

TARGETED ANALYSIS //

METRO

The role and future perspectives of Cohesion Policy in the planning of Metropolitan Areas and Cities

Annex IV // Barcelona Metropolitan Area case study

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Abbreviations

AMB	Barcelona Metropolitan Area
CCAA	Autonomous Communities
CMB	Metropolitan Corporation of Barcelona
EC	European Commission
EDUSI	Integrated Urban Development Strategies
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EUCP	European Union Cohesion Policy
FUA	Functional Urban Area
IDAE	Institute for Energy Diversification and Savings
MC	Monitoring Committee
MSA	Metropolitan Statistical Areas
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
NOP	National Operational Programme
OP	Operational Programme
PA	Priority Axe
PAM	Metropolitan Action Plan
PDU	Urban Development Plan
PECT	Projects of Territorial Specialization and Competitiveness
PEMB	Barcelona Metropolitan Strategic Plan
PMMU	Metropolitan Urban Mobility Plan
PO	Policy Objective
PSA	Environmental Sustainably Plan
RIU	Urban Initiatives Network
ROP	Regional Operational Programme
RRF	Resilience and Recovery Facility
TO	Thematic Objective
UIA	Urban Innovative Actions

Foreword by Ernest Maragall i Mira

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) is the only metropolitan government formally institutionalized in Spain with its own legal framework set through law of the Catalan Parliament (2010) and a tradition of more than forty years of supralocal cooperation among the 36 municipalities of its territory. AMB has specific powers in urban planning, infrastructures, housing, transport and sustainable mobility, waste and water management, economic development and social cohesion. Hence, the AMB has enough capacity, competences, resources and projects to participate in the development of the Cohesion Policy, from the designing phase until the execution.

The ESPON Metro Project represents a unique example on how the metropolitan perspective can contribute with an important added value to the European integration and its policies. This study is conducted by different research institutions in cooperation with nine European metropolitan areas and sets a clear sample of the metropolitan joint work potential. The study itself shows the great significance of this teamwork and shows the way for further collaboration.

The project has allowed us to share and capitalise with others the agreement reached between the AMB and the Catalan government within the Operational Programme for Catalonia 2014-2020 to manage for the first time a programme that develops 10 metropolitan projects with a total budget of 72.6M€ of which 30M€ financed by the ERDF. This first step represents a very important achievement for the institutional recognition of the metropolitan area of Barcelona even if limited to the implementation phase. This agreement has allowed the municipalities of the metropolitan area of Barcelona to benefit from these funds.

We are in a key moment of the definition of the future Cohesion Policy programmes 2021-2027 as well as the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility funds. It is necessary to involve metropolitan authorities in this process. The metropolitan dimension can give a better answer to the main challenges that the European Union is facing in particular the digital and ecological transition and the economic recovery. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions have to be vigilant and secure a fair implementation of the partnership principle when planning and developing the new programmes. To this purpose, the European Metropolitan Authorities network (EMA) can play a fundamental role in defending the metropolitan contribution and in joining efforts to embrace the metropolitan dimension in the design of the Cohesion Policy.

The commitment of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area with the Cohesion Policy is firm and the ESPON Metro Project is a great example of shared work with other EU metropolises to include the metropolitan perspective at the core of the European policies.



Ernest Maragall i Mira,
Vice-president of International Relations and Cooperation

1 Introduction

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) is a unique case of metropolitan government in Spain. It is composed of 36 municipalities and 3.2 million people.

In the Catalan context, the Barcelona metropolitan area represents the main agglomeration of population and economic activity; it is the main economic engine (52% of the Catalan GDP) and counts 43% of the total Catalan population, but only 2% of its territory. Nevertheless, the 36 municipalities forming the metropolitan authority are just a part of the wider functional metropolitan area (in economic and social terms) of Barcelona that, depending on the specific definition adopted, comprises between 135 municipalities and 5 million inhabitants, corresponding to the OECD-Eurostat Functional Urban Area concept, or 164 municipalities and 5.2 million inhabitants corresponding to the Metropolitan Region of Barcelona.

In institutional terms, the metropolitan authority was created by law 31/2010 of the Catalan Parliament and replaced the two existing metropolitan entities (the Environmental Agency and the Transport Metropolitan Agency) and the Union of Municipalities of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, rationalising and simplifying the metropolitan governance by creating one single administration. After 10 years since its establishment, the metropolitan authority can be characterized as a hybrid institution between an administration that gives technical and financial support to municipalities and a proper metropolitan government for the implementation of true metropolitan policies. Nowadays, the AMB has responsibilities in urban planning, infrastructures, public space, sustainable mobility, transport, environment, economic policies and international relations and cooperation.

However, it is still relatively fragile in financial terms, and the divergence between the metropolitan region and the territory that covers the metropolitan authority interferes in the adequate provision of services. In addition, there is an ongoing debate about the need to strengthen its democratic legitimacy and governance mechanisms, considering non-institutional (social and private) actors in the decision-making processes and the larger metropolitan region.

In this context, the study analyses the impact of the EU Cohesion Policy in the development of metropolitan goals, policies and governance in the Barcelona metropolitan area. In order to do this, the document presents an analysis of the position and role of the Barcelona metropolitan authority in the Spanish framework of the EU Cohesion Policy, and in particular the ERDF.

The research focuses on the main EU Cohesion Policy instruments implemented in the metropolitan area. Among these, in 2017 the Catalan government and the metropolitan authority signed an agreement by which the metropolitan government was granted EUR 30 million of the ERDF Catalan Operational Programme for metropolitan policies. Other ERDF instruments have also been assessed, such as UIA, URBACT or Interreg, by which metropolitan municipalities develop innovative urban projects. Moreover, the study also reviews the potentialities and necessities of the forthcoming Next Generation programmes in the post-COVID era.

Then, through the analysis of policy papers, legal documents, plans and programmes, and interviews, the study evaluates the impact of EU Cohesion Policy instruments on metropolitan governance in the Barcelona region. In particular, it explores the main effects of European funds in relation to the prioritization and acceleration of policies in the metropolitan context, the incorporation of new agendas and goals, and the incorporation of innovation and administrative modernization, both at the metropolitan and local levels. In this sense, it also assesses the coherence of these projects with metropolitan authority planning instruments, and its alignment with its investment programmes. The document also looks at the spatial effects of EU projects in relation to redistribution, territorial cohesion, and the impact over local government capacities.

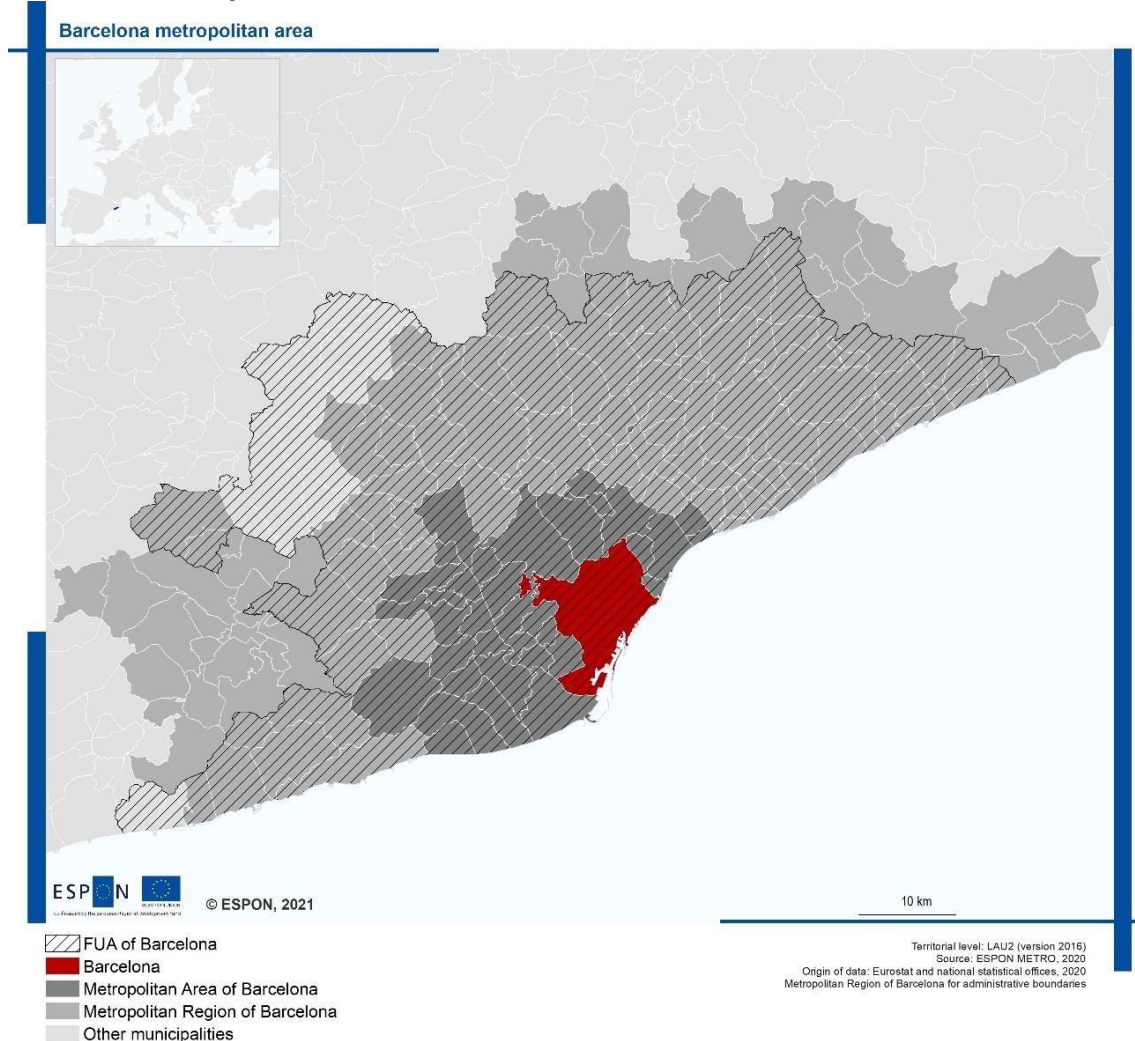
Last, the impact of the EU Cohesion Policy on metropolitan governance has been also analysed, which is not only in the new or diverse relations of the metropolitan authority with municipalities (and other actors) in policy design and implementation, but the potential of the EU Cohesion Policy in strengthening the role of metropolitan authorities in an open, multilevel, and transversal metropolitan governance.

2 Case study area contextualisation

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) is the metropolitan authority of Barcelona and its surrounding municipalities. It is located in Catalonia, of which the city of Barcelona is the capital, on the north-eastern Mediterranean coast of Spain. It is the core of the second most populated urban region in Spain, one of the top urban regions in Europe and the largest in the Mediterranean.

Map 2.1

Barcelona metropolitan area



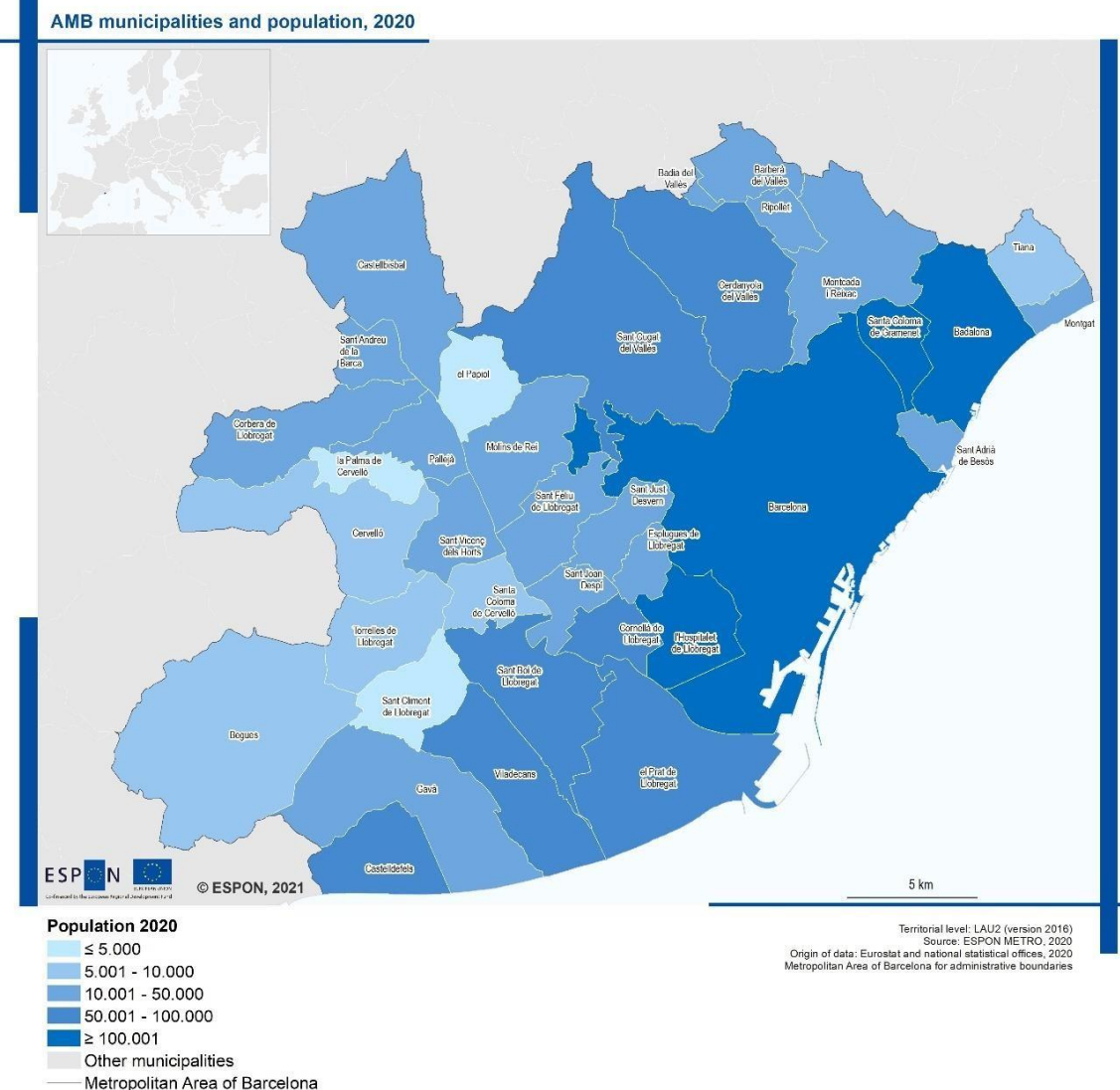
Source: IERMB.

The Metropolitan authority is composed of 36 municipalities: Barcelona and 35 municipalities, with a total population of 3.2 million in a total area of 636 km². The population density is 5,093 inhabitants per km², and 52% of the territory is forest, beaches and unoccupied land, 20% is dedicated to residential use, and 7% to industrial use (the rest is dedicated to infrastructures, facilities, and parks). The population is equally distributed between the municipality of Barcelona (1,636,762 inhabitants, 49.7%) and the rest of the 35 municipalities (1,654,892 inhabitants), showing a great difference between the central municipality and the rest: the second largest municipality is l'Hospitalet de Llobregat (264,923 inhabitants, representing 8% of the total metro population), and the smallest is La Palma de Cervelló (2,954 inhabitants and 0.1% of the total population). By gender, 51.5% of the metropolitan area population are women and 48.5% are men. The life expectancy for men is 79.25 years and for women is 85.12 years. There is a significant share of foreign population (22% in 2019) and from other regions in Spain (19%). However, most residents were born in the

metropolitan territory (54.2%) and only 5% are from other parts of Catalonia.

Map 2.2

AMB municipalities and population, 2020



Source: IERMB.

Concerning the economic structure, labour is mainly concentrated in service activities (86% in 2019), as expected for a metropolitan economy. Moreover, almost half of workers are employed in knowledge-intensive activities (47.4%), which is a higher share than that of Catalonia (42%). Industry represents 9.3% of the working population and construction constitutes 4.6%. In Gross value-added terms, the distribution is similar: services account for 84%, industry 12% and construction 4%.

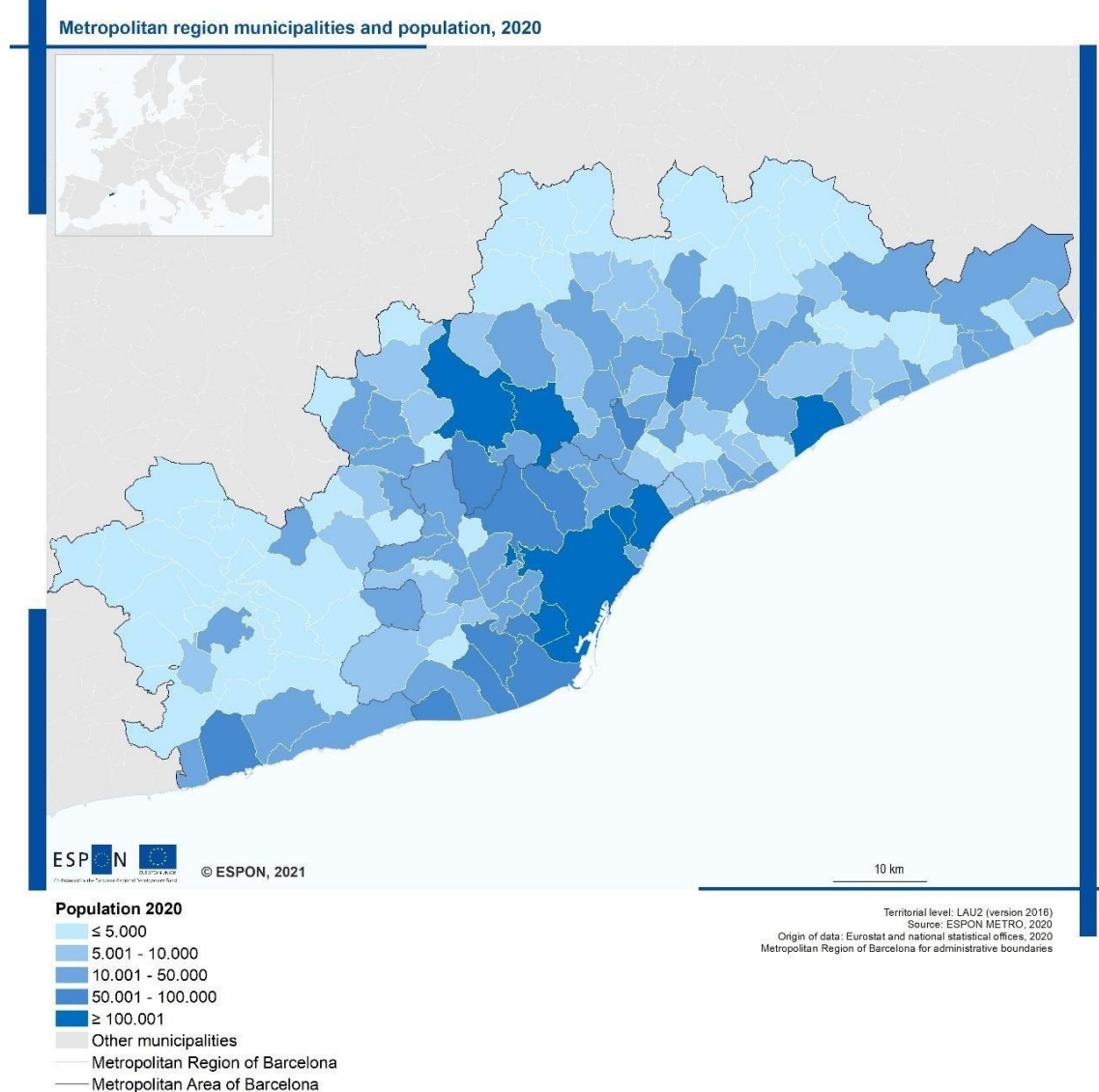
In the context of Catalonia, the municipalities that are part of the metropolitan institution represent the main agglomeration of population and economic activity. In other words, 43% of the total Catalan population live in an area that represents only 2% of the territory of Catalonia. However, it represents 52% of jobs and 52% of the total GDP. In relation to Spain, the Barcelona metropolitan area represents 7% of the population and 9% of the national GDP.

It should be noted that an intense relationship with the surrounding territory, in terms of economic and labour market, but also leisure and other non-commercial relations characterize the territory of the metropolitan area. In fact, it can be argued that the metropolitan area is a very prominent and central part of a larger functional metropolitan region. Thus, if we take into account the labour mobility flows of the functional metropolitan region of Barcelona we would have a much larger dimension: up to 164 municipalities and

5,155,174 inhabitants, representing 67% of the population and around 70% of the GDP of Catalonia.

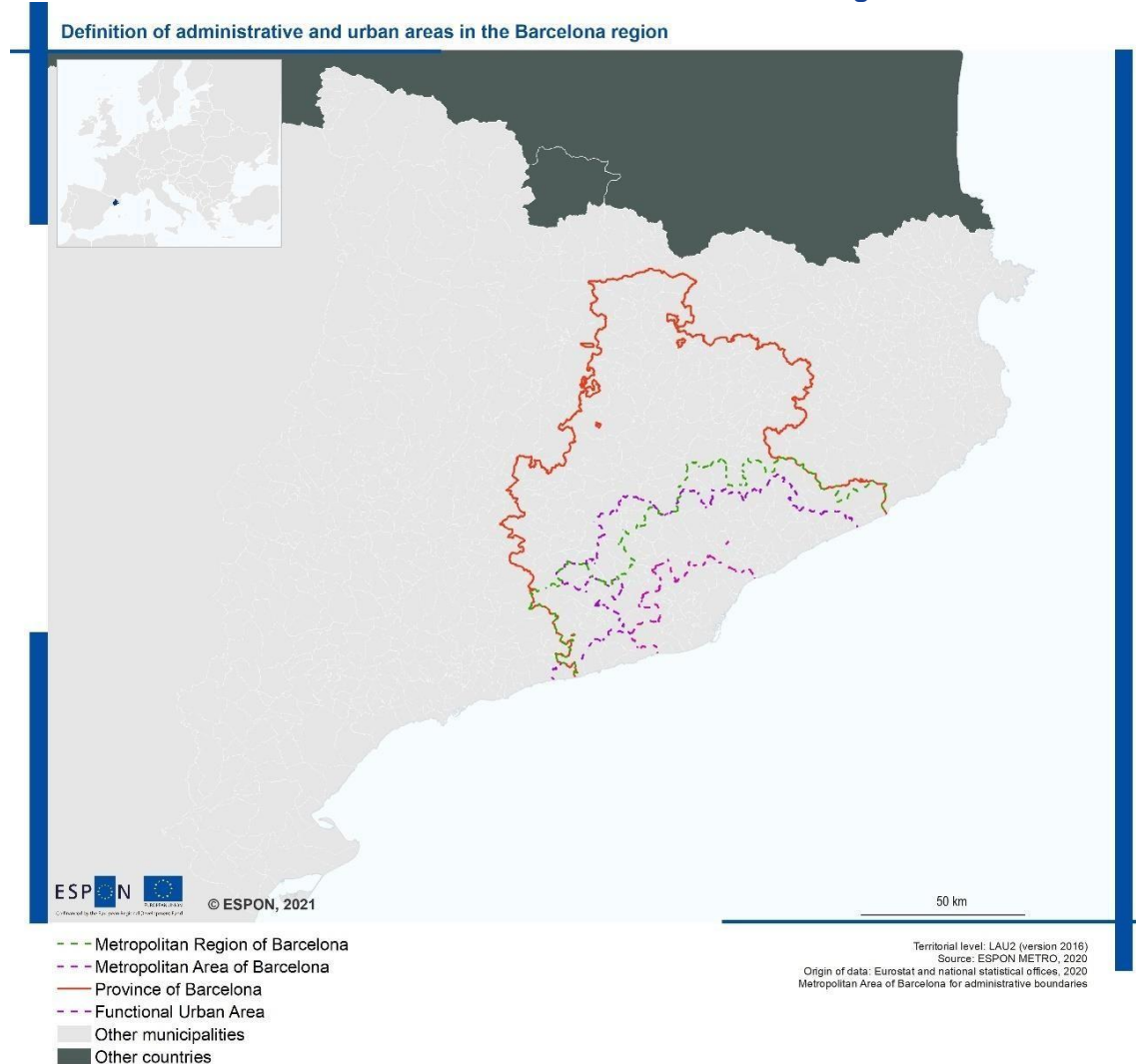
Map 2.3

Metropolitan region municipalities and population, 2020



Source: IERMB.

A second definition of a metropolitan area is one proposed by Urban Audit (a European project which started in the 1990s with the aim of collecting statistical indicators for the main European cities) which states that a combination of functional (mobility flows) and morphological criteria (spatial contiguity) defines the Functional Urban Areas (FUA) in Europe. The FUA of Barcelona consists of 135 municipalities and almost 5 million inhabitants. Thus, the FUA in the Barcelona area comprehends a more extensive area than the metropolitan area but smaller than the province and the Catalan territory.

Map 2.4**Definition of administrative and urban areas in the Barcelona region**

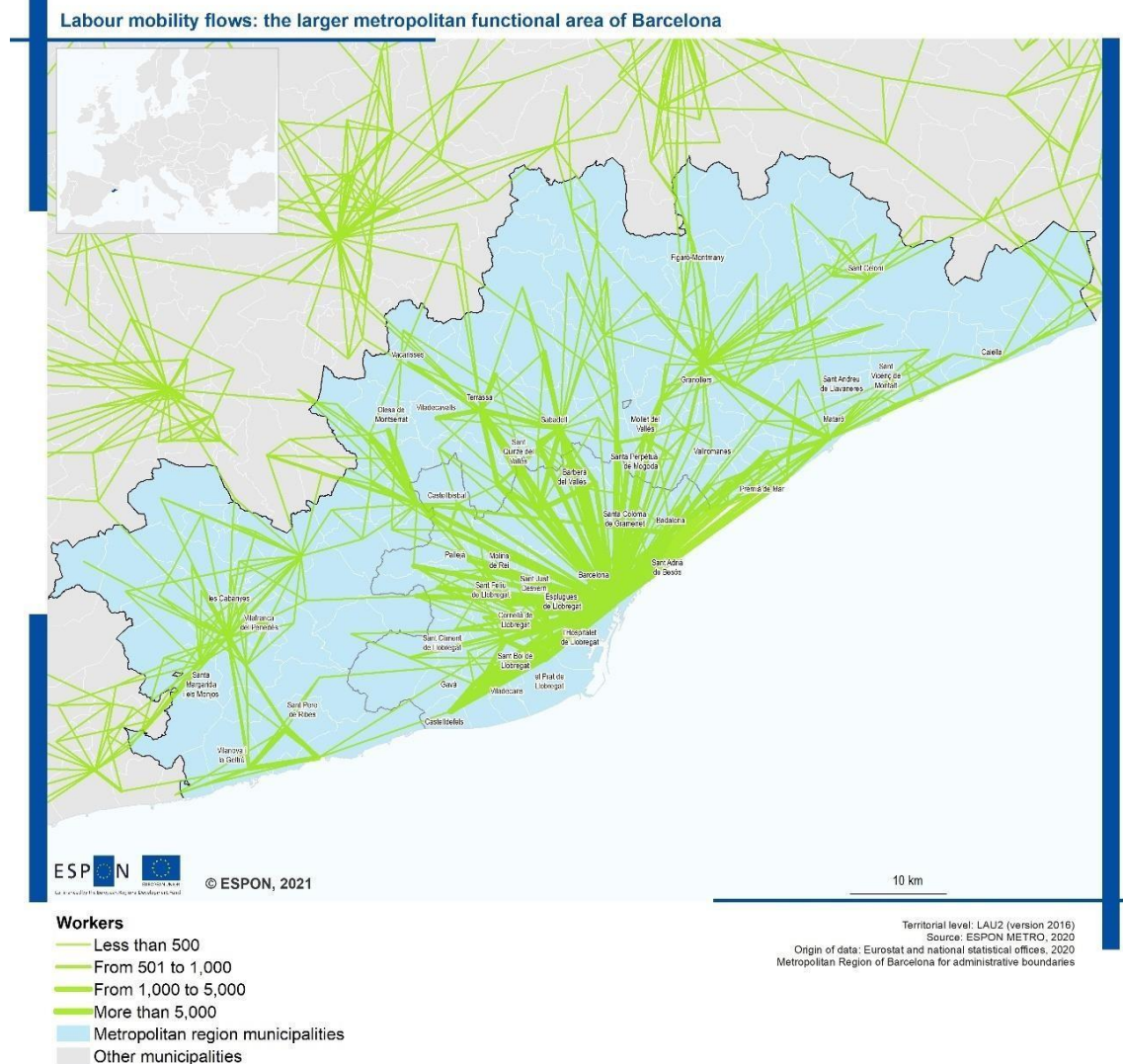
Source: IERMB.

Finally, Eurostat recently published statistics on Metropolitan Regions. They consider territories within one or more NUTS3 representing agglomerations of minimum 250,000 inhabitants, as falling into the category of a metropolitan area. In all 28 EU countries, Eurostat identified 288 Metropolitan Regions in 2016. In the case of Barcelona, the Metropolitan Region corresponds to the province of Barcelona (NUTS3, figure 2.2), the fourth Metropolitan Region in terms of population and eighth in terms of GDP of all European metropolitan regions.

Thus, in fact, the metropolitan area is a part of the larger metropolitan region. That is, some municipalities are not integrated in the metropolitan authority even though they are part of the functional region. This poses some relevant problems in terms of coordination and *de facto* effectiveness in implementing metropolitan-type policies. This can be clearly seen in the following map: metropolitan municipalities have strong relations, not only between them but also with other municipalities located outside the metropolitan territory, that is, the outer Metropolitan Region ring.

Map 2.5

Labour mobility flows: the larger metropolitan functional area of Barcelona



Source: IERMB from population census 2011, INE, and ICC (Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya).

3 Metropolitan governance structure and cooperation activities

3.1 Institutional framework

In the Spanish context, the Barcelona metropolitan area is the only metropolitan government (together with an unsuccessful attempt to create the Vigo Metropolitan Area in Galicia). The current legal framework grants regional governments (Autonomous Communities in Spain) the competences to create, modify and abolish metropolitan areas. However, neither regional governments nor the central government, have been very active in the creation and consolidation of such entities (Martí-Costa, 2018). In fact, Spain's model of local government has traditionally not favoured the creation of supra-municipal bodies of government (Heinelt and Kübler, 2005; Tavares and Feiock, 2017). There are generalised resistances and a lack of interest in the consolidation of metropolitan institutions from the various levels of government, either local, regional, and national (Hildebrand, 2017). Particularly, there is a low confidence among local political elites towards the most institutionalized models of metropolitan governance that are seen as interfering with local autonomy (Medir et al., 2018).

In 2010, the Catalan Parliament passed the Law 31/2010, which constituted the current Barcelona metropolitan area. The framework put forth by the Law 31/2010 regarding its tasks and prerogatives shapes a true “local government” at the metropolitan scale (Font, 2018). The Law grants the Barcelona metropolitan area a broad framework for action through a set of core competences: urban planning, mobility and public transport, environment, housing, economic development and social policies

The Law also defines its governing bodies and funding. In those terms, the metropolitan authority is still a young institution with little fiscal autonomy (see 3.5 Metropolitan financing and budgeting) and with a system of democratic legitimacy under debate. Its bodies of government are indirectly elected and there are few mechanisms and spaces for public participation and deliberation (see 3.6 Role of social groups and the business community in metropolitan governance). Three bodies constitute the metropolitan government: the Metropolitan Council, the Governing Board, and the Council of Mayors. The main decision-making body is the Metropolitan Council, formed by the 36 mayors and 54 municipal councillors elected in each municipality in the local elections. Among other powers, it is responsible for the election of the President among its members. In this respect, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area could lack democratic legitimacy based on the indirect election of its governing bodies. Instead, its main source of legitimacy lies in its recognized ability to manage and effectively provide public goods and services.

All being said, the current governance model is not ideal and is continuously being examined (PEMB, 2019). The most relevant debates around the metropolitan governance in Barcelona are those related to the territorial scope, the full deployment of its responsibilities and its sources of democratic legitimacy.

First, the divergence between the metropolitan region and the actual institutional arrangement of the metropolitan area may interfere in the adequate provision of services and the policy-making process. Moreover, the metropolitan authority does not include major metropolitan poles in the region such as the Terrassa-Sabadell pole or cities like Mataró and Granollers, which can barely participate in the decision-making of relevant and strategic issues to them. In this sense, there exists an increasing need for scaling up metropolitan governance instruments and for reconsidering the relations between the Barcelona Metropolitan Area and the metropolitan region of the 5 million people.

Second, once many metropolitan responsibilities are solidly consolidated (mostly core policies, such as planning mobility, and water and waste management) there is a need for a second wave of policy deployment. In particular, there is a special potential in the deployment of social policies, in areas such as social and territorial cohesion, housing and economic development. In this sense, it is also necessary to strengthen the financial autonomy of the metropolitan authority. At the same time, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area has an important international role which is not included in its law.

Finally, and in relation to the deployment of new policy areas, there is a need to strengthen the democratic pillars of the metropolitan governance in the Barcelona area. In this regard, there has been a resurgence of

debates about the direct election of its bodies of government (particularly the Metropolitan Council and the President), and the development of a coherent and integrated system of public participation.

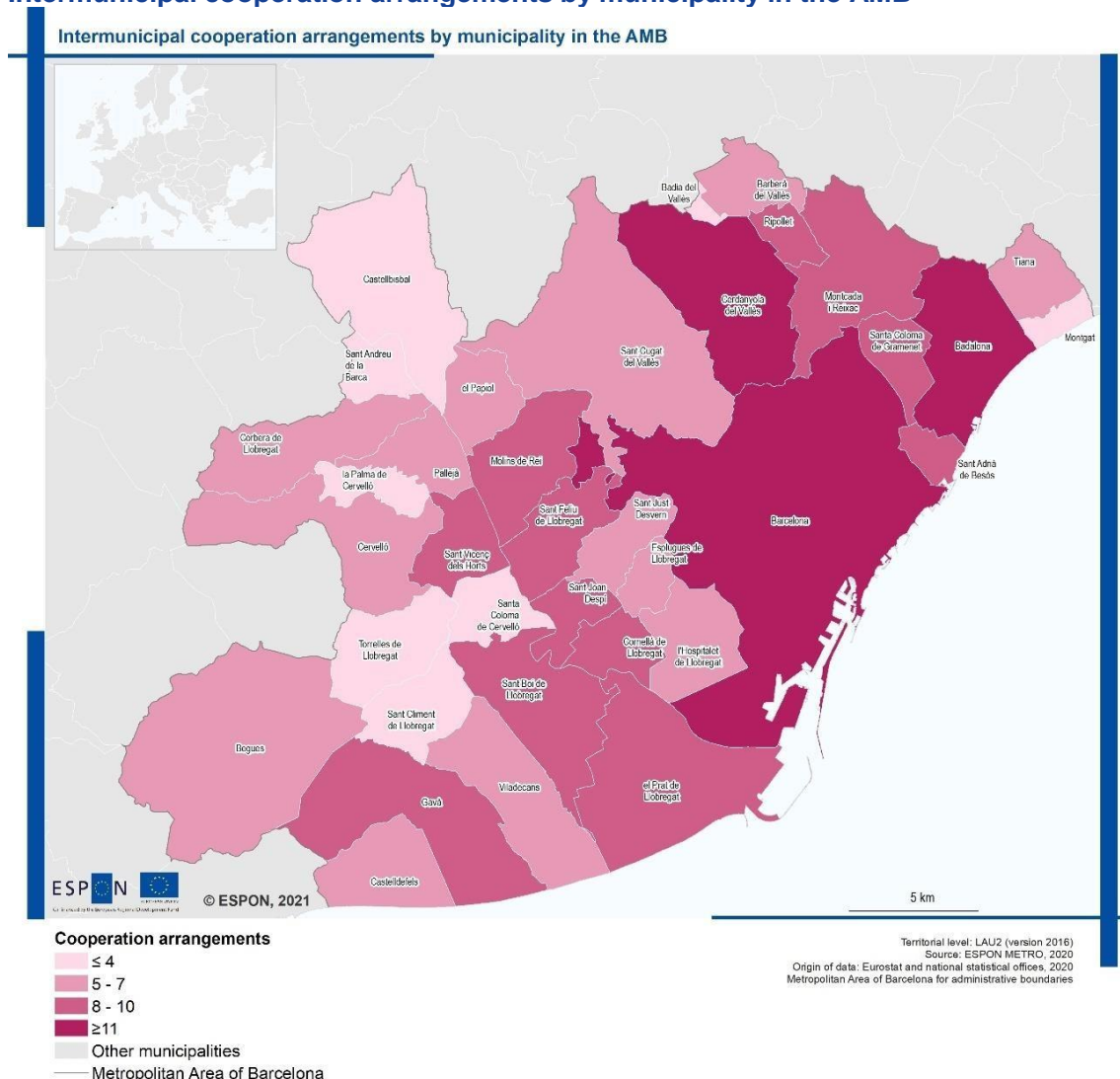
3.1.1 Other forms of cooperation

While the Barcelona Metropolitan area is the most relevant institution of metropolitan governance, the metropolitan region of Barcelona is also defined by a dense network of intermunicipal cooperation (Riera and Ganau, 2009), in which most populous municipalities are the more active actors. This network is defined by the prevalence of policy-based and voluntary public partnerships, mostly in hard policy areas, such as urban planning and mobility, but also environmental policies and economic development. Conversely, there are few or no cooperation in areas such as security, social policy, public health or housing.

In general terms, we can observe a strong territorial rationale in the intermunicipal cooperation arrangements, based on longstanding relations at the county level (*comarca*). However, there are also relevant examples of low-institutionalized city networks and arrangements with an extended regional scope, such as the Barcelona Strategic Plan or the Metropolitan Transport Authority.

Map 3.1

Intermunicipal cooperation arrangements by municipality in the AMB



Source: IERMB.

Having said that, while the metropolitan authority is an active agent in this cooperation network, it mainly participates in it through bilateral cooperation agreements with municipalities. Among these, the most common arrangements are in the form of AMB-municipalities bilateral agreements for transfers and grants for infrastructure investments and planning. This role of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area might reinforce a governance system defined by localist behaviours and bilateral cooperation

In addition, the provincial government (*Diputació de Barcelona*) plays a complementary role of technical and financial support to the municipalities. However, the province represents a much larger territory than the metropolitan area, formed by 311 municipalities (see map 2.3).

Challenges and critical elements

- The Barcelona Metropolitan area is an exception in Spain. There is a lack of a comprehensive metropolitan agenda and policy either at the national and regional levels.
 - Lack of funding by the national government to metropolitan policies, in areas as critical as public transport.
 - The metropolitan authority only covers part of the metropolitan functional region. This may prevent the realization of agglomeration economies related to the metropolitan dimension and interfere in the policy-making and the adequate provision of services at the regional scale.
 - There is a need for a second wave of policy deployment to the metropolitan authority, particularly social and territorial cohesion, housing and economic development. At the same time, the international action should be incorporated in the law of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area.
 - The democratic pillars of the metropolitan governance could be improved: indirect election of bodies of government and non-integrated instruments of public participation.
 - Consolidate the role of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area in fostering cooperation between metropolitan municipalities and its relationship with other second-tier institutions, such as the provincial government (*Diputació*) and counties (*consells comarcals*).
-

3.2 Evolution of metropolitan cooperation

The Law 31/2010 of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona defines the current institutional model. However, it has been preceded by other metropolitan bodies, the most important one being the Metropolitan Corporation of Barcelona, a body for urban planning created in 1974. The Metropolitan Corporation was abolished in 1987 by the Catalan Parliament due to a combination of political struggles between local and regional leaders, and what was perceived as an excessive power gained by the metropolitan corporation (Tomàs, 2017).

The political and personal leadership of the mayor of Barcelona, Pasqual Maragall, was seen by other local and regional powers as excessively presidential, using the metropolitan entity as a political platform. Particularly, in the years after the Spanish transition, in which the decentralization process was still under construction and regional governments were assuming and consolidating their powers, the role of the Metropolitan Corporation and Mr Maragall raised some reluctance about the metropolitan government becoming a counterweight to the Catalan government.

This situation coincided with an international context in which the economic recession in the early 1980s and the rise of Thatcherism did not favour an agenda of metropolitan reform and consolidation. In those same years, not only the Metropolitan Corporation, but also many of the most iconic metropolitan governments created during the 1970s were abolished: Greater London, Greater Copenhagen, Rotterdam... (Sharpe, 1991, 1995).

After its abolition, the tasks and responsibilities that once were granted to the Metropolitan Corporation were assumed by three sectoral entities: the Metropolitan Entity for Transport, the Metropolitan Entity of Water and Waste Treatment and the Association of Municipalities of the Metropolitan Area.

In 2003 regional elections, the win of a left-wing coalition led by the former mayor of Barcelona himself put the metropolitan reform high on the agenda again. During the process of its institutional design the main will among many regional and local political elites was to limit the power and centrality of Barcelona and to lower the political profile of the incoming metropolitan entity. In this sense, the will to re-build a metropolitan

government was more related to a pragmatic interest for policy and service coordination rather than a desire to build metropolitan political power (Tomàs, 2017). Finally, on the 3rd of August 2010, the Law of Metropolitan Area of Barcelona was passed by the Catalan Parliament.

After 10 years of the consolidation of the Metropolitan Area, the debates around metropolitan governance in Barcelona have also surpassed the institutional framework and has focused on the scaling up to the metropolitan region and new, low-institutionalized, mechanism of metropolitan governance involving non-public agents. Among these, there are relevant experiences such as the ongoing strategic planning process in the metropolitan region or the emergence of private and public-private with a metropolitan agenda (see 3.6 Role of social groups and the business community in metropolitan governance).

Map 3.2

Evolution of metropolitan consolidation in the metropolitan area of Barcelona

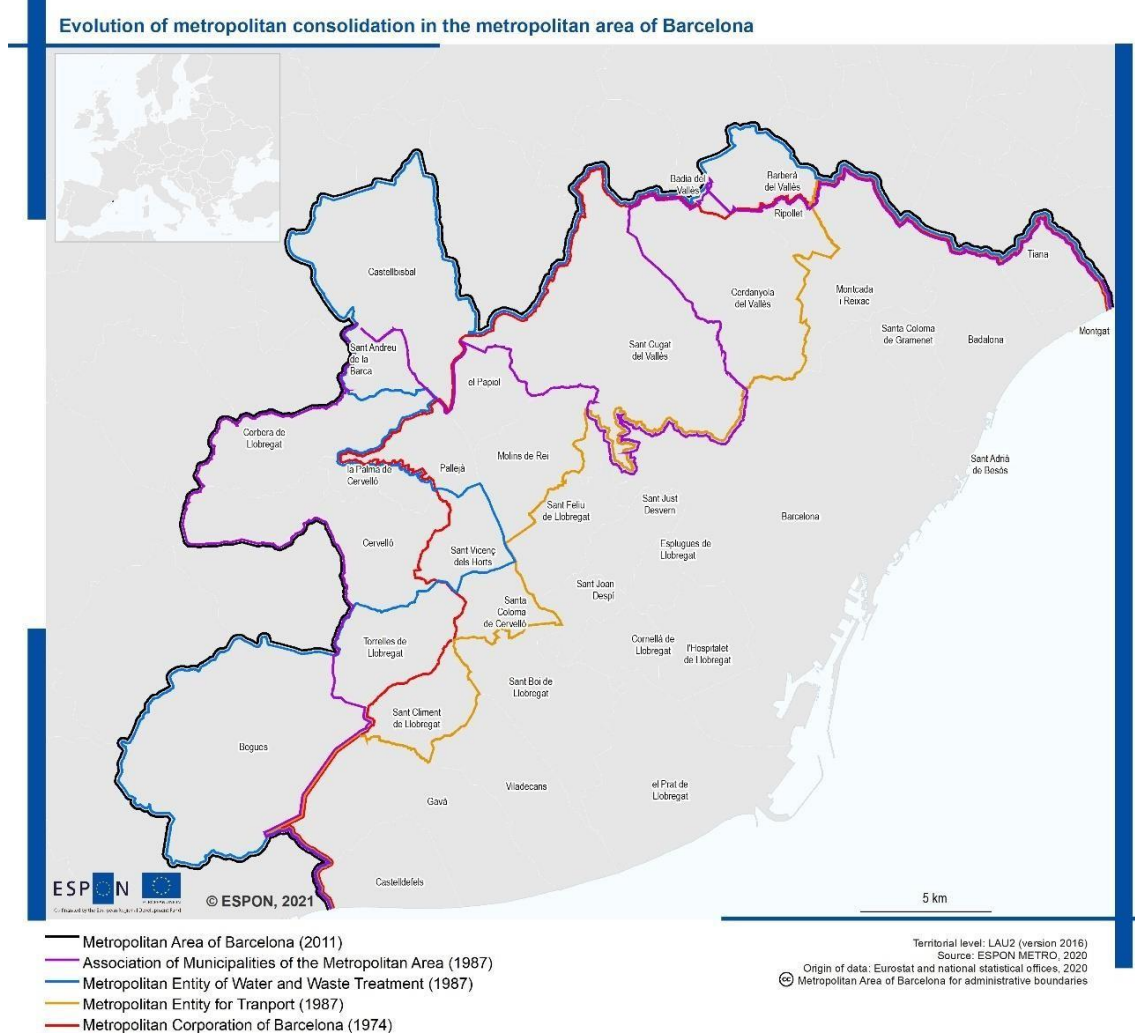
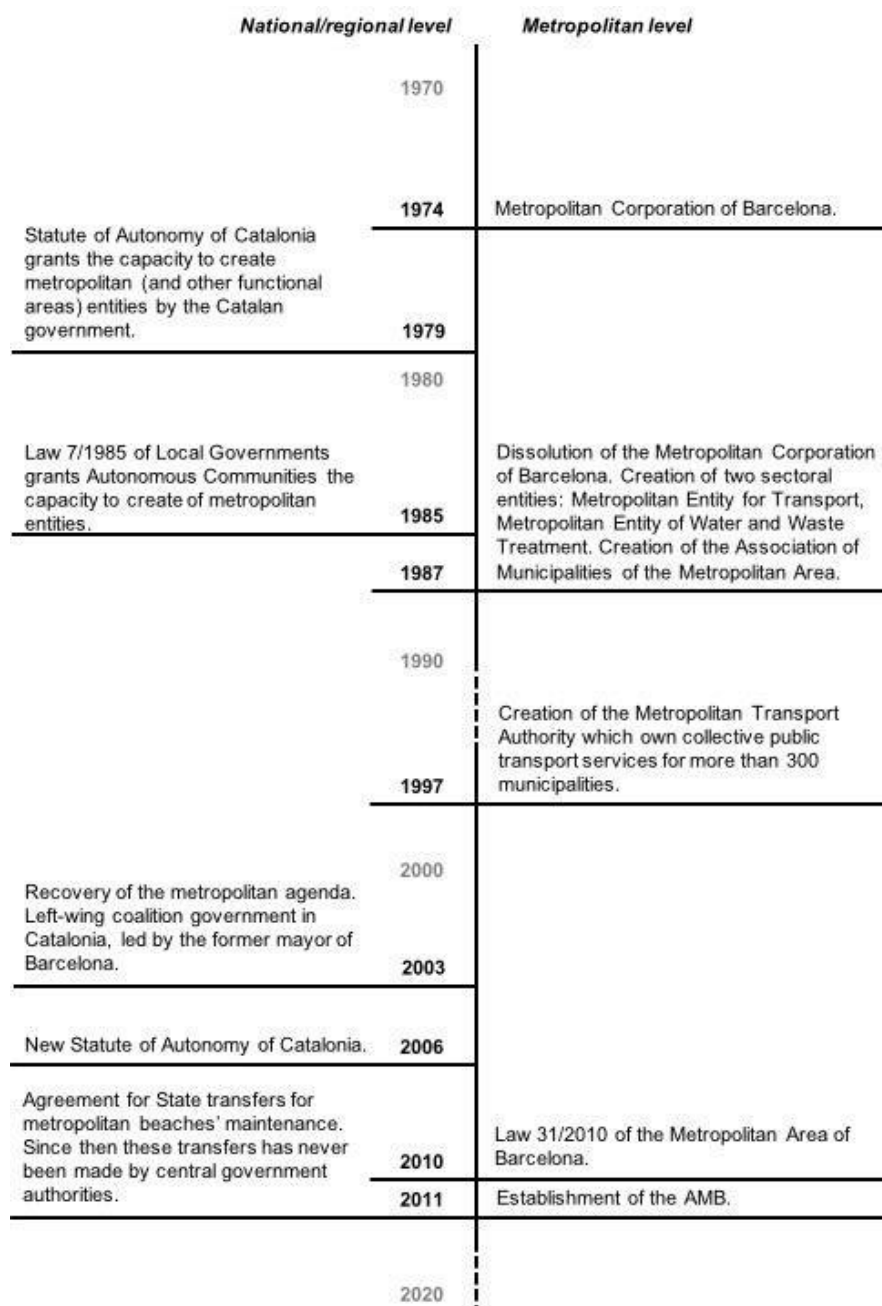


Figure 3.1
Timeline of metropolitan cooperation in the Barcelona metropolitan area



Source: IERMB.

Challenges and critical elements

- The 2010 re-build of the metropolitan government was related to a pragmatic interest for policy coordination, with a strong focus on municipal autonomy.
- A new wave of metropolitan consolidation would be focused on new actors, instruments, and scales (metropolitan region).

3.3 Metropolitan development goals

As mentioned earlier, Spain lacks a metropolitan agenda at the national level, and Autonomous Communities are responsible for the development of metropolitan policies and strategies. In relation to this, comprehensive strategies in which metropolitan development goals are defined have not been developed. For instance, the recent Urban Agenda in Spain hardly mentions metropolitan areas and metropolitan policies among its strategies and goals.

At the regional level, the Catalan Urban Agenda is still under development. However, taking into account the participation of metropolitan entities and institutions in its elaboration, already in the preliminary phases there are explicit references to the metropolitan phenomenon.

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area is the institution that has elaborated metropolitan development goals in its area. While there is no strategic planning at the metropolitan area level, and the regional strategy is currently in process, the main instrument is the Metropolitan Action Plan, which defines metropolitan strategic goals and guides the metropolitan government activity for the 4-year political mandate. The current defines 8 areas of intervention, 24 lines of action, and 375 actions (see table 3.1). All of them are linked to the Sustainable Development Goals defined by the UN.

Table 3.1
Metropolitan goals defined in the Metropolitan Action Plan (2019-2023)

Areas	Lines of action (goals)	SDG
Governance and transparency agency	Improve governance and socio-institutional coordination	10, 11, 16, 17
	Consolidate the culture of good governance and strengthen the open government model in the AMB	11, 16, 17
	Asbestos strategy	3, 12, 13
Territory and administration	Guarantee the right to housing	3, 10, 11, 17
	Coordinate plans, programmes and projects of a metropolitan scope	11, 16, 17
	Preserve natural and free spaces	11, 13, 14
	Sustainable development infrastructure	3, 9, 11
	Modernise public administration	5, 11, 16, 17
Social and economic development	Towards a socially consistent territory, which combats inequalities and promotes full access to basic services for metropolitan citizens	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 17
	Promote the Metropolitan Economic Development Agency to foster inclusive growth in the metropolitan territory	4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 17
Mobility, transport and sustainability	Boost sustainable mobility throughout the metropolitan territory	3, 11, 13
	Transport and mobility governance with guaranteed funding	11, 16, 17
	Work towards achieving a more efficient and innovative management of the public transport system	10, 11, 16, 17
Ecology	Climate change and energy transition	7, 9, 13, 14, 15
	Environmental education for sustainability	4, 11, 13, 17
	Waste prevention and management	3, 11, 12, 13
	Planning and master plan for the water cycle	6, 11, 14, 17
Development of Urban planning policies	Metropolitan planning and strategic support	9, 11, 17
	Regulated areas of responsibility and technical support for local councils	9, 11, 17

	Basic territorial information	9, 11, 16
Strategic planning	Adapt the efficiency of the AMB's reflection and management instruments from a cross-cutting and strategic perspective	11, 16, 17
	Take a systematic approach to the socioeconomic and spatial data of the metropolitan area and region of Barcelona and ensure their dissemination	11, 16, 17
	Strengthen metropolitan governance, involvement and the bodies directly linked to the AMB	11, 16, 17
International relations and cooperation	Boost the AMB's projection abroad and contribute towards guaranteeing rights within an urban scope	5, 11, 16, 17

Source: IERMB from Metropolitan Action Plan (2019-2023).

PAM has been elaborated through political negotiation between the parties in government and a participatory process (see 3.6 Role of social groups and the business community in metropolitan governance), and establishes the main guidelines and priorities for the metropolitan government. In this sense, planning instruments and European funded projects would be in line with the goals in the Metropolitan Action Plan. In particular, there are explicit references to the presentation and management of ERDF funds. In addition, several of these goals make explicit reference to planning instruments such as mobility and urban planning, or waste prevention and management strategy (see 3.4 Metropolitan development and planning instruments).

3.4 Metropolitan development and planning instruments

As noted before, in the Spanish case there is a lack of a comprehensive metropolitan policy. Catalonia is the only region that has effectively developed a metropolitan government, while other regions have scarcely developed metropolitan governance arrangements, in the form of low-institutionalized metropolitan arrangements.

In this sense, at the national level, there are no relevant metropolitan planning instruments. Conversely, in Catalonia and Barcelona, both the regional and metropolitan governments have been active in the development of such instruments.

There are several governance instruments at both the metropolitan area and region. The Barcelona Metropolitan Area owns sectoral plans and programmes in relation to core policy areas such as the Metropolitan Urban Plan (PDU), mobility and transport (PMMU), waste management (PREMET25), or climate and energy (Pla Clima i Energia 2030). All these plans and programmes have also represented new experiences of public participation at the metropolitan level. Last but not least, while there have been some attempts, there is no strategic plan at the metropolitan area level.

At the metropolitan regional level, there are two major governance instruments. The Catalan government elaborates all the territorial plans in the region. At the metropolitan level is the Metropolitan Territorial Plan of Barcelona, which is mandatory for both local and metropolitan authorities when they develop their respective urban planning instruments. In relation to other policies, the only instrument of governance in the metropolitan region is the Metropolitan Strategic Plan 2030. The Barcelona Metropolitan Strategic Plan (PEMB), a public-private association composed by metropolitan and local governments and economic and social agents in the metropolitan region, owns it.

Table 3.2
Main instruments at regional and metropolitan level

Instrument	Level	Type of instrument	Owner	Binding / Non-binding
Metropolitan Territorial Plan	Regional	Territorial planning	Catalan gov.	Binding
Strategic Plan of Barcelona	Regional	Strategic planning	PEMB	Non-binding
Master Mobility Plan	Regional	Mobility planning	Catalan gov.	Binding

Instrument	Level	Type of instrument	Owner	Binding / Non-binding
Metropolitan Action Plan (PAM)	Metro	AMB mandate strategy	AMB	Non-binding
Metropolitan Urban Plan (PDU)	Metro and local	Urban planning	AMB and municipalities	Binding
Metropolitan Mobility Urban Plan (PMMU)	Metro and local	Mobility strategy	AMB	Non-binding
Metropolitan Programme for Prevention and Management of Resources and Municipal Waste 2019-2025 (PREMET25)	Metro and local	Waste prevention and management strategy	AMB	Non-binding
Climate and Energy Plan 2030	Metro and local	Climate and energy strategy	AMB	Non-binding

Source: IERMB.

In addition, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area plans its investments through a Metropolitan Investments Plan, which in the 2016-2019 period amounted to EUR 270 million, and in the 2020-2023 period EUR 316 million. The investment plan is structured in four main programmes in areas such as urban improvement (PAMUS), territorial cohesion (PACTE), technical assistance for municipalities, and natural and urban landscapes (PSG).

Furthermore, after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, two new extraordinary investment programmes were passed (PSA, AproPAMB) aimed at accelerating and promoting sustainable mobility and energy transition and supporting municipal initiatives, for which the metropolitan authority has got into debt.

Table 3.3
Investment metropolitan programmes (2020-2023)

Instrument	Territory	Type of investment	Main goals/areas of intervention	Budget (EUR million)
PAMUS	Metropolitan municipalities (except Barcelona)	Distribution based on municipal property tax	Urban improvement, facilities maintenance and social services	181
PACTE	Metropolitan municipalities (except Barcelona)	Distribution of investments based on population and socioeconomic level	Facilities, public space and infrastructures	100
PSG	Metropolitan municipalities (except Barcelona)	Competitive	River spaces, recovery of degraded areas, road integration, energy and service infrastructure, urban-rural connectivity and nature-based solutions	8
AproPAMB	Metropolitan municipalities	Competitive	Social policies, education, economic development	17
PSA	Metropolitan municipalities (except Barcelona)	Mixed	Mobility and environment	110
Technical assistance	Metropolitan municipalities	Demand by municipalities	Technical support to municipal projects	10

Source: IERMB from AMB.

3.4.1 Instruments and initiatives related to COVID-19

During the initial phases of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, Spain's first measures were centralization of powers to the central government, declaration of the alarm state, and a hard lockdown for 3 months. In addition, many socio-economic measures were implemented (Deloitte Legal, 2020): health-related measures, economic and social measures aimed at protecting vulnerable groups from eviction, fiscal measures to support the tourism sector, access to loans for companies and self-employed individuals, direct grants and tax advantages. In this context, and despite the initial centralization and lack of resources, municipalities had been highly proactive, agile, and innovative in the provision of measures to face their diverse effects. Among the many measures implemented by metropolitan municipalities, the most common were related to local responsibilities: social services and socio-economic vulnerability, taxes and fees, business support, or public space regulations. However, among them, few measures and initiatives had been designed or implemented with a metropolitan perspective.

Alternatively, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area had also implemented measures in its areas of responsibility. In particular, cleaning and disinfecting measures in public spaces of its competence, such as urban parks and beaches; change in the public transport services and regulations; a new mobility pact among public and private actors; public housing rents and water supply fees moratoriums, or compilation and communication of municipal and supra-local social, business support and labour measures.

Among these measures, on the 1st of October 2020, the Department of Social and Economic Development of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area launched the Board for Economic Reactivation and Reindustrialization. It is a participatory process mainly aimed at social agents, business organizations and unions, elected municipal representatives, organizations with economic interest in the territory (such as the Barcelona Metropolitan Strategic Plan), and economic development public officers. The current Metropolitan Action Plan had already anticipated the implementation of this board, but the current situation, especially as a result of the deep crisis derived from the COVID-19 pandemic, has strengthened the need to develop measures to face this severe and unprecedented situation.

The main goal of the Board is to raise debates on the reality of the economy in the metropolitan territory taking into account the impact of the COVID-19. In particular, its primary goal is to identify challenges and propose measures that both municipalities and other social and institutional actors could implement, to strengthen the economic fabric, and build spaces that foster economic growth and job creation. The Board counts on metropolitan city councils, social and economic agents (trade unions and business organizations), other institutions and actors such as universities and social and economic entities. It also has the support of other departments of the metropolitan authority.

The initiative has a special focus on economic development and inclusive and sustainable growth. Nevertheless other issues might be considered, particularly urban planning, mobility, energy, communications, the environment, and innovation, among others. In addition, one of the side effects of this initiative could be a strengthening of intermunicipal cooperation, which could lead to the improvement of metropolitan governance.

The Board as such will not take part of any EU fund directly, but it is expected to identify projects and measures that will be considered for the EU recovery fund and, if necessary, the European Stability Mechanism.

Challenges and critical elements

- Metropolitan goals are set in the Metropolitan Action Plan, thematic sectoral plans, and investment plans. However, the integration between thematic plans and investment programmes should be improved in order to prioritize critical investments for social and territorial cohesion.
- Other relevant planning instruments have not been approved yet. In particular, the Metropolitan Urban Plan has not been approved, and the lower level territorial plans that the Urban Plan guides should be reviewed already.
- Other planning instruments have just been approved for the first time and they have not been implemented yet.
- There are still difficulties in developing more comprehensive and cross-cutting planning instruments due to a silo-based organization of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area.
- Lack of a better integration between investments programmes (strongly focused on redistribution

of funds among municipalities) and sectoral plans and programmes.

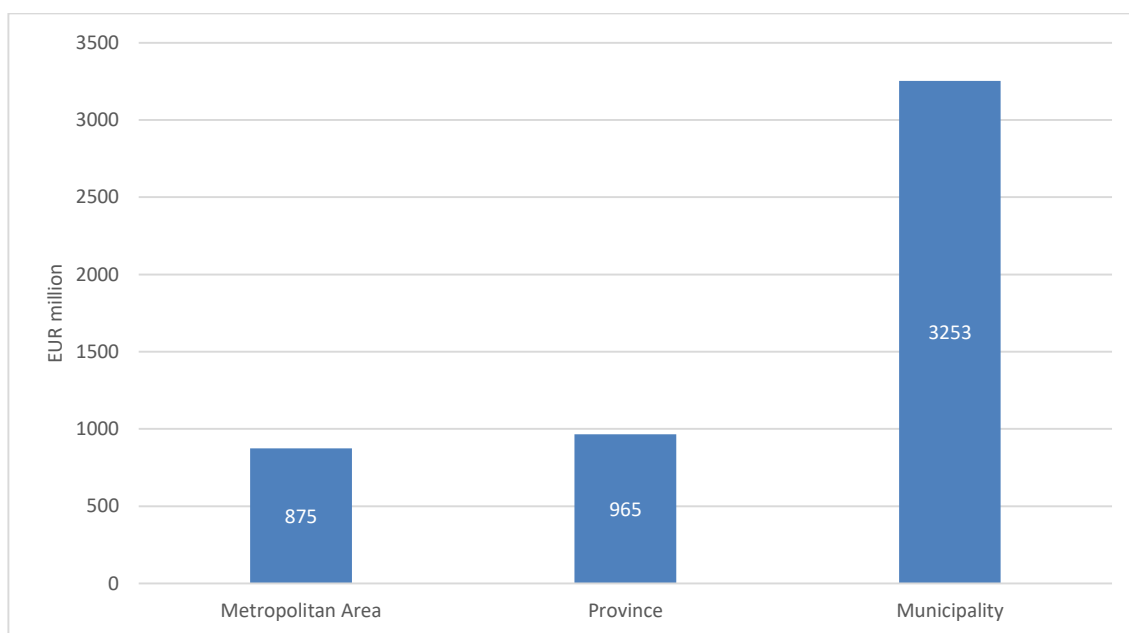
3.5 Metropolitan financing and budgeting

The Law 31/2010 establishes the main sources of funding for the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. The Barcelona Metropolitan Area is mainly funded by transfers from municipalities and by its own taxes. The Metropolitan Council is responsible for the approval and modification of the budget. The metropolitan government has an annual budget of approximately EUR 900 million (see figures 3.2 and 3.3).

However, in addition to the EUR 875 million of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area budget, there are other dependent entities that operate in policies such as waste and water management (Besòs-Tordera, Ecoparc4), housing (Habitatge Metròpolis Barcelona, REGESA) and urban planning (IMPSOL), mobility and public transport (IMET, and TMB conglomerate), to a total of EUR 2,700 million (see figure 3.4).

Figure 3.2

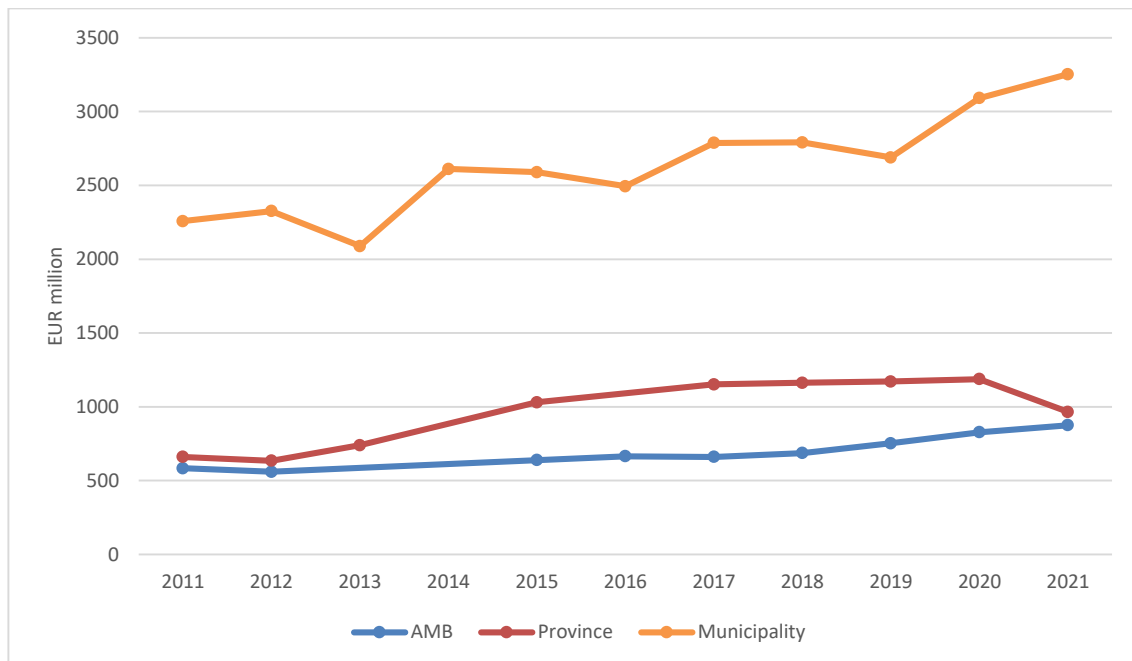
Budget of AMB, Barcelona provincial council and Barcelona city council (2021)



Source: IERMB from AMB, Barcelona provincial council (Diputació de Barcelona), and Barcelona city council.

Figure 3.3

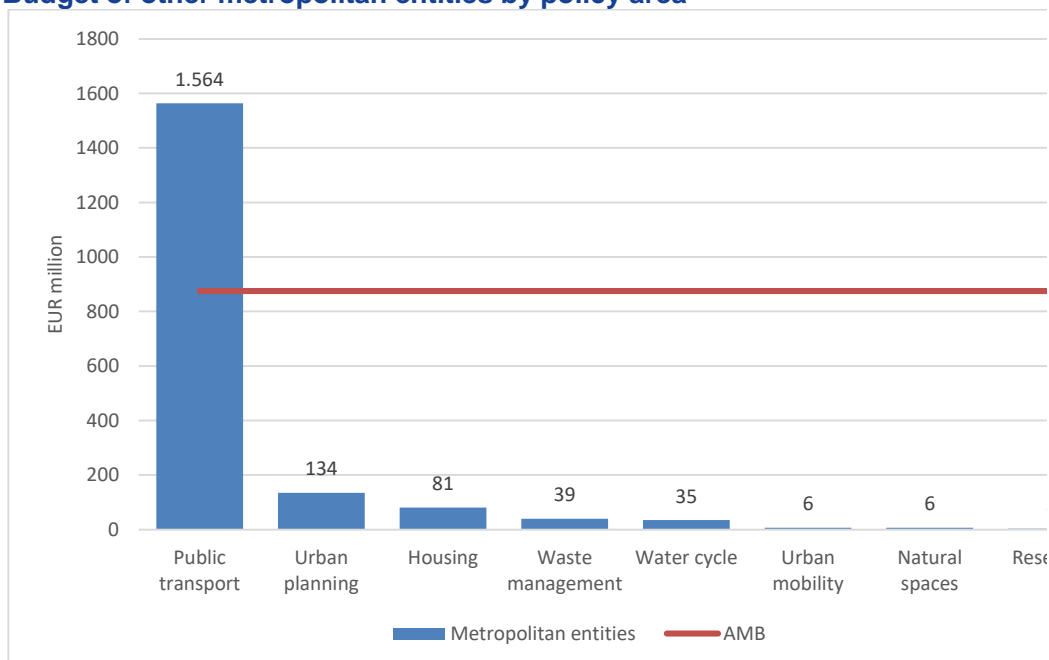
Budget evolution: AMB, Barcelona provincial council and Barcelona city council (2011-2021)



Source: IERMB from Ministry of Finance, Spain.

Figure 3.4

Budget of other metropolitan entities by policy area



Source: IERMB from AMB, Barcelona provincial council (Diputació de Barcelona), and Barcelona city council.

In terms of income, the metropolitan administration is largely dependent on transfers from other institutions. Half of its total income budget comes from municipalities and the regional government. Among them, almost one-third of these transfers are from municipalities. It is also relevant to note that since 2011, when specific transfers from the national government to the metropolitan area were granted by law, these funds have never

been transferred (Salinas & Vilalta, 2018).

Additionally, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area is financed through service fees. About a quarter of its income budget comes from fees, most notably water and waste. Finally, the metropolitan institution is very limited in its capacity to levy its own taxes. Currently, the only tax that the metropolitan institution can levy is a surcharge in the municipal property tax, which counts for 15% of its income budget. It is relevant to note that an extension of this tax to 18 metropolitan municipalities in 2019 encountered public and political resistance in many municipalities. In part, that might be linked to the lack of information and knowledge and low visibility of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area and its functioning.

Table 3.4
Income budget, AMB 2021

Sources	EUR 1,000	%
Current transfers	467,657	53.4%
Fees	192,031	21.9%
Direct taxes	127,190	14.5%
Capital transfers	36,434	4.2%
Other	51,851	5.9%
TOTAL	875,164	100%

Source: IERMB from AMB.

In terms of expenditure, almost 90% of the budget is dedicated to core policies, including public transport, waste and water management, and planning. In contrast, other policy areas such as social and economic development or housing are still poorly funded.

It is also important to note that a majority (70%) of Barcelona's Metropolitan Area income is dedicated revenue. However, for many of the most relevant services provided, these dedicated revenues do not completely cover them and non-dedicated funds have also to be dedicated to them. Altogether granting a low autonomy to the metropolitan institution in the allocation of its own resources (Salinas & Vilalta, 2018). In addition, metropolitan investments have a significant redistributive rationale, from Barcelona, which is the most important contributor, to the rest of metropolitan municipalities.

Table 3.5
Expenses budget, AMB 2021

Heads	EUR	%
Mobility and transport	363,797	41.6%
Waste prevention and management	185,037	21.1%
Territory and urban planning	110,725	12.7%
Urban water cycle	108,291	12.4%
Administrative and financial expenses	73,629	8.4%
Social and economic development	19,346	2.2%
International relations and coop.	2,170	0.2%
Other	12,169	1.4%
TOTAL	875,164	100%

Source: IERMB from AMB.

Challenges and critical elements

- High share of transfers from other institutions and limited capacity to levy own taxes.
- National transfers to the Barcelona Metropolitan Area have not become effective since 2011 and there is an underfunding of vital metropolitan policies, such as public transport.
- Budget mostly dedicated to core policies; other policy areas are scarcely funded.
- A majority of Barcelona's Metropolitan Area income is dedicated revenue, granting low investment autonomy.
- Poor visibility and understanding of the metropolitan fiscal system.

3.6 Role of social groups and the business community in metropolitan governance

In the last decade, the metropolitan institution has become a principal actor in the provision of public services and goods in the metropolitan area. From a democratic perspective, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area has based its legitimacy on its capacity to provide services in an effective and efficient way, which is output legitimacy. However, it is still weak in terms of direct political representation and citizen participation (input legitimacy). Nevertheless, Table 3.6 shows how non-institutional actors has been involved in the metropolitan planning instruments.

Table 3.6
AMB's main participatory instruments

Plan or Service	Type of instrument	Goals	Actors involved	Digital tools
PAM	Process	Consultation for the gov. programme for the 2019-2023 mandate	Open participation through web platform	YES
PDU	Process	Urban plan elaboration	Experts, civic and professional org., individual citizens	YES
PMMU	Process and body	Plan elaboration and monitoring	Municipalities, civic and business, public institutions, experts	YES
PREMET25	Process and body	Plan preparation and monitoring	Municipalities, civic and professional org., business, universities	YES
AMDE	Bodies	Consultation and advice	Political parties, Public and private companies, professional org., business associations, universities	NO

Source: IERMB.

Nevertheless, in recent years diverse experiences have been developed in order to grant more participation of civic and private agents in policy-making processes, particularly in the elaboration of plans and programmes.

As noted before, metropolitan plans and programs such as PAM, PDU, PMMU or PREMET25, represent new experiences of public participation at the metropolitan level (see 3.4 Metropolitan development and planning instruments). In addition, there have been created new sectoral bodies of participation owned by the metropolitan government, such as the Metropolitan Mobility Council, or other dependent bodies, such as the Economic Reactivation and Reindustrialization Table or the Advisory Board, for the Metropolitan Economic Development Agency (AMDE).

Having said that, while participatory instruments are becoming more used in metropolitan governance, it is still an initial stage of a true “architecture” of participation.

First, whereas Law 31/2010 grants the capacity to implement participatory instruments, there is not a participation regulation yet. So far, a majority of the participatory instruments respond to sectoral legislation and no steps towards more comprehensive participatory bodies or new instruments have been taken yet.

More importantly, there is a way for improvement in participation processes, in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. Currently, the metropolitan institution neither has specific resources, nor political or technical teams responsible for political participation. All the participation bodies and processes have been implemented in a fragmented way: each area or department has built its own process with the involvement of different external consultancy teams, with diverse methodologies.

Similarly, while most processes have enabled digital participatory tools, each one has implemented its own tool, different platforms and methodologies.

Finally, there is a strong tradition of civic participation among Catalan municipalities. Nevertheless, there has not been developed any mechanism of coordination or integration between metropolitan and municipal participatory instruments.

In parallel, recently other actors (non-public and public-private) have created new instruments for metropolitan debate and governance. In particular, business organizations have been active in the creation of associations for metropolitan economic development.

Among these actors, the Metropolitan Strategic Plan of Barcelona (PEMB) has a central position. PEMB is an association formed by both public institutions (including local and metropolitan governments) and private entities in the metropolitan region. It is the owner of the metropolitan strategic plan in Barcelona. Currently, the strategic plan has scaled up and the PEMB is developing the 2030 strategic plan for the broader metropolitan region (*Barcelona Demà 2030*).

Table 3.7
Other actors at the metropolitan scale

Instruments	Scale	Main topic	Membership
BCN Global	City and metro.	Economic development	Business, universities, culture org.
PEMB	Metro. region	Strategic planning	Local and metropolitan govts., civic, professional and business org., universities, unions
Pacte Industrial RMB	Metro. region	Economy (industry) development	Local and metropolitan govts., business org., unions
Rethink BCN	Metro. region	Economic development	Catalan employers' org.

Source: IERMB.

In the last months, in the post-pandemic context and with perspective of the harsh economic recovery, new economic actors have entered into the metropolitan arena with the aim at lobbying and branding (Barcelona Global, Rethink BCN). This is relevant since it represents a scaling up of these activities from the local (Barcelona) to the metropolitan region.

However, these are either very recent cases or fragile instruments since there are still few social and economic actors at the metropolitan region scale.

Challenges and critical elements

- Lack of institutionalization of participation policies and instruments in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area.
- Lack of consolidated metropolitan governance networks at the regional metropolitan scale.
- Few relevant social and economic actors with a regional metropolitan nature.

3.7 Participation in policy networks

Finally, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area is an active actor in supra-national networks. Among these, it has been a leading institution establishing networks for metropolitan advocacy and cooperation (i.e. EMA, Metropolis, MedCities), and is a prominent member of other global networks like UCLG.

In addition, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area participates in global sectoral networks in its areas of responsibility, particularly, the International Association of Public Transport (UITP) and the Association of Cities and Regions for sustainable Resource management (ACR+), ICLEI and, EIT Urban Mobility.

It is relevant to note that in most of these networks the Barcelona Metropolitan Area shares representation with other institutional actors in the region, including the city of Barcelona, the provincial government or the Catalan government.

Table 3.8
Main city networks

Network	Scale	Membership	Goals	Role of the AMB
EMA	European	Metropolitan areas and cities	Dialogue, advocacy and cooperation	Founding member and HQ
Metropolis	Global	Metropolitan areas and cities	Advocacy and cooperation	Co-presidency. HQ in Barcelona
MedCities	Regional	Local governments	Sustainable urban development and cooperation	Secretary and HQ
UCLG	Global	Local, metropolitan and regional governments	Advocacy and cooperation	Executive board. HQ in Barcelona
UITP	Global	Public authorities and stakeholders	Public transport	Member
ACR+	Global	Local and regional governments	Waste prevention and management	Member
ICLEI	Global	Local and regional governments, associations	Sustainability	Member
EIT Urban mobility	European	Local and regional governments, private org. and re-search inst.	Mobility	Member HQ in Barcelona

Source: IERMB from AMB.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To further develop the recognition of the metropolitan phenomenon, through the development of European, national and regional metropolitan agendas, guaranteeing institutional and economic capacity of metropolitan institutions, and investment in key metropolitan policies. Reinforce the role of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area as a suitable actor to introduce the metropolitan vision in policy design and implementation in the region.

Consolidate the Barcelona Metropolitan Area as a metropolitan government in collaboration with the municipalities for the implementation of metropolitan policies. Scaling of the metropolitan governance to the region; developing new mechanisms and instruments of regional governance between the metropolitan institution and the 36 municipalities, and the whole metropolitan region.

A second wave of metropolitan policies deployment should be particularly focused on social and territorial cohesion policies, housing and economic development.

To deepen the democratic pillars of metropolitan governance in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area; through the exploration of the direct representation of metropolitan bodies of government and the consolidation of participatory instruments and networks for the involvement of social groups and the business community.

To further develop comprehensive and cross-cutting planning instruments and strategies, and better integrate plans and investments. Prioritize projects and interventions with a metropolitan dimension related to the implementation of the investment metropolitan plans (waste, urban planning, mobility, climate change).

4 Cohesion policy governance

4.1 EU cohesion policy institutional architecture and competences

The Partnership Agreement

The first element of the institutional architecture of the EU Cohesion Policy governance in Spain is the Partnership Agreement between the EU and Spain 2014-2020 (Gobierno de España, 2019). The Partnership agreement is the document prepared by Spain, with the participation of partners and with multi-level governance, which sets out the Spanish strategy, its priorities and the provisions for using the European Structural and Investment Funds to pursue the Union's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The Commission approved this document on November 4, 2014 and it was modified in February 2019.

This agreement establishes that Spain will contemplate all the thematic objectives defined in Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013. However, each Fund will focus on a limited number of thematic objectives and investment priorities. In the elaboration of this document took part the Spanish Government, regional governments (*Comunidades* and *Ciudades Autónomas*, CCAA), local authorities (represented through the Association of municipalities and provinces, and specific municipalities; Madrid, Terrassa and others, but not Barcelona) and social and economic agents (unions and business representatives).

From this document, the National Operational Programmes (NOP) are developed. Next, we will focus only on the most relevant ones for our case study, the NOPs of the ERDF and ESF, and in those aspects more related to metropolitan or urban dimension. In figure 4.1, the governance structure of the Funds is summarized. In both cases, the Managing authorities are different departments of the Spanish government.

Spanish ERDF NOP (Multiregional OP)

The Spanish ERDF NOP is called Multiregional OP (DGFE, 2020) and the document has been elaborated taking into account previous strategic documents and plans from the Spanish administration and in partnership with public agencies and other organizations, economic and social agents, representatives of civil society (unions and business representatives), and regional governments (CCAA) and local entities.

Regarding CCAA, it is stated in the document that “the partnership process carried out with CCAA has been essential in defining the content, objectives and actions of the program, as well as for its coordination with the regional OPs. This is especially relevant in the next period, in which the regional ERDF OPs will not incorporate co-financing from the General State Administration. For this reason, it has been necessary to coordinate the regional and multi-regional OPs from the beginning of their design process, establishing clear criteria that respect the distribution of competences of the Spanish administrations, delimit the respective areas of action and avoid duplication. Meetings of the DG of Community Funds have been held with all the Autonomous Communities in order to share the lines of action foreseen in the different thematic objectives of the program” (p. 397). Finally, regarding Local Entities, they were represented only through the FEMP (Spanish Association of municipalities and provinces). Clearly, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area was absent.

Regarding its content, besides the five Priority Axis (PA) established in the Partnership Agreement, an additional axis number 12 titled “Urban” appears, which allows to take advantage of the flexibility permitted by the Regulation to apply 10% of ERDF resources to ESF-type action. Furthermore, chapter 4 of the NOP (which actually is common in all OPs) titled “Integrated actions for sustainable urban development” foresees, on one side, the possibility that municipalities with at least 20,000 inhabitants or urban agglomerations (formed by several municipalities with at least 20,000 inhabitants) may develop “Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development Strategies”; and on the other side, specifies the ITIs foreseen in the NOP: the Atlantic ITI, and the ITIs for the cities of Jaén and Cádiz (cities deeply affected by the economic crisis of 2008).

It is also worth mentioning that a part of the endowment of the PA 4 (regarding the transition to a low carbon economy) will be allocated to “singular projects in the low-carbon economy” at the local level¹ (p. 52), and it will have to be coordinated with the Urban Axis through the Network of Urban Initiatives (*Red de Iniciativas Urbanas* or RIU in Spanish, see section 4.1.1).

Spanish ESF NOPs

In the case of the ESF, there are 3 NOPs: for youth employment (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social, 2020b), for training and education (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social, 2020a) and for social inclusion and social economy (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social, 2018). In the elaboration of this document, there has been participation of public agencies and other organizations, economic and social agents, representatives of civil society (unions and business representatives), and regional governments (CCAA). Regarding its content, only in one of the NOPs, the one for training and education, appears a reference to ITI, but only to the one for Cádiz, in chapter 4.

As a reflection of the decentralized organization of the Spanish state, the NOP are specifically developed at regional level (CCAA) with the respective ROP. In these cases, the regional governments have the consideration of Intermediate bodies, with the responsibility of the selection of actions and the management of the Fund.

Catalan ERDF ROP

Regarding ERDF, in the Catalan ROP is stated that in the preparation and execution phase of the OP, an association has been organized with the participation of the following partners, besides regional government (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2020): 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 (pp. 174-5). Again, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area was absent but the council of Barcelona took part.

Regarding the content, it is worth mentioning that in chapter four, it is expected a specific treatment to the municipality of Barcelona, considering its weight (demographic, economic) and to the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (considering its weight but also its competences). But these are not the only way (metropolitan) municipalities can receive ERDF funds from the ROP. They can receive funding through projects called Projects of territorial specialization and competitiveness (PECT in Catalan)² and also through calls for axis 4 (low-carbon economy) and 6 (environment and resource efficiency) of the ERDF and also through a sectoral call such as the DTES for bike lanes.

PECTs are initiatives, promoted by the agents of the territory and led by the local public entities of Catalonia (city councils, county councils and provincial councils), that articulate projects with operations and actions for the economic development of the territory, which have a strong innovation component. They aim at having a multiple impact in the territory, fostering the smart specialization, the improvement of competitiveness, the creation of employment and, as much as possible, the creation of links with international value chains. In the specific case of Barcelona, the City Council decided that the funds ERDF ROP will be invested in the framework of a PECT.

Catalan ESF ROP

The Catalan ESF ROP (Servei d'Ocupació de Catalunya, 2019) was elaborated similarly to the ERDF, with different departments of the Generalitat de Catalunya, Local authorities and other competent public authorities (two Association of Catalan municipalities), social and economic agents (unions and business representatives) and (a long list of) representatives of civil society. The Barcelona Metropolitan Area, as well as Barcelona city, were absent.

The document again contains chapter 4 about integrated territorial development, but in this case, is quite vague and only announces that “this (OP) develops different actions...focusing on employment, training, recruitment and entrepreneurship (...) on the youth population and the insertion of the immigrant population”.

Other programmes: UIA, URBACT, Interreg and ESPON

¹ In this case, Institute for Energy Diversification and Savings (*Instituto para la Diversificación y Ahorro de la Energía*), which depends on the Spanish Ministry of Ecological Transition, has been designated, by the Ministry of Finance, as Intermediate Body for the management of funds framed in the Priority Axis 4 (PA4), of the Spanish ERDF NOP.

² The AMB was excluded from the PECTs calls due to the specific agreement with the Generalitat.

Finally, there is another way for the municipalities to receive ERDF funds, which is through European territorial cooperation programmes: Interreg and URBACT, and the programmes of Urban Innovative Actions (UIA), managed through decentralized managing authorities located in different European regions or countries. For instance, France's Ministry for Urban Affairs has supported URBACT as Managing Authority since the programme was first launched in 2002, and for the period 2021-2027, it has been appointed the National Agency for Territorial Equality (Agence Nationale à l'Égalité des Territoires) which is under the responsibility of the French Prime Minister. In the case of the UIA it is managed by Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy via indirect management, and the implementation is delegated to the Hauts-de-France French Regions, for the Interreg the European Commission has delegated the implementation to the Hauts-de-France French Region as the Managing Authority (2014-2020), whereas the Managing authority of the ESPON 2020 Operational Programme is Luxembourg's Ministry of Energy and Spatial Planning.

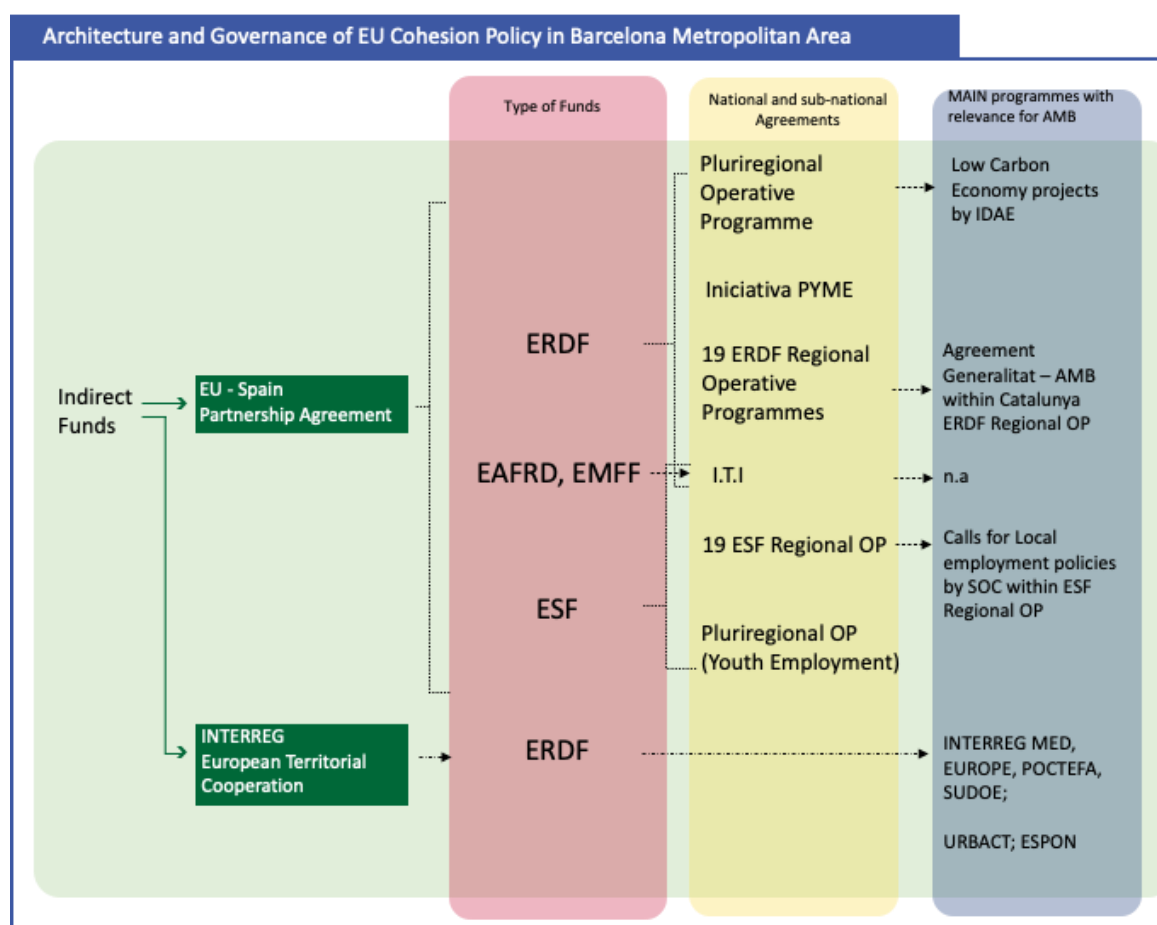
In summary, metropolitan municipalities can receive funds from EU Cohesion Policy in four different ways: (1) ERDF funds from the Urban Axis of the NOP (EDUSI, Low Carbon Projects); (2) ERDF funds from the ROP in an indirect way through the Generalitat-AMB agreement; (3) ERDF directly from EC initiatives (Interreg Programmes, UIA and URBACT); and (4) ERDF and ESF funds from the Generalitat ROPs calls for proposals.

This means that there are three levels of complexity in the management of EU fund. The first, less complex, is related to actions with direct interaction with Decentralized Management, such as Interreg Programmes, UIA and URBACT. The second, with more complexity, is the case where the actors involved have to interact directly with the national Managing authority, like in the EDUSI projects or the calls for proposals managed by the Regional OPs. And the third is when the actors involved have to interact with the Managing authority through the intermediate body, like the agreement between the Generalitat and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, for instance.

This different level of complexity explains that local authorities, especially the small and medium size municipalities, tend to avoid calls from ERDF ROP and even NOP preferring direct calls from EC in the form of Interreg Programmes, UIA and URBACT. The result is that the potential impact of the EU Cohesion Policy is lowered.

Figure 4.1 shows the EUCP programmes with relevance for Barcelona Metropolitan Area, not for metropolitan municipalities. Among them, the most important EUCP projects managed by Barcelona Metropolitan Area are the projects included in the Generalitat-AMB Agreement from the Catalan Operational Programme of the European Regional Development Fund. Barcelona Metropolitan Area also receives funds from the Regional Development Fund for programmes outside the Partnership Agreement, such as like INTERREG, URBACT or ESPON projects.

Figure 4.1
The governance of the EU Cohesion policy in Spain



Source: IERMB

Changes in the next programming period 2021-2027

Finally, regarding the programming period 2021-2027, as it is already stated in documents from EC (Fioretti et al., 2020), the proposed post-2020 framework will offer more flexibility in terms of funds and aggregation of thematic objectives (TO).

At a more specific Spanish level, the research has not found any relevant or official paper for the programming period 2021-2027, with the exception of a *non-paper* setting the common position on Cohesion Policy post 2020 of all the Spanish regions and Autonomous cities, dated February 2018 (DGFE, 2018). The paper specifies that the Directorate-General of European Funds of the Ministry of Finance also joins to the general principles and contents described in it.

The position is that the Cohesion Policy must continue to be the main investment policy of the EU in the MFF post 2020; it should maintain its investment level and continue to benefit all regions, aiming at reducing economic, social and territorial disparities in the EU. In addition, the document highlights the need to seek legal certainty and simplification, with a higher degree of flexibility.

Regarding the urban dimension, “it is considered appropriate to continue strengthening the urban dimension of Cohesion Policy, which represents one of the best examples of multi-level governance, the application of integrated approaches and the territorial dimension of Cohesion Policy” and that “the territorial approach of Cohesion Policy must be reinforced”.

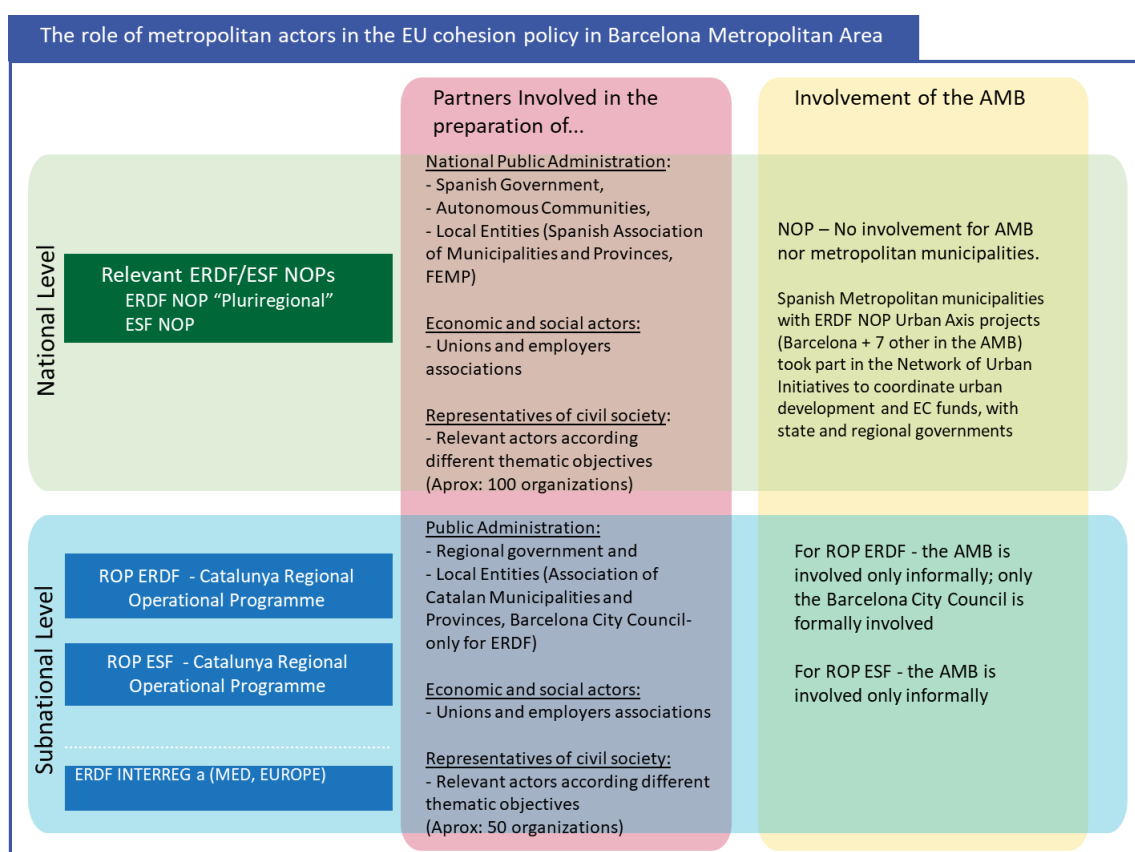
4.1.1 The role of metropolitan actors

As already explained, “metropolitan” entities in Spain are scarce, in fact the Barcelona Metropolitan Area is the only legally recognized metropolitan area and it has only been so since 2010, so it could hardly have

had a more active or recognized role, especially on a national scale. The Barcelona Metropolitan Area played a limited role in the early stages of the 2014-2020 period. While local governments had an active role during the elaboration of the ROP, Barcelona Metropolitan Area was involved mostly in an informal way.

Actually, it is more striking that on a regional scale it has not had a more important role, and that it only started to appear in the ROP after the agreement with the regional government of the Generalitat in 2017. Moreover, while it is a positive milestone regarding the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, it should not be forgotten that it is an agreement limited to a part of the metropolitan area, 35 municipalities (1.6 m inhabitants), which excludes the central municipality of Barcelona (also with 1.6 m inhabitants). The Barcelona municipality has its own agreement (with the regional government, the ERDF Intermediate body) that contemplates a range of actions greater than that of the metropolitan institution (5 priority axes, against 3 of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area agreement) and a higher amount of resources (EUR 40 million against EUR 30 million).

Figure 4.2
The role of metropolitan actors in the EU cohesion policy



Source: IERMB.

Figure 4.2 shows the role of metropolitan actors in the EU cohesion policy in Spain, specifically in the preparation of the ERDF and the ESF OP. The partners involved are listed in chapter 7 of the respective OP and it is quite standard, in the sense that the partners come from three type of institutions: the public administration, economic and social agents (unions and employers associations), and representatives of civil society (environmental groups, social economy institutions...). The difference is that in the NOP the partners are national organizations whereas in the ROP are regional organizations. Regional governments are

represented in the NOP as well as local entities, represented by representative associations of municipalities and provinces.

The role of metropolitan actors in the monitoring of the OP

In the execution of the OP, the Regulation (EC) No. 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, of December 17, 2013, establishes that Member State must create a Monitoring Committee (MC) in charge of monitoring the execution of the Programme, in agreement with the Management Authority.

In the case of the ROPs, the regulation of the MC establishes that the regional government and the Spanish government (Ministry of Finance) have to share the chair. Other members are: representatives of other central and regional government and, with a consultative role, a representative of the EC, representatives of the economic and social partners (regional unions and business representatives) of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia (at national level, in the NOPs, the composition is equivalent). The functions of the MC are defined in articles 49 and 110 of Regulation (EC) No. 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, of December 17, 2013, and refer mainly to the assessment of the execution of the OP, and the progress in achieving its objectives. In the regulation MC it is established that there will be at least one meeting a year. Therefore, municipalities, nor its associations, nor the Barcelona Metropolitan Area have an active role in the monitoring of the OP, nor regional nor national.

Network of Urban Initiatives (RIU)

Also regarding the implementation and monitoring, it is worth to mention the existence of the RIU (see Table 4.1). It started in 2009 as a coordination mechanism for the programming period 2007-2013 to provide local authorities with coordination and support for the implementation of urban strategies. It has been reinforced for the period 2014-2020 as a recognition of its value; actually, it has been recognized as a good practice (Fioretti et al 2021, p.22). As stated in the ERDF NOP 2014-2020, “actions of the Urban Axis will be coordinated through the Network of Urban Initiatives” (p. 337).

So, the RIU coordinates, promotes and supports the management and evaluation of actions in urban issues, co-financed by ESI Funds, like the Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development Strategies (EDUSI) and Low Carbon Economy Singular Projects (both from the ERDF Urban Axis), the Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) and the URBACT program.

The RIU represents the main coordination mechanism for urban development and European Commission funds, and constitutes an open forum for:

- Exchange of experiences and good urban practices that have received community funding.
- Analysis and response to possible problems and / or doubts raised by the application of the regulations on European Funds for urban development.

RIU is managed by the national body responsible for cohesion policy (Ministry of Finance) and that responsible for urban policies (Ministry of Public Works), both chair the network, by the departments responsible for urban policies in the Spanish government and the Autonomous Communities, the Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, and representatives of City Councils with a significant participation in the management of Community Funds and the European Commission.

In the case of the metropolitan area of Barcelona, the municipalities involved in some of these instruments are Barcelona, Santa Coloma de Gramenet, Sant Boi de Llobregat, Gavà, Viladecans, Badalona, Esplugues de Llobregat, and l'Hospitalet de Llobregat from the metropolitan area, and Sabadell, Mataró, Mollet del Vallès, Vilafrañca del Penedès, and Vilanova i la Geltrú, from the outer metropolitan region.

Metropolitan Network of EDUSI Cities

Also at the local level, it should be noted the existence of the Metropolitan Network of EDUSI Cities (see Table 4.1). It is an informal network that works as a meeting point for the four cities with an EDUSI (Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development Strategies): Barcelona, Santa Coloma de Gramenet, Sant Boi de Llobregat, and Sabadell (outside of the metropolitan area). In this network, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area is invited to participate. The aim of the network is to share experiences regarding the management and the contents of the projects in the different cities and to generate collaborative work dynamics at the metropolitan level.

Table 4.1**The role of metropolitan actors in the monitoring and implementation of EU cohesion policy**

Name	Aims	Members	Level of institutionalization
Network of Urban Initiatives (<i>RIU</i>)	The RIU is the main coordination mechanism for urban development and EC funds. It coordinates, promotes and supports the management and evaluation of actions of the Urban axis, co-financed by ESI Funds.	Departments responsible for urban policies in the Spanish government and the Autonomous Communities, the Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, and representatives of City Councils with a significant participation in the management of Community Funds, and the European Commission. The AMB does not participate in the RIU	High. It is composed of a chair, secretariat, working groups and an annual plenary
Metropolitan Network of EDUSI Cities	To share experiences regarding the management and the contents of the projects to be carried out in the different cities; Generating collaborative work dynamics in actions at the metropolitan level to build good local governance practices; Carry out joint communication actions that help optimize resources	Barcelona, Santa Coloma de Gramenet, Sant Boi de Llobregat and Sabadell (outside AMB). The AMB also is invited to the meetings	Low. Informal meetings

Source: Own elaboration

Challenges and critical elements

- In the metropolitan territory of Barcelona, the metropolitan institution is capable of introducing a metropolitan perspective in the management of the EUCP funds. Moreover, the AMB is capable of taking into account agglomeration economies (and diseconomies) of the metropolis.
 - The Barcelona Metropolitan Area lacks recognition as an efficient and effective entity in achieving the objectives of the EUCP, whose added value is the consideration of the metropolitan scale, and the consequent economies (and diseconomies) that this implies.
 - The Barcelona Metropolitan Area neither participate in the OP design nor in the monitoring and follow-up committee of ERDF. The role of the metropolitan institution is limited to be an observer.
 - The Barcelona Metropolitan Area must be involved in developing projects under the Spanish ERDF Urban Axis, fostering collaboration with metropolitan municipalities.
-

4.2 EU cohesion policy instruments at the metropolitan level 2014-2020

As anticipated in section 4.1, there are different instruments that can be applied at the metropolitan scale. Here we will focus only on those applied in the metropolitan region of Barcelona, this is: the Generalitat-AMB Agreement (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017b), Generalitat-Barcelona Agreement (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017a), calls for local governments from Catalan ERDF, Low Carbon Economy Singular Projects, Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies, Urban Innovative Actions, Interreg and ESPON, and URBACT.

The Agreement Generalitat-AMB for the Implementation of the Catalan ERDF

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area has a relevant and active role in the agreement with the Generalitat to manage and implement a part of the regional ERDF. In chapter 4 of the ROP regarding the Integrated approach to territorial development it is announced that the Barcelona Metropolitan Area will be given specific treatment in the OP for its size and importance, and also for its competencies and resources, created by Law to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the administrations that act in the metropolitan territory. This has resulted in an agreement signed in 2017 that came into action in 2018 and is considered a relevant achievement for the metropolitan institution as a first signal of its significance in the metropolitan area.

The agreement is limited to three priority axis corresponding to the core and traditional competences of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area: Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, ICT (axis 2); Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors (3), and Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency (6).

The agreement, even if it is signed with the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, only applies to 35 out of 36 municipalities, because Barcelona is not included due to the fact that this municipality has its own agreement with the Generalitat from the ERDF. The amount of the agreement is for EUR 30 million of the regional ERDF (3.6% of regional ERDF) with a grant intensity of 50% (VAT excluded because it is not eligible for local governments in the Catalan OP). The agreement has resulted in 10 projects and at this moment, almost all the resources have been allocated.

The Agreement Generalitat-Barcelona City Council for the Implementation of the Catalan ERDF

For the municipality of Barcelona there is, as said before, a specific agreement between the city council and the Generalitat, which is also announced in chapter 4 *Integrated approach to territorial development* of the Catalan ROP. The City Council of Barcelona will be given specific treatment for its size and importance, so as not to distort the calls in which the other municipalities of Catalonia will be able to participate.

In this case, the city council has a proposal for a city RIS3 approach in the form of PECT (RIS3BCN GROWTH 2020), in which the ERDF ROP would provide resources for actions in five priority axis: Strengthening research, technological development and innovation (1); Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, ICT (axis 2); Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors (3); Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors (4), and Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency (6). So, two more axis than the Barcelona's Metropolitan Area agreement and a higher total amount of resources: EUR 40 million (4.9% of regional ERDF).

Calls for local governments from Catalan ERDF

Catalan municipalities (therefore also for metropolitan municipalities but not the Barcelona Metropolitan Area) can opt to the so-called PECT (see section 4.1.4). These are projects promoted by local agents and led by local public entities with the aim to transform and enhance local competitiveness. As such, they should deal with four specific ERDF Priority axis: (1) Promote research, technological development and innovation; (2) Improving the use and quality of ICT and access to these technologies; (3) Improving the competitiveness of SMEs; (4) Encourage the transition to a low-carbon economy in all sectors; (6) Conserve and protect the environment and promote resource efficiency. There are 12 projects of this type among metropolitan municipalities, one of them in Barcelona as explained above in 4.3.2.

Local government can opt also to specific calls for proposals from Catalan ERDF ROP priority axis (4) Encourage the transition to a low-carbon economy in all sectors, and (6) Conserve and protect the environment and promote resource efficiency and promote resource efficiency.

Furthermore, municipalities can also access to other specific sectoral calls from different Departments of the Generalitat de Catalunya to obtain ERDF resources.

Low Carbon Economy Singular Projects

Low Carbon Economy Singular Projects are an instrument from the priority axis 4 (transition to a low carbon economy) of the NOP, and the Institute for Energy Diversification and Savings (IDAE, depending from the Spanish Ministry for the Ecological Transition) is the Intermediate body. The IDAE has launched aid programs for energy saving and efficiency projects, either in the form of subsidies or low-interest loans, aimed at different types of beneficiaries: City Councils and local entities, companies (with special attention to SMEs), and communities of owners, to develop projects for the renovation of municipal outdoor lighting or for improving the energy efficiency of industrial processes or buildings, both for residential use and for tertiary use. The Barcelona Metropolitan Area is currently the beneficiary of 2 projects of this instrument, and has another pending approval.

Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies (EDUSI)

The Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies (in Spanish, EDUSI) are an instrument from the priority axis 12 of the ERDF NOP. This axis is “new” in the sense that is not included in the Partnership Agreement Spain-UE but it is a combination of other 4 axis, 3 from ERDF and the other from ESF: Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, ICT (axis 2); Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors (4); Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency (6), and Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination (9) from the ESF. Regarding this axis 9 from ESF, the actions included are ESF-type actions but the resources and the regulation are from the ERDF. This fact (allowed in the ERDF Regulation) is considered a form of flexibility but, as has been highlighted by the municipal officials in charge, it has the inconvenient that the officials from the MA that have to monitor the actions developed are experts in ERDF, not in ESF, causing inefficiencies and misunderstandings. The metropolitan municipalities of Barcelona, Santa Coloma de Gramanet and Sant Boi de Llobregat have been awarded by this programme.

The urban areas to implement these strategies are considered with the perspective of the urban functionality, so they may be constituted by a single municipality or a set of municipalities, in any case with a minimum of 20,000 inhabitants. However, as already explained, all four EDUSI in the metropolitan area of Barcelona consist of only one municipality. The reason given by municipal officials is that the first criteria to opt for this instrument is that there should be a common (integrated and sustainable urban development) strategy, obtained through a process of social and citizen agreement, which is already difficult for one municipality. In addition, the fact that the participating city councils must define a single administrative management body increases the difficulties to coordinate a proposal, leading to limit it only to the own municipality. Furthermore, even for single city councils, the complexities of the regulation prevent many of them to consider participating; actually, the smallest of the four city councils with an EDUSI is Sant Boi de Llobregat with 80,000 inhabitants. The maximum grant is EUR 15 million, with a maximum intensity of grant of 50%.

Urban Innovative Actions

The Urban Innovative Actions (UIA³) are an initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. In the metropolitan area of Barcelona, there are 5 UIA, two from the Barcelona city council, and the other three in three different municipalities (Gavà, Viladecans and outside metropolitan area, Mataró). In this case, the size of the municipalities in some cases is smaller than the EDUSI (for instance, the smallest municipality is Gavà with 47,000 inhabitants). The reason is, as noted by the city officials, they are simpler and more affordable to manage. In addition, it is highlighted that even if the total amount is lower (EURO 5 million) the intensity of grant reaches the 80%.

Summing up, the EDUSI were introduced to developed supramunicipal (metropolitan) projects reflecting the challenges of urban and metropolitan areas (combining priority axis from both ERDF and ESF), but the operational difficulties limited its implementation. Nevertheless, both the EDUSI and UIA are well valued by local officials because their complexity is much lower than projects elaborated under the ROPs. The role of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area in both cases it is limited to an observer, as mentioned before the metropolitan institution takes part in the Metropolitan Network of EDUSI cities.

³ See <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities> (accessed 09/04/21)

Interreg Programmes and ESPON

These programmes are: Interreg Cross-border Cooperation Programme Spain/France/Andorra, Sudoe Interreg, Interreg MED and Interreg Europe. ERDF funds are also allocated for EU partners like metropolitan municipalities in the ENI Cross-border Cooperation Med Programme and ESPON. The ESPON 2020 Programme aims at promoting and fostering a European territorial dimension in development and cooperation by providing evidence, knowledge transfer and policy learning to public authorities and other policy actors at all levels.

URBACT Program

The fourth instrument is the URBACT programme⁴, the European Territorial Cooperation programme aiming to foster sustainable integrated urban development in cities across Europe. It is an instrument of the Cohesion Policy, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and the aim of the program is to enable cities to work together and develop integrated solutions to common urban challenges, by networking, learning from one another's experiences, drawing lessons and identifying good practices to improve urban policies. In this programme, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area has been active and is currently the lead partner in one URBACT action and was partner in another, regarding mobility and urbanism, two core competences of the institution (see table 4.2). There are other URBACT actions in other municipalities, both in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area or in municipalities in the outer metropolitan region.

Table 4.2

EU cohesion policy programmes and instruments in use in the AMB metropolitan area from ERDF

Instrument	Level (geographical scope)	Type	Program ming	Management	Implement ation	Role of metro politan actors
Agreement Generalitat-AMB	Metropolitan (35 municipalities)	ERDF ROP	Generalitat - AMB	Generalitat (Managing authority: National government)	AMB	Promoter, project proposal and implementation
Agreement Generalitat-Barcelona City Council	Barcelona municipality	ERDF ROP	Generalitat-Barcelona City Council	Generalitat (Managing authority: National government)	Barcelona City Council	Promoter, project proposal and implementation
Specific calls for municipalities from Catalan Government (PECT and others)	Municipal	ERDF ROP	Generalitat	Generalitat (Managing authority: National government)	Local authorities	Project proposal and implementation
Low Carbon Economy Singular Projects	Municipal / Metropolitan	ERDF NOP	National government	IDAE (National government)	Local authorities	Project proposal and implementation
DUSI	Municipal	ERDF NOP	National government	National government	Local authorities	Project proposal and implementation

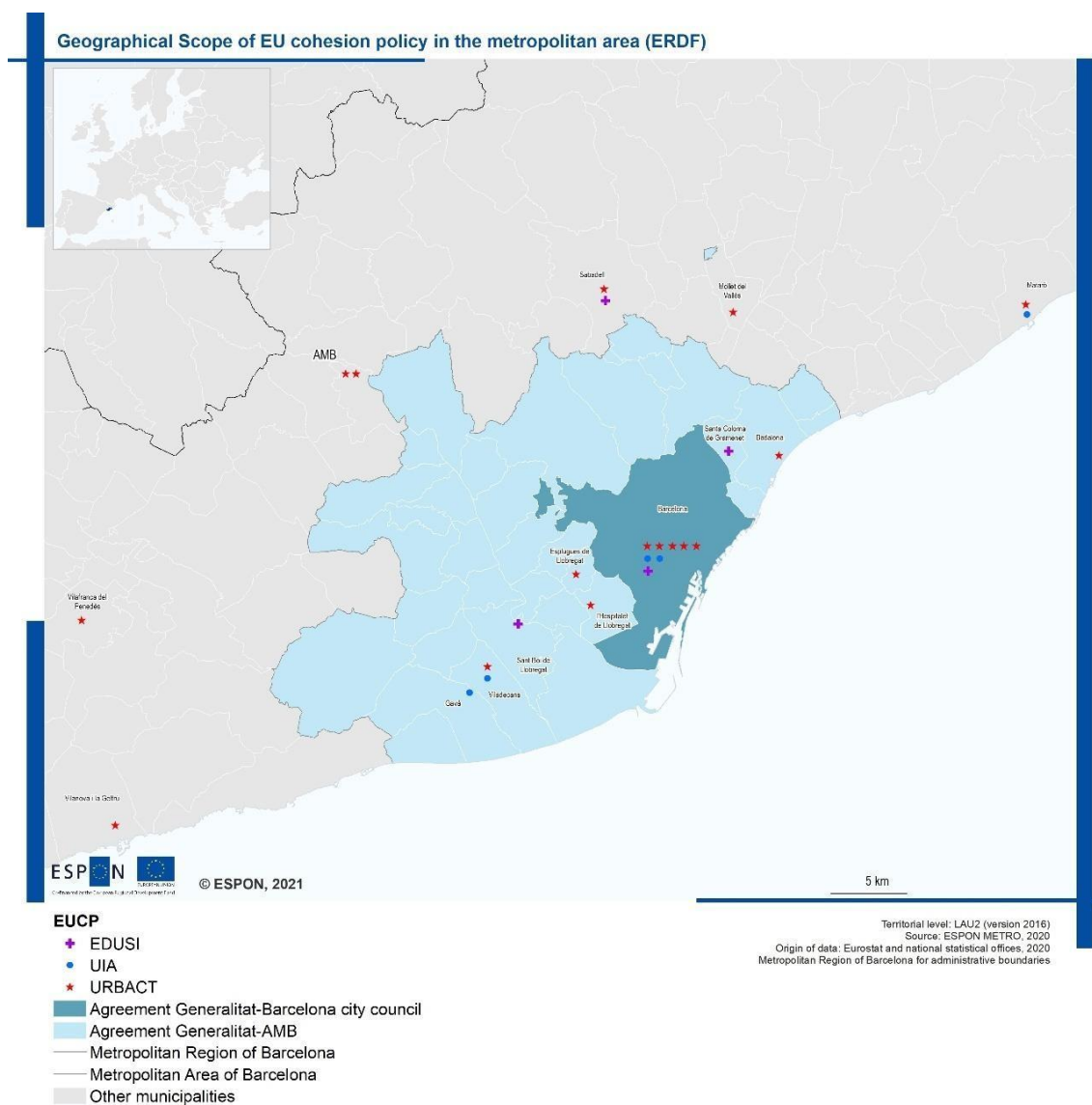
⁴ See <https://urbact.eu/urbact-en-espana> (accessed 09/04/21)

UIA	Municipal	ERDF EC initiative	European Commissio n	European Commission	Local authorities	Project proposal and implementati on
Interreg and ESPON	Regional, metropolitan and municipal	ERDF EC initiative	EC	EC	Regions and local government s (including AMB)	Project proposal and implementati on
URBACT	Municipal	ERDF EC initiative	EC	EC	Local authorities (including AMB)	Project proposal and implementati on

Source: IERMB.

Map 4.1

Geographical Scope of EU cohesion policy in the metropolitan area (ERDF)



Source: Own elaboration

Challenges and critical elements

- The main fund of the EUCP that benefits the municipalities and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area is the ERDF (although the municipalities also receive funds from the ESF of the Generalitat).
 - Within the ERDF, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area mainly receives funds from the Catalan ROP through the agreement Generalitat-AMB (limited to 35 municipalities, Barcelona is not included).
 - Metropolitan municipalities, including Barcelona, can receive direct funds (UIA, URBACT, Interreg, ESPON) or intermediate bodies, either at state level (Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies, Low Carbon Economy projects) or at regional level (agreements, PECT, 4-6 axis).
-

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- Difficulties to combine the needed structural coherence and enough flexibility in order to adapt to local circumstances. For instance, in the case of Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies, difficulties to combine projects from ERDF and ESF priority axes.
 - Municipalities take part in the coordination and monitoring of the Operational Programmes only through associations of municipalities, lacking an effective involvement. In the case of Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies, where the resources available are limited and the selection process is highly competitive, supralocal cooperation has not been stimulated.
 - There are not enough incentives for the municipalities to develop joint sustainable urban development strategies, which reduces the capacity to achieve results at metropolitan scale.
 - The complexity of the monitoring and implementing controls hinders the chances of smaller metropolitan municipalities to benefit from the EU cohesion policy funds. The only chances they have is through projects managed by supralocal institutions.
-

4.3 Involvement of social groups and the business community in the EU cohesion policy

As already explained in the section 4.1.1, social groups and business representatives took part in the preparation phase of the OP implementing the EU cohesion policy. Regarding its participation in the monitoring of the OPs, it is regulated in the Article 47.1. of Regulation (EC) No. 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, of December 17, 2013, establishing that the Member State must create a Monitoring Committee (MC).

In the case of the ROPs, the regulation of the MC establishes that the regional government and the Spanish government (Ministry of Finance) will share the chair. Other members are representatives of other central and regional government and with a consultive role, a representative of the EC, a representation of the economic and social partners (regional unions and business representatives) of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia (at national level, in the NOPs, the composition is equivalent).

The functions of the MC are defined in articles 49 and 110 of Regulation (EC) No. 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, of December 17, 2013, and refer mainly to the assessment of the execution of the OP, and the progress in achieving its objectives. In the regulation MC it is established that there will be at least one meeting a year.

Challenges and critical elements

- The participation of social groups and the business community in the EU cohesion policy is limited to this formal committees.
 - Social groups and business community have a limited role in the monitoring of the OP. They should be better involved to embody the needs of local communities and enhance the impact of the projects and actions in the territory.
-

4.4 The governance of EU cohesion policy in the COVID-19 emergency

The metropolitan reaction to the COVID-19 emergency can be analysed from diverse perspectives. The first one comprises the actions developed by the metropolitan institution in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Secondly, the response at national level and the overall national and regional programming of the EU recovery plan, Next Generation EU and in particular the Recovery and Resilience Facility⁵.

The aim of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area in this context has been to give maximum support to municipal initiatives that mitigate the effects of the crisis caused by the pandemic. As the crisis is still unfolding also the political response is developing, so this section tries to reflect the most up-to-date available information. The most outstanding of these measures are explained below and it should be noted that although the first two were planned before the COVID-19 pandemic (the Environmental Sustainability Plan and the Program to improve the natural and urban landscape), the total amount of the investments has been doubled in response to it, reaching a total budget of EUR 118.4 million.

The Environmental Sustainability Plan (PSA) is an investment plan that aims to promote shared development projects between municipalities and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area to strengthen sustainable urban mobility policies and adapt them to new requirements arising from COVID-19, as well as promoting the ecological and energy transition.

Actually, this plan is a compilation of measures that the Barcelona Metropolitan Area was already working on from different departments of the institution in the field of sustainability, which have been integrated and reinforced in a single Plan. The total budget of the Plan amounts to EUR 110 million, divided in two programs:

- the Program of investments (PACTE) endowed with EUR 100 million which incorporates the Barcelona's Metropolitan area investments for the municipalities, either in direct execution or in cooperation with the town councils. This program will be deployed in 35 municipalities of the metropolitan area, not including Barcelona
- the Program of projects and technical assistance, endowed with EUR 10 million, which complements the direct work of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area in projects with external technical tasks linked to the Plan.

It is worth to mention that the allocation of these funds is characterized by the aim to be proportionate and, at the same time, to compensate for the inequalities that exist between metropolitan municipalities. The desire for proportionality is reflected in the allocation of a larger part of the resources based on the weight of the population of each municipality on the total population of the metropolitan area (not including the municipality of Barcelona, due to its size has a specific treatment). On the other side, in order to compensate for inequalities between municipalities, a part of the resources is allocated inversely proportional to the socio-economic level of each municipality. To do this, the data on the gross family income available per inhabitant for the year 2018 is taken as an indicator, which is weighted according to the respective population and it is applied in an inverse way.

Another initiative is the *"Program of actions to improve the natural and urban landscape"* (PSG) endowed with EUR 8.4 million. Initially it was endowed with EUR 25 million but given the economic context as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided to reduce it to EUR 8.4 million and allocate the remaining amount to social and economic support for the municipalities that are members of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. The purpose of the PSG is to invest in metropolitan river areas, recover degraded areas and integrate infrastructure. The ultimate goal of these investments is to consolidate, recover and improve the metropolitan green infrastructure, which in recent years has become a reference as a social and leisure space for the citizens of the metropolis of Barcelona and that, during this pandemic, has ratified and increased its importance. In this filed the Barcelona Metropolitan Area has a metropolitan tradition and experience of planning and managing open spaces from a supramunicipal perspective.

The PSG is part of the Metropolitan Investment Plan for the municipalities of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area for the period 2020-2023 and a part of these projects are expected to be co-financed by the ERDF. The selection and financing of the projects will be by competitive concurrence: the city councils can present proposals and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area will study them and will choose the best ones based on criteria of metropolitan or plurimunicipal interest⁶. Once the projects have been selected, the Barcelona Met-

⁵ The authors acknowledge the difference between EU cohesion policy and Next Generation programme. However, in order to grasp the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on European funding and regional policies, we have considered relevant to include the analysis of the latter in this and further sections

⁶ See <https://www.amb.cat/web/amb/govern-metropolita/economia-i-inversions/inversions-i-suports/pla-d-inversions/psg>

ropolitan Area will finance 50% of the cost and the city council will provide the other 50%. Subsequently, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area will draft the executive projects and will be responsible for the execution of the works.

Another plan is the Metropolitan Plan to support social cohesion, the local economy and the co-production of services (named *ApropAMB*), which is structured in 3 programs and 8 lines of work. The three programs are: (1) Social policy reinforcement network; (2) Educational, digital and inclusive reinforcement; (3) Support to the networks of economic activity of the municipality. The *ApropAMB* Plan is endowed with a total of EUR 16,600,000 and prioritizes financial support for municipal initiatives presented within the framework of its three programs. Prior to the calculation of the variable allocations, a fixed amount of EUR 30,000 is guaranteed for each city council.

While the Barcelona Metropolitan Area will not be eligible for the additional ERD Funds aimed at the COVID-19 emergency (REACT-EU), it is relevant to get some insights about the future funding possibilities beyond the Cohesion Policy (i.e. Next Generation, RTRP). Thus, figure 4.3 shows the *big picture* of the Institutional architecture of EU Funds 2021-2027. This figure is useful to highlight some aspects obtained from the central and regional government publications made until this moment.

The first is the total amount of the funds, for the whole EU and specifically for Spain. In this case, the sum of the resources from the Resilience and Recovery Facility (RRF) plus the REACT-EU funds amount to EUR 151 1000 million for the period 2021-2026 (20% aprox. of the total). This quantity is equivalent to the 12% of the Spanish GDP in 2019 (2% in annual terms), which is much more than the ESI funds from 2014-2020 (3% of the Spanish GDP in 2019, 0.5% in annual terms).

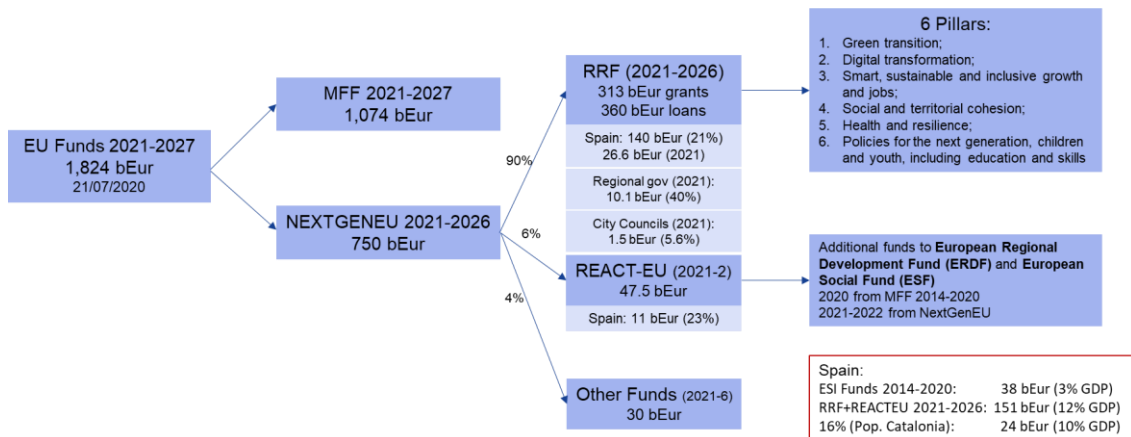
The Spanish Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan (RTRP) (Gobierno de España, 2021) establishes 10 “Lever policies”. The policy with more budget is “Modernization and digitization of the industries and the SMEs, recovery of tourism and boost to an entrepreneurial nation” with 23,1% of the total resources allocated. The second one is the “Urban and rural agenda, the fight against depopulation and the development of agriculture” with 20,7%, followed by “infrastructures and resilient ecosystems” with 15%. However, although the Urban Agenda policy is the second largest in terms of resources, it appears as the first policy in the plan presentation, a fact that highlights its strategic importance.

The second aspect is regarding its territorial distribution. The criteria to allocate the funds are population, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita and the average unemployment rate of the last five years compared to the EU average. For the year 2021, the only year with already a territorial distribution of funds, regional governments and local institutions will receive the 40% of the disbursements, while city councils will receive another 5.6% (implying that the central government will manage more than 50% of total funds). Thus, of the EUR 4,252 million already pre-allocated (22% of 2021 total), Andalusia, with EUR 702 million, is the region that will receive the most money; Catalonia is going to receive EUR 596 million; the Community of Madrid, EUR 461 million and the Valencian Community, EUR 414 million.

Another aspect to highlight is that there will be three ways for city councils to receive funds: directly from the city council's assignment, from the regional government and the local institutions assignment, or from calls from the Spanish and regional governments.

The quantity of resources from the EU funds have risen concerns about the capacity of the Administration to manage them. Therefore, Spanish government reacted publishing an emergency law (or fast track law) about “Urgent measures for the modernization of the Public Administration and for the execution of the Spanish *Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan*”. In this law is presented the governance model of the funds and it is sketched in the Figure 4.4. The law establishes that the “Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan is a country project, which requires the involvement of all economic and social agents, from all levels of government and all the resources of the public administration”, but the structure showed seems quite centralized.

Figure 4.3
Institutional architecture of EU Funds 2021-2027



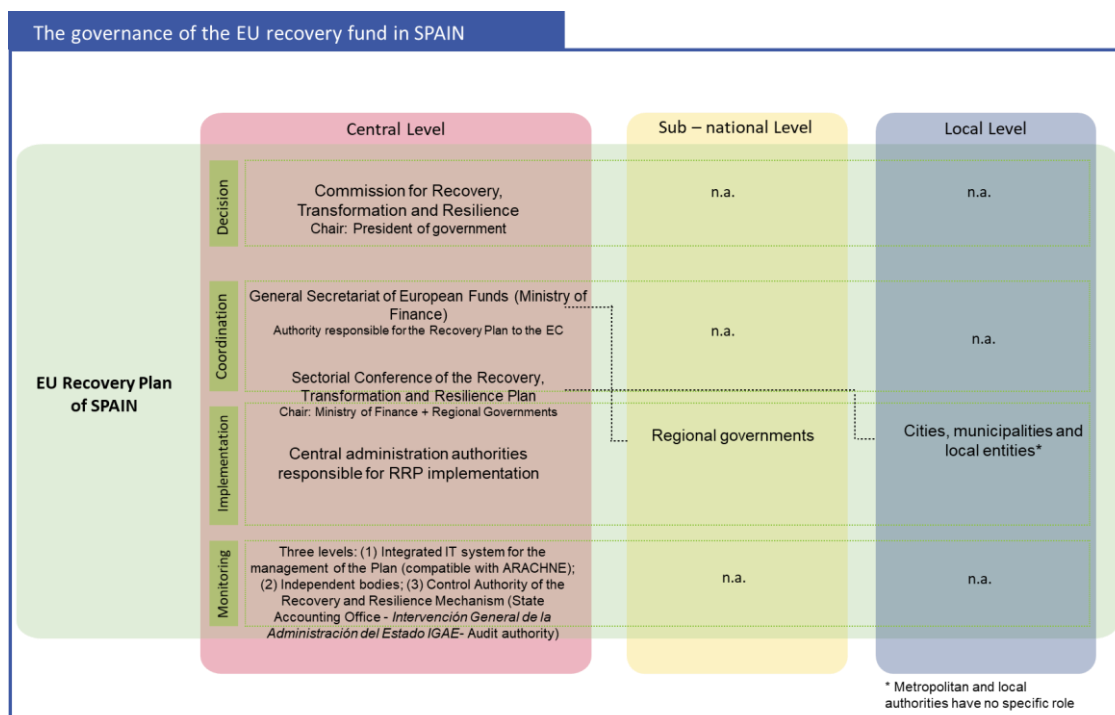
Source: IERMB.

The governance will be structured with the creation of three new institutions, the Commission for Recovery, Transformation and Resilience, the General Secretariat of European Funds and the Sectoral Conference of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan (Gobierno de España 2021. Plan de Recuperación, transformación y resiliencia, pp. 187-194). The first will be chaired by the president of the central government and will deal with “how” projects will be developed, establishing guidelines or standard models of procedure, as well as standard bidding documents and bases for grants calls. The new General Secretariat of European Funds will be the Authority responsible for the Recovery Plan to the European Commission. This unit will promote the development of the Plan and the coordination with the Ministries, Public Organizations, Autonomous Communities and local Entities and other national and community entities involved in the Recovery Plan. The third, chaired by the Ministry of Finance also from the central government but with the participation of regional governments (Autonomous Communities) will deal with the territorial multilevel territorial governance, establishing mechanisms and channels of cooperation and coordination in the implementation of the Plan.

Furthermore, it establishes that the responsible authority will be a Secretariat from the Ministry of Finance, without including regional intermediate bodies, and limiting their role to providing information, a self-assessment, and a fraud control regarding their projects. In September 2021, when Spain (and other countries) already received a first disbursement from NextGenEU funds, the Ministry of Finance approved two Ministerial decrees (HFP/1030/2021 and HFP/1031/2021) to regulate and manage the monitoring of the Recovery and Resilience National Plan, detailing several obligations for the public administrations receiving NextGenEU funds. Among them, regional and local governments will have to define an anti-fraud plan: “Any entity, decision-maker or executor, that participates in the execution of the Recovery and Transformation Plan measures must have an Anti-Fraud Measures Plan” (*Orden HFP/1031/2021, September 29th, 2021*).

In parallel, the regional governments have developed regional “Next generation Plans”. In case of Catalonia, the regional government published at the beginning of February a strategic Plan regarding Next Generation funds with 11 Missions and 27 Emblematic projects (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2021). It also proposes the creation of two consortia as mechanisms of collaboration with local institutions to promote projects in the fields of sustainability and digitization services. In this document, the Catalan government foresees to receive EUR 1.7 billion only in 2021, a quantity equivalent to the Catalan population weight in Spain, which is striking because as mentioned before the distribution criteria are related to the impact of the crisis on GDP and the unemployment rate. Moreover, regarding the role of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area in the governance or managing of these recovery funds, in neither case, the Spanish governance law of the NextGen funds nor the Catalan NextGen plan, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area has had any role in their elaboration. At this moment, its involvement is limited to the presentation of preliminary projects to the regional and national government opting to these funds.

Figure 4.4
The governance of the EU recovery fund in Spain



Source: IERMB from Gobierno de España (2021) *Plan de recuperación, transformación y resiliencia*, 16 de junio de 2021.

Challenges and critical elements

- The Barcelona Metropolitan Area will not be eligible for the additional funds from the ERDF REACT-EU.
- Neither in the Spanish law of the NextGen funds nor the Catalan NextGen plan the Barcelona Metropolitan Area have had a role in their elaboration.

4.5 Coordinating metropolitan governance and EU cohesion policy

As said in section 4.1.1, there are two instruments with the aim at coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the EU funds at municipal and metropolitan scale, the RIU and the EDUSI, but in both the role of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area is not of great relevance.

The situation regarding the agreement Generalitat-AMB to manage EUR 30 million from the Catalan ERDF is different. In this agreement, signed in 2017 and valid for the rest of the programming period up to 2020, it is established that there will be a Technical Monitoring Committee formed by an equal number of representatives (2) from both institutions.

The functions of the Committee are to monitor and evaluate the actions included in the agreement; approve the monitoring indicators and evaluate the actions of the agreement; and resolve conflicts of interpretation that may arise in relation to the agreement.

Challenges and critical elements

- In the metropolitan territory of Barcelona, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area is capable of introducing a supramunicipal/metropolitan perspective in the management of the EUCP funds.
- The Barcelona Metropolitan Area is capable of taking into account agglomeration economies (and diseconomies) of the metropolis.
- Nevertheless, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area has a peripheral role in the EUCP governance network

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area should have a more active and relevant role in the definition of policies and plans related to EU funds, emphasizing the metropolitan dimension as the main added value of its proposal. To this end, it must promote a strategic reflection on the importance of metropolitan areas not only at regional scale but also at the national and European levels. In addition, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area should foster collaboration with metropolitan municipalities and the larger metropolitan region in the design and implementation of EU projects.

At the national and European levels, there is a need to strengthen the role of metropolitan areas in the governance of the EUCP. To this purpose, the EMA network could play a fundamental role defending the metropolitan dimension. At the national level, it should be further recognition of the metropolitan phenomenon through the inclusion of Metropolitan Areas as stakeholders in the elaboration of national ROP, direct link of ROP objectives with core metropolitan competences, and incentives for local administrations to develop policies at the metropolitan scale.

At the European level, the metropolitan scale should be included as suitable to efficiently tackle urban problems and to facilitate interlocal cooperation. Thus, promoting the recognition of metropolitan institutions as legitimate actors in the elaboration of national ROP. EU authorities should be vigilant with member states on the implementation of the partnership principle when programming, managing and evaluating the OP of the ESI funds.

The administrative complexity should be reduced, developing actions in three directions:

- (1) reducing managerial tasks and controls in the justification of projects,
- (2) simplification and coherence in the audit and justification system (MA and IB),
- (3) allowing those institutions with management duties (such as the AMB) to access to resources from the technical assistance axis of the regional OP in order to hire staff and technical assistance.

The consideration of what is a subsidized expenditure should be revised. Many local officials are critical with the fact that VAT is not considered a subsidized expenditure in the Catalan ERDF ROP. The no eligibility of VAT can discourage the proposal submission (and implies that the effective share of co-financing is well under 50%).

Another area of concern is the different criteria that apply the diverse auditing levels (intermediate bodies and management authorities). It is understandable that each authority audit what they are responsible for, but not that they apply different criteria. This is very relevant in aspects related to what is considered eligible expenses (beyond VAT), in some cases it has been reported significant differences that imply important imbalances in local authorities budgets difficult to manage, especially for medium and small municipalities.

Increase the technical support in the management of ERDF to supra-municipal governments (Barcelona Metropolitan Area but also the Provincial Government) so that they can assist local authorities, particularly the smaller ones, and for projects involving more than one territorial administration. Also, it is necessary to increase technical support from the MA and establish better and more effective communication and consultation channels.

Simplification is needed in the audit and justification system of the ERDF to make it more proportionate to the size of the local body implementing the actions. Local officials complain that there is an excess of bureaucratic procedures for the development of very simple/small projects (Diputació de Barcelona, 2018). They also stress that the processes of verification and payment of the ERDF should be more effective in order to reduce the time between the expenditure and the reception of the corresponding grant, thus avoiding financing problems by local authorities.

5 Cohesion policy impact

5.1 EU cohesion policy objectives and actions

There are several instruments, programmes and funds that municipalities and the metropolitan authority can be beneficiaries of, as the previous chapter has explained. As seen before, each fund has its priorities and objectives. Now, the present chapter is going to focus mainly on the Generalitat-AMB agreement.

This agreement established three priority axes (PA) from the Regional Operational Programme (ROP) in Catalonia, in which the Barcelona Metropolitan Area could include its projects (see table 5.1). Therefore, most projects are included in policy areas such as infrastructures and territorial management. The amount of the agreement is for EUR 30 million financed by the ERDF (3.6% of regional ERDF) for metropolitan projects with a total cost of EUR 72 million.

Table 5.1

Main instruments and objectives of the EU cohesion policy in the metropolitan area

Instrument	Type of Fund(s)	Axis / Objectives	Territories
Generalitat – AMB Agreement	ERDF	PA2: Enhancing access, use and quality of information and communication technologies	Barcelona Metropolitan Area
		PA4: Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy	
		PA6: Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	
Generalitat - Barcelona city council Agreement	ERDF	PA1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 for a Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3 strategies) through 3 programmes: 1 Entrepreneurial and innovative ecosystem for the economic development 2. Smart City Initiative for the development of urban public services 3. Innovative public procurement - Open Challenge	Barcelona
Integrated Sustainable Urban Development	ERDF & ESF	Municipal strategies which enhance sustainable urban development in order to strengthen the resilience of cities	Barcelona, Santa Coloma de Gramanet, Sant Boi de Llobregat
Urban Innovative Actions (UIA)	ERDF	Test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges	Barcelona (2), Gavà, Viladecans,

Source: IERMB.

The agreement between the Barcelona Metropolitan Area and the Generalitat applies to 35 out of 36 municipalities; Barcelona has its own agreement with the Catalan government. In this case, Barcelona has been proposed for a RIS3 (RIS3BCN GROWTH 2020), in which ERDF ROP provides EUR 40 million (4.8% of regional ERDF), for actions in innovation in economic development, public services and public procurement. Other metropolitan municipalities have also received ERD funds to develop projects in

economic development through competitive calls from the Catalan government.

The two agreements (Generalitat-Barcelona and Generalitat-AMB) show that there are no explicit objectives of the EUCP with a metropolitan dimension. In the 2014-2020 programming period, both agreements have been reached through a negotiation between the regional government and each of the two local entities according to their needs, competences and plans. The city council has focused on innovation and economic development and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area has developed projects mainly related to the territory digitization, the promotion of a low-emission economy and the protection and conservation of the environment.

Obviously, these projects have to be related with the priorities and objectives of the Operational Programmes. These two agreements reflect a set of division in the metropolitan area between the core city and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, focused on the other 35 municipalities. The two agreements show the use of the funds depending on interests, competences and expertise of each institution.

Finally, there are other instruments in the framework of the European urban policy, most of them funded by the ERDF: Urban Innovative Actions (UIA), Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies, or URBACT, such as the URBACT-Riconnect. Those are the main programmes aimed to foster innovation in the field of sustainable urban development and transfer and exchange of best practices between cities. Besides Barcelona, these programs have benefited many of mid-sized and big cities in the metropolitan area, depending on its capacity to attract and manage these funds (see Map 5.2).

A more detailed analysis of the metropolitan projects included in the Generalitat-AMB agreement is provided in the following subsections. We have analysed the projects of the Agreement from diverse perspectives: funding amount, territorial scope and spatial distribution (see table 5.2).

Table 5.2

Projects of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona co-funded by the EU Cohesion Policy (ERDF)

OP Priority Axes	Projects	Sponsor dep./ Service	Budget over total
PA2: Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies	Metropolitan smart cities platform	Innovation	7.3%
PA4: Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy	LED lighting on Barcelona ring roads	Infrastructures	19.3%
	Low-emissions zone of the metropolitan area of Barcelona	Mobility	6.3%
	Expansion of the metropolitan charging station network	Mobility	3.2%
	Photovoltaic installations in the metropolitan area	Environment	10.0%
	Increasing secure bike parking	Mobility	3.8%
	Expansion of the metropolitan cyclable network (Bicivia)	Mobility	7.4%
PA6: Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	Socio-environmental restoration of metropolitan river areas	Infrastructures	23.6%
	Restoration and improvement of the Network of metropolitan parks with patrimonial value	Public space	4.0%
	Metropolitan network of industrial and cultural heritage	Public space	15.2%

Source: IERMB from AMB.

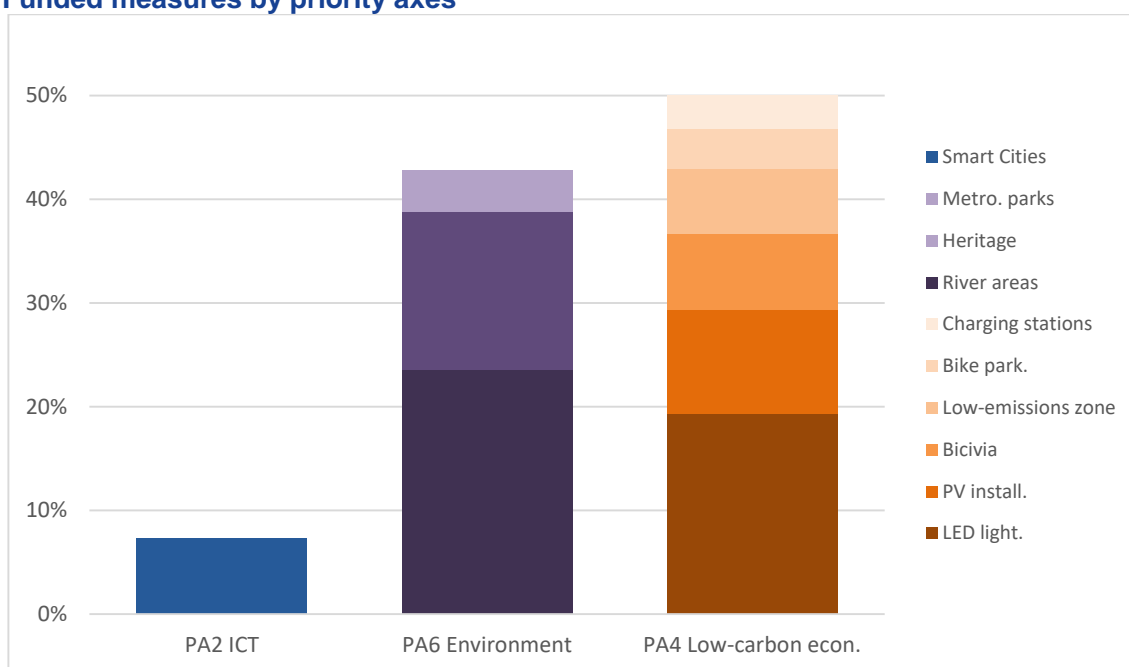
5.1.1 Barcelona Metropolitan Area funded measures: main sectors and spatial distribution

First, PA4 “supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy” is the most relevant axis in the Agreement. In this PA there are six projects, which in total represent half of the total grants received in the Generalitat-AMB Agreement (see figure 5.1). Projects under this PA have a particular focus on mobility infrastructures (cycling infrastructures, low-emissions zone and charging stations), and energy efficiency (LED lighting and PV installations).

In addition, PA6, “preserving and protecting the environment and promotion resource efficiency”, has three projects, aimed at the restoration of nature spaces (river spaces, metropolitan parks) and the protection of heritage. Nevertheless, they are very significant in quantitative terms since two of them represents almost 40% of the total grants funded investments (river areas and heritage) (see figure 5.1).

Finally, PA 2, “enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies”, has only one project (Smart Cities platform), aimed at developing and improving smart services (public transport, waste, complaints and suggestions). This is the only project in which soft-policy departments participate (Area of Social and Economic Development).

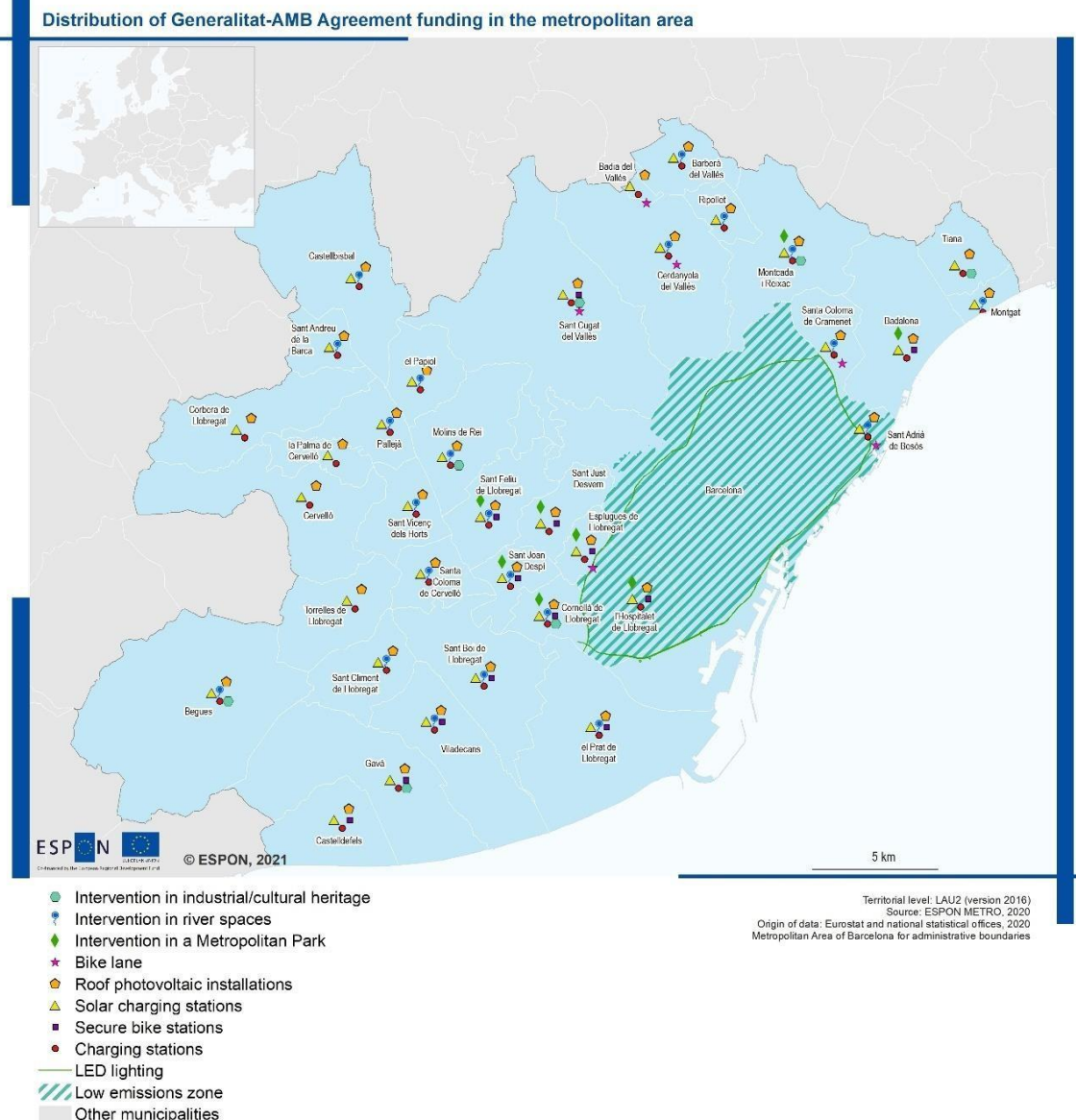
Figure 5.1
Funded measures by priority axes



Source: IERMB from AMB.

Regarding the spatial distribution, in general investments and projects, benefit the whole metropolitan area, as we can see in the following map 5.1. Nevertheless, we can differentiate between projects that: a) benefit the metropolis as a whole, such as Metropolitan Smart Cities Platform (not included in the map), or an important intermunicipal area, like LED lighting and Low-emissions zone; b) projects that are local interventions but as part of a metropolitan infrastructure (Bicivia, secure bike parking, metropolitan parks, river spaces); and c) local interventions in the metropolitan municipalities, and in which the metropolitan dimension is less clear (such as the photovoltaic installations).

The distribution of resources in the metropolitan area is based in the following rationale: a) an even distribution in all the municipalities (charging stations, roof photovoltaic installations); b) investments in metropolitan infrastructures (Bicivia, Road Rings, metropolitan park, etc.); so the localization of the investment depends on the development of the infrastructure itself ; or c) in municipal facilities or heritage that fitted in the call conditions of the project (not all the municipalities have this kind of facilities).

Map 5.1**Distribution of Generalitat-AMB Agreement funding in the metropolitan area**

Source: IERMB from AMB.

5.1.2 ERDF co-funded measures in the metropolitan and regional area: spatial distribution

If we analyse the total investments from ERDF (including Catalan ROP, NOP, UIA, URBACT and Interreg), the metropolitan region of Barcelona has received more than EUR 160 million to co-finance, in most cases, up to 50% of the total cost of the project⁷. Map 5.2 shows the distribution of ERDF funds projects by population among municipalities in the metropolitan region, in the 2014-2020 period⁸.

The map shows how funded projects are concentrated in the coastal area, where most of the population lives. Above all, the spatial distribution shown in the map highlights the ability of local authorities to prepare proposals, and access and manage ERD funds. In order to access and implement them, municipalities must have resources and capacities, in form of well-trained and experienced teams. In this sense, larger municipalities tend to have both resources and skilled professionals that can be focused on the management

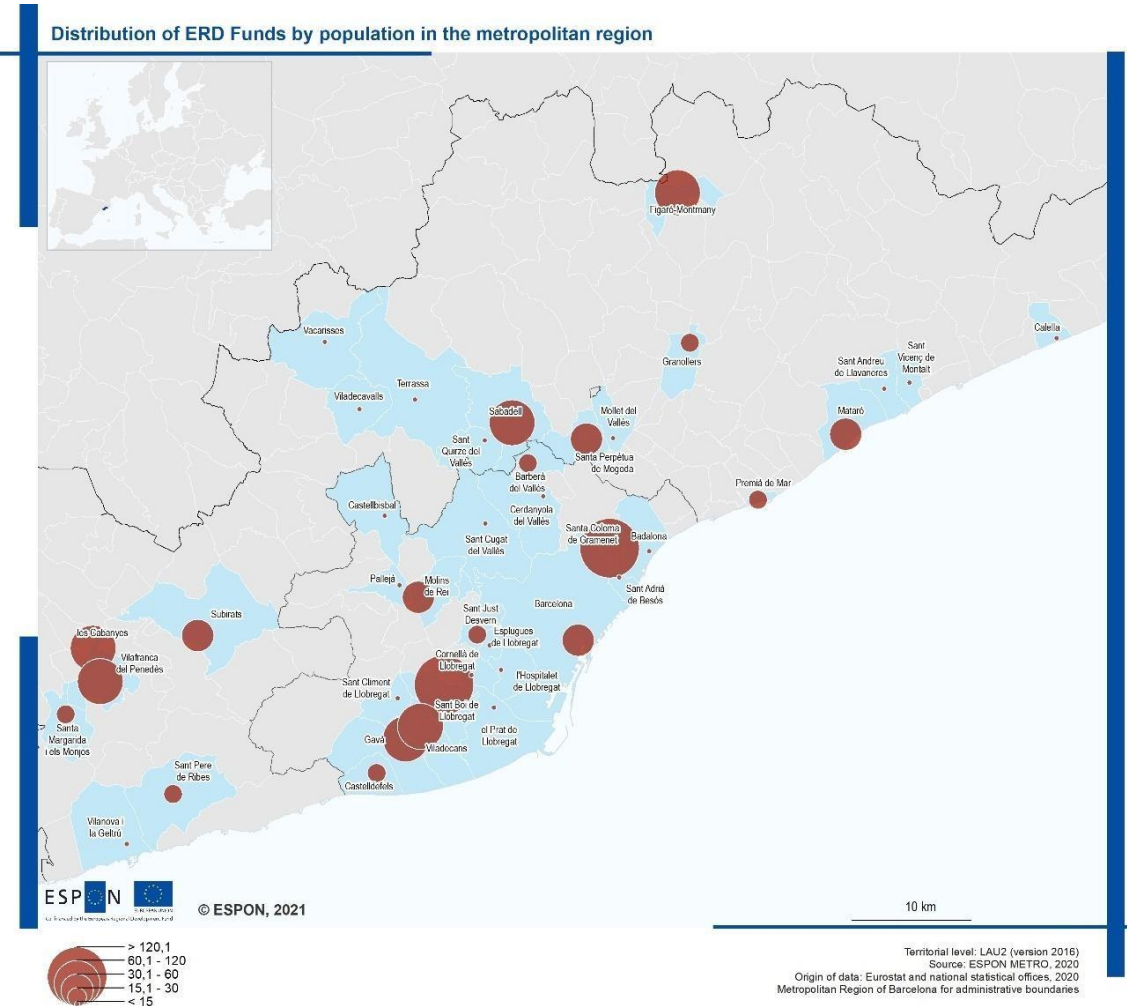
⁷ There are some exceptions such as Urban Innovative Actions funds, which co-finance up to 80% of the project.

⁸ Only includes the funds which local governments are beneficiaries of. It doesn't include funds to other territorial institutions, such as Consell Comarcals, Diputació de Barcelona or AMB.

of these funds.

Map 5.2

Distribution of ERD Funds by population in the metropolitan region

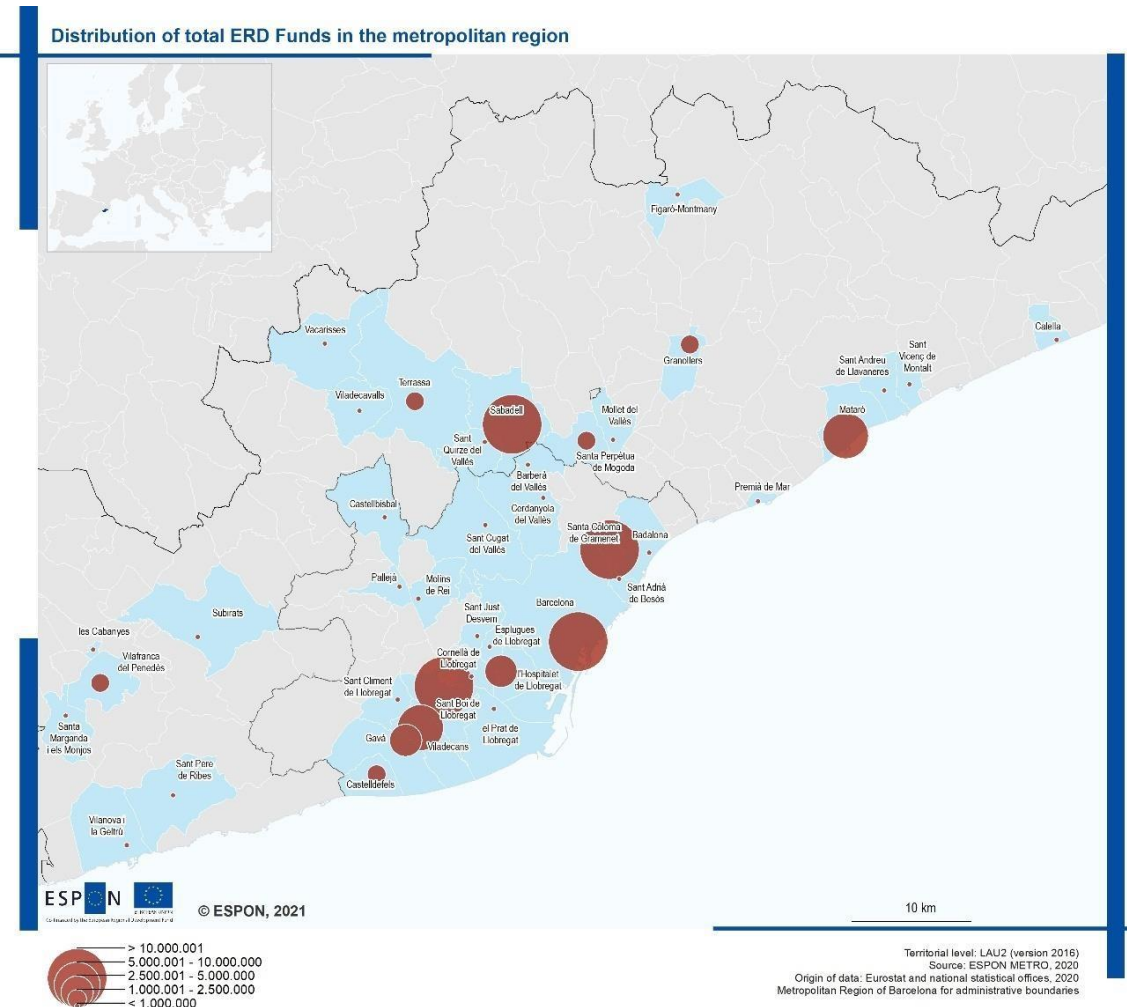


*ERDF ROP + ERDF NOP + UIA + URBACT + Interreg

Source: IERMB from Ministry of Finance, ERDF database.

However, from a certain amount of population (around 50,000 inhabit.), a sustained political commitment in the field of innovation makes a difference among these municipalities and ends up reversing in a greater reception of these funds. This capacity to raise funds, therefore, does not necessarily have to be related to the particular needs of metropolitan cities, and the need of metropolitan social cohesion in whole.

Following this reasoning, a certain relation can be seen between the size of the municipalities and the capacity to attract ERD funds. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions and particularities: the seven largest municipalities (more than 100,000 inhabitants) receive 74% of the total ERD funds in the metropolitan region of Barcelona. Among them, the case of Barcelona is logically preponderant, with a total amount of EUR 78 million in ERD funds, representing almost half of the total ERD funds in the region. Santa Coloma de Gramanet is the second municipality with more ERD funds, roughly EUR 20 million.

Map 5.3**Distribution of total ERD Funds in the metropolitan region**

*ERDF ROP + ERDF NOP + UIA + URBACT + Interreg
Source: IERMB from Ministry of Finance, ERDF database.

Among the largest municipalities, there are some notable peculiarities. For instance, Badalona in spite of being a city with a considerable concentration of vulnerable neighborhoods (28.6% of its statistical areas have extreme vulnerability⁹), it has not had a remarkable capacity to attract these funds. Moreover, it is among the municipalities with the lowest ratio of ERD funds per capita among all the municipalities in the metropolitan area.

In the greater metropolitan region, it is relevant the case of Terrassa which, despite being one of the largest cities in the region, has a low level of ERD funds (EUR 175.200).

Besides the most populated municipalities, there are a total of 25 municipalities (between 10,000 and 100,000 inhabitants) that manage the other 25% of ERD funds in the metropolitan region. Among these, the case of Sant Boi de Llobregat is particularly relevant. With a population of 84,500 inhabitants, it has had the capacity to get EUR 19 million in ERD funds in projects aimed at digitizing public services, improving energy efficiency or protecting the environment. In fact, Sant Boi de Llobregat is the municipality that has more EUR invested in ERDF projects per capita (228 EUR/inhab.).

Finally, the smallest municipalities (less than 10,000 inhabitants) in the metropolitan region only retain 0.4% of ERDF funds. These funds are mainly focused on energy efficiency projects. In fact, all the ERDF projects

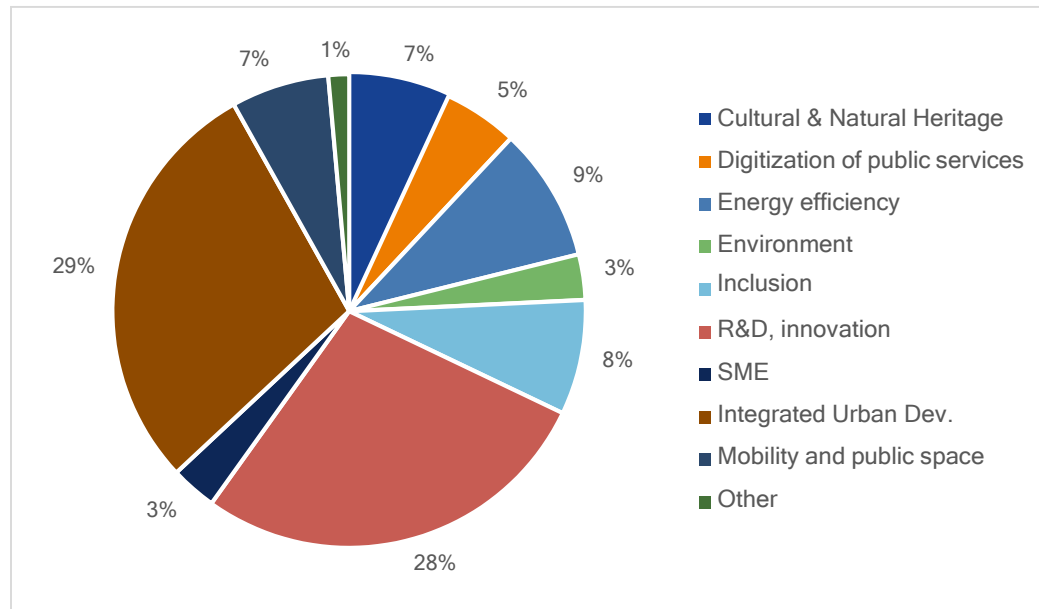
⁹ Antón Alonso, F., Porcel, S., Cruz, I., Coll, F. (2021). La vulnerabilitat Urbana a Barcelona: persistència, concentració i complexitat. Revista *Papers*, 63, p50-67). Retrieved from [PAPERS_63_ART-4.pdf](#).

in the eight smaller municipalities in the region are aimed at energy efficiency (street lighting).

In relation to the distribution of funds among areas in the metropolitan region, we found that integrated strategies (EDUSI) are a big share of the total ERDF funds (29%) followed by innovation and R&D (28%). Other areas of intervention such as energy efficiency and environment, social inclusion, heritage or mobility infrastructures (including bike infrastructures) and urban space are more evenly distributed (9-7%).

Figure 5.2

Thematic distribution of ERD Funds* in the metropolitan region



*ERDF ROP + ERDF NOP + UIA + URBACT + INTERREG

Source: IERMB.

Challenges and critical elements

- There are no specific metropolitan goals in the EUCP framework. In contrast, the European Urban policy is locally based. There are many European policy instruments for big and mid-sized municipalities funded by the ERDF and many metropolitan municipalities benefit from these (Interreg, URBACT, UIA and Sustainable Urban Development Strategies). Some of them could foster metropolitan cooperation but they are very exceptional.
- The ERDF works through a negotiation between the intermediate body and the city/metropolitan authority, each institution can fund projects in their interest. In the 2014-2020 period, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area has been included due to the adequacy of its responsibilities and coherence with the political objective, and the contextual political will.
- There is an important difference in the use of the ERDF ROP between the core city and the rest of the metropolitan area. The Barcelona city council implements projects in innovation and economic development, and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area developed projects mainly related to the territory digitization, the promotion of a low-emission economy and the protection and conservation of natural and cultural heritage.
- The distribution of resources from the Generalitat-AMB Agreement in the metropolitan area is based in a) an even distribution in all the municipalities; or b) metropolitan infrastructures; c) municipal facilities and heritage. In some projects, the metropolitan added value of the local intervention could be reinforced.
- Urban vulnerability often goes beyond municipal borders and is concentrated in several spots of the metropolitan area. There is a lack of incentives for promoting intermunicipal area-based regeneration projects.
- There are not explicit goals for the larger metropolitan region (they are currently under development by the Regional Strategic Plan). Nowadays, the distribution of ERD funds in the metropolitan region depends mostly on the expertise and capabilities of local governments' human and economic resources and local political commitment.

5.2 Coherence and synergies with metropolitan objectives and instruments

There are relevant insights in terms of the coherence of ERDF ROP co-funded projects with the metropolitan planning instruments and development goals. In particular, there is a strong association with the Metropolitan Action Plan (PAM), planning instruments and investment programmes (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3
Coherence and synergies between EUCP and metropolitan objectives

Projects	PAM	Plans	Invest. plans
Metropolitan smart cities platform	YES	NO	NO
Low-emissions zone of the metropolitan area of Barcelona	YES	YES (PMMU)	NO
LED lighting on Barcelona ring roads	YES	NO	NO
Expansion of the metropolitan charging station network	YES	YES (PMMU)	NO
Photovoltaic installations in the metropolitan area	YES	YES (Pla Clima)	NO
Increasing secure bike parking	YES	YES (PMMU)	NO
Expansion of the metropolitan cyclable network (Bicivia)	YES	YES (PMMU)	NO

Projects	PAM	Plans	Invest. plans
Socio-environmental restoration of metropolitan river areas	YES	NO	YES (PSG)
Restoration and improvement of the Network of metropolitan parks with patrimonial value	YES	NO	YES (PACTE)
Metropolitan network of industrial and cultural heritage	YES	NO	YES (PACTE)

Source: IERMB.

5.2.1 Alignment with the goals defined in metropolitan instruments

The PAM defines the main priorities and guides the metropolitan government activity for the 4-year mandate period (see section 3.3). In this context, all funded projects from ERDF ROP are coherent with the main goals established in the Metropolitan Action Plan (PAM) but there are disparities with the connection with other planning instruments (see table 5.3). The Metropolitan Mobility Plan (PMMU) is the planning instrument that covers more ERDF ROP metropolitan projects.

On the other hand, projects aimed at territorial intervention and nature spaces are directly related to investment programmes, either PSG (natural landscapes) and PACTE (territorial cohesion). Actually, this difference between instruments/programmes is very relevant; for projects that are part of an investment programme, EU funds represent extra resources for either planned or on-going projects with a budget. But projects that are included in other plans or strategies, they generally have not an approved budget linked to them. In this case, EU funds represent a relevant input for the implementation (or acceleration) of these projects.

Also, there are projects that are not contained in neither plans nor investment programmes. In the case of the LED lighting project on the Barcelona ring roads, it is just a regular intervention of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area in one of its infrastructures that is not part of an investment programme but the general budget. In this case, similarly to the PSG/PACTE cases, EU funds are added to this regular investment. In the case of the Metropolitan Smart Cities platform, it is a project that has not been programmed in any of the main planning instruments. In this sense, EU funds represent an opportunity for new policies/services. However, these kinds of projects may be fragile, since its continuity is highly dependent on EU funding.

In sum, while in general terms EU funded projects are in line with the main goals and actions defined in the main metropolitan planning instruments, there is a lack of integration between the diverse plans and programmes, particularly between thematic plans and investment programmes.

5.2.2 Funding magnitude

The funding magnitude of the 2014-2020 ERDF ROP managed by the metropolitan authority is around EUR 30 million. The Agreement was signed in 2017 but the development of the projects started properly in 2018. In order to quantify the importance of this funds for the metropolitan authority, we compare them to the investment budget (as the ERDF is oriented towards investment) during the 2018-2021 period. The result of the comparison is that the ERDF ROP represents 16% of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area investment budget.

Table 5.4 shows the distribution of the EUR 30 million from the ERDF ROP and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area investment budget among different chapters in order to compare them. We classified the projects as follows: infrastructures (bike parking), technological installations (low-emissions zone), ICT (Smart Cities platform), and investments in other infrastructures and facilities (includes investments in charging stations, PV installations, BiciVía, river area, parks, heritage and Barcelona's ring roads). The weight of the metropolitan ERDF ROP in comparison to the Barcelona Metropolitan Area regular investment budget is higher in the chapter of the investment in other public facilities and in the ICT (26,7% and 25,3% respectively).

Table 5.4

Amount of EU funds per sector/priority compared to the investment metropolitan budget (2018+2019+2020)

Investment chapter	EU cohesion policy funds (EUR million)	Total AMB investment budget	%
Infrastructures	1.1	14.5	7.6
Tech. installations	1.9	61.2	3.1
ICT	2.1	8.3	25.3
Other infrastructures and facilities	24.6	92.2	26.7
Total invest. (2018-2019)	29.7	183.8	16.2

Source: IERMB from Ministry of Finance.

Challenges and critical elements

- There are key metropolitan responsibilities whose programmes were not eligible for receiving ESI funds but are relevant for the cohesion policy: enhancing circular economy in waste management, promoting resilience in the water supply, or improving energy efficiency in public transport, among others.
- The EU Funds are especially relevant for the implementation of metropolitan thematic plans (climate change, waste management, mobility) whose actions are out of the investment plans.
- There should be a better and clearer alignment between the thematic plans, the investment plans and the Metropolitan Action Plan.

5.3 Outcomes

In the case of the ERDF ROP is still too early to assess the outcomes. As explained before, the Generalitat-AMB Agreement was approved in mid-2017 and its development started in 2018. Therefore, the projects are at the initial phase of their development. In particular, the overall execution of the projects is nowadays around 20%.

Having said that, from a general perspective, the ERDF ROP agreement will foster a significant sustainable transformation of the metropolitan area of Barcelona through investments in the territory digitization, the promotion of a low-emission economy and the protection and conservation of the natural and cultural heritage. The study argue that the primary outcome of the ERDF ROP will be the impulse to the development or improvement of metropolitan infrastructures. As we have seen, the Generalitat-AMB Agreement has a strong focus on metropolitan infrastructures; among the diverse projects a majority are investments in infrastructures, such as cycling infrastructures, nature spaces, or the ringroads.

In this context, ERDF funds have a significant role in the acceleration of investments in metropolitan infrastructures, in either their extension (e.g. km of bike lanes) or their improvement (in terms of efficiency and sustainability). Therefore, in the case of the metropolitan area of Barcelona, EUCP main outcomes are in relation to the physical development and territorial structuring of the metropolis.

In spite of that, we would also argue that currently outcomes do not have dominant position in the evaluation of the ERDF ROP. Instead, there is still a stronger focus in the evaluation of its execution and processes. In this respect, while the Generalitat-AMB agreement establishes a set of outcome indicators, they have been defined in relation to the ROP priority axes, but not for each project (see Table 5.5). Consequently, outcome indicators are quite general but moderately related to the specificities of the diverse projects. Hence, they are less precise in the evaluation of the explicit outcomes of each project. In contrast, the interviews reveal that they are more focused on execution and process evolution.

Table 5.5
Generalitat-AMB Agreement outcome indicators

Projects	Priority axes	Outcome indicators
Metropolitan smart cities platform	PA2	- % population with access to broadband network - Number of platform users
Low-emissions zone of the metropolitan area of Barcelona		
LED lighting on Barcelona ring roads		
Expansion of the metropolitan charging station network	PA4	- Energy consumption in public infrastructures and buildings (toe/year)
Photovoltaic installations in the metropolitan area		- Greenhouse gases emissions in Catalonia (CO ₂ eq)
Increasing secure bike parking		
Expansion of the metropolitan cyclable network (Bicivia)		
Metropolitan network of industrial and cultural heritage		
Restoration and improvement of the Network of metropolitan parks with patrimonial value	PA6	- Number of visitors to cultural and nature heritage spaces - Population living in areas with interventions
Socio-environmental restoration of metropolitan river areas		

Source: IERMB from Generalitat-AMB Agreement.

In relation to other instruments implemented by municipalities, such as UIA, URBACT or EDUSI, the outcomes are mostly related to administrative performance and capacity. In general, some of the most relevant outcomes of these projects are in relation to the capacity of local administration, policy innovation, and participation in networks.

Particularly, they are relevant for enhancing the capacity of local administrations to innovate in policy areas such as economic development, social and territorial cohesion, and sustainability. In this case, it is also important for the recognition as an innovative government, which brings visibility and gives access to other European projects, networks and new resources. In addition, they are relevant for improving administrative and management processes, planification, strategic orientation, etc.

However, as mentioned earlier, the territorial distribution of funds among metropolitan municipalities is not related to municipal need, but other features such as size, organizational capacity or political commitment. From this perspective, the transformative capacity of these instruments may be limited by these preconditions that, ultimately, reinforce the capacity of municipalities with previous experiences in the participation in European projects.

SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS WITH A METROPOLITAN ADDED VALUE

Socio-environmental recovery of metropolitan river spaces. The project intervenes in the natural and environmental configuration of the metropolitan area of Barcelona pursuing the recovery of fluvial spaces formed by the Besòs and Llobregat river basins and the natural drainage system marked by the Collserola slope. The intervention includes 122 ha of protected and regenerated land preserving the ecological quality of the green infrastructure. This intervention has transformed several abandoned spaces without a clear use into meeting spaces with high environmental quality for the metropolitan citizens. The total project budget is 16.843.419,76 € of which 13.920.181,62 € are financed by the ERD fund.

Extension of the metropolitan network of bike lanes. This project has extended and integrated the metropolitan network of bike lanes within the existing complex urban reality. The principal objective is to connect in a sustainable and safe way the different metropolitan territories, promoting the use of bicycles and reducing the use of private cars. This intervention has achieved a reduction of 1.000 tons of CO2 emissions per year, improving environmental conditions and generating a healthier metropolitan area for its citizens. The total project budget is 5.842.041,00 € of which 4.345.400,00 € are financed by the ERDF fund.

Redesign of the area around the national road 150. The Metropolitan Area of Barcelona leads with other 7 European metropolis the European project URBACT-Riconnect that seeks to rethink, transform and integrate mobility infrastructures to connect people, neighbourhoods, cities and natural spaces. As part of this program, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area has chosen to intervene in an old national road (N-150) that actually works as an urban barrier between different municipalities. The purpose is to transform the urban hostility of this infrastructure into a pleasant metropolitan space to connect the surrounding neighbourhoods. The total project budget is 749.898,17 €. The Barcelona Metropolitan Area contributes with 156.434,89 of which 109.504,42 € are financed by the programme.

Challenges and critical elements

- It is too soon to evaluate the outcomes of the metropolitan projects co-funded by the ERDF Regional Operational Programme. The Agreement came into force while the Operational Programme was already in process. Hence, all the projects under the Agreement are still in execution.
 - The outcome indicators in the Agreement do not fit well the specific objectives of each project. This is due to the fact that while the set of evaluation indicators in the agreement matched the ROP indicators, the ROP indicators do not respond to relevant outcomes of the goals/projects.
-

5.4 The impact of the EU cohesion policy in the COVID-19 emergency

As a result of the COVID-19 emergency, a new Specific Objective was included in the first axe of the ERFD Operational Programme 2014-2020. The aim was to reinforce the response capacity to the diverse crisis d by COVID-19, and includes investments in sanitary equipment and health infrastructures, R&D pro-jects and additional studies related with COVID-19 or strategies to mitigate it. The total fund was EUR 970

million without a metropolitan dimension, although Madrid and Barcelona were the most affected areas in terms of population infected.

Besides that, the Next Generation EU programme will have a fundamental role in the phase of recuperation. As we explained in section 4.5.2, the Spanish Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan (RTRP) establishes 4 axis (Digital transition, Ecological transition, Gender equality and Social and territorial cohesion) and 10 “Lever policies”. The first one is “Urban and rural agenda, fighting against depopulation and agricultural development”. Moreover, this Lever policy includes three “components”. The metropolitan dimension is explicitly mentioned in the first one: “Sustainable, safe and connected mobility plan in urban and metropolitan areas”. The specific objectives are the following:

- Accelerate the implementation of low-emission zones in municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants or provincial capitals
- Promote the transformation of transport towards a zero emission activity
- Reduce the use of private vehicles in urban and metropolitan environments, prioritizing collective public transport and active mobility, thus contributing to the objectives of modal change
- Promote the digitization of the activity of public transport services of municipal competence.

The second component in the Urban and Rural Agenda “Housing rehabilitation and urban regeneration plan”, in which there are no reference to “metropolitan”, whatsoever. It focuses in improving the energy efficiency of buildings and public lighting. Most of this plan would be based on the “Long-term strategy for energy rehabilitation in the building sector in Spain. 2020 Update” (ERESEE2020).

Spanish Ministries launched several expressions of interest around different components of the Plan. A call for expressions of interest on the mobility plan was launched¹⁰ for cities of more than 50,000 inhabitants. Regarding the urban regeneration plan, another call for expressions of interest to rehabilitate public buildings¹¹ was also launched. Beneficiaries could be local entities or CCAA. In addition, there was another expression of interest for neighbourhood regeneration programmes¹² also oriented towards local entities and CCAA.

At the regional/Catalan level, the Generalitat selected 27 projects from 542 initiatives to apply for the resources of the European Next Generation EU fund. The Generalitat and local entities, private companies, consortiums and social entities presented the initiatives. The selection was made based on ten prioritization criteria: uniqueness, degree of maturity, amount, commercialization potential, investment capacity in future trends, leadership, contribution to the reindustrialization of the country, promotion of territorial balance, the contribution to the fight against climate change and the capacity to generate well-being and social progress. In the “Next Generation Catalonia” Plan, 11 missions are fixed, developed through 27 flagship projects, and 55 highlighted projects.

Barcelona Metropolitan Area is included as a relevant actor in just one of these 27 flagship projects. It is a project aimed at improving the resilience of water supply in the metropolitan region. The concept “metropolitan” can also be found in a flagship project to enlarge the metro and tram network. In another project, “Catalonia, engine of audio-visual and video game innovation”, regional and metropolitan local authorities such as Barcelona, l’Hospitalet de Llobregat, Terrassa and Sant Joan Despi are considered relevant actors.

Challenges and critical elements

- The Barcelona Metropolitan Area will not be eligible for the additional funds from the ERDF REACT-EU.
- The metropolitan dimension only is explicitly included in the mobility plan of the Spanish Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan.
- The metropolitan dimension is almost inexistent in the Next Generation Catalonia Plan. Barcelona Metropolitan Area is included as a relevant actor in one project to improve the resilience of the water supply in the metropolitan area.

¹⁰ See https://sede.mitma.gob.es/SEDE_ELECTRONICA/LANG_CASTELLANO/FINANCIACION/default.htm (accessed 14/03/21)

¹¹ See <https://forma.administracionelectronica.gob.es/form/open/corp/5181/rYyM> (accessed 14/03/21)

¹² See <https://forma.administracionelectronica.gob.es/form/open/corp/5243/OyIT> (accessed 14/03/21)

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

The Generalitat-AMB Agreement is a very important milestone for the institutional recognition of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area as a metropolitan authority. As explained in chapter three, the institutionalization of the metropolitan governance had episodes of intermunicipal cooperation as well as episodes of conflict between the metropolitan entity and the regional government. The Agreement implies the same treatment that Barcelona has for the management of the ERDF ROP by Generalitat de Catalunya, which remains the legal intermediate body and the main gatekeeper for accessing to the ERDF ROP.

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area operates both as a body for municipal support and cooperation, and as a government that plans and implements metropolitan policies and services. In this sense, the role of the local governments in various ERDF ROP co-funded projects responds as well to these diverse natures of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area.

When the relation between the Barcelona Metropolitan Area and metropolitan municipalities for the allocation or project selection is analysed, three main methods emerge. First, there are funds that are evenly distributed among all 35 municipalities. In this case, all municipalities would have the same intervention and equal investment; that is each municipality would have one charging station or one PV installation in a municipal facility.

Conversely, other interventions are selected by a prioritization process with the participation of the municipalities, in some cases through competitive calls (interventions in the metropolitan rivers of cultural and industrial heritage sites) or due to its singularity (interventions in urban parks with a cultural value). Usually, these are policies or projects in which the Barcelona Metropolitan Area intervenes in the municipalities with a metropolitan planning. That is, projects such as the restoration of river areas and the expansion of the metropolitan cyclable network. Particularly, in the latter case the intervention is not equally distributed among municipalities (see map), and they might (or might not) coincide with the priorities of each municipality. Therefore, the main rationale behind these projects is metropolitan, this is the for the benefit of a metropolitan cycling mobility (see table 5.6).

Finally, there is a direct allocation of funds by the metropolitan authority in infrastructures or services responsibility of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. For instance, interventions in the Barcelona ring roads.

In this sense, the implementation of EU projects in the metropolitan area tend to reproduce the rationale of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, by supporting metropolitan governance and coordinating/implementing metropolitan policies. In that sense, it has to be explored the development a more intense networked governance with metropolitan municipalities by the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. A first step has been done with the presence of the metropolitan institution in the EDUSI city network.

Table 5.6
Governance and policy impacts

Projects	Multilevel governance	Effect in the policy-making
Metropolitan smart cities platform	Direct allocation to AMB service/ infrastructure	New policy (or funding opportunity)
Socio-environmental restoration of metropolitan river areas	Prioritization process with municipalities	Fund (and improve) ongoing policies
LED lighting on Barcelona ring roads	Direct allocation to AMB service/ infrastructure	Fund (and improve) ongoing policies
Low-emissions zone of the metropolitan area of Barcelona	Direct allocation to AMB service/ infrastructure	Fund (and improve) ongoing policies
Expansion of the metropolitan charging station network	Even distribution among municipalities	Fund (and improve) ongoing policies
Photovoltaic installations in the metropolitan area	Even distribution among municipalities	Fund (and improve) ongoing policies
Increasing secure bike parking	Even distribution among municipalities	Fund (and improve) ongoing policies

Projects	Multilevel governance	Effect in the policy-making
Expansion of the metropolitan cyclable network (Bicivia)	Prioritization process with municipalities	Fund (and improve) ongoing policies
Restoration and improvement of the Network of metropolitan parks with patrimonial value	Direct allocation to AMB service/ infrastructure	New policy (or funding opportunity)
Metropolitan network of industrial and cultural heritage	Prioritization process with municipalities	New policy Ongoing policy

Source: IERMB.

Another level of analysis in relation to the impact on metropolitan governance is the effects of EU projects on metropolitan policy-making. In general terms, the two main impacts can be described either as EU funds as an opportunity for the emergence of policy areas or as instruments to fund and improve ongoing or planned projects. In this case, improvements might either be by the acceleration of projects, by improving their planification and processes, or their strategic orientation.

In this respect, EU projects have the potential to reinforce, refocus and prioritize policies of the EU agenda in the metropolitan area, or introduce new issues and agendas. In sum, 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.

Challenges and critical elements

- The Generalitat-AMB Agreement is an important milestone for the institutional recognition of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area as a metropolitan authority and represents a first experience of a cooperation scheme between the regional Catalan government and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area in the implementation of EU Cohesion Policy. However, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area has an implementation role mainly. Other mechanisms of cooperation such as Integrated Territorial Investments remain unexplored.
 - The even distribution of the interventions among all the metropolitan municipalities does not ensure the metropolitan character of the project or the policy. The prioritization of projects and interventions in metropolitan infrastructures and/or those related to the implementation of thematic metropolitan plans (waste, urban planning, mobility, climate change) from ERDF would reinforce the role of Barcelona Metropolitan Area in the Barcelona's metropolitan governance.
 - ERDF has the capacity to reinforce ongoing metropolitan policies or push up new ones. In the second case, it might be better to explore specific calls oriented to foster innovation or to scale best practices
 - Beyond a more bottom-up or more top-down metropolitan policy process, a network governance remains underexplored for specific projects (i.e. Intermunicipal Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies for a group of metropolitan municipalities or intermunicipal urban regeneration programme funded by Next Generation). The Barcelona Metropolitan Area should be granted its participation in the future Next Generation calls for proposals or management instruments.
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RECOMMENDATIONS

The Agreement Generalitat-AMB has allowed the Metropolitan Area to work, in a metropolitan scope, some of its interventions. It has endorsed the Barcelona Metropolitan Area to manage funding from the ERDF ROP (as Barcelona City Council already had) in order to improve the territorial cohesion of the metropolitan area. The Agreement has to be evaluated, improved and reedited.

Prioritize projects related to the implementation of the metropolitan thematic plans, economic recovery and social cohesion or the development and improvement of metropolitan (green) infrastructures. It should be a better alignment between the investment plans, the thematic plans and the Metropolitan Action Plan. A more integrated and comprehensive metropolitan framework would enable a better identification of the critical projects in order to be funded from EUCP.

While they are not included in the OP, projects enhancing circular economy in waste management, promoting resilience in the water supply are relevant policies for the metropolitan area and would be important to be included in future programming periods.

Other tools of the Cohesion Policy might be explored in the new Programming Period for the metropolitan area of Barcelona. The Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) could be a good instrument to support integrated actions in urban areas as it offers 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.

Projects of Territorial Specialization and Competitiveness (PECT) has been the main programme to foster local collaboration for innovation and economic development managed by Generalitat de Catalunya. This programme must be evaluated in order to learn how to improve effective collaboration between local governments and other public and private actors.

Beyond the direct implementation of the EUCP co-funded project there is room to develop a more networked governance with the metropolitan municipalities. This capacity to raise funds by metropolitan municipalities, does not necessarily relate with the needs of social cohesion of the metropolis. Mid-sized and small municipalities with social needs do not have the installed capacity to apply for and manage these funds. The European urban programmes for the development of integrated urban regeneration strategies should be used to improve deprived and in-between urban areas involving and supporting the municipalities of these areas.

The Next Generation is a gold opportunity to develop metropolitan policies and infrastructures in digital transition, energy and ecological transition, housing, economic recovery, sustainable mobility urban regeneration, among others. The metropolitan dimension is even included in the Spanish Plan for the mobility plan. Barcelona Metropolitan Area should get a better recognition from the Spanish Government and the Catalan Government as a key actor to develop these policies in the Barcelona metropolitan area. In addition, Barcelona Metropolitan Area could play a more active role in articulating regional projects to be financed by the Next Generation (regional or national) plan.

6 Main challenges and recommendations

6.1 The role of metropolitan areas in the EU cohesion policy governance

Challenges

- In the metropolitan territory of Barcelona, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area is the main institution capable of introducing a metropolitan perspective in the programming and management of the EUCP funds. Actually, it is the best institution capable of taking into account agglomeration economies (and diseconomies) in the metropolitan area. However:
 - Barcelona Metropolitan Area is only a part of the larger Functional Urban Area (AMB: 36 municipalities, 3.2 million inhab.; Functional Urban Area: 135 municipalities, 5 million inhab.).
 - Barcelona Metropolitan Area lacks recognition as an institution related to the objectives of the EUCP, even if it develops policies strongly linked to cohesion policies and their priorities.
- Barcelona Metropolitan Area neither participate in the ERDF Operational Programme design nor in the monitoring and follow-up committee. The role of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area is limited to be an observer (similar to other local institutions such as provincial councils and associations of local authorities). Municipalities take part in the coordination and monitoring of the Operational Programmes only through associations of municipalities, lacking an effective involvement.
- The Agreement with the Regional Government to manage funds, the Catalan ERDF Regional Operational Programme (€30m), is a milestone for the institutional recognition of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, but it also represents a test of its management capability.
- In the case of Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies, where the resources available are limited and the selection process is highly competitive, supralocal cooperation has not been stimulated. There are also operational difficulties to combine projects from ERDF and ESF priority axes.
- The complexity of the monitoring and implementing controls hinders the opportunities of smaller metropolitan municipalities to benefit from the EU cohesion policy funds. The only chances they have is through projects managed by supralocal institutions.
- The participation of social groups and the business community in the EU cohesion policy is limited to formal committees. Also, social groups and the business community have a limited role in the monitoring of the Operational Programme.



Recommendations for the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (metropolitan level)

- In order to gain visibility and get a more active and relevant role in the definition of policies and plans related to EU funds the Barcelona Metropolitan Area should reinforce its role as the most suitable actor to introduce the metropolitan vision.
- To do this, Barcelona Metropolitan Area could promote a (nation-wide) strategic reflection on the importance of metropolitan areas not only at the regional level or at European level.
- Barcelona Metropolitan Area should try to have a more proactive role in the design and implementation of projects in the next operational programmes 2021-2027, fostering collaboration with metropolitan municipalities, even the larger metropolitan region.

- Increasing involvement of social groups and the business community could result in a better representation of the needs of local communities, and a greater impact of projects and actions in the territory



Recommendations for the regional and national level

- Increase the technical support in the management of ERDF to supra-municipal governments (Barcelona Metropolitan Area but also the Provincial Government) so that they can assist local authorities, particularly the smaller ones. Also it is necessary to increase technical support from the MA and establish better and more effective communication and consultation channels.



Recommendations for the EU level

- Strengthening the role of metropolitan areas and the European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA) in the governance of the EU cohesion policy.
- Administrative complexity should be reduced, developing actions in three directions:
 - reducing managerial tasks and controls in the justification of projects,
 - simplification and coherence in the audit and justification system (Metropolitan Authority and Intermediate Body), proportional to the size of the local body implementing the actions (i.e. eligible expenses, VAT),
 - allowing those institutions with management duties (such as the Barcelona Metropolitan Area) to access to resources from the technical assistance axis of the regional OP in order to hire staff and technical assistance.
- Further recognition of metropolitan areas as suitable scales, in which social, economic, and environmental issues can be tackled more effectively.
- To be more vigilant with member states on the implementation of the partnership principle when programming, managing and evaluating operational programmes of the ESI funds.

6.2 Impact of the EU cohesion policy on (the achievement of) metropolitan goals

Challenges

- The metropolitan goals are set in the AMB Metropolitan Action Plan, thematic sectoral plans, and investment plans. However, the integration among them should be improved.
- The 30M euros of the Generalitat-AMB Agreement represents a moderate 16% of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area investment budget with a co-financing of 50%. VAT is not included, and the complexity and administrative costs are important. A good alignment between the priorityaxes and the metropolitan goals is critical.
- There are key metropolitan responsibilities by AMB that nowadays do not receive ESI Funds (i.e. circular economy in waste management or investments in water supply).
- It is too soon to evaluate the outcomes of the metropolitan projects co-funded by the ERDF Regional Operational Programme. The Agreement came into force while the Operational Programme was already in process. Hence, all the projects under the Agreement are still in execution.
- The European Urban policy is locally based. The design of European policy instruments (Interreg, URBACT, UIA and Sustainable Urban Development Strategies) could be revised to foster metropolitan cooperation.

- There are not explicit goals for the larger metropolitan region (they are currently under development by the Regional Strategic Plan). Nowadays, the distribution of ERD funds in the metropolitan region depends mostly on the expertise and capabilities of local government human and economic resources and local political commitment.



Recommendations for the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (metropolitan level)

- Develop comprehensive and cross-cutting planning instruments and strategies, and better integrate plans and investments in order to facilitate its link with future operational programmes of the EU Cohesion Policy.
- Prioritize projects, interventions and investments in metropolitan infrastructures and/or those related to the implementation of specific metropolitan plans (waste, urban planning, mobility, climate change) from EU Cohesion Policy funds.
- Explore other projects and programmes in the field of social and economic cohesion that could be eligible for EUCP funding (ERDF or ESF). Some of them could be designed and implemented in collaboration with the 36 metropolitan municipalities.
- Contribute using EUCP funds to develop metro-regional governance mechanisms in collaboration with other local governments and stakeholders prioritizing a set of goals and projects at that level.



Recommendations for the regional and national level

- Include Barcelona Metropolitan Area as a stakeholder in the elaboration of the National and Regional Operational Programmes from the beginning.
- Further recognition of the metropolitan phenomenon. Include objectives in the Regional Operational Programmes linked to core metropolitan competences.
- Promote incentives for local administrations to develop policies at metropolitan scale.



Recommendations for the EU level

- Include the metropolitan scale as a suitable scale to efficiently tackle urban problems and facilitate interlocal cooperation in the European Union policy instruments.
- Promote the recognition of metropolitan institutions as a legitimate actor in the elaboration of the National and Regional Operational Programmes.

6.3 Impact of the EU cohesion policy on metropolitan governance and cooperation

Challenges

- The Generalitat-AMB Agreement is an important milestone for the institutional recognition of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area as a metropolitan authority and represents a first experience of a cooperation scheme between the regional Catalan government and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area in the implementation of EU Cohesion Policy. However, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area has an implementation role mainly. Other mechanisms of cooperation such as Integrated Territorial Investments remains unexplored.
- The two existing agreements (Generalitat-Barcelona and Generalitat-AMB) show that there are no explicit objectives of the EU Cohesion Policy for the metropolitan area as a whole. The city council chose innovation and economic development and Barcelona Metropolitan Area developed projects related to the territory digitization, the promotion of a low-emission economy and the protection and conservation of the environment
- The AMB projects co-funded by EU Cohesion Policy have different scope and involvement of the metropolitan municipalities. The even distribution of the interventions among all the metropolitan municipalities does not ensure per se the metropolitan character of projects/policies.
- Urban vulnerability often goes beyond municipal borders and is concentrated in several spots of the metropolitan area. There is a lack of incentives for promoting intermunicipal area-based regeneration projects.



Recommendations for the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (metropolitan level)

- Projects related to the implementation or improvement of metropolitan (green) infrastructures and related to specific cross-cutting plans should be prioritised in the allocation of the EUCP Funds 2021-2027.
- There is room for developing a more metropolitan networked governance with metropolitan municipalities. For instance, Intermunicipal Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies for a group of metropolitan municipalities or an intermunicipal urban regeneration programme funded by the Recovery and Resilience Facility or next ERDF and ESF operational programmes.



Recommendations for the regional and national level

- The Agreement Generalitat-AMB has to be evaluated, improved and reedited. It allowed the Barcelona Metropolitan Area to manage funds from the ERDF Regional Operational Programme (as Barcelona City already had) in order to improve the territorial cohesion of the metropolitan area.
- However, other tools of the EU Cohesion Policy should be explored in the new Programming Period for the metropolitan area of Barcelona. The Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) could be a good instrument to support integrated actions in urban areas as it offers 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.
- Barcelona Metropolitan Area could play a more active role in articulating regional projects to be financed by the Next Generation (regional or national) plan.
- Projects of Territorial Specialization and Competitiveness (PECT) has been the main programme to foster local collaboration for innovation and economic development

managed by Generalitat de Catalunya. This programme must be evaluated in order to learn how to improve effective collaboration between local governments and other public and private actors.



Recommendations for the EU level

- Increase the resources for technical support, especially for projects involving more than one territorial administration (municipalities).
- Recognise European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA) as stakeholder to introduce the metropolitan perspective in the EUCP.

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