

Policy Paper:

# The Role of Metropolitan Areas in the Governance of Development Challenges: Towards the European Urban Agenda

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# 1. Introduction

Accelerated urbanisation is a global demographic trend that takes different shapes in each region and continent. In developing countries the tendency has led to the creation of big megalopolises, but in Europe, where rural-to-urban migration is more mature and the urbanisation rate is highest (70% compared to the world average of 54%), the metropolitan phenomenon has a more polycentric architecture. There has been a transition from a centre/periphery dialectic framework to a more complex reality in which interdependencies between various municipalities continually interact. Furthermore, the notion of what is and is not an urban area has been changing (OECD, 2012), with increasing exchanges between large urban areas and the hinterlands surrounding them through the connections and constant flows of people between different municipal administrations (METREX, 2014).

Today, European metropolitan areas are territorial spaces immersed in the global world, where innovative cross-fertilisation and social transformations occur, and which form part of economic and social networks. But they are also a source of social conflicts and problems that need political and institutional responses. The challenges of

the metropolis transcend municipalities and state policies and require new forms of governance. The urban agenda is being expanded to address growing global challenges such as: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climate change threats, massive refugee flows, growing levels of inequality and poverty, and the dangers posed by terrorists and organised crime.

Metropolitan areas are also the main drivers of growth and innovation. In a context in which the concentration of population, wealth and power in cities is increasing, their political representatives need to coordinate their international projection to make it more effective. The ability to act in coordination will be essential if they are to influence state policies and contribute to shaping the international agenda. Acting together requires the construction of new spaces of transnational governance at different levels that exceed the current spatial and sectoral fragmentation. It is necessary to seek mechanisms to interact with the various existing initiatives and to promote the effective participation of local actors in global decisions to ensure that they are later implemented on the ground.

## 2. Key challenges for metropolitan governance

The metropolitan agenda should be holistic, covering a multitude of sectors related to economic, social, regional and territorial sustainable development. However, among them we highlight four main areas in which to focus and coordinate the collective action, without neglecting to take an integrated approach and taking into account other related agendas. For that purpose, it is paramount to invest in facilitating urban intelligence systems based on benchmarking, monitoring and evaluation of policies, strategies and best practices,<sup>1</sup> as well as building advocacy capacity that matches that of regional, national and transnational policymakers.

### ENVIRONMENT

#### *Adapting infrastructure and climate change*

European cities face two main environmental challenges: climate change mitigation and adaptation; and ageing infrastructure and densification. For the former, climate change mitigation requires significant greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions to meet the 2°C and near-zero emissions target set for 2050.<sup>2</sup> Improving air quality, reducing high-levels of noise, tackling contaminated sites, addressing water scarcity and quality, and fostering efficient waste management cycles are the most prominent challenges for urban areas. In parallel, climate change adaptation needs flexible measures to fight heat wave increases due to the frequency of heavy precipitation, which may lead to inland and coastal flooding. This is coupled with the fact that the mean sea level is expected to continue rising in the future due to global warming, which will also pose additional flood risks.

Beyond the impacts cities are facing, they have to be prepared for quick response to disasters as well as systematic prevention. In this context, metropolitan areas can play a critical role in managing coordinated change and recovery from extreme weather events and transforming the infrastructure and its organisation to adapt to long-term climate changes. Regarding the latter, as cities in Europe grow older, ageing infrastructure is also a major challenge that pushes cities to rethink urban planning with an integrative vision. City resilience also means the gradual process of retrofitting the existing housing and infrastructure stock, ensuring that the new projects are designed taking

into consideration the environmental challenges such as mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

#### *Comprehensive environmental agenda*

The preservation of the environment in resilient cities entails an intensive use of green infrastructure and nature-based solutions and is no longer an isolated concern of environmental policies. Such solutions bring more natural processes into urban landscapes and seascapes through locally adapted, resource-efficient, systemic intervention. Guaranteeing the sustainable development of green technologies through multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance models for meeting the implementation of the aforementioned challenges is rather a comprehensive urban development process. It encompasses the interrelations and interdependences that exist between the environment and the economic, social and cultural aspects of urban life.

Therefore, metropolitan areas must play an eagle-eyed role in devising and facilitating a holistic approach to environmental issues and energy efficiency. It is time to go from a sectoral to an integrated approach to tackling urban development that is inspired by citizens' values of attractiveness, culture and well-being, where environmental challenges are transversally mainstreamed. The implementation of urban green growth and nature-based infrastructure solutions requires both technological and social innovation strategies to be designed in relation to the whole development of the urban space. Modelling this holistic approach to solve environmental challenges should involve cooperation with and between the four agents that take part in the urban innovation ecosystem through public and private partnerships: metropolitan and municipal government, industry, academia, and, last but not least, citizens (the four-helix model).

### COMPETITIVENESS

#### *Jobs and new technologies*

In today's uncertain world, driven by fast-paced technological change and increasing globalisation, there are two – intertwined – big challenges that jeopardise urban competitiveness. First and foremost, the scope and depth of a consolidated era of economic stagnation in Europe has resulted in higher levels of unemployment, which have especially impacted young people and women. This situation

1 A centralised and transversal information system that collects and analyses urban development indicators.

2 Urban Megatrends: towards a European Research Agenda.

is increasing poverty levels and putting social cohesion at risk in urban areas. Cities, which are the engines of economic activity and wealth creation, are seeing a gradual increase of income polarisation driven by higher levels of inequality that is transforming the urban landscape. Together with ageing populations, governments incur more financial pressures when maintaining basic social services. Depopulation from inner cities to the surrounding areas is increasing urban sprawl, and with immigration, the lack of absorption capacity is challenging the integration and social cohesion of urban areas.

The second challenge concerns the fourth industrial revolution that is already taking place. This new technology-driven paradigm is mainly shaped in cities and poses enormous threats, such as the automation and robotisation of work. This process can lead to a significant and gradual increase in job cuts, and to the physical, digital and biological transformations that will negatively or positively impact citizens' lives. The outcome will largely depend on the cities' capacity to put them behind people's values, culture and identity. These two challenges, economic stagnation and the fourth industrial revolution, along with the environmental pressures that are a challenge in themselves, are reshaping urban competitiveness.

#### *Innovative territorial competitiveness factors*

Traditionally, territorial competitiveness emerged from factors such as clustering (based on the advantageous locational factors of the area) and the spread of innovation and knowledge. But today, trends in competitiveness involve a more holistic approach to vertically and horizontally integrated policies that support the development of an inclusive, creative economy. The new paradigm includes the latter factors and adds new innovation models that are based on the capacity to generate inclusive economic activity. These models assess the capacity and impact of also involving the bottom of the income pyramid in value generation activities that accrue economic, social and environmental benefits for all.

The circular, sharing and green economies offer new bottom-up social innovation models that respond to urban challenges, increasing the participation and engagement of citizens and decentralising the role of public administrations. Against this backdrop, metropolitan areas can become facilitators and drivers of fostering a coordinat-

ed approach towards entrepreneurship, ensuring a wider democratisation of entrepreneurship-based policies and strategies. 3D-printing Fab Labs, social entrepreneurship incubators, accelerators and co-working facilities are contributing to increasing the availability of open-source technologies (e.g. big data), access to finance, talent education, vocational training, mentoring support and the spread of social capital, all key ingredients needed for accelerating the path towards the creative city.

Besides governance, metropolitan areas can play a catalytic local leadership role. To achieve such a goal it is essential that cooperation with other cities and metropolitan areas acts as a driver of competitiveness itself. Furthermore, metropolitan areas can best work as the links with regions and other urban conurbations to jointly cooperate to increase cities' branding, visibility and attractiveness.

## TRANSPORT AND ENERGY

### *Facilitating mobility*

How to deal with the increasing flows of people between the different urban spaces and the hinterlands is one of the main policy fields for the metropolitan authorities. Lack of coordination in transport planning can result in inconsistencies in the design of public transport routes, complex ticket systems, duplicities and a lack of connections between suburbs, as well as car access restrictions and even collapse (OECD, 2015b). Transport should be linked to the spatial planning of the use of land. To avoid conflicts between the uses of land and transport planning, it is necessary to align the priorities between metropolitan and local authorities and establish harmonised guidelines. Better integrating governance of transport and spatial planning can contribute to higher growth and well-being and promote balanced development.

The increasing multiplicity of transport facilities makes coordination among them crucial. New digital technologies help to adapt transport information systems to changing requirements over time using friendly innovative applications. Sustainable innovations and new concepts for combining different means of transport are needed, including the development of facilities for car sharing and electric cars. Transport information systems should help select the most cost effective or time appropriate mode of transport and inform of any incident en route.

Users may require information on short local journeys or longer trips including those journeys. Large metropolitan areas can design interconnected transport networks better. This requires a comprehensive and participatory assessment of existing public and private operators and current and future needs, establishing their priorities and taking the uses of the different spaces into account. Coordinated timetables, physical integration of stops and stations, pedestrian networks and cycle paths, clear and accessible information, and affordable prices are especially important for users. This requires investment in infrastructure to address territorial inequalities and provide easy access to jobs and services.

#### *Pollution reduction and energy efficiency*

Pollution does not respect administrative boundaries and extends its harmful effects to adjacent territories. That is why integrated action is essential in metropolitan areas. Transport and energy supply are key policies to reduce pollution in urban areas. Urban transport is responsible for up to 25% of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and for 50% of all emissions in urban areas. Investing in low carbon transport systems and urban transport is essential as well as the regulation of the use of private vehicles, introducing restrictions on the most polluting vehicles and promotion of the use of public transport and vehicles that create low or no pollution, such as bicycles and electric vehicles. Also, green urban areas can partially offset the impact of traffic pollution.

The concentration of population and economic activities in metropolitan areas results in high energy demand territories that means they are key actors in the local implementation of the energy transition to a low-carbon, sustainable energy supply system at global level. This involves local authorities but also national policies and the private sector committed to energy saving systems and renewable energies. Integrating renewable energy sources requires new energy management strategies to deal with intermittent and uncontrollable power production. Also, introducing electric vehicles to urban areas requires a substantial increase in available energy at the right times. Therefore, integrated energy management systems and governance capabilities are essential for improving energy efficiency and creating economic value for metropolitan areas by integrating distributed renewable energy power plants into both urban and rural areas in an integrated framework, using

real-time management of consumption, production and energy storage data. (Smart Cities, 2013)

Public lighting represents up to 60% of the electricity consumption in cities. European metropolitan areas should play a major role in the reduction of the carbon footprint by large-scale deployment of eco-friendly new technologies such as Solid-State Lighting (SSL) based on light-emitting diode (LED) solutions (OECD, 2012). They ensure high quality light and visual performance, while providing substantial cost-saving opportunities, reducing light pollution and driving innovation in the construction sector. Increasing urbanisation will also require higher levels of sustainability in public and private buildings. The EU's Energy Efficiency Directive encourages the application of energy management systems and asks the authorities to purchase only products, services and buildings with high ratings for energy performance, consistent with the Energy Labelling and Ecodesign Directives.

The implementation of all these reforms requires significant investments in infrastructure that must be financed by different sources at local, national and European levels.

## **SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COHESION**

#### *Inequality and inclusive policies*

The metropolitan areas, as big inhabited spaces, involve multiple social disparities living together. They are laboratories for the social tensions arising from increased inequalities and therefore privileged spaces for adopting inclusive local policies, in particular those meant to face large disparities such as housing shortages, unemployment and poverty, taking specific local factors into account in each region. Access to decent and affordable housing is a challenge for large urban conurbations. This implies not only the availability of new social housing at affordable prices but also accessibility through the necessary reforms to the urban layout and old housing. Social infrastructure, including education, culture, health, telecommunications and leisure, contributes to inclusive development. Great disparities in the standards of well-being in metropolitan areas erode social and territorial cohesion. Declining districts can be found right next to stable or growing ones and the trends in their demographic structures also vary enormously. Metropolitan authorities lack sufficient competences and resources to address all these challenges, but they can be efficient in

making an accurate diagnosis of the necessities of citizens living in large urban areas and provide a comprehensive and integrative vision of the problems, including the different municipalities. Cooperation between authorities is necessary for a balanced approach and to avoid the expansion and deepening of the problems from one area to another because of uncoordinated actions.

### *Migrations and refugees*

The big urban areas, as places of opportunities, are poles of attraction for international migrants. Economic migration could be seen as a contribution to improving the demographic transition in a Europe with an ageing population, but it also poses challenges, such as the integration of newcomers and pressures on social services, housing and public spaces. Being the closest administration to the citizens, local authorities have to undertake policies to provide welfare for all people within their territories. This is particularly challenging in large urban agglomerations with complex and changing realities. The risks of marginalisation and exclusion due to the lack of opportunities, the effects of the economic crises and the pressures deriving from intensive population inflows require active policies to prevent the establishment of ghettos in peripheral or degraded areas. The current refugee crisis and the different conflicting responses that have been given in the EU stress the importance of active public policies to tackle the massive influx of foreigners and

the difficulties of their integration, even in societies with higher levels of welfare. Big urban areas are particularly vulnerable to the emergence of pockets of poverty and marginalisation.

### *Social participation*

Big urban areas are divers for social innovation and experimentation. The demographic agglomeration and the heterogeneous social composition of the metropolitan areas provide a unique opportunity to put into practice innovative participatory experiences providing interaction between different actors. Popular participation is key to integrated urban district development. Metropolitan institutions have an intermediate position that can hinder the direct relationship with citizenship, especially in cases where they lack recognised legal status. Formal participation processes, such as direct elections of the metropolitan authorities, are desirable but remain the exception. However, they can be supplemented by informal participatory processes. Comparing and exchanging best practices can be useful for elaborating guiding principles for participation and pilot experiences can be put into practice with the active involvement of municipalities, citizens' associations, third sector and other social actors. With their growing international role, metropolitan institutions may also be channels for citizen participation in the international arena, enhancing involvement in international cooperation.



### 3. Multilevel metropolitan governance

Multilevel governance is crucial to meeting urban development challenges. The mobilisation and contribution of state and non-state actors are critical to the agenda-setting and policy implementation at both the domestic and international levels, whether in providing resources, expertise or legitimacy. The metropolitan authorities are challenged to be part of this multilevel structure, clarifying its role in the search for the good governance of large urban areas.

#### *Governance of metropolitan areas, exchanging experiences*

The number of governance arrangements in metropolitan areas is growing. 50% of urban residents live in agglomerations of more than 500,000 people, but they are very diverse. According an OECD study we can classify them into: informal arrangements (52%); inter-municipal institutions (24%); supra-municipal institutions (16%); and metropolis cities (8%) (OECD, 2015b). This variety results in the heterogeneous legal status, composition, power capacities, budget and staff of each case. Each experience is shaped by the historical, institutional, economic and social factors that make it unique. So, exact replication of specific arrangements should be avoided. However, international exchanges and comparative studies are important in order to incorporate lessons learned of good and bad practices.

Inside wider metropolitan areas, decisions in one municipality have consequences in others. For this reason, institutional metropolitan arrangements must be established, but they should be win-win exercises for all participants. Without incentives and compensation in the case of possible losses for the relevant stakeholders involved in metropolitan governance arrangements, institutions will not work and policies will not deliver. Other key factors to ensure cooperation in the long term are: reliable financial sources, human resources and independent monitoring and evaluation systems. Financing the growing needs for social policies and metropolitan infrastructures requires a balanced tax system, revenue transfers, access to capital financing and public-private partnerships. As the investment requirements of urban areas increase it is necessary to find new forms of financing and mobilising public and private funds for metropolitan infrastructure. Another challenge for metropolitan governance is to enhance social participation. Although there are some examples of socioeconomic consultative bodies and some examples providing the

possibility of popular initiatives (Tomàs 2015), it is still an underdeveloped issue that needs to be addressed.

The exchange of experiences between metropolitan authorities is still in the early stages. The heterogeneity and large differences between them can present obstacles, but are not insurmountable. The objective should be to establish stable but flexible interrelationship channels. One of the main challenges is to find a common language and understanding of metropolitan parameters and identify issues that can be applied across different systems and situations, while allowing for local adaptation and negotiation. Another step is to find common ground in addressing the factors that can enable and enhance metropolitan collaboration, such as: joint financing, relations between elected bodies and governance arenas, how to manage differences between local and regional priorities, etc. However, the support of the European institutions and the member states is essential in order to boost transnational exchanges in a strategic framework for urban development aligned with the Europe 2020 agenda and also with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 agenda adopted in 2015.

#### *Metropolitan governance at EU institutional level*

The Treaty of Lisbon strengthens the commitment of the European institutions to territorial cohesion and a number of instruments and policies have been devoted to underpinning the territorial development dimension. However, the participation of local authorities in the EU initiatives has been fragmented and lacking in strategic planning (Van Lierop, 2015). In the last decade, the European institutions have been trying to better include the urban agenda in EU policies. In 2007 EU ministers adopted the Leipzig Charter, calling for an integrated urban policy and this was reiterated in the 2010 Toledo Declaration.

In 2011 the European Parliament adopted a resolution arguing for strengthening the urban dimension of European policies and suggested the adoption of an EU Urban Agenda. During the revision of the 2014-20 cohesion policy framework, new instruments to increase the role of urban actors in cohesion policy were introduced in the new regulation on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF),<sup>3</sup> and new legal tools were created to help the states carry on these activities and facilitate local level

<sup>3</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013.

participation.<sup>4</sup> However, the effective implementation of these instruments has been underused at national level, according to the first assessment made by the European Commission (Van Lierop, 2015).

The EC communication “Urban Dimensions of EU Policies” launched a public consultation to address the best way to support the urban agenda.<sup>5</sup> The results presented in June 2015 have been the starting point of the debate about the content of the EU Urban Agenda. Regarding this, the European Parliament’s Committee on Regional Development adopted a report calling for closer involvement of local authorities in European urban policy planning, adopting a multilevel governance approach and respecting the subsidiarity and proportionality principles. The URBAN Intergroup at the European Parliament has been also involved in the debates.<sup>6</sup>

Another institution that has been closely involved in the discussion is the Committee of the Regions (CoR)<sup>7</sup>. In an opinion adopted in July 2014 the CoR argued for a more integrated urban agenda and the inclusion of the urban dimension earlier in the decision-making process, ensuring the involvement of the local authorities at all stages of the policy cycle. Despite this statement, large metropolitan areas are under-represented in the CoR and, because of its consultative status, this institution’s influence on the decision-making process is too limited. Nevertheless, urban policies have increasing weight in sectoral EU policies in general and more specifically in the Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy. Other actors outside the EU institutions have expressed interest in the EU Urban Agenda, such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), Eurocities, Energy Cities and METREX and have participated, not only in the consultation process, but also in producing inputs meant to influence the content of the EU Urban Agenda.

Despite the mentioned recent improvements, the European institutions’ decision-making processes hinder the

effective incorporation of local authorities throughout the political cycle. Until now the definition of urban development policies remains a highly intergovernmental process. The participation of the local authorities is limited to consultative processes through intermediate institutions. The recognition of the key role of cities in the Europe 2020 agenda has not been accompanied by an extension of the mechanisms for metropolitan areas’ participation and discussion with the European institutions. As a result, institutional channels to translate the subsidiarity principle into effective multilevel governance are lacking. Recognition is necessary of the crucial role of urban authorities in developing partnership working methods, allowing their participation in the design of instruments and services to be implemented at local level. A first obstacle is the lack of a specific legal basis for the Urban Agenda in the Treaty of Lisbon that constricts the Commission’s legislative initiatives in the absence of a clear mandate from the European Council. Another limitation is the reluctance of some states to give more competences to the EU or, in the opposite sense, to transfer them to local authorities. Finally, local entities also suspect that EU legislation can affect their autonomy by eroding the principle of subsidiarity.

#### *International recognition and international networks*

The concentration of population, wealth and power in cities gives them growing international projection and responsibility in achieving global development goals. The ability to act in a coordinated way will be essential to exerting influence on the policies of states and shaping the international agenda. Cities are key actors for the *localisation* of the SDGs agenda and the commitments of the Paris climate change conference. Both, adopted in 2015, will require the active participation of the metropolitan areas to translate them into urban policies. Cities and metropolitan areas seek to be formally recognised as key players in ensuring sustainable development, taking into account the citizens’ most direct needs.

In the last decades, cities and local governments have increased their international presence and efforts to influence the agenda. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio in 1992 was a turning point because, for the first time, it brought together thousands of local governments organised into international networks such as ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, and United Cities and Local Governments

4 Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD).

5 Communication from the Commission on the Urban Dimension of EU Policies – Key Features of an EU Urban Agenda, COM (2014) 490 final, 18 July 2014.

6 A cross-party, cross-committee grouping to discuss urban-related issues composed of 70 MEPs. They work with 100 partners from local, regional, national and European levels representing the interests of Europe’s cities or working in the domain of urban development.

7 Composed of 355 regions and municipalities, it has a consultative status to examine legislative initiatives and advise the European institutions, including the local perspective.

(UCLG). The mobilisation of local authorities has been instrumental in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda with over 10,000 cities establishing local sustainability strategies called “Local Agenda 21”.

Local authorities have also been active in the participatory process of defining the SDGs. UCLG was represented on the High-Level Panel and has led its own consultation process between local governments and sub-state actors under the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments for Post-2015. During the negotiations, the High-Level Dialogue on the Localization of the Post-2015 Development Agenda underlined the essential role of local government leadership in the effective implementation of the agenda and the need to involve local authorities in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of policies and activities, not only for Goal 11 on sustainable cities, but in the achievement of the 2030 SDG Agenda as a whole. It was therefore recommended to adopt a bottom-up approach and strengthen the technical capabilities of local governments in order

to adapt the global agenda to the local context by tailoring it to each region using real data and socially perceived needs.

One of the main events of 2016 is the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador. This should play an important role in contributing to the implementation of the SDGs, and the EU Urban Agenda is the European contribution to this process. In such a context, the power to connect to networks of private and public actors is a central dimension of influence on the international urban development agendas. Connections between networks representing local authorities like UCLG, METROPOLIS, METREX, ICLEI and others that are more specific or have narrower geographical or national scope should be fomented and associated with other development actors trying to harmonise activities, avoid overlapping initiatives and promote efficiency. The EU Urban Agenda should be aligned with the SDGs and metropolitan authorities are especially well-suited to leading the partnerships to achieve the agendas.

## 4. Metropolitan authorities and the future European Urban Agenda

The EU Urban Agenda is scheduled to be released before the end of the Dutch presidency of the Council in June 2016. The relevance and necessity of such a comprehensive urban agenda is not under discussion; it is recognised that two-thirds of EU sectoral policies have impact in urban areas and their involvement is essential to achieve the Europe 2020 strategy goals. However, there is significant debate between EU member states and other relevant actors about its objectives, scope and how it could function. The EC public consultation provided different visions of local authority associations, trade and industry federations and civil society organisations (European Commission, 2015).

A common assessment is that the EU Urban Agenda should fully acknowledge the key role cities and metropolises play in translating national and EU policy objectives into concrete action. According to the conclusions of the report there is an extended opinion that rather than new legislation, instruments or funding sources, better coordination among the existing ones is required, and that no new competences should be transferred to the European level, but instead a more structured, regular dialogue with full respect for subsidiarity should be put in place.

The EU Urban Agenda should undertake a common framework for cooperation and provide resources to develop cooperation initiatives and institutions based on voluntary engagement (Eurocities, 2014). Three main objectives have been identified: improved policy coherence and coordination of instruments; concerted action on a few priorities; and better use of the knowledge (European Commission, 2015).

To assure the coherence of EU policies with an urban dimension the EU institutions should engage cities and metropolitan areas in a regular dialogue beyond consultations not only about cohesion policy, but on other European policies with direct and indirect impact on urban development. The European Urban Agenda should provide a framework for local, national, state, regional and international authorities with regard to urban development-related policies.

To promote joint cooperation, facilitate exchange and mutual learning about metropolitan areas and undertake innovative actions to find common solutions to

shared problems the metropolitan dimension should be included in all the urban development policies' planning and implementation processes.

To foster synergies between relevant stakeholders and to adapt metropolitan governance to changes in the economic, social and environmental context, the EU Urban Agenda should take into account the diversity of local authorities and the specificity of the metropolitan areas.

To avoid policy incoherence, any new legislative actions in metropolitan area programming should be preceded by systematic ex-ante territorial impact assessments (CEMR, 2015). All levels of governance should share a common vision to adopt coherent strategies for equitable and sustainable development.

Planning and programming in the EU Urban Agenda should adopt a bottom-up approach, facilitating participative processes to identify the main priorities and tailor the policies to the specific context of each urban area and improve local ownership.

To put the metropolitan development plans into practice, European, national and regional economic and political support will be necessary as well as the involvement of the private sector. Metropolitan authorities should be effectively included in the programming of the priorities for the allocation of the European funds devoted to urban areas.

All the relevant powers at different levels should be identified and addressed effectively to better coordinate EU instruments for urban development. Metropolitan authorities should be involved according to their competences and added value.

Metropolitan authorities should assess existing instruments and initiatives to propose possible measures to simplify procedures, make them better focused on big metropolitan areas' necessities, more user-friendly and facilitate more synergies between the development policies.

Metropolitan governments should promote the right of access to public information and encourage a culture of good governance, transparency and open governments, establishing the necessary methods and instruments of information and capacity-building.

Key strategic challenges and demands should be identified based on accurate data for planning; the EU Urban Agenda should make possible a reliable and up-to-date database of the metropolitan areas main features and develop more comparable urban indicators on key issues at the EU level.

The European Urban Agenda should develop reliable indicators to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of urban development policies with information systems and international observatories, taking into account the specificity of metropolitan areas.

The EU Urban Agenda should develop specific tools and facilities to support exchanges of experiences on sustainable integrated development, technological advances and social innovative actions between metropolitan areas and other public and private actors, industry and academia.

Metropolitan partnerships should be promoted to enhance international cooperation, recognising the role of metropolitan areas and implementing effective metropolitan governance structures (Montreal Declaration, 2015).

To promote multi-country metropolitan cross-border cooperation, intra- and extra-EU, the Urban Agenda should facilitate networking opportunities between metropolitan authorities and cities to exchange innovative and collaborative experiences on urban development policies, involving the population in specific joint actions.

The EU Urban Agenda should promote urban-related academic research to take into account the increased international role of the metropolitan areas, their key involvement in the implementation of the Agenda for Sustainable Development and their contribution to the multilevel governance to achieve the global development goals.

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