

metropolis ●

Metropolis 2024-2026

Strategic Action Plan



Metropolis in the metropolitan era

In 2025, Metropolis will reach the age of 40. The trends that were already obvious in 1985, when the association was created, have accelerated. We live in a metropolitan era, characterized by large cities surrounded by spread-out suburbs, forming urban agglomerations of unprecedented complexity and diversity, connecting to each other locally and globally. Today, almost 2 billion people live in cities with more than 1 million inhabitants. That's nearly half of the world's urban population, and a quarter of all people on the planet.

Large cities and metropolises are where talent and capital come together to produce the bulk of the world's wealth, creativity, innovation and artistic output. Metropolises are also where our most pressing challenges loom largest, from intensifying inequality, gender disparities and social segregation, to environmental degradation and climate change. Yet, too often, a lack of coordination between different levels of government, or even competition between them, leaves metropolitan spaces unable to capitalize on the benefits of urban growth and to minimize negative externalities.

Climate change is already hitting cities, and has created a new awareness about the need to rethink urban spaces. Metropolitan governance must take into consideration the connection between the urban agglomerations and environment, from local ecological corridors and ecosystems, to the global climate crisis. Old thinking used to oppose not just city to nature, but urban to rural, planned to spontaneous, center to periphery; the world operated under these and other simplistic dichotomies that have little meaning in the diverse mosaics of closely interdependent territories that make up contemporary metropolises. The time has come to change the way of thinking: it is time to think and act on a metropolitan scale and to articulate the actions and public policies of all actors in the construction of metropolises.

Metropolitan thinking, planning, and action are more needed than ever and Metropolis, at 40, has become a global reference. Metropolis, the World Association of the Major Metropolises, is the leading global voice on strengthening metropolitan governance, and the metropolitan section of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). We bring together local and metropolitan governments in a unique association dedicated to finding answers to the current and future challenges facing metropolitan spaces. We foster global cooperation, dialogue, and sharing of knowledge and solutions, grounded in the experience of our members. Together, we elevate the collective voice of metropolises on the global stage, and help them deliver on their commitments with their citizens and with global agendas.



What brings us together

The local and metropolitan authorities that form Metropolis come together around an organizational **mission**, a **vision** for metropolitan spaces, a set of shared **values**, their commitment to **global agendas**, and the resolve to advance together good **metropolitan governance** for their citizens. In nearly four decades of existence, these five elements have been at the core Metropolis' work, and they will continue to define our association in the coming years.



Mission

In Metropolis, major cities and metropolitan authorities exchange experiences, share solutions and pool resources to foster metropolitan governance that delivers for people and planet, with positive and sustainable effects on the lives of millions of inhabitants, and that contributes to the global agendas to which they are committed. The organization's activities help members to address local and global challenges as they exist today, and to anticipate and plan ahead for those of tomorrow.



Vision

Collectively and in our own cities, we work towards metropolises for and by their citizens, spaces of inclusion and peace where participatory and effective metropolitan governance fosters sustainability, social cohesion, economic development, gender equality and quality of life.



Value proposition

Diversity is one of Metropolis' strengths. Members are different in many ways, from the size and population of their territory, to the degree of economic development, the political system, or the predominant cultural values. Moreover, political leadership changes and, with it, the goals and priorities of members. However, we have found in Metropolis a common value proposition with which we all can agree. The values that we share, and that define the future we all work towards, are the following:

- 1. Care for Planet:** metropolises restore harmony with planet and balance in their ecosystems.
- 2. Care for People:** all metropolitan inhabitants live with dignity, share in prosperity, and have equitable access to the benefits and opportunities provided by metropolitan life, irrespective of their gender, age, race, religion, body ability, income, or any other factor.
- 3. Accountability:** people play a central role in metropolitan governance that generates opportunities, respects their rights, opinions and preferences, and remains accountable and transparent.
- 4. Sharing:** Collaboration, rather than competition or confrontation, defines government-to-government relationships within metropolitan

spaces, and between metropolises of the world; Metropolis is a space of solidarity and mutual help.

- 5. Learning and anticipating:** Metropolis' foresight and innovation shapes better metropolitan futures, metropolitan leaders stay ahead of emerging issues, and find in Metropolis a hub for gathering and disseminating the knowledge they need to adapt and innovate.



Commitment to Global Agendas

Local governments of large metropolises are committed to global agendas; their action, in fact, is key to the success of those agendas. As we come together in Metropolis, members share resources and knowledge to make progress, individually and collectively, on these commitments, and to advocate together for their success.

Our shared points of reference are the following global agendas:

- Sustainable Development Goals (2015)
- Paris Climate Agreement (2015)
- Montreal declaration about Metropolitan Areas (2015)
- New Urban Agenda (2016)
- Pact for the Future of Humanity of the United Cities and Local Government (2022)

Metropolis participates actively in the processes to foster, monitor and review the implementation of these agendas at local level, and in any processes to renew them or to create new global agendas within its thematic scope.



Aspiration to excellent Metropolitan Governance

Metropolises are known under many names depending on legal, administrative, language, cultural and other criteria. Following UN-Habitat's terminology, their functional geography is what defines metropolises, characterized by '*strong economic, social and environmental interdependencies which need to be integrative managed, based on functional territories and across both jurisdictional boundaries and the urban-rural continuum.*' International organizations, starting with the UN Statistical Commission, recognize that the full extent of cities must include their functional urban area, a commuting zone of suburban, periurban and rural areas closely connected to the city. In this new urban reality, good urban management must consider the metropolitan dimension (Global State of Metropolises, UN Habitat 2022).

Metropolis is the leading global voice on strengthening metropolitan governance. There is no one-size-fits all approach to governing large metropolitan spaces, and a variety of models exist around the world. In 2018, Metropolis defined five necessary factors for sound metropolitan governance: strong commitment from political **leadership** to work across jurisdictional boundaries for common benefit; **inclusion** of the voices of citizens into the decision-making process; **cooperation** across all levels of government to work together toward a joint, long-term vision; a legal and institutional **framework** that favors cooperation; and adequate **resources**, including funding and technical capacities, for metropolitan institutions.

The constant transformation, evolution and, in many cases, growth of metropolitan spaces means that metropolitan realities often exceed jurisdictional boundaries. The first defining challenge of metropolitan governance is to find ways to operate **across administrative boundaries**, and to **coordinate vertically** the actions of all public administrations in the metropolitan territory to provide effective and lasting solutions. Other challenges that are characteristic to metropolitan governance are **connecting territories** with diverse and complementary uses (residential, industrial, agricultural, infrastructure, nature, and more), managing the **functional interdependency** between all areas in the territory, integrating urban spaces into their **natural ecosystems**, and generating social and **territorial cohesion** at a larger and more diverse scale than the city.

Sound Metropolitan governance rests on three pillars: a **vision** for the metropolitan territory shared by key stakeholders; **planning** that creates a blueprint to achieve that vision; and an **institutional framework** that can implement the plan and govern the space effectively.

Rather than focusing solely on the creation of a new level of local government, metropolitan governance is most effective when institutions **deliver common goods at the most adequate scale**. Thus, **proximity**, in territories that are often smaller than the city, is crucial to provide quality of life, including services that ensure safe and healthy living, education, support to caregiving, local commerce, and resilient communities. The **urban agglomeration** or metropolitan area, a scale that can contain several cities and towns, is the one where the advantages of city life are most obvious, in the form of a diversified economy, economic opportunity and jobs, cluster effects for productive sectors, mobility, advanced education and healthcare, culture, leisure and sports, and more. Finally, the **metropolitan region** is the scale to manage environmental issues such as water, waste management, biodiversity, and ecological corridors, but also other key factors for sustainability and success like food security, energy supply, logistics, and global connectivity.



Thematic priorities

Metropolis members share many interests, solutions and problems in a huge array of thematic areas. In addition to their many bilateral and triangular forms of cooperation, they participate in regional and global networks where they discuss and address many of these issues. Metropolis, therefore, needs to find its own niche and the areas where it can make a difference to its members and beyond. For the 2024-2026 period, there will be five themes of concentration of Metropolis' activities.

1

Metropolitan Futures

Desired outcome

Metropolises anticipate possible futures, plan in order to shape them, and innovate to generate new opportunity

Topics

- Foresight and anticipation of future trends and scenarios
- Innovation in city management
- Managing demographic growth (or de-growth) and its challenges to mobility, housing, migration and more

2

Metropolitan Ecosystems

Desired outcome

Metropolises in harmony with their natural environment, reducing their ecological footprint, and adapting to environmental change

Topics

- Nature-based solutions, including green and blue infrastructure
- Sustainable mobility and logistics
- Metropolises within sustainable cycles of water, energy, food and solid waste

3

Cohesive Metropolises

Desired outcome

Inequality between individuals, groups, communities and territories in metropolises shrinks, and the benefits and opportunities generated in functional metropolises are fairly distributed

Topics

- Reducing poverty and inequality within the metropolis
- Supporting Care and caregiving as central elements of metropolitan life
- Fair distribution of economic opportunity

4

Inclusive and effective Metropolitan Governance

Desired outcome

Governance adapted to existing and upcoming metropolitan realities, answering to the needs and preferences of inhabitants, and accountable to them

Topics

- Legal and institutional frameworks
- Public legitimacy and citizen engagement
- Planning with a Metropolitan perspective and bridging the rural – urban divide

5

Gender Equality

Desired outcome

Women and men enjoy the advantages of Metropolitan life equally, and the experiences, preferences and perspectives of both are equally taken into consideration in planning and managing metropolitan spaces

Topics

- Mainstreaming gender perspectives across policies
- Supporting women's leadership in metropolitan governance
- Measuring gender realities and policy impacts



How Metropolis drives impact



Action Lines

Action Line 1 – The power of the Network: Membership and Institutional Relations

Exchange, benchmarking, and mutual learning

- Members learn from each other and help each other face similar challenges through structured exchanges and visits
- Members find in Metropolis spaces to share their best practices for the benefit of others inside and outside the association
- Members find support in Metropolis to initiate or consolidate collaborative city initiatives and campaigns that are in line with Metropolis' Mission and Strategy, to engage in decentralized co-operation, and to articulate city-to-city solidarity amongst members

Metropolitan Section of United Cities and Local Governments

- Metropolis plays a constructive role in the impact, governance and activities of UCLG
- Metropolis ensures that the voice and concerns of large cities and metropolitan areas is heard and is influential within the global Municipalist movement represented by UCLG
- Metropolis contributes to the success of the Pact for the Future and related initiatives

Regional and global alliances

- Metropolis partners with key international and regional players to advance its themes in a spirit of complementary, collaboration, and openness.
- Metropolis helps members keep track of international initiatives that they cannot directly follow, and acts as a connector between the membership and international initiatives that fall within the scope of Metropolis' Strategic Action Plan
- Wherever relevant and possible, Metropolis joins forces with existing campaigns and initiatives, and actively works to avoid duplication and dispersion of efforts

Action Line 2: Resources for Members: Programs

Access to, and mobilization of, financial resources

- Metropolis generates funding opportunities for members' projects in partnership with specialized external partners
- Members identify funding and financing opportunities adequate to their needs thanks to Metropolis
- Metropolis leverages the know-how of its Secretariat General and of its members to support members who request help to access international funding and financing

Learning and capacity building

- Metropolis creates, updates and delivers its own resources for training of policy makers and implementers of metropolitan policies in key strategic metropolitan themes
- A global network of local training institutes, the Metropolis International Training Institute, creates training opportunities specifically for the benefit of Metropolis members
- Members open-up specific training and capacity-building initiatives to other members of the network

Technical assistance

- Metropolis mobilizes internal and external resources to support a particular member or group of members with a specific need within its strategic priority themes
- Metropolis supports processes of creation of metropolitan structures upon request
- Metropolis provides its services to international players who need specific information about metropolitan and large city governance

Action Line 3: Shaping the global environment: Policy

Metropolitan narrative, knowledge and perspectives

- Metropolis generates, updates and promotes a narrative about Metropolitan governance in relevant international debates
- Metropolis brings metropolitan and large city perspectives to the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments and to other relevant international spaces
- Metropolis becomes the go-to place for specific information on Metropolitan Governance for members, interested cities, partners and international institutions

Supporting advocacy of members

- City, national or regional efforts to institutionalize metropolitan governance obtain effective support from Metropolis
- Members that advocate at national or regional level other topics within the themes of the Strategic Action Plan find resources, allies and support within the association
- Metropolis supports members that engage individually or collectively in international advocacy to advance issues contained in Metropolis' Strategic Action Plan



Foresight

- Members share and get access to key forecasts and trends analysis that inform their mid- to long-term planning
- Members engage with scenarios, and explore together possible metropolitan futures
- Members get access to state-of-the-art knowledge that allows them to anticipate the effects of scientific and technological advances

Action Line 4: Communication

External communication

- Metropolis' website is engaging and contains solutions and up-to-date information that is relevant to those with an interest in large-city and metropolitan governance
- Metropolis engages in proactive communication to promote and publicly advocate effective solutions and successful practices
- It is easy to understand Metropolis and to follow its activities through multiple channels

Communication within the network

- Members can easily identify the opportunities inside Metropolis, and can assess the impact of Metropolis' work
- Metropolis's events are spaces of sharing, learning and connecting between members and with partners; physical events offer the additional opportunity to promote local best practices and generate a legacy for the host city
- A real community of practitioners emerges through constant, curated, and effective internal communication inside the network

Spreading and fostering Metropolitan perspectives

- Metropolis actively engages in communication and public advocacy about its Metropolitan narrative
- Metropolis creates and updates off-the-shelf resources on basic aspects of Metropolitan governance
- Metropolis contributes to the inclusion of the metropolitan lens in leading global knowledge-production on urban issues

Action Line 5: Living our shared values

Metropolis is a collaborative and caring association, dedicated to transforming our metropolises towards more sustainable, equal and resilient societies. What Metropolis does is important, but how we achieve our impact counts too. It is important to maintain coherence between the values and ideas that we advocate locally and globally, and the ways in which the association operates.

The association, under the leadership of its Board of Directors and with the work of the International Secretariat, will strive to be:

Caring

- The Statutory Bodies and the Secretariat General actively listen to members, and are responsive to their concerns, needs, and preferences.
- Metropolis takes into consideration the particular circumstances that

members may undergo at any given moment, and tries to accommodate them within the limits of the Statutes, Rules of Procedure, and Strategic Action Plan

- Metropolis also takes into consideration the personal circumstances of the individuals involved in Metropolis' activities, and takes steps to ensure that everyone is treated with fairness and respect.
- Metropolis takes into consideration the ecological impact of its activities and undertakes steps to minimize their ecological footprint.

Inclusive and forthcoming

- The association actively seeks to include new members amongst eligible local governments, and to reengage those that have been temporarily inactive
- Very different members feel ownership of the association, and find in Metropolis useful resources, irrespective of their competences, legal set-up, geographical location, political adscription, policy choices, or performance.
- Metropolis generates resources that appeal to different parts of its membership, in addition to those applying to all members

Committed to equality between women and men

- Metropolis identifies and shares policies, strategies and instruments that promote gender equality among members in all fields of Metropolitan governance
- Metropolis consolidates as a go-to place for measurement of gender impacts and mainstreaming of gender equality in Metropolitan governance
- Metropolis applies gender criteria in the management of the association's projects and boosts women's leadership in statutory bodies

Financially sustainable

- The financial commitment of its members ensures the independence and sustainability of Metropolis as an independent organization
- Metropolis has a diversified funding base, and it is not excessively dependent on any single donor
- Metropolis's projects and activities are efficient and cost-effective

Accountable and transparent

- Metropolis plans on a yearly basis with clearly identified activities, goals, milestones and indicators to structure a robust Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation system
- The Secretariat General ensures effective compliance and accountability systems
- Members can easily trace sources of income, activities and expense



Implementing this Strategic Action Plan and Centering Impact

This Strategic Action Plan, approved by the General Assembly of Metropolis, is the main guiding document for all Metropolis' activities in the period starting at the beginning of January 2024 and ending at the end of January 2026. Between the adoption of this document and the end of December

2023, the Secretariat General will prepare an Operational Plan that will detail the activities, resources, priorities and indicators for the approval of the Board of Directors. That document will be a daily guide for the activities of the network and the Secretariat General.

In order to ensure that this Strategic Action Plan results in tangible impact not only for the members of the association, that is the local authorities of major cities and metropolitan areas, but also for their inhabitants, the Secretariat General will additionally design and implement a Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation Framework that will include the following elements:

- 1. Annual workplans** detailing the activities that will bring this Strategic Action Plan to life, on the basis of the operational plan
- 2. Clear objectives** for activities and projects, aligned with the Strategic Action Plan
- 3. Regular reporting** to the Board of Director on progress towards impact
- 4. Observable indicators** for organizational success
- 5. Systematic evaluation** of projects and plans, resulting when needed in adjustments and course correction, as well as measures to ensure organizational learning and adaptation

The Secretary General and their team will be responsible for the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan, its Operational Plan, and the accompanying Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation Framework. The Presidency and the Treasurer will contribute to the success of all three documents with their political leadership, with the support of the Executive Committee. The Board of Directors will review and approve any substantial modifications and transformations, in addition to its supervisory role on budgetary matters.



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