



Cities in action: the Progress programme

Birmingham

Birmingham was chair of the EUROCIITIES Social Affairs Forum from 2010-2012. During this time the PROGRESS programme provided invaluable financial resources to develop the capacity of cities to become more engaged in the EU social policy development process. This was not just limited to the social affairs forum but we were also able to involve other forums within EUROCIITIES so that colleagues working on other areas of policy, such as environment or knowledge society, were able to consider how their work feeds into social policy issues in an EU context.

Birmingham is also a member of the Cities for Active Inclusion (CfAI) partnership. The financial support of PROGRESS has allowed these cities to develop close working relations and to share good practice on active inclusion matters. It has also enabled and provided the resources for Birmingham, as a city, to engage with a wide range of teams and departments in the city council who contribute to social policy development and implementation, so that they have a better understanding of how their work contributes to the EU active inclusion strategy. Thanks to PROGRESS, several of the CfAI cities have explored, or are exploring, further joint work on social policy matters as a result of this close collaboration.



Jennifer Crisp | Birmingham

Ghent

Roma inclusion



I'm a member of the EUROCIITIES taskforce on Roma inclusion, which carried out a peer review on Roma people working as mediators between schools and Roma families in Berlin. We went there as a working group to evaluate the city's projects and policies. We learned how they were tackling the inflow of new EU citizens. After our visit to Berlin, we in Ghent decided to expand our project on working with school mediators, and Roma mediators were trained. We also started up a project with neighbourhood mediators.

It is always good to exchange practices with other cities; not only the good ones but the projects that failed as well. Hearing from colleagues how they are tackling the difficulties they are facing is a great learning experience. It's also interesting to compare situations; what are the common grounds, what are the differences.

The great thing about the taskforce on Roma inclusion has been the fact that it's a very diverse working group. Both sending *and* receiving cities are sitting around the same table, which makes it a very dynamic platform.

Kristel Danel | Ghent

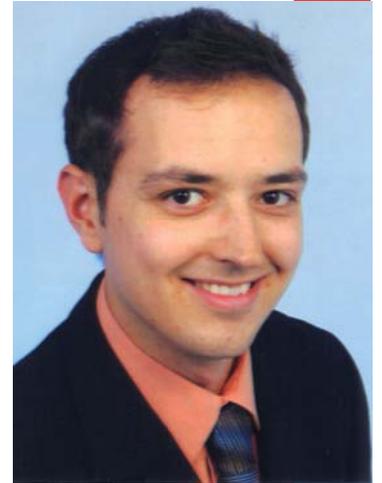
Vienna

The Vienna Social Fund, Viennese Assistance Programme for the Homeless, is a member of the EUROCITIES Working Group Housing & Homelessness, Subgroup Homelessness. The partnership with EUROCITIES is very important for the reflection and development of social services for homeless persons in Vienna.

In October 2012, we hosted a meeting of the homelessness subgroup, focussing on user involvement and participation and EU free movement and its consequences. Thanks to the financial support from EUROCITIES, we were able to invite Dr. Preben Brandt, Project Udenfor, Copenhagen, as a guest speaker. He presented his valuable experiences and knowledge concerning social inclusion and homelessness to the subgroup and experts from leading Viennese homelessness non-profit organisations.

In general, being member of EUROCITIES facilitates contact and exchange with other cities in the European Union which are comparable with Vienna concerning the number of inhabitants and social issues. The Viennese Assistance Programme for the Homeless has a long tradition and disposes of a differentiated offer of social services. Nevertheless, the needs of homeless persons and the problems they face are changing constantly. In order to give the right responses, the system has to adapt to these new challenges. Best practice models and the regular exchange with experts from other cities are an important resource for planning and implementing social innovation which meet the people's needs. Without the structures of EUROCITIES, these exchanges would be much more difficult to establish.

Michael Langwiesner | Vienna



Stockholm

social affairs forum, Cities for Active Inclusion, awareness raising days



I remember exchanging with colleagues through the awareness raising days, Cities for Active Inclusion (CfAI), the social affairs forum and the working group employment. I have certainly used these networks to get partners for EU projects within Stockholm and to get information when I need it. I have also used the network for dissemination. It has helped me greatly to have access to such a big and competent network

Rebecka Glaser | Stockholm

Stockholm

Cities for Active Inclusion, working group employment

My first interaction with EUROCITIES started with an inquiry regarding our interest in the upcoming Cities for Active Inclusion (CfAI) partnership. Of course I couldn't miss such an opportunity to take part in a European-wide exchange of experiences and knowledge. As a starting point, CfAI has well served all of the above. For me and the organisation I represent (Jobbtorg Stockholm) EUROCITIES has been very useful and has proven a very good source of connecting with colleagues in many other European cities, tackling the same challenges as we do.

As I've taken part in the working group employment and also had peer reviews of initiatives within my organisation, I think I've used knowledge from other colleagues and new ways of thinking as a means of constant development and improvement of our initiatives. It's been useful to take part in different conferences finding out more about other cities and their good examples. I only wished for a conference to share mistakes so you didn't make the same mistake as others already have.

It is possible to get new input to your own challenges by meeting other city representatives and listening to what they have to share. Also by letting colleagues from other cities know about our challenges and city initiatives, there is a learning mechanism which actually helps you to view your own problems/challenges in new ways.

Helena Bernstein | Stockholm



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