EUROPEAN COMMISSION LAUNCHES COMPETITION TO FIND EU'S GREENEST CITIES

The European Commission has launched the competition for the 2023 European Green Capital and the 2022 European Green Leaf Awards, which will again serve to recognise the commitment by those cities in becoming more sustainable regions. The deadline date for all applications in both award categories is Wednesday 28 October 2020.

The financial prize for both awards will be significantly increased to a combined €1 million, aimed at supporting cities to put in place urban sustainability measures. The 2023 European Green Capital winning city will receive €600,000, while up to two EGLA 2022 winning towns/cities will receive €200,000 each.

This increased financial prize reflects the importance of cities for delivering on the objectives of the European Green Deal, including the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

European Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevi□ius, said: "Sustainability is not a luxury, it is a necessity. During these difficult times we want to help those European cities who are facing economic and social challenges to realise their sustainability vision. Past winners have shown it's perfectly possible to live in a cleaner, greener environment and protect citizens' health while having a thriving economy."

EUROPEAN SEAL OF APPORVAL
Winning either of these awards is a seal of approval by the European Commission and brings many benefits such as increased international media coverage, a boost in local pride, a greater focus on environmental projects, and increased foreign investment.

All finalists and winning cities also gain access to a network of previous finalists and winning cities where they share learnings on how to overcome key challenges. And with the increased financial prize, the winners are expected to take on additional responsibilities, such as committing to tangible projects to enhance their city's environmental sustainability.

The annual European Green Capital Award (EGCA) is open to cities with a population of over 100,000 inhabitants, while the European Green Leaf Award (EGLA) is for towns/cities with a population of 20,000 to 99,999 inhabitants. A maximum of two cities can win the European Green Leaf each year.

Following Galway's success in winning the EGLA in 2017, this year the accolade went to Limerick (alongside the Belgian city of Mechelen) in recognition of its commitment to better environmental outcomes. However, the Treaty City has had to amend its programme of events to mark its designation as EGLA for 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

GREEN CAPITAL AWARD
Since 2008, the European Green Capital Awards have been rewarding and highlighting the achievements of Europe's greenest cities – those that are making urban environments better and healthier places to live.

With more than two thirds of Europe's population living in urban areas, these awards play a vital role in informing and inspiring other cities and towns that strive for urban sustainability and eco-innovation towards implementing the European Green Deal.

Each year, a panel of independent urban sustainability experts assesses the performance of the competing cities against 12 environmental indicators and selects finalists, to present to an international jury.

To date, 12 cities have been awarded

the title of European Green Capital since the initiative began a decade ago. Stockholm, Sweden, won the inaugural title in 2010, followed by Hamburg, Germany (2011); Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain (2012); Nantes, France (2013); Copenhagen, Denmark (2014); Bristol, UK (2015); Ljubljana, Slovenia (2016); Essen, Germany (2017); Nijmegen, The Netherlands (2018); Oslo, Norway (2019); Lisbon, Portugal (2020); and Lahti, Finland (2021).

DATES FOR THE DIARY

28 October 2020: Deadline for applications.

April 2021: Announcement of finalists.

June 2021: Jury presentations and announcement of winners.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
Websites: ec.europa.eu/europeangreencapital or ec.europa.eu/europeangreenleaf;
Emails: info@europeangreencapital.eu or info@europeangreenleaf.eu
Twitter: @EU_GreenCapital (and use #EGCA2023 #EGLA2022)
Facebook: @EuropeanGreenCapitalAward

Limerick City and County Council was given a prize of fund €75,000 on winning the EGLA to deliver on environmental objectives for 2020. Pictured (l-r): Laura Ryan, Karen Burke, Sinead McDonnell, European Commissioner Karmenu Vella, Simon Jennings, Derartu McDonnell, and Mayor of the City and County of Limerick, Cllr Michael Sheahan.

GREEN LEAF AWARD
Following the success of the European Green Capital Award, the European Green Leaf Award was established in 2015 to recognise the environmental efforts and achievements of smaller towns and cities (with populations of between 20,000 to 99,000 inhabitants).

The same panel of 12 independent urban sustainability experts assesses the applications received based on six environmental topic areas, before the finalists are selected.

To date, nine cities have been awarded the European Green Leaf title – Mollet del Vallès, Spain (2015); Torres Vedras, Portugal (2015); Galway, Ireland (2017); Leuven, Belgium (2018); Växjö, Sweden (2018); Cornellà de Llobregat, Spain (2019); Horst aan de Maas, The Netherlands (2019); Limerick, Ireland (2020); and Mechelen, Belgium (2020).

For further information on the rules and application details visit **www.egcaeglaportal.eu/**

TREATY CITY TOPS EUROPEAN GREEN LEAF AWARDS FOR 2020
Limerick City's programme of events to mark its designation as the European Green Leaf Award (EGLA) winner for 2020 has been deferred due to the outbreak of the coronavirus in Ireland.

With a total of 12 cities from across Europe having entered the EGLA competition, this year's award was given as much for Limerick's vision and commitment to a more sustainable future as it was for anything already achieved, along with the city's ability to act as a green ambassador.

Limerick showcased its ongoing commitment to monitor air quality and improve noise levels in the city and transform itself into Ireland's first digital city by integrating several public services, creating smart neighbourhoods and energy districts.

And the award follows on from Limerick becoming Ireland's first 'Lighthouse City' in 2018, under the biggest research and innovation programme called Positive City Exchange, as part of EU's Horizon 2020 project. The city will invest over €6.5m to establish Ireland's first energy block in the heart of the mid-west. For updates on the new events programme visit **www.limerick.ie/European-Green-Leaf-City**