

31 October 2025

METREX Autumn Conference in Gipuzkoa

Donostia-San Sebastian 5-7 November

Upcoming trends and perspectives – what are the challenges for metropolitan policies?

How to articulate with the Multiannual Financial Framework and which role can METREX play?

European metropolitan areas today face concrete challenges: energy transition, housing crisis, sustainable mobility, social cohesion and growing budgetary constraints. These issues are intensifying in a Europe confronted with geopolitical, energy and migration crises that are reshaping our action priorities. As Europe prepares its next multiannual financial framework (MFF) and redefines its investment priorities, this METREX conference in Gipuzkoa brings us together to share our practical experiences and identify the role that METREX can play in articulating responses to local issues with advocacy towards the EU.

This conference is also a time for listening to the real needs of our members and building an operational roadmap, particularly through collaborative workshops in small groups. This is a decisive conference for sharing together the future of the network and its activities in light of expressed needs, at the very moment when we are renewing governance by electing, within a newly designated managing committee, a new presidency and vice-presidency.

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Wednesday 5 November – San Sebastian Network- and Expert Groups

10:00 – 15:30 | Parallel network- and Expert group meetings

Venue: Carlos Santamaria Centre, Library of the Universidad del Pais Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea

Address: Plaza de Elhuyar, 2, 20018 Donostia-San Sebastian, Gipuzkoa

Directions

When you enter the Centre, turn left and you will see the entrance to an auditorium. The rooms and classrooms are on the left side of the auditorium.

10:00 – 11:30 Mapping METREX (Room 2)

Mapping METREX is a project initiated by the Province of South Holland (PZH). The goal of this activity is to deepen the knowledge around the territorial diversity and variety of governance systems that exist in the METREX membership by connecting and visualizing existing information and making it easily available.

Join online: [Teams Meeting](#)

Referent: [Mariana Faver](#), Province South Holland, NL

11:30 – 13:00 EuroDelta EG: Cities and Regions Driving the Circular Transition (Classroom 3)

The EuroDelta network continues its work on one of today's most urgent challenges – the circular transition. During the meeting, we will explore how cities and regions can take the lead in this transformation. We are delighted to welcome two key institutions shaping Europe's circular future:

- *The OECD, with **Ander Eizaguirre**, presenting insights from their study *The Circular Economy in Cities and Regions of the European Union*.*

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- The European Investment Bank (EIB), with **Jan Byström**, sharing perspectives from their Circular4Cities initiative.

Join online: [Teams Meeting](#)

Referent: [Dagmar Keim](#), City of Amsterdam, NL

10:00 – 13:00 Nordic Baltic Network (Classroom 2)

The Nordic-Baltic Space Expert Group unites METREX members to develop a shared vision and framework for more effective city-region policies across the Nordic-Baltic area. By analysing key drivers of change, challenges, and strengths, the group aims to create a joint scenario, shared strategic maps, and coordinated spatial strategies that foster a more integrated and polycentric development model. Its goal is to enhance sustainable regional competitiveness and cooperation among city-regions. In this meeting we will focus on Preparedness and Security, addressing issues such as geopolitical risks, climate impacts, socioeconomic instability, market uncertainty, and housing shortages.

Referent: [Peter Austin](#), City of Oslo, NO

12:00-13:00 Foresighting (Room 4)

In response to the rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape and heightened uncertainty, METREX has embarked on an ambitious project: "Foresight for Europe." This initiative aims to explore potential future scenarios for Europe and identify strategies to bolster and advance Europe's metropolitan backbone in these challenging times. Recognizing the need for resilience, flexibility, and foresight, the project is inviting experts, stakeholders, and the METREX community to collaboratively examine Europe's possible paths forward.

Referent: [Sébastien Rolland](#), Urbalyon, FR

13:00 – 14:30 Climate Challenge Expert Group (Classroom 3)

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The Metropolitan Climate Challenge Expert Group aims to enhance metropolitan and regional cooperation on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Its activities will help cities and regions reduce emissions and strengthen climate resilience. The group focuses on identifying and promoting the most effective and rapid measures to cut emissions and adapt to changing climate conditions. Open to practitioners, planners, and land-use officers across METREX metropolitan and city regions, the Expert Group provides a collaborative platform to exchange knowledge, develop strategies, and accelerate collective action toward sustainable, climate-resilient urban and regional development.

Join online: [Teams Meeting](#)

Referent: [Ilona Mansikka](#) and [Marikka Manninen](#), Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council, FI

13:00 – 15:30 EconoMETREX 2.0 (Classroom 5)

The EconoMETREX working group focuses on strengthening the economies of Europe's metropolitan regions. Competitiveness lies at the heart of current European policies. The group discusses economic ecosystems and the key spatial conditions that support them. Together, we aim to draft a White Paper to be submitted to Brussels. In parallel, we are exploring opportunities for European funding and preparing study visits to facilitate knowledge exchange within the group.

Join online: [Teams Meeting](#)

Referent: [Peter Pol](#), City of The Hague, NL

Technical note: MUGI Cards for using local public transport will be distributed before the start of the working sessions. An Initial charge of 5 euros is included

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Wednesday 5 November – San Sebastian Arrival & Institutional Welcome

Theme: Cultural & Political Anchoring

17:30 – 18:30 | Official Reception

Venue: Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa

Address: Gipuzkoa Plaza, 1, 20004 Donostia, Gipuzkoa, Spain

- Welcome by [Eider Mendoza](#) Deputy General of Gipuzkoa
- Welcome by [Azahara Domínguez](#), Deputy for Mobility, Tourism and Land Use Planning, Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa
- [Jakub Mazur](#), METREX President

Walk to the Convent

19:00 | Informal Dinner

(kindly offered by Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa)

Venue: Convent of Saint Teresa

Address: Andere.E.Zipitria Kalea, 1, 20003 Donostia, Gipuzkoa

Thursday 6 November - Irun Local Inspiration, European Perspective

Theme: Gipuzkoa as a Model for Sustainable and Integrated Mobility

Transport to Irun

All the participants will reach Irun on their own

Transport by bus is organised only for speakers, rapporteurs and moderators

7:30 | Meeting point: Donostia Bus Station, Federico García Lorca Pasealekua, 1. 20014 Donostia, Gipuzkoa

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Venue: FICOPA – Irun

Address: Av. Iparralde, 43, 20302 Irun, Gipuzkoa, Spain

08:30 | Registration and Welcome Coffee

Remaining MUGI Cards for using local public transport will be distributed at the registration desk (Initial charge of 5 euros included)

Chair of the morning: [Sandeep Shingadia](#), Director of Strategic Partnerships and Delivery Integration, Transport for West Midlands, UK

09:00 – 09:15 | Official Opening

- [Cristina Laborda](#), Mayoress of Irun
- [Azahara Domínguez](#), Deputy for Mobility, Tourism and Land Use Planning, Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa
- [Jakub Mazur](#), METREX President

09:15 – 09:45 | European Framing

Introduction of the day: From Local Model to European Challenge and back with [Laura Papaleo](#), MC Genova, IT (video recording)

Keynote by [Frank van Oort](#), Professor Regional Economics, Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL
Recent comparative research on the economic power of European metropolitan regions.

09:45 – 10:45 | Gipuzkoa Institutional Presentations

How mobility enables urban transformation and territorial cohesion

- VIA IRUN Project – Linking regeneration and transport infrastructure, [Cristina Laborda](#), Mayoress of Irun.
- Cycling Strategy – Mobility beyond infrastructure, [José Ignacio Asensio](#), Deputy for Sustainability, Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa.

10:45 – 11:00 | Coffee Break

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11:00 – 12:15 | European Panel – Urban Mobility in the EU Context

- MUGI system – Social & environmental value beyond fare integration, [Azahara Domínguez](#), Deputy for Mobility, Tourism and Land Use Planning, Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa
- Sustainable Mobility Plan of Euskadi 2025–2035 – Strategic policy, [Susana García Chueca](#), Minister of Sustainable Mobility of the Basque Government
- Sustainable mobility as an element that integrates and renovates cities – [José Antonio Santano](#), Secretary of State for Transport and Sustainable Mobility. Government of Spain.

12:15 – 13:00 | METREX Moderated Dialogue: Bridging current transitional dynamics in the Metropolitan Reality

- [Laura Papaleo](#), MC Genova, Italy & [Dario Parravicini](#), MC Milano, Italy
- [Dietmar Schulmeister](#), Metropolregion Rheinland, Germany

13:30 – 14:30 | Informal Networking Lunch at FICOPA

14:30 – 17:30 | World-Café with METREX Expert Groups (parallel)

Introduction to the work sessions by [Simone Jung](#), Stuttgart region and [Sébastien Rolland](#), UrbaLyon

14:45 – 15:45 Round 1

EconoMETREX: Europe's Economic Future

Chair: [Erik Pasveer](#), Rapporteur: [Peter Pol](#)

The MFF (Multiannual Financial Framework) appears to show a step toward centralization to accelerate decision-making—something seen as necessary in times of war threats. How does this relate to the nation-state? What if national politics primarily draws its electorate from outside major cities? Is it important for urban regions to collaborate more across borders?

Since 2024, there has been increasing pressure from established industries (automotive, chemical) to weaken the Green Deal. Sound

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economic policy requires a broad foundation. It must be democratic on the one hand, but also decisive on the other. Shared societal missions could play a role here. Consider how, in the U.S. during the 1960s and 70s, NASA engaged in tough negotiations to develop quality private-sector products that served public goals. Societal missions can transcend party lines.

The new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of the European Union is currently being developed for the period 2028–2034.

- The MFF is the EU’s long-term budget and determines how funds are allocated across priorities such as agriculture, urban policies, cohesion policy, defense, migration, climate, and innovation.
- On 16 July 2025, the European Commission presented its proposal for the new MFF.
- Negotiations are now in full swing and will lead to formal adoption by the Council of Ministers and approval by the European Parliament.

Questions:

- What worries you regarding the economy of your metropolitan region?
- Do you recognize the urgency of increased European cooperation among metropolitan regions on economic issues? Are we on the same page in this respect?
- How can metropolitan regions strengthen ties with the business sector to develop a shared agenda?
- How should this be reflected in the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)? Which role can METREX play in this respect?

Metropolitan Governance: Interreg Metro-Case & MECOG-CE

Chair: [Łukasz Medeksza](#), Rapporteur: [Soňa Raszkova](#)

The discussion suggests linking the Expert Group’s future work with EU-funded projects **MECOG** and **Metro Case** to strengthen members’ capacity, inform METREX policy inputs, and expand knowledge on metropolitan governance. It also invites reflection on emerging issues such as national regulations, political trends, major investments, and resource-oriented autonomy.

Questions:

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1. How to use such projects as MECOG and Metro Case (and any similar ones in the future) to:

- build our members' capacity at their local, and national level?
- create inputs to METREX opinions/statements at the EU level?
- build our own METREX base of knowledge about metropolitan governance models and strategies?

2. Are we open to work on new issues (and if yes – how?), such as:

- what are the tendencies towards metropolitan regulations at the national level?
- what are the political tendencies in the metropolitan areas themselves?
- what are the biggest investments in European metropolitan areas?
- what are the tendencies/attitudes/strategies towards building resource-oriented autonomies in our metropolitan regions and areas?

Geographical challenges (Nordic Baltic Network)

Chair: [Peter Austin](#); Rapporteur : [Jānis Ušča](#)

The Nordic-Baltic Space Expert Group brings together METREX members to develop shared strategies for integrated, polycentric city-region development, analysing key drivers and challenges to strengthen cooperation and enhance sustainable regional competitiveness across the Nordic-Baltic area.

METREX 2049: Foresight

Chair: [Sébastien Rolland](#); Rapporteur (tbc)

In response to the rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape and heightened uncertainty, METREX has embarked on an ambitious project: “Foresight for Europe.” This initiative aims to explore potential future scenarios for Europe and identify strategies to bolster and advance Europe’s metropolitan backbone in these challenging times. Recognizing the need for resilience, flexibility, and foresight, the project is inviting experts, stakeholders, and the METREX community to collaboratively examine Europe’s possible paths forward.

Questions:

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- Expectations at local level for the foresight EG + the will to integrate the EG,
- Expectations from EU level to be addressed by the foresight EG,
- Expectations for METREX level from the foresight EG

Mapping METREX

Chair: [Mariana Faver](#); Rapporteur: [Daniel Rădulescu](#)

There is already a lot of (Geo)data available at European scale through different platforms, but the information is often fragmented and not tailored to the metropolitan scale. In addition to fostering knowledge exchange, this group aims to make existing data understandable, accessible, and useful for its members.

- What are hot topics within your expert/ network group?
- Are there knowledge gaps regarding (Geo)data?
- How can Mapping METREX contribute to solving these challenges?

15:45 - 16:00 | break

16:00 – 17:00 Round 2

From Roads to Streets: the Mobility shift

Chair: [Sandeep Shingadia](#); Rapporteur: [Chuck Bean](#)

Climate Challenge

Chair: [Mariikka Manninen](#) Rapporteur: [Ilona Mansikka](#)

The METREX Climate Challenge Expert Group (CCEG) has been active since 2022. The group provides a platform for cooperation and knowledge exchange among spatial planning climate experts from different metropolitan regions across Europe. The group aims to identify best practices for strengthening metropolitan regions and cities' capacity to reduce emissions, enhance carbon sequestration and improve resilience. Questions:

- What are the most relevant/hottest climate related topics in Your region at the moment?

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- Which climate related topics are most relevant and/or interesting in terms of the EU and the metropolitan regions?
- How will EU-regulation change the planning of the metropolitan regions in the near future?
- What are the key climate messages from Metrex to the EU? Which Eu-related topics should be highlighted in the work of the Climate Challenge Expert Group? How?
- How could The Climate Challenge Expert Group best benefit You and other member organizations within the METREX network? Materials, events, projects...? Ideas for joint EU-projects? Collaboration between Expert Groups?

Background materials:

[The Key Messages report about our group's activities 2022-2023](#)

EuroDelta EG: Cities and Regions Driving the Circular Transition

Chair: [Dagmar Keim](#); Rapporteur: tbc

Social and Affordable Housing (SAH)

Chair/Rapporteur: [José Ferreira](#)

The METREX Sustainable and Affordable Housing Expert Group (SAH) was launched during the fourth edition of the Social Housing Festival in Barcelona (SHF) in May 2023. After a series of thematic and place-based workshops and online interactive sessions, the SAH group showcased their activities at the Social Housing Festival held in Dublin, in June 2025. Sustainable and Affordable Housing is an economic and spatial challenge. A key issue is the mismatch between the scale of housing policy and the scale of housing markets, as emerging evidence shows that metropolitan governments have a better understanding of intermunicipal operators at the forefront of housing development, and we propose a new approach to engage with them and find opportunities and solutions for regional housing affordability. The SAH Group aims to explore opportunities for regional governments to contribute to this critical and pressing issue, engaging members and sharing their expertise on land issues affecting housing affordability in their regions, and this way co-produce innovative thinking and approaches, to develop a strategic multistakeholder network

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that can enable the creation of more equitable and sustainable communities.

Questions:

- what would you like to have from this group?
- how would you like to contribute to this group?
- problems and solutions that you would like to share and discuss with the group?

[Link to Background materials](#)

<https://www.eurometrex.org/activities/metrex-expert-groups/sustainable-and-affordable-housing/>

17:00-17:30 | Rapporteurs on stage : 5 takeaways from the afternoon working sessions serving as input for a potential “Gipuzkoa Statement” on MFF 2028

17:45 | Transport back to San Sebastian

Note: only for speakers, rapporteurs and moderators

Destination: Donostia Bus Station. (Federico García Lorca Pasealekua, 1. 20014 Donostia, Gipuzkoa)

18:15 Arrival at Donostia Bus Station. (Federico García Lorca Pasealekua, 1. 20014 Donostia, Gipuzkoa)

19:30 | Transfer by bus to the restaurant

Meeting point: Donostia Bus Station. (Federico García Lorca Pasealekua, 1. 20014 Donostia, Gipuzkoa)

20:00 | Conference Dinner

23:00 | Departure by bus to San Sebastian

23:20 | arrival in San Sebastian at Donostia Bus Station. (Federico García Lorca Pasealekua, 1. 20014 Donostia, Gipuzkoa)

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Friday 7 November

METREX Day: Scaling Up, Looking Ahead

Venue: FICOBA – Irun

Address: Av. Iparralde, 43, 20302 Irun, Gipuzkoa, Spain

Participants will reach Irun by public transport with MUGI card

08:30 – 11:00 | METREX General Assembly (Members only)

- Presentation of MC Elections results
- Presentation of the candidates for presidency
- Election of a new METREX President and Vice-Presidents
- Financial overview and discharge old MC
- Board and Secretary-General announcements

11:00 – 11:30 | break

11:30 – 14:00 | Thematic Excursion

VIA IRUN Project – Urban Regeneration in Practice (English)

- High-speed station, customs zone transformation
- Integration of housing, economic activity, and mobility

14:00 | Closing and Lunch – METREX Congress