative is interesting since it aims to address the coordination of all the territorial and organizational challenges faced by Italian metropolitan areas on the basis of two main strategic drivers (Smart City and social innovation). This NOP mixes resources from the ERDF the ESF and devotes a budget of 40 million euros for each city located in the more developed and in transition regions, and 90 million euros for each city in the less developed regions. If we set aside the fact that the projects are implemented by the core municipality, this instrument could serve as an inspiration for the development of some sort of Metropolitan OP or ITI, that may be then adopted in the different European contexts to support integrated metropolitan development.

### 4.3 The role of metropolitan private actors and the civil society in EU cohesion policy

The METRO case studies provided interesting information also in relation to the involvement of private actors and of civil society actors in the management and implementation of the EU cohesion policy, an issue that lies at the very centre of the EU governance agenda since more than two decades (CEC 2001). The EU defines those actors very broadly, namely social partners, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders, and their involvement is regulated by the prescriptions of the Article 5 of the EU Regulation N. 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council. These issues are then further substantiated in a special document defining the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the ESIF (CEC 2014).

The involvement of various types of actors in the policy and implementation process can serve very different purposes, related to the quality and clarity of the outputs but also to the desired characteristics of the planning process such as its fairness, openness, social justice (e.g. Morf et al. 2019; Lalenis 2016). At the same time, participation dynamics should be always context-dependent in line with the needs, resources, existing

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<sup>36</sup> Overall, the City of Barcelona can develop a greater range of actions than the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (5 priority axes, against 3 in the AMB agreement) and it receives a higher amount of funds (EUR 40 million against EUR 30 million).

institutions and stakeholders' preparedness (Giacometti et al. 2020). Properly designed and facilitated participation increases the ownership of the social process in which stakeholders participate. This is important, in particular, in relation to grass-root initiatives that pave the way for new legal or administrative arrangements and in those cases where firm legislative frames are lacking (such initiatives are usually based on the principles of the urgency of needs, common understanding of the desired solutions etc.). Moreover, participation is essential for the territorial dialogue, necessary in the situation of fuzzy borders and flexible territorial arrangements as recently discussed extensively by Faludi (2018; 2019). This is especially relevant for metropolitan areas since they are characterised by a high degree of institutional fragmentation and in search of effective forms of dialogue and cooperation across the institutional perimeters. Various other benefits of participation have been also identified in the literature such as sharing and developing the necessary knowledge, improving legitimacy, addressing value-based conflicts or fostering stakeholders' empowerment. However, in parallel, participation might raise questions in relation to conflict escalation, strengthening power asymmetries and favouring vested interests etc. (Morf et al. 2019a, Jansen et al., 1998; Stirling, 2008).

These observations are important in the context of the metropolitan processes described in the METRO study. Many of them are very recent, based on voluntary agreements and actions, formed by the joint interests of metropolitan actors who strive to improve their position in the various decision-making formal processes at various scales (regional, national and EU). Therefore, a wise inclusion of the different interests is extremely important for the success of metropolitan projects, and deficits or limitations in this process might result in failing to achieve the necessary critical mass to claim a stronger role for metropolitan governance.

As far as the development and implementation of the cohesion policy at the metropolitan level is concerned, the role that the private sector and civil society representatives could play can in principle take various forms:

- Engagement in the elaboration of the regulative strategic documents deciding on the key arrangements for the EU cohesion policy at the EU and national level (e.g. EU regulations, National regulations, partnership agreements);
- Engagement in the elaboration of strategic documents framing the scope of the EU cohesion policy in a given metro area (e.g. regional or national strategies);
- Engagement in the elaboration of the programmes and instruments deputed to the management and implementation of the EU cohesion policy in a given metro area (various OPs, ITI etc.);
- Participation in EU cohesion policy implementation and monitoring in a given metro area;
- Preparation and execution of projects in a given metro area;
- Monitoring the results of the cohesion policy in a metro area (through assessment reports etc.).

Business and civil society actors can participate in the aforesaid processes in a given metro area because of different legal arrangements. Two possible situations were distinguished in the analysis:

- **Conscious participation:** actors were asked to participate because of their metropolitan nature or relevance. In other words, their participation was foreseen in various legal acts or administrative routines as representative of the business or civic interests.
- **Accidental participation:** actors participate accidentally, asked to join various fora because of the need to include social actors but not necessarily those representing specific interests.

Finally, one should keep in mind that participation can take various forms (Lalenis 2016; Morf et al. 2019b), as described by Arnstein participation ladder (1969):

- **Information** – Providing information, in form of communication towards stakeholders<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Dwelling on Matczak et al. (2014), we restrict this category to targeted information about relevant aspects of the cohesion policy process, hence disregarding non-targeted ways of information i.e. publications of various websites

- **Education** – Explaining or raising awareness of something - often in order to change attitudes/action – in the form of communication towards stakeholders.
- **Consultation** – Asking opinions of stakeholders through various ways of asking for opinions or reactions to a particular draft decision (e.g. phone inquiries, focus groups, debates). It entails a two-ways communication but final decisions are made by those who are doing the consulting.<sup>38</sup>
- **Involvement** – More than just opinions are expected and participants may be part of the solution through taking action, endorsing something, etc. Communication is two-ways, responsibilities are not necessarily formally set out and relationships between participants may remain unclear.
- **Partnership** – Direct involvement in decision making and action, with all parties having clear roles and responsibilities and powers – usually for a defined purpose/shared common goal.
- **Devolved Power** – Giving away decision making, resources and control. It also entails clear lines of accountability and two-ways communication with those giving away the power.

In this report the Arnstein’s ladder is not treated as a hierarchical, absolute construct i.e. one-directional movement from a lower to the upper level. On the contrary, one can imagine that depending on needs, stakeholders might become project partners without being proactively involved or consulted on the project scope, content and necessary characteristics. As noted by Morf et al. (2019b: 226), an important insight from the literature is that “there is no linear progression between different levels of power”.<sup>39</sup>

Based on the aforesaid elements, Table 4.6 shows the involvement of private operators and/or civil society in the development and implementation of metro related parts of EU cohesion policy.<sup>40</sup>

**Table 4.6**  
**Involvement of private actors and the civil society in the EU cohesion policy at the metropolitan level**

	Regulatory strategic documents (partnership agreements)	Content related strategies (regional strategies)	Implementing documents (e.g. OPs)	participating in EU cohesion policy Management	Participating in projects	Monitoring EU cohesion policy results (Advisory Boards)
Being informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>• Brno (cpr)</li> <li>• Florence (B&amp;NGO apr)<sup>41</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>• Brno cpr)</li> <li>• MA Florence (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>• Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot cpr<sup>45</sup>(B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>• Lisbon (B&amp;NGO (apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>• Brno cpr)</li> <li>• Brussels (apr)</li> <li>• Florence (B&amp;NGO cpr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>• <sup>46</sup></li> <li>• Brno (cpr)</li> <li>• Brussels (apr)</li> <li>• Florence (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>• Brno(cpr)</li> <li>• Brussels (cpr)</li> <li>• Florence (B&amp;NGO cpr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>• Brno (cpr)</li> <li>• Brussels (apr)</li> <li>• Florence (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> </ul>

<sup>38</sup> Dwelling on Matczak et al. (2014), we distinguish between asking stakeholders for inputs revealing their existing practice and interests or asking for opinions and reflections a draft proposal of a strategy or a plan).

<sup>39</sup> Bishop and Davis (2002) relate the required level of citizen control, to the nature of the policy problem. Since the nature of the problem might change the levels of participation should be adjusted accordingly.

<sup>40</sup> The Identification of what private and civil society actors to consider in the analysis as relevant for the metropolitan level is of course subjective and based on the concrete experience of the different areas and their networking patterns.

<sup>41</sup> The social and economic forces and representatives of civil society are involved in a consultation aimed at drafting the partnership agreement at the national level, not as metropolitan actors.

<sup>45</sup> All CPRs in Polish case are related to regional level of EU cohesion policy i.e. to regional strategies and regional OP. For national level no role.

<sup>46</sup> AMB business and civil society partners participate only in the Monitoring Committee of the Agreement Generalitat-AMB. Not in the Management or Advisory Boards of EU cohesion policy. This committee is only for monitoring projects which AMB is responsible for from Regional ERDF

	Regulatory strategic documents (partnership agreements)	Content related strategies (regional strategies)	Implementing documents (e.g. OPs)	participating in EU cohesion policy Management	Participating in projects	Monitoring EU cohesion policy results (Advisory Boards)
Consultations: being asked for input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MA Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)<sup>42</sup></li> <li>MA Riga(apr)<sup>43</sup></li> <li>MA Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)<sup>44</sup></li> <li>Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>Brno(cpr)</li> <li>Florence (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot cpr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot cpr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Riga(apr)<sup>12</sup></li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>Brussels (apr)</li> <li>Florence</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot cpr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot apr</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Lyon(cpr)<sup>47</sup></li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>Brno cpr)</li> <li>Brussels (apr)</li> <li>Florence (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot apr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Lyon (cpr)</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot cpr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Lyon (cpr)</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>Brno(cpr)</li> <li>Brussels (cpr)</li> <li>Florence (B&amp;NGO cpr)</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot cpr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Lyon (cpr)</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot apr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Lyon apr</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Barcelona(apr)</li> <li>Brno cpr)</li> <li>Brussels (apr)</li> <li>Florence (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot apr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Lyon apr</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> </ul>
Consultations: being asked for opinion/reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>Brno(cpr)</li> <li>Florence (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot cpr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>Brno(cpr)</li> <li>Florence (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot cpr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Barcelona(apr)</li> <li>Brussels (apr)</li> <li>Florence(apr)</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot cpr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barcelona(apr)</li> <li>Brussels (apr)</li> <li>Florence(apr)</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot cpr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>Brno cpr)</li> <li>Brussels (apr)</li> <li>Florence (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot apr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Lyon (cpr)</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>Brno cpr)</li> <li>Brussels (apr)</li> <li>Florence (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot apr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Lyon (cpr)</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>Brno(cpr)</li> <li>Brussels (cpr)</li> <li>Florence (B&amp;NGO cpr)</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot cpr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Lyon apr</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>Brno(cpr)</li> <li>Brussels (cpr)</li> <li>Florence (B&amp;NGO cpr)</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot cpr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Lyon (cpr)</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Barcelona(apr)</li> <li>Brno cpr)</li> <li>Brussels (apr)</li> <li>Florence (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot apr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Lyon apr</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barcelona(apr)</li> <li>Brno cpr)</li> <li>Brussels (apr)</li> <li>Florence (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot apr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Lyon apr</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> <li>Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Barcelona(apr)</li> <li>Brno cpr)</li> <li>Brussels (apr)</li> <li>Florence (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot apr B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>Lyon apr</li> <li>Riga(apr)</li> </ul>

<sup>42</sup> NGO and business organizations that participate are not associated with their metropolitan nature since regional nature prevails. So, it is an accidental participation of B&NGO. However, it must be noted that metropolitan area overlaps NUTS2 region and it is also possible to consider that B&NGO have a conscious participation since their focus on the region coincides with the metropolitan area.

<sup>43</sup> In Latvia, Regulatory strategic documents (e.g. partnership agreements), elaboration of key documents implementing EU cohesion policy (OP), Monitoring Committee and Advisory Boards of EU cohesion policy are related to national level. The private operators and/or civil society on national level are often represented by associations (e.g. Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Latvian Employers Confederation etc). Therefore, private operators and civil society from Riga MA could be represented by various national level sectoral associations and civic organizations. However, these activities have not direct affiliation with the Riga MA, rather reflecting close links to the relevant sector and thematic groups.

<sup>44</sup> The social and economic forces and representatives of civil society are involved in a consultation aimed at drafting the partnership agreement at the national level, not as metropolitan actors.

<sup>47</sup> At the regional level (*comité de suivi des fonds européens, comité régional de programmation*). For participation and monitoring, at the metropolitan level.

	Regulatory strategic documents (partnership agreements)	Content related strategies (regional strategies)	Implementing documents (e.g. OPs)	participating in EU cohesion policy Management	Participating in projects	Monitoring EU cohesion policy results (Advisory Boards)
Being involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riga(apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brno cpr</li> <li>• Florence (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>• Riga(apr)</li> <li>• Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Florence (B&amp;NGO apr/cpr)<sup>48</sup></li> <li>• Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr/cpr)</li> <li>• Riga(apr)</li> <li>• Turin (B&amp;NGO apr/cpr)<sup>49</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>• Brno cpr</li> <li>• Riga(apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turin (B&amp;NGO cpr)</li> <li>• Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>• Brno(cpr)</li> <li>• Brussels (cpr)</li> <li>• Florence (B&amp;NGO cpr)</li> <li>• Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot cpr (B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>• Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>• Riga(apr)</li> <li>• Turin (B&amp;NGO cpr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turin (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>• Barcelona apr)</li> <li>• Brno (cpr)</li> <li>• Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot B&amp;NGO cpr)</li> <li>• Riga(apr)</li> <li>• Turin apr)</li> </ul>
Being partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riga(apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riga(apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riga(apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riga(apr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barcelona (apr)</li> <li>• Brno (cpr)</li> <li>• Brussels (cpr)</li> <li>• Florence (B&amp;NGO cpr)</li> <li>• Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot cpr (B&amp;NGO)</li> <li>• Lisbon (B&amp;NGO apr)</li> <li>• Riga(apr)</li> <li>• Turin (B&amp;NGO cpr)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riga(apr)</li> </ul>
Devolved Power					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barcelona (cpr)</li> <li>• Brno (cpr)</li> <li>• Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot cpr (B&amp;NGO)</li> </ul>	

Notes: B = business metropolitan partners; NGO = civil society metropolitan partners; cpr = conscious participation; apr = accidental participation.

Source: authors' elaboration

The analysis shows that, despite the guidelines and regulations developed at the EU level to promote it, the actual involvement of the Civil Society on European policy matters continues to widely vary among countries and regions (see also: Chabanet and Trechsel 2011). More in detail, two of the identified types of participation prevail within the METRO case studies:

<sup>48</sup> Metropolitan actors participate as apr in ROPs, as cpr in LAG, NOP Metro, ITP Project Piana Fiorentina.

<sup>49</sup> Metropolitan actors participate as apr in ROPs, as cpr in LAGs.

- General participation to the consultation processes organised in relation to the EU cohesion policy key documents at the national level and, in some cases, involvement in the monitoring of the performance of the OPs.
- Preparation and implementation of EU cohesion policy projects, or participation in projects prepared and initiated by the metropolitan authorities.

The participation of the private and social actors in the various processes of consultation that accompany the drafting of the EU cohesion policy documents is a legal obligation that should be fulfilled by national authorities of the member states (in line with aforementioned Article 5 of the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013). Thus, it took place in all the case studies.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, there is scarce evidence of the involvement of metropolitan private and social actors in the analysed cases in this process. The Metropolitan Cities of Turin and Florence are perhaps partial exceptions in this concern, as metropolitan social groups and actors from the business community have been to some extent involved in the implementation of some OPs priorities, of the local development strategies of the National Strategy for Inner Areas, and in Rural Development Plan initiatives that adopt the CLLD-Leader approach and are carried out by Local Action Groups. Also in the case of Brno Metropolitan Area, the civil society participated in the programming and implementation of the social cohesion thematic objective (Brno, 2015, p.144). However, a general lack of mechanism and/or regulation at the national and regional levels, aimed at the involvement of metropolitan business and civil society actors in the programming and implementation of the EU cohesion policy seems to persist.<sup>51</sup>

The situation concerning the monitoring of the OPs that, in one way or another, concern metropolitan cooperation and development is slightly brighter. Also here the participation of private and social actors with a clear link to the metropolitan governance is limited; however, sometimes it does happen. For instance, in the Pomorskie ROP, the supporting members of MAG share a seat together with two other business associations actively collaborating and involved in the MAG activities. A similar situation occurs in the context of Barcelona Metropolitan Area where the ROP Monitoring Committee includes representatives of the economic and social partners (regional unions and business representatives) of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia. In the Lisbon case, the involvement of social groups and the business communities has been until now fairly limited to the ITI monitoring committee. Also in the cases of Turin and Florence, representatives of metropolitan social groups and the business community are included in the monitoring committee of the ROPs. According to a number of interviewees, in some programmes the role of these actors is significant. In particular, in the Turin ROP ESF social players are engaged extensively and in the governance of the Rural Development Plan farmers' associations have a rather strong influence. However, this broad involvement does not have a relevant metropolitan flavour, and these actors in the majority of cases do not participate in the meetings in order to represent metropolitan issues.

The most frequent form of involvement of private and civic actors is their participation in the ESIF funded projects and, in various cases, this favoured their further engagement with metropolitan governance and cooperation and allowed them to gain deeper understanding of metropolitan challenges and needs<sup>52</sup>. Episodes of this activity have been detected in all case study areas. For instance, in Lyon, a variety of businesses and NGOs have been actively involved in the EU cohesion policy at the implementation level, and a number of NGOs specialized in vocational training, digital activities or urban agriculture have benefitted from ERDF or ESF support. A similar situation characterised the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot context, where the project run by metropolitan authorities "Support for Social Economy" provided substantive and financial support to social economy entities and linked very diverse third sector actors: Caritas of the Archdiocese of Gdańsk, Pomeranian Special Economic Zone, Foundation Regional Centre for Information and Support of NGOs, Employers of Pomerania. In Florence, the EU cohesion policy contributed to strengthen the collaboration of the tourism sector actors. The platform and the related app "Feel Florence" has been developed as a co-

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<sup>50</sup> The examples discussed in §4.1 show how this have occurred in practice in a number of cases.

<sup>51</sup> Some evidence of change in this trend is detected in the MAG case, where the association of universities became an associated partner of MAG, and may lead to a stronger role of the Universities and related actors in the 2021-27 EU cohesion policy at the metropolitan level.

<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, some case studies (e.g. the metropolitan areas of Lyon and Brno) report a less intensive involvement of the private businesses in comparison to the civil sector.

created process, within the framework of a project involving both public and private partners, in so doing favouring innovative solutions. Various relevant stakeholders, such as social and trade associations, actively participated also in the debate on the future of the metropolitan area in the post-pandemic phase (that led to the development of the strategic plan “Rinascere Firenze”). Also in the case of Turin third sector actors were involved in the implementation of various Programmes as final beneficiaries (NOP Metro, ESF and ERDF ROPs, RDP and Interreg ALCOTRA).

The most tangible results identified for private and civil society actors' involvement in the implementation of the EU cohesion policy at the METRO level are related to the project level. For instance, *Métropole de Lyon* projects were beneficial for high school pupils and their families (e.g. digital cultural classes, festival Super Tomorrow etc.). In some metropolises, positive results were also identified with regard to metropolitan governance processes. For instance, in Florence, the projects funded through the NOP Metro axis 3 (social inclusion services) reinforced the existing system of relations with the third sector associations and NGOs. Only in the case of Latvia, some evidence highlights the successful change of the content of national programming documents due to suggestions of these actors in the course of the consultation process. Whereas these changes were not necessarily driven directly by metropolitan concerns, they may contribute to the momentum towards the institution of the Riga Metropolitan Area in a long run (strengthening research and innovation capacity and introducing advanced technologies). Overall, despite the constraints linked to the financial reporting and controls, access to ESIF is perceived very positively by the concerned businesses and civil society actors, and through time various organisations have been strengthening their business models in order to be able to get increase the benefits of their participation to the EU cohesion policy.

#### 4.4 Coordinating metropolitan governance with the management and implementation of the EU cohesion policy

The coordination of the management and implementation of the EU cohesion policy with the very heterogeneous metropolitan governance and cooperation activities ongoing within the nine METRO case study areas occur according to very different models and mechanisms. More in particular, the shape that these models and mechanisms take and the way they are applied depend on the different institutional configuration that characterise each metropolitan area.

However, despite the high heterogeneity detected in the various cases, three main situations can be analytically distinguished (Table 4.7):

- Formal changes and adjustments that take place within metropolitan level structures and mechanisms;
- Formal changes and adjustments that concern the EU cohesion policy architecture and procedures;
- Episodes of soft, informal coordination and fine-tuning, that however do not involve formal institutional changes.

A higher coordination between the EU cohesion policy and metropolitan priorities and policies can be achieved by metropolitan level authorities by undertaking specific internal institutional adjustments and/or adopting dedicated policy measures. In the case of the Metropolitan city of Turin, for instance, the recently approved Metropolitan Strategic Plan tries to identify, for each action, the possible interactions and synergies with the tools and policies that are already in place and under development in the metropolitan area, as well as with the main objectives that characterise the EU cohesion policy 2021-27 programming period and the Next Generation Europe framework. Moreover, in 2019 the Metropolitan City also established a “European and International Projects and Programs” Specialized Unit within its Economic Development Department. The unit is responsible for the promotion and coordination of projects to be funded with supranational resources, in so doing aiming at ensuring a higher consistency between these projects and the Metropolitan fundamental functions and the strategic plan as well at explicitly positioning the Metropolitan City strategies with respect to the EU programming season. A similar direction is postulated by the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area, that is considering to establish a permanent team devoted to monitor the evolving socio-economic trends and to develop and coordinating a forward-looking long-term policy for the planning and development of the area, in support by also beyond the implementation of ITI projects. Also the Brno Metropolitan Area is working on the further development of metropolitan governance based on its own metropolitan agenda beyond the EU cohesion policy, in order to progressively contribute to decouple metropolitan development from the ITI instrument. Such an Agenda is also supposed to provide solid ground for metropolitan

area to be proactive *vis-à-vis* the programming of the EU cohesion policy in the programming period 2021-27. In the case of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, the main mechanisms deputed to the coordination and fine-tuning between metropolitan and EU cohesion policy priorities and actions is represented by the Technical Monitoring Committee managing the Catalan ERDF ROP resources. A key issue in this concern has been the equilibration of the number of representatives of the Generalitat and of the AMB, that in turn provides metropolitan authorities with a higher margin of influence on the implementation of the Catalan ERDF. In this case – but this also applies to other metropolitan contexts – a promising way forward is represented by the further institutionalization of the cooperation between the metropolitan area and the regional authority that is responsible for managing part of the EU cohesion policy funds.

At the same time, the required coordination between metropolitan and EU cohesion policy priorities and actions may be achieved through an adjustment of the boundaries of the latter in a way that solves the partial weaknesses that its general framework encounters when it is applied in the specific national and regional contexts. An example in this concern is represented by the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, where the metropolitan authority is exploring innovative mechanisms to favour the inclusion of metropolitan actors into the cohesion policy processes. In the case of the Métropole de Lyon, a number of challenges have been detected, related to the absence of explicit mechanisms devoted to the integration of metropolitan decision-makers in the programming of the EU cohesion policy. Similar issues are raised in the context of MAG. Whereas this lack of formal involvement in the programming activity can result in a serious limitation of the influence that metropolitan authorities exert in the programming phase, some of the analysed case studies show how it can be at least partially offset through soft, informal mechanisms. For instance, through its regular discussions with the regional branch of the national government and the regional council Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, the representatives of the *Métropole de Lyon* have been able to raise a number of specific issues of metropolitan relevance, eventually managing to achieve their upload on the EU cohesion policy agenda, and a similar result has been achieved by the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (see §4.2). Whereas these episodes of soft-coordination may result in a fine-tuning of the priorities of authorities active at the different territorial level, they may also end up influencing the actual EU cohesion policy financial allocation<sup>53</sup>.

Finally, in the context of the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area, a challenge that has recurrently been raised by the stakeholders concerns the weak legal position of Polish metropolitan areas and the need of a formal recognition of metropolitan governance in Poland as a prerequisite for fine-tuning the metropolitan governance with the EU cohesion policy management and implementation routines. According to the analysis, the EU cohesion policy and its tools would have a stronger impact on strengthening metropolitan potentials if they were accompanied by a national administrative reform that strengthened the legislative activity in metropolitan areas. According to the interviewees, the consolidation of the metropolitan governance legal framework is more important than the magnitude of the resources allocated through the EU cohesion policy to metropolitan areas, as the latter are at present institutionally too weak if compared to the goals and tasks that an effective metropolitan development governance would require. Within the framework of this reform, the EU cohesion policy funds allocated to activities in metropolitan areas could be seen as a partial compensation for local governments for transferring part of their competencies to a formally institutionalised metropolitan authorities.

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<sup>53</sup> A good example in this concern is the case of *Métropole de Lyon*, that managed to obtain the allocation of €14 million to brownfields regeneration in the 2014-20 ROP, and then used part of those resources to act upon a contaminated industrial site that lies among its responsibilities (the so-called Chemical Valley – Vallée de la Chimie).

Table 4.7

### Mechanisms adopted to coordinate metropolitan governance with the management and implementation of the EU cohesion policy

Metropolitan areas	Formal coordination. Changes within metropolitan structures	Formal coordination. Changes in EU cohesion policy architecture and procedures	Soft and informal coordination and fine-tuning
Barcelona	☺ Several postulates of fine-tuning formulated by the researchers e.g. related to planning instruments priority projects and sources of funding.	☼ An agreement concerning the Catalan ERDF signed between AMB and Catalan Government. Establishes a Technical Monitoring Committee formed by an equal number of representatives from both institutions.	△ A reinforcement of the International Relations department as a resource provider for projects managed by other departments, improving its horizontal work in the whole MA. Gaining experience in management and auditing EU cohesion policy Funds.
Brno	☺ No formal metropolitan government is present. but in the Brno Metropolitan Area, and at the national level, a working group was established to discuss and propose arrangements for the formal metropolitan government.	☼ Within the EU cohesion policy, the metropolitan areas are represented by the metropolitan Steering Committee and administrative office, which were established in association with the implementation of the ITI instrument and EU cohesion policy since 2014.	▼ Several informal or less-formal fine-tuning activities reflect upon metropolitan issues, planning and governance, including working committees in urban and regional development and policy or on metropolitan governance on the national level,.
Brussels	▼ Since no metropolitan governance and cooperation is available, no adjustments are envisaged.	▼ Within the EU cohesion policy, the several federated entities (Regions and communities) are the only actors competent to manage European funds.	▼ Several informal fine-tuning activities reflect on metropolitan planning and governance, including working committees in urban and regional development, cooperation between regional entities.
Florence	☼ A special coordination office for MA for EU funds has been established (in charge of the City of Florence)	☼ The implementation of the cohesion policy in Florence develops in an already structured governance context in which metropolitan governance structures and cooperation practices are already in place and seems to work.	☺ Even though metropolitan governance structures and cooperation practices are already in place and seems to work, the Metropolitan City aspires to acquire a more relevant role in the management of EUCPs.
Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot	☺ Postulate: permanent and institutionally established team for monitoring the socio-economic situation and coordinating/running a forward-looking long-term policy for planning and development of the area, and not only the implementation of ITI projects.	△ The MA as an Intermediary Body for ITI under the ROP of the Pomorskie Region. It will continue at the next programming period.  ☼ Territorialisation of the preparation of a new Regional Strategy – MA as one of the territorial units preparing the Strategy.	☼ Informal dialogue on the allocation of funds for ITI with the regional government.
Lisbon	☺ Postulate: need of “a methodology” that aggregates synergies, seeking to incorporate the contribution of other entities to EU cohesion policy	△ The LMA collaborates with CCDR-LVT in the Lisbon ROP. It is an Intermediate Administrative body of this instrument.	☼ The MA institution acts in several policy domains with variegated stakeholders in the metropolitan area, formally or informally, aiming at articulating strategies and actions (transport or health care or urban planning).
Lyon		▼ Absence of an explicit mechanism for the integration of metropolitan decision-makers in the programming of the EU cohesion policy	☼ Regular discussions with the regional branch of the national government and the regional council Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, the Lyon Métropole keeps pointing specific (metropolitan) issues.

Metro-politan areas	Formal coordination. Changes within metropolitan structures	Formal coordination. Changes in EU cohesion policy architecture and procedures	Soft and informal coordination and fine-tuning
Riga	<p>Δ Municipalities are involved in metropolitan cooperation in a broader sense through the Riga Planning Region, an organisation responsible for creating the Riga Metropolitan Area.</p>	<p>Δ Draft Order of the Cabinet of has been developed to ensure the inclusion of a representative of "Riga Metropolis" in the European Union Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in the Monitoring Committee of the annual programming period as a voting member.</p>	<p>☼ Participation in the Association of Riga and Pieriga Municipalities "Rigas Metropole" should foster cooperation processes. For the new planning period of 2021-27, more than two or three municipalities are involved in integrated territorial development projects. These projects will foster dialogue</p>
Turin	<p>☼ European and International Projects and Programs Specialized Unit within its Economic Development Department, responsible for the promotion and coordination of projects funded with supranational resources.</p> <p>☼ Usage of the elaboration of the Metropolitan Strategic Plan for the coordination and integration of the constellation of metropolitan objectives, targets, instruments and funding opportunities against EU cohesion policy.</p>		<p>☺ Collaboration with other Italian MAs on the elaboration of a Position paper to advocate their role in the EU cohesion policy in 2021-27.</p>

Notes: ☼ = promising situation; Δ = some progress or at least some hopes; ▼ = limited or not-existing progress; ☺ = postulates/hopes formulated by MA.

Source: Authors' elaboration

## 5 The added value of the EU cohesion policy in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies

After the discussion of the role that metropolitan areas play within the EU cohesion policy framework, this section addresses the second policy question that animates the METRO project, i.e. to reflect upon the actual added value that the EU cohesion policy has – or may have – in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies.

Overall, the EU cohesion policy covers and has a (more or less relevant) impact in every region in the EU. However, the distribution of funds reflects the level of development of each member state and region. Cohesion Fund resources are allocated to countries with a GNI per capita lower than 90% of the EU average, while ERDF and ESF targets with higher shares of resources those regions characterised by a GDP per capita that is lower than the 75% of the EU average (the so-called convergence regions). Therefore, assuming that the added value of the EU cohesion policy in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies is to a certain extent related with funding allocation, it is necessarily influenced by these two principles<sup>54</sup>. At the same time, the impact of the EU cohesion policy on metropolitan governance, planning and policies is also linked to the magnitude of the budget of each metropolitan area. In other words, whereas in the presence of larger shares of ESIF one can expect larger impacts, even small ESIF contributions can produce an impact on metropolitan areas whose budget is rather low or non-existent. Besides the magnitude of ESIF delivered on the ground and their relevance when compared to the actual magnitude of the metropolitan budget, the added value of the EU cohesion policy to the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies is also determined by a variety of other factors, among which the country and regional administrative organization and culture and the devolution of power and responsibilities therein, the spatial governance and planning tradition that characterise each context, etc.<sup>55</sup>

Drawing on the nine case studies under scrutiny, the following subsection focuses on the impact that the EU cohesion policy priorities and instruments have on the definition of goals and objectives of the different metropolitan areas, namely addressing the themes and priorities underlying the EU cohesion policy programmes and instruments having an impact on metropolitan areas (§5.1). Then the EU cohesion policy funding architecture is analysed more in detail, devoting particular attention to how the magnitude of ESIF compares to the budget of each metropolitan areas, to the intra-metropolitan geographical distribution of funding and to their thematic focus (§5.2). The third sub-section showcases successful experiences and points out lessons learned from the implementation of the EU cohesion policy at metropolitan level (§5.3). Finally, the section ends with an attempt to synthesise the provided evidence, reflecting on the added value that the EU cohesion policy may have in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies as a function of a number of variables: the magnitude of funds received, the level of institutionalization of metropolitan governance and cooperation and its coherence with the FUA and the actual engagement of metropolitan areas in the management of the EU cohesion policy programmes and instruments (§5.4).

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<sup>54</sup> Among the metropolitan areas analysed in the ESPON METRO project, those that are located in Central and Eastern Europe – i.e. the metropolitan areas of Brno, Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot and Riga – met these principles in the programming period 2014-20, whereas all the remaining areas are located in regions and countries that did not satisfy the criteria. The Lisbon metropolitan area constitutes an exception in this concern, being located in a developed region that however belongs to a Cohesion Fund beneficiary country.

<sup>55</sup> For an overview of the main institutional variable that may influence the impact of the EU cohesion policy in the various European regions see: Cotella & Dabrowski, 2021.

## 5.1 Goals and priorities of the EU cohesion policy programmes and instruments and coherence with metropolitan policies

In order to discuss the added value that the EU cohesion policy can play in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies in the analysed case studies, it is important to first explore the goals and priorities that underpin the EU cohesion policy programmes and instruments that concern, on one way or another, the metropolitan areas under investigation. In this sub-section we summarize and compare this information (§5.1.1), to then discuss the mechanisms that contribute (or not) to enhance the coherence between the EU Cohesion policy goals and priorities with those underpinning the strategies and policies developed at the metropolitan level (§5.1.2). Finally, the main challenges encountered in the promotion of effective thematic synergies between the EU cohesion policy and the planning and implementation of metropolitan policy are highlighted (§5.1.3).

### 5.1.1 EU Cohesion policies goals and priorities in the METRO areas

To identify with absolute accuracy what are the EU cohesion policy instruments that exert some sort of influence over metropolitan development and governance is a rather problematic task. In fact, only the ITIs managed by metropolitan areas explicitly address metropolitan development dynamics and logics, and do so under the coordination of metropolitan institutions. In the four of the nine metropolitan areas under scrutiny that do not manage any ITI (see §4.2.1), other agreements and instruments exist, that allow for the EU cohesion policy to deliver a more or less direct impact over metropolitan policies. This included specifically dedicated NOPs, axes of the NOPs and ROPs, and other European programmes aimed at European Territorial Cooperation, Rural Development, exchange of knowledge and good practices, or others. In this light, the research has focused on the incremental identification, through desk research and interviews with metro stakeholders and other relevant actors in the metropolitan areas, of all those EU cohesion policy instruments that (i) concern in one way or another the territory of the metropolitan area under investigation and (ii) in doing so may have a more or less direct impact on the planning and development of metropolitan policies.

Table 5.1 displays the EU cohesion policy programmes identified through the analysis. The result is somewhat heterogeneous among the nine case studies, and this heterogeneity is explained with the diversity that characterises the national and regional administrative approaches to the EU cohesion policy, spatial development governance and planning, and other institutional features. These variations range from the fully regionalized configuration of Belgium to the centralized nature of Latvia and the Czech Republic, and have evident implications in the organization of EU cohesion policy programmes and in the differential decentralization opportunities that characterises their development and management (see §3, §4.1 and §4.2). On the other hand, from the analysis it is possible to identify three main features that recur across metropolitan areas:

- If one excludes Latvia, where only NOPs exists, ROPs stands out as the main Cohesion policy programmes that have an impact at the metropolitan level;
- Also selected thematic NOPs play a role in the in the planning and implementation of metropolitan area development policies (except in Belgium, where only ROPs exists).
- Despite the different financial allocation, ITIs managed to stimulate a more integrated approach the delivery of the EU cohesion policy, providing the latter with a more marked functional/territorial perspective, further delegating management tasks to the metropolitan/local level and allowing the combinations of thematic and financial mix from EU funds and OPs (§4.2.1. See also: Ferry, 2019).

More in detail, and in particular concerning the last feature, the cases of the metropolitan areas of Brno paradigmatically show how to implement the EU cohesion policy through the adoption of an ITI has played a pivotal role in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies in contexts that, otherwise, were characterised by scarce metropolitan cooperation activities.<sup>56</sup> The same stands true for the metropolitan area

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<sup>56</sup> As it will be analysed more in detail in §6, the introduction of ITIs in these two contexts (and in the metropolitan area of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot) strongly contributed to rise the momentum towards metropolitan governance and cooperation in the respecting regions and countries.

of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot, where the ITI provided further momentum and resources to the existing metropolitan cooperation. Considering that these three metropolitan areas belong to convergence regions eligible to large shares of ESIF support, the relevance of the amount of resources delivered through the ITIs *vis-à-vis* the low or non-existent metropolitan budgets contributed to trigger the development of metropolitan development strategies that have been thoughtfully designed to match the EU cohesion policy priorities identified for the programming period.

**Table 5.1**  
**EU cohesion policy programmes that were to a different extent relevant to the METRO case studies (2014-20)**

Metropolitan Areas	National/Thematic OPs	Regional OPs	ITIs	Other programmes
<b>Barcelona</b>	Spain Multiregional	Cataluña	---	INTERREG URBACT/ESPON
<b>Brno</b>	Education Employment Enterprise and Innovation for Competitiveness Research, Development and Education Environment Transport	Integrated Regional Operational Programme	ITI BMA	---
<b>Brussels</b>	---	Brussels-Capital Region Flanders Wallonia Wallonia-Brussels Federation	---	---
<b>Florence</b>	Education Governance and Institutional Capacity Metropolitan Cities	Tuscany	---	Regional Rural Development Plan INTERREG SNAI
<b>Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot</b>	Infrastructure & Environment Smart Growth Digital Poland Knowledge Education Development	Pomorskie	ITI MAG	INTERREG URBACT
<b>Lisbon</b>	Competitiveness and Internationalisation Social Inclusion and Employment Sustainability and Resource Use Efficiency	Lisbon	ITI LMA	URBACT/ESPON
<b>Lyon</b>	Employment and Social Inclusion	Rhône-Alpes	ITI MdL	---
<b>Riga</b>	Growth and Employment	---	ITI for Riga and Jurmala	INTERREG
<b>Turin</b>	Education Governance and Institutional Capacity Metropolitan Cities Social Inclusion	Piedmont	---	Regional Rural Development Plan (EAFDR) INTERREG SNAI (national)

Source: authors' own elaboration on [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/atlas/programmes](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/programmes) and ESPON-METRO case-study reports

Also in the cases of the Metropolitan areas of Lyon and Lisbon the adoption of a ITI, for which they act as intermediate bodies in the management of funds, plays a relevant role in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies. However, as already highlighted in §4.2.1, the scope of the registered impact is rather different: the actions financed in the context of Lyon are limited to the fields of economic development, digital culture and the thermal renovation of social housing; on the contrary those implemented in the case of Lisbon range from low carbon transition to environmental protection, from economic development to social inclusion.

The Italian metropolitan cities of Turin and Florence and the Barcelona metropolitan area are not characterised by any ITI. In the absence of the latter, the impact of the EU cohesion policy on metropolitan development is delivered through different mechanisms. Due to its unique nature the Barcelona metropolitan area benefits from a special agreement with the regional authority that delivers a funding envelope to promote actions on the territory of its municipalities except the Barcelona city. At the same time, a similar agreement provides the city of Barcelona with an additional amount of resources to finance different types of development actions on its territory. On their hand, the Italian metropolitan cities of Turin and Florence, despite their high level of institutionalisation, are mostly impacted by the EU cohesion policy actions delivered through the respective ROPs and RDPs, without playing a relevant role on their definition. Interestingly, they also benefit from a specific NOP dedicated to the development of metropolitan areas, that is managed by the two capital cities of Turin and Florence and that they may contribute to influence through cooperation with the latter.

In many ways, Brussels-Capital Region is a singular case in Europe. Belgium is a highly decentralised country, that delivers the EU cohesion policy through its ROPs. However, whereas development policies that concern the territory of the Brussels FUA can be potentially funded through four different programmes, the geographical misfits between the regional subdivision of the country and the geographical configuration of the Brussels FUA mean that the undertaking of any truly metropolitan policy would require large coordination efforts between the three regions.

Having identified the main programmes and instruments that have a more or less direct impact on the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies in the contexts under investigation, it was possible to individuate and compare the various thematic objectives that substantiate them. More in detail, the EU cohesion policy programming period 2014-20 comprised 11 thematic objectives, that then framed the deriving programmes and actions: research and innovation; information and communication technology; SMEs competitiveness; low carbon economy; climate change and risk prevention; environment and resource efficiency; transport and energy networks; employment and labour market; social inclusion; education and training; better public administration. Naturally, the amount of funding available through each instrument also conditioned the range and depth of its scope and, in turn, the scope of the EU cohesion policy intervention in the metropolitan areas<sup>57</sup>.

The evidence presented in Table 5.2 aims at detecting the relevant priorities identified in the instruments that have a more or less direct impact in each metropolitan area, disregarding the amount of funding delivered for each of them.<sup>58</sup> The analysis of the thematic priorities that characterised the various programmes and instruments that had an impact on each metropolitan area confirms a stronger focus on the priorities of research and innovation, information and communication technology, SMEs' competitiveness, and low carbon economy, that emerge as key priorities for both developed and less developed regions. This demonstrates a strong emphasis on policies aimed at innovation, competitiveness, and decarbonization of the economy. Other thematic priorities across metropolitan areas concentrate in education and social inclusion, targeting deprived families and groups, as much as environment and resource efficiency.

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<sup>57</sup> As mentioned above, the six Western and Southern metropolitan areas are located in more developed regions, whereas the other three Central and Eastern European metropolitan areas in "less developed regions". Moreover, in developed regions (whose average GDP exceeds 90% of the EU-27 average), the ceiling for co-financing rates is 50% and the regions must also earmark at least 80% of the ERDF envelope to innovation and research, digital strategy, support for SMEs and low-carbon economy thematic priorities.

<sup>58</sup> The magnitude of funding devoted to the different thematic priorities are explored more in detail in §5.2, while §5.3 focuses on those priorities where the most successful interventions have been identified.

Climate change and risk prevention as well public administration modernization objectives do not present the same relevance. It is duly noted that the thematic transport and energy networks is associated to EU cohesion policy interventions in the Central and Eastern European metropolitan areas. Similarly, the priority of administrative modernization is restricted to a small number of metropolitan areas, namely both Italian metro-cities and Brno. Overall, the thematic coverage of the EU cohesion policy instruments that may have an impact over the territories of the metropolitan areas under investigation shows a differential landscape that ranges from the extremely comprehensive figures in Brno, Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot and Turin to the more selective approach in the case of Barcelona. The remaining metropolitan areas cover between eight and nine thematic priorities.

**Table 5.2**  
**Thematic objectives of EU cohesion policy programmes in the metropolitan areas**

	TURIN	FLOR- ENCE	LYON	BRUS- SELS	BARCE- LONA	LISBON	BRNO	MAG	RIGA
Research and innovation	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
Information and communication technologies	▪	▪	▪		▪		▪	▪	▪
SMEs Competitiveness	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
Low carbon economy	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
Climate change and risk prevention	▪			▪		▪	▪	▪	
Environment and resource efficiency	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
Transport and energy networks							▪	▪	▪
Employment and labour market	▪		▪	▪		▪		▪	▪
Social inclusion	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
Education and training	▪	▪	▪	▪		▪	▪	▪	▪
Better public administration	▪	▪					▪		
Total	10/11	8/11	8/11	8/11	6/11	8/11	10/11	10/11	9/11

Source: authors' elaboration on [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/atlas/programmes](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/programmes) and ESPON-METRO case-study reports

### 5.1.2 Different mechanism and drivers of coherence between the EU cohesion policy goals and priorities

The presented analysis shows that metropolitan areas have been recipient of a large majority of the 11 thematic priorities that underpinned the EU cohesion policy in the programming period 2014-20, even if the

resources delivered through the latter were not necessarily managed by the metropolitan institutions themselves. In turn, the EU cohesion policy objectives appear to be coherent with the main goals of metropolitan cooperation, as they have been already identified in §3.2 (innovation, SMEs support, circular economy, environmental protection, social inequalities and territorial disparities, education).

However, the actual level of coherence and the drivers behind it are differential, and vary from context to context, mostly as a consequence of the different institutional nature of the metropolitan areas under investigation and the mechanisms through which they have engaged through time in the EU cohesion policy. Overall, the mechanisms that stand behind the coherence between the EU cohesion policy goals and priorities and the priorities and goals underpinning metropolitan strategies and policies belong to the realm of so-called Europeanisation influences (Fetherstone & Radaelli, 2003; Radaelli, 2004). Particularly relevant for understanding the impact of those policies for which the EU is not entitled to produce binding regulations and directives, as in the field of territorial development and policies, are the concept of economic conditionality and social learning. They indicate, on the one hand, the economic leverage through which the EU can pressure domestic adaptation by attaching specific conditions to its economic incentives and, on the other hand, a process of genuine cognitive conditionality and persuasion that lead to the adoption of EU concepts at the domestic level (Cotella, 2020; Cotella & Dabrowski 2021). Similarly, an important role is played by the circular dimension of Europeanisation, indicating that the top-down influence of the EU on the domestic actors is accompanied by bottom-up reactions from the latter, that either have room for manoeuvre to interpret the EU stimuli in a way that maximises their benefits or directly try to upload concepts and priorities on the European agenda and policy to then benefit from their implementation (Cotella & Janin Rivolin, 2015).

When it comes to the concrete examples of the processes detected in the metropolitan areas under investigation, they occur through four distinct forms, that have been compiled in a preliminary typology of the mechanisms that concur to enhance coherence between EU and metropolitan priorities (Figure 5.1).

**Circular dynamics and mutual influence.** The first type is characterised by both top-down and bottom-up logics of Europeanisation, that circularly contribute to enhance the coherence between the European and the metropolitan dimension. This model concerns metropolitan areas that are characterised by their own development agenda and priorities, while at the same time are entrusted with the management of a more or less relevant amount of EU cohesion policy resources. This is the case of the Metropolitan Areas of Barcelona, Lisbon and Lyon where, on the one hand, the metropolitan development strategies and policies have been influenced by the EU cohesion priorities while, on the other hand, the metropolitan authorities have successfully attempted to upload specific priorities at the regional and national levels in order to then benefit from the deriving actions.

**Top-down influence.** Then there is a second type of areas, that are mostly subject to top-down influences, that contribute to the development of metropolitan development strategies and policies that are overlapping with the priorities of the EU cohesion policy. This case concerns those metropolitan areas that, due to their scarce institutionalisation before the involvement in the EU cohesion policy, were not characterised by any relevant metropolitan development agenda, and were then entrusted with the management of a share of EU cohesion policy resources and of the development of a dedicated strategy. This is the case of the Metropolitan Areas of Brno and Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot that, when they were awarded the management of EU resources through the ITI, tailored the instruments strategies over the EU cohesion policy priorities. Interestingly, these cases are subject to evolution through time, with the engagement within the EU cohesion policy that provide momentum towards their further institutionalisation (see §6.1), in turn stimulating the development of independent territorial development agendas and strategies that aims at grasping the peculiarity of their territorial contexts to a full extent and beyond the EU cohesion policy goals (as it is the case MAG 2030 strategy, but also with similar activities that are currently ongoing in the Brno case).

**Bottom-up reaction to top-down influence.** A third case concerns those metropolitan areas that are sufficiently institutionalised to develop their own development strategies and policies, but neither possess an adequate level of financial resources to implement them nor are entrusted with the management of a relevant share of the EU cohesion policy. In these contexts, that are well exemplified by the Metropolitan cities of Turin and Florence, the autonomous definition of metropolitan priorities and goals is influenced from the top-down through logics of economic conditionality, due to the existence of EU cohesion policy funds that are attached to regulations, priorities and goals determined by other actors. Here metropolitan authorities are required to react from the bottom-up to the stimuli of the EU cohesion policy, shaping their own strategies and policies in a way that will then allow for maximising the channelling of ESIF over the identified actions

(as it is well represented in the recently approved Metropolitan Strategic Plan of the Metropolitan City of Turin).

**Scarce or no influence.** Finally, there are contexts in which no metropolitan institution exists that is responsible for the development of any metropolitan strategy or policy and, at the same time, the national and/or regional bodies responsible for the programming and management of the EU cohesion policy decide, either willingly or due to particular constraints, not to adopt any specific instrument with metropolitan scope. This case is well exemplified by two of the cases analysed in the METRO project, although for different reasons. On the one hand, the Brussels FUA does not have any institution responsible for its development, and is concerned by EU cohesion policy programmes that are managed by the autonomous regional entities. In this case, the complex institutional framework and the low amount of resources that Belgian regions receive if compared to local and regional budgets, make the transaction costs of the cooperation that would be required to establish a metropolitan development strategy funded within the framework of the EU cohesion policy (e.g. a multiregional ITI) rather high, when compared to the benefits perceived from the perspective of the Flanders and Wallonia Regions. On the other hand, in the context of the Riga Metropolitan Area, the decision of the central government to pivot the use of the ITI on the main cities of the country has partly limited the influence of the EU cohesion policy over the metropolitan area. However, some influence has been delivered, especially in relation to the institution of a Riga Metropolitan Area.<sup>59</sup>

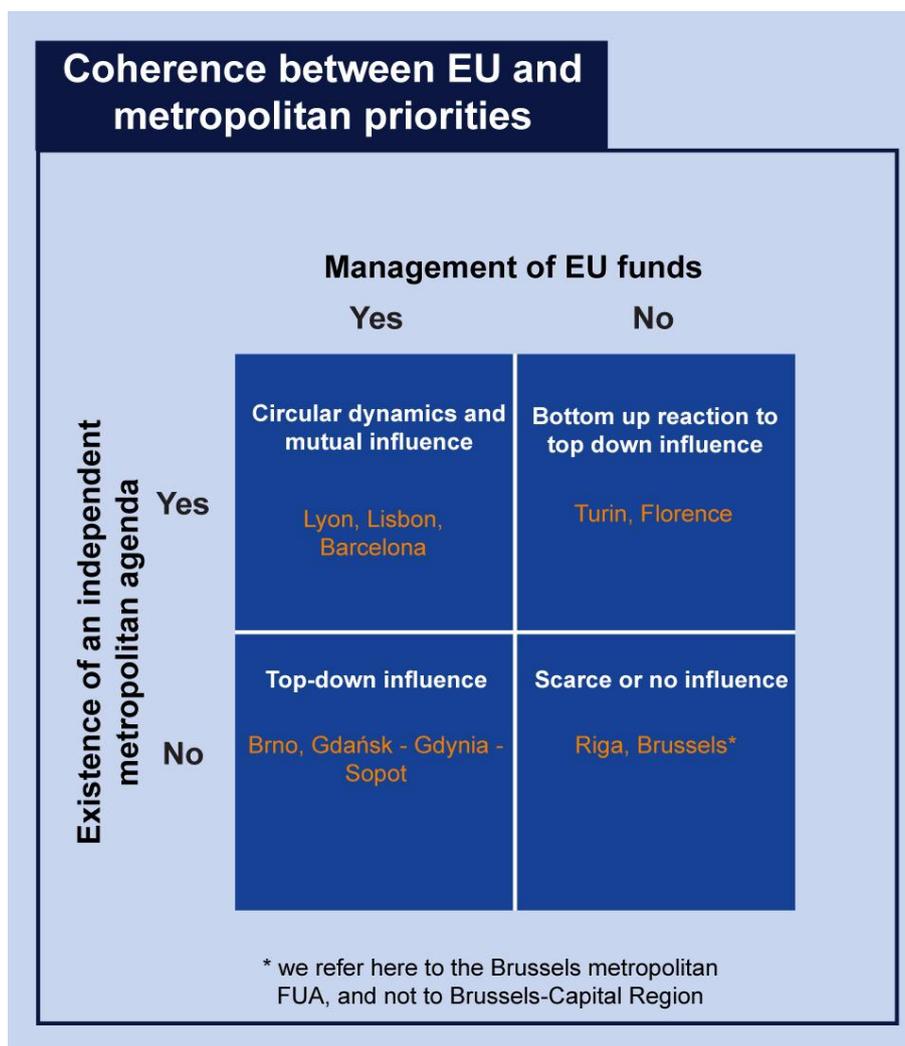
To conclude, the level of coherence between metropolitan development goals and EU cohesion policy is maximised in those cases where metropolitan governance and cooperation exists almost exclusively as functional to the management and implementation of the EU cohesion policy (as for instance in the metropolitan areas of Brno and Riga or, to a lesser extent, of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot), or where no direct management exists and the metropolitan authorities are conditioned to adapt their territorial agenda and policies in a way that then allow to maximise the channelling of EU resources on the include priorities and actions (as in the case of the Italian Metropolitan Cities). However, this is not necessarily an asset, as it may mean that the metropolitan priorities have been tailored over those defined in the EU cohesion policy framework without reflecting on their actual fit with the domestic context. As a matter of fact, whereas the EU cohesion policy goals are fully coherent with and encompassing the main goals of the metropolitan area development strategies produced in the contexts under investigation, the observed coherence is not necessarily true the other way around. On the one hand, the EU cohesion policy priorities are rather broad due to their very nature and the need to fit the various socioeconomic and territorial contexts in which they need to be implemented; on the other hand, the goals and priorities of each metropolitan area are more specific and rather heterogeneous throughout Europe, in turn in most cases exceeding the boundaries of those underpinning the EU cohesion policy.

Despite the highlighted difference between the analysed cases, however, it is reasonable to argue that that all the metropolitan institutions analysed in the METRO project, although diverse in their structures and strategies, are slowly consolidating themselves as relevant players in the implementation of the EU cohesion policy. On the one hand, they participate to the latter mostly through the implementation of projects, and only in some cases they also manage and coordinate specific instruments or priorities. On the other hand, through this activity, metropolitan institutions gain visibility and traction as relevant stakeholders in the multilevel territorial governance structure. Through time, they are progressively learning how to use the EU cohesion policy resources to support the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies, in turn contributing to the achievement of the overall EU cohesion policy goals.

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<sup>59</sup> As a speculation, it is interesting to notice that, in the presence of a different decision, i.e. the introduction of metropolitan ITI, the case of the Metropolitan city of Riga could have likely be assimilated to those of the Metropolitan areas of Brno and Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot, and witness the development of a metropolitan agenda pivoted around the EU cohesion policy goals and priorities and the progressive institutionalisation of the metropolitan authority responsible for it.

**Figure 5.1**  
**Coherence and coordination between EU cohesion policy and metropolitan goals and priorities.**



Source: authors' elaboration

### 5.1.3 Main challenges along the way

The added value that the EU cohesion policy may produce on the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies is delivered according to two main dimensions. On the one hand, it may influence the governance of metropolitan areas, and foster further cooperation with local institutions and other actors (see §6 for more details on the matter). On the other hand, it may also impact the achievement of selected policy goals and facilitate the implementation of the instruments that aims at achieving them, for example through the delivery of financial resources through specific programmes targeting different themes and geographical areas.

The heterogeneous institutional configurations through which metropolitan governance and cooperation manifest throughout Europe continues to represent a relevant challenge for the involvement of metropolitan areas in the EU cohesion policy and, in turn, for the maximisation of the added value that the latter could produce on the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies. More in particular, due to their institutional heterogeneity, the involvement of metropolitan area institutions in the EU cohesion policy takes on variegated forms across the analysed case studies, which may favour or constrain the actual exploitation of synergies between the actions undertaken through the EU cohesion policy framework and the development of the metropolitan areas. In this light, the collected evidence seems to hint that, when the institutionalization

of metropolitan governance has proceeded hand in hand with higher degree of EU cohesion policy decentralization (e.g. through the introduction of a ITI or/and the decentralised management of selected ESIF priorities as Intermediate Bodies), it has been easier to achieve a higher added value of the impact of the EU cohesion policy at the metropolitan level. Both Lisbon and Lyon managed to upload some priorities on the national/regional agendas to then benefit from the dedicated funding, in so doing raising the added value of the EU cohesion policy in their territories. Brno and MAG too defined metropolitan agendas fitting the ITI so as to maximising the added value of the cohesion policy. Conversely, when the high level of metropolitan institutionalisation does not go hand in hand with adequate EU cohesion policy devolution (as in the context of the Italian metropolitan cities), it has been more difficult to establish proactive synergies and to increase the value-added of the EU cohesion policy interventions.

When it comes to ITIs, their introduction in the 2014-20 EU cohesion policy programming period was motivated with the need to deliver the EU cohesion policy through strategies that are territorially integrated, in turn increasing its effectiveness and added value. Pooling various ESIF via metropolitan management and governance can bolster positive effects, instead of letting each sector/entity investing according to its own priorities, in so doing favouring the integrated development of territories that are functionally interconnected. As a consequence, ITIs have been adopted in five of the nine METRO case studies, as the most operative instrument to organize the programming and management of EU funds at the metropolitan level. Whereas these instruments allow for the combination of different ESIF from different priorities of NOPs or/and ROPs, the preferred approach has however been a combination of different priorities aiming at delivering multi-dimensional and cross-sectoral actions, in so doing partially hindering the innovative potentials that the ITI approach could bring. This is particularly true for those contexts where the financial envelope of the ITI is rather small in comparison of the investments made within local and national schemes for metropolitan development (e.g. in *Métropole de Lyon*). Moreover, as already highlighted in §4.2.1, most metropolitan authorities reported a number of challenges concerning the management of these instruments, in particular in relation to the constraints that its structure and regulations set in relation to the scope of the objectives and the administrative cumbersomeness and scarce flexibility that characterise its implementation (due to its strict set of indicators and financial plan). Importantly, it is interesting to notice that some metropolitan authorities (e.g. the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area, and the Metropolitan Area of Brno) have also raised concerns in relation to the support provided to metropolitan policy exclusively through an ITI. More in detail, they argue that the EU cohesion policy should address the complexity of metropolitan processes in their entirety. The ITI appears incapable to do this in isolation and would need to be accompanied by the support delivered through other instruments.

## 5.2 Funds in metropolitan areas: magnitude, geographical distribution and priorities

Assessing the importance of the EU cohesion policy in the metropolitan areas across Europe in quantitative terms proved to be a difficult task. The encountered difficulties reside in the highly differential institutional and spatial characteristics of metropolitan areas as well as in the more or less arbitrary choices that had to be made in order to make the results of the analysis as comparable as possible. First of all, to choose to focus only on official metropolitan areas would have implied to exclude those metropolitan areas that are not provided with any formal institutional framework from the analysis. Additional concerns emerged when considering the identification of spatial focus of the EU cohesion policy instruments that have been identified in §5.1 as having an impact on metropolitan area. More in particular, only the ITI and the special management arrangement in place in the context of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area have a dedicated metropolitan focus, meaning that in all other cases, to identify the actual portions of ROPs and NOPs that have been effectively invested in actions contributing to the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies would have proved impossible due to the lack of these specific data.

At the same time, to assess the importance of the EU cohesion policy in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policy, its magnitude had to be compared to a reference value, and this could either concern the overall GDP of the area or its number of inhabitants, the overall budget of the metropolitan institutions, the specific budget dedicated by these institutions to public investments, or even to the total amount of public investments made by all public authorities included in the metropolitan area within the metropolitan area. As a consequence of the impossibility to develop and apply a standard quantitative methodology that would have provided sound, comparable results for all the METRO case studies, we adopted a quali-quantitative analysis, building on the data available in relation to each case and proposing a qualitative comparison based on the collected information, also taking into account the peculiar characteristics of the contexts under

examination. This approach has been followed to collect and discuss the information that are presented in the subsection below, concerning the assessment of the magnitude of ESIF in the different metropolitan areas (§5.2.1) and their geographical and thematic distribution (§5.2.2 and §5.3.3 respectively).

### 5.2.1 Assessing the magnitude of funds in metropolitan areas

From the analysis of the METRO case studies, it appears that most metropolitan areas in located in Western European countries can only rely on rather low amount of ESIF. In order to provide account of this evidence Table 5.3 assesses the magnitude of European funds that interest each of the nine case studies, distinguishing between those that are managed by institutionalized metropolitan area and the whole amount of money, which is invested in the space of the metropolitan area. The mentioned lower values are particularly true in relation to the cases of the *Métropole de Lyon* and of Brussels-Capital Region. These areas are among the two wealthiest areas in Europe, and here the ESIF share that lands on the ground represents less than the 0,5 % of the public expenses, when compared to the budgets of Brussels-Capital Region and of the *Métropole de Lyon*. Such assessment is largely overestimated given that municipal budgets are not included. Moreover, in the case of Brussels, the municipalities belonging to the Brussels FUA, but located in the Flanders and Wallonia regions, are excluded from the calculation. This area accounts for as much as the 55 % of the population of the Brussels FUA, and no information about the exact amount of ESIF that the Flemish and Walloon regions deliver in these wealthy municipalities was available for investigation.

**Table 5.3**  
**Magnitude of ESIF managed by institutional metropolitan areas in comparison to the total amount of resources invested in the metropolitan territories**

		ESIF managed by the institutional metropolitan area	
		+	-
ESIF invested in the metropolitan territory	+	Brno, Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot,	Riga
	-	Barcelona, Lisbon**	Brussels*, Lyon, Turin, Florence

\* No institutional metropolitan area exists in the case of Brussels FUA

\*\* Lisbon has an intermediate position on both axes.

Source: authors' elaboration

In the case of Italian metropolitan cities of Florence and Turin, the EU funds also appear to be limited. In both cases, we can distinguish between the whole funds that flow to the metropolitan area, for instance through actions funded by the ESF and ERDF ROPs, and the funds that are specifically managed by institutions located in the metropolitan areas as Intermediated Bodies, for instance the specific ROP ESF priorities managed by the metropolitan city of Turin or the NOP METRO resources managed by the cities of Florence and Turin. Nevertheless, in both cases, the share of ESIF delivered on the ground remains rather limited. As an example, the yearly budget of the Metropolitan city of Turing amounts to around €260 million, compared to which the share of the ESIF actually managed by the institution accounts to less than 1%. The share is higher when considering the total amount of ESIF flowing on the whole territory of the metropolitan area (around €100 million a year for the 2014-20 period), but remain limited compared to the total budget of all local authorities concerned by its action.

In the case of Barcelona, the Metropolitan Area manages €30 million of the Catalonia ROP, accounting for almost 16.5% of the investment budget of the Metropolitan Area (183 million for years 2018 to 2020). It also manages €0,54 million of the Sustainable Growth NOP, and participates in different projects of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes. As a consequence, although limited in absolute terms, the importance of EU funds for the metropolitan institution is relevant, making this case different from the one of the Italian cities. However, when compared to the total public expenditure of local authorities this amount remains rather limited, and the same is true if one also considers that, in this particular case, the management of a higher share of ESIF is devolved from the region directly to the Municipality of Barcelona (around €40 million of the Catalonia ROP).

In qualitative terms, the Lisbon Metropolitan Area shows a similar situation. However, in this case the amount of ESIF appears to be much higher in both absolute and relative terms: in total, around €1.5 billion have flown into the Lisbon metropolitan area during the 2014-20 period, from which 93.4 million through a dedicated ITI. Here the ROP represent between 5 and 10% of the relevant local public budgets, and, given the limited budget of the metropolitan area itself, the share of the ESIF delivered through the ITI contributes to increase it of nearly 41%. In this perspective, the case of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area occupies an intermediate case between the Western and Eastern European metropolitan cities analysed in the METRO project.

The three case studies focusing on Central and Eastern European metropolitan areas clearly emerge among the METRO case study as a consequence of the higher level of ESIF that are delivered on their territories through different instruments, including the Cohesion Fund. In Riga metropolitan area, the total amount of ESIF delivered through different means and institutions in the 2014-20 programming period accounts for slightly less than € 440 million. This figure is much higher in absolute terms than, for example, the one that concerns the Brussels and Lyon cases, despite a much lower population. However, in the case study of Riga (in contrast to the two other metropolitan areas located in Central and Eastern European countries), no metropolitan cooperation has been setup yet to manage these resources<sup>60</sup>. The management of the ESIF in the Riga metropolitan territory in the programming period 2014-20 occurred through to main means: a ITI focused on the cities of Riga and Jurmala, as well as the NOP, hence making it difficult to assess their actual added value in the planning and implementation of truly metropolitan policies.

A similar situation concerns the cases of Brno and Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot. In the Czech Republic, the ESIF represent around 10% of public expenditures and we may expect similar figures for the Brno Metropolitan Area and in the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot metropolitan area, the resources delivered through the EU cohesion policy account for around 9% of the public expenditures of all municipalities and counties included. Moreover, the quantity of resources is also highly relevant in absolute terms as well as in comparison to the amount of people living in the two areas. Finally, the most relevant issue in both cases has been the institution of dedicated ITIs, upon which the governance and development of otherwise limitedly institutionalised metropolitan areas.

### 5.2.2 The geographical distribution of funds in metropolitan areas

An additional variable that influences the added value that the EU cohesion policy may produce in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies concerns the actual geographical distribution of the ESIF that are delivered within each metropolitan area. Also in this case, a number of methodological challenges have influenced the analysis, as it has been difficult to distinguish the total funds that flow into each metropolitan area from the funds specifically dedicated to the promotion of policies and actions that are truly metropolitan in their nature.<sup>61</sup>

In the case of Barcelona, we can distinguish between the total amount of ESIF delivered on the ground to all the municipalities that compose the metropolitan area and the resources specifically managed by the Barcelona Metropolitan Area institution. When looking at the latter, their geographical distribution appears balanced when compared to the distribution of population, and the episodes that counteract this tendency may be attributed to particular territorial features, i.e. the punctual localisation of infrastructure of metropolitan relevance or to the eligibility of selected groups of municipalities to the calls concerning the protection and valorisation of natural or cultural heritage. When looking at the total amount of ERDF and other ESIF delivered on the ground, however, the results are different. Larger municipalities show a higher capacity to attract EU cohesion policy resources from the various calls. This is especially true for the city of Barcelona, that receives nearly half of the funds while accounting for 32% of the metropolitan population, also thanks to the mentioned *ad hoc* agreement signed with the regional government concerning the management of a rather large share of the ERDF ROP. On the contrary, smaller municipalities encounter higher challenges in the attraction of ESIF from funding means that are not managed by AMB. According to the interviewees, this

<sup>60</sup> The establishment of a Riga Metropolitan Area, in the form of a “Riga Planning Region with new borders” is under discussion at the time of writing (see Annex XI for additional details).

<sup>61</sup> Also here the information available in relation to each context is uneven, due to different institutionalisation of the metropolitan areas under investigation and the different spending logics that underpin the multitude of instruments used to deliver ESIF support therein (see §5.1.1).

unbalance mostly depends on the unequal capacity to answer to complex calls, a process in which the lack of specialised administrative competency put small municipalities in a disadvantaged position.

In the case of Brussels, the peculiar institutional configuration makes it impossible to assess correctly the geographical distribution of funds within the metropolitan area. The main reason for this is that most of the municipalities that compose its FUA depend on the Walloon and Flemish regions in relation to ESIF distribution, while we do not have the exact geographical distribution of funds within the Walloon and Flemish Regions. However, the Brussels case points to an interesting issue, which may concern other wealthy cities in the management of the EU funds from a geographical perspective. Compared to previous programmes, before the 2014-20 programming period, we observe a geographical shift in the geographical distribution of ESIF in the sole Brussels-Capital Region from the deprived neighbourhoods which concentrated most of the EU funds previously to a more global approach focussing on more or less large projects. In practice, in the previous programmes, most of funds had to be invested in specific areas of the Brussels-Capital Region, defined as deprived neighbourhoods, but this constraint is no longer applicable after 2014.

When it comes to the case of the Metropolitan Cities of Turin and Florence, a larger concentration of funds in the central municipalities is detected in comparison with the rest of the territory. Importantly, however, this concentration can be considered a direct consequence of the higher concentration of the population in these centres. This is evident in the case of the area of the Municipality of Turin, that benefits from nearly half of the ESIF delivered in the Metropolitan city and account for as much as half of its entire population. A similar geographical pattern is visible in the city of Florence, where the share of resources landing on the ground is proportional to its share of population in relation to the whole Metropolitan city. At the same time, the concentration may also reflect the fact that the structural interventions promoted through the NOP METRO must land on the territory of the institutional body that manages the resources, i.e. the two main municipalities. Interestingly, in both cases a number of less populated, peripheral benefit from higher ESIF share if compared to the share of population they host. In the case of the Metropolitan City of Turin, that features a highly heterogeneous territory that extend up to the mountain region bordering France, this may be due to the resources delivered through European Territorial Cooperation Cross-Border and Transnational Programmes. This evidence is particularly relevant, as it also testifies the attempt of the metropolitan authority to counteract the described unbalance in resources' distribution to the benefit of the smaller municipalities, through the creative combination of different programmes on a highly heterogeneous territory that would be otherwise difficult to plan from a metropolitan perspective.

The Metropolitan Area of Lisbon, similarly to what has been observed in the case of Barcelona, shows two different patterns when looking at the totality of ESIF flowing into the area or only to the resources delivered through those EU cohesion policy programmes and instruments that are managed from the metropolitan authority. In the first case, the territory of the Lisbon municipality benefits from the 32% of the total amount of funds landing on the metropolitan area, while hosting only around 17% of its population. In contrast, when considering the ITI, the funding per inhabitant is significantly higher in the most peripheral and less populated municipalities of the metropolitan area. Also here, this evidence may derive from the attempt of the metropolitan authority to counterbalance the concentration of funding on the capital city.<sup>62</sup>

In contrast to most cases, Brno and Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot are characterized by a strong concentration on central municipalities in both absolute and relative terms. As far as ITI is concerned, Brno municipality benefits from nearly 75% of investments while grouping half of the population. The imbalance is less accentuated in Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot where the three core municipalities receive 60% of the funds for 47% of the population.

Finally, the figures collected in relation to the Riga Metropolitan Area seem to constitute an exception to the patterns identified in most of the other case studies. Here the geographical distribution of funds is unbalanced in favour of the periphery, that benefits from slightly less than the 60% of the total ESIF delivered on the metropolitan territory, while hosting only around one third of its population. The main reason behind this evidence however does not seem related to a specific policy choice aimed at equilibrating the distribution of the EU cohesion policy resources in the area, rather to the high amount of funding delivered for the realisa-

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<sup>62</sup> However, in absolute terms, the distribution of resources remains highly concentrated on the core municipalities.

tion of specific infrastructural investments. This interpretation is supported by the unbalances that characterise the distribution of EU cohesion policy resources between the municipalities that compose the Riga Metropolitan Area suburbs.

Overall, whereas it is difficult to identify a number of patterns from the collected evidence, they show that the unequal distribution of funding among municipalities constitutes a more or less relevant challenge in most of the metropolitan areas under investigation. Whereas often the higher share of resources landing on the main municipalities mirrors their prominence in terms of population, various case studies interviewees have also reported a prominence of the core cities in the definition of the metropolitan agendas and strategies, that is politically difficult to circumvent. Also, as pointed out in Barcelona metropolitan area, the use of transparent and competitive calls between local authorities may lead to imbalances that are not related to the real needs of the local populations but to the ability of local authorities to be competitive in answering the calls. At the same time, the unequal distribution may also be caused by the existence of multiple programmes and instruments that deliver resources on the metropolitan territory at the same time, most often allowing for a scarce or no influence of the metropolitan authorities in their management. This evidence points to the need to strengthen the multi-level coordination between metropolitan institutions and the institutions that are responsible for the management of these instruments: the national and regional governments, on the one hand, and the main municipalities, on the other hand.

### 5.2.3 Distribution of funds by thematic priorities

The analysis of the distribution of ESIF to different thematic priorities is subject to the same challenges identified above, and due to similar methodological reasons. As for the analysis of the geographical distribution of resources on the territory of the metropolitan areas, also in this case it is difficult to identify a clear pattern emerging from the nine contexts under investigation. However, some similarities between the various cases under investigation do emerge.

For example, in the three metropolitan areas located in Central and Eastern Europe, a large share of funds is oriented through the development of transport-related infrastructures. This is also due to the fact that all three countries benefit from Cohesion Funds, for which infrastructures are essential. This is particularly true in the case of Brno, where mobility and transport benefit from 61% of the resources delivered through the ITI in the programming period 2014-20, and a similar figure is detected in the case of the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot metropolitan area. However, in both cases, some of the transport infrastructures also address environmental concerns, making any precise separation of the actual amount of funds dedicated to these two thematic priorities rather complex. Also in the Riga Metropolitan Area the focus on transport infrastructure stands out, although less prominently if compared to the other two cases, accounting for around one third of the total amount of the ESIF flowing on its territory.

Similarly, in these three areas it is also possible to observe a relevant focus on economic and technological priorities, despite being labelled with different denominations: in the case of Riga, Research & Development (R&D) investments catalyse as much as the 22% of the European funds landing on the territory; in the case of Brno interventions focusing on enhancing competitiveness accounts for the 14% of the total resources; in the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area, initiatives focusing on smart growth vehicle the 12% of the total ESIF managed through the ITI. These differences in terminology highlight once more the difficulty to compare the analysed contexts, that is also amplified by the different instruments that delivers the EU cohesion policy support on the territory (the ITIs in the cases of Brno and Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot, and the ITI and the NOP in the case of Riga). Beside the highlighted similarities, the interventions related to social inclusion receive different considerations in the three contexts: they play a rather prominent role in the Brno Metropolitan Area, accounting for the 14% of the ITI financial envelope, while they benefit from a lower share of resources in the other two contexts.

To a certain extent, also the two Italian cases and the Barcelona metropolitan area show some similar trends. In the Metropolitan City of Florence, interventions focusing on transport (25%) and R&D (27%) account for more than half of the total amount of resources landing on the area, while in the Metropolitan areas of Turin R&D represents by far the most funded thematic priority, financing interventions that benefit from the 30% of the ESIF employed in the two metropolitan areas. In all three metropolitan areas, social inclusion interventions account for rather limited share of the delivered EU funds. Whereas these figures concern the total amount of resources landing in the region, a consideration of the resources directly managed by the metropolitan institution provide a very different picture. For instance, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area invests nearly the total amount of the resources it manages in environmental intervention and in the promotion of a

low carbon economy. Similarly, also the figures of the resources directly managed by the Metropolitan City of Turin differs from the above picture, due to the limited room for manoeuvre in the choice of the types of interventions to finance that is intrinsic in the devolution of management of the ROP thematic priorities.<sup>63</sup>

When it comes to the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, the thematic pattern is rather peculiar. On the one hand, the focus on R&D or business issues (through support to SME) is similar to the previous cases, both categories accounting for 50% of the whole. However, social-related issues (poverty, discrimination or education and training) as well as environmental-related issues (low-carbon economy, environmental protection and energy efficiency, worker's mobility) each account for around a quarter of the EU funds in the metropolitan area.

Finally, the cases of Brussels and Lyon show divergent evolution patterns in the 2014-20 financing programme, when compared to the previous periods. As already mentioned above, in Brussels, there has been a partial shift from the focus on deprived neighbourhood (that however still accounts for the 15% of the total) to interventions related to enterprises and innovation, that now accounting for the 36% of the total ERDF allocated in the Brussels-Capital Region, as well as to interventions aiming at the promotion of a circular economy (23% of the total). In contrast, the case of Lyon shows a clear shift towards interventions oriented to the promotion of a higher social cohesion, while in the past a larger share of EU resources has been dedicated to the promotion of action focusing on business innovation and on the consolidation of the smart-city paradigm.

Overall, the range of determinants of thematic priorities is rather variegated. We can of course mention the cohesion policy global priorities but more importantly the institutional configurations play an important role, for example the existence of a metropolitan institution with specific missions or, in contrast, the absence or weakness of such institution, hence thematic priorities being defined at other institutional levels.

### 5.3 Good practices and lessons learned

When analysing the added value that the EU cohesion policy may play in the planning and development of metropolitan policies, beside discussing the magnitude of the funds and on their geographical and thematic distribution it is also (if not more) important to analyse the success stories that emerges in the various cases, to identify interesting good practices and added value produced, and to reflect on the actual role that the metropolitan areas have played in their implementation and in the results they achieved on the ground and that identify them as successful. With reference to the metropolitan areas under investigation in the context of the METRO project, it is possible to detect a good number of projects and actions that in one way or another represent a selection of positive examples of how the EU cohesion policy can produce an added value on metropolitan areas under investigation (Table 5.4). A more detailed list of projects is provided in each case study report (see annexes III to XI).

**Table 5.4**  
**Good practices in the implementation of the EU cohesion policy in the METRO case study areas\***

MA	Name	Scope and main themes addressed	Role of Metropolitan Institution	Added value
Turin	MiP Programme	Support of business creation and self-employment	Intermediate Body in the metropolitan area	Institutional capacity of CMT0 and of its implementing bodies
	NOP Governance – “Metropoli Strategiche project”	Accompany organisational changes, development of competencies and institutional innovation in the Metropolitan Cities.	Involved by ANCI in the <i>Metropoli Strategiche</i> Project	Improving coordination and cooperation among institutional actors
	Participation to ETC programmes	Various scope and fields	Beneficiary partner or lead partner	Consolidation of institutional capacity expertise and know-how over time

<sup>63</sup> The Metropolitan City of Florence played a rather limited role in the ESIF management, managing as Intermediate Body, only until 2018, some projects related to the axis A-Employment as an intermediate body, for an amount of approximately 8,500,000 million euros.

MA	Name	Scope and main themes addressed	Role of Metropolitan Institution	Added value
Barcelona	Extension of the metropolitan network of bike lanes	Extend and integrate the metropolitan network of bike lanes within the existing complex urban reality.	beneficiary	Integration of network system with environmental and social dimension
	Urban Innovative Actions	Five UIA projects focused on various issues	observer	Improving administrative capacity; Introducing new form of governance models
	URBACT programme	Mobility and urbanism, economic development, social and territorial cohesion, and sustainability	Lead partner / partner	Improving administrative capacity
	Socio-environmental recovery of metropolitan river spaces	Natural and environmental configuration of the metropolitan area pursuing the recovery of river spaces	beneficiary	Improvements of environmental quality of the metropolitan area
Lisbon	Metropolitan Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change	Active cooperation in new policy domains such as Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency	Lead the initiative under the ITI	Improving coordination (horizontal and vertical) and Improving cooperation among various actors
	Education targeting school abandonment	Reducing school abandonment - Education and training	Select interventions under the LMA IT	Improving cooperation among various actors
Brno	Transfer terminal in Zidlochovice	Modernisation and electrification of the of trainline	Joining individual projects into one integrated project	Improving coordination (horizontal and vertical)
	Networks of cycle paths in Šlapanice	Activate a better connection of the hinterland to the core centre	Providing a frame for the actions of the special purpose associations of municipalities	
	New district of Trnitá	Solve a series of problems related with the central bus station Zvonařka	Enabling, coordinating and integrating individual projects into one integrated project	
	Czech Cybersecurity Center	Provide Brno with an excellence structure in terms of cybersecurity		
Riga <sup>64</sup>	Integrated development programmes of municipalities	Promoting climate change adaptation and resource efficiency Supporting the shift to a low carbon economy	No role of the metropolitan institution. Projects have been implemented by cities within the ITI	Improving administrative capacity
	Interreg programmes	Several fields	Elaboration of the project application, participation in the projects	Improving administrative capacity
Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot	TriPOLIS	Improve cooperation between business incubators and science and technology parks	Intermediate Body in the ROP ERDF, ROP ESF and NOPs and Managing authority of the ITI	Increase of the competitiveness and innovation of enterprises by ensuring better access of enterprises to the high-quality integrated offer of services.
	Metropolitan System of Social and Professional Activation	Support social groups affected by the risk of poverty		Increase of the level of social and professional activity of people and families affected by and at risk of poverty and social exclusion; development of the social economy
	Development of transport integration hubs together with access routes	Improve transport system		Creation of 24 transfer nodes in the MAG area, integrating various means of transport

<sup>64</sup> Examples have been included to show the various added value that the implementation of EU cohesion policy might have produced in Riga conscious of the fact that there is no metropolitan institution, yet.

MA	Name	Scope and main themes addressed	Role of Metropolitan Institution	Added value
	Comprehensive energy modernization of public utility buildings and municipal residential buildings in the MAG area	The scope is to reduce energy consumption		Reduction of energy consumption in public and municipal buildings through deep thermal modernization with the use of renewable energy installations
	OMGGS Metropolitan Bike System	Enable the use of public bicycles in 14 municipalities of the metro area and combine them into a network integrated with interchange nodes	MAG is a lead beneficiary / partner	Increasing territorial cooperation among municipalities.
Florence	Project financed by NOP Metro	Increase digitalization of metropolitan municipalities and creations of new digital services and development of a sustainable mobility and infomobility system, scalable at the metropolitan level	Involvement of CMFi through a memorandum of understanding	Definition of a control room as a space for discussion and co-design between the municipality and the metropolitan city Construction of a metropolitan digital infrastructure Implementation of metropolitan impact projects, replicable and scalable
	NOP Governance	Accompany organisational changes, development of competencies and institutional innovation in the Metropolitan Cities.	Involved by ANCI in the Metropoli Strategiche Project	Increasing institutional capacity
	ITP-Piana Fiorentina (RDP fund)	Enhance the traditional agricultural landscape and local supply chains, safeguarding of the hydraulic system and wetlands, recovery of ecological corridors.	The CMFi has assumed the role of leader in the territorial agreement	Coordinating role of Metropolitan City is increasingly strengthening and that it can also play outside its institutional boundaries
	Horizon Replicate REPLICATE	Develop complex and integrated action to improve energy efficiency, sustainable mobility, ICT and IoT, resilience and security	Included among the pilot projects of the PSM and in the SUMP	The results at the local level were scaled to the metropolitan level (in particular on sensor systems for mobility)
Lyon	Networking of digital players (public, private, NGOs) on the scale of the metropolitan area	Increase the networking of digital players in the metropolitan region.	Creation and animation of the network	Increasing coordination among institutional and not institutional actors
	Creation of Business-Employment Liaison Officers	Liaison officers establish relations with local companies and mobilise them on the issue of integration	Link social integration and economic development	
	Super Demail	The scope was to facilitate access to educational re-sources and digital media	The Métropole selected and funded the project	Support to families and schools in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods
	Home Silk Road (UIA project)	The project combines transitional urban planning, the integration of vulnerable people and the reception of migrants.	The Métropole of Lyon leads the project	Applying place-based approach in addressing social and urban issues

Authors own elaboration

\* No truly metropolitan project has been identified in the context of the Brussels FUA

Whereas these experiences are presented more in detail in the various case studies reports (see Annexes III to XI), this section presents them under a synoptic perspective, aiming at highlighting the main lessons that they can teach and the nature of impacts that they have produced. More in detail, the detected good practices identified in each metropolitan context are analysed in the text that follows according to three different perspectives:

- Their **scope** and the main themes that they addressed;
- The **role** of metropolitan institutions in their implementation;
- The **added value** that identified them as good practices.

For what concerns the scope and the main thematic issues addressed by the identified good practices, the landscape is highly variegated across the METRO case studies (Table 5.5). According to the data gathered, the scope of the identified projects focuses on social and environmental issues, whereas in only few cases

interventions are more focused on economic issues. For example, the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona has a strong focus on promoting socio-environment related projects as in the case of the project that implements the socio-environmental recovery of metropolitan river spaces improving the environmental quality of the metropolitan area. A mixed character also characterises the Urban Innovative Action - Home Silk Road promoted in Lyon. The project indeed poses at the centre of its action the regeneration of industrial areas with a strong social dimension. In cases where the economic dimension has been favoured, projects have been mainly focused on supporting business creation and self-employment (MIP programme in Turin), or supporting cooperation between business incubators and science and technology parks (Tri-POLIS in Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot).

When delving deeper in the specific themes the various initiatives focus on, the situation is however more varied, as each metropolitan area develops and implements actions whose specific focus largely depends on its territorial needs and potentialities. In this light, thematic issues like transport, innovation, ICT, energy efficiency appear to stand at the top of the political agenda in most cases, followed by housing and climate change. In this respect, a number of successful projects have been implemented across cases (e.g. the comprehensive energy modernisation of public utilities buildings in the context of Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot). While innovation has been considered as a cross cutting issue that involves several socio-economic aspects (e.g. the Horizon Project Replicate in Lyon, which promotes an integrated action aimed at improving energy efficiency, sustainable mobility, the development of ICT and the Internet of Things, urban resilience and security). A project that focuses on ICT has been also implemented by Florence, with the goal to increase the digitalization of metropolitan municipalities and the creations of new digital services and development of a sustainable mobility and info-mobility system, scalable at the metropolitan level (the project was financed by NOP Metro).

The improvement of mobility systems and metropolitan connections seems to be a priority for various metropolitan areas. The metropolitan area of Brno has dedicated its attention to implementing several projects like the transfer terminal in Zidlochovice which has contributed to reorganize the terminal increasing the efficiency of this railway connection in terms of speed and frequency and the networks of cycle paths in Šlapanice which has improved the connection of the hinterland with the core of the metropolitan area. Additional projects on mobility/transport have been implemented by Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot (see for instance the OMGGS Metropolitan Bike System) and Barcelona which have contributed to the extension of the metropolitan network of bike lines.

While issues like education, SMEs and employment seem to attract less attention although are often reputed strategic for metropolitan institutions. In this respect it is worth mentioning the examples of the Metropolitan System of Social and Professional Activation activated in Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot, the Creation of Business-Employment Liaison Officers in Lyon which primary scope was to establish relations with local companies and mobilise them on the issue of integration, and the Education Targeting School Abandonment initiative activated in Lisbon.

Finally, a number of projects focus mainly on the activation of formal and informal cooperation among institutions, private actors and social groups. In this respect, the role played by the NOP Governance for Turin and Florence is important in accompanying organisational changes and the development of competencies in the metropolitan areas, as done in Lyon with the implementation of networking activities for digital players (public, private, NGO) at the metropolitan scale.

**Table 5.5**  
**Main scope and thematic issues of the identified good practices**

Metropolitan area	Main scope			Main Themes									
	Social	Economic	Environmental	Education	Housing	Health	SME	Job/employment	Innovation	ICT	Climate Change	Energy Efficiency	Mobility
Metropolitan City of Turin (CMT0)		X				X	X		X				
Metropolitan Area of Barcelona (AMB)		X	X						X	X			X
Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA)	X		X	X							X	X	
Brno Metropolitan Area (BMA)	X	X			X				X	X		X	X
Riga Metropolitan Area (RMA)	X		X		X	X					X	X	X
Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan area (MAG)	X	X	X				X	X	X			X	X
Metropolitan City of Florence (CMFi)			X							X	X	X	
Lyon Metropolitan Area (MdL)	X				X			X	X	X			
Brussels Metropolitan Area (BCR)	(no metropolitan project has been identified in the context of the Brussels FUA)												

Source: authors' elaboration

As far as the role that the metropolitan areas have played in the implementation of the identified good practices is concerned, one should notice that it varies widely across the METRO case study (Table 5.6). Although metropolitan areas have played a role in almost all the identified interventions (except Riga, which has not yet a formal metropolitan institution, and Brussels), the role they played spans from a simple observer (as in the case of Barcelona in the implementation of various UIA projects) to the one of coordinator of metropolitan projects. In some cases, metropolitan areas have been partner of projects with limited responsibility while in others have lead the partnership - as the case of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (see the Urbact Reconnect project focusing on mobility and social inclusion) and Turin with the implementation of a number of territorial cooperation initiatives funded by the Interreg ALCOTRA programme. While in other

cases, metropolitan institutions were coordinator<sup>65</sup> of projects (mainly based on projects financed by ERDF and ESF operational programmes). Finally, the case of Brussels is peculiar since no projects have been activated.

**Table 5.6**  
**The role of metropolitan areas in relation to the identified good practices**

Metropolitan areas	Role of Metropolitan areas in EU cohesion policy				
	None	Observer	Partner	Lead partner	Coordinator
Metropolitan City of Turin			X		
Metropolitan Area of Barcelona		X	X	X	
Lisbon Metropolitan Area			X	X	X
Brno Metropolitan Area					X
Riga Metropolitan Area	X				
Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan area (MAG)					X
Metropolitan City of Florence				X	
Lyon Metropolitan Area				X	
Brussels Capital Region	(no truly metropolitan project has been identified in the context of the Brussels FUA)				

Source: authors' elaboration

Finally, it is interesting to reflect on the results that were achieved from the analysed interventions and that make them identifiable as good practices. These results may concern different spheres, ranging from the improvement of horizontal and vertical coordination to the enhancement of the cooperation among metropolitan institutions and other actors within the metropolitan area, from the introduction of new forms and mechanisms of governance to the improvement of integration among policy sectors, up to a general empowerment of the public administration and the enhancement of its institutional capacity (Table 5.7).

In general terms, almost all metropolitan areas have gained a more or less relevant added value from interventions deriving from the EU cohesion policy. The results achieved are however different from case to case. More in detail, it should be noted that the implementation of EU funding projects has often improved the coordination capacity of the authorities involved. This can be seen both in vertical terms – **increasing coordination** between administrative levels (central, regional, and local) - as well as horizontally among authorities within each level. An example of this coordination is the *Metropoli Strategiche* financed by the Italian NOP Governance, which has brought together all metropolitan areas discussing issues related to institutional innovation, organizational change, and skill development for the full implementation of integrated policies on a metropolitan scale.

The **increasing cooperation** among societal actors and institutions is reported as another added value EU cohesion policy and project implementation. This is particularly important in cases where projects implementation requires the participation of societal actors as a whole. This is the case of Turin, Barcelona, Lisbon, Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot and Lyon metropolitan areas where the involvement of societal actors in projects is seen as an asset to further increase the impact of projects on their respective territories.

<sup>65</sup> A coordinator role refers to metropolitan institutions in charge of managing funds using them to coordinate local municipalities in implementing specific projects with explicit metropolitan dimension (e.g. ITI implementation in MAG and Brno).

Another key factor that the implementation of projects has brought seems to be the **improvement of integration** among sectoral policies. This is particularly visible in the cases of Brno and Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot where being ITI Manager Authority has allowed the metropolitan areas the possibility to integrated sectoral initiatives. Moreover, in the case of Barcelona and Turin metropolitan area the active participation at territorial cooperation programmes like URBACT and various Interreg (especially ALCOTRA in the case of Turin), have **enhanced the administrative capacity** to deal with specific urban and territorial development issues.

**Table 5.7**  
**Added value of the identified good practices**

Metropolitan Areas	Added value				
	Improving co-ordination (horizontal and vertical)	Improving co-operation among societal actors and institutions	Introducing new governance models/mechanisms	Improving integration among sectoral policies	Enhancing administrative capacity
Metropolitan City of Turin (CMT0)		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
Metropolitan Area of Barcelona (AMB)		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>
Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA)	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>			
Brno Metropolitan Area (BMA)	<b>X</b>			<b>X</b>	
Riga Metropolitan Area (RMA)	<b>(X)</b> <sup>66</sup>				
Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan area (MAG)		<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	
Metropolitan City of Florence (CMFi)	<b>X</b>				
Lyon Metropolitan Area (MdL)		<b>X</b>			
Brussels Metropolitan Area (BCR)	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>n.a.</b>

Source: authors' elaboration

<sup>66</sup> The presence of the ITI has somehow influenced the level of coordination among actors as they are invited to follow certain priorities. However, the metropolitan dimension of this interaction should be further investigated once the metropolitan institution is consolidated.

## 5.4 The added value of the cohesion policy for metropolitan areas in Europe. A tentative typology

As shown by the numerous good practices presented above, the EU cohesion policy potentially delivers an added value in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies. The possibility to be directly involved in the EU cohesion policy mechanisms and to benefit from its resources is however differential, and may depend on a number of different variables. Building on the information collected in the METRO project, it is possible to reflect in a more structured manner on the conditions that may allow the EU cohesion policy to produce an added value on the planning and implementation of policies that are truly metropolitan in their nature and impact.

This is done on the basis of a tentative typological classification of European metropolitan areas and the way they engage with the EU cohesion policy, that is pivoted on three main variables: (i) the magnitude of funds delivered and its relative importance *vis-à-vis* the metropolitan and local budgets (ii) the level of institutionalization of metropolitan governance and cooperation and its coherence with the functional phenomena on the ground and (iii) the actual devolution of the management of the EU cohesion policy resources to metropolitan institutions.

A number of simple assumptions are here put forward in relation to these variables, that will be used to classify their diverse configurations in relation to the potential metropolitan added value that they entail:

- The relative magnitude of the EU cohesion policy resources that are delivered on the ground in each context matters. In the presence of equivalent institutional conditions, the potential for the EU cohesion policy to have a metropolitan added value is likely proportional to the resources' magnitude;
- In the presence of a similar quantity of resources landing on the ground, the existence of a more or less institutionalised metropolitan governance framework entrusted with the management of (part of) these resources increases the potential for the EU cohesion policy to have a metropolitan added value;
- When comparing formally institutionalised metropolitan authorities that manage similar levels of EU cohesion policy resources, the potential to deliver an added value is proportional to the coherence between the administrative boundaries and the metropolitan functional phenomena. More in detail, when there is a large misfit between the two, in the presence of similar conditions in relation to the other variables, higher added value is likely to occur when the metropolitan authority is larger than the metropolitan functional area, than in cases where metropolitan phenomena largely exceed the institutional boundaries.

Building on these assumptions, it is possible to identify an ideal condition in which the potential for the EU cohesion policy to produce an added value in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies is maximised. This occurs in the presence of high levels of funding, that are managed by a formal metropolitan institution (e.g. through an ITI, or as the Intermediated Body of an Operational Programme or another dedicated agreement) whose boundaries overlap perfectly with those of the metropolitan functional area. Starting from this ideal condition, it is then possible to build a typology that is composed by all the other possible cases that differs from it in relation to one or more of the three identified variables (magnitude of funds, level of institutionalisation and management competences) (Table 5.8).

The 18 categories that compose the typology allow for the development of a number of considerations, concerning the potentials they entail for the EU cohesion policy to produce a metropolitan added value. More in detail, when assessing the potential to allow a metropolitan added value as a function of the amount of resources delivered on the ground in a particular place and of the institutional aspects that concerns metropolitan governance and cooperation in that place (i.e. the existence of a metropolitan institution, its coherence with the functional phenomena and the role it plays in the management of EU cohesion policy resources), it is possible to consider this potential as inversely proportional to the transaction costs that are required to set up the necessary conditions to maximise the EU cohesion policy added value. At the same time, the higher the amount of resources available (hence its potential metropolitan added), the higher the transaction costs that each context may be ready to undertake to maximise their added value.

**Table 5.8**  
**EU cohesion policy potential added value in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies. A typology**

Resources		Institutionalisation + FUA coherence	management	Potential of the EU cohesion policy to produce an added value in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies	
High	High + FUA coherent	Y		High – allows to manage a high share of EU cohesion policy resources over a functional territory.	
		N		Likely high – depends on the quality of vertical coordination (with central, regional, local levels). The high amount of resources makes the potential benefit higher than coordination costs.	
	High + FUA incoherent	Y		Likely high – depends on the quality of territorial coordination efforts to overcome incoherence. The high amount of resources makes the potential benefit higher than coordination costs.	
		N		Variable – depends on the quality of vertical and territorial coordination. Transaction costs are higher when the institutional area is much smaller than the FUA.	
	Low		Y		High - Allows to manage a high share of resources over a functional territory. It also contribute to institutionalise metropolitan governance and cooperation ( <b>Brno and Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot metropolitan areas</b> )
			N		Variable – Lack of an institution advocating a metropolitan dimension. Depends on the will of the other levels to think metropolitan. The high resources may make the benefit higher than the costs ( <b>Riga metropolitan area</b> )
Average	High + FUA coherent	Y		Likely High - allows to manage a medium share of EU cohesion policy resources over a functional territory. The metropolitan added valued may be hampered by excessive spending diffusion or sectoral concentration ( <b>Lisbon metropolitan area</b> )	
		N		Variable – depends on the quality of vertical coordination (with central, regional, local levels).	
	High + FUA incoherent	Y		Variable – depends on the quality of territorial coordination. Transaction costs are higher when the institutional area is much smaller than the FUA	
		N		Variable – depends on the quality of vertical and territorial coordination. Transaction costs are higher when the institutional area is much smaller than the FUA.	
	Low		Y		Likely high – Allows to manage an average share of resources over a functional territory. The metropolitan added valued may be hampered by excessive spending diffusion or sectoral concentration. However, it may contribute to institutionalise metropolitan governance.
			N		Likely low – Lack of an institution advocating a metropolitan dimension. Depends on the will of the other levels to think metropolitan. The average level of resources may make metropolitan benefits overshadowed by sectoral concentration
Low	High + FUA coherent	Y		Variable - allows to manage a medium share of EU cohesion policy resources over a functional territory. The metropolitan added valued may be hampered by excessive spending diffusion or sectoral concentration	
		N		Variable – depends on the quality of vertical coordination (with central, regional, local levels) ( <b>Florence metropolitan area</b> )	
	High + FUA incoherent	Y		Variable – depends on the quality of territorial coordination. Transaction costs are higher when the institutional area is largely much than the FUA. ( <b>Barcelona metropolitan area, Lyon metropolitan area, Brussels Capital-Region</b> )	
		N		Variable – depends on the quality of vertical and territorial coordination. Transaction costs are lower when the institutional area is much smaller than the FUA. ( <b>Turin metropolitan area</b> )	
	Low		Y		Likely low – Allows to manage a low share of resources over a functional territory. The metropolitan added valued is likely hampered by excessive spending diffusion or sectoral concentration. It may contribute to institutionalise metropolitan governance. However, to set up ad hoc metropolitan mechanisms to manage minimal amount of resources is disputable.
			N		Low – Lack of an institution advocating a metropolitan dimension. Depends on the will of the other levels to think metropolitan. The low level of resources makes metropolitan benefits overshadowed by the benefits of sectoral concentration

Source: authors' elaboration

When exploring what could be the causes of the mentioned transaction costs, from the collected evidence at least two three categories emerge, overall related to the realm of multilevel territorial governance. First of all, there may be costs related to the enhancement of vertical coordination between metropolitan institutions and the institutions that are responsible to manage the EU cohesion policy resources at the national, regional

and local levels. Then, there may be costs related to enhance territorial coordination to overcome the incoherence between the boundaries of a metropolitan institution and those of the actual metropolitan functional phenomena. Here two cases exist, i.e. where this coordination is to be ensured 'internally' through the differential approach to a heterogeneous territory (the metropolitan institution is responsible for a territory that is larger than the functional phenomena), or where it has to be achieved 'externally' through inter-institutional cooperation (the metropolitan institution is responsible for a territory that is much smaller than the functional phenomena). Finally, the benefits of a metropolitan approach to the spending of EU cohesion policy resources should be also assessed *vis-à-vis* the benefits that their sectoral, concentrated spending would generate.

When it comes to the position that the nine case studies investigated in the METRO project occupy within the mentioned typology, the characteristics of the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot and Brno metropolitan areas allows for a high metropolitan impact of the EU cohesion policy. The high magnitude of funds, and the fact that the decision has been made to allow the metropolitan management of the latter through a ITI, ensured the development of a metropolitan agenda that is to a large extent geographically tailored on the functional metropolitan phenomena. In this concern, on the one hand, the lack of a formal metropolitan authority has allowed to tailor the ITI on the actual functional area, on the other hand, the decision to devolve the management of resources to the metropolitan level has triggered virtuous processes of metropolitan institutionalisation.

Conversely, despite the high magnitude of funds, the potential to produce a meaningful added value is likely low in the context of the Riga metropolitan area. Whereas also in this case the central government has opted for the adoption of ITIs, these instruments have been used to promote urban development, and pivoted on the main municipalities of the country. No metropolitan institution exists here to directly advocate in favour of a valorisation of the metropolitan dimension, hence the increase of the metropolitan added value of the EU cohesion policy will likely be achievable only through a change in the priorities and logics of the national stakeholders.

When it comes to the case of the Lisbon metropolitan area, the potential to generate an added through the EU cohesion policy is likely high, due to the fact that an institutional metropolitan authority is responsible for managing an average amount of resources over a territory that is more or less coherent with its FUA. This situation allows experimenting with metropolitan governance and coordination, and to look for synergies between the EU cohesion policy and other metropolitan instruments and policies, hence maximising the added value. At the same time, the amount of resources does not make their excessive concentration on limited sectoral priorities a preferable alternative. This case argues in favour of the direct management of the EU cohesion policy resources by metropolitan authorities, in a context where funds are significant in magnitude, in order to increase the chance to achieve a metropolitan added value.

The two Italian metropolitan cities belong to categories for which the potential metropolitan added value that can be generated through the EU cohesion policy is variable. In the case of the Metropolitan City of Florence, that concerns a territory that is to a certain extent comparable to its functional dynamics, the added value generated through the EU cohesion policy depends on the quality of the governance and coordination relations that are in place between the metropolitan authority and the authorities responsible for the management of the EU cohesion policies programmes and in particular the ROPs and the NOP METRO. The same stands true when the Metropolitan City of Turin is concerned. In this case, however, additional efforts are required in terms of territorial coordination, since the metropolitan authority is required to address with its strategies and policies more complex dynamics that concern a highly heterogeneous territory. Interestingly, despite the required additional effort, in this case a potential also emerges to deliver a larger impact, through the innovative, differential use of multiple EU cohesion policy instruments in relation to its different types of territories.

The potential to produce an added value is also variable in the cases of Barcelona and Lyon metropolitan areas, and requiring efforts in terms of territorial coordination. In both cases the presence of metropolitan authorities deputed to manage a part of the EU cohesion policy resources constitutes an asset. However, the misfit between the territories concerned by these authorities and the actual metropolitan functional areas require rather large efforts in terms of territorial coordination. A similar situation concerns Brussels-Capital Region, a highly institutionalised authority that directly manages ERDF and ESF ROPs. However, it covers a much smaller area than the FUA, with the latter that extends in the neighbouring regions of Flanders and Wallonia. Under these conditions, to generate a metropolitan added value would require to put in place coordination mechanisms whose transaction costs are rather high. To overcome this impasse, a joint com-

mitment of all three regional authorities is required, perhaps accompanied by the introduction of an innovative tool (e.g. an interregional ITI or a dedicated interregional operational programme), that could serve as a leverage to enhance cooperation.

As a conclusion, it is worth underlining that the proposed classification is based on the analysis of the nine case studies under investigation in the METRO project, and to the following attempt to generalise their results through an approach that is potentially useful to allow other European metropolitan areas to position themselves within a comprehensive framework. As such, some of the 18 categories that have been identified when combining the mentioned variables may include metropolitan areas that are rather different in relation to the quality of multilevel territorial governance and cooperation, with these differences that are crucial in defining the 'variable' added value of the EU cohesion policy in positive or negative terms. At the same time, some combination of the variables, while appearing logical according to the adopted approach, in the practice may not include any of the metropolitan areas that characterise the European context.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is worth mentioning that a EU metropolitan area is not 'statically' located in one category. Whereas any shift in the magnitude of resources that a territory receive depends on logics that are hardly influenced by a single metropolitan area, through the introduction of specific institutional and governance mechanisms a context may easily move from one type to another (as for instance as a consequence of the decision to devolve part of the management of the EU cohesion policy resources to the metropolitan level, setting up a stronger metropolitan governance or ensuring a better correspondence between the latter and its FUA). Inspired by this last argument, the ambition of the proposed typological exercise is to allow stakeholders from the different metropolitan areas in Europe to recognise where they position among the identified categories, to then, to receive indications on what added value the EU cohesion policy can generate in their case, what are the variables determining this added value, and what are the directions and possible actions they may want to pursue in order to improve their situation.

## 6 The impact of the EU cohesion policy on metropolitan governance and cooperation

While potentially producing an added value in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies, the EU cohesion policy also exerts impacts on metropolitan governance, stimulating institutional innovation and the introduction and consolidation of new cooperation mechanisms. Aiming at shedding light on the matter, this section focuses on the role that the EU cohesion policy plays in enhancing and consolidating metropolitan governance and cooperation across European countries and regions, drawing on the information collected in relation to the nine metropolitan contexts analysed in the project.

In the following subsection, the results of the analysis are organised according to a number of key issues. The first one adopts an outward look, exploring the role that the EU cohesion policy has played through time in favouring the emergence, consolidation and institutionalisation of metropolitan governance (§6.1). Then, the focus turns inwards, to the investigation of the cooperation dynamics that characterise the various metropolitan areas and how the EU cohesion policy has been used to consolidate them. More in detail, the second subsection explores how metropolitan authorities have been using the EU cohesion policy to further engage and cooperate with the municipalities that compose them, and to orient and coordinate their action towards a metropolitan perspective (§6.2). Finally, the third subsection reflects on how the EU cohesion policy and its instruments have been used as a leverage to stimulate the further engagement of the business community and of the various societal actors within processes of metropolitan cooperation (§6.3).

### 6.1 The role of the EU cohesion policy in establishing and consolidating metropolitan governance

The influence that the EU cohesion policy has played in the establishment, evolution and consolidation of metropolitan governance varies from country to country, as a consequence of multiple variables: the countries' peculiar administrative traditions and the patterns that through time have characterised their evolution, the prior existence of supralocal administrative units and their level of formalisation, the relevance of the EU cohesion policy budget over the national, regional and local public budgets, how well the existing institutional configuration has adapted to EU requirements etc. (Borzal and Risse, 2003). The METRO case studies' sample confirms this differential picture, as it encompasses cases in which no explicit link between the EU cohesion policy and the consolidation of metropolitan governance is identifiable, cases in which the latter has emerged as a direct consequence of the former and cases where some sort of link between the two is possible, although difficult to demonstrate in absolute causal terms (Table 6.1).

More in detail, the EU cohesion policy has exerted a direct influence in the consolidation of metropolitan governance in the cases of Brno Metropolitan Area and Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan area. This influence has been delivered as a consequence of the introduction of the ITIs, with the opportunity to manage EU funds that favoured the establishment of more or less formal intermunicipal cooperations and/or the consolidation and further institutionalisation of those that already existed on the territory. In the case of Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan area, formal cooperation started since the end of the communist regime, with the introduction of the ITI that has contributed to provide them with additional momentum and scaling up existing initiatives. Also in the case of the Brno Metropolitan Area the consolidation of metropolitan governance and cooperation followed a similar path, although at present still being characterised by a lower level of institutionalisation.

The experience of Riga Metropolitan Area differs from the above cases, despite the use of ITIs in the Latvian context, in so doing remarking the relevant role played by national governance dynamics in filtering the possible influence that the EU cohesion policy may exert on metropolitan governance and cooperation. More in detail, in the Latvian context the EU cohesion policy is managed centrally through NOP, and the ITI has been used to devolve the management of part of the resources to the main cities of the country, without foreseeing any metropolitan dimension. At the same time, while no official Riga Metropolitan Area existed, through time the EU cohesion policy has contributed to fuel a discussion on the institution of planning regions in the country and a new borders of the Riga Planning Regions have been recently established.

**Table 6.1****The role of the EU cohesion policy in the establishment of metropolitan institutions and governance**

Metropolitan Areas	Influence of the EUCP on the establishment of metropolitan governance			Comment
	Explicit role	Possible, implicit role	No role	
Metropolitan City of Turin	-	X	-	Despite previous soft cooperation initiatives, Italian Metropolitan Cities were established in 2014 by a national law that followed peculiar national political dynamics. However, the law underlines their potential European role.
Metropolitan Area of Barcelona	-	-	X	Metropolitan form of cooperation started since 1974. The AMB of Barcelona has been then instituted in 2011 from a Law of the Catalan government, that has not been influenced by the EU cohesion policy.
Lisbon Metropolitan Area	-	-	X	The establishing of metropolitan area was the result of local communities' activism by developing intra-institutional cooperation. The Lisbon Metropolitan Area was then institutionalised in 2008.
Brno Metropolitan Area	X	-	-	The metropolitan governance and cooperation established since 2014 under the impact of the EU cohesion policy (2014-20) and in particular by the use of the ITI instrument.
Riga Metropolitan Area	-	X	-	The Riga Metropolitan Area is still in under discussion, although soft cooperation initiatives in the area dates back to the mid 1990s. The EU cohesion policy might have implications in this discussion.
Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan area	X	-	-	Whereas more or less formal intermunicipal cooperation existed, the introduction of the ITI in 2014 contribute to the consolidation of more explicit metropolitan governance.
Metropolitan City of Florence	-	X	-	Despite previous soft cooperation initiatives, Italian Metropolitan Cities were established in 2014 by a national law that followed peculiar national political dynamics. However, the law underlines their potential European role.
Lyon Metropolitan Area	-	X	-	The metropolitan area of Lyon has a long tradition of territorial cooperation. However, only in 2015 the <i>Métropole de Lyon</i> has been established by law. The EU cohesion policy fosters may have implicitly contribute to provide momentum to the reform.
Brussels Metropolitan Area	-	-	X	Ongoing discussion on the institution of a Brussels Metropolitan Area did not produce relevant results yet, despite the possibility opened by a federal law in 2011 to create a Brussels metropolitan community.

Source: authors' elaboration

An implicit role of the EU cohesion policy in the consolidation of metropolitan governance can be noticed also in the case of Lyon and of the Italian metropolitan cities of Turin and Florence, although it is hard to establish direct causal relations. In the Lyon Metropolitan Area, the small budget of cohesion policy (compared to the ordinary metropolitan budget, the EU funds represent less than 0.5% of the annual budget) has had limited direct impact on metropolitan governance. However, the institution of *Métropole de Lyon* in 2015 (and of other French *Métropoles*) may have benefited from the momentum triggered by the EU cohesion policy, as testified by the fact that the institution has then been appointed as Intermediate body for a ITI. In Italy, the Metropolitan Cities have been instituted through a national reform in 2014, following internal political and administrative reorganisation logics that are independent from the EU cohesion policy. However, also in this case, the fact that the law provides the newly instituted unit with strategic spatial planning competences and explicitly mentions their potential European role allows to think of an indirect influence.

For what concerns the remaining three metropolitan areas examined by the project, the cohesion policy does not seem to have played any relevant role in the establishment of metropolitan governance. The process that has led to set up the Lisbon Metropolitan area in 2008 has been the incremental result of a traditional intermunicipal cooperation that has then been formalised by a central governance reform. The same is true in relation to the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, that has been instituted in 2011 through a dedicated law of the Catalan government that made it an exception in the national Spanish context. The case of Brussels-Capital Region is different from all the others. On the one hand, Brussels-Capital Region is instituted as a fully autonomous region since the regionalisation reform that has characterised the Belgian context. On the other hand, no metropolitan institution exists that is responsible for the development of the extended Brussels FUA area, and the cooperation activities within the latter remains very limited.

Whereas the EU cohesion may or may not have played a role in the emergence of metropolitan institutions and governance, once they are in place it has contributed in most cases to the consolidation of existing forms of cooperation – for instance favouring the upgrade of formal and informal networks supporting the formalisation of associations of local entities etc. – and the further institutionalisation – e.g. favouring their incremental recognition. A number of examples exist in this concerns, as for instance the project *metropoli strategiche*, development within the framework of the Italian NOP Governance, that took advantage of the EU cohesion policy to allow the newborn Italian Metropolitan Cities to individuate common challenges and share knowledge and good practices on how to address them coherently. As a matter of fact, in the majority of cases where some sort of metropolitan cooperation already existed, the EU cohesion policy has been proactively used to consolidate it, favouring for example the elaboration of joint territorial strategies with a metropolitan focus or of projects that have a metropolitan dimension. In this respect, the cases of Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot and Brno metropolitan areas are particularly relevant, showing how the existing (formal and informal) networks have benefited by the cohesion policy (and in particular from the adoption of a ITI) to further consolidate existing relations. The same is true in the case of Riga, although to a different extent as already mentioned above. Also in the case of *Métropole de Lyon* and of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona and Lisbon, the EU cohesion policy has contributed to reinforce and consolidate the role of metropolitan institutions, that had been established mostly as a consequence of national political logics, within the national multilevel governance framework.

### 6.1.1 Main directions and patterns of influence

When it comes to the main directions and patterns of the influence that the EU cohesion policy has delivered on metropolitan governance and cooperation in the different contexts under examination three main categories can be identified (Table 6.2):

- Triggering or strengthening metropolitan governance – when the EU cohesion policy contributes to the introduction of peculiar metropolitan governance institutions, or strengthening those that were already in place;
- Setting thematic priorities – when the EU cohesion policy influences the selection of thematic priorities that are included in metropolitan strategic documents and substantiate the interventions implemented on the ground;
- Decentralising funding – when the EU cohesion policy is favouring the devolution of the management of ESIF from the national and regional authorities to the metropolitan and local levels, that are awarded the role of Intermediate Bodies in relation to specific programmes and instruments.

Overall, in the majority of the metropolitan areas under investigation, the collected evidence show that the EU cohesion policy played an important role in strengthening metropolitan governance, in some cases also leading to the introduction of governance models and institutions that did not exist before. This has happened mainly by enhancing territorial cooperation among metropolitan municipalities as well as between metropolitan areas within the national and European context. Generally speaking, the lower metropolitan governance is institutionalised in metropolitan areas, the more it is likely that the devolution of specific management functions in relation to the EU resources will trigger metropolitan governance (e.g. in the cases of Brno and Gdańsk-Gdynia Sopot). However, it is not certain that this process will lead to any relevant result, nor that it will eventually lead to the effective institutionalization of a metropolitan authority. The processes of metropolitan institutionalisation follow rather complex and tortuous paths that may end p in a blind.

**Table 6.2**  
**Influence of the EU cohesion policy in the consolidation of metropolitan governance**

Metropolitan Areas	Direction of influence			Explanation
	Strengthening governance	Setting thematic priorities	Decentralizing funding	
Metropolitan City of Turin	(X)	X	(X)	Despite the EU cohesion policy has not induced significant changes in the governance arrangements in the Metropolitan City of Turin, the participation of the “ <i>Metropoli Strategica</i> ” project has offered an opportunity to strengthen the role of metropolitan areas. Moreover, the EU cohesion policy contributed to the definition of the priorities of the Metropolitan Strategic Plan.
Metropolitan Area of Barcelona	(X)	(X)	X	EU policies in the metropolitan governance have a double nature of reproducing existing organization and processes, but also introducing new agendas and strengthening metropolitan governance. At the same time, the management of a share of ERDF resources has been devolved to AMB.
Lisbon Metropolitan Area	(X)	(X)	X	The EU cohesion policy spurred the institution role in many ways. In this respect, the LMA learned to use the funding and influence metropolitan-wide strategies and policies.
Brno Metropolitan Area	X	X	X	In Brno Metropolitan Area the EU cohesion policy played a crucial role in inducing the metropolitan arrangements and in fostering cooperation therein through its funds. It stimulated cooperation, partnerships and joint vision and strategy making on the metropolitan level.
Riga Metropolitan Area	(X)	(X)	-	The EU cohesion policy has positively impacted cooperation between municipalities, since the provided funding has promoted cooperation and helped solve issues that probably would not have been worked on otherwise.
Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan area	X	X	X	The EU cohesion policy and its tools has a strong impact on strengthening metropolitan potentials. The role of EU cohesion policy in the institution of MAG has been pivotal.
Metropolitan City of Florence	(X)	X	(X)	The EU cohesion policy operates within an already defined framework of metropolitan cooperation. However, especially for some areas such as rural and inland areas, it has increased cooperation through LAGs groups or participation in the SNAI. Moreover, it contributed to the definition of the priorities of the Metropolitan Strategic Plan.
Lyon Metropolitan Area	X	(X)	X	Since the national government has looked for a reduction in the number of intermediary organisations, <i>Métropole de Lyon</i> has taken over projects that were, until now, led by municipalities. This pleads for more cooperation between municipalities and the <i>Métropole</i> .
Brussels Metropolitan Area	-	-	-	The lack of any form of metropolitan governance limits the influence of the EU cohesion policy, that remains managed autonomously by the three regional bodies. Until now, this institutional configuration did not manage to foster metropolitan cooperation around Brussels to a relevant extent.

(X) partially influence

Source: authors' own elaboration.

The role that the EU cohesion policy has played in the definition of metropolitan thematic priorities has been already discussed extensively in §5.1.2. Overall, a rather relevant influence is detected almost in all cases, that manifested in the introduction of development strategies directly related to the EU cohesion policy (as the ITI strategies in the cases of Brno and Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot) or inspired by the UE cohesion policy goals and priorities (as the Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, the Metropolitan Strategic Plans of the Italian Metropolitan Cities and the Integrated Urban Development Strategy in the case of Riga).

In a number of cases, the EU cohesion policy has stimulated the devolution of the management of EU funds towards the metropolitan level through dedicated ITI (in the cases of Brno, Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot, Lyon and Lisbon). In the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, this occurred through an *ad hoc* agreement between the regional government and the metropolitan institution. In the case of the Metropolitan cities of Florence and Turin, the introduction of the NOP METRO has devolved the management of funds to the central municipalities (however not necessarily leading to their use in a metropolitan perspective); similarly, the management of selected priorities of the ROP ESF has also been devolved to the metropolitan cities.

## 6.2 How metropolitan areas use the EU cohesion policy to engage with their municipalities and support their actions

The analysis conducted on the nine metropolitan case studies under scrutiny underlines a number of challenges that the metropolitan areas face when attempting to use the EU cohesion policy in order to consolidate their role and engage with their municipalities. In most cases, these challenges are related to the fact that metropolitan areas are mostly excluded from the decisional process concerning the definition of the programming instruments and are scarcely involved in the management of its resources. However, various examples exist of metropolitan authorities that have tried to use the EU cohesion policy to stimulate the engagement of local municipalities and to coordinate and support their action towards a metropolitan perspective. According to the collected evidence, at least three different engagement and coordination mechanisms are possible:

- Agreement-based – where metropolitan areas engage local communities about specific issues by adopting agreements and memorandum.
- Programme-based – where metropolitan areas involve local communities in implementing programmes, possibly of sectoral nature and often related to the ITI implementation.
- Project-based – where metropolitan areas coordinate and/or support local communities to prepare and/or implement EU cohesion policy projects.

At the same time, a plethora of other more or less formal institutions and mechanisms are in place in selected contexts, in one way or another taking advantage of the EU cohesion policy and its resources to promote intermunicipal actions in the case study territories.

### 6.2.1 Formal agreements regulating the use of EU cohesion policy among the municipalities (or other local authorities) and eventual upper-level authorities.

The section illustrates the formal agreements regulating the use of EU cohesion policy among the municipalities and the modes of coordination and engagement. These agreements can be temporary or permanent, legally binding or not, and might have a political or technical character (see Table 6.3):

- Temporary - when referred to a specific timeframe usually related to the implementation of the EU cohesion policy – or permanent – where local communities establish formal/informal agreements to addresses specific territorial issues within the EU cohesion policy framework;
- Binding – which include agreements that have a mandatory status, meaning that metropolitan and local authorities tie themselves up in respecting and implementing them – or not binding – usually based on voluntary initiatives among local actors;
- Political – meaning that they set the general framework as a consequence of a political convergence – or technical – which usually are more operative-oriented in given solutions to practical problems/opportunities for implementing EU cohesion policy initiatives.

**Table 6.3****Agreements regulating the use of the EU cohesion policy among metropolitan municipalities**

Metropolitan Areas	Agreement-based			
	Agreement	Type Temporary/permanent	Legal nature Binding/not binding	Political/Technical
Metropolitan City of Turin (CMT0)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Metropolitan Area of Barcelona (AMB)	Association of Catalan municipalities			
	Agreement Generalitat-AMB	Temporary	Binding	Political
Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA)	Agreement Generalitat-Barcelona City Council			
	Pact for Development and Territorial Cohesion Responsible for ITI	Permanent	Not binding	Political
Brno Metropolitan Area (BMA)	Public contract with managing authorities	Temporary	Binding	Technical
Riga Metropolitan Area (RMA)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan area (MAG)	Agreements between the ITI Associations and the Regional Operational Program Managing Authority	Temporary	Binding	Technical
Metropolitan City of Florence (CMFi)	Consortium & Territorial Agreements signed by participants to ITP Pi-ana Fiorentina integrated territorial project	Temporary	Not binding	Technical
Lyon Metropolitan Area (MdL)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Brussels Metropolitan Area (BCR)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Authors' own elaboration

Among the METRO case studies, it is possible to identify different formal agreements regulating the use of EU cohesion policy among the municipalities (or other local authorities) and eventual upper-level authorities. The first group of metropolitan areas has no formal agreements regulating the use of EU cohesion policy among municipalities. This is the case of the Metropolitan City of Turin, Lyon Metropolitan Area and the Brussels Metropolitan Area. However, in France, in the 2014-20 period, cities and groupings of municipalities had a reinforced role in the implementation of cohesion policy and they could be partially delegated of the management activities of the structural funds. They are responsible, at least, for the selection of operations financed under integrated urban development. In Belgium, Brussels Capital Region, Flemish Region and

Walloon Region (and the linguistic autonomies for ESF) are the only actors having a role in the programming, management and implementation of EU cohesion policy funds, allowing scarce room for intermunicipal and interregional coordination agreements.

The second group of metropolitan areas features a number of formal agreements regulating the use of EU cohesion policy among municipalities. The Metropolitan Area of Barcelona is the case showing the wider set of options. Regarding ERDF, the Catalan ROP stated that in the preparation and execution phase of the OP, an association has been organized with the participation of the regional government, *local authorities* and other competent public authorities (*Association of Catalan municipalities*, Catalan provinces, Barcelona city council, Catalan universities and research centres), social and economic agents (unions and business representatives), representatives of civil society (but not the Metropolitan Area). The *Barcelona municipality* signed its own agreement *with the regional government*, and a parallel agreement between the regional government and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area exists, that applies to the remaining 35 municipalities. By the Agreement Generalitat-Barcelona City Council for the Implementation of the Catalan ERDF, the City Council of Barcelona will be given specific treatment for its size & importance, not to distort the calls the other municipalities of Catalonia will be able to participate. This separation between the capital municipality and the others does not occur in Portugal, where the Lisbon Metropolitan Area acts as an intermediate management body entity, leads the Pact for Development and Territorial Cohesion and is responsible for the Integrated Territorial Investment in the metropolitan area, implementing the strategy, defining priorities, approving projects and investments. Similarly, in the Brno Metropolitan Area, city offices of managing authorities cover areas with an integrated strategy, being an intermediate body (for ERDF supported programmes). In fact, the city office is entrusted with a public contract with the managing authority to perform the function of the intermediate body. The superior administrative body of the public law contract is the Minister at the head of the Ministry in the role of managing authority of the operational programme.

By the same token, in the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan area, the ITI Association, established based on the agreement signed by the main metropolitan local governments, become the seed for the larger metropolitan association of Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot. The Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area is responsible for ITI implementation. However, as the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot area is larger than the ITI area in Pomorskie Region, the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area established the office of ITI Association as a part of its structures. The implementation of the ITI is very positively valued by the local governments composing MAG. The agreements are signed between the ITI Associations and the Regional Board of the Pomorskie Voivodship (the Managing Authority of the ROP). Also in the case of the Metropolitan City of Florence a Consortium Agreement has been signed, and followed by a Territorial Agreement between the Metropolitan City (lead partner) and a number of direct (agricultural companies that require contributions) and indirect participants (Unifi, Municipalities, Farmers' Organizations, Land Reclamation Consortium). This agreement concerns the ITP Piana Fiorentina integrated territorial project, a multi-measure instrument financed through the Rural Development Plan and aiming at addressing specific environmental criticalities at the local level by promoting the maintenance and development of agricultural activities. Moreover, as part of the NOP Metro, managed by the Municipality of Florence as an Intermediate Body, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Metropolitan City for the dissemination and replicability of the projects envisaged in the intervention plan, in particular for Axis 1 (Digital Metropolitan Agenda) and potentially for Axis 2 (Sustainability of public services and urban mobility).

### **6.2.2 Favours the metropolitan cooperation and coordination of local municipalities through programmes and projects**

The use of programmes to favour the cooperation and coordination of local municipalities towards a metropolitan perspective has been identified in almost all the case studies under scrutiny. This activity takes advantage of rather different types of programmes, depending on the configuration of the architecture of the EU cohesion policy in the different countries and regions. Among them, the most relevant role has been certainly played by the metropolitan ITIs activated in the metropolitan areas of Brno, Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot, Lisbon and Lyon. The main role of the ITI metropolitan institution was to promote the specific ITI envelope among the variety of actors and stakeholders who were listed as eligible project applicants. Each ITI metropolitan institution was programming, managing and implementing its respective ITI envelope within programmes defined in their integrated strategies. The role of the ITI in favouring the cooperation and coordination of metropolitan municipalities is particularly evident in the context of the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan area. Prior to the 2014-20 programming period, two separate metropolitan cooperation platforms existed, with little co-operation ongoing between them: Gdańsk OM and NOR-DA Association. As a result

of the introduction of ITI, the two metropolitan associations were merged into the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area in order to cooperate in the management of the ITI, with metropolitan actors that now cooperate in the definition of the priorities to be financed under the ITI mechanism and in the selection of the most important projects. A similar situation is evinced in the Brno Metropolitan Area, where the Municipality of Brno that has used the ITI to further engage in metropolitan cooperation activities with the other municipalities and to jointly collaborate with them in the development of strategies and actions. When it comes to the case of the Lyon Metropolitan Area, a number of challenges are reported in relation to the decentralization of ESIF to French regions, as the lack of skilled resources and the cumbersomeness of the administrative burden. These issues contribute to partially hamper the engagement of local municipalities in strategies and actions that are truly metropolitan in nature, with the ERDF credits that have been mostly used by Métropole de Lyon for its own projects as well as to the benefit of a number of stakeholders on the territory (e.g. social landlords).

In the case of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, metropolitan municipalities can receive funds from ERDF funds from the Urban Axis of the NOP (EDUSI, Low Carbon Economy Singular Projects) and in the framework of calls issued by the Catalan ERDF and ESF ROPs as well as within direct EC initiative (Interreg Programmes, UIA and URBACT). At the same time, they can benefit from the share of ROP ERDF funds that have been devolved to the metropolitan institution through a special agreement with the regional government. This last option would be potentially the most relevant to support local municipalities and orienting their action towards a metropolitan direction. However, the presence of multiple funding channels and the complexity connected to the application process limit its added value, with municipalities that prefer to participate to those programmes that are characterised by less cumbersome procedures (e.g. URBACT, UIA). Moreover, the fact that the city of Barcelona benefits from a separate agreement with the regional government and is not eligible for funding in the one between the latter and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, while on the one hand preserving local municipalities from the competition of the main municipality, it also somehow limit the scope of the metropolitan institution action due to the so-called 'donut effect'.

In the Riga Metropolitan Area, ESIF are delivered through a single multi-fund NOP, as well as through a ITI pivoted on the cities of Riga and Jurmala. Whereas the latter mostly allows for the promotion of urban development interventions on the territory of the capital city, through the NOP the promotion of actions concerning (or serving) the territories of several municipalities has been possible. The Riga Planning Region had played a relevant role within this framework, identifying a number of regional-scale projects in its regional development planning documents, that were then evaluated and possibly approved at the ministerial level. On the other hand, the Brussels Metropolitan Area is potentially interested by the three ERDF ROPs. However, whereas Brussels-Capital Region is able to use its ROP to coordinate the action of the 19 municipalities that compose its territory, the remaining 118 municipalities that compose the metropolitan area benefit from the support of one between the Flanders and Wallonia ROPs, with these two instruments that do not foresee any metropolitan dimension in their action. At the same time, the lack of a coordination between the three regions in the use of programmes, possibly also due to the low relative magnitude of the resources they deliver if compared to regional and local public budgets, does not allow for any engagement of local municipalities from a metropolitan perspective.

When it comes to project-based cooperation among municipalities, within the analysed metropolitan areas EU funded projects have been used to coordinate and engage municipalities in various ways. In Turin, for instance, the Metropolitan City has made use of Interreg ALCOTRA Integrated Territorial Projects (PITER, PITEM) to co-participate with local authorities in the same project proposal, in some cases as lead partner. The role of European Territorial Cooperation funded projects to stimulate intermunicipal cooperation was highlighted in the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, where local authorities, especially the small and medium-sized municipalities, tend to avoid calls from ROP ERDF and even NOP preferring direct calls from European Commission (mainly URBACT and UIA). The relevant role of these types of projects has been reported also in the case of the Metropolitan Areas of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot and Lisbon. Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan area was also involved in some URBACT, INTERREG and Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund projects (relevant examples concerns the projects Liquid Energy, RiConnect and European Platform of Integrating Cities). Finally, in relation the Riga metropolitan area, intermunicipal cooperation has been promoted through projects dedicated to ensuring Cross-Border Cooperation.

### 6.2.3 Other governance bodies and mechanisms contributing to the joint action of metropolitan municipalities

Whereas the main inputs towards the joint action of municipalities towards a metropolitan perspective is certainly provided through formal and informal agreements, programmes and projects, the evidence collected in the METRO case studies shows that other governance bodies and mechanisms exist, that contribute to favour the joint action of metropolitan municipalities (Table 6.4). On the one hand, in most cases this occurs in relation to selected territories and/or specific sectoral issues, somehow limiting the overall metropolitan value of the cooperation. On the other hand, however, these initiatives constitute interesting practices that the metropolitan authorities should learn how to interact with and coordinate, in so doing diversifying their action and experimenting innovative routes towards metropolitan development. The most relevant example in this concern is represented by the Local Action Groups (LAGs), that in selected context act as managers and beneficiaries of funds and stimulate the joint development of integrated territorial development strategies and actions. The relevance of these bodies has been highlighted in the case of the two Italian Metropolitan Cities of Turin and Florence, as well as in the Metropolitan Areas of Lisbon, Brno and Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot.

In the Metropolitan City of Florence, the LAG Start, financed with a specific measure of the Rural Development Programme, acted as a mechanism for the involvement of municipalities in the use of EU cohesion policy. It operated like a local development agency favouring the development of innovative rural development strategies integrated between public and private entities, and promoting and coordinating innovative projects in its area of action (Mugello, Val di Sieve, Val di Bisenzio, Chianti hills). Particularly relevant for the Italian context are the governance mechanisms set up through the so-called National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI), a multi-fund strategy financed with national and regional resources (ESFR, ESF, EAFRD). In the area of the Metropolitan City of Florence, a SNAI strategy area exists that is composed of the 19 municipalities of the unions of the municipalities of Mugello and Val di Sieve (CMFi) and Val di Bisenzio (province of Prato) and provides for interventions to promote accessibility to public services (infrastructures, education, health) and activate local economies (creation of the Green District and promotion of sustainable tourism). Also the territory of the Metropolitan City of Turin hosts three Local Action Groups (Escartons, Valli del Canavese, Valli di Lanzo Ceronda e Casternone), that have adopted the Community-Led Local Development approach under the Rural Development Programme. The Metropolitan area also features a SNAI strategy area (Valli di Lanzo); however, the metropolitan authority does not play any role in its programming and implementation. In fact, the CLLD is coordinated by the Region through its Rural Development Programme and implemented by the LAGs, and the SNAI is managed in interaction with a dedicated Technical Committee, which is coordinated by the Department for the cohesion policy of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and in which the Metropolitan City is not involved. Also in the case of Lisbon, 10 LAGs have established protocols of functional articulation with the Lisbon Regional Operational Programme (ROP) 2014-20. Importantly, two of them have a declared inter-municipal aim and involve collaboration across more municipalities: the A2S – Association for Sustainable Development of “Saloia” Region, that located at the heart of a countryside area in the north of Lisbon, and ADREPES – Association for Regional Development of Setúbal Peninsula, covering a section of the south portion of LMA. These cooperation arrangements are not directly related to the main metropolitan institution, making the governance framework of the Lisbon metropolitan area more complex.

In the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, a specific Axis of the NOP financed the development of Integrated Urban Development Strategies (EDUSI), introduced to developed supra-municipal (metropolitan) projects reflecting the challenges of urban and metropolitan areas and combining priority axis from both ERDF and ESF. A number of operational difficulties limited the implementation of this mechanisms, reducing its impact especially in relation to smaller municipalities. However, both the EDUSI and UIA are overall well-received by local officials, because their bureaucratic complexity is lower than the one of the projects elaborated in the framework of the ROPs. The role of the metropolitan institution in both cases it is limited to the one of observer; and of participant to the Metropolitan Network of EDUSI cities. In the case of the Riga Metropolitan Area, the role of the Regional Development Coordination Council has been brought up, as the latter acted as a consultative body and included institutions involved in ITI implementation, institutions involved in ESIF management and other institutions that were involved in implementation and monitoring of sustainable urban development, municipalities and unions of municipalities, planning regions and other organizations. In the case of the Lyon Metropolitan Area, the sub-regional implementation of ROPs defined by the region is complex and accompanied by the action of numerous collective associations, as for instance the *assemblée des départements de France* and numerous more or less voluntary groupings of municipalities. Whereas

these activities contribute to the promotion of intermunicipal cooperation, their impact on the actual management and implementation of the EU cohesion policy remains limited.

Overall, the multiplication of bodies and mechanisms intervening in one way or another in metropolitan development, represents an important capital that metropolitan authorities should recognise and engage with, in order to be able to produce comprehensive and integrated territorial development strategies and actions that are receptive of the different territorial instances. However, these episodes, if not properly engaged with and coordinated, risk to increase metropolitan fragmentation instead of enhancing its coherence, in so doing contributing to hamper the development and implementation of comprehensive development strategies and plans.

**Table 6.4**

**Other governance bodies and mechanisms contributing to favour intermunicipal cooperation in the implementation of the EU cohesion policy**

Metropolitan Areas	Other bodies or governance mechanisms
Metropolitan City of Turin (CMT0)	LAG (Local Action Group)
Metropolitan Area of Barcelona (AMB)	EDUSI (Integrated Urban Development Strategies) UIA (Urban Innovative Actions)
Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA)	LAG
Brno Metropolitan Area (BMA)	LAG
Riga Metropolitan Area (RMA)	Regional Development Coordination Council
Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan area (MAG)	LAG
Metropolitan City of Florence (CMFi)	LAG
Lyon Metropolitan Area (Mdl)	ADF (Assemblée des départements de France) voluntary groupings of municipalities
Brussels Metropolitan Area (BCR)	None

### 6.3 How metropolitan areas use the EU cohesion policy to engage with business actors and social groups

An additional added value that the EU cohesion policy can bring to metropolitan areas is the possibility to use its resources to further engage with business actors and social groups and integrate their instances within metropolitan policies and projects. The different metropolitan areas have different modalities to engage business actors and social groups. Building on the examples gathered by in the project, it can be argued that, at a different stage of EU cohesion policy implementation, metropolitan areas may include private actors, mainly in terms of consultation or preparation of projects. It occurs for the elaboration of the regulative strategic documents deciding on: key arrangements for the EU cohesion policy at the EU and national level; key content related to strategic documents framing the scope of the EU cohesion policy in a metropolitan area; key documents implementing EU cohesion policy in a given metro area; participating in EU cohesion policy execution and monitoring in a given metropolitan area; preparation and execution of the EU cohesion policy financed projects important for the development of a given metro area; monitoring of the results of the EU cohesion policy in a given metropolitan area.

More in detail, business actors and social groups might be included in the elaboration of instruments and strategies that are directly or indirectly functional to the implementation of the EU cohesion policy or for the adoption of strategic documents, as in the case of the Metropolitan Strategic Plan 2021-2023 '*Torino Metropoli Aumentata*', approved 2021 after an inclusive participatory process. This document is not directly linked to the EU cohesion policy, and it is produced as a consequence of the strategic planning competence

that is attributed to Italian Metropolitan Cities by law. However, the document explicitly related to the objectives of the 2021-27 programming period, in so doing contributing to collect and include the instances of the business community and social groups (but also of the different municipalities that compose the Metropolitan City) in a strategy that will count on the EU cohesion policy programming instruments and projects for its implementation. Also in the case of the Florence several decisions concerning the development of metropolitan instruments and strategies have been taken after a participatory process in which also the third sector and the business community were involved extensively. This case also represents a good example in relation to the implementation of the public-private partnerships, as the implementation of the NOP Metro shows how very different entities can talk to each other and work together. Moreover, in relation to both cases the involvement of social and business actors takes on various other forms, depending on the type of actor and instrument, and from the participation to monitoring committees (hence involved in the programming and/or management) to the participation to projects as beneficiaries (hence involved in the implementation).

In the case of Barcelona, the participation of social groups and the business community in the EU cohesion policy occurred through formal committees, for the preparation phase of the OP, whereas in a more limited way in their monitoring. As a result, the programmes were able to better embody the needs of local communities and enhance the impact of the projects and actions in the territory. In the case of the ROPs, the regulation of the Monitoring Committees establishes that the regional government and the Spanish Ministry of Finance share the chair of a group also involving, with an advisory role, a representation of the economic and social partners (regional unions and business representatives) of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia (at the national level, in the NOPs, the composition is equivalent). Overall, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area seems to suffer from a lack of institutionalization of participatory processes and just a few relevant social and economic actors have an actual metropolitan character. Similarly, in Lisbon, the involvement of social groups and the business community is fairly modest and mostly concerns monitoring committees, combined with the consultancy for ITI, although no funds for business or innovation and technological development are included in the ITI.

In the case of Brno Metropolitan Area, the role of social groups and the business community was defined in accordance with the partnership approach of the EU cohesion policy, which invites relevant actors to participate in the discussion on the definition of strategic development aims within thematic objectives of ITI Strategy. The explicit recognition of the territorial dimension of the EU cohesion policy initiated the establishment of the Regional and National Standing Conferences. However, actors like NGOs and business partners have been involved only in the implementation of the EU cohesion policy through projects as defined by individual objectives of OPs. The ITI metropolitan institution surveyed all actors and stakeholders within the territory and identified a list of relevant actors for each thematic objective of metropolitan cooperation. The civil society participates in the programming and implementation of some social cohesion thematic objectives. At the same time, the Brno Metropolitan Area does not specifically seek partners from the business community for planning and implementation of the metropolitan strategy. Business and social actors may be also involved also in the activities of the governance bodies responsible of the management of the EU cohesion policy funding programmes as part of monitoring committees or part of the management body. For example, in the Polish context the Monitoring Committee of each OP acts as an independent advisory and opinion-making body, appointed by the Managing Authority, and is composed of representatives of the national/regional government, local governments and organizations outside the administration (including representatives of the research sector, non-governmental organizations, social partners). However, the metropolitan structures have no statutory role in these committees and MAG business and social actors are not sufficiently involved in EU cohesion policy programming, management and implementation, in particular in the case of OPs. There seems too much greater potential in the activity of these actors than is currently used by the MAG. In the opinion of the business representatives, the realisation of the ITI project is still mostly driven by the public sector, with private and social actors that are not fully aware of the role and specificity of the ITI programme and how it is related to metropolitan activity.

The Riga Metropolitan Area displays an interesting case of wide and articulated participation. The preparation of the National Development Plan for the period of 2021-27 was accompanied by wide-scale public participation involving relevant sectoral, experts, researchers, NGOs, national-level public administration and local government officials, business community and politicians in all regions of Latvia (CSCC, 2021). The Ministry of Finance invited citizens and non-governmental organizations to provide comments and proposals, thus participating in the EU policy planning process (MoF, 2021). Therefore, social groups and the business community have the opportunity to be involved in discussions about the EU cohesion policy, in particular regarding funding. As part of the public discussion, the Ministry of Finance also organized six

thematic meetings, where the social and cooperation partners could remotely get acquainted with the draft operational program, listen to the ministries' positions, make suggestions for necessary clarifications or changes. These thematic meetings were attended by representatives of almost a hundred different organizations. To ensure optimal involvement of partners in various planning stages, after consultation with the European Commission, the Ministry of Finance plans repeated discussions on the Operational Program with social and cooperation partners in the format of EU funds Monitoring Committee/subcommittees, as well as regular information on current processes.

Finally, business actors and social groups are most active during the implementation of EU cohesion policy funded projects, with different roles. A particularly relevant example in this concern is the involvement of the Turin Metropolitan area in the Interreg ALCOTRA cross-border cooperation programme that covers the Alpine territory between France and Italy and that since the 1990s has financed almost 600 projects accounting for about €550 million ESIF. Also in the case of *Métropole de Lyon* the engagement of business and social actors mostly concerns the participation in projects prepared and initiated by the *Métropole*, raising questions on their rather scarce involvement in the consultation or monitoring phases of the EU cohesion policy. An engagement that is mostly project-based is reported also in the case of the Brussels Metropolitan Area, also due to the lack of any form of metropolitan governance and cooperation. On the one hand, social groups and the business community were engaged to a larger or smaller extent in the process that led to the definition of the Brussels-Capital Region ERDF ROP. On the other hand, when it comes to the broader metropolitan perspective, they have been mostly engaged in the implementation of different bottom-up, localised projects, sometimes involving more than one municipality. Whereas these projects deliver on the territory "quick-wins" result, the hope is of a gradually inclusion of these stand-alone actions under an overall coordination, to eventually lead to the development of a metropolitan-wide strategy and to larger-scale projects.

## 7 Use of the EU cohesion policy to react to the COVID-19 emergency at the metropolitan level.

The last section of this extensive comparative analysis of the results of the METRO case studies presents and discusses the role that metropolitan areas have been playing in reacting to the COVID-19 emergency, and to what extent the EU cohesion policy has represented an added value in this concern.

Whereas metropolitan areas have been seriously impacted by the pandemic, at the same time the metropolitan level is the one that is potentially better positioned to react to it, and to play an active role in its aftermath. This is due to the crucial importance that metropolitan areas have in the promotion and coordination of intermunicipal strategies and actions, as well as for the support that they can provide to municipalities in the development and implementation of project proposals.

The evidence collected in relation to the nine metropolitan areas under investigation, however, somehow confutes this hypothesis, as in most cases metropolitan areas did not play a pivotal role in the reaction to the pandemic. In the majority of cases, reactive measures have mostly been developed at the national and regional levels, or in the framework of by the main municipalities, with a very limited involvement of metropolitan areas. However, a number of positive exceptions exist, that are worth exploring. Similarly, whereas the reaction to the pandemic has been driven at other territorial levels, the role that the metropolitan areas will play in planning its aftermath remains to be seen. Also in this case, however, their engagement within the programming the Recovery and Resilience Facility is rather differential and not always relevant.

These elements are further discussed in the sections that follow, and substantiated through specific examples. More in detail, section one provides an overview of the initiatives that have been developed in each context in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic and the role that the different metropolitan areas are expected to play in the respective National Recovery Plans and Recovery and Resilience Facility (§7.1). Then, drawing on the presented examples, each context is analysed in relation to the (i) the level of metropolitan involvement in reacting to the COVID19 pandemic (§7.2), (ii) the nature of the policy responses that have been adopted (§7.3) and (iii) and the types of instrument that have been used in each case (§7.4).

### 7.1 Overview of the actions and initiatives put in place in each metropolitan contexts

Metropolitan actions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and making use in one way or another of the EU cohesion policy are reported in several case studies (Table 7.1). These actions are conditioned by the legal status of each metropolitan authority and by the resources at their disposal. Moreover, in various cases important initiatives have been put in place, that however did not take advantage from the EU cohesion policy. This is for instance, the case of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, that put in place the most comprehensive set of anti-Covid metropolitan measures among the analysed case studies, but that however did not support them through the use of EU cohesion policy resources.

When it comes to the measures directly supported through the EU cohesion policy, only the cases of the *Métropole de Lyon* and of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area report positive findings. In 2021, the *Métropole de Lyon* has launched a call for projects focusing on mental health, and uses the remaining ESF funds from the 2014-20 programming period to support them. This specific call for projects was inspired by a bottom-up request for psychological support for the general public suffering from pandemic-related distress. When it comes to the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, a number of measures have been implemented, this time in relation to the transport sector. Moreover, through the Lisbon ROP it was able to directly finance the adaptation of the metropolitan area's health care facilities so that they could better respond to the COVID-19 pandemic needs. In all the other case studies, the role of metropolitan institutions has been limited. The reasons for this are twofold: the lack of EU cohesion policy instruments that could be used as a part of metropolitan governance in the case of unexpected shocks and the limited discretionary power of the metropolitan authorities on the existing EU cohesion policy instruments.

**Table 7.1**  
**COVID-19 related actions supported by EU cohesion policy in the METRO areas**

Case studies	Main actions for the Pandemic, based on the use of EU cohesion funds (Retrospective)	National Recovery and Resilience Plan (Future)
Barcelona MA	▼ Two existing instruments have been changed: The Environmental Sustainability Plan (PSA) and the Program of actions to improve the natural and urban landscape (PSG). However, these plans are not funded by EU cohesion policy.	△ Barcelona MA is not expected to have a role in the drafting of the instrument, however, it contributed with the presentation of a number of metropolitan projects. It is not clear yet if the institution will play a role in the implementation of projects co-funded by the Plan (i.e. Metropolitan mobility plan).
Brno MA	▼ There has been no specific metropolitan instrument dedicated to react to the COVID-19 pandemic at the metropolitan scale, neither promoted at the national level nor in the Brno Metropolitan Area.	△ The main cities of the metropolitan areas have had the (limited) opportunity to comment on the preparation of the National Recovery Plan from the position of urban and metropolitan development priorities. However, the approved plan itself does not include any measures specifically targeting urban or metropolitan development. It explicitly states that its goals are nationwide and shall rather contribute to the convergence of non-metropolitan regions.
Brussels MA	▼ There is no specific metropolitan instrument dedicated to react to the COVID-19 pandemic at the metropolitan level.	▼ No metropolitan or interregional vision will be put in place in the Belgium National Recovery Plan. The main sectors and axis concerned by the Recovery and Resilience facility have been determined by the federal states. Brussels Capital Region will receive more than € 395 million and produce a dedicated strategy that is likely to focus largely on social inclusion.
Florence MA	☀ In the NOP Metro, interventions were reviewed and implemented to face the pandemic challenge: strengthening of cycle mobility systems, housing etc. The REACT-EU doubled the funding of the NOP Metro (intended for interventions for sustainable mobility, energy efficiency, urban forestry, urban regeneration, digitalization). The Municipality of Florence, which manages the NOP Metro funds, has played a crucial role as NOP METRO Intermediary Body.	☀ The metropolitan city may impact on the implementation of the National Recovery Plan through the preparation of the relevant metropolitan projects. A dedicated working group acts as collector of proposals of projects from the metropolitan city and the municipality of Florence. It analyzed their fit with the ministerial guidelines and drafted a joint proposal to ANCI, the body responsible to summarise the inputs of municipalities and metropolitan cities.
Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot MA	△ No specific metropolitan instrument is dedicated to react to the pandemic at the metropolitan level. However, two ITI projects have been enlarged in scope to accommodate reactions to COVID-19, by the decision of Region.	▼ No role in the preparation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan so far.
Lisbon MA	☀ Some specific transport-related interventions were developed by the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. Moreover, the Lisbon ROP was able to fund health care facilities' adaptation to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.	△ Until now the national government has not decided how to implement the Recovery and Resilience Plan and which institutions will be involved. The latter is seen as an opportunity to change the paradigm in the transport and mobility domain in the metropolitan area. Health, digital transition and housing are other key areas of investment. However, it's not clear yet whether the LMA institution will play any relevant role.
Lyon MA	☀ in March 2021, Métropole de Lyon launched a call for projects in the framework of the ESF ROP, to support emergency mental health prevention measures, following a grass-root demand from integration structures. Moreover, MdL has tried to interact with the REACT-EU programme, through the proposition of 23 project proposals, that however have been reduced to two after the further delimitation of the programme scope and criteria by the Region.	☀ The French National Recovery and Resilience Plan does not include any relevant territorial perspective. The local and regional authorities are mentioned as implementing bodies and/or beneficiaries of interventions. In March 2021, after a negotiation project that lasted two months and involved various regional and metropolitan authorities, the president of the Métropole de Lyon finally signed a recovery agreement with the State, that guarantee that development of metropolitan projects.

Case studies	Main actions for the Pandemic, based on the use of EU cohesion funds (Retrospective)	National Recovery and Resilience Plan (Future)
Riga MA	<p>△ No specific metropolitan instrument is dedicated to the treatment of the COVID-19 pandemic at the level of the Metropolitan Area. However, certain reforms and investments are at least partly related to the Metropolitan Area or certain territories which are a part of the Metropolitan Area. The Ministry of Transport ensured public participation in the development of the RRF within the established working group of Greening the Riga Metropolitan Area Transport System reform, which included representatives from the Riga City Council and the Riga Planning Region.</p>	<p>☀ Latvia's plan devotes 38% of its total allocation to measures that support climate objectives and places a particular emphasis on sustainable mobility, with investments to help overhaul transport networks in the Riga metropolitan region. Measures improving intermodal transport infrastructure within and around Riga aim to facilitate labour mobility and help curb growing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions from passenger cars. Representatives from the Riga City Council and surrounding municipalities will be involved in the implementation of Greening the Riga Metropolitan Area Transport System reform. In addition, the Plan will fund the development of an Integrated Health Care Approach in clinical university hospitals.</p>
Turin MA	<p>▼ A very limited role in the governance of the EU cohesion policy in the COVID-19 emergency. The REACT-EU enabled a doubling of funding for the NOP Metro, however, the NOP Metro is managed by the municipality of Turin, with a limited impact on and coordination with the Metropolitan City.</p>	<p>☀ The metropolitan city has proposed 17 projects to the Recovery and Resilience Plan, in relation to four macro-sectors: green transition, digital transition for the public administration Cohesion, sustainability, inclusion and mobility. The proposals have delivered through ANCI.</p>

Notes: ☀ = promising situation; △ some progress detected; ▼ limited or absent results

Source: authors' elaboration.

When looking at the future role that metropolitan areas can play in the aftermath of the pandemic, the key instrument put in place by the EU is the so-called Recovery and Resilience Facility, allocating Covid-relief funds in line with the EU Member States national recovery plans. The collected evidence shows that the involvement of the metropolitan authorities under investigation in the programming of the latter varies widely, due to the different approaches in programming and compiling the national recovery plans that have been followed in the various countries and the progresses that had been achieved at the time of the analysis.

When looking at the monitored processes, the Italian metropolitan cities seem to be well positioned, as they have managed to take part in the programming process, although indirectly through the provision of metropolitan-relevant input in the form of flagship projects. This occurred through their representation in ANCI (the National Association of Italian Municipalities)<sup>67</sup>. More in detail, the Mayor of the Metropolitan City of Florence has activated a working group coordinated by the Florence City Manager which acts as an administrative collector of proposals from actors belonging to both the metropolitan city and the municipality of Florence. This working group, that builds on ongoing EU cohesion policy activities (as the NOP Metro actions and urban authority organization) has analysed the correspondence of the collected projects with the ministerial guidelines for project proposal and, on this basis, has delivered a detailed proposal to ANCI, together with the ones of all metropolitan cities. Also, the Metropolitan City of Turin has proposed 20 projects related to green transition, digital transition for the public administration, cohesion, sustainability, inclusion and mobility. The proposals have been also shared with the Regional government, that tried to integrate the proposals developed by its local institutions into the broader regional projects. In December 2020, Metropole de Lyon proposed 23 projects to the REACT-EU programme, concerning the thermal renovation of schools and social housing, the development of inclusive digital projects, and the purchase of personal protective equipment. In addition, five projects have been presented by the City of Lyon, concerning the development of a new vaccination centre and the thermal renovation of schools. The involvement of Barcelona Metropolitan Area has been also related to the presentation of preliminary projects to the regional and national governments

<sup>67</sup> Within the latter, a sub-section is dedicated to metropolitan cities, and led by the Mayor of Florence (that is also the Mayor of the Metropolitan City).

endowed with the task of programming the recovery framework. The Latvian National Recovery and Resilience Plan devotes a large amount of resources to climate related objectives, and in particular to support sustainable mobility. The greening of the Riga Metropolitan Area transportation system is one of the actions that will be implemented through the plan, also thanks to the involvement of Riga city and a good number of neighbouring municipalities. Of metropolitan relevance is also the development of an integrated health care approach in university hospitals.

The remaining cases do not seem to have been involved yet in the programming of the Recovery and Resilience Facility to any relevant extent. In the case of Brno, the major cities that compose the metropolitan areas, settlement agglomerations and the holders of the ITI have gained since early 2021 some opportunities to comment upon the preparation of the National Recovery Plan from the position of urban and metropolitan development priorities. The Portuguese Recovery and Resilience Plan is seen as an opportunity to make heavier investments and change the paradigm in the transport and mobility domain in the metropolitan area of Lisbon, while it also includes priorities dedicated to the health sector, digital transition, and housing. This may partially compensate for the reduction of the funding of the Lisbon ROP. However, at the time of writing it is not clear what role the Lisbon Metropolitan Area will play in the development and implementation of the new actions. A similar situation concerns the Metropolitan Area of Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot, where are a number of expectations in relation to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan but the metropolitan influence in its programming has been so far limited. When it comes to the case of Brussels Metropolitan Area, each federal entity develops its own plan and is provided with its own budget, but their integration into actions with a true metropolitan dimension is not likely to occur.

## 7.2 The level of Metropolitan involvement

When assessing the level of metropolitan involvement in the reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, also in relation to those interventions that did not take advantage of the EU cohesion policy resources, it differs across the metropolitan areas under investigation. It is possible to differentiate between (Table 7.2):

- **No involvement.** Metropolitan authorities did not play any role in the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation measures;
- **Scarce involvement.** Metropolitan authorities played a limited role in addressing the emergency;
- **Sectoral involvement.** Metropolitan authorities have implemented some COVID-19 mitigation measures, mainly focusing on sectoral issues;
- **Comprehensive involvement.** Metropolitan authorities have reacted to the pandemic according to a comprehensive, metropolitan perspective.

A first result of the analysis is that, from the collected evidence, no case reports a full engagement of the metropolitan authority in the reaction to the pandemic, through the development of a comprehensive and integrated set of instruments developed according to a metropolitan perspective. Apparently, metropolitan areas were often excluded from the “control room” when it came to tackle the pandemic emergency. On the other hand, however, in a number of cases (i.e. Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot, Lyon and Barcelona metropolitan areas) metropolitan authorities have been involved in the development of sectoral interventions addressing the pandemic emergency and its impacts, while no comprehensive, integrated territorial response has been put together. The Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot metropolitan area has undertaken several initiatives related to COVID-19, mainly of a “soft” nature, such as measures in support to the local tourism industry, cultural initiatives, social initiatives in support to local restaurants, and social inclusion measures. In addition, *Métropole de Lyon* has directly acted on COVID-19 related issues through a set of dedicated measures: in April 2020 it launched a €100 million emergency fund to support local businesses, to then adopt a series of actions supporting metropolitan health and social facilities, services dedicated to child protection and to fight against poverty. The Barcelona Metropolitan Area has launched the most structured set of interventions to react to the COVID-19 pandemic, although also of a sectoral nature and detached from the EU cohesion policy framework. Two extraordinary investment programmes (i.e. PSA, ApropAMB) and a New Mobility Pact were approved, aimed at accelerating and promoting sustainable mobility and energy transition and supporting municipal initiatives.

**Table 7.2**

## Level of Metropolitan Involvement in dealing with the pandemic emergency

Metropolitan areas	Metropolitan involvement				comment
	No	Scarce	Sectoral	Comprehensive	
Metropolitan City of Turin	<b>X</b>	-	-	-	The Metropolitan City has not been directly involved in the management and reaction to the COVID-19 emergency.
Metropolitan Area of Barcelona	-	-	<b>X</b>	-	In AMB, two new extraordinary investment programmes were passed (PSA, ApropAMB) aimed at accelerating and promoting sustainable mobility and energy transition and supporting municipal initiatives. As a response of the pandemic, the New Mobility Pact has been adopted.
Lisbon Metropolitan Area	-	<b>X</b>	-	-	COVID-19 emergency was tackled by LMA and CCDR-LVT through the adjustment of certain priorities of the Lisbon ROP.
Brno Metropolitan Area	<b>X</b>	-	-	-	No role of the Brno Metropolitan area in addressing the emergency issue.
Riga Metropolitan Area	<b>X</b>	-	-	-	Decisions related to the COVID-19 pandemic have been made for the entire country. Some stricter measures were effective in some municipalities (but there is no explicit involvement of the Metropolitan area).
Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan area	-	-	<b>X</b>	-	MAG has undertaken several initiatives related to COVID-19, mainly of a “soft” nature, such as measures in support to the local tourism industry, cultural initiatives, social initiatives in support to local restaurants, and social inclusion measures.
Metropolitan City of Florence	-	<b>X</b>	-	-	The implementation of post-covid funds has led to implement specific interventions (concerning however the municipal level).
Lyon Metropolitan Area	-	-	<b>X</b>	-	Métropole de Lyon has been able to use ESF resource to react to the pandemic. It has allocated €1 million for mental health projects and other resources to support local businesses etc.
Brussels Metropolitan Area	<b>X</b>	-	-	-	No specific metropolitan instrument dedicated to react to the pandemic exists in the Brussels FUA, also due to its institutional complexity.

Source: authors own elaboration

A number of initiatives, although of a less structured nature, have been put in place in the cases of the Metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Florence. In the Lisbon area, the pandemic emergency was tackled by the metropolitan authority and the regional government (CCDR-LVT) through the adjustment of certain priorities of the Lisbon ROP, namely those focusing on social inclusion, education and training, including school digitalisation and support to the acquisition of COVID-19 tests and Individual Protection Equipment. Here the pandemic crisis put under stress the metropolitan administration's capacity to deal with emergency global issues, at the same time highlighting a gap between the institutional legal competence framework of metropolitan administration and the expectations, causing frustration among the different stakeholders. In the case of Florence, the NOP Metro was used (on the city level) to face the pandemic through a strengthening of cycle mobility systems, interventions in the field of housing etc. However, due to the nature of the instrument, the implemented interventions are hard to read from a metropolitan dimension. Finally, in four out of nine

METRO cases (Brno, Brussels, Riga, Turin), the metropolitan authorities did not play any substantial role in addressing the pandemic emergency in an integrated way.

### 7.3 Nature of the policy responses

Although in the majority of cases the metropolitan areas have had limited room for action, where this has been possible the measures that have been undertaken are rather heterogeneous (Table 7.3). More in detail, they can be identified as:

- **Reactive** – metropolitan authorities promote short-term measures aiming at giving an immediate response to the pandemic issue.
- **Containment driven** – metropolitan authorities take strict decision in order to contain the pandemic by, for example, reallocating ordinary budget or EU funds (when possible) according to certain line of investments.
- **Proactive** - metropolitan authorities support the implementation of long-term measures where decisions are taken based on a strategic view in order to overcome the pandemic impact.<sup>68</sup>

**Table 7.3**  
Nature of Policy Responses of metropolitan areas dealing with COVID-2019

Metropolitan area	Nature of Policy Responses			comments
	Reactive	Containment	Proactive	
Turin	-	-	-	No policy responses
Barcelona	-	-	X	Although a sectoral initiative, the New Mobility Pact will influence the mobility system of the AMB in the long run.
Lisbon	-	X	X	The readjustment of the Lisbon ROP adopted in tandem with CCDR-LVT, aims at adjusting specific priorities affected by the Pandemic. LMA has also adopted a programme aiming at school digitisation
Brno	-	-	-	No policy responses
Riga	-	-	-	No policy responses
Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot	X	-	-	The majority of initiatives have been oriented to support local businesses
Florence	-	X	-	The reallocation of the budget aimed at answering contingent (emergency) needs.
Lyon	-	X	-	The reallocation of the budget aimed at answering contingent (emergency) needs.
Brussels	-	-	-	No policy responses at the FUA level

Source: authors' own elaboration

When examining the five metropolitan areas where the metropolitan authorities have somehow played a role in addressing the pandemic, only the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona seems to have adopted a proactive

<sup>68</sup> This generally means shifting investments from sectors less affected by the pandemic to sectors that will have more attention after COVID-19 like environment, online education, capacity building, sustainable transport etc.

approach. Although of sectoral nature, the New Mobility Pact is aimed at influencing the mobility system of the AMB in the post-pandemic scenario. On the other hand, in the cases of Lisbon Metropolitan Area, Lyon Metropolitan Area and the Metropolitan City of Florence, a readjustment of funds has been made in the light of containing the pandemic emergency instead, as for instance strengthening soft mobility, or reinforcing health and social facilities. Finally, in the case of the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot metropolitan area the majority of initiatives have been reactive to the pandemic, trying to provide support to local businesses and tourist activities in a way that they could survive the pandemic emergency, instead of being driven by more long-term oriented strategies and priorities.

Overall, the encountered heterogeneity of policy responses shows how articulated and challenging the COVID-19 pandemic has been for each territory. Perhaps as a consequence of their limited room for action due to the lack of competences, dedicated instruments and resources, the role that metropolitan areas could have played in addressing the pandemic has remained largely unexpressed until now. It will be interesting to see whether and how the situation will change with the implementation of the actions funded under the Recovery and Resilience Facility, and included in the National Recovery and Resilience Plans that some of the METRO stakeholders have in one way or another contributed to substantiate.

## 7.4 Type of policy responses

The actions put in place in each of the analysed contexts to react to the COVID-19 pandemic differs also in relation to their type (Table 7.4). According to the data collected, it is possible to identify three categories of responses according to the diversity of instruments that they adopted to deal with the emergency:

- **Incentives** – metropolitan areas have activated specific incentives (by allocating *ad hoc* funds) to support specific sectors or social categories;
- **Strategies** – metropolitan areas have introduced medium and long term sectoral strategies aiming at reducing the impact of the pandemic as well as increasing the quality of life of their territories.
- **Projects** – metropolitan areas have implemented specific *ad hoc* initiatives to limit or mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

The above categorisation highlights first of all that no specific regulations have been developed and adopted by metropolitan areas to deal with the pandemic challenges. This reflects the fact that the majority of normative restrictions have been introduced by the national, regional and local authorities, due to the national distribution of responsibilities on health matters or the principle of subsidiarity. Among the five metropolitan areas that have been active in addressing the pandemic, all of them seem to have promoted incentive-based initiatives. Those initiatives mainly consist on allocating funds to support sectors and/or social groups particularly affected by the pandemic as for instance in Lyon where cohesion funds have been used for targeted interventions on some problematic areas such as those related to social cohesion and unemployment. These incentive-based initiatives are seen as the way to alleviate contingent emergency problems instead of supporting post-pandemic reconstruction.

Examples of proactive and future oriented measures (i.e. long-term strategies) are very few across the METRO metropolitan areas. At this regard, is worth to mention the New Mobility Pact adopted by the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, which took the momentum to go beyond the emergency towards the definition of a post-pandemic scenario where mobility will definitely play a crucial role. Finally, almost everywhere there was a proliferation of *ad hoc* projects that help metropolitan areas to implement short-term initiatives aiming at softening the impact of the COVID-19. Usually those projects target specific issues and help communities.

**Table 7.4**  
**Measures of adaptation - type of responses of COVID-19 emergency**

Metropolitan areas	Type of Responses			Comments
	Incentives	Strategies	Projects	
Metropolitan City of Turin	-	-	-	No initiatives are taken

Metropolitan areas	Type of Responses			Comments
	Incentives	Strategies	Projects	
Metropolitan Area of Barcelona	X	X	X	Most common were related to local responsibilities: social services and socio-economic vulnerability, taxes and fees, business support. The AMB also introduces long-term strategy like the New Mobility Pact.
Lisbon Metropolitan Area	X	-	X	In LMA the main sector subject of incentives has been the health care, transport and digitalisation.
Brno Metropolitan Area	-	-	-	No initiatives are taken
Riga Metropolitan Area	-	-	-	No initiatives are taken
Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan area	X	-	X	EU and ordinary budget has been used to support various sectors heavily affected by the pandemic (i.e. local tourism industry, cultural initiatives, services and social inclusion).
Metropolitan City of Florence	-	-	X	Some project funded through the NOP METRO and focusing on cycle mobility were implemented in the capital city.
Lyon Metropolitan Area	X	-	X	ESIF have been used for targeted interventions on some problematic areas such as those related to social cohesion and unemployment
Brussels Metropolitan Area	-	-	-	No initiatives are taken

Authors' own elaboration

## 8 Policy guidance and recommendations

Building on the evidence presented in this report, on the data and information collected in relation to the ESPON METRO case studies (Annexes III to XI), and of the policy recommendations that have been addressed to each of the nine metropolitan stakeholders that have commissioned this project, the research team has been able to distil a total of 40 policy messages that, due to their more general nature, may prove useful in the further enhancement of the metropolitan dimension of the EU cohesion policy and a stronger engagement of metropolitan actors within the latter. The policy messages have been first identified by the research team on the basis of the results of the analysis, and then discussed and incrementally consolidated together with the project stakeholders. This iterative activity has followed a three round Delphi exercise<sup>69</sup>, that has first contributed to verify and select the most relevant recommendations and consolidate their wording, to then explore their actual relevance for the nine metropolitan contexts at stake.

The resulting policy guidance is presented in the text that follows, organised in three distinct sections that are inspired directly by the three policy questions that have been driving the research work: (i) how to strengthen the role of metropolitan areas and cities in the development, management and implementation of the EU cohesion policy (§8.1); (ii) how to enhance synergies between the EU cohesion policy and metropolitan policies towards a greater added value (§8.2) and (iii) how to maximise on the impact of the EU cohesion policy on metropolitan governance and cooperation (§8.3).

For each of the three policy issues, a distinction has been operated in the target audience to which the various policy messages are addressed, distinguishing between (i) recommendations targeting European metropolitan areas (ii) recommendations aimed at informing the work of national and regional authorities and finally (iii) messages directed to EU-level actors that are responsible for setting the multilevel frame within which the EU cohesion policy is programmed, managed and implemented.

In relation to each of the 40 policy messages identified, the results of the last round of the Delphi exercise are summarised, highlighting its relevance in relation to the various METRO stakeholders that responded to the survey and, in turn, to other metropolitan areas located in Europe that share similar features. At the same time, the proposed policy messages aim to provide an added value to the activities of the two umbrella organizations involved in the METRO project – Eurocities and Metropolis – when advocating in favour of a stronger metropolitan dimension of the EU cohesion policy. Actors from these organisations have been engaged at different stages, through their participation to the five Steering Committee Meetings and to the first open round of the Delphi exercise, and have provided a decisive contribution to the definition and consolidation of these messages.

### 8.1 Strengthen the role of metropolitan areas within the EU cohesion policy

The first policy issue investigated in the project concerns the actual functioning of the institutional architecture and governance mechanisms that characterize the EU cohesion policy, analysed in a multilevel perspective. This issue is relevant in one way or another for all the METRO stakeholders, as they explicitly highlighted the need to explore what room exists for enhancing the influence of metropolitan areas in the EU cohesion policy programming, management and implementation. On the one hand, institutionalized metropolitan authorities aim to be more directly and extensively acknowledged in the definition of the EU cohesion policy priorities, as well as in the management of selected thematic priorities. On the other hand, while metropolitan areas benefiting from the implementation of dedicated ITIs would like to raise attention on the importance and added value of this instruments and on how their governance and institutional status could be further consolidated, other stakeholders are interested in more information concerning ITI functioning and added value, upon which to ponder its undertaking.

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<sup>69</sup> The Delphi method is a process used to arrive at a group opinion or decision by surveying a panel of experts. Experts respond to a number of rounds of questionnaires, and their responses are aggregated and shared with the group after each round. The ultimate result is meant to be a true consensus representing the approximated opinion of the group. Additional details on the exact boundaries of the METRO Delphi exercise are provided in Annex I.



## Recommendations for metropolitan areas

(Prioritise) **Identify thematic priorities and actions for which the metropolitan level generates a higher impact.** Use available instruments and processes to motivate and claim a role accordingly and address regional, national and EU authorities through concrete proposals.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (8) or moderately relevant (1) by all stakeholders participating to the survey.*

(Join forces) **Network actively with other metropolitan areas at the national and EU level to exchange knowledge and good practices** in order to better identify the “metropolitan identity”. **Jointly organise lobbying and promote actions** towards a further recognition of the metropolitan dimension in the EU cohesion policy and Recovery and Resilience Facility and, where necessary, also within national administrative and policy frameworks.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (4) or moderately relevant (5) by all stakeholders participating to the survey.*

(Collaborate) **Establish proactive collaboration with all the municipalities within the metropolitan area, economic and social stakeholders and national and regional governments**, in so doing guaranteeing the co-definition of projects with a true metropolitan dimension that ensures larger impact.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (6) or moderately relevant (3) by all stakeholders participating to the survey.*

(Capitalise) **Identify good practices in the engagement of the metropolitan areas in the concluded EU cohesion policy programming period and capitalise them**, working towards their strengthening and using them as a leverage to claim additional involvement.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (3) or moderately relevant (4) by 7 stakeholders over a total of 9. On the contrary, it has been assessed as scarcely relevant in relation to contexts where scarce previous experiences in the management of the EU cohesion policy exists.*

(Empower) **Invest to consolidate institutional capacity by enlarging and upskilling human resources and re-engineering processes and procedures**, to facilitate the quest for and management of EU funds, further enhance metropolitan governance functioning and strengthen the case for a devolution of EU cohesion policy and other competences.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (7) or moderately relevant (1) by 8 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as not relevant only in a context where at present no metropolitan institution exists.*



## Recommendations for national and regional institutions

(Acknowledge) **Acknowledge the crucial role that the metropolitan level can play** in dealing with socio-economic, environmental and territorial challenges.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (6) or moderately relevant (2) by 8 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant in only 1 context, due to its scarce applicability in the peculiar national and regional institutional framework.*

(Involve) **Involve metropolitan institutions in the design of EU cohesion policy National and Regional Operational Programmes** as well as of the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the European Green Deal, to enrich them with a metropolitan dimension.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (7) or moderately relevant (2) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*

(Devolve) **Devolve part of the management of the EU cohesion policy (and other EU funding programmes) to metropolitan institutions** in relation to those priorities for which the management at the metropolitan level provides higher impact.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (6) or moderately relevant (2) by 8 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant in relation to only 1 context, where the EU cohesion policy is highly centralised and metropolitan institutions do not exist.*

(Consolidate multilevel governance) **Use the EU cohesion policy as a way to structure a coherent multilevel governance framework** that ensures the effective coordination of the EU, national, regional, metropolitan and local planning and policies. In doing so, generate a momentum towards the **institutionalisation of metropolitan areas as a key territorial setting for national and regional public policies** (and, where necessary, their legal recognition).

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (4) or moderately relevant (4) by 8 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant in only 1 context where horizontal cooperation between regional entities would be more relevant than vertical multilevel governance.*



## Recommendations for EU-level actors

(Define) **Define the boundaries of a specific EU metropolitan development discourse and policy** in parallel to, but independently from the one focusing on sustainable urban development (e.g. through an official EC Communication, links to the implementation of the Territorial Agenda 2030 and to the EC Communication on the long-term vision for Rural Areas).

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (5) or moderately relevant (3) by 8 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant in relation to only 1 context.*

(Recognise) **Officially acknowledge the role that metropolitan areas play in the socio-economic, environmental and territorial development of the EU** and, in turn, **explicitly recognise them in the EU cohesion policy governance** as a key level at which to catalyse the action of cities, suburban and rural areas in relation to selected issues with a metropolitan dimension.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (8) or moderately relevant (1) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*

(Enhance knowledge) **Enhance knowledge by engaging with EU networks with a metropolitan focus** (European Metropolitan Authorities, Eurocities, Metrex) **in the definition of the EU cohesion policy** priorities and regulations (and also in the Recovery and Resilience Facility and in the European Green Deal).

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (4) or moderately relevant (5) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*

(Monitoring and Reward) **Monitor more closely the implementation of the European code of conduct on partnership** in the Member States when programming and managing the EU cohesion policy programmes. **Predispose rewards to incentivise the establishment of inter-institutional managing authorities involving metropolitan areas** in the cohesion policy, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the European Green Deal, the use of ITI and other types of agreements.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (5) or moderately relevant (2) by 7 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant in relation to 2 contexts, from stakeholders highlighting the potential drawbacks related to the further complication of an already complex administrative structure.*

(Monitor) **Establish a European Metropolitan Policy Observatory**, with the support of European organisations with a metropolitan focus (European Metropolitan Authorities, Eurocities, Metrex) and in connection to the planned EU Rural Observatory, to develop and share evidence-based knowledge on metropolitan institutions and governance as well as data for all EU functional and institutional metropolitan areas.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (3) or moderately relevant (3) by 6 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant in relation to 3 contexts, from stakeholders highlighting that existing institutions could perform a similar role.*

## 8.2 Enhance the added value of the EU cohesion policy in the planning and implementation of metropolitan policies

A second element of analysis concerns the potential for the EU cohesion policy to produce an added value in the planning and implementation of metropolitan strategies and policies and, vice versa, how the latter can contribute to achieve EU territorial development goals. All stakeholders have highlighted the need to establish and consolidate stronger synergies between metropolitan and EU priorities and instruments. Whereas European programmes have their own rationale, given the breath of their goals, to enhance formal coherence between European and metropolitan development strategies is rather straightforward. However, at a closer look, a number of challenges still exist for metropolitan areas and cities to meet their objectives through the EU cohesion policy, as the specific governance arrangements and mechanisms in place in the different context may or may not allow virtuous episodes of cross-fertilisation to occur.



### Recommendations for metropolitan areas

(Think strategically) **Establish an overarching, comprehensive metropolitan strategy together with all relevant stakeholders, matching the EU cohesion policy and other national and regional policy instruments and opportunities**, in order to facilitate the channeling of resources on concrete metropolitan actions. When possible, use it to upload pivotal metropolitan priorities on the regional, national and EU agendas.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (5) or moderately relevant (3) by 8 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant in relation to only 1 context, where such strategy would require prior coordination outside the existing administrative boundaries.*

(Integrate sectors) Use existing frameworks and instruments (Operational Programmes, but also ITI and *ad hoc* agreements) to **integrate sectoral actions anytime it is possible and propose integrated projects with a potentially metropolitan-wide, high impact.**

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (7) or moderately relevant (2) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*

(Soften boundaries) Use the different available means to **act through variable geographies** (FUA, urban-rural relations, remote rural areas etc.) **defined by the issues at stake.** Tackle territorial misfits and heterogeneity through a multi-network approach and use partial 'quick-wins' to eventually reach a larger scale.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (3) or moderately relevant (5) by 8 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant in relation to only 1 context, where metropolitan cooperation is almost fully overlapping with the FUA.*

(Support and work together) **Support and co-work with local public bodies and private actors in the outline and preparation of project proposals and in their implementation,** in turn overcoming the negative impacts of fragmentation and ensuring a greater metropolitan added value.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (6) or moderately relevant (2) by 8 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant in relation to only 1 context, where no institutional metropolitan area is in currently place that may perform this activity.*



## Recommendations for national and regional institutions

(National and regional Metro-thinking) **Involve metropolitan representatives when programming National and Regional Operational Programmes as well as other relevant programmes (as the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the European Green Deal), to strengthen their metropolitan dimension** and enhance their impact in terms of coherence and outcomes on the ground.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*

(Local Metro-thinking) Include incentives in National and Regional Operational Programmes aiming at **encouraging local administrations and local stakeholders to think and act with a metropolitan perspective in mind,** to reduce the fragmentation of the EU cohesion policy impact and enhance its metropolitan added value.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (7) or moderately relevant (2) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*

(Metropolitan nexus) **Identify the metropolitan level as a relevant nexus between national, regional and local authorities.** In the spirit of subsidiarity and in cooperation with regional authorities, the metropolitan institutions shall support local authorities in the preparation and implementation of actions with an expected metropolitan impact.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (6) or moderately relevant (2) by 9 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant in relation to only 1 context, where this role appears already well recognised.*

(Metropolitan instruments) **Introduce programmes and instruments managed at the metropolitan level** (as dedicated Operational Programmes, ITIs or other ad hoc agreements), to guarantee the allocation of funding **enhancing vertical** (between different territorial levels) **and horizontal** (between sectors and funds) **coordination** in the definition of priorities and operational plans with a metropolitan dimension.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (6) or moderately relevant (3) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*

(Metropolitan balance) **provide Operational Programmes with actions plans and measures to enhance metropolitan cooperation and favour a balanced distribution of resources** that complies with metropolitan-wide priorities and policies.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (5) or moderately relevant (4) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*



## Recommendations for EU-level actors

(EU Metro-thinking) **Acknowledge the metropolitan scale as the most suitable scale to efficiently tackle functional urban challenge and facilitate supralocal cooperation.** On this basis, further strengthen the metropolitan dimension in the design, implementation, and management of the EU cohesion policy.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (7) or moderately relevant (1) by 8 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant in relation to only 1 context, where such acknowledgement should rather be achieved in the domestic context, and interregional cooperation promoted accordingly.*

(Metropolitan instruments) **Provide metropolitan governments with dedicated programming instruments** (ITI, National Operational Programmes, Metropolitan Operational Programmes), deputed to address relevant metropolitan issues (e.g. socio-economic polarisation, smart economic transformation, mobility, social inclusion, climate change).

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (8) or moderately relevant (1) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*

(Engagement catalyst) **Recognize the role that metropolitan areas can play as catalyst of engagement,** that support and stimulate **the participation of small and medium-sized municipalities** to the EU cohesion policy, so that also these entities benefit from EU funding and receive an added value in a true metropolitan perspective.

*This recommendation has been introduced after the last round of the Delphi, as a consequence of the received inputs.*

(Simplify) **Streamline managerial burdens and facilitate the access to Technical Assistance resources. Simplify the logics and mechanisms behind the various EU funds.** Favour their integration within territorial development strategies and actions, also strengthening those instruments that allow to do so (as ITI, CLLD).

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (3) or moderately relevant (6) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*

### 8.3 Maximise the impact of the EU cohesion policy on metropolitan governance and cooperation

A third issue open for investigation concerns the added value that cohesion policy could provide in favouring the consolidation of metropolitan governance and in the development and articulation of cooperation practices. Obviously, in relation to this policy issue, less institutionalized metropolitan areas and cities are perceiving the highest value, and would like to exploit the opportunities offered by the EU cohesion policy to further consolidate the position of metropolitan institutions within national and regional administrative hierarchies. However, also formal metropolitan authorities generally acknowledge the added-value that the EU cohesion policy could have in consolidating cooperation dynamics with the national and regional levels, with the various municipal authorities they include as well as with the business community and the social actors that are active within their boundaries. In this light, the provided policy messages address whether and under what conditions the EU cohesion policy may contribute to the consolidation of integrated metropolitan governance structures and stimulate further cooperation therein. Moreover, where functional dynamics are not matching the borders of metropolitan institutions, the use of EU funds may help stimulating institutional actors to cooperate according to area-based approaches.



#### Recommendations for metropolitan areas

(Dialogue and leverage) **Intensify EU cohesion policy dialogue with local municipalities and all other relevant actors**, thus fostering multi-local cooperation and the articulation of a metropolitan policy agenda. **Use the EU cohesion policy and other means (the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the European Green Deal) as a leverage** to overcome the differential interests of basic territorial units and encourage them to join forces.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (6) or moderately relevant (3) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*

(Variable networking) **Valorise the role of the metropolitan institution**, using the opportunities offered by the different EU instruments (Operational Programmes, ITI, CLLD, the Recovery and Resilience Facility) to adapting the scale of metropolitan governance to actual functional challenges (i.e. cooperating with neighbouring territorial units towards a broader perspective and acting within its own territory through variable geographies).

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (3) or moderately relevant (5) by 8 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant in relation to only 1 context, where the main challenge concerns the impossibility of the institution to act upon metropolitan territories that lies outside their administrative competence.*

(Transparency and legitimacy) **Ensure transparency through the establishment of a clear decision-making framework** for the EU cohesion policy governance and resource allocation, in order to **legitimize the reciprocal representativeness of all institutions involved** (metropolitan institutions and all involved local governments).

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (4) or moderately relevant (3) by 7 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant (1) or not relevant (1) in relation to 2 contexts, where the level of transparency and legitimacy is already considered adequate.*

(Link with policy forum) **Valorise existing metropolitan policy forums**, to engage with relevant public, private and third sector actors, as an added value to collect their inputs in relation to the EU cohesion policy consultation process, thus encouraging a place-based representation of local and metropolitan needs and priorities.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (2) or moderately relevant (6) by 8 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant in relation to only 1 context, where no such metropolitan forum exists due to the fragmented and purely functional nature of the metropolitan area.*

(Beyond the EU cohesion policy) **Seize the window of opportunity offered by the 2021-27 EU cohesion policy to further consolidate metropolitan governance** and planning as self-standing.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (4) or moderately relevant (5) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*



### Recommendations for national and regional institutions

(Devolve) **Devolve the management of specific Operational Programmes priorities or of a dedicated Metropolitan Operational Programme to metropolitan institutions.** This would ensure a better representation of territorial challenges and provide a leverage to involve municipalities and local stakeholders in the definition of metropolitan visions and priorities.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (6) or moderately relevant (3) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*

(Experiment) **Explore and experiment the use of ITIs in metropolitan areas,** to trigger and strengthen metropolitan cooperation and consolidate the metropolitan dimension as the key level to promote integrated sustainable urban development within the multilevel decision making process.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (5) or moderately relevant (2) by 7 stakeholders over a total of 9. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant in relation to 2 contexts, one where the main knowledge need concerns to receive information on what would be the added value to adopt the ITI and another one arguing that the same should apply to any territorial development instrument.*

(Institutionalise) **Enhance the metropolitan dimension not only within the EU cohesion policy frame,** exploring alternative pathways to support autonomous metropolitan development plans and actions and, where necessary, to further institutionalise metropolitan authorities.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (6) or moderately relevant (3) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*



### Recommendations for EU-level actors

(Cooperation catalyst) **Recognise metropolitan areas as catalysts of cooperation within heterogeneous territories** and involve them in EU cohesion policy programming and management, in so doing improving the multilevel partnership among local, regional and national actors as well as economic and social stakeholders.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (8) or moderately relevant (1) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*

(Experimental ground) **Strengthen and further articulate** EU cohesion policy instruments dedicated to metropolitan development, **as an experimental ground to tackle functional challenges** through the development of overarching metropolitan visions and priorities and actions focusing on variable territories.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (8) or moderately relevant (1) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*

(Vanguard) **Include dedicated actions for metropolitan areas in the new European instruments** (e.g. the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the European Green Deal), so that metropolitan authorities can use them to enhance further cooperation within their territories. **Metropolitan areas** are the ideal level to react to the pandemic as well as to tackle climate change and other pressing challenges and **should be recognised as a vanguard in implementing** these instruments.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (7) or moderately relevant (2) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*

(Context sensitive) **Provide in the EU cohesion policy with a flexible framework that allows tasks and long-term actions to be tailored to the characteristics of any metropolitan area**, while at the same time stressing the need to act at a functional level.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (4) or moderately relevant (5) by all stakeholders participating in the survey.*

(Empowerment) **Guarantee the diffuse employment of resources dedicated to strengthen the institutional capacity of metropolitan actors** (also within the Technical Support Instrument), in order to allow them to play an active role in supporting local actors' engagement with the EU cohesion policy framework, hence strengthening metropolitan governance and cooperation.

*This recommendation has been assessed as highly relevant (6) or moderately relevant (1) by 7 stakeholders over a total of 8. It has been assessed as scarcely relevant in relation to 2 contexts (one where no institutional metropolitan area exists).*

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