



PON Città Metropolitane 2014-2020

Servizio di valutazione indipendente a favore dell'Autorità di Gestione del PON Città Metropolitane 2014 – 2020 con riguardo agli interventi dell'Asse 3 del PON Metro

Indagine n. 2 – Analisi del processo di attuazione degli interventi di contrasto alla povertà abitativa finanziati dalle Azioni 3.1.1, 3.2.1 e 3.2.2 dell'Asse 3 del PON Metro – Executive Summary

Regolamento (UE) n. 1303/2013 - articoli 72, 122 e Allegato XII

Regolamento (UE) n. 1011/2014- articolo 3 e Allegato III

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Executive summary

The **purpose of Survey 2** is to **evaluate the implementation process** of the interventions carried out by the 14 Intermediate Bodies under the National Operational Programme on Metropolitan Cities (PON Metro), with the aim of improving the quality of the design and implementation of Axis 3 of the Programme.

The survey focuses, in particular, on the different choices made by the Intermediate Bodies in the planning and implementation phases of the interventions under Actions 3.1.1, 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 of the PON Metro, on the mechanisms and organization adopted and on the processes put in place to achieve the expected objectives, highlighting strengths and weaknesses that could affect the success of the Programme.

On the methodological level, after an initial phase of sharing evaluation questions with the Managing Authority and with the main stakeholders on the territories (first of all, representatives for the evaluation and referents for the Axis / Intermediate body), the field activities were carried out. **Survey tools of a purely qualitative nature** such as interviews and focus group, were adopted, since they were considered to better respond to the type of information to be collected.

The survey showed that in the **planning phase** the policy design mechanism was closely linked to the strategies already defined by each metropolitan City and took into account the good practices already tested at the local level. A process of strong contextualization has led, in most cases, to give priority to interventions aimed at responding to the specific needs of the territory rather than to put in place completely new activities, although the Programme has also represented, in some cases, an opportunity to experiment innovative projects, in absolute terms or in relation to local context. During the design phase of the policies, two aspects proved to be important: the interaction between different departments of the Municipal Administration and the involvement of external actors, in the first place Third Sector bodies and social operators.

Hence the **PON Metro**, on the one hand, **allowed to continue (and/or expand) activities already carried out** - strengthening the services already offered in order to reach a greater number of recipients and giving continuity over time to some key services, thanks to the fact that resources could be spent over a medium-long period of time – while, on the other hand, allowed the **implementation of new interventions** (or the adoption of new implementation modalities).

Given the strong contextualization of Axis 3 with respect to the strategies, the needs, the models and practices of intervention developed by each Municipal Administration, the resources of the PON Metro were therefore seen as an opportunity, an added value with respect to the strategies and needs identified, without the explicit intent to "make social innovation", but, rather, to respond in a different and more effective way to needs already identified. Therefore: *enhancement and continuity* in the case of already existing services; innovation for greater effectiveness, in the case of new services.

From the point of view of **integration** with other policies and resources, the interventions financed with the PON Metro are generally carried out in synergy with interventions focused on the same targets but financed with resources from other sources (local funds - municipal budget, national funds, EU funds). Across all the Actions, the integration with the NOP Inclusion is of particular importance. Less frequent is the integration with other funds such as the OP I FEAD 2014-2020 (Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived), the AMIF (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund), the ESF Regional Operational Programmes, as well as the National Fund for the Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion. There are also other sources of funding, specific for the Actions, as in the case of Action 3.2.1 with the project P.A.L - Local Action Plans, promoted by UNAR, and with the National Project for the inclusion and integration of children belonging to marginalised communities (such as the Roma), promoted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies in the framework of the actions of the NOP Inclusion 2014-2020 and, in the case of Action 3.2.2, the Citizenship Income Fund.

The above described integrations represent a significant synergy and complementarity across different funds which, however, does not emerge (or or, if it does, not sufficiently) at a formal level. This is due to the fact that they start and develop as a "bottom-up integration" in the operational activities, rather than as a "top-down integration" defined during the programming phase. This aspect, of great interest, could be further explored with a more in-depth analysis in view of the 2021-2027 EU programming period.

Excluding the metropolitan Cities that activated projects in support of women victims of violence, in the other Cities during the planning phase no specific attention was given to the **gender perspective**. The gender perspective actually takes on greater importance in the implementation phase of the interventions, especially with reference to the specific needs of women concerning emergency accommodation.

The analysis of the **governance mechanisms** adopted by the various metropolitan Cities does not seem to show the presence of distinctive models, but reveal a strong continuity with the histories and organizational contexts of the Cities themselves. The two criteria that seem to have guided the organizational choices of the 14 Metropolitan Cities might be, on the one hand, the criterion of **competence** (for those structures within the Administration that have historically dealt with the issue) and, on the other, an evaluation of the **effectiveness of the interventions' implementation methods**, which might have been directed towards two opposite paths: a **maximum decentralization** (functional to avoid an excessive organizational load and therefore delays in the implementation of activities) or a **strong centralization** (functional to maintain greater control).

Where it is actually operational, the role of an Axis representative as a node connecting the staff of the Intermediate Body and the coordinators of the single operations appears to facilitate the monitoring of the interventions (also by the Intermediate Body). The internal monitoring of Axis 3 with regard to the implementation of the activities however varies from city to city, ranging from the organization of periodic meetings to the creation of dedicated structures (control rooms, project staff, working groups, etc.).

In the perception of the main actors involved, the governance system set by the Metropolitan Cities is evaluated in an overall positive way, net of critical issues related to the limited allocation of human resources to the projects' implementation which, especially in emergency phases such as the one currently underway, makes it difficult to fully control the progress of the activities.

Keeping in mind the full freedom of choice of the metropolitan Cities, it seems appropriate to reflect on the role of the representatives for the evaluation in light of the 2021-2027 Programming period. The aim would be to make this role fully operational and optimise the potential of the evaluation in a perspective of *in itinere* improvement of the strategic choices and of the implementation of the Cities' Operational Programmes.

In the implementation phase, the **mechanisms for the allocation of resources** led to the prevalent use of external suppliers contracted through calls for tenders (in all metropolitan Cities); other formulas, such as conventions, accreditations, etc., were used to a much lesser extent. Of particular interest, although not widespread on a large scale, is the use of forms of co-design of interventions in compliance with art. 55 of Legislative Decree 117/2017, which is presently showing good results in terms of active involvement of the Third Sector.

Overall, to date there are **no particular difficulties in reaching the potential recipients of the actions foreseen in the PON Metro**, because in most cases these are persons and families whom the social services had already taken charge of. For many projects, mainly under Action 3.1.1, many Cities took charge of the final recipients and their families following the recommendation of social services rather than upon the request by the final recipients themselves; this clearly reduces the difficulties in detecting the potential users, who then also have to adhere to the initiatives. For a lower number of projects/territories the choice has been, instead, to reach the potential recipients through public calls and procedures, in some cases complemented by support in the application phase.

Some specificities concern, however, women victims of violence (addressed by Action 3.1.1), who were intercepted primarily through an effective connection with the local anti-violence Centres, as well as marginalised communities, such as the Roma (addressed by Action 3.2.1), for which it was often necessary an ad hoc mapping and verification of the households groups actually present in the camps.

The greatest difficulties in reaching the target users relate to the homeless people (Action 3.2.2). An extremely valuable role, in terms of engagement of this type of users, is undoubtedly played by the operators of street and mobile units, and by volunteers and associations of the Third Sector.

The multi-dimensional way of taking charge of disadvantaged persons and the adoption of an integrated approach represent one of the strengths of Axis 3 of the PON Metro, together with the design of **personalised paths**.

With respect to the taking charge of disadvantaged persons, there is a strong integration from the point of view of users (not only the individual recipient is taken charge of, but also his entire family), a strong contextualization with respect to the system of services in the various territories, and an approach oriented to multi-dimensionality also from the point of view of the job profiles involved in the response to the different needs of the persons, also using, where possible, multidisciplinary teams.

In this sense, there doesn't seem to be "alternative models"; this type of taking charge appears to be more or less anchored, in the different Cities, to their own organizational history, to the different degree of experience they reached and, above all, to the structures that can concretely be dedicated to the activities foreseen. It could be useful to organize working groups among the different metropolitan Cities, in order to identify the "minimum" elements necessary to ensure the success

of this type of taking charge, given the fact that a "standardization" of procedures would not fit into the specific characteristics of each territory.

Thanks to the PON Metro, the ability to respond to people's needs has improved both in quantitative terms, as resources allowed to increase the number of recipients and to give greater continuity to the interventions over time, **and in qualitative terms**, thanks to the possibility to expand the range of services offered and experiment with innovative solutions. In some cases the Programme also allowed significant changes, ensuring a renewal of the social services provided by the local Administration through a reorganization of their systems. This usually happened in the areas where the Housing Agency, when concretely activated, proved to be a valuable tool to optimize the public response to the needs of citizens and to the complexity of their problems.

The potential usefulness of the synergy between the intervention under Axis 4 and Axis 3 foreseen in the planning phase was confirmed during the implementation of the projects, as the renovations and adaptations of the buildings concretely responded to the need to have available housing to accommodate people or families in a situation of housing emergency. However, several critical issues were recorded, first of all related to delays in the completion of renovations, which led to delays in the provision of services for housing inclusion of the recipients of interventions funded under Axis 3. Other critical issues stem from the complexity of procedures within the construction sector and from the fact that the two Axes are generally managed by different departments within the same Municipal Administration: both factors, even if they do not produce significant delays, still make it difficult to synchronize in an optimal way the different interventions. Where the difficulties were minimal, this was possible thanks to a constant connection between the different departments of the Administration involved, which facilitated the dialogue and the sharing of objectives.

With regard to the specific actions funded, the interventions designed under **Action 3.1.1**, although focused on the housing inclusion of people in a condition of housing deprivation, adopted an integrated approach that takes into consideration the overall well-being of the person. Therefore, in addition to the accommodation / housing services, the interventions provided services in support of people's autonomy and an economic aid to housing expenses. This integration was achieved, in some cases, through several projects interconnected to one another; in other cases through a single complex project, which provide coordinated services.

With reference to the **results**, the modest progress of many projects does not allow to fully measure the actual achievement of the expected results. However, the result indicators at the end of 2019

(which concerned only projects with recipients who had concluded their participation in 2018) showed a substantially positive outcome with regard to the housing autonomy of the recipients. The results were instead weaker with regard to the improvement of their employment situation, which is mainly due to the fact that not all metropolitan Cities provided services supporting employment.

The most widespread type of project under Action 3.1.1 concerns the Housing Agencies, which are present (or to be activated) in all metropolitan Cities except Rome. Among these Cities, in two cases (Genoa and Turin) the Housing Agencies operate exclusively with funding from sources other than the PON Metro. In the Cities where the Agencies are not yet operating, the delays are due to three main factors: reformulation of the original project, delays in the internal procedures of the Administration (due mainly to the lack of personnel to be dedicated to the activity) and the time needed for the renovation of the building to be allocated to the Agency, which turned out to be longer than expected.

Where the Housing Agencies are financed with the resources of the PON Metro and are already operational (six Cities), they are generally considered a very useful tool not only for housing inclusion, but also for the activation of personalised forms of intervention. The critical factors that limit the Agencies' effectiveness appear to be primarily imputable to the lack of housing available for people with difficult housing situations. This is a problem that would require a political solution, through awareness-raising actions and forms of economic incentives aimed at the owners of the housing units.

For the interventions launched so far under **Action 3.2.1** of the PON Metro, which on the whole are still at a modest stage of progress compared to other Actions of the Programme, it seems possible to identify some success factors, but it is not yet possible, given the limited number of recipients who have completed the participation in the project, to fully evaluate the effects of the Programme on the exiting from housing deprivation and on the inclusion in employment of the marginalised communities (such as the Roma).

The handling of problems and needs of the final recipients in an integrated and multidimensional way, together with the management of the context, were essential elements for the success of the projects, helping to make the final recipients more responsible in their self-determination. A determining factor for the success of the interventions was also the involvement of people who already intended to change their own life, as well as the involvement of other citizens and Third

Sector entities. An early and widespread activity aimed at raising awareness of the territory, through public events and contacts with the network of neighbourhood committees, where it occurred, proved to be particularly important to achieve good results.

Similarly, a further success factor consisted in the ability to activate governance mechanisms capable of engaging the institutions of the territory. However, the presence of institutional entities that are not very receptive to the issue is undoubtedly an obstacle.

Another potentially critical element, still of an external nature, is represented by the size of the camps: their large size makes it difficult to “detect” the potential recipients of the interventions and to involve them in personalised paths.

The results achieved so far highlighted some aspects that could be usefully investigated in the future: on the one hand, the long timeframes of this type of intervention, which often end up involving a small number of recipients compared to a considerable effort in terms of resources deployed. On the other hand, the need to link the interventions aimed at the marginalised communities funded under the PON Metro with other projects aimed at the same target in the same territories, in order to promote synergies and maximize the possible impacts at the local level.

Projects funded under **Action 3.2.2**, coherently with the strategy of the PON Metro focused mainly on the activation and/or the strengthening of networks providing low-threshold services for the homeless, such as services provided through street service units and low-threshold accommodation. These services are almost always complemented with different kinds of support: listening, emergency accommodation, accompaniment, guidance, counselling and mentoring, tailored according to the specific type of problem (psychological, legal, health, socio-economic, relational), etc.

Listening and accompaniment services are an important success factor of these projects, together with the adoption of integrated and multidimensional models of intervention, which are essential given the homeless' condition of extreme fragility and the presence of different problems.

As already mentioned in the previous Survey 1, given the type of services mainly provided and the fragility of the target group, reasoning on the success of this type of intervention does not imply overcoming the situation of housing deprivation, intended as achieving full housing autonomy. The success, in an incremental logic, is represented by subsequent steps towards the autonomy, which usually, where it occurs, requires a long time (this is why, to date, the results recorded are still modest).

The interviews with the main stakeholders also highlighted how the interventions carried out are not only useful to respond to the needs of the homeless, but also have strong added value, represented by the capillarity with which they operate on the territories, sometimes starting new mechanisms of interaction with the citizens.

A further element of strength of this type of intervention can be found in the **synergic work between the institutions and the network of private social bodies**, which is normally precious in a logic of subsidiarity and absolutely crucial in emergency phases, as recently experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Among the possible **further analyses** that may be conducted, two main issues can be pointed out. The first one concerns the possibility to carry out, over time, considerations - shared among the cities – on a common definition of “exiting the situation of housing deprivation” for the homeless, as mentioned above with regard to the incremental success.

The second issue, which recalls not only the implementation phase but also (and more importantly) the planning phase, refers to the need to plan in an integrated way the interventions aimed at the homeless, given the coexistence of substantial economic resources from many different sources, all contributing to improve the living conditions of people in situations of extreme marginality. It is essential, therefore, to act in a synergic perspective avoiding overlaps between the interventions; it would be useful, as well, to have a uniform evaluation of the effects on the recipients of the set of actions put in place.

Given the above described framework, it seems useful to propose some general suggestions in view of the 2021-2027 programming period.

1. **Axis 3 of the PON Metro performs better than what can be measured and better than what is reported.** There are various critical internal factors (some Cities perform better while others perform worse, but this occurs regardless of the PON Metro) and external critical factors (lack of housing units, delays in the renovation of buildings with Axis 4, bureaucracy of the Public Administration, shortage of human resources, COVID-19, etc.). Therefore there are wide margins of improvement. It has however become clear that there is no full knowledge of how much, how and what has been achieved through the interventions under Axis 3. **The presence (or greater involvement) of human resources** with communication skills could help to better understand the great potential of the Programme. Moreover, it could be useful to provide for adequate communication, also to external actors, of the

governance of the Programme, in a logic of maximum transparency. Incidentally, if it is true that it is rather difficult to objectively measure the effects of the projects on the urban context, a more targeted communication activity, in addition to the "animation" initiatives often carried out by associations and social operators, would help to strengthen the links and ties with the territory;

2. **The improvement of the monitoring system** (as already suggested in the Evaluation Report related to Survey 1) **and the opportunities to share and to know what is being done** would help to improve the external perception of the success of the Programme and to increase the state of implementation in the different Cities. In this regard, it is suggested to **intensify the opportunities for thematic meetings** concerning:

- **contents.** For example, topics that in our opinion could be dealt with could be:
 - *the definition of "incremental success" and "stabilization of the exit from the state of disadvantage"* in the different Actions. Agreeing on this crucial aspect for the success of the Programme does not mean abdicating from one's own model of intervention, but sharing the steps that allow the exit from the state of disadvantage. This is a topic that requires competence on the matter and that can be easily dealt with if the necessary conditions of communicative exchange are created;
 - *a reflection on the models of taking charge of vulnerable persons.* If it is true that multi-professional and multi-dimensional teams are now present everywhere, they do not all work in the same way. The survey revealed, for example, that there are problems due to psychiatric pathologies of the recipients, and that there is the need for a better integration between accommodation and accompanying activities;
 - *the possible models (roles) that the Housing Agency can undertake in response to housing emergencies and to external critical factors that limit its operations;*
 - *social innovation interventions* capable of detecting needs that are still implicit, unexpressed, or not yet present in the municipal strategies (for example, some of the issues provided for Agenda 2030);
- **procedures relating to:**
 - *greater use of co-designing*, which allows to optimise the use of human resources available on the territory (in terms of competences and closeness to the final recipients) even though this requires more complex administrative and organisational procedures;

- methods of *detecting potential recipients* who are not yet known by the social services;
 - *methods of carrying out interventions* (in particular the "taking charge" by multi-professional and multidimensional teams) through an approach based on different theoretical models that could be particularly innovative and therefore could not rely on well-known practices;
 - *institutional and organizational methods of integration between the different dimensions of the needs* (housing, training, employment);
 - methods of intervention that *encourage private property owners to make housing units available*;
 - *reduction in the fragmentation of operations* by increasing their size and/or the concentration on the territory;
 - "targeted" communication, aimed at promoting and making more identifiable the effects of the interventions;
3. While fully respecting the organizational choices made by the metropolitan Cities, it appears important to **recommend for the next programming period a strong surveillance by the Intermediate Bodies**, given the fact that this seems to not have been fully achieved, at least until today. In this regard, two different models can be identified, both of which could ensure a good level of control in terms of contents and progress in the implementation of the Programme and therefore also timely corrective actions in case of critical issues:
- *a direct connection between the Intermediate Body and a representative of the Axis*, in order to synthesize the various experiences achieved by the Programme through the operations financed and to allow a simplified communication flow which would ensure a constant update on the implementation of the Programme;
 - *an active involvement of the staff of the Intermediate Body in the coordination of the technical and administrative activities of the projects*, through a constant and direct connection with the beneficiaries of the various projects financed;
4. The **gender perspective** is present, but mostly in the implementation phase, where "unforeseen" problems emerge (others from those typical of gender violence). Since there are no ex-ante evaluations of potential impact, it can be said that, with regard to this issue,



there are areas of improvement to better address fragilities not foreseen in the design phase and not directly related to the specific actions already put in place (such as early maternity, single parenting ...). It would be desirable that, in the future, also thanks to the experience gained with the current projects, any actions aimed at addressing women's vulnerabilities are defined in the conception and design phases of the interventions.