

AMSTERDAM TO HOST INTEGRATING CITIES CONFERENCE 2012

The City of Amsterdam and EUROCITIES are collaborating to organise the fifth edition of the Integrating Cities Conference on 8 and 9 March 2012. The title of this year's conference is 'Making Integration Work in Europe's cities'. EUROCITIES, the network of major European cities, aims to encourage and improve communications between cities and the European Commission. The Integrating Cities Conference is a platform for dialogue on the subjects of integration and diversity. Eurocities comprises of 135 cities, each with more than 250,000 residents.

The primary aim of Integrating Cities is to improve cooperation and knowledge transfer with regard to integration and diversity on local, national and European levels. It is vital that cities are involved in the process of developing European policy on integration. After all, the integration process in major cities is often highly pressurised. Diversity is a fundamental part of city life, where people have different backgrounds, nationalities and lifestyles, which means that cities play a crucial role in developing integration policy.

Amsterdam Vice Mayor Andrée van Es (Citizenship and Diversity): 'I am pleased that the City of Amsterdam has been granted the opportunity to organise the Integrating Cities Conference. Amsterdam is home to 180 nationalities. Every day, we have to seize and maintain our desired norms of tolerance, respect and freedom. Only by continuing to do so, can we guarantee a tolerant society. I hope that these norms remain a top priority for Amsterdam, for the European institutions and the other European cities. The Integrating Cities Conference goes some way to ensuring this is the case.'

Mayors and councillors from various cities will participate in the Integrating Cities Conference in Amsterdam. The conference will also be attended by policy makers and professionals in the fields of migration and integration working at local, national and European levels.

The Integrating Cities Charter was signed by 17 EUROCITIES members during the previous conference, held in London in 2010. The purpose of this charter is to ensure that individual cities play as significant a role as possible in the integration process. Eight additional member cities signed since and two (Riga and Rennes Metropole) will add their names to the agreement in Amsterdam. The extent to which the participating cities have already realised the aims set out in the agreement will be discussed.

Speakers at the conference will include Stefano Manservigi (Director General for Home Affairs at the European Commission), Ricard Zapata-Barrero (Professor of Political Science at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, Spain), Saskia Sassen (Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology at Columbia University, USA), Ahmed Aboutaleb (Mayor of Rotterdam) and Eberhard van der Laan (Mayor of Amsterdam). Various 'Dutch Masters' specialising in diversity and integration will also be holding masterclasses at locations throughout the city. An overview of speakers, locations and masterclasses is included in the attachment. During one of the masterclasses, Dutch researchers Han Entzinger and Paul Scheffer will present a comparative study of the diversity policies of Amsterdam and Rotterdam (where the first Integrating Cities Conference took place in 2006).

For more information on Integrating Cities 2012, please visit www.integratingcities2012.eu