



**LEARNING FROM
INTERNATIONAL
APPROACHES**

Governance models and development ideas for metropolitan areas

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The term “metropolitan areas” is still quite a mystery for many decision makers. The idea that EU policies should acknowledge metropolitan areas and give them an important role as one of the territorial levels in policy making, usually falls on deaf ears in Brussels. The best reaction is that “we know that metropolitan relations are important but we do not know what these areas are and how they can be defined. And if such an area is incidentally delineated, where is its trustworthy leadership which could make democratic decisions at this level?”

Thus the official recognition of metropolitan areas is far behind their importance in real life—not only amongst Brussels decision makers but also in many of the member states. To fill this gap many efforts were taken in the last years by different organizations and experts. This article gives a brief account on some of these efforts, with the aim to draw a few conclusions for the case of Vienna.

METROPOLITAN AREAS: WHAT ARE THEY AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Urban areas face many different challenges: demographic, employment, environmental, social problems of development, which emerge simultaneously. For balanced urban development public policies have to be integrated, as policies tackling exclusively only one of the challenges create huge problems (externalities) regarding others (Tosics, 2013). Integration of the different aspects of urban development

requires different types of co-ordination: across policy sectors (horizontal), across administrative areas (territorial) and across government levels (vertical coordination, multi-level governance). The territorial coordination challenge means that integrated policies need a territorial base which is large enough to deal with the externalities of each of the policy domains. For this reason there is a growing need for cooperation between municipalities beyond the administrative boundaries of the cities, as in most of the European cities the administrative borders are outdated, do not cover the territory of everyday links, e.g. the housing market or the commuting area (European Union, 2011).

The functional urban areas (metropolitan areas) of the cities are in most cases fulfilling this criteria (Rubbo, 2018). Strengthened collaboration and joint planning in such areas might lead to more integrated solutions—without necessarily creating any new form or level of universal public management or administration. However, “metropolitan cooperation” can frighten rural stakeholders who might think that cities will dominate them. In many cases, not even the residents of urban areas understand this from everyday perspective rather abstract idea. Moreover, in many cases, the well-established administrative regions are against metropolitan cooperation, protecting their own power against the joint power of the city and its surrounding settlements. In order to overcome this metropolitan governance challenge, strong citizen support would be required for metropolitan cooperation, but public awareness is quite limited and people are quite reluctant to see any new administrative units to develop.

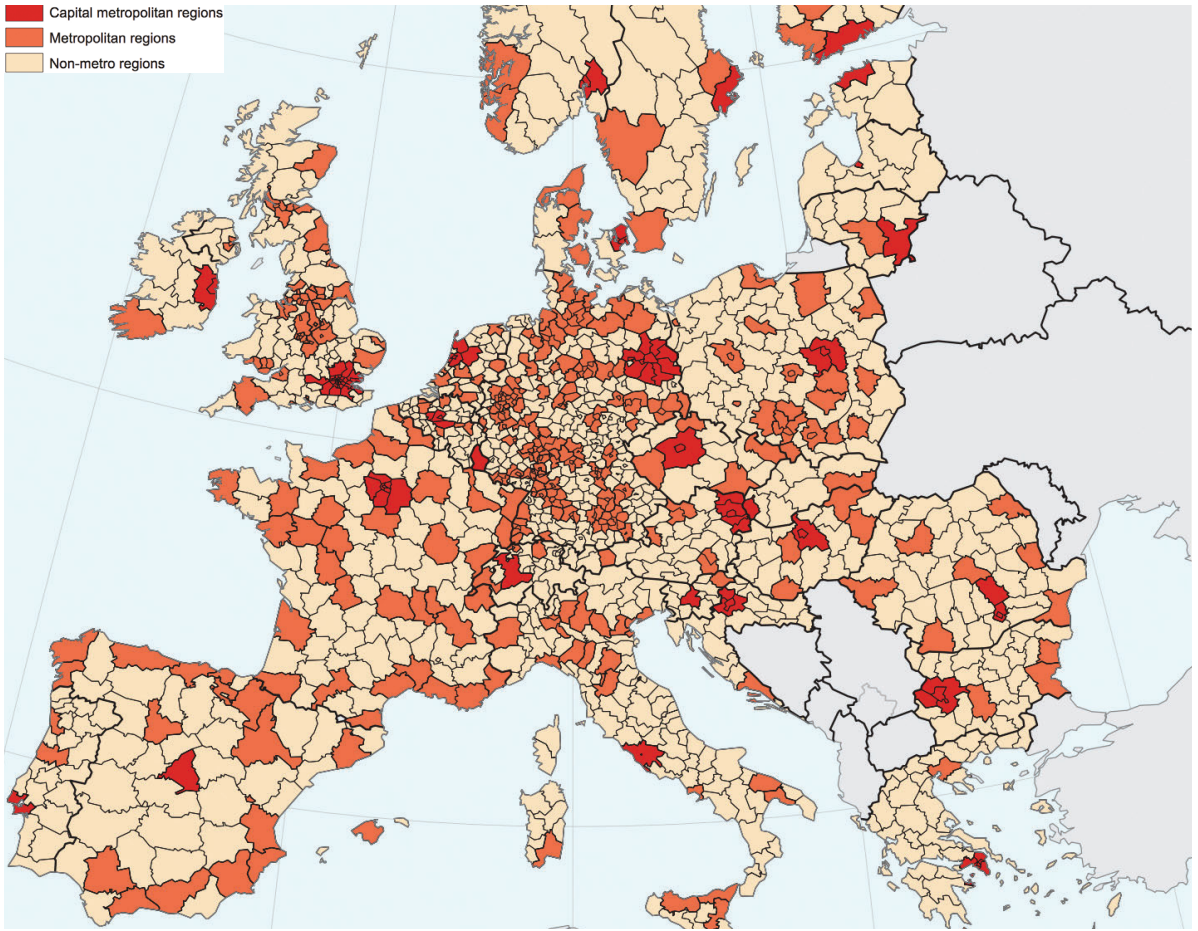


Figure 1: Typology of Metropolitan Regions © Eurostat, JRC and European Commission Directorate-General for Regional Policy, 2016

Thus, metropolitan cooperation is not at all a natural process, but to be developed by systemic and long-lasting efforts, led by public actors.

As already mentioned, there is no uniformly accepted definition and delineation of the metropolitan areas in Europe. For the spatial localization there are different databases regarding the functional urban areas (FUA): the *ESPON* research (2007) and the *OECD* (2013) attempt to determine metropolitan (FUA) areas around larger cities in the *OECD* countries. These delineations do not perfectly

match, as for some cities the *ESPON* and *OECD* definitions of the FUA are different. Regarding the definition and delineation of metropolitan areas *Eurostat* made pioneer work, coming up with maps about such areas (see Figure 1). In their definition metropolitan regions are approximations of functional urban areas (cities and their commuting zones) of 250 thousand or more inhabitants consisting of one or more *NUTS* level 3 regions. *Eurostat* data show that almost 300 million people are living in the EU's metropolitan regions, i.e. almost three out of five EU inhabitants. Countries with ▶

Size of the collaboration	1. Statistical unit	2. Networking, weak strategic planning	3. Single function	4. Multiple functions	5. Strong strategic, spatial planning of binding nature
A) Smaller than FUA	Budapest, Brussels	Ghent, Malmö, Vienna, Zurich.	Frankfurt, Helsinki ¹ , Katowice, Warsaw	Amsterdam, Rotterdam	Lille ² , Lyon, Rennes, Strasbourg Milan (metropolitan city)
B) FUA	Berlin, Budapest, Ghent, Linköping, Lisbon, Strasbourg, Vienna, Warsaw	Amsterdam , Birmingham LEP, Bratislava (region) , Brno, Brussels, Göteborg , Katowice, Lyon ³ , Malmö, Sofia ⁴ , Terrassa		Helsinki ⁵ , Madrid (region) , Munich , Manchester, Oslo , Preston, Stockholm (county) , Tampere (region)	
C) Somewhat larger than FUA	Sofia	BrabantStad, Zurich	Brussels	The Hague, Torino (province), Helsinki (region)	Stuttgart, Torino (metropolitan city)
D) Much larger than FUA (larger economic zone)	Birmingham, Budapest	Amsterdam, Bratislava, Frankfurt, Ghent, Göteborg, Hamburg, Katowice, Lille, Linköping, Lyon, Malmö, Oslo, Rennes, Stockholm, Strasbourg, Stuttgart, Tampere, Vienna, Zurich	Rotterdam—The Hague	Katowice (region), Lisbon (region),	Berlin, Malmö (region)

Table 1: Classification of cities based on the size and functions of the different collaboration territories

Cities in bold: some type of metropolitan organization exists. As many cities did not supply enough detailed information, this table can only be regarded as a hypothesis. Polycentric FUAs are more complex and are in most cases part of the C or D categories: Frankfurt, Lille, Katowice, Brussels, Lyon, Rotterdam—The Hague, Malmö, BrabantStad and Zurich—at least—are fitting within this category.

¹There are two different levels smaller than the FUA around Helsinki: a common Environmental Service Authority for 4 municipalities and a common transportation authority for 7 municipalities.

²Lille has two levels that are smaller than the FUA and they operate several common services—for 85 municipalities—and a SCOT system for 124 municipalities. (The FUA would involve about 150 municipalities.)

³The Metropolitan Cooperation around Lyon consists of 4 metropolitan areas that are not connected directly (so this area is not exactly a FUA). They promote common policy development.

⁴Sofia agglomeration was defined in the Operational Programme Regional Development (2007–2013) as an area for strategic planning.

⁵In the Greater Helsinki area not really common services were organised, rather special contracts with well-defined targets in the area of social housing, homelessness services and employment programmes.

the largest share of the population in metropolitan regions are Spain (69.2 %), Denmark (69.0 %), Germany (67.5 %), the UK (66.2 %) and France (65.6 %)—predominantly the western part of the EU. (Eurostat 2018 quoted according to EPRS 2019)

How are such metropolitan areas governed? The *OECD Metropolitan Governance Survey*, conducted in 2014 across the globe in OECD countries in 263 metropolitan areas with more than 500 thousand inhabitants, explored three categories: metro areas with strong coordination by inter-municipal authorities, supra-municipal authorities or metropolitan cities; with weak informal/soft coordination; or with no coordination at all. The results show that these categories have roughly equal 1/3 share in OECD countries. (OECD 2014)

RESEARCH RESULTS ABOUT METROPOLITAN AREAS

Regarding the functional aspects of cooperation, very different types of links can be observed between the core city and its neighbouring municipalities. European cities differ substantially in this regard, as the following research results show.

In 2012, the *Eurocities Metropolitan Areas Working Group* collected information about the different territorial collaboration forms around 40 European cities. The *Metropolitan Areas in Action* survey has shown that in the majority of cities there are no institutions or strong collaborations existing in the spatial level of the functional urban area (row B in Table 1). In those, roughly one third, of the cities which came close to have some metropolitan cooperation (columns 4-5 in Table 1), two types of mismatch have been identified: cities where the metropolitan areas have governance structures but miss the strongest functions (cell B-4); and cities, which have strong strategic territorial cooperation but this does not cover the whole territory of the functional area (cell A-5). To handle these

problems, cities in the position of B-4 need to achieve 'functional expansion', while cities in the position of A-5 need to achieve a "territorial adjustment". In order to achieve such steps, bold and conscious public policies are needed, which can hardly be achieved without the support of the regional and national level. (EUROCITIES 2013)

In 2018, the *Metropolitan Research Institute Budapest* carried out a systematic analysis of the governance systems of six innovative European metropolitan areas for the *Àrea Metropolitana Barcelona* (Geróházi-Tosics 2018). The cases of Barcelona, Manchester and Stuttgart have shown that metropolitan level coordination might be achieved one the one hand by institutionalization, by establishing a metropolitan organization with independent functions and competencies, either as a new territorial government level or in the form of a strong institutional setting, on a fixed territorial basis with a sufficiently large range of competences. Another approach, illustrated by the cases of Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Zurich is procedural approach, building on collaboration and planning processes and agreements, which allow for coordinated activities within a sufficiently large metropolitan territory, although not necessarily in fixed territorial constellations. This second model is similar to the perception of *New Regionalism* (Kunc et al. 2021), focusing on voluntary cooperation, informal networking, and integration—for more details see e.g. the *ESPON SPIMA* project (ESPON 2018).

These two approaches are very different but not mutually exclusive, and elements of the other appear in both approaches. For example, the key element of the procedural approach is strategic and spatial planning, which is also an important aspect in the institutional approach, and vice versa: even though the existence of a strong institutional structure on the metropolitan level is specific to the institutional approach, the functional approach also strives for some forms of institutions, although in a much more flexible way. ►

Procedural metropolitan coordination			Institutionalized metropolitan coordination		
Amsterdam	Copenhagen	Zurich	Greater Manchester	Stuttgart	Barcelona
2.4 million inhabitants, 33 municipalities (2015)	2 million inhabitants, 34 municipalities one third of the national population	1.9 million inhabitants (2006), 238 municipalities one fifth of the national population	2.7 million inhabitants (2011), 10 boroughs	2.7 million inhabitants, 179 municipalities one quarter of the population of Baden-Württemberg	3.2 million inhabitants, 36 municipalities (AMB) 43% of the population of Catalonia
Informal, no representation worked out	No organisation	Each municipality + 8 cantons at the Metropolitan Conference, 8 representatives by the cantons and 8 by the municipalities: Metropolitan Council	Greater Manchester Combined Authority Councillors of the 10 boroughs are the council members + directly elected mayor	Region Stuttgart Directly elected members of the Assembly (election based on party lists)	AMB Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona Metropolitan Council with 90 metropolitan councillors (weighted representation)
Forum for bi- and multi-lateral negotiations	Strong spatial plan (Finger Plan) elaborated on national level	Spatial planning. Lobbying towards the central government. Pilot projects with metropolitan relevance	Public transport and highways, spatial planning, economic development, police, waste management, health care coordination, funds in social and housing topics	Public transport. Spatial planning. Economic development. Branding	Public transport, territorial planning, urban planning. Common services: water, waste, environment, slightly social and housing issues
No budget	No budget	Appr. 0.9 million EUR	Appr. 340 million EUR with direct competencies, about 2,2 billion EUR with all common services (in addition controls different funds and national sources)	Appr. 350 million EUR	P684 million EUR for the metropolitan administration (AMB); 1,7 billion EUR with all the metropolitan companies and institutions

Table 2: Main information about metropolitan areas of six European cities: population, governance system, functions and budget

In an abstract form, the dynamism of metropolitan development in growing urban areas can be outlined as follows. Collaborations develop in procedural way beyond the border of the administrative city through networking, and common activities like planning and marketing. After a time these collaborations achieve a form of institutionalization, covering a certain metropolitan area with new competences devolved to the new institution, mostly by national legislation. After a while the area of the new institutional arrangements proves again to be too small compared to real economic processes and a new process of procedural collaboration building starts on a new and enlarged metropolitan scale (sometimes, as in case of Amsterdam and Copenhagen, with the parallel “downgrading” of the former competencies in the former metropolitan area). This might again lead to an act of institutionalization on the larger territorial level—and these steps follow until metropolitan expansion is feasible, or the enlarged area would cover too large a share of the upper governmental level (usually the administrative region).

Thus, the results of the study indicate that these two approaches, although being very different, are not exclusionary and might even follow each other in time in the development of metropolitan relations of given cities. Moreover, tackling the problems of a metropolitan area might require a combination of the institutional and the procedural approaches and the application of different tools at the same time. Two recent *ESPON* studies also dealt with the topic of metropolitan areas. *ESPON SPIMA* (2016-17) explored the spatial dynamics and strategic planning in metropolitan areas, while *ESPON MISTA* (2019-20) tackled the relationship between industry and the city. Vienna was part of both projects as one of the stakeholder cities that initiated the research work.

METROPOLITAN EXAMPLES— COMPARABLE TO THE VIENNA SITUATION

When looking for comparative city examples, which can be relevant for Vienna, the most important characteristic of the city has to be taken into account. This is—besides being a large, monofunctional urban area—its administrative status: Vienna is a local municipality and state at the same time. This is a quite special situation, with some advantages but also disadvantages. In such cases, cities have strong functions because they are also states/regions/provinces/cantons. On the other hand these cities have usually very limited possibilities for procedural cooperation beyond their borders, as this would need cross-regional agreements with the other municipalities.

From the earlier mentioned research projects the cities which can be considered as comparative cases to Vienna are Berlin (city and state), Zurich (city and canton), Turin (city and province), Prague (city and region). All these cities constitute monofunctional urban areas and their “metropolitan stories” carry important messages for Vienna.

Berlin: Although in 1996 a popular referendum rejected the idea to merge Berlin with the surrounding Brandenburg, as a remnant of the unification efforts there is a joint planning authority existing for the two states. Also a common spatial development plan covers the entire area of the two states, although creating only a vague framework for manufacturing land use and locations. At a more local level a municipal neighbourhood forum exists with 4 informal working groups (North, South, East, West). They comprise the boroughs of Berlin and their bordering municipalities, having no formal power. They meet three times a year ▶

and in addition hold an annual conference where a specific topic is discussed in depth. So far the municipal neighbourhood forums have been paid exclusively by Berlin, while now there is a plan to turn these institutions into a registered non-profit organization and to require all its members to pay a small membership fee (of € 0,1 per inhabitant). This step would increase the stability of the organisation as it would then have a legal basis and formal statute, and the commitment of the involved partners would increase.

Zurich: The cooperation between the cities and the surrounding areas was very problematic in Switzerland and urban sprawl was an increasing problem. To fight this problem, the Swiss government defined metropolitan areas of the country and prescribed mandatory cooperation within them. One of these areas is the *Zurich Metropolitan Association*, including 1,9 million people in 8 cantons and 122 settlements, with Zurich (415.000 people) being the center. It took 7 years to build up the cooperation, which includes agreement on the regulation of growth and how to compensate those areas whose growth is limited. The agreement was achieved on the informal level of the planning conference of the 8 cantons, whose resolution is not binding, but will be gradually adopted by the 8 cantons which make binding decisions. Those cantons that do not implement the resolutions of the planning conference risk having their cantonal plan approved by the federal government. In this way, strategic spatial planning initiated by the national is used as meta-governance tool.

Turin: The Italian government established 14 Metropolitan Cities by a National Act in 2014, by merging the cities with their surrounding provinces. Turin Metropolitan City thus

comprises 316 municipalities. It is the most unbalanced among all metropolitan cities, as it has a large mountainous area with no links to the city. The metropolitan strategic plan sets the guidelines for metropolitan development in the entire territory. It is mandatory, has a duration of three years, but is updated annually. It has to be approved by the Metropolitan Council and the Mayors Assembly of the 11 homogeneous zones of the metropolitan city. The 316 municipalities are developing their General Urban Plans, which must be in compliance with the metropolitan plans. These plans are a key instrument in Italy, allowing municipalities to designate land-uses for a ten-year period.

Prague: The city is a *NUTS3* region, surrounded by the Central Moravian region. The cooperation across the city border has always been a huge problem. For the 2014-2020 European funding programme, the Czech Republic has chosen to use the *Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI)* funding instrument on a metropolitan level. A national proposal for the delimitation of the seven largest metropolitan areas and six smaller urban areas was elaborated. This national *ITI* framework provides a guideline for the development of the *ITI* programming documents, the operation of the managing authority and the secretariat, and on the calls for proposals. The Prague delimitation of the *ITI*-based metropolitan covers 515 settlements (315 as inner ring, 199 as outer ring). A strategy has been prepared for this area, containing only those issues that can be covered by EU funds both in Prague (a “more developed region” in EU cohesion terms) and Central Bohemia (“a less developed region”). Consequently, the strategy focuses on three topics: transport and mobility, environment and the regional education system. Prague *ITI* has a funding of €145 million and 85% of the *ITI* funds must

be used outside of the capital, in the less developed areas. The working group, which participated in the preparation of the *ITI* and takes part in preparing the calls for proposals and the evaluation processes, consists of representatives of both Prague and the region. Of the four cities discussed, Turin can be considered as belonging to the institutional model, Zurich to the procedural model, while Berlin and Prague are mixed cases, with only partial metropolitan institutions. In each of them some kind of metropolitan coordination can be observed, although such cooperation has to be established not only across the city border but also across regional borders. To overcome this difficulty, some kind of intervention of the national government was needed in each case.

CONCLUSION: THE IMPORTANCE OF METROPOLITAN COOPERATION AND THE CASE OF VIENNA

In view of the growing challenges and threats (such as climate change, demographic change, and the recent sudden crises such as the pandemic and the energy crisis), territorial cooperation in large urban areas is more important than ever to ensure sustainability and resilience of future development. Besides efforts from below, democratic and inclusive national policies are needed, led by progressive national governments that consider the cities as allies, not enemies, in the steering of future development.

The city examples discussed suggest that Vienna might develop different ideas for metropolitan cooperation. It could aim at strengthening the neighbourhood forums and trying to initiate a joint planning body (as in the Berlin example). It could pursue a joint planning conference with the surrounding region (as in the

Zurich example). It could seek an *ITI*-type coordinated development with the functional urban area (as in the Prague example). The Turin example is probably the least relevant, as it would need a decision by the central government to merge the surrounding administrative units with the city.

It is a fact that the federal structure of Austria is very strong, which means that all these options for cooperation within the Vienna metropolitan area would need a strong support, even an initiative of the central government, directly or indirectly enforcing the cooperation between Vienna and Lower Austria regarding the metropolitan area. At the moment, however, there is no indication that the Austrian government would take steps to support metropolitan cooperations across the regional borders.

So is it totally hopeless for Vienna to come up with metropolitan ideas along the lines of the European examples discussed? Probably not, as the urgency to become carbon neutral and the recent EU efforts to reach the ambitious goals of the *Green New Deal*, the *Fit for 55* and the *Farm to Fork* strategies (just to name a few) would all require stronger collaborations across metropolitan areas. This might also lead to a change in the Austrian national position, which could in turn create better opportunities for metropolitan cooperation in the Vienna metropolitan area.

Until this change happens, Vienna has to strive for “cooperation from below”, aiming to strengthen the functional, procedural links to the neighbouring municipalities. The city examples analysed in this article might provide a good basis for such efforts. ■