

First nationwide conference series of the Global Cities Dialogue:

GCD convenes a local dialogue series on IT

Since 1999 the Global Cities Dialogue (GCD), an international network of Mayors and High Political Representatives, has been engaged in promoting solutions to local problems using the new opportunities offered by ICT in our computer-networked world. The idea of organising a series of conferences was inspired by Neelie Kroes, European Commissioner for Digital Agenda. In the course of several preliminary talks with Global Cities Dialogue, represented by Angela Spizig, Mayor of Cologne, the importance of sharing experience and adopting good practice concepts while “going local” became evident.

An article by
Claire Klindt

GCD successfully launched a series of expert conferences in Germany around the topic “City transformation in a changing world”. The first conference dedicated to “city transformation in an ageing society” took place on 1 July 2010 in Eschborn.

The “small but smart” approach proved itself during the opening event in Eschborn: the number of participants was consciously limited to six invited cities. The representatives of the participating cities were actively involved in the conference which they helped shape. They were supported by experts present either on the spot or via Telepresence, a high-quality videoconferencing system giving the impression that participants are sitting next to each other at the Round Table.

“Going local”

With its “Global Cities Dialogue - Executive Briefing Forum for Cities” (GCD eBFC), GCD provides political and administrative decision-makers with an attractive platform for targeted discussions, open dialogue and networking. Local authorities are offered the occasion to become acquainted with new concrete ideas and concepts and discuss them. It is worth looking beyond one’s own backyard as it gives access to valuable contacts and existing proved solutions of other cities. In addition, the direct dialogue



with experts allows a deeper look into the discussed topics.

The conference series in Germany is organised under the patronage of the Mayor of Cologne, Angela Spizig, who is also one of its initiators. As one of the founding cities, Cologne has been member of the GCD for more than 10 years. The concept of the conference series was developed by GCD during its Spring Summit. The local action plan for Germany was adopted in May 2010 during the Mayors’ Summit in Brussels.

The co-operation with Cisco Systems Germany provides the conference series with technical and professional know-how in the area of “Smart+Connected Communities”. Cisco technology is committed to smart and sustainable solutions.

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Not reinventing the wheel

Both municipal representatives and experts benefited from sharing experience and concepts around the topic “the city transformation in an ageing society” on 1 July at the Cisco Customer Briefing Centre in Eschborn, Germany.

In addition to the political and c-level executives of the cities of Cologne, Saarbrücken, Trier, Dörentrup and Metz, the experts, Dr. Ole Wintermann, a Project Manager at the Bertelsmann Foundation, and Diogo Vasconcelos, a Distinguished Fellow at Cisco and Chair of SIX - Social Innovation Exchange, were invited to the event.

During the 3-hour event and following lunch, experts and participants studied in detail successful IT-based solutions coping with demographic change in cities. The problem of providing adequate medical care has been identified as one of the main challenges of an aging society. There are more and more elderly people and people in need of care. The older a population, the higher the incidence of chronic diseases. Even today, bottlenecks in the supply of medical care are observed in sparsely populated areas. New technologies in the field of eHealth and Telemedicine, such as the Cisco HealthPresence Platform presented in Eschborn, can contribute to solve the problem. “Virtual health care consultations” allow patients to connect with doctors and clinicians who can be far away and to have a live face-to-face consultation experience as if they were in a traditional medical facility. These technologies spare patients potentially long trips to their general practitioner or other health care providers.

Outlook

Upcoming expert conferences will be dedicated to the increasing importance of IT in cities and the unavoidable related question of cost efficiency. How can IT generate growth and decrease costs at the same time?

Note

This text is a translation of the original German text published in “Europa Kommunal”, No. 5/2010. “Europa Kommunal” is the member magazine of the German Section of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).



Another key topic of the conference series will be the potential of Green IT.

In its ten years of existence, GCD has initiated a number of valuable co-operation projects – either directly through its annual action plan or indirectly through the strong dynamics of the network and the resulting partnerships.

GCD invites all cities to continue the dialogue – also beyond the conferences. The objective is to establish and maintain a sustainable dialogue and valuable contacts enabling the cities to find the right information and the right partner at the right time. Requests can be made at any time by contacting the GCD General-Secretary.

Further conference series should follow this first one. Moreover, the organisation of similar national conference series in other states, especially in the Latin American region, is planned – with topics adapted to the specific needs and problems of these countries, a proposal that the initiator of the conference series, Mayor Angela Spizig, and members of the GCD-Steering Committee are fully agreeing with. ■

Info

**The Network
“Global Cities Dialogue”:**

☞ <http://www.globalcities-dialogue.com>

**First nationwide
GCD conference series:**

☞ <http://www.globalcities-dialogue.com/index.php/component/content/article/152.html>

**“Smart+Connected
Communities”:**

☞ http://www.cisco.com/web/strategy/smart_connected_communities.html

Background



The Network

Launched in 1999 in Helsinki by twelve founding members, the GCD is a political network operating worldwide for a socially fair and sustainable Information Society. GCD currently focuses on the fight against climate change (Green IT), mobile public services and the move from digital divide to digital solidarity.

Today, the GCD network – the world’s first initiative based on a joint commitment by cities represented by their mayors and high political representatives – counts approximately 200 members worldwide and is registered as an international non-profit organisation under Belgian law (AISBL).

The next General Assembly Meeting of the GCD will be held on 18 & 19 November 2010 in Rufisque, near Dakar, Senegal.