



Metropolis Diploma in Internationalization for Local Authorities

3rd edition

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Ajuntament de
Barcelona




Metropolis Diploma in Internationalization for Local Authorities

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Get the skills to further your career in international affairs

 In person meeting, Barcelona

 17 to 21 November 2025

“Today’s urban economies are complex systems tied to global trade and capital flows, in which foreign entities can own the property next door and distant events can affect the prices for local goods. Cities must be smarter than ever about how they position their economies for the maximum benefit of all residents while also safeguarding the environment and improving their city’s quality of life.”

-UN World Cities Report, 2022



Introduction

Urban leadership is about delivering the best possible quality of life for a city's people—ensuring safety, fostering a healthy environment, creating economic opportunities, and nurturing inclusiveness, culture, and identity. The wellbeing of a city and its inhabitants is shaped by local conditions, but in today's interconnected world, local policies alone are not enough.

Cities are no longer just local spaces; they are key players in global dynamics. International challenges—climate change, migration, economic shifts—directly affect urban life, making global engagement a necessity, not a choice, for local governments. Forward-thinking city leaders understand that acting globally is essential to ensuring their cities' resilience, prosperity, and influence.

Around the world, cities are strengthening cross-border collaborations like never before. To navigate this complex landscape, local governments are investing in the professionalization of their international relations offices. These specialized teams not only safeguard their city's interests but also amplify urban perspectives on the global stage.

To meet this growing demand, **Metropolis**, in partnership with the **University of Melbourne** and with the support of the **Barcelona City Council**, offers an accredited **Diploma in Internationalization for Local Authorities**. This program provides participants with the knowledge, skills, and tools to strengthen international engagement and drive impactful global strategies.

Held over five days in Barcelona—one of the world's most globally connected cities—the course offers hands-on learning, expert-led sessions, and invaluable networking opportunities. Participants will benefit from Metropolis' global network of over 160 cities and its 40 years of experience in knowledge-sharing, as well as the expertise of its partners."

This program goes beyond training—it's a chance to build practical skills and connections that strengthen cities' roles on the global stage.

About the course

Objective

This course aims to provide a foundation for building, updating, and strengthening participants' knowledge and capacities in international action for local authorities.

Developed skills

The Metropolis Diploma in Internationalization for Local Authorities contributes to the participant's development of the following skills:

- To understand if international action can add value to your city/metropolitan area
- To learn how to build an international strategy
- To link theory and evidence to practical and applied situations
- To use tools for designing strategies and practical solutions for international issues
- To learn from others cities experiences and how knowledge transference can be beneficial
- To use effective tools to design strategies and solutions for the international issues
- To measure problems & audit solutions to demonstrate impact
- To learn from the best practice of other participating cities, understand the value of knowledge transference, and make connections that will help your city grow

Methodology

The course is delivered through three key pillars:

1. **Knowledge sessions** aimed at providing an evidence-based landscape on key developments and debates in the internationalisation of local authorities;
2. **Skills sessions** aimed at building capacity through interactive activities and peer-to-peer learning;
3. **Cities case studies** showcasing successes, challenges, lessons-learned and diverse urban strategies.
4. **In-person site visits** and interactions with local stakeholders, offering hands-on experience and deeper engagement with metropolitan practices.
5. **Masterclasses** delivered by experienced practitioners in international affairs

The course is designed with an applied approach, where theoretical knowledge is directly linked to practical skills sessions that, in turn, inform the development of tailored policy outputs. The course also leverages the expertise of participants, creating opportunities for networking and peer-to-peer learning, particularly through collaborative discussions and hands-on exercises

Who can participate?

This training is designed for junior and mid-career public sector professionals.

Participants will aspire to make an impact on their territory through the international outreach of the local authority they work for, expanding their city's influence. The ideal participant is:

- Experienced junior to mid-level staff in international affairs (IA) departments with a desire to develop their skills
- Staff from metropolitan governments perhaps without dedicated IA departments who are seeking to expand their office's expertise & activity in the internationalisation space
- Officials from multi-sectoral metropolitan public authorities

While the ideal participant will meet the above criteria, **we encourage applications from officials at all stages of their careers**, as we value the diversity of experiences within city government. We will communicate with prospective participants to ensure that no one who would benefit from the course and contribute their own value is excluded.

Evaluation and certification

In order to evaluate the skills acquired and the level of capacity reached, and to successfully complete the Internationalization for Local Authorities course, participants will be required to:

- Actively participate in all course activities, including expert sessions and skills workshops, and site visits.
- Share your city's experiences and knowledge with other participants, fostering mutual learning from each other's experiences.
- Present the final project according to the provided guidelines.

Once these requirements have been met, participants will receive a certificate of completion for the course.

Course content

The course is structured around 5 main modules.

The modules cover various aspects of internationalization, starting with its origins and the emergence of concepts like city diplomacy, and demonstrate why economic development is a key motivation for cities to engage internationally. Later modules explore how cities can act as international players and achieve their own objectives.

Lesson 1: Cities in a changing international context

This session introduces the concept of city diplomacy, highlighting what, when, and why cities engage internationally. It covers a spectrum of aspects, from traditional twin or 'sister city' relationships to peer-to-peer international engagement, and extends to the multilateral, philanthropic, and multinational sectors. The session also illustrates the expanding scope of city diplomacy and the networking opportunities and pressures local authorities face, particularly within the context of metropolitan governance.

Lesson 2: Strategies for internationalization

This session draws on expertise from professionals who have overseen the process of developing a metropolitan international strategy. In this session we address the rationale, process and expectations of generating an international strategy, and demonstrate how such a document can be used in practice. The session also reflects on how international strategies might be located in relation to the structures of metropolitan governance, and how they affect and are affected by international stakeholders.

Lesson 3: City diplomacy and economic development

This lesson aims to deepen participants' understanding of how cities collaborate with a diverse range of international actors—such as philanthropic organizations, multilateral lending agencies, and multinational corporations—to achieve these objectives. It also examines how international economic development strategies can link local and multi-level urban planning cycles.

Lesson 4: Measuring results and impact

Metropolitan authorities operate in a context of limited resources and must justify how their activities benefit their citizens. Defending expenditures on international engagement can be a significant challenge for cities if these activities cannot be linked to clear local benefits. In addition to clearly defining international strategies and objectives, more metropolitan governments are exploring ways to measure the impact of these engagements and align them with other organizational KPIs to track their consistency with the city's international strategy

Lesson 5: Communicating the value of international engagement

Metropolises face common challenges in effectively communicating the value of their international engagements to both local and global audiences. This session explores the importance of developing clear, comprehensive, and nuanced strategies for conveying the value and impact of city diplomacy to different audiences. It highlights how communication is a critical tool for achieving strategic objectives and ensuring accountability, and how crafting effective narratives can help coordinate international and external stakeholders within the context of metropolitan governance.

“The practical nature of the course is very appreciated. We are looking into solving real issues in practical ways.”

Thuthuka Mzimela
Unit Head: Integrated and Community Based Plannin
City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality



Registration and admission process

After submitting your completed application, you will receive a confirmation of receipt. Once we have assessed your application and admitted you to the course, we will send you an invoice with payment details.

Payments can be made via bank transfer. Your participation in the course is guaranteed only upon receipt of full payment.

Registration fees

Metropolis member cities participants (50% discount)*	330€
Metropolis non-members	660€

1 Special rate for Metropolis member cities up to date with their membership contributions 2024. Some discounts may apply for early bird registrations and for group registrations from the same organization (8% discount).

Participants may also refer to the general conditions of the course for more details.

In total, up to three members from low and middle-income countries will receive a special registration fee. The registration fee will be fully waived for low-income countries and reduced by 50% for middle-income countries, according to the [World Bank's income level classifications for 2024-2025](#).

What's included?

- Access to the course material
- Masterclasses with local governments or academic experts
- Site visits
- Transfers to site visits
- A 10-trip public transportation card
- Coffee/tea breaks
- Lunches
- Networking event (TBC)
- Certificate

What's not included?

- Air travel expenses from the City/Country of residence to Barcelona.
- Accommodation**
- Visa (if applicable)
- Transfers from/to the airports
- Any other item not included in the section "What is included in the price of the course?"

**We will provide participants with a list of hotels with different type of rates so that you can choose the one that fits better into your budget/preferences

Enrollment cancellation policy

Students are entitled to a refund of the registration fee under the following terms and conditions:

- Cancellations must be informed in writing, replying to the place reservation email. Cancellations informed by any other means will not be accepted. All registration data must be included in the email, including: Name of the course, name and surname of the student, date of registration and contact information.

No cancellations will be accepted 30 days prior to the start of the course

- For cancellations received before 30 calendar days prior to the start of the course, 75% of the amount paid at the time of cancellation will be refunded. Refunds will be made within 30 calendar days of the cancellation request. Participants are responsible for any bank fees associated with the refund of the registration fee
- After the cancellation deadline no refund will be made.

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