



# Jury Report 2019

June 2018

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	THE ROLE OF THE JURY .....	1
1.2	JURY MEMBERS.....	1
1.3	EUROPEAN GREEN LEAF AWARD 2019 – JURY ASSESSMENT .....	2
<b>2</b>	<b>JURY FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1	CORNELLÀ DE LLOBREGAT .....	3
2.2	GABROVO .....	3
2.3	HORST AAN DE MAAS.....	4
2.4	MECHELEN .....	4
<b>3</b>	<b>JURY CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>5</b>

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Due to the interest from cities and building on the success of the European Green Capital Award the need to create a competition for cities of a smaller size was identified by the European Commission in 2014. This competition now exists as the European Green Leaf Award (EGLA).

Following a Europe wide competition, the title of European Green Leaf is awarded every year to recognise and promote the efforts of smaller cities and towns (20,000 up to 100,000 population) towards better environmental management and outcomes. The first cities were awarded the title in 2015.

Urban areas are the source of many of today's environmental challenges – not surprisingly, since two out of three Europeans live in towns and cities. It is important to reward cities which are making efforts to improve the urban environment and move towards healthier and sustainable living areas. Local governments and authorities can provide the commitment and innovation needed to tackle and resolve many of these problems. The European Green Leaf Award promotes and rewards these efforts, recognising cities that demonstrate a good environmental record and commitment to generating 'green' growth and new jobs to improve our urban living environment.

The Award is based on a two tier evaluation process: firstly applicant cities are technically assessed across six environmental topic areas by a panel of experts. The short-listed cities from this stage are then invited to present to the Jury.

## 1.1 THE ROLE OF THE JURY

The Jury's role is to select the winner(s) of the European Green Leaf Award (EGLA). The European Green Leaf Award shortlisted cities are invited to present their achievements and future vision to the Jury. Following these hearings, the Jury deliberates on the winner(s) of the European Green Leaf Award.

## 1.2 JURY MEMBERS

The Jury for the EGL Award comprises representatives from key European and international organisations in the environmental field and is chaired by the European Commission. Jury members cover a wide range of expertise and have in-depth knowledge of the issues involved. The Jury for the 2019 European Green Leaf Award includes the following organisations and their representatives:

- European Commission: Joanna Drake, Deputy Director-General for Environment
- Committee of the Regions: Sirpa Hertell, City Counsellor of Espoo
- Covenant of Mayors Office: Frédéric Boyer, Head of Office
- European Environment Agency: Ivone Pereira Martins, Urban Sustainability Co-ordinator
- ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability: Stefan Kuhn, Deputy Regional Director for Europe

### 1.3 EUROPEAN GREEN LEAF AWARD 2019 – JURY ASSESSMENT

The Jury was provided with a suite of supporting background documents on the shortlisted cities including: the Technical Assessment Report, prepared by the Expert Panel in April 2018, Application Forms and Background Research Report.

On 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018, the four finalist cities<sup>1</sup> presented their vision, action plans and communication strategies to the Jury. The Jury assessed the shortlisted cities based on the following criteria:

- The city's overall commitment, strategy and enthusiasm, as conveyed by the presentation;
- The city's efforts to communicate to citizens and the citizens' engagement in environmental activities; and
- The city's potential to act as a 'green ambassador', promoting good practice and spreading the EGL concept further.

Each EGL finalist was allocated 30 minutes in total with the Jury which comprised 20 minutes presentation followed by a 10 minutes Questions and Answers session. Members of the media were permitted to attend the presentation of their own shortlisted city to the Jury. However, there was no media present for the 2019 EGLA Jury presentations.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Five cities were shortlisted for the 2019 EGLA. However, the City of Joensuu informed the Commission on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2018 that they did not wish to take part in the EGL Jury Final.

## 2 JURY FINDINGS

The Jury considered that all four cities demonstrated a strong commitment to delivering environmental excellence in their towns and cities. Importantly, they also demonstrated the ability to empower similar cities across Europe and their potential to be worthy European Green Leaf Award winners. In this respect, the Jury found that the level of the finalists was very high and, making a decision between these four well-prepared, dedicated cities, was not easy. The Jury comments in relation to each of the shortlisted cities are summarised below.

### 2.1 CORNELLÀ DE LLOBREGAT

The Jury was impressed by the clear environmental strategy presented by the City and the ability of the City to connect and empower their citizens. The City presented its EGLA vision under the tag line of *'Feel, Commit, Transform'*. The *'Feel'* element of the Cornellà de Llobregat proposal outlined the activities that are ongoing in the city both in Local Government, through governance and extensive engagement with citizens and stakeholders, through activities such as *'Riverfest'*, participation in Green Schools and Mobility Week.

The *'Commit'* aspect presented by the city was demonstrated by the use of a Social Agreement with the citizens of Cornellà de Llobregat for an inclusive and equal city which includes open participatory budgets. The City presented the *'Transform'* element of their strategy through targeted objectives and measures they are working towards, including access to green areas for their citizens from 9.72 km<sup>2</sup>/inh in 2016 to 15.52 km<sup>2</sup>/inh in 2026.

The Jury appreciated the challenges facing this compact city in order to deliver a high environmental performance. The close proximity of the city to the Municipality of Barcelona brings additional environmental challenges in terms of housing stock, transport connectivity, air and noise pollution. The Jury recognised that Cornellà de Llobregat can provide a strong template for sustainability to similar cities.

### 2.2 GABROVO

The Jury admired the city's aspirations to become a role model for similar cities and, particularly, their dedication to sharing experiences through initiatives such as the *'Take me in your Village'* project. The tag line presented by the city was *'Gabrovo; for and with the people'*.

The Jury recognised the significant strides that Gabrovo has made in attracting funding to develop infrastructure within the city. The city was also commended for its development and engagement with Gabrovo Innovation Camp which supports eco-innovation.

The Jury appreciated the efforts made by the city in becoming more sustainable and recognised there is transformation underway in the city. Further information on the environmental strategy and sustainable vision of the city and its alignment to EU Policy would have been welcomed. The Jury also considered the participation of Gabrovo in the European Green Leaf Network to be very important.

## 2.3 HORST AAN DE MAAS

The Dutch city of Horst aan de Maas was commended for its enthusiasm and well-planned inclusive urban strategy. The Jury was particularly impressed by the involvement of all stakeholders in the city, especially its citizens, in a range of activities related to climate change, sustainable urban mobility, water and air quality.

The city has an extensive bicycle and public transport network and has taken a wide range of actions to encourage cycling, electric vehicles and car sharing. Of particular interest was the collaborative and sharing approach to solving the issues associated with providing sustainable public transport options in more remote areas of the municipality.

The City demonstrated great ambition and is striving to become the 'Healthiest Region in Europe' and put Horst aan de Maas on a global stage. The City clearly demonstrated a passion for innovation and solving future global issues such as food poverty, as presented by Brightbox. Overall, the Jury recognised the potential for Horst aan de Maas to be a strong role model for other municipalities with similar spatial challenges associated with serving both rural and urban populations.

## 2.4 MECHELEN

The City of Mechelen presented their EGLA vision under the theme of 'Sustainable Growth, Resilient City'. The Jury recognised the diversity of the municipality which is home to 130 different nationalities. The City strives to ensure social cohesion and environmental strategy are interlinked and sustainability is transversal.

The Jury also liked the steps that Mechelen has taken in decoupling their carbon footprint from growth which is an admirable achievement. The progress of the city is measured periodically which supports the delivery of initiatives, guides communications for the city and shapes environmental and sustainability strategy.

The City clearly understands the importance of connecting their citizens to nature. This was demonstrated by measures including opening waterways and replacing carparks with new recreational parks. The Jury appreciated the culture that appears to be present in Mechelen where the citizens feel they have the 'ownership' of their city and the direction it takes. This was demonstrated by the inclusion of citizen funding in projects such as the development of wind turbines in the municipality and the implementation of participatory budgeting.

### 3 JURY CONCLUSION

The Jury would like to commend all cities shortlisted for the 2019 European Green Leaf Award for their demonstrated excellence in a number of the environmental topic areas assessed.

Concluding its deliberations, the Jury decided to award the titles of European Green Leaf for 2019 to Cornellà de Llobregat (Spain) and Horst aan de Maas (Netherlands).

*Note: The cities are listed in alphabetical order.*