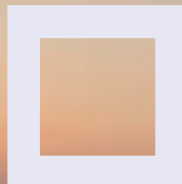




European
Commission



ACCESS CITY Award **2021**

Examples of best practice in
making EU cities more accessible

[#EUACCESSCITY](#)



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Foreword



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 *Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality*

Following on from last year's 10th anniversary celebrations, it is very positive to see an even higher number of applications to this year's Access City Award.

It is a pleasure to welcome the new applicants into the Access City Award network as it shows our collective commitment to ensuring accessibility.

We celebrate this year's Award in unusual and difficult circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic created new challenges, many of which relate to accessibility. Social distancing and travel restrictions have affected access to public services and support networks, and this has increased the risk of social exclusion and isolation, particularly for persons with disabilities and older citizens.

I am encouraged to see our cities continue to prioritise accessibility, even more so in times of crisis. Congratulations to all of this year's winning cities, particularly our first

prize winner, Jönköping. This city stands out for its collaborative, bottom-up approach to accessibility. It deserves the recognition.

Moving forward, we will now begin intensive work to implement the Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, in which accessibility will remain a priority as we continue with the implementation of the European Accessibility Act in parallel.

The Access City Award is not just about complying with EU standards; it is also about sharing knowledge and good practices. This year's winning cities should serve as an inspiration to others.

I wish every success to our future applicants.

Access City Award 2021



Easy-to-read version

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Who are we?

We are the European Commission and the European Disability Forum.

The **European Commission** runs the day to day work of the European Union.



The **European Union** is a group of 27 countries in Europe that came together to make things better and safer for people. The European Commission takes actions and suggests laws for the European Union.

The **European Disability Forum** works to protect the rights of people with disabilities in Europe.



We often work together to make things better for people with disabilities in Europe. For example, every year we work together to make the **Access City Award** happen.

What is the Access City Award?

The **Access City Award** is a prize we give every year to cities that work hard to be accessible.

A city is accessible when all people can live in it and use all things and services without problems.

For example, a city is accessible when all people can easily:

- get the bus or the metro to go to work.
- use ticket machines to buy a ticket.
- go around the streets or get in public buildings like hospitals and town halls.
- get information in ways that they can read and understand.

This is important for all people and especially for people with disabilities and older people.

Often things like transport and information are not accessible for them.

If things are not accessible, they will not be able to take part in the community like all other people.

They will be left out.

For example, if buses do not have ramps, people in wheelchairs will not be able to take them to go to work.

Or if information is not easy to read, people with intellectual disabilities and other people may not be able to read and understand it.



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So the Access City Award is a chance for cities in Europe to show what they have done to become accessible for all people.

The Access City Award started in 2010. It is important that the Access City Award continues to remind cities how important it is to be accessible to all people.

Which city won the 2021 Access City Award?

The city that won the Access City Award for 2021 is Jönköping. **Jönköping** is a city in Sweden.

Jönköping won the Access City Award because it is working hard to become more accessible for people with disabilities and all people. For example, Jönköping has done a good job:



© Peter Appelin, 2014

- thinking about the needs of people with disabilities.
- listening to people with disabilities and their organisations when making decisions that concern their lives.
- helping people with disabilities and older people to not feel left out during the hard times of COVID-19. **COVID-19** is a new disease that has made many people sick. Many people have died from it.

Also, Jönköping made a local Access City Award for companies and organisations that work to make their services accessible for all people. This is a really nice idea that they made happen over there!

Jönköping got 150 000 euro for winning the Access City Award for 2021.

Two other cities won the second and the third place in the competition:

- The city of **Bremerhaven** in Germany won the second place and 120 000 euro.
- The city of **Gdynia** in Poland won the third place and 80 000 euro.



© Tanja Mehl / Erlebnis Bremerhaven, 2020

This year there was also a special award for cities that did good work to protect people with disabilities from COVID-19.

COVID-19 is a new disease that has made many people sick. Many people have died from it. The special award about COVID-19 went to the city of **Poznań** in Poland.



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Poznań won this award because it did a great job giving accessible support and services to people with disabilities during the hard times of COVID-19.

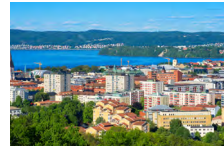
The next Access City Award will be for 2022.

Which cities can take part?

Not all cities can take part in the Access City Award.
The cities that can take part in the Access City Award should:

- be in countries that are part of the European Union.
- have more than 50 000 people living in them.
If a country has less than 2 cities with this many people,
2 or more smaller cities can join together.
If together they have more than 50 000 people,
they can take part in the Access City Award too.

The city that won the Access City Award this year
cannot take part again next year.



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How can cities take part?

Cities that want to take part
in the next Access City Award
can apply online when the application period starts.
People who run these cities
and make important decisions for them
should fill in a form on the internet.



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In this form, they should:

- say why they think their
city should win the Access City Award.
- give examples and show how their city works
to make things accessible for all people.



© Pixabay

- talk about how they plan to continue this good work in the future.

You can find more information on our website here:
www.ec.europa.eu/social/accesscityaward

There, we will soon say when the application period will start.

When the application period starts, cities can fill in the form

and take part in the next Access City Award.

So, keep an eye on our website to find this information!



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How do we choose the winner?

After the cities apply for the Access City Award, some groups of people check their applications and choose the winner.



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In every country there is a group of people that checks the applications of the cities of this country.

They choose up to 3 cities as the best examples of this country.

Then another group of people in Europe checks all these cities and chooses which of them is the best example of all. This city wins the Access City Award of this year.

People with disabilities and older people are part of these groups. They check what cities do to make things accessible for the good of their people.

For example, they check if cities have accessible:

- buildings and streets.
- buses and metros.
- ticket machines and cash machines.
- websites and other technology that people use to communicate.
- information that is easy to read and understand for everyone.



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They see which of the cities does a better job to make these things accessible for all people. This city wins the Access City Award.

When will we present the winner?

At the end of 2021,
we will say
which city wins the Access City Award
for 2022.
We will hand over the Access City Award
to this city.

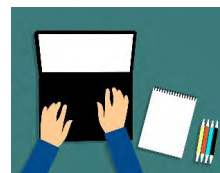


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More information

If you want more information
you can check our website here:
www.ec.europa.eu/social/accesscityaward

If you have any questions,
you can send us an email at:
secretariat@accesscityaward.eu



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Introduction

Around 100 million Europeans have some form of disability – more than a fifth of the EU population. As the population continues to age, accessibility is more important than ever.

For more than a decade, the EU's Access City Award has been recognising cities for their exceptional progress in becoming more accessible. The Award also aims to raise awareness, spread good practices and inspire action among other EU cities.

Good accessibility ensures all citizens – regardless of age, mobility or disability – can participate equally and independently in society. It means they can enjoy all that their city has to offer. For each city, this poses different challenges. The Award therefore looks at cities holistically, including their built environment, infrastructure and public spaces, as well as information, communication and public services.

EU cities with over 50 000 inhabitants can submit applications, which are assessed first by national juries and later by the European Jury of accessibility experts. The top three cities

win a financial prize and others receive special mentions for particular aspects.

This year's awards include special mentions for a city that has improved its built environment and a city that has embraced accessibility as an opportunity for the whole city. There is also a special mention relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected life in ways we could not have imagined and created new challenges for accessibility.

A key theme this year – epitomised by the first prize winner – is cooperation with citizens. The winning cities show that engaging with citizens helps to understand needs, take action and improve life for everybody in the city.

Jönköping

Sweden

© Peter Appelin, 2014



The winner of the Access City Award 2021 is the Swedish city of Jönköping. Jönköping is located at the southern point of Lake Vättern, between the larger cities of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. This makes it a natural hub and meeting place, meaning accessibility is essential. The city's picturesque landscape of lakes, hills and woodland also makes accessibility a challenge.

A collaborative, citizen-led approach

The jury praised Jönköping for its bottom-up approach to accessibility. The city involves representatives of persons with disabilities in decision making and engages with citizens to understand the needs of its 140 000 residents.

The Funktionsrätt Jönköping is a group of 18 organisations representing persons with disabilities. Four times a year it meets with

municipality representatives, who also meet regularly with older citizens' associations. Meeting agendas are set by the organisations, meaning they can discuss issues of importance to citizens and drive action at municipal level.

The Funktionsrätt Jönköping helped develop the city's disability policy programme, which set out strict rules on accessibility. It also runs training and shares expertise with the municipality.



‘We are so proud to receive this prize. For many years we have cooperated with older citizens and the Disability Rights Federation to help build a society that is accessible to everyone. We have realised the importance of having dialogue at an early stage when we are planning and building our city. Jönköping is a growing city, and we want to grow sustainably and equally.’

Ann-Marie Nilsson, Mayor of Jönköping

Accessible buildings and mobile services

Jönköping involves disability organisations in construction projects and gives a high weighting to accessibility in public procurement processes.

One of the city’s most impressive accessible buildings is the Spira concert hall, which overlooks Lake Vättern. Spira has tactile maps and signage, audio descriptions, sign language interpretation, and full accessibility for wheelchairs.



© Jönköping Municipality, 2020

 The Spira concert hall is fully accessible

Another fully accessible public building is the library, which has tactile maps and signage. Its accessible media include DAISY players and tactile, easy-to-read and large-print books.

Jönköping has even started an accessible mobile library, which visits the homes of people who are unable to go there themselves. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the municipality also organised a mobile service to support older citizens with errands such as shopping.

Access to the natural environment

As well as its built environment, Jönköping has made its unique natural environment more accessible. The city finds itself in Sweden's East Vättern Scarp Landscape region, a Unesco Biosphere Reserve.

The municipality owns and manages the Dumme Mosse nature reserve, home to a rich variety of flora and fauna. This area has an accessible nature trail that is suitable for wheelchairs, walkers and prams.



© Peter Appelin, 2020

 *The Dumme Mosse nature reserve*

The municipality has made the walkways around Lake Rocksjön more accessible and offers an audio guide for visitors. It is also working with the County Administrative Board to inventory the accessibility of natural areas surrounding the city.

Accessible spaces within the city include gardens, parks and playgrounds. The two largest playgrounds are fully accessible and a

further 120 have undergone improvements. Accessible pavements, crossings and public toilets contribute to ensuring all citizens can enjoy these spaces.

Accessible activities and establishments

Jönköping has created the Pluspolare card, which allows persons with disabilities to be accompanied to activities for free. It can be used to attend leisure activities organised by the municipality and cultural events such as football matches.

The municipality has worked with the Funktionsrätt Jönköping to inventory the city's shops and restaurants and published a map of

accessible establishments on its website. The fully accessible website provides information in easy-to-read and sign language and has a read-aloud function.

All trains from the central station are accessible for wheelchairs and walkers, as are all buses and bus stops in the city. Buses use audio announcements to help people with visual impairments or dyslexia, who can also track their journey using a mobile app.



‘Accessibility is not just about lowering curbs and inventorying stores. Real accessibility comes when people can feel safe, welcome and included. We are conscious of our standards and prejudices, which we are prioritising to make Jönköping more inclusive for all its citizens.’

Kristine Andreassen, Sustainability Strategist, Jönköping municipality

Awareness raising

To make accessibility a long-term reality, Jönköping knows it is important to raise awareness.

The city hosted the Swedish Forum for Human Rights in 2017, which included sessions on disabilities. It organises an annual ‘accessibility walk’ and has even created its own accessibility award for local businesses under the inclusion-focused campaign *Jönköping för Alla* (Jönköping for everyone). Such initiatives ensure the municipality, business community and civil society work together to achieve its vision.

Jönköping recognised that it needed to become more accessible, listened to its citizens, and made this a reality. It is a city that is adapting to its citizens – not the other way around – and its approach can inspire others to do the same.



‘We hope that we can serve as an inspiration for other cities to use this method in their work for diversity and inclusion. The key success factor in our work is that it originates from persons with first-hand experience. In close cooperation with city representatives, we have been able to design and implement an inclusive environment and the right mindset. This important topic needs constant focus and there is still room for improvement, even in our city. This award will boost our continuous efforts.’

Johan Steirud, Representative of Funktionsrätt Jönköping

© Jönköping Municipality, 2020



 An accessible playground



© Jönköping Municipality

 Jönköping för Alla

Bremerhaven

Germany

© Tanja Mehl / Erlebnis Bremerhaven, 2020



**SECOND
PRIZE**

With 113 000 residents, Bremerhaven is the most populous city on Germany's North Sea coast. As one of Europe's largest ports, it is best known as a trade hub. The city is also a leader in scientific research and new technologies. Similarly, it is a pioneer in the area of accessibility, using innovative approaches to develop a barrier-free city.

Independent advisory board

Bremerhaven's city council kick-started its mission to create a city for all in 2009, when it developed a Municipal Participation Plan. This included regulations on the accessible design of public buildings, transport, green spaces and sports facilities.

In 2015, it established a non-governmental Inclusion Advisory Board, made up of associations representing persons with disabilities. The Board is involved in drafting legislation and updating the Municipal Participation Plan.

The Disability Ombudsman, based within the Office for Persons with Disabilities, is a permanent contact point for accessibility matters. Both the Ombudsman and the Inclusion Advisory Board provide independent advice to the city council, representing the needs of citizens.

The Inclusive Bremerhaven network also works on projects and campaigns to promote inclusion across the city.



'The Inclusion Advisory Board monitors and helps to shape the implementation of the Municipal Participation Plan. It also questions, critically, why things are not implemented. We have a close relationship with the department for persons with disabilities and the municipal commissioner for persons with disabilities. In this way, we are always up to date on problems in the everyday lives of persons with disabilities and can actively contribute as an independent council for the citizens.'

Heima Schwarz-Grote, Chairperson of the Inclusion Advisory Board Bremerhaven

Accessible trains, buses and ships

Tactile paving in the city assists people with visual impairments, while sanded-down cobblestones provide a safe surface for wheelchairs, walkers, prams and bikes.

Together with the University of Bremen, the city council is also developing a real-time navigation app for wheelchair users.

Bremerhaven has made its train stations accessible and installed a tactile map in the main station. It has also created a tactile model of the city centre.

© Tanja Albert / Erlebnis Bremerhaven, 2020



© Tanja Albert / Erlebnis Bremerhaven, 2020



Tactile maps and models



© Tanja Albert / Erlebnis Bremerhaven, 2018

○ Sanded-down pavements

The city uses low-floor buses and 70 % of bus stops provide tactile guidance and acoustic announcements. Over half of the city's traffic lights are fitted with acoustic signals.

Bremerhaven's accessible ships are its most unique transport initiative. The River Weser Ferry is accessible to users of wheelchairs and other mobility devices. The Columbus Cruise Centre also provides barrier-free access to cruise ships.

Germany's first barrier-free tourist destination

These accessible ships are an important part of Bremerhaven's growing tourism industry. The Harbour Worlds area is home to many accessible attractions, including the German Maritime Museum, Bremerhaven Zoo, the Climate House and the German Emigration Centre.

Bremerhaven's beaches are equipped with accessible ramps and 'beach baskets'. These purpose-built pods are wheelchair friendly and offer privacy and shelter.

In 2019, Bremerhaven was certified as Germany's first barrier-free tourist destination by Reisen für Alle. The city has also hosted international conferences on accessible tourism, demonstrating its status as a leader in the field.



© Tanja Albert / Erlebnis Bremerhaven, 2018

○ Accessible beach baskets



‘In Bremerhaven we have a motto: “a city for everyone”. This is particularly true for persons with disabilities. That is why we have set out to provide the best possible support and assistance to our guests who have a disability – including our attractions, public transport, hotels, restaurants and much more. We are on the right track towards barrier-free tourism and a city for everyone.’

Melf Grantz, Lord Mayor

Innovative approaches to housing

Another unique development is the Spiralenhaus, a 1950s apartment block that was renovated with public funding in 2017.

The renovation introduced an accessible spiralling ramp, thought to be the first of its kind in Germany. Users of wheelchairs and other

mobility devices can use the ramp to access any floor of the building, including top-floor apartments with city views.

The Spiralenhaus also has an accessible communal garden, which helps to increase social interaction and prevent isolation. The building’s residents include persons with disabilities, older people and refugees.



© Staewog / B. Perlbach, 2018

 The Spiralenhaus has an accessible ramp and garden

A holistic approach to accessibility

Bremerhaven also works hard to support citizens with learning disabilities, cognitive impairments and other forms of disability.

It has set up the Bremerhaven Academy for Inclusion, which will train teachers to provide inclusive education for children with learning disabilities. Public administration and police staff have also received disability-focused training.

The city council has installed easy-to-read signage across the city and sends easy-to-read invitations to its meetings. Its website provides information in easy-to-read and sign language. An emergency SMS system also enables people with hearing or speech impairments to contact the emergency services by text message.

With a holistic approach to accessibility and pioneering work on tourism, Bremerhaven has shown it is a city designed for all of its residents and visitors.



© Tanja Albert / Erlebnis Bremerhaven, 2020

○ Easy-to-read signage



‘What makes us unique is the unconditional recognition of our goal to be a city for all by our authorities and politicians. Bremerhaven is taking on a pioneering role in the region. Not only have we expressed the will to dismantle barriers, but we have also created the legal basis for this.’

Uwe Parpart, City Councillor, Office for Persons with Disabilities

Gdynia

Poland

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**THIRD
PRIZE**

Gdynia is the second-largest city on Poland's Baltic Sea coast, with a population of 250 000. The city grew significantly during the 20th century after the building of its port in the 1920s. Today, the city remains a hub for trade and a frequent stopover for cruise ships. Despite being a relatively young city, Gdynia was an early adopter of accessibility measures.

20 years of the Barrier-free Gdynia programme

Since 1999, the Mayor's Plenipotentiary for Persons with Disabilities has been responsible for creating equal opportunities in Gdynia. In 2000, the city council established the Barrier-free Gdynia programme, which included comprehensive accessibility measures.

This programme has guided Gdynia's exceptional progress, which was recognised when the city won third prize in the Access City Award 2019.

At the time, the Award praised Gdynia for its inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities in particular.

The latest Barrier-free Gdynia programme, renewed in 2018, will run until at least 2023 – a sign of the city's long-term commitment.



‘It is the people living in Gdynia who every day create the unique atmosphere of our city, a city of openness and sensitivity to the needs of others. This is achieved through social campaigns that aim at raising social awareness, setting modern standards of equality in all areas of life so that we can live together, not just next to one another. For many years we have been creating a city accessible to all, promoting universal design so that no barriers limit the realisation of dreams and lives full of joy, but most importantly so that everyone has the right to choose how they want to live.’

Wojciech Szczurek, Mayor of Gdynia

Legal standards

Over time, the city has established the legal basis to deliver on this commitment. In 2013, it adopted standards for the universal design of public spaces. This means these spaces must be accessible to everyone, regardless of age or disability.

Since 2014, a nominated accessibility expert has provided analysis and advice on universal design. The expert reviews all city-funded

projects, including plans for the construction or renovation of public buildings, and helps to audit public facilities.

The city also has a Public Benefit Council made up of members of non-governmental organisations. This council plays an active role in shaping policy, representing the needs of persons with disabilities. Specific councils are in place for older citizens and children with disabilities.



‘Disability is not a defined state, everyone has too much or too little of something. The most important things are compassion and empathy. What is accessible to persons with disabilities is accessible to everyone. The result of these activities is accessible architecture, public spaces and transport, cultural events that connect not divide. Thanks to this, the city of Gdynia can live together, not separately.’

Wojciech Szczurek, Mayor of Gdynia

Helping everyone move around

Gdynia works hard to be inclusive. It runs a sign language service point for people with hearing impairments and has worked closely with the Polish Blind Association to understand the needs of citizens with visual impairments. As a result, it has introduced various measures that make it easier to move around. These include tactile maps in public spaces and braille information on staircase handrails.

The city council has equipped its entire bus network with accessible low-floor buses and

trolleybuses. Bus stops have tactile paving and information boards provide audio information to passengers. The city has also launched a door-to-door transport service to support anyone who – despite these measures – is still unable to use public transport.

Public transport drivers also receive training on providing inclusive services. The Access City Award highlighted this initiative when it awarded a special mention to Gdynia for transport and infrastructure in 2013.

© City of Gdynia / press materials / Gdynia.pl, 2016



 A tactile city map near the beach



 Gdynia is a leader in accessible public transport

© City of Gdynia / press materials / Gdynia.pl, 2016

Accessible sports and leisure

Wooden ramps provide wheelchair-friendly access to several beaches in Gdynia. The city council audited its beaches in 2019 and followed this up with recommendations to further improve their accessibility. Lifeguards receive annual training on supporting persons with disabilities.

The city council ensures its cultural, recreational and sporting events are accessible and, wherever possible, free of charge for persons with disabilities. Wheelchair dance classes are among the free events it organises.

All other large-scale events are reviewed by the Plenipotentiary for Persons with Disabilities.

In 2019, the city opened its Central Park, which has an outdoor gym with equipment designed for persons with disabilities and older people. It also features a sensory garden and will soon include a playground adapted to children with disabilities.

The city is planning to build a swimming pool that will provide a 'place of tranquillity' for people with conditions such as autism. The 'World of a Child' programme also runs activities for young children with autism.

© City of Gdynia / press materials / Gdynia.pl, 2016



- Lifeguards are trained in supporting persons with disabilities

To complement its own initiatives, Gdynia helps to spread knowledge and good practices by organising conferences and awareness-raising campaigns. It also rewards local projects through its Barrier-free Gdynia competition.

© City of Gdynia / press materials / Gdynia.pl, 2016



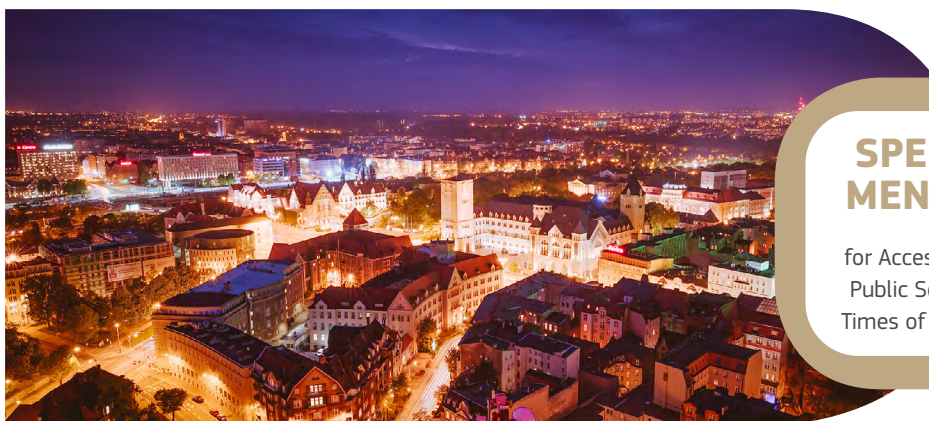
- The city organises free accessible activities, including wheelchair dance classes

Guided by the Barrier-free Gdynia programme, this city has made exceptional progress in the past 20 years, particularly in the areas of transport and leisure. Using a clear legal framework and principles of universal design, it has worked hard to become accessible to everyone.

Poznań

Poland

© Michal Matyska, City of Poznań, 2020



SPECIAL MENTION

for Accessibility of Public Services in Times of Pandemic

Poznań is Poland's fifth-largest city. As the historic capital of the Greater Poland region, it is one of the country's most important economic and cultural centres. The city has shown a long-term commitment to accessibility and won the third prize in the Access City Award 2014. This year, however, it receives a special mention for its more recent efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Protecting the most vulnerable citizens

At a time when the COVID-19 virus posed huge challenges across Europe, Poznań quickly identified the implications for its 535 000 citizens.

The city recognised the need to provide additional support to particular groups, especially older people and those with particular disabilities or health conditions. These citizens are not only at higher risk from the virus itself, but also more

likely to be isolated from their usual support circles due to restrictions on social contact.

Poznań set up a campaign called Seniorro Masks, through which volunteers produced and distributed free protective face masks to older residents. Many of these volunteers were themselves older people who could offer their sewing skills. As such, the initiative promoted solidarity at a time of widespread isolation.



‘From the very beginning of the pandemic, we knew that we had to support our city’s inhabitants. Particular attention was paid to older people and persons with disabilities – those classified as high risk. We wanted them to be able to use public services to meet their everyday needs, while taking all precautions.’

Jacek Jaśkowiak, Mayor of Poznań

Another volunteer-led initiative is Shopping for Seniors. Through this scheme, volunteers go shopping on behalf of those at higher risk of the virus. Shopping for Seniors has helped vulnerable citizens to obtain essentials such as food, hygiene products and medicines without leaving their homes.

Exemplary use of technology

In 2014, the Access City Award praised Poznań for its development of an accessible online portal for persons with disabilities.

Several years on, Poznań remains a leader in information technology (IT). It regularly audits the accessibility of its website, which includes easy-to-read and sign-language content.

During the pandemic, the city has used IT to facilitate access to public services. It has also been publishing information about the virus on its website, including sign-language videos for people with hearing impairments.

Importantly, Poznań also recognised that some citizens do not have the skills to find essential information and services online. When so much information is being communicated in this way, older people in particular are at risk of digital exclusion.

The city therefore set up a dedicated helpline to help these citizens find reliable information online. Its consultants also support with aspects such as sending emails or setting up social media accounts, helping to prevent isolation.

Poznań also launched another free helpline for older residents, the Telefon Serdeczności (Telephone of Cordiality). For many, the helpline offers a way to discuss their fears and difficulties. For others, it is simply a chance to speak to a friendly voice when they are feeling lonely.



 A Seniorro Masks volunteer sews a mask at home

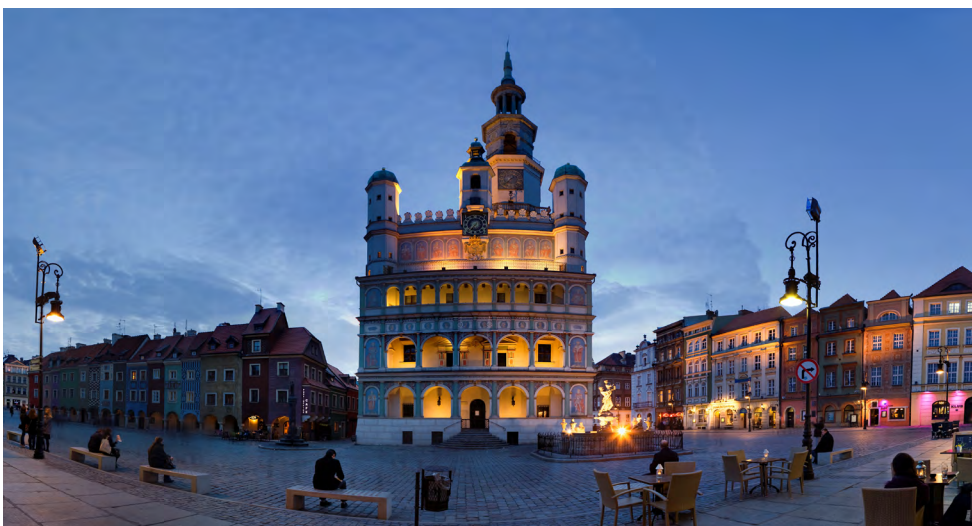


 The city has been publishing accessible information on its website during the pandemic

Accessibility embedded in the city's strategy

Poznań's exemplary response to the pandemic is no surprise, given accessibility is embedded in the City Development Strategy 2020+ and Social Problem Solving Strategy for 2019-2025.

The city has also run a programme entitled 'Directions and tasks of the city of Poznań for the social integration of persons with disabilities for 2012-2020'. Through this, it has developed accessibility standards, rules for investments, and audits of public spaces.



 Poznań has worked hard to communicate with its citizens amid widespread social distancing



‘Poznań, in its strategic goals, is focused on creating high-quality living conditions for its inhabitants, being especially open to the needs of older people and persons with disabilities. The city adjusts its public services, benefits, medical assistance, social support and social activation programmes according to the needs of older people and persons with disabilities. Ultimately, this action contributes to the improvement of the quality of life, independence and greater independence of people with special needs. These goals were followed consistently by the city during the pandemic. The implemented projects and services will certainly be continued, as practices that have been very well received by the inhabitants of our city.’

Dorota Potejko, Plenipotentiary of the Mayor of Poznań for Persons with Disabilities

The Mayor’s Plenipotentiary for Persons with Disabilities has overall responsibility for this programme, supported by the Coordinator for Accessibility of Public Spaces. Poznań also involves persons with disabilities in developing all its strategies and standards. Representatives of persons with disabilities participate in two key advisory bodies: the Plenipotentiary’s Civil Dialogue Commission and the Municipal Social Council for Persons with Disabilities.

An inclusive approach

Aside from its initiatives during the pandemic, Poznań stands out for its work on accessible culture. Cinemas, theatres and libraries use induction loops, audio descriptions, sign language translations and alternative text to make their cultural offerings accessible.

The city also runs creative projects for persons with disabilities, such as film workshops and theatre productions.

This is another area that demonstrates Poznań’s overall commitment to inclusion, which has been evident during the pandemic. With its innovative initiatives and intelligent use of IT, the city has worked hard to protect its citizens and ensure access to public services in times of exceptional difficulty.

Komotini

Greece

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SPECIAL MENTION

for Accessibility
as an Opportunity
for the Whole City

Komotini is the capital of Greece's Eastern Macedonia and Thrace region. With 54 000 inhabitants, it is the smallest of this year's winning cities, and one with modest financial resources. Despite this, Komotini has become an example by making great progress in the area of accessibility and embracing this as an opportunity for the whole city.

Improvements despite challenges

Komotini is a modern, multicultural city built around a Roman-era fortress. As a result, it has undergone multi-phased development over time, with a mixture of influences. This has made accessibility a challenge.

The city is also the administrative centre of a region that has had limited financial resources, especially since the financial crisis of 2008.

However, Komotini has worked closely with its 54 000 inhabitants to become more accessible and inclusive. In doing so, it has recognised that improving accessibility will promote the future growth and prosperity of the whole city.





‘Our city shows that – even under the most unfavourable conditions – if city officials put accessibility high in their policy agenda and work with determined individuals that sacrifice time and resources, they can transform a city.’

Ioannis Garanis, Mayor

Urban regeneration programme

For the past 20 years, the municipality has been implementing the Urban II Community Initiative Programme, which focuses heavily on accessibility and social inclusion. It has invested millions of euro in this regeneration programme, which is now in its third phase.

Through the programme, the municipality has embedded accessibility in its policies and strategies. Many investments have focused on the built environment. The programme has improved the bus network and created 20 km of accessible walkways and a digital map of the routes.

Three quarters of city-owned buildings are now accessible, including the city hospital, medical centres, police academy, theatres and the library.

The Komotini campus of the Democritus University of Thrace, home to around 10 000 students, is also accessible. Some 90 % of schools are already accessible and the rest should soon follow as the municipality has set a target to make all city-owned buildings accessible by 2021.

Investments have also focused heavily on sports and leisure. All sports facilities in the city are now accessible, as are 47 of its 60 playgrounds. There are six accessible entry points to beaches on the local coastline.



© Komotini Municipality, 2020

 Komotini has improved its built environment

© Komotini Municipality, 2020



 The city has invested in accessible sports facilities



© Komotini Municipality, 2020

 An accessible playground

A collaborative approach

Komotini stands out for its inclusive approach and involvement of persons with disabilities in decision making. The municipality does not treat persons with disabilities as a separate group in society, but rather as an asset and equal partner in the city's management. It learns from their experiences and makes use of their expertise.

Representatives of persons with disabilities participate in advisory boards and steering committees, helping to shape accessibility strategy and policy. They work closely with the local social services and help implement various municipal projects.



‘As a community, we are all really proud of this award. Komotini is one of the friendliest cities in Europe for persons with disabilities because we fight for this as a community. Side by side, organisations and the local authorities work for this together. We need a city that is discrimination free, barrier free and a city for everybody – with no exceptions. We have fought for this for the last 20 years, using lots of systems and strategies.’

Spyridon Ntontanidis, Board Member of Perpató

The local association Perpatto, which represents persons with disabilities, is part of the consortium that manages local food aid through the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived. It is also involved in managing European Social Fund funding.

The municipality co-funded the creation of a community and activity centre, which is run for and by persons with disabilities. Local civil society organisations also manage after-school programmes for children with intellectual disabilities.

Accessible tourism offers opportunity for growth

Komotini is building a reputation as a modern city where persons with disabilities can feel safe, welcome and included.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the municipality worked with a local association to map all persons with disabilities using a geographic information system. This enabled the social services to easily reach out to those in need of support.

Accessible tourism offers another example of Komotini's forward-thinking approach. Knowing that accessible cities attract more visitors, it has invested in becoming an accessible and sustainable tourist destination. It hopes that visitors will experience the city's inclusiveness and make return visits, or even move there permanently. This in turn will boost the local economy.

As part of this initiative, it is training local businesses in the travel and hospitality sectors. The training will help businesses tailor and target their services to persons with disabilities. It has also developed the 'Visit Komotini' website, which will soon be fully accessible.

Following on from Chania last year, Komotini is the second Greek city to receive a special mention from the Access City Award. It is becoming a regional and national leader in accessibility, working with its university community to share knowledge and good practices. In doing so, it hopes to inspire other cities across Greece.

It is clear from all of these initiatives that Komotini sees accessibility not just as an obligation, but as an opportunity.



© Komotini Municipality, 2020

 *Civil society organisations are heavily involved in local activities*

Florence

Italy

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SPECIAL MENTION

for the
Built Environment

Known as the birthplace of the Renaissance, Florence is a city rich in cultural heritage. Its historic centre was named a Unesco World Heritage Site in 1982. As a result, Florence is one of the world's most popular tourist destinations. This means accessibility is important not only for 368 000 residents, but also for over 12 million tourists who pass through the city each year.

Adapted buildings and public spaces

In modern cities, it can be relatively simple to make new developments accessible. However, it is more challenging to adapt existing environments, particularly in historic cities with ancient, monumental buildings and narrow, cobbled streets.

Despite facing these challenges, Florence has made exceptional progress. It has done so by following an ambitious Adaptation Plan for Buildings and Public Spaces, which it updates each year.

The plan covers aspects ranging from roads, pavements and car parks to gardens, sports facilities, libraries and museums. Based on this, Florence has renovated 29 public facilities, including schools, sports centres and libraries, to make them more accessible.

In 2019, the city appointed a Disability Manager to promote the needs of persons with disabilities in its development. The Disability Manager coordinates accessibility-related actions, working closely with city departments and associations.

The Disability Manager is also coordinating the creation of a one-stop-shop for disability, which will provide accessibility information on aspects such as public transport and tourism.



‘The inclusion of persons with disabilities is a key concern for sustainable urban development. Maximising synergies between social inclusion, healthy living, mobility and the design of urban areas, green spaces and public spaces will remain a key sustainable development priority for the city of Florence.’

Cecilia Del Re, Deputy Mayor



© Municipality of Florence (City Councillor for Sports), 2019

 Wheelchair basketball is played in the city's accessible sports centres

Mobility measures

Since 2009, Florence has extended the pedestrian zones in its historic centre from 260 000 m² to over 400 000 m². This has reduced traffic by 25 %, lowered pollution levels and created a more pleasant environment. It has also made it safer and easier for persons with disabilities to move around.

At the same time, the city has increased its number of parking spaces for persons with disabilities.

Florence now has more such spaces than any other Italian city, despite being only the eighth-largest city in the country. These spaces are also free to use.

All buses and trams are fully accessible, as are all stations, including those located in narrow streets. Taxis in the city are equipped to transport wheelchairs, providing an accessible transport option in areas not served by public transport. These taxis charge reduced fares for persons with disabilities.

Innovative use of technology

Florence stands out for how it has used IT to make the most of these improvements. The city's physical infrastructure is supported by modern IT services that make it easier to move around and find information.

The municipality has developed the Infomobilità Firenze mobile app, which helps people travel around the city by providing real-time information on public transport, traffic and parking spaces.

Another app is Kimap Pro, which helps users of wheelchairs and mobility scooters to follow accessible routes around the city. A voice assistant guides the user and reacts to real-time updates to optimise the route.

The FeelFlorence app and website also has a dedicated section on barrier-free tourism, available in five languages. This includes itineraries and information on guided tours, events, markets and other facilities.

© Municipality of Florence



 Florence's taxis are wheelchair accessible

Accessible cultural heritage

Florence has worked hard to make its rich cultural heritage accessible. The city's main tourist information centre provides free wheelchairs, audio guides in five languages and information in international sign language.

The municipality has also developed the Passepartout, a toolkit providing maps, routes around the historic centre and information on accessible cultural hotspots. These include the Santa Maria del Fiore Cathedral, the Santa Maria Novella Church and the Boboli Gardens.

Florence's famous museums and art galleries are among the public facilities it has renovated. Most civic museums are now accessible, free of charge, to persons with disabilities via ramps or lifts.

Alongside this, it has worked with the Italian union for people with visual impairments to develop multi-sensory visitor routes that combine touch, smell, space and sound.

© Kinoa s.r.l., 2019



 Kimap Pro helps wheelchair users move around the city

It has also collaborated with the national association for people with hearing impairments to offer tours with sign-language translation. In addition, some museums provide multimedia guides with subtitles.

Sociotherapeutic visits are available for people with Alzheimer's disease or other cognitive impairments. The Museum in a Suitcase initiative also offers virtual tours so that people with reduced mobility can visit from home.

Overall, Florence has demonstrated that careful planning can help historic cities to overcome challenges and adapt their built environment.

The city has also shown exceptional commitment to making its cultural heritage accessible to everyone. Its inclusive approach, supported by innovative IT, means residents and tourists can make the most of all the city has to offer.



'Being a world heritage city, Florence has always felt the need to grant accessibility to everybody and allow visits to its famous monuments and other facilities. To accomplish our mission we have followed a holistic approach to ensure coordinated policies for widespread accessibility.'

Cecilia Del Re, Deputy Mayor



© MUSE Association, 2018

 Florence's museums offer special visits

Participating in the Access City Award 2022

The Access City Award is organised by the European Commission together with the European Disability Forum. The Award recognises cities that have worked to become more accessible for their citizens.

The Access City Award is an EU initiative that promotes equal access to city life for all citizens, including persons with disabilities and older people.

Participating in the Access City Award is not only an opportunity to gain recognition from the EU, but also a unique chance to review the current situation in your city and measure progress.

The Award also enables you to promote accessibility among other EU cities and share best practices. The winning cities will be featured in next year's Access City Award brochure.

In addition, the European Commission awards a financial prize to the winner and second and third-placed cities, as follows:

- 1st prize: €150 000
- 2nd prize: €120 000
- 3rd prize: €80 000

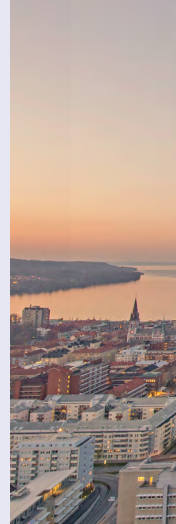
Would you like to apply to be one of next year's winners? Read on to find out more.

Who can apply?

In order to apply, you must be a government authority of a city of over 50 000 inhabitants in one of the EU Member States. In Member States with fewer than two such cities, urban areas made up of two or more towns may also participate if their combined population exceeds 50 000 inhabitants.

As the same city cannot win the Access City Award in two consecutive years, the winning city in 2021 is not invited to take part again in 2022. The Award encourages all other cities, including the second and third prize winners and special mention cities, to participate again.

To apply, you must complete and submit an online application form by the deadline. When the application period opens, a guidance note and participation rules will be published to help you apply.





© Peter Appelin, 2014

They will be available in all official EU languages on the Access City Award 2022 website.

ec.europa.eu/social/accesscityaward2022

Selection process

The juries will consider measures taken and planned in the following areas:

- the built environment and public spaces;
- transport and related infrastructure;
- information and communication, including new technologies (ICTs);
- public facilities and services.

The juries will evaluate the applications, taking into account the following six criteria:

- scope of the actions;
- ownership, level of commitment;
- impact;
- quality and sustainability of results;
- involvement of persons with disabilities and relevant partners;
- social innovation.

As the EU is celebrating the European Year of Rail in 2021, the 2022 Award may also include a specific focus on accessibility of train stations. Please keep a close eye on our website for news on the final criteria. Further information on the European Year of Rail is available here: europa.eu/year-of-rail/index_en

The selection process is divided into two phases: pre-selection at national level and final selection at European level. The **national juries** in each country select a maximum of three cities from among the national applicants using the evaluation criteria provided by the European Commission. These national candidates go forward to the second phase of the competition and are assessed by the **European Jury**.

The winner of the Access City Award 2022 will be announced in **winter 2021**. The ceremony is part of the annual European Day of Persons with Disabilities conference in Brussels.

The Access City Award Secretariat

The Access City Award Secretariat can assist you with the preparation of your application. If you need any additional information, please contact: secretariat@accesscityaward.eu

Getting in touch with the EU

In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct information centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you at:

europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

On the phone or by email

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696 or
- by email via: europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

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Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website at: europa.eu/european-union/index_en

EU publications

You can download or order free and priced EU publications at:

publications.europa.eu/en/publications. Multiple copies of free publications may be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local information centre (see europa.eu/european-union/contact_en).

EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1952 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex at: eur-lex.europa.eu

Open data from the EU

The EU Open Data Portal (data.europa.eu/euodp/en) provides access to datasets from the EU. Data can be downloaded and reused for free, both for commercial and non-commercial purposes.

The annual Access City Award recognises European cities for their efforts to make themselves more accessible for persons with disabilities and older citizens. This brochure celebrates the achievements of the 2021 winners, runners-up and special mentions: Jönköping (Sweden), Bremerhaven (Germany), Gdynia (Poland), Poznań (Poland), Komotini (Greece) and Florence (Italy). This year's cities have taken concrete steps to make public spaces, services, transport, buildings, culture and tourism more accessible.

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