

International Seminar

Localizing the Next Generation EU: The Role of Cities in the Recovery Process

Barcelona, 13 December 2022, 09:00 - 16:15

CIDOB, Sala Maragall. Elisabets 12, 08001 Barcelona

Organized by: CIDOB's Global Cities Programme and Eurocities with the support of Barcelona City Council

Background

Two years into the pandemic, cities are the arena in which the success of the recovery measures adopted by the EU will be decided. The unprecedented €672.5 billion of funding of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), which is the main instrument of the Next Generation EU, constitutes a once-in-a-generation opportunity for a green and digital just recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. With 75% of European citizens living in cities and subnational governments currently implementing 70% of EU legislation, it will be a daunting challenge to effectively address the transformations proposed by the European institutions without considering public policies implemented by city governments. The crucial responsibility of city governments in services and infrastructures is fundamentally a matter of the innovations required to address the climate crisis, a fair digital transition, and growing inequalities. They are the best guarantee to ensure just transitions and that no one, and no territory, is left behind.

In order to access the funding, the EU Member States needed to prepare the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs) for the European Commission, laying out the investments and reforms necessary for the recovery. However, local governments were only marginally involved in the elaboration of the NRRPs submitted at the end of April 2021. Although the Commission had encouraged multi-level consultations, it did not make them obligatory. Crucially, this lack of local government involvement means that most national plans only partially address the urban dimension of the recovery process and that there is a disconnect with urban realities. Despite the explicit calls for engagement by city leaders across the region over the last years, most plans do not acknowledge the central role of cities in driving Europe's green and digital just transitions and thereby undermine the Commission's recent policies geared towards empowering cities as leaders on the twin transitions. The NRRPs will largely inform the EU investment for the implementation of the overarching European Green Deal (EGD), the blueprint towards climate neutrality by 2050 adopted in 2019, in which, conversely, cities have already been acknowledged as fundamental players as pioneers in climate mitigation and adaptation.

These shortcomings now require that all efforts are channeled towards ensuring cities' active engagement in the implementation of the EU recovery funds. The centralization of the decision-making processes and the lack of efficient multi-level governance mechanisms run the danger of fostering national recovery strategies that do not respond to specific urban realities, priorities, and needs, and weaken the impact of the financial instrument. Only by establishing alignment between European, national, and local recovery strategies and projects can the major challenges ahead of us be effectively tackled.

Project outline

CIDOB's Global Cities Programme and Eurocities, with the support of Barcelona City Council, have joined forces through a multi-year project that aims to bolster the empowerment of cities in the EU green and digital recovery process. The project is shedding light on the participation of European cities in the various financial instruments that are part of Next Generation EU, with a special focus on the RRF. By analyzing the involvement of cities in the preparation of the NRRPs in specific EU countries, the project will identify key learnings that can be transferred to other countries. The findings of this analysis will be published on a CIDOB Report and inform the discussions of the international seminar taking place in Barcelona in December 2022.

The international seminar in Barcelona will bring together policymakers and the experts in charge of the country-specific briefings analyzing the involvement of cities in the NRRPs. The event will seek to formulate recommendations for the empowerment of cities to drive the EU's green and digital just recovery from the pandemic, identifying challenges and opportunities towards the localization of the Next Generation EU. In addition to boosting a dialogue that bridges policy and analysis, the seminar will focus on the collaboration across tiers of governance through the participation of representatives at the local, national, and EU level. Following an introductory presentation, the first panel will set the stage by discussing the localization of the Next Generation EU building on specific inputs from the perspective of city representatives. The following two panels will focus on key insights about the participation (or lack thereof) of cities in the design of the NRRPs and their role in the process of implementation of the RRF.

Programme

- 09:00 – 09:30 **Welcome remarks**
Pol Morillas, Director, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)
Laia Bonet, Deputy Mayor for the 2030 Agenda, Digital Transition, Sports, and Territorial and Metropolitan Coordination, Barcelona City Council
André Sobczak, Secretary General, Eurocities
- 09:30 – 10:00 **Introduction: Cities in the Recovery Process: The Issues at Stake**
Maria Teresa Fábregas, Director, Recovery and Resilience Taskforce, European Commission (*online*)
Jorge Fabra Portela, Director General, Recovery and Resilience Plan and Facility, Ministry of Finance and Public Administration of Spain (*online*)
Agustí Fernández de Losada, Senior Research Fellow and Director, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)
- 10:00 – 11:30 **Localizing the Next Generation EU: Inputs from Cities**
Xavier Paton, Area Manager for the Agenda 2030, Digital Transition and Sports, Barcelona City Council
Anna Lisa Boni, Deputy Mayor, Bologna City Council (*online*)
Anu Riila, Senior Advisor, EU Affairs Strategy Department, Helsinki Executive Office
Chair: **Pietro Reviglio**, Policy Advisor, Eurocities
- 11:30 – 12:00 **Coffee break**
- 12:00 – 13:30 **Cities and Their Participation in the Design of the NRRPs**
Agustí Fernández de Losada, Senior Research Fellow and Director, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB, Spain
Lotta-Maria Sinervo, Senior Lecturer, Administrative Studies, Tampere University, Finland
Iván Tosics, Managing Director, Metropolitan Research Institute, Hungary
Chair: **Marta Galceran**, Research Fellow, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)

13:30 – 14:30 **Lunch**

14:30 – 16:00 **Cities and Their Involvement in the Implementation of the RRF**

Marco Cremaschi, Professor, Urban School, Sciences Po, France (*online*)

Valeria Fedeli, Professor, Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano, Italy

Karsten Zimmermann, Professor, Department of Spatial Planning, TU Dortmund University, Germany

Chair: **Ricardo Martínez**, Senior Research Fellow, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)

16:00 – 16:15 **Concluding remarks**

Ricardo Martínez, Senior Research Fellow, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)

Pietro Reviglio, Policy Advisor, Eurocities