

# Metropolitan Governance and Intermunicipal Cooperation Solutions in the Mediterranean

An exploration of the state of metropolisation  
in the Mediterranean region

With the support of



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## METROPOLITAN MANAGEMENT AND INTERMUNICIPAL COOPERATION SOLUTIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

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# Introduction to metropolitan governance and intermunicipal cooperation in the Mediterranean

In the vibrant context of the Mediterranean, the exploration of metropolitan governance and intermunicipal cooperation emerges as a critical imperative. Mediterranean metropolitan areas have different maturity levels, are distributed across various subregions, each with its own distinctive geography across Western Europe, the Balkans, Western Asia and the Middle East and Northern Africa, unfolding multifaceted and evolving urban realities.

The rapid urbanisation in the Mediterranean region brings forth a set of challenges, ranging from public infrastructure to social cohesion and environmental sustainability. Effective urban governance becomes imperative to navigate these challenges and harness the potential opportunities emerging from fostering a resilient and collaborative framework that can adapt to the evolving needs of these dynamic urban landscapes.

MedCities, with an extensive network of 80 local authorities (both local councils and unions of municipalities) across the Mediterranean, strives to raise awareness of interdependence and shared responsibility for sustainable development policies, environmental conservation and social cohesion that can arise from coordinated metropolitan action.

**This study sets out to explore current examples of metropolitan governance and intermunicipal cooperation in the Mediterranean to draw on key lessons that can help shape better governance of urban systems in Mediterranean metropolitan areas in the future.**






Metropolitan governance, as a process of stakeholder coordination, directly shapes the lives, norms and social fabric of citizens in dynamic metropolitan areas. Acknowledging both public and private sector contributions and the territorial fabric, the comprehensive approach of metropolitan governance becomes paramount. However, there's no one-size-fits-all formula, emphasizing the necessity of exploring and adapting various governance models. The effectiveness of a particular model often depends on local and national circumstances and the willingness of stakeholders to collaborate. It oftentimes starts with the idea of intermunicipal cooperation which allows for incipient organising at a functional urban area level by bringing together neighbouring municipalities around shared challenges.

The trend towards metropolisation in the Mediterranean reflects a broader global pattern of urbanisation and the concentration of people and activities in key urban centers. Many countries in the Mediterranean region have experienced significant urbanisation over the years, with a growing concentration of population in metropolitan areas. This trend is driven by factors such as rural-to-urban migration, economic opportunities in urban centres and other demographic shifts.

As Mediterranean urban areas endeavor to navigate the complex challenges of rapid urbanisation and diverse metropolitan dynamics, the exploration and adaptation of governance models emerge as integral tools for shaping the sustainable future of urban agglomerations in the Mediterranean region.

**There is no common definition for metropolitan areas. Certain concepts such as Europe's Functional Urban Areas have tried to capture the territorial aspect of strong commuting ties and economic integration with the urban core. However, these areas do not often match territorial and administrative boundaries. Metropolises emerge as a way to bring together the city and its surrounding municipalities into a structure for collective decision-making and resource sharing that can work both in territory and at the governance level. It can accommodate varying levels of administrative maturity, territorial size and tends to contain anywhere over 250,00 inhabitants in larger higher density territories. Given a limited formalised definition, these metropolises are worth further study to understand how they can shape better urbanisation across the Mediterranean.**

## Key objectives of the report:

-  Exploring the different realities of intermunicipal cooperation and the metropolitan governance structures around the Mediterranean.
-  Understanding the key existing governance challenges and also opportunities faced by metropolises in the Mediterranean when tackling urban systems problems.
-  Extracting the main learnings and principles that can be used to scale or launch cooperative processes as part of governance structures at the metropolitan level (as opposed to national, regional or local ones) in Mediterranean metropolises.

## Methodology of the study:

- 1 Documentation:** Reviewing the network of Mediterranean urban areas and documenting 20+ most visible examples based on secondary research looking at maturity level, capacity to implement projects, geographical and cultural specificities, ability to influence or create policies and ability to respond to challenges.
- 2 Interviews:** Prioritising and selecting 10 case studies showcasing the different realities of metropolitan governance and municipal cooperation along the Mediterranean area, rounding 1-to-1 interviews to collect best practice examples, lessons learned and opportunities for the future.
- 3 Consolidation:** Analysing the collected data and identifying common models of governance in the Mediterranean area, the best practices and opportunities that metropolitan areas have.
- 4 Collecting ecosystem lessons:** Enhancing the study with key reflections from the “Building Metropolitan Governance in the Mediterranean Region” conference held in Barcelona on 12-13 Dec. 2023, leading to practitioner-oriented recommendations.

# Overview of the metropolitan realities across the Mediterranean region

MEDITERRANEAN  
METROPOLITAN  
GOVERNANCE

**OVERVIEW**

# Mediterranean metropolises at a glance





## POPULATION



## GEOGRAPHY



## CHARACTERISTICS

### Metropolitan urban area features

Mediterranean metropolises exhibit distinctive features shaped by geography and historical development. Most of them are strategically **located on the coast**, leveraging **sea outlets for economic and cultural prosperity**. Others are inland yet have expansive territories encompassing surrounding regions. Connectivity varies; coastal cities benefit from **maritime access**, while inland ones rely on **extensive road and rail networks**. The degree of centrality also differs, with cities like Milan and Istanbul serving as **pivotal hubs**, in contrast to less central but regionally significant metropolises. Despite having **diverse hinterland territories**, these urban areas place equal importance on natural resources, public spaces and connecting infrastructure.

Metropolitan areas display marked contrasts, reflecting each region's unique fabric:

- **Western Europe**, with its rich urbanisation heritage and dense populations, boasts numerous metropolises like Barcelona and Milan. These cities are notable for their economic and cultural significance, extensive urban growth and advanced infrastructure.
- In the **Balkans**, fewer metropolises like Sarajevo and Zagreb reflect the region's centrality around capital cities or economic centres, smaller population sizes, and varied economic maturity levels, leading to more compact urban territories.
- The **Levant**, with cities such as Amman and Beirut, presents a diverse urban tapestry, with some expanding areas driven by economic and strategic factors.
- **North Africa**, featuring populous hubs like Cairo and Casablanca, has a limited number of metropolises, yet their territorial sizes are influenced by a mix of historical patterns, economic dynamics, and modern urban strategies.

### Economic activities and main industries

Many cities, like Istanbul and Alexandria capitalize on their **coastal locations** with **robust maritime and port industries**, crucial for **trade and commerce**. Tourism plays a pivotal role in cities such as Athens and Nice, drawing on **cultural heritage, scenic beauty and attractive beaches**. These metropolises often surpass the rest of the country in economic development. Beyond these, sectors like **finance, technology, and manufacturing** are significant in cities like Marseille and Tel Aviv, further diversifying the economic fabric of these urban areas. This **mix of maritime, tourism, and advanced industries** underscores the dynamic and multifaceted economic character of Mediterranean metropolises.

**While metropolis have similar territorial characteristics, their role as part of the Mediterranean differs considerably depending on the socio-political context of the geographical region they belong to and its territorial realities.**

### **Western Europe**

Metropolitan areas are increasingly pivotal in fostering sustainable urban development and efficient governance. By acting as intermediaries between central governments and local municipalities, they adeptly address regional needs with a nuanced understanding that the central government might lack.

### **Northern Africa**

Metropolitan areas are increasingly instrumental in fostering a greater sense of autonomy for local authorities. While central governments maintain a significant role in shaping development strategies, metropolitan sector-based agencies enable better management of urban areas through a more bottom-up approach. This allows for more nuanced urban planning and public service delivery, tailored to the specific needs of the region.

### **The Balkans**

Metropolitan areas and managed territories play the role of providing a collaborative environment between large and small cities, accessing knowledge for developing projects, building capacity and identifying resources necessary for scaling projects. Metropolisation mostly occurs in the area of influence of capital cities, following a more monocentric territorial model.

### **The Levant**

Metropolitan areas are either in their early stages, but with a considerable potential to become influential partners to the central government, or are in charge of municipal management and public services relevant to the urban area of influence that they oversee. In this area, international organisations play a key role in supporting the implementation of metropolitan initiatives and supporting knowledge transfer and capability building.



# Mediterranean metropolitan models and urban challenges

There are four main models of metropolitan governance (Tomàs M., 2016) that can also be visible in the Mediterranean as a non-mutually exclusive categorisation, since formalised structures often co-exist with less formal ones in an area.

Fully institutionalised with formal recognition by the state

Degree of institutionalisation

No institutionalisation based on voluntary informal structures

## METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT

*Metropolitan governments are the most politically-recognised structures, created to approach metropolitan challenges holistically and implement policies at that scale.*

**In the Mediterranean, metropolitan governments are primarily formed in Western European countries with a decentralised structure to streamline coordination.**

Metropolitan governments can work on different levels. In France and Italy, as well as in the case of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, they are created by law and have conferred responsibilities. The metropolitan governments bring a top level of coordination to the metropolitan territory and they coexist with their comprising municipalities, although the role and powers of the latter can vary in each country. Metropolitan governments can be elected directly, as in France and Italy, or indirectly, via municipal elections.

## METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

*As an example of vertical coordination model, metropolitan municipalities work on a metropolitan scale, but they do this through existing governments, without the creation of a dedicated new entity.*

**In the Mediterranean, metropolitan municipalities are most often tied to the largest municipality that acts as the centre of the metropolitan area.**

In many countries with limited territorial decentralisation, metropolitan municipalities are the sole municipalities of the territory with policy powers, being comprised otherwise of districts with limited local authority as is the case with Jordan, Egypt or Turkey. In the Balkans or in other areas of Spain apart from Barcelona, local structures maintain more power in the metropolitanisation process. The process is often initiated by the largest municipality of a metropolis that also benefits the most from coordination as visible with Tirana, Podgorica or Malaga.

## SECTOR-BASED METROPOLITAN AGENCY

*Sector-based metropolitan agencies plan and manage a single service (public transport, environment, police, etc.) with a technical rather than political nature.*

**In the Mediterranean, agencies are used for their expertise primarily covering transportation, urban development, waste management.**

Morocco's mobility agencies in Casablanca, Rabat or Agadir or Thessaloniki's urban development one are the sole to push for metropolitan action in areas without another formalised structure. Even more, such agencies have the power to unite territorial divides under the common purpose of functional infrastructure as seen with Nicosia's development agency. In metropolises with several existing agencies such as Valencia's waste and water management or Athens' mobility and housing, the agencies enable a future formalised metropolitan coordination.

## ASSOCIATIONS/ UNIONS

*Voluntary cooperation among different municipalities is the least institutionalised model, in which local urban representatives are organised at their own initiative.*

**In the Mediterranean, these informal structures are formed to serve a specific purpose that cannot be otherwise met alone.**

Unions of municipalities or associations are a popular form that aligns to the legal frameworks of the city. Some are particularly visible structures that encourage decentralisation by enabling metropolitan collaboration or even project implementation on specific topics, as is the case with Turkey's Union of Marmara or Saida-Zahrani in Lebanon. The informal structures can also arise to unlock specific opportunities for funding as seen in Zagreb Urban Agglomeration.

**While urban challenges benefitting from a metropolitan approach tend to be generally the same, the following are the ones most prioritised by metropolitan governance structures in the Mediterranean.**

### **Basic infrastructure for streamlined public services**

Intermunicipal cooperation relies on a shared responsibility for crucial public services and infrastructure. Whether managing pedestrian mobility, developing connecting transportation systems between large urban areas and neighbouring rural ones, implementing waste management, or setting a vision for social service standards, this collaboration at the local level prevents resource waste. A metropolitan approach enhances efficiency, aiming for a common standard in public services for citizens. Most importantly, it also allows for the development of better solutions by taking into account the whole system contributing to a certain problem, as is the case with housing pressures that do not stop at the borders of one municipality,

### **Integrated planning for urban managed territory**

Metropolitan urban planning is vital for cohesive development in functional urban areas. Without a dedicated department overseeing integrated development, including civil works, public and private projects, and green space management, there's a risk of unequal development. This may lead to overpopulated and gentrified urban centers with concentrated economic activity, while surrounding municipalities struggle to maintain attractiveness. A metropolitan approach ensures balanced and reliable linkages between rural and urban areas and tackles any inequalities within the broader metropolitan area by giving a voice to all comprising municipalities.

### **Leading a green transition as a united collective**

Mediterranean cities, thriving economically from water, wind, and sun resources, attract residents and tourists. This success comes with the duty to protect the region's natural heritage and facilitate a just transition. Integrated approaches are essential to ensure long-term progress and momentum at a collective level by building on each municipality's good work. Economies of scale are also important in enabling the green transition and a metropolitan approach can help pool resources for costly infrastructure development. In the short-term, the Mediterranean region is already tackling climate change impact in the territory from heat pressure in summer, flooding risks and ongoing pollution from industrial ports.

### **Organising for consolidated regional change**

Small areas face challenges in local administration, resource allocation, and financing, often lagging behind larger urban areas. A metropolitan approach enables Mediterranean cities to become regional hubs, ensuring sustained services and a higher standard of living with dedicated, enduring funding, addressing disparities in smaller municipalities. Metropolitan governance in the Mediterranean supports a balanced economic development of the area by sharing resources such as funding, staff or expertise as well as considering what are the opportunities that can help lift pressure in administration, training or financing from smaller rural municipalities surrounding urban areas. These connections support the equal and inclusive development of the region.

**Mobility & transportation  
Waste management  
Resources management  
Housing & social services**

**Civil engineering  
Urban planning  
Blue-green areas management  
Rural-urban linkages**

**Environment pollution  
Nature protection  
Resilience planning  
Climate crisis effects mitigation**

**Municipal administration  
Economic development  
Capability building  
Social cohesion**



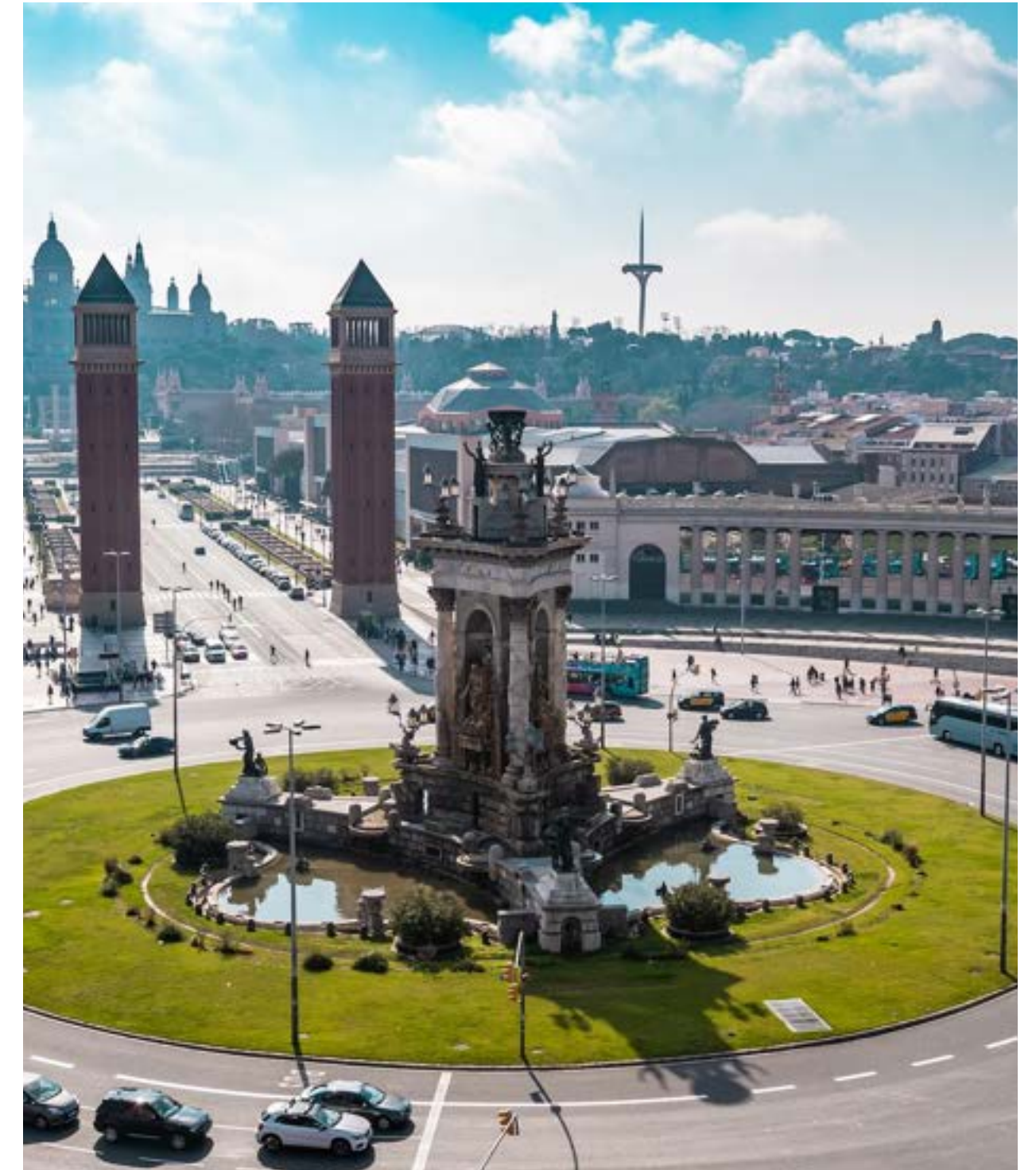
# Main tendencies towards Mediterranean metropolisation

## Creating a middle governance level for intermediating

Across the Mediterranean, intermunicipal cooperation aims to create a new level of urban management that can translate the demands of national and regional agendas to the local level. The process of metropolisation as a middle ground structure can start both as a top-down or bottom-up process depending on geography. In Europe, this approach is more formalised with metropolitan structures being setup or recognised nationally with more authority over the decisions taken. Nevertheless, it is still the municipalities of large urban centres that lead these efforts with smaller municipalities being later involved. Outside of Europe, a tendency towards centralised administration limits the authority granted to local authorities. This means that the focus is primarily on using existing large municipalities to enable better collaboration between public services in the area and treating these sites as best practice pilots that can then be scaled towards the neighbouring municipalities.

## Operating in practice as one managed urban territory

Intermunicipal cooperation arises in the Mediterranean from a need to accommodate citizen needs across the whole area of influence around an urban centre with a managed territory that removes territorial jurisdictions for the benefit for consolidated public services. However, approaches differ based on the maturity of each urban area as well as the openness of the central government to delegate powers to local and metropolitan structures. The more formalised a cooperation structure becomes, the more it can stretch on a spectrum from providing purely operational technical support on specific services to setting a strategic direction and overseeing or supporting the local municipalities in its implementation. While this starts for all municipalities as initial efforts to consolidate public service delivery one by one across a larger connected area, in time this leads to the coordination of all public services as a whole across the territory.







## **Unlocking funding with more robust integrated projects**

With a diversity of geographies around the Mediterranean, financing urban projects is a complex topic that depends on national allocations and regional visibility. Intermunicipal cooperation enables an integrated approach to urban projects that make these more efficient but also equally appealing in the eyes of financiers who look for integrated action to supercharge urban transition like the European Union. The larger an urban area the more is taken into consideration at a national and regional level, having easier access to funds and more sway in decision making. However, leaving neighbouring municipalities behind brings in additional challenges to citizens and ends up costing the country more to be able to make up for the discrepancies in public services with short-term actions.

## **Collaborating as an ecosystem towards lean progress**

When it comes to collaboration, the size of a municipality and the broader urban area of influence opens up different routes for internal and external engagement. For larger municipalities of urban agglomerations, the collaboration with neighbouring municipalities can streamline implementation of projects and free up resources to scale the visibility of the are in the international space. For smaller municipalities, working as part of a collective enables progress on providing urban services with better quality at lower costs. Dedicated metropolitan structures also enable municipalities to speed up their urban actions by allowing experts and public-private partnerships that act in a more flexible way. Tapping into existing knowledge from the whole urban ecosystem can streamline and consolidate efforts, without doubling up work.



# Analysis of operating mechanisms of metropolitan structures in the Mediterranean

MEDITERRANEAN  
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**ANALYSIS**

# A comparative analysis of metropolitan structures

10 case studies were selected to uncover a taxonomy for metropolitan cooperation in the Mediterranean





	<b>Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona</b> Spain	<b>Urban Community of Al Fayhaa</b> Lebanon	<b>Marmara Municipalities Union</b> Türkiye	<b>Agadir Mobilité SA</b> Morocco	<b>Major Development Agency Thessaloniki</b> Greece
<b>Type of structure</b>	Metropolitan Government	Municipalities Union	Municipal Association	Metropolitan Mobility Agency (Local Development Company)	Metropolitan Development Organisation (Public Company)
<b>Scale of the area</b>	36 municipalities defined by law Population of 3.2 million	Municipalities of Tripoli, Mina, Baddaoui, Qalamoun Population of 1 million	188 member municipalities Population of 27 million	Agadir and 12 municipalities of the districts in making up Grand Agadir Population of 1 million	Thessaloniki and 10 neighbouring municipalities Population of 1 million
<b>Creation</b>	Law by Parliament of Barcelona Barcelona Metropolitan Area Act 31/2010	National law, Decree No.7349/1982	Voluntary, 1975 Under the scope of the 7th Chapter (Art. 133-148) of the Municipal Law No. 1580	2019, Support for Morocco's National Urban Mobility Strategy	National law, 1994
<b>Decision-making &amp; Representation</b>	Metropolitan council, Governing Board, Council of Mayors and Metropolitan Government (President and Vice-Presidents)	Municipal union, Mayors are elected by municipal council members who are elected by the citizens, and mayors represent their municipalities in the Union council	Union General Assembly, Membership in MMU is voluntary	Council of local municipalities. The agency uses a consultative committee made up of local or regional representatives, national technical experts or national authorities.	General Assembly Functioning based on a shareholder model
<b>Remits &amp; Jurisdictions</b>	Transport and sustainable mobility, Waste management, Water management, Public space, Green infrastructure, Environment, Urban Planning, Socio-economic development, International relations and housing	Waste management, Firefighting, Civil works engineering, Financing, Administration, Insect Control, Execution of common projects	Consulting, networking, capacity building	Metropolitan public mobility (bus planning for urban and interurban transport).	Technical and Management Support to Municipalities, Management and Implementation of Sustainable Development Projects, Social Resilience and Inclusion, Housing Policies, Knowledge Transfer, International Networking.
<b>Funding</b>	Taxes, EU funds, service surcharges and credits	Taxes, Ministry of Municipalities funds, UN funds, external funding	Tax from member municipalities, external funds from international projects	Government funding	Integrated Territorial Investment through government funding, EU funds
<b>Multilevel relations</b>	Consultations with stakeholders in creating development plans, as partners in projects or in drafting public policies Working networks: European Metropolitan Authorities, MedCities, Metropolis	Modest engagement with local stakeholders but strong partnership with international organizations. The UCAF is member of MedCities network.	Strong partnership with the universities, civil society, international institutions and businesses which are directed to municipalities for generating projects	Collaboration with public sector representatives to implement mobility systems. The local council of Agadir is member of MedCities network.	Public and private partners engaged through workshops and dissemination actions

	<b>Urban Agglomeration of Zagreb</b> Croatia	<b>Città Metropolitana di Napoli</b> Italy	<b>Métropole Aix-Marseille-Provence</b> France	<b>Sfax Mobility Agency</b> Tunis	<b>Greater Amman Municipality</b> Jordan
<b>Type of structure</b>	Urban Community recognised by the State	Metropolitan Government	Metropolitan Government	Metropolitan Agency for Urban Mobility	Metropolitan Municipality
<b>Scale of the area</b>	Zagreb City and surrounding 10 cities and 19 municipalities Population of 1 million	Naples and 92 towns Population of 3 million	92 municipalities Population of 2 million	Sfax and 9 neighbouring municipalities Population of 300.000	Amman Population of 4 million
<b>Creation</b>	Voluntary, 2016 Based on The Republic of Croatia Regional Development Act of 2015	National Law No.56/2014 Established in 2015	2016 National law (Law No. 58/2014, Arts. 12–14 and No. 1212/2015	2004 Law, followed by voluntary process	National Law, 1909
<b>Decision-making &amp; Representation</b>	Functional Urban Area - 30 mayors and municipality mayors with equal voting power	Metropolitan Council - mayors and city counselors nominating and electing the management council	Metropolitan Council - unified metropolitan governance and a single budget	Regional Agency - municipal councils invited to participate in decision-making	Municipal Government, The Mayor of GAM is appointed and directly reports to the Prime Minister.
<b>Remits &amp; Jurisdictions</b>	EU Funds Management, Integrated Territorial Investment Management for the area, Urban Regeneration, Urban Mobility	Territorial Planning, Urban Mobility Strategies, EU funds management	Urban Mobility, Urban Planning, EU Funds Management, Water and Waste Management	Mobility, Technical expertise, Development	Climate Action, Sustainable Development, Waste Management
<b>Funding</b>	Integrated Territorial Investment through government and EU funds	Taxes, EU funds	Taxes, EU funds	Taxes from central government and municipalities	Central government and collected taxes and grants
<b>Multilevel relations</b>	Collaboration system between municipalities that also communicates with the Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds	Collaboration with regional/national entities and building partnerships with NGOs and international stakeholders. Both the Municipality of Naples and the Metropolitan municipality are members of MedCities network.	Strong partnerships with universities, civil society and the business sector under the Development Partnership Project. The local council of Marseille is member of MedCities.	National, regional and local collaboration with stakeholders involved in mobility policies. The local council of Sfax is member of MedCities network.	Collaboration with external partners to strengthen their expertise and capability in delivering strategic projects



# Creation of Mediterranean metropolitan structures

Metropolises can arise on a spectrum of initiatives from those more formally initiated by law on a national or regional level to those voluntarily created as bottom-up structures that in time find means of formalisation.

Top-down

## National law

This top-down approach depends on the degree of decentralisation of the country. In Western Europe, metropolisation through national law is especially prevalent in countries such as Italy and France where the laws were created to better intermediate numerous local municipalities and highly centralised regional authorities. While national laws can secure the creation of formalised metropolitan governments, they can also give recognition and legitimacy to less autonomous entities, especially in geographies with limited levels of decentralisation such as municipality unions in Marmara or urban communities in Al Fayhaa.

Creation mechanism

## Procedural action constituted by law

The most popular form of creation of metropolitan structures though combines an incipient voluntary approach followed by a top-down formalisation process. This is visible across all geographies in the Mediterranean where a national framework is inexistent. One of the more standardised processes are found in the creation of sectoral metropolitan agencies such as Morocco's transport ones or urban development ones in the Balkans which start at the initiative of one of the main urban centres such as Agadir or Thessaloniki and by aligning to the existing regional or national strategies can get formal recognition by law. When several such entities coalesce within the same metropolitan area this can then give the opportunity for further institutionalisation through the creation of a metropolitan government such as Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona.

Bottom-up

## Informal cooperation

Voluntary processes are usually initiated by the largest city in a metropolitan area that sees the benefit of starting to operate at a metropolitan level and reaches out to neighbouring municipalities for collaboration. The municipality representing the urban centre are the ones most involved in such a process with the other municipalities joining in voluntarily, without a legal framework to limit or impose their involvement as visible in the case of Sfax Mobility Agency. In the case of Zagreb's urban agglomeration this bottom up process is based on an agreement of cooperation between the municipalities recognised by an official act.



# Remits of metropolitan structures

Development  
visions

## Strategic direction for the area

Metropolitan governance is above all about setting the vision for a metropolitan future that municipalities can rally around, citizens can envision in practice, and partners can support with funds, expertise and clout. From metropolitan governments to sectoral agencies or informal structures, all entities focus on strategies to a degree. This can look like setting the vision and plans for local or integrated action such as Amman's Resilience Plan or Sfax Urban Mobility Plan. The strategic level also involves the direction setting for the development and supporting resources needed for execution as Zagreb does by establishing the plans, securing funding and monitoring their integrated projects. These large strategic actions primarily tackle topics of shared interest where action alone would limit impact, as seen with Al Fayhaa's 2020 Strategy or Barcelona's prioritisation of new metropolitan action areas in security as an opportunity for the area.

## Supramunicipal administration

Supramunicipal administration involves streamlined metropolitan-wide services for the functional urban area. This is mostly the scale of action of metropolitan governments or municipalities as is the case with Aix-Marseille-Provence's holistic administration of all public services apart from education or culture or Barcelona's intermediation on topics of public interest such as waste, water or mobility. Depending on the degree of intermediation between the local and regional level, metropolitan governments can sometimes take on attributions that would otherwise be managed locally such as Naples administration of civil engineering that extends into the management of educational infrastructure, otherwise the remit of local authorities. This hands-on pat of administration also involves the development of metropolitan capability with Marmara union providing capability building to neighbouring municipalities to further decentralisation.

## Project implementation

Centralised implementation of projects on key topics aligned to strategies and administrative plans offers metropolitan bodies a stronger hold. This can be seen with Sfax alternative mobility infrastructure or Thessaloniki's urban development of local infrastructure in small neighbouring municipalities. Agencies are best placed in this role as intermediaries between the metropolitan administration and contracting bodies, a model preferred by municipalities such as Amman who develop separate agencies to manage transportation, waste management or investments to accelerate projects.

Collective Action

Administrative  
actions

Examples of urban jurisdictions at each action level





# Vertical multilevel relations in metropolitan cooperation

Vertical relations enable metropolitan entities to connect into other levels of government such as regional authorities or state government to consolidate the metropolitan area's position as part of integrated territorial agendas.

## Connecting to the regional level for cohesive action

Collaboration with regional authorities enhances coordination for addressing common challenges and leveraging collective opportunities. Metropolitan governments, exemplified by Naples, engage in joint planning and policy coordination to contribute to broader regional development. Sectoral agencies, like Thessaloniki's urban planning one, bridge metropolitan and regional efforts by aligning sector-specific strategies with overarching regional goals. Metropolitan municipalities or associations, such as Al Fayhaa, work closely with regional authorities to ensure seamless policy and service integration. These efforts prioritize resource-sharing, infrastructure projects, and strategic planning to promote integrated development across metropolitan and regional scales.

## Gathering state level support for increased autonomy

Collaboration with central governments can empower informal metropolitan structures, granting them recognition and autonomy, contingent on regional political contexts. In Western Europe, metropolises align with national governments for sustainable urban development, while in the Balkans, collaboration addresses disparities and boosts economic growth. The Levant manages rapid urbanization and social challenges for thriving metropolises, and in Northern Africa, governance structures navigate demographic shifts and stimulate economic development. Tailored approaches are essential, considering distinct regional dynamics for effective metropolisation.

## Tapping into international networks for support infrastructure

Collaboration with international bodies helps advance the metropolitan agenda by helping address the main questions around its legitimacy as part of larger international agendas across continental regions such as EU Agenda or global agendas as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Joining international networks that gather metropolitan regions or enable collaboration between urban areas, however small or large, that have potential for metropolisation is key in furthering this cause. Such networks as seen with European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA) or MedCities or even topical ones such as ICLEI or C40Cities can provide a fertile ground for learning, experimenting and piloting approaches to metropolisation around the Mediterranean.



# Horizontal multilevel relations in metropolitan cooperation

To make metropolitan action a reality requires the involvement of actors beyond the public sector, from communities to businesses who can act as catalysts by challenging thinking on policies or enable project implementation.

**Consultative engagements**  
for increasing participation

*Scope of engagements*

**Action-oriented partnerships**  
for ensuring implementation

## Raising awareness for metropolitan priorities

Strategic metropolitan initiatives that build towards a shared vision for the area are often opened for consultations with the general public. Engagements can take many forms from more proactive awareness building to reactive views. On the former, this can look like the recurrent workshops done by Sfax to mobilise public understanding of the need for a shared transport system across the functional urban area. It can also mean involving citizens and NGOs in a participatory process to shape strategies such as Al Fayhaa's 2020 Strategy or on the reactive part, offering feedback to metropolitan plans such as Zagreb's online 30-day public feedback process on the area's action plan.

## Enabling knowledge transfer for subject-matter experts

Outside of decision-making structures, communities of practice enable knowledge transfer between topical experts in the public sector working at similar levels within municipalities and private sector experts who collaborate with public entities. This takes the form of spaces for dialogue or upskilling through collective knowledge. For example, Agadir's WhatsApp-based community of practice enables better collaboration between experts in mobility. In a more formal setup, Thessaloniki's 100 Resilient Cities Network membership allows it to collaborate with public representatives from other cities in exchanging best practice for local climate action agenda participation.

## Mobilising expert input for shaping robust interventions

Moving more towards mobilising action, expert collaborations can also shape the feasibility and viability of urban projects receiving political and funding support. These committees are made up of technical experts coming from think tanks, academia, private sector or partnering organisations who can strengthen current proposals. For example, Marmara brings at the same table public and private experts to advance discussions on metropolitan priorities with a focus on technical knowledge, over political agendas. The involvement of external organisations that act as think-tanks can help advance local efforts for metropolitan action as seen in the formalisation partnership between Sfax and MedCities.

## Partnerships for ongoing project implementation

The most formalised type of horizontal partnerships is that for project implementation where the public sector collaborates with the private sector by contracting them to support with the implementation of previously agreed urban plans. This is the case across all metropolitan areas where contracts are set up with private entities who deliver the services or infrastructure work required in advancing the likes of Agadir's transportation rapid bus lines infrastructure, Thessaloniki's social housing scheme or Amman's water management anti-flooding systems. Metropolitan bodies are involved with varying degrees, most often agencies or informal structures holding most of the coordination power.

**CITIZEN  
GROUPS**

**CIVIL  
SOCIETY**

**PUBLIC  
SECTOR**

**PRIVATE  
SECTOR**

**THINK  
TANK**

**ACADEMIA**

**PRIVATE  
SECTOR**

**PUBLIC  
SECTOR**

**PRIVATE  
SECTOR**

# Metropolitan decision-making and representation

There are several structures in place that enable a balanced process of decision-making between more ad-hoc engagement for knowledge transfer on topical issues to stable involvement of a elected or representative members.

Knowledge management from non-binding engagements

Decision-making elements

Governing bodies with decision-making power

## Consultative Committees

Consultative committees provide opportunities for capacity building and participation of the stakeholders involved in the body. The representatives of municipalities have the option to receive support either through knowledge exchanges, networking or funding from partners without being subjected to any legal obligations. The Marmara Municipalities Union provides such capacity building opportunities through events and projects involving the 188 members. The Urban Agglomeration of Zagreb manages to access funding through an Integrated Territorial Investments programme by bringing together 30 mayors in a council, each with equal voting power, in a transparent, decentralised and functional manner because of the collaborative vision crafted along the years. They also employ a slightly different consultative committee under the form of a Partners Council where 61 advisors from various sectors are brought in at key stages of decision-making to provide input and enhance any the process with comprehensive insights on what is feasible in terms of implementation.

## General Assembly

The General Assembly ensures the participation of all the members of the metropolitan area or of a metropolitan agency in the decision making-process. In the case of Barcelona, the representation of the municipalities is based on the demographic weight of the municipalities, with the mayors of each municipality and city councillors in numbers according to the size of the administrative unit representing the interests of the citizens who elected them. In the case of agencies, the general assemblies blend the power of the administrative units with the expertise provided by the said agency. The example of the the Major Development Agency of Thessaloniki is illustrative, as it works on a shareholder model from the private sector, where the Thessaloniki city owns the majority of shares and can influence the decision but does not assess full authority.

## Municipal or Metropolitan Council with direct or indirect election

The most widespread form of administrative model is the municipal council, which faces certain limitations when it comes to ensuring representativeness and funding, but exerts a larger authority in developing projects tailored to the needs of the citizens. This can take the form of councils made up through indirect election (city representatives form part of the metropolitan structure) or direct election (councillors are elected into a metropolitan position by citizens). The indirect model is most visible in the Mediterranean. In Barcelona, the president is nominated after the election in the metropolitan council made up of each municipality's mayors and councillors. In Jordan, the mayor of Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) is appointed by the prime-minister due to the fact the position requires direct responsibility for large infrastructure projects. This represents the interests of both the state and the residents to a degree given to the blend of authority provided by the government and given by the people. Without direct election, citizens can be represented in these processes by being involved in the prioritisation process. Al Fayhaa community is illustrative for implementing projects approved by higher authorities but that start from the needs of residents and willingness of mayors to provide certain services.



# Funding approaches for metropolitan governance

Funding sources for Mediterranean metropolis vary from bottom-up transfers from external bodies or collective contributions to more top-down allocations from the State, the latter being mostly for institutionalised structures.

**Stable funding** from internal recurrent sources

*Financial autonomy*

**Ad-hoc funding** from external temporary sources

## Central government budgets for integration

Central governmental funding can be granted to metropolitan areas as either recurring budgets for the ongoing work as is the case with Aix-Marseille-Provence or on a project basis aligned to national strategies as is the case with Agadir's mobility plan development.

Still from a top-down approach is also securing a percentage of cohesion funds through European Union's Integrated Territorial Funding mechanism where a set budget is allocated to each country to distribute among its functional urban areas for sustainable development. For example, Zagreb's urban agglomeration has been formed to unlock this funding for integrated metropolitan projects.

## Own fees and taxes deriving from the sale of services

Metropolitan municipalities, who oversee the metropolitan area from within the existing municipality of an existing large city, can leverage the fees and taxes mechanism aligned to the national legal framework. This is the case of Amman whose part of the metropolitan activity is supported by land ownership taxes and fuel tax allocations from the state.

Those running on sectoral agency models present a similar model wherein they can charge municipalities for the services provided in the absence of a collective municipal contribution scheme. For example, agencies can be brought in as an expert to consult on other cities going through similar processes such as Thessaloniki's development agency that is offering urban planning and development services as contracts to cities in the region.

## Municipal contributions for intermunicipal support

Collective municipal contributions are another form of funding that can either be mandated by law or voluntary. Where entities are more institutionalised, these contributions are set in order for municipalities to be able to benefit from the metropolitan structure. For informal entities, those with central government backing have the safety net of deductions from central allocations to municipalities as is the case of Marmara, while those with less recognition might struggle to ensure collective support.

Contributions are usually adapted to a municipality's size and financial power, with larger ones as Barcelona municipality contributing more given the larger wins. In some cases, contributions can also come under the form of resources that can cut running costs for a metropolitan structure by covering staff as a paid resource from within a local municipality as is the case for Naples.

## External funds for specific project implementation

Independent partnerships with external bodies allows most flexibility in accessing funds for thematic priorities. International organisations such as UN Habitat or UNDP are known to support urban communities such as Al Fayhaa that used such funds to expand their firefighting capability.

Wider regional funds such as European Union's Urbact or Horizon mechanisms are also a major source, with the likes of Thessaloniki accessing them to scale their territorial monitoring with the Resilience Observatory. These robust budgets put the programmes high up on metropolitan governments' agendas who double down on project writing as Naples. However, they remain a tricky mechanism for second-level metropolitan governments who need to compete with comprising municipalities for the same funding as seen with Barcelona.

# Key takeaways to enable Mediterranean urban areas to move towards a metropolitan future

MEDITERRANEAN  
METROPOLITAN  
GOVERNANCE

**FUTURE OUTLOOK**

*The following reflections are based on the comparative analysis of Mediterranean case studies and key takeaways from the international conference “Building metropolitan governance in the Mediterranean region” organised by MedCities on 12-13 December 2023 in Barcelona.*

# Benefits of taking a metropolitan view of urban future

## Growing the effectiveness of large urban areas

Cities go beyond administrative boundaries, in reality we need to talk about urban continuums representing challenges and topics such as public transport, urban planning that interwine in the real experience of urban space of citizens. Metropolitan governance makes this leap from theory into practice by allowing the connection of complementary public services at the level of the functional urban area. Moving away from working in siloed administrative units of separate municipalities or departments providing services only within a set perimeter, the metropolitan approach ensures a comprehensive and integrated urban structure. As visible in Naples, this can grow the effectiveness of any service in reaching more citizens and improving the quality of life of residents across a large urban area.

## Enabling territorial balance through an inclusive structure

The metropolis offers a structured approach to urban governance and decision-making, that can bring all key actors of the urban space into a well orchestrated ecosystem where each actor can best contribute with its strengths while enjoying the collective benefits of the whole. In practice, the model facilitates a more effective decision-making process, moving away from the centrality of a single large municipality that can superimpose its powers in an area. It opens up the space for smaller municipalities, towns and villages to join into an open and transparent process of collaboration. Large urban municipalities still play the leader role in initiating such processes as seen with Thessaloniki's role in pushing for metropolitan urban planning or Agadir's in putting integrated transportation on the agenda. However, through a metropolitan approach, their early strides work as cornerstones for extended action, allowing neighbouring municipalities to learn, weigh in on key decisions and voice concerns as trusted partners towards progress.

## Streamlining urban management with resource effectiveness

A metropolitan approach to urban management and development bring about significant efficiency in terms of resources, budgets and return on investment for urban projects. Looking at mature metropolitan structures as those seen in France, working at the metropolitan scale can streamline administration costs through a super-administrative power taking the place of numerous independent municipalities needing their own staff, budgets and lobbying energy to function. Similarly, for smaller municipalities surrounding large urban areas, the collaboration with a metropolitan structure can offer access to new resources, faster funding, higher level of expertise, unlocking more cohesive and impactful development between rural and urban complementary areas as seen with Zagreb.

## METROPOLIS IN FOCUS

The Urban Agglomeration of Zagreb was voluntarily setup by City of Zagreb together with the surrounding municipalities as a structure that let them unlock Integrated Territorial Investment funds allocated from the European Union to Functional Urban Areas in each country. The move from a municipal to a metropolitan approach in developing urban projects has made a big difference on the urban area. By bringing in all surrounding municipalities that cover the real functional urban area in and around Zagreb, the process enabled the development of truly integrated strategic projects. Municipalities have been given equal voice in the selection of integrated metropolitan projects. A dedicated budget was also allocated to smaller municipalities to promote an inclusive and streamlined approach.



# Internal limitations of adopting metropolitan governance

## The struggle for official recognition and financial autonomy faced by bottom-up processes

**Voluntarily-created metropolitan processes struggle with an increased burden of responsibility** while fighting for the recognition and authority equivalent to governmental bodies. Acknowledging and offering such authority at a comparable level to other metropolitan municipalities or governments becomes crucial for effective governance and decision-making. The challenge lies in bridging the gap between the responsibilities undertaken by metropolitan areas in more voluntary stages such as unions, agglomerations or even sectoral agencies and the authority granted to them. This usually translates into the need for a sponsor or political endorser who can offer the metropolitan entity the recognition by alliance such as Thessaloniki Municipality's support of the Major Development Agency Thessaloniki or City of Zagreb's role in the Zagreb Urban Agglomeration.

**Recognition directly affects the financial reality of a metropolis.** Metropolitan regions often face financial challenges arising from inconsistent, project-based funding sources, leading to resource struggles. While more institutionalised structures benefit from stable finances, the same cannot be said about agencies such as Agadir Mobilité SA or less-formalised communities such as Al Fayhaa who struggle to ensure sustainable and efficient operations for long-term development.

## A limiting space for evolution and operational progress on collective strategies faced by top-down processes

On the flip-side, **legal imposition of metropolitan structures coming top-down can lead to operational collaboration challenges**, where differing parties come together only operationally without a genuine desire to collaborate. The structural rigidity imposed by law can hinder adaptability and evolution, potentially hindering the collaborative spirit necessary for metropolitan success.

Institutionalised metropolitan areas often find themselves functioning as super administrations, **efficiently handling day-to-day operations but facing limitations in addressing more strategic visions.** The challenge lies in balancing operational efficiency with the ability to address long-term plans, especially concerning sustainability, which require collaboration and dialogue. Overcoming this challenge involves redefining the role of metropolitan areas to encompass both operational excellence and strategic foresight, creating space for shared understanding.

## METROPOLIS IN FOCUS

Métropole Aix-Marseille-Provence is one of the key metropolitan areas created in France following the Modernization of Territorial Action Acts law that saw France reducing the autonomy of its numerous local municipalities. While the creation of this law enabled a more efficient territorial administration, the enforced metropolisation and the process of giving and receiving power have created a difficult ground for voluntary cooperation between municipalities of differing sizes and political agendas. This is hindering faster progress on key issues requiring commitment, shared vision and tight collaboration. An example is the environmental impact and better management of large harbour areas such as Marseille where the balance between metropolitan and local needs is still to be reached.

# Internal requirements for a successful metropolisation

## Committing to quality over scale for better urbanisation

Cities transitioning into metropolitan areas through intermunicipal cooperation can optimize urbanization by prioritizing the enhancement of public services and residents' quality of life over sheer geographical expansion. Successful metropolitan governance requires a commitment to change and a willingness to experiment, learn, and iterate for the common good. To ensure this commitment, increasing the capacity of metropolitan structures, whether formal or informal, is crucial. By strategically expanding and upskilling the workforce, metropolitan areas can demonstrate their capability to handle a broader range of projects and improving their delivery on a wider range of topics as seen in Al Fayhaa. This dual approach strengthens the capabilities necessary to deliver on the commitment for change.

## Communicating the benefits clearly inwards and outwards

To garner greater buy-in for metropolitan governance, there is a crucial need to enhance its visibility among citizens, municipalities and greater ecosystem of urban actors. Often, citizens benefit from metropolitan policies in their daily lives, such as using public transportation or accessing water, yet the connection may not be apparent. Efforts should be made to consistently communicate the significance of metropolitan initiatives in fostering cohesion. Similarly, for neighbouring municipalities the benefits of such an approach need to be clearly communicated and consistently represented. Citizen and smaller municipal engagement becomes instrumental in showcasing the benefits of metropolitan coordination in urban agglomeration, fostering a clearer support for such governance across the wider ecosystem. This can lead to more advocating on this topic, making the metropolis a more formalised reality and in turn enabling metropolitan bodies to have a voice on more topics outside the usual urban planning or public transportation.

## Building true solidarity through rural-urban cohesion

True rural-urban cohesion can be reached by having all municipalities, regardless of size, part of the metropolisation process. Beyond resource sharing, the inclusion carries a political dimension often overlooked, especially for smaller municipalities. This approach signals a commitment to leaving no one behind, benefiting both the central city and its peripheries. By providing smaller municipalities with access to resources and services, larger cities create a halo effect, advancing rural areas toward adapted urban models. The consensus-based nature of metropolitan policies can accommodate diverse territorial needs, ensuring a balanced approach that enhances services for smaller cities. This strategy, rooted in solidarity and geographic understanding can help reduce disparities.

## METROPOLIS IN FOCUS

Sfax has been committed to the topic of metropolitan mobility since 2012. It started as a voluntary process, engaging with citizens and the larger ecosystem through dedicated workshops and events to identify the pain points of transportation and mobility in and around Sfax. This laid the foundation for the creation of Sfax Urban Mobility Plan, aligned to the the first of its kind in Tunis at a metropolitan level. While primarily developed by Sfax municipality, neighbouring municipalities were informed and consulted for an integrated approach. Open and consistent communications with regional and national authorities has helped Sfax move towards a more formalised structure as a mobility agency aligned to the Tunisian Urban Mobility National Policy.

# External challenges faced by the metropolisation process

## Rising competition from unclear power allocation

Competition can arise between municipalities or between municipalities and regional authorities for control over powers associated with the metropolitan territory. While national directives typically outline overarching goals, successful cooperative governance requires empathy. Coordination becomes relatively straightforward when there's alignment, but conflicts often arise during the mobilisation of funds and resources. The difficulty lies in establishing common projects, where mitigating potential conflicts necessitates mechanisms like roundtable discussions to facilitate open communication. Defining clear roles and responsibilities within a well-defined framework is essential. Ultimately, resolving these conflicts hinges on political will and a shared strategy that can ease tensions.

## Global trends towards political recentralisation

Metropolitan governance faces external challenges due to the global rise in centralization. Global signals such as the rise in populism and authoritarianism or even Europe's national management of the recovery budgets point towards a rise in centralised design and operations in the public sector. This hinders the cooperation necessary especially for addressing large-scale sustainability issues that Mediterranean cities are facing such as pollution, water or waste management. These topics inherently require regional solutions, including regional funding, given their extensive scope and the lengthy economic cycles associated with large infrastructure projects. The execution and implementation of these initiatives crucially depend on metropolitan cooperation. It is key to keep metropolisation at the front of the national and international agendas as it can emphasise the allocation of resources such as funding and assets that can help prevent blockers on acting on sustainable action in a consolidated way.

## Diversity of metropolitan realities hindering consistency

Metropolisation in the Mediterranean presents a unique set of challenges characterized by the diversity of formalisation structures, tackled topics, and geographical landscapes, making it challenging to present a cohesive identity. The varied nature of metropolitan structures across the region poses difficulties in articulating a unified voice to effectively communicate their purpose and functions. Additionally, the presence of a mismatch in political agendas further complicates the establishment of a coherent metropolisation narrative. The disparate approaches and priorities among Mediterranean metropolises hinder collective action and shared objectives, underscoring the need for strategic alignment.

## METROPOLIS IN FOCUS

Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU) has shown how using a metropolitan approach can put the wellbeing of the area and its residents before administrative hurdles. By stepping up as an intermediary actor to facilitate conversations across neighbouring municipalities, key regional and national authorities, MMU has managed to close the divide between different political agendas. This led to the adoption of the Marmara Sea Action Plan in 2021 in collaboration with Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change. The 22 actions benefit all municipalities of Marmara with a clear framework of partnership and responsibility. This shows the benefit in linking up metropolitan approaches to distinct plans and policies for coordinated action.



# External opportunities to enable further metropolisation

## Accelerating the SDGs at a metropolitan scale

Metropolitan areas play a key political role despite not having yet received clear recognition. The recent acknowledgement from UN Habitat general assembly on the necessity of metropolitan representation to meet the SDGs shows incipient signs of recognition. It is imperative not to overlook the metropolisation topic in the 2030 EU agenda, as the SDGs are best addressed at the metropolitan scale, where the complexity of issues necessitates a coordinated approach. With 60% of the 2030 agenda implemented at the local level, metropolitan areas play a crucial role in realizing the EU agenda, including initiatives like the New Green Deal, digital transition, and biodiversity conservation. Collaboration is essential to tackle these challenges effectively, emphasising the pivotal role metropolitan areas can play in accelerating the Net Zero Cities missions.

## Tapping into international networks for support

Networks serve as facilitators of change and implementation, offering support for the final push, critical mass, or recognition, and sharing risks during experimentation. Building trust and alliances is essential, with supranational levels providing valuable assistance. Networks play a crucial role in helping cities avoid past mistakes and assisting municipalities that may face challenges in international engagement. For example, MedCities network includes metropolis and union of municipalities from several Mediterranean countries and helps accelerate changes for the accomplishment of shared regional and global objectives. Leveraging these networks is practical for accessing funding and fostering cooperation, promoting a collaborative approach that enhances impact compared to individual efforts.


## Harnessing the political power of local diplomacy

Empowering local governments and strengthening institutional capacity are vital for self-protection against central authority. Meetings with mayors, centred on understanding citizen needs, can foster regional cohesion and exemplify local diplomacy. Advancing together in the Mediterranean, reframing regions as allies rather than competitors, offers an opportunity to resist recentralisation collectively. This collaborative approach highlights the interconnected progress of both regions and metropolitan areas. International bodies are starting to see this, as the recently approved Mediterranean Macro-Regional Strategy from EU Parliament and Committee of Regions is acknowledging metropolitan challenges. This is an important milestone, given metropolitan policies require broad consensus, input from diverse stakeholders and an inclusive environment within such large institutions.

## METROPOLIS IN FOCUS

European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA) is a forum for political dialogue initiated and led by Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona. It serves as a dynamic network fostering dialogue among leading metropolitan areas. Operating without a fixed structure, board, or budget, it offers a flexible annual meeting for metropolitan mayors and presidents to address common challenges. Despite the abundance of city networks, few networks are specifically tailored to metropolitan realities. One of EMA's key objectives is to lobby at the European Union level, advocating for metropolisation and addressing the unique needs and issues faced by metropolitan areas within the broader policy framework on sustainable urban development, economic and social cohesion. This informal learning space is also key in helping cities navigate the complexity of metropolitan governance.

## **Key results of adopting a metropolitan approach to urban development and intermunicipal cooperation in the Mediterranean**

-  Truly integrated spatial and strategic planning, as physical and socio-economic links emerge naturally in dynamic territories.
-  Enhanced economic outcomes, as metropolitan planning allows for more efficient allocation and distribution of resources across jurisdictional boundaries.
-  Improved quality of services and also more efficient delivery, as economies of scale are accessible in larger territories, and costs can be reduced when services reach more users.
-  Increased institutional flexibility, as local citizen and territorial needs evolve faster than central state or regional administrations can change.
-  Intermunicipal solidarity, as an inclusive process of urbanisation ensures territories of all sizes can access the support needed for balanced territorial development.

# Recommendations for Mediterranean urban areas municipalities and practitioners interested in intermunicipal cooperation

LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES  
MUNICIPALITY UNIONS  
METROPOLITAN ASSOCIATIONS

## Voluntarily gather as a collective around a shared vision by all

Voluntary association and bottom-up mobilisation is the best place to start a journey towards metropolisation that ensures shared commitment from everyone early on. Conduct collaborative sessions to identify existing assets, common pain points, key priorities that can help shape unified vision for the metropolitan area and working synergies. Promote open dialogue to build consensus and a sense of shared purpose among all of the participating municipalities.

## Establish clear communications around intermunicipal realities

Ensure a more transparent communication among your neighbouring municipalities by reaching out and taking the time to engage with everyone. Clearly share goals, challenges, and benefits to foster understanding and build trust. Use accessible channels and regular forums for fellow municipal practitioners, citizens, as well as key urban actors to open up the dialogue around the need for collaboration and intermunicipal cooperation to make better use of individual resources collectively.

## Open up to external opportunities to grow expertise and capability

Develop integrated metropolitan pilots that can practically demonstrate the contribution brought by metropolisation to national sustainability targets. By integrating these goals into local actions, you set yourself and place metropolitan structures as a key element in delivering SDGs or Net Zero agendas. Showing the impact difference between similar pilots ran on a local vs metropolitan level can better highlight the relevance of metropolisation in achieving broader sustainability objectives.

## BEST PRACTICE HIGHLIGHT

Montpellier initiated a voluntary process of metropolisation by working closely with neighbouring cities. They worked through the gaps, missing links and the reality of different political parties and geography through a whole process of communications, empathy and trust building anchored in a collective manifesto. It was a process of accommodating needs where smaller municipalities had to give in some sovereignty and Montpellier had to give up local interest for the metropolitan one. The resulting structure paid off as smaller urban areas now have automatic access to resources and support unseen before for integrated development.



# Recommendations for Mediterranean urban areas municipalities and practitioners moving towards metropolitan governance

METROPOLITAN SECTORAL AGENCIES  
MUNICIPALITIES WITH INFORMAL  
METROPOLITAN SCOPE

## Harness an ecosystem of partners to strengthen resources and funding

Strengthen your resources and funding by collaborating with neighbouring municipalities, local businesses, non-profits, as well as academic institutions. Forge partnerships beyond traditional public boundaries to tap into external expertise and funding opportunities, in this way overcoming resource constraints during metropolisation. Look into diversifying income sources by balancing public allocations, private funds and external budgets without giving away the power and public interest held by the public administration.

## Target local challenges with scaling potential for recognised action

Focus on local challenges with scalable potential. Identify key metropolitan issues and prioritize initiatives that can be easily scaled for broader impact across neighbouring municipalities. You can start with some of the more popular topics such as water or waste management, public transportation or urban planning which benefit most from a metropolitan process. Key is to address immediate needs of your residents that can allow you to gain visibility and recognition to be then garnered for longer-term action.

## Translate national sustainability targets into metropolitan pilots

Start engaging with external organisations, academic bodies, and experts to access resources and best practices. Participate in networks, conferences, or even training programs to find relevant topics for your urban area that would benefit from a metropolitan approach. Use these exchanges to broaden the skill set of your team and to learn how to navigate challenges more effectively in the development of purpose-led partnerships.

## BEST PRACTICE HIGHLIGHT

Major Development Agency Thessaloniki has been closely involved in sustainable mobility and urban development in the metropolitan area and also in the broader region, enabling the Green Deal agenda. The mixed financing model for the sectoral agency drawing on both Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and targeted external European budgets mirrors its functioning as part of an ecosystem of numerous private, public and civil society partners. Using these partners and budgets, the agency is able to pilot new projects starting from Thessaloniki that can then be replicated across municipalities in the metropolitan area.

# Recommendations for Mediterranean urban areas municipalities and practitioners leading the way in metropolisation

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENTS  
METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITIES

## Lobby at a regional and national level for formal metropolitan recognition

Voluntary types of intermunicipal cooperation once combined with a formal recognition from the state through regional or national policy can bring higher legitimacy to metropolitan areas on the ground and become a key level in the national structure. Lobby for policy frameworks that help recognise metropolitan areas, addressing the challenges of unclear jurisdiction and authority. Collaborate with metropolitan entities of all sizes to present one single unified front, emphasising the need for tailored governance solutions and the benefits they can provide.

## Put metropolitan success in urban management on the international agenda

Share best practices, case studies, and lessons learned from your metropolitan experiences. Engage with international organisations and forums to showcase the benefits brought by metropolitan governance in addressing global urban challenges. Position metropolitan level as the optimum level of urban action needed to tackle any of the large urban and sustainable challenges in climate action forums. Showcase the impact achieved via quick action, experimentation, pilot and scaling that metropolitan initiatives can bring forward.

## Act in solidarity by guiding the development of incipient metropolis

Recognise the challenges faced by nascent metropolitan structures, such as the need for clear roles and responsibilities. Offer to provide mentorship and resources to help them navigate the complexities of governance. Foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing platforms to facilitate the growth of incipient metropolitan entities, ensuring a smoother transition towards effective metropolitan governance, especially in geographies where metropolisation is a counter trend.

## BEST PRACTICE HIGHLIGHT

As a formalised metropolitan structure, Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona (AMB) is looking at how to better expand its metropolitan remits by leveraging strategic partnerships and diversifying income sources. AMB has focused on developing public-private partnerships such as the Housing Metropolis Barcelona project where they build social housing for rental together with a private partner. While local municipalities have land, they don't have the money to develop housing projects. The private sector makes the investment and receive the proceeds, while the public sector holds the decisional power to align to the metropolitan direction.

# Lessons from the field: 10 Case studies of metropolitan action in the Mediterranean

METROPOLITAN  
GOVERNANCE

**CASE STUDIES**





# STRUCTURE OF METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

## Remits and decision-making

With regulatory authority, AMB can formulate and implement public policies. An impactful example is the low emission zone covering 95 km<sup>2</sup>, discouraging polluting vehicles and promoting public transport usage. Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona stands as a pioneering European metropolitan area, lauded for its citizen-centric practices, emphasising cohesion and sustainable development. Municipalities recognised the need for collective development and quality of life, fostering a collaborative culture.

## Municipal & citizen involvement

The City Council consists of 90 metropolitan councillors. Each of the 36 municipalities has a number of members proportional to its demographic weight. Moreover, the mayors of the municipalities are ex officio members of the Council, in addition to the councillors appointed by the Town Councils, whose number increases until it covers the stipulated amount for each municipality. Monthly meetings facilitate discussions on citizen-centric projects and services. Additionally, other important processes involve citizens and civil society, such as in the elaboration of the new Metropolitan Urban Master Plan (PDUM), which envisions the future of the Barcelona metropolitan area for the next 30 years. The urban planning proposals undergo validation by mayors, ensuring local integration, while public consultations empower citizens to request changes.

## Funding model

The annual budget for the AMB and public companies is almost 2.5 billion Euros. Most of this amount comes from the municipalities' transfers and the taxes paid by the citizens. A smaller percentage is contributed by the regional and national authorities. The AMB also receives funding from EU funds, service surcharges, and credits.

## Multilevel partnerships

AMB maintains direct collaboration with all its municipalities, but it also collaborates with other administrations at the local, regional, national, European, and international levels. At the European, Mediterranean and international levels, AMB strives to promote the metropolitan dimension and interests primarily through direct collaboration with other metropolises, as well as by participating and taking a leading role in city networks and forums such as the European Metropolitan Authorities, Metropolis, Medcities, and through bilateral agreements, including the one with UN-HABITAT. AMB also collaborates with numerous partners from civil society, such as universities, research institutes, think tanks, NGOs, and civil associations, among others.



# LESSONS ON METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

## **Metropolitan dimension ensures specific urban challenges are better addressed**

Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona (AMB) has successfully executed significant metropolitan projects, such as one of the largest low emission zone in south Europe. Planned since 2017 and implemented in 2020, covering more than 95 km<sup>2</sup> and several municipalities, the zone resulted from AMB's policy implementation and public transport management. The initiative substantially reduced polluting vehicles from 160,000 to 30,000 and achieved a daily trip distribution of 50% through active mobility, 24% via public transport and 26% by car. AMB incentivized car renunciation by providing a free 3-year public transport subscription or access to a comprehensive bike-sharing network. Tackling the challenges posed by low emission zones showcases AMB's integrated metropolitan approach, serving as a best practice model for major project development.

## **Circular economy requires total commitment and cross-sectoral action**

AMB has implemented an exemplary circular economy model integrated into all its policies and programs, as seen, for example, in waste and water management cases. Through selective waste collection and processing at its waste management plants (Ecoparcs), prime materials are recovered and prepared for recycling. In the worst-case scenario, materials that cannot be recycled are incinerated to obtain energy or biogas. Regarding water management, the El Prat de Llobregat water treatment plant, operational since 2002, is a leading facility in Europe, treating 420 million liters daily—meeting the needs of two million citizens and businesses. Covering 36 hectares with expansion potential, it purifies 36% of the total water found in Barcelona's metropolitan area. These best practices demonstrate a holistic circular economy, emphasizing waste-to-energy processes and sustainable water management. Operating at a metropolitan scale ensures a cohesive system where municipal actions align with broader sustainability objectives.

## **Rigorous urban planning takes time and needs to involve all the stakeholders**

For a decade, a comprehensive effort has been underway to formulate the Metropolitan Urban Master Plan (PDUM) guiding the development of the Barcelona's metropolitan area. With the involvement of over 15,000 people, 13 exhibitions, 21 papers and 500 experts, the PDUM aims to modernize the existing urban plan dating back to the 1970s. Despite some adjustments post-dictatorship and during democracy, the original plan persists. AMB's goal is to reshape urban development by addressing sprawling growth, promoting a green access network for sustainability and creating metropolitan boulevards for seamless connectivity. Municipalities and citizens actively contribute to the plan's evolution, ensuring it aligns with local perspectives and meets the evolving needs of the community. Despite the lengthy process, this inclusive approach guarantees the PDUM's relevance and effectiveness.





# Métropole Aix-Marseille- Provence

FRANCE

[www.ampmetropole.fr](http://www.ampmetropole.fr)

**Population:** 2 million  
**Territory:** 92 municipalities  
**Creation:** National law, 2016  
**Structure:** Metropolitan Area  
**Governance:** Metropolitan Council  
**Jurisdictions:** Urban Mobility, Urban Planning, EU Funds Management, Water and Waste Management



# STRUCTURE OF METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

## Remits and decision-making

The Aix-Marseille-Provence metropolitan area faced challenges in garnering support from towns during its transition from 6 agglomeration communities to a single metropolitan structure. Since adoption of the Modernization of Territorial Action Acts (Loi MAPTAM) by the French Parliament in 2015, municipalities' competencies and budgets for projects have been increasingly transferred to the metropolitan level. Despite challenges, the metropolitan model offers greater autonomy for economic initiatives and regional public service operation. It prioritises social and regional cohesion, emphasising access to quality services across the area and a commitment to sustainable development goals.

## Municipal & citizen involvement

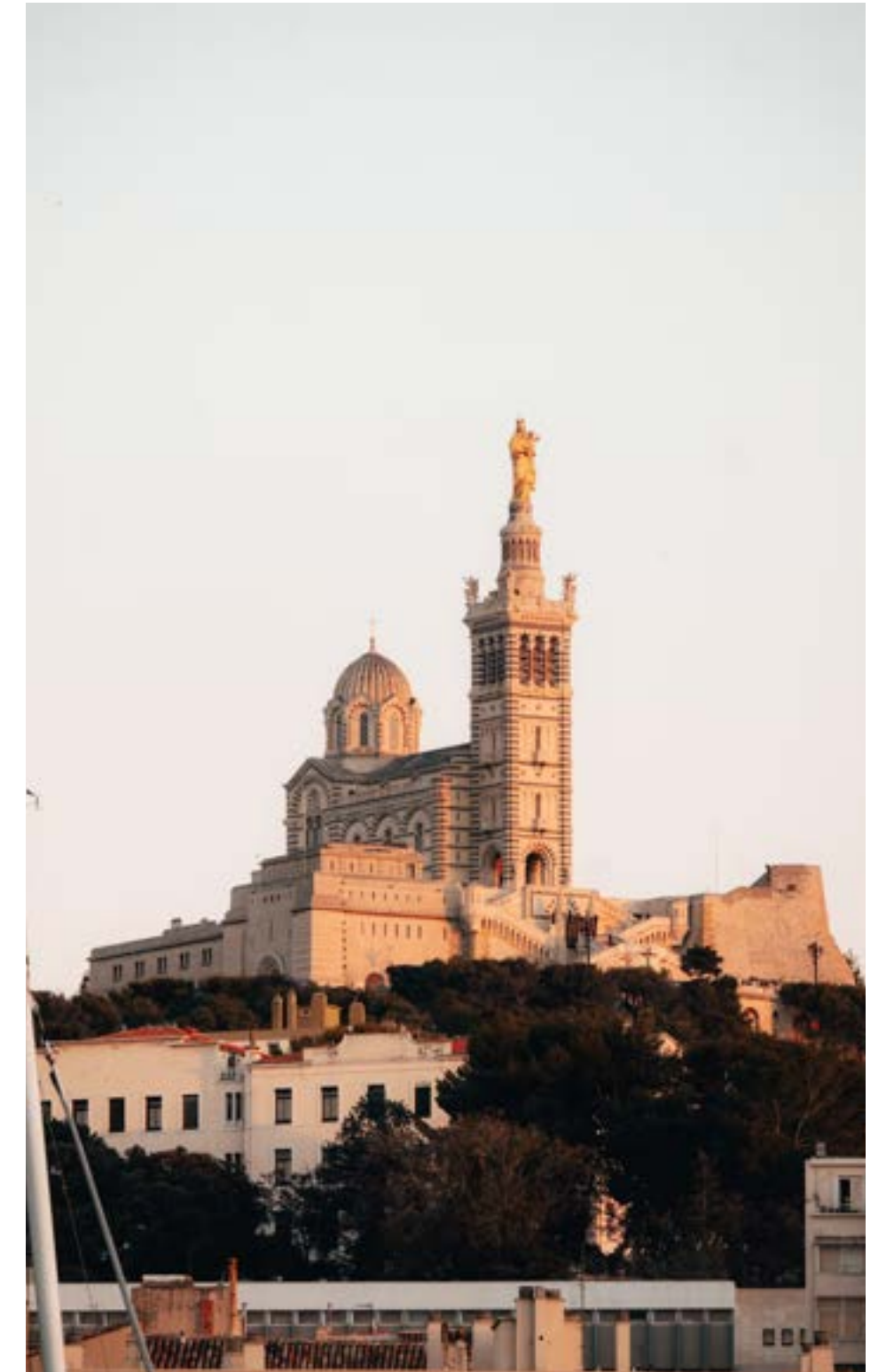
In 2016, the Métropole Aix-Marseille-Provence was established with a two level governance: a metropolitan council and 6 territorial councils (Conseil de Territoire) endowed with dedicated territorial budgets. By 2022, territorial councils were eventually replaced by a unified metropolitan governance and a single budget. Covering 92 municipalities and more than 3000 km<sup>2</sup>, the metropolitan area was established following the MAPTAM Law and could therefore only be modified through a change of the legal framework. This concentration of competences and resources empowers the metropolitan council for significant investment projects. Formed following municipal elections, this metropolitan council gathers elected representatives of large cities (Marseille, Aix-en-Provence) but also middle-size cities and small villages and ensures a balance of influence in the decision taking process between those.

## Funding model

The funding question of the metropolitan area is that municipalities of different sizes are concerned with how resources contributing to the metropolitan budget are financing the services for the whole area. To solve the issue of limited local budgets and built on the project of metropolitan areas replacing provinces or communes, the legislation has been updated to allow metropolitan areas to function on a regional autonomous budget, having powers of regulating and implementing policies without depending on budgets that might be refused or delayed by the member municipalities.

## Multilevel partnerships

It is a project unprecedented in France due to its scale and aims to provide a higher life quality for the residents while restoring the built heritage and revitalising the economic function of certain areas. Territorial cohesion is one of the main topics of concern for Aix-Marseille-Provence. Starting from the principles of shared governance and integrating cross-financing as well as public policies, the Governance Pact was adopted in 2021, establishing the co-piloting of the project by the metropolitan area and the City of Marseille.



# LESSONS ON METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

## **Building a super administration to tackle municipal governance inefficiencies**

France faces the challenge of managing approximately 35,000 communes, a high number in Europe, creating an economic autonomy disparity between these small administrative units and metropolitan areas. In response, the 2016 law aimed at territorial reorganization faced resistance as communes hesitated to relinquish certain powers. In 2022, the updated law introduced a transformative shift by consolidating budgets at the metropolitan level, replacing individual local budgets for each commune. This strategic move empowered the metropolitan council to balance commune powers, fostering cohesion, particularly in cases like Aix-Marseille-Provence. The flexibility allows diverse political majorities to collaborate, ensuring a unified approach that considers the dialogue between stakeholders and prioritizes the holistic needs of citizens across the entire area.

## **Top-down approach limiting the willingness of municipalities to collaborate voluntarily**

While the creation of a fully formalised and recognised metropolitan structure has allowed the more efficient governance of the area, this top-down approach has also led to a few challenges. On one hand, the formal metropolitan structure has led to the merging of pre-existing intermediary intercommunal institutions made of 92 municipalities with differing size, political affiliations and agendas. In this context establishing an active metropolitan governance is a challenge. On another hand, this also makes it difficult for the metropolitan governance structure to be easily modified or evolved based on new challenges or needs of the municipalities that make it up. The traditional setting of this formal arrangement requires more voluntary commitment from municipalities to cover the political divide of different territorial agendas.

## **Seizing the opportunity in future environmental transition**

The Aix-Marseille-Provence area has a thriving industrial economy which represents one of the strengths of the area. At the same time, this large industry also poses an environmental challenge to the metropolitan area notably in terms of air pollution. A move towards a just transition that focuses on protecting the environment shared by all municipalities of the metropolitan area has thus been taken with the adoption of a Metropolitan Climate Action Plan. To ensure a collaborative approach in the implementation of this plan in an integrated way, the future requires a strong focus on aligning on a shared collective vision for the territory anchored in the challenges to be addressed for a green transition.





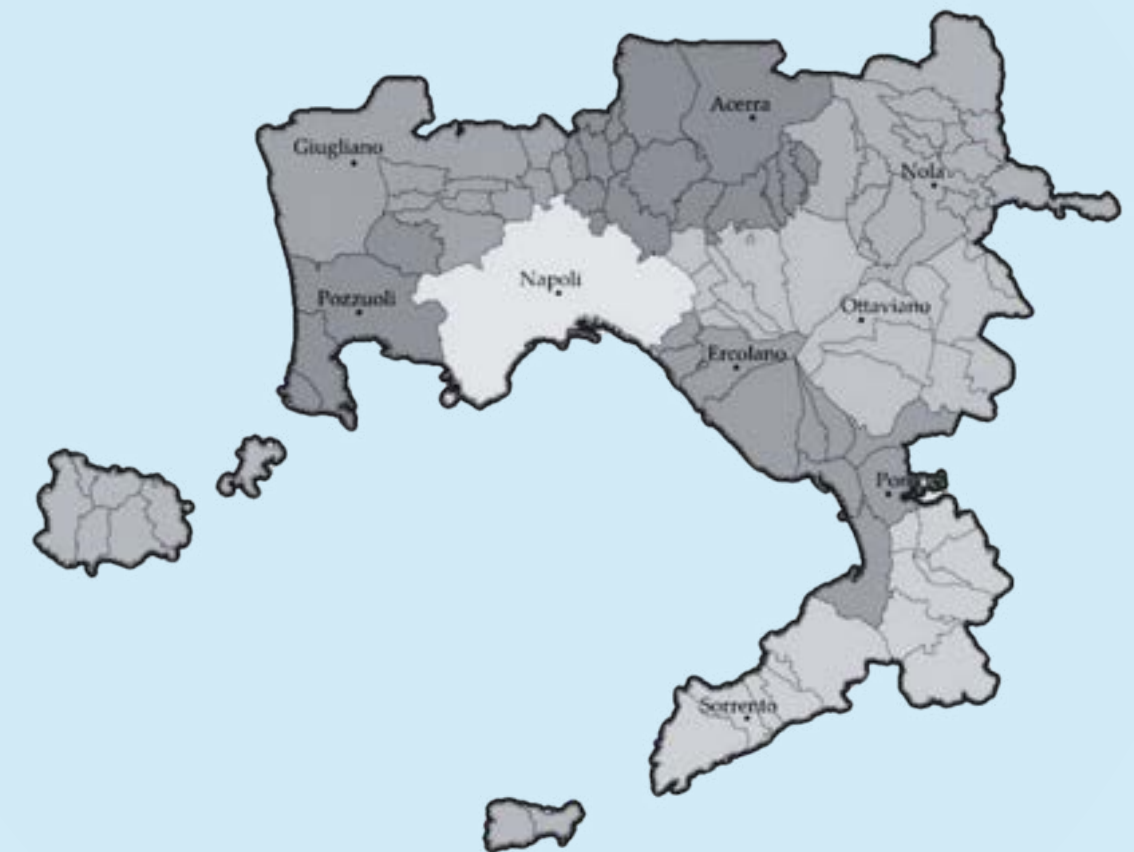
CITTÀ METROPOLITANA  
DI NAPOLI

# Città Metropolitana di Napoli

ITALY

[www.cittametropolitana.na.it](http://www.cittametropolitana.na.it)

**Population:** 3 million  
**Territory:** Naples and 92 towns  
**Creation:** National law, 2015  
**Structure:** Metropolitan government  
**Governance:** Metropolitan council  
**Jurisdictions:** Territorial Planning, Urban  
Mobility Strategies, EU funds  
management



# STRUCTURE OF METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

## Remits and decision-making

In 2014, a new institution was established in Italy, replacing provinces with metropolitan cities and that the structure is primarily governed by members elected from the most important cities of the provinces. Significant differences in the election process have been made, with members now appointed directly by the towns and municipalities. The Metropolitan City has jurisdiction over collecting proposals, making reports on the economic and regional development and creating development programs.

## Municipal & citizen involvement

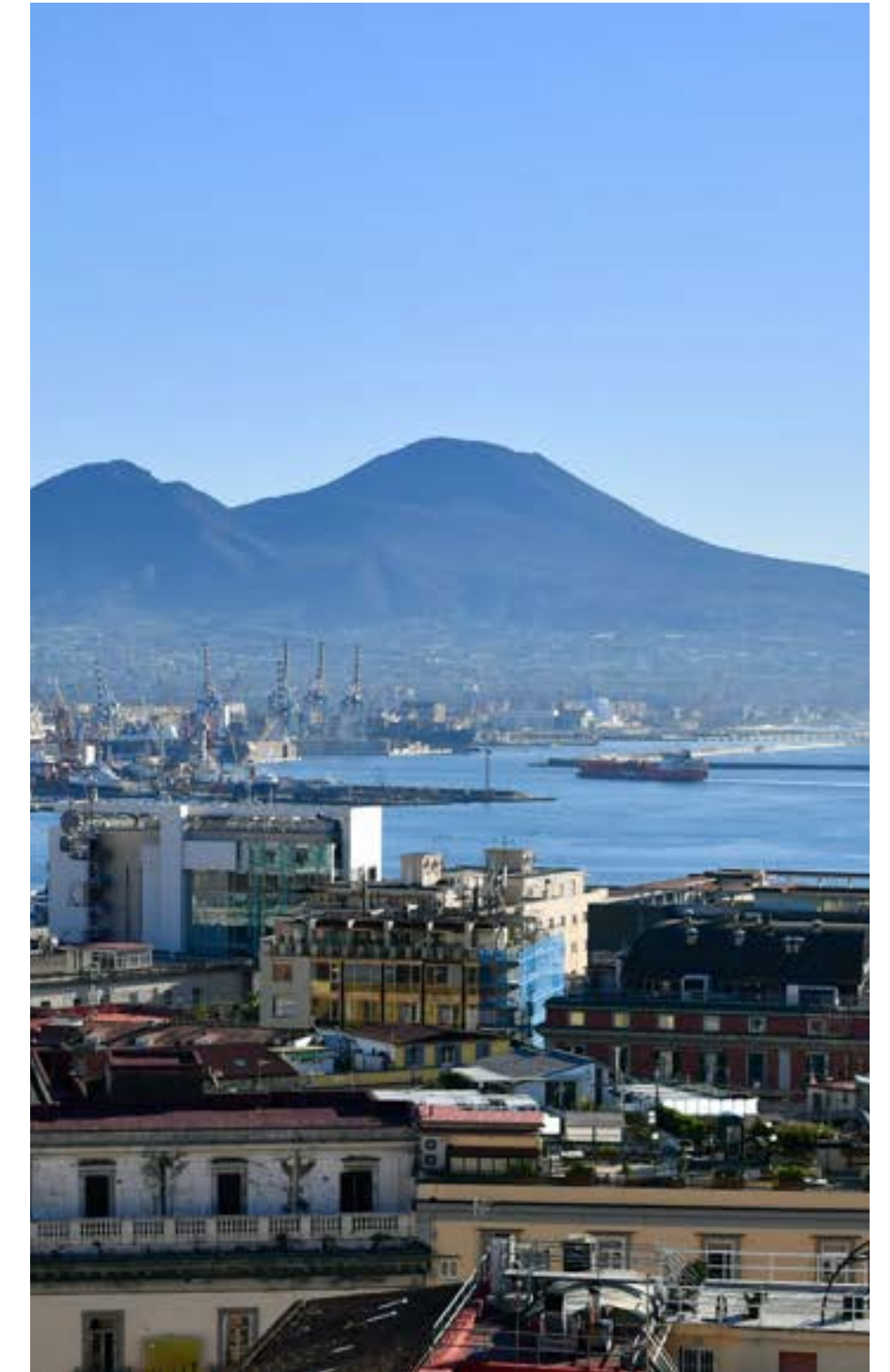
NapNaplesoli Metropolitan Area is recognized as a metropolitan structure in the national Constitution. The election model moved from having representatives directly elected by the citizens for the management of the metropolitan area to having mayors and city counselors nominating and electing the management council. Due to the geographical spread and number of 92 towns, the mayors and counselors have a seat in the metropolitan council and are able to participate in the drafting and implementation of policies that affect the lives of their community.

## Funding model

The main focus is on attracting European Funds that can then be used for the development of metropolitan-level projects. The metropolitan structure actually works on 0 costs, as it is not paid from a dedicated budget, but people elected into the metropolitan structure are based and paid by the municipality where they have their main position and roles.

## Multilevel partnerships

Città Metropolitana di Napoli works with various entities such as universities and ministries in Italy. However, the partnerships with the private sector, universities and NGOs are in their initial stages and are expected to be developed in the years to come. The system of shareholdings owned by the Metropolitan City of Naples includes companies with total or controlling participation, companies with non-controlling minority participation and consortia, associations, foundations in which the Metropolitan City is a member together with other public and/or private entities for the pursuit of its institutional purposes.



## **People's power can be connected with professional administration**

Direct democracy does not guarantee that the best people would occupy the key positions for managing the area. However, people's power should be the basis of democratic construct of the metropolitan area. The middle road is electing representatives who, in turn, elect experts in administering various departments at the metropolitan level. The law of the metropolitan area reduces the costs of the public administration and the burden it put on the budget. The salaries of the team members are taken from municipalities and it is the responsibility of the cities to remunerate the elected experts and representatives.

## **Metropolitan plans ensure an area can reach its maximum potential**

Development programmes drafted according to territorial realities can enhance the power of the region to change and create assets. The Regional Programme of the metropolitan area is developed for a number of 3 to 4 years and on different activity sectors and tailored to the needs and strong points of every town. Plan of Southern Territory is to be confirmed and implemented, covering all the area of Naples. Furthermore, the urban plan for sustainable mobility covering the next 10 years has been approved. In terms of achieving territorial cohesion, it is important to mention that the municipalities cannot manage without the plan created by the metropolitan city.

## **The Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan puts the citizens in the center**

The Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan sought to provide the people with a means to improve the quality of urban life through policies and planning for the following 10 years. The plan is based on the challenges regarding transport in the metropolitan area and integrating it in a sustainable method by putting the people in the center instead of traffic management. Citizens have been encouraged to participate in the planning stages through consultations and studies. The plan sought to provide the fundamental functions of the metropolitan city in terms of environmental protection, territorial planning, social development, transport planning, school buildings and equal opportunities for the residents. This plan is a pivotal step for the application of green city concepts in the Italian peninsula starting from citizens and expanding to the entire metropolitan area.





# STRUCTURE OF METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

## Remits and decision-making

Zagreb Urban Agglomeration collaboratively crafted its Development Strategy with constituent municipalities, outlining goals for improved quality of life, a competitive economy and environmental sustainability. The agglomeration, responsible for strategy development, collects project ideas and prioritises them based on state methodology. Emphasising brownfield regeneration and sustainable mobility, they focus on areas where they can influence project prioritisation, advancing integrated sustainable development for the metropolitan region.

## Municipal & citizen involvement

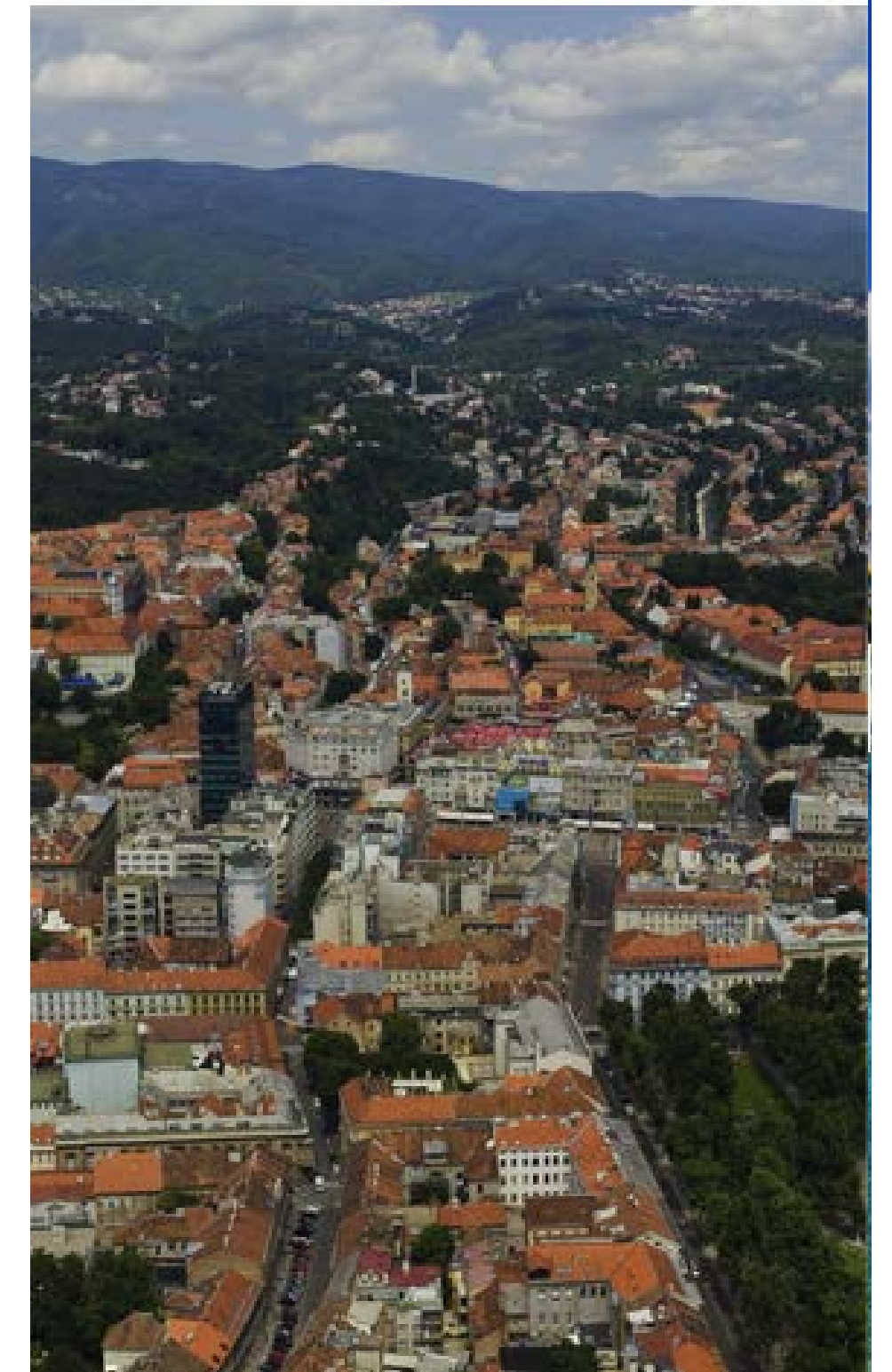
The Coordination Council, featuring 30 mayors and municipality mayors with equal voting power, guarantees each municipality has a substantial voice. The Partners Council, comprising 61 advisors from various sectors, enhances decision-making with comprehensive insights. Electronic public consultations are used as a citizen engagement tool. Strategy approval involves gathering opinions from The Coordination Council, The Partners Council, and mayors from all cities and municipalities from Zagreb Urban Agglomeration. Local contact points and workshops for municipalities, Zagreb's city offices and other stakeholders support effective collaboration.

## Funding model

Urban Agglomeration of Zagreb was created as a structure to access funding through the Integrated Territorial Investment tool (ITI) that the country can get from EU for sustainable urban development. The funding structure combines a set central government allocation of 70% from ITI budget for Zagreb with the remaining funding allocated to surrounding municipalities. Funds vary depending on the national spread across eligible urban agglomerations every 6 years, but the general strategy is to support initiatives contributing substantially to the overarching metropolitan agenda.

## Multilevel partnerships

The Zagreb Urban Agglomeration intermediates the relationship between the local level (municipalities) and national level (central government and ministries). By developing the strategy for the region, documenting the proposed metropolitan projects, they set the framework for using ITI funds that are then allocated by the State, Ministry of Regional Development and EU. Zagreb as a city center of Urban Agglomeration of Zagreb is in charge of strategic planning (development of Urban Agglomeration Strategy and Action Plan), monitoring the implementation of the funded projects, collecting data on progress and reporting to the national level.



# LESSONS ON METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

## **Encouraging decentralised decision-making and engagement**

Zagreb's success in metropolitan governance is underpinned by a commitment to open communication, transparency and civic engagement. Civil society participation in the Partners Council ensures fair decision-making, while involving diverse sectors from business to academia enriches governance with varied perspectives. This approach yields benefits, such as enhanced understanding of surrounding municipalities challenges and transparent communication of decisions, fund allocations and rationale that fosters trust in the collaborative governance. Electronic public consultations enable citizen participation in decision-making through an open 30-day public comment period. This allows for thorough review of proposed metropolitan strategies, incorporating community insights if raised by the public and shows a commitment to transparent metropolitan governance for and with citizens.

## **Adapting the funding mechanism to accommodate strategic priorities for the metropolitan area**

The emphasis on strategic project selection aligns with a vision for comprehensive and impactful urban development. This approach ensures that funds are allocated to initiatives that contribute significantly to the overall metropolitan agenda to have the most impact for municipalities using the allocated ITI funds. Among these is the ambitious “Zagreb City Library and Social-Cultural Center at the Paromlin location”. The project ensures the revitalization of brownfield area and the restoration of individually protected cultural assets of industrial heritage and encourages more efficient use of the existing cultural and social infrastructure in the center of Zagreb. Furthermore, the project additionally connects the inhabitants municipalities and cities in the area of the Zagreb Urban Agglomeration, and through culture and art it significantly contributes to the integrated development and quality of life of the inhabitants of the entire Zagreb Urban Agglomeration, with a special impact on the cities and municipalities that are in the zone of daily migration.

## **The role of transparency in ensuring a balanced democratic process among municipalities**

Zagreb initiated the agglomeration, prioritizing inclusivity over simplicity. In contrast to regions choosing smaller areas for easier project management, Zagreb aimed for comprehensive involvement of all municipalities in the overall urban territory as experienced by citizens. However, the extension of ITI funds to 22 urban areas across the country led to a series of challenges and disappointment with a new budget of 80 mil. euros, reduced from the previous 120 mil. euros. This made Zagreb shift its strategy to focus on integrated projects that would benefit most of the municipalities while setting aside dedicated grant calls for local needs and small projects that didn't make the strategic cut to balance the impact on the whole metropolitan area. This approach ensures fairness and transparency for municipalities of all sizes and contributes to an equitable system that accommodates the diverse needs of its municipalities.





# Major Development Agency of Thessaloniki

GREECE

[www.mdat.gr](http://www.mdat.gr)

**Population:** 1 million

**Territory:** Thessaloniki and 10 neighbouring municipalities

**Creation:** National law, 1994

**Structure:** Sectoral Metropolitan Agency; Thessaloniki Metropolitan Development Organisation

**Governance:** General Assembly

**Jurisdictions:** Technical and Management Support to Municipalities, Management and Implementation of Sustainable Development Projects, Social Resilience and Inclusion, Housing Policies, Knowledge Transfer, International Networking.



# STRUCTURE OF METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

Major Development Agency of Thessaloniki

## Remits and decision-making

The agency strategically aids the Thessaloniki metropolitan area, assisting with business planning, project design, funding acquisition and local implementation supervision. Collaborating closely with the Municipality of Thessaloniki, it contributes to major strategic plans like the EU Mission Cities and significant urban development initiatives. For other area municipalities, the focus shifts to infrastructure projects of significant local, inter- or supra-municipal scale. The General Assembly holds the highest authority, with the Board of Executives, Chairman of the Board and CEO following in the hierarchy.

## Municipal & citizen involvement

Thessaloniki city has the majority of representatives in the assembly, but in the Council which influences decision making each municipality holds one vote each with the same weighting ensuring a balanced decision making process. The agency works on a shareholder model where Thessaloniki city has the majority of shares (56%), accompanied by other 10 municipalities and a number of public entities from infrastructure or academic sectors.

## Funding model

The agency has a double funding model. On one side, it receives funds from central government from respective ministries in line with the applicability of the projects and initiatives developed, including ITI funds. The municipalities also contribute towards the agency through binding contracts that allow them to access the agency's support in their local implementation. On the other side, the agency uses European level funds through programmes such as Interreg, Horizon 2020 or external foundations such as the Open Society Foundation for projects that align with coordinated European efforts.

## Multilevel partnerships

The agency collaborates with a range of partners, including private, public and civil society entities, engaging them through dedicated workshops. These forums disseminate best practices from European initiatives like the 100 Resilient Cities Network and enhance the capabilities of municipalities, citizens and visitors. The agency is actively working to promote participatory approaches, especially in shaping climate action agendas. By involving experts from different sectors, it aims to enrich public decision-making processes with diverse perspectives.



# LESSONS ON METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

Major Development Agency of Thessaloniki

## **Replicating best practices to move collectively towards an agreed Green Deal**

The Thessaloniki metropolitan area municipalities actively engage in initiatives such as Interreg Med to collaboratively address shared challenges, including the replanning of road axes. While municipalities currently seek support for specific needs, the agency takes a leading role in implementing region-wide sustainable mobility and urban development plans. All municipalities signing the Green Deal reflects a collective commitment to upgrade strategic planning. This provides a valuable opportunity to replicate successful practices from Thessaloniki, adapting them locally and aligning with the broader vision of the Green Deal. The agency's involvement ensures coordination and knowledge exchange, moving towards a unified, holistic and sustainable approach in addressing the evolving needs of the metropolitan region and fostering cooperation among municipalities.

## **Developing a strong understanding of the metropolitan reality**

Looking ahead, plans for scaling metropolitan governance in the Thessaloniki metropolitan area focus on collaborative endeavors and underscores a continuous learning and improvement process. The incorporation of a data platform for constant monitoring, as seen in the Resilient Observatory of Thessaloniki, aligns with the future vision of informed, data-driven decision-making for both the public and private sectors. This has served as a successful first step towards the development of a data platform that could integrate data points, analyse challenges and give an overview on a range of demographic, usage and sectoral trends. This is now running as Horizon project that would serve each metropolitan municipality as well as private actors to enable pinpointing the needs for future metropolitan developments.

## **Moving towards a holistic approach for integrated urban development**

The development agency, while a supporting entity, lacks the authority over the metropolitan region. Decision-making authority and budget allocation primarily rest with the Metropolitan Unit of Thessaloniki, as the Intermediate Body of the Region of Central Macedonia, creating a discrepancy in influence and resource allocation. The distinct status of the Metropolitan Unit as a separate public administration at a regional level introduces complexities in the governance structure. A crucial lesson in the implementation of a metropolitan structure is the necessity for a holistic approach across all governance levels. Social and sustainable challenges demand a consolidated effort, as exemplified by projects such as the social housing scheme developed at a metropolitan level with all municipalities that takes a comprehensive, rather than sector-specific view. This emphasizes the importance of transcending traditional governance silos to address complex, interconnected issues.





# Marmara Municipalities Union

TÜRKIYE

[www.marmara.gov.tr](http://www.marmara.gov.tr)

**Population:** 27 million  
**Territory:** 188 member municipalities  
**Creation:** Voluntary, 1975  
**Structure:** Municipal association  
**Governance:** Union General  
**Jurisdictions:** Consulting, networking, capacity building



# STRUCTURE OF METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

## Remits and decision-making

The Union promotes decentralisation and democratic values. It boasts a training department, supports international relations, including sister cities and aids the formation of local government associations. Guided by a legal framework, the union defines its attributions and chart, subject to approval by the assembly and the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change. Through platforms, consulting, training and events, the Marmara Municipalities Union fosters collaboration among policymakers and elected officials across the political spectrum.

## Municipal & citizen involvement

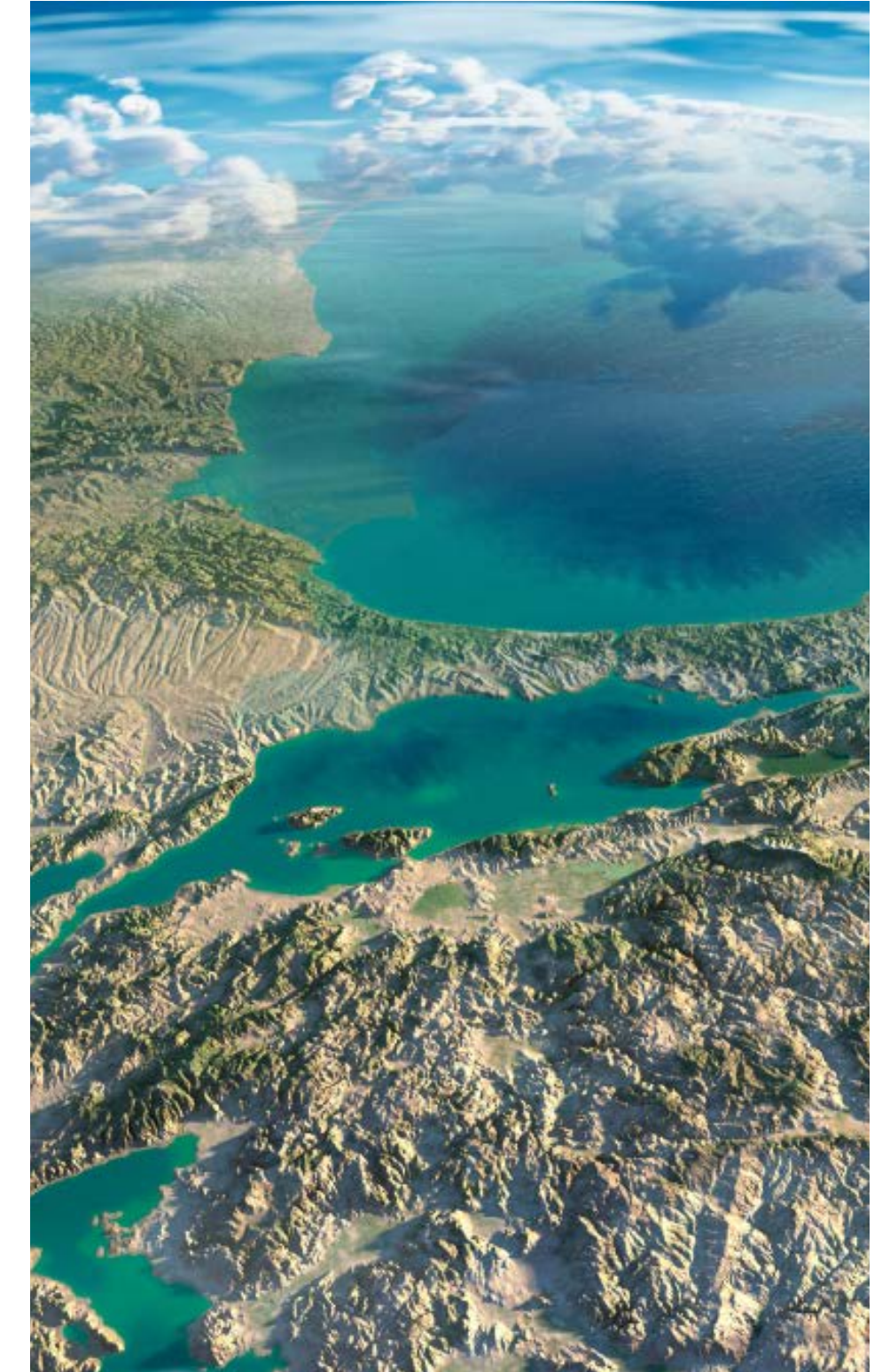
Membership in MMU is voluntary and the union cannot obligate municipalities to take certain actions, but it can offer support and knowledge resources to assist them. With 188 member municipalities collaborating on metropolitan challenges, MMU stands as the inaugural regional local government association. Each municipality has a representative within the General Assembly who elect a president in charge of representing and managing the union together with the executive board.

## Funding model

The organization's budget is primarily derived from membership fees paid by member municipalities, amounting to over 95% of their total budget. MMU does not accept any funds from the Central Government, maintaining a selective approach to funding from institutions and private companies. This method of funding ensures the union's independence and financial capabilities to develop projects and function autonomously.

## Multilevel partnerships

MMU cultivated partnerships with universities, civil society, businesses and international institutions, launching a mentoring program for efficient peer-to-peer learning. Facilitating matchmaking for international projects, MMU established five expertise centers: Urban Policy Center (UPC) for regional policies, Migration Policy Center (MPC) for migration and social cohesion, Sustainability and Climate Change Center (SCC), Data and Technology Center (DTC) and a Management Development Center for local government capacity building.



## **Unions as the middle-ground between political agendas**

Around 60% of Türkiye's industrial production resides in the Marmara region. In response to shared environmental challenges in the sea, mayors united under the Union, transcending political affiliations. This exemplifies that metropolitan collaboration can bridge political gaps and yield projects for citizens. The Mayors' Summit, an initiative by the Marmara Municipalities Union, annually assembles member mayors, fostering an environment for experience and knowledge exchange. The Summit features expert speeches on communication, management, economy and disaster management. Mayors engage in discussions on municipality issues in the Local Government Issues Negotiation Platform, enhancing collaboration despite political differences.

## **A set legal framework offers protection in the face of funding irregularities**

The financing of the union is protected by a law which ensures that if one member does not pay their share, MMU can request the sum from the central government out of the budget allocation of the municipality in question. This ensures MMU can continue working independently and providing support to all the members of the union, without compromises. Having a legal framework that ensures the financing of a union is an example of best practice for how independent structures can become a facilitator for collaboration among stakeholders, an international informal ambassador for a region, a knowledge transfer center and a key democratic instrument which ensures participatory representation of municipalities on regional level.

## **Lobbying for decentralization by strengthening democratic systems**

The Founding fathers of Marmara Municipalities Union were for decentralization and supported local governments and the democratic journey of Türkiye. They wanted to create democratic systems within the local administrations that would nourish a fair, inclusive and efficient participation of all the stakeholders. Because each municipality has a representative within the General Assembly, the citizens are represented on a greater scale and their needs are met through collaborative actions which are facilitated by the MMU. The union acts also as a supervisor of the municipalities in the sense it provides expertise for projects and expects that municipalities implement the ideas accordingly. This acts as a checks and balances which ensures citizens are the ultimate beneficiaries of the implemented projects.





# Urban Community of Al Fayhaa

LEBANON

[www.urbcomfayhaa.gov.lb](http://www.urbcomfayhaa.gov.lb)

**Population:** 1 million

**Territory:** Municipalities of Tripoli, Mina, Baddaoui, Qalamoun

**Creation:** Decree 5234, 1982

**Structure:** Municipal union

**Governance:** Mayors are elected by municipal council members who are elected by the citizens, and mayors represent their municipalities in the Union council

**Jurisdictions:** Waste management, Firefighting, Civil works engineering, Financing, Administration, Insect Control, Execution of common projects



# STRUCTURE OF METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

## Remits and decision-making

Al Fayhaa, a union of municipalities in Lebanon, operates as an urban community overseeing common projects across cities. Al Fayhaa uniquely engages all four municipalities. A notable achievement is the implementation of Solid Waste Management projects serving the entire area. Ongoing projects include the development of the Fire Brigade and the creation of a metropolitan police department. With some departments stemming from Tripoli's municipality, the creation of new ones showcases the union's evolution beyond its initial remits.

## Municipal & citizen involvement

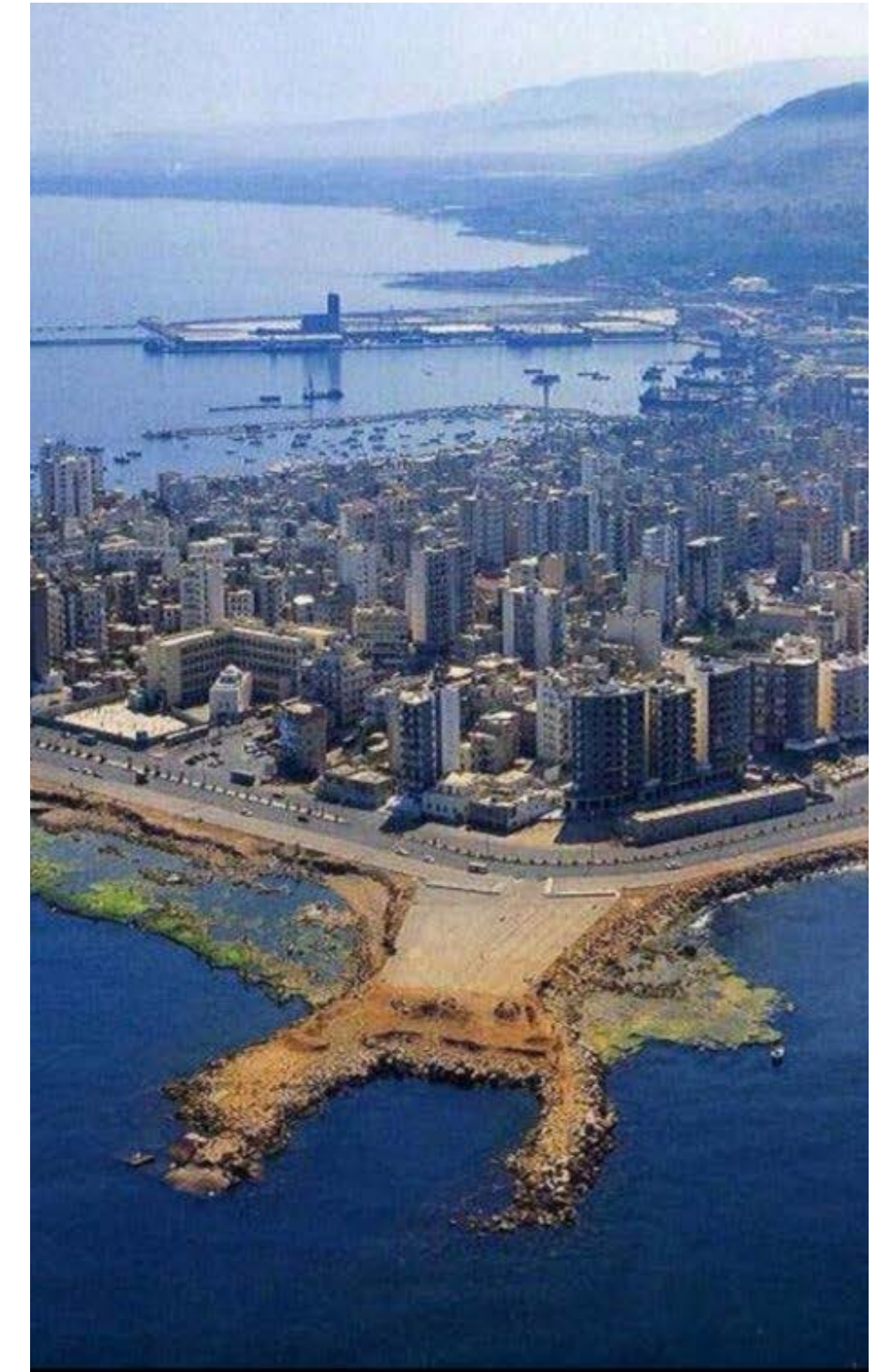
In the Union Council, mayors from Tripoli, Mina, Baddawi and Qalamoon elect a president who is the head of the execution authority and the head of deciding authority (the head of the council of the Urban Community Al Fayhaa). Citizens elect council representatives for each municipality, who then elect the mayors for each municipality, who both elect the president of the Urban Community Al Fayhaa. The union prioritises the governance body, aligning the municipalities through their elected mayors, emphasizing the need for a cohesive approach to address the interests of the four territorial units. The final approval of proposed projects can involve the approval of the Governor or the Minister of interior and Municipalities or other controlling authorities as per municipal law.

## Funding model

Member municipalities allocate 10% of their expenditures of the past year to the union, yet Lebanon's economic crisis has hindered payment fulfillment, with no legal recourse to enforce transfers. To counteract, the union seeks funds from the Ministry of Municipalities and partners with international entities. Notably, the fire brigade project was developed within the Municipal Empowerment and Resilience Project which was funded by EU through UNDP and UNHABITAT. Funding diversification occurs through soliciting partners or joining joint projects with cities from different countries, providing flexibility in financial support avenues.

## Multilevel partnerships

Al Fayhaa forms project-specific collaborations with various stakeholders, such as universities, public institutions and private entities. Notably, UN Habitat and UNDP are key partners in initiatives like the development of the fire brigade which was an initiative to respond to the Syrian crisis. The MedCities network significantly aids Al Fayhaa in accessing funding opportunities. Additionally, the waste management plan's development involved a successful private-public partnership between Al Fayhaa and business entities.





# LESSONS ON METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

## Turning the weight of responsibility into potential for recognised authority

Lebanon grapples with a severe economic downturn, marked by a 90% devaluation of its currency and soaring inflation. This crisis strains resources at both national and regional levels, amplifying pressure on Al Fayhaa human resources. Despite frozen wages and diminishing purchasing power, employees exert extra efforts to deliver services. Facing challenges in securing valuable human resources for citizen services, Al Fayhaa advocates for enhanced authority in service management and greater autonomy in project development. Recognising the potential of unions in metropolitan governance, Al Fayhaa, the approval of the decentralization law in Lebanon, spearheads initiatives like waste management and fire brigade services. By showcasing competence, Al Fayhaa aims to shift powers from municipal to union authority, paving the way for more extensive metropolitan services. In navigating the crisis, Al Fayhaa strategically positions itself for increased autonomy, underlining unions' vital role in governance.

## Bringing municipalities together under a shared vision

Al Fayhaa 2020 strategic plan has been pivotal in fostering collaboration among institutions, NGOs and civil society, positioning the union as a credible partner for local, national and international stakeholders. By engaging stakeholders in shaping the development vision, Al Fayhaa has strengthened its reputation. While the strategic plan has successfully aligned the four municipalities, its implementation is confined to the current metropolitan level remit. Nonetheless, this shared vision has united the municipalities in addressing urban community needs collectively. Encompassing initiatives like a 10-hectare park, coastal development through urban regeneration, an integrated public transport network and harmonised master plans, the plan reflects Al Fayhaa commitment to holistic urban development.

## Scaling horizontally in a context of crisis

Efficiently providing services like firefighting and waste management for the entire area, rather than individual cities managing them independently, is a collaborative approach that Al Fayhaa finds advantageous. However, the national crisis has hindered scaling best practices and expanding initiatives. To enhance citizen services amid limitations, the union focuses on consolidating and expanding key departments horizontally. Strengthening the remit of the fire brigade, development and police at the metropolitan level allows the union to deliver value, overcoming current barriers to formal expansion. Notably, when contextual constraints impede operational scaling, informal structures can internally grow. By enhancing project delivery across the metropolitan area and ensuring services benefit the entire region, collaboration increases efficiency, even without formal expansion avenues.





# Greater Amman Municipality

JORDAN

[www.ammancity.gov.jo](http://www.ammancity.gov.jo)

**Population:** 4 million  
**Territory:** Amman and surrounding districts  
**Creation:** National Law, 1909  
**Structure:** Metropolitan Municipality  
**Governance:** Municipal Government  
**Jurisdictions:** Climate Action, Sustainable Development, Waste Management, Transportation, Territorial Planning



# STRUCTURE OF METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

## Remits and decision-making

Greater Amman Municipality takes action in climate related projects, waste management and sustainability focused initiatives. The aim of GAM is to increase the resiliency of the urban area and create a greener municipality in the coming decades. Urban Micro Lungs (UML) is a project that uses the Miyawaki method for the restoration and reconstruction of natural ecosystems to create ultra-dense, highly biodiverse and multi-layered forests in dense urban areas in Amman. The aim of the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) Municipal Solid Waste Management and Carbon Finance Project includes institutional strengthening and capacity development of GAM to establish and manage a cost effective and sustainable municipal solid waste system.

## Municipal & citizen involvement

The Mayor of GAM is appointed and directly reports to the Prime Minister. GAM has some elements of self-rule through elected officials who are voted in office by the citizens, but the highest authority is appointed by the central government because it is the one which directs funds for large infrastructure projects. The council is composed of 42 members, out of which 22 are elected directly by the citizens and 6 seats are reserved for women to ensure fair representation. The mayor and 13 other members are appointed by the Prime Minister and Prime Minister's council.

## Funding model

As the metropolitan structure works as an actual municipality, it only unlocks a limited amount of money from central government and most of its budget is coming from the collected taxes and grants accessed through various schemes such as land ownership and fuel tax. To relieve pressure on the municipal budget, GAM has created 3 private companies that have the role to stabilise the municipality's budget: an investment company aiming to provide assistance in attracting public funds and resources, a dedicated environmental and waste management company focused on liaising for the implementation of circular projects, and a transportation company dealing with the government and transport authorities on contracts for the transport infrastructure in GAM.

## Multilevel partnerships

The municipality works with external partners to strengthen their expertise and capability in delivering strategic projects. To tackle the flooding situation that is a large problem for the area given its difference in altitude, the municipality worked with Japan International Cooperation Agency who provided a study that analysed the situation and offered a solution blueprint for downtown flooding through the installation of water tanks that are now being replicated across the metropolitan area. Similarly, United Nations has been a close partner and advisor in sustainability related projects and studies, while the World Bank also participated in funding projects such as the public transportation network and preparing the necessary documentation plans.



## **Moving towards a resilient city by working together**

Greater Amman Municipality is facing challenges in mobilising collective efforts around sustainable development as local action is harder to make visible in the same way when operating at a metropolitan scale. GAM focused on working together with its districts and neighbouring cities to promote sustainable development goals and build capacity. Heat waves are one of the most common issues and create discomfort especially for people living in apartments, which lowers the quality of life and require solutions. To address this problem and increase the resiliency of the area, GAM created the Climate Change Action Plan and Green City Action Plan, which lay out the issues and strategies for overcoming climate related problems. Stakeholders such as the national government, NGOs or UNDP and investment banks were consulted for the creation process of the document. Communication is kept at the core of such engagements to ensure all parts of the metropolitan area are on board and agree by talking to each district councillor to understand the plan and the benefit for them.

## **Maintaining high levels of expertise with dedicated sectoral agencies**

In order to facilitate the popular support for metropolitan area management, Greater Amman Municipality is working on inter-municipal cooperation and providing services at a larger scale, such as the public transport and urban planning. However, for this to happen GAM needs to ensure it retains the highest level of expertise to be able to plan and deliver projects such as rapid transit bus lines. To facilitate these projects and capture expertise, the municipality accesses grants to have a stronger base for the administration and its staff to provide a higher quality of services for the people. This is why GAM is creating dedicated companies to manage waste management and transportation as extensions of the municipality. This will enable to relieve financial pressure from the municipality, whilst ensuring that through a separate entity that will manage implementation contracts and attract funds, the metropolitan area will be able to benefit from the best expertise needed on these topics.

## **Knowledge exchanges are a medium for cooperation**

Greater Amman Municipality managed to conclude partnerships with international institutions as well as local stakeholders. This strategy of openness to encourage participation of stakeholders in the public agenda and planning the future of GAM considering the international role it can play as a leader in sustainable best practices. Because the knowledge of UN, Japanese experts, World Bank and MedCities flows in the projects developed by the municipality, Amman already built strong ties with external partners and gained access to a network where it can conclude new cooperations for projects of mutual interest with other cities or institutions.





# Sfax Mobility Agency

TUNIS

[www.commune-sfax.gov.tn](http://www.commune-sfax.gov.tn)

**Population:** 300.000  
**Territory:** Sfax and 9 surrounding municipalities  
**Creation:** National law of 2004 followed by a voluntary process  
**Structure:** Sectoral Metropolitan Agency; Metropolitan Agency for Urban Mobility  
**Governance:** Intermunicipal Authority  
**Jurisdictions:** Mobility, Technical expertise, Development



# STRUCTURE OF METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

## Remits and decision-making

The authority is under development, soon to be launched in 2024 following a long process of local awareness around the need for metropolisation for transport and traffic problems. Across the urban agglomeration of Sfax, the challenges include a lack of coordination among different stakeholders at the regional, local and national levels. Decision-making involves navigating political dynamics, with varying levels of motivation among municipalities. The authority's local objective is now the implementation of the Urban Transportation Plan (PDU). The national focus is the implementation of the National Policy for Urban Mobility through the creation of this agency. Sfax will be a first pilot for the modernisation of the transport infrastructure, development of the metro lines, and alternative mobility through new bike lanes.

## Municipal & citizen involvement

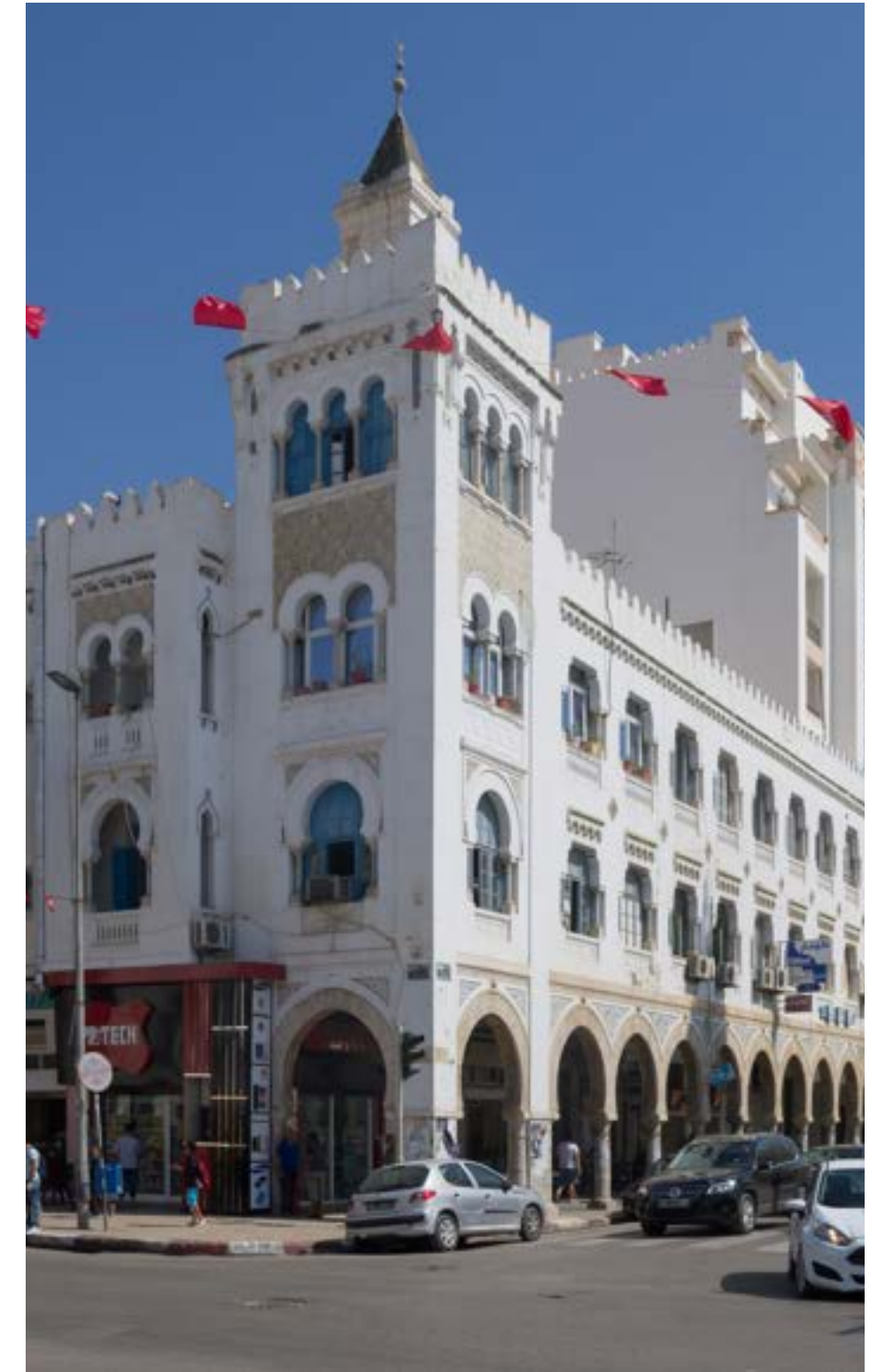
The future authority's creation plan includes a prefiguration committee and plans for a rotating presidency to ensure Municipal & citizen involvement and municipal council approval. In the process so far, municipal councils have been informed and invited to participate in decision-making, although challenges arise due to institutional instability, different political agendas and changing municipal compositions that impact the representation process. This is why the planned authority also focuses on inclusivity by encouraging municipalities of different sizes to contribute, fostering a sense of equality and shared commitment. The upcoming challenge involves navigating political transitions and maintaining democratic principles within the authority.

## Funding model

The funding model for the metropolitan authority in Tunisia involves a multi-pronged approach. Funding sources include contributions from municipalities forming the authority in a collaborative approach, with potential financial support from the Ministry of Transport aligned with the national urban mobility policy. Additionally, the creation of a national fund for financing transport is explored. While acknowledging the financial limitations of municipalities, the funding model aims to signify commitment and interest in the authority's goals. Coordination with the Ministry of Transport and leveraging national funds for mobility projects are key aspects of the funding strategy.

## Multilevel partnerships

Collaborations span national, regional and local levels, fostering coordination among various stakeholders. The Ministry of Transport plays a crucial role in the development of the national urban mobility policy, aligning with the metropolitan authority's objectives. International partnerships, such as with Germany, contribute technical assistance and funding for projects like the urban travel plan. Collaborating with Medcities provides the authority with valuable insights, expertise and resources that enhance its capabilities. This partnership contributes to the development of the metropolitan authority, allowing it to tap into a broader network and benefit from shared experiences.



## **Keeping up dedication for the long-term mobility of the area**

Sfax has demonstrated unwavering dedication to the long-term mobility of the urban agglomeration. Over the past decade, the city has taken significant steps to enhance transport and urban mobility. Notably, preliminary studies for a light metro were initiated in 2013, a carbon assessment was conducted with ADEME's support in 2015, and the development of an Urban Transportation Plan in 2017 (PDU) currently under implementation. The development of the Action Plan for Renewable Energy and Climate (PAEDC) reflects the sustained commitment of Sfax and its efforts towards sustainable solutions and resilience in the face of challenges. This is especially visible within an environment marked by political instability and a shift towards recentralisation, where short-term objectives often take precedence.

## **Moving towards a consolidated mobility agenda with the PDU**

Sfax is making strides towards a consolidated mobility agenda through the development of the Urban Transportation Plan (PDU). The Sfax municipality has actively engaged in the creation of this plan, focusing on an integrated approach that builds upon existing infrastructure while envisioning future needs. The PDU encompasses diverse elements, including enhancements to bus infrastructure, the introduction of a metro ligne and the promotion of alternative mobility methods. This comprehensive strategy extends beyond immediate concerns, aligning with a vision for the future of the area. The emphasis on integration and forward-thinking demonstrates Sfax's commitment to sustainable and efficient urban mobility.

## **Using Sfax city as a living lab to test and scale metropolitan solutions**

Sfax has been actively engaged in advancing urban mobility since 2010. Initiatives include preliminary studies for a light metro, a carbon assessment with the support of ANME and launching an Urban Transportation Plan (PDU) in 2015. The PDU, a key component of the Nationally Adapted Mitigation Action, reflects Sfax's commitment to climate change challenges. With a dedicated technical team, the city aims to implement long-term solutions. Sfax has become a living lab that tests and scales locally metropolitan solutions in urban mobility. The PDU encompasses bus infrastructure, metro lines, alternative mobility and governance, shaping Sfax's urban mobility future. Collaborating with MedCities enhances these efforts, reflecting Sfax's commitment to green mobility and sustainable development.





# Agadir Mobilité SA

MOROCCO

[www.agadirmobilite.ma](http://www.agadirmobilite.ma)

**Population:** 1 million  
**Territory:** Agadir and 12 municipalities of of Grand Agadir  
**Creation:** 2019, Support for Morocco's National Urban Mobility Strategy  
**Structure:** Metropolitan Mobility Agency (Local Development Company)  
**Governance:** Council of local municipalities.  
**Jurisdictions:** Metropolitan public mobility (bus planning for urban and interurban transport).



# STRUCTURE OF METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

## Remits and decision-making

Agadir Mobilité SA is dedicated to enhancing urban mobility in Greater Agadir. Its focus includes formulating and updating the Urban Mobility Plan, establishing bus rapid lines (BRT), conducting studies, securing financing and engaging with operators. The agency collaborates with Agadir municipality's mobility plans, notably the Urban Mobility Plan (PDU) and the Administrative Mobility Plan (PDA), a pioneering municipal plan nationwide. The PDA aims to enhance public transport connectivity between administrative centers, promote sustainable staff mobility, reduce air pollution and minimise travel costs and time.

## Municipal & citizen involvement

The agency uses a consultative committee made up of local or regional representatives, national technical experts or national authorities to evaluate and validate any decisions being taken on mobility plans. Districts are involved in providing plans and in consultations on the development of mobility related initiatives, with a representative of each district joining in these committees for representation in the final decisions.

## Funding model

The agency has been setup as a local development agency, which allows for public funding from the government. At the moment, the agency is funded on a project by project basis with the Moroccan government being the main sponsor together with direct contributions from the local municipalities of the districts that make up the metropolitan area of Grand Agadir.

## Multilevel partnerships

Agadir Mobilité SA is currently focusing on the integration of the first line of the TCSP/BRT with the rest of the conventional urban and interurban lines. In the process, collaborate with representatives of the public sector from other similar metropolitan areas that work on implementing a similar mobility system such as Casablanca or Rabat. The main role of the mobility agency is to identify among the private sector operators the best operators who will execute and implement the mobility plans defined by the agency.



# LESSONS ON METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

## **Creating a network to have a space for exchanging good practices in urban mobility**

The evolution of mobility collaboration in Morocco shows the power of setting up community of practice around specific topics. As part of a program developed by the State aimed at training trainers in urban mobility, these trainers have set up an informal communication network in the form of a WhatsApp group. In this group, members exchange information, articles, documents, and experiences regarding urban mobility, fostering mutual support and partnerships for new projects. This informal initiative requires an official networking formalism allowing the exchange of good practices and the production of documents, data, information, training. Gathering representatives with technical expertise around a common vision for urban mobility, this network sets the basis for future collaborative success.

## **Setting up a separate entity with a clear focus can speed up progress in the public sector**

The presence of a local development company focused on public mobility, such as Agadir Mobilite, has been instrumental in advancing metropolitan mobility in Agadir. Operating under private law, the agency exhibits flexibility in adapting swiftly to evolving demands in the urban mobility plan, maintaining a high level of technical expertise. This approach expedites the development of integrated mobility plans, incorporating public transport and rapid transit bus lines. The partnership is characterized by trust and the direct involvement of the local municipality of Agadir in decision-making through consultative committee meetings. In essence, the local development agency functions as a startup, aiding municipalities in incubating metropolitan transport solutions at a pace and expertise level that would be challenging to achieve solely through municipal structures.

## **Project-based funding model limits the scale of change through lack of continuity**

The agency encounters a limitation in its current project-by-project funding model. With expertise in transportation solutions and administration, Agadir Mobilite secures funds from the national government and involved districts for each project. As a technical agency, recurring funding options are constrained, relying on new projects or phases for financial support. The municipality of Agadir collaborates closely to facilitate projects like integrating bus lines. However, there's a broader need for a national-level funding structure for similar local development companies. This restructuring could enable Agadir Mobilite to expand its scope from bus-centric solutions to comprehensive integrated urban mobility, aligning with its intended representation.



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**MedCities** - Konstantia Nikopoulou

**Città Metropolitana di Napoli** - Giuseppe Sommese

**Sfax Municipality, Sfax Mobility Agency** - Riadh Haj Taieb

**Major Development Agency Thessaloniki (MDAT)** - Anthi Tsakiropoulou

**Municipality of Thessaloniki / MDAT** - Maria Karagianni

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