

# URDICO

## Urban Dimension of Cohesion Policy and other EU programmes

### CITY OF ROTTERDAM

#### City Description

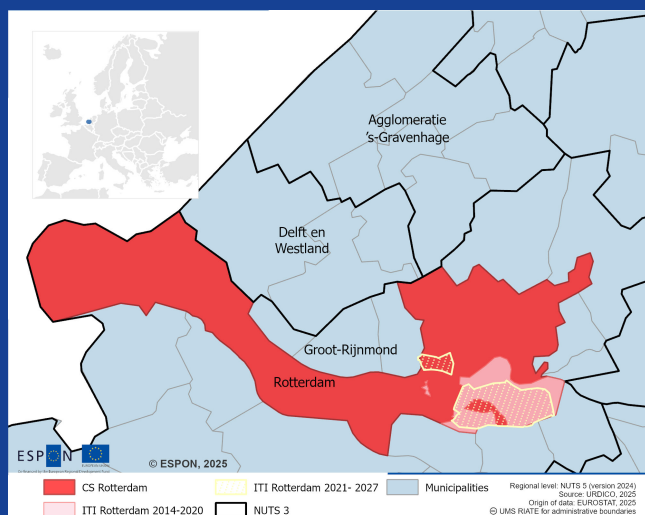
Rotterdam is the second largest city of the Netherlands with the population of 670,610 (in 2024). The city is situated in the province of South Holland, on the shore of the North Sea, and plays a critical role in the national economy as the site of Europe’s largest seaport. Despite its economic significance, Rotterdam faces persistent socio-economic disparities, particularly in the southern part of the city, where challenges such as unemployment, low education levels, and poor housing conditions are concentrated.

#### Role in Cohesion Policy delivering

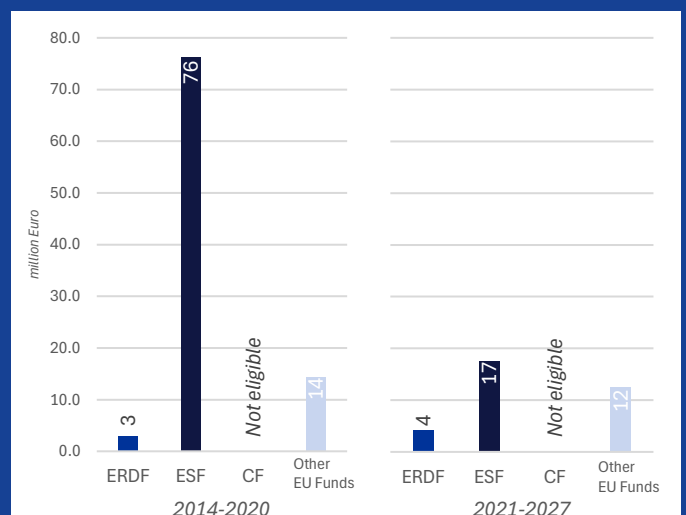
Rotterdam is the Managing Authority of the regional ERDF West Nederlandse programme. This role is exceptional among EU cities and provides Rotterdam with significant influence over programme design and implementation. The city is also an Intermediate Body for the Just Transition Fund for the IJmond and Rijnmond regions. These roles place Rotterdam at the heart of EU CP governance in the western Netherlands and reflect its long-standing involvement in EU funding initiatives. The city has historically concentrated its CP efforts on Rotterdam South, an area also targeted by the National Programme Rotterdam South, a long-term investment strategy supported by national and municipal actors. Nevertheless, the impact of EU funding remains financially modest, representing around 2,5% of the annual municipal investment budget, though this support is strategically significant for specific urban transitions.

Rotterdam used ITI in both periods. The ITI area is within the city borders and also targets the disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The experience of the 2014–2020 period revealed difficulties in integrating ERDF and ESF within the SUD ITI, so this integration was abandoned in the 2021–2027 period. Rotterdam also introduced several notable innovations, like the urban CLLD in Bospolder-Tussendijken, which gives residents direct control over project selection and governance.

#### Spatial Organisation



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





**Local** **Difficulties with setting up multi-thematic projects** - Even though the city administration is well organized, the limited resources can affect multi-thematic projects, which require staff and co-funding from different parts of the organization. When multi-thematic projects involve more than one funding source, this also complicates project management due to different rules and timelines.

**Geographically concentrated support due to the limited resources** - Because of the limited financial contribution of CP to the city, it was decided that Rotterdam concentrates this support in the SUD ITI area. However, the city challenges and thematic funding opportunities of the EU programmes are larger, and beneficiaries often question the territorial focus.

**Regional** **Insufficient activity of regional stakeholders** - Regional stakeholders are important for projects, but some of them could be more active. There is a Regional Coordination meeting on EU Funds, but it does not meet frequently, and usually there is no strategic discussion about interconnections and future priorities.

**National** **Different roles of the national level for different funds and programmes** - In programme management the role of the national government goes from a facilitating role for provinces in Interreg programmes, to exclusive programme manager in the case of RRF, their role in ESF and JTF is somewhere in between. Cooperation between the state and the city is good in general, but sometimes decisions are taken at state level with which the city disagrees. For RRF, the consultation and cooperation were minimal even though many priorities directly affect cities.

**The role of the national government in CP programmes can lead to suboptimal solutions** - An example for this is that JTF was set up as a new programme with new structures, while it could have been implemented as an ITI under existing ERDF programmes with easier management.

The case of Rotterdam demonstrates how a major European city can leverage EU CP instruments to address persistent socio-economic disparities while navigating the constraints and opportunities of multi-level governance. Rotterdam's dual role as MA of the West Netherlands ERDF programme and IB for the JTF positions it uniquely within the Dutch and European landscape. The strategic, geographically targeted use of the limited available EU CP funding through the ITI is a good practice, which supports critical transitions in employment, education, and the green transition.

