



## HELSINKI-UUSIMAA POLITICAL DECLARATION

On the 29th of September 2023, we, the mayors, leaders, and political representatives of the European Metropolitan Authorities, convened in Helsinki for the eighth European Metropolitan Forum. Our collective purpose is to propel the visionary agenda of the Metropolitan areas, setting forth a comprehensive strategy to advance the realms of green, digital, and labour market transformations. With unwavering determination, we pledge to foster a sustainable, innovative, and inclusive future for all.

The achievements are already notable. And in this regard, we celebrate the recent normative resolution approved by the UN-HABITAT in June 2023. This resolution calls for the reinforcement of metropolitan governance to further advance the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through enhanced policy coherence and cross-sectoral alignment. Furthermore, we thank the Metrex initiative for launching a Manifesto for a Metropolitan Europe 2050. This initiative is dedicated to developing metropolitan-level solutions for a prosperous, safe, and sustainable Europe.

As stated in Katowice on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2022, we firmly condemn the Russian aggression on Ukrainian territory. It has resulted in tremendous effects on Europe and globally. EMA members commit to supporting the Ukrainian refugees and exploring present and future actions to reconstruct the country.

In light of the pressing challenges that confront us, we acknowledge the urgency of our shared responsibilities:

- The increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events demand our swift and decisive action to mitigate and adapt to climate change's impacts and preserve biodiversity.
- The evolving dynamics of global trade, resource allocation, and technological innovation require that we act on strategic autonomy to ensure our resilience in the face of changing circumstances.
- The aftermath of a global economic downturn necessitates a unified effort to support the steady recovery of the EU/EEA zone and restore economic vitality.

### **Strengthening Inclusive Growth through Green and Digital Transformation**

As we navigate this complex landscape, we are resolute in our commitment to shaping a collective future that benefits every European citizen. We pledge to harness the potential of our metropolitan areas as incubators of

innovation and catalysts for the twin transition of Green and Digital. In our pursuit of carbon neutrality, we are steadfast in leveraging the transformative power of digital technologies to drive down carbon emissions across diverse industries.

### **1. Advancing Circular Economy, Climate Action and Green Affordable Housing**

We cannot overstate the pivotal role of European metropolitan areas in facilitating a circular economy and green transition. To effectively mitigate climate change, increase resource efficiency and combat the degradation of biodiversity and the economy, we call upon European leaders to establish concrete circular economy targets and to seamlessly integrate them into policy-making decisions. Recognizing the extensive potential for circularity in sectors ranging from electronics, plastics, textiles, energy, construction and food, we advocate for an environment that fosters innovation and offers creative financing solutions, support of tax incentives to promote circular economy practices, shifting from taxing labour to taxing pollution and resource use, thus enabling systemic change and the propagation of a regenerative economy.

Moreover, housing is a critical concern for our metropolises as they grapple with an unprecedented scarcity and pricing crisis that affects numerous families. Ensuring the right access to quality housing is a primary political and social challenge our metropolises are combating.

### **2. Nurturing Skills for Green and Digital Transition**

The seismic shifts brought about by the green and digital transitions necessitate a workforce equipped to harness emerging technologies, drive innovation, and propel Europe toward a sustainable future. We emphasize the urgency of updating and enhancing skills and competence within our metropolitan areas. Through investing in educational and workforce training initiatives and engaging young people in climate actions and projects, we cultivate the requisite expertise, encourage international collaboration, and attract skilled professionals to align our workforce with the demands of present and future opportunities.

### **3. Elevating European Strategic Competitiveness**

Recent geopolitical events have underscored the fragility of global supply chains. We are primed to overcome these challenges with our rich educational resources, the spirit of innovation, commitment to fair competition, and the unified EU market. By taking the lead in addressing global obstacles, we bolster Europe's competitive edge and global influence. This also entails nurturing the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises and startups, recognizing their potential to drive transformative change.

### **4. Forging a Trustworthy Digital Landscape**

Establishing a reliable and resilient data-sharing ecosystem is paramount in an increasingly digital world. Our policies on digital trade must mirror our interests, empowering businesses of all sizes within the EU. Building upon the achievements of the von der Leyen Commission, exemplified by the AI Act, Digital Services Act, Digital Market Act, and Data Governance Act, we commit to formulating a European framework rooted in human-centric values. This framework promotes trust, resilience, and ethical data usage.

### **5. Enhancing Metropolitan Coalition to Achieve the SDGs**

As we approach the halfway mark for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it's concerning that only 12% of measurable targets are on track. To address this, local and subnational governments and stakeholders must play a central role, as two-thirds of SDGs hinge on our involvement. Metropolitan solutions are

effective but face institutional, financial, and regulatory hurdles. Urgently, we must strengthen local and metropolitan governance to propel SDG implementation in the final phase of the 2030 Agenda.

We are committed to strengthening metropolitan governance through stronger policy coherence, cross-sectoral alignment, multi-stakeholder engagement, and participation to accelerate the six transitions needed to achieve the SDGs in the areas of Food systems, Energy access and affordability, Digital connectivity, Education, Jobs and social protection, and Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

## **6. Empowering Metropolitan Areas in European Policies**

European policies should amplify economic, social, and territorial cohesion across EU regions and metropolitan areas. These areas are the nuclei of growth, education, research, and unity, proving their resilience in times of crisis. Challenges such as health, education, housing, mobility, pollution, biodiversity, climate change, inequality, and migrant inclusion can be better addressed from a metropolitan perspective. European metropolitan areas are committed to EU missions and are willing to take responsibility.

In the post-2027 era, we advocate for robust support for metropolitan areas' sustainable and innovative development, particularly in the green and digital transitions. To create a Europe that genuinely serves its citizens, we must elevate the vision of metropolitan areas in policy planning, management, and execution. These areas, characterized by multi-sectoral and multi-level partnerships, are essential platforms to realize this vision. We also call for the EU/EEA to engage with its member states in increasing the voice of metropolitan areas regarding national design, implementation and evaluation of EU policies and funds. Therefore, ensuring the interest and needs of metropolitan areas is fairly considered in the implementation of EU policies in the territories.

United under the banner of progress, sustainability, and resilience, we, the members of the European Metropolitan Authorities, are poised to lead the charge in innovation, driving transformative actions and offering solutions to shape a brighter future for every European citizen.

Through our commitment to circular economy principles, the nurturing of essential skills, the fostering of strategic competitiveness, and the assurance of a secure digital future, we pledge the European Union, the new European Commission and the new European Parliament resulting from the upcoming June 2024 elections to be clear with the role of metropolitan areas within the EU/EEA, integrating them into the institutional architecture of the union for greater involvement in this collaborative journey toward a stronger Europe.

Members of European Metropolitan Authorities, September 29, 2023

Signatures:

**Omar Al-Rawi,**

Member of Regional Parliament of Vienna & of the  
City Council of Vienna

**Antonio Balmón**

Vice President of Barcelona Metropolitan Area & Mayor  
of Cornellà de Llobregat

**Henryk Borczyk**

Deputy Chairman of Gornośląsko-Zagłębiowska  
Metropolia (GZM)

**Joanna Brzezińska**

Acting Director Revitalisation and Housing Bureau of the  
City of Lodz

**Elzibeta Burtan**

Vice president Krakow Metropolis Association

**Filip Chvátal,**

Councillor of the City of Brno

**Giuseppe Cirillo**

Deputy Mayor of Naples Metropolitan City & Mayor  
of Cardito

**Adrian Craciun**

General Manager of Constanta Metropolitan Area  
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**Azahara Dominguez**

Guipuzkoa Foral Deputy of Mobility, Tourism and  
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**Juraj Droba**

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**Julia Frohne**

CEO of Business Metropole Ruhr GmbH

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**Markku Markkula,**

President of the Board of the Helsinki-Uusimaa  
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**Jakub Mazur**

Deputy Mayor of Wroclaw

**Christophe Meunier**

Deputy Director for Territorial Promotion and  
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**Jorge Sequeira**

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**Jacopo Suppo**

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**Hein van der Loo**

Mayor of Almere on behalf of Metropolitan Region  
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