

Bart Andriessen: Opening international symposium 'Healthy Empowerment' krachtstation, kanaleneiland.

Hello everybody, dear guests.

I am Bart Andriessen and I am the Director of Public Health in the city of Utrecht and I want to welcome you at this symposium and especially to the beautiful city of Utrecht. I am glad to hear that such a diverse group of people, local citizens, professionals, experts, policymakers and representation from local and international organisations and institutes, joined together on this topic of 'healthy Empowerment'.

It isn't a coincidence that you are here today in Utrecht, and I am happy to tell you why!

Utrecht is a fast growing historical city in the centre of the Netherlands, in 2022 we will be celebrating our 900 year anniversary. Currently we have 352.941 three hundred fifty-two thousand nine hundred forty-one (452.941) Utrechters, almost 700.000 thousand hotel stays a year and the DOM tower has four hundred and sixty-five (465) steps, besides the fact that we have more than seventy thousand (70.000) students a year and fourty thousand (40.000) jobs in healthcare!

We will have grown to 400.000 citizens in 2024 which means we will encounter a lot of challenges, also regarding public health.

Thinking about these challenges I am proud that this city decided to choose 'healthy urban living for everybody' as its main focus! This becomes visible on many different levels. Very recently our new public health policy was accepted by the city council. In Utrecht we look at health from a positive and broad perspective, we are aiming towards 'health in all policies', 'health equity' in all policies and we work on themes as poverty and behaviour to make this city a healthy city for everybody.

To achieve all these ambitions we collaborate and co-create with citizens, professionals, experts, local, regional, national and international organisations and initiatives. As some of you may know, Utrecht is part of the WHO Healthy City Network. In Brussels we represent health from the city perspective. In the region organisations work together in the Health Hub Utrecht and in the city we are building a broad dynamic network, a coalition of the willing called 'the health pact Utrecht' where everybody who wants to contribute to health in the city comes together. If this makes you curious I invite you to go to breakout session 2.

As you can tell we are mobilizing all kinds of forces from a wide range of perspectives on health and wellbeing in this city. This makes me confident that we can deliver.

Now you heard the story for a Utrecht perspective, I think there is a lot we can learn from each other therefor I wish you all a wonderful and inspiring symposium.

And yes, I hope you are able to explore some more of my favourite city, Utrecht!