



To be released immediately

01 June 2021

Proven as crucial during pandemic, more than 8,300 small and medium cities are waiting for support from the new EU Urban Policy

Cities play an important economic and social role for a large proportion of Europe's population, providing an incentive for local employability and sustainable development, and determining the quality of public services such as water management, transport, waste management and environmental protection. Nowadays around 24% of Europe's population lives in 8,350 small, medium and peripheral cities. During the pandemic crisis, cities played a crucial function as centres of services and infrastructures innovations. New EU urban policies should support cities in maintaining and further developing their role in reinforcing resilience and social cohesion for a large segment of the population, especially having in mind the forthcoming post-COVID socio-economic recovery.

Brussels, Belgium – Following a recently released report which provides analysis of the use of ERDF funds allocated for the development of urban policies in 10 thematic areas, the Interreg Europe EURE project issues an Opinion Report addressed to European, National, Regional and Local authorities.

This report is aiming to increase awareness of policy makers and governments:

- To improve the participation of small, medium and peripheral cities in the definition and more effective implementation of European Urban Policy.
- For a polycentrism at the centre of Urban Policy and Cohesion Policy.
- From an urban life to a more humane life.

The next programming period for European funds should therefore provide an opportunity to advance the incorporation and financing of the Functional Urban Areas (FUAs) concept, with special attention given to metropolitan areas, polycentrism of smaller nuclei and rural urban transition spaces.

Generally speaking, at the EU level only major European FUAs and FUAs in cities with 50,000 or more inhabitants are currently eligible for the ERDF. Here we ask – why? Smaller cities have the same problems, even if on a different scale, and have lesser technical and financial resources. For these reasons, FUAs of 20,000 or more inhabitants should be more supported.

The European resources available for urban policy in the period 2021 – 2027 will be at least 18 billion EUR, an increase of 8 billion compared to the period 2014-2020. On top of that, 564 million EUR will be available under the New Urban Initiative.

Europe is a polycentric urban territory, with different levels of polycentrism. Basically, the urban territory in Europe is organized as follows:

- Metropolitan Regions or Metropolis, which functionally constitute FUAs;
- Cities with 50,000 or more inhabitants, which constitute, or may be, FUAs within a Region;
- Smaller cities with 10-20,000 inhabitants, which are centres of attraction for 2 or more smaller urban/rural centres.

In a [recent study](#) published by the European ESPON program, around 1,600 potential FUAs with a minimum of 20,000 inhabitants were identified in Europe.

Based on this situation EURE Project Partners proposed the following 10 policy recommendations:

- 1. Promote an effective participation of small, medium and peripheral cities in the EU urban policy to strengthen Policentrism, as well as an adequate definition of these cities, depending on the territory in which they are located;**
- 2. Empower public and social participation of the local administration in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of urban strategies and, in general, urban policy;**
- 3. Sustainable and integrated urban development requires taking into account in a progressive way functional urban areas and polycentric urban systems;**
- 4. Promote a greater commitment of Member States in political and financial decentralization to the local administration;**
- 5. Give greater relevance to strategic planning in the preparation of the programme instruments for the implementation of urban policy and public investment in general;**
- 6. Promote the territorial and thematic grouping of cities and entities for the joint development of sustainable urban development policies through integrated territorial strategies;**
- 7. Urban functional areas for sustainable urban development can and should overflow administrative demarcations, configuring around different urban functions, polycentric territorial systems and greater territorial interrelationships;**
- 8. Empower the capacity building for decentralized authorities and simplification of ERDF management and ensure that ERDF resources allocated to urban policies are increased;**
- 9. Circular Economy should be mainstreamed into European Urban Policy for small, medium and peripheral cities;**
- 10. Cities, as they have done during the health pandemic, should play a crucial role in post-COVID socio-economic reconstruction.**

According to expectations of EURE Project Partners, these policy recommendations could be taken into consideration by the targeted authorities in the preparations of the programming period 2021-2027 of European funding.

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More information:

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The [EURE project](#) – Effectiveness of Environmental Urban policies to improve Resources Efficiency – proposes the exchange of experiences as a way to improve the environmental performance management of EU urban spaces, including the urban areas with a low population density.



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