

**Interreg**  
CENTRAL EUROPE



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MECOG-CE



# SOLUTIONS FOR STRONG METROPOLITAN COOPERATION AND GOVERNANCE

**Metropolitan areas for European cohesion  
and growth**

**March 19, 2026**

Museum of Applied Arts  
Brno, Czech Republic



**WiFi:** MetroConf, **Password:** Mecog2026

# Introduction

Metropolitan areas are at the forefront of Europe's most pressing challenges – from climate adaptation and social cohesion to competitiveness, innovation and sustainable development. With their concentration of people, resources, and know-how, they are not only the places where these challenges are most acute, but also where solutions are being shaped.

This conference explores how metropolitan cooperation and governance can unlock the full potential of these areas to drive cohesive, balanced, and resilient development across Europe. It presents metropolitan solutions to European challenges and

highlights the need to better recognize and strengthen their role in both national and European policymaking – particularly within the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework.

Join us to discuss why metropolitan areas matter, how cooperation across these territories can make a real difference, and what needs to change to empower them as engines of strategic transformation. The conference also serves as a final event of the MECOG-CE project, led by Brno for over three years, and important project outputs delivered during its implementation are presented.



# Programme

**Moderator: Peter Austin**, Planning advisor, City of Oslo

**8:30–9:00 Registration and welcome coffee**

**9:00–9:15 Official opening**

Welcome by the **Markéta Vaňková**, Mayor of Brno, **Zuzana Mrázová**, Minister of Regional Development of the Czech Republic and **Ondřej Krutílek**, Member of the European Parliament

**9:15–9:30 Keynote: Strengthening the role of metropolitan areas**

**Jan Olbrycht**, former chair of the Urban Intergroup of the European Parliament, advisor to European Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Administration Piotr Serafin

**9:30–10:15 Metropolitan cooperation in action: MECOG-CE project – collaborative approaches to metropolitan challenges**

The first part will introduce the MECOG-CE project and the role of Interreg Central Europe programme. Discover the status quo of metropolitan cooperation within the Central European context.

**Christophe Ebermann**, Head of Project Unit – Operations, Joint Secretariat of Interreg Central Europe programme

**František Kubeš**, Head of Strategic Development and Cooperation Department, City of Brno

The second part will focus on best tools and practices of metropolitan areas in Central Europe. The presentation will show what works and what could potentially be implemented.

**Robert Pyka** and **Zuzanna Neuve-Église**, professor and sociologist at Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Silesia

**10:15–11:00 Looking ahead: Metropolitan Vision and Strategic framework for better metropolitan governance**

The visionary and strategic session will start with the Common Metropolitan Vision that showcases the desirable future of metropolitan areas, their strengths and what they need to unlock their potential.

**Luděk Sýkora**, professor at Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Charles University

The session will continue with the Strategy for strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance. This strategic framework provides step by step guidance for metropolitan areas to enhance their territory.

**Iván Tosics**, managing director of Metropolitan Research Institute, Budapest

**11:00–11:30 Coffee break**

**11:30–11:50 Signing of the memorandum on cooperation**

The representatives of the MECOG-CE project partners will sign the memorandum focusing on their future joint activities.

**11:50–13:00 The future of metropolitan areas from a Czech and European perspective**

The panel discussion will focus on the current status of metropolitan areas in Czechia, specific features of the Central European region, the future trends in the development in European metropolitan areas, or visibility of metropolitan level at the European one. Explore how the outputs of the MECOG-CE project can be used and why is it crucial to support the development of metropolitan areas.

**Zuzana Mrázová**, Minister of Regional Development of the Czech Republic

**Martin Příborský**, Member of the Brno City Assembly, representative of the Association of Metropolitan areas and agglomerations in Czech Republic

**Jan Olbrycht**, former chair of the Urban Intergroup of the European Parliament, advisor to European Commissioner for Budget and Administration Piotr Serafin

**Pietro Reviglio**, Policy and Research Advisor on Urban Governance, Eurocities

**Iván Tosics**, managing director of Metropolitan Research Institute, Budapest

**13:00–14:00 Lunch**

**14:00–14:45 Key tools for metropolitan development: Inspirational examples developed within the MECOG-CE project**

Interactive afternoon session. It will start with the presentation by each metropolitan area participating in the MECOG-CE project. Discover their journey throughout the project and their solutions for strengthening metropolitan cooperation.

**Soňa Raszková**, Head of Foreign Cooperation and Marketing Unit at the City of Brno, Brno Metropolitan Area

**Jürgen Neumüller**, Head of the Division „European Spatial Planning“ in the Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin-Brandenburg, Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg

**Massimo Vettoretti**, Director of the Economic, Territorial and Social Development Department – European and International Projects and Programs Unit, Metropolitan City of Turin



**Dušan Pöllich**, Specialist in strategic planning at the City of Ostrava, Ostrava Metropolitan Area

**Simone Jung**, International Affairs Officer, Verband Region Stuttgart

**Andrzej Czajkowski**, Head of the Office, Warsaw Metropolis Association

#### **14:45–16:00 Metropolitan collaboration in practice – Thematic Workshops**

Workshops will focus on four topics connected to metropolitan cooperation: **mobility, governance, participative process, food cooperation.**

**Mobility** is crucial for metropolitan citizens to move within the territory, commute to work, school or for leisure activities. **Governance** represents important metropolitan aspect and having appropriate structures leads to coordinated development. **Participative** process ensures inclusion of relevant stakeholders in the development processes within the territory. **Food cooperation** is then essential for a proper enhancement of resilient and sustainable food systems.

This part can also serve for the identification of the **new transnational projects' collaborations among participants.**

#### **16:00–16:15 Workshop insights**

Summary of workshops outcomes by their leaders - identification of top issues to be addressed and what can be done jointly.

#### **16:15–16:30 Closing remarks**

**Martin Příborský**, Member of the Brno City Assembly responsible for strategic development and metropolitan cooperation

#### **16:30–17:00 Networking coffee**

#### **17:00–18:00 Optional Tour at the Museum of Applied Arts**

Discover the building and its exhibitions with English guide.

#### **19:00 Joint Dinner**

Pavillon Steak House, Jezuitská 687/6, Brno

# Speakers' medallions



**Markéta Vaňková** has been the Mayor of City of Brno since 2018. In 2000, she successfully completed her studies at the Faculty of Law of Masaryk University in Brno, and two years later she obtained her Doctor of Laws degree, specializing in civil law. In 2003, she passed the bar exam. Already during her studies, she was interested in local government issues and subsequently entered public life in her native Brno. From 2002 to 2022, she was also a Member of the Assembly of the Brno-střed City District. Between 2006 and 2010, she served as a Member of the Brno City Assembly and a Councilor of the Brno-střed City District. For the next four years, she worked as a full-time Member of the Assembly of the Brno-střed City District for legislation and the environment. From 2016 to 2020, she was a Member of the Assembly of the South Moravian Region. Since her re-election in 2022, she has been responsible for the following areas: city budget, foreign relations, culture, external and internal control activities, civil emergency and defence planning, and public order.

**Zuzana Mrázová** serves as the Minister of Regional Development of the Czech Republic, bringing a unique combination of hands-on municipal leadership and central government expertise. Her professional background spans spatial planning, regional development, and public investment management across multiple governance levels. As former Mayor of Bílina, a city within the Ústí-Chomutov metropolitan area, she gained direct experience in addressing metropolitan challenges and inter-municipal cooperation. Her work at the Ministry of Regional Development further strengthened her expertise in strategic territorial coordination and integrated territorial investments. Minister Mrázová has been instrumental in advancing metropolitan governance structures and fostering collaboration between cities and regions, making her a leading voice in Czech metropolitan policy and development.





**Jan Olbrycht** is a former Member of the European Parliament. He has a PhD in Sociology and is a university teacher, expert, politician, and social activist. He was Mayor of Cieszyn 1990–1998 and President of Silesia Region 1998–2002. He is active in many European local and regional government organisations and is regional policy and urban development expert. As a Member of the European Parliament 2004–2024, he was working mainly on EU budget, regional policy and urban related issues. He is Founder and President of URBAN Intergroup in the European Parliament. He was standing rapporteur on the EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027. Currently, he is a Special Adviser to EU Commissioner for Budget Piotr Serafin and Member of Team Europe Direct Poland.

**Christophe Ebermann** is the Head of the Project Unit of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, where he oversees the implementation of the Programme's operations. He brings extensive expertise in sustainable urban and regional development, having previously advised cities and regions on the formulation of territorial development strategies. Over three programming periods, he has supported a broad portfolio of transnational cooperation projects in the fields of governance, environment, and culture. Through this work, he has contributed to strengthening cooperative frameworks and fostering integrated territorial development across central Europe.





**František Kubeš** has been Head of the Strategic Development and Cooperation Department at the City of Brno since 2019. From 2014 to 2019, he worked at the Czech Ministry of Regional Development as Head of the Urban Policy Sub-department, and for the last two years he was also in charge of the Regional Policy Department. Prior to that, he worked at the City of Brno in the City Strategy Office, where he was responsible for creating the Strategy for Brno, but also for participating in several international projects. During this phase of his career, he received a scholarship from the Robert Bosch Foundation and spent nine months working in Germany. He specializes in strategic and regional development, cohesion policy (integrated territorial investment instrument), and support for innovative environments, including the Smart Cities concept.

**Robert Pyka** is a professor of sociology at the University of Silesia in Katowice. He holds a distinguished academic background in the social sciences. Between 2019 and 2020, he served as Deputy Dean for Research and Internationalization at the Faculty of Social Sciences. Previously, he held the position of Scientific Director at the Institute of Sociology. In 2017, he established the Observatory of Urban and Metropolitan Process, focusing on urban and metropolitan research. In his research, he focuses on issues related to cities and metropolises, including empowerment, decentralization, and the complexity and diversity of urban processes as sources of creativity and innovation. He is interested in multilevel governance and participatory democracy.

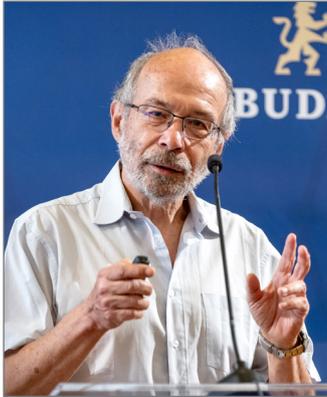




**Zuzanna Neuve-Église** is a sociologist and linguist, holding a PhD in social sciences. She is affiliated with the Institute of Sociology at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. Her research interests include discourse, communication and collective imaginaries, metropolisation processes and governance, as well as transformations of collective identities and territorial identification. Since 2016, she has been actively involved in the Observatory of Urban and Metropolitan Processes, where she also serves as Office Coordinator, contributing to applied research, stakeholder engagement and knowledge transfer between academia and society. She has participated in numerous national and international research and educational projects devoted to urban and metropolitan issues. She is a member of the Polish Sociological Association.

**Luděk Sýkora** is a professor of social geography and regional development at Charles University in Prague. His research and teaching focus on urban change in post-socialist cities, the impacts of globalization on urban transformation, metropolitan processes such as suburbanization, neighbourhood change including gentrification, segregation, intercultural dynamics in immigrant neighbourhoods, and urban and housing policies. He has conducted applied research and consultancy for the European Commission, national ministries and agencies, local governments, the business sector, and NGOs.





**Iván Tosics** is an “urban explorer”, eager to find interesting examples and good practices of cities to innovate urban development, for the sake of public interest and keeping the balance between social, environmental and economic interests. He is one of the principals of Metropolitan Research Institute, Budapest. He is a sociologist with long experience in urban sociology, strategic development, housing policy and EU regional policy issues. Between 2011 and 2022 he was one of the Programme Experts of the URBACT programme. He teaches at the University of Pécs, Department of Political Studies, Doctoral School. He is vice chair of the European Network of Housing Research, executive committee member of the European Urban Research Association. He publishes extensively on topics like integrated urban development, urban renewal, metropolitan areas, EU urban policies, dilemmas of post-Covid urban development.

**Pietro Reviglio** is a Policy and Research Advisor on Urban Governance at Eurocities, where he leads advocacy and research at the intersection of EU policymaking, urban governance and evidence-based analysis. He coordinates high-level political engagement, shapes Eurocities’ urban governance agenda, and steers flagship research initiatives such as the Eurocities Pulse Mayors Survey, gathering strategic insights from over 100 European city leaders. A key focus of his work is metropolitan governance where he supports cities in navigating multi-level governance processes and in enhancing their institutional capacity to act at the metropolitan scale. Before joining Eurocities, he worked at the European Commission on the Copernicus programme and at UNESCO on sustainable development and youth engagement. He holds a Master in Public Policy from Sciences Po Paris.





**Soňa Raszková** has experience working in both regional and city administration, including seven years in the Strategic Development and Cooperation Department of the City of Brno. During this time, contributed to metropolitan strategy development, strategic project management, and the implementation of the integrated Territorial Investment instrument within the Brno Metropolitan Area. Currently serves as the Head of the Unit focusing on international cooperation and marketing, as well as on strengthening metropolitan cooperation through actions delivered within the MECOG-CE project. In parallel, serves as a lecturer and external collaborator at the Faculty of Economics and Administration, Masaryk University in Brno.

**Jürgen Neumüller** holds a PhD in civil engineering Technical University of Darmstadt. He started his professional career evaluating INTERREG programmes from 1999 on and was leading several transnational projects addressing prevention of floods and regional development along European transport corridors. After running a private consultancy for about 20 years he moved to the public administration sector. He served for the Federal Ministry of Environment and the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community in Berlin, focussing on Regional Policy, Structural Change and Urban Development, taking part in the commission for equal living conditions. Since July 2021 he heads the division „European Spatial Planning“ in the Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin-Brandenburg, representing the Capital Region in European networks and projects.





**Massimo Vettoretti** is Engineer and Director of the Economic, Territorial and Social Development Department – European and International Projects and Programs Unit of the Metropolitan city of Turin (CMT0) since December 2024. Manager at CMT0 since 2011, in various sectors including school construction, sustainable development and environmental planning, and technical assistance to municipalities. He is Chair of the Provincial Expropriation Commission.

**Dušan Pöllich** works as a specialist in strategic planning in the administration of Ostrava, a city of almost 300,000 inhabitants located in the northeast of the Czech Republic. He takes part in metropolitan and urban working groups and represents Ostrava in smart city initiatives and international projects. In his everyday work, he deals with agendas that include support for small and medium-sized enterprises and municipal energy policy. He believes that Ostrava is a unique city, where the ratio between quality of life and cost of living is among the best in Europe.





**Simone Jung** is the International Affairs Officer at the Verband Region Stuttgart. She holds a diploma in Spatial Planning and an MA in European Public Administration. She has professional experience in metropolitan governance, regional planning and development, and European and cross-border cooperation.

**Andrzej Czajkowski** serves as a Head of the office of Warsaw Metropolis Association, which brings together 79 local government units from the Warsaw metropolitan area. Coordinator of national and international projects implemented by the City of Warsaw, UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), the British Embassy in Warsaw, UNICEF in Chechnya, and the Polish Humanitarian Organisation.





**Martin Přeborský** is a Member of the Brno City Assembly responsible for strategic development and metropolitan cooperation. He holds degrees in Law and Political Science and has professional experience from the European Commission in Brussels, where he worked mainly on competition policy, protection of the EU's financial interests, and EU funds. He has been active in Brno's municipal politics for several years. His work focuses on supporting entrepreneurship, innovation, science and research, and on preparing key strategic development documents. In metropolitan cooperation, he is primarily responsible for managing EU funds and Integrated Territorial Investment instrument that support strategic metropolitan projects.

**Peter Austin** works as planning advisor for regional and international cooperation in the City of Oslo. He has been co-chair of Eurocities Working Group for Metropolitan Areas since 2010, was lead stakeholder for the ESPON SPIMA project on spatial planning in metropolitan areas in 2016, he coordinates for the METREX Nordic-Baltic Network, and has worked closely with many of the MECOG-CE stakeholder cities through projects and networks. He has coordinated regional spatial planning in Oslo since 2007 and is currently leading the City team in a major revision together with the neighbouring county of Akershus. He has worked with researchers and planning colleagues in Norway and across Europe, focusing on strategic issues including sustainability, climate, transport, affordable housing, economic development and more recently security and preparedness issues.













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Ministry of Regional  
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