

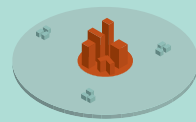
Growth and decline in metropolitan areas

Changes in the size of the population in cities are the result of natural processes (births and deaths) and migration. In most European metropolitan areas, the population is growing. Cities in Europe are also becoming more culturally and ethnically diverse, as a result of the free movement of citizens within the European Union and the influx of migrants and asylum seekers from non-EU countries. Most EU cities saw an increase in the share of non-national inhabitants in recent decades.

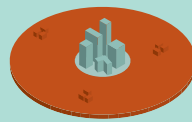
In the 2000–2010 period, the strongest population growth took place in London, Madrid and Paris. But also Dublin, Toulouse, Oslo and metropolitan areas in Spain gained in population. However, not all metropolitan areas have been growing. In the same period, population numbers in Athens, Tallinn, Genova and a number of cities in Poland and Germany declined.

How are metropolitan areas defined?

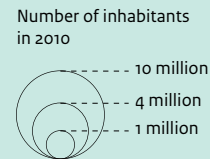
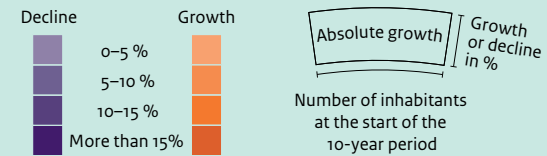
The OECD database contains detailed data on 114 metropolitan areas in Europe. According to the OECD definition, metropolitan areas are urban areas with more than 500,000 inhabitants. The OECD, in cooperation with the European Commission and Eurostat, has developed a harmonised definition of urban areas that overcomes previous limitations linked to administrative definitions (OECD, 2012). According to this definition, an urban area is a functional economic unit characterised by densely inhabited ‘cities’ with more than 50,000 inhabitants and ‘commuting zones’ whose labour market is highly integrated with nearby cities.



City



Commuting zone



Population change for the 114 metropolitan areas in Europe, 2000–2010

Source: OECD Metropolitan Explorer, adaptation by PBL

