

URDICO

Urban Dimension of Cohesion Policy and other EU programmes

CITY OF FLORENCE

City Description

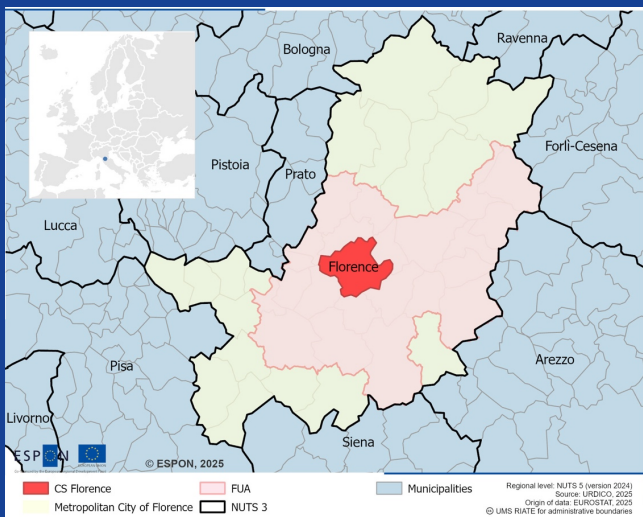
Florence has 362,353 residents, representing 36.6% of the metropolitan city population. The city has a very high population density and a large urban footprint, with 56% of its land occupied by settlements and infrastructure. Functionally, Florence is the core of Central Tuscany’s socio-economic system. Its influence extends along the Florence–Prato–Pistoia axis, forming a polycentric, non-hierarchical urban network with strong commuting flows and economic interconnections. Economically, Florence is the main regional hub for higher education, cultural industries, tourism, and advanced services, leading to a higher GDP per capita than surrounding areas. However, this economic centrality also creates spatial inequalities, as peripheral zones face lower accessibility and fewer opportunities.

Role in Cohesion Policy delivering

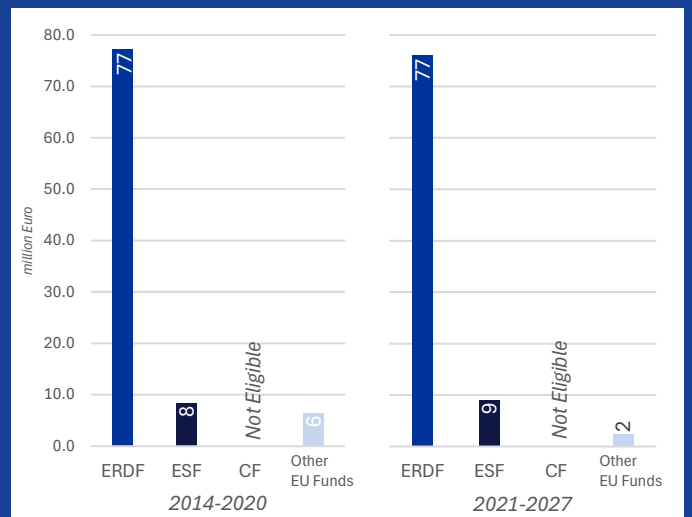
Both in 2014-2020 and in 2021-2027, the municipality of Florence acts for the NOP Metro as “Urban Authority”. The Urban Authority is the intermediate body which receives funding and manages it according to a participatory process that involves both other institutions and main local stakeholders. Started as a pilot sharing process, due to other in-place project activities (like the participation to Integrated Sustainable Development Plans in the frame of regional funding programs/Sustainable Urban Development Strategy that brought to create a common office), in the framework of the NOP Metro Programme this process of interaction has become more structured and reconfirmed in the current programme - NOP Metro+ Medium-Sized Cities South.

As regards the thematic priorities, there is a general continuity between the two periods, with some slight differences in project’s areas of intervention in the period 2021-2027, also following a dialogue between the city of Florence and the metropolitan city. The new programming has incorporated the feedback of the metropolitan municipalities and partly updated its priorities with those that are better aligned with local needs. Two key sectors that were and are not sufficiently addressed by EU funding schemes: roads and bridges, on which emerges the absence of EU funding for infrastructure maintenance, despite its strategic importance for mobility; seismic retrofitting, which is dealt with only in the NRRP, but overlooked and ignored in cohesion policy’s funding opportunities.

Spatial Organisation



EU Funds 2014-2020 and 2021-2027



Note: ERDF figures include allocations from PON Metro 2014–2020 and PON Metro+ 2021–2027. For 2021–2027, part of the amounts refers to planned allocations not yet fully implemented.



Local **Unequal territorial capacity** - the local governance challenge is compounded by unequal capacities across the wider metropolitan area. While the city of Florence may have comparatively higher administrative capacity, smaller municipalities within the metropolitan area often lack the technical means to access and manage EU funding.

Projectification - While the city's strategic objectives often align thematically with EU policy priorities - such as climate action, sustainable mobility, and cultural heritage - the practical integration of EU projects into long-term municipal strategies remains limited.

Staff stability - Substantial difficulties in recruiting and retaining personnel with the expertise required to manage complex, multi-year EU-funded projects. This skills gap is exacerbated by rigid national constraints on public employment and competition from the private sector, where working conditions are often more attractive.

Regional **Role of the city within the regional context** - the city of Florence has developed an high level coordination in delivering Cohesion Policy both shared and direct funds. This leading role is partially overlapping with the role of the Metropolitan City of Florence.

National **Effective Multilevel Governance** - Although the legal and policy frameworks may appear coherent on paper, their implementation is often undermined by institutional overlapping mandates, and poorly defined responsibilities - especially in the aftermath of the constitutional reforms under Title V. Rather than reinforcing strategic coordination, EU funding is frequently used to compensate for systemic deficiencies.

Policies Misalignments - a recurring issue is the misalignment between national policy priorities and the actual needs of urban areas. In sectors such as public housing, seismic safety, and infrastructure, national frameworks tend to adopt top-down approaches that are insufficiently responsive to the differentiated challenges faced by cities.

Fragmentation and Complexity - the fragmentation and complexity of the national funding landscape - encompassing the NRRP, React-EU, the National Complementary Fund, national budgetary lines, place a heavy burden on local administrations. The absence of harmonised guidance, combined with rigid co-financing requirements and shifting eligibility criteria, limited innovation and responsiveness, especially for small-scale or experimental projects. In some cases, transformative ideas are abandoned not because of a lack of ambition, but due to procedural barriers that stifle local initiative.

Considering the both programming period, the city of Florence has **benefited from multiple funding schemes** including ERDF, ESF and RRF as well as by national managed programmes like NOP METRO (and NOP METRO+). As part **Urban Authority of NOP METRO**, the city has applied projects with metropolitan sounding dimensions in a multilevel perspective. Altogether makes the City of **Florence ready for the new programming** period in which cities ask for a more effective role.

