“Smart City” – a city that makes its residents’ lives comfortable

The smart city was one of the key topics of the 6th Mazovia Development Forum, which took place at the National Stadium in Warsaw between the 7th and 9th October. The partners of the “Smart City” zone presented numerous innovative ideas and solutions to improve the quality of city dwellers’ lives based on effective, ecological management. During the networking sessions, workshops, panel discussions, and presentations, the participants expanded their knowledge and shared their best practices.

This year’s 6th edition of the Mazovia Development Forum promoted the new period of developing EU funding programmes for the years 2014-2020 and concentrated on the promotion of the widely understood innovativeness and entrepreneurship in Mazovia Province. Among the exhibitors and guests there were public and private businesses that are familiar with the concept of synergy between modern, ecological, efficient, and effective solutions to increase the level of comfort experienced by city residents and the quality of the surrounding natural environment.

The leader of the “Smart City” zone was the international engineering and design consultancy BuroHappold Engineering, which for many years now has been successfully executing multidisciplinary projects featuring innovative solutions. Together with Bluevine Consulting, the zone activity coordinator, and other partners such as BASF, BNP Paribas Real Estate Poland, Florabo2, Kampus+, Philips Lighting and Platforma Efektywność Energetyczna w Budynkach (EEB), as well as partner towns and cities – Ciechanów, Grodzisk Mazowiecki, Ostrołęka, Płock, Radom, Siedlce and Warsaw – the experts from BuroHappold encouraged us to increase the quality of life, health, and productivity by adopting the most modern technological solutions and modernizing the existing office infrastructure. Katarzyna Chwalbińska-Kusek, Associate/Marketing & Business Development Manager at BuroHappold, conveyed the message that it was possible and necessary to measure the influence of buildings on employees. She also demonstrated to the guests how to perform this type of measurements.

At a table made of live grass, Halina Kamińska of Florabo2 held a workshop on the role played by plants in everyday life, particularly in air-conditioned office building conglomerates. To improve workplace quality, employees’ satisfaction and effectiveness, Florabo2 creates green solutions that clean the air, which are an alternative to “urban plantations” and counteract the negative effect of air-conditioned office buildings on employees. This goal is achieved using the natural properties of certain plant species that eliminate toxic substances from the air.

Berlin and the project BeMobility were examples of how a city could be made healthier and more modern – a miracle made possible mainly thanks to the integration of electronic mobility, energy-efficient public transport, and renewable energy. “The world of transport is changing rapidly – the need for mobility is increasing continuously, following the economic development of the society, the need for energy efficiency, and the ever easier access to new technologies. Today we know that to meet those needs, new means of transport will be introduced in the future. Therefore cities must have new,
innovative mobility solutions.” – emphasized Sebastian Seeling, responsible for city strategies at BuroHappold Engineering. The expert from BuroHappold Engineering added that the current city projects based on the smart city concept postulate that transport should be available on demand: bicycles, cars and other electric vehicles will be at the residents’ disposal within a single package. Mobility will be a service supported by intelligent apps and infrastructure. This requires a holistic approach to planning in respect of urban transportation, understanding of the urban fabric, city dwellers and their behaviour, and, last but not least, an integrated mobility system.

The most extensive item on the agenda was an expert panel discussion “Smart City based on good practice from the city of Płock”, led by Aneta Klodaś, Managing Director, Bluevine Consulting. At the beginning, Jacek Terebus, Deputy Mayor of the City of Płock for Development and Investments said that cities and towns have to open to their residents’ needs and employ the latest technologies to improve interaction. He also presented the main goals of the SmartPłock project, which consists of a number of initiatives and investments that will improve the quality of life and safety, eliminate barriers hindering the physically challenged, and make the residents more active. Another aspect of the “smart” concept is building restoration and infrastructure modernisation. This includes a series of modern solutions such as a dynamic passenger information system and an intelligent city control system.

“The smart concept has been a part of all our activities in Płock for many years now. In the past it was known under different names: economy, thriftiness, and effectiveness.” – said Janusz Majchrzak, Chairman of the Board of Komunikacja Miejska Płock.

Aleksandra Nocoń, Sustainable Development Manager at BASF emphasized a special role that cooperation plays in the implementation of innovative ideas. Integration, based on knowledge, understanding and favour, is necessary for effective activities in the areas related to ecology and sustainable development.

The smart city means also green, environmentally-friendly transport with low emission levels. Katarzyna Lemańska, Marketing and PR Director, Central and Eastern Europe, BNP Paribas Real Estate Poland pointed out the economic aspects of making electrical mobility more popular in Poland. The lack of financial support, concessions, subsidies, and privileges for electric vehicle users decelerate this development.

“Poland should follow other European countries and support the development of electric mobility through passing specific bills and introducing regulations that will give privileges to the users of zero emission cars. This is a task for state and local governments.” – summarised Katarzyna Lemańska.

In Poland the concept of the “smart city” is in embryo as yet, but thanks to EU funding, interest in the idea is increasing and cities are now obtaining the funding to make further investments.

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