

# Green City Accord - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## 1. Why was the Green City Accord launched?

EU environment policies have significantly improved the state of the environment and have raised environmental standards across EU countries.

However, many challenges remain. Today, air pollution is a principal environmental health risk; concentrations of air pollutants in many cities still exceed both EU standards and the levels recommended by the World Health Organisation. Rivers, lakes and coastal waters are under significant pressure, biodiversity and ecosystems continue to deteriorate, noise pollution is on the increase, and rising production and consumption patterns have led to an increase in municipal solid waste generation.

The [majority of Europeans](#) consider the protection of the environment important, and as more than 70% of the EU's population live in urban areas, cities play an important role in meeting the EU's environmental objectives and in helping the EU to become a more sustainable region.

The European Commission launched the Green City Accord in October 2020 to encourage cities to take further action to protect the environment and thereby to improve the quality of life of their citizens.

## 2. Who can become a Green City Accord signatory?

Cities of 20,000 inhabitants and above located in the European Union are eligible to apply.

## 3. Who should sign the political commitment?

Mayors – or equivalent representatives of the respective councils - should sign the political commitment. They should be committed to making their city cleaner and healthier, and interested in giving their environmental efforts visibility.

## 4. How does the monitoring and reporting work?

After signing the Accord, the city has two years to submit a first report. This report should contain:

- Information on the baseline situation (e.g. levels of relevant pollutants at the time of joining the Accord) in each of the five areas, including data on the common GCA indicators (see below)
- The targets which the city has set for itself to meet by 2030 (these targets may be qualitative or quantitative)
- An overview of the next steps (measures and actions) the city intends to take in order to achieve the targets

The city is required to report on progress every three years through an easy-to-use online tool. This tool is currently being prepared.

Cities will be allowed to use existing data and other reporting requirements that they are already engaged in. For instance, a city that reports regularly on air pollution, in the framework of the Ambient Air Quality Directives, or alternatively in the framework of

another city action plan or a national government programme, could re-use such information or data to fulfill these reporting requirements.

The timeframe for achieving the locally defined targets is 2030.

To monitor progress towards the Green City Accord’s objectives and allow for comparability across cities, a small set of mandatory indicators has been established, see the table below. All signatories will use these indicators for reporting purposes. In addition to this core set of mandatory indicators, cities are welcome to use other locally defined indicators to monitor progress towards their specific local targets.

**Indicator**



- Air** — PM2.5 concentration levels [highest annual mean observed at (sub) urban background stations]
- NO2 concentration levels (highest annual mean observed at traffic stations)



- Water** — Household water consumption (litres/capita/day)
- Infrastructure Leakage Index (ILI)
- Percentage of urban wastewater meeting the requirements of the UWWTD<sup>1</sup> (regarding collection and secondary treatment)



- Nature & Biodiversity** — Percentage of protected natural areas, restored and naturalised areas on public land in municipality
- Percentage of tree canopy cover within the city
- Trend of vegetation cover in Urban Green Infrastructure
- Change in number of species of birds in urban area/built-up areas in the city



- Waste & Circular Economy** — Municipal waste generated per capita (tons)
- Recycling rate of municipal waste (%)
- Municipal waste landfilled (%)



- Noise** — Percentage of the population exposed to average day-evening-night noise levels (Lden) ≥ 55 dB
- Percentage of the population exposed to night-time noise (Lnight) ≥ 50 dB
- Percentage of (adult) population Highly Annoyed
- Percentage of (adult) population with High Sleep Disturbance

**5. How often does a signatory city have to report?**

After signing the Accord, the city has two years to submit a first baseline report containing information on the baseline situation, the targets which the city has set for itself to meet by 2030 and an overview of the measures that the city intends to take to achieve the targets. After the submission of the baseline report, the city is required to report on progress every three years. For more details about monitoring and reporting, please consult question 4.

<sup>1</sup> Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive

## **6. What type of support does the Green City Accord offer to signatories?**

The helpdesk provides technical support. This includes answering queries related to planning, implementation and monitoring of a city's actions.

The helpdesk will also provide access to materials such as best practices for inspiration, links to existing tools, guidance documents and advice on appropriate EU funding support.

## **7. Is the Green City Accord linked to the European Green Capital and Green Leaf Awards?**

The [European Green Capital \(EGCA\)](#) and [European Green Leaf \(EGLA\)](#) Awards are given each year to cities leading the way in environmentally friendly urban living. Given that Green City Accord cities will take stringent action to enhance the protection of the environment, signatories will have a 'competitive advantage' when applying for these awards.

EGCA and EGLA winners receive a financial prize, which has recently been increased (the EGCA winning city will receive €600 000, while up to two EGLA winning towns or cities will receive €200 000 each). Winners and shortlisted cities also gain access to the European Green Capital Network, providing them with additional support and a platform for sharing knowledge and best practices.

## **8. Is a signatory obliged to take action in all five areas of the Green City Accord?**

Yes. By signing the Accord, a city commits to addressing all five areas: air, water, nature and biodiversity, circular economy and waste, and noise. Cities can prioritise certain areas. For example, a city that has already taken steps to improve air quality beyond the minimum standards set by EU laws can prioritise addressing water quality and efficiency, by identifying further actions or measures to achieve this goal.

The prioritisation of areas will need to be identified in the early stages (post signature). Cities will still need to set targets for all areas and report accordingly, including on a small set of prescribed common indicators.

## **9. What if a signatory fails to submit the required information?**

If a signatory fails to submit the required information, the city's membership will be suspended.

The city will be informed of the suspension in advance, and given time to provide the necessary information. The required information includes the baseline report, the 2030 targets, and delivery of the regular progress reports within the indicated deadlines.

The suspension will be lifted, once the requested documents are provided. This procedure ensures transparency and fairness with regard to other signatories.

## **10. Is there a fee associated with the Green City Accord?**

There is no fee associated with joining the Green City Accord.

## **11. Are other organisations, apart from cities, also eligible to join the Green City Accord?**

Only local governments are eligible to join. Other organisations, such as associations and networks of cities and regions, regional and national authorities, universities, business associations, federations or NGOs, are encouraged to support the initiative. If your organisation is interested in becoming a Green City Accord supporter, please fill in the following [registration form](#).

## **12. Is the Green City Accord linked to the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy?**

The Green City Accord and the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy are two separate but complementary initiatives. The Covenant of Mayors focusses on climate change mitigation and adaptation and the alleviation of energy poverty. The Green City Accord addresses five environmental areas which are not the primary focus of the Covenant of Mayors: improving air and water quality, conserving and enhancing urban biodiversity, making progress towards the circular economy and improving waste management, and reducing noise in cities.

The two initiatives will cooperate with each other in order to foster synergies.

## **13. Who is behind this initiative?**

The Green City Accord is a European Commission initiative. The secretariat is currently run by a consortium consisting of: EUROCITIES, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

## **14. Where can I find more information about the Green City Accord?**

For more specific information about the initiative, we invite you to read our brochure and/or write an email to: [contact@greencityaccord.eu](mailto:contact@greencityaccord.eu)