

EURODELTA: a *glocal* megalopolis?

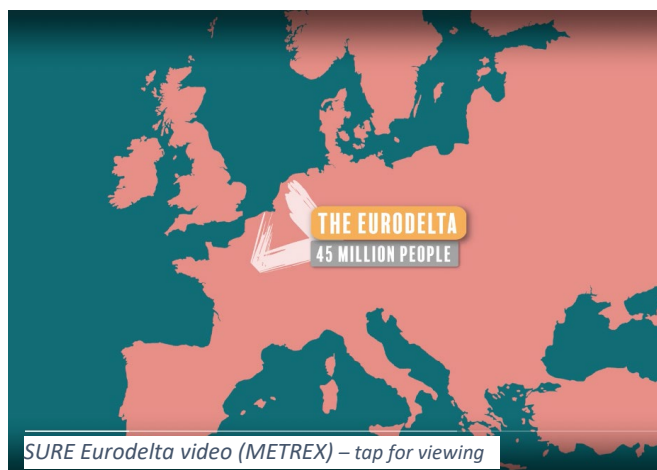
Thinking and planning a 45 million supercity beyond national borders

Open Call for CoP EURODELTA

‘Eurodelta’ is a potential transnational pilot area for territorial collaborative action to advance and implement the [European Green Deal](#). As such it is of global relevance and importance. By scaling up a global ambition while respecting and cultivating a very diverse microcosmos, Eurodelta can aspire the status of a ‘*glocal*’ megalopolis of more than 45 million inhabitants.

This memo¹ provides background information on the Open Call to establish a community of planners and designers and enthusiasts in Europe and beyond, who are dedicated to the Eurodelta as an inspiring field of action. ISOCARP is doing this in close collaboration with [Deltametropolis Association](#) and [Metrex](#), with whom we share a passion for transnational sustainable urbanization and the Eurodelta in particular. The primary goal of our [Eurodelta partnership](#) is to establish a Community of Practice (CoP) to bring challenging and innovative Eurodelta issues and inspirations to the relevant tables of decision-making and -taking. As such, the CoP Eurodelta would be open to both members and non-members of ISOCARP, albeit keeping a manageable size of this vanguard group.

With the ISOCARP Secretariat based in The Hague since 1965, and with Brussels Capital Region as host of ISOCARP’s [58th World Planning Congress](#) we have two ‘home-cities’ of special interest in the backbone of the Eurodelta! While aspiring a podium-function for our new office in The Hague (please do visit us!), the Brussels Congress will provide a global platform to explore challenges and opportunities of (healthy) cities within larger urban megaregions. In short, the Eurodelta is a functional transnational polycentric river-delta and global gateway on the European scale, consisting of the densely urbanized parts of the Benelux, Western Germany, and Northern France, with fast connections to the surrounding mono-centric metropolises including London, Paris, and Frankfurt. It’s probably the ‘best kept secret’ in the world with its economic performance only slightly trailing



behind better-known megaregions such as the Greater Tokyo in Japan and the Boston-Washington corridor in the USA. However, more important than ‘economic output’ is ‘sustainable urbanization and territorial cohesion and collaboration’.

The initiators are confident that this Eurodelta megalopolis can perform much better on today’s challenges when it is working as a whole, living up to the aspirations of the European Green Deal and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Now is the time to act.

¹ Memo prepared by Jaap Modder, Frank D’hondt and Alankrita Sarkar in consultation with members from respectively ISOCARP, METREX and Association Deltametropolis.

The Eurodelta is more of an opportunity than an issue for most planners, designers and other directly professions involved in European territorial collaboration. It aims at mobilizing a broader range of people who feel connected to the issue of an urbanized megaregion where people, ideas, knowledge, goods, and culture can flow without bureaucratic borders. Moreover, the initiators attempt to engage professionals from other megaregions in the world to join the community to be able to draw lessons from elsewhere.

Past, present, and future of Eurodelta as planning concept

It's not clear when the term Eurodelta was first used but it could be that it was "born" in 2005. In the fifties there was this idea of an urbanized Northwest Europe already and in the nineties, there were pleas for a Benelux Delta Plus. In 2005 however an advisory council for the Dutch government published an agenda setting advice with the following title: "[Collaboration in the Eurodelta](#)". The subtitle of this report is also worth citing: "Chances of a position reinforcement (of the three countries) in the core economic area of continental NW Europe" In its advice this council brought five recommendations to the table:

1. Bring enthusiastic stakeholders together and let them share their influence and contribution for this idea.
2. Stimulate exchange of data on the Eurodelta scale, make common proposals for research and bring them in at the European Union.
3. Get insights from the functioning and performance of other (comparable) mega regions and determine what we can learn or do better than these regions.
4. Promote the Eurodelta as one area. From the perspective of our outside world nobody will be surprised because they already see this European region as the "West gateway to Europe".
5. Put cooperation on the Eurodelta scale on the political agenda by acting. Organize meetings and conferences on the professional but also on the political level.

More than fifteen years later we can agree that (again) no significant changes happened, nobody moved and almost nothing happened on the side of governments. In the meantime, the analysis, and the challenge for a more effective Eurodelta has only gotten more weight. It underlines that the Eurodelta is one of the most underrated issues in Europe. While the urgency of doing something by governments has grown, there are more challenges which should be addressed by and for the Eurodelta. Climate action is highly relevant for the Eurodelta because it is already putting a strong emphasis on the necessity of sustainable energy and transport transition – see e.g. ESPON research project '[Sustainable Transport Infrastructure in the Strategic urban region Eurodelta](#)'.



STISE promo video (ESPON) – tap for viewing

However, thinking and planning across borders is a difficult issue, even in today's European Union. Although the internal cohesion in the Eurodelta region in terms of trade and transport is growing every day it is not easy to "break down" borders or to overlook the adjacent rules and regulations in a more radical way, even when everybody understands the advantages. Andreas Faludi, a renowned scholar in the field, wrote a book about it: "The poverty of territorialism" (Edward Elgar Publishing, Massachusetts 2018). Mind the subtitle: "A neo-medieval view of Europe and European planning" He sees (for the future of European integration) that the bondage of individuals to their state is loosening. And his plea is mainly about re-inventing democracy for a networked world. This is a valuable contribution to the debate about this issue because it leads us to the fact that establishing a better performing Eurodelta is a political problem, and therefore a political solution is necessary.

There are a few parties in the planning domain who could and should play a role: ISOCARP (as a global organization), INTA (idem), Metropolis UCLG (idem), Metrex Europe (European scope) and the Association Deltametropolis (Dutch but with a strong international orientation). To that end Metrex, Association Deltametropolis and ISOCARP signed a MoU in 2021 to join hands, open to more partners. To that end, Metrex launched [SURE Eurodelta](#), while Association Deltametropolis established the [Eurodelta Knowledge Platform](#) and organized Eurodelta sessions during consecutive European Weeks of Cities & Regions. To that end, ISOCARP not only contributed to these activities but also pre-launched the Eurodelta Community of Practice during the first [ISOCARP Regional Event](#), at the [Real CORP](#) Conference in Vienna in September 2021.



Source: Association Deltametropolis

Moreover, as mentioned, also [ESPON](#) is playing its share through the research project 'Sustainable Transport Infrastructure in the Strategic urban region Eurodelta'.

The CoP Eurodelta can thus capitalize on increasing knowledge and add value through a global lens. Both the upcoming World Urban Forum (June 2022) and ISOCARP's World Planning Congress (October 2022), hosted by the Brussels Capital Region, provide unique opportunities for debate and advocacy. The CoP could play a vanguard role in preparing a convincing case for the Eurodelta.

For more information and expressions of interest please contact eurodelta@isocarp.org.