



Jury Report 2021

October 2020

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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. Cities that apply for the European Green Leaf Award do not have to be perfect in all criteria. 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 finalist cities from this stage are then invited to present to the Jury.

2 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 finalist 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.

2.1 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 European Green Leaf Award 2021 includes the following organisations and their representatives:

- European Commission: Joanna Drake, Deputy Director-General for Environment (Chair)
- Committee of the Regions: Rastislav Trnka, Chairman of the Košice Self – Governing Region
- Covenant of Mayors Office: Frédéric Boyer, Head of Office
- Eurocities: Anna Lisa Boni, Secretary General
- European Environment Agency: Katja Rosenbohm, Head of Communications
- European Environment Bureau: Jeremy Wates, Secretary General
- ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability: Stefan Kuhn, Deputy Regional Director for Europe

2.2 European Green Capital Award 2021 - Jury Assessment

The Jury was provided with a suite of supporting background documents on the finalist cities¹ including: the Technical Assessment Report, prepared by the Expert Panel in April 2020, Application Forms and the Background Research Report.

On 7 October 2020, the five finalist cities presented their vision, action plans and communication strategies to the Jury. The Jury assessed the finalist 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 a 20-minute presentation followed by a 10-minute Question and Answers session. Members of the media were permitted to attend the presentation of their finalist city to the jury, but not the Q&A session.

¹ Elsinore (Denmark), Gabrovo (Bulgaria), Lappeenranta (Finland), Nyborg (Denmark), Ringkøbing-Skjern (Denmark)

3 JURY FINDINGS

The Jury considered that all five cities presented their environmental ambitions and communications strategy through high quality and well-prepared presentations. Each finalist demonstrated qualities with potential to be a European Green Leaf Award winner, and ambassador for the competition.

The Jury emphasised the importance of bringing citizens and all stakeholders on the green just transition journey to create more sustainable cities and deliver the ambitions of the [European Green Deal](#).

The Jury comments in relation to each of the finalist cities are summarised below.

3.1 Elsinore

The Jury appreciated Elsinore's strong emphasis on learning, education and the use of schools as a channel to raise awareness and effect behavioural change in citizens on the subject of sustainability to support the green transition.

The Climate Committee comprising of members from the political arena, business and citizens is considered a positive forum to inspire the city to take action in the shift to climate neutrality.

Elsinore's systematic approach to sustainable development shown through investment and plans (such as the Climate Plan) showed a strong commitment which impressed the Jury.

3.2 Gabrovo

Gabrovo's green transformation includes an integrated plan for urban development. On energy efficiency, the City was a role model in developing a kindergarten the first passivhaus in Bulgaria.

A very entrepreneurial approach to sustainability and sustainable technology was demonstrated including start ups innovation to initiate young people.

The jury was impressed by Gabrovo's leadership in the implementation and application of Green Public Procurement in the city and nationally, showing ambition and motivation to use the public administration to drive the EU Policy framework.

The City's engagement of citizens to promote sustainability through a wide range of initiatives including the 'Walk like a Gabrovian' initiative as part of the European week of mobility was appreciated by the Jury. Gabrovo showcased authenticity in its general engagement with a good emphasis on citizen reach.

3.3 Lappeenranta

Lappeenranta presented a vision of no waste, no emissions, pure water and sustainable consumption with ambitious carbon neutrality targets delivered through a new type of governance linked to climate. There were good strategies for implementation of technologies, social innovation and communication.

The City has a close association to research and the university (LUT).The UNIORI Junior University which educates children on sustainability to ensure a sustainable future is considered to be a replicable concept.

A good role model, the city leadership was shown to be close to the people, involving all, with an innovative administration delivering a diverse message in a different way with stakeholders and citizens.

The communications and engagement were strong with a good use of humour to deliver a message of 'sustainability is fun' that is accessible to all. The City appears to be very approachable, and the Jury appreciated the very human aspect to their presentation.

3.4 Nyborg

The early involvement of citizens and their engagement in the planning process was a City strategy that was valued by the Jury.

The Green Pilots initiative a volunteer programme supported by the City which provides the tools and training to help citizens to develop ideas, select, implement and innovate sustainable initiatives working towards the green transition was commended.

Nyborg's application of the 'Mylius' software tool to assess the sustainability potential of new projects and their importance in relation to their alignment with the [United Nations \(UN\) Sustainable Development Goals SDG's](#) was considered to be a convincing approach.

The current development of infrastructure to accommodate 10 separate waste fractions and the use of difficult waste fractions in Waste to Energy to generate heat was also noted.

3.5 Ringkøbing-Skjern

Ringkøbing-Skjern showed an industrial area with a strong presence of green industries. The entrepreneurial approach to industrial development and economic sustainability was considered innovative. The City's approach of 'less talk, more action' was appreciated by the Jury.

The Naturkraft or Forces of Nature's international 'exploratorium' visitor and science park centre allows the public to experience the Power of Nature, understand the interactions between humans and nature and the consequences of ignoring sustainability and climate change and was considered an excellent example of the City's citizen engagement.

The Jury commended the Energy Council with representatives from the council, public utility companies, businesses and citizens demonstrating governance with strong participatory engagement. The Energy Council with the Energy Secretariat drives and supports the green transition and was viewed as having potential for replication.

4 JURY CONCLUSION

The Jury would like to commend all of the European Green Leaf Award 2021 finalist cities for their demonstrated excellence.

Concluding its deliberations, the Jury decided to award the titles of European Green Leaf for 2021 to Gabrovo (Bulgaria) and Lappeenranta (Finland).

As in previous years, the Jury encouraged the finalists to continue their efforts in aiming to become a Green Leaf and to re-apply again in the future.

Note: The cities are listed in alphabetical order.