

# WE ARE THE METROPOLITAN AREAS

## OUR COMMON METROPOLITAN VISION

Adopted by MECOG-CE Metropolitan Cooperation and Governance in Central Europe Partnership of the City of Brno, Metropolitan City of Turin, Stuttgart Region Association, City of Ostrava, City of Warsaw, Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin-Brandenburg.



# Preamble Of Common Metropolitan Vision

Metropolitan agendas, initiatives, long-term policies, and everyday practices are carefully crafted. The document "We are the Metropolitan Areas – Our Common Metropolitan Vision" outlines a framework for a long-term, shared, and enduring commitment of undersigned metropolitan leaders, stakeholders, and actors to:

- advance the development of metropolitan societies and their areas;
- maximize the positive impacts that metropolitan areas currently have and can potentially contribute to the overall prosperity and quality of life in Europe, its member states, and regions;
- continuously strengthen and develop the institutionalization of metropolitan governance, emphasizing the pivotal role of the metropolitan dimension in European and national policies.

The narrative in the document is purposefully flavored with a vision. It envisions an ideal situation that has not yet been fully developed and achieved in our cities and regions. We, the representatives of metropolitan areas and regions, are committed to further enhancing metropolitan societies, given that they possess the best preconditions, capabilities, and skills to address major societal challenges. Metropolitan areas can substantially contribute to achieving a high quality of life and resilient, sustainable, and inclusive development on European, national, and regional levels. In this endeavor, we are encouraged by the growing recognition of the

role of metropolitan areas and urban regions in European and national strategies and policies. However, we emphasize that we cannot fully and effectively pursue policy objectives and address societal challenges without adequate competences and resources. Our effort aligns with a wide array of initiatives and declarations calling for a more active role of local governments in the dialogue about systematic and comprehensive European and national urban policies.

The Common Metropolitan Vision recognizes metropolitan areas as:

- functional urban regions comprising agglomerations of densely populated urban cores and their surrounding territories, fostering integrated labor and housing markets, and interconnected through commuting and mobility;
- urbanized spaces encompassing large cities with pivotal roles in international and national development, alongside towns serving as local and regional centers;
- surrounding territories of suburban and rural settlements, areas designated for agriculture and forestry, nature protection zones, and spaces dedicated to recreation;
- being shaped by governance mechanisms that facilitate metropolitan cooperation among diverse stakeholders from public, private, and citizen sectors.



**60 % of EU inhabitants live in metropolitan regions and areas.**

The articulation of the Common Metropolitan Vision is motivated by:

- the increasing importance and relevance of the metropolitan dimension in national and European development and policy-making;
- acknowledgment of potentials and opportunities in realizing the benefits and advantages arising from metropolitan cooperation, planning, and governance;
- needs of metropolitan areas to enhance their institutional capabilities, enabling effective cooperation and governance for the timely and efficient delivery of public services.

The Common Metropolitan Vision comprises three integral components:

- **Vision for Metropolitan Areas:** Paints a comprehensive picture of a future state

for metropolitan areas, societies, and governance that is both aspirational and attainable.

- **Metropolitan Strengths and Commitments:** Spotlights the current and potential resources, capabilities, knowledge, and skills inherent in metropolitan societies, stakeholders, and leadership. These are harnessed to address major societal challenges, implement policy priorities, and achieve declared goals.
- **Metropolitan Empowerment:** Tackles organizational and procedural challenges, proposing viable solutions to overcome existing limitations in metropolitan cooperation and governance. The aim is to fortify the capacity, effectiveness, and efficiency of metropolitan policy-making.



Berlin-Brandenburg Metropolitan Area

# Vision for Metropolitan Areas

Metropolitan agendas, initiatives, long-term policies, and everyday practices are carefully crafted, driven by a common vision of a future state that is both desirable and realistic. This vision encompasses the holistic development, governance, planning, and cooperation within metropolitan areas, all framed by the key values of democracy, participation, and equality. The overarching goal of these efforts is to establish sustainable and resilient metropolitan areas (MAs) committed to societal leadership and social responsibilities.

## Centers of Everyday Life and Creativity

Metropolitan Areas are esteemed by citizens, businesses, organizations, and governments across regions, countries, and the European

Union. They stand out as globally renowned centers of Research and Development (R&D) and innovation in technological, social, and organizational realms. Additionally, MAs are recognized as educational hubs, providing learning opportunities at all levels, including lifelong learning. Their vibrant cultural scene and advanced production capabilities contribute to creating a dynamic metropolitan environment. MAs are particularly prized for fostering a high quality of life, entrepreneurship, and creativity, making them magnets for talent and investment. These areas offer a diverse range of jobs, housing, and services, facilitating a seamless integration of living, studying, working, and leisure activities. This comprehensive approach enhances not only regional and national competitiveness but also reinforces European resilience and independence within the globalized economy.



Brno Metropolitan Area

## Balanced, Inclusive and Sustainable

Balanced and inclusive development strives for equitable living conditions, ensuring universal access to jobs, services, cultural, and environmental amenities for all social and demographic groups. This commitment extends to socially and spatially just, efficient, and sustainable distribution of resources. Environmentally friendly solutions and policies are applied in MAs and effectively contribute to improving the environment. Transportation, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), and other systems use smart technologies that enhance accessibility and connectivity and play a vital role in enabling efficient and sustainable mobility and communication within the metropolitan living space. Importantly, all local governments, citizens, and stakeholders from organizations and firms actively participate in democratic and collaborative planning, governance, and management across the metropolitan area in pursuing metropolitan interests.

## Diverse and Complex Community

The strength and advantage of a metropolitan area lie in its social, cultural, economic, and organizational complexity — a synergy of metro diversities. Metropolitan areas harness this diversity by fostering specialized businesses engaged in an advanced and mutually supportive division of labor. They thrive on the cohabitation of diverse social groups, each contributing differentiated knowledge, skills, and competences while attending to their unique priorities and needs. The unity of local governments, marked by varied population composition, diverse economies, cultural amenities, natural resources, and geographic positions, is anchored and guided by effective cooperation and community attachment. This ensures the harmonious coexistence and integration of these diverse elements, thereby maintaining metropolitan integrity.



**80 % of newcomers choose metropolitan areas and regions as places to live.**

Turin Metropolitan Area



## Metropolitan Partnership and Identity

Inhabitants, businesses, and local governments deeply value their roles within the functionally integrated, socially inclusive, and spatially collaborative metropolitan area. They actively contribute to and appreciate the dynamics of the metropolitan union, collectively working towards the realization of the metropolitan cooperation. Governments engage in cooperative efforts, while citizens and businesses actively participate in metropolitan policies centered around shared and intersecting common interest goals. The cultivation of a widely shared metropolitan identity serves to overshadow urban-rural dichotomies, fostering a sense of unity between local communities. Additionally, the pursuit of integrated territorial development serves as a crucial bridge, connecting and harmonizing both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. This collaborative approach ensures the cohesive growth and prosperity of the entire regions in national and European territories.

## Recognition and Appreciation

The metropolitan dimension is unequivocally recognized as an essential foundation for mutual cooperation, vital in addressing major challenges and achieving shared goals more effectively. Specific instances, such as collaborative initiatives or joint efforts, exemplify the practical importance of the metropolitan dimension. Metropolitan areas are esteemed as natural spaces where citizens' lives unfold, fostering daily interactions that contribute to the vibrancy and dynamism of the region. The resounding voice and substantial contribution of metropolitan areas are highly valued, not only by local residents but also by partners in neighboring non-metropolitan regions and at the national and European levels. This recognition underscores the pivotal role of metropolitan areas in shaping regional, national, and European dynamics.



# Metropolitan Strengths and Commitments

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Metropolitan areas and societies possess vital resources, capabilities, knowledge, and skills crucial for building a common future. The commitment of metropolitan leadership extends to addressing major societal challenges, defining and accomplishing local and metropolitan priorities, and actively contributing to fulfilling national and European policy objectives. The metropolitan dimension, encompassing organization, development, planning, and governance, offers benefits for all, from local communities to the planetary environment. Metropolitan areas are key players on the global stage, contributing significantly to international performance and competitiveness, thereby shaping the process of European integration.

## Metropolitan Hubs

Metropolitan areas are home to a significant portion of a region or country's population, serving as engines of development for the entire economic system. The large number and qualitative diversity of jobs and services, coupled with the resources generated by metropolitan economies and cultures, are the most valuable asset and have far-reaching effects beyond metropolitan areas. Metropolitan areas, encompassing not only places of production and services but also daily life, education, and recreation, fully leverage the potential of agglomeration advantages.

## Metropolitan Ecosystems

Metropolitan areas function as daily socio-spatial ecosystems, where most social interactions and connections take place. The intricate web of these interactions fosters the advanced division of labor, crucial for economic performance and the well-being of the population. The size and density of metropolitan settlements, coupled with the heterogeneity of human activities, are vital for generating benefits from agglomeration mechanisms. However, strategic, integrated, and effective public policies become imperative to address potentials and opportunities as well as inefficiencies and obstacles. Metropolitan actors and instruments play a pivotal role in developing and coordinating the innovation ecosystem. They establish spaces and institutions that foster creativity and innovation while also identifying and supporting emerging grassroots innovative places where residents devise alternative solutions and contribute to urban commons. These policies are instrumental in realizing the full potential of metropolitan contributions to societal development, facilitating sustainable development and resilience to both long-term risks and sudden threats. As complex and advanced ecosystems, metropolitan societies and territories initiate new developmental paths, address pivotal societal challenges, learn from successes and failures, and present innovative solutions. Metropolises stand at the forefront of shaping alternative urban models for the future.



**70 % of greenhouse emissions in the EU come from the metropolitan regions and areas.**

## Metropolitan Societies

The cosmopolitan culture of metropolitan societies emerges from values of openness, inclusion, and tolerance - essential markers of democracy, convivial interaction, and social cohesion. This culture empowers metropolitan areas to handle diversity, embrace inclusion, and prevent xenophobia, conflicts, and segregation. It strengthens population mental and physical health, stimulates reproductive behavior and cares for everyday life needs of productive age population, adolescents, elderly, disadvantaged and vulnerable. The strength of metropolises generates benefits for all, fostering solidarity with disadvantaged regions or places affected by hazards, threats, and disasters, both within our countries, the European Union, and on a planetary scale. Open and pluralistic metropolitan societies, along with inclusive public spaces, stimulate mutual learning essential for developing competencies in creativity, innovation, and competitiveness. Communities with robust social and human capital encourage the exchange of ideas and collaboration, making them more resilient, adaptable, and capable of collectively addressing challenges. Rooted in the local neighborhoods, metropolitan leaders, citizens, firms and organizations envision a global, forward-looking view of prosperity, sustainability and resilience.

## Metropolitan Co-operations

Metropolitan projects, initiatives, and solutions often stem from mutual learning and multidimensional co-operations embedded within and spanning outside the metro-area. Multilevel cooperation in governance and planning involves different actors committed to achieving shared goals. Examples of policy agendas, developed tools, and good practices spread towards other regions. Benefits achieved through cooperation ensure the enabling metropolitan environment to advance economies, services and quality of life pushing the frontiers of dealing with major societal challenges. Metropolitan acting and planning enhance urban-region functional interdependencies. Metropolitan traffic management and mass transportation systems, designed to meet the daily needs of increasing numbers of commuters, are compelling examples of complex metropolitan co-operations. The metropolitan level of planning and governance can fully address complex issues such as suburbanization and urban sprawl, sustainable mobility, and accessible public services, which require cooperation between stakeholders. The strategic and integrated planning of metropolitan areas identifies development potentials, addresses shortcomings, obstacles, and risk trends, requiring coordination and cooperation with agencies and governments at regional, country, and European scales.



Stuttgart-Ulm Railway Project,  
Reorganisation of the Stuttgart  
Rail Node



Formation of Study Clusters,  
MECOG-CE

## Metropolitan Solutions

Metropolitan areas concentrate major societal challenges and their impacts on societal development. Metropolitan solutions, anchored in the priorities of national governments and the European Union, play a pivotal role in significantly reducing risks and threats. Metropolitan actors take on the responsibility of ensuring the security of the metropolis and fostering an appropriate level of self-sufficiency, with a focus on the benefits of a circular economy within the interconnected metropolitan area. The populations within these areas actively adapt their activities to withstand and positively utilize the complexities posed by environmental, social, demographic, cultural, health, security, and technological challenges.

For instance, large metropolitan cities and their regions often stand as key contributors to emissions. Simultaneously, they experience the consequences of climate change. Research and development initiatives within these metropolitan areas not only help to mitigate the impacts of climate change but also position them as proactive agents in this global challenge. Functional metropolitan cooperation, strategic planning, and an integrated approach are essential components that effectively address these complex societal challenges across a variety of thematic areas. The application of this integrated approach at the metropolitan scale yields better results with fewer resources. Metropolitan solutions, therefore, serve as the flagship at the forefront of societal advancements.



Vítkovice Lower Area, ITI Best practice, Ostrava Metropolitan Area

# Metropolitan empowerment

While metropolitan areas are committed and resourceful, their full potential is not always recognized and utilized. Metropolitan strategies, policies and instruments play a crucial role in identifying, evaluating, and addressing key challenges and thematic development priorities. They are dedicated to building green, inclusive, and productive metropolitan communities. However, organizational and procedural arrangements currently hinder the effectiveness and efficiency of their fulfillment. Frictions and path dependencies sometimes limit cooperative efforts between multiple partners in private business, NGOs, citizen groups, governments, and public organizations within metropolitan areas, as well as with neighbors and partners at national and EU levels.

## Emancipation and Recognition

Forward-looking organizational agendas of metropolitan areas, societies, and governments focus on internal, emancipatory, bottom-up activities, synergies, and co-ordination. These

agendas prioritize the establishment of a solid institutional framework, ensuring the firm integration of the metropolitan dimension in external, top-down national and European policies, planning, and governance. The key entry point is the promotion of inclusive, equal, balanced, and respectful cooperation among all local governments, actively involving citizens and businesses in the design and implementation of shared goals anchored in metropolitan strategies and policies. Despite the presence of fragmented local government jurisdictions, the co-operative governance builds mutual trust and synergies. In this context, the European Union and national governments increasingly recognize metropolitan areas as essential partners in strategic policy dialogues and embed them in policies and legal documents. The metropolitan vocabulary gains prominence in media and public discourse, thereby reinforcing metropolitan identity and recognition.



Closer to the Labour Market, Best practice, Warsaw Metropolitan Area



Directly elected Assembly of the Stuttgart Region, Best practice, Stuttgart Region Association

## Metropolitan Institutionalization

While metropolitan governance holds the potential to effectively address regional and global societal challenges, the insufficient, weak, or missing competences of metropolitan agencies limit their effectiveness. An essential precondition for realizing the full benefits of metropolitan governance is the establishment of a legal framework that facilitates effective metropolitan co-operation, planning, and management. This includes a strategic shift of responsibilities and competences towards the metropolitan level of governance. The support of soft forms of governance, such as collaborative networks, joint initiatives, and informal partnerships, alongside formal structures, raises awareness of metropolitan issues and paves the path towards metropolitan institutionalization. To effectively empower metropolitan development, concerted efforts are needed at all levels of government, including the EU, with dedicated attention to securing metropolitan funds, ensuring sufficient budget allocation, maintaining stability of resources, and allowing flexibility in their disposition. These measures are crucial for providing the necessary power to steer metropolitan development in a manner that aligns with overarching goals and societal needs.

## Metropolitan Expertise and Capacity

Clever and smart metropolitan agendas, policies, and practices strike a balance between applying universal principles and recognizing the diverse challenges presented by global and specific place-related metropolitan contexts. The drivers, potentials, limitations, and risks vary significantly based on local, regional, national, legal, political, organizational, economic, social, cultural, and environmental contexts. Realistic evaluations of potential paths and roadmaps to strengthen cooperation and build metropolitan institutions are essential. Metropolitan expertise, guided by thorough analysis, data-driven policies, and evaluation, supports the timely, flexible, and effective advancement of the metropolitan dimension. Tailored data provision for metropolitan areas streamlines the formulation and implementation of evidence-based policies. Moreover, metropolitan intelligence thrives on a dynamic interplay of innovation, creativity, and diverse human capital, enhancing the empowerment of citizens, technological advancements, and multilateral cooperation. Deep and cooperative knowledge sharing and exchange contribute significantly to spreading the benefits derived from the diverse experiences, pushing the frontiers of metropolitan cooperation.



**70 % of EU GDP is produced in metropolitan areas and regions.**

Warsaw Metropolitan Area

# Common Metropolitan Vision - full version

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