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European Green Leaf for Media

Towns and Cities, Growing Greener



European Green Leaf – an initiative of the European Commission

Gain recognition for your environmental achievements

What is European Green Leaf?

European Green Leaf is a competition aimed at cities, with between 20,000 and 100,000 inhabitants, to recognise their achievements in green growth. The recognition is given to a city that demonstrates a good environmental record & green growth commitment; actively seeks to develop citizen's environmental awareness; and can act as a 'green ambassador' to encourage other cities. The European Green Leaf is awarded on an annual basis by the European Commission in conjunction with the European Green Capital Award from 2015 onwards as a stamp of approval to Towns and Cities, Growing Greener!

- The 'European Green Leaf' is open to EU Member States, EU Candidate Countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.
- All cities from the countries listed above which have between 20,000 and 100,000 inhabitants can apply for a European Green Leaf.
- In this context, a 'city' is understood to be an urban area and an administrative unit governed by a city council or another form of democratically elected body.
- Past winners may not apply for a period of three years after they have been awarded a 'European Green Leaf'.

How is a European Green Leaf selected?

The selection of a city or cities to earn a European Green Leaf will be assessed on the basis of six categories:

- Climate Change & Energy Performance
- Mobility
- Biodiversity & Land Use
- Quality of Air & the Acoustic Environment
- Waste Management & Green Economy
- Water and Wastewater Management

Detailed instructions on how to apply, including a guidance note can be found at ec.europa.eu/europeangreenleaf



European Green Leaf 2015

To underpin the work of creating an ever-better environment for European citizens, the EU adopted the 7th Environment Action Programme (7th EAP) entitled 'Living well, within the limits of our planet'. It provides the basis for EU environment policy up to 2020. This programme aims to enhance Europe's ecological resilience and transform the EU into an inclusive and sustainable green economy.

The 7th EAP includes a specific policy objective 'To enhance the sustainability of EU cities'. It foresees that the EU will promote and expand existing initiatives that support innovation and best practices in cities, enabling better networking and exchanges between cities and encouraging the leading ones to show how they lead on sustainable urban development.

The European Green Capital Award (EGCA) launched in 2008, is one such initiative. Following its success, many smaller cities seek EU recognition for their efforts and commitment in the areas of sustainability & environment. In response, the European Commission launched the new pilot European Green Leaf (EGL) initiative for Smaller Cities, Growing Greener! It ran as a pilot project for 2015 aimed at cities with between 50,000 and 100,000 inhabitants. Due to the success of the pilot, the European Commission has decided to now run the competition on an annual basis and has opened it to towns and cities with between 20,000 and 100,000 inhabitants.

On the 6th of May 2015 Ludwigsburg (Germany), Mikkeli (Finland), Mollet del Vallès (Spain) and Torres Vedras (Portugal) were announced as the four finalists shortlisted for the inaugural European Green Leaf 2015. An Expert panel undertook a technical assessment of each entry, looking at Climate Change and Energy Performance; Mobility; Biodiversity and Land Use; Quality of Air and the Acoustic Environment; Waste and the Green Economy; and Water Management (incl. Wastewater Treatment).

The shortlisted cities will now submit a short video to the Jury, highlighting their progress towards Sustainable Urban Development. The Jury will then review all the information provided and decide on the winner(s). The European Green Leaf 2015 laureates will be announced at the European Green Capital Award ceremony on the 18th of June 2015, in Bristol, UK, Europe's current Green Capital.

What are the benefits?

- The following advantages should convince you to participate in the European Green Leaf initiative:
- Citizen's pride in living/working/playing in a green city which is recognised at EU level and where the city authority's efforts to improve inhabitants' quality of life are seen as a priority;
- Attraction of new investors where green performance matters, which is an open door for increased tourism, commercial investment, new jobs and further investment in green growth initiatives;
- Twinning and/or capacity-building among and between European Green Capital winners and European Green Leaf laureates. Exchange of best practices, experiences and knowledge for continued better quality of life.
- Valuable national and international media coverage which leads to wider active interest in the city and its environmental achievements.



Good Practices from Shortlisted Cities

- The city of Ludwigsburg has implemented a number of measures aimed at improving the city's air quality. Ludwigsburg introduced Low Emission Zones (LEZ) in the city centre together with the adoption of an identifiable green sticker on allowed vehicles, an improved parking system which allows the locating of free spaces and the installation of electric vehicle charge points.
- Mikkeli demonstrated a proactive approach to citizen engagement and stakeholder consultation on waste related issues. The city also actively supports an organisation which provides employment for long-term unemployed citizens in reuse and repair activities. This partnership demonstrates a good example of the city's circular economy activities.
- Mollet Del Vallès' Urban Mobility Plan favours pedestrian mobility and public transport and incorporated round table discussions with all stakeholders to encourage public engagement during its formation. To further encourage this engagement and to aid in identification of issues associated with particular routes, users were taken on typical commuter trips where they were able to give feedback on the respective strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, bus usage in the municipality has increased by 25% in the last 5 years.
- In the past number of years Torres Vedras has put a number projects in place aimed at decreasing biodiversity loss and ensuring guaranteed access to nature for the population. 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 impressed the Expert Panel.