



3,000 participants, 57 sessions and 1 premiere:

The URBAN FUTURE Global Conference 2018

Vienna, 5 March 2018 – Around 3,000 participants from over 400 cities, 50 countries and four continents gathered in Vienna over the last three days at the URBAN FUTURE Global Conference, the world's largest conference for CityChangers held at Messe Wien. In 57 sessions on topics ranging from climate protection, sustainable building and mobility, to "making change happen" and "leadership in cities", city officials and experts shared personal stories, experiences and failures with like-minded people. The City of Vienna hosted the conference for the first time. The signing of the Covenant of Mayors was one of the highlights of the URBAN FUTURE Global Conference (UFGC), which moves to Oslo for 2019.

Vice-Mayor of Vienna, Maria Vassilakou, and 36 other mayors from across Europe who represent more than ten million citizens signed the agreement to increase energy efficiency and the use of sustainable energy sources on the first day of the conference. The aim of the Covenant of Mayors is to support the European Union's energy policy targets for reducing CO2 emissions by 40% by 2030 as well as to develop joint strategies for dealing with the consequences of climate change. In signing the covenant the cities sent out a strong message, showing their commitment to increasing sustainability. For the City of Vienna, this agreement is another step towards being a Smart City. With this in mind Vassilakou also referred to the recent results of the monitoring of the Smart City strategy. These were published at the same time as Urban Future and provide a summary of the areas in which the City of Vienna is already smart and where there is still room for improvement.

People who drive change

Around 230 speakers from all over the world presented specific projects and shared their partly very personal experiences, such as:

- Rui Moreira, mayor of Porto, reported on how a broad cultural programme that encouraged residents to participate helped include socially disadvantaged populations in the development of their own neighbourhoods. This programme helped to revive run-down districts in Porto.
- Rajendra Singh, who has made it his life mission to cleanse the Ganges and is affectionately known as "Waterman of India", took action in order to restore access to clean drinking water in rural areas by means of traditional rainwater storage tanks with the help of the NGO that he founded, Tarun Bharat Sangh in Rajasthan.
- Gil Penalosa, founder of the Canadian NGO *8 80 Cities*, emphasised in his energetic presentation, how important it is to design cities for all. City planners have to put much more emphasis on the needs of children, older people and people with disabilities than they have done so far.

Highlight „Cities FuckUp Night”

As part of the UFGC, the world's first FuckUp Night for city leaders took place. CityChangers from Ghent, Oslo, Stockholm, Vancouver and Vienna showed that projects are not always



successful and what can be learned from "failing". Vienna's Vice-Mayor Maria Vassilakou also drew on a personal summary of the three-year remodelling of one of the longest shopping streets in Europe, Mariahilferstraße. Vassilakou took an open and self-critical look back at the ups and downs in the implementation of the controversial, but ultimately very successful project and addressed specific points which she would approach differently today.

In doing so, the UFGC brought this format to the public sector for the first time, thus contributing to a new culture of learning in which mistakes are not only allowed but actually serve as catalysts to foster change to more sustainable cities.

UFGC '19 in Oslo

At the end, Vice-Mayor Maria Vassilakou handed over the baton for the next conference to Hanna E. Marcussen, Vice-Mayor of Oslo. Norway's capital was named European Green Capital in 2019 and is therefore predestined to host the next UFGC (from May 22 to 24, 2019). "I am proud that Europe's largest sustainable cities conference will be coming to my city in 2019. It is inspiring to have so many international experts from whom we can learn in Oslo. I'm already looking forward to many pioneering projects for the future." says Marcussen.

Strong network – 100 international partners

The UFGC has a network of around 100 international partners, including the European city network EURO CITIES, the *Covenant of Mayors*, the research institute *LSE Cities*, the *UN Cities Programme*, but also dedicated companies such as EY, Saint-Gobain and MHP.

More information at www.urban-future.org

Photos of the event from:

1. [Conference day \(28.2.\)](#)
2. [Conference day \(1.3.\)](#)

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