

A look back on

World Metropolitan Day 2023



Forward

World Metropolitan Day, a global campaign led by Metropolis and UN-Habitat, celebrated its fifth anniversary on 7 October 2023. The day commemorates the adoption of the [Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas](#), which was signed in October 2018. Since its first edition, World Metropolitan Day has been an occasion to spark global debates on how to promote a better urban future in our metropolises.

This year, World Metropolitan Day was hosted in Istanbul, Türkiye, to explore how nature can transform metropolises. Mayors and metropolitan leaders from around the world gathered to share their experiences and visions on how to enhance the resilience of their metropolitan areas through nature-based solutions.

The event, which was organised by the Marmara Municipalities Union, Metropolis, and UN-Habitat, was part of a global celebration that included events in Barcelona (Spain), Mexico City (Mexico), Guangzhou (China), and many other metropolises. It also featured a multi-level discussion on the prospects of developing a legal framework for metropolitan governance in Ukraine and the institutionalisation of Argentinian metropolitan areas.

Sharing, humbleness
and willingness to
cooperate are what
cities bring to the world.
Rather than competing,
cities are sharing,
rather than excluding
we're including. We are
building solutions.

Claudia López
President of Metropolis
and Mayor of Bogotá



Global observance in Istanbul

On 7 October 2023, over 240 participants gathered in Istanbul, Türkiye, to celebrate World Metropolitan Day and discuss how to use nature-based solutions to transform metropolises into more liveable places. The event was hosted by the Marmara Municipalities Union in the framework of the Marmara Urban Forum (MARUF).



World Metropolitan Day main event in Istanbul. © Marmara Municipalities Union.



World Metropolitan Day main event in Istanbul. © City of Istanbul.

The theme of this year's World Metropolitan Day was "The Power of Nature in Our Metropolises." Cities are facing many challenges, including pollution, flooding, health, and inequality. But what if we could use nature as a source of inspiration and innovation to solve these problems?

During the event, mayors and metropolitan leaders debated how to make nature a priority in cities' vision and action. They also discussed the importance of metropolitan governance in addressing urban challenges from a territorial perspective. One of the key points of discussion was the need to integrate nature into urban planning and investment. Mayors also discussed specific solutions, such as building green corridors, restoring surrounding ecosystems and promoting care and well-being.

Another key topic of discussion was the importance of metropolitan governance. Mayors emphasised the need to coordinate policies and actions across different levels and sectors to address metropolitan challenges. They also recognised that **there is no one-size-fits-all approach to metropolitan governance** and that each territory has its specific characteristics and needs. Finally, mayors discussed the need to use

a territorial approach to urban challenges. This approach takes into account the diversity of different neighbourhoods and communities within a metropolitan area. It also recognises the interconnectedness of urban and rural areas. Mayors shared examples of how they are using a territorial approach to address challenges such as affordable housing, mobility and climate change.

In a lively discussion at the end of the day, mayors shared their experiences in leading their communities in a changing world. They emphasised the importance of collaboration, innovation and resilience. They also expressed hope for the future of metropolitan areas and their commitment to creating more sustainable, equitable and inclusive metropolises.

World Metropolitan Day 2023 was a call to action for cities around the world to embrace the power of nature and use nature-based solutions to create more sustainable and liveable metropolises. [Discover the pictures of this edition of World Metropolitan Day.](#)

For too long, we've thought of cities as almost the opposite of nature. Now, especially with the climate crisis, what we need is to turn nature into our ally.

Jordi Vaquer
Metropolis
Secretary General



World Metropolitan Day events around the world

Governance of European Metropolitan Areas

October 03

Council of Europe

Ukrainian authorities are planning ahead and pursuing further reforms in multi-level governance. One key priority is the development of a legal framework for the operation of metropolitan areas, which are drivers of economic development and recovery.

This event examined the governance of European metropolitan areas and how their models can inform new approaches to the metropolitan reality in Ukraine. The event presented an overview of the report [Governance of European Metropolitan Areas](#), prepared by the Council of Europe's Centre of Expertise for Good Governance in cooperation with Metropolis. The report reviews the experiences of 13 metropolitan areas in Europe and illustrates the variety of ways in which the metropolitan phenomenon can be managed. While the report does not provide direct policy recommendations, it will assist Ukrainian decision-makers in choosing models and approaches for introducing metropolitan governance into national legislation.

The presentations at the event highlighted the diversity of governance models in Europe and revealed some crucial elements for inclusive and effective metropolitan governance. Above all, a culture of collaboration and trust among stakeholders plays a pivotal role. This atmosphere of cooperation and trust is fundamental for effective decision-making and harmonious efforts. Additionally, inclusive planning is a cornerstone of metropolitan governance, and it should incorporate a gender perspective in all policy-making processes. Lastly, the ability to remain flexible and adaptable in the face of changing circumstances is crucial. Metropolitan governance structures that can adjust and innovate when necessary are better equipped to address the complex issues they face.

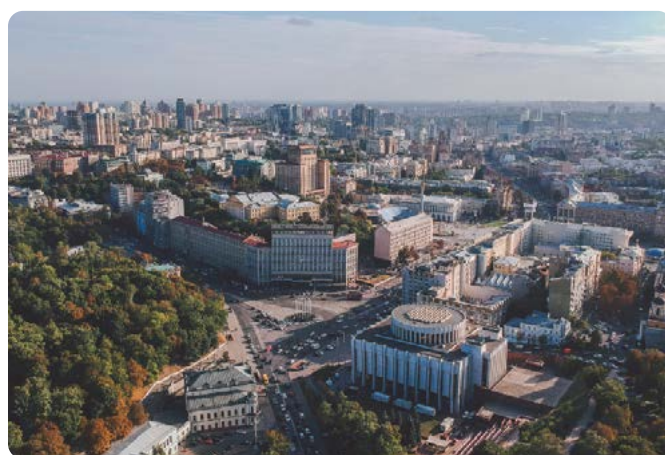
This event was organised by the Council of Europe, with contributions from Metropolis, the Parliamentary Committee of Ukraine on Organisation of State Power, Local Self-Government, Regional Development and Urban Planning and the Association of Ukrainian Cities.



Video



Report



Kiev (Ukraine). © Council of Europe

Towards the institutionalisation of Argentinian metropolitan areas

October 03

UN-Habitat - AMB - SCA - CIPPEC - Ciudadanía Metropolitana

The global trend of urban growth and transformation into regions is accelerating, but it is often unsustainable. This is especially true in Latin America and Argentina, where 92% of the population is urban. Governments and decision-makers have experienced difficulties in guiding the inclusive development of metropolitan areas. Metropolitan planning and governance will be key to addressing urban sprawl and its challenges.

The International Seminar on Metropolitan Areas, hosted at the Senate of Argentina explored the role of the metropolitan approach in overcoming territorial management fragmentation and promoting a comprehensive perspective for addressing challenges equitably, competitively and sustainably. While the metropolitan approach is not a one-size-fits-all solution, it does identify a gap in institutional and planning frameworks for development.



Beatriz Avila, Argentine National Senator. © Ciudadanía Metropolitana

 Videos

The role of women leaders in local government: A vision for progress

October 04

Paradiplomacia

This webinar recognised the work carried out by women heading International Relations offices in Latin America. It showcased their management experiences and emphasised the importance of promoting women's leadership in the generation of solutions and responses to global challenges in environmental issues and the management of natural resources. The

event aimed to foster substantive discussions and critical examination, bringing together local government authorities to dissect international activities within their domains. Furthermore, it examined the constraints and dilemmas in this realm, while also identifying avenues for progress.

Presentation of the Green Infrastructure Toolkit

October 05

Barcelona, Aburrá Valley and Mexico City metropolitan areas

The “Metropolitan Dialogues for Green Infrastructures” project, funded by Metropolis, enabled the metropolitan areas of Barcelona, Aburrá Valley, and Mexico City to share their experiences on assessing the status of various green infrastructure projects in their regions and to identify achievements, challenges and opportunities for each of them. Based on the insights from

these three regions, the project produced the ‘Green Infrastructure Toolkit’, a resource that offers guidance and recommendations to any local authorities on how to manage their green infrastructures effectively.

 Report



Infrastructure and Aerial View of the Llobregat River (Spain). © AMB

Guangzhou lights up the Canton Tower for World Metropolitan Day

October 05

Paradiplomacia

On 7 October, Guangzhou lit up the iconic Canton Tower in a display of support for World Metropolitan Day. This gesture signified the city’s commitment to the global mission of promoting sustainable metropolitan development. It showcased Guangzhou’s role as a significant participant in worldwide endeavours to address the intricate issues faced by metropolitan areas.



Guangzhou Canton Tower (China). © Guangzhou Foreign Affairs Office

 Video

Launch of the Kombola Kinshasa campaign

October 07

Kinshasa Municipality

The “Kombola Kinshasa” campaign was officially launched at the event, which aims to promote eco-citizenship for health and community resilience in Kinshasa. The campaign also involves beautifying the city with trees and flowers to conserve and restore its natural resources. This initiative shows how Kinshasa’s city authorities are creating a more sustainable and resilient city by improving its health conditions.



Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo). © Franck M, Pixabay

Bilbao 30 Support the World Metropolitan Day

October 07

Bilbao 30

World Metropolitan Day, themed “The power of nature” for this year, served as an opportunity for Bilbao Metropoli 30 to acknowledge and spotlight the valuable contributions made by their associated organisations in recognising the pivotal role of nature-based solutions in the improving the people’s quality of life in our metropolis.

© Bilbao Metropoli 30



Integrated Urban Water Management in the City of Mashhad

October 12

Mashhad Municipality

This event reviewed the existing challenges facing the Mashhad Municipality in water supply and management and the use of technology and innovation in this field.



Mashhad (Iran). © Marco, Pixabay

Collaborative Learning on Urban Forests as nature-based solutions (UFNBS) in China and Europe

October 16

Clearing House Project

The CLEARING HOUSE project, a Sino-European EU-funded research project on urban forests, was presented by Rik de Vreese, Senior Researcher and Team Leader for Urban Forestry at the European Forest Institute, at the 2023 World Forum on Urban Forests in Washington DC. The project involved 26 international partners, including ten cities from Europe and China, and explored how urban forests can support sustain-

able urban development. Some of the main outcomes of the project include a new typology for urban forests, policy guidelines for urban forest nature-based solutions (UFNBS), an educational package for teachers and students aged 10-14 on UFNBS, and a global benchmark tool for academic literature on UFNBS.



Washington (United States of America). © World Forum on Urban Forests

Highlights

The Metropolitan Reports Collection: A Call to Address Metropolitan Challenges

The “Metropolitan Reports collection,” supported by the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, was completed and launched in Helsinki on 25 September during the annual European Metropolitan Authorities meeting. This collection has examined the metropolitan realities of various regions, with reports on [Africa \(2019\)](#), [Asia \(2021\)](#), [Pan-America \(2022\)](#) and [Europe \(2023\)](#).

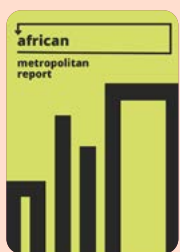
A consistent theme emerges across these reports: the pivotal role of metropolitan governance in addressing challenges posed by emergencies, such as the climate crisis. This crisis is intensifying and making inequalities in our metropolises more visible in various ways, including poor air quality, access to essential resources like drinking water and increased risk of extreme natural events.

Another common trend identified across the collection is the importance of data gathering, processing and management from a metropolitan perspective. Metropolises are experiencing a significant digital transformation in the form of big data, artificial intelligence and smart city technologies. However, while these technologies make it easy for policy-makers to access vast amounts of data and information, the use of this data is limited to responding to specific needs rather than serving as a tool for facilitating peer-to-peer learning between metropolises.

The UN-Habitat Assembly adopts a normative resolution on the “Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals”

Another important milestone for metropolitan governance was achieved at the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, held in Nairobi on 5-9 June. **For the first time, a normative resolution on “Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals” was adopted by the UN-Habitat Assembly.**

The resolution counted with the endorsement of nine countries (Brazil, Botswana, Egypt, Israel, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, Portugal and Spain) and recognised the key role of local and metropolitan multi-level governance in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals through better policy coherence, cross-sectoral alignment and multi-stakeholder participation.



2019



2021



2022



2023

In the news

Latest articles on World Metropolitan Day 2023



Jordi Vaquer: “Bolivia is progressing in the process of metropolitanization, but there are challenges.” (ES)



An international seminar on metropolitan areas was held in the Senate. (ES)



The Metropolitan Management Commission commemorates World Metropolis Day



Governments of Mexico City, Barcelona, and Valle de Aburrá conclude a project on green infrastructure. (ES)



European Metropolitan Areas: an overview for Ukraine



The 3rd Marmara International Urban Forum commenced in Istanbul. (TR)



The MARUF23 World Metropolitan Day has concluded. (TR)

World Metropolitan Day over the years

Metropolis is the global network of major cities and metropolitan areas. It was founded in 1985 to support effective and inclusive metropolitan governance. It also advocates and fosters cooperation and knowledge-sharing among its 150 members to enhance the quality of life in their territories.

Metropolis has been collaborating with UN-Habitat for the past five years to promote World Metropolitan Day, which encourages cities to think beyond their administrative boundaries. In addition, Metropolis provides knowledge and resources for its members and other metropolitan areas through research and projects such as the Metropolis Observatory and the USE Platform.

World Metropolitan Day is celebrated every 7 October, in honour of the Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas, which was adopted on that date in 2015. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities faced by metropolitan areas around the world. The campaign has received strong support from mayors of major global cities such as Bogota, Montreal, Barcelona, Johannesburg, Rabat and Seoul. Metropolis, together with 48 mayors and metropolitan leaders from different regions, have signed a petition for World Metropolitan Day to be recognised as an International Day.

Last year was a significant milestone in the history of the World Metropolitan Day campaign, as for the first time, a city hosted World Metropolitan Day in partnership with Metropolis and UN-Habitat. Claudia Lopez, Mayor of Bogota, led a global conversation around the role of care in strengthening metropolitan governance and collaboration, inviting local and international leaders to discuss experiences on how to use care as a guiding principle to develop urban policies that leave no one behind. This year, World Metropolitan Day was hosted by the Marmara Municipalities Union in Istanbul. Over 240 participants gathered to hear from mayors and representatives from metropolises from across the world—about how we can create greener, healthier and more resilient metropolitan spaces.

2023

World Metropolitan Day 2023: The power of nature

Hosted in Istanbul (Turkey)

[+ Info](#)

2022

World Metropolitan Day 2022: Crossing boundaries

Hosted in Bogota (Colombia)

[Report](#)

2021

World Metropolitan Day 2021: Resilience for all

[Report](#)

2019

World Metropolitan Day 2019

[Report](#)

2018

World Metropolitan Day 2018

[Report](#)

This report has been edited
with the financial support of



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