

Agenda item 7B

METREX - The Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas

Position Statement on Cohesion Policy 2014-2020

Metropolitan Dimension, subsidiarity and sustainability

The Urban Audit (2006/7) clearly identifies and defines 127 "Larger Urban Zones" (LUZ) with populations over 500k. They comprise about 200m (40%) of Europe's total population of 500m. They are the "metropolitan" areas on which the future well-being and prosperity of Europe largely depends.

LUZ comprise a core city and a surrounding larger urban zone. ESPON has used the term "Functional Urban Area" (FUA) to describe them. METREX uses the term "metropolitan area and region" to describe the larger urban zone (metropolitan area) and its area of influence (metropolitan region). The shorthand for both is "metropolitan". In many cases the metropolitan region can include a much larger polycentric network of cities and towns, which together can significantly increase the population. METREX has estimated that Europe's metropolitan regions may contain over 60% of the total population of the EU 27+2.

This territorial reality is not yet reflected in EU Cohesion Policy and the result is that many of the key issues that can only be addressed effectively at the metropolitan level (area and region), on the principle of subsidiarity, remain unrecognised. Such issues include the following.

1 Urban policy, cities and the metropolitan dimension

The need for a clarification of terms that recognises the urban reality of Europe and reflects this in Cohesion Policy.

Cohesion policy now contains a welcome urban dimension that, nevertheless, continues to focus on "cities". This is maybe a question of terminology but the Urban Audit has demonstrated that the urban reality of Europe is core cities surrounded by larger urban zones, which together have a wider area of influence. This reality should be reflected in Cohesion Policy and METREX would suggest a clear clarification of terms to recognise LUZ/FUA and their area of influence. The term "Metropolitan" might be adopted.

METREX advocates a clarification of terms within European urban policy to reflect the urban reality of core cities surrounded by larger urban zones and wider areas of influence. It commends the all-embracing term "metropolitan" to describe such metropolitan areas and regions.

2 Metropolitan governance and the metropolitan dimension

The need for effective metropolitan governance to address key problems and opportunities in an integrated way.

The strength of such governance should reflect the scale and severity of the problems that need to be addressed and the potential of the opportunities that remain to be realised. Metropolitan governance may range from voluntary cooperation to statutory authority and decision-making and implementation powers, responsibilities and resources should be proportionate to the key issues concerned. Governance has to be appropriate but must be effective.

Without effective metropolitan governance Europe's metropolitan population is disenfranchised from some of the key decisions affecting its future well-being and prosperity and Europe is deprived of an important partnership level of governance through which to implement such strategies as the Lisbon Agenda and Europe 2020.

METREX advocates the recognition of the need for effective, appropriate and proportionate means of metropolitan governance within urban Europe.

3 Territorial Cohesion and the function of spatial planning

The need for a clarification of the meaning of Territorial Cohesion and for recognition of its spatial dimension.

Territorial Cohesion could be defined as progress towards greater social and economic equality of opportunity in Europe through the sustainable use of Europe's natural and urban resources and their sustainable connectivity. In these terms it is inconceivable that Territorial Cohesion would not have a spatial dimension.

ESPON has now initiated the welcome ET 2050 project to develop Territorial Visions and Scenarios for Europe. METREX promoted an Interreg IIC project, PolyMETREXplus, in 2007 and the outcome was a comparable Framework - Polycentricity and better European territorial balance (www.euroemterex.org).

METREX took this step because it recognised that, on the basis of subsidiarity, European macro-regions and metropolitan regions needed a spatial planning context within which to develop their own strategies. Some nation states have also adopted Spatial Planning Strategies that would benefit from being set in a coherent European territorial context.

METREX advocates the adoption of a spatial interpretation of Territorial Cohesion, using whatever term is politically acceptable (Vision, Framework, Perspective etc.) to provide a coherent European context, on the basis of subsidiarity, for spatial planning at the nation state, macro-region and metropolitan region levels. It would also provide a context for the TEN-T programme and projects since it is Europe's metropolitan areas and gateways that are the major generators of inter-urban traffic flows.

An important component of such a Vision should be a reassessment of the strengths and weaknesses of Europe's metropolitan areas based on the earlier work of ESPON on Metropolitan European Growth Areas (MEGA).

4 Urban sustainability and urban renewable energy generation

METREX has promoted the EUCO2 80/50 project to explore scenarios for the mitigation of urban greenhouse gas emissions. The project was led by the Metropolregion Hamburg and supported by General Electric (GE). The outcomes can be seen at www.euco2.eu.

A METREX outcome was the conclusion that urban areas have could become largely self-sufficient in renewable energy, before 2030, if the waste of urban energy from the building stock is curtailed and if the urban fabric and urban land is used to its potential to generate renewable energy. An energy-planning tool, ReMA, is available to enable metropolitan areas to carry out their own assessments of this potential.

Perhaps the most important aspect of urban sustainability is the decarbonisation of urban energy use. The potential for Europe's urban areas to become the decentralized renewable energy "power stations" of the future, well before 2030, has significant implications for the Europe 2020 target and the longer term 80% greenhouse gas mitigation by 2050 target.

METREX advocates the recognition of the potential of urban areas to become largely self-sufficient in renewable energy, with all the benefits for energy security, price stability, employment creation and increased disposable income that this could bring.

METREX also advocates the recognition that urban renewable energy self sufficiency will provide the basis for urban electro-mobility. Hydrogen will then be a prime means of energy storage as well as an urban transport fuel.