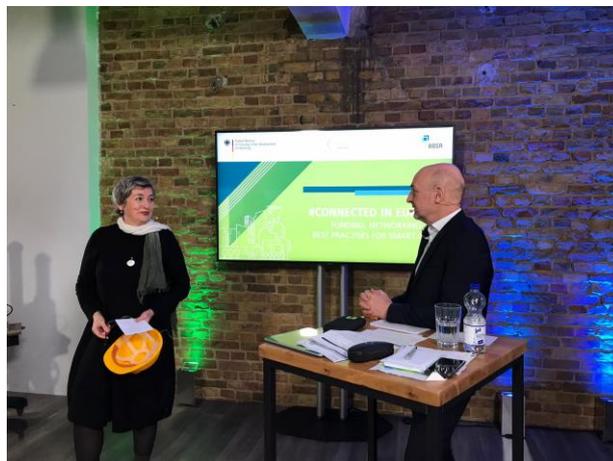


#CONNECTED IN EUROPE

## #Connected in Europe: Funding, networking and best practices for Smart Cities 10.02.2022

On 10 February 2022, the conference ‘#Connected in Europe: Funding, networking and best practices for Smart Cities’ took place. This conference marked the official launch of the #Connected in Europe project. During the event, 280 participants learned about European networking opportunities in the field of Smart Cities, about existing European opportunities in the framework of Digital Europe and actively participated in the three parallel sessions on ‘Current EU Digital Strategies and Regulations’, ‘Stronger together: The case of European Networks’ & ‘EU Funding and Programmes’. Dorothea Palenberg, Managing Director at blue! advancing European projects GbR, moderated the event.

Live from the studio, the **Secretary of State, Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building Dr Rolf Bösing** firstly welcomed the participants.



*Source 1: Connected In Europe conference - Dr. Rolf Bösing | Secretary of State, Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building*

Positioned within the newly established Ministry of Housing, Urban Development and Building, Dr Bösing commented on the need to combine integrated, sustainable and common good oriented development as an important core task. In this context, urban development, in combination with digital development, plays a decisive role at local, national and European level. To sustainably promote this development, the #Connected in Europe project focuses on the transfer of knowledge in Europe through the formation of strong networks.

Building on this introduction, the **#Connected in Europe project**, its goals, mission, and activities, was then introduced by **Orhan Güleş, BBSR and Walter Kahlenborn, adelphi.**

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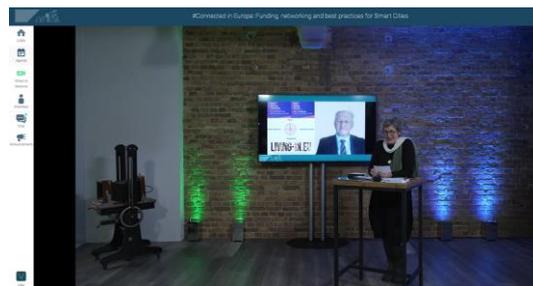


Source 2: Connected In Europe Conference - Orhan Güleş | BBSR & Walter Kahlenborn / adelphi

The project addresses the need for the structured bundling of “digital transformation and urban development” processes and for supporting the participation of (small and medium-sized) municipalities in European networks. The mission is built on three pillars: EU funding, European networking and EU digital policy, and the activities of the project are framed within the Research Cluster Smart Cities BBSR: Smart Cities International.

[Presentation: #connectedinEurope: the project at a glance - Orhan Güleş, BBSR and Walter Kahlenborn, adelphi](#)

“We have to work closer together and inform on local levels about EU- structures and funding possibilities”, was one of the opening appeals by **Eddy Hartog, Head of Unit Technologies for Smart Communities, DG CONNECT, European Commission**.



Source 3: Connected In Europe Conference - Eddy Hartog, Head of Unit Technologies for Smart Communities, DG CONNECT, European Commission

The European Commission already offers a lot of starting points for such collaboration, such as the Digital Compass for the EU's digital decade, which is the European Commission's plan to achieve Europe's digital transformation by 2030 and includes visions and avenues, alongside funding possibilities within Horizon Europe and the digital Europe Programme. Such supportive actions were then further highlighted as important tools for integrating and motivating citizens, which can be achieved through the creation and use of strong networks and the resulting sense of community. Within the Smart Cities context, the connection of cities and municipalities with the European level was also highlighted as a very important as a driver for success.

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**Federica Bordelot, EUROCITIES**, followed this initial discussion with a keynote on '**Connected Smart Cities: Networking & Digital City Development**', discussing the current challenges facing cities and regions, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, social crises, poverty, and the climate/environmental situation. She commented that this can be addressed through the possibilities that digitalisation offers, commenting also, however, that a digital divide is also being witnessed. To deal with such a growing problem, she noted that it is indispensable to improve the access to data and to build a cooperative, multi-level governance structure as a framework. She further highlighted that the Digital Europe programme has already contributed to these requirements, through providing support for the development of sectoral data spaces.



Source 4: #Connected In Europe Conference - Federica Bordelot | Eurocities

She then appealed to the audience to build on this work by using the existing networks such as [Cities for Digital Rights](#), [Global Observatory of Urban AI](#) and [Living in EU \(living-in.eu\)](#)

*Presentation: Connect Smart Cities: Networking & digital city development - Federica Bordelot, Eurocities*

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**'Let's talk: Status Quo and future ambitions'** - European and German Smart City initiatives and networks were then the theme of the roundtable discussion. The first speaker on stage was **Georg Houben, Smart Cities, Directorate General for Energy, European Commission**. He directed the focus to the [Smart Cities Marketplace](#), an EU initiative which aims to bring cities, industries, SMEs, investors, researchers and other smart city stakeholders together to foster the exchange of information and demonstrate financing possibilities. In his function as policy officer, he invited everyone to see the DG not only as a provider for finance but to use it for joint strategy development.

**Matthias Woiwode von Gilardi, DLR**, then furthered the discussion by discussing the view of the Smart Cities Coordination and Transfer Office (KTS), which focuses on the design and testing of integrated smart city approaches in German municipalities, extending knowledge transfer from Germany to Europe. The office aims to build a strong and successful innovation ecosystem by 2030, focusing right now on research and the analysis of the current status quo.

**Nadja Riedel, City of Leipzig**, Germany, then contributed the views of a municipal government as a foundational contributing stakeholder in this space. As city representative and partner in a Smart Cities lighthouse project, she is involved in the establishment of an urban development and digitalisation organisational unit. She stressed that there are existing questions around financial and personal resources and that it is very important to consider how to include such requirements in daily planning. Her message to all the cities present was to be more self-confident about their work and the projects that have been achieved so far.



Source 5: #Connected In Europe Conference - Georg Houben / Directorate General for Energy, European Commission, Matthias Woiwode von Gilardi | DLR & Nadja Riedel | City of Leipzig

The panellists then deepened the discussion by considering the requirements needed to make such activities successful. This discussion created valuable knowledge, such as the importance of cities developing a culture of innovation which includes and accepts the freedom to take risks, to work on their own local eco-systems, processes and streamline them with the strategies of the European Union. The discussion had a significant added value as different levels were able to interact, talk and listen to each other about the implementation of EU and national policies directly at community level. Furthermore, it was seen as very important to define and highlight the added value of the activities,

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and to include the political level of leadership in the processes to ensure impact. Smart cities ultimately need local ecosystem support and funding to maximise potential success.

### Session 1 | adelphi

#### Current EU Digital Strategies and Regulations

EU policies play an important role in the development of national as well as regional and local policies in the different EU member states, also in the field of digital urban development/smart cities. But what kind of impact have some of these regulations and directives already had on municipalities in the past? And, what kind of digital transition will the upcoming EU strategies enable or even maybe make more difficult in the future?

Therefore, an ongoing discussion and knowledge exchange are needed that address e.g. the way data has to be or should be used and exchanged, which aspects have to be considered for the development of a proper data governance act, how digital services and key technologies need to be handled in the future and what kind of security issues have to be included within this special field. This is necessary as all of these strategies and regulations will have a significant impact on the development of digital realities in municipalities and the fields of action for urban development in the future.

In the session “Current digital EU strategies and regulations: Challenges in and importance for municipalities?” Javier Orozco-Messana from the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology of the European Commission gave a brief overview about the most important current EU policies, such as the PSI Directive (2003), the European Data Strategy (2020), the Data Governance Act (2020), the Data Act (2021) and the Artificial Intelligence Act (2021). Additionally, the Digital Europe Programme has also been introduced with the aim of enabling the implementation of the aforementioned different EU strategies and regulations on a local level. It is the key programs for municipalities to attain funding for their smart city approaches from the European Union.

This top-down perspective was followed by viewing medium-sized cities and EU digital policies, specifically what kind of impact they have had, will have and might have on urban and digital development in municipalities in the future. Julian Schahl from the City of Sindelfingen presented the network Eurotowns, the European network for medium-sized cities that fosters their access to EU funding programmes and European partnerships with a special focus on Smart Cities. Carlos Alberto Alves Simões from the City of Ulm did a brief presentation about data management strategies and activities, adding a review of the challenges and opportunities that go along with them in a municipality like Ulm.

Finally, Jana Helder from the German Institute of Urban Affairs provided a critical review on the presented topics by highlighting the importance of the development of data strategies (e.g. how data should be used and shared with citizens or companies), solid data infrastructures as well as local engagement for a successful digital transition in municipalities.

Main results and recommendations out of this session are:

- EU policies as a black box



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- Knowledge gap about the various existing and upcoming EU strategies, regulations and directives in municipalities
- Need for getting a comprehensible overview about their objectives and key provisions
- Need for discussion on what their possible impact might be on urban development in municipalities/cities in the future
- Data and digitalisation
  - Need for the development of data using and sharing strategies (e.g. B2B, B2G) as well as data infrastructures in municipalities
  - Data use and data management need IT expertise, but also non-experts should be able to understand technical possibilities and outcomes to boost acceptance and identification with the transformations
  - Use, legitimacy and value/monetisation of data represent challenging future action fields
- Requirements for implementation
  - Digital Europe Programme is the main funding programme for bringing digital technology to businesses, citizens and public administrations, but the crucial precondition for the use of this programme is the development smart concepts that can be implemented successfully on a local level
  - Need for the exchange of innovative ideas, useful concepts and knowledge sharing about e.g. best practices in the field of digital urban transformation
  - Top-down-policies will not be successful without local involvement and buy-in, hence this underwrites need to create new networks

*[Presentation: Digital Europe Program: Policy principles and data directives - Javier Orozco-Messana](#)*  
*[Presentation: The network Eurotowns: Julian Schahl & Challenges and Opportunities in Urban Data Management in a Smart City: Carlos Alberto Alves Simões](#)*

### **Session 2 | German Institute of Urban Affairs (difu)**

Stronger together: The case of European Networks

Networks enable the transfer of ideas and knowledge as well as the exchange of experience. The basis is trust and personal relationships. Does this also work across borders, and if so, how? At the beginning of the session, Dr Jens Libbe from the German Institute of Urban Affairs gave an overview of which European networks exist in connection with smart cities, how they differ from one another and who uses them. The session then looked at whether and how cities and municipalities benefit from European networks. Gert Blom from the Dutch city of Helmond, which uses European networks in many ways, and Florinda Boschetti from the city network of the Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) provided brief impulses.

Main recommendations out of this session are

- European networks empower administrations on a city level and people on a personal level



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- Working on EU projects makes a (city/regional) administration attractive: As the shortage of skilled staff is a key concern, the involvement in an EU projects can attract talent
- European networking enables even small- and medium-sized cities to influence European legislation on a given topic
- Although the need of knowledge transfer and exchange is recognised, the lack of resources (personnel, funding, skills) remains a challenge
- Harvesting the fruits of networking takes time, but “stronger together “ also means “faster together”

*[Presentation: Analysis of municipal network approach in the field of digital transformation – Jens Libbe](#)*

*[Presentation: Helmond and Europe the view on European networking of a medium sized city - Gert Blom](#)*

### Session 3 | Steinbeis Europa Zentrum

#### EU Funding and Programmes

The session EU Funding and Programmes introduced selected programmes linked to digital transition in urban development, especially the opportunities for community involvement. The results of the analysis phase of this project were presented, e.g. easier access to the programmes via thematic areas / activities and connecting them with the suitable programmes and upcoming calls for proposals. Charlotte Schlicke, from the Steinbeis Europa Zentrum showed that funding opportunities and participation are possible under acceptable framework conditions for communities e.g. time for application, type of funding, percent of funding, flexibility in budget and specific frameworks for deviations. To understand the role of communities in EU projects, Nadja Riedel, from the Digital City Unit at the city of Leipzig, presented both the history of their roadmap towards digitalisation in urban planning and their roles in the two Horizon 2020 smart cities and communities projects [triangulum](#) and [SPARCS](#) (from a follower city to the status of a lighthouse city) as well as their involvement in the Interreg project [EfficienCE](#).

Main recommendations out of this session are

- There are multiple options of cooperation and implementation of measures funded by the European Commission. You do not need to be a genius to get access to funding BUT
  - get connected to the experts and strategic partners
  - learn from best practices,
  - learn from other experienced cities
  - build your own network with experienced cities
- Identify strengths, weak points in your communities to reach the Sustainability development goals
  - to get aware of your own opportunities
  - prioritise your cross-sectoral topics for the digital transition of urban development
  - tackle your main challenges

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- building up your city and community network (citizens, universities, companies etc.)
- streamline your internal and external timelines in your community
- It is not only about money but also about learning / sharing knowledge
- Communities are not alone – there are several contact points available and also this project will be able to give some further support.

*Presentation: EU Funding and Programmes: Charlotte Schlicke, Steinbeis Europa Zentrum, Germany*

*Presentation: Role of Leipzig in EU projects: Nadja Riedel, Digital City Unit, Leipzig, Germany*

The closing words of the conference were given by **Renate Mitterhuber, Head of Unit SW III 2 ‘Smart Cities’, Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building**. She is looking forward to exchange with multilevel partners on the topic of Smart Cities.



Source 6: Connected In Europe Conference - Renate Mitterhuber | Head of Unit SW III 2 „Smart Cities“, Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building