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Berlin, Ghent and Oulu win European awards

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Berlin, Ghent and Oulu are the winners of the EURO CITIES awards 2012. The awards recognise outstanding achievements by city councils in developing and implementing innovative measures to engage citizens in the local political process. The awards ceremony was held during the EURO CITIES annual conference, which runs until 10 November 2012 in Nantes, France.

Now in its seventh year, the EURO CITIES awards scheme celebrates initiatives by local authorities aimed at improving the quality of life for citizens. Presenting the awards, Karine Daniel, vice-president of Nantes Metropole and chair of the jury, remarked:

“Cities across Europe are seeking new ways to engage citizens in local politics. The more uncertain the economic situation, the more citizens must be able to be confident in the future of their cities. These three examples demonstrate how local authorities are developing innovative approaches to encourage citizens to take an active role in shaping local policies.”

Being honoured this year are:

Innovation eCopper (Oulu): an online chat platform allows young people to chat freely and anonymously with the police, resolving prejudices and building better relationships

Participation Youth election project U18 (Berlin): any youth organisation can register as a polling station for young people, who, after a year of studying manifestos, debating with politicians and forming parties, vote in a mock election

Cooperation Climate Alliance (Ghent): helping formulate Ghent’s transition to a greener future, citizens participate in working groups to formulate ideas, use online tools to calculate their energy use and confirm their commitment by signing a charter

Speaking at the conference, EURO CITIES secretary general, Paul Bevan, said:

“Challenging times call for fresh approaches. Cities are innovating to overcome disinterest, low levels of involvement and even antipathy to politics. These initiatives help to bridge the gap between citizens and politicians and rebuild confidence in the democratic process. Reaching young people is particularly important.”

Over 40 EURO CITIES members submitted projects for this year’s awards. Entries were judged by an independent jury comprising one representative each from the EU institutions, academia, the non-governmental sector, the media and the conference host city.

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Note to editors:

- EURO CITIES is the network of major European cities, www.eurocities.eu
- EURO CITIES 2012 Nantes, www.eurocities2012.eu
- EURO CITIES awards: www.eurocities.eu/eurocities/activities/awards
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