



Policy Advice on metropolitan governance, inter-municipal cooperation and spatial planning

- City of Turku and Turku City Region -

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Executive summary

Purpose, objective and scope of the document

This policy advice report has been requested by the Finnish Ministry of Finance and produced under the Joint Project of the Council of Europe and the EU “Delivering Good Governance and Balanced Local Economy in Finland” which aims to contribute to an improved legislative framework and enhanced performance of public authorities to provide good public services at local and regional level, in accordance with European standards. The main objective of the report is to offer a set of recommendations for the City of Turku and the Turku City Region for improvement of the current metropolitan governance issues, including aspects of inter-municipal cooperation and spatial planning. Turku and the Turku City Region have been selected as an area that could benefit the most from the Council of Europe international expertise in the domain of good democratic governance and improve its coordination and cooperation processes for ensuring high quality services to its citizens.

The set of the recommendations suggested in this report should be taken as a set of possible policy measures and opportunities for further consideration by relevant authorities, and not as a panacea suggesting the only correct way for the further development of Turku and the Turku City Region in the analysed fields.

Methods

The preparation of this Policy advice report was based on international expertise and experience, shared by three internationally recognised experts who elaborated the report (**About the authors**), namely Daniel Klimovský (Associate Professor at the Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia; as a lead project expert); Thomas Prorok (Managing Director of the KDZ Centre for Public Administration Research in Vienna, Austria); and Rūdolfs Cimdiņš (Head of the Spatial Planning Unit at the Riga Planning Region in Riga, Latvia).

The expert team employed both desk research focused on analysing preliminary data on the pertinent situation and semi-structured interviews with representatives of selected local stakeholders. The desk research was based on publicly available information, official documents, documents of the Ministry of Environment and the Association of Finnish municipalities on MAL agreements, including the case of MAL agreements in Helsinki, as well as written contributions by different interlocutors. A preparatory meeting was held in Turku in October 2023, and it was used to discuss both expectations and possible obstacles or limits regarding this policy advice. In addition to the preparatory one, two more meetings were organised: one in November 2023 in Turku and the other one in December 2023, online. In total, ten representatives of local stakeholders, as selected by the City of Turku, were interviewed. The interviews were used to collect first-hand information on the challenges faced by the local authorities which fall into the remit of the report and enrich the baseline research.

Findings

Turku City Region as the new metropolitan coordination body starts as a light and low-budget body, but is institutionalised by law as a joint municipal authority and therefore offers high

potential for further development. As a joint municipal authority, Turku City Region may overtake tasks in multiple sectors and bundle the activities of many existing cooperations based on agreements only.

The City of Turku has a robust administrative structure with its own city board, and a few sectoral boards (the activities of these boards are coordinated by three deputy mayors). Furthermore, there is a strong political steering and besides the mayor and the mentioned deputy mayors, a few specific steering groups are active in this field. Last but not least, a few other bodies and corporations provide their services within or beyond the city's boundaries (e.g., Regional and Social Health Organisation, Regional Waste Management Board, Regional Public Transport Board, and municipal companies).

The current regional governance in the region around Turku is characterised by a mixture of a vertical coordination model with a restricted coordination body (this body was established just recently) and fragmented sector-based metropolitan organisations. The City of Turku itself is actively engaged in several inter-municipal cooperation networks (e.g. in the fields like waste management, water management, transport) with different memberships, objectives as well as regulations. One of the strongest cooperation structures is a MAL agreement (it is an agreement regulating land-use, transport and housing in the municipalities, i.e. parties to the agreement). Its main goal is to enhance both the functionality and competitiveness of urban regions. This collaboration unit has a robust organisation structure, including its own steering group and a few working groups. However, there are thirteen members in the Turku MAL Agreement, and only a few of them have become members of the Turku City Region. This uncovers several challenges in regard to further development of the city region itself as well as relationships between these two cooperation networks. For example, an ambitious city region strategy was approved in March 2024, but it is still unclear how binding the city region strategy would be for the municipalities neighbouring the City of Turku (especially for those which are members of the Turku MAL Agreement). In addition, from a spatial planning perspective it seems that the cooperation networks around Turku are based on political collaborations rather than functional needs. Despite the fact that the Region of Southwest Finland is providing some analytical basis on developmental issues, and the urban region is usually clearly highlighted, the Turku City Region itself should become much more active in monitoring, analytical and forecasting processes, too. More precisely, a deeper and broader cooperation in the city region among the member municipalities in the field of spatial planning is desirable.

Several overlapping sectoral cooperation initiatives can be observed in the region around Turku. Despite their stability and individual effectiveness, this variety becomes challenging regarding desired synergies, issues of coordination and optimising regional tasks, especially in cross-sectional areas such as climate protection and adoption of relevant policies.

In addition to some structural reasons¹, the establishment of the Turku City Region was primarily a political decision based on some positive results from other inter-municipal cooperation initiatives and the intuitive preferences of the representatives of all involved

¹ A structural plan is mentioned not only in the new Regional Strategy (2024-2026): Joint municipal authority of the Turku urban region, but also in a structural plan for the core city region (2035).

municipalities. The founders of this cooperation initiative have concentrated their efforts to ensure that only urban municipalities participate in the Turku City Region.

The Turku City Region was established as a joint municipal authority in 2022. Despite the fact that the founders of this entity have declared their support for a unique city region identity, the residents of the involved municipalities have not been involved in the decision-making processes linked to the establishment of this city region.

The core functions and tasks of the city region have not been precisely defined yet, and the preliminary impacts of the first activities are not monitored during the current stage of implementation. The aforementioned exclusion of local residents remains a visible feature in this stage, too.

Recommendations

All recommendations in this report have been prepared taking into account good international practices and expertise, and have been tailored to the local context on the basis of the available information collected during the desk research and interviews with representatives of several local stakeholders. From this perspective it is important to understand them as a set of suggested opportunities or options.

It is highly recommended to start the implementation of these recommendations with a consideration from a political and functional perspective, for integration of existing sectoral cooperation between different defined regions and their members, step by step, under the roof of the city region's governance. Obviously, this activity includes some political risks and requires intensive negotiations, and therefore an annual city-region conference could be established. The conference could bring together all actors from different levels, and be used as a platform for open discussions about all sensitive issues. On this matter, to foster robust and harmonious relationships among municipalities and ensure the effectiveness in their cooperation, it is essential to cultivate a culture of cooperation grounded in equal rights for all city region members. This can be achieved through regular meetings and knowledge-sharing initiatives.

Instead of political attempts, in the case of the Turku City Region, it is recommended to use a more functional approach based on the above-mentioned structural plan as well as relating forecasts, which should be enriched by the active use of participatory tools. More precisely, the city region boundaries should reflect the economic and social reality rather than the political or administrative boundaries.

For example, certain functional criteria have been used for the Turku MAL agreement which includes the City of Turku, and it would be worthwhile gradually aligning the Turku City Region with the municipalities of the MAL agreement. From this perspective, it is worth highlighting the fact that the role of the Turku City Region within the MAL agreement is assessed and clarified in the new strategy (2024-2026) of the Turku City Region (e.g., in the field of regional transport system planning). Furthermore, it is important to know that the Director of the Turku City Region became a member of the MAL Steering Group in March 2024, and this step personally connects these two collaboration units even more.

From an external perspective, the Turku City Region Office should function as the main representative body for the city region, and it should promote the city region's interests at all levels. All public relations activities should be bundled within a joint marketing strategy to set up an internationally visible image of an attractive and modern city region. Taking these functions into account, The Turku City Region Office should be strengthened by expanding its personnel alongside its growing tasks.

Regular and frequent contacts as well as intense exchanges between members of various organisational bodies have to be planned in order to make these processes smooth, and to foster the development of a climate of trust. In addition, it is recommended to install permanent working groups or committees at a practitioner/administrative level which will be tasked with core (maximum two to four) issues/challenges of the Turku City Region. This measure should foster the development of the most important themes from the city region's perspective.

Mutual learning is one of the most efficient tools that can be employed in this case, and all members of the Turku City Region should share their experience with each other. Thus, instead of competition among the individual municipalities of this city region, it needs coordinated efforts in many policy fields as well as open communication between them. From the perspective of spatial planning, it is important to build a data-driven analytical base on the scale of the Turku City Region which focuses on relevant functional socio-economic issues of Turku as well as the whole city region.

It is imperative to incorporate various forms of citizen participation into all processes linked to the development of the city region if one wants to enhance democratic decision-making, transparency as well as democratic accountability, promote the widespread acceptance of implementation measures, and to build a common city region identity. For example, the proposed city-region conference should bring together not only local government authorities and representatives of local business, but also representatives of various interest groups (e.g., NGOs). In addition, implementing specific measures/tools, such as for example the Centre of Expertise's tool on Civil participation in decision-making process, could empower the local authorities with skills to identify relevant stakeholder groups and attract them to take part in the decision-making process. The same process, as a feedback effect, should result in improving the trust of the citizens towards the local government. Residents should also have an opportunity to take part in monitoring processes, either by keeping them informed and aware of all updates (passive approach), or to invite them in a consultation process (active approach) on their satisfaction with the pertinent issues, for instance in the working meetings of different committees, or to take part in other platforms intended to collect citizens' feedback. Such a practice will ensure that the local authorities are taking citizens' concerns into account.

The coordination body of the city region should also be responsible for coordination of monitoring of all measures adopted, and its findings should be reported on regular basis. Although coordination of monitoring should be in the hands of the coordination body, all involved actors (member municipalities, and their residents in particular) should be actively involved in the monitoring itself. It is crucial to adopt and use a set of clear and measurable

indicators, which are based on the strategy and its activities of the Turku City Region. From this perspective, establishing transparent guidelines for various forms of cooperation and procedural frameworks seems necessary for instilling a trustworthy cooperative environment. However, also external observers (e.g., academic/research institutions) might be invited to monitor both adoptions of new measures and outcomes. A clear advantage of this kind of external monitoring is an unbiased assessment by those who are not directly involved in cooperation network.

Implementation of these recommendations should lead to 1) significantly higher awareness about the city region, its goals, activities, and achievements among all relevant stakeholders which should ensure higher transparency and reduce (potential) political tensions; 2) more effective and efficient coordination of inter-municipal cooperation (those which operate under the umbrella of the Turku City Region); 3) enhancement of chances to build a strong city region identity; 4) faster development of the city region, similar to other rapidly growing city regions in Finland such as Tampere or Helsinki.

Although the cases of Tampere and Helsinki have been used as examples of good practice, the members of the Turku City Region should be capable of bringing their own solutions and innovations, and they should look for examples of good practice beyond Finland itself, too. For example, one can find several inspiring cases in the report (from Austria, Germany, Latvia, Norway, Slovakia, and the UK) which are relevant for the Turku City Region as the local/regional authorities in all these cases were facing similar challenges. Taking into account these cases, one of the most important lessons to be learnt is the importance and usefulness of wide-ranging coordination, broad engagement of local/regional stakeholders, and clear distribution of tasks and responsibilities.

1. Introduction

This policy advice report has been requested by the Finnish Ministry of Finance in the framework of the Joint Project of the Council of Europe and the EU “Delivering Good Governance and Balanced Local Economy in Finland”, which aims to contribute to an improved legislative framework and enhanced performance of public authorities to provide good public services at local and regional level, in accordance with European standards. Following an internal coordination process in Finland, the Turku City Region has been selected as an area that could benefit the most from the Council of Europe international expertise in the domain of good democratic governance and improve its coordination and cooperation processes for ensuring high quality services to its citizens.

Turku and its surroundings are considered to be one of the most important development areas for the Finnish government. Together with Helsinki and Tampere, it is a part of the economically important Growth Triangle² of urban areas. Each of these urban centres represents an important pole of growth which has to cope with its own challenges and use its own advantages; however, there is also a need to coordinate development in the context of national strategies and their objectives. From the economic point of view, they are not so independent, and their inter-connections and ties cannot be avoided.

The main objective of this document was to elaborate a policy advice report (based on international expertise and experience) for the City of Turku and the Turku City Region (for more information see part “**Turku and the Turku City Region**” of this report) on improvement of the current metropolitan governance issues, including aspects of inter-municipal cooperation and spatial planning. The expert team consisted of three internationally recognised experts, namely Daniel Klimovský from Slovakia (as a lead project expert), Thomas Prorok from Austria, and Rūdolfs Cimdiņš from Latvia (for more information see part “**About the authors**”). Their findings and recommendations in this report have been formulated on the basis of good international practice and internationally recognised standards, especially articles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government³, principles of good democratic governance⁴,

² For instance, MDI Public uses this name for an area that contains the cities and regions of Helsinki, Tampere and Turku, as well as the regions in between. (MDI Public. 2019. MDI created cartograms of the growth triangle. Online at: <https://www.mdi.fi/en/mdi-created-cartograms-growth-triangle/>).

³ Council of Europe. 1985. European Charter of Local Self-Government. European Treaty Series - No. 122. Online at: <https://rm.coe.int/168007a088>

⁴ Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the principles of good democratic governance. Online at: https://search.coe.int/cm/pages/result_details.aspx?objectid=0900001680abeb87

recommendations on democratic accountability⁵, local democratic participation⁶, guidelines for civil participation in political decision making⁷, etc.

The expert team was tasked to collect all accessible and important data linked to metropolitan governance, inter-municipal cooperation and spatial planning; assess and compare them with relevant international experience and knowledge; and formulate a set of policy recommendations which can be adopted by the members of the Turku City Region and the City of Turku itself.

1.1 Method

A preparatory meeting for planning the work needed for the preparation of this report was held in Turku in October 2023. Besides the lead project expert and project staff, a few representatives of various departments of the City of Turku and a national expert from Turku took part in this meeting. The meeting served as a forum to discuss the specific topical areas in relation to which Turku authorities wish to strengthen the regulatory framework and/or relevant practices, thereby sharing their expectations from the required policy advice report.

Taking the outcomes of the October meeting into account, the expert team carried out desk research to collect preliminary data on the pertinent situation. Consequently, each expert prepared a set of questions: Rūdolfs Cimdiņš focused on spatial planning, Thomas Prorok focused on metropolitan governance, and Daniel Klimovský on inter-municipal cooperation, and in November 2023, a series of semi-structured interviews/discussions with the Finnish stakeholders were carried out to enrich the baseline research and collect first-hand information on the challenges faced by the local authorities which fall into the remit of the report. These interviews were selected as a suitable and sufficient method to collect primary data that could uncover the perceptions of local stakeholders in regard to the present state and further development of the Turku City Region and well as Turku itself in terms of metropolitan governance, inter-municipal cooperation and spatial planning. A representative of the Finnish Ministry of Finance observed and/or participated in some of the interviews with additional comments and explanations. The full list of meetings is given in Tables 1 and 2 presented below.

Table 1. People who were interviewed on 13 November 2023

Time	Interlocutor	Title / position
10:30h - 12:30h	Siv Sandberg Markku Mölläri	Local expert – Åbo Akademi University Ministerial adviser – Ministry of Finance
13:30h - 14:30h	Jukka Vornanen	Director – Turku City Region

⁵ Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on democratic accountability of elected representatives and elected bodies at local and regional level. Online at: https://search.coe.int/cm/pages/result_details.aspx?objectId=0900001680a57739

⁶ Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life. Online at: https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807954c3

⁷ European Committee on Democracy and Governance. 2017. Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making. Online at: https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807509dd

	Markku Mölläri	Ministerial adviser – Ministry of Finance
15:00h - 16:00h	Heikki Saarento	Planning director – Regional Council of Southwest Finland
	Markku Mölläri	Ministerial adviser – Ministry of Finance
16:00h - 17:00h	Antti Lippo	Development manager – Tampere City Region Unit
	Markku Mölläri	Ministerial adviser – Ministry of Finance

Table 2. People who were interviewed on 14 November 2023

Time	Interlocutor	Title / position
9:00h - 10:00h	Eero Vainio	Mayor – City of Raisio
	Markku Mölläri	Ministerial adviser – Ministry of Finance
10:30h - 12:00h	Timo Hintsanen	City development director – City of Turku
	Markku Mölläri	Ministerial adviser – Ministry of Finance
13:00h - 14:00h	Jonathon Murphy	Talent adviser – International House Turku
	Markku Mölläri	Ministerial adviser – Ministry of Finance

Although all the interviewed people helped the experts collect a good volume of important data, it is necessary to stress that the expert team required holding interviews with a few more stakeholders, such as representatives of rural municipalities which had not been involved in the Turku City Region in spite of their reported political interest. Unfortunately, interviews with such stakeholders did not take place although the expert team interviewed two more people in December 2023, online. (Table 3).

Table 3. People who were interviewed on 4 December 2023

Time	Interlocutor	Title / position
9:00h - 10:30h	Jari Jussinmäki	City manager – Municipality of Paimio
12:00h - 13:00h	Sini Ruohonen	Member of the city board – City of Turku

The expert team analysed the collected data and discussions; being aware of its limited volume, this report's recommendations should be understood as a set of possible policy measures and opportunities for further consideration by relevant authorities, and not as a panacea suggesting the only correct way for the further development of Turku and the Turku City Region in the analysed fields.

1.2 A brief overview of local government in Finland

Finland is a European country where democratic local government has a long tradition. Since this report may also attract an international audience, it shall also include a brief overview of local government in Finland.

1.2.1 The local (municipal) level

The local government system in Finland is essential for national wellbeing and democracy. The first national articles of local authorities were enacted in 1865, when municipalities separated from the church and became autonomous.⁸ Nowadays, the self-government status of the municipalities is guaranteed in the Constitution of Finland.⁹ In spite of the self-government status of all municipalities, the state is entitled to intervene in areas such as the provision of local public services by introducing laws.

Nowadays, there are 309 municipalities (*kunta / kommun*, and certain municipalities are called cities or towns: *kaupunki / stad*) in Finland. The population of more than half of all the municipalities is fewer than six thousand residents. The smallest municipalities are populated by fewer than one hundred people. On the other hand, there are nine cities (Helsinki, Espoo, Tampere, Vantaa, Oulu, Turku, Jyväskylä, Lahti and Kuopio) with populations exceeding 100,000 residents. Since approximately 30 percent of the entire population of the country lives in these nine cities, it is clear that Finland is a very unevenly populated country. This is even more visible if one focuses on job distribution; while approximately 10 percent of jobs are offered in municipalities with a population up to six thousand residents, the nine largest cities of Finland offer approximately 40 percent of all jobs.

Each municipality is represented by a municipal (local) council (*kunnanvaltuusto / kommunfullmäktige*). The municipal councils are the highest decision-making bodies, and they steer all relevant activities at a local level. They also determine the definition of long-term goals. Members of the municipal councils are directly elected by municipal residents for a four-year term of office. The Local Government Act (410/2015) as amended includes provisions on the decision-making responsibility of municipal councils for areas such as municipal strategies; administrative regulations; municipal budgets and financial plans; ownership policy principles and corporate governance principles that apply to local authority corporations; other principles or objectives (e.g. objectives linked to the operation and financial state of municipally owned companies and principles for managing assets and for investment activities); elections of members to other municipal decision-making bodies; the appointment of auditors; and the approval of financial statements.¹⁰

Executive powers – including municipal administration and financial management – are in the hands of municipal (local) executive boards (*kunnanhallitus*), whose members are elected by the municipal councils. The personal composition of each municipal executive reflects the distribution of seats in the relevant councils. These municipal executives draft decisions which are taken by the municipal councils; they are also responsible for the implementation of all approved decisions. In practice, municipal executives are powerful municipal bodies because

⁸ Vakkala, H., Sinervo, L.-M., Jäntti, A. 2021. Local Self-Government in Finland. In: B. Brezovnik, I. Hoffman, J. Kostrubiec (eds). *Local Self-Government in Europe*. Maribor: Institute for Local Self-Government Maribor, pp. 173–206.

⁹ Council of Europe. 1997. *Structure and Operation of Local and Regional Democracy: Finland. Situation in 1997*. Strasbourg Cedex: Council of Europe Publishing.

¹⁰ Local Government Act (410/2015) as amended.

most important matters prepared for relevant councils are politically agreed on in advance by these executives.¹¹

The municipal executive is led by a chief executive – municipal manager (in municipalities: *kunnanjohtaja / kommundirektör*, in cities: *kaupunginjohtaja / stadsdirektör*, and in Helsinki: *ylipormestari / överborgmästare*) – in most Finnish municipalities; however, several municipalities in Finland have introduced a model with a mayor (*pormestari / borgmästare*) who has replaced the chief executive. There is a visible difference in the relationship of the municipal council towards these two alternatives. In the case of the mayoral model, mayors are indirectly elected from among municipal councillors, and they are therefore members of municipal councils in their municipalities. By contrast, chief executives are unelected local government officers (managers) and therefore are not members of municipal councils in their municipalities. They are civil servants, and their position is either permanent or for a fixed term. Regardless of these models, both chief executives and mayors are subordinate to their municipal executives. This means that they act as the heads of a municipal administration and that they are responsible for financial management and coordination activities.

Moreover, municipal councils elect municipal committees (e.g. a municipal/urban planning committee, a cultural committee, and an education committee). Interestingly, these committees are established to operate under the supervision of relevant municipal executives; they can also be established as standing committees, which are permanent and responsible bodies for managing important operations. These local bodies are in charge of the provision of certain public services. Due to various features and needs, individual municipalities establish and use committees, whose scope may vary. Two obligatory municipal committees are the election committee and the auditing committee, which is responsible for auditing the administration and financial matters in relevant municipalities.

Each municipality in Finland is represented by a municipal council, a local executive, an election committee and an auditing committee. It is up to these bodies to determine whether some other decision-making bodies are to be established: e.g. a school management committee or an equality committee. They also can decide on whether they use a managerial model or whether they adopt a mayoral one. On this matter, one can find a few structural models of local government among Finnish municipalities.¹²

Furthermore, local executives and their chiefs (managers) or mayors manage local authority corporations (companies). They are supported in this by other municipal decision-making bodies, certain local officers and elected officials specified in the relevant municipal rules of procedure. Each local authority corporation consists of a municipality and its subsidiaries (i.e. entities such as limited liability companies and foundations, where a municipality exercises power of control) and provides a set of local public services.

¹¹ OECD/UCLG. (2022) 2022. Country Profiles of the World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment. Online at: <https://www.sng-wofi.org/country-profiles/finland.html>

¹² Vakkala, H., Sinervo, L.-M., Jäntti, A. 2021. Local Self-Government in Finland. In: B. Brezovnik, I. Hoffman, J. Kostrubiec (eds). Local Self-Government in Europe. Maribor: Institute for Local Self-Government Maribor, pp. 173–206.

Regardless of size or location, every municipality in Finland has the same service responsibilities as defined by legislation.¹³ For the local population, municipalities in particular deliver services in education and culture as well as various technical services. More precisely, municipalities are responsible for early childhood education, primary education, upper secondary education, youth work, local libraries, environmental protection, water supply, waste management, construction supervision and the construction of roads and other infrastructure. As for the capital, Helsinki delivers health services, rescue (emergency) services and social services to its residents. In the case of other municipalities, these services are delivered by recently established Wellbeing Services Counties.¹⁴ Each municipality has the right to tax its own residents. On this matter, municipalities are especially entitled to set their own tax rates. In addition, the Finnish Parliament determines a share of corporate tax revenue as an income for municipalities. A significant amount of municipalities' income comes from revenues linked to fees charged for local services. In addition, the State offers a set of central government transfers. There is specifically focused state aid which aims to financially support the municipalities.

1.2.2 The regional level

Regional councils (maakunnan liitto / landskapsförbundet) are statutory joint municipal authorities¹⁵ in which each municipality of the region must be a member.¹⁶ These councils have various responsibilities which are determined by the specific features of individual regions; however, there are two obligatory functions for all of them: regional development and regional land-use planning. As for their other operations, regional councils protect regional interests in their relationship to other stakeholders. More precisely, regional councils protect and promote things such as specific regional culture features and traditions as well as regional economies in order to ensure the wellbeing of regional communities.

¹³ Vakkala, H., Sinervo, L.-M., Jäntti, A. 2021. Local Self-Government in Finland. In: B. Brezovnik, I. Hoffman, J. Kostrubiec (eds). Local Self-Government in Europe. Maribor: Institute for Local Self-Government Maribor, pp. 173–206.

¹⁴ Suomi.fi Municipalities and Local Government. Online at: <https://www.suomi.fi/citizen/rights-and-obligations/digital-support-and-administrative-services/guide/how-finlands-public-administration-works/municipalities-and-local-government>

¹⁵ Council of Europe. 2009. Structure and Operation of Local and Regional Democracy: Finland. Situation in 2009. Strasbourg Cedex: Council of Europe Publishing.

¹⁶ Suomi.fi Municipalities and Local Government. Online at: <https://www.suomi.fi/citizen/rights-and-obligations/digital-support-and-administrative-services/guide/how-finlands-public-administration-works/municipalities-and-local-government>

Figure 1. Collaborative areas and territories of regional councils in Finland¹⁷



There are eighteen mainland regions (maakunta / landskap) in Finland and the autonomous province of the Åland Islands (Figure 1), which also enjoys the status of a region. A differently organised administration is used in the Åland Islands, which is located near the southwest coast of the Finnish mainland.

1.2.3 Vertical and horizontal cooperation

The Finnish State and its ministries (especially the Ministry of Finance) steer and regulate the services and economy of the municipalities (including cities) and influence their financial resources through state subsidies and economic policies.¹⁸ In relation to the sought higher efficiency of the local governments, there is a general belief that many municipalities remain too small to gain effects of economy of scale. To tackle this issue, efforts towards amalgamation have been made, but have been generally rejected by the municipalities; therefore, as an alternative, the government's measures are focused on enhancing various

¹⁷ Regions in Finland and Their Capitals. Online at:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regions_of_Finland#/media/File:Regions_of_Finland_labelled_EN.svg

¹⁸ Vakkala, H., Sinervo, L.-M., Jäntti, A. 2021. Local Self-Government in Finland. In: B. Brezovnik, I. Hoffman, J. Kostrubiec (eds). Local Self-Government in Europe. Maribor: Institute for Local Self-Government Maribor, pp. 173–206.

forms of collaboration,¹⁹ which necessarily influences the implementation of the principles of locality and subsidiarity.²⁰ This long-term top-down pressure, in combination with the limited capacities of some municipalities, has led to situations in which municipalities are overburdened.²¹

Municipalities usually negotiate with the central government through the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (Suomen Kuntaliitto), when: (1) a new regulation influencing the local government system is planned, (2) the central government introduces measures that are far-reaching and can influence municipalities, their status, financial wellbeing or the local government system as such, and (3) there is a case of coordination of central-local financial relationships.²² If there is a new national draft regulation which can influence the local government system, competences or financial rules, the drafting body must take into account the self-governing status of the Finnish municipalities anchored in the Finnish Constitution as well as the financial state of these municipalities.²³

The Finnish Constitution also secures the municipalities' right to make financial decisions, for example the right to levy taxes. However, the Finnish Ministry of Finance monitors their financial activities. In addition, the Advisory Committee on Local Government Finances and Administration (Kuntatalouden ja -hallinnon neuvottelukunta / Delegationen för kommunal ekonomi och förvaltning) closely cooperates with the Ministry of Finance, and this committee is responsible for monitoring and assessing trends linked to municipalities' financial wellbeing.²⁴

Each year, a programme for local government finances is elaborated. This programme is included in the preparatory work for the general government fiscal plan and for a national budget proposal. In this programme, one can find an assessment of the funding of municipalities in terms of adequacy and an assessment of changes regarding the local environment as well as the demand for local services.²⁵ Although the preparation of this programme is managed by the Ministry of Finance, other ministries (e.g. the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy) also take part in its preparation. At this point, it is important to stress that the programme for local government finances is a tool to monitor municipalities' finances as a

¹⁹ Kettunen, P. 2015. The Finnish Municipal Reform. *Annals of the Croatian Political Science Association*, 11(1): 55–70.

²⁰ Vakkala, H., Jäntti, A., Sinervo, L.-M. 2021. Redefining Local Self-Government: Finnish Municipalities Seeking Their Essence. In: T. Bergström, J. Franzke, S. Kuhlmann, E. Wayenberg (eds). *The Future of Local Self-Government*. Palgrave Studies in Sub-National Governance. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 43–54.

²¹ Haveri, A. 2015. Nordic Local Government: A Success Story, But Will It Last? *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 28(2): pp. 136–149.

²² Local Government Act (410/2015).

²³ OECD/UCLG. (2022) 2022. Country Profiles of the World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment. Online at: <https://www.sng-wofi.org/country-profiles/finland.html>

²⁴ Ministry of Finance Finland. Advisory Committee on Local Government Finances and Administration. Online at: <https://vm.fi/en/advisory-committee-on-local-government-finances-and-administration>

²⁵ OECD/UCLG. (2022) 2022. Country Profiles of the World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment. Online at: <https://www.sng-wofi.org/country-profiles/finland.html>

part of the public economy in terms of their adequacy; however, some scholars have already questioned its effectiveness.²⁶ For more details on the specificities regarding the financing of the Finnish municipalities, local finance management by the local authorities as well as CoE recommendations in this area, please refer to the CoE Policy advice report on fiscal decentralisation and fiscal autonomy of the regional and local governments, and the fiscal impact of the reform.

Municipalities in Finland usually deliver local services in cooperation with other municipalities²⁷ as well as private companies and corporations.²⁸ A main driver of this model of local service delivery is economic efficiency rather than political ties. A joint municipal authority is a very popular model among small municipalities. In some cases, these authorities are single-purpose inter-municipal cooperation bodies, but multi-purpose joint municipal authorities are much more common. Municipalities employ this model of cooperation, for instance, in the field of security services and services linked to environmental protection.

The responsibility for organising healthcare, social welfare and rescue services was transferred from municipalities and joint municipal authorities to wellbeing services counties on 1 January 2023.²⁹ These wellbeing services counties (*hyvinvointialue / välfärdsområde*) were introduced as new self-governing units, and nowadays there are twenty-one such counties in Finland. The territories of some of them are the same as the territories of some regions, but, in other cases, the boundaries of the wellbeing services counties and the regions are different. Helsinki is excluded from this structure; therefore the capital takes responsibility for the equivalent delivery of these counties' services. All other municipalities are within these counties, with no municipality being a member of more than one. The counties' responsibilities include the delivery of primary healthcare, specialised healthcare, social welfare, services for children, young people and families, services for working-age people, mental health and substance abuse services, services for persons with disabilities, student welfare, rescue services, and prehospital emergency medical services.³⁰ The healthcare services are provided at healthcare centres and hospitals.³¹ The wellbeing services counties are governed by county councils, whose members are directly elected every four years in county elections. These councils are

²⁶ Vakkala, H., Sinervo, L.-M., Jäntti, A. 2021. Local Self-Government in Finland. In: B. Brezovnik, I. Hoffman, J. Kostrubiec (eds). *Local Self-Government in Europe*. Maribor: Institute for Local Self-Government Maribor, pp. 173–206.

²⁷ Various forms of inter-municipal cooperation among Finnish municipalities are guaranteed not only by the national legislation, but also by the Art. 10 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Council of Europe. 1985. *European Charter of Local Self-Government*. European Treaty Series - No. 122. Online at: <https://rm.coe.int/168007a088>).

²⁸ Eythórsson, G. T., Kettunen, P., Klausen, J. E., Sandberg, S. 2018. Reasons for Inter-municipal Cooperation: A Comparative Analysis of Finland, Iceland and Norway. In: F. Teles, P. Swianiewicz (eds). *Inter-Municipal Cooperation in Europe. Governance and Public Management*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 105–129.

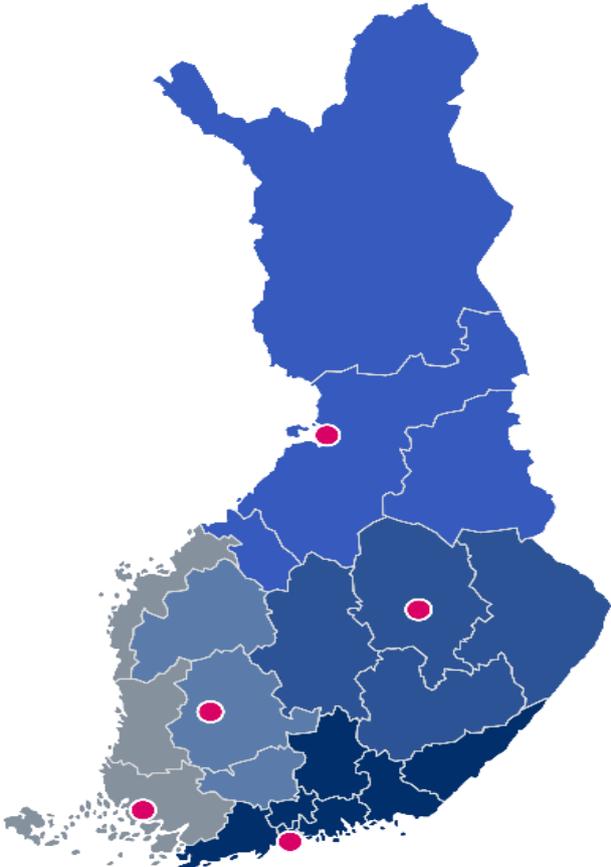
²⁹ Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. 2023. Wellbeing Services Counties Will Be Responsible for Organising Health, Social and Rescue Services. Online at: <https://stm.fi/en/wellbeing-services-counties>

³⁰ Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. 2023. Wellbeing Services Counties Will Be Responsible for Organising Health, Social and Rescue Services. Online at: <https://stm.fi/en/wellbeing-services-counties>

³¹ Suomi.fi Wellbeing Services County. Online at: <https://www.suomi.fi/citizen/rights-and-obligations/digital-support-and-administrative-services/guide/how-finlands-public-administration-works/wellbeing-services-county>

supreme decision-making bodies at the county level. Individual counties also establish a few additional councils (e.g. youth councils, disability councils, and councils for the aged) – and these bodies reflect the responsibilities of the counties and their intention to act inclusively. Despite the self-governing status of wellbeing services counties, their autonomy is limited because their funding is significantly determined by the state. Indeed, they have no right to levy tax and are instead financially dependent on the state and its funding. Unlike the municipalities, counties do not have any general competence; therefore, they cannot take on new tasks without the approval of the central government.³²

Figure 2. Collaborative areas and wellbeing services counties in Finland³³



Every wellbeing services county belongs to a collaborative area, and a university hospital is located in each of these collaborative areas. In total, there are five collaborative areas (Figure 2) in Finland (namely Northern Finland collaborative area, Eastern Finland collaborative area, Inland Finland collaborative area, Western Finland collaborative area, and Southern Finland collaborative area), and they aim to promote the regional coordination and development of healthcare and social welfare, and cooperation between the wellbeing services counties. The wellbeing services counties belonging to the same collaborative area draw up a mutual cooperation agreement where they agree on the division of responsibilities among the counties.

The bilingual wellbeing services counties (e.g., the Wellbeing Services County of Southwest Finland) also draw up a mutual cooperation agreement to secure the linguistic rights of the Swedish-speaking population in healthcare and social welfare.³⁴

³² OECD/UCLG. (2022) 2022. Country Profiles of the World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment. Online at: <https://www.sng-wofi.org/country-profiles/finland.html>
³³ Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. 2023. Collaborative Areas for Healthcare and Social Welfare. Online at: <https://stm.fi/en/collaborative-areas>
³⁴ Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. 2023. Collaborative Areas for Healthcare and Social Welfare. Online at: <https://stm.fi/en/collaborative-areas>

2. Turku and the Turku City Region

For the preparation of this report, the expert team analysed information from the perspectives of the City of Turku and the Turku City Region. In this context, it is paramount to understand the current baseline as well as desired achievements of both the City of Turku and the Turku City Region. However, understanding the reasons / motivation of the current local government setup in the city is also important, because its quality and capacity can influence the effectiveness of implementation of all policy recommendations.

2.1 A general overview and development potential

The past of Turku is very important for its current activities and its visions. It was the first city established on the territory of modern-day Finland. It was also the first capital of Finland, and there is a clear cultural heritage linked to a Swedish-speaking community in the city itself and in the wider region. Nowadays, Turku is the most important city located in the region of Southwest Finland (Varsinais-Suomi), and its present population size is almost 200,000 inhabitants.³⁵ This means that Turku is the sixth largest city in Finland (only Espoo, Helsinki, Oulu, Tampere, and Vantaa are larger in terms of their population). It is also the centre of an urban (metropolitan) area that is the third largest city region in Finland after the Helsinki Capital Region and the Tampere City Region. Almost 340,000 residents live in the Turku City Region nowadays.

Looking at the population size of the city, one has to be aware that its population has been growing in recent years but that this growth is primarily based on immigration. Due to this trend, as well as due to a significant Swedish-speaking community which lives in the city and the whole region, Turku is clearly multicultural and diverse.

Turku is the centre of the region in terms of industry, commerce, education, science, sports, and culture. The city plays the role of regional leader, and its main national competitors in terms of economic development are Helsinki and Tampere. It seems that this kind of competition has recently led to a reinforcement of the city's efforts to gain some competitive advantages. In 2020, Turku was recognised by the EU's Covenant of Mayors as the best mid-sized climate city in Europe. Nowadays, Turku has an ambitious city strategy (The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the City of Turku). By 2030 and 2040, it wants to become a leader in the field of carbon neutrality and environmental protection:

- a carbon-neutral city by 2029 (the city has its own 2029 Climate Plan that was approved by the city council in 2018)
- a resource-wise city by 2040
- a city effectively implementing a zero-waste policy by 2040

³⁵ According to official data, 197,900 residents inhabited the city in 2022. See the Municipal Key Figures 1987–2022. Online at: https://pxdata.stat.fi/PxWeb/pxweb/en/Kuntien_avainluvut/Kuntien_avainluvut_2023/kuntien_avainluvut_2023_aikasarja.px/

In these efforts, the city tries to collaborate, for example, with the local business sector, universities, and NGOs, and it develops strategies and plans in important development fields. In addition, it tries to use recent immigration in order to increase its own capacities. On the other hand, it still lags behind Tampere and Helsinki in terms of local development, which creates a development gap that should be filled.

2.2 Administration and management

The Turku City Council is the highest decision-making body in Turku. It elects both the Turku Mayor and the Turku City Board.

The Turku City Board is responsible for the city's administration and financial management as well as preparing, implementing, and monitoring the legality of the City Council's decisions. The City Board supervises the interests of the city and, unless otherwise stated by law or by administrative regulations, represents the city and exercises its right to comment on wide-ranging, city-wide matters. Nowadays, the City Board, chaired by a mayor, has 14 members and each member has a personal vice member. The City Council chooses members for the City Board for two years at a time³⁶.

There are several additional sectoral boards in the city, and their activities are coordinated by the mayor and three deputy mayors:

- The mayor coordinates the activities of the Central Election Board
- Deputy mayor 1: Wellbeing Board, Culture and Youth Board, Physical Wellbeing and Sport Board
- Deputy mayor 2: Educational Board (this board consists of the Finnish Unit and the Swedish Unit)
- Deputy mayor 3: City Environment Board, Building and Permit Board

Political steering is managed by the mayor and three deputy mayors. In addition, there are three specific steering groups – the Wellbeing Steering Group, the City Environment Steering Group, and the Business and Attractivity Steering Group – as well as one Integration Steering Group.

Around 370 employees work for the Urban Environment Services Unit. Moreover, another fifty employees work for the Joint Services of the City Unit, and they provide necessary organisational support to the Urban Environment Services Unit in fields such as finances, administration, human resources, regulation, communications and development. As for Urban Environment Services, this unit is led by a director and there are five departments:

- Urban Design and Land Property: the zoning of the city centre, the zoning of the areas outside the city centre, transport planning, property development and housing management and site services
- Urban Construction: implementation planning, regional construction and maintenance of the urban environment and the construction of premises

³⁶ Turku. City Board. Online at: <https://www.turku.fi/en/decision-making/city-board>

- Authorisation and supervision: parking control and vehicle transfers, building supervision, environmental protection and environmental health
- Geographic Information and City Surveying: geographic information, field surveying, property formation and customer services
- Mobility Services: regional public transport and urban mobility solutions

In addition to these bodies, a few other bodies and corporations provide their services within or beyond the city's boundaries:

- the Regional and Social Health Organisation
- the Regional Waste Management Board
- the Regional Public Transport Board
- municipal companies

Turku is involved in several cooperation initiatives, including in inter-municipal cooperation. At the regional level, the Southwest Finland region comprises twenty-seven municipalities (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Municipalities in Southwest Finland³⁷



The territory of this region completely overlaps with the Wellbeing Services County of Southwest Finland (Varsinais-Suomen hyvinvointialue/ Egentliga Finlands välfärdsområde) which consists of the following municipalities: Aura, Kaarina, Kimitoön, Koski Tl, Kustavi, Laitila, Lieto, Loimaa, Marttila, Masku, Mynämäki, Naantali, Nousiainen, Oripää, Paimio, Pargas, Pyhärinta, Pöytyä, Raisio, Rausko, Salo, Sauvo, Somero, Taivassalo, Turku, Uusikaupunki, and Vehmaa.³⁸

While this wellbeing county especially provides healthcare services, social welfare services and rescue services, the region – which is represented by its regional council – is responsible for tasks in the fields of regional development and regional land-use planning.

³⁷ Saarento, H. 2022. Regional Council of Southwest Finland as a Regional Planning Authority. A Presentation for the Regional Council of Southwest Finland (17 May 2022). Online at: <https://www.kurzemesregions.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Saarento-Planning-in-SWF-20220517.pdf>

³⁸ Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. 2023. Wellbeing Services Counties on the Map. Online at: <https://stm.fi/en/wellbeing-services-counties-on-the-map1>

Similarly to cities like Helsinki and Tampere, Turku entered into inter-municipal cooperation through a MAL agreement (an agreement regulating land-use, transport and housing in the municipalities - parties to the agreement). The main and general goal of these MAL agreements in Finland is to enhance the functionality and competitiveness of urban regions. Thirteen members of the Turku MAL Agreement especially focus on land use and related voluntary urban regional planning. This collaboration unit has a robust organisation structure, including its own steering group and a few working groups. On this matter, it is important to mention that the Director of Turku City Region became a member of the MAL Steering Group in March 2024.

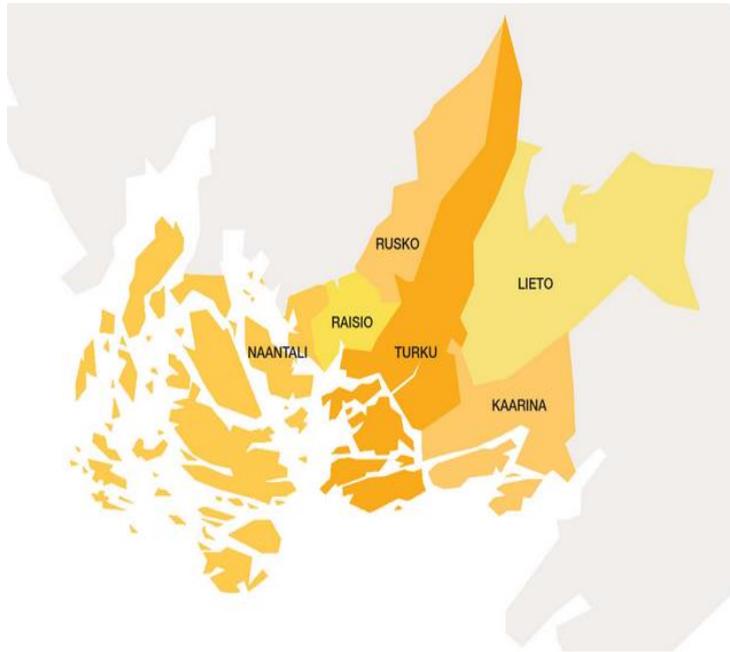
The City of Turku has a unit called Business Turku. From a territorial point of view, it covers eleven municipalities and is particularly focused on business development. As for inter-municipal cooperation, Turku must cooperate with other municipalities in the field of waste management, which is organised at the regional level. Other inter-municipal cooperation initiatives where Turku is involved are developed in fields like transport, water management, the labour market and education, but these cooperation initiatives are voluntary and there are multiple cooperation networks in these fields across the Southwest Finland region.

Turku and the five neighbouring municipalities – Lieto, Raisio, Kaarina, Naantali and Rusko – founded the Turku City Region in 2022. From a legal point of view, this is a joint municipal authority which is the legally recognised and commonly used form of inter-municipal cooperation in Finland. Despite the fact that there was a broader demand to join this inter-municipal cooperation initiative by other, mainly rural municipalities located in the surroundings of Turku, the founding members excluded them from active participation. Even though some structural reasons were considered during the establishment of the Turku City Region³⁹, it was understood as a politically-driven decision. At this point it is important to stress that further enlargement of this collaboration unit is not banned. On the contrary, in the new city region strategy, one can find the following provision: *“In the second half of the strategy’s period, there will be an assessment of the current relevance of the joint municipal authority’s membership base and possible needs for changes.”*⁴⁰ However, taking the establishment of the Turku City Region into account, should there be a change in members’ preferences, it would likely again be a purely political decision.

³⁹ See the new Regional Strategy (2024-2026): Joint municipal authority of the Turku urban region or a structural plan for the core city region (2035).

⁴⁰ Regional Strategy (2024-2026): Joint municipal authority of the Turku urban region.

Figure 4. Territorial coverage of the Föli and Turku City Region⁴¹



A very important cooperation unit from the perspective of Turku and its neighbouring municipalities is Föli. Its activities are focused on transport services, and its territorial coverage is the same as in the case of the Turku City Region itself (Figure 4) with one exception. It has already been decided that the municipality of Paimio will become a full member of this cooperation within Föli in 2024, but it is not clear whether it will also become a new member of the Turku City Region.

⁴¹ About Föli. Online at: <https://www.foli.fi/en/lookingforthese/about-foli>

3. Findings and recommendations

Turku and the Turku City Region represent an interesting and economically viable area with a specific political and cultural heritage. In spite of some stereotypes that consider the Turku area to be somewhat slow in terms of decision-making and a laggard, especially in comparison with Tampere or Helsinki, the analysis has revealed the clear potential of both the city and the city region in terms of further complex development. On the other hand, several weaknesses, risks and shortcomings have been identified too. A set of policy recommendations for further consideration of the Finnish authorities, prepared on the basis of comparative international experience, is offered in the following sections of this report.

3.1 Main findings and recommendations

The analysis led to identification of relevant findings in four main fields. The first field is linked to the spatial definition of the city region, especially in terms of its development potential and common identity. The second field touches upon the mission and vision of the city region while the third field is organisation and the coordination framework. The fourth field includes the involvement of citizens and their support for development in accordance with the European standards on democratic governance. All these fields are rather broad and, therefore, they are presented separately in this section of the report.

3.1.1 A spatial definition of the city region in terms of development potential and a common identity

Findings: ➡ development potential and inter-municipal cooperation

The City of Turku is very active in various collaborations. Its activities include several inter-municipal cooperation initiatives. Taking the content of section 2.2 “**Administration and management**” into account, most of these initiatives are of a voluntary nature; however, this group of inter-municipal cooperation initiatives is very diverse if one looks at them from various points of view. For instance, these initiatives differ among themselves in terms of their duration. Some of them started a long time ago and have been meticulously developed since their start. Some others are rather new. The inter-municipal cooperation initiatives operate in different legal frameworks. While cooperation in the field of waste management is obligatory, and local governments have to follow the official national regulation, inter-municipal cooperation initiatives are voluntary in many other fields, and legal provisions in regard to these initiatives are rather flexible. There are also some cooperation initiatives that are co-ordinated by national authorities (e.g. MAL agreements).

The Turku City Region is also a case of voluntary inter-municipal cooperation. Nowadays, it consists of six urban municipalities: Kaarina, Lieto, Naantali, Raisio, Rusko and Turku. Established in 2022, it is a new initiative of inter-municipal cooperation. Since it has the status of a joint municipal authority, its management and administration are flexible and there is no

closed or legally pre-defined number of its members. This legal form is also used by other city regions in Finland and has proven to be effective.

An interesting point is that representatives of a few other municipalities which are members of the MAL agreement had been interested in the active involvement of their municipalities in this city region, but, due to politically-driven resistance, they had not received invitations. It was decided that in the initial phase, only Turku and its immediate neighbouring municipalities would be included in the Turku City Region. The main intention was to minimise the complexity and necessary balancing of interests that could have occurred with multiple partners with different preferences. In addition, some structural reasons (they are mentioned, for instance, in the structural plan for the core city region) were also taken into account.

Interviews with representatives of some of local stakeholders helped understand that the establishment of the Turku City Region was primarily a political decision based on some positive results from other inter-municipal cooperation initiatives and the intuitive preferences of the representatives of all involved municipalities; however, no comprehensive territorial study – including economic, social and political impacts – had been elaborated before the establishment of this body. More precisely, the functional criteria of territorial cooperation – such as size, population, workspace density and commuter relations – were not taken into consideration. Instead, the founders of this cooperation initiative have concentrated their efforts to ensure that only urban municipalities participate in the Turku City Region.

This seems that during the preparation stage of this inter-municipal cooperation initiative, the missing link between rural–urban communities has created a crucial cleavage. The territory of the Turku City Region exclusively covers urban municipalities; however, there is an ongoing interest from other municipalities involved in the MAL agreement in participating in the Turku City Region, and so in general a further enlargement of this city region through the accession of some other municipalities to the joint municipal authority is possible. For instance, the representative from Paimio confirmed that they are still interested in getting involved but that the process has been rather slow; indeed, some doubts linger among the current members of the Turku City Region in regard to further enlargements. To sum up these findings, local politics seems to be an important driver (or obstacle) for the further development of any inter-municipal cooperation initiative in the Turku area.

A closer look at the Southwest Finland region and the area around Turku reveals that there is a comprehensive, diverse and very well-developed compilation of inter-municipal cooperation across the whole region; however, it is fragmented and there is a noticeable lack of common coordination and spatial definition. The individual inter-municipal cooperation initiatives operate next to each other, but potential synergies are marginalised due to scattered coordination. More precisely, Turku is actively engaged in several inter-municipal cooperation networks with different territorial coverages (memberships), objectives as well as regulations, but its intensive involvement in these initiatives is not supported by any strong coordination body or authority. This fact opens questions in regard to willingness to cooperate and capacity sufficiency. On this matter, it is useful to assess, inter alia, financial, material and human

resources that can be invested in the coordination of various inter-municipal cooperation initiatives by Turku and other municipalities.

Recommendations: ➡ development potential and inter-municipal cooperation (using functional criteria to define the spatial demarcation of the Turku City Region)

The key functional characteristics like territorial coverage, density of settlement, workplaces, commuting patterns, transport organisation and public services should be taken into consideration to accurately define the extent of the regional (metropolitan) spaces. Employing an established functional classification system, such as the urban–rural classification,⁴² would be beneficial for delineating the coverage of the Turku City Region. This system enables the differentiation of settlements based on factors like interaction levels, categorising them into inner and outer urban zones as well as peri-urban zones and rural areas close to urban areas.

For the Turku City Region, this would mean that the eligibility of membership would be based on objective criteria and the boundaries would correspond to current operational needs. It is of interest that these functional criteria were used for the MAL agreement. On this matter, it would be worthwhile gradually aligning the Turku City Region with the municipalities of the MAL agreement. The classification would support this approach insofar as the other rural communities could enrich the city region as outer urban zones. To establish a distinctive and enduring image of a city region, it is advisable to encompass and have the capacity to engage with a broad spectrum of existing collaborations. The future basic objective, especially in the area of traffic and spatial planning, should be to match the coverage of the Turku City Region with the MAL agreement area in order to achieve an effective sub-regional (metropolitan) governance. At this point, it is worth highlighting the following provision from the new city region strategy (2024-2026): *“The role of the joint municipal authority of the Turku urban region (i.e., the Turku City Region) in the MAL agreement procedure and the regional transport system planning, will be assessed and clarified.”*⁴³ A supporting example is offered by the Tampere City Region, whose experiences show the advantages of having a matching membership of both the MAL agreement and the city region.

Centralisation, coordination and inter-municipal cooperation:

- **selected research-based findings-**

The results of a recently conducted survey in Norway, which focused on a certain form of inter-municipal cooperation, show that cooperation structures characterised by centralised governance, stability over time and reduced complexity, were likely to enhance the benefits and reduce the costs of inter-municipal cooperation through trust and consensus.⁴⁴

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, inter-municipal cooperation initiatives that include Turku are very scattered. Governance in this field is too complex and reveals a few

⁴² Finnish Environment Institute. 2020. Updated Urban–Rural Classification: Finland’s Degree of Urbanisation Currently at Over 72 Per Cent. Online at:

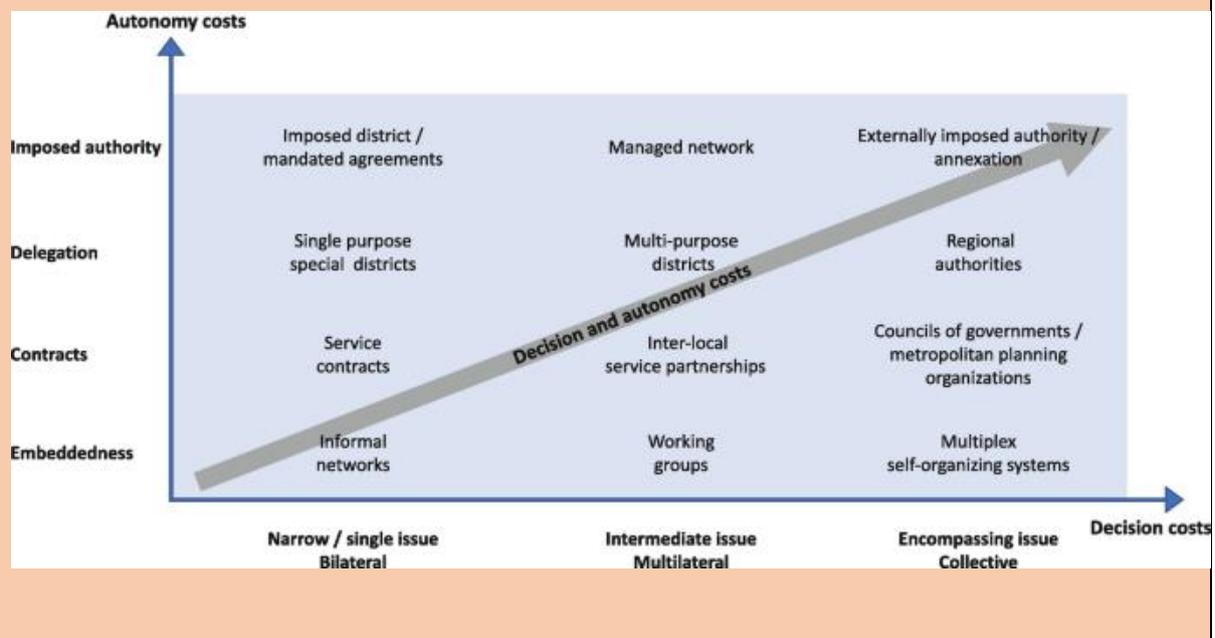
[https://www.syke.fi/en-US/Current/Updated_urbanrural_classification_Finlan\(57443\)](https://www.syke.fi/en-US/Current/Updated_urbanrural_classification_Finlan(57443))

⁴³ Regional Strategy (2024-2026): Joint municipal authority of the Turku urban region.

⁴⁴ Arntsen, B., Torjesen, D. O., Karlsen, T.-I. 2020. Associations Between Structures, Processes and Outcomes in Inter-municipal Cooperation in Out-of-hours Services in Norway: A Survey Study. *Social Science & Medicine*, 258: 113067.

dilemmas. The complexity of inter-municipal cooperation initiatives that are developed by the City of Turku can be nicely illustrated by a typology of integrative mechanisms for overcoming institutional collective actions. The City of Turku is engaged in several inter-municipal cooperation initiatives, which have diverse forms: e.g. service contracts, single-purpose cooperation, multi-purpose cooperation, regional authorities, inter-local service partnerships and the city region. In this context, it is necessary to keep in mind that fragmentation and lack of integration produce externalities (or spillovers) affecting third parties that exacerbate institutional collective action dilemmas, in turn creating situations where authorities' particularistic incentives are misaligned with collective interests.⁴⁵ In the context of investments in transport infrastructure, all local governments in a fragmented region benefit from better infrastructure but each one has the temptation to not contribute to the cost of achieving this result.

Figure 5. Integrative mechanisms for overcoming institutional collective actions⁴⁶



In terms of the consolidation of the fragmented inter-municipal cooperation initiatives and the possible enlargement of the Turku City Region, the 2025 local elections can be seen as a political driver (as well as an opportunity) to start a new public discussion on this issue. On this matter, inter-municipal cooperation is not a quick solution. All members of inter-municipal cooperation initiatives, as well as those in waiting and those who have applied for their memberships, must be patient because the first results can easily be confusing, or even disappointing. Some relevant observations from Norway show the importance of stepwise, incremental processes in establishing well-functioning inter-municipal cooperation.⁴⁷ From

⁴⁵ Feiock, R. C. 2013. The Institutional Collective Action Framework. *Policy Studies Journal*, 41(3): 397–425.

⁴⁶ Kim, S. Y., Swann, W. L., Feiock, R. C. 2020. Collective Learning and Institutional Collective Action in Fragmented Governance. In: J. Glückler, G. Herrigel, M. Handke (eds). *Knowledge for Governance. Knowledge and Space*. Cham: Springer, pp. 351–373 (adapted from R. C. Feiock, 2013).

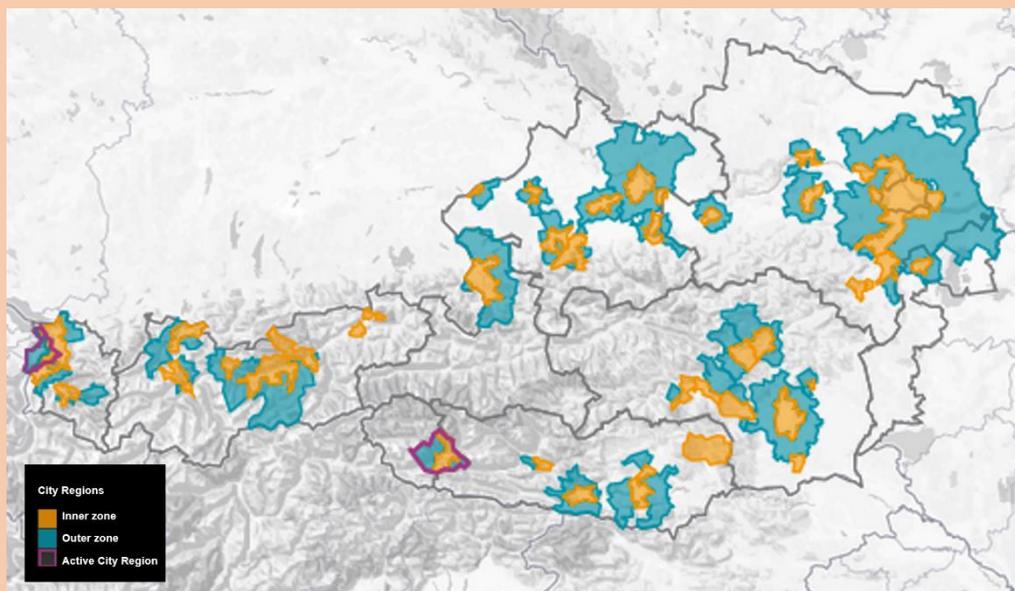
⁴⁷ Jacobsen, D. I., Kiland, C. 2017. Success with a Bitter Aftertaste: Success Factors in Inter-Municipal Cooperation. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, 21(4): 53–76.

the perspective of the cooperating municipalities, it is good to set a hierarchy of results, including not only strategic objectives but also quick and small wins. Achieving the strategic objectives often takes a long time and the road to them can be winding. Taking this fact into account, it is a wise strategy to follow both strategic objectives and quick wins because these wins can satisfy the first expectations and keep all collaborators determined. More precisely, these quick wins can play a role as drivers of possible consolidation in the case of fragmented inter-municipal cooperation initiatives because waiting for big achievements can be long and even confusing for all parties. This should be taken into consideration by the representatives of the Turku City Region.

The demarcation of city regions in Austria

The delineation of city regions in Austria is based on spatial and structural characteristics such as population and building density, from which a core area with a homogeneous structure can be summarised. On the other hand, their demarcation is based on the extent of spatial interdependencies between the core and outer zone in the areas of commuter flows, supply and leisure, which indicate the catchment areas of the core zone. A nationwide definition of city regions in Austria has been carried out every ten years since 1971.

Figure 6. City regions in Austria⁴⁸



Since 2013, the city region's demarcation has been integrated and derived from the newly developed Urban–Rural Typology of Statistics Austria. The Urban–Rural Typology is essentially grid-based and then transferred to the municipal level so that each municipality is characterised as one of eleven different types: e.g. big, middle and small urban centres; central or intermediate regional centres; and rural areas within the catchment area of centres.

The development of city regions in Austria is mainly driven by the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK) and the Austrian Association of Towns and Cities. Additional

⁴⁸ Statistics Austria. Urban–Rural Typology. Online at: https://www.statistik.at/atlas/?mapid=topo_stadt_land

activities for fostering city-regional development are implemented by these institutions. As an example, an implementation partnership within the process of the Austrian Spatial Development Concept (ÖREK) has been set up. This is dedicated to a Cooperation Platform Urban Region to define positions and key points for an Austrian agglomeration policy. This ÖREK partnership elaborated the Agenda City Regions⁴⁹ so that in 2017 all ÖREK members, the government, federal states, cities and municipalities all agreed on a common recommendation for a city regions policy⁵⁰ which included a roadmap. Furthermore, a City Regions Day is regularly organised focusing on knowledge transfer.

Findings: ➡ **identity**

Local and regional identity is a sensitive topic and it is usually linked to a clear resistance in some cases of change. Paradoxically, despite having learnt - thanks to the interviewees - that the founders of the Turku City Region intended to support a unique city region identity, the residents of the involved municipalities were completely excluded from decision-making processes. Due to this exclusion of residents, a common image of the Turku City Region and of a sub-regional identity is not recognisable. Unfortunately, there is no robust empirical evidence to prove whether the involved municipalities or their citizens consider and define themselves as members of the city region. In addition, an important point is the finding that the common identity and marketing of the Turku City Region is a topical issue, but there are diverse opinions regarding the issue from local stakeholders. According to expert opinions and interviews, it seems there is large room for improvement in politicians' awareness at the regional level as well as a need for an increased willingness to cooperate. A discernible need can be determined for a stronger spirit of cooperation in regional/municipal politics and administrations to initiate successful collaborations.

At least three different institutions provide services related to the field of regional marketing: Business Turku, Archipelago (Tourism) and International House Turku addressing services for international residents and professionals. The coordination between these institutions is weak or non-existent.

Last but not least, in spite of some stakeholders' declarations about the importance of the identity of the city region, too little has been done in this area so far.

Recommendations: ➡ **identity**

It became apparent during the interviews that there is room for improvement in involving citizens in various processes because their awareness regarding the future plans and actions concerning the Turku City Region was poor. Identity is a shared value, which should be rooted in something deeper than the texts of political declarations and cooperation agreements. This, however, requires long-term and intensive efforts.

⁴⁹ ÖROK. 2015. Österreichische Raumordnungskonferenz: Agenda Stadtregionen in Österreich -Empfehlungen der ÖROK-Partnerschaft „Kooperationsplattform Stadtregion“ und Materialienband. Schriftenreihe, 198.

⁵⁰ ÖROK. 2017. Österreichische Raumordnungskonferenz: Für eine Stadtregionspolitik in Österreich – Ausgangslage, Empfehlungen & Beispiele. Empfehlung, 55.

Since the Turku City Region is a very young entity, a “regional thinking” linked to its existence should be established through the administration and policies of all involved municipalities. From this perspective, their communication among themselves, towards their citizens and towards third parties must be coordinated and focused on both the needs and benefits of joint city-regional actions in particular.

For outer visibility, all active institutions working in the field of (regional) marketing – especially Business Turku, the Archipelago and International House Turku – should interconnect their activities with the Turku City Region's activities. All public relations activities should be bundled within a joint marketing strategy to set up an internationally visible image of an attractive and modern city region.

The Turku City Region Office should function as the first contact point for all aspects and representation of the city region, and it should promote the city region's interests at all levels. A joint presentation of the city region – for example, in social media as well as in international networks and events (fairs) – is crucial in order to attract national and international audiences, especially private companies. This integration of capacities and the coordination of activities can also increase the chances of the city region to attract external funding. Instead of competition between the individual municipalities of this city region, it needs coordinated efforts and comprehensive location marketing.

Crafting a distinctive and comprehensive image of the city region is a crucial determinant of cultivating regional identity and a shared sense of belonging. It is imperative to incorporate various formats of citizen participation into all processes linked to the development of the city region if one wants to enhance democratic decision-making and promote the widespread acceptance of implementation measures.⁵¹ This could involve initiatives such as a citizens' assembly⁵², akin to the model in Tampere, as well as leveraging information and communication platforms (e.g. dialogues), surveys, regional events, participatory planning and budgeting.

The European Metropolitan Region Munich



The European Metropolitan Region Munich (EMM) was founded 2008 as a private law association comprising ninety cities and districts as well as 100 private partners (seventy companies and thirty educational and research institutions and other associations).

One of the main goals of the EMM is to create a metropolitan regional identity (joint location marketing, strengthening external perception). Attempts are being made to optimise hard and soft location factors (e.g. joint climate protection activities, region of knowledge, skilled worker development, accessibility, master plans for selected industries,

⁵¹ Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life. Online at:

https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807954c3

⁵² Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on deliberative democracy. Online at: https://search.coe.int/cm/pages/result_details.aspx?objectid=0900001680ac627a

and broadband expansion). In addition, the EMM is a platform for business, science and politics (networking and bundling internal forces). Tangible projects for positive regional development are also being implemented.

Six working groups (knowledge, economy, environment, mobility, culture and sport, and rural areas) determine the direction of content. The office employs five full-time employees. The general meeting elects a steering committee and committee elects the board. Both the steering committee and the board are 50 percent public and 50 percent private. The registered association is financed by the contributions of its members, which are calculated proportionately: six cents/inhabitant for districts and three cents/inhabitant for municipalities. Other members pay fixed membership fees. The membership fees are regulated in a fee schedule which is approved by the board and published on the EMM homepage.

Topics and activities:

- life quality
- leisure/local recreation, especially through the visualisation of offers (promotion of domestic tourism)
- energy through common climate protection concepts; further training/networking and exchange of energy officers and climate protection officers
- local transport/mobility through the creation of an accessibility atlas (individual transport and the “accessibility” of skilled workers)
- education, e.g. skilled workers campaign
- governance through the organisation/structure of the EMM

Regional identities in Slovakia

Due to an extremely fragmented municipal structure, the central government has decided to establish a second (i.e. regional) level of government in Slovakia in 2001; however, the citizens were not properly informed on the importance of regional governments, and the voter turnout in the 2001 regional elections was extremely low. This effect has been repeatedly observed in regional elections in the following years, and the regional governments have struggled terribly with low public trust and a weak position in the public administration system of Slovakia.⁵³

The citizens were strongly resistant to a new regional identity, and they preferred to identify themselves with either historically developed cultural regions or with the regions that had been used during Communist party rule. Some significant changes have occurred just recently, and there are a few reasons for this - one most important being a kind of political maturity in these regions and a willingness and capacity to produce their own “solutions”, i.e. measures that help them show their uniqueness from everyone else. The Trenčín Self-Governing Region became very active in using various pro-environmental and participatory

⁵³ Klimovský, D. 2009. Politics and its Impact on the Reform Processes: The Case of Public Administration Reform in Slovakia (1989–2006). In: J. Musil (ed). Space and Historical Time as Dimensions of Social Change. Prague: Charles University, pp. 45–64.

tools, including participatory planning and participatory budgeting. The Trnava Self-Governing Region and the Bratislava Self-Governing Region became much more visible thanks to adopting “unusual” strategies, e.g. in combating gender-based violence and in the low carbon economy. Interviews with representatives of these regional governments revealed that while they were competing between each other, they also seek inspiration from each other. In addition, they have combined all relevant and necessary resources in order to present themselves to their own citizens, all municipalities located on their territories and third parties.⁵⁴

A key message from this example could be considered for the Turku City Region: an effort to build some identity requires patience and the employment of relevant resources. It is good to look for inspirations in Tampere, Helsinki and other city regions in Finland and elsewhere. Ultimately, the logic of a city region will require the Turku City Region to produce something unique for its citizens and member municipalities.

3.1.2 Mission and vision of the city region

Findings: mission and future tasks

Taking the recent establishment of this entity (in 2020) as well as its current personnel resources (one employee) into account, the Turku City Region is still in its starting phase, and is building up its political and administrative basis. Two crucial shortcomings have been identified at this point: (1) the core functions and tasks of the city region have not been precisely defined, and (2) the preliminary impacts of the first activities are not monitored at this stage of implementation. From the previous section, we know that the citizens have not been involved in these processes at all; therefore, they cannot help in defining the function and tasks of the city region or in monitoring the preliminary impacts.

Taking the data collected in the interviews into account, mobility and traffic planning seem to be core issues of further development in the whole city region. The Turku City Region Transport Committee (Föli region) works by operating buses, and the City of Turku is currently planning the construction of a tramline within the city boundaries. Although the Regional Council of Southwest Finland actively participated, for instance, in the processes of planning the tramline as well as regional planning, active involvement of other regional players or of representatives of surrounding municipalities remained very limited. For example, representatives of Raisio and Kaarina were invited at the initial stage of planning the tramline but these representatives were not ready to adopt the final decision at the mentioned stage, and therefore the City of Turku continued in planning of this important transport infrastructure within its own borders. This is despite the fact that there is a sub-regional interest and a need for further coordination and planning of the tramline (the existence of the

⁵⁴ Klimovský, D., Marušinec, J. 2022. 20 rokov samosprávnych krajov: vybrané míľníky v legislatívne a financovaní. In: G. Mesežnikov, V. Maroši (eds). 20 rokov samosprávnych krajov na Slovensku 2001 – 2021. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, pp. 122–156.

city region not only allows but also can be reinforced by the possible construction of a tramline beyond the borders of the City of Turku).

Another interesting example of policy limitation in regional planning is linked to the three existing harbours in this region. An alternative to the current, competitive set up could be to find the best location for concentrating the resources for development on just one site or for splitting functionalities between existing locations. There are several other areas of regional importance where the city region can play an important role (e.g. education, culture and sports), but during the interviews it was understood that any strategy in these fields at the level of the city region were missing.

Recommendations: ➡ **mission and future tasks**

It seems that the preparatory planning of the city region's establishment has been underestimated. Based on a stakeholder mapping and analysis of the most serious challenges and specific needs of the Turku City Region, the mission, main tasks, objectives and areas of cooperation have to be precisely defined in the Turku City Region Strategy. More precisely, it must be clear to everyone what the representatives of the participating municipalities want to achieve and how they plan to achieve the desired state (or the mentioned objectives).

Specific permanent working groups or committees should work on the chosen core themes and elaborate detailed measures with the aim to set up an action plan for the Turku City Region (including a budget and marketing concept). One of these working groups could address the area of mobility and (public) transport, and another could address city region marketing for tourism (e.g. promoting the Archipelago) and the settlement of people and businesses.

The spatial development and land use should be linked at the MAL agreement level. The existing binding regional development plans of the MAL agreement may be further developed and implemented within the Turku City Region by the coordination of municipal development plans. At this point, it is important to remind that the Director of the Turku City Region became a member of the MAL Steering Group in March 2024. On this matter, the city region level represents the perfect reference to deal with cross-sectional tasks like the transition to sustainability and resilience (e.g. a risk and disaster plan, energy planning and green network plans).

It is also recommended to focus on specific regional development and infrastructure projects which can help strengthen the city region's visibility and identity. One such example could be the common planning and implementation of a regional tram connecting the most densely populated areas and fostering the inter-relations and affiliations of inhabitants. Interestingly, the tramline had specifically been planned as a sub-regional (*seutu*) measure, but due to various reasons the current version of its plan does not cross the City of Turku's borders. Other starting pilot projects could deal with common financing and preparing regional cultural, recreational and sports infrastructures (e.g. theatre, sports facilities, recreational parks and river parks). A few identified priority projects may be driven by the establishment of temporary implementation partnerships. Another focus may be linked to the inter-municipal development of business parks. The example from Austria, below, shows how this can be managed by fairly dividing the benefits of the participating municipalities.

INKOBA Region Freistadt



The INKOBA (Inter-Communal Business Settlement) Region Freistadt primarily pursues the goal of securing the economy in a partially peripheral region and bringing high-quality jobs to the citizens there. This objective is to be achieved through the joint development and marketing of business development areas and the relocation of companies. The focus is on strengthening and expanding the regional portfolio of companies. INKOBA is an association in accordance with the Austrian law. Uniform and clear rules for the establishment of companies have been put in place; all new business areas occupying over 5000 square metres must be offered to INKOBA and will be included in INKOBA by resolution of an association meeting. Selected projects and successes include the development of the Mitte-Abfoltern industrial development area in the municipality of Rainbach im Mühlkreis; the creation of medical technology as a new segment with Greiner Bio One, creating around 300 jobs; the Inter-municipal Spatial Development Axis S10 follow-up project (eight municipalities); and the Energy 2000 project on sustainable energy supply in operating areas in cooperation with the University of Vienna. The association's steering committee is a board consisting of nine members (mayors). The annual meeting serves as the decision-making body (with 82 members).

An important success factor for this cooperation is the agreement to divide the municipal business corporation tax of companies in the joint business development areas among the participating municipalities according to an agreed allocation.

Finally, the implementation processes and impacts on the city region have to be monitored and assessed in order to continuously optimise the effectiveness of the city region governance. The following example from Liverpool shows how a major common regional challenge like “climate change” led to a consistent coordination and cooperation with a strong elected political leadership.

Liverpool City Region – Climate Action Plan



The Liverpool City Region (LCR) includes the local government districts of Liverpool, Halton, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral, and it has more than 1.5 million inhabitants. It is organised as a combined authority which is chaired and represented by a directly elected Metro Mayor. In 2015, the government devolved some significant powers and tasks in the fields of economic development, transport, housing, planning, employment and skills to the LCR Combined Authority by a devolution agreement. Furthermore, the LCR focuses on innovation, energy, the environment and cultural activities in order to drive prosperity, encourage innovation and expand opportunities for people and communities in every part of the city region. The devolution deal allocated an investment fund worth £900m over

thirty years to the Combined Authority.⁵⁵ In October 2023, devolution enabled the mayor and the Combined Authority to take the bus network back into public control.

The region's visions and long-term strategic priorities are set out in its prosperity plan.⁵⁶ Together, the six local governments aim to create a "fairer, stronger, cleaner LCR – where no one is left behind". Crucial to the delivery of these corporate objectives is the Climate Action Plan, which was published in 2022 after a climate emergency was declared by the Combined Authority in June 2019. The Five-Year Climate Action Plan 2023–2028 sets actions for the Combined Authority to contribute towards the decarbonisation needs in the LCR to reach net zero carbon by 2040 while also delivering multiple co-benefits. This Plan is divided into five pillars (Transport, Buildings, Industry, Clean Energy and the Natural Environment), each with associated actions, complemented by a series of cross-cutting actions. Each action is classified depending on the role the Combined Authority will play (lead, enable or champion).

The Action Plan comprises various activities, funds and projects, including funds to expand electric vehicle infrastructure, the community environment fund, the Mersey Tidal Power project and the Glass Futures Project. The implementation of the Climate Action Plan is supported by the 2023 Investment Strategy. This strategy identifies four key pillars to wider prosperity: maximising the impacts of innovation for people, places and businesses; turning people's potential into prosperity; building thriving, sustainable and resilient places; and developing integrated infrastructure for a connected city region. The investments of the Combined Authority shall help to spread social value across local communities and embed equality, diversity and inclusion across the LCR.⁵⁷

Currently the Combined Authority is working on a Spatial Development Strategy based on the preference for a Brownfield First approach. The LCR Brownfield Land Register provides up to date and consistent information on available Brownfield Land sites across the six constituent local authorities. The LCR was the first region in England to launch a Land Commission in 2020 with the aim to review the use of land for community wealth building and develop creative approaches to the sustainable and economically inclusive use of land. In July 2021, the Land Commission report was published setting out thirteen recommendations to improve land use across the city region.

⁵⁵ HM Treasury, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. 2015. Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Devolution Agreement. Online at: <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/article/explainer/devolution-liverpool-city-region>

⁵⁶ Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. 2022. Five Year Climate Action Plan 2023-2028.

⁵⁷ Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. 2023. Creating a Fairer, Stronger, Cleaner Liverpool City Region – Where No One is Left Behind. Online at: <https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/>

3.1.3 Organisation and coordination framework

Findings: ➡ coordination and intra-organisational development

The current regional governance is characterised by a mixture of a vertical coordination model with a restricted coordination body (this body was established just recently) and fragmented sector-based metropolitan organisations (e.g. waste management, water management and transport). Each municipality is involved in several different cooperation agreements with various members and differently assigned territories.

The Turku City Region is governed by a regulation according to which the member municipalities pay a share per resident. As a new metropolitan coordination body, the Turku City Region has begun as a light and low-budget body. From a legal perspective, it is a joint municipal authority and it offers a high potential for further development. In addition, as a joint municipal authority, the Turku City Region may take over tasks in multiple different sectors and bundle the activities of many existing cooperation initiatives only based on agreements. This potential is also supported by these findings:

- No representatives of local governments want amalgamation, but most of them are ready for cooperation.
- Although there are different political cultures among cooperating municipalities, relationships among municipalities and among their representatives are much better nowadays than they used to be.
- There is no real local tax competition between the individual municipalities. More precisely, the individual municipalities compete for residents and corporate establishments but they do not employ local taxes as the main tools of this competition.
- The City of Turku covers some additional costs (e.g. it sponsors hobbies for children) and there are other tasks which will be transferred from the State to the municipalities (e.g. some services in the field of employment policy in 2025).
- “Soft policies” are not crucial from the perspective of ordinary citizens and therefore it is politically easy to “centralise” them under the one roof of the city region.

While political reasons were the most important in establishing inter-municipal cooperation initiatives in the past, it is important to use a much more functional approach which will be enriched by the active use of participatory tools.

The human resources of the coordination body are limited, therefore, a step-by-step widening and strengthening of the city region organisational body is crucial. Further resources are needed for starting adequate planning and coordination (neither the main tasks nor competences of the joint municipal authority, i.e. the city region, have been determined yet). The nomination procedures for the board/steering group and for the working groups are in a premature state. According to the information gleaned from interviews, there are changes in the representatives in the steering committees and meetings. This situation also concerns accountability mechanisms towards citizens.

In the current form of metropolitan governance, individual actors (e.g. the joint municipal authority of the Turku City Region, MAL agreement, Region Southwest Finland, Business

Turku, International House Turku, and Föli) are only involved to a small extent in exchange. In particular, the vertical coordination between the city level, city region level, other cooperation levels and regional level is weak, which poses risks in terms of sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency for the Turku City Region. Even the coordination body of the Turku City Region has no specific formal links towards the upper level of policy-making.

Recommendations: ➡ **coordination and intra-organisational development**

Elaborating statutes for the joint municipal authority should be at the top of the agenda. Following the model of other city regions, these statutes include clear structures and competences. Furthermore, statutes may define the organisational bodies and competences, purpose and working groups and standardise procedures and regular meetings as well as basic rules for cooperation and additional accountability mechanisms towards local citizens⁵⁸.

A strong, robust and capable coordination body is decisive for successful cooperation within the Turku City Region. Its office should therefore be strengthened by expanding the number of its personnel and strengthen its capacity⁵⁹ alongside the growing tasks. For example, the Tampere City Region office has fourteen employees. To get the process going – and to foster the development of a climate of trust – regular and frequent contact and intense exchange between the members of the organisational bodies have to be planned. Regular meetings of the steering board can be foreseen on a monthly basis. In addition, all stakeholders should be brought closer together within a permanently organised regional communication forum in the form of regular meetings and events. The example from Germany below (i.e. Verband Region Stuttgart) shows a very strong corporate body under public law which step by step increases its field of responsibilities for the benefit of the region.

At the level of the MAL collaboration, there are two collaborative groups: namely the collaborative group on land use and the collaborative group on traffic system. In order to foster the development of focus themes, it is also recommended to install – maximum two to four – permanent working groups or committees at the level of the Turku City Region. These working groups should focus on planning and coordinating tasks and be flexible. It means that they should be open for additional members outside of the current city region within the MAL agreement (observership), and due to specific tasks, they should allow participation of various private-sector organisations and citizens' interest groups. Working groups should address the core themes of cooperation such as spatial planning, education, tourism, culture, and sports. One of the first tasks for these working groups could be an agreement on specific measures along the Turku City Region Strategy with the aim of setting up an action plan (including a budget and a marketing concept).

⁵⁸ Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on democratic accountability of elected representatives and elected bodies at local and regional level. Online at: https://search.coe.int/cm/pages/result_details.aspx?objectid=0900001680a57739

⁵⁹ Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on capacity building at local and regional level. Online at: https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d5271

Verband Region Stuttgart



The Stuttgart City Region has a long tradition of cooperation starting with a Municipal Working Group for the Stuttgart Region in 1956.⁶⁰ The Verband Region Stuttgart itself was founded in 1994 as a corporate body under public law. It is a strong and stable regional association with multiple tasks and binding planning power.

The city region covers the districts of Stuttgart, Böblingen, Esslingen, Göppingen, Ludwigsburg and Rems-Murr, taking in 179 municipalities. Together they aim to maintain the quality of life and economic strength in the region. As a specific democratic feature, the Regional Assembly, which forms the parliament for the Stuttgart region and is responsible for political control, is elected directly. Every five years, the citizens in the region decide who will represent their interests in the Regional Assembly.

The Verband Region Stuttgart is responsible for several core mandatory tasks in relation to transport, regional planning and business development. This association prepares the Regional Plan, where the objectives and principles for spatial development in the Stuttgart region are set out. These binding guidelines and specifications for the municipal sectoral and land-use planning are agreed upon in a broad participatory process: “The cities and municipalities are involved in the planning process in several rounds. Associations, authorities, the public, chambers and trade unions are also involved – from the regional council to the nature conservation organisation.”⁶¹

Furthermore, the association is in charge of the conception and planning of the Stuttgart Region Landscape Park, regionally significant local public transport and regional traffic management (e.g. the P&R concept), parts of waste disposal and regional tourism marketing. Additionally, the association is involved in several informal networks such as the KulturRegion, SportRegion and BioRegio (OrganicRegion), which shows its comprehensive scope of activities and its acceptance from the perspective of various business, cultural and societal actors in the region. The Verband Region Stuttgart is a member of the metropolitan area of Stuttgart.

3.1.4 Quality of local democracy and its support (open communication)

Findings ➡ transparency and democracy

Several overlapping sectoral cooperation initiatives can be observed in the region around Turku. These initiatives with different members are stable and have proven to be effective. Nevertheless, this variety becomes challenging regarding issues of coordination and

⁶⁰ Priebs, A. 2019. Die Stadtregion: Planung – Politik – Management. Stuttgart: Verlag Eugen Ulmer.

⁶¹ Verband Region Stuttgart. 2023. Über Uns - Das ist der Verband. Online at: <https://www.region-stuttgart.org/de/verband/ueber-uns/>

optimising regional tasks, especially in cross-sectional areas such as climate protection and adoption of relevant policies. A bundling of resources based on the same spatial demarcation would facilitate the organisation and coordination tasks. Tampere can be used as a suitable example, where the city region authority is responsible for the same region as the MAL agreement. By covering only the inner municipalities of the MAL agreement in the Turku City Region, even coordination with and the integration of MAL regulations becomes an additional challenge.

Regardless of existing inter-municipal cooperation initiatives, the City of Turku acts on its own without further coordination on the (sub-)regional level. The Turku tramway is being planned by the city without the proper involvement of neighbouring municipalities or other regional actors. Furthermore, municipalities compete for business settlements instead of pooling their resources (for negotiations) and finding the best place for the settlement together.

From the theoretical point of view, inter-municipal cooperation initiatives often decrease the possibilities of direct citizens' control as well as direct control from politically elected representatives, blur the mechanisms of accountability, and make the system not only more complex but also less transparent.⁶² On the other hand, democratic accountability is an important element of any robust and long-term inter-municipal cooperation.⁶³ If one looks closer at the case of the Turku City Region, the involvement of citizens, according to the interlocutors interviewed, has been poor so far. Nevertheless, the Turku City Region's new regional strategy (2024-2026) foresees that an operating model for involving residents and stakeholders in the urban region will be created for the joint municipal authority.

Recommendations ➡ **transparency and democracy**

To foster robust and harmonious relationships among municipalities and ensure the effectiveness of collaborations, it is essential to cultivate a culture of cooperation grounded in equal rights for all city region members. This can be achieved through regular meetings and knowledge-sharing initiatives. Establishing transparent guidelines for various forms of collaboration and procedural frameworks is crucial for encouraging a trustworthy cooperative environment. It is imperative, however, to strike a balance, preventing the dominance of Turku's central authority and maintaining consistency in committee representation whenever feasible. The city region should serve as a coordinating platform, acting as the sole representative body for the region. Subsequently, it could extend its role to provide additional support to members engaged in collaborative efforts.

A dilemma: the domination of one municipality

Meaningful and long-term inter-municipal cooperation should be also based on an equality principle, and this is a challenge for both the dominant municipality (or city) and all collaborators. In any inter-municipal cooperation initiative, and in a city region in particular,

⁶² Jantz, B., Reichborn-Kjennerud, K., Vrangbaek, K. 2015. Control and Autonomy – The SAls in Norway, Denmark, and Germany as Watchdogs in an NPM-Era? *International Journal of Public Administration*, 38(13–14): 960–970.

⁶³ Bučaitė-Vilkė, J. 2021. Participation of Interest Groups at Local Level: Any Space for Democracy in Inter-Municipal Cooperation? In: M. Lackowska, K. Szmigiel-Rawska, F. Teles (eds). *Local Government in Europe New Perspectives and Democratic Challenges*. Bristol: Bristol University Press, pp. 141–160.

there is a kind of risk that the largest municipality is both the initiator of cooperation and the main supplier. Due to its capacities, it provides most of the expertise and often the largest financial support. From the point of view of other involved municipalities as well as their citizens, the largest municipality (its leaders and public servants) are suspected of trying to increase their power and influence.⁶⁴ The dilemma of the dominating municipality is clear: the largest local government plays the role of cooperation initiator with great discretion, but it has to satisfy the requests of smaller municipalities and expectations of their citizens. On the other hand, if the environment of inter-municipal cooperation is too scattered, there is a high risk that the relevant citizens can be confused, and the equality principle can be broken in some areas.

As a multi-purpose joint municipal authority, the aim of the Turku City Region should be to integrate existing sectoral cooperation initiatives with different territories and members step by step under the roof of city region governance. For planning tasks as well as tourism and city region marketing (e.g. Business Turku and International House Turku), it would be worthwhile adopting and harmonising regional borders and memberships.

To ensure efficiency and effective governance, the Turku City Region has to be embedded into a living vertical governance network. This can be achieved by approaching the MAL agreement, establishing partnerships and regularly installing multilevel meetings and coordination platforms. The Turku City Region should pay attention to the link with the state (especially the Ministry of Finance), which steers and regulates the services and economies of municipalities by influencing their financial resources.

An annual city region conference ought to be established covering all groups of actors and stakeholders to foster these relationships. The conference should bring together all levels and actor groups: political representatives, administrative institutions, science and research institutions, the private sector, different interest groups (NGOs) and citizens. Another important tool is the establishment of working groups or implementation partnerships. In addition, implementing specific measures, such as the Centre of Expertise's toolkit on civil participation in decision-making process⁶⁵, could empower the local authorities with skills to identify relevant stakeholder groups and attract them to take part in all relevant decision-making processes. To build and improve residents' trust towards the Turku City Region and its office, these residents should also have an opportunity to take part in monitoring processes. On this matter, a minimum task for the office is to keep them well informed through rich dissemination activities (including regular official reporting), but we also recommend adoption of measures, which facilitate their more active participation in monitoring (e.g., representatives of various stakeholder groups can be invited to take part in meetings of some working groups or through some other consultation/feedback platforms).

⁶⁴ Schep, G. J., Schep, S. W. 2010. Inter-municipal Cooperation: Introduction Guide to the VNG International Approach to a Successful IMC. The Hague: VNG International.

⁶⁵ Centre of Expertise for Good Governance, Civil Participation in Decision-Making. Toolkit. Online at: <https://rm.coe.int/civil-participation-in-decision-making-toolkit-/168075c1a5>

To foster democratic accountability, the city region should follow the CoE Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)2 on democratic accountability of elected representatives and elected bodies at local and regional level⁶⁶ as well as some recommendations from the inter-municipal cooperation toolkit manual which are stated below:

- Citizens and consumers who want to know how the inter-municipal cooperation entity is performing; they must first understand the inter-municipal cooperation itself, its rationale and its operations.
- Inter-municipal cooperation entities are expected to be efficient and effective. Otherwise, why create a new body? Poor performance in inter-municipal cooperation entities will be more likely to be criticised by citizens. However, organisational competence requires modern management, including recruitment based on merit and performance management techniques.
- Partner municipalities and their citizens want to be sure that one municipality is not benefitting at the expense of the others; this requires good communications and a culture of trust and cooperation.
- Decision-making processes have to be transparent so that ordinary people have confidence in the integrity of the inter-municipal cooperation entity.
- The delegated inter-municipal cooperation council/board members represent the interests of their own municipality at the same time as they represent the interests of the citizens of all the partner municipalities. This requires maturity and an ability to secure political compromise. They will need training and support⁶⁷ from their own municipalities. There must be clear reporting lines to the assemblies/councils of partner municipalities if clear democratic control over the inter-municipal cooperation entity is to be retained. Good inter-municipal cooperation accountability requires good leadership from the partner municipalities.⁶⁸



SUM City Region Management Vienna/Lower Austria – SUM Conference

SUM City Region Management Vienna represents a small and light organisation and coordinating body fostering the city region's communication and cooperative projects in the fields of settlement and site development, traffic (mobility) and green space development (natural and recreational areas, agriculture and forestry).

⁶⁶ Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on democratic accountability of elected representatives and elected bodies at local and regional level. Online at: <https://rm.coe.int/0900001680a57739>

⁶⁷ Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on capacity building at local and regional level. Online at: https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d5271

⁶⁸ Inter-municipal Cooperation: Toolkit Manual. 2010. Prepared by the Council of Europe, the United Nations Development Programme and the Local Government Initiative of the Open Society. Online at: <https://rm.coe.int/imc-intermunicipal-co-operation/1680746ec3>

SUM was founded in 2006 and is anchored within an association of the federal states of Vienna and Lower Austria. It has two regional managers who are responsible for the southern and northern part of the region and who are supported by one additional office assistant. The work of SUM is governed by an advisory board with twenty-six members made up of politicians (mayors and district mayors), administrators (representatives of the planning departments of Vienna and Lower Austria), and representatives of Planning Association East (PGO).

SUM functions as a well-established communication and network platform connecting the key players within the Vienna city region. The exchange of information on topics relevant to the region is intended to strengthen mutual trust and facilitate cross-border thinking. Once a year, the City Region Conference is organised, offering room for a broad exchange of knowledge and experience. Additionally, SUM forums are held on a case-by-case basis on current topics. Different excursions and regional dialogues foster communication and strengthen inter-regional relations.

The managers work operationally as an interface and mediators between Vienna and the surrounding municipalities. The long-term stable and reliable relationships are crucial to preparing joint regional plans and specific projects and for balancing different interests in order to find sustainable and effective solutions. Specific work is carried out in a network of the relevant departments of the provincial administrations, municipalities and regionally active organisations.

Many different and important development processes and projects in recent years were initiated and managed or participated in by SUM: e.g. the regional recreation strategy, the Mödling regional plan, cycle networks and routes, the Vienna Airport dialogue forum and the Marchfeld economic cooperation project.

3.2 Issue-specific findings and recommendations

3.2.1 The stability of inter-municipal cooperation and a step towards future mergers

As it has been understood from the interviews with several representatives of the local stakeholders, any further amalgamation in the area around Turku is considered to be a politically unacceptable measure. This report does not argue against this position because there had been cases when unwanted amalgamation did not lead to better governance and services to local residents. On the other hand, it is important to stress that establishing the Turku City Region and its official intentions of (1) intensifying multilateral cooperation as well as policy coordination among participating municipalities and (2) enhancing a city-region based identity can be theoretically understood as steps towards much closer (political,

administrative, economic and social) inter-connections, which enhance the potential for local mergers in the future.

3.2.2 Mutual learning and innovativeness

The Turku City Region is still a new initiative. Thanks to the fact that it is fully in the hands of its members, it offers many opportunities. One of the most beneficial opportunities, which is often underrated, is the opportunity to learn from each other and to generate various soft innovations.

There are three general categories of beneficial outcome of inter-municipal cooperation:

- financial performance (i.e. reducing service costs thanks to economies of scale and higher efficiency)
- non-financial performance (i.e. increasing service quality thanks to resource sharing, reduction of workloads and multiplying capacities)
- mutual learning and innovativeness (i.e. the transfer of good practices or sharing various training programmes)⁶⁹

Mutual learning can be organised in three dimensions at least. It can be organised as intra-city region learning, i.e. as learning among the member municipalities. The second dimension is linked to inter-city region learning which can be organised, for instance, among the city regions of the Growth Triangle (i.e. Helsinki, Tampere, and Turku). The third dimension is international because positive experiences with achievements in a city region can be exported abroad and help city regions in other countries to learn something relevant and grow in the desired way.

3.2.3 Spatial planning

All collaborative platforms (layers) around Turku are based more on political collaborations and already existing platforms (NUTS – Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) and do not respect the functional space of Turku (e.g. commuting and economic links). If one looks at the Turku City Region from the perspective of spatial planning, an interesting feature is that all involved municipalities are urban municipalities with similar planning needs. In this context, the 15-to-30-minute concept territory around Turku could be the best spatial scale for a metropolitan/regional spatial strategy. This is an urban planning concept containing an idea of most daily necessities (work, shopping, leisure activities) and services (education, healthcare) to be accessed by walking, micro mobility or a public transport in a certain period of time.

The adjacent territories to Turku feel the necessity to have more detailed development planning together with the Turku City Region, better collaboration during the planning process

⁶⁹ Provan, K. G., Sydow, J. 2008. Evaluating Inter-organizational Relationships. In: S. Cropper, M. Ebers, C. Huxham, P. Ring (eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Inter-organizational Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 691–716.

and the elaboration of more detailed plans. At the moment, it is unclear how binding the city regional strategy will be for the municipalities neighbouring the City of Turku. On the other hand, we know that it contains some priorities and collaboration principles but, according to the interlocutors interviewed, without the spatial development perspective of the region.

There is no systematic approach on the overall development monitoring of processes. Southwest Finland is providing some analytical basis on developmental issues, and the urban region is usually clearly highlighted. However, the Turku City Region itself should be much more active in monitoring, analytical and forecasting processes, too.

Taking these facts into account, deeper and broader cooperation in the city region among the member municipalities in the field of spatial planning is desirable. The preparation of a joint Turku City Region scale Spatial Development Plan can be understood as an addition to an existing development strategy, with the key thematic fields to be transport and mobility, settlement structure and housing, public services, natural environment, areas of complex development and business specialisation. It is of high importance to reflect the “natural” economic footprint of the city region. This means that the city region boundaries must reflect economic reality and not political or administrative boundaries; for instance, mapping territorial coverage of the region could help understand inner diversity and territorial development needs. On this matter, it is important to build a data-driven analytical base on the scale of the Turku City Region which focuses on the functional socio-economic links of Turku itself, with the city region being based more on purely functional characteristics.

Planning requires much more involvement from other stakeholders. A clear additional value can be brought by means of the capacity building of the Turku City Region with the aim to attract experts in the fields of necessary competence and creating joint financing instruments for regional projects. Some kind of regional fund for the implementation of regional scale initiatives should be considered. Citizens’ involvement in processes connected with the development of joint collaborative platforms around Turku is also important.

The Riga Metropolitan Area (Latvia)

An example from Latvia: the definition of Riga metropolitan spaces in the Action Plan for the Development of the Riga Metropolitan Area (approved on 10 January 2020). The internal diversity of the Riga Metropolitan Area (RMA) is divided into three spaces. This approach is based on a set of features specific to each space, taking into account characteristics such as distance to Riga itself, the intensity of daily commuting, trends in the changes of the population, transport flows, the availability of public services and other specific features.



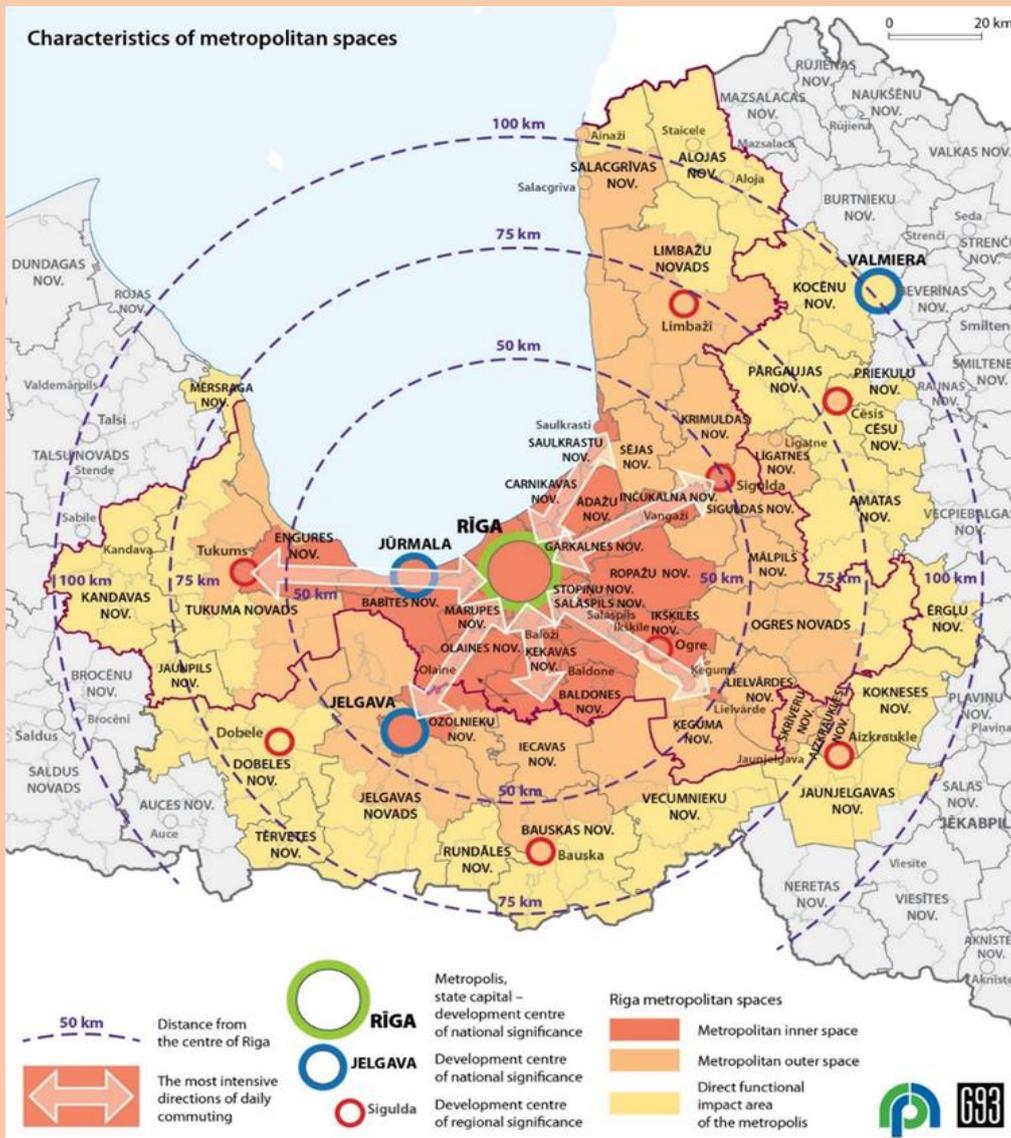
Table 4. The characteristics of metropolitan spaces – the RMA approach⁷⁰

Characteristics	INNER space	OUTER space	IMPACT area
Territorial coverage (distance from Riga)	~50 km	~75 km	~100 km
Intensity of daily commuting (working population employed in Riga)	>50 %	30-50 %	>20 %
Changes in population numbers	growing	slightly negative trend	mainly negative trend
Public transport organisation	in the direction of Riga	in the direction of Riga and centres of regional significance	mainly in the direction of centres of regional significance
Reception of public and household services	mainly in Riga	in Riga and centres of regional significance	mainly in centres of regional significance
Accessibility and quality of services	relatively good, but there are problems of service scarcity in Pieriga (particularly in the fields of education and health)	limited, particularly outside regional centres	limited
Specific features	Low unemployment. A relatively high level of income with a tendency to grow. International tourism. Concentration of education and science	The role and potential of centres of regional significance significantly exceeds the development potential of surrounding areas	Relatively poorly developed public transport system and related infrastructure. Lower quality and poorer condition of local and regional roads

According to the relatively high intensity of daily commuting, the metropolitan area covers areas close to Riga as well as those further away. The concentration of the population, the demographic and economic situation, the transport infrastructure and the settlement structure, identify the spatial coverage of the metropolitan area. In the vicinity of the metropolitan area, mainly in the direction of the most important transport corridors, there are territories directly linked to the RMA and which form a circular area. Riga and its immediate adjacent and closest territories form the inner space of the core area. From a spatial planning perspective, this is the densest and economically vibrant space of the whole metropolitan area, and it shows the real collaboration space of the Latvian capital. The division of Riga metropolitan spaces provides a strategic and spatial planning environment for key development issues such as settlement structure, transport and mobility, the competitiveness of the region, coordinated development and promotion of business infrastructure, public services (e.g. education, health and culture) and the management of the natural environment.

⁷⁰ Riga Planning Region. 2020. Action Plan for the Development of the Riga Metropolitan Area. Online at: https://rpr.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Action-Plan-for-the-Development-of-the-RMA_Web-1.pdf

Figure 7. Territorial framework – RMA spaces⁷¹



The Cardiff Capital Region (Wales)



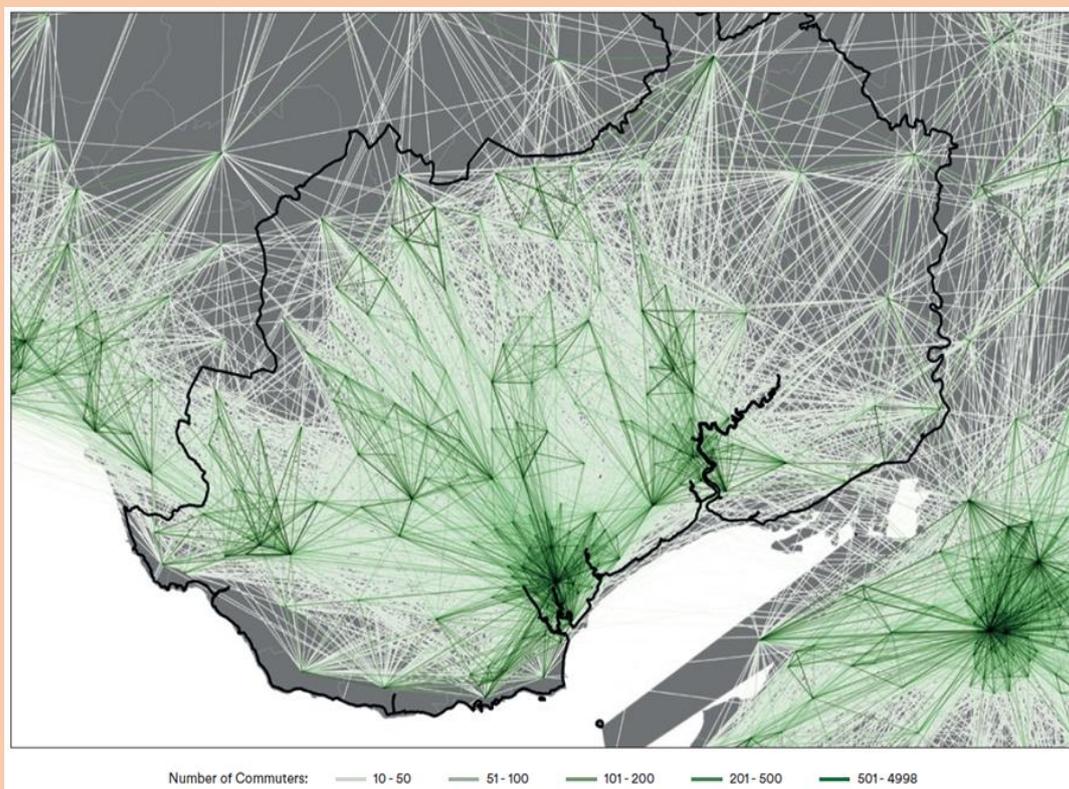
The Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) includes ten local authority areas in south-east Wales. The CCR City Deal was launched in 2016 with a regional-scale collaborative programme committed to being the catalyst for regional growth and sustainable success. The City Deal has a strong emphasis on the implementation of transport infrastructure and on further opportunities in terms of developing digital infrastructure, improving skills and unemployment rates, delivering enterprise growth and strategic planning for future housing

⁷¹ Riga Planning Region. 2020. Action Plan for the Development of the Riga Metropolitan Area. Online at: https://rpr.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Action-Plan-for-the-Development-of-the-RMA_Web-1.pdf

and regeneration. Although the City Deal approach is largely business- and investment-oriented, it provides a basis for spatial development planning solutions on the scale of a functional region.

In order to better understand the real territorial coverage of the city and the functional links with the surrounding territories, one of the basic indicators is daily commuting. The socio-economic activity of the CCR is presented by analysing commuting flows in the region. Despite the increase in rail travel during the past decade, the dominant mode of transport for work in the city region was the car (over 70 percent). Such commuting monitoring helps understand the real requests for mobility needs and come up with useful solutions for integrated spatial planning to synchronise the settlement structure with public services, transport and business infrastructure.

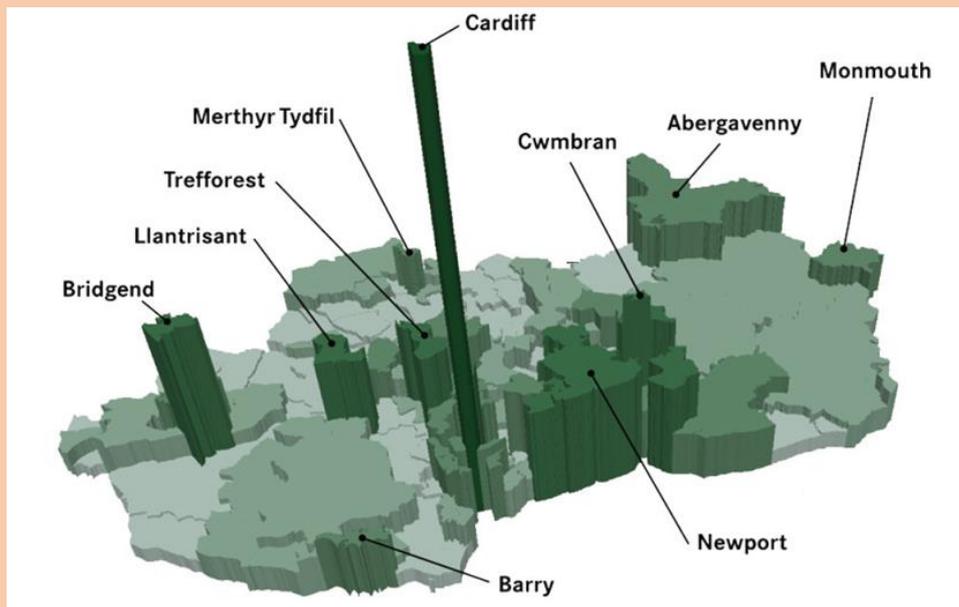
Figure 8. Commuting flows in the CCR⁷²



The real situation of job localities in the region provides another insight. The main areas of jobs in the CCR are analysed in territorial units called Middle-layer Super Output Areas, which were designed in England and Wales to improve the reporting of small area statistics. As the CCR is not homogeneous and consists of diverse territories, such an approach provides a better understanding about the localisation of businesses and justifications for the necessary mobility and public-service planning solutions. These examples reflect how the spatial connection of cities with the region can be determined, and they bring some territorial evidence on how to define delineation of functional city regions.

⁷² Cardiff Capital Region. 2020. State of the Region. Part 1: Connected. Online at: <https://www.cardiffcapitalregion.wales/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ccr-state-of-the-region-part-1-connected-singles-con-1-4.pdf>

Figure 9. The main areas of jobs in the CCR⁷³



3.3 The Case of Helsinki

Although international experience is important because it often brings some unconventional or innovative solutions, Turku and the Turku City Region must consider their national context since national regulations might significantly differ between countries; therefore, it is worth to take into consideration the Finnish cases and best practices, too. Since one representative of the Tampere City Region was interviewed during the data collection, it seemed useful to present here also a brief overview of the Helsinki case (namely Helsinki Region 2023 Land Use, Housing and Transport Plan MAL) which is usually seen as a best practice case.

Helsinki region is by far the largest urban region in Finland, where more than a quarter of Finns live. The population is expected to grow to 1.9 million in 2040. At the same time, the Helsinki region is the locomotive for the entire country and a significant centre of services, culture, and business as well as a transport node.

The urban region forms a cross-municipal entity in which land use, housing and transport must be coordinated and planned on a long-term basis. The Helsinki Region 2023 Land Use, Housing and Transport Plan (MAL) is a strategic plan for the 14 municipalities in the Helsinki region who carry out joint planning. Its vision is that in 2040, Helsinki region is the most sustainably growing and people-centred metropolitan area in Europe. The region achieves the vision by meeting the three main objectives set for the plan: a carbon neutral, healthy and successful Helsinki region. The Plan prepares for future growth while keeping into perspective the sustainability of the existing urban structures and locations favourable to public transport,

⁷³ Cardiff Capital Region. 2021. City Deal – Growth and Competitiveness Commission Report and Recommendations. Online at: <https://www.cardiffcapitalregion.wales/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/item-6-appendix-c-growth-and-competitiveness-commission-recommendati....pdf>

adequate and diverse housing production, availability of services, operating conditions for business and comfort of living environments. MAL planning solves challenges at the regional level and promotes the functioning, success, wellbeing, and carbon neutrality of the urban region.

The MAL 2023 Plan sets out:

- How the urban structure is developed sustainably,
- How and where sufficient housing is built for people in different life situations, while at the same time ensuring good quality of both housing and the living environment,
- How transport and the entire transport system are developed so that they serve the needs of the entire Helsinki region in the best possible way,
- How emissions are reduced in the region,
- How the operating conditions for business, labour force accessibility and the effectiveness of transportation are ensured.

On the side of the municipalities, the MAL 2023 Plan serves as the basis for a MAL Agreement between the state and the municipalities. The agreement sets out the most important land use, housing and transport measures for the Helsinki region for the next 12 years.

4. Conclusions

As mentioned in the previous parts of this report, the elaboration of the policy advice was based on international expertise and comparable practice. Specifically, in the field of metropolitan governance, the examples from Austria, Germany and UK (i.e. SUM City Region Management Vienna/Lower Austria, European Metropolitan Region Munich, and Liverpool City Region) were taken into account; in the field of inter-municipal cooperation, specific experiences from Germany, Norway, and Slovakia were taken into account; whereas in the field of spatial planning, specifically selected experiences from Latvia, and UK were considered. Additionally, the Tampere and Helsinki cases and their experience were relevant for all these fields, because they offer the same national experience. It is important to state that all used cases have their own specific features, including both Finnish cases, and therefore they should be understood as a set of inspirations for future measures of the City of Turku as well as the Turku City Region, and not as any final set of exclusive measures that would automatically lead to desired goals or intentions.

A clear strength of the mentioned international experience is the fact that their outcomes can be translated as real empirical results. Moreover, they bring a much wider perspective and perhaps also some unconventional or innovative solutions for the Finnish stakeholders. On the other hand, national or local contexts of the selected cases must be considered because, for example, the national Finnish regulation may differ significantly in some specific points. Moreover, all relevant capacities of the City of Turku as well as the Turku City Region must be taken into account before adoption of any recommended measures. Last but not least, there is a risk of unexpected resistance at the side of some stakeholders. For example, if there is no political will, enlargement of the city region membership will not happen. The membership itself might also be endangered if the city region development is too slow or brings no expected/desired outcomes.

Taking the contents of this report into account, the most important findings are as follows:

- a mixture of a vertical coordination model with a restricted coordination body and fragmented sector-based metropolitan organisations is typical for the current regional governance in the region around Turku
- the City of Turku itself is actively engaged in diverse inter-municipal cooperation networks
- the establishment of the Turku City Region was primarily a political decision and the residents of the involved municipalities have not been involved in this process
- the core functions and tasks of the city region have not been precisely defined yet, and there is neither a strong coordination body/authority nor a common spatial strategy.

A set of recommendations includes several measures. To sum up this part of report, one can conclude that the most important recommendations are as follows:

- the Turku City Region should employ a more functional approach which will be enriched by the active use of participatory tools
- the Turku City Region Office should be strengthened by enlarging the number of its personnel alongside its growing tasks, and it should play the role of the main

representative body for the city region towards its members as well as towards the third parties

- it is recommended to expand and strengthen the role of existing working groups (land use and traffic system planning) at the MAL level, and install a few additional permanent working groups which will be flexible in terms of their own memberships and tasked with core challenges of the Turku City Region in particular
- all members of the Turku City Region should share their experience with each other in order to facilitate mutual learning and exchange of good practices
- from the perspective of spatial planning in the city region, it is important to build a data-driven analytical base on the scale of the Turku City Region
- the members of the Turku City Region should have an ambition to bring their own solutions and innovations, and therefore they should look for examples of good practice not only in Finland but also beyond its borders.
- to build a common city region identity and to avoid any undesired weakening of democratic accountability or transparency, local residents must be involved into all processes linked to the development of the city region.

A recent approval of regional strategy should be followed by a detailed action plan (a road map) where priorities would be defined. The definition of priorities must be based on pre-defined objectives, available and required (especially personal, material, financial) capacities, expectations from relevant stakeholders, and political will. An integral part of the action plan should be a training and capacity-building plan. It should be focused on those skills and capacities that are identified as insufficient or weak in the relevant strategic documents. However, if these insufficiencies or weaknesses are related to citizen participation or capacity building in general, it is advisable to follow the Council of Europe's recommendations⁷⁴. One good practice for implementing specific measures, could be the piloting of Council of Europe relevant toolkits, such as the one on Civil participation in decision-making process.

We highly recommend monitoring implementation of all recommended measures in order to assess their effectiveness and efficiency and to translate collected experience into lessons to be learnt for other local governments in Finland as well as for future development of the Turku City Region. This intention would require a set of clear and measurable key performance indicators (KPIs), which are based on specific goals or objectives from the regional strategy and other relevant planning documents. The coordination body of the Turku City Region should be responsible for the coordination of this monitoring, but it is important to actively engage all relevant local stakeholders, including residents, in monitoring activities. The monitoring by the residents can be ensured through two approaches: first one (rather passive approach) – to keep them informed and aware of all updates, including achievements reported by the local authorities, and a second one (a more active approach) – to invite them in a consultation process on their satisfaction with the pertinent issues, for instance in the

⁷⁴ Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life. Online at: https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807954c3 / Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on capacity building at local and regional level. Online at: https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d5271

working meetings of different committees, or to take part in other platforms intended to collect citizens' feedback. This would enhance transparency and also support building of common city region identity.

KPIs are important metrics, and they are crucial for effective monitoring. They are used to track and measure real progress towards specific goals and objectives. In line with the expectations discussed with the beneficiary of this Policy advice before the start of its preparation, the methods employed and data collected do not allow to suggest precise KPIs for the case of the Turku City Region; however, the local authorities are strongly encouraged to use a set of clear KPIs. On this matter, we recommend them to follow this five-step approach, namely:

1) Identification of goals and objectives

This step is connected with strategic or planning documents. One should be able to find goals and objectives in these documents. Therefore, the Turku City Region should pay special attention to the recently approved city region strategy as well as its later updates within this step. A simple but important rule is: the more specific goals and objectives in strategic or planning documents, the easier task to propose a set of KPIs.

2) Definition of metrics

It is crucial to choose metrics that is appropriate in regard to measuring relevant progress. In the case of the Turku City Region, these metrics might range from simple metrics like gradual increase of membership of the city region to much complicated metrics like citizen satisfaction ratings or degrees of efficiency in delivery of specific services.

3) Selection and definition of KPIs

Each metrics determines a room for KPIs. It is important to select KPIs, which provide a concise picture of desired progress. In addition, they must be easy to understand and respect availability of relevant data.

4) Identification of targets and benchmarks

Multiple goals and objectives often require gradual progress, and therefore it is necessary to determine interim targets, a realistic pace of their achievement, as well as possible (acceptable) deviations or alternatives. These targets must be achievable in terms of existing capacities. If the Turku City Region decides to employ benchmarks, it is possible to use either national ones (e.g., Tampere or Helsinki are usually referred as best practices in Finland) or international benchmarks (especially in cases, when the Turku City Region will try to implement some innovative measures).

5) Monitoring and redefinition of KPIs if necessary

Monitoring allows to check relevance, measurability, and usefulness of the selected KPIs. If any KPI is not performing as expected, one can propose its adjustment or even replacement.

This simple but also effective approach would help the Turku City Region to achieve its goals and objectives, and allow other stakeholders, including local residents, to monitor progress in a comprehensible way.

Although the Turku City Region is still in its starting stage, it is recommended that its representatives are actively involved in some international networks which facilitate exchange of relevant experience. In this stage, the city region should follow the existing networks of its own members (e.g., international partners of the City of Turku). However, more intensive engagement of other stakeholders (e.g., universities, business, or NGOs) in building common city region identity would bring much more opportunities for international cooperation at various levels. This is crucial approach if exchange of knowledge and best practices is expected to be sustainable.

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Daniel Klimovský was a leading member of the expert team. He is an associate professor at the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia.

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Thomas Prorok is the Managing Director of the Austrian-based KDZ Centre for Public Administration Research. For more than twenty years, he has been working in the fields of public administration reform, governance and quality as well as in decentralisation, local governments and EU integration.

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Rūdolfs Cimdiņš is the Head of the Spatial Planning Unit at the Riga Planning Region in Latvia. For more than fifteen years, he has been working in the field of regional planning and monitoring, mostly focusing on transport and mobility, spatial planning and territorial governance.

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