

Capital Cities & Regions Network

Preliminary position on the EU cohesion policy post-2027

In light of:

- the publication last year of [the 8th Cohesion Report: Cohesion in Europe towards 2050](#) ;
- the November 2022 [Council conclusions on cohesion policy post-2027](#) ;
- the September 2022 [European Parliament resolution on economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU: the 8th Cohesion Report](#) ;
- the recent DG REGIO papers on [the outcome of 2021-2027 cohesion policy programming](#) ; on [Regional Trends for Growth and Convergence in the EU](#) and on [the geography of EU discontent and the regional development trap in Europe](#) ;
- the Commission communication [“Harnessing talent in Europe’s regions”](#) ;
- the ECA review 01/2023 [“EU financing through cohesion policy and the Recovery and Resilience Facility: A comparative analysis”](#) ;
- the [2022 EU Regional Competitiveness Index 2.0](#) and the [2020 European Social Progress Index](#) ;

taking into account:

- The New Leipzig Charter ([The transformative power of cities for the common good](#)) and its implementation roadmap [“Next steps for the Urban Agenda for the EU”](#) ;
- the EPC paper [“Addressing Cohesion Policy’s identity crisis in a changing European”](#) (February 2023) and the Bertelsmann Stiftung study [“The Future of EU Cohesion: Effects of the Twin Transition on Disparities across European Regions”](#) (October 2022) ;
- the [recommendation of the OECD Council on Regional Development Policy](#) (June 2023) as well as the OECD report [“Rethinking Regional Attractiveness in the New Global Environment”](#) (July 2023) ;
- the CoR COTER study [“The delivery system of Cohesion Policy now and in future”](#) (June 2023).

and given:

- the ongoing discussions within [the group of high-level specialists on the future of cohesion policy](#) ;
- the [renewed declaration of the #CohesionAlliance](#) signed on 12 October 2022 by the European Committee of the Regions together with the leading European associations of cities and regions as well as [the METREX Manifesto for a Metropolitan Europe](#) (July 2023) and the EURO CITIES policy paper [“How the EU can work better with cities”](#) (June 2023);
- the [draft CoR opinion on “the future of cohesion policy post-2027”](#) to be adopted on November 2023 as well as [the EESC opinion on “the Recovery and Resilience Facility and cohesion policy: towards cohesion policy 2.0”](#) adopted on 20 September 2023 ;
- the workshop [“Rethinking the post-industrial transition in capital cities and regions”](#) organised by the CCRN partnership on 11th October 2023 during the 21st European Week of Regions and Cities.

The undersigned European capital cities and regions:

1. *are convinced that Cohesion policy needs to continue strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion **for all regions and cities** in the post-2027 programming period. These objectives enshrined in article 174 of the TFUE are indeed at the heart of the European project and can only be achieved with capital cities and regions;*
2. *acknowledge that **key drivers of growth and just transitions remain concentrated in metropolitan areas** as centres of education and R&D activities but underline that capital cities and regions are also confronted with many challenges that can be tackled thanks to cohesion policy such as **the persistency of subregional disadvantaged areas and social disparities**, lack of affordable housing, health and healthcare provision, mobility, pollution, pressures on biodiversity, climate changes effects, inclusion of migrants...;*

3. remind that **capital cities and regions have been at the frontline in recent years in enabling the EU to overcome multiple crises** (combating covid-19 - including vaccination campaigns -, post-Covid-19 economic recovery, energy, migration...) making the best possible use of EU Cohesion policy funding available. They thus consider that **without compromising its structural and long-term objectives, cohesion policy post-2027 must keep a sufficient degree of flexibility to make future programs more responsive to evolving territorial needs and unforeseen circumstances.**
4. consider that future regional programmes should be targeted on **a limited number of issues, but in such a way that allows capital cities and regions to decide where to concentrate EU investments** taking into account the priorities that they can accurately identify.
5. insist on the fact that cohesion policy has **an important leverage effect** including when the investments are taking place in more developed regions. These investments must then continue to **improve the quality of EU citizens' lives and to support the transition towards a climate-neutral, circular, green and digital economy, each and every of these challenges concerning directly capital cities and regions.** They also want to underline the well documented **spatial spillovers of Cohesion policy** and its positive economic impact for the EU on a global scale as well as the fact that **capital cities and regions are key drivers of growth, cohesion and the just transition of the whole EU territory.**
6. are supporting a post-2027 cohesion policy with **a strong urban and metropolitan dimension providing solutions for the development of sustainable and innovative urban areas** (cities, including city centres, and their commuting zones). They thus strongly support **the continuation post-2027 of the European Urban Initiative** (including Urban Innovative Actions). They can also testify that **urban-rural linkages are important drivers of regional development** and want therefore to stress **the importance of territorial strategies based on functional urban and peri-urban areas.** They also underline the importance of linkages with smaller cities in the vicinity of capital cities. These functional areas in and around capital cities are a key scale for integrated solutions to many challenges such as overpopulation and congestion in capital regions. Cohesion Policy post-2027 should thus introduce flexible tools facilitating investment policies for the benefit of these functional areas.
7. stresses that **GDP as the main indicator of development fails to take into account capital cities and regions environmental sustainability, resource efficiency, health, education, equity and social inclusion trends.** The European Commission itself acknowledges in its 2023 Strategic Foresight Report that “with recent developments such as climate change and the pandemic, it has become increasingly clear that GDP is incomplete as a measure of progress, as it does not fully reflect important environmental or social challenges of our times”. Capital cities and regions thus call for **the continuation of the reflexions on how GDP can be complemented with social, environmental and demographic criteria¹** that are integral parts of the EU development model in order to **ensure that post-2027 cohesion policy envelopes and priorities are not determined on the basis of a narrow or even biased socioeconomic vision of EU capital cities and regions.**

¹ The Commission suggests that “one option to develop beyond-GDP metrics consists of assigning monetary values to relevant factors of wellbeing and using these values to “adjust” GDP. These can include different aspects of quality of life (e.g., health, education, and recreation), unpaid care and domestic work, inequalities, costs of environmental damage (e.g., pollution and GHG emissions), or natural resource exhaustion.” - See also the CoR COTER report “[Overview: Cohesion Policy benchmarks beyond GDP to better reflect well-being standard of living](#)” (March 2023)

8. believe that European territorial cooperation must remain a key objective of post-2027 cohesion policy and highlight in particular **the added value of interregional cooperation** to allow Capital Cities and Regions to work together on the many common challenges they are facing ;
 9. believe that the efforts to simplify cohesion policy should be duly continued in order to significantly reduce the administrative burden on managing authorities and final beneficiaries of the post-2027 cohesion policy funds. **Capital cities and regions will be paying close attention to the lessons that can be learned from the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility** bearing in mind that **simplification should not provide an argument for recentralising cohesion policy** at European or national levels nor for considering **budgetary support instruments that would be territorially blind**.
 10. suggest that Cohesion policy being one of the most visible EU-policy, including in capital regions and cities where a large number of European citizens live, **it is extremely relevant for the image of the EU and has the potential to substantially contribute to counter anti-European tendencies in our societies**. Capital cities and regions will thus continue to play their full part in communicating the concrete results of cohesion policy.
 11. strongly support of **the principle of multilevel governance** and ask for **strengthening the European Code of Conduct on Partnership to ensure a more consistent application across member states**. Capital cities and regions can attest the positive impacts of the shared management mode for its implementation, which contributes to proper accountability at the regional and local levels, a better public administration and the linking of bottom-up programming with EU global objectives. Generally speaking, the fact that local and regional levels are not significantly involved – if not totally sidelined - from crucial EU processes (e.g. the European Semester cycles, National Energy and Climate Plans or the National Recovery and Resilience Plans) undermines the efficiency of the EU's performances on social, economic and sustainable targets even though these processes are of crucial importance for the sustainable transition and recovery of capital cities and regions.
 12. emphasize the need for a rules-based order as defined by the EU treaties. When it comes to the Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation, the European Commission should undertake efforts to **identify areas where it can work together directly with Capital cities and regions** to strengthen the rule of law in Europe so that **final beneficiaries of the funds are not unfairly affected**.
- **List of Capital Cities & Regions supporting this preliminary position on the EU cohesion policy post-2027**

Amsterdam

City of Budapest

Bratislava Region

Helsinki-Uusimaa Region

City of Prague

Region Stockholm

Vienna

Berlin

Brandenburg

Brussels-Capital Region

Île-de-France Region

Riga

City of Stockholm