

METROPOLISES: CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS FOR TERRITORIES

Metropolises are big cities that concentrate populations, jobs, and creative, executive and research activities. A distinction should be made between metropolitan reality and metropolises in the legal sense of the term. The Act of 16 December 2010, along with a number of other decentralisation laws, led to the institution of 22 metropolises in France on 1 January 2019. A variety of statuses ensued, which, in addition to the Metropolis of Greater Lyon, distinguishes between collectivités territoriales à statut particulier (CTSPs – special status territorial communities), the métropoles aux statuts particuliers (metropolises with special statuses) of Greater Paris and Aix-Marseille-Provence, and métropoles de droit commun (“common law” metropolises).

29% of our country's population live in these 22 metropolises, on 2% of the nation's surface area. Although they all have a positive natural balance largely due to the youth of their populations, their evolutions in terms of demographics and employment vary considerably. 5 metropolises in western and southern France (Montpellier, Nantes, Bordeaux, Rennes and Toulouse) are seeing strong demographic growth and their urban areas enjoyed major growth in employment between 1975 and 2012. In Montpellier, however, employment growth could not keep up with the increase in the active population, leading to a high unemployment rate. Other metropolises are experiencing population and employment growth lower than the national average. Such differences are partly to do with the

effects of economic specialisation and macro-regional affiliations. According to the CGET, some metropolises share their growth dynamics with neighbouring territories, other less so.

Metropolis' populations include a large proportion of households with high living standards alongside others in situations of poverty. Île-de-France and a dozen metropolises concentrate most of France's ongoing difficulties with regard to access to housing. The metropolises have extensive but often overloaded public transport networks. In parallel, they foster recourse to soft mobility (cycling and walking). The high price of real estate has led many of the people who work in them to move to their outskirts, and the predominance of solo car use in travel to and from work is a source of pollution problems. Confronted with unavoidable environmental issues, the metropolises have begun to take action.

The status of metropolis enables a change of scale in terms of governance and resources, and also fosters visibility. Nonetheless, the rise of France's metropolises has been accompanied by a feeling that territorial inequalities are increasing. Improvement of cooperation between metropolises and other territories is essential.

With a view to fostering sustainable, balanced and coordinated development of the territory, with the help of the metropolises in particular, the ESEC makes recommendations with five priorities:



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▾ PRIORITY 1: IMPROVING GOVERNANCE TO TAKE BETTER ACCOUNT OF TERRITORIAL DIVERSITY

- Make it compulsory for the Conférence Métropolitaine des Maires des Communes Membres (Metropolitan Conference of Mayors of Member Municipalities) to meet at least twice a year and entrust it with the mission of ensuring territorial balance.
- Do not question the ways in which development councils are created and operate. Carry out an assessment in order to determine modalities for optimal operation. Ensure the involvement of organised civil society and input from citizens. Foster parity in the Conférence Métropolitaine and the Conseil de Développement des Métropoles (Metropolitan Development Council)
- Create conditions for better cooperation between metropolises and the surrounding areas with which they interact (medium-sized towns and rural areas) through conclusion of reciprocity contracts, and write such essential action into law.

▾ PRIORITY 2: PROMOTING BALANCED TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Assert the region's role as the leader in economic development across French soil, in collaboration with other local authorities.
- Accelerate development of very high speed broadband in all areas and combat "information illiteracy" by implementation of a nation plan on provision of training and assistance to populations.

▾ PRIORITY 3: REDEVELOP STRONG SPATIAL PLANNING DYNAMICS

- Scale up equalisation of and national policies on spatial planning to the advantage of the territories most in difficulty. Reinforce solidarity within metropolises and as regards neighbouring territories
- Develop a collective project based on a shared diagnosis of the territory and drawing on local actors, promoting sustainable dynamisation of the economic fabric in the following sectors:
 - industry, by increasing the resources provided under the "136 Territoires d'industrie et l'économie de la transition énergétique" (136 industrial and economic areas for the energy transition) Plan;
 - agricultural, commercial and craft activities, and services relating to local economies, by promoting relocation and the circular economy whenever possible;
 - the social sector, by making ageing an asset in local economies and youth an opportunity for local development;
 - tourism and culture, with a view to promoting territorial offers.
- Improve access to public services via a moratorium on their closure, and institute a minimum "basket" of public services available to one and all.

▾ PRIORITY 4: PROMOTING PLURAL URBAN PLANNING WITH GREATER AND BETTER INCORPORATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS

- Carry out a comprehensive urban diagnosis, prioritising study of the possibility of "rebuilding the city over the city". Limit urban sprawl (encouragement to requalification, sustainable densification).
- In metropolises, ensure that urban planning is designed to reduce risks connected with climate change and improve resilience. Foster functional, generational, economic and social mixity, by increasing numbers of intermediary housing units and continuing to promote social housing through proactive control of land use.
- Foster consistency of action between the State and the various levels of local authorities, by harmonising indicators for monitoring Plans Climat-Air-Energie Territoriaux (PCAETs – Territorial Climate-Air-Energy Plans), and carry out consistent monitoring of their implementation.

▾ PRIORITY 5: ORGANISING COORDINATED DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT AT THE VARIOUS TERRITORIAL LEVELS

- In metropolises and their surroundings, expand plans for development of safe soft mobility (walking and cycling), and continue development of local public transport. Define a transport plan shared between Regional Councils and the metropolises in their territory.
- In periurban areas, promote intermodal transport, complement rail services by inaugurating bus lines linking TER and RER stations, and foster car-sharing and pooling.
- Provide for travel contracts in Mobility Plans, involving organisations representing employers and employees, women and men alike, and professional sectors.
- Promote development of telework and creation of time offices in order to limit travel, and foster wider use of such practices over time.