

## **Short reporting**

VVSG

### **Place Turnhout on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> of May**

#### **Description of the discussions during the event**

In Turnhout (ca. 43000 inhabitants), together with the province of Antwerp, the city organises during the month of April the concept of Pop-Up Europe, in which they bring Europe closer to the citizens. The kick-off event of that whole month, was on Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> of April. The province was on the market place (during market day) and did didactic interactions with the market visitors (based on the Europe-wheel).

The city of Turnhout organized during the whole day walking tours and a bicycle tour visiting city projects co-funded by the European Commission (mainly through the cohesion funds). The projects included the development of new urban areas (harbour area, railway station area, market place) and interactive projects (city farm, skate rink...). The Bike tour started at 10 AM with 1 hour of introduction in the city hall and then visiting with the bike the different projects. During the visits, the projects were explained by the city's project managers and the visitors interacted throughout the day with their immediate reactions. Along the visits, participants on foot joined for the specific project visits. The day ended at 4PM with a guided tour around the market place. During that 1 hour visit of the market, more participants joined to hear about the development of the market place and the European funding mechanism behind it.

The cohesion dialogue was thus not organized in a traditional way, but throughout the day, we captured the participants' reactions and suggestions in an audio-visual way. The end result (a short video, subtitled in English) will be used to further promote and generate discussions in the city of Turnhout and in the context of EU awareness raising activities of the VVSG in Flanders.

Provisional Key messages captured during the interaction:

- "I did not know the EU funding had such an impact in our city" □ Better communication on EU funding and the impact it has on urban developmental projects
- Mayor of Turnhout: "The social cohesion projects (esp. INTERREG and EFRD) offer an important leverage for the realization of the strategy of the city council" □ EU projects should always be aligned to local city's strategies and offer an added value to the city's strategic planning
- Lack of coherence within the different project calls (unclear procedures of approval and criteria differ too much: sometimes projects can be pitched and approved along the way...).
- Administrative burden for the city's staff is too high regarding the implementation of the projects
- Regional administration (administration by the regional Flemish government) is sometimes – esp. for the EFRD projects – not clear... Flemish civil servants do not always understand urban development and city's development □ inclusion of local governments in decision and approval procedures of cohesion projects is crucial. So guidelines and procedures of EU funding should also be clarified and improved with the regional managing authorities.

- Diversity exists within the countries of the EU, but also within the cities... social cohesion is important to achieve also on the local level, not only between the countries. So in the future, the cohesion fund remains very important, also for local governments in Belgium.

Number of participants 42

### Type of participants

Participants could register digitally, so presence lists were not signed

- 15 participants on the bike tour (10-17.30)
- 23 participants on the walking tour in the market place (16-17.30)
- 4 participants during the different walking visits

### Media coverage

- List of media
- Social media activities before, during and after the event (Tweets, Facebook, etc.)  
Twitter  
3 tweets @JanssensBert VVSG  
14 retweets; 17 likes,  
<https://twitter.com/JanssensBert/status/982699209559367680>  
<https://twitter.com/JanssensBert/status/982693164547964929>  
<https://twitter.com/JanssensBert/status/982179716697174017>  
  
1 tweet EC Representation BE @EU4BE  
1 retweet, tweets visualisations  
<https://twitter.com/EU4BE/status/981830120603299841>  
<https://twitter.com/JanssensBert/status/982699209559367680>  
<https://twitter.com/JanssensBert/status/982693164547964929>  
<https://twitter.com/JanssensBert/status/982179716697174017>  
<https://twitter.com/EU4BE/status/981830120603299841>
- Press conference
- Press release
- Number of webpage views
- Video  
  
To be upload on CEMR You Tube Channel
- Press clipping after the dialogue indicated and number of articles echoed by media