

NEWS



Challenges and opportunities for international city networks

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On July 3, representatives from the Metropolis membership and the Secretariat General team joined a day of discussions in Barcelona about how the different city networks can collaborate more closely, adapt to changing environments and accomplish the shared mission of empowering subnational governments as major players with an impact on the global agenda. In the face of shared members and functional overlaps, the event generated a frank debate among the organizations that are willing to be more complementary, instead of competing against each other.

Named “Rethinking the ecosystem of international city networks: challenges and opportunities”, the seminar was convened by the Global Cities Program of CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs), with the objective to stimulate common responses to the evolution of the ecosystem of city networks.

The Metropolis Secretary General, Octavi de la Varga, shared his perspective in one of the panels of the conference, which also counted on the presence and active speeches from representatives of the AL-LAs Project, C40, Cities Alliance, Educating Cities Association, Eurocities, MedCities, Mercociudades, 100 Resilient Cities, UCLG, as well as of the United Nations Development Programme and the academia

Regarding the topic of how to move towards complementarity between networks, Octavi de la Varga remarked: “We are knocking at the same mayors’ doors, but I still think that there is space for everyone. We must readapt our action plans in order to open more channels of collaboration among the different local

government networks, making the most out of our resources". He mentioned the memorandum of understanding that Metropolis is about to sign with C40, as well as the factor of belonging to UCLG as its metropolitan section, as examples of starting points for closer collaboration.

Public officials from local governments such as the Barcelona City Council, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, Madrid, Mexico City and Montevideo also attended the event. Arnau Gutiérrez, Director of International Affairs at the Madrid City Council, commented on Octavi's speech: "The number of overlaps of city networks is indeed worrying ". He pointed out that measuring impacts and communicating well is key to improve the efficiency of the work of these institutions.

Members of the team of the Metropolis Secretariat General, namely Hélène Jourdan, Project Officer for Strategic Partnerships, and Lia Brum, Content Curator, attended the event. The results and conclusions of the conference will be published by CIDOB as part of its monographies series by the end of this year. To follow-up with the debate, the event is intended to be organized again in 2019.