

NEWS



The City Managers Community has its say on 5G implementation in metropolitan areas

Thursday 08/07/2021

As **5G** rolls out around the world, this new technology is raising questions, dealing with misinformation and facing new challenges. 5G, the new global wireless standard that will allow for faster internet connection, innovative possibilities for automation, and remote operations of a myriad of services, depends primarily on **infrastructure located in public space managed by city governments and metropolitan authorities**. With this in mind, Metropolis made 5G the topic for the sixth meeting of the City Managers Community. Every year, this event brings together top leaders from our membership who are in charge of implementing public policies in major cities and metropolitan areas. The first online meeting of the Metropolis City Managers Community in 2021, held on 7 July, brought together fifteen representatives from

our membership who are in charge of implementing 5G technology and was moderated by Alexander



Although most 5G implementation has been led, so far, by national actors and private companies (especially in Asia, North America and Europe), the cities and metropolitan areas who attended the webinar showed an interest in playing **a more active role in the deployment of the technology**, and some of them have already put pilot initiatives in place.

“Our approach is based on the following question: how can we integrate 5G infrastructure in the urban spaces we already have?”, Ramon Torra

This is the case in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, which has set up some **5G pilot projects along its 42 km-long coastline**. These 5G spots are being tested to provide fast and free internet connection to beach users, across metropolitan ring roads for traffic and pollution monitoring, and on metropolitan industrial states that require better connectivity to improve logistics operations. “Our approach is based on the following question: how can we integrate 5G infrastructure in the urban spaces we already have?” said Ramon Torra, General Manager of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, explaining how the metropolitan authority is making the most of existing infrastructure in 5G deployment.

5G at AMB – Pilot test Metropolitan beaches

- Same equipment on public roads shared by all operators (Technical Room).
- Same antenna shared by all operators, integrated in the Integral Modular Column AMB.
- Lower visual impact of implementation.



5G Module (Technical Room)



IMC AMB. Integral Modular Column



Technical Closet



Providing efficient public services is one of the main aspects taken into consideration when implementing 5G in existing or new infrastructure, and it requires the involvement of a multitude of stakeholders. For Marc Pérez, Innovation Manager at Barcelona City Council, pilot projects are the best way to understand the relationship between the public sector, the private sector and the city population. This will eventually ensure a successful 5G rollout. In this process, **effective communication is key in order to inform the public what 5G really is**, as misinformation and fear can spread easily.

Participants agreed that proper governance systems need to be in place to include all stakeholders, following a vertical coordination model for instance, in which metropolitan policies are not carried out by a specific metropolitan body, but by other levels of government that already exist (so far, this is the most popular option chosen by members in the 5G Metropolitan Portrait survey).

For members, it is essential for decision-making powers to be equally distributed between local and national governments. **As 5G infrastructure is located directly on the ground in metropolitan areas, the local and regional governments that manage these territories must have a say in the matter**, as they will have to handle both the benefits and risks of the technology. As Fernando de Pablo, General Director of the Digital Office in Madrid, reminded participants, 5G is not only a matter of cybersecurity. As shown in the 25 pilot projects conducted by the city of Madrid, the technology will impact all fields: from



Shuibin Xie, Secretary General of the Guangzhou Foreign Affairs Office, who joined the webinar on behalf of the Guangzhou Municipal Industry and Information Technology Bureau (the department in charge of 5G rollout in the city), stressed the importance of working hand-in-hand with technology companies. With a consolidated action plan for 5G implementation, Guangzhou showed itself to be more advanced than its peers, and will inspire upcoming activities of the City Managers Community this year—a workshop in October and public event in November.

The City Managers Community activities are exclusive to invited Metropolis members. Members who wish to participate in upcoming events (even if they did not participate in the first webinar) are welcome to join by filling out the 5G Metropolitan Portrait survey, which will remain open until 30 July, 2021.

Download the presentations of the webinar here:

- Alexander Heichlinger
- Ramon Torra

For further information about the City Managers Community, please contact Lia Brum, Research and Policy Officer at the Secretariat General