



EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF INNOVATION

A place to bring
ideas to life



European Capital of Innovation Awards 2020

Frequently Asked Questions

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1. ABOUT THE PRIZE

1.1 What is the European Capital of Innovation Awards?

The European Capital of Innovation Awards is an annual cash prize awarded to the European city that best promotes innovation in their communities. In particular, cities that:

- Contribute to open and dynamic innovation ecosystems;
- Involve citizens in governance and decision-making;
- Use innovation to improve the resiliency and sustainability of their cities.

The most innovative city is selected among a wide number of applicants by a panel of experts, named European Capital of Innovation of the year, and receives a monetary reward of €1 000 000.

The award also recognises a number of finalist cities specially acknowledged for their efforts in pushing the boundaries of local innovation. In the 2020 edition, five finalists will receive €100,000 each.

1.2 Why does the European Commission award a prize to innovative European cities?

This prize enables European cities to showcase their contribution to developing local innovation ecosystems for the benefit of businesses and the wellbeing of their citizens.

1.3 How many cities will be awarded in 2020?

Among all applicants to the contest, twelve cities will be shortlisted as finalists. Out of this initial selection, six will be selected as runners-up, among which one will become European Capital of Innovation 2020.



2. PARTICIPATION CRITERIA

2.1 Which cities are eligible to apply for this award?

All cities with a population equal or above 100 000 inhabitants in the EU Member States or in countries associated to Horizon 2020 are eligible (see exceptions below, or in the 2020 Rules of Contest).

For the purposes of this competition, a 'city' is any urban area understood as an administrative unit governed by a city council or another form of democratically elected body. Eurostat will be the official source of reference (the latest available year will be considered for the population threshold):

- [Population by age groups and sex - cities and greater cities](#)
- [Population structure - cities and greater cities](#)

For countries not covered by Eurostat, the European Commission will perform specific checks when assessing the eligibility criteria, and might ask any concerned cities to prove they comply with this requirement.

2.2 What are the Associated Countries to Horizon 2020?

The full list of the Associated Countries to Horizon 2020 is available [here](#).

2.3 Can cities from the United Kingdom (UK) apply?

Yes, in conformity with the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement¹, the entities established in the UK continue to be eligible to receive Union funds under actions carried out in direct, indirect or shared management, which implement Union programmes and activities committed under the Multiannual financial framework 2014-2020 until the closure of those Union programmes and activities.

2.4 Can metropolitan areas apply?

Yes, as long as they comply with all requirements listed in the contest rules and they are not falling under any of the exclusion cases listed in the call documents.

2.5 Can a city submit more than one application?

No. The award is aimed at rewarding the most innovative city practices in the framework of a developed, multi-faceted, well-functioning city innovation ecosystem. Therefore, a city can present different initiatives within the same application (for example, projects run by different city departments) as a common, holistic approach to foster innovation.

¹ Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community.



2.6 Are previous participants allowed to participate in the contest?

Yes. Among the cities that participated in previous contests, only the winners of the first prize are not allowed to apply. Up until the 2020 contest, this includes Barcelona (2014), Amsterdam (2016), Paris (2017), Athens (2018), and Nantes (2019). Any city that was shortlisted as finalist or runner-up can apply again.



3. APPLICATION GUIDE

3.1 Why should the Mayor/the equivalent highest political representative sign the application?

According to the Rules of Contest and the other prescriptions set out in this document, the general principle is that a city can only submit one application. The endorsement of the city Mayor (or the equivalent political representative) is meant to ensure that the highest city representative will not sign two applications.

3.2 The submission consists of a complete application. What does this mean?

Contestants are requested to provide the application form (Part B) duly filled in, along with three obligatory annexes:

- Mayor's (or equivalent) endorsement;
- Proof that proposed actions relate to initiatives started after 1st January 2019 (see Rules of Contest);

These mandatory documents have to be uploaded in the relevant slots marked with a red dot in Step 5 of the application. Applications missing any of these documents cannot be retained for evaluation.

3.3 Where can I find the Part B?

On the left side of the application page there is a blue box "Download PART B Templates". Here you can find the document. You will have to download the corresponding file, complete and upload it in the corresponding box.

3.4 Can I upload further documents?

No. You can upload further relevant information only within the annex of Part B (e.g. budget plans; creation of local partnerships; involvement of population and/or stakeholders) provided you do not exceed the size limits.

3.5 What is the size of the documents that I can upload?

You must exclusively use PDF (portable document format) files. For Part B there is a limit of 20 MB. The page limit is 30 (when submitting Part B of your application, you can delete the instruction page). For all other documents, the size limit is 10 MB each.

3.6 Is the template provided in Part B mandatory?



Yes. Candidates are requested to use the provided template (Part B) and to fill in all the boxes mentioned there. They can include charts and/or pictures if they deem it necessary; however, they have to comply with the provided layout and respect the size limits provided in the Rules of Contest.

3.7 When I open the application software, I am required to provide an acronym and a summary of 2000 characters. What does it refer to?

The acronym and summary section mainly serves the purpose of helping the software to archive and search for your application. It is an automatic step when creating an application. The summary will be also relevant for your evaluation, as it will have to be included in the first box of the submission form (Part B).

3.8 I am a city official and I have a general delegation to act on behalf of the mayor in affairs covering the subject of my application. Do I need another specific delegation to apply on mayor's behalf for this contest?

No, the general delegation to act is sufficient for the purpose of this award and can be uploaded as requested above. However, an application failing to prove the mayor's endorsement (or his/her explicit delegation) will be rejected.

3.9 We are a private company that received a delegation from the city Mayor to carry out a specific activity, and this activity would become the object of the city application. Can we apply on his/her behalf to this competition?

No. The delegation does not refer to external stakeholders: it only applies to city officials specifically designated by the mayor.

3.10 At the end of 2018 we adopted a legal act, according to which an innovative action – to be included in the submission – would be launched after January 2019. Is it eligible? What documents should we submit?

In order to be eligible an initiative must not have started before 1 January 2019, regardless of when the relevant administrative act was adopted (it can be earlier). However, if such an act does not mention the actual starting date of the initiative, you should prove this by uploading any further relevant documents. For any further information, you can also use the annex section of Part B.

3.11 "Contestants that have already received an EU or Euratom prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities". Can you clarify this?

As a general principle, the European Commission applies the principle of non-cumulative award ("double funding"), i.e. the EU will not fund twice the same activity. If the activities are different, the prize can be awarded, regardless of their timeline.

3.12 Our initiative has already received a regional award from my country and/or support from European structural funds. Does this disqualify us?



No. Only contestants having previously received an EU or Euratom prize and applying with the same activities are not eligible. Former winners of the European Capital of Innovation Awards competitions are not eligible either.

3.13 The award looks at cities as a whole 'innovation ecosystem'. What does this mean?

The award supports the vision of a city as a place of systemic innovation. Innovation as a system links the citizens (People) with the built environment (Place) and public organisations and policy-makers (Public) through business (Private) - creating an interactive citywide innovation ecosystem.

3.14 What is the focus of the award, and what will be evaluated in particular?

The award aims at acknowledging innovative practices in cities based on the criteria: experimenting, engaging, expanding and empowering (see following questions).

For each of the actions included in the applications, the jury of external experts will look, in particular, at the impact and openness of the innovation ecosystems, i.e. activities showing a high degree stakeholder engagement, including citizens (in broad terms), along the whole spectrum of the application from design to implementation, and how the city's innovative practices position that city as a role model for others.

3.15 In the contest documents you refer to different terms like strategy, practices, achievements etc. What is the difference? What should be the focus of the application?

It is up to the applicant city to decide whether a full strategy (i.e. a comprehensive document setting out a long-term vision) or a policy (i.e. a set of decisions, programs or projects part of a bigger strategy) could help describe (and to what extent) the city's innovation ecosystem.

However, the focus should remain on innovative and creative practices, i.e. concrete actions resulting from, or a part of, a strategy or a policy related to the city's innovation ecosystem (across the whole spectrum, including coordination, administration, direct service, etc.).

Only the most relevant actions supporting the city attitude to innovate should be included in the application, considering the limited available space in Part B. Applicants will have to demonstrate their relevant impact, including facts and figures related to concrete achievements.

3.16 How will the 'Impact' be evaluated?



The overall award objective is to shed light on new, innovative practices. Therefore, the goal of the assessment is not to measure the absolute figures of a city strategy; it will rather focus on the 'distance travelled', i.e. the progress in developing and implementing an innovative practice. This must be however supported by clear and relevant facts and figures.

3.17 You ask to provide concrete achievements to support the application. What does it mean?

Concrete evidence could be any supporting data, paper, fact, figure, web link and other tools that present high relevance and provides clear indication of any achievement in the specific field, (e.g. number of people reached through a campaign etc.). You can also use the Part B annex for this purpose.

3.18 Among the evaluation criteria, what does 'Experimenting' exactly mean?

'Experimenting' refers to any innovative concepts, processes, tools, and governance models proving a city's commitment to act as test-bed for a number of innovative practices. Contestants should also explain how such practices are mainstreamed into the ordinary urban development process, i.e. how the public sector ensures that these practices become beneficial to the whole city.

3.19 Among the evaluation criteria, what does 'Engaging' exactly mean?

Under the 'Engaging' criterion, contestants should explain how their city uses innovation to increase the chances for a broader range of citizens to make their innovative practices emerge, by particularly ensuring the uptake of their ideas.

3.20 Among the evaluation criteria, what does 'Expanding' exactly mean?

'Expanding' means how the city aims at attracting new talent, resources, funding, investments through its innovative practices, thus positioning itself as a potential role model for other cities.

3.21 Among the evaluation criteria, what does 'Empowering' exactly mean?

Under this criterion, contestants are requested to provide evidence of any concrete and measurable impact directly connected to the implementation of innovative practices. Facts and figures provided should relate to concrete achievements.



4. EVALUATION & TIMELINE

4.1 How will the evaluation process work?

The call will remain open until 23 June 2020, 17:00:00 CET.

A panel of high-level, independent experts from across Europe, appointed under Horizon 2020 rules, will perform an individual assessment between July and September 2020. The sum of individual scores will provide a first, provisional ranking.

Up to 12 top ranked cities – finalist cities – will be convened in Brussels in late August or early September 2020 for hearings with the jury of evaluators. The hearings are an integral part of the evaluation process and will be included in the final call ranking.

The winner of the European Capital of Innovation Awards 2020, along with the five runner-up cities, will be announced at the European Research and Innovation Days in Brussels (22-24 September 2020), to where all runner-up cities will be invited. Their Mayors are requested to attend.



5. THE PRIZES

5.1 Is there any obligation to report in the application how the prize(s) money will be used, in case of awarding?

The European Capital of Innovation Awards is a ‘recognition prize’ under Horizon 2020. The prize money will acknowledge the innovative practices listed in the application. Therefore, the winner of the first prize (the European Capital of Innovation of the year), or the five runners-up receiving five smaller monetary prizes, will not sign any grant agreement with the European Commission, and the payment to the winner(s) will be done in one instalment, once the final ranking is approved. If the applicant deems it useful, any concrete idea, plan or relevant information on how the prize would contribute to (or scale up) the city innovative practices can be mentioned in the application and further detailed in the annex. It is recommended to focus on the most relevant information to facilitate evaluators' assessment.

5.2 What are the obligations for winners about the prize money?

While there is no legal obligation as such on the actual use of the money, the Commission will stay politically vigilant to avoid any misuse of EU money. Winning cities will be particularly requested to respect the Commission rules as regards publicity and dissemination (art. 8 of the Rules of Contest).



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6. CONTACT

In case of questions, please send an e-mail to : rtd-i-capital@ec.europa.eu.

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