

# OPENCities Concept Paper

Openness and the Competitive Advantage of Diversity



Connecting cities  
Building successes





## OPENCities Concept Paper

### Openness and the Competitive Advantage of Diversity

OPENCities is a British Council project funded by URBACT and led by Belfast City Council in collaboration with a network of European cities. The partner cities include Bilbao, Bucharest, Cardiff, Dublin, Dusseldorf, Nitra, Poznan, Sofia and Vienna. URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development.

#### Timeframe:

Launched in January 2009 at the Belfast Waterfront, the project runs for 30 months, from 24<sup>th</sup> December 2008 until June 2011.

#### Project Objectives:

The main objective of the project is to identify what makes a city attractive to international populations and to develop practical strategies for tackling economic and social integration issues, which can help cities better attract and retain international populations thus contributing to their improved competitiveness. It was initiated because of a belief that cities that attract international populations are more competitive than cities that don't. By attracting new international populations, cities will inevitably attract more international events, investors and visitors. This 'internationalisation' will lead to greater diversity, which leads to more economic success.

The OPENCities Project is committed to demonstrating that a diverse population can be a true asset; bringing talent and new ideas from all over the world, supporting innovation and therefore enhancing the competitiveness, the success of cities, as well as the welfare and well-being of its citizens. The project considers how to successfully integrate international migrants and how to become and remain competitive in a globalised world. OPENCities has three key themes – Leadership and Governance, Internationalisation and Integration and Inclusion.

At a political level, the OPENCities project has been signed up to by the First Citizen of each city through a signed letter of Commitment and a signed Joint Convention. Each city also has the engagement of their Managing Authority (MA). The MA acts as a support to each city providing information on existing EU funded migrant projects, acting as a signpost to funding opportunities and has a role in helping to populate Local Action Plans.

The European Commission is an active partner in this prestigious project since OPENCities has been selected for "fast track" project, under the Regions for Economic Change initiative. This means that the European Commission works closely with the project to track policy and transferable practice to promote learning across Europe.

The exchange of learning within the project is supported by the production of thematic papers which are used to stimulate ideas of good practice case studies in each of the cities.

Workshops based on each of the themes allow partners to discuss the findings and learn more about areas of shared interest. The resulting conference report, prepared by the project's lead expert, summarises the activities and highlights key points from the research, case studies and links with the other themes.

A key output of the project is the production by each city of a Local Action Plan based on the needs of that city's migrant population.

The development of a **Local Action Plan** is informed by a **Local Support Group** made up of key informed representatives and government departments. The Local Action Plan provides an opportunity to map existing and new initiatives as well as solutions to problems associated with managing migration and the benefits to the city. Local pilot projects will be identified and developed based on peer review learning with financial support sought from European Structural Funds to mainstream best practice in supporting these initiatives aimed at economic and social inclusion. The Local Action Plan will propose a series of actions required in order for strategy and policy in this area to succeed including:

- what needs to be done
- who should be involved
- how it will be carried out, in terms of funds, resources and methods
- when this will happen.

The Local Support Group will also improve the impact of transnational exchange activity between countries at a local level and take key messages about managing sustainable cities to a far broader audience.

## **Funding**

The 6 competitive cities involved in the project are contributing €17,295 over the 30 month period while with 3 convergence cities contribute €1,530 to the total budget of €18,850. The remaining 70% and 80% (respectively) of the budget is made up of ERDF funding.

The funding covers travel costs to enable the learning exchange in partner cities, local support group activities in aid of developing the local action plan, external expertise, communication and dissemination of findings and general staffing and administration costs.

## **Project Outputs**

- OPENCities information and document archive
- Baseline profiles from each city
- Expert Thematic Reports x 3
- Thematic Conference Reports x 7
- Local Support Group in each city
- Local Action Plan for each city x 9 including Pilot Project Proposals
- Good Practice Case studies under each theme (min 9)
- Opportunity to participate in URBACT Thematic Poles and Conferences
- A feasibility study on whether openness can be measured internationally; complete and available on line.
- OPENCities Index - Benchmarking Tool (produced and financed by British Council, under OPENCities Global with and for project partners and other cities)
- Opportunity to contribute to EUROCities Economic Migration Working Group to Influence National and EU Policies
- Information Materials for URBACT OPENCities web portal
- OPENCities electronic newsletter
- OPENCities brochures and promotion materials

## Challenges

The project addresses how cities that attract migrants can be responsible towards cities that are losing population and how the successful integration of international populations can impact on attractiveness and competitiveness in the long term.

The experiences of the different partners are not exactly the same and the project provides the opportunity to exchange ideas, to learn from best practice and in the case of the new member states to plan ahead for the future.

## Key point of focus

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The project will tackle the following main issues on the basis that not all cities are equally open to international migrants. We want to better understand:

- What city openness is and how we can define what makes OPENCities? Considering a number of factors – economic, regulatory, cultural, amenity, connectivity, risks, leadership and internationalisation.
- Why do some cities appear to be more attractive to international populations despite similar national frameworks and conditions?
- What role does the social and economic integration of migrants play in city competitiveness and the attraction of further international human capital?
- Can we develop clear guidance for city leaders on how to increase and promote the openness of cities to international populations?
- Can we develop an OPENCities ‘index of openness’ to compare and benchmark various European cities and to consider the potential for an internationally recognised openness ‘standard’ or ‘kitemark’ for cities?

## Benefit of participation in OPENCities

- Influence policy makers and structural fund programmers
- Recognise and promote our cities as open cities
- Identify successful integration projects for economic migrants
- Establish a network and legacy of local support groups throughout the cities
- Develop and deliver concrete, measurable local action plans to address economic migration issues
- Produce practical tools to address barriers to employment such as language, recognition of qualifications and skill groups.

## More information:

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For more information on the British Council Global OPENCities Project:

**Web:** [www.opencities.eu](http://www.opencities.eu)



City of  
Düsseldorf



POZnań  
\* Eastern energy, Western style



City of Vienna



URBACT II

**URBAN** is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development.

It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 300 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants. URBACT is co-financed by the ERDF Funds and the Member States.

[www.urbact.eu/opencities](http://www.urbact.eu/opencities)  
[www.opencities.eu](http://www.opencities.eu)



EUROPEAN  
PROGRAMME  
FOR  
SUSTAINABLE  
URBAN  
DEVELOPMENT



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