



WALK21 VIENNA 2015  
STEPPING AHEAD  
XVI International Conference on Walking  
and Liveable Communities  
20 - 23 October 2015

## **Press release**

### **Walk21 Vienna: Over 600 participants from all over the world at 240 discussions, seminars, workshops and urban labs**

**Vienna, 23 October 2015:** From 20 to 23 October, over 600 participants and experts from the fields of urban planning and development, politics, science, health and architecture met at Vienna City Hall for the Walk21 Vienna conference to discuss new planning strategies, forms of activism and research in the field of walking. The conference with the motto "stepping ahead" provided the opportunity to learn about best practice examples from all over the world and discuss new strategies for smart, walking-oriented urban development. The 240 discussions, seminars, workshops and urban labs addressed the conference themes of public spaces, quality of life and resilient cities, safety and health, and walking together in the city.

#### **New impetus for walking**

"One of the main lessons of Walk21 is that the way in which public space is designed determines whether we enjoy walking in a city or not. Cities that want to promote walking should start there. The conference has shown us the whole range of possibilities and encouraged us to continue our course in Vienna. We want more space for pedestrians, we want to make the public space more attractive, and we want Vienna to have one of the highest levels of traffic safety worldwide," said Vienna's Deputy Mayor and Executive City Councillor for Traffic and Transport Maria Vassilakou.

The presentation by Fritz Reusswig of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research showed clearly that climate change can only be stopped by a paradigm shift in mobility policy. Timothy Papandreu, Director of Strategic Planning at the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, also believes in a comprehensive approach to mobility.

The Austrian Ministries of Environmental Affairs and Transport developed a Walking Master Plan for Austria together with experts from the federal provinces and municipalities. This first national strategy for the promotion of walking in Austria was presented at Walk21 Vienna.

Promoting active mobility is not just a matter of courage but also of perseverance, as examples like the redesign of Mariahilfer Straße in Vienna, Walworth Road in London or

Borgatún in Reykjavík show. Cities that ignore pedestrians miss their opportunity to become liveable cities. Where walking is promoted, the quality of living is higher, people are healthier and the feeling of social safety increases.

The discussions between the 600 experts and participants from over 39 countries also made it evident that walking is a crucial economic factor for cities. Pedestrians spend more money in the city than motorists.

### **Hongkong to host Walk21 in 2016**

The final Leadership Panel Discussion with Rüdiger Maresch (Die Grünen, spokesman for Traffic and Transport), Henriette von Eijl (European Commission DG MOVE-C2), Simon Ng (Chief Research Officer, Civic Exchange Hong Kong), and Heather Allen (SLoCat Partnership), which was chaired by Walk21 Director Jim Walker, was followed by the official handover of the Walk21 conference to Simon Ng. Hong Kong will host the 17th "International Conference on Walking and Liveable Communities" in 2016.

### **The Walk 21 conference series**

The Walk21 conference series was initiated by the non-profit organisation Walk21 in London in 2000. The annual international conference aims to establish the importance of walking firmly in the public awareness. Walk21 connects people involved in pedestrian matters and promotes the dialogue between science, civil society and administration so that they can jointly increase acceptance for pedestrian matters and establish them as an important part of public planning policies. In 2015, the world's largest conference on walking and public space was held in Vienna for the first time. Previous host cities include Sydney, Munich, Mexico City, Vancouver, New York, Barcelona, Toronto, Melbourne, Zurich, Copenhagen and London.

**Information on Walk21 Vienna:** <http://walk21vienna.com/>

**Press photos:** <http://walk21vienna.com/press-kit/>

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