



The European Week of Regions and Cities - OPEN DAYS

What is it?

The OPEN DAYS is an annual Brussels-based four-day event during which officials from regions and cities' administrations, as well as experts and academics, can exchange good practices and know-how in the field of regional and urban development. It is also an acknowledged platform for political communication in relation to the development of EU Cohesion Policy, raising the awareness of decision-makers about the fact that regions and cities matter in EU policy-making. The OPEN DAYS is the biggest European public event of its kind.

What actually happens?

At the beginning of October, some 6 000 participants and 600 speakers from all over Europe and beyond will gather together in Brussels for a programme of some 100 workshops, debates, exhibitions and networking events on regional and local development. The organisers adapt the programme every year to the specific context of the EU agenda. Participation in the OPEN DAYS is free of charge.

Why a 'week' for regions and cities?

Regions and cities are involved in the making of most EU policies. Sub-national public authorities in the EU are responsible for one-third of public expenditure (EUR 2 100 billion per year) and two-thirds of public investments (about EUR 200 billion), the latter often to be spent in accordance with EU legal provisions.

What does the name 'OPEN DAYS' stand for?

Back in 2003, the Committee of the Regions, the EU's assembly of regional and local representatives, invited Brussels-based local and regional representations to the European Union to open their doors to visitors simultaneously, as part of a joint 'Open Days' concept. Over the years, the initiative has developed into a key annual event involving the European Commission and other stakeholders.

Who are the organisers?

OPEN DAYS is jointly organised by the EU Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO). Usually in January, they launch a call for partners for the OPEN DAYS in that year. Following the call, over 200 partners from all over Europe are selected, usually during the spring: regions and cities, mainly grouped into thematic consortia ('regional partnerships'), companies, financial institutions, international associations or academic organisations. Partners have to organise seminars of common interest, often in the context of implementing European Structural and Investment Funds and other EU programmes.

How is the programme structured?

The programme is organised around a key slogan and a number of sub-themes. Moreover, workshops or debates can be divided into three categories: 1/ those organised by the regional partnerships (1/3 of all workshops); 2/ those organised by the European Commission, i.e. by different Directorates-General (1/3 again); and 3/those organised at the CoR (1/3). Participants and speakers have to



circulate between 30 different venues in the EU quarter of Brussels, representations of Member States and regions and the premises of the European Commission and the CoR.

What is the 'Meeting Place'?

The Meeting Place refers to both all the workshops organised at the CoR and a networking place, with its dedicated café and its press centre. The concept was thought up in order to help participants to gather together at one single place, against the background of the numerous venues spread in the EU quarter and beyond.

What is the OPEN DAYS University?

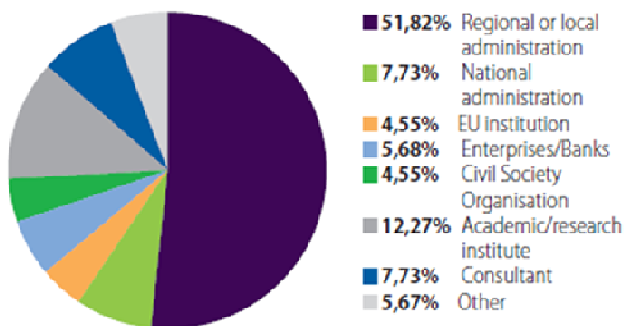
This refers to a set of workshops organised by DG REGIO, the CoR and the Regional Studies Association. The OPEN DAYS University raises awareness and facilitates exchanges between academics and regional and local representatives on research results in the field of regional and urban development and EU Cohesion Policy. Since 2013, a Master Class for PhD students has also been organised as part of this framework.

Who attends the OPEN DAYS?

The audience is specifically interested in regional and urban policy, hence mostly officials at local, regional, national and EU level. The typical participant is from a regional or local administration (52%), new to the event (45%) and is travelling to Brussels specifically for the event (82%).*

(*N.B.: figures from the 2013 online survey)

Organisational affiliation of participants (figures from the OPEN DAYS online survey)



How does the OPEN DAYS reach out to the local level?

Between September and November, each of the 200 regions and cities organise one local event under the slogan 'Europe in my region/city'. Together with other partners, there are over 350 local events held in more than 30 countries each year, with an estimated 200 000 participants and about 2 000 politicians and experts involved as speakers.

What is the impact of the OPEN DAYS?

Since its beginning, the impact of the OPEN DAYS has been systematically evaluated. Participants have highlighted in particular the usefulness of information from the EU institutions and the



networking with colleagues from other countries as being relevant to their professional management of EU funds. The importance of the event is also proven by its significant media impact. For years now, up to 300 print, radio, TV and online media journalists from all over Europe have come to Brussels to cover the event.