

# Manifesto for Metropolitan Partnerships:

accelerating on a  
greener, more just and  
competitive Europe

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# Rethinking Europe's institutional framework is essential if we are to accelerate to more resilient, greener, just and better-connected communities. It's time to grow Metropolitan Partnerships in Europe.

Metropolitan regions and areas are the places where day after day, across urban and rural settings, Europe creates and re-creates itself. 60 percent of EU inhabitants live in regions and areas. Over 80 percent of newcomers choose them as places to live, so they are still growing. Nearly 70 percent of EU GDP is produced there. On the other hand, over 70 percent of greenhouse emissions in the EU come from the metropolitan regions and areas. They were also severely impacted by the pandemic.

Metropolitan regions and areas have always coped with such challenges. However, as new and deeper challenges arise, to tackle them we need new models and stronger cooperation involving multilevel government and different actors. We are creative and effective, and are already networked across Europe and beyond.

Not all metropolitan regions and areas have their own formalised institutional structures. Nevertheless, they all are shaping and managing effective partnerships to achieve common, often cross-border and trans-sectoral goals. The strength of our regions and areas lies in the combination of three interlinked dimensions: urban, rural, and suburban. The “rurban ecosystem” combines resources from the three of them. Reuse and circular economies function on that scale. Food strategies implemented in many regions and areas need the metropolitan scale. Public and ecosystemic services serve hundreds of millions of our inhabitants and visitors. We are working effectively on achieving the UN’s sustainable development goals. And last but not least, we are experts in delivering places of excellent quality to live, work, and enjoy all over Europe.

Momentum is building behind the metropolitan level. Both the most recent EMA<sup>1</sup> declaration signed in Helsinki in September 2023, and the resolution adopted by the UN Habitat in Nairobi in June 2023, stress that metropolitan regions and areas are indispensable to achieving the sustainable development goals.

The metropolitan regions and their networked space of flows are essential partners to support the EU institutions in implementing our main, common policies – such as the European Green Deal, energy transition, industrial policies, digital transition, investments into transportation networks, and more. The ITI<sup>2</sup>s, which proved to be successful in many countries, serve as a good model for such partnerships.

Apart from the three huge crises we have been experiencing in recent years – climate change, the covid pandemic and war in Ukraine, and their consequences – we are aware of two new, huge challenges we must deal with:

- a housing crisis indicated by sky-rocketing prices of ownership and rental over the EU, mainly in the biggest cities,
- the growing demographic gap between Europe and Africa, which may lead to unprecedented waves of migration towards Europe, triggered by heat, poverty, and wars.

All these issues and challenges should also be a part of future cooperation between the EU institutions and metropolitan regions and areas, in the form of Metropolitan Partnerships.

As METREX and our partner network EMA we may be treated as prototypes of a new, pan-European, metropolitan governance model. We are the only existing metropolitan networks focused on Europe. We gather local politicians, practitioners, and experts. We are ready to cooperate with the European and national authorities to set a new collaborative governance model for metropolitan regions and areas, and for cooperation between different territories, for sustainable and resilient development.

<sup>1</sup> [European Metropolitan Authorities EMA](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Integrated Territorial Investment](#)

We propose to establish Metropolitan Partnerships, involving EU institutions, and the representatives of metropolitan regions and areas to address these challenges. Their main goal is to co-create a resilient, sustainable and prosperous Europe based on the structure of urban and rural networks. However, for such partnerships to work, adequate tools and resources are needed. Therefore, we ask the European Union for:

- 1.** A formal role for Metropolitan Partnerships within existing programmes and initiatives, such as established organisations working on the metropolitan level (METREX, EMA, Rural Pact Eurocities, etc.) to be better consulted during Commission dialogues under its pan-European networks initiative.
- 2.** A new and dedicated Metropolitan Programme 2050 in the EU multi-annual financial framework (MFF) for Metropolitan Partnerships, and active involvement in shaping the projects and programmes to achieve this.
- 3.** The Metropolitan Partnerships to be obligatory stakeholders in processes regulated by the EU code of conduct on partnerships, following the newly adopted UN formulation on this.

**4.** An EU Commissioner that has the “Metropolitan Dimension” in their portfolio.

**5.** Transforming the Committee of the Regions into the Committee of the Regions and Metropolitan Areas, as it requests to include a direct representation from metropolitan partners among its members.

**6.** The big EU infrastructural (e.g. TEN-T), agricultural (CAP), innovation (Horizon Europe), and regional development (ERDF) policies to be further shaped to strengthen Europe’s metropolitan dimension.

**7.** Greater emphasis on physical metropolitan links across Europe (flagship projects such as highspeed railway networks connecting communities and markets in Europe).

As METREX, we are ready to work with the national governments on strengthening the role of the metropolitan level in our countries. We recommend adapting and implementing national regulations and policies concerning Metropolitan Partnerships and institutions, new national operational programmes dedicated to metropolitan regions and areas, and capacity building among metropolitan communities.