



COORDINATING SPATIAL PLANNING AND INVESTMENT ACROSS STATE AND LOCAL BOUNDARIES IN THE HAMBURG METROPOLITAN REGION

Hamburg Metropolitan Region, Germany—

- The Hamburg Metropolitan Region (HMR) spans four federal states, creating an important need to coordinate spatial planning and infrastructure investment across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Coordination within the HMR is supported through an institutional framework with joint decision-making bodies consisting of federal states and municipalities who support the identification of joint priorities and investment projects.
- Alongside the HMR, the Hamburg Public Transport Association coordinates public transport services and the planning of infrastructure projects in the region and serves as a prime example of effective inter-state collaboration on transport.

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● Keyword

Themes: Economic and community development | Tags: Place-based revitalization; Leadership, governance and partnerships | Geographic scale: City / metropolitan area, Region/State, Cross regional / cross border

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● Theme

Economic and community development

● Countries

[Germany](#)

What are the objectives?

The Hamburg Metropolitan Region (HMR) is one of 11 metropolitan regions in Germany and covers 8% of the land area in the country. It encompasses four federal states: Hamburg (a city-state entirely within the HMR), Lower Saxony (26% of the HMR), Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (30% of the HMR) and Schleswig-Holstein (51% of the HMR). Given the relatively

fragmented structure of the metropolitan area, co-ordination and co-operation for planning and investment is critical for supporting the coordinated development of the region.

The Hamburg Metropolitan Region is formalised through a coordination body. This body aims to sustainably improve future opportunities of the region, strengthen the regional economy and employment, and promote cohesion between rural and urban areas. The body develops strategies for the region, initiates and develops cooperation projects, and implements them together with the stakeholders. Projects undertaken by the HMR cover topics including economy, transport, tourism, housing, culture, nature, climate and energy.

How does it work in practice?

Co-operation within the HMR began in the 1950s with joint regional planning between Hamburg, Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein, including the establishment of bilateral promotional funds for funding regional projects. After decades of collaboration, in 1995 the HMR was recognised as a metropolitan region by the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning. A more structured and formal body, the joint Planning Hamburg Metropolitan Region, was established in 1997, with political and executive bodies such as the Regional Council, Steering Committee and thematic working groups. Over the years, the region expanded and operational programmes and administrative agreements for co-operation were established.

To avoid barriers in coordination, initiatives led by the HMR do not require unanimous consent from all four federal states. According to an informal rule, any HMR member can choose to refrain from involvement in a specific project but is not permitted to impede or reject projects pursued by others. This method adeptly averts deadlock, fostering a collaborative ethos among those eager to work together. The HMR has a central governing body composed of stakeholder representatives, determined by a general assembly. The framework is further fortified by a shared financial instrument, facilitating the funding of projects for regional development.

Cooperation in the HMR is formalised through agreed projects. Recent projects have included the implementation of a system for cross-border digital coordination of construction sites and traffic disruptions, and the development of a Mobility Competence Centre. In 2021, the HRM established a Spatial Development Coordination Group, which comprises planning authorities from the metropolitan region to foster inter-state collaboration in spatial planning. These efforts are anticipated to result in a spatial mission statement to help identify regional infrastructure needs up to 2045.

Another notable illustration of effective inter-state collaboration within the HMR is the Hamburg Traffic Association (HVV). The HVV has developed a unified transport network by gathering local government officials and public transport operators to coordinate public transport infrastructure, fare structures and ticketing throughout the metropolitan area. The HVV also

supports coordination in public transport services and infrastructure planning across federal state and local government boundaries.

What has been the impact?

HMR has enhanced coordination within the region by helping to develop joint priorities and projects. HMR serves as a co-ordination body that promotes dialogue to build consensus among its 36 stakeholders. It has continued to expand to include new stakeholders. Since 2006, the HMR has undergone several geographical expansions and increased stakeholder involvement (e.g. the federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania joined in 2012 and the capital city of Schwerin in 2017, as well as various stakeholders such as Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Chambers of Crafts, the United Business Association, the German Trade Union Confederation, etc.).

Alongside HMR, HVV is considered as a benchmark in transport coordination for many cities in Europe. As a result of the interoperability and coordinated planning through the creation of HVV, annual public transport trips per person increased by 30% from 1990 to 2015 in Hamburg. The Association's achievements have reverberated across the continent, inspiring the establishment of more than 70 similar associations in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria.

What can other communities learn from this example?

- Establishing structured governance frameworks can help to facilitate the coordination of investment among state and local governments.
- Incorporating flexibility in cooperation mechanisms, such as allowing abstention from projects without the ability to veto, can help to avoid deadlock and maintain a collaborative ethos among participating governments.
- Identifying and implementing small but clearly defined projects that address shared priorities can help to achieve tangible outcomes and strengthen collaboration.

Further information

- [Hamburg | IKM \(deutsche-metropolregionen.org\)](https://www.deutsche-metropolregionen.org/)
- [Metropolregion Hamburg](#) (in German)
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OECD resources

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