

# Thousands join Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival in Antwerp, Belgium (with photos)

Thousands of people enjoyed the 10th Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival held in the port city of Antwerp, Belgium on June 8 (Antwerp time), of which the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Brussels (HKETO, Brussels) was the main sponsor.

The Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival was organised by the Rotary Antwerp International and Rotary Antwerp West, and is recognised as one of the city's biggest annual events. Twenty dragon boat teams took part in a full day of racing, attracting around 6 000 enthusiastic paddlers and visitors.

New this year, the HKETO Brussels entered the race with three boats. These boats, existed out of a competition crew of well-trained paddlers, a fun crew represented by international expats, entrepreneurs, Hong Kong residents living in Belgium and locals. And a new third boat crew, formed by the Hong Kong youths who were visiting Europe under the exchange tour organised by the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (HKFYG). The growing presence of Hong Kong boats was clearly present.

Deputy Representative of the HKETO, Brussels Miss Fiona Li started the event. She said that the participation of HKFYG highlighted the commitment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government to youth development. "We encourage young people to engage in international, multi-cultural vibrant events to broaden their horizon", Miss Li said.

Dragon Boat festivals are celebrated across many cultures around the world. The upcoming Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races is one of the largest of its kind and also one of the many mega events that are organised in Hong Kong attended by visitors all over the world. "Do come visit Hong Kong to see for yourselves our colourful city", as Miss Li encouraged the spectators to experience Hong Kong in person.

At the award giving ceremony, Miss Li presented the trophy to the champion. It came with dragon boat-themed mechanical paper boxes designed by Hong Kong artist Sylvia Yeh to recognise the dedication and creativity of the winning teams.

Apart from watching the competitions and experiencing the fun of the sport by paddling the dragon boats sponsored by the HKETO, Brussels, visitors including senior officials of the local government, were welcomed by the Hong Kong ambassadors from the HKFYG team at the Hong Kong booth to learn more about Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival supports the charity organisation, Thomas houses. This organisation helps mentally challenged people to

integrate into society.

