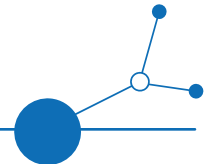




# REPORTS ON STUDY CLUSTER OUTCOMES

## Deliverable 2.2.2



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This document was elaborated within the project **MECOG-CE: Strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance in Central Europe** and is part of the WP2: Capacity building towards pilot actions and new solutions, Activity 2.2. Joint development of pilot actions.

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## A. Introduction

Study clusters represent a real opportunity for the project and associated partners to gather insights about the **best practices that have been proven successful** in metropolitan areas. These clusters are small thematic groups of several partners involved in the mutual learning on one or more tools/practices for strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance. They served not only for **thorough learning** but also for the **mutual exchange of knowledge and expertise**. All five study clusters were crucial parts of the MECOG-CE project and transnational cooperation enabled partners to broaden their horizons mainly on metropolitan cooperation and governance.

Deliverable 2.2.2 called “**Reports on study clusters outcomes**” gathers the sub-reports of all five study clusters into one document. Its goal is to provide an overview of study clusters’ outcomes, reflecting the pros and cons of the studied tools regarding their prospects for implementation, management, and transferability. Each sub-report was prepared by the members of each cluster and was sent to the Work Package 2 (WP 2) leader to complete the deliverable.

This document is based on the previous work within Work Packages 1 and 2. It included analysing existing best practices, selecting them, and subsequent formation of five study clusters. Furthermore, partners also set up initial work and time plans for each cluster, which guided them throughout each phase of work. This deliverable marks another step within this work package, which has been a crucial component of the entire project.

The work within the study clusters contributed to the fulfilment of the **Common Metropolitan Vision** thanks to the several steps achieved not only during the in-depth learning but also within the next steps related to pilot actions and new solutions. Moreover, studied best practices target some of the **identified challenges and opportunities** for metropolitan areas in Central Europe. These efforts are guided by the overarching goal “to establish sustainable and resilient metropolitan areas committed to societal leadership and social responsibilities”, as stated in the Common Metropolitan Vision.

The deliverable includes three main parts. The first one is **methodology** which explains the process of functioning of the clusters and the creation of the document itself. This part describes several steps that led to the creation of a sub-report of each cluster and the guidance provided by the Work Package 2 leader, the City of Brno. The methodology also includes an explanation of the objectives and the core of work within the established clusters.

The second part gathers all collected sub-reports on the **outcomes of each of the five study clusters**. This is an essential part of the deliverable. Each sub-report is described in separate sub-chapters and includes the information provided by the members of clusters that were responsible for its development. Therefore, each sub-report has the same structure, making them comparable.

The conclusion, as the third main part, contains the summary of all sub-reports and outlines the next steps. The conclusion summarizes the role and outcomes of the study clusters within the project. It highlights how they facilitated learning about best practices, enabled transnational cooperation, and provided critical evaluations of tools for metropolitan governance. The findings



contributed to the development of pilot actions aimed at improving these practices. The report on them serves as Deliverable 2.2.3 “**Report on pilot actions.**”



## B. Methodology

This deliverable was created by the Work Package 2 leader, the City of Brno, in cooperation with members of each cluster, mainly the lighthouse metropolitan areas which were responsible for the creation of each sub-report. The methodology provides a detailed **description of the process of the functioning of the clusters which led to the outcomes of the learning phase** within the MECOG-CE project.

The study clusters within the MECOG-CE project were **crucial for the further advancement** of the project and its overall success. Firstly, they **aimed to delve into the selected best tools and practices**, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of their applications within the Central European (CE) context. **Through collaboration and in-depth learning**, the clusters fostered a rich environment for knowledge exchange and exploration, enabling participants to gain valuable insights and perspectives. Moreover, the clusters provided a platform to **test the transferability** of these practices, assessing their feasibility in respective metropolitan areas and regions. This process included adapting the practices to **suit the specific conditions and challenges** prevalent in CE, ensuring their relevance and applicability.

Each study cluster was led by the lighthouse metropolitan area which has the **most developed best practice/tool** chosen. In each cluster, there were **pilot action** metropolitan areas that played a pivotal role within the clusters, **guided by the expertise and insights** of the lighthouse metropolitan area, and they tested the transferability of selected studied tool in their area. Other members of the study clusters included metropolitan areas (followers) that would like to **learn more about the chosen best tools/practices** and possibly transfer them to their metropolitan area in the future. Universities and Metropolitan Research Institute provided their expert insights on the tools and practices studied in the cluster.

Central to the functioning of the study clusters was a series of activities designed to **facilitate the engagement and collaboration** of project partners involved. These included **online and on-site meetings** between lighthouse metropolitan areas, followers and pilot action metropolitan areas, and other relevant stakeholders (non-metropolitan partners), fostering **ongoing dialogue and exchange of ideas** on several cluster topics, i.e. on selected tools or pilot actions. Clusters also allowed to evaluate the studied tools by followers in terms of their pros and cons in the elements of the **implementation, management, and transferability**.

The deliverable is based on the previous work within the WP 1 and WP 2. At first, partners provided 76 best practices developed in their metropolitan areas and they were analysed by the University of Silesia and described in Deliverable 1.2.1 “**Report on metropolitan governance systems and existing tools/best practices at partner metropolitan areas for enhancing metropolitan cooperation**” and the Deliverable 1.2.2 “**Analysis of best practice outside partners’ regions**”. Then, each metropolitan partner selected five tools that were most interesting and beneficial for them for the next phases of the project. This selection and its process was described in Deliverable 2.1.1 “**Summary of the selected key tools and practices by each partner.**” On this basis, partners formed five study clusters which were focused on eight tools that were most desired. The formation was thoroughly described in Deliverable 2.1.2 “**Forming the study clusters and their**



**methodology.**” Then, each formed cluster set up initial work and time plan which guided partners throughout each phase of work within the cluster. All these plans were part of Deliverable 2.2.1 “**Initial work set-up and time plan of the study clusters**”.

Moreover, the mentioned best practices address some of the identified challenges for metropolitan areas in Central Europe described in Deliverable 1.1.1 “**Identification of challenges specific for Central European metropolitan areas**”. These include, for example, sustainable mobility, climate change, fragmented administrative structure, or lack of competencies and instruments for planning on the metropolitan dimension. Thanks to the positive impact of the best practices on metropolitan cooperation and governance stated in each sub-report, they contributed to the fulfilment of the **Common Metropolitan Vision** and its several parts, showing the metropolitan strengths. The work within the clusters itself also represented an important step in fulfilling this vision through metropolitan empowerment.

The City of Brno as the WP 2 leader provided guidance to all clusters and its members. This also included the development and provision of the **template for study cluster outcomes for partners** which was shared with partners on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2024. The template provided required information on the study cluster outcomes with concrete descriptions guiding the project partners. The template focused on describing the main points about the studied tools and knowledge obtained, how the tool is strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance, the evaluation of studied tools by partners, or the functioning of the cluster with reflection of the work and time plan. The template also included the part which required the summary of the whole work within each cluster. All required information and descriptions for partners were available in the provided form (see [Annex 1](#)).

It was emphasized by the WP 2 leader that the lighthouse metropolitan area of each cluster would be responsible for the completion of the template, but also that the consensus on the template information should be reached among members of the cluster. Partners were encouraged to complete the template by **15<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at the latest** and submit it to the lead partner. The WP 2 leader then commented on the provided templates and suggested improvements related mainly to the main outcomes of each cluster and their description. These improvements were incorporated by the partners and finalised forms were gathered in the project SharePoint in the second half of November 2024. On their basis, the WP 2 leader developed the deliverable as the completed templates represent its major part.

This methodological approach was fundamental to achieving the overarching goals of capacity building, pilot action execution, and development of new solutions in the MECOG-CE project.



## C. Outcomes of each study cluster

Partners within each study cluster gathered insights about the **best practices that have proven successful** in metropolitan areas. Thanks to the **thorough learning and mutual exchange of knowledge and views**, they were able to elaborate on the main outcomes of each cluster and evaluate the existing tools in terms of their implementation, management, and transferability.

The following sub-chapters represent each study cluster formed within the project, namely:

- **Engagement of metropolitan stakeholders in the agri-food sector through Food Districts,**
- **Metropolitan Prototyping Academies - innovative cooperation and transferability locally and internationally,**
- **Semi-structures and dialogues for improvement of metropolitan cooperation,**
- **Strengthening Metropolitan Governance through Integrated Public Transport Management,**
- **Strengthening metropolitan institutionalization through developing joint opinions supporting informal and dialogical planning processes.**

Partners within each study cluster completed the template created by the WP 2 leader, the City of Brno, and all information provided by the partners in these templates form each sub-chapter. The required information includes:

- initial information about the cluster and studied tools,
- functioning of the study cluster with meetings and methods of work,
- main points about the tools and the knowledge obtained,
- impact of the tools on strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance,
- evaluation of the selected existing tools by the members of the cluster,
- reflection of initial work set-up and time plan,
- main outcomes of the work of the study cluster.

### 1. Engagement of metropolitan stakeholders in the agri-food sector through Food Districts

#### Initial information about the cluster

Members of the cluster	<p>The Study Cluster (SC) concerning the “Engagement of metropolitan stakeholders in the agri-food sector through Food Districts” involves 5 partner Metropolitan Areas (MAs) and 2 associated MAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the Metropolitan City of Turin (CMT0);</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the City of Brno;</li> <li>▪ the City of Ostrava;</li> <li>▪ the Stuttgart Region Association;</li> <li>▪ the GZM Metropolis;</li> <li>▪ the Metropolitan City of Milan.</li> </ul> <p>The Metropolitan City of Turin acts as the “lighthouse Metropolitan Area” leading the Study Cluster, whereas the City of Brno, the City of Ostrava, the Stuttgart Region Association, the GZM Metropolis, and the Metropolitan City of Milan participate in the SC as “follower” or “learning” MAs. The City of Brno is the MA responsible for the development and execution of a pilot action, with due guidance by the leading MA.</p> <p>The Charles University, the University of Silesia in Katowice, and the Metropolitan Research Institute, as well as other associated partners interested in the Good Practice (GP) (e.g. Metrex), were invited to take part in the activities of the cluster and to contribute to the development of the PA, though not formally being members of the SC.</p>
Selected tool(s) studied within the cluster	The cluster revolved around the tool represented by the Italian Food Districts. Exchange and learning activities were specifically focused on Food Districts operating in the metropolitan area of Turin. More precisely, the Metropolitan City of Turin shared with members of the cluster its experience in promoting the establishment of the Canavese Food District and in accompanying it on its path towards formal recognition.

## Functioning of the study cluster

Study visits/meetings	<p>From March to November 2024, members of the cluster met five times, twice in person (one study visit) and three times via online meetings. Meetings were held on a bi-monthly basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First online meeting (25<sup>th</sup> March 2024): the meeting was dedicated to better illustrating the tool at the heart of the study cluster and presenting the initial work set-up and time plan of the cluster.</li> <li>▪ Site Visit (29<sup>th</sup> May 2024): on the 29th of May, the Metropolitan City of Turin hosted members (and some non-members) of the cluster for a study visit aimed at allowing them to experience first-hand what establishing a Food District entails, by exchanging information with those operating in the Rural and Mountain Development Directorate of the Metropolitan City of Turin who</li> </ul>
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	<p>are directly engaged in promoting the development of cooperative networks among metropolitan agri-food stakeholders for the establishment of Food Districts. Key stakeholders were invited, such as the main representatives of the Food District operating in the Canavese area (Distretto del Cibo del Canavese). The in-person study visit offered those participating the opportunity for a fruitful face-to-face exchange of experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Second online meeting (25<sup>th</sup> of July): during the 2<sup>nd</sup> online meeting, the finalized pilot action proposal of the City of Brno was discussed, along with a series of questions concerning the tool. Brno also illustrated the progress achieved in the first phases of developing the PA and shared the most pressing challenges.</li><li>■ Transnational partners meeting in Ostrava (Sept. 2024): at the meeting, the City of Brno illustrated the progress achieved in the development and implementation of its pilot action, whereas the lighthouse MA described the work that had been carried out by the cluster from March to September and its first outcomes.</li><li>■ Third online meeting (30<sup>th</sup> October): on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October, the last cluster meeting took place. Having completed a major part of its pilot action, the City of Brno presented the outcomes of the part of the “Analysis of the potential for food cooperation at the level of the Brno Metropolitan Area” focusing on proposals for possible steps towards the establishment of a food governance network, including a SWOT analysis. The meeting also offered members of the cluster the opportunity to further discuss the pros and cons of the tool with the lighthouse MA.</li></ul>
<p>Methods of work, cooperation and transfer/sharing of information</p>	<p>Besides online and in-person meetings, information was shared through the exchange of written questions (from the members of the cluster) and answers (from the Metropolitan City of Turin) and through the exchange of remarks on key documents such as the proposal for a pilot action focusing on the “Analysis of the potential for food cooperation at the level of the Brno Metropolitan Area” drafted by the City of Brno.</p> <p>Written questions were shared by the City of Brno with the lighthouse MA right after the first online meeting and then again after the Study Visit. The lighthouse MA provided written answers, but both questions and Brno’s PA proposal were also discussed during meetings of the cluster among all members.</p> <p>As far as the involvement of metropolitan stakeholders is concerned, local stakeholders forming part of the Canavese Food District were involved in the study visit held in May.</p>



## The main points and the knowledge obtained

<p>The core of the studied tool</p>	<p>Food Districts (FD) consist of partnerships between public and private actors (agricultural and agro-industrial enterprises, consortia for the protection of certified agri-food products, professional agricultural organisations, municipalities, metropolitan authorities, foundations, universities, and research institutions, etc.) operating in the context of a specific local production system that is characterized by a unique and homogeneous historical and territorial identity. The goal of Food Districts is to encourage the enhancement of agricultural and agri-food production and their profitability and sustainability. Food Districts also aim to preserve and promote rural landscapes and the heritage of agricultural areas and pursue environmental goals, such as the promotion of food security through the reduction of the environmental impact of production and food waste. All in all, Food Districts can act as promoters of the development and preservation of territorial agricultural systems. More generally, Food Districts represent a tool for the establishment of cooperative networks among stakeholders operating in selected agri-food production chains having a local, metropolitan, regional, or interregional reach. Finally (and most importantly), Food Districts serve as a tool for strengthening metropolitan governance concerning food and agricultural policies.</p>
<p>Knowledge transferred and obtained</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The legal framework: legal provisions concerning the goals of FDs and the conditions and steps for their recognition set out in national and regional law.</li> <li>■ The building blocks of a Food District: the District Agreement and the District Plan.</li> <li>■ The governance system of Food Districts.</li> <li>■ Finances: minimal requirements to set up a FD.</li> <li>■ Lessons learnt from noteworthy Italian FDs, such as the “Southern Tuscany” Food District, the Distretto Rurale Milanese (DAM - Milan Rural District) or the “Piacenza cured meats” Food District.</li> <li>■ The role of the Metropolitan City of Turin as a promoting institution and fundraiser for the recognition of two FDs operating in the metropolitan area of Turin.</li> <li>■ How to engage local stakeholders in order to set up a FD: the experience of the Metropolitan City of Turin in the involvement of relevant local stakeholders (from the spring-summer of 2022 to the spring of 2023) with the aim of setting up the Canavese Food District.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Actions envisaged in the Canavese Food District: the three-year District plan and the District's goals.</li> </ul>
<p>Interesting points and facts</p>	<p>The study visit organized in May provided all participants with the opportunity to learn from representatives of the Metropolitan City of Turin directly involved in the promotion of Food Districts, as well as from a few of the stakeholders from the Canavese Food District (namely, a representative of CAPAC, the Agricultural Consortium for Agro-supplies and Cereals, the President of the Caluso irrigation canal Consortium and the Peila mill). During the visit, when asked about the key ingredients for setting up a District and ensuring its effectiveness and longevity, speakers emphasized the importance of mutual trust, to be built through the establishment of informal (as well as formal) ties and relationships among actors and by ensuring open and continuous communication. The Metropolitan City of Turin also underlined the importance of reaching out to local stakeholders and engaging with them in the areas where they operate: making the effort to physically reach stakeholders and to work with them on the ground, instead of letting them reach out to the metropolitan authority and gather in the urban centre at the heart of the metropolitan area, might prove crucial in the process towards the establishment of a well-functioning and truly effective District, by laying the foundations for actual trust among actors. This also helps ensure that Food Districts are not just a tool for a more participative governance of food and agricultural policies, but also for promoting territorial cohesion.</p>
<p>Materials and documents shared</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The District Agreement of the Canavese Food District</li> <li>▪ The Canavese Food District's three-year District plan</li> </ul>

## Strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance

<p>Impact on metropolitan cooperation and governance</p>	<p>Food Districts can be thought of as tools for the establishment of cooperative relationships among agri-food stakeholders and the metropolitan authority and for the promotion of a more participated and effective governance of agri-food policies at the metropolitan level.</p> <p>The establishment of solid and effective relationships between the metropolitan urban centre and its rural hinterland is crucial for the functioning of Food Districts. Therefore, FDs can help re-define the relationships between “urban” and “rural” and promote a strengthening of the participation of the rural hinterland in metropolitan matters, resulting in more effective governance of metropolitan areas, especially those in which a strong dichotomy</p>
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	<p>between the urban centre and its agricultural hinterland can be observed. Important aspect of cooperation is its bottom-up approach. Even though the FDs have legal framework, their establishment depends on strong interest of metropolitan stakeholders. They are at the beginning of the establishment process in the territory and set up their relations in the district documents. Furthermore, metropolitan stakeholders participate in FDs because they are aware of its benefits, e.g. the adaptation to climate change is beneficial for all sectors thanks to the protection of environment or preventing losses for farmers caused by drought.</p> <p>Finally, as well for their cooperative features, FDs can positively impact metropolitan areas by promoting local production, distribution and consumption and their sustainable development (environmentally as well as from an economic and social point of view).</p>
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### Evaluation of the selected existing tool/best practice

<p>Implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>+ The implementation of this tool allows the metropolitan authority to engage with several metropolitan stakeholders representing different sectors (public, private, academic, and non-profit).</li><li>+ The tool enables metropolitan areas to connect with these stakeholders while acting as the coordinator of cooperation among members of the Food District.</li><li>+ This tool enhances local food production, the local economy and can promote employment, for example by fostering investments and innovation in the agri-food sector, promoting local agri-businesses and their products and supporting short supply chains. It can also promote sustainable tourism.</li><li>+ Food Districts also focus on climate change adaptation and the preservation of the environment, as the degradation of the natural environment threatens the agri-food sector. One of the aims of Food Districts is consequently to slow down/reverse this process.</li><li>+ The tool is in line with the Farm to Fork Strategy at the heart of the European Green Deal, aiming to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally friendly.</li><li>+ Establishing a Food District entails analysing the territory where the District would operate, assessing its productive specializations and drafting an action plan guiding collaboration among stakeholders. This process might be helpful for purposes beyond the formation of a Food District.</li><li>+ For MAs in which no cooperation on food and agricultural policies is present, the introduction of the tool provides the opportunity to</li></ul>
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	<p>establish new forms of dialogue on the topic and to start addressing it at the metropolitan level.</p> <p>+/- Food Districts are a relatively new tool and their implementation has only just started in the metropolitan area of Turin. Therefore, it is too early to evaluate whether the goals set in the District plans have actually been achieved or are on track to being achieved as well as to assess the effectiveness of the tool in reaching these goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The implementation of the tool is voluntary, but FDs are precisely disciplined in national and regional law.</li> <li>- Members of FDs are required to pay a membership fee. Though small, it can hinder the establishment of a district.</li> <li>- Food Districts rely on funding from the national level; therefore, their functioning (and survival) might depend on decisions made centrally, by the national government.</li> <li>- The successful implementation of Food Districts requires an active involvement of local stakeholders. If they are not willing to cooperate (especially private actors), establishing the District might prove impossible or the District might be ineffective and insufficient to face the challenges that the tool is meant to tackle.</li> <li>- A lack of monitoring seems to characterize the tool. The Food Districts operating in the metropolitan area of Turin are of recent establishment, but monitoring is not foreseen by District Plans. The absence of a monitoring set-up makes it impossible to evaluate whether Districts achieve the goals set in the District Plan and to measure their positive impacts.</li> </ul>
<p>Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Food Districts have a formal management structure (each District has its District Agreement, Assembly and Plan). This ensures a clear attribution of responsibilities and tasks among members of the District.</li> <li>+ Though operating according to formally established norms, informal relationships between stakeholders are key in the context of Food Districts. They build the foundations on which Districts can be structured formally. Informal relationships can indeed help build trust among actors, which is key in the structuring phase of the District.</li> <li>+ Managing Food Districts does not require extensive personnel or financial resources at the metropolitan level.</li> <li>+/- Since external funding is limited, activities must be prioritized based on the most urgent needs at a certain time. Not all that is foreseen by the District Plan can be implemented at the same time.</li> <li>- The establishment of a formal management structure takes time (the District agreement has to be signed, the assembly needs to be established and the District Plan approved).</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The demand side (e.g. public canteens which might be interested in buying local products coming from producers adhering to a Food District) is not involved in cooperation.</li> <li>- For goals to be reached, and given the complexity of the tool, ensuring funding is crucial. Dedicated funding might not be provided for in other MAs.</li> <li>- The daily management of the functioning of the Food District can be ensured by one person working at the metropolitan level.</li> <li>- The instrument can be applied within the limited scope of the city's competencies - e.g. it is not possible to force the private sector to get their supplies from local producers.</li> </ul>
Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The overall goal of FDs (supporting local production, preserving the environment and promoting adaptation to climate change) is in line with European strategies and can be positively transferred through various means. The protection of the environment and climate change adaptation are among the most current and pressing challenges, which need to be addressed at various government levels, including the metropolitan one.</li> <li>+ The tool is flexible in terms of production focus, i.e. a Food District can focus on cereals, wine, meat, a combination of these, or other products.</li> <li>+ The goals of each District and how to pursue them are also up for discussion among members of each district.</li> <li>+ For the kind of informal metropolitan cooperation that FDs entail to be transferred into other contexts, the establishment of a country-specific formal/legal framework is not needed.</li> <li>+ The role of the Metropolitan City of Turin as a coordinator and promoter of the Canavese Food District can be of inspiration for other MAs, which could also act as such in their territory.</li> <li>+/- This tool can be best transferred in areas where agricultural production is strong and practised by many, meaning there are various stakeholders that could be interested in becoming members of a Food District. In industrial MAs with a relatively small number of agricultural enterprises, the implementation of this tool could also be possible, but on a smaller scale.</li> <li>- In Italy, the tool is shaped by national legislation. A national legal framework might not be provided for in other areas.</li> <li>- The tool also depends on national subsidies. This hinders its transferability since national funding might not be available in other contexts.</li> <li>- More generally, the tool is shaped by the legal set-up of the country in which it was developed. Food Districts might be structured and funded differently in other contexts.</li> </ul>





## Reflection of the work of the study cluster

The reflection of the initial work set-up and time plan	In the period running from March to November 2024, activities have been carried out in line with the initial time plan. The only deviation concerning the “Initial work set-up and time plan” of the District has concerned the scheduling of meetings, which have taken place on a bimonthly rather than a monthly basis, to allow for activities to advance more between meetings. Collaboration has been positive among members of the cluster and the MA in charge of the Pilot Action (the City of Brno) has shown great interest in the Good Practice and timeliness in the development of the PA. Academic associated partners took part in some online meetings and Metrex participated in the study visit, also contributing by publicizing it and the project through their social media accounts.
Problems and deviations	Cluster activities were carried out without any actual problems arising. The only observed deviation has concerned the scheduling of meetings (see above).

## Main outcomes

The main outcomes of the work of the study cluster	<p>The work that was carried out in the <b>“Engagement of metropolitan stakeholders in the agri-food sector through Food Districts”</b> Study Cluster has allowed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ to thoroughly examine Food Districts, a tool for the establishment of cooperative networks among stakeholders operating in selected agri-food production chains having a local, metropolitan, regional or interregional reach: how Districts work in Italy, what their goals are, what is needed to set one up, how they are funded and managed, what role Metropolitan Cities can play in them, how the Metropolitan City of Turin promoted the establishment of a Food District in the metropolitan area surrounding Turin and how it engaged local stakeholders;</li><li>■ to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the tool concerning implementation, management and transferability. Overall, the tool was given a positive evaluation by cluster members, especially concerning its potential as a tool for the improvement and strengthening of metropolitan cooperation and governance, though recognizing some significant shortcomings (e.g. FDs are disciplined by national and regional law, which provide a legal framework that cannot be given for granted when evaluating the possibility of transferring the tool into other contexts);</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ based on its shortcomings, which were collaboratively identified by members of the cluster, to start imagining possible ways by which to improve the instrument, for example by increasing its transferability, and possible further topics for metropolitan cooperation on food and agricultural policies;</li> <li>▪ to co-design and then implement a pilot action (“Analysis of the potential for food cooperation at the level of the Brno Metropolitan Area”) through which the City of Brno was able to start engaging local stakeholders from the agri-food sector on the topic of metropolitan cooperation in the field of food and agricultural policies and to carry out a detailed analysis of the metropolitan area surrounding Brno, of its productive specializations and of the consequent potential for cooperation on food and agricultural production in Brno’s metropolitan area;</li> <li>▪ to fruitfully exchange experiences among members of the cluster and to effectively cooperate towards the goal of promoting stronger and more efficient metropolitan governance in Central European metropolitan areas.</li> </ul>
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## 2. Metropolitan Prototyping Academies - innovative cooperation and transferability locally and internationally

### Initial information about the cluster

Members of the cluster	<p>The Study Cluster (SC) “<b>Metropolitan Prototyping Academies - innovative cooperation and transferability locally and internationally</b>” is created by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Metropolia GZM (Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia)</b> - lighthouse metropolitan area</li> <li>- <b>Stuttgart Region Association</b> - learning MA and executor of pilot action,</li> <li>- <b>City of Ostrava</b> - learning MA and executor of pilot action,</li> <li>- <b>Metropolitan City of Turin</b> - observer,</li> <li>- <b>Charles University, University of Silesia in Katowice and Metropolitan Research Institute</b> - expert role.</li> </ul> <p>The City of Brno, as the MECOG-CE project’s lead partner, provided extensive support and guidance to the lighthouse MA.</p>
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<p>Selected tool(s) studied within the cluster</p>	<p>This study cluster relates to the Metropolitan Prototyping Academies, which are a collaborative tool focused on hands-on, project-based learning in urban innovation and on the development of innovative solutions for urban environments, as practised in various cities. Prototyping is defined as the process of creating prototypes concerning urban space, prototyping means jointly developing solutions, testing them in the urban environment and evaluating them with a focus on their transferability. Prototyping in Metropolitan Prototyping Academies means connecting different actors, citizen groups, and stakeholders, and involving them in solution-oriented participatory activities.</p>
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## Functioning of the study cluster

<p>Study visits/meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <b>4<sup>th</sup> April 2024</b> - 1st online meeting (4th April) - detailed description/explanation of the methodology of Metropolitan Prototyping Academies and its stages; initial thoughts and needs in Pilot Action territories;</li><li>■ <b>9<sup>th</sup> May 2024</b> - Study visit in Katowice, a city located in the GZM area<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Participation of the City of Ostrava, the Stuttgart Region Association;</li><li>□ Presentations on best practices (Radzionków, Dąbrowa Górnicza, Tychy);</li><li>□ Study tour around the campus of the Silesian University in Katowice, as an example of a Prototyping Academy solution;</li></ul></li><li>■ <b>11<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> September 2024</b> - monitoring the advancement in the execution of the pilot action during the MECOG-CE transnational meeting in Ostrava, presentations of the lighthouse partner Metropolis GZM and by both piloting partners, the Stuttgart Region Association and the City of Ostrava;</li><li>■ <b>1<sup>st</sup> October 2024</b> - online meeting with PA's expert, Michał Lorbiecki. Michał Lorbiecki had participated in the Prototyping Academy in Tychy, related to the refurbishment of parking spaces. The expert held an open discussion with two Pilot Action MAs, listened to their reflections on Prototyping Academies, and discussed the obstacles and advantages of the tool. The discussion was honest and productive - the expert touched upon each</li></ul>
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	<p>experience within the Prototyping Academy held by Tychy, not only the good aspects but also the mistakes made in the process.</p>
<p>Methods of work, cooperation and transfer/sharing of information</p>	<p>During the work of the cluster, the partners transferred and shared the information by several means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ an onsite study visit, to thoroughly describe and discuss studied tools;</li> <li>▪ a workshop with experts already involved in the Metropolitan Prototyping Academies;</li> <li>▪ an online peer-review meeting with an expert;</li> <li>▪ direct Q&amp;A sessions during the online meetings, the workshop and the on-site visit;</li> <li>▪ delivering study material to the partners/cluster members (fiches with good practices);</li> <li>▪ presentations;</li> <li>▪ raising questions and comments during the meetings and the study visit;</li> <li>▪ evaluation of the studied tools by providing pros and cons in written form via e-mails;</li> </ul> <p>All these ways of communication and feedback techniques ensured a cooperative approach to work within the cluster including all study cluster members. At all times, GZM provided online support if necessary. Furthermore, different experts from GZM municipalities have been involved during the learning phase of the cluster.</p>

## The main points and the knowledge obtained

<p>The core of the studied tool</p>	<p>The Metropolitan Prototyping Academies bring together representatives of metropolitan institutions, different municipalities, communes, experts, academics, local communities and other project stakeholders to collaboratively design and test solutions to metropolitan challenges such as urban mobility, sustainable infrastructure, and public realm development. Participants typically engage in real-world projects, often using digital fabrication tools and human-centred design principles to develop functional prototypes to improve urban life. The goal is to develop skills in technology, design, and civic engagement while addressing pressing needs in urban environments.</p>
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<p>Knowledge transferred and obtained</p>	<p>The learning MAs have thoroughly learned about the methodology of Metropolitan Prototyping Academies. The following information was shared by GZM experts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ the aims of the tool,</li><li>▪ the possible fields of application,</li><li>▪ the different steps of the process,</li><li>▪ the stakeholders to be involved,</li><li>▪ the challenges and opportunities related to the tool of Metropolitan Prototyping Academies.</li></ul> <p>The pros and cons of this tool have been jointly evaluated by the study cluster members on the basis of the information provided.</p>
<p>Interesting points and facts</p>	<p>The Metropolitan Prototyping Academies are part of an innovative approach, in this particular form developed and applied in the Górnśląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia (GZM) area in Poland. These Academies aim to foster collaboration between municipalities to design and test solutions for public space challenges in urban areas, particularly with low-cost and adaptable prototypes. The emphasis is on creating models that are resource-efficient and easy to replicate across metropolitan regions, making it accessible for municipalities with limited budgets to implement effective changes.</p> <p>The Academies are suitable to initiate multiple “study clusters” to exchange best practices across Europe, between cities and metropolitan areas. By focusing on topics like transport, sustainable urban planning, and public engagement, the Academies help metropolitan areas to work together, ensuring that solutions are not only effective but also tailored to local needs. In the past, these collaborations have generated actionable insights on managing urban greenery and have led to pilot projects like the Good Quality Neighborhood Project in Radzionków, emphasizing sustainable urban design through direct community involvement.</p>
<p>Materials and documents shared</p>	<p>The knowledge has mainly been shared by presenting different examples of Metropolitan Prototyping Academies that have been realised in the GZM area. The information was shared via presentations in online sessions as well as on-site during the study visit in Katowice in May 2024.</p>



## Strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance

<p>Impact on metropolitan cooperation and governance</p>	<p>A prototype is developed for one typical challenging situation in the metropolitan area (MA). The results can be transferred to similar situations within the metropolitan area and serve as an example for solving the particular challenge.</p> <p>Experiences from other municipalities in the MA, which face similar situations, are valuable input in the prototyping process. It is worth identifying interested partners within the MA, using their interest, to involve them from the very beginning, to evaluate and to use their experiences from similar problem settings.</p> <p>A common metropolitan identity can be strengthened by jointly developing the prototyped solution, and metropolitan cooperation across the administrative borders of single municipalities can be built on the firm foundations of common teamwork.</p>
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## Evaluation of the selected existing tool/best practice

<p>Implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>+ The tool allows a structured form of consultation and engagement of representatives of metropolitan institutions, different municipalities, communes, experts, academics, local communities and other project stakeholders at the same time.</li><li>+ Having been introduced to various challenges and times, the tool has been well-tested. It is not the purpose to always create a material result, the added value consists in the process of cooperation and participation.</li><li>+ The cooperation is aimed at several topics, which are important for its members. Therefore, its focus can be very flexible, and members can set their own topics.</li><li>+ The Metropolitan Prototyping Academies (MPA) allow extensive exchange of experience and knowledge between the members, on every level of cooperation.</li><li>+ The members of each Academy collectively decide on the topics and goals, as well as the final version of the project outcomes.</li><li>+ The MPA use a bottom-up approach and are built on trust between the members, which strengthens their relations.</li><li>+ The experimental nature means that small, concrete measures can be implemented. This is often the beginning of larger processes: “The main thing is to get started”.</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Measures can be very different and individual, e.g. investments or social measures.</li> <li>+ The tool inspires imagination and encourages creativity to develop new measures.</li> <li>+ The MPA involve critics. Their critical views and opinions are valuable input for the tested projects and developed solutions.</li> <li>+ Changes and amendments are possible both during the project and immediately after the project.</li> <li>+ The tool does not require high financial outlays.</li> <li>+/- The result may differ from the solution imagined at the outset, but the process will always be valuable.</li> <li>- The tool demands a lot of preparation and the building of a good and representative team.</li> </ul>
<p>Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The tool helps to identify positive effects and break up old structures/processes.</li> <li>+ It is a constant teamwork.</li> <li>+ It doesn't need a large budget.</li> <li>+/- It demands a facilitator, whose role is rather coordinating the process than managing it.</li> <li>+/- Decisions can change during the process if the circumstances turn different than expected.</li> <li>+/- The manager or leader of the Academy should take into consideration different opinions and different stakeholders' points of view.</li> <li>+/- The leaders and coordinators of the Metropolitan Prototyping Academy should pay attention to relations created at every stage of the process.</li> <li>- It may be difficult to define the topic precisely, to limit to solvable questions; and to find compromises.</li> <li>- This tool can be very time-consuming for the people involved in the project.</li> </ul>
<p>Transferability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The tool can be easily transferred as test measures are easily transferable to similar problem areas.</li> <li>+ MPA can be used in various areas like transport, sustainable urban planning, and public engagement, the academies help metropolitan</li> </ul>



	<p>areas work together, ensuring that solutions are not only effective but also tailored to local needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Dependence on the willingness of the stakeholders in the territory which can differ and can be difficult to involve them due to several reasons.</li><li>- Targets pre-defined by political strategies or by political decision-makers can eventually differ from the outcomes of participatory actions / from the MPA outcomes. The Prototyping tool is transferable mainly to those municipalities, where the local decision-makers support the tool and where they are open to accepting the uncertainty of the final outcomes.</li></ul>
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### Reflection of the work of the study cluster

<p>The reflection of the initial work setup and time plan</p>	<p>There have been no significant delays in the initial work set-up and time plan. The study cluster managed to meet and elaborate on particular points of the work set-up without obstacles, meaning that the results so far - gaining appropriate knowledge for further actions of partners, the possibility of comparing intentions and action plans with the experience of experts during the online meeting - have been achieved, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ April: delivering the final version of the Initial work set-up and time plan;</li><li>■ May: selection of a challenging issue to be solved through Metropolitan Prototyping Academies by Ostrava and Stuttgart partners;</li><li>■ November: submission of sub-report on study cluster outcomes by GZM to WP 2 leader.</li></ul> <p>There are also planned activities which are on the track to be achieved on time and in proper quality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ November: conclusion of the execution of pilot action, sub-report delivery to the WP leader (by the Stuttgart Region Association and the City of Ostrava).</li></ul> <p>Partners have been equally involved, responsive and open to the reported needs. The lighthouse partner provided support to its internal and external experts, while the implementing MAs developed their own implementation visions, offering feedback to the lighthouse partner, and giving new insights into the pros and cons of the tool, based on their so far experience.</p>
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Problems and deviations	No problems or deviations occurred during the learning phase of the cluster.
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## Main outcomes

The main outcomes of the work of the study cluster	<p>As far as the results of the study cluster on <b>Metropolitan Prototyping Academies</b> are concerned, the lighthouse MA transferred knowledge on its tool to two learning metropolitan areas, thus gaining dissemination of the tool and the possibility of receiving reflection on the tool from international partners. Partners had the opportunity to learn about this tool which focuses on the process of creating prototypes concerning urban space, as the prototyping means to jointly develop solutions, to test them in urban environments and to evaluate them with a focus on their transferability.</p> <p>This cooperative process with partners, in turn, translates to further improvement of the tool, by considering the conclusions, suggestions and feelings about it, received from international learning partners. For the lighthouse partner, all that serves as an additional and meaningful contribution to the inspection and improvement of the tool.</p> <p>The learning MAs have thoroughly learned about the methodology of Metropolitan Prototyping Academies and received information about the aims as well as the possible fields of tool application, the different steps of the process, and the stakeholders involved in the prototyping. Through that learning process, they had a chance to pre-design different steps of their own processes, to think about the stakeholders they would need to involve and to discuss their own challenges with the GZM expert. The learning MAs' ideas of their own Metropolitan Prototyping Academies could be discussed and received feedback during the online expert session, laying a strong basis for further steps. Therefore, the cooperation with partners was highly valuable during the learning phase and the functioning of the cluster represented an important step for the following phases.</p>
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### 3. Semi-structures and dialogues for improvement of metropolitan cooperation

#### Initial information about the cluster

Members of the cluster	<p><b>City of Brno</b> - main lighthouse metropolitan area (MA),</p> <p><b>Joint Spatial Planning Department (JSPD) Berlin-Brandenburg</b> - second lighthouse area,</p> <p><b>Metropolitan City of Turin</b> - learning MA and executor of pilot action,</p> <p><b>The City of Ostrava</b> - learning MA,</p> <p><b>Charles University, the University of Silesia in Katowice and the Metropolitan Research Institute</b> - expert role.</p>
Selected tools studied within the cluster	<p>This study cluster combines two best practices, as they both serve for a structured dialogue among stakeholders. These practices are:</p> <p><b>A Questionnaire among mayors of the Brno Metropolitan Area (BMA)</b> - this tool allows the gathering of opinions and views of mayors of municipalities in BMA through a detailed questionnaire which is focused on metropolitan topics and issues.</p> <p><b>Municipal Neighbourhood Forum (MNF)</b> - this tool represents a bottom-up institutionalized platform of Brandenburg cities, the City of Berlin and Berlin districts, which serves for communication and cooperation between them, focused on several metropolitan topics.</p>

#### Functioning of the study cluster

Study visits/meetings	<p>Within the cluster, there were four online meetings focused on both tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 11 March 2024 - Initial meeting on the Questionnaire: detailed information about it, agreement on initial work set-up and time plan.</li> <li>▪ 10 April 2024 - Initial meeting on the MNF: detailed information about it and further discussion on the initial work set-up and time plan.</li> <li>▪ 23 May 2024 - Second meeting on the Questionnaire: proposal of a pilot action, peer-review of the pilot action proposal by the cluster members, Q&amp;A session related to the tool.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 26 June 2024 - Third meeting on the Questionnaire: progress of the pilot action, further Q&amp;A session related to the tool.</li> </ul> <p>Transnational meeting in Ostrava (11-12 September 2024) - discussion about outcomes of the study cluster, the pilot action, and a possible new solution, derived from the piloting.</p> <p>Study visit related to the MNF, which provided thorough information about the tool on site and about topics, which are addressed by this platform. The study visit took place on 15-17 July 2024 and focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the processes and competencies of the MNF.</li> <li>▪ the project of strengthening city centres: discussions about the future roles of city centres and solutions for mixed-use developments. The town of Potsdam served as a case study.</li> <li>▪ axial development projects of the MNF: the north-east development axis, as an example of inducing commercial, demographical and scientific growth and initializing infrastructural development between Berlin's north-east city district (Pankow) and the neighbouring municipalities in Brandenburg (Wandlitz and others).</li> </ul>
<p>Methods of work, cooperation and transfer/sharing of information</p>	<p>During the work of the cluster, partners transferred and shared the information through several means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meetings and study visit to thoroughly describe and discuss the studied tools,</li> <li>▪ Delivering presentations with all necessary information about the tools,</li> <li>▪ Raising questions and comments during meetings and study visits,</li> <li>▪ Sharing documents and questions through the project SharePoint platform.</li> <li>▪ Evaluation of the studied tools conducted through an assessment, where the advantages and disadvantages were systematically documented in written form.</li> </ul> <p>These methods ensured a cooperative approach within the cluster, involving all study cluster members.</p> <p>Partners also involved staff and stakeholders, who are responsible for these tools and have more detailed knowledge about them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Questionnaire: As this tool was developed by the same team which manages the MECOG-CE project, the tool was presented in</li> </ul>



	<p>detail by the staff of the City of Brno, Department of ITI Management and Metropolitan Cooperation. This team also participated in subsequent discussions, providing more information about the context of the tool.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ MNF: Partners from the JSPD involved the managing office of the MNF (including its director), as the JSPD is one of the stakeholders involved in the platform, but not responsible for the MNF management. The MNF office provided thorough information about the tool and answered questions raised by the partners. During the study visit, members of the MNF Steering Committee, the JSPD, the City of Potsdam and the district of Pankow also participated and offered further insights into the cooperation in the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg.</li> </ul>
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## The main points and the knowledge obtained

<p>The core of the studied tools</p>	<p>Both tools represent a valuable platform for a structured dialogue among stakeholders within metropolitan areas. The stakeholders mainly include representatives of municipalities or city districts. The most important features of each tool are outlined below.</p> <p>Questionnaire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The main objective of this tool is to regularly identify thoughts/opinions, needs and problems of 183 municipalities in the metropolitan area.</li> <li>■ The mayors share their views on metropolitan cooperation which has been important for the City of Brno to gain a better understanding of their needs and to improve metropolitan planning and fostering stronger relationships with the mayors.</li> <li>■ The questions focus on the enhancement and institutionalization of metropolitan cooperation. For example, the representatives are asked to share their views on existing cooperation, the involvement of their municipalities in this cooperation, factors influencing the collaboration and priority areas for future metropolitan cooperation.</li> <li>■ The tool has proven effective due to a high response rate and the quality of the insights gathered. As a result, it has been repeated three times so far (in 2017, 2020 and 2023). The questionnaire was created in cooperation with Masaryk University and its results are also evaluated by academic experts.</li> </ul> <p>MNF:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ This tool represents an initiative of Brandenburg cities situated in the surroundings of Berlin, the City of Berlin and Berlin districts.</li> <li>■ It is a bottom-up association operating without legally binding instruments.</li> <li>■ It serves as a platform for cross-border communication and cooperation between local authorities and municipalities. The communication and cooperation focus on several topics which enhance mutual relations and contribute to joint solutions.</li> <li>■ The MNF was launched in 1996 and has been a registered association since 2020. As a registered association (“eingetragener Verein”), the MNF possesses legal subjectivity.</li> </ul>
<p>Knowledge transferred and obtained</p>	<p>Partners had the opportunity to thoroughly learn about both tools and the lighthouses responsible for each best practice provided the following necessary foundational information.</p> <p>Knowledge shared about the Questionnaire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The context of the tool and reason for the development of this tool in BMA.</li> <li>■ The process of preparing and administering the survey.</li> <li>■ The technical design and step-by-step deployment process of the tool.</li> <li>■ An overview of all questionnaires, including their results and comparisons.</li> <li>■ A detailed description of the latest questionnaire, including all 24 questions for mayors.</li> <li>■ Data processing, visualisation of the received answers and results through graphs and maps, dissemination of the results to mayors, stakeholders, experts and the public.</li> <li>■ Follow-up activities based on the questionnaire results, e.g. discussion with mayors and municipalities regarding their future development.</li> <li>■ Evaluation of the tool and lessons learned.</li> </ul> <p>Knowledge shared about the MNF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Members and participants involved in the MNF.</li> <li>■ MNF activities aimed at several topics, e.g. yearly occurring topics in a region characterized by demographic and economic growth and by suburbanization processes. Some activities were</li> </ul>



	<p>introduced in more detail, for example, “Inner Cities”, a topic of the year 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Organisational aspects of the MNF, its day-to-day functioning, and the use of financial resources for different activities.</li> <li>■ Self-declarations of mayors, which are not binding, but aimed at lobbying for different themes.</li> <li>■ Interim conclusions of the experience with the MNF.</li> <li>■ Success factors in cooperation and future tasks.</li> <li>■ Other organisations in the territory focusing on intermunicipal or territorial cooperation.</li> </ul>
<p>Interesting points and facts</p>	<p>Interesting points and facts related to the Questionnaire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The high response rate for all questionnaires (around 90 %) was largely due to the direct reminders sent to mayors through various channels because it was possible to track who had and had not completed it.</li> <li>■ Municipalities’ awareness of their affiliation to BMA has increased significantly (from 64% to 88%), as did their willingness to cooperate (from 75% to 91%).</li> <li>■ The results of the questionnaire are used for further discussions with mayors or for research purposes. Therefore, the mayors can see that their opinions are analysed and taken into account.</li> <li>■ The questionnaire is evolving to address new challenges, with each repetition reflecting current issues (e.g. climate change, energy self-sufficiency) based on the mayors’ responses.</li> </ul> <p>Interesting points and facts related to the MNF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The MNF structure ensures equality on all levels (communication, financing, or voting). Therefore, the MNF members have equal involvement and impact, regardless of their status (e.g. population, size).</li> <li>■ This structure also includes financing of projects by local funds, which benefit multiple municipalities.</li> <li>■ Due to the large number of municipal partners in Brandenburg, four sub-regions were formed. A few districts or municipalities contribute to two sub-regions.</li> <li>■ It can react flexibly to problems and challenges in its territory and create a sense of ownership and commitment among members; therefore, it supports sustainable cooperation.</li> </ul>



<p>Materials and documents shared</p>	<p>During the learning phase about the tools, the partners mainly shared presentations with other members of the cluster. The presentations included the above-mentioned information and were made available through internal folders on SharePoint. They also submitted written questions focused on these tools. Earlier, during Work Package 1, the City of Brno provided a link to the questionnaire on their <a href="#">website</a>. During and after the study visit in Berlin-Brandenburg, presentations on the discussed topics were shared. Multiple strategic and planning documents are also at public disposal on the MNF <a href="#">webpage</a>.</p>
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### Strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance

<p>Impact on metropolitan cooperation and governance</p>	<p>Both tools have a positive impact on metropolitan cooperation and governance. It means that they enhance the cooperation between stakeholders in the metropolitan areas, strengthen mutual relations and build trust in the territory as they serve as a place for structured dialogue between municipalities or city districts within a given metropolitan region or area.</p> <p>The impact of the Questionnaire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Mayors share their views on metropolitan cooperation and its future which shapes further activities in the territory.</li><li>■ All municipalities are involved and can directly share their opinion.</li><li>■ Strengthening metropolitan cooperation through structured dialogue ensures that each mayor has the same opportunity to provide a view on this topic. This fosters a more balanced decision-making.</li><li>■ The results serve as a base for further metropolitan cooperation and its institutionalization as the mayors indicate their opinion on the elaboration of metropolitan cooperation. It helps to build better strategies to improve the existing cooperation.</li><li>■ Follow-up work with mayors according to their inputs builds trust between the core city and the hinterland.</li></ul> <p>The impact of the MNF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The tool involves not only 46 local authorities and municipalities but also 16 associated partners from different sectors. This ensures a strong opportunity for them to cooperate.</li><li>■ This platform is driven by joint communal interests.</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ As the members face similar trends, joint development seems to be an appropriate strategy to enhance the whole region.</li> <li>▪ The MNF focuses on joint projects and solving current challenges.</li> <li>▪ It turned from an informal type of cooperation to a registered association. This encourages the municipalities in the hinterland to cooperate.</li> <li>▪ Berlin districts and Brandenburg municipalities are equal partners, there is no hierarchy.</li> <li>▪ This association promotes a polycentric approach to cooperation and a decentralized framework.</li> </ul> <p>After the learning phase, members of the cluster recognize both tools as enhancing metropolitan cooperation and governance in a given metropolitan region or area due to the above-mentioned impacts on these aspects. Both tools can be considered valuable examples of cooperation across administrative boundaries on key development topics and on facing crucial challenges connected to demographic shifts, economic growth and changing “gravitations” in urban landscapes.</p>
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### Evaluation of the selected existing tool/best practice

Implementation	<p>Evaluation of the Questionnaire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+/- The tool allows for a structured form of consultation and engagement of metropolitan mayors. However, it needs adaptation to be administered to other types of stakeholders.</li> <li>+ Having been administered multiple times, the tool has been well-tested.</li> <li>+ Effective follow-up by Brno (experienced in the elaboration of results and in the organization of activities to engage those who expressed negative opinions to foster better collaboration).</li> </ul> <p>Evaluation of the MNF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The implementation of the MNF as a tool not only enhances metropolitan cooperation and communication between the core city and its hinterland but also involves the city districts of Berlin in the process.</li> <li>+ This tool is beneficial for strengthening city-countryside relationships as it brings equality among members.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The cooperation is aimed at several topics which are important for its members. Therefore, its focus can be very flexible, and members can set their own priorities.</li> <li>+ The MNF allows extensive exchange of experience and knowledge between members representing various sectors, also through events and conferences.</li> <li>+ Members collectively decide on the topics and goals which will be addressed.</li> <li>+ Members together develop and fund opinions, studies, common politics and projects which have an intermunicipal character and impact.</li> <li>+ The tool uses a bottom-up approach and is built on trust between members, which strengthens their relationships.</li> <li>+ The features of this structure support innovation, e.g. diverse experiences and ideas gathered together; without top-down constraints, members are more likely to propose creative solutions that are tailored to their unique regional challenges.</li> <li>+ The MNF creates a sense of ownership and commitment among members which leads to more effective and sustained cooperation.</li> <li>+ The tool supports the development of the area in a polycentric and sustainable way.</li> <li>+ This structure also involves other institutions in the area from different sectors (private or public).</li> <li>+ The MNF cooperates with other initiatives aimed at intercommunal and regional cooperation in the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg.</li> <li>- This tool does not include any binding measures aimed at other levels of governance.</li> <li>- The voluntary participation and lack of binding legal powers can make it difficult to enforce decisions or drive significant changes when there is disagreement or lack of political will.</li> <li>- The MNF does not operate within the defined FUA territory.</li> <li>- The MNF does not cover the entire hinterland. There are a few little blank spots on the map until they voluntarily decide to participate.</li> </ul>
<p>Management</p>	<p>Evaluation of the Questionnaire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The tool can be managed by a limited number of people.</li> </ul>





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Limited technical and financial resources are needed for administration.</li> <li>+/- Follow-up activities (especially if in person) can require organizational and financial resources.</li> </ul> <p>Evaluation of the MNF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Even though the membership is voluntary, the majority of municipalities and city districts participates in this structure and serves as an example of functioning voluntary cooperation.</li> <li>+ The MNF has the legal status of a registered association, so the relations, responsibilities and tasks are written and understandable for its members.</li> <li>+ The MNF started as an informal group and transformed into an association 23 years later. Therefore, it represents a good bottom-up example of the transformation from an informal to a formal structure.</li> <li>+ The MNF has a formal structure which includes a board and an office and is also divided into four working groups and other thematic groups.</li> <li>+ The members of the association are equal (e.g. in terms of communication, financing or voting).</li> <li>+ The MNF facilitates the alignment of strategies and visions across municipalities, ensuring that regional development ideas or projects can fit within a larger common perspective.</li> <li>+/- This tool does not require extensive personnel and financial resources. On the other hand, it can hinder further and new activities due to the lack of these resources.</li> <li>- The tool is rather less institutionalized, so the management does not have extensive powers and there is a possible time-consuming decision-making process in cases, where strong leadership is needed to push initiatives forward.</li> <li>- The day-to-day operation and execution are outsourced to an external body/institution.</li> </ul>
Transferability	<p>Evaluation of the Questionnaire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The tool is easily adaptable to the specific needs of the MA that adopts it.</li> </ul>



	<p>+ If used across multiple MAs, it can allow for the comparison of trends, challenges and successes between different MAs, enabling benchmarking and mutual learning.</p> <p>+/- Its success depends on the response rate (a low response rate can diminish the significance of the results), but this can vary depending on how reactive mayors/stakeholders are.</p> <p>- The response rate can be limited by cultural or political differences. Consultation processes depend on the level of trust in given regions/countries.</p> <p>Evaluation of the MNF:</p> <p>+ The overall concept of cooperation between municipalities, city and its districts is transferable to other MAs where these types of administrative structures exist.</p> <p>+ The concept is also transferable to MAs seeking decentralized or cooperative governance models emphasising voluntariness, equality and mutual benefit.</p> <p>+ Several aspects of this cooperation are transferable to other MAs (voluntariness, development of shared activities, exchange of experience or inclusion of different institutions).</p> <p>+/- Since the tool is based on voluntariness, there must be clear added value and benefits for its members to ensure that it can function properly.</p> <p>- The legal status of the MNF may not be easily transferable to other countries due to differing national regulations. In regions where there is an urgent need for action, replicating the steady and voluntary growth from informal cooperation to a registered association might not be feasible.</p> <p>- The development of this tool may also depend on the level of the autonomy of municipalities. In countries/regions with less municipal autonomy, the flexibility and voluntary nature that underpin this tool may clash with more centralized governance models.</p>
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## Reflection of the work of the study cluster

<p>The reflection of the initial work setup and time plan</p>	<p>The initial work set-up was achieved during the work of the study cluster because the partners effectively fulfilled their roles and responsibilities. They participated in the meetings and in a study visit and followed their planned tasks. The cooperation among the partners was on a high level and the members of the cluster shared</p>
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	<p>information, questions, and remarks, which ensured the proper development of the learning phase. Additionally, the partners contributed to the preparation of sub-reports, important for creating the WP2 deliverables.</p> <p>In terms of an initial time plan, the members of the cluster completed all necessary steps on time. They decided to hold one in-person study visit related to the MNF but opted not to organize a visit for the Questionnaire. This was due to the fact that during the online meetings, all the needed information was shared and travelling to the location was not necessary, as the Questionnaire is an online tool. There were three online meetings held concerning the Questionnaire and one to the MNF. These meetings were organised based on the needs and interests of the cluster members.</p>
Problems and deviations	<p>No major problems or deviations were encountered during the work of the cluster. Only minor issues arose, such as the evaluation of tools, which extended beyond August and continued into the following months, being finalised together with this sub-report. No other problems and deviations were observed during the learning phase.</p>

## Main outcomes

<p>The main outcomes of the work of the study cluster</p>	<p>The study cluster called “<b>Semi-structures and dialogues for improvement of metropolitan cooperation</b>” provided an opportunity to learn about two best practices: the <b>Questionnaire among mayors of the BMA</b> and the <b>Municipal Neighbourhood Forum</b>. The cluster participants gained valuable knowledge about both tools. Regarding the Questionnaire, the City of Brno presented how they regularly identified thoughts/opinions, needs and problems of 183 municipalities and their mayors in the Brno Metropolitan Area. The mayors were encouraged to share their views on further metropolitan cooperation in the area and its possible institutionalization. The members of the cluster learned about how this tool was developed and administrated to the mayors, as well as how the results were processed and visualised or which activities were built on this survey. The City of Brno also highlighted the positive feedback, noting that the mayors’ willingness to cooperate increased with each successive questionnaire. The learning metropolitan areas also evaluated the tool as advantageous for its structured approach to consultation and engagement of mayors. The questionnaire was seen as well-tested and easily transferable, although its success was noted to depend on the response rate.</p>
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Moreover, the Metropolitan City of Turin prepared a related pilot action, with the proposal being reviewed by the study cluster members.

In relation to the Municipal Neighbourhood Forum (MNF), partners from Berlin-Brandenburg presented the tool that brought together Brandenburg cities near Berlin, the City of Berlin itself and Berlin districts in a bottom-up association for communication and cooperation on current topics and challenges. The cluster members were introduced to the structure and functioning of the association, including information on its members, activities and yearly topics, success factors of cooperation and future tasks. They observed, how the tool ensured equality of the members at all levels, for example, the fact that every vote has the same weight. The learning metropolitan areas evaluated the MNF as a mechanism for enhancing cooperation between partners in the territory, facilitating an extensive exchange of experience and knowledge and serving as an example of voluntary cooperation. Its overall concept was deemed transferable. However, this tool does not include any binding measures aimed at other governance levels, and the management does not have extensive powers. Its legal status may not be easily transferred to other countries due to differing national regulations.

During the learning phase, it became clear that both tools could strengthen metropolitan cooperation and governance, having a positive impact and being useful for the stakeholders in the territory. They serve as means for structured dialogue between municipalities or city districts within a given metropolitan region or area and allow the sharing of opinions, views, knowledge or experiences between local authorities and other important actors. By promoting cooperation and dialogue across municipalities, both tools contribute to a stronger sense of attachment to the territory and shared purpose.

The cluster functioning **was at a high level**, with partners adhering to their initial work set-up and time plan. No major deviations or problems were encountered, and the cluster used efficient methods of work and cooperation. Four online meetings were held, focusing on learning about the tools, and one study visit was conducted related to the Municipal Neighbourhood Forum. The lighthouse metropolitan areas provided crucial information, supported by the involvement of stakeholders and staff who are directly engaged in the tools' implementation. In summary, the work of the cluster was effective and successful in facilitating the transfer of knowledge about both tools and the pilot action execution.



## 4. Strengthening Metropolitan Governance through Integrated Public Transport Management

### Initial information about the cluster

Members of the cluster	<p>The Study Cluster involved three MECOG-CE Metropolitan Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The <b>Stuttgart Region Association</b> was the Study Cluster’s “Lighthouse Metropolitan Area (MA)”.</li><li>▪ The <b>Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin-Brandenburg</b> took up the role of a “Co-Lighthouse MA”.</li><li>▪ The <b>City of Warsaw</b> participated in the study cluster as a “Follower” (or “Learning”) MA and was responsible for the development and execution of a pilot action.</li></ul> <p>The scientific partners <b>Charles University, University of Silesia in Katowice and Metropolitan Research Institute</b>, were invited to take part in the study cluster activities and took part in some of the meetings.</p>
Selected tool(s) studied within the cluster	<p>Within the cluster, the tool of <b>Integrated Metropolitan Transport System</b> was studied, with a specific focus on bus transport. The two differing ways in which integrated metropolitan transport is organized in the Stuttgart and the Berlin-Brandenburg regions have been presented to the Warsaw partners and served as a basis for their analysis driven within the pilot action.</p>

### Functioning of the study cluster

Study visits/meetings	<p>The work within the study cluster was realized in seven steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) 21/02/2024 <b>Study Visit</b> in Stuttgart allowing on-site understanding of the transport system,</li><li>2) 09/04/2024 Online Meeting regarding <b>initial work-set up</b> and time plan of study cluster,</li><li>3) 30/04/2024 Online Meeting on <b>genesis and mode of operation</b> of integrated public transport systems in the metropolitan areas of Stuttgart and Berlin,</li><li>4) 13/05/2024 Online Meeting on <b>metropolitan transport and tariff associations</b> in Stuttgart and Berlin,</li></ol>
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	<p>5) 05/2024 <b>Written question &amp; answer exchange</b> between Warsaw experts and Stuttgart experts leading at deeply analysing precise technical aspects of the integrated transport system,</p> <p>6) 11/09/2024 Transnational Meeting in Ostrava on the <b>presentation and discussion about the outcomes</b> of the cluster and the progress of pilot action,</p> <p>7) 29/10/2024 Online Meeting reviewing the <b>results of the pilot action</b>.</p>
<p>Methods of work, cooperation and transfer/sharing of information</p>	<p>The first meeting between the Stuttgart Region Association as Lighthouse Metropolitan Area and the City of Warsaw as Metropolitan Area developing pilot action took place on 21 February 2024 in Stuttgart, preliminary to the MECOG-CE project meeting in Stuttgart.</p> <p>The follow-up meetings took place online via MS Teams.</p> <p>In between the meetings, there was regular communication between all members of the study cluster through dedicated e-mails and telephone calls as well as the use of the specific study cluster’s folder on the project’s SharePoint for sharing documents and jointly working on them.</p> <p>Besides the MECOG-CE team members, the following experts have been involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expert of Stuttgart Region Association regional planning department,</li> <li>▪ Expert of Stuttgart Region Association transport department,</li> <li>▪ Experts of Stuttgart Region Transport and Tariff Association (VVS),</li> <li>▪ Experts of Berlin-Brandenburg Region Transport and Tariff Association (VBB),</li> <li>▪ Experts of the Public Transport Authority in the City of Warsaw.</li> </ul>

### The main points and the knowledge obtained

<p>The core of the studied tool</p>	<p>A well-developed metropolitan transportation system enables metropolitan citizens to easily move within the MA and to profit from services that might not be available in their local community. The establishment of integrated transportation systems fosters the integration process in the MA and the genesis of a metropolitan</p>
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	<p>identity. Consequently, integrated transport systems are also an important economic asset for the MA.</p> <p>In the Stuttgart Region and Berlin-Brandenburg, the metropolitan transport systems are crucial for citizens and their commuting. These systems include several tools and instruments, regional mobility management, transport and tariff associations or information for passengers. For example, the backbone of the metropolitan transport system in the Stuttgart Region is a railway network called S-Bahn providing regular and frequent connections for passengers. In the case of Berlin-Brandenburg, the joint transport system of two federal states represents a unique approach in Germany and offers transparent ticketing in the entire region.</p>
<p>Knowledge transferred and obtained</p>	<p>The cluster has studied the mindset of integrated metropolitan transport. In detail, the following elements and knowledge have been studied and transferred:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The general functioning of the transport systems in Stuttgart and Berlin.</li> <li>▪ Repartition of tasks in metropolitan transport in the Stuttgart Region and Berlin-Brandenburg,</li> <li>▪ Transport planning tools and instruments,</li> <li>▪ Transit Oriented Development: Integrated approach of transport planning and settlement development,</li> <li>▪ Regional Mobility Management (express bus lines, mobility platform, mobility hubs, bike sharing),</li> <li>▪ Financing and budget of metropolitan transport, sharing of revenues,</li> <li>▪ Competences of Transport and Tariff Associations,</li> <li>▪ Passenger Information Systems (website, apps, signposting),</li> <li>▪ Legal rules.</li> <li>▪ The development of cooperation within public transport over the years.</li> <li>▪ The main assumptions of the currently functioning transport systems, especially the issue of cooperation between entities.</li> </ul>
<p>Interesting points and facts</p>	<p>An interesting fact is the huge difference in the issues of financing, cooperation, and the history of the functioning of the integrated transport system in the case of Stuttgart and Berlin, and the Warsaw Metropolitan Area. Moreover, the solutions adopted at the national level are very developed in Germany and are only beginning to</p>



	develop in Poland. This situation allows for drawing on good practices and may allow for planning activities based on proven solutions.
Materials and documents shared	<p>Presentations on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Public transport system and financing in Stuttgart Region,</li> <li>■ Integration of information and tariff, integrated passenger information systems,</li> <li>■ Stuttgart Region Transport and Tariff Association (VVS),</li> <li>■ Berlin-Brandenburg Region Transport and Tariff Association (VBB).</li> </ul> <p>The General Rule on the financing of public service obligations in level II of the Stuttgart Transport and Tariff Association: <a href="#">Microsoft Word - E1 2023-01-01 Satzung markup (region-stuttgart.org)</a>.</p>

### Strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance

Impact on metropolitan cooperation and governance	<p>Integrated transportation is the crucial backbone of metropolitan development, planning and cooperation. A well-developed metropolitan transportation system enables metropolitan citizens to easily move within the MA and to profit from services that might not be available in their local community. The establishment of integrated transportation systems fosters the integration process in the metropolitan area and the genesis of a metropolitan identity. Thus, integrated transport systems are also an important economic asset for the metropolitan area.</p> <p>An efficient metropolitan passenger transport system uses the potential of local public transport, individual car transport, non-motorised transport and sharing transport services. It allows to increase the efficiency of passenger transport in the metropolitan area without increasing the burden on the environment. After all, only attractive and convenient transfer options meet the mobility needs of the metropolitan population. An efficient metropolitan transport system can only be achieved with well-structured long-term cooperation across municipal borders within the MA. The development of a joint public transport system creates a strong spatially collaborative metropolitan area and establishes a platform for communication between municipalities and transport companies involved, not to mention it provides an opportunity for further sustainable growth.</p>
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	<p>Integrated public transport is at the top of the agenda of many Central European MAs, for example, Stuttgart Region or Berlin-Brandenburg, so that the work within this study cluster can be transferable to other MAs in Central Europe.</p>
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## Evaluation of the selected existing tool/best practice

Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Debates, discussions and decisions on the metropolitan level about metropolitan issues.</li> <li>+ Method of cooperation to which all interested parties in the process agree.</li> <li>+ Broad perspective, also from the point of view of the entire country, not only regionally and locally.</li> <li>- Potential situations where political action could have influenced the practical solutions.</li> <li>- Many entities are involved which may make reaching a compromise difficult.</li> <li>- Diverse needs and characteristics of individual local government units (including population density and access to rail infrastructure).</li> </ul>
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Topics of regional significance that are discussed by dedicated committees, including a committee for transportation, which allows to solve problems precisely.</li> <li>+ Combining public transport with other areas, such as spatial planning, is very effective.</li> <li>+ Cooperation in management at many levels (regional and local) and joint decision-making.</li> <li>+ Very detailed level of public transport planning, e.g. in the preparation and updating of master plans.</li> <li>-/+ Rigid rules for participation in the public transport system, including obtaining permits or meeting quality rules.</li> <li>- Complicated financial settlement system in the field of public transport organization.</li> <li>- Quite complicated management - many local government units in the process, many entities (organizers and carriers).</li> </ul>
Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Many years of experience and methods of cooperation are particularly valuable for functional/metropolitan areas that have been cooperating in joint transport for a shorter period.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The scope of the analysis is rather universal for bus transport in different metropolitan areas in other countries.</li> <li>+ The concept of rail transport as the backbone of the public transport system and bus transport as its support.</li> <li>+ Developed system of regional mobility hubs connecting different means of transport.</li> <li>- Different levels of planning activities (regional, not local) means that not all elements can be applied for example in WMA.</li> <li>- The mentality of society and lifestyle in individual countries can be problematic: less attachment to an orderly structure of the activities of the entities involved.</li> <li>- Reluctance of local government units to transfer some of their competencies to the metropolitan association or lack of trust in one “metropolitan structure”.</li> </ul>
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### Reflection of the work of the study cluster

The reflection of the initial work setup and time plan	<p>The initial work set-up and time plan have been respected.</p> <p>One online cluster meeting and additional sessions with further experts have not been necessary due to sufficient know-how exchange in the first meetings and additional direct written exchange between the experts.</p> <p>The planned on-site visit in Warsaw has been replaced by an online meeting to present the results of the pilot action and to evaluate the pros and cons.</p> <p>The study cluster meetings took place in a very friendly and collegial atmosphere. The participants had a very good and open exchange and profited from detailed input from the various experts.</p>
Problems and deviations	<p>Besides the above-mentioned updates regarding the format of the exchange, there haven't been any deviations from the initial work set-up and time plan.</p> <p>No problems have occurred.</p>



## Main outcomes

<p>The main outcomes of the work of the study cluster</p>	<p>The work that was carried out in the study cluster has allowed for a thorough examination of the <b>integrated metropolitan transport systems of Stuttgart and Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan areas</b>, and enabled the partners from the City of Warsaw to well prepare their pilot action, "Analysis of the possibilities of integrating bus transport in the Warsaw Metropolis".</p> <p>Study cluster participants have learned about the repartition of tasks in metropolitan transport in the Stuttgart Region and Berlin-Brandenburg, different transport planning tools and instruments, the principle of "Transit Oriented Development", e.g. the integrated approach of transport planning and settlement development, regional mobility management, financing and budget of metropolitan transport, the sharing of revenues, the competences of transport and tariff associations, passenger information systems as well as the legal framework of metropolitan transport systems. These systems also have a significant impact on metropolitan cooperation and governance as they include several metropolitan stakeholders.</p> <p>The best practices of an integrated metropolitan transport system were evaluated as highly valuable for the territories and the lessons learnt from the study cluster were very useful for the planning process in the Warsaw Metropolitan Area. The results of the "Analysis of the possibilities of integrating bus transport in the Warsaw Metropolis" which has been elaborated as a pilot action, will be the basis for the creation of a metropolitan transport system. The results of the study cluster will help to launch the metropolitan transport system in the Warsaw Metropolitan Area.</p> <p>Therefore, the functioning of the study cluster fulfilled the partners' expectations and represented valuable international cooperation with practical outcomes for partners focused on enhancing metropolitan cooperation and governance.</p>
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## 5. Strengthening metropolitan institutionalization through developing joint opinions supporting informal and dialogical planning processes

### Initial information about the cluster

<p>Members of the cluster</p>	<p>The study cluster “Strengthening metropolitan institutionalization through developing joint opinions supporting informal and dialogical planning processes“ involved 3 project partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>City of Warsaw</b> - Lighthouse MA,</li> <li>▪ <b>J.S.P.D. Berlin Brandenburg</b> - Pilot Action MA,</li> <li>▪ <b>City of Brno</b> - Learning MA.</li> </ul> <p>as well as associated partners and research institutions: <b>Union of Polish Metropolises, METREX, Eurocities, Charles University, University of Silesia in Katowice, Metropolitan Research Institute.</b></p> <p><b>The City of Warsaw</b> as a Lighthouse MA managed the work and progress of the cluster, among others: organized regular online meetings, ensured the exchange of information between partners and project leader; provided expert knowledge, answered partners' questions; intermediated in contact with the Warsaw Metropolis Association; prepared information packages, source materials and presentations for partners; led and supported J.S.P.D. Berlin Brandenburg in the preparation of its pilot action.</p> <p><b>J.S.P.D. Berlin Brandenburg</b> as a project partner responsible for the preparation of Pilot Action, among others: participated in online meetings, learned about the functioning of Warsaw Metropolis Association (mainly the organization of workshops), provided questions and feedback on presented issues, contributed to the sub-reports, prepared a Pilot Action.</p> <p><b>The City of Brno</b> as a learning MA, among others: participated in cluster online meetings, learned about the functioning of Warsaw Metropolis Association (mainly joint opinions), provided questions and feedback on presented issues, reflected on pros and cons, contributed to the sub-reports.</p>
<p>Selected tool(s) studied within the cluster</p>	<p>Name of tool which was studied: <b>Developing joint opinions and organization of workshops by Warsaw Metropolis Association.</b></p> <p>The Association promotes self-government and civil society and provides expert assistance on issues of interest to local authorities</p>



	<p>of the Warsaw Metropolitan Area. It is also an advisory body, a partner in consultations on solutions relevant to local authorities. It prepares positions, studies, and analyses, and implements initiatives to ensure that the voice of the metropolitan area is recognized and heard at both national and European level.</p> <p><b>Joint Opinions</b> can only be adopted on issues that affect the entire region. The initiator can be any member of the Warsaw Metropolis Association or institution/organization/NGO. However, submitted initiative to the Association Office must meet the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ its impact extends beyond the area of one local government unit,</li> <li>▪ be consistent with the statutory activities of the Association.</li> </ul> <p>They must be adopted by resolution of the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Management Board of the Warsaw Metropolis Association: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ considers and adopts the majority of opinions,</li> <li>▫ the matter requires a quick decision - the Management Board meets more often than the General Assembly and can do it remotely or by circulation, unlike the General Assembly.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. General Assembly of Members of the Warsaw Metropolis Association: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ opinions that concern particularly important issues for the entire region,</li> <li>▫ there is no unanimous consent to adopt the opinion by the Management Board.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p><b>Organization of workshops</b> - the Association provides training for local authorities and supports activities related to European education, e.g. by organizing model lessons for teachers or competitions to promote the activities of local authorities in the Warsaw Metropolitan Area. This allows for an exchange of experience between local authorities.</p>
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## Functioning of the study cluster

Study visits/meetings	<p>List of meetings held within the cluster:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>23.02.2024 - the first meeting in Stuttgart:</b> establishment of work and system of collaboration,</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>15.03.2024 - online meeting:</b> presentation about the structure of the Warsaw Metropolis Association and work on Initial work and time plan,</li> <li>■ <b>23.05.2024 - online meeting:</b> presentation about joint opinions and workshops discussion on the shape of the pilot action,</li> <li>■ <b>18.07.2024 - online meeting:</b> discussion on the pilot action proposal with the participation of a representative of the State Chancellery of Brandenburg,</li> <li>■ <b>04.09.2024 - online meeting:</b> execution of the pilot action,</li> <li>■ <b>11-12.09.2024 - Ostrava meeting:</b> presentation and discussion about study cluster outcomes,</li> <li>■ <b>08.11.2024 - online meeting:</b> discussion about the pros and cons of Warsaw Metropolis Association.</li> </ul>
<p>Methods of work, cooperation and transfer/sharing of information</p>	<p>Communication and information exchange took place regularly during the work in the cluster. Online meetings were organized to maintain the best cooperation, depending on the current needs of the partners or the stage of the work. Partners exchanged materials and presentations after each meeting as well as written questions to maintain a constant dialogue. The meetings took place online via MS Teams. In addition, partners also communicated via email and telephone. The SharePoint platform MECOG-CE was used to exchange files between the partners. This working method ensured the involvement and participation of each partner in the cluster’s work. It can be summed up as open dialogue and cooperation based on mutual understanding.</p> <p>Besides the MECOG-CE team members, the following experts have been involved in the cluster work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Expert of State Chancellery of Brandenburg,</li> <li>■ Expert of Warsaw Metropolis Association.</li> </ul>

### The main points and the knowledge obtained

<p>The core of the studied tool</p>	<p>Work in the cluster focused on two tools that support informal and dialogic planning processes. The most important features of each tool are outlined below.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Joint opinions</b> adopted by the Association authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ are the MA’s common voice on the most important issues,</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ have a greater impact on regional and government authorities (strength in numbers),</li> <li>▪ represent a lifeline for smaller municipalities,</li> <li>▪ directly engage all local government units,</li> <li>▪ serve as a space for dialogue and exchange of different and sometimes contradictory opinions (working on consensus),</li> <li>▪ in some cases, they require the development of analyses (access to specific data),</li> <li>▪ represent the opportunity for residents to learn about current activities and the metropolitan policy (free access for everyone to joint opinions on the website).</li> </ul> <p>2. <b>Organization of workshops</b> for Association members and stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ networks local government units (an opportunity to get to know each other),</li> <li>▪ builds mutual trust and paternal relationships,</li> <li>▪ helps to raise the competencies and skills of local government employees,</li> <li>▪ allows learning from each other (implementation of good practices),</li> <li>▪ metropolis as an intermediary connects business and local governments,</li> <li>▪ is free for participants.</li> </ul>
<p>Knowledge transferred and obtained</p>	<p>Project partners participating in the cluster learned more about the activities of the Warsaw Metropolis Association, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>joint opinions</b> adopted by the Association authorities:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ creating joint opinions in terms of resources - personal, time, financial,</li> <li>▫ initiating and selecting topics for joint opinions,</li> <li>▫ next steps after finalizing and adopting joint opinions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <b>organization of workshops</b> for Association members and stakeholders:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ organization of workshops,</li> <li>▫ groups of stakeholders to whom the workshops are addressed,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▫ problems with acquiring participants,</li> <li>▫ workshop methodology,</li> <li>▫ evaluation of workshops,</li> <li>▫ use of results to conduct further processes.</li> </ul> <p>Additionally, knowledge about the general organizational structure of the Association was passed during the sessions of questions and answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ functioning and financing of the Association, the role of the Association's bodies (General Assembly, Management Board, Metropolitan Council, Office),</li> <li>■ preparation of strategic documents in the EU financial perspective for 2021-2027 (Integrated Territorial Investment Strategy for the Warsaw Metropolis 2021-2027+, Development strategy of the Warsaw Metropolis until 2040) and of the metropolitan act.</li> </ul>
<p>Interesting points and facts</p>	<p>It is interesting that during the work in the cluster, at the same time, work was underway on the draft of the metropolitan act for the Warsaw Metropolis. During the written exchange with the Brno partner, this topic was raised many times because it is a key element for the future development of the Warsaw Metropolitan Area (WMA). Finally on September 30, 2024, during the General Assembly of Members of the Warsaw Metropolis Association, a directional consent to the draft of the metropolitan act was adopted almost unanimously (1 abstention).</p>
<p>Materials and documents shared</p>	<p>All submitted materials are located in a folder dedicated to the cluster on SharePoint. During the work in the cluster, the Lighthouse MA provided a list of workshops and joint opinions adopted by the Warsaw Metropolis Association as well as links to conferences and strategic documents that are available online on the website of the Warsaw Metropolis: <a href="http://www.metropolia-warszawska.pl">www.metropolia-warszawska.pl</a>. Presentations prepared by the J.S.P.D. Berlin Brandenburg partners are also available on SharePoint.</p>

## Strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance

<p>Impact on metropolitan cooperation and governance</p>	<p>In 2014 City of Warsaw, together with 39 communes, concluded a metropolitan cooperation agreement, which is the basis for cooperation on key issues related to the economic and social development of local communities i.e. Integrated Territorial</p>
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	<p>Investments. Before the above-mentioned agreement was concluded, metropolitan informal cooperation within the WMA took place mainly through the Warsaw Metropolis Association, which was established in 1999 as an initiative of only a few local governments. Currently, it brings together the entire Warsaw Metropolitan Area (NUTS2 - 79 local government units) and plays a key role in implementing the Integrated Territorial Investments for 2021-2027 and developing strategic documents.</p> <p>The tools developed by the Association for strengthening metropolitan institutionalization, such as: developing joint opinions and organizing workshops, enabled the development of metropolitan cooperation on a larger scale than ever before in the region. Their free-of-charge and voluntary nature allows for broad stakeholder involvement. Moreover, they were developed despite the lack of financial or statutory support from the Polish government.</p> <p>Joint opinions are a unified voice representing the metropolitan area on significant regional issues. They are developed through a consultative process involving local governments and organizations and require approval from the WMA's management bodies.</p> <p>Workshops serve as a platform for building trust, raising competencies, and fostering knowledge exchange among local governments. They also bridge relationships with the private sector and other metropolitan stakeholders.</p>
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### Evaluation of the selected existing tool/best practice

Implementation	<p>Evaluation of the joint opinions and organization of workshops developed by the Warsaw Metropolis Association:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The implementation of this tool brings enhancement of metropolitan cooperation among municipalities and counties in the area through different tools (e.g. joint opinions, workshops and trainings or ITI, creation of strategies, international projects).</li> <li>+ These tools also serve as a support to its members and thus strengthen local governments.</li> <li>+ The activities of the association focus on the whole territory and have a metropolitan impact.</li> <li>+ The association allows its members to have a significant influence on the opinions and workshops.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Thanks to the association, members can share experience and knowledge and can strengthen mutual relations and trust.</li> <li>+ The implementation of the workshops and trainings brings the connection between members and several metropolitan stakeholders (e.g. private sector). They can learn or suggest new solutions with metropolitan impact.</li> <li>+ Such an institution has a better position to influence national legislation related to metropolitan issues as it represents dozens of municipalities and counties.</li> <li>+/- One of the tools, joint opinions, represents the voice of the whole WMA on metropolitan issues towards different levels. Nevertheless, these levels are not obliged to follow them, and it depends on the willingness of these levels to consider the opinion of WMA.</li> <li>+/- Joint opinions can include the analysis conducted by an external company which can provide a more detailed view. Nevertheless, it means that financial resources for this analysis are needed.</li> <li>- The association represents rather a soft form of cooperation as it does not function on the basis of some metropolitan law which would assign more competencies and budget.</li> <li>- The implementation of the ITI tool in WMA requires the creation of two strategies (ITI Strategy and Development Strategy) due to national regulations. It would be more beneficial to create only one strategy which would cover all metropolitan topics including ITI. Nevertheless, for the WMA was more beneficial to develop the main strategy properly and for the usage of funds through the ITI tool to develop the ITI strategy earlier.</li> </ul>
<p>Management</p>	<p>Evaluation of the joint opinions and organization of workshops developed by the Warsaw Metropolis Association:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The association is based on the Statute which was agreed between members.</li> <li>+ WMA has a formal structure with the assigned tasks and responsibilities of its bodies.</li> <li>+ All members are represented in this formal structure through the General Assembly, the highest authority, and members also elect its Management Board and Audit Committee. This ensures democratic representation and participation of municipalities and counties, indirectly also of citizens.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Moreover, the association has the Management Board which serves as the executive body so the functioning of the association can be more effective.</li> <li>+ The association also have a supervisory body represented by the Audit Committee which controls the activities of WMA.</li> <li>+ Meetings of the General Assembly take place quite often (approx. four times a year, which means that metropolitan issues are present and important in this area).</li> <li>+ The membership is voluntary; therefore, the association is built on the trust and interest of all its members.</li> <li>+ Both mentioned tools, opinions and workshops, are rather easy to manage as they do not require extensive personnel and financial resources.</li> <li>+ The ITI tool is managed by WMA with the support of the City of Warsaw, not just the city as in other countries.</li> <li>+ The creation of strategies includes the work of the Metropolitan Council which is the body established for this purpose and includes several metropolitan stakeholders from different levels relevant to the development of these documents.</li> <li>+/- This association currently does not require extensive financial and personnel resources. Nevertheless, for proper functioning, it would be beneficial to have a higher number of staff and finances from different resources. This would also allow the association to cover more topics on a voluntary basis (as there is no metropolitan act yet).</li> <li>- The amount of membership fees is significantly lower than in other MAs in Poland which causes insufficient budget for mainly new activities. Furthermore, current activities are supported by the City of Warsaw which means that the association is highly dependent on Warsaw's staff and finances.</li> <li>- The management of the ITI tool has higher requirements (mainly personnel) than other activities of WMA.</li> </ul>
<p>Transferability</p>	<p>Evaluation of the joint opinions and organization of workshops developed by the Warsaw Metropolis Association:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The joint opinions as a tool are highly transferable to other MAs as they do not require specific conditions or extensive resources and can help other MAs to strengthen their voice towards different levels.</li> </ul>



	<p>+ Workshops and trainings are highly transferable as they can be focused on several metropolitan issues which are important for many MAs.</p> <p>+ The participatory approach (which includes metropolitan stakeholders and citizens) used during the creation of both strategies can be beneficial for other CE MAs as it is highly transferable.</p> <p>+/- The structure of association is highly transferable to MAs with a lower number of municipalities. In the case of for example Czech MAs, mainly the General Assembly cannot be transferred in this form because of a high number of municipalities. Direct representation of all municipalities would lead to ineffective management of the structure. However, overall, the structure can serve as an inspiration for other CE MAs.</p> <p>- Implementation of the ITI tool also depends on national regulations in a given country, so it is not so transferable to other MAs with different conditions. However, the approach can be inspirational for the national level.</p>
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## Reflection of the work of the study cluster

The reflection of the initial work setup and time plan	<p>The work in the cluster proceeded without major problems. All deviations from the original plan are described in the section "Problems and deviations". The partners stuck to the previously agreed "Initial work set-up and time plan" with minor exceptions.</p> <p>The biggest challenge for the partners was the changing political situation in Berlin. In September 2024, state elections were held in Germany. The uncertainty about the results led to a change in the final shape of the pilot action proposed by J.S.P.D. Berlin Brandenburg.</p>
Problems and deviations	<p>Deviations from the "Initial work set-up and time plan":</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ no online meeting in June 2024 regarding the execution of the pilot action due to the holiday season - the online meeting was held on July 11, 2024;</li> <li>■ a study visit in WMA was not necessary due to sufficient know-how exchange during the online meetings and additional written exchange with experts;</li> <li>■ a previously planned on-site visit in Berlin-Brandenburg related to the execution of pilot action was not necessary, due to the fact that, within the pilot action, it was planned to elaborate a</li> </ul>



	<p>concept, a written document which was possible to be discussed online - instead, we held an online meeting on November 8, 2024, and additionally we are going to organize a study visit in Warsaw regarding the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) in 2025.</p>
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## Main outcomes

<p>The main outcomes of the work of the study cluster</p>	<p>The main result of the study cluster was the exchange of knowledge between partners on the issue of <b>strengthening metropolitan institutionalization through developing joint opinions supporting informal and dialogical planning processes</b>. Partners gained valuable knowledge about the tools.</p> <p>The good practices of the Warsaw Metropolis Association helped to identify a new tool for the regional governance and governance structure for the capital region of Berlin-Brandenburg. This was possible because of the close cooperation with representatives of the State Chancellery of Brandenburg, who were involved the whole time in the work of the study cluster and got the chance - in close coordination with JSPD - to develop new participation tools and processes, e.g. for the upcoming revision of the Overall Strategic Framework. Meanwhile, the City of Brno learned in detail about developing joint opinions and the functioning of the Warsaw Metropolis Association.</p> <p>The partners maintained ongoing communication through regular online meetings, email, and written exchange. The SharePoint platform MECOG-CE was used for file sharing, ensuring smooth information exchange and participation. Partners reflected on the pros and cons of the Warsaw Metropolis Association tools and exchanged opinions on pilot action. Cooperation remained at a high level.</p> <p>The study cluster has proven that informal and dialogical planning processes, such as the development of joint opinions and the organization of workshops, can significantly enhance metropolitan governance. These tools have helped to foster greater cooperation, mutual learning, and dialogue between local governments and stakeholders, thereby strengthening metropolitan cooperation. Therefore, they can be easily transferred to other metropolitan areas as an example of good practice.</p> <p>To sum up the work in the cluster, it should be emphasized that despite a few problems that occurred during the cluster's work, it was possible to achieve satisfactory results for each partner and</p>
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	successfully transfer knowledge about both tools. The outcomes of the study cluster were important for the creation of pilot action.
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## D. Conclusion

The study clusters proved to be an **indispensable part of the project** for its partners as they allowed them to gather insights about the best practices which are successfully implemented in metropolitan areas. The **thorough learning and mutual exchange of knowledge and expertise** represented an opportunity for an extensive transnational cooperative approach to the topic of strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance. The outcomes of all five study clusters were provided by partners via sub-reports which included all required information.

The study clusters differed significantly in their **thematic focus and tools studied**. Each addressed distinct challenges: **Food Districts** focused on fostering cooperative networks in agriculture and food production, while **Prototyping Academies** emphasized an innovative, participatory metropolitan approach. Semi-structured dialogues prioritized stakeholder engagement through **questionnaires** and **Municipal Neighbourhood Forum**, **Integrated Public Transport Management** aimed at synchronizing policies for better mobility governance, and **Joint Opinions and Workshops** centred on building consensus and enhancing local government capacities.

These **differences extended to their methodologies and challenges**, such as reliance on local agricultural stakeholders in Food Districts, preparatory demands in Prototyping Academies, and the need for high response rates in questionnaires in Semi-structured dialogues. Despite their **unique approaches**, all clusters encountered **specific implementation barriers**, like voluntary participation constraints or funding dependencies, tailored to their focus areas. Thus, studied best practices address some of the **identified challenges and opportunities** for metropolitan areas in Central Europe.

Members of the clusters could obtain not only **essential knowledge about best practices** that allowed them to get to know the tool in detail but also **interesting points and facts** about them. This approach served for a sufficient transfer of experiences to partner metropolitan areas that inspired them to further enhance metropolitan cooperation and governance.

In terms of **strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance**, all lighthouse metropolitan areas provided information on how their best practices contribute to the advanced cooperation with stakeholders in their territory. Then, based on the provided information, members of each cluster concluded that these tools are beneficial for stronger metropolitan cooperation and governance.

The work of each cluster and knowledge exchange allowed partners to critically **evaluate each studied tool**. The members presented the most important pros and cons of each tool in three domains: implementation, management, and transferability. Partners listed pros and cons for each best practice which means that they were not only positive but also included some disadvantages that can be altered or improved. It is important to note that each best practice was assessed as advantageous for the metropolitan level as the partners indicated more pros than cons.

The **functioning of each cluster** can be classified at a **high level**. Each cluster included not only partner metropolitan areas but also expert organizations and associated partners. This approach allowed the mutual exchange of knowledge and views on the topic of metropolitan cooperation



and related tools. Partners cooperated transnationally via several means. They held online meetings, four of five study clusters organised study visits, participated in written Q&A exchanges or shared necessary materials. Furthermore, each cluster reflected its initial work and time plan. It showed that **partners fulfilled each plan** with minor deviations which did not affect the functioning of the clusters, their objectives, and final outcomes.

The study clusters represented a significant step during the project as they not only allowed in-depth learning about best practices, but the outcomes of sharing knowledge were also crucial for the development of pilot actions described in the Deliverable 2.2.3 “**Report on pilot actions**”. On their basis, **new solutions** improving these best practices will be created at the beginning of 2025. The work within the study clusters served as an important step towards the achievement of the **Common Metropolitan Vision**, showing the metropolitan strengths and empowerment.