

NEWS



European metropolitan authorities stand for leading role in the urban policies of the continent

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Last Friday, the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona (AMB) convened the Forum European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA) in Turin, one of the cities that founded Metropolis back in 1985. The event revealed the leadership of the metropolitan areas of the region to boost the work of our association. The forum brought together mayors, presidents and political representatives of around thirty metropolitan areas, including the representation of the Metropolis members of Athens, Lisbon, Madrid and Paris.

Our Secretary General Felip Roca accompanied all sessions of the program and said that the forum presented initiatives that can guide the work strategy of Metropolis onwards. "The growing number of formally established metropolitan areas in Europe contributes a lot to the work of Metropolis, because it shows alternatives to tackle the challenges of urban development that go beyond municipal boundaries, worldwide," he said.

At present, 50% of the world population lives in urban areas with at least 300,000 inhabitants. Metropolitan cities established in many European countries become, therefore, the ideal administrative and political dimension to attract more private and public investments, as well as to govern the urban structure of the territories, promoting sustainable development, social inclusion, culture, capacity building, and reception of migrants. In Europe alone, there are about 120 large cities and metropolitan areas.

In the opening speech of the forum, the metropolitan mayor of Turin, Piero Fassino, and Alfred Bosch, AMB's Vice President of International Cooperation, stressed that "the metropolitan dimension is increasingly important for the development of the states, but metropolitan areas still do not get deserved recognition as generators of wealth, employment, innovation, and as the managers of problems like poverty, climate change, the reception of refugees, etc. If the gross domestic product of metropolitan areas is compared to their nation-states', we observe that GDP increase in the former is larger than in the national level. This means that metropolitan cities are the engine of economic and social development".

Alfred Bosch traveled to Turin in his role as co-host of the forum and to participate in the round table "EU, national and regional policies for metropolitan areas", and also in the role of Copresident of Metropolis (representing Ada Colau, President of AMB). At the roundtable, Bosch explained the objectives that the AMB has for its 2015-2019 mandate, including the drive for sustainable mobility, the reactivation of public housing policies with initiatives such as the social rent, the attraction of investments, and the economic social development with the generation of jobs, and generally improving the quality of life of metropolitan citizens.

The forum concluded with the adoption of the **Declaration of Turin**, which calls for a stronger role of metropolitan areas in the definition of policies in Europe, and stresses the importance of the collaboration between metropolitan authorities and forums of local governments such as Metropolis. This document is being delivered to the European Union, with particular reference to the European Urban Agenda project, which is being discussed by the Dutch Presidency of the EU.

In addition, the meeting decided that Lyon will host the EMA forum in 2017. The event also counted on the participation of the European metropolitan areas of Akershus, Bilbao, Bologna, Budapest, Catania, Cologne, Florence, Hannover, Helsinki, Lisbon, Lodz, Lyon, Milan, Nice, Oslo, Porto, Palermo, Poznan, Stuttgart, Thessaloniki, Tirana, Vienna and Warsaw. As part of the new regional work strategy of the General Secretariat of Metropolis, closer relations and strengthened ties with these metropolitan authorities will be sought in the near future.

**With information from the Press and Communication Service of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona.*