European Commission

Press release

Brussels, 4 December 2018

**Breda wins 2019 Access City Award for making the city more accessible to citizens with disabilities**

**The 2019 Access City Award goes to the city of Breda, in the Netherlands, for continuously making improvements to make life easier for people with disabilities.** The award was handed out this morning at the Access City Award Ceremony, taking place in Brussels. Breda is a source of inspiration for cities in Europe and beyond, which encounter similar challenges.

At the award ceremony, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen** said: "*Too often, people with disabilities feel isolated because they cannot access public spaces or transport. In Breda, public places such as parks and stores are accessible to everyone. Digital technologies ensure that all citizens can get around using public transport. And Breda's investments pay off. Tourism is thriving thanks to the city’s commitment to inclusion. In the near future, the European Accessibility Act will complement Breda's efforts by setting European accessibility standards for key products and services. Our combined efforts at local and European level are a game changer for the more than 80 million Europeans with disabilities.”*

To mark the [European Year of Cultural Heritage,](https://www.eych2018.com/) awards were also presented to cities that made outstanding efforts to make their cultural heritage accessible. When handing out the trophies, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: "*Enabling everyone to discover and enjoy cultural heritage is one of the main goals of the European Year of Cultural Heritage. That is why I am delighted that this year’s edition of the Access City Awards features a special prize for two cities that have made their cultural heritage sites more accessible. I congratulate Viborg in Denmark and Monteverde in Italy for the steps they have taken, and hope that many other cities will follow their example*.”

For the 2019 Access City Award, the European Commission received 52 applications. The city of Évreux in France and the city of Gdynia in Poland are the second and third place winners. The jury praised Évreux for its particular focus on invisible disabilities and Gdynia for its initiatives to include people with intellectual disabilities. Finally, Kaposvár in Hungary and Vigo in Spain both received a special mention. Kaposvár was recognised for its continued improvements and Vigo for its innovative architecture in a challenging topography.

Background

**Access City Award**

The [Access City Award](https://ec.europa.eu/info/access-city-awards_en), organised by the European Commission together with the European Disability Forum, is one of the actions of the [EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1137&langId=en) to create a barrier-free Europe. It recognises those cities that are leading lights in overcoming obstacles across Europe today. The Award is given to the city that has clearly and sustainably improved accessibility in fundamental aspects of city living, and that has concrete plans for further improvements. The purpose of the Award is to inspire other cities, which may face similar challenges, and to promote good practices across Europe.

The Award is traditionally addressed to European cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants. Cities are expected to demonstrate a comprehensive approach to accessibility across four key areas: built environment and public spaces; transportation and related infrastructure; information and communication including new technologies (ICT); public facilities and services.

Last year, the competition was exceptionally opened to cities with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants for the special prize in the framework of the [European Year of Cultural Heritage](https://www.eych2018.com/).

The Access City Award is presented at the yearly [European Day of Persons with Disabilities conference](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventsId=1352&furtherEvents=yes), which is attended by around 400 participants coming from all over Europe.

The previous winners of the Award are: 2018, Lyon (France); 2017, Chester (United Kingdom); 2016, Milan (Italy); 2015, Boras (Sweden); 2014, Gothenburg (Sweden); 2013, Berlin (Germany); 2012, Salzburg (Austria); 2011, Avila (Spain).

**EU policy on accessibility**

Making Europe more accessible to those with disabilities is a key part of the EU's overall [Disability Strategy 2010-2020](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0636:FIN:en:PDF). The strategy provides the general framework at EU level for action in the area of disability and accessibility to complement and support Member States' actions. Specific provisions on accessibility are contained in EU legislation in areas such as transport and electronic communication services. On 8 November 2018, the European Parliament and the Council came to a provisional agreement on the [Commission's proposal for a European Accessibility Act](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-6147_en.htm), which will make many everyday products and services accessible to persons with disabilities.

The European Union makes use of a variety of instruments to make Europe more accessible to people with disabilities and older people and to foster an EU-wide market for accessible products and services. Beyond legislation and policy, research and standardisation optimise the accessibility of the built environment, ICT, transport, and other areas.

For More Information

An accessible version of this press release is available here

[Access City Award 2019](https://ec.europa.eu/info/access-city-awards_en)

[European Day of persons with Disabilities conference 2018](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventsId=1352&furtherEvents=yes)

[EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0636:FIN:en:PDF)

[European Year of Cultural Heritage](https://www.eych2018.com/)

[Making key products and services accessible across the EU: Statement by Commissioner Thyssen following the provisional agreement between the EU institutions](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=89&langId=en&newsId=9234&furtherNews=yes)

[Press release: Commission proposes to make products and services more accessible to persons with disabilities](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-6147_en.htm)

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