

The Role of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas in solving urgent challenges



METREX

The Network of European
Metropolitan Regions and Areas

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We are METREX

METREX is a professional platform that aims to connect people in the public sector to work together for a productive, healthy, inclusive, and sustainable future for Europe.

METREX is actively seeking experts and leaders who believe in this future and want to share their knowledge and experience in overcoming urban and rural challenges. We aim to improve the performance of metropolitan regions and areas in Europe and create better places for people to live in.

METREX calls for experts and leaders to work together across borders, to enable integrated thinking that will solve complex challenges. This collaboration will capture and share innovative approaches that accelerate urgent transitions required in all European regions and areas. The future calls for greater understanding of the potential of regions and territories to improve the lives of all Europeans.

We are METREX, the network for European metropolitan regions and areas. Only together we can make an inclusive, competitive future a reality.

Join the METREX network.

The Role of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas in solving urgent challenges.

Europe is confronted by unprecedented social and physical change. But change brings new opportunities: the challenges we face in climate adaptation, energy production and consumption, productivity, competitiveness, migration and inequality, and digitalisation, all demand innovation.

Ambitious policies and programmes from the European Commission, such as the Urban Agenda, Leipzig Charter, Territorial Agenda 2030 and the Green Deal, have been designed to guide this change and build a stronger Europe together. There is no time to waste in turning these good intentions into action. We must move quickly and pragmatically, applying the best available tactics through the most effective vehicles.

We, the members of METREX, believe that European Metropolitan Regions and Areas are best in place to address the challenges we face, by bringing together the urban and rural areas and multiplying each other's strengths. By working at the Metropolitan scale we are grounded in realistic and practical solutions, yet with the reach to effect widespread change. We therefore have the tools to help develop a productive, healthy, inclusive and sustainable Europe.

This Mission Statement is a call to all European Metropolitan Regions and Areas to join METREX and demonstrate the pivotal role we play in solving the challenges ahead. It calls upon all Regions and Areas to set the necessary pace and demonstrate the power of local execution, to meet societal and ecological deadlines that we believe will otherwise not be met.

With this Mission Statement, we call on the European Commission and national governments to join forces with us to find viable solutions for the urgent challenges ahead.



Jakub Mazur
President of METREX
First Deputy Mayor, Wrocław

Five Metropolitan Approaches

5) **Metrex contributes to effective policies.**

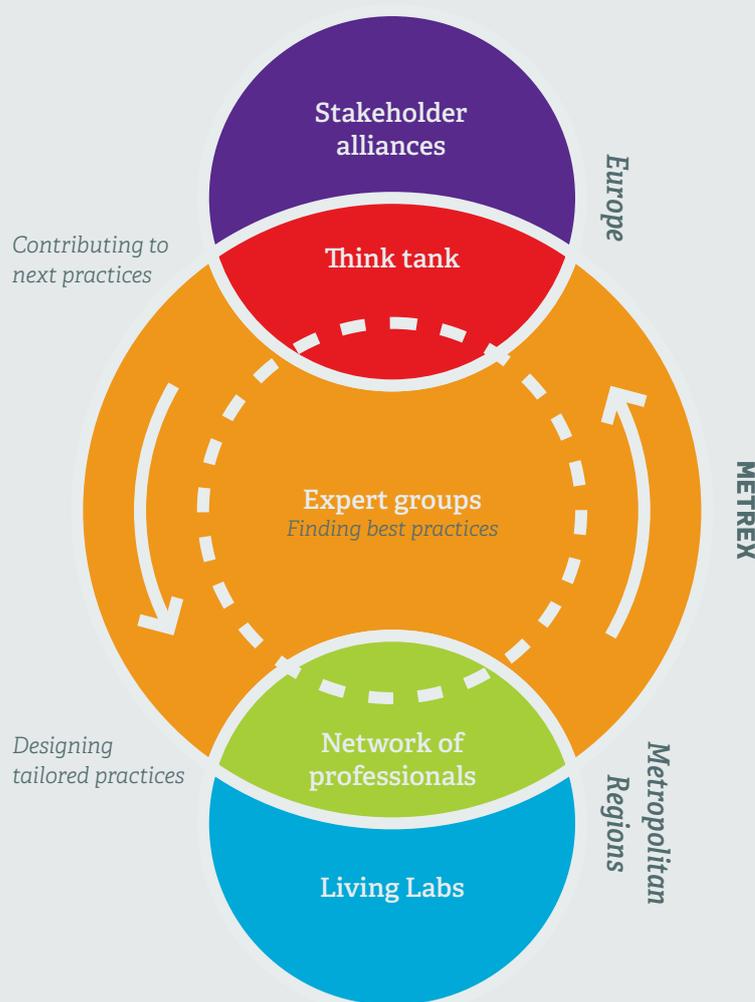
Metropolitan Regions and Areas formulate constructive feedback on abstract EU policies and regulations they are working with across their territories.

4) **Metrex contributes to a common policy framework.**

Metropolitan Regions and Areas translate their approaches into principles that are available for all European regional and local authorities.

3) **Metrex accelerates urgent transitions.**

Metropolitan Regions and Areas demonstrate situational leadership on pressing issues which enables excellent followership for others. This accelerates the journey to finding tailored solutions.



2) **Metrex enables integrated thinking.**

Metropolitan Regions and Areas come together on specific issues to build the capacities required to cope with the complexity of current challenges.

1) **Metrex shares knowledge and experience on urban and rural themes.**

To continuously improve the performance of our Metropolitan Regions and Areas, METREX actively links experts to learn from each other's best experiences and practices on current and emerging topics.

*Point of departure:
We are 'Living Labs'.*

Metropolitan Regions and Areas invest in pilots and research across their territories that focus on workable solutions with maximum impact.

Elaboration of our ambitions

Point of departure

We are 'Metropolitan Labs'.

Metropolitan Regions and Areas are a reality resulting from a variety of processes, to not compete with direct neighbours but collaborate on common issues. Within them, people and strengths are permanently combining into unique blends of characteristics and specialities. These Regions and Areas are open in their outlook and often partner and experiment around a shared interest or inter-dependency, combining knowledge, specialisations or strengths to achieve the best, executable solutions. These 'living labs' make the ultimate partners for national governments and the European leadership to test and ultimately realise its ambitions.

Metropolitan Regions and Areas are 'Living Labs'. METREX does not simply address problems from behind a desk. We investigate and reflect on our daily habitats. We harmonise our challenges and approaches. We share our trials and errors. We experiment. We make sure our differences become productive. We enrich each other's insights. We learn and share learnings and so avoid inventing what's already been invented. We create an open mindset and share it across all European levels of governance.

That's why we:

- work iteratively – evaluating and building as we move;
- continuously develop and improve by adopting shared insights from colleagues to our situation;
- monitor the fundamental effects of what we do in every intervention;
- ask our colleagues from other regions to join as experts on site.



METREX members join European programmes such as ESPON and INTERREG and share findings of pilot projects.

Approach 1

METREX shares knowledge and experience on urban and rural themes.

Metropolitan Regions and Areas demonstrate the value of thinking beyond municipal and sometimes national borders and balancing urban and rural aspects in decision-making and decisive execution. These are exactly the skills and approaches that help solve the challenges, including a strong recovery from the pandemic: to determine shared interests; to combine strengths and overcome differences; to formulate solutions and come up with concrete plans to realise them. To just do it: locally, region-wide or cross-national.

Metropolitan Regions and Areas across Europe face the same challenges and in principle use the same executive strength to solve them. With our professional network, METREX creates space and time for both dialogue and action. We focus on problems in-depth to explore solutions on physical, legal, economic, social and empathic levels – from urban to rural. We use discoveries in one metropolitan region to solve comparable problems in others.

That's why we:

- connect the best spatial planners, sociologists, economists, health experts and policy-makers from all over Europe;
- promote and support intensive knowledge exchange by research, reports and pilots;
- never sit still: behind every task a new insight is hidden that can be valuable for people elsewhere in Europe.



The Nürnberg 2021 conference has informed us in detail on the EU Farm to Fork strategy with examples from Nürnberg, Lyon, Amsterdam.

Approach 2

METREX enables integrated thinking.

The pursuit of goals typically starts as part of a particular strategic domain. With growing complexity, we tend to stay within our own domain. Yet, complexity calls for thinking outside the box, for integrating parts of the solution from other disciplines to generate innovative approaches. Metropolitan Regions and Areas have an overarching view and bring together disciplines and decision-makers from a wider spectrum to address the pressing issues.

Metropolitan Regions and Areas are a gateway to a wide array of knowledge, experts, leaders and cultural diversity. This enables a holistic and integrated view of problems, investigating and reflecting on the real, day-to-day world of our Metropolitan Regions and Areas. METREX functions as the curator of this cross-border and cross-culture fabric, offering leaders and decision-makers access to it and representing its ideas and values.

That's why we:

- observe and investigate, record and describe methods;
- bring together administrative tiers, cross-border and cross-silos;
- don't solve problems 'instrumentally' but want to know the effects of our actions.



The METREX Expert Groups focus on specific policy themes such as Metropolitan Governance and show HOW to get things done in an integrated way.

Approach 3

METREX accelerates urgent transitions.

Metropolitan Regions and Areas are leaders in their field, but no place is a leader in all fields. Some regions are further ahead because of past opportunities, while some have moved more quickly by focusing their resources on particular challenges. But by learning from these differences and being open to new ideas, situational leadership enables excellent followership. Through connecting and comparing Metropolitan Regions and Areas, exemplary cases and solutions can be shared. This allows us to raise the overall quality of actions and therefore accelerate urgent transitions.

ETREX members form an alliance with an exceptional insight into Europe's cultural diversity and its local needs and strengths. In this capacity, METREX wants to represent all European metropolitan knowledge and government bodies. At the same time, METREX is a high-profile think tank on metropolitan issues. We are a bridge builder between all nodes of the metropolitan mesh network. This is our network's distinct added value. This is what gives METREX the potential to apply pressure to urgent matters, such as the green recovery, to remove any time-lag between those areas setting the pace and everyone else.

That's why we:

- want to better understand the regional differences, historical facts and cultural individuality of European regions and cities;
- understand that each region and city has different valuable assets for the sustainable development of Europe;
- call on regions with exemplar solutions to take the lead in continuously changing circumstances;
- draw the attention of even the 'best regions' to surprising insights from unexpected quarters.



Porto and Birmingham are both leading on user-friendly mobility services that can inspire others.

Elaboration of our ambitions

Approach 4

METREX contributes to a common policy framework.

As a result of Europe's cultural and political richness, decisions are taken in different ways. However, the shared policy outlook that these decisions are based upon need not be different. From the north of Europe to the south, and east to west, successful approaches are being developed and applied by Metropolitan Regions and Areas, forming a common set of principles that can inspire, direct and inform others.

METREX represents a border-crossing alliance of Metropolitan Regions and Areas. Fed by the METREX think tank of expert knowledge on metropolitan issues, the alliance offers insights on 'next practices' to Europe's national governments and to the EU. METREX translates experiences and insights from across Europe in a way that does justice to their individual merits, and makes them applicable and understandable for all.

That's why we:

- bundle insights and report back to our members and European institutions;
- that's because we understand how to facilitate policymakers and politicians from our daily practice;
- want to keep our (EU) stakeholders' principles and assumptions about metropolitan areas up to date.



Lyon Metropole is learning from Amsterdam about applying the UN Sustainable Development Goals into practical applications.

Approach 5

METREX contributes to effective policies.

Common European policies and frameworks need a realistic approach, without compromising on ambition. To pursue these ambitions, a close connection to the real world, its networks and its stakeholders, is vital. Metropolitan Regions and Areas accommodate up to 80 per cent of Europe's population. And we even see more border-crossing, multinational agglomerates with strong regional and local cultural characteristics. Metropolitan Regions and Areas understand local characteristics, while being in tune with national and international priorities.

METREX uses its network and connections to address Europe's common goals and support other levels of government. We translate these common goals to the realities of people in Metropolitan Regions and Areas. METREX builds bridges for exchange of knowledge, experience and synergies. With 25 years of experience, we can bring activities to the next level, and play an active role to initiate and coordinate metropolitan developments.

That's why we:

- many of our challenges can be tackled in coordination with other metropolitan areas in Europe;
- policies must work for the people who are set to be most impacted by them;
- we want to gain support from the European institutions and in the regions;
- we must not lose any more time to make our countries, regions and cities more liveable for our children.



METREX contributes to European Committee of the Regions position papers and the New Leipzig Charter on the output of members realities.

We are open for dialogue

What we do

METREX contributes the metropolitan dimension to policies, programmes and projects on a European scale. The network is a partner of European institutions, the research community, governmental organisations and other networks.

METREX hosts regular meetings for Members, either through Expert and Network Groups, our online METREXmonthly events, or bi-annual conference.

We contribute to EU programmes and events organised by networks we collaborate with, such as Eurocities, EMA and Metropolis.

What METREX can do for your region or area

METREX offers a network of experts from around Europe who work in the public sector, on a regional or metropolitan level.

Network Members share similar interests and challenges, but each brings their own specific cultural and territorial background, and therefore unique approach to solving issues.

METREX is a closed network and therefore a safe space to exchange exemplar experiences, but also raise questions and doubts.

METREX can support your EU funding applications as a stakeholder. In doing so we can take away some of the administrative burden that comes with EU projects and enable Members to focus on content.

Finally, we bring the Metropolitan dimension to the EU level, but also to the city and regional level, supporting the forming of further and formalised regional and metropolitan collaboration.

METREX is a not for profit organisation with its secretariat in Lyon.

For more information, please contact

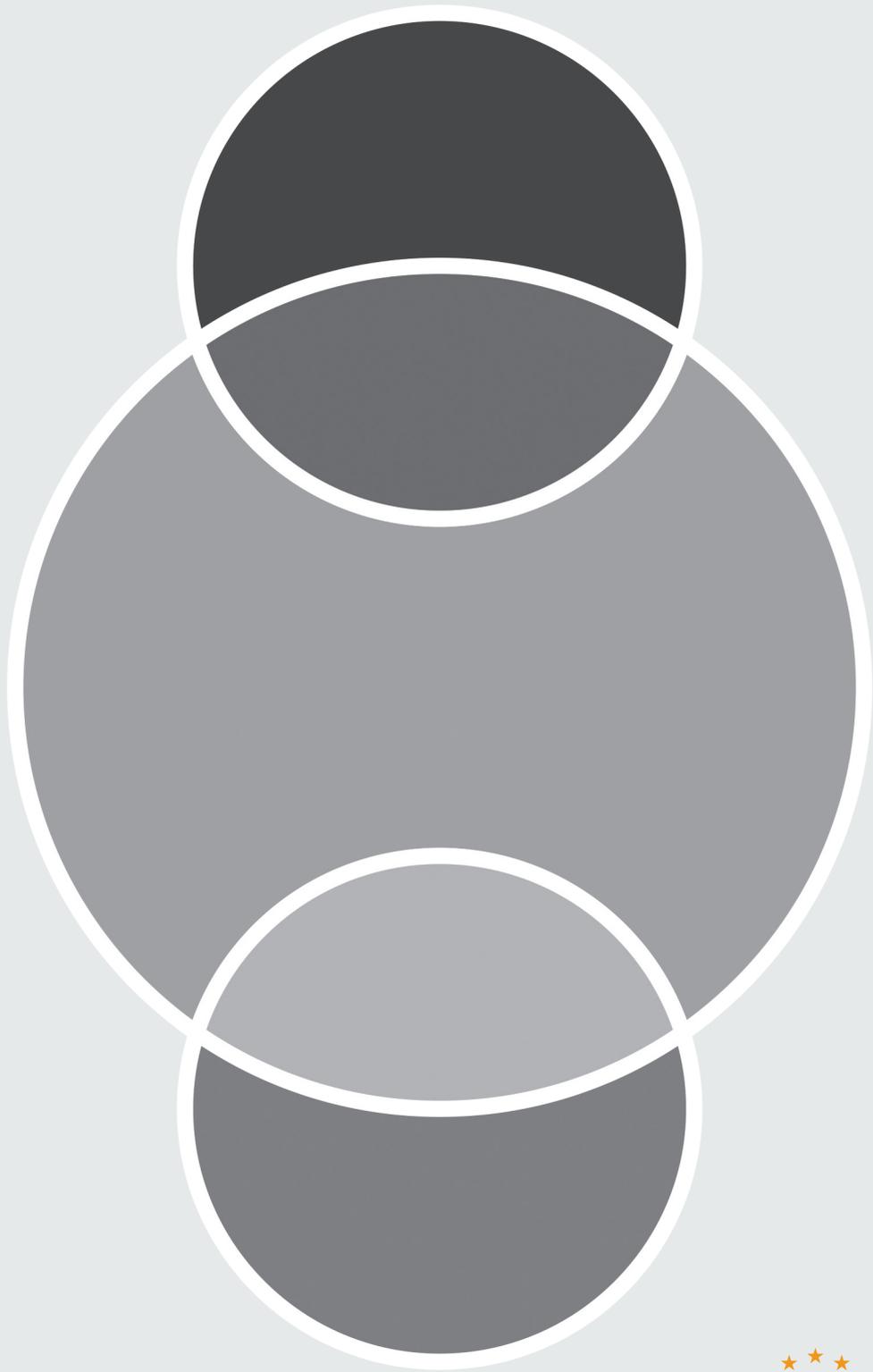
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