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METREX response to the renewed Lisbon Strategy

Dear President Barroso,

A key conclusion to emerge from the renewed Lisbon Strategy is that Europe will only remain competitive if all levels of government, working with civil society and the private sector, act in an integrated way to address the closely related issues of economic competitiveness, social cohesion and sustainability.

The continuing urbanization of Europe means that the larger cities and their hinterlands, now recognized as *metropolitan* in character, have a key role to play in the realization of the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy. It is at the metropolitan level that competitiveness, cohesion and sustainability can be addressed most effectively in an integrated way.

However, it is clear that many of Europe's 120 or so recognized metropolitan regions and areas do not yet have the means to act in this way. They do not have appropriate mechanisms for metropolitan governance in place.

It is clearly in the central interest of the European Union to advocate and foster the concept of effective metropolitan governance, in order to ensure that the wider objectives of such frameworks as the Lisbon Strategy, the Third Cohesion Report, the Gothenburg Agenda and the European Spatial Development Perspective can be progressed.

Europe needs a strong signal from the centre that metropolitan regions and areas need to make a significant contribution and that *effective metropolitan governance* and the production of *Integrated Strategies* to address, implement and sustain action on the related issues of competitiveness, cohesion and sustainability, is the way forward.

METREX now has significant practical experience of the various mechanisms for effective metropolitan governance. It also has experience of the realities of producing Integrated Strategies. Neither of these two concepts is easy to achieve, as all levels of governance know from experience. In practice, the horizontal and vertical integration of strategies and action has proved difficult.

METREX is registered as an Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif (AISBL) with the Ministry of Justice Belgium.

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METREX has produced a Practice Benchmark to help practitioners in the function of spatial planning and development at the metropolitan level to achieve more effective practice. Drawing on this, it has also produced a Discussion Note to explain, in some detail, how spatial planning and development can contribute to the Lisbon Agenda. This potential contribution does not seem to have yet been recognized in the Lisbon Agenda Action Plan.

However, it is in the wider area of effective metropolitan governance and the production of Integrated Strategies for metropolitan regions and areas that METREX feels that its experience and knowledge might offer greatest support to the Lisbon Strategy. The Network has produced a short Discussion Note on these related issues, which it will discuss with colleagues and with the EESC, with which it shares a common concern for metropolitan affairs. It will then offer this for further discussion with the Commission.

METREX offers its strong support to the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy and recommends that the Commission should seriously consider the value of recognizing the metropolitan dimension to European affairs, in particular the establishment of effective metropolitan governance at this level, to address, in an integrated way, the related issues of competitiveness, cohesion and sustainability.

METREX also offers its knowledge and experience on the production, implementation and safeguarding of Integrated Strategies at the metropolitan level and, within these, the contribution that the function of spatial planning and development can make. The Network would be interested to discuss these matters with colleagues in the European Commission in order to explore common interests and the way forward.

In responding to the renewed Lisbon Agenda, METREX as the network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas suggests that the European Commission might formally recognize the need for an integrated metropolitan response and set up an initiative to progress this. METREX has commended the concept of METROPOLITAN, which might be a Commission initiative to identify and pull together strands from the programs of the Structural Funds and others that can be used in an integrated way, to promote a metropolitan dimension to European affairs.

On the specific question "What new elements might be included in order to address this agenda?" set out for consultation at the end of the Communication from the Commission on Cohesion policy in Support of Growth and Jobs: Community Strategic Guidelines 2007-2013, METREX recommends most strongly that the National Strategic Reference Frameworks required by the Strategic Guidelines should themselves be required to include a *metropolitan dimension*. This should set out proposals for metropolitan governance including the identification of key strategic issues by the stakeholders involved and the preparation, implementation, safeguarding and rolling forward of effective Integrated Metropolitan Strategies. In effect, to operationalize the concept of functional urban areas and Metropolitan European Growth Areas (MEGA) set out in the work of ESPON and in the Third Cohesion Report.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Bernd Steinacher
President