



## PORTO POLITICAL DECLARATION

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2021, mayors, leaders and political representatives of the European Metropolitan Areas gathered in Porto for the Sixth European Metropolitan Authorities Forum, framed by the objective of “Boosting Climate Neutral Metropolitan Areas: Green, smart and resilient”

### Having discussed

- The opportunity for Metropolitan Areas to be game changers for a sustainable, smart, resilient and green recovery
- The role of digital transformation for promoting a new and more inclusive urban living system
- The challenges to overcome financial scarcity and address the recovery towards a more resilient metropolis

### Recalling that:

Metropolitan Areas are key drivers of development. As nearly two-thirds of the European population live and work in Metropolitan Areas, these areas are responsible for generating 67% of the GDP and 61% of the employment in the EU<sup>1</sup>. They host key economic, employment and cultural activities, being true innovation hubs for research and piloting, thus attracting further capital, investment and people.

As stated in the COP 26 in Glasgow decarbonisation objectives set by the European Green Deal and the EU's goal to reach climate neutrality by 2050 are not only ambitious but also imperative. The more frequent and extreme weather conditions have highlighted that the reduction of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions is not only necessary but extremely urgent.

The COVID-19 pandemic confronted our society with new challenges, uncovering contradictions and vulnerabilities of traditional urban models. Metropolitan Areas have faced unprecedented levels and new forms of social and economic problems, being on the frontline of the crisis management and on many occasions without the necessary powers and financial resources.

The new Leipzig Charter<sup>2</sup>, signed in November 2020 during the German Presidency, calls for integrated, place-based approaches, multi-level governance, participation and co-creation. Cross-cutting approaches and broad community collaboration are at the heart of Metropolitan Areas, being the best positioned to setup integrated strategies and projects while ensuring that no one is left

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<sup>1</sup> My Region, My Europe, Our Future: Seventh report on economic, social and territorial cohesion [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/cohesion7/7cr.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/cohesion7/7cr.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/information/publications/brochures/2020/new-leipzig-charter-the-transformative-power-of-cities-for-the-common-good](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/brochures/2020/new-leipzig-charter-the-transformative-power-of-cities-for-the-common-good)

behind. The 2030 Territorial Agenda<sup>3</sup> also highlights the enhancement of the role of Functional Regions as one of the six priorities to reach a Just and Green Europe.

Digital solutions are broad, and include approaches to smart urban mobility, energy efficiency, sustainable housing, digital public services or civic-led governance. The large-scale uptake of these solutions are crucial to help Metropolitan Areas in meeting their climate targets and reduce their environmental footprint, while fostering citizen participation and bringing prosperity to business, including SMEs and start-ups. Digital transition must go hand in hand with climate transition and should also lead to a better social and 'digital cohesion'.

Technologies, digital tools and data analytics capabilities are to a large extent already available. However, the integration and collaboration of systems and stakeholders are fundamental drivers to accelerate and scale-up the transition. Europe's twin transition towards a green and digital economy requires social fairness and an economy that works for the people, as set out in the Commission's priorities for 2019- 2024<sup>4</sup>. Managing transitions requires a strategic vision, ensuring investment on innovative solutions while assuring that transition runs in a fair and inclusive way. Leaving no one behind also means leaving no one out of the digital transition.

The widespread use of the internet and mobile technologies are revolutionizing the provision of urban services. Mobility-as-a-Service, city platforms, food deliveries or home shopping are more present in our everyday lives. In the future, with the digitalization of services, the Internet of Things and sensors, besides flexible and adaptive firms and services, changes will continue in many other areas. The increasing importance of user-oriented services, besides the changing demographics, migration and an ageing population will also shape the provision of new services.

Cities and Metropolitan Areas are drivers of the green, digital and just transition that Europe needs for its recovery. The push for climate-friendly Metropolitan Areas is largely linked to their capacity of adapting to the ever-changing economic conditions and of rebuilding trust. As mobility becomes more digital, groups at risk of social exclusion might require additional capabilities to fulfil their daily mobility needs. Understanding social and economic vulnerabilities is essential to formulate resilient actions adapted to local needs, with local communities in the center of these actions. These key transformations might bring more opportunities for future services in Metropolitan Areas to become more sustainable and efficient.

The three pillars of the EU's Urban Agenda call for better regulation, better funding and better knowledge. Metropolitan Areas can significantly contribute to fulfilling these pillars, if they take an active role in the implementation of the national policies and have access to sufficient funding. In this respect, Metropolitan Areas should be incorporated in the agenda of future Thematic Partnerships.

The wide range of climate change mitigation measures and adaptation actions to cope with climate neutrality are local in nature and require implementation at a sub-national level. Cohesion policy envisages European added value as a condition for obtaining funding. As acknowledged by the Committee of the Regions, the support to regional and metropolitan authorities not only yields European added value, but also ensures both the EU's global competitiveness and further regional convergence, through spillover effects resulting from such support.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://territorialagenda.eu/library/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/priorities\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/priorities_en)

Metropolitan Areas offer a good opportunity with well-prepared projects, based on integrated and existing strategies and on the legacy of their well-functioning public administrations, besides their proximity to the territory and stakeholders. Nevertheless, only a few metropolitan authorities have been engaged in the definition and drafting of the national Recovery and Resilience Plans, as stated by the EMA network in the political statement of December 2020<sup>5</sup> sent to European Institutions.

The ESPON<sup>6</sup> Metro and the URBACT RiConnect<sup>7</sup> projects, both managed by EMA members, have highlighted the need for an effective participation of metropolitan governments in the preparation and management of the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy programmes.

As highlighted by the opinion of the European Committee of the Regions<sup>8</sup>, the parallel diplomacy by regional and local authorities at European level is crucial especially in the stage of drafting of the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes and, therefore, the European Commission should actively involve metropolitan areas in the negotiations on the new programming period in order to get more accurate insight on the key challenges of their territories.

Finally, the crisis that has emerged after the takeover of Afghanistan, which closely resembles the situation in Syria and other global crises, deserves our solidarity and an EU call for action. The situation is entailing a setback for human rights. In particular, they are also a threat to the rights and freedom of women and children, as those who are the central victims of this crisis.

#### **REAFFIRMING that,**

1. Metropolitan Areas have made significant headway in confronting the climate crisis through ambitious action and are COMMITTED to increase this leadership with specific measures as it has been demonstrated in the COP26 debates in Glasgow.
2. EMA network ASSUMES the main agreements of the COP26 and each metropolitan area will work to develop programmes and projects aligned with these agreements in the framework of their competencies.
3. Metropolitan Areas cooperating in the EMA network ARE READY to Boost Climate Neutrality, expressing the strong commitment for being active partners in the execution and achievement of such results.
4. Metropolitan Areas are COMMITTED to the implementation of integrated and innovative approaches to meet the needs of our citizens, sharing and experimenting the best solutions by being closer to local challenges.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://docs.amb.cat/alfresco/api/-default-/public/alfresco/versions/1/nodes/81dc83c6-f3b6-4987-bcd8-83039dd42251/content/EMA\\_POSITION%20PAPER\\_The%20role%20of%20metropolitan%20areas%20in%20the%20RRF.pdf?attachment=false&mimeType=application/pdf&sizeInBytes=1167255](https://docs.amb.cat/alfresco/api/-default-/public/alfresco/versions/1/nodes/81dc83c6-f3b6-4987-bcd8-83039dd42251/content/EMA_POSITION%20PAPER_The%20role%20of%20metropolitan%20areas%20in%20the%20RRF.pdf?attachment=false&mimeType=application/pdf&sizeInBytes=1167255)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.espon.eu/participate/calls/open-calls/role-and-future-perspectives-cohesion-policy-planning-metropolitan>

<sup>7</sup> <https://urbact.eu/ricconnect>

<sup>8</sup> <https://webapi2016.cor.europa.eu/v1/documents/cor-2021-02505-00-00-ac-tra-en.docx/content>

5. Metropolitan Areas are called on to TAKE ACTION in a number of areas linked with digital transition, ecological transition, economic recovery and social cohesion. Thus, their level of responsibility should be empowered by the financial capacity to act. The European Financial Framework for 2021-2027 and the Next Generation EU Package support a stronger link between the achievement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, the commitments laid down in the European Green Deal and economic recovery.
6. European Metropolitan Authorities ARE READY to implement mature metropolitan projects using the funds from the Recovery and Resilient Facility and React EU, in line with the digital and energy transition, ensuring the involvement of municipalities, regions, academia, as well as economic and social stakeholders.
7. EMA calls the central administrations and the European Commission for a GREATER INVOLVEMENT of Metropolitan Areas in the implementation of the national Recovery and Resilient Plans, as well as in the preparation and implementation of future Cohesion Policy programmes.
8. EMA urges Member States, the European Union and the United Nations to guarantee shelter and reception, and articulate a shared civilian network between cities and Metropolitan Areas to Afghanistan, allowing channelling resources and providing human, logistical and economic support to any democratic initiative existing within the country, besides preventing information isolation and oblivion that Afghanistan can experience.

The European Metropolitan Authorities COMMIT to continuing their collaboration supporting a more solidary and united Europe, taking into account the concerns of its citizens.

Porto, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2021

*Signatures*

