

# Metropolitan area of Brussels

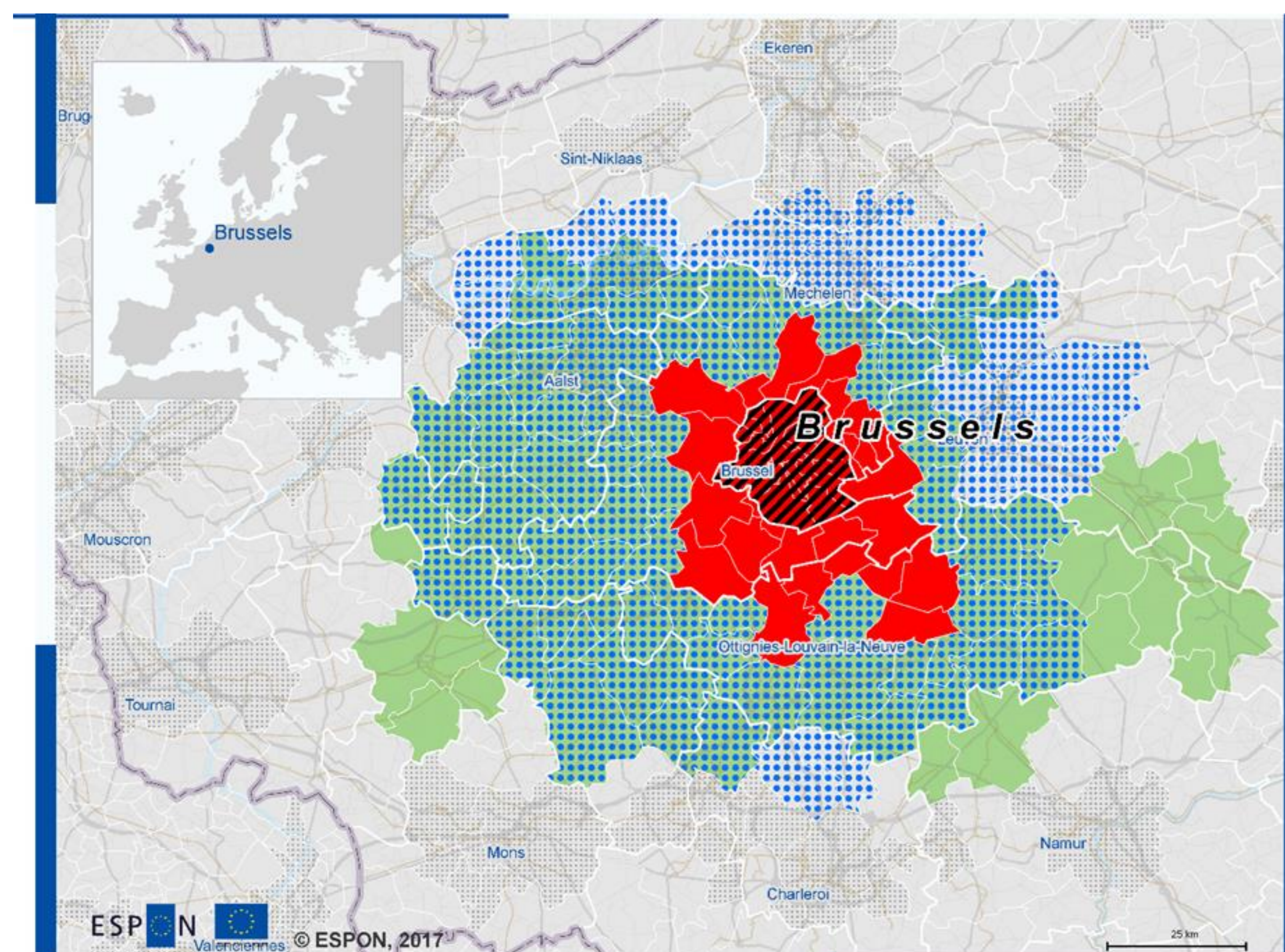
## Spatial dynamics and strategic planning

### The Metropolitan development of Brussels

The demographic, social and economic development trends of the Brussels-Capital Region show an expansion of the urban functions far beyond its current administrative borders and across the three federal regions. This process has determined the need for a strategic territorial development at a metropolitan scale. Such process would help planning and addressing more effectively the current urban growth patterns, including improved accessibility and mobility, balanced distribution of population, optimal provision of services and resources. The discussion about the metropolitan development of Brussels is currently stimulated by the initiation of a collaboration process for establishment of the Metropolitan Community of Brussels.

### Metropolitan Development Area (MDA)

Map of the MDA of Brussels



- Core city municipality
- MUA of the core city (ESPON 2013 Database)
- Surrounding MUA's (ESPON 2013 Database)
- Metropolitan Development Area (MDA)
- FUA of the core city (ESPON 2013 Database)
- National border
- Railroad
- Motorway
- Primary road
- Other road
- rivers

Territorial level: LAU2 (version 2011)  
at information system of the Commission (GISCO), 2017  
Origin of data: EUROSTAT, 2011  
© EuroGeographics for the administrative boundaries

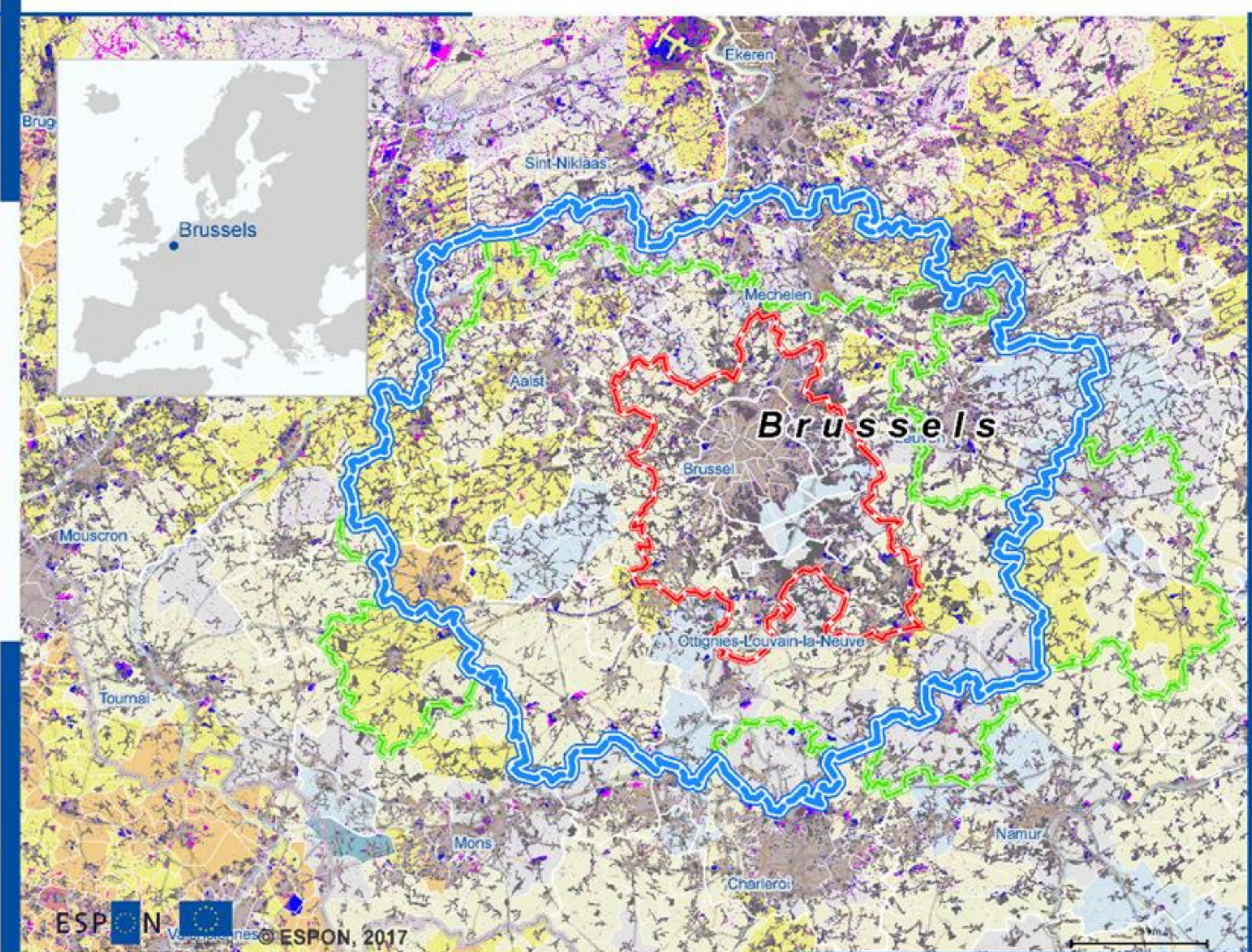
- The idea for the MDA of Brussels refers to the Brussels-Capital Region and the Railway Express Network zone (Zone RER) covering a 30 km ring around Brussels. The area consists of 135 municipalities, including 19 municipalities in Brussels-Capital Region and 116 municipalities around Brussels.
- The MDA of Brussels is not a formal territory and it does not have a consolidated management body.
- A broader metropolitan governance process between the three regions has been recently launched based on a special regulation (2012) for establishment of a Metropolitan Community of Brussels.
- The Metropolitan Community of Brussels aims to establish collaboration for an area within the proposed MDA, covering 111 municipalities (19 municipalities in Brussels-Capital Region and 92 municipalities located in the FB province and the WB province).

### Current spatial development challenges

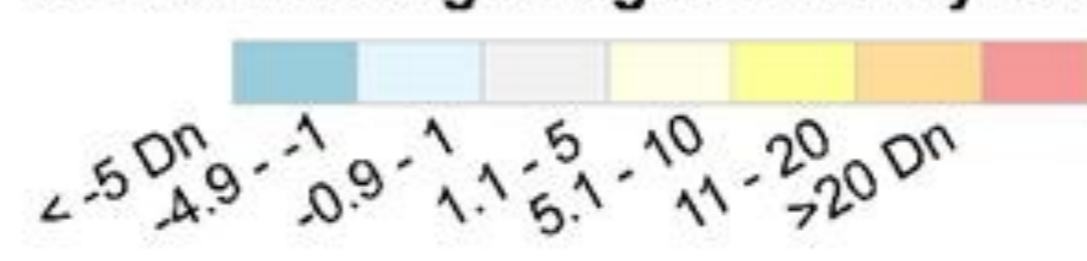
- The key challenge of the metropolitan development of Brussels is in establishing a strong collaboration between the Brussels-Capital Region, Flanders and Wallonia.
- Key issues on the metropolitan development agenda, include:
  - Ensuring new jobs in the city, featuring a proportional mix of living and working opportunities, especially for vulnerable groups;
  - Establishing regional cross-border agreements for development of more effective transport system, providing accessibility and mobility across the regions;
  - Involving civil society and local communities
  - Dealing with differences in cultures and bilingual communities and promoting multicultural diversity.

Map of the Urban Sprawl in MDA, FUA and MUA of Brussels

### Urban Sprawl 1975-2014



### Increase in Night Light Intensity 1992 - 2012



Territorial level: LAU2 (version 2011)  
Source: Geographical information system of the Commission (GISCO), 2017  
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## Strategic priorities, opportunities and incentives

- The draft Regional Strategic Plan of Brussels-Capital Region addressees the need to consider the economic links between Brussels and its hinterland.
- Key strategic priorities are to achieve a sustainable urban development that provides better services, better environment and economic opportunities. The plan needs to further extend its metropolitan scope.
- A key need is seen in reconciling the different interests of the three regions and developing a shared vision with regard to the extent of urban growth in the territories of each region.
- Brussels-Capital Region has a proactive role in promoting a metropolitan planning approach in collaboration with Flanders and Wallonia.
- The active participation of the regional authorities in European initiatives and the collaboration with European institutions brings important incentives.

SOEI matrix of the Metropolitan city of Brussels

### Strategic priorities

- Sustainable Development
- Development of new housing areas and affordable housing
- Development of facilities in an user-friendly sustainable and attractive environment
- Development of sectors and services for stimulating jobs, economy and education
- Improving mobility as a sustainability factor for urban development.

### Emergent problems

- Rapid population growth
- Migration to suburbs
- Deprived communities in inner city
- Increase in foreign immigrants
- Insufficient housing (affordable)
- Unbalanced job market
- Air pollution and waste management
- Reduced traffic efficiency
- Insufficient accessibility to suburbs
- Sprawl and inefficient land use
- Market stagnation and unemployment
- Need for political consensus
- Lingual discrepancies among communities

### Opportunities

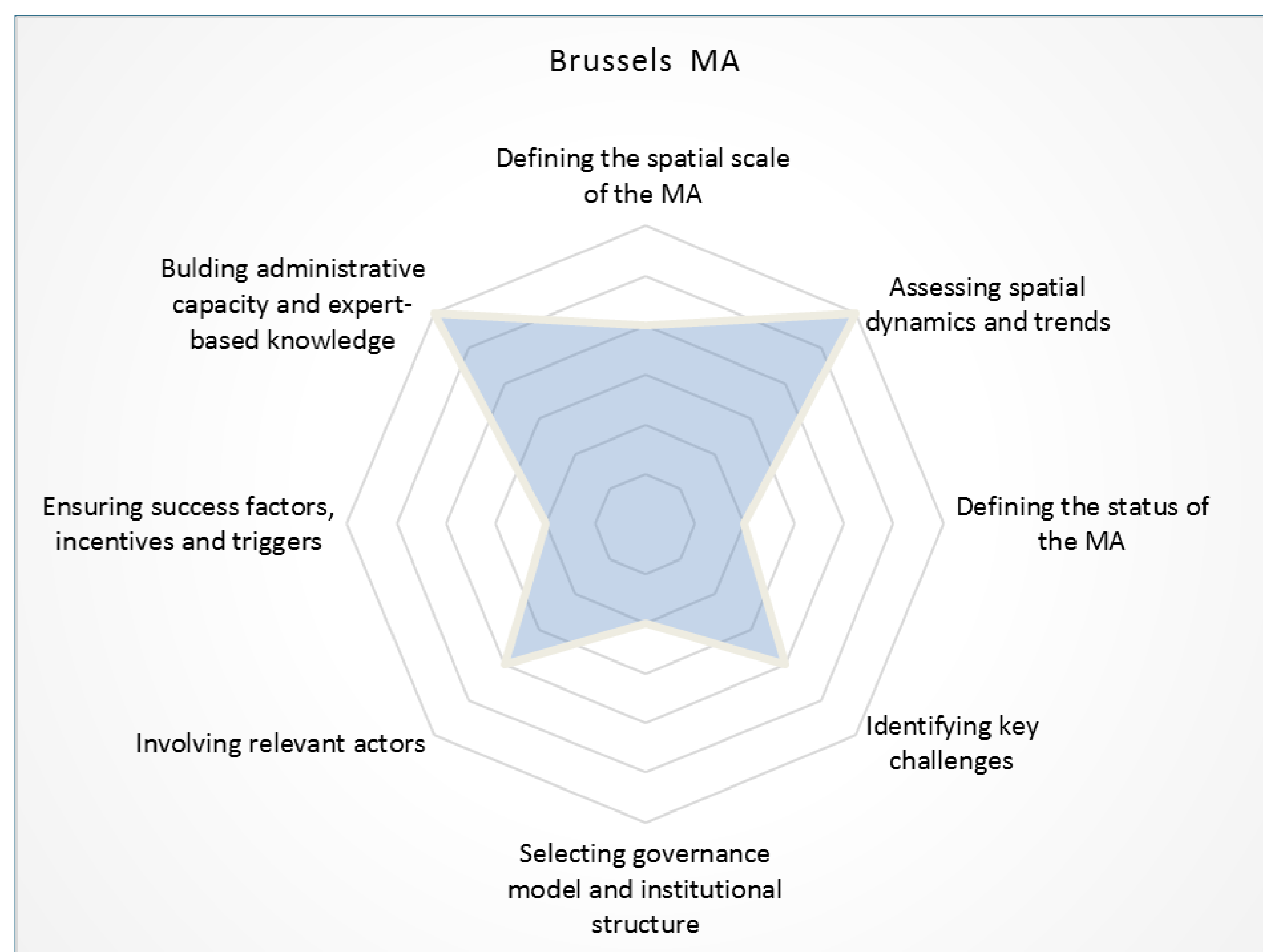
- Attractive European capital
- Culture and identity
- Education: schools and universities
- Research and innovation infrastructure
- Favourable businesses environment
- Current bottom-up networks to build upon
- Strategic position of the core urban area

### Incentives

- New framework regulation for inter-regional-metropolitan collaboration
- BCR regional authority is proactive towards MA planning approach and collaboration
- Regional Strategic plan
- Availability of knowledge and expertise
- Access to European institutions and funds
- Participation in European networks
- Active involvement in European projects

## Key recommendations and relevant policy tools

Progress in Metropolitan Planning Approach based on eight action areas



- Recent efforts of the regional authorities have provided better understanding on the current urban trends behind the metropolitan development of Brussels. Building specific knowledge capacity is in progress to address metropolitan development challenges.
- The regional authorities are involved in the formation of the Metropolitan Community of Brussels. A consensus building process has been started, regarding the role of the Community, its thematic scope and status.
- More efforts are needed in developing a shared governance among the federal regions and between the regional authorities and the municipalities.
- The formalization status of the metropolitan area needs to be defined further on by the regional authorities.
- Creating preconditions for long-term collaboration at inter-regional level is essential next step, focusing on gaining political commitment of the regions and enhancing their proactive-role in strategic planning.
- Starting up bottom-initiatives between the regions can be highly beneficial for building awareness and recognition of the common benefits among key regional and local actors.
- The key policy interventions currently needed are in fostering the collaboration between the regions, setting up a clear coordination process and developing an inter-regional institutional framework for metropolitan planning.



## References:

SPIMA final report <https://www.espon.eu/metropolitan-areas>