



# 14<sup>th</sup> Direct Dialogue

— EU Capitals Mayors —  
and the European Commission

**Warsaw, 24 January 2025**

## **Warsaw Declaration for secure, resilient, prepared – European cities in times of crises**

We acknowledge the longstanding positive experiences with the EU cohesion policy and its significant role in fostering the development of our countries and cities. Therefore, it is essential that this policy continues to play a pivotal role in the Union's development. To achieve this, we advocate for maintaining an adequate allocation of funds including inflation adjustment that is no less than the 2021–2027 period, with an undiminished percentage share in the EU budget structure. The financing of the EU budget must be put on a broader footing by creating new own resources.

We are committed to advancing sustainable development, climate change adaptation, and energy transitions in our cities, with the overarching goal of enhancing resilience and ensuring energy security. Safeguarding against the impacts of climate change, while fostering energy independence and supply stability, is a fundamental priority across all levels of administration. Building resilience through nature conservation and the development of green energy has a profound impact on critical aspects of social integration, public health and transition in our cities.

**Adequate Funding for Cities and Metropolitan Areas:** It is crucial to ensure sufficient funding for cities and metropolitan areas, both within and beyond the framework of cohesion policy. Building on the positive outcomes of sustainable urban development instruments, such as Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI), we propose establishing a dedicated instrument for metropolises/metropolitan cities, amounting to at least 10% of the structural funds' allocation. This instrument could support areas including urban green transitions, sustainable urban mobility, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, and



social integration. Additionally, we advocate for greater flexibility in fund interventions, encompassing areas such as housing and healthcare infrastructure in metropolitan areas.

**Partnership and Subsidiarity Principles:** Recognizing the fundamental importance of partnership and subsidiarity, we stress the need to maintain shared fund management at both Member State and local levels. Regional authorities must retain their ability to program and manage allocations dedicated to their regions.

**Recognition of Urban and Metropolitan Authorities:** We propose that EU legislation fully recognize urban/metropolitan authorities as responsible for programming funds and selecting projects. These authorities should also participate in negotiations for operational programs with the European Commission (EC), particularly regarding allocations based on development strategies (e.g., ITI strategies) for their respective urban/metropolitan areas.

**Implementation Simplifications and Fair Regional Classification:** To enhance transparency and streamline fund absorption, a new proportional regional classification system should be examined in due time, internal interregional / interurban disparities within Metropolitan Areas should be taken into account. Furthermore, we suggest increasing co-financing rates for regions previously classified as "more developed", because their GDP remains sometimes below the EU average.

**Direct Financing by the European Commission:** To mitigate the risks of excessive centralization of funds and potential obstruction of cohesion policy funding for cities/metropolitan areas by Member State authorities, we propose that, in justified cases, the European Commission enable direct financing of projects above national allocations. It should be also avoided that EU funds become unavailable for final beneficiaries, e.g. for cities, due to Rule of Law conflicts or other non-compliances of national governments with EU rules. The solution is a smart conditionality approach with creating channels to allocate de-committed or lost EU sources directly to cities and other final beneficiaries.

**Resilience and Adaptability in Crisis Situations:** In cases of crises, such as armed conflicts or natural disasters, it is imperative to allow for rapid and significant revisions of operational program objectives, budgets, and intervention scopes to ensure adequate support for security and defense efforts in affected regions.



**Defence and Security as a New EU Priority:** We agree that, in the face of contemporary threats, the European Union must support its Member States in building our shared security, both military and civilian. The ongoing war in Ukraine underscore the critical importance of civil defense, securing critical infrastructure, maintaining connectivity, and other aspects of non-military security. Protecting the population and raising awareness about potential threats must be intensified, as emphasized in the Ninisto Report. Achieving this goal will require the active involvement of cities and local authorities.

**Cities and innovations:** Cities have long been active participants in the EU's Framework Research and Innovation Programmes. Under Horizon Europe, they are in particular involved in proposals to meet the key global challenges outlined in Pillar 2. This enables cities to play an important convening role, working alongside universities and other local stakeholders, and to ensure synergy between Horizon projects and urban policy objectives. In the context of the shaping of the next programme, FP10, it is therefore essential that there remains a strong focus on innovation in addressing societal challenges and that cities and local stakeholders are fully involved in the design and implementation of projects.

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**Supporting cities:**

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Athens	Nicosia	Warsaw
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