

Press release

Walk21 Vienna: Vienna is stepping ahead

130 days to go until the world's largest expert conference on walking and urban development

- **230 experts from 39 countries**
- **More than 400 abstracts submitted**
- **240 discussions, seminars and workshops**
- **Walking Visionaries Awards: Over 200 innovative submissions from 47 countries**

Vienna, 12 June 2015: The City of Vienna will host the world's leading conference on walking, quality of life and urban development in 2015, Vienna's Year of Walking. The Walk21 Vienna conference will take place from 20 to 23 October in the Austrian capital, which follows in the footsteps of previous host cities Sydney and Munich. The motto of the 16th Walk21 conference is "Stepping ahead". 230 experts from 39 countries will meet some 700 participants from all over the world for seminars, workshops and discussions at Vienna City Hall. Over 200 creative ideas from 43 countries have been submitted for the Walking Visionaries Awards. Today, Deputy Mayor Maria Vassilakou, Walk21 Director Bronwen Thornton and Vienna's Officer for Pedestrian Matters Petra Jens presented the conference programme. The programme offers a mix of different conference formats and encourages participation with excursions, "Walkshops" and "Urban Labs".

Vienna is considered one of the top smart cities. The City Administration has developed a long-term strategy to maintain the city's high quality of life for everyone. That includes promoting walking. "Vienna is one of the few cities with over 1 million inhabitants worldwide where many trips can be made on foot. We want to use this unique opportunity and continue to improve the situation for pedestrians. Walking is healthy – not only for us as individuals, but for the city as a whole. Streets filled with pedestrians increase personal safety and are good for retail," the city's Deputy Mayor Maria Vassilakou explains. The Vienna City Council's strategy for promoting pedestrian traffic includes not only a range of infrastructure improvements, but also extensive monitoring measures. "Therefore, I am very pleased that the world's largest conference on walking, Walk21, will take place in Vienna and that we will have the opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas with many international guests," says Deputy Mayor Maria Vassilakou. The City of Vienna actively promotes walkability by designing new neighbourhoods with the needs of pedestrians in mind and by introducing speed limits of 30 km/h in residential areas.

Walk21 Director Bronwen Thornton gives Vienna top marks: "Vienna already has a very high standard of mobility, urban development and walkability. In many large cities, like New York, making roads and public spaces more walkable is a relatively new trend. For liveable cities you have to offer people attractive alternatives and make best use of the available space." In London, she adds, 80 percent of public space is actually the roads. "Too many vehicles, air pollution, loss of retail, no room for children to play and nowhere for older people to sit and rest – these are indicators that show that something is not right. The Walk21 conference series aims to increase public awareness for walking and is an excellent forum for presenting new ideas. Even cities like Vienna have room for improvement."

Petra Jens, Officer for Pedestrian Matters, adds: "In Vienna, more than a quarter of all trips are made on foot and nearly 40% by public transport. In the Year of Walking, we are offering people ways of making walking even more comfortable for them. That includes the first pedestrian route map for Vienna and an app that counts your steps and helps you plan your walking route. This year-long campaign initiates processes that will be visible long beyond 2015."

Walk21 conference programme 2015: Walking as a smart and green form of mobility

The Walk21 conference, which has the motto "Stepping ahead", will bring together over 230 experts from the fields of urban planning and development, politics, science, health care, architecture, interest groups and NGOs and 700 participants from all over the world. They will meet in Vienna to discuss

recent developments in pedestrian traffic and planning and design for walkable urban spaces. The conference themes are public spaces, quality of life and resilient cities, safety and health, and walking together in the city.

The list of speakers includes Raúl Krauthausen, activist and consultant for inclusion and accessibility, Charles Montgomery, author and urbanist from Canada, Peatónito, the pedestrian activist superhero from Mexico, Kristian Skovbakke Villadsen of Gehl Architects in Copenhagen, and Geetam Tiwari, professor at the Indian Institute of Technology. Simon Ng from Hong Kong and Andreja Kodrin, Cabinet Member of EU Commissioner Violeta Bulc, as well as Austrian experts Eugene Quinn from “space and place” and Harald Frey from the Vienna University of Technology will also share their expertise.

The conference will discuss issues such as how to improve quality of life and resilience and the implementation of the traffic and transport policy goals of the City of Vienna as laid down in the urban development plan STEP 2025 or the Smart City Vienna Framework Strategy.

Walking Visionaries Awards: Creative ideas for walking in the city

Walking is the key to rethinking urban mobility. The Walking Visionaries Awards are given to the most innovative and creative ideas for urban and traffic development that promote walking and public space. In total, there were 208 submissions from 47 countries. The topics range from research and development, social projects, and urban design to arts, culture, fashion, and design. People all over the world can vote for their favourite ideas online until 16 June 2015. The winners will be able to participate in the Walk21 conference in Vienna free of charge, giving them the opportunity to present their ideas to an international audience.

Walk21 2015 framework programme: Walkshops and Urban Labs in Vienna

As part of the Vienna Year of Walking, there will be many events and networking meetings for the people of Vienna. During Walk21, there will be 20 interactive Walkshops and 10 Urban Labs. The colourful programme will give Walk21 participants and enthusiastic walkers the opportunity to discover the city from a new perspective.

The Walk21 conference series

The Walk21 conference series is an international series of meetings that aims to establish walking firmly in the public awareness. For the 16th time, planners, architects, engineers, social marketing experts, industry and business representatives, scientists, environmental activists, managers and civil servants will meet to share their know-how about recent developments in walking and designing public urban spaces, to create networks, and to keep the dialogue between science, civil society and public administration going. Before Vienna, this international conference has been hosted by cities such as Sydney, Munich, London, New York, Copenhagen, Zurich, Barcelona, Melbourne, Vancouver and Mexico City. The Walk21 conferences are initiated and commissioned by the non-profit organisation Walk21, which champions the promotion of walking worldwide.

For information about the programme and to register for Walk21 Vienna, please visit:

<http://walk21vienna.com/>

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Press photos

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Today, Deputy Mayor Maria Vassilakou, Walk21 Director Bronwen Thornton and Vienna's Officer for Pedestrian Matters Petra Jens presented the programme of the world's leading conference on walking, quality of life and urban development, which will take place at Vienna City Hall from 20 to 23 October. The organisers expect 700 participants and 230 experts from all over the world.

For more photos please visit

<http://walk21vienna.com/press-kit/>

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