

POLYCE Press Release

Bratislava, Budapest, Ljubljana, Praha and Wien: A metropolitan quintet of high living standards and potentials for smart urban development

Vienna – Bratislava, Budapest, Ljubljana, Praha and Wien form a Central European quintet of metropolises with exceptionally high living standards. Beyond this commonality each of the five metropolises is showing a distinct profile in economy, environment, mobility and human capital. This gives each of them a specific role in establishing a competitive Central European urban system.

POLYCE, a research project within the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON), was set up to analyse the cities' future competitive and cooperative potentials among each other and towards other metropolises and brought together universities and political stakeholders from these five metropolises. Results of the project were presented at a press conference in Vienna and commented by representatives of the cities.

The analysis shows that each of the five capitals can play a different, maybe decisive role as generator of competitiveness of the Central European urban system in a wider spatial context.

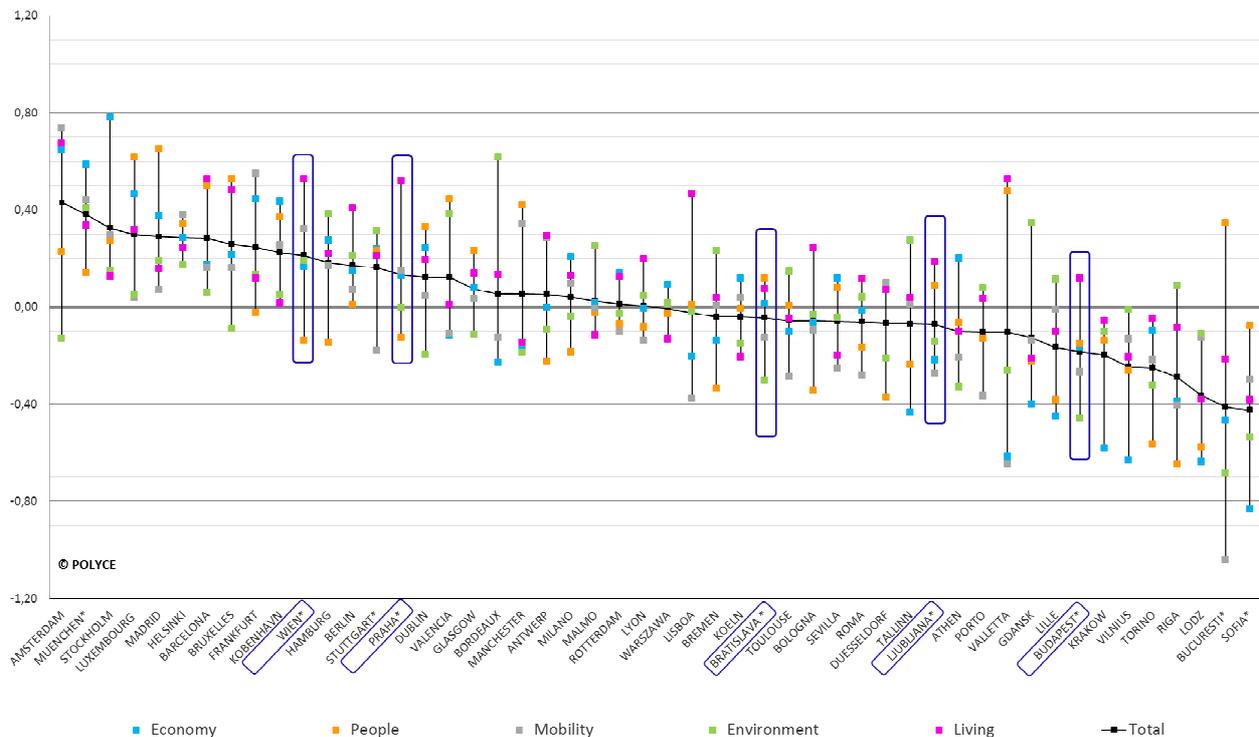
- All five agglomerations perform well in living conditions. It is the only characteristic, in which all five metropolises perform above average of the 50 compared European cities.
- Overall, only Praha and Wien do better than the average of all 50 selected cities. Among the five POLYCE metropolitan areas they do best in economic development terms, also profiting from high-rated living conditions. At the same time both suffer from weaknesses in demography, education, and low ethnic diversity – all subsumed under the category People.
- Bratislava and Ljubljana instead perform notably well in the field of People – a fact, which puts these two metropolises in an important position within the five POLYCE cities, concerning particularly those approaches fostering education and ethnic diversity.
- Wien's profile shows its important position as a role model for environmental issues. Although other Northern and Western European cities outperform Wien in this respect, the metropolitan area obviously shows favourable conditions among its Central European partners. The same is true for mobility, where Wien's position is at least of the same importance.

Performance Profiles of 50 European Metropolises

Performance profiles of the five capital cities have been elaborated on the basis of empirical data of a sample of 50 European metropolises. Parameters were analysed in five profile categories:

- **economy** (reflecting economic performance, entrepreneurship, knowledge-based economy, labour market, research and development funding, international embedment)
- **people** (reflecting demographic trends, education and ethnic diversity)
- **mobility** (reflecting public transport, commuting, international accessibility, availability of information- and communication technologies)
- **environment** (land use, environmental conditions, pollution, resource consumption, environmental quality)
- **living** (cultural facilities, health facilities, housing, touristic attractivity, safety and urban services).

Profiles of 50 Metropolises in Europe



The Zero-line indicates the sample's average; the small line connects the cities' overall performance measures summing up all indicators. Available data for this analysis reach to the year 2008. Developments after 2008 are not reflected and could alter the results in respect to specific indicators to some extent.

Central European Agenda

On the basis of this empirical evidence POLYCE engaged stakeholders in a discussion process to define activities and strategies for a Central European Development Agenda leading among others to the following suggestions:

- Cooperative potentials and assets among the POLYCE metropolises are more or less strong in knowledge economy, transport management and metropolitan governance. They should be activated in a bi- or multilateral way through cooperative endeavours.
- Both institutional as well as structural relations including transport, migration or information flows between the five cities appear to be underdeveloped and should be placed in the focus of a Central European Agenda.
- Relational capital (e.g. language skills, new administrative and strategic capacity) needs to be improved among Central European stakeholders by strengthening contacts and accessibility to information.
- Exchange on the respective experiences and strategies to overcome specific challenges could form an important field of action in the future. For instance, sustainable land mobilization, reduction of urban sprawl and less dependence on individual motorized traffic represent major challenges within the metropolitan regions of the POLYCE capitals.
- Cooperative strategic activities should take the European Strategy for the Danube Region into account. Together, the five metropolises can play an important role in steering the further development paths of this strategy.
- All five metropolises try to position themselves as hubs in their own geographical context towards outside neighboring regions and countries. Therefore, a territorially cohesive development within the Central European territory needs new common strategies.

The research project was conducted within the framework of the ESPON 2013 programme with the Vienna University of Technology, Centre for Regional Science, acting as lead partner and contributions from the University of Ljubljana, the Slovak Technical University in Bratislava, the University of Szeged, the Czech Technical University in Prague, the Charles University in Prague, the Center for Populations, Poverty and Public Policy Studies, Luxembourg, and the Politecnico di Milano.

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