



Towns and Cities, Growing Greener





The city's new pedestrian bridge, connecting Yantra riverbank's cycling lanes, is a favourite spot for social gatherings

## Gabrovo at a Glance

Strategically located along the banks of the Yantra River and beneath the central Balkan Mountains, Gabrovo is a vibrant town with a population of almost 57,000. The city holds a strong historical heritage, and along with an entrepreneurial spirit, is committed to improving its environment.

### Why Gabrovo Won

Gabrovo won the European Green Leaf Award 2021 for its continuous efforts in championing a green transformation throughout all aspects of the city, including building awareness and public support for 'greening' the city, reducing CO<sub>2</sub> and noise pollution, investing in alternative mobility, and applying green policies to evolve and grow.

Gabrovo applies smart and economical solutions to effectively improve citizens' wellbeing. Some of Gabrovo's policies have become models in Europe for energy efficiency, preservation of the natural environment, water management and waste management. Its National Programme for Energy Efficiency of Multi-family Residential Buildings<sup>1</sup> has delivered 37 energy-efficient apartment blocks. Gabrovo's Integrated Water Cycle Project, was

presented as a role-model for European funding at an exhibition to the European Parliament, celebrating 30 years of the EU's Cohesion Policy.

Gabrovo's urban green areas are maintained through its Strategy for the Development of Green Infrastructure 2017-2023<sup>2</sup> (Green Strategy), that includes annual work plans and specific measures to guide activities. The city aims to apply smart solutions across all sectors of public life, stimulating the business community to introduce technological innovations; and becoming a pilot city for Bulgaria's Green Public Procurement procedures. Gabrovo is the also Bulgarian representative within the EU's Urban Agenda Framework. This involves participating in developing a manual for Building a Procurement Strategy: Using a city's buying power to achieve political goals<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>[https://gabrovo.bg/files/files/BROSHURA\\_\\_UCHILISHTA\\_FINAL\\_13-05-2019\\_PRINT.pdf](https://gabrovo.bg/files/files/BROSHURA__UCHILISHTA_FINAL_13-05-2019_PRINT.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.gabrovo.bg/files/Strategy\\_green\\_2017-2023.docx](https://www.gabrovo.bg/files/Strategy_green_2017-2023.docx)

<sup>3</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/action\\_1\\_public\\_procurement\\_strategy.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/action_1_public_procurement_strategy.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.gabrovo.bg/files/GAB-OPR\\_CD%20Give.rar](https://www.gabrovo.bg/files/GAB-OPR_CD%20Give.rar)

# Green Facts

- 50% of the municipal territory is covered by forests
- 200 tonnes of compost is produced annually at the regional waste facility
- A quarter of all household waste is recycled
- The Municipal Communal Unit Greenhouse produces 130,000 plants every year
- 7,500 trees and bushes were planted in 2020
- 46,000 tulip and narcissi bulbs will blossom in spring 2021
- 165 tonnes of textiles were collected for recycling at new textile / clothes bins in 2020
- In 2020, Gabrovo was awarded Bulgaria's "Best City to Live in"
- 300 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to be saved in 2021 through new eco-buses
- 1,300 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will be saved in the next eight years by transforming city lighting
- In 2017, the French embassy in Bulgaria awarded Gabrovo the 'Eco Municipality Award for Energy Efficient Buildings'
- 1/3 of Gabrovo's Municipal territory is made up of Natura 2000 sites
- In 2015, Gabrovo was awarded by the Passive House Institute in Darmstadt, for building the first public passive building: a kindergarten
- Gabrovo has 'eco-inspectors' who control gathering of litter, waste, and illegal landfills
- In 2021, a smart and digital air quality monitoring system will become operational

## A Green City

### Climate Change and Energy Performance

Gabrovo is currently implementing a Programme for Environmental Protection as part of the city's Municipal Plan for Development<sup>4</sup>, demonstrating its commitment to energy and climate planning. The city is also drawing up a series of strategic development planning documents for 2021, to encompass all aspects of community development and climate change adaptation measures.

Energy efficiency in public buildings includes new thermo-insulation, replacement of heating and ventilation systems, and roof reconstructions in many educational, sports and cultural facilities.

128 villages already have energy-efficient street lighting. In addition, Gabrovo's urban street lighting will be updated this year (2021) with 6,000 energy efficient light bulbs and a city-wide smart control management system.

Gabrovo's commitment to renewable energy is steadily growing, including hydropower, photovoltaic panels, and biomass. Most recently, the city installed new photovoltaic panels in a newly refurbished primary school. Gabrovo participates in the Covenant of Mayors<sup>5</sup>, and the Municipal Energy Efficiency Network 'Eco Energy'<sup>6</sup> and Bulgaria's Building Efficiency Accelerator<sup>7</sup>.

### Sustainable Urban Mobility

Alternative transport choices are being introduced, including municipal electric vehicles (EVs); green public procurement procedures; investigating hybrid cars; and installing EV charging stations. Gabrovo has already invested in 14 new eco-buses, three of which are electric.

Traffic improvement measures have been implemented to address issues inside and around the city-centre. Nine new roundabouts, completed with new pavements, as well as traffic lights and subways with accessible elevators, have been installed. A new municipal project, the Eastern Road and Tunnel, is diverting local traffic away from the city-centre.

Along with pedestrian and cycling zones, there are 63 playgrounds, six parks and nine open-air fitness / sports facilities.

Gabrovo participates annually in European Mobility Week<sup>8</sup>, the European Commission's flagship awareness-raising campaign on sustainable urban mobility, promoting behavioural changes in favour of active mobility.

<sup>4</sup><https://www.covenantofmayors.eu/en/>

<sup>6</sup><http://www.ecoenergy-bg.net/>

<sup>7</sup><https://buildingefficiencyaccelerator.org/>

<sup>8</sup><https://mobilityweek.eu/home/>



Thousands of flowers bloom all year round with residents participating in the city's annual Floral Campaign



New public transport choices contribute to the city's sustainable urban mobility initiatives

## Nature, Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Use

Gabrovo is endowed with large natural spaces and thriving wildlife. The municipal territory includes 5,295.5 ha of protected land. Over 50% of the territory is covered by forestry, while one third of Gabrovo's territory is made up of Natura 2000<sup>9</sup> designated areas. The Natura sites represent core breeding and resting spaces, protected to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's rare and threatened species and natural habitats.

Two natural parks and several protected areas lie within Gabrovo's municipal boundaries. The largest mountain lawn, part of the Uzana Resort, known for hiking, mountain biking and skiing, is just 20 km from Gabrovo.

The city is striving to achieve a proper urban balance between built-up areas and green zones, and currently maintains over 250 km of green spaces along the municipal road network.

Gabrovo's residents love the annual 'floral campaign' when the city provides trees, shrubs, and flowers for citizens to plant in local green areas. Each year, Gabrovo celebrates Earth Day with ecolessons, practical demonstrations, and information campaigns.

Gabrovo's Take me to your Village<sup>10</sup> initiative brings the city's youth and elderly villagers together to share knowledge of local traditions, rural life, and horticulture. In 2017, the initiative was crowned the National Winner of the Energy Globe Award and in 2018, the Pompidou Group European Drug Prevention Prize.

## Air Quality and Noise

Gabrovo acknowledges that the country as a whole has issues regarding air quality; and citizens have highlighted this. Gabrovo is actively working to ensure up-to-date air quality data is available. New smart digital measuring stations will be installed around the city to provide accurate real-time data, in 2021. This EGL initiative is a partnership between the city, the Technical University and the Regional Innovation Centre.

Gabrovo is part of the National Network for Air Quality Control. Official data measured by Bulgaria's Environment Executive Agency shows that 2020 air quality is within the set standards under a number of indicators. Regional Health Inspections regularly measure the levels of noise and have recently reported a gradual noise decrease. Recent good performance indicators are the result of diverting traffic away from the city, cycling and pedestrian facilities, eco-transport measures and better construction standards that include soundproofing for new buildings.

## Waste and Circular Economy

Gabrovo is making great progress in terms of waste collection and recycling. In 2014 recycling rates were at just 2%, but by 2021 this had increased to 25.49%. With a quarter of all domestic waste now being recycled, including through composting biowaste, just over 70% is being sent to landfill. The city is working hard to improve this. It is striving to comply with the EU's municipal-waste-recycling targets under EU Waste Management Law 2018<sup>11</sup>, to achieve recycle at least 55% of municipal waste by 2025.

<sup>9</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm)

<sup>10</sup><https://www.priemimenaselo.eu/>

<sup>11</sup><https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32018L0851>





**Gabrovo's many green spaces and water fountains allow residents to enjoy the warm summer weather**

In 2019 the city started a new service, providing door-to-door collection of at-home separated waste for citizens, including plastic, paper, metal, glass, textiles and clothing, electronic equipment, and some hazardous household waste. Batteries can be recycled in 70 bins located in public buildings; or returned to their point of sale.

Underground waste collections are being increased in accordance with Gabrovo's policy to deliver more amiable neighbourhoods. Waste statistics will be compiled by the 'LoRanetwork' a smart city sensorbased programme, based on occupancy levels, frequency of use and number of services to inform collection schedules.

## Water

In 2015, Gabrovo completed one of its largest investments in water: the Bulgarian Integrated Water Cycle Project<sup>12</sup>. Gabrovo transformed its water infrastructure in three years of intensive construction work (2012 - 2015), building 120 km of water supply networks; repairing five pumping stations; and modernising two treatment plants, one for drinking water and one for wastewater.

Many of Gabrovo's 150 villages have outdated water supplies. The city is working to modernise these systems and provide a good quality and healthy water supply to all. In 2019, as part of these efforts, 15 villages received renovated water supply systems; with another 20 to be completed in 2021. Future long-term investments will be based on regional feasibility studies, considering the River Basin Management Plans under the EU

Water Framework Directive<sup>13</sup> and national guiding documents.

The city offers educational tours for citizens to visit the water and wastewater treatment plants. By learning how water is managed, these tours encourage citizens to conserve water.

## Plans for 2021

In 2021, Gabrovo is dedicated to implementing a multifaceted programme involving all sectors and citizens. The city's programme will include a number of initiatives to spread environmental awareness locally and promote sustainable green policies, including fun-filled programmes for children and families.

Several competitions are also being run, to focus the minds of photographers, students, and entrepreneurs. A green start-up fund will be launched by the city in conjunction with the Regional Innovation Centre, 'Ambitious Gabrovo' to support local innovative solutions and development projects. Take me to your Village initiative and Uzana Fest will continue to be ambassadors for the city's green transformation.

The city will also host a series of international events, including a conference, and tree-planting with the EGL Network.

For more information, see [www.greenleaf.gabrovo.bg](http://www.greenleaf.gabrovo.bg)

<sup>12</sup><http://waterprojectgabrovo.eu/>

<sup>13</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/index\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/index_en.htm) / [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/info/intro\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/info/intro_en.htm)

# European Green Leaf Award Winners

## Носители на наградата „Европейски зелен лист“

- **Gabrovo** / Габрово — 2021 г.
- **Lappeenranta** / Лапенранта — 2021 г.
- **Limerick** / Лимерик — 2020 г.
- **Mechelen** / Мехелен — 2020 г.
- **Cornellà de Llobregat** / Корнея де Лобрегат — 2019 г.
- **Horst aan de Maas** / Хорст ан де Маас — 2019 г.
- **Leuven** / Льовен — 2018 г.
- **Växjö** / Векшьо — 2018 г.
- **Galway** / Голуей — 2017 г.
- **Torres Vedras** / Торес Ведрас — 2015/2016 г.
- **Mollet del Vallès** / Молет дел Валес — 2015/2016 г.





## European Green Leaf Award

The European Green Leaf Award is a competition aimed at towns and cities across Europe, with a population of 20,000 to 99,999 that recognises a city's commitment to improving the environment. It is the partner competition of the European Green Capital Award for cities over 100,000 inhabitants. Gabrovo in Bulgaria and Lappeenranta in Finland are the joint European Green Leaf Award winners for 2021.

The previous winning cities are Mollèt del Valles, Spain and Torres Vedras, Portugal (2015); Galway, Ireland (2017); Leuven, Belgium, and Växjö, Sweden (2018); Cornellà de Llobregat, Spain, and Horst aan de Maas, the Netherlands (2019); and Limerick, Ireland and Mechelen, Belgium (2020).

The European Green Leaf and European Green Capital Awards are initiatives of the European Commission.

For more information about the winners, how to apply for the Awards, how the winners are selected, and for any other questions, please visit our website below.

Наградата „Европейски зелен лист“ е насочена към градове в Европа с население от 20 000 до 99 999 души и отличава ангажираността на града в дейности за опазване на околната среда. Конкурсът е категория на наградата „Европейска зелена столица“ за градове с население над 100 000 души. Габрово в България и Лапенранта във Финландия са съвместните носители на наградата „Европейско зелено лист“ за 2021 г.

Нейни носители досега са Молет дел Валес (Испания) и Торес Ведрас (Португалия) – 2015 г.; Голуей (Ирландия) – 2017 г.; Льовен (Белгия) и Векшьо (Швеция) – 2018 г.; Корнея де Лобрегат, (Испания) и Хорст ан де Маас, (Нидерландия) – 2019 г.; и Лимерик (Ирландия) и Мехелен (Белгия) – 2020 г.

Наградите „Европейски зелен лист“ и „Европейска зелена столица“ са инициативи на Европейската комисия.

За повече информация относно победителите, как се кандидатства, как се избират победителите и за всякакви други въпроси посетете нашия уебсайт по-долу.



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