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Model project "Regions of the Future"

Initiativkreis Europäischer Metropolregionen in Deutschland
(Network of German Metropolitan Regions)

Strategy statement (Status 31.03.2003)

In the case of any dispute over the interpretation of the present strategy statement, the German text is binding.

Preliminary remarks

Metropolitan regions are agglomerations that are characterised by their extraordinary significance within the international network of city regions. They are distinguished by economic strength, strong infrastructure, political and economic decision-making levels, a small-meshed network of product-oriented service providers and a high demographic potential.

In summer 2001, the metropolitan regions of Berlin-Brandenburg, Frankfurt/Rhine-Main, Hamburg, Hanover, Munich, Rhine-Ruhr, Stuttgart and Halle/Leipzig-Sachsendreieck (Saxon triangle)¹ started to co-operate under the heading of „*Initiativkreis Metropolregionen in Deutschland*“ (Network of German Metropolitan Regions). The Conference of Ministers responsible for spatial planning refers to them as "European metropolitan regions".²

The most important goals of the initiative group are to formulate the self-perception of German metropolitan regions and their demands on German and European spatial planning and development policies, to improve their capability to compete and act at European level, to enhance the concept of a strong system of metropolitan regions in Germany and to put it into practice, and to promote this co-operation with a view to transforming it into a permanent network.

¹ The metropolitan region of Halle/Leipzig-Sachsendreieck is formed by the urban regions of Halle-Leipzig, Dresden and Chemnitz.

² With the exception of Hanover region; Bundesministerium für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau (Federal Ministry of Transport, Construction and Building) 1997, p. 51

The metropolitan regions are represented by the following bodies in the network:

- Berlin-Brandenburg: *Gemeinsame Landesplanungsabteilung der Länder Berlin und Brandenburg* (Joint planning department of the federal states of Berlin and Brandenburg)
- Frankfurt/Rhine-Main: *Planungsverband Ballungsraum Frankfurt/Rhein-Main* (Planning association of the Frankfurt/Rhine-Main metropolitan area)
- Halle/Leipzig-Sachsendreieck: Ministry of Internal Affairs of the federal state of Saxony
- Hamburg: Senate chancellery of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg and Ministry of Rural Areas, Regional Planning, Agriculture and Tourism of the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein
- Hanover: Hanover region and city of Hanover (capital of the federal state of Lower Saxony)
- Munich: *Regionaler Planungsverband München* (Regional planning association of Munich)
- Rhine-Ruhr: *Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet* (Association of local authorities of the Ruhr region)
- Stuttgart: *Verband Region Stuttgart* (Association of Stuttgart region).

The Network of German Metropolitan Regions is based on a spatial planning project carried out by the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (*Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung* = BBR), i.e. the contest "Regions of the Future". With a view to continuing the processes initiated by the contest, the BBR launched two sub-projects: the network "Regions of the Future" and a coaching project for model regions.³ The model projects selected for coaching receive individual advice and support. This type of regional coaching shall help to analyse and test innovative approaches to sustainable development that can be transferred to other regions. The experience gained is incorporated into the work of the "Regions of the Future" network. The Network of German Metropolitan Regions is one of the model projects that receive coaching for a period of approx. 18 months.

This strategy statement summarises the results of the discussion on the strategy of German metropolitan regions led by the network and takes account of the current debate among experts. The present paper is aimed at public and private actors who share responsibility in the metropolitan regions, at the actors responsible for spatial planning and development at regional level (Länder), national level (Bund) and European Level (EU) as well as professional circles.

³ For further information on the contest and the sub-projects, see www.zukunftsregionen.de

Overview of demands made by the metropolitan regions

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1. Policies in all spheres and at all levels must be increasingly geared towards meeting the needs of metropolitan regions.

In order to ensure that the German metropolitan regions are able to live up to the growing demands and tasks within the spatial fabric of the Federal Republic of Germany and to compete with other metropolitan regions at European and global level, it is imperative to gear policies in all spheres and at all levels increasingly towards meeting the needs of these regions.

Concrete conclusions must be drawn at following levels:

- The strategic importance of metropolitan regions in Germany must be debated systematically.
- The category 'European metropolitan region' must be increasingly incorporated into declarations of intent, development programmes and plans both at national and *Länder* level.
- The category 'European metropolitan region' shall be used concretely in European spatial planning policies and be put into practice.
- The functions of the European metropolitan regions shall be promoted by special programmes in the framework of regional and structural policies. At present, neither the German programme "Regional Economic Structure" (joint programme of federal government and *Länder*) nor the European regional/structural policies allow for the specific needs of metropolitan regions.
- The *Länderfinanzausgleich* (financial transfer and equalisation scheme between the *Länder* and between the *Länder* and the federal government) makes it possible to cater for such an approach. The current situation seems to point in that direction (approach to "central place" functions, consideration of Berlin's specific 'capital' functions)⁴.
- Changes in the regional economic structure will have massive spatial and social implications. The metropolitan regions must be enabled to find solutions to the ensuing problems.

As globalisation progresses, the importance of metropolitan regions in the global competition of business locations grows. This can be felt to a growing extent in Europe where economic growth will be concentrated in highly developed, established agglomerations – the metropolitan regions.

⁴ Blotevogel 2002, p. 3

„The global society and global economy are no longer primarily a patchwork of nation-states and national economies but a multiple-layer network, with 'global cities' and metropolitan regions being the points of intersection.“⁵

Metropolitan regions are nodal points where national and global financial and production powers intersect. The concentration of highly specialised service providers and networks of scientific institutes as well as the presence of political decision-making structures and above-average infrastructure are decisive factors. The innovative milieu that benefits from these factors has best developed in the well-established agglomerations over the past decades. The rise of information & communication technologies (ICTs) since the 1970s has contributed significantly to moving metropolitan regions into the focus of global economy. This is why Sassen likens 'global cities' to „... the production sites of leading information brokers of our time.“⁶

As a matter of fact, German metropolitan regions not only compete with their European neighbours but with metropolitan regions in the whole world. They will only be able to face their competitors if:

1. their role as catalysts of economic development is recognised by politicians and society and
2. they receive stronger support in order to be successful in the international competition.

Without supporting the metropolitan regions as the growth poles, it will hardly be possible to achieve a positive development of the country as a whole. This is in line with the contents of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) which explicitly calls for the creation of strong growth regions in Europe.⁷

Another factor that must not be neglected is that social and environmental conflicts and deprivation are always most evident in metropolitan regions, requiring them to take remedial action. Social segregation, structural and long-term unemployment and alienation, traffic noise and soil sealing are problems that have a major impact on the quality of life in metropolitan regions.

⁵ Blotevogel 2001, p. 160

⁶ Sassen 2001, p. 200

⁷ Europäische Gemeinschaften (European Communities) 1999, p. 21 a. 39

2. Efficient forms of regional co-operation must have political legitimacy and secure funding.

Reasons

Efficient forms and institutions of regional and inter-municipal co-operation and organisation are an important prerequisite for the full development of metropolitan functions.⁸ It does not seem useful, however, to have standardised procedures. Instead, specific solutions for each metropolitan region on the basis of existing co-operations or the reinforcement of existing institutions should be striven for. The minimum requirements of institutionalisation that must be guaranteed are:

- direct democratic legitimacy
- strategic planning powers
- implementation of regional projects
- availability of requisite financial and human resources.

Basically, four models of formal, institutionalised intra-regional co-operation can be outlined:⁹

1. Co-operation in task-related associations (so-called *Zweckverbände*, linking local authorities for joint performance of certain tasks)

This form of co-operation is suitable to solve concrete, specific problems. It must, however, be taken into consideration that a large number of different associations encompassing varying authorities and having a varying geographical basis can fragment the regional level and weaken its capability to act. In addition, this approach is not transparent and permits only indirect democratic control.¹⁰

2. Regional associations

The establishment of a regional association is often considered as the ideal form of intra-regional co-operation in city regions. Members of the association are the regional and local authorities. The association is thus based on the municipal units and performs a number of planning and implementation tasks for the entire region. The association is a kind of "umbrella"

⁸ Bundesministerium für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau (Federal Ministry of Transport, Construction and Housing) 1997, p. 56

⁹ They were developed by an ARL working group (ARL = Academy of Spatial Research and Regional Planning) as co-operation models for regional development management in urban regions. They can serve as a guideline for further development of metropolitan regions at the regional level.

¹⁰ This group includes the *Regionale Planungsverband München* (Regional Planning Association Munich) and the *Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet* (Association of local authorities of the Ruhr region).

covering the core cities and surrounding municipalities. As recent years have shown, regional associations can have direct democratic legitimacy.¹¹

3. Regional authorities

Under this model, the joint "umbrella" for core cities and surrounding municipalities covers all regional tasks.¹² In the case of the *Regionalkreis* model (literally 'regional county'; super-county combining several counties), the cities and municipalities remain legally independent while the regional powers are combined. This permits a financial equalisation between the municipalities belonging to the region. There are limits to the change of authorities under public law: political limits due to the requisite shift of powers and geographical limits imposed by the need for practical implementation.

4. Cross-"border" regions

In the case of metropolitan regions that are situated on the territory of more than one *Land*¹³, the *Länder* levels must be involved. Again, the local levels are indispensable as implementing bodies and in terms of regional self-responsibility. Innovative institutional solutions must be found regarding democratic legitimacy, performance of regional tasks and requisite resources.

The establishment of regional development agencies in charge of tasks such as co-ordinating, coaching and representing business locations as well as the use of existing or the establishment of new companies and associations under private law provide additional possibilities for regional co-operation and will take on greater significance in the future.¹⁴

The formal boundaries of regions have no absolute importance for the set-up of the institutional framework. Regions are delimited by underlying (functional-spatial) interrelationships, and these interrelationships take different forms depending on the task at hand. The institutionalised region can be defined as the "core region" in the sense of an area where a maximum of functional interrelationships intersect/overlap. Depending on the task at hand, co-operation extends beyond the boundaries of this core region.¹⁵ In line with this, regions such as Hanover and Munich have founded networks with spatial units outside the institutionalised core region.

¹¹ So, for example, the *Verband Region Stuttgart* that has its own regional parliament; in contrast to this, associations such as the *Planungsverband Ballungsraum Frankfurt/Rhein-Main* only have indirect legitimation.

¹² So, for example, the Hanover region

¹³ This concerns primarily the metropolitan regions of Hamburg, Berlin-Brandenburg and Halle/Leipzig-Sachsendreieck as well as Frankfurt/Rhine-Main.

¹⁴ Bundesministerium für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau (Federal Ministry of Transport, Construction and Housing) 1997, p. 56

¹⁵ Ritter 1997, p. 168

3. The most important tasks of the metropolitan regions concern supra-local planning, provision of infrastructure and regional promotion of economic development.

Reasons

A number of metropolitan tasks can only be performed successfully at regional level. With a view to sustainable regional development, the regional institutions must have the powers needed to perform these tasks under their own regional responsibility. These powers depend on the respective region, but they must encompass at least:

- strategy development (declarations of intent and concepts),
- regional planning,
- co-ordination of projects and measures having an impact on the region as a whole,
- provision of infrastructure in areas such as communication, mobility, trade fairs and conference facilities, social issues, recreational facilities and environment (regional parks),
- steering of projects and infrastructure as well as regional development with the aid of regional management and marketing,
- promotion of regional interests within and outside the region,
- regional promotion of economic development.¹⁶

In order to guarantee that these processes are successful and foster the regional sense of identity, a maximum number of actors in charge of metropolitan functions must be involved:

- The political and economic decision-making centres, including the leading associations and authorities, are not only important "ambassadors" of a metropolitan region. The development and maintenance of a common regional milieu, based on the combination of and relationship between these actors, also enhance the community spirit of institutional and individual actors and their commitment to the region. Such a fabric of (inter-)relationships can also have a positive influence on future decisions to be taken in the metropolitan region.
- The public and private actors who characterize the gateway functions of a metropolitan region depend on intensive co-ordination to ensure the continual increase of their efficiency and environmental compatibility. Against this background, direct co-ordination and co-operation between the actors (on the basis of sovereign planning powers) must be promoted in order to maintain and enhance the international position of German metropolitan regions.
- The same holds true for the creation and promotion of a creative milieu in the metropolitan regions. The establishment of scientific networks and the transfer of research results to the

¹⁶ ARL 1998, p. 30ff

regional economy via the interface of "local" higher education and R & D institutions is an important regional task. In addition, co-ordination and co-operation between internationally renowned cultural institutions and tourism organisations must be promoted at regional level.

4. The metropolitan regions must co-operate more closely both at national and international level in order to enhance their efficiency and advance their common interests

Generally speaking, the benefit of co-operation is to produce win/win situations that offer advantages to all the parties involved. These are

- **internal efficiency increase,**
- **modernised processes for the performance of tasks,**
- **joint marketing,**
- **stronger and more efficient promotion of common interests,**
- **exploitation of synergies.**

Reasons

Co-operation offers various possibilities to metropolitan regions, ranging from information via consultation and co-ordination right through to joint projects, marketing and lobbying.¹⁷ Possible instruments to be used for the exchange of information and experience are best/good practices or benchmarking. These processes allow the region's situation to be evaluated objectively against the information provided by partner regions.¹⁸ Interregional co-operation can thus help to overcome obsolete values and ossified routines and relationships, and it can serve as a marketplace for innovative ideas; on the other hand, it can also question the regional milieu.¹⁹ The promotion of common interests offers the possibility of "speaking with one voice" and to be perceived as metropolitan regions with all the requirements and changes they are faced with. This includes joint regional marketing with the aim of enhancing the visibility of the metropolitan regions, changing the way they are perceived and fostering a regional sense of identity.²⁰ Joint lobbying is aimed at the public levels of the federal state and the *Länder* as well as the European Union and the actors who take decisions that have an impact on the spatial dimension of metropolitan regions. In this respect, it is the metropolitan functions or common problems, such as amendments to the *Länderfinanzausgleich* (financial equalisation scheme) or the implementation of infrastructural projects, that need to be debated. The influence exercised should extend to the development of political programs, such as EU structural funds or programmes run jointly by the German federal government and the *Länder* (GA = *Gemeinschaftsaufgaben*).

¹⁷ Kragt 1998, p. 120

¹⁸ Kunzmann, 1995, p. 131f

¹⁹ Kilper 1998, p. 47

²⁰ Kunzmann 1995, p. 131f

Joint lobbying with the aim of establishing institutions with European or global relevance (associations, authorities, R & D, scientific, training and cultural institutions) in the co-operation regions necessitates consultation and co-ordination. Another goal is to find common rules for the interregional competition (of business locations).²¹

Among the areas of work where metropolitan regions should endeavour to establish the above-mentioned types of co-operation, there are:

- regionalization and "formation" of regions (e.g. developing a sense of identity, regional management),
- (joint) regional planning (e.g. regional development concepts, sub-/desurbanisation)
- internationalisation
- sustainable regional development (e.g. segregation, integration, regional land management)
- infrastructure (e.g. trade fairs, cultural facilities, mobility)
- regional promotion of economic development (e.g. innovation, tourism).

Besides the co-operation between German metropolitan regions, transnational co-operation with other metropolitan regions at European and global level takes on greater significance. By co-operating in various policy areas, metropolitan regions can improve their starting conditions in the European competition. The Interreg programmes make it possible to initiate and intensify these forms of co-operation.

Co-operation can take place between neighbouring metropolitan regions in different countries, transnational co-operation, or within European or global networks.

²¹ This type of rules shall be defined in the scope of the co-operation between the metropolitan regions of Hamburg and Berlin.

5. Each metropolitan region must consistently develop its specific profile as a business location

Reasons

In view of growing European and global competition between regions, and in particular metropolitan regions, the importance of a clear, recognisable profile is evident. Metropolitan regions are distinguished by particular characteristics from other agglomerations. These specific characteristics are important arguments in the above-mentioned competition between metropolitan regions as business locations. They must be identified and reinforced. The most important metropolitan functions can be summarised under three headings:

- decision-making and control,
- innovation and competition,
- gateway functions.²²

The primary aim for each metropolitan area is to align its powers and specific characteristics along this catalogue of metropolitan functions and to develop a region-specific profile in line with its excellence in particular areas. In order to identify their own position, it is imperative that German metropolitan regions compare themselves with other German and non-German metropolitan regions.

For this purpose, the regions can employ benchmarking processes. Benchmarking is a practical tool for regions allowing them to improve their own processes by comparing them with those of their competitors and by learning from successful examples and understanding the underlying processes. It was introduced as an instrument to optimise the performance of private companies and is increasingly used in public institutions, too.

Furthermore, the German metropolitan regions shall enhance their international profile. This includes all areas of everyday life, such as multilingual signposts in public transport, improvement of English skills of service providers and civil servants, etc.

²² cf. Annex p. 24

6. The metropolitan regions must aim at a division of labour and tasks

The division of labour and tasks allows to use synergies in the metropolitan system and to enhance the position of the system in international competition.

Reasons

In spite of the growing importance of competition between business locations and regions, a combination of competition and co-operation, often called "co-opetition", must characterise the relationship between metropolitan regions, similarly to the relationships between private companies.²³ With the aid of co-operation based on partnership and a functional division of labour between metropolitan regions, above all where complementary structures exist, it is possible to increase efficiency and use synergies.²⁴ The different "talents" of the metropolitan regions can be used to their maximum extent in competition and win/win situations when there is co-operation based on a division of labour.²⁵

One of the objectives of the ESDP is "promoting complementarity between cities by simultaneously building on the advantages and overcoming the disadvantage of economic competition between them. Complementarity should not be focused solely on economic competition but be expanded to all functions, such as culture and education."²⁶ Possible areas of co-operation are the joint use and maintenance of large-scale, cost-intensive infrastructural facilities (e.g. trade fairs, airports), the organisation of major social events (such as soccer championships or a "European Cultural Capital" year), the promotion of international tourism, etc. A temporary division of labour is also conceivable, e.g. when hosting major events. During the world exhibition EXPO 2000 in Hanover, for example, Frankfurt advertised its gateway role, and Berlin and Hamburg advertised their accommodation and cultural facilities as an alternative to Hanover.

Another possibility for co-operation is to network the scientific institutes of several metropolitan regions. As a matter of fact, co-operative division of labour in terms of infrastructural facilities will have to be restricted to neighbouring metropolitan regions.

²³ Schamp 2001, p. 176

²⁴ Heeg/Klagge/Oßenbrügge 2000, p. 3

²⁵ Häußermann 2000, p. 74

²⁶ Europäische Gemeinschaften (European communities) 1999, section 73f

7. The metropolitan regions must develop a sense of identity and encourage active participation of their citizens

The way metropolitan regions are perceived by their inhabitants is just as important as their competitive positioning. The considerable potentials available must be exploited in order to encourage the active participation of citizens and the development of a regional sense of identity in each metropolitan region.

"The regions must learn to think of themselves as European metropolitan regions."²⁷

This is regardless of the power of institutional regional structures. This task is particularly challenging in those metropolitan regions where institutionalisation has only progressed to a limited extent and where no institutional basis exists to back up the development of a common identity.

Reasons

The particular functional scope of metropolitan networks makes it extremely difficult to develop a common identity and to involve the citizens in regional decisions. This cannot be a short-term task. It is imperative to raise the public awareness of regional issues and problems and the interest taken in metropolitan development, to make it a "region for each and everyone".

A stronger involvement of the citizens is a central demand aiming at improving governance in the EU member states. The concept of "good governance" is based on the commitment of the citizens to their municipalities and regions. By good governance, we understand "the totality of various ways individuals as well as public and private institutions use to deal with their common matters. It is a co-operative process that conciliates controversial or diverging interests and that can initiate co-operative action."²⁸ Weakly institutionalised management forms, such as Round Tables, regional conferences, etc., can be very beneficial to the work in metropolitan regions, insofar as a mediating level between state institutions and actors of a region is established.

Initiatives launched by political, economic or scientific actors can and shall serve as a platform for metropolitan regions and advance regional demands at a sub-political level. Their activities can make a major contribution to developing and reinforcing the regional identity of an attractive economic area with a high development potential and global importance.

Both subaspects – developing a sense of identity, encouraging participation of citizens– can be promoted, in particular, with the aid of internal marketing. The focal points of this approach are:

²⁷ Blotevogel 2001, p. 167

²⁸ Fürst 2001, p. 370

- identification and promotion of strengths and elimination of weaknesses with the aid of lighthouse and pilot projects,
- definition of target groups,
- definition of communication channels.

All actors in charge of metropolitan functions must be involved in identity-enhancing marketing processes.

One example of efficient internal marketing is an initiative launched by the metropolitan region of Zurich:

The "**Greater Zurich Area – The Zurich Network**" was founded in 1999 by several cantons in co-operation with leading companies, primarily with a view to promoting and advertising Zurich as a business location. The "Greater Zurich Area" covers a geographical region within a driving distance of 90 minutes from Zurich airport. This co-operation has caused economic actors, political decision-makers, the media and general public to rethink (albeit this process has only just started) and has triggered the formation of a common sense of identity, especially among the most important regional, supra-regional and international actors. In the long run, this can lead to the establishment of far-reaching forms of co-operation having stronger democratic legitimacy.²⁹

²⁹ Behrendt/Kruse 2001, p. 202ff

8. The German metropolitan regions must intensify and co-ordinate their Europe-related activities

Reasons

The German metropolitan regions must develop systematic and consistent strategies regarding European issues and activities and put these strategies into practice. The regions must take a stand on EU concepts and programmes.

European activities should be based on a **Europe' strategy** or common and agreed goals, allowing to initiate an integrated discussion (on objectives) in the metropolitan regions. Thanks to their metropolitan character, the issues Europe and internationalisation can help to develop a common identity and to mobilise citizens. By reaching agreement on the main thrust, the effects of a region's "external" activities can be considerably improved.

The **co-operation of metropolitan regions in European networks**, such as the "Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas" (METREX)³⁰ offers the possibility of actively exchanging information and experience. Networks enable their members to make contacts with potential co-operation partners, to draw from the experience of other regions for their own work and to have better access to global and European institutions. This holds true, in particular, for thematic networks. In addition, this form of co-operation can enhance the way the metropolitan region is perceived by others.

Twinned cities/regions offer the possibility of direct and intensive contact and detailed, more specific exchange of information on projects in other metropolises or metropolitan regions. Existing partnerships between cities, above all the core cities of metropolitan regions, can serve as the starting point for interregional relationships. Until now, this type of partnership has mainly focused on cultural contacts and the core cities. They could expand to various issues and involve, in the long run, the entire metropolitan region.

Participation in EU projects does not only allow to exchange experiences with other regions and to gather experience as a result but also to establish stable intraregional and transnational partnerships. This helps to understand international projects and develop the requisite competencies and enables the participants to see beyond the "backyard" of their own region and institution. In addition, the way individual regions are perceived by EU institutions and, in turn, these region's possibility of exercising influence on the institutions can be improved by this

³⁰ www.eurometrex.org

type of project. Last but not least, additional funding for projects can be obtained and the findings produced in the course of the projects can serve as the basis for future investments.

A **permanent representation of the metropolitan regions to the EU institutions** (in Brussels) will primarily ensure direct contact with European decision-makers, quick flow of information, easy contacts with potential partners and lobbying and marketing for the regions. It can help to overcome ossified structures in the metropolitan regions since only a common position will lead to success. In addition, such an institution can boost the process of internationalisation in the region and thus serve as a building block of the internal marketing strategy.

A joint representation of German metropolitan regions, maybe connected with an existing representation or in conjunction with partners (e.g. METREX, leading local authorities, *Deutscher Verband für Wohnungswesen, Städtebau und Raumordnung e.V.* [German Association for Housing, Urban and Regional Planning]) can be very effective in bringing about the above-mentioned goals. Thus, all metropolitan regions can benefit from existing contacts with political decision-makers.

Furthermore, the metropolitan regions should make better use of contacts established with other EU institutions (MEPs, Committee of Regions). They promise to yield direct information and the possibility of influencing decisions. The central prerequisite is that the individual representatives are really committed to promoting the regional interests.

Another very important factor is the **flow of European information to the regions**. As a matter of fact, this flow is the quicker the closer to the source (the European institutions) the information is gathered and processed. It is also crucial that information is provided on a regular basis. Comprehensive information is the prerequisite for a short-term mobilisation of actors for forthcoming projects in the metropolitan regions as well as a higher degree of acceptance on the side of actors and inhabitants. In the metropolitan regions, the maximum number of public and semi-public (private) actors must be consulted in an intensive process or co-ordinated via a common information centre.

Hosting meetings/events of EU institutions or conferences focussing on European issues in the individual metropolitan regions also makes it possible to have direct and intensive contacts with decision-makers, and the same holds true for the representation of interests vis-à-vis European institutions. As a consequence of strong competition, this type of project requires a long-term perspective.

The Randstad region in the Netherlands is a good example of an interesting strategy for the formation of a metropolitan region with European alignment:

The **Randstad** region encompasses 7 out of the 16 million inhabitants of the Netherlands, 40-45% of all jobs and 15% of the Dutch territory, making it the largest and economically strongest of the four Dutch regions. Four years ago, the four provinces of North Holland, South Holland, Utrecht and Flevoland decided to create the "Regio Randstad" with an Utrecht-based office. Regio Randstad today employs eight staff who co-ordinate its activities. Besides the office in Utrecht, Regio Randstad has a second office in Brussels. The work of the two Randstad offices is perceived as "process-oriented regional diplomacy", a long-term promotion of the region's interests without any pressure to produce short-term results. In 2002, the Regio has been converted into the "Randstad co-operation association", involving cities and the city regions of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague. European co-operation and the goal to transform Randstad into a European metropolitan region under the name of "Deltametropolis" are at the top of the agenda. Starting from the four large cities, an association has formed under the same name that has a growing basis and takes the role of a think tank.

Against the background of a rather uncoordinated situation, especially the important public actors of the region have opted for co-operation between the state and municipal level, with networking being a strategic option. A common interest in development led to the creation of an efficient, operative structure that provides a strong degree of cohesion in spite of weak institutionalisation.

ANNEX: Functions and importance of metropolitan regions

1. Definition of metropolitan regions

In the early age of nation-states, the metropolis was a country's political, economic and cultural centre and was thereby clearly distinguished from the country's other cities. Especially in strongly centralised states, the capitals developed into agglomerations at an early stage, as the examples of Paris or London show.

In Germany, the nation-state did not develop to the same extent. This particular characteristic led to the federal system of government, which is more or less unique in Europe, and the polycentric demographic structure of the Federal Republic of Germany. There is no single urban agglomeration that is by far larger than the country's other cities, but a number of similarly developed city regions with metropolitan structures.

The current scientific debate is dominated by the economic-geographical definition of a metropolis. According to this definition, a city or a region claiming the status of a metropolis or metropolitan region must have certain characteristics, such as a strong infrastructure, high-ranking political decision-making structures, a dense network of production-oriented service providers and a certain number of inhabitants.

In line with this approach, the Spatial Planning Report 2000 defines metropolitan regions as "high-density agglomerations with more than a million inhabitants undergoing a particularly dynamic development in terms of economic criteria, such as added value, economic power and income, and having a prominent international position and commitment."³¹

Most experts think that only the interaction of the different indicators allows a qualified statement to be made on whether an agglomeration belongs to the 'metropolitan region' category or not.³² This also applies to the number of inhabitants which, consequently, cannot be used schematically. However, it naturally plays an important role, both in terms of infrastructure utilisation and human resources. Companies, for example, that have to decide on a business location depend on the availability of a highly skilled workforce.

The "Action Framework for Spatial Development" (1995), adopted by the Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning, introduced a new spatial-planning category into the debate on metropolitan regions, the "European metropolitan region" (EMR):

„...geographical and functional locations whose functions, that are rated as outstanding by international standards, radiate far beyond the national borders. As the driving force behind

³¹ Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung BBR (Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning) 2000

³² cf. Blotvogel 1998, p. 53 a. 67

social, economic and cultural development, they shall help to preserve Germany's and Europe's capacity and competitiveness and to accelerate the European integration process. One crucial feature of European metropolitan regions is good accessibility at intercontinental level."³³

The above definition is an important contribution to enhance the position of German metropolitan regions in Europe. Competition and potential partnerships are not limited to the German metropolitan regions but include European metropolitan regions in neighbouring countries that, in some cases, have strong interrelationships with German metropolitan regions.

³³ Bundesministerium für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau (Federal Ministry of Transport, Construction and Housing) 1995, p. 27f

2. Metropolitan functions in the national, European and global context

The importance of metropolitan regions will not decrease, it will rather increase as a result of their role as the territorial framework of the international network economy.³⁴ Against this background, it is obvious how important metropolitan functions are for the development of the state as a whole:

- they improve the innovative and competitive capacity of a country;
- they guarantee global economic integration of a country;
- they are centres of international cultural transfer.

"If the locational qualities of metropolitan regions are the decisive factor in tomorrow's global competition, neither the states nor the cities can be indifferent to the capacity and competitiveness of the respective urban or metropolitan system."³⁵

The functional descriptions contained in German and European spatial planning documents can be differentiated and specified in more detail on the basis of the catalogue of functions published by Hans H. Blotevogel. Metropolitan regions perform various tasks for the surrounding municipalities and far beyond. These can be divided into decision-making and control powers, innovative and competitive functions and gateway functions. They are not to be considered as separate functions but they are interdependent and complementary. At the same time, it is possible to derive a list of indicators from this catalogue which can be used to identify the position of a metropolitan region in relation to other regions.

Metropolitan functions	Derived indicators
<i>A Decision-making and control</i>	
- Private economy	Headquarters of national and international companies, financial sector (banks, stock exchange, etc.), company-oriented service providers
- State	Central or state (<i>Land</i>) government, foreign embassies or consulates
- Other organisations	European and international organisations (EU, UN), international NGOs
<i>B Innovation and competition</i>	
- Generation and dissemination of knowledge	Universities and other higher education institutions, research institutes (e.g. "blue list" institutes)

³⁴ Blotevogel 2000, p. 165

³⁵ *ibid.* p. 164

- Economic-technical innovation	R & D institutes, knowledge-based service providers
- Social and cultural innovation	Cultural facilities (theatres, museums, etc.) Places of social communication Festivals (events such as "Love Parade" in Berlin, major sports events, <i>Oktoberfest</i> , etc.), cultural diversity
C Gateway functions	
- Access to people	Long-distance transport nodes (access to high-speed network of roads, railway connections, air transport and overseas ports, etc.)
- Access to knowledge	Media (television, newspapers, etc.), congresses, libraries, telecommunication nodes
- Access to markets	Trade fairs, exhibitions

Especially for globally operating companies that need to take locational decisions, it is very important if a region is close to political and economic decision-makers. Based on the number of political bodies, headquarters, or similar entities physically present at a location, conclusions can be drawn on the quality of the decision-making function of a metropolitan region.

As a result of the growing global importance of research and development (R & D) for the economy, a region's capability to generate and disseminate knowledge takes on ever greater significance. Besides the "production" of knowledge, a strong link between R & D and the local economy is called for. The quantity of education and training institutes is important, but even more so is the overall quality of the research institutes in a region. How many research institutes are based in a region, or what is the level of investment in R & D spent by the local economy? These are characteristics that could be used to assess a metropolitan region's capacity for innovation and competition.

It seems obvious that the international, cosmopolitan character of a metropolitan region is of vital importance. Being a "gateway" primarily means to have good access to human resources, knowledge and markets and thus improve the attractive power and projection of a metropolitan region beyond the national borders.

The availability of direct international flights and access to the European high-speed train connections is important for the high-ranking metropolitan functions.³⁶ The establishment of

³⁶ cf. Krätke 1992, p. 40

multiple-mode transport connections between the metropolitan regions in Germany and Europe is a prerequisite for the positioning of the individual regions.

The organisation of international trade fairs and congresses helps to make the region better known, to secure old markets and develop new markets.

An important characteristic of a metropolitan region is its international attractiveness. The presence of international organisations and companies, cultural diversity and open-mindedness to people and influences from all over the world enhance the way the region is perceived in the whole world.

Another factor is just as important for the international character of a metropolitan region: the conditions and the environment created for international companies, scientists and artists who want to work and live there. The first step in this direction are the civil servants who should at least speak English as today's *lingua franca*. What are the formal barriers for an international entrepreneur who wants to set up in business in a German metropolitan region? Can her/his children attend international schools? Do German universities offer a sufficient number of international courses?

The most important argument in favour of a geographical concentration of these functions in one or several metropolitan regions is based on the theory of agglomeration/urbanisation benefits. The geographical concentration of activities in one or several industries leads to positive external scale effects. Higher labour and capital productivity, for example, achieved by companies based in metropolitan regions give evidence of the positive effects. These are, however, counteracted by negative agglomeration effects (higher factor costs, higher taxes and levies, preference of workforce to live in green/rural areas, etc.). For many manufacturing industries, rural areas today provide better locational conditions. Parts of commerce and transport companies show a tendency to move to suburban locations. In spite of global communication, the concentration of economic activities in metropolises or metropolitan regions is still important. Four reasons can be identified:

- Face-to-face contacts are indispensable for many forms and purposes of communication (confidentiality, complexity, temporal advantage).
- Metropolitan regions provide the strong "hard" and "soft" infrastructure required for many activities (transport, specialised service providers, etc.).
- The metropolitan regions have highly differentiated labour markets.
- Metropolitan regions offer an attractive environment to live in for highly qualified, career-oriented and/or culturally interested people.³⁷

For appropriate strategic planning and policies, the following factors that influence the German system of cities and regions constitute important boundary conditions:

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- The reunification of Germany has brought and is still bringing shifts in the division of labour between the German regions. The structure underlying this division had previously been relatively stable in both parts of Germany. A new common structure for the division of functions is now evolving. This process is additionally fuelled by European integration and the incorporation of the German cities into the European network of cities and, consequently, by growing competition.
 - The economy is marked by structural changes towards greater flexibility and specialisation. The development of a structure called "flexible network economy" becomes apparent. Globalisation, the transformation of national economies to one "global economy" and the ensuing intensification of competition for goods, services and information, production factors such as capital, workforce, knowledge and business locations exercise a certain pressure on governments to harmonise policies, e.g. fiscal and social policies. At the same time, there are new options for regional and local policies to promote locations.
 - The labour market crisis and the state's financial crisis (in part caused by the labour crisis) necessitate a realignment of economic policies to benefit the economic development goals of cities and regions (as a reaction to the need to secure their position in global competition).³⁸
 - In addition, the communication infrastructure, both in terms of telecommunications and (high-speed) transport, is continually optimised as one of the driving forces behind the above-mentioned processes.
 - Changes of the population's age structure and risks caused by environmental pollution can also have a major influence, especially in large agglomerations.³⁹

The 'metropolitan region' concept is not restricted to the core regions. The central goal and content of the 'metropolitan region' concept are spatial integration and participation of cities and regions within the catchment area of a metropolitan region – not to weaken their position.⁴⁰

³⁷ Blotevogel 2000, p. 164f

³⁸ Blotevogel 2001, p. 157ff

³⁹ Ritter 1995, p. 393

⁴⁰ Blotevogel 1998, p. 57

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