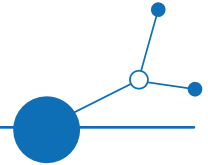


The Status Quo of Metropolitan Dimension in CE and its Future Development

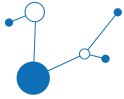
Deliverable 1.3.1.



Version 3

03 2024





This document was elaborated within project **MECOG-CE: Strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance in Central Europe** and is part of the WP1: Analysis of metropolitan dimension, Activity 1.3. Determination of the comprehensive dimension, challenges and needs for MA's development.

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The MECOG-CE project is supported by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme with co-financing from the European Regional Development Fund. Additionally, in Poland, the project is co-financed by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education under the programme called International Co-financed Projects.



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1. Introduction

This document is the deliverable “**D.1.3.1. The Status Quo of Metropolitan Dimension in CE and its Future Development**” elaborated within a project “MECOG-CE: Strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance in central Europe” supported by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE programme. It is a part of “**WP1: Analysis of metropolitan dimension,**” and „**Activity 1.3. Determination of the comprehensive dimension, challenges and needs for MA’s development.**”

The activity 1.3. focuses on **two major aims**. First goal is a comprehensive overview and summary of outcomes and outputs derived from analyses accomplished in “**Activity 1.1 Identification of challenges specific for central European MAs**” and “**Activity 1.2 Analysis of existing tools/best practice for enhancing metropolitan cooperation**”. The outcome is this report as the deliverable “**D.1.3.1. The Status Quo of Metropolitan Dimension in CE and its Future Development.**” The second objective is the summarization of outcomes of analyses in a knowledge base that is through ICT tools disseminated towards project partners and target groups. The outcome is presented in the deliverable “**D.1.3.2. Transfer of knowledge base via existing ICT solutions.**”

This report overviews and summarizes the **achievements from activities 1.1 and 1.2**. The first section focuses on:

- **metropolitan dimension** in European strategic documents,
- **challenges and opportunities** for metropolitan dimension in Central Europe.

The second part summarizes:

- metropolitan **governance systems**,
- existing **tools and best practices** in the partner metropolitan areas (MAs) and outside the MECOG-CE consortium.

The final section presents the key conceptual issues and characteristics of the policy advocacy document **Common Metropolitan Vision**, which reflects the overall work in WP1.

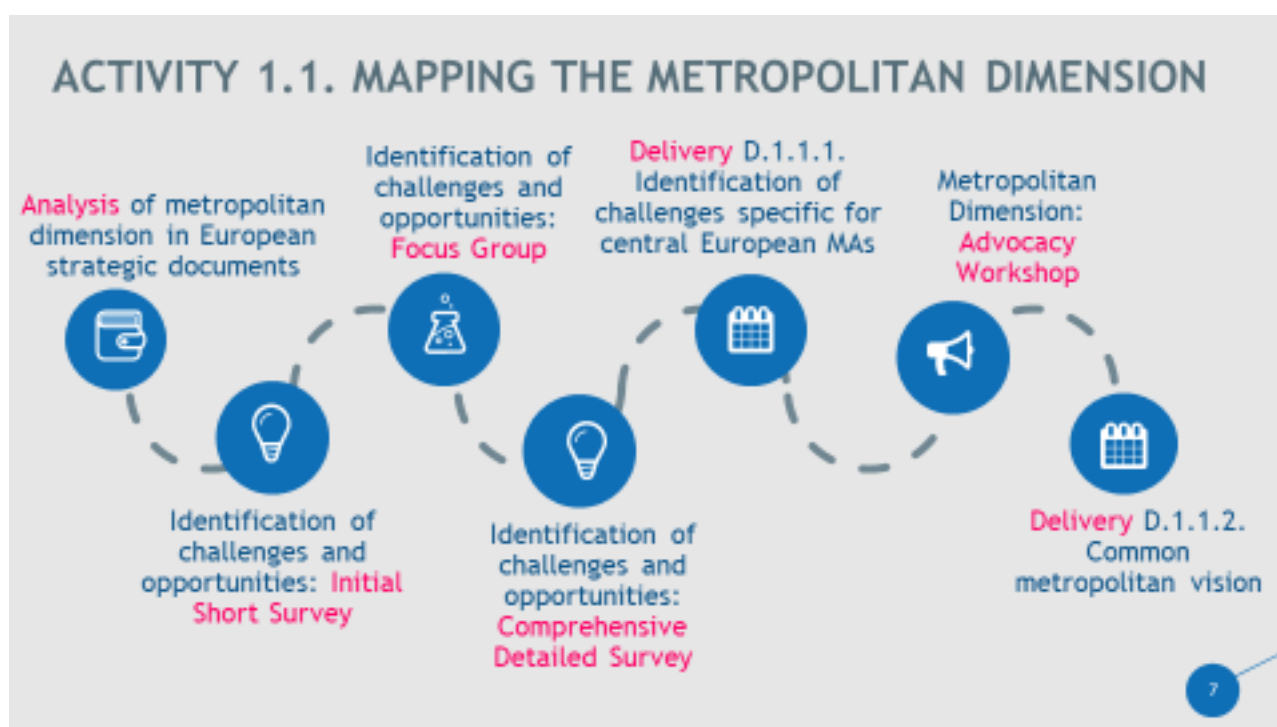


2. Challenges and Opportunities for Metropolitan Dimension

This part focuses on:

- the articulation of metropolitan dimension in strategic documents and its relevance for Central European MAs;
- contemporary challenges for the metropolitan development, governance, planning and cooperation specifically in Central European MAs and windows of opportunities for the metropolitan dimension in Central Europe.

Figure 2.1. The pathway from mapping the metropolitan dimension to the formulation of Common Metropolitan Vision



2.1. Metropolitan dimension in European strategic documents

The analysis of metropolitan dimension in European strategic documents investigated whether the EU strategic documents and policies mention, highlight and articulate the metropolitan



dimension as an important and effective instrument for the development of the EU, national and local societies and economies.

The analysis focused on the **presence and proliferation of metropolitan dimension** not only in **the EU policy documents**, but also in **international documents**, such as of the UN or OECD, in **EU regulations**, specifically regulations related to the EU Cohesion Policy, and in **policy initiatives**, such as European Urban Initiative or New European Bauhaus. The analysis identified and researched not only the strategies, policies and measures that explicitly use the term metropolitan, but also included initiatives aimed at functional urban areas or urban regions. Once pursuing the desk research of policy documents, the work also overviewed global societal megatrends and their challenges for urban development and the principles and objectives of international and EU urban policies.

The analysis found that the **concept of “metropolitan” development, governance or cooperation is infrequently used** in EU and international strategic and policy documents, resulting in its **fragmented recognition**. While there has been increasing emphasis on the metropolitan dimension in discussions about urban and regional policies, it has not yet resulted in significant changes in policy implementation. Despite the acknowledgment of the importance of metropolitan areas, it **lacks a systematic and consistent approach**. Therefore, there is a **need for a more explicit and cohesive narrative of metropolitan dimension** in European strategic and policy documents.

Metropolitan dimension in policy documents

- the reference to metropolitan dimension is fragmented rather than systematic;
- metropolitan dimension is unsurprisingly recognised namely in urban and regional policies, however, as secondary to urban agendas focused on cities rather than city regions;
- societal challenges are addressed in a very general manner, without further elaboration of urban impacts and implications in policy implementation.

Global societal megatrends resulting in major challenges for urban development

- globalization;
- international cooperation and security;
- innovation and digitalization;
- climate change;
- environmental degradation;
- growth in energy consumption;
- urbanization;
- demographic change, population ageing and changes in reproductive behaviour;
- international migration;
- social inequalities and diversity;



- health, civilization diseases and global pandemics.

Key areas of urban policy principles and objectives

- sustainability and resilience as key general principles of urban policies;
- green, inclusive, and productive city as a general long-term objective;
- multiple transformation objectives that address namely climate, energy, circularity, digitalization, mobility, affordability, diversity and security;
- balanced spatial development aimed at reducing disparities and polycentric settlement and integrated development of city regions with strong emphasis on urban rural partnerships;
- strategic and integrated approach to urban governance.

The insights from the desk research of policy documents aimed at (1) global societal megatrends and their challenges for urban development and (2) the principles and objectives of urban policies and (3) the presence of metropolitan dimension, served as important **information for the MECOG-CE project partners and metropolitan stakeholders during the survey and analysis of perceived metropolitan challenges and opportunities in Central Europe.**

Furthermore, the gained knowledge also **fertilized the discussions about a shared vision for metropolitan areas** and helped in the **formulation of the Common Metropolitan Vision**, which is the project Output 1.1.

2.2. Challenges and opportunities for the metropolitan dimension in Central European Metropolitan Areas

The key objective of the investigation of challenges and opportunities for the metropolitan dimension in Central European metropolitan areas was to capture and evaluate the **perspectives of stakeholders** regarding metropolitan development, governance, planning, and cooperation. The findings were derived from **surveys and focus groups with MECOG-CE project partners**. The surveys and discussion specifically distinguished between **thematic and organisational and procedural** challenges and opportunities.

The **methods and instruments** used in the study (open-ended format of questions, displayed answers for other respondents, possibility for answers adjustments, the repetition of the survey, focus group discussions, and discussions of interpretations) encouraged and supported respondents to provide more in-depth thoughts, offer comprehensive insights, arguments, explanations, and interpretations. This approach allowed for a **richer understanding** of the challenges and opportunities related to metropolitan areas, encouraged mutual reflections and facilitated the exchange of views and positions between participants. It thus fostered **collaboration and discussions** within the MECOG-CE network.

This **processual approach** brought important gains through evolving outcomes. It allowed for a more nuanced interpretation of **mutual relations between various thematic challenges** as well as for work with the **dynamics between thematic and procedural challenges**. The complex and evolutionary path of the surveys and discussion led to the integrated understanding of the



challenges and opportunities. Furthermore, it led all the participants from the **analysis to critical evaluation** to stimulate further work on the policy advocacy document Common Metropolitan Vision.

Both **surveys and focus group discussion** that aimed at the identification and articulation of challenges and opportunities for metropolitan areas in Central Europe provided **valuable information about the challenges and opportunities** themselves as well as about their **reflection in the narratives** of the respondents. In this sense, it contributed by a **dual information gain**. First, through the **shared knowledge about the objectively existing challenges**. It proved that there definitely is a strong body of **common knowledge and understandings** of the crucial societal challenges as well as opportunities for the metropolitan development, planning and governance. Second, it provided information about the challenges and opportunities **subjectively perceived** by individual stakeholders and showed a **diversity** in the formulation of challenges and opportunities that specifically calls for attention to the **influence of local and national cultural, policy and institutional/regulatory contexts**.

The objective of the surveys and focus group discussion was not only to assemble information about the stakeholders' perceptions. More important was the approach that stimulated and helped organize the **process of building mutual understanding of metropolitan challenges and opportunities within the MECOG-CE consortium**, as this is considered essential for the internally conceived formulation of the Common Metropolitan Vision policy document.

The surveys' outcomes showed that the identified key **thematic challenges** for metropolitan development, such as **climate change or sustainable mobility**, are related to the major objectives of the EU policies. Central European metropolitan areas face **common thematic challenges**, including climate change, energy supply, sustainable mobility, population shifts, suburbanization, and urban sprawl. An outstanding position is held by **climate change** (as an external factor of natural environment) and adaptation to climate change (as a societal imperative to react to the environmental change to mitigate both impacts of these changes as well as decrease negative societal impacts of climate change and other environmental hazards). Besides that, **suburbanization and sprawl** were seen by all the MAs as major challenges for metropolitan development.

While thematic challenges are often understood as shared and common for MAs in Central Europe, **regional interpretations of these challenges differ**. Respondents from **Czechia and Poland** often cite **burdens related to reindustrialization and economic transformation**, whereas those from **Germany and Italy** tie economic transformations to the need for **green transitions**. The responses thus pointed to certain **differences in the narratives and interpretation of challenges and opportunities** by the stakeholders that are likely to be driven by different contexts of local and national cultures and discourses. The respondents from **Czechia and Poland** more often articulated **challenges as issues and problems**. This might be explained by the still existing feelings of catching-up with the West, position in less developed or convergence regions, shorter experience with metropolitan governance and cooperation, institutional weakness (rather than thickness) of democratic society, lower general trust in society and specifically trust in public authorities. Respondents from **Germany and Italy** more often associated challenges with future



opportunities having more **forward-looking approach** that emphasised adaptation of existing strategic objectives and daily practices.

In contrast to thematic challenges, **the procedural challenges were often understood and during discussions articulated as specific for individual MAs**. Nevertheless, the surveys disclosed that procedural challenges are largely consistent across all MAs, encompassing diverse municipalities in metropolitan territories, administrative fragmentation, lack of formal planning instruments, complex thematic priorities, and insufficient competences to address metropolitan challenges.

However, these challenges take on distinct forms in individual MAs. **Czech and Polish** respondents, except for the Metropolis GZM (Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia), often highlight **the lack of an established top-down institutional framework or insufficient support from central governments for metropolitan cooperation**. **German and Italian** respondents place a stronger emphasis on **bottom-up activities optimizing existing governance structures and practices**.

The following comparison between global societal megatrends and identified challenges for CE MAs provided important insights. While **digitalization** stands at prominent place at global scale as well as in the EU policies, it **does not figure** in this position among identified metropolitan challenges. Similarly, the **smart city** agenda has not been highlighted on such a level, which could be expected from its prominence in international debates and policy priorities. Similarly, the MECOG-CE partners rarely reflected the issues of **social inequality and cultural diversity**. At the metropolitan scale, the issue of **housing availability and affordability was rarely mentioned**, despite it was in recent years re-constituted as one of key challenges and priorities of urban policies. Very strong emphasis on energy transformations with the reference to removing the reliance on the gas from Russia shows how the perception is significantly **shaped by the immediate challenges**.

While the **economic transformation and economic issues** penetrated many answers, they were **often only secondary** and derived from climate change and the need for more sustainable circular and carbon neutral economy, related to mobility and transportation or population change and migration or to metropolitan services. **Metropolitan economy is not articulated as the key entry point among the major challenges**, despite in the discussions the stakeholders admit that the functioning economy and labour market is essential for the metropolitan development, specifically for fulfilling the role of metropolitan areas as the engines of national prosperity.

Interestingly, the social inequality and well-being dwarfs beyond population change and migration. This shows that the **three essential pillars of sustainable development are at present somewhat unbalanced in the perception of challenges** with the prominence given to the environmental pillar with the social and economic pillars lagging behind. This does not mean that these pillars are not present in metropolitan strategies, it rather shows that at present the key challenges are more related to the environmental pillar.

Opportunities for the promotion of metropolitan dimension are closely linked to favourable EU instruments and policies, such as ITI (Integrated Territorial Investments), the New Leipzig Charter, and the Territorial Agenda 2030, that provide advocacy and support for metropolitan areas and metropolitan cooperation. The **key opportunity lies in the development and practice of metropolitan cooperation itself**, which can demonstrate the benefits of synergies between



member municipalities and other metropolitan stakeholders. Areas such as **spatial planning, mobility, environmental issues, and shared services** like waste management are considered ideal for showcasing successful practices. Additionally, **participation in metropolitan networks and knowledge-sharing projects** plays a pivotal role in promoting the metropolitan dimension and strengthening MAs' influence in public policies.

In summary, the analysis illuminates the **fragmented recognition of the metropolitan dimension** within EU and international documents, emphasizing the pressing need for a more cohesive approach. Central European metropolitan areas (MAs) contend with shared thematic challenges, including climate change, energy supply, sustainable mobility, population dynamics, suburbanization, and urban sprawl, though these challenges manifest with regional variations. Procedural obstacles, such as **administrative fragmentation** and the **absence of formal planning tools**, persist across MAs but assume distinctive forms based on their level of experience with metropolitan cooperation. Opportunities to fortify the metropolitan dimension hinge on **favourable EU instruments, the cultivation of metropolitan cooperation, engagement in networks and knowledge-sharing initiatives, and the promotion of best practices.**

Beyond its analytical objectives, the investigation of challenges and opportunities within the MECOG-CE project serves as a **knowledge exchange process, fostering a mutual understanding of metropolitan challenges and opportunities.** This exchange of knowledge plays a crucial role in the formulation of a Common Metropolitan Vision, a pivotal policy advocacy document that represents the stance of MECOG-CE partners in the promotion of metropolitan dimension in public policies.



3. Metropolitan governance systems and best tools and practices

This section of the report consolidates conclusions concerning different aspects of **metropolitan governance systems (3.1)** and the **identified best tools and practices (3.2)**. In the first part (3.1), it provides a presentation of the **context of metropolitan cooperation** in the countries from which the project partners originate. This entails, among others, the **position of local government and metropolitan areas in the political system**, considering their **organisational and financial autonomy**, and the **strength of urban and metropolitan leadership**, including their influence on the central government level, as well as the assessment of the importance of the **metropolitan issue in the national political agenda**. The general remarks relating to different **main structures and characteristics of interrelations** within the respective metropolitan governance systems were also delineated, with their variations highlighted among the selected countries and regions. Other points of the report summarise essential observations about the **existing metropolitan cooperation forms and structures**, together with their **areas of intervention**. In the second section (3.2), the findings of the comprehensive analysis of the **selected flagship examples of good practices identified by the MECOG-CE project partners** are demonstrated. This part presents key insights regarding the **thematic domains of the practices** and their **responses to significant contemporary challenges**. Additionally, it highlights the **innovative or added value** within specific regional contexts, along with the **potential for transferability**, encompassing both opportunities and potential obstacles to transferring the selected practices to other metropolitan areas. The section also includes a **concise summary of the findings of the analysis regarding best tools and practices outside partner regions**.

The central objective of the investigation of the above-mentioned issues is to **strengthen the metropolitan network and community** by bringing together all prominent initiatives involved in metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces within the MECOG-CE consortium. This endeavour aims to **promote and disseminate best solutions for metropolitan cooperation and governance in Central Europe**, while simultaneously **fostering partnerships and enhancing the overall capacity of metropolitan areas**.

3.1. Metropolitan governance systems

The fundamental objective of the MECOG-CE project is mutual learning of mechanisms for building effective collaboration in the metropolitan areas of Central Europe. Individual metropolitan areas are at **different stages of their governance systems** construction developing **diverse tools for metropolitan cooperation**. It opens up significant opportunities to learn from the successes and failures of others, implement successful solutions, and join forces in the collective search for answers to the challenges and needs of Central European metropolitan areas. Nevertheless, the **direct transfer of solutions from one country to another is challenging**. The tools and best practices identified in the **project cannot be analysed in isolation from the context** in which they were created. Therefore, knowledge about the **broader context of metropolitan cooperation** in a given country is needed to **assess the transferability of specific tools for**



metropolitan cooperation. This context includes, among other things, **the position of local government and metropolitan areas** in the political system, considering their **organisational and financial autonomy** and the strength of **urban and metropolitan leadership**, including their influence on the central government level. The presence of representatives of municipal authorities in parliament or the **existence of institutional solutions dedicated to metropolises**, as well as the recognition of their importance by central authorities, can facilitate the development of advanced tools for metropolitan cooperation. Understanding and describing the national contexts in which metropolitan areas develop allows for **contextualisation of the identified solutions and a proper assessment of their transferability.**

3.1.1. Level of autonomy of municipalities and strength of municipal leadership at local and national level

In the examined countries, municipalities are characterised by a relatively **high level of autonomy in terms of competencies.** Municipalities are provided with their own revenues (local taxes and fees) as well as resources provided by central or regional authorities. The Czech municipalities show the highest level of financial dependency from the central state, but in Poland, also half of municipal revenues come from subsidies from the central budget. **The extensive range of competencies and necessary resources allows municipalities to have a tangible impact on living conditions and meet the needs of residents defined at the local level.**

The strength of **municipal leadership at the local level is quite strong** in the project partner countries. In most cases, **mayors are directly elected by the residents**, with the only exception of Czechia, where they are elected indirectly by the Municipal Assembly. The term of office for municipal authorities is usually between 4 and 5 years. Only in Germany the Mayors are elected for eight years.

The relatively strong position of municipal authorities, stemming from their competencies, democratic legitimacy through direct elections, and sometimes long terms of office, **does not translate into a significant influence of municipal authorities at the central government level.**

Representatives of municipalities are not directly present in central government structures. They can only **indirectly influence state power and lobby for their interests** within various bodies and mixed conferences where representatives of central and municipal authorities meet. Czechia **presents an exception as indirectly elected mayors can be elected as members of parliament**, which is a common practice. One of the political parties in Czechia (Mayors and Independents) is composed mainly of mayors or former mayors, the third largest party in parliament and a part of the current government.

3.1.2. Metropolitan empowerment as a part of the national political agenda

The metropolitan phenomenon in Central Europe was noticed much earlier in Germany and Italy than in the countries belonging to the post-communist bloc, where a highly centralized approach prevailed.

The level of empowerment of metropolises and the strength of metropolitan leadership **varies not only between the countries** represented in the project but often also between metropolitan areas within a single country (Poland, Germany). **Italian and German metropolises present a higher**



level of empowerment, while metropolises in post-communist countries such as Poland and Czechia struggle to be recognised.

In Germany and Italy, the metropolitan actors had **more time for searching or and testing appropriate institutional solutions for emerging metropolises**. Although this process was not linear ultimately led to the **recognition of the metropolises as an appropriate level for strategic and spatial planning**.

Although in Italy, the constitutional change in 2001 recognised metropolises as autonomous bodies, the **establishment of metropolitan cities** like the Metropolitan City of Turin took over a decade due to resistance from other self-government territorial units.

Metropolises in Germany have also gained a strong status and the ability to take action, although the adopted solutions may vary in the German federation's individual states (Länder). The Stuttgart Region has a strong position related to direct elections to the metropolitan Assembly and legally guaranteed competencies.

After the collapse of the post-communist bloc, efforts in Central European countries, including Poland and Czechia, focused on reforming political and economic systems as well as (re)building new administrative organisation and restoring the autonomy of local self-government. Thus, **the metropolitan issue emerged in Poland and Czechia only at the end of the first decade of the 21st century**. To this day, the Polish and Czech metropolitan areas **lack adequate political and institutional frameworks**.

Currently, **Poland has only one institutionalised metropolis** officially recognised in national legislation, namely the GZM Metropolis, with its largest city, Katowice. The cooperation of municipalities in other metropolitan areas is of **bottom-up character** and takes the form of metropolitan conferences, agreements, and associations. The cooperation in Polish and Czech metropolitan areas was **strengthened and, in some cases, even initiated through Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI)**, ensuring the possibility of financing joint metropolitan projects.

Even in the case of the strongest Italian and German metropolises, the **pre-existing municipalities were preserved** and decisions to merge municipalities were not made.

Regardless of the diverse level of empowerment of metropolitan areas in Central Europe, considering their influence on national decision-making and legislation, **their position is even weaker than that of municipalities**. Official metropolitan representatives have **no formal presence in state or central government bodies**. In Italy, the metropolitan cities are represented as municipalities in mixed commissions (the State-Cities, the Local Authorities Conference, and the Unified Conference). An exception is the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan area, where metropolitan cooperation is carried out by the authorities of two states, which, following the principles of German federalism, are represented in the federal parliament (Bundesrat).

3.1.3. Metropolitan governance system - structure and interactions

Understanding the functioning of the metropolitan governance system in a given metropolitan area requires **going beyond the institutional and formal perspective**. Therefore, the perspective of **territorial dialogue and cooperation spaces** in metropolitan areas have been adopted to analyse the metropolitan governance system in Central Europe.



Thanks to this approach, a closer analysis reveals that **dynamic metropolitan governance also exists in less institutionalised metropolitan areas.**

Italian and German metropolitan areas have **more complex and consolidated metropolitan governance systems** with numerous interconnected metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces. It reflects more extended **collective learning, higher metropolitan civic capital, and trust**, essential for the proper functioning of metropolitan institutions.

In the **Metropolitan City of Turin**, the core-town-oriented governance model has been enriched with diverse infra-metropolitan forms of cooperation, which are 11 Homogeneous Zones, 3 Local Action Groups, 16 Unions of Mountain Municipalities, 8 Unions of Municipalities, and 8 Territorial Pacts.

Stuttgart Region Association (Verband Region Stuttgart, VRS) is the centre of the metropolitan governance system. Still, other closely related elements of the governance system are the public transport company VVS (Verkehrs- und Tarifverbund Stuttgart) since 1977, and the regional development agency of the Stuttgart Region (Wirtschaftsförderung Region Stuttgart), established in 1995.

The less advanced stage of development of metropolitan governance systems in post-communist countries can be related to the late integration of the metropolitan issue into the political agenda at the beginning of the 21st century. The self-government units that recently regained autonomy are **reluctant to easily give up and transfer their competencies** and budgets at the metropolitan level.

In Poland the **metropolitan cooperation developed bottom-up**, often through associations or informal agreements. **Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) introduced in 2014 have strengthened Poland's existing metropolitan associations and initiated metropolitan cooperation in Czechia.** Even in later cases, a complex governance system can be observed. In the case of the Brno Metropolitan Area, cooperation is based on a Memorandum signed by Brno, the South Moravian Region, and six cities with extended powers. Nevertheless, there are spaces for dialogue at the infra-metropolitan level in the form of voluntary associations of municipalities (DSO) and Local Action Groups. Brno, responsible for implementing ITI, maintained significant cooperation with the remaining 177 municipalities of the functional urban area, but only on an informal and voluntary basis.

Transferring tools and good practices from highly institutionalised metropolitan areas in Germany and Italy to Polish or Czech metropolises may be challenging but not excluded. However, the financial and technical capabilities, as well as effective metropolitan decision-making, necessary for implementing the solutions must be taken into account. **The transfer from Polish and Czech metropolitan areas to Italian and German ones may be more effortless.** The solution and tools from the latter are often more flexible, agile, and less technically and financially demanding. Still, their transfer is conditioned by the added value they would provide to existing metropolitan cooperation.



3.1.4. Metropolitan cooperation forms and structures

Metropolitan cooperation forms, structures, and dialogue spaces depend on the duration of cooperation, national and regional agreements, and legal status. **Three distinctive forms of cooperation and dialogue spaces can be identified.** The first relates to a given structure's functioning under national regulations on metropolitan areas. Such organisations adhere rigorously to specific provisions, are highly formalised, and depend on political relations. The second form concerns the functioning of associations and agreements with formerly established institutions, also legally binding. This group of spaces is slightly less formalised but requires a wide network of relations. The third form relies on informal structures that in some cases can overlap the two previously presented. These are spaces of dialogue whose boundaries are difficult to clearly define. Often, hard spaces of cooperation with a clear influence on political decisions overlap with soft spaces of cooperation without such an influence. **The development of the metropolitan space of cooperation and dialogue usually takes place in two ways,** on an evolutionary basis, and then may become formalised, which can mean a revolution in action. It is often supported by a national law, considered as a dual process, which entails receiving a financial support, but also dealing with the imposition of political goals. The main actors of the emergence of metropolitan spaces of cooperation and dialogue are both political and non-political ones/associated structures. This is often connected with the functioning of additional committees and bodies supporting the operation of a given structure. These internal divisions may be formal in nature, but there are also advisory committees with no formal status.

3.1.5. Metropolitan domains of intervention

By their nature, metropolitan areas are complex structures in many respects: spatial, demographic, social, economic, administrative, etc. Hence, the spheres of activities undertaken in these areas are also diverse. Among these diverse domains, four were most frequently indicated by project partners. These are regional development, transport (or, more broadly, mobility), spatial planning and activities related to culture and cultural heritage. It does not mean that other domains are unimportant, but that **metropolitan mobility system, spatial planning and regional development could be named as a “Big 3” of metropolitan issues** (culture and cultural heritage domain can be regarded as the sphere “supported” by metropolitan structures). The above-mentioned issues are complex according to laws and institutional, organisational, financial and political frameworks. In institutionalised metropolitan areas, their organisation is the prerogative of metropolitan structures. In the remaining cases, it is supported by the implementation of specific projects. However, everywhere, it is the subject of metropolitan discussion.

One fundamental dimension that differentiates how metropolitan structures engage in the domains can be noticed by looking at the studied metropolitan areas. **It is the form of institutionalisation of metropolitan cooperation.** In a situation where metropolitan institutions function based on laws defining their prerogatives, their areas of operation entail prescribed responsibilities, and as a result, activities are complex. This is the case of the GZM Metropolis (Upper Silesian MA), Stuttgart Region, and the Metropolitan City of Turin. However, it does not mean that metropolitan institutions do not take action in other areas; it depends on their choice,



ability to act, and perception of potentially important fields of intervention. Therefore, these are often single-point and more fragmented actions. Another category consists of metropolitan areas covered by the institutions coordinating the ITI projects. In this case, there are many spheres of action. Sometimes, metropolitan structure activity focuses on coordinating projects undertaken by groups of municipalities located in the metropolitan area. Such engagement results from the logic of the ITI instrument. This is the case of Brno, Ostrava, and Warsaw MAs. The Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan structures constitute a particular case. They can be called institutions mediating between the municipal and state levels.

3.2. Best tools and practices at partner MAs for enhancing metropolitan cooperation and governance

This section focuses on the **identified good collaboration practices developed by the metropolitan structures within the MECOG-CE consortium** by both highly institutionalised metropolitan areas and those fostering bottom-up cooperation. The previous elements of the analytical work (3.1) were key to present the context from which these practices emerge, allowing partners to more adequately assess their usefulness and the possibility of their transfer to the respective metropolitan areas. Additionally, **a summary of findings concerning best tools and practices outside partner regions** is also provided in the section.

The comprehensive analysis of the selected flagship best tools and practices identified by the MECOG-CE project partners, which evolved from the established forms of metropolitan cooperation and governance, concentrated on three main elements:

- **thematic domains and major contemporary challenges** for metropolitan areas perceived by the project partners (explored and described in the D.1.1.1 by prof. Luděk Sýkora and Alžběta Rychnovská, the Charles University), which were addressed by the selected practices;
- **innovative or added value** of the gathered tools and initiatives in specific regional context;
- their **potential for transferability**, which reflects **chances and possible obstacles to transferring** the chosen practices to other metropolitan areas.

The overarching goal of this analytical task is to strengthen the metropolitan network and community by uniting all leading initiatives involved in metropolitan cooperation and fostering dialogue spaces within the MECOG-CE consortium.

Embarking on the endeavour to explore the exemplary tools and practices is targeted at **nurturing a culture of sharing, collaborative development, and continuous learning**, while also seeking **potential innovations**. The study aimed not only to **gather leading practices that have demonstrated tangible results** in respective metropolitan areas, but also to **enhance capabilities and promote bottom-up validation**. The guiding principle is that by sharing resources and experiences, the project partners **enrich their knowledge as well as empower and motivate others to strive for excellence and better decision-making**. This phase of the project aimed to establish grounds for **meaningful partnerships** and to cultivate a **supportive community**



conducive to growth, thereby advancing and advocating for cooperation and governance at the metropolitan level.

The selected best tools and practices offer a rich collection of solutions, representing the **multifaceted nature of urban development**. They differ in terms of **thematic domains, required scale of investments and metropolitan impact and results**. Thus, their **potential of transferability** differs as well, depending on eventually what parts or key ideas could be replicated. They also give an overview of the state-of-art of metropolitan projects that can be treated as a significant resource and point of reference and inspiration.

3.2.1. Main thematic domains of the identified best tools and practices with regard to challenges and opportunities specific for Central European MAs

The first dimension of the analysis concentrated on the thematic domains and possible challenges that may be addressed by the practices. The 47 selected best tools and initiatives ([Appendix 1](#)) refer to 14 main thematic domains, i.e. Waste management; Tourism & Leisure; Housing; Revitalisation; Energy; Green infrastructure / Landscape; Promotion & Territorial marketing; Spatial Planning; Social policy / Inclusion; Culture & Heritage, Metropolitan Identity, Management of metropolitan area; Regional Development; Education; Transport / Mobility. Among the **most prevalent thematic areas** addressed by the practices are: **Transport / Mobility, Education, widely perceived Regional Development and Management of metropolitan area**, mostly of strategic character as an additional category that emerged in the analysis of data. It is worth noting that the thematic categories are not entirely mutually exclusive, as **there are practices of cross-cutting character**. In this case, the **accent was put** by the partner metropolitan area **on a certain model of work, design or conceptual process, or type of project implementation**, such as the *Prototyping Academies* (GZM Metropolis, Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area) or the *Overall strategic framework* (Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg), involving different elements of sustainable regional development.

When it comes to a territorial repartition of the practices, no uniform pattern can be observed across the partner metropolitan areas in Central Europe. However, **in Czechia and Poland**, most of **the transport or metropolitan management related tools** (the two most numerous thematic categories overall), were **developed with the use of the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI)** instrument. **This supports the idea of the ITI being a window of opportunity for the development or enhancement of metropolitan cooperation**, especially in the countries with the weaker institutionalisation of metropolitan governance or where the competences of the metropolitan institution are not fully or adequately adjusted to the needs of a given area.

In **Italy and Germany** (especially Berlin-Brandenburg), the partners opted for a **more strategic and processual approach** in terms of sustainable mobility, spatial planning, regional development, and bottom-up or participatory metropolitan management model. This can be perceived as a **need to optimise mature or relatively long functioning governance structures towards grass-roots and less formalised or rigid forms of cooperation**.

Regarding challenges and opportunities identified by the MECOG-CE consortium partners, the practices refer to **three fundamental pillars of sustainable development - environmental, social**



and economic. Figure 3.2.1 demonstrates main groups of gathered practices with reference to sustainable development pillars. **The practices consistently emphasise the environmental dimension**, particularly through solutions in **sustainable mobility and transport**, such as Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) aligned with EU guidelines. Additionally, they encompass practices oriented towards **addressing climate change and promoting green transition**. The problems of economic growth and transformation, metropolitan economies (metropolitan innovation and competitiveness), as well as social inequality, cultural diversity or population change, were addressed by smaller number of selected flagship practices. This aspect deserves special attention, because **having these three pillars balanced allows for the real improvement of the quality of life of the metropolitan inhabitants**. Enhancing human capital and its retention capacity, reducing social inequalities and segregation, as well as developing a strong metropolitan economy system should go hand in hand with environmental demands.

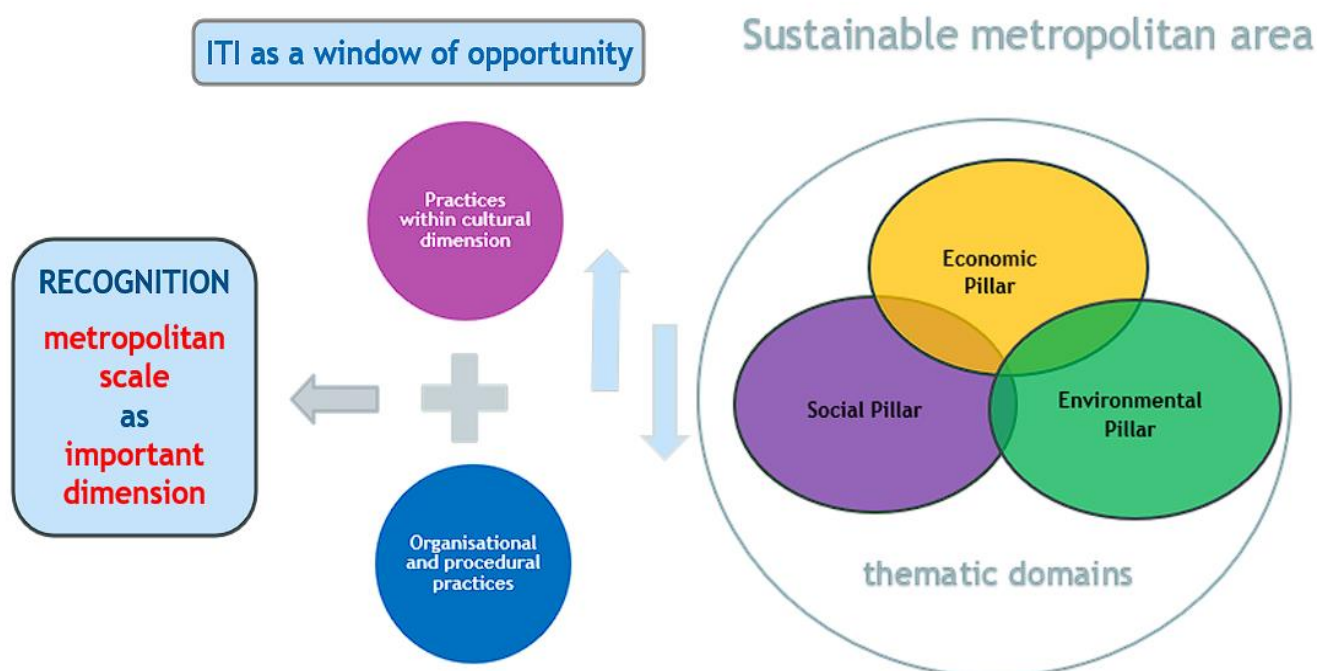
Interestingly, there are also two separate and considerable groups of initiatives. They have a **common ground relating to the cultural dimension of metropolisation**. It involves **shaping the “metropolitan” way of thinking and acting** (the metropolitan mindset or culture), **fostering a sense of togetherness**. The ITI served as a crucial funding source for initiatives falling under both mentioned groups.

The first group of practices mainly consists of **“soft measures,” promoting diverse metropolitan resources, and sharing knowledge and values through the exchange of opinions, and statements, but also surveys** and emotional mapping among different metropolitan actors. Their crucial added value is that they **build and reinforce mutual trust between municipalities of an MA**. This is especially important as these practices contribute to the recognition of the **metropolitan scale as an important dimension**.

The second group of best practices relates to **organisational and procedural issues** as an expression of a need to develop **strategic and sustainable approaches in metropolitan planning** (e.g. frameworks, plans, strategies, visions), but also **bottom-up and horizontal governance structures** (e.g. voluntary associations, partnerships, networks, etc.). This can be regarded as a positive response to **the need of the development and enhancement of metropolitan cooperation, perceived as crucial by all Central European metropolitan areas involved in the MECOG-CE project**. To some extent, this type of initiatives also refers to the cultural dimension, for instance through a **participatory approach to building metropolitan governance structures** fostering metropolitan socialisation and awareness.



Figure 3.2.1. Main groups of identified best tools and practices with reference to three pillars of sustainable development



Source: own elaboration

3.2.2. Innovative or added value of best tools and practices

The second dimension of the analysis concerned innovative character of the tools and practices. The importance was brought to a **relativized meaning of innovation**, as a **new or added value in the metropolitan social system** and not an entirely novel solution, unknown elsewhere. There were different types of innovations recognised - technological, organisational, social (Edwards-Schachter 2018), and cross-cutting. **The last category was highly represented, consisting of complex and large-scale projects necessitating a creative or distinctive approach across multiple areas or a unique combination of existing resources or solutions.** Examples include the *Food Districts* (Metropolitan City of Turin), *Dolní Vítkovice* (Ostrava MA), and the *AI Alliance Baden-Württemberg* (Stuttgart Region Association). The technological group of innovations, exemplified by the *Brno Centre for Waste Recovery* (Brno MA), was the least present. The organisational innovations encompassed a range of governance structures, predominantly grassroots and participatory models, as well as processes for strategy and plan development, and various voluntary platforms for exchanging knowledge. These were for instance: *the Municipal Neighbourhood Forum* (Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg) or the *ITI/Integrated Development Strategy of BMA 21+* (Brno MA). The social innovations comprised diverse activities aimed at enhancing human capital, fostering knowledge, skills, and competencies among individuals, and promoting social inclusion, tolerance, and integration. Among them, there are the following



initiatives: the *Welcome Center* (VRS - Stuttgart Region), the *Closer to the labour market - Integrated Educational and Vocational Advisory System ITI WFA* (Integrated Territorial Investments of the Warsaw Metropolis) or the *Community social worker* (Metropolitan City of Turin). It can be argued that **many of the gathered initiatives do not have high innovative value in terms of the originality of the core idea**. However, it was the **configuration of different resources and a special approach that made a significant change in the area of their implementation**.

Moreover, the most important determinant of various types of innovation lies in interactions, since they facilitate learning and accumulation of knowledge (Morisson, Doussineau, 2019). The most crucial for the enhancement of metropolitan governance is **the inter-sectorial collaboration, according to the Quadruple Helix concept**, linking business, science, and public authorities as well as residents. The ability to develop inter-institutional relations, but also vertical and horizontal interactions of different actors, is a key resource in competition between metropolitan areas (Crespo, Cabral 2010). As reported by the MECOG-CE partners, **regardless of the type of innovation, the exchange of knowledge, enhancement of mutual trust, and improvement of cooperation among stakeholders consistently emerged as significant advantages and added value across various practices**. These are the elements that create a specific atmosphere fostering the creation of new and out-of-the-box ideas to urban problems. As such, it shows a relatively high awareness of **the significance of the pragmatic dimension of trust, acquired through joint implementation of projects, in building collaborative governance systems** in the examined metropolitan areas.

Another important and distinctive feature indicated as added value **was a multi-modal or integrated approach to urban challenges**. It is reflected in the creation of comprehensive strategic documents and approaches, such as the *Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan* (SUMP) (Metropolitan City of Turin) or the *Overall strategic framework* (Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg), combining different tools and actions to meet the overall sustainable development objectives (environmental, social and economic).

However, the partners from **Czechia, Poland and Italy** slightly **more frequently and directly articulated as innovative relational and trust-building elements**, which form the foundation of **social capital and collaborative cultures**. This emphasis on collaboration was particularly pronounced in **the ITI-funded projects**. The partners from **Germany** emphasised more the **importance of specific or distinguished fields of intervention of a given structure in the development and management of the metropolitan area**. This included focusing on new competencies within existing metropolitan dialogue and cooperation spaces, as well as adopting multi-dimensional approaches to urban problems and planning.



3.2.3. Potential for transferability of best tools and practices

The third dimension of the analysis related to the potential of transferability. In this respect, it should be noted that **the validation process was threefold**. The first phase occurred **at the level of the “donor” metropolitan area**, where the MECOG-CE project partners selected up to five flagship initiatives.¹ In this process, they aligned with the project’s overarching objectives and considered tools that enhance metropolitan cooperation and dialogue. This stage aimed to promote a bottom-up approach to decision-making, providing partners with the opportunity to reflect on, recognise, and champion implemented initiatives they wished to share and disseminate within the MECOG-CE consortium.

The second validation stage entailed **an expert analysis aimed at the objectivization of the selection process** conducted by the partners who submitted their practices for transfer. During this stage, the expert team from the University of Silesia in Katowice endeavoured to illustrate the extent to which the practices chosen by the MECOG-CE partners were rooted in the particular contexts and governance systems of their respective metropolitan areas. Additionally, the team aimed to establish more general and objective assessment criteria for identifying the best tools and practices, focusing on their potential for transferability.

The third validation stage involves **the assessment and recontextualization of a specific tool or practice by the receiver**. This process is facilitated by a comprehensive understanding of the original context and the objective validation criteria outlined by the expert team, particularly focusing on transferability and the capacity to foster or strengthen cooperation.

The assessment of **the transfer potential of practices yielded positive results overall**, indicating **a strong inclination among the consortium members to knowledge and experiences sharing**. This encouraging outcome holds **significant promise for the project’s progression and the study clusters**, particularly as they enter the conclusive validation phase of recontextualization.

The transferability of the identified projects depends primarily **on their alignment with the needs and requirements of a specific metropolitan area and the availability of various resources essential for project implementation**. These resources encompass financial, infrastructural, human, time, as well as administrative or legal requisites. Thus, the evaluation of these factors is pivotal in estimating the feasibility of transferring or implementing projects within a particular context.

In the following phase of the project, there is **a need for a more critical and thorough assessment of different aspects of transferability in the receiving contexts**. The majority of even complex and place-specific projects were evaluated by the partners as highly replicable. Yet, especially in the case of cross-cutting, context-specific or process-oriented solutions, the following questions should be taken into consideration:

- What elements or universal and key ideas of a given tool/practice could be transferred to another metropolitan area?

¹ It should be mentioned that while some project partners identified more than five flagship practices, others mentioned fewer. This variation in responses accounts for the final identification of 47 practices.



- How the integrated approach and a set of tools it incorporates are designed, e.g. the process of building synergies between different projects, the way of involving different stakeholders and gaining mutual trust and consensus?
- How to organise and optimise a process of cooperation?

For instance, in the case of the *Berlin-Brandenburg Transport Association* (VBB) as a complex system, the potential objects of transfer are rather selected parts of the whole concept as joint ticketing or public transport plan, or a way how to integrate efficiently different services.

In general, most of small-scale projects focused on education and competence-building employing soft measures, along with conceptual efforts in strategy design, demonstrate greater potential for transferability. Similarly, tools addressing the cultural aspects of metropolitan development can be readily adapted to other contexts, encompassing promotional tools, awareness-raising initiatives, increased participation efforts, and the cultivation of a metropolitan mindset.

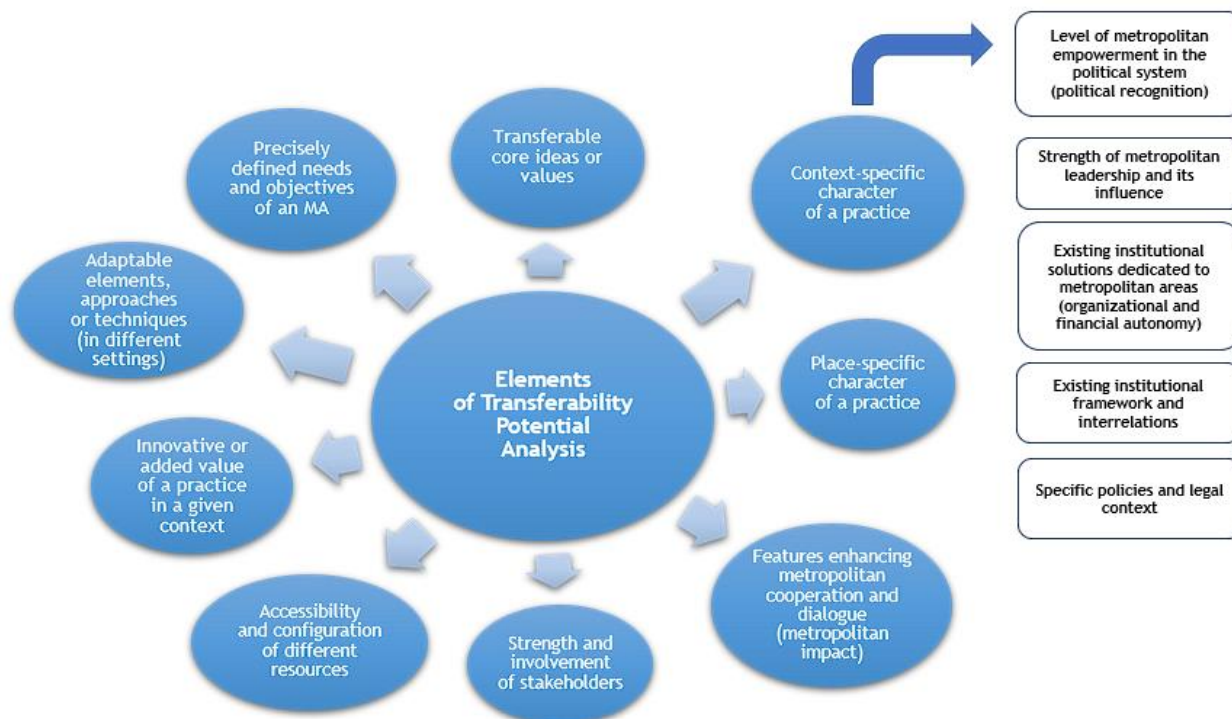
The separate issue concerns the use of specific European funds, as the ITI instrument, whose accessibility differs across EU member states and should be thoroughly examined if there was no previous experience in its implementation. In the so-called “old” EU member states, the use of ITI necessitates careful consideration of both its advantages (added value) and drawbacks, including the availability of funding, administrative resources required for management, and existing experience and competencies in its implementation across various administrative levels. Consequently, the partner areas from Czechia and Poland could serve as mentors in this process, having acquired quite a considerable level of expertise in its adoption. However, upon analysing various practices funded by the ITI, it became evident that numerous projects focusing on education and transport/mobility infrastructure solutions were constrained in their territorial reach. Identifying initiatives that significantly impacted cooperation and governance at a genuinely metropolitan scale, encompassing all functional area or most crucial partners and authorities, proved challenging.

Lastly, this reflection prompts the pivotal question of whether a selected project, tool, or practice underscores the importance of and effectively enhances metropolitan cooperation and governance, including across different sectors with reference to Triple or Quadruple Helix models. Practices centred on knowledge sharing and networking among various metropolitan stakeholders, such as the *National Conferences on Metropolitan Issues* (Brno MA), the *Opinion Statements* (Warsaw MA), the *Questionnaires among Mayors* (Brno MA), and the *Prototyping Academies* (GZM Metropolis) unequivocally fulfil this objective. Moreover, they possess high potential for replication in foreign contexts and require comparatively lower investments than large-scale endeavours, e.g. the *Hydrogen project* in the Stuttgart Region or the *Dolní Vítkovice Area* in the Ostrava MA.

In Figure 3.2.2, the majority of aspects relevant in assessing the potential for transferability of selected flagship initiatives in the MECOG-CE project were gathered. The diagram can serve as a guidance and point of reference for a replication of best tools and practices within the MECOG-CE consortium in the second phase of the whole project (WP2).



Figure 3.2.2. Elements of Transferability Potential Analysis



Source: own elaboration

In the figure above, the two circular elements positioned at the upper right, referring to the **context-specific and place-specific character of practices**, indicate **potential challenges** associated with the transfer or replication process that one might encounter with regard to **different aspects**, such as the level of metropolitan empowerment in the political system or existing institutional solutions dedicated to metropolitan areas. **The remaining elements highlight various factors that can facilitate the transfer process**, provided that it is possible to accurately define them within the receiving context.

As previously noted, the potential for transferability is closely linked to the **scale of a project and the feasibility considerations**, including **necessary resources** (financial, infrastructural, human, time, administrative etc.) **for implementation**. Hence, an openness and **readiness for the transformation of practices** are prerequisites to effectively **adapt them to the receiving context** of the prevailing institutional framework, interrelations, arrangements, network of partners, specific policies, and legal provisions. The scope of activities and the target group are subject to modification. Additionally, **evaluating the MA's own needs and objectives** (which should be consistent across different scenarios), **actively engaging various stakeholders**, **accessing available guidelines, handbooks, or project descriptions**, and **establishing a detailed work plan** delineating target groups, objectives, intended outcomes, timelines, financial and administrative considerations, sustainability, and required resources, **can all be beneficial** (Yilmaz, MPG, 2022: 22).



3.2.4. Best tools and practices outside partner regions

Within “**Activity 1.2 Analysis of existing tools/best practices for enhancing metropolitan cooperation,**” the analytical work also included the identification of metropolitan cooperation tools and best practices with reference to **selected examples from different regions in Europe (up to 8 case studies) outside the MECOG-CE partner consortium.** The objective of this task was to **enrich the perspective focused on Central European solutions and to get a possible source of inspiration or comparison as to the state-of-art of metropolitan cooperation and governance instruments in different metropolitan areas outside the project partners’ metropolitan areas in Central Europe.** The practices were gathered based on the expert knowledge of the University of Silesia Team in the field and the expertise regarding selected metropolitan areas of the following organisations: METREX and Eurocities (associated project partners), Metropolitan Research Institute in Budapest (full project partner). The selected metropolitan areas represent different parts of Europe (three cases outside the EU) and diversified metropolitan areas in terms of governance systems, as follows:

- Metropolitan Region Amsterdam (the Netherlands),
- Barcelona Metropolitan Area (Spain),
- Lyon Metropolitan Area (France),
- Rome Metropolitan Area (Italy),
- Zürich Metropolitan Area (Switzerland),
- Oslo Metropolitan Area (Norway),
- Grenoble Metropolitan Area (France),
- Birmingham Metropolitan Area (United Kingdom).

All in all, there were **29 best tools and initiatives** (see [D.1.2.2 - Analysis of best practice outside partners’ regions](#)) gathered referring to **12 main thematic domains**, which mostly aligns with the thematic fields of practices from the project partner metropolitan areas. They represent quite **a rich and diversified collection of different instruments and initiatives.** The most prevalent thematic areas are: Regional Development, Spatial planning and Social policy/inclusion. One third of all gathered practices addressed clearly the **thematic challenges related to broadly perceived environmental issues (climate change or green transition),** including different categories, from waste management, through energy, regional development, or spatial planning, to transport/mobility and the management of metropolitan area (the ERDF funds management by the Barcelona MA). **The majority of practices responded to multiple challenges,** especially in the **regional development field.** The selected projects and initiatives also **addressed visibly challenges related to metropolitan economies, social inequality/inclusion, urban and rural partnerships, and lack of trust among MA members.**

It is important to emphasise that the **identified practices represent diverse solutions in terms of scope of actions and scale of investments.** They stretch from rather soft tools concerning the establishment of platforms for metropolitan and urban discussion and dialogue, through intermunicipal partnerships dedicated to better management of resources (e.g. energy, green



spaces, EU funds), or technological tools supporting policy implementation and management (e.g. AI testing environment, data compilation tools in spatial planning or social care), to strategic integrated approaches, regulatory frameworks and plans (e.g. Master Plan, etc.) to tackle various urban challenges. **Many practices were also of cross-cutting character**, particularly from the **regional development category**. For example, *Food project for the Lyon territory* (Metropolis of Lyon) aims at strengthening the local agricultural production and the whole food system. It encompasses its various dimensions, including social, health, economic, and environmental aspects (integrated approach).

As to added or innovative value, the majority of presented projects and tools across various thematic areas were **characterised by extensive collaboration among stakeholders from both public and private sectors**. Another significant and distinguishing feature was **the adoption of a bottom-up, user-centric, or participatory approach to service design and delivery**. This often involved incorporating the opinions and ideas of residents or service users into the decision-making process, as well as fostering open communication with metropolitan authorities. The last visible indicated added value was **a multi-modal or integrated approach to urban challenges**. It is reflected in the creation of comprehensive strategic documents and approaches, such as the *Metropolitan Urban Master Plan* (Barcelona MA) or the *Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan* (SUMP) (Metropolitan City of Rome).

The exemplary practices from outside partner regions help to get a deeper understanding of the challenges, issues, and priorities across various thematic domains within the metropolitan area. In the following stages of the project, **these initiatives can enrich the development of study clusters**, by contributing insights into broader experiences in the given area.

3.2.5. Conclusions

The presented **overview of 76 diverse tools and practices** from the project partner MAs and from outside the project consortium, across 14 thematic areas, **demonstrates the complex nature of urban and metropolitan development**. From regional development strategies to waste management initiatives, all exemplary practices and projects **give evidence of significant urban and metropolitan planning and governance efforts**. Encompassing domains such as spatial planning, energy management, and social policy, the presented collection of initiatives **highlights the interconnectedness of various factors shaping metropolitan ecosystems in different European regions**. Each thematic area addresses crucial elements necessary for fostering sustainable and dynamic urban environments. Covering topics ranging from enhancing metropolitan identity to promoting sustainable transportation and mobility, the identified best tools and practices represent **a wealth of knowledge intended to inform and guide metropolitan policymakers and practitioners in their efforts towards creating more resilient and liveable metropolitan areas and regions**.

The selected flagship tools and practices not only **contribute to individual thematic objectives**, but also **play a vital role in advancing the overarching project objective of strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance**. By emphasising the **benefits of collaboration among diverse stakeholders and fostering integrated approaches to urban and metropolitan development**, the practices facilitate the establishment of effective governance structures



and mechanisms within metropolitan areas. Through participatory and bottom-up approaches, they empower local communities to actively engage in decision-making processes and contribute to the development of inclusive and responsive governance frameworks. Furthermore, by highlighting collaboration and coordination across different thematic fields, the identified initiatives and projects promote synergy and coherence in metropolitan planning and policy implementation. Thus, they ultimately enhance the capacity of metropolitan areas to address complex challenges and collectively pursue sustainable development goals.



4. Common Metropolitan Vision

The Common Metropolitan Vision is a **policy advocacy document** which articulates the **position of MECOG-CE partners to promote metropolitan dimension in public policies**. While the document primarily aims at the European level, it also intends to address national stakeholders. It argues for the relevance and importance of metropolitan dimension in European and national strategic documents and policies. It highlights the benefits and advantages of metropolitan dimension in public policies and metropolitan level governance for the accomplishments of national and European policy objectives as well as local (municipal) and regional policy priorities. The document also points to the needs and requirements of metropolitan areas to enhance metropolitan governance and cooperation.

The work on Common Metropolitan Vision (CMV) started already during the **identification of challenges** specific for Central European MAs ([Deliverable 1.1.1](#)). The first phase of the work on the Common Metropolitan Vision included the discussion and definition of the focus and structure of the document as well as the character of its narrative.

The work on **the structure** of Common Metropolitan Vision focused on five areas:

- **state-of-the-art** overview of metropolitan dimension in public policies;
- **vision** for metropolitan areas;
- **relevance** of metropolitan dimension for objectives of public policies;
- **benefits/advantages** of metropolitan dimension for societal development;
- **needs** of metropolitan areas for cooperation and governance to deliver the benefits.

It was aided by an overview and analysis of policy documents aimed at the promotion of metropolitan dimension. It used two perspectives. First, it **structured insights, statements and recommendations** from these documents according to the above presented five areas. Second, using **inductive analysis** it drew the most important highlights and lessons irrespective of their affiliation with this structure.

At the Transnational Project Meeting in Warsaw, October 19-20, 2023, an intensive discussion of MECOG-CE partners focused on **initial inputs** for the CMV through assembling ideas to formulate the vision, the benefits and the needs. Furthermore, the initial insights from the work on the [Deliverable 1.2.1](#) about the governance systems and best tools informed the work on CMV. An **online web interface** (<https://sites.google.com/natur.cuni.cz/metropolitan-vision/>) with the **survey of MECOG-CE partners' ideas, suggestions and formulations** for CMV was prepared.

The key imperative for drafting the CMV was to have a **concise policy advocacy document**. It was decided that the Common Metropolitan Vision will not aim to argue for any specificity of conditions and achievements in Central Europe. The key strength of Central European MAs was seen in a **diverse experience** with metropolitan governance, cooperation and planning that can reach the interests of other European MAs. Therefore, the Common Metropolitan Vision was intended to be general to represent all MECOG-CE partners and address issues expected to be shared more



generally between MAs in the EU member states. CMV was intended to target primarily European and also national, regional and local audience.

As the suggestions of partners' contribution in the survey under the themes of vision, relevance, benefits and advantages, and needs and requirements were often repetitive, and the initial text that attempted to reflect and include partners' suggestions was too long, it was decided to **simplify the structure and focus on vision, benefits and needs**. The narrative of the document was purposefully drafted using **positive language** with the **flavour of "vision,"** i.e. as "if we already are in the desired metropolitan future." The purpose is to use the CMV to establish a narrative and influence discourse on the important role of metropolitan dimension. The text can then have the power to change and form new realities. Therefore, the text of the narrative was constructed in a sense that we metropolitan areas have the resources, deal with obstacles, already have achievements, are recognised and are part of European and national policy making. The text also includes arguments about the needs of metropolitan areas, fulfilment of which can help to achieve the benefits.

The first draft of Common Metropolitan Vision was circulated at the beginning of January 2024. Reflections and suggestions on the first draft of CMV by MECOG-CE partners were delivered before the end of the month. **The second draft** of Common Metropolitan Vision was circulated on February 5th with reflections and suggestions on the second draft of CMV by MECOG-CE partners received before the Transnational Project Meeting in Stuttgart, February 22-23, 2024. **Third version** was circulated on March 8th for final readings and comments before the discussion and approval of the document at the MECOG-CE Steering Committee on March 19th, 2024.

The final policy advocacy document "**We are the Metropolitan Areas - Our Common Metropolitan Vision**" outlines a framework for a long-term, shared, and enduring commitment of undersigned metropolitan leaders, stakeholders, and actors to:

- advance the development of metropolitan societies and their areas;
- maximize the positive impacts that metropolitan areas currently have and can potentially contribute to the overall prosperity and quality of life in Europe, its member states, and regions;
- continuously strengthen and develop the institutionalization of metropolitan governance, emphasizing the pivotal role of the metropolitan dimension in European and national policies.

The Common Metropolitan Vision **recognises metropolitan areas as:**

- functional urban regions comprising agglomerations of densely populated urban cores and their surrounding territories, fostering integrated labour and housing markets, and interconnected through commuting and mobility;
- urbanized spaces encompassing large cities with pivotal roles in international and national development, alongside towns serving as local and regional centres;



- surrounding territories of suburban and rural settlements, areas designated for agriculture and forestry, nature protection zones, and spaces dedicated to recreation;
- being shaped by governance mechanisms that facilitate metropolitan cooperation among diverse stakeholders from public, private, and citizen sectors.

The articulation of the Common Metropolitan Vision is **motivated by**:

- the increasing importance and relevance of the metropolitan dimension in national and European development and policy-making;
- acknowledgement of potentials and opportunities in realizing the benefits and advantages arising from metropolitan cooperation, planning, and governance;
- needs of metropolitan areas to enhance their institutional capabilities, enabling effective cooperation and governance for the timely and efficient delivery of public services.

The Common Metropolitan Vision comprises **three integral components**:

- **Vision for Metropolitan Areas:** Paints a comprehensive picture of a future state for metropolitan areas, societies, and governance that is both aspirational and attainable.
- **Metropolitan Strengths and Commitments:** Spotlights the current and potential resources, capabilities, knowledge, and skills inherent in metropolitan societies, stakeholders, and leadership. These are harnessed to address major societal challenges, implement policy priorities, and achieve declared goals.
- **Metropolitan Empowerment:** Tackles organisational and procedural challenges, proposing viable solutions to overcome existing limitations in metropolitan cooperation and governance. The aim is to fortify the capacity, effectiveness, and efficiency of metropolitan policy-making.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of the **challenges and opportunities** faced by **Metropolitan Areas (MAs)** in **Central Europe** illuminated the **fragmented recognition of the metropolitan dimension** within EU and international documents and emphasised the pressing **need for a more cohesive approach**. Central European Metropolitan Areas (MAs) contend with **shared thematic challenges**, including **climate change, energy supply, sustainable mobility, population dynamics, suburbanization, and urban sprawl**, though these challenges manifest with regional variations. **Procedural challenges**, such as **administrative fragmentation and the absence of formal planning tools**, persist across MAs but assume distinctive forms based on their level of experience with metropolitan cooperation. **Opportunities** to fortify the metropolitan dimension hinge on

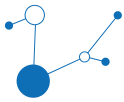


favourable EU instruments, the cultivation of metropolitan cooperation, engagement in networks and knowledge-sharing initiatives, and the promotion of best practices.

The formation of the metropolitan level and its recognition in the state's territorial organisation is still an ongoing process in Central European countries. This process is at a relatively early stage in Poland and Czechia but not linear and far from the well-advanced stage in Germany and Italy. The influence of metropolitan areas on the state's central authority is still insignificant compared to the role these areas play in society and the economy. Despite the different levels of metropolitan governance systems development and empowerment of partner metropolitan areas, initiatives and projects are being developed in each of them aimed at deepening cooperation among municipalities and defining a common metropolitan interest as a guarantee of sustainable development of the area. It turns out that Polish and Czech metropolitan areas, despite lower levels of institutionalisation, have tools and good practices of high added value to offer to Italian and German metropolitan areas. Paradoxically, a lower level of formalisation can be conducive to innovative, "soft" forms of cooperation that may enrich the experiences of more institutionalised metropolitan areas focused on "hard" infrastructure projects. Polish and Czech metropolitan areas can actively shape their institutionalisation process by observing the trajectories of institutionalisation of Italian and German metropolitan areas, learning from their successes and mistakes, and enlarging their capacities for conducting high-scale and far-reaching metropolitan projects.

The joint work in the WP1: Analysis of metropolitan dimension was reflected in the Common Metropolitan Vision. The document "We are the Metropolitan Areas - Our Common Metropolitan Vision" outlines a framework for a long-term, shared, and enduring commitment of metropolitan leaders, stakeholders, and actors. It comprises three integral components. Vision for Metropolitan Areas paints a comprehensive picture of a future state for metropolitan areas, societies, and governance that is both aspirational and attainable. Metropolitan Strengths and Commitments spotlight the current and potential resources, capabilities, knowledge, and skills inherent in metropolitan societies, stakeholders, and leadership. These are harnessed to address major societal challenges, implement policy priorities, and achieve declared goals. Metropolitan Empowerment tackles organisational and procedural challenges, proposing viable solutions to overcome existing limitations in metropolitan cooperation and governance. The aim is to fortify the capacity, effectiveness, and efficiency of metropolitan policy-making. The key objectives of this advocacy policy document are to advance the development of metropolitan societies and their areas; maximize the positive impacts that metropolitan areas currently have and can potentially contribute to the overall prosperity and quality of life in Europe, its member states, and regions; continuously strengthen and develop the institutionalization of metropolitan governance, emphasising the pivotal role of the metropolitan dimension in European and national policies.

The exchange of knowledge during the accomplishment of WP1: Analysis of metropolitan dimension, its deliverables and outputs fostered mutual understanding and cooperation between MECOG-CE partners, who aspire to propel Central European MAs toward becoming thriving hubs of metropolitan development.



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