



Connecting cities
Building successes



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OPENCities Overview

The OPENCities project is now in its final phase. The project end date is 19 July 2011 with an administrative closure date of 19 October 2011. Partners have now attended all 5 Thematic Meetings, most recently in Nitra in February 2011. As we head toward the end of the project, planning is underway for the OPENCities Closing Conference which will be held at the European Economic & Social Committee building in Brussels on 25th of May 2011. Partners are also working on completing their Local Action Plans by March 2011.

For further information on the OPENCities project and its outputs: <http://urbact.eu/en/projects/human-capital-entrepreneurship/open-cities/our-outputs/> For information on attending the Closing Conference contact laveryk@belfastcity.gov.uk

Nitra Thematic Workshop

City partners met in Nitra, Slovenia, on 16th - 17th February 2011 to discuss the agenda for the upcoming OPENCities Closing Conference and feedback on their experiences producing their Local Action Plan.

Partners and delegates were welcomed by Vice-Chairman of Nitra Self-Governing Region (NSR), Ing. Vladislav Borík, who spoke of the importance of making the region more dynamic by embracing 'openness'.

"OPENCities has helped the region better prepare and support its migrant workers and communities. Through developing the Local Action Plan, we have also started to look at how to better pool our existing resources to make Nitra more attractive to our migrant communities through culture, sport and the arts."

The Local Action Plan (LAP) of each city will play a key role at the closing conference, with partners to speak on key outputs of their LAP in a presentation coordinated by Lead Expert, Ian Goldring.

Partners agreed that the conference theme should centre around the concept of 'openness' during a recession, and that the panel would debate the statement 'An open city is the only way forward'.

For a full report on the Nitra Thematic Workshop visit our website at www.urbact.eu/opencities. More information on the closing conference will also be available soon on the dedicated opencities webpage.

OPENCities Partners – City News

Inter-City Projects – Poznan and Bilbao

Poznan and Bilbao plan to embark on a joint project to start up a multicultural integration centre in Poznan. Inspired by the Centro Socialo Ignacjo Ellacuria in Bilbao, Poznan hope to replicate the success of the centre as a 'one stop shop' for immigrant communities in their own city.

OPENCities Coordinator for Poznan, Wojciech Bauer, said "The Bilbao Center is run by one organization but intended for all foreigners and citizens. This is a great example of what we can do in Poznan and will be a project we can implement as part of our LAP. Bilbao's experience in this could be very helpful for us to learn from."

The idea for the project was developed during an 'organised study visit' with delegates from Poznan meeting their OPENCity colleagues in Bilbao in December last year under URBACT II's OPENCities project. The visit was devoted to issues related to the creation and implementation of the Local Action Plan and the involvement of the Local Support Groups.

Representatives from both partner cities presented their city LAPs for discussion aimed at exploring the possibilities of adapting common ideas, sharing knowledge and assisting in implementing existing good practice.

Overall, there was consensus among all city representatives of the need to continue the inter-city cooperation and knowledge exchange especially with regard to openness, the attraction of an international human capital, and the development of the cities.

"We had a great opportunity to visit Bilbao and get to know their experiences of openness, migration, human capital and such." Said Mr Bauer. "With what we have learned from Bilbao in this trip, Poznan is ready to find proper funds for inter-city cooperation with Bilbao in implementing a new multicultural integration center in Poznan. Only time and human involvement is needed for final preparations."

For more information on this joint project between Poznan and Bilbao, contact Wojciech Bauer (OPENCities Coordinator, Poznan) at wojciech_bauer@um.poznan.pl or Claudia Emmanuel (OPENCities Coordinator, Bilbao) at claudia.emmanuel@ayto.bilbao.net

New Mayor for Vienna

The city of Vienna is excited to announce the appointment of their new vice Mayor, Maria Vassilakou, the city's first ever Green Party deputy Mayor. The vice Mayor hails originally from Greece but is very much involved in the city she now calls home. Her appointment takes Vienna another stride forward in their vision towards becoming a truly OPENCity.

STEP IN to Nitra – Caritas, LSG Member

Nestled in the medieval heart of Nitra, Slovakia, lies the office of Diecezna Charita Nitra - the local branch of the International Catholic Organisation, CARITAS, and home to 15 children from Nitra's Roma community.

Diecezna Charita Nitra is a branch of CARITAS, a charitable Catholic organisation and also part of the Local Support Group. STEP IN is an acronym for Studying Training and Educational Paths for the Integration of young Roma. STEP IN was considered an appropriate name because it also means 'to enter', 'to intervene', i.e. to step in(to) society as citizens with full rights.

The main seven partners in STEP IN are: Caritas Ambrosiana, from Italy, Caritas Bucharest and Asociatia Aproapele from Romania, Bulgarisch-Deutsches Sozialwerk from Bulgaria, Secours Catholique from France, from Slovakia, Cordaid from The Netherlands and Caritas Europa based in Belgium.

On the initiative of Caritas Ambrosiana as lead partner, 14 organisations committed to the plight of young Roma's, have joined forces and committed themselves with the aim to increase school attendance and career prospects for young Roma kids between the ages of 13 to 18.

Studying Training and Educational Paths for the Integration of young Roma otherwise known as STEP IN is the result of this commitment. The project is supported by "Joint Actions Socrates, Leonardo Da Vinci and Youth Programmes" and it lasts from December 2004 to December 2006.

All project partners believe that education is one of the best ways to overcome isolation and the best-proven tool to integrate young Roma into the local community. Education should be seen as a tool to give the Roma access to the same chances as their peers, to develop mutual trust and to encourage them to become active and responsible citizens. The STEP IN project set out to find and test new and innovative ways for integrating young Roma into the national education systems.

The general basis of the project is formed by the educational package. The educational package was agreed between all project partners, it was then used by the partners to plan local experimentations. This educational package is meant as a flexible tool and was adapted by each partner to the local context and to the target group.