



**METREX
Autumn
conference**

**Unlocking the
metropolitan potential**
The benefits of territorial
partnerships

Towards a metropolitan agenda

23-25 October



Bucharest2024



METREX Autumn Conference
Bucharest 2024



Unlocking the Metropolitan Potential
Towards a European Metropolitan Agenda
23-25 October 2024

ADIZMB
BUCHAREST
METROPOLITAN AREA
INTERCOMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
ASSOCIATION

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Introduction

From our METREX Manifesto to Linking New Challenges in Planning to Organisational Adaptation

In alignment with the METREX [Manifesto for Metropolitan Partnerships](#), we recognize that metropolitan regions and areas are uniquely positioned to address the multifaceted challenges we face today. By understanding the bigger picture and translating it to a metropolitan scale, we can collaboratively find solutions with local partners.

Following the launch of our Manifesto for Metropolitan Partnerships, we continue to strengthen our preparedness by:

- [1. Developing Approaches to Urgent Planning Issues](#); Enhancing our fundamental professional capabilities to tackle pressing spatial planning challenges.
 - [2. Organisational Adaptation](#); Becoming more agile, efficient, and accessible in our organizational structure.
 - [3. Forging a Metropolitan Future for Europe](#); Encouraging active participation in shaping a future-oriented metropolitan vision for Europe.
- At this year's METREX Spring

Conference in Brussels, we focused on:

- New Challenges in Spatial Planning; Deliberating on current pressing issues and evaluating our readiness for the future both organizationally and in our planning approaches.
- Equipping ourselves for the future; Providing comprehensive support to staff, ensuring they have the skills, tools, and resources necessary to effectively tackle complex metropolitan challenges.

Building on that, the program of the Autumn conference in Bucharest aimed at integrating several key components to support our members in building a robust organizational framework capable of addressing new spatial planning challenges, including:

- [1. Introduction to the Romanian context](#): Understanding regional specifics and contextual challenges.
- [2. Thematic and Parallel Workshop Sessions](#): Offering opportunities for learning, mirroring, and reflection on strategies to address spatial planning issues.

[3. New methodologies and learning approaches](#):

Metropolitan Observatory and Foresighting: Combining these elements to ensure we are not only prepared for the future but also proactive in shaping new policy statements towards EU and national institutions.

[4. Panel discussions](#):

Seeking for a political steer in formulating a European Metropolitan Agenda.

The program offered a varied range of activities shaped in different formats: from the plenary session's presentations and many hands-on, to parallel workshops delving into a wide spectrum of themes.

Opened the works Gianina Panatau, Director General ADIZMB and Olivia Ciobanu-Oprescu, Administrator ILFOV County with greetings from Volodymyr Bondarenko, Deputy Mayor Kyiv (online) and Jakub Mazur, President of METREX.

December 2024

TOWARDS A METROPOLITAN AGENDA

Outputs and notes from sessions&workshops

The Metropolitan Dimension in Romania

Wednesday 23 October

Moderator: **Bogdan Suditu**, Head of Urbanism and Urban Mobility Department – ADIZMB
Rapporteur: **Claudia Pamfil**, ADIZMB and Vice-president of Romanian Professional Association of Urban Planners (APUR)

Introduction Panel

- **Adrian Crăciun**, Executive Director, The Federation of Metropolitan Areas and Urban Agglomerations in Romania
- **Liviu Băileşteanu**, Director, Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration
- **Ovidiu Cîmpean**, State Secretary, Ministry of Investments and European Projects
- **Marius Cristea**, Urban Development Consultant – World Bank
- **Liviu Ianăşi**, Doctor in urban planning, University of Architecture, Bucharest

Conclusions

A structured and clearly defined approach to metropolitan cooperation could allow Romanian metropolitan areas to operate more cohesively and effectively. By focusing on high-priority metropolitan issues, introducing incentives and mandates for cooperation, and establishing flexible but robust institutional structures, Romania can foster metropolitan areas that are both economically viable and socially equitable.

Discussion

The metropolitan dimension in Romania highlights the complexities and challenges around establishing and sustaining effective metropolitan cooperation across localities. Below is an analysis of the current situation and recommendations that could shape future metropolitan collaboration.

1. Current Situation Analysis

Undefined Metropolitan Cooperation: The concept of metropolitan cooperation in Romania is currently ambiguous, lacking clear definitions and structures. This vagueness often leads to superficial or symbolic partnerships rather than substantive

collaboration.

Perception of Threat to Local Sovereignty:

Many local officials view metropolitan cooperation as a potential infringement on local autonomy, which can hamper efforts to build cohesive, integrated urban regions.

Cautious Approach by Central Government: The central government has taken

a conservative approach, refraining from promoting or mandating robust metropolitan cooperation structures.

Naturally Occurring Socio-Economic Interactions: Despite the lack of formal frameworks, there are socio-economic activities, public services, and issues that naturally extend across metropolitan boundaries, highlighting the need for a unified approach to these cross-jurisdictional issues.

Erosion of Trust in Metropolitan Partnerships: The tendency to establish nominal partnerships—“pretend” collaborations—has led to a lack of trust and effectiveness in metropolitan cooperation.

Operational Limitations in Spatial Policy: Mechanisms for implementing spatial policies, such as land transfer processes or re-parceling, are limited. This lack of tools restricts the practical application of metropolitan plans and visions.

Absence of Incentives and Enforcement Mechanisms: There is a critical shortage of both incentives (carrots) and requirements (sticks) for fostering cooperation, leading to inconsistent and often ineffective collaboration.

2. Needs and Opportunities for the Near Future

Prioritize Key Metropolitan Themes: Metropolitan cooperation should focus on areas that are visibly beneficial and relatively easy to advocate for at the metropolitan level.

These include:

- Climate resilience and neutrality
- Public health coordination
- Integrated mobility and transport systems
- Efficient land use and sober land consumption
- Waste management and environmental protection
- Affordable housing and public amenities
- Social inclusion and poverty reduction
- Reindustrialization, particularly in strategic areas
- Crisis preparation, response, and management.

Emphasize Economies of scale: By collaborating at a metropolitan level, localities can benefit from economies of scale—reducing costs (housing, health, and time) and enhancing capacities (e.g., access to specialized personnel or services). Presenting the tangible financial and social benefits of cooperation can foster greater acceptance among local leaders.

Introduce Legal and Policy Levers: Effective metropolitan partnerships require a supportive legal framework and national policy backing.

This would make metropolitan cooperation essential, rather than optional, and include:

Legal mandates for planning and policy integration: This could ensure that metropolitan areas have the authority and duty to conduct joint strategic planning and monitoring.

Metropolitan Budgeting: A legally mandated metropolitan budget, with supplementary funding from the central government (e.g., additional 20% allocation from the state budget – piggyback funding), could ensure resources are available for collaborative initiatives.

Eligibility for EU Funding: Metropolitan associations should have direct eligibility for EU funding, with mechanisms that channel resources specifically to metropolitan programs.

Develop Flexible and Defined Institutional Structures: Metropolitan areas need adaptable institutional frameworks that reflect their unique needs and hierarchies, while ensuring:

Special Treatment for Bucharest: Given its distinct scale and complexity, Bucharest may require a unique metropolitan governance approach.

Clear Role Definitions: Roles and responsibilities, particularly in strategic planning and land operations, should be clearly defined to ensure that metropolitan plans and policies are effectively implemented.

Text by Claudia Pamfill





Workshop 1

Bankability of Green Policies

Thursday 24 October

Moderator: **Henk Bouwman**, METREX Secretary General

Rapporteur: **Vera Marin**, President, ATU Association for Urban Transition

- *Introduction Panel*

- **Alpo Tani**, Climate Mitigation Specialist, City of Helsinki, Finland
- **Jeroen Rijdsdijk**, Arcadis
- **Wojciech Deska**, EIB Senior Urban Sector Specialist
- **Ana-Maria Mitroi-Ciobica**, JASPERS
- **Conference participants**

Thematic framework

A structured and clearly defined approach to metropolitan cooperation could allow Romanian metropolitan areas to operate more cohesively and effectively.

By focusing on high-priority metropolitan issues, introducing incentives and mandates for cooperation, and establishing flexible but robust institutional structures, Romania can foster metropolitan areas that are both economically viable and socially equitable.

A strong regulatory framework, innovative financial instruments, and growing market maturity enhance the bankability of green policies in Europe. However, challenges remain, particularly in emerging sectors and regions, requiring continued effort to create an enabling environment for sustainable investment. The success of Europe's green transition will depend on the ability to mobilize pri-

vate capital on a scale, which in turn hinges on the continued development of bankable green projects.

The bankability of green policies in Europe refers to the attractiveness of these policies to private investors, especially financial institutions, to fund projects that align with environmental sustainability goals. It's a critical factor in the transition towards a low-carbon economy, as public funds alone are insufficient to meet the scale of investment needed.

Factors Influencing the Bankability of Green Policies in Europe are the EU Regulatory framework, various types of Financial Instruments, risk mitigation (national governments and EIB), the market maturity of the sectors, possibilities, and opportunities of public-private partnerships, and 'investors' appetites'.

The workshop addressed these issues by showing some practical experiences around our membership.

However, it also focused on technical assistance programs funded by the EU or international organizations that help improve the bankability of projects by enhancing project preparation and implementation capacity.

Challenges include:

Regulatory Uncertainty, changes in policy direction, or lack of clarity can undermine investor confidence.

High Upfront Costs, and the substantial initial investments required for many green projects, particularly infrastructure, can be a barrier without adequate risk mitigation.

And the *access to finance* for smaller projects or those in less mature markets that may struggle to secure financing due to perceived risks.

Conclusions

To enhance the bankability of green projects, cities and regions must develop strategies that align with private sector benefits, embrace green criteria early on, share risks appropriately, and build partnerships for knowledge exchange. Additionally, cities should position themselves as facilitators in these processes, ensuring a more sustainable and finance-ready approach to urban development.

Discussion

The workshop 1 outlined key strategies for improving the bankability of green projects, particularly for cities, regions, and metropolitan areas. Here's a breakdown of the main ideas:

1. Cities as Not-for-Profit Entities:

Cities should not be seen as profit-making entities, but rather as enablers of public good, with a focus on sustainable development.

- Funding and financing landscapes need to be understood before approaching projects. Not all projects promoted by municipalities are bankable. are suitable for bank financing.
- Mapping available funding and financing options based on the project's nature is essential, and cities need the capacity to access the right sources.

2. Leveraging Private Sector Benefits:

- Public investments often lead to private sector profits (e.g., increased land value or benefits for insurance companies and banks).
- Cities/regions need strategies to encourage private actors to invest upfront or through mechanisms that allow cities to recover these investments. Public-private cooperation is key here.

3. Green Criteria for Bankability:

- Environmental sustainability criteria (e.g., climate adaptation, carbon reduction) are increasingly critical for project bankability.
- Banks tend to shy away from "dirty" projects that contribute to CO2 emissions and prefer funding "clean" promoters and initiatives.
- Projects with a strong green narrative should be mainstreamed early, from planning to implementation and communication.
- Municipalities engaged in EU initiatives (e.g., EU Mission – 100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities) may receive fast-track loan approvals for their projects.

4. Risk Sharing Between Banks and Beneficiaries:

- Successful collaboration with financial institutions requires early identification and mapping of risks, ensuring that all parties are aware of potential financial, environmental, or operational risks.

5. Assessing Climate Adaptation Costs:

- A variety of tools exist for assessing climate adaptation costs and impacts. Cities should use these tools to explore different scenarios and design more resilient projects,

balancing risks and costs effectively.

6. Cooperation and Knowledge Exchange:

- Cities should tap into the EU Urban Agenda and thematic partnerships to exchange knowledge, ideas, and financial support mechanisms.
- Partnerships between cities, the private sector, research institutions, and innovation hubs can help in project development and implementation.
- Cities should serve as facilitators or platforms for implementing green policies by connecting stakeholders.

7. METREX's Role in Metropolitan Climate Challenges:

- METREX (the Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas) supports cities by identifying common challenges and good practices.
- Proposing similar solutions for similar problems can help the banking sector better understand and assess projects, potentially lowering costs for project preparation.

Text by rapporteur Vera Marin

Workshop 2 Mobility strengthen metropolitan cooperation

Thursday 24 October

Moderator: **Sandeep Shingadia**, Transport for West-Midlands UK
Rapporteur: **Rafael Amorim**, CIM Cávado

Introduction Panel

- **Adrian Foghis**, Secretary of State, Ministry of Transport, Romania
- **Claudiu Staicu**, Deputy General Director, Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, Romania
- **Geanina Suditu**, Director of Development, The Bucharest-Ilfov Public Transport Inter-community Development Association (TPBI)
- **Chuck Bean**, NARC representative
- **Alexandre Santacreu**, Secretary-General European Metropolitan Transport Association (EMTA)
- **Aileen Boucle**, Executive Director, Miami Dade Transport Planning Organisation
- **Conference participants**

Thematic framework

Strengthening metropolitan collaboration in mobility is essential for building more sustainable, efficient, and equitable transportation systems. It requires a concerted effort to align policies, share resources, and engage stakeholders across municipal boundaries. By working together, metropolitan areas can better address the challenges of modern mobility and enhance the overall well-being of their residents.

Strengthening metropolitan collaboration in mobility involves fostering cooperation among cities, regions, and metropolitan areas to create more efficient, sustainable, and integrated transportation systems. Metropolitan areas often encompass multiple

municipalities, each with its own governance structures, priorities, and challenges. Effective collaboration across these entities is essential for addressing shared mobility issues such as traffic congestion, pollution, and public transport inefficiencies.

Key areas of focus for strengthening metropolitan collaboration in mobility are Integrated Transportation Planning, Shared Mobility Services, Sustainable and Active Mobility, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), Governance and Policy Alignment, Funding and Investment and Citizen Engagement and Public Awareness.

The benefits of Strengthening Metropolitan Collaboration in

Mobility are obviously based on the existing examples all over Europe:

Efficiency Gains:

Coordinated efforts reduce redundancies and improve the overall efficiency of the transportation system.

Sustainability: Collaboration enables a more strategic approach to reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainable mobility solutions.

Economic Growth: Improved mobility fosters economic growth by making it easier for people to access jobs, services, and markets across the metropolitan area.

Quality of Life: Enhancing mobility options can improve the quality of life by reducing travel times, improving air quality, and increasing access to amenities.

The most common challenges to overcome are political and administrative fragmentation, resource disparities and the complex decision-making processes.

Strengthening metropolitan collaboration in mobility is essential for building more

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By working together, metropolitan areas can better

address the challenges of modern mobility and enhance the overall well-being of their residents.



W2 Mobility strengthen metropolitan cooperation

Conclusions

Towards a Holistic and Inclusive Metropolitan Mobility Framework.

By focusing on metropolitan autonomy, data-informed decision-making, and sustainable funding, Europe can establish transport systems that address both regional connectivity and inclusivity. Strengthening governance structures at the metropolitan level and promoting policies that prioritize both environmental sustainability and social equity are crucial. Coordinated action, re-source-sharing, and stakeholder engagement across municipal and metropolitan boundaries will be key in creating transportation systems that serve both current and future mobility needs.

Discussion

This workshop was all about how we can **strengthen metropolitan cooperation** in mobility and this collaboration is essential for building more sustainable, efficient, and **equitable** transportation systems.

There are a number of common themes that have come up throughout the conference such as **investment, land use, access to the labour market, employment, skills, environment, and governance structures** that are all related to mobility.

Transport doesn't work on its own, it exists to support everything else we do. It's not a means to an end in itself but it connects people, places and purposes.

To create meaningful improvements in urban and metropolitan mobility, it is clear that a holistic, well-integrated approach is essential.

The following summarizes the key points, challenges, and guiding messages to promote metropolitan-level transport systems that are sustainable, equitable, and resilient:

Challenges of Modern Mobility and Well-Being

A successful transport system should enhance economic competitiveness and the quality of life, but it often faces environmental and logistical challenges.

Urban and low-density metropolitan areas encounter unique difficulties, including:

- **Environmental and Health Impacts:** Air pollution, noise, and environmental degradation are persistent issues in densely populated areas.
- **Accessibility for All Communities:** Equitable access to transportation is crucial, especially in underserved communities and for populations without private vehicle access.
- **Coordination Across Boundaries:** Effective transport solutions require collaboration across urban, metropolitan, and regional boundaries, as well as among different levels of governance.

Key Questions for Consideration

- 1. Managing Urban Nodes:** How can regions and metropolitan areas streamline coordination at critical urban transport hubs to ensure integration into wider mobility systems?
- 2. Low-Density Area Mobility:** What approaches can provide practical mobility solutions in low-density and rural areas, where public transit options may be scarce or economically challenging?
- 3. Equity for Car-Free Communities:** How can we design transport systems that are accessible to those without private vehicles, particularly in underserved areas?
- 4. Inclusivity in Mobility:** How can mobility policies address the needs of vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and the elderly, to ensure accessible and safe transit options?
- 5. Integration of E-Mobility and Active Transport:** What are the best strategies to harmonize electric vehicles with active mobility options (e.g., walking, cycling) to build a cohesive

mobility ecosystem?

6. Mobility Beyond Urban Cores:

How can planners address travel patterns that extend beyond city centers, supporting commuting and travel needs across less centralized areas?

Three Strong Messages to Share Across Europe

1. Empowering Metropolitan-Level Solutions

- “We should empower the metropolitan level for integrated and equitable public transport services, accessible for all, not one size fits all.”

- Metropolitan areas need the autonomy to shape mobility systems in line with local demands, adhering to the principle of subsidiarity. This approach allows metropolitan regions to implement solutions tailored to the specific

economic, geographic, and demographic characteristics of their areas rather than adhering to uniform, top-down policies.

2. Data Utilization for Smarter Mobility

- “Data is key, but understanding and interpreting data is essential.”

- Access to data is abundant, but actionable insights remain limited. Institutions like CEREMA in France exemplify how robust data collection and interpretation can guide mobility policies. Expanding similar efforts across Europe would equip metropolitan regions with the locally relevant data they need to make informed decisions, leading to smarter and more responsive mobility solutions.

3. Overcoming Legal, Political, and Funding Barriers

- “Regions that work on mobility problems have three

major issues: i) legislation; ii) political will to collaborate and form partnerships, and, especially, iii) funding.”

- Effective metropolitan mobility depends on a strong legal foundation, collaborative political will, and sustainable funding.

Funding remains the greatest challenge, necessitating dedicated, metropolitan-level financial resources. Innovative funding methods, such as car usage fees, could be explored, but substantial, reliable funding to the Next Generation EU recovery fund is essential.

This should be directly allocated to local or metropolitan governments to avoid being diluted in national budgets.

Text by rapporteur Rafael Amorim

Workshop 3

No New Land Take by 2050

Thursday 24 October

Moderator: **Alfredo Corbalan**, Perspective.brussels

Rapporteur: **Simone Jung**, Verband Region Stuttgart

Introduction Panel

- **Jean-Marie Halleux**, Professor of Economic Geography and Spatial Planning, University of Liege, Belgium
- **Sylvain Chapu**, Toulouse Metropolitan Area Planning Agency, FR
- **Dagmar Keim**, Municipality of Amsterdam, Programmanager international territorial developments, NL
- **Sabina Reichert**, Urban planner specialised in metropolitan development, Deputy Director, Urbasofia
- **Conference participants**

Thematic framework

Achieving net-zero land take in metropolitan regions is a complex but essential goal for sustainable urban development. It requires a multi-faceted approach that includes land recycling, compact urban development, smart zoning, and active community engagement. While challenges remain, the long-term benefits of protecting natural and agricultural lands, promoting sustainable development, and enhancing urban liveability make the pursuit of net-zero land take a critical objective for metropolitan planners and policymakers.

Conclusions

Balancing Densification with the Need for Open Spaces

*Achieving net zero land take will require metropolitan regions to balance densification with the preservation of open spaces, prioritizing collaboration with surrounding peri-urban areas. Only through integrated strategies that combine **environmental, housing, and planning** [1] considerations can metropolitan areas achieve sustainable urban development aligned with the EU's ambitious targets.*

[1] Those three elements were the ones mentioned during the workshop.

Discussion

By setting a net zero land take target, the EU aims to curb unnecessary land consumption, protect biodiversity, and mitigate the economic impacts of climate change. Here's a closer look

at the implications, strategies, and necessary actions to make this ambitious goal a reality at the metropolitan level.

Core Challenges and Case Studies

1. France's Legislative Response

- France pioneered the introduction of a national law

with quantitative limits on land use, committing to zero land take by 2050. While the goal has broad public support, local governments are concerned about its impact on their control over development.

- France's approach includes flexibility, allowing for specific exceptions, such as industrial and housing projects of national interest, acknowledging that some urban growth is necessary.

- Tools, like extensive data-tracking and planning models, have been employed to measure and manage land use at the local level, allowing urban planners to maintain more granular oversight.

2. The Netherlands' Integrated Approach

- The Netherlands consolidated 26 laws under a new framework that includes climate, energy, housing, and environmental policies. Their strategy promotes densification, repurposing brownfields, and adding green spaces in urban areas.

- By integrating laws and leveraging urban greening, the Netherlands aims to strike a balance between necessary urban growth and ecological sustainability.

The Metropolitan Scale as a Nexus for Action

Metropolitan regions are the ideal scale for tackling zero land take, as they bridge the gap between dense urban cores and sprawling peri-urban areas. This approach supports a ****polycentric model****

that enhances the role of secondary cities, preventing over-concentration in primary urban centres and reducing the pressure on undeveloped land.

1. **Polycentric Development:** This model encourages the development of multiple hubs within a metropolitan area, dispersing urban growth and reducing land pressure on a single core city.

2. **Boundary Redefinition:** Current administrative boundaries often fail to encapsulate the functional geography of metropolitan regions and specially the housing dynamics, calling for new governance structures or boundary adjustments that reflect actual housing, land use and mobility patterns.

3. **Diversity of local situations:** the European top-down quantitative approach on zero land take does not take into account the diversity of situation of different urban areas in Europe. Moreover, it does not include a qualitative approach related to the land or the green area to protect.

Social and Territorial Considerations

Densification brings with it significant social challenges:

- **Rising Housing Costs:** Increased housing demand within dense urban areas can lead to higher prices, making affordability a key concern. This could inadvertently drive people towards peri-urban areas, increasing urban sprawl, traffic congestion, and energy

costs.

- **Family Housing Needs:** As family homes remain in high demand, there's a tension in certain countries between densification goals and the desire for low-density family housing. On the other side there is also a demand for other alternative form of housing (co-housing, community land trust...). Future housing plans must carefully consider the actual and future different social and housing needs to preserve long-term social sustainability.

- **Equity in Access:** Social sustainability also involves ensuring access to affordable housing, open spaces, and essential services for all residents, making affordability a critical aspect of the no net land take strategy.

Integrated Development Strategies for Metropolitan Areas

To meet the net zero land take objective, metropolitan areas need to adopt cohesive strategies that address multiple interconnected dimensions:

1. **Spatial Development:** Strategic land use planning that prioritizes infill development and brownfield regeneration can help curb land take.

2. **Housing Affordability:** Policies must promote affordable housing options in high-density areas to avoid urban sprawl and keep essential services accessible.

3. Social Cohesion: A socially sustainable approach considers the impacts of densification on community well-being, from green space availability to affordable living standards.

4. Nature and Environmental Protection: Integrating green infrastructure, like parks, green rooftops, and preserved natural areas, within urban development support biodiversity.

5. Transport and Mobility Planning: Efficient public transit and active transport options reduce car dependency, further curtailing urban sprawl.

6. Climate Adaptation: Policies must consider the resilience of urban areas to climate impacts, such as extreme heat or flooding, by incorporating green and blue infrastructure.

Active Land Policies

The increase in housing prices in recent years is mainly due to the rise in the price of land. Moreover in several countries, the land consumption has been much higher than population growth. Thus metropolitan authorities need to develop active land policies towards more land sobriety.

- **Brownfield Reuse:** Encouraging the development of previously industrial or abandoned sites reduces the need for greenfield expansion.
- **Tackling Vacancies:** Repurposing empty buildings and addressing under-

occupied housing stock could improve land use efficiency.

- **Flexible Zoning:** Zoning laws should enable a mix of uses to support compact, multi-functional spaces that reduce the need for new land take.

Governance and Competencies

For metropolitan strategies to succeed, governance structures need to shift from voluntary cooperation to binding competencies:

- **Formalized “Hard Competences”:** Empowering metropolitan bodies with formal decision-making authority and funding control ensures they can enforce land use policies effectively.
- **Resource Allocation:** Dedicated financial resources from EU and national funds can be directed to metropolitan-level planning and implementation, helping overcome financial barriers to sustainable land management.

A Call to Action for the EU and the Commissioner for Housing & Energy

The EU must address the complex relationship between housing demand, densification, and environmental sustainability.

A nuanced approach to affordable housing that incorporates net zero land take principles is essential. The new EU plan on affordable housing should prioritize policies that:

- **Support high-density affordable housing options** in metropolitan areas to discourage sprawl.

- **Recognize the social and environmental need for open spaces and public amenities** within dense urban environments.

- **Encourage collaboration across metropolitan and peri-urban areas**, creating cohesive land use, housing and transport systems that align with net zero objectives.

- **Encourage cooperation between housing actors and spatial planners**

Text by rapporteur Simone Jung, co-edited by moderator Alfredo Corbalan



W1 Bankability of Green Policies

W3 No New Land Take by 2050



W4 Metropolitan Economic Development



Workshop 4 Metropolitan economic development

Thursday 24 October

Moderator: **Gratian Mihailescu**, UrbanizeHub RO

Rapporteur: **Peter Pol**, City of The Hague

Introduction Panel

- **Mihai Precup**, Secretary of State at the Prime Minister's Office, President of the Inter-ministerial Council for the Implementation of State Aid Policy, RO
- **Sebastian Burduja**, Minister of Energy (online)
- **Masha Smirnova**, Eurocities - Industrial Deal and Competitiveness
- **John Austin Stokes**, representative National Association of Development Organisations (NADO), USA
- **Marcel Ionescu Heroiu**, World Bank, RO

Thematic framework

Boosting metropolitan economic development requires a strategic approach that leverages the unique strengths of metropolitan areas while addressing their specific challenges. Metropolitan regions are often economic powerhouses, but they also face complex issues such as inequality, infrastructure strain, and environmental concerns. To promote sustained economic growth, a combination of policy interventions, investment in infrastructure, fostering innovation, and ensuring inclusive growth is essential.

Conclusions

The importance of mission-oriented economic development (Mazzucato). It will be key to stimulate economic activities that are within the planetary and social boundaries (also for social progress). Moreover, the EU metropolitan areas (economic powerhouses) have to contribute to strategic autonomy, sustainable competitiveness and creating a sufficient financial base for supplying public services. Public leadership, translation in place-based policies and multi-level cooperation are preconditions in this respect.

Discussion

It is of utmost importance to further develop **adequate legislative frameworks** for the goals mentioned above. This is needed to steer and support markets for the large transitions needed for goals related to biodiversity, climate

neutrality, and social equity. Moreover, the private market needs good legislative frameworks to be able to invest long-term consistently and to create a level playing field.

Unified financial markets. The common internal market of the EU and its legislative authority is a powerful tool for sustainable competitiveness. However, a structural weak point is its fragmented capital market. One of the recommendations

of the Draghi report is to stimulate a unified capital market. This is needed particularly for metropolitan regions, the economic powerhouses of the EU. This would be a great catalyst to financially support mission-oriented economic development and an important tool to improve the competition with other economic powers, such as China and the USA.

Text by rapporteur Peter Pol

Metropolitan Regions and Areas, what are they?

Thursday 24 October

Towards a Metropolitan Observatory

Moderator: **Henk Bouwman**, METREX Secretary General

Speakers:

Ioana Ivanov, METREX BS Fellow, RO

Mariana Faver, Province South-Holland, NL

Rapporteur: **Laura Papaleo**, Città metropolitana di Genova

Thematic framework

The session focused on understanding the structure, governance, and challenges faced by metropolitan areas (MAs) in Europe.

By examining the results of the METREX Members' Survey and the Mapping METREX initiative, the discussion centered on how these insights can contribute to the creation of a Metropolitan Observatory, aimed at providing standardized data and fostering collaboration among MAs across Europe.

Governance and Territorial Overlap

Many metropolitan areas experience territorial overlap with other organizations, making governance complex. Competences such as spatial and transport planning are central functions across most MAs, with spatial planning being essential at the European level.

Main challenges identified:

- Insufficient Powers and Governance Structures
- Limited resources
- Financial constraints

The ambition of this program is to making progress in:

- Mapping Metropolitan Organizations and Functional

Urban Areas (FUAs)

- Clarifying Competencies
- Financial Sustainability
- Focus on Outcomes, Not Inputs
- Integration with Existing Databases

The discussion led to a broader reflection on the following points:

Institutionalizing Metropolitan Cooperation

Formalize structures through legal frameworks to ensure sustainability and stronger decision-making. An EU-wide policy could support this process.

Innovative Funding

Explore public-private partnerships (PPP), blended finance, green bonds, and climate-focused EU funds to attract resources and enhance sustainability.

Data-Driven Decision-Making

Use standardized KPIs for resilience, climate impact, economic development, and well-being to track and improve performance.

Territorial Cohesion & Multilevel Governance

Strengthen horizontal and vertical governance integration

to avoid overlaps and streamline decision-making.

Resilience & Climate Neutrality

Prioritize climate adaptation and sustainable mobility to address environmental challenges in metropolitan planning.

Leveraging Digital Tools

Use digital platforms and real-time dashboards to foster data sharing and collaboration across metropolitan areas.

Text by rapporteur Laura Papaleo



Collaborative check of the METREX members' territorial areas for Mapping METREX



Towards a metropolitan Observatory session

“Metropolitan regions and the future of Europe”

Moderators and coordinators: **Łukasz Medeksza**, City of Wrocław and **Sébastien Rolland and Claire Boisset**, Urbalyon

The main aim of the session was to launch the METREX Foresight 2049 project.

The coordinators of this initiative presented the experiences in foresighting from Wrocław (Łukasz Medeksza / Municipality of Wrocław, METREX), Lyon (Sébastien Rolland / UrbaLyon, METREX), and the Netherlands (Johan van Zoest / Eindhoven University of Technology). We also had a short discussion about the goals and tools of foresighting (with Charles Wemple / USA, Director of the Houston regional Council association and an expert in foresighting; Karol Wasilewski / Poland, 4CF – The Futures Literacy Company; and Johan van Zoest). The Prospect’Us foresighting game closed the works of the afternoon involving all the participants of the conference. The game produced a set of six possible combinations of Europe’s future whether desirable or repulsive.

What is it all for? And why foresighting?

In November 2023, METREX presented the metropolitan Manifesto for Europe in Brussels, at a breakfast held in the European Parliament. Distinguished guests, among MEPs, mayors, and representatives from other networks took part in the event.

The Manifesto promotes the idea of strengthening the metropolitan dimension of the European Union, mainly by giving new, good regulations, and funds to our metropolitan regions and areas, and by investing in better infrastructural connections.

In January 2024, the Belgian presidency of the EU prepared the Brussels Declaration.

It was officially signed in Brussels by several mayors and representatives of municipal and metropolitan

networks from all over Europe. METREX president Jakub Mazur was among the signatories.

The Brussels Declaration is basically a call for strengthening the municipal and metropolitan dimensions of the EU.

It was partly inspired by some documents and declarations issued by a couple of European networks besides METREX, such as EMA, and Eurocities, who also promote the metropolitan and municipal agendas. In the Belgian capital the idea of using foresighting as an operational tool to draw scenarios was presented to representatives of the European Commission and some MEP’s.

Following this first steps, a new question was raised: what next? How do we implement the Metropolitan Manifesto

of METREX? What kind of a “metropolitan strategy for Europe” could we propose? It quickly became obvious that in order to answer such questions it was necessary to find out what direction Europe could be heading to.

The problem is that the future is uncertain. We don’t know its direction. We may have to deal with various possible scenarios of the future, with various directions.

So what to do now?

This is when it was decided to become operational and work with foresighting.

This is a method of finding out what could be the possible scenarios of the future.

Foresighting has been used for decades by the public and private sectors. Foresight is not a forecast, so you don’t predict the future, you try to

imagine its possible directions, by analysing various trends, and uncertainty factors and enlightening the present conditions.

Foresight is also not a strategy, it doesn't tell you what to do, but it can tell you what kinds of contexts and circumstances you may have to take into account. And last but not least foresight is not about valuing scenarios - it won't tell you which one is good, and which one is bad. It will only show you the possibilities.

The coordinators of this session, will be planning a foresight program which will last about a year. It will be a process of collecting and analysing basic trends - in the fields of values, peoples' desires, institutions, technologies, and resources. The aim is to find out what could be the basic so-called uncertainty factors. Art will be used as an instrument of finding out what fears and hopes do people have, but also as a language for communicating the outcomes of the project. Finally, scenarios for the future of European metropolitan areas will be described and discussed to define a foresight statement enhancing the Implementation of the Manifesto.

A first version is expected to be ready by the next METREX Spring conference in 2025.

Text by Łukasz Medeksza, Sébastien Rolland, Claire Boisset







Moderator: : **Xavier Tiana Casablanacas**, Coordinator of the General Manager Bureau at Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona (AMB)

EU institutional level

- **Marcos Ros**, MEP

Local authority level

- **Agnès Thouvenot** 1re Adjoint au Maire Villeurbanne – GrandLyon, FR
- **Marco Griguolo**, Councillor Città Metropolitana di Milano, IT
- **Stelian Bujduveanu**, Vice Mayor of Bucharest, RO
- **Jakub Mazur**, Deputy Mayor of Wroclaw, PL

What is it all for? And why foresighting?

It sounds like the METREX Autumn Conference in Bucharest provided an invaluable platform for advancing metropolitan collaboration and policy insights across European regions.

Moderating a session with such a diverse set of political representatives has provided a unique perspective on the challenges and strategies within metropolitan governance across different cities.

Highlights underscore critical aspects:

- **Romania's Efforts in Metropolitan Cooperation:**

Despite resource and legislative limitations, the cooperative initiatives in 16 Romanian cities are a promising model. Such regional teamwork could indeed inspire broader, more resource-backed efforts within the EU, particularly if national

and EU support strengthens.

- **Economic Growth vs. Social Challenges in Bucharest:**

Bucharest's economic expansion contrasts with the difficulties in some urban areas. Addressing these social inequalities while maintaining growth appears to be a priority for future regional strategies.

- **Metropolitan Regions as Key Policy Players:**

The recognition of metropolitan areas as central to shaping urban planning, mobility, and environmental policies aligns with trends towards regional empowerment. Balancing equity and securing sufficient funding remain critical, especially as metropolitan areas face growing demands.

- **Governance and Structural Balance:** The emphasis on achieving a stable balance between political and technical

leadership in metropolitan institutions highlights a governance model that could be instrumental in fostering effective, responsive regional administrations.

- **Need for National and EU-Level Policy Support:** As metropolitan areas assume more responsibility, it's clear there is a growing demand for tailored national policies, and the EU could indeed play a more proactive role in supporting these frameworks.

The focus on EU lobbying reflects the urgency of solidifying metropolitan areas' role in upcoming policies, especially given the international attention from entities like the OECD and UN Habitat.

Text by Xavier Tiana Casablanacas



Wrap up and conclusions with rapporteurs



Wrap up and conclusions from the Foresighting session



Political exchange

Keynote by Corina Cretu former EU Commissioner

'Between 2014-2019 I was European Commissioner for Regional policy leading the launch of the urban agenda of the European Union.

At the heart of this mission is the idea that each city and each region is peculiar and needs tailor-made strategic planning to ensure balanced and cohesive territorial development.

I support your thinking of a metropolitan agenda: combining a rural and urban agenda will close the gap and mitigate the disparities between urban and rural territories all over Europe. During the last 30 years, Romania as many other countries in our Continent, has witnessed a dramatic phenomenon of 'desertification' of the rural and mountain regions.

Social capital and human resources are concentrated in the urban centers at the detriment of the social linkages and productive dimension of rural territories, nowadays emptied. This is a challenge that needs to be tackled adopting a wider perspective on territorial development. In Romania, the pandemic, the war conditions and the global instability are all contributing to a dynamic change where a wave of people is moving from the urban to the rural areas demanding for a wider offer of welfare services (starting

from education, healthcare and mobility infrastructures) and economic opportunities. Still today, territorial disparities are consistent. In this regard, I believe metropolitan areas can contribute to reducing the divide and significantly enhance the implementation of cohesive European Union.

The uncertainty of the difficult and dramatic times we are currently facing is teaching us that we cannot address the future alone. We need to embrace a common European vision.

Therefore I hope that within the ambitions of the new Commission, the cohesion policy will remain a pillar to bridging urban and rural regions reducing disparities and fostering sustainable regional redevelopment in the context of climate adaptation efforts. Furthermore, metropolitan regions play also a vital role in advancing digital transformation and innovation. Hubs for universities, cultural and business centres, metropolitan areas can contribute to the alignment with EU priorities in research, education and smart cities initiatives.

We must equip ourselves with tools and the capacity to adapt to changes ahead of us, including innovative approaches to new financial solutions and models. However,

no matter what you do, challenges remain as societies evolve. But Metropolitan areas and regions have the ability to implement policies locally and, as I said, tailor them to specific regional needs, adding considerable value to the broader European agenda'.

Making a direct link to our premises, the outcomes of the event will serve as a first outline for an updated proposal, the **European Metropolitan Agenda**, to Members of the European Parliament in Spring 2025, also using the Polish EU Presidency and our METREX Spring Conference.

By embracing these initiatives, we aim to be proactive in addressing the challenges ahead and shaping a sustainable metropolitan future for Europe.

The EMA Conference in Amsterdam which took place short after the Conference, was a timely opportunity to continue these conversations, and allowed to see how these insights can evolve with further input.

Many thanks to all the contributors and participants and most of to Gianina Panatau and the Team Asociatia de Dezvoltare Intercomunitara Zona Metropolitana Bucuresti (ADIZMB) for hosting us and for the fantastic event!





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Kindly hosted by



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