



# PRESS KIT



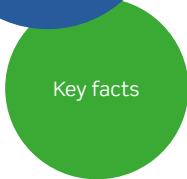
Winning cities



Message from  
**Mr Virginijus Sinkevičius**  
*European Commissioner for  
Environment, Oceans and  
Fisheries*



Toolkits &  
Factsheets



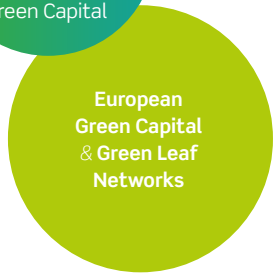
Key facts



European  
Green Leaf



European  
Green Capital



European  
Green Capital  
& Green Leaf  
Networks



Press  
content &  
Contact



EUROPEAN  
GREEN CAPITAL

An initiative of the  
European Commission



EUROPEAN  
GREEN LEAF

An initiative of the  
European Commission

The challenges that we are facing are urgent and their scale is immense. But our plans are up to the task. With the European Green Deal, we have a roadmap to sustainability. It's taking us to a non-toxic, carbon-neutral world where nature is protected and resources are used efficiently. And it works best when we work on these common solutions together. With Europe's cities and citizens all pulling in the right direction we will make the transition a success. Our European Green Capital and Green Leaf Awards winners are a true inspiration – they show that by changing the way we live, work, and move, we create more livable, sustainable and resilient cities. I call on European cities to rise to the green challenge."

**Virginijus Sinkevičius**

EU Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries



In 2019, the European Commission adopted a set of proposals called the [European Green Deal](#). It aims to make the EU's climate, energy, transport and taxation **policies fit for reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030**, compared to 1990 levels.

In 2021, the UN Human Rights Council unanimously passed a [resolution](#) recognising the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right. The text also calls on all stakeholders to work together to implement this resolution.

The majority of Europeans (around 70%) live in urban areas. Cities in particular have an important role to play in pushing forward societal and environmental change. Cities generate growth but also pollution. But they are also able to generate solutions to the problem.

**What's the challenge?**

Today, cities across Europe face several environmental and climate challenges. Air pollution continues to be the main environmental cause of premature death and disease. Europe's water bodies still face significant pressures.

Biodiversity and ecosystems continue to deteriorate. Environmental noise is a growing concern, and inefficient waste management practices mean that significant quantities of valuable resources are lost, hindering the transition to a more circular economy. Cities also continue to generate increasing GHG emissions and at the same time are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

**What can cities do?**

Cities are important players in making urban areas greener, less polluted, healthier and cleaner. Cities that have signed the [Green City Accord](#) have agreed to take further action on Air, Water, Waste/Circular economy, Nature/biodiversity, and Noise to make their cities cleaner, greener and healthier by 2030.

## EU policy in support of cities

Cities will be pivotal in the local delivery of the [European Green Deal](#). A **number of policy areas** in the European Green Deal are relevant to cities: clean energy; sustainable industry; building and renovating; sustainable mobility; biodiversity; sustainable food systems with a [“Farm to Fork” vision](#); and the goal to eliminate pollution.

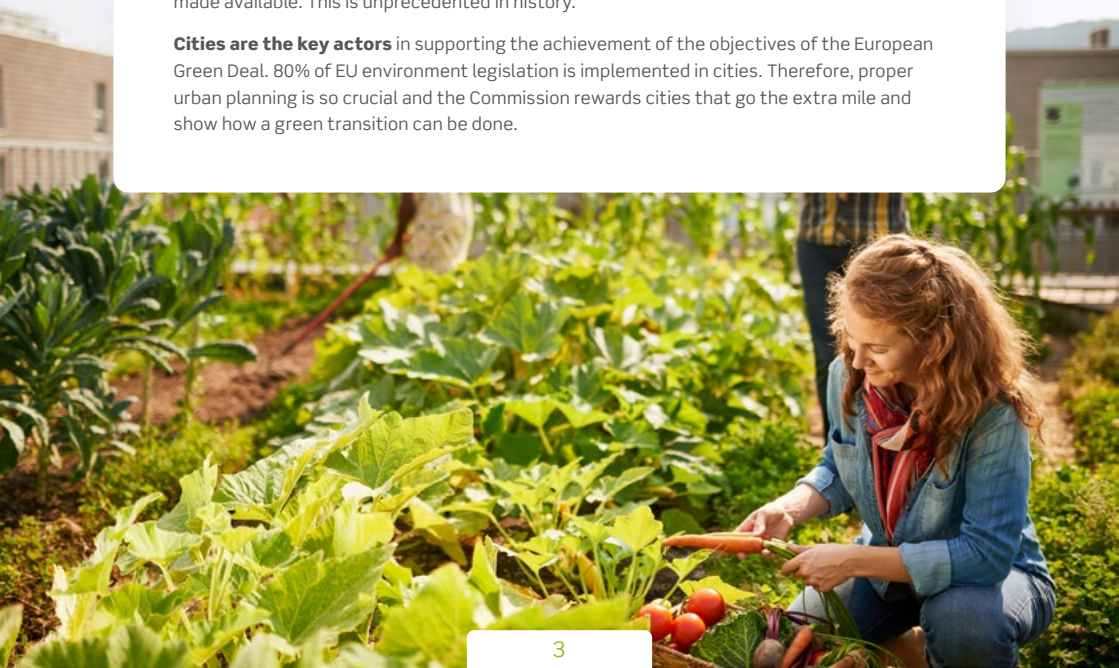
The new [Biodiversity Strategy](#) for 2030 including [Natura2000](#) and the [Forest Strategy](#), are important. The [Zero Pollution Ambition](#) and its Action Plan for air, water and soil provide cities with key targets to achieve. The [Circular Economy Action Plan](#) is equally relevant and important to urban areas.

The recent [Soil Strategy](#) is very relevant for cities and for preserving green areas or restoring sealed spaces in the city. Furthermore, a proposal for a regulation to curb [deforestation](#) and promote sustainable consumption also supports cities. And new rules to govern [waste shipments](#) will boost the circular economy and ensure that waste exports do not harm the environment or human health elsewhere.

Under the [European Climate Law](#), the European Commission is committed to making Europe climate-neutral by 2050, including the [“Fit for 55” package](#), with an intermediate target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. The European [Climate Pact](#), invites people, communities and organisations to participate in climate action and build a greener Europe. An increasing number of cities strive to achieve climate neutrality in appreciation of the importance of their own engagement in the fight against climate change. The new [100 Climate Neutral Cities Mission](#) under [Horizon Europe Programme](#) contributes to the goal to increase the number of clean and healthy cities.

In order to support this transformation, the EU's long term budget, an incredible amount of **1,8 trillion €** from the [NextGeneration EU](#) initiative and [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#) is made available. This is unprecedented in history.

**Cities are the key actors** in supporting the achievement of the objectives of the European Green Deal. 80% of EU environment legislation is implemented in cities. Therefore, proper urban planning is so crucial and the Commission rewards cities that go the extra mile and show how a green transition can be done.





# European Green Capital Award

- an initiative of the European Commission



## What is the European Green Capital Award?

The European Green Capital Award has the mission to increase the number of cities that manage the transition to a green and healthy place for citizens to have a better quality of life. The winners of the Award show excellence in their green transition and act as role models for other cities.

The European Green Capital Award offers clear guidelines to improve a city's performance and a supportive community to keep it running. The Award promotes and rewards the efforts of cities that are committed to improving the urban environment and follow the ambitious goals under the European Green Deal and more specifically the [Zero Pollution Action Plan](#), the Circular Economy Action Plan and the Biodiversity Strategy.

## What makes a winner?

The Award recognises cities that:



- have a consistent record of achieving high environmental standards;
- are committed to ongoing and ambitious goals for further environmental improvement and sustainable development;
- can act as role models to inspire other cities and promote best practices across Europe.

Since 2010, Green Capitals have been awarded by the European Commission. In 2015, the Green Leaf Award was introduced for smaller cities below 100.000 habitants. Both Awards have already generated a good number of winners ([Capital winners](#) - [Leaf winners](#)).










## How is the winning city selected?

The Award is open to cities with over 100,000 inhabitants in the EU Member States and EEA countries. In countries where there is no city with more than 100,000 inhabitants, the largest city is eligible to apply. Each year, the rules of contest are adapted to reflect the latest EU policy initiatives and ambitions.



[Rules of contest](#)

Applicant cities are assessed on the basis of **12** environmental indicators :

-  Air Quality
-  Green Growth and Eco-innovation
-  Noise
-  Climate Change: Mitigation
-  Water
-  Climate Change: Adaptation
-  Sustainable Land Use and Soil
-  Sustainable Urban Mobility
-  Waste and Circular Economy
-  Energy Performance
-  Nature and Biodiversity
-  Environmental Governance

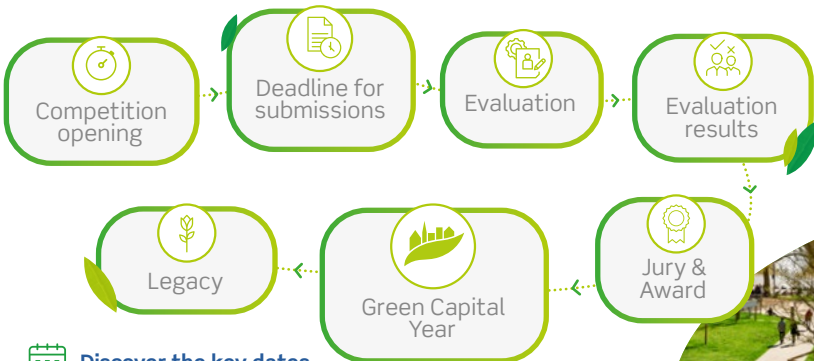


A panel of **12 independent and internationally acknowledged experts** carries out a technical assessment of the applications and provides a ranking of the applicant cities, along with a shortlist to go to the next stage of the competition. The shortlist of cities is then submitted to an international Jury, chaired by the European Commission.



The European Green Capital Award shortlisted cities are invited to present a communication strategy along with an action plan on how they intend to fulfill their European Green Capital year, to the Jury.

## Competition process:



 [Discover the key dates](#)

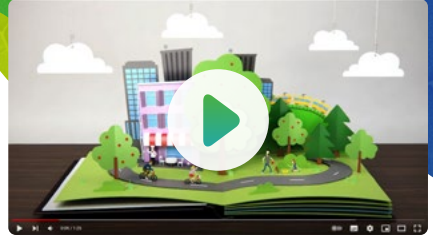


## What are the benefits of being a European Green Capital?

The Commission will award **€600,000** to the winning city of the 2024 European Green Capital title to enhance the city's environmental sustainability and to contribute to achieving the city's sustainability vision.

The winner joins a club of green leading cities in Europe.

Cities report that being a European Green Capital brings many benefits long after the designated 'winner' year ends, for example:



[Discover the video](#)

Positive national and international media coverage

Better access to (EU/national/regional/local) funding

### New possibilities

Green capitals have successfully exported their green products, processes and services

Increased tourism and healthier living conditions for citizens

More emphasis on environmental projects through sponsorship

Boost in local pride and feeling of belonging to a progressive environment

New alliances (including through the EGC Network of finalist and winning cities)

Momentum to continue improving environmental sustainability

Organisation of national and international events (Opening Ceremony, Jury Meeting, EU Green Capital Award Ceremony and Network Meetings)



Attract foreign investments that lead to new jobs

Increase in international profile, networking and new alliances

# European Green Leaf Award

- an initiative of the European Commission



## What is the European Green Leaf Award?

Building on the success of the Green Capital Award, the European Commission launched the European Green Leaf Award (EGLA) in 2015 to recognise cities of a smaller size. The European Green Leaf Award is presented on an annual basis by the European Commission in conjunction with the European Green Capital Award.



## What makes a winner?

The Award recognises cities that:

- demonstrates a good environmental record and commitment to generating green growth,
- actively develops citizens' environmental awareness and involvement and
- can act as a 'Green Ambassador' to encourage other cities to progress towards better sustainability outcomes.

Each year, the title can be jointly awarded to up to 2 towns and cities. The two inaugural winners of the European Green Leaf Award were Mollet del Vallès in Spain and Torres Vedras in Portugal.

## How is the winning city selected?

Since its launch in 2015, the European Green Leaf Award is open to towns and cities with between 20,000 and 99,999 inhabitants from EU Member States and EEA countries. The title of European Green Leaf is awarded to one or two cities.

The selection of a city or cities to earn a European Green Leaf Award will be assessed on the basis of their performance across **6** environmental topic areas:



Nature, Biodiversity,  
Sustainable Land Use and Soil



Waste and Circular Economy



Air Quality & Noise



Climate Change & Energy Performance



Water



Sustainable Urban Mobility





A panel of **12 independent and internationally acknowledged experts** carry out a technical assessment of the applications received based on the above 6 topic areas and provides a ranking of the Applicant Cities, along with a shortlist to go to the next stage of the competition. The shortlist of cities is then submitted to an international Jury, chaired by the European Commission.

The European Green Leaf Award (EGLA) shortlisted cities are invited to present their achievements and future vision to the Jury. At this presentation, the Jury assess 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 EGLA concept further.

### Competition process:



 [Discover the key dates](#)

For the current call for applications, the Green Leaf title was aligned to the 2024 cycle, thus no Green Leaf winner will be selected for the year 2023. The title evolves and Green Leaf winners, even though smaller but not less ambitious, are in need for more preparation time for their winning year. When awarded the prize in October 2022, the winners will have 14 months to well prepare their title year. Consequently, the 2024 cycle looks for a Green Capital 2024 and one or two Green Leaf winners 2024.

### What are the benefits of being a European Green Leaf?

- The Commission will award **€200,000** to the winning city of the European Green Leaf 2024 title to enhance the city's environmental sustainability and to contribute to achieving the city's sustainability vision.
- Attraction of new investors where green performance matters, which is an open door for increased tourism, commercial investment, new jobs and further investment in green growth initiatives;
- Citizen's pride in living/working/playing in a green city which is recognised at EU level and where the city authority's efforts to improve inhabitants' quality of life are seen as a priority;
- Access to the European Green Leaf Network of previous winners and shortlisted cities to exchange best practices, experiences, and knowledge for continued better quality of life; and
- Valuable national and international media coverage which leads to wider active interest in the city and its environmental achievement.



# The European Green Capital & European Green Leaf Networks

All previous winners and finalists of the European Green Capital Award are eligible to become members of the network, contributing to and benefitting from the collective knowledge.

The European Green Capital Network was founded by the city of Copenhagen during its own Award-winning year in 2014. The intention was to use the lessons learned from the European Green Capital Award initiative to create long-term impact in sustainable urban development in Europe, and to encourage cities to continue pushing the bar and exchanging with like-minded peers. The main goals are: branding, learning, and cooperation.

Like the European Green Capital Network, the European Green Leaf Network provides its members with the opportunity to collaborate and exchange ideas and experiences with colleagues from other city administrations who have a similar high level of ambition and commitment to the environment.

The Networks expand each year with the new winners and finalists.

## What does the Network do?

**The Networks' main role is to:**

- debate on best practices, challenges and potential solutions between each other
- encourage other European cities on their paths towards a more sustainable future by providing guidance and support
- represent European cities in relevant political processes as strong advocates for impactful sustainable urban development in Europe



## Which cities are members of European Green Capital Network?

**The 36 members are all former winners and shortlisted finalists of the European Green Capital Award (EGCA) since the first year of the Award in 2010. [Discover the interactive map.](#)**

Amsterdam, Barcelona, Bristol, Brussels, Cagliari, Copenhagen, Dijon, Essen, Frankfurt, Freiburg, Ghent, Glasgow, Grenoble, Hamburg, Helsingborg, 's-Hertogenbosch, Krakow, Lahti, Lille, Lisbon, Ljubljana, Malmö, Münster, Nantes, Nijmegen, Nürnberg, Oslo, Reykjavik, Sofia, Stockholm, Strasbourg, Valencia, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Tallinn, Turin and Umeå.

## Which cities are members of the European Green Leaf Network?

**The 23 members are all former winners and shortlisted finalists of the European Green Leaf Award (EGLA) since the first year of the Award in 2015. [Discover the interactive map.](#)**

Bistrița, Cornellà de Llobregat, Elsinore, Gabrovo, Galway, Gavà, Horst aan de Maas, Joensuu, Lappeenranta, Leuven, Limerick, Ludwigsburg, Mechelen, Mikkeli, Mollet del Vallès, Nyborg, Ringkøbing-Skjern, Torres Vedras, Treviso, Valongo, Växjö, Velenje and Winterswijk.

# EGC Winning cities



## 15 cities have won the European Green Capital Award to date:

Stockholm (2010), Hamburg (2011), Vitoria-Gasteiz (2012), Nantes (2013), Copenhagen (2014), Bristol (2015), Ljubljana (2016), Essen (2017), Nijmegen (2018), Oslo (2019), Lisbon (2020), Lahti (2021), Grenoble (2022), Tallinn (2023) and Valencia (2024).

European Green Capitals



## Winner EGC 2024 Valencia, Spain



Valencia earned the title due to its past and current achievements in the field of sustainable tourism, climate neutrality, as well as fair and inclusive green transition. 97% of city's inhabitants live within 300 metres of green urban areas. The city has also proven commitment to improving air quality and restoring nature ecosystems, such as the Devesa dune and [wetland ecosystems](#).

Valencia also stimulates a healthier, sustainable, and inclusive food production through its "Neighbourhood and Food Programme".

## Winner EGC 2023 Tallinn, Estonia

[MORE INFO](#)

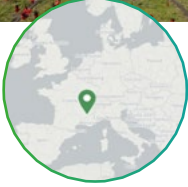


Tallinn stood out to the international Jury for its systemic approach and intralinked strategic goals. Its consistent and stable commitment shows continuity with a solid focus on innovation. The city's good green governance model reflects the ambitions of the European Green Deal.

Furthermore, Tallinn will lead the newly launched network of 19 European cities, which aims to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals at the local level, focusing among other things on the poverty eradication, gender equality, clean water, climate change, sustainable cities and energy sustainability, economic growth and employment.



## Winner EGC 2022 Grenoble, France [MORE INFO](#)



The Jury was impressed by Grenoble's presentation of a rebellious city with a strong emphasis on participatory democracy and green inclusion. This commitment to truly systemic change showcased an innovative city governance that the Jury considered to be a compelling role model for other cities.

The city's attitude of "we work together", sharing knowledge and energy impressed the Jury, as well as its ambitious plans for its European Green Capital Year and how it would reach cities and citizens across Europe to inspire solutions and grow the European Green Capital Award brand.

### More about the previous winners and finalists



[Discover the interactive map](#)



# EGL Winning cities



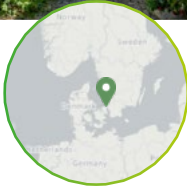
## 15 cities have won the European Green Leaf Award:

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); Limerick, Ireland and Mechelen, Belgium (2020); Grabovo, Bulgaria and Lappeenranta, Finland (2021), Winterswijk, The Netherlands, and Valongo, Portugal (2022), Elsinore, Denmark and Velenje, Slovenia (2024)

European Green Leaves



## Winner EGL 2024 Elsinore, Denmark

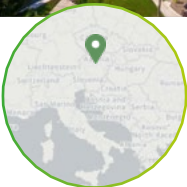


The Danish city of Elsinore mitigates the impact of the current energy crisis by accelerating the energy renovation of buildings and heat source conversion, including by establishing district heating systems.

The city has reconstructed the sewage system to separate rainwater and waste water to improve water quality and efficiency, as well as to support climate adaptation.

The motto of its Green Leaf year is *"sharing is caring"*, with *citizens and local businesses* involved in achieving a green transition.

## Winner EGL 2024 Velenje, Slovenia



The Slovenian city of Velenje is working to phase out coal, while opening up new employment opportunities in the green job sectors. Their motto is *"from black to green & bright"*.

Velenje was one of the first cities in Slovenia to install a separate waste collection system and has been improving waste management ever since.

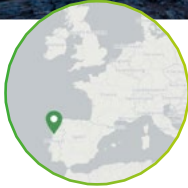
The city is eager to share their experiences on the transformation from a coal mining to a climate neutral city.





## Winner EGL 2022 Valongo, Portugal

[MORE INFO](#)

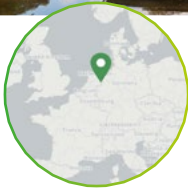


The Portuguese city of Valongo has addressed and convincingly tackled all its relevant environmental issues. The engagement of the citizens is at top level and the city shows a strong political commitment. According to Valongo, every citizen is a green ambassador.

Additionally, the jury complimented the various ways the city offers support to low-income citizens in the transition to sustainability as well as Valongo's close collaboration with neighbouring cities to preserve the surrounding nature.

## Winner EGL 2022 Winterswijk, the Netherlands

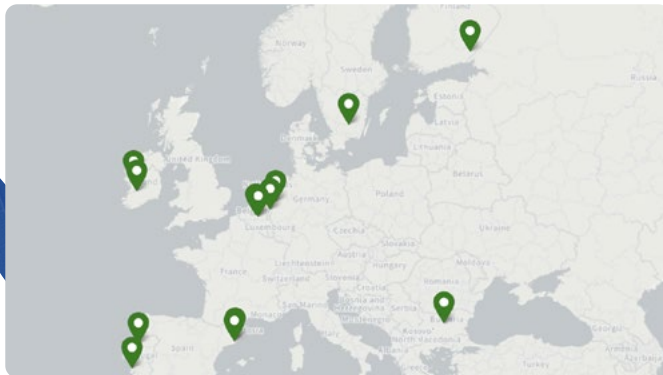
[MORE INFO](#)



The jury was impressed to see Winterswijk literally being presented to the jury by the citizens themselves. Their narrative demonstrated they have embarked on a durable commitment. This small city in the Netherlands, with hardly 30 000 inhabitants, punched above her weight presenting advanced initiatives to drive the ecological transition.

The city is novice in European projects, but the Jury is convinced that most of the presented measures are applicable in other cities of the EU and that Winterswijk can advocate them.

### More about the previous winners



[Discover the interactive map](#)

# Best practices examples & key facts

Award-winning cities have set ambitious targets and initiatives, for example:

## European Green Capitals



### Tallinn (2023)

**Sustainable Urban Mobility: Maximum 15min away ✓**

Tallinn has set a 15min target where its citizens should be able to reach all necessary infrastructure with soft transport modes.

### Grenoble (2022)

**Air Quality: - 30% of fine particules ✓**

The city has had a local climate plan in place since 2005.

Between 2005 and 2018, fine particle levels in the air have fallen by almost 30%.

**Energy Performance: 80% of renewable energy ✓**

The metropolitan heat network which is the second largest in France after Paris uses 80% of renewable energy and energy recovery. The ambition is to use 100% by 2030.

**Sustainable Land Use: Canteens 60% local ✓**

School canteens source at least 60% of their produce locally or from organic farms (95% for nurseries).

### Lahti (2021)

**Energy performance: - 70% GHG emissions ✓**

Finland will be carbon-neutral by 2035 while Lahti has set the goal to reach that in 2025, 10 years earlier. So far, they have already cut down GHG emissions by 70% compared to the level of 1990.

**Waste and Circular Economy: +99% recycled ✓**

More than 99% of household waste is recycled. One third of this is used to make recycled materials, the other two thirds are used to produce energy.

### Lisbon (2020)

**Sustainable Urban Mobility: 516 charging points citywide ✓**

In 2017, Lisbon launched a bike-sharing scheme, with electric bikes comprising two thirds of the fleet to encourage cycling in the hillier parts of the city.

It also has one of the world's largest electric vehicles charging point networks with 516 such points citywide.

**Sustainable Urban Mobility: More cycle paths ✓**

As a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the city sped up the implementation of cycle paths using a "pop-up" model. Pop-up paths are temporary but can become permanent after monitoring their use for a period.





### Oslo (2019)

**Energy performance/Governance: CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on a budget** ✓

Carbon Dioxide emissions are being counted for in the same way a financial budget would account for funding.

**Environmental Governance: Climate education in schools** ✓

The Education Agency and the Agency for Climate have cooperated on a programme to strengthen climate education in schools. In 2019, climate lecturers visited 78 schools and 17,000 pupils.

### Nijmegen (2018)

**Nature & Biodiversity: Less than 300m from green** ✓

In 2018, 190,000 paving stones were replaced with a plant or a tree, and 10,000 trees were planted. The city now has over 1,450 ha of parks, and everybody lives less than 300 m from a green space of at least 0.5 ha.

### Essen (2017)

**Nature & Biodiversity: 2,200 football fields of green spaces** ✓

The city has several hundred kilometers of cycling paths. It has around 24 rehabilitated sections of streams and rivers, as well as green spaces covering the equivalent of more than 2,200 football fields.

### Ljubljana (2016)

**Nature & Biodiversity: Most Bee-Friendly city** ✓

In the five years after being the EGC the city has planted over 3,500 new trees. In 2017 and 2019, the city received the title Most Bee-Friendly Municipality in Slovenia.



### Valongo (2022)

**Waste and Circular Economy: Door-to-door collect** ✓

The city collects residual waste, clothes, WEEE and cooking oil door-to-door and aims to extend this up to 90% by 2030, including paper, packaging, glass, and food collection.

### Winterswijk (2022)

**Energy Performance: Renewable energy deploys** ✓

The renewable energy deployment across the city went from 0.9% in 2012 to 12.6% in 2020.

### Lappeenranta (2021)

**Climate Adaptation: Multiple award-winning city** ✓

In 2014 and 2016, the World Wildlife Fund nominated the city as Earth Hour Capital. In 2016, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities awarded the city for its campaign against climate change.

### Gabrovo (2021)

**Energy Performance: Leader in clean technology** ✓

For over a decade the local government has been one of the leading local authorities involved in the implementation of energy efficiency and clean technology.





**Limerick (2020)** 

**Sustainable Urban Mobility: 1 billion euros invested** ✓

Over 1 billion euros are invested in enterprise and investment infrastructure as part of the Limerick 2030 vision.

**Horst aan de Maas (2019)** 

**Sustainable Urban Mobility: Business travel goes electric** ✓

In 2019, a successful pilot was run, where employees of eight municipalities could use electric bicycles and cars for their business travel.

**Cornella de Llobregat (2019)** 

**Nature and Biodiversity: Green space for all residents** ✓

The city is working with its citizens to ensure that each resident will have over 15m<sup>2</sup> of green space by 2025.

**Leuven (2018)** 

**Energy Performance: Climate-neutral by 2030** ✓

In 2011, the city council set the ambitious goal to become a climate-neutral city by 2030. In 2013, Leuven was nominated as the most sustainable municipality in Belgium compared to 48 other municipalities across Belgium.

**Växjö (2018)** 

**Sustainable Land Use: Access to local land organic for all** ✓

The city is developing urban agriculture to ensure the inhabitants have access to local and organic products.





# Toolkits & Factsheets

A list of **factsheets** with examples of best practices and ideas for other cities to follow are listed on our [website](#)

During 2018-2020, the Network has developed toolkits for cities outside of the network which provide recommendations and strategies around four thematic clusters – or ‘visions’ – for sustainable European cities. These toolkits provide various examples and ideas about how cities can manage waste, reduce energy demand, become more resilient and more!



## Green Capital Toolkit

DOWNLOAD

Contains tips and advice from previous finalists and winners of the European Green Capital Award to help a city submit a solid application and make the most of the process to generate long-term benefits.



## 100% Renewable Toolkit

DOWNLOAD

Tackles the question of how to become ‘100% renewable’. Here, some of the European Green Capital Network members share some of the successes and challenges they have faced on their paths towards this vision.



## Less Waste, More Value Toolkit

DOWNLOAD

Contains guidelines, tips and inspiring stories from circular economy and waste experts from Europe’s leading cities: members of the European Green Capital Network.

**Key themes:**

Sustainable waste management, circular economies & responsible consumption



## EU Green Capital Future-proof Toolkit

DOWNLOAD

Focuses on the future-proof vision. This vision combines European cities’ strategies to use nature-based solutions to become (or stay) resilient towards natural and manmade disasters and adapt to climate change.

**Key themes:**

Climate change adaptation, resilience, sustainable water sources & eco-systems



## Human Scale Toolkit

DOWNLOAD

This toolkit showcases examples from European Green Capital Network members that have used sustainable mobility, green spaces, participation tools, co-housing initiatives and more to develop people-centred cities.

**Key themes:**

Integrated urban planning and sustainable mobility, green spaces & inclusive communities

# Useful contacts & links for the press



## Press Contact

If you have any further queries, please contact the European Green Capital and European Green Leaf Secretariat. Our team will be happy to provide you with all relevant information and help you in the process of your interview requests.

+32 (0) 2 548 12 89 [info@europeangreencapital.eu](mailto:info@europeangreencapital.eu)

Awards' Secretariat and Network Support is provided throughout the year by PHRENOS with the support of Arcadis Netherlands.

## Media & Inspiration

Here you can find photographs, story ideas, press releases and background information:



Press corner



Our latest press releases



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European Green Capital Award



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