NEWSLETTER

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Governing metropolitan communities in a more **cohesive Europe**

Interreg Europe

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Metro Case

Table of contents

1. Editorial
2. Governance State of the Art – What did we learn?
3. SWOT Analyses – What do the findings tell us?
4. Good Practices – What can be transferred?
5. Bringing the findings together - Implications for the next project phase
6. Spotlight on the City of Skopje
7. Next steps, Upcoming events and Follow us

1. Editorial

Dear Readers,

This third issue of the Metro Case Newsletter marks an important step in the project's shared learning process. Following extensive work across the partner territories, the Governance State of the Art and SWOT Analyses have been finalized, providing a common evidence base on metropolitan governance systems, institutional arrangements and the policy instruments addressed by the project. The findings were reviewed by the partnership, discussed during the Project Partners Meeting in Skopje and consolidated into a comprehensive comparative analysis.

In parallel, the partners identified and documented good practices that demonstrate how metropolitan challenges can be addressed through coordinated governance, stakeholder cooperation, institutional innovation and place-based solutions. The resulting Good Practices Handbook will strengthen the project's focus on practical learning, transfer and policy improvement.

This newsletter presents the key conclusions emerging from these three strands of work. Rather than reproducing the documents, it highlights what the partnership has learned, why these findings matter and how they will support the next phase of the Metro Case policy improvement process.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue and following the progress of Metro Case.

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2. Governance State of the Art – What Did We Learn?

The Governance State of the Art reveals that there is no single institutional model for effective metropolitan governance. Across the eight partner territories, cooperation ranges from voluntary and bottom-up arrangements to formally established metropolitan authorities and more centralised, top-down structures. **Yet their effectiveness is not determined by the model alone, but by its capacity to turn cooperation into shared decisions, coordinated action and tangible results.**



Despite major differences in territorial, legal and administrative contexts, the analysis identifies a strong convergence around the conditions needed for metropolitan governance to work. These include clearly defined responsibilities, stable decision-making arrangements, adequate financial and technical capacity, a shared strategic vision, common administrative and digital standards, and the meaningful involvement of municipalities, stakeholders and citizens.

Metropolitan planning plays a particularly important role by linking sectoral policies, territorial priorities and available resources within a common framework.

The findings also show that administrative boundaries rarely correspond fully to the functional relationships that shape everyday life. Mobility flows, access to services, environmental systems and economic connections extend across municipal and, in some cases, metropolitan borders. **Effective governance therefore requires flexible forms of cooperation that can respond to different territorial needs while preserving local identity and applying the principle of subsidiarity.**

A further lesson concerns metropolitan awareness. Citizens experience the metropolitan dimension every day, but often identify more strongly with their municipality than with the wider metropolitan area. Legitimacy must therefore be built through visible improvements, accessible services, transparent communication and opportunities for participation.

Metropolitan governance is not simply an additional administrative layer. It is the capacity to connect territories, institutions and policy sectors around shared challenges and translate cooperation into better outcomes for the whole metropolitan community.

3. SWOT Analyses – What Do the Findings Tell Us?

The SWOT Analyses show that the metropolitan territories involved in Metro Case are not starting from zero. Each has valuable assets on which to build: existing cooperation mechanisms, strategic and sectoral plans, experienced institutions, technical expertise, stakeholder networks and a strong record of participation in European projects. These strengths provide a solid foundation for more integrated metropolitan governance.

Their full potential is constrained by a recurring set of weaknesses. Responsibilities remain fragmented across institutions and administrative levels, competences are not always clearly defined, and financial resources often depend on individual projects rather than stable long-term arrangements. Unequal capacities among municipalities, gaps in shared data and monitoring systems, and weak links between strategic plans, funding and implementation further limit coordinated action.



"Metropolitan territories connect urban cores, surrounding municipalities and rural areas through shared services, mobility flows and environmental systems."

A central finding is that strengths and weaknesses are closely interconnected. Voluntary cooperation offers flexibility but depends heavily on trust, continuity and local commitment. Formal metropolitan structures provide legal authority, yet their existence alone does not guarantee effective collaboration, participation or delivery. **Strong core cities can drive innovation and investment, but may also reinforce territorial imbalances if surrounding municipalities are not adequately represented and supported.** Strategic plans can establish a common direction, but their influence remains limited when responsibilities, resources and monitoring mechanisms are not clearly connected to implementation.

European funding, digital transition, climate action, institutional reform and interregional learning create significant opportunities for all partner territories. These opportunities are not self-executing. Their impact depends on administrative capacity, common standards, prepared project pipelines and stable coordination across sectors and government levels. The same external change can become either an opportunity or a threat, depending on the readiness of the metropolitan system to respond.

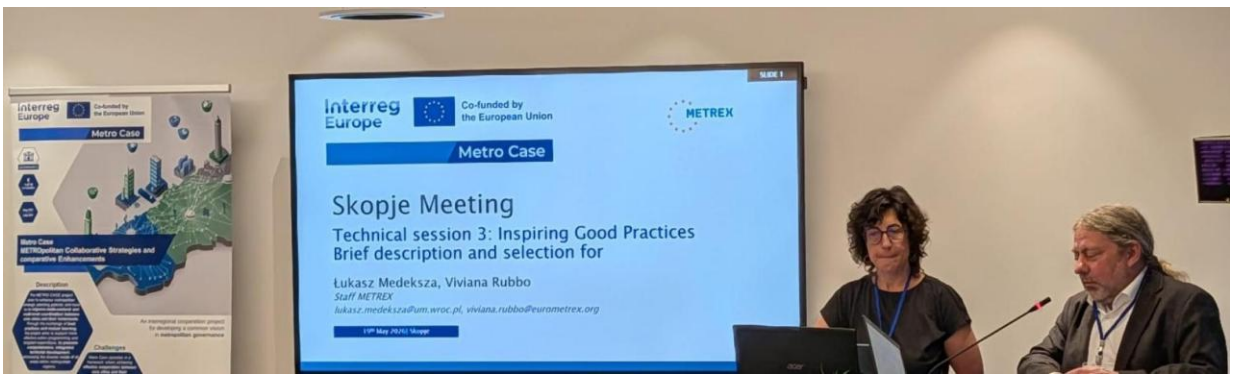
The SWOT findings therefore point to one common priority: transforming existing cooperation, knowledge and policy instruments into lasting institutional and operational capacity. Metropolitan resilience depends not only on having ambitious strategies, but on the ability to implement them collectively, adapt them over time and deliver visible benefits across the entire territory.

4. Good Practices – What Can Be Transferred?

The good practices identified through Metro Case demonstrate that successful metropolitan solutions emerge from the interaction between sound policy design, effective governance and the capacity to adapt action to local conditions. Their value does not lie in offering ready-made models to be copied, but in showing which principles, working methods and enabling conditions can be transferred across territories.



"Good practices create value when knowledge is shared, adapted to local conditions and translated into coordinated action."



The main transferable lesson is therefore a method rather than a fixed model: start from a shared challenge, create a stable framework for cooperation, combine political commitment with technical capacity, test the solution in practice and use evidence to guide its further development. In this way, good practices become instruments for learning and policy improvement, rather than examples to be reproduced without regard to context.

5. Bringing the Findings Together – Implications for the Next Project Phase

Taken together, the Governance State of the Art, the SWOT Analyses and the Good Practices establish a clear progression for Metro Case. The State of the Art explains how metropolitan systems currently function, the SWOT Analyses identify the capacities and constraints that influence their development, and the Good Practices demonstrate how comparable challenges have been addressed in other territorial and institutional settings.

Their combined message is that policy improvement cannot begin with the simple import of an external solution. It must start from a precise understanding of the territory, its governance arrangements, institutional capacities and policy priorities.

Learning becomes useful only when it is interpreted through the receiving territory's legal, administrative, financial and cultural context.

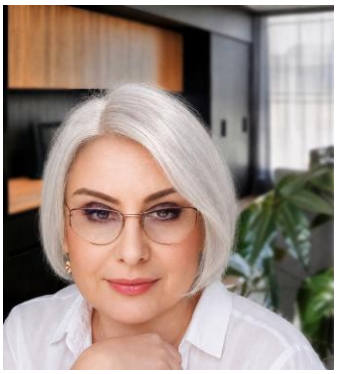
The next project phase will therefore move from diagnosis and comparison towards selection, adaptation and application. Partners can use the common evidence base to assess which governance approaches and good practices are most relevant to their policy instruments, which elements are realistically transferable and what changes are required for successful implementation. Engagement with local stakeholders will be essential for testing these conclusions, refining priorities and connecting interregional learning with practical territorial needs.

Several common directions emerge for this work: clarifying institutional roles, strengthening links between strategic planning, funding and implementation, improving technical and administrative capacity, developing shared data and monitoring systems, expanding participation, and creating more stable mechanisms for cooperation across sectors and administrative boundaries.

Interregional exchange will remain central, but its value will be measured by what it changes. The objective is not merely to circulate examples, but to transform shared knowledge into better governance arrangements, stronger policy instruments and more coordinated action.

Each partner territory will follow its own improvement pathway, reflect its specific starting point, while contribute to a common ambition: metropolitan policies that are more integrated, adaptable and capable of delivering visible benefits to citizens.

6. Spotlight on the City of Skopje



Interview with Danijela Petrusheva-Andonova,
Project Manager of City of Skopje for Metro Case Project

What role does the City of Skopje play in Metro Case, and which policy instrument does it aim to improve?
The City of Skopje contributes the perspective of a capital city from an EU candidate country, with a metropolitan governance model defined by law and a complex system of relations among the City, its ten municipalities, public enterprises and national institutions. The policy instrument addressed by the project is the City's Local Environmental Action Plan - LEAP. Metro Case provides an opportunity to strengthen its metropolitan dimension and support its further development through comparative analysis, stakeholder involvement and interregional learning.

What are the most relevant lessons for Skopje emerging from the project findings?
The findings confirm that formal competences alone do not ensure effective metropolitan governance. For Skopje, stronger coordination among institutions, municipalities and technical structures is essential, particularly in areas such as environmental protection, mobility, data management and climate adaptation. Shared information standards, stable cooperation mechanisms and clear communication of tangible benefits can improve implementation, strengthen public trust and gradually develop a stronger culture of metropolitan cooperation.

How can Skopje contribute to and benefit from the exchange of Good Practices?
Skopje can benefit by identifying approaches that respond to its priorities and adapting their transferable elements to the local institutional and territorial context. At the same time, the City contributes its own experience through the ~~accepted~~ Good Practice "CIVITAS RENAISSANCE – Intelligent Traffic Management and Control System". The practice demonstrates that digital solutions create lasting value when technological innovation is supported by institutional coordination, technical capacity and evidence-based decision-making. This combination of learning and contribution reflects the core purpose of Metro Case: improving policies through practical and reciprocal exchange.

7. Next steps, Upcoming events and Follow us

With a shared evidence base now in place, Metro Case partners will focus on adapting transferable lessons to their territorial contexts and translating them into concrete priorities for stronger metropolitan cooperation and policy improvement.

Upcoming events

7-8 October 2026 – EMA Forum 2026 in Istanbul
24-27 November 2026 – Metro Case Partner Meeting & interregional exchange in Barcelona

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19 – 21 May, 2026
Partner meeting & interregional exchange in Skopje, North Macedonia