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Metropolitan responses to the current territorial challenges in Europe

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Foreword

It is our pleasure to present the results of the side event, Metropolitan Responses to the Current Territorial Challenges in Europe, jointly organised in Turin on 15 March 2023 by the Metropolitan City of Turin, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area and the European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA) network. This event was organised in the framework of the 5th edition of the Cities Forum, a biennial event of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy that this year focused on green and just transitions in cities. The aim of this side event, attended by over one hundred people, was to construct new arguments in favour of the role of metropolitan areas in Europe as a response to the European Green Deal and the energy and social challenges currently facing our metropolises.

For the past two years, Europe's metropolitan areas, as drivers of development and opportunities, have been undergoing a process of economic and social recovery in the aftermath of COVID-19. In addition, the energy crisis and high levels of uncertainty brought about by the war in Ukraine are reshaping the day-to-day reality of our territories. In this context, the metropolitan areas of Europe need to develop a stronger, more united voice to find solutions to these common challenges. Adaptation and resilience strategies are essential to the transformation of our metropolitan areas into green, just and sustainable territories for all.

The EMA network unites 57 metropolitan cities and areas that represent more than 122 million inhabitants, with new European metropolitan areas expressing their interest in joining the network every year. The side event in Turin provided a forum for knowledge exchange to representatives from nine European metropolises, who participated in two thematic round tables. The first of these showcased innovative solutions to the implementation of European climate policy by the metropolises of Turin, Barcelona, Lyon, Venice, and Genoa. Various good practices were presented in relation to urban greening, air quality management, sustainable mobility, and localised SDGs. The second-round table centred on the economic recovery of metropolitan territories and the role of the Cohesion Policy, through the experiences of the metropolitan areas of the Helsinki Uusimaa Region, Wrocław, Bologna, and Milan. We hope you enjoy reading this publication, which compiles the main statements made by the participants at the EMA side event in Turin.

Jacopo Suppo, *Vice-president of the Metropolitan City of Turin*

Elisenda Alamany, *Vice-president for International Relations and Digital Metropolis of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area*



Metropolitan responses to the current territorial challenges in Europe



From left to right: Michele Fassinotti, Massimo Pronio, Jacopo Suppo, Mara Cossu, Jacopo Chiara

First round table: European climate policy and metropolitan solutions in practice

Jacopo Suppo

Deputy Mayor, Metropolitan City of Turin

In the context of the debates that will take place on 16–17 March at the Turin Cities Forum, organised by the European Commission, it is important to propose a consideration of the role of Europe's metropolitan areas as a response to the Green Deal, and to the main social, environmental and economic challenges to which our territories must respond, now and in the years to come.

The complexity of the challenges faced by local governments, and the centrality they increasingly assume in global governance, make moments such as this meeting necessary, and is the reason for participation in formal or informal networks such as the EMA, established in 2015 as a forum for political leaders from major European cities and metropolitan areas to engage in political dialogue between metropolitan areas, cities, European institutions and national governments.

The European Union is a region in which metropolitan areas play an important role that is recognised by the European Commission, the European Parliament and Committee of the Regions, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). Metropolitan areas in Europe, as drivers of development and opportunity, have been deeply affected by the effects of the pandemic over the previous two years.

Furthermore, the current economic and energy crisis and the uncertainty generated by the war in Ukraine are reshaping the daily reality of our territories.

Today, the Metropolitan City of Turin will share the experience of its Agenda for Sustainable Development. Indeed, in Italy, metropolitan cities have been engaged

by the Ministry for the Environment and Energy Security in a broad process of territorialisation of global (2030 Agenda), European (Green Deal) and national (National Strategy for Sustainable Development) objectives, whereby regional strategies and metropolitan agendas for sustainable development are defined and implemented. The interaction between different institutional levels for improving policies and responding to global challenges is situated within the broader framework of policy coherence already outlined by the OECD.

The Agenda for Sustainable Development of the Metropolitan City of Turin and its territory (AMSvS), approved by the Metropolitan Council on 22 December last year, defines a scenario of change for the socio-economic development of the territory, within a timeframe defined on a global and European scale.

The year 2030 is the first deadline, followed by 2050, taking into account the complexity of transitions for certain goals or outcomes to be achieved.

The process of transition to accomplish objectives that affect all dimensions of development (socio-economic and environmental), already partially in progress, must seize the opportunities and address the challenges of a new model of land development that structurally and systemically confronts the issues of climate change, inequality, health, and the necessary cultural changes.

Over the past two years, hundreds of stakeholders from governmental organisations (including the Metropolitan City of Turin and Region and the National Association of Italian City Councils), universities, research institutions, trade and professional associations, foundations and other associations, have asked the same question: what can the metropolitan territory do to usefully support the paradigm shift needed to pursue the sustainable development goals of the Piedmont system?

From this perspective:

a) the 21 missions of the AMSvS represent the DIRECTIONS OF CHANGE, referring to areas relevant to the metropolitan territorial system;

b) the 79 areas of intervention represent the SPACES OF ACTION in which to operate and, through planning and design, promote the changes identified in the missions.

The missions and the areas of intervention are broadly correlated in that they both identify areas of work in which the three dimensions of economic development, social development, and environmental preservation and enhancement are interwoven and simultaneously pursued.

With our roundtable as a reference, the Agenda succinctly identifies missions and areas of focus as follows:

- conversion of the production system, requiring investment in gradual changes and based on careful analysis of the conditions that make these possible, aiming to strike a balance between economic, environmental and social sustainability, increasing competitiveness and at the same time reducing environmental impact (including climate-changing effects) and social inequalities.
- energy transition process, i.e., increased share of renewable sources in the energy mix for the production of electricity and heat, aimed primarily at reducing the emissions of climate-changing gases and other pollutants, as well as promoting a secure and affordable energy supply, creating new opportunities for growth and employment and reducing import dependence.
- analysis of services produced by natural capital in relation to the impacts of pressures – such as climate change, land consumption and pollution – that amplify damage to the economy and society: increasing adaptive capacity, i.e., the set of resources that can be used and appropriately organised to cope with the consequences of change, is strategic in a context strongly affected by climate change, the impacts and costs of which are already evident in Piedmont's natural environment and socio-economic systems.

**Rosa Suriñach**

Metropolitan Councillor, Barcelona Metropolitan Area

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area shares many challenges and possible solutions with most of our metropolitan partners from all over Europe, and our meetings are always a good opportunity to exchange experiences and lessons learned to help us improve our policies and build a better Europe for all.

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) is composed of 36 municipalities and has 3.2 million inhabitants, 1.6 million of whom live in the city of Barcelona. In common with the majority of Europe's metropolitan areas, the AMB is relatively new, having been legally constituted in 2010, when a political decision was taken to create a

single authority that united the municipalities, replacing the existing environmental agency and the metropolitan transport agency. Right now, the AMB is in charge of transportation, water management, waste management, environment, housing and urban planning. Therefore, our institution manages many competencies directly related to services that affect our citizens on a daily basis.

One of the main challenges we face is air quality. It is important to understand that our metropolitan area is mainly urban, with a high population density and therefore some of the densest traffic in the whole of Europe: around six thousand vehicles per square

kilometre. Evidently, this translates into high pollution levels. Since 2010, Barcelona has exceeded the permitted pollution levels established by the EU. Although the data indicate that air quality is improving, the region is still far from staying within the limits recommended by the World Health Organization, not to mention the fact that our region still records over 3,000 premature deaths annually due to air pollution.

All these issues have become chronic over the past decades. The difference is that our institutions now have data and scientific studies proving that all these externalities cause serious harm to the population. Up until now, health has not been a primary variable in urban planning and city mobility considerations, but this is no longer acceptable. Our citizens have a high level of sensibility and awareness of this topic, and our institutions must live up to the challenge.

One of the main measures the AMB has successfully implemented is the low emissions zone (LEZ). Many other cities in Europe have been enforcing similar measures, but in our case the Barcelona LEZ covers the city of Barcelona as well as several municipalities around it. With an extension of more than 95 square kilometres, it is one of the largest LEZ in Europe.

The LEZ has successfully reduced the use of private vehicles, adapted the public space to climate change and improved air quality. Now it is impossible for the most polluting cars to enter the LEZ during working hours from Monday to Friday.

One of the main issues the government had to tackle was how to implement the LEZ; negotiation with civil society played an important role. The LEZ was launched at the beginning of 2020, and the number of exemptions has increased over the past three years, in response to complaints from the community. People with reduced mobility, as well as those entering the city centre due to an emergency or for essential services, are exempt from LEZ rules.

European funds have played a fundamental role in fostering the deployment of the AMB's LEZ. The first phase was financed through the ERDF fund, receiving

1,542,464 euros in grants from a total budget of 3,725,833 euros. The initial project included studies, technical design, signage deployment, measures for managing and controlling traffic restrictions on Barcelona ring roads, a technological platform for managing the LEZ, and information and awareness-raising campaigns targeting the general public.

The second phase has a total budget of 60,397,517 euros, 40 million euros of which derive from NextGenerationEU funds. The main objective is to expand the LEZ to at least 15 municipalities, while improving the public transport system, fostering sustainable mobility, promoting electric mobility, intermodality, and digitalisation of the information system.

One of the main positive outcomes of the Barcelona LEZ is that Spanish law now requires all Spanish towns and cities with a population of more than 50 thousand inhabitants to introduce a low emissions zone.

Although the LEZ has allowed the metropolitan area of Barcelona to accelerate the modernisation of its fleet vehicles, this process needs to be accompanied by improved public transport and more active mobility, including the use of bicycles. Hence, the LEZ is accompanied by a package of complementary measures designed to promote sustainable mobility, improve bicycle infrastructure and create a new metropolitan public bike share scheme. This understanding of new ways of mobility also supports all other measures aimed at enhancing air quality.



From left to right: H  l  ne Dromain, Jacopo Suppo

H  l  ne Dromain

Vice-president, Lyon M  tropole

One of our main goals is to create a greener and more sustainable metropolis. There are 59 communities in the Lyon M  tropole and 1.4 million inhabitants. Biodiversity should be protected to enhance the well-being of those inhabitants and fight climate change. It is known that trees have a significant impact on climate. Twenty-nine per cent of local plants have disappeared in less than 20 years. Conversely, we are seeing a real demand for nature. Especially after the COVID-19 crisis, people want to get back to nature, and our institutions must preserve it.

Our metropolitan area enjoys great diversity in its distribution of natural parks and green areas. Although there are few green spaces in the centre and the eastern part of the Lyon M  tropole, there is a large green area in the western part. It is our responsibility to recreate green corridors and spaces. With this in mind, in 2021 our administration drafted a Nature Plan, part of which proposes actions for pollinators. Pollinating insects are

crucial for the production of many food products. In accordance with our action plan for pollinators, quiet spaces for insects to grow and prosper have been created.

Another part of the plan is the creation of urban forests. The first urban forest in the metropolis was inaugurated in Saint-Priest, in the east. In the space of two hectares, two thousand trees and six hundred shrubs and flowers were planted. The creation of this urban forest had three objectives: fight against heat waves, provide inhabitants with rapid access to nature, and promote animal diversity.

Additionally, the plan aims to support the greening of collective housing and private property, since 70 % of the M  tropole's vegetation is privately owned. The footprint of the collective housing is therefore a major asset for growing plants. In its Nature Plan, the Lyon M  tropole has deployed key support by providing knowledge and financial aid to private properties, incentivising them to increase the number of trees.

Another feature of the plan is the creation of green and blue grids. A number of green parcels currently exist, but animals and insects are unable to move and reproduce between them. The idea of the green grid is to recreate the continuity of this territory. Twelve green corridors have therefore been identified, the restoration of which is a priority.

The final element of the plan is the preservation of nature through the use of planning tools. Protecting biodiversity means maintaining sufficient space to allow the expression of functional biodiversity. Hence, the Lyon Métropole is experimenting with innovative approaches, new heatwave-resistant plant species, climate adaptation, diversified space management and new vegetation techniques that use less water.

Finally, it is important to stress that the European Commission must help the European metropolises to finance their public policies. The Lyon Métropole used Cohesion Policy funds to finance this kind of action. Funds were obtained from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to help depollute and rehabilitate the Pierre-Bénite brownfield, situated in an important international space dedicated to the chemical industry. The objective of the project was to experiment with new ways of depolluting soil and redefine its use and reuse.

The Lyon Métropole has a further new opportunity to finance our project with the new European programmes for 2021–2027. The 2021–2027 regional programme of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes is prioritising energy and environmental transition and aims to assign 25 million euros to the preservation and restoration of blue and green infrastructure, recycling, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. This fund and the support of European institutions are needed to fast forward our action.



From left to right: Massimo Gattolin, H  l  ne Dromain

Massimo Gattolin

Environmental Protection and Promotion Coordination Service and Civil Protection, Metropolitan City of Venice

Today, the question of the territorial identity and functions of the Metropolitan City of Venice in Northeast Italy remains open and is particularly important.

It is in this context that the Plan to Agenda for Sustainable Development (PAGE.S.) project was conceived with the aim of drafting a Metropolitan Agenda for Sustainable Development (MASD) in line with the metropolitan cities' planning tool, the Metropolitan Strategic Plan (MSP). The objective was to incorporate a robust reference to the 2030 Agenda Goals, scaled up and supported by a monitoring system, into the metropolitan area's development planning process.

Selection of the SDGs and main targets for implementation of sustainability policies – to which the appropriate indicators will be matched as locally as possible as the project advances – was carried out through a two-phase process involving the PAGE.S. group in the first phase, and the various sectors of the administration represented on the steering committee in the second.

The first result of the process was a shortlist of potential targets, leading to the selection of those deemed the most suitable to represent the SDGs for the authority, at metropolitan level and among stakeholders called upon to weigh in on the MSP.

A weighting framework of SDGs and related targets was developed for the Metropolitan City of Venice (CMVe), taking into account the general guidelines of the MSP. In this way, the targets selected are consistent with the specificities of the Venetian territory within the regional, national and international context.

The MASD and its related SDGs are structured from this perspective, beginning with the approval of the three general strands of the MSP: identity, development and resilience. These strands converge to define "metropolitan well-being" through the improvement of citizens' quality of life and a robust economic system which has a positive relationship with the natural

environment and its resources. The aim of the MASD is to interconnect these three principles and policy lines with specific goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Regarding the theme of identity, the focus is on the quality of services offered to municipalities, business associations and citizens through the implementation of innovative policies and services that require renewed forms of governance. The future identity of the CMVe will therefore be generated through a stronger coordinating role at metropolitan level between institutions, business associations, third sector entities and citizens as required by the 2030 Agenda, as well as through Italy's current National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). For these reasons, SDG 17 was selected, with three targets: 17.14, 17.17 and 17.19. The identification of SDG 17 at the local scale is also a significant element, as it is able to measure the capacity of a local administrations system to operate according to shared, or at least coordinated (through the MSP), objectives.

The second strategic line of the MSP is the development of the metropolitan territory according to the characteristics of sustainability and integration across economic, social and environmental dimensions. This urban model must support and promote urban regeneration processes without land consumption, the energy requalification of buildings, industrial processes oriented towards the circular economy, and the development of sustainable mobility, and must be capable of responding to new and old poverty in an inclusive manner. The natural benchmark target is SDG 11, "Sustainable cities and communities", which is closely related to SDGs 8, "Decent work and economic growth"; 9, "Industry, innovation and infrastructure"; and 15, "Life on land". The following targets have been selected: 11.2, 11.4 and 11.6.

Finally, there is resilience, understood as transformative resilience and hence as an opportunity to redesign socio-economic and infrastructural development in the face of the climate crisis, to which the CMVe is particularly vulnerable due to its specific characteristics (lagoon and coastal area, cultural heritage, tourist vocation, etc.). This perspective calls for climate change adaptation strategies.

Our benchmark objective is certainly SDG 13, "Climate action", closely linked to SDGs 15, "Life on land", and 4, "Quality education", in relation to school buildings and certain existing projects. In connection with this, targets 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 15.2, 15.3, 15.9, 4.a and 4.7 were selected.

The CMVe has created the MASD as a tool through which to articulate the vision and objectives of the MSP within new regulatory frameworks at international, European, national and regional levels, as a prerequisite to accessing the resources of the PNRR. The MASD will provide useful support to the MSP, lend concreteness to the plan itself because it is built on the main initiatives and projects at metropolitan level, and enable the tracking of progress and execution of actions undertaken and their economic, social and environmental impact.

A further goal of the PAGE.S. Project was the development of a web platform (defined "Dashboard") to connect the SDGs (and related indicators) to the Single Programming Document for both the metropolitan city and the municipalities of the territory, the point of contact between the PAGE.S. Project and the MSP.

The objective was therefore the definition of a methodology to integrate the 17 SDGs in all the planning activities of the authority and its municipalities by connecting them to their strategic goals and operational objectives.

This web platform, shared with local institutions, allows the descriptive sections of the metropolitan and general context of the municipalities to be shared in a single solution, and, in a customised section, the overlap of the three-year programme with the strategic and operational objectives aligned to the SDGs.

In this way, it will be possible to integrate the 2030 Agenda into single policy documents, in both metropolitan and municipal planning. This interconnection between authorities will also allow metropolitan strategic planning to be adapted to the specific needs of the territory.



From left to right: Paolo Sinisi, Rosa Suriñach

Paolo Sinisi

Governance Department, Metropolitan City of Genoa

For the Metropolitan City of Genoa (CMGe), the year 2022 was a year in which the pandemic brought about the rethinking of all its strategies. The strategic plan is the tool with which to outline this new cross-cutting vision for other metropolitan planning tools, in the awareness that sustainable and effective strategic planning requires an organic approach: a territorial plan (PTG), a sustainable urban mobility plan (PUMS), a bicycle mobility plan (Biciplan), a waste management plan, management plans for special areas of conservation (SACs), and reference also to the strategic section of the single policy document (DUP).

The CMGe's Sustainable Development Agenda was developed to reorient the objectives and actions of the Metropolitan Strategic Plan (MSP) towards environmental, social and economic sustainability. The CMGe's Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (PUMS) and bicycle mobility plan (Biciplan) also propose a sustainable vision of the entire urban mobility system

in the metropolitan area. These guidelines constitute the foundation upon which the financial planning documents have been built, and the projects proposed for the different funding lines of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) have been selected.

The sustainable development strategies were also based on an analysis of the primary themes underpinning the strategic documents of our metropolitan territory's municipalities. The following keywords emerged from these documents: hydrogeological risk mitigation, naturalness understood as the protection of natural and cultural heritage, environmental and landscape quality, energy efficiency, public green use, welfare and sports, and associations.

The metropolitan strategic plan aims to not only strengthen the circular economy and guarantee the optimal use of water, but above all to develop a sustainable mobility system on the metropolitan

scale, since the mobility, accessibility and safety of infrastructures are the territory's critical issues, whose resolution would significantly contribute to climate change adaptation, especially in terms of CO₂ reduction.

Therefore, the following key objectives have been identified:

- to strengthen local public transport, improve service quality and increase the number of passengers using public transport by 18% by 2026;
- to integrate the different transport systems, including rail, and give coherence to the parking system by focusing on modal interchange, and create an additional capacity of more than 400 parking spaces for the interchange between public and private mobility by 2027;
- to develop cycle and pedestrian mobility, encouraging in particular the use of bicycles for systematic travel (home–work and home–school);
- to study the feasibility of a public transport service “by sea”, which could offer an alternative to private transport, proposing innovative solutions from a technological point of view for the design of vessels, with a view to environmental sustainability and as a prerequisite for access to funding for their construction.

The Metropolitan City of Genoa, thanks to funding from the Ministry of the Environment, has developed the Sustainable Metropolitan Agenda, which includes among its pilot actions the definition of a “sustainable metropolitan space model”, with replicability and scalability characteristics, in different metropolitan territorial contexts (homogeneous, urban and suburban), for coastal or inland areas.

The model integrates several sustainable and mutually synergetic lines of action consistent with the goals of the 2030 Agenda and defines criteria related to infrastructure (accessibility), people (usability), and space design (quality, naturalness, resilience and adaptation to climate change), proposing the use of nature-based solutions (NBS). The welfare model (participatory processes and management models) crosses the dimensions, providing a tool with which to create socially and economically sustainable spaces.

The metropolitan agenda project identifies spatial governance tools oriented towards sustainable development objectives at the level of a so-called “widespread metropolitan city”. The metropolitan cities of Genoa, Venice, Milan and Turin have in fact launched a system for the exchange of best practices and collaboration on issues of common interest, jointly organising dissemination and communication events in the different territories. An open, shared analysis and monitoring dashboard was defined and, with the CREIAMO PA project, the exchange was extended to all 14 Italian metropolitan cities, which collaborated to define a matrix of National Strategy indicators.

Drawing on the collaboration of “widespread metropolitan city”, the CMGe has created the Datalab, an integrated monitoring tool for the Metropolitan Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (PUMS). The Datalab is a structured information and data collection system for up-to-date analysis of the metropolitan territory, as well as for integrated monitoring of the achievement of sustainability objectives, including those set out in the metropolitan PUMS.



From left to right: Michele Fassinotti, Raffaella Quitadamo, Ossi Savolainen, Lukasz Medeksza, Lucia Ferroni

Second round table: Meeting the challenge of economic recovery in the metropolitan territories

Ossi Savolainen

Regional Mayor, Helsinki Uusimaa Region

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, our region was isolated from other areas of Finland for many months. The Helsinki Uusimaa Region received a much smaller share of Recovery and Development Funds than we usually received in normal times. For this reason, negative financial results were obtained in Finland that year.

However, although the Helsinki Uusimaa Region has recovered relatively well after the pandemic, as have the other regions of Finland, we are experiencing persistent challenges in our post-pandemic recovery. Unemployment has been decreasing a little more slowly in our region than in other regions; today it stands at about 9.5 %, which is still higher than the pre-pandemic indicator of 7 %.

At the same time, our country is facing a serious workforce deficit. Manufacturing companies, in the engineering sector above all, are unable to find skilled workers. In the service sector, many private and public companies have serious problems as they struggle to find clients. Healthcare centres, restaurants and tourist centres, for example, are almost empty and struggling to remain afloat.

Furthermore, immigration cannot provide us with a rapid solution because, in the international competition for highly qualified employees, Finland is still lagging behind many countries due to our domestic bureaucracy. It has been more than 30 years, and still we have insufficient educational services for foreign people; Finland is a small country, and very few people speak the Finnish language.

On the positive side, our territory received support from the European Commission, which understood our needs as an urban region. Sadly, our own government did not do the same, allocating funding mostly to the sparsely populated areas in the eastern and northern parts of Finland. Those regions were able to receive the funds at the expense of the Helsinki Uusimaa Region, the only progressive region in Finland.

Nowadays, European programmes are our main source of funding. In the last programming period, our institution received funding worth about 1 billion euros, and our goal for the current period is to raise that amount to 1.5 billion euros. This means that we need to maintain

equilateral, profound cooperation within our region and internationally, and that is why we need fruitful cooperation with other municipalities in Europe, especially with big cities, metropolitan areas and regions.

Our goal in the Helsinki Uusimaa Region is to increase our research, development and investment to 5 % or even 6 % of our GDP, because Finland has set the goal of increasing that figure to 4 % of the national average. This means that we need to make new investments worth 300 million euros year.

The Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council does not operate directly with individual companies but has influence over the municipalities and other stakeholders, and the region's business environment is functional and attractive to start-ups.

We are promoting the region's interests through political advocacy at EU level, and we work closely with entrepreneurial and business organisations, as well as universities of applied sciences and research institutes, with a view to developing the region's innovation potential.

Thanks to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and national funding, we have financed projects and promoted the operating environment of companies in the region. However, directly supporting investments in private companies is not possible in our region, although it is permitted in the other 70 regions of Finland. Undoubtedly, the current situation poses a significant challenge. Nevertheless, I remain optimistic about the future, and I believe that economic recovery can be achieved by implementing our programme.



From left to right: Lukasz Medeksza, Michele Fassinotti

Lukasz Medeksza

Representative of Wrocław and the Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas (METREX)

Wrocław is a city in south-western Poland; officially, it has 680,000 inhabitants. However, a couple of years ago we already suspected that the real number was much higher, probably 840,000 people. Russia's invasion of Ukraine was then followed by a huge influx of refugees in Poland's major cities, including Wrocław. Our sources indicate that this new wave of refugees brought as many as 150,000 refugees to Wrocław. Before the invasion, we already had around 100,000 migrants from Ukraine, so now we have around 250,000 Ukrainians. This puts the Ukrainian migrants in the position of a substantial minority of up to 20% of the city's population. Evidently this creates an immense challenge for the municipal authorities, as well as for the regional and national ones.

As far as the metropolitan government is concerned, immigration is a complex issue since Poland has only one formalised metropolitan area. This means that the refugee problem is handled at either the municipal or the national level. In terms of metropolitan cooperation, our institution is in touch with other councils from the metropolitan area, but there are no formal instruments or separate funds to deal with the problem.

The phenomenon of this influx of migrants from Ukraine and Poland is that most of the migrants do not ask for help from refugee centres, turning instead to people they know: relatives, friends, etc. They are able to find accommodation on their own, so there are no large refugee centres in Wrocław or other major cities. Approximately 3,000 accommodation spaces have been provided for refugees, meeting the required capacity.

Education in the region is facing a major challenge. In the current school year, the city of Wrocław is accommodating a substantial number of pupils – around 20,000 – from Ukraine. However, only a minority of these Ukrainian students have integrated into the local educational system, with many opting for remote attendance at Ukrainian schools. Consequently, the establishment of online education centres has been necessary to cater to those following the Ukrainian curriculum. This situation has prompted the need to consider additional school facilities. Looking ahead, the city anticipates addressing housing and other related infrastructure concerns due to the dynamic growth in the local population.

Our administration is also very active in the Union of Polish Metropolises organisation. Last year, this union prepared two analyses of the migration situation. When these two waves of research were compared, the union discovered that the Ukrainian migrants in the first wave went mainly to the major cities and metropolitan areas. Later, the trend changed as the refugees began to choose between particular cities. The report showed that two Polish cities were attracting more refugees from Ukraine, while the number of Ukrainian refugees in other cities was falling. Those two cities were Warsaw and Wrocław. On the one hand, it is good news that new inhabitants come to Wrocław; but, on the other, it shows the scope of the challenge we face.

In the future, the question of citizens' rights for these migrant people will have to be addressed and, quite apart from the infrastructural challenges, other kinds of problems of equal importance will arise. Just imagine that 30% of a city's population has no voting rights and cannot be the subject of public policies. This will have to change somehow, and the decisions will have to be made at national level. As local governments and major city authorities, we are constantly in touch with the national government. Last year, a round table on refugees was organised in Wrocław to discuss ideas on how to address the issue and determine what needs to be done in different areas of life. Hopefully this table will inspire long-term decisions and actions at national level.

In Wrocław, we conducted a poll among the Ukrainian refugees, our potential future inhabitants, asking them how they imagined the future of the city; the results of the poll have not yet been published.

All of this is happening during times of serious financial challenges for Polish local governments due to changes in Polish fiscal law. The biggest cities have lost huge amounts of money as well as a number of policy instruments. Hence, two crises are being confronted simultaneously: the influx of refugees and the shrinking of municipal budgets.

Now a new problem has arisen in that, for political reasons, Poland has still not received access to recovery funds. Another issue is that the Lower Silesia region

has become a transition region, and as such will be able to receive funding for only 70% of its investments, leaving 30% to self-funding. Considering the financial situation of our local governments, this goal seems quite impossible to reach.

The profound nature of the current challenges leads to the realisation that the Cohesion Policy is outdated. The funds, instruments, indicators and goals of the policy do not match the challenges of the present. Significantly more investment is needed for our educational infrastructure alone. Similarly, investments in housing and transportation systems lack support from the existing Cohesion Policy. Consequently, we are directing our efforts towards international lobbying for the formalisation of the metropolitan level of governance. Our advocacy includes seeking funding and, via METREX, we are also lobbying to strengthen the metropolitan dimension of the European Union.



From left to right: Lucia Ferroni, Michele Fassinotti

Lucia Ferroni

*Coordination of the Metropolitan Strategic Plan,
Metropolitan City of Bologna*

The Metropolitan City of Bologna has long since set out on a path of commitment to sustainability, both in terms of territorial protection and in the active involvement of all stakeholders, and through the definition of objectives and indicators to measure achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda. Promoter of the Bologna Charter for the Environment in 2017, the Metropolitan City drew up the “Agenda 2.0 for Sustainable Development” as part of a collaboration agreement between the Metropolitan City and the Ministry for Ecological Transition. The Agenda 2.0 is a document that is open to constant updates; it is not intended to be an additional planning tool, but rather a frame of reference in constant interaction with metropolitan and sector planning and programming tools (e.g., MSP, PUMS or the Metropolitan Territorial Plan (PTM)), in line with national and regional strategies.

The goal is the greening of the entire territory with environmental, economic, and social objectives and

indicators that can be measured in time and space; and the creation of an integrated multi-level system of territorial agendas for sustainable development, embedded in the planning cycle of the authorities (DEF, DEFR, DUP), thus creating a unified framework of their strategies and priorities. An example of this is the Metropolitan Pact for Work and Sustainable Development (MPWSD), signed by 51 public and private stakeholders on 13 January 2021.

The MPWSD, signed by all the social and institutional actors in the territory, brings together policies capable of responding to new needs, while promoting sustainable growth and development consistent with the objectives of Agenda 2.0. It is divided into two areas, emergency management and priority strategic projects, that cover broad time horizons and which, in their implementation, complement each other and generate synergies to achieve sustainability objectives. The MPWSD is a pact inspired by a “development vision”, built cooperatively

and based on sector plans and programmes and the Metropolitan Strategic Plan (MSP) 2.0. Sustainability, inclusiveness and attractiveness are the founding dimensions of this vision, pursued by the MSP 2.0 as a guiding tool created by and for the territory itself, considering the characteristics and peculiarities of the population, territory, economy and society of the entire metropolitan area.

Recent years of economic and social crisis have increasingly contributed to strengthening awareness of the central role of territories, both in facing the emergency and in sharing and building actions and projects for sustainable development and growth. There can be no change without the central role they play, taking into account also the funding opportunities offered by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) and the new 2021–2027 European funds programmes. The MPWSD, moving in this direction, identifies a series of actions aimed at managing the emergency phase to respond to needs that require and allow for immediate interventions, but to then continue and consolidate in the medium to long term through the identification of priority strategic projects. In addition, the MPWSD identifies a series of instruments to carry forward emergency actions and projects: the Metropolitan Community Fund, Together for Work, the Metropolitan Equalisation Fund, and the Regeneration Plans and Programmes.

Three of the most significant actions carried out under the MPWSD to address economic recovery are listed below.

- The Economic Recovery Table as an institutional place for consultation between businesses and workers to safeguard employment and productive activities. It is therefore a place for dialogue between the Metropolitan City and other territorial authorities, the Chamber of Commerce, trade associations, trade unions and, in general, all those who have a role in identifying actions to tackle crises in the sectors most affected by the effects of the post-pandemic economic and social crisis. The table aims to act according to preventive and strategic logic, to define lines of support and to elaborate, from a metropolitan territorial perspective, possible proposals to strengthen the productive fabric with the aim of supporting recovery, growth and economic and social development. The table also aims to create a synthesis point for monitoring economic and employment dynamics, providing an up-to-date knowledge base for the elaboration of possible interventions such as the identification of actions to support and qualify employment and to accompany the transformation processes of the supply chains, paying particular attention to some of the most vulnerable groups (women and young people, for example).
- Together for Work is a project for the integration into the workplace of people who need support in their search for employment. The project also supports basic and specific training, boosts motivation and guarantees ad hoc tutoring within companies. The project is the result of a collaboration between the municipality, the Metropolitan City and the Archdiocese of Bologna; in 2021, the Emilia-Romagna Region also joined the collaboration. The network includes associations, trade unions and the non-profit sector in its efforts to become an effective tool for dialogue between labour supply and demand in Bologna.
- The Community Fund was set up in 2020 as a new metropolitan welfare tool that collects resources, goods, projects and ideas to meet people's economic and social needs, initially in response to the COVID-19 emergency. Since its inception, projects have been implemented in different fields of intervention, with activities that contribute to the strengthening of territorial networks against poverty in the metropolitan area of Bologna. The fund is promoted by the Metropolitan City Council in cooperation with the municipalities, together with trade unions, enterprises and their associations, investee companies, the third sector, foundations, and public and private stakeholders.

Raffaella Quitadamo*Waste and Reclamation Sector, Metropolitan City of Milan*

Metropolitan cities are intermediate institutions that are the custodians of numerous functions in the environmental field, including those delegated by the regions, in an operational context beset by organisational and management difficulties after the national reforms.

In an enthusiastic and constructive mood, this contribution aims to outline a synthesis of metropolitan responses to current territorial challenges in Europe, and to explain the trajectory of actions to achieve a circular economy, through the initiatives of the Metropolitan City of Milan (CMMI). The starting point is to briefly reconstruct the process that led the CMMI, in December 2022, to approve the Urban Metropolitan Agenda for Sustainable Development.

After the adoption of the United Nations 2030 Agenda, the CMMI felt a strong responsibility to make a commitment to the future, at its own level of governance, starting right then and there. With the aim of territorialisation of goals and targets, it took steps to build a tool for growth that also had an identity connotation for the authority, an expression of an all-encompassing challenge, so much so that it became one of the objectives of the strategic plan.

In 2019, a collaboration agreement was signed with the Ministry for Ecological Transition to define specific actions aimed at achieving the objectives of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development.

The work was carried out through the creation of internal governance, with a steering committee and a working group across the organisation, the involvement of stakeholders through the creation of tools and platforms such as the NetLab and the School of Sustainability, and the identification of strategies and actions, contained within so-called “trajectories”.

The trajectories, guided by five “values” (reducing inequalities; peace, justice and solid institutions;

partnership for goals; quality education; and gender equality) to safeguard and guarantee a just and responsible transition, are six strategic priorities to strive for the sustainable transition of the metropolitan territory. They have associated objectives and indicators related to the following categories: energy, circular economy, resilience, ecology, digitalisation, and economic development.

In pursuit of SDG 12, “Responsible consumption and production”, it was decided to focus on one of the most crucial categories in our area, that of the circular economy in the construction and demolition sector. This focus was chosen due to the quantitative relevance of this category of waste at European and national levels, the peculiarity of the Milanese metropolitan context, and the urban regeneration and transformation of the city fabric that was already under way. Also of significance was the CMMI’s specific experience in the construction sector, which includes a collaboration with the University of Milan, as part of an international network of research bodies involved in in-depth studies that collect and monitor best practices at an international level.

The implementation of a regenerative and circular growth model has been identified as crucial to the pursuit of macroclimate neutrality objectives (greenhouse gas emissions from the extraction of materials, the manufacture of construction products, and the construction and renovation of buildings are estimated to correspond to 5 to 12% of total national emissions). In addition, the sector produces the most waste, generating 45.1% of the total, corresponding to 66.2 million tonnes, and this figure is expected to increase sharply due to planned interventions, as well as in light of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

Although Italy’s waste recovery rate is particularly high, standing at 77.9% in 2020, above the 70% target set by Directive 2008/98/EC for 2020, it should be noted that this indicator considers the quantity of waste destined for recovery rather than the amount of material actually resulting from transformation processes.

As the body responsible for authorising and monitoring waste management plants, we have been able to observe that much of the waste entering the plants is not actually re-introduced into the market. Rather, it remains unsold and is stockpiled, sometimes forming actual mountains of waste, mainly due to the difficulty in finding suitable destinations for leftover secondary raw materials, which is in turn due to operators' lack of confidence in the quality of the recycled products and the lack of economic convenience, given the substantially similar prices.

Moreover, the most widespread types of recovery of aggregates from construction and demolition involve embankments and road sub-bases, while more noble uses are certainly less practised. As a matter of fact, the construction cycle is not, in reality, completely closed, as the option to construct works and buildings with materials from demolition is rarely used. Thus, the demand for new raw materials remains substantially unchanged.

Moreover, an adequate network of plants operating on the basis of the best available techniques has yet to be implemented, either at national or European level, and it is particularly difficult to implement selective dismantling activities, provided for by European legislation and qualified as preferential by national regulations, because of the high costs involved as well as the fact that they require careful planning and complex logistical management. This involves a very long supply chain that is currently difficult to track and coordinate.

Finally, we have observed critical issues related to the absence of any obligation to use recycled aggregates in the specifications, minimum environmental criteria, and clear regulatory references to end-of-waste characteristics.

Having gathered these major insights into what is actually happening, as the CMMI we have become aware that decisive intervention is needed, both in terms of legislation and public policy, taking into consideration the problems in the sector and intercepting opportunities for change.

Support for a new economic paradigm that encourages circularity, reducing the consumption of raw materials and consequently the production of waste, first requires

constructive partnerships between private companies, public administration realities and the world of research to foster new opportunities for the circular economy and push the market towards sustainable practices.

In this respect, the CMMI is keen to play a central and proactive role. In a sector characterised by the predominance of small and medium-sized enterprises that operate at local level, the promotion of innovation necessarily passes through facilitating works carried out by public bodies, for the adoption of virtuous practices by operators. This could perhaps be achieved through proposals for the establishment of a rewards system – whereby companies that take this path obtain an advantage in terms of reputation or competitive benefit – within the framework of public procedures, including through the establishment of certifications.

We are currently focusing on concrete operational proposals provided by research carried out with the University of Milan. These consist of the promotion of virtuous behaviours, through the establishment of circular business rating systems; the adoption of an integrated approach to the territory, through the promotion of coordinated local networks; the enhancement of synergies between supply chain components, through the use of collaborative agreements; the coordination of sector regulations, through legislative proposals; and the process of updating and adjusting national end-of-waste legislation, which is currently in progress.

The establishment of the circular economy requires a proactive and open attitude, and a willingness to implement projects that benefit the entire territory, in terms of integration, supply chain efficiency and respect for the environment, as well as the creation of added public value.

Wrap-up and conclusions

Rosa Suriñach

Metropolitan Councillor, Barcelona Metropolitan Area

Advocating for the voice of metropolitan areas at European level is not an easy task. We are not part of the institutional and relational structure of the Union, and although these advocating efforts pose a great challenge to all our institutions, we have a collective responsibility that we cannot avoid, because we know that the benefits of our metropolitan project are crucial for our citizens.

Beyond this event, superbly organised by the Metropolitan City of Turin, it is imperative that we carry forward the discussions held here into the future. The diverse array of topics explored –ranging from mobility and energy to citizens’ rights – is of great relevance when approached from the metropolitan perspective. Hence, it becomes our duty to advocate, promote and safeguard this metropolitan vision.

The ongoing efforts of the EMA as a network must be sustained. This involves the organisation of similar events in addition to bolstering the cohesion, capacity and vision that may at times be lacking in the European Union institutions. The incorporation of the metropolitan perspective, with its distinctive instruments and tools, is paramount.

In conclusion, there is a deep sense of responsibility in continuing our collaboration into the future. Forthcoming milestones include convening once again for the annual EMA meeting in Helsinki in September 2023. This prospect serves as an optimistic conclusion to the present gathering, with the assurance that we will reinforce it in Finland in six months’ time.



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