

Torino, 28 ottobre 2020  
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To the European Commission President  
Ursula Von Der Leyen  
Rue de la Loi, 200  
1049 – Bruxelles

**Subject:** Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 and the role played by metropolitan authorities

Dear President, Ms Ursula Von Der Leyen,

more than 70% of European population currently lives in urban areas and projections reveal that the percentage is likely to reach 80% by 2050. Metropolitan areas represent the main economic engine of the EU and their level of education is higher than in the rest of the countries where they are located, making them the most favorable environment for the development of creative and high-value activities<sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless, metropolitan regions face a number of important challenges. As they are composed of urban, sub-urban and sometimes even rural and mountain areas, as it is the case of the Metropolitan City of Turin, they require a multidimensional policy approach to help them to tackle their complex issues. Through time, the EU has allocated an increasing share of funds to urban development goals, recognizing urban areas as key components for social and economic development and, at the same time, places of social unrest – such as poverty, unemployment and exclusion – and environmental concerns – such as pollution.

Looking to the 2021 – 2027 programming period, the Commission proposal for the MFF (Multi-annual Financial Framework) takes into account a number of provisions that may be beneficial to metropolitan areas and cities. It further strengthens the urban dimension of Cohesion Policy and Member States will be required to earmark 6% of their ERDF (European Regional Development Funds) resources to sustainable urban development<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, it also institutes the *European Urban Initiative* (EUI), which will be aimed at ensuring a coherent support for cities and strengthening integrated and participatory approaches to Sustainable Urban Development.

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1 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/642218/EPRS\\_BRI\(2019\)642218\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/642218/EPRS_BRI(2019)642218_EN.pdf)

2 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-regional-development-regi/file-mff-erdf-and-cohesion-fund>

Your speech on 12<sup>th</sup> October at the European Week of Regions and Cities was very clear in those terms. We strongly agree when you say that “it makes a big difference how politics is implemented on the ground. Local and regional politics is never abstract. It is about families, workers, communities. [...] It not only helps to solve small, everyday problems, but also to master the great challenges of our time”.

However, many metropolitan areas still lack the policy tools, jurisdiction and funding that would allow them to fully embrace their role. Despite their importance for the development of Europe, they are rarely involved in the design of the agreements and operational programs of the Cohesion Policy, which remains mostly managed at a different level (notably, national or regional one). This situation leads to negative consequences for the policies effectiveness, jeopardizing the impact capacity of structural funds on the ground and hampering metropolitan areas and cities to play a primary role in terms of attractiveness and allocation of resources for development towards a sustainable and inclusive smart society.

This is also strictly related to the Coronavirus emergency, which you also referred to in your speech at the European Week of Regions and Cities. The COVID-19 pandemic is giving rise to new challenges and worsening old ones, but also highlighting the essential role of cities, metropolitan authorities and regions, which, as you also pointed out, have been at the forefront of delivering local and public services and taking emergency measures as close as possible to citizens. As you write, “Europeans know what their mayors, governors or councilors have done for them. This is very clear in the Barometer that you present today. You continue to be the most trusted institutions in our Union”.

In this light, the need of a better coordination among levels is more evident now than ever and so is a further and stronger recognition of the specific competencies and role of metropolitan areas and cities.

That being said, it is to be hoped that the upcoming programming period 2012-2027 and the implementation of the European Green Deal and Recovery Plan, will take into due consideration the metropolitan dimension, with political objectives directly connected to it.

Con i migliori saluti,

Il Consigliere metropolitano  
appointed to the mountain development, international and  
european programs and projects, strategic planning, economic  
development, transport and vocational training

Dimitri De Vita

