

OPENCITIES URBACT NEWSLETTER JUNE 2011

In this issue:

- OPENCities Overview
- OPENCities Closing Conference
- Highlights from the LAPs
- LSG Summer School
- New staff in Belfast

OPENCities Overview

The OPENCities project has now ended and is now winding down with an administrative closure date of September 2011. Partners have attended Thematic Meetings in Poznan (June 2010), Sofia (September 2010) and Nitra (February 2011). Partners attended the OPENCities Closing Conference where they handed over their Local Action Plans. Dublin is to provide their LAP by 19 July 2011.

For further information on the OPENCities project and its [Outputs](#)

For information on attending the Closing Conference contact [Aaron McMullan](#)

OPENCities Closing Conference

“OPENCities and Economic Recovery - Why city openness matters during recession?”

The OPENCities Closing Conference was held on 25th of May 2011 at the European Economic & Social Committee building in Brussels.

LAP Handover

Partners handed over their Local Action Plans and made presentations based on a range of highlights from selected LAPs by representatives of participating cities, bringing out transferability, learning points and key challenges. The session was moderated by the OPENCities Lead Expert, Ian Goldring.

Deputy Mayor of London

The Deputy Mayor of London spoke of London's commitment to openness as essential to its ambitions as a key world city and stressed the need for micro as well as macro practical measure

Looking to the Future

Jean-Loup Drubigny, Head of the URBACT Secretariat, presented on the new priorities and challenges for URBACT, in particular the upcoming third URBACT call which will be focused largely by the EU 2020 agenda

Panel Debate on Local Leadership

The panel members included the Deputy Lord Mayor of Dublin, Vienna City Council Member, Belfast City Director of Development and the Leader of Cardiff Council, Moderated by Oliver Freeman, Anglo-Swiss Intercultural Management Consultant. Discussions centred on how the economic crisis has changed the focus of “openness”.

Conference Conclusions

Jan Maarten de Vet, Director of Ecorys-Ecotec Brussels presented the highlights and key findings and observations of the day. He identified key messages from partner city experiences, issues concerning Openness policy, the future of work on Openness, the functioning of urban networks and future urban policy.

OPENCities Faces Exhibition

The exhibition was presented by Anna Maria Darmanin, Vice-President of EESC and Mark Baumfield, OPENCities Project Director who spoke on Openness and the themes of OPENCities.

Highlights from the LAPs

The following are outlines from the selected case studies from the OPENCities LAPs. The full document can be found [here](#)

Belfast

Allstate Northern Ireland was established in Belfast in 1998 and provides high quality software development services and business process outsourcing solutions in support of its U.S parent’s global operations. Currently, the company employs more than 1500 people in Northern Ireland. Allstate NI plays a strategic role in developing, transforming and maintaining the various technology platforms used within Allstate, to support it in its day to day business, looking after the different systems that you might expect one of the world’s largest insurance giants to run. A significant factor in the success of Allstate NI’s unprecedented growth in Northern Ireland has been the company’s ability to attract, retain and develop a diverse workforce. This case study provides an insight into the tools and techniques which Allstate NI has put in place to support this diverse working environment, which not only meets the needs of migrant workers, but also encourages gender diversity and positive policies to enhance employment opportunities for disabled workers. Allstate NI’s Diversity and Equality Programme has successfully integrated diversity into the organisational culture. It is not a singular programme but an ongoing, integrated corporate initiative that enhances the company’s ability to attract, motivate and retain a diverse pool of high performing employees necessary for a successful business. Allstate NI has developed a comprehensive programme to support the integration of migrant workers and their families into the company and into Northern Ireland society.

Bilbao

The general objective of this awareness programme is to improve the health of women, where it relates to both health and wellbeing. The intention is to foster empowerment by creating spaces for communication and relations between women, preventing gender violence within couples, preventing unwanted pregnancies and providing information and guidelines for the healthy development of sexuality. The programme consists of training a group of young women so that they can act as 'health agents' or reference points in their own local areas, groups and social environments, disseminating and multiplying the knowledge acquired in their training and generating forums for debate and meeting points with others to tackle issues concerned with health, violence, sexuality, cultural and sexual identity, maternity and others that may be of interest to young women. Each 'health agent' organises and plans meetings to fulfil the general objectives of the programme, encouraging participation in group discussions. The meetings act as small-scale health observatories organised on an informal basis, which are just as valuable as more formal programmes.

Vienna

Vienna's integration policy follows a clear concept based on transparent rules for immigration and integration. It focuses on a set of tailor-made integration measures for newly arrived immigrants and specific target groups such as women and youngsters. The four pillars of the concept are:

- Language learning PLUS (education and labour market orientation measures)
- Education, training and employment
- Promoting a respectful climate of living together in the city
- Measuring and evaluating progress in the field (Vienna Integration and Diversity Monitor)

The roof of the concept, which is depicted symbolically as a house, is a broad coalition for integration and against racism and xenophobia. The integration measures of the MA 17 – the department of the Vienna City Administration in charge of initiating measures and projects to improve equality and provide equal opportunities for migrants – aim at providing migrants with a good start in their new hometown and include language courses, information about everyday life (e.g. schools and health system) as well as support in finding work in Austria (e.g. recognition of diplomas). The department helps all residents of Vienna at finding the best way of living together as good neighbours. In addition to promoting language acquisition and diversity measures, MA 17 supports projects that provide advice, counselling, support and empowerment for migrants, strengthen their participation in society, and promote intercultural sensitivity and competence. A special focus of the department is on maintaining close ties and regular communication with immigrant organisations and associations. 'Start Wien' is one of the key integration initiatives which has been in place since October 2008 covering welcome policies, including welcome and information packages as well as mother-tongue orientation meetings focused on the labour market, with special offers for immigrant women.



LSG Summer School

The first URBACT LSG Summer University will welcome European-wide ULSG members. The Summer University was conceived as a unique learning experience, primarily aimed at strengthening individual skills and capacities to develop participative action-planning in urban policies.

The university will provide ULSG members, Lead Experts, Lead Partners and MAs with an excellent opportunity to develop their capacities to develop participative action-planning in urban policies and will provide an opportunity to network with national partners to improve ULSG impact at local level.

The Summer University will be held in the Jagiellonian University of Krakow, Poland from the 29th to the 31st August 2011, with registration on the evening of Sunday 28th August.

New Staff

This month Belfast welcomes a new Lead Partner Manager, Kim Lavery and a new Lead Partner Finance & Communications Officer, Aaron McMullan. Both of who will take the OPENCities project to closure and will be more than happy to help with all enquiries.

Click the photos to contact Kim or Aaron

