



## 2015 POLIS CONFERENCE OPENING PLENARY

*Karen Vancluysen, Polis Secretary General*

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Deputy mayor Murgui Parra,  
Vice-President Katainen,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Also on behalf of myself and my colleagues of the Polis secretariat here in Brussels, a warm welcome to the 2015 Polis conference.

I would like to start with expressing our deepest sympathies to Polis members **Paris and Île-de-France** in light of last week's tragic events. What happened in Paris is the worst nightmare of every city, and our thoughts are with you.

Then I would like to express my gratitude to the city of **Madrid**, for having been a great Polis president over the last two years. You provided the secretariat with valuable support and were a perfect ambassador for our network and we thank you for that!

We are delighted to welcome over **400 participants** for this edition of the Polis conference, more than ever before. This strengthens us in our belief that what we do matters, gathering cities and regions from all over Europe to discuss and cooperate on urban transport innovation and engage with other stakeholders in the field.

I just mentioned we bring together cities and regions from all over Europe, but actually our ambition, as the deputy mayor of Madrid just mentioned, is now to also go beyond the borders of European cooperation. Therefore, I would like to join our President in welcoming the city of Sao Paulo as our very first member indeed of the **Polis global** platform.

2015 was again a year filled with interesting activities and exciting innovations within our network, some of which were highlighted by our President. In that respect, Polis also became increasingly involved in the European debate on **Smart Cities**. We are a partner in GrowSmarter, one of the first European Smart Cities Lighthouse projects that kicked off at the beginning of the year, which is led by the city of Stockholm and also involves Polis members Barcelona and Cork. And, within the European Commission's Smart Cities Marketplace, Polis is in charge of the urban mobility cluster.

But what is a Smart City really? Is it more than just a **buzzword**? I'm happy to tell you that today also sees the launch of our policy paper on Smart Cities, in which we reflect

on how the Smart City is approached today, and what we believe a Smart City could and should be. Allow me in that respect, to quote a few statements from our own member cities that we fully subscribe to:

“The Smart City knows what it wants, knows how to intervene, is interested to assess results and change course if needed, and in this process is able to take everybody along. It is a place where citizens have all the information they need to make informed choices about their lifestyle, work and travel options.”

Another quote: “Integration and joint-up thinking are key. It is important that different sectors talk. In this view, mobility cannot be seen as a subsector, but should be an integral part of the Smart City. The focus should be on transversal issues. Also other less obvious sectors should be involved.”

And finally: “Citizens should come first when designing, planning and building the Smart City. Without citizens, the Smart City has no real purpose.”

On a global scale, cities and industries are developing **coherent operational tools** to better plan and manage the urban territory and improve quality of life of citizens. These tools are the practical translation of a deeper understanding of interdependencies and synergies between sectors such as transport, energy, urban planning, economic development, environment, health, and so on. This trend proves that the ‘Smart City’ concept is not just a buzzword.

However, Polis experiences that currently the role and potential of urban mobility in making the city smarter, is **not sufficiently recognised**.

Transport has a lot to offer to the Smart City. Polis wants to ensure that local urban mobility stakeholders can take their full responsibility in co-creating the Smart City and pursuing Smart City objectives, without transport being made **subsidiary** to other sectors, such as energy.

There are good reasons to put urban transport at the heart of Smart Cities policies. To name a few:

urban mobility has the framework for **integrated planning**, Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans. All over Europe, cities are engaging in bringing such an SUMP together. It offers a unique opportunity for joint up thinking, and thus a building block for the Smart City.

transport also helps to make the **health challenge** more concrete. The past decade, the relation between health and urban transport has become increasingly apparent. Both active travel and air quality are important in this respect. The transport sector can therefore bring the health dimension into the Smart Cities’ concept.

**Electrification** is happening, in all modes of transport and for both passengers and goods.



Urban transport also embraces and is a key area for the transition towards the **sharing economy**.

Transport offers an endless source of interesting **data**. The traveller is increasingly connected, as are the vehicles and the infrastructure.

Transport technology systems are becoming more and more **open and interoperable**. The urban ITS sector is moving away from proprietary systems to open systems. This enables interaction with systems used in other sectors.

The EC Smart Cities and Communities focus on the integration of energy, ICT and transport, currently provides the most visible framework for Smart Cities deployment. We feel however, that considering the daily practice of urban transport professionals in European cities, this framework may be **too narrow**.

Smart transport solutions can address other objectives than just energy and decarbonisation: health, environment, road safety, economic development, urban development, equality etc. In other words: within transport, measures can be smart (e.g. they are saving lives) without that they directly save energy.

Also, **digital technologies** are an enabler of many smart mobility measures, but still, not all transport solutions need ICT to make them smart. The use of ICT should not be an end in itself but is a means to an end. Simple solutions can also enable place-making and can help to enjoy the city and urban life.

Finally, urban mobility is closely linked with **land use planning**. The absence of any territorial policy reference framework in the Smart Cities discussion is therefore a missed opportunity.

Anyhow, we have to recognise that the definition of Smart Cities will never be uniform, and that the Smart City concept is not statically defined, but this does not have to hamper its further promotion and improvement.

Against the backdrop of these observations, Polis has formulated a number of **recommendations** to the EU level and we invite you to read more about them and pick up a copy of our policy paper at the Polis stand in the exhibition area. While you're there, also don't forget to take the latest issue of our Thinking Cities magazine, with a focus on smart cities as well.

I also look forward to hearing the views of our distinguished panellists in the Smart Cities discussion later on, but first of all I am very honoured to give the floor to **European Vice-President Katainen, Commissioner for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness**, to listen to his observations and learn more about upcoming EU initiatives in the field.