



Connecting cities
Building successes



Project overview

The OPENCities project is now entering its final year. The projected end date is June 2011 with an administrative closure date of September 2011. Partners have attended Thematic Meetings in Poznan (June 2010) and Sofia (September 2010). The final thematic workshop in Nitra is scheduled to take place 16th - 17th February 2011. Partners have been working on completing their Local Action Plans in advance of Christmas 2010 and planning is underway for the OPENCities Closing Conference which will be held in Brussels at the [EESC](#) on 25th of May 2011.

For further information on the opencities project and its outputs:

<http://urbact.eu/en/projects/human-capital-entrepreneurship/open-cities/our-outputs/>

Belfast Local Action Plan

Lead partner Belfast hosted a consultative event in Belfast's Waterfront Hall on the 6th of December 2010. The aim of this consultation was to share information about the Opencities project and to gather feedback from participants to assist in the formation of the Local Action Plan.

Belfast's public consultation (Dec 2010) on the draft Local Action Plan asked migrant workers and their representative organisations if the key problems identified in 2008 were still the same problems they faced now.

Findings from migrant workers indicated that the baseline is broadly accurate but there continues to be inadequate information for migrants on a host of issues and areas. If you cannot speak good English you cannot access services and linked to this translation services are essential.

NGOs commented that, there is even greater need for more information due to the economic downturn. There is more competition with local people for jobs with local companies as the context has changed a lot with the economic downturn. The question of what happens if you become unemployed and, as a result, destitute is now a key issue for many people. Linked to this there are a whole range of factors which the recession impacts on in a particular way for migrants. The impact of the personal loss of a job, of an income, of a way of life, can lead to mental health issues

– and especially those related to a sense of rejection. Accessibility of information rather than lack of information continues to be an issue.

OPENCities Belfast would like to express a sincere thank you to the various organisations and migrant workers who braved the harsh weather conditions to attend the public consultation and assist in this process.

URBACT Annual Conference

The URBACT Annual Conference was held in Liege November 2010 and attended by the OPENCities Project Manager, MA representative from Belfast and TALK – IT Good Practice Case Study presenters, Anne Downs (Gems NI) and Dwyer O’Gorman (Allstate NI). Speakers participated in a workshop entitled, ‘Steps Toward Inclusive Growth’. The workshop considered measures cities can put in place to fully utilise the potential of women and migrant workers, and how to make their indigenous enterprises stronger and more robust. It considered the following question: What can cities do to promote sustainable growth opportunities that generate quality jobs for all?

According to organisations like the OECD, before the recession “while strong job growth helped economies to prosper, this disguised an inherent problem in the large-scale creation of weakly productive jobs.....providing relatively low salaries which created a section of society which could be classed as the working poor.” During the recovery, they recommend that “it is not just enough to invest in the supply of skills. Employers also need to address the organization of their workplaces so that they better harness the skills of their workers and create more sustainable employment opportunities in the future”. This is easier said than done - especially in a recession.

Two URBACT networks approached this issue from the point of view of particular target groups (WEED for women and Open Cities for Migrants) while two focused on the needs of particular types of firms (social enterprises in the case of Urban Nose and small and innovative enterprises for Fin Urb Act). A fifth new network (ESIMeC) considered how to bridge the gap between labour supply and demand by looking at “demand (employer) led skills strategies”.

Further information on the event can be accessed as of January 2011 online at www.urbact.eu.



Dublin city Peer Review in partnership with Eurocities

The Office of International Relations, Research and Special Projects within Dublin City Council held a Peer Review process in November 2010. Bringing together members of the Eurocities Economic Migration Working Group with OPENCities partners, Peter Finnegan's team presented a case study on the city's approach to attracting International Students. The policy objective of Dublin City Council implements the national policy objective for Ireland to become internationally recognised and ranked as a world leader in the delivery of high-quality international education.

The Peer Review coincided with a week of activities in the City of Dublin exploring innovation and creativity, which culminated in an Innovation Forum. For further information on Dublin activities contact Jamie Cudden at jamie.cudden@dublincity.ie

A report on the Peer Review will be available in February 2010 from the OPENCities project website: <http://urbact.eu/en/projects/human-capital-entrepreneurship/open-cities/our-outputs/> and via Eurocities website www.eurocities.eu