



The European Green Capital Award - A Friendly Competition



A race for environmental recognition is taking place in Europe in which capitals and cities strive for the coveted [European Green Capital \(EGC\) Award](#), initiated in Estonia in 2006. Today the initiative is supported by more than 40 European cities, including 21 capitals. The European Commission rewards one city each year, for succeeding to improve its living environment as a whole. The award is based on three broad criteria. A European Green Capital must demonstrate a consistent record of high environmental standards, ongoing and ambitious goals for environmental improvement and sustainable development, and a set of best practices applicable to other European cities. These criteria encompass 11 environmental indicators that assess a city's performance in the areas of the award. In 2010, Stockholm scored highest on having fulfilled these objectives. For more information about the EGC, please consult our [2009 newsflash](#) on the topic.

Stockholm, European Green Capital 2010 - Learning from the Best

Clear and effective measures towards reducing noise pollution, a protection plan setting new standards for cleaner water, and an innovative integrated waste system: these were some of the initiatives which made Stockholm the first ever European Green Capital in 2010. "The award is a great opportunity to inform and inspire others about the good environmental work the city, the citizens and the companies are doing", says Sten Nordin, Mayor of Stockholm. Throughout 2010, Sweden's capital has seized this opportunity to raise awareness on environmental issues.

Numerous Post Title Initiatives

The objective of the title is to appoint a city that can serve as an exemplary leader in environmental issues by sharing experience, best practices, thoughts and ideas. In Stockholm, the fulfilment of this objective began at the traditional New Year's Eve celebration in 2009 at Skansen Zoo. The broadcasted festivity was seen as a great opportunity to reach a large audience while simultaneously drawing attention to the beginning of the European Green Capital Year. In 2010, Stockholm has launched numerous initiatives to enhance its environmental communication activities. One of them was the development of a trademark for the Stockholm region: *Stockholm – The Capital of Scandinavia* – and a logo for the 2010 Green Capital. Environmentally-active companies and organisations have been encouraged to help spreading best practices, by contributing to three different incentives: joining the climate pact, welcoming fieldtrips on their premises and contributing to the City of Stockholm's 2010 European Green Capital Calendar. Organisations which took part were rewarded by being allowed to use the Swedish trademark and the Green Capital logo in their communication activities.

Not only has Stockholm launched numerous seminars, events and workshops, but it also arranged the first [European Green Capital Conference](#) in October 2010, to increase cooperation in environmental awareness-raising between different cities. Many smaller initiatives were included in the programme of this conference: the Stockholm Green Sightseeing boat tour, the Mayors' Session, enabling mayors and politicians to discuss common challenges for sustainable cities, and the Meeting of the Minds which allowed the members to share and learn from each other's ideas regarding sustainability.

The eleven environmental indicators

- Local contribution to climate change
- Local transport
- Green urban areas
- Sustainable land use
- Nature and biodiversity
- Local air quality
- Noise pollution
- Waste production & management
- Water consumption
- Waste water treatment
- Environmental management of the municipality



Stockholm European Green Capital 2010



Meeting the Objective

Stockholm has participated in established, international events, like the [European Green Week](#), [Earth Hour](#) and [MIPIM](#) (an international real estate trade show), to create visibility for the Green Capital title. Furthermore, Stockholm-focused events have been organised around the upper-mentioned renowned initiatives. The Stockholm [Earth Hour Conference](#) communicated how cities and organisations can act as role models for sustainable societies, and the [Earth Hour Concert](#) strove to further alert citizens about climate issues, by reaching a broader audience. In order to involve the citizens, numerous [Official EGC Seminars](#) have taken place, familiarising the public with various climate-related topics.



The 2012 and 2013 winners at the Green Capital conference (Source: EGC)

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“The finalists of the European Green Capital Award provide us with valuable examples of how respect for the environment, excellent quality of life and economic growth can all be successfully combined.”

Janez Potočnik, EU Commissioner for the Environment

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Less formal events directed towards the citizens, like the [Stockholm Green Festival](#), the [Stockholm Green Week](#), the [Green Projection](#) (a daily slide show about global warming in central Stockholm), and the opening of a new tramway, have been successful communication initiatives. Moreover, the [Gowalla Green Capital Tour](#) provided a way to explore Stockholm by foot, with the help of Gowalla, a GPS positioning Smartphone application. The ‘Green Capital Map’, thus highlights places in Stockholm that demonstrate the environmental work done in the city. The [Stockholm Environmental Hero](#) competition was launched, to vote for the most environmentally-active Stockholmer. A lot of effort has also been directed towards the youngest citizens and the Walking School Bus (children walking together to school in line, with their parents), represents an activity organised to develop environmental awareness from an early age. This initiative has decreased traffic around schools, improved neighbourliness and increased the amount of quality time spent between children and their parents.

Leading the Way - Benefits of the Title

Aside from the honour of holding the prestigious title, many benefits can be derived from being the Green Capital. Stockholm has reported the significant amount of interest the award has stimulated, particularly amongst the media, during the European Green Capital Year. Furthermore, the title is likely to boost eco-tourism, while raising the city’s international profile by attracting new investments. The award enables broad community involvement and constitutes an excellent way to promote sustainable urban development. Janez Potočnik, EU Commissioner for the Environment, maintains that recognition and rewards are essential for progress, and he is therefore convinced about the future environmental success that will result from the award.

And the New Winners are...

The Spanish regional capital Vitoria-Gasteiz and the French city of Nantes were recently announced as the winners of the award for 2012 and 2013 respectively, at the official European Green Capital Conference in Stockholm, in October 2010. Vitoria-Gasteiz, the 2012 winner, has made significant progress in greening a traditional urban environment, through the ‘Green Belt’ initiative (a semi-natural green area, partially reclaimed from degraded areas), and the city has steadily decreased its water consumption over the last decade. Vitoria-Gasteiz’s future objective is to reduce domestic water consumption to below 100 litres per capita per day. Nantes won the award for 2013 by linking its [green and blue urban areas](#) through a sustainable water management programme. The city has a long established sustainable transport policy, focusing on public transport and cycling. This initiative has reduced air pollution and a new climate plan aims to cut CO₂ emissions by one quarter by 2020. One novel initiative for citizens’ health is an allergy risk evaluation system, in the form of an experimental ‘pollen watch garden’ that identifies the allergy risks originating from the air quality.

Application criteria for the European Green Capital Award

Who can apply:

- EU member states, candidate countries and European Economic Areas countries, with more than 200,000 inhabitants.

Information to be provided:

- Present environmental status and results achieved
- Measures implemented to improve the urban environment
- Future commitments and initiatives
- Programme of activities & events to disseminate experience and best practice on environmental matters