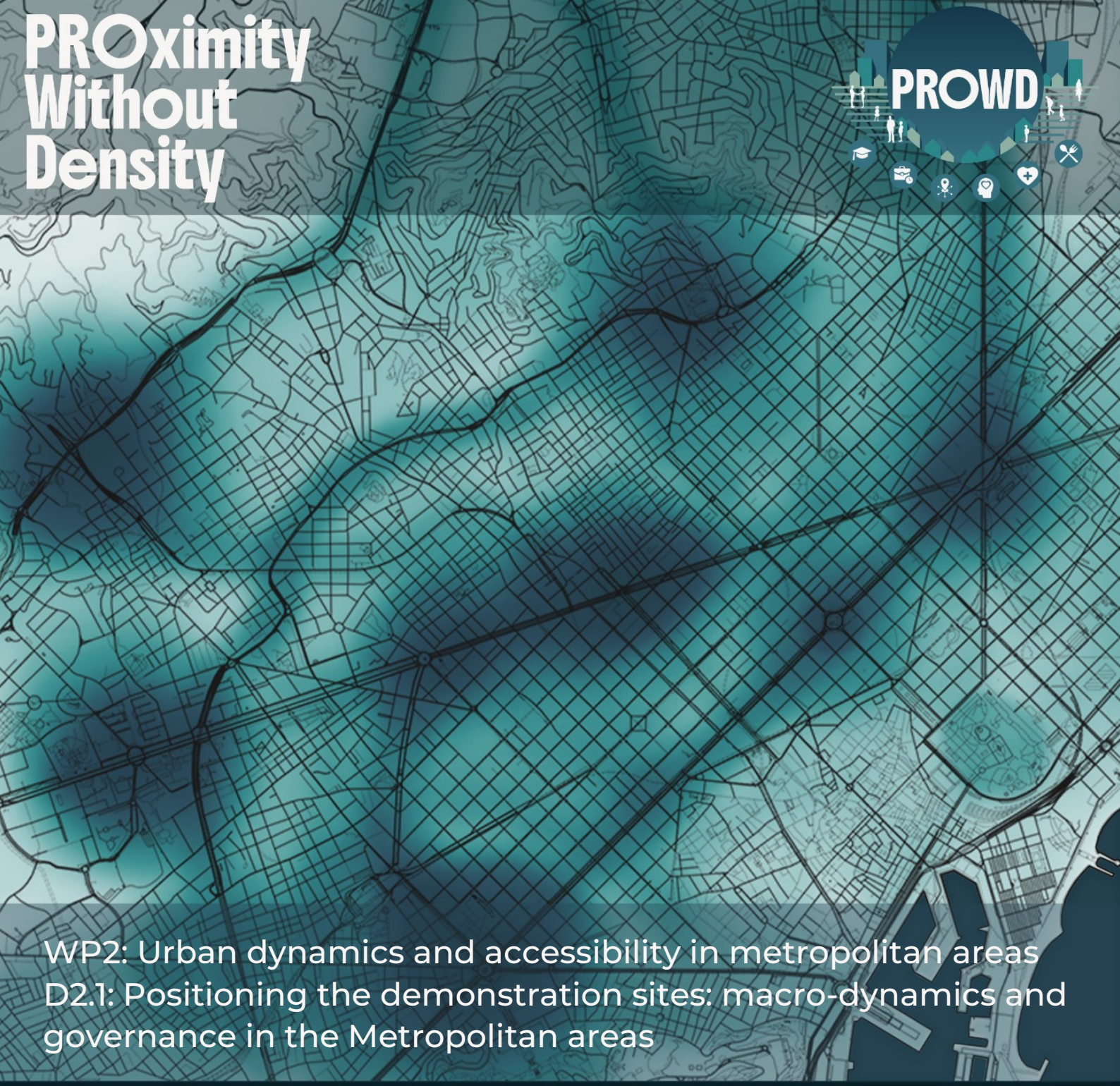
PROximity Without Density

PROWD



WP2: Urban dynamics and accessibility in metropolitan areas
D2.1: Positioning the demonstration sites: macro-dynamics and governance in the Metropolitan areas

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Table of Contents

Introduction

This report is part of Task 2.1 of the PROWD Project. The aim of this task is to assess the governance framework of the four metropolitan areas where the demonstration sites are located – Lisbon, Rome, Bucharest and Vilnius – and to develop a brief description of the of the governance structure and related competences in each area, examining their organization, competences and operation at various levels, including the regional, metropolitan, municipal and sub-municipal scales.

First, typical metropolitan governance structures will be synthesized, followed by an assessment of their main characteristics. Secondly, the main components of the metropolitan governance will be introduced, encapsulating elements such as afferent competences, forms of operation, financing schemes, multi-level relationships and democratic participation in decision-making processes.

The second part of the report presents the four metropolitan case studies in succession. For each area, the analysis explores its institutional framework and governance configuration, outlining the distinctive features that shape metropolitan management and planning. The focus is placed on identifying the organizational models, regulatory frameworks, and key instruments through which metropolitan development and spatial planning are implemented.

Beyond providing a descriptive overview, this report also seeks to position each metropolitan area within the broader PROWD framework, serving as a foundation for subsequent analytical tasks in WP2. Understanding governance structures is essential for interpreting how competences, decision-making, and policy instruments influence accessibility, service provision, and ultimately the capacity of each demonstration site to transition towards a localized, proximity-oriented urban model.

This deliverable contributes to the comparative perspective of PROWD by offering a cross-case understanding of how metropolitan governance mediates urban dynamics in diverse European contexts. The insights derived from this task will inform the rationale for demonstration site selection and support the co-

design of transition pathways in later project stages (WP4), ensuring that local interventions are grounded in an informed understanding of governance realities.

Conceptual Framework

Settlement patterns have changed, with a strong trend toward urbanization. Currently, more than 50% of the world's population lives in cities, a figure expected to reach nearly 70% by 2050 (UN-Habitat, 2022). In Europe, the urban population is estimated to represent approximately 76% of the total population, which demonstrates the huge relevance of the urban areas in the European geographic context (UN, 2024). This has led to the metropolization of large cities, which have expanded beyond their original boundaries into surrounding rural areas. This process has given rise to extensive suburban areas, shaped by both demographic growth and transformations in national economies, particularly the expansion of industrial and service sectors (Salvati & Carlucci, 2017). These new suburban areas are, in most cases, primarily residential in function, while maintaining close ties with urban centres, measured primarily through population mobility flows in a complex system of relationships between centres (Sá Marques et al., 2024). The heavy peri-urban expansion also led to several modifications of the landscape, such as the artificialization of previously natural areas, affecting the agricultural and forest systems (Abrantes et al., 2016). Metropolitan organization, therefore, plays an important role in the territorial governance of Metropolitan Areas, enabling the exploitation of synergies through cooperation between integrated municipalities. In this context, metropolitan governance becomes a key mechanism for coordinating growth, managing shared resources, and addressing the functional interdependencies between urban cores and suburban territories.

Metropolitan regions face numerous challenges at the demographic, economic, social, environmental, and institutional levels. The population living in metropolitan areas is expected to continuously increase by approximately 1 billion people worldwide over the next decade, which will likely lead to differentiated forms of metropolitan growth, with greater densification in some cases and

greater dispersion in others (Metropolis, 2024; UN-Habitat, 2022). The important role of these territories as spaces for production and economic growth is also accompanied by negative externalities, such as high energy consumption and GHG emissions, mainly due to the high dependence on motorized transportation, particularly individual transportation (Metropolis, 2024). Landscape degradation and excessive consumption of natural resources in metropolitan areas also raise sustainability issues in resource management and spatial planning (Jacobi & Peres, 2016), as well as the need to adapt to climate change by defining strategies to mitigate its effects (IPCC, 2022). Disparities in economic growth between agglomerations are also frequent, especially between metropolitan cities and their surrounding areas (Metropolis, 2024; OECD, 2023). This divergence often translates into increased income inequalities, which, when combined with the fragmentation of metropolitan space, makes it more difficult for the population to access essential services and, at the same time, implement social support policies, leading to increased inequalities within metropolitan areas (Arvin et al., 2025; Sá Marques et al., 2024). Furthermore, the governance of metropolitan regions is particularly difficult due to the differences in the organization of power of each country. Additionally, the overlap between government levels and institutions., ranging from national power to regional and local bodies, often leads to failures in action in essential areas such as mobility or territorial infrastructure (Storper, 2014).

Therefore, the adoption of efficient metropolitan governance mechanisms becomes imperative. More than intermunicipal cooperation in certain areas of activity, adopting a holistic perspective in metropolitan management, decentralized from the Central State and tailored to the characteristics of each metropolitan region, is essential to respond to the challenges that characterize these territories (Habitat III, 2017). Thus, the establishment of metropolitan or intermunicipal government institutions is an important support for the creation of an integrated vision for the development of metropolitan territories.

Several types of metropolitan management structures can be defined, as summarized in Metropolis (2024): metropolitan governments, metropolitan sectoral agencies, vertical institutional coordination, and voluntary intermunicipal cooperation. A Metropolitan Government is a multisectoral body

operating at the metropolitan level, designed to meet the needs of the metropolitan territory as a whole, adopting a holistic perspective. This type of organization is common in countries where regional and metropolitan levels of government are provided for by law, with a high level of decentralization from the central government. Single-level Metropolitan Governments, such as Metropolitan Cities, can be structured, as governments formed by the aggregation of multiple local authorities (like the municipalities), or multilevel Metropolitan Governments, consisting of a metropolitan authority and the municipal authorities covered by the Metropolitan Region, without weakening the municipalities' powers (UN-HABITAT, 2020). In this case, it is common for functions to be divided between municipalities and metropolitan regions, with the latter typically responsible for issues of metropolitan interest, such as transportation or infrastructure management (including transport, energy and communication infrastructure), in cooperation with the municipalities. The establishment of Metropolitan Governments is a fairly common practice, as it streamlines policymaking and avoids the frequent duplication of responsibilities by different, overlapping institutions. They also foster intermunicipal cooperation through their representation in metropolitan bodies, such as Metropolitan Councils.

Another form of metropolitan organization is the creation of metropolitan sectoral agencies, responsible for providing specific services such as mobility, energy and sanitation, in order to better respond to the population's needs in a context of metropolization (Rodríguez, 2022). For example, metropolitan transportation or waste management companies are common. This type of organization, despite its efficiency due to better allocation of funds to specific areas, can also lead to disparities in service levels between territories, especially in low-density contexts. This is due to the fragmentation of human settlements which potentially decreases the sustainability of the provided services, an especially prevalent issue in the context of public transport services (Storper, 2014). To address this issue, the existence of a metropolitan governing body, such as a Metropolitan Government responsible for managing these authorities, is crucial. This also implies greater democratic and civic participation, as Metropolitan Governments are elected by the resident population. An example

that will be addressed later is that of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. In this spatial context, the Metropolitan Council, formed by the population-elected mayors of each municipality organizes and supervises the metropolitan sector companies, such as the company responsible for metropolitan mobility (*TML – Transportes Metropolitanos de Lisboa*).

In turn, vertical institutional cooperation does not establish a metropolitan management authority, but rather defines strategies and action plans through metropolitan planning instruments developed by different levels of government, from the Central Government to local authorities, even including the regional level where legally defined. Its operation varies according to each country's level of decentralization. One of the weaknesses of this type of organization is the potential lack of coordination between municipalities, especially when widely varying financial resources limit the provision of quality services throughout the metropolitan area. Poor coordination between power-wielding institutions can also lead to difficulties in implementing actions within the territory with overlapping planning instruments which can lead to internal conflicts.

Beyond formal structures, certain cases exist where intermunicipal cooperation is based on voluntary agreements between municipalities to split responsibilities and strive toward common goals. These scenarios are more commonly found in metropolitan areas undergoing consolidation. This practice is especially useful in the early stages of metropolitan integration, as it does not establish a rigid legal framework to formalize cooperation structures, which are often still incipient (UN-HABITAT, 2020). The existence of a legal framework providing for this type of cooperation is not mandatory, but the formation of an association to formalize agreements and joint service provision is advantageous, as seen in Bucharest Metropolitan Region. In this case, strengthening the municipalities' financial resources is essential, given that they are responsible for structuring shared services, thus avoiding territorial disparities within the Metropolitan Region.

All typologies and forms of metropolitan management present strengths and weaknesses, which make them suitable for different contexts. As such, decisions regarding organizational frameworks should be made based on the

operational needs and tangible needs of each territory. As mentioned in Metropolis (2024), priority should be given to aligning government structures with the dynamics and interrelationships of the various agglomerations that comprise each metropolitan region. This makes balanced, collaborative, and sustainable development of these territories more viable compared to adopting uniform structures that may not be best suited to the specific needs of each territory (*one-size-fits-all*). The same principle should apply to the extent of metropolitan territories themselves, since urban and regional administrative boundaries do not necessarily represent the true range of the functional relationships that urban centres establish with each other. One example is the definition of Functional Urban Areas (FUA), whose scope varies in time and space depending on population flows between territories. The FUAs often extend beyond the boundaries of Metropolitan Areas themselves as seen in Lisbon, where the daily commute of the resident population defines a substantially larger FUA than the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. The forms of operation also vary based on the type of metropolitan government structure and national regulatory frameworks. Metropolitan regions often act as transport authorities, structuring the service within the metropolitan territory using a holistic approach, thereby making it more feasible to provide a cohesive service with fewer disparities between municipalities. Furthermore, in conjunction with the latter and the central government, metropolitan areas can play an important role in territorial infrastructure development, particularly in the management and planning of the structural road, water supply and sanitation networks, along with the waste collection system (ESPON, 2021).

When studying metropolitan governance mechanisms, one of the frequently brought up questions pertains to multilevel cooperation, between metropolitan authorities and the central government or between them and the municipalities they cover, based on the type of structure in place. The level of decentralization varies considerably among countries, and metropolitan governance benefits significantly from political and administrative decentralization policies—that is, from the capacity metropolitan authorities have to make decisions and implement planned actions within the territory, without excessive dependence on the central government (Tolki & Haveri, 2020). It is

important to strive for a balance of power between the state and local authorities so that a more democratic metropolitan governance process can be reached, with direct alignment to local interests. At the same time, the definition of development strategies and the development of programs and plans must include the participation of various levels of government, not only to direct local policies toward national and regional strategies, but also to allow greater participation of local authorities in the development of policies at higher levels of government.

This issue is directly related to the importance of democratic representation and citizen participation in metropolitan planning processes. The different types of metropolitan structures should include representatives from all municipalities, who are, in turn, elected by resident citizens, ensuring effective democratic representation of the various nuclei that constitute a metropolitan region. Mobilizing civil society to participate in decision-making processes and cooperation between the public and private sectors also constitutes a way to strengthen democracy in metropolitan governance (Plüss, 2015). Furthermore, principles of transparency and provision of information to stakeholders should be defined for effective citizen participation (UN-Habitat, 2017).

Another key component is financing, as the financial resources of metropolitan authorities directly impact their capacity for intervention and service provision. Once again, the importance of decentralizing and empowering local authorities in managing financial resources and defining how to acquire them is evident (Trejo-Nieto, 2021). Funding sources are diverse, ranging from shares of state budgets, contributions from member municipalities, local taxes and fees, participation in national or community funding projects, along with revenues from services provided by metropolitan entities, such as public transportation (UN-Habitat, 2017). Depending on the operational levels of metropolitan areas, state compensation may be established to cover the operation of public services, particularly public transportation, thus ensuring their sustainability. However, it is important to establish clear financing mechanisms and to avoid significant discrepancies between municipalities and different levels of government, a common problem in several metropolitan areas (Trejo-Nieto, 2021; UN-Habitat, 2017).

Case Studies

The selected demonstration sites are characterized by different forms of organization and metropolitan governance (Figure 1). All of them are composed of a main urban core and progressively larger peripheral areas, generally with low population densities, and different levels of access to essential needs and amenities such as shopping, education, health, employment, mobility or culture. For each demonstration site, the metropolitan governance institutions and other relevant administrative levels will be presented, along with their competencies, organization, financing, and territorial operating modes, with a focus on sustainable mobility policies.

Beyond the institutional structures, each demonstration site presents unique socio-spatial characteristics that influence the implementation of PROWD's approach. These include variations in settlement patterns, population density, land use, and the distribution of public and private services. In particular, peripheral areas often face challenges related to car dependency, fragmented service provision, and limited accessibility for vulnerable groups, including the elderly, children, and newcomers. Understanding these local specificities is crucial for designing tailored interventions that strengthen social proximity, enhance connectivity, and support community-driven initiatives in low-density contexts.

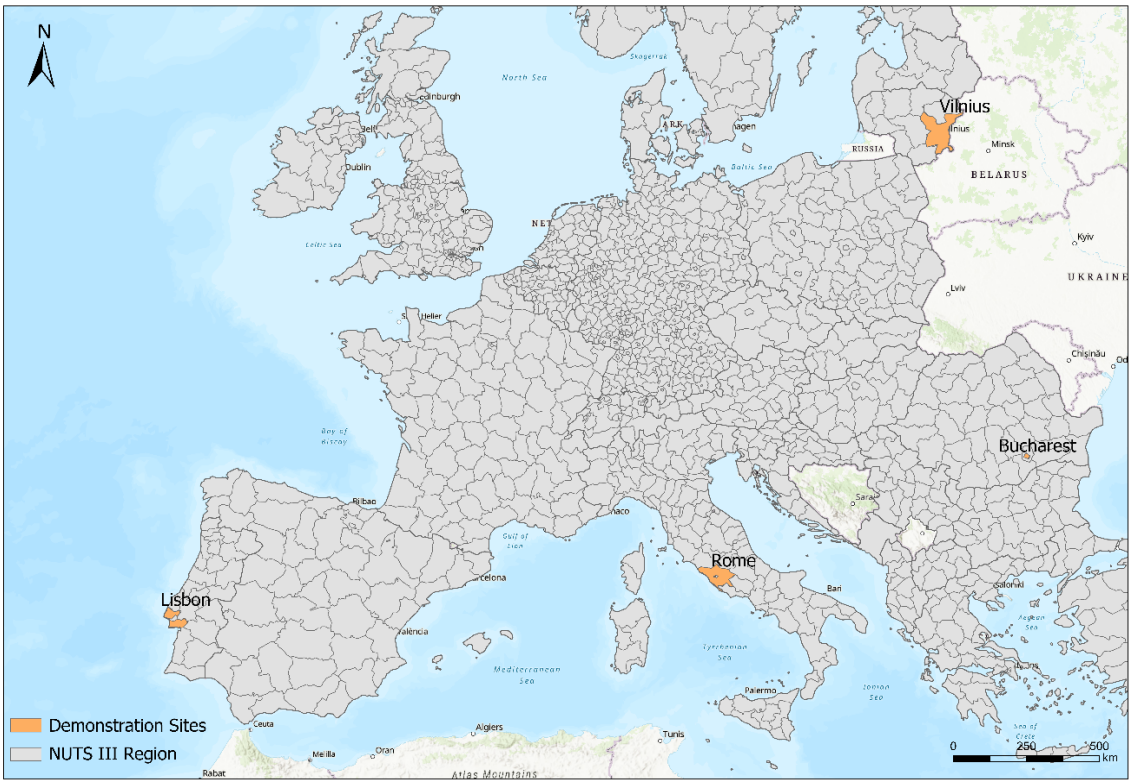

Figure 1 – PROWD Demonstration Sites

Lisbon

The Lisbon Metropolitan Area encompasses the NUTS III Grande Lisboa and NUTS III Península de Setúbal (Figure 2). It had 2 870 208 inhabitants (2 062 306 in Grande Lisboa and 807 902 in Península de Setúbal) and a population density of 951,9 hab/km^2, in 2021, with a significant growth of its resident population since 2001 (7,83%), when the value was of 2 661 850 habitants (INE, 2021). Its development stemmed from urban growth beyond the original boundaries of the city of Lisbon, particularly from the second half of the 20th century onwards, taking advantage of the development of radial railway axes towards Sintra, Cascais, and Vila Franca de Xira. In 2018, the urban area occupies a total of 472,22 km2, growing by 6.30% since 2001 (Copernicus, 2018) However, the compact urbanization model along the railway axes has been changing to a radio-concentric model, composed of multiple urban centres, with some polarizing capacity, but still maintaining a strong relationship of functional dependence with the city of Lisbon, particularly

in terms of employment, services, and specialized facilities (Marques da Costa, 2016). Effectively, approximately 30% of the trips made in context of work or study from the LMA in 2021 had Lisbon as its destination, which reinforces the important polarizing role of the city of Lisbon.

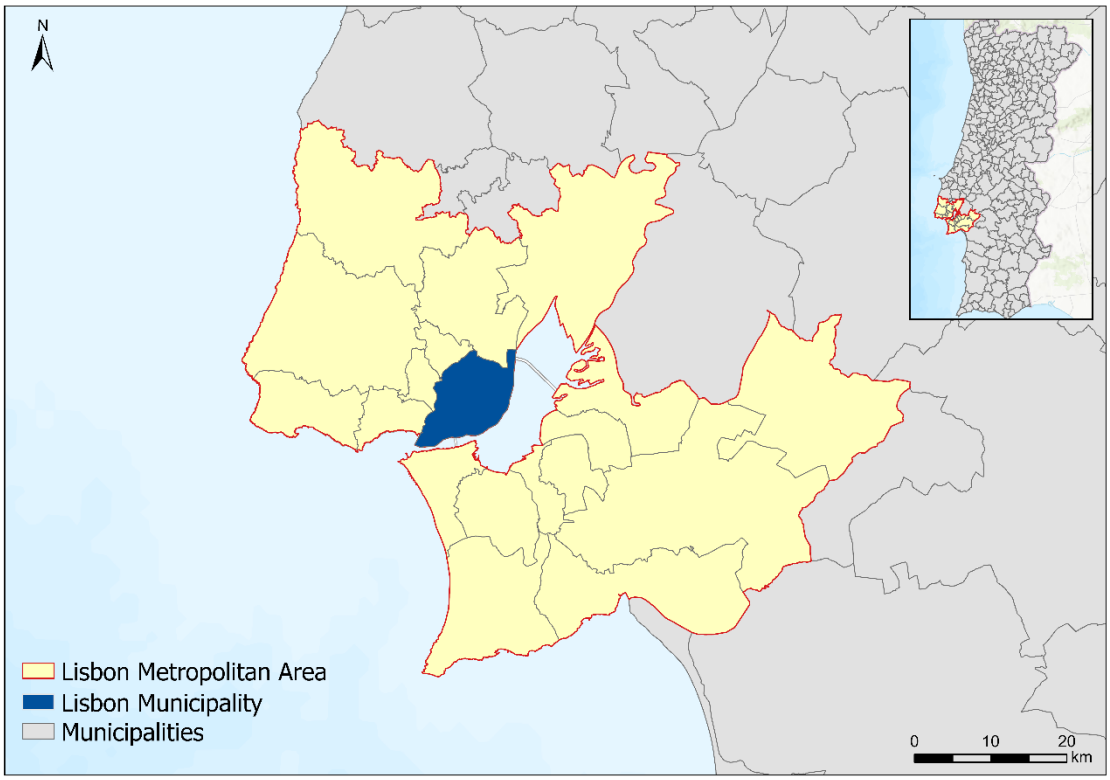

Figure 2 – Lisbon Metropolitan Area

In Lisbon, a metropolitan government solution has been adopted with the creation of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA), a public association with territorial scope composed of the municipalities of Alcochete, Almada, Amadora, Barreiro, Cascais, Lisbon, Loures, Mafra, Moita, Montijo, Odivelas, Oeiras, Palmela, Seixal, Sesimbra, Setúbal, Sintra, and Vila Franca de Xira. It was created by Law No. 75/2013 of September 12, which establishes the legal framework for local authorities, approves the statute for intermunicipal entities, establishes the legal framework for the transfer of powers from the State to local authorities and intermunicipal entities, and approves the legal framework for municipal

associations. The LMA's are subdivided into 81 parishes (*Freguesias,* LAU), with attributions related to local population.

Some of its main responsibilities, according to Law 75/2013, are 1) Participate in the development of public investment plans and programs focused on the Lisbon Metropolitan Area; 2) Promote the planning and management of the territory's economic, social, and environmental development strategy; 3) Coordinate metropolitan municipal investments; 4) Participate in the management of regional development support programs, especially within the scope of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF); 5) Participate, as required by law, in the definition of metropolitan-wide service and equipment networks; 6) Participate in metropolitan-wide public entities, especially in the fields of transportation, water, energy, and solid waste treatment; 7) Plan the activities of metropolitan-wide public entities; 8) Coordinate actions between municipalities and the central administration in various areas, such as public water supply, sanitation, and waste treatment networks; healthcare equipment networks; education; land use planning, nature conservation, and natural resource protection; in security and civil protection; in mobility and transportation; in public equipment networks; in the promotion of economic and social development; in the network of cultural, sports and leisure facilities. LMA is member of *METREX - The Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas*.

1.1 Organization

The Governing Bodies of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA) are the Metropolitan Council, the Metropolitan Executive Commission and the Strategic Council for the Metropolitan Development (Law n° 75/2013). There are also metropolitan services who are responsible for supporting the operationalization of metropolitan competences in an effective and planned manner, along with a set of thematic workgroups to support the activities of the Metropolitan Council and the Metropolitan Executive Committee (Figure 3). Their composition, forms of election and main attributions are described in Table 1.

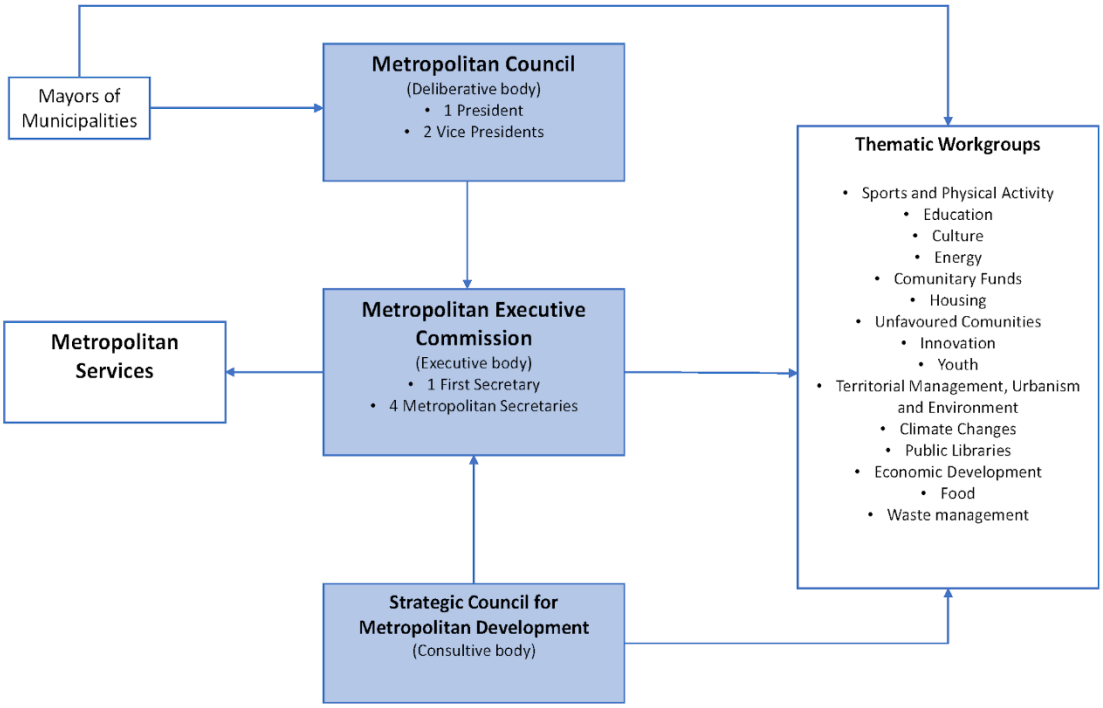

Figure 3 – Organigram of LMA

Table 1: Governing bodies of LMA, composition, forms of election and main attributions.

Governing Body	Main attributions
Metropolitan Council – deliberative body of LMA. Composed of the Presidents 18 Municipal Chambers of the municipalities that constitute it. It meets regularly once a month.	• Its own management and ensuring its proper functioning; • Defining the strategic guidelines for the LMA; • Approving the LMA Action Plan; • Approving development plans and programs of metropolitan interest; • Overseeing the activities of the Metropolitan Executive Committee and other entities and companies within the local administration;

	• Authorizing the execution of delegation of powers agreements with states and municipalities; • Authorizing the LMA to associate with other public, private, or social and cooperative sector entities, to create or participate in other legal entities, and to establish local companies; • Monitoring the LMA's activities and evaluating their respective results in local companies or other entities in which the LMA holds a stake; • Approving the creation or reorganization of metropolitan services; • Authorize the Metropolitan Executive Committee to enter into service concession contracts after public bidding; and decide on LMA's participation in decentralized cooperation projects and actions.
Metropolitan Executive Committee – executive body of the LMA. Composed of a first secretary and four metropolitan secretaries, elected by the members of all Municipal Assemblies that comprise the LMA by secret ballot . The lists are submitted to and approved by the Metropolitan Council and elected by an absolute majority. The votes cast by each Municipal Council are weighted according to the size of the respective municipality in terms of number of voters.	• Developing and submitting to the Metropolitan Council the plans necessary to fulfil metropolitan responsibilities; • Proposing to the Government investment and development plans, programs, and projects of metropolitan interest; • Providing opinions on central administration plans and programs of metropolitan interest; • Ensuring coordination between municipalities and central administration services;

The committee meets regularly every fortnight.	• Participating in the management of regional development programs and submitting applications for funding through programs, projects, and other initiatives; • Developing and submitting to the Metropolitan Council the action plan and budget proposal, as well as any amendments and revisions thereto; • Implementing the plan and budget options; • Approving projects, bidding programs, specifications, and the awarding of works and the acquisition of goods and services, for which the authority is responsible; • Authorizing expenditures; • Proposing to the Metropolitan Council the representative of the metropolitan region at the general assembly of local companies, as well as their representatives in any other entities, bodies, or committees in which the metropolitan region participates, regardless of whether they are part of the local administration; • Collaborating in supporting programs and projects of metropolitan interest, in partnership with central government entities; • Acquiring and leasing goods and services; • Proposing the declaration of public utility for expropriation purposes; • Developing projects to support municipal management;

	• Managing metropolitan services; • Discussing and preparing delegation of authority contracts with government departments and municipal councils, under the terms provided for in this law; • Proposing to the Metropolitan Council the establishment of the entity managing the requalification of local government agencies.
Strategic Council for Metropolitan Development – advisory board Composed of representatives of institutions, entities and organizations with relevance and involvement in metropolitan interests.	• Supporting the decision-making process of the other LMA governing bodies.

1.2 Operative

1.1.2.1. Planning

The Lisbon Metropolitan Area handles its strategic planning responsibilities through a set of thematic instruments, which establish guidelines for territorial development in coordination with municipalities as well as with the Lisbon and Tagus Valley Region and the Central Government.

In the mobility sector, the Action Plan for Sustainable Urban Mobility of the LMA (PAMUS-LMA) stands out. This plan was developed in 2016 with the aim of assessing mobility in the municipalities of the LMA across various thematic areas. Its objectives further include the development of future scenarios and objectives, along with the outlining of a metropolitan strategy for sustainable mobility. Through its alignment with the investment priorities established by the Strategic Urban Development Plans (PEDU), the strategy enables the formulation of intervention proposals and the definition of an action plan. It has undergone several revisions since its creation.

Three scenarios were built in PAMUS-LMA: a business-as-usual scenario, an optimistic scenario, and a baseline scenario. The business-as-usual scenario consists of maintaining the trends identified in the diagnostic phase, such as population growth in the metropolitan areas (especially in the Northern LMA), concentration of economic activities along the current structural road axes, continued imbalances observed in the current territorial model (peri-urban expansion and difficulty in consolidating new centralities and dynamic urban subsystems), excessive dependence on automobiles, and difficulty in maintaining a sustainable public transportation service in areas with lower population density.

In turn, the optimistic scenario reflects a paradigm shift, with greater balance in the distribution of the resident population and economic activities, potentially resulting in shorter commuting distances. A change in the urban system is also expected through the strengthening of other urban centres with the capacity to polarize people and activities in a polycentric way, the greater penetration of alternative energy vehicles, as well as through an improvement in the national economic and financial situation of the LMA institutions, enabling a reinforcement of the metropolitan financing from the central state, especially focusing on public transportation.

Finally, the reference scenario foresees a slight decrease in the population of the LMA, the consolidation of networks of regional hubs with high economic specialization and the consequent increase in qualified employment throughout the area. Additionally, it aims for the reinforcement of polycentrism, with the city of Lisbon as the central element and a network of functionally autonomous urban subsystems, in accordance with the recommendations of the Regional Territorial Planning Program of Lisbon Metropolitan Area (PROT-AML). In a similar fashion, the reference scenario reinforces the implementation financing of structuring projects for the transport network, thereby allowing an improvement in its quality, efficiency and competitiveness.

Building on the diagnosis and vision recommended for the LMA, PAMUS-LMA defines a mobility planning and management strategy based on five strategic axes: 1) Strengthen the intermodality of the transportation system; 2) Strengthen the connectivity of the road network and modernize the metropolitan

rail network; 3) Increase the use of active mobility, like walking or cycling; 4) Implement mobility management measures; 5) Improve the performance of the urban logistics system.

PAMUS-LMA also provides for the development of Sustainable Mobility Plans on a regional and sub-regional scale, so that the strategic guidelines defined on a metropolitan scale can be better adjusted to the reality of each municipality. Therefore, it is recommended that all municipalities develop their own Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (PMUS), an example followed by the Municipalities of Lisbon, Sintra, Cascais, Oeiras, Loures or Mafra.

In parallel, the development of the Metropolitan Plan for Sustainable Urban Mobility (PMMUS) has started, with objectives centering around the defining and promoting of a metropolitan mobility policy context better adapted to the current needs of the population and the complex transport system of the AML region. The PMMUS further aims to promote sustainability, modal shift, energy transition, equity in access to transportation, multimodal integration and greater public participation in decision-making. Sections of the document have already been published, including the strategic vision and strategic objectives which include the improvement of public transport user experience, the optimization of its regular service, and the increase of its capacity. Additional targets encapsulate the exploration of new solutions for flexible transportation, the promotion of the energy transition, the rationalization of private automobile usage and the adoption of smart mobility solutions (TML, 2025).

Within the scope of sustainable urban mobility, the Lisbon 2030 Regional Operational Program highlights the priority *2B – Urban Mobility: accelerating decarbonization by promoting sustainable urban mobility*. This priority recognizes the profound transformations of the LMA urban system over the years and the consequent changes in commuting patterns and distances. The goal is to significantly reduce GHG emissions from the transportation sector, particularly through intermodality, decarbonization, and the promotion of soft modes for short-distance trips. Actions to promote sustainable multimodal urban mobility are therefore planned, including promoting the use of public transportation, creating *Low Emission Zones* (LEZ) in urban areas, adapting traffic routes to

prioritize public transportation, investing in traffic and parking management and control systems, and building *Park&Ride* parking lots at major transportation hubs in suburban areas of the LMA, digitizing metropolitan mobility services, and focusing on actions to promote active mobility (Lisboa 2030, 2021).

Considering that the LMA occupies a large part of the territory of the Lisbon and Tagus Valley Region, it is important to look at the LMA Regional Spatial Planning Program (PROT-AML). As its revision process is not concluded yet, the original version, from 2002, remains active. It defines the strategic guidelines for the development of the LMA, establishes the territorial model, identifies the main systems and networks of intra- and inter-regional articulation, and identifies the main areas of action and identifies actions and investments to be carried out, in various domains. PROT-AML's fundamental objective is to consolidate the Lisbon Metropolitan Area as a hub of high productivity, knowledge and innovation at national and European level, as well as to make AML an attractive place to live, work and visit (CCDR-LVT, 2002). To this end, it proposes strategic actions aimed at economic qualification and specialization, urban rehabilitation and regeneration of degraded areas, strengthening internal and external accessibility, promoting properly planned urban areas, avoiding excessive territorial fragmentation in peri-urban areas, contributing to social cohesion, increasing tourism, and strengthening the productive system. Among the measures, the promotion of job creation in suburban areas, especially in the trade and services sector, and the promotion of a local lifestyle in these areas stand out, reducing the need for long commutes.

1.1.2.2. Functions

The LMA functions as the metropolitan transport authority under Decree-Law No. 52/2015, which approves the Legal Framework for the Public Passenger Transport Service (RJSPTP). Its responsibilities include defining the strategic objectives of the mobility system and planning, organizing, operating, assigning, monitoring, investing, financing, promoting, and developing public passenger transport services by road, river, rail, and other guided systems. The RJSPTP decentralized responsibilities previously held by the Institute for Mobility and

Transport *[Instituto da Mobilidade e dos Transportes – IMT*] to local authorities (the municipalities, in the majority of situations) and metropolitan areas.

These functions are performed by Lisbon Metropolitan Transports [*TML – Transportes Metropolitanos de Lisboa*], a company established by LMA in 2021. TML acts as a transportation authority in the LMA territory, with responsibilities including organizing and planning the public passenger transportation network; operating it, or granting it to public service operators through the execution of public service contracts; determining public service obligations to ensure minimum transportation supply thresholds throughout its geographical area; investing in public passenger transportation networks and equipment; financing the public passenger transportation service, its infrastructure and equipment, and the public service obligations imposed on contracted operators, as well as compensation for the operation of the public transportation service and the provision of reduced-cost social tariffs, as determined by the transportation authority; determining the current tariff regimes; receiving compensation for the operation of the public passenger transportation service; overseeing and monitoring the service; conducting mobility surveys within LMA; promoting the adoption of transportation planning instruments within LMA; and the promotion of the public passenger transport service (AML, 2025).

There are some exceptions to TML's exercise of power as the transport authority. The State is the competent transport authority for the river public transport service (concessioned to the internal operators *Transtejo – Transportes do Tejo, S.A.* and *Soflusa – Sociedade Fluvial de Transportes, S.A.*). Responsibility for the Lisbon bus, tram, and metro services (*CARRIS – Companhia dos Carris de Ferro de Lisboa, S.A.* and *Metropolitano de Lisboa, E.P.E.*) was transferred from the State to the Lisbon Municipality (CML) in 2017, which acts as its own transport municipality similarly to the Barreiro and Cascais municipalities, although these municipalities integrate the fare and ticketing metropolitan system (AML, 2025).

Some of the TML's major areas of actuation are the organization of the public transport network in the LMA and the fixation of the travelling fees for the users (in this case at an operational level, regarding the Government orientations on this matter). Since 2019, under the Tariff Reduction Support Program

(*Programa de Apoio à Redução Tarifária - PART*) defined by the Portuguese Government, the LMA has simplified the tariff system in force in its territory, reducing the price of monthly transport tickets. There are now two tariffs: the *Navegante Metropolitano* with a price of€40, which allows travel throughout the LMA on all services under the responsibility of the LMA or local authorities; and the *Navegante Municipal*, with a price of €30, which allows travel within the respective municipality, on operators that operate their service primarily within it (Art. 3rd and 4th of Regulation No. 278-A/2019).

Subsequently, TML launched the International Public Tender for Public Passenger Transportation Services in the LMA, which was won by the operators *Viação Alvorada, Rodoviária de Lisboa, Transportes Sul do Tejo* (TST), and *Alsa Todi*. These companies began working under a common brand created by TML: *Carris Metropolitana*, marked by a thorough overhaul of the LMA bus network, increased service frequency and reliability, and the renewal of the bus fleet. *Carris Metropolitana* became responsible for operating the public passenger bus service throughout the LMA, with the exception of routes allocated to municipal operators (AML, 2025).

As the metropolitan transport authority, TML is responsible for planning and optimizing metropolitan transport services, as well as coordinating with other transport authorities for services that connect it to adjacent geographic areas. In this context, contracts for the organization of interregional public passenger transport services were signed between LMA and the Intermunicipal Communities of Alentejo Litoral, Lezíria do Tejo, Alto Alentejo, Alentejo Central, Oeste, and Médio Tejo. This reveals an adequate horizontal coordination between local authorities, which has increased the quality and the level of the mobility service between Lisbon and adjacent cities and villages like Torres Vedras, Caldas da Rainha, Santarém or Benavente. In return, the good accessibility to Lisbon and the resulting intensification of the commuting movements enable the increasing integration of the aforementioned areas in the Lisbon Functional Area.

Public passenger transportation service planning should consider the principles of the right to transportation and equal opportunities for citizens to access various goods and services in their area of residence. Thus, the LMA may

also define minimum levels of passenger transportation service, appropriate to demand. In these cases, different operating methods may be adopted, such as flexible public passenger transportation services (like *Demand-Responsive Transport*) or, in very specific cases, providing transport by taxi (when potential demand for the service proves insufficient to guarantee its financial sustainability), as provided in the Article 34th of the RJSPTP.

1.3 Multi-Level Relationships

The LMA has been marked by a growing relationship with various administrative levels, from the central government to local authorities. There has been a concern to maintain high coherence between national strategic planning instruments, such as the National Programme of Spatial Planning Policy, the Portugal 2030 Strategy or the National Investment Plan 2030, which are essential for defining the guidelines for national development and establishing national and community funding, and metropolitan policies, despite the relatively limited influence of metropolitan and municipal policies in defining the national strategy (ESPON, 2021). However, it is worth noting the LMA's lack of formal participation in the development of national strategic documents, such as Portugal 2020, despite the increased levels of decentralization with the establishment of Integrated Territorial Development Strategies (EIDT). This demonstrates the still incipient relationship between metropolitan regions and the Central Government, although its growth is visible (ESPON, 2021).

At a regional level, it is worth highlighting the active and involved participation of the LMA in the preparation of the Lisbon 2030 Regional Strategy, led by the Lisbon and Tagus Valley Regional Coordination and Development Commission (CCDR-LVT), a document that gave rise to the Lisbon 2030 Regional Operational Programme, mentioned above.

At the municipal level, the contribution of LMA municipalities to metropolitan management is clear, given the fact that it is a public association composed of 18 municipalities, represented in the Metropolitan Council.

1.4 Financing

The basis of LMA's regular funding is made up of contributions from the State and the 18 afferent municipalities, totalling €2 million. Municipalities are expected to cover 50% of the regular contributions (AML, 2025).

Another significant portion of LMA's funding comes from community funds, particularly from Cohesion Policy. The LMA's community funding framework for the 2021-2027 period is established by the Lisbon 2030 Regional Program, with a total allocation of €381 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), contributing to the implementation of cohesion policy in LMA within the same timeframe. The funds are distributed across four areas of action (AML, 2025):

1. Innovation and Competitiveness – Strengthening regional economic competitiveness supported by knowledge and innovation (€170 million);

2. Social Inclusion – Promoting the ecological transition and climate resilience (€55.9 million);

3. Sustainability and resilience – Promoting social inclusion and equal opportunities (€95.4 million);

4. Urban development – Promoting transformative change and the city within (€47.5 million).

Furthermore, the Environmental Fund is also an important source of funding, as it is responsible for compensating the implementation of the PART in the LMA, contributing €73 million to its implementation in 2019.

Rome

The city of Rome is the political and administrative capital of Italy, counting with 2 751 747 residents in its municipality in 2025 with a population density of approximately 2 140 hab/km2. Demographic trend-wise, Rome has registered a slight decrease of -0,183% since 2011 (ISTAT, 2025) (Figure 4). The growth of the city

was no exception to the suburbanization pattern of Mediterranean cities. Expansion into the surrounding areas occurred rapidly, especially at the end of the 20th century, coinciding with the exodus of population from the historic centre, creating low-density urban agglomerations in a fragmented and dispersed pattern, increasingly distant from the centre (Salvati, 2015). This growth of residential areas was not accompanied by adequate economic development in these areas, resulting in continued dependence on the city of Rome for access to employment and various services.

In this context, the Italian constitution has provided, since 2014, for the creation of Metropolitan Cities (*Citta Metropolitana,* NUTS III) as a subdivision of the Regions (*Regioni,* NUTS II), together with the Provinces (*Provinci*, NUTS III), which can serve as an articulation between the regional and local levels (Lucarelli, 2015). The Metropolitan City of Rome Capital (*Citta Metropolitana di Roma Capitale* - CMRC) is composed of the City of Rome (headquarters of the Metropolitan Region) and 120 surrounding suburban municipalities (*Comuni,* LAU), coinciding with the territory of the Province of Rome. It holds distinct responsibilities from those of the Metropolitan Regions (Figure 2). Its statutes are governed by Law No. 56 of April 7, 2014, also called *Delrio Law*, which extinguished the Provinces and established the metropolitan cities, with a strategic role in territorial development and in infrastructure management at a metropolitan scale. In 2025, the Metropolitan City of Rome had approximately 4 223 885 residents, making it the most populated metropolitan area in Italy (Istat, 2025), with a growth of 1,67% since 2011. It has approximately 537,151 km2 of urban areas, with a growth of 8,62% since 2000 (Copernicus, 2018). CMRC is a member of *METREX – The Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas.*

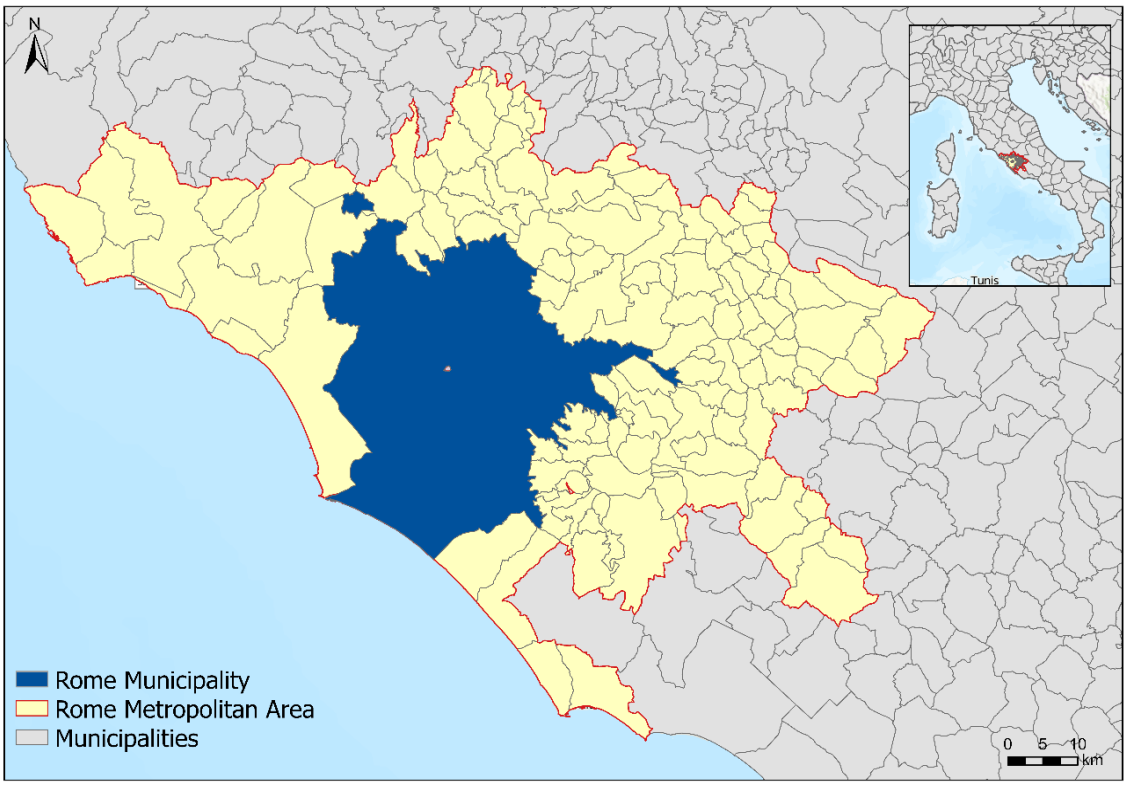

Figure 4 – Rome Metropolitan Area

The Metropolitan City of Rome's fundamental responsibilities include promoting the strategic development of the metropolitan region, managing, in an integrated manner with the municipalities, the services, infrastructure and communications networks within the metropolitan area, and ensuring institutional relations between the metropolitan region and the different government bodies, as well as with other cities and metropolitan regions in Europe. The Metropolitan Region must develop a Strategic Metropolitan Development Plan every three years, integrating the functions of the Region and the Municipalities. It also acts as the oversight body for each municipality's land use policies, ensuring their integration (CMRC, 2020).

The competencies of Metropolitan City of Rome are divided into the following groups: 1) Institutional activity and transparency; 2) Institutional organization; 3) Budget and taxes; 4) Mobility, transportation, and traffic; 5) Agriculture, hunting, and fishing; 6) Territory and environment; 7) Public contracts and services; 8) Associations, education, culture, and tourism (CMRC, 2020).

1.1 Organization

The organizational structure of the Metropolitan Area of Rome is established by Part III of the Statutes, with the bodies being the Metropolitan Council, the Metropolitan Conference and the Metropolitan Mayor, with their functions being established by its Statutes (CMRC, 2014). There are also several departments, divided by thematic responsibilities (Figure 5).

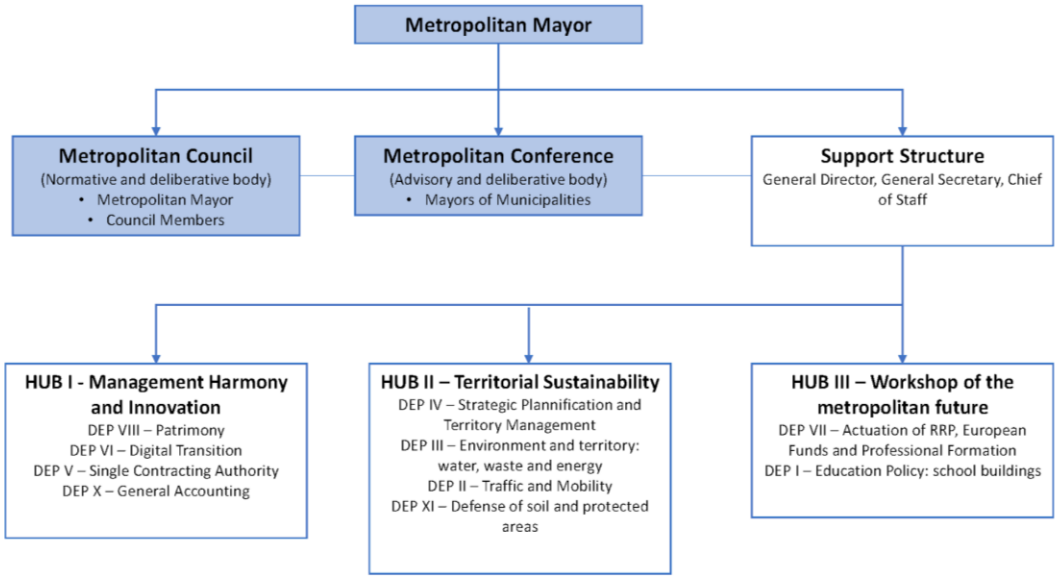

Figure 5 – Organigram of CMRC

The composition, forms of election and main attributions of the governing bodies are described in Table 2.

Table 2: Governing bodies of CMRC, composition, forms of election and main attributions.

Governing Body	Main attributions
Metropolitan mayor – responsible for the administration of the CMRC.	• Convening the Council and the Conference, the bodies over which he or she presides;

Elected by direct universal suffrage for five-year terms.	• Deliberating on the organization of services in the Metropolitan Region; • Overseeing service activities; • Approving administrative acts not within the purview of the Council or the Conference.
Metropolitan Council – normative and deliberative body of the CMRC. Chaired by the Metropolitan Mayor and composed of council members, in number established by law. The Council members are elected by direct universal suffrage for five-years terms.	• Propose the Metropolitan Region's bylaws and amendments to them to the Metropolitan Conference; • Approve the plans and programs applicable to the Metropolitan Region; • Approve, upon proposal by the Metropolitan Mayor, the budget proposal to be submitted to the Metropolitan Conference for review; • Adopt general guidelines regarding the Metropolitan Region's activities, particularly its role in promoting and coordinating socioeconomic development strategies; • Adopt, after consulting the Conference, general guidelines and ensure the management of metropolitan mobility and public services of general interest; • Adopt taxation measures within metropolitan jurisdiction and charge for the use of goods and services; • Approve, after review by the Conference, agreements and arrangements between the Metropolitan Region and its constituent municipalities, as well as the Metropolitan Region's participation and various forms of associations, including

	with municipalities outside its geographic scope; • Deliberate on companies controlled, wholly owned, or subsidized by the Metropolitan Region; • Approve the Strategic Plan, the Metropolitan Mobility Plan, the Waste Management Plan and the General Territorial Plan.
Metropolitan Conference – advisory and deliberative body of the CMRC. Chaired by the Metropolitan Mayor and composed of the Mayors of Metropolitan Region Municipalities.	• Approving the statuses and statutory amendments of CMRC; • Approving, with the votes representing one-third of the Municipalities included in CMRC and the majority of the total resident population, the regulation to govern its functioning; • Supporting the decision-making process of the other LMA governing bodies, in planning instruments like the metropolitan strategic plan, metropolitan territorial plan, metropolitan mobility plan, waste management plan and the promotion of economic and social development; • Commenting and advising guidance acts and general-content acts related to mobility and road systems, to coordinated management systems for public services of metropolitan interests, to participation of CMRC in associations and agreements with municipalities outside its territory, to companies controlled by CMRC and

	dependent entities, subsidized entities or those under CMRC's supervision; • Expressing a reasoned opinion on the programmatic guidelines presented by the Metropolitan Mayor.

1.2 Operative

The CMRC operationalizes its role of metropolitan planning and management through a set of Plans and Programmes.

The General Provincial Territorial Plan designs development and indicates the priorities that will inspire the planning choices of the 121 municipalities of the metropolitan area. It aims to promote the sustainable and polycentric development of the metropolitan territory, by organizing it as a system composed of human settlements and functional components of different hierarchical levels but connected with dynamic relationships between them. It also aims to increase the collaboration between the municipalities, and between them and the Metropolitan Area, further encouraging citizenship participation in decision-making processes.

The Metropolitan Strategic Plan establishes the strategic guidelines for the development of the Metropolitan Region and its member municipalities, identifying the main areas and scopes of intervention, as well as the resources necessary for implementing the strategy. The Plan is reviewed every three years and prioritizes vertical integration of policies (coordination between different administrative levels), appropriately aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The first Strategic Plan was approved in 2022 for the 2022-2024 period, with a focus on three fundamental pillars: Innovation, Sustainability, and Inclusion.

Regarding mobility, the Strategic Plan aims to consolidate an efficient and safe public transportation network covering the entire territory, avoiding the marginalization of certain municipalities in access to public transportation, and the energy transition in the transportation sector, as well as reducing

dependence on private cars. Some strategic and operational actions include promoting the concentration and diversification of functions within the territory, combating urban sprawl, fostering the role of railway stations as hubs for housing and services, with railways assuming a structuring role in the mobility of people and goods. Furthermore, it proposes a careful analysis of service levels in low-density areas and supports solution development to make them both sustainable and tailored to the needs of the population (flexible mobility solutions). The Plan also focuses on improving highway safety conditions and reducing accidents, improving intermodality supported by the digitalization of service management, strengthening local public transportation services, adopting a hierarchical logic between modes, improving public information, and adopting urban traffic management systems to prioritize public transportation. It also aims to digitally transition the transportation system, specifically by replacing obsolete technology and improving user experience. With an objective of promoting proximity mobility, the Strategic Plan aims to improve the pedestrian and cycling network by building new routes connecting existing ones, improving safety conditions, and investing in shared mobility services (such as bike-sharing). It also addresses urban logistics and the need to increase its efficiency and to reduce its negative externalities. The Strategic Plan also considers the development of suburban areas through urban rehabilitation, increasing the proportion of public housing at controlled costs, directing neighbourhood units towards soft transport modes, developing local commerce and services, and fostering a sense of community and integration, in line with the principles of the Sustainable Community.

In the field of mobility, the Metropolitan Sustainable Mobility Plan (MSUMP) of Metropolitan Rome, approved in 2024, has been developed under the Ministerial Decree Number 397, of 4th August 2017, which entrusts metropolitan cities and provides the guidelines for access to state infrastructure funding for new mass rapid transport interventions such as metropolitan rail, metro and tram systems. It aims to improve quality of life by promoting a sustainable, inclusive and efficient transport system. It ensures equitable access to services, enhances safety, reduces emissions and energy use, and supports the efficient movement of people and goods, strengthening both environmental performance and

territorial attractiveness. The Sustainable Mobility Plan also aims to develop an organic vision to integrate the centripetal force of Rome with the different contexts and needs of the metropolitan municipalities. It seeks to build a system of efficient and resilient mobility networks capable of connecting each settlement with others from the Metropolitan Area. Its general objectives and specific strategies are summarized in the following table (Table 3).

Table 3 – Goals and Strategies of the MSUMP of CMRC. Source: CMCR (2024).

Metropolitan Sustainable Mobility Plan of Rome	
General Objectives	Specific Strategies
Accessibility - Ensure accessibility to the mobility of people and goods in a fair and inclusive manner	• Improvement of accessibility for people and goods; • Increase the infrastructure supply for public transport; • Reduction of the congestion; • Development of the smart mobility; • Improve social inclusion (physical-ergonomic accessibility); • Increase in employment rate.
Efficiency - Developing a sustainable and efficient metropolitan mobility system	• Improve public transport; • Modal rebalancing of mobility; • Improve the quality of the road and urban space; • Improve the attractiveness of the active mobility; • Improve the intermodality with public transport. • Increase widespread sustainability.
Development - Promote local development by increasing economic competitiveness and environmental sustainability	• Improve the integration between mobility system development and land use and development (residential development and urban planning for commercial, cultural, and tourist attractions);

	• Improve the attractiveness of the shared mobility; • Development of slow tourism; • Increase citizen satisfaction.
Liveability – Improve the quality of live and of the urban environment	• Improve the accessibility for people and goods; • Reduce the consumption of traditional fuels other than alternative fuels; • Improve the air quality; • Mitigate the effects of the sound pollution; • Reduction in mobility spending (related to the need to use a private vehicle).
Security - Making urban mobility safer to protect people and vehicles	• Reduce the road sinistrality; • Significant decrease in the overall number of accidents resulting in deaths and injuries; • Significant reduction in social costs resulting from accidents; • Significant reduction in the number of accidents resulting in deaths and injuries among; • Increase safety for vulnerable road users (pedestrians, cyclists, children, and the elders); • Improve the security of the active modes.

The MSUMP of Rome includes targeted actions centred around the convergence between the major urban centres and the low-density metropolitan territories. With the aim of optimizing the public transport systems, the Plan proposes the improvement of the connections between the central urban cores and the peripheral areas to improve territorial cohesion. When viable, the structural corridors should be on railway, promoting the train as the structural mode of

transport between the centre and the peripheries, action combined with the increase of accessibility to the train stations. In order to rationalize the services provided, a better adaptation of the supply to the demand of transport is proposed, with the support of Smart mobility solutions such as flexible transport or *Demand-Responsive Transport* (DRT). Additionally, the promotion of the *15-Minute City* concept is a specific objective of the Plan, which it aims to reach by consolidating a polycentric urban system, reducing the distances between the centre and periphery, developing dedicated public-transit corridors, revitalizing the core of the urban agglomerations, ensuring the proximity to essential commerce and services (like essential commerce, nurseries, schools, green areas, railway stations or cultural and sport amenities), and reducing the speed limits and establish coexistence zones.

The Metropolitan Region also promotes local development projects, such as the *Biovie* Project. It focuses on sustainable intermunicipal mobility, promoting improvements in the quality of transportation services for the population's various mobility needs. The objectives are to develop a smart, carbon-neutral mobility system by promoting accessibility to local commerce and services in the population's places of residence and work, along with the encouragement of sustainable tourism and of a culture of sustainable mobility in schools. The Plan aims to combine investments in transportation infrastructure with a set of social interventions within metropolitan management. It further considers the distinct characteristics of the various municipalities, particularly the urban-rural contrasts and distinct urban forms.

With the aim of converging the development of the city of Rome and its peripheries, the project "*The Metropolitan City for the Capital Suburbs*" was launched with promotion from the Call for Suburbs (https://www.cittametropolitanaroma.it/progetto/bando-periferie/). Since Rome's suburban areas are characterized by significant economic, social, and infrastructural heterogeneity, some of which are illegally developed, the project aims to develop an integrated network of physical, social and sustainable mobility projects across Rome's outer districts and nearby municipalities, addressing issues such as 1) territorial and social fragmentation; 2) lack of infrastructure and

transport accessibility; 3) decay of public spaces and building stock and 4) urban insecurity and low environmental efficiency.

The initiative covers 16 interventions in the municipalities of Trionfale, Boccea, Massimina, Monte Mario, Corviale, Santa Palomba, Fiumicino, Pomezia, Tivoli, Guidonia Montecelio, Monterotondo and Anguillara Sabazia. The project is estimated to benefit approximately 220 000 residents directly, and more than 2 000 000 inhabitants in the CMRC. Its interventions are summarized in the following table (Table 4):

Table 4 – Main actions of the Project "The Metropolitan City for Capital Suburbs". Source: CMRC (2025)

Major Objective	Thematic Actions
Urban and environmental requalification	• Rehabilitation of degraded buildings and public areas; • Creation of multifunctional facilities (social, cultural, and sports centres); • Reuse of underutilized public assets (e.g., historic forts, former hospitals); • Improvement of energy performance and public lighting; • Landscaping and introduction of urban gardens and green corridors.
Mobility and Infrastructure	• Construction of cycling and pedestrian routes linking peripheral areas to transport hubs; • Park-and-ride facilities near rail and bus stations; • Electric charging points and promotion of e-mobility;

	• Upgrading of local road and drainage systems.
Safety and Social Inclusion	• Deployment of video surveillance systems and improved street lighting; • Labour inclusion and community employment programs; • Rehabilitation of assets confiscated from organized crime for social use; • Support networks and community-based social services.

1.3 Multi-level relationships

The CMRC carries out its activities in close collaboration with the municipalities it encapsulates, similarly to the practices of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. As a regulator of territorial planning practices, it ensures coherence between municipal planning instruments and metropolitan development strategies. Municipalities also participate in the design of metropolitan policies, ensuring an integrated planning between all local authorities. In the specific case of the Project "*The Metropolitan City for Capital Suburbs*", municipalities work with the CMRC based on formal agreements to execute the proposed interventions. Also, CMCR is increasing its participation in the formulation of the national vision for sustainable development, as it has recognized the importance of engaging local authorities to collaborate in the design of national policies (Hurtado *et al.,* 2023). The CMRC also maintains cooperation with the European Union, through participation in EU-funded development projects.

1.4 Financing

The CMRC receives various funding sources, including taxes paid by residents of all its member municipalities, state support, and participation in community-funded projects (CMRC, 2020). The National Operational Program for Metropolitan Cities, which covers the 14 Metropolitan Cities, is funded by the ERDF (€1 436 869 914) and the ESF (€245 890 086). The goal is to improve the efficiency and quality of urban services in the Metropolitan Cities. €37,000,000 were allocated to Rome for the 2014–2020 period (https://www.pnmetroplus.it/home-2/ecosistema/viaggio-nei-cantieri-pon-metro/elenco-progetti/?cm=RM). In turn, The Metropolitan City Project for the capital suburbs received €39,992,180.09 from the Cohesion Fund.

Bucharest

No metropolitan organization existed in Romania before the creation of the *Bucharest Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association* (ADIZMB) in 2008, which is a partnership between the Municipalities of Bucharest and Ilfov for the development of a Metropolitan Area. ADIZMB defines a functional metropolitan territory within the Bucharest-Ilfov development region, encompassing the national capital Bucharest and surrounding localities within the Ilfov County, forming a roughly concentric urban-rural gradient around the city (Figure 6). The metropolitan area covers approximately 1,800 km², of which 274 km² were classified as urban in 2018, reflecting a 7.45% increase since 2000 (Copernicus, 2018). The Bucharest-Ilfov Region has 2 313 519 habitants in 2025, making it the most populated region in Romania (INS, 2025).

The Bucharest-Ilfov metropolitan region is characterized by high population densities in Bucharest city proper and the immediately surrounding suburban area, along with lower population densities in the peri-urban and rural areas of Ilfov. These areas have been urbanized in a dispersed and unplanned manner. Current transport infrastructure is insufficient to meet the needs of the metropolitan population, leading to high dependence on individual transport in these areas, leading to increases in congestion (especially on structural road

accesses to Bucharest) and greater difficulty in accessing shops and services near homes (Suditu *et al.,* 2014).

Romania's subnational administrative units structure consists of two levels: 42 counties (*Judete,* NUTS III) and 3 181 municipalities (*Municipii,* LAU). NUTS I (*Macroregiuni*) and NUTS II (*Regiuni*) levels are only defined for statistical purposes, as them are not administrative units. ADIZMB is composed of the Bucharest Municipality and the Iflov County, which acts as a coordinating body (Figure 3). The Municipality constitutes a special case from a territorial scale standpoint, as it is categorized as a NUTSIII unit. The ADIZMB association was established under the Legal Framework for intercommunity development associations, supported by Laws No. 215/2001, 273/2006, and 26/2012 (ADIZMB, 2025). It is a member of *METREX – The Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas*. In Romania, metropolitan areas are not actually official administrative units, and there is no official national legal framework for metropolitan governance with binding powers, which makes ADIZMB a structure of voluntary cooperation between municipalities.

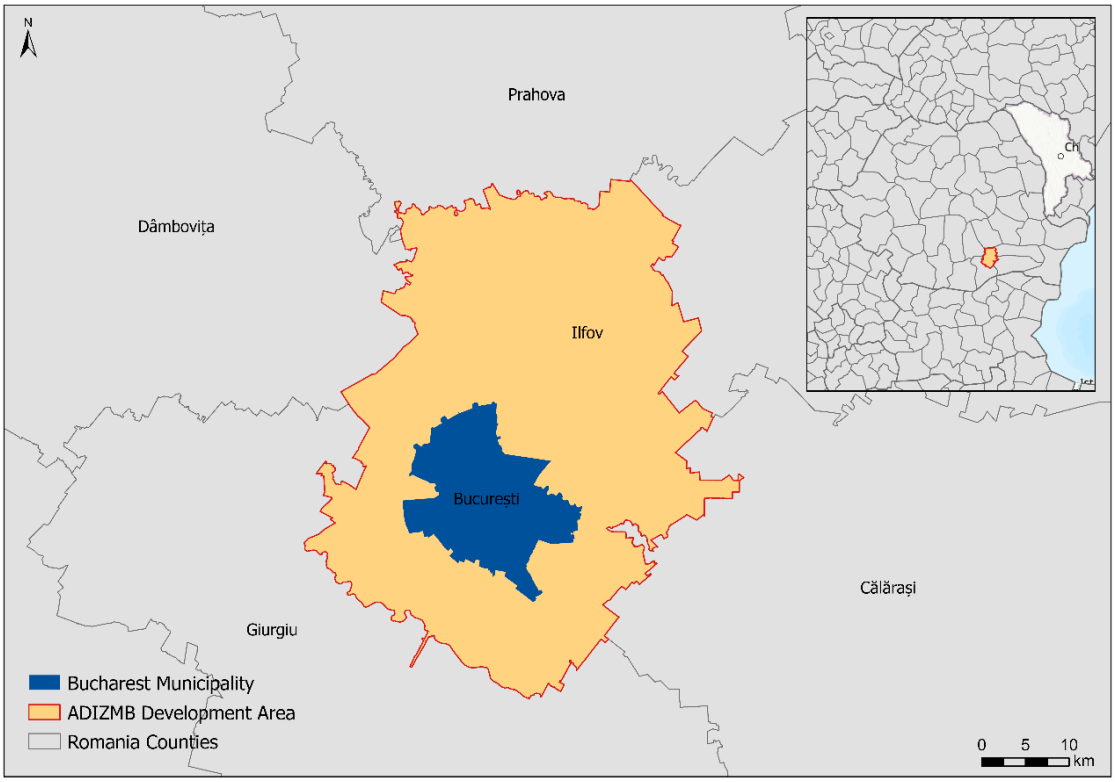

Figure 6 – ADIZMB Metropolitan Area

The objectives of ADIZMB are to promote the regional development projects in a concerted manner between the two encapsulated areas in terms of social services, education, transportation, waste management, environment, economy, tourism, and financing. The Association aims to improve transportation infrastructure, promote environmental conservation, expand and modernize public sanitation and telecommunications infrastructure, improve urban waste management, develop emergency prevention and management plans, promote economic growth and employment, develop social support networks, promote sustainable development, and support the development of policies, programs, and land use plans for integrated urban development, among other objectives (ADIZMB, 2025).

1.1 Organization

The ADIZMB governing bodies are the General Assembly, the Board of Directors, and the Auditor, as defined in its Statuses (Figure 7). These are not elected by direct universal suffrage, as there is not yet a legal framework for metropolitan governance (ADIZMB, 2025).

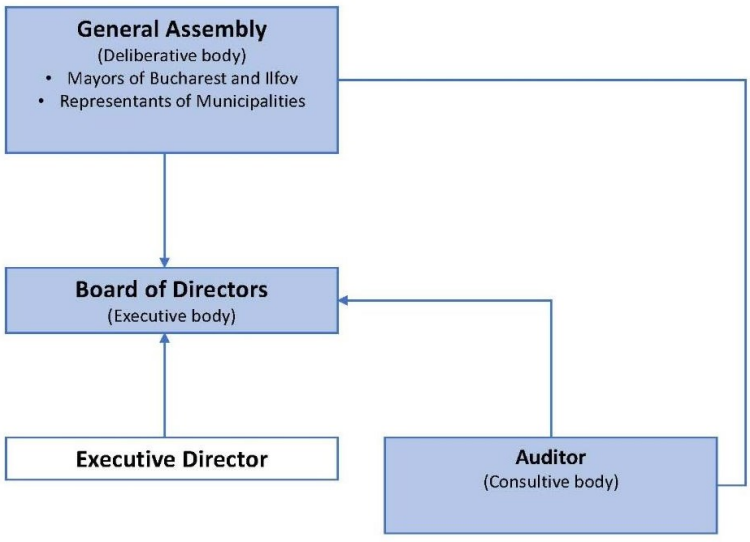

Figure 7 – Organigram of ADIZMB

The General Assembly is a governing body composed of representatives of the association's members (the Mayor of Bucharest and five members of the municipality, the Mayor of Ilfov and six members of the county). This ensures democratic principles and citizen participation, as the members of the General Assembly are chosen from among the members democratically elected by the population to the local authorities. Its responsibilities include (ADIZMB, 2025):

- Establishing the Association's strategy and main objectives;
- Electing and dismissing the President, Board of Directors, and Auditor;
- Approving budgets and accounts;
- Approving the admission and exclusion of Association members;
- Approving the Association's operating rules;
- Approving the Annual Activity Report;
- Establishing the annual contribution of each member municipality.

The Board of Directors is composed of the President of the Association and six members, three of whom are representatives of the Municipality of Bucharest (at least two of whom must be members of the General Assembly) and three of whom are representatives of the Ilfov County. Their main responsibilities include (ADIZMB, 2025):

- Enforce the decisions of the General Assembly;
- Implement the approved budget and prepare the budget proposal for the following year;
- Ensure relations between the Association and the local public administrative authorities of the administrative units that comprise it and monitor the allocation of their contributions to the Association's budget;
- Oversee the Association's financial management;
- Define the Association's organizational chart;

- Ensure compliance with the Association's objectives and propose measures to better achieve them.

Finally, the Auditor is responsible for overseeing the Association's management, preparing reports and presenting them to the General Assembly, and performing any other duties assigned to him or her by the General Assembly (ADIZMB, 2025).

Since the formalization process for the Bucharest-Ilfov Metropolitan Area has not been completed, ADIZMB exercises its powers through agreements and partnerships with local authorities. Despite these limitations, ADIZMB plays a crucial role in shaping metropolitan-level strategies, facilitating collaboration between Bucharest and Ilfov, and supporting initiatives such as PROWD. Its governance structure allows coordination on key issues like sustainable mobility, spatial planning, and service accessibility, serving as an important platform for metropolitan experimentation and policy development.

1.2 Operative

ADIZMB has a coordination and strategic planning role, not direct operational competences. Its legally established responsibilities focus on intercommunity cooperation, joint project development and strategic territorial planning at a metropolitan level. Its main competences are subdivided in 4 themes: mobility and transport planning, urban and regional planning, environmental and educational infrastructure projects, as part of its broader mandate for regional development, and data and evidence-based policy development (ADIZMB, 2025).

In mobility and transport planning, ADIZMB supports integrated infrastructure planning by participating in Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) working groups and engaging in European mobility projects, including Interreg, URBACT, and Horizon Europe programs. In Urban and Regional Planning, ADIZMB is part of working groups for the development of metropolitan and local integrated strategies. The association also coordinates and participates

in urban development and land-use planning projects. ADIZMB's role in environmental and educational infrastructure projects includes joint planning and coordination for waste management, utilities, social and educational services, and disaster response infrastructure. Lastly, ADIZMB develops studies, collects, manages, analyses and shares territorial data through the Urban Observatory, under the responsibility of the Association's Department of Urban Planning and Urban Mobility, which further uses this data to support strategic decision-making with integrated metropolitan-level datasets.

While the delivery of services remains under the authority of local municipalities and the Ilfov County Council, ADIZMB functions as a facilitator and integrator for projects that require coordination across multiple administrative units, bridging local policies with national and European funding instruments.

In order to adapt the public transport service to the strong functional relations between Bucharest and Ilfov, the Intercommunity Development Association for Public Transport Bucharest-Ilfov was established in cooperation between the municipality of Bucharest and the Ilfov county in 2017. It functions as a Transport Authority, with legally established powers. The objective of the Association is to plan, organize, regulate, monitor and manage the local public transport service, improve the quality and efficiency of the service through coordinated development with municipalities and ensure adequate financing, as well as the implementation of measures.

The Bucharest-Ilfov Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan establishes the sustainable mobility strategy for the Bucharest-Ilfov Metropolitan Area. Its main objective is to develop and maintain an integrated and coherent vision for the development of transportation systems in the Bucharest-Ilfov region, promoting system efficiency, service quality and increased coverage while reducing environmental impacts and improving the quality of life in the region. It is aligned with various mobility policies and strategies at the European level, such as the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility, national (Romania's General Mobility Plan), and local levels, through coordination with the Bucharest and Ilfov urban development plans. The Plan defines the metropolitan mobility model for Bucharest, which will serve as a basis for planning the transportation system. As

such, the model aims to achieve the plan's fundamental objectives through diagnostics and the formulation of prospective scenarios. The strategic vision for the mobility system consists of an integrated transportation network between municipalities that promotes sustainability, safety, equitable access to transportation, efficiency, and minimized environmental impacts. To this end, the proposed expansion and modernization of the public transportation network and infrastructure is intended to reduce car dependency, particularly through the development of the rail and metro networks and the promotion of intermodality. Additional recommendations tie into public road user safety and the transportation network; pollution reduction through the decarbonization of motorized modes and the promotion of soft transportation; and the efficient allocation of financial resources for effective convergence between territories (Municipiul Bucuresti, 2023).

The Plan defines three thematic intervention scenarios to achieve the established vision (Municipiul Bucuresti, 2023):

1. Infrastructure Repair and Management: Rehabilitation and renovation of the road network, as well as optimization of its layout to improve circulation; creation of dedicated public transportation lanes; expansion of the high-capacity public transportation network (such as the subway) to suburban areas, thereby creating viable alternatives to private transportation. This solution is complemented by the creation of efficient interfaces and *Park & Ride* facilities; expansion of the bicycle lane network; and definition of areas off-limits to vehicle circulation in urban centres.

2. High-capacity Public Transportation and Active Mobility: This scenario envisages investments in expanding the road network, improving connectivity between road and rail, increasing accessibility to residential developments, and reconfiguring main arteries to allow for coexistence among all types of users. In terms of public transportation, it encourages the development of the light rail network, modernization of the bus fleet, and development of the suburban rail network and the subway. This scenario also considers alternative mobility modes through the improvement of walkability in urban centres, increase in safety for pedestrians and cyclists, creation of dedicated lanes for non-motorized modes,

prioritisation of active mobility in urban developments, and expansion of Bucharest's bike-sharing network throughout the city. Interventions are also proposed in terms of intermodality, regeneration, and urban development around transport interfaces (*TOD – Transit Oriented Development*), such as improving public space conditions, digitizing mobility services, regulating parking, increasing the supply of electric vehicle chargers, and institutional reorganizations to improve administrative capacity within the scope of sustainable urban mobility.

3. Focus on Bucharest-Ilfov Connections: Focuses on the importance of strengthening connections between Bucharest and Ilfov by structuring an efficient metropolitan transportation network. To this end, road network interventions are proposed, such as improving connectivity between riverbanks and the rail network, revising road layouts, increasing road accessibility along and between the *TEN-T* network and national roads, upgrading roads in the outskirts, and building bypasses to access cities and towns in Ilfov. Greater regulation of freight transportation is also envisaged, and public transportation measures include the development of the BRT (*Bus Rapid Transit*) system, regional rail connections, interventions at road and rail interfaces, expansion and modernization of the metro network, and the creation of new connections between new residential developments and intermodal stations. Regarding alternative modes, the proposals include developing dedicated non-motorized corridors and expanding the secondary cycle path network.

Another strategic document, complementary to the Bucharest-Ilfov Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, is the Cycling Mobility Plan (*Master Plan Velo*), which establishes the strategy for urban cycling mobility at the metropolitan level. Its objective is to establish guidelines for the development of the cycling network as a viable mobility alternative both for residents and tourists through a diagnosis of the existing cycling network and identification of areas with cycling potential for future expansion. Thus, the plan aims to foster connections between the population's residential areas and key destinations, such as nearby employment, commerce, services, healthcare, or education, thereby lowering car dependency. Furthermore, it also aims to improve cycle path connections between the peripheral urbanizations around Bucharest. The plan is expected to

increase safety for cyclists and pedestrians while achieving a greater coherence and continuity of the cycling network.

The Bucharest-Ilfov public transportation system is currently undergoing a transformation, similar to that of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. To this end, the Bucharest Transport Company Development Strategy aims to define guidelines for modernizing said network, focusing on improving accessibility, network coverage, comfort, safety, and operational and environmental efficiency. To this end, the recommendation is to reorganize the sole operator, *STB S.A.*, responsible for bus, trolleybus, and tram services throughout the metropolitan area.

To achieve these objectives, the proposed guidelines are: 1) Develop an accessible and safe public transportation service; 2) Adjust transportation supply to demand; 3) Restructuring the public transportation network; 4) Increasing commercial speed; 5) Increasing public acceptance of the service; 6) Improving vehicle comfort; 7) Improving station comfort; 8) Reducing travel times; 9) Increasing passenger and crew safety; 10) Reducing the service's environmental impact; 11) Improving operator-public relations and its image; 12) Fleet modernization; 13) Adapting and modernizing maintenance systems; 14) Modernizing workshop equipment; 15) Modernizing transportation infrastructure; 16) Modernizing rolling stock yards, stations, terminals, and interfaces; 17) Modernizing STB S.A. facilities; 18) Developing traffic support systems; 19) Modernizing information systems; 20) Adopting tariff integration policies; 21) Modernization of ticketing systems; 22) Exploring possibilities for obtaining additional financial resources; 23) Development of *R&D* projects with the support of external funds; 24) Optimization of *STB S.A.*'s structure; 25) Increased management efficiency and focus on professional training; 26) Ensure the human resources necessary for the operation of *STB S.A.*

1.3 Multi-Level relationships

ADIZMB serves as a strategic intermediary and coordinator among multiple levels of governance. It works in collaboration with local authorities, as an intercommunity association, like the Municipality of Bucharest, Ilfov County

Council and the cities and communes that are members of the association. At a regional scale, ADIZMB can be an intermediary between the local authorities and the *Bucharest-Ilfov Regional Development Agency* (ADRBI) in planning and implementing regional development strategies. ADIZMB also collaborates with national institutions of government, such as the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration, the Ministry of Transport or the Ministry of Environment. At a European level, ADIZMB participates in European territorial cooperation programs, like *Interreg*, *URBACT* or *Horizon Europe*, and in international networks such as *METREX*. This multi-level governance model enables the alignment of strategies, pooling of resources, and the coordination of integrated territorial development at the metropolitan scale.

1.4 Financing

ADIZMB's funding is based on contributions from its member municipalities, central state and EU funds. The amount of annual contributions is determined by the General Assembly. Funds are also received from central government institutions and public investment programs, and portions of the State Budget and municipal budgets are allocated to the association. European funds are also an important component of ADIZMB's funding, particularly through programs such as *Interreg Europe*, the *Transnational Danube Program*, *URBACT*, and *Horizon Europe* (which finance projects such as *EMBRACER*, *SMAP*, and *Metro Case*, focusing on the Bucharest-Ilfov metropolitan area). ADIZMB may legally receive contributions, sponsorships, and grants from other national or international sources, as well as funding for projects they coordinate.

Vilnius

Vilnius City is Lithuania's capital, with an estimated population of 607 667 in 2025 for the city proper, and 747 864 for the Vilnius Functional Area which extends beyond the city limits. Its population density is of 1 515 hab/km^2 over a total surface of 401 km^2 (9 730 km^2 in the metropolitan area). The Vilnius

Metropolitan Area does not function as a territorial administrative unit, but is rather defined as a Functional Urban Area. It has no governing bodies or intermunicipal communities, relying instead on intermunicipal collaboration for metropolitan-level issues such as spatial planning or mobility.

Lithuania's sub-national administrative structure consists of three levels: 10 counties (*apskritys,* NUTS III), 60 municipalities (*savivaldybės*, LAU) and 545 elderships (*seniūnijos*). Only municipalities possess self-governing authority. Elderships function as local administrative units within municipalities, while counties serve primarily as statistical and planning regions. For statistical purposes, Vilnius County has been classified as both NUTS 2 and NUTS 3.

The Vilnius City Municipality delimits the city of Vilnius, while the Vilnius District Municipality covers the area surrounding the city (Figure 8). The Functional Urban Area (FUA) encompasses both municipalities, extending towards other municipalities such as Elektrėnai, Šalčininkai, Širvintos, Švenčionys, Trakai and Ukmergė. In Lithuania, municipalities are autonomous, while elderships are responsible for a limited set of local government matters, as established by the Republic of Lithuania Law on Local Self-Government. This law establishes the principles of local self-government, the powers and functions of municipal institutions, as well as the status of municipal council members and the economic and financial rules applicable to municipalities (Table 5). Over time, it has been revised to accommodate new municipal powers following the decentralization process, which began in 2007.

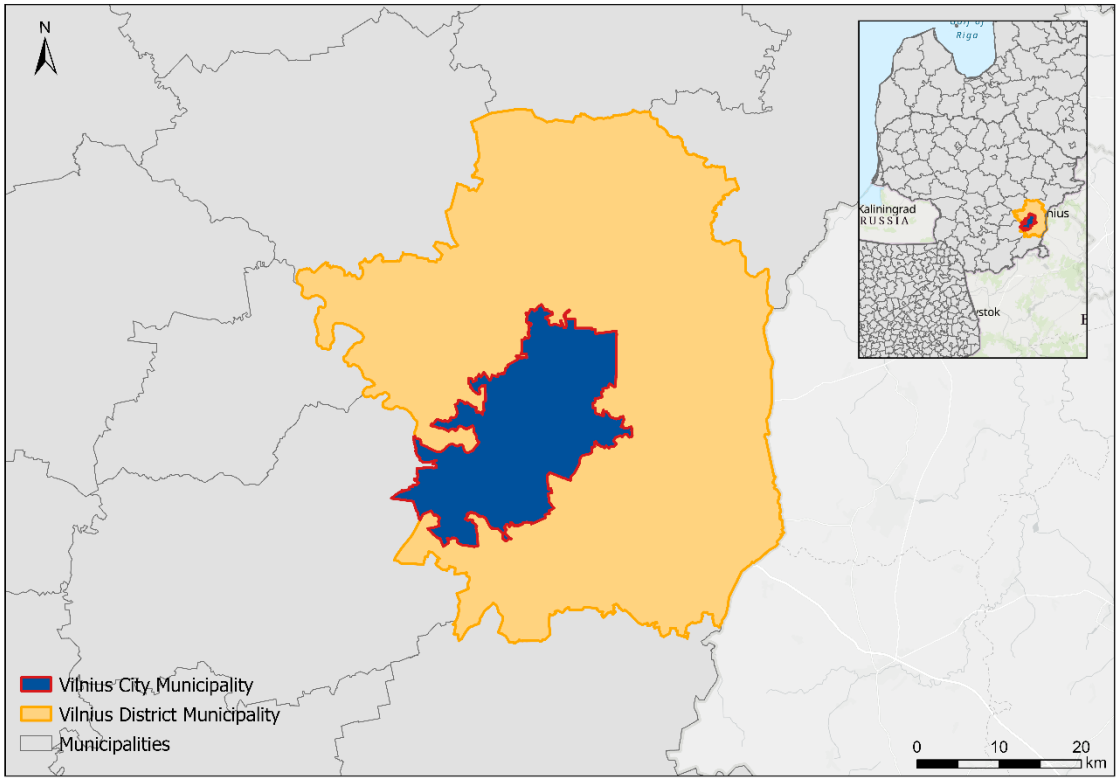

Figure 8 –Vilnius City and District

Table 5 – Responsibilities of municipalities in Lithuania

Fundamental responsibilities of municipalities, established by law	• Preparation and approval of the municipal budget • Establishment of municipal taxes and fees, with limited regulation of real estate tax rates. • Management and use of municipal property • Ensuring compulsory education • Management of school transportation, free of charge for users • Preparation of cartographic work within their jurisdiction • Planning and provision of social services, creation and maintenance of social support institutions, and

	cooperation with non-governmental organizations • Construction and maintenance of rent-controlled municipal housing • Ensuring primary health care • Promotion of community health measures • Developing municipal territorial management instruments (Master Plan and Detailed Plans) • Establishing urban and architectural standards • Preparing and implementing strategic development documents and promoting their implementation within the territory • Participating in the preparation and implementation of regional development programs • Defining, planning, and managing protected areas • Maintaining and protecting the landscape, properties of cultural interest, protected areas, creating and maintaining green spaces and vegetation. • Promote improvements in environmental quality • Ensure basic sanitation and heating • Manage waste • Maintain and repair the municipal road network and streets to improve traffic conditions and safety • Ensure urban hygiene • Establish noise mitigation measures

	• Create conditions for business and tourism development
Powers delegated by the state to the municipalities, within a framework of decentralization	• Civil protection • Fire management • Participation in the management of national parks • Organizing and publishing of some statistical information • Participating in the development of policies related to the labour market and citizen employability • Organizing elections and referendums • Participating in the preparation of censuses • Collecting, storing, and sharing with the European Commission information regarding the financial relations of municipal institutions controlled by municipalities • Other functions designated by the State.

1.1 Organization

Lithuanian municipalities are governed by two main bodies: the municipal council and the mayor. Both the mayor and the council are elected through direct democratic elections. The mayor serves as the executive head of the municipality, and is responsible for nominating up to four deputy mayors as well as the director of the municipal administration (Table 6).

Table 6: Governing bodies of CMRC, composition, forms of election and main attributions

Governing Body	Main attributions
Mayor – executive head	• Plan the Municipal Council's activities, representing the municipality or delegating representation; • Serve on the Regional Development Council, represent the municipality, and collaborate in the development of the Regional Development Program; • Make nominations to the Municipal Council and coordinate with it the candidacies for deputy mayors, director of municipal administration, deputy director of municipal administration, and vice-president of the Municipal Council's Control Committee; • Prepare the project of municipal budget for approval at the Council and implements it; • Define the areas of activity of the vice-mayors; • Submit to the Council proposals for the creation of a Council panel; • Overseeing the activities of the boards of directors of municipal companies; • Formalize, with the Council's approval, agreements regarding cooperation between the municipality and state institutions, other municipalities or institutions, and foreign countries; • Approve the division of its territory into elderships; • Appoint and dismiss senior staff of municipal companies and establishments (except educational institutions); • Ensure adequate representation of the municipality on the Regional Development

	Council and the effective implementation of the strategies it defines within the municipality; • Ensure that municipal strategic documents are properly prepared and monitor their implementation, as well as if the Municipal Council's decisions are adopted by the city government; • Ensure that the municipality's interests are adequately represented in cooperation with other state agencies, NGOs, or legal institutions.
Municipal Council – normative and deliberative body. Chaired by the Municipal Mayor and elected by direct universal suffrage.	• Approve the nominated deputy mayors; • Establish committees and commissions integrated with the Municipal Council, as well as other integrated units for organizing the work of the municipality; • Approve the structure of the municipal administration; • Approve the budget and mayor's reports; • Decide on the allocation of additional and higher-than-planned budget revenues and other treasury resources, as well as on the establishment and use of targeted and specialized funds; • Submit proposals to state institutions regarding the improvement of the activities of the units of these institutions located within a municipality, when necessary, hearing the heads of these units according to the procedure established in the rules of conduct; • incorporation, reorganization, liquidation, and supervision of municipal establishments and companies; • Make decisions on intermunicipal partnerships; • Make decisions regarding the disposal of assets belonging to a municipality by right of ownership, establishing rules for the management, use, and disposal of said assets, except in cases where such

	procedure has been defined in laws or other legal acts adopted on the basis of laws; • Make decisions regarding the management, use, and disposal, by right of trust, of State lands and other State assets assigned to a municipality; • Make decisions on the approval of concessions; • Make decisions on the construction of social housing owned by the local authority; • Approve a general plan for the municipality; • Define protected areas in the municipality; • Submit proposals to the Government for changing the municipality's administrative boundaries; • Define noise prevention and reduction measures in strategic document; • Set tariffs for services provided by municipal companies, as well as public passenger transportation services and water supply; • Approve municipal strategic development plans, action plans, and sectoral economic development programs; • Approve general procedures for municipal strategic planning.

To facilitate local administration, small units called elderships (*seniūnija*) are established, based on localities or groups of localities, or neighbourhoods in urban areas. An eldership can operate as a division of the municipal administration or as a public body. Their establishment or any modifications are approved by the municipal council. Each eldership has a representative (*seniūnas*), who is appointed by the director of the municipal administration according to Civil Service rules (through an open competition). Their responsibilities focus on local issues, such as road networks and public space maintenance, management of local social support institutions, and local sports, among others.

1.2 Operative

At a metropolitan scale, the main responsibility of the Vilnius City Municipality is the management of the public transportation system through a public transport company (*Vilniaus Viesasis Transportas – VVT*), wholly owned by the Vilnius City Council established in 2011 by decision of the City Council. VVT operates bus, trolleybus and, since 2025, the boat service along Neris River. Its area of operation is the city of Vilnius and its immediate suburbs. Currently, VVT is renewing its fleet and expanding its network, allowing for better connections between Vilnius and its surrounding areas. The company is primarily funded by the Vilnius City Council, with the remaining coming from revenues from service operations (20-30% of total income).

VVT was supported by the EU, which co-financed the Renewal of the City's Public Vehicle Fleet in the Vilnius City project through the Cohesion Fund in 2016. As part of the project, 41 trolleybuses were purchased to improve the quality of VVT's services, enhance their attractiveness, and encourage its greater use by residents. Since then, 91 new trolleybuses have been delivered into city service. The most recent contract, for the purchase of 73 new trolleybuses, was signed in 2025. These vehicles are expected to replace the remaining older trolleybuses in 2026-2027. As EU support is gradually diminishing, loans from the European bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Nordic investment Bank (NIB) have been used.

The Vilnius City Municipality also functions as the city transportation authority and, for this purpose, established a company responsible for mobility planning and management (*JUDU - Susisiekimo paslaugos*). The municipality has a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan approved in 2018 which is currently under review as part of the *Interreg REFOCUS* Project. Its main objective is to define a sustainable urban mobility model for Vilnius, contributing to improving the quality of life in the city and its surrounding areas. The plan serves as a strategic document, developed with reference to existing programs, plans and policies, and extends beyond mobility itself – adapting an integrated development approach that considers social, economic, environmental, and political-

institutional dimensions. The vision advocated by this plan is based on three fundamental pillars:

1. Improving the quality of travel, reducing its duration, and increasing its pleasantness;

2. Reducing the negative environmental impacts of transportation;

3. Reducing congestion, especially in urban areas.

The Plan provides for a broad set of actions for the 2025-2027 period, namely:

- Integration of river transport into the urban mobility system
- Modernization of the ticketing system
- Introduction of a public transportation prioritization system in urban signage;
- Implementation of traffic calming zones
- Allowing residents to park in commercial areas;
- Creation of Park & Ride facilities;
- Creation of a low-emissions zone;
- Implementation of educational programs for sustainable mobility in schools
- Improvement of cycling conditions and creation of a bicycle travel planning tool

The programmatic lines are characterized by interventions in several areas:

- Development and promotion of public transportation:
- Optimization of the public transportation system
- Integration of the Vilnius District into the transportation system and the fare system

• Creation of radial transportation belts

• Modernization of the public transportation fleet, prioritizing carbon-neutral solutions

• Encouraging the use of soft modes by adapting public roads and improving safety conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, following the principles of universal design. To this end, greater space allocation for pedestrians is planned, along with an increase in the density of pedestrian crossings, a reduction in speed limits to 30 km/h in certain areas, and improvements to the maintenance of the pedestrian paths, bicycle lanes, and street lighting.

• Expansion of the bicycle path network by an additional 150 km, with the goal of making the network accessible to more than 65% (current value) of residents within a 250m radius, supported by the creation of parking facilities for bicycles and the increase in the supply of bike-sharing services.

• Reorganization of vehicle circulation, avoiding excessive disruption to their conditions of use, by rearranging parking and its costs, depending on location and demand;

• Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the traffic light system, implementing a modern regulation system and ensuring priority for public transportation;

• Development of the public charging network for electric vehicles;

• Creation of Reduced Emissions Zones in Vilnius's historic centre, aiming to reduce GHG emissions by up to 72% and the number of cars circulating in the centre by up to 42% by 2030.

• Fostering a culture of sustainable mobility by encouraging public participation in the development of projects in this context, including the topic of sustainable mobility in school curricula, and making data available to the public.

1.3 Financing

According to the Local Government Law, municipal funding comes from:

- Income tax of Vilnius municipality residents (corresponding to approximately 50% of the total funds received)
- income from municipal property
- fines
- income from the provision of services to the public by municipalized companies;
- subsidies from the State for delegated state functions (approximately 30%)
- compensation for the provision of public services
- other income provided for by law

Additional budgetary allocations are also planned to support the implementation of the municipal budget, along with funds for the exercise of functions delegated to municipalities by the State, which will be provided through State Budget. In 2025, income from EU funds and other international support programs accounts for less than 1,5% of city's total budget.

1.4 Multilevel relationships

The Local Government Law establishes that cooperative relations must be maintained between municipalities and various state institutions, without any type of subordination. When considering issues of interest to a given municipality, state entities must do so in consultation with the mayors of the respective municipalities. The same applies to decisions related to municipal administrative boundaries changes. The Association of Local Authorities of Lithuania was created

to more effectively represent municipal interests within the state. The implementation of the Strategy for the Vilnius Functional Zone 2024-2029 aims to strengthen the cooperation between all municipalities in the region, focusing on reducing economic inequalities, reinforcing territorial cohesion and promoting a more sustainable mobility model along with better accessibility to the public services. However, despite these objectives, a lack of intermunicipal cooperation remains evident, as there is any integrated development strategy for the Metropolitan Area of Vilnius. The Vilnius City Municipality and the Vilnius District Municipality continue to operate largely in isolation from one another. Moreover, the Vilnius City Municipality did not participate in the preparation or implementation of this Strategy, which was signed by all other municipalities of Vilnius county. There is also no significant evidence of cooperation in the field of mobility, as most sustainable mobility initiatives are led primarily by the Vilnius City Municipality, with limited involvement of peri-urban and rural areas that remain strongly dependent on the Vilnius urban core for access to key services and functions.

In other hand, cooperation can be observed between the Vilnius City Municipality and local communities, which are organized in participatory groups. These groups are encouraged to propose projects that benefit residents and are financed through the city's participatory budget. One example is the "*Participate! Vilnius*" project, which is a contest for small-scale initiatives (ranging from €30 000 to €150 000) focused on environmental improvements within specific elderships. In addition, the city has established a Council of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) dedicated to fostering cooperation with the *NGO* sector's.

Main Conclusions and Synthesis

The analysis of the metropolitan governance frameworks of the various case studies proposed in this project allowed us to understand the main characteristics of each metropolitan area in terms of geographic scope, government structure, organization, competencies, forms of intervention in the territory, financing, and multi-level cooperation. This report enabled the synthetization of the four most common governance structure types in

metropolitan areas: metropolitan governments, metropolitan sectoral agencies, vertical institutional cooperation, and voluntary or informal intermunicipal cooperation. Each of these types of structures have advantages and disadvantages; however, several studies converge on the position that a formalized metropolitan structure with adequate participation of the responsible local authorities, good cooperation between different levels of power, and decentralized and autonomous resource management, is usually the most appropriate solution. This configuration enables the adoption of a holistic approach in defining development strategies, avoiding significant disparities between territories and promoting an integrated and balanced development.

The four metropolitan areas, Lisbon, Rome, Bucharest, and Vilnius, have different forms of metropolitan organization. In the case of Lisbon and Rome, metropolitan areas are defined, corresponding to regions, with a governing structure, with its own responsibilities and bodies, with the participation of all municipalities within the metropolitan area. In Bucharest, there is an association of voluntary collaboration municipalities, and the process of formalizing the metropolitan area is underway. In Vilnius, there is no defined metropolitan area, with the City of Vilnius having some responsibilities, particularly in mobility and transportation, that extend beyond its administrative territory.

The four areas still face several challenges when it comes to metropolitan management. Fragmented structures and a lack of institutional coordination between different levels of government can lead to overlapping planning instruments and greater difficulty in allocating resources and implementing concrete actions for the sustainable development of metropolitan areas. Even so, efforts toward greater decentralization of powers and the promotion of democratic participation and institutional cooperation are evident. On the other hand, dispersed and fragmented metropolitan expansion fosters uneven development, particularly in the provision of services such as public transportation and accessibility to nearby commerce and services, leading to greater dependence on private transportation and increased social inequalities. However, it is important to reinforce the importance of the ongoing Plan for Metropolitan Suburbs in Rome, in order to meet the main challenges of low-density metropolitan territories. Therefore, increasing the governance capacity of

metropolitan institutions and joint collaboration between the various levels of government is essential to promote more balanced and sustainable growth in metropolitan areas, so that they can establish themselves as territories with a high quality of life, high economic dynamism, and good potential for sustainable development.

Status-quo – PROWD pilots

Lisbon

Lisbon Metropolitan Area demonstrates a strong example of formalized metropolitan governance, with a clearly defined territorial scope, a dedicated governing structure (the Metropolitan Council and Executive Committee), and well-defined responsibilities for planning, mobility, and service provision. This structure enables the coordination of strategic projects across municipalities, particularly in areas like transport integration, environmental management, and urban development. From a PROWD perspective, Lisbon shows that structured metropolitan governance facilitates the alignment of municipal policies with broader regional objectives, ensuring that sustainable development interventions, such as public transportation modernization or intermodal mobility initiatives, are implemented in a coherent and technically sound manner.

However, the case of Lisbon also underscores the need for continuous capacity-building at the municipal level to leverage metropolitan-scale initiatives. While the Metropolitan Government has normative powers, successful implementation relies on the technical capabilities of municipalities and their willingness to integrate local plans with metropolitan objectives. PROWD activities can thus support Lisbon by identifying gaps in operational coordination, fostering standardized methodologies for data collection, and promoting digital tools to enhance inter-municipal planning efficiency.

Lisbon's case illustrates that formal governance coupled with multi-level cooperation, from municipal to national and European programs—can maximize resource allocation, reduce redundancies, and enhance the resilience of

metropolitan systems. Strategic investments in mobility, social infrastructure, and spatial planning benefit from this governance framework, providing a replicable model for other metropolitan areas seeking to balance urban dynamism with peripheral integration. PROWD can leverage Lisbon's approach to inform frameworks for metropolitan collaboration, highlighting best practices in structured governance, participatory planning, and integrated territorial strategies.

Rome

Rome presents a metropolitan governance model characterized by a combination of formal institutions and project-driven initiatives, such as the Metropolitan City of Rome Capital and the "Metropolitan City for the Capital Suburbs" project. Unlike Lisbon, Rome's governance must address heterogeneous urban-rural dynamics and low-density peripheral areas, requiring tailored strategies for accessibility, transport infrastructure, and urban renewal. From the PROWD perspective, Rome demonstrates that targeted, coordinated projects are essential to bridge gaps between central urban cores and peripheral territories, improving territorial cohesion and fostering sustainable mobility.

The CMRC's approach integrates mobility planning, land-use strategies, and social interventions, demonstrating that infrastructure investments must be coupled with social and environmental actions to achieve comprehensive metropolitan development. The Metropolitan Suburbs project illustrates the potential of combining EU, national, and municipal funding to enhance accessibility, safety, and quality of life in marginal areas. PROWD can build on this by proposing frameworks for scaling such integrated interventions, promoting digital tools for transport optimization, and developing performance metrics for peripheral connectivity.

Rome highlights the importance of polycentric development and the 15-Minute City concept for metropolitan sustainability. By consolidating urban cores, improving public transport corridors, and supporting slow tourism and shared mobility, the CMRC can reduce private vehicle dependence and foster economic

competitiveness. The PROWD project can leverage Rome's lessons to formulate strategic recommendations on governance capacity-building, cross-sectoral coordination, and the promotion of equity in metropolitan service provision, particularly for low-density territories.

Bucharest

Bucharest illustrates a nascent stage of metropolitan governance, characterized by the voluntary association of municipalities through ADIZMB. While the legal framework for formal metropolitan structures remains under development, ADIZMB has demonstrated its strategic role in coordinating cross-jurisdictional mobility, spatial planning, and public services, acting as a bridge between municipalities, national authorities, and European programs. From a PROWD standpoint, Bucharest exemplifies the importance of establishing institutionalized mechanisms for multi-level coordination, particularly in highly fragmented metropolitan areas where urban-rural interdependencies generate congestion and service inequalities.

The Bucharest-Ilfov Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan highlights the potential of evidence-based, integrated planning at the metropolitan level, including infrastructure expansion, active mobility promotion, intermodality, and low-emission measures. The strategic scenario approach adopted by the SUMP covering infrastructure rehabilitation, high-capacity transport, and metropolitan connections, demonstrates a systematic methodology for tackling mobility and accessibility challenges, which PROWD can translate into operational guidelines for other emerging metropolitan areas.

Moreover, Bucharest emphasizes the critical role of dedicated institutional entities for public transport coordination, such as the Intercommunity Development Association for Public Transport, in ensuring operational efficiency and service quality. The PROWD project can draw lessons from Bucharest by developing capacity-building programs that strengthen ADIZMB's strategic, regulatory, and monitoring functions, and by proposing frameworks to integrate

municipal planning with metropolitan-scale service delivery, funding, and citizen engagement.

Vilnius

Vilnius represents a functional metropolitan area without formal governance structures, relying on intermunicipal cooperation between the City and District municipalities. The City of Vilnius, through VVT and JUDU, demonstrates a strategic, city-led approach to sustainable mobility, including fleet modernization, active transport promotion, low-emission zones, and integration with peri-urban areas. From the PROWD perspective, Vilnius underscores the need for formal coordination mechanisms to ensure continuity of mobility and service provision across the metropolitan area, particularly given the high dependence of surrounding municipalities on the urban core.

The Vilnius SUMP and associated initiatives highlight an integrated planning approach, combining infrastructure investments, active mobility promotion, traffic management, and participatory governance. PROWD can leverage these experiences to propose tools for strengthening intermunicipal collaboration, data-sharing mechanisms, and participatory planning processes that include peri-urban stakeholders, ensuring that metropolitan strategies are not limited to city boundaries. Vilnius demonstrates the importance of aligning technical capacity and financing mechanisms to enable metropolitan-scale interventions. The combination of municipal budgets, EU co-financing, and targeted projects supports ambitious mobility and environmental goals. PROWD can use this case to provide strategic recommendations on sustainable metropolitan financing, cross-jurisdictional governance, and the institutionalization of integrated planning frameworks, addressing the current fragmentation and promoting equitable service provision across the functional urban region.

Particularities and similarities between demonstration sites

The four metropolitan areas, Lisbon, Rome, Bucharest, and Vilnius, demonstrate distinct approaches to urban mobility governance, reflecting different institutional frameworks, historical development patterns, and territorial challenges. Lisbon and Rome are characterized by formalized metropolitan governance structures, enabling coordinated interventions across municipalities and alignment with national and EU policies. This formalization allows for the integration of mobility policies, spatial planning, and social services, which is particularly relevant for designing intermodal transport networks and reducing reliance on private vehicles. In contrast, Bucharest and Vilnius operate under more voluntary or functional arrangements, where mobility strategies are implemented primarily by city-level authorities or intermunicipal associations, often leaving peripheral and low-density areas underserved. This distinction underscores the importance of institutional capacity in shaping coherent metropolitan mobility strategies.

Regarding mobility policies, Lisbon and Rome have developed comprehensive Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans that address public transport expansion, active mobility promotion, and intermodality. Lisbon benefits from a structured integration of public transport modes and a clear regulatory framework, while Rome's policies are tailored to address heterogeneous urban-rural gradients, including peripheral suburbs that require enhanced connectivity through railway corridors, flexible transport, and Demand-Responsive Transport. Bucharest and Vilnius, while implementing SUMPs and cycling strategies, face limitations in coordination and coverage, particularly for peri-urban areas. This highlights a recurrent challenge in PROWD-relevant contexts: ensuring equitable access to mobility services across dense urban cores and low-density peripheries.

The issue of proximity and accessibility further differentiates the four metropolitan areas. Rome's 15-Minute City concept and polycentric urban strategies aim to reduce travel distances, enhance access to services, and revitalize suburban cores, providing a practical model for improving functional

accessibility in sprawling territories. Lisbon similarly emphasizes multimodal connections and transit-oriented development to reduce congestion and car dependency. In Bucharest and Vilnius, however, the lack of integrated metropolitan governance translates into fragmented service delivery, with mobility improvements concentrated in the urban core and limited options for peripheral residents. PROWD lessons point to the necessity of combining infrastructure investments with planning instruments that promote territorial cohesion and reduce social inequalities.

Low-density urban areas pose particular challenges for metropolitan strategies, as observed in Rome, Bucharest, and Vilnius. Dispersed urbanization increases dependence on private vehicles and complicates the delivery of public transport services, while also raising costs for infrastructure and service provision. Rome's Metropolitan Suburbs Project demonstrates how targeted, project-based interventions can mitigate these challenges by linking transport infrastructure to social, environmental, and cultural programs. Bucharest and Vilnius show that, without formal governance mechanisms and dedicated intermunicipal coordination, mobility and accessibility deficits persist, reinforcing urban-peripheral inequalities. Lisbon, with its more centralized and structured metropolitan planning, illustrates that formal governance frameworks can facilitate investments and policy interventions even in low-density peripheral municipalities.

Across all four cases, multi-level coordination emerges as a critical factor for successful metropolitan strategies. Lisbon and Rome effectively leverage EU funding, national policies, and municipal capacities to implement comprehensive mobility and development programs. Bucharest and Vilnius rely heavily on voluntary cooperation, municipal leadership, and project-based EU support, which, while effective for pilot interventions, limits scalability and the consistent delivery of metropolitan-wide mobility services. PROWD can draw from these lessons to recommend institutionalized frameworks for intermunicipal collaboration, integrated transport planning, and strategic investments in low-density areas, ensuring that metropolitan strategies enhance mobility, accessibility, and territorial cohesion across entire functional regions.

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