

15 June 2015

Announcement

The European Award for Accessible Cities is now open for entries!

The European Commission is today opening the competition for the sixth Access City Award - the European award for accessible cities. Cities over 50,000 inhabitants are invited to submit their applications for the award by 10 September (midnight Brussels time).

Since 2010, the Access City Award rewards cities for their work to achieve more accessible environments in all areas of life, making cities more inclusive and accessible to all. Every edition shows good examples of projects, demonstrating the enthusiasm and commitment of cities across the EU in facilitating accessibility for disabled and older people. In the last five years, over 200 cities have applied for the award. Projects presented by cities provide a wealth of ideas for making cities better places to live for all.

Awards will be handed out to five EU cities at a ceremony taking place during the annual European Day of People with Disabilities Conference in Brussels on 7 December 2015. The winning cities will be awarded for their efforts to make it easier for the disabled and older people to gain access to public and private areas such as housing, children's play areas, work environments, public transport, communication technologies.

The 2016 edition will comprise a first, a second and third prize plus two new special mentions:

- The '**access to work**' special mention will reward efforts undertaken by cities to ensure that public employment services, as well as initiatives by the private sector, facilitate the access to work and they make information on jobs accessible to people with disabilities. This can for example be initiatives increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities through improvement of accessibility in workplaces or in transport to ensure that every part of the journey from home to the workplace is accessible.
- The '**accessible smart cities**' special mention will recognise efforts by cities to ensure that they become smart in an inclusive manner, in particular ensuring that their technologies, user interfaces, and related services are accessible for people with disabilities following a 'design for all' approach.

The purpose of the Award

The Award is part of the EU's wider efforts to create a barrier-free Europe. Improved accessibility helps remove the too many barriers that people with disabilities still face in their daily life: using transports, accessing information, or living independently.

There are around 80 million people with disabilities in the EU. As the EU population ages, this number will grow. It has consequently become increasingly important to create

environments within which people can live independently and with dignity throughout their lives. The European prize for making cities more accessible to people with disabilities and older people recognises outstanding efforts by cities that have worked towards achieving this goal.

The competition also provides a golden opportunity for public authorities to look at the pluses and minuses of their city in terms of accessibility and take action to improve. The Access City Award illustrates a very wide range of initiatives and policies covered: from policies on accessible housing, to children's play areas, workplaces and public transport information; every aspect of city life needs to take account of the changing demographics.

In line with the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities](#), accessibility is one of the pillars of the European Union's [Disability Strategy 2010-2020](#) which aims at creating a barrier-free Europe for all.

Which cities won in previous years?

Last year, in the fifth edition, the winner was Borås (Sweden). Helsinki (Finland) took the second prize and **the third prize was awarded to** Ljubljana (Slovenia). Logroño (Spain) was awarded a special mention in the field of the built environment and public spaces, Budapest (Hungary) received a special mention for its work in the field of transportation. Arona (Spain) and Luxembourg got a special mention for public facilities and services.

In the fourth edition, the 2014 winner was Gothenburg (Sweden). Grenoble (France) took the second prize, Poznań (Poland) the third prize, and the special mentions went to Belfast (UK), Dresden (Germany), Burgos and Málaga (Spain).

In the **third edition**, the Award was given to the German city of Berlin. Nantes (France) and Stockholm (Sweden) were the other two finalists, with special mentions going to Pamplona (Spain) for the built environment and public spaces, Gdynia (Poland) for transport and related infrastructures, Bilbao (Spain) for information and communication, including new technologies and Tallaght (Ireland) for public facilities and services.

For the **second edition**, the Austrian city of Salzburg was named the overall winner. The three finalist runners-up were Kraków (Poland), Marburg (Germany) and Santander (Spain). Special mentions went to Terrassa (Spain), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Olomouc (Czech Republic) and Grenoble (France).

In the 2010 inaugural edition, the winning city was Ávila in Spain. The three other finalists were Barcelona (Spain), Cologne (Germany) and Turku (Finland).

How to apply?

Applications must be made by completing and submitting the online application form (in English, French or German) by 10 September 2015 at the latest. A guidance note and the participation rules are available in all the official EU languages here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventsId=1058&furtherEvents=yes>

How are the applicants selected?

Up to three cities will be selected by national juries in each country based on the evaluation criteria provided by the European Commission. These national candidates will then be assessed by a European Jury.

For more information on the background of the Access City Award:

Would you like to have your city projects featured in the next booklet of the Access City Award? If you want to share your experiences and actions with other cities, read more about the Access City Award on: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1141&langId=en>