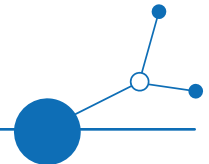


IDENTIFICATION OF CHALLENGES SPECIFIC FOR CENTRAL EUROPEAN MAS

Deliverable 1.1.1.



Version 3

09 2023





This document was elaborated within project **MECOG-CE: Strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance in Central Europe** and is part of the WP1: Analysis of metropolitan dimension, Activity 1.1. Mapping the metropolitan dimension of European strategic documents and its status quo.

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1. Introduction

This document is the deliverable “**D.1.1.1. Identification of challenges specific for central European MAs**” elaborated within a project “MECOG-CE: Strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance in central Europe” supported by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE programme. It is a part of “**WP1: Analysis of metropolitan dimension**“, and „**Activity 1.1. Mapping the metropolitan dimension of European strategic documents and its status quo**“.

The activity 1.1. focuses on **two major aims**. First goal is analytical with an objective to map, analyse and evaluate, first, the articulation of **metropolitan dimension in European strategic documents** and its relevance for Central European MAs; second, **contemporary challenges** for the metropolitan development, governance, planning and cooperation specifically in Central European MAs; third, **windows of opportunities** for the promotion of metropolitan dimension. The second goal is to formulate a **policy/advocacy document** aimed at European as well as national governments and organizations. The document will articulate the **benefits and advantages of metropolitan dimension** (metropolitan cooperation, governance and planning).

The deliverable “**D.1.1.1. Identification of challenges specific for central European MAs**” reflects the first objective. The document summarizes specific challenges for Central European MAs, namely those that related to metropolitan cooperation, governance and planning. The document also addresses the windows of opportunities for the enhancement of metropolitan dimension. The follow-up deliverable “**D.1.1.2. Common metropolitan vision**” is an advocacy document that will build on the insights gained from this report (Figure 1.1.).

Figure 1.1. The position of deliverable within MECOG-CE

MECOG-CE: Strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance in Central Europe

WP1: Analysis of metropolitan dimension

Activity 1.1. Mapping the metropolitan dimension of European strategic documents and its status quo

delivery D.1.1.1. Identification of challenges specific for central European MAs

delivery D.1.1.2. Common metropolitan vision





The process of identification of challenges and opportunities for metropolitan dimension in Central Europe included desk research and survey among partners within the consortium. The first part of the report presents the articulation of **metropolitan dimension in European strategic documents** and its relevance for Central European MAs. The outcomes achieved through a desk research include an overview of **global societal megatrends** and challenges for urban development, summary of **urban policy objectives** in European and international strategic documents, and analysis of the presence and **articulation of the metropolitan dimension** in the EU and international policies. The second part focuses on the **contemporary challenges** for the metropolitan development, governance, planning and cooperation and **windows of opportunities** for the metropolitan dimension in Central Europe identified through two **surveys** and **focus group** with the MECOG-CE stakeholders.

In addition to being part of the MECOG-CE project's deliverable, the analysis, overview, and assessment of the metropolitan dimension in European and international strategic documents serve as **guiding and contextualizing insights** for consortium partners. It aims to provide **guidance for cooperation** within the MECOG-CE project. The analysis outcomes can inform partners' thoughts and activities related to identifying challenges for metropolitan development in Central Europe and identifying opportunities to promote the metropolitan dimension.



2. Conceptual approach

The task and analytical document (deliverable) “**Identification of challenges specific for central European MAs**” is composed of three key sub-tasks with the objective to map, analyze and evaluate:

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

2.1 Analysis of metropolitan dimension in European strategic documents

The analysis of metropolitan dimension in European strategic documents primarily investigates **whether the EU strategic documents and policies mention, highlight and articulate the metropolitan dimension as an important and effective instrument for the development of the EU, national and local societies and economies**. However, the analysis of the documents, policies and initiatives offers much wider potential.

First, it also includes major policy documents of international organizations, such as United Nations or OECD, which objectives are reflected and further developed in European policies and initiatives. More importantly, the analysis is used much broadly for the **acquisition and evaluation of much broader scope of knowledge** with possibilities for the utilization in the practice of participating organizations and stakeholders. Therefore, the analyses also investigate which themes, challenges, visions, objectives, proposed tools are considered as relevant, important, and inspiring for metropolitan dimension, metropolitan cooperation, metropolitan planning, metropolitan governance, and metropolitan budget. The knowledge assembled thus can and will be used during the course of the whole project duration and beyond.

The analysis of metropolitan dimension in European and international strategic documents is as desk research focused on content analysis of the key policy documents. Therefore, it compiles the **list** of policy documents and initiatives and executes their **review**. The review of the documents and their content analysis focused on three areas:

- review and generalized summary of **major societal challenges** that impact urban developments and are reflected in the European and international strategic documents;
- review and generalized summary of **urban policy objectives** in European and international strategic documents;
- identification of **metropolitan dimension** in European and international strategic documents, policies and initiatives.



The approach starts from a more general issue of major societal challenges, through their reflection in broadly understood urban policies, to a detail focus on specific metropolitan dimension, metropolitan scale and metropolitan issues. This broader and more inclusive approach allows to **contextualize the metropolitan dimension** within the wider scope of more general urban policies and initiatives (not only metropolitan) and assess it against the backdrop of general societal challenges and their relevance for urban developments.

The performed steps of the analysis of metropolitan dimension in European strategic documents also included **the identification of general challenges** for metropolitan development, governance, planning and cooperation as well as **perceived windows of opportunities** for the promotion and enhancement of metropolitan dimension. Therefore, it also served as one of the sources for the identification of challenges and opportunities in Central European MAs.

2.2. Challenges for the metropolitan dimension in CE MAs

The task focuses on the **identification of contemporary challenges** for the metropolitan development, governance, planning and cooperation **specifically in Central European MAs**. While there is a wide array of challenges discussed in terms of the societal development at the global, international or European scale (reflected in policies, documents and initiatives of the UN, OECD, EC) or national level (national government documents, analyses and policies), this task identifies specific challenges related to the metropolitan areas in the geographical context of Central Europe.

These challenges include, on the one hand, the **thematic structural conditions of social, economic and environmental development** (e.g. climate change) affecting the metropolitan areas of Central Europe and, on the other hand, **challenges related to the procedural aspects** of metropolitan governance, cooperation and planning.

The analysis also distinguished between challenges for the development of MAs and cities, regions and neighborhoods within MAs from **challenges that can be effectively tackled/solved at the metropolitan level**. While there are major societal trends that are not explicitly related to metropolitan development as they have implications for all geographical types and scales, not only metropolitan, the metropolitan level can play a key role in their mitigation. In such a case, the potentially important role of metropolitan areas in enhancement of societal resilience and sustainability, while facing these challenges and dealing with them can be presented as the strength and contribution of the MAs in the policy advocacy document Common metropolitan vision.

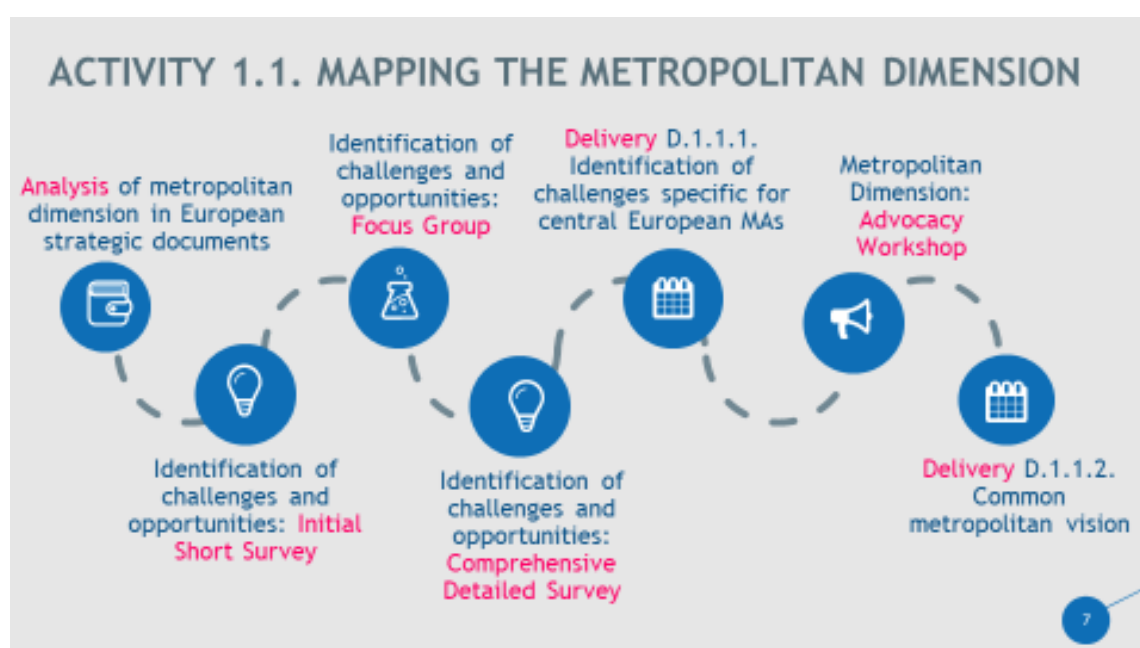
The task „Identification of Challenges and Opportunities for Metropolitan Areas in Central Europe” reflected the insights and knowledge gained during the desk research aimed at the analysis of metropolitan dimension in European strategic documents. However, the core of the task was executed through **three steps** (Figure 2.1) that addressed MECOG-CE metropolitan stakeholders.



They included:

- initial short survey;
- focus groups / discussion groups;
- comprehensive detailed survey.

Figure 2.1. Mapping the metropolitan dimension



The objective of these steps was the identification of challenges and opportunities for metropolitan areas that included not only simple gathering of stakeholders' perceptions and opinions, but, more importantly, **building mutual understandings of the metropolitan challenges and opportunities within the MECOG-CE consortium**. The initial short survey provided the first round of uncovering the thoughts about challenges and opportunities. This was followed by the mutual discussion of challenges and opportunities and clarification of their understanding, articulation and structuring through **focus group discussions**. The final **comprehensive detailed survey**, which aimed at getting a more nuanced articulation of challenges and opportunities, already involves the mutual reflections and understanding between consortium partners. This approach **increases the capacity of stakeholders to address metropolitan issues and formulate the common metropolitan vision**, a policy document that is planned as MECOG-CE deliverable "D.1.1.2. Common metropolitan vision".

The surveys and discussion groups provided **dual information gain**. First, they helped to understand and structure the challenges and opportunities for metropolitan dimension, which can be understood as the **objective dimension**. Second, they inform which challenges and opportunities are perceived and articulated by the stakeholders, and with what frequency and sequence. In this way, the survey provides information about the **subjective dimension**, i.e. the role of stakeholders in narrating the challenges and opportunities.



2.3. Windows of opportunities for metropolitan dimension in Central Europe

The third key task is the **identification of (windows of) opportunities** for metropolitan dimension in Central Europe. They can be understood and analyzed in **three dimensions**. First, there are the windows of opportunities for addressing **specific metropolitan issues**. These, for instance, include thematic areas such as suburban sprawl and sustainable mobility, or processual issues, such as metropolitan budget. The window of opportunity means such situations and constellations that are beneficial for dealing with these challenges and issues. The opening of the window is not favorable only for the metropolitan level of governance, but also for vertical and horizontal collaborations, public-private partnerships and inclusive participation of experts, NGOs and general population. The analysis addresses those issues and opportunities that are perceived as crucial by the MECOG-CE metropolitan stakeholders.

The second are the windows of opportunities that can **serve for the promotion of metropolitan dimension in public policies**, specifically in European and national development strategies, policies and practices. These strategies and policies include a wide array of initiatives, such as national plans of recovery and resilience, national regional policies and spatial planning, thematic or sectoral policies, such as smart city strategies or housing policies. The task focused on the **opportunities to articulate and strengthen the role of metropolitan dimension in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policies**. For instance, the currently used instrument of the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and emphasis on the integrated planning in functional areas in European policy documents and interventions in the current planning period of the EU Cohesion Policy can be perceived as a window of opportunity.

Finally, the two above discussed understandings of the window of opportunity help to **articulate the role of metropolitan dimension in European and national policies, policy documents and development strategies**. This window of opportunity is understood as an active building of a stakeholders' coalition aimed at the formulation of a common metropolitan vision and construction of an institutionalized alley of discursive and material practices that can streamline and enhance the metropolitan dimension as a widely recognized effective instrument in the European and national development policies leading towards more sustainable and resilient societal development. This third dimension directly relates the outputs from this deliverable "D.1.1.1. Identification of challenges specific for central European MAs" as a base knowledge for the preparation of the advocacy argumentation for the promotion of metropolitan dimension as one of major objectives of the policy document within MECOG-CE planned as the deliverable "D.1.1.2. Common metropolitan vision".

Similarly to the identification of challenges, the identification and formulation of opportunities reflects the **insights and knowledge gained during the desk research** and was addressed to the metropolitan stakeholders from MECOG-CE consortium with the use of the **initial short survey, focus groups / discussion groups** and final **comprehensive detailed survey**.



3. Societal challenges and urban policy objectives in European and international strategic documents

This section presents insights from an **analysis of European and international policies and initiatives focused on identifying challenges to urban development and their reflection in urban policies**. The analysis, overview, and assessment of **European and international policies** serves as **guiding and contextualizing insights** for MECOG-CE consortium partners and their thoughts and activities related to identifying challenges for metropolitan development in Central Europe and identifying opportunities to promote the metropolitan dimension.

3.1. Approach and method

The research focused on identifying contemporary challenges for metropolitan development, governance, planning, and cooperation in Central European Metropolitan Areas (MAs). The main objective of the desk research was to provide a general **overview of societal challenges discussed in European and international strategic documents** related to cities, urban areas, and urban development. This overview serves as a **contextual framework** for understanding metropolitan challenges in Central Europe and the specific metropolitan areas involved in the MECOG-CE project. It also helps assess the extent to which general challenges identified in the international documents are considered and reflected in the regional context of Central Europe and the local metropolitan areas of the project partners.

The desk research on challenges included a brief survey and overview of **global megatrends and challenges**, including their effects on urban areas. European policies and initiatives largely align their objectives with these megatrends. Therefore, the desk research also reviewed the **objectives of European and international policies**, focusing on those explicitly dedicated to urban development or considering cities and urban areas as significant focal points. The analysis primarily focused on cities and urban areas in general, rather than specifically distinguishing challenges related to metropolitan areas.

The analysis reviewed **European policy documents explicitly addressing urban, regional, and territorial development**, either entirely (e.g., the New Leipzig Charter) or in part. Additionally, policy documents thematically related to issues and practices closely linked to urban, regional, and territorial development, governance, and planning (e.g., The Charter of European Planning) were included. Policy initiatives such as the New European Bauhaus, represented by a set of narratives on web pages rather than a single policy document, were also considered. Although the project's focus is on the EU strategic documents and policies, the review also encompassed policy documents from international organizations, such as the UN and OECD, which the EU contributes to and widely reflects in its policies.



Policies, policy documents, policy initiatives, regulations

European Union

- Urban Agenda for the EU - 'Pact of Amsterdam' (2016)
- The European Green Deal (2019)
- New Leipzig Charter - the transformative power of cities for the common good (2020)
- Territorial Agenda 2030 - A future for all places (2020)
- EU Cohesion Policy 2021 - 2027 (2021) (https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/2021-2027_en)
- Ljubljana Agreement: Urban Agenda for the EU - The next Generation (2021)
- New European Bauhaus (from 2022) (https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en)
- European Urban Initiative (from 2022) (<https://www.urban-initiative.eu/>)

UN

- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)
- New Urban Agenda (2016)

OECD

- OECD Principles on Urban Policy (2019)

WHO

- Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide (2007)
- Healthy Cities. Effective Approach to a Changing World (2020)

European Council of Spatial Planners

- The New Charter of Athens 2003: The European Council of Town Planners' Vision for Cities in the 21st century (2003)
- The Charter of European Planning (2013)

The overview, summary, and interpretation of the EU and international urban policies presented in this document are based on recent work conducted for the Principles of Urban Policy of the Czech Republic. This work involved an extensive review of urban policies and initiatives¹. The findings from this review have been updated and revised specifically for the purpose of the MECOG-CE project. Although the analysis considered individual documents, the knowledge gained has been **generalized and organized according to the main themes and issues**. Firstly, the document outlines **global megatrends and global challenges** that have significant implications for societal development, specifically focusing on cities and urban areas. These megatrends and challenges provide a broader context for understanding the urban policies. Secondly, the document identifies and structures the **key areas of objectives within urban policies**. These objectives range from more general thematic issues of urban development to more specific organizational and procedural goals of urban policy. The aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the objectives pursued in European and international urban policies.

¹ The work of Anna Švarcová from the Ministry for Regional Development, who has prepared the initial excerpts from many of the policy documents, is greatly acknowledged.



3.2. Global societal megatrends and challenges for urban development

Global societal megatrends are **long-term transformative processes that change the principles, values, practices and activities of individuals, firms, organizations, social groups and territorial groupings** (states, regions, international associations) and lead to **fundamental changes in social institutions and the organization of society** on a planetary scale. Many of these trends respond to global environmental changes, which are predominantly conditioned by the activities of human civilization, and to socio-economic changes resulting from society's own development, particularly with regard to the process of globalization.

Major **societal challenges are specific issues** that arise as a result of these global megatrends and have significant implications for society. These challenges represent **complex and interconnected problems that require attention and solutions** at all spatial scales of human life and governance. The global societal challenges include climate change, poverty, inequality, health crises, biodiversity loss, and conflicts. While the global megatrends are the overarching transformative processes that shape the world, societal challenges are the specific problems and issues that arise from these megatrends and require collective efforts to address them effectively. Major global societal megatrends and challenges include multiple areas from which below are presented those with major implications for the development of cities, metropolitan areas, city regions and settlement systems. They include globalization; international cooperation and security; innovation and digitalization; climate change; environmental degradation; growth in energy consumption; urbanization; demographic change; population ageing and changes in reproductive behavior; international migration; social inequalities and diversity; health, civilization diseases and global pandemics.

3.2.1. Globalization

Globalization is the process of integrating economic activities and fostering governance and cooperation on a global scale. Since the 1970s, globalization has been driven by multinational companies, global commodity chains, and global production networks. It has led to the globally organized production and distribution of goods, providing a wide range of products and services for consumers in developed countries. However, countries in the Global South often serve as sources of natural resources and labor. In European cities, globalization has resulted in various changes. This includes the internationalization of the economy, labor markets, and construction, as well as the relocation of production to other countries, leading to deindustrialization. It has also brought about the expansion of trade, logistics, and services, accompanied by the income growth, but also the increased income inequality. Globalization has influenced value orientation, fostering individualization and affecting consumption and reproductive behavior. Moreover, decision-making has shifted towards prioritizing individual development projects rather than long-term strategies and plans. Globalization sets the framework for the domestic economy, economic actors within supply chains, and the global division of labor. Consequently, it creates varied development opportunities. Large metropolitan areas often have opportunities for knowledge-based economic development. Medium-sized cities and well-connected zones adjacent to motorways may have developed manufacturing industries. Smaller cities and peripheral areas, in



contrast, tend to be more reliant on agriculture, small-scale manufacturing, tourism, and recreation.

3.2.2. International cooperation and the security

International cooperation has played a vital role in maintaining stability and promoting prosperity since World War II. The collapse of the bipolar world led to the unification of Europe, the enlargement of the European Union, and transatlantic cooperation in economic, social, and security matters. Cooperation has resulted in remarkable progress in areas, such as the common market, mobility of people and goods, integration of education and research, coordinated decision-making, and solidarity through cohesion policies. International organizations like the United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO) are essential in fostering global partnerships for sustainable and inclusive economic development. They also address challenges related to health, food security, and the protection of cultural heritage. However, there are economic and security challenges posed by the growing influence of countries like China. Additionally, adverse developments in Russia, including power asymmetric warfare with neighboring countries that were once part of the USSR or under its influence, present security concerns. Extremism, terrorism, cyber threats, and the rise of populism further contribute to security risks. Addressing these challenges requires continued international cooperation, strengthened partnerships, and multilateral efforts to promote peace, security, and sustainable development worldwide.

3.2.3. Innovation and digitalization

Innovation and digitalization have been integral to societal development, enabling advancements across various sectors. Information and communication technologies have revolutionized the global economy and society, impacting areas such as business management, production and consumption, communication through social networks, travel, culture, education, science, research, and development. Digitalization has given rise to new business models like e-commerce, personalized production, and smart products. It has also facilitated alternative working models, such as online platform employment and the expansion of remote work. This places emphasis on high-speed internet coverage, influences commuting patterns, and has implications for transportation and logistics systems. Information technology has fostered the development of efficient SMART solutions, enhanced communication between citizens and authorities, and provided new avenues for participation. The application of artificial intelligence further challenges society, potentially revolutionizing work, learning, and societal organization. Cities play a crucial role as hubs for the development, testing, deployment, and widespread application of innovative technological solutions, including in public administration. However, digitalization is associated with challenges such as uneven social and spatial development and cyber security risks. Efforts are required to address these disparities and ensure robust cyber security measures. Overall, embracing innovation and digitalization offers immense opportunities for societal progress, but it is essential to navigate these changes responsibly and inclusively to minimize potential negative impacts.



3.2.4. Climate change

Climate change is a global phenomenon with immense local impacts. It is contributing to the rise in extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, storms, and tornadoes, necessitating the development of resilient infrastructure to mitigate the effects of natural disasters. Long-term consequences of climate change include surface heating, declining groundwater levels, and water scarcity. Urban areas, in particular, are prone to exacerbating the effects of global warming, resulting in heat islands and reduced comfort levels that can have detrimental health effects, especially for vulnerable populations. The implementation of green and blue infrastructure can help alleviate these impacts. Cities, urban environments, populations, and economies have a significant role in mitigating the adverse social effects of global climate change. Emphasizing a low-carbon economy and striving for climate neutrality, as outlined in initiatives, such as the Green Deal for Europe, is increasingly considered a fundamental starting point for the development of cities and city regions. By prioritizing sustainability and taking proactive measures to address climate change, cities can play a crucial role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting resilience, and creating a more sustainable future.

3.2.5. Environmental degradation

Environmental degradation is a result of human activities, including the production of emissions and waste, as well as unsustainable development practices that harm natural environments. This degradation manifests in various forms, such as air, water, and soil pollution, loss of biodiversity, and overall ecosystem degradation. The consequences extend to the risk of compromising ecosystem services and impacting the health of human populations. In urban environments, the concentration of human activities exacerbates these negative impacts, underscoring the importance of safeguarding air, water, soil, habitats, and ecosystems. It becomes imperative to prioritize sustainable solutions that balance development priorities with environmental protection. Alongside protecting the environment, natural resources, and habitats, promoting sustainable consumption of scarce resources, reducing energy intensity, and increasing energy efficiency are crucial challenges. Raising awareness about the long-term risks associated with environmental degradation, promoting environmental protection measures, and emphasizing the need for sustainable solutions are essential. By recognizing the importance of preserving and restoring ecosystems, adopting sustainable practices, and promoting responsible resource use, society can work towards mitigating environmental degradation and creating a more sustainable future.

3.2.6. Growth in energy consumption

The continuous increase in energy consumption has significant repercussions. The escalating use of fossil fuels leads to a rise in greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to climate change. Consequently, there is a growing emphasis on decarbonization and transitioning towards a low-carbon economy. Additionally, the availability of natural resources is limited, necessitating a shift towards greater utilization of renewable energy sources. Energy distribution plays a crucial role in geopolitics, and there are risks associated with energy supply shortages in unstable security



situations. Constraints on raw material supplies can also lead to energy crises. To mitigate these risks, it is important to prioritize a diverse range of energy sources from reliable and secure suppliers, while also promoting local energy sources, including community energy initiatives. Changes in energy consumption have specific implications for various sectors and their workforce, as well as for consumers, particularly vulnerable groups. It is crucial to implement appropriate measures to ensure a fair transition that addresses the needs of affected workers and provides support to vulnerable consumers. Overall, addressing rising energy consumption requires concerted efforts to promote decarbonization, increase renewable energy utilization, diversify energy sources, enhance energy security, and ensure a just transition that considers social and economic impacts.

3.2.7. Urbanization

Europe has experienced significant urbanization, with the majority of the population residing in urban areas that offer a high standard of living, employment opportunities, services, and cultural amenities. In general, there is a trend of population migration, leading to a concentration of people in major metropolitan areas, as well as in agglomerations and urban regions with thriving economies. Within metropolitan and urban regions, there is a prevailing trend of deconcentration, with population growth occurring in the suburban areas surrounding cities. This has resulted in challenges related to increased mobility, congestion in transportation infrastructure, inadequate service infrastructure capacity in the suburbs, and impacts on the natural landscape of suburban areas. The concentration of population in metropolitan areas and urban regions poses challenges for inter-municipal cooperation between urban cores and suburban municipalities, as well as between cities and rural areas, particularly in peripheral regions. Addressing these challenges requires effective collaboration and coordination to ensure the provision of adequate services, efficient transportation systems, and balanced development across urban and suburban areas. Fostering inter-municipal cooperation, a balance between urban and rural areas and addressing the needs and challenges of both urban cores and suburban communities are key considerations for sustainable urban development and ensuring equitable development opportunities for all residents.

3.2.8. Demographic change, population ageing and changes in reproductive behavior

Advancements in the quality of life and healthcare have led to increased life expectancy and an emphasis on healthy life. As a result, there is a notable increase in the proportion and absolute number of elderly, leading to an ageing population. This demographic shift necessitates the provision of social services and infrastructures tailored to the needs of the elderly, and the creation of age-friendly urban spaces that support active lifestyles for older adults. The ageing of the population is not solely a consequence of increased life expectancy but also stems from lower fertility rates and a reduced proportion of children and adolescents in the population. Factors such as education, employment opportunities, personal leisure, and travel choices impact reproductive behavior. Social conditions, economic developments, housing markets, risks, threats, and government policies also influence fertility rates. Many European countries have experienced



fluctuating fertility dynamics in recent decades, which pose challenges for service provision, educational institutions, labor market fluctuations, societal resilience, and population policy. Addressing the implications of demographic change requires proactive measures to ensure the provision of adequate social services, healthcare, and infrastructure for the elderly population. It also necessitates considering policies that support sustainable fertility rates and address the evolving needs of different age groups. By adapting to these demographic trends, societies can better navigate the challenges and seize the opportunities associated with changing population dynamics.

3.2.9. International migration

Europe is experiencing significant international migration, with most migrants choosing to settle in urban areas rather than rural regions. Many metropolitan areas and cities are witnessing population growth, primarily driven by migrants with foreign citizenship, particularly from countries outside the European Union. The increasing number of foreigners help to fulfill the demand for labor in lower value-added and lower-income sectors, such as manufacturing, construction, and personal services. A significant challenge lies in ensuring the full integration of foreign migrants into urban society. Integration efforts should focus on promoting social cohesion, facilitating access to education, healthcare, and social services, fostering cultural understanding, and providing opportunities for language acquisition and employment. Successful integration benefits both the migrants and the host society by creating inclusive and diverse urban communities. Efforts to address the challenges of immigrant integration should involve collaboration between government agencies, local communities, civil society organizations, and the migrants themselves. By promoting inclusivity and creating supportive environments, cities can harness the social and economic potential that international migration brings and enhance the overall well-being and cohesion of their urban communities.

3.2.10. Social inequalities and diversity

Contemporary society struggles with social inequalities and diversity, despite ongoing efforts to ensure equality and equity among citizens of different age, gender, or origin. Social and spatial inequalities persist, rooted in historical patterns and emerging trends. Changes in the international division of labor, local implications of participation in global production networks, and wage differentials have contributed to income inequalities. Disadvantaged groups, including the elderly and migrants, face higher risks of income poverty, social exclusion and segregation. Discriminatory practices continue to have a lasting impact on societal disparities. Simultaneously, there is a growing recognition and acceptance of cultural openness and pluralism, fostering coexistence among diverse groups with varying backgrounds, interests, cultural preferences, and sexual orientations. Embracing cultural diversity has the potential to enrich urban life. However, it is crucial to address challenges related to discrimination, social exclusion, and segregation, and actively promote social cohesion, inclusion, and integration. Fostering cohesion in urban populations requires comprehensive approaches that acknowledge diversity while combating discrimination and promote equal opportunities for all residents. It entails creating inclusive spaces, providing access to quality education, healthcare, and social services, and facilitating



intercultural dialogue and understanding. By prioritizing inclusive policies and practices, societies can strive towards a more equitable and harmonious coexistence, where social inequalities are reduced, and diversity is embraced as a source of strength and enrichment.

3.2.11. Health, civilization diseases and global pandemics

As the population ages, there is a rise in diseases and illnesses associated with modern civilization. Many of these effects stem from lifestyle changes, shifts in dietary habits, exposure to new chemicals, and the overall increase in life expectancy. Alongside these challenges, there is a growing trend towards adopting an active and healthy lifestyle. This trend leads to increased demand for services and infrastructure that support active lifestyle, mobility, and the improvement of urban environments. In addition to civilization diseases, global pandemics are becoming more prevalent. The profound impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has emphasized the need to enhance the preparedness and resilience of cities and urban areas to external influences and emergencies. This includes strengthening healthcare systems, implementing effective crisis response plans, and promoting public health measures such as vaccination campaigns and disease surveillance. Addressing these health-related issues requires a comprehensive approach that combines preventive measures, accessible healthcare services, health education, and the development of infrastructure that supports healthy lifestyles. It is essential to prioritize public health and well-being in urban planning and decision-making processes, ensuring that cities are equipped to respond effectively to health challenges, including both chronic diseases and infectious outbreaks. By building resilient and health-conscious cities, societies can enhance the quality of life for their residents and mitigate the impact of diseases and pandemics.

3.3. Objectives of international and the EU urban policies

Urban policies, urban policy documents and initiatives of the European Union (EU) and international organizations such as the UN and OECD reflect the global societal megatrends and challenges and address five areas:

- general principles of urban development;
- desirable state of cities and city regions;
- transformational objectives;
- priorities for spatial organization;
- principles for urban governance.

3.3.1. Sustainability and resilience: the key principles of urban development

Sustainability is a fundamental principle for long-term urban development embedded in most policies, initiatives and strategic documents. It emphasizes a holistic approach to the integrated development of three pillars of economic, social, and environmental spheres.



Recently, there has been an increased focus on resilience. **Resilience** refers to the ability of cities and regions to withstand and adapt to sudden shocks, assess and mitigate vulnerabilities, and prepare for future threats. Recent disruptions like the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have highlighted the importance of resilience.

Sustainability primarily informs the definition of the desired state and spatial development priorities, while resilience is more closely associated with transformation objectives and decision-making principles. Urban policy frameworks at present reflect both these principles.

3.3.2. Green, inclusive, and productive city as a general long-term objective

The desirable state of city and city region encompasses a balanced development across economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

Green city: A green city prioritizes ecosystem services, biodiversity, and climate neutrality. It implements climate-friendly solutions to meet environmental commitments and promotes the protection and regeneration of urban ecosystems. It leverages blue-green infrastructure to adapt to climate change and offers a healthy environment, enhancing overall resilience for both nature and the urban society. The green city also drives changes in production and consumption patterns, promoting the circular economy to reduce waste, emissions, and energy demands.

Inclusive city: A just and inclusive city ensures equal opportunities and justice for all residents, regardless of socio-economic status, gender, age, or ethnicity. It fosters social inclusion and actively avoids stigmatization, marginalization and segregation. The focus is on providing accessible health and social services and affordable housing, particularly for disadvantaged groups, ensuring that everyone can fully participate in society.

Productive city: A productive city with a resilient economy thrives on a diversified economy, including strengthening elements of the circular economy. It aims for sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth and development. Employment opportunities are provided for all residents, with a focus on disadvantaged groups. Productive cities strive to be attractive, innovative, and competitive and are characterized by a skilled workforce, accessible social, technical, and logistical infrastructure of high quality, and provision of suitable sites for housing and non-residential development.

These three dimensions need to be interwoven and balanced to foster sustainability resilience. While promoting new transformative trends, it is crucial to consider the interdependence and harmony of economic, social, and environmental pillars. For instance, the transition to carbon neutrality should consider the implications for the labor market, industries, employees, and regions. Similarly, digitization should address the constraints faced by certain social groups and territories, ensuring inclusivity for all, such as the elderly population or socially excluded communities.



3.3.3. Multiple transformation objectives on climate, energy, circularity, digitalization, mobility, affordability, diversity and security

The current development objectives of cities and city regions encompass various aspects of societal transformations and respond to global megatrends and challenges. These objectives are often interlinked through reflecting the imperatives of sustainability and resilience.

Adaptation to climate change: Cities aim to develop strategies and measures to adapt to the impacts of climate change, ensuring resilience and minimizing vulnerabilities.

Energy transition and carbon neutrality: Cities strive to transition to renewable energy sources, improve energy efficiency, and reduce carbon emissions to mitigate climate change.

Circular economy: The transition to a circular economy focuses on reducing waste, promoting resource efficiency, and fostering sustainable production and consumption patterns.

Digital transformation: Digitalization is embraced across various aspects of urban development, enabling smart solutions, enhancing energy efficiency, improving public services, and fostering citizen engagement and participatory governance.

Sustainable and efficient mobility: Cities prioritize sustainable and efficient transportation systems, including accessible public transport, active mobility options, and connectivity at local, national, and international levels.

Affordable housing: The provision of affordable, inclusive, and environmentally friendly housing is considered essential for enhancing quality of life and ensuring social well-being.

Social and cultural diversity: Cities attempt to embrace social and cultural diversity, fostering tolerance and inclusivity, while promoting civil cohesion and respect for individual rights.

Prevention of security risks: Cities address security risks associated with globalization, population mobility, cultural openness, and conflict situations. This includes monitoring threats and risk prevention activities to address organized crime, terrorism, corruption, extremism, and cyber threats.

Cities and city regions are recognized as key actors in driving societal transformations due to their potential for the utility of agglomeration mechanisms, social interactions, infrastructure, and innovation. They play a vital role in implementing sustainable practices, adopting renewable energy sources, promoting digital solutions, improving transportation, providing affordable housing, and fostering social and cultural diversity and inclusion.

3.3.4. Balanced spatial development and integrated development of city regions

EU policies prioritize economic, social, and territorial cohesion. Regional and urban policies support balanced social and territorial development. The key priorities for achieving this include:

Reducing, eliminating, and preventing territorial disparities: Efforts are made to address existing socio-spatial disparities at both macro-regional and intra-urban levels. At the urban scale,



this includes tackling concentrations of vulnerable groups, segregation, regeneration of brownfields, and developing sites and localities with high potential for private and public amenities. Policies and instruments focusing on inclusion, integration, and social cohesion are utilized to reduce disparities and prevent segregation.

Polycentric urban development: The focus is on strengthening interconnected networks of cities with different sizes and roles. This is achieved through infrastructure development that enhances population mobility, expands choices and opportunities in the labor market and access to services. Additionally, cooperation between urban governments is emphasized to promote polycentric development.

Integrated development and cooperation in functional regions: Collaboration between territorial partners is developed in city regions and metropolitan areas, strengthening urban and rural partnerships and relations between core cities, suburban municipalities and peripheral areas. Urban regions and metropolitan areas that are functionally connected but administratively fragmented require specific attention, with instruments supporting territorial cooperation, planning, and governance across administrative boundaries.

Strengthening urban-rural linkages and partnership: The EU recognizes the importance of functional relations between urban and rural areas. Efforts are made to foster cooperation and development within city and metropolitan regions to harness the development potential of cities for the overall prosperity of the entire region. An integrated approach is applied to address global megatrends and challenges, and mitigate development trends with negative impacts on sustainability and resilience, such as urban sprawl.

In summary, the EU's priorities for balanced territorial development encompass reducing disparities, promoting polycentric settlement development, facilitating integrated development and cooperation in functional regions, and strengthening urban-rural linkages.

3.3.5. Strategic and integrated approach to governance

The implementation of urban development policies, strategies, and practices is rooted in democratic governance, cooperation and participation, an integrated and place-specific approach, and flexible, data-driven decision-making. These principles include:

Multi-level governance (vertical): Promoting coordination and collaboration between actors at different levels of government, respecting the principle of subsidiarity. This involves cooperation between city, urban, metropolitan, regional, national, and transnational levels.

Territorial cooperation (horizontal): Fostering cooperation and coordination between local authorities, public administrations, and other stakeholders within functional regions such as city regions and metropolitan areas.

Governance based on public, private, and civil sector cooperation: Encouraging collaboration and participation of all stakeholders, including public, private, and civil society actors, in decision-making processes and urban development initiatives.



Integrated (holistic) approach: Adopting an integrated approach that considers the interdependencies and interactions between various sectoral policies, aligning them to achieve sustainable and balanced urban development goals.

Place-based approach to development: Recognizing the uniqueness and specific characteristics of different territorial units, taking into account local contexts, constraints, and opportunities. This approach tailors development strategies to the specific needs and potentials of different areas.

Decision-making based on data and information: Emphasizing the use of data, information, trend analysis, and policy monitoring to inform decision-making processes. Data-driven decision-making ensures evidence-based policies and strategies.

Flexibility in decision-making: Anticipating future trends, risks, and threats, and promoting flexibility in decision-making processes to adapt and respond effectively to changing circumstances. This includes preventive measures and scenario planning to address environmental, economic, energy, and security risks.

The principles of governance, collaboration, and participation foster quality democratic governance and enable the competitiveness, sustainability, and inclusive development of cities and city regions. By integrating different levels of governance, promoting cooperation among various stakeholders, and adopting data-driven and flexible decision-making, these principles contribute to informed and responsive urban development policies and strategies. They also help anticipate and address challenges arising from global megatrends, unexpected events, and long-term development trajectories, ultimately enhancing resilience and promoting the well-being in urban areas.



4. Metropolitan dimension in the EU and international policies

This chapter presents the outcomes of an **analysis of European and international policies and initiatives** focused on the **metropolitan dimension** (metropolitan development, governance, planning, and cooperation). The analysis, overview, and assessment of the metropolitan dimension in European and international strategic documents serve as **guiding and contextualizing insights** for consortium partners. It aims to provide guidance for cooperation within the MECOG-CE project. The analysis outcomes can inform the partners' thoughts and activities related to identifying challenges for metropolitan development in Central Europe and identifying opportunities to promote the metropolitan dimension.

4.1. Approach and method

The analysis of metropolitan dimension in European strategic documents primarily focused on examining **whether EU strategic documents and policies acknowledge and emphasize the importance of the metropolitan dimension** as a valuable instrument for the development of EU, national, and local societies and economies. Furthermore, the analysis aimed to gather a broader understanding by exploring various themes, challenges, visions, objectives, and tools that are considered relevant, significant, and inspiring for metropolitan dimension, cooperation, planning, governance, and budgeting. The analysis also involved identifying **challenges specifically related to metropolitan dimension** (development, governance, planning, and cooperation).

The analysis work encompassed three fundamental pillars or steps:

- **Compiling and organizing a list and repository of policy documents and initiatives.**
- **Reviewing** the identified policy documents and initiatives in detail with the aid of content analysis and discourse analysis.
- **Summarizing, evaluating, and interpreting** the metropolitan dimension as presented in the policy documents and initiatives.

Additionally, a **review, summary, evaluation, and interpretation of challenges** explicitly linked to the metropolitan dimension, as articulated in the policy documents and initiatives, were also conducted.

The first step of the analysis of metropolitan dimension in European policy documents involved **identifying relevant policy documents** that explicitly address urban, regional, and territorial development. This included documents such as the New Leipzig Charter, which may focus entirely on these topics, as well as those that touch upon them to a certain extent. The aim was to locate policy documents that are thematically linked to urban, regional, and territorial development, governance, and planning, such as The Charter of European Planning. In addition to policy documents, **policy initiatives**, like the New European Bauhaus, were also considered, even if they



are not represented by a single policy document but by a collection of narratives typically found on web pages. Furthermore, we also include specific **regulations** for the EU policies related to urban and regional development.

While the analysis primarily focused on the EU strategic documents and policies, **policy documents from international organizations such as the UN and OECD**, which the EU contributes to and are widely reflected in EU policies, were also included. The identification of policy documents and initiatives prioritized those that currently have or can have an impact on urban and metropolitan development. In specific cases, like the Leipzig Charter, previous versions were also included to track the evolution of the perception and performance of the metropolitan dimension.

The identification of policy documents and initiatives relied on long-term expert knowledge in the field, including recent involvement in the formulation of the Principles of Urban Policy of the Czech Republic, participation in research projects like ESPON METRO (<https://www.espon.eu/metro>), engagement in the Functional areas in the EU initiative supported by the World Bank (<https://functionalareas.eu/>), and suggestions from project partners within the MECOG-CE project. Based on this identification process, a **list of policy documents and initiatives** was established, along with a **repository of these documents**.

Reviewed policies, policy documents, policy initiatives, regulations

European Union

- Leipzig Charter (2007)
- Urban Agenda for the EU - ‘Pact of Amsterdam’ (2016)
- The European Green Deal (2019)
- New Leipzig Charter - the transformative power of cities for the common good (2020)
- Territorial Agenda 2030 - A future for all places (2020)
- Regulation establishing a European Union Recovery Instrument to support the recovery in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis (2020)
- EU Cohesion policy 2021-2027
 - Regulation on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) (2021)
 - Regulation on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund (2021)
 - Regulation establishing the Just Transition Fund (2021)
 - Regulation laying down common provisions EU 2021/1060 (2021)
- Urban Agenda for the EU - ‘Ljubljana Agreement’ (2021)
- New European Bauhaus (2022) (https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en)
- European Urban Initiative (from 2022) (<https://www.urban-initiative.eu/>)

United Nations

- New Urban Agenda (2017)

OECD

- Cities in Europe - The new OECD-EC definition (2012)
- OECD Principles on Urban Policy (2019)

European Council of Spatial Planners

- The Charter of European Planning (2013)



The review of policies, policy documents, regulations, and narratives within policy initiatives used methods and instruments of content analysis and discourse analysis. It primarily focused on **explicit mentions and articulations of the metropolitan dimension, meanings associated with it and context, in which the concept was used.** The metropolitan dimension encompasses metropolitan development, governance, planning, cooperation, and other related fields and concepts that are related to explicitly defined metropolitan areas or metropolitan regions.

The first step of the analysis was the identification of key words and phrases related to metropolitan dimension. The most explicit evidence of the metropolitan dimension within the documents was associated with the term (text segment) "**metropol**" to capture concepts such as *metropolis*, *metropolization*, *metropolitan area*, *metropolitan region*, *metropolitan government*, *metropolitan governance*, *metropolitan development*, and *metropolitan planning*. However, it should be noted that the search results also included broader usage of the term, such as *metropolitan scale*, *metropolitan level*, *metropolitan transport*, or *metropolitan context*.

However, there are policies and initiatives that do not directly use the term "metropolitan," but they do address issues and challenges relevant to cities and urban regions in general, including metropolitan areas. In these cases, the concepts of **functional area** or **functional region** are commonly used to emphasize the interconnectedness of central cities and their surrounding areas (suburban, rural, commuting). Since functional urban areas or regions also include metropolitan areas, the documents were searched for the term "**functional**." However, for the purpose of the review and subsequent analysis, only uses of the term "functional" related to urban territories, such as *functional area*, *functional region*, *functional urban area*, and *functional urban region*, were taken into account.

In addition to the previous search criteria, the expressions such as "**city-region**," "**city region**," "**urban region**," and "**urban area**" were also searched since they can also refer to metropolitan areas and the metropolitan dimension. However, the decision to include these terms in the review and analysis was based on careful reading and evaluation of their relevance to the analysis of the metropolitan dimension.

The term "*urban area*" has some level of ambiguity. For instance, The Charter of European Planning sometimes uses this term to refer to any urbanized area, such as a settlement or neighborhood, without explicitly referring to a city and its hinterland. Similarly, the Pact of Amsterdam states that "the term 'Urban Areas' is used in the Pact to denote all forms and sizes of urban settlement and their citizens, since the precise definition of a 'City' and an 'Urban Area' differs from one Member State to another." Therefore, only expressions where the term "*urban area*" was related to concepts such as *urban region* or *metropolitan area*, and thus to the metropolitan dimension, were included in the review and analysis.

The technique of content and discourse analysis

Based on the identified keywords, concepts, and expressions (metropol, functional area / region, functional, city-region, city region, urban region, urban area), direct citations were extracted as text segments from the documents and stored in a table that included the document name, publication or approval year, a quote containing the keywords, and the page of the citation. The relevant keywords, concepts, or phrases for the metropolitan dimension were highlighted in bold for easier reference. The



mentions of the term "metropolitan" were marked in red to highlight its explicit connection to the metropolitan dimension.

The table served as the first step of the analysis, that provided systematically organized source quotations from analyzed documents. The citations were then generalized to key meanings for metropolitan development, governance, planning, and cooperation. These meaning and their source quotations were then clustered based on **themes and meanings** related to the metropolitan dimension, such as "integrated development of the urban area." Finally, for each document a brief description of the use of the key words, concepts, and terms that were the subject of the search was created.

The table served as the **key input** for the interpretation and evaluation of the presence of the metropolitan dimension in European policy documents and initiatives and recognition of **narratives and discourses** associated with and related to the metropolitan dimension.

4.2. The metropolitan narratives

The **explicit reference to the metropolitan dimension using the term "metropolitan"** has been **infrequent in the analyzed EU policies**, policy documents, and initiatives. Only two documents explicitly refer to metropolitan dimension, very recent The New Leipzig Charter (2020) and Territorial Agenda 2030 (2020). The term "metropolitan" is directly used also in the United Nations' New Urban Agenda (2017), in The Charter of European Planning issued in 2013 by The European Council of Spatial Planners and especially and frequently in the OECD Principles on Urban Policy (2019).

The original Leipzig Charter (2007) argued that: "cities should be focal points of city-regional development and assume responsibility for territorial cohesion". The New Leipzig Charter (2020) builds upon this concept and highlights the importance of coordinated policies in cities and their functional areas for ensuring quality of life. It emphasizes that: "sustainable and resilient urban development takes place within a regional or **metropolitan** context and relies on a complex network of functional interdependencies and partnerships".

Metropolitan areas are understood as a specific case of the functional area, a term proliferated by the Territorial Agenda 2030, which associates metropolitan areas with flourishing economies in contrast to declining (often rural) areas. The New Leipzig Charter (2020) stresses the need for integrated territorial policies within functional regions, including metropolitan areas.

"In order to adapt urban policies to people's daily lives, towns and cities need to cooperate and coordinate their policies and instruments with their surrounding suburban and rural areas on policies for housing, commercial areas, mobility, services, green and blue infrastructure, material flows, local and regional food systems and energy supply, among others." (The New Leipzig Charter, 2020, p. 3)

The New Urban Agenda of the United Nations (2017) indeed highlights the need for the "coherence between goals and measures of sectoral policies [etc.] at different levels and scales of political administration, across administrative borders and considering the appropriate functional areas, in order to strengthen integrated approaches to urbanization and implement integrated urban and territorial planning strategies" (p. 23). The New Urban Agenda acknowledges the significance of



urban-rural partnerships and inter-municipal cooperation within functional territories, including metropolitan areas. It recognizes the metropolitan level as an important territorial scale for governance and planning. This perspective aligns with the understanding that metropolitan areas play a crucial role in addressing urban challenges, fostering sustainable development, and promoting territorial cohesion.

The Charter of European Planning (2013) does not refer to metropolitan areas only in its historical account of European urbanization. It acknowledges the significance of the metropolitan dimension and recognizes that it “challenges the traditional concept of city as free standing entity” (p.16). The Charter emphasizes the importance of planning and governance at the metropolitan level for enhancing the competitiveness of European cities and in achieving “smart, inclusive and sustainable growth and territorial cohesion” (p. 23).

Since publishing the new OECD-EC definition of cities in Europe (Dijkstra & Poelman 2012), OECD uses the methodology that redefined “the urban” or cities to functional regions (consisting of urban centers and their commuting zones), the OECD compares urbanization trends as well as socio-economic and environmental performance for metropolitan areas (OECD 2012).

The OECD Principles on Urban Policy (2019) highlights the importance of delivering development strategies and public services at appropriate urban scales, ranging from neighborhoods to metropolitan areas and megaregions. Furthermore, the document points that fragmented metropolitan governance can have negative impacts on economic growth. While around two-thirds of metropolitan areas in OECD countries have a metropolitan governance authority, the presence of fragmented governance structures can hinder coordinated decision-making, policy implementation, and effective collaboration within metropolitan regions and in consequence harm economic growth (p. 14).

There are instances where policies, documents, and initiatives do not explicitly use the word “metropolitan” (area, development, governance), but **acknowledge the presence of the metropolitan dimension**, usually referring to a more general concepts such as functional urban area:

“[...] when developing urban areas, special attention should be paid to supporting functional urban areas due to their importance in triggering cooperation between local authorities and partners across administrative borders as well as strengthening urban-rural linkages.” (Regulation on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund, 2021, p. 5)

“[The] common goal [of the Ministers responsible for urban matters] is to safeguard and enhance the quality of life in all European towns and cities and their functional areas.” (The New Leipzig Charter, 2020, p. 1)



4.3. The meaning and role of metropolitan dimension

In selected policies, policy documents, and initiatives, different **meanings** and roles are assigned to the metropolitan dimension (metropolitan areas, urban regions, and functional regions/areas). Below are the most pronounced examples.

The role of metropolitan areas in territorial / regional development

European policies highlight the importance of integrated and balanced development. Territorial cooperation is seen as crucial for achieving this objective, and urban and metropolitan regions/areas are recognized as actors in fostering territorial cooperation and balanced development at various spatial scales.

“Within the framework of sustainable urban development, it is considered necessary to support integrated territorial development in order to more effectively tackle the economic, environmental, climate, demographic and social challenges affecting urban areas, including functional urban areas, while taking into account the need to promote urban-rural linkages.” (Regulation on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund 2021, p. 9)

“[...] ensure coherence between goals and measures of sectoral policies [etc.] at different levels and scales of political administration, across administrative borders and considering the appropriate functional areas, in order to strengthen integrated approaches to urbanization and implement integrated urban and territorial planning strategies that factor them in.” (New Urban Agenda 2017, p. 23)

The Regulation EU 2021/1060 about common provisions on the EU funds emphasizes integrated approach to territorial development. It established Integrated territorial investment (ITI) for the delivery of integrated approach with one of the focus on sustainable urban development within functional urban areas. Despite the regulation does not explicitly uses term metropolitan and the instrument of ITI is associated with a variety of territorial formations (including rural areas, mountainous areas or islands and coastal areas) it established a key base for the integrated use of the EU funds in metropolitan areas as well as non-metropolitan urban regions.

Emphasis on cooperation in polycentric networks of cities, metropolitan areas and regions

“Europe’s territorial diversity offers considerable development potential. [...] Cooperation in polycentric networks of cities, metropolitan areas and regions contributes to spreading development potential more optimally.” (Territorial Agenda 2030, p. 15)



Metropolitan level as part of multi-level governance

Documents and policies advocate for considering the metropolitan dimension in multi-level governance and planning at local, regional, national, and European levels.

“[...] networks of cities and regions (territoires), connected in various ways, will determine the distribution, development and strength of economic activities throughout Europe. This has special implications for metropolitan governance and an integrated approach to rural investment.” (Charter of European Planning, p. 16)

“[...] support strengthening the capacity of subnational and local governments to implement effective local and metropolitan multilevel governance, across administrative borders, and based on functional territories, ensuring the involvement of subnational and local governments in decision-making and working to provide them with the necessary authority and resources to manage critical urban, metropolitan and territorial concerns. We will promote metropolitan governance that is inclusive and encompasses legal frameworks and reliable financing mechanisms.” (Pact of Amsterdam 2016, p. 4)

Multi-level governance in functional urban areas (including metropolitan areas)

“Appropriate formal and informal instruments [(funding, development strategies etc.)] should cover all spatial levels, from neighborhoods to local authorities and wider functional areas including the metropolitan level.” (The New Leipzig Charter 2020, p. 7)

Need for multi-level governance including the level of urban regions (and metropolitan areas)

The documents often recognize the **procedural ineffectiveness** and **unbalanced development** when policies and strategies are not integrated across all spatial levels of governance. This underscores the **importance of adopting a multi-level governance approach and considering the metropolitan dimension** in policy-making processes.

“In addition to formal local policies, specific and informal measures need to be enforced at other levels including neighbourhoods as well as wider functional, regional and metropolitan scales. This requires harmonised coordination of measures implemented at all spatial levels to ensure coherence and to avoid inefficiency.” (The New Leipzig Charter 2020, p. 3)

Metropolitan areas and functional (urban) regions/areas for addressing societal challenges

Policy documents acknowledge that metropolitan and urban areas provide the spatial/territorial scale for effectively and efficiently addressing societal challenges. However, explicit argumentation and examples regarding the impacts of these scales on policy effectiveness are often lacking.



Functional urban areas as the spatial scale for addressing societal challenges

“A growing number of urban challenges are of a local nature, but require a wider territorial solution (including urban-rural linkages) and cooperation within functional urban areas. At the same time, urban solutions have the potential to lead to wider territorial benefits. Urban Authorities therefore need to cooperate within their functional areas and with their surrounding regions, connecting and reinforcing territorial and urban policies.” (Pact of Amsterdam 2016, p. 4)

4.4. Challenges for metropolitan areas

The challenges associated with urban areas, including the metropolitan dimension, are often addressed **thematically** (e.g. climate change) without being explicitly linked to their specific implications for urban and metropolitan development.

“Sustainable and resilient urban development takes place within a regional or metropolitan context and relies on a complex network of functional interdependencies and partnerships. This is exemplified by the functional area as stated in the Territorial Agenda 2030. In parts this covers a metropolitan area or a combination of other territorial entities.” (The New Leipzig Charter 2020, p. 3)

Many of the challenges discussed in the documents have a **global nature**, indicating that they are not unique to a specific region or context. These challenges include issues such as climate change, social inequality, and sustainable development.

“To address economic, environmental, climate, demographic and social challenges, the ERDF shall support integrated territorial development based on territorial or community-led local development strategies in accordance with Article 29 or 32 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, respectively, that are focused on urban areas, including functional urban areas [...]” (European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund Regulation 2021, p. 20)

On the other hand, there are **challenges that are specifically related to Europe**. For example, The Charter of European Planning highlights the importance of European cities balancing competitiveness with the protection and promotion of their cultural identity and preserving their cultural heritage:

“European towns and cities must however remain competitive. This requires two streams of action. On the one hand, enhancing the historical urban landscape [...] On the other hand, new forms of urban governance are needed to provide an effective institutional capacity for sustaining competition and simultaneously protecting the heritage of our cities and regions (territoires). This is best achieved through planning at a metropolitan level.” (The Charter of European Planning 2013, p. 17)



4.5. Summary: metropolitan dimension in the narratives of the documents of the EU and international policies

The analysis demonstrated that even though the explicit use of the term "metropolitan" may be **limited in policies and policy documents**, the **recognition of the metropolitan dimension and its significance is evident** in the context of territorial development, governance, and addressing societal challenges.

The **representations** of the metropolitan dimension in policies and policy documents are currently **fragmented**, unconsolidated, and vulnerable. While the recognition of the metropolitan dimension has increased in the discourse of urban and regional policies over the past decade, it **has not yet translated into significant implications for policy implementation**. This can be attributed to the weak institutionalization of metropolitan governance.

While policy documents address thematic **challenges**, the explicit articulation of their implications for urban and metropolitan development is often missing. It is important to further explore and analyze these challenges to develop **targeted strategies and policies that address the specific needs and characteristics of metropolitan and urban areas**.

Interestingly, while the European Commission has introduced the instrument of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) to support (among others) the integrated development within functional urban areas, i.e. of the metropolitan and urban region dimension in public policies, the use and potential of this instrument is not in any significant manner reflected in the narratives presented in the strategic policy documents. As the ITI promotes horizontal and vertical cooperation to enhance the role of metropolitan and urban regions/areas in addressing sustainable development while reflecting societal challenges at global, European, national, and regional levels, the ITI mechanism represents an **extraordinary opportunity** for promoting the metropolitan dimension. **Its potential should be more explicitly recognized and utilized in the policy narratives**.

In summary, while there is acknowledgement of the metropolitan dimension in policies, there is a **need for more cohesive narratives and stronger institutionalization of metropolitan governance**. The ITI mechanism provides one of possible pathways for advancing the metropolitan and urban region dimension in public policies and should be **further leveraged for this purpose**, and used by MECOG-CE in the **Common metropolitan vision**.



5. Identification of challenges and opportunities I: Initial short survey

This part presents the outcomes of an **initial survey of challenges and opportunities specific for central European MAs** among the MECOG-CE partners. The survey serves for the identification of challenges and opportunities perceived, reflected and discussed in the MECOG-CE partners' metropolitan areas and constitutes an important input for the formulation of a policy document **Common metropolitan vision**. The initial survey is the first step in the research process, followed by a focus group discussion and comprehensive detailed survey.

5.1. Approach and method

The objective of the **initial short survey** of challenges and opportunities specific for central European MAs was the first level of uncovering the understanding and articulation of challenges and opportunities for metropolitan dimension, i.e. metropolitan development, governance, planning and policies. It was organized as a set of three questions on challenges for individual MAs, generally for MAs in Central Europe and opportunities for metropolitan dimension. It provided first round of answers by the MECOG-CE partners. These answers have been then mutually shared and discussed at the discussion forum organized during the kick-off meeting. It initiated a **process of building mutual understandings of the metropolitan challenges and opportunities within the MECOG-CE consortium**. This process continued beyond the discussion forum with the second round of comprehensive and detailed survey of challenges and opportunities and will be further developed during the formulation of a policy document **Common metropolitan vision**.

The short survey was conducted between May 22nd and May 26th 2023, prior to the MECOG-CE kick-off meeting in Brno. The initial short survey took form of an **online survey**. It used Google Forms and answers were stored in Google Sheet. The survey google form was **embedded into Google Webpage** (Figure 5.1). The webpage provided detail instructions. The answers from the stakeholders (stored in Google Sheet) were displayed on the webpage and were visible to all the survey participants. The respondents had the **option to adjust and expand their original answers** in reflection of answers (and thus suggestions) provided by other participants. This model of the survey thus **enabled mutual contact and exchange of views and positions between the MECOG-CE partners**.

The three questions were:

- In your opinion, what are the main challenges faced by metropolitan areas in Central Europe?
 - (Which of the challenges are common for MAs in Central Europe and are some of them very specific for Central Europe?)
- What do you perceive as the primary challenges for your metropolitan area or a metropolitan area you are familiar with?



- (The challenges can include the impact of general societal challenges on MA as well as challenges that are specific to the MA; challenges can be identified in various thematic fields and include climatic change, digitalization or circular economy as well as be associated with organizational and procedural challenges, such as missing legislative framework for the institutionalization of metropolitan collaboration.)
- What do you consider to be the key opportunities for the development and promotion of the metropolitan dimension (metropolitan development, governance, planning, cooperation)?
 - (Opportunities can be associated with a possibility to effectively address specific metropolitan thematic issues, such as suburban sprawl, or procedural issues, such as metropolitan budget. Opportunities can also be related to favorable circumstances for the promotion of metropolitan dimension, such as is the currently used instrument of the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) in the EU Cohesion Policy and the emphasis on the integrated planning in functional areas in European urban and territorial policies.)

Figure 5.1. The webpage of the Initial Short Survey



This **online survey** aims to gather information on challenges related to metropolitan dimension (metropolitan development, governance, planning, and cooperation). We are particularly interested in the perspectives and discussions within MECOG-CE partner metropolitan areas, as reflected in their strategies, policies, and decision-making processes.

The survey consists of **three main questions**:

- What do you perceive as the primary challenges for your metropolitan area or a metropolitan area you are familiar with?
- In your opinion, what are the main challenges faced by metropolitan areas in Central Europe?
- What do you consider to be the key opportunities for the development and advancement of the metropolitan dimension (metropolitan development, governance, planning, and cooperation)?

The open-ended format of the answers encourages respondents to provide more in-depth thoughts, offering comprehensive insights, arguments, explanations, and interpretations. This approach allows for a richer understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to metropolitan areas, as it encourages respondents to provide more complex and nuanced perspectives. The aim is to gather detailed responses that can inform further analysis and decision-making processes regarding metropolitan development, governance, planning, and cooperation.



5.2. Survey results

Even though all project partners were asked to take part in the survey, only the representatives of MAs provided their answers.

The following partners participated in the survey and provided their insights:

- Brno Metropolitan Area
- Stuttgart Region
- Warsaw Metropolitan Area
- Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia (GZM)
- Ostrava Metropolitan Area
- Metropolitan city of Turin
- Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg
- Charles University, Prague²

5.2.1. Main challenges faced by metropolitan areas in Central Europe

In general, the participants mentioned thematic challenges of global nature, such as climate change, urbanization or population change. Some also touched on specifically (Central) European challenges, for example energy transition towards no dependence on Russian gas (Stuttgart Region), or deindustrialization of cities and reindustrialization of their surroundings (Warsaw Metropolitan Area).

A few also described challenges of procedural character. That included little recognition of metropolitan dimension and of the added value of metropolitan approach in Central Europe.

“Not enough voice heard and not enough finances on [the area’s] development.” (Brno Metropolitan Area)

The Metropolitan city of Turin articulated the need for strengthening networks of heterogeneous cities and municipalities in the context of European polycentric development.

“[...] the focus should be on strengthening interconnected networks of cities with different sizes and roles and, in the meantime, expanding opportunities in the labor market and access to services. In relation to this broader concept we think it is also necessary to strengthen urban-rural linkages and partnership, especially in the territorially wider metropolitan areas, in which this dualism could be more evident.” (Metropolitan city of Turin)

² Charles University team provided answers for Prague Metropolitan Area as an example.



5.2.2. The primary challenges for own metropolitan area

The MAs with a large share of mining industry (GZM, Ostrava) considered one of the primary challenges for their MA to be tackling the effects of industry/energy transformation.

“[...] a significant share of mining and other sectors of the economy with high energy intensity makes the GZM area more vulnerable to the negative effects of transformation (m.in. possible intensification of social problems, such as unemployment, addictions, violence, or intensification of social inequalities and pauperization of part of society)” (GZM)

“Regeneration and revitalisation of neglected areas and sites (former mining landscape, former industrial sites); Low entrepreneurial activity (small number of SMEs)” (Ostrava Metropolitan Area)

A large portion of the respondents find their primary challenges to revolve around cooperation within the MA, while their answers all have slightly different perspectives. Some areas highlighted the fragmented administrative structure to be an obstacle to sound development.

“The need for a common solution to some problems for the whole conurbation does not coincide with the administrative fragmentation - the existing fragmentation is a barrier to common solutions.” (Ostrava Metropolitan Area)

For others, it is challenging to set up an adequate administrative and governance structure of the area when it is dynamic in time - municipalities join and leave, creating an ever-changing cooperation structure, as well as tension between the “old” and “new” members.

“In 2014, Warsaw, together with 39 communes, concluded an agreement on metropolitan cooperation, which is the basis for cooperation on key issues related to economic development and social of local communities. [...] According to the NUTS2 statistical division in force since January 1, 2018, the Warsaw metropolis consists of 70 communes and 9 counties located in the area of the Warsaw Metropolitan Area (WMA). [...] The doubling of the existing area of cooperation within the Warsaw Metropolis translates into the need to develop a new model of co-operation between the previously cooperating local government units and its new members.

As a result, it is necessary to redefine the existing assumptions and development goals of the region [...]” (Warsaw Metropolitan Area)

Similarly, some areas consist of very heterogeneous municipalities (urban/rural, large/small), for which it is difficult to provide common objectives.

“The Metropolitan city of Turin (CMT0) is characterized by a very high administrative fragmentation (312 municipalities) and polycentric environment, with very diverse geographic and socio-economic contexts. Due to the wideness and diversity of the territory, local administrations, especially small ones in rural and mountain areas, are not often feeling metropolitan nor very engaged in the processes led by the metropolitan institution. One of the main specific challenges for CMT0 is to support the engagement of local



administrations and, at the same time, systematize the processes of metropolitan government in an integrated metropolitan governance.” (Metropolitan city of Turin)

Complementing such challenges to metropolitan cooperation, certain answers articulate specific procedural challenges - for example lack of tools for cooperation and governance, such as non-existent formal instruments of spatial planning on the metropolitan level.

“[...] we face no formal/legally based structure of metropolitan cooperation, no formal instruments to pursue spatial (land use) planning on metropolitan level. The challenge can be seen also in the fact that metropolitan cooperation is still viewed by many partners as strictly dependent on ITI instrument.” (Brno Metropolitan Area)

“Lack of a legislative framework for institutionalisation of metropolitan cooperation” (Ostrava Metropolitan Area)

Interestingly, many of the participants stated that they experience challenges related to metropolitan cooperation, while there have not been similar mentions in the first question about challenges faced by CE MAs. Based on these individual insights it could be argued that challenges to metropolitan cooperation are common for Central European metropolitan areas.

5.2.3. The key opportunities for the development and promotion of the metropolitan dimension

The participants most often recognize the key opportunity for the development and promotion of the metropolitan dimension to be success in planning or tackling a challenge. Specifically, they mention spatial planning, tackling urban sprawl, or successfully managing transport within the metropolitan area.

“We need to prove that we can deliver the best solutions to overcome crises/to solve challenges. Metropolitan areas provide the best scale.” (Stuttgart Region)

“Opportunity to demonstrate metropolitan planning/cooperation on a specific integrated solution, e.g. concerning waste management” (Ostrava Metropolitan Area)

“Good practices and effective tools of MA planning and management” (Warsaw Metropolitan Area)

“The opportunity can be seen in a suburban sprawl and the reaction of metropolitan area to this issue.” (Brno Metropolitan Area)

As was stated earlier, this success could lead to better recognition of the added value of metropolitan approach. It remains a question, however, how the MAs facing procedural challenges such as lack of tools for spatial planning can accomplish such success.

Some respondents highlight that mutual learning and sharing could lead to better results in tackling challenges and providing common solutions.

There is a two-sided view of the role of EUCP instruments (such as ITI) for the metropolitan dimension. On the one hand, some answers state that these instruments are important for financing territorial development and can also stimulate metropolitan cooperation. On the other



hand, the participants recognize a threat of dependency on such instruments, which can serve as a barrier to the development of other forms of cooperation. In order to avoid these negative effects of dependency, some respondents suggest providing MAs with greater autonomy (financial, administrative), for example through a more place-based approach of development financing.

“It is necessary to enhance the metropolitan governance and cooperation as a self-standing, autonomous policy that is independent on the EUCP and enhance institutionalization of metropolitan governance and planning.” (Brno Metropolitan Area)

“Opportunity to implement Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs) under the Cohesion Policy 2028+ with more emphasis on the needs of the territory (place-based approach) than on the (national) needs of central managing authorities; An own metropolitan budget could help to move away from the dependence on EU programmes and on the Cohesion Policy.” (Ostrava Metropolitan Area)

“One of the possible key opportunities for this kind of development lies in the EU cohesion policy instruments, to the extent that these are used for have a differential impact on the metropolitan territory, according to the specific needs and administrative structures of the local authorities. However, as underlined by the Espon METRO final targeted analysis, the architecture of the cohesion policy seems to give too little space to the Metropolitan vision in the programming and management of EU cohesion policy instruments.” (Metropolitan City of Turin)

For some respondents, the opportunity for metropolitan dimension also lies in policies and other documents.

“[...] recognition of functional area in New Leipzig Charter + Territorial Agenda of the EU” (Stuttgart Region)

“Potential changes to the metropolitan act - the issue of elaborating the scope of tasks of the Metropolis GZM in the Act on the metropolitan association in the Śląskie Voivodship is one of the challenges, but also an opportunity for the Metropolis GZM to take its initiatives and activities to a higher level. Thanks to a stronger mandate, as well as better defined and potentially broader competences, GZM could gain in importance on both the regional and national arena.” (GZM)

5.3. The outcomes of the initial short survey

The outcomes of this initial survey were assessed prior to the MECOG-CE kick-off meeting in Brno and the summary was presented to the partners during a workshop at the meeting on May 30th, 2023. It served as the initial overview of the challenges and opportunities recognized by the MECOG-CE partners and as the stimulation for the group discussion during the kick-off meeting. Together with the outcomes of the group discussion, it helped deeper and more complex thinking about the challenges and opportunities based on more articulated mutual understanding and sharing of thoughts and ideas within the MECOG-CE partnership that was essential for the comprehensive detailed survey.



The understanding of the main challenges faced by metropolitan areas in Central Europe among the MECOG-CE metropolitan partners reflected selected global trends and challenges, namely and outstandingly **climate change**, which is hardly surprising due to its prominent position within the current EU and national policies. It also included **urbanization and population change**, i.e. processes that are more related to the scale of metropolitan regions. The **dependence on Russian gas**, respectively diminishing this dependence, reflected the major current geopolitical challenge in Central Europe, while the processes of **industrialization/re-industrialization were expressions of the still ongoing long-term transformations**, especially in former socialist countries. Procedural challenges were related to weak recognition of the added value of metropolitan dimension and the organization of networks of heterogeneous actors in metropolitan areas.

Within the articulations of specific thematic challenges in individual metropolitan area, the **restructuring of industries and energy transformations** was boldly pronounced by the MAs in coal regions (Ostrava, GZM). The identified challenges for individual MAs involved namely procedural aspects related to cooperation within the MAs, specifically related to fragmented administrative structure, heterogeneity of municipalities and areas (urban/rural) and weak or missing instruments for effective governance, including the metropolitan budget. While the stakeholders and MECOG-CE partners associated these procedural challenges with their specific areas, it can be argued that **challenges in the field of metropolitan cooperation are commonly perceived as crucial by all involved Central European metropolitan areas**.

The key opportunities for the development and promotion of the metropolitan dimension (metropolitan development, governance, planning, cooperation) were associated with the **important achievements in metropolitan planning** that would bring a **success in tackling important challenges**, such as sprawl or waste management. The opportunity is also **associated with the use of the instruments of the EU Cohesion Policy** that help to provide finance for the development of metropolitan territories. However, the over dependence on these EU instruments also presents certain threat to greater metropolitan autonomy.



6. Identification of challenges and opportunities II: Focus group discussion

This part presents the outcomes of a **focus group discussion** among the MECOG-CE partners about **challenges and opportunities specific for central European MAs**. The discussion was organized on May 30th, 2023 during a workshop at the MECOG-CE kick-off meeting in Brno. The Focus Group objective was to discuss challenges and opportunities perceived and reflected in the MECOG-CE partners' metropolitan areas.

6.1. Approach and method

The key objective of the Focus Group was to **enhance the common understanding and formulation of challenges and opportunities** for the Central European metropolitan areas and its potential implications for the individual metropolitan areas. It also contributed to the final refining of the comprehensive and detailed survey of challenges and opportunities that followed the discussion forum. This was achieved through employing following activities within the Focus Group(s):

- presentation and discussion of the **challenges and opportunities identified in the analysis of European and international policy documents and initiatives**;
- presentation and discussion of the **responses to questions in the initial short survey** concerning challenges and opportunities in CE MAs assembled during the short survey organized prior to the Focus Group;
- discussion of the challenges and opportunities within **group-work during the Focus Group** and their formulation, mutual presentation and discussion within the complete group of all participants;
- implication of the outcomes of Focus Group for the **final formulation of the structure and articulation of questions in the detailed survey** of challenges and opportunities for metropolitan dimension.

The event started with the presentations of challenges and opportunities identified in the analysis of European and international policy documents and initiatives and summary of results from the initial short survey. Then organizational instructions were provided to launch the Focus Group discussions (Figure 6.1.). The following discussion consisted of two parts, both approximately 40 minutes long, divided by a 15-minute break.

In the **first part**, the participants were divided into **three groups** with different discussion topics:

- thematic challenges;
- procedural challenges;
- opportunities.



The groups were asked to complete two tasks:

- Exchange their views on the topic
 - What's their experience?
 - What do they find important to mention?
- Formulate a shared view of the topic

In the **second part**, each group presented their outcomes to the general forum and a general discussion followed, allowing the participants a deeper and shared understanding of metropolitan challenges and opportunities.

In order to help review and summarize the inputs from the participants, the discussion was recorded on a Dictaphone, and a camera and notes were taken throughout.

The **main outcomes** of the focus group are:

- a more **advanced, structured and nuanced understanding of challenges and opportunities** shared within the group of involved partners that will serve as a key input for the formulation of Common Metropolitan Vision, i.e. advocacy policy document that is the deliverable 1.1.2.;
- **feedback to the proposed detailed questionnaire survey** of the challenges aimed at the metropolitan areas of involved stakeholders and suggestions for the finalizing of its structure.

Figure 6.1. Focus Group discussion in Brno





6.2. Survey results

The results are based on contributions from 21 partners that represented:

- Brno Metropolitan Area (František Kubeš, Petr Šašinka, Soňa Raszková)
- Stuttgart Region (Frieder Oesterle)
- Warsaw Metropolitan Area (Andrzej Czajkowski, Katarzyna Gruba)
- Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia (Natalia Puchała, Agata Koszek-Pyka)
- Ostrava Metropolitan Area (Hana Juráňová, Dušan Pöllich, Jiří Svobodník)
- Metropolitan City of Turin (Anna Turrini, Chiara Ambrogini)
- Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg (Jürgen Neumüller)
- JS Interreg CE (Christophe Ebermann)
- Metropolitan Research Institute (Iván Tosics)
- Ministry of Regional Development CZ (Kristýna Drápelová)
- University of Silesia (Robert Pyka, Krzysztof Bierwiazzonek, Małgorzata Suchacka, Zuzanna Neuve-Eglise)
- Charles University, Prague (Alžběta Rychnovská)

6.2.1. Thematic challenges

In the very beginning of their presentation, this group summarized the interconnectedness of metropolitan agenda with other scales of issues by saying:

“We had issues to find the challenges that are thematic as well as metropolitan, because we think that they are very much connected all together with the management of the city as such.” (Soňa Raszková)

Afterwards, they showed a drawing of a person named George/Jürgen/Jurek/Jiří, who is an inhabitant of a metropolitan area. According to this group, this person does not understand how the metropolitan management and administration works, he just wants to live in an area which is effective in tackling challenges, providing services etc. In this context, they highlighted the need to identify and tackle challenges with the public interest in mind, to do it for the people. Later, they argued for the identification of thematic challenges to be the foundation and starting point of metropolitan cooperation:

“All of us should start with this thematic approach because this is the reason behind why there should be a cooperation or some instruments. [...] This is kind of the basis.” (Jürgen Neumüller)

The group listed several specific challenges they found important for Central European metropolitan areas. That included transport, which is already handled well by some MAs, and some are currently developing their transport strategies. Secondly, environment/climate change was



mentioned, together with the fact that emissions do not stop at the administrative border of the city and therefore it is key to tackle this aspect of climate change at a higher (metropolitan) level. The group also presented public service availability as a challenge for metropolitan areas, connecting it with practical experience - they stated that it is key to make sure that there is enough demand for such services in smaller, more rural municipalities. Moreover, desindustrialisation, young people leaving the area and affordable housing were added to the list.

6.2.2. Procedural challenges

In the beginning, this group declared that it was difficult for them to come up with a shared approach to procedural challenges, because all the areas that participated in the discussion are different and face different issues.

“[In] The issue of procedural challenges is quite complicated to present some kind of common approach that will save the world.” (Petr Šašinka)

While the management and cooperation framework is functioning in some metropolitan areas, and often only needs to enhance some specific competences, representatives of other metropolitan areas, notably Ostrava and Brno, referred to under-institutionalization. Despite the metropolitan cooperation is anchored by the EU Cohesion Policy instrument of the ITI Integrated Territorial investment, its actual realization was seen as being pursued primarily on a more informal and voluntary basis with a lack of formally established top-down national framework for metropolitan governance and planning.

The group presented several points resulting from their discussion. On the example of Brno or Czechia respectively, it was argued that there are some procedural obstacles to tackling thematic challenges effectively, regarding appropriate recognition of competences on various spatial scales:

“In the Czech case there are plenty of competences that we know should be done on the metropolitan level. But nobody, no institution, does these competences, they are completely missing. [...] Nobody in our metropolitan area is responsible for the issue of waste management, for example. Even the region doesn't do that, even the municipalities don't do that.” (Petr Šašinka)

“There are competences given by legislation, but they are delegated to, let's say, not appropriate level. [...] For example the question of spatial planning. In the Czech case, every separate municipality is responsible to do its own land-use or spatial plan. But we know it's not efficient. They don't have knowledge, they don't have the capacity. But it's written in the legislation. Our attempt would be to change it, to create something like a metropolitan spatial plan for the whole metropolitan area. But because of missing framework, we cannot do it.” (Petr Šašinka)

Democracy and various forms of citizen representation within metropolitan governance were also discussed by the group. (Direct election of a "metropolitan mayor", or a selection of a non-elected "metropolitan manager".)



Chiara Ambrogini from the Metropolitan City of Turin explained how the historical development in Italy allowed the Metropolitan City of Turin to establish such a strong institutional structure.

6.2.3. Opportunities

This group presented a set of opportunities for metropolitan areas, addressing opportunities for these areas to better tackle challenges, as well as opportunities for the promotion of metropolitan dimension in general (often a single opportunity included a notion of both of these dimensions).

Firstly, the group argued that being part of a metropolitan area is beneficial for both small and large municipalities.

“Especially for small municipalities, the metropolitan area’s a big opportunity because the smaller ones really need support, they have lack of resources, lack of staff, also lack of finances, and dealing with those complex challenges as we have, transformation of economy, climate change etc., you may need the support of the metropolitan area.”
(Frieder Oesterle)

This was confirmed by Natalia Puchała from GZM, who said that there, a Solidarity fund was established where larger municipalities gave up some of their finances in the benefit of the smaller ones. This MA is also consciously developing public transport network in the areas further from the central city to make them more connected.

“Also [for] the bigger [municipalities], or the metropolis itself it’s an opportunity to cooperate with its surrounding area because we have the surrounding area using services of the city, of the metropolis itself. Either [the people] work there, they go to university there, they go shopping etc., so you need some sort of coordination otherwise it’s chaos.”
(Frieder Oesterle)

The group also saw economic and energetic transformation as an opportunity, as it can initiate cooperation between municipalities in need of support, and this cooperation can result in a more efficient use of resources, capacities etc.

“One opportunity may be an improved education system which could be provided by the metropolitan area. So, really, capacity building, so to say, on a metropolitan level.”
(Frieder Oesterle)

Another opportunity was seen in the metropolitan identity:

“In Stuttgart, for example, we do not really have a direct election [and] not really a metropolitan identity yet. So this could be an opportunity for the future.” (Frieder Oesterle)

Finally, the importance of the presence of metropolitan dimension in European documents and the existence of appropriate instruments was highlighted:

“We have European instruments like the ITI instrument, also Interreg, that supports functional areas. Also various documents [...] like the Leipzig Charter, Territorial Agenda, Urban Agenda etc. So these [...] still leave room for improvement I think, concerning



strengthening metropolitan dimension, but nevertheless are a huge window of opportunity - we didn't have this 7 years ago - so a huge opportunity for metropolitan regions to further develop their governance system of the thematic challenges. (Frieder Oesterle)

Jürgen Neumüller added that metropolitan areas are also actors in an international competition and the frontrunners of European economy, therefore better metropolitan cooperation is an opportunity to stay competitive in face of competitors from China etc., as well as to provide jobs in the area and have more tax revenue. Iván Tosics expressed that there is a need to differentiate between economic development which serves the area and one which does not, mentioning the questionable effects of building a Tesla battery factory near Berlin.

6.2.4. Unsuccessful attempts to tackle a challenge

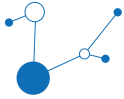
During the general discussion as well as in the initial short survey, it was often mentioned that successfully tackling a challenge is a key opportunity for the promotion of metropolitan dimension. To support mutual learning and sharing, the participants were asked towards the end of the discussion to share their experiences where their MA took on a challenge and did not manage to tackle it successfully.

In Brno, some municipalities refused to transfer some of their competences to the metropolitan level, when offered that the (informal) metropolitan administration will take care of these. They saw it as losing power, which can be common in post-socialist countries. In Budapest, a successful territorial structuring with incentives in the field of school desegregation was eliminated after Fidesz came into power. In Berlin-Brandenburg, an attempt to unify Berlin and Brandenburg failed in a public vote (despite political will on both sides) 20 years ago, because the inhabitants of Brandenburg did not want Brandenburg to take Berlin's debts. In GZM, a structure for managing ITI was established, but it is different from the general metropolitan administrative structure, which creates tension.

6.3. Outcomes and implications for the Comprehensive Detailed Survey

The focus group discussion proved that for the mutual understanding and for the articulation of the Common metropolitan vision, it is **necessary to build understanding**. The survey itself is not sufficient. The **group discussion and exchange are essential**.

The groups discussing thematic and procedural challenges during the workshop both stated that they found it difficult to come up with a shared approach to the topic, as their metropolitan areas are very different and deal with different issues. That resulted in both of them presenting a list of diverse challenges. The group focused on **thematic issues** listed challenges that the group participants commonly perceived, experienced and shared. The **procedural challenges group's** list consisted more of challenges experienced individually in each metropolitan area, without focus on the mutual intersections. In both cases, the participants generally mentioned the mutual



interconnectedness of all challenges, but did not show many examples of these connections. The third group that discussed **opportunities** for metropolitan dimension explicitly related opportunities with challenges. For instance, they presented the economic transformation as an opportunity for initiating cooperation in difficult situations.

In order to encourage finding the linkages between various thematic and procedural issues and challenges as well as between challenges and opportunities, the questions in the comprehensive detailed survey were modified to **stimulate the respondents to connect challenges and opportunities and differentiate them according to their importance.**

In the discussion as well as during the initial survey, some challenges were mentioned by most of the respondents **as important for their individual MA**, but at the same time **were not mentioned as challenges common for MAs in Central Europe** (climate change, issues connected to metropolitan cooperation). Another aim of the comprehensive survey is therefore to further **stimulate the shared understanding of challenges and opportunities across the perceived differentiation and diversity between Central European MAs**, which is needed for the formulation of the deliverable D.1.1.2. Common metropolitan vision.



7. Identification of challenges and opportunities III: Comprehensive detailed survey

This part presents the outcomes of the **comprehensive detailed survey of challenges and opportunities specific for central European MAs** perceived, reflected and discussed in the MECOG-CE partners' metropolitan areas. This is the final step in the research process that followed the initial short survey and the focus group discussion.

7.1. Approach and method

The objective of the **comprehensive detailed survey** of challenges and opportunities specific for central European MAs was the full, complex and nuanced understanding and articulation of challenges and opportunities for metropolitan dimension, i.e. metropolitan development, governance, planning and policies. The survey followed after the focus group discussions at the MECOG-CE kick-off meeting. The project partners were asked to fill in the questionnaire from June 20th to July 10th, 2023 with the deadline extended by a week.

The format was **online** in the same environment as in the initial short survey. It used Google Forms and answers were stored in Google Sheet. The survey google form was **embedded into Google Webpage** (Figure 7.1.). The webpage provided detail instructions. The answers from the stakeholders (stored in Google Sheet) were displayed on the webpage and were visible to all the survey participants (Figure 7.2.). The respondents had the **option to adjust and expand their original answers** in reflection of answers (and thus suggestions) provided by other participants. This model of the survey thus **enabled to continue in mutual contact and exchange of views and positions between partners** in MECOG-CE.

The survey was divided into **two sections** that focused on (A) **challenges** and (B) **opportunities** for metropolitan dimension. The **open-ended format** of the answers encouraged respondents to provide **more in-depth thoughts, offering comprehensive insights, arguments, explanations, and interpretations**. This approach allowed for a richer understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to metropolitan areas, as it encouraged respondents to provide more complex and nuanced perspectives. The aim was to gather **detailed responses that can inform further analysis and decision-making processes** regarding metropolitan development, governance, planning, and cooperation, specifically the formulation of a policy document **Common metropolitan vision**.

Using **content and discourse analyses**, the extensive and comprehensive responses were scrutinized for each individual question and then generalized in key highlights. The interpretations were then subject of a quick **process of comments** by the MECOG-CE partners, with important suggestions by Brno Metropolitan Area and University of Silesia. Critical remarks and comments were delivered by the Ostrava Metropolitan Area, which asked for substantial revisions of interpretations; the consideration of them lead to adjustments in the texts.



Figure 7.1. Questionnaire on the webpage of the Comprehensive Detailed Survey

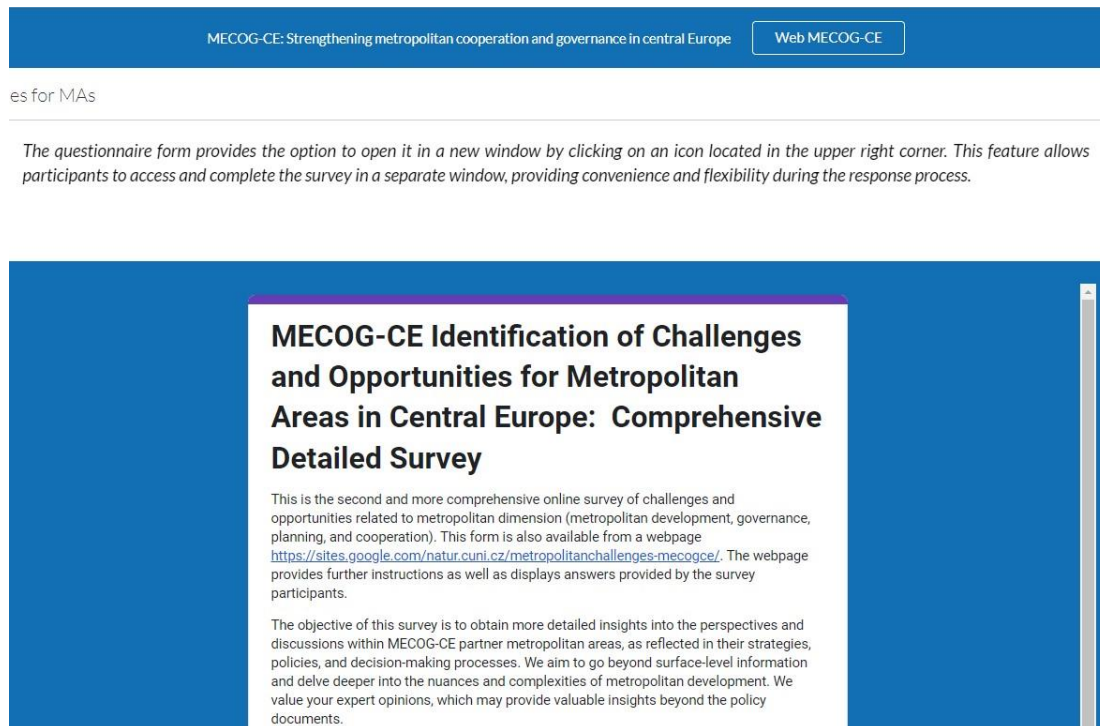
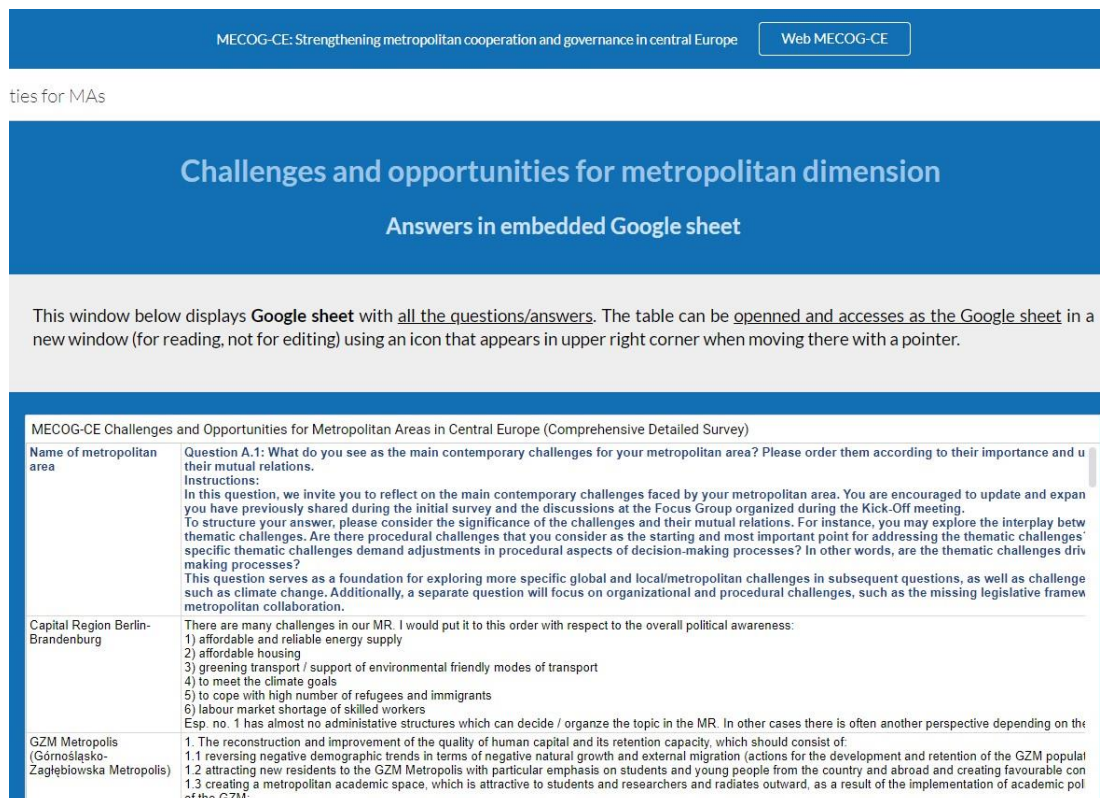


Figure 7.2. Answers on the webpage of the Comprehensive Detailed Survey





7.2. Survey results

The following partners participated in the survey and provided their insights:

- Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg
- Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia (GZM) (represented by the University of Silesia in Katowice)
- Brno Metropolitan Area
- Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia (GZM) (represented by the Metropolitan administration)
- Ostrava Metropolitan Area
- Metropolitan city of Milan
- Metropolitan city of Turin
- Metropolitan Research Institute
- Stuttgart Region
- Warsaw Metropolitan Area

The following report is organized around each individual question, with the full text of the question and detailed instructions, explanation and guidelines for their answering.

7.2.1. Challenges for metropolitan area

Question A.1: What do you see as the main contemporary challenges for your metropolitan area? Please order them according to their importance and urgency. Additionally, comment upon their mutual relations.

Instructions:

In this question, we invite you to reflect on the main contemporary challenges faced by your metropolitan area. You are encouraged to update and expand upon the insights and suggestions you have previously shared during the initial survey and the discussions at the Focus Group organized during the Kick-Off meeting. To structure your answer, please consider the significance of the challenges and their mutual relations. For instance, you may explore the interplay between procedural challenges and thematic challenges. Are there procedural challenges that you consider as the starting and most important point for addressing the thematic challenges? Alternatively, do you believe that specific thematic challenges demand adjustments in procedural aspects of decision-making processes? In other words, are the thematic challenges driving the need for changes in decision-making processes? This question serves as a foundation for exploring more specific global and local/metropolitan challenges in subsequent questions, as well as challenges related to various thematic fields such as climate change. Additionally, a separate question will



focus on organizational and procedural challenges, such as the missing legislative framework for the institutionalization of metropolitan collaboration.

The responses to this question could be roughly divided into ones from institutionally more developed MAs with a firmer organizational structure, and ones from MAs expressing essential procedural difficulties. There is a pattern to be found in the other identified challenges, which can be linked to the level of procedural obstacles.

Brno, Ostrava, and partly also GZM highlighted the lack of legislative framework and formal administrative instruments as a very important challenge for their MA.

“no formal/legally based structure of metropolitan cooperation (cooperation is strictly depended on ITI instrument); no formal instruments to pursue spatial (land-use) planning on metropolitan level” (Brno Metropolitan Area)

“Lack of a legislative framework for an advanced institutionalisation of metropolitan cooperation.” (Ostrava Metropolitan Area)

The other challenges stated by these respondents, both procedural and thematic, were mostly specific to the MA.

“Weak sharing of good practices within the metropolitan area.” (Ostrava Metropolitan Area)

“Significant loss of young residents as a result of emigration - over the last two decades there has been a significant decrease in the number of inhabitants of the GZM area, especially among people of working age. This phenomenon increases the degree of demographic burden on the region, with other negative consequences (e.g. insufficient labour supply, higher burden on local governments of public services, etc.).” (GZM)

“Fragmented waste management system.” (Ostrava Metropolitan Area)

Even general societal challenges such as sustainable transportation or climate change have their specific dimension here.

“[Public transport network in the GZM is] a complex, polycentric network with a diverse settlement structure and spatial functions, managed from the spatial planning side by 41 local government units. Harmonization of their transportation activities is extremely difficult, and at the same time crucial for the sustainable development of GZM.” (GZM)

“Lack of capacity, knowledge and will to implement measures to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change.” (Ostrava Metropolitan Area)

Compared to that, areas which do not face missing administrative framework highlight the general societal challenges as more important/urgent for them than areas with essential procedural difficulties. As it seems that areas with such difficulties have to tackle these together with all their other challenges, it is a question whether there remains enough capacity to both overcome the procedural obstacles and reach success in dealing with the general challenge - to show the full potential of the metropolitan dimension. To conclude, it can be argued that even though the MAs lacking legislative and organizational framework are able to identify important challenges, the missing framework hinders them from tackling these most effectively.



There is also a difference in the perspectives of procedural challenges explained by more institutionally developed MAs (Milan, Turin) and the ones challenged by lack of framework (Ostrava, Brno, and partly GZM). Whereas the second group often expressed crucial procedural difficulties, the responses of Turin and Milan were much more nuanced in this regard.

"The institution's key role lies in coordinating and integrating the activities of the municipalities involved and providing instruments and strategies to facilitate such coordination. [...] the main challenges for the metropolitan area involve harmonizing, integrating, and digitalizing administrative procedures." (Metropolitan city of Milan)

Nevertheless, the MAs challenged by the lack of formal instruments are advocating for themselves through identifying the area's challenges and opportunities, sharing know-how through participating in relevant projects, and taking on responsibility and leading roles in the region - at least to the extent that the existing framework allows.

Concerning the relation between procedural and thematic challenges, a respondent from Brno Metropolitan area stated that:

"Thematic challenges in our metropolitan area are driving the need for changes in decision-making processes for achieving better outcomes and meeting objectives. And vice versa, facing procedural challenges is significant for addressing the thematic challenges." (Brno Metropolitan Area)

This is in line with Mr. Neumüller's remark from the kick-off meeting:

"All of us should start with this thematic approach because this is the reason behind why there should be a cooperation or some instruments. [...] This is kind of the basis." (Jürgen Neumüller)

Stuttgart, GZM and Ostrava all touch upon the topic of revitalization of space or depletion of existing spatial resources, which can be connected to the opportunity of enhancing citizen participation in the process of spatial planning and development.

"Stuttgart Region is comparatively dense and space is limited. Spaces for housing, the economy/industry, transport, agriculture and open spaces are needed and are thus in competition with each other. Citizens are often not favoring the construction of new areas for housing, industrial estates, streets and bigger infrastructure projects in general." (Stuttgart Region)

"The improvement of the quality of public spaces and revitalization of buildings and brownfields (revitalization areas cover more than 9% of the area of the GZM). Linking the issue of creating public spaces with the broader revitalization process, grassroots activism of inhabitants and the right to the city." (GZM)



7.2.2. Common challenges faced by metropolitan areas in Central Europe

Question A.2: In your opinion, what are the main common challenges faced by metropolitan areas in Central Europe? Can you also identify challenges that are specific to countries, regions, and cities in Central Europe?

Instructions:

In this question, we invite you to share your expert opinion on the main common challenges encountered by metropolitan areas in Central Europe. While many challenges faced by metropolitan areas have global origins and impacts, some are specific to Central European countries, regions, and cities. Please consider both. When providing your answer, please note that it is not necessary for the challenges you consider important to be explicitly reflected or articulated in official policy documents in your metropolitan area. We are interested in your expert opinion based on your knowledge, discussions, and professional engagement in the field of metropolitan development and governance.

To offer some context, it is worth mentioning that in the initial survey, respondents highlighted adaptation to climate change as an important challenge for their own metropolitan areas. However, this global challenge was rarely mentioned as a challenge commonly shared by all metropolitan areas in Central Europe. Concerning challenges specific to Central Europe, Ostrava metropolitan area highlighted demographic change and population aging, while the metropolitan area of Turin pointed to the promotion of polycentric urban development as a specific challenge faced by metropolitan areas in Central Europe.

The summary of identified challenges for metropolitan areas in Central Europe from all the respondents is very similar to the answers in question A.1 (main contemporary challenges for the individual metropolitan area). The analysis of individual responses has shown that respondents tended to choose responses about Central Europe from the list of challenges for their metropolitan area already provided in the question A.1 with only very limited thinking beyond the experience in their own metropolitan area. The responses rarely include challenges which the participants do not perceive as important/urgent in the case of their MA (such as lack of will or motivation to cooperate within the MA or the MA not having adequate tools for planning/governance) despite these challenges were articulated by the other participants during the previous steps of initial survey and focus group discussion. This proves that the general goal of the MECOG-CE to think about and reflect realities beyond own metropolitan area and a specific country context is needed.

There is therefore still a question, what are the challenges common among CE MAs. Two of the most reoccurring ones are climate change and sustainable mobility/public transport. Regarding the first one, the participants expressed various views on tackling climate change within the MAs in other questions, ranging from the need to implement land-use plans in a larger share of the area to calling for state-wide cooperation on becoming climate neutral. It could be key to explore this issue and gain a deeper understanding of what could be the common elements, and furthermore if these are really Central European, or if they are also shared with other European regions. It could be valuable to specify what it is that ties the CE MAs together, and at the same



time differentiates them from MAs in other parts of Europe - what is the Central European metropolitan agenda.

Generally, there seems to be a connection between the responses of post-socialist MAs and the ones which were never part of the Eastern Bloc. The post-socialist ones mention challenges such as unwillingness to cooperate and lack of trust more often, and they also share perspective on the industrial/green transformation (also because of similarities in the historical industrial focus of these regions).

Except for Brno's response, where they highlight:

"Lack of recognition of metropolitan dimension and added value of metropolitan approach."
(Brno Metropolitan Area),

all the other responses focus on thematic challenges. In question A.1 Brno, Ostrava and GZM (post-socialist) together with Stuttgart and Berlin-Brandenburg all expressed certain levels of lack of formal legislative/administrative structure. In the post-socialist countries, the national legislative framework is very weak in regard to metropolitan areas, in Germany it is more a matter of missing administrative bodies with relevant organizational and implementational competences:

"[Affordable and reliable energy supply] has almost no administrative structures which can decide/organize the topic within the MA." (Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg)

Even though the thematic challenges serve as a basis for the development of any cooperation and any attempts to establish a formal structure as stated before, it is still important to acknowledge that difficulties in doing so are common among many CE MAs.

Finally, some respondents touched upon the important topic of national political trajectories, which can have crucial effects on the functioning of MAs. MRI summarized it in this way:

"Some of the CE countries have very fragmented local government structure and it is well known that without basic changes, such as amalgamation of municipalities or fostering functional area cooperation, the efficiency of public administration can not be increased. Even so, the lack of cooperation culture is a strong factor, in most countries municipalities are unwilling to cooperate with each other and higher levels of government rarely introduce enforcement mechanisms (except for EU planning related tools)." (MRI)

This corresponds with a challenge identified by respondents from Ostrava in A.1:

"potential lack of motivation to cooperate more closely on strengthening the metropolitan dimension, even if the legislation would make it possible" (Ostrava Metropolitan Area)

GZM added more detail to the topic of national political climate:

"There is fear in central government of the division of power and its allocation in MAs. [...] The "illiberal" democracy manifests itself, among other things, in the shift from securing the freedom of the individual (liberal democracy) to ensuring the effectiveness of state authorities. With reference to the management of metropolitan areas, it translates itself in undermining public confidence in local government, portraying local governments as often incompetent and incapable of solving important local issues combined with



convincing that government institutions and government representatives will solve the majority of residents' problems.” (GZM)

7.2.3. Thematic challenges

Question A.3: Which are the main thematic fields of challenges related to the development in the metropolitan area that are identified in metropolitan policies, policy documents, and reflected in decision-making practices? Can you order these challenges according to their importance and urgency? Can you distinguish between the impact of general societal challenges on the metropolitan area and challenges that are specific to the metropolitan area?

Instructions:

In this question, we invite you to identify and prioritize the main thematic fields of challenges related to the development of your metropolitan area. The thematic fields can encompass various areas, including but not limited to the degradation of the environment, climate change, sustainable mobility, inclusive digitalization, circular economy, diversity and social justice, affordable housing, and more.

These challenges should be those that are recognized and addressed in metropolitan policies, policy documents, and reflected in decision-making practices. Please order the challenges based on their importance and urgency within the context of your metropolitan area. Additionally, differentiate between challenges that originate from general societal trends and affect the metropolitan area (even if the origin is outside the metropolitan area), and challenges that are specific to the metropolitan area itself, which are unlikely to be faced by all metropolitan areas.

To provide an example, digitalization can be considered one of the key general societal challenges that has an impact on all MECOG-CE metropolitan areas. However, it is essential to highlight specific implications and variations of the digitalization challenge in your own metropolitan area. For instance, you may mention how digitalization affects aspects such as connectivity, access to services, or economic transformation within your metropolitan area.

Furthermore, for locally specific challenges within a thematic field, you can refer to examples such as the Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia, which faces challenges related to industries with high energy intensity and the effects of post-socialist deindustrialization. While these challenges can be attributed to more global trends, they are more locally or regionally specific in nature.

In over a half of the responses, the mentioned fields of challenges identified in the policy documents covered the challenges described as important/urgent for the MA in A.1. In some cases, e.g. Metropolitan city of Turin, the challenge named as most important (aging population and shrinking of remote/mountain areas) is not addressed directly by the documents. Their effects (e.g. issues with mobility in the remote areas) are embedded in slightly differently organized thematic fields. For example:



“design metropolitan mobility as a multimodal service to users and territories”
(Metropolitan city of Turin)

In other cases, the overlap between challenges identified by the MA and by its policy documents seems to be even smaller. In the response of Ostrava Metropolitan Area, they mention challenges such as negative migration trend, population aging and outflow of young, qualified people in the specification of thematic fields "education", "labour market" and "quality of urban life", never in a special designated category, even though according to the answer to A.1, these are 1st and 2nd most important/urgent challenges OMA faces today. The structure of challenges recognized by the provided policy documents hints that it might be using formal or conventional categories such as "education" and "labour market" and fitting some of the experienced challenges into them, rather than creating categories based on the actual experience.

Some responses included valuable insight on the ability of the participants to distinguish the feasibility of tackling certain challenges based on their scope and the real abilities of the MA.

“Stuttgart Region is working on becoming more sustainable and thus plans to develop an Agenda 2035 for it. [...] Stuttgart Region cannot handle this transformation [to become climate neutral] on its own, because it cannot produce that much renewable energy on its own. Especially the industry will still rely on importing energy.” (Stuttgart Region)

“The main policy document that identifies the main thematic fields of challenges [...] focuses on 6 axes (digitalisation, green transition, sustainable mobility, education and research, cohesion and inclusion, health) that correspond to priorities identified at a regional, national and european level. Among these thematic axes there are challenges that fits with specific metropolitan competences and range of action and therefore could be considered as priorities.” (Metropolitan city of Turin)

It is important that the Stuttgart Region is able to identify its limits when it comes to strategic planning and tackling challenges as complex as sustainability and energy transformation, and that it is able to translate this awareness into strategic documents. That could contribute to the Region positioning itself in the network of other actors (metropolitan areas, states, national government etc.), establishing itself also through external relations, and finding its optimal role. Similarly, the Metropolitan city of Turin acknowledges its specific range of action, already picking out challenges which would be effective to tackle at the metropolitan level.

The lists of challenges defined by policy documents can be compared to the ones identified by the MAs themselves in A.1. Generally, the challenges from A.1 were put into a more detailed context and the participants were able to describe important linkages of the challenges to one another and to other factors (thematic to procedural, general societal to MA specific, concrete individual challenges to global societal megatrends etc.)

“Systems inspired by the sharing economy are developing, such as: rental of scooters, cars (most of these vehicles are electrically powered). However, there is an infrastructural problem, the metropolis is not prepared for such a rapid increase in energy demand and charging stations.” (Warsaw Metropolitan Area)



“The ongoing process of suburbanization - the migration of people from city centers to their outskirts is, on the one hand, another stage of urbanization, and on the other hand, it creates a number of challenges, such as the loss of rank and function of city centers or the high costs of providing adequate infrastructure in suburbia. Suburbanization makes it difficult to reduce the GZM climate footprint as a result of a less effective settlement structure, longer commutes, and the spread of multi-family housing.” (GZM)

Compared to that, the responses to A.3 were less nuanced, often divided into thematic sections (e.g. education, environment, society...) which seem to suppress the articulation of the valuable linkages. That shows that the partner MAs are competent in describing the challenges they face and also in putting them into context, however, the reflection of these in the metropolitan policies and policy documents is somehow weaker, more superficial, not capturing the complete detailed knowledge the MAs possess.

7.2.4. Organizational and procedural challenges

Question A.4: What are the key organizational and procedural challenges related to metropolitan governance, planning, and cooperation? Can you distinguish which of these challenges are related to external developments and frameworks at the international, European, and national levels, and which are more unique and specifically related to the forms and situations that affect decision-making within a particular metropolitan region?

Instructions:

Please distinguish between challenges that arise from external developments and frameworks at the international, European, and national levels, and challenges that are more specific and unique to the forms and situations affecting decision-making within your particular metropolitan region. To provide an example of the external frameworks, one challenge related to the metropolitan dimension could be the absence of a framework for metropolitan cooperation in national urban policies or the lack of a legal framework for the institutionalization of metropolitan governance, including the absence of a dedicated metropolitan budget. Additionally, please consider locally specific challenges that are more unique to your metropolitan region. For instance, in the case of metropolitan Turin, challenges include high administrative fragmentation, diverse geographic and socio-economic contexts, or other factors that influence decision-making processes within the specific metropolitan region.

Most of the respondents mentioned facing various levels of legislative/organizational framework issues, which is a challenge related to external (national) factors. These include the lack of formal instruments for planning on the metropolitan level, insufficiently defined tasks, lack of competences for the implementation of planned measures, lack of national legislative framework for the institutionalization of an MA etc. For some MAs, these issues create a crucial obstacle for their effective functioning, for others it seems to be more a question of optimizing procedures.

“The current institutional architecture and the scope of powers of the GZM Metropolis do not guarantee its subjectivity, empowerment and real governance, making it impossible to meet the expectations formulated for this entity.” (GZM)



“not-precisely defined tasks and competences of GZM, which are listed in the Act on the Metropolitan Union in the Silesian Voivodeship” (GZM)

“One of the key organizational and procedural challenges in our area is no formal/legally based structure of metropolitan cooperation. Another challenge is the lack of formal instruments to pursue spatial (land-use) planning on metropolitan level and missing interconnection between strategic and land-use planning. We can also mention lack of non-European level financial instruments for enhancing metropolitan cooperation.” (Brno Metropolitan Area)

“Lack of a legislative framework for an advanced institutionalisation of metropolitan cooperation” (Ostrava Metropolitan Area)

“[...] a notable issue at the national level is the legislative imbalance between the extensive functions assigned to the metropolitan dimension and the limited recognition of its legitimacy.” (Metropolitan city of Milan)

“Having a brake pedal, but no accelerator pedal: Our mandatory regional planning mainly allows us to tell municipalities where something cannot be built. We can tell them where something should be built, but we are not responsible for its realization (e.g. industrial estates, houses, solar panels, wind turbines, etc.). Thus, we can only use soft instruments like extensive consultations and dialogues, providing information and also money through regional co-funding schemes to make sure that measures defined in the regional plan are also being realized.” (Stuttgart Region)

“The lack of national urban policy is a general challenge in many countries, to which the lack of any metropolitan considerations is an added element in many countries.” (MRI)

In some countries, in this case Poland (and Hungary), such state-conditioned difficulties can take on a systematic, intentional form of political struggle:

“In Hungary and Poland, for example, the large cities are on the opposite side of the political spectrum as their national government is. From this it follows that the national government makes the cooperation between the large cities and their surrounding settlements as difficult, as possible, both regarding regulatory and financial tools.” (MRI)

“Issues of “big politics”, which, due to the capital city of Warsaw, can be a serious obstacle (other political options). In addition, the development of large cities is not currently a government priority.” (Warsaw Metropolitan Area)

The GZM formulated a valuable perspective on the division of organizational challenges into two categories. 1) “procedural, related to legal regulations and institutional architecture”, 2) “mindset and organisation and institutional culture (issues related to social capital, trust, values and elites’ mentality), which cannot be considered separately from the procedural dimension”. According to their commentary, the 2nd category affects tackling the 1st one to great extent:

“Even the best legal and institutional solutions will not translate into effective action and cooperation in a situation of low potential for cooperation (social capital and trust) and lack of formation of a common metropolitan interest of local government communities.



This makes it difficult to move beyond the divergence of interests of rural municipalities and core cities of the GZM Metropolis in the development of metropolitan functions.” (GZM)

They also hint on the possibilities of dealing with both categories of challenges:

“While procedural issues most often require legislative changes at the central level, building metropolitan awareness is a long-term process carried out at the local government level, which requires the involvement of inhabitants as well as local scientific, media and government elites in the process.” (GZM)

Acknowledging that the externally influenced procedural issues are often difficult to tackle from the position of an MA, it could turn out to be more efficient to focus on the challenges stemming from their specific circumstances (lack of trust, lack of motivation to cooperate etc.), and try finding ways to tackle these while still existing in the imperfect external environment. The internally rooted procedural challenges with the potential to be successfully tackled by the MAs included e.g. engagement with municipalities and with citizens:

“Citizens directly vote our regional assembly every 5 years, but apart from that dialogue with citizens is mainly focused on protests/controversial topics like wind turbines, building of larger infrastructure projects, etc. A constant and honest citizen outreach is favorable. For this, a close collaboration with the municipalities and counties is necessary.” (Stuttgart Region)

“metropolitan cooperation is still viewed by many partners as strictly dependent on ITI instrument and part of this challenge is the promotion of metropolitan cooperation independent of the existing ITI scheme. In overall, we can sum it up that the key challenge is to overcome this state of mind and shift the metropolitan cooperation in our area to more long-term planning focusing on projects/solutions not only supported by ITI.” (Brno Metropolitan Area)

“Due to the wideness and diversity of the territory (diverse geographic and socio-economic contexts), local administrations, especially small ones in rural and mountain areas, are not often feeling metropolitan nor very engaged in the processes led by the metropolitan institution. One of the main specific challenges for CMTo is to support the engagement of local administrations and, at the same time, systematize the processes of metropolitan government in an integrated metropolitan governance.” (Metropolitan city of Turin)

Successfully enhancing citizen involvement would also pose an opportunity for the MAs. In the previous questions, MAs with a large share of brownfields or with other types of expected construction/public space interventions linked the planning of these interventions with the wish to involve participation of the inhabitants in the process. This would serve the goal of promoting the MA among citizens - Stuttgart Region states, for example, that according to a recently published survey, only 43 % of the population have heard of the VRS (Verband Region Stuttgart). In Stuttgart and Turin, the metropolitan elections already contribute to the citizen involvement (even if Stuttgart Region expressed doubts over the scope of effects this type of involvement has on the citizen dialogue), other MAs without such option have to find another means of citizen outreach, and here the coordinated public participation on spatial development projects could be of help.



Regarding the municipality involvement, many respondents mention in following answers that systematic support for smaller municipalities is one of the important activities of their MA. By coordinating administrative procedures, for instance, the metropolitan area offers benefits also to municipalities, which could otherwise be hesitant towards metropolitan cooperation.

7.2.5. Challenges effectively tackled at the metropolitan level

Question A.5: In your opinion, which challenges can be effectively tackled and solved at the metropolitan level, even if it is not currently the case in your specific metropolitan area?

Instructions:

In this question, we value your expert opinion based on your experience in the field of metropolitan development and governance. We understand that you possess valuable insights and knowledge through your involvement in discussions and professional meetings related to the challenges faced by metropolitan areas.

There are major societal challenges, such as global climate change, digitalization, or the rise of artificial intelligence, that have implications for territories of cities, regions, and countries of all geographical types and scales, not just metropolitan areas. While these challenges have broader origins and effects beyond the metropolitan level, the active involvement of the metropolitan dimension can play a crucial role in mitigating the transformations and issues arising from these challenges.

Metropolitan areas have the potential to contribute to the enhancement of overall societal resilience and sustainability by addressing these challenges. By actively engaging with these issues, metropolitan areas can not only benefit themselves but also various social groups, economic sectors, as well as non-metropolitan and peripheral regions. Their efforts can have a positive impact on a larger scale.

In your expert opinion, we would like to know which challenges you believe can be effectively tackled and solved at the metropolitan level, even if this may not currently be the case in your specific metropolitan area. Please consider the challenges that you deem suitable for metropolitan-level intervention, regardless of whether they are explicitly reflected or articulated in the official policy documents in your metropolitan area.

The participants usually focused on the thematic challenges they see as possible to tackle at the metropolitan level. Most of them agreed on mobility management, spatial planning, and environmental issues such as air quality and waste disposal, as “Climate, air and water are independent from municipal borders.” (Stuttgart Region) Some proposed concrete measures the MAs can take in this regard:

“Implementing coordinated anti-degradation strategies, such as those for rivers and landslides, along with reducing over-building, can help counteract territory deterioration and mitigate climate change impacts.” (Metropolitan city of Turin)



“Commuting patterns should be as short as possible in order to decrease CO₂ and the share of public transport needs to be increased. Thus, a transit-oriented development can be steered by the metropolitan area. Having a metropolitan tariff and transport association and being responsible for the S-Bahn also helps in tackling this challenge.” (Stuttgart Region)

However, other responses are rather general, stating the field or area where the MA could be active (climate change, sustainability etc.), without specifying the concrete actions - despite the fact that in A.1 the participants were able to identify concrete challenges very well. Maybe this general approach was caused by the phrasing of the question, or maybe there are still some steps needed to be done in the respondent’s ability to turn the well identified experienced challenges, with all their linkages and dimensions, into the form of points to be tackled. Similar reduction of challenges from A.1 was seen in A.3, where some of the most important/urgent issues seem to have been sidelined by using more formal categories of strategic goals.

What was mostly left out from the respondents’ lists of issues optimal for intervention at the metropolitan level, were the procedural challenges. As explained in the previous chapter, many of them have roots in external developments and are therefore hard to deal with from the position of the MA. However, others are of character allowing for some form of internal solution, for example:

“One of the main specific challenges for CMTo is to support the engagement of local administrations and, at the same time, systematize the processes of metropolitan government in an integrated metropolitan governance.” (Metropolitan city of Turin)

And following GZM’s division of organizational challenges into procedural and mindset/culture-related ones, while keeping in mind the ever present imperfection of external (and internal) circumstances, it could also be said that the MAs do have a certain capacity to tackle “issues related to social capital, trust, values and elites’ mentality” (GZM). Even if they will most probably not solve trust issues present in the whole society, MAs can develop tools to alleviate their effects within the metropolitan agenda.

Some of the respondents further explain why some challenges can be optimally tackled at the metropolitan level. One of the reasons is the possibility of taking advantage of the different types of resources offered by urban/rural areas. This poses a strong argument for the metropolitan dimension, as it enables integrated territorial solutions.

“metropolitan level could be the appropriate for the adoption of food strategy/policy (cutting the supply chains, shortening production links)” (Brno Metropolitan Area)

“The surrounding more rural area may provide the space for renewable energies which are needed in the more urban parts of the metropolitan area. Win-win situation for the metropolitan area.” (Stuttgart Region)

Stuttgart Region further describes their way of dealing with the threat of the widening of socio-economic differences between urban and rural parts of the area, which was noted earlier for example by the GZM:



“Metropolitan areas generate a metropolitan cohesion, because more jobs are provided by the main city/cities and nevertheless workers live across the region. Thus, more rural municipalities profit from an increased income tax which is in Germany paid according to your place of residence. If you work in Stuttgart, but live in a more rural part of the region, your home town profits from the income tax which is generated and paid by your employer in Stuttgart. Through its planning, measures and projects, VRS provides this metropolitan cohesion by developing every part of its region (urban and rural). Urban-rural cooperation is thus a key action for metropolitan areas.” (Stuttgart Region)

7.2.6. Policies and policy documents in favor of metropolitan dimension

Question A.6: Do policies and policy documents in your metropolitan area, as well as national (state, provincial, regional) policies in your country, argue in favor of the active and important role of metropolitan areas for the overall society? If so, please provide the names of the policy documents and/or initiatives that explicitly support these arguments. Additionally, if available, please provide quotations from these documents along with page references or hyperlinks.

Instructions:

In this question, we kindly ask you to provide information regarding the policies and policy documents in your metropolitan area, as well as national (state, provincial, regional) policies in your country, that advocate for the active and important role of metropolitan areas in contributing to the overall society.

Please indicate whether these policies and documents explicitly emphasize the significance of metropolitan areas and their involvement in addressing societal challenges. If possible, provide the names of the specific policy documents and/or initiatives that support these arguments. Additionally, if you have access to quotations from these documents, kindly include them along with page references or hyperlinks.

This information will be valuable for our policy advocacy document, the "Common metropolitan vision," which aims to showcase examples of metropolitan areas actively contributing to societal well-being. Your contribution will help us highlight and reference relevant policies and initiatives that recognize the importance of metropolitan areas in the broader societal context.

Some of the documents provided by the respondent articulate the importance of metropolitan areas in various contexts very well. These are mainly the Concept and Strategies for Spatial Development in Germany (2016) and National Urban Policy 2030 of Poland (Krajowa Polityka Miejska 2030) and also the Regional Urban Policy of the Silesian Voivodeship (2021) (Regionalna Polityka Miejska Województwa Śląskiego) implemented in Poland. These documents do not only describe metropolitan areas as control, economic, scientific etc. centers or “economic engines” of the country. They also acknowledge the abilities metropolitan areas have which arise from their specific status, and the distinct ways in which they can contribute to tackling societal challenges.



Furthermore, MAs are recognized as important entities for the implementation of European agenda such as the Cohesion policy.

“The German metropolitan regions of European importance are the essential national economic areas with a high productivity and are facing international competition. Steering and control functions, gateway functions, innovation and competition functions as well as educational and scientific institutions of European and global significance are concentrated there. They are characterized by innovative multi-level governance structures of cooperation which enable them to give special impetus to climate protection and cluster policy as well as to international linkages.” (Concept and Strategies for Spatial Development in Germany (2016), p. 8)

“In their function as communities of cooperation and responsibility, the metropolitan regions which do not cross borders as well as the cross-border regions make a significant contribution to European cohesion policy.” (Concept and Strategies for Spatial Development in Germany (2016), p. 9)

“Growing challenges require the existence of stabilised metropolitan structures capable of coordinating activities and providing equal chances, as well as being conducive to spatial cohesion, internationally competitive and intensifying internationalisation processes.” (Krajowa Polityka Miejska 2030, p. 52)

“The urban, or even metropolitan character, of the voivodeship opens up the region to many opportunities that belong only to strong urban areas in the country, Europe and the world.” (Regionalna Polityka Miejska Województwa Śląskiego (2021), p. 83)

Other documents, often the development strategies, contain some references to the significance of metropolitan areas, but generally focus more on specific development strategies and action points. Such documents are crucial for the decision making in the MA and are also important indicators of the approach of other administrative entities to them (region, state, depending on the publisher of the document).

“It will also be important to develop metropolitan functions, improve the quality of the environment and space, create attractive jobs by developing economic potential and increasing the level of investment to stop the process of “brain drain” by other attractive metropolitan centres.” (Development Strategy of the Silesian Voivodeship “Śląskie 2030” (2020), p. 103)

In some provided documents, the articulation of metropolitan dimension is quite weak. For example, the Regional Development Strategy of the Czech Republic 2021+ recognizes metropolitan areas (among others) as specific territorial contexts which require specific policy approaches. However, when the document talks about various socio-economic occurrences, e. g. economic development, it uses the division into regions (NUTS3) rather than mentioning the concrete metropolitan areas, even though the processes in the MAs are probably the critical driving force of the occurrence. That undermines the understanding of metropolitan areas as distinct entities with distinct abilities, as they are recognized in the aforementioned Concept and Strategies for Spatial Development in Germany (2016). This can be related to the fact that in Czechia, statistical data is collected for NUTS 3 regions and not for metropolitan areas.



“The City of Prague, the South Moravian and the Central Bohemian Regions show a very dynamic relative and absolute growth. This phenomenon can be associated with the continuing concentration of inhabitants and services in the most important centres of settlement and generally with agglomeration effects which are crucial for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises.” (Regional Development Strategy of the Czech Republic 2021+, p. 19)

Nevertheless, the same document argues for the practical development of metropolitan areas.

“Supporting the creation of new forms of voluntary cooperation between municipalities allowing for cooperation even among remote municipalities, where relevant, if such cooperation is necessary for the functioning of the agglomeration as a whole.” (Regional Development Strategy of the Czech Republic 2021+, p. 141)

“A new division of powers in delegated competence in the surroundings of metropolis centres and agglomerations. Support for new forms of municipal voluntary cooperation between municipalities in agglomerations, including financial instruments.” (Regional Development Strategy of the Czech Republic 2021+, p. 141)

7.2.7. Key opportunities for the development and promotion of the metropolitan dimension

Question B.1: What are the key opportunities for the development and promotion of the metropolitan dimension (metropolitan development, governance, planning, cooperation)? Please rank them according to their importance and feasibility.

Instructions:

This question focuses on identifying the key opportunities that exist for the development and promotion of the metropolitan dimension. These opportunities can be related to addressing specific metropolitan issues, whether they are thematic areas like suburban sprawl and sustainable mobility or processual issues such as establishing a metropolitan budget. Consider the current presence of windows of opportunities in your metropolitan area or in metropolitan areas in Europe for effectively addressing these specific metropolitan issues. Additionally, identify and discuss the main obstacles that may hinder the realization of these opportunities.

Feel free to draw upon your initial survey responses and insights gained from the discussions during the Focus Group organized during the Kick-Off meeting. This will allow you to build upon your previous thoughts and incorporate any additional insights or suggestions from other project partners. Structure your answer based on the significance of the opportunities and the feasibility of achieving them within the available window of opportunity.

During the initial survey, respondents frequently mentioned the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) as an instrument and the emphasis on integrated planning in functional areas as opportunities present in European policy documents such as the New Leipzig Charter. These interventions can be seen as windows of opportunity. Furthermore, Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska



Metropolia provided a comprehensive list of opportunities, including thematic fields such as the development of new green technologies or regionally specific advancements in rail transport.

In this question, we seek your expert opinion, given your experience in the field of metropolitan development and governance. Your insights, knowledge of the issues and challenges, and participation in professional meetings allow you to provide valuable perspectives. Your answer can be independent of whether the opportunities you consider important for promoting the metropolitan dimension are currently reflected in official policy documents in your metropolitan area. We greatly appreciate your thoughts and insights as they contribute to building mutual understanding, positioning, and argumentation in favor of the metropolitan dimension.

The respondents often see European frameworks (EUCP (ITI), New Leipzig Charter, Territorial Agenda 2030) as one of the most important opportunities for the development of metropolitan dimension. These either recognize the metropolitan dimension and by that enable metropolitan areas to further advocate for themselves on other levels (EU, national), or they provide financing for metropolitan development. That can serve as an initial base for starting metropolitan cooperation at all (case of Brno Metropolitan Area), or help finance integrated metropolitan solutions. During the partner's discussion so far (Initial survey and kick-off meeting workshop), however, they expressed that developing metropolitan cooperation independent of ITI is desired.

“Nowadays, the temporary opportunity for [the enhancement of metropolitan governance and cooperation and their institutionalization] lies in the ITI tool, which was the starting point for metropolitan cooperation in CZ and still can be considered as the important opportunity for the above-mentioned enhancements of metropolitan governance. But in the future, we want to establish metropolitan governance and cooperation independent on this tool. So, the opportunity for the development of the metropolitan dimension is the establishment of institution at the metropolitan level, introduction of financial instruments (metropolitan fund/budget, joint financing) and spatial planning instruments (land-use plan or spatial vision) at this level.” (Brno Metropolitan Area)

In connection to the aforementioned political development in some countries (currently mainly Poland and Hungary), the MRI points out that utilizing the European framework to the MAs' benefit is dependent on the decisions made at national level.

“European frameworks (SUD, allowed on FUA level and the ITI tool) are potentially helpful but only if the national government, which acts as a gatekeeper, opens these opportunities for the sub-national levels.” (MRI)

“[...] the development of large cities is not currently a government priority.” (Warsaw Metropolitan Area)

Because metropolitan areas are competing with other territorial actors (cities, regions) for the utilization of the possible financial/power resources (EU, national - the lawmakers can assign MAs higher competences etc.), the opportunity to reach such resources can be seized by lobbying. Berlin-Brandenburg mentioned an already existing network of German MAs which focuses on lobbying, and the GZM calls for establishing a similar network on the international level.



“In order to better feed these opportunities, there should be common metropolitan lobbying on the international level (European Parliament, European Commission), e.g. in the frame of metropolitan associations or networks, for a better recognition of metropolitan areas and securing EU financing for metropolitan tasks / investments in the EU new financing period (after 2027).” (GZM)

Thematic challenges such as urban sprawl, mobility and waste management are also often seen as opportunities to successfully demonstrate metropolitan competence. There are also general societal challenges which need to be addressed on many levels, and the MAs possess a specific set of abilities with which they can contribute. The Stuttgart Region provided a useful example of connecting a general societal challenge (economic transformation) with an opportunity for the promotion of metropolitan dimension (successfully tackling a challenge) and with the competences of the metropolitan level (capacity for regional planning and economic development).

“VRS was created due to the economic crisis in the early 90s. Overcoming the current transformation is a huge opportunity for further strengthening the metropolitan dimension. Regional strategies and co-funding schemes for hydrogen and artificial intelligence support the diversification of the economy. Regional planning especially for larger industrial areas provides the suitable sites to master the current transformation.

Example: The construction of the new Cellcentric headquarter (joint venture between Daimler Trucks and Volvo focusing on hydrogen trucks) was supported and accompanied by VRS planning and our regional economic development company.” (Stuttgart Region)

Adequate institutional backing of the MAs guarantees competences and finance, therefore enabling the MA to take on challenges, which results in the promotion of metropolitan abilities.

Finally, an opportunity for the metropolitan dimension is also seen as the metropolitan cooperation by itself. As was mentioned earlier, the urban and rural areas of the MAs offer different sets of resources and the MA can benefit from their coordinated sharing. This includes natural resources, agriculture, space (e.g. for building solar panels and wind turbines which then provide energy also for the urbanized areas), social life, labor market or economic opportunities.

“The GZM offers the highest level of services, academic potential with eight public universities and a quality of life guaranteed by its extraordinary natural resources and polycentric structure. It combines the benefits of “being metropolitan” with life in medium-sized cities, urban compactness, accessibility, as well as enclaves of rural life (at the junctions of the cities of the GZM and in its surroundings).” (GZM)

Cooperation is also an opportunity in regard to smaller municipalities. MAs can facilitate cooperation between member municipalities themselves or between them and higher-level administration, and establish coordinated procedures to simplify their tasks. By that, the MA offers the benefits connected to becoming metropolitan also to small municipalities, which were often described as not being motivated to cooperate or not having sufficient resources for it.

“The key way to promote the metropolitan dimension is to manage communities within the metropolitan region in a coordinated manner: to support local associations and unions between municipalities and their development processes, as well as to promote the



creation of homogeneous and coordinated practices, procedures, and services within the municipalities.” (Metropolitan city of Milan)

“Supporting especially smaller municipalities in dealing with climate change, because they do not have the necessary resources for it and the climate targets can only be met when every municipality contributes to them. About 2/3 of the 179 municipalities have less than 10.000 inhabitants.” (Stuttgart Region)

7.2.8. Metropolitan issues and challenges associated with opportunities

Question B.2: Are there specific metropolitan issues and challenges that have been identified in your metropolitan area, reflected in policies and policy documents, or discussed among experts and decision-makers and associated with opportunities for addressing them through metropolitan-level governance?

Instructions:

This question aims to identify concrete examples of metropolitan issues and challenges that have been recognized and tackled in your metropolitan area and were or can be related to opportunities that can be leveraged through metropolitan-level governance. You can refer to opportunities that are currently seen and discussed as potentials, as well as those where action has already begun or been accomplished. This information will help build a strong argument for advocacy in favor of the metropolitan dimension.

In connection to the opportunity for the promotion and strengthening of metropolitan dimension, the MAs often stated they take on (or are planning to take on) various thematic challenges, both specific to the MA and general societal. This includes managing public transport, possibly planning the whole regional mobility, engaging in processes related to energetic transformation, promoting digitalization etc. In some MAs, the ability to reach success in these activities is enhanced by a clear definition of the MA's role in the process, usually by national documents/laws. That way, the metropolitan level can contribute to dealing with challenges most effectively. Such assignment of tasks therefore has two benefits for the metropolitan dimension: firstly, they enable the MAs to fulfill them more effectively, moreover, they contribute to the recognition of metropolitan dimension in general.

“The law 56/2014 identifies the fundamental functions of Metropolitan cities, which correspond to the main challenges to which it is considered more effective to respond through wide area policies. [...] These are “areas of action” in which coordinated action at the metropolitan level, involving not only the various municipalities and local authorities but also the main local stakeholders, is considered more effective.” (Metropolitan city of Turin)

“The State of Baden-Württemberg, VRS, the city of Stuttgart and the counties had the goal to increase the share of public transport by 20 % until 2025. That is why, the Pact for Public Transport Stuttgart Region was established in 2014 and its main content was also being



included in the updated Law on the establishment of VRS in 2015. This included for example now also the responsibility of VRS for regional transport management - a task newly assigned to VRS. As a result, VRS created a regional mobility platform to steer road mobility more effectively, created regional mobility hubs at train stations, rolled-out a regional e-bike renting system, created a regional park&ride strategy incl. co-funding scheme, etc.” (Stuttgart Region)

“Green and blue infrastructure are also crucial soft location factors in order to attract a qualified workforce. Thus, the Landscape Park Stuttgart Region is a mandatory task of VRS included in the Law on the establishment of VRS.” (Stuttgart Region)

Some participants also stated they have experience with tackling procedural issues, which is a widely experienced challenge in many MAs. The ways to approach these often intersect with solving related thematic challenges or with becoming part of national or European frameworks.

“Metropolitan empowerment, governance and effective public policies [-] [...] the creation of the joint information system / information sharing platform, in line with the EU open data objective, which is essential for efficient and evidence-informed policy-making. It is called the GZM Data Store [...] In the framework of the project, the data of the communes of the Metropolis were made available on a unique portal, which allows for wider and more systematic (also on the scale of the whole Metropolis GZM) use of data for the needs of its inhabitants, and non-governmental organisations, entrepreneurs, investors and other entities.” (GZM)

“Our challenges regarding to institutionalization of metropolitan cooperation [etc.] [...] have been identified in our Strategy and discussed among experts and decision-makers. They are currently tackled on different levels (for example WG on Horizontal cooperation)” (Brno Metropolitan Area)

7.2.9. Promotion of metropolitan dimension

Question B.3: Can you suggest specific opportunities that can be utilized to promote the metropolitan dimension and strengthen its role in public policies? We are seeking both examples and proposals of explicit declarations that recognize the role of metropolitan areas in public policies and acknowledge their active involvement in streamlining and enhancing the effectiveness of European and national development policies towards more sustainable and resilient societal development. Your suggestions will greatly contribute to the formulation of the advocacy policy document "Common Metropolitan Vision," which aims to promote the metropolitan dimension.

Instructions:

This question deviates from the typical format, as we are seeking your cooperation in providing suggestions that will help shape a narrative that strengthens the policy discourse in favor of the metropolitan dimension. We encourage you to provide specific examples and proposals that highlight opportunities for promoting the metropolitan dimension and emphasize its importance in public policies.



Your valuable insights and suggestions will greatly contribute to the development of the "Common Metropolitan Vision" advocacy policy document, which aims to promote the metropolitan dimension and its significant role in driving sustainable and resilient societal development.

An important opportunity, which many respondents participate in, is the formation of metropolitan networks, partnerships, or the involvement in various related projects. As was stated in the summary of B.1 question, there is a certain level of will in the EU and in individual countries to assign finances/power to territorial actors, and the formation of metropolitan networks provides the necessary means for the better recognition of metropolitan dimension as important and worth granting more competences to (through lobbying, publishing declarations, providing a platform for sharing know-how etc.). The groups/projects mentioned by the respondents were:

- international
 - METREX
 - EMA (European Metropolitan Authorities)
 - Eurocities
 - HARMONY (Holistic Approach for Providing Spatial & Transport Planning Tools and Evidence to Metropolitan and Regional Authorities to Lead a Sustainable Transition to a New Mobility Era)
 - ESPON METRO - The role and future perspectives of Cohesion Policy in the planning of Metropolitan Areas and Cities
- national
 - Union of Polish Metropolises
 - a network of MR's in Germany (Initiativkreis Europäische Metropolregionen in Deutschland)
 - Conclusions of the expert seminar of Czech integrated tools (ITI, CLLD) with DG REGIO in Brussels in December 2022
 - Conclusions of the expert seminar "Territorial Dimensions and Integrated Territorial Instruments: Past, Present and Opportunity for Cohesion Policy after 2027" held on 7 December 2022 at the European Committee of the Regions
 - Principles of Urban Policy in Czechia

Following a letter from the former Councilor for economic development of the Metropolitan city of Turin in 2020, the significance of metropolitan dimension was also recognized by the President of the EU von der Leyen.

“President von der Leyen fully acknowledge the importance of multi level governance and partnership for an effective delivery of the European Green Deal and the recovery plan and



the need to provide the means for territorial and local authorities to act.” (Metropolitan city of Turin)

Secondly, the respondents' MAs engage in addressing many of the challenges mentioned throughout this document (mobility, climate change, service availability, waste management, suburbanization, depopulation etc.), which they also perceive as an opportunity for strengthening the metropolitan dimension's role in public policies. Showing that the metropolitan level is efficient in implementing integrated territorial solutions in various fields and competent in regard to strategic planning can serve as an important argument for the previously named metropolitan networks in their advocacy and lobby activities.

7.3. Outcomes of the Comprehensive Detailed Survey

Compared to the responses from the Initial Short Survey, the participants formulated **more nuanced and clearly articulated insights** in the Comprehensive Detailed Survey.

All survey participants commonly perceive **thematic challenges** that are at the forefront of the EU policies, such as **climate change or sustainable mobility**, as the key topics for metropolitan development. The responses document that the understanding of challenges for metropolitan development is anchored within the common EU policy narratives. At the same time, metropolitan areas accentuate their own specific issues within the broader trajectories of societal development and policy narratives.

From the provided survey responses, certain **differences in the articulation** of the challenges can be detected between the MAs in Germany and Italy with more established metropolitan governance structures, compared to the MAs in former socialist countries of Czechia and Poland with less advanced metropolitan cooperation. While, in the former case, **the general societal challenges**, such as climate change, are more emphasized in their interpretation of challenges, the latter pay more attention to **locally specific and procedural issues**.

This observation does not suggest that there is clear-cut division or sharp difference. The representatives of Czech and Polish metropolitan areas more often provided quantitatively larger and **thematically more diverse list of locally specific issues** that rather implicitly fall within the broader articulations in the EU and internationally defined challenges and policy goals. The respondents from the German and Italian metropolitan areas more often addressed smaller number of issues, which were more explicitly anchored within the general international and the EU thematic discourses and narratives. They also more often associated challenges with the desired future state of societal development in metropolitan areas. Their statements and narratives provided in the survey can be characterized as **forward-looking approach to opportunities-led policies and practices**. The MAs from the post-socialist countries commonly articulated issues such as a low willingness to cooperate among MA members, the lack of general trust in society and specifically in relation to government and public policies and a weak legislative framework supporting metropolitan institutionalization. They also shared their perspectives on economic issues related to deindustrialization, while the German and Italian MAs rather emphasized need for green transition and international cooperation. The responses from Czech



and Polish metropolitan areas more often articulated challenges in relation to **obstacles and limitations**.

This discursive difference can be associated with a stronger need of the Czech and Polish metropolitan areas for the articulation of local and regional specificities and needs within the space given by the EU (and international) policy narratives, specifically as they are classified by the EU Cohesion Policy, and also self-identify themselves, as less developed or convergence regions³. These insights from the survey presents a challenge for the formulation of a common metropolitan vision for Central European MAs as a need to **bridge this gap in the understanding and interpretation of challenges** while incorporating the sensitivity to local, regional and nation contexts.

Specific attention has been given to those challenges for which mitigation is **the metropolitan scale considered as essential or optimal**. They include mobility management, spatial planning and environmental issues, such as air quality and waste disposal. These are also fields, where the MAs are already actively involved in policy-making and can provide evidence of achievements.

As a part of the survey, documents of metropolitan strategies and policies were collected. Interestingly, while the respondents from metropolitan stakeholders elaborately defined and described thematic challenges using an up-to-date concepts and terms, the metropolitan **policies and policy documents more often use formal and taxonomic-like categories** of thematic issues, rather than using language that would address the challenges. This shows certain **gap between the more advanced narrative of stakeholders and experts in comparison with the more conservative language in policy documents**.

The procedural challenges include the lack of formal instruments for planning on the metropolitan level, insufficiently defined metropolitan tasks, the lack of competences for the implementation of planned measures or lack of national legislative framework for the institutionalization of MAs. While the MAs, which have more clearly defined position and roles and longer experience with metropolitan coordination, focus more on the **optimizing governance procedures**, the Czech and Polish MAs rather emphasize **obstacle for the more effective functioning of metropolitan cooperation**. In this context the **GZM is a specific case in Poland**, with its own metropolitan administration and financial resources (own budget) as it operates under a unique national act just for this MA (no other Polish MA received this status).

A commonly recognized opportunity for the development of metropolitan dimension is the existence of **European instruments, institutions, organizations and frameworks**, namely Cohesion Policy of the EU and specifically the instrument of the ITI, and policy documents of New Leipzig Charter and Territorial Agenda 2030. These either **advocate for the metropolitan dimension** or **provide financial support** for the development of metropolitan cooperation. The opportunity was associated with international networks of metropolitan areas for promotion of the metropolitan dimension as metropolitan areas are competing for the scarce resources with other territorial units. Opportunities are also associated with the **capabilities to demonstrate good practices and success stories** and thus metropolitan abilities to deal with such challenges as urban sprawl, mobility or waste management.

³ This explanation was pointed out by the Ostrava Metropolitan Area during the commentary process.



A major opportunity for the metropolitan dimension is the **development of metropolitan cooperation itself**. Firstly, the urban and rural areas of the MAs offer different sets of resources and the MA can **benefit from their synergies**. Secondly, through the facilitation of cooperation between member municipalities and coordination of relations with higher-level public administration bodies, the MAs can offer **significant benefits to their members**, especially for smaller municipalities. Furthermore, the participation in metropolitan networks and partnerships, involvement in knowledge-sharing projects is seen as essential for the **promotion** of metropolitan dimension and **strengthening** the role of MAs in public policies.

The respondents provided valuable **examples from documents** that can serve as **suggestions for the articulation of the metropolitan dimension**. The most inspiring strategic policy documents include the Concept and Strategies for Spatial Development in Germany (2016) and National Urban Policy 2030 of Poland (Krajowa Polityka Miejska 2030) together with the Regional Urban Policy of the Silesian Voivodeship (2021) (Regionalna Polityka Miejska Województwa Śląskiego).



8. Summary of findings and suggestions for formulation of Common Metropolitan Vision

The work on the deliverable D.1.1.1. “Identification of challenges specific for central European MAs”, that is a part of “**WP1: Analysis of metropolitan dimension**“ and was elaborated within the project “MECOG-CE: Strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance in central Europe” supported by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE programme, focused on two major fields. First, using **desk research of policy documents**, it overviewed **global societal megatrends and their challenges for urban development** and **principles and objectives of international and EU urban policies** and analyzed the presence of the **metropolitan dimension in the EU and international documents**. Second, using two surveys and focus groups, it assembled stakeholders’ perceptions and articulations of **contemporary challenges** for the metropolitan development, governance, planning and cooperation in Central European MAs and **opportunities** for the promotion of metropolitan dimension.

Based on the overview of policy documents, the following **global societal megatrends** resulting in major **challenges for urban development** were identified:

- globalization;
- international cooperation and security;
- innovation and digitalization;
- climate change;
- environmental degradation;
- growth in energy consumption;
- urbanization;
- demographic change, population ageing and changes in reproductive behavior;
- international migration;
- social inequalities and diversity;
- health, civilization diseases and global pandemics.

The analysis of international and EU urban policies identified five areas of **urban policy principles and objectives**:

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



- strategic and integrated approach to urban governance.

The analysis of the **presence and proliferation of metropolitan dimension in the EU and international policy documents** and initiatives focused not only on the strategies, policies and measures that explicitly use the term metropolitan, but also included initiatives aimed at functional urban areas or urban regions. The analysis found that:

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

The outputs of the desk research of policy documents on global societal megatrends and their challenges for urban development, principles and objectives of urban policies and the presence of the metropolitan dimension in the EU and international documents served as **background information for the MECOG-CE project partners and metropolitan stakeholders** during the second phase aimed at metropolitan challenges and opportunities in Central Europe.

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

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

The **methods and instruments** used, such as open-ended format of questions, displayed answers for other respondents, possibility for answers adjustments, the repetition of the survey and discussions, encouraged and supported respondents to provide more in-depth thoughts, offer comprehensive insights, arguments, explanations, and interpretations, encourage mutual reflections and facilitate the exchange of views and positions between participants. This approach allowed for a **richer understanding** of the challenges and opportunities related to metropolitan areas. Furthermore, it fostered **collaboration and discussions** within the MECOG-CE network. This way it supports the preparation of the Common Metropolitan Vision as well as decision-making



processes at MECOG-CE partners' organizations regarding metropolitan development, governance, planning, and cooperation.

This **processual approach** brought important gains through evolving outcomes. On the path from the initial to the comprehensive survey, it led to an **increasing complexity** in understanding and articulation of the challenges and opportunities. A process that will further continue in the formulation of Common Metropolitan Vision. This complexity building allowed for the more nuanced interpretation of **mutual relations between various thematic challenges** as well as to work with the **dynamics between thematic and procedural challenges**. Instead of separating the **challenges and opportunities** to independent categories, the evolutionary path led to the more straightforward conception of **challenges as opportunities**. Most importantly, the path led all the participants from the **analysis to critical evaluation** to stimulate further work on the **normative aspects** of the Common Metropolitan Vision.

The surveys' outcomes showed that the identified key **thematic challenges** for metropolitan development, such as **climate change or sustainable mobility**, are related to the major objectives of the EU policies. The responses also pointed to certain **differences in the narratives and interpretation of challenges and opportunities** by the stakeholders that are likely to be driven by different contexts of local and national cultures and discourses. The respondents from **Czechia and Poland** more often articulated **challenges as issues and problems**. This might be explained by the still existing catching-up with the West feelings (explicitly mentioned by respondent from Warsaw), position in less developed or convergence regions, shorter experience with metropolitan governance and cooperation, institutional weakness (rather than thickness) of democratic society, lower general trust in society and specifically trust in public authorities. Respondents from **Germany and Italy** more often **associated challenges with future opportunities** having more **forward-looking approach** that emphasized adaptation of existing strategic objectives and daily practices.

Another difference can be observed in the reference to local/metropolitan in comparison with Central European and thus shared challenges. **Thematic challenges are often understood as shared and common for MAs in Central Europe**. Among them, an outstanding position has the **climate change** (as external factor of natural environment) and adaptation to climate change (as societal imperative to react to the environmental change to mitigate both impacts of these changes as well as decrease societal negative impacts on the climate change and other environmental hazards). There were certain differences in the emphasis on some thematic fields. For instance, while the respondents from **Czechia and Poland** more referred to the **burdens stemming from deindustrialization and economic transformation**, respondents from **Germany and Italy** in their narratives more often related transformations in metropolitan economies to needs for **green transition**. Beside the climate change, **suburbanization and sprawl** were seen by all the MAs as major challenges for metropolitan development.

In contrast to thematic challenges, **the procedural challenges were often understood as specific for individual MAs, while their articulations shared many similarities across all MAs**. From all respondents, there were voices referring to the diversity of municipalities in metropolitan territories, to administrative, functional, morphological fragmentation across urban, suburban and rural areas, as well as to large variability and complexity of thematic issues. The **Czech and Polish**



respondents more often complained about the **lacking fully established top-down institutional framework** (except the GZM, which is a unique case) and not sufficient support to metropolitan cooperation from the central government. The answers of **German and Italian** respondent more **accentuated bottom-up activities for optimizing governance structures and practices** at metropolitan scale within functioning synergies of vertical governance structures.

A comparison between the list of global societal megatrends and challenges and challenges identified as crucial for metropolitan areas provides important insights. While **digitalization** stands at prominent place at global scale as well as in the EU policies, it **does not figure** in this position among mentioned metropolitan challenges. This also includes the **smart city** agenda. Similarly, **social inequality and cultural diversity was rarely reflected**. These linkages between global and metropolitan challenges need to be further discussed and scrutinized within MECOG-CE during the work on the Common Metropolitan Vision. Very strong emphasis on energy transformations with the reference to removing the reliance on the gas from Russia shows how the perception is significantly **shaped by the immediate actual challenges**.

At the metropolitan scale, the issue of **housing availability and affordability was rarely mentioned**, despite it was in recent years re-constituted as one of key challenges and priorities of urban policies. This is also an issue to be further discussed within MECOG-CE as housing provision and affordability in cities and their suburban hinterland is **closely related with the processes of suburbanization and sprawl** that are seen as the key challenges at metropolitan scale and, also, as a major opportunity to prove that metropolitan scale of governance and planning is essential in dealing with such challenge.

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

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

The **opportunities for the promotion and proliferation of the metropolitan dimension** are associated with the current window of opportunity given the **favorable setup of the EU instruments** (such as the ITI Integrated Territorial Investments) and **policies** (The New Leipzig Charter, Territorial Agenda 2030) that provide advocacy and support for metropolitan areas and



metropolitan cooperation. The capability of metropolitan actors to address key societal challenges at metropolitan scale through the **demonstration of good practices and success stories** was unanimously recommended as the major opportunity for the promotion of metropolitan dimension. What is very important is the shared understanding that the **development of metropolitan cooperation itself** shall be seen as the opportunity. Specifically, major potential lies in the conviction about the **benefits for metropolitan members from synergies** between member municipalities and other metropolitan actors as well as benefits from **negotiations led by MA representations** on behalf of its members. Another important field of opportunities for the support to metropolitan dimension is the **international partnerships and knowledge-sharing**.

Spatial planning was often mentioned as the major field as well as instrument that can promote the metropolitan scale and prove its place in territorial governance. Interestingly, while stakeholders refer to strategic plans for metropolitan areas, the strategic planning is in the narratives beyond the emphasis on the spatial planning. This insight shall be also further discussed during the preparation of the Common Metropolitan Vision. **Mobility and transportation** also gained a prominent place among the thematic areas which needs organization on the metropolitan scale. More explicit relation to job and housing markets and their spatial dynamics with the reference to suburbanization can bring further suggestions. Unsurprisingly, **environmental issues** as well as **services** (specifically waste management) are also seen as key areas where the metropolitan coordination is needed and where the reference to good practices and success stories can help to highlight the role of metropolitan scale.

The objective of the investigation of challenges and opportunities for metropolitan dimension among the partners within the MECOG-CE consortium was not only to gather detailed responses for an analysis. It has been prepared as a **process of knowledge exchange and building of mutual understandings** of the metropolitan challenges and opportunities within the MECOG-CE consortium. This helped for a **deeper and shared knowledge and articulation** of metropolitan challenges and opportunities.

This **summary and generalization** from a rich array of insights and suggestions of respondents is only the first step in the utilization of the survey and discussion aimed at the identification of metropolitan challenges and opportunities. The information provided in this stage will serve to **compile a list of options**, which will serve for the discussion of stakeholders and as a **menu** from which to choose the priorities for the formulation of the Common Metropolitan Vision, which is the next step in the work on the WP1 “Analysis of metropolitan dimension“ within the project “MECOG-CE: Strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance in central Europe” supported by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE programme.



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