

METROPOLITAN DIPLOMACY





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1. Introduction

Metropolises are at the forefront of many global crises, such as climate change, food security, and migration. For this reason, they are increasingly assuming a proactive role within the international ecosystem. Their international engagement is becoming ever more necessary to formulate policies aimed at strengthening the management of metropolitan territories, particularly beyond the current cycle of global agendas concluding in 2030 and in anticipation of new international contexts that may arise in the near future.

Metropolitan diplomacy refers to the actions and strategies developed by metropolitan areas with the intention of influencing the international sphere, cooperating with other cities and regions, and positioning themselves globally. This approach acknowledges that metropolises are not only centers of innovation and growth, but also essential actors that can shape global policies and contribute to the resolution of shared challenges such as climate change, migration, and inequality. Metropolitan diplomacy is distinguished by its capacity to address systemic and far-reaching issues on a global scale, such as territorial planning, regional mobility, and climate change mitigation, integrating various jurisdictions and stakeholders around a common strategic framework.

The concept of metropolitan diplomacy differs from contemporary diplomacy in that it involves local and regional governments operating under cooperative and collaborative governance modalities. This form of diplomacy is a response to the growing global interdependence and to the recognition that many solutions to global challenges require collective and coordinated action at the metropolitan level.

Moreover, city diplomacy and metropolitan diplomacy should be complementary in order to maximize their effectiveness. While city diplomacy focuses on bilateral relationships and cooperation in specific areas, metropolitan diplomacy addresses a broader range of issues that require collective solutions to tackle challenges and seize opportunities that transcend the local scale and jurisdictional municipal boundaries, incorporating the needs of the entire metropolitan territory. This complementarity enables more effective coordination in the implementation of policies and solutions, while also strengthening influence in shaping international agendas by allocating appropriate roles according to the scale and complexity of the urban and territorial challenges.

2. Metropolitan Diplomacy: A Journey Through Declarations of Metropolitan Areas

Metropolitan diplomacy has gained prominence over the last decade, presenting itself as a key tool to address global challenges from a supra-local and regional perspective. This progress has been further reinforced in recent years, with the adoption of various international declarations and agreements that highlighted the role of metropolitan areas in promoting sustainable development, interregional cooperation, and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this context, the main messages arising from these declarations stand out, underscoring their impact on global development agendas and their capacity to position metropolises as strategic actors in global governance.

2.1 Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas (2015)¹



The Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas was a turning point in metropolitan diplomacy by recognizing the crucial role of metropolitan areas in global development. Adopted in October 2015, this declaration underscores the importance of metropolitan areas as drivers of economic growth, innovation, and social cohesion. The declaration highlights the need for sustainable metropolitan policies that address the challenges arising from accelerated urbanization, such as socioeconomic inequality, environmental degradation, and the need for resilient infrastructure.

One of the most significant aspects of the Montreal Declaration is its call to integrate metropolitan areas into the New Urban Agenda (NUA), establishing clear metropolitan governance mechanisms that promote intermunicipal and interterritorial cooperation. This approach has been essential in positioning metropolises as key actors in the achievement of the SDGs, particularly in areas such as sustainable mobility, inclusive urban planning, and climate resilience.

2.2 Barcelona Statement on Metropolitan Development (2023)²



In May 2023, the Barcelona Statement on Metropolitan Development reaffirmed the importance of metropolitan areas in the localization of the SDGs and in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and positioned metropolitan solutions as necessary interventions within a territory that goes beyond the traditional municipal or local scale. This document, endorsed by experts from various metropolises and international organizations, addressed the need to close the metropolitan management gap at the global level, promoting innovative solutions based on evidence to tackle contemporary urban challenges.

The Statement emphasized the need to strengthen metropolitan governance arrangements in order to facilitate vertical and horizontal cooperation among various levels of government. In addition, it highlighted the importance of incorporating metropolitan approaches into national policies and regulatory frameworks, ensuring that metropolitan areas have the fiscal and administrative capacities needed to lead sustainable development.

¹<https://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/Montreal-Declaration.pdf>

²https://docs.amb.cat/alfresco/api/-default-/public/alfresco/versions/1/nodes/6e0631b3-8b49-42c1-bbc2-75121a792039/content/1_BARCELONA%20STATEMENT_Metrosolutions_EN.pdf?attachment=false&imeType=application/pdf&sizeInBytes=554842

³<https://opamss.org.sv/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/ACUERDO-DE-VOLUNTAD-IMPULSO-RCyMA-final.pdf>

2.3 San Salvador Agreement: Central American Network “From Cities to Metropolises in Action” (2023)³

The San Salvador Agreement, signed in May 2023, represents a significant effort by the capital cities and metropolitan areas of Central America and the Caribbean to collaboratively address the region’s common challenges. This agreement underlines the importance of building a regional platform for exchange and mutual support for the design of metropolitan public policies, legal frameworks, and financing mechanisms.

The agreement highlights how metropolitan areas in Central America, facing similar challenges such as uncontrolled urbanization and climate vulnerability, can benefit from an integrated and regional approach. This reinforces the idea that metropolitan diplomacy is not only a tool for international cooperation, but also for strengthening local and regional response capacities in the face of global challenges.



2.4 The Helsinki Declaration (2023)⁴

The Helsinki Declaration of the Network of European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA) of September 2023, adopted by the European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA), reinforces the commitment of European metropolises to the green and digital transformation. This declaration calls the European Union to integrate metropolitan areas into its institutional architecture, recognizing their central role in promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion within the European Union. This Declaration positions European metropolitan areas as leaders in innovation and sustainability and underscores the need for coherent metropolitan policies that reflect the needs and aspirations of European citizens.



2.5 UN Habitat Assembly Resolution (June 2023) on the Adaptation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to Local Contexts⁵

This 2023 United Nations Habitat Assembly Resolution is one of the outcomes of metropolitan diplomacy and reflects a global recognition of the importance of strengthening metropolitan governance as an essential pillar to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The explicit inclusion of the strengthening of metropolitan governance in this resolution is a direct result of the advocacy of the Barcelona Statement, which emphasized the need to integrate metropolitan approaches into national policies and international treaties, strengthen metropolitan governance and cooperation, and create global tools and platforms to support the localization of the SDGs. It also proposed the creation of a World Metropolitan Forum and highlighted the importance of protecting the cultural and natural heritage of metropolises. These messages were crucial for the UN Habitat Assembly, as they sent a clear message about the role of metropolitan areas in the achievement of the SDGs and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.



2.6 Brussels Declaration (2024), “Brussels Declaration of European Mayors: A European Policy Fit for the Future”⁶

The Brussels Declaration of European Mayors: A European Policy Fit for the Future, signed in January 2024 by European mayors and presidents of metropolitan areas, highlights the central role that metropolitan areas must play in achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal and the Territorial Agenda 2030, as they are essential to attaining climate neutrality and territorial cohesion. The Declaration calls for greater integration of the metropolitan dimension at all levels of European governance, including increased representation in expert groups and a structured and binding dialogue with institutions such as the European Committee of the Regions and the European Parliament. Likewise, it urges the promotion of metropolitan



³https://docs.amb.cat/alfresco/api/-default-/public/alfresco/versions/1/nodes/b40bc98a-245e-4872-ba58-e9fc8c382c2/content/EMA%202023%20Helsinki%20Declaration_en.pdf?attachment=false&MimeType=application/pdf&sizeInBytes=510976

⁴https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2023/09/english_13.pdf

⁵<https://www.politico.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/23/BE2024-Brussels-Declaration-of-Mayors-A-European-policy-fit-for-the-future.pdf>

strategies that foster cooperation between cities and the surrounding rural areas, facilitating the shared management of services and resources such as transport, education and health, to ensure more balanced development. Finally, it advocates for more accessible financing tailored to the needs of cities, with mandatory urban earmarking of funds in EU programmes post-2027, ensuring that metropolitan areas have the necessary support in key sectors such as infrastructure, mobility and climate adaptation.

2.7 Barcelona Metropolitan Declaration (2025), “Metropolitan future beyond 2030”⁷



Adopted at the World Metropolitan Summit in October 2025, the Barcelona Metropolitan Declaration marks a key milestone in the advancement of metropolitan diplomacy. It reaffirms the role of metropolitan areas as essential actors in global governance and sustainable development, especially beyond 2030. The declaration highlights the importance of strengthening multilevel governance, applying the principle of subsidiarity, and developing institutional frameworks that reflect the complexity and diversity of metropolitan systems.

The declaration underscores the strategic contributions of metropolises to addressing global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, housing crises, and digital transformation through integrated territorial approaches. It calls for metropolitan inclusion in the design and implementation of international and national policies, particularly in areas like housing, environmental action, and digital equity, emphasizing the need for transformative capacity at the metropolitan scale.

Finally, the declaration urges national governments and international institutions to formally recognize metropolitan areas as full partners in global governance. It advocates for dedicated funding mechanisms, increased institutional autonomy, and the integration of the metropolitan perspective into emerging global frameworks such as the Pact for the Future and the Global Digital Compact. In doing so, it positions metropolitan diplomacy as a vital tool to bridge global commitments with territorial action.

⁷https://docs.amb.cat/alfresco/api/-default-/public/alfresco/versions/1/nodes/4687b56a-96a6-4875-b0fe-4fb24784fe10/content/WMS2025_%20political%20declaration.pdf?attachment=false&MimeType=application/pdf&sizeInBytes=301806

3. Purpose and Strategic Scope of Metropolitan Diplomacy

Metropolitan diplomacy serves both as a framework for international engagement and as a strategic tool for strengthening the role of metropolitan areas in global governance. This section outlines its overarching purpose and strategic objectives, as well as the concrete actions required to advance its implementation and impact.

3.1 Strategic Objectives of Metropolitan Diplomacy

The main objective of metropolitan diplomacy is to strengthen the capacity of metropolitan areas to influence the global agenda, promote sustainable development, and improve the quality of life of their inhabitants. This is achieved through international cooperation, the exchange of inspiring practices, and active participation in global networks and multilateral forums. Metropolitan diplomacy seeks to position metropolises as key actors in the formulation of global policies, facilitating the mobilization of resources, innovation in urban governance, and the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and New Urban Agenda at the local and regional levels, as well as positioning the role and contribution of metropolises in multilateral commitments at the United Nations, such as the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and the Declaration on Future Generations (Pact for the Future, 2024).

Metropolitan diplomacy makes visible the role of metropolises as decisive actors in building a more sustainable and equitable future for all. More specifically, metropolitan diplomacy pursues:

- **Influence on global policies:** Ensuring that the priorities and needs of metropolitan areas are considered in the formulation of international policies, contributing to a more inclusive and representative global governance.
- **Influence on national policies:** Promoting the involvement of metropolitan areas in countries' urban development and fiscal policies and the creation of laws and regulatory frameworks that recognize and strengthen metropolitan management.
- **International coordination:** Facilitating collaboration among metropolitan areas at the global level to address shared challenges.
- **Metropolitan institutional strengthening:** Developing institutional capacities and promoting the professionalization of metropolitan management to improve effectiveness in the implementation of urban development policies.
- **Promotion of the metropolitan dimension:** Positioning metropolises on the international stage, attracting investment, talent and tourism, while fostering a solid and coherent metropolitan identity.
- **Mobilization and optimization of resources:** Accessing financing and technical resources through international partnerships, enabling metropolises to implement high-impact projects in areas such as infrastructure, transport, and environmental sustainability.

3.2 Strategic Actions to Advance Metropolitan Diplomacy

Metropolitan areas can play a decisive role in shaping global development agendas by implementing comprehensive strategies that strengthen their leadership, visibility, and operational capacity in the international arena. To reinforce their global positioning, it is essential to align metropolitan initiatives with international priorities, enhance their ability to influence decision-making processes, foster active participation in multilateral governance, and ensure that their actions contribute meaningfully to sustainable development and the well-being of their inhabitants. Within this framework, a set of strategic actions is proposed to boost their influence and effective engagement in global processes, consolidating their role as key actors in international governance.

1. Strengthen metropolitan participation in international forums and networks

Promote the active engagement of metropolitan areas in international dialogue platforms and networks. This includes developing clear strategies for their representation and influence in multilateral spaces, fostering peer-to-peer collaboration, and ensuring metropolitan priorities are reflected in global agendas.

2. Foster strategic international alliances for collective action

Encourage the formation of partnerships with international organizations, cities, and key stakeholders to address shared challenges. Strategic alliances enable joint project implementation, exchange of technical expertise, resource mobilization, and innovation in tackling global issues at the metropolitan scale.

3. Institutionalize metropolitan international relations

Develop and strengthen institutional capacities within metropolitan areas to manage international affairs. This includes establishing dedicated offices or units for international relations, training specialized staff, and equipping them with tools, instruments, and financial resources to sustain metropolitan diplomacy efforts.

4. Align metropolitan strategies with global development agendas

Ensure that international action frameworks of metropolitan areas are aligned with major global agendas such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, and the New Urban Agenda. Demonstrating how metropolitan action contributes to these frameworks reinforces their legitimacy and relevance on the global stage.

5. Enhance capacities for global policy advocacy

Support metropolises in developing instruments and mechanisms for international advocacy, including the drafting of metropolitan manifestos, participation in the formulation of global policies, and leadership in international coalitions. Advocacy must be evidence-based and rooted in metropolitan realities

6. Promote the visibility and impact of metropolitan action

Communicate the role and contributions of metropolitan governance in addressing global challenges. This involves strategic communication to highlight successes, showcase innovations, and advocate for the recognition of metropolitan leadership in sustainable urban development.

7. Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the impact of diplomatic actions

Develop and implement monitoring and evaluation frameworks to assess the effectiveness of metropolitan diplomacy. These tools should measure contributions to sustainable development, inform strategic decision-making, and ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

4. Role of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) in Metropolitan Diplomacy

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) plays a strategic role in metropolitan diplomacy, positioning itself as a hub for international coordination and cooperation. Building on a solid track record, the AMB has consolidated its standing as a relevant actor capable of influencing the global urban and metropolitan agenda. Its active participation in international city networks has been key to making metropolitan governance more visible, sharing experiences and good practices, and contributing to the design of global agendas that incorporate metropolitan approaches and solutions. This international engagement has enabled the AMB to become a reference in key processes such as the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and in the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This leadership was further reinforced when the AMB hosted the World Metropolitan Summit in 2025. The Summit culminated in the adoption of the Barcelona Metropolitan Declaration, helping place metropolitan diplomacy at the centre of global urban governance. It also highlighted the role of metropolitan governance in responding to urgent challenges including housing, inclusive mobility, climate adaptation, digital transformation and water management, while positioning metropolitan areas as key actors in shaping the global post-2030 agenda.

In addition, the AMB has focused on building alliances with other metropolitan areas, creating synergies that enhance institutional capacities to address challenges arising from accelerated urbanization. Through joint projects in critical areas such as sustainable mobility, and the efficient management of water and waste, the AMB promotes integrated and coordinated solutions that benefit the metropolitan territory as a whole.

Likewise, the AMB aims to lead the digital transition in order to become an internationally recognised digital metropolis. This vision involves developing a comprehensive data intelligence ecosystem to improve metropolitan services and policies, as well as fostering the exchange of experiences and knowledge with other regions and metropolises worldwide.

The AMB has succeeded in consolidating its international presence and influence through different strategies:

4.1 Participation and Leadership in International Networks

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) has consolidated its leadership in international networks through its active participation in organizations such as Metropolis, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), MedCities, the EMA, METREX, and other relevant international forums. This participation pursues several key purposes: to facilitate the exchange of knowledge on technical solutions to metropolitan challenges; to foster governance through learning about different institutional models; to promote the international visibility of the AMB; and to drive joint projects that address common problems related to sustainability and metropolitan development.

4.2 International Presence in Dialogues on Sustainable Development

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) has a prominent presence in major international dialogues related to sustainable development, especially in events linked to the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda (NUA). This includes participation in discussion forums on issues such as the energy transition, water resource management and sustainable mobility, contributing a metropolitan perspective that enriches the implementation of these agendas.

4.3 Global Influence Through the Transfer of Knowledge on Metropolitan Management and Governance

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) has become a point of reference in the transfer of knowledge and good practices on metropolitan governance and urban management. Through the concept of Metropolitan Solutions, the AMB facilitates access for other metropolitan areas to key tools and experiences to address urban challenges and fosters capacity-building in other regions of the world, reinforcing the AMB's position as a leader in participatory governance.

4.4 Leadership in the Development of International Cooperation Projects

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) leads the development of international cooperation projects focused on urban sustainability, climate resilience, sustainable mobility and efficient resource management. It collaborates with cities and metropolises such as Dakar, Gauteng, Guadalajara, Lisbon, Maputo, and Tunis as well as with international networks such as Metropolis, Medcities and C40 Cities, to implement innovative solutions to common challenges.

These projects, financed with European funds such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Next Generation EU, promote energy efficiency, air quality and sustainable infrastructure. Through multilateral cooperation, the AMB coordinates initiatives achieving synergies that strengthen the capacity for action in the face of global challenges. Among its main achievements are the expansion of low-emission zones and progress in waste management and green infrastructure.

4.5 International Cooperation of the AMB in Other Regions of the World

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) extends its cooperation to regions such as Africa, Asia and Latin America, promoting the transfer of knowledge and supporting the implementation of metropolitan policies through technical assistance and planning advisory services. The AMB's approach in these contexts is to contribute to improving metropolitan planning capacities and to promote the adoption of sustainable infrastructure solutions.

4.6 Institutional Component and Instruments for International Cooperation

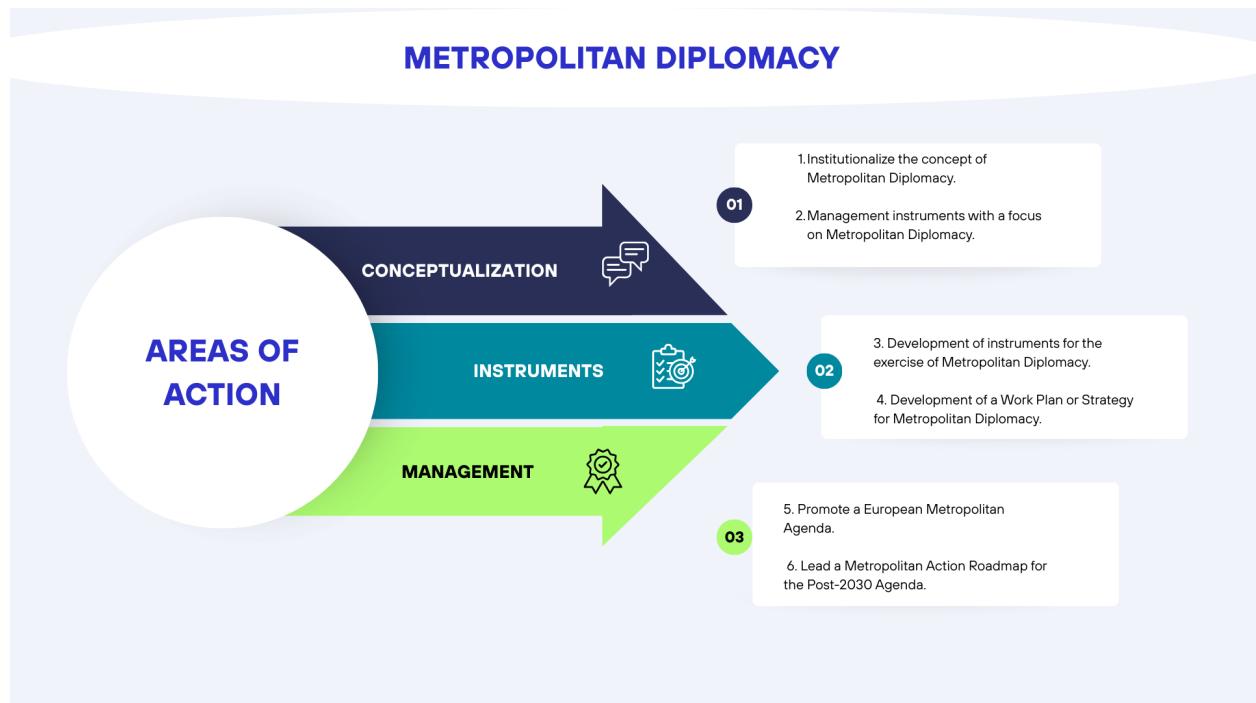
The Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) has developed a solid institutional structure that strengthens its capacity to act at the international level. This structure includes a specialized unit for international action and cooperation, and a technical team dedicated to the planning and management of transnational projects, supported by instruments such as the Cooperation Master Plan 2024–2027 and the Internationalization Plan 2020–2025.

The institutional component has as its main objectives the strengthening of the AMB's international strategy, the updating of cooperation policies and the allocation of 0.7% of its own revenues for these purposes. In addition, it seeks to promote direct international cooperation in line with the current Master Plan, obtain funding from the European Union for strategic metropolitan projects, and position the AMB as a reference institution at the global level.

Likewise, within the framework of cooperation and international action for sustainable development, it promotes the external projection of metropolitan governance and the guarantee of rights at the global level.

5. Recommendations for Strengthening Metropolitan Diplomacy in the AMB

The following recommendations aim to institutionalize the concept of Metropolitan Diplomacy, enhance existing management instruments, and innovate through the creation of new tools. These initiatives will enable the AMB to become a benchmark in sustainable urban development, strengthen its participation in international networks, and establish more strategic alliances to influence global policies. The implementation of these recommendations will provide the AMB with effective tools to participate proactively in global governance.



5.1 Institutionalize the Concept of Metropolitan Diplomacy

This can be kickstarted by creating a dedicated work area to develop forward-looking analysis on strategic areas, instruments and scenarios for international advocacy. This area will focus on identifying and coordinating metropolitan diplomacy actions to position this metropolitan management approach within global development agendas, as well as within international networks, thereby strengthening the AMB's capacity to influence and lead in the urban and metropolitan sphere at the global level.

5.2 Management Instruments with a focus on Metropolitan Diplomacy

It is recommended to explicitly integrate Metropolitan Diplomacy into instruments such as the Cooperation Master Plan and the Internationalization Plan, establishing it as a key strategic axis. This approach will make it possible to orient internationalization actions towards greater collaboration with global metropolitan networks, strengthening the influence of metropolises

in shaping global policies. In addition, it will foster cooperation by identifying opportunities to share good practices and advance strategic alliances in key areas of international advocacy.

5.3 Development of Instruments for the Exercise of Metropolitan Diplomacy

Promote the development of strategic instruments for AMB's action in the international context, making visible the impact of metropolitan policies at the global level through instruments such as prospective analysis reports on international frameworks for metropolitan management, which make it possible to anticipate trends and steer the international engagement of metropolises more effectively.

Likewise, Voluntary Metropolitan Reports (VMRs) on the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should be produced to monitor and make visible the progress made and results, as well as reports on influence in global climate agendas that assess the impact of AMB policies on international sustainability commitments. It is also essential to develop advocacy agendas in international networks that prioritize AMB's participation and reinforce its leadership in strategic spaces for metropolitan action, promoting greater influence in the formulation of global policies.

5.4 Preparation of a Workplan or Strategy for Metropolitan Diplomacy

Prepare a workplan or strategy for metropolitan diplomacy that enables AMB to strategically guide its advocacy in the global context, measure results and monitor impacts on the visibility of metropolitan needs in global policies and multilateral forums. This will contribute to closing gaps in metropolitan management and identifying actions for strengthening metropolitan management at the national level together with strategic partners who can help enhance AMB's influence and promote its metropolitan diplomacy objectives.

5.5 Promote a European Metropolitan Agenda

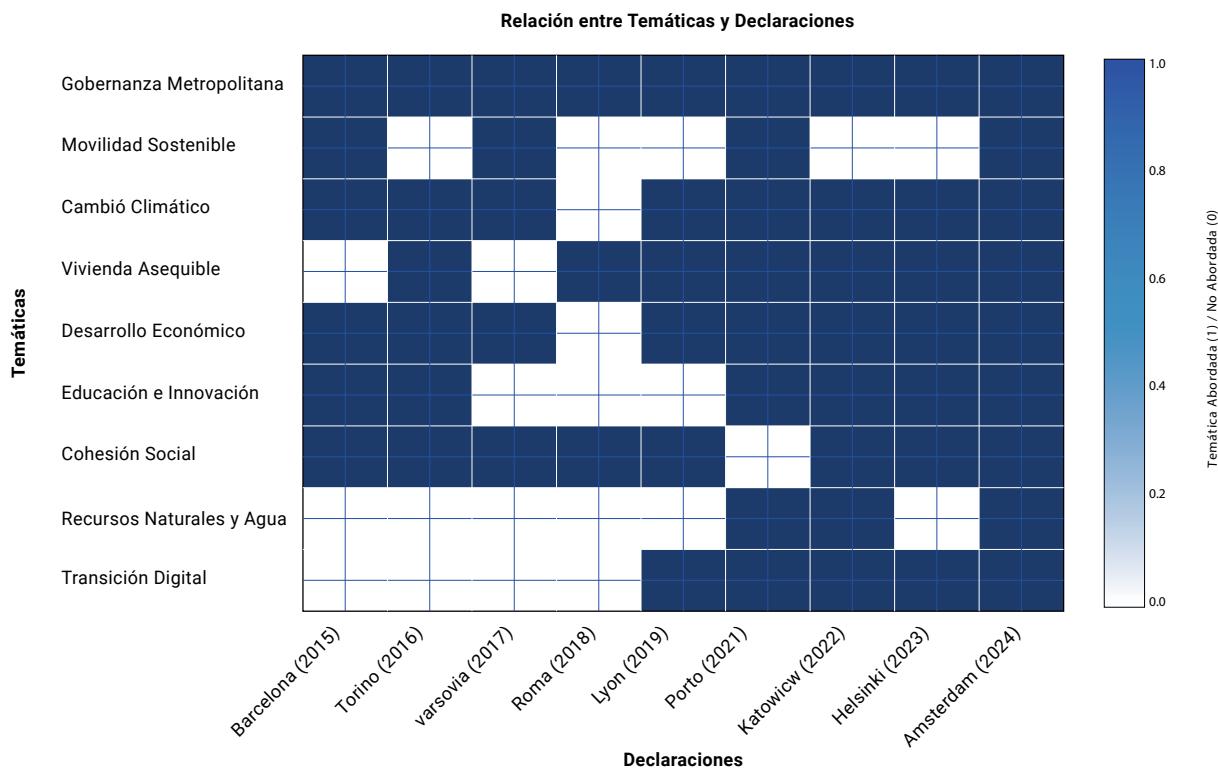
After a decade of cooperation through the European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA) network and following the adoption of nine political declarations that reflect the perspectives of mayors, presidents and political representatives from 59 major European metropolitan areas, it is crucial to take a step towards a more structured metropolitan diplomacy. This implies consolidating a management instrument capable of positioning the metropolitan perspective in the design and implementation of European Union policies such as the European Urban Agenda (EUA).

During this period, the EMA has promoted agreements on key issues for sustainable development, strengthening its role as a platform for metropolitan leadership. Below is a comparative table that summarizes the topics addressed and their consistency across the nine EMA declarations.

Theme / Declaration	Barcelona (2015)	Turin (2016)	Warsaw (2017)	Rome (2018)	Lyon (2019)	Porto (2021)	Katowice (2022)	Helsinki (2023)	Amsterdam (2024)
Metropolitan Governance	Governance and relationship with the EU	Multilevel governance	Cross-border cooperation	European governance	Local and international governance	Resilient governance	Cooperation networks	Inclusion in governance	Multilevel coordination
Sustainable Mobility	Sustainable urban mobility	Not addressed	Sustainable infrastructure	Not addressed	Not addressed	Clean transport	Not addressed	Not addressed	Accessible and clean transport
Climate Change	Climate change and resilience	Environmental sustainability	Climate mitigation	Not addressed	Inclusive digitalization	Energy transition	Climate mitigation	Biodiversity and mitigation	Biodiversity and restoration
Affordable Housing	Not addressed	Social inclusion	Not addressed	Territorial equity	Affordable and quality housing	Economic recovery	Critical infrastructure	Sustainable housing	Affordable housing
Economic Development	Economic development and employment	Innovation and employment	Economic growth	Not addressed	Inclusive economy and employment	Economic recovery	Strategic resources	Competitiveness and sustainability	Circular economy
Education And Innovation	Knowledge transfer	Cultural innovation	Not addressed	Not addressed	Not addressed	Digital transformation	Energy transition	Education for the transition	Educational innovation
Social Cohesion	Social equity	Social cohesion	Social inclusion	Collaboration and equity	Inclusion and equity	Not addressed	International solidarity	Inclusion in governance	Well-being and participation
Natural Resources And Water	Not addressed	Not addressed	Not addressed	Not addressed	Not addressed	Resilience to crises	Critical resources	Not addressed	Integrated water management
Digital Transition	Not addressed	Not addressed	Not addressed	Not addressed	Digital transformation	Technological innovation	Sustainable technologies	Inclusive digitalization	

Comparative matrix of themes by EMA Declaration (2015–2024)

The EMA declarations, analysed from 2015 to 2024, show a thematic evolution that reflects the adaptation of metropolitan areas to contemporary global challenges. Metropolitan governance is consolidated as a cross-cutting axis, moving from initial conceptual approaches to practical strategies for multilevel inclusion. Climate change and sustainability, present from the outset, have matured into comprehensive approaches that include biodiversity, natural restoration and the energy transition. Meanwhile, affordable housing and social cohesion have gained prominence, evolving towards policies that integrate equity, well-being and citizen participation. Sustainable mobility and the management of natural resources, although addressed intermittently, re-emerge as strategic priorities in recent contexts.



Thematic intensity map across EMA Declarations (2015–2024)

In recent years, the rise of digital transformation stands out as a key driver of sustainability and economic competitiveness, linking technological innovation with social and environmental resilience. This analysis shows a convergence towards more holistic approaches that integrate governance, economy, technology and the environment, positioning metropolitan areas as central actors in the implementation of global agendas. The Declarations underline the need for coordinated and multisectoral action to address the urban challenges of the twenty-first century, reinforcing the opportunity to capitalize on the outcomes of the 10-year trajectory of experience in generating a far-reaching instrument that will strengthen the participation and action of metropolitan authorities in shaping European Union policies.

5.6 Lead a Metropolitan Action Roadmap for the Post-2030 Agenda

It is essential to define a clear and strategic roadmap that enables metropolitan areas to lead the implementation of the post-2030 agenda. This effort should focus on identifying opportunities for participation and advocacy in global agreements such as the Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations. The goal is to articulate a global metropolitan community that strengthens metropolitan diplomacy on key issues such as climate action, the digital transition, social cohesion and inclusive governance.

The Pact for the Future⁸ emphasizes the urgent need to strengthen the multilateral system and governance institutions in order to address contemporary challenges. Among its priorities are accelerated climate action, biodiversity conservation, the sustainable use of natural resources and efficient water management. It also underlines the importance of ensuring safe and affordable housing, reducing inequalities and building inclusive, just and peaceful societies. For its part, the Global Digital Compact⁹ focuses on closing digital divides, ensuring equitable access to technology and establishing responsible governance of artificial intelligence.

In this context, metropolitan management plays an essential role as a bridge between global objectives and the localization of solutions. Defining a metropolitan advocacy roadmap not only makes it possible to position metropolitan areas as key actors in the implementation of these agendas, but also to reduce gaps in metropolitan management through the strengthening of governance, regulation and financing. This roadmap should prioritize areas of influence both in terms of metropolitan management and metropolitan solutions in relation to the priorities of the post-2030 agendas. Alignment with the principles of these agreements will strengthen metropolitan capacity to influence multilateral and regional platforms, consolidating their role as agents of change in the construction of a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable future.

These actions will guide the AMB towards proactive and effective metropolitan diplomacy, aligned with the needs of metropolises. This approach will generate a substantial force for action to strengthen metropolitan management at the global scale.

⁸[Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations](#)
⁹[Global Digital Compact - United Nations Summit of the Future | United Nations](#)

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