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EUROCITIES 2013 Ghent

Smart citizens

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Over 400 city leaders and delegates are attending the EUROCITIES 2013 conference in Ghent. They are meeting to explore how innovation and new technology can be used to empower citizens and build more inclusive and sustainable societies.

Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, the president of EUROCITIES and mayor of Warsaw, and Daniel Termont, mayor of Ghent, gave the opening speeches.

Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, mayor of Warsaw and president of EUROCITIES, said:

“It is people that make cities. Buildings, infrastructure and technology are not enough. It is the dense concentration of people that generates innovation, dynamism, and the creative spark that makes a city successful. We need to put people at the heart of our digital future.”

The conference features a mayors' debate with politicians from the cities of Karlsruhe, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Tampere and Venice sharing their views and experiences of engaging with smart citizens. Through a series of workshops, participants will also hear how the city of Ghent is working with smart citizens on issues from climate action to local economic development.

The mayor of Ghent, Daniel Termont, said:

“Cities like Ghent are home to clever and creative people. These smart citizens have innovative ideas and the enthusiasm to make them happen. Their initiatives can offer sustainable solutions to social, environmental and economic challenges if we engage and empower them correctly.”

The European commissioner for regional policy Johannes Hahn yesterday spoke to conference attendees about the urban agenda in 2014, while Walter Deffaa, head of the European Commission's directorate-general for regional and urban policy, is addressing the plenary today.

On the eve of the conference, the EUROCITIES 2013 awards rewarded Gijon, Brighton and Hove and Ljubljana for their work in smart governance, smart jobs and smart living respectively.

The EUROCITIES 2014 conference will take place in Munich next year.

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Notes to editors:

- EUROCITIES is the political platform for major European cities towards the European institutions. We network the local governments of over 130 of Europe's largest cities and 40

partner cities that between them govern some 130 million citizens across 35 countries (www.eurocities2013.eu).

- EUROCITIES 2013 annual conference in Ghent: <http://www.eurocities2013.eu/>
- EUROCITIES on Twitter: @EUROCITIEStweet
- EUROCITIES 2013 on Twitter: @eurocitiesghent
- The hashtag for this event is #eurocitiesghent