

Fact sheet

The multi-city region advantage

Overview

“The mega-region is not an objective. It is a tool – one that helps a group of cities get to their goal.”

Soo-Jin Kim, Head of Urban Policies and Reviews Unit, OECD

We are in the middle of the century of cities – the hundred years of accelerated urbanisation that is creating a predominantly urban planet. Many of the great cities of the world are now evolving into multi-centred regions. These regions of multiple connected cities are set to become the focus of strategic investment and policy.

In this factsheet, four key benefits of the multi-city region are explored:

- Long run productivity
- Improved growth management
- Optimisation of resources
- Influence, reach and brand

The importance of each benefit varies between multi-city regions, depending on the kind of growth pressures they face and their international status.



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Long run productivity

“Mega-regions have a central role in national economies and [are] increasingly seen...as strategic sites for achieving economic growth objectives.”

Gavin Shatkin, Northeastern University

- **Improved productivity and economic diversification.** Multi-city regions provide a path to coordinate across jurisdictions to cooperate on key economic decisions and locations of precincts and anchors.
- **Building shared advantage.** In an effective multi-city region, each city works to its strengths, rather than competing. Multi-city regions provide an opportunity for scale in sectors that rely on combining physical and conceptual activities, such as the circular economy.
- **Shared assets and tech.** Multi-city regions can share energy facilities and innovation infrastructures, especially those that are already distributed along an urban corridor.
- **Borrowed scale.** Small cities can achieve advantages of scale, from sharing transport infrastructure, enabling more robust housing markets and supporting the development of offices, science and technology parks.
- **Identifying major opportunities.** A multi-city region offers the potential to look at the future project pipeline based on common issues and gaps.

Improved growth management

- **Efficient settlement patterns.** Multi-city regions have the potential for more efficient settlement patterns by enabling denser development across a wider number of well-connected centres. This can be essential in better guiding future population growth and alleviating sprawl.
- **Reducing congestion.** Some multi-city regions avoid the road congestion of large cities, through frequent links to smaller cities, multi-modal public transport systems at key transport hubs and airports, and harmonising the ticketing and physical experience.

- **Suitable for fast rail.** The typical distance between metropolitan areas in multi-city regions is the ideal operating range of high-speed rail – usually 45-90 minutes. This gives people and businesses access to opportunities and resources across the region.

Optimisation of resources

- **More coordinated and effective custodianship of natural resources.** These include surface and groundwater resources, forests and agricultural land.
- This can include **establishing commissions** to coordinate efficient water policy, ensuring appropriate water supplies to each population centre within the region according to needs.
- For others, greater coordination among cities within the region can generate more robust approaches to **protection of land and forests, oceans and soil.**

“[Multi-city regions] are capable of having an intelligent and shared project of the future and achieve amazing results in terms of economic development, social integration and environmental sustainability.”

Alfonso Vegara, Fundacion Metropoli

Influence, reach and brand

- **Stronger international presence and position.** For larger cities, their position as an anchor and gateway to a much larger region makes them more attractive for business and investment. For smaller cities, their ability to be an active part of a larger region with more global reach presents more opportunities for local companies to have a global presence.
- **Events attraction.** Multi-city regions are increasingly the right scale for hosting (and bidding for) large events, allowing smaller cities to host international gatherings, conventions and championships.