



## European Commission Press Release

Brussels, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015

### **Torres Vedras wins inaugural European Green Leaf 2015**

The Portuguese city of Torres Vedras has won a European Green Leaf in the first year of the new European competition which recognises a city's commitment to better environmental outcomes. The scheme has a particular focus on efforts that generate green growth and new jobs.

The title was presented by Karmenu Vella, EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, at a ceremony held in Bristol, the current European Green Capital. Torres Vedras was recognised especially for its mobility strategy and efforts at reducing biodiversity loss as well as its attention to water management.

Commissioner Vella said: *“Given the very high standard of our applicants and of the shortlisted cities, it is a credit to the efforts of Torres Vedras that it is one of the first to win a European Green Leaf. Environmentally sound mobility is just as important in small cities as it is in big ones. Torres Vedras has shown how good planning can lead to quick clean movement of people around their town. I hope that these inaugural European Green Leaf cities will act as role models and inspire many others to pursue better environmental stewardship in the future.”*

The 2015 European Green Leaf (EGL) is a European Commission initiative aimed at cities with a population between 50,000 and 100,000 inhabitants. Each year, an EGL will be awarded to a maximum of three cities which demonstrate a good environmental record and commitment to green growth, and which actively seeks to develop citizens' environmental awareness. Winners should also be able to act as 'Green Ambassadors' to inspire other cities.

The jury was particularly impressed by Torres Vedras' mobility strategy, which aims to diagnose weaknesses of its transport system and define a set of measures to improve mobility and the quality of life for its citizens. The focus of the strategy was placed on the links between different modes of transport, the consideration of structural issues and the needs of visitors and businesses as well as the local population. Plans have been developed to encourage and facilitate the use of bikes by

citizens, while an electromobility plan has also been implemented. Beyond that, a new sustainable mobility plan will aim for even more ambitious measures, demonstrating that Torres Vedras views sustainable mobility as an ongoing priority.

Over the past few years, Torres Vedras has also put a number of projects in place aimed at decreasing biodiversity loss and ensuring access to nature to its inhabitants. The implementation of 'the Atlantic Path – Western Natura Network' and the active involvement of the local population in the protection and management of landscape projects particularly impressed the jury.

In addition to Torres Vedras, Mollet des Vallès in Spain was also awarded a European Green Leaf for 2015.

## **Background**

Europe is now an essentially urban society, with more than two thirds of European citizens living in towns and cities. Many environmental challenges facing our society originate from urban areas, but it is these same urban areas that catalyse the commitment and innovation needed to find solutions.

The EU's 7th Environment Action Programme (7th EAP) entitled "Living well, within the limits of our planet" underpins and guides the work of creating an ever-better environment for European citizens and provides the basis for the EU environment policy development up to 2020. The 7th EAP includes the specific policy objective, "to enhance the sustainability of EU cities". It foresees that the EU promotes and expands existing initiatives that support innovation and best practices in cities, enabling better networking and encouraging leaders to show how they are progressing towards sustainable urban development.

Launched in 2008, the European Green Capital Award (EGCA) has achieved increasing renown. Following its success, many smaller cities also seek EU recognition for their efforts and commitment in the areas of sustainability and environment. In response, the European Commission launched the new European Green Leaf (EGL) initiative.

Jury comprises representatives from the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the European Environment Agency, ICLEI – the Local Governments for Sustainability, the Covenant of Mayors Office and the European Environmental Bureau.

## **For more information:**

Website: <http://ec.europa.eu/europeangreenleaf>

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/EuropeanGreenCapitalAward](http://www.facebook.com/EuropeanGreenCapitalAward)

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The full EGL 2015 Expert Panel Technical Assessment Report can be read online [here](#).