

METREX Briefing note

Conferences

Introduction

METREX is the Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas. It was established in 1996, at the Glasgow Metropolitan Regions Conference, with the support of the European Commission. It now has Members from some 50 of Europe's major metropolitan regions and areas. Details about the Network can be found at www.eurometrex.org

The twin purposes of the Network are the exchange of knowledge and experience on key spatial planning and development issues of metropolitan significance and the contribution of a metropolitan dimension to European affairs. Conferences are structured to reflect these core interests.

Conferences

METREX holds Conferences twice a year, in the spring and autumn, and holds a biennial General Assembly (GA) and Conference. Conferences/GA Conferences follow a similar format with colleagues and delegates arriving on a Wednesday afternoon for networking meetings followed by a two-day event on the Thursday and Friday. This programme has proved practical in maximising the time available and minimising the time away from Member offices.

Programmes

Conference Programmes normally take the following form but this can be varied to suit local circumstances and interests.

Wednesday - Networking

- Possible late afternoon METREX networking meetings, for example, for Interreg projects or Expert Groups
- Members and delegates arrive and meet at an evening Reception

Thursday - Host day

- Presentation of key issues in the host metropolitan area together with strategies, plans, major projects and programmes
- Orientation visit
- Open forum to discuss key issues and to exchange knowledge and experience
- METREX Managing Committee Meeting option
- METREX dinner option to allow Friday evening departures

Friday - Europe and METREX day

- Presentation on a key issue or issues of European significance by invited speakers
- Open forum to discuss key issues and to exchange knowledge and experience
- Presentations and dissemination of outcomes and outputs from METREX initiatives and projects, for example, EU projects and the findings and conclusions of Expert Groups
- Open forum to discuss key issues and to exchange knowledge and experience
- At the spring 2011 Athens Conference METREX experimented successfully with a Knowledge Day format involving interactive conversations based on seven METREX European macro areas (Baltic, CADSES, Central, Germany, France and Italy). These require special language service arrangements
- METREX Managing Committee Meeting alternative option
- METREX alternative dinner option

Themes

Conference themes will normally reflect the key interests of the host Member. Hosts can use a Meeting to explore issues with METREX colleagues and draw on their wide-ranging knowledge and experience to inform their own decision-making. Participation will normally be local and METREX.

General Assemblies and Conferences will normally adopt themes of European or global significance. Speakers will be drawn from organisations with current knowledge and experience to share. Participation can be from the wider European or global metropolitan community.

Themes will be chosen by the host Member in discussion with the METREX President and Secretary General.

Participation

For planning purposes Conferences normally attract around 80-100 Member participants and General Assemblies and Conferences some 120+ delegates and Members. METREX promotes and publicises the event within the membership and makes the Registration arrangements through the METREX web site.

Registration and hotel booking

Registration for Conferences is through the METREX web site. Registrations are copied to the host Member on a weekly basis for logistic and catering planning purposes.

The host Member selects a Meeting hotel, or hotels, which may or may not be the Meeting venue, and negotiates a METREX Member rate. Members then make their own bookings and payments with the hotels concerned.

Venues

The venue for a Conference may be in the premises of the host Member or at a selected hotel. Member premises can reflect local heritage and culture and involve less expense. Hotels can offer delegate convenience, minimise local travel transfers and provide support services but may involve greater expense.

Conferences are normally free to METREX Members (two delegates at a General Assembly and Conference) apart from their travel and hotel accommodation costs (bed and breakfast).

Conferences can involve a delegate fee to cover the extra costs of speakers and support services such as interpretation booths, sound/projection systems and catering. For example, a delegate fee may apply to METREX Member delegations of more than two participants and non-METREX delegates. Conference fees will be agreed by the host and the METREX Secretariat and will be paid either in advance, by bank transfer, or at the Conference in cash. In registering, delegates will be required to choose which way to pay and agree to do so.

Conference fees will be collected by METREX and the Network will pay the costs covered by the fees.

Finance

The host Member will normally finance,

- 1 The Wednesday evening Reception
- 2 The Thursday or Friday evening Dinner
- 3 Lunches and refreshments on the Thursday and Friday. Lunches can be light buffets.
- 4 A second team of four interpreters (DE|FR|IT|ES into EN). METREX provides the Network team of four interpreters. The two teams then work together on an agreed shift basis to share the interpretation workload
- 5 Interpretation booths and sound/projection equipment. This may involve Plenary and Workshop sessions at Conferences
- 6 Any venue costs, for example, at an hotel
- 7 The orientation visit
- 8 Member/delegate packs

METREX will normally provide, from the registration database,

- 9 Member/delegate badges

A Conference host and the METREX Secretariat will draw up an agreed Budget to balance prospective minimum Member/delegate fee income and maximum Conference expenditure.

Outcomes and outputs

The METREX Secretariat will produce Agenda Notes and Minutes for Managing Committee meetings and General Assemblies. It will also produce Conference Proceedings, including presentations and papers, and circulate these to Members and delegates. Proceedings will also be made available for downloading from the METREX web site as pdf's.

Planning timetable

Experience has shown that pre-planning is required for some time in advance of a Conference. There are usually lengthy exchanges to identify and confirm speakers. Members and prospective delegates need advance notice of METREX events to obtain the necessary approvals to attend and to make their travel arrangements. It is for these reasons that the following pre-planning timetable has been used.

- 1 Meeting or Conference location agreed, in principle, one year in advance at a Managing Committee meeting. This may require a letter from the METREX President or Secretary General to the host area
- 2 Theme and outline Programme agreed, six months in advance, between the METREX President/Secretary General and the host
- 3 Invitation and Programme circulated to Members and prospective delegates three months in advance
- 4 Registration, through the METREX web site, and hotel booking open two months in advance. Experience has shown that many registrations and booking are made in the two weeks before a Conference, which can make budgeting and the finalisation of arrangements difficult

Liaison

Host Members and METREX will nominate colleagues who can liaise together on the arrangements for Conferences. The main resource of the Network is the goodwill and mutual support that colleagues bring to Conferences. This Briefing Note is intended to provide clarification of the arrangements that have been found to work well in the past but they can be varied to meet local needs and circumstances.