

TARGETED ANALYSIS //

METRO

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

Annex X // Brussels Metropolitan Area case study



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Abbreviations

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

Foreword by Rudi Vervoort

The Brussels-Capital Region is very committed to promote and defend the urban and metropolitan dimension in all EU policies and especially in the Cohesion policy.

In a context where Metropolises have been particularly hit by the COVID and its consequences, it is now more than ever important to have European place-sensitive policies at metropolitan level. The European Union via its budget, its cohesion policy, and its recovery and resilience funds can play an important role to foster more metropolitan cooperation. This will be essential to build a more just, green and productive Europe while strengthening the territorial cohesion of our continent.

The Brussels-Capital Region plays an active role for the recognition of the metropolitan dimension by European and international institutions. We pay a special attention to have this recognition included in the different EU policies and regulations. I am convinced that the metropolitan level is an adequate level of action to tackle the main global and local challenges such as climate change, economic transition or social justice. For that reason, the Brussels-capital Region joins forces with hundreds of metropolises across Europe and the world through associations such as EUROCITIES, European Metropolitan Authorities Forum or METROPOLIS. For that same reason with our spatial planning agency, perspective.brussels, we have decided to take part in the ESPON METRO project to investigate how Cohesion policy could play a role for a better recognition of metropolitan needs across Europe.

A specificity of the Brussels-Capital region, in comparison with other European metropolises, is that we have the competence and the legislative power to edict our own regulations and public policies in matters such as spatial planning, housing, environment, mobility or economic development. The same goes for cohesion policy where we are managing authorities of our own ERDF and ESF programs in our territory since more than 30 years. This large autonomy has given us the possibility to use Cohesion policy in combination with regional policies to foster urban regeneration, social cohesion, economic development and sustainability. But we are aware that challenges do not stop at our administrative borders. Our functional urban area is much larger. For instance, every day almost 400.000 persons commute to work in Brussels and our hospitals welcome a lot of patients from outside our Region.

Our regional spatial planning strategy recognises the need to think and act at the metropolitan scale. As our functional urban area is spread in the two others Belgian regions, it is essential to cooperate with the Regions of Wallonia and Flanders. Despite the absence of a specific and permanent metropolitan cooperation body, we are exchanging information between the three regions and developing concrete metropolitan studies and projects. But we want to go further and look for innovative ways to develop this metropolitan governance and to have stronger and more integrated metropolitan policies. In that respect, we will read with attention the concrete recommendations on how we can use the Cohesion policy as a leverage to achieve these goals. The concrete examples coming from the 8 other metropolises studied in the METRO project will also be a useful source of inspiration for us.

Finally, we would like to thank Turin as lead stakeholder, the stakeholders, the ESPON staff and the scientific team around Politecnico di Torino for the excellent cooperation and the good work. A special thanks to the team of ULB that worked on the Brussels case study.

With the robust evidences coming from this ESPON METRO research, we do hope now that the European Union will recognise the relevance of Metropolitan areas and mirror that relevance in the different European policies, starting with the Cohesion policy.



Rudi Vervoort,
Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region
Member of the European Committee of the Regions

1 Introduction

The Brussels Capital Region (BCR) is a federated region of Belgium. At the heart of Europe, it gathers approximatively 1,2 million inhabitants. It is quite important to distinguish the town of Brussels, inhabited by 160.000 inhabitants and one of the 19 municipalities forming the BCR, the Brussels Capital Region itself and the Brussels functional urban area, gathering 2,7 million inhabitants. Hence, the core (BCR) includes around 45% of the whole functional urban area (FUA) population and is exclusively urban. Although prosperous, the Brussels Capital Region faces many important challenges, among which social inequalities or mobility, exceeding by far its borders. In that way, we consider in this report the Brussels Metropolitan Region fits to the Brussels functional urban area.

To face such challenges, the BCR would need an appropriate governance, in which they can be dealt with at the right scale. However, political institutions in Belgium made this very complicated. Indeed, Belgium is made of three regions, with large competencies: the Brussels Capital region, limited to nineteen municipalities, the Flemish and the Walloon regions. Brussels Capital Region is thus a limited space, surrounded by Flemish and Walloon suburbs. Such institutional arrangement is the result of long term conflicts and compromises between the two main communities and is impossible to change in a predictable future.

As a result, the metropolitan challenges cannot be dealt at the right scale. It includes the issue of economic development, with competition between core (Brussels Capital Region) and suburbs, or, even more importantly, social issue. Indeed, social duality is a strong feature of Brussels, partly originating in the lack of low qualified jobs and insufficient qualification of Brussels residents. This is a typical example where cooperation may facilitate access to jobs in the suburbs for Brussels residents. Another evident issue is mobility where lack of cooperation and institutional complexity has resulted huge delays in the regional Express train network. Since, everyday, around 380.000 suburban workers converge to Brussels, this mobility challenge should be faced at the metropolitan scale. Finally, the functional urban area of Brussels goes well beyond the borders of the Brussels Capital Region, and extends its territory in both Flemish and Walloon regions.

In the governance of the EU funds, the consequence of this rigid institutional arrangement is that most funds are managed separately in the three regions, while in and around the Brussels Capital Region, as mentioned, common challenges exist. In this context, the emphasis in this case study should be put on « **favouring the institution and consolidation of metropolitan governance structures and cooperation practices** », in particular if and how cohesion policy could be relevant to implement metropolitan policies and achieving spatial development goals. This initial recommendation will be developed in the last section of this case study (see section 6 – Main challenges and recommendations).

2 Case study area contextualisation

Brussels is a prosperous city/region, positioned at the top of the wealthiest city/region in Europe. Such figure is partly the result of the administrative division, which isolates the core city, where the production is spatially concentrated. This prosperity is mostly based on high level market and non market services, which constitute the heart of the Brussels economy: Brussels is the economic centre of Belgium, concentrating high level functions of the finance industry for example, but also hosts international administrative functions and is embedded in the international economy of services. Hence, high level market services account for 38% of the economy of the Brussels functional urban area, the highest share among the studied cities. These sectors offer very qualified and highly remunerated jobs. At the same time, the Brussels FUA is a nearly completely deindustrialized city, with manufacturing industry reaching only 7% of the economy, much less than in most European cities.

Such economic structure results in a socially dual city: on the one hand, highly remunerated jobs in the qualified service industry, on the other hand, low remunerated jobs in the traditional service economy and moreover, high level of unemployment due to insufficient growth in low qualified jobs. This social duality is also a spatial duality, with high concentration of deprived populations in the West margins of the centre, while wealthy populations locate in the South-East of the city or in most suburbs. This social and spatial duality is a major challenge for Brussels in both economic and urban terms.

Another trait of Brussels is the very high share of foreigner population, which accounts for around half of the population, if we consider all residents whose parents are born abroad. Brussels has gone through several waves of immigration since the sixties, and continues to be an international attractive city for both ends of the population spectrum: international highly qualified labour force, on the one hand, and low qualified immigrants originating from medium or low income countries, on the other end.

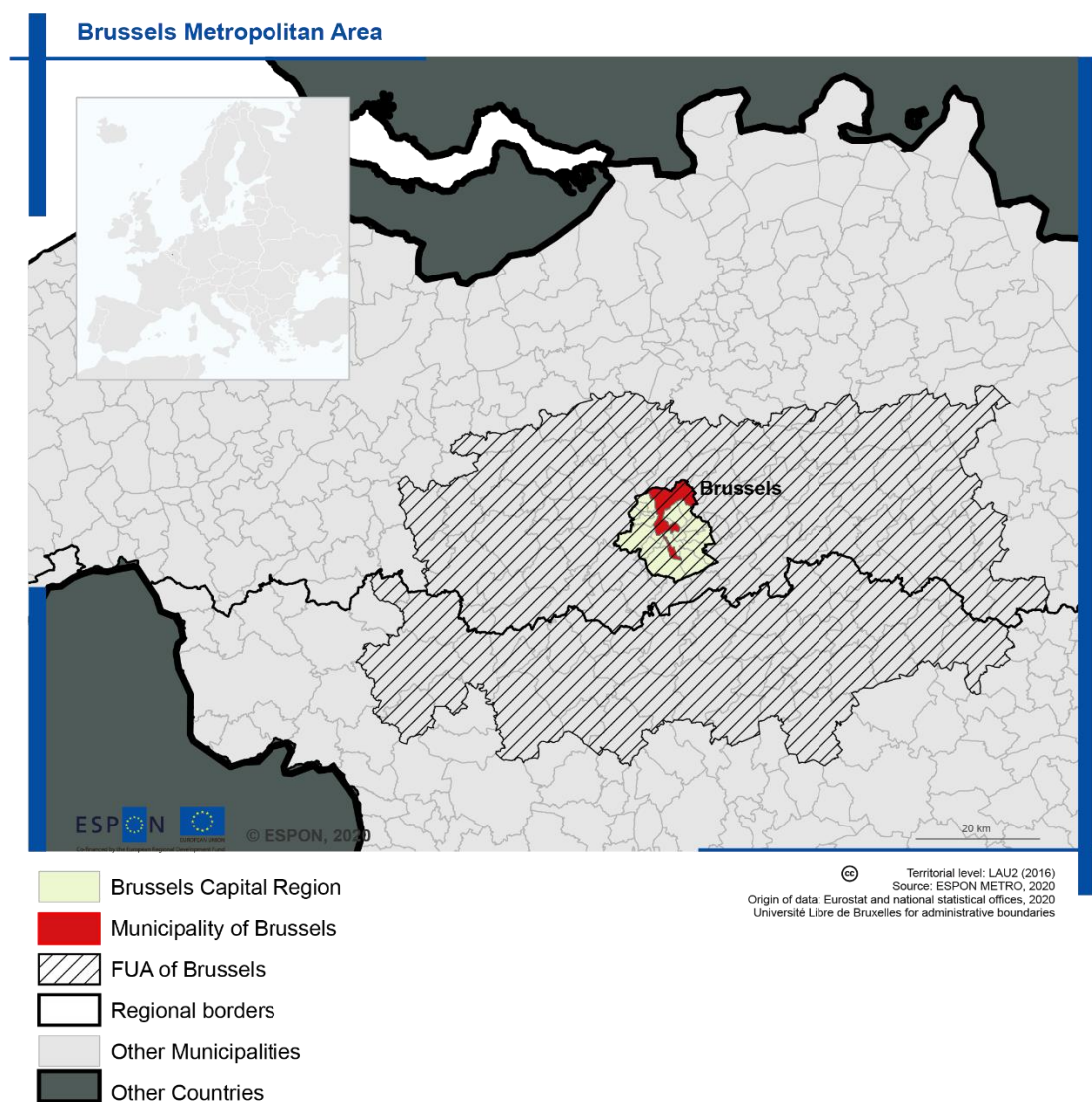
As a result, Brussels distinguishes itself in ESPON METRO by the youth of its population, with high share of 15-24 and lower share of more than 65 years old (only 16% of the FUA population). This is partly the result of the immigration flows and attractiveness of the city, but also of higher fertility among the different generations of immigrants.

Brussels thus faces major challenges for its social and economic development:

- Social duality and deprivation is a central issue, due the insufficient number of low qualified jobs, insufficient level of education for part of the immigrant population, and above all, a huge housing crisis resulting in the fact that deprived households dedicate increasing share of their income for housing;
- Mobility is another major challenge for the city, with around 380.000 workers converging each morning to the core city coming from Flemish and Walloon suburbs, most of them by car. It results in high level of congestion but also related pollution and health problems.

Some of these challenges, and this is the central point here, would certainly be better tackled at the metropolitan/FUA scale than at the city-region level.

Map 2.1
Brussels Metropolitan Area



Source: authors' own elaboration

Table 2.1
Main territorial indicators

Theme	Indicator	FUA		
		Core	Suburb	Total
Institutional	Number of municipalities	19	118	137
	Area (km ²)	161	3551	3712
Demography	Population (2019)	1215289	1473065	2688354
	Population (2010)	1089538	1378476	2468014
	0-14	239193	254540	493733

Theme	Indicator	FUA		
Population by age groups (2018)	15-24	142099	172985	315084
	25-44	391909	354500	746409
	45-64	274553	405544	680097
	65+	157738	274763	432501
Population density (2019)		7531	415	724
Employment (2018)	Activity rate	53		53
	Economically active population, total	509085		1147894
	Persons unemployed, total	70400		97124
	Unemployment rate	14		8
	Economically active population (20-64)	503680		
	Persons employed (20-64)	435257		1041240
	Agriculture, fishery	273		
	Mining, manufacturing, energy	25911		
	Construction	22849		
	Trade, transport, hotels, restaurants	131814		
	Information and communication	37257		
	Financial and insurance activities	57143		
	Real estate activities	12581		
	Professional, scientific and technical activities; administrative and support service activities	126818		
	Public administration, defence, education, human health and social work activities	249477		
	Arts, entertainment and recreation; other service activities; activities of household and extra-territorial organizations and bodies	44369		

Source : authors' elaboration on OECD, Eurostat and Census data

3 Metropolitan governance structure and cooperation activities

3.1 Institutional framework

There is no metropolitan body or cooperation in Brussels, although there is a legal framework to implement one around Brussels. Indeed, such 'metropolitan community' has been planned by the sixth state reform in Belgium in 2011. This community is supposed to be a consensus-building organization dealing with transregional matters around Brussels such as road security or infrastructure. Spatially, it includes all municipalities of Brussels, and of the Walloon and Flemish Brabant provinces, meaning that it should involve all three regions of the country. Regions are indeed the relevant level of authority to actually implement such metropolitan cooperation around Brussels, since such cooperation mainly focusses on issues linked to regional competencies. However, this organization has never been implemented and in any case would have no binding authority.

Why is there no cooperation around Brussels despite common challenges and recurrent voices calling for the necessity to have one?

To understand the absence of formal or informal collaboration at metropolitan scale, we must understand the complex institutional configuration of Belgium, especially around Brussels. Belgium has initially been built as an unilingual centralized state from its independence, marginalizing the Flemish population. Despite the Flemish movement succeeded in getting cultural rights in all domains, regionalism has become a very strong political force after World War II, including in Wallonia. It resulted in the continuous reformation of the institutional configuration of the Belgian State since 1970. However, the foundations of this institutional configuration has been relatively stable, and Belgium has officially become a Federal state in the 1990s. Belgium is composed of three regions (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels), competent in domains such as territorial and economic development, and of three communities (Flemish, French and German), competent for cultural issue, including education. Territorial and urban development have been fully transferred to the Regions, which can freely adopt their own regulations and policies. Federal state has no competence and neither a role of coordination on the issue, like for instance it happens in other European federal states where the federal level plays a role in coordination or exchange of information.

Among the three regions, the Brussels Capital-Region (BCR) is specific because of its bilingual status and its urban configuration. It is made of 19 municipalities, which include the historical core, the first ring of XIXth century development and the second ring mostly developed from the end of the XIXth century onwards. **However, the BCR does not include the suburban areas that is all surrounding municipalities, located in the territories of the Flemish Region or of the Walloon Region.** Yet, these municipalities are nowadays deeply intertwined with the Brussels-Capital Region in at least three ways:

- from the 1950s onwards, there has been a massive movement of suburbanization towards these municipalities, resulting for example in an increasing share of French-speaking population in Flemish neighbouring municipalities, hence extending the « real Brussels » beyond its institutional borders. This process has led to major conflicting issue between both communities of Belgium;
- Brussels is the most important economic pole in Belgium, with more than half of its labour force coming from outside the Brussels-Capital Region. This is the result of the suburbanization process described above but also of very precocious « shuttle policies » encouraging workers to continue living in rural areas (as soon as the end of the XIXth. century), while working in Brussels;
- the third process is the suburbanization of the economy within the large urban zone of Brussels. From the 1960s onwards, we first observe a suburbanization of the manufacturing industry, and later from services, notably less qualified services. The suburban economic development also relates to personal services following the suburbanization of wealthy population.

As a result of these processes, the urban area of Brussels is nowadays much larger than the official Brussels Capital-Region, but metropolitan cooperation is made very difficult by the complex institutional arrangements in Belgium, and especially around Brussels.

The consequence of this issue is nevertheless ambiguous regarding the issue of urban governance. On the one hand, metropolitan cooperation is made very difficult politically for the reasons already mentioned. On the other hand, the Brussels Capital-Region has very large competencies on a relatively extended territory, grouping 1.2 million inhabitants while the functional urban area counts 2,7 million people. Because of its large autonomy, Brussels is thus in a different situation than many metropolises in Europe.

So Brussels has large competency on a significant part of its urban area (19 municipalities grouping 1,2 million inhabitants, corresponding to more than half of the population of the functional urban area) but metropolitan cooperation, which should include suburban areas, is nearly inexistent and politically very complicated to implement.

However, in some very specific domains in which transregional cooperation is nearly inevitable, we do find some cooperation. It is the case for example on the management of the Soignes Forest, which covers the three regions. It is also the case for some aspects of spatial planning (Noordrand) or around the NATO zone, also at the border between the Brussels and Flemish regions. It is also interesting to note the existence of an interregional forum on spatial planning created in 2013 where the 3 regional administrations in charge of spatial planning meet to exchange information or launch common study, such as the study on Brussels metropolitan landscapes.

In the Brussels suburbs, both territorial development and management of the EU funds are competencies of the Walloon and Flemish Regions. This means that any metropolitan cooperation should involve the three regions of the country, as well as other relevant institutional actors such as the province of Flemish and Walloon Brabant.

3.1.1 Other forms of cooperation

Metropolitan cooperation in the Brussels area still needs to evolve based on the agreement for the establishment of the Metropolitan Community. Yet there are constraints on this process, such as the current political, cultural and institutional issues that have not yet been sorted out between the three regions. The subject only recently appeared on the agenda and there is not yet a strong-willed attitude on the part of institutional actors. There are particular tensions between Flanders and Brussels on sensitive subjects. Given the slowness and the reluctance to collaborate in the current politico-institutional arena, civil society and the public administrations can be of great help. The legitimacy and the mutual benefits of the Metropolitan Community can be made explicit to political actors with the aid of project-based bottom-up initiatives.

In addition, there are collaborative initiatives based on thematic areas related to metropolitan development, in which partnerships have been established. These include:

- employment: inter-regional union of mobility of workers
- railway transport : Railway Express Network
- public transport : single pass in and around BCR (3 public transportation companies + train)
- the economy and business sector in the Brussels metropolis
- cross-regional spatial development: Noordrand project involving BCR and Flanders
- the Metropolitan Landscape Project
- OPEN Brussels
- LABO XX_XXI

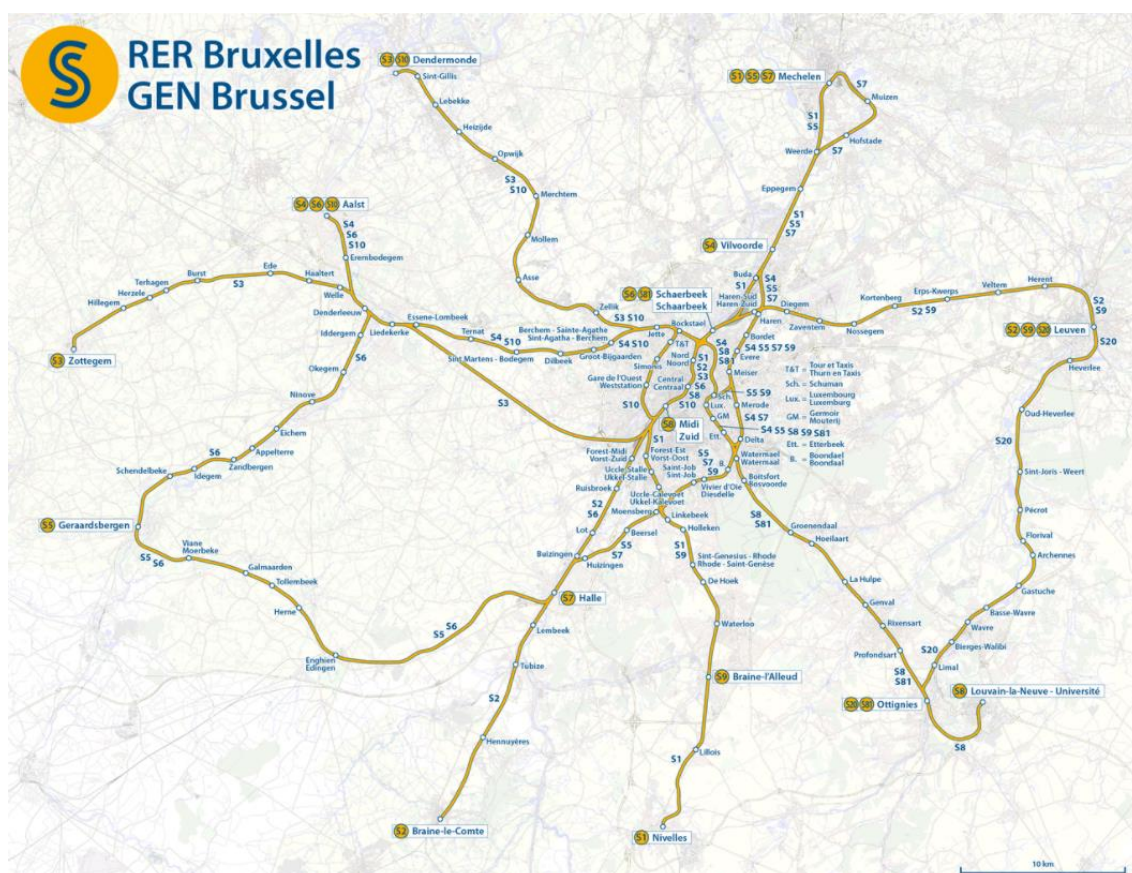
The **Railway Express Network** is a huge project under elaboration/construction led and implemented by the Belgian railways. This network extends in the Brussels Capital Region, in Flemish Region and in Wallonia. The Brussels-Capital Region is the largest employment area in the country. More than half of the jobs in the Brussels-Capital Region are held by workers from Flanders and Wallonia, a large proportion of whom reside in the project area. Several hundred thousand individual vehicles converge on the city every day, creating major problems of mobility, pollution and energy waste.

The suburban network is one of the answers to these growing problems that lead to the saturation of public space. Only a fraction of daily commuters use public transport to get to work, the aim is to reach 40%. It should also improve travel within the city, complementing existing public transport networks.

The origin of the network dates back to the early 1990s. A first project was published in 1995, by a specially created study syndicate. The first lines were planned to be in service in 2002. The institutional complexity of Belgium has subsequently caused many delays and postponements for a project that requires the agreement and financing of the federal government and the three regions of the country, as well as the collaboration of four public transport companies, the SNCB, the STIB, De Lijn and the TEC. Some sections have aroused the opposition of local residents' committees and organisations for the protection of listed sites.

The first works did not finally start until 2005, with the entire line scheduled to be brought into service in 2012. However, several delays have been announced and certain infrastructures will not be brought into service before 2025 or even 2030.

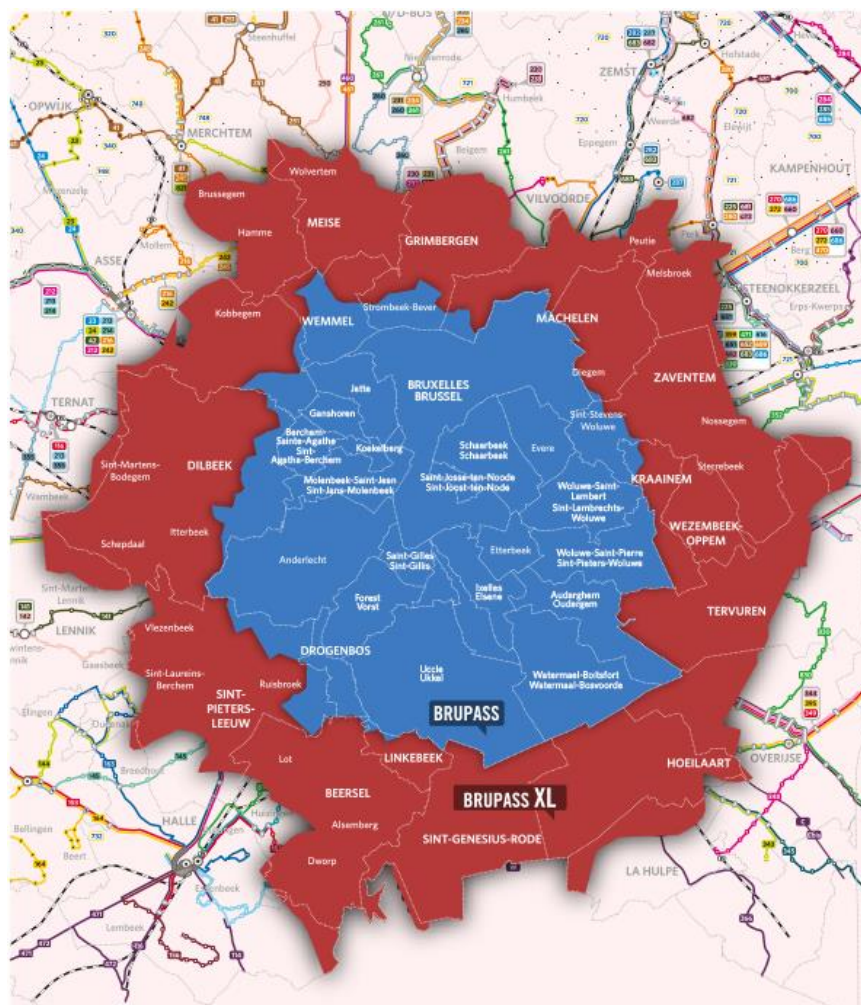
Figure 3.1
Regional Express Network



Source: Mediarail.be

The **Brupass XL Zone** is, since 1 February 2021, a zone of 11,5 km around Brussels Capital Region, which covers some municipalities of the Flemish Brabant, serviced by the SNCB-NMBS, TEC and De Lijn. This extended zone includes 17 train stations and almost 200 bus stops of TEC and De Lijn. The Brussels XL Zone is centered on the Brussels Capital Region and the STIB network. The Brussels Intercommunal Transport Company (Société des Transports Intercommunaux de Bruxelles, STIB - Maatschappij voor het Intercommunaal vervoer te Brussel, MIVB) is the first urban public transportation company in Belgium and serve the 19 municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region and 11 suburban municipalities. This way, everybody can travel in and around Brussels with only one transport ticket valid for the 4 public transport operators.

Figure 3.2
Brussels XL transport ticketing zone



Source: Stib-mivb.be

The northern periphery of Brussels is a dynamic and complex area with major spatial challenges. Brussels Capital Region is the most metropolitan city in the country and the centres of Strombeek-Bever, Vilvoorde, Machelen and Zaventem form the part of the Flemish territory that is strongly connected to Brussels. Many projects are in preparation and many actors are active in this area. Many initiatives overlap or influence each other, which makes coordination necessary.

The Department of Environment and Spatial Planning of the Flemish government, perspective.brussels (Brussels Capital Region), the province of Flemish Brabant and OVAM have joined forces to develop a territorial development programme (T.OP) for this area. Through concrete "building sites", a vision based on the terrain is promoted.

The aim of this programme is the territorial development of the northern part of Brussels (Noordrand), a dynamic and complex area that presents major spatial challenges, overlapping the northern part of the Brussels Region and parts of the municipalities of Machelen, Vilvoorde, Zaventem and Grimbergen located in the Flemish Region. Five main projects make up this programme, including the conversion of the former NATO site near the airport.

The Noordrand spatial development programme is the result of intensive consultation and joint strategic knowledge building since 1989. As with all cooperation between federated entities, it is a difficult process towards a constructive vision, while respecting the competences of the different regions and administrative levels.

The Noordrand programme has chosen to start as concretely as possible, with building sites and projects in which all those involved are willing to collaborate. This programme can be considered as experimental but also hopeful, showing that ambitious cross-border cooperation is possible in practice and that metropolitan cooperation is therefore also possible.

Finally, an initiative by entrepreneurs of the Brussels Metropolitan Region have joined forces, with the support of the Brussels Enterprises Commerce and Industry, Union Wallonne des Entreprises, Vlaams Netwerk van Ondernemingen and Fédération des Entreprises de Belgium, in the project called Business Route 2018 for Metropolitan Brussels. The business world has formed a community of interests that transcends regional and linguistic divides in order to demonstrate that political and institutional measures are not the only road to economic development in Brussels.

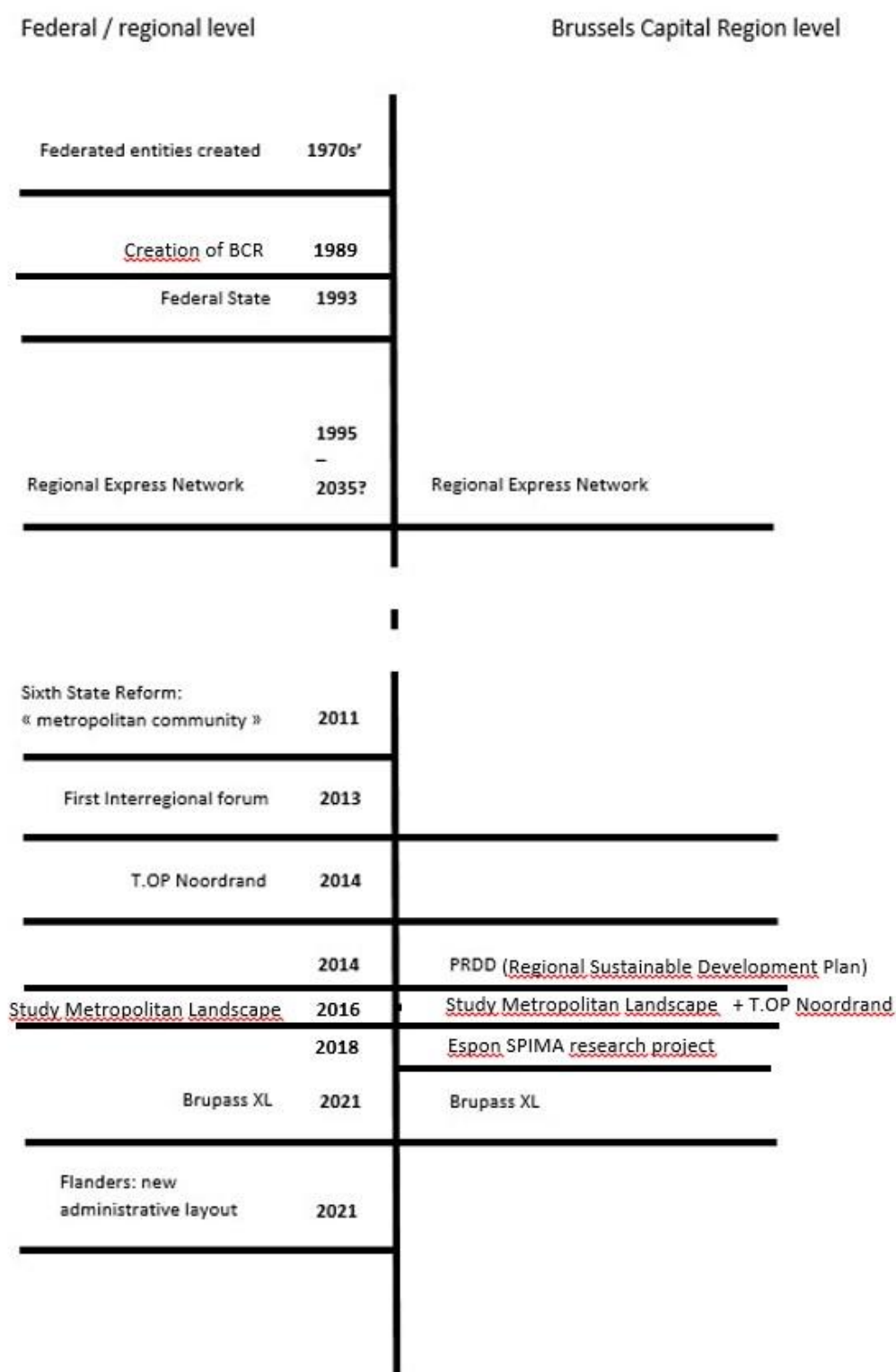
Challenges and critical elements

- The main challenge is to actually implement in one way or another an efficient metropolitan cooperation. Such metropolitan cooperation can take different forms but will have to deal with major common issues :
 - economic development since obviously suburban and core economies are completely intertwined, face common challenges but also show harmful competition;
 - mobility issue related to intense commuting between suburbs and the core city;
 - pollution and related health issue, partly due to intense commuting by car;
 - urban sprawl;
 - land artificialisation;
 - ...
 - The RER and the Brupass XL, which cover a significant part of the Brussels FUA, can give rise to a feeling of belonging that goes beyond the municipality or the region in which one lives. It can make people aware that the 'city' (corresponding to the Brussels Capital Region), but also its periphery, whether in Wallonia or Flanders, are connected and that it is not limited to its administrative boundaries. This type of project is therefore one of the levers that will perhaps, in the long term, make it possible to realise that reasoning solely on the basis of administrative borders, without taking into account the links and synergies with what is happening just beyond, is not desirable in order to respond to the current challenges of mobility, housing and the environment.
 - The Noordrand territorial development programme attempts to demonstrate that cooperation between federated entities, whether on a metropolitan or non-metropolitan level, is possible if all the actors are involved and their opinion taken into consideration.
-

3.2 Evolution of metropolitan cooperation

There is no metropolitan body or cooperation in Brussels, although there is a legal framework to implement one around Brussels. Indeed, such 'metropolitan community' has been planned by the sixth state reform in Belgium in 2011. This community is supposed to be a consensus-building organization dealing with transregional matters in and around Brussels Capital Region such as road security or infrastructure. This step has never been implemented in federal and regional policies since then. Therefore, apart from a legal text from 2011 allowing the establishment, in the long term, of a metropolitan community covering the Brussels-Capital Region, municipalities located in Flanders and in Wallonia, there is no other incentive for the creation of this interregional/metropolitan governance.

Figure 3.3
Timeline of metropolitan cooperation



Source : authors' elaboration

Challenges and critical elements

- Brussels Capital Region and its counterparts (Flemish Region and Wallonia) are only at the beginning of the cooperation process at metropolitan level. Although this is not a priority for the federated entities due to the competences structuration within the Belgian federal state, it is clear that a joint reflection on a larger scale, at the level of the FUA, seems to be a solution in order to respond to current challenges, whether they be environmental, mobility, etc. Today, it is impossible to say which direction the metropolitan cooperation process will take, or even if it will be pursued.

3.3 Metropolitan development goals

It is interesting to see how the objectives of the Brussels Capital Region in terms of territorial planning can serve as a basis for metropolitan reflection. As mentioned above, it is a city-region in its own right, with very broad competences enabling it to establish its own objectives in terms of territorial development, the main obstacle being that it represents only a small part of the FUA, where the Brussels Capital Region is the centre. As we will see in section 3.4., the BCR has established its own strategy for its territorial development. This strategy is the “*Plan Régional de Développement Durable*” (PRDD). A very instructive way to learn what are the objectives of territorial or metropolitan goals is to see how Brussels is described in this document :

“A city is a complex system. It is a societal form of high density and great functional and cultural diversity in a limited space. However, this space is not circumscribed, either by natural boundaries or by its administrative structure. The city is in permanent interaction with a hinterland, both near and far. Brussels is the Brussels-Capital Region, made up of 19 municipalities.

It is also a horizontal metropolis, as it includes a large part of the country's territory in its functional area and therefore many other smaller urban centres. This fact gives it a polycentric structure. This state of affairs gives it a polycentric structure, especially as this periphery has very different characteristics depending on where one is located.

In this way, the city has to get along with and deal with its external territory, that is, with the periphery or the metropolitan area. Its life does not stop at its borders. Its fabric continues beyond its administrative limits. Numerous exchanges and balances are formed between Brussels and its periphery: economic exchanges and complementarities, mobility flows, ecological flows, residential mobility, shared histories... Even if the structures of the State have given a form to the territory of the Brussels Region, the ecological, economic, social and cultural dynamics are in continuous interaction with the outside world and transcend the borders, which are arbitrary and abstract in nature.”

The urban project is built within the complex institutional framework that we have. The Region therefore assumes the role of Brussels as a metropolitan centre, but expresses its ambition for sustainable development in a wider area and calls on all possible and necessary collaborations to achieve a transversal and integrated development. However, within the framework of its competences, the Region seeks to define the territorial structures that it controls and that must be part of the ambitions of the city project.

It is therefore a question of defining a territorial development based on the finite space of the Brussels Region, the reality of the nodes and levers which interact and influence a wider territory, a nearby and sometimes very distant hinterland.

3.3.1 Coherence with national and regional goals

Since there is no metropolitan governance and cooperation, this section is actually irrelevant for the national level due to the federalized competences dedicated to the Regions and communities. Therefore, the Federal State has no competence on spatial planning and urban policies.

Each region has established its own territorial development strategy. If in Flanders and Wallonia, main axes of territorial development are essentially focused on Antwerp, Gent... in Flanders and Liège and Charleroi in Wallonia, the Brussels Capital Region, due to its geographical position and territorial narrowness has

established its own territorial development tool in a reflection going beyond its administrative borders, and therefore in connection with Flanders and Wallonia.

Beyond the absence of a national (and metropolitan) goal, each region is responsible of its own administrative subdivisions. Recently, a new obstacle emerged from the Flemish region. Few months ago, the Flemish government voted to create a new administrative subdivision, between the provincial level and the municipalities. The global feeling about this reform is that it will drastically complexify cooperation at supra “district” level and at inter-regional level. In that way, cooperation between the Brussels Capital Region and the new surrounding Flemish administrative entities will be more complex, partly due to the fact that these districts will receive more powers from Region and community. Moreover, it adds five more actors and thus the risk of impasse between involved actors.

3.3.2 Coherence with municipal goals

Municipalities powers are very extensive and cover everything that is in the “communal interest”, in other words the collective needs of the inhabitants. In theory, a municipality can do anything that it is not prohibited from doing, ranging from building a sports centre to road-building. The municipalities have powers relating to public works, social welfare, maintaining public order, housing, education, etc. In its plans, it is naturally subject to the supervision of the higher authorities, specifically the Federal State, the Communities, the Regions and the provinces. Finally, municipalities must also perform the tasks imposed on them by higher authorities. They have no competence on spatial planning. Moreover, each municipality has to have a “Municipal Development Plan” that have to be in accordance with “Regional Sustainable Development Plan” (PRDD).

Challenges and critical elements

- Only the regions are competent for spatial planning. It is therefore the cooperation, or lack of it, between them that determines the success or failure of the implementation of a vision that goes beyond their own administrative borders. The advancement of metropolitan cooperation, and thus governance, is very poorly developed and is only in its early stages.
 - However, reflections are sprouting here and there, and particularly in the Brussels Capital Region. The “Plan Régional de Développement Durable” strategy is built within the complex Belgian institutional framework. The Brussels Capital Region therefore assumes the role of Brussels as a metropolitan centre, but expresses its ambition for sustainable development in a wider area and calls on all possible and necessary collaborations with Flanders and Wallonia to achieve a transversal, integrated development, and thus metropolitan coordination and vision.
 - It is therefore a question of defining a territorial development based on the finite space of the Brussels Capital Region, the reality of the nodes and levers which interact and influence a wider territory, a nearby and sometimes very distant hinterland.
-

3.4 Metropolitan development and planning instruments

Despite the absence of metropolitan governance and cooperation, the strategy adopted by the BCR in 2018 about its territorial development could be used as a basis to thinking how to develop such cooperation.

Thus, in 2018, the BCR region adopted its *Plan Régional de Développement Durable* (Regional Sustainable Development Plan). The PRDD aims to provide adequate responses to the challenges and issues facing Brussels as an urban territory. These include demographic growth and accessibility to housing, economic redeployment and access to employment, functional and social diversity, the various forms of mobility and environmental issues.

The PRDD articulates regional planning and projects around 4 main themes:

1. Mobilising the territory to build the framework of territorial development and develop new districts.

With this line of work, the Government is creating the conditions for the harmonious reception of new inhabitants of Brussels and is organising territorial development to enable everyone to find the housing that corresponds to their life path. The Region will develop around a multitude of centres, corresponding to the neighbourhoods, as well as in 12 priority development poles in which the Region will create new quality neighbourhoods offering housing, public facilities, activities and green spaces. The final version of the PRDD enshrines the principle of reasoned densification linked to a notion of public comfort and proximity services.

2. *Mobilise the territory to develop a pleasant, sustainable and attractive living environment.*

In this second part, the Government intends to preserve and strengthen the living environment of the Region (through an ambition in terms of welcoming public spaces, green networks/waterways/biodiversity, etc.) and to mobilise the territory in the key themes of the fight against pollution (noise, air, etc.), against risks (flooding), against environmental damage (waste, energy waste, destruction of heritage, etc.). The PRDD also defines the principles of local life (around the Nuclei of Local Identity), the balance of neighbourhoods and facilities. Axis 2 also gives a large place to regional ambitions in terms of urban agriculture, circular economy or security.

3. *Mobilise the territory to develop the urban economy.*

For the Region, it is a question of mobilising energies and achieving an optimum between economic life, the economic attractiveness of the territory and the jobs of the inhabitants of Brussels. In this respect, the PRDD takes into account the progress made in the mechanisms for stimulating economic activity - territorial such as the Urban Enterprise Zone, the economic development axes, the investments envisaged or more general such as training and employment. The Brussels-Capital Region reaffirms, alongside its international, tertiary and tourist specialisation, its industrial and productive character and the compatibility of such an economic structure with harmonious territorial, environmental and human development.

4. *Mobilise the territory to favour multimodal travel.*

The PRDD constitutes the first stage of the regional vision of multimodal mobility: it will be specified by a Regional Mobility Plan which will specify and detail its operational aspects. The vision proposed by the finalised version of the PRDD completes, specifies and prioritises the regional ambitions in this crucial aspect of territorial development. In particular, Axis 4 constructs the major objectives according to the needs of long-distance (international and national scale), metropolitan and regional - proximity - mobility. The Government reaffirms its desire for efficient metropolitan mobility that benefits everyone. The Region would like everyone to be able to find everything they need on a daily basis within five minutes of their home, and for other journeys, it is promoting more multimodal and virtuous mobility for the people of Brussels and the Region's users. Thus, this fourth part reveals the mobility framework of Brussels through the corridors: these major axes irrigate the city and will eventually allow for efficient travel. On these axes and more generally in the Region, active modes of transport (walking, cycling, etc.) and public transport (STIB network, metropolitan operators' networks, rail network) will gain in importance and will be given priority. The use of the car will find its place and will benefit from innovations.

The decree of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region approving the PRDD was published in the Belgian Official Journal on 5 November 2018. The PRDD enters into force within 15 days of its publication, i.e. on 20 November 2018.

Moreover, as part of the preparation of the draft *Plan Régional de Développement Durable*, three multidisciplinary teams were entrusted with the task of reflecting on a possible future for the Brussels metropolitan area up to 2040, following an international competition. The result: three different visions that fed the debate in the framework of the elaboration of the PRDD, brought together in a single document: "Bruxelles 2040, trois visions pour une métropole". (source: perspective.brussels)

Table 3.1
Main instruments at national, regional to the local level

Instrument	Level	Type	Type (2)	Type (3)	Main Goals	Budget (if any)
PRDD	Regional (BCR)	Strategy/vision	Statutory and mandatory	Non-binding for public authorities	See above	No budget

Instrument	Level	Type	Type (2)	Type (3)	Main Goals	Budget (if any)
Beleidsplan Ruimte Vlaanderen (BRV)	Regional (Vlaanderen)	Strategy/vision	Statutory and mandatory	Non-binding for public authorities	Identical to PRDD	?
Schéma de Développement du Territoire (SDT)	Regional (Wallonie)	Strategy/vision	Statutory and mandatory	Non-binding for public authorities	Identical to PRDD	?

Plan Régional de Développement Durable (BCR, 2018) and other regional instruments.

3.4.1 Instruments in the framework of other cooperation initiatives

Currently there is a tool for development in the form of an interregional consultation body called the Forum on Territorial Development. This forum was created in 2012 by an inter-ministerial agreement. Its members are the ministers and civil servants of the three regions. The mission of the forum is:

- to identify territorial planning processes of interest for at least two regions;
- to facilitate concertation on new planning documents;
- to organize and facilitate the exchange of information on new planning processes;
- to finance common studies.

T.OP (Noordrand Territorial Development Programme as seen above) is another project that sees collaboration between perspective.brussels (Brussels-Capital Region), Omgeving Vlaanderen (Flemish Region), the Province of Flemish Brabant (Vlaams-Brabant) and OVAM (the Flemish public waste management agency).

Table 3.2
Other instruments

Instrument	Level	Type	Type (2)	Type (3)	Main Goals	Budget (if any)
Forum on Territorial Development	Interregional	Strategy	Non statutory	Non-binding	• See above	No budget
T.OP Noordrand	Interregional	Planification	Non statutory	Non-binding	• See above	No budget

Forum on Territorial Development and T.OP Noordrand instruments

3.4.2 Instrument and initiatives related to COVID-19

There is no specific metropolitan instrument dedicated to the treatment of COVID-19 pandemic at any level in Belgium. The federated entities had no competence in the management of this field and had to submit to the decisions of the federal state in broad terms. They then developed their own strategy, in accordance with the guidelines of the federal level. Thus, the vaccination process, while overseen by the federal state, is managed by the regions and other federated entities. Since autumn 2020, the National Recovery Plan has been under negotiation at federal level. Each Region as submitted their own strategy to cope with the covid-19 pandemic aftermath and funds will be split between federated entities. The Belgium National Recovery Plan has been adopted by European Union in summer 2021 and Brussels-Capital Region will receive 395 millions euro to finance 14 investments and 5 reforms.

Challenges and critical elements

- At present, there is a lack of other instruments and mechanisms (apart from ITI) that would encourage and frame metropolitan cooperation, planning and governance. The challenge is to explore these possibilities, especially ITI and the incentives coming from the EUCP. ITI instrument is seen, among actors, as one of the best mechanism to develop metropolitan vision, but, as it implies political commitment and willingness between actors (Regions), the same blockage is possible and dreaded.
-

3.5 Metropolitan financing and budgeting

There is no metropolitan budget and up to present (2021) no metropolitan financial instruments were developed. Resources dedicated to territorial development and spatial planning are competences of Regions, and thus affected to their own budgets.

Challenges and critical elements

- To sustain and enhance the metropolitan cooperation in the long run, there is a need for common budget. It shall be used for co-financing of the support to metropolitan cooperation between Regions (and the EU). Its establishment requires framework for metropolitan governance that would enable financial participation of involved actors (a form of binding conditions, some benefits in exchange, or a legislative obligation).
-

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

As we have seen above (section 3.1.1.), several forms of cooperation exist involving civil society or business actors. The role of social groups and the business community in metropolitan governance makes sense in setting up bottom-up, localised projects, which can quickly lead to "quick-wins", in the hope of gradually extending this strategy and finally, perhaps, carrying out projects on a larger scale.

3.6.1 Social groups and the civil society

As we have seen above (see 3.1.1.), several collaborative initiatives including civil society based on thematic areas related to metropolitan development have been established, but not specifically in a procedure to set up a metropolitan cooperation. The interviews let emerge that in some processes and projects, the role of some actors is significant, particularly in transportation and mobility.

3.6.2 Business community

As we have seen above (see 3.1.1.), several collaborative initiatives based on thematic areas related to metropolitan development have been established, including business companies but not specifically in a procedure to set up a metropolitan cooperation. The interviews let emerge that in some processes and projects, the role of some actors is significant, particularly in local economic development.

Challenges and critical elements

- Social groups and the business community are involved to different bottom-up, localised projects, which can quickly lead to "quick-wins", in the hope of gradually extending this strategy and finally, perhaps, carrying out projects on a larger scale. Their influence strongly differs according to cases, but they are not involved in the institutional governance of EU cohesion policy instruments.
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3.7 Participation to policy networks

The Brussels Capital Region is member of several policy networks such as Eurocities and Metropolis. Moreover, it takes part to EMA and METREX activities.

Eurocities is a network of cities in Europe, including more than 200 of Europe's major cities from 39 countries. The network offers a platform to ensure a better quality of life for all, and allows members to share knowledge and ideas, exchange experiences, analyse common challenges and develop innovative solutions. Projects are coordinated by Eurocities and cover fields such as mobility, digital innovation, social inclusion, environmental transition.

Metropolis is global network of major cities and metropolitan areas around the world. It is considered as a hub and platform to connect, share experiences, and mobilize on a wide range of local and global issues for metropolises. This network aims and is the focal point of worldwide experience and expertise on metropolitan governance. Metropolis mission targets the creation of sustainable cities characterized by engaged metropolitan governance and the implementation of urban diplomacy based on agreed principles.

European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA) is an initiative creating spaces for political debate among European metropolitan authorities aimed at sharing experiences, fostering joint projects as well as positioning themselves and defending their interests in front of the European Union and states. EMA is a platform of volunteer cooperation composed by more than 40 European metropolitan areas representing 75 million inhabitants. Recently, the EMA published a document emphasising that metropolises, large functional urban areas, have a key role to play in the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility, following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas (METREX), provides a platform for the exchange of knowledge, expertise and experience on metropolitan affairs, and joint action on issues of common interest. 50 metropolitan regions and functional urban areas constitute this network. METREX contributes the metropolitan dimension to policies, programmes and projects on a European scale. Brussels is taking actively part in an expert group about the Eurodelta megaregion in order to foster crossborder cooperation within territories part of this important urban region.

Other federated regions (Flanders and Wallonia) are not members of any of these associations, as they are not considered as metropolitan areas or functional urban areas themselves. However, several Flemish cities are members of Eurocities, as Bruges, Ghent, Ostend, Antwerp and Leuven.

Challenges and critical elements

- Brussels Capital Region participates to several international networks, which contribute to increase its influence and activate collaborations. Other cities as well are partners, meaning the dominant position of Brussels (as a city, by its population and extent) does not confer it any advantage in these networks. Small cities as by example Ostend are also members Eurocities, with a population of 70.000 inhabitants only.
-

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Use concrete undergoing projects to develop sense of "metropolitan identity".
- Develop projects, localized processes, in diversified fields related to territorial development in a "bottom-up" perspective allowing to get quick-wins and start an effective dynamic.
- Choose a soft governance/consultation/cooperation model to ensure to build trust between partners, each of them has something to gain.
- Establishing a metropolitan budget to initiate common projects. A softer mechanism could be to have a common budget to implement some common project like Hamburg did at the beginning of their metropolitan cooperation. They created with the other two or three land a small Metropolitan agency in charge of some common projects and the agency was commonly financed by the different land.
- Join forces with other metropolitan cities to strengthen Metropolitan Cities as a category (advocacy, lobbying, mutual learning, ...) in Belgium and Europe.

4 Cohesion policy governance

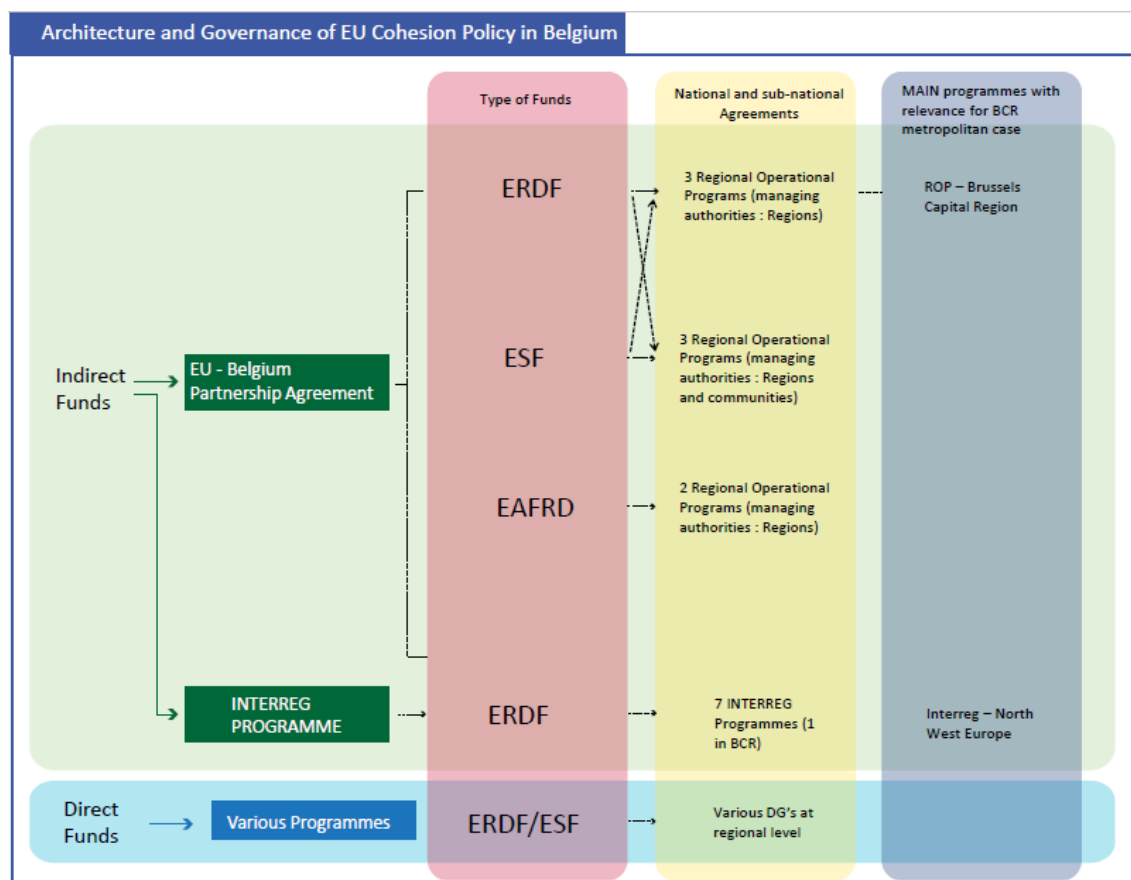
4.1 EU cohesion policy institutional architecture and competences

The federal state of Belgium is the first brick in the institutional architecture of European funds: Belgium negotiates the programmes and priorities for the pluriannual period. However, in practice, in these negotiations, Belgium is *de facto* represented by each Region in turn. In the course of this process, the three Regions have agreed, after a concertation and coordination organized by the Federal State in which Regions negotiate between themselves in order to represent Belgium as a whole, on a common position to negotiate at the EU level.

The allocation of funds between the three regions is mostly constrained by the application of EU criteria and is thus function of the level of development and so on. However, in practice, there is a little margin since the allocation of funds result from a negotiation between the three regions.

Once the money received, the Regions have the full management of European funds at least for ERDF. In Brussels, it means that the Brussels Capital-Region fully manages its Operational Programme (OP) of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) on its limited territory of 19 municipalities. This is very different from the other cities in Belgium which are included in much larger regions (Wallonia and Flanders) and have thus much more limited room in the management of these funds. This management also includes total latitude (as long as EU rules are met) in defining the priorities in the use of ERDF. In contrast, the European Social Fund (ESF) has a more complex management which include Regional institutions, such as ACTIRIS which is in charge of unemployed activation in Brussels and manages a Regional ESF OP, but also transregional (communities) management who manage several ESF OP's for example in the field of training

Since there is no metropolitan cooperation, its involvement in the governance of EU funds is irrelevant in Brussels.

Figure 4.1**The governance of the EU Cohesion policy in Belgium**

Source: authors' elaboration

There is a multiplicity of actors managing European funds. These actors are essentially immediately under the responsibility of Regions and Communities. As a reminder, the three Regions are the Brussels Capital-Region, including 19 municipalities, Flanders and Wallonia. For each region, several authorities are playing a role in the management of European funds.

Brussels-Capital Region

- **Perspective Brussels (stakeholders of ESPON METRO).** This public institution is responsible for the territorial development in the Brussels Capital-Region;
- **Service public régional de Bruxelles - Bruxelles International.** Bruxelles international is part of the Regional administration which is directly managing the ERDF, notably by defining its Operational programme and selecting the projects implemented using EU funds;
- **ACTIRIS.** This institution manages the part of ESF dependent from the Brussels Capital Region.

Flanders

- **Omgeving Vlaanderen.** This public institution is responsible for the territorial development in the Flemish Region;
- **Flanders innovation and entrepreneurship Agency** is the managing authority of the ERDF funds in Flanders;
- **ESF Vlaanderen** is the managing authority of the ESF fund in Flemish Region and Community (ie. This programme is active in Flanders and Brussels)

Wallonia

- **Service Public de Wallonie - Territoire.** This public institution is responsible for the territorial development in the Walloon Region;
- **Service Public de Wallonie – Secrétariat Général** is the managing authority of the ERDF funds in Wallonia;

Wallonia-Brussels Federation

- **Agence FSE.** This institution manages the part of ESF dependent from the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

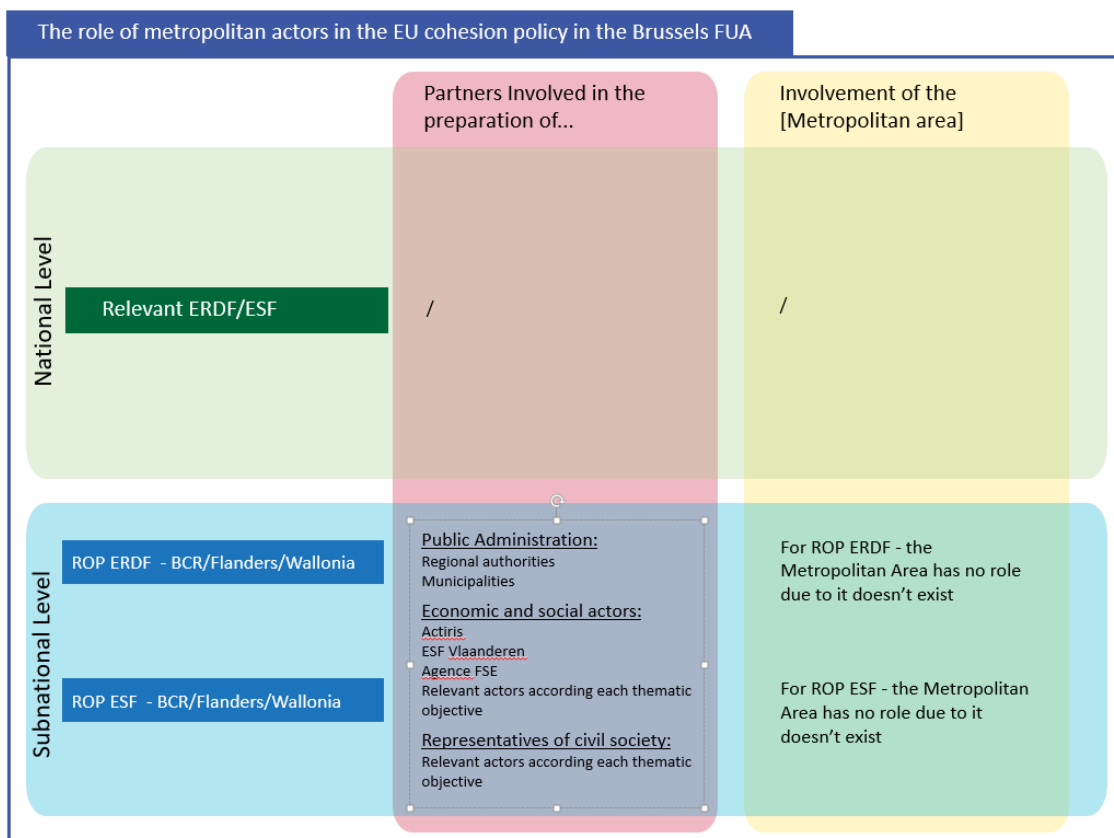
4.1.1 The role of metropolitan actors

As regions are competent in domains such as territorial and economic development, and as communities (in this case, only Flemish and French (Wallonia-Brussels Federation) are relevant), are competent for cultural issue, including education, all these actors play a role inside the Brussels FUA.

Table 4.1**Actors managing ERDF and ESF funds in Brussels FUA**

Topic	Organisation	Body	Role
cohesion fund	SPRB - Brussels international - ERDF Department	Brussels-Capital Region	Managing authority for the ERDF funds in the BCR
cohesion fund	Actiris	Brussels-Capital Region	Managing authority for ESF funds in BCR
cohesion fund	Agence FSE	Brussels-Wallonia Federation and COCOF	Managing Authority for ESF funds in Wallonia and for French-speaking people in BCR
cohesion fund	SPW- SG	Wallonia Region	Managing authority ERDF funds in Wallonia
cohesion fund	ESF Vlaanderen	Flanders Region	Managing authority for ESF funds in Flanders and for Dutch-speaking people in BCR
cohesion fund	Flanders innovation and entrepreneurship Agency	Flanders Region	Managing authority ERDF funds in Flanders
cohesion fund and planning	Brulocalis - European projects department	Association of Brussels municipalities	Informing Brussels municipalities

Source: authors' elaboration

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

Source : author's elaboration

Challenges and critical elements

- Brussels Capital Region, Flemish Region and Walloon Region are by far the main actors to have role and competences in the programming, management and implementation of EU cohesion policy funds. Alongside that, communities manage ESF. It lets no room for any other actor to intervene in the decision process at federal, municipal or interregional level.
- If a new decision-making body were to be created, then this would have as an imperative preamble a new state reform, although the 2011 reform addressed metropolitan cooperation very briefly.
- As a reminder, few months ago, Flemish government created a new administrative subdivision, between the provincial level and the municipalities. The feeling of the actors met during interviews about this reform is that it will drastically complexify cooperation at supra "district" level and at inter-regional level. In that way, cooperation between the Brussels Capital Region and the new surrounding Flemish administrative entities will be more complex, partly due to the fact that these districts will receive more powers from Region and community. This could make the structure of the federal state more complex, which would make it more difficult than now to bring actors around the in a pragmatic and constructive way. In On the other hand, this could be the first sign that the Flemish region recognises the existence of the Brussels FUA.

4.2 EU cohesion policy instruments at the metropolitan level

Since there is no metropolitan governance and cooperation, this section is actually irrelevant. However, as regions are competent in domains such as territorial and economic development, and as communities (in this case, only Flemish and French (Wallonia-Brussels Federation) are relevant), are competent for cultural issue, including education, all these actors play a role inside the Brussels FUA.

Table 4.2

EU cohesion policy programmes and instruments in the Brussels metropolitan area (FUA)

Instrument	Level (geographical scope)	Type	Program-ming	Manage-ment	Implemen-tation	Role of metropoli-tan actors
ROP - ERDF	Regional	Regional Oper-ational Pro-gramme	BCR, Flan-ders, Wal-lonia	BCR, Flanders, Wallonia	Public ad-ministra-tions, enter-prises, pro-fessionals, third sector associations	No role
ROP - ESF	Re-gional/com-munity	Regional Oper-ational Pro-gramme	BCR, Flan-ders, Wal-lonia-Brus-sels Feder-ation	BCR, Flanders, Wallonia-Brussels Federation	Public ad-ministra-tions, enter-prises, pro-fessionals, third sector associations	No role

Source : author's elaboration

Challenges and critical elements

- Brussels Capital Region, Flemish Region and Walloon Region are by far the main actors to have role and competences in the programming, management and implementation of EU cohesion policy funds. Alongside that, communities manage ESF. It lets no room for any other actor to intervene in the decision process at federal, municipal or interregional level.
- The Brussels Capital Region assume its role to be leader in the metropolitan cooperation and construction. In this perspective, the operational programmes it undertakes are part of a plan desire to promote exchanges with the other federated entities. A metropolis cannot be reduced to a city made up of 19 municipalities, especially as the problems are often similar between the central municipalities (BCR) and the peripheral municipalities in Flanders and Wallonia. Further afield, in semi-peripheral or rural areas, the influence of Brussels is also felt through numerous factors (urbanisation, soil sealing, pollution, commuter mobility, real estate pressure, etc.).

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

Social groups and the business community are not directly involved in the institutional governance of EU cohesion policy instruments

Challenges and critical elements

- Social groups and the business community are involved to different bottom-up, localised projects, which can quickly lead to "quick-wins", in the hope of gradually extending this strategy and finally, perhaps, carrying out projects on a larger scale. Their influence strongly differs according to cases.
-

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

As for EUCP funds, the Next Generation EU programme, and especially the Recovery and Resilience Facility, federated entities will be the main beneficiaries. Therefore, it will not have any metropolitan dimension. Main sectors and axis concerned by the Recovery and Resilience facility have been determined by the federal state:

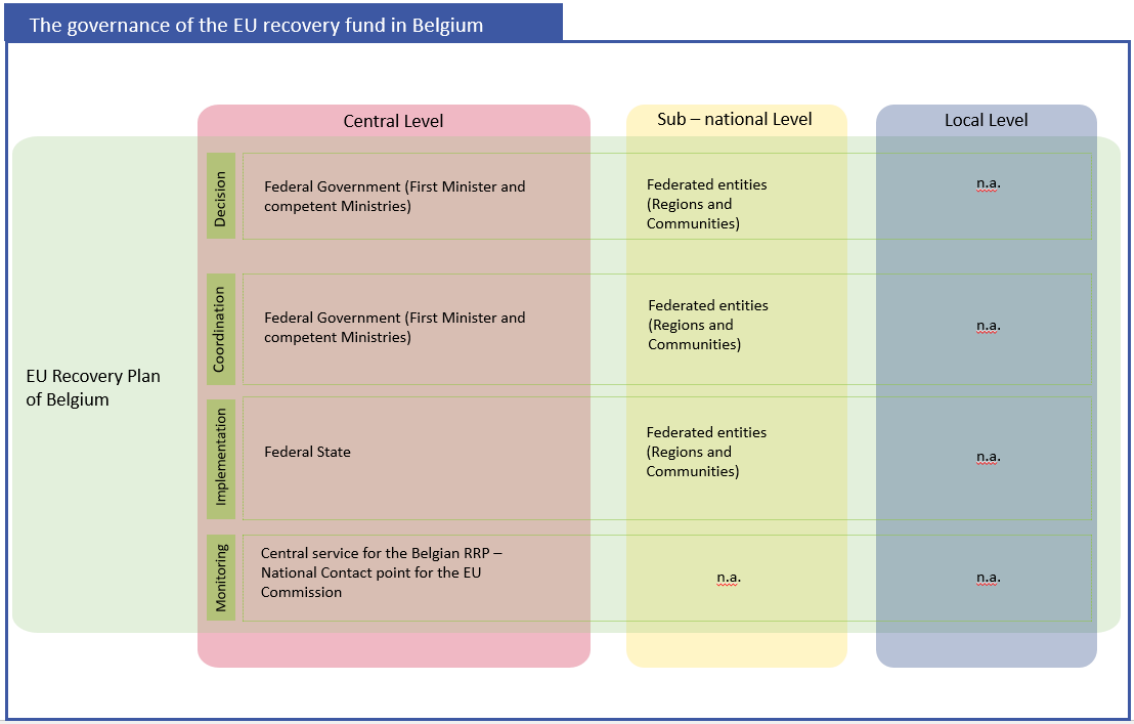
- Mobility: investments in public transport (rail...), development of electric cars sales share, promotion of bicycle use, smart mobility...;
- Durability: investments in public buildings renovation, promotion and development of renewable energy, biodiversity protection, circular economy...;
- Social: investments in healthcare system, education...;
- Digitalisation: investments in 5G, public services digitalisation, cybersecurity, development of optic fibre...;
- Productivity: investments in research and entrepreneurship.

As a reminder, Belgium will get 6 billion € grant allocations from Recovery and Resilience facility. Federal state will receive 1,25bn €, 2,2bn € will be allocated to Flanders, 1,5bn € to Wallonia, 500M € to Wallonia-Brussels Federation, 395M € to BCR (in practice, BCR will receive indirectly more than 500M € due to projects coming from Wallonia-Brussels Federation and Flanders that will be implemented in the Brussels region territory).

Each federated entity set up their own strategies, on their own territories, following main outcomes identified by federal state. Each region will use these grants according to their own specific objectives.

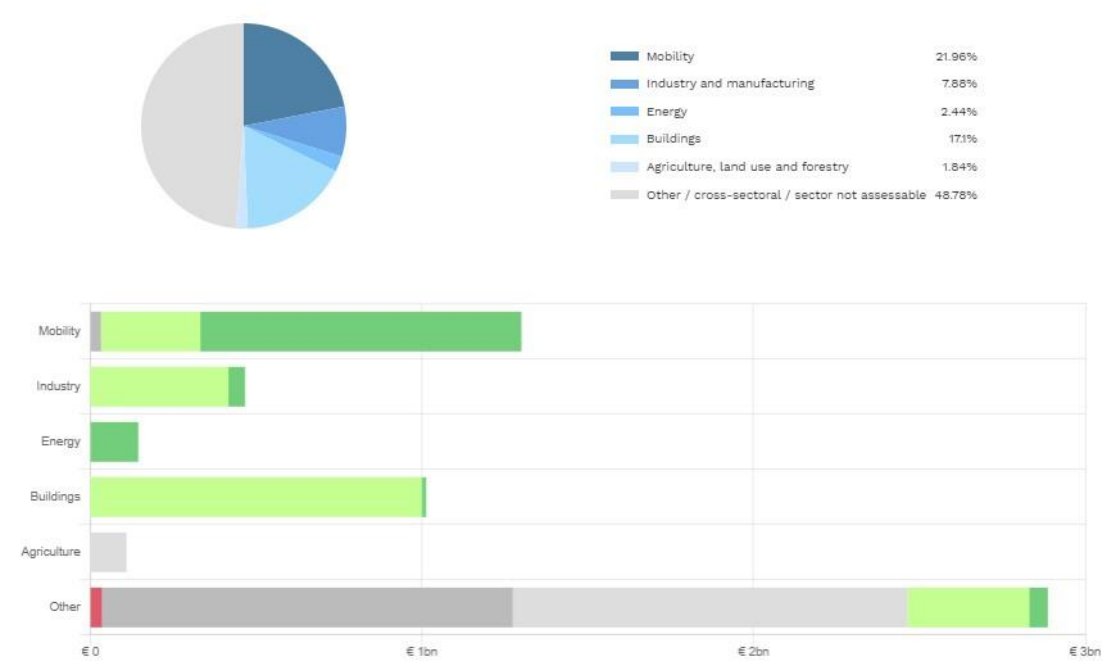
The three regions have more or less equivalent programmes, with a stronger emphasis on entrepreneurship in Flanders and on social inclusion in the Brussels Capital Region. Details of each regional strategy are available here: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_2101

Figure 4.3
The governance of the EU recovery fund in Belgium



Source : author's elaboration

Figure 4.4
The EU recovery fund in Belgium



Source : Green Recovery Tracker. Green parts represent durable expenses and investments.

Challenges and critical elements

- The lack of metropolitan governance negates any investment at interregional level. Each federated entity will therefore receive its share and invest it as it wishes in its own territory. The lack of consultation and coordination between actors suggests that no metropolitan or interregional vision will be put in place, especially as each region is indirectly competing with the others to redevelop its economy as quickly as possible, each of them will want to maximise its own economic recovery first.

4.5 Coordinating metropolitan governance and EU cohesion policy

At the current time, there is no coordination on a metropolitan (or superregional) scale between actors in charge of EUCP funds. Each Region applies its own strategy on its own territory.

Table 4.3

List of nodes of the metropolitan governance and EU cohesion policy network

Institution's name	Status	Scale	Sector
SPRB - Brussels international - ERDF Department	Public	Regional	Managing authority for the ERDF funds in the BCR
Actiris	Public	Regional	Managing authority for ESF funds in BCR
Agence FSE	Public	Regional	Managing Authority for ESF funds in Wallonia and for French-speaking people in BCR
SPW- SG	Public	Regional	Managing authority ERDF funds in Wallonia
ESF Vlaanderen	Public	Regional	Managing authority for ESF funds in Flanders and for Dutch-speaking people in BCR
Flanders innovation and entrepreneurship Agency	Public	Regional	Managing authority ERDF funds in Flanders
Brulocalis - European projects department	Non-profit organisation	Inter-municipal	Informing Brussels municipalities

Source: Authors' own elaboration

The Regions (Brussels Capital Region, Flanders and Wallonia) are the only actors managing spatial planning and development in a hypothetical Brussels metropolitan Area. Several entities, under the supervision of regional authorities, form the backbone of the managements of EUCP and non-EUCP funds. They were asked fill in a roster questionnaire, specifying the main actors with which they establish relations and what is its purpose (EUCP or non-EUCP relations).

To ensure the maximum comparability across case-studies, the team decided to apply the following procedures:

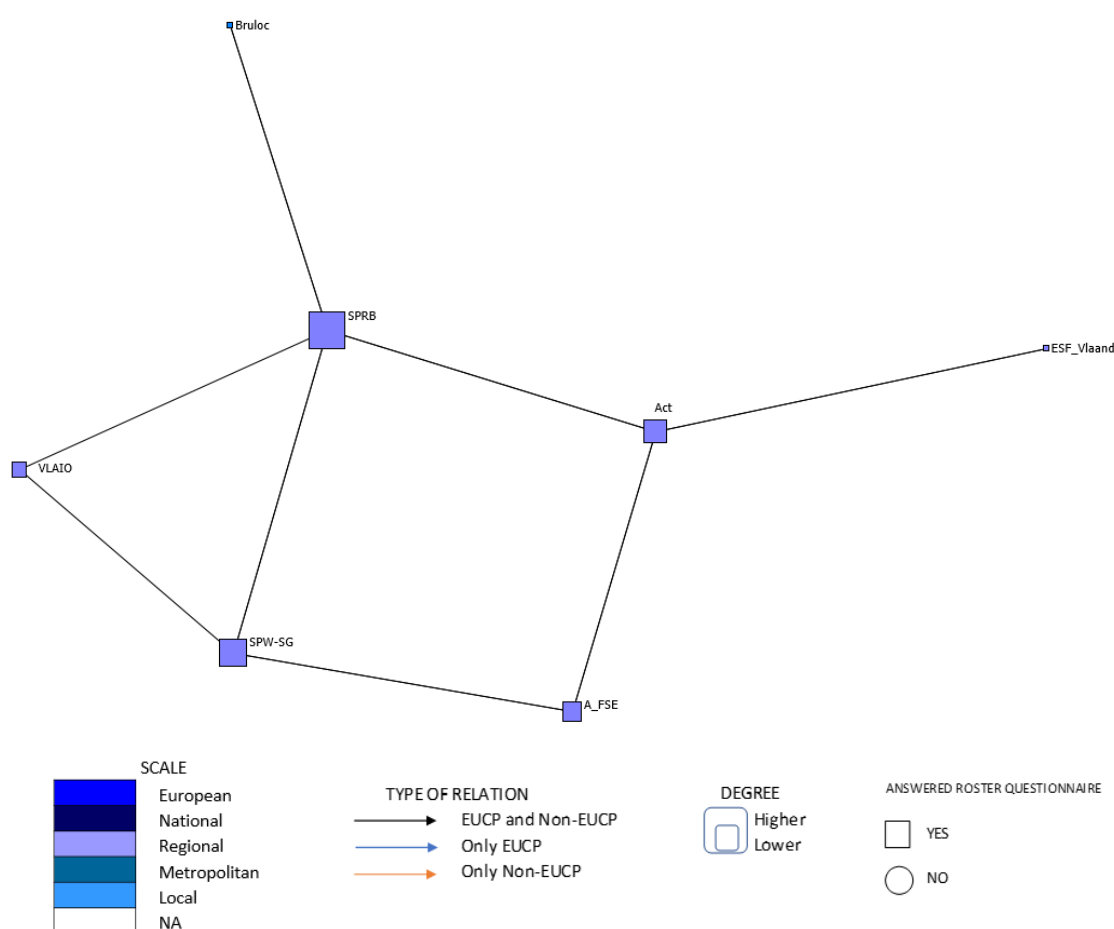
- No consideration of intensity of relations because it is difficult to ensure all organisations have a common criteria /understanding on different levels;

- No analysis of intra-organization relations in each institution.

We use the UCINET software package (Borgatti *et al.*, 2002) to elaborate the matrices of dichotomous relationships between the actors and we use the NetDraw module to draw the networks of relationships. The following steps were applied:

- Dataset consolidation;
- Computation of binary symmetrical matrixes (UCINET);
- Elaboration of one network per case study (NetDraw);
- Networks include the type of relation (EUCP, non-EUCP), scale of intervention of actors (European, National, Regional, Metropolitan, Local), and the degree of each node (the number of nodes adjacent to a given node in a symmetric graph measures the network activity).

Figure 4.5
The metropolitan governance network



ID	ID_name	SCALE
A_FSE	Agence FSE	Regional
Act	Actiris	Regional
Bruloc	Brulocalis	Local
ESF_Vlaand	ESP Vlaanderen	Regional
SPRB	Service public régional de Bruxelles	Regional
SPW - SG	SP Wallonie	Regional
VLAIO	Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship	Regional

Source: authors' elaboration

Due to the lack of cooperation between entities and actors, their splitted structure due to their relative independence between them, this exercise does not bring a real added-value to the analysis.

Instead of analysing a poor structure, we recommend the following:

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establishing a soft governance/consultation/cooperation model to ensure to build trust between partners, each of them has something to gain. The first step is often the most difficult, but if a trusty situation could be put in place, the process of coordination would be strongly eased.
- Thinking on an interregional or metropolitan scale could vastly increase the positive effects of the Resilience and Recovery Plan through “economies of scale”.
- Flanders and Wallonia should join the exploratory processes led by the Brussels Capital Region in terms of a metropolitan view, which could lead to identify common challenges and objectives.
- Join forces with other metropolitan cities to strengthen Metropolitan Cities as a category (advocacy, lobbying, mutual learning...) in Belgium and Europe.

5 Cohesion policy impact

5.1 EU cohesion policy objectives and actions

All cohesion policy objectives and actions reported in this chapter are Regional operational programmes (ROP), or programmes implemented by Communities (Flemish community and Wallonia-Brussels Federation).

Brussels-Capital Region

In concrete, the « Brussels international » administration of the Brussels Capital-Region manages the ERDF, while there are, as already mentioned, three authorities managing ESF, ACTIRIS being the administration in charge for the part of ESF directly dependent from the Brussels-Capital Region. The allocation of these funds is made through call for projects: public, private or associations can answer the calls. The municipalities have no role to play in the management of the funds, even if selected projects are planned on their territories. However, they can answer themselves to the call for projects.

Further analyses are possible to know the share of the different types of actors in the use of European funds.

« In line with the objectives set at European level by the “Europe 2020” strategy, the 2014-20 programme will contribute to the financing of projects aimed at strengthening the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the Brussels-Capital Region ». The Region has defined 4 priorities, adapted from the European framework¹:

- increasing research and improving the transfer and promotion of innovation (axis 1);
- strengthening entrepreneurship and improving the development of SMEs in promising sectors (axis 2);
- supporting the development of a circular economy through the rational use of resources in promising industries (axis 3);
- improving the quality of life of deprived neighbourhoods and their population (axis 4).

The importance of each priority is detailed in table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Allocation of ERDF in the Brussels Capital-Region during programming period 2014-2020

Priority axis	Funding	Thematic objective	Aid from the Union Amount in €	National contribution Amount in €	Total funding Amount in €
1	ERDF	1	17,268,166.00	17,268,166.00	34,536,332.00
2	ERDF	3	34,688,808.00	34,688,808.00	69,377,616.00
3	ERDF	4	21,812,420.00	21,812,420.00	43,624,840.00
3bis	ERDF	6	3,635,403.00	3,635,403.00	7,270,806.00
4	ERDF	9	14,541,612.00	14,541,612.00	29,083,224.00
AT	ERDF	N/A	3,831,099.00	3,831,099.00	7,662,198.00
TOTAL	ERDF		95,777,508.00	95,777,508.00	191,555,016.00

Source : <http://www.europeinbelgium.be/en/brussels-capitalregion-erdf>

Objectives

The Programme puts in place a concentration of resources,

¹ <http://www.europeinbelgium.be/en/brussels-capitalregion-erdf>

- on a thematic level: projects from the first four priority axes have to contribute to strengthening specific economic sectors or offer a response to certain challenges identified as being priorities for the Region;
- as well as on a territorial level: the infrastructures financed are concentrated in the Urban Regeneration Zone and, for the first four priority axes, in Regional Development Hubs.

Priority axes

- Strengthening research and improving the transfer and promotion of innovation
 - Increasing applied research capacities in association with the priority challenges identified in the diagnosis
 - Increasing innovation in SMEs
- Strengthening entrepreneurship and improving the development of SMEs in promising industries
 - Creating new employment-generating activities, including in the social economy
 - Supporting the development of SMEs, including social economy projects
- Supporting the development of a circular economy through the rational use of resources in promising industries (low carbon)
 - Strengthening the energy transition of Brussels SMEs
 - Supporting the energy transition of public infrastructure and public housing
 - Improving the environmental quality of urban spaces
- Supporting the development of a circular economy through the rational use of resources in promising industries (resources/waste)
 - Supporting the improvement of the urban environment through the rehabilitation of polluted soil and industrial wastelands and the improvement of the environmental quality of urban spaces
 - Facilitating collection and organisation of waste with a view to transforming it into “resources”
- Improving the quality of life and environment for vulnerable neighbourhoods and populations
 - Increasing the number of early childhood places in deprived neighbourhoods
 - Strengthening the infrastructure and cultural facilities offering that supports urban regeneration in deprived neighbourhoods
 - Increasing the participation of inhabitants in urban dynamics and urban development projects in deprived neighbourhoods
 - Developing a health and social offering for vulnerable populations (including refugees, asylum seekers, illegal immigrants or immigrants without any administrative status)

Compared to previous programmes, there has been a shift from « social cohesion » to strategies more oriented toward economic competitiveness and innovation. This shift also appears in the geography of the funds: until the 2007-2013 programme, most funds were allocated to deprived neighbourhoods, along the Brussels canal zone. This geographical constraint has nearly completely disappeared in the 2014-20 programme, except concerning the fourth axis for which the BCR still limits the geographical area. New infrastructures are bounded to several strategic zones spread in the Region (deprived neighbourhoods) while other projects have nearly no geographical limitations. This shift is due to the change at the European level with the Europe 2020 strategy putting more emphasis on territorial competitiveness than cohesion and removing the obligation of territorialisation of projects in the Operational Programs.

In addition, European Social funds is managed through ACTIRIS – the Regional organization in charge of employment policies - and focusses on the integration to the labour market through three major axes²:

- Priority axis 1: Durable integration of young people in to the job market;
- Priority axis 2: Access to work for everybody;
- Priority axis 3: Improving the vocational integration of persons who are excluded or at risk of exclusion.

However, it does not cover the whole ESF in Brussels, since as mentioned before, a part of ESF is managed by Flanders and the French Community of Belgium (Brussels-Wallonia Federation).

Table 5.2

Allocation of ESF in the Brussels Capital-Region during programming period 2014-2020

Priority axis	Funding	Thematic objective	Contribution of the EU	Contribution of the Region	Total Financing
1	ESF	TD8	9.382.253	9.382.253	18.764.506
	YEI	TD8	5.871.109	5.871.109	11.742.219
2	ESF	TD8	21.276.845	21.276.845	42.553.691
3	ESF	TD9	12.944.976	12.944.976	25.889.953
Total					98.950.370

Source: <http://www.europeinbelgium.be/en/brussels-capitalregion-esf>

Flanders

Description

ERDF in Flanders is constructed around the following thematic objectives:

- TO1 « Strengthening research, technological development and innovation»
- TO3 « Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)»
- TO4 « Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors»
- TO5 « Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management»
- TO6 « Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency»

Objectives

The operational program 'EFRO Vlaanderen 2014-2020' focusses on strengthening sustainable development, the competence of Flanders and providing an essential contribution to the realization of the European Objectives in the context of Europe 2020 – Strategy for an innovative, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Priority axes

The Flemish Operational program is developed around 4 axes (except technical assistance):

- Axe 1 : Strengthening research, technological development and innovation
- Axe 2 : Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises
- Axe 3 : Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors
- Axe 4 : Sustainable urban development

² <http://www.europeinbelgium.be/en/brussels-capitalregion-esf>

Table 5.3**Allocation of ERDF in Flanders during programming period 2014-2020**

Priority axis	Funding	Thematic objective	Aid from the Union Amount in €	National contribution Amount in €	Total funding Amount in €
1	ERDF	1	69.546.999	104.320.499	173.867.498
2	ERDF	2	34.875.995	52.313.993	87.189.988
3	ERDF	4	45.267.185	67.900.778	113.167.963
4	ERDF	5 & 6	16.932.469	25.398.703	42.331.172
TOTAL	ERDF		166.622.648	249.933.973	416.556.621

Source: <http://www.europeinbelgium.be/>

The ESF programme lays down the priorities for the expenditure of 1 billion euro. 600 million euro is financed through the Flemish budget and 400 million euro through the European budget.

The programme not only aims to stimulate employment and social inclusion, it also intends to promote innovation and transnational cooperation. It supports targeted actions for more entrepreneurship, an increased flow from social economy, as well as a better integration and inclusion of unskilled youngsters and Roma.

In the end, the Flemish Operational Programme will assist 250,000 people in finding or keeping a job, in setting up a company, or in participating in vocational training.

Axes

- Investing in sustainable and qualitative jobs on the Flemish labour market (1st priority) and investing in vocational training and lifelong learning (2nd priority). 60% of the resources have been allocated to this priority. This corresponds with the Flemish career policy, which wishes to bring about a more effective labour market. More specifically, Flemish ESF projects will focus on key transition moments in careers, such as the transition from school to work, from unemployment to work, from a job to another job.
- 20% of the resources has been allocated to supporting social integration and equality and to combat poverty (3rd priority). The focus is placed on pathways to integration for the most vulnerable groups on the labour market.
- Structural measures on company level (4th priority), which encourage people to work longer, get specific attention in the programme: ESF projects assist companies in creating an attractive working environment for their employees.
- Finally, the European Social Fund intends to keep promoting transnational exchange and cooperation, as well as innovation or the sponsoring of innovative labour market services (5th priority).

Table 5.4**Allocation of ESF in Flanders during programming period 2014-2020**

Priority axis	Funding	Thematic objective	Contribution of the EU	Contribution of the Region	Total Financing
1	ESF	Career curative	162 325 134	243 487 700	405 812 834
2	ESF	Career preventive	67 114 353	134 910 677	202 025 030
3	ESF	Social inclusion and poverty	81 327 223	121 990 835	203 318 058
4	ESF	People oriented enterprise	35 067 997	74 519 494	109 587 491
5	ESF	Innovation and transnationality	32 312 147	26 437 211	58 749 358
6	ESF	Technical assistance	15 756 119	15 756 119	31 512 238
Total			393 902 973	617 102 036	1 011 005 009

Source: <http://www.europeinbelgium.be/>

Wallonia

Description

The ERDF in Wallonia is based on the thematic objectives:

- TO1 « Strengthening research, technological development and innovation »
- TO3 « Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs »
- TO4 « Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors »
- TO6 « Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency »
- TO10 « Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning »

Objectives of the Operational Programme for the Wallonia region

The intervention strategy of the OP for the Wallonia region through the declination of the selected thematic objectives is based on the fundamental stakes of Wallonia: increasing sustainable growth and the employment rate.

Priority Axes

The Operational Programme of Wallonia is structured around six priority axes (excluding technical assistance):

- AXIS 1 ECONOMY 2020 : Improving the Competitiveness of Enterprises Strengthening of firms competitiveness
- AXIS 2 INNOVATION 2020 : Fostering of activities creating added value and optimization of the results in the economic sector
- AXIS 3 TERRITORIAL INTELLIGENCE 2020 : Restoring the attractiveness of the territory
- AXIS 4 TRANSITION TO A LOW-CARBON WALLONIA : Sustainable development
- AXIS 5 INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT 2020 : Revitalization of urban poles
- AXE 6 SKILLS 2020 : Acquisition of skills for SMEs through advanced equipment and extension of reception capacities

Table 5.5

Allocation of ERDF in Wallonia during programming period 2014-2020

Priority axis	Funding	Thematic objective	Aid from the Union Amount in €	National contribution Amount in €	Total funding Amount in €
1	ERDF	3 & 6	206.581.183	306.296.760	512.877.941
2	ERDF	1	188.516.847	282.775.271	471.292.117
3	ERDF	6	116.409.685	174.614.528	291.024.213
4	ERDF	4	98.471.081	147.706.621	246.177.702
5	ERDF	4 & 6	34.067.507	51.101.260	85.168.767
6	ERDF	10	27.981.819	41.972.728	69.954.546
TOTAL	ERDF		672.028.122	1.004.467.168	1.676.495.286

Source: <http://www.europeinbelgium.be/>

Wallonia-Brussels Federation

Description

The OP is based on thematic objectives:

- TO 8 : « promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility »
- TO 9 : « promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination »

- TO 10 : « investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning »

Objectives

Its objective is to contribute to job creation and to strengthen social cohesion in Wallonia and Brussels, with particular attention on the integration of young people into the labour market.

Priority Axes

The OP is structured around four priority axes (excluding technical assistance) :

- Axis 1: Business and creativity
- Axis 2: Knowledge and capacities
- Axis 3: Inclusive society and employment

Table 5.6

Allocation of ESF in Wallonia-Brussels Federation during programming period 2014-2020

Priority axis	Funding	Thematic objective	Contribution of the EU	Contribution of the Region	Total Financing
1	ESF	TO 8	40.578.751	40.578.751	81.157.502
2	ESF	TO 10	204.912.440	204.912.440	409.824.880
3	ESF	TO 9	230.382.513	230.382.513	460.765.026
4*	ESF	TO 8	142.011.200	142.011.200	284.022.400
Total			617.884.904	617.884.904	1.235.769.808

Source: <http://www.europeinbelgium.be/>

*Included YEI : 108.384.390 € (Transition: 85.018.309 € and More developed : 23.366.081 €)

Table 5.7

Objectives of the EU cohesion policy in the metropolitan area (FUA) according to actors

Instrument	Type of Fund(s)	Axis	Objective
ROP - BCR	ERDF	6	Innovation, competitiveness, circular economy, quality of life
ROP - BCR	ESF	3	Youth employment, social integration
ROP - Flanders	ERDF	5	Innovation, competitiveness, sustainable growth
ROP - Flanders	ESF	3	Employment, entrepreneurship
ROP - Wallonia	ERDF	5	Sustainable growth, employment
Community OP - WBF	ESF	3	Employment, social cohesion

Source: <http://www.europeinbelgium.be/>

5.1.1 Funded measures: main sectors and spatial distribution

Spatially, ERDF funds are used by the regions on their own territory. There are no specific funds for interregional or metropolitan projects.

The main sectors benefiting from cohesion policy funds do not differ greatly from one region to another.

Employment is one of the actors benefiting most from these funds, both in the Brussels Capital Region and in the Flemish and Walloon Regions. This represents approximately 1.5 billion euros over the 2014-2020 period.

Sustainable growth is another sectors receiving big parts of EUCP funds, with approximately 500 million euros.

Finally, we can observe the operational programme in the Brussels Capital Region puts more emphasis on urban issues, such as social inclusion, the circular economy, the improvement of the quality of life... This is of course linked to the morphology of the region, which is a city-region.

Challenges and critical elements

- Broadly speaking, the operational programmes between the different federated entities (depending on the type of fund) address the same themes, but with a more targeted focus on urban issues for the Brussels Capital Region. It is therefore tempting to imagine that pooling some of these funds via metropolitan management and governance (through interregional ITI for instance) could have greater positive effects than in the current situation, where each entity invests in its own territory, according to its own criteria, but for territories which are, after all, fairly similar/interconnected, at least in the functional urban area.
-

5.2 Coherence and synergies with metropolitan objectives and instruments

This section reports preliminary considerations on the coherence between the EU cohesion policy objectives, thematic priorities and actions and the main goals of metropolitan cooperation. To this aim, it considers to what extent the EU cohesion policy funding addresses the main development issues of the metropolitan area, and how its goals are aligned with the metropolitan area needs and strategies.

5.2.1 Alignment with the goals defined in metropolitan instruments

The EU cohesion policy objectives are coherent with the main goals of metropolitan instrument “*Plan Régional de Développement Durable*” developed until by the Brussels Capital Region. However, the actions only partially respond to the territorial development goals, essentially due to the fact the PRDD only applies in BCR, and not in Flanders and Wallonia.

5.2.2 Thematic priorities

“*Plan Régional de Développement Durable*” thematic priorities for metropolitan development (see section 3.4) resonate the EU cohesion policy priorities in relation to different fields (infrastructure, transportation, social inequalities and territorial disparities, economic development, education etc.). The objectives and priorities of the main metropolitan plans and programmes (section 3.4) have been defined in relation to European objectives and priorities, which in turn are consistent with the EU cohesion policy priorities.

5.2.3 Funding magnitude

During the 2014-2020 period, the Brussels Capital Region has received approximately 150 million €. This number doesn't take into account other funds dedicated to municipalities and other entities in the BCR (see tables 5.1. and 5.2.): we are speaking here of the funds dedicated to the regional body. The overall budget,

during the same period, of the Brussels Capital Region was 28,5B€. So, the amount of EU funds compared to the total budget is 0,5%, quite insignificant. This share, given the above explanations, is an overestimation of reality. This share is quite identical in Flanders, a little bit superior in Wallonia.

5.3 Outcomes

The “*Plan Régional de Développement Durable*” has been approved in 2018. The publication of the PRDD is not at the end of the process of reflection and work on the regional territory, on the needs of the inhabitants of Brussels, but at its first step: perspective.brussels has been charged by the Government to ensure the active follow-up of the project that the PRDD carries, both from the point of view of evaluation, implementation via other planning tools and by strengthening its role as a regional expert in territorial development. This mission is called projecting.brussels.

The Brussels Capital Region's goals for its future can only be achieved if certain conditions are met: in particular, the link with the municipalities and other public institutions and authorities must be consolidated. The Region also considers the smart city to be an essential lever for achieving its objectives and, as such, will support its emergence. Finally, the Region recognises in the PRDD that the link between citizens and the Region must be strengthened, particularly with regard to regional development.

At this day, only the future will say if successful outcomes will occur.

Table 5.8
Successful outcomes

Action	Field	Outcome	Added value	Role of the metropolitan institution
PRDD	Territorial development	Not available	Not available	Not available

PRDD outcomes

Challenges and critical elements

- For now, outcomes from the “Plan de Régional de Développement Durable” are not yet available. As the “Plan Régional de Développement Durable” only applies on the Brussels Capital Region territory, that tool is not extendable to other regions. However, the strategy developed and the goals targeted by this tool could be useful to set up considerations and objectives to a larger scale, interregional scale, or metropolitan scale. The funding magnitude of EU funds in the Brussels Capital Region is quite insignificant, accounting less than 0,5% of the overall budget if we take into account regional and municipal budget bodies. Due to this fact, EU funds have nearly no impact in the overall policy and operating of the BCR.
-

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

As for EUCP funds, the Next Generation EU programme, and especially the Recovery and Resilience Facility, federated entities will be the main beneficiaries. Therefore, it will not have any metropolitan dimension. Main sectors and axis concerned by the Recovery and Resilience facility have been determined by the federal state:

- Mobility: investments in public transport (rail...), development of electric cars sales share, promotion of bicycle use, smart mobility...;
- Durability: investments in public buildings renovation, promotion and development of renewable energy, biodiversity protection, circular economy...;
- Social: investments in healthcare system, education...;
- Digitalisation: investments in 5G, public services digitalisation, cybersecurity, development of optic fibre...;
- Productivity: investments in research and entrepreneurship.

As a reminder, Belgium will get 6 billion € grant allocations from Recovery and Resilience facility. Federal state will receive 1,25bn €, 2,2bn € will be allocated to Flanders, 1,5bn € to Wallonia, 500M € to Wallonia-Brussels Federation, 395M € to BCR (in practice, BCR will receive more than 400M € due to Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Flanders and Federal state participation).

Each federated entity set up their own strategies, on their own territories. By example, Brussels-Capital region has determined its own strategic axis made up of 19 measures (14 investments and 5 reforms) :

- Unemployment and training (120M€) ;
- Digitalisation (70M€) ;
- Mobility and public transport (140M€) ;
- Durability (120M€).

Challenges and critical elements

- The lack of metropolitan governance negates any investment at interregional level. Each federated entity will therefore receive its share and invest it as it wishes in its own territory. The lack of consultation and coordination between actors suggests that no metropolitan or interregional vision will be put in place, especially as each region is indirectly competing with the others to redevelop its economy as quickly as possible, each of them will want to maximise its own economic recovery first.
-

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

Since there is no metropolitan governance, EUCP and its funds play no role in metropolitan policies and governance and therefore does not contribute to strengthen metropolitan governance and foster metropolitan cooperation around Brussels.

Challenges and critical elements

As EU cohesion policy funds are managed by federated entities, ERDF and ESF funds are exclusively invested on their own territories.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Thinking on an interregional or metropolitan scale could vastly increase the positive effects of the Resilience and Recovery Plan through “economies of scale”.
- Flanders and Wallonia should join the exploratory processes led by the Brussels Capital Region in terms of a metropolitan view, which could lead to identify common challenges and objectives.
- Join forces with other metropolitan cities to strengthen Metropolitan Cities as a category (advocacy, lobbying, mutual learning,...) .
- Pooling some of EUCP funds via metropolitan management and governance could have greater positive effects than today, where each entity invests in its own territory, according to its own criteria, but for territories which are, after all, fairly similar/inter-connected, at least in the functional urban area. The Metropolitan city of Turin seems to be a good example to follow.

6 Main challenges and recommendations

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

Challenges

- reactive role of metropolitan bodies in the designing EUCP ;
- lack of metropolitan body in the programming and implementation of EUCP ; mainly limited to ROPs' implementation, even if the BCR develops tools to develop the metropolitan vision ;
- No metropolitan governance in Belgium for Brussels, Regions (federated entities) are the only bodies with the competences in territorial development and cohesion policy ;
- ITI instrument imply political commitment and willingness between actors, which is the main obstacle in Belgium between federated entities ;
- develop involvement of social groups and business community in the case of regional EUOPs ;
- in Belgium, the policy and the EUCP support for counteracting the effects of the pandemic are Regional competences ; the approach deprives metropolises of the possibility to actively participate in the fight against the long-term social and economic consequences of the pandemic ;
- Brussels Capital Region and its counterparts are only at the beginning of the metropolitan cooperation process ;
- federated entities (Regions) don't have the willingness to cooperate with other at metropolitan scale, because it will reduce their own competences on their territories ;
- health care, mobility, sustainable development and housing policy are becoming very important post-Covid-19 future challenges ;
- programming of the post-Covid-19 recovery instrument (recovery and resilience plan) is fully centralised at federal and regional levels, with no influence of metropolitan level ;
- Necessity to set up projects promoting metropolitan synergy, metropolitan "identity", as RER and Brupass XL.



Recommendations for the Brussels Capital Region (metropolitan level)

- The legal empowerment of the metropolis will open the possibility of obtaining funds not only from the EUCP but also from other sources, including national budget funds, with positive effects for each Region, including BCR ;
- ITI implementation should be treated as one of several instruments of a more active and independent metropolitan policy ;
- Develop and extend the “*Plan Régional de Développement Durable*” in a way that other Regions could participate by targeting common objectives among three Regions and working on a larger scale than BCR.



Recommendations for the regional and national level

- Quick-wins, built up upon bottom-up processes and local project, in collaboration with other Regions, in order to reach, eventually, larger scale;

- Pragmatism, building trust are the main targets to any implementation of metropolitan governance ;
- The EUCP and its tools would have a stronger impact on the development of metropolitan areas if the functioning of metropolitan areas were anchored in federal/regional legislation and if the “metropolitan community” legal framework planned in the sixth state reform was adopted.



Recommendations for the EU level

- Since EUCP funds are aligned on NUTS regions and reflects UE (transversal) thematic objectives, get out of current Belgian situation could be complex : a more spatial approach, less thematic, when deciding Cohesion Policy guidelines could lead to another reading key of the territory / metropolitan area / FUA ;
- Including the metropolitan areas governance in EUCP programming will have a key meaning for the coordination of the policies and instruments of cities, towns, suburban and rural areas within such important spheres of inhabitants' needs like housing, mobility, green infrastructure, waste management, energy management etc. It could change Regions point of view about the pooling of resources for metropolitan governance ;
- Establishing the European Metropolitan Policy Observatory providing among others the statistical data for the EU metropolitan areas would significantly improve an evidence-based metropolitan policy both at the EU and at the national states level.

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

Challenges

- the role of EUCP in the creation of the Brussels Metropolitan Area is inexistent due to the federal structure in Belgium ;
- EUCP funds impact is limited in each Regional budget.



Recommendations for the Brussels Capital Region (metropolitan level)

- Taking into account the European call for public services improvement the projects under European Social Fund should strongly address the need for development and improvement of public services, including health systems, housing policy in the scale of metropolitan areas;
- Long-term goals of strategic metropolitan planning included in EUCP may help to identify the future opportunities and threats of individual metropolitan areas development and may stimulate undertaking the long-term initiatives within an hypothetical Brussels Metropolitan Area ;
- The institutionally and organizationally weak metropolitan area is not able to undertake tasks related to such complex problems like climate crisis or economic crisis management therefore the institutional capacity of a hypothetical Brussels Metropolitan Area should be created with the use of adequate EUCP instruments.



Recommendations for the regional and national level

- Solving the pending problems and achieving the goals of metropolitan areas development depend strongly on how EUCP OPs are designed and implemented;



Recommendations for the EU level

- The impact of EUCP on the achievement of metropolitan goals depends strongly on how its instruments are implemented at national and/or regional level; it should be taken into account in the next perspective of the EUCP. It also should be taken into account in the mid-term revision of the actual programming period ;
- EUCP should explicitly address such issues like climate change, sustainable development, socio-economic polarisation on metropolitan scale as it is the relevant scale to intervene with a cohesion policy instruments; tackling these problems needs strategies across administrative boundaries.

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

Challenges

- Federal state : federated entities with high level of power (territorial development, spatial planning, public transport...) on their own territory;
- Regions are competing between them and invest according to their own strategies on their own territory ;
- strong position of regional governments too narrowly focused on their territorial unit needs;
- No or lack of cooperation and trust between Regions ;
- No (role of) metropolitan level in setting up development goals at national, regional and local level.



Recommendations for the Brussels Capital Region (metropolitan level)

- Long-term goals of strategic metropolitan planning included in EUCP may help to identify the future opportunities and threats of individual metropolitan areas development and may stimulate undertaking the long-term initiatives within an hypothetical Brussels Metropolitan Area ;
- The institutionally and organizationally weak metropolitan area is not able to undertake tasks related to such complex problems like climate crisis or economic crisis management therefore the institutional capacity of a hypothetical Brussels Metropolitan Area should be created with the use of adequate EUCP instruments.



Recommendations for the regional and national level

- To effectively support the future inter regional as well as metropolitan development the regional authorities cannot play only a role of Managing Authorities for regional OPs but have to take the more subjective role to develop a wider territorial focus than their own territory.
- Quick-wins, built up upon bottom-up processes and local project, in collaboration with other Regions, in order to reach, eventually, larger scale;
- Pragmatism, building trust are the main targets to any implementation of metropolitan governance ;
- The EUCP and its tools would have a stronger impact on the development of metropolitan areas if the functioning of metropolitan areas were anchored in federal/regional legislation and if the “metropolitan community” legal framework planned in the sixth state reform was adopted.



Recommendations for the EU level

- integrated initiatives and investments. The EUCP stimulus and support for cooperative forms of territorial initiatives will result in development of regular territorially integrated strategies aimed at solving problems of supralocal and subregional (in the NUTS2 meaning) nature;
- The metropolitan governance modes and the capacity to implement integrated planning tools are sensitive to specific context; EUCP should provide a framework that allows tasks and long-term actions to be tailored to the needs of particular metropolitan areas;
- Since EUCP funds are aligned on NUTS regions and reflects UE (transversal) thematic objectives, get out of current Belgian situation could be complex : a more spatial approach, less thematic, when deciding Cohesion Policy guidelines could lead to another reading key of the territory / metropolitan area / FUA ;
- The need of institutional strengthening of the metropolitan areas should be anticipated in the EUCP 2021+. The ITI instrument would not be enough to meet the approaching challenges resulting from Covid-19 crisis, economic crisis and/or climate crisis;
- Future EUCP tools and incentives dedicated to metropolitan areas development will help to overcome difficulties in tackling the problems of the administratively divided functional urban areas consisting of the ‘soft spaces’ and ‘fuzzy boundaries’; it will help to achieve one of EU Territorial Agenda priorities for balanced growth of Functional Regions built on linkages and flows of people, resources and policies between cities, towns and rural areas;
- The direct addressing the metropolitan governance in the EUCP 2021+ will have a positive impact on strengthening and development of multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation being one of the aims of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

Additional comments about challenges and recommendations

Given the absence of metropolitan governance in Brussels « the enhancement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the governance of cohesion policy at the metropolitan level » and reflections concerning « the added value that cohesion policy could provide in implementing metropolitan policies and achieving metropolitan spatial development goals » are not relevant. In this context, the emphasis for Brussels should be put on « **favouring the institution and consolidation of metropolitan governance structures and co-operation practices** », in particular if and how cohesion policy could be relevant to implement metropolitan policies and achieving spatial development goals.

Hence, for the Brussels Capital-Region (BCR), the authorities in charge of the EU funds, cohesion policy may be used as a leverage to developing metropolitan cooperation. Indeed, territorial development does not stop at the Brussels regional border, and more cooperation is needed with the two other regions (Flemish and Walloon Regions) and all municipalities strongly connected to the BCR. More precisely, in the Belgian/Brussels context, EU funds may help in favouring the institutional actors to cooperate whenever necessary. Target topics here are numerous: spatial planning; social cohesion and inclusion, economic development; local housing policy, urban policy, management of public services of collective interest...

One of the principles upon which various actors active within the Brussels metropolitan area are relying is to envisage inter-regional cooperation in a very pragmatic way. Indeed, as we have seen above, the Belgian federal political system, attributing large powers to federated entities, such as spatial planning or management of European structural funds, makes obsolete any possibility of creating an additional level of governance at inter-regional scale, level which should ideally take back several powers from the regions. This solution is inconceivable at this moment. So, a model copied on what is done in large French metropolises such as Lille or Lyon is not possible in Belgium.

Within the Brussels metropolitan area, the various actors seem to favour a consultation and/or a cooperation model, which would identify data and experiences to exchange between entities and thus attempt to define a strategy for developing an inter-regional approach. This "soft governance model" would contribute to establishing, among other things, a high level of trust between the different entities, where each of them would have something to gain by collaborating with the others on common issues established upstream. This type of governance thus makes it possible to achieve a win-win situation, with each actor benefiting from it. Perhaps the genesis of the process establishing the Metropolitan city of Turin (see dedicated case study) is a good example to follow for the Brussels, as it is based on a constructive and pragmatic approach, a soft governance process. The various actors were, at the beginning of 2000s' brought together, on a voluntary basis, to discuss and exchange ideas and proposals. This led to the signing of an agreement between several municipalities and the city of Turin, with the aim, among other things, to develop multi-municipal projects. It was only after established the necessary trust between partners and these opportunities for discussion and exchange that more formal elements were proposed, in particular the delimitation of the metropolitan area, culminating with the adoption of a law at the beginning of 2010 which ratified the creation of the Metropolitan city of Turin. Between the first negotiations and the formal creation of the metropolitan government, just over 10 years have passed. This example shows that a soft governance/consultation/cooperation model, enable to ensure trust between partners, with each of them has something to gain, could be the solution for the Brussels Metropolitan Area.

The other element identified as an interesting solution to develop metropolitan cooperation in Brussels is to identify quick-wins, actions that pay off in the short term for the various actors. This leads to the implementation of a bottom-up process, identifying targeted, localised thematic projects, possibly concerning only a part of the metropolitan area. These projects, requiring the collaboration of several actors, are thus likely to lead quickly to positive results, thus reinforcing the interest in cooperation between entities that led to the first successes. Such projects already exist in diverse domains, by example for public transport, with the creation of a single pass in and around BCR, involving each regional public transportation company + train) or in a more located project, the T.OP Noordrand: Territorial Development Noordrand Program, aiming to develop north outskirts of Brussels, including former NATO headquarters, involving BCR, Flemish Region and province of Flemish Brabant.

The second major objective for the Brussels Capital-Region is more directly related to the actual use of EU funds. It aims at better supporting the regional strategy of territorial development as well as area-based approaches as implemented in the BCR, notably through territorial tools proposed by the EU. Hence, the way tools like ITI have been used elsewhere is of decisive importance for the BCR. It should be noted here that ITIs, although clearly identified as one of the most effective levers among Cohesion Policy tools, have

never been implemented by regions. Each entity has created custom tools and processes have been created, to better correspond to their reality. The reason for this choice is to be found between the complexity that can arise from cooperation between several actors in the framework of an ITI and a feeling of lack of added value that such a tool can bring them.

INTERREG Programme could also be a mechanism which could be adapted to the Belgian federal context, particularly the “Cross-border Cooperation Programmes” type. The “Cross-border Cooperation Programme” operates in a context where it appears clearly from exchanges with border regions and their representatives certain key local issues faced by citizens and businesses crossing borders on a daily basis need further reflections and actions. Crossing borders to find employment, receive better healthcare, make use of public facilities or receive emergency support can still cause difficulties. Taxation or pension rights issues, non-recognition of rights or standards, impossibility to operate joint emergency services are still problems that exist today. Most of the remaining obstacles stem from diverging national legislations on either side of the border (national legislation is “border-blind”), incompatible administrative processes, or simply lack of common territorial planning. The particularity of that type of programme is that regional entities (Regions in Belgium, “Länder” in Germany, “départements” in France...) are the key partners of the implementation of the programme. This mechanism could maybe be adapted to spatial planning. The Interreg “Greater Region”, including parts of Germany, Belgium, France and Luxembourg is one of these and could be a model the federated authorities could follow to elaborate a better cooperation between them. As a reminder, Interreg Greater Region Programme supports cross-border cooperation projects between local and regional actors from the territories that make up the Greater Region. Through these cross-border co-operations, the program aims to strengthen the territorial, social and economic cohesion of the large-regional areas by reducing the negative effects of borders. Support can be provided for both local projects and large-scale projects throughout the Greater Region. Transnational cooperation programme like Interreg North-West Europe could also be interesting to foster Brussels metropolitan cooperation in relation with other metropolitan area of Benelux, France, Holland and North Rhine Westphalia. Right now Brussels-Capital Region is not eligible to cross-border cooperation programs because it has no administrative border with another region from another members states. So making possible to have interregional cooperation within Belgium or within the Eurodelta Region could be an interesting idea.

Finally, two past ESPON projects could also guide next steps in order to reach a metropolitan governance in and around Brussels. The first one is the ESPON-SPIMA project, which tries to answer to several questions:

- What is the strategic role of spatial planning for cities towards inclusive and sustainable growth within a metropolitan area, taking into account the national context, specificities of each metropolitan area as well as multi-level governance arrangements?
- What are the approaches, including governance arrangements, to spatial and strategic planning that can help overcoming the above mentioned spatial development challenges at the metropolitan level in the specific context of each stakeholder’s metropolitan area?
- Which policy tools and governance approaches can be useful and sensible to plan and manage spatial development at metropolitan area scale, taking into account the context of each stakeholder metropolitan area?

The ESPON-SPIMA results for Brussels are: *“Brussels faces the challenge of establishing a process of collaboration for more coordinated urban developments at the metropolitan scale. This requires the involvement of the three regions of Belgium. There are a number of unique factors influencing this process comparing to other areas. These include the multicultural environment in the Brussels Capital region that is not always valued by the other two regions, and the cultural differences in terms of language and identity between Brussels, Wallonia and Flanders. The added value for this collaboration has to be shared and seen by all the regions as an asset to their own development. A number of bottom-up initiatives and projects are currently aiming to boost this process on a small scale. Given the confinement of the city limits to the sole core part of the metropolitan area (i.e. the Brussels Capital Region), the absence of a metropolitan-wide planning approach and tensions between the three Belgian regions (i.e. Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia), current cross-regional developments entail many issues of territorial competitiveness between the core city and its Flemish or Walloon suburbs.”*

The second one, the ESPON-ACTAREA project, completed in 2017, can be an important source of inspiration for the implementation of a metropolitan governance in Brussels through a soft governance model. As we mentioned above, a soft governance model seems to be the best way to investigate and focus on. Developing soft territorial cooperation thus requires actors to go through the dialogue process of finding common ground for cooperation based on specific territorial needs. Soft territorial cooperation holds great potential for renewing territorial governance. In the context of a decentralised, federal structure, it can improve coordination between different tiers of government. In all cases, it can renew relations between institutions and actors and fill governance gaps.

The ESPON-ACTAREA project has taught us a lot about how to develop soft cooperation at a metropolitan scale. These recommendations, included in a handbook in 2017, are listed and summarised below in order to make targeted recommendations for Brussels.

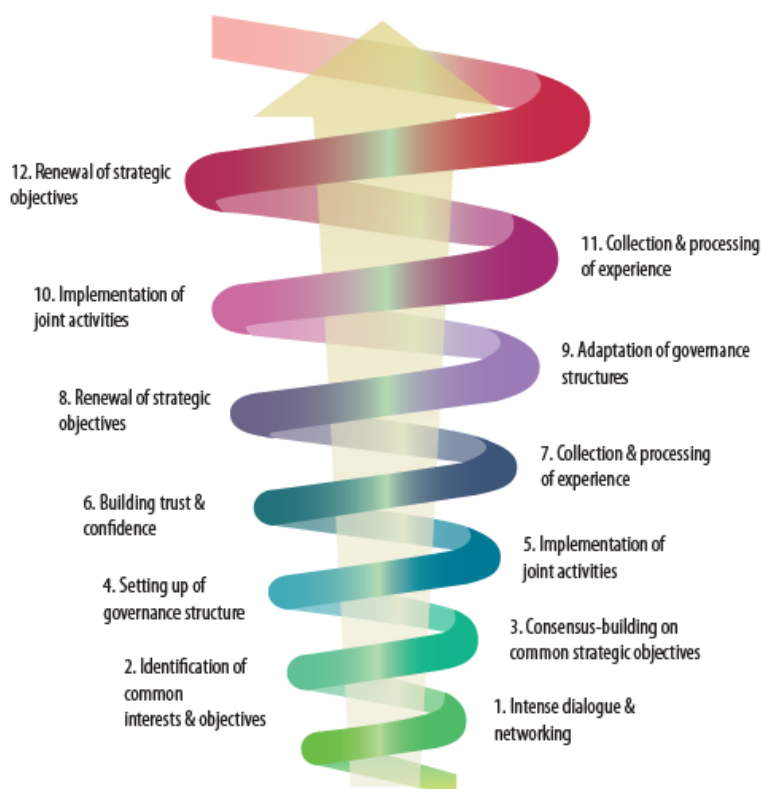
Based on ESPON-ACTAREA, soft territorial cooperation goes several phases:

- Intense dialogue, identification of relevant actors, networking, exploration ('getting to know each other'), consensus-building, definition of joint objectives...
- Implementation
- Collection and processing of experiences
- Renewal of cooperation based on accumulated experiences and evolution of framework conditions

Prior to this, two conditions must be fulfilled according to ESPON-ACTAREA for a positive bottom-up cooperation dynamic:

- Cooperation partners must have sufficient freedom to shape the cooperation so that it is meaningful from their point of view. Cooperation objectives, partnership, perimeter, activities and governance structure must be the result of an ongoing dialogue process. Furthermore, they must develop continuously to adapt to changing conditions in order to remain relevant over time.
- Soft territorial cooperation must be continuously encouraged to avoid losing momentum. This is even important for cooperation initiatives that have succeeded in establishing a territorial 'brand' or 'shared identity', and in changing working habits, i.e. establishing a habit of cooperation, so that the cooperation become easier to implement.

Figure 1: Spiral of growth in cooperation



Source: ESPON ACTAREA (2017).

ESPON-ACTAREA conclusions are identical to those emitted by actors met during interviews. The methodology identified to develop soft metropolitan cooperation is therefore recognised by all. The last obstacle to its implementation is probably a lack of political willingness from the various federated entities.

Important steps documented in ESPON-Actarea to develop soft territorial cooperation are provided here for information, as, in the BCR case study, they form the basis to favour the institution and consolidation of metropolitan governance structures and cooperation practices in Brussels metropolitan area.

The **first phase**, consisting of intense dialogue, consensus-building, networking is probably the most important step to undertake for the establishment of a metropolitan governance in Brussels as the positions of the various actors are very different from each other. At this point, Regions need to discuss and exchange their point of views, their (mutual) objectives, to identify sectors where a mutualisation of decisions could be more efficient than separated...

The **second phase**, corresponding to the implementation of the previous phase is important. The implemented strategy is crucial in the sense that each stakeholder must have something to gain, has to be listened, respected and trusted. If a territory, or an actor is disadvantaged compared to the others, then there is a bias in the process that could break the momentum. This step already exists partially and locally through local projects such as T.OP Noordrand or more thematic ones like the RER or Brupass XL. The objective should be to build up on these projects and to see how they could contribute to the establishment, both by their implementation process and by their very existence, of cooperation on an interregional/metropolitan scale in Brussels.

The **third phase**, corresponding to collect and process experiences, is probably the easiest in that process. As mentioned, each region has huge competences in a very wide range of sectors, including territorial development, mobility... Each region is competent since nearly 30 years in these domains. They know how to manage their territory, they know their specificities and their needs. Sharing their knowledge therefore does not seem to be the most difficult step.

Finally, the **fourth and last phase** in the implementation of a soft territorial cooperation/governance is the renewal of cooperation based on accumulated experiences and evolution of framework conditions. This step could lead to reorganize cooperation model in a more legal structure, maybe in the creation of a metropolitan government, as in Turin. But before to reach this stage, a necessary reform of the state, the functioning of the federated entities and their mutual relations will be required. As it stands, the federal law does not allow the creation of a new interregional level of decision.

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