

# URDICO

## Urban Dimension of Cohesion Policy and other EU programmes

### CITY OF WARSAW

#### City Description

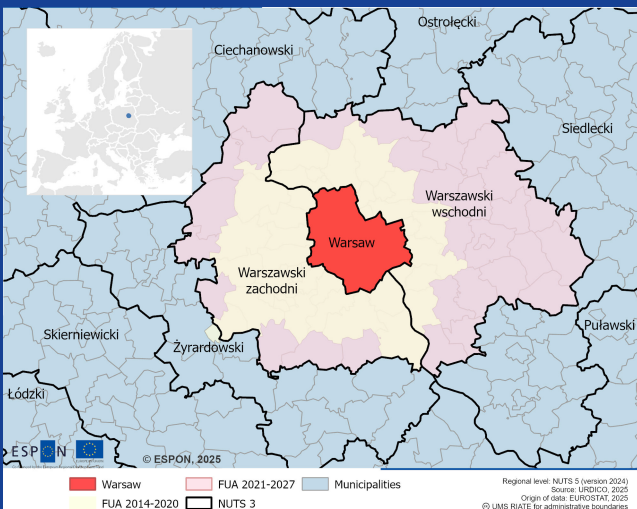
Warsaw is the capital and largest city of Poland, it has 1,863,845 residents (at the end of 2024). Warsaw is also the capital of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship. The city is subdivided into 18 districts, which are not separate legal entities and do not have independent local government status. Warsaw concentrates national institutions, major businesses, international connections, and attracts a daily influx of commuters and migrants. The Warsaw Metropolitan Area (Warsaw Metropolis) consists of Warsaw and 69 other municipalities, it has a population of about 3.3 million and became a separate NUTS 2 region and the territorial frame of reference for the updated ITI strategy in 2021-2027.

#### Role in Cohesion Policy delivering

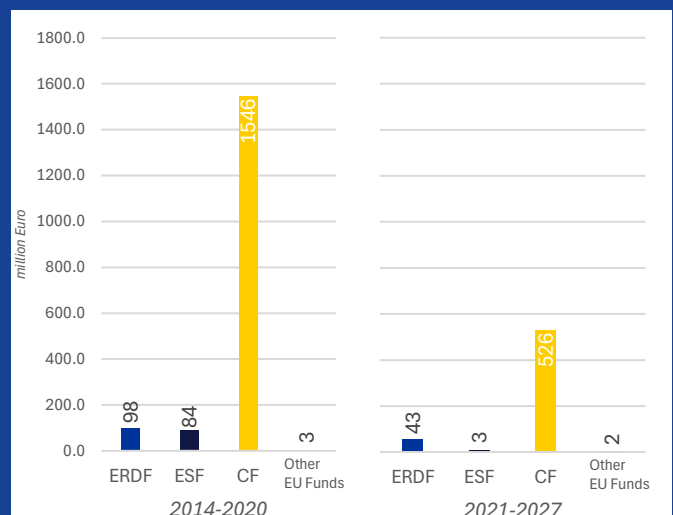
During the 2014-2020 period, Warsaw acted as an Intermediate Body for the ITI within the framework of the Regional Operational Programme of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship. Warsaw contributed to the preparation of project selection criteria proposals and was involved in the project selection process, primarily through coordination and assessment functions, while the formal adoption of criteria and final selection decisions were the responsibility of the Managing Authority at the regional level. Warsaw also acted as a beneficiary, implementing its own projects as a municipality within national OP-s and the Regional OP. While Warsaw was formally responsible for strategy development and project coordination, many key programming and funding decisions were made at the regional or national level.

In 2021-2027 Warsaw and the Warsaw Metropolis Association serve as key intermediaries between the regional and local levels, responsible for the full functioning of the ITI mechanism. The City of Warsaw no longer holds the formal status of IB as in the previous period, it continues to play a critical role through the Department for European Funds and Development Policy. However, Warsaw is still not treated as a strategic development partner at the national level, but rather as an efficient service provider. Thematic priorities have evolved between the two programming periods in line with changes in the EU Cohesion Policy framework. In 2014–2020, urban interventions under the ITI were largely aligned with Thematic Objectives focused on infrastructure investment, sustainable transport, urban regeneration and energy efficiency. In the 2021–2027 period, reflecting the shift to Policy Objectives, greater emphasis is placed on integrated, place-based development, including innovation, green transition, public services and soft measures, while infrastructure investments remain an important component of urban policy.

#### Spatial Organisation



#### EU Funds 2014-2020 and 2021-2027





**Local** **Municipalities with differing characteristics within the metropolitan area** -The Warsaw metropolitan area is composed of municipalities that differ significantly in size, levels of socio-economic development, wealth, investment needs, growth potential and experiences with cooperation.

**Gap between available EU funding and long-term strategic urban agendas** - EU funded interventions are often shaped more by programme availability than by urban priorities. Investments may follow programme-specific priorities that are not always fully synchronized with the city's long-term strategic frameworks, which can affect the coherence of spatial development, infrastructure rollout and service provision., The uncertainty surrounding the thematic areas eligible for EU funding is also a big problem.

**Regional** **Excessive procedural rigidity** - Programmes are often conceived within narrowly defined institutional silos, making them ill-suited to address the multidimensional nature of urban challenges. Administrative procedures and decision-making cycles are over formalized and poorly adapted to the realities of project delivery in metropolitan contexts.

**National** **Fragmented governance and insufficient coordination mechanisms across the metropolitan areas** - Rapid urbanization has not been accompanied by parallel improvements in joint spatial planning and investment alignment. The lack of formalized, legally supported platforms for coordinated decision-making impedes efforts to implement long-term strategies across administrative boundaries.

**Limited financial autonomy of cities** - This has been a long-standing feature of the system, with local governments remaining highly dependent on intergovernmental transfers and exercising limited control over revenue streams, despite the steady expansion of their responsibilities. Recent legal changes are expected to strengthen local fiscal autonomy and gradually improve cities' capacity to plan multiannual investment strategies and respond more flexibly to emerging needs.

**Limited role of cities in Cohesion Policy** - National frameworks still tend to treat cities as mere implementers of projects rather than strategic actors in co-designing development trajectories. This hierarchical model limits the ability of urban authorities to influence national development programmes and undermines the potential for strategic alignment.

Over the last two periods, Warsaw Metropolis learned to turn EU frameworks into a disciplined delivery system. Inside City Hall, a dedicated team of professionals designs projects, pre-screens concepts for quality, standardises documentation and follows projects through to certification. At the metropolitan level, the ITI architecture has given Warsaw and municipalities from metropolitan area a shared language for priorities - public transport, education, climate and energy, digital services - and the practical tools to move from strategy to bankable portfolios.

