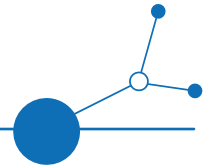


Report on metropolitan governance systems and existing tools/best practices at partner MAs for enhancing metropolitan cooperation

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Authors: Robert Pyka, Krzysztof Bierwiazzonek, Zuzanna Neuve-Église, Małgorzata Suchacka
University of Silesia in Katowice, Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of Sociology
Observatory on Urban and Metropolitan Processes



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Executive Summary

The primary objective of the study was to undertake a systematic exploration of the most effective tools and practices for enhancing metropolitan cooperation and governance in Central Europe, with the overarching goal of nurturing collaborative learning and development.

The aim of the study extends beyond mere identification of successful flagship practices that have yielded tangible results within diverse metropolitan contexts in the MECOG-CE partner areas. An equal commitment is directed towards increasing capacity and advocating for a grassroots-driven validation process.

The exchange of resources and experiences not only enrich knowledge about contemporary solutions to different challenges that Central European metropolitan areas face, but it also serves to empower and inspire the MECOG-CE partners to achieve excellence through sharing. This project phase is dedicated to establishing meaningful partnerships and cultivating a supportive community ethos, thereby facilitating cooperation and governance enhancement at the metropolitan level as well as shaping a more prosperous and sustainable urban future.

Key findings with reference to the consecutive parts of the report

National context

- Partners' metropolitan areas are at different stages of their governance systems construction developing diverse tools for metropolitan cooperation. It opens up significant opportunities to learn from each other. Nevertheless, directly transferring solutions from one country to another is challenging. The knowledge about the broader context of metropolitan cooperation tools and best practices is needed to assess their transferability potential.

Level of autonomy of municipalities and its influence at the national level

- Generally, the extensive range of competencies as well as necessary resources, allows municipalities in the examined countries to have a real impact on living conditions and meet the needs of residents defined at the local level.
- The relatively strong position of municipal authorities, stemming from their competencies, democratic legitimacy through direct elections, does not translate into a significant influence of municipal authorities at the central government level.
- Representatives of municipalities are not directly present in central government structures. They can only indirectly influence state power and lobby for their interests within various bodies and mixed conferences, where representatives of central and municipal authorities meet. Czechia presents an exception as indirectly elected mayors can have joint position as a deputy in parliament, which is a common practice.

Level of metropolitan empowerment

- The level of empowerment of metropolises varies between the countries represented in the project and often between metropolitan areas within a single country (Poland, Germany).
- Italian and German metropolises present a higher level of empowerment, while metropolises in countries, such as Poland and Czechia, struggle to be recognised.



- Even in the case of the strongest Italian and German metropolises, the pre-existing municipalities were preserved and decisions to merge municipalities were not made.
- Considering the potential influence of metropolitan actors on national decisions and legislation, their position is even weaker than that of municipalities. The official metropolitan representatives have no formal presence in State or central government bodies.

Metropolitan issues as a part of the national political agenda

- The metropolitan phenomenon in Central Europe was noticed much earlier in Germany and Italy than in the countries belonging to the post-communist block, where a highly centralized approach prevailed.
- In Germany and Italy, the metropolitan actors had more time for searching or testing appropriate institutional solutions for emerging metropolises. Although this process was not linear ultimately led to the recognition of the metropolises as an appropriate level for strategic and spatial planning.
- After the collapse of the former communist bloc, efforts in Central European countries, including Poland and Czechia, focused on reforming political and economic systems as well as restoring the autonomy of local self-government. Thus, the metropolitan issue emerged in Poland and Czechia only at the end of the first decade of the 21st century. To this day, Czechia and Poland metropolitan areas lack adequate political and institutional frameworks. Even so, they still represent some form of metropolitan governance as metropolitan areas in other Eastern European countries are in an even weaker position or non-existent at all.

Metropolitan governance system

- Understanding the functioning of the metropolitan governance system in a given metropolitan area requires going beyond the institutional and formal perspective. Therefore, the perspective of territorial dialogue and cooperation spaces in metropolitan areas has been adopted to analyse the metropolitan governance system in Central Europe. A closer analysis reveals that dynamic metropolitan governance also exists in less institutionalised metropolitan areas.
- Italian and German metropolitan areas have more consolidated metropolitan governance systems with a large number of interconnected metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces. It reflects longer collective learning, higher metropolitan civic capital, and trust, essential for the proper functioning of metropolitan institutions.
- The less advanced stage of development of metropolitan governance systems in Poland and Czechia can be related, among others, to the unreadiness of self-government units that recently regained autonomy to transfer their competencies at the metropolitan level as well as to the unwillingness of the regional and national level to support metropolitan cooperation actively.

Form and status of metropolitan dialogue and cooperation

- Cooperation in the metropolitan areas from outside the post-communist countries is more advanced and longer-lasting, as reflected in strong legal foundations that result in increased competencies and budgets. These forms of cooperation are more often classified as hard spaces.



- The GZM Metropolis is an exception - it is considered a hard space, but its budget and competences remain modest compared to the studied governance structures in Italy or Germany.
- Other studied metropolitan structures in Poland and Czechia are based on soft forms of cooperation (Warsaw, Brno, Ostrava MAs). Nevertheless, it can be postulated that the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) significantly contributes to the ongoing process of the gradual “hardening” of metropolitan governance structures.
- Three distinctive forms of cooperation and dialogue spaces can be identified. The first relates to a given structure’s functioning under national regulations on metropolises. Such organisations adhere rigorously to specific provisions, are highly formalised, and depend on political relations. The second form concerns different associations and agreements with formerly established institutions, also legally binding. This group of spaces is slightly less formalised but requires a wide network of relations. The third form relies on informal structures, which in some cases may overlap with the two previously mentioned forms.

Emergence and structure of metropolitan dialogue and cooperation

- In most metropolitan areas, the shifts in the formation of metropolitan cooperation structures had the evolutionary character, but crucial decisions, often accompanied by alterations in national law, are made at a certain stadium of cooperation. Such decisions often revolutionise the pace of change and the quality of cooperation.
- Emergence of metropolitan cooperation is also related to political and financial support by central or regional authorities. On the one hand, such support is necessary for a smooth operation. On the other hand, it can pose a burden, as it directs the undertaken actions towards previously established political goals of these authorities.
- The main actors of the metropolitan spaces of cooperation and dialogue are both political and non-political ones/associated structures. This is often connected with the functioning of additional committees and bodies supporting the operation of a given structure. These internal divisions may be formal in nature, but there are also advisory committees with no formal status.
- The metropolitan dialogue structures provide different opportunities to engage residents or NGOs in various forms of participation in the governance metropolitan system.

Subject and character of metropolitan dialogue and cooperation

- Metropolitan transport (or more broadly mobility) system, spatial planning and regional development could be named as a “Big 3” of metropolitan domains of action. These issues are complex, which relates to laws and institutional, organisational, financial and political frameworks.
- The form of institutionalisation of metropolitan cooperation constitutes a fundamental dimension that differentiates how metropolitan structures engage in different domains of intervention in the studied metropolitan areas. In a situation where metropolitan institutions function based on laws defining their prerogatives, their areas of operation result from prescribed responsibilities, and consequently, activities are complex. This is the case of the GZM Metropolis (Upper Silesian MA), Stuttgart Region and the Metropolitan City of Turin. Another category consists of metropolitan areas covered by the institutions coordinating the ITI projects. This is the case of Brno, Ostrava, and Warsaw MAs. The Berlin-Brandenburg

metropolitan structures constitute a particular case. They can be called institutions mediating between the municipal and state levels.

- Metropolitan dialogue is most often focused on the future and fostering development. However, its foundation lies in a thorough examination of the current diagnosis of specific issues.
- The MECOG-CE partners emphasised the consensual, multilateral forms of metropolitan dialogues, which are concentrated on the shared metropolitan interest. Such a perspective manifests that different forms of metropolitan cooperation and metropolitan dialogue are rather effective.
- There are three most visible conflictual factors which can be indicated in relation to maintaining the metropolitan dialogue. These are: differences of interests between the local, metropolitan and state levels, different points of view of representatives of political parties present in metropolitan institutions, and differences of interests between individual municipalities participating in the metropolitan dialogue.

Best tools and practices at partners' metropolitan areas

- There were 47 best tools and practices gathered within the MECOG-CE consortium as a significant resource, point of reference and inspiration. They form a rich collection of different solutions that can be seen as responses to current, major problems faced by metropolitan areas in Central Europe. Across 14 thematic areas, they demonstrate the complex nature of urban development and the interconnectedness of various factors shaping metropolitan ecosystems in different European regions. From regional development strategies to waste management initiatives, all exemplary practices and projects give evidence of significant urban planning and governance efforts.
- The selected flagship initiatives were examined with regard to three main dimensions: thematic domains and major contemporary challenges perceived by the project partners, innovative or added value of different initiatives in specific regional context, potential for transferability into other metropolitan areas.

Thematic domains and major contemporary challenges for metropolitan areas perceived by the project partners and addressed by the selected practices

- Among the most prevalent thematic areas addressed by the practices, there are: Transport / Mobility, Education, widely perceived Regional Development and Management of metropolitan area, mostly of strategic character. Many of the gathered practices are of cross-cutting character, showcasing a complexity of metropolitan projects. They focus on a certain model of work, design or conceptual process, or type of project implementation.
- There are two separate and considerable groups of initiatives relating to the cultural dimension of metropolisation, fostering the “metropolitan” mindset and sense of togetherness. The ITI served as their crucial funding source. The first group consists of “soft measures,” promoting diverse metropolitan resources, and sharing knowledge and values. It is especially meaningful as these practices contribute to the recognition of the metropolitan scale as an important dimension. The second group of initiatives relates to organisational and procedural issues through the development of strategic and sustainable approaches in metropolitan planning (e.g. frameworks, plans, strategies, visions) as well as bottom-up and horizontal governance



structures (e.g. voluntary associations, partnerships, networks, etc.). It responds to the need of development and enhancement of metropolitan cooperation, perceived as crucial by all CE metropolitan areas involved in the MECOG-CE project.

- In Czechia and Poland, most of the transport or metropolitan management related tools were developed with the use of the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) instrument. This supports the idea of the ITI as a window of opportunity for the development or enhancement of metropolitan cooperation, especially in the countries where there is a lower institutionalisation level of metropolitan governance.
- In Italy and Germany (especially Berlin-Brandenburg), the partners opted for more strategic and processual approach in terms of sustainable mobility, spatial planning, regional development, and bottom-up or participatory metropolitan management model. It can be perceived as a need to optimise mature or relatively long functioning governance structures.
- Regarding challenges and opportunities identified by the MECOG-CE consortium partners, the practices refer to three fundamental pillars of sustainable development - environmental, social and economic. The practices emphasise the environmental dimension, in particular through solutions in sustainable mobility and transport, but also those addressing climate change and promoting green transition. However, the practices representing the social and economic pillars should also be valued as indispensable for sustainable development of the metropolitan areas and the improvement of the metropolitan inhabitants' quality of life.

Innovative or added value of the gathered tools and initiatives

- There were different types of innovations recognised in terms of best practices - technological, organizational, social and cross-cutting. The last category was highly represented and typical of complex and large-scale projects which required a creative or distinctive approach in multiple areas, or a unique combination of the existing resources or solutions. The technological group of innovations was the least present. The organisational group of innovations referred to different forms of governance structures, mostly grassroots and participatory, as well as the process of strategy and plans creation and different voluntary platforms for knowledge exchange and sharing. The social category encompassed various activities that can be seen as enforcing the human capital, people's knowledge, skills and competences, but also promoting social inclusion, tolerance and integration.
- However, oftentimes, it was the configuration of different resources and a special approach that made a significant change in the area of the project implementation, and not necessarily high innovative value of a given practice in terms of the originality of the core idea.
- Regardless of the type of innovation, the most significant advantages and added value across various practices were the exchange of knowledge, enhancement of mutual trust, and improvement of cooperation among stakeholders. The ability to develop inter-institutional relations, but also vertical and horizontal interactions of different actors, is a key resource in the enhancement of metropolitan governance. Another important and distinctive feature indicated as added value was a multi-modal or integrated approach to urban challenges, reflected in the creation of comprehensive strategic documents and approaches meeting the overall sustainable development goals (environmental, social and economic).



- The MECOG-CE partners from Czechia, Poland and Italy more often and directly articulated as innovative the relational and trust elements forming social capital and the fundamental basis for collaborative cultures, which was accentuated in the ITI-funded projects.
- The partners from Germany were more attached to the significance of a specific or distinguished field of intervention of a given structure for the development and management of the metropolitan area.

Potential for transferability of best tools and practices

- The assessment of the transferability has three phases. The first phase involves validation in a “donor” metropolitan area, where up to five flagship initiatives were selected for sharing. The second validation stage consisted of an expert analysis aimed at objectivizing and decontextualizing tools and practices by highlighting their characteristics and criteria for transferability. The third validation stage occurs in the receiving metropolitan area, involving the recontextualization of tools or practices considering regional situations, technical and financial capacities, needs, and challenges.
- The crucial elements in the assessment of the transfer or implementation feasibility in a given context entail the needs and objectives of a given MA and the accessibility of different resources needed for the project implementation, e.g. financial, infrastructural, human, time, as well as administrative or legal requirements. Other elements are: scope of actions and target group, engagement of different stakeholders, access to available guidelines and materials.
- In the case of cross-cutting, context-specific or process-oriented solutions, the transferability is complex and requires a thorough analysis on which selected parts of the whole concept or approach can be the object of transfer.
- Most of small-scale projects in education and competence-building, based on soft measures, but also conceptual work in the strategy design, have higher potential of transferability. Similarly, tools concerning the cultural dimension of metropolisation.
- The use of specific Europeans funds, as the ITI instrument, should be thoroughly examined if there was no previous experience in its implementation. In the so-called “old” EU member states, the use of ITI necessitates careful consideration of both its advantages (added value) and drawbacks, including the availability of funding, administrative resources required for management, and existing experience and competencies in its implementation across various administrative levels. The partner areas from Czechia and Poland could serve as mentors in this process, having acquired quite a considerable level of expertise in its adoption.
- Transferring tools and good practices from highly institutionalised metropolitan areas in Germany and Italy to Polish or Czech metropolises may be challenging, but not excluded. However, the financial and technical capabilities, as well as effective metropolitan decision-making, necessary for implementing the solutions must be taken into account.
- Transferring tools and good practices from Polish and Czech metropolitan areas to Italian and German ones may be easier. The solutions and tools from the former are often more flexible, agile, and less technically and financially demanding. Still, their transfer is conditioned by the added value they would provide to existing metropolitan cooperation.



- The pivotal question for the transfer within the MECOG-CE project remains whether a selected project, tool or practice underscores the importance of and effectively enhances metropolitan cooperation and governance, including across different sectors.

1. Introduction

This document is the deliverable “D.1.2.1. Summary of existing tools/best practices at partner’s MA¹ for enhancing metropolitan cooperation” elaborated within the project “MECOG-CE: Strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance in central Europe” supported by the programme Interreg-CE as part of “WP1: Analysis of metropolitan dimension”, including “Activity 1.2. Analysis of existing tools/best practices for enhancing metropolitan cooperation”.

In the development process, the MECOG-CE partner metropolitan areas are at different institutionalisation levels and their functioning relies on diverse legal regulations and grounds. The common goal of these metropolitan areas is to seek optimal tools for developing strong metropolitan collaboration that enables more effective resolution of common problems and challenges while ensuring sustainable development. This process opens up opportunities for mutual learning, although the transfer of best practices requires careful consideration and possible adaptations, as there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution.

The aim of this report is therefore to identify good collaboration practices developed within the MECOG-CE consortium members by both highly institutionalised metropolitan areas and those fostering bottom-up cooperation. A key step in the analytical work is to present the context from which these practices emerge, allowing partners to more adequately assess their usefulness and the possibility of their transfer to the respective metropolitan areas.

The process of identification of different elements of the MECOG-CE partners’ governance systems, as well as best tools and practices enhancing metropolitan cooperation included data collection with the use of the comprehensive research tool (Matrix) among the consortium members, allowing also for the expression of different partners’ views and perspectives on the metropolitan development of their areas. The first part of the report (4.1) provides a presentation of the broad context of metropolitan cooperation in the countries from which the project partners originate. Thus, it entails, among others, the position of local government and metropolises in the political system, considering their organisational and financial autonomy, and the strength of urban and metropolitan leadership, including their influence on the central government level, as well as the assessment of the importance of the metropolitan issue in the national political agenda. Finally, different structures, interactions and interrelations within the respective metropolitan governance systems were demonstrated, with all their complexity and substantial variations highlighted among the selected countries and regions.

In order to better grasp the context of different developed solutions and way of their functioning and emergence, the second part of the report (4.2) gathers essential information about the existing metropolitan cooperation structures and dialogues spaces (Mikuła, Pyka, Czornik, Thimonier-Rouzet, 2024) as components of a metropolitan governance system. It includes aspects,

¹ The abbreviation of “MA” stands for “metropolitan area.”



such as form and status of these metropolitan spaces, their way of development, main actors and governance bodies, as well as domains and areas of intervention with relevant tools and good practices, and strategic documents.

The third and last part of the report (4.3) provides the results of the comprehensive analysis of the selected flagship examples of good practices identified by the MECOG-CE project partners. They are scrutinised with regard to their thematic domains and responses to significant contemporary challenges, as well as the innovative value within a specific regional context. Moreover, the reflections in this part of the report delineate opportunities and potential obstacles to transferring the chosen practices to other metropolitan areas. The aim is to bolster the metropolitan network and community by uniting all leading initiatives engaged in metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces within the MECOG-CE consortium. This collaboration seeks to collectively enhance these initiatives, foster partnerships, facilitate resource and experience sharing, and build overall capacity.

Apart from constituting a deliverable within the MECOG-CE project, an analysis, overview and assessment of the metropolitan governance systems, together with the best tools and practices for enhancing metropolitan cooperation in the partner metropolitan areas, the report provides guiding insights and recontextualization opportunities for the second phase of the project. The analysis outcomes and expert recommendations can inform the partners' activities related to building study clusters and testing the selected solutions and initiatives.

The insights gained from the “Analysis of existing tools/best practices for enhancing metropolitan cooperation” contribute significantly to the output 1.1. “Common Vision for enhancing cooperation in Central European MAs”, which is a strategy/action plan, enabling the project partners to proceed to testing of the selected tools and best practices in the partner MAs, as well as to the deliverable “D.1.3.1. The status quo of metropolitan dimension in CE and its future development”.

2. Approach and objectives of the study

2.1. Context of the analysis and key notions²

The analysis performed in the framework of the MECOG-CE project stems from the contemporary reflection on ongoing urbanisation processes resulting in the formation of metropolitan areas that accumulate economic, political, scientific, and cultural functions and, thus, become new spaces for the life and mobility of people.

However, from administrative and political standpoint, metropolitan areas seldom form cohesive planning and governance entities. The large size, intricate nature, and dependence on functional interconnections make it challenging for metropolitan areas to neatly align with a country's conventional territorial and administrative frameworks. The discrepancy between the functional

² The content of this chapter was based on the publication initiated and co-authored by Robert Pyka, a member of the team: Ł. Mikula, R. Pyka, M. Czornik, E. Thimonier-Rouzet (2024). Emerging Metropolitan Spaces in Poland and France: Co-creation of New Territorialities Through Institutional Dialogue and Soft Planning. *Urban Affairs Review*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10780874241228551>.



scope (real geography of a problem) and the reach of political, administrative, and planning institutions encapsulates the essence of the “metropolitan problem.” This incongruity typically hinders the establishment of integrated metropolitan governance.

In terms of metropolitan accommodation strategies, the leading role of central governments is consistently emphasised. Nevertheless, despite efforts of the authorities in some countries to enact changes in territorial organisation, such as consolidating the metropolitan area into a single administrative unit or enforcing mandatory local government cooperation (“old regionalism”), these strategies tend to be effective only temporarily, within limited time frames. The inherent expansiveness of metropolitan areas means that administrative borders are unable to match the rapid pace of inevitable developmental dynamics, including suburbanization processes.

What should also be taken into consideration is the fact that the development of the metropolitan level and its empowerment is not a linear process, and collaboration is not an inherent or universally applied mode of operation. Therefore, from the institutional perspective, metropolisation is often blocked and top-down territorial reforms can face active opposition. Thus, metropolisation should be regarded as an ongoing process that involves not only the institutional level resulting in new laws, governance bodies, and structures. But, as a phenomenon involving the shift in social awareness, territorial affiliations, and identities of local elites and residents, which should correspond with the institutional evolution to ensure its requisite legitimacy.

For that reason, it should be noted that, at the same time, partly irrespectively of the reform efforts of central authorities or their absence, metropolitan areas are increasingly becoming “soft spaces” of metropolitan dialogue and cooperation (Haughton, Allmendinger, Counsell, Vigar, 2010; Allmendinger, Haughton, Knieling, Othengrafen, 2015; Purkarthofer, Granqvist, 2021), as a result of bottom-up cooperation between local authorities and other stakeholders. The entanglement and crosscutting of these two processes (top-down reform and bottom-up space of dialogue and cooperation) are taken into account in the project approach.

Although the metropolitan dialogue as a soft space may be deprived of decision power, it can contribute to the emergence of a metropolitan cognitive community. In these communities (Cohendet, Grandadam, Simon, Capdevila, 2014), individuals develop and use shared notions related to identified challenges by utilising a common language and building their metropolitan civic capital (Nelles, 2013). As a soft space, metropolitan dialogue prepares the ground for the gradual emergence of the “harder spaces” provided with decision powers. Nevertheless, transitioning from “soft” to “hard” cannot be regarded as one and only appropriate direction. The primary function of metropolitan dialogue is to keep the balance between institutions and the agency of metropolitan actors.

It is assumed that integrated metropolitan planning and governance can no longer solely be a domain of consolidated administrative structures. It must rely on a broad coalition network of engaged political, economic and social actors. Therefore, for the purpose of this project, the notion of territorial dialogue and cooperation spaces in the metropolitan areas is used as it applies best for the description of the metropolitan cooperation tools and practices, which are very rich and diverse in form, territorial range, and the level of formalisation and institutionalisation.

In this sense, a metropolitan dialogue and cooperation space comprises *all forms of exchange of information, everyday discussions, commitments, and transactions between actors from the public, private, or civic sectors, functioning at different territorial levels, which are triggered*



by the interdependence of their interests and concerns at the metropolitan level. The notion of metropolitan dialogue can encapsulate every area and problem, i.e. spatial planning, road network, projects, and events, which take place in a supralocal dimension, and the appropriate implementation of which demands arrangements of actors at the metropolitan level (Mikuła et al., 2024).

The use of the notion of metropolitan dialogue and cooperation spaces reduces the risk of overlooking interesting tools and practices of metropolitan cooperation, the so-called “soft planning spaces”, which are less institutionalised, but can be highly efficient in enhancing metropolitan cooperation and the emergence of new metropolitan structures in the future. For that reason, the study will explore not only highly institutionalised hard forms, such as metropolitan cities in Italy or the GZM Metropolis in Poland, but also less institutionalised initiatives at the metropolitan level. The latter can take different forms: an association, a conference of mayors from MA, or regular informal meetings in metropolitan areas.

The metropolitan governance system consists of a set of different interdependent, crosscutting and overlapping metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces. Its characteristics, including the content and field of actions, course of development and participants as well as territorial range, level of formalisation, available resources etc., determine the specificity of governance in a particular metropolitan area.

2.2. Objectives of the analysis

The project activity “1.2. Analysis of existing tools/best practices for enhancing metropolitan cooperation” and this report focus on two main objectives.

The first one is to identify how cooperation and governance are ensured in each partner metropolitan area in Central Europe. It is based on the exploration of the national context of their development, description of metropolitan cooperation forms, structures and dialogues spaces (i.e. its status and origin, metropolitan policies and financing, actors and competences/areas of intervention), as well as interactions of different structures and spaces as components of a metropolitan governance system. Importantly, it provides a comprehensive background of how the identified solutions enhancing metropolitan cooperation developed and function within the whole governance system, allowing for a deeper understanding of the tools and a proper assessment of their transferability in the further stages of the project.

The second aim is to gather the substantive knowledge on specific metropolitan cooperation tools and best practices with reference to selected examples provided by the MECOG-CE partners. The analysis of these practices encompasses their thematic focus and responses to major contemporary challenges as well as the innovative or added value they bring in a given area. Furthermore, the objective is to delineate opportunities and potential obstacles to transferring a selected group of practices into other metropolitan areas. Thus, by bringing together all flagship initiatives involved in metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces within the MECOG-CE consortium, it bolsters the metropolitan network and community. It also facilitates the collaborative development of practices, the establishment of partnerships, and the exchange of resources and experiences.

Within the scope of activity 1.2, the analytical work included the elaboration of seven case studies (detailed reports) per every partner metropolitan area (Berlin-Brandenburg, Brno, Ostrava,



Stuttgart, Turin, Upper Silesian, Warsaw MAs)³ in the form of completed Matrices, the research tool developed by the experts from the University of Silesia in Katowice. The case studies give an overview of the structures of metropolitan cooperation and governance, but also of different tools and best practices in specific areas, such as public transport management or regional development, etc. The soft spaces and less institutionalised forms of metropolitan cooperation were not disregarded. The completed Matrices served as the first step in the description and analysis of metropolitan structures and solutions for cooperation and governance, based on which a comprehensive summary with all essential elements was developed.

The comprehensive report will be compiled with the identification of the most urgent needs and challenges of Central European metropolitan areas to guarantee cohesion of the analytical process and to promote the already successfully applied solutions to problems in the metropolitan dimension. The delivery of results under D.1.2.1 is a crucial preparatory phase for the selection of best tools strengthening metropolitan cooperation, which will be tested in MAs and, then, incorporated into the final strategy and implemented by the project partners.

3. Method

3.1. Analysis of existing tools/best practices for enhancing metropolitan cooperation

The work on the analysis of existing tools/best practices for enhancing metropolitan cooperation included the following steps:

- elaboration of the research tool (Matrix) to be used in relation to the partner metropolitan areas in Central Europe and selected other metropolitan areas (outside CE);
- presentation of the research tool and its main categories during the kick-off meeting in Brno (29-31 of May 2023);
- elaboration of the model example of the Matrix with full answers presenting the two most important cooperation structures identified in the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area, i.e. the GZM Metropolis and the Association of the Municipalities and Counties of Central Subregion of the Silesia Region in order to develop guidelines helping project partners provide exhaustive answers with regard to tools and instruments used in their MAs;
- collection of data among partner metropolitan areas from the 6th of June to the 30th of September 2023, with the deadline extended by a week, data verification and interpretation based on additional direct contact with editing persons;
- preparation of detailed sub-reports in the form of case studies (completed Matrices) concerning tools and best practices used in the partner metropolitan areas ([Appendix 3](#));
- presentation of preliminary results of the analysis during the transnational meeting in Warsaw (19-20 October 2023) and a second round of data verification;

³ Initially, there was also the case study of the Metropolitan City of Milano planned to be elaborated. However, the Milano partners decided not to participate in the data collection process, keeping the role of the associate project partner.



- thorough analysis and preparation of a complex summary report on metropolitan governance system and best tools and practices enhancing metropolitan cooperation in the MECOG-CE partner areas in Central Europe,
- additionally, there was an Executive Summary elaborated to facilitate more effective knowledge sharing with project partners and beyond as well as promotion of the selected solutions and other informational activities.

For the purpose of the analysis, the team from the University of Silesia (Poland) designed the research tool **“Matrix for Identification and Analysis of Tools and Best Practices Enhancing Metropolitan Cooperation”**, which is attached as an appendix to this document ([Appendix 2](#)). The main aim of the tool was to gather and analyse the existing instruments and best practices in the form of case studies of partner MAs. The complex structure of the research tool has been designed with the aim of highlighting the context of national regulations, the level of MAs empowerment, and their developing metropolitan governance systems. The comprehensive Matrix is composed of three parts: A, B and C, providing grounds for the elaboration of the report on metropolitan dialogue and cooperation spaces and a summary of existing tools/best practices in partner MAs for enhancing metropolitan cooperation.

3.1.1. Research tool for the summary of existing tools/best practices at partner MAs for enhancing metropolitan cooperation

In this section of the report, the thematic scope of the subsequent parts A, B, C of the comprehensive version of the sociological qualitative research tool is presented. Referred to as a matrix rather than a questionnaire, this tool distinguishes itself by not being designed for completion by a large group of respondents. The Matrix was aimed at representatives of the selected metropolitan areas within the MECOG-CE consortium. Through the use of open-ended questions and instructions that solicit detailed answers and explanations, it fosters the formulation of more informative and engaged answers.

PART A

Part A of the matrix refers to the national context determining the strategies of metropolitan empowerment and the structure of metropolitan cooperation and governance in a given metropolitan area in Europe.

The overview of the national context of partner metropolitan areas was taken into account in the study, given the fact that the emergence of metropolises as new territorialities constitutes a considerable challenge for states as they try to adjust their territorial organisation to the scale and extent of the metropolitan phenomenon. The effects of this adaptive process on the institutionalisation of the forms and the levels of empowerment of the metropolises are very diverse, as are also their results. Individual countries, and often individual metropolises, develop their own adaptation paths evolving from the interaction between the search for economic and administrative (management) effectiveness and the historicity of a given society and its previous territorial organisation, which is deeply rooted in values, identities, and representations shared by citizens. The adopted solutions are, therefore, not always optimal, but they constitute a consequence of possibilities negotiated in given time and circumstances.

Despite wide differences in the paths of adaptation taken, comparative studies make it possible to identify certain basic regularities. Thus, the **adaptation paths can be determined by**, among others (Pyka, 2022):

- **the degree of political autonomy of local authorities**, expressed by the budget resources (level of control of the funding by a central authority) and the autonomy of municipalities in terms of their responsibilities/competences;
- **the strength of the municipal/metropolitan leadership** and its possible influence on the national level (e.g. a power to shape legislation that affects cities and metropolitan areas);
- **the presence and role of the “metropolitan issue” in the government’s political agenda** as an essential developmental challenge (meaning all kinds of expression of the political will towards the empowerment of the metropolitan level, laws, policies, strategies, programmes, decisions/declarations etc. at the national level).

The above-mentioned elements form the consecutive three points of Part A of the matrix.

PART B

Part B of the matrix is designed to present metropolitan cooperation forms, structures and dialogues spaces as components of a metropolitan governance system. The whole part B can be replicated up to 5 times depending on the number of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces (structures, institutions, associations etc.) identified in a given partner metropolitan area. Part B consists of six main elements (points). Each element is divided into sub-points. The thematic scope of this part presents itself as follows:

Point 1 concerns “Form and status of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces” and is composed of ten sections related to basic elements of the structure: 1.1. Official name, 1.2. Date of creation/start of cooperation, 1.3. Official logo, 1.4. Number of jurisdictions/ municipalities comparing to functional metropolitan area (FMA)” (territorial range of cooperation), 1.5. Legal status - if it is regular meetings, conference, agreement, association, territorial unit, self-government, 1.6. Is it an ITI (integrated territorial investments) managing institution?, 1.7. Amalgamation - fusion/inter-communal cooperation: to specify whether the metropolitan structure in its current form results from a merger of municipalities into one city or is an entity based on cooperation between municipalities, 1.8. Seat (office) /place(s), 1.9. Total annual budget in 2022 at disposal of the unit of cooperation and its sources (partner contributions, taxes, subvention from the central level, EU funds), 1.10. Strategic and/or spatial development and planning instruments of MA: to provide a brief description of the MA approach towards the strategic/spatial planning, information about the strategy of MA, its content, time period, etc., 1.11. Type of space: hard (with political power, meaning an ability to make political decisions at the metropolitan level that are binding for municipalities) or soft (without political power). The last section is also a point where the relationship between MA and higher (regional) and lower (municipal) levels of government can be described.

Point 2 was elaborated to capture and present the process of metropolitan dialogue and cooperation. It is based on the following binary categories (Mikuła, et al., 2024):

- **evolutionary / revolutionary**: to define whether it is a slow and long-term progressive process or if it is rather a result of a quick decision, an event, change of the political majority, new law etc.



- **state-supported / state-hampered:** to define the state's attitude towards the emergence of metropolises. Cooperation can be impeded or facilitated by state authorities' financial aid and policy preferences, e.g. funding joint projects that require agreements or creating legal acts that regulate relations between territorial units.
- **monocentric / polycentric:** to define the character of cooperation activities that can be undertaken as a result of initiatives of the metropolitan area's leader city, which directs the cooperation relationship, or that can be a result of bottom-up integration projects proposed by medium size and smaller cities.

It is essential to highlight that these binary features are not alternatives. They represent two extremities and the case of a given MA can be situated somewhere in between or fit into both categories. Thus, each section contains a box where an explanation can be provided (up to 200 words).

Point 3 of the matrix refers to “Actors of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue and its governance bodies.” It is composed of six sections related to issues, such as the diversity of actors involved (political actors and/or technical-administrative staff guaranteeing the stability of the dialogue over time and more significant agency potential), composition of the governance body and functions of its organs, number of representatives/actors/institutions in governance body and outside them, number of full time and part time administrative employees, the existence of non-statutory advisory bodies (e.g. council of development, council of youth, advisory committee) or/and other forms of involvement of external actors (entrepreneurs, NGOs, inhabitants/citizens, etc.), as well as other forms of social/civic participation (e.g. participation of MA inhabitants in the activities of the metropolitan structure). In this point, the respondent is also asked to describe the forms of such participation and actors involved together with examples with the aim to present the broadest possible context of their functioning.

Point 4 aims to identify the subject or subjects of metropolitan dialogues and their features. Firstly, in section 4.1., fifteen categories of potential cooperation are listed. These are (1) spatial planning, (2) regional development, (3) housing, (4) waste management, (5) water management, (6) energy, (7) education, (8) tourism and leisure, (9) social policy (included social inclusion issues), (10) culture, heritage and metropolitan identity, (11) promotion and marketing, (12) sewage management, (13) transport, (14) healthcare, (15) other domains and subjects of cooperation and dialogue that can be added if needed. Identifying the subject of cooperation is the first step to its further, more detailed description. The matrix contains characteristics concerning the range of action/competence within the domain (subject) of cooperation, tools and good practices used in the mentioned activities and a question about whether a general strategy connected with the domain or sectorial strategic document exists in the metropolitan area. Section 4.2 refers to the time perspective of a given action and its present or future nature. There are two dimensions to be specified by respondents: 1. “repairment” and/or “development”, 2. “present” and/or “future”. The first dimension relates to a situation when there is a focus on making up for backlog (repairment) or when dealing with current problems may be the beginning of strategic thinking and action (development). In the second dimension, the category of “present” refers to concentration on current problems or conflict resolution. As to the category “future”, it means all forms of cooperation that try to anticipate future challenges (e.g. the development of artificial intelligence in educational contexts or the use of autonomous vehicles in cities). Section 4.3 refers to the nature of the cooperation dialogue. The first issue in this area concerns the



conflictual or consensual nature of the cooperation. One of the most important (and interesting) problems for the analysis of the metropolitan discourse process is its character and roots. The conflictual (or the opposite consensual) nature demonstrates how the relations between the actors of MA are built and what kind of social atmosphere prevails in the MA dialogue. The second issue, in section 4.3, specifies the range of cooperation related to the number of actors involved in the dialogue process. Here are two categories used: “bilateralism” and “multilateralism”. The next point concerns benefits derived from the dialogue process. There are two categories possible: “transactionality” and “shared metropolitan interest.” The aim of this point is to define whether it brings benefits only to partners of particular cooperation (municipalities, institutions), but without reference to the broader interest of the metropolitan area (and sometimes even against this interest), or it is intended to build a competitive advantage of the entire MA and have a positive impact on it. The fourth section (4.3.4) concerns the communication process within a given cooperation. It includes categories related to the direct and indirect forms of communication. Moreover, it is worth noting that direct communication can sometimes be associated with its informal nature. On the one hand, it can help in the efficiency of dialogue, but on the other hand, the dominance of such a form can result in a non-transparent decision-making process.

Similarly to Point 3, the binary features outlined in sections 4.2.1-4.3.4 are not alternatives, and each case can fall somewhere on the spectrum between two extremities. Thus, both categories may be marked.

Point 5 focuses on the character of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue results and empowerment. Here, the term “empowerment” refers to autonomy, gaining more independence and responsibility in functioning and decision-making. The aim of this section is to consider, first and foremost, what sort of projects or structures a given cooperation and dialogue space brings. And thus, this dimension includes two basic questions. The first one is about “visionary aspect” or “operability” (meaning practical realisation of ideas into projects, initiatives or investments). The operability aspect entails a special focus on the implementation of different initiatives, most often investment and infrastructure projects. The visionary aspect of results relies on creating visions and ideas about the functioning of a given sphere. In the activity of an institution/form of dialogue, it translates itself mainly into creating programming documents, defining strategic goals, etc. In the second sub-point, the respondent is asked to define more specifically what the result is in terms of organisational aspects: whether the cooperation leads to the creation of some formal, institutionalised structures, or rather coalitions of different stakeholders that support and engage in the development of some individual metropolitan ventures/projects.

Point 6 consists of the most crucial element for the project development and the provision of deliverables as it relates to the selected best practices or the so-called “flagship projects” that can be tested by the partner metropolitan areas in the next stage of the project. In this point, the task is to select up to five examples of tools or practices mentioned in point 4.1 that concern different areas of action/intervention, such as housing, waste management, transport etc., and are regarded as potentially replicable and applicable in different metropolitan areas in Europe. The selected projects should be then described based on the following categories: name; main goals, organisation, way of functioning; metropolitan impact and results (short-term/long-term; direct/indirect (less tangible: new forms of cooperation, shared knowledge, etc.); innovative aspect; involvement of stakeholders; potential of transferability. When it comes to the innovative



aspect of a given practice, a broad definition of the term is applied in the study, referring not only to the development of new technologies or improvement of the already existing ones, but also to social innovations engaging citizens in the creation of urban common goods, and the “bottom-up dispersed innovation” (Thompson, 2019; Bierwiazzonek, Pyka, 2022a) emerging from informal communities and urban spaces that constitute innovation sites (e.g. projects related to reducing energy consumption, programming workshops, regenerating vacant properties or creating support spaces for people of different ages). As to the last point “the potential of transferability”, the respondent is asked to rate if it is high or low, depending on their subjective view on whether a given practice/project/tool exhibits universal applicability or is very context specific and would need much transformation to match with the needs and conditions in other metropolitan areas.

Part C

Part C of the matrix concerns the overview of interrelations and interactions between different cooperation and dialogue spaces identified in a given partner metropolitan area and presented through up to five examples in part B of the matrix. The respondent is asked to describe this dimension in no more than 400 words. The aim of the section is to explore the existing structures forming the metropolitan governance system and to reflect on its (functional/dysfunctional) character and determinants. In the study, the metropolitan governance system is defined as a collection of interrelated, intersecting, and overlapping metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces. Its distinctive features, encompassing content and scope of actions, developmental trajectory, participants, territorial reach, formalisation level, available resources, etc., define the unique governance dynamics within a specific metropolitan area.



4. Analysis

4.1. National context

The fundamental objective of the MECOG-CE project is mutual learning of mechanisms for building effective collaboration in the metropolitan areas of Central Europe. Individual metropolitan areas are at different stages of their governance systems construction developing diverse tools for metropolitan cooperation. This opens up significant opportunities to learn from the successes and failures of others, implement successful solutions, and join forces in the collective search for answers to the challenges and needs of Central European metropolitan areas. However, it is essential to remember that while these areas share a common history related to their respective national experiences from the second half of the 20th century, each has chosen its own development path, shaping institutional solutions accordingly. Thus, although Central European metropolitan areas can learn from each other, they should refrain from directly and automatically copying solutions from one country to another. The tools and best practices identified in the project cannot be analysed in isolation from the context in which they were created, i.e., the political and legal-institutional conditions and the conditions of the state that would implement these solutions. Therefore, knowledge about the broader context of metropolitan cooperation in a given country is needed to assess the transferability of specific tools for metropolitan cooperation. This context includes, among other things, the position of local government and metropolises in the political system, considering their organisational and financial autonomy and the strength of urban and metropolitan leadership, including their influence on the central government level. The presence of representatives of municipal authorities in parliament or the existence of institutional solutions dedicated to metropolises, as well as the recognition of their importance by central authorities, can facilitate the development of advanced tools for metropolitan cooperation. Therefore, this part of the report focuses on understanding and describing the national contexts in which metropolitan areas develop, which will allow for the contextualisation of the identified solutions and a proper assessment of their transferability in the further stages of the project.

4.1.1. Level of autonomy of municipalities in terms of competencies and budget resources

In the examined countries, municipalities are characterised by a relatively high level of autonomy in terms of competencies. As local government entities, they can define their development strategies and methods of implementation. The municipalities covered in the study carry out a wide range of competencies as either their own tasks or those delegated by central or regional authorities in the case of a federal system (such as Germany). This extensive range of competencies allows them to have a real impact on living conditions and meet the needs of residents defined at the local level. In some countries, the existence of a strong metropolitan level (e.g. Metropolitan City of Turin) may lead to the transfer of some competencies to the metropolitan level, with municipalities focusing on local tasks related to proximity and residents' daily lives.

Germany:

The tasks of the local community include, among other things, the harmonious shaping of community development, including location decisions in compliance with environmental compatibility and the protection of historical monuments, urban land use planning, the promotion of business and industry, the guarantee of public transport, the supply of energy and water, the harmless discharge and treatment of wastewater, improving housing for residents through social housing construction and the promotion of private and cooperative construction, as well as through the socially equitable distribution of housing, providing health and social care, ensuring and promoting a wide range of educational and childcare facilities, and developing leisure and recreational conditions, as well as protecting the natural environment and maintaining public cleanliness. The municipality promotes cultural life and the transmission of cultural heritage in its territory and enables its residents to participate in cultural life and access to cultural assets. (Source: *Joint Spatial Department Berlin Brandenburg*)

Municipalities in the examined countries have their own revenues (local taxes and fees) as well as resources provided by central or regional authorities (as in Germany). The proportions between the share of own revenues and transfers from the state vary in the individual examined countries and determine the actual independence of municipalities in financial terms. Among the examined countries, Czech municipalities show the highest level of financial dependence, with the majority of their income being controlled by the State. Following in terms of financial dependence is Poland, where over half of municipal revenues come from subsidies from the central budget. In the case of Germany, fiscal transfers by the State of Baden-Württemberg represent the most important source of income (known as key allocations) for municipalities. However, it is worth emphasising that the financial sovereignty of German municipalities is guaranteed in the state constitution as an essential element of the municipal right to self-government. Nevertheless, the re-centralization tendency can be observed in some European countries during the last few years. Local governments are losing their financial and legal autonomy to a given extent, which can influence their will and capability to cooperate (Tosics, 2023).

Czechia:

Financial autonomy of municipalities in Czechia is very low. The incomes of municipalities are composed of: tax income (76 % in 2022), non-tax incomes (5 % in 2022), capital incomes (3 % in 2022) and transfers from different levels (regional, national, international) and own funds (17 % in 2022). It means that over 70 % of municipality incomes consists of collected taxes shared from national level. The municipalities have their own resources through local taxes (3 % of budget), non-tax incomes (5 %), capital incomes (3 %) and transfers from own funds (8 %). It means that they can control almost 20 % of their incomes. (Source: *Brno City Municipality*)

Italy:

The budget of Italian municipalities is composed by own incomes as tax (25% in 2021) and extra-tax revenues, transfers from central government and from regions (21% in 2021) and external financing (leasing and derivative financial instruments). According to national Law (D.lgs n. 267/2000 - Text on Local Bodies), municipalities possess autonomous taxation powers in the field of duties and taxes and may set revenue by their own regulations within the limits set by national Law (e.g. maximum tax rates, taxpayers and taxable cases). (Source: *Metropolitan City of Turin*)

Regardless of whether the funds come from the state budget or constitute direct own revenues, municipalities in the examined countries have the necessary resources to carry out broad competencies at the local level. In some cases (e.g. Poland), a challenge may arise in expanding municipal tasks, especially in the context of dealing with the consequences of crises (such as migration or health crises), without a corresponding increase in municipal revenues. This can lead to a growing dependency on income controlled by the State, as observed in the case of Czechia.

4.1.2. Strength of municipal leadership and its influence at the national level

The strength of municipal leadership at the local level is quite strong in the project partners countries. In most cases, mayors are directly elected by the residents of municipalities, although previously, these elections had an indirect character, and mayors were elected by city councils (in Poland until 2002 and in Italy until 1993). Among the studied cases, only in Czechia mayors are indirectly elected every four years by the municipal Council, which, in turn, is directly elected by citizens. Nevertheless, the role of Czech mayors is generally quite decisive regarding competencies and powers at the local level. The term of office for municipal authorities is usually between 4 and 5 years, but Germany presents an exception, where in two analysed states (Baden-Württemberg and Brandenburg), the Mayor's term is as long as eight years, providing them with a strong position and independence from the city council, which is elected for five years. Berlin, the capital of Germany, is an exception because the Berlin House of Representatives elects the Governing Mayor for a term of 5 years. However, the Governing Mayor of Berlin is not only the head of the city of Berlin but also the head of the government of the State of Berlin.

Germany:

In the State of Baden-Württemberg, mayors are elected directly for a term of 8 years. The direct election of the Mayor by the citizens, as well as the fact that the term of office (eight years) is independent of that of the municipal Council elected for five years, underlines the strong position of the Mayor. (*Source: Stuttgart Region Association*)

In the State of Brandenburg, the Mayor is the chief administrative officer of the municipalities. He is a full-time temporary official, head of the municipal administration and legal representative and representative of the municipality. The full-time Mayor shall be elected by the citizens of the municipality in a general, direct, free, equal and secret election for a term of eight years. The Governing Mayor of Berlin is the head of government of the State of Berlin and also the head of the city of Berlin. He chairs the Berlin Senate, determines government policy guidelines, monitors its implementation, and represents Berlin. The Governing Mayor is elected by the Berlin House of Representatives for five years. (*Source: Joint Spatial Department Berlin Brandenburg*)

Czechia:

Mayors are elected indirectly. Every four years, citizens directly elect an Assembly composed of representatives of political parties, reaching more than 5 % of all votes. The Assembly elects the Mayor, vice mayors, and councillors. The turnout of municipal elections is around 45 %. The role of the Mayor is generally quite strong regarding competencies and powers. The local level is the second most trusted among elected institutions, only behind the president of Czechia. (*Source: Brno City Municipality*)



The relatively strong position of municipal authorities, stemming from their competencies, democratic legitimacy through direct elections, and sometimes long terms of office, as seen in the case of mayors in Germany, does not, however, translate into a significant influence of municipal authorities at the central government level. Representatives of municipalities are not directly present in central government structures (e.g. as members of parliament) and cannot directly impact central government decisions and policies. Cities and municipalities can only indirectly influence state power and lobby for their interests within various bodies and conferences where representatives of central and municipal authorities meet. In Poland's case, the Joint Committee of the Government and Local Government serves as an intermediary between municipalities and central government. In Italy, there are three bodies: the State-Regions Conference, the State-Cities and Local Authorities Conference, and the Unified Conference. In Germany, where municipalities are not directly involved in central government bodies, municipal influence is exerted through municipal lobby groups, deputies from the respective cities, and several associations of cities (Städtetag, Städte- und Gemeindebund, Landkreistag). An exception is The Governing Mayor of Berlin, who is the head of the government of the State of Berlin and chairs the Berlin Senate. A specific case is found in Czechia, where although mayors are indirectly elected, their influence on central authorities is ensured by their direct presence in parliament through the possibility of combining representative mandates, including the position of Mayor, city councillor/member of city assembly, with the position of a deputy in parliament. Additionally, mayors are associated in the Union of Towns and Municipalities of Czechia, representing local interests and influencing the national level. The National Permanent Conference presents another informal gathering of Czechia mayors, territorial partners, and central government representatives.

Poland:

The Polish local authorities cannot directly influence the central government. In the context of the general ban on doubling electoral mandates, city mayors are not permitted to sit in the Polish parliament and, therefore, cannot shape legislation that affects their cities and metropolitan areas. The Joint Committee of the Government and Local Government provides a forum for developing a common position of the government and local authorities. Central government bodies allow the presence of municipal official representatives as advisory voices in targeted teams for developing national legislation (mostly national acts related to issues being strictly linked with municipal/metropolitan competencies). (*Source: GZM Metropolis*)

Italy:

The need to ensure the system of local autonomies (including municipalities, provinces, metropolitan cities, and regions) effective participation in national-level decisions of a regulatory but also administrative nature, intended to affect the exercise of their competencies is met above all by the establishment of three bodies:

- the State-Regions Conference,
- the State-Cities and Local Authorities Conference,
- the Unified Conference.

Specifically, the latter two are attended by representatives of municipalities and metropolitan cities. Under current legislation, the conferences remain the only forum for dialogue between the State, regions, and local authorities. (Source: *Metropolitan City of Turin*)

Czechia:

Representatives of local/urban/regional municipalities can be elected to the national level (including government and parliament), in other words, they can have double/triple functions. This is common practice in Czechia, where one of the political parties (Mayors and Independents) is composed mainly of mayors or former mayors. It is the third largest party (51 out of 281 MEPs) in parliament and is a part of the current government. Other parliamentary parties have also mayors/governors in their ranks. For example, the Mayor of Prague is also a member of parliament. According to the stats, 50 mayors were elected to the 200-member Chamber of Deputies (lower house of parliament) in the last election. Mayors/governors and other local partners are part of the National Permanent Conference - an informal gathering of Czechia territorial partners, representatives, and ministries. (Source: *Brno City Municipality*)

4.1.3. Strength of metropolitan leadership and its influence at the national level (amalgamation - fusion / inter-communal cooperation)

The level of empowerment of metropolises and the strength of metropolitan leadership vary not only between the countries represented in the project but often also between metropolitan areas within a single country (Poland, Germany). Italian and German metropolises present a higher level of empowerment, while metropolises in post-communist countries, such as Poland and Czechia, struggle to be recognised.

After the constitutional change in 2001, Italian metropolises were recognised as autonomous bodies on par with regions, provinces, and municipalities. However, the establishment of metropolitan cities took over a decade due to resistance from other self-government territorial units, fearing the loss of some competencies and finances. Ultimately, the Metropolitan City of Turin was established in 2014 by replacing the Province without modifying its borders.

Italy:

Italian metropolitan cities are local public authorities established and characterised by national Law as autonomous bodies with their own statutes, powers, and functions according to the principles laid down by Art 114 of the Italian Constitution. The metropolitan cities are wide area bodies that perform integrated government functions in metropolitan areas by absorbing the Province and the capital city but leaving the metropolitan municipalities to exercise all the representative and proximity functions, according to the principle of subsidiarity. From 1 January 2015, according to Law n. 56/2014 (Delrio Law), ten provinces, including Turin, have been turned into metropolitan cities.

The Metropolitan City of Turin is composed of 3 political bodies with an indirect democratic legitimisation:

- The office of metropolitan Mayor coincides with the one of Mayor of the capital city (Turin), therefore its electorate consists only of residents of the city of Turin;



- The Metropolitan Council is composed of Councillors elected among and by the Mayors and city Councillors of the municipalities following a so-called second-level election system;
- the metropolitan Conference comprises the 312 Mayors of the metropolitan municipalities.

(Source: Metropolitan City of Turin)

Some German metropolises have also gained a strong status and the ability to take action, although the adopted solutions may vary in the German federation's individual states (Länder). In the State of Baden-Württemberg, the Stuttgart Region has an exceptionally strong position related to direct elections to the metropolitan Assembly and legally guaranteed competencies. The situation is entirely different in the case of the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg, which does not have a metropolitan institution but is managed through cooperation between two states (Länder), i.e. Berlin and Brandenburg.

Germany:

The Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg presents a unique case as a single special dedicated organisation does not run it. It is organised within its regular administrative units in the City of Berlin and the Federal State of Brandenburg, coordinated by state chancelleries on both sides. In this sense, Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg is an intergovernmental cooperation on the Federal state level. German capital region, Berlin-Brandenburg, is represented jointly by the Governing mayor of Berlin and the Prime Minister of Brandenburg. (Source: Joint Spatial Department Berlin Brandenburg)

Currently, Poland has only one institutionalised metropolis officially recognised in national legislation, namely the GZM Metropolis, covering the area of 41 municipalities in the conurbation with its largest city, Katowice. This metropolis was established based on a 2017 law passed by the Polish parliament, which granted it appropriate competencies and its own budget. Other metropolitan areas in Poland, including Warsaw, are deprived of institutional frameworks recognised by the National Law. Bottom-up cooperation of municipalities in these metropolitan areas takes the form of metropolitan conferences, agreements, and associations. The cooperation in Polish metropolitan areas was consolidated and strengthened through Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI), ensuring the possibility of financing joint metropolitan projects.

Poland:

GZM Metropolis, with a site in Katowice, is the only Polish metropolis established by Law, i.e., Act 9.III.2017: For a metropolitan union in the Silesian Voivodeship (uniform text, Polish Journal of Laws of 2022, item 2578). The GZM's governing structure consists of the Metropolitan Board and the Assembly. The members of the Assembly are delegated mayors or heads of municipalities and communes (41 delegates, 1 of each commune). As representatives of local government units, they are elected in direct, universal elections at the level of communes. This shows that the Assembly benefits from a partial legitimacy of the GZM inhabitants, albeit there is no direct election to the Assembly. As far as the Management Board is concerned, the abovementioned "socially legitimised" delegates choose a candidate to stand at the position of a Chairperson of the Management Board, who cannot be a mayor or head of commune of the GZM Metropolis. Thus, this function is managerial in its character. The GZM has its own statutory competencies and own income in the form of a 5% share in personal income tax from residents. Statutory tasks:

- developing spatial order;
- social and economic development of the metropolitan association area;

- planning, coordinating, integrating and developing mass public transport, either by road or rail, and sustainable urban mobility;
- metropolitan passenger transport services;
- cooperation in determining the course of national and regional roads within the metropolitan association area;
- promoting metropolitan Association and its area. (Source: GZM Metropolis)

In Czechia, the consolidation of cooperation in metropolitan areas began with implementation of the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) instrument as part of the EU cohesion policy. However, implementing ITI did not create particular institutional frameworks for metropolitan areas, which still rely on informal cooperation among municipalities. As a result, ITIs are managed by the central cities of metropolitan areas that initiate informal spaces for metropolitan dialogue, allowing for the implementation of development strategies for metropolitan areas and joint projects in cities such as Ostrava and Brno and their surrounding municipalities.

Czechia:

There are no formal metropolitan entities representing metropolitan areas in Czechia. The strength of metropolitan leadership is limited as the metropolitan entity exists on an informal voluntary basis without any formal political metropolitan leader. The main representatives of the informal structures (metropolitan entity) are usually mayors of the main city of the metropolitan area. (Source: Brno City Municipality)

The City of Ostrava is the Holder of the Ostrava Metropolitan Area Strategy and is responsible (according to Law) for preparing and implementing thereof. The Steering Committee (SC) of the Ostrava ITI is a representative body without legal subjectivity (not elected, not included in Law). It involves all key stakeholders of the Ostrava Metropolitan Area. The Mayor of the City of Ostrava is the Chairman of the SC, and the Governor of the Moravian-Silesian Region is the Vice-Chairman of the SC. (Source: Ostrava City Municipality)

Despite differences in institutionalisation and empowerment level of the discussed metropolitan areas, even in the case of the strongest metropolises (Italy and Germany), decisions have not been made to merge municipalities within these metropolitan areas. The adopted solutions lead towards inter-communal or even inter-governmental cooperation (Germany) based on dedicated strong territorial units (Stuttgart Region, Metropolitan City of Turin, GZM Metropolis) or more or less formalised cooperation basis (Berlin-Brandenburg Metropolitan Area, Brno Metropolitan Area, Ostrava Metropolitan Area, Warsaw Metropolitan Area) while preserving, in all cases, the pre-existing municipalities.

Considering the presence of metropolitan actors in central government structures and their potential influence on national decisions and legislation, it must be acknowledged that the position of metropolises is even weaker than that of municipalities. There are no formal metropolitan entities in Czechia; thus, their presence in central government bodies is non-existent. Metropolitan issues may penetrate the central level through the mayors of central cities of metropolitan areas who sit in the previously mentioned Union of Towns and Municipalities, representing municipalities of all sizes with different goals and interests. In the case of Poland, metropolitan areas are not represented in central government bodies. However, the interests of



the largest metropolises are represented at the national level by the Union of Polish Metropolises (UMP), which gathers the 12 largest cities in Poland.

Poland:

The Paweł Adamowicz Union of Polish Metropolises (UMP) represents the interests of the largest metropolises in Poland. The Union was founded in 1990 according to a project by the City Institute entitled "Tyle państwa ile miasta" (Eng. As much State as City), on the initiative of the Mayor of Warsaw to implement the partnership of the capital of the Republic of Poland with other major cities in order to strengthen the position of our country in Europe and the world.

Since 1993, the UMP has been functioning as a foundation. Its Council comprises the mayors of 12 central Polish metropolitan cities. The Council elects a six-member Executive Board with a president, treasurer, and secretary. In the UMP, presidents, deputy presidents, secretaries, treasurers, department directors, and city experts cooperate together.

Statutory objectives of the Union of Polish Metropolises:

1. Promoting the initiatives and activities related to the creation and operation of regional and local structures, particularly those emerging in metropolitan areas.
2. Promoting the development of local and economic self-governance.
3. Jointly addressing the specific problems of major cities.
4. Cooperating with state authorities and national and international organisations to increase the role of the metropolis in the state and European integration.

UMP brings together the 12 largest cities in Poland. The ten member cities of the UMP: Białystok, Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Katowice, Lublin, Łódź, Poznań, Rzeszów, Warsaw, and Wrocław are members of the Association of large European cities - Eurocities. (Source: "Warsaw Metropolis" Association)

In Italy, the metropolitan cities established under the 2014 law are represented in mixed commissions, particularly the State-Cities and Local Authorities Conference and the Unified Conference. Despite the absence of official metropolitan representatives in central government bodies, the State-Cities and Local Authorities Conference is recognised as a primary forum for dialogue and connection between the State and local authorities. It actively promotes the resolution of issues, primarily economic and financial, affecting municipalities, provinces, and metropolitan cities.

In the German State of Baden-Württemberg, official metropolitan representatives have no formal presence in State or central government bodies. Due to the specific management structure of the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg, based on cooperation between two states (Länders), their representatives are members of central government bodies. This is because the German Länder representatives form the Federal Council (Bundesrat), which, in part, decides on federal acts along with the Federal Parliament (Bundestag).

4.1.4. Presence and importance of a metropolitan issue in the national political agenda

The metropolitan phenomenon in Central Europe was noticed much earlier in West Germany and Italy than in the post-communist countries, where a highly centralised approach prevailed. As a



result, the process of searching for and testing appropriate institutional solutions to guarantee governance at the level of emerging metropolises has lasted much longer in these countries. Although this process was not linear and faced obstacles or setbacks, it ultimately led to the recognition of the metropolitan phenomenon as a significant and appropriate level for strategic and spatial planning.

In Italy, planning documents first considered metropolitan areas in the 1970s. During this time, the delimitation of the Turin metropolitan area, consisting of 53 municipalities, was also carried out. Italian metropolitan cities were constitutionally recognised in 2001 (Constitutional Law n. 3/2001), but formally established by national Law starting from 1 January 2015. The reform plan started in the early 2000, was supposed to end with the substantial abolition of the provinces and the consequent downsizing of the newly established metropolitan cities. This reform has never been implemented. However, over the last 20 years, there has been a gradual cut in financial and human resources to these authorities. In the recent period, thanks also to their new role as coordinating body for National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) measures and resources, metropolitan cities have regained space in national political discourse. Currently, the main issue at the centre of the political debate concerns the lack of democratic legitimacy of the metropolitan Mayor and its possible direct election.

Until the 1990s in Germany, “city regions” or “agglomerations” were more commonly used to describe emerging metropolitan areas, and a significant moment occurred with the introduction of a new spatial planning category called “The European Metropolitan Regions” by the German Ministerial Conference on Spatial Planning (MKRO). This spatial planning category combines core cities/centres with their suburban and rural hinterlands into a larger, more visible, and more competitive unit. In 1995, seven regions in Germany were initially defined as European Metropolitan Regions: Berlin/Brandenburg, Frankfurt/Rhine/Main, Hamburg, Halle/Leipzig-Saxony Triangle, Munich, Rhine-Ruhr, and Stuttgart. Ten years later, in 2005, four more metropolitan regions were added: Bremen/Oldenburg, Hannover-Braunschweig-Göttingen, Nuremberg, and Rhine-Neckar. However, German urban and spatial development policy intentionally refrained from defining a concrete demarcation and governance structure for the new metropolitan regions. The German government considered the delimitation and design of regional cooperation as elements of self-responsibility and self-organisation for local political actors.

Germany:

Verband Region Stuttgart (VRS) was established in 1994 as a public law corporation following legislation adopted by the State of Baden-Württemberg. In the early 1990s, business circles expressed a desire for better regional integration in the Middle Neckar region. The state government took up this initiative in the form of regional conferences. The desire of business and politics to strengthen the Stuttgart Region in European and international competition with the establishment of Verband Region Stuttgart was stated in the explanatory memorandum to the Law establishing VRS. During its creation, there were discussions about merging the five existing counties into one Stuttgart Region, but this was in the end not realised. Thus, Verband Region Stuttgart was established as a public law corporation (Association) with its own defined set of tasks. The first direct elections of the VRS Assembly took place on 12 June 1994. The VRS has the following mandatory tasks defined by state law: regional public transport (responsibility for the S-Bahn), regional planning, regional transport planning, landscape planning, Landscape Park Stuttgart Region (a public funding scheme for the development of open spaces), business and tourism development



and waste disposal. The region is also voluntarily involved in other sectors such as sports and culture and the trade fair - however, these are not mandatory policy arenas. (Source: Stuttgart Region Association)

Meanwhile, behind the Iron Curtain, the ongoing crisis of centrally planned economies did not favour thinking in terms of decentralisation and empowering metropolises as potential engines of growth. After the fall of the communist bloc, efforts in Central European countries, including Poland and Czechia, focused on restoring the autonomy of local self-government. Another challenge was the reconstruction of the territorial division breaking away from the Soviet system, which would simultaneously adapt to Western European solutions from the perspective of the EU integration process and access to the EU regional policy. The effort to reform political and economic systems in post-communist countries was so significant that there was no energy left to anticipate the challenges related to the emergence of metropolitan areas during the reform stage. Thus, the metropolitan issue started to gain certain significance in Poland and Czechia only at the end of the first decade of the 21st century. Nevertheless, to this day, the metropolitan level struggles to be recognised by the central government, and the metropolitan areas in Czechia and Poland (except for the GZM Metropolis) still lack adequate political and institutional frameworks.

In Poland, the issue of metropolisation has been marginalised in the overall policy agenda for many years. This tendency became more pronounced with the accession to power of the conservative government, whose electorate primarily resides outside the major urban centres. It is problematic that the topic of the Metropolitan Law, which aims to establish an institutionalised metropolitan level, has been treated more as a political matter than a substantive one. Although the issue of metropolises has been addressed in national strategic documents to varying degrees, it has not led to the general and concrete strengthening of Polish metropolises. The topic of the Metropolitan Law in public debate resurfaces from time to time, unfortunately often in the context of elections. After 15 years of discussions about the desired status of metropolitan regions, only one metropolis was established – the GZM Metropolis, with its largest city Katowice in 2017. The results of the latest parliamentary elections at the end of 2023 and the shift away from power by the conservative right offer some hope for adopting pro-metropolitan legislation. Such legislation would also provide other Polish metropolitan areas (including Warsaw) with appropriate institutional frameworks, competencies, and financial resources.

The situation of metropolitan areas is even more challenging in Czechia, where there is weak and non-institutionalised intercommunal cooperation between cities and municipalities. Although municipalities can establish a voluntary association of municipalities (abbreviated as DSO in Czech) and delegate and share some of their competencies to this voluntary Association (e.g. water management), regions cannot be members of this type of Association. Therefore, DSO is not an appropriate legal form for metropolitan cooperation. The origins of metropolitan governance can be traced back to the introduction of the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) tool at the European level. The mayors of statutory cities advocated for the implementation of this tool at the metropolitan level, and the Ministry of Regional Development accepted it. However, from a legal standpoint, the ITI is managed by the cities, as there is currently no formal metropolitan entity and metropolitan cooperation operates only on an informal basis. The introduction of the ITI tool is seen as the catalyst for metropolitan cooperation, and nowadays, municipalities are calling for the institutionalisation of the metropolitan level. However, there are obstacles at the

regional level, which perceives the evolution of metropolitan areas as a threat to some of its competencies and influences.

Czechia:

Although Czech metropolitan areas have not yet seen dedicated institutional solutions, they are mentioned in several documents at the national level. The empowerment and institutionalisation of the metropolitan level are discussed in the Regional Development Strategy of Czechia 2021+ (the main Czech strategic document), Client-oriented Public Administration 2030 (a strategic document focused on the development of public administration), as well as in the Coalition Agreement and Policy Statement of the current government. Law No 248/2000, concerning the Support of Regional Development, imposes on designated cities the obligation to draft and implement a strategy for their metropolitan area. The Regional Development Strategy of Czechia 2021+ defines the metropolitan area as a type of territory and sets its development goals. The metropolitan topic is also included in the Partnership Agreement for Czechia (in the chapter on the territorial dimension), where the "ITI tool" is defined as a mechanism for implementing metropolitan/agglomeration strategies. (Sources: Ostrava City Municipality, Brno City Municipality).

4.1.5. Metropolitan governance system - structure and interactions

Understanding the functioning of the metropolitan governance system in a given metropolitan area requires going beyond the institutional and formal perspective. Suppose one were to limit the analysis to institutionalised forms of metropolitan cooperation. In that case, it might be concluded that metropolitan governance does not exist in Czechia, as metropolises do not exist as formal public entities and ITI are managed by central cities within metropolitan areas. However, a closer examination of relationships, connections, information flows, and projects implemented in metropolitan areas reveals that dynamic metropolitan governance also exists in Czechia, albeit based on voluntariness and informal cooperation.

Therefore, for the analysis of the metropolitan governance system in Central Europe, we have adopted **the perspective of territorial dialogue and cooperation spaces in the metropolitan areas** as it comprises all forms of exchange of information, everyday discussions, commitments, and transactions between actors from the public, private, or civic sectors functioning at different territorial levels, which are triggered by the interdependence of their interests and concerns at the metropolitan level. The notion of metropolitan dialogue can encapsulate every area and problem, i.e. spatial planning, road network, projects, and events, which take place in a supralocal dimension, and their appropriate implementation demands arrangements of actors at the metropolitan level. The use of the notion of metropolitan dialogue and cooperation spaces reduces the risk of omitting interesting tools and practices of metropolitan cooperation, the so-called soft planning spaces, which are less institutionalised, but can be very efficient in enhancing metropolitan cooperation and the emergence of new metropolitan structures in the future.

Considering the above, the **metropolitan governance system** consists of a set of interdependent, crosscutting, and overlapping metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces. Its characteristics, including the content and field of actions, course of development and participants as well as territorial range, level of formalisation, available resources etc., determine the specificity of governance in a particular metropolitan area.



Italian and German metropolitan areas represented in the project have complex and consolidated metropolitan governance systems with a large number of interconnected metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces. It reflects longer collective learning, higher metropolitan civic capital, and trust, essential for the proper functioning of metropolitan institutions. The less advanced stage of development of metropolitan governance systems in post-communist countries can be related to the late integration of the metropolitan issue into the political agenda at the beginning of the 21st century. Another reason for resistance to deepening cooperation and sharing competencies and budgets at the metropolitan level is the recent regaining of autonomy by local entities as self-government units. Thus, these units are not willing to easily give up their independence and competencies.

Italy stands out due to the existence of constitutionally recognised metropolitan cities with their own competencies and budgets. Although metropolitan cities are at the centre of the metropolitan governance system, they do not constitute the only platform for developing metropolitan dialogue. The case of the metropolitan city of Turin illustrates this situation well, as it replaced the previously existing Province within its boundaries, making it a vast and internally diverse metropolitan city. Therefore, the core-town-oriented governance model has been enriched with diverse infra-metropolitan forms of cooperation, in which municipalities facing common challenges can engage in dialogue with each other and the metropolitan city. These are, respectively:

- 11 Homogeneous Zones
- 3 Local Action Groups
- 16 Unions of Mountain Municipalities
- 8 Unions of Municipalities
- 8 Territorial Pacts

Italy:

The Metropolitan City of Turin comprises 312 municipalities, and 80% have less than 5.000 inhabitants. The most populated ones are primarily located in the so-called first belt of the city of Turin. The cooperation relationship between the municipalities is facilitated by local networks which are independent from the metropolitan city, such as Local Action Groups (LAG), Unions of Mountain Municipalities, and Unions of Municipalities, which help to boost a polycentric system of development. As provided for by national Law, metropolitan cities may establish 'homogeneous zones' within their territory according to territorial contiguity and population criteria. In the case of the Metropolitan City of Turin, its Statute provides for the establishment of 11 homogeneous zones which constitute the operational articulation of the metropolitan Conference. Each of them is governed by the Assembly of Mayors of the municipalities belonging to the individual homogeneous zone, which appoints a spokesperson among its members. (Source: *Metropolitan City of Turin*)

A similar situation can be observed in two German metropolises participating in the project (Stuttgart and Berlin-Brandenburg). Since the mid-1990s, these metropolises have developed institutionalised metropolitan governance systems. However, the adopted solutions and functioning entities differ in specific cases because the German Federal State did not impose a single model of metropolitan cooperation.



Stuttgart was among the first German metropolitan areas identified in national planning documents as The European Metropolitan Region. This is related to deep functional connections, as evidenced by the fact that 75% of the residents of the functional area do not work in their town of residence and cross municipal borders each day. Main cities like Stuttgart, Ludwigsburg, Esslingen, Sindelfingen, etc., provide services (work, leisure activities, shopping, concerts, universities, research institutions, etc.) that are used by the population living in the surrounding area. Every day, 250,000 people commute to Stuttgart, and 90,000 commute from Stuttgart to other regional places. This regional lifestyle requires coordinated management at the metropolitan level. As a result, the Stuttgart Region Association (Verband Region Stuttgart, VRS) was established in 1994, whose Assembly is elected by direct elections, and which has extensive powers. To this day, VRS is the centre of the metropolitan governance system, but it is not the only entity. Essential and closely related elements of the governance system are the public transport company VVS (Verkehrs- und Tarifverbund Stuttgart), which has been operating since 1977, and the regional development agency of the Stuttgart metropolitan region (Wirtschaftsförderung Region Stuttgart), established in 1995.

A different situation is observed in the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg, where, as mentioned earlier, the metropolitan area is not organised in a separate institutional structure. Therefore, a key dimension of the metropolitan governance system is the cooperation between the two federal states, Berlin and Brandenburg, covering the entire territory of both states. The state chancelleries of Berlin and Brandenburg develop and coordinate an overall strategic framework concerning all cooperation fields in the metropolitan region. Nevertheless, structured spaces for metropolitan dialogue can also be identified in this governance system.

The first of these is the Joint Spatial Planning Department (JSPD), a joint administrative ministry unit where both states agree on long-term state spatial planning. It creates important fundamentals for promoting growth and developing infrastructure in the entire metropolitan region. Another important element of the metropolitan system in the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg is the VBB, the Joint Transport Association (Verkehrsverbund Berlin-Brandenburg). VBB's shareholders include the federal states of Berlin and Brandenburg, as well as 14 counties (Landkreise) and 4 cities (kreisfreie Städte) in Brandenburg. The VBB coordinates the different interests of the shareholders and stakeholders and manages public transport in the capital region. The VBB collaborates with transport companies and neighbouring authorities to provide coordinated and integrated local transport services by rail and road.

Spaces for metropolitan dialogue can also emerge in a bottom-up logic, as exemplified by the informal cooperation of municipalities in the Berlin and Brandenburg metropolitan region since 1995. The Municipal Neighbourhood Forum (Kommunales Nachbarschaftsforum, KNF) has operated as a Registered Association since 2020. The Association's activities stimulate cross-border exchange and develop common policies in areas such as mobility and transport, housing and settlement development, open and green spaces, economy and businesses, water, and social infrastructure. The Association has developed various productive exchange formats, including annual conferences, workshops, and geographic and thematic working groups.

Germany:

In 1995, a year after establishing the Stuttgart Metropolitan Region (Verband Region Stuttgart, VRS), the Wirtschaftsförderung Region Stuttgart (WRS) was founded. WRS is a publicly supported company responsible for business development in the Stuttgart Region, promoting the region's qualities at both the national and international levels. WRS is the central point of contact for investors in the Stuttgart Region that helps companies find suitable commercial properties. VRS is the biggest shareholder of WRS. Nevertheless, WRS acts independently from VRS regarding its core competencies in business development. At the same time, both organisations also work closely together on major projects (like IBA 2027), planning and realising regional industrial areas, regional co-funding programs, and flagship projects concerning hydrogen and artificial intelligence. The VRS provides the necessary funding and political support, and the WRS implements specific projects or co-funding programs. Another element of the metropolitan governance system in Stuttgart is Verkehrs- und Tarifverbund Stuttgart (VVS). The VVS is a public transport company that guarantees a common tariff for all buses and railways in the region. There is a close collaboration between VRS and VVS and VRS is the biggest public shareholder of VVS. Cooperation is especially tight concerning bus transport, revenue distribution from selling public transport tickets, and S-Bahn coordination. VRS, WRS, and VVS have their own unique set of competencies and tasks, but at the same time also work closely together to ensure a sustainable and future-proof development of the Stuttgart Region. The relationship between these three institutions can generally be described as trustworthy and consensual. (Source: Stuttgart Region Association)

Metropolitan governance systems in former communist bloc countries, i.e. Czechia and Poland, are certainly at a lower stage of development than in so-called old EU member states. Neither in Poland nor in Czechia nationwide institutional frameworks designed explicitly for metropolitan areas have not been adopted. Cooperation in these regions has typically developed bottom-up, often through associations or informal agreements. An exception is the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area in Poland, which constitutes the country's largest and most fragmented conurbation. Thus, it was provided with the first and, so far, the only Law establishing the previously mentioned Metropolitan Union (GZM Metropolis). Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs) introduced in 2014 have strengthened Poland's existing metropolitan associations or initiated the formation of new ones, which have gained European funds for joint projects. Similarly, ITIs have triggered informal cooperation and agreements among municipalities in Czech metropolitan areas.

The metropolitan cooperation in the Warsaw Metropolitan Area is based on two increasingly interdependent spaces of dialogue, namely the "Warsaw Metropolis" Association (Stowarzyszenie "Metropolia Warszawa") and the agreement among municipalities for the implementation of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI). Although the Warsaw Metropolis Association was established in 1999, the capital city, Warsaw, only joined it in 2017. The Association did not participate in the implementation of the ITI instrument during the EU Financial Perspective 2014-2020. The second dimension of cooperation in the Warsaw Metropolitan Area is the Agreement of Warsaw Functional Area Municipalities, concluded in 2014, on cooperation in the implementation of Integrated Territorial Investments. Acting as the Intermediate Body responsible for implementing ITI, the City of Warsaw, along with 39 municipalities, agreed on a common goal to address issues on a supra-local scale and leverage the common agglomeration potential, both in terms of infrastructure (e.g. cycle routes, P&R car parks) and economic and social aspects (e-public services, education of children and young people). The City of Warsaw will no longer act as an Intermediate Body for the ITI instrument within the new EU financial perspective 2021-2027, and further cooperation between metropolitan self-governments (79 units), as well as the



implementation of ITI in the Warsaw Metropolis, will be carried out through the “Warsaw Metropolis” Association. Therefore, in 2021, work began on strategic documents outlining objectives for future joint activities, including the Integrated Territorial Investment Strategy for the Warsaw Metropolis 2021-2027+, the Strategy for the development of the Warsaw Metropolis until 2040, and the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan for the Warsaw Metropolis 2030+ (SUMP).

The Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area, with its largest city Katowice, has a more developed governance system than the Warsaw Metropolitan Area but also faces significant challenges. Similarly to the metropolitan governance in the Warsaw area, the governance in the Katowice metropolitan area is based on two highly institutionalised spaces of dialogue. The first is the already mentioned and unique in Poland Metropolitan Union (GZM Metropolis), established in 2017, with its own competencies and budget. This Union brings together 41 municipalities, including 13 cities with powiat status⁴, that decide based on a double majority vote mechanism, representing the majority of municipalities and residents in the metropolitan area. In addition to GZM Metropolis, the Association of Municipalities and Powiats of the Central Subregion of the Silesia Region has been operating since 2014, covering a much larger area (81 municipalities, including 41 of GZM) and serving as the sole entity implementing the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) instrument in the subregion. Despite the establishment of GZM Metropolis in 2017, no decision was made to entrust it with the implementation of the ITI instrument. It creates a dysfunctionality dualism, as the first pilot metropolitan union in Poland (GZM Metropolis) lacks control over the primary financial instrument dedicated to urban functional areas and metropolises - the ITI. The ITI is meant to foster cooperation in Metropolitan Areas and support their development, including metropolitan functions. The management of the ITI instrument is handled by a separate entity (the Association of the Central Subregion), which, due to its dependence on the regional authority (the Marshal's Office of the Voivodeship), adopts a regional rather than a metropolitan development perspective. While GZM Metropolis and the Association of the Central Subregion participate in joint bodies and actions, maintaining dialogue, there is currently no imminent perspective of their merger, even though the country's central authorities may favour such a possibility.

Metropolitan governance in Czechia was determined by the implementation of the ITI instrument, but a lower level of institutionalisation characterises it compared to Polish metropolitan areas. In the case of the Brno Metropolitan Area, cooperation is based on a Memorandum on cooperation on metropolitan development signed by Brno, the South Moravian Region, and six cities with extended powers. Brno, responsible for implementing ITI, maintains significant cooperation with the remaining 177 municipalities of the functional urban area, but only on an informal and voluntary basis. Additionally, there are spaces for dialogue at the infra-metropolitan level in the form of voluntary associations of municipalities (DSO) and Local Action Groups.

Similarly, in the case of Ostrava, the ITI instrument played a significant role in consolidating cooperation in the metropolitan area. In 2013, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the five largest (statutory) cities, the Moravian-Silesia Region, and the Regional Council of the Moravian-Silesian Cohesion Region (the managing authority of the ROP Moravia-Silesia 2007-2013). However, this partnership extended to other entities in the region as well, including

⁴ Cities with powiat status are large cities that combine the competencies of two territorial unit levels, i.e., municipalities (local level) and powiats (intermediary level between municipalities and regions).

representatives of smaller cities and municipalities, employers, and representatives of the non-profit sector, resulting in the creation of the ITI Steering Committee. The implementation of ITI for the 2021-2027 period involves 172 municipalities of the metropolitan area.

Czechia:

The metropolitan governance system in the Brno Metropolitan Area (BMA) currently functions on a voluntary basis. BMA consists of 184 municipalities. Brno, South Moravian Region, and six municipalities with extended powers have signed the Memorandum on cooperation, and relations between them are on a regular basis, for example, within the ITI Steering Committee and Working groups. Their relations are predominantly consensual and based on built trust. Brno also cooperates with all 177 municipalities from functional urban area that have not signed the Memorandum. This cooperation is in the form of:

- Regular communication (personally or via phone and email). The communication can be related among others to municipalities' projects co-funded by the ITI tool. Brno also regularly sends municipalities co-funding opportunities outside of the ITI tool, a newsletter of the BMA. Furthermore, the mayor of Brno regularly sends municipalities information about BMA.
- Collection of opinions of municipalities by questionnaire among mayors of BMA (every three years).
- BMA holds meetings with municipalities and their representatives. These meetings are held in the hinterland, not only in Brno, to build trust, inform them about the advantages of metropolitan cooperation, and share opinions on it. This can also reduce the fear of smaller municipalities about being treated less favourably than the larger cities in the MA.

Thanks to all of this, trust is built between Brno and its whole hinterland.

Furthermore, as the administrative districts of municipalities with extended powers cover the broader number of municipalities, there are also relations between the higher and lower levels of municipalities. Municipalities with extended powers are encouraged to share their knowledge with the smaller municipalities and should serve as intermediaries between the metropolitan level and smaller municipalities.

In the area, there are also voluntary associations of municipalities (DSO), and municipalities can delegate and share some of their self-governing competencies to this voluntary association based on inter-municipal cooperation. Moreover, associations are implementing CLLD tool (another integrated tool created by the EU) through Local Action Groups (Místní akční skupiny, MAS, in Czech). To implement this tool, MAS adopt strategy and has its own structure and finances. Compared to ITI tool, projects co-funded via CLLD tools are more local and complementary to those co-funded via the ITI tool. Members of MAS can be municipalities, the public sector, and the private sector or NGOs.

Generally, there are different means of inter-municipal cooperation in the metropolitan area. Their effectiveness depends a lot on the willingness of municipalities to cooperate. However, most municipalities perceive cooperation as a means for their development. (*Sources: Brno City Municipality*)

4.1.6. Conclusions

The partner metropolitan areas are in various stages of constructing their governance systems and are developing diverse tools for metropolitan cooperation. This presents significant opportunities for mutual learning; however, a direct transfer of solutions is not feasible. Knowledge about the broader context of metropolitan cooperation tools and best practices is essential to assess their transferability.



This context encompasses, among other factors, the position of local government and metropolises in the political system, organisational and financial autonomy, and the strength of urban and metropolitan leadership, including its influence on the central government level. The existence of dedicated institutional solutions for metropolises, as well as recognition of their importance by central authorities, can facilitate the development of advanced tools for metropolitan cooperation.

In the examined countries, municipalities exhibit a relatively high level of autonomy regarding competencies. They generate their own revenues through local taxes and fees, in addition to resources provided by central or regional authorities. Czech municipalities demonstrate the highest level of financial dependence on the central state, but in Poland, also approximately half of municipal revenues come from central budget subsidies. Broad range of competencies, coupled with the necessary resources, empowers municipalities to have a tangible impact on living conditions and address the needs of residents defined at the local level.

The strength of municipal leadership at the local level is robust in the project partners' countries. In most cases, mayors are directly elected by the residents, with the only exception being Czechia, where they are elected by the municipal assembly. The typical term of office for municipal authorities is between 4 and 5 years, except in Germany, where mayors are elected for eight years.

The relatively strong position of municipal authorities, derived from their competencies, democratic legitimacy through direct elections, and sometimes extended terms of office, does not, however, result in a significant influence of municipal authorities at the central government level. Municipal representatives are not directly present in central government structures; they can only indirectly impact state power and advocate for their interests within various bodies and mixed conferences where representatives of central and municipal authorities convene. Czechia stands out as an exception, as indirectly elected mayors can also serve as deputies in parliament, a common practice.

The metropolitan phenomenon in Central Europe was recognised much earlier in Germany and Italy than in the countries belonging to the former communist bloc, where a highly centralised approach prevailed.

In Germany and Italy, metropolitan actors had more time to search for and test suitable institutional solutions for emerging metropolises. Although this process was not linear, it ultimately led to the recognition of metropolises as an appropriate level for strategic and spatial planning. Even in the case of the strongest Italian and German metropolises, the pre-existing municipalities were preserved, and decisions to merge municipalities were not made.

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

The level of empowerment of metropolises and the strength of metropolitan leadership not only vary between the countries represented in the project but often also within a single country (e.g. Poland, Germany). Italian and German metropolises exhibit a higher level of empowerment, while



metropolises in post-communist countries, such as Poland and Czechia, struggle to gain recognition.

Currently, Poland has only one institutionalised metropolis officially recognised in national legislation, namely the GZM Metropolis, with its largest city, Katowice. Cooperation among municipalities in other metropolitan areas is of a bottom-up nature, taking the form of metropolitan conferences, agreements, and associations. In Polish and Czech metropolitan areas, cooperation has been consolidated and strengthened through Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI), ensuring the possibility of financing joint metropolitan projects.

Considering the potential influence of metropolitan actors on national decisions and legislation, their position is even weaker than that of municipalities. The metropolitan areas have no official representation in state or central government bodies.

Understanding the functioning of the metropolitan governance system in a given metropolitan area requires going beyond the institutional and formal perspective. Therefore, for the analysis of the metropolitan governance system in Central Europe, the perspective of territorial dialogue and cooperation spaces in the metropolitan areas has been adopted. By adopting this perspective, a closer analysis of even less institutionalised metropolitan areas reveals that dynamic metropolitan governance also exists in Czechia through the so-called soft planning and cooperation space.

The Italian and German metropolitan areas represented in the project have more complex and consolidated metropolitan governance systems featuring a large number of interconnected metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces. This complexity reflects longer collective learning, higher metropolitan civic capital, and trust, all essential for the proper functioning of metropolitan institutions.

The less advanced stage of development in metropolitan governance systems in post-communist countries can be attributed to the late integration of the metropolitan issue into the political agenda. The self-government units that recently regained autonomy are unwilling to easily relinquish their competencies and transfer some of them to the metropolitan level.

Therefore, it is necessary to consider the impact of the outlined national context of the functioning of metropolitan areas on the transfer of good practices of cooperation between metropolitan areas from different countries. Based on the above findings, it can be assumed that the transfer of tools and good practices from highly institutionalised metropolitan areas in Germany and Italy to Polish or Czech metropolises may be challenging due to the former's greater financial, technical, and decision-making capabilities. However, this transfer is not ruled out if partners identify less costly and technically demanding solutions or if the transfer is limited to the logic of the project and the organisation of its implementation process.

It appears, however, that the transfer of good practices from Polish and Czech metropolitan areas to Italian and German ones, which are more strongly interested in less formalised and grassroots cooperation tools, may be easier. An open question remains whether the practices proposed by Polish and Czech metropolitan areas can bring added value to existing metropolitan cooperation in Germany and Italy.



4.2. Metropolitan cooperation forms, structures and dialogue spaces as components of a metropolitan governance system

4.2.1. Form and status of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces⁵

Most of the studied metropolitan areas started different, more institutionalised forms of metropolitan cooperation between 2013 and 2018, apart from Germany, where they have been recorded since 1994 (the Stuttgart Region Association - VRS). In 1995, the Ministerial Conference on Spatial Planning (MKRO) officially recognised the first European metropolitan regions in Germany, and further metropolitan regions were established in 2005. There are now in Germany eleven metropolitan regions of European significance. Within them, cities and rural areas successfully work together on current and future challenges and jointly face international competition. It is difficult to look for any comparisons and development paths on this basis. However, one of the clearest trends is the development path regarding the functioning of the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) (in Czechia, and Poland - Warsaw Metropolitan Area), which was related to the creation of strategies and, in general, cooperation in the implementation of the ITI - an instrument introduced in the programming period 2014-2020 in the field of EU Cohesion Policy.

Analysing the metropolitan phenomenon in Central Europe, it is worth emphasising once again that this process started much earlier in West Germany and Italy than in the post-communist countries. It was connected with the strong tradition of state centralisation. Although Brandenburg was part of the “Eastern Bloc”, which is worth noting, the specificity of the German unification process imposed ready-made patterns of changes adapting the functioning of cities and regions to Western European conditions. It is worth emphasising that especially the northern and south-eastern parts of Brandenburg still struggle with their post-communist heritage, and they share a whole range of problems typical of the structurally weakest parts of “Eastern Europe.” In this sense, large parts of the province of Brandenburg (and even some parts of the city of Berlin) are also largely “post-communist” regions. However, they cannot be clearly compared with the other analysed areas of post-communist Europe, precisely because of the transferability of ready-made patterns of the German state. While in the Eastern Bloc countries certain models of activities had to be gradually developed, taking into account many additional elements, such as the political instability of the authorities.

In Italy, the first documents regarding the metropolitan areas appeared in the 1970s. The MECOG-CE German partners from Stuttgart emphasised the development of their metropolitan area dating back to 1974, when the planning association started its operations. The process of institutionalisation and formalisation was spread over time. Italian metropolitan cities were constitutionally recognised in 2001 (Constitutional Law No. 3/2001), but formally established by a national law on the 1 January 2015. By and large, it is over the last 30 years when careful attention began to be paid to the development of metropolitan regions.

Taking a closer look at the administrative and territorial division of the analysed metropolitan areas, it can be seen that the number of municipalities associated in different metropolitan cooperation structures varies. Moreover, the territorial range of the structures does not always

⁵ The basic characteristics of the analysed metropolitan areas with official names, logos and visual identification can be found in [Appendix 3](#).



correspond to a functional metropolitan area. For this reason, only the number of municipalities that belong to the metropolitan structures of the MECOG-CE partners is considered here. In the Polish metropolitan areas, the number of municipalities participating in cooperation is relatively the smallest compared to other areas. This is due to the specific nature of the administrative reform carried out in 1999. These are 79 (“Warsaw Metropolis” Association - Warsaw Metropolitan Area), 41 (GZM Metropolis - located in the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area) communes compared to over 100 or even over 300 (Metropolitan City of Turin - Turin metropolitan area) in other metropolitan areas studied in the MECOG-CE project. In the case of the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg, it is 69, but in fact the cooperation is based on a partnership of two federal states (Berlin and Brandenburg).

The headquarters of the unit coordinating cooperation is in the central city of the metropolitan area. The legal status of cooperation is most often based on national and local government law. The evident example is the GZM Metropolis (located in the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area), established by a special act passed by the Polish Parliament in 2017.⁶ Generally, a certain distinction in legal statuses of the examined structures can be noticed. The first group are entities operating on the basis of specific regulations dedicated to metropolises (Metropolitan City of Turin, Stuttgart Region - general acts at the national or state level (federalism), or individual - the GZM Metropolis, Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg). The second group is represented by slightly weaker forms, such as associations (“Municipal Neighbourhood Forum” - Kommunales Nachbarschaftsforum KNF e.V.) or agreements and memoranda of cooperation in the field of ITI (“Warsaw Metropolis” Association, Brno Metropolitan Area, Ostrava Metropolitan Area).

The budgets of the analysed metropolitan areas are of different composition. They are difficult to compare not only because of the diversity of the studied areas, their size and specificity, but also due to various sources of financing. Especially the last element relates to the fact that individual entities representing metropolitan areas have different legal bases for their activities. Those that have legal personality benefit from state subsidies, local resources, EU funds and projects. Metropolises that have strong formal grounds more often possess greater and more stable financial resource. Entities operating as associations largely rely on their members' contributions in financing the implementation of projects. The appearance of the ITI instrument improved the situation of less institutionalised metropolitan areas, opening the way to the European financing for the operation of their structures. In both cases, projects are implemented based on co-financing agreements and approved implementation schedules. The budget structure mostly consists of tax revenues, transport revenues, contributions from member municipalities, fees, and donations/allocations.

There is no uniform formula for strategic planning or spatial development in individual metropolitan areas. In many cases, these fields of action are covered by the integrated development strategy for the metropolitan area, as it is the case in the Brno Metropolitan Area (Brno MA) and the Ostrava Metropolitan Area (Ostrava MA) implementing the ITI instrument.

Ostrava MA:

The Strategy of the Ostrava Agglomeration was issued for the programming period 2014-2020. It was drafted in 2014-2015 and adopted in 2016. It included an ITI tool with a financial plan for years 2017-

⁶ Act of 9 March 2017 on the metropolitan union in the Silesian Voivodeship (uniform text, Journal of Laws of 2022, item 2578).



2023. It concerned the strategic development of an agglomeration of 124 municipalities and contains 3 common strategic objectives (promoting employment, promoting entrepreneurship and improving the environment for residents). (Source: City of Ostrava)

In the case of Brno MA, the broader strategy concerns the development of the city of Brno and its hinterland. It focuses on 4 priority areas (sustainable mobility, environment, social affairs and education, and horizontal topics). The strategy also focuses exclusively on topics with a metropolitan dimension, which requires the cooperation of municipalities in the functional area. This marks a strategic shift in metropolitan thinking in the BMA. Spatial planning does not fall within the competence of the BMA (no legal force).

However, in the case of the Warsaw Metropolitan Area, the cooperation and dialogue space is mostly based on the Integrated Territorial Investments instrument (ITI) that is going to be implemented in the current EU financial perspective by the “Warsaw Metropolis” Association. The guiding document is the Integrated Territorial Investment Strategy for the Warsaw Metropolis, which constitutes a response to the challenges faced by local government units resulting from the increasing importance of urban functional areas in national and European Union policies. The current functioning of the structure is based on the next update of the Integrated Territorial Investment Strategy for the Warsaw Functional Area.

The GZM Metropolis (located in the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area) is a special case of a metropolitan structure in Poland due to its clear formalisation and specific rules of operation based on the law adopted by the Polish Parliament. The functioning of this metropolitan institution is supported by a detailed and consistent development strategy approved by the management board for the years 2022-2027 with a perspective until 2035.

Metropolitan areas in Germany build their strategic and spatial development primarily on joint planning at the level of regions, based on previously defined goals and principles.

Stuttgart MA:

The regional plan is binding for all public planning agencies, including sectoral authorities and municipalities. The regional plan has in most cases no direct effect on private individuals and investors, but it can provide guidance. The Regional Assembly via the Committee for Planning provides regular advice on the status and progress of work on the regional plan and is responsible for monitoring its implementation. (...) According to the State Planning Act, the regional plan sets mandatory guidelines for local land use plans and local zoning. Therefore, a strong collaboration with the municipalities is key. (Source: Stuttgart Region Association)

In the case of the Turin metropolitan area, cooperation is based primarily on national regulations and priorities defined at regional, national, and European levels. For each priority, strategies and possible actions, which metropolitan institutions can take, are identified through their own policy instruments. The main governance structure is the Metropolitan City of Turin (CMT). The metropolitan cities in Italy adopt and update annually three-year strategic plans for their metropolitan areas. General spatial development plans are adopted for seven years. These documents relate to communication facilities, service networks and infrastructure falling within the competence of the metropolitan community, as well as set the limits and objectives of the activities and functions of the municipalities that are part of the metropolitan territory. When analysing the forms and statuses of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces, it is worth



considering whether they can be defined as “hard” or “soft” spaces. “Hard” space relates to the ability to make political decisions at the metropolitan level binding for municipalities. It was difficult for the representatives of the studied metropolitan areas to identify clearly to which category of a cooperation space they belonged. As a rule, most experts indicated a “soft” type of cooperation space with evident voluntary elements, even with regard to metropolitan cities and regions where the governing structures have clearly defined competences, and this translates itself into a greater political power and ability to make decisions. In the case of the GZM Metropolis, because there was no transfer of competences from the communes to the metropolis, some metropolitan competences overlap with the municipal ones. A separate category is formed by those areas without their own competences, such as the Warsaw MA, Brno MA, Ostrava MA, which have authority over municipalities only in terms of the principles and criteria for selecting municipal projects for co-financing from ITI.

Brno MA:

This cooperation is in form of regular meetings with representatives of municipalities (e.g. on their projects co-funded via ITI tool), sharing information (e.g. co-funding opportunities outside the ITI tool) and good practice. Municipalities can share their view on metropolitan cooperation via questionnaire sent every three years. Also, they could comment the Integrated Strategy in the process of its creation. (Source: Brno City Municipality)

Financial resources granted under the ITI are often a very clear stimulus for the emergence or development of a cooperation space. This is what fosters multi-level cooperation, both in its “hard” and “soft” dimension. Although some of the MECOG-CE partner MAs indicated the “hard” nature of the cooperation space, it did not exclude the possibility of seeing also “soft” forms of cooperation not specified in formal agreements.

However, in all highly institutionalised metropolitan areas analysed in the project, partners indicated that the cooperation space has primarily a “hard” dimension. This was most clearly visible in the case of the GZM Metropolis:

Upper Silesian MA:

It is a hard space, because the GZM has its own statutory competences and own income in the form of a 5% share in personal income tax from residents. (...) It is “hard” in this specific task, because specific decisions are made by the GZM Assembly, and then become binding for the member communes. (Source: GZM Metropolis)

Also, in the case of Turin and Stuttgart metropolitan areas, it is emphasised that a “hard” space was connected with the rules established and written down formally as an agreement, albeit voluntary.

Turin MA:

It is a hard space, because the institutional and administrative architecture is ruled by national Law, which recognises limited autonomy in matters within its competence as well as relative financial autonomy thanks to the taxation system. That means, for example, in the case of the Metropolitan General Spatial Plan (PTGM), the prerogative to influence the spatial planning of individual municipalities, which are required to adapt their land-use plans to the metropolitan guidelines. As for other areas of intervention, these are different and non-competing competences that therefore do not clash with the regulatory



powers of municipalities, or in the event, do not have a superordinate character. (Source: *Metropolitan City of Turin*)

Defining the cooperation space as having a “hard” or “soft” character, often went hand in hand with the formal status and operating principles of specific structures. This is precisely how it was expressed in the cases of the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg and Stuttgart Region (The Stuttgart Region Association - VRS) identifying themselves within both categories.

Stuttgart MA:

Verband Region Stuttgart (VRS) has the following mandatory tasks defined by state law: regional public transport (responsibility for the S-Bahn), regional planning, regional transport planning, landscape planning, Landscape Park Stuttgart Region (a public funding scheme for the development of open spaces), business and tourism development and waste disposal. The region is also voluntary involved in other sectors such as sports and culture and the trade fair - however, these are not mandatory policy arenas. (Source: Stuttgart Region Association)

In the example of Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan area, soft space was mentioned with regard to its various cooperation structures.

Berlin-Brandenburg MA:

Government agreement is binding for the federal ministries in Berlin and Brandenburg. In both federal states municipalities exist in self-government for the policy area. However, state, federal level and local level are tightly linked through federalist structures. (Source: Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin Brandenburg)

Berlin-Brandenburg MA:

Verkehrsverbund Berlin-Brandenburg (VBB) GmbH itself does not make any political decisions. Political decisions are made via the Supervisory Board of VBB GmbH, on which the shareholders are represented. For example, VBB GmbH makes proposals for fare adjustments in public transport. In the end, however, the decisions rest with the territorial authorities. (Source: *Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin Brandenburg*)

As indicated by representatives of the GZM Metropolis *in the case of other tasks, not provided in the Metropolitan Association Act, the powers are rather soft and recommendatory*. The representatives of Warsaw Metropolitan Area (WMA) clearly emphasised the soft nature of their cooperation. The competences of this governance structure are limited to the implementation of ITI, and this will only apply to the organisation of project selection. Metropolitan cooperation has a multidimensional character, which is why it was so difficult for the MECOG-CE project partners to determine the nature of this space, especially if it did not have a clear impact on political decision-making.

Warsaw MA:

“Soft” spaces without political power. The cooperation is voluntary, established with the aim of pursuing the integrated development of the Warsaw Metropolis and jointly obtaining European funds in the 2014-2020 perspective. The participating self-governments emphasise that it is most important for the future of



all communes to integrate the area and increase the chances for exploiting its development opportunities to improve conditions and quality of the residents' lives. (Source: City of Warsaw)

To sum up, it should be stated that forms and status of main governance structures of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces in the analysed metropolitan areas are more based on the legal provisions and regional agreements than on informal relations. The observation stems not only from the MECOG-CE partners' declarations, which sometimes emphasised the informal nature of the cooperation, but also from the overview of legal statuses and nature of the budget in disposition of different structures, as well as the approach to management, durability of structures and years of operation.

Cooperation in the MAs from outside the post-communist countries is more advanced and longer-lasting, as reflected in strong legal foundations that result in increased competencies and budgets. For this reason, they are more often classified as hard spaces. Among the structures from the MAs of the post-communist countries, the GZM Metropolis is an exception. Despite being relatively young, it is considered a hard space, but its budget and competences remain modest compared to Italy or Germany. Other studied metropolitan structures, mainly in Poland and Czechia, are based on soft forms of cooperation (Warsaw, Brno, Ostrava MAs). Nevertheless, it can be postulated that the ITI significantly contributes to the ongoing process of the gradual “hardening” of metropolitan governance structures. This is evident in the considerable budgets allocated for projects and the bestowed decision-making power within the realm of integrated municipal projects.

4.2.2. Emergence of spaces forming a metropolitan cooperation and dialogue

Another element of the analysis of the metropolitan governance system concerns the emergence of spaces forming a metropolitan cooperation and dialogue. The tables below present the identified features of this process in different metropolitan areas studied in the MECOG-CE project.

Various characteristics of the creation of spaces forming metropolitan cooperation and dialogue will be presented below. They may have different specifics, as indicated by the MECOG-CE project partners. Please note that these are not mutually exclusive.

evolutionary vs revolutionary

The emergence of spaces forming a metropolitan cooperation and dialogue was assessed in terms of their evolutionary or revolutionary nature (Figure 1). The former can be interpreted as slow progress in reaching a dialogue, whereas the latter relates to the emergence of decisions that quickly and radically change the rules of communication and relations between municipalities and other metropolitan institutions/entities. In most of the studied metropolitan areas, the above-mentioned process has been evolutionary. However, the MECOG-CE project partners notice that at some point revolutionary decisions had to be taken. Thus, the very moment of making these decisions can be considered as revolutionary, because from then on, the further development of the area began to take a different course.

Figure 1. The evolutionary or revolutionary character of the emergence of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces in the MECOG-CE partner metropolitan areas

	Project partners	Evolutionary	Both	Revolutionary
1.	Berlin-Brandenburg Metropolitan Area: Capital Region Berlin Brandenburg Berlin-Brandenburg Transport Association, VBB Municipal Neighbourhood Forum, KNF Overall strategic framework for the Berlin-Brandenburg Capital Region			
2.	Brno Metropolitan Area 			
3.	Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area: Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia (GZM Metropolis) The Association of Municipalities and Powiats of the Central Subregion of the Silesia Region implementing the ITI instrument			
4.	Ostrava Metropolitan Area: 			
5.	Stuttgart Region: Stuttgart Region Association, VRS Stuttgart Region Economic Development Corporation, WRS Verkehrs-und Tarifverbund Stuttgart, VVS			
6.	Metropolitan City of Turin: 			
7.	Warsaw Metropolitan Area: "Warsaw Metropolis" Association Integrated Territorial Investments for the Warsaw Functional Area 2014-2020+			

Source: own elaboration based on the subjective perception of the situation by the MECOG-CE partners - indicated in the Matrices



It seems surprising that in the case of the GZM Metropolis, where the dialogue space is highly formalised since the adoption of metropolitan law, the process was seen as evolutionary, stable and slow.

Upper Silesian MA:

In the dominant role, the emergence of GZM had an evolutionary character. Since 2007, there has been a voluntary association - the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Union, initially bringing together 14, and in the last stage 13 main cities of the metropolis. The associates initiated the metropolitan dialogue, carried out projects going beyond the borders of the member cities (e.g. investment in promotion, joint purchase of energy) and built civic capital at metropolitan level. Its main goal was to create and to lobby for the Metropolitan Act. However, the revolutionary moment was establishing the Metropolitan Act on the Metropolitan Association in the Voivodeship of Silesia - March 9th, 2017. (Source: GZM Metropolis)

The example given above requires clarification and taking into account the realities and national context - the situation in Poland. In the case of the GZM, there has been a slow evolution since 2007 when the first association of metropolitan cooperation was established bringing together 14 municipalities. The Upper Silesian metropolitan area is specific due to a whole range of factors called as a “regional anchor” (Suchacka, 2009). Cooperation between many municipalities, authorities and decision-making centres of various environments was necessary. Lobbying activities for the common interest of the metropolis required time and full understanding, developing gradually over the years. A sudden acceleration, defined as “the revolutionary moment”, happened when the Act of 2017 was passed, changing the rules of the game and allowing the cooperation in metropolitan area to reach a higher level. However, in the case of Warsaw MA where the informal nature of cooperation was emphasised - the revolutionary emergence was stressed. It should be added, however, that this is the subjective view of representatives of particular areas.

Warsaw MA:

Following the signing of the agreement in 2014, which set out the joint principles of cooperation between municipalities in the programming, implementation, coordination, financing, evaluation, and settlement of the Integrated Territorial Investments of the Warsaw Functional Area (ITI of the WFA), cooperation within 40 WFA communes was formally established. This has allowed further expansion of cooperation, which in the new EU perspective 2021-2027 will involve almost twice as many local government units (79 communes and districts of the Warsaw MA). Without the support of ITI funding, cooperation within the Warsaw Metropolitan Area was limited. (Source: City of Warsaw)

In the case of other studied metropolitan areas, there is no agreement as to the initial moment of cooperation. However, it is clearly visible that the development of these cooperation areas was evolutionary, followed by the formalisation marking a revolutionary moment (similar to the situation of the GZM). The differences in perception of the process can be noted, because the participants of the process define it as a revolutionary event, while in fact, from an external perspective, it can be viewed as a longer process of an evolutionary nature. This was clearly noticed by the MECOG-CE project participants from both the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg and Stuttgart Region.



Berlin-Brandenburg MA:

Evolutionary as reaction and adjustment to changing needs due to the growth of Berlin, interlink in traffic infrastructures, and movement of people. (Source: Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin Brandenburg)

Stuttgart MA:

1974 - foundation of the regional planning association "Central Neckar ". VRS evolved from this planning association, but its tasks and competences were greatly extended by its foundation in 1994 and they continue to grow until today. Especially the installation of the directly elected regional Assembly in 1994 (in line with the foundation of VRS) can be seen as a revolution. (Source: Stuttgart Region Association)

In the remaining metropolitan areas, a clear boundary was noticed when national law changed, and decisions were made at political level. This means that a change in law is often regarded as an incentive for further transformation (starting as "a revolution", as it was described by the partners). In the case of the Warsaw, Brno, and Ostrava MAs, the decision and actions regarding the implementation of ITI are definitely more important, because they actually enable intermunicipal cooperation. Hence, the MECOG-CE project partners highlighted the dual nature of the formation of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces.

Brno MA:

Both. At national level - the revolutionary decision to implement and manage ITI at MA level did radically change the progress of metropolitan cooperation in BMA. In terms of metro level - the progress of reaching a dialogue is evolutionary (gaining experience, consensus of actors, mutual trust etc.). (Source: Brno City Municipality)

Ostrava MA:

After the decision on the establishing of Metropolitan Areas /Agglomerations and its inclusion into law, a metropolitan cooperation was established, founded on the principle of a broad partnership with main cities in the area, with the Region and with representatives of middle-size and small towns and other partners in the territory. The partnership was made possible by the accessibility of EU funds for ITI and by joint political will. (Source: City of Ostrava)

The emergence of metropolitan spaces of dialogue and cooperation frequently assumed a complex and intricate form, being a challenging process. The situation of the Turin metropolitan area provides the most telling example in this respect.

Turin MA:

Even though the political discussion around this topic had already been going on for more than twenty years, the establishment of metropolitan cities in Italy in 2015 came with a top-down law that has tried to reshape the administrative architecture of the country, by downsizing the role of the Provinces and by replacing some of them (the biggest ones, including Turin) with the new metropolitan cities, with a view to the gradual abolition of this intermediate body between municipalities and the Region. A political design that has failed a few years later thanks to the negative result of a national referendum. (Source: Metropolitan City of Turin)



It is therefore difficult to clearly determine whether such processes take an evolutionary or revolutionary form. But, the analysed cases indicate that the cooperation space initially evolves more or less steadily, and finally it results in the necessity to formalise the existing structures (often legally), which becomes a marking point for a revolution in activity. A different situation may be regarded as a revolutionary moment for each area.

Supported vs hampered

An equally important issue when analysing the emergence of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces is the question of whether this process was impeded by central political elites, or it was politically and financially supported. Cooperation can be facilitated by state authorities providing, for instance, large urban areas with the organisation framework, e.g. metropolitan law coming from the central government. The emergence of metropolitan cooperation structures can also be blocked by the central authorities in financial terms (lack of subsidies specific to cooperating municipalities of metropolitan areas) and politically (resistance to granting competences to the metropolitan governance structures, to transforming them into new local government units, or to giving them political power, i.e. by introducing direct elections) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The supported or hampered character of the emergence of spaces forming a metropolitan cooperation and dialogue in the MECOG-CE partner metropolitan areas

	Project partners	Supported	both	Hampered
1.	Berlin-Brandenburg Metropolitan Area: Capital Region Berlin Brandenburg Berlin-Brandenburg Transport Association, VBB Municipal Neighbourhood Forum, KNF Overall strategic framework for the Berlin-Brandenburg Capital Region	 	 	
2.	Brno Metropolitan Area: 			
3.	Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area: Górnśląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia (GZM Metropolis) The Association of Municipalities and Powiats of the Central Subregion of the Silesia Region implementing the ITI instrument		 	
4.	Ostrava Metropolitan Area: 			
5.	Stuttgart Region: Stuttgart Region Association, VRS Stuttgart Region Economic Development Corporation, WRS Verkehrs-und Tarifverbund Stuttgart, VVS	 		
6.	Metropolitan City of Turin: 			
7.	Warsaw Metropolitan Area: "Warsaw Metropolis" Association Integrated Territorial Investments for the Warsaw Functional Area 2014-2020+			

Source: own elaboration based on the subjective perception of the situation by the MECOG-CE partners
 - indicated in the Matrices



In most studied metropolitan areas, the MECOG-CE project partners indicate that the emergence of these dialogue spaces is supported by the political preferences of state authorities. At the same time, the partners notice certain obstacles that may hamper the collaboration and make it weaker.

Brno MA:

Both. Supported in terms of decision to administer ITI at MA level. Nevertheless, when it comes to enhancing metropolitan governance through various means, such as implementing metropolitan law, the collaboration is impeded by the national authorities. (Source: Brno City Municipality)

Upper Silesian MA:

Both. The creation of GZM was the result of support of the central government, which established the act. More metropolitan areas lobbied for their own acts. (Source: GZM Metropolis)

Turin MA:

The establishment of metropolitan cities has been boosted by central government through a legislative process; however, the same Law attempted to downsize the competences of the provinces and, reflexively, of the newborn metropolitan cities. As a matter of fact, the 56/2014 Law led to the cut of financial and human resources to these authorities. (Source: Metropolitan City of Turin)

Only in the case of the project partners from the Warsaw MA, as they expressed it, the state authorities did not provide the expected support. Thus, this type of cooperation was defined as hampered.

monocentric or polycentric nature

When analysing the emergence of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces, it is also important to define if it has monocentric or polycentric nature. Metropolitan cooperation can be undertaken because of initiatives of the leader city of the metropolitan area, which coordinates the cooperation relationship, or it can result from bottom-up integration projects proposed by medium-sized or smaller cities (Figure 3).

Figure 3. The monocentric or polycentric character of the emergence of spaces forming a metropolitan cooperation and dialogue in the MECOG-CE partner metropolitan areas

	Project partners	Monocentric	Both	Polycentric
1.	Berlin-Brandenburg Metropolitan Area: Capital Region Berlin Brandenburg Berlin-Brandenburg Transport Association, VBB Municipal Neighbourhood Forum, KNF Overall strategic framework for the Berlin-Brandenburg Capital Region			
2.	Brno Metropolitan Area: 			
3.	Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area: Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia (GZM Metropolis) The Association of Municipalities and Powiats of the Central Subregion of the Silesia Region implementing the ITI instrument			
4.	Ostrava Metropolitan Area: 			
5.	Stuttgart Region: Stuttgart Region Association, VRS Stuttgart Region Economic Development Corporation, WRS Verkehrs-und Tarifverbund Stuttgart, VVS			
6.	Metropolitan City of Turin: 			
7.	Warsaw Metropolitan Area: "Warsaw Metropolis" Association Integrated Territorial Investments for the Warsaw Functional Area 2014-2020+			

Source: own elaboration based on the subjective perception of the situation by the MECOG-CE partners
- indicated in the Matrices



In most of the studied metropolitan structures, the polycentric nature of activities and development of areas of cooperation and dialogue was indicated, as exemplified hereunder.

Ostrava MA:

The polycentricity of the Ostrava MA is proven by statistics of commuting for work and services to the City of Ostrava and to other 5 centres of the Ostrava metropolitan area (statutory cities). All 6 statutory cities are members of the Steering Committee. However, team of the ITI Manager is based by the Administration of the City of Ostrava and City of Ostrava is by law responsible for implementation of the MA/ITI Strategy. (Source: *City of Ostrava*)

Upper Silesian MA:

The GZM Metropolis as a metropolitan area is a typical conurbation consisting of 13 adjacent cities but also other communes. The leading role is played by Katowice, which is the capital of Silesia Region, but its size and number of inhabitants don't differ a lot from other cities. (Source: *GZM Metropolis*)

The partners from the Brno MA and the Stuttgart Region very clearly emphasised the dialogue between the metropolitan city and the municipalities, referring to the polycentric nature of cooperation, but the context of the activity reveals that it is the central city that dominates or coordinates cooperation.

Brno MA:

City of Brno is the main initiator of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue in the MA. However, the cooperation is targeting on polycentric and balanced development of the whole MA. (Source: *Brno City Municipality*)

Only in the metropolitan areas that are also capital cities - in Warsaw and Berlin - monocentricity of relations was highlighted.

Warsaw MA:

In the case of the Warsaw Functional Area, due to the dynamic development and dominance of Warsaw, its monocentric character is clearly distinguishable, which does not favour the strengthening of the role of local centers in the settlement system. (Source: *City of Warsaw*)

Berlin - Brandenburg MA:

Monocentric in terms of the leading actors, the two chancelleries - the Senate Chancellery of Berlin and State Chancellery of Brandenburg - have the agenda setting power for the debate and transformation of the strategic framework for Berlin-Brandenburg. Ministries have initiative right. (Source: *Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin Brandenburg*)

Summarising the most important observations regarding the emergence of metropolitan space of cooperation and dialogue, several conclusions can be drawn. In most metropolitan areas, the shifts had the evolutionary character, but crucial decisions, often accompanied by alterations in national law, are made at a certain stadium of cooperation, and they often revolutionise the pace of change and the quality of cooperation. It is also related to the process of providing political and financial support by central or regional authorities. On the one hand, such support is necessary for a smooth operation. On the other hand, it can pose a burden, as it directs the undertaken actions towards



previously established political goals of these authorities. The analysed metropolitan structures emphasised the duality of these processes, and, in most cases, the significance of development of the polycentric governance system.

4.2.3. Actors of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue space and its governance bodies

The third part of the Matrix refers to “Actors of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue and its governance bodies.” There are six aspects concerning the involved actors who guarantee the stability of the dialogue over time. The cooperation of metropolitan actors is influenced by their diversity and the management structure. The number of technical-administrative and non-statutory advisory bodies, as well as any other forms of cooperation with residents, is also important.

With regard to the first category, elucidating the type of involved actors, most representatives of the analysed metropolitan areas indicated both types - the political actors (politicians) as well as the technical and administrative personnel (officials and clerks). The political dimension was most often represented by the steering committee or the metropolitan Assembly. In addition, there were also technical and administrative workers involved in the daily running of the office. The staff configuration exemplified by the structures of the Brno MA, Ostrava MA and Warsaw MA serves as a notable illustration of this pattern.

Ostrava MA:

The prevailing “everyday business” of the Ostrava ITI is run by technical-administrative staff (ITI Manager-Unit of ITI and metropolitan cooperation). Political actors are among the members of the ITI Steering Committee. (Source: *City of Ostrava*)

Warsaw MA:

The City of Warsaw has a new role: Intermediary Body for Integrated Territorial Investments. In view of the above, representatives of the City of Warsaw are actively involved in the various stages of investment implementation through the ITI of the WFA Secretariat. WFA communes' authorities within the ITI of the WFA Steering Committee (Source: *Integrated Territorial Investments for the Warsaw Functional Area 2014-2020+*)

The GZM Metropolis’s account (Upper Silesian metropolitan area) provides a clear depiction of this aspect. Having good rapport between the political and technical-administrative actors is necessary due to the high degree of formalisation of the structure. The significant role of political bodies was also emphasised in the case of Berlin-Brandenburg MA.

Upper Silesian MA:

As far as the actors of metropolitan dialogue are concerned, in terms of the political ones - all the 41 delegates are necessary to be mentioned. Apart from that, some directions of actions, some projects are sometimes also discussed with the higher political level (regional - due to e.g. joint promotion of the GZM and the Silesia region, or to the regional funds to which the GZM is eligible; and central-governmental - usually in case of GZM being a part of a national project or nationally funded project). As far as the technical administrative actors are concerned, most of the 187 employed in the GZM participate in metropolitan dialogue on their administrative level. Political actors are mostly involved in greater tasks



and/or decisions to be taken. Technical administrative actors are involved on a daily basis, as those directly responsible for project execution. As mentioned before, involving a multistakeholder cohort in metropolitan dialogue is crucial for the GZM. (Source: GZM Metropolis)

Berlin - Brandenburg MA:

The State Development Plan is a highly political issue, its elaboration is managed by the Joint State Planning Department (which is an administrative unit in the respective Ministry / Senate). (Source: Joint Spatial Department Berlin Brandenburg)

The Turin and Stuttgart metropolitan areas are noteworthy cases as well, because the interplay and mutual dependence between management relationships at the regional level and their political dimension are evident.

Turin MA:

Since the office of metropolitan Mayor coincides with that of the Mayor of the capital city (Turin, the most populated municipality) most of the representative and dialogue activities in the territory are led by the deputy Mayor and consequently by the Councillors within the limits of their delegated powers, bearing in mind that Councillors are also Mayors or councillors of metropolitan municipalities. The peculiar structure of metropolitan government leaves room for technical-administrative staff to participate in metropolitan dialogue on their administrative level. In general, political actors are mostly involved in greater tasks and/or decisions to be taken. Technical administrative actors are involved on a daily basis, as those directly responsible for project execution. (Source: Metropolitan City of Turin)

Stuttgart MA:

Directly elected regional Assembly as political actors plus staff members of VRS as technical-administrative actors. (Source: Stuttgart Region Association)

Beyond the type of actors, an important aspect pertains to the composition of the governance bodies. When analysing the structure of bodies of metropolitan management units, the degree of institutionalisation of metropolitan areas should be considered. In addition to the management board and metropolitan assemblies in some metropolitan areas, and steering committees in others, there are different advisory bodies and working groups. Metropolitan authorities also engage in activities involving residents, thereby fostering a more inclusive metropolitan governance process that welcomes active participation from civil society.

The management structure in the case of GZM Metropolis is precisely delineated in accordance with pertinent legislation, which makes it a highly formalised structure with specifically defined tasks. The GZM's Assembly, comprising 41 delegates, functions as both the constitutive and controlling body. Delegates, representing each commune in the metropolitan union, are typically commune heads, mayors, or city presidents, or individuals representing them. The Assembly makes decisions on GZM-related tasks, oversees the GZM Management Board, and approves crucial documents and components, such as the GZM development strategy and statute, as well as the GZM budget. Resolutions require a double majority of votes for adoption. The GZM's Management Board adheres to a "gentleman's agreement," ensuring representation from each of the five subregions in the Metropolis. The board manages entrusted tasks, GZM property, budget preparation and expenditure, as well as coordination of organisational units and drafting the



development strategy. Board members are elected by the Assembly without duplication. Additionally, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, commissioned by the GZM Board, handles public transport organisation, while the Metropolitan Transportation Board oversees integrated transport with a director and three deputy directors.

In the Metropolitan City of Turin as in other metropolitan cities in Italy, metropolitan bodies are structured according to the law, with the metropolitan Mayor serving as the legal representative, typically the mayor of the capital city. The Mayor has the authority to appoint a deputy Mayor and delegate powers to Council members. The metropolitan Council, functioning as the steering and control body, approves various acts submitted by the metropolitan Mayor, including regulations, plans, and programs. The Council's size is contingent on the population of the metropolitan city, with the Metropolitan City of Turin having 18 members. The tenure of a metropolitan councillor concludes concurrently with the termination of a mayor's or councillor's term in their respective municipality or with the renewal of the Municipal Council of Turin. Furthermore, the metropolitan Conference operates as an advisory and proposing body, comprising the metropolitan Mayor and all mayors of municipalities within the metropolitan city. Legal provisions mandate a "double majority" for the approval and amendment of the Statute, and the Conference provides input during the budget approval process. Importantly, the tasks assigned to these bodies are carried out voluntarily without compensation.

In the case of Stuttgart Region, German urban and spatial development policy uses the notion of metropolitan regions instead of a metropolitan area and attributes their delimitation and organisation to the self-responsibility of the local political actors.

The Law establishing the Stuttgart Region Association delineates the Regional Assembly, Regional Director, and honorary Chairperson as the governing bodies. The Regional Director, elected for an eight-year term, oversees the administration, represents the Association, and executes decisions made by the Regional Assembly and its committees. Responsibilities are defined by statutes and resolutions. The Regional Assembly, comprising 80 to 96 members directly elected for five years, establishes administrative principles and decides on Association's affairs. It supervises the director's execution of decisions. Three decision-making committees focus on economy, infrastructure, administration, planning, and transportation. The committees submit matters to the Assembly and handle specified tasks, with the Assembly retaining decision-making authority on budget-impacting issues. An honorary Chairperson and two deputies, elected by the Assembly, lead meetings, execute resolutions, and oversee the director's administration.

Considering the number of administrative staff, the most numerous group was employed in the Turin metropolitan area - 863 workers. A discernible trend suggests that as the level of formalisation, scope of competences, and budget increase, there is a corresponding rise in the number of employed individuals. In Berlin-Brandenburg MA, there were about 60 employees and in Stuttgart Region - 90. In the case of GZM Metropolis, there was quite a large group (187) of permanent employees, along with several individuals working on non-standard schedules. The smallest number of employees was indicated by the metropolitan structures in Czechia. In Brno MA, it was 9 employees (including 2 part-time) in the ITI management office and in the Ostrava MA - 6 permanent employees (FTE). In the case of Warsaw MA, due to an unobvious division of responsibilities, a number of persons employed in the City of Warsaw was responsible for the implementation of the ITI for the WFA. But finally, 16 employees were delegated to work in the Integrated Territorial Investments Department.



Non-statutory advisory bodies also play an important role in the development of metropolitan cooperation and the creation of a dialogue space. A council of development, council of youth advisory committee or/and other forms of involvement of external actors, such as entrepreneurs, NGOs, inhabitants/citizens, etc. - all these entities contribute to the establishment of an extensive network of contacts for multi-level cooperation.

Turin MA:

The CMTo cooperates and leads dialogue with numerous actors and territorial stakeholders, who are regularly involved in the draft process of the metropolitan strategic and planning instruments. For example, the main ones are: the representatives of the academic world (university and polytechnic of Turin), trade associations, workers' associations and voluntary associations. *(Source: Metropolitan City of Turin)*

The main role of the established working groups is to issue expert opinions and advise decision-making groups. In the case of Stuttgart MA, these extra non-statutory advisory bodies are of twofold nature. The first consists of working groups analysing current and priority tasks. The second group is the round table of regional initiatives gathering representatives of the most important regional entities.

The GZM Metropolis's advisory bodies constitute an interesting example of non-statutory and consultative organs. However, due to a highly formalised structure based on national regulations, relationships between advisory bodies and Management Board are also very formal. The established structure is responsible for delivering opinions and consulting on the most important issues regarding the development of the metropolis.

Upper Silesian MA:

The Metropolitan Development Council is an interdisciplinary advisory body for the Management Board of GZM. The purpose of the Council's activity is substantive support to the Management Board of GZM in the implementation of the project entitled Metropolis GZM Development Strategy for the years 2022-2027 with a perspective until 2035, in order to develop the most effective and efficient tool for managing the metropolitan area and dynamizing the socio-economic and spatial development of the GZM. The Metropolitan Development Council is composed of representatives of the following institutions: Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy, Ministry of Infrastructure, Marshal's Office of the Silesian Voivodeship, University of Economics in Katowice, University of Silesia in Katowice, Silesian University of Technology, Society of Polish Town Planners - Silesian Branch, Association of Municipalities and Districts of the Central Subregion of the Silesian Voivodeship, Institute for Ecology of Industrial Areas, Central Mining Institute, Statistical Office in Katowice, Regional Chamber of Commerce in Katowice, Katowice Special Economic Zone, Representatives of all the 5 subregions; Union of Polish Metropolises, Silesian Union of Municipalities and Districts; Ministry of Development and Technology. There are 23 members altogether, including the chairman and the deputy chairman of the Council. *(Source: GZM Metropolis)*

As to other forms of social/civic participation in metropolitan cooperation, the representatives of the studied areas give no clear indications. Sometimes, they emphasised an NGO's participation, or public consultations of the Integrated Territorial Investments. Individual accounts indicate that this is a spontaneous and irregular form of collaboration, as was the case with Brno MA.



Brno MA:

Mostly ad hoc participation at some events (exhibition on metropolitan projects, "feeling" map for the inhabitants of BMA, conferences on metropolitan issues, city or relevant social events - presentation of BMA leaflets, brochures). (Source: *Brno City Municipality*)

Once again, the GZM Metropolis provides a noteworthy example of extensive cooperation, leading to the development of inspiring participative models acknowledged by the European Commission. The GZM actively encourages and values the participation of external actors in its structures. This involvement extends to advisory roles, where external actors provide evidence and expertise to inform decision-making processes. External actors play a role at various levels, including expert, municipal, and citizen levels. They contribute to decision-making related to the GZM Metropolis projects by participating in designated teams, groups, or committees. The GZM Metropolis also collaborates with academia, engaging in councils for the development of major documents and participating in a network with major universities. Additionally, it is currently working with universities on joint initiatives, such as the "Katowice - City of Science 2024," involving year-long actions and events.

In the case of Berlin-Brandenburg MA, the MECOG-CE partners emphasised the importance of ongoing consultations with stakeholders as valuable forms of cooperation. This involves extensive consultations, meetings with stakeholders, task committees and thematic conferences.

Berlin-Brandenburg MA:

Numerous (hundreds) of Stakeholders were involved in the process (writing statements) which have to be checked carefully and to be weighted. 2020 was an online participation executed the debate key stones of the strategic framework with citizens and stakeholders, otherwise no ongoing, regular participation process. Various committees, advisory boards and expert working groups ensure the involvement of the relevant stakeholders (transport companies, passengers, experts, etc.). (Source: *Joint Spatial Department Berlin Brandenburg*)

A similar situation concerns the Stuttgart Region, but the MECOG-CE partners also included in their accounts more formalised forms of contact with residents, such as different social surveys, and direct election of the regional Assembly by the citizens.

Summarising the analysis of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue actors, along with management structures, a certain pattern becomes evident. It concerns institutional identity which refers to the distinctive characteristics and values that define a particular institution. The process of building institutional identity involves establishing clear missions, visions, and goals, as well as shaping values that serve as the foundations for the institution's actions and decisions. A strong institutional identity aids in understanding the institution's role, attracting societal support, and building trust in the institution. The more formalised the structure of a given cooperation is, the more it depends on political arrangements and additional internal entities. At the same time, the formalisation of structures provides different opportunities to engage residents or NGOs in various forms of participation. This undoubtedly involves additional funds, as it requires maintaining or employing more administrative staff, for which more investments must be found.

4.2.4. Subject of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue

Domains of operation of metropolitan structures are the basis for implementing projects and good practices, both those resulting from the tasks assigned by law and those resulting from the voluntary and no statutory initiatives of metropolitan institutions. Sometimes, metropolitan structures are responsible by law only for some of the activities within a given domain. Such cases are also included in Table 1, which highlights MECOG-CE partners' activities in particular metropolitan areas.

Table 1. Domains of activities/interventions of metropolitan structures

	Berlin- Brandenburg MA	Brno MA	Upper Silesian MA	Ostrava MA	Stuttgart MA	Turin MA	Warsaw MA
Spatial Planning	x	•	x		x	x	x/•
Regional Development (growth, innovation, R&D, etc.)	•	•	x	•	x	x	x/•
Housing	x/•				•		
Waste management	•	•	•	•	x/•	x/•	
Water Management	•		•			x	
Energy	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Education	•	•	•	•			x/•
Tourism & Leisure		•		•	x	•	
Social policy / inclusion		•	•	•		x/•	•
Culture & Heritage, Metropolitan Identity	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Promotion & Territorial marketing	•		x	•	x	•	
Sewage Management			•				
Transport	x	•	x/•	•	x/•	x	x/•
Healthcare	•						
International cooperation	x/•	•	•		•	x	x/•
Other domains and subjects of cooperation and dialogue	•	x/•	•	x/•	x/•	x/•	•

x - statutory domain of activities; • - non-statutory domain of activities; x/• - some aspects of the activities in the domain are statutory

Source: own elaboration based on the Matrices and information from the MECOG-CE partners



As shown in the table, the activities of metropolitan structures usually cover several thematic areas. The six main fields of metropolitan structures' activity are regional development, transport (or, more broadly, mobility), spatial planning, international cooperation, energy and activities related to culture and cultural heritage. Spatial planning, regional development, and transport (mobility) can be called the "Big 3" of metropolitan issues. These spheres of activity are very complex and require a wide array of resources, including infrastructural, human, financial, and others - for effective management. In the metropolitan areas where dedicated laws regulating them exist (in Italy, Germany, and Poland - in the GZM Metropolis case), these "Big 3" domains often translate into statutory tasks. However, in Brno, Ostrava, and Warsaw MAs, some non-statutory projects have also been implemented within these domains. In the case of other spheres, the activities of metropolitan structures are more often non-statutory in nature. It results from recognising other essential issues which need to be addressed for better development and functioning of the metropolitan areas.

Generally, the involvement of metropolitan institutions in the implementation of tasks in these areas varies and results from the degree of responsibility of the metropolitan structures for a specific domain and the degree of formalisation of cooperation in metropolitan areas. The degree of formalisation is high in Katowice, Stuttgart, and Turin MAs and lower based on the implementation of ITI-related projects in Brno, Ostrava, and Warsaw MAs. In turn, in Berlin-Brandenburg, the identified spaces of metropolitan dialogue are most often institutions mediating between other actors from various levels of administration, from local to state. These differences should be considered when reading the rest of the study.

The presentation below is organised thematically according to the most frequently indicated areas of activity in metropolitan areas. At the end of this chapter, the other domains of cooperation and dialogue mentioned by the MECOG-CE partners are demonstrated.

Regional Development

Regional development can be understood broadly. This is reflected in the context of activities undertaken by actors in metropolitan areas. Most activities, including those related to other domains, are directly or indirectly related to regional development.

In the approach to the issue of regional development, two aspects are essential in the information obtained from project partners. The first is to emphasize the importance of different innovations, especially technological, organizational and social ones. The second common element is the approach to regional development following the assumptions of sustainable development. Therefore, three basic dimensions of sustainable development ideas are emphasised: environmental, social and economic. Apart from this common core, different ideas are emerging in each metropolitan area to stimulate regional and metropolitan development.

The idea of innovative axes that interlink both states along train infrastructure for knowledge transfer, economic development, etc., is essential in the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan area. Regional and metropolitan development ideas are combined with transport and spatial development issues in this case.

The Brno Metropolitan Area indicates the importance of innovation, especially IT, and broadly understood entrepreneurship for regional development. The existing strategic documents



(*Integrated Development Strategy of the BMA for 2021-2027 and Regional Innovation Strategy for the South Moravian Region 2021-2027*) are complementary in this respect. Examples of activities that fit into these ideas include *CERIT Science Park II - a business incubator for innovative start-up companies focused on security research and development*, or *INTEMAC Centre, which focuses on applied research, experimental development and education in the field of engineering production technology* (Brno City Municipality).

The GZM Metropolis emphasises improving the quality of life in the post-industrial area as an essential regional and metropolitan development stimulator. The second structure of the dialogue (Association of Municipalities and Counties of Central Subregion of the Silesia Region) accentuates *increasing the competitiveness of SMEs, preparation of investment areas for economic activities and revitalisation of degraded areas: supporting the physical, economic and social revitalization of poor communities in urban and rural areas* as a critical factor for regional development (GZM Metropolis). It can be concluded that the activities of both structures are complementary. Improving the quality of life in metropolitan area is intended to counteract the demographic crisis that mainly affects industrial cities located in its core.

The Ostrava metropolitan area declares similar activities as the GZM Metropolis. Here, the revitalisation of post-industrial areas is also essential, combined with activities such as *investment for SMEs growth and digitalisation, for application of research results (commercialisation), services for SMEs, long-term intersectional cooperation between companies and universities (public R&D sector)* (Ostrava City Municipality).

In the Stuttgart metropolitan area (Stuttgart Region), the main structure responsible for economic development issues is Wirtschaftsförderung Region Stuttgart GmbH (WRS), which is an organisation established in 1995 by Verband Region Stuttgart (VRS). WRS activities are focused primarily on *organising regional cooperation and developing regional networks. WRS is a publicly supported company and is the central point of contact for investors and companies in the Stuttgart Region*. In its activities, WRS clearly emphasises the importance of the main ideas of sustainable development, in particular, the inviolability of the natural environment as the basis for the quality of life, the importance of eco-related innovations as a drive for future prosperity, the introduction of the principles of circular economy, social acceptance for the introduced solutions and cooperation of universities and research institutes with economic entities and state institutions to introduce optimal solutions.

In the Turin metropolitan area, regional development is one of the statutory tasks for Italian metropolitan cities. However, even before the legal changes that introduced metropolitan cities, the Territorial Pacts were signed in Turin. They are *instruments of Negotiated Programming that identify a coordinated complex of productive and infrastructural interventions. The characterising element of a territorial pact is the concertation (agreement) between the different social actors, both public and private, with the aim of activating infrastructural investments and entrepreneurial initiatives. The interventions concerned the following macro-areas: territorial redevelopment; enhancement of industrial areas; construction of buildings of public interest; strengthening of road, aqueduct and connectivity networks for the development of broadband; infrastructure for higher technical education. Currently, CMTo is the Responsible Party of 6 territorial Pacts that are still active* (Metropolitan City of Turin).

In the case of Warsaw, the metropolitan area itself is considered the most important growth pole in the Masovian Voivodeship. This is how it is recognised in the *Development Strategy Of The*



Masovian Voivodeship 2030+. Moreover, the indication of this area in the voivodeship strategy is a condition for the implementation of the ITI instrument in this area. In turn, in the development strategy being prepared for the metropolitan area itself, in the development context, attention is focused on building competitiveness based on innovation, digitalisation, the future industry, highly skilled human resources, and the benefits of concentrating administrative functions ("Warsaw Metropolis" Association).

Mobility/Transport

The second issue crucial for the activities of metropolitan areas participating in the project is transport or, more broadly understood, mobility. Mobility is the fundamental domain of activity - *core business* (the phrase used by a GZM Metropolis representative) - for each metropolitan area. Well-functioning public transport is an indicator of a well-functioning metropolis. Moreover, it is an essential public service from the perspective of the everyday functioning of metropolitan residents. The modern approach to public transport is systemic and integrated.

The systemic and integrated approach to mobility means that metropolitan areas participating in the project use sustainable urban mobility planning assumptions - the modern idea concerning mobility introduced by the European Union. This means that the approach to metropolitan mobility emphasizes, e.g. the focus on people, accessibility and quality of life, integrated development of all transport modes, long-term vision and strategy, involvement of stakeholders and citizens using a transparent and participatory approach, interdisciplinary planning teams (Rupprecht et.al. 2019: 10). Well-functioning integrated public transport aims to reduce using cars as private means of transport.

On a macro scale, the issue of mobility is closely related to the climate crisis and the need to reduce CO₂ emissions. So, it joins with the idea of sustainable development. In turn, on a micro-scale, mobility is related with the lifestyle and culture of metropolis residents. The threads discussed here are present in the approach to mobility in the metropolitan areas participating in the project.

The primary institutional structure responsible for transport in the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan area is the Berlin-Brandenburg Transport Association (Verkehrsverbund Berlin-Brandenburg VBB). In addition to meeting the current transport needs of the inhabitants of the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan area, VBB also tries to anticipate future evolution of transport and mobility needs and challenges (*Development of a new public transport concept 2040+*). An

Berlin-Brandenburg MA:

The VBB GmbH coordinates the different interests of the shareholders and stakeholders and takes over the management of public transport in the capital region, especially on rail. VBB GmbH is responsible for the management of transport services, as well as for ordering and handling regional and suburban rail transport. VBB GmbH cooperates with transport companies and neighboring authorities to provide coordinated and integrated local transport services by rail and road.

It coordinates the concepts of the public transport authorities and harmonizes the timetables. In order to strengthen the public transport system and make it as easy as possible for all passengers to use, VBB GmbH carries out public relations work and offers standardized passenger information. The uniform VBB fare applies throughout the entire area. (*Source: Joint Spatial Department Berlin Brandenburg*)



important aspect of VBB's work are activities aimed at providing effective and transparent information for public transport users.

The other important project for Berlin and Brandenburg is the "i2030". It is aimed at renovating existing transport routes and creating new ones. In the latter case, the idea is to connect developing centres in the metropolitan region with Berlin, create eight transport axes, and connect them with the S-Bahn system.

Activities in the transport field implemented by the Brno Metropolitan Area are linked to projects implemented within ITI. The Brno Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan ensures coherence of activities in line with the Integrated Development Strategy of the BMA for 2021-2027.

An investment implemented under the ITI instrument is *New District Trnitá (including the modernisation of the bus station Zvonařka, and construction of tram line Plotní; this project was financed by ITI and aims to combine multiple activities - spanning different operational programmes, financial sources, etc. - into one, integrated project, which generates more value than each of its component parts would have)*. Transport activities also include cycling infrastructure, e.g., *a network of cycle paths (12 bicycle path projects have been realised in BMA with an emphasis on easier commuting to work or school) in different regions around Brno (Brno City Municipality)*.

Brno MA:

Actions of BMA in this domain are related to the use of ITI tool, when BMA decide which projects in this field will be co-funded. Supported projects focus on metropolitan sustainable mobility, e.g. constructing public transport interchanges/ terminals to facilitate easy transfers between routes, bicycle paths, building new railways, making public transport more comfortable, purchasing new public transport vehicles, better management of traffic to give preference to public transportation, and much more. (Source: Brno City Municipality)

In the Upper Silesian metropolitan area, *planning, coordination, integration and development of public transport, including road and railroad transportation, as well as sustainable urban mobility is one of the six public tasks of the metropolitan union in the Act on the metropolitan association in the Silesian Voivodeship (Article 12)*. The methods of implementing this task are included in the *Development Strategy of the GZM Metropolis for 2022-2027, with an outlook to 2035*, while the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan was approved in December 2023 (GZM Metropolis). GZM's approach to transport also emphasises the integration of means of transport, with particular emphasis on rail transport, limiting individual transport and sharing systems (especially in the context of last-mile transport). Work on the velostrade (bicycle path) system is also underway in the GZM Metropolis.



Upper Silesian MA:

Executing transport-oriented activities is the “core business” of GZM. These activities consist in:

1. Developing sustainable urban mobility and popularizing public transport as the primary choice for everyday commuting
 - 1.1. Creating and implementing solutions to reduce individual transportation and improve pedestrian safety;
 - 1.2. Integrating mobility and transportation communities;
2. Developing infrastructural and organizational conditions for the improvement of public and road transport
 - 2.1. Optimizing the operation of public transportation with the integration of operators and the tariff-ticketing system as well as the development of the ticketing network;
 - 2.2. Expanding infrastructure related to public transportation and traffic management, including smart solutions;
 - 2.3. Developing an information system on public transportation system solutions and implemented changes;
 - 2.4. Supporting the development of priority metropolitan transport routes;
3. Developing railway transport
 - 3.1. Developing rail infrastructure and fleet, taking into account the connection with the Katowice Airport in Pyrzowice;
 - 3.2. Cooperation with institutions of the legislative and executive branch on changes in the mechanisms of financing railroad passenger transport and statutory discounts;
4. Promoting micromobility, including cycling and the principle of sharing
 - 4.1. Building a coherent system of cycling connectivity and existing, and planned infrastructure;
 - 4.2. Popularization of individual and shared micromobility for “last mile” travel. (Source: GZM Metropolis)

The Ostrava Metropolitan Area (like the Brno Metropolitan Area) uses funds from the ITI mechanism to modernise the transport system and promote sustainable and clean mobility. These activities consumed approximately 50% of the funds allocated for ITI investments in both programming periods (2014-2020 and 2021-2027). Thanks to this, the *building and modernisation of tram and trolleybus networks, telematic systems on city road networks and in public transport, purchasing of new clean busses and filling infrastructure (electro and hydrogen), modernisation of public transport terminals, building new cycle paths and measures for safety of pedestrian and cyclists* (Ostrava City Municipality).

In the case of the Stuttgart metropolitan area, one of the metropolitan dialogue structures, the Verkehrs- und Tarifverbund Stuttgart (VVS), is responsible for the uniform ticketing system and the organisation of transport within the Stuttgart Region. This is a long-term activity that started in 1977, resulting in the organisation of the communication system in the Stuttgart Region.



Recently, investment activities related to railway infrastructure have been carried out in the Stuttgart Region - the Stuttgart 21 project. Due to the high level of metropolitan mobility in the Stuttgart Region, an effective transport network is treated as a key element of metropolitan infrastructure. The main goals for mobility development in the Stuttgart Region include the *Sustainable Urban/regional Mobility Plan* prepared in line with EU standards.

Stuttgart MA:

The rail project Stuttgart 21 is the largest public rail transport project in Baden-Württemberg since the 19th century. The project entails the complete restructuring of the Stuttgart rail networks. In total, three new stations will be constructed. First, the Stuttgart city main station's configuration is planned to be changed, from a terminus station to an underground through-station. Secondly, the project includes constructing a new S-Bahn train station together with a new residential quarter, which is also part of the Stuttgart 21 project. Thirdly, the airport and trade fair station will link the region to the south of the city to long-distance and regional transport routes.

It is expected that the project will open up development and investment opportunities in Stuttgart. For example, the new underground main station of the city of Stuttgart will free up space to develop a whole new neighborhood in the center of the city. Additional green space, new housing, and jobs are to be expected. The Stuttgart 21 project is envisioned as a cornerstone for the development of the region's export-oriented economy as the expected benefits of the project include shorter travel times, better accessibility, and more convenient connections that will benefit passengers and companies of the Stuttgart Region. VRS is one of the six project partners. (Source: Stuttgart Region Association)

In the Turin metropolitan area, the organisation of public transport is the responsibility of the metropolis. Every Italian metropolis is obliged to prepare a sustainable mobility plan. Such a plan has also been prepared in Turin and allows for the organisation of metropolitan transport. *The Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (PUMS) is a strategic planning tool that aims to plan actions and interventions on the metropolitan territory, in order to develop a vision of a more accessible, safer and less polluting mobility and transport system, oriented towards improving people's quality of life. The Plan has a ten-year time horizon and is updated at least every five years, consistent with territorial planning and environmental, social and economic sustainability objectives* (Metropolitan City of Turin).

In the case of the Warsaw Metropolitan Area, the structure participating in the project is not responsible for organising public transport. However, it conducts activities related to various aspects of urban mobility. ITI projects included activities related to developing a system of bicycle paths and P+R parking lots. In turn, the "Warsaw Metropolis" Association commissioned the preparation of a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, which was created in 2023. *The SUMP is a strategic plan primarily aimed at balancing the modes of travel in the Warsaw Metropolitan Area. Through the indications contained therein, the Warsaw SUMP is expected to meet the mobility needs of the residents and the economy in and around the cities with a better quality of life. It builds on existing planning practices and also takes into account issues of integration, public participation and the principles for evaluating its implementation* ("Warsaw Metropolis" Association).



Spatial Planning

Spatial planning is another crucial issue of interest to metropolitan institutions. In the case of three metropolitan areas - Upper Silesian metropolitan area (GZM Metropolis), Turin (Metropolitan City of Turin) and Stuttgart (VRS) - participating in the project, spatial planning is a task imposed on metropolitan institutions by appropriate legal provisions. Therefore, in these areas, spatial planning issues are supported by proper activities and projects.

Upper Silesian MA:

Planning spatial order is one of the six public tasks of the metropolitan association in the Act on the metropolitan union in the Silesian Voivodeship (Article 12).

The spatial policy trends are related to the 4 priorities identified in the strategic findings: 1. climate change adaptation to resilience, 2. mobility and accessibility, 3. spatial and social cohesion, 4. Metropolitanity and innovation; except for one priority, concerning institutional issues (the functioning of the GZM and cooperation with municipalities). They are addressed separately for the core GZM and the surroundings of the core GZM or for the entire Metropolis. (Source: GZM Metropolis)

Turin MA:

General spatial planning is one of the two main metropolitan competences recognised by Law. According to National Law 56/2014 metropolitan cities have the duty to draft and adopt a seven-year metropolitan general spatial Plan (PTGM), which also takes on the value of the Territorial Coordination Plan. The PTGM includes the communication structures, service and infrastructure networks that fall within the competence of the metropolitan community, also setting constraints on land consumption and objectives for the activity and exercise of the functions of the municipalities.

The Metropolitan general spatial Plan (PTGM) outlines the structure of the territory of the metropolitan city as a whole, and sets the criteria for regulating transformations, in accordance with the guidelines of regional planning, starting from the comparison with the municipalities and the associative forms that perform functions in urban planning. The Plan also fits into the European and national framework of territorial development strategies, also with reference to integrated environmental sustainability objectives. The PTGM is drafted with the involvement of the municipalities and associative forms that perform the function of urban planning and is approved by the Metropolitan Council, after having obtained the mandatory opinion of the Assembly of Mayors of the Homogeneous Zones and the binding opinion of the Metropolitan Conference. (Source: Metropolitan City of Turin)

Stuttgart MA:

The regional plan lays down the requirements, goals and principles of spatial planning for the region. It is issued for a period of ca. 15 years. The current plan dates from 2009. The regional plan is binding for all public planning agencies, including sectoral authorities and municipalities. The regional plan has in most cases no direct effect on private individuals and investors, but it can provide guidance. The Regional Assembly via the Committee for Planning provides regular advice on the status and progress of work on the regional plan and is responsible to monitor its implementation.

The plan is based on five categories of instruments:

- **Settlement development:** The regional plan uses the concept of “needs-based development” to determine how many areas are available for residential or commercial uses in each municipality. (...)
- **Development axes:** The plan guides the creation of new residential and commercial areas by establishing criteria for the selection of these areas close to the existence of railway lines of the S-Bahn (suburban train).
- **Central places:** the plan creates a four tier hierarchy of centres for the specialization of functions in each settlement of the municipalities that comprise Stuttgart Region. This aims to create a structural support between settlements. (...)
- **Infrastructure:** this axis aims to guarantee the efficiency of the Stuttgart Region. In this axis the guidelines for transport routes, energy supply, including wind turbines, solar energy and bioenergy, and waste management are outlined.
- **Green belt:** the regional plan designates areas and corridors where open spaces are preserved. (...)
- **Green corridors:** Can be found where municipalities are to be prevented from growing together. These stretches are established in order to avoid the conurbation of settlements.

According to the State Planning Act, the regional plan sets mandatory guidelines for local land use plans and local zoning. Therefore, a strong collaboration with the municipalities is key. The Stuttgart Region Association offers the municipalities advice and support in putting the plan into practice. Other mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the plan include the right to set contractual agreements and legal means if certain requirements of the plan are not met. (Source: Stuttgart Region Association)

Each description mentioned above draws attention to the need for cooperation in spatial planning with other key structures operating in the metropolitan area. The most important among them are municipalities that belong to metropolitan areas. So, effective spatial planning at the metropolitan level is impossible without consultations with the municipalities located within the metropolitan area. Attention should also be paid to the specificity of subregions, especially municipalities in the metropolitan surroundings, which are subject to suburbanisation pressure and sometimes have a specific function, e.g. tourism (as in Turin). It is also worth emphasising that the MECOG-CE partners join spatial planning issues with adapting metropolitan areas to climate change.

In those metropolitan structures where spatial planning is not a statutory task, this problem is also present, although the approach to it is different. In the Brno Metropolitan Area, spatial planning is included as an aspect of strategic planning, for which BMA is responsible (Brno Metropolitan Area *has no competence in terms of land-use planning, but one of the measures of Strategy aims at linking strategic and spatial planning in the BMA*). In Warsaw, the issue of spatial planning is taken up in the metropolitan area development strategy which is in preparation.

In the Berlin-Brandenburg MA, five subordinate planning regions exist. The *joint spatial planning is a sub-theme of the strategic framework for the Berlin-Brandenburg Capital Region*. The Joint State Planning Department Berlin-Brandenburg accompanies inter-municipal cooperations, contributing to spatial development across federal states and supporting specific projects.

Culture & Heritage, Metropolitan Identity

Another important area of metropolitan activities relates to the issue of culture, cultural heritage and metropolitan identity. Most often, the activities of the metropolitan structures involve promoting or supporting cultural initiatives. Such a situation is presented in the Berlin-Brandenburg MA which co-finances *the Prussian Palaces and Gardens Berlin-Brandenburg Foundation* (Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg). The GZM Metropolis supports *cultural events like The Night of Theatres and The Industrial Heritage Path, thus also building a metropolitan identity*. The Turin metropolitan area *promotes cultural metropolitan initiatives, local events, and, more generally, the cultural heritage of its territory through patronage and concrete projects*. Culinary traditions in the Turin metropolitan area are also recognised as meaningful cultural heritage. This approach contributed to creating the *Food Districts* project (mentioned later in the report as a good practice). In Czech metropolises, culture-related activities mainly concern co-financing cultural heritage projects under ITI. The Stuttgart metropolitan area takes a broader approach to culture. In this metropolitan area, there is an organisation called the Culture Region Stuttgart, of which the VRS is a member.

Stuttgart MA:

Culture Region Stuttgart has 47 members, including 43 towns and municipalities, three clubs and associations and VRS. It plans and organises regional cultural projects, bundles and promotes the existing cultural offering in the region and contributes to strengthening dialogue on cultural policy between local authorities, creatives and the public. VRS currently contributes approximately EUR 330,000 annually, with around EUR 150,000 co-funded by the local authorities. VRS is thus the main sponsor. (Source: Stuttgart Region Association)

Energy

Energy policy is conducted at the state level, and the EU sets its directions. Nevertheless, at the metropolitan level, energy-related projects are also present. Providing energy supply in light of the increasing energy consumption, climate policy and during the war in Ukraine, is a significant challenge for countries, regions, metropolises, and smaller cities.

In the case of Berlin-Brandenburg MA, the issue of energy resources management is treated as a strategic action linked to an agreement at the government level. The metropolitan area itself does not take any extensive action in this regard.

For the Brno Metropolitan Area, the energy issue is, on the one hand, a topic included in the *Integrated Development Strategy of the BMA for 2021-2027*. At the same time is an area of project activities related to the ITI mechanism. *The current strategy includes integrated solutions and measures aimed at energy self-sufficiency of the region - energy production and distribution system, photovoltaic power plants, biomass combined heat and power unit, facilities for the production of electricity and heat from renewable sources*. Projects supported by the ITI



mechanism *focus on energy efficiency and safety, renewable energy sources* (Brno City Municipality). A similar situation is in the current (2021-2027) programming period of ITI in Ostrava MA. In this metropolitan area, some activities that support savings and the supply of renewable energy for the public and private sectors also exist.

For the GZM Metropolis, issues related to energy resources are not regulated by law but as part of the non-statutory and voluntary cooperation of the municipalities forming the metropolis. In this matter, a joint purchase of energy and gas was organized (this is one of the good practices described later in the report). In turn, the second dialogue space operating in the metropolis, the Association of Municipalities and Counties of Central Subregion of the Silesia Region, focused mainly on the promotion of the generation and distribution of energy from renewable sources, investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy sources in public and residential infrastructure. These activities were implemented as part of ITI projects.

The activities of VRS in the Stuttgart metropolitan area in the energy field are closely related to the European, national and regional energy policy assuming climate neutrality by 2050. Because VRS is responsible for spatial planning, its main task is to find space that can be allocated for wind or solar energy investments. *The search for locations for wind turbines + open space solar panels is not easy, because in addition to the already relatively high population and job density and the concentration of infrastructure facilities, additional areas are needed for living, working, transport and recreation. Open spaces are also needed to secure the basis of nutrition and the ability of agricultural businesses to function. Last but not least, space is needed for measures to adapt to climate change, to safeguard biodiversity and for recreational areas. Regional planning should balance these conflicting goals. The definition of suitable spaces for wind + solar are thus carried out in a transparent and participation-oriented procedure* (Stuttgart Region Association).

The Turin metropolitan area takes two steps in the context of energy policy. Firstly, the *CMT*, building on the experience gained by the former Province of Turin over the years, plays the role of Energy Observatory, collecting data from the main energy distributors and producers operating in the territory and drawing information from official statistical sources. Secondly, it provides authorisation for electricity production plants, EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) opinions and IPPC procedures, light pollution; it carries out checks on the operation, conduction and maintenance of systems for air conditioning, including checks on the installation of heat metering and thermoregulation systems (Metropolitan City of Turin).

International Cooperation

One of the defining features of a metropolis is the participation in a global network of relations covering administrative institutions and many other entities operating in metropolitan areas. It is, therefore, not surprising that most of the institutions participating in the project indicated international cooperation as one of the areas of activity. Additionally, it can be noted that the participation in the MECOG-CE project itself is an element of international cooperation.

The participation in metropolitan networks, such as METREX, Eurocities, etc., is indicated as the basic form of international cooperation (Berlin-Brandenburg, Brno, Katowice, Stuttgart, Warsaw MAs). Participation in such networks allows for exchanging experiences and implementing projects in collaboration with other metropolises. The Brno Metropolitan Area also indicates the World Bank as a partner in implementing international projects.



The Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg, in the context of international cooperation, recognises the role of axes located along railway lines (identified as development corridors) as those that can become the basis for building international relations, especially with Polish regions and border cities and metropolises.

The Stuttgart metropolitan area participates in broad international cooperation networks. In addition to its membership in the networks mentioned above, the VRS has a representative office in Brussels. The collaboration undertaken by the VRS covers many areas and goes beyond the

Stuttgart MA:

The objectives of Stuttgart Region's work in Europe are:

- To be involved in shaping European policy and funding policy
- To implement funded projects
- To gain insights through an exchange of experiences in networks
- To position Stuttgart Region as an innovative high-tech location with a good quality of life
- To inform stakeholders in the region about current developments and funding programmes at EU level
- To support regional partners, in particular municipalities.

The VRS is not only involved in European affairs. It has a transatlantic partnership with the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) since 1999. This vivid partnership includes exchanges on political and staff level and also the inclusion of other stakeholders in the two regions like universities, schools and companies.

The VRS is part of the EU program of International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC) in which the VRS cooperates with US, Vietnamese and Chinese metropolitan areas and cities. (Source: *Stuttgart Region Association*)

borders of Europe.

International cooperation is a statutory task for the Turin metropolitan area. In the case of this metropolitan area, the main emphasis is placed on the implementation of international projects. Among other things, in the years 2014-2020, the CMTa was a partner or leader in 37 European projects (including under the Interreg programs).

Waste management

In several metropolitan areas, waste management is an important area of activity. However, the waste management problem is addressed differently across the MECOG-CE-partners.

In the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan area, waste management is primarily a local issue.

In the Brno Metropolitan Area, the ITI mechanism is used to support projects focused on investing in the waste management sector. As part of one of the projects, the Brno Centre for Waste Recovery was established.

In the Turin metropolitan area, *competencies and activities in this domain concern provincial waste management planning, authorization and control of landfills and disposal facilities, and*



environmental impact assessments. As part of the activities, The Metropolitan Waste Observatory was established (Metropolitan City of Turin).

Turin MA:

The Metropolitan Waste Observatory cooperates with institutions and bodies operating in the waste sector, such as the Municipalities of the metropolitan territory, the Basin Consortia, the waste management companies, the Piedmont Region, the Optimal Territorial Ambit Association, the Superior Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA), ARPA Piedmont, the Polytechnic University of Turin, the Chamber of Commerce and other bodies. The Observatory performs monitoring and support functions with respect to the implementation of territorial waste planning. (Source: Metropolitan City of Turin)

An interesting situation occurs in the Stuttgart metropolitan area, where the VRS is responsible for problematic waste, such as mineral waste and contaminated excavated soil. Because the VRS *does not have any waste treatment facilities, it has transferred this task to a private law company, namely the waste disposal company of Ludwigsburg County. (...) In general, all other waste management-related tasks are carried out by the counties of the Stuttgart Region* (Stuttgart Region Association).

In the Upper Silesian metropolitan area, in the context of waste management, activities are carried out in individual communes. Some of these projects are coordinated by the Association of Municipalities and Counties of the Central Subregion of the Silesia Region. They mainly focus on the construction of Municipal Selective Waste Collection Points. In turn, the GZM Metropolis is trying to undertake larger-scale activities related to waste management. One of them was a trial *to build the incineration plant for the GZM. Unfortunately, these efforts have been stopped by the Supervisory Authority of the Voivodeship, which indicated that waste management was not the GZM's statutory task and cannot be executed by the GZM* (GZM Metropolis). The blocking of this investment resulted mainly from political reasons, as the GZM institution was perceived as opposition to the government.

Education

Prerogatives related to the educational system are located mainly at the central government level. Hence, the possibilities of involving metropolitan institutions in educational projects are primarily limited to caring for the educational infrastructure, improving the quality of human capital (both teachers and students) and building cooperation between universities and other entities.

In the educational context, the MECOG-CE project partners mentioned activities related to increasing the accessibility of educational institutions for residents (mainly suburban areas), including kindergartens (Brno MA), ensuring equal access to good quality education (Upper Silesian MA), expanding teachers' competences (Warsaw MA), developing students' competences, including digital tools and awareness of potential threats related to the digital world (Warsaw MA, Brno MA), students' competencies applicable on the labour market (Ostrava MA, Upper Silesian MA), improving the standard of school equipment or renovation of school buildings (Ostrava MA, Warsaw MA, Upper Silesian MA), lifelong education (Upper Silesian MA).

In the case of these projects in Polish and Czech metropolises, the ITI mechanism was used.



In the Brno Metropolitan Area, projects expanding the kindergarten base were also indicated, and the importance of cooperation with the universities and the implementation of projects related to regional development (MUNISS and METROSPOL projects) were emphasised.

Brno MA:

MUNISS: inter-university student competition where students from different fields and universities meet to work on studies focusing on the development of Brno (BMA). **METROSPOL:** research project lead by Masaryk University aimed to analyse and evaluate municipalities' motivations for metropolitan cooperation and its institutionalization. BMA was an application guarantor in this project. (Source: Brno City Municipality)

In turn, the GZM Metropolis in the educational context indicated the 1. *Metropolitan Fund Supporting Science* programs fostering cooperation between universities and scientists from the Metropolis and other significant scientific units worldwide; 2. *Metropolitan Socio-Economic Observatory (INFOGZM)* providing analyses of important socio-economic processes in the Metropolis (GZM Metropolis).

Social Policy

As in educational issues, the role of metropolitan institutions and projects in the case of social policy complements state policy as well as policies and projects of local governments. It does not mean that interesting activities related to social policy issues are not implemented in the metropolitan areas participating in the project. Activities related to social policy may be targeted at various domains.

The Brno Metropolitan Area, *via the ITI tool, co-funds strategic projects to improve the availability and quality of health and social services, promote labour market integration with a focus on particularly vulnerable groups, support activities and infrastructure for the elderly or coordinate social housing in the BMA* (Brno City Municipality). Brief descriptions of concrete projects are included in the box.

Brno MA:

Home Bethlehem: it serves as facility for people with severe disabilities and improves services for these people. This project was built in Brno's hinterland.

Josef Chaloupka House of Services for the Blind: it provides a barrier-free modern space for people with visual impairments in the BMA and also serves as a day care centre for the blind. The project is located in Brno.

New Home: it is a home for adults with autism spectrum disorder, where they can live on their own while remaining under the constant care of professionals and assistants. It is one of the projects located in hinterland of Brno.

House for Julie: it is the first hospice for paediatric patients in Czechia and provides assistance to terminally ill patients and their loved ones. (Source: Brno City Municipality)



In the Upper Silesian metropolitan area, projects related to social policy are implemented by municipalities of the Association of Municipalities and Counties of the Central Subregion of the Silesia Region. The Association itself plays an inspiring and coordinating role here. The provided activities are focused on three areas: *strengthening the regional job market, actions on revitalization and social and health infrastructure, and actions on social inclusion* (GZM Metropolis).

The Ostrava metropolitan area implements projects oriented on the labour market and strengthening the competitiveness of employees.

For the Turin metropolitan area, social policy is a residual competence. The metropolis tries to use EU programs for activities related to this dimension. An example is the *SocialLab* project benefiting from the Interreg funds. The project itself assumes as its goal that of *improving the quality, sustainability and proximity of services to the local population, defining and experimenting with a community social assistance service focused on the well-being of the community and based on innovative practices* (Metropolitan City of Turin).

The Warsaw Functional Area, as part of ITI, implemented projects related to the care of children up to three years of age.

It is not easy to distinguish common threads in the implemented social policy activities. However, it can be said that metropolitan activities are aimed at those spheres of social policy in which deficits are noticed, and there is a possibility of supporting residents and thus improving the quality of life, especially for vulnerable groups.

Water Management

Water Management is usually not the responsibility of metropolitan areas (Ostrava, Stuttgart, Warsaw MAs), or only individual projects are undertaken concerning water resources (Berlin-Brandenburg, Upper Silesian MAs). The exception among the metropolitan partners participating in the project is the Metropolitan City of Turin, in the case of which *water management is a statutory competence which envisages the protection of surface and underground waters in the territory of the Metropolitan City of Turin through the management of withdrawal concession and discharge authorisation practices, flanked and directly connected to planning activities for the proper use of the resource and protection of river and lake territories* (Metropolitan City of Turin). The River and Lake Contracts project is carried out within this competence.

Turin MA:

River and Lake Contracts

The river agreements were introduced in Italy based on Law 125/2006, as voluntary tools for territorial and place-based governance. They promote vertical and horizontal subsidiarity, interactive local development, the safety of the riverside and sustainability. The tool is regulated by regional guidelines. (Source: Metropolitan City of Turin)

Water management activities undertaken in the remaining three metropolitan areas have a small scale. In the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan area, as to water management, on the one hand, *there is a joint government agreement in which the local level is more involved*, and on the other



hand, the Municipal Neighbourhood Forum - one of the identified dialogue spaces - together with other stakeholders conducts a *Study on cross-border water management on the river Panke*.

In the Upper Silesian metropolitan area, projects related to water management are carried out by the Association of Municipalities and Counties of the Central Subregion of the Silesia Region. They are focused on *actions on environmental protection and efficient use of resources, as well as investments in the water and wastewater sector: construction and modernisation of municipal water supply systems and drinking water reservoir protection* (GZM Metropolis).

Promotion & Territorial marketing

Widespread activities aimed at promotion and territorial marketing are run in the three project partner metropolitan areas (Katowice, Stuttgart, Turin MAs). This results from statutory defined tasks of the metropolis (GZM Metropolis) or intra-metropolitan arrangements for promotional activities (Stuttgart Region, Metropolitan City of Turin). In the Berlin-Brandenburg region, responsibility for promoting the region is divided between various entities operating in the metropolitan area.

In the Upper Silesian metropolitan area, promotion is one of the six public tasks of the GZM Metropolis. It is included in the general strategy document: *Development Strategy of the GZM Metropolis for 2022-2027, with an outlook to 2035*. Promotional activities are carried out on a national and international scale, *mainly to attract investment, foster further growth, and benefit from international exchange*. As part of its promotional activities, the GZM Metropolis participates in many international meetings (e.g. MIPIM - the global Urban Festival focusing on real estate issues, and EXPO REAL), but also operates in metropolitan networks, such as EMA - European Metropolitan Authorities or METREX. In the GZM Metropolis case, the promotion activity is strictly linked to international cooperation.

In the Stuttgart metropolitan area, the WRS is responsible for promotional activities and territorial marketing. They are focused on showing the specificity of the region, where global players in the automotive industry are often located in small towns belonging to the Stuttgart Region (e.g. Porsche Development Center, which employs 6,500 in the municipality of Weissach - a town with 7,500 inhabitants), building a sense of pride in living in the Stuttgart Region and in showing the Stuttgart Region as an important area from the perspective of international metropolitan regional competitiveness.

Stuttgart MA

#SoistS - The digital platform for the Stuttgart Region. Under the hashtag #SoistS, we bundle the Stuttgart Region's attitude to life and, together with people who live and work here, show what makes our home region so special.

Hi Tech! - International location marketing campaign Hi Tech! draws the attention of international specialists and start-ups to the qualities of the Stuttgart Region as a high-tech location and invites them to realize their professional or entrepreneurial potential in the Stuttgart Region. The campaign creates access to potential employers and cooperation partners. (Source: Stuttgart Region Association)

In the Turin metropolitan area, promotional activities are concentrated in rural communes with the undoubted advantage of a mountain location. The *CMTo promotes the rural-mountain*



development with a series of initiatives and pilot projects that develop the different vocations to (re)connect, accommodate, (re)inhabit and protect the mountain areas. As part of these activities, a bottom-up system was created in which discussions of local stakeholders are crucial, and activities related to mountain area promotion and sustainable development are undertaken.

Housing

Housing was relatively rarely indicated as a subject of interest for metropolitan areas participating in the project. It was referred to by the Berlin-Brandenburg, Brno and Stuttgart MAs. However, nowhere is this a solely metropolitan prerogative. In implementing activities related to housing, the need to integrate spatial development policies and plans at various levels, from local (municipal) to state levels, is clearly emphasised. These dependencies were well revealed in the Stuttgart metropolitan area, where the VRS emphasizes the need to integrate various actors' activities and reconcile various stakeholders' different expectations regarding spatial development. In Stuttgart MA, areas designated for intensive development and those where this form of action is not possible are indicated. The basis for such a subdivision is the area's location near the S-Bahn railway line, which allows quick movement within the region. Thus, intensive development plans are linked to the functioning of regional (metropolitan) transport. Many solutions concerning housing are discussed on various forums, so taking actions related to housing is not an imposed top-down logic.

Turin MA:

Governance system of the permanent table for the mountains (*Tavolo permanente per la montagna*):

The permanent table for the mountains is a territorial concertation tool with a view to attracting the European funds needed to launch experimental growth models, and to identify suitable ways of enhancing the role of mountains in eco-systemic, economic, tourism, sporting and social terms. The table is composed by a representative of territorial LAG (local group of action), Mountain Unions and Homogeneous zones. (Source: *Metropolitan City of Turin*).



Stuttgart MA:

The regional plan grants all cities and municipalities sufficient settlement development in line with their needs. In order to treat the remaining open spaces as sparingly as possible, the following applies: First, gaps between buildings or brownfield sites should be built on before new "greenfield" sites are touched. In addition, the regional plan distinguishes between municipalities "limited to self-development" and municipalities in a "settlement area". In general, more growth and higher density is foreseen in places with access to the railway system - lower density in places without access to the railway system - and limited to the need of local population.

New residential and commercial areas are to be developed along the development axes between larger centers, which are predominantly oriented to the rail lines (S-Bahn). Development axes coordinate and bundle settlement development. They are defined by state planning, specified in the regional plan and supplemented by regional development axes.

Densified housing construction is an important approach here. And how do you get from the "plan" to the "crane", e.g., how can residential areas that have been secured by planning actually be implemented? These and many other questions are discussed at public events such as the Housing Forum or at special specialist conferences organized by VRS.

Furthermore, the International Building Exhibition (IBA) 2027 City Region Stuttgart explores how we want to live in the future. IBA 2027 partners are the City of Stuttgart, VRS and the Stuttgart Region Economic Development Corporation (WRS), the Baden-Württemberg Chamber of Architects and the University of Stuttgart.

It is a truly regional approach, since the exhibition locations for IBA'27 are buildings and infrastructures that make the transformation in the whole Stuttgart Region visible and tangible: homes and neighbourhoods that mix uses and different aspects of life, thus bringing people closer together. A ten-year journey of shared discovery is under way until the exhibition year in 2027 with the aim of making Stuttgart Region a liveable, sustainable place. (Source: Stuttgart Region Association)

An interesting form of housing-related activity exists in the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan area. It is the Municipal Neighbourhood Forum (Kommunales Nachbarschaftsforum KNF e.V.) association. It includes 32 municipalities in Brandenburg, the city of Berlin and 11 districts of Berlin. This association has been identified as one of the key forms of the metropolitan dialogue space. In 2016 and 2020, the Municipal Neighbourhood Forum conducted studies *on planned housing investments (2016 and 2020)*. Additionally, *monitoring of housing activities in municipalities, quantitative summaries and qualitative evaluation of location investments were conducted* (Joint Spatial Department Berlin Brandenburg).

Tourism & Leisure

Tourism and recreation are usually not important subjects of activity for metropolitan institutions participating in the project. The exception is the Stuttgart metropolitan area, where *according to the law on the establishment of VRS, it is the Stuttgart Region Association that is responsible for regional tourism marketing. Therefore, the VRS has a stake of around 32% of the Regio Stuttgart Marketing and Tourismus company. With the "Program for the Co-financing of Regional Model Projects and Cooperation in the Field of Economic and Tourism Promotion", the region sets*



thematic impulses and supports inter-municipal cooperation (Stuttgart Region Association). Under this program, up to 50% co-financing can be obtained for implemented projects.

In two other metropolitan areas (Brno and Turin MAs), which indicated tourism and recreation as the subject of their activities, the importance of suburban areas in the implementation of these activities was emphasised. Their priority was noticed as constituting a vital counterweight to the urbanized centre of the metropolis. Interestingly, just as in Brno and Turin MAs, people are encouraged to explore and visit suburban areas (e.g. the “Go from Brno” project). In Stuttgart MA, one of the implemented activities is a project encouraging people to get to know the Stuttgart’s city centre again - *new city sightseeing tours are being developed to attract tourists back to the city centres on foot and by bike.*

Sewage Management

Sewage Management is generally not the subject of metropolitan institutions’ activities. Only the Association of Municipalities and Counties of Central Subregion of the Silesia Region declares that it supports projects involving *construction and modernization of sewage treatment plants, construction of water supply and sanitary sewage systems in municipalities.*

Healthcare

Similarly to sewage management, the issue of healthcare is not usually the subject of metropolitan activities. These are activities related to the health policy of individual countries. Only the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan area declared joint activities undertaken with the government involving planning a hospital network in the metropolitan area.

Other domains and subjects of cooperation and dialogue

The list of activities undertaken in individual metropolitan areas proposed in the research tool (Matrix) was not exhaustive. The MECOG-CE partners could add areas of action other than those mentioned earlier that they considered important. Some of them could be classified in earlier categories, but the logic of filling the Matrix by MECOG-CE partners was respected, so they are presented here. Additional areas of activities indicated by the project partners were as follows:

- Promotion of volunteer work (Berlin-Brandenburg MA),
- Environment/ecology (Brno MA, Upper Silesian MA, Stuttgart MA),
- Strategic planning (Brno MA, Turin MA),
- Sport (Stuttgart MA),
- E-services (Warsaw MA).

Of these additional areas of activity, two are particularly important: environmental issues and strategic planning.



The approach of the studied metropolitan structures to issues concerning the natural environment and its protection is combined with attempts to counteract the climate change.

Stuttgart MA:

Digital Climate Atlas

The digital climate atlas is an important tool for climate-friendly urban and regional planning. The statements it contains help to assess which previously undeveloped areas should be kept free for reasons of climatic compensation. The data, which is available to all 179 cities and municipalities, also provides information on where fresh air corridors should remain permeable. Indications of which areas are in need of redevelopment under settlement climatic conditions are also provided. The climate maps were also used to delineate the regional green corridors and green areas in the regional plan.

ISAP - Model Region Stuttgart

Already today, Stuttgart Region and its important infrastructure facilities are affected by the impacts of climate change. For the region, adaptation to these impacts is therefore a central requirement for maintaining the quality of life as well as the security and competitiveness of the regional economy. As the body responsible for regional planning, it is therefore the task of VRS to create planning foundations for the realization of adaptable and resilient spatial structures. The joint project ISAP, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), provides an important basis for this.

Climate adaptation in the county of Böblingen

Interlinking and better coordination of regional and local options for action on climate protection are key. Projects funded by the federal government have helped to establish workable structures of local, regional and scientific actors in the county of Böblingen. An integrated action model was developed, recommendations for a regional climate protection strategy were formulated and projects were implemented as models. (Source: Stuttgart Region Association)

Sometimes such tasks are combined with other spheres of activity of metropolitan institutions. This is the case with the VRS in the Stuttgart metropolitan area. *Especially through its mandatory tasks of regional planning and regional public transport, VRS is conducting several projects concerning climate protection and climate adaptation. VRS provides information, especially for smaller municipalities, on how to deal with climate change, because they do not possess the necessary resources to deal with it* (Stuttgart Region Association). In this case, it is worth paying attention to supporting smaller municipalities belonging to the metropolitan area and providing them with tools that can help conduct effective activities monitoring the environmental and climate situation and enable them to take practical actions in the event of crises.

Stuttgart MA:

The Landscape Master Plan (Landschaftsrahmenplan) gives a comprehensive overview of the state of “open spaces” in the Region. The plan builds on the acknowledgement that open spaces, namely agriculture areas, water supply, forest areas, raw material deposits, and other factors as climate, are subject to new demands and expectations. The plan aims to provide a framework to manage the conflicts emerged from different uses of “open spaces”, driven by new production requirements in economic sector, and provides a set of indicators to assess the ecological costs or benefits of different uses of open spaces. The guiding principle of this plan is the preservation of the natural resources that sustain life. This plan is legally binding for the districts and municipalities in Stuttgart Region, and so guides the decisions of municipalities. (...) The basic idea of the landscape park is not only to protect the landscape, but also to upgrade it in terms of adaptation and biodiversity. During the last 15 years several masterplans have been developed in close cooperation with municipalities and many other stakeholders from which the projects derive. (Source: Stuttgart Region Association)

In the Brno Metropolitan Area and Upper Silesian metropolitan area, ecology-related projects are implemented mainly based on the ITI mechanism. The Association of Municipalities and Counties of Central Subregion of the Silesia Region emphasis is on *actions on environmental protection and efficient use of resources, projects aimed at conserving and restoring biodiversity, protecting and restoring soil, and promoting ecosystem services, also through the Natura 2000 programme and green infrastructure*. Similarly, the goals of implemented project activities are determined by the Brno MA (*Supported projects focus on environmental protection, adaptation measures, public spaces, or landscape revitalisation*).

In the context of environmental issues, the approach of the Stuttgart Region to the domain of landscape is worth mentioning. In this metropolitan area, *landscape planning is a mandatory task of VRS*. Such legal conditions enable effective landscape planning and management.

The importance of strategic planning as a sphere of activity of metropolitan institutions is emphasised by Brno and Turin MAs. As to the Metropolitan City of Turin, *strategic planning is one of the two main metropolitan competencies recognised by National Law*.

Turin MA:**Metropolitan Strategic Plan (PSM):**

The metropolitan strategic Plan is the result of an intense participatory planning process that implied the consultation and involvement of institutions, economic and social forces, civil society, intermediate bodies, the world of culture and research and, more generally, all interested citizens. The 2021-23 Plan is divided into 6 axes, which correspond to the 6 programme points of the Next Generation Europe programme and the 6 missions of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. The axes are in turn divided into 24 strategies and 111 concrete and punctual actions. (Source: Metropolitan City of Turin)

In the Brno Metropolitan Area, the importance of the strategic document, the Integrated Development Strategy of the BMA for 2021-2027, in the context of strategic planning is emphasised (the previous strategy was valid for 2014-2020). *It is one complex, unique, wide-range document at the metropolitan level. By continuous integrated strategic planning, BMA aims to develop itself into a pleasant and prosperous place to live in a sustainable and balanced way. The themes of*



the strategy are grouped into four development areas: mobility, environment, public services, and development coordination (Brno City Municipality).

4.2.5. Focus of the cooperation and dialogue

The areas of activity of metropolitan institutions presented in the previous part of the report showed the multitude of spheres in which metropolitan institutions are involved, implementing statutory prerogatives or projects aimed at broadly understood improvement of the quality of life in metropolitan areas. Inevitably, the implementation of such activities requires dialogue between metropolitan actors. It is worth looking at what this dialogue looks like, whether it is aimed at repairing or developing the problematic domain, and whether it is aimed at the present or future solution.

present vs future character of dialogue

Most metropolitan structures participating in the project indicated that the metropolitan dialogue focuses on both activities aimed at improving the current situation and future development. In this respect, it was often emphasised that such situation derived from the nature of the work of metropolitan institutions, which diagnose the existing situation and plan future development activities on its basis. Among the studied metropolitan structures, only the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg indicated that the dialogue and the actions resulting from it are clearly future-oriented. At the same time, the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg emphasised that the perception of currently occurring changes and processes might be dominant (*The planning horizon is about ten years ahead, at least, but current challenges might be dominant*).

Generally, it can be concluded that most actions made by metropolitan actors begin with fixing current problems, which will result in development processes to achieve positive changes in the future.

repairment vs development character of dialogue

The project participants approached issues related to focusing the dialogue on repairment and development in a more diverse way. The dominant statements indicated that metropolitan activities concentrate on both repairment and development, but these statements were not so prevalent (as in the present-future dimension).

In two cases - the Ostrava metropolitan area and the Stuttgart metropolitan area - the developmental nature of activities, and the metropolitan dialogue leading to them, were strongly emphasised. In the Ostrava MA, in the context of the possibility of implementing the ITI mechanism, it was stated that *EU-funded projects should lead to fundamental change and development, not only to repair the current state*. In this case, funds from ITI mechanisms became a kind of game changer for the metropolitan area and enabled development activities. In the case of the VRS and WRS (Stuttgart Region), it was explicitly stated that these are structures *focused on development through mutual cooperation with the 5 counties and 179 municipalities and various other stakeholders*. Such a statement also emphasizes the importance of dialogue and trust. This approach shapes and maintains social capital between metropolitan actors/institutions.

The GZM Metropolis approaches the dialogue regarding repairment and development activities interestingly, emphasizing the short period of existence of its institution and pointing out that the



repairing measures were related to taking over tasks previously carried out by other regional entities. Only after correcting them was it possible to initiate dialogue and actions aimed at development.

In general, metropolitan dialogue concerning the development or repairment of metropolitan problems can be summarized as an approach focusing on future development. However, the dialogue and the resulting development actions as a starting point must concern current issues. Yet, simply focusing on current affairs is not in the nature of metropolitan institutions.

4.2.6. Character of dialogue/decision-making mechanism

By nature, stakeholders operating in metropolitan areas often present different perspectives on specific issues during metropolitan dialogue. Metropolitan dialogue is, therefore, a constant search for consensus. So how do the project partners perceive the issue of consensual vs conflictual character of metropolitan dialogue?

consensual vs conflictual character of dialogue

Metropolitan dialogue from the MECOG-CE partners' perspective is considered rather positively as primarily consensual. All studied metropolitan structures emphasise the ability to reach consensus during metropolitan dialogue. It could be explained by the nature of the project partners' structures, which such dialogue provided or initiated. Their experiences as crucial metropolitan actors allow for emphasising the dialogue's consensual character.

Sometimes, there is also a conflict potential in the metropolitan dialogue. The conflictual character of the dialogue may result from various reasons: differences of interests between the local and state levels (Berlin-Brandenburg MA), different points of view represented by representatives of political parties present in metropolitan institutions (Stuttgart MA) or differences of interests between individual municipalities participating in the metropolitan dialogue located in metropolitan areas (GZM Metropolis, Metropolitan City of Turin). In this case, the diverse interests of individual municipalities may result from several conditions: urban or rural character, size relating to both the number of inhabitants and the area of the municipality, central or peripheral location in the metropolitan area. However, metropolitan dialogue allows for neutralising differences and reaching consensus. Clearly defined goals help to achieve it. In this context, the existence of strategic documents clearly setting out these goals and action priorities is essential. The conflictual dimension of dialogue is more often revealed during the participatory creation of strategic documents. In other situations, consensual forms of dialogue related to carrying out specific activities dominate from their adoption through the operation and implementation of projects.

bilateralism vs multilateralism

The decision-making mechanism/dialogue can take the form of either the dominance of bilateral relations (or coalitions) between municipalities in conflict or those with joint problems or of the broader cooperation involving all or majority of municipalities of metropolitan areas necessary to think about common challenges in the future.

The information obtained from the representatives of metropolitan areas clearly shows that many partners (including municipalities) are involved in the dialogue and subsequent activities.



Therefore, the multilateral approach to metropolitan dialogue dominates. This situation is well illustrated by a statement from the GZM Metropolis Matrix: *41 communes associated in one organism, one institution, means that the nature of the dialogue will prevalingly be multilateral.*

However, a bilateral dialogue and activities are also present in the metropolitan areas participating in the project. Two situations favour bilateral relations and dialogue. Firstly, the implementation of ITI projects in which a smaller number of municipalities were involved. It was evident in the 2014-2020 financial perspective among municipalities associated in the Association of Municipalities and Counties of Central Subregion of the Silesia Region. In those years, ITI projects were most often implemented by agreements of at most a few municipalities from Upper Silesian metropolitan area. In the current perspective, projects of ITI instrument must be implemented by a more significant number of partners, and it can be assumed that multilateral dialogue will also be more frequent in the case of ITI projects. Secondly, bilateral relations connect municipalities of a similar scale and joint problems. Hence, such relationships are more common among rural communes located on the periphery of metropolitan areas (Upper Silesian metropolitan area, the Turin metropolitan area). This situation can be treated as a form of opposition to the visible domination of larger municipalities. The risk of excessive domination of large cities within metropolitan areas was also mentioned (Stuttgart MA). Therefore, the challenge for metropolitan areas is to maintain a balance in relations between municipalities of different sizes and potential (population, economic, cultural, etc.). Keeping the balance fosters multilateral forms of metropolitan dialogue.

transactionality vs shared metropolitan interest

Considering the information presented earlier, it is not surprising that in the metropolitan areas studied in the project, forms of dialogue oriented towards the shared metropolitan interest are dominant. Transactional forms of dialogue are rare, because, as noted by the MECOG-CE partners from the Berlin-Brandenburg MA, in the metropolitan context, *the planning philosophy focuses on a shared metropolitan interest*. This statement can also be applied to the forms of dialogue and activities in other metropolitan areas participating in the project. The good exemplifications in this matter are information included in the Matrices of the Brno Metropolitan Area and the GZM Metropolis: *The dialogue/decision-making mechanism predominantly relies on shared metropolitan interest among metropolitan stakeholders who have similar goals (BMA). The basis of GZM's foundation make it obvious that it is the shared metropolitan interest, which is the ground of the dialogue and the decision-making mechanism. However, transactionality cannot be excluded (GZM Metropolis).*

The presence of a transactional nature was most strongly emphasised in implementing ITI projects, especially those coordinated by the Association of Municipalities and Counties of Central Subregion of the Silesia Region.

direct/personal vs indirect communication between actors

Metropolitan dialogue can take different forms. Sometimes, dialogue may be direct, even informal, or, on the other hand, indirect, in extreme cases involving the exchange of formal correspondence. The latter form was mentioned only in the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg, but at the same time, it emphasised the existence of other forms of relations between metropolitan stakeholders, e.g. formal meetings. In the remaining metropolitan structures



participating in the project, both forms of dialogue were mentioned (Brno Metropolitan Area, GZM Metropolis, Metropolitan City of Turin) or the dominance of direct relations between representatives of metropolitan institutions was indicated. In this context, the role of official meetings related to the functioning of managing institutions at the metropolitan level was pointed out:

- The regional assembly and its committees are the main and official communication platforms (Stuttgart Region Association).
- The Steering Committee and Working Groups are based on personal meetings and communication (Brno and Ostrava Metropolitan Areas).
- Each meeting of the Assembly is preceded by a meeting of its representatives, where the communication is doubtlessly direct. The formal meetings of the Assembly are also direct and the communication during them is direct (GZM Metropolis).

The role of informal meetings accompanying formal ones or those held during conferences or seminars organized by metropolitan institutions was also repeatedly emphasised.

Therefore, the information obtained from the project partners shows that regardless of the degree of formalisation of metropolitan structures, a constant dialogue between various institutions operating in metropolitan areas exists. Despite the differences in interests, this dialogue usually ends with reaching an agreement and implementing specific activities included in the project forms. Importantly, in most cases, the metropolitan interest is taken into account. The relationships between stakeholders are much more often direct than indirect. In the first case, forms of informal relationships are also present.

At the end of this part of the report, the example of Berlin-Brandenburg is worth mentioning. The metropolitan institutions indicated by the project partner very well demonstrate the different logics of dialogue and action in structures with political power and those that operate as voluntary associations. In the former, formal relations dominate, and the dialogue itself is conflictual due to the differences in the interests of individual stakeholders (especially those representing different levels of government: local vs national authorities). Although the common metropolitan interest is present during various meetings of metropolitan stakeholders, reaching an agreement that builds the shared metropolitan interest is not always possible. A different logic of action occurs in those forms of dialogue that originate from the activities of metropolitan associations. Such is the Municipal Neighbourhood Forum. Informal relations dominate here. Discussions, events, and research are organized and aimed at the common goal of developing concepts, expert contributions and proposed solutions for the core of the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan area. The network itself is open. The agency (in the political sense) of this form of action is probably lower. Still, the satisfaction from a successful action - even carried out on a micro-scale - is undoubtedly more significant than in the case of more formalized structures. It can be reasonably assumed that similar situations, although not identified in the Matrices of metropolitan areas participating in the project, are also present in their areas. Generally, it must be emphasised that associations without real political power are more consensual, but they can mostly deal with matters where consensus is possible. However, institutions with political power and the ability to impose some decisions provide the opportunity to solve difficult problems where voluntary agreement may never be achieved.



4.2.7. Cooperation and dialogue results and empowerment

The last characterisation of the metropolitan dialogue process refers to its effects on the metropolitan area. Two dimensions were taken into account here: operationality as opposed to the visionary of the implemented activities and reference to the process of strengthening metropolitan structures (institutionalisation) as opposed to the implementation of project activities.

operationality vs visionary

In the dimension of operationality vs visionary, the institutions participating in the project were exceptionally consistent. In each case, these two dimensions occur together as effects of metropolitan dialogue. Such a situation is a result, on the one hand, of the functionality of metropolitan institutions that deal with current activities in accordance with their tasks. On the other hand, it results from recent strategic documents relating to the future. This regularity is well illustrated by the entry from the Matrix prepared by the Brno Metropolitan Area, which even estimates the percentage of activities related to operability and visionary aspects: *Strategy includes both long term visionary strategic projects (some require a change of law) and projects ready for implementation. 70% visionary vs 30% operational.* The focus on the vision for the future of the metropolitan area is also clearly defined by the VRS. The 2035 agenda as *a joint vision for the region* is essential for this structure.

institutionalisation vs project-based nature

The result of metropolitan dialogue defined as institutionalisation was more often indicated in those metropolises whose key institutions have statutory prerogatives for their operation (GZM Metropolis, VRS and WRS from Stuttgart MA, Turin MA) or are firmly located in state structures (Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg). Inevitably, the high level institutionalization of dialogue leads to higher level of formalization of metropolitan institutions. This is how the GZM Metropolis describes the process: *Most of the results of cooperation and dialogue are based on institutionalisation. The GZM needs to follow the National Act and therefore fulfil the tasks included therein.* The situation is similar in other metropolitan areas, which operate according to specific metropolitan laws.

Those metropolitan areas focused on implementing projects under the ITI mechanism more often describe the results of metropolitan dialogue as project-focused. However, even in such a situation, elements of institutionalisation are not avoided or even postulated. This statement is most clearly articulated by the Brno Metropolitan Area representatives, who also estimate their institutionalisation and project-based dialogue results: *30% institutionalisation, 70% project-based nature. There are attempts to institutionalise metropolitan cooperation (this requires a change in legislation). Meanwhile, cooperation is based on stakeholders' initiatives to pursue metropolitan ventures and projects via ITI further.*

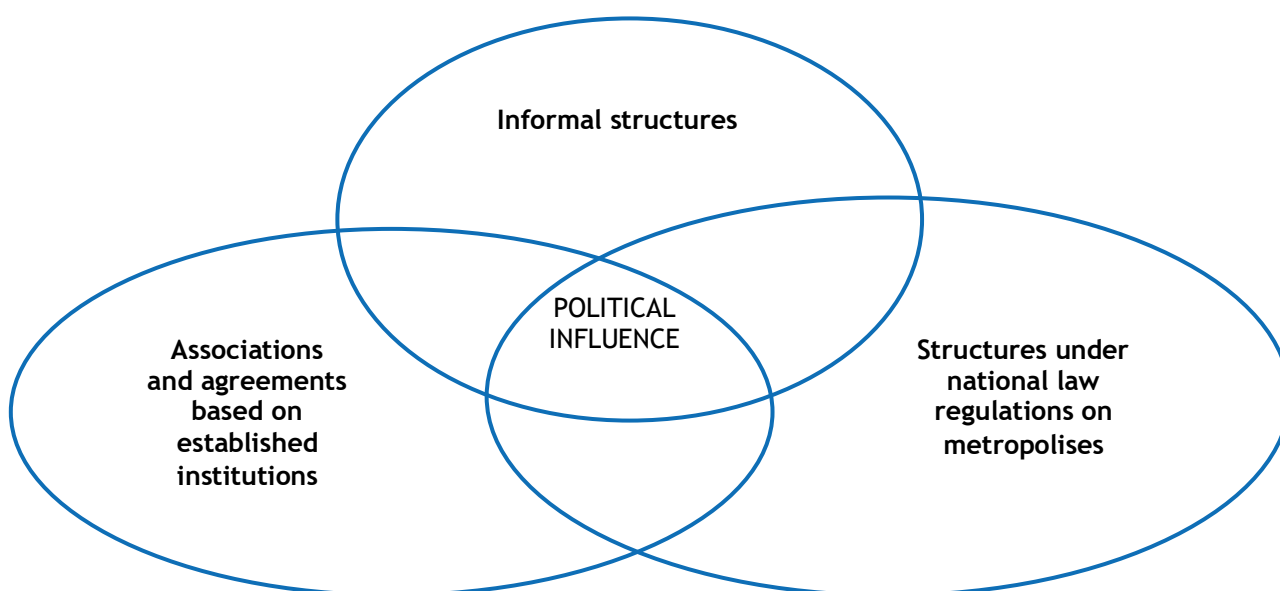
Regardless of the degree of institutionalisation, it is important that the institutions operating in metropolitan areas and the laws on which they work do not constitute an obstacle to effective metropolitan activities. The examples of good practices and projects presented in the next part of the report show that this is possible.

4.2.8. Conclusions

This part of the report concerned on metropolitan cooperation forms, structures, and dialogue spaces as components of a metropolitan governance system. After a detailed presentation of these problems, the following conclusions are formulated:

- The functioning of metropolitan areas depends on the duration of cooperation, national and regional agreements, and legal status. Three distinctive forms of cooperation and dialogue spaces can be identified (Figure 4). The first relates to a given structure's functioning under national regulations on metropolises. Such organisations adhere rigorously to specific provisions, are highly formalised, and depend on political relations. The second form concerns the functioning of associations and agreements with formerly established institutions, also legally binding. This group of spaces is slightly less formalised but requires a wide network of relations. The third form relies on informal structures that in some cases can overlap the two previously presented. These are spaces of dialogue whose boundaries are difficult to clearly define. In the first two cases, it is possible to determine the number of municipalities and of other metropolitan institutions/entities involved in cooperation and their budgets. However, in the third case, cooperation may take place on the basis of completely spontaneous, ad hoc initiatives. Often, hard spaces of cooperation with a clear influence on political decisions overlap with soft spaces of cooperation without such an influence.

Figure 4. Three forms of cooperation and dialogue spaces



Source: own elaboration

- The development of the metropolitan space of cooperation and dialogue usually takes place in two ways, on an evolutionary basis, and then may become formalised, which can mean a revolution in action. It is often supported by a national law, considered as a dual process, which entails receiving a financial support, but also dealing with the imposition of political goals.



- The main actors of the emergence of metropolitan spaces of cooperation and dialogue are both political and non-political ones/associated structures. This is often connected with the functioning of additional committees and bodies supporting the operation of a given structure. These internal divisions may be formal in nature, but there are also advisory committees with no formal status. Moreover, residents are also involved in metropolitan cooperation through all kinds of consultations. The added value of the functioning of such cooperation structures is the democratisation of the metropolitan governance process by increasing the influence of residents on decision-making. In this way, metropolitan citizenship and the subjectivity of residents are strengthened. Following social expectations favours the emergence of a sense of attachment to the metropolitan area. Moreover, the political structures of the metropolitan areas gain legitimacy.
- By their nature, metropolitan areas are complex structures in many respects: spatial, demographic, social, economic, administrative, etc. Hence, the spheres of activities undertaken in these areas are also diverse. Looking at the studied metropolitan areas, one fundamental dimension that differentiates how metropolitan structures engage in the domains can be noticed. It is the form of institutionalisation of metropolitan cooperation. In a situation where metropolitan institutions function based on laws defining their prerogatives, their areas of operation entail prescribed responsibilities, and as a result, activities are complex. This is the case of the GZM Metropolis (Upper Silesian MA), Stuttgart Region, and the Metropolitan City of Turin. However, it does not mean that metropolitan institutions do not take action in other areas; it depends on their choice, ability to act, and perception of potentially important fields of intervention. Therefore, these are often single-point and more fragmented actions. Another category consists of metropolitan areas covered by the institutions coordinating the ITI projects. In this case, there are many spheres of action. Sometimes metropolitan structures activity focuses on coordinating projects undertaken by groups of municipalities located in the metropolitan area. Such engagement results from the logic of the ITI instrument. This is the case of the Brno, Ostrava, and Warsaw MAs. The Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan structures constitute a particular case. They can be called institutions mediating between the municipal and state levels, but also between two federal states empowered with legislative competences. Despite the differences mentioned above, they all represent a form of institutionalisation of metropolitan cooperation, as opposed to the case of some other countries (e.g. Hungary) where neither of these forms exists.
- Among the MECOG-CE partners' areas of activity, four are the most common. These are regional development, transport (or, more broadly, mobility), spatial planning, international cooperation, energy and activities related to culture and cultural heritage. It does not mean that other domains are unimportant, but that metropolitan mobility system, spatial planning and regional development could be named as a "Big 3" of metropolitan issues. These issues are complex according to laws and institutional, organisational, and financial frameworks. In institutionalised metropolitan areas, their organisation is the prerogative of metropolitan structures. In the remaining cases, it is supported by the implementation of specific projects. However, everywhere, it is the subject of metropolitan discussion.
- Metropolitan dialogue is most often focused on the future and fostering development. However, its foundation lies in a thorough examination of the current diagnosis of specific issues.



- The MECOG-CE partners emphasised the consensual, multilateral forms of dialogues, which are concentrated on the shared metropolitan interest. Such a perspective manifests that different forms of metropolitan cooperation and metropolitan dialogue are rather effective. But, some conflictual factors can also be indicated. Three of them are most visible: differences of interests between the local, metropolitan and state levels, different points of view of representatives of political parties present in metropolitan institutions and differences of interests between individual municipalities participating in the metropolitan dialogue. It should be emphasised that in a democratic system, expressing different perspectives on critical issues is obvious. Therefore, effective forms of dialogue in metropolitan areas fulfil their role as forms of reaching consensus.
- The effects of metropolitan dialogue in each case are focused on an operational and visionary character. This issue is similar in the case of the institutional and project dimensions. What differs is the emphasis on these dimensions in individual metropolitan areas. It can be noticed that the results of metropolitan dialogue largely depend on the legal basis of metropolitan structures. Where they operate based on dedicated acts, the results of their activities more often focus on institutionalisation and operationalisation, resulting from extensive bureaucratic structures. In other cases, they are more often projective and visionary in character. But, the difference lies in an emphasis on particular effects of metropolitan dialogue, because both forms of results (operational and visionary) are present.



4.3. Best tools and practices identified in the project MAs

This part of the report concentrates on the analysis of examples of good practices identified by the MECOG-CE project partners representing Central European metropolitan areas, which result from the established forms of metropolitan cooperation and governance. The selected tools and initiatives are examined with regard to major contemporary challenges, but also innovative value of different initiatives in specific regional context. Furthermore, it outlines chances and potential barriers to the transfer of a selected group of practices into other metropolitan areas. The objective is to support the metropolitan network and community, by bringing together all flagship initiatives involved in metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces within the MECOG-CE consortium to be able to enhance them together, develop partnerships, share resources and experiences, and build capacity.

The following analysis of best tools and practices for enhancing metropolitan cooperation identified in the MECOG-CE partner metropolitan areas consists of three dimensions:

1. Main thematic domains of the identified good tools and practices with regard to challenges and opportunities specific for Central European MAs;
2. Present-future orientation and innovative aspect of best tools and practices;
3. Potential for transferability with regard to process- and project-orientation of best tools and practices.

The first phase of data analysis aimed to collect, order, and categorize different identified types of tools and best practices in the partner metropolitan areas. In order to meet this objective, the MECOG-CE partners were asked to fill in the research tool (Matrix) on the basis of their knowledge and expertise on cooperation between municipalities in their respective areas. As a result, there were seven matrices provided from the following partners:

- City of Brno (Czechia),
- GZM Metropolis (Poland),
- Metropolitan City of Turin (Italy),
- Stuttgart Region Association (Germany),
- City of Warsaw (Poland),
- Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin Brandenburg (Germany),
- City of Ostrava (Czechia).

In the initial stage of the study process, there were 44 best tools and practices gathered with the use of the Matrix. However, in the effort to obtain the broadest scope of different initiatives, due to the data verification and clarifications provided at the transnational meeting in Warsaw (19-20 October 2023) by the partners, finally, there were 47 examples of good practices identified.



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

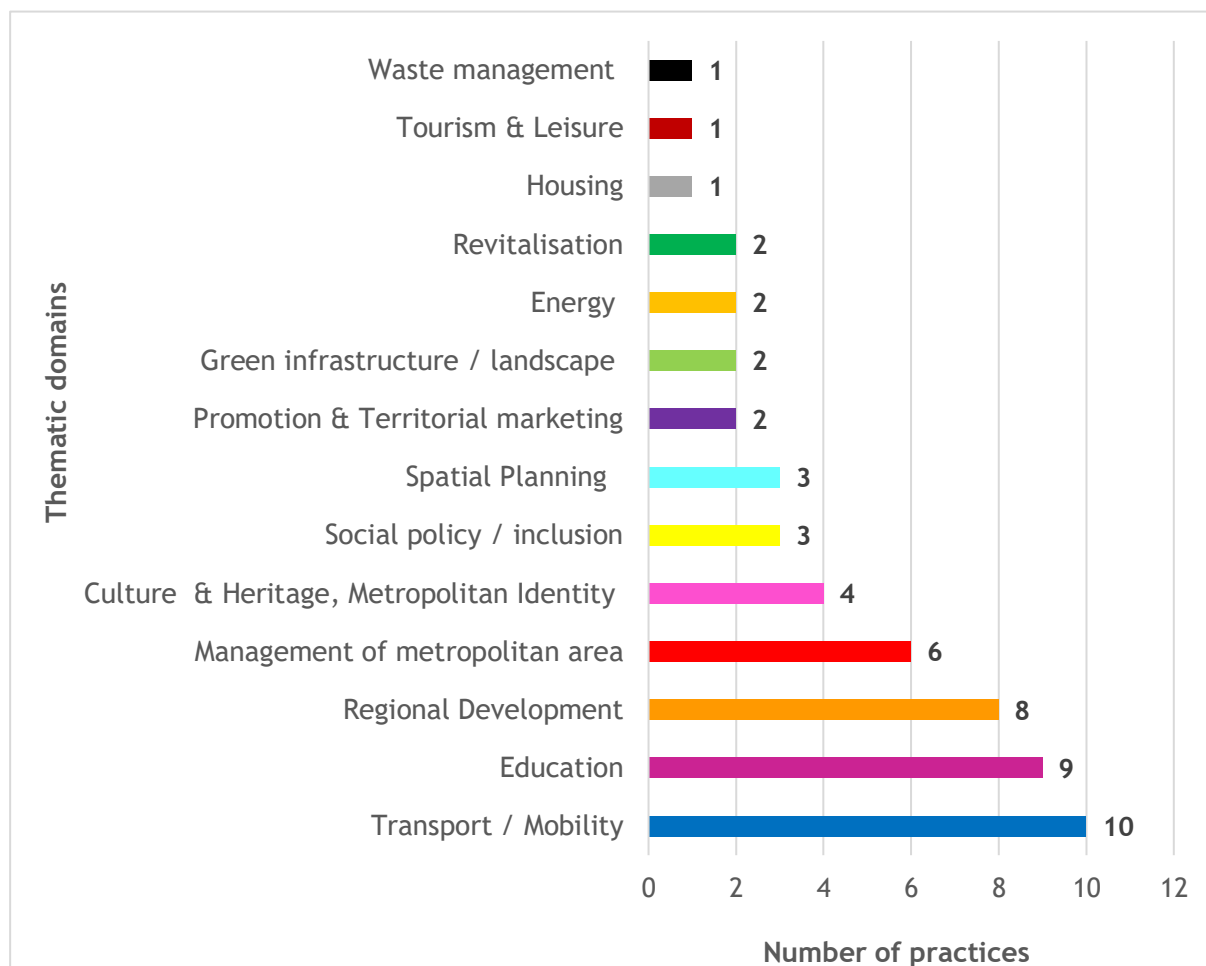
The 47 tools and best practices collected among the MECOG-CE project partners representing seven Central European metropolitan areas are regarded as flagship projects or activities that could be shortlisted for further examination and possible testing in study clusters in the following phase of the project (WP2).⁷ The thematic domains reflect a wide array of competences and areas of intervention/action of the metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces and structures. They cover most of, but not all, 15 fields of intervention enlisted in the Matrix. The reason for that is that the tools and practices defined as best were selected based on the internal, and deliberate, evaluation process of each partner organisation, which favours a bottom-up validation in line with the objectives of the MECOG-CE project, enhancing and promoting cooperation and governance at the metropolitan scale. The presented practices evolved from the following metropolitan cooperation and dialogue spaces described in the Matrix:

- Berlin-Brandenburg Metropolitan Area:
 - Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg
 - Berlin-Brandenburg Transport Association, VBB
 - Municipal Neighbourhood Forum, KNF
 - Overall strategic framework for the Berlin-Brandenburg Capital Region
- Brno Metropolitan Area:
 - no separate and formal structure of the metropolitan governance exists (voluntary cooperation of municipalities of the area implementing the ITI instrument)
- Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area:
 - GZM Metropolis
 - Association of Municipalities and Powiats of the Central Subregion of the Silesia Region implementing the ITI instrument
- Ostrava Metropolitan Area:
 - no separate and formal structure of the metropolitan governance exists (voluntary cooperation of municipalities of the area implementing the ITI instrument)
- Stuttgart Region:
 - Stuttgart Region Association, VRS
 - Stuttgart Region Economic Development Corporation, WRS
 - Stuttgart Transport and Tariff Association, VVS
- Turin Metropolitan Area
 - Metropolitan City of Turin
- Warsaw Metropolitan Area:
 - “Warsaw Metropolis” Association
 - Integrated Territorial Investments for the Warsaw Functional Area 2014-2020+

The selected best tools and practices refer to 14 main thematic domains that are exemplified hereunder. The majority of the domains were described thoroughly in the previous part of the report. Figure 5 shows the repartition of the identified initiatives according to 14 main thematic fields.

⁷ The list of all identified best tools and practices can be found in [Appendix 1](#) of the report.

Figure 5. Thematic domains of best tools and practices



Source: own elaboration

Among the most prevalent thematic areas addressed by the practices, there are: Transport / Mobility, Education, widely perceived Regional Development and Management of metropolitan area, mostly of strategic character, as an additional category that emerged in the analysis of collected data. Next, less present, there are the domains related to Culture & Heritage, Metropolitan Identity, Social policy / inclusion, Spatial planning, Promotion and territorial marketing, Green infrastructure / landscape, Energy and Revitalisation. Single indications concerned Housing, Tourism & Leisure and Waste management. It should be emphasised that the thematic categories are not entirely mutually exclusive, as there are practices of cross-cutting character, in the case of which the accent was put by the partner metropolitan area on a certain model of work, design or conceptual process, or type of project implementation, such as the *Prototyping Academies* (GZM Metropolis) or the *Overall strategic framework* (Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg), encompassing different elements of sustainable regional development. Such practices can be classified in more than one category based on their complex and multidimensional field of action.

Prototyping Academies (GZM Metropolis, Upper Silesian MA):

The practice relies on a co-creative design thinking process for finding and testing solutions to various urban challenges, including users' needs, research and analysis, and spatial prototyping. Prototyping Academies tackle challenges related to, e.g., spatial planning, mobility, or environmental protection issues. Prototyping Academies function over a period of time including 1-2 months of conceptual works and several weeks for the implementation process. Once the prototype is introduced, the validation period lasts several months. It is then evaluated and decided whether the tested solution requires introducing changes or whether it shall be implemented as a long-term solution. (Source: GZM Metropolis)

Overall strategic framework (Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg):

The tool has a form of a “living document”, flexible for further updates. It formulates goals for the development of the capital region in this decade, creates a uniform framework for ongoing projects, launches new projects and strengthens interdepartmental links between the projects. It is developed in an administrative dialogue and with online participation of civil society strengthening its legitimization and the awareness of the capital region as a proper field of action. The framework covers the cooperation of two states of Berlin and Brandenburg in 8 thematic fields of action with approx. 60 projects: settlement development and housing; mobility; economy, skilled workers, energy and climate protection; civic engagement, media and promotion of democracy; natural resources and quality of life; digital transformation; science, research, culture and education; openness to the world, international networking and cooperation with Poland. (Source: Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin Brandenburg)

When it comes to the territorial origin of the practices, there is a diversity of solutions selected as flagship across partner metropolitan areas in Central Europe. No uniform pattern of territorial repartition exists. However, the examined MAs in Italy and Germany (especially Berlin-Brandenburg) opted for more strategic and processual approach in terms of sustainable mobility, spatial planning, regional development, and bottom-up or participatory metropolitan management model, which they shared as best practices. This can be regarded as an expression of the need to optimise mature or relatively long functioning governance structures and practices towards grass-roots and less formalised or rigid forms of cooperation. In Czechia and Poland, most of the transport or metropolitan management related tools and initiatives (the two most numerous thematic categories overall), were developed with the use of the Integrated Territorial Investment instrument (ITI). In this case, the processual and strategic approach to practices can be perceived as a sign of compensation for the lack of strong institutional framework of the metropolitan area (except the GZM Metropolis). This supports the idea of the ITI being a window of opportunity for the development and enhancement of metropolitan cooperation, especially in the post-socialist countries with the weaker institutionalisation of metropolitan governance or where the competences of the metropolitan institution are not fully or adequately adjusted to the needs of a given area.

In Czechia and Poland, the ITI was also an important base for funding initiatives falling under the category of cultural dimension of metropolisation (Culture & heritage, metropolitan identity; Promotion & Territorial marketing), beyond institutional and functional dimensions. This category mainly consists of “soft measures”, aiming at enhancing and promoting awareness of a metropolitan area, creating foundation for territorial attachment, identity and coherence or togetherness in order to build and reinforce mutual trust between municipalities of a metropolitan

area, and the metropolitan way of thinking. These measures are targeted not only at political and economic elites, and authorities, but also at citizens and inhabitants, providing incentives for partnerships between municipalities of a metropolitan area, and lobbying for the larger metropolitan interest, instead of one's own or the municipality's one. In this sense, they counteract the so-called "municipal egoism" and contribute to the recognition of the metropolitan scale as an important dimension for the emergence of solutions improving the metropolitan inhabitants' living conditions. This cluster of practices also entails an entire system of communication and visual identity, as elements of symbolic culture, conveying images, representations and values of the metropolitan space, as well as its political and social structure.

Metropolitan governance and cooperation cannot fully exist without the democratic values of active citizen participation in the decision-making processes (citizen-centric governments, inclusive metropolises). The best practices from the cultural dimension also entail a participatory approach to building metropolitan governance structures, e.g. direct elections to metropolitan governing bodies (real citizen representation), social consultations, metropolitan citizens' budget, or the creation of advisory bodies, such as the citizens' councils or assemblies. Moreover, this dimension includes reaching out to citizens and promoting the metropolitan area as a common, "our own" space offering valuable life opportunities. It relates to making it attractive for business, work, education, and recreation, also by means of various technological tools enabling greater participation (e.g. online consultation and polling platforms), emotional arousal and creativity.

Directly elected Assembly (Stuttgart Region):

Directly elected Assembly of the Stuttgart Region was established in 1994 (in line with the foundation of VRS) as an innovation. The Assembly has at least 80 and at most 96 honorary members, elected by universal suffrage for five years. The city of Stuttgart and the five counties of the Region form the electoral constituencies for the election of the Assembly. Direct elections provide the authorities of the Stuttgart Region with democratic legitimacy for their actions and ensure discussions, debates, and decisions at the metropolitan level. (*Source: Stuttgart Region Association*)

Emotional map of metropolitan area within cultural dimension of cooperation (Brno MA):

Emotional map for citizens of BMA is a tool that serves to mark places in BMA of special interests to residents (places they like or where they are missing something etc.). Their responses are evaluated. The tool is used during the promotional events, such as exhibitions and conferences. (*Source: Brno City Municipality*)

MetroLab (GZM Metropolis, Upper Silesian MA):

It is a physical space that serves as an intermediary between the metropolis and its residents. Through participation in various activities, such as lectures, workshops, meetings, and debates, residents can learn about the GZM's activities and how they contribute to improving their quality of life and opportunities. MetroLab is also a place for engaging in participatory actions related to Metropolis projects. This space is jointly operated by the city of Katowice and the GZM Metropolis. (*Source: GZM Metropolis*)

The nuanced and interesting insights regarding thematic domains are brought when compared with the major challenges for metropolitan areas in Central Europe, explored together by the project partners in the first phase of the research process and described in the report by Luděk Sýkora and Alžběta Rychnovská (Charles University) in the framework of Activity 1.1 (Deliverable 1.1.1.

Identification of challenges specific for central European MAs). The identified challenges and opportunities include different thematic, as well as organizational and procedural issues, enlisted in the table below. There are also 4 practices gathered, which did not refer directly to any challenge articulated by the project participants in the previous stage of the analytical process. These are mostly soft instruments and initiatives representing the cultural dimension of the metropolisation, addressing the challenge of stimulating the metropolitan awareness or consciousness (Brno Metropolitan Area, Warsaw Metropolitan Area).

Table 2. Best tools and practices responding to challenges for metropolitan areas in Central Europe

a/ Challenges: thematic issues	No of corresponding practices - opportunities
1. Sustainable mobility	10
2. Lack of trust and cooperation among MA members (mindset, organisational culture)	9
3. Social inequality	9
4. Metropolitan economies (innovation, metropolitan functions, engines of national prosperity)	5
5. Cultural diversity	3
6. Climate change (environmental issues)	2
7. Green transition	2
8. Spatial planning	2
9. Urban and rural areas cooperation	2
10. Population change (young population outflow, aging population etc.)	2
11. Deindustrialization	1
12. Suburbanization and urban sprawl	1
13. Housing (housing availability and affordability)	1
14. International partnerships and knowledge-sharing (demonstration of good practices and success stories)	1

b/ Challenges: organizational and procedural issues	No of corresponding practices - opportunities
1. Weak institutional framework form MA - insufficiently defined metropolitan tasks, the lack of competences, budgets, formal instruments for planning at the metropolitan level (top-down approach)	5
2. Optimising governance structures and practices (e.g. bottom-up approach)	5
3. Implementation of European instruments, Cohesion Policy of the EU and ITI	17

The objective of the juxtaposition of the challenges and opportunities with the selected practices in a given thematic domain was to analyse to what extent those practices could address or bring solutions to the commonly perceived problems faced by the partner metropolitan areas. The practices described by the partner MAs as flagship most often addressed the issue of sustainable mobility (N=10), paying special attention to transport services, their management, coordination and integration into one smooth system towards more user-friendly and need-adapted approach. The selected projects also aimed at the improvement of the transport infrastructure, such as the renovated tracks, or the modernization of the fleet with low-emission and zero-emission vehicles (ITI, Ostrava Metropolitan Area). The suggested solutions ranged from single projects, such as the simplification of the ticket zones in the Stuttgart Region, to *Urban Sustainable Mobility Plan* (PUMS) as a certain concept work in the Metropolitan City of Turin, to more complex regulatory frames of the Berlin-Brandenburg Transport Association (VBB) or the overall “metropolitan approach” to mobility in the Brno Metropolitan Area.

Such significance put upon sustainable mobility is not surprising, considering that metropolitan areas face huge commuter flows between urban cores and their hinterlands as an effect of growing urbanization, the physical expansion of cities and the suburbanization. This aspect was also described in part 4.2.4 of the report. Metropolitan regions and areas typically emerge as transport nodes of European and national importance, which stresses a need for smooth and sustainable mobility. Interestingly, it corresponds with the identification of environmental issues as major challenge articulated by the MECOG-CE partners, as well as in the context of global and EU aspirations in the field of the environment, supporting clean and sustainable transport, which plays an important role in achieving climate neutrality and sustainable development (European Council. Council of the European Union, *Clean and sustainable mobility...*, 2024). Even if among other thematic issues, climate change and green transition were not so much addressed by the selected practices (only 4 practices), but together with the mobility issue, they form quite a prominent field of metropolitan action, where a rich pool of various solutions developed by the MECOG-CE partners can be found.

What the analysis of best tools and practices in this dimension shows vividly is that the two other essential pillars of sustainable development - the social and economic ones - meet with less attention from the project partners. The problems of economic growth and transformation, metropolitan economies (metropolitan innovation and competitiveness), as well as social inequality, cultural diversity or population change, were addressed by smaller number of selected flagship practices. Among them, there are very diverse initiatives focused on the enhancement of



human capital, from a bunch of rather small-scale projects (the use of ITI) in the field of education, training or career and vocational counselling, to huge infrastructural and cultural investments, such as the *Dolní Vítkovice area* (Ostrava Metropolitan Area).

With regard to the social and economic pillars, there should also be a distinction made between the projects aimed at economic development and growth, including those developing competences or acquiring labour force through the adaptation of migrants, and the projects fighting the side effects of growth, i.e. inequality and exclusion. The economic dimension related to growth is stressed in practices referring to models and networks of cooperation in the field of artificial intelligence and automotive and mechanical engineering (Stuttgart Region). The social sphere of counteracting inequalities and fragmentation is more expressed in initiatives, such as the *Community social worker* (*Operatore sociale di comunità*) in the Metropolitan City of Turin.

All in all, even if the challenges of social inequality and cultural diversity were rarely mentioned by the partners as crucial, and those of metropolitan economy almost unarticulated in the MECOG-CE project surveys, there were quite a few interesting, albeit very diverse in terms of the scope of action and scale, best practices proposed corresponding to these problem areas. The examples are presented below.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) (Stuttgart Region):

The AI Alliance aims to create an internationally competitive and visible center and ecosystem for artificial intelligence (AI) for the development of new applications of artificial intelligence in companies, research institutions, and the public sector in Baden-Württemberg. This will be achieved by strengthening regional resources and competencies in Baden-Württemberg through a decentralised, cooperative and polycentric approach for the support of future technologies: “multiple locations - one concept”. In real contact points and experimentation rooms, the competencies and value chains of all alliance partners become accessible and available to customers. (Source: *Stuttgart Region Association*)

Gigabit Region Stuttgart (Stuttgart Region):

Gigabit Region Stuttgart GmbH is a joint company of the Economic Development Region Stuttgart GmbH, the state capital Stuttgart and the five districts of Böblingen, Esslingen, Göppingen, Ludwigsburg and Rems-Murr, initiated in 2019. It controls broadband expansion in the Stuttgart region, coordinates cooperation with the telecommunications industry and promotes smart region applications. The company sees itself as a service provider for the facilities in the state capital and the five districts as well as for all municipalities in the expansion of fast internet in the region. It provides know-how and a central pool of experts for the districts and municipalities in the region. In 2018, only 2.3% of households had access to broadband Internet, and by 2022, that number had risen to 24.8%. The goal is to reach 50% of all households, schools, and industrial areas in the Region with access to broadband internet by 2025. (Source: *Stuttgart Region Association*)

Closer to the labour market - Integrated Educational and Vocational Advisory System ITI (Warsaw MA):

The aim of the project was to improve key competences among 4,450 students from 71 schools with junior high school classes in the ITI WFA area in terms of creating an educational and professional career path and improving the labour market orientation. Thus, thanks to the implementation of activities in the area of development and quality improvement, the employability of former students increased. (Source: *City of Warsaw*)



Welcome Centre (Stuttgart Region):

It offers assistance to all new residents and people from abroad who wish to live and work in Stuttgart or the Stuttgart Region in order to ease the transition and integration process. The team provides information and advice on: entry and residence rules, job application, learning German, finding accommodation or childcare, etc. Since the lack of a skilled workforce cannot only be overcome by the Stuttgart Region's own population and migration from Germany, the stakeholders in Stuttgart joined forces to attract international workforce. (Source: Stuttgart Region Association)

Community social worker (Metropolitan City of Turin):

It is an initiative aiming at the introduction of professionals able to support the accessibility of social services to the local population in small and remote communities (mountain test areas). The initiative focuses on the creation and management of community-oriented service based on innovative and collaborative practices. The project links important healthcare issues with territorial development, resulting in reducing the depopulation of remote communities with a shortage of services. (Source: Metropolitan City of Turin).

The second most important group of practices (N=9), after the mobility-related ones, addresses the challenge defined by the MECOG-CE partners as a “lack of trust and cooperation among MA members”, which refers to the problem of weak social capital and the need for creating a specific “metropolitan mindset” or “metropolitan organisational culture”. In political dimension, it relates to the democratic legitimization of governance structures.⁸ From even broader perspective, this group of practices could also be connected with the cultural dimension of metropolisation, encompassing not only political projects such as the *Directly elected Regional Assembly* (Stuttgart Region), but also the widely perceived forms of cooperation of stakeholders, as within the framework of the ITI projects (Warsaw Metropolitan Area), the ITI integrated development strategy (Brno Metropolitan Area), and the Municipal Neighbourhood Forum's position papers, joint projects, studies and recommendations (Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg). As one of the major potential lies in the development of metropolitan cooperation itself, a considerably high number of practices in the field of education, regional development and management of metropolitan area testifies to the growing interest in different initiatives enhancing cooperation of metropolitan stakeholders towards building synergies of horizontal governance structures (e.g. Warsaw Metropolitan Area, Brno Metropolitan Area).

Among different thematic challenges, the least numerous addressed by the gathered practices were those related to deindustrialization, suburbanization and urban sprawl, housing, spatial planning, as well as international partnerships and knowledge-sharing. The last two issues constitute especially interesting examples as they were often mentioned by the MECOG-CE partners as major fields promoting the effectiveness of the metropolitan cooperation.

It is also worth noting that in several cases of best practices there are no clear responses to any metropolitan challenges identified or articulated by the MECOG-CE partners. This involves particularly initiatives developed in the framework of the ITI and concerning small-scale projects representing the cultural dimension of the metropolisation, e.g. competitions for schools on

⁸ It is worth noting that in some MAs, there are practices, such as the *Directly elected regional assembly* (Stuttgart Region), strengthening the democratic legitimization of the existing metropolitan governance structures. In other cases, namely the Metropolitan City of Turin, since the reform in 2014, replacing the former provinces with metropolitan cities, there is no direct election to the political bodies at the metropolitan level and, thus, only an indirect democratic legitimization exists.



metropolitan topics (Warsaw MA) or promotion of recreational sites in the metropolitan area (Brno MA).

Another separate, but large, group of practices addressed the organizational and procedural challenges (N=27), which referred to the process of management and institutionalisation of the metropolitan areas. This can be regarded as a positive response to the need of the development and enhancement of metropolitan cooperation, perceived as crucial by all Central European metropolitan areas involved in the MECOG-CE project. Some of the previously mentioned solutions to the thematic challenges were also included in the procedural category, namely the *Prototyping Academies* (GZM Metropolis, located in the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area) as a co-creative and multistakeholder design thinking process to prototype a solution, as well as the strategic plans or developmental frameworks acting as regulatory frames (Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg, Metropolitan City of Turin), as they englobe both dimensions. Furthermore, the recognised flagship projects spanned from the bottom-up and voluntary structures of cooperation, driven by joint interest, such as the *Municipal Neighbourhood Forum* (Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg), through soft instruments of surveying among mayors (Brno Metropolitan Area), to examples of directly elected political bodies at the metropolitan level, being the proof of a longer tradition of the metropolitan institutionalisation (*Directly elected Assembly of the Stuttgart Region*).

Within this group, there were also all practices referring to the use of ITI identified (N=17), because even in the less institutionalized metropolitan areas, notably Ostrava, Brno and Warsaw MAs, the metropolitan cooperation can actually happen, and is fostered, thanks to this instrument. The MECOG-CE partners reported it as an added value of every ITI-funded project regardless of the thematic scope. In many cases of the MECOG-CE partner areas, the selected best practices, even if addressing the organizational and procedural challenges in more pragmatic dimension (through cooperation in a given domain), can be perceived as optimising or even compensating measures for the lacking fully established top-down institutional framework, as well as for lacking instruments or competencies of the existing metropolitan governance structures in terms of specific areas of intervention, e.g. spatial planning, energy or transport management at the metropolitan level. The benefit of such initiatives is that they considerably support the development of inter-municipal collaboration, based on commonly defined goals, needs, and mutual trust. They have an impact on strengthening the social capital that leads to success of activities, their efficiency, effectiveness and coordination, and, above all, the socio-economic well-being and development of a community. In the context of metropolitan governance, it also allows for more effective efforts for establishing stronger metropolitan management institutions based on national legal regulations. A higher level of social trust provides more space for developing innovative solutions that determine the society's future.

4.3.2. Present-future orientation and innovative aspect of best tools and practices

The second dimension of the analysis of best tools and practices includes their orientation to the present or to the future with regard to the innovative aspect. The introduction of these categories stems from the modernization and social change theories which emphasize the role of the present and future orientation in the socio-economic development. For the purpose of the study, in the context of metropolitan areas and territorial development, the orientation to the present relates to the extent to which a given good practice or tool focuses on the repairment of or compensation for current problems, challenges and deficits encountered in the management of a metropolitan area. The future orientation relates to aspects connected with a focus of a given best practice or tool on being prospective, anticipating future challenges and preparing the basis for sustainable development. It should be noted that the division between present- and future-oriented practices is not entirely exclusive as activities focused on the present challenges definitely impact the future development of a given metropolitan area in particular sphere. Similarly, such a perspective was brought by the MECOG-CE project participants when determining the focus of the metropolitan cooperation and dialogue (see chapter 4.2). The future-oriented actions were mostly connected with a diagnosis of current problems.

16 out of 47 practices were defined as those that are clearly future-oriented. They belong to many thematic categories: from educational, promotional (territorial marketing), and tourist ones, to those related to energy, transport, green infrastructure / landscape, spatial planning, housing policy, broadly understood regional development and management of the metropolitan area. It is worth noting that future-oriented good practices rather consist of “soft” activities or measures, such as in the field of education or territorial marketing, and were reported slightly more often by metropolitan areas in Poland and Czechia, which is connected with the use of the ITI instrument.

The opposite tendency can be observed with regard to activities that require greater financial outlays and developed infrastructure resources. The selected practices involving more investments, both financial and infrastructural, were more often reported among metropolitan areas in Germany and Italy. This situation may be due to an advantage of these metropolitan areas relating to both material resources and the longer duration of more advanced and institutionalized metropolitan cooperation. The differences of similar nature associated with the approach to metropolitan challenges were observed by Luděk Sýkora and Alžběta Rychnovská in D.1.1.1. *Identification of challenges specific for Central European MAs.*

When it comes to the present-oriented category, there were 21 best practices identified. In this case, the thematic scope of activities is also very wide, similarly to those defined as future-oriented. However, two distinct groups of practices should be noted. The first group consists of the practices intended to strengthen human capital resources (knowledge, skills, abilities, etc.) through educational activities (e.g. Upper Silesian MA, Warsaw MA), but also by attracting qualified migrants (*Welcome Center*, Stuttgart Region). The second category of practices is aimed at organising public transport, improving its efficiency and introducing sustainable solutions (e.g. Stuttgart Region, Ostrava MA).

Moreover, 10 practices were defined as “in-between” - focused on solving present issues, and having a clear reference to the future. This type of initiatives is based on the diagnosis of a deficit and the implementation of solutions that are supposed to guarantee further development in the



future. Typical practices of this nature are those relating to the creation of solutions for sustainable transport (e.g. *Metropolitan approach to mobility* in Brno MA or *Urban Sustainable Mobility Plan* (PUMS) in the Metropolitan City of Turin) or educational projects (e.g. *Closer to the labour market - Integrated Educational and Vocational Advisory System ITI WFA* in the Warsaw MA), as well as planning instruments and development strategies (e.g. *Overall strategic framework* for the Berlin-Brandenburg Capital Region, *Metropolitan Strategic Plan* (PSM) and *Metropolitan Spatial General Plan* (PTGM) in the Metropolitan City of Turin).

Anticipating future challenges, but also reducing present deficits, can be perceived as a prominent added value of a given best practice, contributing to its innovative character. Although innovations can possibly happen anywhere, they are usually generated in heavily urbanised areas, such as metropolitan ones. These are territories of high concentration of human interactions, where technological, scientific, financial and cultural potentials concentrate creating a unique synergy of resources. As hubs of productivity, experimentation and innovation, they offer a space of hope for developing the best possible solutions to various problems society faces at a given moment. The determination of the innovative aspect of the selected tools and initiatives favours the idea of their potential transferability to other metropolitan areas, as innovation is viewed central to economic performance and social welfare, which are drivers of development. This means that authorities and governance structures of the metropolitan areas should understand the importance of innovation, as well as promote and strengthen practices of this character, especially in the transition towards sustainability. In this respect, they can contribute to boosting the competitiveness of metropolitan areas, and consequently advancing whole regions and countries. For the purpose of this study, we apply a broad definition of innovation understood as an “introduction of a new or significantly upgraded product, service, process, marketing method and/or organisational practice, workplace organization or external relations” (OECD 2005).

Reviewing the gathered best tools and practices, particular attention was paid to the following types of innovations: technological, organisational, and social (Edwards-Schachter 2018). Typically, technological innovation is investigated by linking inputs in terms of investment in R&D to outputs in terms of patents or new products and manufacturing processes. A focus relies on technological development of new products and new production techniques by firms. Gault (2018, p. 619) defines an organisational innovation as “the implementation of a new or significantly changed organizational method in the business practice, workplace organization or external relations of the institutional unit.” In this respect, organisational and marketing innovations oftentimes relate to the feature of uniqueness in business models. Social innovations are understood as novel ideas and solutions or alternatives to the currently implemented ones that aim to improve living conditions and to satisfy various social needs, contributing to increasing opportunities for cooperation and strengthening social ties (Mulgan et al., 2007; Murray et al., 2010; Bukowski et al., 2012; Djellal & Gallouj, 2012, p. 39; Zajda, 2015; Bień et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the most important determinant of various types of innovation lies in interactions, since they facilitate learning and accumulation of knowledge (Morisson, Doussineau, 2019).

The table below demonstrates the examples of best practices divided by the categories of innovation as a proposition of possible typology. The organisational and cross-cutting innovation groups are the most numerous. Among the identified flagship projects, many have an ambivalent or low innovative character. At the same time, they entail several educational projects aimed at the development of human capital, which is an essential asset stimulating innovation through

intellectual and relational aspects. Others relate to strategic and planning approaches, which are well-established, but can encompass specific need-adapted and unique solutions to metropolitan problems in different domains. The technological innovations were the least present among the best practices, which can be associated with the fact that they often require more financial, organisational and time resources to be transferred elsewhere, that is why they were deliberately not suggested by the MECOG-CE partners.

Table 3. Types of innovations with examples of best tools and practices

Types of innovations				
technological	organisational	social	cross-cutting	ambivalent or low innovative character
Hydrogen (Stuttgart Region Association)	K2 Network for careers and competences (Association of Central Subregion - Upper Silesian MA)	Community social worker (operatore sociale di comunità) (Metropolitan City of Turin)	Dolní Vítkovice (Ostrava MA)	Workshops and trainings on specialised metropolitan management issues (Warsaw Metropolis Association - Warsaw MA)
Brno Centre for Waste Recovery (Brno MA)	Metropolitan Leaders / Ambassadors (Brno MA)	Closer to the labour market - Integrated Educational and Vocational Advisory System ITI WFA (Integrated Territorial Investments of the Warsaw Metropolis)	Prototyping Academies (GZM Metropolis - Upper Silesian MA)	Competitions for schools on metropolitan topics (Warsaw Metropolis Association - Warsaw MA)
Polygo (VVS - Stuttgart Region)	Financial mechanisms supporting the intermunicipal actions / Solidarity Fund (GZM Metropolis - Upper Silesian MA)	Welcome Center (WRS - Stuttgart Region)	Junior Centre of Excellence (Brno MA)	Berlin-Brandenburg Transport Association (VBB - Capital Region Berlin Brandenburg)
	Directly elected regional assembly (VRS - Stuttgart Region)	Integrated solution - Implementing innovative teaching methods in	AI Alliance Baden-Württemberg (WRS-Stuttgart Region)	Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) (Metropolitan City of Turin)



		newly equipped classrooms in schools (Ostrava MA)		
	Overall strategic framework (Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg)		Cars 2.0. (WRS - Stuttgart Region)	S-Bahn Stuttgart (VRS - Stuttgart Region)
	ITI/Integrated Development Strategy BMA 21+ (Brno MA)		Energy purchasing Clusters (GZM Metropolis - Upper Silesian MA)	Tariff reform (VVS - Stuttgart Region)
	Competence Centers (WRS - Stuttgart Region)		Food districts (Metropolitan City of Turin)	Full integration of County of Göppingen (VVS - Stuttgart Region)
	Metropolitan Strategic Plan (PSM) and Metropolitan Spatial General Plan (PTGM) (Metropolitan City of Turin)		Gigabit Region Stuttgart (VRS, WRS - Stuttgart Region)	School closer to science Integrated Territorial Investments (Association of Central Subregion - Upper Silesian MA)
	Integrated Territorial Investments of the Warsaw Metropolis (ITI) (Warsaw MA)		River and Lake Contracts (Metropolitan City of Turin)	Developing opinions and adopting statements (Warsaw Metropolis Association - Warsaw MA)
	Municipal Neighbourhood Forum (Kommunales Nachbarschaftsforum KNF e.V.) (Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg)		Go from Brno (Brno MA)	Training of staff of local government units on different fields of expertise (Association of Central Subregion - Upper Silesian MA)
	National conferences on metropolitan issues (Brno MA)		International Building Exhibition (IBA) 2027 (VRS - Stuttgart Region)	Integrated transport interchanges and bicycle paths - ITI (Association of Central Subregion - Upper Silesian MA)
	Joint State Development Plan of the		Landscape Park (VRS -	Integrated Solution of Sustainable

	Capital Region Berlin- Brandenburg (LEP HR)		Stuttgart Region)	Transportation (Ostrava MA)
	Metropolitan approach to mobility (Brno MA)		MetroLab (GZM Metropolis - Upper Silesian MA)	Emotional map of metropolitan area (Brno MA)
	Questionnaire among mayors of the BMA (Brno MA)			

Source: own elaboration

It should be noted that, firstly, the lack or low level of an innovative character does not mean that a given project or practice is not important or relevant for a given metropolitan area. It may introduce some solutions that have already been proven effective elsewhere, but not necessarily innovative. Secondly, innovation is perceived in the study in a relativized way. This entails recognising that innovation does not always have to entail entirely novel activities or solutions unprecedented elsewhere. Instead, it encompasses the adaptation or refinement of existing practices, even potentially reverting to methods used earlier or embracing solutions applicable under completely new conditions (Djellal, Gallouj, 2012, p. 39). Therefore, it was acknowledged that the actions being introduced as new in a given social system, in this case metropolitan, are in fact innovative, and have the potential of triggering a positive change at a particular territorial scale. However, the above-mentioned assumption manifests a certain limitation as the division into what is considered innovative or not is not entirely clear-cut. For instance, tariff solutions introduced in various metropolitan areas, especially related to the integration of ticketing systems in public transport, cannot be considered innovative (although they are new to residents at the time of introduction), because they are generally well-known and functioning in various urban areas. Similarly, the development strategies indicated in the matrices also refer to both traditional methods of creating such documents and the search for new solutions that often emphasise the complexity of the problem and the need to integrate specialist knowledge from many fields (e.g. *Integrated Development Strategy BMA 21+ - Brno MA* or *Metropolitan Strategic Plan (PSM)* and *Metropolitan Spatial General Plan (PTGM)* - Metropolitan City of Turin). Most of them are European standard practices, created in response to the EU guidelines and requirements, harmonising and integrating existing planning approaches (e.g. SUMP in mobility). Therefore, in the following section of the report, we strive for indicating the solutions or initiatives specified in the Matrices as having a distinctly innovative character. Moreover, we also highlight particular elements within more well-known solutions that can foster innovation and offer significant added value, thereby improving the metropolitan cooperation and governance.

Importantly, in many cases of the initiatives categorised in Table 3 as of ambivalent or low innovative character, as well as in the case of organisational innovations (especially introduced with the use of ITI instrument: Brno MA, Ostrava MA, Warsaw MA), the significant added value is a multi-stakeholder and need-adapted approach, which supports the exchange of knowledge, creating bonds and relations between different actors, and thus, provides increase in mutual trust contributing to the development of social capital. In general, most of the selected best practices

induce the emergence of cooperation models, often bottom-up and inclusive, which as such can also be perceived as social innovations (e.g. *Municipal Neighbourhood Forum* - Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg, *MetroLab* or *Prototyping Academies* - GZM Metropolis, located in the Upper Silesian MA, *River and Lake Contracts* - Metropolitan City of Turin; *Dolní Vítkovice* - Ostrava MA). The most crucial for the enhancement of metropolitan governance is the inter-sectorial collaboration, according to the Quadruple Helix concept, linking business, science, and public authorities, as well as civil society and the media. The ability to develop inter-institutional relations, as well as vertical and horizontal interactions of different actors, is a key resource in competition between metropolitan areas (Crespo, Cabral 2010).

Municipal Neighbourhood Forum (KNF) (Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg):

KNF is a bottom-up-structure driven by joint communal interests, based on a voluntary cooperation, encouraging the municipalities in the capital region's hinterland to raise their voice in different matters (equal partnership). It is a well-established tool, innovative as an example of a cross-border, interstate co-operation focused on joint projects and solving current challenges. (Source: *Joint Berlin-Brandenburg Spatial Planning Department*)

River and Lake Contracts (Metropolitan City of Turin):

It is a voluntary instrument based on public participation processes for the involvement and empowerment of local actors and on cooperation of the managers of the resource and the territory (governing structures), citizens and representatives of other groups of stakeholders (e.g. farmers, industrialists, fishermen, environmental associations, etc.). Thus, it enables concerted solutions to different problems (social, environmental, economic) between actors with different interests (conflict resolution). It promotes vertical and horizontal subsidiarity, interactive local development, safety of the riverside, as well as sustainability. (Source: *Metropolitan City of Turin*)

Interestingly, it can be argued that the perception of what is essentially innovative in the solutions collected in the Matrix varies among the MECOG-CE partners. In the descriptions of the innovation category relating to best practices, the partners from Czechia, Poland and Italy most often articulated issues concerning the development of mutual trust, broadening of the already existing cooperation and need-adapted approach. The partners from Germany perceived and characterised the innovative elements more in relation to a specific promising or pioneer field of intervention, a new competence of a given structure that is unique at the national scale, and its importance for the development of the metropolitan area (e.g. *Hydrogen project* or *Artificial Intelligence Alliance (AI)* - Stuttgart Region; *Joint State Development Plan* of the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg (LEP HR)).

What is characteristic of the practices categorised as innovative is the fact that novel elements most often go beyond one category of innovation. This is due to the complexity of many metropolitan projects, which require innovatory activities in multiple areas: technological, organisational and social. Examples of such complex projects include the revitalisation of a former steelworks in the Ostrava MA (*Dolní Vítkovice*), the *Junior Center of Excellence* in Brno MA, *AI Alliance Baden-Württemberg* (Stuttgart Region), *Prototyping Academies* in the Upper Silesian MA and several others. It is also worth noting that the indicated practices are of different scale: from large-scale revitalisation projects in Ostrava MA to innovative search for new solutions to urban problems, such as the *Prototyping Academies* of GZM Metropolis.

Dolní Vítkovice area (Ostrava MA):

After the termination of black-coal mining and iron production, the Dolní Vítkovice area (**Dolní oblast Vítkovice**) was declared a National Monument of Culture in 2002. The site, located close to the city centre, has been transformed into a unique educational, cultural and community hub with international impact. It is an example of a long-term, sustainable approach to the use of a brownfield for multiple purposes. The **Dolní Vítkovice Association** operating there connects private and public partnership (companies, universities, Moravian-Silesian Region, City of Ostrava, other medium-sized cities) in a sophisticated system - “donation with benefits.” (Source: City of Ostrava)

Junior Center of Excellence (Brno MA):

It is technological centre for cyber security and ICT. It enables high school students to practice their skills in the new field of cyber security. As part of their education, students prepare for facing hacker attacks, i.e., how to protect information systems, networks and data etc. The project is completely unique in its concept combining a real professional environment and educational facility and technological solution in Czechia. (Source: Brno City Municipality)

The particularly interesting endeavour concerns the Dolní Vítkovice area (*Dolní oblast Vítkovice*) as it has a great potential for generating “urban commons” (Brossaud et al., 2019), connecting tangible (new spaces, objects, devices) and intangible forms (social capital, new narratives, new identity). As such, it exhibits a number of distinctive features of the innovation place concept (Bierwiazzonek, Gawron, Pyka, Suchacka, 2020; Bierwiazzonek, Pyka, 2023b). These are namely specific meanings and values (in Latin: *genius loci*) associated with its industrial past, references to sustainability based on its successful revitalisation, as well as openness to and interrelations between many different types of activities and actors from music, art, science and business fields. In fact, the project is a case in which both the generation process and the commons themselves can be perceived as innovations.

4.3.3. Potential for transferability with regard to process- and project-orientation of best tools and practices

Transferability of a good practice refers - in a broad sense - to the extent to which a practice can be easily adapted and used in other contexts, from one country or region to another, and to the elements that should be considered during a transfer. In this study, the metropolitan areas within the MECOG-CE consortium delineate the territorial context of the transfer. Another pre-condition for the transferability of practices within the MECOG-CE consortium concerned the aspect of metropolitan cooperation that was supposed to be established or enhanced thanks to a given project implementation. The so far analysis of the flagship practices and tools gathered among the MECOG-CE partners led to the determination of a wide list of initiatives that could be potentially examined for transferability during the meetings with regional stakeholders and, then, in the study clusters formed in the second phase of the project duration. At this stage of the analysis, the focus is put on the subjective dimension of the transferability potential assessment performed by the MECOG-CE partners and indicated in the Matrix (point 6). The results are presented in the following paragraphs. It should be noted that even if the majority of partners evaluated the potential for transferability of best practices on the scale from low- to high-level in



the Matrix, they did not provide further justification of their choice despite the instruction given.⁹ Thus, in this part of the report, apart from a presentation of the perception of the transferability potential by the MECOG-CE partners, several indications concerning important dimensions, namely the complexity of a project in terms of availability and configuration of different resources (scale of necessary investments), its uniqueness, or context- and place-specific character that could be taken into consideration in that process, will be given.

The transferability of the identified projects depends, first, on whether they respond to the needs of a given MA, and second, on the accessibility of different resources needed for the project implementation, such as financial, infrastructural, human, time, as well as administrative or legal requirements. The above-mentioned elements are crucial points in the assessment of the transfer or implementation feasibility in a given context. The identification of needs of a certain area or structure, where a practice is intended to be transferred and/or adapted, usually constitutes a first step of the transfer process. The evaluation of feasibility in the receiving context comes as the next step. Essentially, all possible stakeholders in the metropolitan area, from public authorities to possible private or civil society/NGOs partners, interested in adapting a tool or practice proceed to a detailed comparative evaluation of its features and conditions in the light of their own conditions and resources. In addition, the purpose and core ideas behind the practice should be grasped and accentuated, because they help to define elements and modalities that are more likely to be applied in a new context. As many solutions can be context-specific, and thus, difficult or impossible to be transferred exactly as they are, such elements are useful in finding equivalents that might function best in the specific receiving context.

With regard to the potential for transferability, two auxiliary categories of the typology of best tools/practices are offered in the analysis, which concentrate on their orientation to project or process. The process-oriented practice or tool refers to the complexity and holistic value of a given solution, which means it has a multi-layer, multi-dimensional or strategic character based on setting priorities and common goals, or bringing a valuable change in the approach to a problem by means of different targeted tools/objectives. In many cases process-oriented practices or tools would entail a form of cooperation or agreement, a process of coming to a dialogue, which can involve a reconfiguration, rearrangement or new way of organising the relationships between partners. It may also refer to an integral approach to a particular set of challenges by planning, managing, creating strategies and visions, and building consensus. Whereas the project-oriented pole includes all the initiatives focused on obtaining tangible results and particular outputs concerning services or products in a given period of time in the framework of specific large- or small-scale projects. Thus, it is more often connected with technological or infrastructure advancements or the design of particular products and services, bringing response to diagnosed problems and needs.

In general, the transferability of process-oriented tools as regulatory frames for different actions proves problematic, because they often refer to the very functioning of a given dialogue and cooperation space, as mentioned in the case of Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg (e.g. the *Municipal Neighbourhood Forum*, KNF). They can be highly dependent on the context, in which

⁹ Some explanations and remarks to the practices' potential to be transferred were articulated by the partners during the Workshop: *Outcomes of analysing the best tools and practices for strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance* led by the University of Silesia in Katowice and the City of Brno at the transnational meeting, held in Warsaw in October 2023. They will be referred to in the analysis where appropriate.



they were established, and it also entails different legal provisions and regulations in the studied MAs. What can be the object of transfer to be tested in this case is the way how the integrated approach and a set of tools it incorporates are designed, e.g. the process of building synergies between different projects, involving different stakeholders and gaining mutual trust and consensus. For the study clusters, it implies a central question of how to organize or optimise a process of cooperation. The examples of such practice can be the *ITI/Integrated Development Strategy BMA 21+* (Brno MA), or *Metropolitan Strategic Plan (PSM) and Metropolitan Spatial General Plan (PTGM)* (Metropolitan City of Turin).

The analysis of the process- and project-oriented dimension showed that out of 47 identified tools and best practices, more than half (N=28) were project-based. This sort of practices were developed in six out of seven partner MAs which delivered the completed matrix, except the Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg. The focus of the German metropolitan area was more on sharing knowledge about the functioning of large regulatory frames and approaches to strategic and spatial planning, but also models of organisational structures providing management of transport services (*Berlin-Brandenburg Transport Association (VBB)*) and enhancing metropolitan bottom-up cooperation of municipalities (*Municipal Neighbourhood Forum, KNF*). To the contrary, another German metropolitan MECOG-CE partner, the Stuttgart Region, as well as partners from the Brno MA, Ostrava MA, Warsaw MA, and the Upper Silesian MA, selected as flagship mostly project-oriented practices.

The potential for transferability of the project-oriented practices was usually estimated by the partners as high (in 23 of 28 cases). They were quite diverse in subject matter and character, stretching from building new infrastructure (e.g. bicycle paths or integrated transport interchanges, waste sorting plant, post-industrial educational, cultural and entertainment centre, etc.), to new transport products and services (*polyGO card, website and application* - Stuttgart Region), financial mechanisms supporting the intermunicipal actions (GZM Metropolis, Upper Silesian MA), offering social (*Community social worker* - Metropolitan City of Turin) or integration services (*Welcome Center* - Stuttgart Region), and raising skills and competencies in a certain sphere, such as vocational education and career counselling (the ITI of Warsaw MA).

However, the most frequently indicated project-based practices were those in the field of education (N=8) and transport (N=6). In Polish and Czech MAs, they were established thanks to the ITI instrument (in the Stuttgart metropolitan area there were no ITI-funded practices). Other thematic domains, e.g. concerning energy or waste management issues, were less present, with only one and two project-based practices indicated. Taking into account educational domain, the initiatives within this field entailed investments in the refurbishment of school buildings and teaching aids, as well as in diverse skills and competencies of teachers and pupils in several municipalities of the respective areas. Similar situation in terms of territorial scope of action relates to the development of transport/mobility infrastructure solutions. That is why, it is hard to distinguish those initiatives among them that were particularly influential with regard to the enhancement of cooperation and governance at the truly metropolitan scale, covering all functional area or most of the crucial partners or authorities. Different transport solutions, concerning the tariff reform or the transport integration services at the metropolitan level, can be very time consuming, and usually demand multilateral negotiations with service providers existing in the region as exemplified by the case of the tariff reform in the Upper Silesian metropolitan area. It took several years of intensive discussions since the beginning of the



formalised intermunicipal cooperation within the first metropolitan association (Upper Silesian Metropolitan Union, GZM, established in 2007) in order to bring the project to term and gain the consensus.

The other essential remark concerns the mobilization of different resources or their configuration in a specific context. The potential for transferability of many project-oriented practices, as indicated by the MECOG-CE partners, seems quite overestimated and would necessitate thorough expert assessment in terms of what selected elements or core ideas of such practices could be subject to transfer into other metropolitan areas. One of the examples of overestimation in this regard constitutes the case of *Dolní Vítkovice Area* (Ostrava MA), requiring massive concentrated interventions of European and private funds, but also an accumulation of other types of resources (human, time, administrative tools) relevant for such large-scale projects. Thus, the revitalisation project has a rather low possibility of replication as a unique and impressive endeavour of great symbolic value and the first Czech industrial monument registered in the European Heritage Label. In that case, the potential object of transfer could more consist of a logic and structure of the process relating to the management of industrial monuments (e.g. financial structure and fundraising, building partnerships, etc.) or the design of its new functions connected with culture, art and creative industries. Another example of practice demanding large investments is the *Brno Centre for Waste Recovery* (Brno MA), the first municipal automatic waste sorting plant for plastic, paper and metal packaging built in Czechia. As similar projects from other metropolitan areas in Central Europe showcase, especially the waste incineration plant in the GZM Metropolis, even after the approval of the project for funding from national or EU resources, the obstacles in the realisation can appear because of the lacking legal framework or competence attribution or insufficiently defined tasks of the structure managing diverse fields of intervention in the metropolitan area. In general, the transfer and implementation of technological solutions (e.g. *Hydrogen project* in the Stuttgart Region), even if providing responses to essential environmental challenges, usually require considerable financial outlays and long process of adjustments to national legal requirements and frameworks (e.g. patents or licences etc.).

Relatively well estimated (high) potential for transferability present other initiatives within the cultural dimension of metropolisation, such as the *Emotional map of metropolitan area*, *Go from Brno*, *Metropolitan leaders (ambassadors)* (Brno MA), or *MetroLab* (GZM Metropolis, Upper Silesian MA) as an example of the creation of metropolitan places and/or spaces strengthening the sense of metropolitan community among residents from member municipalities. They all rely on the promotion of the unique qualities, values and meanings of a given territory, as well as its political, administrative and social structure, based on some product or service, the scope of which can be easily adjusted to different country or region contexts and needs.

Other best practices, the *Food districts* and *Community social worker (operatore sociale di comunità)* (Metropolitan City of Turin), or *Welcome Center* for immigrants (Stuttgart Region) demand more complex network of partners, financial and human resources, as well as legal procedures for proper operation. The *Energy purchasing clustering* seems potentially an easily adaptable solution, applicable with reference to many different fields (not only energy) and offering great potential by ordering large volumes to decrease expenses, which can increase services to customers. Nevertheless, the MECOG-CE partners from Germany have already pointed out at some legal constraints concerning the functioning of the tool with regard to procurement procedures.



As to the process-oriented practices, they were less frequent (19 of 47), but again almost in all partner MAs such types of practices were identified, except the Ostrava MA. The potential for transferability of the majority of such practices is evaluated by the project partners as high (N=15). This supports the idea of the creation of a separate study cluster for examining and testing more integrated and multidimensional approaches. Albeit, as the German partners emphasised, the transfer potential should be estimated as low if the whole complex system provided by a given structure or a regulatory framework would like to be replicated elsewhere (e.g. *Berlin-Brandenburg Transport Association* (VBB)). In such cases, it would be recommended to concentrate on selected parts of the whole concept as joint ticketing or public transport plan, or a way how to integrate efficiently different services.

Crucially, the process-oriented practices were indicated mostly by the Stuttgart Region (N=6), Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg (N=4), Brno MA (N=4), and Metropolitan City of Turin (N=3), so in majority, in the countries, with more advanced and institutionalised metropolitan cooperation, and with a focus on developing bottom-up activities for optimising governance structures and practices (more forward looking pro-active approach). The most represented domains of such practices were: regional development (N=6) and management of metropolitan area (N=5). Among them we can find: *ITI/Integrated Development Strategy BMA 21+* (Brno MA), the instrument of ITI as such (Warsaw MA), the *Directly elected regional assembly* (Stuttgart Region) and the *Municipal Neighbourhood Forum* (KNF, Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg) with a set of different exchange formats. It is worth noting that the Ostrava MA also uses the ITI regarded as a good practice. These solutions testify to be context specific and their transfer potential should be estimated as lower. However, in the case of the bottom-up cooperation format of the KNF, the form of a voluntary association of municipalities and different tools of knowledge exchange that it offers can easily be adjusted to the needs of many areas, if only there is a need and political will for such initiative from the side of different municipalities. In case of the strategic documents and approaches, also in other partner areas (e.g. the Metropolitan City of Turin, Capital Region Berlin-Brandenburg), what can be transferred relates to a method or concept work rather than particular solutions conceived, unless there are very similar problems encountered in different regions that can be addressed.

As to regional development field, the practices were mainly identified by the Stuttgart Region, and the Upper Silesian MA (GZM Metropolis). Among them, we can find several interesting and valuable projects concerning metropolitan economies and innovation (the *Artificial Intelligence Alliance* (AI) or *Competence Centres* - Stuttgart Region), but also a co-creative design thinking process including users' needs research and analysis (*Prototyping Academies*, GZM Metropolis). Their potential transfer seems quite high as they focus on a certain approach to pool resources and build a cooperation network. However, a question of necessary infrastructure arises in case of competence centres or AI contact point and experimentation rooms.

All in all, the analysis shows a great interest of the MECOG-CE partners to share their best tools and practices, that is maybe why so many of initiatives were identified as of high transferability potential. Nevertheless, a close look at the offered solutions calls for more rigour and critical approach in the assessment of transferability potential in the next phase of the project. What should come to the front as a guiding and essential question is whether the selected projects emphasise the significance of, and actually strengthen, metropolitan cooperation and governance with respect to different sectors (the Triple or Quadruple Helix models). Practices based on sharing



knowledge and networking between different groups of metropolitan actors (e.g. *National conferences on metropolitan issues*, Brno MA; *Opinion statements*, Warsaw MA; *Questionnaire among mayors*, Brno MA; *Prototyping Academies*, GZM Metropolis) definitely fulfil this mission, have high chances of being replicated in foreign contexts and demand less investments comparing to large-scale endeavours (e.g. *Hydrogen project* - Stuttgart Region, or *Dolní Vítkovice Area* - Ostrava MA).

Another important issue concerns the needs and feasibility regarding different types of resources, as described before. For instance, in terms of the use of the ITI instrument, undoubtedly, there are some countries that have acquired quite a considerable level of expertise in its implementation, namely Poland and Czechia. Yet, it can be questioned if, in the case of the so-called old EU member states, based on the logic of EU funds repartition with regard to the economic development levels or differences between regions, the ITI instrument can eventually appear as an attractive or easily accessible tool. Its implementation in those countries would demand a deep reflection on positive (added value) and negatives sides in terms of the amount of available funding, administrative resources needed for its management, and existing experience and competences of its implementation at different administrative levels.

An approach that addresses the main issues and needs in a given functional area is needed to avoid fragmentation, duplication and complex implementation of best practices (Ferry, 2019). It certainly does not mean that all solutions can be transferred to other regions, but some of their parts or core ideas. To be effective, practices should be tailored to specific national and regional contexts, e.g. institutional arrangements, existing structures and networks of partners, legal requirements.

4.3.4. Conclusions

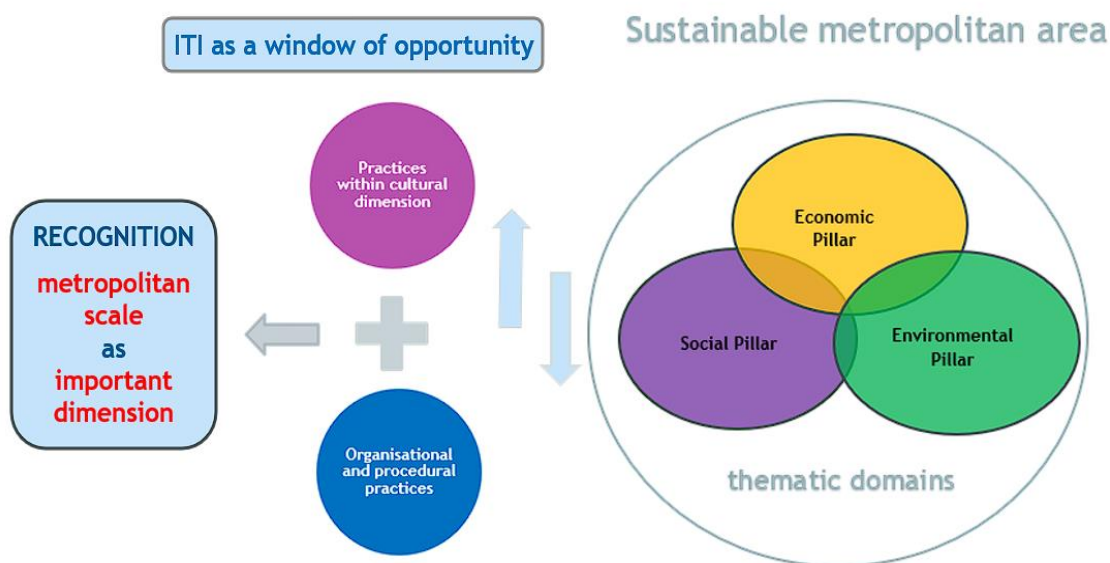
The identified best tools and practices present a rich collection of different solutions that can be seen as responses to current, major problems faced by metropolitan areas in Central Europe. They also give an overview of the state-of-art of metropolitan projects that can be treated as a significant resource, point of reference and comparison, and a potent source of inspiration to other metropolitan areas in Europe. The guiding principle underlying the most of selected initiatives relied on the development of inter-municipal activities, increasing mutual trust and awareness of the potential and power of the metropolitan scale of actions. The partners shared diverse best practices in terms of thematic domains, required scale of investments and metropolitan impact and results. Thus, the potential of transferability of these practices differs as well, depending on eventually what parts or key ideas were chosen to be replicated.

With regard to challenges and opportunities identified by the MECOG-CE consortium, the gathered tools and practices refer to three fundamental pillars of sustainable development - environmental, social and economic (Figure 6). However, they consistently put stress on the environmental dimension, especially through solutions concerning sustainable mobility and transport, such as Sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP) in line with the EU guidelines and recommendations. Importantly, the social and economic pillars are less reflected in the identified flagship projects. This aspect deserves a special attention and further reflection as a sustainable and resilient metropolis should invest in the improvement of the quality of human capital and its retention capacity, in reducing social inequalities and segregation, as well as in a strong metropolitan economy system, which altogether open up new development opportunities for residents. It also

constitutes a source of creativity and innovation that go hand in hand with environmental demands. Having all three dimensions equally balanced allows for the real improvement of the quality of life of the metropolitan inhabitants.

Interestingly, apart from specific thematic domains of best tools and practices, two separate and considerable groups of initiatives can be distinguished, but having a common ground relating to shaping the “metropolitan” way of thinking and acting (the metropolitan mindset or culture), and fostering a sense of togetherness. The first group of practices and soft measures represents the cultural dimension of metropolisation, which consists of promoting diverse metropolitan resources, and sharing knowledge and values through the exchange of opinions, and statements, but also surveys and emotional mapping among different metropolitan actors. The second group of initiatives relates to organisational and procedural issues as an expression of a need to develop strategic and sustainable approaches in metropolitan planning (e.g. frameworks, plans, strategies, visions), but also bottom-up and horizontal governance structures (e.g. voluntary associations, partnerships, networks, etc.). The second group also involves the use of the ITI instrument. Some differences among the MECOG-CE partners can be noted in terms of their interest in sharing particular set of solutions, as the countries with longer tradition of metropolitan institutionalisation (Germany, Italy) or with a legally binding institution (the case of GZM Metropolis - Upper Silesian MA, Poland), indicated as best many practices and mechanisms optimising their well-established governance structures or compensating their missing or weak competencies. In Czechia and Poland (especially the Warsaw MA), where the tradition of metropolitan cooperation is more recent, the promoted solutions in the organisational dimension concentrated on the use of the ITI (the ITI development strategy, the concept work or approach in the ITI implementation), even if the objective of compensation was very similar, in this case it addressed the absence of a strong governance structure.

Figure 6. Main groups of identified best tools and practices with reference to three pillars of sustainable development



Source: own elaboration



In the analysis of innovative character of the identified tools and practices, the importance was brought to a relativized meaning of innovation, as a new or added value in the metropolitan social system and not an entirely novel solution, completely unknown elsewhere. There were different types of innovations recognised - technological, organizational, social, and cross-cutting. The last category was highly represented, and typical of complex and large-scale projects which required a creative or distinctive approach in multiple areas, or a unique combination of the existing resources or solutions. The technological group of innovations was the least present. The organisational group of innovations referred to different forms of governance structures, mostly grassroots and participatory, as well as the process of strategy and plans creation and different voluntary platforms for knowledge exchange and sharing. The social one encompassed various activities that can be seen as enforcing the human capital, people's knowledge, skills and competences, but also promoting social inclusion, tolerance and integration. It can be argued that many of the gathered initiatives do not have high innovative value in terms of the originality of the core idea, but it was the configuration of different resources and approach that made a significant change in the area of their implementation. As reported by the MECOG-CE partners, regardless of the type of innovation, in most cases of practices a strong advantage and added value was the exchange of knowledge, increase in mutual trust, and the improvement of cooperation between the stakeholders. These are the elements that create a specific atmosphere fostering the emergence of new and out-of-the-box ideas to urban problems. As such, it shows a relatively high awareness of the significance of the pragmatic dimension of trust, acquired through joint implementation of projects, in building collaborative governance systems in the examined metropolitan areas. However, the partners from Czechia, Poland and Italy slightly more often and directly articulated as innovative the relational and trust elements forming social capital, and the fundamental basis for collaborative cultures. The collaboration was especially accentuated in the ITI-funded projects. The partners from Germany were more attached to the significance of a specific or distinguished field of intervention of a given structure for the development and management of the metropolitan area, new competencies of the existing metropolitan dialogue and cooperation spaces, as well as multi-dimensional approaches to urban problems and planning.

Lastly, the potential of transferability of the selected best tools and practices was explored. In this respect, it is important to note that the validation process of the selected best tools and practices was three-fold. The first phase of the validation process occurred at the level of the "donor" metropolitan area, where the MECOG-CE project partners selected up to five flagship initiatives.¹⁰ In this process, they addressed the project general objectives and took into account tools enhancing metropolitan cooperation and dialogue, and enforcing the empowerment of their respective metropolitan areas. This stage was aimed at fostering bottom-up approach to decision-making, allowing room for the partners to reflect on, value and appreciate implemented initiatives that they wished to promote and disseminate within the MECOG-CE consortium.

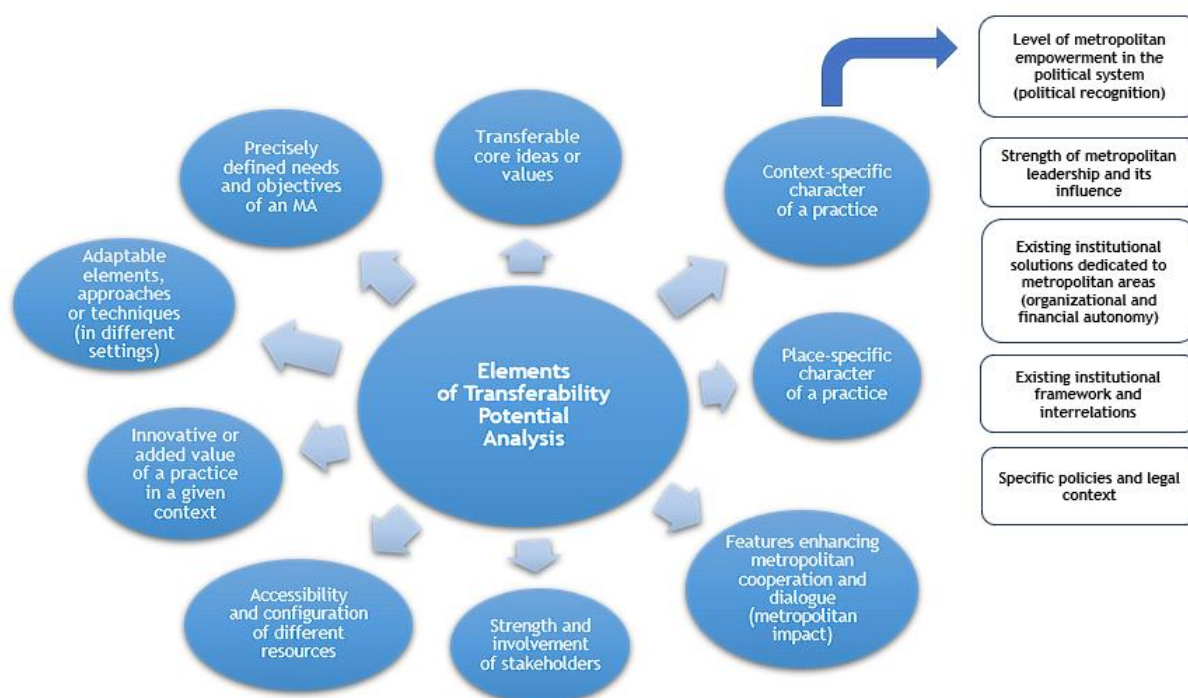
The second stage of validation consisted of an expert analysis resulting from the objectivization of the selection process done by the partners submitting their practices to transfer. In this stage, the expert team from the University of Silesia in Katowice strived to demonstrate to what extent the practices selected by the MECOG-CE partners stemmed from specific contexts and governance systems of their respective metropolitan areas. The team also aimed to indicate more general and

¹⁰ It should be mentioned that while some project partners identified more than five flagship practices, others mentioned fewer. This variation in responses accounts for the final identification of 47 practices.

objective criteria of assessment of the identified best tools and practices with reference to the potential for transferability. The team analysed the submitted projects and instruments on the basis of their quality and goals (thematic scope) and the extent to which they addressed the identified challenges, innovativeness or added-value, potential for transferability and usefulness in terms of the development or enhancement of metropolitan cooperation and dialogue, as well as from the perspective of broadly defined context (e.g. national experiences, governance structures, legal provisions etc.). The criteria used in the analysis of transferability at the expert level correspond with ideas and observations developed in other studies on best practices, such as the project “Sustainable Practices of Integration” (SPRING) (Yilmaz, MPG, 2022). The criteria that were relevant in the MECOG-CE project analysis pertain to specific features of the practices that are potentially easier to transfer, i.e.: adaptable elements/techniques, but achieving identified objectives, unbound to specific policy and legal context, unbound to country-specific frame conditions, flexible and adaptable to similar settings, having transferable core ideas, objectives, or values. Nevertheless, additional factors may be indicated, acting as auxiliary elements that facilitate the transfer process. One such example is the development of a comprehensive work plan for the implementation of a practice.

Figure 7 gathers the majority of aspects relevant in assessing the potential for transferability of selected flagship initiatives in the MECOG-CE project. The diagram can serve as a guidance and point of reference when considering a possible replication of best tools and practices within the MECOG-CE consortium. It provides a consistent summary of the analysed aspects of transferability, but also introduces outlooks and areas that can serve as catalyst inspiring and fostering the development of study clusters in the second phase of the whole project (WP2).

Figure 7. Elements of Transferability Potential Analysis



Source: own elaboration



The observations resulting from the expert analysis conducted in the second stage of validation inform the subsequent phase. The third stage of validation involves the receiver's assessment and recontextualization of a given tool or practice, supported by the appropriate knowledge about its original context and objective criteria of validation proposed by the expert team, especially in terms of transferability and the potential to generate or enhance cooperation.

The analysis of best tools and practices in the dimension of transferability calls for a more critical and thorough assessment of different aspects of transferability in the receiving contexts in the following phase of the MECOG-CE project. This results from the fact that the majority of even complex and place-specific projects was evaluated as highly replicable. Yet, especially in the case of cross-cutting, context-specific or process-oriented solutions, the basic question arises, what elements or universal and key ideas of a given tool/practice could be transferred to another metropolitan area. It is strongly connected with the issue of feasibility and, thus, necessary resources (financial, infrastructural, human, time, administrative etc.) for the implementation. Consequently, an openness and readiness for transformation of practices is a pre-requisite, to be able to adapt them to the receiving context of the existing institutional framework and interrelations, specific policies and law provisions. The scope of actions and the target group can be altered. What can also be helpful is the evaluation of own needs and objectives (that should be similar in varying situations), strong engagement of different stakeholders, access to ready-to-use guidelines, handbooks or project descriptions, and a detailed workplan specifying target groups, objectives, intended outcomes, timelines, financial and administrative planning, sustainability, and resources required (Yilmaz, MPG, 2022: 22). Most of small-scale projects in education and competence-building, based on soft measures, but also conceptual work in the strategy design, have higher potential of transferability. Similarly, tools concerning the cultural dimension of metropolisation can be easily adapted to other contexts, i.e. tools of promotion, raising awareness, increasing participation and shaping the metropolitan way of thinking. The separate issue concerns the use of specific European funds, as the ITI instrument, whose accessibility differs in different EU member states, and should be thoroughly examined if in a given area there was no previous experience in its implementation. Consequently, the partner areas from Czechia and Poland could serve as mentors in this process.

The significance of the criteria of enhancing metropolitan cooperation and dialogue for the validation process cannot be underestimated when analysing the potential for transferability. Two groups of initiatives deserve special attention. The first one represents the cultural dimension of metropolisation, where practices serve as catalysts for the development of vibrant platforms for dialogue, understanding, and collaboration among diverse communities, fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity. The second one focuses on developing strategic and sustainable approaches in metropolitan planning (e.g. frameworks, plans, strategies, visions), especially based on bottom-up and horizontal governance structures. Thus, the central and pivotal question that should take precedence in the selection of practices for replication is whether the chosen projects underscore and actively enhance metropolitan cooperation and governance across various sectors.

The general positive evaluation of the transfer potential of practices can be considered as an expression of willingness to share knowledge and experiences among the MECOG-CE consortium members. As such, it is a promising sign for the further progress of the project and the establishment of study clusters, in which the conclusive validation stage will be conducted through a meticulous process of re-contextualizing the chosen practices and projects.

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